

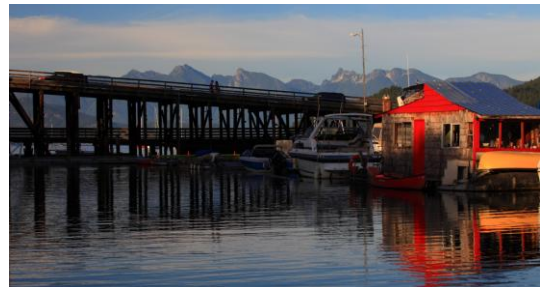


The Sunshine Coast Top Towns & Destinations

LOWER SUNSHINE COAST

The Lower Sunshine Coast is a 40-minute ferry ride from the [BC Ferries](#) terminal at Horseshoe Bay in West Vancouver to the Langdale terminal just outside the town of Gibsons.

Gibsons: Talk about accolades. In 2009, at the United Nations-backed International Livable Communities (LivCom) Awards, Gibsons was named the most livable community in the world, (population under 20,000), cited for social and environmental leadership. Made up of Upper Gibsons, the retail and residential core, and the quaint village of Gibsons Landing, the town is built on a hill overlooking the panorama of Gibsons Marina, alive with fish boats, yachts and visitors to the scenic cedar pier and gazebo. Look for the “flower lady’s” floating home and the carved cedar salmon at the entrance to the marina offices. Gibsons past claim to fame was Molly’s Reach, the former studio set, now a popular cafe, where the CBC-TV series *The Beachcombers* was shot from 1972 to 1990. Today, visitors can browse the funky shops and boutiques of Molly’s Lane, dine on fresh-caught seafood in local bistros and explore early First Nations, pioneer and maritime history at the Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives. Visit Winegarden Waterfront Park for the weekend market, hike to the viewpoint at the top of Soames Hill or stroll Ocean Beach Esplanade for 180-degree ocean views. Passenger ferries depart from Gibsons to idyllic Gambier and Keats islands. Take a short drive north from Gibsons to Port Mellon, home of the oldest operating pulp and paper mill in BC. www.gibsons.ca; www.hellobc.com/en-CA/RegionsCities/Gibsons.htm



Roberts Creek: Colourful only begins to describe this eclectic artistic community that proudly calls itself Gumboot Nation or the Gumboot Capital of the World, after many of the local resident’s favourite footwear. Hippie culture is alive and well here three generations after an influx of 1960s Vietnam War draft dodgers permanently settled in Roberts Creek. The heart of community life is the cedar-sided village square, home of a world-renowned woodworking school, art galleries, gift shops and the organic, fair trade Gumboot Cafe. Next door, the Gumboot Restaurant adheres to the fresh local tenets of the 100-Mile diet, supplied by small organic farms in the area. The Creek Daze celebration in August puts this creative community on full display during the annual Higgledy Piggledy Parade. At the Roberts Creek Pier, around 200 volunteers each year paint an eye-catching three-metre (10-foot) Mayan calendar. In summer, local gardeners put out bouquets of fresh-cut flowers, along with money drop-boxes, relying on the honour system. Picnics, beachcombing and wildlife viewing are popular pastimes along the cobblestone beaches at Roberts Creek Provincial Park, while Cliff Gilker Park is a relaxing place to hike amid a waterfall and babbling creek in a red cedar forest. In nearby Wilson Creek, visitors will find the entrance to Dakota Ridge Winter Recreation Area, popular for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. www.robertscreek.com

Sechelt: The cultural capital of the Sunshine Coast, Sechelt sits on a narrow two-kilometre (1.25-mile) sandbar between the Strait of Georgia and Sechelt inlet, earning its Shishalh First Nations name meaning “land between two waters.” At the House of Chiefs Museum, visitors can learn about local Sechelt First Nations history through photographs, masks, prehistoric stone carvings and the largest collection of documented native basketry on the West

Coast – a currency once used to trade with Union Steamships in the late 1800s. The museum also houses the Raven’s Cry Theatre, featuring First Nations plays, concerts, movies and storytelling. The Sunshine Coast Arts Centre hosts art exhibits, literary readings and craft fairs. Visitors can walk along the town’s pier and seawall, then a short jaunt to the historic Rockwood Lodge, host of the annual Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts, Canada’s longest running literary festival. There’s camping, swimming and kayaking at Porpoise Bay Provincial Park, while divers head to Kunechin Point to explore the shallow-water wreck of the HMCS Chaudiere, one of the the top four dive sites on the Pacific Coast. Nearby Davis Bay is the ideal spot to grab an order of fish and chips then settle down on an oceanfront bench to people-watch along the esplanade. Davis Bay hosts a popular annual Sandcastle Competition, welcoming sand sculpture artists and spectators from around the world. www.secheltvisitorinfocentre.com; www.secheltchamber.bc.ca; www.hellobc.com/en-CA/SightsActivitiesEvents/Sechelt.htm;

Halfmoon Bay: This small seaside village, 16 km (10 mi) north of Sechelt, is accessed from Redrooffs Road through Sargeant Bay before the road curves back around Secret Cove and Wood Bay to Highway 101. The Halfmoon Bay General Store, built in 1938, is a local ice cream spot and gathering place in front of the government wharf. Local artists and crafters display their works in two village galleries. In July, the Halfmoon Bay Country Fair features a children’s parade and fishing derby, outdoor performance stages and craft booths. Hiking on the local Redrooffs Trail leads to forested walkways marked with interpretive signposts highlighting natural and historical points of interest. Rentals are available in Halfmoon Bay for canoeing and kayaking in Sargeant Bay Provincial Park, also popular for hiking, fishing and windsurfing. Locals love to spin tales about the history of Smuggler’s Cove Provincial Marine Park where rum smuggling was said to be rampant during the days of Prohibition. Smuggler’s Cove offers protected all-weather anchorage for boaters, as well as scuba diving, walk-in wilderness camping and a wetland habitat for resident beavers. Rockwater Secret Cove Resort, voted by CNN.com Travel as #2 on the list of “ 10 Dazzling Hideways By The Sea, ” is a destination in itself, renowned for luxury tenthouse suites, fine dining and an outdoor spa in the midst of an oceanfront rainforest. www.bigpacific.com/halfmoonbay

Pender Harbour: Nicknamed the “Venice of the North” for its maze of local waterways, Pender Harbour encompasses the communities of Madeira Park, Garden Bay and Irvines Landing. All share the common coastline known as Pender Harbour where guest cottages, resorts and B&Bs can be found clustered around lakes, inlets and lagoons. Madeira Park is Pender Harbour’s commercial centre with everything from a post office to a grocery store, clothing boutiques and a book store, as well as outdoor carvings and murals by local artists. Madeira Park’s newest destination hot spot is the high-end Painted Boat Resort & Marina offering deluxe suites and fine dining, as well as multiple treatment rooms, a sauna cave and glacial rain shower at its elegant spa. Garden Bay is the site of the Sunshine Coast’s original (now defunct) hospital, an offshore station of the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club and the Garden Bay Hotel and Marina, (a popular pub, but there are no rooms). Historic Irvines Landing was once a bustling steamship port and is still a popular fishing marina and boat launch. Just north of Pender Harbour, Ruby Lake is home to the Ruby Lake Resort and Rainforest Spa, as well as the Iris Griffith Field Studies and Interpretive Centre, offering guided nature hikes, wetland trails, birdwatching and educational programs. Ruby Lake Lagoon is famous for its thriving wildlife, including painted turtles, Roosevelt elk, beavers, otters and bears. The annual Pender Harbour Jazz Festival showcases international jazz artists on the third weekend each September.



www.penderharbour.org

Egmont: Located at the edge of the Skookumchuck Narrows, just east of the BC Ferries terminal at Earl’s Cove, Egmont offers a public boat launch, water taxis, family restaurant, pub and the Bathgate General Store, built in 1948. Accommodations at the Egmont’s Backeddy Marina Resort range from a campground to ocean view cabins and an inn. A prime charter boat base, Egmont is also a departure point for cruises up the Jervis Inlet to serenely beautiful Princess Louisa Marine Provincial Park, home to the thundering 40 m (120 ft) Chatterbox Falls, and where the granite walls of a glacier-carved gorge are marked with ancient pictographs. The luxury West Coast Wilderness Lodge specializes in zodiac cruises to Princess Louisa Inlet and in west coast fine dining. At Skookumchuck Narrows Provincial

Park, one of BC's most spectacular outdoor shows performs twice daily when up to 200 billion gallons of water flows into the narrows connecting Sechelt and Jervis inlets, creating wildly turbulent tidal rapids and whirlpools. The rapids at high tide can rise up to 2 m (6.6 ft), running at speeds of more than 30 km/hr (19 mi/hr), drawing extreme kayakers and whitewater adventure seekers from around the world.

www.sunshinecoastcanada.com

UPPER SUNSHINE COAST

The Upper Sunshine Coast is connected to the lower coast by a 50-minute ferry ride at [Earl's Cove](#) to Saltery Bay, a 20-minute drive along Highway 101 to Powell River. The BC Ferries terminal in downtown Powell River sails daily to [Comox](#) on Vancouver Island. In addition, BC Ferries offers discount package fares on the [Captivating Coastal Circle Tour](#), a four-day tour of the Sunshine Coast from top to bottom.

Powell River: The city of Powell River, the Sunshine Coast's largest community, is known for its well-preserved historic Townsite, a planned community built by the local mill between 1910 and 1930 and now a National Historic District of Canada. Today, Powell River is equally famous as a gateway to the marine parks of Desolation Sound and as a mecca for outdoor adventure enthusiasts seeking world class hiking, kayaking, rock climbing, fishing and scuba diving. The local Knuckleheads are a prime powder destination for tobogganing, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. In 2004, Powell River was named a Cultural Capital of Canada, laying claim to the title through its annual artists' studio tour, international choral competition, symphony orchestra and film festival. In Westview, the city's retail core, visitors can browse gift shops and art galleries, and dine at multicultural eateries with fresh local fare. The Powell Model Community Project for persons with disabilities publishes a guide to the city's wheelchair accessible accommodations, facilities and walkways. Much of the town is built sloping down to the sea and brilliant, almost nightly, sunsets from Palm Beach and Willingdon Beach silhouette the Hulks, 10 concrete WWII ships forming the world's largest floating breakwater. Other attractions include the Townsite Heritage Walk, Powell River Historical Museum, Powell River Forestry Museum, Myrtle Point Golf Club, , the Sunshine Coast Trail, the Blackberry Festival, and the Powell Forest Canoe Route. www.powellriver.ca; www.discoverpowellriver.com

Lund: A gateway to Desolation Sound marine recreation, this picturesque fishing village is connected by a waterfront boardwalk winding from the SunLund By-The-Sea campgrounds to the Historic Lund Hotel, offering craft shops and a harbourfront cafe (famous for its cinnamon buns) along the way. Circa 1905, the Lund Hotel is the heart of the village with a popular pub, dining room, art gallery and well-stocked grocery store carrying everything from beach toys to fresh deli sandwiches. From the Lund Marina, visitors can catch the water taxi to Savary Island, book a bare boat charter to the Copeland Islands or arrange an educational kayak tour of the wildlife sanctuary at Mitlenatch Island, summer home to coastal cactus and the winter playground of hundreds of Stellar sea lions. Visitors can sail aboard an 18 m (58 ft) catamaran on dinner and eco-cultural cruises to Desolation Sound, May through September. To celebrate the area's rich abundance of fish and seafood – including cultured clams, oysters, scallops and mussels from the nearby Okeover Inlet aquaculture industry – Lund holds an annual Shellfish Festival in May. The annual one-day Lund Daze in August is a long-time popular family event. In 2009, local organizers raised funds to erect a Mile 0 marker commemorating Lund's status as the northernmost terminus for Highway 101 that runs 15,202 km (9,446 mi) to the southern tip of Chile. www.lundbc.ca



Texada Island: BC's largest Gulf Island at 50 km (31 mi) long, with only 1,100 full-time residents, is a pristine, exciting choice for the adventurous traveller. The island is rich in history, from evidence of ancient First Nations middens to its early discovery by Spanish explorers to local mining of iron, copper and gold in the 1800s and the limestone quarries, still active today. Heritage buffs can tour two museums operated by the Texada Heritage Society in Blubber Bay or in Van Anda on the island's east side. Getting to Texada is easy with 10 ferries per day from Powell

River's Westview ferry terminal to Blubber Bay in just 30 minutes. KD Air provides four scheduled flights per day from Vancouver to the Gillies Bay Airport, which has a 914 m (3,000 ft) paved runway ensuring smooth landings. Recreation abounds here with excellent hiking and mountain biking trails, over 250 species for avid bird-watchers and a 9-hole golf course. Water recreation includes kayaking from Shingle Beach to historic Jedediah Island Marine Park, skimboarding and swimming at Shelter Point Park Campground beach, and exploring the newly protected karst caves near Davies Bay. For scuba divers, according to a *Sport Dive Magazine* writer, Texada is "dripping with life," boasting warm, high-visibility waters where divers can search for Texada's famous sponge clouds. Marble Bay provides good anchorage and the Texada Boat Club offers dockside moorage with water, power and reasonable rates for transient boaters. Texada, billed as the undiscovered "Jewel of the Pacific" has many outdoor events throughout the summer months. www.texada.org

Savary Island: Aerial maps of this warm-water holiday destination reveal its ring of gleaming white sand beaches, earning Savary Island subtropical comparisons. This small 7.5 km (4.7 mi) long and less than 1.0 km (0.6 mi) wide island is described by the Savary Island Land Trust (SILT) as "essentially a migrating sandbar" with a range of highly sensitive ecosystems from sand cliffs to dune meadows and ancient forested dunes. While this is the most heavily subdivided land in Canada, mostly made up of private holiday homes, the island has no power and no public campsites or washrooms. Overnight visitors are welcomed, however, at several cottage rentals, B&Bs and a private campsite. Daytrippers can be dropped off and picked up at the public wharf, with many visitors arriving by water taxi or aboard chartered boats from Lund Marina. The best way to get around is to cycle from beach-to-beach. Prime stops include South Beach, Duck Bay, Sutherland Beach and the Malaspina Promenade. www.silts.ca

Sliammon: The Coast Salish village of Sliammon, just north of Powell River, has a vibrant culture and history in the region dating back more than 2,000 years. Visitors to the reserve can enjoy free interpretive hikes with a First Nations guide. Local sights include the Sliammon Sacred Heart Church, a historic Catholic church that burned down in the 1900s and has since been rebuilt, and the majestic carved totem pole on Beach Road. The Sliammon Salmon Hatchery is open to the public, offering free tours of the hatchery and the unique fluvarium, an underwater salmon-viewing gallery. Visitors are welcome to stay and picnic on the scenic grounds of the hatchery. Sliammon Beach offers gorgeous views of Harwood and Texada island to the south. www.sliammonfirstnation.com

Desolation Sound: Captain George Vancouver sailed here in 1792 and finding the area too remote for his tastes, named it Desolation Sound. Today, its pristine isolation is a major attraction. One of BC's finest saltwater cruising areas, said to rival the best in the world, Desolation Sound lures legions of pleasure boaters and paddlers with its warm waters, photogenic wildlife and sheer-sided waterways of Scandinavian-like fjords that at low tide reveal thick walls of purple starfish. Desolation Sound Marine Provincial Park's 60 km (37 mi) of coastline and crystal-clean, nutrient-rich waters are prime habitat for intertidal marine life, as well as for seals, sea lions, porpoises, dolphins, eagles, shorebirds – and occasional migrating whales. Grace Harbour, Prideaux Haven and Tenedo's Bay are the three main destination anchorages among the many sheltered bays and inlets. Popular activities include scuba diving, saltwater and freshwater fishing, and walk-in wilderness camping. Water taxis, guided kayak tours, cruises and boat charters can be arranged from Lund and Okeover Inlet.

www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/desolation.html; www.lundbc.ca

For more on Sunshine Coast towns, communities, provincial parks and attractions, visit

www.sunshinecoastcanada.com and www.discoverpowellriver.com



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