

# PORT HARDY

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## BRITISH COLUMBIA

Northern Vancouver Island's  
Wonder-Filled Wilderness

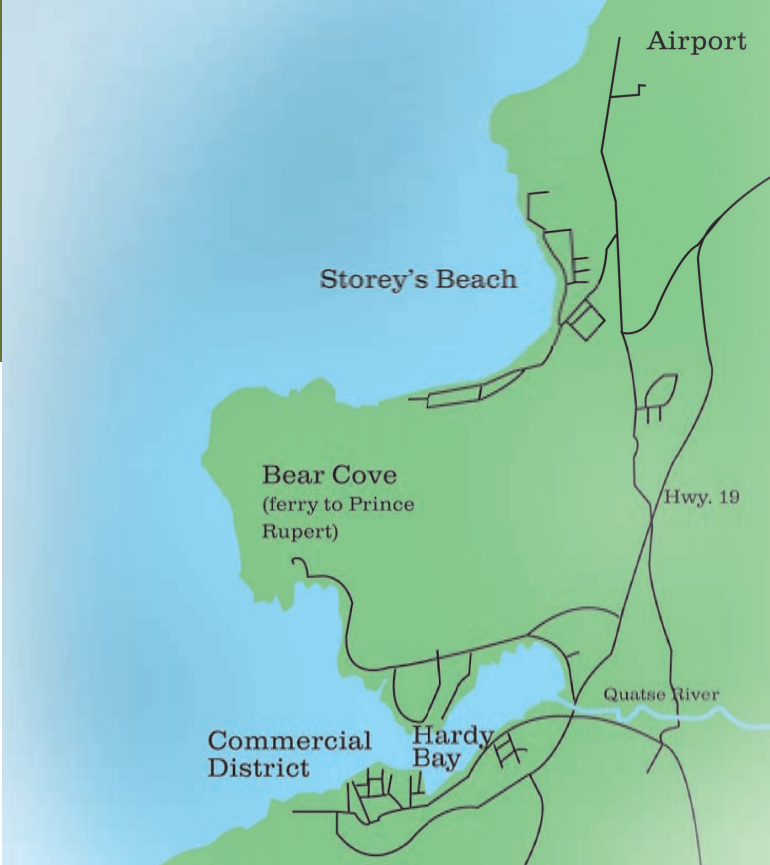


Somewhere along your journey to Port Hardy, it hits you. This isn't like any place you've ever been before. The black bear lumbering across the highway and bald eagles soaring overhead are only the beginning.

# WELCOME TO Port Hardy LIVING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure starts here in Port Hardy (pop. 4,500) at the northern tip of Vancouver Island, where fishing and logging are a way of life and wildlife species far outnumber people. This unspoiled wilderness is the ideal starting point for adventure of all kinds.

Wildlife and whale watching, kayaking, caving, salt-water and freshwater fishing, scuba diving, hiking and other eco-adventures abound. Port Hardy is also rich in First Nations culture. Totems, wood carvings and art galleries throughout town display the talent and legends of native bands living in the community.



## Getting Here

A modern highway system connects Port Hardy to the rest of Vancouver Island. Commercial airlines provide daily service from Vancouver and coastal communities. Seaplanes offer charters and scheduled flights from Port Hardy, Alert Bay and Port McNeill. BC Ferries links Port Hardy with several remote communities along the breathtaking Inside Passage and Discovery Coast routes to Prince Rupert and Bella Coola. Nearby, BC Ferries links Port McNeill to Alert Bay on Cormorant Island and Sointula on Malcolm Island.

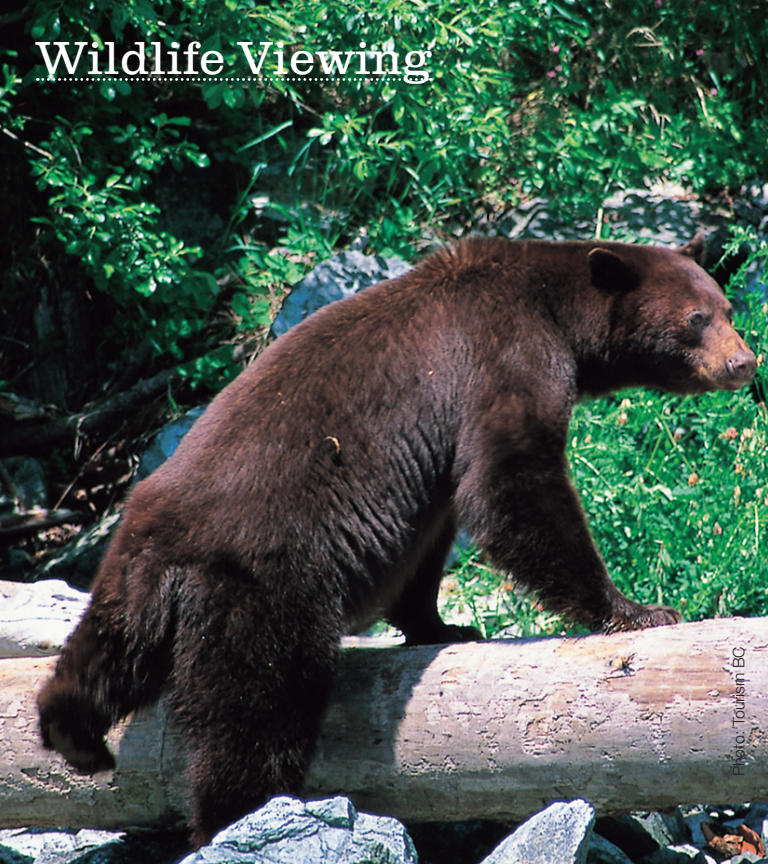
### Travel Times & Distances

From Victoria	6.5 hrs	502 km
From Nanaimo	4.5 hrs	391 km
From Comox	3.5 hrs	282 km
From Prince Rupert	15 hrs	(BC Ferries)
From Bella Coola	13 hrs	(BC Ferries)



Photo: Rob Dodds





## Spectacular encounters with wildlife happen 365 days of the year

in and around Port Hardy. A variety of eco-tours provide visitors with unforgettable experiences.

Every year orcas, also known as killer whales, travel just offshore in Johnstone Strait and Blackfish Sound. On a boat charter late-June through early October you'll see and hear these majestic mammals along with humpback, grey and Minke whales, dolphins, porpoises, seals, sea lions and sea otters.

Watch for black bears along the highway in spring and summer. They feed along riverbanks during the salmon run in the fall. Grizzly bear viewing excursions take you by boat to nearby mainland inlet shores July through September.

At the harbourfront seawall, Hardy Bay estuary, or the vast sands of Storey's Beach you'll find prime bird watching.

Short, easy trails and challenging multi-day backpacking treks reward hikers with spectacular views. Try one of these popular hikes

- **Cape Scott Trail/North Coast Trail** – These rugged and challenging trails (70 km/43 mi total) linking in Cape Scott Provincial Park are the ultimate adventure.
- **San Josef Bay Trail** – An easy 45-minute walk (2.5 km/1.5 mi) in Cape Scott Provincial Park leads to a beautiful sandy beach.
- **Quatse River Trail** – Begin at the seaplane base and follow the estuary shorefront to a quiet trail along the scenic Quatse River.
- **Tex Lyon Trail** – This challenging five-hour trek starts at Storey's Beach and follows the rocky coastline to Dillon Point.

## My Moment

"A few years ago I was fishing with my dad and brothers near Port Hardy. The ocean was perfectly calm when we heard a couple of splashes. Then all of a sudden we were surrounded by 800 or 1,000 [Pacific] white-sided dolphins jumping everywhere -- as far as you could see. The water just exploded with them. Some even swam right up to the boat to look at us. After three or four minutes they disappeared. It was quite an experience."

ROBERT DRIEMEL



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# Outdoor Adventures

No matter what adventure you pursue, you're guaranteed to go home with at least one good story. Maybe it's getting a double header right after dropping the lines on a salmon fishing charter. Or maybe it's diving emerald waters and looking a huge Pacific octopus right in the eye.

## Diving

God's Pocket Provincial Marine Park just offshore is considered one of the best spots in the world for scuba diving. You'll find every colour of the rainbow here. In nearby Browning Passage, orange nudibranchs, green anemones, red and purple sea urchins, and yellow sponges blanket the massive Browning Wall, a sheer rock face descending 230 feet below the surface. The nutrient-rich waters are also home to crabs, wolf eels, and the elusive giant Pacific octopus.

Photo: John Rawlings

## My Moment

"I was kayaking a few days ago at Storey's Beach when an eagle flew out of a tree behind me and pounced on a fish about 20 or 30 feet away. The eagle locked on, but the fish was so big he couldn't lift it out of the water. The fish pulled him in, so he's sitting there on the water with his wings outstretched. All of a sudden he let go of the fish and jumped into the air. I was blown away. I might never see that again in my whole life."

PAT KERVIN



## Kayaking

Spend at least one early morning in a kayak gliding silently across tranquil waters. Guides lead paddlers on excursions ranging from easy half-day tours at Storey's Beach to overnight camping trips on remote islands in the Queen Charlotte Strait and Johnstone Strait. Countless inlets and secret coves are ideal places to spot bald eagles, seals, sea lions and occasionally whales.

## Fishing

The North Island is well known for its fishing. The waters of the Queen Charlotte Strait are so plentiful, limiting out isn't uncommon. Catch record-breaking salmon April to September and halibut April to October. Head to the hatchery-stocked Quatse and Cluxewe Rivers for excellent winter steelhead fishing. Trout are abundant in most rivers and lakes in the area.



Photo: Rob Dodds

# First Nations Arts & Culture

First Nations people first inhabited the area some 8,000 years ago, and their culture is still an integral part of life here today. You'll find historic totem poles, wood-carved signs and outdoor murals nearly everywhere you go.

## My Moment

"It was a gorgeous summer day at Beaver Harbour, and I was watching the Kwakwaka'wakw Arts & Culture Festival's canoe races. Four big war canoes with maybe 16 paddlers each came around the sheltered islands. They chanted to a beat as they paddled up to the big sandy beach and did a ceremonial greeting. I could actually imagine another time when they were the only people on the coast. It was really striking."



**HANK BOOD**  
MAYOR OF PORT HARDY

Market Street is dotted with local native artists' shops and galleries. Several of these artists regularly invite visitors into their workshops as they create paintings, jewellery, masks and other pieces. At the Copper Maker Gallery, just outside Port Hardy on the Fort Rupert Reserve, you can meet artists whose works have been displayed at museums and cultural centres around the world.

Fort Rupert is also home to several totems and a traditional native Big House. Look for petroglyphs on the sandstone formations near the old site of the Hudson's Bay fort.

A small collection of artifacts at the Port Hardy Museum tells the colorful history of First Nations people and explains the significance of local forestry, fishing and mining over the years. For another perspective, join a charter company tour and hear ancient legends and wisdom as you visit cultural centres and native villages.

Photo: Rob Dodds



## Dining

### No visit to Port Hardy is complete without a taste of fresh, locally caught seafood.

Whether you prefer fish and chips or surf and turf, you'll find it in many restaurants here. Some places will even cook your own catch on request, or you can purchase locally smoked salmon.

Enjoy a sumptuous dinner at a quaint bistro overlooking the bay, or wake up early and ease into the day at a Market Street coffeehouse. No matter where you end up, you'll savor views of the ocean and snow-capped peaks of the Coastal Mountain Range.



## Shopping

Port Hardy's small, locally owned shops are the ideal place to find that special gift or unique memento. Native arts and crafts stores and galleries line Market Street, the town's picturesque main street that runs alongside the bay. Within walking distance of downtown, a mall houses a handful of other unique shops and services.



## Lodging

Visitors can choose from nearly 20 different resorts, hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and cottages in Port Hardy. There are also campgrounds and RV parks. Many places offer accommodation packages with fishing, whale watching or other excursions.

Especially in spring and summer, reservations are recommended. Vacancies are scarce when the BC Ferries vessels from Prince Rupert and Bella Coola arrive every other day May through September.



Photo: Rob Dodds

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Explore life in northern  
Vancouver Island's  
wonder-filled wilderness.  
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