

British Columbia

Wherever students decide to study in British Columbia, Canada, they are never far away from a breathtakingly beautiful natural playground. AMY BAKER reports.

Vancouver is one of the world's most beautiful cities – a multicultural, cosmopolitan centre surrounded by majestic mountains, dramatic forests and sandy beaches," enthuses Alice Hsu at Vancouver Premier College located in the city. "Where else can you go skiing, hiking and sailing in one day?"

Throughout British Columbia, school representatives are equally enthusiastic about the delights of their location, and like Hsu, many highlight the outdoor opportunities on their doorstep.

"You can truly ski in the morning, go sailing at noon, golf in the afternoon, have dinner at one of many fine restaurants and take in a live play in the evening [featuring] well-known stars of the entertainment world," says Dan Dycke of Comox Valley International College in Comox Valley. He

adds that the college is only a 30-minute drive from an international ski resort, Mount Washington, and close to Della Falls, the highest waterfall in North America.

In Cranbrook, Cheryl Webber, International Education Coordinator at the College of the Rockies, boasts, "The college is in the centre of a world-famous outdoor recreation environment. The region features spectacular scenery, famous hot springs resorts, beautiful forests and some of Canada's finest skiing [and] snowboarding areas."

All institutions in the province of British Columbia, bordering the Pacific Ocean on the west coast of Canada, have fantastic natural facilities within easy reach. Many schools claim to have friendly local populations, too. In Van-

couver, Sharla Reid at Bodwell Language School, a division of Bodwell College, reports, "Bodwell students usually say that the highlight of their experience is the people they have met. Their host families, teachers, classmates and friends are a source of support for them during their stay."

To enable international students to mix fully with locals, some schools organise activities alongside Canadian students, or volunteer programmes in the local community. Mark Herringer, Manager of International Recruitment Services at Malaspina University-College & International High School in Nanaimo, explains, "On campus, Malaspina's international student activity office develops a monthly schedule of ac-



Grizzly bear and cub
Grizzly bears are shy creatures but areas such as Glendale Cove, Knight Inlet and Khutzeymateen in the northwest coast of British Columbia provide the best opportunities to spot them

Agent viewpoint



"British Columbia is a beautiful province. It has the sea, a lot of green countryside, mountains and developed urban areas. It also offers quality winter sports and mild temperatures (compared to other parts of Canada), which makes it less scary for Brazilians. In Vancouver, in the summer, students like to enjoy the beach and its sports. In the winter, wherever they are in the province, they would definitely try snow sports."

Claudio Tyszler, Canada-Brazil Exchange Programs, Brazil

"British Columbia is a nature lovers paradise, so in their free time, many students go hiking, participate in water sports, go skiing in the winter,



picnicking, etc. Many students naturally pick Vancouver, but we strongly recommend other locations, such as Victoria. Victoria is a cosmopolitan international city, but there are fewer Asians and students tend to integrate more into the local community and learn English quicker."

Brian Hockertz, Oh! Canada Consulting, Taiwan



"My clients choose to study in Victoria, British Columbia, because of its mild climate, unique location surrounded by sea – allowing easy access to Vancouver – friendly, lovely and open-minded people, splendored historical architecture, and admirable atmosphere influenced by the UK. One

disadvantage is that there are less work experience (internship) choices and opportunities for international students."

Yasuko Fujiwara, Global Partners Inc., Japan



"British Columbia has such great weather and a beautiful environment. The educational and living environment is really good for students who want to study post-secondary, secondary and elementary levels as well as parents who want to take care of their children, especially for elementary school students. Students like to [partake in] many activities such as skiing, skating, boating, fishing, swimming etc."

James Kim, Gaga Education Group, Korea

Yoho National Park on the western face of the Rocky Mountains

activities that includes Canadian and international students. The office can also assist students to find volunteer positions in the community, which help a lot in [enabling] students to feel like they belong.”

Nanaimo is situated on Vancouver Island, which is a short ferry ride away from Vancouver itself. “The island is about the same size as Taiwan,” says Herringer. As well as a friendly local population, Nanaimo has an attractive harbour and wonderful views of the mountains on the mainland.

Students can take a ferry from Nanaimo to Newcastle Island, a provincial park that is a popular retreat for campers, hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts. Herringer adds, “In the winter time, there are daily buses taking skiers up on a one-and-a-half hour trip to one of the best ski areas in British Columbia.”



Also situated on Vancouver Island is the capital of British Columbia, Victoria. According to Monika Benker, Manager of Four Corners Language Institute in Victoria, the city has the mildest climate in the country. “It has been nicknamed the Garden City,” she explains, “as we have flowers all year round.”

The range of extra-curricular activities on offer at Four Corners Language Institute includes skiing weekends, camping on the island and whale watching. At Camosun College, also in Victoria, Linda Glanville, Manager of International Marketing at the college, lists a different range of activities. She recounts, “English language classes have field trips to places like the Royal British Columbia Museum, the Rogers



Chinatown, Vancouver
Full of bustling shops, restaurants and markets, Vancouver's Chinatown offers shoppers the chance to buy Chinese delicacies, fabrics and alternative medicines at bargain prices

Chocolate Factory and Goldstream Park to view the salmon spawn.”

The city of Victoria prides itself on its British heritage, and as Glanville relates, there is a historical downtown area and quaint waterfront in the city to explore. She says students also enjoy visiting museums, art galleries and the

Butchart Gardens, while for longer trips, Whistler, Vancouver and Seattle in the USA are within easy reach.

Another interesting destination in British Columbia is Kamloops. “It takes its name from the word *Tk'emlups* in the Shuswap language, meaning “where the waters meet”, explains Christopher Gas at the University College of the Cariboo in the city. “Kamloops is the third-largest city in the interior of British Columbia,” he says, “and with a population of 82,000, it offers visitors all the amenities of a big city.”

Situated to the northeast of Vancouver, Kamloops also boasts great recreational

possibilities. According to Gas, there are more than 200 lakes within an hour's drive of the city, which are a draw for fishing enthusiasts. He says, "If students are looking for a true wilderness experience, they can try an overnight kayaking/canoeing trip in Wells Gray Park or just hike to see the impressive waterfalls."

University College of the Cariboo runs a special activity programme for students keen to make the most of their time in Canada. "This programme runs year round and offers between six-to-eight activities per semester," explains Gas. "Activities include horseback riding, volleyball tournaments, hockey games, curling, soccer, winery tours, dog sledding [and] fossil digging."

Aside from experiencing outdoor activities, all students enjoy the opportunity to visit Vancouver, the cultural capital of the province. Many choose to study in the city itself. Reid at Bodwell Language School says, "Vancouver is

a diverse city with a multitude of cultural groups, which... creates an atmosphere of acceptance and exchange."

And there is plenty to keep students occupied in their free time, as Marc Officer, Director of UTS College in the city, explains. "Typically, students studying in our downtown campus enjoy taking part in the local nightlife," he says. "Vancouver has an array of clubs that young adults can enjoy [including] the local karaoke bars and games rooms." Hsu, at Vancouver Premier College, adds that the city is known for "its trendy cafés, great restaurants, museums and nightclubs".

As well as plenty of opportunity for enjoyment, Vancouver also offers many study options for students wanting to go on to degree or diploma

"Many host family hosts also like the outdoor life so are excited to provide international students with experiences such as hiking, camping, fishing and wildlife viewing. Many students have had the experience of seeing deer, moose, elk, bighorn sheep, mountain goats or even bears."
Cheryl Webber, College of the Rockies, Cranbrook

courses at universities or colleges in the country. Rosa Sorace, at Kester Grant College (KGC) in the city, says, "Students of KGC [can] apply for entrance to university or college programmes or progress to one of our partner institutions. Stu-

dents may choose the British Columbia Institute of Technology bridging programmes, to complete a degree, diploma or certificate, or CDI College, a leading private post-secondary IT and business training institution for a diploma."

At the University College of the Fraser Valley, east of Vancouver, similar options are available. "Students can bridge into academic programmes while in the upper levels of ESL," says Nancy Merritt at the institution, adding, "There is a co-op work option – semesters that alternate work and study – that is available to international students, and when work [on campus] is available, international students are qualified to apply and be paid." □



Inner Harbour, Victoria
Victoria's picturesque inner harbour is full of tourist attractions such as the wax museum and the Parliament buildings. Street performers and horsedrawn carriages complete the picture