

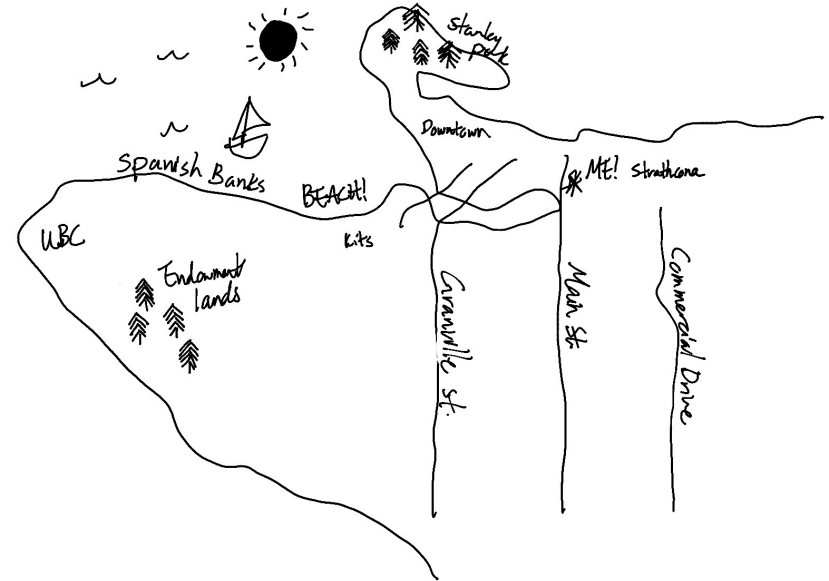
Hannah's Vancouver

2nd Edition, 2025

there's lots to do in vancouver!

this city has a lovely scene of bars, restaurants, cute neighbourhoods, and gorgeous walks that you can do to get some nature right within the city. yes, absolutely go up the sea to sky to find some hikes, but look that up somewhere else.

you might also want to look up a better map.



outside

Pacific Spirit Park: Your prime forest bathing destination. You'll find families walking their dogs and occasional local hockey celebrities in this gorgeous park that separates UBC from the rest of the city. The Sworn Fern Trail is a particular favourite.

Spanish Banks Beach : You can actually walk down here from the northern most section of Pacific Spirit Park. In the summer, this is a lively (but not too crowded) beach and in the drizzly fall/winter this can be a great place for a moody walk. You MUST come when the tide is all the way out -- you'll be able to walk nearly 200m out on to the tidal flats and get an amazing view of downtown.

Trout Lake: An east van park with a pretty but definitely not swimmable lake. Have a picnic, read a book, watch people do acro-yoga, and feed some geese. Swans and willow trees bring the vibe.

Lighthouse Park: A little bit further afield, head over to West Vancouver to this rocky, coastal park where you'll look out across the mouth of English Bay. You'll get a great view looking back at downtown Vancouver and Pacific Spirit Park. An excellent sunset. Be careful dodging rock climbers.





Phnom Penh: My favourite food in the city. Big round table style dining with Vietnamese-Cambodian fare. The butter beef and the chicken wings are both a must. They don't take reservations so expect to wait at a nearby bar (the Irish Heather next door is excellent). They might just turn you away if you don't get on the wait list early enough. \$

Bao Bei: Small plates style, modern, Chinese-inspired bistro. Go for dumplings, pork belly, fresh seafood, and great cocktails. You'll know you've made it when you get the booth at the front window. \$\$\$

Fat Mao Noodles: A perfect lunch stop in Chinatown. The curried chicken and duck noodles are my favourites (those are also the least spicy...). Also recommend the roti appetizer. \$

La Grotta Del Formaggio: Italian deli on Commercial where you'll get one of the best takeaway sandwiches in the city. My favourite is their mortadella and pistachio sandwich. A great spot to stock up for a picnic at Trout Lake. \$

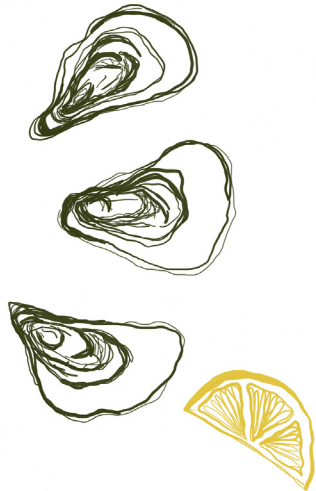
Bodega on Main: Amazing, lively vibes and a great spot for some red wine and tapas. They keep with the Spanish tradition and leave the kitchen open late. Also an easier spot to get a table right away, or to bring a larger group. \$\$

New Town Bakery: Your Chinatown spot for steamed pork buns. Bring cash or debit. \$



food

drinks & snacks



33 Acres: An excellent summer patio in Mount Pleasant. You can choose to go to either their classic venue, or the experimental side next door where they have their funkier beers. Light on the food offerings so don't come too hungry. \$\$

Bar Gobo: A great happy hour spot for a negroni and martini with some bar snacks. \$\$\$

Dear Gus: My favourite of the few small-plates-wine-bar style spots in the city. Also won't take reservations so best to get there early. It's fun to sit at the bar and watch them work in the very very small kitchen. \$\$\$



Benny's Market: A centerpiece of the Strathcona community for nearly 100 years. You'll find no cheaper place to buy flowers. The deli counter tucked away in the back is a great place for a quick sandwich. \$

Annabelle's Cafe: Great spot to arm yourself with a cappuccino and kouign amann before a walk through Chinatown or Gastown. \$\$

Rise Up Marketplace: Unreal Jamaican patties. Amazing vibes with some good local products. \$



Harvest Community Foods: The freshest noodles and soups for lunch. Baked goods and cookies are to die for. Also a great spot to treat yourself to some fresh local produce and pantry delights. \$\$

Union Market: The pastel de nata is a must. \$

Finch's Tea House: The epitome of why I love Strathcona. This wouldn't exist in any other neighbourhood in the city. A great spot to bring a book or get some work done alongside a creamy early grey. \$

cafes & grocers

other favourites

Strathcona Community

Gardens: Come here for the biggest sunflowers you've ever seen in your life (season dependent). Have a true main character moment walking through the apple orchard and wistfully thinking about how you want to connect to the earth.

Pulpfiction Books: Great selection of both new and used books. Super friendly staff who are more than happy to order in anything they don't have in stock.

Basic Inquiry: Volunteer run studio that does a great job of keeping life drawing focused but not intimidating. I find there's nothing better to take my focus off my phone for a morning and get lost in how little my 30 second drawings look like a human body.

Hunter & Hare: Unfortunately, I live right upstairs and so stop in this second-hand women's clothing store every other time I'm coming home. Not great for the wallet, but my wardrobe has never been better. They do a great job of breaking out of the Aritzia/Lululumon Vancouver formula.

Many of my recommendations here are in the Chinatown and Strathcona neighbourhoods. These are some of the oldest parts of the city, with rich histories and strong communities. The Downtown East Side (or DTES) is a community within this area that has been afflicted by incredibly high rates of housing instability, substance use, and toxic drug supply. This community is particularly concentrated near East Hastings/Cordova and Main St. If walking through here, you may encounter open drug use and erratic behaviour. I have never felt unsafe in my experiences with this area, although generally avoid walking through some blocks alone (as a young woman) at night.

I am personally no expert but think it's worth considering the complex set of challenges at play in Vancouver that contribute to suffering in the DTES, including housing unaffordability, stigmatization of addiction, and vast intergenerational pain and trauma. For most of my life growing up in Vancouver, I looked the other way when passing through the DTES. It's a part of the city that no one should ignore. In trying to catch up, here are some of the resources I've recently found helpful:

Overdose: Heartbreak and Hope in Canada's Opioid Crisis, by Benjamin Perrin (Book)

Pain Killer, by Barry Meier (Book)

Crackdown, by Garth Mullin (Podcast)

The core of Vancouver's Black community, informally named Hogan's Alley, also used to exist in Strathcona between Union and Prior streets. Jimi Hendrix's grandmother, Nora Hendricks, lived in Hogan's Alley (whom he would frequently travel from Seattle to visit)! This neighbourhood was sadly demolished in the 1970s to build the Georgia St Viaduct.

I'd recommend doing some reading of your own on the history of this neighbourhood. I've really enjoyed the documentary, *Union Street*, which details this history and the ensuing loss of community to Black people living in Vancouver. The Hogan's Alley Society, a local non-profit, sometimes hosts walking tours of the neighbourhood and is well worth supporting.

notes

