

Topic Page: [Vancouver Island \(B.C.\)](#)

Definition: **Vancouver Island** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Island off the Pacific coast of British Columbia, Canada. Captain Cook visited it in 1778, it became a British Crown Colony in 1849, and part of British Columbia in 1866. The largest island off the W coast of N America, the interior is rugged and forested. The main city, Victoria, is the province's capital. Industries: timber, fishing, copper, coal-mining, tourism. Area: 32,137sq km (12,408sq mi).



Summary Article: **Vancouver Island**

from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Image from: [The early years of Victoria, British Columbia.... in Britain and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History](#)

Island off the west coast of Canada, part of British Columbia, separated from the mainland by the straits of Juan de Fuca, Haro, Georgia, Johnstone, and Queen Charlotte Sound; area 32,136 sq km/12,404 sq mi. Industries include coal, timber, fish, and tourism. Fruit is grown, and there is dairying.

History Vancouver was visited by British explorer Captain Cook in 1778, and surveyed in 1792 by Captain George Vancouver. It was established as a British crown colony in 1849 under the Hudson's Bay Company, being united with British Columbia in 1866.

Geography Vancouver is the largest island off the west coast of North America. It extends north-south for 458 km/286 mi. Fjords containing deep-water harbours indent the western shore. Flat, narrow plains border the south and east coasts. The interior is mountainous and heavily timbered; the Vancouver Island Ranges are an extension of the Coast Ranges of Oregon and Washington. Golden Hinde, in the Strathcona Provincial Park, is the highest peak, reaching 2,200 m/7,219 ft. Numerous small island groups lie in the straits. The climate is mild and moist. The island contains lakes Cowichan, Sprout, Great Central, and Nimpkish. Towns and cities include Victoria (capital of British Columbia), Nanaimo, and Esquimalt (naval base). Features include Strathcona Provincial and Pacific Rim national parks, British Columbia's Forest Museum Park, and Chemainus murals; whale-watching is popular off the coast.

Economy Lumbering and the manufacture of forest products are the most important occupation. Salmon and herring form the chief catch of the fishing industry, and Campbell River is the main salmon fishery. Iron, copper, and some gold and coal are mined. Fruit and vegetables are grown, loganberries being a speciality, and dairy farming is practised. In 1993 Clayoquot Sound was the scene of a confrontation between conservationist and logging interests over the exploitation of virgin forest territory.

Settlement Victoria, the capital of British Columbia, lies on the southern tip of the island, and was the site of the original Hudson Bay Company trading post in 1843. Russian and French traders worked here, too. Native Canadian Salishan and Wakashan peoples continue to inhabit the island, which was occupied for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans.

Education and culture The University of Victoria was founded in 1964. Chemainus, a village 60 km/38 mi northwest of Victoria, contains international award-winning murals depicting the area's history. The U'Mista Cultural Centre at Alert Bay and Kwagiulth Museum on Quadra Island display Native Canadian artefacts, costumes, and totem poles. Victoria is the site of the Royal British Columbia

Museum, with major collections of the region's wildlife, culture, and history.

Whale-watching The Pacific Rim National Park on the west coast of the island is on the main migration route of whales travelling between their winter breeding waters in Baja, Mexico, and summer feeding grounds in the Bering and Chukchi Seas off Siberia. Killer whales are sometimes sighted, but grey whales are the most commonly seen. Near Telegraph Cove, on the northeast coast, pods of killer-whales calve at Robson Bight, an ecological reserve since 1982.

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