

24 Hours in . . . Vancouver

Grizzly bears, fresh salmon and healthy outdoorsy types - it must be Canada. Here's a guide to the ultimate stopover in cosmopolitan Vancouver.



ORIGINALLY from Stoney Lake, north of Toronto, these days Bradley Cocks travels the world as senior vice-president of Kiwi Collection, a resource for discerning high-end travellers. In any given week he will be testing

luxury hotel beds and rating resort pools anywhere from Budapest to Bali for the group's website, www.kiwicollection.com, and publications. He seizes every visit to Kiwi Collection's head office in Vancouver as an opportunity to discover the city's hot spots.

10am

"Yaletown is the place to be for breakfast," Cocks says. "With its old industrial warehouses, it's the Surry Hills of Vancouver."

He recommends starting the day at Glowbal Grill on Mainland Street with Lobster Benedict or Belgian waffles.

"The coffee's good at Glowbal but I prefer to wander up the road to Caffe Artigiano," Cocks says. "They have award-winning baristas there and just fabulous coffee. Odd in a country where percolated brew is considered gourmet."

12pm

Next up, hire a car to see more of the city that blends urban sophistication with outdoor charm. A drive over Lions' Gate Bridge will

bring you to North Vancouver and the famous Grouse Grind trail. Dubbed "Nature's Stairmaster", the peak affords breathtaking views over the city and out to the ocean. "In the winter you can ski down Grouse Mountain and in the summer you hike," Cocks says. "If you're very fit you'll get to the top in 45 minutes; it takes me an hour."

2pm

Grouse Grind also houses a refuge for endangered wildlife, and travellers can see grizzly bears in their natural habitat before taking the trolley car back down a steep slope to the bottom of the mountain.

2.30pm

Robson Street is the main thoroughfare through the heart of Vancouver. "It's become a really high-end shopping street with lots of international brands and local flair," Cocks says.

His secret style tip for male fashionistas is a store called Harry Rosen in the Pacific Centre. "They have an unbelievable range you just can't find in Sydney, and it includes my favourite label, Etro."

4pm

The best way to enjoy Vancouver is from the water. Take the ferry over to Granville Island - "it costs, like, two

dollars" - and discover an amazing mini hub of interesting knick-knacks, a marketplace for fresh produce and hard-to-find original clothing designs.

"A lot of people just go there for cooking inspiration," Cocks says. "Watch the fresh oysters coming off the boats and the amazing displays of seafood."

Take your pick of gourmet takeaway - Cocks recommends the oysters, smoked salmon and some chilled Canadian pinot gris - then savour it out on the sunny piers.

5.30pm

It's time to work off those calories. Take the ferry back to the other side of the river and walk up to Stanley Park. "The size of the trees will just blow you away; it's very Jurassic!" During summer, the park is buzzing with locals on bicycle and in the public pool. It is also a cool place to watch the sunset.

7.30pm

Ready for refreshments? Then head on down to rustic Rodney's Oyster House in Yaletown. A Caesar is the Canadian take on a bloody mary, using clomato juice (clam and tomato). Rodney's takes it one step further and serves up a version with a huge king prawn and chunks of zesty horseradish. "It's unbelievable," says a clearly besotted Cocks.

As a former warehouse, the venue features massive wooden beams and attracts a stylish urban professional crowd. A delicious dinner menu featuring seafood is available.



11.30pm

"Yaletown by then would be buzzing," Cocks says. "Walk three blocks to Bin 941, this great little hole-in-the-wall bar-cafe that not many tourists know about." Bin 941 serves food till 2am and beer all day long. Cocks gives the thumbs up to the local Moosehead beer, though many micro-brewery drops are served.

1am

Fresh air and mountain hikes can be tiring. Rest your head at the Opus Hotel, where REM rented the top suite for three months while they recorded their last album. Rated one of Vancouver's coolest hotels by *Wallpaper* magazine, the Opus offers 96 luxury rooms. "The coolest thing is how the bathrooms at the cocktail bar have monitors," Cocks says, "so you can keep an eye on the lobby and see if your date is flirting with someone else."

KRISTIE KELLAHAN

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