

TRAVEL

Visit Granville Island, you'll have a grand time

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SPECIAL WRITER

Granville Island, located in Vancouver, British Columbia, is a great little place to visit, with the kids or without. The tiny island has just about everything. Well, I didn't see any fast food restaurants — and I didn't miss them at all.

A Moveable Feast

First things first, there's food, and lots of it. The Granville Island Public Market is a feast for your eyes and stomach. Browse through the stalls of produce from bright red tomatoes to luscious mangoes to Japanese eggplant. Smell the wonderful aromas of fresh baked bread or bagels mixed with the sweet scent of chocolate. Gaze upon spicy salami and cheeses strung up in colorful rows.

Make sure to nab a nice bouquet of fresh flowers arranged in a theater of colors from one of the many flower stalls. Sample a tidbit from one of the multinational stalls such as: Babushka's Kitchen, The Milkman, Okanagan Wine Shop, Old World Fudge, Seafood City, South China Seas Trading or Longliner Seafood.

Chefs from some of Vancouver's finest restaurants come to the Public Market to find that special ingredient for their recipes. How about, wild fiddleheads? (I think they are the young growth of a fern — I wouldn't know this except I'm a gardener.)

Who would know that they are edible? Or, how would you like to taste some fresh dorian? (I

If you are going...

Granville Island Hotel

The Hotel started out as a "boater" where weary seafarers could stop for a shower and some food. It is now a very nice place to rest your head on a pillow. It has some nice traditionally decorated rooms facing the water and some less pricey ones with no view. The Creek is a nice spot for lunch and in good weather to watch the boats go by. For reservations call (604)-683-7373.

CMHO Granville Island Office

For information on transportation, maps, restaurants, events and festivals, shops and artists, call (604)-666-8655.

Crude!

Weather permitting and generally in the summer, plan to take one of several choices of short water cruises. Try an Italian Gondola ride with lunch or dinner with Viaggio Gondolas (604) 688-3362.

Chow down

The island offers quite a selection of restaurants. The only thing we couldn't find was a decent breakfast place. Here is a list of some of them: Bridges, Granville Island Coffee House, The Sandbar, The Creek, The Keg, The Sirloliner, The Only Other Fish and Oyster Cafe, Pastel's and the Cat's Meow. We ate at the Cat's Meow and enjoyed it for the upbeat, artsy atmosphere and the good food. The Creek has food "to die for" and a wonderful view of the water. We were going to try The Sirloliner. This was a traditional steak type of place. It was a bit run down when we visited and we weren't impressed, so we skipped it.

Granville Island Brewery

This was BC's first and still a leading maker of craft brews. It is a very popular spot for a taste and it has a retail shop. They also carry a number of local wines, hooch and cider.

"Raindrops keep fallin' on my head"

Vancouver is a wet city, especially in October through April. Bring an umbrella or a waterproof jacket. The temperature is mild most of the year, thanks to the winds off English Bay, but a jacket still comes in handy. We were there in June and we wore jackets most of the time.

admit, I looked this one up.) It is an edible fruit with a nasty smell, but a pleasant taste — or so they say — I didn't try one.

Blue Parrott Coffee

This was a must rest stop in the Public Market for me and my husband — notice my last name. The Blue Parrott Coffee Bar

claims to be the first establishment in Vancouver to make coffee beverages according to old Italian methods. They serve such drinks as Coffee Glace, Coffee Chiacio, and of course there is Iced Americano. Light sandwiches come with the coffees and so does a wonderful view. Get there early or you will have to fight for

a seat. It is always packed full of students, shoppers and tourists.

Just for Kids

The Kids Market is a brightly colored modern building that even has a special door for kids to enter. This building is a wonder to see, even for adults. It has a store for the serious or amateur magician called, Clowning Around. Granville Eyeland "Just for Kids" has custom sunglasses strictly for children. Don't miss Camelet, a store specializing in soft learning toys from all over the world.

Outside of this store is a place called Woofies — Doggylicious Deli. This deli is located in an old trolley car and serves to puppies, both young and old!

A little history

Granville Island didn't used to be so grand. The island started out as a sandbar in False Creek used by the natives of Snaug village to trap beaver, ducks and muskrat and fish for trout and sturgeon. By the 1920s, due to its access to barge traffic, it had evolved into an industrial mecca with some of the largest manufacturing operations in the area. Starting in the 1950s the island began to decline. It no longer made sense to have large manufacturing companies in the middle of the city and freeway access was more important and quicker than shipping by barge.

Starting in the 1970s a plan was formulated to transform this derelict industrial region into a people place. The plan was to have a mix of restaurants, theaters, shops, educational facilities, studios and office space.



Island life: The Vancouver skyline is within eyesight of tourists on Granville Island.

This design was to incorporate its industrial roots by maintaining the brick, metal and stucco buildings and turning them into modern, colorful works of art. The Granville Island that lives today was a struggle for these developers and city officials, yet it contains a nice mix and I think it was worth their effort.

Let's go Shopping

If you like artistic and fun kinds of stores and studios, this is the place. There are jewelry stores and textiles, to glass studios and pottery. Visit the custom printers, metalworkers, glassblowers, ceramists, candle-makers and even a custom shoemaker. Generally, they will let you watch while they create.

Have you ever seen a Luthiery? Geza Burghardt Luthiery designs, restores and repairs fine violins, guitars and other musical instruments using European skills. Want to see a

boat being built right before your very eyes? Stop by the Alder Bay Boat Company. They will probably invite you in and let you ask millions of worthless questions — like I did.

Some of Granville Island street entertainers have been performing on the island for years and have attracted quite a following. Two of the best known are G.I. Blues and Soul Survivors who play to international audiences.

And Granville Island capitalizes on its street entertainers. Where else would you be able to dial up on a hotline to find out who's playing on the street? But here you can, and the number is (604) 683-0878.

The exchange rate (remember this is Canada) along with all of the entertainment, arts and crafts for adult and child alike makes Granville a grand place to visit.

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