“Vancouver is a wonder city,” Canadian author Stephen Leacock once wrote. “It has the combined excellence of nature’s gift and man’s handiwork.” Today this statement rings truer than ever. The glittering glass metropolis—set against temperate rainforest, ocean inlets, and the Coast Mountains of British Columbia—keeps finding new ways to shine.

Over the past five years, the city has taken important steps toward reconciliation with the native Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh people, and a thriving indigenous tourism industry has grown along with it. More restaurants and bars are sourcing local ingredients—from foraged berries to Douglas fir infusions—and a booming brewery and distillery scene rivals that of Portland.

An ethic of sustainability permeates the culture of Vancouver, which brims with community gardens and farmers markets, plus LEED-certified buildings and more than 275 miles of bike paths. You can now pedal from the cedars of Stanley Park to the nudists of Wreck Beach. From there, mountains, islands, and wonder await.

—Serena Renner
When you spot the terracotta-tiled Millennium Gate and the dragon-topped red lampposts, you know you’ve arrived in Vancouver’s vibrant Chinatown. For a primer on the neighborhood, join HISTORICAL CHINATOWN TOURS to venture inside 100-year-old clan houses, where Chinese elders play mah-jongg, and behind the scenes offer a taste of the dining scene that’s redefining Chinatown. Opt for mantou or Japanese-accented Italian fare at BAO BEI or the modern rendition of a restaurant that first opened in 1925. For a nightcap, try the Opium Room Check in the basement of the Exchange Hotel, which debuted the indulgent pours of absinthe.

The Douglas

ROSEWOOD HOTEL GEORGIA
The marble fireplace and glass staircase in the 1907 lobby hark back to the days when Nat King Cole stayed here. In 2011 the hotel debuted the indulgent Sense spa and sleek new rooms with soaking tubs. In the basement speakeasy, Prohibition, find a throwback haunt for live music, creative cocktails, and traditional pursuits of absinthe.

Choose Your Adventure
Nature Lovers
Walk through the rainforest of Stanley Park with Candace Campo, the First Nations owner of Tl’etxw’w Tours, and you’ll start to see cedar bark as clothing, hide assistants as the makings for tea. “The forest is our grocery store, our pharmacy,” Campo says. Take that notion to Deep Cove, for a paddle up Indian Arm before checking out the North Shore Spirit Trail, a new greenway for pedestrians, joggers, bikers, and in-line skaters.

Culture Vultures
The UBC Museum of Anthropology curates innovative programs and in 2017 opened the Gallery of Northwest Coast Masterworks. Led by Vancouver Art Gallery, the contemporary art scene has expanded with the new Polygon Gallery, dedicated to Canadian photography. Visitors of Coast Salish art should stay overnight at Skwachays Lodge, where 18 rooms were designed by indigenous artists like Rich and Shorty, whose work is sold in the lodge gallery. In 2011 the hotel debuted the indulgent pours of absinthe.

Music Mavens
Downtown’s Granville Entertainment District is still one of the best spots to catch a show, thanks to a trifecta of historic venues—Vogue, Orpheum, Commodore Ballroom—that attract top talent. In other areas, discover hidden gems such as the Rogue Folk Club, which stages bluegrass and roots music in a churchlike hall in Kitsilano. Below the cobblestone streets of Gastown, Odd Society Spirits. Go pay-what-you-can jazz, soul, and cabaret.

Craft Connoisseurs
Vancouver Foodie Tours will shepherd you to the tastiest treats at the Granville Island Public Market. Oyama sausages, Bentons Brothers cheeses, Lee’s honey donuts. The neighborhood of East Van, aka “East Van,” hosts breweries and distilleries including Bomber and Off the Rail brewing and Odd Society Spirits. Go behind the tanks with Canadian Craft Tours. Finally, the semimonthly Eastside Hya is a hip gathering of indie makers.
EAT IT
VANCOUVER

Tastes of the Place

Native Roots
A pioneer of First Nations-inspired cuisine, the indigenous-owned Salmon n’ Bannock serves the namesake bannock (a traditional quick bread) with mushrooms, as well as maple-cured salmon and slow-cooked bison. Mr. Bannock, the city’s first indigenous food truck, began offering Squamish-style smoked meats and clay-oven creations last year. Head to Forage for dishes made with wild ingredients, and belly up to Botanist for cocktails like Candy Cap Magic, which arrives in a cloud of wood-scented dry ice.

Standout Sushi
The restaurant that introduced flame-seared aburi and pressed oshi sushi to Canada, Miku makes its own sake to pair with the Aburi Prime platter of nine rice bites topped with everything from jalapeno-spiced platter of nine rice bites topped with everything from jalapeno-spiced sockeye to Japanese Wagyu. Kishimoto offers six types of oshi—rectangular rice pedestals for delicacies such as pickled mackerel and flamed eel. Be sure to arrive early at Raisu for the Oceans Offering: 12 multicolored oshi squares presented in a bamboo box. The izakaya makes only 10 orders each night.

Dumpling Trail
Dumplings reign supreme in Richmond, an epicenter of Asian cuisine. Start at Su Hang Restaurant with intricately pleated xiao long bao (Shanghai soup dumplings) stuffed with pork and broth. The nearby Dinesty Dumpling House serves eight types of soup dumplings, plus pan-fried guo tie and water-boiled shui jiao. In summer, stroll to The Dumpling Master at the Richmond Night Market, whose gyoza range from kimchi beef to vegan spinach. Korean dumplings, or mandu, are a popular side dish at Samsoonie Noodle & Rice.

Tea Time
The Vancouver version of a London fog means a frothy Earl Grey latte laced with vanilla syrup. Just about every café makes one, and the flavor has seeped into Earnest Ice Cream, baked goods, and local beers. Granville Island Tea Company supplies 12 loose-leaf varieties of Earl Grey for custom cups, while Parallel 49th Café & Lucky Doughnuts boils its own vanilla bean syrup. Cartems Donuts has created a London fog variety stuffed with tea-infused whipped cream and iced with Earl Grey glaze. It also sells tasty vegan options.