

A CHOICE DESTINATION

Vancouver's harbourfront offers up a relaxing family adventure for all

TRAVEL

MHAIRRI WOODHALL

Vancouver is one of our family's choice destinations for an extended weekend escape. The scenic city is incredibly walkable, and its excellent transit system eliminates the need for a car. Given Vancouver's popularity with international visitors and its bustling downtown cruise hub harbour, we typically visit in early spring or late fall when accommodation costs are lower. However, this summer presents a rare opportunity to explore world-class experiences, restaurants, and hotels without the international crowds and steep peak season pricing.

Our most recent escape was a relaxing four-night getaway at the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel in downtown's picturesque harbourfront. The hotel is ideal for the location and its year-round heated outdoor pool, which we last swam in on Boxing Day two years ago. We were able to finally tour the property's seasonal rooftop honeybee garden during this visit and learn about the busy creatures that produce upwards of 90 kilograms of honey per year. After the tour, my daughter Brooklyn just had to try ARC Restaurant's Bees Knees Sundae — an over-the-top shareable ice cream creation featuring the Fairmont's rooftop honey. Usually, summer Fairmont rates are outside our budget, but many deals are on offer through the end of 2021, including a 20 per cent off Stay Local for Canadians. We also took advantage of a Pets Stay Free promotion and saved \$35 per night, so our vacation-loving Frenchie Lulu joined us.

A harbourfront base offers immediate access to top area sights and attractions, making it easier to layer in poolside downtime. Activity options are limitless in Vancouver, so we decided to stay close and focus on what we could reach on foot or by transit.

HAWAII FROM ABOVE

Having postponed multiple island vacations over the last year-and-a-half, we booked Fly-Over Canada's limited showing of Hawaii from Above to temper our wanderlust. The immersive flight simulator soars passengers across the Aloha state's most treasured landscapes. Once aboard the sensory adventure, compete with ocean mist and the scent of plumeria floating in a tropical breeze, we coasted over Waikiki beach, big wave surfers, lush rainforests and volcanic lava fields. Tickets are available as a single viewing or a combo package, including FlyOver Canada's signature coast-to-coast flight ride. The on-site Flying Whale Cafe has embraced the Aloha spirit with themed decor and tropical treats. After our post-flight refreshments, we grabbed Lulu and walked the Canadian Trail — at Canada Place — checking out the interactive monuments.

PICNIC IN THE PARK

At 28 kilometres, Vancouver's seawall is the world's longest uninterrupted waterfront path. The stunning oceanview route is dotted with lush parks and sandy beaches, linking some of the city's most exclusive neighbourhoods. We walked Lulu 10 minutes from our hotel to Harbour Green Park, set up on the expansive lawn and watched kids splash through the summer fountain. Rather than doing takeout, we pre-ordered one of Fairmont's ARC in the Park Limitless Picnics. Showcasing some of Vancouver's finest local charcuterie, cheeses and farm-picked produce, the Granville Island Public Market picnic box is a decadent culinary tour for two, which easily feeds three hungry people — and more if you share. It was shockingly good, artfully presented, and a lovely alternative if, like us, you don't make it to Granville Island.

BILL REID GALLERY OF NORTHWEST ART
Created in honour of its namesake, a Victoria-born Haida



A guest room at Vancouver's Fairmont Waterfront Hotel offers stunning harbour and mountain views.

master goldsmith, carver and sculptor, the Bill Reid Gallery is Canada's sole public gallery dedicated to contemporary Indigenous art of the Northwest Coast. While most of Reid's jewelry, prints and sculptures are displayed at Simon Fraser University, the gallery's small collection and related archives are a special tribute to the artist's legacy. The current exhibit, Hands of Knowledge, features six women who draw from traditional stories and connections with their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers, to create contemporary art forms. After our self-guided tour, we visited the gallery shop to purchase "Every Child Matters" T-shirts, designed by Tsimshian artist Morgan Asoyuf, which we'll wear on Orange Shirt Day (Sept. 30).

OAKRIDGE X PAC RIM PATIO

This summer, the Fairmont Pacific Rim launched a spectacular pop-up patio with live music every Wednesday and Sunday. Reflecting the design of Oakridge Park, the garden-inspired grassy space features umbrella-topped tables, fire pits and lounges and an Asian-influenced food truck menu complemented by inventive, hand-shaken cocktails. We ordered family-style to sample as many flavours as possible. The guilt-free Superfood Salad with apple tahini dressing and crispy Thai chicken wings are



Brooklyn samples a sundae at ARC Restaurant. PHOTOS: CURT WOODHALL

phenomenal and Brooklyn-approved. After chatting with one of the hosts, I learned that most servers and bartenders are hourly banquet staff, picking up much-needed hours while the world waits for group events to come back.

Seating is first-come, first-serve, so avoid peak times if you

want to snag a coveted spot on the Oakridge x Pac Rim Patio.

SEABUS TO LONSDALE QUAY

Growing up on the North Shore, I spent a lot of time at Lonsdale Quay, commuting downtown for work on the SeaBus. We made the experience

an inexpensive scenic tour on this family trip. The views across Burrard Inlet are a sweeping display of North Shore mountains, Stanley Park, and the iconic Lions Gate Bridge. Just 12 minutes after boarding, we docked at Lonsdale Quay, hungry to explore its 60-plus fresh food vendors and eclectic selection of shops. The waterfront market hosts festivals and community events throughout the year, and on weekends there's usually live music. After grabbing some frozen yogurt, we hiked the winding 77-step staircase to the observation deck atop Q Tower for unobstructed views of Vancouver's city skyline. Our round trip Lonsdale Quay outing took less than two hours, affording enough time for a quick plunge in the hotel pool before dinner.

FAMILY STYLE MEAL AT NIGHTINGALE

Canada's best Farm to Table Restaurant (2019) is a delicious culinary adventure for families. Owned by the Hawksworth Group, Nightingale partners with the farms it procures produce from to create its extensive ingredient-driven, seasonal menu. Even children with a highly particular palate will find something to please. The menu opens with salads, vegetable dishes — stay with me here — and then traditional Italian wood-fired pizzas. While the selection of toppings is wondrous, we went with the classic Margarita for our daughter's sake. It was divine, as was every morsel of our meal, from the tomato and cucumber salad with whipped ricotta and crispy baked sweet potato drizzled with habanero sauce, chive crème fraîche and bacon, to the halibut ceviche and apricot topped roasted pork belly. Nightingale has become our family's favourite restaurant, and thankfully the prices are in line with most of Western Canada's casual upscale dining chains. Next time we'll dine with another family to explore the menu choices further.

Truthfully, before arriving in Vancouver, we'd planned on exploring farther afield. However, after settling in and walking around the harbourfront and Coal Harbour, we found more than enough to keep us there. Our impromptu strategy was savvy, clocking a staggering number of steps, allowing for more authentic experiences, and returning home feeling refreshed and energized.

For more destination information and family-focused travel ideas, visit arrivalstravel.com

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Coastal & Hawaii

11 NIGHT CALIFORNIA COASTAL

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- » 1 night in a 4★ Vancouver hotel OR \$100 US pp onboard credit
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16 NIGHT HAWAII

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