



# Fresh from Vancouver

Tourism Vancouver's Travel Media Newsletter



Dusk settles on downtown Vancouver's Coal Harbour (Photo: Ian Stotesbury Photography| Flickr).

## FIVE CAN'T-MISS EVENTS AT THE VANCOUVER CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL



There are many reasons to celebrate spring: the days get warmer, nights get longer and the city pops with colour at the peak of cherry blossom season. Each year, more than 40,000 cherry trees spring to life, decorating Vancouver's streets and parks with a canopy of white and pink blossoms. The Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival (April 3 to 28) honours this time of year. From colourful soirees to educational seminars, the vibrant festival offers a variety of events that delight in the rebirth of spring and beauty of the *sakura* (cherry blossoms in Japanese). Our top picks:

**Indulge in traditional Japanese cuisine.** Kick off the festival at Sakura Night, a pink-tie opening gala showcasing the best of Vancouver's Japanese cuisine. Attendees can sample delectable eats from [Tojo's Restaurant](#), [Zen Japanese Restaurant](#), [Fairmont Pacific Rim's Raw Bar](#), [Miku Restaurant](#), [Seventeen89](#) and [Zakkushi](#). The event takes place at Tojo's Restaurant on March 30. To purchase tickets, click [here](#).

**Take in live music under the blossoms.** Soak up live music, dance performances, Haiku readings and more at the [Cherry Jam Downtown Concert](#). The event takes place on April 3, from 12:00pm to 1:30pm, under the cherry blossom canopies of downtown Vancouver's Burrard Station.

**Discover the beauty of cherry blossoms at night.** The [Sakura Illumination Tour](#) invites locals and visitors to experience the beauty of cherry blossom after dark. Taking place on April 4 at [Granville Island's](#) Sutcliffe Park (7:30pm to 9:00pm), the event encourages attendees to revel in the beauty of an illuminated canopy of cherry blossoms brought to life by LED and patterned video lights.

**Experience traditional Japanese culture.** Treat yourself to all things Japanese at this year's [Sakura Days Japan Fair](#) at [VanDusen Botanical Garden](#), April 5 to 6. Chow down on Japanese food, sip traditional tea and sake and take a class or two (like calligraphy or origami). Additional highlights include ikebana lessons, guided walks through the blossoms, taiko drumming, martial arts performances, a children's area and more.

**Picnic, walk or bike the cherry-pink way.** Use the [Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival](#) bloom map to locate your favourite blossom variety and the whereabouts of city streets lined with blooming cherry trees – then decide whether you want to eat, walk or bike under the pink canopy. If you're keen to join a group, pedal along at [Bike the Blossoms](#) – a free blossom bike ride that takes place on April 26.

## FEATURED VANCOUVERITE: LINDA POOLE, FOUNDER OF THE VANCOUVER CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

Linda Poole spent 12 years working abroad alongside her husband in the Canadian Foreign Service – and when she returned to Vancouver, she was instantly reminded of her love for the city's blossoming cherry trees. Linda soon turned her passion into a citywide celebration: she created the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival, taking inspiration from the age-old tradition of *sakura* festivals in Japan. Now in its eighth year, the festival draws international attention and attracts thousands of attendees each year. Here, we ask Linda to tell us about the city's best parks and gardens, and where visitors and locals can find the best cherry blossom sightings.



**How long have you been a Vancouverite and why did you move here?** I've been a Vancouverite for more than 20 years. A dream came true for me when Pacific Western Airlines transferred me for work from Edmonton to Vancouver.

**Favourite way to spend a Saturday?** Cycling around Vancouver's 28-kilometre scenic beltway to Spanish Banks. What's great about the city is you can bike from [Stanley Park](#), across Burrard Street Bridge, past [Kits Beach](#) and safely along to UBC (especially with the new traffic-calmed Point Grey road). I also enjoy stopping by [Epicurean](#) (located in Kitsilano) for a perfect cappuccino alfresco, and then filling my wicker basket to shop for fresh and local produce at [Granville Island](#) (especially for organic Okanagan-grown Honeycrisp apples). I also enjoy grabbing a croissant at [Daniel Le Chocolat Belge](#) (located in South Granville) – it reminds me of being in Paris.

**Favourite parks and gardens in Vancouver?** Stanley Park was a motivating factor in my move here. I love biking the seawall, walking through the park's forested trails and stopping at Beaver Lake Park – it's simply stunning, especially during fall months. I feel particularly lucky that the [Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival](#) offices are located at [VanDusen Botanical Garden](#) – the grounds are an inspiration for me and my everyday work. Another favourite is [Queen Elizabeth Park](#), especially during springtime, with its magnificent display of cherry trees. You'll also find me at [Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden](#). The mosaic floor patterns are mesmerizing, and I like visiting the garden in late spring when the Royal Empress Tree is in bloom – it's such a rare sight.

**Top picks for local attractions and activities?** The University of British Columbia's [Museum of Anthropology](#) is fantastic. Designed by late architect Arthur Erickson, the building itself is worth a visit. Also, many people don't realize that behind the museum you'll find stunning views of the ocean. I also enjoy attending local performances at the [Arts Club Theatre](#) and [The Cultch](#). We have such a great theatre scene in Vancouver, and I always like seeing what's new. I'm also a huge fan of alfresco theatre, and look forward to summer months when I can attend [Bard on the Beach](#) and [Theatre Under the Stars](#).

**Best locations for viewing the city's cherry blossoms?** For a canopy of cherry blossoms, visit the Burrard SkyTrain Station – there are few cherry blossom canopies in the city as beautiful as this. I also love the "Grand Pappa" cherry blossom tree at [Queen Elizabeth Park](#), which is one of Vancouver's largest cherry trees. If you're up for a drive, I suggest cruising along Graveley and Lillooet streets (in Vancouver's Hastings Sunrise neighbourhood). You'll find yourself driving under a tunnel of old, blooming blossoms – it will blow you away. It's even better in a convertible.

**Top insider tip for visitors?** Have a pop-up picnic under the cherry blossoms – it's free and so beautiful. The [VCBF Google Viewing Map](#) is also a great guide for finding the best cherry blossom sites and locales for your picnic.