



# The gay outdoors

Vancouver expert SEAN HORLOR tells us where to get physical during the Outgames...

As the host city for the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, Vancouver catapulted on to the global scene as an adventure-seekers' paradise, packed with elite athletes and locals who know how to invite the world to a good party.

The summers here are hot and dry, with very little of the trademark Vancouver rain. That's why it is called the Canadian Riviera.

The downtown core is ringed with beaches and a continuous seawall that stretches for more than 13 miles, including paths for pedestrians, cyclists and inline skaters, as well as stops at some famous Vancouver landmarks: Coal Harbour, Stanley Park and Kitsilano Beach.

Both renting a bike and walking are highly recommended. Not only are these great ways to see the city, you can check out shirtless athletes doing their daily cardio. And this year,

you'll have close to a 100% chance of meeting a gay one.

More than 3,000 GLBT athletes will be coming to Vancouver for the North America Outgames, which run from 25-31 July and coincide with Vancouver Pride Week and the Vancouver Festival Of Lights.

Although Vancouver lacks the history of Montreal or the size of Toronto, you won't want to spend a minute indoors the moment you get off the plane.

The charm of the gay Vancouverite is their ability to enjoy their jaw-dropping natural environment. Whether they're hiking the mountains on Vancouver's North Shore, barbecuing on Third Beach or partying the day away on a tour boat, your stereotypical bearded Canadian outdoorsman will almost always be shirtless and tanned.

Vancouver's gastro scene is the best in Canada. Hands down. Seafood is

very much a part of the city's culture and Pacific Northwest cuisine is built around dishes involving mussels, scallops, salmon, Dungeness crab and prawns.

The heavy influence of South and East Asian foods and an emphasis on organic and locally grown produce create a special fusion of flavour. Traditional Japanese izakaya and robata restaurants are very popular here, and to eat something unique to Vancouver, make sure you stop at a Japadog (Japanese hot dog) stand.

One last thing you should know about Canadians: we have a long tradition of fighting for diversity, so no surprise that our GLBT celebrations are a huge deal – to both gays and straights. The Vancouver Pride parade's seaside route draws more than 650,000 spectators. So what are you waiting for?

*Sean Horlor is the host of OUTro's Don't Quit Your Gay Job. [insidevancouver.ca](http://insidevancouver.ca)*

## RELAX

If you like laying around, there's no better place to do it in Vancouver than naked at Wreck Beach. Located at the bottom of the cliffs surrounding the University of British Columbia, you'll see everything there: hippies, hipsters, yuppies, students and homos. Swimsuit optional. The gay area is right next to the breakwater.

## FOOD

Where's the best place to eat in Canada's culinary capital? At L'Abattoir, in Vancouver's historic Gastown, you'll experience signature West Coast Pacific staples prepared with a modern twist. Everything is home-made, including the very attractive waiting staff. Reservations are strongly recommended. If you have to wait, cocktails around the corner at The Diamond are a must.

## GOING OUT

Vancouver's gay village is located on Davie Street, but the heart of its gay nightlife is found at 560 on Seymour Street. This sprawling three-floor megaclub features the best local and international DJs – and the hottest crowd. Dubbed 'Five Sexual', contact the hostess, the incomparable Miss Cotton, for guest-list glamour and make sure to thank her personally when you're inside.

## SLEEP

The North America Outgames athletes will be staying at the Sheraton Wall Centre. Located at the end of Davie Street, in the heart of Yaletown, OPUS Hotel is the boutique hotel for discerning GLBT travellers visiting the city. It's smack in the middle of one of Vancouver's premier entertainment districts and a cheap cab ride to the gay village.



## NORTH AMERICA OUTGAMES

The 2011 North America Outgames will be hosted this year by Vancouver from 25-31 July. Supported by the Gay and Lesbian International Sports Association, the games feature international athletes competing in 18 different sports, including football, hockey, mountain biking, tennis and volleyball. A key component of these games will be a three-day human rights conference focusing on GLBT issues. For more information, visit [vancouver2011outgames.com](http://vancouver2011outgames.com).



Clockwise from main picture: the city at night, gay Davie Street, the gondola on Grouse Mountain and top restaurant L'Abattoir

## DO NOT MISS

Grouse, Cypress and Seymour are the three mountains closest to the city. They are approximately 15 minutes away by car, and shuttle buses depart regularly from downtown. Grouse Mountain has a spectacular gondola that takes travellers from the base to the peak in roughly 10 minutes. On a clear sunny day, this is one of the best views in western Canada. You will not regret taking the time to see it.



MAIN PHOTO: THEODOR SYNNESTVEDT (THEODORPHOTO.COM)