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A Guide to the Meeting & Event Planning Industry in British Columbia

Vancouver Island & Gulf Islands

Getting down to business



Within minutes of downtown Vancouver or the Vancouver International Airport by seaplane, or anywhere from a half-hour cruise to a day's journey by car and ferry, Vancouver Island and B.C.'s southern west coast islands offer ample meeting and convention venues.

The Victoria Conference Centre is the largest meeting facility on Vancouver Island. With 40,000 square feet of meeting space, it can accommodate 1,500 delegates. Victoria features more than 3,500 downtown hotel rooms and most properties offer additional meeting space.

In Nanaimo, the on-again-off-again conference centre has finally been confirmed, and local dignitaries attended an official ground-breaking on July 5, 2005. Dubbed the New Nanaimo Centre, the project will offer 38,000 square feet of flexible function space, and will accommodate meetings, conferences and events for up to 1,300 people. Located on the downtown block bordered by Commercial Street, Terminal Avenue and Gordon Street, it will also offer access to the adjacent



The Empress Hotel overlooks Victoria's picturesque inner harbour (top); Bear Mountain Resort (middle), just outside of Victoria, opened in December 2004 with 65 guest rooms, and phase two, expected to open in summer 2006, will include a 4,600-square-foot conference facility; the Nanaimo conference centre (below) is scheduled for a fall 2007 opening



island style

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION

total properties: 626 (18,570 rooms)
fishing lodges: 56 (816 rooms)
hotels: 168 (9,806 rooms)
motels: 144 (3,683 rooms)
vacation rentals: 132 (2,038 rooms)
other: 126 (2,227 rooms)

SOURCE: BC STATS



800-seat Port Theatre. The centre is scheduled to open in fall 2007. At an estimated cost of \$100 million, the project will also include the 140-room Marriott Courtyard Hotel with residential units on top and storefront retail and commercial space.

The big news in meeting and conference space around Victoria in the past year was the opening of Bear Mountain Resort, just outside the city proper. The resort opened in December 2004 with 65 guest rooms, and can accommodate

meetings from 10 to 24 people, and banquets serving 60 indoors, or 120 at its outdoor terrace. Phase two is expected to open in summer 2006, with an additional 95 guest rooms and a 4,600-square-foot conference facility.

The west coast of Vancouver Island is home to several luxury resorts with meeting and banquet facilities suitable for groups ranging from 20 to 200. Northern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands offer numerous retreats for smaller groups.

The Olympic View golf club in Victoria (above) can accommodate small conferences; Crown Isle Resort in Vancouver Island's Comox Valley has 82 overnight guest rooms, and with eight meeting rooms it can host meetings of up to 220 people



Vancouver Island & Gulf Islands

Elsewhere on Vancouver Island, numerous lodges and resort destinations cater to outdoor sports enthusiasts while also providing state-of-the-art meeting facilities.

In the waters between Vancouver and Vancouver Island, five main islands form the southern Gulf Islands group, all with easy access by ferry from Vancouver Island or the mainland.

In the northern Gulf Islands, Sonora Resort on Sonora Island opened three new guest lodges in the past year, adding 46 overnight rooms, for a total of 80 rooms. The resort is completely wireless, equipped with state-of-the-art audio and visual equipment, and Internet access in its three meeting facilities including the 4,000-square-foot Salish Longhouse. ■



Vancouver Island is dotted with idyllic getaways, such as Painter's Lodge in Campbell River



Oak Bay Beach Hotel and Marine Resort in Victoria (left) can host meetings of up to 130 people ; Tigh-Na-Mara Resort Spa and Conference Centre in Parksville (below) offers a picturesque setting for meetings of up to 200

