



British Columbia Community Profile...

Gabriola Island

Overview

Gabriola Island is located in the Strait of Georgia, 20 minutes by ferry to the southeast of the city of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. Known as “The Isle of the Arts”, it is blessed with a temperate climate, quiet beaches, forested parks, and an abundance of wildlife. Gabriola is one of the most populous of the Gulf Islands and its residents enjoy a relaxed lifestyle and strong sense of community. Recreation and relaxation opportunities are plentiful here.

Accessibility

Gabriola is accessible by floatplane service from Vancouver, as well as via BC Ferries <http://www.bcferrries.bc.ca/schedules/southern/nhgi-current.html> car and passenger service from downtown Nanaimo on Vancouver Island, a twenty-minute ride. Nanaimo itself can be accessed by road, by ferry service from British Columbia’s mainland, as well as by regional air carriers through the Nanaimo Airport. The distance from Nanaimo to the capital city of Victoria is 108 km.

History

The first visitors to Gabriola Island were the Coast Salish First Nations who hunted and fished during the summer months. Spanish explorers sailed in the area during the late 18th century as evidenced by place names such as Descanso Bay and Malaspina Inlet. Scottish, British and Irish settlers arrived in the 1850s to work briefly in the coalmines at Nanaimo before turning their hand to farming. In 1887, a sandstone quarry near Descanso Bay produced building blocks for Victoria and later, enormous grindstones for crushing logs in the pulp mill. A brick works opened around the same time, employing many Chinese workers, until it closed in 1945.



YUKON

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

ALASKA, USA

ALBERTA

WASHINGTON, USA





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Economy

Tourism plays a role in the island's economy and a number of Gabriola's residents commute to Nanaimo on a daily basis for work. In addition, the island is known for its many artisans, with thriving cottage industries in pottery and other arts and crafts.

Population Profile

Gabriola Island has a population of approximately 4,000 people. Seasonal residents and visitors increase the population to approximately 6,500 during the summer months.

Climate

Gabriola, like other Gulf Islands, is said to have a "Mediterranean" climate. This means moderate temperatures, dry summers, and wet winters. Summer temperatures are usually around 20-25°C. Winter temperatures seldom fall below freezing. The average annual rainfall is 884 mm.

Housing

The average cost of a single-family home on Gabriola Island is \$280,000 - \$320,000. Rental homes are available at a cost of approximately \$600 - \$850 per month.

Education/Daycare

There is one elementary school on Gabriola providing classes from Kindergarten to grade 7, as well as some daycare services for small children. Older students attend high school in Nanaimo.



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Recreation

Gabriola Island is home to three provincial parks, a regional district park, a nine-hole golf course, as well as numerous neighbourhood parks and public beach accesses. With its protected bays and open waters, it is an ideal location for boating, sailing, fishing, scuba diving, sea kayaking and canoeing. Cycling is also enjoyed on the island's circle routes.

Annual island events include the Salmon Barbecue, the Concert on the Green and the Pan-Am Gulf Tournament, all in August; the Outhouse Race and Gabriola Islander Day in September; and the Thanksgiving Weekend Gallery Tour.

Culture

Gabriola is home to a large number of artists and artisans inspired by its natural setting. The Gabriola Arts Council, a multi-disciplinary umbrella organization, supports the island's artists, produces events and sponsors community education in the arts. Both private studios and commercial galleries can be found on the island.

Petroglyphs (native Indian rock art) are found all over the northwest coast and are one of the least understood cultural legacies of northwest coast native peoples. Gabriola Island houses several major petroglyph sites

Services & Amenities

Gabriola Island offers residents all the basic amenities while being only a 20-minute ferry ride from a major urban centre. Retail shopping and business services are concentrated in three main commercial areas and include grocery stores, a credit union, a bank, an automated teller machine, clothing stores, a pharmacy, a hardware store, numerous restaurants, a library, and a weekly farmer's market from May through September. High speed Internet service is available here.

Anglican, Roman Catholic, United and several other churches are located on Gabriola Island.



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Health Authority

Gabriola Island is located within the Central Island Health Region of the Vancouver Island Health Authority. Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) provides healthcare services that include acute care facilities, mental health & addictions, environmental and public health, home, and community care. For comprehensive information on Vancouver Island Health Authority, visit their website (see Internet References below).

Internet References

British Columbia.com

<http://www.britishcolumbia.com/regions>

Gabriola Island Community Website

<http://www.gabriolaisland.org/GICC/home.htm>

The Gulf Islands Guide

<http://www.gulfislandsguide.com>

Vancouver Island Health

<http://www.viha.ca>

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