

Plan now for your summer in Vancouver

Travel Spotlight

MIKE COHEN



VANCOUVER — I received a flurry of emails following last month's column about Vancouver (www.tourismvancouver.com), with inquiries about fun summer activities to take note of. "We have already planned our trip for next July," wrote Samantha. "Can you help us with summer destinations?"

Samantha is not off the mark. We actually organized our trip in January, beginning with the booking of airfare and a hotel, the Rosedale on Robson (www.rosedaleonrobson.com). And yes, July is the best time of the year to visit Vancouver. We saw virtually no rain during our stay, spending most days at the beach or the pool. It does not get overly hot here either. The temperature did not surpass 24 degrees celsius.

I always like to check out amusement parks. Located on the site of Vancouver's Pacific National Exhibition (www.pne.ca) on East Hastings Street, the 15 acre Playland Amusement Park is a popular attraction. Open from late April through the end of September it has hosted millions of thrillseekers of all ages since it opened in 1910. Playland's marquee attraction, the beloved 1958 Wooden Roller Coaster remains the most popular ride on the site and one of the most highly regarded wooden coasters in the world. Now I must confess that I normally avoid rollercoasters. Nonetheless, I convinced my family to wait in line for a half hour. That first drop was

Stanley Park, Broadway musicals, theme parks and beaches

incredibly frightening, but a major rush at the same time. I am glad I did it. Ditto for the flume, in which we all got soaked to the skin.

Other popular rides include the wild mouse, hell's gate, wave swinger, crazy beach party, the corkscrew, rock climbing, the hellelevator, the pirate ship and music express. The "Kids Place" has a variety of tamer rides, including the merry-go-round, KC's Raceway, dune buggies, the super slide, Pirate adventure, elephants, helicopters and honeybee express.

If watersliding is your thing then make the trip to Cultus Lake Waterpark (www.cultus.com). This is a family oriented park, providing guests with rides for all ages. For thrill seekers there are some extreme waterslides. Open Victoria Day to Labour Day, I spent the day there with my family. It was one hour and 20 minute drive from downtown Vancouver to Chilliwack, but well worth the trip. Last summer's expansion saw the debut of Colossal Canyon, a family raft ride that is like no other. Our family went on this twice. It is quite a thriller. The same goes for the Valley of Fear, which includes one incredible drop that has you experiencing panic and a thrill at the same time. The 72 foot free fall and speed slide has you moving at a rapid pace. There are three other slides which are much tamer. For little ones, a much more sedate area exists. I found the adventure river, in which you travel in a circle on a small tube very relaxing. The two large hot tubs indeed warm you up.



Cultus Lake Water Park is fun for all ages

If you are planning a summer visit to Vancouver, then you must include Theatre Under the Stars (www.tuts.ca) at the Malkin Bowl. The program's best of Broadway musicals have been delighting audiences in Stanley Park since 1940. Every July and August they present two wonderful productions on alternating nights. Last summer Jesus Christ Superstar and Annie Get Your Gun were on the stage. My family and I saw the former, purchasing our tickets online at www.ticketsonight.ca. This was a convenient choice since we were able to print them off the computer and avoid any lineups the night of the show. We got there a bit early and grabbed a light bite to eat in their small concession stand.

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