



Supporting Article

Community Spotlight: Courtenay – Wild Sophistication

Located in the central region of Vancouver Island, Courtenay is one of the fastest growing urban communities in BC, and it is easy to see why! Though it is not known as a cosmopolitan city, it is attracting leading-edge industries which make it economically unconventional yet wildly sophisticated.

The beauty of Courtenay flows from the Puntledge and Courtenay Rivers, which run through the heart of the city and nourish an abundance of vegetation and a diversity of wildlife. This unique ecosystem is the largest wintering place for Trumpeter Swans in the world. Some 2000 swans descend upon Courtenay in February creating a dream-like quality to its winter landscape.

Wintertime is also a great time to be in Courtenay as Mount Washington, only 20 kms from Courtenay, has one of the longest ski seasons and some of the deepest snow in the world! Some 400,000 people visit Mount Washington each year; it is the second busiest winter recreation destination in BC, behind Whistler/Blackcomb. Recreation is indeed a big draw for those relocating to Courtenay with skiing, salmon and fresh water fishing, mountain biking, hiking, swimming, and golf all within short distances of downtown Courtenay. Visitors to the region inject approximately \$85 million annually into the local economy.

Delightful is a good word to describe a first visit to downtown Courtenay. It has an eclectic array of funky shops, galleries, fashion boutiques, antique stores, theatres, eateries, outdoor entertainment venues and cafes; it inspired Vitality Magazine to name Courtenay as “the most charming small town on Vancouver Island.” But don’t let the latte drinkers fool you, the City of Courtenay and the Comox Valley region is a bustling business centre; in fact, the Comox Valley region is one of only four areas within BC deemed to be an official site for the BC Hub initiative.

BC Hub is an organization helping to integrate science, technology and knowledge into the manufacturing economy by creating a forum for communication, collaboration and partnership. The fact that the Comox Valley was selected to be a BC Hub site is a testament to the quantity and quality of highly skilled talent being attracted to the region, and to the more than 1200 high technology firms that are located throughout Vancouver Island.

The Courtenay area has a temperate climate with an annual low temperature above zero degrees Celsius, an average high of 22 Celsius, about 1100 millimetres of rainfall, and one of the longest frost-free periods in Canada. The weather allows for maximum flexibility with respect to outdoor recreation and creates ideal growing conditions for a wide range of crops. About 180 different crops

are currently grown in the [Comox Valley source](#). With lower land costs compared to other regions, it is not surprising that the number of farms has increased by 6% and the land area farmed by 32%.

The New Comox Valley Economic Development Strategy for the Comox Valley has identified food and beverage processing as the community's number one economic growth priority. A number of services, such as business planning, are made available through the Canadian Farm Business Advisory Services.

On a higher level, the new Comox Valley International Airport has daily direct flights to Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton, enabling producers to supply markets outside the region – especially for specialty products and ones that have short shelf lives. In addition, hourly ferry sailings to the mainland from nearby Nanaimo allow for a variety of lower cost transportation options.

Courtenay has it all - physical beauty, a temperate climate, diverse recreational offerings, a supportive business culture, an educated workforce, and an expanding number of transportation routes for travel and goods. Perhaps it is time for you to check out the wildly sophisticated City of Courtenay!