

THE LOCALS' COUNTDOWN • 25 TO 1

25 Best
**Hidden
Gems**

Vancouver to Whistler, fall 2026



WELCOME

The quiet side of fall.

Fall is when the coast shows off. Creeks run high, the maples go gold against the cedars, salmon push upstream and eagles gather on the Squamish. The crowds thin out, and the places locals keep to themselves get room to breathe again.

This is the countdown, 25 to 1: trails, falls, lookouts, groves and a few warm stops for after, from Vancouver up the Sea to Sky to Pemberton. Details come from official sources, checked October 20, 2026. Days are short now. Start early, pack a headlamp and a layer.

From the Burrard Bulletin desk

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25

MUSEUM · RICHMOND

Britannia Shipyards

In Steveston, a National Historic Site the City of Richmond describes as a rare collection of historic buildings that reflect the diverse community. Admission is free. It is a calmer side of Steveston than the main wharf, and the river views on a grey day are part of it. Off season hours are shorter, so call ahead before you make a special trip.

Why fall: The Steveston waterfront is quiet in fall, and the shipyard's boardwalks and old buildings along the river suit a grey day.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Free admission; open Friday to Sunday, 10am to 4pm, through December 31, closed statutory holidays; 604-238-8050.

[Details at stevestonheritage.ca](https://www.stevestonheritage.ca) →

24

BEACH · WEST VANCOUVER

Whytecliff Park

Near Horseshoe Bay, a small rocky park with an island you can reach on foot at low tide. About 2 km of walking and 75 m of climbing. It is a good place to watch weather come down Howe Sound. Check the tide and come back before it turns.

Why fall: Off season the cove is empty of summer crowds. Check a tide table for a daytime low before you plan the island.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

2 km return, about 1.5 hours; island reachable only at low tide.

[Details at vancouvertrails.com](https://www.vancouvertrails.com) →





23

MARKET · VANCOUVER

Riley Park Winter Farmers Market

The summer markets close, this one picks up. Vancouver Farmers Markets runs the Riley Park Winter Market on Saturdays from November 7, 10am to 2pm, at 30th and Ontario by Nat Bailey Stadium. The market lists more than 85 farms and producers plus food trucks, with whatever the farms still have this late in the year. Stadium construction may limit parking, so transit or a walk from Main Street is easier.

Why fall: The winter market opens November 7 and runs Saturdays through the dark months.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Saturdays 10am to 2pm from Nov 7; no market Dec 26 and Jan 2.

[Details at eatlocal.org](https://eatlocal.org) →

22

GARDEN · VANCOUVER

Nitobe Memorial Garden

A Japanese garden at UBC where the maples are the reason to go in autumn. In fall the colour is the whole show, and the paths are quiet. Fall hours run 10am to 4:30pm, Tuesday to Sunday, until October 31, then winter hours are shorter, 10am to 2pm. Tickets are sold online or at the gate. Go on a weekday morning and keep your voice down.

Why fall: The Japanese maples are the reason to go, and the garden is at its quietest once term papers take over campus.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Closed Mondays; from Nov 1, 10am to 2pm, Tuesday to Sunday; adults \$5 in winter.

[Details at botanicalgarden.ubc.ca](https://botanicalgarden.ubc.ca) →





21

CAFÉ · DEEP COVE

Honey Doughnuts & Goodies

On Gallant Avenue in Deep Cove, the doughnut stop most people know the village for. Doughnuts, cinnamon buns and scones, plus breakfast plates, soups and sandwiches. Open 6am to 5pm every day, so you can get one before the line forms, then walk it down to the water.

Why fall: Deep Cove is calm once the paddling season ends, and a doughnut by the water is the fall reward after Quarry Rock or a cove walk.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Open daily 6am to 5pm; closed Christmas and Boxing Day.

[Details at honeydoughnuts.com](https://honeydoughnuts.com) →

20

MUSEUM · WHISTLER

Whistler Museum

Behind the library at 4333 Main Street, a small museum on how Whistler went from summer fishing lodges to Whistler Blackcomb and the 2010 Games. Entry is by donation, with \$5 suggested. It is a better rainy day stop than another coffee, and it explains a lot about the place. Closed Wednesdays; open late until 9pm on Thursdays.

Why fall: Shoulder season is the quiet stretch before the lifts open, and the museum is a dry, cheap hour in the village.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Closed Wednesdays; open 11am to 5pm, to 9pm Thursdays; by donation.

[Details at whistlermuseum.org](https://whistlermuseum.org) →





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LAKE · PEMBERTON

One Mile Lake

Near Pemberton, a 1.6 km loop around a small lake, with raised boardwalks along one side. About 45 minutes, no climbing. It is an easy leg stretch after Nairn Falls and before the long drive home, and quieter than anything in Whistler. Vancouver Trails lists its season as March to November, so go before snow.

Why fall: A short boardwalk loop at the edge of Pemberton, good on a fall day with the valley's cottonwoods turning and Mount Currie behind.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

1.6 km loop, about 45 minutes; listed season March to November.

[Details at vancouvertrails.com](https://vancouvertrails.com) →

18

MUSEUM · BURNABY

Festive Village, Burnaby Village Museum

A heritage village museum in Deer Lake Park, with period buildings and a carousel. From November 25 it turns into the Festive Village, open Wednesday to Sunday, 2pm to 9pm, then daily from December 16, closed December 24 and 25. Admission is free; carousel rides are \$2.86 plus tax each. Go after dark, when the lights are on.

Why fall: The 1920s village reopens in late November with lights, and admission is free.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Nov 25 to Dec 13 Wed to Sun 2pm to 9pm, daily from Dec 16; closed Dec 24 and 25.

[Details at burnabyvillagemuseum.ca](https://burnabyvillagemuseum.ca) →





17

BEACH · HOWE SOUND

Porteau Cove

A small provincial park on the water south of Britannia Beach, on what BC Parks calls the most southerly fjord in North America. A rock and pebble beach, artificial reefs and two sunken vessels offshore for divers, and views over Howe Sound. In fall it is mostly locals with a thermos. Day use closes at 11pm, and the wind can change quickly.

Why fall: Once the summer campers leave, the pebble beach and pier are quiet, and Howe Sound weather moves through fast.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Day use area closes at 11pm; no beach fires.

[Details at bcparks.ca](https://www.bcparks.ca) →

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FOREST · WEST VANCOUVER

Lighthouse Park

Not exactly secret, but most visitors walk straight to the lighthouse and back. Spend longer in the old growth cedar and Douglas fir on the side trails, up to 6 km in all, with almost no climbing. On a stormy afternoon the rocks below Point Atkinson are a good place to watch weather roll in off the Strait.

Why fall: Storm season brings big swell onto the rocks below the lighthouse, and the old growth forest is at its moodiest in rain.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Up to 6 km of trails, about 2 hours, minimal gain.

[Details at vancouvertrails.com](https://www.vancouvertrails.com) →





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CAFÉ • SQUAMISH

Fergie's Café

A brunch spot up the Squamish Valley Road in Brackendale, known for food made with care and no reservations. It is the obvious place to thaw out after a cold hour on the eagle dyke. Open 9am to 3pm, seven days, first come first served, so a late weekend morning means a wait. Closed only December 25 and 26.

Why fall: It sits up the Squamish Valley Road in Brackendale, a short drive from the eagle dyke, which makes it the natural warm up after eagle season.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

9am to 3pm daily; no reservations; closed Dec 25 and 26.

[Details at fergiescafe.ca](https://fergiescafe.ca) →

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FOREST • VANCOUVER

Camosun Bog, Pacific Spirit

Pacific Spirit has more than 55 km of trails, but the odd corner is Camosun Bog, where boardwalk trails cross a patch of bog right at the edge of the city. It feels nothing like the forest around it, and it rewards a slow lap. Pair it with the big trees on Sword Fern Trail. Some trails in the park are closed for work this fall, so check the notices first.

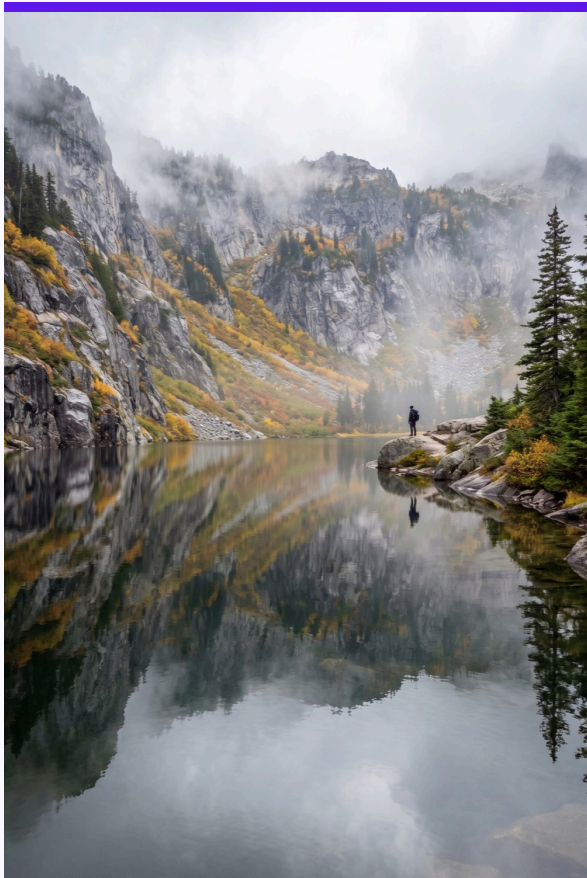
Why fall: Rain brings the bog mosses and the ferns along Sword Fern Trail back to full colour, and the forest feels wilder in wet weather.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Part of Salish Trail closed from Oct 19 for about three weeks; Admiralty Trail closed between Salish and West Canyon trails from Oct 26 for about four weeks. Park open 7am to 6pm from Nov 3.

[Details at metrovanancouver.org](https://metrovanancouver.org) →





13

LAKE · SQUAMISH

Browning Lake, Murrin Park

Right beside the Sea to Sky, 9 km south of Squamish, Browning Lake sits under climbing cliffs with an easy walking trail around it. Most people treat it as a pullout. Give it 20 minutes: the loop is short, the water is still and the cliffs above catch whatever light gets through. There is no overnight parking, and BC Parks tows illegally parked cars.

Why fall: The summer climbing and swimming crowd thins out and the easy lake loop is quiet.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Overnight parking prohibited; access may be restricted by snow.

[Details at bcparks.ca](https://www.bcparks.ca) →

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LAKE · NORTH VANCOUVER

Rice Lake

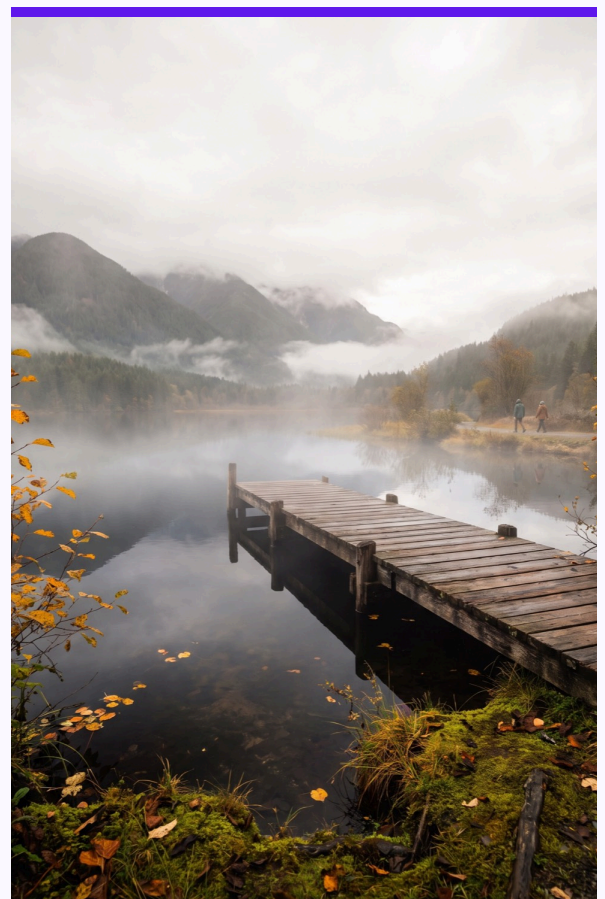
In the Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve at the top of Lillooet Road, a quick, flat loop around a small, stocked lake. Metro Vancouver calls it a 2 km stroll. It is easy enough for grandparents and pleasant in steady drizzle. No dogs, no swimming, no boats. Watch the closing time; vehicles have to be out of the lower gate before it.

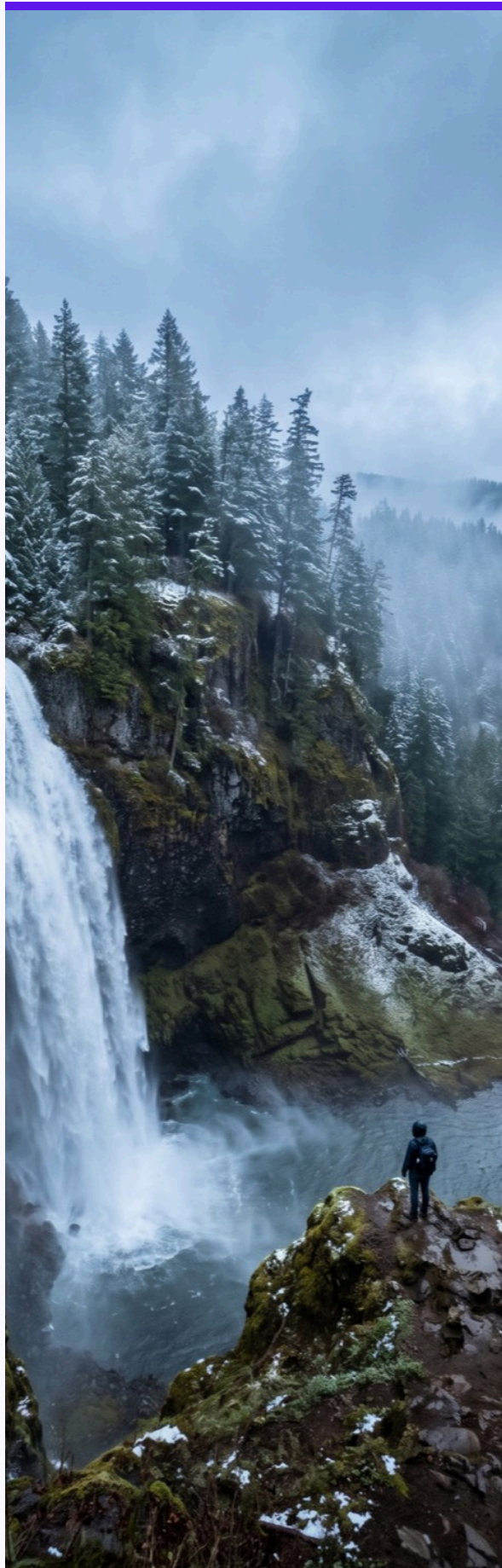
Why fall: The loop is flat, short and forested, which makes it a good wet day walk.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

About 2 km loop; no dogs; gates open 6am and close 6pm in October (some dates 7pm) and 5pm in November and December, and vehicles must be out of the lower gate by then.

[Details at metrovancouver.org](https://www.metrovancouver.org) →





WATERFALL · WHISTLER

Alexander Falls

Roughly 10 km up the Callaghan Valley Road, south of Whistler, a large gravel pull out has a viewing platform in the corner looking across at the falls. No hike, no crowds, and a good excuse to drive a quiet valley. Combine it with Brandywine or skip Brandywine entirely. Expect cold up there; the valley holds snow earlier than the highway.

Why fall: Tourism Squamish says the area's waterfalls are usually at their best in spring and fall.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Viewing platform beside the parking lot, about 10 km up Callaghan Valley Road; once snow falls the lot may not be cleared, so expect a short walk in.

[Details at exploresquamish.com](https://exploresquamish.com) →

10

WILDLIFE · BURNABY

Piper Spit, Burnaby Lake

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

No dogs and no feeding at Piper Spit; Nature House closed for the season.

Details at metrovanancouver.org →

A spit on the edge of Burnaby Lake, minutes from the freeway, where herons work the shoreline and ducks bob in the reeds.

Feeding is no longer allowed and dogs are banned on the spit. From the Piper Avenue entrance the Cottonwood Trail is 5.2 km return if you want a proper walk. Metro Vancouver lists bird counts here on November 3 and December 8; earlier counts needed registration, so check the park page first.

Why fall: Herons work the shoreline and ducks bob in the reeds off the spit, and Metro Vancouver holds bird counts here in November and December.

9

LAKE · WEST VANCOUVER

Whyte Lake

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

5 km return, about 2 hours, 160 m gain; the Westport Road trailhead lot is pay parking by app, and it fills quickly.

[Details at vancouvertrails.com](https://vancouvertrails.com) →

Above Horseshoe Bay, a 5 km return walk climbs gently along a creek canyon past several large old growth Douglas firs to a small, quiet lake.

Two hours, about 160 m of gain, open all year. It is the sort of place you mention to friends and then regret. Pick a weekday and you may have the shoreline to yourself.

Why fall: The canyon trail is shaded and green year round, and fall rain fills the creek beside the big Douglas firs.



TRAIL · SQUAMISH

Squamish Estuary trails

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

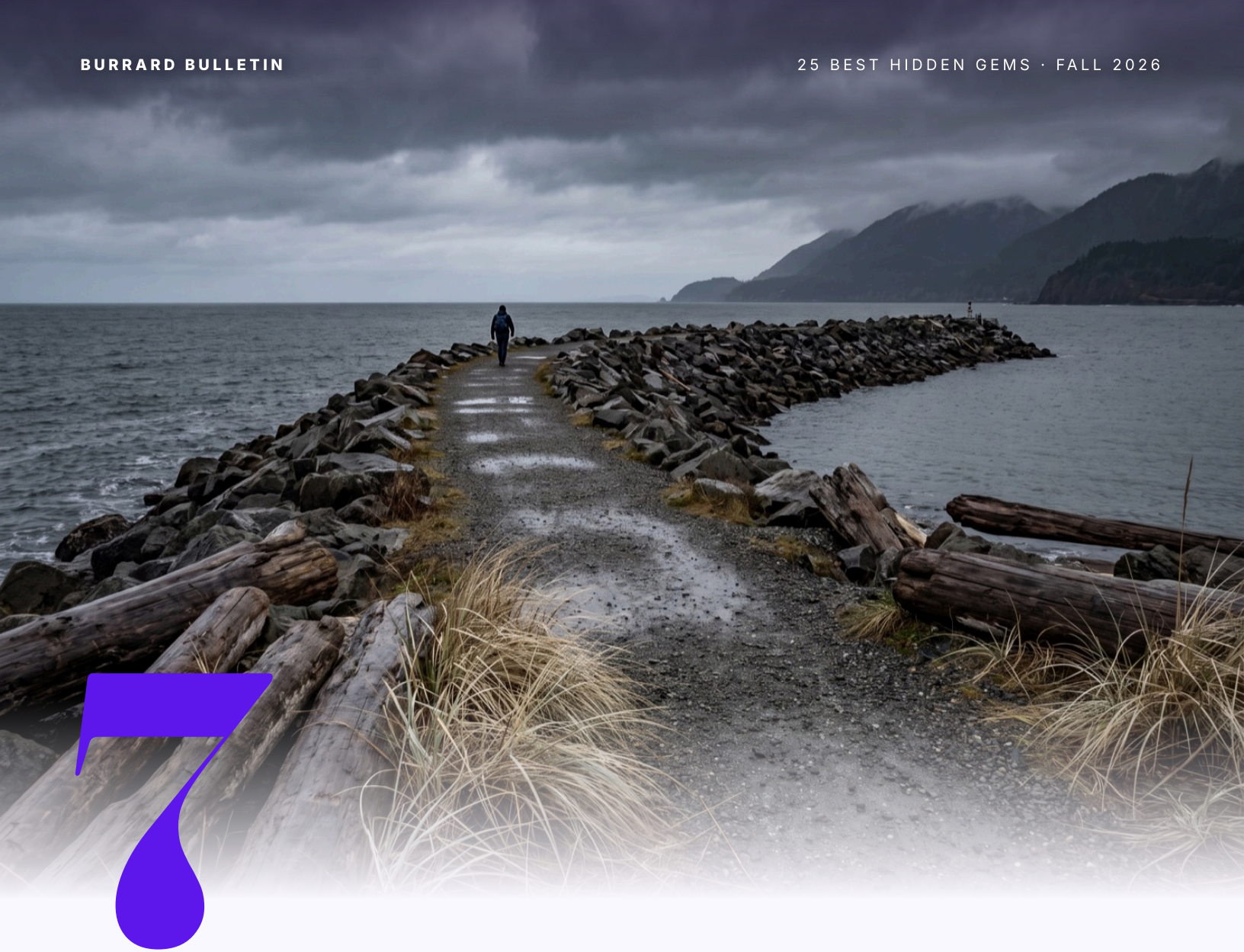
4.3 km, easy, 1 to 2 hours; dogs on leash.

[Details at exploresquamish.com](https://exploresquamish.com) →

A 4.3 km level trail through the Skwelwil'em Squamish Estuary Wildlife Management Area, with Howe Sound, the Chief and Diamond Head all in view.

Tourism Squamish rates it easy, one to two hours, and fine for strollers. Park along Main Street, walk to the roundabout and go behind the buildings on the left to the trailhead. Dogs are allowed on leash. Good on a grey day when the cliffs are too wet to bother with.

Why fall: The Chief and Diamond Head stay in view across the estuary, and Squamish is on the Sea to Sky BC Bird Trail with the estuary as one of its birding spots, so fall birding is part of the walk.



BEACH · RICHMOND

Iona Beach jetty

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Open 7am to 6pm from November 3; viewing structure at the jetty end is closed.

[Details at metrovancover.org](https://metrovancover.org) →

Out past the airport, a 4 km jetty runs straight into the Strait of Georgia where the Fraser meets the sea.

It is flat, exposed and oddly calming, with planes overhead, logs on the beach and herons, hawks and eagles working the marsh. The viewing structure at the far end is closed after storm damage, so turn around before it. Dress for wind.

Why fall: Fall storms and low winter light make the long jetty walk feel properly coastal, and the herons, hawks and eagles are still working the river mouth.



TRAIL · SQUAMISH

Stawamus River dike

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Park on the gravel area off Valley Drive and cross the pedestrian bridge.

Details at exploresquamish.com →

Locals walk this one, visitors drive past it.

Park on the gravel off Valley Drive, by Chances Casino, cross the pedestrian bridge a few hundred metres from the highway and follow the dike along the Stawamus River behind Valleycliffe. In fall the deciduous trees along the dike turn, and side trails lead down closer to the river. Wet leaves make the river rocks slippery if you go down to the bank, and watch the water level.

Why fall: Tourism Squamish lists the dike among its best places to see autumn colours in Squamish.

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WATERFALL · PEMBERTON

Nairn Falls

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

3 km return, allow at least one hour.

[Details at bcparks.ca](https://www.bcparks.ca) →

Just south of Pemberton, a mostly flat 1.5 km trail follows the Green River to a viewpoint over a 60 m waterfall on a fast flowing river.

It is a better stop than most of what is signed off the Sea to Sky, and it takes about an hour return. The riverbank has steep drop offs, so keep kids close and dogs on leash.

Why fall: The forest along the Green River takes on fall colour, and the 60 m falls pour through a narrow rock gorge the river has worn into potholes.



WILDLIFE · NORTH VANCOUVER

Maplewood Flats

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

3.5 km loop, about 1 hour, flat; free parking; dogs on leash and not past the bridge; no access to the beach or mudflats.

[Details at destinationvancouver.com](https://destinationvancouver.com) →

The Wild Bird Trust looks after this stretch of shoreline on the Dollarton Highway, on Tsleil-Waututh lands and waters, and it is one of the quieter walks on the Shore.

A flat 3.5 km loop of easy trails, ponds and mudflat views, starting at the info hut at the south end of the parking lot. Bring binoculars. Dogs stay leashed and on the east side, short of the bridge, and there is no jogging or cycling, which is the point.

Why fall: Overwintering ducks and shorebirds move onto the mudflats as the weather turns, which makes late fall a good time to start a bird list here.

3

WATERFALL · WEST VANCOUVER

Cypress Falls Park

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

3 km return, about 1.5 hours, 130 m gain.

[Details at vancouvertrails.com](https://vancouvertrails.com) →

A short West Van forest walk just above the Upper Levels, reached from the Woodgreen Drive exit.

The trail follows Cypress Creek past two waterfalls, with the upper falls dropping into the canyon below, and near the upper falls there is a grove of cedar and fir, some of them 200 to 300 years old. After a wet week the noise alone is worth the trip. The forest is damp and mossy, so wear real shoes.

Why fall: The creek runs hard after fall rain, so both waterfalls are at their loudest when most people have packed away their hiking boots.



WILDLIFE · BURNABY

Stoney Creek salmon run

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Trail entrance just north of North Road and Rathburn Drive; street parking.

Details at naturevancouver.ca →

A small creek in a Burnaby neighbourhood that still gets chum and coho every fall.

The trail starts just north of North Road and Rathburn Drive, there is street parking, and Burquitlam SkyTrain is about a 15 minute walk. Walk slowly along the bank and watch the pools. Timing matters: visitors in late November have found only a few fish once the peak has passed.

Why fall: Chum and coho spawn here from October to December, in a creek that runs through a residential neighbourhood.

NUMBER ONE

1

WILDLIFE · SQUAMISH

Eagle Run dyke, Brackendale

Squamish once logged a world record 3,769 eagles, and the Eagle Run dyke along Government Road is where you watch them without bothering anyone.

The park across the river is closed to recreation from October to March, so the dyke is the grandstand. Bring binoculars, a thermos and patience. Mornings on a grey day, with the birds hunched in the cottonwoods, are the classic Brackendale scene.

Why fall: Bald eagles gather on the Squamish River to feed on spent salmon, and BC Parks puts the peak at November to December.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Peak November to December; view from the dyke, as the park across the river is closed to recreation (fishing excepted) October 1 to March 31.

[Details at bcparks.ca](https://www.bcparks.ca) →

BURRARD BULLETIN

You're on the list.

Burrard Bulletin lands in your inbox with what's on from Vancouver to Whistler: the events worth leaving the house for, where to go on the trails, what's new to eat and drink, and the plan for the weekend.

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Dates, prices and details come from each organizer's or operator's official page, checked October 20, 2026. Plans change, weather happens and things sell out, so check the link before you go. Photographs are illustrative. © 2026 Burrard Bulletin.