

Tahsis Adventure Guide

Tahsis is located on the west edge of Vancouver Island - a rugged landscape of lush rainforest and steep fjord-like mountains, swept by the fresh strong winds of the wild Pacific Ocean. This pristine coastal geography is the setting for some of the best recreation opportunities on Vancouver Island.

With the historic setting, monuments, and natural beauty, just walking around Tahsis is an adventure: Bull of the Woods Trail, the Leiner River Estuary Trail, and Leiner River Recreation Site are close by.

Hikers are discovering the uncrowded trails and dramatic vistas, including the internationally famous Nootka Trail. Kayakers and paddle boarders are enjoying the sheltered inlet waters, the rugged coastal scenery, and abundant wildlife. Strong inflow and outflow winds and the nearby open Pacific Ocean create great conditions for windsurfers and kite boarders in the Tahsis Inlet.

Tahsis Inlet, Nootka Sound, and Esperanza Inlet offer areas of strong tidal activity and diverse marine life, conditions which attract divers who have the best chance in BC to view the prehistoric species of deep water six gill sharks.

Surfers are attracted by the wild Pacific waves off Nootka Island and Brooks Peninsula - a climatic pocket that produces waters of the same temperature as those off the coast of Northern California. Climbers and cavers find the local areas of karst landscape and exposed rock to offer some of Vancouver Island's best caving, climbing, and bouldering.



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Tahsis

Tahsis Original Townsite

Ascending the Cardiac Climb stairs brings you to old townsite. This neighbourhood is very rewarding for those interested in architecture, as it features old float homes from the 1940's (oldest in Tahsis) and the Heritage Building housing St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church.

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Continue on down South Maquinna Drive to Tipperary, then walk around the original townsite to see homes from the 1950's plus a spectacular view of the inlet from Tipperary Park at the top of Princess Victoria View.

As South Maquinna Drive heads down toward the Public Boat Launch, there is a picnic table and sign marking Ubedam Trail... a short hike up to Discovery Crescent and a popular shortcut for locals.

Bull of the Woods

A short drive past the old Maquinna Resort you will see a sign for Bull of the Woods trail. This trail is a 1.8km out and back trail that links up with West Bay. It is a beautiful trail that meanders along the shoreline through lush forest with viewpoints and benches along the way. Fun tree identification keeps you guessing species around every corner. This is a lovely walk on the west side of town that offers views of Tahsis Inlet.



Leiner River Recreation Site

3km (2 miles) out of Tahsis towards Gold River and just before the Leiner River Bridge is the Leiner River Rec Site. Walk around and explore this section of the river, where it expands out into a picturesque little swimming hole with a rope swing. Follow the trail towards town to link up with the Leiner River Estuary Trail.

Please note: all activities and routes described in this guide are followed at your own risk. Visit www.wildsafebc.com for safety information when adventuring in wildlife country and www.adventuresmart.ca for more.

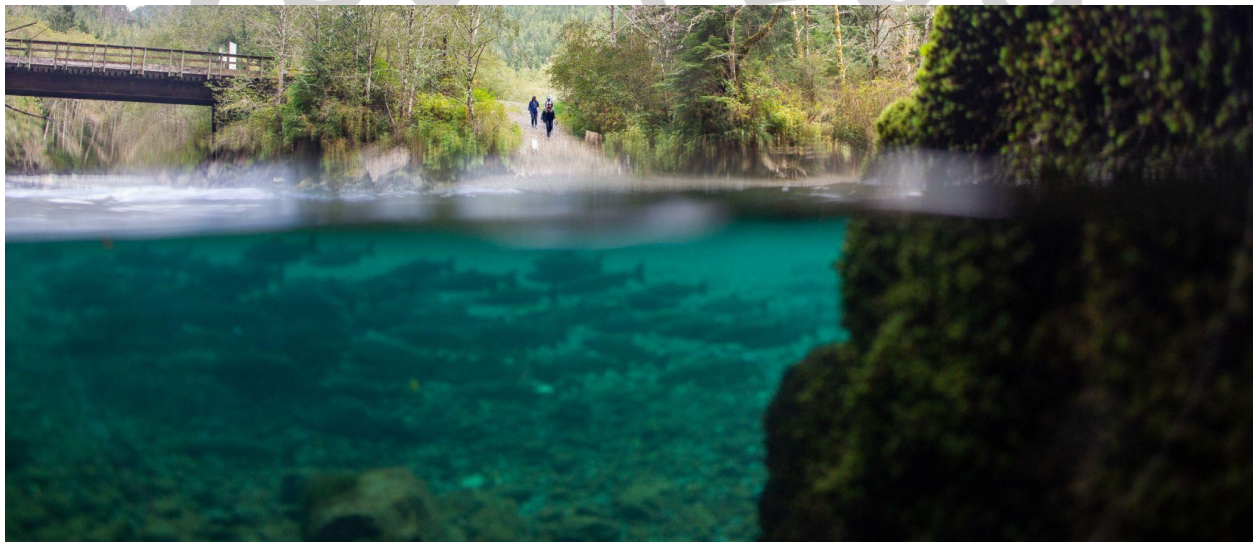
Leiner River Estuary Trail

This 2 kilometre long trail provides excellent wildlife viewing opportunities right on the doorstep of Tahsis. This route is a level trail with boardwalks and viewing platforms on the salt marshes and along the Leiner River where it meets the sea.

Wildlife often seen here include Trumpeter Swans, hawks, eagles, seals, salmon and bears. Many birds stop over here on their annual migrations. The trail access is from the Tree to Sea Drive, just 500 metres from town and is well marked. There is a parking lot and washroom at the trailhead. This makes for an easy afternoon stroll close to town.

Tahsis Heliport and Tahsis River Bridges

Back at the head of Alpine View Road is the Tahsis Heliport, and a very walk-able waterfront section that is popular with locals walking their dogs. There is an expansive panorama view of the head of the Inlet, lots of local marine bird life and convenient parking. The bridge close by is a great spot to view spawning salmon going up the river in the fall. Stroll down North Maquinna to the second bridge over the Tahsis River, another great spot to view wildlife, bird life, and spawning salmon.



Hiking Trails

See Hiking Guide for more information on the Leiner River Boulder Patch Trail, Coral Cave & The Lookout, Maquinna Trail, Woss Lake Grease Trail, and the world-renowned Nootka Trail.

Kayaking

Tahsis Inlet

Tahsis Inlet has many attractions for short or long excursion kayaking and canoeing, right from Tahsis. During high tide, the Tahsis River and Leiner estuary open up, and both rivers feature striking scenery and splendid wildlife and bird viewing opportunities. Both rivers offer particularly excellent wildlife viewing during the fall, when spawning salmon attract eagles and bears.

Kayaking Tahsis Inlet, Nootka Sound and Yuquot

When kayaking Tahsis Inlet and Nootka Sound, it is best to work with the winds and tides. On most days there are outflow and inflow winds down Tahsis Inlet to Nootka Sound. The wind flows out from Tahsis to Nootka Sound starting at daybreak, and then reverses around 11:00am and then flows inward from Nootka Sound to Tahsis until about 4:00-5:00pm. Ideally, you would kayak out in the morning with the outflow winds and an outgoing tide, and on return voyages - come back in the late afternoon with inflow winds and the incoming tide. Be prepared for a slower journey back, in the event of weather changes that affect this typical daily pattern.

To kayak to Yuquot, allow an all-day paddle. Eight miles south of Tahsis on the eastern shore is a sandy beach with fresh water. Further along in Bligh Island Marine Park are rest-camping areas with freshwater. Camping spots are also available at Yuquot. This whole area where Tahsis Inlet, Kendrick Inlet, Tlupana Inlet and Muchalaht Inlet converge is particularly suited to exploration by kayak, though care must be taken in crossing the open waters between Bligh Island and Nootka Island.

Yuquot provides sheltered kayaking and calm water docking. There is a landing fee to visit this historic site where Captain Cook first navigated to the west coast of British Columbia in 1778 and met with Chief Maquinna at Yuquot. Visit the historic church and 'Friendly Cove' Lighthouse for a tour. www.yuquot.ca

Kayaking Esperanza Inlet

To explore Esperanza Inlet and Nuchatlitz, allow a day for your paddle out. The same wind patterns affect Esperanza Inlet as Tahsis Inlet and Nootka Sound (see previous description of kayaking to Yuquot).

After leaving Tahsis, take 'The Cut' (Tahsis Narrows) after you pass West Bay, and head to Esperanza Inlet. To stretch your legs, stop at Esperanza, a small Christian community and First Nations retreat with a dock and tackle shop, which sells snacks.

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Continue on to Garden Point and Rosa Island just off Nootka Island, with good camping spots above the high tide mark. Take your own potable water, especially in the summer.

There are also excellent camping spots on Catala Island and Yellow Bluff on the north shore, but access to both requires crossing open water when the tides are good and water is calm. Fresh water is not always available at either camping spot. From Rosa or Garden Point, kayaking in Mary Basin up to Ferrer Point has many advantages. There are lots of little streams, safe protected kayaking, sea otter families, eagles, bears, and marine birds. Mary Basin also has a historic area with a former First Nation reservation, and many interesting trails, especially in the eastern part of the basin. Please be aware of changing tides and weather conditions as you approach the open ocean past Ferrer Point.

Nuchatlitz is a scattering of small islands surrounded by protected waters located between Rosa Island and Nuchatlitz Inlet, and is the traditional home of the Nuchatlaht First Nation. Nuchatlitz is an increasingly popular kayaking destination. Many kayakers now choose to be dropped off to this area of Esperanza Inlet by kayak transport from Tahsis or Zeballos. Contact Shorebird Expeditions for transportation. www.shorebirdexpeditions.com

Caving

Tahsis has become known as the “Caving Capital of Canada” due to its vast networks of caves in nearby hills, which attract caving clubs from around the world. Visitors are reminded that caving requires specialized equipment and experience, and it is not advisable to enter an unfamiliar cave without appropriate equipment and experience.

Upana Caves

The Upana Caves are located along the Tree to Sea Drive, just before Bull Lake Summit coming from Gold River. Formed by an underground stream, the caves are 300 metres long with many entrances linked by good trails. The large lower stream entrance is an impressive sight - don't forget your camera! Bring lights and helmets. There is ample parking and a cave map at the entrance.



Coral Cave

These are the most accessible caves near Tahsis. Drive the gravel road south of town past the turnoff to West Bay Park and take the first right turn up Extravagant Mainline (unsigned). This road is for 4wd or high clearance vehicles like ATV's or quads, and snakes its way uphill over 6km (4 miles). There are spectacular views of Tahsis Inlet and the surrounding peaks as you climb to 480 metres (1575 feet). As you are driving over karst (limestone rock with caves and sinkholes), watch for holes that occasionally appear in the road. Where the bridge has been removed, park and cross the creek, following the old road for a short distance and take the right fork past a junction.

Look for a sign and trail to the cave on the left, shortly after the junction. Coral Cave is over a kilometre long, the main passage about the size of a subway tunnel as it descends gradually to a permanently flooded sump. Each caver needs warm clothing, a helmet and three independent light sources. There are some climbs; the worst can be bypassed in adjacent side passages. Watch out for holes in the floor.

This cave should never be entered during rainfalls as it may flash flood.

Scuba Diving & Snorkeling

Tahsis Narrows & Mozino Point

Tahsis is one of the best places on the BC coast to view six gill sharks - a prehistoric species of deep-water shark that comes to shallower depths during summertime algae blooms. Tahsis Inlet has a rare Gorgonian Coral Grove at Mozino Point in the Tahsis Narrows at depths starting just over 100 feet. The local stand of Coral shows intense colour due to the ideal growing conditions provided by the strong tidal current. The Cut - as locals call the Tahsis Narrows - also has carpets of pink strawberry anemones, Puget Sound King Crabs and Cloud Sponges.

Snorkeling

Tahsis and Leiner Rivers provide excellent snorkeling opportunities in the late summer and early fall when the salmon return to spawn. At that time the rivers are full of Coho and Chinook, as well as Pink, Chum, Sockeye and Steelhead.

Little Espinosa Inlet

Little Espinoza Inlet has remarkable biodiversity, and is also a favoured diving spot.

Surfing

The outside edge of Nootka Island experiences dramatic surfing waves, at temperatures identical to the waters of North California - the whole area occupies one of the most moderate climatic pockets in Canada. Nootka's outer reefs are known for their consistent wave action, all in a setting of spectacular beaches, waterfalls, and coastal mountains.

Wildlife Viewing

Tahsis has an abundance of local wildlife on land and water. Black bears can be seen in the spring, summer, and fall, but generally not during the winter period, when they are hibernating. While for the most part they like to be left alone, bears frequently wander into the village in the late summer and fall to feast on fruit, berries and spawning salmon in the Tahsis and Leiner

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Rivers. While there is no known case in recent years of a bear harming a human being, care should be taken with these wild animals.

Also in the Tahsis area are cougars, coastal wolves, deer, Roosevelt Elk, weasels, raccoons, and mink, not to mention the odd squirrel or two! In the fall and winter, the majestic elk can be seen with their young ones, in singles or pairs, along the road from Gold River. Be cautious and alert when driving to Tahsis, as wildlife are frequently on the road.



Birding

Migratory hummingbirds gather in great numbers in Tahsis from March well into summer. Many Tahsis residents, charmed by these unique birds, plant hummingbird friendly flowers and keep their hummingbird feeders well stocked during their stay.

The Tahsis inlet and area are home to some of the most beautiful birds that inhabit North America: Trumpeter swans that winter in Tahsis Inlet, bald eagles present year round, various species of ducks, geese and other water birds, the vivid blue Stellar Jays, robins, crows and ravens, and such interesting species as the tufted puffin and great blue heron. The waterways and trails around Tahsis provide plenty of opportunities for the avid bird watcher to spot a variety of species.

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The most commonly seen marine birds are: red-throated loon, common loon, marbled murrelet, western grebe, red-necked grebe, Leach's storm petrel, forked-tailed storm petrel, Brandt's cormorant, pelagic cormorant, great blue heron, Canada Geese, black brant, white-fronted goose, Trumpeter Swan, mallard, American Widgeon, green-winged teal, northern pintail, bufflehead, harlequin duck, surf scoter, white wing scoter, bald eagles, turkey vultures, black oystercatcher, glaucous-winged gulls, common murrelet, marbled murrelet, Cassin's auklet, rhinoceros auklet, tufted puffin and pigeon guillemot.

Near shore and offshore locations serve as important breeding areas, summer and wintering areas, migration corridors and staging areas. The four breeding locations in the Nootka area identified by the Canadian Wildlife Service are Cameron Rocks, Ensenada Inlet, Justice rock and White Island.



Marine Life

Tahsis, Esperanza Inlet and Nootka Sound is home to an abundance of marine life including orcas (commonly referred to as killer whales), the harbour porpoise, the gray whale, the humpback whale, sea otters, California sea lions, Stellar sea lions and harbour seals.

Sea otters have been known to come right up to the public boat ramp, checking out the newly arrived visitors and ducking out of sight as quietly and quickly as they came. The wide variety of fish and shellfish in the harbour allow rich diets for these amazing animals, which are plentiful in Esperanza Inlet and Nootka Sound.

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