

THE ULTIMATE

Sea to Sky Trip Planner

Vancouver • Squamish • Whistler • Pemberton

Where to eat, stay, hike, and explore — with real costs,
trail ratings, and seasonal tips from locals who live here.

bestseatosky.com

2026 Edition • Free Download

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1. At a Glance

Total Distance	Vancouver to Pemberton: 150 km (2.5 hrs non-stop)
Main Towns	Squamish (pop. 25,000) • Whistler (pop. 13,000) • Pemberton (pop. 3,000)
Best For	Hiking, skiing, climbing, craft beer, waterfalls, scenic drives
Peak Season	June–September (summer) and December–March (ski)
Getting There	Drive from Vancouver or take the Squamish Connector bus
Fuel	Fill up in Squamish or Whistler — gas gets sparse heading north
Cell Service	Good in towns, spotty on trails and between Whistler–Pemberton
Parking	Free at most trailheads; paid at Sea to Sky Gondola (\$8–10)

Budget Breakdown

What things actually cost in the Sea to Sky corridor (2026 prices, CAD).

Accommodation (per night)

	Squamish	Whistler	Pemberton
Budget (hostel/camping)	\$25–45	\$30–60	\$20–40
Mid-range (hotel/Airbnb)	\$150–250	\$250–450	\$120–200
Luxury (resort/chalet)	\$250–400	\$450–900+	\$200–350

Food & Drink

Item	Typical Cost
Coffee	\$4–6
Casual lunch	\$15–22
Dinner for two (mid-range)	\$80–140
Dinner for two (upscale, Whistler)	\$150–250+
Pint of craft beer	\$7–9
Flight of beer (4 tasters)	\$12–16
Groceries for a day (self-catering)	\$40–60

Activities & Attractions

Activity	Cost
Sea to Sky Gondola (adult)	\$65–75
Whistler Blackcomb lift ticket (peak)	\$200–250
Whistler Blackcomb lift ticket (early/late)	\$130–170
Whistler Bike Park day pass	\$75–90
Scandinave Spa entry	\$90–110
Guided rock climbing (half day)	\$150–200 pp
Kayak rental (2 hours)	\$40–60
Mountain bike rental (full day)	\$80–130
Joffre Lakes day pass (BC Parks)	\$10–12 per vehicle
Most hiking trails	Free
Shannon Falls / Brandywine Falls	Free

Budget Tip: Squamish is 30–50% cheaper than Whistler for accommodation and dining. Base yourself in Squamish and day-trip to Whistler to save serious money.

Sample Daily Budgets

Style	Per Person/Day	Includes
Backpacker	\$60–100	Camping, self-catering, free hikes, one beer
Comfortable	\$150–250	Mid-range hotel, lunch + dinner out, one activity
Luxury	\$400–700	Resort stay, fine dining, gondola + spa

3. Seasonal Guide

Summer (June – September)

Peak season. All trails accessible, waterfalls flowing, patios open, days are long (sunset after 9pm in July).

What's On	Details
Hiking	All trails open including alpine. Joffre Lakes requires a day pass.
Mountain biking	Whistler Bike Park open. Squamish trails in prime condition.
Water sports	Kayaking, paddleboarding, kiteboarding on Squamish Spit.
Climbing	Peak season. Long days = more time on the wall.
Weather	20–30°C in valleys. 10–20°C on summits. Rain is rare but pack layers.
Crowds	Busy weekends. Book accommodation 2–4 weeks ahead. Hike early.

Summer Tip: The Squamish Spit gets thermal winds almost every afternoon May–September. Even if you don't kiteboard, watching from the estuary at sunset is spectacular.

Winter (December – March)

Ski season transforms the corridor. Whistler Blackcomb is the main draw, plus eagle watching, snowshoeing, and spas.

What's On	Details
Skiing/Snowboarding	Whistler Blackcomb: 8,000+ acres, 200+ runs. Buy tickets online.
Cross-country	Lost Lake trails (Whistler, free). Callaghan Country (backcountry).
Snowshoeing	Whistler Olympic Park and Elfin Lakes area.
Eagle watching	Brackendale (Dec–Feb). 2,000+ eagles on the Squamish River.
Spas	Scandinave Spa Whistler. Hot pools surrounded by snow-covered trees.
Weather	-5 to 5°C in valleys. -15 to -5°C on mountains. Heavy snow above 800m.
Crowds	Christmas and spring break are peak. Midweek is 50% less crowded.

Winter Tip: Start at Creekside Gondola instead of Whistler Village — shorter lines, same mountain. Midweek skiing is a completely different experience.

Shoulder Seasons

Spring (April–May): Waterfalls at peak flow. Lower trails open, alpine still snowy. Fewer crowds, lower prices.

Fall (October–November): Stunning autumn colours. Mushroom foraging. Quietest time to visit.

4. Highway Stops: Vancouver to Pemberton

Every worthwhile stop along the Sea to Sky Highway, in order from south to north.

Porteau Cove Provincial Park

25 min from Horseshoe Bay

Waterfront park with stunning Howe Sound views. Popular scuba diving. Rocky beach, mountain backdrop, small campground.

Cost: Free (camping: \$35/night)

Britannia Mine Museum

Britannia Beach

Underground train tour, gold panning, mining history. Great for kids. Budget 90 minutes.

Cost: \$26 adult / \$18 child

Shannon Falls Provincial Park

10 min south of Squamish

BC's third-highest waterfall (335m). 5-minute walk from parking. Most impressive in spring.

Cost: Free

Sea to Sky Gondola

Next to Shannon Falls

10-minute ride to 885m summit. Suspension bridge, hiking trails, restaurant.

Cost: \$65–75 adult

Brandywine Falls Provincial Park

20 min north of Squamish

70-metre waterfall into a volcanic canyon. Easy 10-minute walk. Continue to Swim Lake in summer.

Cost: Free

Tantalus Lookout

Highway pullout

Head-on view of the Tantalus Range and glacier. One of the most dramatic mountain panoramas from any highway in Canada.

Cost: Free

Nairn Falls Provincial Park

South of Pemberton

1.5 km trail through old-growth forest to a powerful cascade. Less crowded than Shannon Falls.

Cost: Free (camping: \$35/night)

Full road trip guide: bestseatosky.com/blog/sea-to-sky-highway-road-trip-itinerary

5. Squamish

The Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada. World-class climbing, biking, hiking, and a craft beer scene that rivals cities ten times its size.

Where to Eat

Restaurant	Known For	Price
Howe Sound Brewing	Brewpub classics, house-brewed beer	\$\$
Locavore Bar & Grill	Farm-to-table, seasonal menu	\$\$\$
Fergie's Café	Brunch, baked goods, river views	\$\$
Mag's 99	Mexican street food, tacos	\$
Norman Rudy's	Pizza, craft cocktails	\$\$
Backcountry Brewing	Taproom, food trucks, mountain views	\$\$
A-Frame Brewing	Craft beer, laid-back atmosphere	\$\$
Crabapple Café	Coffee, pastries, breakfast	\$

Full guide: bestseatosky.com/guide/best-restaurants-squamish

Where to Stay

Option	Type	From/Night
Sandman Hotel	Hotel, downtown	\$150
Executive Suites Garibaldi	Hotel, riverside	\$170
Sunwolf Resort	Riverside cabins, Brackendale	\$200
Alice Lake Campground	Provincial park, swimming lake	\$35
Squamish Adventure Inn	Hostel/budget	\$45

Full guide: bestseatosky.com/guide/best-hotels-squamish

6. Squamish Trail Guide

Every major hike rated by difficulty, distance, and time.

Trail	Difficulty	Distance	Time	Highlights
Shannon Falls	Easy	0.5 km	15 min	BC's 3rd highest waterfall. Paved path.
Estuary Trails	Easy	3–5 km	1–2 hrs	Flat, river views, eagles, sunset spot.
Four Lakes Trail	Easy–Mod	6 km loop	2–3 hrs	Four lakes, swimming in summer.
Chief 1st Peak	Hard	4 km	2–3 hrs	Iconic granite scramble. Howe Sound views.
Chief 2nd Peak	Hard	5 km	4–5 hrs	Biggest summit. Less crowded. Best views.
Chief 3rd Peak	Hard	7 km	5–7 hrs	Highest (702m). Epic Garibaldi views.
Garibaldi Lake	Moderate	18 km	5–7 hrs	Turquoise alpine lake. Life-changing.
Elfin Lakes	Moderate	22 km	6–8 hrs	Alpine meadows, overnight hut available.
Sea to Summit	Moderate	7.5 km	3–4 hrs	Forest trail to Gondola summit.
Smoke Bluffs	Easy	2–4 km	1–2 hrs	Climbing crag views. Loop trails.
Brandywine Meadows	Hard	10 km	5–6 hrs	Alpine wildflowers in July–Aug.

Trail Tip: Start the Chief before 8 AM on weekends. Second Peak is the local's choice — same views, more space, fewer selfie sticks.

Full guide: bestseatosky.com/guide/best-hikes-squamish

7. Whistler

North America's largest ski resort. Purpose-built pedestrian village with world-class dining, shopping, and nightlife.

Where to Eat

Restaurant	Known For	Price
Rimrock Café	Seafood, fine dining, legendary	\$\$\$\$
Araxi	West Coast cuisine, award-winning	\$\$\$\$
Handlebar Café	Coffee, breakfast, cycling culture	\$\$
Purebread	Bakery, pastries, lines out the door	\$
Sushi Village	Japanese, Whistler institution since 1985	\$\$\$
El Furniture Warehouse	Everything \$5.95, budget legend	\$
Hunter Gather	Brunch, locally sourced	\$\$\$
The Longhorn Saloon	Après-ski classic, live music	\$\$
Whistler Brewing Co.	Taproom, pub food	\$\$

Full guide: bestseatosky.com/guide/best-restaurants-whistler

Where to Stay

Option	Type	From/Night
Fairmont Chateau Whistler	Luxury resort, ski-in/out	\$450
The Westin Whistler	Upscale hotel, Village location	\$350
Pangea Pod Hotel	Pod hotel, budget-friendly Village	\$90
Nita Lake Lodge	Boutique lakeside, Creekside	\$300
HI Whistler Hostel	Hostel, social atmosphere	\$45
Crystal Lodge	Mid-range, Village centre	\$200

Full guide: bestseatosky.com/guide/best-hotels-whistler

8. Whistler Trail Guide

Trail	Difficulty	Distance	Time	Highlights
Lost Lake Loop	Easy	5 km	1–2 hrs	Flat loop, swimming, free. Year-round.
Train Wreck Falls	Easy	2 km	30 min	Suspension bridge to graffiti train cars.
Cheakamus River	Easy	3 km	1 hr	Riverside walk, old-growth forest.
Whistler Peak Trail	Moderate	5 km	2–3 hrs	From gondola summit. Alpine views.
Russet Lake	Hard	26 km	8–10 hrs	Musical Bumps to Singing Pass. Epic.
Wedgemount Lake	Hard	12 km	5–7 hrs	Steep but stunning glacier lake.
High Note Trail	Moderate	9 km	3–4 hrs	Panoramic alpine views. Gondola access.
Flute Summit	Hard	12 km	5–6 hrs	Above the treeline. Musical Bumps.
Rainbow Falls	Easy	3 km	1 hr	Gentle forest walk to waterfall.
Helm Creek	Hard	22 km	7–9 hrs	Black Tusk views. Backcountry camping.

Trail Tip: High Note Trail is the best effort-to-reward ratio in Whistler. Gondola up, walk the ridge with 360° views, ride back down.

Full guide: bestseatosky.com/guide/best-hikes-whistler

9. Pemberton

The Sea to Sky's hidden gem. A farming valley surrounded by peaks, home to Joffre Lakes.

Where to Eat

Restaurant	Known For	Price
Mile One Eating House	Farm-to-table, locally famous	\$\$\$
The Pony	Bistro, craft cocktails, patio	\$\$\$
Blackbird Bakery	Fresh bread, pastries, coffee	\$
Grimm's Deli	Sandwiches, road trip fuel	\$

Full guide: bestseatosky.com/guide/best-restaurants-pemberton

Where to Stay

Option	Type	From/Night
Pemberton Valley Lodge	Hotel, valley views	\$150
The Pemberton Hotel	Historic pub hotel	\$100
Nairn Falls Campground	Provincial park, forested sites	\$35

10. Pemberton Trail Guide

Trail	Difficulty	Distance	Time	Highlights
Joffre Lakes	Moderate	10 km	3–4 hrs	Three turquoise glacier lakes. Day pass required.
Nairn Falls	Easy	3 km	1 hr	Powerful cascade, old-growth forest.
One Mile Lake	Easy	1.5 km	30 min	Lakeside loop, swimming, family-friendly.
Mount Currie Trail	Hard	14 km	6–8 hrs	Summit views over the entire valley.
Tenquille Lake	Hard	24 km	8–10 hrs	Remote alpine lake. Backcountry hut.
Mosquito Lake	Moderate	8 km	3–4 hrs	Lake swimming, forest walk.

Trail Tip: Joffre Lakes is the most Instagrammed spot in BC. Book a day pass in advance at bcparks.ca during summer. Arrive by 8 AM.

Full guide: bestseatosky.com/guide/best-hikes-pemberton

11. Packing Checklist

Summer Essentials

- Hiking boots or sturdy trail shoes
- Layers — mountain weather changes fast
- Light rain jacket
- Sunscreen SPF 50+ and sunglasses
- Reusable water bottle
- Camera or phone with plenty of storage
- Trail snacks and lunch for longer hikes
- Swimsuit (lake swimming is a must)
- Insect repellent (June–August)
- Cash for parking meters
- Bear spray for remote trails
- Headlamp (just in case)

Winter Essentials

- Warm layers (base layer, fleece, insulated jacket)
- Waterproof outer shell
- Warm toque/beanie and gloves
- Ski goggles
- Hand warmers
- Snow tires or chains (required Nov 1 – Apr 30)
- Lip balm with SPF
- Thermos for hot drinks
- Ski pass (buy online for best rates)

12. Planning Resources

Our Guides (Free)

Guide	Link
Best Restaurants in Squamish	bestseatosky.com/guide/best-restaurants-squamish
Best Restaurants in Whistler	bestseatosky.com/guide/best-restaurants-whistler
Best Restaurants in Pemberton	bestseatosky.com/guide/best-restaurants-pemberton
Best Hikes in Squamish	bestseatosky.com/guide/best-hikes-squamish
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Best Skiing in Whistler	bestseatosky.com/guide/best-skiing-whistler
Things to Do in Squamish	bestseatosky.com/guide/things-to-do-squamish
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Our Blog

Article	Link
Sea to Sky Road Trip Itinerary	bestseatosky.com/blog/sea-to-sky-highway-road-trip-itinerary
48 Hours in Squamish	bestseatosky.com/blog/48-hours-in-squamish-weekend-itinerary
Local's Guide to Whistler in Winter	bestseatosky.com/blog/locals-guide-whistler-winter
Squamish vs Whistler: Where to Stay?	bestseatosky.com/blog/squamish-vs-whistler-where-to-stay
Filming Locations (Virgin River +)	bestseatosky.com/blog/movies-tv-shows-filmed-sea-to-sky

AI Trip Planner

Need personalized recommendations? Try our free AI Trip Planner:

bestseatosky.com/chat

Ask it anything: "What should I do for a weekend in Squamish?" "Best hikes for beginners near Whistler?"

Useful Links

Resource	Link
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BC Parks day passes	bcparks.ca
DriveBC road conditions	drivebc.ca
Whistler Blackcomb snow report	whistlerblackcomb.com
Squamish Connector (bus)	squamishconnector.com
Weather (Squamish)	weather.gc.ca

Best Sea to Sky

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