

The Island Next Door – Galiano has something for all.

Colleen Bessel, Special to The Sun 06.12.2015



Just a short ferry ride and you're there, surrounded by rocky shoreline, towering Douglas Firs and majestic twisted Arbutus trees. You won't find a single high-rise tower or trendy condo complex. The only traffic you will encounter is the line-up of cars departing the ferry with kayaks and Thule racks on top. You can smell and taste the salty sea air. You can hear the ocean waves crashing against the rocky shore. Eagles soar in the breeze and otters scamper along the coastline.

There is no shortage of island destinations off the coast of Vancouver, but Galiano Island is the perfect choice for an escape from the city. First, the location can't be beat. By the time you have enjoyed your bacon and eggs (or granola and whole wheat bagel, if you prefer) and drained your second cup of coffee, the ferry will be docking at Sturdies Bay. Secondly, Galiano Island is small, just 27.5 kilometres long and 6 kilometres across at its widest point, with just over 1000 permanent residents. But, Galiano opens its hearts and doors to the thousands of visitors that make the journey every year. And, no matter what you enjoy doing there is something for you on Galiano.

1. **Camping.** Make your home under the towering firs at Montague Harbour Provincial Campground, with just a short walk to the beautiful white shell beach. Frolic

in the crystal clear waters, picnic on the beach or hike around the peninsula, but make sure to make it back to the beach as the sun sets. Spread your blanket on the sand and join dozens of visitors as the western sky is painted with brilliant shades of orange, red, and yellow. (PS. Don't forget your camera!)

2. **Kayaking.** Slip your kayak into the waters right off the shore. Hear the splash of your paddles cutting the quiet waters as you explore the islands and channels off the harbour. If you are lucky you will be joined by seals, otters, herons or whatever other wildlife welcomes you. If you don't have your own kayak, you're in luck, rentals or guided tours are also available.

3. **Hiking.** Galiano is criss-crossed with hiking trails – long trails, short trails, easy walks or steep and challenging hikes. Savour the peace and tranquility of the wooded forest floor or climb to the top of the rocky ridges that surround the island for 360 degree views and sweeping ocean vistas.

4. **Beaches and Parks.** The Island is ringed with numerous beaches and parks, each offering something unique. From Montague's white shell beach and stunning sunsets, to Morning Beach where you can bask in the morning sun and count the starfish in the shallow water. Walk the rocky lowbank shoreline of Bellhouse Park or explore the caves at Retreat Cove. Hunt for beach glass or seashells on Cain Beach or watch the ferries wind through Active Pass far below from your perch on top of Bluff Park or Lover's Leap.

5. **Saturday Market.** Make your way to the Lions Park for Galiano's Saturday Market. Grab a piping hot cup of Salt Spring Coffee and a fresh baked scone from Alison's Kitchen. Stock up on garden fresh vegetables from Cable Bay Farms. Check out the local artists and artisans and pick up a unique souvenir or gift. Meanwhile the park is abuzz with lively music and entertainment, a party in the making.

6. **Art Galleries galore.** Galiano is renowned for its vibrant and prolific arts scene. With over 40 galleries you'll find paintings, photography, pottery, glasswork, jewellery, woodwork or much more. You can spend a day or the whole weekend visiting the studios, shops and galleries and chatting with the artists. If you love art, visit during the long weekend in August when the island's artists open their doors and host their annual Art Shows.

7. **Eating.** Galiano does not forget or disappoint the food lovers. From the Grand Central Emporium diner to fresh wood-fired pizza straight from the outdoor stone oven at the Galiano Inn. Hop on the Hummingbird Pub bus for pub fare and an evening of merriment complete with live music most weekends. At Wild1 local Chef Orion Finnie adds herbs fresh from the window ledge to his delicious Thai dishes. Over at *pilgrimme*, near Montague Harbour, you will discover a constantly changing menu of shared plates using local ingredients paired with BC wines and beer. Sip a cold drink with heaping plate of nachos on the deck of The Sea Blush Café overlooking Montague Harbour. Or, for that special occasion treat yourself to oceanfront fine dining at Atrevida in the stunning Galiano Inn and Spa.

Special Event: Plan your getaway for the August 8th weekend (2015) and spend a hot summer afternoon sampling wonderful BC wines, beers and ciders at Galiano's Wine & Beer Festival, an annual open-air event at Lions Park. It's a casual unhurried atmosphere with plenty of room to wander among the wine merchants and wine makers and learn about their vintages.

For more information and trip planning ideas for Galiano Island: www.galianoisland.com

Getting There

Galiano Island is the first in the chain of South Gulf Islands between Vancouver and Victoria. In the summer months there are daily departures from Vancouver by BC Ferries out of Tsawwassen Terminal and from Victoria via Swartz Bay. Sailing time from Vancouver is just 55 minutes, from Victoria it is 70 minutes. Pick up your Galiano Island Map on the ferry. Reservations (free of charge) are required for all sailings. www.bcferrries.com/schedules/southern/