



# Canada – Vancouver Island

## Birds and Whales

Friday 7 – Tuesday 18 September 2012

(12 days)

*Why not join our resident Canadian expert Chris Charlesworth for a trip that combines good accommodation and food with brilliant birding and wildlife - and some truly superb Pacific coastal scenery!?*

British Columbia's rugged Pacific coastline is peppered with thousands of islands, largest of which is Vancouver Island. Some 460 kms long and 80 kms wide, much of this incredibly scenic island is cloaked in pristine temperate rainforest. Vast sandy beaches and rocky headlands dominate the coastline, while its rich pelagic waters teem with life just offshore. With seabirds, waders and migrants on the move, plus good chances of American Black Bear and Humpback Whale, and a plethora of west coast specialities, this easy-paced tour is positively crammed with great birding and wildlife.

After a night in Vancouver, we take the ferry across the Strait of Georgia to Vancouver Island. American Black Oystercatchers and Black Turnstones forage along the shoreline, with Surf Scoter and Pelagic Cormorants occurring offshore.

We'll spend our next two nights in the beautiful city of Victoria, its forested parks home to such waifs as Anna's Hummingbird, Bushtit, Golden-crowned Kinglet and the recently 'split' Pacific Wren. September is a fantastic month for waders along North America's Pacific coast and we should see 20 or more species on this tour, including Wandering Tattler and Surf-bird, while seawatching from nearby rocky headlands could produce Rhinoceros Auklet and Harlequin Duck.

A four-night stay in the delightful fishing resort of Tofino will allow ample time to explore. We'll visit Cathedral Grove, where tiny Chestnut-backed Chickadees are dwarfed by the Park's monstrous Western Red Cedars and Douglas Firs. Tofino's bays host many coastal birds with Pacific Diver, Western Grebe and Heerman's, Glaucous-winged and California Gulls all likely. Nearby, Pacific Rim is a gem amongst Canadian national parks. Noisy Steller's Jays are common and species seen on our past visits have included Band-tailed Pigeon, Hutton's Vireo and Black-throated Grey and Townsend's Warblers.

A major highlight of our stay at Tofino will be two boat trips into Clayoquot Sound. Brandt's Cormorant, Pigeon Guillemot and Marbled Murrelet are possible, while huge Steller's Sea-lions haul out on to the rocks. We saw the latter very well last time, along with fabulously close Humpback Whales, Sea Otters in the kelp beds and no fewer than eight American Black Bears!

Returning to the mainland, our trip concludes with a couple of days exploring Vancouver's premier migration hotspots of Boundary Bay and Reifel Refuge. Wildfowl and waders abound. Why not join



our resident Canadian expert Chris Charlesworth for a trip that combines good accommodation and food with brilliant birding and wildlife – and some truly superb Pacific coastal scenery!

### Outline Itinerary

**Day 1 :** We fly from London to Vancouver, British Columbia's largest city, where Chris will be waiting to welcome us.

*Overnight Vancouver*

**Days 2 - 3 :** After breakfast this morning we'll catch the ferry from Tsawwassen, just to the south of Vancouver, across the Strait of Georgia to Victoria on Vancouver Island. The 40km crossing takes around two hours.

*Two nights on the waterfront in Victoria*

**Day 4 :** After breakfast this morning, we'll drive from Victoria on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, north and west to Tofino.

*Overnight Tofino*

**Days 5 - 7 :** The rich waters of Clayoquot Sound are home to a good variety of cetaceans. Humpback Whales are often seen playing in the churning waters just offshore. Grey Whales which breed near Baja California spend their summers here too and with a little luck we may still find a lingering individual. From time to time, spectacular Orcas (Killer Whales) may also be seen as they navigate the waters of the sound.

*Three nights Tofino*

**Day 8 :** After some final birding around about Tofino this morning, we make the scenic drive back across the island to Nanaimo, a bustling coastal community on the more sheltered eastern shore of Vancouver Island.

*Overnight Nanaimo*



Common Loon (Great Northern Diver) and, top, Townsend's Warbler (Photos: Rebecca Nason)

### TRIP DETAILS

**ACCOMMODATION :** We use comfortable, good to excellent North American-style hotels and motels, with all rooms en suite.

**MEALS :** All included in the price. Food is good, varied and plentiful. As is the norm in North America, some meals may be taken at local restaurants as not all hotels have in-house restaurant facilities. Some lunches may be picnics.

**WALKING :** Easy. Short walks at a relaxed pace, mainly over well-marked trails and boardwalks.

**BOAT TRIPS :** The tour includes two 2-hour ferry crossings, plus two boat trips (weather permitting) into Clayoquot Sound at Tofino in search of seabirds inshore, whales, Sea Otters, sea-lions and American Black Bears.

*[An optional pelagic boat trip is sometimes available locally at Tofino, at extra cost (not included in our tour price) and subject to availability and weather permitting, for those that want. There can be considerable ocean swell offshore, the boats can be small and may remain offshore for 6-8 hours so this trip may not be suitable for all.]*

**PRINCIPAL LEADER :** Chris Charlesworth

**NUMBERS :** Max. 12 clients

**PRICE :** £ 4,495  
**Single supp. :** £ 855  
**Deposit :** £ 500 per person

The price is per person and includes scheduled return flights London-Vancouver; all accommodation and meals (including restaurant tips, 15-20% expected in N America), surface transport including ferries and two Tofino boat trips (one for whales, one for bears), reserve entry fees/permits as appropriate, airport taxes, map, bird checklist and services of the leaders.

The price excludes travel insurance, drinks & other personal expenses. Optional pelagic seabirding trip out of Tofino (subject to availability locally and weather permitting); the cost payable locally and price may vary depending upon numbers booked.

**This trip will be operated in conjunction with Limosa Holidays.**

**Days 9 - 10 :** After a further opportunity to look around Nanaimo this morning, we board the ferry in town and cross back over to Vancouver, where we'll enjoy a further two nights on the Canadian mainland.

*Two nights Vancouver*

**Days 11 - 12 :** Our flight back to London departs Vancouver on the evening of **Day 11**, leaving us free to enjoy much of the day birding at the bird-rich George C. Reifel Refuge, on nearby Westham Island.

We swing north to Vancouver airport and catch our overnight flight home. Arrival back in London on **Day 12**, where our tour concludes.

**Special note: Early booking is strongly recommended for this tour to be certain of space at the best hotels on Vancouver Island, which fill up fast!**