

# Sensory overload with BC's natural beauty



View from Quarry Rock in British Columbia.  
Photos/Kathryn Reed

**By Kathryn Reed**

VANCOUVER, British Columbia – For people who can't decide if they prefer the ocean, mountains, or city, Vancouver is the place to visit.

A certain vibrancy fills this Canadian city of 603,502 people. It's easy to walk throughout downtown. Then there is the natural beauty that is reminiscent of the Sierra.

A long weekend last month barely scratched the surface of what there is to see and do. Fortunately I had my good friends Kim and Dan to play tour guide. I had driven through Vancouver in January 2010 to get to Whistler, but didn't stop.



The flame is rarely seen at the Olympic cauldron along the Vancouver waterfront.

There are few overt signs the Olympics were here nearly six years ago. A stop on the train from the airport to downtown has some reference to the Games, but my friends said all the Olympic Village housing is now condos.

Near the waterfront, in Jack Poole Plaza, is the glass and steel cauldron for the Olympic flame. It was relighted during part of the Sochi Games last year. It costs about \$5,000 to light it for four hours, so it is mostly dark.

Seaplanes dot the harbor unlike any water city I've been too. It shows the common choice of transport to get to neighboring islands.



Lions Gate Bridge was completed in 1938.

My friends live on the other side of the 77-year-old Lions Gate Bridge. I had to agree with their description of it – it's like crossing the San Francisco Bay Bridge, except instead of being dropped into Oakland it's more like Tahoe.

At the end of their street is a forest. While we didn't do it, going up would have delivered us to **Cypress Mountain** where the Olympic snowboarding events were staged.



Canadian maple leaf

We went on a few walks/mini hikes in the region. One was the 2.4-mile round-trip trek to Quarry Rock from Deep Cove. This is a little town on what is called the North Shore. Walking through the woods it's lush. It's almost tropical.

Vancouver gets an average of 57.3 inches of rain a year. To put this in perspective, Sacramento averages 21 inches a year.



Views along on the way to

## Quarry Rock.

Beauty is everywhere. What is nice is that it isn't super dense, so it's possible to see the forest through the trees. Hemlock and Douglas fir are the predominant trees. And those Canadian maple leaves, they are huge – bigger than any I have seen in New England.

The end, well, it's just stunning. The rock provides views of fjords that make this oasis of the world so captivating.



Shannon Falls

Another day we took a little road trip toward Whistler. We stopped in Squamish where Shannon Falls is located. The Sea to Sky Highway, which was overhauled for the Olympics, is worth driving on even without a destination.

The falls drop nearly 1,100 feet – making it the third tallest falls in British Columbia. It's like a ribbon of white rushing water.

From here we could have hiked Sawamus Chief, but the brewery sounded better. It's easy here to get distracted by good beer. It's a nice reward after enjoying the outdoors.