



# Southern Gulf ISLANDS

Photos courtesy of Alistan Cafe.

**THERE ARE MORE** than 200 islands between the city of Vancouver and Vancouver Island. These islands are located in the Strait of Georgia, sometimes called the Gulf of Georgia, and each one has its own unique personality. Within this group of 200 islands are 6 major islands in the southern gulf island chain that are easily accessible for both visitors and residents. Ferries from both Vancouver and Victoria service them daily. Floatplanes are also frequent ways of traveling to the gulf islands from both Vancouver Island and the lower mainland and also from Seattle Washington.

Each unique island destination offers safe rural environments for families or individuals to visit, explore, or even settle down. While the islands may be small the experience they supply is tremendous. Every visitor to the gulf islands should plan at least a day or two visiting each of the major islands.

## SALT SPRING ISLAND

The largest and most populated, with a population of approximately 10,000, island between Vancouver Island and the city of Vancouver is the alluring and charming Salt Spring Island. With 185 square kilometres of natural beauty to explore, over 130 kilometres of blissful shoreline, more than 50 unique artist studios, 16 stunning parks, 8 fresh water lakes, and a couple of golf courses, Salt Spring Island offers a substantial amount of recreation and culture for both the curious visitor and the long time resident.

Salt Spring is the most accessible of the gulf islands, and the most visited, with three B.C. ferry terminals taking you to two locations on Vancouver Island and one location in Vancouver at Tsawwassen. Salt Spring also offers more Bed & Breakfasts per capita than anywhere else in Canada.

Salt Spring, as with most of the gulf islands, enjoys a mild temperate climate year round. Thus making everyday an opportunity to enjoy all of the beauty and tranquility the island has to offer.

## GABRIOLA ISLAND

Know as the “Isle of the Arts” Gabriola Island boasts more than 55 local studios. Many of the gulf islands are know for their arts and culture but Gabriola is home to more artisans than any other of the gulf islands.

A 20-minute ferry ride to downtown Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island, makes Gabriola very accessible for both visitors and for each

each of the approximately 5,000 residents. Summer brings out a large number of vacationers who will find many activities to occupy your time here. Kayaking, diving, whale watching, cycling, and of course visits to any number of provincial parks and beaches will enlighten everyday with a sense of fulfillment.

One unique “treasure” to Gabriola is its ancient petroglyphs. The Gabriola Museum tells the story of the petroglyphs carved by its ancient native inhabitants. After a visit to the museum its time to go explore the mythology of the more than 50 petroglyphs discovered throughout the island, each ancient image telling a story of the island, its immigrants, plants, and animals.

### PENDER ISLAND

Pender Island is made up of, not one but two, islands actually. Together they make up about 36 square kilometres of spectacular scenery, copious wildlife, and a lifestyle like none other.

A canal was created in the early 1900's to help with the marine traffic between Pender Island and Victoria thus dividing the island into two. Later in 1956 the two islands became one again, so to speak, when a one-lane bridge was constructed. During the time of separation North Pender had become more densely populated while South Pender remained mostly rural. Today all who visit the Pender Islands can enjoy what both Islands have to offer.



A permanent population of over 2,000 residents make Pender their home. That number swells to 6,000 during the summer months with visitors and weekend cottagers arriving to take in the peaceful laid-back lifestyle that island living has to offer.

### MAYNE ISLAND

Mayne Island is considered a must visit by numerous history buffs. Although Mayne contains its fair share of artists, beaches, and other notorious amenities that is synonymous with island life, it has a rich history too. The Mayne Island Museum is located in a jail that was built in the late 1800's and contains artifacts from the oldest wreck know to occur in the gulf islands.

The Mayne Mast was once a Japanese farmhouse. The Japanese were some of the first settlers here in the early 1900's until they were whisked away to war camps in the interior of B.C., during World War II, out of fear of espionage. The Japanese had an important role in regards to the history of Mayne Island that is still present today.

A strong sense of community is important to the 900 residents of Mayne and of course open arms are always extended to visitors.

### GALIANO ISLAND

No shortage of breathtaking views and ample beaches here on Galiano Island. One of the smaller and less populated gulf islands, with a population reaching 1,100, Galiano offers solitude and relaxation anyone seeking “paradise”. Called the Jewel of the Strait of Georgia, this long, narrow island has always had a reputation for making visitors feel welcome.

Climb to the top of Mount Galiano for some of the most spectacular awe-inspiring views possible. From here you can see the coast mountain range, Vancouver Island, the entire gulf and San Juan Islands, and Mt. Baker in the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State.



### SATURNA ISLAND

Nestled right at the end of the gulf islands is Saturna Island. The most remote and rural of the larger populated southern gulf islands. With wildlife outnumbering the total population of 350 residents by far, this quiet serene island offers more than just a break from the daily grind. It offers an opportunity to get close to nature and take in everything that the gulf islands have to offer.

When visiting Saturna Island please plan ahead because there are no campsites and lodging is limited. Also there are fewer ferry stops to Saturna because of its lower population.

The gulf islands have been a long time favoured destination for retirement and for vacations. They have also served as a haven for numerous artists and artisans. However more recently people are discovering they don't need a million dollars to live here. Affordable recreational homes and retirement options do exist within the gulf islands but keep in mind they are in high demand so these opportunities go fast. ☆