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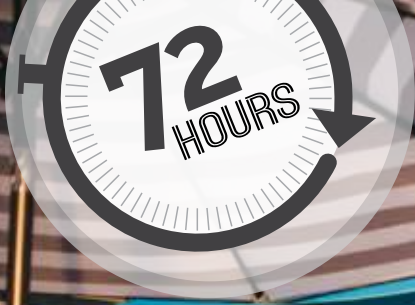


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Maryhill Winery on the Vancouver Waterfront

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# EXPERIENCE "The Couve" IN VANCOUVER USA

BY TAMARA MULDOON

Once upon a time, Vancouver, Washington, languished in the shadow of its flashy neighbor across the Columbia River, Portland, Oregon. People often confused it with Vancouver, British Columbia, not realizing the existence of two Vancouvers. But recently, Vancouver USA has come into its own. "The Couve," as locals call it, is now the belle of the ball.

This Cinderella story didn't occur by magic, but through planning and investment. A bold waterfront redevelopment and downtown revitalization has attracted entrepreneurs and new businesses. Unique shops, *avant-garde* dining experiences, an exploding craft-beverage industry, and abundance of attractive public spaces and recreation options have brought the city into the spotlight and made Vancouver an excellent getaway destination. Consider planning your trip to coincide with monthly events like First Friday or the Vancouver Night Market. For visitor information, go to [VisitVancouverUSA.com](http://VisitVancouverUSA.com).

**Day 1** Whether you roll in by car, or arrive on Amtrak and use a ride-share service, Downtown Vancouver is the place to be. Briar Rose Inn B&B ([briarroseinn.com](http://briarroseinn.com)) is ideal for couples wanting quiet, luxurious accommodations. This stately Craftsman-style home offers four tastefully-decorated guest rooms and is within easy walking distance of the city center. A full hot breakfast is included.

Families might prefer Comfort Inn and Suites ([vancouverwahotel.com](http://vancouverwahotel.com)) with an outdoor swimming pool and complimentary hot breakfast buffet. Its central Downtown location makes it a perfect base for exploring the city.

Once you've checked-in, take a stroll through Uptown Village, a business district just north of Downtown. Browse one-of-a-kind shops offering vintage clothing, antiques, collectibles, gifts and home décor. Indulge your sweet tooth with hand-made truffles or fudge at Fleur Chocolatte ([fleur-chocolatte.com](http://fleur-chocolatte.com)) or savor a scoop of hand-crafted, small-batch deliciousness at Ice

Cream Renaissance ([icecreamrenaissance.com](http://icecreamrenaissance.com)). Get caffeinated at Relevant Coffee or grab a late lunch from one of the food carts at 23rd and Main St.

But, save room for dinner and drinks at Amaro's Table ([amarostable.com](http://amarostable.com)). Here you'll find satisfying menu selections and unusual craft cocktails made with *amaro*, Italian-style herbal liqueurs created in-house. For the less adventurous, beer, wine and traditional cocktails are available.

**Day 2** After breakfast at your lodgings, meander down Main Street. Pop into shops and art galleries along the way. More than 25 murals adorn the downtown core, so watch for them as you go. Visit Clark County Historical Museum ([cchmuseum.org](http://cchmuseum.org)), housed in a 1909 former Carnegie Library. Collections cover regional history and Native American artifacts along with rotating exhibits. Ask about the Brautigan Library, a unique collection housed in the



Ilchee statue along the Waterfront Renaissance Trail

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Vancouver Farmers Market

museum.

Next, head to Esther Short Park for the weekend Market with food, crafts, art and music. Relax and enjoy this city-block-sized urban oasis. For lunch, go to nearby Smokin' Oak Pit & Drinkery ([thesmokinoakpit.com](http://thesmokinoakpit.com)) for Texas-style barbeque cooked over a wood-fire grill. Or, take a break at Brewed ([brewedcafeup.com](http://brewedcafeup.com)), a popular local hangout, for delicious light fare along with coffee, tea or something stronger.

Walk off your lunch on Waterfront Renaissance Trail, a five-mile-long paved pathway along the Columbia River that takes you past parks, restaurants and stylish condo developments. Then, return along the trail to Grant Street Pier, which anchors a new park and commercial development.

At Maryhill Winery's tasting room ([maryhillwinery.com](http://maryhillwinery.com)), sample award-winning wines with some small-plate bites and discover why Maryhill is one of the Northwest's leading



Downtown Vancouver

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Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

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wineries. Afterward, head next door to WildFin American Grill ([wildfinamericangrill.com](http://wildfinamericangrill.com)) for fresh, locally-sourced seafood, meats and produce, paired with regional wines, beer and craft cocktails. Dine in or watch the sunset from the patio. Not quite ready to call it a night? Head to Brickhouse Bar ([vancouverbrickhouse.com](http://vancouverbrickhouse.com)) which hosts live music most evenings.

**Day 3** Grab a wake-up beverage at your hotel, then make tracks to Bleu Door Bakery ([bleudoorbakery.com](http://bleudoorbakery.com)) for breakfast or brunch. At the very least, stop in to pick up a freshly made pastry.

Heading east on Evergreen Blvd., follow the Discovery Loop Trail to Fort Vancouver National Historic Site ([nps.gov/fova](http://nps.gov/fova)). Learn about the important role Vancouver played in the discovery and settlement of the Pacific Northwest. Start your exploration at the Visitors Center where exhibits and a short film set the scene. Pick up a brochure and site map.

Walk to Fort Vancouver, once the Northwest headquarters of Hudson Bay Company. Within the log palisade, tour Chief Factor John McLoughlin's residence as well as the blacksmith shop, bakehouse, kitchen, fur warehouse and Indian trading post, carpenter shop, counting house and jail. Costumed interpreters frequently demonstrate period crafts using the tools of the time. Climb the bastion for a bird's-eye view of the fort and surrounding countryside.

Stroll through the garden outside the fort entrance as you make your way to the adjacent Pearson Air Museum. This free museum contains exhibits and small planes dating from the early 1900s through World War II.

Return to Evergreen Blvd. and Officers Row, a street lined with distinguished historic homes dating from 1846 that now house businesses and non-profit organizations. Among them is Grant House, a grand two-story structure with wrap-

around veranda which once served as army headquarters and commanding officer's residence. Today, it's The Eatery at Grant House ([eateryatthegrighthouse.com](http://eateryatthegrighthouse.com)) where you can experience its timeless ambiance while you linger over lunch.

Continue along the Discovery Loop Trail, past former military barracks, a historic orchard and replica village where Hudson Bay Company employees lived. Cross the *Land Bridge* with its interpretive signage and scenic viewpoints, then follow the Waterfront Renaissance Trail back into downtown.

Spend the remaining afternoon browsing downtown shops or sampling craft beer at any of several breweries and taphouses located there. When you've worked up an appetite, you can't go wrong with Little Conejo ([littleconejo.com](http://littleconejo.com)). Handmade tortillas and locally-sourced, fresh seasonal ingredients make for some tasty tacos. Have a margarita made with freshly-pressed citrus or choose from a "library" of more than 100 mezcals. Afterward, catch a current movie at Regal City Center 12 Cinema, or more eclectic film at Kiggins Theater ([kigginstheatre.com](http://kigginstheatre.com)), an Art-Deco gem dating to the 1930s.



The Grant House

**Day 4** On your last day in Vancouver, review your experiences over a leisurely breakfast at your lodgings. There is so much more to discover here, a few days isn't nearly enough. 🍷