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VANCOUVER, CANADA

It may be affectionately called "Hollywood North" for the movies filmed here, but 15 years ago this August I saw shooting stars of a different kind when I fell in love twice—first with Vancouver; then with my husband, Mark, who was based there playing pro ball for the Vancouver Canadians, the former Triple-A farm team for the then-called California Angels.

Surrounded by the pristine Pacific Ocean on three sides with majestic views of the craggy Coast Mountains, it's no wonder Vancouver is consistently ranked as one of the most livable cities. Whether you thrive in nature, appreciate art, crave culinary masterpieces or revel in romance, the city doesn't disappoint with a smorgasbord of indulgences. You'll fall in love more than once during your stay. I did.

Getting Around

If you're an outdoor enthusiast, you can't go wrong hoofing it or renting a bike. Bayshore Bike Rentals www.bayshorebikerentals.com offers reasonable rates. For a quick weekend escape, you're better off renting a car from Vancouver International Airport. Without a freeway directly leading into downtown, it is walker and cyclist-enticing.

Night Out

Catch the boys of summer and their night moves at Nat Bailey Stadium, home to the Vancouver Canadians—the single A affiliate of the Oakland Athletics. It's an outing the



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entire family can afford with grandstand tickets at only \$11. Players are approachable and autograph-willing and if you're lucky, that moniker will belong to a future Big League star like Padres' Jimmy Edmonds or Cardinals' Russ Springer. www.canadiansbaseball.com. Nosh at Vij's www.vijs.ca on 1480 W. 11th Ave. for its critically acclaimed Indian fare. No reservations. Waiting an hour is part of the experience. Enjoy snacks and wine al fresco.

Don't Miss

Spanning over 1,000 lush acres, Stanley Park www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/parks/stanley/ is a must-see with its seawall surrounding the entire park and its intricately carved and hand-painted totem pole display at Brockton Point. Cycle, in-line skate or take the free Stanley Park Shuttle to see the Vancouver Aquarium, Canada's largest, open daily. Pack a picnic lunch. A must-see are the magnificent rose gardens at Queen Elizabeth Park, which is the city's second-most visited park. Green thumbs enjoy the University of British Columbia Botanical Garden's themed gardens on 110-plus acres. Don't miss the annual Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival at Vanier Park running through September 27.

Tuck In

Vancouver boasts a number of quaint B & B's. If you're looking for a Walden Pond experience, check into the Lighthouse Park Bed and Breakfast www.lighthouse retreat.com in West Vancouver, located directly across the street from Point Atkinson Lighthouse. Fifteen-year proprietors, Hanna and Rob Pakow recommend taking a tranquil walk or hike to enjoy the absolutely exquisite views. Upscale boutique option: The Opus Hotel www.opushotel.com in the preserved, historic Yaletown district packed with great shopping, nightlife and art galleries.

Food Fix

Make a bee-line to the Granville Island Public Market. Sate your gastronomical cravings with an endless supply of wild and farmed salmon, fresh produce, gourmet cheeses and spicy curries. Seek a table outside to people-watch while taking in the briny air. Vancouver's dining landscape has tremendous Asian influence. Ignite your

passion for sushi at Octopus' Garden, 1995 Cornwall Ave.
Having said that, nothing beats a loaded brat and an ice-cold
Molson Canadian at Nat Bailey Stadium.

By Liz Holzemer