

Surrey, B.C.

Where nature, cultural attractions and international cuisine collide

written by Ryn Pfeuffer

IF YOU FIND yourself in Vancouver, Surrey is an excellent home base for exploring the city while retreating to a quieter place to stay. The coastal town, about 30 minutes from the city, is a worthy side trip or destination on its own.

Book a room at the Civic Hotel, Autograph Collection. The property is chic, clean, modern, and right near the metro for those traveling without a car. Request a high floor for fantastic sunset and North Shore Mountains views.

Feel like a walk by the Pacific Ocean? Try Crescent Beach in South Surrey. Its northernmost spot, along the Nicomekl River, is Blackie Spit Park. The wildlife conservation area is a popular destination for birdwatchers—home to more than 200 species of birds, including bald eagles, herons and sandpipers. Visitors can learn about the area's history at the park's interpretive center, which features displays and exhibits about the local wildlife and the history of the Coast Salish people.

After you've worked up an appetite, go to Afghan Kitchen for its aromatic spreads of shareable dishes. Think Bandejan, pan-seared eggplant with a yogurt drizzle; Mantu, steamed minced beef dumplings topped with split peas, tomato sauce and yogurt; and marinated and grilled kebabs. Dishes come from restaurateur and refugee of war during the last Taliban reign (1996-2001) Hassib Sawari. His family emigrated to Canada and escaped the war. Afghan Kitchen is

Sawari's homage to his mother's cooking. The restaurant opens at noon on weekends.

If you want a lighter meal, Mauna Sushi, in the Fleetwood neighborhood, serves a mix of classic Japanese dishes and creative new twists on traditional favorites.

Later, take a stroll through Redwood Park and marvel at the towering redwood trees, which were planted in 1936. One of the highlights of Redwood Park is the TreeWalk, a raised boardwalk that winds through the forest canopy. The TreeWalk offers stunning forest views and a unique perspective of the towering trees. The park also features several totem poles carved in the 1980s by First Nations artists. The totem poles represent the history and culture of the Coast Salish people.

Dinner at My Shanti, in the Morgan Creek neighborhood, is a must. The sister business of Vij's Indian restaurant in Vancouver, this outpost serves a modern take on Indian cuisine inspired by the travels of celeb chef Vikram Vij. The vegetarian-friendly menu serves a range of dishes, from jackfruit and cauliflower pakoras to a slow-cooked goat stew with red chilies and curry leaves. During the warmer months, guests can enjoy outdoor dining on the patio.

▼ Paddling at Crescent Beach along the wildlife conservation area.



Ian Harland/Discover Surrey



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Discover Surrey



BC Bird Trail/Discover Surrey

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Savory dishes from Afghan Kitchen. Birdwatching at Blackie Spit, where more than 200 species live. Downtown Surrey (Holland Park).



SURREY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

EAT

- Afghan Kitchen**
www.aksurrey.com
- Golden Samosa Bakery**
www.goldensamosa.ca
- HenLong Market**
www.henlongmarket.ca
- Mauna Sushi**
www.maunasushi.ca
- My Shanti**
www.vijs.ca/my-shanti

STAY


- Civic Hotel, Autograph Collection**
www.marriott.com

PLAY

- Redwood Park**
www.surrey.ca/parks-recreation/parks/redwood-park
- Crescent Beach**
www.surrey.ca/parks-recreation/parks/crescent-beach
- Blackie Spit Park**
www.surrey.ca/parks-recreation/parks/blackie-spit-park

For travelers seeking a rich urban experience, Surrey is also home to several museums and cultural attractions, such as the Surrey Art Gallery and the Historic Stewart Farm. If you want to learn more about the history and culture of the region, these are great places to wander for a few hours.

Before you head home, swing by HenLong Market. The grocery store focuses on Southeast Asian food and has a few food stalls that serve Filipino food. There's also a bakery and a deli section that offers freshly made Asian-style pastries, buns, and a variety of ready-to-eat hot dishes like dim sum, steamed buns and rice rolls.

Or go to Golden Samosa Bakery. The family-owned Indian bakery has been in business for more than twenty years and is cherished for its freshly made samosas. In addition to samosas, the bakery also offers a range of Indian sweets and snacks, such as gulab jamun, jalebi and kachori. 

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