

INSPIRATIONS

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Jonas rocks new Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton campus!

Singer-songwriter Jonas Tomalty participated in the Reverse Integration program at the Mackay Centre School in Grade 5. He returned to the school's new campus in N.D.G. for the ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 25.

Read our special report on the opening of the new Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton Schools on pages 6 to 9.

Inside this edition

- A dream inclusive playground ... *page 9*
- Pets lend helping paws in schools ... *page 13*
- Montreal businesses offer employment opportunities for people with special needs ... *pages 18, 19*
- Parenting to promote good mental health ... *page 25*
- Josh Trager overcomes visual impairment to achieve drumming fame ... *page 26*
- Bouger comme le vent ... *page 35*
- 'Choose Love' for change ... *page 39*

Trevor Paul (left), River Fraser (right) with Jonas Tomalty.



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VANCOUVER

Adapted Travel

By Mike Cohen

Beautiful Vancouver provides facilities for tourists with special needs

VANCOUVER—With an estimated one in eight people worldwide living with a disability, disabled travellers now make up one of the fastest growing tourism markets. In North America alone, people with disabilities spend more than \$13 billion each year on travel. Their biggest challenge - finding accessible travel destinations that will meet their special needs and heighten their travel experience.

Consistently among the top five most liveable cities in the world, Vancouver (<https://vancouver.ca>) also enjoys a reputation as one of the world's most accessible places to visit. Thanks to its progressive transportation systems, innovative housing and recreational opportunities, people of all ages with visual, hearing or mobility impairments can fully enjoy business and leisure time in Vancouver.

Spinal Cord Injury BC has published *Accessible Travel Project*, which includes tutorial videos to help wheelchair users figure out getting to/from the airport, the steps needed to check in, go through security and transfer onto a plane. Log on to <https://sci-bc.ca/resource-centre/accessible-travel/>.

They also created *Your Accessible Travel Guide*, a travel tips eBook that is free to download at <https://sci-bc.ca/resource-centre/accessible-travel/accessible-travel-guide/>

As one of the world's most accessible airports, over the past 20 years, Vancouver International Airport (YVR) has worked to ensure all passengers with disabilities have a positive experience travelling to and from Vancouver. Outside the terminals, ramps and special curbside parking are available at both the Arrivals and Departures areas. Relief areas for guide dogs and service animals are also provided on the Arrivals level outside the main terminal. Throughout the airport, facilities include fully-accessible restrooms, phone booths and TTY phones, plain language signage, low-mounted flight information monitors, visual paging monitors and public ad-

dress systems, check-in counters adapted for wheelchairs, and contrasting, textured flooring to guide visually impaired travellers. Individual airlines have trained staff who can assist in escorting passengers through security checkpoints and to the gates. It is recommended that travellers with disabilities state their particular needs when booking, and again at the ticket counter. Additionally, YVR Airport Customer Care personnel can be reached at 604-207-7077.

The Canada Line of the SkyTrain connects YVR to Richmond and downtown Vancouver quickly and easily. The line is fully accessible by elevator from both the Arrivals and Departures level. More than 500 trained and licensed taxis currently serve the airport. Wheelchair-accessible taxis and vans are available, and no reservations are required. Curbside staff is available to provide assistance. Most airport rental car companies can provide accessible vehicles, but a minimum of 48 hours advance booking is required.

WHERE TO STAY: There are more than 24,000 rooms in Greater Vancouver and more than 13,000 in the downtown core. For this trip we based ourselves at the Landis Hotel & Suites (<https://www.landissuitesvancouver.com>) located downtown at 1200 Hornby Street. This is part of Mayfair Properties, which also owns the neighbouring Courtyard Marriott.

Here you have easy access to the city's buzzing business district, pedestrian-only shopping entertainment districts, gorgeous green spaces and spots like Stanley Park, the Vancouver Art Gallery, historic Gastown, hip Yaletown and more. The hotel is fully wheelchair accessible. Elevators can take you from the indoor parking garage to the lobby and any floor. The second floor pool area is accessible as well. The pool itself has a wheelchair lift.

The hotel offers deluxe, executive and penthouse suites. They are in the midst of renovations, replacing carpeting with hardwood floors and outfitting the rooms



The pool area at the Landis Hotel & Suites is wheelchair accessible.

with new furniture. Our executive suite featured a master bedroom with a luxurious king-size bed and a second bedroom with a comfortable queen-size bed. Both had cozy duvets and triple sheeting, blackout drapes, closet space with mirrored glass doors and a radio alarm clock. The kitchen offers ample cooking and storage space, and includes a full-size fridge with a freezer, a stove, an oven, a dishwasher, microwave, toaster and coffee maker. You can enjoy your meals or snacks in the dining area located on an enclosed balcony with city views. The glass-top table seats four. As well, you can sleep extra guests on the pull-out sofa sleeper in the nice-sized living room, which also features a 37-inch flat screen HDTV. Guests can relax after a busy day in the deep soaker tub in the full bathroom, which also features a shower and double sinks with a granite countertop. This is one of few hotels in Vancouver to feature all-suite accommodations and an indoor pool to play around in.

For more information about the hotel call toll free: 1-877-291-6111, email res@landissuitesvancouver.com or log on to www.landissuitesvancouver.com.



Scotiabank Field at Nat Bailey Stadium is complete with wheelchair accessible ramps.

PRO BALL: If you are a baseball fan, then the months of June, July and August represent an opportunity for you to see some good old-fashioned minor league ball. The Vancouver Canadians (www.canadiansbaseball.com) play out of the prettiest little ballpark in North America - 67-year-old Scotiabank Field at Nat Bailey Stadium. There are 6,413 seats here, every one of them dandy. The Canadians are the short season rookie "A" ball affiliate of the major league Toronto Blue Jays. There are a number of wheelchair reserved parking spaces at the ballpark and these are located in the parking lot off of Ontario Street along the east end of Scotiabank Field at Nat Bailey Stadium. This stadium recognizes the needs of guests with disabilities, and provides a wheelchair access viewing platform for fans with accessibility needs and their guests located down the third base line of the ballpark. Wheelchair access is provided through the third base gate located at the Southeast corner of Nat Bailey Stadium.

WHAT TO DO: The Sea to Sky Gondola (<https://www.seatoskygondola.com>) is located on Highway 99 just south of Squamish, a scenic 45-minute drive (depending upon traffic) from downtown Vancouver. A 10-minute gondola ride will take you up to a truly magical place with some of the most spectacular views you will ever see and activities for all interests and ages. We really enjoyed the experience, especially the memorable photographs we took where the backdrop was spectacular.

As you rise from the water's edge on the valley floor, the view opens up before you: the bright blue water of Howe Sound, dotted with green islands and backed by the steep mountains of the Coast Range; the majestic Stawamus Chief; and a bird's eye view of the town of Squamish with the rugged, snow-capped mountains to the north. The ride up and down is a thrilling adventure for all ages and provides new views of Shannon Falls and the famous Squamish Chief climbing area. You will arrive at the Summit Lodge where the experience continues. A popular spot for spectacular photos is the 100-metre Sky Pilot Suspension Bridge.

Adapted Travel VANCOUVER

If you would like to explore more, there are many walking and hiking trails for all ages and abilities, whether you want a backcountry adventure or a stroller/wheelchair friendly interpretive walk. These experiences are fully accessible to all. For those looking for a bit more adventure, the Via Ferrata (Italian for the “iron-way”) is a great option. There are events happening



*The Sea to Sky Gondola
(Photo, Paul Bride)*

year-round at the Sea to Sky Gondola.

From Basecamp to Summit, the Sea to Sky Gondola makes it easy for people to connect with the great outdoors. All of the Basecamp and Summit Lodge facilities are wheelchair and stroller accessible. The gondola cabins are designed to accommodate both wheelchairs and strollers and are capable of slowing or stopping for ease of access. The patio and viewing deck at the Summit are wheelchair accessible (snow conditions permitting) and can be accessed on the left hand side of the building. The following amenities are available to make the Sea to Sky Gondola as accessible as possible: wheelchair accessible parking spaces directly adjacent to the Basecamp facilities; Accessibility window for ticket purchases at Basecamp; wheelchair accessible gender neutral washrooms available at the base and in the Summit Lodge (ask retail at Summit for directions); wheelchair accessible tables are available at the Basecamp Cafe and in the Summit Lodge; and baby changing tables at the base and at the summit.

Adult day tickets are \$39.95 when purchased online and \$41.95 at the ticket window. Check out ticket pricing and buy tickets online at <https://www.seatoskygondola.com>.

PLAYLAND: If you like amusement parks, Vancouver's Pacific National Exhibition (www.pne.ca) on East Hastings Street is the place to go. The 15-acre Playland Amusement Park is a popular attrac-

tion. Open from late April through the end of September it has hosted millions of thrill seekers of all ages since it opened in 1910. The Park was named “Happy Land” in 1926 and remained on the original site until 1958, when it was moved to its present spot and re-opened under the name Playland. Previously owned by a number of parent companies, Playland became a division of the PNE family in July, 1993. Playland's marquee attraction, the beloved 1958 Wooden Roller Coaster, remains the most popular ride on the site and one of the most highly regarded wooden coasters in the world. Designed by the legendary ride construction team, Carl Phare and Walker LeRoy, the Playland Wooden Coaster rides over half a million people annually. The flume, though, ranks as a favourite as well. Unfortunately on the day we visited, it was not operational... Other popular rides include wave swinger, west coast wheel, breakdance, the scrambler, the corkscrew, rock climbing, the hellevator, bumper cars, the pirate ship and music express. Tamer rides include the merry-go-round, cool cruisers, the super slide, raiders, helicopters, tea cups and honeybee express. There are the traditional carnival games, an arcade and plenty of food options. This place is a lot of fun and I would highly recommend you spend the day there. It was a memorable experience for my sister-in-law as this was her four-year-old's very first visit to an amusement park. He felt so adult behind the wheel of his own car (cool cruisers), driving a motorcycle (choppers) and climbing aboard the kids' rollercoaster (Kettle Creek Mine Coaster). I thought he was quite daring to go on the wave swinger. The PNE is wheelchair accessible. Disabled access is provided at one bathroom stop near the midway.

DINING OUT: There are some superb restaurants in Vancouver. Here are some in particular I strongly recommend.

JOE FORTES SEAFOOD & CHOP HOUSE

First let me tell you about Joe Fortes Seafood & Chop House (www.joefortes.ca) on downtown Thurlow Street. It has become our “go to” place while in Vancouver. On this night we were a party of five adults and a four-year-old. The hostess seated us on the gorgeous roof garden. Our server Jennifer, who also works as a manager on some nights, gave us a thorough look at the menu and the day's many specials.

One of Joe Fortes many unique qualities is the immediate sense of character and personality that guests recognize the moment they step inside. The large, bright room feels instantly powerful, yet inviting. With a commitment to freshness, the Joe Fortes kitchen receives daily local deliveries, ensuring that you're guaranteed to find the freshest ingredients on your plate every day.

Joe Fortes Seafood & Chop House has been specializing in classic, American cuisine since 1985. The kitchen prepares each dish with a focus on natural flavours and features the finest ingredients collected from Pacific Northwest farmers, fishermen and food artisans. Serving more than 50 kinds of fresh fish, including their legendary Seafood Tower on Ice, premium oysters and succulent chops, their signature dishes have become a favourite of locals, celebrities and tourists alike. From our previous two visits, the Seafood Tower on Ice was on our “must eat” list and it did not disappoint us. The five adults in our party shared two towers, almost a meal on its own, featuring chilled Atlantic lobster, local oysters, marinated clams and mussels, scallop ceviche, albacore tuna crudo and chilled jumbo prawns. We also added a crispy crab cake and some scallops.

Since we have been to Joe Fortes before, we had some valuable experience as to how to navigate the impressive menu. Three members of the group decided to have the best of both worlds – splitting the petit mignon and the most delicious cuts of fish we've ever experienced - miso marinated sable fish with sides of sesame quinoa, mushrooms, edamame, kale and sweet soy and café de Paris butter gratin, potato pavé, and market vegetables. I opted for the Sirloin Steak (seven oz.),



The main level of Joe Fortes Seafood & Chop House.

with buttermilk mashed potatoes and jasmine rice. Given the large serving I already enjoyed from the Tower, this was the perfect size of meat. The other member of our group chose the Scallop dinner from the special menu of the day. As for our little four-year-old nephew, he feasted on some macaroni and cheese. There were drinks as well for some of us, bellinis, a vodka martini and a glass of wine.

While pretty much full, the dessert menu was too appetizing to ignore so we agreed to share a piece of chocolate sin cake with ganache, brandy and chocolate brittle and half orders of traditional tiramisu with mascarpone cream, lady fingers, espresso, kahlua and baileys and the Tahitian vanilla Crème Brûlée, with house-made biscotti and whipped cream. Needless to say, we all left with smiles on our faces.

For individuals with mobility issues Joe Forte's has ground level seating as well as a single stall restroom on the main floor. There is also valet parking for a fee.

The Sandbar

I also recommend you check out the four extraordinary restaurants that make up the Sequoia Company of restaurants at vancouverdine.com. We opted in flavour of the Sandbar (<https://www.vancouverdine.com/sandbar>) on Granville Island.



The Sandbar Terrace.

There is live music here seven nights a week and quite a marvelous ambiance. The 300-seat restaurant was packed the night we chose to dine there. Guests can enjoy the bustle of the market, the non-stop energy of False Creek and the shores of Vancouver's West End. Walk up the wood post staircase, the only item that was salvaged from the historic Mulvaney's Restaurant site, and elevate your view of the city waterfront. The busy animated open kitchen gives the guest that “Granville Is-



Adapted Travel VANCOUVER

land Market feeling" plus an up-close look at the chefs as they prepare their seafood creations.

The Sandbar serves up the freshest seafood in a warm, sophisticated atmosphere. Suspended above the bar in the Teredo Lounge is Kivi, a 24 foot salmon troller hand built by Allan Farrell, one of the West Coast's finest craftsman of wooden boats. Fresh oyster bar, tapas, dinner and dancing, this is considered to be Vancouver's most popular spot to see and be seen.

Along with your menu comes a clipboard called the Seafood Fresh Sheet, with holes punched next to the items that are fresh that day.

We were a group of five adults and one four-year-old, who was thrilled with the kid's menu/colouring page. He happily enjoyed his pizza while using his crayons to the max, creating some masterpieces of his own. The adults, meantime, started off with some French martinis, a margarita and a glass of white wine before sharing a magnificent Sandbar Tower - eight jumbo prawns, 12 oysters, ahi tuna poke, salmon sashimi, king crab and lobster. I ordered a delicious cup of clam chowder while the table also shared a trio of superb sushi rolls: California (Dungeness crab, avocado, cucumber, tobiko and mayonnaise) and Tuna Goma-ae (albacore tuna, Chef Hoshi's special sesame sauce and green onion) and special scallop (diced scallop, tobiko, mayonnaise).

For the main course, a few of us gravitated toward the clipboard. I wanted something authentically B.C. and found it in the Wild Sockeye Salmon with mango papaya salsa, citrus butter and sauce. On the side I had some rice and roasted potatoes. It was a good choice. Two others chose the Sable fish (black cod) with a miso ginger glaze while another opted for the Ahi tuna, seared rare with soy mustard, wasabi, cucumber and salsa. The crab & shrimp Louie was the final item selected by a member of our party - fresh Dungeness crab, hand-peeled shrimp, egg, avocado, tomatoes, cucumbers and creamy Old Bay dressing. Their steaks are said to be very good as well, something we will have to consider on our next visit. For dessert we managed to share two decadent choices: the lemon torte and some to die for chocolate cake, accompanied by a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Our little nephew, his pizza completely digested, was more than

happy to take part in this final tasting of the evening.

The restaurant is fully handicapped accessible, including an elevator to bring patrons in wheelchairs up to the second and third floors.

Bridges

Bridges (www.bridgesrestaurant.com) was always one of my favourite spots when I used to frequent Vancouver for business a number of years ago. This restaurant has been a landmark on Vancouver's waterfront for over 27 years.

Located next to the public market on historic Granville Island, Bridges serves the freshest seafood Vancouver has to offer. Set near the Arts Club Theatre and Maritime Market, Bridges offers magnificent views of Vancouver's waterfront, mountains and city center. Bridges Dining Room, Bar, Bistro and outdoor dining are the quintessential summer experience in Vancouver. Served by public moorage, Aquabus and False Creek Ferries, Bridges is easily reached by the water and has hundreds of free parking stalls for automobile access. It is open daily, from 11 a.m. One of my oldest friends, Clifford Margolese, moved to Vancouver 35 years ago. When I asked if we could meet for lunch, he immediately suggested Bridges. It was my first time back in 10 years and the place has not lost any of its charms. On this beautiful day we stayed out on the patio, looking out at the waterfront.

Bridges operates a second floor dining room with 150 seats inside and a 40 seat terrace. On the main floor is a 120-seat bistro and a 100-seat bar with its own terrace, both fully wheelchair accessible.

Clifford and I shared some deliciously fresh oysters with pickled ginger mignonette and calamari with house made tzatziki, with crispy fried onions and jalapenos. For my main meal I remembered how good the grilled chicken club burger was, featuring free-range chicken breast and crispy bacon served with fries. You can switch the latter for another side if you wish.

Clifford, always the healthy eater, chose the mixed green salad, featuring market fresh vegetables, organic greens and honey lemon vinaigrette. He added a salmon filet as well.

I was able to coax my friend into sharing some desserts – the decadent chocolate cake and the equally fantastic lemon layer cake. It was worth the cheat for both of us and a great suggestion from our server Charlie.

Bridges is located at 1696 Duranleau Street. For more email info@bridgesrestaurant.com or call 604-687-4400.

Gotham

We got to experience Gotham Steakhouse and Bar (<https://gothamsteakhouse.com>) at 615 Seymour Street for the first time. The menu is simple and classic steakhouse, with only the finest ingredients making the cut. Hand-crafted cocktails and extensive wine list make decisions just a little harder, but satisfaction guaranteed.

The restaurant is sophisticated and elegant, but the atmosphere is comfortable and relaxed. You never know who may turn up on any given day. Gotham counts well-known performers, actors, sports icons and local legends all among its regular guests. It features soaring ceilings, sumptuous leather and velvet upholstery and, private dining rooms.

Dinner at Gotham is an occasion to remember. The à la carte menu features classic steakhouse favourites, perfectly prepared and presented in an atmosphere of luxurious comfort. The beef is Prime Grade Alberta, 28-day aged, and simply seasoned to bring out maximum flavour. The fish and seafood is delicate and fresh, and the delicious and decadent side dishes are perfect accompaniments to complete a memorable dinner.

There are two levels, with an elevator providing handicapped access to the second floor and to the basement where you will find the washrooms and some private rooms used for groups and special occasions. A seasonal urban garden patio is popular as well. All of the servers wear white tops. Our waiter Ryan has been with Gotham for 14 years.

Our party of six included one four-year-old who loved his choice from the kids menu – a grilled cheese sandwich and mashed potatoes. After starting out with

some drinks, we went directly to our main courses: a 32-ounce bone-in rib steak, served sliced, and nicely shared by two people; a perfectly prepared filet; the Blackened Ahi Tuna; and the fish of the day, which happened to be halibut with risotto and vegetables included. We all shared some sides of mashed potatoes, creamed spinach and fresh steamed broccoli. We will hopefully try items like the Seafood Tower, the jumbo lobster tail and the fresh oysters on our next visit. To cap the night off, we also shared the decadent Belgian Chocolate Bourbon Cake. It was an absolutely superb meal in a great ambience. Gift cards are available in different denominations and a very nice option if you would like to surprise a family member or business associate with something they would truly appreciate.

The house DJ is on duty for social hour, from 3 pm to 6:45 pm, Wednesday to Friday. And when the summer sun shines, he takes his mix of contemporary sounds to the patio for chilling al fresco. Tuesday through Saturdays they feature some of



Vancouver's most talented musicians in the sensuous lounge from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. This is perfect for cocktails before dinner or a luxurious after dinner drink.

Executive Chef Jean Claude is from France. He honed his skills over winters in the Alps and summers in St. Tropez. Arriving in Montreal in 1992, he spent six years at Le Soubise, then moved to Vancouver, furthering his experience at several well-known local restaurants, including as Chef-Owner of Cyrano. Since 2005, with grace, skill and good humour, he has led the Gotham kitchen.

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