

Canada The Pacific



Canada's Pacific province of British Columbia is one of the most mountainous regions in North America. Its eastern border lies mainly along the continental height of land in the Rocky Mountains, and a series of lesser ranges runs through the province from north to south at intervals all the way to the sea. Elevations range from some 3 900 metres in the Rocky and Coast Ranges to about 600 metres in interior valleys.

The Pacific coast was first explored by a succession of Russian, Spanish and British ships during the eighteenth century before any explorers reached the coast overland. Settlement did not begin until the nineteenth century, and gathered momentum under the largely illusory stimulus of gold discoveries. By 1871 the colony's population was large enough to warrant admission into the Canadian Confederation of provinces established in the east in 1867. Fourteen

years later, the promise of a nation linked from the Atlantic to the Pacific was fulfilled with the completion of the transcontinental railway through the Rockies. This required extraordinary feats of engineering both in mountain passes and in the gorge of the Fraser River.

Most of British Columbia's 2 745 000 inhabitants are concentrated in the southwestern corner of the province around Vancouver, which is Canada's third largest city, and its foremost seaport. Smaller cities are clustered in interior valleys which enjoy mild climates and excellent agricultural conditions. Most of the rest of the province's nearly one million square kilometres is heavily forested, some of it with gigantic firs reaching heights of 75 metres.

Isolated from the rest of Canada by its formidable mountain ranges, the province has a natural orientation towards other "Pacific Rim" countries. Virtually all British Columbia's major industries serve export markets. In particular, the province produces and exports large amounts of coal and forest products of all kinds. Links with Asia are reflected in Vancouver's large and growing Chinese and Japanese communities.

Dairy, fruit and general farming are all part of the region's mixed agriculture, while coastal fisheries produce halibut, cod, sole, salmon and herring as well as oysters, clams and crabs. In addition to coal, other mines throughout the interior produce lead, zinc, copper, gold and silver. Abundant hydro-electric power feeds various industries, including aluminum smelting.

Scenic splendours and the mildest climate in Canada make outdoor recreation an important part of life in British Columbia. Skiing, sailing, golf,

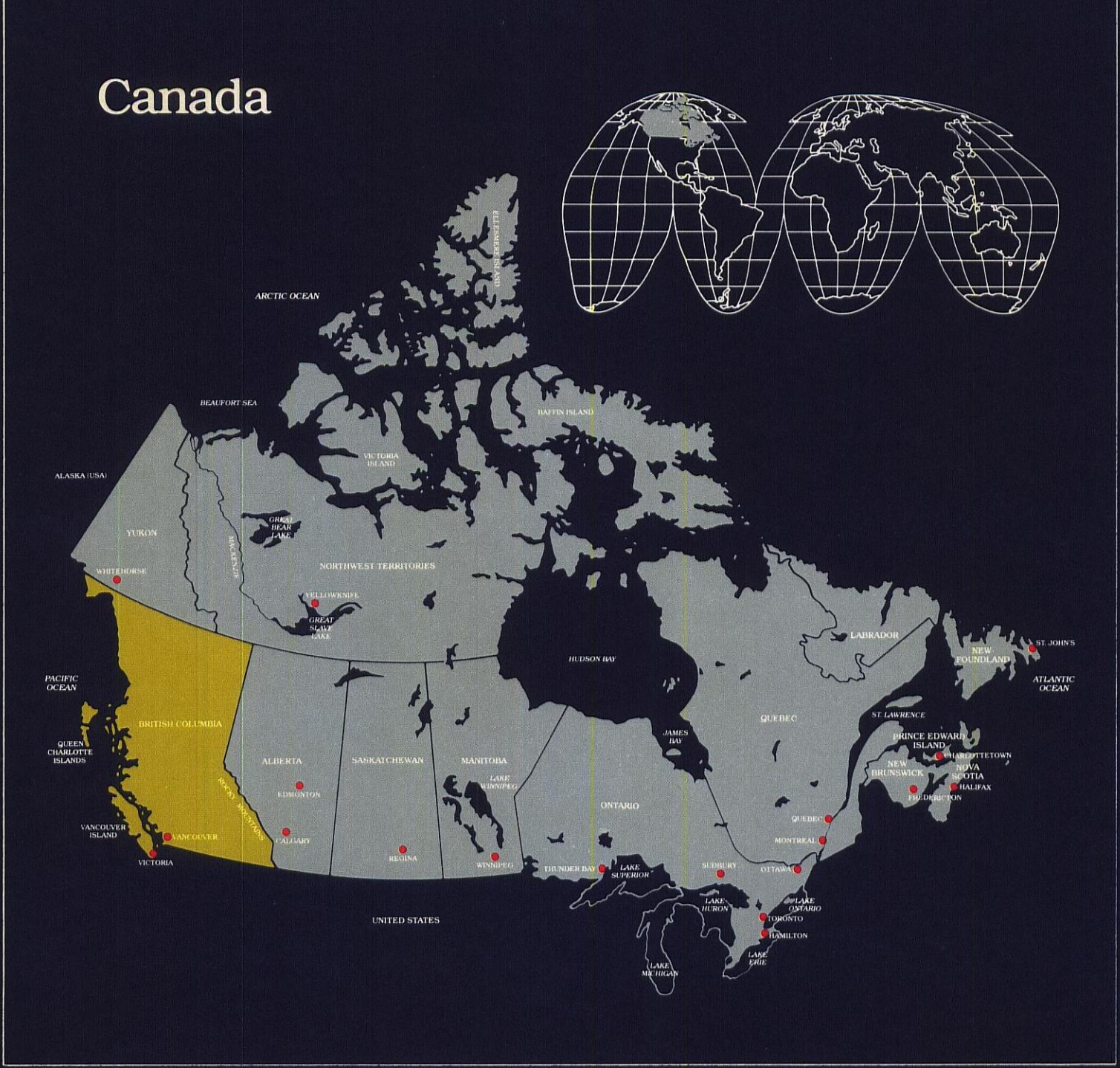
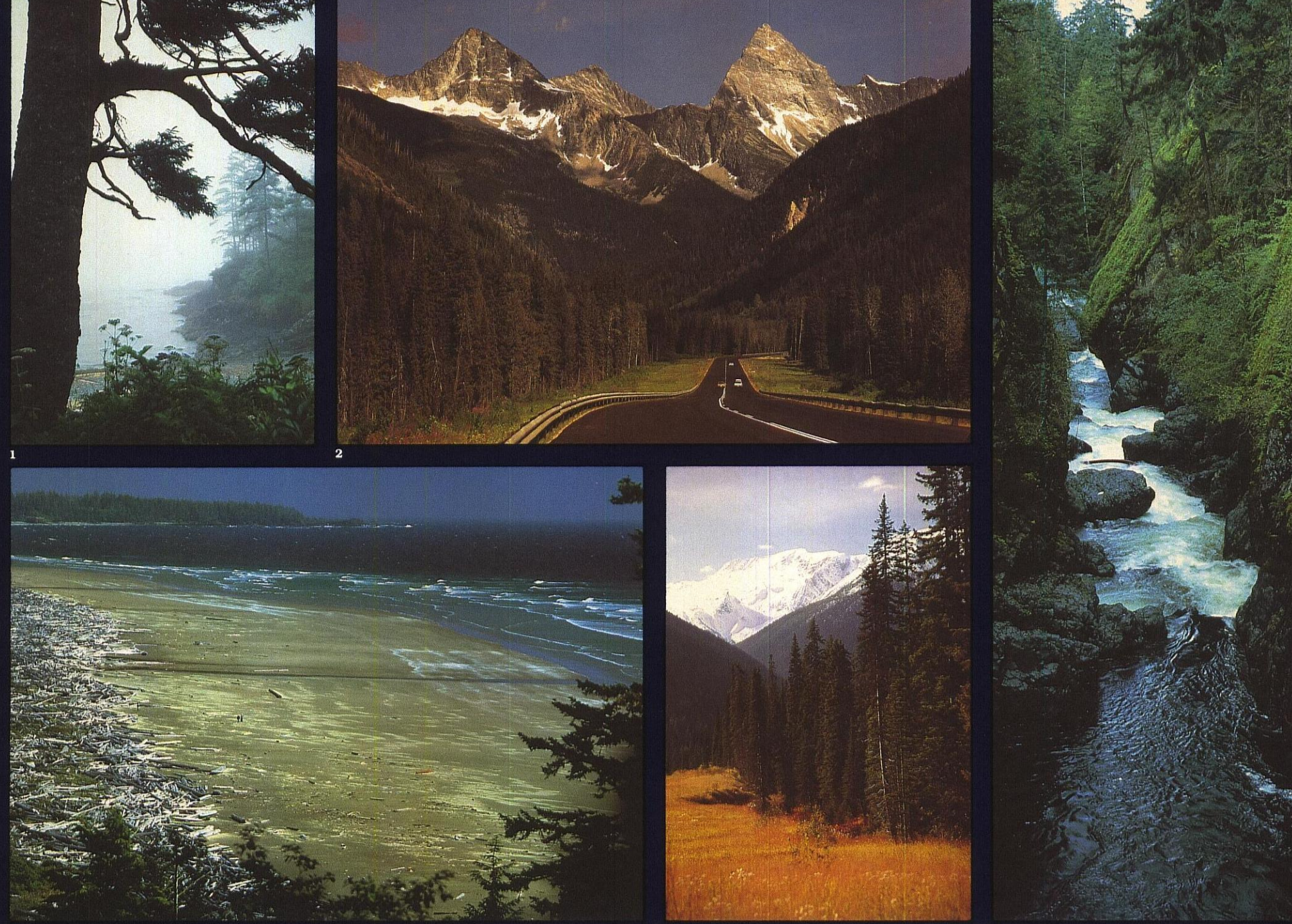
swimming, hiking and gardening are all popular pursuits.

Victoria, the provincial capital, located on Vancouver Island, keeps the "British" in British Columbia by maintaining a decidedly English flavour. Famous for its parks and gardens, the city is one of Canada's favourite retirement communities.

While British Columbia was the last region of Canada to be opened up to settlement by Europeans, it has already overtaken some other regions in development. In particular, Vancouver's rapid growth as a seaport and commercial centre has earned it an important place in the Canadian economy.

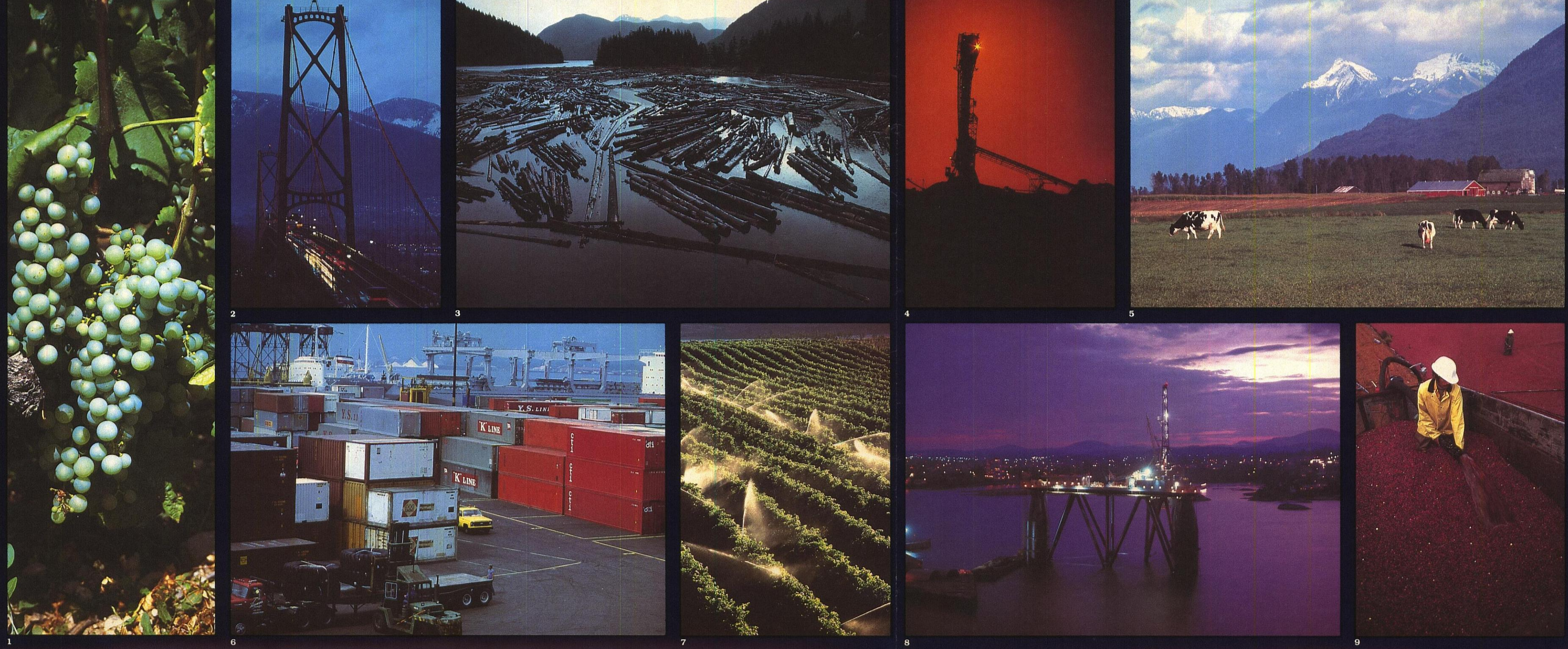


Geography



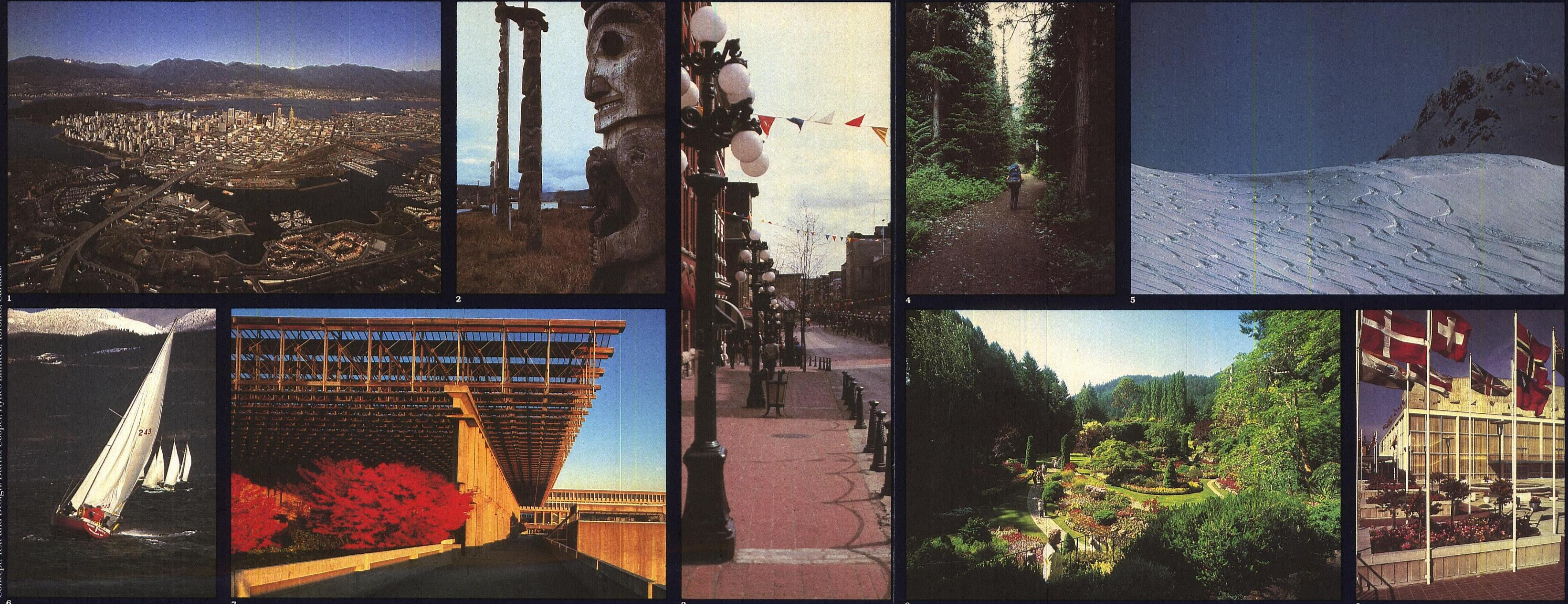
1. Forests of giant trees crowd the rocky shores of Wickaninnish Bay on the west coast of Vancouver Island. This area is part of Pacific Rim National Park.
2. British Columbia's excellent road system links dozens of communities otherwise isolated by towering mountain ranges.
3. Pacific surf leaves tonnes of driftwood on one of Vancouver Island's large beaches. In other areas, the coastline is rugged and intricate, including fjords at least 100 kilometres in length.
4. Snowcapped peaks and warm, heavily forested valleys are typical of the B.C. interior, which covers some 948 596 square kilometres of territory.
5. Precipitation of some 3 000 millimetres a year in coastal areas produces lush rain forests like this one on Vancouver Island. Inland, conditions are much drier: Okanagan Valley precipitation is 300 millimetres a year.

Economy



1. Some of Canada's finest wines are produced in the dry, sunny Okanagan Valley in the province's interior.
2. Lion's Gate Bridge soars above the lights of Greater Vancouver, the province's chief seaport, manufacturing and financial centre.
3. British Columbia is Canada's leading producer of forest products, accounting for close to 50 per cent of the nation's total volume of wood cut.
4. A large portion of British Columbia's coal production is shipped overseas through a super-port at Robert's Bank (near Vancouver).
5. Dairy farms are an important element in the balanced diversity of the Fraser Valley's agricultural economy.
6. At least 50 million tonnes of cargo are handled yearly in the Port of Vancouver.
7. Irrigation moistens crops in the summer sun near Osoyoos, in the southern interior.
8. A giant offshore oil rig moves out of the harbour of Victoria. British Columbia shipyards service vessels from around the world.
9. Cranberries grown in the Fraser Valley are harvested by the flotation method.

Culture



1. Vancouver's spectacular natural setting provides it with unparalleled recreational resources.
2. Weathered totem poles in the Queen Charlotte Islands guard the memory of the ancient Haida culture.
3. A restored square in Vancouver's Gas Town district preserves a piece of the city's brief but colourful past.
4. Forests, mountains and hikers epitomize British Columbia's outdoor life.
5. Helicopters are used to lift skiers to the heights of the Monashee Mountains in the province's interior.
6. A wealth of islands, fjords, inlets and natural harbours make the Pacific Coast a yachtsman's paradise.
7. Simon Fraser University, named for one of the region's most intrepid early explorers, is one of British Columbia's important academic centres.
8. The Butchart Gardens near Victoria attest to the region's virtually perfect gardening climate.
9. Flags fly outside the Queen Elizabeth Theatre and Playhouse during the annual Vancouver International Festival.

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