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Featuring everything from city circuits and fun runs to epic trails, such as the Grand Canyon Rim to Rim, and classic events, such as the Big Sur and Boston marathons. Contributors include Alison Mariella Désir, Hannah Selinger, Jinghuan Liu Tervalon, Mark Remy, Allison Burtka and Stephanie Case.



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EPIC RUNS of NORTH AMERICA

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# EPIC RUNS of NORTH AMERICA

Explore North America's most thrilling running routes and trails





# FORESTS AND FAR-FLUNG SHORES ALONG BC'S TONQUIN TRAIL

*Fiona Tapp finds solitude on an early-morning run on this scenic trail through the beaches, rainforests, and Indigenous lands of Tofino, on Vancouver Island.*

**T**he ancient rainforests in Tofino cling to the rugged cliffs as Pacific waves crash below, filling the air with a fresh, salty scent. Here it feels easier, somehow, to connect to the water, the land, and your own body – and what better way to do that than by taking to the trail?

When I am running here, far from home, I slow my pace, stop to enjoy the landscape, snap a photo, or chat with a local about where to go next. I abandon my usual running playlist entirely and instead try to tune in to the sounds all around. Here they include the rush of the waves and children laughing on the beach.

Each time I've come to Tofino, I've stayed at Pacific Sands Beach Resort and have run along Cox Bay, back and forth as the surfers dot the waves. I like to watch them as I run and time my stride with the way they dip below the water and then pop back up to ride triumphantly toward the shore. They have an outdoor barrel sauna here, which is the perfect treat to motivate tired muscles to chug on just a little longer. I've bribed myself many

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times with the promise of that sauna. When I'm feeling brave, I take it a step further and complete a Scandi-style hydrotherapy circuit by dousing myself in icy water after the heat of the sauna, or even rushing down for a quick wild swim in the ocean.

As much as I love running on the beach, Tofino offers something rare: stunning and contrasting geographical features just steps away from the shore. Running the Tonquin Trail lets you experience the rich variety of Tofino's landscapes, from beach to old-growth coastal rainforest, and the Indigenous Tla-o-qui-ah't lands that have been inhabited here for over 5000 years.

It's a looped trail that starts and ends at the Tofino Community Hall, which makes it ideal for running with friends, with a clear meeting point even if you run at different paces. Run along the tree-lined gravel path and first you'll come to Tonquin Beach, via a series of wooden steps set into the forest. Use these for sprints, hill training, or simply catch your breath and look up into those marvelous moss-covered trees. Continue down to the small beach area to run along the sand for some additional resistance, or enjoy the calmer waves here, which are bordered by a rocky shoreline. Retrace your steps to the main trail, then turn in the opposite direction to the Community Hall; here you can run along the coast from above, on the relatively flat gravel forest path. I've never seen anything more than birds on my trips here, but multiple signs alert visitors to the possibility of encountering wildlife such as bears, cougars, and wolves. So, it makes sense to be aware of your surroundings and stay alert to the potential for unwanted running companions.

Along your route, you'll find some spectacular points to stop and enjoy the views of Clayoquot Sound, including the Maze Lookout, where you can spy the lighthouse on top of Lennard Island, and take in Templar Channel and Wickaninnish Island. The latter's name comes from Chief Wickaninnish of the Tla-o-qui-ah't, who was a powerful leader controlling the west coast



### EVERYTHING IS ONE

The Tla-o-qui-ah't First Nation of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations uphold values of environmental stewardship known as the principles of Hish-uk-ts'o-walk, which means 'everything is one'. Learn more about the Tla-o-qui-ah't's guardianship of the land, and the principles of sustainability in this beautiful territory, at their flagship visitor experience, the Big Tree Trail at Wanachus-Hilthuius (Meares Island) Tribal Park. Here you'll see Western red cedar trees, some as old as 1500 years.



*Clockwise from top: Vancouver Island's west coast near Tofino; downtown Tofino; seaplane at Tofino; run through temperate rainforest in the Pacific Rim National Park. Previous spread: Cox Bay Beach and running the Pacific coast of Vancouver Island*



of Vancouver Island in the late 1700s. This is also the site of a shipwreck, from 1811, after a conflict broke out between American traders and members of the Tla-o-qui-ah't community, which resulted in an explosion that sank the *Tonquin*, a fur-trading vessel. Later on, walk down Third St toward the harbor and you'll find the anchor from the ill-fated ship on display.

On your run, you'll also pass several creeks and a small wetland before your last beach-stop of the trail, at Middle Beach, which passes through the ha-houlthee (traditional territory) of the Tla-o-qui-ah't people. This is your halfway point, so maybe stop for a snack and a stretch before looping back to the start of the trail.

The Tonquin Trail is popular but at many spots, particularly Third Beach, you may well find it deserted, especially if you do as I do and go early in the morning when it feels like you have the Earth to yourself and can enjoy a coastal sunrise.

One of the more surprising aspects of this run is how, at times, it feels so remote, whereas it is, in fact, very central. The Tonquin's start and end are within a 10-minute walk of some of the town's most popular attractions, including the gallery of renowned Indigenous artist Roy Henry Vickers and the popular Wolf in the Fog restaurant. This makes it very accessible even without a car, and a convenient point to meet up with friends for a run or hike before enjoying the rest of your day in Tofino. I also love how it unfolds, beginning just as a path through a forest before revealing glimpses of the coast, the smell of the ocean air, and the sound of crashing waves. As you descend the wooden steps, the appearance of the beach below is like opening a gift. **FT**



**Start/Finish** // Tofino Community Hall  
**Distance** // 2.2 miles (3.5km) plus half a mile (800m) of boardwalk and stairs.

**Getting there** // Drive to Tofino from the mainland, crossing on the ferry, or take a seaplane from Vancouver into Tofino Harbor.

**When to go** // Tofino is popular and well-visited year-round but especially in the summer and the storm-watching season, which runs from November to February.

**What to wear** // Quick-drying layers that adapt to Tofino's changeable weather.

**Where to stay** // Pacific Sands Beach Resort ([pacificsands.com](http://pacificsands.com))

**Where to eat** // Order a luxury pop-up picnic from Lux.Fino or enjoy wild, foraged, local ingredients when you dine at SoBo.

**Things to know** // Run the Tonquin Trail at low tide to enjoy even more of the beaches.

**More info** // [tourismtofino.com](http://tourismtofino.com)





Opposite: the Valley of the Five Lakes Trail near Jasper; boardwalk in the Pacific Spirit Regional Park

## MORE LIKE THIS NATURE RUNS IN WESTERN CANADA

### PACIFIC SPIRIT REGIONAL PARK, BRITISH COLUMBIA

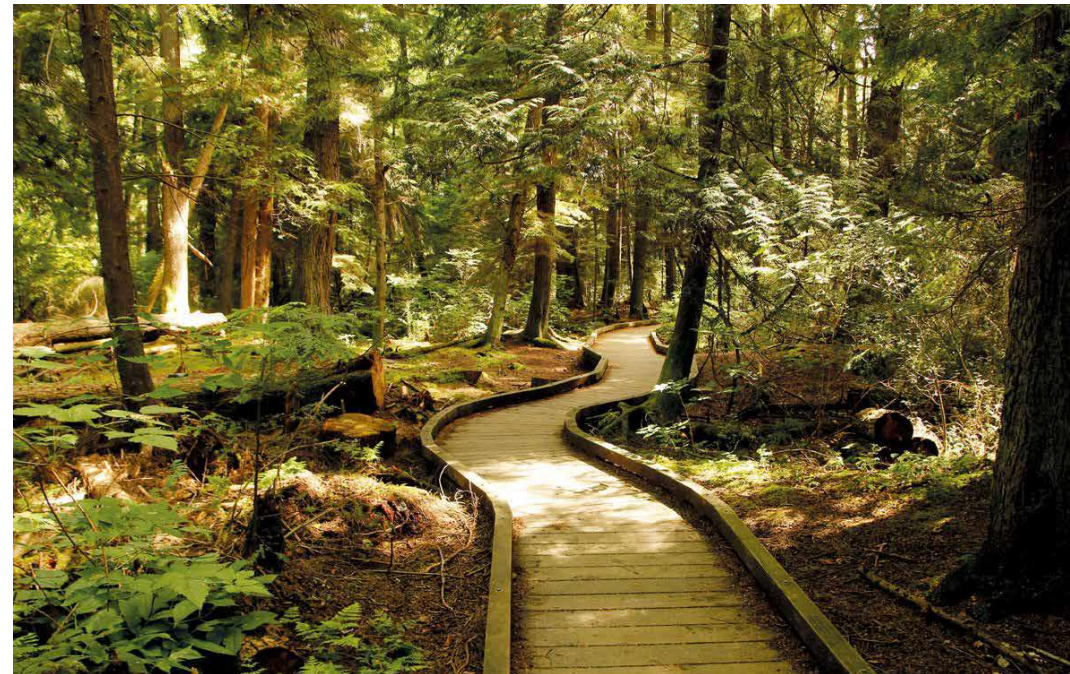
Located in the north of the park, the Spanish Trail is a picturesque journey through part of this expansive century-old, 1850-acre (750-hectare) second-growth forest. It starts with a steep incline but then plateaus out significantly to a fairly flat path, offering a relaxed run with multiple connecting trails if you want to explore further. Stay alert to other trail users, including those on horseback or riding mountain bikes, as these are shared multi-use paths. The route is well-marked and features hemlock, cedar, and maple leaf trees. You'll follow the route along the Sword Fern Trail before it connects to the Salish Trail and onto the Admiralty Trail, bringing you back around in a loop to the start of the Spanish Trail. **Start/Finish // Spanish Banks Central Parking Lot, Vancouver**  
**Distance // 3.4 miles (5.5km)**  
**More info // [metrovancover.org/services/regional-parks/park/pacific-spirit-regional-park](https://metrovancover.org/services/regional-parks/park/pacific-spirit-regional-park)**

### VALLEY OF THE FIVE LAKES, ALBERTA

Once you've run from the start of the trail toward the lakes, you'll have a choice: take the clockwise path to see the lakes in order (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc), or take a right and travel the route counter-clockwise to appreciate the lakes in reverse order, which means you'll save the largest and perhaps most impressive lake (1st lake) for the end of your run. Just a 15-minute drive from Jasper, Alberta, this trail is incredibly popular with good reason – the five lakes are truly stunning, boasting otherworldly turquoise waters that demand you stop and snap a picture or two. You'll cross a footbridge and a marsh during your run, and be sure to keep your eyes out for the sixth, uncounted bonus lake. **Start/Finish // Valley of the Five Lakes, Banff**  
**Distance // 3 miles (4.8km)**  
**More info // [jasper.travel/experiences/valley-five-lakes-everyone](https://jasper.travel/experiences/valley-five-lakes-everyone)**

### WHITTAKER TRAIL, MT DOUGLAS PARK, BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Whittaker and Irvine Trails are well-maintained paths around the edge of Mt Douglas Park, offering a captivating loop through lush forests, featuring towering Douglas fir and cedar trees. As you get closer to the mountain, you'll need to cross a road and the trail will get steeper here, with some possible scrambling required to reach the 738ft (225m) summit elevation. The incredible views over Victoria are well worth the effort put in on your ascent. Once you've enjoyed your reward, you'll follow the Irvine Trail back down again, connecting with Whittaker to return to the same starting point. Mt Douglas Park is going through a process of name restoration and will be officially known by the Indigenous WSÁNEĆ word PKOLS (pronounced 'p'cawls') which means 'white rock'. **Start/Finish // Cordova Bay Rd, Victoria**  
**Distance // 2.79 miles (4.5km)**  
**More info // [saanich.ca/EN/main/parks-recreation-community/parks/parks-trails-amenities/signature-parks/mount-douglas-park.html](https://saanich.ca/EN/main/parks-recreation-community/parks/parks-trails-amenities/signature-parks/mount-douglas-park.html)**



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