

THE VANCOUVER SUN

Activity level this week; [Final Edition]

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Legend for activity levels

Price level \$ \$0 - \$99. \$\$ \$100 - \$500 \$\$\$ \$500+

Difficulty

I Beginner

n Intermediate

s Pro

Family friendly Whole family 10 years+ Adults only

Travel time (From downtown Vancouver in hours) Less than

TIME OF DAY Daytime Night time Day and Night

at its best July August September

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CAVING AT HORNE LAKE

On a hot day, it pays to remember caves are cool. **Horne Lake** Provincial Park on central Vancouver Island has two caves open for free exploration. Guided tours of other caves, up to 60 m below the entrance, range from a 1 1/2 hour family tour (\$64 for 2 adults/2 kids) to a five-hour adventure that includes ra-pelling down a six-storey waterfall (\$139/person).

Elevation: down to -60 m (vs. entrance)

Contact: **Horne Lake** 250-757-8687

Website: www.hornelake.com

VISIT AN UNDERSEA GARDEN

Keep driving past Butchart Gardens and you'll find another display of nature's eye candy -- but this one's underwater. Visitors to Pacific Undersea Gardens in Victoria Harbour go below the deck of a ship. There, they can look through windows into the

ocean at colourful, flower-like sea creatures without getting wet. \$28 for 2 adults/2 kids.

Elevation: -5 m (vs. sea level)

Contact: Pacific Undersea Gardens 250-382-5717

Website: www.pacificunderseagardens.com

SNORKELLING WITH SEALS

The harbour seals of Snake Island like snorkellers. They'll chew on their flippers and push their noses up against visitors' masks and cameras, says Ian Hall of Ocean Explorers. The company brings tourists from Nanaimo's Departure Bay to swim with the seals for \$99/ person. The water is clearest and the seals abundant Aug.-Oct., but July is okay too.

Elevation: 0 to -0.5 (vs. sea level)

Contact: Ocean explorers 1-250-753-2055

Website: www.oceanexplorersdiving.com

DIVING SKOOKUMCHUCK NARROWS

Suncoast Diving is one of several shops that offer charters to the colourful, abundant sea life of Skookumchuck Rapids; and you should take an experienced charter because the rapids can be dangerous and unpredictable. Daytime slack waters suitable for diving occur only a couple of times a month, so plan ahead. A full package including equipment and a dive at one other location in the area costs \$160/person. Boat only is \$110.

Elevation: -12 m to -25 m (vs. surface)

Contact: Suncoast Diving 604-740-8006

Website: www.suncoastdiving.com

CRABBING OFF THE PIER

You can buy live crabs, but it's more fun to catch your own at White Rock, Jericho or Ambleside piers. You just need a fishing licence, a crab pot (trap) and some bait (fish heads or guts). Licences are free for kids, but adults need to pay \$5.62/day or \$22.47/yr. Bring a ruler to be sure your catch is big enough to keep.

Elevation: around -5 m (vs. surface)

Contact: Crabbing (fisheries & oceans) 604-666-0384

Website: www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca

SNORKELLING SOOKE POTHOLES

The clear, chilly Sooke River pours through a series of deep pools, some with waterfalls between. These "potholes" are a popular swimming spot on hot summer days. Cycle there on the Galloping Goose from Victoria, and take your snorkel for a look at the fish and underwater rock formations.

Elevation: 0 to -5 m (vs. surface)

Contact: Sooke potholes 250-479-8053

Website: www.sookepotholes.com

UNDERWATER WHALE WATCHING

You might spot orcas but you won't see belugas from a local whale watching tour boat. To get a glimpse of belugas, you'll have to go to the Vancouver Aquarium. Head down to the whale tank underwater viewing for a close-up. \$59 for 2 adults/2 kids.

Elevation: -10 m (vs. surface)

Contact: Vancouver Aquarium (604) 659-3474

Website: www.vanaqua.org

HISTORY UNDER GASTOWN

In Gastown you don't need to dig for the history underfoot -- just go to Storyeum. Its B.C. Live Underground attraction is a theatrical re-enactment of B.C.'s history from the Tseil-Waututh Nation's creation story to the present day, while its Dinosaurs Under Gastown exhibit takes you way back with fossils, dino skeletons and an animatronic T-rex. \$95.80 for 2 adults/2kids.

Elevation: -5 m to -9 m (vs. sea level)

Contact: Storyeum 604.687.8142

Website: www.storyeum.com

GO DOWN A MINE SHAFT

You have to climb stairs to get to the B.C. Museum of Mining in Britannia Beach, but once you're inside the mine shaft, 90 m of mountain sit above you. At the museum, you can try gold panning or ride an underground train. \$49.75 for 2 adults/2 students.

Elevation: -90 m (vs. surface)

Contact: B.C. Museum of Mining 1-800-896-4044

Website: www.bcmuseumofmining.org

FREE DIVE

It's possible to swim 110 m underwater just by holding your breath, and Vancouver has some of the world's best breath-hold divers or freedivers, including some who can give you lessons (\$295 for a basic course). But don't try this at home, kids -- you need training to freedive safely.

Elevation: 0 to -110 m (vs. surface)

Contact: Freedive Canada 604-420-5012

Website: www.freedivecanada.com