

# Vancouver Island Visitor Centre, (VIVC) Comox Valley Annual Report – 2015

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## Introduction

The Vancouver Island Visitor Centre (VIVC) continues to experience steady growth. True visitor party numbers have continued to grow over 2014 figures, by 6%. Visitation at the Centre compares positively to visitation throughout the Region. On July 18<sup>th</sup> the VIVC welcome the 100, 000<sup>th</sup> visitor and the total number of visitors that visited in 2015 was 27,644 and this is a 12% increase over last year. True visitor parties into the building continue to rise. This year proved to show an impressive increase of 10%. Europeans represent the third highest Visitor Origin to visit the centre. Facility rentals and consignment sales also saw increases. Trip Advisor reviews continue to show a high level of guest satisfaction.

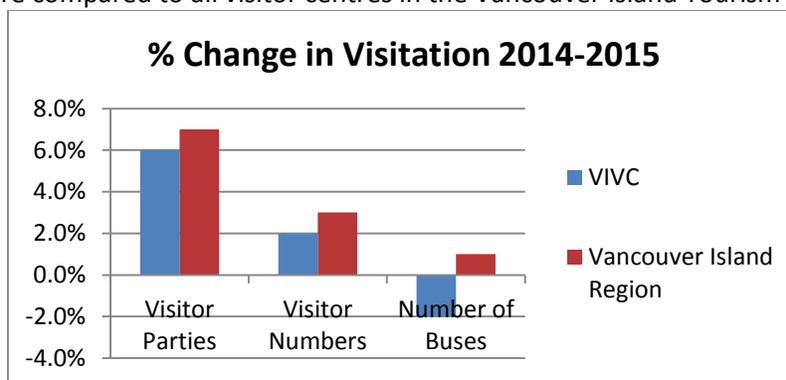
## Visitor Statistics

Visitor parties are defined as any group travelling together regardless of the number of people, while visitor numbers are the total number of individuals who came into the Centre. True visitor parties are what would be considered as “tourists” – visitor parties from outside of the Comox Valley area.

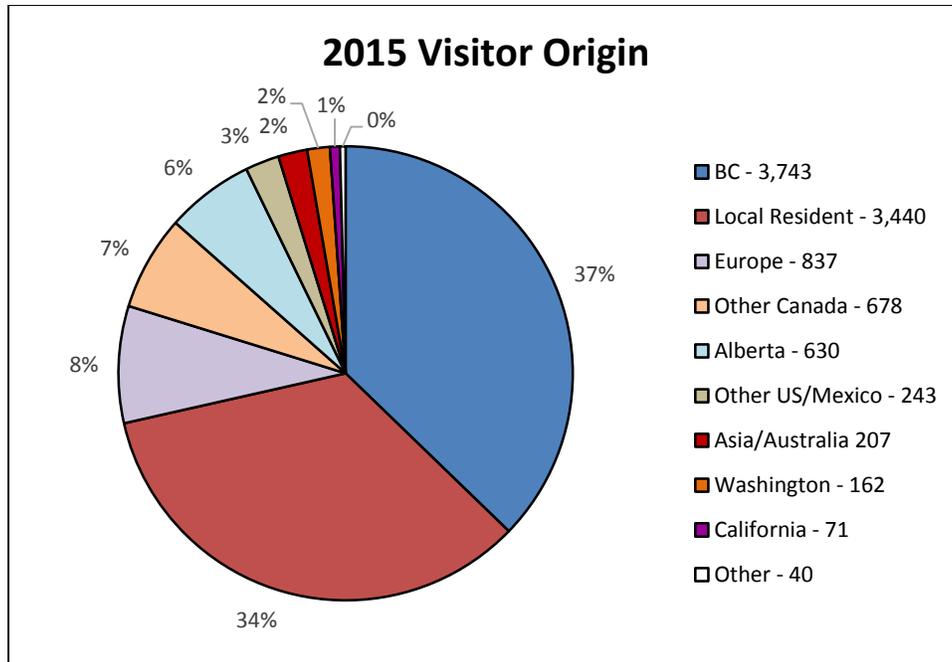
The following chart shows a comparison of statistics between 2015 and 2014:

Statistics	2015	2014	% Change
Total Visitor Parties	17,070	16,088	6%
Local Parties	3,440	3,769	-9%
True Visitor Parties	13,630	12,319	10%
Visitor Numbers	27,644	27,312	12%
Number of Buses	30	32	-6%

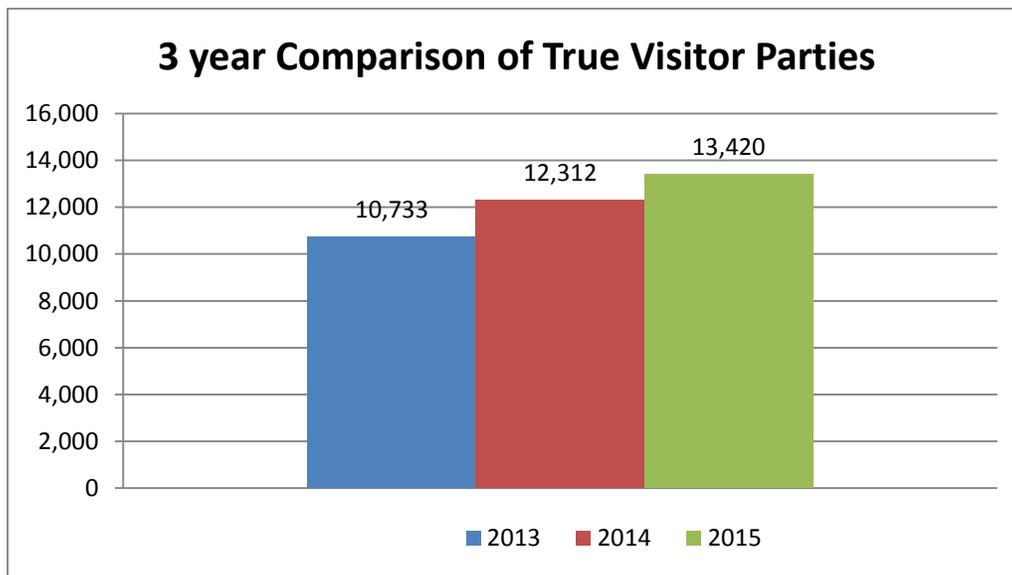
The following chart shows the changes in visitor parties, visitor numbers and buses for the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre compared to all visitor centres in the Vancouver Island Tourism Region:



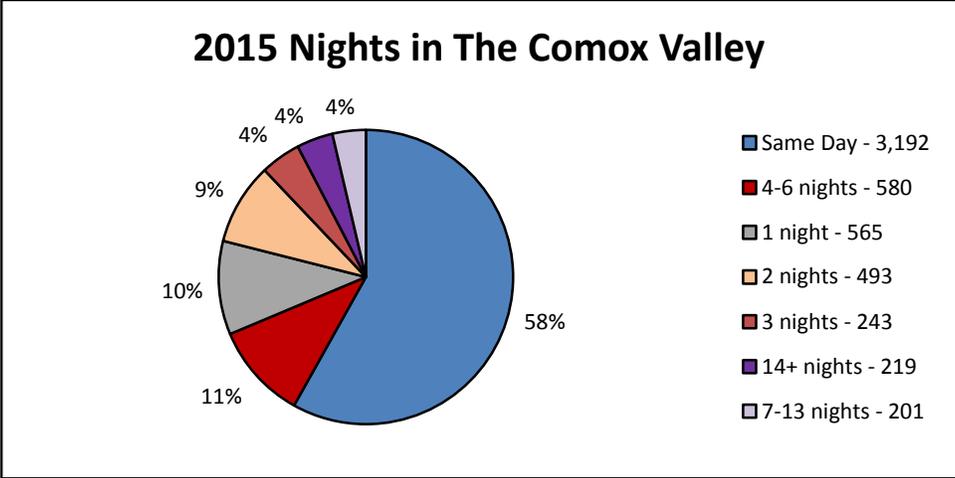
The following chart shows BC residents represent the slightly higher number of visitors 37%. It also shows strong support for the Visitor Centre and the Comox Valley. This is in line with the increase of BC residents vacationing within the province. The next highest percentages of visitors are those from the local Comox Valley Region (34%). This holds true that many local residents bring out-of-town guests to get information for their stay or just to browse the grounds and exhibition gallery. It is very interesting to point out that Europe is the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest Visitor Origin into the centre (8%). The breakdown of visitors by origin shown in the graph below:



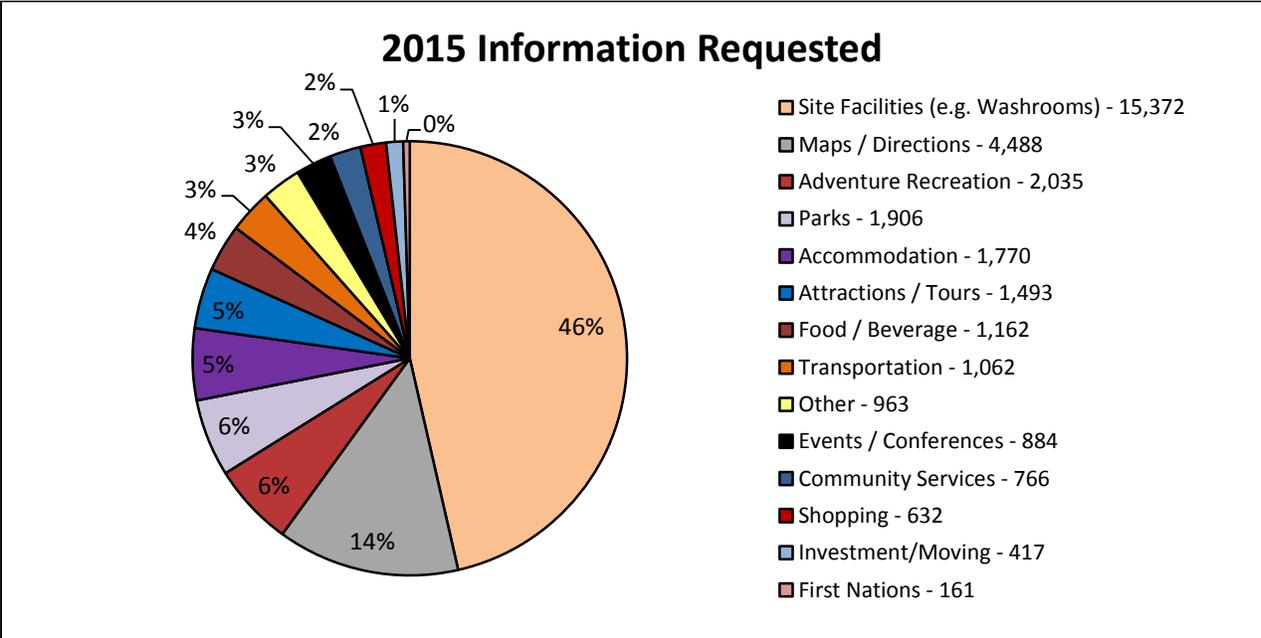
Although the number of local parties declined in 2014, visitation from true visitors has increased substantially which allows the staff at the VIVC to encourage longer stays and promote the bookable products available to visitors through the centre. The following chart shows the increase in true visitor numbers from 2014 to 2015:



Other information about the parties who visited the Centre is shown in the charts below: The following chart shows the number of nights spent in the local community by visitor party. It is typical in visitor centres across BC that the largest group (58% provincially,) are same day visitors. These are visitors who are passing through the area and have not spent a night locally. As with all visitors, counsellors work diligently to create a positive first impression and encourage longer stays and repeat visits.



The following chart shows information requested by visitor party in 2015. It should be noted that most parties request more than one type of information, so although site facilities is the highest category, it is likely that after these visitors located and used the facility required, they also asked questions from other categories. When washroom facilities are not taken into account, the highest category of information requested is Maps and Directions, despite the prevalence of hand held devices.



Of the three major communities in the Comox Valley, Courtenay is the most inquired municipality.

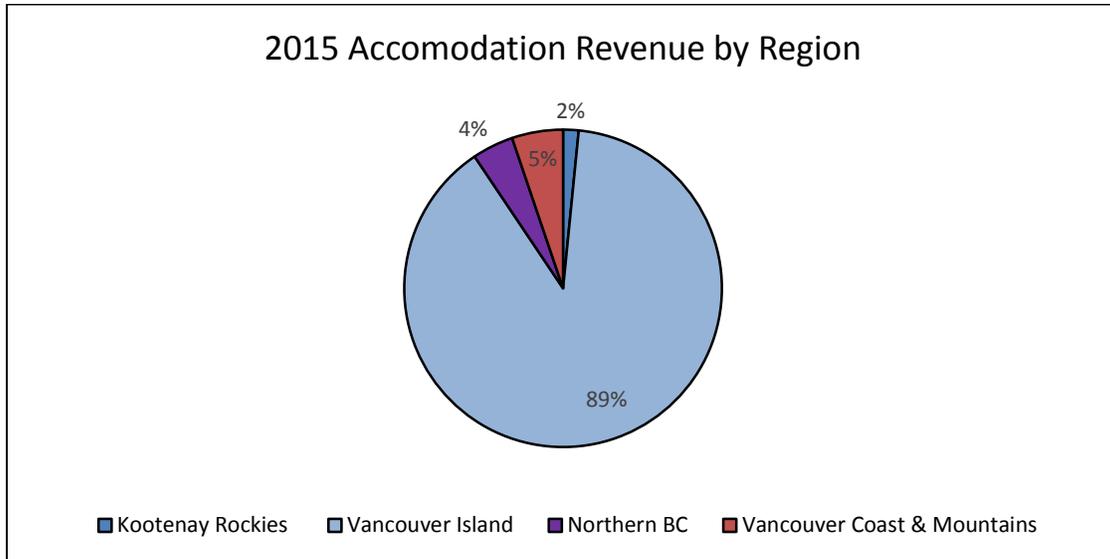
	2014
Courtenay	1373
Cumberland	1202
Comox	1100

	2015
Courtenay	1656
Cumberland	1497
Comox	1452

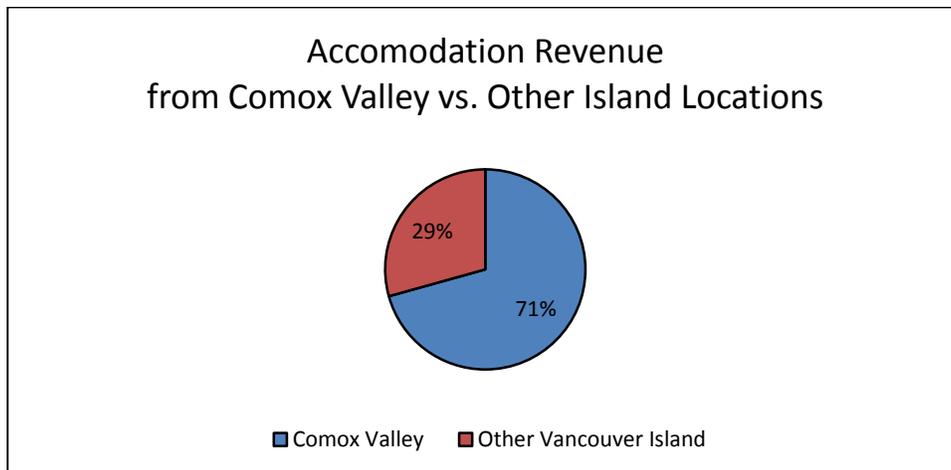
## Accommodation Revenues

The decline in accommodation revenues is consistent with what is happening at visitor centres throughout the Province. The trend is for visitors to make their own reservations on their cell phones and tablets using sites such as bookings.com. Although the travellers who use the Visitor Centre booking system really appreciate it, fewer visitors require this service. For the coming year an online booking system is being sourced to enable direct online bookings of tours, activities, packages and event tickets.

The following chart shows a breakdown of reservations by Tourism Region:

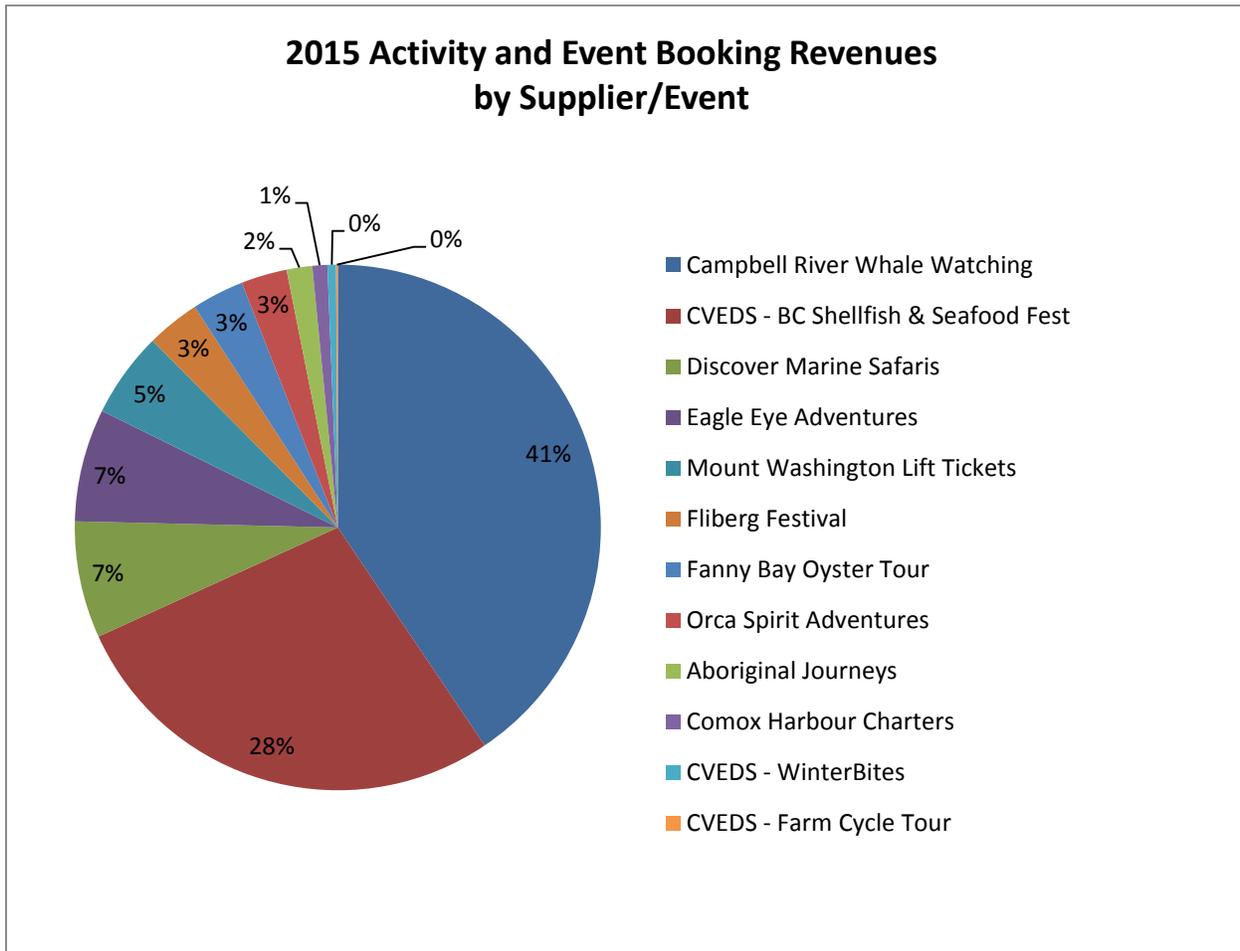


The following chart shows the percentage of Vancouver Island reservations made by the Centre in the Comox Valley compared to those made in other Vancouver Island locations.



## Activity and Event Booking Revenues

Although activity, festival and event bookings sales experienced a decline due to contract turnovers, as well as a trend province wide, that travellers were not booking in advance with visitor centres, but instead were booking direct with suppliers due to droughts and forest fires. The following chart shows the local bookings by operator:



The following chart shows the activities and events on Vancouver Island currently bookable by the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre:

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Aboriginal Journeys                        | Filberg Festival                     |
| BC Salmon Farmer's Assoc-Salmon Farm Tours | Island Joy Rides                     |
| Campbell River Whale Watching              | Pacific Coach                        |
| Comox Valley Kayaks and Canoes             | Prince of Whales Whale Watching      |
| Discovery Marine Safaris                   | Royal BC Museum                      |
| Eagle Eye Adventures                       | Tide Rip Grizzly Adventures          |
| Fanny Bay Oysters                          | Vantoptours - Vancouver and Victoria |
| BC Shellfish and Seafood Festival          | Victoria Butterfly Gardens           |
| Farm Cycle Tour                            | Victoria IMAX                        |

## Summary

The statistics and revenues show that the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre continues to fulfill its role of enhancing the economic activity through tourism to the area by promoting longer stays and return visits to prospective visitors and those who have come into the Centre.

The year ahead will see a launch of the enhanced Visitor Services Marketing Opportunities Program, with product specific themed visitor intercept brochures presenting bookable products & tours including Dine and Drink, Arts/Culture & Heritage, Marine Adventures and more, complemented by a reformatted official Comox Valley Vacation Guide. This initiative and focus will bring more individuals through the door to drive increased product bookings across numerous sectors of the tourism industry.

2016 will also see the integration of a streamlined online booking system. This system will allow customers to see the scope of bookable products available through the Centre and enable conversion of bookings prior to guests travel to the region.

## Trip Advisor Reviews

A sample of comments from the VIVC Trip Advisor page shows that that the Centre is surpassing visitor expectations and leaving them with a memorable impression of their time spent at the VIVC:



Quinn L  
Moncton, Canada

Level 5 Contributor

84 reviews

53 attraction reviews

7 helpful votes

*“Wow!”*

Reviewed 25 October 2015

We stopped because the building looked very odd. A circle? Made of wood? The outside wasn't much compared to the inside, though. A few big touchscreens to learn about the area, several stands, and displays. So you can entertain kids with the exhibits while grabbing some travel info. Great idea!

Helpful?

Thank Quinn L

Report



Imjives  
Victoria, Canada

Level 5 Contributor

49 reviews

22 attraction reviews

19 helpful votes

*“Great presentation”*

Reviewed 24 September 2015

I was impressed with this visitor centre. We stopped to use the facilities and stayed to take in the display area depicting local attractions and activities. It's fun, has visual appeal, and hits the right tone for families and folks who want casual colourful information. There's a decent gift shop, a couple of snack options, and a full-service reservation centre....

More ▾

Helpful?

Thank Imjives

Report



Arcosdad  
Comox Valley, Canada

Level 6 Contributor

95 reviews

22 attraction reviews

58 helpful votes

*“Best visitor centre in BC”*

Reviewed 16 September 2015

We have been into the center a number of times since moving to the Island and always have had a warm reception and excellent service. They even mailed us a package within 5 business days when we inquired about real estate etc prior to moving. The building itself is impressive as are the displays and clean washrooms. There is even...

More ▾

Helpful?

Thank Arcosdad

Report



boss622  
Vancouver, Canada  
Level 4 Contributor

- 17 reviews
- 13 attraction reviews
- 8 helpful votes

*“Nice stop by place”*

★★★★★ Reviewed 12 September 2015

This is a very good visitor center. The design of the center so awesome Inside the building, there is a room with all the think you can do in this city It also have a small playground for kids. The Staff are very kind and give a lot of information where we can go. you must visit this place if...

More ▾

Helpful?

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More ▾

Helpful?

Report



Tootall70  
Calgary, Canada  
Level 4 Contributor

- 24 reviews
- 16 attraction reviews
- 9 helpful votes

*“Great Stop...Great staff”*

★★★★★ Reviewed 2 September 2015

We stopped on our way to Comox. The staff are super friendly, and the building is clean and well kept. Information available was very informative, and the staff were very helpful adding there knowledge to what I already knew. A must stop if in the area.

Helpful?

Report



FishandRose  
Edmonton, Canada  
Level 4 Contributor

- 24 reviews
- 21 helpful votes

*“Best Visitor's Information Centre.”*

★★★★★ Reviewed 19 August 2015

This is absolutely the best Information Centre that we have visited in our travels (4 continents). It is worth a visit even if you don't need tourist information. There are interactive, entertaining displays in The Gallery. The many local arts, crafts and products in the gift shop make it difficult to decide what to buy for presents or decor additions....

More ▾

Helpful?

Report



ross m  
Royston, Canada

Level 6 Contributor

- 61 reviews
- 26 attraction reviews
- 19 helpful votes

### *"A must Stop for new Visitors and locals too"*

Reviewed 17 August 2015

The Visitor Centre is all about telling stories of things to do and see on the Island. Their decor setting in the round building tells it all in an experience way. Staff are knowledgeable and helpful. Good spot to stop for a quick coffee and a chat upon entering or leaving the Comox Valley and just a few minutes from...

More ▾

Helpful?

Thank ross m

Report



morewierd  
Boulder, Colorado

Level 6 Contributor

- 398 reviews
- 112 attraction reviews
- 166 helpful votes

### *"Superb Service"*

Reviewed 4 August 2015

After arriving on the ferry this AM from Powell River, the first item on our agenda was the V.C. We were slightly annoyed that we had to go thru the whole city.....BUT...it was worth it. Ivonne took care of us and we left with all the info we needed AND MORE. DO stop here to get your questions answered and...

More ▾

Helpful?

Thank morewierd

Report



Audrey A  
Cumberland

Level 3 Contributor

- 11 reviews
- 6 attraction reviews
- 6 helpful votes

### *"Vancouver Island Visitor Centre"*

Reviewed 18 February 2015

The visitor centre is worth a stop if you have never visited it before. They have some interesting interactive displays as well as a little gift shop inside.

Helpful?

Thank Audrey A

Report



FoodEnthusiastCV  
Comox

Level 4 Contributor

- 32 reviews
- 3 attraction reviews
- 14 helpful votes

### *"Not What I Wanted"*

Reviewed 15 February 2015

The relocated visitor centre isn't that warm friendly place with the local feel that I used to enjoy when coming to the Comox Valley. Now it's awkward to access and has too much of a "we're here to make money" feel to it. Too bad so much money was spent to offer so little.

Helpful?

Thank FoodEnthusiastCV

Report