

5 Places To Dine in the West Coast's Coolest Surf Town



By Leslie Kelly

After a way-too-early two-hour drive from Seattle to catch a three-hour ferry ride, followed by another five long hours on the road, I arrived at **Tofino, British Columbia**, and staggered out of the car, feeling slightly woozy. The cure? A short walk on the beach, soaking up the gorgeous scenery and watching wetsuit-clad surfers catch perfect waves, and I was madly in love this remote spot at the northwest edge of Vancouver Island. And that was before being blown away by some of the best meals I've eaten in 2016. Tofino offers the West Coast's most intriguing destination dining.



Surfers at North Chesterman Beach, Tofino, Vancouver Island, B.C. Canada, photo by Sander Jain

Beautiful Beachcombing

Just south of Tofino, **Pacific Rim Park** offers lots of options for exploring. I took a mile-long wooden path to Schooner Cove through an ancient cedar rain forest, walking for miles seeing just a few others. Peering into tide pools and scrambling up rocks and climbing the stairs back to the parking lot and I was hungry again. It was a good thing I had a reservation at the much-talked-about, often-awarded **Wolf in the Fog** in the absolutely adorable village of Tofino. On a Friday evening, the comfortable dining room was jammed with big groups, passing plates, family-style and two-tops, romantically sharing bites, man-bun wearing surfers sipping drinks at the bar. It felt like the best kind of party, almost too casual considering the upscale quality of the food.

Chef-owner Nicholas Nutting is dedicated to capturing the special sense of place, which means seaweed salad (so gorgeous, and surprisingly fresh tasting), foraged morels on meltingly tender gnocchi and a pickled herring starter that spoke to my Nordic roots, whispering: Why don't you eat more of this fabulous fish? That over-looked oily specimen beloved by cultures around the globe definitely deserves its moment. It's not nearly as strong as mackerel and has off-the-hook Omega-3s. Plus, it's so pretty when paired with sliced radishes and veggies quick-pickled just long enough to impart a subtle flavor, not so long that it blasts away the fresh taste.



Photo by Leslie Kelly

I'm a sucker for halibut and it was the evening's special that truly was a reminder of how wonderful springtime can be if you love to eat. The ultra-fresh fish wore a golden sear, artistically contrasted by tender greens, fiddlehead ferns, radishes, and herb oil. Just stunning seasonal cooking, paired by the staff with excellent wines from [B.C.'s Okanagan Valley](#).



Photo by Leslie Kelly

For those who prefer turf to surf, there's also a big, juicy burger regulars won't let the chef take off the menu and large plates including something called the Block Party. Fried chicken, ribs, and collard greens are definitely worth celebrating on this collection of Southern comfort food classics.

My weekend visit was over way too quickly, but before heading down the road, I picked up a couple of treats for the 10-hour trip: Incredible candied salmon from [Dockside Smoked Fish Store](#) and some luscious pastries at Common Loaf Bake Shop. I was already planning a return trip, hungry to try more. Next time, though, I think I'll fly.



Photo by Leslie Kelly