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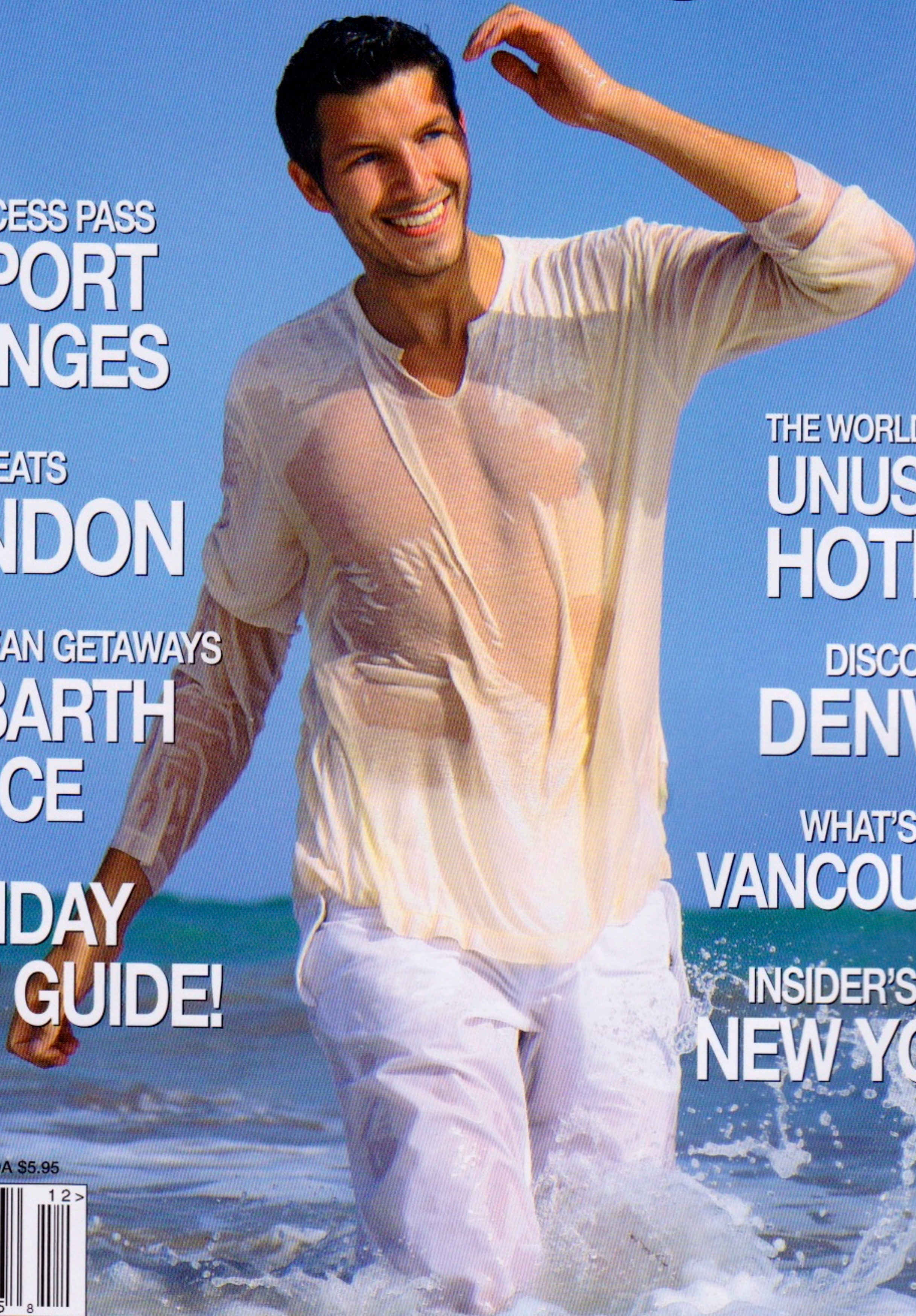
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## VANCOUVER

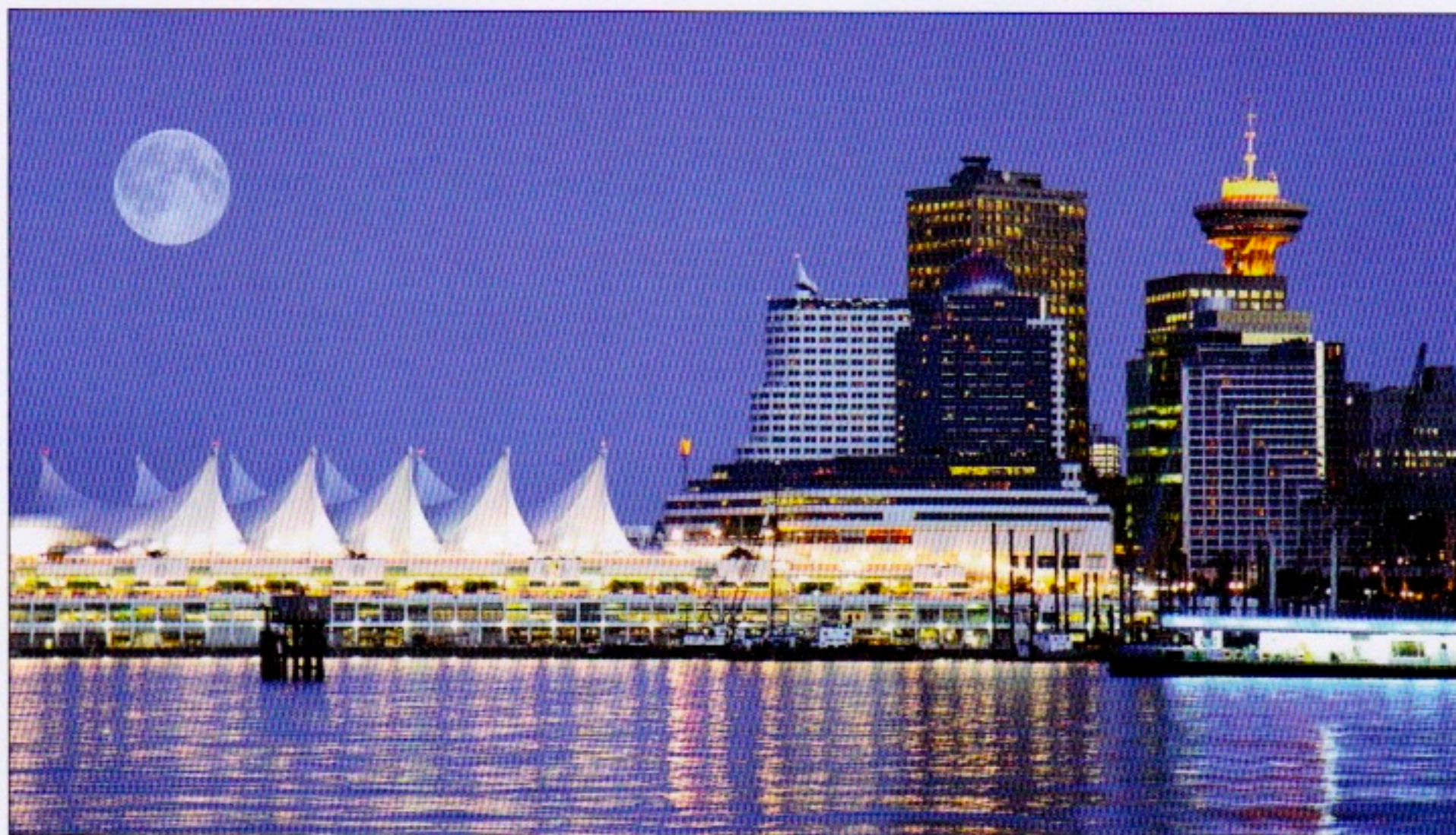
by Paul Horne

**T**he first thing most people will notice in today's Vancouver is the **Canada Line**, a new light-rail hookup from Vancouver International Airport that opened just before the Olympics, which gets you into downtown Vancouver in about 22 minutes.

For the spa-lover, Vancouver is bustling with innovative offerings. If your skin's a bit dehydrated after the flight, step into **SKN Holistic Rejuvenation Clinic** (1152 Mainland St, Tel: 604-568-6333. [www.skn-clinic.ca](http://www.skn-clinic.ca)), for a highly personalized skin-care treatment. During an acupuncture facial, I fell asleep with a face full of needles but woke feeling refreshed with noticeably tighter skin. After the facial, men can head over to **Momentum Grooming** (1237 Burrard St. Tel: 604-689-4636. [www.momentumgrooming.com](http://www.momentumgrooming.com)) for an unbelievable straight-razor shave. Mine was so close I couldn't keep my hands off my face for days, and a week later I even raced back just before my return flight to get one more for the road. Owners Robert and Graham will happily walk you through their dazzling selection of shaving and skincare products.

When you're ready for total indulgence, head to the spectacular **Willow Stream Spa** in the newly opened Fairmont Pacific Rim (1038 Canada Place. Tel: 800-441-1414. [www.willowstream.com/pacificrim](http://www.willowstream.com/pacificrim)). This super luxurious, fifth-floor spa gets my vote for best spa in the city for its spaciousness, Zen design, and incredible attention to detail. When your massage is over, the table electronically raises you back up so you literally don't have to move a muscle (I want that for my bed!). There are also separate lounges for men and women, a co-ed lounge with a fireplace, and a new outdoor spa terrace.

**F**or the outdoor enthusiast, Vancouver is a never-ending source of inspiration, from skiing and hiking to bike riding, kayaking, whale watching, and



bungee jumping. No adventure lover in Vancouver should miss a trip to the city's most-visited attraction, **Grouse Mountain** (Tel: 604-980-9311. [www.grousemountain.com](http://www.grousemountain.com)). Grouse is a vast mountain playground perched 4,100 feet above the city. For the fitness-inclined, lace up your hiking shoes and hit the Grouse Grind, a 1.8-mile hike so relentlessly steep it feels like the world's biggest stairmaster. Or skip the hike and take a beautiful Skyride gondola to the top, where you can join the two-hour zipline tour for a bird's eye view of the forest at speeds up to 55 miles per hour. There are also eco walks, lumberjack exhibitions, tandem paragliding, a grizzly bear habitat, and an unbelievable view of Vancouver from the Eye of the Wind—a giant wind turbine that visitors ascend (thankfully via elevator). You can also jump in a helicopter for a tour of the mountain, a nearby glacier, or an extinct volcano. There are several places to eat, but the most impressive is **The Observatory**, a fine dining restaurant 3,700 feet above the city, serving a multi-course, prix-fixe meal for \$125 including wine pairings. For an even more memorable night, they offer a Fly, Dine, and Drive package, where you're picked up in the city by helicopter, whisked to the top of the mountain for dinner, and returned via limo.

**O**ff the mountain, the dining scene in Vancouver is vibrant and ever-changing. In 1995, Canadian über-chef Rob Feenie opened elegant French resto **Lumiere** (2551 West Broadway. Tel: 604-739-8185. [www.lumiere.ca](http://www.lumiere.ca)), one of Canada's most acclaimed restaurants. It's hot again after re-opening in 2008 with Daniel Boulud at the helm. For a less expensive but chic alternative, check out Boulud's **db Bistro Moderne** ([www.db-bistro.ca](http://www.db-bistro.ca)) next door, matching its eponymous New York sibling.

Foodies will want to head to **Medina Café** (556 Beatty St. Tel: 604-879-3114. [www.medinacafe.com](http://www.medinacafe.com)), where it's worth the wait for the best breakfast in Vancouver. I loved the fricassee (two fried eggs over braised short ribs, roasted potatoes, caramelized onions, and applewood cheddar on a bed of arugula), but you can't go wrong with breakfast items like paella, a tagine, or smoked salmon foccaccia. Medina is also known for delicate waffles topped with white chocolate, pistachio, rosewater, or raspberry caramel. Medina is the little sister to acclaimed Belgian restaurant, **Chambar** (562 Beatty St. Tel: 604-879-7119. [www.chambar.com](http://www.chambar.com)), next door. Chambar is the place to go for innovative cocktails, a warm, sexy dining atmosphere, and moules



## POSITIVE SUPPORT

We all have our own taste in men—some may like them tailored and clean cut while others might prefer them more rugged and rough around the edges. Fortunately, two fantastic events held by the **British Columbia Persons With AIDS Society (BCPWAS)** cater to both types of “Mr. Right.” At **SUITS—Working Men’s Dinner Group**, you’ll find well-dressed gents with spirits more durable than any well-tailored ensemble. Besides being an excuse to look sharp, this monthly culinary event strives to sew a strong sense of community while deconstructing isolation and stigma. Here, HIV-positive men and their allies can find good food, wine, and a forum to form new friendships. Then there’s **Ou+Doorsmen** for the more nature-loving types. Already, this hearty group has been kayaking, hiking, climbing, and zip-lining, with plans for snowboarding, tobogganing, and other exciting adventures to come. For three decades, BCPWAS has established itself as a leader in the HIV/AIDS movement by providing not only essential services like peer support, workshops, and retreats, but also by crafting innovative ways to empower and inspire those battling debilitating disease. Whether you’re into fine dining or feel the call of the wild, join other like-minded men who share your style. [www.bcpwa.org](http://www.bcpwa.org)



—Tricia Manzanero

frites you won’t want to share. In addition to helming both Chambar and Medina, Chef Nico Schuermans has just opened **The Dirty Apron Cooking School** (540 Beatty St. Tel: 604-879-8588. [www.dirtyapron.com](http://www.dirtyapron.com)) with his former sous-chef, David Robertson. I was lucky enough to get in on the Italian cooking class, an ideal activity to do on a date or if you’re visiting Vancouver and want to socialize a bit. The kitchen is outfitted with the best—All-Clad cookware, Wusthof knives, Wolf ranges, and Sub-Zero fridges. After watching Robertson demo ravioli with arugula goat cheese filling in a walnut/sage butter sauce, herb ricotta gnocchi, a grilled lamb sirloin, and a lemon panna cotta, the other students and I re-created these restaurant quality dishes like pros at our own stations, then retired to a spacious dining room to eat, drink, and reflect on our pending career changes. Robertson teaches most of the classes (\$135 per person for a four-hour hands-on dinner), with guest and celebrity chefs appearing throughout the year.

Foodies should also check out the ever-changing schedule of culinary events at **Edible BC** (retail store at Granville Market. Tel: 604-812-9660. [www.edible-britishcolumbia.com](http://www.edible-britishcolumbia.com)). This company offers gourmet weekend kayaking trips, chef-hosted dinners right in the middle of Granville Market, and personalized culinary itineraries throughout the city. I recommend their

Chef-Guided Market Tours, especially the Chinatown Market Tour with chef Dora Ho (\$65 per person including lunch). The tour begins with a delicious dim-sum lunch (each dish thankfully explained by Ho), followed by a fascinating walk through one of North America’s largest Chinatowns, including tastings at herbal stores, meat shops, bakeries, and specialty shops.

Another favorite breakfast spot of mine (breakfast is the new dinner!) is **Hidden Tasting Bar and Social Lounge** in the Westin Grand (433 Robson St. Tel: 604-647-2521. [www.hiddenvancouver.ca](http://www.hiddenvancouver.ca)). Start your day off right with poached eggs over sauteed spinach and Roma tomatoes alongside an omega blueberry, banana, and flaxseed smoothie. Or splurge on a buttermilk and lemon waffle with strawberries, lavender butter, and real maple syrup, a corned beef Benedict, or a tofu scrambler with wild mushrooms and caramelized onions.

For a quick meal on the go, the hottest bite in Vancouver right now is **Japa Dog** (530 Robson St, [www.japadog.com/en](http://www.japadog.com/en)), a hot dog stand with a Japanese twist. There are three stand locations (two on Burrard and one in front of Waterfront Station) and a new permanent store on Robson Street, with slightly different menus at each location. One best seller is a kurobuta dog with fish flakes, fried cabbage, Japanese mayo, and okonomiyaki sauce. It may sound crazy,

but it’s a must, and there’s always a line.

**N**ewly opened this year, the centrally located and pet-friendly **Coast Coal Harbour Hotel** (1180 West Hastings St. Tel: 604-697-0202. [www.coasthotels.com](http://www.coasthotels.com)) offers spectacular views from the floor-to-ceiling windows, along with free Wi-Fi, newspapers, and local calls. This bright, modern, and environmentally-friendly hotel is just a couple blocks from the water. It’s also on the same block as Café Artigiano, where award-winning baristas make some of the best coffee in North America.

One of my favorite new boutique hotels is the **St. Regis** (602 Dunsmuir St. Tel: 800-770-7929. [www.stregishotel.com](http://www.stregishotel.com)). It features beautifully appointed suites with oversized bathrooms, and lots of free stuff like access to the Steve Nash Sports Club next door, Fiji bottled water, Wi-Fi, local calls, newspapers, and full breakfast for two. Some suites even come with iPads (otherwise available for a nominal fee). While they don’t have an on-site spa, the hotel did convert one of the guest rooms into a massage treatment area, and you can book their excellent masseur for a surprisingly affordable dollar a minute.

**F**or visitors who want to enjoy some of Whistler’s many diversions, the renovation of the **Sea-to-Sky Highway** (Route 99) from Vancouver to Whistler makes it easier than ever to pop up to Whistler for a day of world-class skiing and still be back in time to hit the Davie Village that night. Or better yet, come for **Whistler Pride** (January 30–February 6. [www.gay-whistler.com](http://www.gay-whistler.com)) for a week of skiing, snowboarding, après-ski, dog-sledding, and an endless schedule of fun wintery events.

Meanwhile, Vancouver has one of the most popular Pride events in North America because it’s a favorite getaway city with a strong community and a beautiful setting (the right to marry doesn’t hurt either). Tourism Vancouver is granting one lucky winner a trip for five people to **Vancouver Pride Weekend** on July 30, 2011. Winners receive shared accommodations at the Opus Hotel Vancouver and a \$500 credit at Raincity Grill Restaurant. The deadline is Dec. 31 so enter now at [www.tourism-vancouver.com/five](http://www.tourism-vancouver.com/five) ■