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LUXURY

## Four multi-million dollar Canadian homes perfect for the Sussexes

Save



*Chelster Hall is a 44,000 sq ft English country mansion set on 10 acres of lawns and gardens on the shore of Lake Ontario CREDIT: SOTHEBY'S*

While the Royal Family sifts through [the wreckage of Prince Harry and Meghan's latest shock announcement](#), an unlikely and unwitting star has been newly cast in the spotlight.

Vancouver Island may have been little known to most this side of the Atlantic, but the largest island of the west coast of the Americas is now the name on everyone's lips after the Sussexes revealed they had been [basking in its glorious wilderness](#) over Christmas.

The couple, and baby Archie, stayed at Milles Fleurs, a four-acre estate said to be worth CA\$18m (£10.5m), although "that may be wishful thinking. That amount would buy you a lot of real estate on the island," says Vancouver-based estate agent Stuart Bonner of RE/MAX.

The 12,000 sq ft house comes with a wine room, media room and wood-burning pizza oven. Crucially, this spot on the island's prime southern tip, close to the province's capital city, Victoria, is a five-minute drive from the international airport, enabling the royal renegades to zip in and out largely unnoticed.

It may be some time until Vancouver Island – a half-hour hop by seaplane from Vancouver – is this newsworthy again. But it's a sought-after spot among Canada's elite, Silicon Valley hot-shots and Hollywood on holiday.



*Surfer's Paradise is a four-bed house with a separate cottage costing CA\$14m (£8.2m) through Sotheby's International Realty CREDIT: SOTHEBY'S*

It's the place you go – though perhaps not right now – to escape prying eyes and wallow in its spectacular nature, from whale-watching and bear-spotting trips, skiing on Mount Washington or surfing off rainforest-fringed beaches such as Tofino, where Thor star Chris Hemsworth takes to his board.

The Canadian PM, Justin Trudeau, also regularly rents an oceanfront retreat on the island and hops on his surfboard “with a wet-suited security guard in tow,” informs Christian de Meillac, from Quintessentially Estates. He lists Vancouver Island's selling points as “very desirable, clean and pretty unique as it's cosmopolitan but with great outdoor activities on the doorstep”.

Wealthy downsizers and retirees from the mainland cash in and head over the water to Vancouver Island for a quieter lifestyle and more bang for their Canadian bucks.



Most will sell homes worth \$2m-\$5m in prime areas of West Vancouver such as Point Grey, Kitsilano and Shaughnessy and buy island homes costing \$500,000-\$1.5m, says Stuart Bonner.

“On the southern tip, near the capital, Victoria, you can spend up to \$12m. But up island, you can buy a 10-acre estate for \$500,000, or up to 500 acres for \$9m-\$12m,” he adds.



This is seven-bed oceanfront estate with two acres of land is close to the life-changing property the Sussexes visited on holiday CREDIT: SOTHEBY'S Although the number of noughts involved in Harry and Meghan’s financially-independent future hangs in the balance, they won’t trouble the coffers too much – with their joint \$45m-or-so fortune – even by buying a super-prime Vancouver Island home.

Set on 1.2 beachfront acres in Tofino, Surfer’s Paradise is a four-bed house with a separate cottage costing CA\$14m (£8.2m) through Sotheby’s International Realty. Or close to the life-changing property they hid away in over Christmas is a seven-bed oceanfront estate with two acres of land, costing CA\$9m (\$5.2m), also through Sotheby’s.

Nearby Gulf islands, such as Salt Spring and Galliano, provide an even greater sense of escape. On Salt Spring, \$3m will get you a secluded 6,600 sq ft waterfront home hidden in the forest.

With Meghan already having beaten a retreat back to Vancouver to reunite with Archie while Harry faces the music in London, perhaps some house-hunting is on the cards.

And now is the time to do so as it's a buyers' market. After a decade that saw Vancouver's house prices rise by 85.3%, prices in the luxury market fell by 10.2% in 2019 and they are forecast to fall by 5% in 2020, according to Knight Frank.



*On Salt Spring island, \$3m will get you a secluded 6,600 sq ft waterfront home hidden in the forest CREDIT: RE/MAX*

“In prime neighbourhoods such as West Vancouver, values currently sit around 20% below their 2017 peak,” says Kate Everett-Allen, head of international research at Knight Frank.

Buyers from overseas should also factor in a 20% foreign buyer tax – one of the cooling measures introduced in the last few years to curb rampant house price growth. “New developments on Vancouver Island were particularly popular with Asian buyers, but there’s less investment since they changed the tax rules,” comments Christian de Meillac.

Although Vancouver has long been known as Canada’s most expensive property market, its crown has been stolen in the past year by Oakville, Ontario, “better known as the traffic jam between Toronto and the Niagara Falls,” according to the Canadian housing news outlet Better Dwelling.





*This Lake Ontario home is palatial CREDIT: SOTHEBY'S*

De Meillac is more praising. “It’s a quiet lakefront town with boutique shops, leading schools and one of the highest standards of living in the world. It’s also home to the Glen Abbey Golf Club, which has hosted the Canadian Open for many years.”

Its palatial property stock will also make Harry and Meghan feel quite at home – though they may need to finalise the divorce settlement from the royal family first in order to afford it. Priced at CA\$59m (£34.5m) through Sotheby’s Realty is Chelster Hall, a 44,000 sq ft English country mansion set on 10 acres of lawns and gardens on the shore of Lake Ontario.

It’s clearly Vancouver, though, that has stolen Harry and Meghan’s hearts. And all eyes will be on it, and them, for some time to come yet.

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