Vancouver is a very young city. This year, 2012, it celebrates its 126th anniversary. Just over a century ago, what is now Vancouver was a forest! Granville Street, the busy main street, was a logging path cut through the forest.

Today, Vancouver is one of the largest Canadian cities, with a population of more than 2 million in the metropolitan area (that is if we count all the suburbs). It is an ethnically diverse metropolis. The Chinese are the biggest ethnic group, making up almost 30% of the population. English is the first language of only 49% of Vancouver residents.

The city is set in stunning scenery, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean and surrounded by the North Shore Mountains. This is where you can ski on snowy mountain slopes and swim in the ocean, all in one day! Vancouver has a pleasant climate, with average summer temperatures of 18°C and winter temperatures of 3°C, making it one of Canada’s warmest cities.

The city cares a lot for the environment. The mayor promised that “Vancouver will be the greenest city in the world by 2020” and his wish does seem to be coming true. Vancouver has many parks, one of which – Stanley Park – is the largest city park in Canada.

Cycling is actively encouraged, with cycle tracks along the sides of most
Stanley Park is an oasis surrounded by skyscrapers, home to a variety of wildlife and local tree species. A big part of it is a forest, but there are also several attractive beaches along the shoreline. The park has forest trails, cycling, jogging, walking and roller-skating tracks. You can also see totem poles by Native Americans there.

The architecturally impressive central branch of the Vancouver Public Library occupies a whole city block. Its shape resembles that of the ancient Colosseum in Rome. The library contains light, airy spaces for reading, internet facilities and bistros.

Granville Island is a paradise for artists. Abandoned (no longer used) warehouses and factories are now colourfully painted and contain woodcarving, painting and sculpting studios, and arts and craft stores. Emily Carr University, one of the world’s leading art and design universities, is situated there. The photo shows some of the luxury floating homes (boat houses) moored (anchored) at Granville Island.

Science World resembles a huge, glittering golf ball and features interactive scientific displays and exhibits.

The SkyTrain is one of the longest automated (operating without a driver) transport systems in the world. It hurtles along at high speed, far above the city streets. It is just like riding on a roller coaster, especially when you fly around sharp bends or race downhill at dizzying speeds!

The Sea-to-Sky Highway connects Vancouver with Whistler, which hosted important events in the 2010 Winter Olympics. It is a scenic route with the ocean on one side, rocky cliffs on the other and snow-capped mountains in the distance.