

# VICTORIA VACATION

Victoria, on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, is an easy-going, pedestrian-friendly city. Spend a few days exploring the Inner Harbour and historic Chinatown, take to the ocean for whale watching and kayaking, or choose from a huge array of restaurants and afternoon tea spots. 2012 marks the city's 150th anniversary, so watch for events throughout the year.

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### BRITISH COLUMBIA



### Victoria's Inner Harbour

Stroll around Victoria's Inner Harbour to browse for crafts and watch street entertainers. Or take in the sights from the comfort of a horse-drawn carriage. Here, floatplanes, yachts and whale watching boats come and go against a backdrop of grand, 19th-century architecture. Visit the Royal BC Museum to see Aboriginal works, including a real Big House (a traditional northwest coast First Nations building used for community gatherings and ceremonies), then head to nearby Old Town, where independent shops fill century-old storefronts.

### Chinatown

Follow Fan Tan Alley, one of Canada's narrowest streets, to Chinatown. Stop for dim sum (Don Mee's is a local favourite) or pull up a seat at Silk Road Tea and Aromatherapy Company, where guests are guided through the intricacies of tea during a variety of tasting workshops.

### Whale Watching

From the Inner Harbour, head out to sea on a whale watching tour to meet some of the Orca pods residing just offshore. Most whale watching boats have hydrophones so people can listen in on whale calls. The on-board naturalists may even be able to translate.

## Fireworks at The Butchart Gardens

On Saturday nights in summer, take a picnic blanket to The Butchart Gardens (north of Victoria), where fireworks blast off over the illuminated flower beds and fountains of the famous 55-acre garden.

### **Victoria Restaurants**

Victoria is said to have more restaurants per capita than just about anywhere else on the continent. Try the house-made salami and local produce at lively, art-filled Café Brio, or the wallet-friendly steak-frites at Chinatown's Brasserie L'Ecole. For cheap eats, line up with the locals for a salmon tacone at Red Fish Blue Fish, or hop a Harbour Ferry to Fisherman's Wharf for outdoor halibut and chips at Barb's Place. Don't forget to sample delectable Rogers' Chocolates at their beautiful heritage store on Government Street.

The must-do Victoria meal is, of course, afternoon tea at the iconic Fairmont Empress hotel. Or try tea in the gardens of the historic waterfront Point Ellice House or the popular White Heather Tea Room. Night life? Perhaps a martini at trendy Veneto, local bands and funky art at the Superior, or microbrews at Swans or Canoe Brewpub.

### **Shopping in Victoria**

Local fashionistas love the silk-screened tops at closet-sized Smoking Lily and the indie designer frocks at Still Life (His and Her boutiques located across the street from one another), all on lower Johnson Street. A block north, shops in the Design District have gorgeous goodies for the home; the lush fabrics and lavish furniture at Chintz & Company will keep design-types happily distracted.

Fort Street boasts a mix of antique shops and boutiques. Check out Not Just Pretty, where clothes are sustainable and stylish, and the Good Planet Company for eco-conscious gifts and housewares.

### **Victoria Accommodation**

Stay at the Chateau Victoria Hotel & Suites, near downtown attractions, to enjoy easy access to fancy cocktails at Clive's Classic Lounge or dinner with a stunning view at Vista 18. For old world charm, try a romantic getaway at the Humboldt House B&B, or relax in a luxury condo-style suite with waterfront views at the Victoria Regent Waterfront Hotel & Suites.

### **Victoria Transportation**

A 90-minute BC Ferries sailing across the island-dotted Strait of Georgia is a scenic way to get to Victoria from the mainland, but for sheer drama nothing beats arriving by floatplane or helicopter. Harbour Air, Westcoast Air and Helijet fly from Vancouver directly to Victoria's Inner Harbour in about 35 minutes. From Seattle, fly with Kenmore Air or sail on the Victoria Clipper passenger ferry.