

# DESTINATION REPORT

## YOUR TRAVEL SPECIALIST



Darl Bachmann  
Ford's World Travel  
623-933-8256  
FAX: 623-933-0122  
Email:  
darl@fordstravel.com

10738 W. Bell Road  
Sun City, Arizona  
85351

Customer satisfaction is job #1 for me and I work tirelessly to ensure my customers receive the best service, the most up-to-date information, and the greatest value for their travel expenditures.

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**YOUR TRAVEL SNAPSHOT:** Destinations included in this guide

**Victoria, BC**

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DESTINATION GUIDE

# Victoria, BC



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## INTRODUCTION

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Although Victoria is in British Columbia, it feels more like England than Canada. The city was founded in the 1800s as a Hudson Bay Co. trading post and outpost of the British Empire, populated by settlers attracted to its mild climate. Historic Victoria boasts several grand buildings, lots of shops, and aesthetic touches reflecting its English heritage. Today, part of the city's charm comes from old-world traditions juxtaposed with new-world experiences.

Victoria is also a modern, prosperous provincial capital with a diversified economy. The education, tourism and technology sectors are strong, and specialty farming has burgeoned in the nearby Saanich Peninsula and up-island Cowichan Valley. The result is a city with an international reputation for good restaurants and a penchant for outdoor activities such as whale-watching, sea kayaking, sailing and cycling. For a city of its size and scale, Victoria has an energetic, eclectic buzz. And it's only a short ferry ride or flight away from Vancouver.

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## MUST SEE OR DO

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**Sights**—Beacon Hill Park for many mature trees and glorious gardens; The Butchart Gardens; the view from Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site; the Parliament Buildings.

**Museums**—The Emily Carr House for her artwork; the history of the area and its trades, like deep-sea diving, at the Royal British Columbia Museum.

**Memorable Meals**—Both levels of Ferris' Oyster Bar & Grill for great food and atmosphere; Rebar Modern Food for a delicious juice bar and health-conscious cuisine; tea at the Fairmont Empress Hotel; takeout fish-and-chips from the Inner Harbour's Red Fish Blue Fish; Ulla Restaurant for local food with a fresh twist.

**Late Night**—The ambience in the Bengal Lounge of the Fairmont Empress Hotel; a brew or two at Spinnakers Gastro Brew Pub on the Inner Harbour; inspired libations at Clive's Classic Lounge; local musicians at Hermann's Jazz Club.

**Walks**—A slow walk around the Inner Harbour; a historic walk through Chinatown; a guided tour of the city's haunted addresses.

**Especially for Kids**—The Victoria Bug Zoo; Victoria Butterfly Gardens; a ride on the Victoria Harbour Ferries; Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre; the petting zoo at Beacon Hill Park.

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## GEOGRAPHY

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Victoria radiates out from its Inner Harbour, where most of the historic buildings, sites and attractions are located. The city's layout is compact, with two main streets, Government and Douglas, running parallel to the harborfront. East-west cross streets, many of them one-way, are generally on an orderly grid system, with few digressions from that pattern.

Heading northbound along Government Street, you'll intersect with Old Town, Bastion Square and Chinatown. Douglas Street begins at Mile Zero, a landmark that indicates the beginning of the Trans-Canada Highway and overlooks the Pacific Ocean and precipitous Olympic Peninsula. Venture north, and Douglas Street flanks Beacon Hill Park and the Royal British Columbia Museum, then defines the eastern edge of downtown. To the east are the picturesque neighborhoods of Rockland, Fairfield and Oak Bay, as well as Craigdarroch Castle and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

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## HISTORY

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Though Spain first claimed what is now Victoria, the English established the first European settlement in 1843, when James Douglas of the Hudson's Bay Company set up a trading post there. Victoria's protected harbor on the southern coast of Vancouver Island offered a safe refuge for clipper ships, and Douglas' good relations with the

native population helped the settlement grow quickly.

In an era known for its formality and elegance, early Victoria must have seemed like the wild frontier to the first British settlers, particularly in 1858, when more than 25,000 miners passed through on their way to the Cariboo Gold Rush. But the new Victorians were intent on civilizing the wilderness, taking with them their fine English china, their architectural ideas, their gardens and their tradition of tea (still staunchly upheld by visitors). They set about creating a society based on a half-remembered, half-imagined England.

The capital of British Columbia, Victoria is filled with heritage buildings and reminders of those early days. The city has a long-standing reputation for being sedate, but it is quickly outgrowing the label. Besides being the province's government hub, Victoria is home to several colleges and universities, and the city has attracted many global technology firms, bringing more young people to the city. The influx has sparked a revitalization in the central area, with old-world-style buildings being converted into restaurants, lounges and hip cafes on every downtown block.

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## POTPOURRI

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With all its outdoor activities, it's no surprise that Victoria has been rated among the fittest cities in Canada.

Victoria's Maritime Museum is home to North America's oldest operating birdcage elevator.

The Fairmont Empress Hotel serves 500,000 cups of tea annually.

Victoria is home to what is recognized as the narrowest street in Canada: Fan Tan Alley. The city also boasts the oldest Chinese temple in Canada: Tam Kung Temple on Government Street in Chinatown.

Victoria arguably has the most microbreweries in Canada per capita (showcased in its beloved Ale Trail), as well as the country's oldest licensed brewpub, Spinnakers Gastro Brewpub.

The B.C. Legislature buildings on the Inner Harbour dazzle year-round with 3,560 lights.

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## LOCATION

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Large cruise ships dock at Ogden Point, about 1 mi/2 km southwest of downtown. The terminal has gift shops, restrooms, foreign-currency exchange and pay phones. If your cruise line has made arrangements, you can take a shuttle downtown for Can\$11. Taxis also wait in front of the terminal. There's public bus service to the downtown area, or you can walk—it takes about 20 minutes to get to the city's center.

Small cruise ships often dock in Victoria's Inner Harbour. The Tourism Victoria Visitor Centre is located along the Inner Harbour on Wharf Street across from the Fairmont Empress Hotel. <http://www.victoriacruise.ca>.

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## SHORE EXCURSIONS

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Shore excursions include a tour of the Legislature Buildings, tea at the Empress Hotel or another teahouse, a horse-drawn carriage ride and a visit to Craigdarroch Castle. Also offered are trips to the Butchart Gardens, an electric-bike outing, an English-style pub tour, and an art gallery and wine-tasting visit. For ocean and rain forest enthusiasts, there are whale-watching trips and travel to an adventure zipline facility in nearby Sooke.

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## SIGHTSEEING

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Victoria's most noted landmarks are the more than 100-year-old, green-domed Parliament Buildings on the south side of the Inner Harbour. At night, the buildings, which were designed by one of British Columbia's most renowned architects, Francis Rattenbury, are outlined by thousands of tiny lights. During the day, you can take a free tour of their interiors. Be sure to stroll through the beautifully kept gardens at the residence of the lieutenant governor of British Columbia (the British Crown's representative to the province) on Rockland Avenue.

Besides the Parliament Buildings, the city's most impressive structure is the grand, ivy-covered Fairmont Empress Hotel, which was also designed by Rattenbury. Built in 1908, the hotel dominates the waterfront and attracts many tourists.

The city also has a wealth of museums—some of which are also historic homes. Don't miss the kid-friendly Royal British Columbia Museum. Next door to the museum is the Helmcken House, once the home of a pioneer doctor and legislator. Craigdarroch Castle is a lavishly decorated mansion that has a stunning view of the city. North of downtown, overlooking the scenic Gorge Waterway, is Point Ellice House. This Victorian manor serves tea amid its luxuriant gardens and lawns.

The area's best-known floral displays can be found at The Butchart Gardens, in nearby Brentwood Bay. (You won't believe the area was once a barren stone quarry.)

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## HISTORIC SITES

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### Craigdarroch Castle

Situated in a quiet, posh area northeast of downtown, this lavish 39-room mansion overlooks the city. It was built in the 1890s for coal baron Robert Dunsmuir and his wife, Joan, though Dunsmuir didn't live to see the project completed. The 25,000-sq-ft/2,323-sq-m mansion is a pleasing medley of Roman arches, Jacobean dormers and Elizabethan chimneys. The castle is not wheelchair-accessible. Daily 10 am-4:30 pm. Can\$13.75 adults. 1050 Joan Crescent (off Fort Street), Victoria. Phone 250-592-5323. <http://thecastle.ca>.

### Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Sites

About 15 minutes from downtown Victoria on Esquimalt Harbor, this park is a wonderful place for a picnic lunch and a hike. (There are picnic tables on the grounds.) A short hiking trail takes you through the woods to a machine-gun post and searchlight emplacements from the 1890s. The Fisgard Lighthouse, dating from 1860, resides along the shore. In the park you'll see plants and animals found nowhere else in Canada. Daily 10 am-5:30 pm. Can\$3.90 adults, free for children younger than 5. 603 Fort Rodd Hill Road, Victoria. Phone 250-478-5849. <http://www.pc.gc.ca/roddhill>.

### Hatley Park National Historic Site

West of the city in what is now Royal Roads University, this park is beautifully landscaped with lakes and Japanese, Italian and English gardens. The magnificent 40-room castle overlooks the Esquimalt Lagoon, a bird and wildlife sanctuary. You can see the Strait of Juan de Fuca from many parts of the park, with Washington's Olympic Mountains in the background. There's also a museum in the castle basement. Open daily 10 am-4 pm. Can\$9.50 to access gated gardens; Can\$18 for a one-hour tour of the castle; access to the general grounds is free. 2005 Sooke Road, Victoria. Phone 250-391-2511. Toll-free 800-788-8028. <http://www.hatleypark.ca>.

### Helmcken House

Built in 1852 for Dr. John Sebastian Helmcken, this is the oldest house in British Columbia on its original site that is open to the public. This elegant Victorian home has period furnishings and some of Dr. Helmcken's original medical instruments. Adjacent to the house is Thunderbird Park, which has a collection of First Nations totem poles and a First Nations building, the Mungo Martin House. Open July and August noon-4 pm. Free admission with a Royal British Columbia Museum ticket. 10 Elliot Square, Victoria. Phone 250-356-7226. Toll-free 888-447-7977. <http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/exhibits/tbird-park/html/present/preshelm.htm>.

## Parliament Buildings

The domed and turreted Parliament Buildings were designed by Francis Rattenbury and completed in 1898. Paintings in the lower rotunda depict Canadian history. If the legislature is in session, you can slip into the viewing balcony over the chambers and listen to the political debate. Summer hours daily 9 am-5 pm; winter hours Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm. Free guided tours offered year-round. 501 Belleville St., Victoria. Phone 250-387-3046. <http://www.leg.bc.ca>.

## Point Ellice House

This lovely house overlooking the scenic Gorge Waterway is a piece of quintessential Victoriana: You can try your hand at croquet and take tea amid luxuriant gardens and lawns. But first tour the rambling Italianate home where some members of Victoria's elite lived in the 1800s. Thursday-Monday 11 am-4 pm. Can\$6 adults for tour only. Can\$27 for tea and tour (reservations required). 2616 Pleasant St. (off Bay Street), Victoria. Phone 250-380-6506. <http://www.pointellicehouse.ca>.

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## MUSEUMS

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### Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

Housed in an 1889 mansion, as well as seven modern galleries, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria is home to British Columbia's largest collection of public art, including many works by Emily Carr and other treasures such as Col. Lewis Broome's king-sized dollhouse. On the grounds is a Japanese garden with the only authentic Shinto shrine in North America—fitting, because the gallery also contains the finest public collection of Japanese art in Canada. Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Thursday 10 am-9 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm. Can\$13 adults. 1040 Moss St., Victoria. Phone 250-384-4171. <http://aggv.ca>.

### Emily Carr House

The birthplace and home of Victoria painter and writer Emily Carr, this restored 1864 house offers insights into Carr's life and works. You might also see the work of other Canadian artists. Tuesday-Saturday 11 am-4 pm. Can\$6.75 adults. 207 Government St. (south of downtown), Victoria. Phone 250-383-5843. <http://www.emilycarr.com>.

### Robert Bateman Centre

Robert Bateman is known as the world's greatest wildlife artist, and this downtown gallery in the former Steamship Terminal displays dozens of his original works. A gallery of birds has recorded bird songs to accompany the pieces. Sunday-Thursday 10 am-5 pm, Friday and Saturday 10 am-9 pm. Admission Can\$12.50 adults. 470 Belleville St., Victoria. Phone 250-940-3630. <http://batemancentre.org>.

### Royal British Columbia Museum

This museum is an exceptional treasury of human history. Dioramas and exhibits about deep-sea exploration, the province's natural habitats and its native peoples are some of the most ambitious and spectacular you'll see anywhere. A 400-seat National Geographic IMAX theater shows spectacular eco-oriented films. Daily 10 am-5 pm. Admission Can\$16 adults; IMAX films cost extra. 675 Belleville St. (next to the Parliament Buildings), Victoria. Phone 250-356-7226. Toll-free 888-447-7977. <http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca>.

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## PARKS & GARDENS

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### Abkhazi Gardens

Considered one of Canada's most significant gardens, this discreet one-acre/.4-hectare property was developed over 40 years, starting in 1946, by Prince and Princess Abkhazi, a European couple with an exotic and war-torn background. Considered an exceptional example of West Coast garden design, it features dramatic rocky slopes, magnificent Garry oaks, maples, rhododendrons and other alpine and woodland species. The site includes the couple's modernist home and a teahouse, with seatings for lunch and tea until 4 pm. Daily 11 am-5 pm April-October; Wednesday-Sunday 11 am-5 pm November-March. Suggested donation Can\$10. 1964 Fairfield Rd., Victoria. Phone 778-265-6466. <http://www.abkhaziteahouse.com>.

## Beacon Hill Park

You don't have to leave the city to see lovely gardens. You can roam the colorful paths of this park, which starts just three blocks from the Inner Harbour. Its expanse includes flowers, lakes, playgrounds and a petting zoo. Other attractions include sports fields, a band shell and the world's tallest freestanding totem pole. The 128-ft/39-m masterpiece was created by renowned Kwakwaka'wakw artist Mungo Martin in 1956. The children's farm is open March to mid-October daily 10 am-5 pm. Suggested donation for petting zoo is Can\$3.50 adults, Can\$2.50 children. Douglas Street (at Dallas Road), Victoria. Phone 250-361-0600. <http://www.beaconhillpark.ca>.

## The Butchart Gardens

One of the most popular attractions in the Victoria area, the gardens were constructed in 1904 by the Butchart family to beautify an ugly, depleted stone quarry. Flowers and flowering shrubs of nearly every color and variety cover more than 50 acres/20 hectares. Special plantings fill Japanese, rose and Italian gardens. Sculptures and fountains abound, and at night the gardens are illuminated by thousands of colored lights. Daily in summer 9 am-10 pm; shorter hours the rest of the year. Prices vary seasonally. 800 Benvenuto Ave. (13 mi/21 km northwest of Victoria), Brentwood Bay. Phone 250-652-5256. Toll-free 866-652-4422. <http://www.butchartgardens.com>.

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## ZOOS & WILDLIFE

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### Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre

This not-for-profit aquarium and marine education is in the seaside town of Sidney, 30 minutes from Victoria. Touch a sea cucumber, go face-to-face with octopuses and learn about all of the critters of the Salish Sea (the geographic term for the region encompassing the Strait of Georgia, Puget Sound and Strait of Juan de Fuca). Daily 10 am-4 pm in winter and spring, 10 am-5 pm in summer and fall. Can\$15 adults. 9811 Seaport Place, Sidney. Phone 250-665-7511. <http://www.oceandiscovery.ca>.

### Victoria Bug Zoo

This miniature zoo is devoted to multilegged creatures. There are more than 40 species, including an ant farm. Monday-Friday 11 am-4:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10:30 am-5 pm. Can\$10 adults, Can\$7 children ages 3-10. 631 Courtney St., Victoria. Phone 250-384-2847. <http://www.bugzoo.bc.ca>.

### Victoria Butterfly Gardens

In this indoor tropical rain forest you'll see hundreds of exotic butterflies from all over the world. Wear something colorful to attract them, and they may land on your shoulders. Daily 10 am-4 pm. Can\$16 adults. 1461 Benvenuto Ave. (near Butchart Gardens), Brentwood Bay. Phone 250-652-3822. Toll-free 877-722-0272. <http://butterflygardens.com>.

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## RECREATION

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Victoria has evolved into a year-round recreational destination. You can bicycle through the city and out to the suburbs on a converted rail line or hike through old-growth forests in parks north and west of the city. There are tide-pool beaches to explore along the coast. Golfers will be delighted with the area's scenic courses, most of which are open year-round. The city is also a starting point for whale-watching, kayaking and fishing charters off the coast of Vancouver Island.

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## BICYCLING

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A fun way to discover Victoria's great outdoors is to follow the many bicycle paths—such as the Lochside Trail, Seaside Cycling Route and the Galloping Goose—that wind through the city and surrounding neighborhoods.

The 37-mi/60-km Galloping Goose was constructed on an old Canadian National Railroad right-of-way and is wide and mostly flat, with gradual grades. It connects several municipalities and shopping areas and serves as a scenic commuting route along the southernmost coastline. Easily accessible at several points, the trail begins downtown and ends at the site of an abandoned gold-mining town just beyond Sooke.

### Cycle BC

This company rents an impressive selection of bicycles for about Can\$24 per day or Can\$7 per hour, including helmet and lock. Daily 9 am-7 pm; hours can vary according to the weather, so call ahead. Prices Vary. 685 Humboldt St. (along the Inner Harbour), Victoria. Phone 250-380-2453. Toll-free 866-380-2453. <https://victoria.cyclebc.ca>.

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## BOATING & SAILING

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Southern Vancouver Island's many sheltered coves and inlets, including Victoria's Inner Harbour, make for some of the world's finest kayaking and canoeing. Several outdoor and adventure companies in Victoria rent kayaks and canoes, as well as offer lessons and tours. To make arrangements, contact Tourism Victoria's information center on Wharf Street. Phone 250-953-2033. Toll-free 800-663-3883.

### Ocean River Sports

This company rents seagoing and white-water kayaks and canoes. Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-6 pm, Sunday 10 am-5 pm. Kayak rentals start at Can\$40 for two hours or Can\$60 per day. 1824 Store St. (Inner Harbour), Victoria. Phone 250-381-4233. Toll-free 800-909-4233. <http://www.oceanriver.com>.

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## FISHING

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British Columbia's coastal waters offer superb sportfishing year-round. Charter trips to catch salmon and halibut start around Can\$75-\$120 per hour (less if you're part of a big group). Fees generally include bait, tackle and gear. Many operators can arrange to have your catch packaged for traveling. You can make arrangements through Tourism Victoria's information center on Wharf Street. Phone 250-953-2033. Toll-free 800-663-3883.

### Adam's Fishing Charters

Operating from the dock in the Inner Harbour, this company runs midsize cruiser-class boats around the southern tip of Vancouver Island year-round. Half-day rates (morning or afternoon departures) are Can\$525; full-day excursions Can\$800. 19 Lotus St., Victoria. Phone 250-370-2326. <http://www.adamsfishingcharters.com>.

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## GOLF

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Because of Victoria's moderate climate, most local golf courses are open year-round. You'll find everything from spectacular vistas and full-scale championship links to shorter, less-difficult courses.

### **Arbutus Ridge Golf Club**

A 40-minute scenic drive north from Victoria takes players to the dramatic landscape of this course surrounded by its namesake Arbutus trees. Greens fees Can\$59. 3515 Telegraph Road, Cobble Hill. Phone 250-743-5000. Toll-free 800-446-5322. [http://www.golfbc.com/courses/arbutus\\_ridge](http://www.golfbc.com/courses/arbutus_ridge).

### **Bear Mountain**

Jack Nicklaus and son Steve designed this 18-hole course, one of two resort courses. It is part of the larger Bear Mountain Resort, with several restaurants. Open daily. Greens fees Monday-Thursday Can\$139, Friday-Sunday Can\$159, including cart. 1999 Country Club Way, Victoria. Phone 250-744-2327. Toll-free 888-533-2327. <http://www.bearmountain.ca>.

### **Cordova Bay Golf Course**

This 18-hole, par-71, very playable championship course has wonderful views of Mount Baker. 5333 Cordova Bay Road (about 20 minutes north of downtown), Victoria. Phone 250-658-4444. <http://www.cordovabaygolf.com>.

### **Olympic View Golf Course**

This challenging course's 18 holes are played around two waterfalls and 12 lakes. 643 Latoria Road (15 minutes north of downtown), Victoria. Phone 250-474-3673. [http://www.golfbc.com/courses/olympic\\_view](http://www.golfbc.com/courses/olympic_view).

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## HIKING & WALKING

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Scenic trails are seemingly everywhere for those wishing to combine exercise with sightseeing. At China Beach, a 20-minute stroll in dense Sitka spruce opens up to one of South Vancouver Island's best beaches and awe-inspiring ocean vistas. The 29-mi/47-km Juan de Fuca Marine Trail is a hiking trail that can be tackled in its entirety over several days or in smaller sections.

### **East Sooke Regional Park**

Just outside the city and bordering the Strait of Juan de Fuca, this park offers everything from casual strolls (including a wheelchair-accessible pathway) to full-day treks. The park's woodland trails meander through old-growth forest to hidden coves. Phone 250-478-3344. <http://www.eastsookepark.com>.

### **Goldstream Provincial Park**

This park offers old-growth forests and trails, and up-close views of spawning salmon in late fall. Highway 1 (just north of the city), Victoria. Phone 250-478-9414. <http://www.goldstreampark.com>.

### **Mount Douglas Regional Park**

Only a 20-minute drive from downtown Victoria, Mount Douglas promises a wide variety of terrain with walks ranging from 30 minutes to four hours. It's all there—from deep evergreen forests with lush fern undergrowth to Garry Oak meadows, plus views from the mountaintop. Cedar Hill Road, Victoria. <http://www.saanich.ca/parkrec/parks/mt-doug/index.html>.

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## OTHER OPTIONS

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### **Adrena Line Zipline Adventure**

Located in Sooke, west of Victoria, this site runs from old-growth forest down to coastal waters. With eight ziplines, it promises an exhilarating experience up to 150 ft/45.7 m off the ground at speeds of up to 38 mi/61 km per hour. 5128C Sooke Road, Sooke, Victoria. Phone 250-642-1933. Toll-free 866-947-9145. <http://adrenalinezip.com>.

## **Westshore Motorcross Park**

This family-oriented dirt-motorcycle facility includes classes on motorcycle use for all ages along with recreational and performance events. All gear can be rented. Western Speedway, Langford (at the back), Victoria. Phone 250-590-8088. <http://www.westshoremx.com>.

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## NIGHTLIFE

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Pubs are a big part of Victoria's nightlife, so they're good places to start your night. Most bars and clubs close at 2 am, but you may find a few that are open till dawn.

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## BARS, TAVERNS & PUBS

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### **Bard & Banker**

This Scottish-style pub is a gorgeous two-story space outfitted with brass fittings, a long wooden bar and elegant chandeliers. The name draws on the building's history: Robert Service worked as a bank teller there before heading north to the Yukon and writing his epic poems, including *The Cremation of Sam McGee*. The menu highlights British pub favorites and local draft beers. Live local music is performed free of charge most nights. Daily 11 am-1 am. 1022 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-953-9993. <http://www.bardandbanker.com>.

### **Bengal Lounge**

This charming, old-world lounge in Fairmont Empress is known for its colorful connection to the past. The buffet is very popular. Evening live jazz performances are held on Thursday-Sunday 8 pm-11 pm. Monday-Wednesday 11:30 am-11 pm, Thursday-Sunday 11:30 am-midnight. 721 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-384-8111. Toll-free 866-540-4429. <http://www.fairmont.com/empress-victoria/dining/thebengallounge>.

### **Canoe Brewpub, Marina and Restaurant**

Join the locals on the biggest waterfront patio in Victoria or head inside to enjoy the soaring timberframe and brick construction. Sip handcrafted beer or a great wine from a spectacular wine list. Sunday-Wednesday 11:30 am-11 pm, Thursday-Saturday 11:30 am-1 am. 450 Swift St., Victoria. Phone 250-361-1940. <http://www.canoebrewpub.com>.

### **Clive's Classic Lounge**

Libations and spirits with house-made garnishes, in-house syrups and mixologists who get it. Chill to the lounge tunes a la *Mad Men*. Monday-Wednesday 11:30 am-midnight, Thursday and Friday 11:30 am-1 am, Saturday 5 pm-1 am, Sunday 5 pm-midnight. 740 Burdett Ave., Lobby Level, Victoria. Phone 250-361-5684. <http://www.clivesclassiclounge.com>.

### **Irish Times Pub**

Housed in a historic, two-story stone building on the edge of Bastion Square, this popular venue offers modern pub fare and generous pints. Daily 11 am-1 am. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 1200 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-383-7775. <http://www.irishtimespub.ca>.

### **Spinnakers Gastro Brew Pub**

Stop in for traditional pub grub featuring locally sourced organic ingredients, seafood and house-brewed beers. The patio is a particularly lovely spot in summer, where you can linger over Inner Harbour views. Daily 11:30 am-1 am. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 308 Catherine St., Victoria. Phone 250-386-2739. <http://www.spinnakers.com>.

### **Sticky Wicket Pub and Restaurant**

This is a pretty good replica of a wood-paneled British public house. There are several bars, nooks and crannies, and a rooftop patio with volleyball courts. It's located in the Strathcona Hotel, along with a host of other drinking spots and a nightclub. Daily 11:30 am-2 am. 919 Douglas St., Victoria. Phone 250-383-7137. <http://www.strathconahotel.com>.

## Swans Brewpub

This is a great spot for fish-and-chips and burgers, as well as traditional beers and English ales. The bar is also noted for its fine-art collection. There's live music every evening. Monday-Friday 11:30 am-2 am, Saturday 9 am-2 am, Sunday 9 am-midnight. \$-\$\$\$. No cover charge. Most major credit cards. 506 Pandora Ave. (located in the Swans Hotel), Victoria. Phone 250-361-3310. Toll-free 800-668-7926. <http://www.swanshotel.com>.

## Veneto Tapa Lounge

This stylish and urban lounge features an extensive cocktail menu and great innovative tapas to share. Monday-Thursday 4 pm-midnight, Friday 4 pm-1 am, Saturday 5 pm-1 am, Sunday 5 pm-midnight. 1450 Douglas St. (located in the Hotel Rialto), Victoria. Phone 250-383-7310. <http://www.venetodining.com>.

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## DANCE & NIGHTCLUBS

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### The Mint

DJ music played weekend nights is as big a draw as the delicious Nepalese and Tibetan dishes. Daily 5 pm-2 am. 1414 Douglas St., Victoria. Phone 250-386-6468. <http://themintvictoria.com>.

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## LIVE MUSIC

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### Hermann's Jazz Club

In business for more than 30 years, this downtown club regularly hosts all kinds of jazz and blues musicians, from local talent to international acts. There's also a dance floor for a good time. Cover charge varies. 753 View St., Victoria. Phone 250-388-9166. <http://www.hermannsjazz.com>.

### Logan's Pub

This low-key venue in the Fernwood neighborhood is home to Victoria's thriving independent music scene, with occasional visits from local bands that have made it big. Open Monday-Friday 3 pm-1 am, Saturday 11 am-1 am, Sunday 11 am-midnight. Check website for details. 1821 Cook St., Victoria. Phone 250-360-2711. <http://www.loganspub.com>.

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## PERFORMING ARTS

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Victoria boasts a vibrant cultural community, with year-round entertainment for every taste. World-class concerts and shows attract loyal audiences of Islanders hungry for culture and, not surprisingly, usually sell out in advance. In summer, the city is host to a number of music festivals that attract visitors from afar, including Symphony Splash (<http://www.victoriasymphony.ca>) and JazzFest (<http://www.jazzvictoria.ca>).

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## DANCE

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### **Ballet Victoria**

This classically trained ballet company performs contemporary and children's works in addition to traditional ballets throughout the year. 643 Broughton St., Victoria. Phone 250-380-6063. <http://www.balletvictoria.ca>.

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## MUSIC

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### **Victoria Jazz Society**

The society hosts concerts September-May and produces annual events such as JazzFest in June and the Vancouver Island Blues Bash in September. Monday-Friday 9:30 am-4:30 pm. 202-345 Quebec St., Victoria. Phone 250-388-4423. Toll-free 888-671-2112. <http://www.jazzvictoria.ca>.

### **Victoria Symphony**

Vancouver Island's largest performance-arts ensembles have regular concerts at the historic 1,416-seat Royal Theatre on Broughton Street. Monday-Friday 9 am-4 pm. 620 View St., Suite 610 (administrative offices), Victoria. Phone 250-385-6515. <https://victoriasymphony.ca>.

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## THEATER

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### **Belfry Theatre**

Formerly a church, this intimate venue is home to professional productions by local troupes. Box Office hours during performances Monday 9:30 am-5 pm, Tuesday-Saturday 9:30 am-7 pm. All other times, the Box Office is open Monday-Friday 9:30 am-5 pm. 1291 Gladstone Ave., Victoria. Phone 250-385-6815. <http://www.belfry.bc.ca>.

### **Langham Court Theatre**

Home to the Victoria Theatre Guild and Dramatic School, this 177-seat space with a solid reputation for amateur fare is tucked into the culturally oriented Rockland neighborhood, close to downtown. 805 Langham Court, Victoria. Phone 250-384-2142. <http://www.langhamtheatre.ca>.

### **McPherson Playhouse**

This 772-seat playhouse presents the city's widest variety of live performances. Monday-Thursday 8:30 am-4:30 pm, Friday 8:30 am-1 pm. 3 Centennial Square (in the 600-block of Pandora Avenue), Victoria. Phone 250-386-6121. Toll-free 888-717-6121. <http://www.rmts.bc.ca>.

### **The Victoria Operatic Society**

Known for its Broadway-style stage productions performed throughout the year at the McPherson Playhouse. 744 Fairview Road, Suite 10, Victoria. Phone 250-381-1021. <http://www.vos.bc.ca>.

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## VENUES

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## **Alix Goolden Hall**

A jewel box of a performance hall, this centrally located 800-seat venue was once a church sanctuary and now hosts the Victoria Conservatory of Music and visiting performers, including readings by noted international writers. 907 Pandora Ave., Victoria. <http://vcm.bc.ca/venues/alix-golden-hall>.

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## SPECTATOR SPORTS

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Active Victorians fervently support amateur and semiprofessional sports, including a WHL hockey team (two levels away from the National Hockey League). Sports tourism in the city is growing.

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## HOCKEY

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### **Victoria Grizzlies**

This home-town division of the Canadian Junior A Hockey League plays home games at the Q Centre during a September-March season. 1767 Island Highway, Victoria. Phone 250-385-1555. <http://www.victoriagrizzlies.com>.

### **Victoria Royals**

This Western Hockey League team plays home games at the 7,006-seat Memorial Centre. Monday-Friday 8:30 am-4:30 pm. Can\$12-\$27 adults. 1925 Blanshard St., Victoria. Phone 250-220-2600. <http://victoriaroyals.com>.

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## OTHER OPTIONS

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### **Victoria Shamrocks**

Victoria is fiercely proud of its world-class lacrosse program, a game with French Canadian and Native American ancestry. The Victoria Shamrocks are the local favorite. Q Center, 1767 Island Highway, Victoria. Phone 250-478-7625. <http://www.victoriashamrocks.com>.

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## SHOPPING

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Victoria's main shopping district is on and around Government Street, where you'll find picturesque British-style storefronts and specialty boutiques.

On Lower Johnston Street, known as LoJo, you'll find fashion boutiques and chic specialty shops. Serious antiques collectors should visit Antique Row, located on Fort Street between Blanshard and Cook streets. Market Square, between Pandora Avenue and Johnson Street, is also a fun place to browse. Its shops are housed in and around an open courtyard.

Those in pursuit of youthful and exotic clothing and other fashions, furnishings and art objects might venture north as far as Herald Street and along Chinatown's Fisgard Street (including Fantan Alley), and on the harbor front, Wharf and Store streets in the area known as the Design District.

**Shopping Hours:** Stores are generally open Monday-Wednesday and Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Thursday and Friday 10 am-9 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm.

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## ANTIQUÉ STORES

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### Classic Silverware

The stock is devoted mostly to fine silver pieces. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm. 813 Fort St., Victoria. Phone 250-383-6860. <http://classicsilverware.com>.

### Pacific Antiques

Among the specialties there are English and Irish porcelains, along with antique silver and Asian ceramics. 829 Fort St., Victoria. Phone 250-388-5311. <http://www.pacificantiques.com>.

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## BOOKSTORES

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### Munro's Books

This Victoria institution is located in a central heritage building. One of the original owners was Alice Munro, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013. Monday-Wednesday and Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Thursday and Friday 9 am-9 pm, Sunday 9:30 am-6 pm. 1108 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-382-2464. <http://www.munrobooks.com>.

### Russell Books

This three-story bookstore in Victoria's downtown is one of the city's largest used-book retailers. Monday-Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm. 734 Fort St., Victoria. Phone 250-361-4447. <http://www.russellbooks.com>.

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## DEPARTMENT STORES

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### Hudson's Bay Company

The store opened as a Victoria trading post in 1843. Today it's part of a nationwide department store chain where you can buy nearly every type of merchandise, including the traditional HBC centuries-old goods, such as thick wool "point blankets" once traded for furs. Monday-Wednesday and Saturday 10 am-7 pm, Thursday and Friday 10 am-9 pm, Sunday 10 am-6 pm. 1150 Douglas St. (in The Bay Centre), Victoria. Phone 250-385-1311. <http://www.thebay.com>.

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## GALLERIES

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## Alcheringa Gallery

Contemporary indigenous art of the Northwest Coast, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and aboriginal Australia is the specialty of this shop minutes from the Inner Harbour. Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm. 665 Fort St., Victoria. Phone 250-383-8224. <http://www.alcheringa-gallery.com>.

## Artina's

This shop carries handcrafted Canadian jewelry in myriad styles, including works by First Nations artists. Monday-Wednesday 9 am-7 pm, Thursday-Saturday 9:30 am-10 pm, Sunday 10 am-6 pm. 1002 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-386-7000. <http://artinas-jewellery.com>.

## Dales Gallery

Contemporary art gallery working with established and emerging artists. The building is historic and located in the midst of neon-hued Chinatown. Monday-Friday 10 am-5 pm, Saturday 11 am-4 pm. 537 Fisgard St., Victoria. Phone 250-383-1552. <http://dalesgallery.ca>.

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## SHOPPING AREAS

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### Bastion Square

Within historic Fort Victoria with an original courthouse, law chambers, and what were brothels and warehouses during the Gold Rush era, this area becomes a lively outdoor market during summer, with vendors selling arts and crafts and street entertainment. It also houses year-round shops, pubs and restaurants, with seasonal patios. View Street (between Wharf and Government streets), Victoria. <http://www.tourismvictoria.com>.

### Market Square

At the heart of old Victoria, the square and courtyards comprise about 25 businesses, including small boutiques, eateries and a craft brewery. Square hours (individual stores may differ) Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday and holidays 11 am-4 pm, slightly later in summer. Pandora Avenue 500 block, Victoria. Phone 250-386-2441. <http://www.marketsquare.ca>.

### Mayfair Shopping Centre

Situated between Douglas and Blanchard streets, this major Victoria mall features about 120 different retailers, including major chains such as The Bay and Toys R Us. Monday, Tuesday and Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Wednesday-Friday 10 am-9 pm, Sunday 11 am-6 pm. 3147 Douglas St., Suite 221, Victoria. Phone 250-383-0541. <http://www.mayfairshoppingcentre.com>.

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## SPECIALTY STORES

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### Capital Iron

Established in 1934, this eclectic store sells everything from fishing gear to hardware to home decor. Monday-Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Sunday 10 am-5 pm. 1900 Store St., Victoria. Phone 250-385-9703. <http://www.capitaliron.net>.

### Choux Choux Charcuterie

A tiny shop serving up a little taste of France using free-range pork, local rabbits and other regional meats. Fans say it has the best pate in town. The well-stocked cooler provides specialty cheeses that are perfect as picnic fare. Tuesday-Friday 10 am-5:30 pm, Saturday 10 am-5 pm. 830 Fort St., Victoria. Phone 250-382-7572. <http://chouxchouxcharc.com>.

### Cowichan Trading Co.

There you'll find fine crafts by First Nations artists, including masks, moccasins, and hand-knitted and numbered Cowichan sweaters. 1328 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-383-0321. <http://www.cowichantrading.com>.

## Dig This

Started in the early 1980s as a source for quality gardening items, this store is stuffed full of everything (except the actual plants) that gardeners would want. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5:30 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm. 1990 Oak Bay Ave., Victoria. Phone 250-598-0802. <http://www.digthis.com>.

## Hemp & Co.

This store is devoted to environmentally friendly principles. Sells casual clothing made from natural hemp fibers. Friday-Wednesday 10 am-6 pm, Thursday 10 am-8 pm. 1312 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-383-4367. <http://www.hempandcompany.com>.

## Idar

Idar (first name only) is a local designer of fine jewelry, using precious metals and hand-picked gemstones, described as a modernist blend of Nordic, West Coast and ancient Celtic designs. Monday-Friday 8:30 am-5:30 pm, Saturday 10 am-4 pm. 945 Fort St., Victoria. Phone 250-383-3424. <http://www.idar.com>.

## Irish Linen

A Victoria institution, this store has stood almost a century in its 1884 Italianate building, with original lamps and glass cases. It sells hand embroideries from the Madeira Islands, Belgium and Ireland, as well as the latest Irish linens, from tablecloths to baby blankets, made with ecologically friendly fibers. Spring to fall open Monday-Thursday 9:30 am-6:30 pm, Friday and Saturday 9:30 am-9 pm, Sunday 10 am-6 pm. Shorter winter hours. 1019 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-383-6812. <http://www.irishlinenvictoria.com>.

## Jade Victoria

This jewelry store boasts one of the largest collections of carved jade from multiple sources, including Canadian nephrite jade, mined in northern B.C. The official B.C. gemstone, the jade is often depicted in pieces that reflect Canada's aboriginal history and Arctic experience. Flexible summer hours—usually from 9 am through the evening. 911 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-384-5233. <http://www.jadestores.ca>.

## Rogers Chocolates

This beloved Victoria chocolatier is famed for its large, rich creams. Daily 10 am-7 pm. 913 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-881-8771. Toll-free 800-663-2220. <http://www.rogerschocolates.com>.

## Salt Spring Soapworks

Originating on the B.C. gulf island of the same name, this artisan-style business produces hand-made soaps and herbal products for women, men and children. Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 11 am-4 pm, slightly later in summer. 545 Johnson St., Victoria. Phone 250-386-7627. <http://www.saltspringsoapworks.com>.

## Silk Road

This is an avant-garde, Asian-style loose-tea and equipage shop. Also an aromatherapy and natural spa. It smells delicious. Monday-Thursday 10 am-6 pm, Friday and Saturday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm. 1624 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-704-2688. <http://www.silkroadteastore.com>.

## Smoking Lily

This famously miniscule storefront is an iconic clothing and accessories store. Unique garments are locally designed and made, often with silk-screen techniques. Mostly for women, but there are items for men (particularly T-shirts) and kids (including toys), too. Daily noon-5 pm. 569-A Johnson St., Victoria. Phone 250-382-5459.

## Sunday's Snowflakes

Funky meets sophisticated in this original women's clothing store. Daily 9:30 am-5:30 pm. 5325 Cordova Bay Road, Victoria. Phone 250-658-8499. <http://www.sundaysnowflakes.com>.

# See & Do: Shopping

DESTINATION GUIDE  
VICTORIA, BC

## **W&J Wilson**

This long-established clothier (located in the same historic building since 1862) specializes in classic but fresh European, American and Canadian designer fashions for women and men. 1221 Government St., Victoria. Phone 250-383-7177. <http://wandjwilson.com>.

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## DINING OVERVIEW

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Although Victoria's culinary scene was once confined to an indulgent afternoon tea, conventional dinner and a few English pubs, the city and wider region have blossomed into a distinguished dining destination. According to local hearsay, Victoria now boasts the second-highest number of restaurants per capita in North America, after San Francisco. Eateries range from those specializing in local fare, fresh from the nearby Cowichan Valley and mainland British Columbia, to those serving gourmand European cuisine and a wide range of Asian offerings. There are excellent breakfast eateries and takeaways in the downtown area.

Because of the stiff competition, creativity is paramount. Fish-and-chips, a local specialty, is served in a variety of styles, from traditional to fusion, all within a few blocks. Most restaurants are located in the inner city and along the coast.

Expect to pay within these guidelines for a meal for one, not including drinks, tax or tip: \$ = less than Can\$15; \$\$ = Can\$15-\$25; \$\$\$ = Can\$26-\$40; \$\$\$\$ = more than Can\$40.

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## LOCAL & REGIONAL

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### AURA

Breathtaking waterfront restaurant and patio setting overlooking the Inner Harbour. East-meets-West fusion cuisine sourcing fresh and local ingredients (especially seafood) in imaginative combinations. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner; Sunday for brunch. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. 680 Montreal St., Victoria. Phone 250-414-6739. .

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**Address**

680 Montreal St.  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada

**Phone**

250-414-6739

### Cafe Brio

Art-filled and warmly inviting, this place, housed in an Italian villa, has been buzzing with dedicated locals from the minute it opened its doors in 1997. Showcasing regional and organic foods meant to satisfy and comfort, the menu evolves with availability of the local market. Charcuterie made on-site. Dishes also available in half-orders. Daily from 5:30 pm. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. 944 Fort St., Victoria. Phone 250-383-0009. .

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**Address**

944 Fort St.  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada

**Phone**

250-383-0009

### Canoe Brewpub & Restaurant

Nestled in a rustic heritage building above the waterfront, Canoe is a hip watering hole with a generous patio. Quality bar food, burgers and entrees. Extensive craft-beer and wine list. Sunday-Wednesday 11:30 am-11 pm, Thursday-Saturday 11:30 am-1 am. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 450 Swift St., Victoria. Phone 250-361-1940. .

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**Address**

450 Swift St.  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada

**Phone**

250-361-1940

## Mo:Le

Mo:Le uses organic and local ingredients. A local institution, this space features local art on exposed brick walls. Daily for breakfast and lunch. \$. Most major credit cards. 554 Pandora Ave., Victoria. Phone 250-385-6653.

### Address

554 Pandora Ave.  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada

### Phone

250-385-6653

## Pig

With a second location in Colwood, this is a Pig that flies. With dedicated followers, this hole-in-the-wall casual eatery creates all things porky and delicious. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$. 1325 Blanshard St., Victoria. Phone 250-590-5193.

### Address

1325 Blanshard St.  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada

### Phone

250-590-5193

## Ulla Restaurant

Stellar chefs, ethically raised proteins and an innovative menu that changes with the market combine to create one of Victoria's hottest restaurants. Brick walls, large arched windows and fir tables create a stylish ambience. Tuesday-Saturday 5:30-10 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. 509 Fisgard St., Victoria. Phone 250-590-8795.

### Address

509 Fisgard St.  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada

### Phone

250-590-8795

## Victoria Public Market

This casual favorite of the Victoria culinary scene is a hive of local producers and small eateries. Farmers, bakers, cheese-makers, preservers, pie-makers, brewers, vintners, olive-oil vendors and seafood shops are among the vendors at the Hudson building market. There is also a farmers market on Wednesday, open 11 am-3 pm. Tuesday-Saturday 9:30 am-6:30 pm, Sunday 9:30 am-5 pm. \$\$\$. 1701 Douglas St., Victoria. Phone 250-884-8552.

### Address

1701 Douglas St.  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada

### Phone

250-884-8552

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## PERSONAL SAFETY

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Victoria poses no great dangers, but be aware of your surroundings and use common sense: Don't walk along dark streets at night, and don't leave items visible in your car (lock your belongings in the trunk).

Areas to avoid after dark are the parks and parking lots immediately adjacent to the Johnson Street Bridge, the corner of Johnson and Wharf streets, and Cormorant Street between Douglas and Quadra streets—the city's homeless population, as well as some drug addicts, tend to congregate in those vicinities. Violent crime is extremely rare.

Southwestern British Columbia is an active earthquake zone. Check with your hotel for emergency evacuation procedures.

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## HEALTH

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Excellent medical care is available in Victoria. Numerous walk-in clinics are located in and around downtown, and the city's two major hospitals are within 20 minutes of downtown. The Royal Jubilee Hospital at 1952 Bay Street is open 24 hours with an emergency department. Phone 250-370-8000.

[http://www.viha.ca/patient\\_care\\_centre](http://www.viha.ca/patient_care_centre).

In the case of an emergency, dial 911. Visitors from the U.S. should make sure that they have adequate out-of-country health insurance.

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## DISABLED ADVISORY

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A community with tree-lined residential streets, Victoria on the whole has a steady, reliable road system with paved sidewalks, and routes outlined for cyclists, making mobility a non-issue for both able-bodied visitors and those with mobility challenges.

However, some historic properties might not be wheelchair-accessible because of their early construction methods, so it's best to contact these venues in advance for wheelchair-accessibility details.

The Federal Government's Canadian Transportation Agency publishes *Take Charge of Your Travel: A Guide for Persons with Disabilities*, which you can download free online. <https://www.otc-cta.gc.ca/eng/take-charge>.

Visitors with disabilities can access a number of local organizations that offer citywide services. For public transit, see the BC Transit Bus Pass (<http://www.bctransit.com/regions/vic/fares/bcbuspass.cfm>). For mobility-aid practice sessions, contact the Victoria Regional Transit System. Phone 250-385-2551.

The Victoria International Airport is wheelchair accessible. For passengers needing assistance, commissionaires are located throughout the building. When seeking assistance, advance notice to the air carrier is recommended. For people escorting those with special needs and who are not flying, there is an escort pass available to provide additional assistance to the departure gate.

Victoria taxis are well-equipped for people with disabilities. Approximately 15% of taxis are wheelchair-accessible; reservations are not required when requesting a lift-equipped vehicle, but are recommended during busy periods.

For airport shuttles, the HandyDART is a public transit service designed to accommodate people with disabilities, though you must register by mail in advance of using the service. Phone 250-727-7811.

BC Ferries provides a variety of accessible services to ensure a safe and comfortable passage to visitors with disabilities. Phone 888-223-3779. <http://www.bcferrries.com>.

In addition, there are many accessible accommodation options in British Columbia. *Hello BC* includes an accessibility rating, identified by a logo found under the "Ratings, Affiliations & Accreditations" section of the property's listing. <http://hellobc.com>.

Access Victoria markets several "barrier-free" accommodations, and provides some information on accessibility to major sites, venues and transportation. Toll-free 888-593-4247. <http://www.accessvictoria.com>.

Those with transportation or other travel-related disability issues can contact the Victoria Disability Resource Centre for more information. Phone 250-595-0044. <http://www.drcvictoria.com>.

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## DOS & DON'TS

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Do use the term "First Nations" to describe British Columbia's indigenous people. Victoria takes a lot of pride in its First Nations heritage.

Don't wear torn jeans or T-shirts to high tea at the Empress—or anywhere else. Locals tend to dress nicely when dining out.

Do respect pedestrian and traffic signals. Canadians are generally law-abiding people and like to see their rules respected.

Don't be confused by terms for the larger Canadian coinage. A Can\$1 coin is called a "loonie," for the loon it depicts on the side opposite the queen. The Can\$2 coin is called a "toonie."

Do remember to carry your umbrella in the spring, fall and winter months.

Do be mindful of dogs in off-leash areas usually harboring along trails.

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## Geostats

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**Passport/Visa Requirements:** All U.S. citizens must have a passport when traveling by air to or from Bermuda, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America and Mexico. Citizens of Canada, Mexico and the British Overseas Territory of Bermuda also must have a passport or other designated secure document to enter the U.S. Passports are required for land crossings at the Canadian and Mexican borders with the U.S. and for cruise passengers returning to the U.S. from Mexico, the Caribbean, Canada or Bermuda. Reconfirm travel-document requirements with your carrier prior to departure.

**Population:** 363,100.

**Languages:** English.

**Predominant Religions:** Christian (Protestant, Roman Catholic).

**Time Zone:** 8 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (-8 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the second Sunday in March to the first Sunday in November.

**Voltage Requirements:** 110 volts.

**Telephone Codes:** 250, area code; 236, area code;

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## Currency Exchange

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Victoria primarily uses Canadian currency. U.S. currency is accepted at most private venues with some offering their own exchange rates, which in most cases will be less than what is offered at the current bank exchange. There are many banks and currency-exchange bureaus downtown. Most banks have ATMs, some dealing in U.S. dollars, but you'll also find ATMs near the city's tourist attractions and shopping areas.

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## Taxes

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Most purchases in British Columbia are subject to 5% Goods and Services Tax (GST) and a 7% Provincial Sales Tax (PST). On accommodations, there is a 1% destination marketing fee, a 10% hotel room tax (8% provincial sales tax plus 2% city tax) and 5% for the federal goods and services tax, for an effective tax rate of 16%. For more information, visit <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/visitors>.

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## Tipping

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It's customary to tip waitstaff and bar attendants 15%, more if you want to reward exceptional service. Taxi drivers are also generally tipped 15%. In hotels, bell staff should be tipped Can\$1 per bag, and the chamber staff left Can\$2 per day.

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## Weather

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Victoria's summer daytime temperatures average about 72 F/22 C. Nights are cool, even in July and August, when temperatures can be as low as 50 F/10 C. Winters are mild (temperatures range 40-50 F/5-10 C), but they can be gray and drizzly. Light rain is most frequent October-May, but not unusual year-round.

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## What to Wear

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Victorians pride themselves on a neat but laid-back appearance when they venture out, so you should pack plenty of nice casual wear for sightseeing. For business travelers, neat and tidy is the rule. Business meetings are

performed in suits or suit jackets and khakis for men. For women, pant suits are typical attire.

Layering is key to managing Victoria's variable humidity and temperature fluctuations. Take a sweater if you are visiting in summer, as nights can be cool. For winter, you'll want warm, waterproof wear for gray and drizzly days. Make sure to take a comfortable pair of walking shoes.

It's a good idea to pack an umbrella and a rain jacket, as well, because of the unexpected showers that can happen at a moment's notice.

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## Telephone

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Pay phones are becoming less common. Most still accept coins, and many also take credit or phone cards. You must dial the area code (250, 236 or 778) when making local calls. Good cell phone coverage is available throughout the area, but be sure to consult with your service provider on roaming fees. SIM cards and disposable cell phones are becoming more common. Visit a local Rogers Store for purchases. One location is the Victoria Bay Centre, 1150 Douglas Road, Victoria. Phone 250-385-6151.

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## Internet Access

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Hotels in Victoria usually offer Internet access to their guests. There is free Wi-Fi available in the Bay Centre downtown. Wi-Fi also is available at many coffee shops in the area.

### Serious Coffee

Free Wi-Fi is offered at all Serious Coffee locations in town. Monday-Wednesday 6:30 am-8 pm, Thursday and Friday 6:30 am-9 pm, Saturday 8 am-8 pm, Sunday 8 am-6 pm. 1280 Broad St. (downtown), Victoria. Phone 250-380-0272. <http://www.seriouscoffee.com>.

#### Address

1280 Broad St.  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada V8W 2A5

#### Phone

250-380-0272

### The Greater Victoria Public Library

The library provides free Wi-Fi at all of its branches. 735 Broughton St., Victoria. Phone 250-940-4875. <http://www.gvpl.ca>.

#### Address

735 Broughton St.  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada

#### Phone

250-940-4875

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## Mail & Package Services

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### Canada Post

The main downtown post office. Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm. 709 Yates St., Victoria. Toll-free 800-267-1177. <http://www.canadapost.ca>.

#### Address

709 Yates St.  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada V8W 1L0

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## Newspapers & Magazines

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The daily newspaper of record is the *Victoria Times-Colonist*; the national dailies are *The Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*. They're available in sidewalk vending boxes, hotels and convenience stores. Free dailies include *Victoria News Daily* (<http://www.vicnews.com>), which is distributed at convenience stores and small shops across the city.

Tourism-related publications that list events and attractions include *Victoria Vacation Guide* and *Where* magazine. The hip and local *Monday Magazine* (<http://www.mondaymag.com>) is a weekly newspaper stuffed full of everything that's current.

*Eat* magazine (<http://www.eatmagazine.ca>) is a bimonthly devoted to the culinary scene. Both *Taste* and *Victoria Dining Guide* are extensive annual foodie publications. These publications are found throughout Victoria and are usually available at hotels, restaurants and tourism information centers.

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## Transportation

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Victoria's charm is best experienced on foot or bicycle. That allows you to enjoy the scent of flowers in hanging baskets along the water's edge and to discover the delights of the town's meandering alleys, public squares and gardens. Most museums, galleries and shops are located around the Inner Harbour or in the downtown core. Even those attractions a little farther afield are within a short cab ride. BC Transit also provides excellent service in and around the city.

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## Air

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Victoria International Airport (YYJ) is a half-hour drive north in the town of Sidney. Phone 250-953-7500. <http://www.victoriaairport.com>.

The airport authority has made Can\$8 million in improvements in the past two years. They include a Nexus line for frequent, pre-approved travelers, a doubling of the security area and additional check-in kiosks. Also added is a full-size, licensed restaurant in the Departures area. The public transportation system now runs 28 daily bus services between the airport and Victoria, resulting in a tripling of service.

If you aren't renting a car, the YYJ Airport Shuttle will take you to downtown hotels in Victoria for Can\$24 one way. It runs for all incoming flights. Phone 778-351-4995. Toll-free 855-351-4995. <http://www.yyjairportshuttle.com>.

Taxis are also readily available at the airport. The fare to downtown Victoria costs Can\$50-\$60.

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## Car

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Rental cars are available at the airport as well as in town. Expect to pay Can\$100-\$110 a day for a mid-sized vehicle, though online deals can often be much less.

The minimum age to rent a vehicle is 18, but some private rental companies require drivers to be 21 and impose additional charges for those who are younger than 25.

The use of cell phones or other hand-held devices while driving is prohibited by law in British Columbia.

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## Public Transportation

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BC Transit runs public buses along regular routes downtown. One-way fares are Can\$2.50, depending on your age and how far you want to go. Exact change in Canadian currency is required. Day passes are also available for Can\$5. <http://www.transitbc.com/regions/vic/fares/default.cfm>.

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## Ship

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Cruise ships berth at Ogden Point, a short taxi ride or 15- to 20-minute walk to downtown. Small passenger ships may dock or anchor in the Inner Harbour. Victoria Harbour Ferries, a passenger-only service with a dock in the Inner Harbour, travels to 17 destinations around the harbor, including several resorts. <http://www.victoriaharbourferry.com/ferry-stops-fares>.

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## Taxi

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Taxis are easy to find. Fares around downtown range Can\$10-\$20.

In addition, Victoria Harbour Ferries (<http://www.victoriaharbourferry.com>) and H2O Taxi (<http://www.h2otaxi.com>) offer water-taxi service for pickup around the Inner Harbour.

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## Recommended Guidebooks

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*The Explorer's Guide to Victoria & Vancouver Island: A Great Destination* by Eric Lucas (Countryman Press).

*Moon Victoria & Vancouver Island* by Andrew Hempstead (Avalon Travel Publishing).

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## Tourist Offices

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### Tourism Victoria

The visitors center has a wealth of information about the city. Daily 8:30 am-7:30 pm. 812 Wharf St., Victoria. Phone 250-953-2033. Toll-free 800-663-3883. <http://www.tourismvictoria.com>.

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#### Address

812 Wharf St.  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada V8W 1T3

#### Phone

250-953-2033

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## Calendar

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Local residents and visitors take part in and enjoy Victoria's celebrations—which cover the spectrum from floral displays to wine, boating and music festivals. There is at least one major event taking place almost every month.

Highlights include the Uno Festival of Solo Performance, which features world-class productions for single performers (May), International JazzFest (June) and the Art Gallery Paint-In (July). The popular Symphony Splash takes place in the Inner Harbour in early August. The Art of the Cocktail is a two-day festival held in late October. The Festival of Trees transforms the Fairmont Empress Hotel into a magically decorated forest each November and December.

During the months of May and June, Victoria hosts its annual garden tours. Some of the city's loveliest private gardens are open to the public as a fund-raiser for the Victoria Conservatory of Music.

Other festivals include the Victoria International Buskers Festival (July), Victoria Highland Games and Celtic Festival (late August), and the Victoria Fringe Theatre Festival (August).

For the latest festival information, contact Tourism Victoria. Phone 250-953-2033. Toll-free 800-663-3883. <http://www.tourismvictoria.com>.