



Day Trips from Vancouver

Victoria p188

A fast floatplane hop or languid ferry trip away, British Columbia's historic waterfront capital combines colonial charm, a brilliant museum and a pub-tastic craft-beer scene.

Whistler p194

In the shadow of the mountains, this idyllic gable-roofed ski resort also becomes Canada's favorite outdoor activity destination in summer.

Richmond & Steveston p200

Richmond's modern-day Chinatown is home to North America's best Asian shopping and dining scenes, from authentic stores and restaurants to cool summertime night markets. Steveston is a historic waterfront fishing village with great museums.

Southern Gulf Islands p204

A scenic floatplane trip (or leisurely ferry voyage, if time allows) from Vancouver, Salt Spring is the main escape here, while the other islands – each with their own distinctive feel – are not far away.

Victoria

Explore

Centered on the twin Inner Harbour landmarks of the Parliament Buildings and the Empress Hotel, downtown Victoria is compact and strollable. Stretching north from here, Government St is the main shopping promenade (especially for souvenirs) and leads to historic Bastion Sq, which is colonized by restaurants and a summer market. At downtown's northern edge, Victoria's small Chinatown is the oldest in Canada. Nearby is Market Sq, adjoined by the funky Lower Johnson (LoJo) shopping area. A few minutes southeast of the Inner Harbour lies Beacon Hill Park, Victoria's clifftop waterfront gem. In summer, you can expect the city's streets to be awash with visitors: hop a miniferry around the harbor or rent a bike (Victoria has more cycle routes than any other Canadian city) to escape the crowds.

The Best...

- ➔ **Sight** Royal BC Museum (p188)
- ➔ **Place to Eat** Red Fish Blue Fish (p192)
- ➔ **Place to Drink** Spinnakers Gastro Brewpub (p193)

Top Tip

For a meal with a difference, show your ID at security and nip into the old-school, white-tableclothed politicians' dining room in the Parliament Buildings; it's open to everyone.

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Air** The scenic downtown-to-downtown floatplane services operated from Vancouver by Harbour Air Seaplanes (www.harbour-air.com) take around 30 minutes.
- ➔ **Bus** Downtown-to-downtown Pacific Coach Lines (www.pacificcoach.com) services arrive, via ferry, several times daily. Hop transit bus 70 to downtown Victoria from the island's Swartz Bay ferry terminal.
- ➔ **Car** Drive to the mainland Tsawwassen BC Ferries terminal, board the Victoria-bound ferry, then hit the island's Hwy 17 into Victoria (32km).

Need to Know

- ➔ **Area Code** 250
- ➔ **Location** 112km southwest of Vancouver
- ➔ **Tourist Office** 800-663-3883, 250-953-2033; www.tourismvictoria.com; 812 Wharf St; ☎8:30am-8:30pm Jun-Aug, 9am-5pm Sep-May

SIGHTS

You'll find plenty to keep you occupied in and around the Inner Harbour for at least a few hours. But if it's time to move on, hop a bus or use your hire car to explore further-flung hot spots, or just wander up to little Chinatown for a camera-loving visit. If you have time, consider hitting a bike trail or taking a whale-watching tour.

ROYAL BC MUSEUM

MUSEUM

(www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca; 675 Belleville St; adult/child from \$16/10; ☎10am-5pm Sun-Wed, to 10pm Thu-Sat, reduced hours off-season) At the province's best museum, start at the 2nd-floor natural-history gallery with its beady-eyed woolly mammoth and realistic dioramas (the shady forest of elk and grizzlies peeking from behind trees is highly evocative). Then peruse the First Peoples culture showcase, which includes a fascinating mask gallery. Don't miss the walk-through colonial street, complete with detailed storefronts and a chatty Chinatown.

The museum also has an IMAX theater and, especially in summer, there's usually a blockbuster visiting exhibition to add to the city's appeal.

PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

HISTORICAL BUILDING

(www.leg.bc.ca; 501 Belleville St; ☎tours 9am-5pm daily mid-May-Aug, to 5pm Mon-Fri Sep-mid-May) **FREE** Across from the Royal BC Museum, this handsome confection of turrets, domes and stained glass is the province's working legislature, but it's also open to history-loving visitors. Peek behind the facade on a colorful 30-minute tour led by costumed Victorians, then stop for lunch at the 'secret' politicians' restaurant (photo ID required). Check out the building's attractive nighttime exterior; it's lit like a Christmas tree. This is one of Victoria's most-photographed landmarks, so keep your camera handy.