

# CALGARY SINCE 1883 HERALD

## **One fabulous West Coast weekend; [Final Edition]**

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The southern tip of Vancouver Island boasts Victoria, British Columbia's capital city: a big-shot coastal town with a small- potatoes population. This metropolis of just 75,000 often triples in size in the high season, owing to its temperate climate, ocean sides, old-growth rainforests and mountain vistas. An outdoorsy lifestyle is de rigueur, albeit here it's tied to a decidedly aging community. This means favoured pastimes of gardening and traditional tea. But young scamps reside here, too, and you'll find plenty of cool-vibe restaurants, pubs and shops.

Here's how to spend a weekend featuring the best of both:

### Day one

Morning: Fuel up at Rebar (50 Bastion Sq.; 250-361-9223) with a healthy brunch. This colourful hub of mismatched furniture and baked goods features morning specials such as buttermilk corncakes with blueberry almond butter and not-so-ordinary huevos rancheros.

Statistics Canada says Victoria is the fittest city in the land, with 36 per cent of the adult population leading active lives: nearly double the national average. So, do as the locals do and go for a jog (or walk). A stunning route is the Scenic Marine Drive, which follows the coastline from downtown Victoria. Views include the Olympic Mountains and Juan de Fuca Strait and you'll even find Mile 0: the beginning of the Trans-Canada Highway.

Afternoon: Just past the legislature is Fisherman's Wharf, which provides moorage for recreational craft, floating homes and fishing vessels. It's also a great place to buy fresh crab, shrimp and fish. Have it cleaned and take it home, or, if you can't wait, head to Barb's Place (Fisherman's Wharf at Erie Street; 250-384-6515; open March to October), famous for authentic English style fish and chips.

The Royal British Columbia Museum (675 Belleville St.;

1-888-447-7977; [royalbcmuseum.bc.ca](http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca)), located at the centre of the Inner Harbour action, is a place of natural and historical wonders. The museum recently launched the Natural History Gallery, which has a permanent exhibition on climate change that features dropping temperatures, thunder crashes and lightning flashes. Other highlights include the Imax theatre and the First Peoples exhibit.

Evening: The Island Chefs' Collaborative is a non-profit group of young chefs committed to promoting Vancouver Island cuisine. This means locally grown, high-quality ingredients turned into delicious victuals. Perhaps the best example is Brasserie L'Ecole (1715 Government St.; 250-475-6260), where chef Sean Brennan dishes out perfect brasserie fare such as cognac-and-chicken-liver mousse with

Saanich red currant preserves, Quadra Island mussels and Sooke trout. Starters average \$8, and all mains are \$19. Later, debauch at **Spinnakers** Brewpub ( 308 Catherine St.; 250-386-2739; [spinnakers.com](http://spinnakers.com)), with various choices like organic nut-brown ale.

## Day two

Morning: Rise early and go for a half-day kayak trip with one of the city's organized outfitters (such as Island Adventure Tours; 866- 812-7103; [islandadventuretours.com](http://islandadventuretours.com)). They'll fetch you from your hotel, where you'll drive 30 minutes through the farm-flanked Saanich Peninsula and into Sidney-by-the-Sea. Sun's shining and the water's sparkling as you slice through bays and inlets, spotting sea lions at play and bald eagles soaring above.

You're spitting distance from the famed Butchart Gardens (866- 652- 4422; [butchartgardens.com](http://butchartgardens.com)), so you may even be early enough to bypass the tour-bus masses. Even if pretty flowers aren't your cup of tea, these 22 hectares of pristinely maintained gardens are a sight to behold, especially the fairy-tale-like Sunken Garden.

Afternoon: For lunch back in Victoria, head to Mo: Le (554 Pandora Ave.; 250-385-Mole), where young owner Cosmo serves up healthy island food. Think omelettes stuffed with local Galloping Goose turkey and sage sausage, Tony's organic kale, tomato and feta, served with toast and pesto hash browns. After lunch, drop into Johnson Street's independent stores, then grab a stash of vanilla creams from Rogers' Chocolates (founded in 1885).

Evening: For cocktail hour, hit the Fairmont Empress's Bengal Lounge. Built circa 1912, it's filled with leather club chairs and couches, fretted woodwork and endangered tiger hide: a much-loved gathering spot for B.C.'s policy makers.

For dinner, Temple (525 Fort St.; 250-383-2313) is a new school restaurant in an 1890s heritage building serving small and larger plates such as butter-chicken brochettes and togarashi-spiced black cod with bonito butter sauce. It's also an area favourite for into-the-night cocktails in the sexy Velvet Room. Besides, where else can you drink in a temple?