

Bug Me, Please!
A Visit to Victoria BC's Bug Zoo
By Ron Kirstein

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The Entry into the Bug Zoo showing the gift shop.

Today I am off to the **Bug Zoo** with my friend and co-worker Lisa. We are on a mission to check out some of the attractions in Victoria and report on them. The Bug Zoo is located at 631 Courtenay Street, just off of Douglas. It is only a few blocks from the famed Empress Hotel and only two blocks from popular Government Street.

When Lisa and I walk through the front door, we are greeted by Carol, the congenial proprietor. The admission area and accompanying gift shop are awash with color and all kinds of neat toys, games, and whimsical items. It is immediately uplifting.



The Host Holding a Female Stick Bug
Up close and personal with the bugs...



A Millipede held by a young boy

As we enter the Zoo, we find a young, energetic host in the midst of a demonstration of live giant Walking Stick bugs. He places them into the hands of willing onlookers as he explains how they live and eat. One falls to the floor and immediately goes into camouflage mode: it shapes itself to look like a blade of grass. How cool is that!



A Millipede Mustache



The Bug Stops Here

Next we are off to visit the large African Millipedes. Apparently they do not have a thousand legs. They had so many that their discoverers gave up counting and settled on "one thousand". Although they look like doggie do-do, they apparently are quite clean. The host asks the crowd who would like to wear a millipede. He offers two choices, a moustache or a wrist bracelet. The first young lad calmly sits down, tilts his head back and the host places the millipede over his upper lip. Great 'stache! He cautions the young lad to keep his mouth closed. Very good idea! After the kids are done, Lisa tries on the bracelet. After it has been taken off, she comments on how the bristly the feet feel. For me, they kind of tickled.



A Hissing Cockroach

The Host gets the cockroach to hiss

Then we were off to the Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches. The host says they are very clean because they coat their bodies with some kind of antiseptic. He then kisses the little hisser! Now all the kids want to kiss the roach. Whoa!

With each demonstration the host provides lots of explanations and viewings. Lots of opportunities are provided to touch or hold the critters. The kids love it. Their parents are taking lots of pictures and the host makes sure they get the opportunity.



The Ant Village



A stickbug on a young girls arm

Then there are the ants, the spiders, the butterflies, and those hairy and rather large Tarantulas. There are bugs from all over the world and each has a great story. This is such an excellent opportunity to learn about these amazing creatures. We share the planet with millions upon millions of these creatures, so I think we do have a responsibility to learn more about them. From the number of people visiting the Zoo, I think many parents agree.

The Zoo has over 60 different species to view in a safe and friendly environment. It is so colourful and engaging. Be sure to bring your camera for this unforgettable, up close and personal, hands-on adventure. Handling is always optional. It is open every day, except Christmas and New Year's Day. Check the web site for times and rates.

The gift shop has something for everyone. It is hard to walk through there without picking something up for the grandchildren. I highly recommend this very educational and interesting attraction. It is one of Victoria's best.

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