

DAY TRIP TO VANCOUVER FROM VICTORIA - STAY PUT, YOU'RE ALREADY IN HEAVEN!

By Ron Kirstein, edited by Lisa Cole

My nervousness could be interpreted as fear as I sit in row two. The light flashes green. My grip tightens on the steering wheel. Engines roar around me. The pedal's on the metal and we're off. A GrandAm to my right cuts so close in front of me I have to hit the brakes. The GrandAm does the same to a Mustang ahead to my left, then again to a Lexus with an elderly driver at the wheel. My palms are sweating. The action's so intense that I almost miss the "Welcome to Vancouver" sign. The trip from the Ferry Terminal now seems like a "cake walk". I long to be back in the safety of my Victoria where rush hour is the emptying of the Ferry!

I finally make it to my friend Bob's house and collapse in a comfortable chair. My heart rate slowly returns to normal.

The next day, Bob is my guide and I feel at bit more confident. The first stop on our day trip is to Cypress Bowl for a great view of the city.



Vancouver has excellent shopping and Robson Street is often referred to as Vancouver's Rodeo Drive. There are hundreds of fine restaurants from which to choose a meal. It has wonderful theatre and lots of professional sports. If this is what you are after, then spend more than a day in Vancouver.

For a thrill, and an opportunity to change the color of my socks, we drive up to the Capilano Suspension Bridge. It is approximately 500 feet above the Capilano River. Standing on the bridge, my legs are instant mush and provide no support. The bridge wobbles and I wobble more. I feel my lunch dancing in my stomach and begin to freak! I watch an elderly lady come to tears just 10 feet onto the bridge her eyes begging for assistance. When I return to the car, Bob says, "You could have gone to Lynn Canyon, and done this for free, just 15 minutes from here!"

We finish our day by heading to the Dockside Restaurant in the Granville Hotel at Granville Island a unique shopping and dining area in Vancouver.

"Why aren't we heading to Grouse Mountain?" I ask. "All the ads claim it's one of the city's top 10 attractions."

"Do you want to pay for the view or do you want it for free?" Bob replies.

We stop near the top of the mountain on a road-side pullout with a park-like setting and a couple of outdoor toilets. Not too classy, but oh what a view! We can see all of downtown, Stanley Park, Vancouver's harbour and the Lion's Gate Bridge crossing the narrows between North Vancouver and Stanley Park. Vancouver is truly one of the most beautiful large cities in the world!

We head down the mountain and cross the Lion's Gate Bridge. The entrance to the park is just off the bridge. I watch carefully as the "traffic" is right on my tail. When we're in the safe confines of the park, we stop at Prospect Point, where Kodak made its first billion. Bus loads of Asian tourists are snapping photos faster than I can blink. The view is awesome. Next to Cathedral Rock, Sedona Arizona, this must be the next most photographed places on Earth.

The Seawall (walkway and bike path) is full of healthy-looking people getting exercise on a spectacular trail. Stanley Park is an evergreen oasis of 400 hectares (1,000 acres) on the edge of Vancouver's downtown core. Majestic cedar, hemlock and fir trees embrace visitors in a tranquil environment.

Next stop is to visit 60,000 very wet critters at the Vancouver Aquarium. Voted one of BC's best attractions, we go to see the Arctic Beluga whales, giant Amazon arapaima, tropical reef sharks, dolphins, sea lions and much more. Wow what a place!

"So Bob, what have I missed on my day trip?"

"Well", Bob says, "If your children were younger, then I would say, don't miss Science World. It is on the edge of downtown, an absolute world of wonder with hands-on interactive displays to stir childhood imaginations. Their Omnimax theatre is one of the world's largest dome screens. It is very easy to use up a whole day at Science World."

It is easy to see why Vancouver is called "a sea-to-sky city". You can ski, snow-board or cross-country ski in the morning and fish, scuba dive, kayak or swim in the ocean in the afternoon. Vancouver's backdrop is the spectacular snow-covered North Shore Mountains. Vancouver is often called 'Raincouver' in jest, so be sure to bring your umbrella, just in case.

Thanking Bob for the whirlwind day-trip, I reflect on my Victoria. Victoria has over 50 attractions, four of which are world class - Butchart Gardens, The Royal Museum & IMAX Theatre, and incredible Whale Watching. Victoria was voted the "Best City in the World for Environmental Ambiance" by readers of Con de Naste magazine. It is an outdoor paradise with golfing, kayaking, hiking, biking, superb year round salmon fishing, sailing in protected waters, spectacular sand and rugged beaches. It has lots of art galleries and museums. Crafters and artists abound. The nearby Gulf Islands are treasures indeed and are just a short hop by Island Ferries. Most of what is available in Victoria is within a 20 minute ride.

When you're done with Victoria, there is so much to see and do on Vancouver Island. Long Beach between Ucluelet and Tofino is truly heaven on earth. Port Alberni and Campbell River fight over who is the salmon fishing capital of the world. Parksville has unbelievable beaches. Strathcona Park is one of the best



From here, Bob and I travel through downtown to one of Canada's oldest Chinatowns. Vegetable stands, souvenir shops and restaurants bustle with commerce. The place is alive and very busy.

In the heart of Chinatown is a tranquil oasis built in 1986 but as old as civilization. It is a classical Chinese garden where a series of landscaping masterpieces reflect the very best of Chinese arts, philosophy and architecture. Occasional glimpses of the surrounding towers offend the natural beauty of this very special garden.

It was named to honor the memory of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, the father of modern China, who was the first president of the Republic of China.

wilderness parks in the world with great hiking and climbing.

So here is my recommendation. If you come to the Pacific Northwest, plan to spend at least a week in Victoria and if Vancouver is on your must-do list, then make it a day-trip. Vancouver is a fast-paced city, somewhat stressful, but exciting and vibrant, whereas Victoria has a much slower pace and has much more to see and do (minus the great shopping, theatre and pro sports, intense traffic and massive high-rises). Victoria is a small city (350,000) where 20 minutes will take you almost anywhere in the city. I got so tired of driving to Victoria from Edmonton Alberta several times a year, so I finally moved here. I've been a consummate tourist for 20 years!

To find out more about Victoria, check out <http://tourismmall.victoria.bc.ca> Vancouver <http://www.tourismvancouver.com/visitors/> and Whistler <http://www.tourismwhistler.com/> To get the inside scoop on Victoria visit <http://tourismmall.victoria.bc.ca/secret.htm>

Go to [top](#)

