

What to Expect: Location and Weather

Location

This oceanside city (pop. 360,000) is the provincial capital of British Columbia. Victoria is located on the southernmost tip of Vancouver Island off Canada's Pacific coast. The city's climate is also the most temperate in Canada and it boasts gardens that bloom year-round – Victoria is popularly known as the "City of Gardens". The wild beauty of the Pacific coast and the adventure of the great outdoors are within the city limits, and ocean and mountain vistas will follow you wherever you go. Vancouver Island itself occupies an area about the size of Holland, and is particularly famous for its rugged west coast with views of the open Pacific Ocean, surfer-friendly waves, and breath-taking old growth coastal rainforest.

Weather

Along with our beautiful coastal rainforest, however, comes the nickname 'The Wet Coast.' Victoria itself actually boasts the lowest rainfall on the coast and gets the most days of sunshine. That being said, a raincoat and umbrella close at hand are always a good idea. The average temperature in November is about 9°C/ 49°F, and the average rainfall is about 147 mm during this month. The mild weather means that year-round outdoor pursuits such as cycling, hiking, and even kayaking are popular, even though you might get a little damp along the way! In terms of outer clothing, a waterproof jacket is ideal, preferably worn over a sweater or micro-fleece jacket/vest to keep you toasty warm.

Getting to Vancouver Island: Airline & Ferry Options

BC Ferries

www.bcferries.com

1-888-BC FERRY (223-3779)

Passenger and vehicle ferry service from mainland British Columbia to Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands – most common way for travellers to get from Vancouver to Victoria. Ferry terminal is located about a half-hour drive – or an hour bus ride – from downtown Victoria.

Washington State Ferries

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/>

1-888-808-7977

Passenger and vehicle ferry service from Anacortes, Washington to Sidney, BC (about a half-hour drive – or an hour bus ride – from downtown Victoria).

Victoria Clipper Ferry

<http://www.clippercavations.com/ferry/>

1-800-888-2535

Passenger-only ferry service between Seattle, Washington and downtown Victoria, BC – the terminal is a short cab ride (or an energetic walk) away from the conference hotel.

Harbour Air

<http://www.harbour-air.com/index.php>

1-800-665-0212

Float plane service from downtown Vancouver to downtown Victoria – terminal is a short cab ride (or an energetic walk) away from the conference hotel.

Victoria International Airport

<http://www.victoriaairport.com/>

Victoria's International Airport is located near Sidney BC, about a half-hour drive from downtown Victoria. (Fun fact: CNNGo ranked Victoria's airport among the top ten loved airports in the world – the only Canadian airport to make the list!) There are several car rental companies located at the airport, and cabs or shuttles are also available – cab fare to the conference hotel is approximately \$56, while the shuttle is \$21 per person.

The airport is also on Victoria's public transit route. To travel by bus from the airport to downtown Victoria, board the 83 Sidney, 86 McTavish, or 88 Sidney bus from the airport, and transfer at the McTavish Exchange to either the 70X Downtown or 72 Downtown – the trip will take approximately one hour, and the fare is \$2.50 per person.

Getting Around Victoria: Local Transportation Options

Public Transit (Bus)

<http://www.transitbc.com/regions/vic/schedules/explore/>

250-382-6161 – press zero for a Customer Service Agent

Many of the attractions in downtown Victoria and the surrounding area are on a bus route – note, however, that buses do not run as frequently as in larger cities, so it's a good idea to pick up a bus schedule before heading out to explore for the day. The bus fare for anywhere around the greater Victoria area is \$2.50, or daypasses are available for \$5.

Taxi Cabs

There are a number of taxi companies in the Victoria area, and rates are competitive between the different businesses. Calling #TAXI (8294) will connect you to the first available cab company in your area, which might be easier than keeping several phone numbers handy.

Car Rentals

There are many options for car rentals either from the Victoria International Airport or downtown Victoria, should you want to explore areas a little further outside the city on your visit. Note that there are no rental car companies at the BC Ferry terminal – it is best to take the public transit bus into Sidney (a fifteen minute trip) and rent a car from there.

Bikes and Feet

Downtown Victoria is very cyclist and pedestrian friendly, and many interesting areas can be explored on foot or by bike from the conference hotel. If you are looking to rent a bike (motorized or people-powered!), Cycle BC Rentals and Tours (<http://www.cyclebc.ca> or (250) 380-2453) at 685 Humboldt St is one nearby option.

Food & Drink

The conference's Dine Around listing has a few great options for restaurants in the area. Victoria has plenty of restaurants (it has the second highest number of restaurants per capita in North America, second only to San Francisco!), and many of them are within walking distance of the conference hotel. A few nearby local favourites include:

Fifth Street Bar & Grill

<http://www.fifthstreet.ca/dinner>

1028 Hillside Ave

250-380-4600

Featuring beautifully crafted woodwork, original artwork, and the textured charm of tile and brick, 5th Street Bar and Wood Fired Grill boasts one of Vancouver Island's few wood-fire rotisseries.

Gas fireplaces on our two patios create a cozy European ambience for savouring luscious pastas and gourmet pizzas. Signature dishes include spit-roasted chicken, rotisserie-smoked meats, juicy steaks, grilled ribs, as well as daily features that include fresh seafood.

Fifth St. is proud to only serve chicken from Rossdown Farm. A fifth-generation family farm, Rossdown ethically raises free-run chickens from egg to harvest without the use of hormones. Fifth St. fully supports the Vancouver Aquarium Ocean Wise program. With over 600 Ocean Wise partners across Canada, Ocean Wise makes it easy for consumers to make sustainable seafood choices that ensure the health of our oceans for generations to come.

Lot 1 Pasta Bar

<http://lot1pastabar.com/food-menu/>

204 - 815 Cloverdale Ave.

[778-265-9311](#)

We've fused traditional pastas with international style, from linguine mixed with Moroccan spices to bucatini combined with Asian sauces – and we believe pasta is no longer about the noodles alone. It's about what you add to it, next to it and what you wash it down with, from fresh salads and savoury sides to local beers and handcrafted cocktails.

Our warehouse-style locale merges modernism with an industrial feel, from brushed concrete floors to 17-foot ceilings, and piping to polished subway tile. It's the place to unwind after work, savour a glass of vino with friends and celebrate a birthday with family.

Canoe Brewpub

<http://www.canoebrewpub.com/>

450 Swift Street

250-361-1940

We have something for everyone - great handcrafted beer, a diverse award-winning wine list, a pub, a lounge, a dining room, patios, knowledgeable staff and free parking - all in one stunning location! The soaring timber frame and rustic brick architecture at CANOE creates a vibrant atmosphere and provides a versatile setting for gatherings large or small. Features live music Thursday – Saturday.

Rebar

<http://www.rebarmodernfood.com/>

50 Bastion Square, Victoria

250-361-9223At Rebar, eating modern means being aware: aware of where your food comes from and preparing and serving food responsibly, from seed to table. Rebar proves that exotic flavours don't need to traverse the globe to reach your plate, especially since there is a wealth of culinary treasures in our own backyards. Food is meant to nourish and Rebar focuses on serving food and juices that maintain as many nutrients as possible. Steaming and roasting vegetables, toasting and grinding spices, using fresh, hand-cut herbs in our dishes and fresh juice from our own juicers to enhance stocks, sauces and dressings: at Rebar, you enjoy real, gourmet food because we never fake it.

Pagliacci's

<http://www.pagliaccis.ca/>

1011 Broad Street

(250) 386-1662

Pagliacci's is one of those timeless places, born in passion, carved from life and bathed in laughter. From the focaccia bread and soup through the Broadway-style cheesecake, every morsel is made on the spot, served with style by someone hustling for you. And there's more than enough pasta or steak to bring home to Lassie. Step back into history. This is what it used to be like before franchises.

Swann's Hotel Brewpub

<http://swanshotel.com/brew-pub/brew-pub-home>

506 Pandora Avenue

(250) 361-3310

Experience our warm and friendly Brewpub, alive with character, heritage architecture, stunning original artwork and First Nations' carvings. Enjoy the views from our unique sunny, glassed/open air patio, overflowing with our signature flowers in the spring and summer. Whether you are looking for a great place for weekend breakfast, lunch, dinner or drinks, you can't go wrong at Swans. We have something for everyone, including a great kids menu and house brewed Root Beer! Live music every night with no cover charge.

Cafe Mexico

<http://cafemexico.com/>

1425 Store St

(250) 386-1425

A part of Victoria's dining experience for over 20 years, Cafe Mexico has built its reputation on consistency. From traditional favourites like fajitas served on cast-iron pans or enchiladas with ranchero sauce to new classics such as chipotle charbroiled chicken and alambres, owner Brad Olberg and his wife Hilda take pride in everything they serve. And that's saying a lot. There is a large menu, with tons to accommodate every taste.

Cultural Attractions and Indoor Adventures

Royal BC Museum/IMAX

www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca

675 Belleville Street

1-888-447-7977

The Royal BC Museum is a place of discovery. Through unique galleries, the Museum showcases the human and natural history of British Columbia and temporary exhibits from other countries and cultures. Authentic artifacts and specimens are displayed in highly realistic settings, giving visitors the experience of another time and place. Pair your museum visit with an IMAX film - the largest IMAX screen in British Columbia offers you an incredible immersive cinematic experience. Victoria IMAX lets you feel like you're really there!

Victoria's Chinatown

500 – 600 block of Fisgard Street

Victoria's Chinatown is the oldest in Canada and second in age only to San Francisco's in North America. It has its beginnings in the mass influx of miners from California to what is now British Columbia in 1858 - initially a collection of crude wooden huts, Victoria's Chinatown rapidly evolved into a dense neighbourhood of businesses, theatres, schools, churches, temples and a hospital. It did gain a dark reputation however, because of opium factories, gambling dens and brothels. Today, Victoria's revitalized Chinatown is a popular area for tourists as well as the artistic community – Fan Tan Alley***.

Parliament Buildings

<http://www.leg.bc.ca/>

501 Belleville Street

250-387-3046 The Parliament Buildings are located on the banks of the Inner Harbour, and at night the building lights up the sky with over 3,300 light bulbs casting a magical spell over the harbour. The construction of the Parliament Buildings in 1893 was led by a 25 year old architect by the name of Francis Rattenbury – he and his crew made an effort to use local materials wherever possible for the buildings, so much of the brick, granite, lime, and Douglas Fir used in the construction is of local origin. Visitors are welcome to join a free public tour or to explore the building on their own self-guided tour. Guided tours begin from the waiting room inside of the Main Entrance and are offered regularly throughout the day. Contact the tour office at 250-387-3046 or tours@leg.bc.ca closer to the date of your visit for up-to-date schedule information.

Bug Zoo

<http://www.bugzoo.bc.ca/>

631 Courtney St

(250) 384-BUGS

Welcome to the amazing world of insects and spiders. A visit to this must see zoo offers visitors an excellent opportunity to view and experience multi-legged creatures from around the world in a safe, fun and friendly atmosphere. Get up close and personal with LIVE giant walkingsticks, alien-eyed praying mantids, hairy tarantulas and glow-in-the-dark scorpions, to name a few. Discover over 40 fascinating species including Canada's largest ant farm. The knowledgeable "bug guides" will reveal the exotic secrets of this hidden kingdom and provide a safe animal handling experience for the more adventurous. Imagine holding a tickling 400 leg millipede that stretches the length of your forearm! Bring your camera. It's an unforgettable, hands-on adventure.

Looking for a little down time?

Cafes and Coffee Shops

Solstice Cafe - <http://www.solsticecafe.ca/> - 529 Pandora Avenue

Habit - <http://habitcoffee.com/> - 522 Pandora Avenue

Cafe Bliss - <http://www.cafebliss.ca/> - 556 Pandora Ave

Bean Around the World – <http://www.beanvictoria.com> - 533 Fisgard St

Wild Coffee House – <http://wildcoffee.ca/> - 632 Yates Street

Spas

The Spa at Silk Road - <http://www.silkroadteastore.com/> - 1624 Government St

The Spa at Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe - <http://www.thespadeltvictoria.com/> - 45 Songhees Road

Unique Shopping Spots

Lower Johnson Street - Johnson Street between Government Street and Store Street

This row of candy-color Victorian storefronts is Victoria's hub for independent fashion boutiques. Storefronts—some closet size—are filled with local designers' wares, funky boutiques, and no fewer than three shops selling ecologically friendly clothes of hemp and organic cotton.

Inner Harbour

This scenic patch of waterfront is the location of Victoria's many tourist attractions, recreational activities, restaurants and shopping. Buskers and street artists sell their wares year-round, making this a great place to stop by to support local talent and take home a custom-made souvenir.

Government Street

From the Inner Harbour, wander up Government Street to find the perfect gift or souvenir. Stop to sample handmade chocolates or the perfect cup of tea or coffee. Discover native art, jewellery, fashion and a variety of specialty stores as well as a major shopping centre along the bustling sidewalks of this iconic street.

Market Square - 560 Johnson St

During the late 19th century, this three-level square provided everything a sailor, miner, or lumberjack could want. Restored to its original architectural character, it's now a pedestrian-only hangout lined with cafés and boutiques. Shops sell toys, jewelry, and local art.

Concerts/Live Bands

Provide schedule closer to event

Hiking & Other Nature Adventures

Whale Watching

The waters surrounding Victoria offer opportunities for excellent whale watching and wildlife viewing, and there are many tour options available leaving right from the downtown area, including everything from small zodiacs (full cruiser suits are provided!) to larger vessels. Orcas are most frequently sighted, as there are three resident pods in the area, but Humpback, Minke, and Grey whales can also be seen, along with harbour seals, Steller and California sea lions, bald eagles, and harbour and Dall's porpoises.

There are many companies to choose from, but here's one good option:

Prince of Whales - <http://www.princeofwhales.com/> - 1-888-383-4884

Other Water Adventures

Kayaking – Because Victoria lies on the southern tip of Vancouver Island and is almost completely surrounded by water, there are plenty of excellent opportunities for kayaking. There are several kayaking companies located in the downtown area that offer harbour departures or tours to nearby areas – as long as you're willing to brave a bit of chill, kayaking is an ideal way to explore the marine life of the West Coast up close and personal.

Again, there's lots of companies to choose from, but one reliable option is:

Ocean River Adventures - <http://www.oceanriveradventures.com/kayaking-tours.htm> - 1-800-909-4233

Diving – National Geographic Magazine recognizes Vancouver Island as one of the best cold-water diving destinations in the world and the renowned Jacques Cousteau Society rates the area as only second to the Red Sea for diversity of marine life and water clarity. If you're up for the challenge, check out the Ogden Point Dive Centre - <http://www.divevictoria.com/> - 1-888-701-1177 – for more information about the area's diving opportunities.

Scenic Strolls

Dallas Road Walkway - Victoria's scenic oceanfront walkway follows Dallas Road from the Inner Harbour area and stretches from the Ogden Point Breakwater to Ross Bay and includes Mile 0 (the start of the Trans-Canada Highway), Holland Point Park, Beacon Hill Park (home of the world's tallest totem pole), and Clover Point Park. This urban walk features gorgeous ocean vistas, and keep your eyes peeled for plenty of local wildlife. Warning: the waterfront walk can be windy, so dress warmly!

Gorge Waterway - The body of water known simply as “The Gorge” to Victoria locals is a narrow inlet that connects Victoria Harbour to Portage Inlet. The Gorge has a rich history as an important spiritual place and fishing area for First Nations, and a fishing, bathing and recreational area for early Victoria residents. The Gorge Waterway Park runs the length of the Gorge – it’s an easy walk, about 2.5 km return (1km=.62 miles), with excellent interpretative presentations along the way.

University of Victoria Finnerty Gardens – If you’re looking to head a little further from the downtown area, consider visiting the University of Victoria. A beautiful campus in its own right, the University’s Finnerty Gardens features one of Canada’s best collections of rhododendrons, and over 4,000 species of trees and shrubs. There are three tranquil ponds, a network of winding paths and dozens of benches – the gardens have been carefully planned to provide a rich array of colour, scent, and texture all year round. Visit <http://www.uvic.ca/finnerty/> for a self-guided walking tour.

Parks and Hiking Trails in Greater Victoria

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary – Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary is a wild oasis in the heart of the urban landscape and includes two distinct ecosystems: the beautiful marshland of Swan Lake and the spectacular Garry oak meadow on Christmas Hill. Both are home to an incredible array of native plants and wild animals. The Sanctuary is a living classroom fostering an understanding and appreciation of nature through direct experiences. Educational programs for all ages encourage responsibility for the care and protection of the natural environment. Managed by a non-profit society, this urban refuge provides an exceptional opportunity to bring people and nature together.

<http://www.swanlake.bc.ca/>

Mount Douglas Park - This is the largest and most magnificent park administered by Saanich. Walk the shores of Cordova Bay, hike trails lush with the abundance of ferns and wildflowers towered by Douglas Fir and Cedar trees overhead. Trails, as well as a steep paved park road, lead you to the summit. From the parking lot at the top, a walking trail leads you to the summit elevation of 213m. This 360° lookout is spectacular, with views of rural Saanich, the city lights of Victoria, and further, the Olympic and Cascade Mountains in Washington State. In 1942, Emily Carr claimed to have had a vision while visiting a friend in Vancouver. The vision inspired her to return immediately to Mount Douglas Park where she felt the *“forest had something to tell her”*. There, for a few weeks in August of that year, she painted her last works which were both mystical and enchanting.

<http://www.saanich.ca/webapp/parks/displaypark.jsp?mapNo=87>

Esquimalt Lagoon – A saltwater lagoon located at the base of the Royal Roads property, next to the Fort Rodd Hill/Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Sites, this beach area is home to an astonishing number of bird species, making it a great location for visiting birders to check out. The beach stretches along a mile-long paved causeway that shelters the lagoon from the open water of the strait. There is a wealth of driftwood along the beach and you never know what might wash up on the shore. The beach is covered with fairly fine sand and there are almost no rocks along its length.

http://www.esquimaltlagoon.com/esquimalt_lagoon

Goldstream Park – Just 17 kilometers from downtown Victoria, Goldstream Provincial Park lies amid the splendour of an old-growth temperate rain forest. There you can see a world class salmon-spawning stream with thousands of Chum Salmon returning between October and December. It doesn’t stop there. During this amazing time of year you can visit the park and it’s always-changing Visitor Centre. Hiking trails in the park take you from valley floor to ridges, even to the top of Mt. Finlayson. Enjoy two different waterfalls, an abandoned gold mine, and incredible views.

<http://www.goldstremppark.com/>

Thetis Lake Park - Go for a hike on the scenic forested trails hugging Upper and Lower Thetis Lakes. One of the nicest parks close to Victoria, with excellent hiking trails accessible all year round. For panoramic views of the lakes and surrounding hills, follow the more challenging trails up Seymour or Scafe hills. Thetis Lake Park was established as Canada's first nature sanctuary in 1958. Thetis Lake also has several inter-park connections for the more adventurous hikers. These include the Francis King Regional Park, Mill Hill and most recently the Stewart Mountain Trail to Mount Work Regional Park, a popular hiking and multi-use mountain biking park.

<http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks/thetis/>

East Sooke Park – West Coast wilderness awaits you at East Sooke Regional Park. Experience it as you hike along the windswept rocky coast, over dry hilltops, through dark rain forest to sheltered coves. In this Wilderness Recreation Park, you'll experience solitude and harmony with nature in a park untouched by urban progress. Over 50 kilometers (31 miles) of trails draw you into the timeless beauty of East Sooke. Begin your exploration at one of the three entry points: Aylard Farm, Anderson Cove, or Pike Road.

<http://www.eastsookepark.com/>

Planning to Extend Your Trip?

Saanich Peninsula Tour

A finger of land that rises up between Saanich Inlet and various straits of the Gulf of Georgia, the Saanich Peninsula points north from the city of Victoria to Swartz Bay, surrounded by water on three sides. It is a bountiful place of gentle hills and fertile fields, which was a major producer of berries and vegetables for more than a hundred years and, more recently, the source of grapes and wine. This is where ploughed fields meet sandy beaches, and marinas offer sanctuary in the coves and harbours of a winding coastline.

For information about touring this area, check out the following resources:

Touring the Saanich Peninsula - <http://www.visitors-info.com/explore-vancouver-island/articles/victoria-features/item/the-saanich-peninsula>

Saanich Peninsula Visitor Information - <http://peninsulatours.ca/>

Tofino – Pacific Rim National Park Tour

Tofino (population about 2,000), reigns as jewel of Canada's west coast. The stunning beauty and ecological diversity of Tofino's location in the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve is the source of all activities. For all this glamour, Tofino remains the rough-and-tumble frontier town it has always been, easygoing, outgoing, enterprising, unpretentious and resolutely friendly. Yet it also boasts swank beachfront resorts, excellent restaurants and a dynamic arts scene rooted in nature and First Nations culture. Environmental protests during the 1980s and '90s spawned a tourism industry with a strong base in ecological values and consciousness about the environment. Clayoquot Sound itself was declared a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve in 2000. Today this little village, with a permanent population of about 1800, welcomes about one million tourists every year, and is known as the Gateway to Clayoquot Sound.

For information about touring this area, check out the following resources:

Highlights on the Road to Tofino: <http://www.wickinn.com/tofino-activities/drive-tofino>

Tofino Tourist Attractions: <http://www.tourismtofino.com/tofino-attractions>

Pacific Rim National Park Reserve: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/bc/pacificrim/visit.aspx>

Vancouver City Tour

Majestic mountains, sparkling ocean, rainforests and beautiful foliage all four seasons make Vancouver one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Canada is known for our people's friendly nature, and Vancouver's citizens take great pride in our welcoming, clean, safe streets - day or night, all year round. Catering to any interest throughout the year, you can enjoy world class shopping, gourmet meals, outstanding live entertainment, sporting events, theatre, outdoor adventure, spectacular sights and attractions – there's something for everyone in this vibrant coastal city.

You can't beat the reviews!

"You're gorgeous, baby, you're sophisticated, you live well...Vancouver is Manhattan with mountains. It's a liquid city, a tomorrow city, equal parts India, China, England, France and the Pacific Northwest. It's the cool North American sibling." – The New York Times

For information about touring this area, check out the following resources:

Visiting Vancouver: <http://www.hellobc.com/vancouver.aspx>

Vancouver Tourism Info: <http://www.tourismvancouver.com/vancouver/about-vancouver/>

Top 10 Vancouver Attractions: <http://www.vancouverattractions.com/home>