

The Best of Vancouver & Victoria

If you really want to understand **Vancouver**, stand at the edge of the Inner Harbour (the Canada Place cruise-ship terminal makes a good vantage point) and look around you. To the west you'll see Stanley Park, one of the world's largest urban parks, jutting out into the waters of Burrard Inlet. To the north, just across the inlet, rise snow-capped mountains. To the east, right along the water, is the low-rise brick-faced Old Town. And almost everything else you see lining the water's edge will be a new glass-and-steel high-rise tower. As giant cruise ships glide in to berth, floatplanes buzz in and out, and your ears catch a medley of foreign tongues, you may wonder just where on earth you are. Vancouver is majestic and intimate, sophisticated and completely laid back, a bustling, prosperous, world-class city that somehow, almost miraculously, manages to combine its contemporary, urban-centered consciousness with the free-spirited magnificence of nature on a grand scale.

Vancouver is probably one of the "newest" cities you'll ever visit, and certainly it's one of the most cosmopolitan. I can guarantee you that part of your trip will be spent puzzling out what makes it so unique, so livable, what gives it such a buzz. Nature figures big in that equation, but so does enlightened city planning and the diversity of cultures. Vancouver is a place where people *want* to live. It's a place that awakens dreams and desires.

The city's history is in its topography. Thousands of years ago a giant glacier sliced along the foot of the coast Range, simultaneously carving out a deep trench and piling up a gigantic moraine of rock and sand. When the ice retreated, water from the Pacific flowed in and the moraine became a peninsula, flanked on one side by a deep natural harbor (today's Inner Harbour) and on the other by a river of glacial meltwater (today called the Fraser River). Vast forests of fir and cedar covered the land, and wildlife flourished. The First Nations tribes that settled in the area developed rich cultures based on cedar and salmon.

Some 10,000 years later, a surveyor for the Canadian Pacific Railroad came by, took in the peninsula, the harbor, and the river, and decided he'd found the perfect spot for the CPR's new Pacific terminus. He kept it quiet, as smart railway men tended to do, until the company had bought up most of the land around town. Then the railway moved in, set up shop, and the city of Vancouver was born.

Working indoors, Vancouverites have seemingly all fallen in love with the outdoors: in-line skating, mountain biking, downhill and cross-country skiing, kayaking, windsurfing, rock climbing, parasailing, snowboarding, and variations on all the above. Why shouldn't they? Every terrain needed is right there in their backyard: ocean, rivers, mountains, islands, sidewalks. And when they're not biking or kayaking, they're drinking coffee or eating out. In the past decade or

so, Vancouver has become one of the top restaurant cities in the world, bursting with an incredible variety of cuisines and making an international name for itself with its unique Pacific Northwest cooking. The new food mantra here is “buy locally, eat seasonally.”

The rest of the world has taken notice of the blessed life people in these parts lead. The World Council of Cities ranked Vancouver second only to Geneva for quality of life (and who wants to live in Geneva?). Surveys generally list it as one of the 10 best cities in the world to live in. It's also one of the 10 best to visit, according to *Condé Nast Traveler*. And in 2003, the International Olympic Committee awarded Vancouver the right to host the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. Heady stuff, particularly for a spot that less than 20 years ago was routinely derided as the world's biggest mill town.

Though some “heritage buildings” still remain in Vancouver, the face of the city you see today is undeniably new. Starting in the 1960s, misguided planners and developers seemed intent on demolishing every last vestige of the city's pioneer past, replacing old brick and wood buildings with an array of undistinguished concrete high-rises and blocky eyesores. Citizen outcry finally got the bulldozers to stop their rampage. Luckily, landscaping and gardening was an ingrained part of life in this mild climate, so plants and trees and shrubs were not uprooted for endless parking lots. You may be amazed, in fact, by the amount of green and the number of fountains and the overall lushness of neighborhoods like The West End, which also happens to be one of the most densely populated areas in the world. A building boom preceded Expo '86 and followed it as well, spurred on by enormous amounts of cash pouring in from Hong Kong and Asia. The new towers, made of glass and steel, are much lighter looking and seem more in keeping with the hip, international image that Vancouver is developing for itself.

If you miss the old in Vancouver, you'll find plenty of it in **Victoria**, some 80km (50 miles) across the Strait of Georgia on Vancouver Island. Victoria took the opposite approach from Vancouver and preserved nearly all its heritage buildings. As a consequence, Victoria, beautifully sited on its own Inner Harbour, is one of the most charming small cities you'll ever find (it has about 325,000 residents in the Greater Victoria area, compared to over two million in Vancouver). Since it's on an island, accessible only by ferry (the best way to go) or floatplane (buckle your seatbelts, it might be a bumpy ride), a more leisurely sense of time prevails in Victoria. It's a perfect antidote for stressed-out mainlanders.

For years Victoria marketed itself quite successfully as a little bit of England on the North American continent. So successful was the sales pitch, residents began to believe it themselves. They began growing elaborate rose gardens, which flourished in the mild Pacific climate, and they cultivated a taste for afternoon tea with jam and scones.

For decades, this continued, until eventually it was discovered that not many residents of Victoria shared a taste for bad English cooking, so restaurants branched out into seafood, ethnic, and fusion. And lately, as visitors have shown more interest in exploring the natural world, Victoria has added whale-watching and mountain-biking trips to its traditional London-style double-decker bus tours. The result is that Victoria is the only city in the world where you can zoom out on a boat in the morning to see a pod of killer whales, and make it back in time for a big afternoon tea. Add the Butchart Gardens, a truly world-class garden that celebrated its centenary in 2004, and the Royal B.C. Museum, and you've got all you need for a memorable holiday just 90 minutes from the big city.

1 Frommer's Favorite Vancouver Experiences

- **Strolling the Stanley Park Seawall:** Or jogging, running, blading, biking, skating, riding—whatever your favorite mode of transport is, use it, but by all means get out there. See p. 114.
- **Taking a carriage ride through Stanley Park:** One of the largest urban parks in the world, and certainly one of the most beautiful, Stanley Park is nothing short of magnificent. You can sample the highlights on a delightful 1-hour carriage ride that winds through the forest, along Burrard Inlet, past cricket fields, rose gardens, and the park's superlative collection of First Nations totem poles. See p. 114.
- **Flying Over the City in a Floatplane:** You'll see these six-seater, single-prop planes taking off and landing on Burrard Inlet near the Canada Place cruise-ship terminal. **Baxter Aviation Adventure Tours** (☎ 800/661-5599) is one company that can take you up on a scenic trip over Vancouver, giving you an eagle's-eye view of its mountains, water, islands, and skyscrapers. See p. 132.
- **Watching the Fireworks Explode over English Bay:** Every August during the July/August HSBC Celebration of Light, three international fireworks companies compete by launching their best displays over English Bay. As many as 500,000 spectators cram the beaches around English Bay, while those with boats sail out to watch from the water. See p. 29.
- **Exploring Chinatown:** Fishmongers call out their wares before a shop filled with crabs, eels, geoducks, and bullfrogs, while farther down the street elderly Chinese women haggle over produce as their husbands hunt for deer antler or dried sea horse at a traditional Chinese herbalist. And when you're tired of looking and listening, head inside to any one of a dozen restaurants to sample succulent Cantonese cooking. See chapters 5 and 7.
- **Visiting the Vancouver Aquarium:** It's a Jacques Cousteau special, live and right there in front of you. The Vancouver Aquarium does an extremely good job showing whole ecosystems. Fittingly enough, the aquarium has an excellent display on the Pacific Northwest, plus sea otters (cuter than they have any right to be), beluga whales, sea lions, and a Pacific white-sided dolphin. See p. 116.
- **Strolling the Beach:** It doesn't matter which beach, there's one for every taste. Wreck Beach below UBC is for nudists, Spanish Banks is for dog walkers, Jericho Beach is for volleyballers, Kitsilano Beach is for serious suntanning, and English Bay Beach is for serious people-watching. See p. 134.
- **Dining Out in Yaletown:** It's Trend Central and some of the city's hottest culinary hot spots are clustered there. For the most sumptuous fare and the coolest dining rooms, try Blue Water Café and Raw Bar, Glowbal Grill and Satay Bar, or Elixir in the Opus Hotel. See chapter 5.
- **Exploring UBC's Museum of Anthropology:** The building—by native son Arthur Erickson—would be worth a visit in itself, but this is also one of the best places in the world to see and learn about West Coast First Nations art and culture. See p. 120.
- **Browsing the Public Market on Granville Island:** Down on False Creek, this former industrial site was long ago converted into a truly fabulous indoor public market. Hop on the miniferry at the foot

The Best Websites for Vancouver & Victoria

- **Entertainment Info** (www.ticketstonight.ca): This site is a great place to turn to for half-price night-of tickets and general entertainment information in the Vancouver area.
- **Tourism B.C.** (www.hellobc.com): The official site of the provincial government tourism agency, this site provides good information on attractions, as well as higher-end accommodations.
- **Tourism Vancouver** (www.tourismvancouver.com): The official city tourism agency site provides a great overview of attractions, including an excellent calendar of events, plus a few last-minute deals on accommodations.
- **Tourism Victoria** (www.tourismvictoria.com): Victoria's official tourism site functions much the same as Vancouver's, with up-to-date, comprehensive information about what to do and see around the city.
- **Whistler & Blackcomb Resorts** (www.whistler.net): This site offers a particularly helpful overview of activities and accommodations options available at North America's premier ski resort.

of Davie Street in Yaletown and in 10 minutes you'll be there. At the market you'll find incredible food and goodies; put together a picnic and sit outside by the wharf to people- or boat-watch as you nosh. See p. 118.

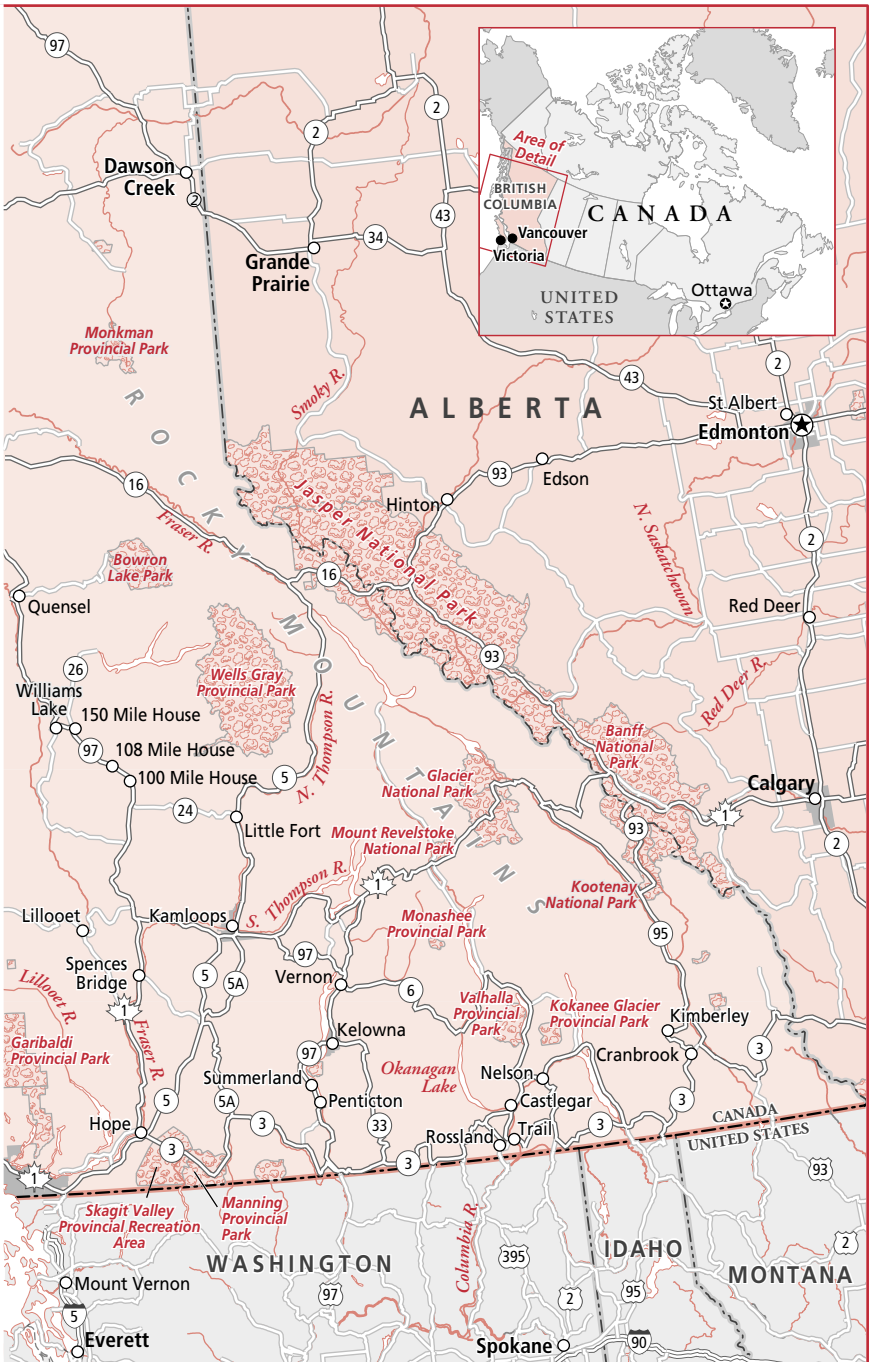
- **Wandering the West End:** Encompassing the über-shopping strip known as Robson Street, as well as cafe-lined Denman and a forest of high-rise apartments, the West End is the urban heart of Vancouver. Enjoy the lush trees lining the streets, the range of architecture, and the neat little surprises on every side street. See chapter 7.
- **Enjoying the F-F-F Festivals:** The Folk, the Fringe, and the Film, to be precise. The Folkfest brings folk and world-beat musicians to a waterfront stage in Jericho Park. The setting's gorgeous, the music's great, and the crowd is something else. Far more urban is the Fringe, a festival of new and original plays

that takes place on artsy Granville Island. The plays are wonderfully inventive. Better yet, they're short and cheap so you can see a lot of them. In late September, the films of the world come to Vancouver. Serious filmies buy a pass and see all 500 flicks (or as many as they can before their eyeballs fall out). See chapter 2.

- **Kayaking on Indian Arm:** Vancouver is one of the few cities on the edge of a great wilderness, and one of the best ways to get there quickly is kayaking on the gorgeous Indian Arm. Rent a kayak or go with a company—they may even serve you a gourmet meal of barbecued salmon. See section 7 in chapter 6.
- **Picnicking at the Lighthouse:** Everyone has their favorite picnic spot—one of the beaches or up on the mountains. One of the prettiest picnic spots is Lighthouse Park on the North Shore. Not only do you get to look back over at Vancouver,

Southern British Columbia





A Short History of First Nations

When Captain Vancouver arrived in English Bay in 1792, there were more than 50 First Nations living in what is now British Columbia, speaking some 30 languages from six distinct language families.

Exactly where each tribe lived, when they arrived, and how many members each had is all now a matter of some controversy, but evidence suggests that the area had been settled for some 9 to 10,000 years. One hundred percent of the province's land area is now claimed by one or more First Nations. Negotiations are proceeding slowly: One of the most important aspects of any claim is a band's oral tradition. The stories and legends about where a band came from, what lands it occupied, and how and where it gathered food are thus not just stories and legends; in certain circumstances they are considered the equivalent of legal documents, with their content and ownership a huge issue.

Living in the rainforest, all of these coastal peoples developed an extremely rich and complex culture, using cedar as their primary building material and, for food, harvesting marine resources such as herring, shellfish, and especially salmon. The richness of the local environment allowed these peoples ample surplus; their spare time was devoted to the creation of stories and art. Now undergoing a revival, Coastal art, whether in wood or glass or precious metals, usually depicts stylized figures from native mythology, including such universal figures as the Raven, or tribal totems, such as the Bear, Frog, or Killer Whale.

The central ceremony of the coastal First Nations was and is the potlatch, a gathering of tribes held to mark a significant event such as the raising of a totem pole or the coming of age of a son or daughter.

but also the walk down to the rocky waterline runs through a pristine, old-growth rainforest. See p. 109.

- **Hiking the North Shore:** The forests of the North Shore are at the edge of a great wilderness and only 20 minutes from the city. Step into a world of muted light and soaring cathedral-like spaces beneath the tree canopy. Great North Shore trails include the very busy Grouse Grind, Cypress Falls Park, and the hike from Grouse back to Goat Mountain. (Whatever you do, go prepared. People die on those trails every year, cold and lost. A good local guidebook can give you more details on trails and tell you what

you need to bring.) See section 7 in chapter 6.

- **Mountain Biking the Endowment Lands:** One of the best places to give this sport a try is on the trails running through the forest by the University of British Columbia. (The area is officially called Pacific Spirit Park, but everyone calls it the Endowment Lands.) On the east side of town, the trails on Burnaby Mountain are equally good, though steep enough to qualify as intermediate terrain. See section 7 in chapter 6.
- **Watching the Sunset from a Waterside Patio:** Why else live in a city with such stunning views? Most establishments on False Creek, English Bay, and Coal

Invited tribes sing and dance traditional songs (which are considered to be their private property), while the host, both to thank his guests and to demonstrate his wealth, gives away presents. At the end of the 19th century, when First Nations culture—supported by a flood of wealth from the sea otter trade—reached unprecedented heights, potlatches could last for days, and chiefs would give away all they had.

The sea otter debacle aside (encouraged by American and British fur traders, coastal natives hunted sea otters to extinction along most of the coast), there is ample evidence that coastal indigenous peoples were exemplary environmental managers. Pre-contact, First Nations society was divided into a nobility of chiefly families, commoners, and slaves, the latter mostly war captives captured during raids.

In the years post-contact, the coastal First Nations were decimated by diseases such as smallpox (it's estimated that some 10,000 people lived along the coastal waterways and all but 600 of them were killed by smallpox carried by white settlers), by the loss of traditional fishing rights, by the repression of traditional rituals such as the potlatch, and by the forced assimilation into English-Canadian culture. In the decades after World War II, an entire generation of native children was forced into residential schools where speaking native languages and learning native stories were forbidden. The 1980s and 1990s were periods of long and slow recovery. Though still beset by problems, the First Nations communities are on their way back to becoming a powerful, worthy, and important force on the B.C. coast.

Harbour have good waterside patios. For something different, head to the North Shore, where

you don't get to see mountains, but you get fabulous city views. See chapter 9.

2 Frommer's Favorite Victoria Experiences

- **Strolling the Inner Harbour:**

Watch the boats and aquatic wildlife come and go while walking along a paved pathway that winds past manicured flower gardens. The best stretch runs south from the Inner Harbour near the Government Buildings, past Undersea World, the Royal London Wax Museum, and the Seattle ferry dock. See p. 242.

- **Savoring Afternoon Tea:** Yes, it's expensive and incredibly touristy, but it's also a complicated and ritual-laden art form. Besides, it's

good. The Fairmont Empress and the Butchart Gardens dining rooms are both good. Not quite as formal but also worth a visit is Point Ellice house. See p. 217.

- **Catching the Fireworks at Butchart Gardens:**

This world-class garden 20 minutes north of downtown Victoria is an absolutely must-see attraction. Gorgeous during the day and subtly illuminated on summer evenings, it takes on a whole new personality when the famous fireworks begin. Saturday nights in the summertime at

Butchart Gardens, you get both. See p. 223.

- **Touring the Royal B.C. Museum:** One of the best small museums in the world, the Royal B.C. does exactly what a good regional museum should do—explain the region and its people. The First Nations galleries are breathtaking reminders of the richness of native culture. See p. 226.
- **Watching Orcas:** Of all the species of orcas (killer whales), those on the B.C. coast are the only ones that live in large and complicated extended families. This makes Victoria a particularly good spot to whale-watch because the orcas travel in large, easy-to-find pods. There's something magical about being out on the water and seeing a pod of 15 animals surface just a few hundred meters away. See section 4 in chapter 13.
- **Touring by Miniferry:** Catch a Victoria Harbour Ferry and take a 45-minute tour around the harbor past the floating neighborhood of West Bay or up the gorge, where tidal waterfalls reverse direction with the changing tide. Moonlight

tours depart every evening at sunset. See "Getting Around," in chapter 10, and "Organized Tours," in chapter 13.

- **Climbing Mount Douglas:** Actually, you don't even have to climb. Just drive up and walk around. The whole of the Saanich Peninsula lies at your feet. See p. 227.
- **Beachcombing:** Just find a beach, preferably a rocky one, and turn stuff over or poke through the tide pools and see what turns up. Of course, what you find depends on where you look. The best beaches are out along Highway 14, starting with East Sooke Regional Park, and moving out to French Beach, China Beach, Mystic Beach, and, the very best of all, Botanical Beach Provincial Park, some 60km (37 miles) away by Port Renfrew. Remember to put the rocks back once you've had a peek. See section 4 in chapter 13.
- **Biking the Dallas Road to Willows Bay:** Okay, we're view junkies, but where else can you find a bike path by an ocean with high mountain peaks for a backdrop? See p. 251.

3 Frommer's Favorite Experiences Beyond Vancouver & Victoria

- **Skiing at Whistler and Blackcomb Resorts:** Why ski anywhere else? The best resorts in North America merged for a total of more than 200 runs on two adjoining mountains. Full-day lift passes are only about C\$68 (US\$51) for adults. See chapter 17.
- **Looking for Bald Eagles in Squamish:** The bald eagle is the national symbol of the United States, but in winter, when the salmon are running, you can see more eagles in Squamish than just about anywhere else in the world. See "Wildlife-Watching," in chapter 6.
- **Watching for Whales and Storms in Pacific Rim National Park:** Few sights in nature match observing whales in the wild, except perhaps a winter storm on Vancouver Island's west coast. Here you can see both in abundance. See chapter 17.
- **Exploring B.C.'s Backcountry by Horseback:** The B.C. backcountry is an incredibly beautiful land of alpine lakes, snowcapped peaks, grasslands, canyons, and high plateaus. One of the best ways to get a taste of it is to set off to explore on horseback. See chapter 17.

4 Two Trips of a Lifetime

British Columbia is really one of the most pristine, most spectacular, most naturally beautiful places on earth. What follows are two trips that can't be replicated anywhere else on the planet. More detailed descriptions are given in "Two Trips of a Lifetime," in chapter 17.

- **Sailing the Great Bear Rainforest:** There are next to no roads in this area of mountains, fjords, bays, channels, rivers, and inlets—the geography's too intense. Thanks to that isolation, this is also one of the last places in the world where grizzly bears are still found in large numbers, not to mention salmon,

large trees, killer whales, otters, and porpoises. But to get there, you'll need a boat. And if you're going to take a boat, why not take a lovely 30m (100 ft.) long, fully rigged sail boat?

- **Horse Trekking the Chilcotin Plateau:** The high plateau country of the B.C. interior has some of the most impressive scenery around. Soaring peaks rise above deep valleys, with mountain meadows alive with flowers that bloom for just a few weeks in high summer. Explore the territory on horseback and save your feet.

5 Best Vancouver Hotel Bets

For a complete description of these and other Vancouver accommodations, see chapter 4.

- **Best Historic Hotel:** The **Fairmont Hotel Vancouver**, 900 W. Georgia St. (☎ 800/441-1414 or 604/684-3131), was built by the Canadian Pacific Railway on the site of two previous hotels. It opened in 1939 as Vancouver's grandest hotel. The chateau-style exterior, the lobby, and even the rooms—now thoroughly restored—are built in a style and on a scale reminiscent of the great European railway hotels. See p. 63.
- **Best for Business Travelers:** The **Westin Grand**, 433 Robson St. (☎ 888/680-9393 or 604/602-1999), in addition to having some of the nicest interior decor, offers big work spaces, dataports, and lots of electrical plugs, plus—in the 40 Guest Office suites—speakerphones, cordless phones, and combo fax/laser printer/photocopiers. See p. 68.
- **Best Boutique Hotel:** Top kudos to two very different properties.

The **Wedgewood Hotel**, 845 Hornby St. (☎ 800/663-0666 or 604/689-7777), is the only boutique hotel in downtown and the most comfortably luxurious in that European style we love so much. In trendy Yaletown, the brand-new **Opus Hotel**, 322 Davie St. (☎ 866/642-6787 or 604/642-6787), has an array of room types, luscious room colors, and a definite nontraditional aesthetic attitude.

- **Best for a Romantic Getaway:** At the **Beachside Bed & Breakfast**, 4208 Evergreen Ave., West Vancouver (☎ 800/563-3311 or 604/922-7773), you can stroll your own private beach, watch the passing seals and eagles, or soak in a beachside hot tub as the sun goes down over the city skyline. See p. 80. Right downtown, the small **Wedgewood Hotel**, 845 Hornby St. (☎ 800/663-0666 or 604/689-7777), has a comfy, romantic elegance and service that's hard to beat.
- **Best Trendy Hotel:** Rooms decorated in funky apple greens and lemon yellows and a lobby of bold

and bright colors and whimsically shaped glass chandeliers make **Pacific Palisades Hotel**, 1277 Robson St. (☎ 800/663-1815 or 604/688-0461), one of the top choices for hip hotel aficionados. See p. 73. A 2004 newcomer, the **Opus Hotel**, 322 Davie St. (☎ 866/642-6787 or 604/642-6787), will suit the more hardcore of the trendy set, and it does so without sacrificing friendliness or service.

- **Best for Families:** The **Rosedale on Robson Suite Hotel**, 838 Hamilton (at Robson St; ☎ 800/661-8870 or 604/689-8033), offers two-bedroom family suites that come furnished with bunk beds, decorated in either a sports or Barbie theme and equipped with a large toy chest and blackboard with crayons. On Saturday night the Rosedale staff puts on a movie or craft night to take the little ones off their parent's hands for a while. Even the family dog or cat is welcome. See p. 70.
- **Best Inexpensive Hotel:** With all the facilities of a convention center plus cheap, comfortable rooms, **The University of British Columbia Conference Centre**, 5961 Student Union Blvd. (☎ 604/822-1000), is the best inexpensive choice in the city. See p. 79.
- **Best B&B:** Built in 1905 by two Vancouver photographers, the **West End Guest House**, 1362 Haro St. (☎ 888/546-3327 or 604/681-2889), is filled with the artists' work as well as an impressive collection of Victorian antiques. Fresh-baked brownies or cookies accompany evening turndown service, and the staff is thoroughly professional. See p. 76.
- **Best Alternative Accommodations:** The **Aston Rosellen Suites**

at **Stanley Park**, 100-2030 Barclay St. (☎ 888/317-6648 or 604/689-4807), has spacious furnished apartments with fully equipped kitchens, dining areas, and living rooms for the same price as many standard hotel rooms. See p. 74.

- **Best Service:** What can we say? Consistently garnering four diamonds and five stars, the **Four Seasons Hotel**, 791 W. Georgia St. (☎ 800/332-3442 in the U.S. or 604/689-9333), just tries harder. See p. 63.
- **Best Location:** Everyone's definition of a great location is different, but the **Westin Bayshore Resort & Marina**, 1601 Bayshore Dr. (☎ 800/228-3000 or 604/682-3377), offers something for everyone: Steps from Stanley Park and Denman Street, the Westin boasts a waterfront location with access to the seawall only 10 blocks from downtown. And the view of the North Shore mountains is great. See p. 74.
- **Best Views:** So many Vancouver hotels have outstanding views that it's difficult to choose just one. Still, there's something special about the upper floors of the **Pan Pacific Hotel Vancouver**, 300-999 Canada Place (☎ 800/937-1515 in the U.S. or 604/662-8111). The harborside rooms have unimpeded views of Coal Harbour, Stanley Park, the Lions Gate Bridge, and the North Shore's mountains. See p. 67.
- **Best Health Club:** Stay at the **YWCA Hotel/Residence**, 733 Beatty St. (☎ 800/663-1424 or 604/895-5830), and you get free access to the best gym in town at the nearby coed YWCA Fitness Centre. For a more upscale gym, there's the indoor/outdoor pool, fitness center, weight-and-exercise

room, aerobics classes, whirlpool, and saunas at the **Four Seasons Hotel**, 791 W. Georgia St. (☎ 800/332-3442 in the U.S. or 604/689-9333). See p. 72 and 63, respectively.

- **Best Hotel Pool:** A toss-up between the large outdoor pool at the **Westin Bayshore Resort & Marina**, 1601 Bayshore Dr. (☎ 800/228-3000 or 604/682-3377), and the half-indoor half-outdoor pool at the **Four Seasons Hotel**, 791 W. Georgia St. (☎ 800/332-3442 in the U.S. or 604/689-9333). The Westin offers unsurpassed views of the harbor and the mountains of the North Shore; the Four Seasons has a giant rooftop sun deck right in the middle of downtown. See p. 74 and 63, respectively.
- **Best for Sports Fans:** The **Georgian Court Hotel**, 773 Beatty St. (☎ 800/663-1155 or 604/682-5555), is as close to the action as you can get with a bed in the room. B.C. Place Stadium is right

across the street, and GM Place is just a few blocks away. See p. 69.

- **Best Hotel Bar:** Located across from the Law Courts and half a block from Robson Street, the **Wedgewood Hotel**, 845 Hornby St. (☎ 800/663-0666 or 604/689-7777), draws a crowd of movers and cocktail shakers to its cozy bar-lounge weeknights after work and before dinner.
- **Best Bathrooms:** No doubt about it, it's the **Wedgewood Hotel**, 845 Hornby St. (☎ 800/663-0666 or 604/689-7777). Every large, marble-clad bathroom has a deep soaker tub and a separate, marble, walk-in Roman shower.
- **Best Spa:** It's the **Wedgewood Hotel** again (see preceding entry), which opened its new, luxurious little spa in 2004. Equally good is the spa at the **Westin Bayshore Resort & Marina**, 1601 Bayshore Dr. (☎ 800/228-3000 or 604/682-3377). At both you'll find a full array of pampering treatments and esthetic services.

6 Best Victoria Hotel Bets

For a full description of these and other Victoria accommodations, see chapter 11.

- **Best Historic Hotel:** Architect Francis Rattenbury's masterpiece, The **Fairmont Empress**, 721 Government St. (☎ 800/441-1414 or 250/384-8111), has charmed princes (and their princesses), potentates, movie stars, and the likes of you and me since 1908. See p. 196.
- **Best for Business Travelers:** With its central location, large desks and dataports, secretarial services, elegant lobby, small meeting rooms, dining rooms, and understated luxury at a reasonable price, **The Magnolia**, 623 Courtney St. (☎ 877/624-6654 or 250/381-0999), is

Victoria's best spot for business. See p. 202.

- **Best Place to Pretend You Died & Went to Bel Air:** The **Aerie**, 600 Ebedora Lane, Malahat (☎ 800/518-1933 or 250/743-7115), a red-tiled villa high atop Mount Malahat, features hand-carved king-size beds, massive wood-burning fireplaces, chandeliers, Jacuzzis, and faux marble finish by the gross ton. See p. 206.
- **Best Hotel Lobby:** The two-story plate glass demi-lune in the lobby of the **Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort and Spa**, 45 Songhees Rd. (☎ 800/667-4677 or 250/360-2999), provides the best vantage in Victoria for watching the lights on the legislature

switch on. There are also comfy chairs and fireplaces to sit and get warm. See p. 194.

- **Best for Families:** The **Royal Scot Suite Hotel**, 425 Quebec St. (☎ 800/663-7515 or 250/388-5463), is a converted apartment building with spacious suites that'll make your family feel at home. They come with fully equipped kitchens, VCRs, and a video arcade and playroom in the basement. See p. 200.
- **Best B&B:** With rooms double the size of those in other B&Bs and every possible need taken care of, the friendly innkeepers at **The Haterleigh Heritage Inn**, 243 Kingston St. (☎ 866/234-2244 or 250/384-9995), do themselves proud. See p. 198.
- **Best Small Hotel:** The tastefully indulgent **Abigail's Hotel**, 906 McClure St. (☎ 800/561-6565 or 250/388-5363), has sumptuous sleeping chambers and warm, welcoming hosts. See p. 202.
- **Best Moderately Priced Hotel:** On the edge of the Inner Harbour, the **Admiral Inn**, 257 Belleville St. (☎ 888/823-6472 or ☎/fax 250/388-6267), provides friendly service, free bikes, and the most reasonably priced harbor view around. See p. 199.
- **Best Inexpensive Hotel:** While the rooms in the main hotel are just okay, the next-door suites and cottage operated by **The James Bay Inn**, 270 Government St. (☎ 800/836-2649 or 250/384-7151), are a veritable steal. See p. 201.
- **Most Romantic Hotel:** Brand-new **Brentwood Bay Lodge & Spa**, 849 Verdier Ave. (☎ 888/544-2079) is a small luxury resort overlooking a pristine fjord. Every detail in the rooms and bathrooms is perfect, from fabrics to fireplace; the finest Italian linens are on the beds, and there's a fabulous spa where you can get treatments for two. See p. 206.
- **Best Alternative Accommodations:** The **Boathouse**, 746 Sea Dr. (☎ 866/654-9370 or 250/652-9370), is a real (converted) boathouse, with a private dock and a rowing dinghy. Built in a secluded cove, the one-room cottage is a perfect spot for those seeking privacy. See p. 208.
- **Best Location:** Not only is **Swans Suite Hotel**, 506 Pandora Ave. (☎ 800/668-7926 or 250/361-3310), in the heart of the old town and just a block from the harbor, it's also right above **Swans Pub**, one of the most pleasant restaurant/brewpubs in the entire city. See p. 204.
- **Best Spa:** There are two in the city and one about a 20-minute drive from downtown. **Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort and Spa**, 45 Songhees Rd. (☎ 800/667-4677 or 250/360-2999), is a calm, contemporary, Zen-like facility. More traditional, and completely luxurious, is the Willow Stream spa at the **Fairmont Empress**, 721 Government St. (☎ 800/441-1414 or 250/384-8111). The new Essence of Life spa at **Brentwood Bay Lodge & Spa**, 849 Verdier Ave. (☎ 888/544-2079), has the most impressive hydro-bath in British Columbia. All three spas offer complete skin and body treatments, aesthetics, and aromatherapy treatments to pamper the body and spirit.
- **Best Fitness Center and Pool:** The fitness center at the **Hotel Grand Pacific**, 463 Belleville St. (☎ 800/663-7550 or 250/386-0450), offers aerobics classes, a 25m (82-ft.) ozonated indoor pool, a separate kids' pool, and a weight room; the hotel's sauna,

whirlpool, and massage therapist can help ease the pain from all that exercise. See p. 198.

- **Best Views:** With panoramic harbor views in an elegant, Japanese-influenced decor, the **Laurel Point Inn**, 680 Montreal St. (☎ 800/663-7667 or 250/386-8721), is the place for view junkies. Outside of town, **The Aerie**, 600 Ebedora Lane, Malahat (☎ 800/518-1933 or 250/743-7115), offers private

terraces with views across tree-clad mountains to a long blue coastal fjord. See p. 198 and 206, respectively.

- **Best Oceanside Inn:** In the little town of Sooke, just west of Victoria, the **Sooke Harbour House**, 1528 Whiffen Spit Rd., Sooke (☎ 800/889-9688 or 250/642-3421), offers quiet West Coast elegance and an exceptional restaurant. See p. 208.

7 Best Vancouver Dining Bets

- **Best Spot for a Romantic Dinner:** **Raincity Grill**, 1193 Denman St. (☎ 604/685-7337), with its low ceiling, crisp linens, windows overlooking English Bay, and fabulous food, is a place that makes you want to linger. See p. 94.
- **Best Spot for a Celebration:** **Lumière**, 2551 W. Broadway (☎ 604/739-8185), is expensive but worth it to be pampered by chef Rob Feenie, the darling of the Vancouver food world and an increasingly hot commodity in New York. See p. 98.
- **Best View:** For a combination of top-notch food and a killer view, try **The Five Sails** in the Pan Pacific Hotel, 999 Canada Place Way (☎ 604/891-2892). See p. 84.
- **Best Wine List:** **Raincity Grill**, 1193 Denman St. (☎ 604/685-7337), has a huge wine list that's focused on the Pacific Northwest and sold by the glass at a reasonable markup by a knowledgeable staff. Go on a tour of the region, glass by glass by glass. See p. 94.
- **Best Value:** Get gourmet-quality Indian cuisine in a West Broadway strip mall at **Sami's**, 986 W. Broadway (☎ 604/736-8330). The well-known chef prepares amazing Indian cuisine with a hint of fusion; none of the main

courses costs more than C\$12 (US\$8) or so. See p. 101.

- **Best for Kids:** **Romano's Macaroni Grill at the Mansion**, 1523 Davie St. (☎ 604/689-4334), has a huge kids' menu, high chairs, and a great old mansion to explore—kids will love it. See p. 95.
- **Best Chinese Cuisine:** **Pink Pearl**, 1132 E. Hastings St. (☎ 604/253-4316), has its fans, and not without reason, but the best Vancouver Chinese at the moment remains **Sun Sui Wah**, 3888 Main St. (☎ 604/872-8822). It's definitely worth the trip. See p. 92 and 103, respectively.
- **Best French Cuisine:** From its early days, **Lumière**, 2551 W. Broadway (☎ 604/739-8185), has been in the running for best restaurant in Vancouver. And, indeed, from 1999 to 2002, Lumière won the top spot in the yearly Vancouver Restaurant Awards. In 2003, it slipped to second, but in 2004 it was back on top. You won't be disappointed. See p. 98.
- **Best Bistro:** Sure you can sit and dine formally, but the best way to experience Yaletown's **Elixir**, 350 Davie St. (☎ 604/642-0577), is up at the bar, where you can enjoy the fine French bistro food and, at the same time, sample all the eye candy. See p. 88.

- **Best Service:** Owner John Bishop of the eponymous **Bishop's**, 2183 W. Fourth Ave. (☎ 604/738-2025), makes every customer feel special. See p. 97.
- **Best Meat:** The **Memphis Blues Barbeque House**, 1465 W. Broadway (☎ 604/738-6806), offers pure southern barbecue, lots of napkins, and next-to-no vegetables. It's a carnivore's dream. See p. 101.
- **Best Seafood:** The creativity of the chef, the quality of the ingredients, and the freshness of the seafood all combine to make **C**, 1600 Howe St. (☎ 604/681-1164), the best seafood restaurant in Vancouver. See p. 84.
- **Best Tapas:** **La Bodega**, 1277 Howe St. (☎ 604/684-8815), was serving tapas when chefs at all the new tapas upstarts were saving their nickels for a night at McDonald's. **La Bodega** still does it best. See p. 90.
- **Best Pacific Northwest Cuisine:** For amazingly fine dining that utilizes absolutely fresh local seasonal ingredients, you can't go wrong with **West**, 2881 Granville St. (☎ 604/738-8938), a culinary highpoint of the city. See p. 100.
- **Best Pacific Northwest Cuisine, Part II:** A top-notch sushi bar plus inventive and ultra-fresh seafood dishes make the **Blue Water Café and Raw Bar**, 1095 Hamilton St., Yaletown (☎ 604/688-8078), another place to sample the best that the West has to offer. See p. 85.
- **Best Newcomer:** Head to Yaletown, where **Coast**, 1257 Hamilton St. (☎ 604/685-5010), opened in May 2004. It offers an extensive variety of seafood from exotic coasts around the world, and cool contemporary Zen-inspired decor. See p. 88.
- **Best Italian: Il Giardino di Umberto Ristorante**, 1382 Hornby St. (☎ 604/669-2422), is the old-time champ when it comes to Italian. But right across the street there is a *fabuloso* newcomer, **Bis Moreno**, 1355 Hornby St. (☎ 604/669-2812), where Italian goes contemporary. See p. 89 and 85, respectively.
- **Best Italian, Part II:** I can't let this category rest without mentioning the wonderful **Cin Cin**, 1154 Robson St. (☎ 604/688-7338), a lively people-watching spot where the menu is divided into Old World and New World and everything tastes divine.
- **Best Japanese:** The most sublime of sushi is at **Tojo's Restaurant**, 202-777 W. Broadway (☎ 604/872-8050). Just remember to take out an extra mortgage and practice your so-you're-a-movie-star-I-don't-care look. See p. 99.
- **Best Late-Night Dining: Global Grill and Satay Bar**, 1079 Mainland St. (☎ 604/602-0835), in trendy Yaletown, is the place to be seen sipping and snacking late into the evening. See p. 89.
- **Best Martinis:** At **Delilah's**, 1789 Comox St. (☎ 604/687-3424), a two-page menu includes such lovelies as a Black Widow, a Boston Tea Partini, and the Edsel (soaked in lemon); you might want to weave your way elsewhere for dinner. See p. 93.
- **Best Outdoor Dining:** For unsurpassed ocean views, reserve a table under the trees at **The Tea-house Restaurant** in Stanley Park, Ferguson Point (close to Third Beach; ☎ 604/669-3281). This patio also doubles as **best sunset spot**. See p. 94.
- **Best People-Watching:** In the heart of the Robson shopping area, **Joe Fortes Seafood and**

Chop House, 777 Thurlow St. (☎ 604/669-1940), is a favorite after-work gathering place for the young, rich, and beautiful—and those acting as if they were. The fresh seafood here is right up there with the best of 'em. See p. 90.

• **Best Vegetarian:** **Annapurna**, 1812 W. Fourth Ave. (☎ 604/736-5959), has fabulous, flavorful food; a cozy little room; and the most reasonable wines in town. Who says you have to sacrifice when you're a veggie eater? See p. 102.

8 Best Victoria Dining Bets

• **Best Spot for a Romantic Dinner:** **Camille's**, 45 Bastion Sq. (☎ 250/381-3433), offers a quiet, intimate, candlelit room and a wine list with a bottle or glass for every occasion. See p. 214.

• **Best Chinese Cuisine:** A billion and a half people can't be wrong. Actually, all of China has yet to eat at **J&J Wonton Noodle House**, 1012 Fort St. (☎ 250/383-0680), but if they had, they'd love it. See p. 219.

• **Best French Cuisine:** At **The Aerie**, 600 Ebedora Lane, Malahat (☎ 800/518-1933 or 250/743-7115), chef Christophe Letard's cooking is as unmistakably French as his accent. It's also quite wonderful. See p. 220.

• **Best Italian Cuisine:** All you have to do is ask around for Victoria's best Italian restaurant, and people will point you to **Il Terrazzo Ristorante**, 555 Johnson St., off Waddington Alley (☎ 250/361-0028), which features excellent northern-Italian cooking and extra points for the lovely patio. See p. 215.

• **Best Pacific Northwest:** The quality, freshness, inventiveness, and incredible attention to detail make the **Sooke Harbour House**, 1528 Whiffen Spit Rd., Sooke (☎ 800/889-9688 or 250/642-3421), the best not only in Victoria, but also on the entire Pacific Coast north of Baja. See p. 220.

• **Best Seafood Cuisine:** **Sooke Harbour House**, 1528 Whiffen

Spit Rd., Sooke (☎ 800/889-9688 or 250/642-3421), serves the best gifts from the sea and its own garden, like red sturgeon in a raspberry coulis, or seared scallops with sea asparagus. Dining here is always a culinary adventure, well worth the money and the trip. See p. 220.

• **Best Brewpub Restaurant:** **Canoe**, 450 Swift St. (☎ 250/361-1940), is casual but upscale, has great beer, good food, and the option of dining indoors or out. See p. 212.

• **Best Decor:** With better art than most museums, **Swans Pub**, 506 Pandora Ave. (in Swans Hotel; ☎ 250/361-3310), wins out for best decor. See p. 204.

• **Best Bistro:** Good food, a fun room, young crowd, and the opportunity to eat and run if you need to, make **The Reef**, 533 Yates St. (☎ 250/388-5375), a top bistro pick. See p. 216.

• **Best View:** **Deep Cove Chalet**, 11190 Chalet Rd., near Sidney (☎ 250/656-3541), offers a lovely setting on the lawn looking out over a quiet ocean bay with mountains in the background. At **The Aerie**, 600 Ebedora Lane, Malahat (☎ 800/518-1933 or 250/743-7115), you can savor a cassoulet of smoked duck and venison sausage with a vintage Château Margaux Pavillon Rouge while sitting atop a mountain looking out over a forest-clad fjord. See p. 221 and 220, respectively.

- **Best Fish and Chips:** **Barb's Place**, 310 Erie St. (☎ 250/384-6515), on Fisherman's Wharf, sells 'em freshly fried and wrapped in newspaper—just like they should. See p. 214.
- **Best Wine List:** Owner Sinclair Philip knows how to choose 'em and the **Sooke Harbour House**, 1528 Whiffen Spit Rd., Sooke (☎ 800/889-9688 or 250/642-3421), has the awards—and more importantly the list—to prove it. See p. 220.
- **Best Value:** **rebar**, 50 Bastion Sq. (☎ 250/361-9223), offers large portions, terrific quality, and a funky laid-back atmosphere. See p. 219.
- **Best for Kids:** **Millos**, 716 Burdett Ave. (☎ 250/382-4422), treats youngsters to a night on the town, with a kids' menu, children-loving waiters, and exciting Greek dishes such as stuffed grape leaves and lemon soup. See p. 215.
- **Best Local Crowd:** **Pagliacci's**, 1011 Broad St. (☎ 250/386-1662), noisy and crowded, is the place to be seen while you devour a plate of spaghetti Bolognese or a piping-hot sausage and mushroom pizza. See p. 216.
- **Best Burgers & Beer:** **Six Mile Pub**, 494 Island Hwy., View Royal (☎ 250/478-3121), offers 10 house brews, juicy burgers (even veggie burgers), and loads of British pub-style atmosphere. See p. 221.
- **Best Late-Night Dining:** At the new **Med Grill@Mosaic**, 1063 Fort St. (☎ 250/381-3417), you'll find buzz till late at night, a DJ spinning music to eat and drink by, and a young crowd there to see and be seen. See p. 219.
- **Best Outdoor Dining:** One of the prettiest spots on earth to dine, the **Deep Cove Chalet**, 11190 Chalet Rd., near Sidney (☎ 250/656-3541), also offers some very fine French cuisine. Located a 30-minute drive from Victoria, it's well worth the trip. See p. 221.
- **Best Afternoon or High Tea:** If you're doing this high tea thing only once, you may as well do it right, and there's no better place than **The Fairmont Empress**, 721 Government St. (☎ 250/384-8111), Victoria's crown jewel of a hotel. See p. 216.
- **Best Fast Food:** **Sam's Deli**, 805 Government St. (☎ 250/382-8424), makes a great stop for a quick soup or sandwich. If you don't want to waste precious sight-seeing time, order your food to go and head down to the waterfront. See p. 219.