

THEATRE ESCAPE TO OAK BAY BEACH HOTEL

November 21, 2017 ~ 5 Days



a world to experience



Fares Per Person:

\$1470 double/twin

\$1835 single

\$1360 triple

> Please add 5% GST

> **Early Bookers:** \$80 discount on first 15 seats; \$40 on next 10

> **Seniors' Discount:** \$6 per person from BC Ferries

> **Experience Points:** Earn 36 points from this tour.

Redeem **36 points** if you book by **September 20**.



Includes

- Coach transportation for 5 days
- 4 nights of accommodation and hotel taxes
- 2 Strait of Georgia ferry crossings
- Admission to Oak Bay Beach Hotel's seaside mineral pools, steam room and fitness centre
- *Cornwall's All-Inclusive Cancun Christmas* at Chemainus Theatre
- Ambrosia Dinner Theatre with Broadway Chorus
- Royal British Columbia Museum
- Imax Theatre show
- *Les Belles Soeurs* at Langham Theatre
- Robert Bateman Centre
- Afternoon tea at Abkhazi Garden
- *Anne of Green Gables* at McPherson Playhouse
- Knowledgeable tour director
- Luggage handling at hotels
- **8 meals:** 4 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 1 tea, 1 dinner

Kamloops > 250-374-0831
Kelowna > 250-762-3435
www.wellsgraytours.com

Penticton > 250-493-1255
Vernon > 250-545-9197
Toll Free > **800-667-9552**



Victoria's Oak Bay Beach Hotel

The original Oak Bay Beach Hotel was built in 1927 by Major William Merston using Elizabethan style architecture based on 16th century English country inns. It was called Marine Drive Hotel and opened to great acclaim because it advertised luxurious accommodation with an Old World atmosphere. The hotel burned to the ground just three years later and a new hotel was built by Major Merston immediately after the fire in the tradition of the former. During the troubled 1930s, a time of international economic pressure, great emphasis was placed on charm and leisure. At the reopened Oak Bay Beach Hotel, an atmosphere of elegance was studiously cultivated and the hotel became the focal point of community life. After the 1930s, times changed for the better and the hotel maintained its reputation for elegance.

The hotel's second owner, Mrs. Macdonald, introduced antiques to the building and was bold enough to hang price tags on them. Two that have survived to the present are the Crusader's Chair featuring an intricate design of carved fish and lions with a rope motif, and the 200-year old mail box. Other owners were Mr. Dutton and partners from Calgary, then the Wooliams family in the 1960s. Bruce Walker purchased the hotel in 1973 with a partner, Glen Anderson, then became sole owner in 1979. His son, Kevin, became General Manager in 1983 at the youthful age of 24 and bought the Oak Bay Beach Hotel from Bruce in 1995.

Over the years, the Oak Bay's Snug became one of Victoria's favourite pubs and was named according to an old English custom. In the past, many English pubs reserved one room for patrons who, for social or other reasons, did not wish to be seen in the public bar. The room was known as a "Snug" and its clientele was often surprising. The local Bobbie on his rounds would nip in for a quiet pint, the Vicar would come for his evening sherry, and other notables would use the Snug for their clandestine visits. The Barman serving the Snug was very discreet and very knowledgeable. It is probably true that the Snug was the domain of an exclusive group and visitors had to be careful not to inadvertently sit in "member chairs." However, in the Oak Bay's Snug, there were no member chairs or reserved signs, just a cosy atmosphere and cheery friendliness!

Victoria introduced a seismic building code in 2003. Kevin and his wife Shawna discovered that the cost of upgrades to the 75-year old building would exceed \$11 million, an impossible expense to recover from a 50-room hotel. They proposed demolishing the hotel and replacing it with a nine-storey 120-room facility at a cost of about \$30 million. Heritage advocates complained about the loss of such an interesting building, and neighbours were concerned about the size of the new hotel and their ocean views. After the Walkers' plans were rejected by Oak Bay Council in 2004, a smaller hotel of four storeys was proposed.

During 2006, Wells Gray Tours ran numerous sold-out "Farewell to Oak Bay Beach Hotel" tours and the final one, on November 3, experienced the sad honour of being the last guests to stay there. Some favourite parts of the old hotel were saved from demolition including the Snug, the Grand Lobby, the lobby fireplace, the third floor library and the front door, and all have been carefully rebuilt inside the new hotel. The Crusader's Chair and the mailbox also have pride of place in the new Grand Lobby.

Construction of the new hotel started in 2009 with a budget of \$60 million and the doors swung open for the first guests on November 15, 2012. Wells Gray Tours was there with 100 customers to celebrate the re-opening of Victoria's grand old lady, and two were chosen at random for the honour of cutting the ribbon. Since then, Wells Gray has offered an annual tour to enjoy the luxury of the new hotel and its first-class amenities, service and dining. Oak Bay Beach Hotel has easily taken its rightful place among the finest lodgings in the Victoria area.

Sadly, the revelry lasted less than two years and Oak Bay Beach Hotel was placed into receivership. The financial success of the rebuilding project depended on condominium sales and most remained vacant in B.C.'s challenging economy. The Walkers have left the property, and the receivers recently sold the hotel by auction. There have been no changes to its high standards of service and luxury.

This tour is a rare opportunity to enjoy the elegant amenities of the Oak Bay Beach Hotel at a bargain price. Room rates normally range from \$200 to \$400 a night, but the hotel has offered Wells Gray Tours a terrific deal to bring a tour in November. Book soon, and enjoy a pampered five-day getaway with four shows.

Itinerary

Tuesday, November 21: *Meals: L*
We travel on the Coquihalla Highway and take the 5 pm ferry to Swartz Bay. We settle into the **Oak Bay Beach Hotel** for four nights.

Wednesday, November 22: *Meals: B,L,D*
A hot breakfast buffet is included each day at the hotel. In late morning, we drive over the Malahat to Chemainus and enjoy a gourmet buffet lunch at the Chemainus Festival Theatre. The afternoon show is **Cornwall's All-Inclusive Cancun Christmas**. The Cornwalls are back for another great holiday season, featuring more classic 1980s tunes, crazy antics, and big hair. Back in Victoria, we go to Ambrosia Dinner Theatre for a variety show with the Victoria Broadway Chorus.

Thursday, November 23: *Meals: B*
We go first to the **Royal British Columbia Museum** for a stroll through its wonderful exhibit galleries, followed by a show on the giant screen of the Imax Theatre. **Note:** If you have been to the Museum and Imax previously, you may prefer to opt out of both and have a free morning at the hotel; fare reduction is \$22.
The afternoon is leisure time to enjoy the splendid oceanfront setting and all the superb facilities of the Oak Bay Beach Hotel. Admission to the seaside mineral pools, steam room and fitness centre is included. Make an appointment for a relaxing treatment at the Boathouse Spa & Baths (book on site or on the hotel website in advance). Tonight, we go to the intimate Langham Court Theatre to see **Les Belles Soeurs**. The story — Montreal housewife Germaine has won a million Gold Star

stamps, given out by grocery stores and exchanged for goods like BBQs and lawn chairs, and invites all the women she knows to help her stick them into redemption booklets. As they stick, the women discuss the men in their lives, the church, and their small joys like Bingo. What Germaine doesn't realize is that while the women are talking, they are also robbing her of her stamps.

Friday, November 24: *Meals: B, tea*
We visit the **Robert Bateman Centre** which displays the major themes of his life's work, including his early experimentation with abstract art styles, his world travels, and his commentary on the state of our planet. A traditional British afternoon tea is served at the quaint **Abkhazi Garden Teahouse**. This was the home of Prince Nicholas Abkhazi and his wife Peggy who came to Canada from Georgia (Russia) in 1946 and created these gardens with majestic trees and a dramatic location. Tonight, Victoria Operatic Society presents **Anne of Green Gables** at the McPherson Theatre. Canada's longest-running musical is being performed to celebrate our 150th Anniversary. Lovingly adapted from Montgomery's 1908 novel, *Anne of Green Gables* is a timeless piece of Canadiana. The story is filled with unforgettable characters and brings the comical adventures of spunky red-headed Anne Shirley to life as she wins over her new family with her spirit and imagination in this heartwarming story about love, family, and home.

Saturday, November 25: *Meals: B*
We bid farewell to the Oak Bay Beach Hotel, take the 11 am ferry to Tsawwassen, and drive home.

Tour Policies

Payments: A deposit of \$150 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due September 20, 2017.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$80 discount on first 15 seats and \$40 on next 10 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after September 20. BC seniors (65 & over) receive \$6 discount extended by BC Ferries, so you must bring your Services Card.

Cancellation Policy: Up to September 20, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$50 per person. From September 21 to October 19, the cancellation charge is 40% of the tour fare. From October 20 to November 6, the cancellation charge is 70% of the tour fare. After November 6, there is no refund.

Fare Changes: Changes to taxes and surcharges from tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up until the time of departure.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Photo Credit: Oak Bay Beach Hotel



Activity Level: Light activity including short distances to walk and some steps in the theatres. If you think you may have difficulty participating in Activity Level 1, Wells Gray Tours recommends that you bring a companion to assist you. The tour director and driver have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance.

e-points: This tour earns 36 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until Sept. 20.

Consumer Protection BC Licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924