

VICTORIA WINTER ESCAPE

February 27, 2021 – 10 Days

Many Canadians look forward to their annual winter escape to a warm and sunny place in some other country. Covid-19 restrictions and the USA border closure will probably still be in place this winter, at least until case numbers decline and a vaccine is widely available. Since we can't leave Canada, let's visit the warmest place in Canada, Victoria. In late February, the weather is usually pleasant and the daffodils may be blooming, while the BC Interior may still be buried in snow. It won't be quite the same experience as relaxing on a sunny beach or basking on the sun-bathed deck of a cruise ship, but we have organized a fantastic variety of attractions and activities to keep you entertained: whale watching, Butchart Gardens, historic and ghostly walking tours, a Chemainus dinner show, and Royal BC Museum. Stay for 9 nights in a one-bedroom suite at the downtown Chateau Victoria. Come and escape from the Interior winter.

Activity Level: 1



TOUR
30

11 Meals Included:

5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners

Fares per person:

\$2,285 double/twin; \$2,785 single; \$2,185 triple
Please add 5% GST.

BC Seniors (65 & over): \$23 discount with BC Services Card

Early Bookers:

\$120 discount on first 10 seats; \$60 on next 6

Experience Points:

Earn 54 points on this tour.

Redeem 54 points if you book by January 26, 2021.

Combine this tour with Storm Watching at Wickaninnish and save \$200 per person:

The Wickaninnish tour is February 22 to 27. After the group leaves Chemainus on February 27 for the ferry, you are driven to Chateau Victoria. The rest of that day is yours to do as you wish, and the Winter Escape group arrives that evening. Calculate the cost of this combination by adding your fares for the two tours, then deduct \$200 per person.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Saturday, February 27

We travel to the coast and take the ferry from Tsawwassen to Swartz Bay. Enjoy the elaborate Pacific Buffet during the crossing. (Note: Most ferries on this route offer the buffet, but an alternative will be arranged if there is a ship change or Covid-19 keeps the buffet closed.) We stay nine nights at **Chateau Victoria** which has an excellent downtown location close to the Inner Harbour, shops, and attractions.

Meals included: Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Chateau Victoria

Day 2: Sunday, February 28

Take the elevator up to the 18th floor and enjoy a panoramic view of Victoria during breakfast. A local guide meets us and conducts a fascinating **tour of Victoria** with many stories about its colourful characters and historical oddities. As your suite has a microwave and small fridge, you may wish to prepare some simple meals yourself, so a stop is made at a grocery store for you to buy some supplies. The afternoon is leisure time. Enjoy the indoor pool or whirlpool at the hotel, or browse the many shops nearby.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Chateau Victoria

Day 3: Monday, March 1

Walk 1½ blocks to the **Royal BC Museum** and wander through its wonderful galleries about BC plants and animals, early explorers, the gold rush, and First Nations culture. A show on the giant Imax screen is included. Stay as long as you wish; one coach trip to the hotel is provided, otherwise walk to the hotel when you are ready.

Accommodation: Chateau Victoria

Day 4: Tuesday, March 2

There is an option today to book a wildlife cruise. See details on page 3. This afternoon, we tour the **Robert Bateman Centre** which displays the major themes of his life's work, including his early experimentation with abstract art styles, his travels throughout the world, and his commentary on the state of our planet.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Chateau Victoria

Day 5: Wednesday, March 3

We visit the renowned **Butchart Gardens**. In 1909, Jennie Butchart set about converting her husband's limestone quarry into the Sunken Garden. In 1939, the Butcharts gave the gardens to their grandson, Ian Ross, who spent the rest of his life creating and promoting this renowned attraction. In early March, the Gardens should be resplendent with the start of spring blossoms. Nearby are the **Butterfly Gardens**, a tropical jungle with thousands of butterflies and other creatures. This evening, we meet **John Adams** who has been organizing ghostly tours for over 30 years. He is the author of four books, an expert on ghosts and unexplained incidents in Victoria, and one of the organizers of the annual Ghosts of Victoria Festival. This drive focuses on Victoria's numerous mysteries and tales of buildings that date from well over a century ago.

Accommodation: Chateau Victoria

Day 6: Thursday, March 4

We visit **Craigdarroch Castle**, a Victorian-era mansion of 39 rooms built in the 1890s by wealthy coal baron, Robert Dunsmuir. The Castle features four floors of exquisite stained glass windows, intricate woodwork, and lavish furnishings representing late 19th century lifestyles of the rich and famous. Note: Access to the castle is by a 10-minute uphill walk, as coaches are not allowed on the street in front. This afternoon, there is an optional guided walking tour along the Inner Harbour and Government Street where many



buildings date from the 19th century and the experience is like a walk back in time.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Chateau Victoria

Day 7: Friday, March 5

The morning is free time, then in mid-afternoon we travel up-Island along the scenic Malahat Drive to Chemainus. There is free time to admire the dozens of murals on the buildings, then we savour a superb dinner at **Chemainus Theatre**. The showroom itself is not operating during Covid-19, but entertainment is presented in the dining room.

Meals included: Dinner

Accommodation: Chateau Victoria

Day 8: Saturday, March 6

This is a day of leisure with no tour activities planned. Browse some shops, relax in the pool or whirlpool, take a walk through nearby Beacon Hill Park or Thunderbird Park, or visit an attraction that is not on this tour.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Chateau Victoria

Day 9: Sunday, March 7

There are several churches near the hotel if you wish to join a Sunday service. At noon, we go to

Abkhazi Garden, a heritage garden created by 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. Lunch is served in their heritage home. A farewell dinner is planned in Vista 18, followed by a return visit from John Adams to relate more intriguing stories about Victoria's past.

Meals included: Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Chateau Victoria



Day 10: Monday, March 8

We ride the ferry to the mainland while enjoying the Pacific Lunch Buffet (if available). We travel home via the Coquihalla.

Meals included: Continental Breakfast, Lunch

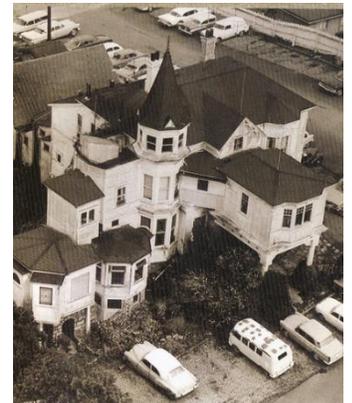
OPTIONS

- 1) **Wildlife Cruise on March 2.** Board a zodiac for a 3-hour winter cruise along the stunning Victoria coastline. The abundant marine wildlife that you are likely to see includes Stellar and California sea lions, harbour and elephant seals, humpback whales, otters, and a variety of birds such as cormorants and bald eagles. The excursion is led by a certified marine naturalist with great knowledge of Vancouver Island's marine wildlife. Dress warmly, but you are also provided with a full length cruiser suit. Cost is \$105 per person. Please book no later than at final payment.
- 2) **Walking tour on March 4.** Take a walk for 1½ hours in downtown Victoria, accompanied by an expert guide who tells intriguing historical tales. This is rated Activity Level 2. There is no charge for this activity, but it is limited to 20 people.
- 3) **Combine this tour with Storm Watching at Wickaninnish and save \$200 per person:**
The Wickaninnish tour is February 22 to 27. After the group leaves Chemainus on February 27 for the ferry, you are driven to Chateau Victoria. The rest of that day is yours to do as you wish, and the Winter Escape group arrives that evening. Calculate the cost of this combination by adding your fares for the two tours, then deduct \$200 per person.

CHATEAU VICTORIA, THE PARROT HOUSE

Chateau Victoria has an excellent downtown location close to the Inner Harbour, shops, and attractions. Your room is an oversized one-bedroom suite with a balcony and one or two beds. The kitchenette is equipped with a microwave, a small fridge, coffee maker, and settings for two – cups, saucers, dinner plates, side plates, cutlery, water glasses, and wine glasses. Individual salt, pepper, sugar, and creamers are provided. Other amenities include free wi-fi, indoor pool, whirlpool, and free shuttle service to restaurants or attractions within 5 minutes. Vista 18 is the fine dining restaurant atop the hotel with a panoramic view of the city, and Clive's Lounge is off the lobby with light meals and beverages.

A rambling mansion used to be on the site of Chateau Victoria, occupied only by a parrot named Louis and his caretaker, Yue Wah Wong. Louis was a gift to Miss Victoria Jane Wilson from her father on her fifth birthday in 1882. She inherited a fortune and the mansion from her father, but lived as a recluse along with Louis, up to 50 other birds, and her gardener, Mr. Wong. As with many famous and secluded people, there were rumours. A persistent one, not true, was that Louis was a hard-drinking recluse. He enjoyed a tot of brandy on special occasions, but preferred eggs. Although pampered through many years as the favourite pet, personal wealth and fame did not come to Louis until after Miss Wilson's death in 1946. Her will left a generous fortune to support Louis, the rest of the feathered flock, and the mansion, and to pay for Mr. Wong's services to look after the birds, house, and garden. This arrangement lasted for 20 years while Victoria grew up around the Parrot House and Louis became the last bird resident, still being doted upon by Mr. Wong. Despite the erosion of inflation, Louis' pension arrangement was adequate to meet his daily requirements and a bit more. Finally, by court approval in 1966, Louis was transferred to another comfortable residence and his home for over 80 years was demolished. Mr. Wong and his descendents continued to bestow care and affection on Louis until he died in 1985 at the age of 115. Chateau Victoria was built on the site of Louis' long time home, and the restaurant on the top floor was called "The Parrot House", now Vista 18.



WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Coach transportation for 9 days
- 9 nights of accommodation and hotel taxes
- 2 Strait of Georgia ferry crossings
- Guided driving tour of Victoria
- Royal BC Museum
- Show at the Imax Theatre
- Robert Bateman Centre
- Butchart Gardens
- Victoria Butterfly Gardens
- Tour of Victoria mysteries with John Adams
- Craigdarroch Castle
- Chemainus Theatre dinner show
- Abkhazi Garden with lunch at tea house
- Dinner talk by John Adams
- Gratuities for guides and speakers
- Knowledgeable tour director
- Luggage handling at hotel
- **11 meals:** 5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners

TOUR NOTES



Activity Level 1: Light activity including short distances to walk and some stairs. There is walking to see everything at Butchart Gardens; a walk of 1½ blocks from hotel to Royal BC Museum; an uphill walk of 10 minutes from coach parking to Craigdarroch Castle. If you choose the wildlife cruise, you must be able to get in and out of the zodiac. If you choose the historic walking tour, be prepared to walk about 5 blocks at a leisurely pace. The coach cannot carry a scooter. 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.

TOUR POLICIES

Payments: A deposit of \$150 per person is requested at the time of booking and balance is due January 26, 2021. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$120 discount on first 10 seats and \$60 on next 6 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after January 26, 2021. BC seniors (65 & over) receive \$23 discount extended by BC Ferries and Royal BC Museum, so you must bring your BC Services Card.

Cancellation Policy: Up to January 4, 2021, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$50 per person. From January 5 to January 26, the cancellation charge is \$100 per person. From January 27 to February 10, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. After February 10, 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 until 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, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Photo Credits: Tourism Victoria (Inner Harbour), Wikimedia Commons (Butchart Gardens, Craigdarroch Castle), Abkhazi Garden, Chateau Victoria, Victoria Archives (Parrot House)

Experience Points: This tour earns 54 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 January 26, 2021.

Consumer Protection BC Licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

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