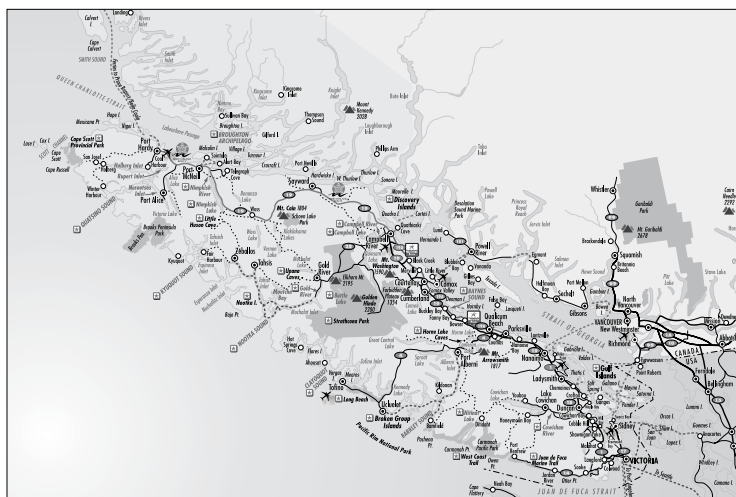


GONZALES HILL (PETER GRANT)

Victoria and Southern Vancouver Island



Southern Vancouver Island includes Victoria, Sooke (35 kilometres south-west) and the Saanich Peninsula (35 km north). The Strait of Juan de Fuca is at its feet, and the Sooke Hills and Highlands form the backdrop. It's an area with a remarkable spectrum of climatic conditions — from Sooke's *wet coast* feel to Sidney's rain-shadow heat trap. The traditional home of Salish First Nations, Victoria was where the English colonial project started in 1843. It grew from a little trading depot to include three cities, two towns and eight municipal districts. Victoria has been a seat of government since 1849 and the capital of British Columbia since 1868. Esquimalt has had a naval base since the 1850s. A host of outstanding cultural and heritage sites are based on these twin heritages. The economic wealth reflected in the area's fine homes, gardens and restaurants is matched by the riches of its parks and natural areas — within hailing distance of the 375,000 people who call it home.

Songhees Point

1

The austere simplicity of ancient rock gives Songhees Point, on the west side of Victoria's Inner Harbour, an elemental character. It is a fitting place

to contemplate the history of Victoria's First Nations.

A bronze sculpture represents a spindle whorl, an icon of the Coast Salish people and an important piece of traditional Salish wool-spinning technology.

The casting is the work of local First Nations artist Butch Dick. It's one of seven Signs of Lekwungen installed around Victoria to mark sites of significance to First Peoples. Each has a different motif. This one's is salmon — an essential part of First Peoples' traditional diet. This waterway once had runs of salmon.

The First Nations account of Victoria's history is not well known. I'm trying to get the names and stories straight.

A display near the point profiles the Lekwungen First Nation.

Songhees was the Europeans' name for the First Nations who gathered around Fort Victoria and settled on the west side of the harbour. Songhees Village stood about where the Ocean Pointe Hotel now stands. At first there were many more indigenous people than European.

The traditional name of the local indigenous people was *Lekwungen*. Their old villages were located in protected areas along 50 km of coast between Metchosin and Saanich and on the waterway above the harbour. Six or seven families owned the land and its resources. Their territorial boundaries were described in the Fort Victoria treaties of 1850-52.

The Lekwungen and other local First Nations sold their lands forever to the Queen of England for a total of £107, retaining the right to use their traditional territories for hunting and fishing.

The village coexisted with the city for more than 60 years. Gradually, the area around Songhees Village, although designated an Indian Reserve, filled in with industries and institutional buildings.

A solution to the encroachment was reached in 1912 whereby the nation sold their land again and resettled on Esquimalt Harbour.

Hard to believe — the shores of Victoria Harbour were once filled with smokestacks. Songhees Point was dominated by Sidney Rubber Roofing's asphalt shingle plant. Up the hill was an oil tank farm.

Songhees Point is now part of the Westsong Walkway linear park — a 2.7 km walk from the Johnson St bridge to West Bay.

There are good views of the façades of old Victoria — some buildings go back to the 1850s — the tourist hub around the Empress Hotel, and the legislative precinct further along. To the south is the suburb of James Bay and to the west, across the outer harbour, the Esquimalt shore.

Details: *Signs of Lekwungen:* http://www.victoria.ca/cityhall/comdev_ccc_wlkwy.shtml. *Self-guided tour.*

Reading: *Songhees Pictorial: A History of the Songhees People as seen by Outsiders 1790-1912* by Grant Keddie (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2003). *Keddie is the museum's curator of archaeology.*

2

The Steps of the BC Parliament Buildings

*From East to West the circling word has passed,
Till West is East beside our land-locked blue;
From East to West the tested chain holds fast,
The well-forged link rings true!*

That strange little ditty is called *Victoria*. It's from the 1896 poem *The Song of the Cities* by Rudyard Kipling.

Kipling's jingo-lingo was the versical equivalent of the British Columbia Parliament Buildings. Both were conceived as propaganda for the British Empire. When the Ledge was completed in 1898, BC had fewer than 100,000 souls.

The Hudson's Bay Company established a toe-hold here in 1843. By 1849 Fort Victoria was capital of the colony of Vancouver Island. By 1862 it was a city, by 1868 the capital of British Columbia, which in 1871 became the sixth province in the Canadian Confederation.

From a grassy field to the metropolis of a vast hinterland measuring 950,000 sq km — larger than France and Italy combined — within 30 years. (Today BC's population approaches 4.5 million, while France and Italy together have 122 million.)

The centre of power in the province is the Premier's Office. The Premier is the province's chief executive officer, and has almost untrammelled authority to run BC's affairs. In the parliamentary system, the executive branch controls the legislature, the law-making body.

Here's how former BC premier Bill Vander Zalm (1986-91) put it in the *Victoria Times-Colonist* in 2010: "I don't recall ever seeing democracy in this province, or any other province or the country. We always elect a dictator and for four years a dictator determined what was. I'll qualify that a little bit by saying, fortunately, for the most part we've elected benevolent dictators."

Our democratic rights may have become clouded by electoral dictatorship, but the right of peaceful protest endures, based on hallowed principles of free assembly and free speech.

The steps of the Ledge are where protesters gather to demonstrate — ordinary citizens joining voices against the executive steamroller. From gatherings of unemployed workers during the Great Depression to the pro- and anti-logging demonstrations of the 1990s. First Nations groups, advocates for children with autism, health care workers concerned about budgetary cutbacks. They come from all over to protest against unregulated fish farms, privatized tree farms, private deals for power projects.

The steps of the Ledge are one place where democracy is alive.

Ferries are a fact of life for islanders. The government-operated BC Ferry fleet is our marine highway system. The latest models are decked out like cruise ships. But turn back the clock, and the Inner Harbour fills up with tiny ocean liners wreathed in black smoke. A liquid steam whistle announces a departure.

For more than 50 years the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) maintained a fleet of handsome coastal steamers known as the Princess ships. Their Victoria docks were beside the pillared CPR Steamship Terminal on Belleville St. It was Victoria's temple of transport.

Princess Ship Roll Call! — *Victoria! Beatrice! Charlotte! Adelaide! Mary! Alice! Patricia! Marguerite! Sophia! Maquinna! Irene! Margaret! Louise! Kathleen! Elaine! Norah! Elizabeth! Joan! Marguerite III! Patricia III!* (There were others; they don't fit this mold.)

The larger ships, weighing 5,000-6,000 tons gross, offered comfortable, fast, frequent sailings to Vancouver and Seattle and, in the 1920s, summer cruises to Alaska.

The Princesses *Maquinna* and *Norah* provided essential services to isolated Vancouver Island communities.

Over time the ships' designs morphed into the modern, and the names lost that quaint quality. The last ones built were the *Princess of Nanaimo* (1951) and *Princess of Vancouver* (1955).

An early memory: being hoisted into the arms of an old man beside a stone wall. That was my grandfather. It's my only memory of my grandparents. Grandfather was standing by the Inner Harbour causeway, I guess, about to catch the Night Boat to Vancouver. He made the long train trip from Owen Sound, Ontario to meet my sister and brother and I. We were his only grandchildren — my father's four siblings all died before my time.

I took the Night Boat once with my family. You went aboard the *Princess Joan* in the evening and settled into your room. While you slept the boat slipped its moorings. In the morning you went on deck to find the boat already gliding under the Lion's Gate Bridge into Vancouver Harbour.

I sailed to Seattle on the *Princess Patricia II* to attend the World's Fair, an afternoon sailing that allowed me and my friend to stay aboard overnight. We had to clear out of our room early but could return in the evening. For 14-year-old boys, it doesn't get any better.

I sailed on the *Princess Marguerite II* when she was 40 years old and in a sorry state. Sheer nostalgia kept her on the Seattle-Victoria tourist run until 1989. The *Princess of Vancouver* survived until 1991.

We loved the Princess ships. We'll never see their likes again.

The Steamship Terminal's commercial tenant vacated in 2010, making possible its restoration as a transportation hub.

Reading: *Robert D. Turner's The Pacific Princesses: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Pacific Railway's Princess Fleet on the Northwest Coast (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1977, many reprints).*

4

Tea Lobby, Fairmont Empress Hotel

The elegant Tea Lobby of the Fairmont Empress Hotel is famous for Afternoon Tea.

In olden days the Tea Lobby was known as the Lounge — and thereby hangs this tale of a fateful encounter.

It begins on the Saturday evening after Christmas, when the Empress is decked out in festive greens. There's a big dinner party in the Crystal Ballroom. Victoria's businessmen are singing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."

In the Lounge, a hotel guest is visiting with a local friend. She will describe "the sounds of revelry and singing" in a letter that surfaces 12 years later in the *London Daily Express*.

They peek into the Ballroom. The friend discovers that "the honoured guest, the man who had inspired this outburst, was an acquaintance." The banquet breaks up. Some of the diners move to the Lounge. "K. introduced me to his acquaintance," the visitor would write.

The acquaintance is Francis Rattenbury — merely the architect of the BC Parliament Buildings while in his 20s and creator of the Empress Hotel in his 30s.

The noted Canadian architect, now 55 year old, is introduced to a young woman named Alma Clarke. She is a classical concert pianist with a knack for writing and selling popular songs. She grew up in Kamloops but is a woman of the World. Widowed in World War I, she drove ambulances on the battlefield in Salonika, Greece. She was decorated for bravery. Now she is a single mother.

"You have almost the kindest face I ever saw," she says when they happen to meet at a party.

Rattenbury's 25-year marriage is unhappy. Husband and wife live apart in their Oak Bay waterfront paradise, communicating mostly through their daughter.

Alma and Ratz (as he was known to friends) conduct an affair with little regard for the scandal that erupts. A divorce ensues. Ratz and Alma marry and have a child. Victoria society shuns them, and Rattenbury cannot get work. His debts pile up.

They flee with their two children, settling in Bournemouth, on England's southwest coast. Besides the children, Alma has a live-in companion and, beginning in September 1934, a 17-year-old "chauffeur/handyman" named Robert Stoner.

Rattenbury, now in his late 60s, drinks heavily and is depressed. He often threatens suicide. "Well, get on with it," Alma teases. She loves him dearly, the companion will testify. The thing is, there's no romance — they have an Arrangement.

In November, having turned 18, Stoner moves in. He is seduced by Alma, and they become lovers. They run away to London, where Alma lavishes gifts on him in what the Court will call *an orgy*. A doctor will testify that she has flare-ups of tuberculosis, which can induce *nymphomania*.

Two days after their return from London, Alma makes plans to take the ailing Francis to see a doctor in a nearby town.

Stoner becomes inflamed with jealousy. That very evening he borrows a mallet from his grandfather and bludgeons Francis in his easy chair.

Driven mad with grief and yet desperate to protect her lover, Alma confesses to the crime. Alma and Stoner are tried together for murder. The four-day trial electrifies the country. Stoner is found guilty and sentenced to hang. Alma is acquitted but soon takes her own life, having lost her husband, lover and reputation.

The British public is moved to pity for the young Stoner. Alma Rattenbury is seen as having used sex to dominate a mere boy. Even the slain architect is an object of contempt for winking at his wife's affairs. Stoner's sentence is commuted and he is out of prison within seven years.

A modern tragedy. It all started here. Enjoy your tea!

Details: *Visitors are welcome to stroll around the heritage lobby of the Fairmont Empress Hotel; enter by the porte cochère near Government and Belleville. Reservations (250-389-2727) are a must for Afternoon Tea; expect to pay well over \$50CDN; dress code; to be seated in the Tea Lobby in high season, book well in advance.*

Readings: *Terry Reksten, Rattenbury (1978) and The Fairmont Empress: The First Hundred Years (revised ed. 2008).*

Royal BC Museum and Thunderbird Park

5

I've been visiting the Royal BC Museum for half a century. In the exhibits hall I cut to the chase: third floor, First Peoples.

The First Peoples exhibit is endlessly fascinating — simply the most accessible way I know to begin understanding BC's indigenous heritage. The sequence on the effects of European contact is guaranteed to make you think.

The displays were created in the 1970s with the collaboration of dozens of First Nations people. Detailed woodwork down to the handrails was honed by the artistic Hunt family of the Fort Rupert Kwakiutl First Nation. There is a scaled-down walk-in model of a big-house built by Henry Hunt and his sons Tony and Richard.

The museum complex has other notable parts. The tower houses workers who collect, study and curate — little-seen foundations of the Museum. Its mission since 1886 is "to preserve specimens of the natural products and Indian antiquities and manufactures of the Province and to classify and exhibit the same for the information of the public."

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Among the Museum's men and women of science are some legendary field workers — Charles Newcombe, Frank Kermodé, Wilson Duff.

The BC Archives, by the sunken courtyard, is an indispensable resource for historians and genealogists. The reference room is one of the most useful in the city.

On the Belleville St. side of the exhibit building are glassed displays of original carved monumental art from coastal villages. Of the weathered masterworks, a human-sized Cowichan house figure of the 19th century stands out for its iconic simplicity.

To me the most fascinating part of the whole complex is the painted house in Thunderbird Park. It's the centerpiece of a huge presence of Kwakiutl artists in Victoria that continues to this day. The builder of the house was paterfamilias and principal exponent.

Mungo Martin (c1881-1962) trained in carving and painting, dancing, singing and storytelling in his native Fort Rupert, where Kwakwaka'wakw traditions survived intact. He collected a museum's-worth of artifacts and folkways. Mungo had several chiefly titles, some inherited and some acquired. One was *Nakapankam*, Ten Times a Chief.

After a life in commercial fishing, Mungo Martin took a post at the University of British Columbia to carve poles and teach the arts. He moved to Victoria in 1952 to be carver-in-residence at the Museum and settled here.

Martin and Henry Hunt, his son-in-law, replicated many of the poles in Thunderbird Park. It was a repository of original monumental art, but the old poles were deteriorating. Their replicas comprise much of the collection in the park today.

Mungo Martin House, built in 1953, is a scaled-down version of a Fort Rupert big house. Its four interior houseposts are elaborately carved with the owner's heraldic crests. The RBCM website has a good historical account of the big house and the park.

A bit further afield in Beacon Hill Park is the 39-metre pole Mungo Martin put up in 1956. The *world's tallest totem pole* is so well loved it was taken down in 2000, restored, recarved, repainted and remounted.

Think of it — a modest fisherman in bluejean overalls, a local yokel, was really this cultural dynamo whose stature as an artist is difficult to overstate. Among those who Mungo Martin influenced were Bill Reid and Doug Cranmer. His protégé Tony Hunt and Tony's brother Richard Hunt are artists of standing who make their homes in Victoria. The next generation is already well-established and their work known worldwide.

When I reflect on the contribution of the Kwakiutl First Nation, with their living connection to ancient north island cultures, it seems to me one of our strongest legacies.

Did I say *our*? Whether it's ours or theirs, it's alive and kicking in Victoria.

Details: Royal British Columbia Museum, 675 Belleville St, Victoria; (250) 356-7226 or toll free 1-888-447-7977; royalbcmuseum.bc.ca. Other exhibits: natural history, modern

history; IMAX Theatre, café, a splendid bookstore; Helmcken House (built 1852) nearby. BC Archives, 655 Beleville St: bcarchives.bc.ca. The online visual records database is an outstanding historical research tool. Register in person to use the reference room.

6

Blue Bridge

An antique blue bridge spans Victoria Harbour and makes a western portal to the Old Town. Locals love the old contraption.

The Johnson St. Bridge is really two — it has separate vehicle and railway spans. There's a stream of bike and pedestrian users.

When a vessel of a certain height approaches, all traffic grinds to a halt, a siren wails, lights flash, barriers descend, decks rise, counterweights fall.

Up and down — that must be why it's called a *bascule bridge*. Bascule is French for "seesaw."

Built in 1924, the Blue Bridge requires a foundational overhaul. The City proposed replacing it, but that provoked an unprecedented public outpouring. Unfortunately, it would cost more to keep than to replace the Blue Bridge, and a budget for a fixed span will soon be put to the citizens.

The bridge is a part of the historic Lower Johnson (LoJo) streetscape and Market Square façade, where you can see the ghostly lettering of a sign painted on the front of a grain warehouse.

The tiny VIA rail station is the terminus of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway. It may soon be on the other side of the harbour — no room on the new bridge.

Across the tracks is the empty Janion building, offices of the E&N Railway until 1948. The City is trying to protect the building while the property is on the market. The hope is to find a buyer who will invest in its rehabilitation as part of a commercial development.

Enjoy the Blue Bridge and its surroundings while you can. Change is in the air.

Details: The City's Johnson St Bridge site: <http://www.johnsonstreetbridge.com/>.

Chinatown

7

Victoria's Chinatown is centred on the lower block of Fisgard St. and covers about eight blocks. Fisgard St. has a terrific atmosphere — neon-lit restaurants, grocery shops with produce spilling over the sidewalks and an old-fashioned Chinese butcher, side by side with art galleries and funky clothiers. It's one of the most vibrant parts of Old Town.

Chinatown flourished during and after construction of the Canadian

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Pacific Railway. It's the oldest and was once the largest Chinatown in Canada. The whole area was honeycombed with secret passageways. Fan Tan Alley, the wonderfully narrow passage between Fisgard and Pandora Ave, is suggestive of that architecture. A diversity of little retail shops lines the shadowy way. My favorite is The Turntable, a music store with vintage LPs.

Chinatown went into a long decline before its fortunes revived in the 1970s. Thanks to some local initiatives the inner-city area has become liveable again.

A distinctive element of Chinatown design is the door on the street that leads to multiple apartments with open-air commons. One such complex is Dragon Alley, 532 Fisgard, across from Bean Around the World. It has been renovated into an interesting mix of residential, commercial and retail uses. The passage leads to Herald St, the beginning of another funky retail shopping zone.

Working as an election enumerator one year, I met aging residents of Chinatown who, although born in Victoria, needed an interpreter.

Chinatown, a monument to tenacity, reminds me of the different stories some Canadians tell.

Details: *Forbidden City self-guided walking tour:* http://www.victoria.ca/visitors/pdfs/wlkngrt_frbddn3.pdf

Discover the Past walking tours: <http://www.discoverthepast.com/>

Victoria's Chinatown, a BC Archives photo essay: <http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/sn-32805B/exhibits/timemach/galler02/frames/chinatown2.htm>

Reading: *The Secret City within Victoria* by David Chuenyan Lai. *Out of print.*
Bean Around the World, 533 Fisgard St, Victoria; buys Central American coffees from producers: <http://www.cowboycoffee.ca/batworganicroasts.html>

8

John's Place Restaurant

John's Place is the Victoria restaurant most likely to have a line-up out the door late in the morning. It's famous for breakfast, particularly Eggs Benedict, which owner John Cantin says outsells the rest of the menu 8 to 1. The hollandaise is from scratch, and they make their own mayonnaise, too. The runner-up in popularity is the Bottomless Bowl of Soup.

John's Place has an ambience I would call hippie. Piney-wood walls are festooned with photographs and posters like exclamation marks. It is the kind of place where the server, who's been there for 20 years, calls you honey.

John is quick to point out he is too young to have been a hippie — even though, when he motored north from LA in the early 80s to seek his fortune, it was in a 60s VW van, the rare roll-up *rag top* model. John is a collector. He treasures the artifacts of that time.

Years ago a college buddy and his wife came to visit from Ontario. We are of hippie vintage, so naturally we went to John's Place. At that time there was a functioning Wurlitzer jukebox with consoles in the booths. Marjorie, an antiques dealer, went into ecstasies.

At John's Place I like to touch spirits with two previous tenants, both pioneering Canadian photographers. Richard Maynard (1832-1907) travelled around BC as a bootmaker — think of all those miners, loggers, ranchers — and found time to photograph the evolving landscapes of the young province. The restaurant was his boot shop beginning in 1892.

Hannah Hatherly Maynard (1834-1918) was a studio photographer — her studio was upstairs — and a pioneering photographic artist who experimented with surreal techniques long before Surrealism. Her outdoor work captured the social and cultural life of the city.

Between them, the Maynards open windows on BC's past. A few of their pictures are on the walls at John's Place.

Details: *John's Place, 723 Pandora Avenue, Victoria. Open 7 am-9 pm, an hour later on week-ends, and does take reservations for 4 or more. The history of the restaurant is recounted on the hippe-style website www.johnsplace.ca.*

BC Archives' holdings of the Maynards' huge body of work can be viewed at www.bcarchives.bc.ca, under Search Visual Records.

Emily of Beacon Hill

9

Beacon Hill is the southerly prominence in Beacon Hill Park, Victoria's 82-hectare civic pleasure grounds. It has splendid views across the Strait of Juan de Fuca. There are remnants of First Nations burial tumuli on the south slope. In the early days of European settlement, beacons were lit on the hill to warn ships away from the shallows of Brochie Ledge.

Beacon Hill's greater significance is as the home range of the artist and writer Emily Carr (1871-1945). Carr's home was half a kilometre west of here. She lived 18 years on a 4-ha property between James Bay and the Dallas Road cliffs. She recounted her charmed early life in an exquisite memoir, *The Book of Small*.

Carr was tied to her home turf by temperament and fortune. She would leave only to return.

She painted from an early age. At length she grew discouraged and all but gave up art. She built an apartment house on a lot carved out of the family property and, at age 41, settled in there for 23 years.

When she was 56 and had been a rooming-house operator for 15 years, a door opened. She found a new style and a new theme. She painted forests. She painted clearcuts, too — for the sky, the light, the energy, the power.

At length she moved a few blocks away and, three years later, relocated to the house her sister Alice built where the family's vegetable garden used to be. Her last abode was St Mary's Priory — now the James Bay Inn

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— a block from the family home.

We can glimpse this *small world* in the journals she kept from 1927 to 1941, edited and published posthumously as *Hundreds and Thousands*.

Carr often visited Beacon Hill Park to sketch and paint the cliffs, the sea, the Olympic Mountains and the sky. I can see her striding up the tunnels in the brush on the back slope of Beacon Hill — with Koko, Maybbe and Tantrum bounding ahead — to study the light on the strait and, if it's good, make a sketch or a watercolour.

Advice to artists from the journal for November 3, 1932:

Search for the reality of each object, that is, its real and only beauty; recognize our relationship with all life; say to every animate and inanimate thing 'brother;' be at one with all things, finding the divine in all; when one can do all this, maybe then one can paint. In the meantime one must go steadily on with open mind, courageously alert, waiting always for a lead, constantly watching, constantly praying, meditating much and not worrying.

... not worrying about, for instance, success? She must have cared. The next lines of the entry are from the poem *Song of the Rolling Earth* by Walt Whitman. It's an exhortation to artists to "pile up the words of the earth!/Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost." Out rolls this Blakean prophesy: "When the materials are all prepared and ready, the architects shall appear."

Whitman's poem composes the triumph of art:

*I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail,
I swear to you they will understand you and justify you,
The greatest thing among them shall be he who best knows you, and
encloses all and is faithful to all,
He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall perceive that you are not
an iota less than they.
You shall be fully glorified in them.*

It came, a little, in her lifetime — first for her writing. After her time it was more her painting. And the circle widened.

Details: *Carr House*, 207 Government St, Emily Carr's birthplace, built about 1862; open seasonally; guided tours, occasional events; see www.emilycarr.com.

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 1040 Moss St, has a standing exhibit of Carr's work and life; see aggv.bc.ca.

Carr's written works are published by Douglas & McIntyre (www.dmpibooks.com). Three classics published in Carr's time: *Klee Wyck* (1941), *The Book of Small* (1942) and *The House of All Sorts* (1944).

About Beacon Hill Park, see www.victoria.ca/cityhall/departments_compar_prkbcn.shtml.

TAKE 5 BEST VICTORIA RESTAURANTS

According to *Vancouver* magazine's Urban Diner 2009 awards and *EAT* magazine's 1st Annual Exceptional Eats! Awards. *Vancouver's* judges agreed with *EAT's* readers' poll on the first four. Excerpted suggestions are *Vancouver's*.

1. Brasserie L'Ecole

1715 Government St (250) 475-6260

"... French country cooking with local ingredients and ace service ... reservations mandatory ... Beer-braised duck legs in a delicate broth of chickpeas and summer vegetables [with] truffled basil purée ... cured pork loin [with] sauté of transparent apples, bacon, kale, and fingerling potatoes ..."

2. Cafe Brio

944 Fort St (250) 383-0009

"... menu changes weekly (even daily) to reflect what's fresh and available ... sweetbread-stuffed ravioli with grilled scallions in a red-wine sauce ... local lamb stuffed with lamb kidneys, pine nuts, and ricotta cheese over a ragout of favas, morels, and fingerling potatoes ..."

3. Zambri's

110 – 911 Yates St (250) 360-1171

"... vitello tonnato is seductively rich ... local rockfish with pepperonata ... beef striploin with gorgonzola fonduta and truffle oil ... cauliflower allasabbia."

4. Stage

1307 Gladstone Ave (250) 388-4222

"... langos, a savoury Hungarian fry bread ... with Maldon sea salt and garlic or slathered with artichokes, tomatoes, and goat cheese ..."

5. Marina Restaurant

1327 Beach Dr (250) 598-8555

"... porcini-crusted halibut with chorizo sausage, sweet potato hash, sweet garlic purée, and braised greens ..."

10

Craigdarroch Castle

Craigdarroch Castle is a Victoria landmark, a sandstone apparition of turrets and red tile roofs rising out of the oaks as you look up the Fort St hill.

Completed in 1888 for the Robert Dunsmuir family, it was the city's finest home, surrounded by 11 hectares of gardens and woods.

Much reduced and after many changes of hands, it pays its way as a heritage museum with sumptuous architectural details and interesting displays of Dunsmuir family history.

The Castle's exhibits pay respect to its many uses. It was a convalescent hospital during World War I. During the Great Depression it was Victoria College — Pierre Berton a notable alumnus. It was a school district office.

During the 1960s the Castle was the home of the Victoria School (now Conservatory) of Music. There were concerts in the spacious front parlour. I fell in love with string quartets there.

At the helm was a team of gifted teachers, Robin Wood and Winnifred Scott Wood. The Woods — he from Esquimalt, she from Winnipeg — met en route to England. Both were bound for the Royal College of Music to study piano.

They were talented musicians, and they fell in love. They launched a brilliant concert career together, playing duets in the capitals of Europe. Then they gave it all up to take charge of the newly-formed school of music.

The Woods devoted 35 years to building a pillar of community education with some 1800 students and alumni the likes of Jon Kimura Parker and Richard Margison.

Long story short, the Castle has an outstanding record of public service — ironic, considering it was built as a tycoon's advertisement of wealth.

Details: *Craigdarroch Castle, 1050 Joan Crescent, Victoria; (250) 592-5323; <http://www.craigdarrochcastle.com>.*

Victoria Conservatory of Music, 900 Johnson St, Victoria; (250) 386-5311; <http://www.vcm.bc.ca/>. Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 907 Pandora Ave, has probably the best acoustics in the city.

Government House Grounds

11

Government House is a 100-room mansion surrounded by 14.6 hectares of gardens and woodlands. The residence of the Queen's representative in British Columbia is not open to casual visitors, but the grounds are.

What a piece of nature this is, a magnificent public resource just a 20-minute walk east of downtown Victoria.

The spacious front and sides comprise 5.7 hectares of duck ponds, rockeries,

rose gardens, herb gardens, cut flower gardens, amazing borders of perennials shaded by graceful walnut and tulip trees along the front wall. The lawns, so popular for wedding photo shoots, are edged by Douglas firs. There is a field with a bandshell, a nursery, pathways and benches and much more besides.

The grounds are conducive to contemplation. One of my favorite spots is the Sunken Garden on the west side, overlooking serpentine Lotbinière Ave with its rockery walls and a lovely Garry oak meadow below.

The south side of Government House is near the edge of a low rock escarpment. It's got one of the best views in town, overlooking the seaside suburb of Fairfield and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. There are some charming grassy spots, and to sit on a rocky knoll amid the dwarf Garry oaks is very Vancouver Island.

Below the escarpment is nearly 9 hectares of Garry oak woodland with pathways and interpretive signs.

Most inspiring to me is the small army of volunteer gardeners in the Friends of the Government House Grounds. The society was formed in the 1990s to restore the gardens after a period of government belt-tightening and neglect. They are flourishing under its care.

Details: *Government House, 1401 Rockland Ave, Victoria; <http://www.ltgov.bc.ca/>. Grounds open during daylight hours. Tours.*

12

Ross Bay Cemetery

"It is a rotten world, artful politicians are its bane. It's saving grace is the artlessness of the young and the wonders of the sky."

John Dean's epitaph makes a powerful statement — even with a comma splice, a misspelled word and faulty grammar. When it was finished and the gravestone set in place at the Ross Bay Cemetery, Dean posed beside it. At 86 he still had a few years left to practice his eccentricities.

Ross Bay Cemetery, established 1872 in an 11-hectare setting in Fairfield, is the shaded park-like resting place of James Douglas, Emily Carr and a who's who of Victorians early and late.

John Dean (1850-1943) was a sometime politician himself — he was mayor of Rossland, BC (1903-4). A carpenter by trade, he was always a failed politician in Victoria, where he lived his last 35 years. The native of England was a confirmed bachelor and an inveterate traveler.

Dean is best known for a park on the slopes of Mt Newton in North Saanich. He bought 32 hectares of mostly old growth forest there and built a handsome cabin where he stayed in the summer. He donated the land to the Province in 1921. Some neighbours followed suit, and John Dean Provincial Park now protects 173 hectares of forest. The Depression-era stairs and other stonework is enchanting.

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The cemetery, besides being one of the most interesting and well-loved landscapes in the city, is close to the haunts of the outdoorsy.

South across Dallas Rd is Ross Bay, with views across the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the Olympic Mountains. An exquisite pebble beach is hidden beyond the steps at the east end.

To the west is a long causeway and Clover Point. A bit inland and west of the cemetery is Moss Rock, a gem of an outcrop with vistas of Victoria's south coast.

Details: *Ross Bay Cemetery, 1495 Fairfield Rd, Victoria (across from Fairfield Plaza, a shopping centre with every convenience.) Consult the Old Cemeteries Society of Victoria (www.oldcem.bc.ca) for historical information, a map and self-guiding tour of Ross Bay Cemetery and a schedule of its guided tours of Victoria's cemeteries. Information about John Dean Provincial Park, maps, directions: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/john_dean/.*

Gonzales Hill

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Gonzales Hill is a rocky eminence that rises to 66 metres above sea level on Victoria's south coast. One end looms over Gonzales Bay and the other over McNeill Bay. Little lanes run up the back and along the ridge. Houses are perched on the edges of cliffs.

The white meteorological observatory is a prominent landmark high on the rocks. Built in 1914, it was the city's weather station for decades. Today a 1.8-hectare park surrounds it. Between clumps of shore pines are picture-postcard views of Gonzales Bay.

At the east end of the ridge is rugged 2-hectare Walbran Park, with little Garry oaks, arbutus and Douglas fir. At the foot of the steps to a cairn is a large plaque with an detailed historical sketch — in bronze — of the exploration of Juan de Fuca Strait. The cairn commemorates Captain John Walbran, a resident of Gonzales Hill and author of *British Columbia Coast Names*. (It's still in print after 104 years.)

Across the road is a lookout dating from World War II, with magnificent views in every direction. It overlooks King George Terrace Harling Point and, just offshore, the Trial Islands.

This landscape — a place of unrivalled beauty — has terrific energy. It is also famous for wind, so be prepared.

Even tamed into a suburb, Gonzales Hill is an elemental place.

Just 20,000 years ago the whole area visible from here was covered in ice. Within about 5,000 years the ice was north of Gonzales Hill and melting fast. Imagine the passing of that glacier — the grinding and scraping, the waters pouring out.

Along the shore of Harling Point, just below the Chinese Cemetery, there are gneisses — hard metamorphosed rock — smooth as a

Michelangelo and creased like your best pants. The ice did that.

Within another 1,000 years, Gonzales Hill and most of Victoria was under water. A thousand years later the hill was a tiny peninsula with a forest of pines and alders.

The whole island rose as the weight of ice disappeared. By 10,000 years ago the shoreline was south of Trial Islands and the land swathed in Douglas fir grassland.

The dynamic of land and sea stabilized at the present level about 6000 years ago.

Details: *Gonzales Hill Regional Park:* <http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks/gonzales/index.htm>. Downloadable map with directions.

Geoscape Victoria, an informative geology website: http://geopanorama.rncan.gc.ca/victoria/index_e.php. Maps showing the history of deglaciation are under "The legacy of ice."

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Oak Bay Islands

We live near a quiet corner of the Pacific Ocean. It takes 15 minutes to walk our self-propelled craft to the put-in by the Oak Bay Marina and be pulling away from shore. We leave familiar landscapes behind and enter a world of little islands with lively waters between.

The nearest island is Jimmy Chicken, five minutes from launch. It has a beautiful little beach edged with outcrops of polished gneisses. There's a 360° panorama from the rocky eminence. It's a good place to watch bald eagles and land-otters.

Jimmy Chicken and his wife Jenny were First Nations people who lived on the island before 1900 and legendarily sold seafood and crafted goods door to door.

Places here tend to have at least two names. The island's legal name is Mary Tod. Its old Salish name was *Kohweechella*, "where there are many fish." Regrettably, that is no longer the case.

Beyond the bay is a recreational wonderland. Considered among the best sailing anywhere — and extremely popular with whale watching boats — these waters get pretty choppy at times.

(In all my excursions I've never seen orca here — but a Gray whale sojourned in Oak Bay for two months in 2010.)

We next encounter some living museums of ecology.

The Oak Bay Islands Ecological Reserve is a protected archipelago with large gull and cormorant populations.

Ecological reserves are set aside for science and education. Public access is restricted to protect sensitive, rare and endangered ecosystems. Most are open to the public for no-impact hiking, birding and photography.

Because it has sensitive ecosystems, BC Parks requires visitors to get permission before visiting these islands. A few seabird colonies are closed

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to all but scientists.

A short paddle southwest brings us to Trial Islands Ecological Reserve. A refugium of plants that have been extirpated from the suburban waterfront, the reserve protects *the most outstanding known assemblage of rare and endangered plant species in British Columbia*. Permission is required to visit this botanical jewel, but you can make the highly scenic circumnavigation (1/2 hour) anytime conditions permit — just beware rips in the channel.

Eastward, we cross to the larger Discovery Islands, always with a weather eye. The tides flow through here at a clip — sometimes 6 or 7 knots past Strongtide Island, generating serious rips.

Winds can spring up and put you in sudden peril, and the smaller islands may not provide protection. Get a wind blowing against those rips, and you'll be fighting to keep the standing waves from flipping your boat.

You have an hour in this frigid water before hypothermia sets in — depending on your metabolic, emotional and physical reactions and how you are dressed.

We wait for slack tides and calm weather to cross.

Discovery Island Marine Park spans 2 km of the island's interesting south coast. There are good campsites in open meadows, but few facilities; no open fires.

The lighthouse at East Point dates from 1886. This, the third, is now automatic. All around are kelp beds. Seals are our constant companions.

The west half of Discovery Island and the two Chatham Islands belong to the Songhees First Nation. A group of Songhees people actually established a village on Discovery at the time of the 1862 smallpox epidemic.

The Chatham Islands are laced with channels challenging to navigate in currents.

To the east is Alpha Island, protected as part of Oak Bay Islands Ecological Reserve. This reserve protects rare plant communities. Permission required.

For the return crossing, we aim for Ten Mile Point. Mind you don't lag crossing in a flood tide and get swept through the passage.

Ten Mile Point Ecological Reserve is a subtidal area that is much studied as a benchmark for measuring change.

We're turning towards home now, with breaks to poke into interesting rocky coves and explore charming Flower Islet.

That's my neighbourhood — the wonders of nature 15 minutes from home.

Details: Oak Bay Islands, Trial Islands, Ten Mile Point ecological reserves: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/eco_reserve/.

Friends of Ecological Reserves : <http://www.ecoreserves.bc.ca/>.

Discovery Island Marine Provincial Park: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/discovery_is/.

Discovery Island Lighthouse: <http://www.discoveryisland.ca/>.

Guided kayak tours of Oak Bay: Ocean River Sports, 5½-hour tours from Oak Bay Marina: http://www.oceanriver.com/day_tours.htm#explore.

The oldest house in Western Canada — the second oldest building in Victoria — was built in 1851 and is still at its original site on a charming property that retains the feel of a farm amid the suburban streets of Oak Bay.

"I was proposing to form a settlement between Point Gonzales and Cadboro point," James Douglas wrote to his Hudson's Bay Company superiors on September 1, 1850. It is "a part of the coast much frequented by the Natives [and acts] as an additional protection to the running stock; with that object in view . . . sold 100 acres of land to Chief Trader Tod, who is now living on the spot."

Wouldn't you know? — the first settler in Oak Bay, a district of famously ageing demographics, was a retiree.

John Tod (1794-1882) had a 40-year career with the HBC. While running the Thompson's River Post (Kamloops) he met his second wife, Sophia Lolo. I imagine they had a jolly time with their seven children on gorgeous Willows Farm.

The Estevan Ave shopping district has one of the city's notable restaurants, Paprika, and a fish and chip shop, Willows Galley.

A couple of outstanding parks are just a stone's throw away.

Scenic Willows Beach has a vibrant summertime scene and is much visited year-round. You might see a leathery old land-otter on the rocks near Cattle Point. For a few years a pair of bald eagles had a nest in a tall tree just above the rocks at the south end.

The rocky Garry oak woodland in 31-hectare Uplands Park gives a sense of the distinctive original ecosystem of the drier parts of the island.

Details: *John Tod House, 2564 Heron St, Oak Bay; much modified, the original shape obscured by additions; privately owned and occupied, so not accessible; Paprika Bistro: 2524 Estevan Ave, Oak Bay; (250) 592-7424; <http://www.paprika-bistro.com/>. Willows Galley: 2559 Estevan Ave, Oak Bay; (250) 598-2711.*

Craigflower Manor is the distinctive white house with peaked windows near the west end of the Admirals Rd bridge. Built in 1853-56 by indentured workers of the Hudson's Bay Company, it was the centre of 364-hectare Craigflower Farm.

Across the bridge on Maple Point stands the original Craigflower School. Built in 1855, it is the oldest schoolhouse on its original site in Western Canada.

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Both farmhouse and schoolhouse are National Historic Sites and among the oldest buildings on the island. They're open to the public seasonally, with interpretive programs depicting farm and school life in colonial times.

An ancient First Nations village stood near the sandy beach by the schoolhouse. Traces of habitat remain. Shell middens — garbage dumps, mostly of seafood — were analysed in a University of Victoria archaeology project. They revealed that the site was first occupied some 3,500 years ago.

At the time of European settlement, the Salish village of Kosapsom occupied Maple Point. The Kosapsom people sold their land to the Crown in 1854 and moved to a village on Esquimalt Harbour.

Craigflower itself dates from the first years of the colony of Vancouver Island. The HBC established four farms near Fort Victoria. Its subsidiary, the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, engaged hundreds of people to immigrate from the old country.

The staff of Craigflower, 37 families and 76 people, made the journey around Cape Horn and arrived at Fort Victoria in January 1853. They set to work clearing land, milling lumber and building the houses the HBC had told them were already built.

The workers poured their sweat into an enterprise named for the English estate of HBC governor Andrew Colville. They were indentured for five years and paid £17 a year — one-quarter what they could earn as labourers on hire.

Desertions were only one of many problems that beset the HBC farms.

The bailiff (manager) of Craigflower was Kenneth McKenzie, who had managed the farms of his well-to-do family in Scotland. Many are the stories of bailiff McKenzie's challenges in the area of human relations.

Still, Craigflower was the least unsuccessful of the farms. McKenzie did well supplying the Royal Navy base with 1,000 lb of meat a day, all its vegetables and all the bakery goods — in purpose-built ovens, using Craigflower wheat.

The traffic on Admirals Rd went both ways. During the McKenzies' tenure, Craigflower was a party house for Naval society.

After the 1858 Gold Rush, the colony prospered, and the HBC soon wrote off its money-losing farms.

Craigflower was subdivided in 1866. The schoolhouse kept functioning until replaced in 1911.

The Admirals Rd bridge is identified locally with the murder of 14-year-old Reena Virk by bullying teens in 1997.

Details: *Craigflower Manor is at 110 Island Highway, View Royal and Craigflower Schoolhouse, 2765 Admirals Rd, Saanich.*

Craigflower National Historic sites are operating by The Land Conservancy of BC:

information, visiting times, directions: <http://blog.conservancy.bc.ca/properties/vancouver-island-region/craigflower-national-historic-sites-of-canada/Teaching, Learning and Farming at Craigflower Farm, an educational website: http://bcheritage.ca/craigflower/>
 Artifacts BC: a detailed account of archaeology at Kosapsom: <http://bcheritage.ca/artifacts/kosapsom/index.htm>.

Fisgard Light and Esquimalt Harbour

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BC's first lighthouse, built 1860, stands at the entrance to Esquimalt Harbour, marking the rocks on the west shore. Accessible by land, Fisgard is the only functioning west coast lighthouse open to the public. Situated on a photogenic rocky islet, Fisgard Light has a spectacular prospect of the straits and approaches to Esquimalt Harbour.

The former lightkeeper's house has handsome exhibits of the technology of the day. The light was automated in 1929. Directly opposite the harbourmouth is Duntze Head, named after Captain John Duntze, master HM frigate *Fisgard*, 42 guns. *Fisgard* and other Royal Navy warships called in

TAKE 5 VANCOUVER ISLAND'S WARMEST PLACES

Places on the islands with the highest annual average daily temperature:

	° Celsius
1. St Mary Lake, Salt Spring Island	10.4
2. Gonzales Heights, Oak Bay Phyllis St, Victoria	10.3 (tie)
3. Cortes Island Departure Bay, Nanaimo Mayne Island	10.2 (tie)
4. William Head, Metchosin	10.1
5. Islandview, Central Saanich	10.0

From *Environment Canada's Canadian Climate Normals 1971-2000* (climate.weatheroffice.gc.ca).

Places with the highest annual average daily temperatures in Canada:

Vancouver, BC (Harbour)	11.0
Chilliwack, BC	10.5 (tie)
White Rock, BC	

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there during the first years of Fort Victoria.

Esquimalt Harbour is spacious and deep with a defensible entrance and as a result the Royal Navy established a presence here. Their presence help dull the American appetite for ever more land. The 1844 American election slogan “54-40 or fight” summarized the US claim to possess the entire northwest coast to Alaska (54°40' N latitude).

At least 43 warships and gunboats were stationed here during the first decades of the colony. They're listed in Colin Browne's poem *Diplomacy, Vancouver Island, 1845-1865*.

The Fisgard light was the first permanent construction around the naval precinct. By 1864 a functioning naval yard was established in the lee of Duntze Head. It became the Royal Navy's Pacific Station — squadron headquarters — in 1865. Today it is still known as HMC Dockyard, and it is the heart of Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt.

On the south side of Duntze Head, well-cultivated waterfront property surrounds the 1885 red brick Admiral's House. A number of heritage buildings from that period survive in Dockyard.

By BC's terms of union, Canada agreed to build a drydock in Esquimalt Harbour. After much delay it was completed in 1887. The drydock was of vital use for Royal Navy vessels in the North Pacific. It was used until a much larger drydock was built across the harbour in the 1920s.

The harbour's strategic value increased with the establishment of an Admiralty coaling station — the only one in the eastern Pacific — supplied by Nanaimo coal.

Pacific Station became a likely target for seizure by foreign navies. In 1877 England and Russia were rattling sabres. Russia's Pacific naval base at Vladivostok was heavily armed.

The war scare resulted in construction of the first shoreline batteries of heavy guns along the Victoria waterfront.

Fort Rodd Hill, constructed in the 1890s above Fisgard Light at the entrance of the harbour, was the culminating fortification. The battery was in service until the 1950s. During World War II it was the headquarters of an elaborate system of sea-lane surveillance, with lookouts posted on prominences from East Sooke to Oak Bay.

The Royal Navy maintained the Esquimalt base until 1905. A five-year hiatus ensued before the Canadian Navy took possession in 1910.

CFB Esquimalt celebrated the base's centenary in 2010. Fisgard Light marks 150 years of service on November 16, 2010.

They stand on guard for the community their presence did much to shape.

Details: *Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Site:* <http://www.fisgardlighthouse.com>.

Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site: <http://www.fortroddhill.com>.

Entrance to both is via Ocean Blvd, Colwood.

CFB Esquimalt, seasonal tours of Dockyard and Naden: (250) 363-5291, www.cfbesquimalt.ca.

The Galloping Goose and Lochside Regional Trails are among Victoria's best loved amenities.

Four railways once served Victoria. Of the three that didn't survive, one became Interurban Road and two have been recycled as multi-use trails.

The 29-km Lochside follows old railbeds between Victoria and North Saanich en route to BC Ferries' Swartz Bay terminal. Much closer to the city, it passes the delightful Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary (Km 5). This 58-ha urban preserve, a Saanich municipal park, has a 2.5-km circuit of the quiet lake and a hike to a rocky summit with 360° views of the city. (The nature house also has terrific programs.)

The Galloping Goose uses 55 km of railbed on a line that ran west to Sooke and north to Cowichan Lake. The original Galloping Goose was a self-propelled railcar that provided daily passenger service between Victoria, Milnes Landing (Sooke), West Shawnigan Lake and Cowichan Lake, 1924-31.

For a longer biking day-trip passing through increasingly rural landscapes, we would choose from two rides on the Goose.

The nearer route begins at Atkins Rd and winds through Victoria's Western Communities en route to Sooke. We drive (or bus) to the Atkins Road parking lot, near Km 10, in Colwood to avoid the haul from downtown and a stretch along Highway 1.

(A friendlier route to the Atkins Rd parking lot is under construction — the E&N Rail Trail between downtown Victoria and Langford.)

Metchosin is particularly scenic, with small farms and four exquisite regional parks at Witty's Lagoon, Devonian Beach, Matheson Lake and Roche Cove. Round trip to Roche Cove: 50 km.

The farther route begins near Roche Cove. Drive or bus the Sooke Road to Gillespie Road. West from Roche Cove (Km 35) the trail follows Sooke Harbour, then climbs into the Sooke Hills, past the Sooke Potholes (Km 48) to the terminus at Leechtown (Km 55). There are long inclines and some challenging crossings. Round trip: 40 km.

The low grades and smooth roadbeds of our linear parks are a gift from the past.

Details: *Maps, directions and descriptions of the Lochside and Galloping Goose trails and regional parks in Metchosin at Capital Regional Parks: www.crd.bc.ca/parks. For Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary: swanlake.bc.ca. (Note: no biking or dogs allowed.)*

E&N Rail Trail: http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks/e_n_railtrail.htm.

The Butchart Gardens

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In the City of Gardens, the Butchart Gardens is the centrepiece. The famous 22-hectare show garden, on an estate near Brentwood Bay, displays nature at its gaudiest. It's one of the city's premier attractions, so solitude is usually not part of the experience.

I have been to Butchart's many times, in all seasons, in daylight and at dusk, and taken many visitors there. Pressed to name a favorite spot, I choose the Rose Garden, beautifully sited on an open slope with benches near a curious spherical mirror.

The fireworks display, Saturday evenings in the summer, is not to be missed. You can take a picnic basket and sit on the grass. (If you forget blankets, they sell them.) The fireworks are the old-fashioned kind, with pinwheels and lines of little displays, their firings perfectly matched to a suite of contemporary music. Viewed against the silhouettes of the nearby mountains, they are enchanting.

The Butchart family was prominent in the cement business. They moved to Tod Inlet from Ontario and built the handsome house in 1904. What is now the Sunken Garden was once a limestone quarry.

Mrs Butchart hired some noted landscape architects to design the gardens. After the quarry was exhausted she set to work landscaping it. By the 1920s Mrs Butchart ran a flourishing mail-order seed business, and the gardens were attracting 50,000 visitors a year. Today, after more than 100 years the property, still in the family, is a National Historic Site.

Details: *The Butchart Gardens, 800 Benvenuto Ave, Brentwood Bay (23 km north of Victoria), (250) 652-5256; open year round: <http://www.butchartgardens.com>.*

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Sidney, Booktown

Sidney, the sunny seaside settlement north of Victoria, styles itself a *booktown*, the centre of which would be Tanner's Books at Beacon and Fourth. It's a place to explore, with a stock of trade books, magazines, newspapers and nautical charts. A bit west is Beacon Books, an arcadia of old books, magazines, pictures, postcards and paper ephemera. Both have great local sections, and they always stock my book *The Story of Sidney*, God bless em.

In a centre of books, can writers be far away? The presiding spirit would be Al Purdy (1918-2000), icon of Canadian poets of the two-fisted variety. Purdy lived half the year in Sidney with his wife Eurithe, who he referred to at a Victoria poetry reading as "the woman who keeps me in the manner to

which I have become accustomed." He was wearing a raincoat and a toque.

We call Purdy ours — he wasn't really. The search for winter warmth brought them here. Purdy died in Sidney, but his ashes were scattered around their property in Ameliasburg, Ontario, where their famous A-Frame house is.

Across the narrow Saanich Peninsula is a noted alliance of authors who pair up like this: Susan Musgrave and Stephen Reid, Patrick Lane and Lorna Crozier.

Susan Musgrave is a poet of local nurture who in the course of publishing more than 25 books of poems and prose has cultivated an eccentric, ironic persona that is extravagantly expressed in her automobile. It is completely covered with molded plastic figures. Her most recent book was *When the World is Not Our Home: Selected Poems 1985-2000* (Thistledown, 2009).

Writing doesn't get much grittier than Stephen Reid's. His contribution to a 2005 *Book of Lists*: the toughest prisons in North America, first-hand.

Musgrave and Reid live part-time on Haida Gwaii.

Patrick Lane's first novel, *Red Dog, Red Dog*, was published in 2008 to critical acclaim. He began writing with serious intent in 1960, his website attests.

Lorna Crozier's most recent book was a memoir of Saskatchewan, *Small Beneath the Sky* (2009).

Both poets have won Governor General's Awards for Literary Excellence, and both have been chair of the writing department at the University of Victoria.

Details: *Sidney Booktown*: 9 places on Google Maps (maps.google.com).

Tanner's Books: 2436 Beacon Avenue.

Beacon Books: 2372 Beacon Avenue.

Susan Musgrave: <http://www.susanmusgrave.com/>.

Patrick Lane: <http://www.patricklane.ca/>.

Lorna Crozier: <http://www.lornacrozier.ca/>.

Stephen Reid's 10 toughest prisons in North America: http://www.macleans.ca/culture/books/article.jsp?content=20051222_140126_5452.

Goldstream

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Goldstream Provincial Park protects 477 hectares of incredibly varied terrain around the narrow defile of Goldstream River, 26 kilometres west of downtown Victoria. Goldstream is particularly famous for its fall salmon run, the most accessible on the island. (It's literally right beside Highway 1.)

Trails wind through the park's enchanting old-growth forest of mostly Douglas firs. Among the trails is one of the oldest on the island. The origi-

nal up-island trail (built in 1861) followed the upper Goldstream en route to Shawnigan Lake.

From Goldstream you can climb a trail beside the waterfall of the Niagara River to the 1886 iron trestle of the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway. The trestle is more than 80 metres above the floor of the canyon. (Watch for trains!)

Mt Finlayson, 419 m elevation, is the highest point in the Victoria area, with great views in three directions. The trail up Mt Finlayson starts near the river and is a locals' favorite — challenging, with some steep bits and some scrambling over smooth rock. The west face has dangerous cliffs.

The park's main attraction is undoubtedly the annual run of Chum salmon in Goldstream River. The fish spawn near the mouth of the little river starting in October. It is the stage for a poignant drama of nature.

Set amid a coniferous forest with large western redcedar trees, the riparian zone is a busy place in the fall. The fish make their way upstream in search of gravel, where they mate in that strange no-contact way, females and males depositing in turn their eggs and milt. Their mottled remains become objects of competition among gulls and eagles and myriad other feeders — the food chain is wide here.

Viewing the pageant of death and new life, one contemplates the gift of the migrating salmon. This run is repeated in countless rivers, some far from tidewater, for six oceangoing species of Pacific salmon.

A nature house, busy on fall weekends and holidays, sits just above the estuary at the head of Finlayson Arm. On the front porch, kids paint fresh salmon carcasses and press sheets of paper over them to imprint the coloured contours of the fish.

This highly scenic spot overlooks, to the north, one of Victoria's most interesting landscapes, across the estuary and down the narrow, steep-walled fjord.

Goldstream Park has one of the island's most popular campgrounds.

Details: *Goldstream Provincial Park:* <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/goldstream/>.

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East Sooke and Race Rocks

Peninsular East Sooke is a rural enclave with one tiny through-road and some amazing dead-ends. East Sooke Park, a 1,434-hectare slice of it, provides a taste of the wild west coast within an hour of downtown Victoria.

The rugged 10-kilometre coast trail between the Aylard Farm and Pike Pt is a full day's hike one-way. The coast is rocky and highly scenic, with windswept forests of pine, fir, spruce and cedar. From many prominences there are spectacular views across the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

The network of interior trails is notable for climbs up Mount Maguire

and Babbington Hill. They're best begun at Anderson Cove.

For briefer excursions, the Aylard Farm area is full of pleasures. The short walk to Creyke Pt. leads to exhilarating views across Becher Bay. The waterfront petroglyphs at Alldridge Point is less than half an hour one-way. There's a 20-million-year-old beach of conglomerate. The lookout at Beechey Head is less than an hour.

Race Rocks is a tiny islet and the surrounding reefs 1.5 km southeast of Christopher Point. It is the southernmost point in British Columbia. The Race Rocks light has warned ships off the rocks since 1860 — it came into service days after the Fisgard light.

Race Rocks' high-current channels support abundant sea-life that is attractive to feeding sea mammals. Two species of sea lions gather by the hundreds on the rocks in winter. Enormous sea elephants breed there. Orcas often visit in summer. It's an internationally known marine biology research site.

Protected as an ecological reserve since 1980, and a marine protected area besides, Race Rocks is under the watchful eye of Pearson College, a prestigious United World College in nearby Pedder Bay.

Marine science students at Pearson are the volunteer wardens of the ecological reserve. They study changes in the ecosystem and run an experimental installation that uses current to generate electricity. They keep a detailed website chronicling their interventions.

The college employs the lightkeepers. Try to land without a permit and you will quickly be shoo'd away. No permit? You can watch and listen to the wildlife at Race Rocks real-time through a cam on the college website.

Pearson College sponsors occasional field trips to the reserve, which I highly recommend. It's an elemental place, and the advanced work of the high-school diver-researchers is amazing.

Details: *East Sooke is accessible via Gillespie Rd, off the Sooke Rd (Highway 14) or by East Sooke Rd, of Rocky Point Rd, Metchosin.*

East Sooke Regional Park: <http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks/eastsooke/>.

Main points of access: Aylard Farm, end of Becher Bay Rd; Anderson Cove and Pike Rd, both on E Sooke Rd.

Pearson College Race Rocks website: <http://www.racerocks.com/>.

Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific is off Rocky Point Rd in Metchosin: <http://www.pearsoncollege.ca/>. Casual visitors are welcome to explore the 30-ha waterfront campus of the 2-year full-scholarship baccalaureate preparatory school.

Sooke Harbour House

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The dining room of this country inn continues to appear on lists of Canada's best restaurants. For some it is the very fountainhead of slow food culture on the island. Sooke Harbour House is also a destination

whose centerpiece is a charming old house with the bounties of nature at the door, spectacularly located on Juan de Fuca Strait, just where the west coast begins to catch the flavour of the open Pacific.

Sooke Harbour House's gardens and farm grow every possible edible thing for use in the kitchen. After all, this is the only area in Canada where extremely high-quality ingredients are available year 'round. The restaurant serves a greater variety of foods than most, yet the menu is completely a reflection of the area — indeed, it has helped to revive local, independent agriculture. Everything is served in season.

The emphasis on fresh, local, organic foods may be commonplace now. In the 1980s, however, Sooke Harbour House was a pioneer. This culinary Mecca began so modestly, cooking was actually an afterthought.

Sinclair Philip grew up in Alberta and spent summers with his parents on the east side of Vancouver Island. Usually they stayed at the Oyster River Cottages, south of Campbell River. They rented little fishing boats and cooked the catch in the cottage. Frederique Philip is from France. They met at a party in Nice when Sinclair was living in France. Both had trained as economists.

When they evolved the idea of a waterfront resort, the Philips looked for the kind of place Sinclair remembered. On the east side of the island there was no such place — that they could afford. The west coast was much less visited. And Sooke Harbour House was in their range.

The place has had that name since 1929. They re-opened it in 1979 on a shoestring, serving food to make ends meet. The southern exposure made it a good place for year-round business. They began to attract visitors from Vancouver and Seattle. Many wanted lighter, healthier food. The cuisine became more elaborate and sophisticated.

As the cachet of the west coast grew, so did the reputation of Sooke Harbour House. Several additions and renovations later, it is a 28-room luxury resort with meeting rooms and a spa. An art gallery shows the work of Vancouver Island artists.

Reservations are a must for dinner. The menu changes every day. If you want to sample the cuisine and ambience, try the three-course special dinner (\$45). Lunch is served on Sundays.

Be sure to leave time for a walk to the end of Whiffen Spit to absorb the views of Sooke Harbour, East Sooke and the straits.

Details: *Sooke Harbour House, 1528 Whiffen Spit Rd, Sooke, is a 45-60-minute drive from Victoria; 1-800-889-9688, (250) 642-3421; sookeharbourhouse.com.*

The Sooke River is the second largest river on southern Vancouver Island, draining an area of nearly 28,000 hectares west of Victoria. A lot of water hits

the bluish rocks of the Sooke Hills. The cool, clear water tumbles through fluted galleries, falls into black pools and flattens into ponds with gravelly beaches.

These are the famous Sooke Potholes that have delighted generations of swimmers. As a kid, my favorite place in the world was the Potholes. On a hot day, watch them fill up with grateful swimmers of all ages.

Sooke Potholes Regional Park protects an 8.5-kilometre-long stretch of the river. There's pay parking and some facilities. A gorgeous 65-site campground fronts the river at the north end of the park. Operated seasonally by the Land Conservancy of BC (TLC), it has many reservable sites.

The real story here is about the endlessly beautiful rock formations. It looks like the river must have been carving the hard, hard rock for millions of years. In fact, geologists believe the potholes were formed about 15,000 years ago.

The rock itself is basalt and has been dated to between 55.8 and 33.9 million years ago. It began on the ocean floor, where molten magma squirts or oozes out and instantly solidifies. It built up into seamounts and islands, becoming part of what geologists call the Metchosin Igneous Complex.

Now the story gets interesting. Earth's crust comprises a few big continent-sized plates and many small terranes that float on a molten mantle and move around, pushed by seafloor spreading — so goes the theory of plate tectonics.

Seafloor spreading pushed the Crescent Terrane, bearing those basalts, northward. The leading edge of the terrane apparently subducted — got pushed under — older rock. Eventually it ground to a halt. Behind it, however, seafloor spreading seems to have continued to push the terrane north. The basalts of the Metchosin Igneous Complex had only one way to go — up. They were uplifted.

A mere 15,000 years ago, kilometer-high ice blanketed most of the island, but when it began to disappear, meltwater poured out of the hollowing glacier. Torrents of water — full of boulders, rocks, gravel, sand — descended in a thundering vortex, scraping and scouring away at the rock, creating one of the island's most enchanting landscapes.

Details: *Information, map, directions to Sooke Potholes Regional Park: www.crd.bc.ca/parks. For information about the Sooke Potholes campground and to make reservations through TLC: blog.conservancy.bc.ca/ecotourism.*

Geological History of Vancouver Island: an overview with links to more detailed information: <http://www.crd.bc.ca/watersheds/protection/geology-processes/geologicalhistoryVI.htm>.

Leechtown

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Leechtown is the western terminus of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail — a mixture of forest, brush and open meadow at the juncture of

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the Sooke and Leech rivers. There's not much to see — an old plaque, a display. What's the deal? It's hard to believe now, but there once was a town or two here.

Before European settlement, the area was crossed by trails. The T'Sou-ke First Nation traveled on them between Sooke, Saanich and Cowichan.

In 1864 a party of 10 explorers, plus two guide-hunters and a few hangers-on, crisscrossed the island, surveying its natural resources and noting their use by indigenous peoples. The expedition's instructions, however, were to find mineral bodies. A prize of £1,000 had been put up for "the discovery of paying gold fields."

Leader Robert Brown related how "on 26th July, the whole party arrived, having, as I expected, found gold on a tributary of Sooke river, which we named Leech river, and which no white man . . . had previously reached."

The reports caused a sensation in Victoria. A thousand would-be miners rushed into the Sooke Hills. Leechtown quickly had stores, hotels and saloons. The Leech did not live up to high hopes, and the rush petered out within a year — although by 1876, it was estimated, \$100,000 worth of gold had been recovered. Any time the price of gold rises, prospectors still turn out.

Today, hardly a trace survives of Leechtown, Boulder City, Kennedy Flats or Thompsons Landing.

After mining came logging. In the 1920s the Victoria-Cowichan railway line opened the area's forests. Kapoor Lumber, owned by Kapoor Singh Siddoo and Mayo Singh, Sikh immigrants, built an Indo-Canadian forest empire that included the area. The Cameron Lumber Company built a sawmill near Leechtown. Workers' families moved into the little settlement.

That was long ago. As happens around the island, logging has given way to recreation.

In 1999, the Capital Regional District acquired 1,300 hectares of Kapoor lands through a land swap. The purpose was to provide a security buffer around the reservoir where Victoria gets most of its drinking water.

The Kapoor family also donated 13 hectares of land at Leechtown, between the railbed and the Sooke River, for a CRD park.

Bill Irvine's father worked as a carpenter at Kapoor Lumber in the 20s and he has a flickr photostream with photos and detailed notes of his regular visits as well as a walking blog. He considers Leechtown "a marvelous place." He always tries to get down to the Deep Pool at the confluence of the Sooke and Leech rivers. You should too.

Details: *Robert Brown's 28-page narrative, Vancouver Island: Exploration, 1864 can be read on Google Books (books.google.ca).*

Bill Irvine's photostream: www.flickr.com/photos/wjjs21; and his blog: [wjiwalks.blogspot.com](http://www.wjiwalks.blogspot.com).

CRD Kapoor park reserve: <http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks/reserves/kapoor.htm>.