

Legislate some time off this weekend in the capital

VICTORIA: Whale watching, outdoor symphonies part of the fun

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SPECIAL TO THE PROVINCE

Vancouver can lay claim to many honours and distinctions, but one thing it can't claim to be is the capital city of beautiful British Columbia.

That title firmly belongs to the city of Victoria. When you see all that the city has to offer, it's not hard to see why. It's incredibly convenient that a tourist paradise such as this is a ferry ride away.

There are plenty of places to stay in Victoria, but one of the highest-rated is the Magnolia Hotel and Spa, which is minutes from downtown. Winner of the 2015 Travellers Choice award on TripAdvisor.com, this luxurious hotel has received rave reviews for its service, value and cleanliness.

Once you've arrived and settled in, what's there to do?

Some must-see attractions in Victoria include:

■ **Royal B.C. Museum:** One of the best museums in the country and the top of many "to-do" lists for vis-

itors, the wildly popular Gold Rush! exhibition is on now until October. This fascinating attraction brings El Dorado to B.C. through interactive displays, rare artifacts and the largest existing gold nugget ever found in the province.

■ **Harbour Ferry Cruises:** Want to check out more of Victoria's splendour from the water? Book a ferry tour departing from the Causeway Marina. These 45-minute non-stop guided tours feature historic landmarks like the Parliament Buildings and sacred territories of the First Nations people.

■ **The Harbour Ferry Ballet** — This year marks the 25th anniversary of the crowd-pleasing water ballet performed by five harbour ferries. Shows are every Saturday at 10:45 a.m. at the Steamship Terminal at the Inner Harbour.

■ **Eagle Wing Whale Watching:** If you want to enjoy something about B.C. very few people in the world get to experience, you should book a whale-watching trip with Eagle

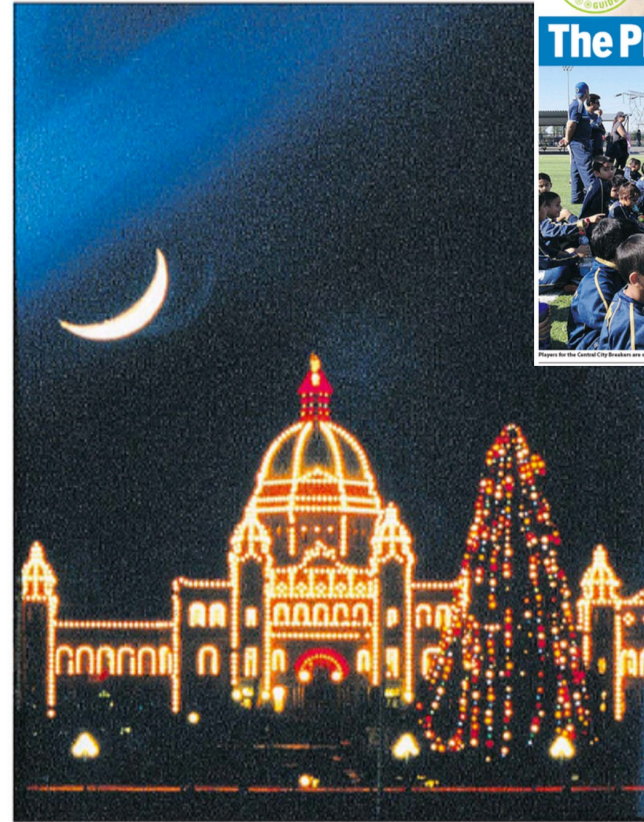
Wing Tours. Voted No. 1 on Trip Advisor every year since 2007 with guaranteed sightings, odds of you coming away from this trip without having watched a whale or two are extremely low.

■ **Parliament Buildings:** Obviously, a stop in our capital wouldn't be complete without taking in the splendour of Belleville Street.

■ **Miniature World** — Definitely more than meets the eye, this engaging collection of miniatures will blow you away with the amount of meticulous detail of futuristic space worlds, knight-patrolled Camelot and the Great Canadian Railway. This truly is the greatest little show on Earth.

Making the trip this weekend has its bonuses, none more enjoyable than the Victoria Symphony Splash on Aug. 2.

From 1 to 10 p.m., this spectacular event sees the Inner Harbour transformed into an outdoor concert stage, which makes this the largest annual outdoor symphony event in Canada (take that, Moncton!).



A trip to Victoria wouldn't be right without visiting the Parliament Buildings. While you're there, head across the street to the harbour for a whale-watching tour. DEBRA CUMMINGS/CALGARY HERALD FILES



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MAGNOLIA HOTEL & SPA
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