

## Kick leaves, kick back and kick up your heels

### Victoria: Fall getaway destination

BY JANE MUNDY, SPECIAL TO THE SUN    OCTOBER 8, 2015



Victoria has lots to offer visitors in autumn, from the annual Zombie Walk, top, to scenic walks to view the fall colours.

Savvy travellers prefer autumn. Summer crowds have gone, hotel rates have dropped and the temperature puts a spring in your step. Restaurants showcase the local harvest and vibrant festivals abound. And there's the glorious colours of nature. Sure, sounds like most cities. But in Victoria you can pack many experiences into a few days — without driving — and come home relaxed.

Autumn is traditionally seen as a time of change and reflection and one of the best ways to see this season is by appreciating the changing colours of trees. Victoria has some of the best spots for leaf viewing. Sure it's touristy, but when did you last visit Butchart Gardens? The Japanese Garden in particular, featuring gold and crimson maples, is gorgeous. Go leaf-kicking through oak and maple leaves in Beacon Hill Park. Take a crisp morning stroll along the loop: Start at the Inner Harbour, wind around James Bay to Dallas Road and the breakwater, take a left on Cook Street and stop for a pumpkin latte at the Mocha House in Cook Street Village. Short-cut back through Beacon Hill Park or keep going along Cook to Fort Street and culinary stores (London Chef, The Little Cheese Shop, Choux Choux Charcuterie).

'Tis the season to hunker down with a few hefty novels. Russell's Books on Fort Street is so chock-a-block with both new and used and some rare books that the family opened another store on View Street. Poke around Munro's Books (also family-run) and check out its terrific selection of Canadiana.

Rest your weary tootsies with a foot massage at Silk Road Tea — the spa is downstairs — before a brisk stroll to Abkhazi Garden and afternoon tea.

Freshly baked scones are lovely served with tea from — you guessed it, Silk Road.

What's more inviting than a crackling fire? The gorgeous 1930s Tudor-style Abigail's Hotel has wood-burning fireplaces in their drawing rooms and some guest rooms. **The Magnolia Hotel's** lobby is so inviting with its "sink-into" chairs around the fireplace. Drop your shopping bags and kick back with a Cafe Catalano cocktail before enjoying the season's harvest at Ten Acres Bistro (produce, eggs and meat come from their farm in Saanich). And Nourish recently opened its second location in the Inner Harbour. They too have a direct connection with local producers and farmers. Side up to their bone broth bar and order a mug of bone broth chai made with chai tea and chicken broth — really.

Kick up your heels at the BC Cider Week party at Todd Creek Cidery (Oct. 24) and Halloween Party, complete with a pig roast and ciders on tap. Given the number of costume stores in Victoria, locals love dressing up. Gear up for Halloween or the annual Zombie Walk (Oct. 17) at The Patch on Yates Street, vintage and thrift shops on Lower Johnson, affectionately called LoJo, and a huge Value Village on Store Street. Speaking of all things zombie, Ross Bay Cemetery is even more fascinating on a Sunday afternoon walking history tour.