



WEST COAST

Vancouver Island three ways

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Tradition with an edge: Victoria

Once considered Canada's retirement capital, today's Victoria thrums with entrepreneurial energy.

Long-vacant heritage buildings now play home to condos, tech startups, trendy cocktail and tapas bars and boutiques full of locally-made jewellery and sundries, and Canadian and international designer clothes. If you've stereotyped Victoria as sleepy and staid, you're in for a surprise.

Getting there: Victoria is a 1 1/2-hour ferry ride from Vancouver (Swartz Bay ferry terminal is about 30 minutes from downtown), or you can go from harbour to harbour in 35 minutes by seaplane. Victoria is also served by an international airport, 25 kilometres north of the city.

What to do: Stroll the shops along Yates and Johnson streets. These once-gritty blocks are now lined with airy boutiques filled with made-on-the-island goods. When you're done, head east along Fort Street, chock-a-block with foodie retailers, from [Crust Bakery](#) to [Choux Choux Charcuterie](#).

After you've worked up a thirst, hit Victoria's unofficial cocktail trail. Victoria was light years ahead of much of Canada when it came to shifting Canadians' beverage palates from cheap drinks to thoughtful, high-quality cocktails.

Though many cities have caught up, Victoria's bartenders continue to lead on the booze front, using locally distilled liquors, bitters and other ingredients. Top bars to try include [Clive's Classic Lounge](#), [Veneto](#) and [Little Jumbo](#).

Where to stay: Two blocks from Victoria's Inner Harbour, [Magnolia Hotel](#) is an elegant boutique property with a terrific onsite spa.

Be sure to take advantage of the complimentary bikes and Curated Trails program, which offers themed self-guided cycling and foot tours of gems around town. From \$209 a night.