



The Inner Harbour Boardwalk at night in Victoria is a great place for a walk, especially for a couple looking to spend some quality time together. — DESTINATION GREATER VICTORIA

A romantic weekend in Victoria

Bianca Bujan suggests how you can surprise your sweetheart with a romantic weekend getaway to B.C.'s capital

SPLURGE ON A SEAPLANE

Start with a seaplane flight with Harbour Air, from Vancouver's Coal Harbour waterfront, to the Inner Harbour of downtown Victoria. It takes less than 40 minutes.

BOOK A BED, BUBBLES & BRUNCH PACKAGE

There's something special about boutique hotels that are locally owned and managed, and the Magnolia Hotel & Spa — with its 64 guest rooms, personalized services, and proximity to the picturesque harbour, is the ideal setting. From the classic exterior that nods to the historic architecture found around town, to the European-inspired room decor featuring deep-soaker tubs, textured walls, thick and elegant carpets and drapes, and floor-to-ceiling windows, the hotel oozes with old-world charm.

It is within walking distance to more than 20 restaurants, as well as Victoria's must-see museums, local boutiques, and lots of walking and bike trails. No need to bring your own bike as the Magnolia provides complementary pedal bikes.

Locally curated trail and journey maps are guide guests to neighbourhood gems, and full-day outdoor adventures. Themes range from food-focused, such as the Culinary Trailblazers, Tea-rific Trail, and Tapa Trail maps, to the more activity-focused routes such as the Beautiful Boutiques Trail, the Rainy Day Trail, the Bike Trail, and the perfectly-suited-for-sweethearts Best Places for Romance trail.

Just in time for Valentine's Day, the Magnolia Hotel has launched a Bed, Bubbles & Brunch package, which includes a stay in a spacious room, a sparkling bottle of

bubbles on ice upon arrival, bubble bath soap (with a bubble whisk for bigger bubbles!) to enjoy in your private in-room deep soaker tub, and brunch for two in the award-winning Courtney Room restaurant, located right in the hotel.

HIGH TEA FOR TWO

Skip the more traditional tea rooms and head to the Venus Sophia Tea Room & Vegetarian Eatery, in the centre of Chinatown. Owned and run by a local couple who are passionate about combining wholesome, homemade food with their wide selection of signature loose leaf teas to create the perfect shabby-chic tea spot, Venus Sophia offers a beautiful blend of laid-back and lavish lunch options.

For the signature afternoon tea, a mix of mouth-watering savoury and sweet bites are presented on a

three-tier tray, each item equally as decadent. When available, the homemade Egyptian Date Cake (created using a recipe belonging to the owner's aunt) will satisfy your sweet tooth, as well as the perfectly prepared orange zest and white chocolate scones.

Try the finger sandwich made up of Swiss Raclette and pickled veggies, as well as the fresh-baked quiche comprised of zucchini, butter glazed shallots, and feta.

Be sure to take a stroll through Chinatown's famed Fan Tan Alley, located adjacent to the tea shop, where you can pick up some Canadian-made keepsakes before heading back to your hotel.

SAMPLE A FLIGHT OF CRAFT BEERS

For those who enjoy a different kind of brewed beverage, stop at Phillips Brewing &

Malting Co. — a great place to sip on a flight of beer and nosh on a freshly baked soft pretzel while chilling with your partner.

Not only is this colourful craft beer tasting room a fun local hangout, offering 16 craft brews on tap, and a lineup of small-batch-distilled, but this hot spot has also put Canada on the malting map, with the country's only barley malting plant, located on site.

Ask one of the bartenders to fill you in on the history of the brewery as they fill up your glass — you may be surprised to learn how this beer business evolved from a basement startup to a thriving success.

Be sure to add the Black Magic Dark Ale — a dark, smooth, and creamy beer — and the Tiger Shark Citra Pale Ale — a zesty tropical treat — to your list of beer flight samples.

DINNER

Victoria's newest dining destination, The Courtney Room, provides the perfect backdrop for a romantic meal. Book a table in the upstairs fine-dining area for a quiet rendezvous in a chic French bistro setting that offers a wide selection of fine wines (look for the glassed-in wine room), and award-winning cuisine (recently recognized as the #10 Best New Restaurant in Canada in the 2018 Best New Restaurant Awards). Start with a side of the signature Potatoes Courtney, a rich appetizer of potatoes fried in duck fat with a house-made onion dip. The main menu offers a variety of fresh seafood, and house dry-aged meats.

Try the beef tenderloin oscar — a buttery steak topped with fresh Dungeness crab, whipped-Béarnaise sauce, and pomme purée with wilted greens.

CANUCKS: Host team tames Flames as wild night ends in shootout win **PAGES**

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