


EVERETT POTTER'S TRAVEL REPORT

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A Whirlwind Tour of Vancouver

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Vancouver from Stanley Park. Credit Bart Beeson.

By Bart Beeson

It's hard not to love the city of Vancouver, with its dramatic mountain backdrop, in-town beaches and funky neighborhoods. While I have been to the city several times, I still had quite a few things on my

Vancouver to-do list, so on a recent visit I set out to check them off. With only one full day to spend in the city, I had to make every minute count.

Knowing I had a lot of activity ahead of me, I wanted a big breakfast, and the buffet at the **Fairmont Hotel Vancouver's Notch 8** was a great way to start the day. I filled up on granola, fresh fruit and a pastry (or two) and then set out for a walk down Robson Street, known as the city's premier shopping street. I window-shopped my way down to Spokes Bicycle Rentals, where they outfitted me with a hybrid bike, lock and helmet and directed me to the nearby Stanley Park.

Exploring Stanley Park

Stanley Park is a beautiful 400-acre park on the northwestern edge of Vancouver that features extensive woodlands, trails, beaches and spectacular views. While I had heard a ride around the park's seawall was a great experience, I had never had time to do it on previous trips; I wasn't disappointed. I biked through the blooming cherry blossom trees in Devonian Harbour Park, and made my way along the seawall, stopping to take in the Vancouver skyline, an impressive totem pole display, the Lion's gate bridge, and the famous 'Girl in a Wetsuit' sculpture perched on a rock offshore. I completed the roughly 10-mile ride in a little over an hour, stopping frequently to take pictures.

Girl in a wetsuit. Credit Bart Beeson

My next stop was the Vancouver Aquarium, located within Stanley Park, where I arrived just in time to duck inside before some heavy rain started. While not as big as some of the U.S. aquariums I've visited, the Vancouver aquarium has a great mix of indoor and outdoor exhibits. I took some time to take in a visually-stunning jellyfish display, watch the sea otters frolic around their enclosure, and observe some brilliantly colored birds in the Amazon exhibit.

Flying over Canada and taking in a Chinese garden

After returning my bike, I took a relaxing half-hour long stroll along the waterfront facing Coal Harbor, passing through Harbour Green Park and by the Vancouver Convention Center. I arrived at the FlyOver Canada theater, located within the Canada Place facility, just in time to catch the next show – a virtual flight ride over Canada. I buckled myself into the seat, felt the chair start to move, and was soon 'flying' over Canada – watching panoramic images of the Canadian countryside pass by while the my seat moved along with motion of the camera. The experience, complete with special effects like wind and mist, was realistic enough to make my body feel like I was really flying – I even got a small dose of vertigo as we flew over a deep canyon. The 8-minute film really gives you an appreciation of the grandeur and diversity of the Canadian landscape.

From the theater I made the roughly 20 minute walk along West Pender Street to the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Garden in Chinatown. Once again my timing was fortuitous, as I arrived just as a guided tour was starting. The garden, constructed in 1985-86 and named for a nationalist Chinese leader, contains the first full-sized classic Chinese garden built outside of China. Our tour guide walked us through the exquisite garden, pointing out subtle design and architectural features that I surely would have missed on my own, as well as the significance of the different plants, trees and rocks used throughout. The garden was constructed as it would have been during the Ming Dynasty, using the same building techniques, and with materials shipped over from China. My favorite detail was that the main path was built to zigzag through the garden, as evil spirits were said to only be able to follow straight lines.

Gastown, artworks and a great meal

Emily Carr Skidegate Beaver Pole, 1941-2 oil on canvas. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust
 Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery

After the hour-long tour I headed down to Water Street to stroll through Gastown, Vancouver's oldest neighborhood, joining the crowd at the iconic Gastown steam clock to wait for it to whistle on the quarter hour. While I had planned to head straight back to my hotel, I realized the Vancouver Art Gallery

was right on my way, so decided to pop in. The gallery is housed in a beautiful old building, a 1900s-era neoclassical structure designed by the same architect as the parliament buildings in Victoria, B.C., Francis Rattenbury. The gallery has a permanent collection of more than 10,000 artworks, including an impressive collection of Emily Carr works, featuring beautiful paintings of Canada's coastal forests.

After finally making it back to the Fairmont, I was ready to get off my feet for a bit. After a rest and a shower, and having worked up a huge appetite with all that walking, I was ready for dinner and a big Italian meal sounded perfect. So I headed to CinCin Ristorante on Robson Street. CinCin was recently named the city's best Italian restaurant by Vancouver Magazine, and the food and wine did not disappoint. I ordered a whole branzino fish, cooked on their wood-fired grill and served with chard and fingerling potatoes — it was the best meal I'd had in a while.

With a belly full of fish and a couple glasses of red wine I was exhausted, so I headed back to the hotel, trying to keep my eyes open long enough to make it to my bed. While I wished I had more time to spend in Vancouver, I went to sleep feeling pretty good about fully making the most of my day there.

Bart Beeson is a Burlington, Vermont-based freelance travel writer and photographer. He is a regular contributor to Travel Weekly, and has published in The Washington Post, Foreign Policy and other media outlets. When he's not travelling, Bart can be found hiking with his dog Kesey or spending time at his family's New Hampshire lake house.



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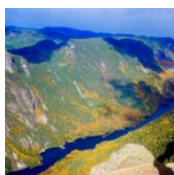
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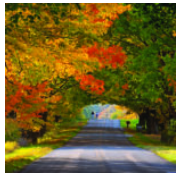
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Great information, thank you for sharing !



Arjun Rijal

on Nocs Are High-Design Binoculars That Enhance The Outdoor Experience

As a homebound travel enthusiast, I thoroughly enjoyed this. Though I'm familiar with Peter Mayle and Donna Leon, I love the idea of reading fiction set in Portugal, and Paris...



Cathy Overly

on Satisfying Wanderlust in the Time of Covid-19

I have been a big fan of Deb's work for many years. These words are true inspiration for those of us who have, unfortunately, taken pre-pandemic travel for granted. Especially...



Carmine Angeloni

on Satisfying Wanderlust in the Time of Covid-19

For years friends have told us that we should go to New Zealand because it has everything we like-- lakes, waterfalls, jungles as well as clean cities and friendly people. I...



Susan Alcorn

on Letter to My Daughter Whom I Left Behind

Dear Effin and family, Thanks for sharing your story. I love New Zealand! It has been many years since my visit, but hope to be back one of these years....



Brigitta

on Letter to My Daughter Whom I Left Behind

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