



VICTORIA

From refined to relaxed and festive experiences, the capital city delights

BY JANE MUNDY



SIP & TASTE

Take your place on this iconic harbourfront hotel's Veranda and savour a 1908 cocktail, named after the year the venerable **Fairmont Empress Hotel** opened: it's made with vodka infused with the Empress's own tea blend. Enclosed by ivy-covered gothic arches, the patio is a perfect place to watch people strolling along the Inner Harbour. Linger over the seafood tower or local oyster tasting. If it gets chilly, you'll get wrapped in blankets – a service fit for royalty.

Grab a stool to rub shoulders with the locals and ask your knowledgeable server at **Stage Wine Bar** in Fernwood (a short drive from downtown) to suggest what wine to order with which charcuterie and cheese. Tables of four and more keep the small shared

plates coming, or try dishes like gnocchi and octopus. If you like theatre, you'll be glad to know the Belfry is just next door.

1307 Gladstone Ave.
250-388-4222
stagewinebar.com

Get your tiki fix and teeny umbrella at **North 48**, an upscale diner serving classic Mai Tai plus its own cocktail inventions like Marcs Mistake with wheat ale from local Driftwood Brewery. Tuck into hearty food like chicken and waffles, or get the sinful mac and cheese. If it's Tuesday, tiki drinks are just \$5.

1005 Langley St.
250-381-2428
northfortyeight.com

Ready for breakfast? **John's Place** is legendary for its Belgian waffles and eggs benny. Arrive early to avoid the lineup.

723 Pandora Ave.
250-389-0711

Johnsplace.ca
Blue Fox Café spices up mornings with quesadillas, huevos rancheros and other Latin fare.

919 Fort Street
250-380-1683
thebluefoxcafe.com
It's breakfast all day at **Jam Café.**

542 Herald Street
778-440-4489
jamcafevictoria.com
Vegans and carnivores alike love "Karin's

Brunch" at **Shine Café.**
1548 Fort St.
250-595-2133
shinecafe.ca

Stroll over to **Fisherman's Wharf** in James Bay for the Fish Store's freshest fish and chips and take home a salmon chowder – yowzah!



Oyster aficionados in the know go between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. for "buck a shuck." And for an extra fiver, you can buy a mess of herring to feed the harbour seals – kids and adults alike love it.

Both vegetarians and carnivores are repeat customers at **Ulla**, a little eatery that brings sophistication and flair to Chinatown. Local and organic products, from silken tofu with chickpea tempeh to 40-day dry-aged striploin, are expertly prepared and beautifully presented. With only 38 seats, reservations are recommended.

509 Fisgard Street
250-590-8795
ulla.ca

ENJOY

Rent a hybrid bike from Cycle BC Rentals and cruise the **Galloping Goose Trail**, named for a 1920s rail-turned-trail. Starting at the Johnson Street blue bridge and stretching 55 kilometres (33 miles) west, you'll bike through urban and rural landscapes, past farms and creeks, rocky coves and lakes. You can bus back from Sooke via Hwy. 61 from Victoria, but it's best to cycle back and celebrate with a cold beer down the street at **Swans Brew Pub.**

685 Humboldt Street
250-380-2453
cyclebc.ca
gallopinggoosetrail.com

Victoria's Chinatown, the oldest in Canada, is also home to **Fan Tan Alley** (just five feet wide and possibly the world's narrowest street).

Trendy and tiny stores selling Asian wares and vintage clothes have replaced opium dens and gambling houses. Need a shopping break?



Pop into adorable **Venus Sophia** (below) for afternoon tea.

540 Fisgard Street
250-590-3953
venusophia.com

Gals' getaway? Or maybe a well-deserved massage after cycling the trail? Whatever the reason, unwind at **The Spa Magnolia**, which offers two-, three- and four-hour treatments in gorgeous rooms with high windows.

625 Courtney Street
250-920-7721
spamagnolia.com

Sip and spa at the Zen-like **Silk Road Aroma-therapy Spa** downstairs from **Silk Road Teas** – and stock up on teas for home.

1624 Government Street
250-704-2688
silkroadteastore.com/spa

While most cities no longer have independent bookstores, **Munro's Books** celebrated its 50th anniversary last year.

1108 Government Street
250-382-2464
munrobooks.com

If you can't find the right book here, Sidney's **Beacon Books**, spread over 350 square metres, is Canada's answer to Portland's Powell's Books.

2372 Beacon Avenue
250-655-4447
sidneybooktown.ca