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Dawson deals something for everyone

JANE MUNDY

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Local Travel





The "Kissing Buildings", built in 1901, lean against each other. Jane Mundy

At first glance, there doesn't seem to be much happening in this Yukon town. But the more I found out about Dawson City, the quirkier it got. Start at the Information Centre on Front Street. The best way to discover

Knowledgeable and fun Parks Board guides in costume tour you along these dirt roads flanked by clapboard shacks and frontier buildings—like you've walked onto an old Western film set. And it's is a great introduction to Gold Rush history. Dawson never had the desire to pave its streets, adding to the frontier feel.

Let's start with the quirky incident that recently made headlines—the case of the stolen toe. This real frostbitten human toe is the key ingredient in the Sourtoe cocktail, which bobs in a glass of Yukon Jack whisky. People line up at Downtown Hotel's saloon bar, hoping to join the Sourtoe Cocktail Club. "You can drink it fast, you can drink it slow – but the lips have gotta touch the toe," to claim bragging rights. That's Capt. Dick Stevenson's rule as it appears in "The Saga of the Sour Toe." Anyway, the RCMP reported that the pickled toe had been returned to its rightful owner in "good condition", along with an apology note.



Downtown Dawson City.

Don't confuse sourtoe with sourdough, the latter being an affectionate term for someone who survived a Yukon winter. Apparently, it's derived from people who stored sourdough starters above their wood stoves. The opposite of sourdough is Cheechako or newcomer. It's also the name of a terrific bakery in Dawson. The Alchemy Café is a long start to the day great food, superb coffee and really slow service. Everything is larger than life here, especially meals served at Klondike Kate's. Try the smoked Arctic char quesadilla and Kate's Tin Roof Pie. I don't have far to waddle home — my little cabin is next door, complete with microwave and fridge.

Cancan dancers high-kick on stage while you rub shoulders with Lady Luck and play blackjack, roulette, and Texas Hold'em poker before heading to former brothel Bombay Peggy's, a hotel that bears the name of its former madam. And they serve a wicked martini. Dawson "City" seems rather presumptuous for a population of under

Night Life is in full swing at Diamond Tooth Gerties Gambling Hall.

1500, but summertime, Dawson's dealt a full house. The locals don't need much sleep, as if the near-constant daylight pumps them with energy. It's contagious, and there's plenty to do besides "...whooping it up in the Malamute saloon; The kid that handles the music-box was hitting a jag-time tune..." Robert Service went on to write, "It was a Saturday night and from the various bars I heard sounds of revelry..." "Our Bob came back to Dawson in 1908, and worked at the bank," says

our guide Sue Taylor at the Robert Service Museum. Dressed in period

costume, Taylor recites "Spell of the Yukon" and tells us how the Yukon's bard liked to sit at the back of the bar and hear miners' stories, which he turned into classic ballads, like "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" and "The Cremation of Sam McGee." It's hard to imagine that three famous writers lived in tiny Dawson City—although there were 40,000 goldseekers here in 1896-and all on the unpaved 8th Avenue, nicknamed Writers Row.



London memorabilia are books in several languages." People drop off his books from all over, in Japanese, Dutch, Polish. This copy of Call of the Wild was mailed from Slovenia," says Taylor. You must get out of town. The best view of Dawson and the surrounding area is from the top of The Dome, a hill above the town. Do a spot of

"panning", maybe at Claim 33 and if Lady Luck is still with you, take

home a glitter of gold dust worth a fistful of dollars.

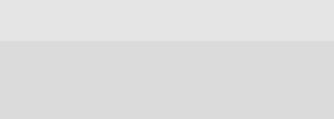
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1920 to 1937. And just steps away is Jack London's log cabin. Amongst

For more information, including walking tours, upcoming festivals and events, visit www.travelyukon.com

The writer was a guest of Tourism Yukon. No one from Tourism Yukon

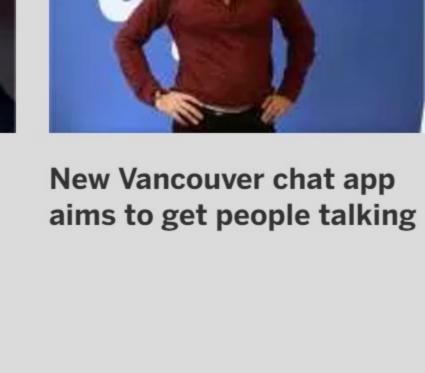
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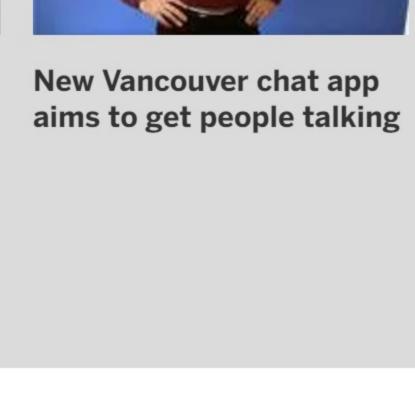
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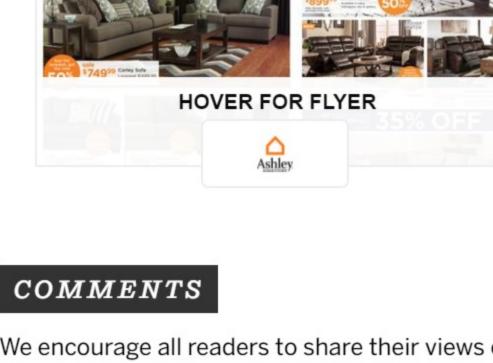






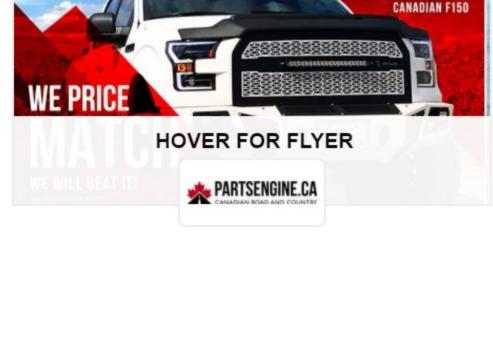
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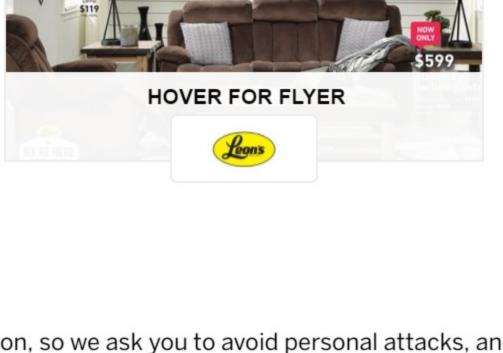
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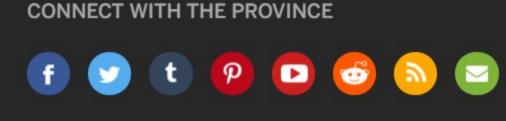
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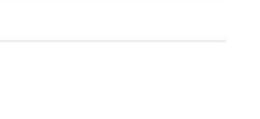
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