



## ARTICLES

### Valentining In Victoria

By Jane Cassie

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Is an Olympic event your ideal Valentine venue - or is it going to interfere with this day of love? If romance, in your perfect world, doesn't include skating rinks, ski slopes or a swarm of spectators, escape the hectic pace and head over to the Island. Victoria offers many award-winning opportunities. You may not go home with a medal, but you'll definitely earn a few brownie points. Here are half a dozen ways you can spoil your sweetheart this month and beyond:



#### Tea For Two

Valentining in Victoria wouldn't be complete without sharing "a spot of tea." Although there are cheaper tearooms in town, the Fairmont Empress has raised the most pinkies over the years. The ivy-draped icon has been honouring this British tradition since 1908 and, beneath the painted portraits of Queen Mary and King George V, you'll dine on delectable dainties, scrumptious pastries and scones topped with clotted cream. Silver service, gracious surroundings, sipping the Empress Blend from fine-bone Royal Doulton – it's a favourite that's filled with pomp and prestige, even if you have to dig a little deeper into your retirement savings.

#### A Sweetheart Harbour

Snuggle up on a horse-drawn carriage, get cozy on a pedal-powered Kabuki Kab or hoist it up a notch on a double-decker bus. There are many ways to check out Victoria's quaint inner harbour together. A pedestrian promenade that rims the waterfront offers more hand-holding moments. While strolling this walkway, you'll be entertained by a lively marina on one side and a lineup of artisans on the other. Magicians, musicians and mimes perform alongside carvers, painters and jewelry makers. In spite of the energy and bustle, this happening hub always seems to be in holiday mode – unhurried and relaxed. And when night falls, the Legislative Buildings up like Cinderella's castle, adding even more whimsical romance to the air!

#### Escape To Yesteryear

The steep turrets and chimneys of Craigdarroch Castle soar above opulent homes in the heart of Victoria. Mosey together through this baronial four-floor masterpiece and get the guided scoop on its past. Hear the story of Joan Dunsmuir, the original resident - her life saga, the family feud, their struggle for power and money. Admire the period furnishings, polished wood and stained glass. Then huff and puff your way up the 87 stairs to the top floor tower and check out the city view. But while en route, beware – Joan's unsettled spirit is still known to lurk about.

A short distance away is the home of another famous Victoria female. Although the yellow clapboard dwelling is not nearly as flamboyant, its history is just as captivating. Emily Carr was raised here with her five older sisters, but as a young woman she escaped the city confines to live, write and paint about the wilderness and natives of British Columbia. Placards throughout the modest interior convey the life of this Canadian artist and, like Joan Dunsmuir, rumour has it Emily's mother still lingers in a few of the rooms.

Anne Hathaway's Cottage may not be haunted, but it's definitely a hit for Shakespeare fans. You'll find this quaint thatched roof replica 10 minutes from the downtown core. Mirroring the birthplace of William Shakespeare's wife, it's been fashioned with antiques that date back to the 16th century. Take a guided tour, browse through the English-style village and re-fuel with a pint at the pub. Like the other historical hits, this one will definitely take you on that romantic step back in time.

#### Picnic in the park

Okay, so it may still be too chilly in February to share a patch of grass with your sweetie, but this city has so many arm-in-arm sea-viewing walks and ever-growing gardens, it'll make you woozy. Here are a few of the hottest plots.

**Abkhazi Garden** - The Fairfield district is home to this dazzling display where giant Garry Oaks canopy 100-year-old rhododendrons, sculptured azaleas and a year-round floral carpet. Learn about the story of founders, Peggy and Nicholas Abkhazi - their trials, tragedies, romance and reunion. And before heading out, take time for the tearoom. While dining on open-faced sandwiches, lemon loaf and truffles, you'll take in more of this visual overload.

**Beacon Hill Park** - Pathways lace around this 200-acre city park where playing fields host sports fans, ponds are home to bird life and benches overlook gregarious flowerbeds. The southern-most side butts up to Dallas road and an ocean-hugging walkway. Rocky ridges and sandy beaches are etched into this coastal jaunt. Take time, sit back and soak in the vista of Juan de Fuca Strait and distant Olympic peaks. And if you want to get more out of those Rockports and romance, continue the hand-in-hand action all the way to the jetty perch of Ogden Point. The saunter and seascape will surely increase your pulse rate!

When it comes to bountiful blooms, the internationally acclaimed Butchart Gardens wins the green thumb! A rose garden, sunken garden, Italian garden, oh my! Waterfalls, ponds and bridges are all linked together by undulating pathways. Even in February, when the million plants on this 50-acre property are still snoozing, you can admire the intricate designs and the finest of greenery.

#### Take Your Love Higher

West Coast Air's deHavilland floatplane rises to this occasion and, during the 30-minute tour, you and your love will be swept off your feet. As well as these valentine venues, you'll soar over patchwork farmlands, shimmering lakes, untouched forests and verdant golf greens. A strand of rocky shoreline trims this majestic land mass and is a buffer to the sapphire waves. Backed by coastal peaks and the omnipresent sentinel of Mount Baker, it's a spectacular setting that will win the heart of any Valentine. And after seeing it with this bird's eye view, you'll likely agree – B.C.'s capital is a destination that will always take the gold!

### SENIOR LIVING MAGAZINE VANCOUVER AND LOWER MAINLAND

#### Romantic travel time:

##### BC Ferries

[www.bcferries.com](http://www.bcferries.com)

##### Romantic things To Do:

Craigdarroch Castle Historic House Museum  
250-592-5323

[www.craigdarrochcastle.com](http://www.craigdarrochcastle.com)

##### Carr House

250-383-5843

[www.emilycarr.com](http://www.emilycarr.com)

##### Flightseeing tour

West Coast Air:

[www.westcoastair.com](http://www.westcoastair.com)

##### A Romantic Stay:

The Magnolia Hotel & Spa

623 Courtney Street

Victoria, B.C. Canada V8W 1B8

250-381-0999

[www.magnoliahotel.com](http://www.magnoliahotel.com)

For more info, check out Tourism Victoria:

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