



Vancouver, BC x 3: A Queer Family Vacation

By JONELLE TORISEVA

My partner, Reilly, and I decided to spend our first real vacation in years in Vancouver, British Columbia, child in tow. The destination proved family-friendly in all senses of the term, a bounty of fun and relaxation. Once we found the amazing and enormous Second Beach pool, off the sea wall, we stayed and swam—for three days.

For three days we splashed in the fifty-meter pool, looking out at the ships on English Bay, and the sun on the western mountains. Second Beach is gorgeous. We lay in the water, my seven-year-old daughter happy that it was no deeper than three feet for all but the deeper southwestern edge, where swimmers practiced their butterflies.

We'd get out every so often and walk the tidal pools at the adjacent ocean beach. Second Beach, located in Stanley Park's southeastern corner, is a heated fresh-water pool. Entry is \$2.60 per family member (www.vancouver.ca/Parks/rec/beaches/second.htm).

Sometimes our child would dodge the dancing rollerbladers and bikers and rush out to swing on the playground or pretend to drive the toy truck. If that wasn't enough, there was also the Variety Kids Water Park nearby (at Lumberman's Arch on the Seawall).

The Fish House at the entrance to Stanley Park has good food but was a little tony for

us, as we were kitted out in our TYR swimsuits. Pricey, but well located, the eatery is a Vancouver institution (www.fishhousestanleypark.com).

For those looking for more swimming options, there's an even larger pool farther down the seawall: the 137-meter Kitsilano pool (www.vancouver.ca/parks/rec/beaches/kitsb.htm), which features heated salt water.

The three of us followed the seawall from our hostel off of Davie Street, passing by the beautiful AIDS memorial. One can easily bike, bus or walk, and for drivers, there is pay parking near the pool.

Our child loved the wonton soup at Hon's Wun-Tun. The eight-page menu offers Cantonese food in abundance and some Canadian Chinese specialties (www.hons.ca). The spit and sizzle from the open kitchens in the back kept us entertained. Dessert was a lovely mango jelly.

From the beluga whales and the pint-sized traffic site, the Miniature Railway to the llamas: Stanley Park provided us with recreation, fun and food (www.seestanleypark.com). At the Traffic School, designed with kids ages 5-8 in mind, our daughter navigated a small motor course complete with stoplights and traffic signs.

Traffic School runs 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, July through August. Each session is 30 minutes, free and

first-come, first-served. Groups (maximum 15) can book in advance by calling the West End Community Centre at 604-718-5859.

We rode on a steam train and petted animals at the Children's Farmyard (www.kidsvancouver.com/Children's%20Farmyard_critters.htm). The Farmyard, part of Rare Breeds Canada, hosts several endangered species of waterfowl, sheep and cattle.

Close to both the railway and the farmyard, The Vancouver Aquarium has a free observation platform, and you can also visit inside (www.vanaqua.org).

Back under the rainbow flags running up and down Davie Street, we waited to get into Stepho's Souvlaki Greek Taverna (604-683-2555). The line, though long, went quickly. Once inside, we feasted on pita bread and hummus, then passed by Hamburger Mary's Diner.

Also worth a visit is the historic Little Sister's Book and Art Emporium (1238 Davie Street), whose March 2000 Canadian Supreme Court case bucked the national Customs and Revenue Agency's right to censor books and magazines at the border.

The next morning called for dim sum. When we saw the bridal changing room and wedding banquet menus at Sun Sui Wah's Seafood Restaurant, we knew we were in the right place (604-872-8822 or www.sunsuiwah.com).

Later, we'd saved up for sushi and were glad we did: Toshi Sushi at 181 SE 16th



Second Beach, Vancouver B.C.

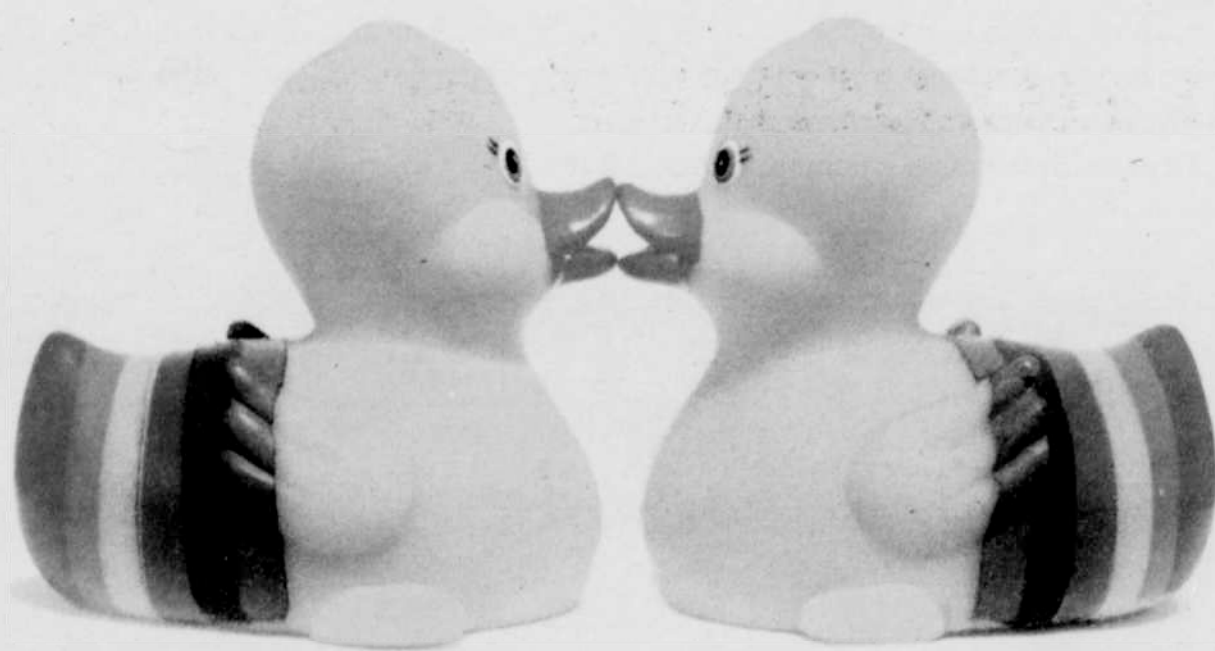
Avenue on South Main had lovely toro waiting for us (604-874-5173). We found the toro pricier at Lime Japanese Cuisine (www.limerestaurant.ca), but fresh and good; the hamachi was sublime.

Stocking up on licorice and watching the milk chocolate river at Dutch Girl Chocolates (1002 Commercial Drive, 604-251-3221) kept us enthralled until we got to the miniature beach at Trout Lake, where we took a sunny walk around the water. Commercial Drive is the lesbian epicenter of Vancouver and features lots of great coffeehouses, restaurants and funky shopping.

Had we stayed longer, the family would have gone to the new Izakaya restaurants and attended the No Hate! Youth Gala Films + Party coming up at 8 p.m. August 14 at Roundhouse Community Center (181 Roundhouse Mews, Yaletown). The event is part of the Out in Schools and NO HATE Bootcamp program (www.outinschools.com).

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