

CLOSE TO HOME

TRAVELING IN THE GREEN LAND

PART 2

By DAVID CAMPICHE
FOR COAST WEEKEND

This is the second installment of a two-part series about the author's recent travels in the Northwest. The first column explored Seattle; this column focuses on British Columbia cities Vancouver and Victoria.

Some people consider travel the ultimate adventure. Crawling out of Seattle's morning traffic, we headed north to Vancouver, British Columbia. One shouldn't confuse travel with getting there. The transit was fierce, but for our aggravations, we would be well rewarded.

Vancouver is a nexus of immigration, a city bursting with some of the finest Asian cuisine in all of North America. The metropolis is bursting with people from many diverse cultures and nationalities. It is a colorful city. It is relatively large. In a major city crowded with restaurants, even the smells taste good!

Our neighbor to the north, like the U.S., has a history of attracting immigrants seeking new opportunities, a chance to get ahead and/or secure safe asylum. This makes for a very diverse and colorful population.

Vancouver

Any visit to this silver-hued city (it was foggy and raining on arrival) must include the exploration of the Native American collection at the University of British Columbia. The collective tribes of the Canadian coast produced (and still produce) art work of world distinction. The carvings, generally from tight-grained cedar trees, are remarkable in scope and craft. They throw my imagination into cartwheels. The university's collection is large and magical. Hundreds of masks and totems and silver-carved jewelry of bears, eagles, whales, even frogs, caress the imagination. Plank longhouses and sleek cedar canoes and loads of historical information line the halls of this museum.

The next day, a walk down Hornby Street exposed the Vancouver Art Museum and the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest



LEFT: Looking down Hornby Street in Vancouver, British Columbia, one can glimpse the water and mountains through clouds that flank the city. **RIGHT:** Viewed from any angle, the Parliament buildings in Victoria, British Columbia, are an imposing structure.



PHOTOS BY LAURIE ANDERSON

Coastal Art, fine shops and cuisine, and a tea house around the corner on Georgia Street that surpassed our expectations with the grand cru teas and one of my favorite meals ever. The Vancouver Art Museum had a show of more than a hundred pieces from the contemporary Coast Salish artist Susan Point. Here is a woman in her prime, a force representing her people and an inspiration for all artisans. Her works weave together past, present and future.

Also featured and running until Dec. 3 is an extraordinary collection of Emily Carr's called "Into the Forest." Carr is a local treasure, a woman forever linked to the fertility of nature and love of Native peoples.

Aside from all the art and Mario Corsi's divine pasta (Red Lion Bar & Grill in West Vancouver), there remain thousands of galleries, Chinatown, exploding markets with fruits and vegetables, meats and seafoods, shops galore, fat with consumables. There is a colorful, exultant and defining aquarium situated in lovely Stanley Park, a Garden of Eden in a city surrounded by 2.5 million human beings. This city is seductive like a dangling salmon lure. And so blew by two happy days. Had it been three, my stomach would never have survived.

Victoria

Through the Gulf Islands, we traversed by ferry, trundling through waterways both narrow and expansive and always captivating, painted on this day with broad swaths of quicksilver and gilded spume.

In the midst of urban sprawl, Victoria, British Columbia, remains a sweet city. We arrived by water, were surrounded by water, and two days later, left by water, feeding our wayward souls with good pub food, East Indian delights (Masala Bites), and healthy veggie cuisine at Rebar. We ate an impressive plate-lovely breakfast at the stately Empress (though felt that the famous tea was overpriced) and, later, laddled in mouthfuls of gelato on Government Street.

The second morning merged into the basket of delights at Buchart Gardens. Don't miss it. Here are ideas to be carried forward for decades. No matter what time of year, this garden amazes.

Never to overlook is Victoria's Royal British Columbia Museum. No museum has exhibited more elegantly the contribution of artwork and culture of these First Peoples than this provincial museum. I have personally visited here more than a dozen times

and never failed to grow my appreciation for a culture that nearly disappeared into the Canadian mist. Today, the force and talent of these First People will continue to inspire us.

Appraisal

Vancouver and Seattle are clogged with humanity. Victoria is smaller and more intimate, but ultimately will face many of the same challenges. As deserts expand in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and southern California, folks are beginning to follow the water. Witness Astoria, the new darling of the Columbia-Pacific region. I, too, have seen my world change, some for good, some for bad. The question remains: What will be our future?

The great Haida artist, Bill Reid, left a towering legacy. His namesake gallery on Hornby Street in Vancouver is a revelation and joy, and his words are inspirational.

Reid was an optimist, who, in the time of desperation, carried his people on his back. Such leaders are rare, but consistent with history and time. Revelations come to those who dare to have them.

Get in your car and travel north-by-northwest. 