

Victoria

Bench by Bench



A Creative Guide to over 60 Intriguing Sites

Rebecca L. Kennel



Copyright © 2010 by Rebecca Lynn Kennel
Cover design by Jo-Ann Loro
Book design by Rebecca L. Kennel
Photographs by Rebecca L. Kennel
Chapter maps by Margaret Hanson Design Co.

Notice of Rights

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the author. The only exception is by a reviewer, who may quote short excerpts in a review.

Notice of Liability

The information in this book is developed from public information, archival sources, and the author's personal observations. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the contents, the author cannot be responsible for changes, errors or omissions, or any consequences arising from the use of this book.

Rebecca L. Kennel

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Kennel, Rebecca L.

Victoria : bench by bench : a creative guide to over 60 intriguing sites / Rebecca L. Kennel.

ISBN 978-0-9867018-0-1

1. Victoria (B.C.)--Guidebooks. 2. Parks--British Columbia--Victoria--Guidebooks. I. Title.

FC3846.18.K45 2010

917.11'28045

C2010-05456-3



Mixed Sources

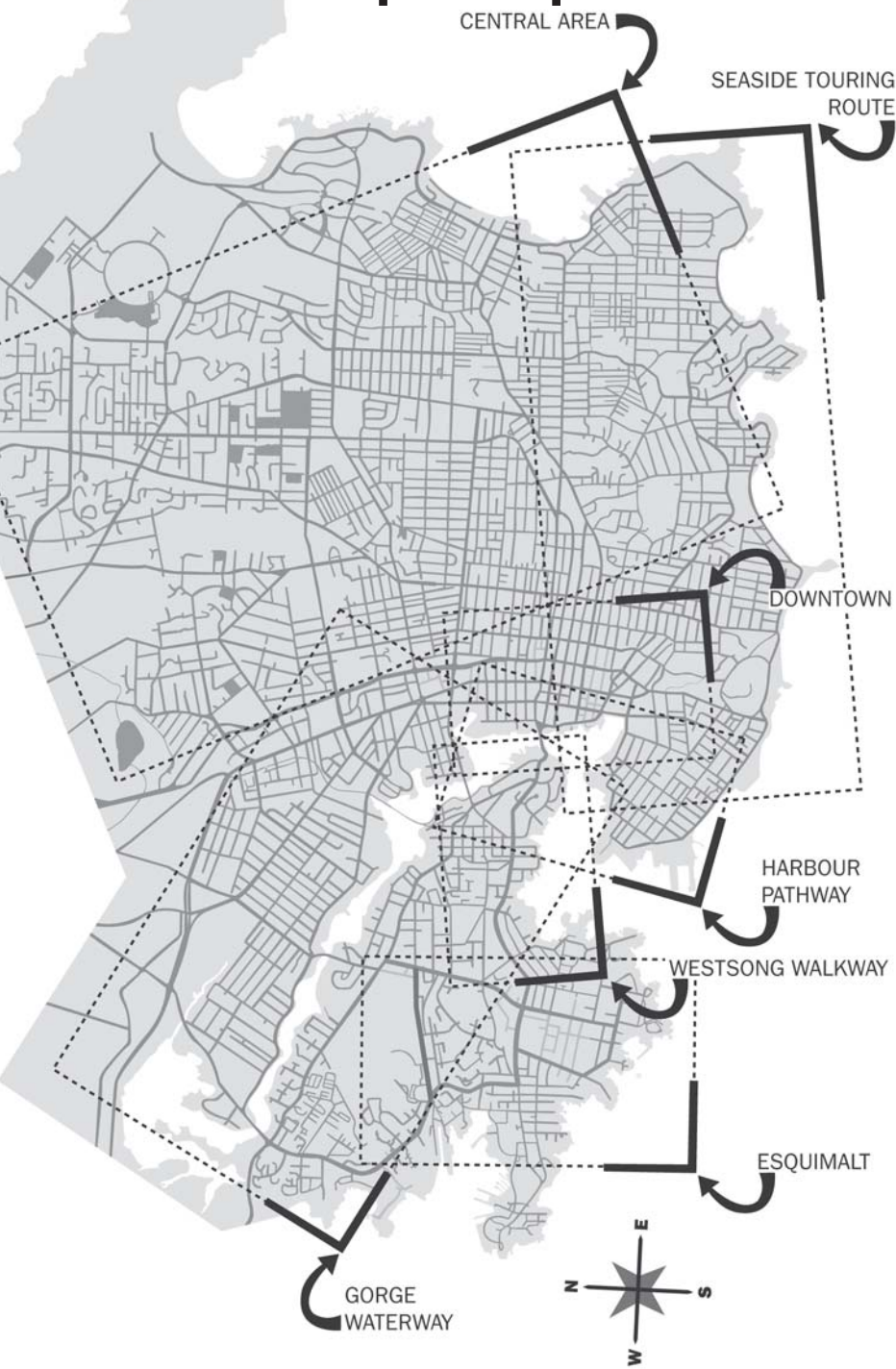
Cert no. SW-COC-001271
© 1996 FSC

Printed in Canada

Contents

Index to Chapter Maps	4	Walbran Park	80
Preface	5	Anderson Hill Park	81
Introduction	7	McNeill Bay	82
Downtown	11	Oak Bay Native Plant Garden	84
Market Square	12	Oak Bay Rose Garden	86
St. John the Divine Gardens ..	14	Central Area	89
Pioneer Square	16	Government House	90
Christ Church Cathedral	18	Bowker Creek	94
Christ Church Labyrinth	20	Lokier Gardens	96
St. Ann's Academy	22	Royal Jubilee Heritage Park ...	98
Royal BC Museum	24	Jewish Cemetery	102
Legislative Grounds	28	Summit Park	104
Victoria Conference Centre	32	Finnerty Gardens	106
Parkside Victoria Resort	33	Playfair Park	110
Westsong Walkway	35	Swan Lake	112
Delta Hotel	36	Gorge Waterway	117
55-65 Songhees	38	Point Hope Shipyards	118
Rainbow Park	40	Selkirk Waterfront	120
The Gazebo	43	Banfield Park	122
West Bay	44	Arm Street Park	124
Captain Jacobson Park	45	McNaughton Park	125
Harbour Pathway	47	Esquimalt Gorge Park	126
Hyack Adventure Centre	49	Gorge Waterway Park	128
Lower Wharf Street	50	Esquimalt	131
The Lower Causeway	51	Macaulay Point	132
CPR Steamship Terminal	52	Saxe Point Park	134
Quadra Park	53	Nelson Street	136
Laurel Point	54	Sturdee Street	137
Japanese Azumaya	57	Foster Street	138
Fisherman's Wharf	58	Denniston Park	139
Ogden Point	59	Highrock (Cairn) Park	140
Seaside Touring Route	63	Veteran's Cemetery	142
Holland Point	65	Military Museum	144
Ross Bay Seawall	68	Resources	147
Ross Bay Cemetery	70	Useful Tips	147
Gonzales Beach	74	Transportation	147
Trafalgar Park	76	Municipal	148
Gonzales Hill Regional Park ...	78	Historical	148
		Epilogue	151

Index to Chapter Maps



Preface

I DIDN'T REALLY INTEND TO WRITE a book about benches—I was looking for a way to turn my 'round the world trip blog into a book. When I heard that Julie Salisbury was offering an InspireABook™ weekend workshop, it seemed like the perfect tool to make that happen. However, as I was going through the pre-workshop assignment, I realised that the 'round the world book was too complicated for a weekend project. It would be more beneficial to choose something simpler, like the writings from my favourite benches around Victoria.

At first it was just an exercise to learn the process that Julie teaches: how to organize your material, how to publish, options for marketing. But, as I worked through the assignments and received feedback from the other participants, I decided to write and publish my benches book.

The group of authors from the workshop continue to meet and have provided me with feedback and support. I thank all of them for helping me turn a vision into reality, especially Jo-Ann Loro for her design layout and photo advice.

My "bench writings" started before the book was even considered. June Swadron's "'Write' Where You Are" workshops nudged me back into a habit of writing. June's special talent for facilitating writing groups pulled the words out of me. I started writing, not only for myself, but to share with others.

My special writing friends, Nan Campbell and Deb Jones, listened to me read and helped me find my voice.

Words on a page make more sense when the grammar, punctuation, and spelling are correct. Esther Hart's critical eye and ability to cut away the unnecessary eased the transition from draft to final copy.

When I decided I needed maps for each chapter, I put out a call on Twitter, using Victoria's hashtag, "YYJ." Margaret Hanson responded within minutes of my request. I was delighted when I met Margaret, as she is both personable and professional.

Structure, advice, encouragement, and inspiration were what I needed to create this book, but through it all I received support from my family and friends. Most of all, Galen, my husband, has supported me in every way.

My thanks to all of you.

Introduction

A WOMAN SITS ON A BENCH in the rose garden, a book open on her lap. Her daughter, feet dangling, snuggles next to her. They come here to be together. To read. No distractions. Just them, the bench, the birds, the flowers. Stopping together. Outside.

Some guidebooks encourage you to keep going. This book is to encourage you to stop.



I started my search for benches when I first came to Victoria. Sometimes I would wander, turning left or right on a whim. Sometimes I would pore over a map, looking for the little green, shaded areas that represent parks. I searched for two reasons. One was to discover this place that I had moved to—the landscape, the history, the buildings, the people. The other was to re-create myself. Who was I now that no one knew me? When people would ask me, “What do you do?” I had to have an answer. “I walk around. I stop. I look. I listen.”

I searched out places to write. I would walk until a bench caught my eye, then sit and write what I saw around me. Write whatever came out, squiggly lines on a page. Some might call it creative writing.

This book is about creativity. Giving you permission to take some time for yourself, to feel your feet on the ground. To really see the world around you, and in seeing the world, open that door to allow your creative expression to come out.

This is about discovery. To discover something that you didn’t know or understand before, to see something spectacular. How will you see the bridge open for that special boat if you don’t sit here? The sea lion lifting its head to sniff the air. The flower turning to face the sun. The beauty in the bark of that gnarly tree. The dead grasses, buffeted by the wind. The sea gulls, hovering and diving, flying for the fun of it.

This is what I want to capture, inspiring you to experience the simple things around you, and through this experience, to open up a little, to let a sense of calm and playfulness come in.

While working on this book I set off to document that perfect bench, a place sheltered from the wind, or with a great view. But I don’t have time to pause long, just long enough to capture the essence of the place. I have to keep going to the next bench.

I am caught, rushing about. I sit. I breathe. I force myself to become still. It works sometimes. Trying to find that elusive balance between my to-do list and my attempt at stillness. How can I stay in a creative groove, in touch with my core, and still get everything done?

Our culture has taught us busyness. We love our to-do lists and our efficiency and productivity. We brag about how busy we are. And then we schedule in the spa time and the weekend

workshops that promise relaxation. We dream of retirement, but we never really learn how to stop, to become still.



I stop at Quadra Park where Belleville meets Oswego. Three benches, surrounded by tall trees just beginning to show hints of green leaves. Flowers and shrubs surround me. It is nice and protected, the sun filtering through the branches above me. The breeze plays in the treetops and barely touches me. This is a little oasis, so close to everything, but just removed enough to feel secluded. Activity all around, but no one stops to sit.

I walk through the Native Plant Garden in Oak Bay. What a tranquil, energizing place, right beside Beach Drive. Here's a table, tucked in amongst the trees. It looks like no one ever sits at it. Farther down the path is a bench by the pond. It calls out to me "Sit here! Sit here!"

I sit and take out my little sketchbook. This is part of my attempt at learning to see. I bought the smallest sketchbook I could find. I thought it wouldn't be as intimidating as a big one.

I take a deep breath and try to see what is in front of me. I stare at the pond and the plants around it. I am supposed to close my eyes for five minutes, then open them and draw.

I don't think I have five minutes. I'm getting hungry and I really need to write something, not draw. Maybe tomorrow I will be able to find five minutes. . .



I am caught in my own schedule, my own reluctance to actually stop. How am I supposed to write a book about sitting when I can't even do it myself? Just sitting. No wonder no one does it. It's too complicated. It is too much work to just sit. And breathe. And see. And feel. Without incessant activity, the space around us opens up. And panic sets in. I should be doing something.

But I stay a little longer. I get used to it. Sitting. Outside. No other distractions. No laundry to fold or dishes to wash.

Come to a bench with a friend to sit together. Come alone. I invite you to go exploring, check out the benches in this book, and find your own favourite places. Take the time to stop and look at the world through fresh eyes. Create some time for yourself to just sit.



*Slow down and enjoy life. It's not only the scenery
you miss by going too fast—you also miss the sense
of where you are going and why.*

Eddie Cantor,
US comedian & singer (1892 - 1964)

Downtown

WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN YOU ARE exhausted from dragging the kids through the museum, feel overwhelmed with the work you are doing, or are dropping from too much shopping? A spa might be nice, but what if you only have 30 minutes?

Right downtown, in the heart of all this activity, are lovely places to just sit. Allow yourself to feel the bench, your feet on the ground. Take a breath and straighten your spine. Take another breath and concentrate on what you see around you. Close your eyes and listen for the subtle sounds. Within minutes you will feel refreshed.

You have many options, from the quiet gardens at St. John the Divine or St. Ann's Academy, to the busy and fun Lower Causeway. From the "Old Burying Ground" to the colourful Market Square. Explore a bit and find the place that is right for you and learn a bit about the history of the place where you are sitting.

Did you know?

Kuo-sing-el-as is the Lekwungen name for what is now downtown Victoria. It means "place of strong fibre," a reference to the Pacific willow.

Market Square

HISTORIC MARKET SQUARE HAS ENTRANCES on three streets: lower Johnson, Store, and Pandora. If you go down to the lower level, you will find great wooden benches set among shrubs and trees.

Part of the area is covered with a high roof, originally built for a produce market. The wind can come down and circle around here, so it isn't always as protected as it looks. But it is a charming place.

There are various options for food—a vegetarian buffet, a Mexican cafe, and several take out vendors tucked away in little shops.

Look for the large photos and descriptions of the history of Victoria located throughout the different levels.

500 block of Johnson or Pandora
48.427819,-123.368547

Hop-on Hop-off stop #2

Washrooms on lower level in the NE corner

Wheelchair accessible through a parking lot on Pandora near the Solstice Cafe



✍ I sit here in the sun on a wooden bench. Piano jazz is playing through speakers somewhere above me. I look up at the brick walls that surround this space. Balconies define each level. Striped awnings shield the windows. Colourful banners hang from the support posts.

I try to imagine how this site has changed over the past 200 years and the vision it took to refurbish the buildings and create this space. Some people have the capacity to see past crumbling bricks and appreciate the uniqueness of the architecture. To see what is possible. Seeing.

An elderly woman in purple walks by, her hair stacked in grey piles on top of her head. A cane marking her steps. What is she seeing? How is it different from my experience of this place?

Looking for a different perspective, I move up to a bench on the balcony at street level next to a little shop that sells fries. I listen to the words of customers making small talk with the cook, casual words slipping from their mouths revealing how they see the world.

Little sparrows hop around on the tile floor searching out morsels that are dropped.

A feather falls from the sky, caught in midair by a sparrow. A treasure to line her nest. I have to keep my eyes open all the time to see the treasures. Maybe I'll just sit here and wait for my treasure to fall from heaven. A gift to me that I will only receive if my eyes are wide open. Sitting. Waiting. Seeing.

Did you know?

Sit over the Johnson Street ravine and appreciate the vision of two brothers, Sam & Nick Bawlf who, in the 1970s, transformed a parking lot, old warehouses, and cheap hotels, into a trendy, heritage shopping area.

There really was a parking lot here and before that a creek that flowed under your feet. The creek separated Chinatown (*Huabu*, meaning “Chinese Port”) from Victoria. The buildings on the Pandora side of Market Square reflect the Chinese culture with businesses on the main floor, offices on the second, and residences on the top.

In 2007 the Bawlf brothers received the British Columbia Heritage Award from the province for their contribution to refurbishing many heritage buildings in BC.

St. John the Divine Gardens

IF YOU WALK EAST FROM DOWNTOWN you will come to Quadra Street—the street of churches. The entrance to the north garden is at the end of Cormorant Street. Walk through the iron gate and under the wooden arch to a private and secluded bench under a massive maple tree.

A rock outcropping is behind the bench. The limbs of the maple tree almost cover the whole garden. Sit in this silent sanctuary surrounded by shrubs and flowers. It is a truly delightful place.

Around to the south side of the church, along Mason Street, is the Memorial Garden.

When you walk under the lych gate, it feels like you are entering a protected space. One comfy wooden bench faces north so you can enjoy the sun on your back. The shrubs behind you provide a little protection from the wind. In the centre of the garden is a sundial. This is a lovely place to sit with few distractions.

1611 Quadra (at Mason St.)
48.428346,-123.358183

Bus #6

Bicycle racks in garden on
north side of building

Parking on Mason (2 hr.)





Did you know?

2010 is the 150th anniversary of St. John the Divine Anglican Church in Victoria. The original church, known as the “Iron Church,” was imported from England along with two workmen to assemble it. It was located on the NE corner of Douglas and Fisgard. The church at this location was built in 1912.

As you pass through the gate, notice the plaques:

“Memorial Garden Lych Gate given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Frank Newton Gibson 1913-1986 & Jean Valance Gibson 1918-1987.”

“The Memorial Garden sundial is given to the Glory of God in memory of Roger Ernest Davis 1927-1988 Son of the Plains—Lover of the Mountains—Faithful—Committed—Active—Visionary—Designer of this Lychgate and Memorial Garden.”

Pioneer Square (Old Burying Ground)

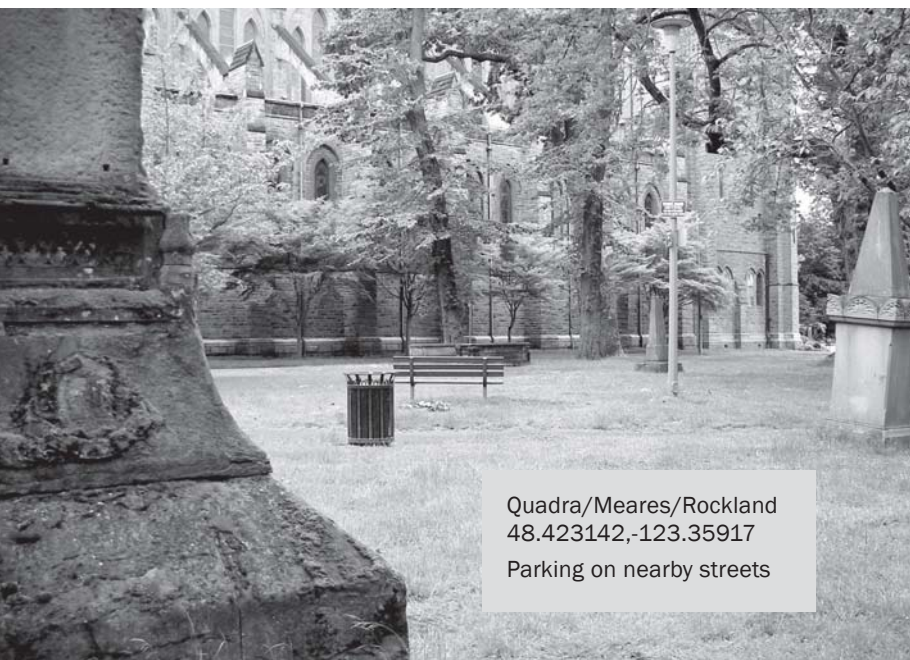
NORTH OF CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL is a small park where you will find at least a dozen wooden benches under tall trees. Around you are moss-covered concrete cenotaphs, some dating back to the 1850s when the cemetery was opened.

You can see why this place is rumoured to be haunted—gravestones were moved to a back corner of the site during a beautification project in the early 1900s, leaving over 1,000 bodies buried without a marker.

Did you know?

Up until 1855, people were buried in the Fort Victoria Graveyard along the Johnson Street Ravine. When that graveyard was closed many of the corpses and headstones were moved here by chain gang. When this cemetery was closed in the 1870s, some of the graves were exhumed and moved to Ross Bay Cemetery.

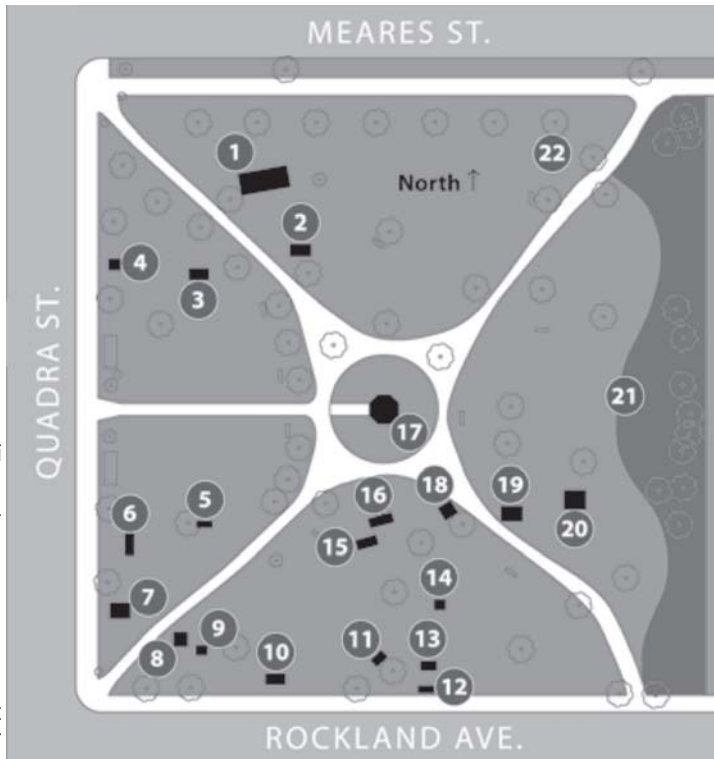
Check out the Old Cemeteries Society website and download their complete walking tour brochure to discover some interesting stories about the tombs you see and the controversial history of the site. http://www.oldcem.bc.ca/cem_pn.htm



Quadra/Meares/Rockland
48.423142,-123.35917
Parking on nearby streets

Over the years the site has been neglected and vandalised, but since 1985 work has been done to conserve and restore monuments, and map their locations.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. Pritchard Tomb | 11. Lucy Sanders Bench |
| 2. Andrew Phillips Obelisk | 12. Helmcken Bench Tomb |
| 3. Thomas Carter Bench Tomb | 13. Cameron Bench Tomb |
| 4. Historical Marker | 14. Wallace Obelisk |
| 5. James Murray Yale Grave | 15. Charles Dodd Bench Tomb |
| 6. Royal Navy & Police Memorial | 16. John Work Bench Tomb |
| 7. Sutlej Obelisk | 17. Canadian Scottish Regimental Cenotaph |
| 8. Charles Rufus Robson Grave | 18. Charles Ross Plaque |
| 9. Cridge Children's Grave | 19. Paul Medana Obelisk |
| 10. RCAF Cairn | 20. Carroll Monument |
| | 21. Tombstone Group |
| | 22. Chinese Section |



Christ Church Cathedral

THE CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, one of the churches on Quadra Street, is close to downtown. Follow Courtney Street up hill and you will see the two square stone towers that dominate the landscape.

This church can be a quiet place to sit. Or, if you are here when the organist is practicing, it may not be so quiet. Quiet or not, the Gothic architecture, stained-glass windows, and massive interior create a pleasant place to visit.



Did you know?

Christ Church had its beginnings as Victoria District Church in the early days of Fort Victoria. The first church was built across the street where the Law Courts now stand. It wasn't until 1926 that construction began at the present location.

<http://christchurchcathedral.bc.ca/>

✍ The side door at the front of the Cathedral is open. I step in onto the glassy green tiles and stop. My eyes move up to the high ceiling. I take a deep breath and let it out slowly. My mind is already adjusting to the spaciousness—the quietness. Informational pamphlets are on a small table in four languages, “Self Guide for Visitors.”

I pull on the heavy door that leads to the sanctuary and to “stopping place #1.” The guide suggests, “Pause to behold the beauty of holiness, to pray, and to give thanks.”

I choose to sit on a bench on the right side of the church, towards the front, so that I can see the little stone robin in her nest at the top of one of the pillars. It is a tribute to the determined robin who raised her family here during the construction of the building.

I try not to look at the couple who are whispering to each other as they tour the church. Oh! They are standing right under the robin and they don't know to look up. Should I tell them they are missing the best part? I sit quietly and allow them to walk by. If I was six years old I could stop them, “Excuse me, you missed the robin.”

But somehow it doesn't feel right at my age. We shouldn't be so excited about small things. Our minds are full of big things—mortgages, job security, failing memory, status. We don't have time to be excited. Besides, in a church one moves slowly and meditatively.

I walk out toward the east end of the cathedral passing the commemorative windows that were unveiled by their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall on November 8, 2009.

Quadra at Rockland
48.422494,-123.360028
Parking on streets nearby
Washroom at east end
Open daily 8:30am-5:30pm

THERE ARE SEVERAL BENCHES facing south over the labyrinth and the gardens. Some may be in the sun, while others are often shaded by the huge trees. The massive stone walls of the cathedral behind offer protection.

The sun is filtering through the still dormant maple tree in front of me. The camellia blooms. The labyrinth, from the bench, looks like a circular courtyard of just bricks. As you go closer to it, you will see the square grey bricks that mark the path for you to follow.

Washrooms inside the Cathedral

Stop at the entrance. Breathe. Fold your hands comfortably over your belly. Breathe in as you step with your left foot, out as you lift your right foot. Follow the path. Breathe in. Step. Breathe out. Step. Feel your foot as it curves and leaves the ground and feel the ground as you lower your foot to meet it.



The labyrinth takes you on a journey left, then right, completely around—and when you think you are nearing the centre, you are taken back to the outside edge and around again. Try going more slowly—one whole breath for your left foot. One whole breath for your right foot.

When you reach the middle you can stand a while or make your way slowly back out. Now sit and enjoy a feeling of peace and calm and the scene around you.

Did you know?

This labyrinth was constructed in collaboration with William Head Institution and funding from the Government of Canada.

Inmates from the federal penitentiary at William Head and volunteers from the church worked side by side to plan and build the labyrinth in a restorative justice project spearheaded by Sister Judi Morin, Catholic Chaplain from William Head Institution and Dr. Michael Hadley, a founding member of the Restorative Justice Coalition.

The project has been explored in a video, “Journey to the Centre,” produced by Penny Joy and Peter C. Campbell, Gumboot Productions.

There are other labyrinths to walk in Victoria and the surrounding area. Aryana Rayne documents them in her book, *Labyrinths of British Columbia: A Guide for Your Journey*.



St. Ann's Academy

IF YOU WANT TO SIT IN A VERY QUIET, secluded garden, go around the east side of St. Ann's Academy where the path leads to Beacon Hill Park. If you look closely near the building, you will see an entrance that leads to the Novitiate Garden, a fenced area with two benches and plantings of flowers and shrubs.

This is where the novices came for recreation, separate from the rest of the students, but still under the watchful eye of the sisters who could look down from their balcony above.





835 Humboldt St.
 48.419589,-123.363461
 Parking on street (2 hr.)
 Washrooms inside
 Wheelchair accessible with
 assistance (250-953-8828)
 Academy hours:
 May to Sept: daily 10am-
 4pm;
 Winter: Thur to Sun 1-4pm
 The grounds are occasionally
 closed for private functions.

Pick up a self-guided tour brochure (\$1) from the front desk that describes the grounds and the building. Explore the old orchard with fruit trees that are over 100 years old. Find the area that was a small ravine with a stream formerly used by indigenous people for access to the inner harbour during storms along the coast. The Sisters had the area filled in by 1911 and planted flowers, trees, and shrubs. Other areas of the grounds were used for growing vegetables and berries, and in one corner is a small cemetery. Burials here ceased in 1908 and in 1974 bodies were moved to the Ross Bay Cemetery.

Did you know?

St. Ann's Academy is a National Historic Site and one of Victoria's premiere heritage buildings.

The original small wood cabin, where the first Sisters taught, is now on the grounds of the Royal BC Museum. The first phase of this Academy was built in 1871, with more wings added as the needs of the convent school grew.

The property was purchased by the provincial government in 1974 and would have been sold in 1990 for private redevelopment, but many people felt the Academy represented an important part of Victoria's history and worked to keep it public.

Now the building has been restored and parts of it are open to the public, including the historic chapel; the balance of the building is used by the Ministry of Advanced Education.

<http://www.stannsacademy.com>

Royal BC Museum

WALK AROUND THE ROYAL BC MUSEUM (RBCM) and discover the variety of places to sit, from the secluded Native Plants Garden to the tables near the totem poles.

Outside Main Entrance

ON THE PLAZA OUTSIDE THE MAIN ENTRANCE to the museum are comfy red, wooden benches under cover of a roofed gazebo. This is a great vantage point to people watch, sketch, or write—set back just enough from the bustle around you.

Come here for a break after exploring the exhibits in the museum, watching an IMAX film, or doing research in the archives.

675 Belleville Street 48.419916, -123.366916

Hop-on Hop-off stops #7, 23

Washrooms inside

Hours: (Daily except Christmas and New Year's Day)

Museum: 10am–5pm (check for longer hours in summer)

IMAX: 10am–8pm; Shop: 10am–5pm; Cafe: 9am–5pm

<http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/>



Thunderbird Park

IN BETWEEN THE Mungo Martin House (*Wawadit'la*, meaning “he orders them to come inside”) and the Royal BC Museum are six tables in an area that faces north onto Belleville. If you walk up to the grassy area you will find more tables, set amongst neatly trimmed hedges and shaded by a variety of deciduous and evergreen trees. There are also benches here. Sit down and look around you at the massive totem poles.

Did you know?

This is the traditional territory of Coast Salish First Nations: the Songhees and Esquimalt. *Wawadit'la* is a bighouse built by Chief Nakap'ankam (Mungo Martin) and opened in 1953 with a potlatch. This was the first legal, public potlatch in British Columbia after the potlatch ban (1885–1951) was dropped from the Indian Act.

A display of totem poles from the museum's collection was set up here in 1941. By 1952 the poles were deteriorating and a pole restoration program began. Mungo Martin was hired as the chief carver. Replicas were carved and the originals were moved into storage.

The poles on exhibit here illustrate some of the varied styles and traditions of coastal First Nations. The figures proclaim and validate a person's lineage and importance.



Native Plants Garden

YOU CAN SIT IN A LIVING NATURAL HISTORY museum in the sunken courtyard just off to the side of the main plaza. Here is the Native Plants Garden surrounding a shallow pond. It is a peaceful setting in spite of buses on Belleville and Government.

This is the wild Victoria in the heart of downtown. Enjoy it before it is filled in as part of the museum's redevelopment plan. The plants may end up being dispersed to other locations on the grounds, as the area is considered to be underutilized.

The site features a bog garden on the north-west corner, an alpine garden in the south-west, a rock garden, and an estuary near the stairs.

This area is wheelchair accessible through the BC Archives entrance just to the right of the main museum entrance. Go in and request to be escorted to the native plants garden. You will be taken down through the restricted area of the archives and out into the garden.

There is another area that is dedicated to native plants just to the east of the main entrance. This is easily accessed by wheelchair, has a small pond and water feature, and several benches.



Did you know?

These gardens, first planted in 1968, hold BC's largest and most diverse collection of plants native to the province. There are almost 500 species, many collected in the 1960s by RBCM botanists. Almost 50 of these are believed to be scarce in their native habitat and some may be extinct in the wild. This really is a living, natural history museum.

The plants were collected from alpine, coastal, and dry inland environments. Many have attractive leaves, flowers, or fruits, and are suitable for local gardens. For more information on native plant gardening, contact the local Native Plant Study Group <http://www.npsg.ca/>

Interpretive tours of the Native Plant Gardens are offered on occasion. Call 250-356-7226 or 1-888-447-7977.



Legislative Grounds

OVERLOOKING THE INNER HARBOUR between Government and Menzies Streets is the 12½-acre property that has served as British Columbia's site of government since 1864.

The grounds in front of the buildings are dominated by a giant Sequoia tree, planted sometime during the 1860s. Pick up the "Outdoor Self-Guided Walking Tour" brochure from inside for descriptions of the other trees and statues located throughout the grounds.

Did you know?

The rose garden was constructed in 1935-36 as a relief project during the depression. It is built into the foundation of the "Birdcages," the original government buildings for the Colony of Vancouver Island, and then for the Legislative Assembly once BC became a province of Canada in 1871.

This garden was named the Premier's Rose Garden in 1986 when it was dedicated to Premier Bill Bennett, premier from 1975-1986.



Premier's Rose Garden

ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE LEGISLATIVE grounds, on the Menzies Street side, is the Premier's Rose Garden. It has one bench. Come here when the roses are blooming and sit and breathe. It is quite protected, sheltered by buildings and hedges. Or come even if the roses aren't blooming and enjoy the solitude, the massive, stone buildings, and the formal garden.

Legislative Building

THE INSIDE OF THE BUILDING IS AWESOME, even though there are very few places to sit and the benches that are here are hard and uncomfortable. Wander through the solemn halls, walking on the shiny floors and reading the inscriptions on the stained glass windows. Look at the photos of the premiers and attorneys general and see if you can guess which year Gillette introduced the safety razor. To see and learn more, take in a free guided tour offered Monday to Friday.

If you want a bite to eat, request a visitor's pass from the office at the main entrance in order to gain access to the basement dining room. It can be interesting to come at lunchtime, but I prefer the quieter, off-peak times when the friendly waiters can answer some of your questions and you can wander around and look at the photographs on the wall.




Wheelchair accessible from east side (contact a security person)

Bicycle racks on Government St. side

Buildings open daily Mon to Fri 8:30am-5pm

Tour Office: 250-387-3046 or toll-free 1-800-663-7867

Dining Room: Reasonably priced breakfasts and lunches. Mon to Fri when house is in session: 8am-7 or 7:30pm, except Fri 8am-2pm. Variable hours when house is not in session

 I picture large, quiet hallways and spacious rooms—surely there is a place to sit and write. I climb the Nelson Island granite stairs to the entrance—carved wooden doors with a sign, “push door to open.” I push the door and it opens. A young woman is stuffing envelopes at the reception desk. She welcomes me, explains where I can go, and offers me the self-directed guide book, in English. She explains that if I want to go to the restaurant I will need to get a security pass from the security office across the hallway. There I hand over my driver’s license in exchange for a pass and a small map, “Route to Legislative Dining Room.” Turn right, turn right, go through the rotunda. . .

What elegant surroundings. My worn walking shoes squeak as I walk across the glossy tiles. The walls are covered with photographs of past premiers, all staring at me. One woman for one year, 1991.

I feel like I am entering an enchanted world, completely sheltered from the turmoil of real life. Is that why decisions made within these walls sometimes seem so . . . I drop that thought and make my way up to the Legislative Assembly room. The door is locked when not in use. Beside it are two wooden chairs and a table. I sit at the table and write. I hear the echo of doors closing; the hollow sound of people talking; the clack, clack, clack of shoes on tile—worn by someone in a hurry—walking with purpose. My shoes only squeak as I creep along the hallways. I wonder if someone is sitting in a room filled with monitors, watching my progress. Perhaps it is time to go down to the dining room for tea.

Did you know?

This fountain celebrates the union of the four colonies and territories that joined to form British Columbia.

The gulls and otter on the centre rock denote the approach from the sea.

The eagle represents the Kwakiutl, Nootka, and Salish societies on Vancouver Island.

The raven is the symbol of the Haida Gwaii formerly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands.

The bear represents the Interior First Nations and the mainland colony of BC.

The wolf represents the Tahltan and Tlineit people of the Stikine territory.

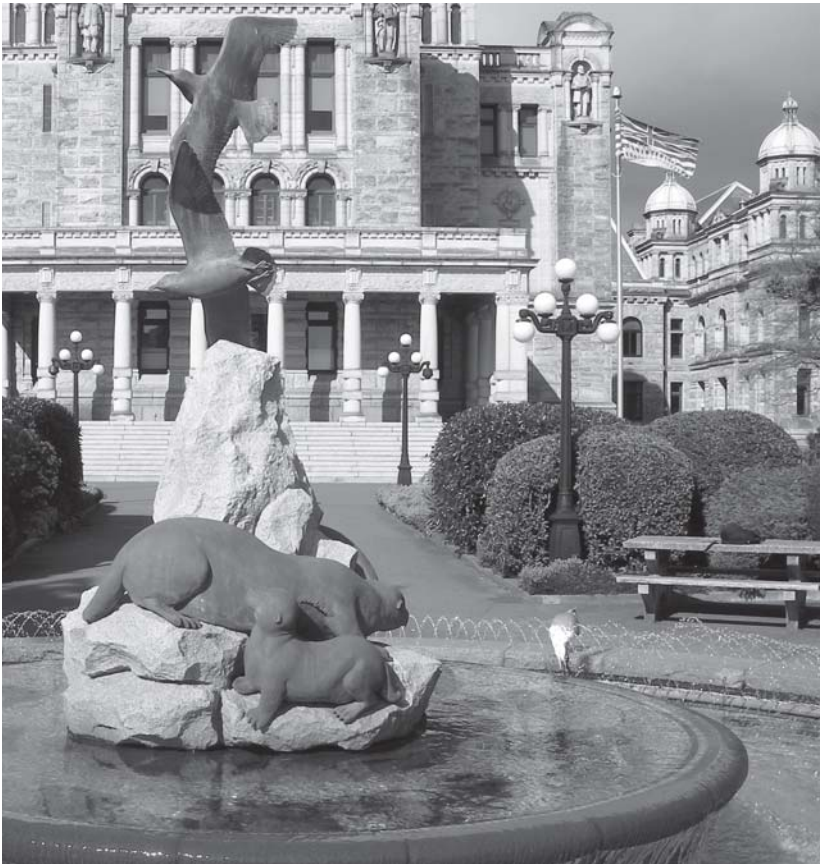
Centennial Fountain

ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE Legislative Buildings is a fountain surrounded by yew and cedar hedges, spruce and cedar trees. Two picnic tables and two benches wait for you here—it is a sunny and sheltered place to sit.

Sculpted otter play in the centre of the fountain—gulls are frozen in flight above them. Bear, wolf, raven, and eagle guard the edge of the circle.



People come and go, stopping to look at the four small sculptures on the fountain. A kid on a skateboard comes through the plaza. A man in a suit. It looks like people in the know use this as a shortcut to downtown from James Bay. Some are going into the office buildings across the street—they are walking head down. Brisk strides. Important work to do. I think I'll just sit here for a while.



Victoria Conference Centre

ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE Victoria Conference Centre, just behind the Empress Hotel, is a large courtyard, a fountain, and teak benches around the edge.

With benches on three sides, you can pick the one that suits you best. In spite of a swarm of people at the front of the Empress, this courtyard is almost empty. If a shower threatens you can always go into the Empress and sit in one of the big leather chairs.

720 Douglas Street
48.421173,-123.366814
Bicycle racks off Douglas St.
Hop-on Hop-off stop #7
Washrooms downstairs in
Empress Hotel near archives

Did you know?

You are sitting over what at one time was James Bay, or in Lekwungen, *Whosaykum* which means “clay” or “muddy place.” The Songhees people used to camp nearby at Ann’s Academy and collect shellfish in the bay. By the late 1900s it had become a tidal garbage dump and the city decided to fill it in.



Parkside Victoria Resort & Spa

PRETEND YOU ARE IN THE TROPICS and be surrounded by more than 3,000 plants that were salvaged from the Crystal Garden.

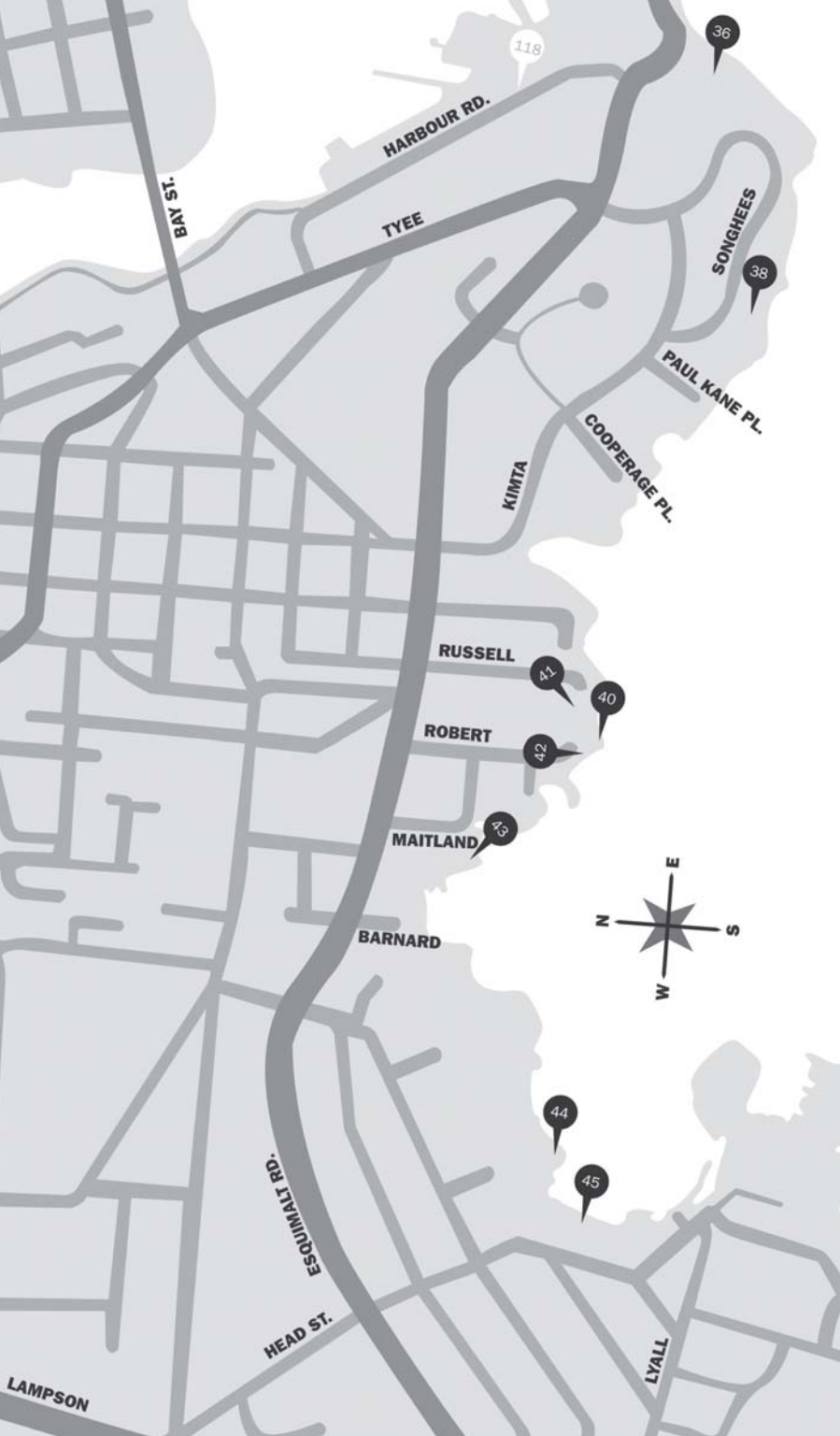
When the Crystal Garden closed in 2004 to be reinvented as “BC Experience,” the developers of the Parkside saw an opportunity to incorporate the tropical plants in the design of the 10-metre high atrium in their planned resort hotel. The palms, birds of paradise, ficus, and ferns were taken on a four-year journey and arrived back in 2009 when the resort opened, just a block from where they started.

The sunny atrium is a delightful place to sit, even on a dreary winter day. The water fountain, stone work, plants, high

ceilings, and the expanse of glass all create a feeling of being in another world. Not quite the tropics, but a good substitute if you don't have time to fly away.

810 Humboldt
48.42023,-123.363097
Bike rack near main entrance
Caffè Fantastico





*Don't underestimate the value of Doing Nothing,
of just going along, listening to all the things you
can't hear, and not bothering.*

Pooh's Little Instruction Book,
inspired by A. A. Milne

Along the Westsong Walkway

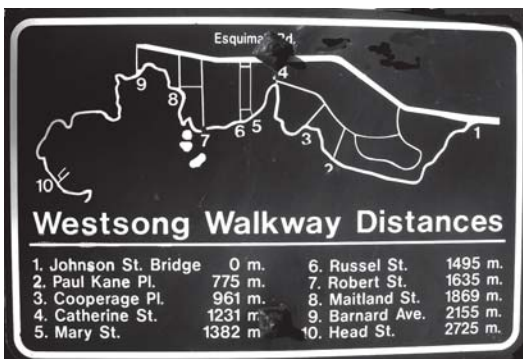
THIS SCENIC PATH STARTS at the Johnson Street Bridge and turns into the Westbay Walkway before it reaches the Westbay Marina 2.725 kilometres (1.7 miles) later. It winds along the Victoria Harbour and offers many opportunities to sit.

Dress in layers. Sometimes, when the wind hits you, it is cold, and then you go around a corner that is protected from the wind and it is hot.

The walkway derives its name from the Songhees Nation whose traditional land it crosses.

Signs posted along the walkway mark the distances between points and a dot on the map shows your current location.

Bicycles are not allowed on the path.



Delta Hotel

ON A PLAZA IN FRONT OF THE DELTA Hotel are five metal benches overlooking the inner harbour.

If you're lucky, you can watch the historic Johnson Street Bridge open as a barge, herded by tugs, passes under the bridge into or out of the industrial waterway along the Gorge. Or you may see one of the schooners from the Sail and Life Training Society (SALTS) as it moves from its home at the Heritage Shipyard out to Ship Point to board trainees for one of their summer programs.

This is a place of movement—boats, planes, people, flags, water, light. The world dances around you as you sit here.

45 Songhees Road
48.426267,-123.374491
Bus #6, 24, 25
Harbour Ferry stop
Hop-on Hop-off stop #3
Parking along Songhees Rd.
(2 hrs.)
Open to the sun and wind
Eat and drink at Lure
Restaurant



✍ The bridge is down now and it is singing—listen for the music of car tires moving across the bridge deck. A little harbour ferry bobs along. Tourists come by and stop to photograph the Empress Hotel and the Parliament Buildings across the harbour. I try to guess where they're from. I want to talk to them. To recommend a good place for them to eat. Find out what books they're reading. . .

Behind me are the steps that lead up to the hotel lobby and the Lure Restaurant. If I get hungry or thirsty, I can slip in there. Or if I'm caught in a sudden rain shower I can pretend to be a tourist and sit in one of the big, leather chairs in the atrium.

Did you know?

When Fort Victoria was built in 1843 the Songhees were paid a 2½ point HBC blanket for every forty cedar pickets they cut. Although the Songhees were very important to the survival of the first immigrants here, supplying fish, seafood, mats, baskets, shingles, canoes, etc., their close proximity and unfamiliar culture made the settlers nervous.

In 1844 the Songhees were relocated here from their campsites outside Fort Victoria. This area became a reserve in 1853 and the main Songhees village. In 1911 they sold the land in a treaty and were moved to the Esquimalt Reserve.

Their long houses once covered the shoreline from Songhees Point (*Pallastis*) on your right to the north side of what is now the Johnson Street Bridge. The Delta Hotel sits on the location of Chief Cheetlam George's home.

Pallastis, "place of the cradle," refers to the tradition where parents would place the cradles that their children outgrew along this point to ensure their children a long life.



The Royal Hospital was built on Songhees Point in 1859 and provided care to both immigrants and natives until 1864 when it was merged with the Women's Infirmary on Pandora. In 1872 it re-opened as an "Asylum for the Insane." Two years later a marine hospital was built just north of the Asylum.



The Delta Hotel is built on landfill, resulting from dredging under the Johnson Street Bridge to allow ships to pass into the upper harbour. The blue bridge was built in 1924 and designed by Joseph Strauss, the chief engineer for San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.

55-65 Songhees

WALKING FURTHER ALONG THE WALKWAY you will come to two benches on the water just in from Shutters along Songhees Road.

All the activity in and out of the harbour passes in front of you, squeezed between the rocks beneath you and Laurel Point on the other side: yachts, fishing boats, whale watchers, the Coho Ferry, the Seattle Clipper, the Harbour Ferry, kayaks, and canoes. When the wind is from the west, the float planes will swoop down over the Johnson Street Bridge and land right in front of you.

The metal benches can be cool and damp—bring a cloth to wipe them and a cushion to sit on if you plan to be here for a while.

Near 60 Songhees Rd.
48.426032,-123.379654

Bus #25—ask to be let off
in front of Shutters

Parking between 55-65
Songhees. (3.5 hrs.) Take a
right onto the path

Exposed to SE, S, SW winds

Can have partial shade on
summer afternoons



I sit on the bench, "In Memory of Frederick Charles Iris. Come sit and enjoy this lovely view. His Loving Family."

Or try the other bench, "David & Elizabeth Friesen. We loved our walks and took pleasure in the harbour activity. Faith, hope, and love to all who rest here." Parks & Recreation Foundations of Victoria.

Sometimes I just sit and write the snippets of conversation that I hear from walkers passing behind me. Inspiration for that novel. Insight into people's lives.

"I could NOT marry him and I won't marry him. So a friend asks him, 'Have you set a date yet?' and he says, 'No, she won't marry me."

Forgive me. I couldn't help but overhear your conversation. I will uphold your privacy—I won't turn and look to see if I might recognize you.

Did you know?

Farther along the waterfront (Cooperage Pl. 48.427264,-123.382258) is a small plaza with a fountain flanked by two small statues. This was the location of Mud Bay, a site used by First Nations canoe builders and a favourite beach for visiting First Nations.

The small cove next to Spin-nakers Brew Pub and Restaurant is what remains of Lime Bay. After Fort Victoria (then Fort Camosun) was established in 1843, lime for construction was brought in by barge and deposited here. The lime kiln itself was above where Kimta Road lies today.

The bay was once much larger but was filled in in stages from 1935 to the late 1950s to allow development.

From Victoria West Community Association Walks.
<http://www.victoriawest.ca/>



Rainbow Park

Russell Street Table

AT THE END OF RUSSELL STREET, on an outcropping of rock right on the water, is a concrete table. Stop here. It is a fabulous place to sit (if the wind isn't blowing). Be careful, as the seagulls love this table too.

It is bright here—I squint into the sun. Geese take off from Colville Island, complaining to each other. The Clipper is arriving. Two giant cruise ships are silhouetted against the Olympic Mountains. A helicopter lands. The geese return, still quarrelling. Hooded mergansers float by. I have become mesmerized by the glint of sunlight, the ripples on the water, the sounds of birds, the dancing

sea gulls. The water changes colour as the sun hides behind the clouds and appears again. The wind picks up and the sea gulls rise—soaring and dipping. Flying for the fun of it.

The beauty and spaciousness—the activity—the sounds. I sit with my pen poised over my notebook. What do I see here? What words can I use to describe it? Glorious.

A plane lands.

200 Russell St.
48.427563,-123.387451
Bus #6, 25
Hop-on Hop-off stop #4
Parking at the end of
Russell and Robert Streets
(3 hrs.)
Exposed to sun & wind
Eat and drink at Casa Nova
Cafe 492 Esquimalt Rd.



Did you know?

Between Russell and Robert Streets is Rainbow Park, a grassy area with several large trees. It was named after the HMCS Rainbow, the first ship of the Royal Canadian Navy.

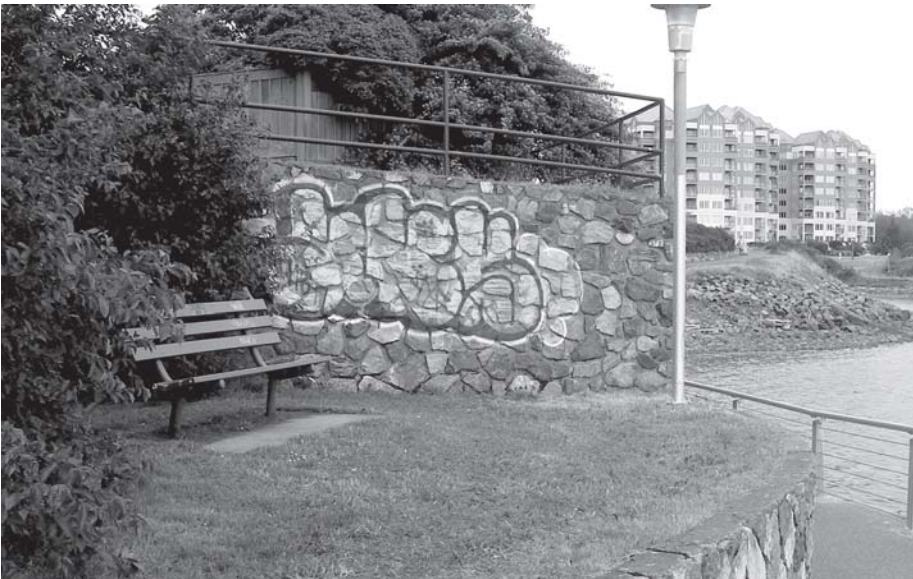
The James Bay Athletic Association had their rowing clubhouse here from 1938 to 1952, before moving it to Elk Lake and becoming the Victoria Rowing Club. Pillars from the clubhouse are visible on the rocks below Robert Street.

Protected Bench

FROM THE TABLE, IF YOU LOOK BACK toward the walkway, you will see a bench tucked against a stone wall just above the path. Even on windy days, this is a fairly protected place to sit. The sun warms it and the wall and bushes shelter it from the wind. If you are lucky, no one will be sitting there—it is a popular bench.



✍ A carnation against the rock wall is just starting to bloom. Tiny white daisies poke their heads up through the grass, all facing south, following the brightness of where the sun must be. Looking southwest I can see the stone house at the end of Work Point, just above Colville Island.



Robert Street Benches

✍ The experience of these places is different each time I come.

The seasons. The weather. Morning. Evening. The harbour activity. The bird life. Is that what keeps me coming back? The world, alive around me.

Four benches. Four people. It appears these benches can only hold one person at a time. What would happen if I were to sit down on a bench with someone? Would they get up and leave?

A white-haired woman reading Alice Munro. Another woman just sitting. I wonder if these people live alone. And come down here alone. And then go home alone.

I come back later and sit on one of the lower benches with the stone wall behind me. Sparrows and starlings jockey noisily for position in the hawthorn trees beside me. They fly up and land on the rocks below, splashing in and drinking from the pools of fresh water in the depressions in the rock—natural bird baths. I look up just in time to see a fish leap out of the water—or was it a diving bird? I stare at the area, but nothing reappears. A sparrow flies into the bushes carrying a feather.

The sun and clouds are playing with the valleys and mountain tops of the Olympic Peninsula across the strait. The snow-topped peaks are gleaming.

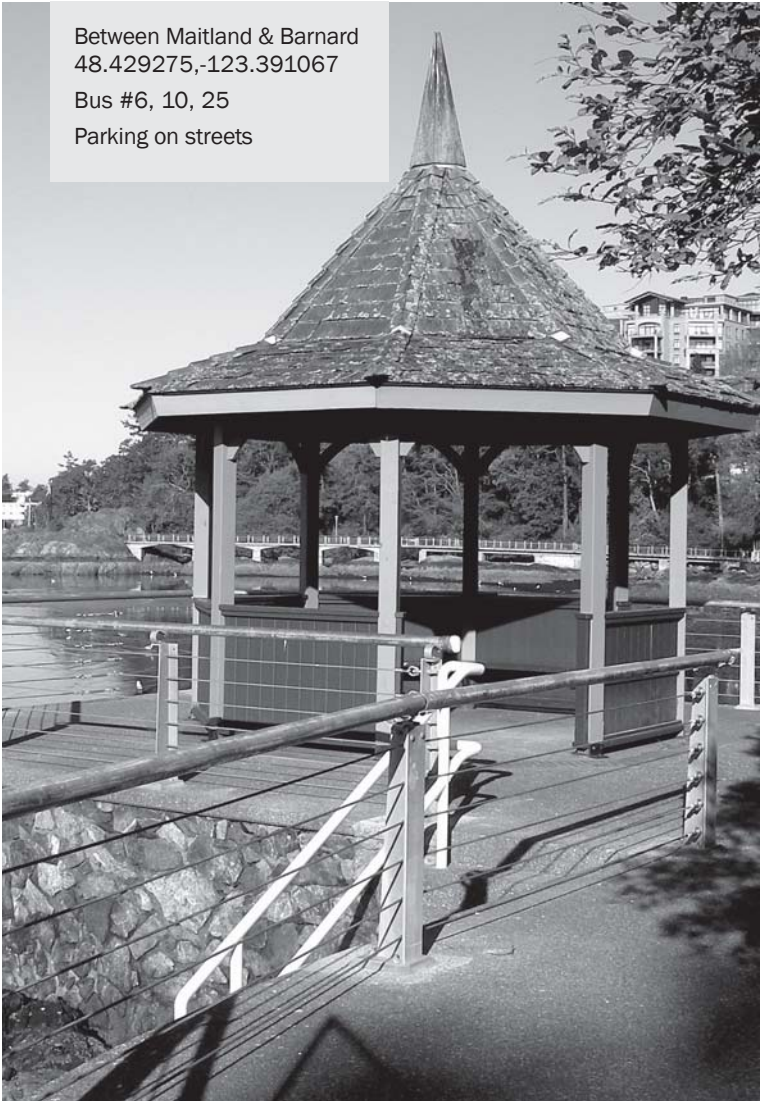


The Gazebo

BETWEEN THE STAIRS AT THE END of Maitland Street and Barnard Park is a shelter to duck into if it starts to rain, the sun is too hot, or you want to stop and sit. A stairway leads down to a small beach.

Looking west you can see the Westbay Marina and to the south is the entrance to the Victoria Harbour.

Between Maitland & Barnard
48.429275,-123.391067
Bus #6, 10, 25
Parking on streets



West Bay

THIS IS THE ENTRANCE TO THE walkway from the Esquimalt end at Head Street. Follow the sloping walkway down to the left and around the corner to the long wooden benches.



I sit and write by the light of the lamppost. It is night. The incoming tide rocks the boats moored at Hidden Harbour.

I take a deep breath of the sea air. I try to grasp the pieces of my life that are buzzing around and draw them back to me—under my control. Sorting out the essential bits and letting the other stuff go.

I breathe deeply again and let it out. What is this magic that happens when I stop—pause—and just look and listen?

A boat creaks as it rubs against the dock. The water laps below me. It is so quiet.



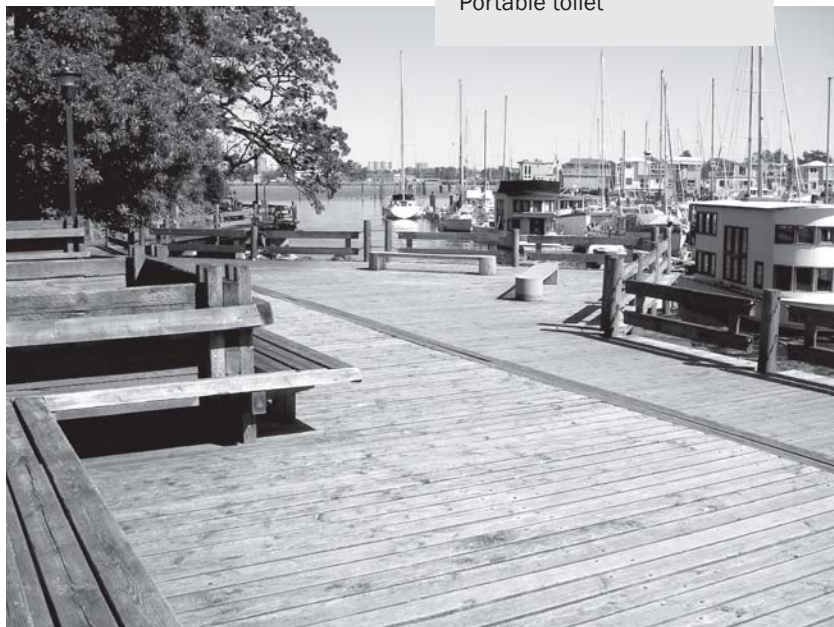
526 Head St.
48.42809, -123.398073

Bus #25 or 6

Parking lot at Head St. (2 hrs.)

Harbour Ferry stop at
Westbay Marina

Portable toilet



Captain Jacobson Park

THIS LITTLE PARK IS AROUND the corner from where the Westbay Walkway comes out on Head Street.

It is an open, sunny park with a view out over the marinas towards downtown.

The Westbay Marina, the Fin & Gill Bar and Grill and Princess Mary Cafe, the Harbour Ferry stop, and the colourful floating homes are just down Head Street from here. If you take the stairs down to the wooden walkway along the marinas you can stroll all the way to the RV park.

507 Head St.
48.427364,-123.398464
Bus #25
Harbour Ferry stop
Parking on Head St.

Westbay Walkway

Did you know?

This used to be an estuary for a small stream that flowed into West Bay. It was filled in during the 1950s.

The “Steamboat Gothic” house was built for Captain Jacobson’s wife in 1893. He made his fortune in the sealing industry when seals were still plentiful.

