



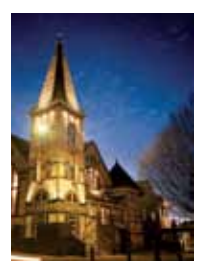
BC's Best-Kept Secrets
By Christina Crook

A sneak peek at BC's best & brightest

There used to be a little upstairs room on Vancouver's Granville Street: the hippest, most creative little restaurant called the Sugar Refinery where you'd spot the musical likes of Rufus Wainwright. Though the tiny live music venue closed its doors in 2004, spots like it are legion *If you know who to ask*.

Have you ever wanted to be an undercover tourist? Perhaps your guidebook is thumbed to within an inch of its life? Or maybe you are the type who carefully plans what to do and where to go – so long as it includes all the latest places to see and be seen in. Whatever your type, British Columbia is a veritable mecca for the cultural enthusiast, promising a bucket list of experiences you won't soon forget.

Here's an insider's view of the province:



Belfry Theatre, Victoria

Best of the City

BC's capital city of Victoria is home to the **Belfry**, a theatre that produces contemporary plays with an emphasis on new Canadian work. The must-see theatre resides in a former Baptist Church built between 1887 and 1892 and is today an award-winning heritage site.

While visiting our culture-laden capital, be sure to get your local fashion fix on Victoria's Lower Johnston Street and hunt down **Russell's** rare, used and out-of-print books, all between art galleries, ice cream parlours and fair trade coffee houses.

Best of the Country

The best of the country lies well off the beaten path. To create memories that last a lifetime, get in the car or borrow a bike, and follow the country roads as far as your feet will take you. One of BC's best-kept secrets is its **circle farm tours**. Consider taking a spin on the original Agassiz-Harrison route (near Harrison Hot Springs) where Farm House Natural Cheeses offers you a view of the cheesemaking process and a taste of pure country – artisan cheeses and dairy products made with pure milk from the cows and goats right on their family farm.



U'mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay



Britannia Mine Museum



Fort Langley, BC

Best of our Past

When communities preserve their heritage they steward their story. Throughout British Columbia you will find local museums, cultural centres and historic sites that help trace the history of Canada's far western province. Though British Columbia is young, its history is rich. From the **U'mista Cultural Centre** in Alert Bay and the **Ksan Historical Village and Museum** in Hazelton (page 124), to "Big House" at Fort Langley where the Father of British Columbia, James Douglas, proclaimed the establishment of British Columbia and the recently restored **Britannia Mine Museum** (page 35), the characters from BC's past have touched all corners of this province.



West Coast Railway Heritage Park, Squamish

From sea to shining sea, the Canadian Pacific Railway connects east to west by way of tonnes of iron and a century long history. The railway was originally built between eastern Canada and British Columbia between 1881 and 1885, fulfilling a promise extended to

BC when it entered Confederation in 1871. Experience the railway for yourself at the **Engine 374 Pavilion** at the Roundhouse in Vancouver or the **West Coast Railway Heritage Park** in Squamish (page 35).

Still hungry for more? Google 'BC's Best-Kept Secrets!'