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"Beat the Heat in B.C."

June 2006

Victoria

Think green, think gardens, think "full of life." That's the new slogan for this capital city of British Columbia. Located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, it's a scenic 90-minute ferry ride via BC Ferries from Tsawwassen, followed by a 35-minute drive from Swartz Bay to downtown Victoria. There is always the option of taking a floatplane or helicopter, too. Victoria was rated as the "fittest" city in Canada five years ago, so get out and see the sights on foot or by bike. A unique way to "see" the city is by kayak. Ocean River Sports has a 2.5-hour Victoria Sunset Tour and if you've never been in a kayak, no worries. The guides are helpful and patient, and before you know it you'll be dipping your paddle into the historic Gorge Waterway while seeing the city transform from daylight to dusk. During a recent paddle, a friendly seal followed our three kayaks, and I swear he winked at me.

And if you want to see whales, this is the city. Victoria's waters are home to three resident pods of Orcas with more than 80 whales.

For a true Pacific Northwest experience, take a tour with the "Seaweed Lady." Diane Bernard of Outer Coast Seaweeds provides resorts, restaurants and spas with her hand-harvested seaweed and products. During the summer months, she gives tours in Sooke, 45 minutes west of Victoria. Afterwards, drive back to Victoria and indulge in a 90-minute Seaweed Body Treatment & Exfoliation at Sapphire Day Spa. It's sublime.

Golf is big on Vancouver Island, and the newest kid on the block is The Westin Bear Mountain Victoria Golf Resort & Spa. The mountainside property features the first and only 36-hole Nicklaus-designed golf course in Canada along with the luxurious Sante Spa (the 18-hole Mountain Course is now open and the 18-hole Valley Course will open in 2008).