

Man sitting on chair facing audience

Woman comes up behind

W: Morning. What is this contraption?

M: This is a Kabuki Kab. You sit behind me and I pedal around town showing you the sites of Victoria! Are you new to Victoria?

W: I just came from Vancouver I had tickets for the Stanley Cup playoffs.

M: Hey so you got to see Vancouver Canucks win the Stanley Cup, again! Did you know that the Victoria Cougars won the Cup in 1920?

W: Thanks! That gives me an idea! I have the oddest request for you today. I've already seen the sights, so I don't just want to you to take me around, I want you to tell me the weird or unusual things you know about Victoria.

M: I'll take that challenge, hop on! Well, since we are parked right between the Empress and the inner harbour, let's start here.

W: I already know that the inner harbour is where you have the tall sailing ships, the float planes, the whale watching boats, the wax museum and the wee little harbour ferries.

M: But did you know that the wee little harbour ferries do an intricate dance that some call the harbour ferry ballet and the wax museum has a torture chamber area!

W: And what about the Empress and the conference centre to our left?

M: All these building are actually built on top of a landfill! Until just a bit after the turn of the century, the ocean inlet actually stretched up to the Crystal Gardens.

W: Ah that explains how the Crystal Gardens was able to pump ocean salt water into their public baths and swimming pool.

M: That's right, and did you know that behind the Crystal Gardens is the oldest Canadian Lawn Bowling Club. It's over 100 years old!

W: So we are passing the Parliament buildings on our right now. Designed by Rattenbury.

M: Francis Rattenbury actually designed the Empress, the Parliament, the Crystal Gardens and many other famous BC buildings. In 1925 he divorced his wife and remarried a piano player Alma Parkenham, who was a wartime heroine. His first wife wasted away and died four years

later. He moved to England with Alma. In 1935 he was murdered by Alma's newest lover, his chauffeur! Shortly after the chauffeur's conviction, Alma committed suicide!

W: Wow there's a lot of dirt in this city.

M: And speaking of dirt, we are passing over the tunnels that connected all the buildings in the inner harbour. Some were Chinese opium dens and brothels. Some were simple storehouses and a few were just to connect offices with the Empress and the Parliament. The tunnels that connected the Parliament were actually used to store records for many years until one day when they accumulated stacks of paper collapsed, trapping and almost killing someone! You may recall this story from a little film called "Buried Alive".

W: If we keep heading south, we'll be close to Ogden Point where the Cruise ships dock. I've walked out on the long breakwater and boy was it windy!

M: And if you just go a little ways down the beach from there you will be at Mile Zero, the start (or finish) of the TransCanada highway. It's the very spot where Terry Fox began his run. It's a beautiful area because you can see the container ships heading for Vancouver against the back drop of the Olympic Mountains of Washington State.

W: Washington State!

M: That's right, Victoria is actually below the 49th parallel that separates most of Canada from the US.

W: And what if we continue along the beach?

M: You'll get to the Ross Bay cemetery, one of the oldest in North America. And in 1909, a large piece of the cemetery actually washed out into the ocean, depositing the bodies of many Chinese and Japanese Victorians on nearby beaches! And in the 1990's the same thing almost happened, until the shore was secured with huge blocks and reinforced concrete.

W: YUCK!

M: And a bit farther down is the Uplands golf course where every year they hold a New Year's Day Golf Tournament.

W: You play golf all year long!

M: And we can bike all year long too along some of the finest trails and greenspaces in the world! But back to the Uplands, if you are "lucky" you might see one of the most famous

ghosts of Victoria, the lady in white, who was murdered by her husband and buried in the sand. She often haunts the golf course.

W: There are ghosts in Victoria?

M: Victoria is one of the most haunted cities in North America. In fact, a world famous historian, John Adams gives Ghost Tours of the downtown and Ross Bay.

W: What's after the Golf course?

M: I guess we could jump to Cadboro Bay where lives the Cadborosaurus! It essentially the Loch Ness monster or Ogopogo, but in Salt Water.

W: I think I'll need a coffee soon. Can we stop at a Starbucks?

M: Actually Starbucks aren't all that common in Victoria.

W: Oh, you don't like coffee?

M: Actually we have the largest number of coffee shops per capita in all of Canada. We just prefer local sources of food, beer, cider, wine, etc. And that includes our baristas.

W: Locally grown, eh? What about BC bud?

M: Ha! Sad to say, but marijuana is the largest cash crop on the Island, easily beating out organic farming and such.