

# Victoria: *Roses in January*

Canada's cities are home to over 75 per cent of all Canadians. As diverse and vibrant as the nation's mosaic of citizens, each possesses a unique ambience and appeal. The beautiful, west coast island city of Victoria introduces a series of Canadian city profiles.



**T**he drama of the fur trade and the riches of a gold rush are all part of the colourful history of Victoria, the capital of British Columbia.

Fort Victoria was originally established as the western headquarters of the Hudson Bay Company in 1843, and thus for many years it was a key British centre for the flourishing North American fur trade. Fifteen years later, with the discovery of gold on the Fraser River, Victoria burgeoned. As the only port on the northwest coast, Victoria became an administrative and supply centre, and the "jumping off" point for thousands of prospectors.

## Between the Ocean and the Mountains

Today, Victoria is a vibrant, modern, ideal-sized city. Yet its harbour, gardens, parks, turn-of-the century

architecture and year-round mild climate combine to create an aura of old-world charm.

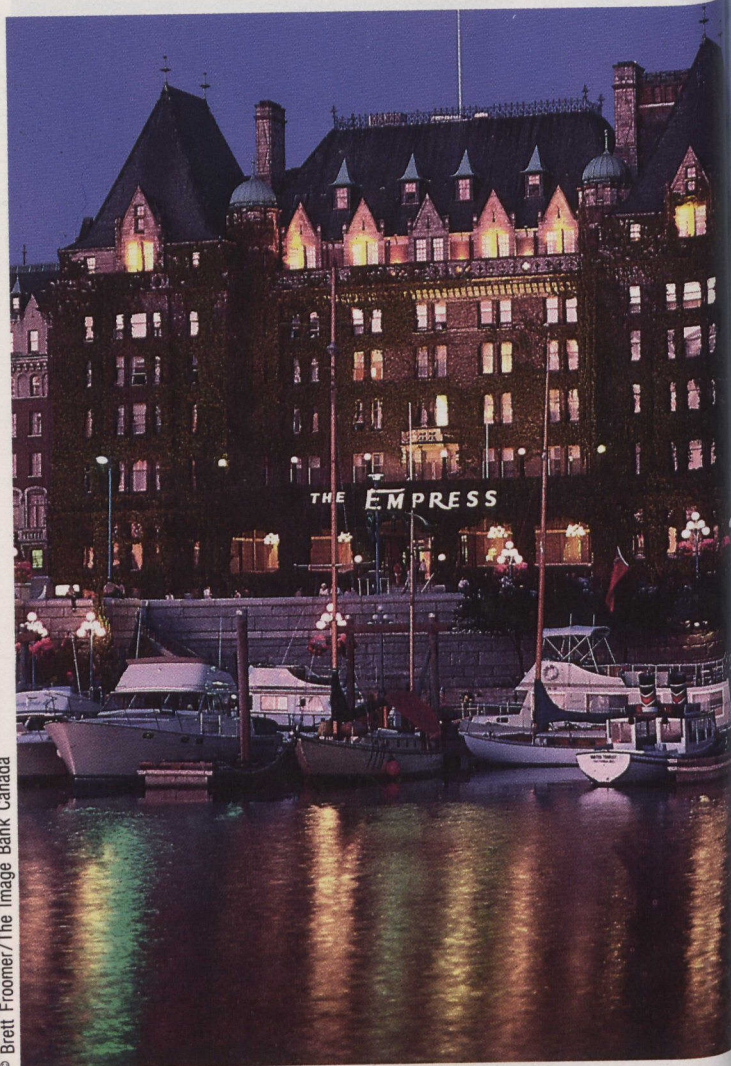
Located on Vancouver Island on Canada's Pacific edge, Victoria is renowned for its setting of unrivaled natural beauty and gentle climate. Ocean and mountains combine with the warming Japanese current to give it Canada's most enviable climate. Snow is a rarity, roses begin to bloom in January, and the annual "Victoria Flower Count" takes place in February.

## Preserving the Past

Victoria, a favourite international tourist destination, attracts 2.5 million visitors each year, most of them from North America, but large numbers also from Japan and Germany and increasingly from the Scandinavian countries. They travel from afar to see the world-famous Butchart Gardens — a spectacular floral scene in a transformed limestone quarry.

A careful tourism strategy includes strict building codes limiting the number of new highrises in the downtown core. Determined to protect the city's heritage of clean air and water, Victoria focuses on attracting non-polluting "clean industries." And a policy of restoration and renovation has successfully preserved the city's unspoiled atmosphere.

Named after a former British monarch, Victoria is still characterized by a flavour of old Britain. The ivy-covered Empress Hotel dominates the city's bustling Inner Harbour



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and continues the tradition of English high tea. Lawn bowling greens, the crack of cricket bats and double-decker buses add to the British heritage.

## Pursuing the Future

Yet Victoria is also a city of the future. The region's strong, diversified economic base supports 250 000 residents who work mainly in government services, fishing, shipbuilding and sawmills.

During the global economic downturn of the late 1970s,

Victoria's Inner Harbour, the hub of the city, is flanked by the historic Empress Hotel.

Victoria faced the challenge of both diversifying its economic base and compensating for its distance from the large mainland markets. The solution was to produce technology and knowledge that were exportable without high transportation costs. Today, 110 high-technology companies operate in the region. A "Silicon Valley" of high-tech firms in fields such