

The Sentinel

Amsterdam

Integrity, heart, humour

feature

VANCOUVER:
AN EXPEDITION
OF TASTES

perspectives

DAM IN 60
MINUTES!





Vancouver: An expedition of tastes

feature

'My taxi drops me off in the
up and coming Gastown
neighbourhood'

By Ananda van Welij

A city right on the Pacific Oceanfront, spread out over flowing hills that morph into impressive, snowy mountains: Vancouver. A city that, in my mind at least, had always been the starting point for a snow adventure. I discovered on my first visit in early March that it has so much more to offer.



'I want to taste so much more and don't want to leave the place'

I'm slightly overwhelmed when walking across town to my hotel. Just as in any large city in North America, the streets are straight and run for a very long time before changing name. As I step up to the lovely and perfectly centrally located Wedgewood Hotel, my bags are collected and carried to the reception. After checking in, I take a minute to wind down on the incredibly comfortable sofa in the Bacchus Piano Lounge, which is known for its great food and wines, before freshening up to go out.

Rustic history, new tastes

Luckily, I'm not completely alone in exploring Vancouver over the next few days; I would be shown around the city on a tasting and sightseeing tour thanks to Tourism Vancouver/BC. And things get off to a good start. As my taxi drops me off in the up and coming Gastown neighbourhood, the driver tells me that it used to be the place where all the town's butchers were located, resulting in the name Blood Alley. Although the street still has a rough feel to it, the open space and lovely aroma into which I walk soon takes my mind off of all that.

The Salt Tasting Room is not simply about tasting delicious wines, cheeses and meats, it's about enjoying them. You don't spit the wine out. You take the time to sit down, unwind, talk and taste. Different menu options are available, depending on your preference. Open to new things and excited to learn about the local products, I allow our waitress to decide for me. This proved to be an excellent decision. Sublime wines from various wineries are combined with cheese and meat and a little bit extra, like a fruit compote or local honey. My favourite combination was Alvear Solera 1927 dessert wine with La Roche Noire blue cheese and a few drops of honey. It's so incredibly delicious that it manages to silence my friend Paul, who joins me at the end of the tasting and insists that I order a bottle online to send home.

I want to taste so much more and don't want to leave the place, but it's time to move on to other culinary delights. Paul and I venture back into the cold and

walk down Blood Alley to The Irish Heather. Stepping back into warmth we are welcomed by the wonderful crew there. It is almost the complete opposite to the Salt Tasting Room in terms of interior style. The Irish Heather has a proper, comfortable pub feeling with matching food. After all the cheese and wine, I decide to keep it light with a fresh salad. Paul goes for the signature dish: the steak and Guinness pot pie. He said he wasn't really that hungry but the food is just too good and when our plates are cleared, his doesn't have a crumb left on it. Besides the good, rustic food, the Irish Heather is a popular place thanks to its long table concept. Taking any free seat is the start of a night full of fun for your taste buds and your tongue is further exercised by talking to the strangers around you.

Full of amazing food and drink, it's time to head back to the hotel. Walking across Gastown at night under the stars makes me curious to know how it looks during the day. Perhaps an opportunity will arise over the next few days.

Next level tea

Bright sun greets me at breakfast the following morning and I'm told that I'm really lucky; it seems we're in for the first real sunny day in a long time. Perfect for exploring! After the lightest and crunchiest fresh waffles I've ever tasted, I jump in a taxi as I'm already late for my next stop: the Urban Tea Merchant. Yes, I do love to drink tea but a tea tasting is not something that springs to mind as a fun activity. But wow, was I wrong! I'm welcomed by Reza and Casey, owners and next level tea sommeliers. Yes, you read that right, sommeliers. After a look around the shop, which is filled with 200(!) different types of tea, it's time to start tasting. Choosing which tea to taste is hard enough in itself. The aromas that waft to my nose when the different cans are opened are all so good.

Sitting down at a special table, Reza explains to me the different backgrounds of the teas he is about to serve me and how to properly prepare and taste them. Letting the tea flow through different cups before allowing me to try any of them will ensure that I will get the



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