

Victoria's Ale Trail

Bottoms Up!

VICTORIA IS WELL-KNOWN FOR its British-influenced heritage and snapshot-friendly vistas. But with four brewpubs within walking distance of each other and three award-winning craft breweries inside the city limits, BC's quaint capital is also a haven for beer lovers.

The first stop on any Victoria Ale Trail self-guided pub crawl should always be Spinnakers (308 Catherine St.) simply because it became Canada's first modern-day brewpub in 1984. Founder Paul Hadfield still runs the place and has overseen its expansion to its present incarnation as **Spinnakers Gastro Brewpub and GuestHouses**. Whether you want to sample some of their cask-conditioned ales such as Doc Hadfield's Pale Ale or Mitchell's ESB, or enjoy a gourmet meal and comfortable night's stay, you're sure to enjoy your experience there.

A short walk along the rocky shoreline of the Inner Harbour delivers you to **Swans** (506 Pandora Ave.), which opened in 1989 and also offers a bed to sleep in along with a tasty array of lagers and ales. The heritage building is a converted grain warehouse, and while founder Michael C. Williams passed away in 2000, he left a lasting legacy, decorating the hotel with pieces from his exceptional art collection, including a Roy Henry Vickers totem pole and other significant works.

A block away is the **Canoe Brewpub** (450 Swift St.), which opened in 1996 in another converted heritage building. Built in 1894, the brick-clad City Lights Building originally housed coal-fired generators that powered the city's streetlights. Following a \$6-million

Canoe Brewpub's superb patio
(Deddeda Stemler/Tourism Victoria)



heritage restoration, it now boasts dramatic vaulted ceilings and exposed beams, as well as one of the city's best waterfront patios. With delicious seasonal brews including honey wheat beer, copper bock, oatmeal stout, maple wheat beer and hefeweizen, it's tough to stop at just one.

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The fourth stop on Victoria's brewpub crawl is **Hugo's Brewhouse** (625 Courtney St.) located in the Magnolia, a boutique hotel situated right in the heart of downtown. By day, Hugo's feels like a brewpub, but after dark, the vibe swings over to that of a nightclub.

Victoria is also home to a trio of craft breweries. **Vancouver Island Brewing** has been putting out award-winning brews like Pipers Pale Ale and Hermann's Dark Lager since 1984, while two more recent upstarts



Swans is a gorgeous spot to stop for a pint
(Deddeda Stemler/Tourism Victoria)

have joined the beer biz in the last decade. **Lighthouse Brewing** offers a consistently good product, such as its excellent Race Rocks Amber Ale. **Phillips Brewing** was started on a whim and a prayer by Matt Phillips who funded his enterprise with credit cards and lived in his brewery for the first two years. His perseverance paid off when it was voted BC's Brewery of the Year in 2006 with cheekily named award-winning beers like Surly Blonde.
—Joe Wiebe



In addition to choice beers, Spinnakers has great food and lodging
(Deddeda Stemler/Tourism Victoria)