

# TRAVEL

For anyone interested in the art of the totem pole — as I have been for the past 20 years, ever since I saw my first mammoth totem in the Denver Museum — there is no question that the most exciting examples of the genre are to be found in Vancouver and in Victoria, capital of British Columbia (located on Vancouver Island, about 15 miles offshore). Some of the totems of the Northwest Indians rise to a startling 120 feet.

Actually, Vancouver is a treat for people interested in all types of architectures, art and music, as well as its startling collection of Indian artifacts. The best, most exquisite examples of totem pole art are located in and around the Museum of Anthropology, a few miles from the downtown area on the campus of the University of British Columbia. It was a real adventure to lose myself among the intriguing, symbolic sculptures, with new insight into the lifestyle of the people who carved them.

The Museum of Anthropology is itself a work of art, a stunning glass and concrete structure designed by noted architect Arthur Erickson. A glorious totem example is installed outside the museum in a clump of evergreens, a harbinger of the awe-inspiring treasures inside the Great Hall.

Glorious as the totems of these Northwest Indians are, however, one should take a break from them to explore other aspects of Vancouver. We chose as our base the Meridian Hotel, part of the international chain that is owned and operated by Air France. The hotel, perched high on one of Vancouver's hills, provides an excellent view of the city's architecture, both contemporary and traditional.

The Meridian offers what, for some people, is the dining delight of the city — a decadent chocolate buffet, featured in the Cafe Fleuri. Although some chocolate lovers make it their entire meal, it's actually billed as the dessert that follows a weekend

# In hot pursuit of towering totem poles

buffet, built, primarily, on the local catch — salmon, of course, served smoked, poached, baked or barbecued.

Exciting as Vancouver is, however, no visit to British Columbia is complete without a detour to its capital city, Victoria. And, for certain, no one (like me) intent on pursuing the totem will be content to leave without seeing the collection there.

People in a hurry can take a seaplane directly from downtown Vancouver to downtown Victoria. But, the ferry ride from the mainland to Vancouver Island (where Victoria is located) is an attraction in itself, passing isolated villages and exquisite scenery.

Victoria is a jewel of a town with strong British influence. Consequently, afternoon tea is offered in tearooms all over town, but the most exciting is the Tea Lobby at the recently renovated Empress Hotel. The hotel was built in 1908 on Victoria's Inner Harbor and it remains a showplace of late Victorian architecture.

Fortified by the experience of tea, take the short walk, across a broad boulevard, to the British Columbia Provincial Museum with a magnificent collection of native Indian art, including 63 totem poles. I felt completely dwarfed, not just by the commanding size of the exhibit, but by the astounding variety and sophistication of the artwork itself, a

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Special to the Exponent

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reflection of the various Indian tribes that created it.

There is more to Victoria, including the oldest surviving synagogue in Canada. Congregation Emanu-El was built in 1863, shortly after the first Jews arrived in 1858, attracted by the Frazer River gold rush on the mainland. When Victoria became the principal urban center for the rush, many stayed on and assumed important posts. According to an authority on the history of the Jewish community in Canada, "From their ranks were drawn the third Jew to be elected to the legislature in British North America, the first to be elected mayor in British North America and the first to sit in the Canadian House of Commons."

So while British Columbia offers fine glimpses of Northwest Indian art, there is even more: a mild climate; great cold-water scuba diving; and Parliament buildings that emulate the ones in London. A myriad of attractions, all charming. But, for me, the startling totem still reigns supreme. ■



The Canadian Northwest is the place to go for those interested in totem-pole-watching.