



HOPPY HOUR RIDE

in Victoria, B.C.

by Tamara Muldoon

Beer and chocolate? It seemed an unlikely combination until we tasted six different handmade truffles expertly paired with an equal selection of house-brewed beers at Spinnakers, Canada's oldest Brewpub. Consider smooth, amber-colored Cascadia Dark Malt together with a confection called "Salt Lick," a velvety combination of dark chocolate, honey and sea salt. Pure genius.

This was just the first of the epicurean delights on our "Hoppy Hour" ride, a 3-hour bicycle tour offered by The Pedaler in Victoria, BC. Both a bicycle rental shop and tour operator, The Pedaler is located in the same building as the Crystal Garden, near the famed Fairmont Empress Hotel.

Playing follow-the-leader, our guide, Rod, led us on a circuitous route down city streets and across the Upper Harbor, delivering bits of historic lore and pointing out interesting sights along the way. The ride was not too strenuous—even for a non-biker like me. The Norco City Glide 7-speed bikes made climbing the few small hills a breeze.

Although sitting outdoors on Spinnakers' second floor deck was so delightful we could have spent the entire afternoon there, we needed to move on lest we get behind schedule.

Next up was Moon Under Water, a working-class

neighborhood watering hole, brewing unfiltered German-style beers. Included among these was their refreshing Victorious Weizenbock, with hints of clove; and Creepy Uncle Dunkel, a nutty-flavored bock made with dark malts and roasted wheat.

Back on Wharf Street, we gratefully bellied up to a window table at The Guild. By then we had worked up an appetite and welcomed the delectable appetizer plate. Although it's not a brewery, The Guild stocks over 50 varieties of bottled craft beers as well as an ever-changing selection of seasonal brews on tap. It was the latter we sampled; among them the light Hoyner Pilsner with citrus notes from Victoria's Hoyme Brewing; and Old Rasputin, a dark and flavorful barrel-aged Russian Imperial Stout made by North Coast Brewing of Fort Bragg, California.

Reluctantly, we returned to the bike shop, ready to do it all again. The Pedaler currently offers three other bicycle tours. Choose from Beans & Bites, featuring coffee tastings and baked treats; Spirits of Saanich, a longer excursion with lunch and hard-cider sampling; and the Castles, Hoods & Legends tour—exploring Victoria's unique neighborhoods and historic sites.

To reserve a tour with The Pedaler, go to thepedaler.ca. To learn more about visiting Victoria, go to tourismvictoria.com.



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