

WESTERN CANADA

Six things to do in Richmond, B.C.

Buddhist temples, dumplings and ice wine

ALISON KENT
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Just landed at Vancouver International Airport (YVR)? You could grab a cab or hop aboard the Canada Line to make the quick trek to downtown Vancouver. Or, opt instead to explore East-meets-West culture in Richmond, a lively metropolis, food hub and travel destination in its own right. Here's what you should do.

1. CHECK OUT THE MALL, NO, REALLY

Get your dim sum on at Aberdeen Centre's Fisherman's Terrace, a grandiose dining room showcasing an extensive selection of dumplings, sticky rice and pastries. You'll then have the required energy to browse Daiso, a quirky department store carrying tens of thousands of buck-or-two goodies you never knew you needed. Still have money burning a hole in your pocket? The Lamborghini store will make quick work of that.

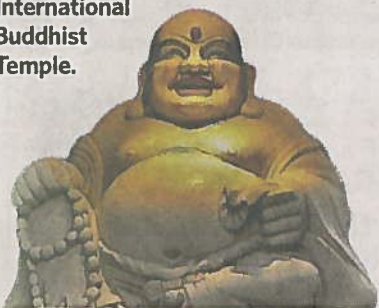
2. PLANE SPOTTING

Local citizens and frequent flyers know the busy Flying Beaver pub and grill oozes personality in a laid-back environment. Located a stone's throw from YVR and housed in a seaplane terminal, it allows you to fuel up with pulled pork potato skins and crispy duck spring rolls and gaze out over the Fraser River while arriving and departing travelers are propelled to Nanaimo, Sechelt and Victoria.

3. QUIET YOUR MIND... AND YOUR BELLY

The International Buddhist Temple is as magnificent as it is serene. Stroll the tranquil courtyard, view bonsai plants, and admire traditional Chinese art and design. Shimmering in gold and standing almost 10 metres from lotus base to top of aura, the Sakyamuni Buddha statue in the Gracious Hall is the largest in North America. The parking lot at Parker Place is an unlikely locale for an actively worshipped glass-encased Buddhist shrine, yet there it stands. After visiting the ornate statue, head inside the mall to Parker Place Aberdeen Meat & BBQ - a nondescript takeout joint with the most sublime BBQ pork ever tasted. Next stop, the food court shop selling dragon's beard

International Buddhist Temple.



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ALISON KENT FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Diners at The Flying Beaver enjoy the view while watching seaplanes come in for a landing on the Fraser River.

candy and bubble waffles.

4. QUENCH YOUR THIRST

Lulu Island Winery is Canada's largest exporter of wine to China. Housed in a spacious Tuscan-style facility, there is plenty of room for visitors to tour and taste award-

winning ice wines, both red (try the 2009 Cabernet Franc) and white wines, and fruit wines. All of Lulu Island's wines are produced on site from 100% Okanagan grapes, while locally grown berries are used for their cranberry, blueberry and raspberry fruit wines.

5. EAT WITH THE GOLDEN VILLAGE PEOPLE

There are more than 200 Asian restaurants easily within walking distance along Food Street (aka: Alexandra Road) in Richmond's "Golden Village." Highlights include Claypot Hot Pot and BBQ for

bubbling broths with meat and seafood to dip, sauce and slurp, Hong Kong-style Cattle Café for bubble tea and oversized bowls of beef brisket and rice noodle laksa, Jang Mo Jib for deftly made Korean bimimbap and crisp seafood pancake, and elegant Jade Seafood Restaurant for mushroom truffle dumplings and smoked "grandpa" chicken.

6. PRESS YOUR LUCK

Conveniently located along the Canada Line rapid transit system, River Rock Casino Resort offers top-notch accommodations, a 1000-seat theatre to catch casino circuit performers, a rainforest-themed spa and water slide. Oh yes, and there is a casino. I lost. But you'll think you won the jackpot dining at Tramonto, River Rock's Italian restaurant. Feel lucky while luxuriating over smoked B.C. sablefish or seared Wagyu rib eye with wild mushrooms.

Alison Kent is a freelance food and travel writer based in Toronto. Her trip was subsidized by Tourism Richmond.

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