

Gastown walking tour (2 hours)

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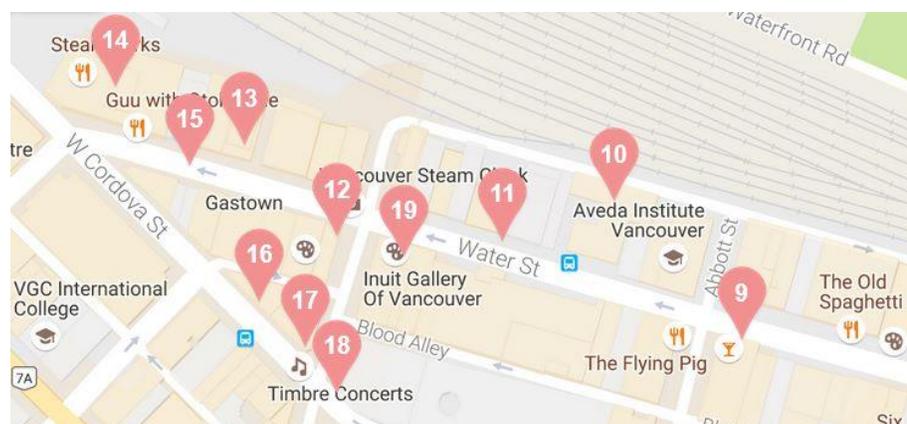
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1. Europe Hotel: 43 Powell Street

Angelo Calori built his Europe Hotel in 1908-1909 conveniently close to the old steamship docks at the foot of Columbia Street. A bus transferred passengers to the hotel. Parr and Fee architects designed a "flat-iron shaped" building for this triangular-shaped lot. It is reputed to be the earliest reinforced concrete structure in Canada and the first fireproof hotel in western Canada. The building and the annex to the east were rehabilitated in 1983 to provide affordable housing units. Funding was provided by Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation, and A. Ingre and Associates were the project architects. The lobby features elegant marble, brass, tile, and glass work.

2. Captain French Building: 41 Alexander Street

In recent years this block has seen a number of buildings converted to residential uses. The first of these at 41 Alexander was completed in 1991 and is known as the "Captain French" after the first owner of the building. Other renovations at 25, 27, and 73 Alexander followed soon after. 58 Alexander was also renovated in 1992 to provide rooms for low-income residents. Street improvements that are in keeping with the developing residential character of this block were completed in 1996.

3. Dunn Building: 110 Carrall Street

Built in 1898, this was one of many warehouses completed in Gastown during Vancouver's boom at the turn of the century. Former alderman Thomas Dunn retained architect N.S. Hoffar to design this structure to house a ship chandlery and hardware business. It was completed in time to profit from outfitting Klondike gold seekers. In those prosperous days, Dunn held a ball in the warehouse to celebrate its opening.

4. Byrnes Block: 2 Water Street

The Byrnes Block was among the first brick structures in Vancouver. It was built after the fire of 1886 by Victoria real estate speculator and former Barkerville sheriff George Byrnes. Designed by architect Elmer H. Fisher and completed in 1887, the block included the Alhambra Hotel. With hot water and a stove or fireplace in each room (note the many chimneys), the Alhambra was one of the city's fancier hotels. It stands near the site of Gassy Jack Deighton's second saloon which torn down in 1870 to make way for the newly surveyed streets. Early residents often gathered under the large maple tree nearby, commemorated by contemporary Gastown's Maple Tree Square.

5. Second Ferguson Block: 6 Powell Street

Railway tunnel contractor A.G. Ferguson constructed the present Ferguson Block between 1886-1890. A wood-frame structure, also owned by Ferguson, stood on the site before the fire of 1886. The CPR land office and a dry goods store were tenants in both buildings. Imagine the traffic at the land office as speculators gambled on the city's future.

6. 210 Carrall Street

This hotel built circa 1888 holds Vancouver's record as the longest continuous business on the same site, although under several different names. The many hotels in early Vancouver's downtown were not unusual in a boom town of that era. Hotels served as long-term lodgings for many people, such as seasonal labourers and married men who were not yet joined by their families.

7. Lonsdale Block: 8 West Cordova Street

This block was built between 1889-1892 by Thomas Dunn - hardware merchant and alderman, and Jonathan Miller - merchant, teamster, and Vancouver's first constable and postmaster. It was designed by architect N.S. Hoffar. The early tenants in the upper storeys suggest the vitality of turn-of-the-century Vancouver. Uses and tenants included a subscription Reading Room, the city's first synagogue, the Knights of Pythias and the Vancouver Electric Railway and Light Company. The Army and Navy Store purchased the buildings in the 1930s, and restored elements of the Classical-style façade in 1973-74.

8. Stanley Hotel: 36 Blood Alley Square

In 1979, during the height of renovation activities in Gastown, the Stanley Hotel (built in 1907) was converted to rent-controlled housing. The City cut a passage through the hotel at 33 West Cordova Street to Blood Alley Square, the location of Vancouver's first civic buildings. The Square contained Constable Jonathan Miller's cottage, which served as the courthouse in 1886, and the City Jail, two small lockless log cells. Walk through the passage to the Water Street side. It opens onto the Garage at 12 Water Street, which was built in 1930 as a parking garage. In 1972 it was renovated into an interior courtyard surrounded by shops and offices on Gaoler's Mews.

9. Dominion Hotel: 92 Water Street

When it was completed at the turn of the century (1900-1901), the Dominion Hotel, like many in Gastown, was home base for commercial travellers working western Canada for Gastown's wholesale companies. Originally, a department store rented the ground floor, resisting the general trend for stores to move closer to Granville Street. E.G. Guenther was the original architect for the building.

10. Gaslight Square: 131 Water Street

Project 200 was to have transformed this area into a series of high-rises served by a freeway. When the project met public opposition, developers rethought and reduced their plans. The CPR's Marathon Realty chose to renovate most of the 1920s warehouses on the north side of this block, adding the new Gaslight Square in 1974-1975. Henriquez and Todd Architects designed the building with its bay windows, brick façade and awnings to blend with its older neighbours.

11. First Malkin Warehouse: 139 Water Street

As William H. Malkin's wholesale grocery business prospered, he built this five-storey warehouse circa 1898. Like most of the buildings on the north side of Water Street at the time, the warehouse originally stood on piles. At high tide, Burrard Inlet flowed underneath it. Eventually, Malkin built two other warehouses in Gastown - at 353 Water Street in 1903, and at 57 Water Street in 1907-1912. A penthouse addition and conversion to residential use was completed in 1996 by the Amadon Group to designs prepared by Paul Merrick Architects.

12. Edward Hotel: 300 Water Street

The fire-resistant iron-and-steel-framed Edward Hotel (built in 1906) replaced the wood-framed Regina Hotel on this site. The Regina was the only Gastown building to survive the fire of 1886. The people trapped inside plastered wet blankets on the walls and formed a bucket brigade on the roof. Cambie Street, running north and south, formed the western edge of the original Granville townsite. Beyond this, up the hill, was land granted the CPR in exchange for extending the railroad to Vancouver.

13. Hudson House: 321 Water Street

The Hudson's Bay Company followed the fashion in Vancouver, locating their retail store to the west at Granville and Georgia Streets. This Gastown building was built in 1895 as the Hudson's Bay Company fur and liquor warehouse and continued in use as The Bay's warehouse into the 1960s. A renovation to accommodate offices and retail tenants was completed in 1977 by Werner Foster Architect.

14. Kelly Building: 361 - 365 Water Street

This warehouse reflects the history of wholesaling in Gastown. The Kelly Douglas grocery company began in 1896 and prospered outfitting Klondike gold seekers in 1898. During Vancouver's boom years, the firm built a five-storey warehouse (1905), and then less than a decade later (1911-14) expanded by adding eight more bays up the hill and around the corner. Both the building and addition were designed by W.T. Whiteway Architect. In 1946 Kelly Douglas moved to a new warehouse in Burnaby close to the freeway. The McLean Group completed a renovation, designed by Soren Rasmussen Architect, to a retail and office complex in 1988 and renamed the building The Landing.

15. Holland Block: 364 Water Street

At the western edge of Gastown, the old streets surveyed for the townsite of Granville jog at an angle to meet the streets laid out in the CPR's land grant. Completed in 1896, the Holland Block was constructed in flat-iron shape to make maximum use of the resulting triangular-shaped lot. Bay windows increased light and space in the rooms of second-floor tenants. At street level, cast iron pillars frame windows and floors. Look for the name of the manufacturer, B.C. Iron Works, on the bases of the pillars.

16. Horne Block: 311 West Cordova Street

The builder of this block was a speculator in the early Vancouver real estate market. James W. Horne made a fortune investing in Winnipeg real estate before moving on to Vancouver in 1885. He commissioned architect N.S. Hoffar to design this building which was completed in 1889. The elegant Horne Block once had a domed tower over the Juliet balcony at the corner.

17. Masonic Temple: 301 West Cordova Street

Architect N.S. Hoffar was responsible for designing a number of buildings like this one in Gastown at the turn-of-the-century. The Masonic Grand Lodge and other shops and offices rented rooms in this building. When it was built in 1888, an elaborate cornice wrapped around the Masonic Temple's roofline. Like the cornice that once decorated the Horne Block next door, this one deteriorated and was removed for safety.

18. Unitel Building: 175 West Cordova Street

Today the Canadian Pacific Telecommunications Building stands out as one of the few modern buildings in Gastown. It was built in 1968-69 as the first phase of the massive downtown redevelopment scheme, Project 200, and was designed by architect Francis Donaldson. Eventually Project 200 was largely scrapped, in favour of small-scale renovation and restoration of older buildings, preserving the historic core of old Vancouver.