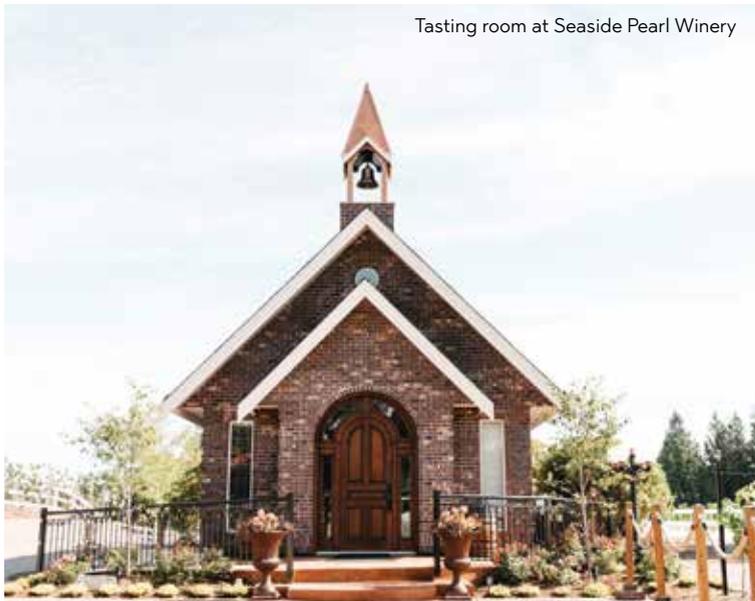




The Fraser Valley, British Columbia

BY JENNIFER HUBBERT

Good things are growing in British Columbia's Fraser Valley. Small businesses are popping up like mushrooms after the rain. Life is being breathed into gentrifying downtown cores. There's a "homegrown and handmade" ethos that's stirring a sense of place and pride – and it's caught the attention of travellers. No longer is the Fraser Valley a drive-through region leading into B.C.'s wine trail-laced hinterland. Travel to eat and drink your way through this edible landscape, but also to meet its butchers, bakers and soy candle makers.



Tasting room at Seaside Pearl Winery

SEE & DO



The Fraser Valley is anchored by Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Langley (but also includes Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Agassiz, Harrison and Hope) and is bisected by Highway 1. Pocketed among the farmland that swathes the freeway are wineries, breweries, farms, markets and makers. The best way to explore these pastoral backroads are via five self-guided **Circle Farm Tour** driving routes. In Abbotsford, stop in at **Singletree Winery**, **Mt. Lehman Winery** and the very charming **Seaside Pearl Winery**. (A detour to Langley's **Township 7** is well worth the drive if not just to sip its NBO vintage.) Along Chilliwack's Circle Farm Tour, duck into **Rustic Soap Co.** for hand-poured soy candles, clay face masks and soap, then head to **Smits and Co. w Farm Cheese** for dairy delights like onion gouda. On Langley's route, meet moonshine mama, Rebekah Crowley, to sample her artisanal spirits at **Roots & Wings Distillery**. Vital Vodka is her inaugural libation but small batch production yields creative seasonals like horseradish, dill, and honey and hops.

A visit to **downtown Abbotsford** – affectionately dubbed "downtown Abby" – offers a portrait of hygge-hip gentrification. First, get caffeinated at **Oldhand Coffee**, a café that evokes an HGTV farmhouse renovation: shiplap walls, an exposed beam ceiling, stamped concrete floors, fig trees and vintage school room seating. Next, shop carefully curated boutique retailers. Peruse **Spruce Market Collective** for home décor, cards and gifts; **Yes Chef** for kitchen provisions; and **Montrose & George General Store** for sensible threads and accessories. Don't leave downtown Abby without an armful of pastries from **The Polly Fox** and **Duft & Co Bakehouse**, and a fresh-pressed juice from **HABIT Project**.

Find equally charming storefronts in darling **Fort Langley Village** where **Republica Coffee Roasters** and **Sabà Café** compete in popularity, shops **Bella & Wren**, **Aimee B Clothing** and **Fort + Co.** sell trendy wardrobes and **Livingroom Fort Langley** and **Maven** offer covet-worthy home décor and jewelry. Of course, a trip to the village must include a visit to **Fort Langley National Historic Site**. The Fort's history is inextricably entwined with British Columbia's proclamation as a colony. To stroll through the Fort's timber outbuildings is to literally walk through the past; fascinating on its own, but better when enlivened by Parks Canada costumed interpreters. Stand in rapture as guide Andrew Bellefontaine shares histories as dramatic as an HBO miniseries.

Travellers who heed the call of the mountains might venture to **Lindeman Lake**. Well-frequented and well-marked, it's an appealing trail for out-of-town hikers. But for truly mindful immersion in nature, go with Lindsay Henderson and Daisy Melnyk, founders of **Namaste Hiking Co.** Once at the lake, you'll unfurl a yoga mat, breathe in the forest air and stretch your arms skyward amid towering hemlock framed by turquoise waters. Namaste Hiking Co. also leads full moon gatherings.