

Put Victoria-by-the-Sea on your must-see bucket list

By Niecee Regis

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VICTORIA-BY-THE-SEA, Prince Edward Island — “Bucket list” destinations are usually grand in scale, such as the Taj Mahal, Great Pyramid of Giza, and Machu Pichu. But what about smaller, less flashy destinations? Do we need entirely new designations for such trips, perhaps “teacup temptations” or “demitasse dreams?” Whatever the category, the tiny village of Victoria-by-the-Sea on Prince Edward Island is at the top of my don’t-miss-this recommendations.

We arrived mid-morning on a sparkling, pre-pandemic late-September day when the saturated colors of the red clay sand, cloudless cerulean sky, Technicolor green grass, and sparkling sea were matched by buildings painted pink, violet, aqua, ochre, and emerald. Amid all the color, we were drawn to a solitary white and red lighthouse. Finding it locked, we began to walk away until spotting a man in a cable-knit sweater hustling toward us, keys in hand. Ben Smith, a year-round resident, had seen us looking and came to open the door. The still operating 1879 lighthouse (open “by chance” with admission by donation) doubles as the Victorian Seaport Museum, where a wall-mounted selection of photos and text details the village’s seafaring history.

On previous visits to PEI — for lobster-, oyster-, chowder-, and mussel-eating at the annual International Shellfish Festival — I had somehow missed this gem of a town. How tiny is it? I



PHOTOS BY NEECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

put this question to Smith.

“We’re a village of 100 people. In the summer, it goes up by about 50,” said Smith.

Coming from a Cape Cod town where the population jumps from about 3,500 to 17,000 at the height of the summer season, I was taken aback, thinking perhaps I hadn’t heard correctly. But the number was confirmed by Christine Smith, Ben’s daughter, who along with her father operates Enchanted Candles, a shop selling intricately carved sandcast candles, delicately beaded mobiles, and other crafts in the Sea Nest, a toy-size one-room cottage.

“This building was originally part of a fox farm,” she said, when asked about the room so small I could reach up and touch the rafters. “It was dragged over here by the fire department.



Top: The 1879 lighthouse doubles as the Victorian Seaport Museum. Left: a fish cake dish at Landmark Oyster House. Top right: one of the area’s many lovingly preserved homes and buildings.

Once you have a shop in your yard, you’re in business!”

Located a 30-minute drive from the capital city of Charlottetown, an area on the south shore of the island referred to as the Red Sands Shore, the village then simply called Victoria was founded in 1819. By the end of that century it was a prosperous fishing seaport with a sheltered harbor from which schooners

shipped the island’s bounty to far flung locales. As the 20th century dawned, the development of roads and highways shifted modes of commercial transportation away from the sea, leaving the town off the grid from major commerce.

Looking at history with 21st-century eyes, this shift could be what saved the town from overdevelopment, and is what makes it special today. Along a six-square-block grid, the historic architecture remains. Lovingly preserved homes and public buildings have been converted into boutique shops selling all manner of crafts — pottery, jewelry, textiles, woodwork, rug weaving, handspun yarns, stained glass, soaps — as well as antiques, handmade chocolates, clothes, toys, and gifts. The Victoria Playhouse, a former hall for community events circa 1914,



presents contemporary drama, comedy, storytelling events, and musical concerts during its summer season. It all seems very turn-of-the-last century, without feeling fake or precious.

Most visitors are day-trippers who arrive to shop, dine, and stroll for all or part of the day. The tourism season runs from mid-May, weather permitting, to sometime in October when the town hosts an early Christmas stroll. (Or, as one shopkeeper told me, “I stay open until I have to turn on the furnace.”) Those who want to linger longer can stay in a historic seven-room bed and breakfast, the Orient Hotel, or in one of several one-, two-, and three-bedroom holiday cottages.

Restaurants serve local island fare in casual settings. Overlooking the harbor, the Lobster Barn Pub & Eatery offers lobster rolls, fresh local shellfish and seafood, po’ boys, burgers, salads, and other traditional pub favorites along with island craft beers. Also on the wharf, Casa Mia by the Sea serves up hearty breakfasts, lunches, and dinners made with island-fresh ingredients. On Main Street, Richard’s Fresh Seafood features — no surprise — fish shack favorites such as lobster rolls, fish and chips, and steamed mussels and clams. The menus may be simple but, this being PEI, the quality of the produce, meat, and seafood shine. Further along Main Street, the Landmark Oyster House serves a French-inspired, east coastal lunch and dinner menu. Swoon-

worthy seafood chowder, fish cakes, braised pork ribs, and PEI beef burgers are some of the offerings, as well as a changing selection of newly-harvested island oysters.

For experiences in the surrounding natural environment, By-the-Sea Kayaking offers one-stop shopping for adventure opportunities. In addition to kayaking tours at various times of day and night (full moon paddle, anyone?), visitors can also rent paddleboards (with or without lessons) and hybrid bikes (with or without added picnic lunch basket). Or sign up for a clam digging excursion that involves kayaking out to the Tyron Shoal at low tide followed by fresh beach side chowder on your return.

Before leaving we stopped by Island Chocolates, a family-run operation in what was once a general store. In addition to luscious chocolates in all shapes and sizes (lobsters, lighthouses, musical instruments, motorcycles, fish), visitors were enjoying decadent desserts and something called “factory coffee,” a Belgian chocolate-lined glass with fresh custom-roasted coffee and whipped cream.

With delights such as these throughout the village, perhaps Victoria-by-the-Sea deserves a “bucket list” designation after all.

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For this traveler, the mask stays

►MASKS
Continued from Page N13

American Bar Association. But I wanted to know about the plaintiffs in the case. The women filing suit against the government, plus the nonprofit that joined them, must have encountered compelling, egregious, and debilitating health issues to file a lawsuit against the government. I mean, it’s *the government*.

In the suit, Daza said she objected to wearing a mask on a plane because “it gives her anxiety, headaches, and shortness of breath.” Pope said she was concerned that “wearing a mask for extended periods will give her anxiety or cause her to have a panic attack.”

If I’m reading this correctly, Pope had not yet experienced a panic attack from wearing a mask on an airplane, but was worried that she might. It’s kind of like saying, “I don’t want to file taxes because I’m worried that I will owe money.”

But Pope was compelled to file suit against the government. You don’t wake up one morning and say, “Today I’ll clean the leaves out of the gutters and sue the federal government.” She must have a background in science and the dangers of mask-wearing that would lead her to embark on this life-altering journey.

I checked to see what she knows that the rest of us don’t. It turns out that Pope knows a lot. She’s a lifestyle blogger, natch. She has a website and a YouTube channel called the Healthy Home Economist. She shows viewers how to make fermented ketchup and raw butter fudge.

In her introductory video, she explains, “This channel is all about health. Health in the way our grandparents experienced it, where they didn’t need medicine for headaches every day because of the stress and the low food quality they were eating. They didn’t need a cup of coffee in the morning to get them going because they just got out of bed and they felt good.”

Poppycock! My grandparents tipped back multiple cups of coffee a day, their definition of a green salad was lime Jell-O with crushed pineapples, and my grandmother was always complaining about headaches. My confidence in Pope’s expertise was quickly eroding. Something about her “didn’t need medicine” line set off some alarms.

I kept Googling, all the way back to 2014, when Pope made an appearance on “The Daily Show with Jon Stewart” to talk about vaccinations. Pope told

then-“Daily Show” correspondent Samantha Bee that “I’m not putting anyone at risk by not vaccinating my children.” She told Bee that the decline in diseases like measles and polio wasn’t because of vaccines, but other factors, such as getting horses off the street. Huh?

“You could line up the doctors from here to down the block refuting me,” Pope promised. “But I’m not gonna change my mind.”

Well, that certainly sounds like a rational approach to health care decisions. Line those doctors up, as many as you want. The answer will always be: “You’re wrong!” Pope must have determined the doctors were misinformed about wearing masks, as well. Doctors, can you please get back into line? We need to tell you all that you’re wrong about masks.

Perhaps Pope isn’t the authority I was looking for on the subject of wearing masks on planes. Although I probably should have guessed that from

Do as you please, America, but I’m following the science.

her blog entries such as “Soy Boy Epidemic. How to Protect Your Son from the Globalist’s War on Testosterone” and “Vaxed Women Increasingly Shunned from the Dating Scene.”

Well, if Pope didn’t have a compelling reason for filing a lawsuit, perhaps I could find one with the Health Freedom Defense Fund, the nonprofit that joined Pope and Daza in the suit. Its website states “Health Freedom Defense Fund stands for *freedom, choice*, and the most basic of human rights, *bodily autonomy*.” Something about this sounded ominous. The preposition “of” between the words “freedom” and “choice” was noticeably missing.

The president of the Health Freedom Defense Fund is Leslie Manookian, a former finance executive who left Wall Street and made a movie called “The Greater Good.” It’s a movie about — here we go again — the debate around vaccines.

You don’t need to be Agatha Christie to see where all of this is headed. Manookian is as strident as Pope when it comes to her belief that vaccines are bad news. I’m still not sure exactly what any of this has to do with

wearing a mask on a plane. After reading Manookian’s blog, I’m a bit leery about taking medical advice from her.

“Vaccine tracking registries already exist in most states and now Bill Gates has developed a technology which will leave an invisible vaccination record under the skin of those vaccinated,” she wrote.

So that explains why I had such a bad reaction to my booster shot. It was the pesky invisible medical record.

Just to recap: Decisions about the health of travelers in the United States are falling into the hands of anti-vaxers who filed suit against wearing masks on planes and in airports. I’m not entirely sure what those views have to do with the efficacy of masks, or what makes these individuals experts on the subject. Even Judge Mizelle chimed in on the value of masks, stating “wearing a mask cleans nothing” and “at most, it traps virus droplets.”

Instead of doffing my mask because a judge in Florida sided with some folks who don’t believe in vaccines and think Bill Gates is tracking my vaccination record under my skin (have at it, Bill; CVS is tracking it, too), I’ll listen to professionals with experience in the arena of infectious disease.

Rochelle Walensky, director of the CDC, was the chief of Infectious Diseases at Massachusetts General Hospital and a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. She may not be an expert on making fermented ketchup, but she does know about viruses. Because of the emergence and spread of the COVID variant BA.2, the CDC decided to hold off deciding against lifting a mandate for public transportation until May 3.

Unlike Daza and Pope, who feel anxiety when they wear a mask (or get anxious at the thought of it), I sometimes feel anxiety when I don’t wear one. Airlines that have been fighting the mask mandate for months are already siding with the judge in Florida. By Monday night, most major US airlines had dumped their mask mandate, telling passengers it was optional.

I think I’m going to go with the CDC on this one. I want to keep myself and others safe. Do as you please, America, but I’m following the science. The mask stays.

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