



FORBIDDEN VANCOUVER

[MEDIA KIT]

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WHAT WE DO

Forbidden Vancouver is a walking tour company that immerses audiences in the city's scandalous past. Founder and Chief Storyteller Will Woods has reinvented the walking tour, staging unique, interactive and theatrical experiences that bring Vancouver history to life.

Forbidden Vancouver currently offers three signature walking tours: *Prohibition City*, *The Lost Souls of Gastown*, and *Secrets of Stanley Park*. The company has also staged a number of special events including *Secrets of the Penthouse*, *War For The Holidays*, and *Who Killed Kraft Bier?*

Storytellers lead our guests on adventures along cobblestone streets and down moonlit alleys to the little-known locations and hidden secrets of Vancouver's past.

Forbidden Vancouver has a five star rating on social travel site TripAdvisor, which also awarded the company one of their coveted Certificates of Excellence for the past six consecutive years.

Forbidden Vancouver has also been designated a Lonely Planet "Top Choice."

Media organizations including the BBC, CBC, *Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, *Westender*, *Vancouver Courier*, Miss604, Vancity Buzz, Global TV and Shaw TV have previously featured coverage about Forbidden Vancouver.



TOUR DETAILS

- ✓ Tours are 1.5 – 2.5 hours in duration depending on the tour
- ✓ \$25 per person, \$22 for seniors and students
- ✓ Can accommodate private groups

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COMPANY HISTORY

Will Woods founded Forbidden Vancouver in 2012. His goal? To create memorable experiences based on Vancouver's fascinating history.

An avid history buff originally from London, England, Woods made Vancouver his home in 2006.

Not long after, he decided the corporate life wasn't for him. He struck out on his own in February of 2012 with the dream of creating a whole new way for locals and visitors to access Vancouver's past.

He honed his acting skills in theatre school, combed through the archives for Vancouver's most scandalous stories and spent countless hours exploring the city's streets and alleyways.

Woods launched Forbidden Vancouver with breakout tour Prohibition City, then added the Lost Souls of Gastown for Halloween. It proved so popular, it's now a year-round offering.

In early 2013, he introduced Secrets of the Penthouse – a collaboration with Vancouver's most notorious venue.

In 2014 the company launched craft-beer-drinking-Vancouver-history-murder-mystery extravaganza Who Killed Kraft Bier?, a one-day special event in historic Mount Pleasant, which ran each year 2014 to 2016.

In December 2015 the company launched its first ever foray into all-out theatre with Christmas play War For The Holidays, staged at Vancouver's historic Roedde House.

In 2017 Forbidden Vancouver launched brand new walking tour Secrets of Stanley Park.

The Forbidden Vancouver team now comprises twelve people – including ten storytellers dedicated to sharing Vancouver's most scandalous history.



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BACKGROUND

- Slogan: “Discover Vancouver’s dirty history”
- Founded in 2012 by local history expert Will Woods
- To prepare for tour guide storytelling, Woods studied acting at Gastown’s Austin-Tuck Studio, under the tutelage of acting coach Deb Podowski
- Company has a team of twelve, including ten storytellers
- Runs three signature walking tours:
 - Prohibition City
 - The Lost Souls of Gastown
 - Secrets of Stanley Park
- Special events:
 - Secrets of the Penthouse
 - Art Deco Vancouver
- Past special events:
 - Granville Street Reveal
 - Who Killed Kraft Bier?
 - War For The Holidays
- Rated five stars on vacation planning site TripAdvisor
- Awarded Certificate of Excellence by TripAdvisor
- Designated a Top Choice by Lonely Planet
- Previously featured on the BBC, CBC, *Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, *Westender*, *Vancouver Courier*, Miss 604 Blog, Vancity Buzz Blog, Global TV and Shaw TV



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PROHIBITION CITY

THE HISTORY

In 1917, Prohibition hit Vancouver harder than a slug of bathtub gin. Saloon doors swung closed for good, forcing law-abiding citizens into an underground world of bootlegged spirits and illicit activity.

Mob bosses set up scores of illegal drinking dens, while dirty cops took bribes to look the other way.

Prescription pads quickly filled with imagined ailments and medicinal liquor flowed like water.

Vancouver's longest-running mayor L.D. Taylor emerged from the chaos, soon notorious for his shadowy past, raucous parties and underworld ties.

When the U.S. followed suit with their own prohibition three years later, enterprising Vancouver rum-runners made millions smuggling booze on midnight voyages down the coast.

THE WALKING TOUR

Delve into Vancouver's dirtiest secrets on this scandal fuelled walking tour. Starting in the world of the saloon, you trace the story of prohibition in Vancouver while winding along the city's most storied streets.

You'll hear tales of blind pigs, corrupt mayors, and enterprising bootleggers. Plus you'll see first hand evidence of opium dens and walk down an alleyway once teeming with over 40 "bawdy houses."

Along the way you'll see some of the city's greatest heritage buildings like the Sun Tower and the Dominion Building, which once battled to become the tallest building in the British Empire. The tour finishes in Gastown, steps from the city's most talked about bars and restaurants.



TOUR DETAILS

- ✓ Starts at 7 p.m.
- ✓ 2 hours long
- ✓ Meets at Cathedral Square, across from Holy Rosary Cathedral, at Dunsmuir and Richards Streets
- ✓ \$25 per person, \$22 for seniors and students
- ✓ Get the scoop on Vancouver's scandalous past
- ✓ Every night Mar-Oct.

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THE LOST SOULS OF GASTOWN

THE HISTORY

Venture into our city's earliest and most gruesome history. A time when Vancouver was the Granville Townsite, a violent frontier town full of hustlers and thieves, vagabonds and bawdy girls.

Meet Vancouver's first madam, who built a glamorous Gastown bawdy house before the city even had a school.

Catch the horror-filled tale of a long-forgotten plague that clutched the city in its feverish grasp.

Relive the terror of the fire that ate up Gastown in minutes and sent people sprinting for their lives down Water Street while the flames licked the skin from their backs.

Relive the tale of John Bray and his mysterious death, along with stories of the people and events that shaped early Vancouver.

THE PREMISE

On the Lost Souls of Gastown, audiences are lead by a storyteller in-character as a resident of Vancouver's past.

As they weave through the city's oldest spaces, the guide weaves a tale of their personal experiences living in early Vancouver.

The Lost Souls of Gastown is not a ghost tour. It's a gothic theatre adventure that transports audiences back to the city's earliest and most gruesome history.



TOUR DETAILS

- ✓ Starts at 8 p.m.
- ✓ 90 minutes long
- ✓ Meets at Cathedral Square, across from Holy Rosary Cathedral, at Dunsmuir and Richards Streets
- ✓ \$25 per person, \$22 for seniors and students
- ✓ Enjoy an immersive theatre performance featuring Vancouver's oldest stories played out on the city's oldest streets
- ✓ Mar – Nov: Tues, Fri, Sat
- ✓ Halloween schedule: *nightly*

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SECRETS OF THE PENTHOUSE

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Explore Vancouver's most notorious venue with club owner Danny Filippone as your host.

Joining Danny as your guides are historian Aaron Chapman and retired Vancouver Police Department constable Grant McDonald, who raided the club in the '60s and '70s.

Your guides share dirt more closely guarded than Mamma Filippone's famous meatball recipe. Be prepared to hear the deepest, darkest secrets of Vancouver's murky underworld past.

WHERE HISTORY WAS MADE

Since the day the Filippone family opened its doors in 1947, The Penthouse not only survived but thrived despite puritanical liquor laws and vice squad busts, playing host to mobsters, bootleggers, Rat Pack parties and murder in its 67 years.

Once a favourite watering hole of celebrity icons like Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald, the Penthouse hosted a mix of patrons you had to see to believe, with judges and crime bosses not just rubbing shoulders, but sharing cocktails, while dazzling, feather-bedecked showgirls perched on each man's suited knee.

Secrets of the Penthouse is a night of intrigue, scandal and humour that takes you through the private back rooms and little-known secrets of this infamous venue, topped off with a hearty Italian dinner and cabaret show.



TOUR DETAILS

- ✓ 3 hours long
- ✓ Takes place at The Penthouse Nightclub at 1019 Seymour Street
- ✓ \$59 per person
- ✓ Price includes Italian dinner and cabaret show
- ✓ Must be 19 or older
- ✓ Check website for dates and times

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PAST EVENTS

WHO KILLED KRAFT BIER?

This adventure set in 1920s Mount Pleasant, gives participants the chance to investigate a fictional murder, meet real-life historical suspects and sample modern day craft brews, all while learning about the history of Brewery Creek.

Who Killed Kraft Bier ran 2014, 2015, and 2016.

WAR FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Forbidden Vancouver's first all-out theatrical production, set at the historic Roedde House Museum in Vancouver's West End.

Audiences travel back in time to the tumultuous World War 1 era, and arrive as invited guests to the Gregson family Christmas party. While sipping on festive cocktails, and enjoying old fashioned plum pudding, audience members get to know the Gregsons, a fictional family whose stories are deeply rooted in the history of the time.

Against the backdrop of Canada at war, with the burgeoning suffrage movement on the home front, guests find themselves in the midst of a family struggling under the pressures of social change, and a terrible secret that threatens to tear them apart. War for the Holidays ran in December of 2015.

THE GRANVILLE STREET REVEAL

This tour took audiences for a trip into Vancouver's entertainment history. The storyteller took on the character of an actor on the city's early stages, known as Lord Fotherington Appleby.

Centered on Granville Street – the city's entertainment district a.k.a. "Theatre Row" – the Granville Street Reveal included glimpses into the past lives of notable venues such as the Commodore Ballroom and the Orpheum Theatre. It also took a detour off Granville to take audiences behind the scenes at the notorious Penthouse Nightclub.



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PRIVATE TOURS

Forbidden Vancouver offers private tours for groups of 2 people to 120 people. Larger groups are split between multiple guides to make sure everyone has a unique and intimate experience. They are popular choices for birthday celebrations, club outings, special occasions, corporate social event and more.

Available options include any of the signature walking tours. Special event Secrets of the Penthouse can be staged for groups of 20 or more.

SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

Forbidden Vancouver offers a version of its Prohibition City walking tour adapted specifically for school groups.

Prohibition City recounts the results of the temperance movement's push to make B.C. liquor-free. Their successful campaign in 1917 made Vancouver a dry city – but only in theory. In reality, the city was overwhelmed by illicit activity – bootlegging, gambling and vice. The tour charts the influence of women's rights, religious fervor, war, corruption and crime on the city's morals during a time of huge economic growth.

The 2 hour walking tour makes a unique field trip for any secondary-level student group. The tour subject matter fits particularly well with subjects covered in Social Studies 10, under the new BC syllabus. Lesson plans are available for free download from the Forbidden Vancouver website.

Teachers and adult chaperones may attend free of charge.



TOUR DETAILS

- ✓ Private tours scheduled at audience convenience
- ✓ Minimum: 2 people, Maximum: 120
- ✓ Teachers and adult chaperones may attend free

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FAQ

ARE THE TOURS WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE?

The Prohibition City walking tour can accommodate audience members in wheelchairs.

CAN CHILDREN ATTEND?

It depends on the discretion of the parent or caregiver. Forbidden Vancouver tours are designed for adult audiences and are not recommended for those under 16 years old. Prohibition City includes drug and alcohol references. The Lost Souls of Gastown includes references to prostitution. Secrets of Stanley Park includes references to some gruesome crimes.

WHAT SHOULD TOUR AUDIENCES WEAR?

Tours take place outside, so Forbidden Vancouver recommends audiences dress weather-appropriate. This could mean gloves, hats and coats for chillier days. With nicer weather, Forbidden Vancouver recommends bringing sunscreen and water.

WHAT IF IT RAINS?

Tours take place rain or shine.



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TRIPADVISOR REVIEW QUOTES

"You almost believe you were there and lived every moment."

– Nikita301

"The storytelling was mesmerizing."

– raindiva

"My husband and I recently took the Secrets of the Penthouse tour and it exceeded our expectations on every level... We've done walking tours in San Fran, NYC, Paris, London and Rome and this tour in our home town was on par to those... If not a cut above. We can't recommend it more."

– Vicky R

"We took the Lost Souls of Gastown tour first and liked it so much we came back the next night to do the Prohibition tour. Both were excellent and some of the best walking tours we have ever done. We've done historic walking tours in Boston, New Orleans, Portland and other cities and really enjoyed the mix of theatrics and history used by Forbidden Vancouver. Highly recommended!"

– Virtio



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MEDIA COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

“Essential experience for Vancouver history buffs.”

– Vancouver Vantage, June 24, 2013

“Treats guests to a view of the downtown Vancouver of yesteryear.”

– Inside Vancouver, June 17, 2013

“These vibrant historical tours have made a splash since arriving on scene just a few years ago. Top reviews and colourful storytellers have led to frequent sell-outs.”

– Miss 604, July 29, 2013

“...he dons a trench coat, trilby and his persona as ‘an undercover newspaper reporter fired for digging up dirt on the mayor’... and takes customers on a stroll through the city’s downtown, where many dirty deeds were done.”

– The Vancouver Sun, July 11, 2012 (Prohibition City)

“Using historical photographs to illustrate his stories, Woods paints a compelling portrait of B.C.’s grand experiment with banning liquor.”

– The Vancouver Courier, August 3, 2012 (Prohibition City)

“The wind howled and the rain beat down as George held up his lantern and started to tell us about his life. George wasn’t a figment of my imagination, but rather the creative character of Will Woods, a history buff and British business consultant turned actor/tour guide... Although George is a fictional character, Will has painstakingly researched all of the historical details. He painted a vivid picture of life in a 19th Century Vancouver – a world of gold seekers, outfitters and shady characters – whilst providing photos to help our imagination along...”

– Vancouver Weekly, October 2012 (Lost Souls of Gastown)



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IMAGES

To access images for media use, please email Will Woods, including information about preferred image subject matter, file size, etc.

Photos from Forbidden Vancouver tours, as well as the company logo, are available for media use.

MEDIA TOUR

We're happy to host members of the media on our signature walking tours or at our special events.

If you're interested in experiencing our unique approach to history, please contact Will Woods with your preferred tour and date.

CONTACT

WILL WOODS

Founder and Chief Storyteller

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FIND US ONLINE

WEBSITE

www.forbiddenvancouver.ca

FACEBOOK

www.facebook.com/pages/Forbidden-Vancouver-Walking-Tours/322483821123830?fref=ts

TWITTER

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PINTEREST

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TRIPADVISOR

www.tripadvisor.ca/Attraction_Review-g154943-d2617067-Reviews-Forbidden_Vancouver_Walking_Tours-Vancouver_British_Columbia.html

