



VANCOUVER  
HERITAGE  
FOUNDATION

# Heritage Discovery Day For Event Volunteers

Updated: March 2026

# WELCOME

The Heritage House Tour has taken place on the first weekend in June since 2003. Now reimagined as Heritage Discovery Day and House Tour, this event activates a community and offers a chance to explore a selection of Vancouver's heritage homes, each with its own story, past and present, from early architects, builders and residents to more recent restorations and adaptations. It is a wonderful way to explore Vancouver's diverse neighbourhoods, local businesses, community spaces, artisans, as well as discover architectural styles, design ideas, and garden landscapes.

## **Why is the house tour important?**

The future of a site is often found in adaptive reuse, which is a key concept in heritage conservation and the retention of historic buildings. Finding compatible new uses for early structures preserves historic materials and maintains a sense of community. Through the decades and adaptations, the history of each home connects to the people who built them, designed them, and lived in them, and helps illuminate the development of the city, its industries, neighbourhoods and communities over the decades.

# EVENT SCHEDULE

**9AM**

Volunteers arrive. Leads direct volunteers in setting up houses.

**10AM**

Houses open to the public and tour begins.

**1PM**

Second volunteer shift arrives and relieves morning volunteers at 1:30pm.

**5PM**

Tour concludes, houses are closed and volunteers pack up.

**5:30PM**

Staff and volunteers go home.

Vancouver Heritage Foundation would like to acknowledge that the tour is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of  $x^w m \theta k^w \acute{a} y \acute{a} m$  (Musqueam),  $S k w x w \acute{u} 7 m e s h$  (Squamish) and  $s \acute{a} l i l w \acute{a} t a \text{?} \text{?}$  (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.

# TOUR GUIDELINES

**These guidelines are shared with ticket holders directly in their ticket guidebook and through online advertisement. They must be strictly enforced - no special exceptions!**

**Additional context is provided here for volunteers.**

Houses are open from 10am to 5:00pm only. No latecomers or early birds.

- These are private homes that the owners live in and only available to us for the duration of the tour. Volunteers need time to prepare the house for opening and they need to be returned to their original condition in time for the homeowners to return.

All attendees are required to take their shoes off before entering a home. Please bring socks/slippers/indoor shoes and a bag for your shoes. We ask that attendees avoid bare feet in tour homes.

- Maintaining the cleanliness of each home is important! A seat will be provided to take shoes off. Some house routes do not exit through the front door.

All attendees must have a ticket. No children under 6 are permitted (infants in front carriers are allowed) and all attendees must have a ticket.

- This is an adult oriented event and not advertised as family-friendly. Personal belongings may be on display as well as breakable objects. Touching is not allowed! Children are discouraged for safety reasons. Children over 6 are permitted with a ticket.

# Guidelines Cont.

Photography on tour sites and within homes is strictly prohibited. Please be aware designated VHF photographers may take photographs or live recordings during the tour, and these images will be utilized without notification by VHF for the purpose of promotion or communications.

Washroom facilities are NOT available at tour homes. Check the map for recommended public facility locations.

- These private homes are only open to us under these restrictions. Homes must be left in the condition in which they were opened to us. Toilets will be taped shut and signs clearly visible. Volunteers may use a designated bathroom.

While visiting tour properties, please do not eat, drink, smoke/vape or use your cell phone. Open food or drinks and pets are prohibited on tour properties. Strollers, wheelchairs, bicycles, dogs, and visible cameras are not permitted in homes. You will be asked to remove (and carry) large bags or backpacks before entering a tour home.

- Again, cleanliness and security of the house is of utmost importance. These are private homes with personal belongings. Please ask any ticket holder to put away their phone, drinking bottle, etc. even if they are not actively using them.

Unfortunately the tour is not mobility device accessible.

- The inherent nature of heritage homes include entry way stairs, steep narrow staircases, and limited lines of sight. We are unable to alter them to meet accessibility needs for the one-day tour. We regret this restriction and strive to exceed accessibility requirements in our other programming. Please always advise attendees to use caution when climbing stairs and hold handrails.

# Guidelines Cont.

VHF reserves the right to refuse entry or ask any visitor to leave who does not adhere to these guidelines.

- The houses are on private property and anyone who is not following the guidelines or intimidating volunteers or fellow ticket-holders can be directed to vacate at any time. Those refusing to comply with the entry requirements (not removing shoes, bags etc.) can be restricted from entering. Please communicate that you are required to enforce these guidelines put in place by VHF and that they are welcome to direct their questions and concerns to management.

## EVENT DAY ATTIRE:

Please wear your VHF nametag and volunteer t-shirt while volunteering AND touring houses. Bring a small backpack/bag, wear layers, and a pair of socks or comfortable indoor shoes (slippers, clean gym shoes) if you do not want to wear socks. No bare feet on shift.

A lidded water bottle can be used but keep it out of sight. Please dress comfortably but clean and presentable – for example no flip flops, ripped pants, cycling gear, or pajamas. Remember you are representing VHF! The House Kit box can be used to store belongings during shift.

## TOURING HOMES WITH YOUR VOLUNTEER TICKET:

A benefit of volunteering is receiving an event ticket to participate during the time you are not on shift. Your ticket will be labeled 'volunteer' and you are required to wear your volunteer t-shirt and nametag while touring. Tickets are for yourself ONLY and are not transferrable.

Volunteers can politely by-pass lines to view the homes, however if lines are short please wait.

## **VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS & GUIDELINES**

Site Teams are led by VHF designated Team Leads - follow your Leads' direction. Please honour the guidelines, be cooperative, positive and treat everyone with respect and expect the same in return. If anyone is disrespectful of the guidelines or their fellow volunteers, a warning will be given by the Team Lead and may be escalated to the Volunteer Manager for further action. Remember: when you have your tour T-shirt on, your behaviour reflects on VHF, so we ask for your best self!

If any volunteers fail to arrive, the Team Lead will attempt to reach the missing volunteer at their home/cell number. If you are unable to function without the missing volunteer, please call the Volunteer Manager.

Please park away from your post – leave the prime spots for ticketholders. Check parking regulations! Consider carpooling, being dropped off, or taking transit. There are two site team shifts - please arrive on time so others get their turn to tour. Eat before your shift (we provide light snacks).

When attending the tour while off-shift, be unobtrusive if you skip lines (if lines are short, please wait). Entrance should be alternated between volunteers and ticketholders.

Room attendants can be prepared to rotate through all room posts. Ticket Checkers are welcome to also be rotated through room posts. Please discuss your preference with the Team Lead when you first arrive.

Absolutely NO visiting houses pre- or post- tour. If you need any information, have lost a belonging etc. contact a VHF staff person.

## **VOLUNTEER ROLES:    TICKET CHECKER**

Greet ticketholders at the house entrance and mark each visitor's guidebook/ticket. The back page is a passport to be marked off at each house (mark the house #, not through the house photo). This ensures that visitors do not share guidebooks.

A record sheet on a clipboard is used to track the number of visitors per hour. Count the number of visitors using the clicker provided. Each hour mark the number from the clicker.

Direct visitors to remove shoes at the entrance and carry them through the house. We do not provide bags and visitors may not always be exiting out the same door as they entered.

Limit entry to the house and have visitors wait when the house becomes crowded. Suggested capacity may be advised to you in advance but also use your discretion on the number of visitors allowed in at any given time – crowded houses are discouraged to prevent accidents or broken items, and so that visitors can enjoy the home. Let people wait in line as needed.

Do not allow oversized backpacks/purses, shopping bags, strollers or other inappropriate objects into the house.

No one under 6 is allowed, except infants in front carriers. No back carriers, no held infants. Everyone regardless of age requires a ticket except infants. This is an adult-oriented event so children are discouraged for safety concerns. Children over six are permitted WITH A TICKET (student prices are available).

Tell visitors they will be emailed an online feedback form – they are entered in a draw for next years tickets!

## **VOLUNTEER ROLES: ROOM ATTENDANT**

You will be posted in strategic, sensitive locations through the house.

Greet visitors and supervise your area. Please be friendly but firm enforcing ticket guidelines. No photography on properties or cell use in houses. This is a privacy and security issue – it is in the guidebook! There will be two clearly identified volunteer photographers as well as VHF Staff.

Ensure visitors do not use the bathrooms on your floor by placing signs and taping toilet seats shut. Suggest the nearest locations to find a public washroom.

Let the front door volunteers know if the house gets too crowded and to ask people to wait.

Be vigilant of areas that cause congestion and stairs in particular. Remind visitors to go slowly and watch out. If necessary, communicate with other volunteers if a group is ascending/descending a blind stairway.

You can also tell visitors they will be emailed an online feedback form – they are entered in a draw for next years tickets!

## **VOLUNTEER ROLES: INFORMATION TABLE**

You will be posted at a table either outside of a tour house or a strategic place within the neighborhood. Greet visitors, answer questions and offer directions. You will be provided with a FAQ sheet to assist you (ex. nearest public washroom location, available parking).

Set up the table with the provided materials - map guides, postcards, signs, posters, etc. Pre-purchased tickets will be available for pick-up from 9:30am - 3:00pm. A list will be provided and check off as tickets are picked-up.

Tickets will NOT be sold on event day. Politely explain to passerby's they are unavailable and direct them to VHF's website and/or other programming coming up.

## **MORNING SHIFT - SETTING UP THE HOUSE**

1. Unpack the House Kit box with the TEam Lead(s) and distribute its contents to the appropriate location in the house: Clipboards, pens and record sheet to the entrance door. Post welcome sign/shoes off at the entrance and the laminated map in a highly visible location near the exit.
2. Put out information about the house in the appropriate locations (if applicable). Put out sponsor materials and/or signs if provided.
3. Identify a secure volunteer storage space for belongings and the house kit. Leave valuables at home.
4. Review what you know about the house, do a walk-around for valuables, breakables, etc.
5. Note the closest bathroom stops on the guidebook map page to offer bathroom suggestions to tour goers.
6. Open the house to visitors at 10 AM sharp. Only admit ticket holders early if you are ready.
7. Remain in the house until the afternoon shift replaces you or your Team Lead releases you.

## **AFTERNOON SHIFT - CLEANING UP THE HOUSE**

1. Take over from the morning shift volunteers and get updated about the house.
2. Close the house at 5pm sharp, LOCK THE DOOR and clear the house of visitors.
3. Collect items, garbage in provided garbage bag. Remove tape from signs. Thoroughly check around the house for VHF items and put in the House Kit. Please retrieve street signs - signage costs VHF money to reproduce. Your house notes/schedule will direct you where to leave the House Box, sponsor sign and house sign.
4. Remain in the house until your Team Lead releases you.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

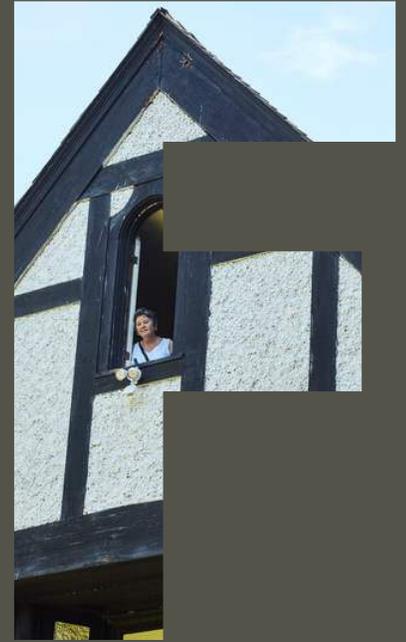
If someone experiences a medical emergency or sustains an injury while in the house, please first assess the significance.

If the person is attentive, move them out of the way or to a quiet place. Alert the Team Lead who can attend to them. They should not be left to rest for a significant amount of time and should always be advised to get checked by a doctor (even if it seems implausible, this is for liability reasons). Ask them or the person they are with if they need any further assistance and if not politely inform them that if they are not able to return to the tour, they will need to find a place outside. If they do not require immediate medical assistance, security of the house is primary.

If the person has sustained a significant injury, are unconscious, or experiencing a medical emergency immediately alert the Team Lead. The tour should be stopped and all persons in the house asked to leave. A volunteer can be stationed outside the entry door to explain the situation to waiting guests. If an additional person is with them, confirm if they will transport them to medical assistance or if emergency services should be contacted. If the person is alone and conscious, ask if they have an emergency contact or if they consent to emergency services being called for them. If they are unconscious, emergency services (911) should be called immediately. If needed, Incident Report Forms are provided in the House Kit.

If a volunteer sustains an injury or has a medical emergency, notify the Team Lead immediately. Team Leads will have a sheet of emergency contact information for each volunteer. Follow procedures as above and notify the Volunteer Coordinator. Band-Aids will be provided in the House Kit.

In the unlikely event of any other emergency (fire, natural disaster, etc.) evacuate the house immediately. Team Leads should attempt to bring their volunteer list and take attendance of volunteers once safely outside. Call necessary emergency services and then the Volunteer Manager.



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This document was produced by Vancouver Heritage Foundation. Policies are subject to change without notice.

Photos courtesy of VHF, Martin Knowles and Kamran Safari.

Questions can be directed to [mail@vancouverheritagefoundation.org](mailto:mail@vancouverheritagefoundation.org)