

Filming in Vancouver's Chinatown

The Vancouver Chinatown

Vancouver Chinatown, the second largest in North America, offers a wonderful array of authentic oriental-looking locations. There are still many areas in Chinatown where all the fascination and colour of the old way of life remain intact. The narrow roads and back lanes, vibrant with all sorts of activities, are filled with unique sounds and smells. Dr. Sun Yat Sen Garden – the first full-sized classical Chinese garden ever built outside China, is an oasis of peace and tranquility – a great location for your ancient Chinese shots! The neighbourhoods surrounding the core of Chinatown, with some unique-looking corner stores, are also worth exploring.

The heart of Chinatown today is between **Keefe Street** and **East Hastings Street**, running east from **Carrall Street** to **Gore Street**. Most stores open from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and offices open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The busiest hours are between **12 p.m. and 5 p.m.** Almost all stores are open for business seven days a week; weekends are exceptionally busy in Chinatown. It is therefore advisable to avoid filming on the weekends. Apart from western festive seasons such as Christmas and New Year, there are three periods that most merchants will not entertain your filming requests:

- Mid-Autumn Festival (or commonly known as Mooncake Festival): the second and third week of September
- Chinese New Year: mid-January to the end of February
- Winter Festival: the third and fourth week of December

The Protocol

Chinatown is made up of many “old guards” who braved a long journey and harsh life to seek better life in Vancouver. Many are not proficient in English, especially in understanding your filming needs. Therefore, it is best to hire an interpreter or a liaison person who speaks Cantonese or Mandarin to communicate for you. To obtain a list of liaisons, please contact the Vancouver Film Office. To film inside Dr. Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Garden (578 Carrall Street), please contact the Garden's Administration Department at 604-662-3207. There are numerous groups and organizations representing clusters of Chinese Canadians, distinguished in terms of political orientation, religious belief, and clan/region of origin in their homeland. Because of small membership and differences in political and religious orientation, no single group or organization can claim to be representative of all Chinese Canadians in British Columbia. However, you should discuss your plans with one or more of following organizations:

Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association
508 Taylor Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 6M4
Phone: (604) 682-8998

Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver
108 East Pender Street
Vancouver, BC V6A 1T3
Phone: (604) 681-1923

Chinese Cultural Centre
50 East Pender Street
Vancouver, BC V6A 3V6
Phone: (604) 687-0729

An ideal way to develop contacts is to send a letter (translated to Chinese) to the neighbourhood of the planned film location. With the assistance of a liaison person, you can arrange a meeting to discuss your filming needs and to answer any questions the residents and merchants may have. Some merchants have been approached by film crews in the past and are aware of the compensation or location fee of which they may be entitled.

Before the Actual Filming...

One week before the day of filming, you should send a letter in both English and Chinese to the Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association and the residents/merchants in the neighbourhood of the filming location. The date, time, and specific areas of filming should be clearly stated in the letter. A brief description of the script, any use of special effects, and temporary changes in traffic and parking regulations should also be mentioned.

A copy of the script, the Location Agreement (if required) and added insurance coverage should be provided to the building owner and the interpreter prior to filming. It is important to discuss your filming project with the owners and tenants of the building since they may not otherwise communicate with each other.

There are certain buildings and monuments in Chinatown that are considered sacred to some members of the Chinatown community. Some examples of these are: the arch in front of the Chinese Cultural Centre and the ceremonial halls of some benevolent societies.

For further information on filming in Vancouver Chinatown, please check with your liaison person or contact:

1. Manager of Community Affairs
 B.C. Film Commission
 601 West Cordova Street
 Vancouver, BC V6B 1G1
 Phone: 604-660-2732

2. Film and Special Events Office
 City of Vancouver
 453 West 12th Avenue
 Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4
 Phone: 604-873-7337

3. Alan Chan
 Translation and Liaison Services
 Cellular: 604-836-3020

Major Business Activities:

- Benevolent and clan societies
- Chinese herbal/drug stores
- Bakery and coffee shops
- Fashion boutiques
- Restaurants
- Jewelers
- Cultural and social services
- Antiques and handicrafts
- Financial institutions
- Lodging houses
- Book stores
- Grocers

An Introduction to Cantonese:

Good Morning: “Jo Sun”

I’m sorry / Excuse me: “Duh Em Ju”

Filming in progress: “Pak Gun Hey”