

I love taking classes to Barkerville.

There is so much to do there, but my advice for teachers is not to overplan the field trip. Give the students time to explore. If you feel the need to attach assignments to the trip, make it something that merges with the idea of students milling about the town and letting whatever happens dictate the experience. A photo essay, a quick write on what they are seeing, a couple of sketches, a soundwalk to take in a reproduction of a soundscape from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mixed with modern voices and noises. By all means, sign up for the school tours – students have a way of finding themselves in the right activity at the right time: the schoolhouse lesson, goldpanning at Eldorado, a show at the Theatre Royal, sifting the diggings from underneath the Barkerville Hotel with the archaeologist, making a note with an authentic printing press, or just waiting in line for a loaf of sourdough bread. Maybe sitting at the picnic table just inside the town gate, hanging around until a whistle pig pops out of a hole in the ground.

As a teacher, probably my favourite memory of Barkerville was sitting down for breakfast at Wake Up Jake with four or five of my Grade 10 students while the rest of my class was wandering the town or watching the Cornish Waterwheel show. This happened about 25 years ago. I don't recall the details of the conversation, but we talked as if we were all adults (I was at almost 30 at the time, so I sure hope I felt like an adult). There was an elegant air, like we were outside of time and cheating the fact that this was a school day; everyone had something to say about the world, even if it was just about the last day or two, or maybe the weather. I don't know what it was, likely the conversation, but also the pan-fried steak and potatoes with strong coffee, but the food tasted as good as it can get, and that hour at Wake Up Jake stands out as the best breakfast I have ever had.