

Soul of Seattle

With more flight capacity from the UK this winter, now is the perfect time for clients to explore the Pacific Northwest, writes **Rae Maxwell**

It's hard not to think of Seattle as the rainy metropolis with a Space Needle skyline, home to Starbucks, *Frasier* and Kurt Cobain. Yet there's much more to discover beyond those icons: the city and its surrounding wilderness have rich Indigenous roots, miles of waterways where rowing teams slice across the water and seaplanes hum overhead, plus a love for ice hockey and art.

The city is best explored on foot, though its steep hills mean every view is well earned. I started as many Seattle visitors do: a stroll through Pike Place Market to see fishmongers tossing salmon across the stalls, tarot card readers in corner booths, artisans selling candles and ceramics, and buskers filling the hallways with music. Amid the cacophony, there's a strong sense of community here that feels rare in a big city.

Just a few steps away from the market, I met Colleen Echohawk, chief executive of Eighth Generation, a Snoqualmie-owned art-and-lifestyle

brand. Here, the fish and fruits piled high on the stalls took on new meaning as she spoke passionately about what food systems mean to Native American people and how traditional ingredients like salmon, berries and wild rice are more than sustenance – they're connection, history and resilience.

LADY OF THE LAKE

Lake Union is where Seattle's spirit feels most alive. It's a working lake that is part playground, part commuter route, part filming location. Having rowed on the Thames for the past 15 years, I'm used to cold, misty mornings with oars 'feathering' through the water and the rhythm of crews moving as one. But here, surrounded by mountains and the silhouette of the city, it felt both familiar and entirely new.

I'd watched *The Boys in the Boat*, a film about the city's rowing history and the story of the 1936 University of Washington rowing team and its ➤

DESTINATIONS

THE US | SEATTLE



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Kayaking on Lake Union; Pike Place Market; city skyline showing Space Needle, backed by Mount Rainier; Chihuly Garden and Glass PICTURES: Shutterstock/oksana.perkins; Alabastro Photography; Visit Seattle; Instagram/carson_tttang

Olympic triumph, on the flight from London. Here, watching young rowers push off the pontoon just after sunrise struck a deep chord of pride and awe that this stretch of water still shapes athletes with the same grit and heart nearly a century later.

On a different stretch of water – this time, kayaking on Puget Sound – my attention returned to how the city and scenery are intertwined. “You see the Space Needle there?” said Alki Tours guide Austin Smith. “That’s about 600 feet. We can fit all of it below us and about three hundred feet more. That is how deep it is below us right now.”

Trying not to think too much about what was lurking in those depths, I was thankfully distracted by sea lions tossing salmon in the air as ospreys and seagulls gathered around.

Those weren’t the only Seattle experiences to savour that day: I headed to the Climate Pledge Arena that evening for my first ice hockey game. Seattle’s Kraken were

playing Vancouver’s Canucks and the chants of “Let’s go, Kraken!” followed by the roar when Seattle won went on for hours. The speed, agility and sheer strength of the sport got my adrenaline pumping and it was hard not to be caught up in the crowd’s energy.

HIGH ON LIFE

There were more Seattle staples to squeeze in, namely the Space Needle and Chihuly Garden and Glass right next to it. Despite long queues, a CityPass meant I could book my slot in advance – and the panoramic views were worth the wait. From that height, the city unfolds in layers from forest-cloaked isles to modern skyscrapers. I tried to catch a glimpse of the elusive Mount Rainier, but it was tucked away behind the clouds.

Yet as I meandered through Chihuly’s vast collection of colourful glass artworks a little later, I befriended one of the curators,

explaining that my only regret was not glimpsing the famous peak. She told me Mount Rainier is ‘shy’, often cloaked by clouds, so spotting it is considered a blessing.

That blessing came soon enough. As I left the city to head to the airport, suddenly there it was, magnificent with its snowy peak glowing in shades of pink. It was the ultimate way to round off this Seattle snapshot, the perfect balance of wilderness and technology, solitude and connection. **TW**

BOOK IT

Delta Air Lines has increased its winter capacity to offer daily non-stop flights from Heathrow to Seattle Tacoma airport year-round, with return economy fares from £439. [delta.com](https://www.delta.com)

Audley Travel offers a 14-night USA Pacific Northwest Self-Drive Tour taking in Seattle, Portland and the surrounding areas, from £4,520. Price includes direct flights from Heathrow to Seattle, car hire and all accommodation. [audleytravel.com](https://www.audleytravel.com)

Find out more about **Seattle** at [visitseattle.org/travel-professionals](https://www.visitseattle.org/travel-professionals)

OUTSIDE THE CITY

SNOQUALMIE FALLS

Only half an hour east of Seattle, Snoqualmie Falls makes for a fantastic day trip and an oasis of calm. This rush of white water tumbling 80 metres into a moss-lined gorge is deeply woven into Indigenous heritage. The Snoqualmie people consider the falls sacred and a place of spiritual power, storytelling and ceremony. A short trail leads to viewing platforms, while timber-clad Salish Lodge & Spa above the falls makes an excellent base for clients who want to spend more than just a day here.



WOODINVILLE WINE COUNTRY

Half an hour northeast will take wine lovers to Woodinville Wine Country, which also feels worlds away. I met Adam Acampora, the region’s executive director, who described Woodinville as “a crash course on Washington State’s viticulture”, saying that winemakers are often on site and keen to chat to visitors.

