

48 hours in Seattle

This northwest port city is the perfect spot for a pre or post-cruise stay, finds **Katie McGonagle**



rather than say the sun has come out, Seattleites say “the mountain is out”, because on a cloudless day, Mount Rainier’s snow-capped peak comes into full view. It’s just one highlight of the city that gave us Amazon and Starbucks, was the birthplace of grunge, and the star of TV shows *Frasier* and *Grey’s Anatomy*. The cruise industry is catching on, with 1.3 million passengers set to visit this year. So if you’re wondering what to suggest for a pre or post-cruise stay, here’s how to spend a weekend in Seattle. ➤

DAY ONE

09.00: Start the day with breakfast in Fairmont Olympic Hotel's elegant dining room, The Georgian Restaurant. It reopens in June after a six-month renovation to restore its original 1924 features – including grand chandeliers, period windows and rich American oak fittings – to their former glory, following a refurb of the hotel's 450 rooms and suites in 2016. The site itself has a storied history too, once used as Washington's first university and later a vaudeville theatre, before Seattle's first landmark hotel was built here in 1924.

10.30: If you do only one thing in Seattle, it should be the Space Needle. Built in 1962 when the World's Fair came to town, it's an icon of mid-century America, rising 184m and offering sweeping views of Puget Sound, the Cascade and Olympic mountain ranges, and downtown Seattle. A \$100 million renovation in 2017 has transformed the experience: the observation deck now has tilting glass walls and clear benches that lean back over the city for the ultimate Seattle selfie. There's also a new revolving glass floor two storeys below, so visitors can look down over the ground far beneath them, and a new wine bar, cafe and accessible lifts.

11.30: Once you've made it to the Space Needle, at the heart of the Seattle Center campus, you don't have to travel much further, as there are several top tourist attractions nearby, many of which are included in the Seattle CityPass (£79.65 for adults, £63.56 for children). Top of the list is Chihuly Garden and Glass, where Tacoma-born artist

Dale Chihuly displays the best of his trademark style. Think twisted shapes of brightly coloured blown glass arranged in everything from a 15ft-high tower inspired by the sea life in Puget Sound – complete with golden starfish and sea anemones – to a dazzling overhead display in the on-site greenhouse. It's the kind of art that will appeal to all tastes and ages, and is not to be missed.

13.00: Stop for lunch at Chihuly Garden and Glass's Collections Cafe, where salads and sandwiches cost \$17 and up. As well as offering garden views, it's home to Chihuly's weird and wonderful collections, from toy soldiers and cars to rare Christmas ornaments.

14.00: Feeling refreshed? Carry on to MoPop, the Museum of Pop Culture, which greets guests with an impressive tower of electric guitars, and celebrates everything about the here and now. You'll find exhibitions on horror movies, sci fi, computer games and fantasy, as well as music acts ranging from Pearl Jam to Prince, and a new gallery examining the art of the tattoo. Music fans can pick up t-shirts from their favourite bands at the museum shop.

16.00: Having absorbed all there is to know about modern-day Seattle, take a short cab ride to join Bill Speidel's Underground Tour, which explores streets preserved below the city when it was rebuilt after an 1889 fire. Starting in Doc Maynard's Public House, visitors stroll through pretty Pioneer Square, then delve under the surface to hear stories about the city's murky past. The 75-minute guided tour runs hourly, from \$22.

20.00: Dine downtown at Purple Cafe and Wine Bar, but don't let

its unassuming air and casually dressed staff fool you – this place takes its wine very seriously indeed. Not only does it display the goods in a fabulous rack stretching the full two-storey height of the restaurant, but when you ask for the wine list, you'll get what can only be called an entire book – luckily, the staff are on hand to make recommendations so you don't have to read every set of tasting notes. The food is similarly unpretentious, with burgers, pizza and pasta including a tempting lobster mac and cheese.

DAY TWO

09.00: Forget breakfast and head straight to Pike Place Market – you'll want to arrive hungry with so much food to try. If you must start with a caffeine fix, skip the queue at the 'original' Starbucks (the first branch to open in 1971, although in fact, it only relocated here in 1977) and try the smooth blends at Ghost Alley Espresso. Next, head upstairs to the Daily

Dozen Doughnut Company, where crisp mini-doughnuts are simple but satisfying; then see what takes your fancy, whether it's a breakfast bagel on the move or a stop at a cafe overlooking the Sound. After you've eaten, stroll through the market's many levels, from the famous Pike Place Fish Company stall, where fishmongers throw their catch of the day back and forth across the counter (a one-time effort to speed up service that soon caught on as a tourist gimmick) to arts and craft stalls, Chukar Cherries for sweets and gifts, Aladdin's Cave-like antiques stores and second-hand book shops. These include the liberal Left Bank Books and indie 'literary saloon' BLMF, where books are stacked up in pile after tottering pile, and the owner is always ready with a recommendation.

11.30: Turn to a different kind of Seattle history at Mohai, The Museum of History & Industry in South Lake Union, where exhibits focus on maritime history and

how the northwest's dramatic scenery and diverse population have shaped the city. Check the website for temporary exhibitions – American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith begins on April 25.

13.00: Lake Union is awash with casual dining spots, so walk a few steps along the waterfront to the White Swan Public House or, if it's sunny, to outdoor seafood shack The 100 Pound Clam. Both do a good line in Pacific fish and chips or clam chowder, with a side of lakefront views.

14.30: Keep lunch light if you fancy taking on the next adventure: a seaplane ride over the water courtesy of Kenmore Air, whose terminal is a pleasant five-minute stroll away. The Seattle Scenic Seaplane Tour is a 20-minute sightseeing flight over the city, soaring over Lake Union, the University of Washington, sports stadiums, the Space Needle and dramatic downtown skyline, all

sandwiched by a surprisingly smooth take-off and landing (from \$99). If a seaplane isn't your clients' cup of tea, suggest the viewpoint at Kerry Park, where they will enjoy cracking views from one of the city's highest points.

16.00: If clients want to squeeze in some last-minute shopping, direct them downtown to Nordstrom, whose flagship department store remains in the city where it was founded as a simple shoe shop in 1901, and now features all the major fashion brands.

20.00: Head to the Thompson Seattle for a decadent dinner in the hotel's recently updated restaurant, Conversation. It serves fancy takes on local ingredients, with an urban-chic vibe and fun touches such as question cards at each place setting, designed to help diners strike up surprising conversations. Finish with a nightcap and a view at The Nest rooftop bar, knowing you've seen the best of Seattle. **TW**

top tip

For a wealth of resources on selling Seattle as a cruise destination, go to seattlecruisealaska.co.uk

GETTING THERE



Icelandair flies up to 13 times a week from Gatwick to Seattle, via Reykjavik, from £216 in economy and £1,185 in Saga Premium. The flight time is 12 hours 50 minutes westbound, and 11 hours 55 minutes eastbound, and passengers can stop over in Iceland at no extra cost. icelandair.com

DESTINATIONS

SEATTLE | THE US

WHERE TO
stay

THOMPSON SEATTLE

This downtown boutique eschews Seattle's casual vibe in favour of upscale decor straight out of Manhattan. Generously proportioned rooms feature rain showers, floor-to-ceiling windows and an urban-cool feel that carries through to public areas such as The Nest rooftop bar.

Book it: Rates from \$179 for a King Bed room. thompsonhotels.com

HOTEL THEODORE

Seattle's industrial heritage comes to the fore in this property, where Boeing aircraft diagrams adorn the walls and old agricultural tools are displayed like artworks. It all contributes to a welcoming vibe reinforced by the relaxed coffee shop in the lobby and top seafood in restaurant Rider.

Book it: Deluxe rooms from \$180 per night. hoteltheodore.com

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Seattle from the air; Pike Place Market; Chihuly Garden and Glass; Museum of Pop Culture; view from The Nest at Thompson Seattle; Space Needle

PICTURES: Port of Seattle/Don Wilson; EMP Museum/Brady Harvey

PORT OF SEATTLE IN NUMBERS

1.3 million passengers due to visit the city this year

225 cruise calls expected in 2020

7 major lines to call at Seattle: Carnival Cruise Line, Holland America Line, Celebrity Cruises, Oceania Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, Princess Cruises and Royal Caribbean

5,500 jobs rely on the cruise industry

\$894 million generated for the local economy each year