

postcard from
Seattle

by robbie mcgrath



Since moving from Decatur to Seattle over two years ago, I've experienced a total immersion in the local restaurant and arts scene, and have worked in terrific places with great people. It's been enlightening, and I still learn something new every day.

Seattle's a great place to visit and, should you have only a short time, you'll want to follow the KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid) method. "Local" insight can help.

Do's and Don'ts

If it's wintertime, don't worry. You can't shovel fog.

Once in Seattle, don't rent a car. Invest your money in where you stay.

Don't bring a coat and tie – it's unnecessary, and they'll know you're from out of town. Seattle's idea of dressing up is clean clothes.

Don't bring a golf umbrella – you'll poke someone's eye out.

For wet weather, bring a jacket with a hood – that's what us locals wear.

Where to stay

Inn at the Market - A two iron to the Pike Place Market. It's a little pricey but remember - you aren't paying for a rental car. Three fine restaurants are attached and there's wonderful shopping in the immediate vicinity. World-class theatres, symphony halls, and restaurants are all within easy walking distance. There's a fifth-floor rooftop deck to enjoy a mid-day respite before venturing out into the evening. It's also perfect for watching the sunset over Elliott Bay.

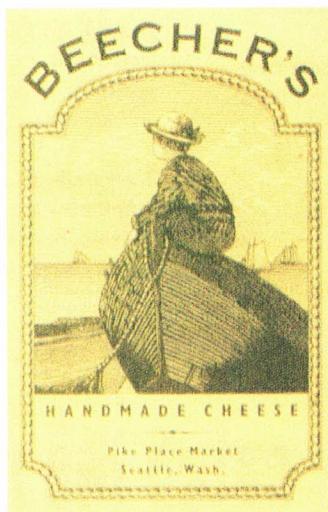


Shopping

Seattle boasts all the usuals. However, some unique, easy-to-find, and nearby places are a must:

Beecher's Handmade Cheese

Beecher's Handmade Cheese - They make their artisanal cheeses in full view Saturday mornings, so why not pick up some fresh-made cheese curds and a wonderful Northwest wine, a French baguette, some smoked salmon, and enjoy that fifth-floor rooftop?



Pike Place Fish - Go watch them throw a big salmon. Watch the "tourists" stand in line, buy fish, and have it loaded into travel containers to haul back. But don't give in to the urge. Enjoy the bountiful seafood of the Northwest while you're here. Witness a book signing by the fish throwers resembling Millikin University's Dr. Golden's casting call. Then move on.

Sur La Table - There's nothing like hands-on in one of the best foodie retail stores this side of New York City's Broadway Panhandler. If purchasing, just ship it.

Nordstrom's

Downtown's corporate flagship store. Immense in size and selection, it's fun to shop here for about an hour. A little secret: Go to the basement garden level's bar where you'll find top-notch Shrimp and Crab Louie along with a variety of sandwiches and burgers. My favorite is the chicken burger. Shopping and cocktails remind me of Christmas Eve in Decatur when "the boys" drank at Robbie's while their wives' last-minute Christmas gifts were being wrapped at Van Law Carol's and Mimi's.

Breakfast/brunch

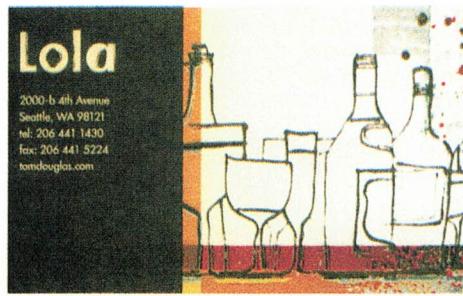
When I travel, one of my favorite meal periods is in the morning. All of these spots are quick walks from the Inn's lobby:

Café Campagne

Café Campagne - According to the menu, Croque-Madame is Parisian ham and gruyere with a fried egg and a green salad. But that doesn't begin to describe the emotional experience that's yours for \$12. It's bubbling béchamel and gruyere cheese, a crispy white sunny-side-up egg with soon-to-be-broken yoke playfully oozing through the bread, lubricating intensely flavored, imported ham with a crunchy, vinaigrette-tossed baby greens salad on the side. When you order your, "I'm out of town" late Saturday morning martini, tell them you know they pickle cipollini onions in-house for that special breakfast Gibson. They'll respect your inside knowledge.

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Lola - A new, nice-looking Greek restaurant, but somewhat weird on menu variety. They serve goat at night. Try Samish Bay Cheese Omelette, smoked pork loin ham, smashed garlic-fried potatoes and toast - wonderful for just \$12. If you're feeling a little whimsy, they offer doughnuts made to order, served in a paper sack and shaken with powdered sugar while being delivered by the wait staff. Huckleberry jam on the side, too.



Le Pichet - A little French joint. Perfect place to read the New York Times and check out Oeufs plats, jambon et fromage for only \$7.50. A personal favorite of mine.

Seattle Restaurants

Here are some ideas for smaller, lesser known, but fabulous places within easy walking distance from the Inn.

Matt's in the Market - Twenty-three seats: Nine bar stools and fourteen chairs at tables located on a second floor walk-up. It's hard to find, but please do. Staff of three who know and like each other, and their customers. The seafood couldn't get any fresher, and is inventive, thoughtful, and seasoned perfectly. Try a catfish sandwich at lunch (to die for) served with a choice of soup or salad, and peruse Matt's small, thoughtful wine list. You just can't go wrong. It's even got a view.

Cascadia - Waterfall, outdoor seating, hardwoods, private dining room, intimate lighting - one of my favorites for their small bites at the bar. Tops is the Mini Beef Tenderloin Cheeseburgers with black truffle oil. At least you get two of them! Skillet roasted prawns is easily a close second. Great service.

The Oceanaire (Seafood Room)
Three years old and

part of a small chain of high-end, seafood-oriented restaurants. The best deal is weekdays from 3 to 6 p.m. when the \$16 shrimp cocktail becomes \$8 — five gigantic shrimp that are crunchy, well-seasoned, blow-your-head-off fresh grated horseradish sauce. Remember to ask for a side of pea

salad — outrageous, thick, crunchy, alfalfa-smelling, bacon-enhanced, shredded cheddar ambrosia. Chef Kevin Davis insisted I try his seafood gumbo. A perfectly colored roux makes perfect gumbo. Add the mess o' shrimp cooked fresh to order, spicy andouille sausage, a splash of basmati rice on top at serving, and it's heaven.

Two Bells Bar and Grill - Think Ralph's Pub, The Winery, and Billy-Mo, with the best \$6.95 pub-type burger in the city. Five ounces of specially ground

chuck and brisket on a garlic-buttered-Beaver Mustard-enhanced baguette, with optional cheese, bacon, mushrooms, etc. Medium-rare if you want it — and of course you do — accompanied by your choice of a cup of house homemade soup, Tim's Cascade potato chips, homemade potato salad, or slaw. So what if the background music happens to be Devo Does Beachboys?

Just cocktails

See Sound Lounge - Very urbane, wanna-be New York. Sleek, well-lit, large flat screen television. The cool bar top makes you want to drop laundry and lay down on it. Word to the wise: Weekends after 10, the door is run by a rope

attendant, so go early for a drink.

Shea's Lounge

-While you're waiting for those seats at Matt's at the Market, have a cocktail. Great service and a view.

The Apartment

Brand-spanking new, but extremely small. Cool and hip. One of the two owners, both named David, has appeared in numerous movies in Japan.

Zig Zag - Friday evening, witness one of the best bartenders I've come across who handles a bunch of bar stools and the wait staff with grace and charm. Well-made, classic cocktails, and Murray, a gentleman of a certain age much like myself, is himself a classic.

Robbie McGrath, a longtime Decatur barman and restaurateur, currently is very busy in the Seattle restaurant industry. He's slinging hash — for now.



catch the purr-fect holiday spirit

enjoy

Alfred Hitchcock's light comedy, "To Catch a Thief" at 6pm plus spirits and edibles at 8pm. \$30 per person.

make reservations

for Thursday, December 2nd. The Avon Theater and Katz on Merchant are the place to be!

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December 2 & 3 - 9am to 4pm

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