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the latest from Vivienne Westwood, United Bamboo and New Zealand's Karen Walker. Following hipster trends? Head up to Capitol Hill where the city's rock, pop and electronica cognoscenti roam free. Offering fashion, gifts, books and art, **Lipstick Traces**, 303 East Pine Street, shapes contemporary tastes. For more post-modern toys, gifts and fashion, the downtown trio of stores called **Fancy**, **Schmancy** and **Pants** (really), all along the 1900 block of Second Avenue, must not be missed.

These neighborhoods also host Seattle's most exciting new restaurants. Inside the sleek, ultramodern lounge and minimal dining room of **Veil**, at 555 Aloha Street near the Seattle Center, cutting-edge cocktails and avant-garde American cuisine set the scene.



One block over, the similarly stylish though more reserved **Crow**, at 823 Fifth Avenue North, features a small, sophisticated menu of pleasing Northwest fare. At the **Boat Street Cafe** at 3131 Western Avenue in Lower Queen Anne, exceptional southern French food is served in an exceedingly pleasant bistro environment.

The neighborhoods offer plenty of inns and bed and breakfasts (many historic, water-facing or both), but downtown is your best bet for overnight accommodations. The relatively

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Although the clichés—rain, coffee and loud, heavy rock music—still apply, the urban and cultural upgrades of the recent technology boom have made Seattle a whole new city. Dot-com immigrants, together with holdovers from the grunge days and lots of passionate locals, conspire to foster a diverse, worldly energy. Still, a laid-back vibe prevails. Whether you're catching an experimental-sound art show or enjoying seasonal, local cuisine after a long hike, jeans and casual attire are almost always in the dress code. From the downtown areas of Belltown and Pioneer Square, boutiques, restaurants and galleries now extend out into the neighborhoods, but the best shopping always will be at the picturesque Pike Place Market. Farmers, fishermen and artisans pedal their wares year-round at the waterfront pavilion.

Stylish shops and live music venues populate the historic cobblestone and brick streets of Ballard, belying the neighborhood's past life as the quiet, residential neighborhood of choice for Seattle's early Nordic settlers. Swedish specialty stores still sell homemade bakery items and goods from the old country, while down the street, the Venuzo family brings emerging Brazilian designers to the Northwest at **Brazilis** on 22nd Avenue NW. Julia Venuzo says she and her siblings purposefully eschewed their country's "beach and carnival" image in favor of an elegant, Victorian feel. Inside the large, loft-like space, tented dressing rooms feel like playrooms for royalty, but the mood is welcoming and warm. Next door at **Arm Candy**, one-of-a-kind and couture handbags decorate the small pie-slice of a shop; around the corner, **Oilvine**, at 5344 Ballard Avenue, is the area's first boutique, and keeps neighbors in designer rain boots and locally made jewelry. In nearby Fremont, down a flight of stairs at 3516 Fremont Place North, the gorgeous fabrics and textures at **Impulse** provide a nice contrast to the shop's chicly industrial basement setting. Owner Jill Wenger will show you

- 1. Hotel Max
- 2. Pants
- 3. Veil



new **Hotel Max**, 620 Stewart Street, is the city's low-key, high-design boutique hotel. Individual rooms feature the work of local painters, and on each floor, a different Seattle photographer's enlarged black-and-white images cover the doorways. Fans of the Kurt and Courtney-era: Request a room on the fifth level. Not far away, **Hotel Andra**, at 2000 Fourth Avenue, sits amid restaurateur/chef Tom Douglas' gastronomic empire; Seattle's **W Hotel**, at 1112 Fourth Avenue, is just steps from the new, gleaming Rem Koolhaas-designed public library. —Laura Cassidy