

Sizing up three downtown Seattle hotels



Lobby at Hotel Max

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Whatever the reason – economic crunch, lack of vacation time, priorities at home – an overnight retreat in Seattle is a great idea, and one that has increased in popularity within the Gay community. Birthdays, anniversaries and college graduations are just a few occasions that have encouraged pods of mostly Gay men to book rooms and dinner reservations at several downtown hotels. Personally, I believe Seattle has one of the best variety of hotels in the country, so if you can't make it to Hawaii any time soon, then at least pamper yourself with a night away from home, at home. Here's the lowdown on three downtown properties.

HOTEL 1000 WWW.HOTEL1000SEATTLE.COM

Hands down, Hotel 1000 is Seattle's best luxury hotel – you can defend the Sorrento, Alexis and Fairmont until you're blue in the face but it will do little to change my mind. Even pop superstar Britney Spears adores this contemporary haven, hanging her celebrity tiara here when she brought the earth-circling Circus tour to the Puget Sound. Grammy-winning babes John Mayer and John Legend and veteran musician Paul Weller have also rested their assets at Hotel 1000. Rooms are gorgeously decorated in a Northwest palate of browns with abundant window views on each side, and modern pluses create a sophisticated yet warm feel that vibrates throughout. In-room amenities range from two-person pedestal tubs with overhead shower faucets to wall-mounted, swiveling flatscreen TVs to Molton Brown bath products, not to mention snugly robes, complimentary morning newspaper, crisp Thai linens, down pillows, and a heating system that automatically adjusts to your body temperature.

Hotel 1000's signature restaurant-lounge is BOKA Kitchen + Bar, providing guests and local diners a wonderful menu of regional favorites – while executive chef Angie Roberts plays it safe with familiars

such as halibut, chicken breast and crab cakes, her dishes are a consistent perfection of abundant flavor and elegant presentation. I never recommend a place that I wouldn't go to myself, which is why you'll likely catch me diving into a bacon mac 'n' cheese on a weekend night – just \$8 off the bar menu – or sinking my teeth into a plate of fresh Northwest tacos served with a zesty chipotle remoulade for lunch. BOKA, high on my list of suggested stops en route to a Benaroya Hall performance or other live show, has assembled a \$25 three-course Pride Brunch on June 28 that will feature items such as baked-to-order mini cinnamon rolls, brown butter crepes and Oregon hazelnut-encrusted French toast. Spaahh at Hotel 1000 deserves a mention, if not for its separated pedicure station than for its terrific "Happy Hour," where you can indulge with a 30-minute Pick-Me-Up massage (\$48) or 30-minute express facial (\$45) – offered Monday thru Friday between 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., you can easily schedule your treatment on your lunch break or treat a colleague to an early afternoon birthday surprise.

Be sure to tell your out-of-town friends about Hotel 1000's Pride Package, starting at \$385, that includes a deluxe city-view room, two tickets to The Cuff Complex's post-parade bash (with special entry bracelets, no waiting in line), overnight parking, two BOKA discount cards, two signature cocktails at BOKA, Hotel 1000 tote bag, and 15 percent off a visit to Spaahh or De-cleor eye cream.

HOTEL MAX WWW.HOTELMAXSEATTLE.COM

Where do cool people stay at in Seattle? Hotel Max, of course. What used to be the old Vance Hotel on 6th and Stewart is now a hipster hotspot that woos art-inspired travelers and many touring rock bands. Each of its 163 rooms is adorned with blown-up photographs by Northwest artists, including giant stills of local music icons Kurt Cobain and Eddie Vedder – throughout the hotel, over 350 pieces of art are displayed. Unique to the Max and its sister locations in Portland and Tacoma – Hotel deLuxe, Hotel Lucia and Hotel Murano – are the "spiritual menus," allowing guests to select their preferred reading material, from The Koran to the Book of Mormon. I found my bathroom to be on the petite side, though the rest of the space was more than enough needed for my overnight urban retreat – while it was chilly outside, I enjoyed the warmth and comfort of a soft bed, flatscreen TV and Torrefazione coffee. The Aveda bath products are a nice bonus, as are the plush in-room robes.

The Red Fin, on the ground level of Hotel Max, is an Asian-infused restaurant, part sushi counter, that constantly gets hit with a happy hour rush – the \$6 Seattle roll, \$7 chicken satay and \$3.50 pint of Manny's is a light meal by itself. I recently stopped by for dinner and was pleased with the shitake mushroom dumplings, aburi salmon, and maple leaf duck breast – however, to be honest, I've eaten here before and the food was a notch better. The service was outstanding; attentive servers never let my water glass go dry and the bartender made drink recommendations that were on the money. No worries if you leave your laptop at home, just use one of two hard-wire computer stations in the hotel's 24-hour business center, and for those needing to keep in shape, a 24-hour fitness center is available on premise.

Hotel Max loves its non-hetero clientele, extending a year-round "Gaycation" package starting at \$199 that includes a room, two "Maxtinis" at Red Fin, and a "Climax Box" filled with naughty goodies – pink handcuffs with matching blindfold, glow in the dark dice, feather, lube, MiniMax vibrator – an O Boy Kit (for the dudes) and O My Clitoral Stimulating gel-tonguedinger (for the ladies).