Sunny in Seattle

FROM GOURMET WILD GAME TO WINE COUNTRY TO WHISKEY POURS, SEATTLE THRILLS—COME RAIN OR SHINE.

BY ELIZABETH HARPER

Clockwise from top: Woodinville Whiskey Co. owners Orlin Sorensen (left) and Brett Carlile. The brand will expand into Arizona, Southern California, Colorado, Illinois, Florida and Texas this year; the living room of the Thompson Suite at Thompson Seattle. The Seattle Great Wheel can be spotted in the distance; a Water View Deluxe King; The Nest, atop Thompson Seattle, has 4,500 square feet of outdoor patio space; the chocolate fudgesicle with black truffle honey from Conversation pastry chef Kate Sigel.
It doesn’t rain. After all I’ve heard (and seen, as a loyal Grey’s Anatomy fan) about Seattle’s weather, I come fully prepped—raincoat, sneakers, weather-appropriate outfits. Yet, the sun is shining, the sky is clear and mountains can be spotted in the distance. So, I set out—sunglasses in tow—ready to explore.

STAY Location: check. Unbeatable views: check. Friendly, accommodating staff: check. Thompson Seattle (suites from $679 per night, thompsonhotels.com) has it all. The design, courtesy of Seattle-based architecture firm Olson Kundig, with interiors by Studio Munge in collaboration with Jensen Fey, is midcentury modern with clever local nods. The floor-to-ceiling windows with unobstructed Elliott Bay views don’t hurt either.

SNACK Inside Thompson Seattle, conversation beckons with global fare. Chef Derek Simcik draws inspiration from his time abroad—from Tunisia to Austria and beyond. “There’s somehow, someway, a little part of me and my experiences in every single item,” he says of the oft-changing menu, “and that thread connects them all.” For the best seat in the house, Simcik recommends the counter by the kitchen: “You’re right in the middle of the action.” Upstairs—all the way up—is The Nest. If no vacation is complete without a rooftop beverage, The Nest delivers with jaw-dropping views of the Seattle Great Wheel, the Olympic Mountains, Puget Sound and Bainbridge Island—and the cocktails to match.

SIP When I hear “a visit to wine country,” I envision gnarled grape vines, rolling hills and large estates. Woodinville, 30 minutes from Thompson Seattle, is entirely different. While the literal vines are in Eastern Washington, the wineries reside in more populous Western Washington. Picture a commune of vintners clustered in a quasi neighborhood built for the sole purpose of winemaking. Before venturing out, book a chauffeur through the concierge. Request Mark: His ubercool Tesla Model X and engaging demeanor will make your wine-fueled jaunt all the more enjoyable. It’s here, in Woodinville, that you’ll find Two Vintners (twovintners.com), where I sample winemaker Morgan Lee’s varietals. I’m a particular fan of the grenache blanc.

SAMPLE Also in town is Woodinville Whiskey Co. (woodinvillewhiskeyco.com), a small-batch producer founded by best friends Orlin Sorensen and Brett Carlisle that, in 2017, was acquired by Moët Hennesy USA, part of the LVMH powerhouse. “When you look at the LVMH family, you see spirits houses that are 200-plus years old. Their brands live forever,” says Orlin Sorensen. “To have an opportunity for our company that we started from virtually nothing to now be nurtured by such an incredible organization is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.” Community relations and intentional growth are top of mind for these whiskey pros—from fan-favorite Taste & Choose Bottle events to expansion into six new markets in 2019 to the much-buzzed-about limited-edition Harvest Release this month.

SAVOR In Seattle’s Greenwood neighborhood, FlintCreek Cattle Co. (flintcreeksattle.com) serves ranch-forward fare. Bison, venison, wild boar, elk and lamb all have a home on this diverse menu. “A lot of the dishes I created as specials throughout my career and held on to, knowing that someday I would open a meat-concept restaurant,” says chef Eric Donnelly. The result is such creations as the Anderson Ranch tartare with cured lemon, rose petal harissa, radish and dukkah spice, paired with a Coffin Head cocktail made with rye, blended scotch, Punt e Mes, maraschino and Laphroaig mist from the superior bar program.

SEE You can’t go to Seattle, let alone stay a block away, without a stop at Pike Place Market (pikeplacemarket.org). Go beyond the iconic sign, flying fish and well-worn tourist track. Taste inventive housemade flavors like spicy pineapple at Rachel’s Ginger Beer; get a caffeine boost at Storyville Coffee; and try a flaky, buttery treat at Biscuit Bitch. Nearby, in Capitol Hill, visit the recently renovated Space Needle. Olson Kundig, the same firm behind Thompson Seattle, was tasked with giving the landmark a face-lift while preserving and retaining its legacy. And save time for a stroll through Chihuly Gardens and Glass. Washington-born and -bred artist Dale Chihuly is a local legend.