

## **Classic Northwest Lodge Experience Is Just Minutes Away In SeaTac**

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SLIDESHOW: CLICK ON THE PHOTO TO PLAY SLIDESHOW. Guest services agent Katie Davis sits by the pond by Cedarbrook Lodge's outdoor wedding lawn.

I've got a nephew down in the high tech Silicon Valley whose wife packs him into the car and drives to the airport for a surprise getaway.

They jet off to Vegas or some fancy wine festival. He grew up in a single-income family with six kids. I figure he thinks he's died and gone to heaven.

Marge is a nervous flyer so when I told her we were taking a weekend vacation and headed toward Sea-Tac Airport, I reassured her that she wouldn't have to board a plane.

I told her she wouldn't have to wait for the San Juan Islands ferry or ride five hours to the Oregon Coast, either.

Marge became suspicious when less than a mile from the airport I turned into a residential neighborhood. But within a few blocks, we suddenly came upon a quintessential Northwest cedar lodge, nestled on 18 acres of restored wetlands.

Cedarbrook Lodge, off South 188th Street in SeaTac, is a 104-room boutique hotel, gourmet restaurant, conference center, and special events venue.

Washington Mutual built it as a training center. They flew executives from all over the country into the airport, shuttled them over to Cedarbrook and took them back to the airport when the training session was over.

When WaMu went belly-up, JPMorganChase inherited Cedarbrook but they already had their own conference centers.

Chase quickly sold Cedarbrook to Coastal Hotel Group, which has other properties in downtown Portland, Mt. Hood and Tucson.

Coastal wanted to get the word out that Cedarbrook now offers alternative overnight lodging off the airport strip, so they invited Marge and me to stay overnight to see what it is like.

"We're like an oasis back here," guest services agent Katie Davis told me. Cedarbrook still has the business training facilities left over from WaMu. Thirteen conference rooms can be configured to hold from 6 to 250 people. The big auditorium seats 150.

"We're always busy during the week with corporate gatherings," Davis said. "But on the weekend we are a different kind of busy."

That's when the baby showers, family reunions and festive weddings occur. Davis admits the weddings are her favorites-especially the outdoor ones on the big green lawn surrounded by flowers and a pond.

Davis also took me out back to show me the wetlands. I set off on the wetlands trail in search of Bow Lake but it ended quickly.

New to Cedarbrook is the chef's garden. Coastal Hotels is into locavore -food raised close to where it's served. The main ingredients and wines served in their restaurants are from within 150 miles of SeaTac.

Coastal has converted part of WaMu's dramatic centerpiece lobby into the 12-table gourmet Copperleaf Restaurant.

When our server, Marietta (from Bulgaria) began serving us a 2-hour, multi-course dinner, I started feeling a little guilty that I had lied about being the New York Times restaurant critic. Truthfully, Marge is not a Food Channel judge, either.

My favorites among the exquisite flavors were the Dungeness crab bisque, two kinds of figs with prosciutto, black truffles with potato-filled pasta, short ribs with quince, cream-cheese ice cream with genoise and hot cinnamon-spiced chocolate with a hot doughnut.

The guy I really felt sorry for was the dishwasher as Marietta kept discreetly replacing the silverware. Not a trouper like me, Marge lagged behind on the wine courses as the glasses piled up on her side of the table. Marietta quietly took them away to the overworked dishwasher.

I am no restaurant reviewer but I've got to say that might have been the best meal I have ever eaten. If you want to knock the socks off your picky father-in-law visiting for the holidays, this might be the place to take him.

We stumbled out of the Copperleaf and headed for our guest room.

The rooms come with floor to ceiling windows, interesting artwork and a good bed.

But my favorite area was the bathroom. Most hotel rooms have a small shower with a dinky tub. This soaking tub was long enough for a basketball player-maybe not a center or a forward, but certainly a point guard.

Left over from the days when the overnight guests were out-of-town business executives at a training seminar, each wing features a "living room" where guests can hang out to chat, watch TV, read or grab a snack from the refrigerator.

Before leaving in the morning we ate the complimentary continental breakfast in Tamarack Hall, which doubles as an airy reception hall and tranquil indoor wedding site. With no Marietta in sight, we toasted our own bagels and poured on our own Starbucks coffee.

Highline, particularly along the airport strip and in Tukwila, has many fine hotels, each with their own great amenities. But if you have visiting relatives this holiday season you want to stash somewhere or out-of-area friends looking to catch a flight out of Sea-Tac the next day, you might suggest they check out Cedarbrook at [CedarbrookLodge.com](http://CedarbrookLodge.com) or 1-877-515-2176.

Or maybe you want a quintessential Northwest lodge experience without the kids. Make a great show of filling up the gas tank, tell them you'll be on the Olympic Peninsula, and drive 10 minutes over to 18525 36th Ave. S. in SeaTac.

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