

Seattle, Washington: The Emerald City

by Andee Zomeran, PassPorter Guest Contributor

What is the first thing that enters your mind when you hear "Seattle"? Is it Pike Place Market? The Space Needle? Most likely, the first word is "rain." It rains in Seattle. A lot. But as a result of all of that moisture, Seattle is one of the greenest places on earth. And those days when the sun blesses the Puget Sound, this emerald gem shines brighter than any diamond.

West Coast Disney enthusiasts are excited to welcome Disney Cruise Line's Disney Wonder in 2011. With a summer Alaskan cruise departing from Vancouver, B.C., many will be traveling 2 hours south to visit Seattle. It won't be hard to fill days with all of the fantastic sites this city has to offer. (Just remember to bring an umbrella!)

Pike Place Market: One of the most well known farmers markets in the country, "The Market" is the pulse of the city. Not only will you find fresh produce, fragrant floral arrangements, and flying fish, but also you will find craftspersons selling local wares particular to the Pacific Northwest. Unique shops surround the market and food vendors are sampling French pastries, Russian piroshky, and Beecher's homemade cheese. For you coffee connoisseurs, here is where the first Starbucks coffee shop resides. The most colorful attraction at Pike Place would be the gum wall at Post Alley underneath the market. Visitors have been chewing and sticking for over 20 years and its produced a sight that is both beautiful and gross at the same time.

1 mile North-west from Pike Place Market is Seattle Center. This vast park-like setting houses Seattle's festivals and events, Key Arena, the Seattle Repertory Theatre, the Children's Museum, as well as the following attractions that you might recognize as "Seattle specific."

The Space Needle: This iconic landmark, built for the 1962 Worlds Fair, is the symbol of Seattle. Take an elevator ride 520 feet up to the observation deck and see the splendor of Mt. Rainer to the east and the majestic Olympic Mountains to the west. Care to dine while taking in the view? Reserve a table at Sky City Restaurant and feast as you slowly rotate 360 degrees. A word to the wise -- if it's cloudy outside, save your money. The view is much less magnificent when all you see is gray.

Pacific Science Center: The prominent white arches that rise in the cityscape are the entrance to this city's interactive museum. Walk

through the Butterfly House and take in the latest IMAX film or laser light show. During select times, view a live science demonstration before walking back in time and getting up close and personal with animatronic dinosaurs. Maybe playing with bugs in "Insect Village" or testing your endurance in "Body Works" is more your speed. Whatever your interest, this science mecca has everything to satisfy your curiosities.

Experience Music Project/Science Fiction Museum: This one-of-a-kind, hands-on environment celebrating music and Seattle musicians is one of the most visited places in the Emerald City. Travel through the history of local music, starting at rock-n-roll with The Kingsman to classic rock with Heart and the genius of Jimmy Hendrix. Follow to grunge with Nirvana and Pearl Jam and on to the alternative sounds of The President of the United States of America. You can do this tour on your own, but I highly recommend paying \$3 for the audio iPod guide. Don't miss the "Oral History" room where dozens of computers are set up for listening to stories from artists, composers, and producers all sharing special narratives from their crafts.

For you Sci-Fi fans -- the north side of the building is the place for you! Dive into the history of Science Fiction and check out everything from the weapons of Klingons to the fashion of The Matrix. Check out the "Spacedock" -- a gigantic window to watch all of the ships from your favorite sci-fi flicks fly right by. This half of the museum is even entertaining to those of us who think "Blade Runner" is a just a nickname for Apollo Ono.

Shopping via the Monorail: Disney Resorts are not the only place to hop on a monorail. Seattle's version takes you from Seattle Center to the center of a shopping paradise. Nordstrom's flagship store is across the street from the downtown terminal; so don't forget your credit card.

Ride the Ducks: I know. Most major U.S. cities have a duck tour. But where else can you get a land/sea excursion while getting an informative history lesson filled with corny jokes? If you only have a day to see Seattle, this tour will cover the most you need to know in the least amount of time. Plus, you get to quack at people on the street.

Maybe you'd like to see the city from a different view. [Argosy Cruises](#) can give you a spin around the harbor or a tour through the Hiram Chittenden Locks. Bring your sense of humor and travel beneath the streets for the [Underground Tour](#). See what Seattle was before it caught on fire in the late 1800s and developers just built over the mess. Hungering for more? Sign up for a culinary adventure with [Seattle Food](#)

[Tours](#) and get a taste for the Puget Sound.

If you have a little more time and want to explore beyond the city limits, Seattle's surrounding areas have plenty to offer. Aviation buffs can travel 10 minutes south of the city to visit [The Museum of Flight](#) or drive 30 minutes north to tour [Boeing's Everett factory](#). (Note: Children MUST be at least 4 feet tall to go on the tour.)

Wine lovers know that Napa isn't the only place for good vino on the West Coast. [Woodinville wine country](#) is 30 minutes northeast of Seattle and boasts over 70 wineries in the area. Most cellars offer tastings, but the [Chateau Ste. Michelle](#) gives free tours of their facility and tops off the visit with a complimentary wine tasting lesson. The botanical grounds at Ste. Michelle are the perfect place to share a wedge of cheese, some crackers and a bottle of pinot noir. Maybe a pint of beer sounds better? Across the street from the Chateau is [Red Hook Brewery](#). Pay \$1 for a tour and tasting glass, but make sure you have a designated driver when you're through. If these tours have given you the munchies, the Forecaster's Pub at the brewery has Pacific Northwest pub fare waiting for you.

Are you in love with Puget Sound native Dale Chihuly's works of art hanging in the lobbies of the Disney Magic and Disney Wonder? Tacoma, 45 minutes south of Seattle, is home to the [Museum of Glass](#). Visit exhibits that celebrate this unique art form and watch professional glass blowers live in the museum's "Hot Shop." Take a stroll on the pedestrian overpass near the museum. This "Bridge of Glass" is an outdoor gallery featuring Dale Chihuly's extraordinary talent.

Seattle lives up to its stereotype. It doesn't matter if it's the middle of January or the middle of August -- prepare for condensation. The hills downtown rival the hills of San Francisco and traffic is congested. But the beauty of the Puget Sound, the surrounding lakes, and evergreens as far as the eye can see truly make this metropolis the jewel of the Pacific Northwest.

About The Author: Andee Zomeran lives in the Pacific Northwest and is a wife and mother to a family that loves all things Disney. They are looking forward to their two-week Disney Cruise/Land vacation in December 2010.

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