

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABOARD



CHECK-IN

SEATTLE'S AIRPORT HIDEAWAY

Each of Cedarbrook Lodge's guest-only communal living rooms has a gas fireplace, vaulted ceiling, original art work, and big sofas and chairs.

SEATTLE — Cedarbrook Lodge overlooks 18 acres of natural wetlands, dogwood trees, a small pond, perfectly groomed lawns, and flower gardens that sprout almost year-round — hardly the place you would picture in an airport setting. This little oasis lies just five minutes down the road from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SeaTac) and a block from International Boulevard, a strip with airport parking lots and its share of gritty, worn-out motels.

My husband discovered the lodge during a work trip and it's now our go-to Seattle hotel. It's the kind of place where visitors take photos of the décor — the tables in the lobby are made from massive reclaimed silver maple logs — the hotel restaurant's chef once beat Bobby Flay in a showdown on the Food Network, and locals come to stay.

"We live 10 minutes down the road," a woman said to me as we lounged in the spa, pre-treatment. "We're here for our 22nd anniversary — it's a great getaway, but close to home."

Washington Mutual, the former savings and loan bank, built the property as a conference center before it went belly up in 2008. The property changed hands several times and eventually became this 167-room lodge that still has killer meeting spaces. (If you ever need to hold an event next to SeaTac, the Summit Auditorium at Cedarbrook has ergonomic Herman Miller Aeron chairs for up to 120 people, and the latest, greatest Dolby surround sound and high-def projection equipment. Other onsite meeting spaces hold anywhere from 10 to 200 guests.)

Most people, like us, go to Cedarbrook to chill out pre or post flight. You don't need to stay here to enjoy the restaurant or spa — grab the lodge's free shuttle from SeaTac and spend your layover here.

The Spa offers more than a dozen treatments. (I highly

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Complimentary snacks in the communal living rooms include bowls of gourmet malted milk balls.

recommend the Petrified Wood and Stone Massage, while my "anniversary" spa-mate swears by the Alaskan Glacial Mud Wrap.) It also has its own Bath Salt Blending Bar, where you can create your own mix of bath salts to take home. Or ask one of the staff to create a blend for your stay (complimentary for guests) — the lavender, cedarwood, and chamomile blend works wonders for relaxing.

One of the hotel's coolest features: It has cozy, communal living rooms located in its secure guest-only wings. Each 500-square-foot room has a gas fireplace, vaulted ceiling, floor-to-ceiling windows, bookshelves (leave a book or help yourself to one), and cool artwork. I often work here after the kids go to bed, so I don't wake them. You can sink into a big lounge chair or sofa and read a book, get online, watch TV, or play a board game. Our kids detoured here at every chance: Each living room has complimentary (and individually packaged) ice cream,

string cheese, yogurt, and bottled water in a fridge, individual bags of Tim's Cascade Style potato chips, and bowls of gourmet malted milk balls.

If you're more motivated than we typically are, you can burn off these treats or maintain your workout routine in the hotel's 24-hour fitness center, which has treadmills, stationary bikes, elliptical machines, and weight machines, along with free weights and balance balls. If you're traveling with kids and the weather cooperates, head outside for badminton, bean bag toss, bocce, ladder ball, and other lawn games.

Try to swing a meal at the onsite Copperleaf Restaurant, which is run by chef Roy Breiman (the chef who beat Bobby Flay in a showdown two years ago). Chef Breiman has worked in restaurants from San Francisco to France, and even designed and opened the 48-room boutique hotel Opus on Martha's Vineyard. His diverse menu draws heavily on flavors and products from the Pacific Northwest — duck, scallops, lamb, beef, sirloin, and sablefish to name a few, plus fresh rolls baked in nearby Kent with local-made butter.

It's easy to get lost in all the comfort and hotel perks, but don't forget to get yourself over to the airport in time. Although if you do miss your flight, you can order a pillow from the pillow library, book another spa treatment, and cozy up to the bowl of malt balls in the living room and watch a movie.

CEDARBROOK LODGE 18525 36th Avenue South, Seattle (locals refer to the area as Seattle Southside); 206-901-9268, www.cedarbrooklodge.com. Rates start at \$179. The property has pet-friendly rooms (complete with dog bed, bowls, and treats) and an outdoor area for furry travelers; \$50 pet fee.

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