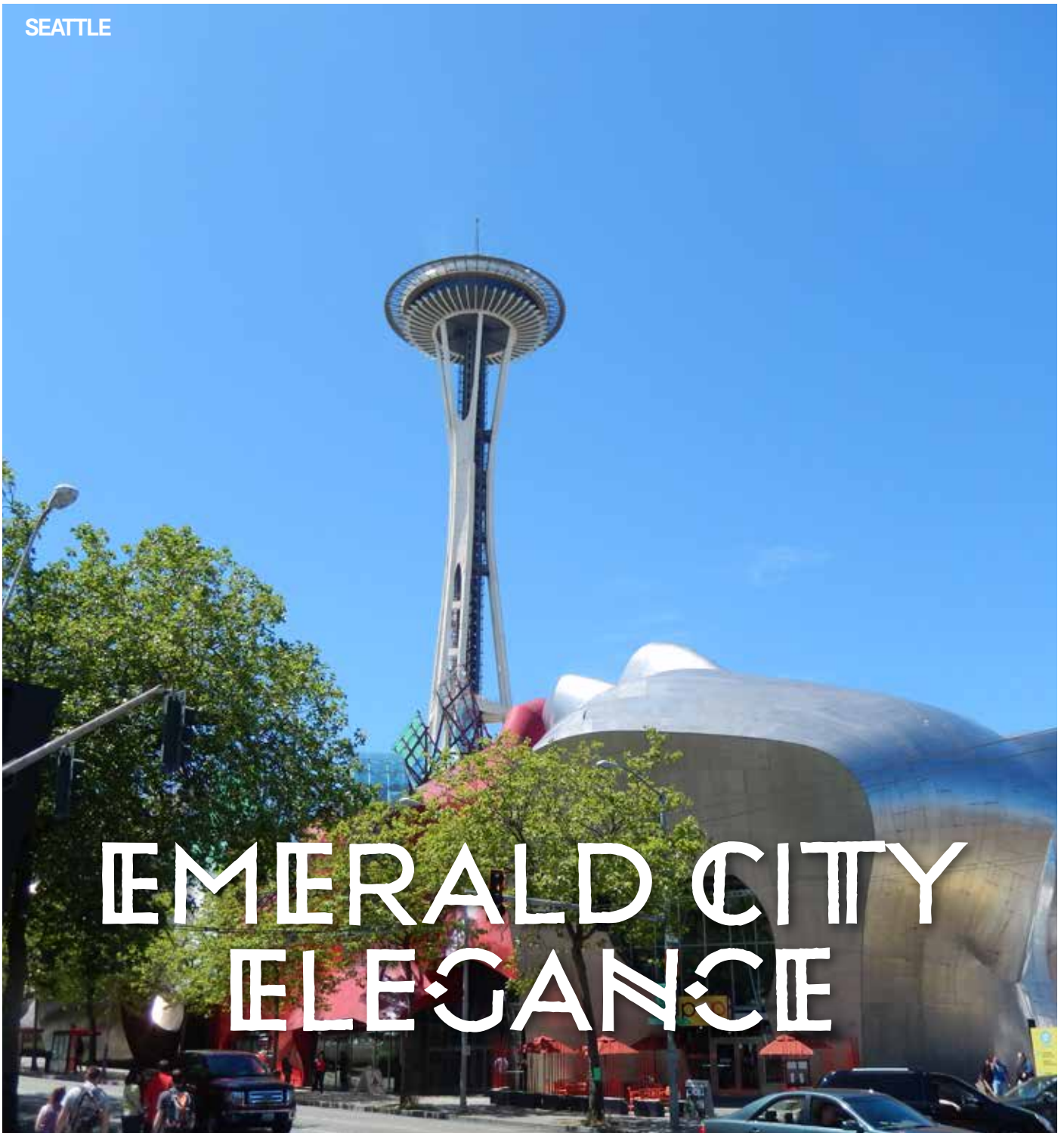


SEATTLE



By BEN MACK  
Photos by BEN MACK

The funny thing about the first Starbucks is it's sometimes not as crowded as people might think. That may come as surprising, considering it's located in the heart of one of the largest cities on North America's West Coast and is the site of pilgrimages by coffee lovers the world over.

Then again, if there's one thing Seattle has more than anything else, it's options. After all, the city located in the US state of Washington seemingly has more cafes than people, and Starbucks is just about everywhere – some

streets even have two across from each other. Perhaps nowhere in the city are there more options than at the famed Pike Place Market. Situated along the Elliot Bay Waterfront, the sights – and smells – of one of the oldest farmers' markets in the United States are truly a wonder to behold. But beyond being able to see fishermen throw whole fish like sockeye salmon and rainbow trout high into the air and wrap them in newspaper next to farmers offering vegetables they might have picked as recently as earlier the same morning or candy makers who bake their white chocolate fudge at home, the real attraction is the opportunity to sample some of the very best of Pacific

Northwest cuisine.

You really can't go wrong no matter which of the dozens of restaurants you choose. But one of the hidden gems of Pike Place is the Sound View Café, a small eatery located near the centre of the market just off the main thoroughfare.

Despite the many large windows that offer stunning views of the water below – from which you can watch numerous ferries and other boats float by – the dark wood décor gives the restaurant a very cozy feel.

The surrounding water is where a large part of the restaurant's seafood-heavy menu comes from. Tuna sandwiches on ciabatta bread

with melted local artisan cheese, coupled with piping-hot clam chowder, are especially sumptuous – and not too expensive, either.

With a full belly, a casual stroll along the waterfront makes for an ideal activity. If you're lucky, you might get a chance to see leaping orcas or sea lions sunning themselves. But before doing so, it may be worth checking out an entire wall made of... gum.

Located in Post Alley just next to Pike Place, the Market Theater Gum Wall was cleaned for the first time in 20 years in November 2015. Cleaning only took three days, with more than 1,070 kilogrammes (2,350 pounds) of gum pulled off a 15-metre (50-foot) section of brick wall. Less than a year later, its spackled explosion of colour is back in all its sticky glory.

Feel free to leave a bit yourself – it's probably the only place in Seattle where littering is encouraged.

If watching the water isn't your thing, a walk along the piers and pathways is still pleasant, especially on warm days when there might be a cooling breeze coming up from the Puget Sound.

A couple blocks away from the water amid the skyscraper jungle of Seattle's downtown core on First Avenue near Occidental Square is one of the city's most underrated eateries. The Berliner Döner Kebab offers not only some of the best of the Turkish-German fast-food specialty that's essentially shaved meat slathered in sauce, loaded with vegetables and layered with a veritable avalanche of feta

cheese inside a piece of bread similar to a pita, in Seattle, but in North America. Owner Victor Twu founded the chain in 2011 after marrying a German and making a stay in Berlin, and it's clear he did his research.

While the mango curry döner (pronounced DOO-NAH) with chicken, mango chunks, cilantro and mild curry sauce or the chicken fiery Kreuzberg (named for one of Berlin's most happening neighbourhoods) with spicy yoghurt chili sauce, mild pepper rings, romaine, tomato, cucumber and red cabbage are fancier than just about any döner one would find in Berlin, that's not necessarily a bad thing. At less than \$10 for a sandwich so filling it's hard for one person to eat it all, it's also a real bargain in a city with a notoriously

Pike Place



Washington State Ferry Terminal



Ferry in Elliot Bay

SEATTLE





EMP Museum



high sales tax (9.6 per cent is added to the sale price, so something a person buys for a listed price of \$10 actually costs almost \$11).

No visit to the “Emerald City” is complete without stopping by its most famous attraction. Built for the 1962 World’s Fair, the 184-metre (605-foot) Space Needle was once the tallest building in North America west of the Mississippi River. Though it’s now no longer even the tallest building in the city, it still offers the best views around. Its SkyCity restaurant, featuring Pacific Northwest cuisine, likewise isn’t the cheapest place to eat, but how many other restaurants rotate 360 degrees over a period of 47 minutes?

Next to the Space Needle, in a complex known as the Seattle Center, are a couple of lesser-known, but still must-do, activities. The EMP Museum opened in 2000 in an ultramodern building designed by Frank O. Gehry. It looks

like something out of a science fiction film, but its place as a mecca for music buffs may be forever unquestioned thanks to exhibits like “IF VI WAS IX,” a giant guitar sculpture made from more than 500 musical instruments and 30 computers. It also has the largest collection in the world of rare artifacts, hand-written lyrics, personal instruments, and original photographs of Seattle-born musician Jimi Hendrix, as well as grunge legends Nirvana. For pop culture consumption of a different sort, next to the EMP Museum, offers more than enough to satiate the appetite of any sci-fi fan. Boasting artifacts like the command chair used by Captain James T. Kirk in Star Trek and parts of the original manuscript of Bram Stoker’s famed horror novel Dracula, the museum is the kind of place where hours can feel like minutes.

For all that Seattle offers, there’s also plenty to do outside of the city. The Olympic Peninsula is a temperate rainforest that’s among the least densely-populated areas in the United States, while a few hours north is Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada’s second-largest city and the home of a burgeoning film industry. About three hours south of Seattle on Interstate 5 is Portland, Oregon, a city so in touch with nature it’s not uncommon to see police horses and bicycles mosey down the tree-lined streets. But let’s face it: Seattle is really the emerald of the west – and not just because of its otherworldly greenery.

But that alone means leaving may be difficult.

*Fiji Airways flies to Seattle with codeshare partners Alaska Airlines and American Airlines from Honolulu, Los Angeles and San Francisco.*