

the lost girls

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In Room Reviews: Hotel Murano; Tacoma, WA



LGs: This week, we sent West Coast writer Jordan Ginn to Tacoma's artsy Hotel Murano to see if glass houses—or hotels in this case—are actually cushy spots to lay your head. Here's what he had to say about the place...

In Room Review: Hotel Murano

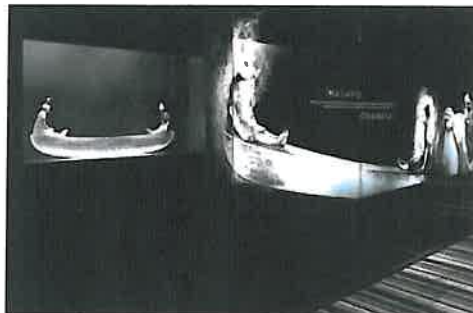
by *Jordan Ginn*

If Seattle and Portland had a tiny baby it's name would be Tacoma, Washington. The quaint city of 300,000 inhabitants or so, is my favorite along the I-5 corridor. The former industrial center after the turn of the century, the blue collar town is perhaps the most genuine of the notoriously friendly Pacific Northwest hotspots. While Tacoma lacks the raucous, shoulder-to-shoulder nightclubs of the larger cities it is sandwiched between, its array of family-owned restaurants, legendary waterfront views, and slower paced dive bars offer the perfect setting for a mid-twenty-something like myself. This is why, to

celebrate my wife's birthday we stayed at Hotel Murano, categorically the best hotel in Tacoma.

Hotel Murano is recently renovated and renamed from its former incarnation as the Tacoma Sheraton. While the Sheraton was hardly lowbrow, Hotel Murano is truly a transcendent place to stay. The Murano, located within walking distance of both the Tacoma Art Museum and the more unique Tacoma Glass Museum, has infused genuinely beautiful works of art seamlessly into its décor. The up-and-coming city of Tacoma has a truly unique landmark in the Murano's glass-themed 21 story luxury hotel. From the massive green glass structure, Orizon, by Greek artist Costas Varotosos outside to the majestic stained glass pirate ships and fused glass chandelier in the lobby, the displays are quite impressive.


As a Tacoma-native I was well aware of the city's interesting emergence as perhaps the U.S. blown glass capital. The world renowned glass artist, Dale Chihuly has pioneered this movement, who, like me is a Tac-Town boy (my mom knows his mom). So, as I pulled up to valet with my date for the weekend I was quite curious how this "art infused" experiment featuring Chihuly, among others, would turn out. My wife and I had both seen post-modern artistic expressions in hotels gone seriously wrong. As we arrived it was clear that Hotel Murano's buzz had made promises which the reality delivered. The spacious and elegant lobby was neither underwhelming nor gaudy, and the pieces--on display or used functionally--were a true spectacle. The friendly staff at check in completed the feeling that this place was not a bust.



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Our room was on the Susan Taylor Glasgow floor (a.k.a. floor fifteen). Before actually making it to our room we were greeted as the elevator doors

opened on our floor by Glasgow's piece entitled Happily Ever After, a glass corset, accompanied by a blurb about her inspiration for the display's ironic feminine theme.

After admiring the display for a moment we finally made it to our room, which of course completed the theme with its glass desk, end tables, and lamps. The bathroom was clean and nice. The classy look of the average size room came with your usual hotel features: ironing board, toiletries, robes, towels, cable TV (flat-screen LCD, Showtime, no HBO) overpriced mini-bar and laundry service. However the room came with a couple unique features including a pillow menu (shapes and softness), spiritual menu (Bible versions, Koran, Torah, etc.), and my favorite: the free feature of being able to borrow a preprogrammed iPod for the in-room iPod dock. The options ranged from Rock to Classical. I called down for the Hip Hop playlist to be brought to my room and jammed out to old Fugees, new Wu Tang and Kanye before he went all auto-tuner.

As our dinner plans would soon take us away from the hotel to one of Tacoma's many cultural hole-in-the-wall dining spots, we promptly went to BITE, Murano's swanky Restaurant/Bar for lunch after check in. With an addiction to seafood and novelties I immediately zeroed in on BITE's menu item "Lobster Corn Dogs". Considering how delicious the two corn-breaded lobster tail appetizers were the \$12 price was more than fair. While my entrée, the Open Faced Shrimp and Crab sandwich was just good, my date's Reuben was sensational. With the ample and perfect fries completing the meal, we were fully satisfied with the food and the service.



For the rest of the day we basically lounged about the hotel, comfortable, pampered and satisfied. We considered going to the waterfront in the afternoon, but the clouds said no. We considered going out dancing up the street at the attempt of a nightclub, misplaced in blue-collar Tacoma. We thought about going to one of the many dive bars in close proximity to play some darts or pool. Instead, we enjoyed the elegance, sipped a couple drinks and played some Scrabble in our room. The next morning we had planned to re-visit the unique Glass Museum, or the modest Tacoma Art Museum, but as we walked to the valet desk, took one last look around, neither my wife nor I felt that we needed to...

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