

Mercer Island REPORTER

Hotel Murano and the City of Destiny

Sometimes, the best getaways are the easiest. And the most overlooked.

Yes, but Tacoma?, you ask.

You bet. The City of Destiny, that city of industry, hard hats, Emerald Queens and toxic smelter landfills is quietly and surely emerging into a destination worthy of a second look.

I should know. Tacoma was my family address until I departed for college. The same is true for my wife, Judy. And with brothers, sisters, cousins and mother-in-laws still residing in Tacoma, I feel like I should know the place.

Wrong.

My latest Tacoma surprise came with a recent weekend getaway to our state's newest, best and largest art lodge — Hotel Murano. This extremely well-reinvented 22-floor, Morton 320-room,



Bill Morton

center-of-town

hotel (formerly The Marriott) takes modest, blue-collar Tacoma to significant heights of sophistication. The Murano and several emerging restaurants have rocketed Tacoma to a whole new realm.

Let's start with the Hotel Murano. It is part of the Portland-based Provenance Hotels collection of art lodgings. Two in Portland, Hotel Lucia and Hotel de Luxe, suggest the corporate thinking. I have stayed in the Hotel Lucia, which features 680 black and white photos by David Kennerly, the Portland native who scored covers on Life, Time, George and Newsweek, and also served as President Ford's personal photographer. The Lucia's corridors, meeting rooms, lobby and lounge are festooned with amazing photos, many of world-famous politicians and celebrities.

Hotel de Luxe starts with another art theme, this time the classic Hollywood of the 1920s, 30s and 40s. From Busby Berkeley to Humphrey Bogart, it is a fun place.

Tacoma's Hotel Murano, like its sister properties, is filled with fabulously documented arts, and each of its 22 floors features a different internationally renowned glass artist. Each floor's art is amplified by informed photos and discussions of how the particular glass art piece on display was created and what led to the particular vision for its creation.

Dale Chihuly? Well, of course, but more than displaying Chihuly in his home town, Hotel Murano serves as a thoughtful homage to the new glass world that Chihuly has created. The biggest names in glass art from around the world are on display: Czech artists Karen Le Monte and Dana Zamecnikova; Sweden's Bertil Vallien; Hiroshi Yamano from Japan; Peter Bremers from Holland; Australia's Cobi Cockburn; and Maurizio Donzelli, Orfeo