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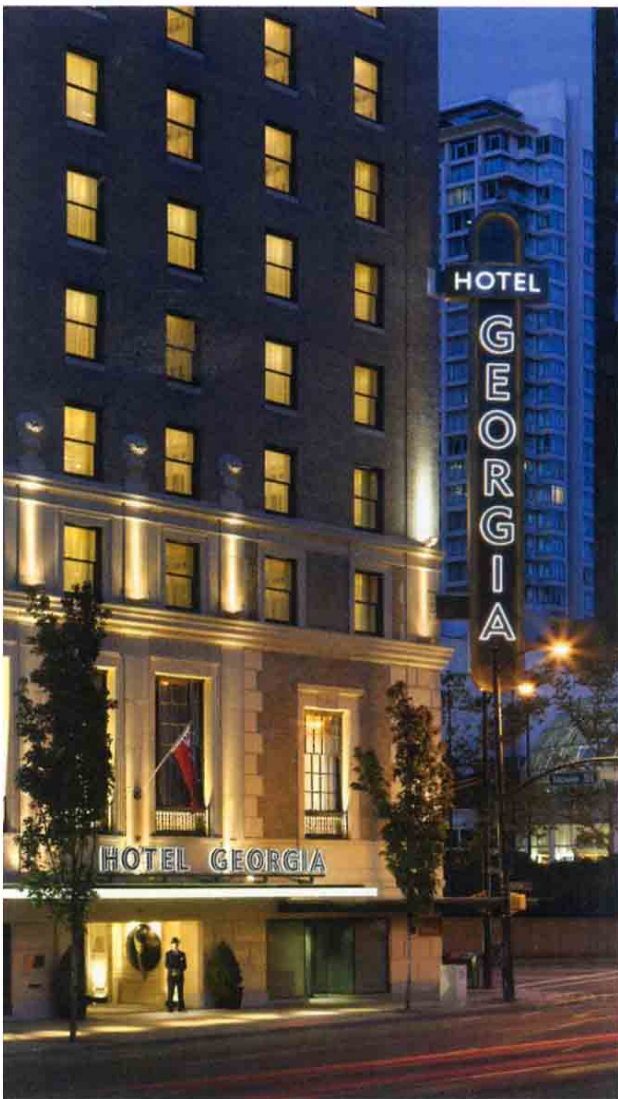




LIBATION DESTINATIONS

HOTEL GEORGIA ON MY MIND

BY TREVE RING



“THE BEST THING ABOUT THE HOTEL GEORGIA IS THE PEOPLE—THEY REALLY CARE.”

This is coming from my driver, Jim, as he glides the Bentley through the pre-dawn streets of Vancouver to my floatplane. The dock is a mere six blocks from the hotel's heart-of-downtown location, but when I met Jim the night before in the lobby he insisted on driving me.



"Jim," I had futilely attempted, "it's late, you're working tonight, and I have a very early plane—it's no problem to walk."

"First flight of the day? So I'll meet you in the lobby at 7 a.m.—maybe we'll take the scenic route," he said with a wink and a smile before he was off. And there he was, still smiling, waiting for me at 6:50 a.m. when I stepped off the elevator. Jim, as I learned on our early morning adventure, has lived in Vancouver for 60 years, almost half of the city's lifespan.

After retiring as general manager of the Vancouver Yacht Club 15 years ago and traveling around the world, Jim received a call and request from his friend of 45 years, Steve Halliday, Rosewood Hotel Georgia's Managing Director. And Jim, fondly titled "The Driver," has been escorting hotel guests around downtown in the property's Bentley ever since. It's not a job to Jim, though. "These people and this property keep me young," he says. "Guests from around the world, talented staff at the top of their game...it's cool."

A CLASSIC REBORN

The newly opened Rosewood Hotel Georgia is cool indeed... or make that *hot*. Since the property's original opening, at the height of the Roaring 20s' Art Deco gilded glamour, the hotel has hosted celebrities, musicians and royalty. Marlene Dietrich (and her 40 suitcases!), Errol Flynn, Sir Laurence Olivier, John Wayne and Gary Cooper are but a few of the Hollywood elite who graced the Georgia's early days.

It is said that when Katharine Hepburn strode into the lobby for the first time in 1950, the indomitable screen legend handed the manager her list of privacy requirements and, in doing so, introduced late-night room service at the Hotel Georgia. By this time, the hotel was well equipped to handle the Who's Who of Hollywood; Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Elvis Presley, Bing Crosby and the Rolling Stones have all been welcomed over the years.



LIBATION DESTINATIONS

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After a lengthy renovation and restoration, halted by economic recession and an ownership shift to the Rosewood Hotels & Resorts group, the Rosewood Hotel Georgia opened its doors in July 2011. Four years of intense labor created 156 spacious and luxurious guestrooms (carved out of the 300 original rooms), nearly 10,000 square feet of meeting space, a sumptuous spa and fitness center (complete with a chromotherapy mood-enhancing swimming pool), and one of the country's largest private collections of Canadian art. The splendidly sophisticated public spaces fit the period glamour, but with all mod cons the luxury traveler would expect. This summer, an adjoining high-rise tower of residential and commercial units will be complete, the newest "best-of" address in a city of exemplary addresses.



ONE OF THE TOP NEW RESTAURANTS IN CANADA

Since the doors reopened last summer, the property is also the site of one of the country's top restaurants, Hawksworth, the long-anticipated return of celebrated Chef David Hawksworth. This highly respected native Vancouverite is a chef's chef. Technically precise, quietly compelling, highly intelligent and fiercely insistent on quality, Hawksworth's pure and precise flavors have charmed critics worldwide, and his friendly, boyish charm has endeared him to locals.

After a decade in Europe working in Michelin-starred kitchens—including Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, L'Escargot and The Square—Hawksworth returned to Canada to helm Vancouver's little-known West Restaurant (or Owest, as it was then named), building it to be among the top restaurants in the world.

For his eponymous restaurant, Hawksworth has put together a cosmopolitan top-tier talent brigade, both in the back and front of house, including chef de cuisine Kristian Eligh (Market by Jean-Georges), pastry chef Wayne Kozinko (Yew at the Four Seasons), general manager Chad Clark (Tom's Kitchen, Lumière), bar manager Brad Stanton (Blue Water, Opus Hotel) and wine director Terry Threlfall (Chez Bruce, *Decanter* magazine).

The most coveted reservation in the city cannot be written off as solely a see-and-be-seen (though it absolutely is). Brilliant, pure flavors come together with an ease that appears effortless—but in reality is the exact opposite. The wine program is deep and exciting to oenophiles and neophytes alike; imaginative pairings by Threlfall



and his posse of some of Vancouver's top sommeliers make wining and dining fun. The service staff is attentive, acting intuitively and unobtrusively. And prices are incredibly reasonable compared to other fine dining establishments—the six-course tasting menu was \$78, and only \$126 with the paired wine flight.

... AND A STAFF THAT CANNOT BE BEAT

If you can't get a seat at Hawksworth, don't worry—there are other F&B outlets at the property that can certainly stand alone. You can enjoy a civilized cocktail and light bite at the lobby lounge 1927, or enjoy alfresco snacks on the fourth floor courtyard's seasonal oasis, Reflections, both overseen by Rosewood Hotel Georgia's head chef Ken Nakano (Fairmont Empress Hotel).

This summer will see the opening of Prohibition, a chic live music nightclub, in homage to the hotel's jazz-era glory. And popular with both hotel guests and locals is the European-styled Bel Café, overseen by Hawksworth and team, and named for David's wife, Annabel. 49th Parallel espresso is pulled by trained baristas on the sleek and gleaming Mirage machine, while rows of colorful macaroons and exquisite cakes are quickly snapped up for coffee breaks and dinner parties. I welcomed a latte from here en route to my early-morning flight home.

Which brings me back to Jim the Driver. My short visit included black truffles and Barolo in Hawksworth, welcome solos from my in-room Nespresso machine, the opportunity to bask in distinctive Douglas Coupland art, and, of course, a ride in a Bentley. But Jim is right—the best thing about the luxurious Rosewood Hotel Georgia is the highly professional, attentive, gracious and unpretentious staff. ●



Rosewood Hotel Georgia
rosewoodhotels.com/en/hotelgeorgia

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hawksworthrestaurant.com, (604) 673-7000