



SEATTLE'S CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

Seattle's downtown skyline is highlighted by the Space Needle, which towers 605 feet above the Seattle Center.

RODNEY WILSON | CIN WEEKLY CONTRIBUTOR

Seattle, Wash. – home of gourmet coffee houses, used bookstores and an early '90s musical era known as grunge.

There's more to what locals affectionately call "Rain City" than these sweeping generalizations, though you will see many second-hand booksellers and more Starbucks than you ever thought possible (there's a marked lack of flannel, though).

A unique city with a breathtaking view of Mt. Rainer, Seattle has a long history of being an independent spirit, with its many locally-owned establishments and respect for the viewpoints of its citizens. The result is a culturally progressive town that's full of opportunities for intelligent discourse and fulfilling recreation – just plan on doing all that indoors, because it rains a lot in Seattle.

PIKE PLACE MARKET

Winter may not be the best time to visit this historic marketplace – many of the vendors are seasonally inclined toward the warmer months – but there's still a bustle of activity even on the soggiest of days. The heart of the market, founded in 1907 as a way to cut out price-gouging produce middlemen, remains connecting consumers with local farmers.

Booths in the market offer everything from fresh vegetables to seafood to handmade hats, and the tone is eclectic and fun, with street performers singing songs and making balloon animals around every turn. Lower levels of the market host permanent businesses, including restaurants and clothiers, and the area surrounding Pike Place has all manner of shops, including the original Starbucks.

INFO: 1508 Pike Place, www.pikeplacemarket.org

EASY STREET RECORDS AND CAFE

This town has some serious rock history – it spawned Jimi Hendrix, Kurt Cobain and something like half of the bands you hear on *The O.C.*

Record stores are plentiful around Seattle, but Easy Street Records is on top of the heap.

Jam-packed with music, movies and memorabilia, Easy Street is the place to go to pick up an exclusive import CD and be scene ... er, seen. It also has a great lineup of in-store band appearances.

INFO: 4559 California Ave. SW and 20 West Mercer St., (206) 938-EASY (3279) and (206) 691-EASY (3279) or www.easystreetonline.com

826 SEATTLE

Actually a storefront called "Space Travel Supply Company," 826 Seattle is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping students improve their writing skills. Though the common tourist probably won't pass through the "Atomic Teleporter" that divides the store from the learning area, the retail area is a wonder to behold in and of itself.

Unabashedly "spacey," the store is constructed of steel and concrete, with all manner of astral imagery projected on screens throughout the room. One side is a bookstore for McSweeney's-related literature, while the other offers supplies for space travel, including gravity (a block of metal) and an "almost-instant spaceship repair patch" (a magnet).

INFO: 8414 Greenwood Ave. North, (206) 725-2625 or www.826seattle.org

Sure you might get soggy, but there's more than music and rain



TIM THOMPSON

The Public Market sign hovers over the Pike Place Market, with Elliott Bay, Puget Sound and West Seattle in the background.

UNIVERSITY DISTRICT

A good rule of thumb when looking for cool things to do on the cheap is to follow the kids to where they live – and that's exactly what a visit to the University District (aka the "U District") is all about. The area around the University of Washington is chock-full of interesting eateries and shops. It's a great place to grab some organic fair-trade coffee and browse through used bookstores and vintage clothing shops.

PLACES TO VISIT:

Red Light Vintage Clothing, 4560 University Way NE, www.redlightvintage.com

Twice Sold Tales, 1311 NE 45th St., www.twicesoldtales.com

Caffe Appassionato, 4518 University Way NE, www.caffeappassionato.com

Caspian Grill, 5517 University Way NE, www.caspiangrill.com

INFO: www.udistrictchamber.org

CAPITOL HILL

In a town as hip as Seattle, Capitol Hill is ultra-hip. It's where you'll find Gwen Stefani's clothing line (at Trendy Wendy) as well as progressive bookshops and a chocolatier that serves up some of the most decadent confections to ever touch your tongue.

SOME HIP SHOPS:

Trendy Wendy, 211 Broadway E, (206) 322-6642

Dilettante Chocolates, 416 Broadway E, www.dilettante.com

Bailey-Coy Books, 414 Broadway E, (206) 323-8842

GETTING AROUND

Gridlocked traffic is a real problem in Seattle, so alternate transportation is encouraged. Try hopping on a bus or the Seattle Center Monorail, or grab a bike and pedal through the rain like the locals do. Visit www.bikestation.org, www.seattlemonorail.com or www.transit.metrokc.gov for more info.

STAYING IN

The Ace Hotel (2423 First Ave.) calls itself a "design hotel," which translates to hip digs. Comparably affordable and centrally located, this hotel is a tres cool option for experiencing Seattle. Call (206) 448-4721 or visit www.theacehotel.com.

GOING OUT

Seattle is a mecca for many artists and musicians, and the result is an inexhaustible assortment of things to do. For listings and recommendations, check out one of the city's many weekly publications, such as *The Stranger* (www.thestranger.com) or *Seattle Weekly* (www.seattleweekly.com).

NEED MORE INFO?

For more visitor information, visit www.seeseattle.com. For info on the Space Needle, visit www.spaceneedle.com.