

Michael's finishing up when I come round again, and I invite him to join me in chairs set up by a small waterfall and pond outside. As we relax to the musical poetry of the waterfall and the visual poetry of the trees reflected in the water, I tell him about Bootsma's painting and note that Cedarbrook is also a wonderful resting point.

"Yes," he agrees. "Let's come back for your birthday."

Rates start at \$119.

The Maxwell Hotel

300 Roy Street, 877-298-9728,
www.themaxwellhotel.com

Guests crossing the bigger-than-a-basketball-court lobby of The Maxwell Hotel on the way to their rooms often pause when they see the mural by painter and best-selling-book author Victor Ostrovsky.

They stand for several minutes in front of the 15-foot-wide-by-6-foot-tall mural, absorbed by its vibrant depiction of Seattle Center, the gathering place created for the 1962 World's Fair. Musicians, dancers, the Space Needle, the International Fountain, the Seattle Repertory Theatre, a seagull, a popcorn vendor—and visitors sporting bright red, green, blue and purple umbrellas—flow seamlessly into each other, framed by drawn-back maroon curtains.

"The mural is really fun," says hotel General Manager Linda Jones, as she shows me around the 139-room hotel, which opened in March. "You're really taken by this, and then you turn around, and it's all just right *there*."

She does a half turn and points above the Seattle Center garage, just across the street, to the center's arts-and-entertainment structures just beyond the parking area.

In less time than it takes to sing Bobby Sherman's *Seattle*—which the pianist in the mural is playing—you can be part of the audience enjoying a KeyArena concert, or a Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle Opera, Seattle Rep, Intiman, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Book-It or Seattle Children's Theatre production. You can be learning how to play the drums at the Experience Music Project or learning about space at the Pacific Science Center Planetarium. You can be splashing in the

fountain or strolling the Space Needle Observation Deck. Or you can be watching the Teatro ZinZanni dinner theater/circus, just a block southwest of the hotel.

When you return to The Maxwell and are recaptured by the mural, you might notice that the maroon curtains are subtly patterned with golden pineapples, complementing the mosaic-tile pineapple on the floor in front of the check-in desk. Hotel owner/operator Columbia West Properties—a local family business whose president, Michelle Foreman Barnet, named the hotel after her 10-year-old son—chose the pineapple as an emblem because it has long been a symbol of hospitality, Jones says. American colonists found the fruit so difficult to procure, its presence at the dinner table was seen as the highest form of welcome, and the pineapple motif was later used in tablecloths, bedposts and other items to indicate the utmost hospitality.

I like the mosaic, but in my opinion, the hotel's best use of the pineapple symbol is the complimentary miniature pineapple cupcakes delivered daily by a local bakery. The mini-cakes are set out—next to flowers such as white lilies—on a round, glass-topped lobby table, for guests to savor between 3 and 7 p.m. Nearby is complimentary coffee from Fidalgo Bay, a Western Washington specialty roaster.

On our second evening at the hotel, I select a cupcake and relax next to the gas fireplace and flat-screen TV in a lobby alcove, where a grouping of black-and-white chairs is enlivened by two lime-green ottomans adorned with circles of silver beads. The hotel's decor is an energetic whirl of patterns—circles, stripes, florals, squiggles, diamonds, rectangles, X's—in a swirl of colors—red, green, orange, gold, yellow, brown, blue, purple, gray, silver.

The idea is to evoke the artsy flair of the nearby attractions; appeal to the senses with various colors, patterns and textures; and cater to the sensibilities of guests ranging from sophisticated business travelers to families with kids, Jones says.

Business travelers will no doubt appreciate the free public-area wireless and

wired Internet access; the business-center nooks with complimentary laptop use and printing; the 24-hour Pineapple Espresso bar; the exercise facility; and the 1,600 square feet of high-tech meeting space.

Families with kids will likely appreciate the heated indoor pool, with its bright plastic chairs in colors such as red and green, and its wall tiles painted in themes such as fish, stars and sharks by young Maxwell and his friends. "Awesome!" says a dad with two young sons in tow as they enter the pool area.

Everyone will like the free underground parking; the spaciousness of the guestrooms—many of which have views of Seattle Center or the historic Queen Anne neighborhood—and the in-room amenities. These include a Keurig coffeemaker; a microwave (and complimentary popcorn); a mini-refrigerator; an alarm clock/iPod dock; allergy-reducing laminate wood floors; a black-marble bathroom vanity; and a spacious shower with unusual imported porcelain tiles that are each nearly 1 foot wide and 2 feet tall.

Our high-ceilinged suite is one of four rooms that also have jetted tubs, and it has a balcony, as well. The jets create such a mound of suds when I pour in the Gilchrist & Soames Body Refresher, I feel like I'm floating in a massaging cloud.

Afterward, I open the fridge and pull out a rhubarb Dry Soda—purchased just a few blocks away at the Metropolitan Market—and Michael and I each choose one of the suite's two queen beds from which to watch, in roomy comfort, a comedy DVD, one of the 93 that are complimentary for guests during their stay.

When the movie's over, we walk over to the sliding-glass door to admire the Seattle skyline in the distance and the Space Needle nearby, glowing white in its night-lights. The landmark is beautiful—and one of Seattle's most-sought-after views.

Michael puts his arm around my shoulder and says: "I really like seeing the Space Needle from our room. The Maxwell does have a great location."

Rates start at \$119. **5**

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