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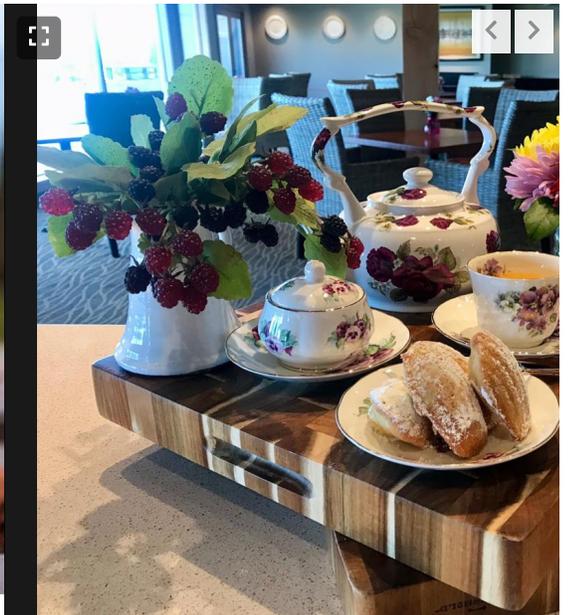
It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas at Richland's "Wine Hotel"

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE CORBETT CONKLIN Special to Yakima Magazine Dec 5, 2019 Updated Dec 5, 2019

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The lodge attracts visitors from all over the U.S. and as far away as Europe and Japan.
Photo courtesy of The Lodge at Columbia Point.



This year the lodge will offer holiday teas with the theme of "Teddy Bears, Trains and Tea."



Central Washington is known throughout the world for its prolific vineyards. In keeping with this spirit, we now have a "winery hotel" dedicated to the viticulture industry.

The Lodge at Columbia Point, overlooking the Columbia River in Richland, features wine tastings, wine dinners and tours of area wineries which can be arranged by staff. Each guest room has the name of a regional winery adorning a barrel stave above the door. In addition, there is a growing collection of artwork and display items, including colorful winery maps along the hallways and in guest rooms.

During the Christmas season, this rustic lodge with its large wooden beams and neutral color palette is brightened with exterior lights and holiday wreaths plus interior décor including lighted Christmas trees, garlands and red poinsettias. This year, there also will be holiday teas, with a theme of "Teddy Bears, Trains and Tea," to celebrate the season. After dark, guests can view sternwheelers, yachts and small boats sailing past, adorned with Christmas lights, including a lighted boat parade planned by the Tri-Cities community on Dec. 6 and 7.

"People are pleasantly surprised when they come here at all of the things that are offered," said Wendy Higgins, general manager of the Lodge, who refers to the hotel as a hidden treasure.

In addition to the amenities of the Lodge and its celebration of wine, there is the scenic beauty of the river, desert and hills. There is interesting local history to explore, such as Hanford Project displays. The community celebrates the arts and there are golf courses and shopping, she added.

This combination of features draws people from far and wide. "We have a lot of wine groups who come and stay with us. ... Recently, a group came from Florida," Higgins said. Other bands of wine enthusiasts have traveled from as far away as Europe, Japan and China, as well as closer Northwest locales including Seattle and Portland.

The Lodge at Columbia Point opened in 2017 under the management of Escape Lodging, a Cannon Beach-based group which manages 13 properties, including hotels and restaurants in the Northwest. With more than 62,000 square feet of space, the Lodge is designed to give people "lots of places to gather and hang out," Higgins said, citing the large lobby "living room," dining room, covered outdoor pool, veranda with fire pit overlooking the waterfront, craft bar and upstairs library.

Boasting a "Northwest feel," the Lodge incorporates wooden planks in the entryway which have been reclaimed from old piers along the Columbia River and a wooden staircase assembled with repurposed wood from a Portland meat-packing plant, Higgins said. An interesting handmade chandelier in the entryway is designed to look like suspended basalt pillars.

There are 82 guest rooms in the Lodge, over half with river views. Prices range from about \$159 for a single room in winter months to over \$300 for a large suite in the peak summer season. "We do have people request rooms (named) for wine clubs to which they belong or a favorite winery," Higgins noted.

The second-floor dining room, Drumheller's, features cuisine such as Valencia beef and duck, risotto, homemade bread and a variety of desserts including cr me brulee and seasonal treats from pumpkin cheesecake to homemade ice cream.

Vine, the first-floor craft cocktail bar and tasting room, focuses on Northwest craft spirits, including offerings from the Lodge's 82 Northwest "wine partners." In warmer weather, the cocktail bar's sliding doors can be opened to provide what they call a waterfront living room.

The Columbia Point Spa is on the first floor. It provides a limited number of services including aromatherapy, massage and facials. A colorful mural of a Columbia River scene adds to the peaceful atmosphere.

For those who wish to sample area wines, there are tastings scheduled from 5 to 6:30 p.m., every Thursday, Friday and Saturday in the craft bar, at a cost of \$10 to \$15 per night for the public, but included in amenities for guests. The first Sunday of each month, beginning in February, there will be a specialty wine dinner in Drumheller's, pairing Northwest wines and cuisine and perhaps even adding a bonus such as a ros  sorbet, Higgins said. Cost of the dinner is \$125 per person.

On Dec. 14 and 15, holiday teas are planned, with two seatings each day. The events will feature Smith teas from Portland, served in English bone china, plus an array of tea sandwiches and pastries. In keeping with the "Teddy Bears, Trains and Tea" theme, there will be special readings of "The Polar Express." Admission is \$39 for adults and \$20 for children age 12 and under. Additional teas are planned for May, to observe Mother's Day.

Lodge guests wishing to tour wineries stretching from Tri-Cities to Walla Walla to Yakima can make arrangements through the front desk. These tours can last from a couple of hours to excursions over multiple days, depending upon individual preferences, with participants often coming back to the lodge to stay overnight.

The Lodge at Columbia Point is a refreshing new destination, filled with possibilities for wine enthusiasts as well as those who are simply looking for a change from the routine.



If You Go

The Lodge at Columbia Point is at 530 Columbia Point Drive in Richland. For more information, visit lodgeatcolumbiapoint.com or call (509) 713-7423 or (844) 200-8641.

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