

LIVING **TRAVEL**

Checking in: Skwachàys Lodge, Vancouver

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Aboriginal art adorns the suites.

Photo: Craig Minielly at Aura Photographics

Skwachàys Lodge, an 18-room boutique hotel in the heart of Vancouver's rapidly gentrifying downtown East Side, marries high-end interiors, First Nations art and a hipster locale.

At once a social enterprise and a cultural tourism experience, Skwachàys Lodge is owned and operated by the Vancouver Native Housing Society. Its first four floors offer subsidized artists studios while its lobby is home to a gallery of traditional and contemporary native art.

The heritage conversion of an old six-story Edwardian hotel by architect Joe Y. Wai now features a 40-foot totem pole on the rooftop "longhouse" that acts as a new neighborhood beacon.

Where

At the intersection of historic Gastown and Chinatown, and just a 10-minute walk to the business district, this is an ideal location for many pursuits. Close to the Sun-Yat-Sen classical gardens and yummy new eateries like Bao Bei, it also offers access to Gastown designer boutiques and nightclubs. It's a 15-minute cab ride to Vancouver's tony West Side or its bohemian Commercial Drive to the east.

Why

Combining thoughtful interior design, contemporary native art and social enterprise, the lodge is a win-win stay for all involved. One hundred percent of profits from the hotel operation and the fair-trade gallery subsidize the 24 Aboriginal artist live/work studios housed at Skwachàys.

Working well



Totem pole atop the boutique Skwachàys.

Photo: Craig Minielly at Aura Photographics

The cozy lobby lounge merges west coast contemporary design with First Nations art and a good selection of regional wines and craft beers.

And the pairing of internationally known interior designers with native artists allows each room to tell a unique story.

The artist and designer teams include: Corrine Hunt and BBA Design Consultants; Lou-Anne Neel and Inside Design Studio; Richard Shorty and Porada Design Group; and Jerry Whitehead with Portico Design Group.

The Canadiana Suite offers a vaguely Douglas Coupland-style Hudson's Bay blanket riff combined with potent animal emblems.

The Moon Suite, done up in elegant lunar whites and beiges, features a circular bed framed by a rounded ceiling light with a gold-leafed Raven and channels a kind of West Coast magic realism.

Don't miss

Take in a workshop with one of the artists featured in your room or check out the traditional sweat lodge and smudge room for healing and relaxation.

Needs Work

The food and beverage service is currently limited to breakfast, but as of March 26, a new, expanded, aboriginal-themed menu will launch with a focus on locally sourced food and wine.

Details

From \$150; skwachays.com

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