



INN AT LAUREL POINT

A LUXURY HOTEL WITH A HEART FOR THE COMMUNITY

BY TRACY BEARD

Photographs courtesy of Inn at Laurel Point

The Inn at Laurel Point is stunning on the outside, inside and at the heart of its governing decisions. The Inn rests on six acres of parkland overlooking the inner harbor positioned at the cusp of a prominent peninsula in Victoria, BC. Staff, guests, and people in and around the community benefit from the charitable and savvy policies instituted by management. The Inn's fine dining establishment, AURA waterfront restaurant + patio, delights diners with West Coast Asian cuisine, and the property boasts multiple impressive meeting spaces for conferences, weddings and other special events.

A NOTEWORTHY TEAM

Paul and Artie Arsens had a dream. The couple purchased the Delta Hotel in 1980 and rebranded it as the Inn at Laurel Point. They immediately began working with renowned architect and friend Arthur Erickson. The Arsens wished to augment the hotel turning it into something grander than it once was.

Paul and Artie enjoyed a love affair with travel and art. Numerous pieces from their personal art collection fill the Inn's rooms and hallways. It is rumored that local artist Louie Morino, a friend of Artie, often traded his artwork for accommodations at the hotel. Since the Arsens' purchase, the Inn has operated as an independ-

dent hotel allowing them to invest in sustainability efforts lowering their overall carbon footprint. In 2010 NatureBank awarded the Inn BC's first Carbon Neutral Hotel.

A SUPERIOR INDEPENDENT HOTEL

The Arsens believed in their staff and the corporate culture they created. Paul passed away in 1997 and Artie set up an 80-year trust before passing away in 2008 that would keep the hotel an independent business.

The Inn at Laurel Point has operated as a social enterprise since 2008. Three trustees manage the trust with guidelines set to maintain the Inn's status as a social enterprise. These policies



state that the hotel funds must be allocated for (1) the betterment of the hotel, (2) new training and incentives to retain superior staff, and (3) good acts of will toward the community.

The trust donates to several local charities including Habitat for Humanity. Victoria hosts the only cancer treatment center on Vancouver Island, and the trust allocates funds to provide free accommodations at the Inn for patients and their families while they undergo treatment. Many of these families travel great distances and are blessed by receiving free housing during this difficult time. Director of Sales Brooke Harris says, “These people become part of our family. Sometimes we get to watch them leave happy, and other times we know we will never see them again.”

A VARIETY OF MAGNIFICENT ROOMS

The Inn at Laurel Point features 200 rooms with private balconies, each one with gorgeous harbor views. The 135 original accommodations in the Laurel Wing range from standard rooms and junior suites to the well-appointed Laurel Wing hospitality suite.

The newer Erickson Wing boasts 65 spacious and luxurious suites from large studio-style rooms to the expansive executive suite with floor-to-ceiling windows and a wraparound balcony.

All rooms at the Inn come with complimentary Wi-Fi, a half-sized refrigerator, movies on demand, in-room coffee and tea, a desk and Aveda amenities.

A FABULOUS RETREAT

My daughter Brittney and I stayed in one of the Erickson Wing studio suites. The elegant room with large sliding glass doors leading out to the balcony fulfilled Erickson’s goal of bringing the outside in. The shoji screen separating our bathroom from the main room gave a nod to the Arsens’ love of Japan and the rest of Asia.

We relished lounging in the sunshine on our balcony. The first afternoon we watched the sailboats bob about while seaplanes took off and landed on the water, and the following morning we enjoyed breakfast gazing out at the harbor.

A DELIGHTFUL RESTAURANT

Executive Chef Takashi Ito oversees all food served at the Inn at Laurel Point. He changes the menu at AURA waterfront restaurant + patio twice a year and works closely with Manpreet Sethi, the restaurant chef, and Janis Goard, the director of food and beverages.

Brittney and I shared dinner outside on the patio. We began our feast with a shrimp and cream cheese spring roll followed by a seafood play on a charcuterie plate. The platter consisted of scallop and nori “mortadella,” cured salmon, smoked tuna pâté, and a delicious pressed local octopus. A delicate Dungeness crab and shrimp terrine, rye crisps and a harissa crème fraîche finished the dish.

The chef prepared a chilled corn soup with cured and smoked scallops, charred corn, and bacon powder. Next, we dined on gnocchi with

roasted beets, edamame, kale, shiso pesto, and feta cheese alongside fennel dressed in yuzu.

Asian flavors came through in the duck breast rubbed with shio koji and the spiced soy-braised duck leg with forbidden rice croquettes. We ended this delightful meal on a light note with strawberry and coconut sorbet and mango ice cream.

A DRAMATIC SPACE FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

The Inn at Laurel Point features 10,000 square feet of premier indoor and outdoor meeting space. The Terrace Ballroom boasts incredible natural lighting and an exquisite view of the Japanese pond and the harbor. The Inn’s meeting space accommodates groups of 10 to 300.

A DREAM FULLY REALIZED

Rooms at the Inn received a remodel 12 years ago, but funds ran short and most of the ground floor did not receive renovations. On October 15, 2018, Arthur Erickson’s vision for the entire renewal project began, and completion of the endeavor is anticipated for the spring of 2019. The mission is to construct a new entryway, lobby, driveway, and ground-floor meeting and event spaces together with a remodel of the AURA waterfront restaurant + patio.

During this six-month venture, the hotel will run with a temporary entrance for guest check-in and will offer on-site catering. The indoor pool, fitness studio, in-room spa services, and bicycle rentals will remain available.



Architect John Graham, manager of the renewal project, was a junior architect during the Inn's Erickson Wing project. He gains his inspiration from the waterfront space and says, "Guests will have the sensation of standing on the prow of a ship and will be greeted by sweeping views of the harbor, and beyond, from the moment they arrive."

A FABULOUS CITY

Victoria is a destination for fun, romance and business. City planners are continually laboring to enhance the city by adding new restaurants and hotels and improving the outdoors by adding more bike trails. Plan your next stay in Victoria at the Inn at Laurel Point where the amenities, service and food will impress and where the views from your room will bring you back again and again. ■