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Vancouver, Canada

The Westin Bayshore, Vancouver

Marriott's Convention Resort Network takes the fuss out of meetings

[ON LOCATION] KAREN TORME OLSON

Vancouver is committed to protecting the environment and also celebrates its multicultural character in food, fun and mindset. From its award-winning LEED platinum-certified convention center with a living roof and walls, to policy that encourages wellness, we saw evidence of caring for the planet and people everywhere. That attitude and the city's emphasis on nurture, nature and noshing were contagious.

THE NETWORK

Our host was the epitome of nature-manmade balance, the year-old **JW Marriott Parq Vancouver**. After checking in, we made a beeline to the hotel's Spa by JW for a reviving massage that wiped away all jet lag and energized us. We used that energy to explore the adjacent **Hotel Douglas** where a living wall, a 25-ft Douglas fir reception desk, and art gallery give the hotel's sixth floor lobby its welcoming vibe. Steps away are the D/6 Bar and Lounge serving craft cocktails, and Hidden Lounge, an intimate meeting space concealed behind a swinging bookcase wall. We strolled through the 30,000-sf urban park off the lobby and got an up-close view of the **BC Place Stadium** next door to The Victor, the Parq's flagship restaurant, where Pacific Northwest seafood, premium steaks and imaginative desserts are showcased.

"We are bringing in projects and groups that never considered meeting in Vancouver," explained Amy Ballard, director of sales and marketing for both the Parq and the Douglas. Between them, the two waterfront hotels have more than 500 rooms and suites, eight bars and restaurants, more than 60,000 sf of meeting space and Vancouver's largest ballroom, all the while being LEED Gold-certified. In addition, a 2-story casino takes up the Parq's second and third floors and the synergy that comes from the hotels'

membership in Marriott International's 110-properties-strong CRN makes both a magnet for meeting planners. Two other Vancouver CRN properties have distinct personalities that also draw crowds.

The 746-room **Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre** is located in the city's center within walking distance to some of Vancouver's hippest neighborhoods: Granville (nightlife and counterculture); Yaletown (65 restaurants in a 2-block radius); Dobson Street (shopping); and Davy (LGBTQ street). The Wall Centre has just completed meeting room renovations, too. "The new light fixtures in our grand ballroom change with the circadian rhythms of your body, so when you come out of a meeting, it feels like the day has progressed," said Christine Brittain, senior sales manager.

The 511-room **Westin Bayshore**, meanwhile, is a trailhead for several running routes that skirt Stanley Park and Coal Harbour and it supplies shoes, running clothes, bikes and guides for attendees who need them. It's also the only hotel in Vancouver that offers "Liquid Yoga," yoga on a floating boogie board.

HYPERLOCAL EXPERIENCES

During downtime, attendees should explore Stanley Park, a sprawling urban park with waterfront, bike and running trails, and a spectacular collection of First Nation totem poles as we did. Top this off with mussels at **Chambar**, a Belgian sustainable seafood restaurant.

During a tour of foodie mecca Granville Island, we used all our senses to experience smoky charcuterie, chewy Montreal bagels, juicy Okanagan Valley apples, creamy chai tea, and warm donuts dripping with gooey glaze. Every bite came with a history lesson and a deeper understanding of the culture and people that created it.

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