

TIPS ON VISITING SEATTLE

by Bruce Blumenthal

If you need to be in Seattle for any reason, there are a few things you should know. First, there are only two seasons. One is damp and miserable. This is summer, lasting from July 23 to August 12 and giving way to winter. These seasons can be characterized, respectively, as "inhospitable" and "uninhabitable".

People in Seattle defend themselves against the weather with enormous amounts of coffee. However, it is an exaggeration to say that every corner contains four Starbucks. I personally encountered one intersection in the Fremont district with three Starbucks and a Seattle's Best Coffee, and another downtown with three Starbucks and a Torrefaction. Everywhere else, the four Starbucks rule is in effect, and the numerous other purveyors of caffeine are relegated to the middle of the block.

It is alleged that on a clear day Mt. Rainier can be seen from Seattle. The guidebooks advise that at such times the natives emerge from their shelters and run amok, yelling "The mountain's out! The mountain's out!" The whole time I was in Seattle, the mountain was most stubbornly and definitely in. In truth, I doubt there even *is* a Mt. Rainier. I view it as a cheap attempt to lure outsiders. Just as some naïve people are conned into spending a night in a supposedly "haunted" English castle, hoping to see a ghost, others go to Seattle for a glimpse of an equally illusory peak. I DON'T BUY IT FOR A MINUTE! (*Still, there is something awfully enticing about the thought of all those people running around like fools.*)

If you are with any Seattlites and wish to be considered a raconteur, you need only drop the word "Tacoma" into any conversation. Your companions will instantly dissolve into uncontrollable laughter, and proclaim you the brightest and wittiest person west of Spokane. As New Yorkers laugh at New Jersey, and everyone else laughs at Cleveland, Seattle finds its neighbor Tacoma irresistibly funny. Toyota may sell a lot of Tacoma trucks elsewhere, but I doubt they can give one away anywhere in Northwest Washington State.

In conclusion, my advice to those contemplating going to Seattle can be compressed into one word....DON'T.