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Friday Harbor House—A Boutique Island Getaway

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It's one of those mornings Pacific Northwesterners crave on gloomy, wet days. Above Mt. Baker's white-tipped peak is a pale blue sky with wispy cotton clouds and cormorants sun themselves on pilings as I board the Anacortes ferry. Soon I'll be cruising through the green-backed San Juan Islands to my final destination—Friday Harbor House—the only boutique hotel and restaurant with a view of Friday Harbor.



An hour later, the ferry cruises into the harbor. Perched above the marina on a bluff, is a row of bright orange umbrellas which remind me of sunning Monarch butterflies. Above that is the words Friday Harbor House Inn & Restaurant on a contemporary grey and brown building nestled next to the coastal town of Friday Harbour.



Innkeeper Margie O'Brien greets me when I check-in and shows me to my room, which is one of two rooms with a corner balcony. From it, the view stretches from one side of Friday Harbor to the other, and the ferry I disembarked is now loading its next round of passengers.

The contemporary bedroom has soothing clean lines with a lounging chair next to a gas fireplace, a flat screen television (which I don't plan to turn on) and plenty of books to read. The oversized jetted tub takes advantage of the view too. And, in the refrigerator sits a purchasable bottle of champagne for that romantic moment. All of it says you have arrived at your island getaway.



Friday Harbor House has 23 rooms, which range in size from queen, king and suite. The majority have a harbor view and some a partial view. Its smaller size puts it in the boutique hotel category, and unlike many larger hotels the front desk is not open 24 hours. Instead, a number is posted for after-hour assistance.

"A boutique hotel can offer a more personalized and individual experience," said O'Brien. "We want to exceed expectations and help guests make their experience unique." Recently, their island savvy and knowledge of local shops and services helped a guest with his marriage proposal.

That evening, after my partner arrives on the evening ferry, we dine at The Bluff. We start with a cheese plate, which includes balsamic fig preserve they prepared from their own figs, a Brazilian “we make it, you shake it!” Caipirinha cocktail and clam and salmon chowder. Our entrées are wild caught salmon and flat iron steak with white wine risotto and vegetables. Every dish is beautifully presented and the white wine risotto is the best we’ve ever had. Dessert is a soft baked chocolate chip cookie—my new favorite—and the island cobbler, both topped with ice cream.

With our bellies fully loaded, we head up to our room and hang out on the balcony. Under the glowing moon the slow-paced island lifestyle takes hold as we relax and watch the ferry cruise in and out of Friday Harbor.



