



A covered common area at the Lodges on Vashon—complete with twinkly lights, a cast-concrete gas fireplace, and sheepskin-strewn seating—offers guests an appealing place to hang out regardless of the weather.

ISLAND TIME

The Lodges on Vashon—just a stone's toss away from Seattle—test-drives a new resort model.

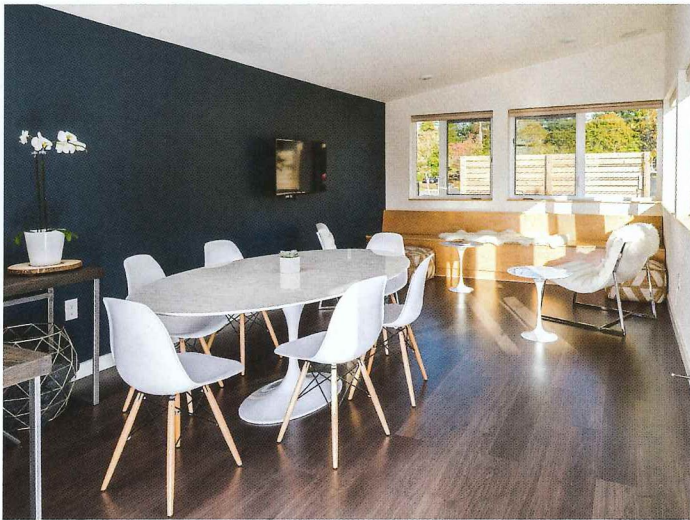
Written by JAIME GILLIN

JENA THORNTON KNOWS HOTELS. The Seattle-based founder of Magnetic/ERV and managing director of Eagle Rock Ventures has participated in the development or acquisition of 87 hotels in her 24-year career, from mega-resorts in Hawaii to a historic boutique hotel in Boston. But when she got her hands on a 4.5-acre lot on Vashon Island, complete with a preexisting entitlement to build 16 lodging units—quite the prize on an island with a strict moratorium on commercial water rights—she longed to create a totally different kind of resort. “Call me a masochist or call me curious, but I wanted to learn something new,” Thornton says.

She was intrigued with prefab architecture, seeing it as a way to “increase the quality of product and accelerate the time frame of construction.” She also recognized an opportunity to create a new model for island accommodations—one that combines the best features of a hands-off vacation rental and a coddling luxury hotel.

Working on big properties in the past, Thornton has witnessed firsthand how economic pressures in seasonal destinations can translate to “gouging guests in high season to build up cash reserves for the off season, when you lose money. But that’s bad for the guest experience.” So her new concept of a »

The 16 prefab lodges, designed by S+H Works and built offsite by Champion Home Builders, have white-and-wood Nordic-inspired interiors outfitted with modern furniture and unique vintage objects. In lieu of a bar, the shared guest lounge (below) has a fridge stocked with complimentary wine, beer, and cider.



JULIE HARMSEN; LOWER RIGHT: ANDREW GIAMMARCO

seasonal hotel has more stable prices, fewer on-site staff, and truly thoughtful, guest-focused design. "People's expectations of travel have shifted thanks to Airbnb and the sharing economy," she says. "As long as you've built a great product, guests are now okay with some DIY aspects. That's the model I'm testing here."

To that end, most of the service guests receive at the Lodges on Vashon is virtual. An offsite manager emails guests check-in instructions and a map and prearranges special amenities and excursions, such as kayaking trips or spa treatments. Upon arrival, guests carry their own luggage and punch in a door code

to let themselves into their unit, eliminating the need for a bellman or front-desk staff. The 570-square-foot guest rooms, each in its own prefab bungalow, have living rooms, fireplaces, a separate reading nook or a second bedroom, and Scandinavian-inspired interiors. There's no bar; instead, a fridge in a common guest lounge is stocked with beer, wine, prosecco, and cider—all complimentary—and there's a covered outdoor pavilion for hanging out, with a fireplace, string lights, and sheepskin-draped chairs. If guests need anything, a local staffer is just a phone call away. Otherwise, they're on their own—and in a spot this comfortable and well designed, that's a good place to be. ✨