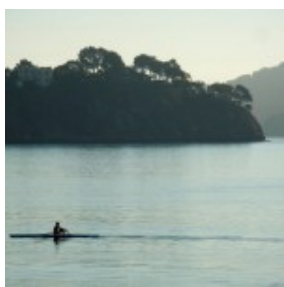


'Do nothing' becomes mantra during Sausalito hotel stay

By Susan Wood

SAUSALITO – In a place where boats dominate the landscape, the fantasy of permanently drifting through life here like the ebb and flow of the tide became our weekend reality at the Inn Above Tide.

From the moment we drove in, inn staffer David greeted us with a sincere welcoming to the gated parking area. There I knew we were in store for something special. He later brought up the luggage only to ask if we'd like Champagne flutes. The attention to detail is unmatched.



Sometimes it's best just to watch the world go by from a hotel balcony.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

In all my days of travel exploration, I have never experienced such a hotel where I've wanted to stay inside the whole time wrapped in a cushy robe and soft slippers with the quiet lapping sounds of the tide touching the building just below. The shore is so close one could almost treat the deck like a

diving board.

It's no wonder at least three guest service workers at this 15-year-old independent boutique hotel warned us of others who show up but never leave the room. (If you do find yourself out during the day, like we did to bike across the Golden Gate Bridge, here's a lunch tip: Get it to go at the Venice Gourmet Deli to enjoy on the balcony. We opted for pasta salad, marinated mushrooms and a veggie sandwich – one of five on the menu).

The next day, we didn't go out until 2:30pm, except to drop one floor for a feast of quiche, fruit, muffins, bagels, coffee and fresh-squeezed orange juice in the common area for breakfast. A woman from Los Angeles who comes every year calls the inn "paradise." The next morning, I brought a breakfast tray to our room to dine on the balcony.

Although the inn starts the day with a list of possible activities, why bother leaving the room? The view from the private deck or even from the bed is beyond mesmerizing. That's why the inn provides binoculars as an added perk. The balcony above the bay by the ferry dock in this Marin town became my favorite space. The Bay Bridge is within view, along with Angel Island, Belvedere and across the bay to San Francisco. All 29 rooms come with this view and a private deck equipped with teak patio furniture. It's an ideal setting for breakfast and lunch or even dinner as the lights of San Francisco come on. If there's a nip in the air, a flick of a switch ignites a gas fireplace and an oversized tub can warm up the inner self.

We slept with the slider open all night. Seagulls, foghorns and boat motors are further reminders of the marine environment by day and night.

In the evening, the inn serves an ample supply of wine and cheese.

A friendly chat with Chuck from Boston reinforced the idea that this is a place for special occasions. He and his wife were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary.

And for special occasions, it's highly recommended a guest bring a furnished wallet. Ten rooms start at \$320 a night and go up to \$1,100 a night for the penthouse suite.

An unusual complimentary amenity is bicycles to use for exploring.

For a fee, a guest may order in-room dining through Room Service of Marin (in keeping with the never-leave theme) and a private in-room massage and other spa services (for enhancing the relaxed mood). We opted to head down the street to the Casa Madrona's new remodeled spa, which the Inn recommends for a full service facility.

If you go:

The Inn Above Tide is located at 30 Portal in Sausalito off Bridgeway Avenue near the ferry docks. The hotel may be reached by calling (415) 332.9535 or 800.893.8433, or go online.

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