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*UNWRAPPED

Smith Tower – Seattle, Washington

Written by CELLOPHANELAND* × October 7, 2017

Downtown Seattle sits in a spectacular location right on the edge of the Pacific ocean, with a compact centre that is filled with more than its fair share of skyscrapers. On a hillside at the ocean edge the cities buildings actually seem to rise straight from the waters of Puget Sound.



The city's skyline is probably best known for the Space Needle, but that's hardly the tallest building, and inconvenient to reach whilst many of Seattle's skyscrapers outrank it in height. The tallest structures are pleasantly varied, and include a mix of modernist office towers, Art Deco blocks and recent glassy monoliths.



As of 2013, the Columbia Center is the 20th tallest building in the U.S. and the tallest building in all of Washington state. The public is allowed to enjoy the view from the [Sky View Observatory](#) on the 73rd floor. The 62-story Seattle Municipal Tower also has restaurants located on its upper floors.



But while these no doubt have pretty impressive views, it is the [Smith Tower](#) that we find ourselves most drawn to. Built in 1914 it was one of the countries first and biggest skyscrapers, it is a fascinating historical monument and, at 522 feet, is plenty high enough for lofty cityscapes.



Conveniently in the centre of downtown, a tempting gift shop serves as the gateway to 'The Legends of Smith Tower'. This is a self-guided tour celebrating the iconic building's history and architecture.



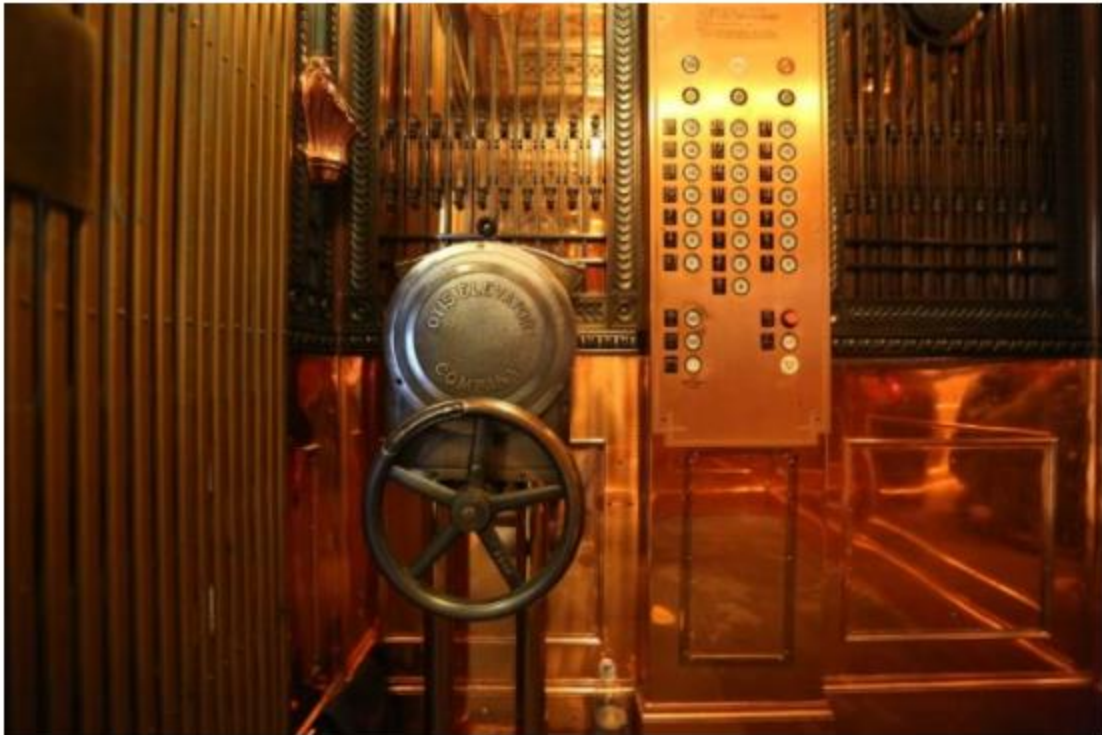
The **Smith Tower** was commissioned by typewriter magnate LC Smith who, like other businessmen of the era, saw the building as a huge advertising opportunity. In the tour we learn about the city, the owner and the buildings construction as well as lots of quirky facts. In 1922 a one armed man made his name as one of the worlds first base-jumpers by parachuting off the tower.



We get the chance to sit at the giant telephone switchboard, 'meet' former employees and learn of their lives, as well as admire the period interiors.



The highlight is a ride up the original Otis elevator, in gleaming copper, brass and polished wood, complete with a uniformed attendant who clangs the gates shut and tells us that the mechanism is, almost uniquely, still in working order.



A swift journey to the Observatory at the top brings another historic surprise: an ornate Chinese room in gilt and dark wood.



It comes complete with a Wishing Chair – where no singleton should sit unless they wish to be married within the year – and a cocktail bar.



Spectacular 360 degree views of the city, Puget Sound and San Juan Islands are the icing on the cake for what has already been a memorable experience.

