



WINE | BEER | CIDER | SPIRITS | EATS | EVENTS | TRAVEL



Photo courtesy of Marcus Whitman Hotel

Drifters: The Marcus Whitman Hotel & Conference Center

by Erin James

From seed to shining seed, Walla Walla Valley was founded on agricultural principles that set it apart from the farming pack, from namesake onions to vibrant asparagus and glowing wheat to now wine grapes that are celebrating their 30th year as a recognized American Viticultural Area. Predating the viticulture and majority of the agriculture is the [Marcus Whitman Hotel & Conference Center](#) in downtown Walla Walla, Wash. Originally a mission built among the Cayuse Indians by Marcus and Narcissa Whitman in the 1830s, the hotel saw its fair share of varying ownership styles, but it was under the leadership of owner and general manager Kyle Mussman that the Marcus Whitman Hotel was fully rehabilitated and renovated in 2001 into the landmark it is in Walla Walla today.

The historic hotel now boasts 127 rooms and suites, six on-site wine tasting rooms off the grand lobby, the award-winning [The Marc Restaurant](#) (named "Restaurant of the Year" by the Washington Wine Commission with James Beard recognized Chef Antonio Campolio) and [The Vineyard Lounge](#) which dominantly offers local wines and signature cocktails with local ingredients, a state-of-the-art audio visual equipment for the many meeting halls both large and small and space for an expansive or intimate wedding ceremony and receptions. Book a room with a package—special offers include the Golf Package (featuring a night's stay, one round of golf at Wine Valley Golf course, complimentary cart rental and a drink from The Vineyard Lounge) or the Wine & Dine package (with one night's stay, a bottle of the Signature Marcus Whitman wine produced by [L'Ecole N° 41](#) and cheese platter plus an \$80 dining voucher to The Marc Restaurant).

The location alone is a cut above the rest in Walla Walla—the town quite literally developed and adapted around the hotel with restaurants, tasting rooms, cafes, boutique shops and more surrounding the property. Lobby-side tasting rooms include [Tero Estates](#), [Lodmell Cellars](#), [Locati Cellars](#) and more, and if guests are feeling up to the walk, within three-four blocks are more than a dozen extra options to choose from like [DaMa Wines](#), [Rotie Cellars](#) and [Maison Bleue](#).

Offering a wide variety of sleeping accommodations (with even longtime residents of condominiums in the top floors), the Marcus Whitman meets many needs depending on the guest. From the low-maintenance West Wing Deluxe Queen room for the minimalistic business traveler to the Tower Spa King rooms that are meant to take a load off (and appointed with rich Renaissance-style decor and furnishings), all rooms feature separate sleeping quarters, a private bath, desk and a number of add-on amenities from flowers and wine to cheese and charcuterie plates.

For the ultimate experience in the Marcus Whitman and provincial provisions, make a reservation at the Chef's Table at The Marc Restaurant. Aiding in the escalation of the hotel's rising caliber as a culinary destination is Executive Chef Antonio Campolio, who beat out the several other competitors for his position and brought half of his staff with him from the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs. As a James Beard Foundation recognized chef, Campolio, brings his best to the Chef's Table, educating and enticing guests with the flavors of the season and the region. Restaurant manager and sommelier Dan McCaffrey pours a broad balance of wines tableside to pair with Campolio's cuisine, with a focus relying heavily on Northwest-made wines as well as selections from across the globe.

Pick up a bottle at a nearby tasting room, pop it for a glass pre-dinner, indulge in a multi-course meal at The Marc, come back to the bottle and kick back in your room of choice. The Marcus Whitman will do you right.

<http://www.sipnorthwest.com/2014/08/drifters-marcus-whitman-hotel-conference-center/>