

AUSTIN'S BEST AMBASSADOR

Liz Fudell, the Four Seasons' invaluable resource, on living the life of a concierge.

BY MACY MOORE, PHOTO BY DUSTIN MEYER

She knows the city like the back of her hand. She's constantly up to date with the hot spots and top music venues. She has a passion for creating memorable experiences for the guests of the Four Seasons Hotel Austin, and is on a mission to make their visits to Austin better than they ever imagined.

A fourth-generation Austinite, Liz Fudell was born and raised in the Live Music Capital, and in a way known only to natives, she knows each corner and crevice of the city. That alone makes her a concierge shoo-in, but her love for creating memorable experiences for tourists is what truly makes her great at her job.

Following the advice of Rebecca, her friend and former coworker, Fudell first applied to be a hostess at Trio, the restaurant in the Four Seasons.

"I knew that the Four Seasons was the place for me," Fudell says. "There is so much movement and growth in the company."

She was a hostess for about 10 months, and in February, the

Four Seasons promoted her to the position of hotel lobby concierge.

"Becoming a concierge was always my goal," Fudell says. "We are the hosts and hostesses of the hotel. We're the first people you see when you walk into the lobby, before you can even see the front desk."

The reason Fudell adores her career with the Four Seasons is simple: Her main responsibility is to help people have fun. Who wouldn't want a career in which fun is the largest part of the job duties?

"One of my favorite parts of the job is meeting new people each day," Fudell says. "I love helping people experience a visit or a vacation to Austin in the best way possible. Helping people have fun is my favorite thing to do, whether it's through the dining and the restaurant scene, getting tickets to a special event or maybe going to Formula 1 or MotoGP. I love having someone come back in the morning after being out at night and saying, 'You were so right about this place. I had a great time,' and I get to know that I helped them enjoy Austin."

Working for the Four Seasons, Fudell has decided, holds the best work environment for a concierge.



"The Four Seasons itself has lots of great perks, the biggest one being the people that we work with," Fudell says. "There's one thing you'll see all Four Seasons employees have in common: We're all naturally sunny, smiley, outgoing people that love to talk and meet new friends. And so when you have over 400 of them in the building at once, everyone plays off of each other's energy, and we're just a fun group."

It would seem that the life of a concierge is all fun and games, but like any other job, there are challenges.

"A challenging part of my job is staying on top of what businesses are opening and closing," Fudell says. "The Austin restaurant scene is just booming. We put a lot of stock in reviews, so knowing someone had a good experience somewhere definitely makes us want to go try it. We have to try the new restaurants before we can send a guest to it. We wouldn't feel right telling someone, 'We heard this place was great. Why don't you try it?'"

Should a guest ask for Fudell's opinion on a restaurant she hasn't checked out, she often turns to other Four Seasons concierges for their two cents. But Fudell makes it a priority to experience the restaurant scene as much as possible so she can provide the best recommendations. When it comes to can't-fail suggestions, Fudell has her list of go-to places for guests.

"For lunch downtown, I really love Second Bar + Kitchen," she says. "But if you're looking for a nicer, upscale suggestion, I would recommend Jeffery's. You can really count on great service and great food and drink every time."

Of course, restaurants and bars aren't the only attractions in Austin. There are always fun experiences to be had and seasonal activities throughout the year, especially during festival season.

"I love it when summertime rolls around because I've never had anyone come back from Barton Springs and say, 'You know, that place wasn't very cool,'" Fudell says. "In the fall and spring, when the weather is nicer, I like to have people go and poke around the Hope Outdoor Gallery, where all of the urban street art is on display in Clarksville, which is a fun neighborhood."

Though Austin doesn't get very many bad-weather days, it's important for a concierge to have a handful of suggestions for when the weather doesn't permit outdoor activities.

"For bad-weather days, I focus more on telling people to experience the museums, like the LBJ Library and Museum, or suggesting that they tour the Capitol building before telling them that it looks the same as the one in Washington, D.C., except ours is bigger," she says.

Visitors to Austin are usually eager to experience the live-music scene, so Fudell is sure to be up to date on the live-music venues and what music genres to find in certain areas.

"I typically begin with explaining how the vast majority of Austin venues are not ticketed [in] advance; you just show up," Fudell says. "But, depending on the guests' favorite genre of music...I go from there. If you want straight jazz, I would recommend the Elephant Room, but if they want blues, I would recommend that they go see The Blues Specialists at the Continental Club. I have a few venues that are my personal favorites that I think show off Austin, so I'll recommend those too."

It's not uncommon for guests to reach out to Fudell while dealing with the backed-up, complicated roads of Austin, and she is always there to provide an alternative route that will help guests arrive at their destinations quickly and safely. Having spent her entire life in Austin, she's well-versed in the back roads and traffic trends of the city.

So what's next on Fudell's radar? She already has her dream job in her favorite city, but when it comes to the future of her career, she aspires to become a member of the prestigious society Les Clefs d'Or USA, an organization for the most talented hotel lobby concierges in the nation. But as far as where she'll go next as a concierge, Fudell is pretty content where she is.

"I would entertain the idea of working at a Four Seasons in a different city, but I don't see myself leaving the company," Fudell says. "It would take a lot of research to take on being a concierge somewhere else. I really play the local angle. Austin is such a great place. Every day, we hear about hundreds of people moving to Austin, and I'm just fortunate enough to be born here."

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