

Link Light Rail from Seatac Airport to Grand Hyatt Seattle

Tickets are \$2.50 each way and need to be purchased prior to boarding. There are automatic ticket dispensers at each station. Unfortunately tickets are good only on the date purchased, so you cannot purchase both directions at once. The ticket dispensers accept VISA and MasterCard credit cards or US coins and bills.

The airport and the hotel are at opposite ends of the only light rail line. You board an outbound train at the airport station and ride it to Westlake Station, the other end of the line. The hotel is conveniently located two short blocks away from Westlake Station.

This sounds simple and it is, but there are challenges. The system is brand new. The airport link will have been in use for just two months at the time of the meeting, so very few Seattlelites know how to use it. Signage is inconsistent at best in stations and at the airport; there are no signs directing you to our hotel from the light rail station. So here are more detailed instructions.

At the airport:

Follow signs to “Parking and Ground Transportation”. These will take you up one level from baggage claim or down one level from ticketing, leading in either case to a “sky bridge” between the terminal and the parking garage. The sky bridges may have additional signs to “Courtesy Vehicles, Vans, Taxis & Rental Cars” – those signs may or may not include “Link Light Rail”. In any case – cross the bridge and turn left immediately on the other side (where there should be an overhead sign with a left arrow to “Link Light Rail”). Now, depending on which airline you flew, you have a 5 to 10 minute walk to the train station. You will walk around two sides of the periphery of the parking garage, possibly passing as many as five other sky bridges back to the terminal. The challenge is that the airport did not overspend on signs to Link Light Rail. They do exist, but aren’t as frequent as you might like. Just keep the parking area to your right, do not cross back over any sky bridges and do not take any elevators or escalators until you have reached the obvious end of the path, the train station.

At the station, buy a ticket at one of the three ticket dispensers. Then proceed up one level to the trains. Trains leave from either side of the platform; use whichever train leaves first¹. Westlake Station is the fourth stop in the downtown bus and rail tunnel; it is announced as “Westlake Station” and “last stop” on the train. Travel time is estimated at 37 minutes. Trains run from roughly 5 AM to midnight, except on Sundays, when trains run from 6 AM to 11 PM. Trains run every 7.5 minutes during peak hours, every 10 minutes in mid-day and every 15 minutes in the early morning and late evening.

From Westlake Station to the hotel:

As you exit the train, take the escalator, possibly ahead of you, definitely to your right, marked “5th Ave and Pine St / Mezzanine”. At the top of the escalator, make a 180° turn and then follow signs ahead and to the right to “5th Ave and Pine St / Nordstrom”. Proceed up two shorter escalators to the street exit. At the exit, turn left onto Pine Street. The Grand Hyatt is two short blocks up Pine Street, on the opposite side of Pine Street.

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Turn left out of the main entrance to the hotel onto Pine Street. Walk 1½ blocks downhill to the Bus & Train Tunnel entrance, which is located in the middle on the Nordstrom building on the opposite side of Pine Street. The entrance is poorly marked by a solitary blue kiosk and a subtle “Westlake Station” sign in the entrance way. Take two escalators down, following signs to “Link Light Rail / Tunnel Buses”. Continue straight ahead following signs to “Link Light Rail to Airport / Bus Bay C – South, D – East (I-90)”. Following these signs, turn right to ticket dispenser and top of stairs down to platform. Board any train marked “SeaTac/Airport”².

At the airport, retrace your walk around the periphery of the parking lot. The only trick is choosing which sky bridge to use to cross to the terminal. The simplest solution is to cross at the first sky bridge. Inside the terminal, go up one level to ticketing and walk to the left until you find your airline. International carriers are farthest away.

¹ A few very late night trains, marked Mt. Baker Station, do not go all the way to downtown. The last train to “Downtown Seattle/Westlake Station” leaves at 12:07 AM M-F, 12:04 AM Sat and 11:05 Sun.

² Only the very last train of the day does not go all the way to the airport. The last train to the airport leaves Westlake Station at 12:34 AM M-F, 12:33 PM Sat and 11:35 Sun. Trains to the airport are marked “SeaTac Airport Station”.