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The Arizona Republic (Phoenix, Arizona) · Fri, Apr 24, 2009 · Page 351
Downloaded on Oct 18, 2024

Scottsdale's Lodge bar lets patrons hit road



JOE GOLFEN/THE REPUBLIC

Inside the Lodge, a new ski lodge-themed bar in Old Town Scottsdale, rustic touches make the place feel like a neighborhood bar on a mountaintop.

By Allison Hamila
SPECIAL FOR THE REPUBLIC

One of Old Town Scottsdale's newest drinking destinations wants to get patrons off their barstools and into whitewater rafts.

The Lodge, a laid-back bar built to resemble a mountaintop retreat, took patrons on ski trips during the winter and in May will take on the 2,000-foot-deep Upper Salt River Canyon in Arizona.

Since opening in November, the Lodge paired with the Alpine Ski Club & Adventure Tours for three ski trips with "unbelievable" turnouts, according to Lodge spokeswoman Laura Dannerbeck.

They'll be pairing with them again to go on a $180 whitewater day trip, including bus transportation, breakfast, lunch, dinner and drinks, a river guide and a seat on a rubber raft.

Many have already signed up for the May 11 trip. Registration ends May 1.

Chef-owner Aaron May said he has given the bar more than a theme; he has given it a mission. He wants the little wood building to function for the city like a real lodge, a place where community is created, camaraderie is established and where adventures are planned.

"A lot of like-minded people hang out (at the Lodge), so we are trying to capture some of that spirit," May said.

The casual bar and restaurant has been popular since winter, drawing a crowd of service-industry regulars and locals looking for an antidote to the bottle service and button downs that make up so much of the Scottsdale nightlife scene.

In fact, the crowd at the Lodge has such a reputation for being friendly that May encourages wannabe whitewater rafters not to be intimidated about coming alone.

"We have really fun groups of people looking to have a good time, and it's pretty easy to assimilate," he said.

The first ski trip hosted a crowd of about 65, but the next two were near sellouts, with about 90 guests each time. May expects this trip to be similarly popular, and he promises the full Lodge experience with lots of food.

And he'll be there because "somebody has to cook."

Details: Depart the Lodge at 7 a.m. May 11. Cost is $180. For reservations call 480-945-0828. Located at 4422 N. 75th St., Scottsdale, scottsdalelodge-.com.

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Oct 18, 2024

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