

Lakeside Inn – an ideal spot to turn a year older

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – No wonder Lakeside Inn is a favorite with locals. Good food, excellent prices, fun dealers, great guest service. And no wonder tourists and locals like to stay there. Reasonable room rates, spacious hot tub, outdoor pool that isn't visible from the highway, walking distance to lots of things.

Having never stayed at the hotel-casino, I didn't know what to expect. I was pleasantly surprised.



Fries, beer
and the Giants
-- two out of
three were
good that
night.

Photos/Kathryn
Reed

For starters, as a non-smoker it was so nice to walk into what's called the Edgewood Lodge and not smell smoke on either of the two floors. I didn't even know the lodging buildings existed because I'd only been to the main casino and Latin Soul.

Wow – was my initial reaction walking into the room – because of the balloons with a note wishing me happy birthday. Anytime the folks operating the inn know a special occasion is the reason for the overnight stay, something special like this is done for the guest.

It was that added little touch that started last weekend off right.

We had one of the suites – providing ample room for birthday gifts, to set up a makeshift office and to feel like we had a home away from home for a weekend.

What got me interested in staying at the Lakeside is getting an email saying they had a deal for me with September being my birthday month. Oh my. They know how to treat a girl right. (OK, everyone who gets older gets special treatment.) Lodging discounts, a free meal, free drink, buy-in deal on poker, match play at other tables, a T-shirt and free coffee are part of the deal.

Walking around

It was time to explore the other side of town. Being typical locals, we tend to hang out in our neck of the woods near the Y.

We decided to go check out Heavenly Village since it had been a while and we'd heard good things about the Stateline Brewery.

Sitting in the seasonal outdoor area, we had a beer. (Be sure to go during happy hour.) A group of guys probably in their 30s were in town to do a little bonding while their wives and children were at home.

People drifted in and out of the shops. It was good not to see too many vacancies. Others were attempting to sink the colored ball in one of the putt-putt golf holes.

I keep trying to be a believer in villages. And still, not a single one in California has won me over. Explore Tahoe and the Heavenly gondola are definite reasons to visit this village.

Walking back, we were going east with traffic along Highway 50. Not a great idea. No sidewalk past MontBleu made me think I was in South Lake Tahoe.

The next morning we walked to Rabe Meadow to Nevada Beach. All along the way we picked up trash as part of Coastal Cleanup Day. It's nice having this acreage so close for people who want to get outdoors.

Food, glorious, food

Friday night's dinner came with a sunset view of Lake Tahoe atop Kingsbury Grade at the Chart House. Yes, a vegetarian at a steakhouse. But have you seen this view? The \$15.99 all you can eat salad bar is a treat in itself. I skipped the caviar, but I don't know of another salad bar in the region that has the offerings this one has.

Sue was delighted with her \$28.99 filet mignon.

Skip the fried asparagus. "Jumbo spears, topped with fresh tomatoes and blue cheese butter" sounds better than what was delivered.

Richard was a superb waiter and could show a thing or two about what guest service is all about to his brethren in other South Shore eateries.

As a little twist, the top of my menu said, "Welcome to the Lake Tahoe Chart House – Happy Birthday Kae!" The other birthday people around us thought this was a pretty cool way to start the night. And we could all take the menus home as a souvenir.

Definitely save room for the Hot Chocolate Lava Cake (\$9.99).

The only place I've been that does this type of dessert better is The Beach House in Kauai.

The next night we stayed in at the Lakeside, choosing to try Latin Soul again. We had been there shortly after it opened. The biggest complaint then was smelling smoke from the nearby sportsbook. Whatever they did to the ventilation system worked.

We should have shared an entrée – the portions are that big. Sue indulged in a chicken enchilada, while I had a burrito. Vincente said they could put portabella mushrooms in it instead of meat. Yummy!

Two entrees and two beers came to about \$25.

The morning we left we chose to eat at Lakeside's other restaurant – Timber House. We had spent a little time in the bar the night before – watching the Giants lose. It was hopping then and it was hopping mid-morning.

The wait staff said locals are the ones who are usually at the tables eating.

Sue chose breakfast – an omelet she would order again; and I went with a veggie sandwich that I would gladly have again. Two meals and two bloody Mary's cost us another \$25.

Chilling at Lakeside

After doing our volunteer work on my birthday, it was time to relax. The pool at Lakeside is inviting. It's heated through September. With the outside temperature in the 80s, I was happy to bake in the lounge chair and catch up on some reading.

The night before we had met a couple women on a girls' weekend away from home in Reno. They had left husbands and children behind to enjoy Tahoe and the Genoa Candy Dance.

An oversized tub with jets was a perfect place to land one night. The bath salts are a great touch.

With televisions in the main room and the bedroom, it means not having to watch the same thing if you don't want to. A mini kitchen allows for refrigerating items and heating things up in the microwave.

With the property turning 25 years old in May, it looks a bit dated. But the rooms and property are clean, the guest service impeccable, the food delicious.

It's a bit of that old Tahoe funky that some of us love and hope stays around to keep the South Shore from being something it will never be and yet so many want it to be – upscale and soulless.

Lakeside does want to make improvements. I just hope in doing so it doesn't lose its character and the reasons why locals fill the tables, bars, restaurants, and hotel rooms.

Talking to employees they said Sept. 24 was one of the best days of the summer tourism season. The confluence of Street Vibrations (there were a lot of bikes in the parking lot), Lake Tahoe Marathon, events in Carson Valley and fall being the best season in the basin apparently made for a profitable weekend.

It was profitable for me on my birthday. Sit at Diana's table next time you want to play blackjack. I like turning \$20 into \$200. It's probably a good thing I only gamble every few years because I know this kind of luck doesn't hold. After all, when I lived in Vegas I cashed a paycheck once and lost the whole thing. But that's another story.

The story I'm sticking with for now is the Lakeside is a great escape – all six miles from home. I know I'll be back to the restaurants before I get next year's birthday coupons.

For more information:

Website

Telephone: 800.624.7980

Address: 168 Highway 50, Stateline

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