

New name, new look for midtown SLT hotel

By Kathryn Reed

The lake or the pool? This should be the most difficult question to answer on vacation.

Out the window I could see both. After a hot hike it was time to cool off, but not freeze. The pool was the answer.

While this particular get-away was just for a night, it was still a mini vacation for me and AJ. We're pretty much of the philosophy that if a hotel room is involved, it means work is secondary.

She was perfectly content to rest on the large bed provided for her by Hotel Azure. She even had a bowl in the room with treats when we came in. (Dogs are \$25/night extra.)



The pool at Hotel Azure is open year round. Photo/Kathryn Reed

This centrally located hotel in South Lake Tahoe recently underwent a \$3.5 million renovation to provide guests with a more contemporary look and features – such as plenty of plugs for electronic gadgets. Reclaimed redwood covers one wall, giving it a woodsy feel. The grey-blue-brown color scheme is relaxing.

While the hotel is not right on the water, Lake Tahoe is directly across the street. It was wonderful to be able to be in the room at sunset to see the colors dance across the lake. Rooms come with a balcony or patio; I was too lazy to go there.

Minor things that hotel designers often overlook were not at Hotel Azure. It's actually possible to read in the bath tub because there is a light overhead. And a full length mirror is always appreciated (not always supplied).

It was nice to grab the comfy robe and head to the pool, which is heated year round. The hot tubs are like two in one with how the water from the upper one tumbles into the lower one. An added perk is that it's accessible until 11pm, an hour later than most hotels.



A multi-million dollar remodel at Hotel Azure included making the rooms contemporary. Photo/Kathryn Reed

I thought staying above the pool/hot tub area might be excessively noisy, but on a Thursday night that was not the case.

With no glass allowed in the pool area, it would have been nice to have had plastic cups in the room. The front desk was able to supply me with a paper coffee cup and they opened my bottle of beer since I forgot to bring an opener.

Most people think of the Stateline area as the place to stay if you don't want to get in your car again. Hotel Azure is proving it can offer that same amenity.

Nearby are several restaurants to choose from. Dinner at MacDuff's was delightful on the patio, while breakfast on the lawn at Bear Beach Café was also good.

The hotel owners, who are from the Bay Area, also own the land where the café is located, as well as the bowling alley on the

same street. They have had the property since 1976. The rooms in the building near the pool were added in 1985. All together there are 99 units.

It's possible to walk to Lakeview Commons or even Ski Run Marina. For those who want to get places a little faster, bikes are available for free at the hotel. (Snowshoes are provided in winter.) This mode of transport expands the offerings even further. (There is bike and ski storage for those who bring their own toys.)

A workout room as well as a game room offer other ways to spend time on property.

The 3,850-square-foot event center that opened in March 2003 has never had many bookings because of its size – a capacity of 100. Going forward the hotel owners will not be taking reservations for this facility after October. They are still deciding if it will be leased to someone or be sold. (Prior to being an events center it was a Pizza Hut.)

It's nice that there are no hidden extra costs, as in resort fees. Plus, parking is free.