

Golf and Spa Amenities Promise the Resort Owners a Hole-in-One

A weakened world economy has sent more than a few hospitality sector executives back to their drawing boards, looking for the magic value proposition that will entice skittish tourists to part with their valued discretionary dollars. In northern California two relatively new resorts are banking on their beliefs that combining spa and golf amenities is the smart way to differentiate themselves in a state that already offers visitors plenty of options for spending their travel bucks.



Strategically located four miles from Highway 4, an east/west artery that stretches from the Bay Area to the Sierra Mountains, **Saddle Creek Resort** is positioning itself as the go-to destination for corporate retreats, weddings and other celebratory events in the emerging Copper Valley. Not too long ago this area was considered a pass-through region for travelers on their way to the hugely popular Yosemite Valley, a 90 minute drive away. Saddle Creek has leveraged the same jaw-dropping scenery, making its 18-hole, championship caliber golf course, sports club and fine-dining restaurant, encircled by an array of custom homes and rental bungalows, a destination in itself.

Yet Saddle Creek's General Manager Bill Troyanoski knows that even the many awards his golf course

has garnered aren't enough to satisfy all his guests. "We have had to build up a repertoire of compelling amenities for those guests who don't play golf," he says. And spa amenities landed on the short list. "When I first arrived at Saddle Creek I don't think I appreciated its importance" says Troyanoski. He is now convinced. Resort guests can reserve the services of a massage therapist whose resume includes a long stint at San Diego's renowned Hotel Del Coronado, with sessions inside their own rental bungalows. Troyanoski says that the Resort is assessing the feasibility of building an onsite spa. Nearby Copperopolis' new Town Square may also offer additional spa options as well as a number of luxury 'town lofts' that Saddle Creek's developer, Castle & Cooke Calaveras Inc, has built in the Square.



Creating a Saddle Creek 'experience' that features amenities available not only at the golf course property but also in the Copperopolis Town Square reflects one of the top trends listed in hospitality consultant Andrew Freeman & Co's latest report, "Project Hospitality: What's Hot in 2009." Strategic partnerships like the kind that Saddle Creek is building with the business community in the Copper Valley, will be key to extending a brand's outreach and sharing costs.

Another key trend, says Freeman's Report, is going 'green.' And perhaps nowhere else in northern California is this principle better exemplified than at **GAIA Anderson**, the eco-friendly resort located in an old pecan orchard in the mountainous region near Mt. Shasta. This is the second green launch for owner Wen-I Chang, whose initial eco-venture, GAIA Napa Valley Hotel and Spa, has achieved popularity further south, in the Napa Valley region. GAIA's target customer, says General Manager

Steve Kinder, is environmentally conscious and they are hoping to capture an audience of leisure and business travelers that use nearby Highway 5, a main north-south road, to travel between such cities as Portland and Seattle, as well as the San Francisco Bay Area.

Currently GAIA's guests can pick from a variety of golf and spa packages. In early 2009 GAIA's onsite spa will open, featuring all organic products. Like Saddle Creek, GAIA wants to create an environment that appeals to a range of sensibilities. "While the guys are golfing, the wives will come to our spa," Kinder says.



"GAIA's spa is an integral part of GAIA Anderson's larger perspective that incorporates sports and wellness activities," he says. "Our vision is to create a sacred space. We used the principles of feng shui (an ancient Chinese practice of balancing objects to promote health, peace and prosperity) to design both our building interior and exterior landscaping. We want to be more than a resort. We see GAIA evolving as a healing facility, where we create energy, movement and emotional connection."

By Patricia Kutza

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