

Genuine Southwest

Hotel group embraces the unique culture and heritage of an enchanted land



Lodge at Santa Fe

Operators seeking to give their travelers an authentic Southwest experience will want to check out the properties of Heritage Hotels & Resorts.

The accommodations, located in New Mexico and Arizona, make a point to get the details right — the weave of a rug, for example, or a particular property's artwork — to help guests gain a better understanding of the region and culture they are visiting.

Jim Long, founder of Heritage Hotels & Resorts, wants the hotels' architecture, interior design, landscaping, art, music, cuisine, and entertainment to accurately reflect their local communities.

The properties are:

- Esplendor Resort, 179 rooms in Rio Rico, Ariz.
- Hotel Encanto, 203 rooms in Las Cruces, N.M.
- Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town, 188 rooms in Albuquerque, N.M.
- Hotel Plaza Real, 56 rooms in Santa Fe, N.M.
- The Lodge at Santa Fe, 128 rooms
- Nativo Lodge, 147 rooms in Albuquerque

All welcome group tours and go the extra mile to keep groups coming back.

For instance, at The Lodge at Santa Fe, the staff understands the importance of getting bags down to the motorcoach quickly in the morning — and they do it, said B.J. Dunn, general manager.

David Miller, general manager of Esplendor Resort at Rio Rico, said his top goal for a group staying at the property is for the group members to say they found a new home. "It happens, all the time," he said.

John Rickey, general manager of the Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces, said the property's major renovation, completed late last year, touched every aspect of the hotel. "We made a big cultural push to really change and provide a unique cultural experience," he said. "We are not a cookie-cutter hotel now."

Hotel Encanto sports a Spanish Colonial style, and guest room furniture is inspired by museum pieces.

"Tours are very important to us," Rickey said. "Groups represent 30 percent of our business and at non-peak times."

The hotel can arrange welcome receptions, Old West "hold-ups," and programs with mariachi musicians.

"We can do group meals, boxed lunches — just about anything you'd like — and we can do it very affordably as well," Rickey said.

The Esplendor Resort at Rio Rico offers a Trent Jones Sr.-designed golf course, country club, Old Mexico-style décor, and a wide variety of birds and wildlife.

"We have a fabulous view of the Santa Cruz River Valley and surrounding mountains, abundant nature, and a blend of heritages unique to this part of the country," Miller said. "Of course, we also have Mexico — 15 minutes away."

Miller said the Esplendor Resort is very much a relationship-oriented resort. "But for every client, including one who is here for the first time, it's about promising what is realistic and delivering on that," he said.

The resort provides welcome receptions and a variety of group menus.

“One of our favorite add-ons is what we call the Chef’s Tour to Mexico,” Miller said. “Our chef takes the group to restaurants in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, for appetizers and dinner, offers a personal tour of Mexico, and even gives the group a look at what life is like south of the border.”

Miller believes Esplendor Resort is just the right size for groups: big enough yet small enough to provide personal attention. “Being 179 rooms, most groups become the center of our attention, a gift we are happy to give,” he said.

The Lodge at Santa Fe was the first property that Long purchased and one of the first to be refurbished. “This is where it all began,” said Dunn, the general manager. A Navajo Chief’s blanket design covers room floors, and an artist-drum maker was commissioned to create rawhide covers for the public space’s light fixtures that are decorated with Native American symbols.

The full-service 147-room hotel is about a mile from Santa Fe’s downtown plaza and is situated on a hill that overlooks the city. It trumpets its closeness to

the downtown, its affordability, and the on-site cabaret. From early June through September, visitors can enjoy the passion of flamenco as world-renowned Maria Benitez performs in the acclaimed Benitez Cabaret located within the hotel.

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