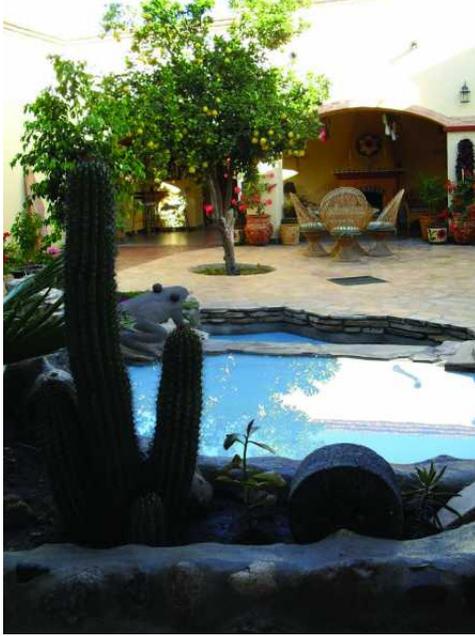


Bask in Banámichi

Hotel Los Arcos de Sonora offers relaxing atmosphere, look at the real Mexico

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BY JONATHON SHACAT
Herald/Review

BANÁMICHÍ, Sonora — A new resort in Banámichi is inviting guests to come here to relax, explore and experience the real Mexico.

Hotel Los Arcos de Sonora, which opened on Sept. 9, features 10 beautifully appointed rooms, including two suites.

Tom and Lynn Matthews moved from Colorado to Banámichi in early December 2007. Construction on their hotel started in January 2008.

“We really wanted to have a quality experience for both local people and their families who want to stay here, and for Americans and Canadians who want to come down,” said Tom Matthews.

Roughly one third of the construction work at the hotel involved the restoration of pre-existing buildings. Some of the original structure is about 100 years old.

A few old doors from the casa vieja were recycled to create tables and bed headboards. Also, some old furniture was restored, such as a small table and a machaca drying cabinet.

“We tried to retain some of the history by reusing those elements,” said Matthews.

The hotel has classic Sonoran colonial architecture with large, comfortable rooms and air conditioning.

Each bedroom is uniquely decorated. The rooms were named from a list of the most popular girl names in Mexico, like Juanita, Flora, Gabriela and Delfina.

Portions of the hotel are adorned with rustic mesquite furniture made by local craftsman Heriberto Leon.

The hotel also has an enclosed courtyard with a lemon tree and a cascading fountain, as well as a coffee room, fireplace and parking area. A gift shop features items such as silver from Monterrey, ironwood pieces from Sonora and some sombreros.

Guests are served free breakfast, such as a cheese omelet, refried beans, bacon, cooked apples, tortillas, chiltepin salsa, sweetbread, coffee, tea and orange juice.

Activities in the region range from a walking tour with a local historian, guided horseback riding, a scenic walk or drive along the Sonora River, bird watching and visits to places like archaeological sites and the Bacachi warm springs and Aconchi hot springs.

People driving to Banámichi must get a vehicle permit at the port of entry in Agua Prieta or Nogales, or in Cananea.

The following documents are needed: a tourist card, a passport, a credit card, a driver's license and the vehicle's registration.

As a courtesy, Matthews said assistance will be provided to people who are not familiar with traveling by car in Mexico, by either meeting them in Bisbee and escorting them across the border in their vehicle, or simply giving them a ride all the way to Banámichi.

But the hotel also is motorcycle friendly. In fact, Tom and Lynn Matthews also run Turkey Creek Motorcycle Tours, which offers guided rides in Colorado during summer, Arizona in spring and Mexico in winter. Their trip to San Carlos stops in Banámichi.

Room prices are \$79 for one queen bed, \$89 for two queen beds and \$105 for a suite. The cost includes breakfast. Discounts and group rates for the holidays are being offered.

For information, visit www.losarcossonora.com, e-mail info@losarcossonora.com or info@turkeycreektours.com, or call 1-888-763-6185 toll free from the U.S., (520) 777-1503 from Tucson, or (623) 231-0289 in Mexico.

Note: The Hotel Los Arcos de Sonora did provide accommodation free of charge to this reporter.

If You Go

Directions from Bisbee:

From Bisbee, drive south and cross the port of entry at Naco into Mexico. Drive on Highway 2 and head west to Cananea. Follow the signs for the Ruta de Rio Sonora to Bacoachi, then continue south to Banámichi. It should take a little more than three hours to drive from Bisbee to Banámichi.

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