

August 30, 2006**CHECK IN, CHECK OUT**

Lake Placid, N.Y.: The Whiteface Lodge Resort and Spa

By FRED A. BERNSTEIN

THE BASICS

Lake Placid, twice the scene of the winter Olympics, is a bustling town inside the vast Adirondack Park, a summer and winter sports paradise. The area was once known for the “great camps” — elaborate log cabins built by the Gilded Age elite. Joe Barile, an Olympic luger and local developer, wanted the Whiteface Lodge (which he designed and built) to evoke that era’s rustic splendor. The lodge’s 85 suites are available for full and partial ownership (a one-sixth deed starts at \$148,000). The nightly resort rates, beginning at about \$360 plus tax, aren’t cheap either, but the hotel has a lot to offer.

THE LOCATION

The lodge is near the center of town. From my room, at the corner of the building closest to the street, I could see and hear traffic at a distance (and this was in summer, with leaves on the trees). Even more surprising, the hotel isn’t on Lake Placid. It does offer a narrow strip of beachfront, about a mile away and reached by shuttle. Luckily, the ride is a pleasure, both because the vehicle is a Mercedes-Benz GL 450 and because the drivers, like most of the staff, couldn’t be nicer.

THE BUILDING

The interiors, where towering timbers are used as columns, and virtually every surface is covered in wood or bark, are stunning. You can’t help wondering if there’s a single tree left in the Adirondacks after seeing the number of logs used in the structure — though most of them, according to Mr. Barile, came from the hotel site.

THE ROOM

My room, dubbed a “one-bedroom superior suite,” was rectangular, with the bed at one end (opening onto a lovely terrace) and the kitchen at the other. I would have preferred some kind of room divider — at \$400 a night, who wants to look at the refrigerator and dishwasher? (More expensive suites have separate kitchens.) The bathroom, containing a washer and dryer in a closet, was luxurious, and just as beautifully detailed, with lots of wood, as every other part of the hotel.

THE GROUNDS

There are far more flowerbeds and fountains and hanging lanterns than a place for communing with nature ought to have.

AMENITIES

There is a lot to do here — children seemed to be having a blast. The main building contains a two-lane bowling alley and a screening room (where family-friendly DVD's are shown afternoons and evenings), both free. There are outdoor and indoor pools and a gorgeous health club. A spa, already offering treatments at any hour of the day or night, will be completed by early next year. At the beach — which is dubbed the Canoe Club — there are boats, Ping-Pong and badminton equipment, horseshoes, croquet and, at lunch, a limited grill menu.

But the pièce de résistance is the resort's restaurant, called Kanu (get it — canoe?), where the food lives up to the high (28-foot) ceilings and higher prices. At dinner, the miso-glazed cod (\$29) was delectable, as was the Grand Marnier French toast (\$10) at breakfast. There's an informal bistro next to Kanu; coffee and pastries are available every day from 5 a.m. until 7 a.m., when the restaurant opens.

ROOM SERVICE

Available at any hour. Then, too, there's your in-room kitchen (which includes, perhaps unnecessarily, a full-size oven).

THE BOTTOM LINE

In summer, rooms are \$360 to more than \$1,000. (My room, in the lowest price category, came to \$398.25 with tax.) That's only for 19 hours — check-in is at 4 p.m., check-out at 11 a.m. (and the hotel will deactivate your key card at 11 o'clock sharp). If booking by phone, expect to be asked, "What brings you to Lake Placid?" — which is either nice or nosy. As a reporter traveling incognito, I wasn't able to tell the truth.

The Whiteface Lodge Resort and Spa, 7 Whiteface Inn Lane, Lake Placid, N.Y. 12946; (800) 903-4045; www.thewhitefacelodge.com.

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