

Tavern Hotel

In Central Arizona, Sedona grabs most of the headlines, but Old Town Cottonwood is making news, too, with the addition of some great new restaurants and a boutique hotel that knows how to welcome its guests.

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OLD TOWN COTTONWOOD, for all its charm, is the last place you'd expect to find an upscale boutique hotel. But that's where the Tavern Hotel put down roots in 2011, and owner Eric Jurisin hopes a stay there will inspire his guests to do the same.

"We want people to move here," he says. And after a night at the Tavern, you might find yourself giving the idea serious consideration.

The building dates to the early 20th century, when it was an auction house for cattle. In later incarnations, it was a grocery store, then a health club. Back then, Jurisin and his family were living in the penthouse above his Tavern Grille next door, and when extended family and

friends came to visit, they had trouble finding a place to stay nearby.

So when the health club shut down, Jurisin bought the property and got to work. "We didn't know if we were building a hotel or a 10-room guesthouse," he says. "It was a roll of the dice. We did not know if people would stay in Old Town."

The gamble paid off, and the Tavern's rooms, which feature one king bed or two queen beds, have become attractions of their own. All the rooms feature modern furnishings, luxurious bedding, a walk-in shower and free Wi-Fi. For larger parties, the 2,400-square-foot Tavern Penthouse, with three bedrooms and a full kitchen, is now available to rent as well, and Jurisin is breaking ground this

year on 26 more hotel rooms, plus a highend spa, that will open sometime in 2017.

A stay begins with check-in at the Tavern Grille, where guests are treated to a cocktail. "You just drove an hour and a half — or 10 hours, depending on where you're coming from," Jurisin says. "Stop and have a cocktail. You're on vacation now." And in the morning, there's breakfast — also included in the stay — at Crema Craft Kitchen, another Jurisin property, across the street.

In between, guests can explore Old Town's shops and wine tastings, follow the Jail Trail down to the Verde River or take a drive to nearby Tuzigoot National Monument. For some, though, sitting on the Tavern's front patio and taking in the sights and sounds of Old Town is plenty. You can forgive them for not wanting to wander too far from such an inviting place to spend the night.

"I think the hotel exceeds what people probably expect in Cottonwood," Jurisin says. "We don't have a beach, a mountain or a ski lodge here, so we'd better give you a nice room, at least."

COTTONWOOD Tavern Hotel, 904 N. Main Street, 928-639-1669, www.thetavernhotel.com