



Down by the River B&B

This beautiful inn, which features polished concrete floors and serves a mean red velvet cake, offers guests an opportunity to explore the San Pedro River, one of the most important waterways in Arizona.

KATHY MONTGOMERY

MY HUSBAND AND I startle the goldfinches perched on the patio fountain as we set out for our walk. The birds are the same yellow as the marigolds overflowing a raised bed. We spent the afternoon in the courtyard, watching them flit about, along with black and Say's phoebes, a Gila woodpecker and white-winged doves. With sunset approaching, we head "down by the river" — which is, appropriately, the name of this lovely haven in St. David.

Constructed as a B&B on 16 acres that border the San Pedro River, the inn contains four spacious guest rooms built around a large common area with pool and shuffleboard tables, comfortable couches and a Talavera-accented fire-

place. It's a beautiful space, with polished concrete floors and French doors that cast bands of light and shadow across a forest of potted plants.

The themed guest rooms have well-appointed bathrooms, private patios, refrigerators, microwaves and dining tables, plus the shared use of a grill. It all makes it easy not to leave. While the B&B is just 15 minutes from Benson and 20 from Tombstone, a 2-mile stretch of gravel road makes the place feel remote.

And there's little chance of going hungry. Owners Darryn and Liz Cray welcomed us with a red velvet cake and other snacks. The following day's breakfast began with a blueberry smoothie.

Next came toasted Parmesan French bread, topped with prosciutto, asparagus and eggs, along with fresh fruit in a ginger-lime sauce and honey yogurt.

It's an easy quarter-mile stroll to the river, where the Crays have set up a fire pit and chairs. The river flows several feet below. A thin, nearly still stream on this early-fall day, it reflects the tall, white trunks of cottonwoods, their canopies just beginning to turn.

The pale half-circle of the moon emerges against the still-blue sky as the percussion of crickets rises like maracas. With our backs to the river, we watch the sun sink behind the Whetstone Mountains, its glow lingering like an afterthought. Lit from behind, the clouds deepen to orange and then red, graying at the edges like dying embers.

A flock of birds flies from west to east across the sunset as a great horned owl glides silently past, taking its post high in a mesquite. And we head back to our rooms, handing over the night watch.

ST. DAVID Down by the River B&B, 2255 S. Efken Place, 520-720-9441, downbytheriverbandb.com