

Good Things in Small Packages

Charming Jackson Hole lodge proves the old axiom and makes a big impression.

What's surprising about Jackson Hole's Rusty Parrot Lodge & Spa is what it doesn't have. The pine and river rock-clad four-diamond resort doesn't have extensive, manicured grounds. It doesn't have a bar or much of a lobby. And the Parrot's Body Sage Spa doesn't have its own facility. Yet the Rusty Parrot has been racking up accolades faster than snow in winter. In its 2004 World's Best Awards, *Travel + Leisure* rated the resort No. 5 among hotels in the United States and Canada (28th in the world), and the No. 1 hotel value in the \$250-\$400 a night category. *Conde Nast Traveler* also included the Rusty Parrot in its Gold List this past January. Considering the Rusty Parrot's acclaim, I had expected something a little, well, bigger. In

truth, the 31-room resort is a fascinating study in making the most of what it has. And what it most has is intimacy. The four-diamond Wild Sage Restaurant has just six tables, for example. And it's so low-key that upon our check-in, my husband walked through the dining room, then asked where the restaurant was.

In truth, the restaurant looks like the open floor plan of a nice, but not particularly spacious, private cabin, with lodge pole and knotty pine accents, and a polished river rock fireplace. The kitchen, with polished stainless steel appliances and granite counter tops, opens onto what could be a family room and dining nook except for the extra tables. A seating area with a leather couch and chairs passes for both lobby and bar, as



Skiing packages begin this month and include accommodations, daily lift tickets and more.

The Rusty Parrot may be small at just 31 rooms, but receives high marks for service and attention to detail.

STRATOS Details

• **RUSTY PARROT LODGE & SPA**
Jackson Hole, Wyoming(800) 458-2004
www.rustyparrot.com Rates from \$175-\$625, depending on season and room.

FBO INFO.:
JACKSON HOLE MUNICIPAL
Jackson Hole Aviation(800) 487-5387

well as occasional seating at mealtimes.

The spa, which offers a full range of treatments, is integrated into the hotel itself. A Jacuzzi sits on an outdoor deck overlooking the slopes of the Snow King ski resort, and the treatment rooms occupy converted guest rooms scattered throughout the resort. Two were located down the hall from our room, suffusing the hallway with the scent of juniper berry and lemongrass oil. I admit I was skeptical of the integrated spa concept, but a massage made me a believer. Instead of changing in a communal locker room and waiting for my massage in the company of robed strangers, I donned one of the soft-microfiber robes in our room and waited there for my therapist to pick me up.

Because the treatment rooms were guest rooms, they are larger and more attractive than those in traditional resort spas. Mine was painted a rich cranberry, warmly illuminated by candles and beaded lamps. My therapist poured me a glass of



The dining room at The Rusty Parrot is rustic yet sophisticated and comfortable, and serves up fine regional cuisine.

water, and we sat in cushioned wicker chairs to talk about my medical history and what I wanted from my massage. Then she left me to undress.

After my massage, I helped myself to some herbal tea in the restaurant, which was laid out with afternoon coffee and freshly baked cookies, and retired to my room to bask in the afterglow. We had one of the smaller guest rooms, but it was roomy enough. Decorated with pine furniture, a leather wingback chair and wrought-iron lamps, it was filled with quality touches, like twig and leaf bathroom fixtures, a signed print by Western artist Gary Carter and comforters and pillows stuffed with fluffy goose down.

But what we enjoyed the most were the Gund teddy bears. We had two, one on each bed, with whisper soft fur, expressive faces and long legs. The resort staff posed them differently each day. One might be sitting crossed-legged, leaning against the pillows, while the other reclined across the pillows tops or looked down from the headboard. One night, we returned from an excellent dinner at the Wild Sage (duck breast with wild rice and pencil asparagus for me, a flavorful cut of bison for my husband) to find one bear tucked in like child on my husband's side of the bed. As we packed to check out, I swear the bears pouted.

It's the little services like this that give the Rusty Parrot its reputation: The bell boy who offered to fill our ice bucket, the restaurant server who asked if she could deliver our drinks to the library or deck upstairs, the hand-written welcome note and fruit plate, the nightly poem left with our chocolates at turn-down, the beautifully packaged trail mix at check out. Then there are the special touches. The original paintings and bronzes throughout the resort provided by the well-respected Trailside Gallery. And the complimentary breakfast, with dishes like smoked salmon and eggs, fresh tomato, basil and mozzarella omelets, blueberry pancakes and waffles with raspberry compote.

Of course, it doesn't hurt that The Rusty Parrot is in Jackson Hole, just blocks from upscale shopping, dining and galleries, not to mention proximity to three ski areas, the renowned National Museum of Wildlife Art, the National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks. The resort concierge can assist in making arrangements for anything from half-day helicopter ski tours, dog sled tours and dinner sleigh rides to a wildlife expedition with an experienced biologist. The Parrot has teamed up with Teton Science Schools' Wildlife Expeditions — named by Travelocity in its Top Eco Travel Destinations — for multiple-day wolf and grizzly "stateside safari" packages.

Ski packages began January 1, and include four to seven nights in selected rooms, daily lift tickets and complimentary transportation to Jackson Hole Mountain Resort for \$299 per night, plus tax and resort fee, based on double occupancy. It's proof that good things come in small packages. ☺