

Clarkdale Lodge

Built in the early 1900s as housing for single men working in the nearby mines, this red-brick lodge now is a popular spot for curious travelers who find their way to charming downtown Clarkdale.

KATHY MONTGOMERY

THE BREEZE FEELS COOL on this early-summer morning. I open the door of my Clarkdale Lodge suite to take advantage of the breeze, then watch the new day spread orange and red across

the eastern horizon.

The sky is clear and unobstructed here, with an expansive view of the Verde Valley. Our suite is on the southeast corner, perfectly positioned to watch



CLARKDALE Clarkdale Lodge, 23 N. 11th Street, 928-634-5037, www.clarkdalelodge.com

the town come to life. Sprinklers fan new sod in the park across the street as dog walkers amble past the bandstand.

I once heard a resident compare Clarkdale to Disneyland's Main Street, U.S.A., and I see what she means as I take the short walk past the stone buildings of the tiny downtown, with its newsstand, bar and kayak rental. As I enter Violette's Bakery Café, Amber Godina is just bringing out fragrant scones, fresh from the oven.

Breakfast in hand, I resume my vigil on the porch, watching as a flock of goldfinches undulates through the sky before descending upon the flower garden. The birds chatter as they work their way up and down tall stalks of cornflowers, their brilliant yellow plumage a pleasing contrast to the azure blooms.

Founded the year Arizona was admitted to the union, Clarkdale was the first master-planned community in the state, according to the town's website. It was a company town, built by the United Verde Copper Co. for employees of the smelter. The red-brick Clarkdale Lodge, built in the 1910s, provided housing for single men and later was converted into apartments.

Daniel Conlin, who manages the property for his parents, admits he was skeptical about the demand for lodging. The family tested the waters by renovating one apartment. "Now we're at 12," he says.

Accommodations include studio and one-bedroom apartments. Ours is billed as a family flat: a one-bedroom suite with a king-size bed, a day bed and a trundle bed. It's homey and comfortable, and includes a full kitchen with painted white cabinets and a view of the park through original, wavy glass. A spacious living room contains comfy furnishings and a large flat-screen TV. With lots of closet space, it's perfect for an extended stay and costs less than a small room at most motels.

Clarkdale Lodge also is close to Verde River access and the Verde Canyon Railroad, and it's a short drive from Jerome and Old Town Cottonwood — making it a cool place to stay in any season.