Luxury, long-term lodging begins to feel like home

By Elizabeth Olson, New York Times

When Tom Cataldi had to leave his hurricane-damaged house in Philadelphia in September, he was definitely not up for camping out, even temporarily. He wanted all the comforts of home in his new lodgings – and more, with no distractions.

“I had to oversee the repairs, but I also had to do my job,” said Cataldi, 44, human resources manager for a global investment company, whose house walls were buckling from rain dumped by Hurricane Irene.

So he headed nearby, to the sort of quiet, luxurious digs preferred by celebrities, actors and other affluent people seeking privacy, comfort and a generous dollop of pampering, whether they are working away from home, divorcing, renovating or relocating. He checked into a condominium-like residence on Rittenhouse Square, run by Korman Communities to cater to those who can afford well more than $200 a night for long periods and do not want to stay in a hotel.

Cataldi has breakfast at the first-floor cafe and leaves the cleaning – and the luxurious sheets – to the maid service. He can work out in the building’s fitness center, stop in at its social gatherings or, for an extra charge, avail himself of wine tutorials or other lifestyle courses arranged by the staff. And since Cataldi has no lease, he can leave whenever he wants.

Longer-term or extended-stay residences, which were developed decades ago, used to mean only corporate housing near office parks. Often drab affairs with kitchens but little else, they did not offer the amenities or residential ambiance that higher-income people wanted in lodgings for longer stays.

“People want a more homey feel,” said Jan Freitag, vice president of Smith Travel Research, which tracks lodging data nationwide.

Read the whole story

Opinion: War on drugs being fought on the wrong front

By John Stossel

Unlike Bill Clinton, President Obama admits he inhaled!. “Frequently,” he said. “That was the point.”

People laugh when politicians talk about their drug use. The audience laughed during a 2003 CNN Democratic presidential primary debate when John Kerry, John Edwards and Howard Dean admitted smoking weed.

Yet those same politicians oversee a cruel system that now stages SWAT raids on people’s homes more than 100 times a day. People die in these raids — some weren’t even the intended targets of the police.



John Stossel

Neill Franklin once led such raids. The 33-year Maryland

police veteran, now executive director of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition, locked up hundreds of people for drugs and felt good about it.

“We really thought that these drugs made people evil,” he told me.

But 10 years ago Franklin decided that drugs — even hard drugs — do much less harm to Americans than does the drug war.

“Drugs can be — and are in many cases — problematic. But the policies that we have in place to prohibit their use are 10 times more problematic.”

The raids helped change his mind. “We end up with kids being shot … search warrants being served on the wrong home, innocent people on the other side of the door thinking that they are protecting their home.”

And the level of drug use remains about the same.

Still, most Americans support the drug war. Paul Chabot, White House drug adviser to Presidents George W. Bush and Clinton, told me: “We should be kicking down more doors. … They’re kicking the door of somebody who’s a violent person.”

Violent? People who get high are rarely violent. The violence occurs because when something’s illegal, it is sold only on the black market. And that causes crime. Drug dealers can’t just call the cops if someone tries to steal their supply. So they form gangs and arm themselves to the teeth.

“We have the violence of these gangs competing for market share, and people get hurt,” said Franklin.

Especially kids. Drug gangs constantly look for new recruits.

“Some of these gangs have better recruitment programs than Fortune 500 companies. They know what to say to kids.”

People think that if drugs were legal, there would be more recruiting of kids. Franklin says the opposite is true.

“Prohibition causes that. We don’t have kids on the corner (saying), ‘Pssst, I got a fifth of Jack Daniel’s.'”

Kids rarely peddle liquor, and there’s little violence around liquor sales because alcohol is legal. There was lots of violence before 1933, but that was because Prohibition forbade liquor sales. Prohibition gave us Al Capone.

“Organized crime existed well before Prohibition,” Chabot replied.

That’s true. But much less of it. The murder rate rose when alcohol was banned. It dropped when Prohibition was repealed.

“If we were to do away with our drug laws … we know drug usage numbers will skyrocket,” Chabot said.

But we don’t know that.

It’s logical to assume that, were it not for drug prohibition, drug abuse would be rampant. But 10 years ago, Portugal decriminalized every drug — crack, heroin, you name it. The number of abusers actually declined.

Joao Goulao, Portugal’s top drug official, said that before decriminalization “we had a huge problem with drug use … around 100,000 people hooked on heroin.”

Then they started treating drug use more like a parking ticket. People caught with drugs get a slap on the wrist, sometimes a fine.

Independent studies have found the number of people in Portugal who say they regularly do drugs stayed about the same. And the best news, said Goulao: “Addiction itself decreased a lot.”

At first, police were skeptical of the law, but Joao Figueira, chief inspector of Lisbon's drug unit, told me that decriminalization changed lots of minds.

"The level of conflicts on the street are reduced. Drug-related robberies are reduced. And now the police are not the enemies of the consumers!"

And teen drug use is down.

All good news. But in American and in most of the world, the drug war continues, thousands are murdered and in ghettos the police are enemies of the people.

Governments should wake up and learn something from the Portuguese.

John Stossel is host of "Stossel" on the Fox Business Network. He's the author of "Give Me a Break" and of "Myth, Lies, and Downright Stupidity".

Californians may get opportunity to vote on death penalty

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Douglas Scott Mickey crept into the rural Placer County home of Eric Lee Hanson and Catherine Blount after midnight on Sept. 29, 1980.

Angry over a drug dispute he had with Hanson and looking for money, Mickey bludgeoned the sleeping 29-year-old man with a

baseball bat and slit his throat ear to ear. He then turned his attention to Blount, 29, stabbing her seven times in the chest.

Convicted of both killings, Mickey has been on San Quentin's death row since 1983, fighting his case through the courts.

There is little chance that he will face lethal injection any time soon. Court battles have brought executions in California to a halt, and on Thursday a group of death penalty opponents said they had passed a milestone toward abolishing capital punishment in the state altogether.

The SAFE California Campaign said it has collected about 800,000 signatures to get a measure on the November ballot to transfer the sentences of death-penalty inmates to life without the possibility of parole.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County supervisor wants to get rid of death penalty

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Ron Briggs recalls turning 21 just in time to hoist an alcoholic drink in celebration of the 1978 victory of Proposition 7, his family's initiative that broadened the application of the death penalty.

At 54, the conservative Republican El Dorado County supervisor is no longer celebrating that win.

He is campaigning against the law he once believed would execute the worst criminals, a law he says went badly wrong. The law was well-drafted enough to survive court challenges, but its consequences are “horrible,” Briggs said last week, sitting on the same land outside Placerville where his family came up with the initiative.

His father, former state Sen. John Briggs, led the campaign for Proposition 7, which broadly rewrote the state’s laws regarding murder: increasing penalties for first- and second-degree murder; revising and expanding the special circumstances categories that require the death penalty or life in prison; and revising laws related to mitigating and aggravating circumstances.

John Briggs does not share his son’s opposition to the death penalty but agrees that the death penalty is not working as the initiative intended.

“What’s not working is the application of the sentence,” he said. “Sentences aren’t being carried out.”

This month, Ron Briggs expects to help deliver initiative signatures to put capital punishment’s repeal on the ballot in November.

Read the whole story

LTVA’s No. 1 goal – bring in overnight guests to S. Shore

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Generating room nights. That’s the overall goal of

the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority.

If the South Shore tourism agency can get people to spend the night, it means hotel taxes for Douglas County and South Lake Tahoe, probably sales tax for both entities, and those same people spending dollars in restaurants, on recreational activities, spa treatments, you name it.

With a budget of $4.3 million – 43 percent of which comes from the Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority and 41percent from the South Lake Tahoe Tourism Improvement District – the LTVA is spending more on luring people to the area.



The celebrity golf tournament each July in Stateline remains one of LTVA's main events. Photo/LTN file

Carol Chaplin, executive director of the LTVA as well as the TDVA, gave a presentation last week to Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe about the rebranding of the area as Tahoe South as well as an update on the agency.

She is slated to be one of the first presenters to the South Lake Tahoe City Council on March 6. The agenda for the 9am meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport says she will talk about destination marketing, the past year and current initiatives.

Tahoe South is something *Lake Tahoe News* first wrote about in December, but is something that has been in the works for a while.

In the first month of LTVA's relaunched website, the number of unique visitors has increased by 13 percent. The site gets about 300,000 page views a month.

While putting heads in beds is the ultimate goal, the other goals of the LTVA are to spur economic growth, attract visitors, and build awareness and appreciation for Lake Tahoe's natural environment.

The South Shore and North Shore work together on many levels, but when it comes to attracting the drive-up market they are competitors.

"Cross-over to the wild side" is LTVA's ad slogan to show that the South Shore is little bit more fun, is how Chaplin put it.

While the talk is about getting away from gaming as the focus and instead having the outdoors being the emphasis, the fact is gaming is still well represented in the promotional material LTVA publicizes.

LTVA is still in the event business, though they have to be of a bigger variety that generates those room nights.

It's being involved with American Century Championship which attracted nearly 40,000 people in 2011 and Iron Girl triathlon that had 600 competitors in 2011 – three times what it had the first year in 2010 – that LTVA focuses on.

Chaplin said she is talking with Amgen officials about bringing the Tour de California back to Tahoe – ideally with cyclists actually riding – in 2013.

The area is one of five being considered for the Peace and Sport event.

More emphasis is also being placed on the wedding co-op to tout the area a destination for brides and grooms.

A facilities analysis was recently completed that will soon be put into a report that will give LTVA a definitive list of regional amenities to know what events it should or should not go after.

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3 men going to jail for selling wild deer meat in El Dorado County

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Three Stockton men have been slapped with jail time and steep fines for poaching and selling wild deer meat in El Dorado County.

The case resulted from an anonymous tip in May 2011 via the California Department of Fish and Game's wildlife enforcement hotline, (888) DFG-CALTIP.

After a three-week investigation, state game wardens arrested Thongseuth Khounchanh, 58; Ti Sila, 51; and Bounleuna Sysenglath, 59; all from Stockton.

The arrest followed extensive surveillance that indicated the suspects were making multiple poaching trips per week, including killing bucks as well as pregnant does. They sold

the deer meat to an established network of buyers.

Read the whole story

Snow Fiesta benefits North Shore organizations

North Tahoe Family Resource Center and Adventure Risk Challenge are celebrating Snow Fiesta on March 10 from 6-10pm at the North Lake Tahoe Event Center.

This is a drug and alcohol-free family event.

Tickets are $10 and all proceeds benefit the North Tahoe FRC and ARC. Kids under 5 are free and 6- to 12-year-olds are $5. Tickets can be purchased at the door or in advance at the North Tahoe Family Resource Center, Syd's Bagelry & Espresso and Tahoe City, and Bill's Rotisserie in Truckee.

Want to volunteer? Email Jen at jgurecki@berkeley.edu or call (530) 416.5682.

More information is online.

Carson City teen releases album

By Michael Sion, Reno Gazette-Journal

Five years ago, a 10-year-old Grant Davis was looking for something new to try. He didn't like sports, didn't fit in with peers and was struggling to discover his passion. What's more, one of his siblings was battling drug addiction and Grant, the youngest of five, felt lost in the upheaval.

Then he auditioned for a musical at his hometown Brewery Arts Center in Carson City. Though he didn't get the role, "It was kind of one of those moments when I went, 'This is right,'" Davis says.

An even bigger moment loomed the next year when he made the cut for BAC's Backstage Kids, singing at a jazz festival. Davis – who'd grown up listening to his parents' records – crooned Sinatra's "That's Life."

And earned a standing ovation.

"There was something about it," Davis remembers. "I had the audience in the palm of my hand."

His mother, Angie, recognized it, too. "I felt this overwhelming responsibility," she says.

She began taking him to singing, acting and dance lessons, auditions and competitions.

Read the whole story

Vonn blasts her way to second in GS; Mancuso doesn't finish

By USSA

OFTERSCHWANG, Germany – Lindsey Vonn of Vail produced a scorching final run of giant slalom Saturday to finish second in spring-like Ofterschwang and boost her Audi FIS Alpine World Cup point total to 1,708.

German Viktoria Rebensburg won for the second straight day and leads Vonn in the giant slalom standings by 135 points with two discipline races left on the calendar. With the podium, Vonn became the first skier to produce four World Cup seasons with 15 or more podiums, breaking a tie she held with Austrian great Hermann Maier.

Vonn was 1.68 behind Rebensburg after hitting her face on a gate, which knocked her goggles sideways in the first run.

Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley was seventh after the first run, but went out in the final.

There are seven races remaining in the World Cup season, including a slalom on Sunday in Ofterschwang.

South Tahoe woman wins slopestyle in Mammoth

By USSA

MAMMOTH LAKES – After three days of wind and snow Chas Guldemond of Reno earned his second slopestyle win in a row, this time at the Paul Mitchell Progression Session at Mammoth.

Teammate Sage Kotsenburg of Park City finished second on Friday when conditions were sunny and beautiful, raising

spirits, bringing smiles and getting the sunblock flowing.

Joanna Dzierzawski of South Lake Tahoe took the win for the women.

Guldermond scored a 94.5 and went huge on a backside double 1260.

Guldemond’s first of two consecutive wins was at the Ticket To Ride World Championship Feb. 19 in Oslo, Norway.

Dzierzawski’s run included switching up her rotations with a backside 360, and frontside 360.

Indigo Monk of Manhattan Beach took second in women’s competition at 17-years-old and Karly Shorr of Milford, Mich., was third.