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AVIA opens doors in Market Street

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Avia The Woodlands general manager Dave Brown poses on the new boutique hotel's Outdoor Terrace overlooking Market Street.

Guests who stayed at AVIA The Woodlands last night enjoyed a champagne toast and ribbons draped across their doors as the new boutique hotel opened for business.

The Market Street location is only the company's fourth nationwide, and first in Texas.

"We're going to cater to helping guests really have an experience beyond just staying in a hotel room," general manager Dave Brown said. "Our goal really is to help them, for whatever reason they're here, discover this area, discover Market Street … make sure they connect with this area because it is unique.

"When you look out at Market Street, you're not seeing that in a lot of hotel settings. We feel very fortunate to have that."

AVIA The Woodlands' signature offering is the Presidential Hosting Suite, an 1,835-square foot room with two bedrooms and bathrooms separated by a large entertainment area, which seats eight to 12 and includes a 50-inch flat screen TV, wet bar and wine refrigerator.

"We Texas-sized it a little bit," Brown said.

There are two Presidential Suites and two Master Patio Suites, which are 709 square feet and also include an entertainment area. The remainder of the hotel's 70 rooms are divided equally among Classic King (270 to 385 square feet) and Classic Double Queen guestrooms (310), Grand Suites (434) and Lux Suites (490 to 552).

Each room features a mini bar, clock radio with iPod dock, walk-in showers and wired and wireless Internet. The smaller rooms have 42-inch flat screen TVs and range from $179 to $359 a night. The Presidential Suites begin at $650 a night.

"We'll just continue to look at our supply and demand and see where our pricing ends up," Brown said. "We'll make sure we don't out-price ourselves in the market."

AVIA The Woodlands will feature regional cuisine on a small plates menu and premier wines in its Kitchen + Lounge.

"We're not here to compete with restaurants," Brown said. "That's not our business.

"Our goal with AVIA is for our guests to start their evening with us and end their evening with us. If they're here on business, they may have a business meeting, they may want to go out to dinner. We'll have a cocktail available for them."

Brown is expecting most of his guests to be executives.

"There's a strong corporate base here with the Marriott and the Resort," Brown said. "We feel like we can do smaller meetings, maybe a little bit more intimate service with our guests."

The hotel has meeting spaces, including a 2,240-square foot Event Room with Event Patio and the Cabana Room and Outdoor Terrace, home to the "quietest, most ecologically-friendly" pool, which is lighted and powered by a Toyota Prius motor.

"In The Woodlands, there's this desire to be the first to see things. So, we think we may be hit real hard this week, we don't know," Brown said. "Once the word gets out that we're open, we feel like that walk-up traffic will be pretty strong."

AVIA The Woodlands' dining offerings and bar will be open to both guests and foot traffic.

Brown said he anticipates reaching capacity in "90 days, maybe, if we get lucky."

"(That's) based on opening the time we are and the first quarter is typically a strong quarter," he said. "Now, the economy and where things are from a business perspective are a little bit of a question. But we feel like we're opening at the right time.

"I'd rather be opening now than in the middle of the summer, because summer typically in Houston, you're down a little bit. In that first quarter we do have an opportunity."

Brown said he anticipates about 20 percent of AVIA The Woodlands' business in the long run — and up to 40 percent on weekends — to come from the Houston area.

"We think that there are opportunities and a lot of people, who we call discoverers — that like the boutique hotel, like something a little different — I think we'll be able to attract them from around the state," Brown said. "But primarily I think our business will be the corporate market, the executive guest who is going to be staying up here in The Woodlands market."

AVIA's other three locations all opened earlier this year. The Savannah, Ga., hotel opened in January; Napa, Calif., in July and Long Beach, Calif., in August.

"Our other hotels are more what I call a destination, like Napa," Brown said. "People are going to Napa for a specific purpose, where ours is going to have that combination of primarily I think business and then the social/vacation market will be probably less."

AVIA The Woodlands Specials

- Guests staying at AVIA The Woodlands in Market Street between Dec. 14 and Jan. 7 will receive a complimentary $25 dining credit valid at the AVIA Kitchen + Lounge. Room rates for Dec. 14 through Jan. 7 start at $179.
- AVIA The Woodlands is hosting "A Sexy Little New Year's Eve Getaway" on Dec. 31. Guests are invited to begin their evening with a special New Year's Eve a la carte small plates menu and drinks at the AVIA Lounge before heading out for evening festivities. There will also be a jazz trio playing. A special guests-only New Year's Day brunch will be available for $30 per person plus tax and gratuity. Room rates for New Year's Eve start at $279.
- For more information, visit www.aviahotels.com.

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