



LAJITAS



A civilized hideout

STORY BY RONA DISTENFELD/SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

LAJITAS — When you really want to get away, but take all your creature comforts with you, head to Lajitas, the Ultimate Hideout.

Telecommunications millionaire Steve Smith bought this border town in the desert near Big Bend National Park and invested \$100 million to make it a very private, world-class resort. He's struggled ever since to find his market niche, and a lender's recent filing for foreclosure hasn't helped the long-term prospects. But for those willing to make the trek to this exceedingly remote desert hideaway, it's still an unforgettable destination, with luxury bedding, Jacuzzi tubs and award-winning cuisine.

The condos have fireplaces, flat-screen TVs, Wi-Fi Internet access, a full kitchen and balconies with a desert view. There is golf, horseback riding, hunting, hiking, skeet shooting and a cowboy action shooting range. Just relax by the pool or enjoy a treatment at the full-service spa.

Varied weekly events offer entertainment and educa-

tion. You might learn about aromatic herbs, fine wines or making mixed drinks, or cook with chef Blas Gonzales (formerly of Hudson's on the Bend in Austin).

The resort offers two restaurants, the Candelilla and the Ocotillo. Executive Chef Santiago de la Cruz presides over the kitchen at the Candelilla. He delights in experimenting with the produce from the resort's 26-acre fruit and vegetable farm. Chiles, squash, tomatoes, peppers, apricots, limes, and more are grown without pesticides.

Over at the Ocotillo, dining is a more elegant experience. The full bar offers every type of spirit, and the wine cellar is surprisingly deep and varied. The menu may offer elk, quail, salmon, Permian Basin shrimp and prime rib.

So whether you drive in or take advantage of the 7,500-foot runway and fly in on your own plane, there's a great getaway waiting for you in the West Texas desert. You may not have a lot of company — but you definitely won't be waiting in line, as you leave the rest of civilization behind.



EXPRESS-NEWS
FILE PHOTO, ALL THE OTHER
PHOTOS BY RONA DISTENFELD/
SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

If you go

**LAJITAS, THE
ULTIMATE HIDEOUT**
(432) 424-5000
www.lajitas.com

**BIG BEND
INFORMATION**
www.visitbigbend.com

Enjoy the beauty of the Chihuahuan Desert without giving up your creature comforts at Lajitas, the Ultimate Hideout. You'll find souvenirs for every taste, a cowboy action shooting range, a 19-hole golf course (with one hole across the Rio Grande in Mexico) and gourmet food.