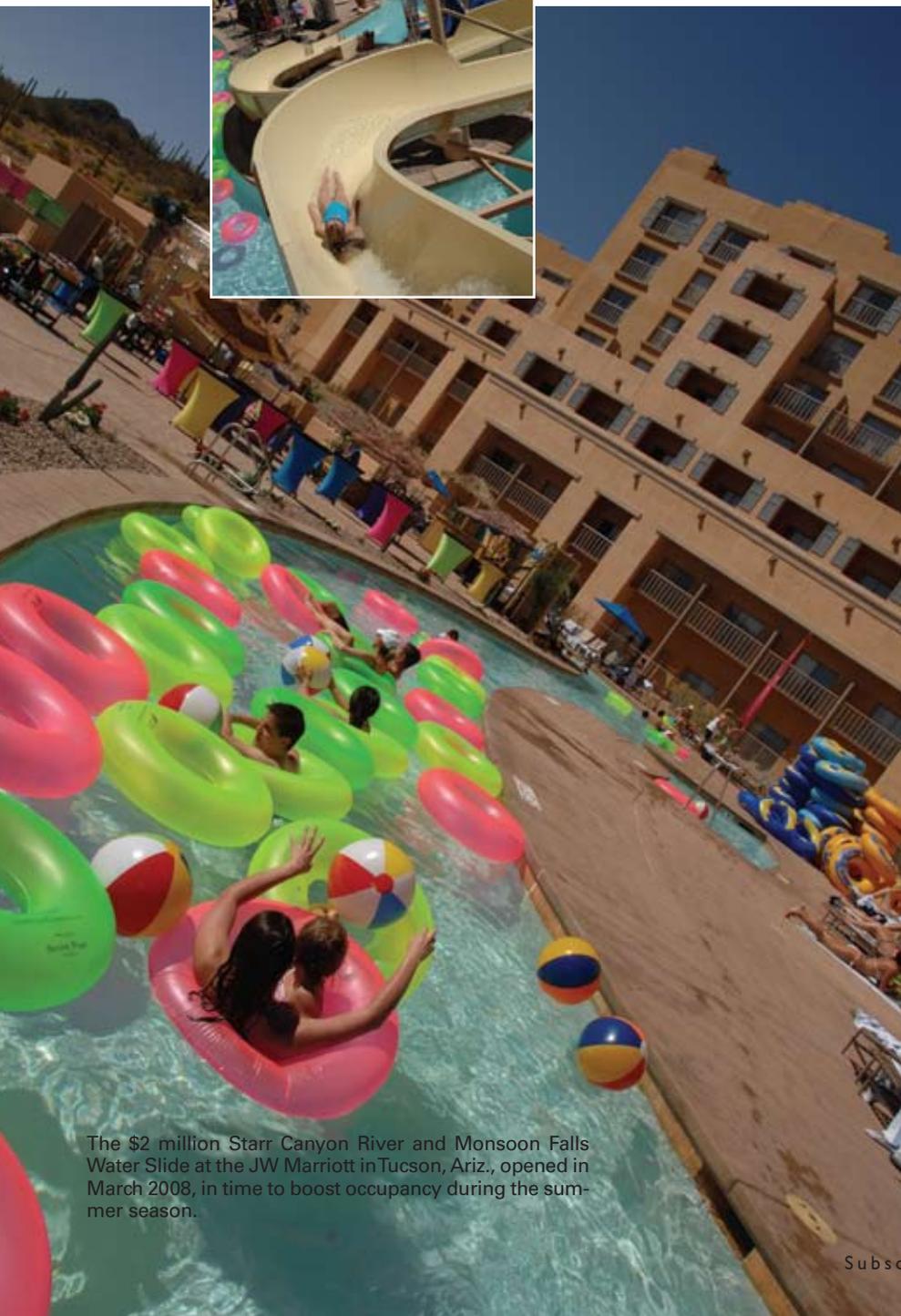


Fun for All

Lazy river rides let families play together



The \$2 million Starr River and Monsoon Falls Water Slide at the JW Marriott in Tucson, Ariz., opened in March 2008, in time to boost occupancy during the summer season.

The April 2008 debut of the Starr River Canyon lazy river ride at the JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa in Tucson, Ariz., came just in time for the summer season. That made it a hit with Matt Brody, the resort's director of sales and marketing. "Summers in the Southwest are often a tough sell, but this year went well," he says. "It really helped."

The added attraction is a lure for group business, as guests have increased their length of stay or more often bring spouses and children. The resort began promoting the new attraction to both local and national media months before it opened, and as a result, improved occupancy.

That strategy is being adopted around the country. As resorts improve their aquatics offerings, a lazy river ride is a great addition, says Donny Weber of the Weber Group. "Everyone can use it together, from grandparents to the toddlers riding on their laps," he says. "You have a lot of bodies in a small space. We call these attractions 'people eaters'."

Also, because most have multiple points of entry, there's no line to get in, points out Bill Ryan of Architectural Design Consultants Inc. "People can immediately start having fun," he says. "They can even use them as a way to get around your facility."

Get a Plan

The JW Marriott's lazy river holds 177,000 gallons of heated water and is 3'3" deep all the way around. A special ADA lift has been implemented for the physically challenged to enter the river, and it's long enough that one lap takes approximately six minutes. As guests travel around a center island, 22 fountain jets shower them with a refreshing mist. That



An island in the center of the lazy river is used for lounging during the day and receptions at night for up to 500 guests.

island is home to deck chairs during the day, but serves as a catering venue in the evening.

It all took a lot of planning, and that's where people like Carin Brown, director of design/build services at Neuman Group in Beaver Dam, Wis., come in "We do the planning and design for water features," she says. "Often we start with a defined space, and plan how to fill it."

Working with a company that specializes in this type of feature will help you avoid operational problems. For example, if each

element of a water complex has its own filtration system, an incident in one area won't mean shutting down the whole complex. Also, safety must come first, so sight lines for lifeguards need to be considered from the beginning. "The curvier the river, the more guards you'll need," Brown says.

Bells and Whistles

"In the past few years, designers have added a lot more features to the typical lazy river experience," Brown says. In addition to the standard slow-flowing lazy river, there are faster, deeper rivers where riders don personal floatation devices. Wave generators increase the turbulence level.

Naming Right

Weber's company helps resorts with theming element of a water attraction, which can add to the brand's story. "It's not just adding rocks and tiki huts," he says. "We don't think it should be arbitrary. You want to do something that will create memories and a sense of place. This is how you add fun and bring the brand to life." **R+R**

Why a Lazy River?

- No lines for guests
- Fun for (almost) all ages
- Guests can use it together
- Lots of people can use it at the same time

aquatons
creative water play

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