

THE ROGUE WILD



TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

The OK Corral serves thousands for lunch and dinner for those who take the Hellgate Excursions jetboat ride. Up to 350 diners at a time can load up on the country-style meal.

OK Corral an open-air dining experience close to nature

By Stacy D. Stumbo
of the Daily Courier

The owner of Hellgate Jetboat Excursions hopes visitors feel more than OK after they finish a meal at the OK Corral.

Renovated in 2005, the 12,000-square-foot, open-air dinner house was designed to complement nature along the Rogue River, where osprey, bald eagle and deer sightings are commonplace.

Located 18 miles west of Grants Pass, the restaurant serves Hellgate guests only. Up to 350 diners at a time can load up on country-style barbecued ribs and chicken, a variety of side dishes, refreshing beverages and dessert after traveling past rocky beaches and sheer cliffs.

Hellgate tours depart from Grants Pass where the Caveman Bridge crosses the Rogue River at 966 S.W. Sixth St. After the boat cruises through

“ We built the restaurant to give an open feeling. It makes it a different experience than that you’ll get anywhere else on the river.

Robert Hamlyn
OK Corral

Hellgate Canyon, it turns around, heads back upstream and docks at the OK Corral.

Dinner, brunch and lunch trips to the OK Corral are offered May 1 through mid-September. Nearly 85,000 people take a Hellgate excursion every year.

In 1961, Grant Garcia start-

ed Hellgate Excursions. Gary and Julie Woolsey bought the business in 1974 and introduced a 48-passenger aluminum boat in 1977. They also introduced brunch and dinner stops. In 1986, Riverside Inn owners hired Robert Hamlyn to manage a rival jetboat business, Rogue Whitewater Excursions. Two years later, he bought and merged the Rogue and Hellgate operations.

He later decided to renovate the ranch-style homestead called the OK Corral.

“You get a feeling of remoteness out there,” Hamlyn said. “We built the restaurant to give an open feeling. It makes it a different experience than what you’ll get anywhere else on the river.”

A three-hour, all-you-can-eat lunch trip costs \$36 for children ages 4 to 11 and \$52 for adults. The four-hour champagne brunch excursion costs \$55 for adults and \$37 for

children. The four-hour, afternoon “Country Banquet” dinner cruise costs \$60 for adults and \$42 for children.

Children, ages 3 and younger, travel and eat for free. Vegetarian meals are available with 24-hour notice.

A five-hour, 75-mile white-water trip to the edge of the

Rogue’s restricted section at Grave Creek is available for \$64 for adults and \$45 for children. The boat stops for a meal at Morrison’s Rogue River Lodge. The cost of the meal is not included in the boat ride. Guides don’t recommend children younger than 3 years old go on this trip

through rapids.

Hellgate also offers two-hour scenic tours through Hellgate Canyon for \$39 for adults and \$26 for children. Meals are not served during the excursion.

For details, call 800-648-4874 or visit www.hellgate.com on the Web.

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