

Pine Valley Motel & Cafe

North of Burwash

Started: Bought business in 1989

Contact: Carmen Marie Hinson

Located north of Burwash Landing, the Pine Valley Motel and Café has a dining room, café, bakery, lounge, gift shop, gas station, RV park, cabins, motel rooms and even an overnight corral for horses. It is open 24 hours a day in the summer.



Getting started: After two years of leasing the café of this highway stop, Carmen became the owner of the entire show in 1989. The outgoing owner financed her take over of the business. Carmen has expanded the café from three booths to 75 seats, added a bakery, brought in trailers for more motel rooms and built a corral.

Key to success: A very large amount of hard work and determination have been the foundation of Carmen's success. She has also worked other jobs in the winter to help finance the business. Using creative approaches, such as hosting a mud wrestling event, has drawn in people in the shoulder season. Listening and responding to what her clientele is looking for has also been important to Pine Valley's growth.

Lessons learned: Carmen has learned how to fix generators and tires, run gas pumps, hire and supervise staff, work with tourists and much more. In a short season, hiring and keeping staff in such a remote location is a challenge and Carmen had to ask the highway construction outfits to stop coming in and offering work to her staff.

Future of business: Carmen plans to keep Pine Valley open this winter and to do some much needed maintenance. Next year, in addition to expanding the RV park and adding more cabins, the second annual mud wrestling event will be held.