

Michael Chaffin | Hospitality Leader, Culture Architect, and Visual Storyteller



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I've spent four decades immersed in the world of hotels—doing just about every job and working in nearly every style of property, from boutique inns to large convention hotels. But my true legacy didn't begin until about twenty-five years ago—when I stopped simply managing hotels and started embracing the art of being an innkeeper.

—often dictated by a three-ring binder. But everything changed when I stepped into independent hotels, where there were no pre-written guidelines, no corporate playbook—just a blank canvas. It was both liberating and daunting. In these moments, I had to craft guest experiences from the ground up, drawing on my childhood encounters at German inns and guesthouses, where I first witnessed the artistry of true hospitality. That’s where my style was born.

A pivotal moment in my journey came in 2010, during a transformative visit to Zappos headquarters. Immersed in their culture for three days—working alongside frontline staff and learning from their leadership—I experienced the power of a unified team driven by a strong belief system. I returned with my “hair on fire” about the impact of culture and core values, determined to reshape my corner of the industry and inspire others to do the same. Since then, I’ve dedicated my work to fostering exceptional hospitality through leadership, intentionality, and a commitment to culture-driven service.

Beyond hospitality, I’m driven by an insatiable curiosity. I seek to understand how people live, work, and create meaning in their lives. I explore the world primarily by car or on foot, documenting my experiences through photography. I

intentionally stray from the beaten path, drawn to the obscure and unexpected. My images, often in black and white, capture moments that resonate deeply, revealing layers of emotion and untold stories. I still develop my black-and-white film at home, embracing the tactile process of creation.

I share my thoughts and visual storytelling through my online journal at [Substack](#) and my photography site, [GetTheCameraOut](#).

Professional Experience

Hotel Development & Openings

Bringing luxury, boutique, and independent hotel concepts to life:

[Capital Hotel](#) – Little Rock, Arkansas

[Keyah Grande](#) – Pagosa Springs, Colorado

[El Monte Sagrado](#) – Taos, New Mexico

[Inn on Biltmore Estate](#) – Asheville, North Carolina

Crossings – Austin, Texas

Edelweiss Lodge & Spa – Taos Ski Valley, New Mexico

Stratford Hall – Stratford, Virginia

Hospitality Leadership

Leading world-class hotels, private clubs, and independent properties:

General Manager Roles

The Alotian Club – Roland, Arkansas

Capital Hotel – Little Rock, Arkansas

Keyah Grande – Pagosa Springs, Colorado

Inn on Biltmore Estate – Asheville, North Carolina

Stephen F. Austin Hotel – Austin, Texas

Omni Hotel Downtown – Austin, Texas

Progressive Leadership Positions

Omni Hotel – San Antonio, Texas

DoubleTree Hotel – Walnut Creek, California

Inn at The Park – Anaheim, California

DoubleTree Hotel & Conference Center – St. Louis, Missouri

DoubleTree Hotel – Orange, California

DoubleTree Hotel – Vail, Colorado

DoubleTree Hotel – Houston, Texas

Events & Hospitality Experiences

Jackson T. Stephens Cup – Premier collegiate golf tournament

Capital 100 Miles and More – Coordinated with the 2013 Big Dam Bridge 100 Michael

Capital Hotel Detour – Partnered with the 2013 Little Rock Marathon

Little Rock Gran Fondo – Competitive and social cycling event

Industry & Community Leadership

Dedicated to shaping the hospitality industry and local communities:

Board Memberships & Leadership Roles

Hospitality & Tourism

Little Rock Downtown Partnership – Board Member

University of Arkansas Hospitality Program Advisory Board – Board Member

Arkansas Hospitality Lodging Association – Board Member, President

Pagosa Springs Lodging Association – Member

Pagosa Springs Town Tourism Council – Board Member

American Hotel & Lodging Association, Resort Committee – Member

Asheville Tourism Product Development Committee – Chair

North Carolina Hotel & Lodging Association – Board Member

Texas Hotel Motel Association – Board Member

Austin Hotel Motel Association – Board Member, President

Aviation & Community Service

Western North Carolina Pilots Association – Board Member, President

Angel Flight Mid-Atlantic – Volunteer Pilot

Federal Aviation Administration – Aviation Safety Counselor

General Aviation Pilots Association – President

Boy Scouts of America – Assistant Scoutmaster

Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce – Board Member

Downtown Austin Alliance – Board Member

Education & Leadership Development

School of Life – Since December 11, 1964 (still learning daily)

AltMBA – Intensive leadership and business development program

University of Florida, Gainesville – B.S. in Business Administration, Marketing

Cornell University, Ithaca, New York – Advanced Hotel Investments

Passions & Interests

Family | People | Travel | Cars | Cameras | Guitars | Running | Cycling

Connect & Learn More

◆◆ michaelchaffin.com – My personal website, featuring my work, insights, and past and upcoming projects.

◆◆ [LinkedIn](#) – Let's connect and continue the conversation.

