

# Decorative Walls, Tight Space And Intimacy Makes Leopold's Of Regina A Unique Bar

By Ryan McKenna

REGINA — When Logan Richards walks into Leopold's Tavern with his good friend, he can often hear the groans from other patrons.

The duo always try to outdo each other to see who can play the saddest country song on the jukebox, much to the chagrin of other customers.

It's one of the reasons Richards has been a regular at the original Leopold's — or Leo's as the locals call it — since it opened in 2013.

"I like the intimacy of it," he says. "You come in during the day and it will feel like a dive bar, and then at night you can come in ... and if 40 people are in here, it feels like 200."

Leopold's is a uniquely Saskatchewan chain that's expanding throughout Western Canada. There are seven locations, and the hole-in-the-wall on Albert Street, just north of Saskatchewan's Legislative Building in Regina's Cathedral neighbourhood, is always packed.

The name originates from Leopold George Duncan Albert, the eighth child of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. A giant poster of the Duke of Albany can be found at each location.

Co-founder Matt Pinch, 40, says when the first Leopold's opened he and a group of five friends wanted a place in their hometown to call their own.

"It wasn't really our intent to make it a big business or anything like that. It was kind of for us."

And though three additional locations are planned for this year including one in Victoria, Pinch says maintaining simplicity in the aesthetic is what gives each bar a Saskatchewan flavour.

"I think that's sort of the nature of Saskatchewan. Good, hard-working, but simple people."

## THE WALLS

A distinguishable feature of any Leo's is the walls.

Staying true to its dive-bar ambitions, Pinch says he and his co-owners took junk from their basements that their wives wouldn't let them put in their houses and slapped it on the wall. Eventually customers were allowed to add their own belongings.

Among the items you can find at the original location are:



Bartender Miranda Holt, center, speaks to regulars at Leopold's Tavern in Regina, Saskatchewan on Thursday January 3, 2019. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Michael Bell

acoustic guitars, Saskatchewan Roughriders apparel, tire rims, licence plates, front pages of the Regina Leader-Post, high heels and a cigarette with a sign attached "Reserved for Slash."

"It makes it feel like it's their own bar," Pinch says. "It's part of their community."

Matt Hjorth, another regular customer who also frequents the Leopold's in the north end of the city, says he put someone's boarding pass on the wall at the northern location because he had a good conversation with them one night.

"I don't know how I ended up with their boarding pass but I was like, 'you know what? We're going to commemorate this night, and I'm going to put your boarding pass right here and just pin it up on the wall,'" Hjorth says.

One of the strangest recent additions includes a bag of rice. It was given to the bar after someone spilled something on their phone and staff decided it was worthy for a wall addition.

"And now it's there, anyone can use it," says Leopold's regional manager AJ Schepers.

Every location is decorated to conform to the neighbourhood it's situated in.

## THE SIZE

The original location has a capacity of 60 people and it's a



Old Saskatchewan license plates cover a small part of the ceiling at Leopold's Tavern in Regina, Saskatchewan on Thursday January 3, 2019. The Regina-founded bar chain emphasizes neighbourhood charm and a warm atmosphere. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Michael Bell

trend that stays true at other Leopold's as well.

Pinch says the size is an important factor and going any bigger would take away the sense of community they're trying to create. Having a small bar also forces you to talk to the person beside you, which Pinch says is

a good thing.

"In this day and age, everyone is so connected on their phones and the art of one-on-one personal conversation is sort of somewhat off. Having a small place sort of forces that to happen and that interaction builds community inside the bar and the com-

munity itself."

If you go...

There's currently three locations in Regina, two in Saskatoon, and one apiece in both Calgary and Winnipeg. Additional locations in Saskatoon, Warman, Sask., and Victoria are planned to open this year. - CP

# Malaysia's Penang Island Attracts More Indian Tourists

CHENNAI: Malaysia's Penang island is seeing an increased flow of Indian travellers despite the absence of direct flights, a top official said on Monday.

"The number of Indian travellers flying in to Penang has also increased in recent years.

"The Penang Immigration Department reported that for the period between January to November 2018, 7,250 Indian travellers flew into Penang, compared to 6,569 in the same period in 2017," Ashwin Gunasekeran, Chief Executive Officer, Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB), told the media here.

The 10.37 per cent increase came despite there not being direct flights between Penang and India, he added.

According to Gunasekeran, India is one of the top five markets for business events in Penang, and over the past year, event planners and conference organisers have shown encouraging interest.

In an attempt to attract Indian corporates and others to hold their meetings, conferences and exhibitions in Penang, the PCEB is offering support packages ranging from sponsorship of souvenirs and welcome luncheon



for the organisers valued at 2,000 ringgit (for confirmed meetings/conferences of 50 to 100 del-

egates) to hosted site inspections, welcome luncheon for organisers, cultural performances and souvenirs valued at 15,000 ringgit (for incentive groups of 501 delegates and above), Gunasekeran said.

He said Penang was also a major medical tourism centre and is now turning into a retirement destination for the wealthy. There are also several attractions for tourists throughout the island. According to Gunasekeran, the av-

erage period stay in Penang by an Indian leisure traveller is about three days.

He said the island-city is a family destination and is home for people having roots in India (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Punjab and others), China and Malaysians.

Pic above: A Hindu temple in Penang. - Michael Coghlan from Adelaide, Australia/Wiki. Bottom picture: Boating in the clear waters off Penang.



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