West is Best



Moulton Barn in Grand Teton National Park (Getty Images)



Traverse the western side of the Rockies for hidden gems, gorgeous views and fresh mountain air.



Map by Peter Sucheski

Start in Park City, a vibrant mountain community dedicated to sustainability and close to Salt Lake City International Airport for easy access. From here, you'll cross Utah, Idaho and Wyoming on your way to Yellowstone and Grand Teton, escaping the crowds to see a side of the West that's often overlooked.

Discover a herd of roaming bison against the backdrop of the Great Salt Lake at Antelope Island State Park and pioneer history as you head north to Logan. Fort Hall offers a glimpse into the culture of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. If Idaho makes you think potatoes, stop in Blackfoot to learn everything there is to know about this humble tuber. Then, dive into communities like Idaho Falls, St. Anthony and Ririe where you'll discover that this state is so much more than just fields of spuds.

As you approach the Tetons from the west, you might be surprised by the mirror image view of the iconic range you've seen photographs of. This side of the Tetons is home to uncrowded trails, hot springs soaks and more. Head into Wyoming's incredible Jackson Hole where you'll find unparalleled summer recreation at two ski resorts. You're almost to Yellowstone, America's first national park, but before you get there don't miss Grand Teton National Park. We've got you covered with a photography guide and where to stay.

Exit Yellowstone via the West Entrance, taking a quick jaunt through Montana before you're back in Idaho. A national park site celebrating the region's volcanic past is the perfect place to stretch your legs on your way back to Utah.

There's no denying it, west is best.



Family hike at Deer Valley (Courtesy of Park City Chamber & Visitors Bureau)

The Future of the West

Two-time Olympic host venue Park City is leading the way for sustainable mountain recreation.

By Mikaela Ruland

Tucked into the folds of the Wasatch Mountains, Park City, Utah is home to world class skiing, miles of summer trails and a vibrant arts scene. And, as it prepares to host multiple events for the 2034 winter games, this alluring destination is continuing its transformation into one of the coolest destinations in the West.

The 400-acre Utah Olympic Park is the obvious place to start exploring. Home to a number of events during the 2002 winter games, the center has two free museums, adventure courses and the bobsled ride, which sends you 65 MPH down the Olympic course. In the summer, it transitions to wheels, and you can also watch for winter freestyle athletes launching off ski jumps and landing in the center's pools.

But setting the stage runs deeper than just getting hyped for favorite winter sports. Park City is aiming to host the first carbon neutral Olympics, in addition to achieving net-zero carbon and running on 100% renewable energy by 2030. It's an ethos that extends outside of city planning meetings and is obvious to visitors who come to stay and play. It's easy to leave your car behind and explore the town on foot or by public transit. Either go completely car free, taking a shuttle or rideshare from Salt Lake City International Airport, or leave your vehicle at the new Canyons Village Parking Structure or at one of the park and ride lots on the outskirts of town. From there, you can access Main Street, hotels, skiing and even hiking trails by a mix of free buses (equipped with ski and bike storage), gondolas, shuttles, bike share and foot.

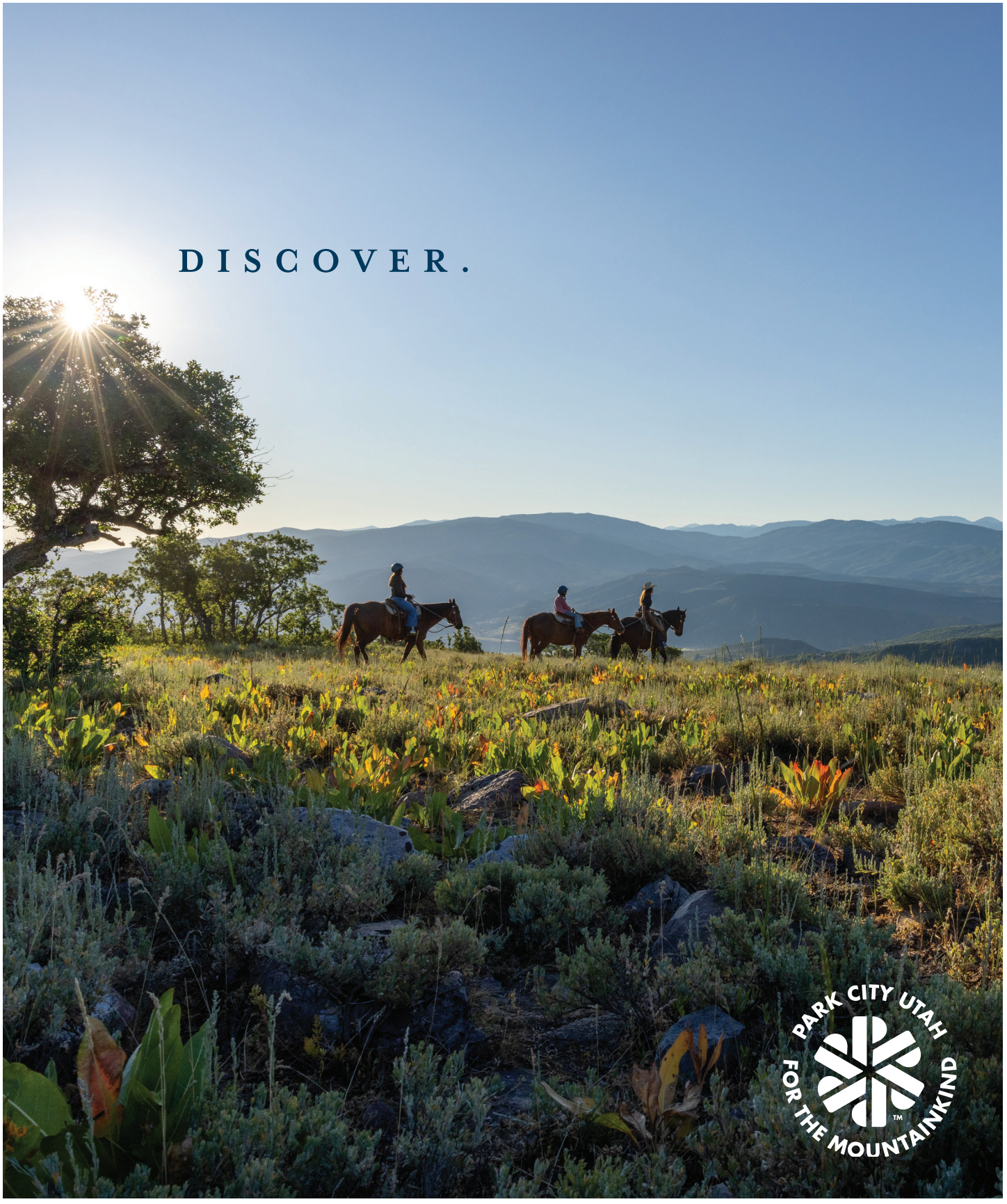
"It's so convenient to get around for free, completely reducing your carbon footprint and expenses," says Visit Park City vice president of communications, Dan Howard.

Take the bus to access Park City's 400-plus miles of trails. Strewn with wildflowers in the summer and golden aspen leaves in the fall, explore on foot or by mountain bike. The 4.7-mile Silver Lake Trail is a hiker-only destination ending in gorgeous valley views and the nearby, moderate Flagstaff Loop offers the same vistas atop a mountain bike. Before you set off on a hike or a bike ride, check the webcams at ParkCityTrails.org. If the parking area is full, pick another trail to help disperse impact. No matter which route you choose here, it's bound to be gorgeous. If you want to find off-the-beaten-path spots from the get-go, hire a local guide. White Pine Touring will take you hiking, mountain or road biking and, in the winter, backcountry skiing and snowshoeing. In addition to finding hidden gems, you'll get a unique local perspective from your expert guide.

Historic Main Street is a must visit for its dining, shopping and a dose of history—47 of the building's facades date back to the town's founding in 1884—but don't miss some of Park City's other neighborhoods. Kimball Junction is home to much of the city's arts scene and is conveniently located near Utah Olympic Park and Woodward, a year round action sports park, fun for kids and adults alike. Kearns Boulevard is where locals go to eat, with an abundance of Australian owned restaurants like Twisted Fern, with a seasonally inspired upscale menu, or five5eeds where you can find seriously great coffee.

In 2025, Deer Valley ski area doubled in size, offering skiers and riders more than 4,300 acres of terrain. It's worth checking out in both winter and summer—especially for performances from the Utah Symphony at the Deer Valley Music Festival. Park City Mountain also unveiled a new 10-person gondola, providing access to the slopes from Canyons Village. If you've visited Park City in years past, it's the perfect time to plan a return trip to discover what's new.

Learn more at VisitParkCity.com.



New trails. Quiet corners. Moments you didn't plan on. If curiosity is what pulls you onward, you're the Mountainkind™—and you owe it to yourself to visit Park City. **VisitParkCity.com**

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Solitude Near the City

Find a remarkable natural wonder at Antelope Island State Park.

By Mikaela Ruland

Surrounded by the mighty Great Salt Lake, Antelope Island State Park feels like another world. Here, bison roam, antelope graze and quiet descends, making it feel so much farther away than the 45-minute drive from downtown Salt Lake City.

For the most unique perspective, take the Antelope Island Causeway from Syracuse. The thin ribbon of road traverses the lake itself, giving you excellent views before you hit the park. Start at the newly expanded visitor center full of interactive exhibits where you can watch an introductory film about the the lake on a 3D Giant Screen. Then, it's time to get out and experience this incredible ecosystem. A great hike to take in the views is Buffalo Point Trail, a short 1-mile out-and-back that provides an elevated look across the park, lake and surrounding mountains. If you're looking for an all-day outing, park manager Doranne Pittz recommends the Split Rock Loop Trail, which traverses 11.7 miles into the backcountry for deafening quiet.

Most visitors are here to spot wildlife and the good news is you're almost guaranteed a bison sighting. A herd of 500 animals roams the island, along with pronghorn, coyotes and more than 300 species of migrating birds. Visit in October to see the annual Bison Round Up, where the herd is wrangled into pens by cowboys and volunteers alike to get their annual health exams. Some are auctioned off each year to keep the population in check. If you want to experience the park on horseback outside of the roundup, trail rides are offered year round.

While every season brings its draws—other than the several week period in the spring where biting midges prove a nuisance—Pittz suggests visiting in the winter, when the park is even quieter and wildlife are most active. It's truly stunning to see the landscape blanketed in snow.

Plan to spend the night for epic views of the stars. Antelope Island is an International Dark Sky Park, and rangers lead star parties on select nights throughout the summer to introduce the cosmos above. Five campgrounds, including a full-service option with hookups, plus three cozy cottages give visitors plenty of options for overnight accommodations.

If you're looking for a good spot for dinner after adventuring for the day, head back across the causeway to Layton, where you can get a craft beer and American pub fare at Rooster's Brewing, or German dishes like schnitzel and spatzle at Weller's Bistro.

Learn more at DiscoverDavis.com.



Go Local in Logan

Catch a glimpse into pioneer living, enjoy live theater performances and stroll a charming downtown.

By Mikaela Ruland

Start by going back in time at the 160-acre American West Heritage Center in Wellsville. You'll find interpreters in period clothing to help you learn about life in the Mountain Man Camp, mock settlements and a working farm straight from 1917.

Then, stroll the newly renovated center of historic downtown Logan at Main and Center streets."It looks like something out of a Hallmark movie," says Cache Valley Visitors Bureau director Julie Hollist Terrill of the quaint street dotted with colorful hanging baskets and outdoor dining.

Stop by the Bluebird Candy Factory where you'll see handmade chocolate and candy being created at this Logan landmark. Sweets have been hand dipped here since 1914.

The area is well known for its locally made food products. All of Pepperidge Farm's iconic Goldfish crackers for the western United States are made here as well as the swiss cheese from Gossner Foods that adorns Wendy's and Arby's sandwiches nationwide. Stop by the shop to pick up fresh cheese curd. Go on the self-guided Foodie Trek and Signature Products Tour to sample all of the region's favorite products including honey, ice cream, coffee and more.

Head up Logan Canyon for a breathtaking scenic drive, ending 43 miles later at picturesque Bear Lake. Stop along the way at one of the 26 trailheads such as Wind Caves, which will bring you on a steep but worthy 4-mile, roundtrip journey to an interesting cavern.

To top it off, every summer Cache Valley becomes Utah's "Heart of the Arts," featuring three historic theaters downtown bursting with musical theater productions set to a full orchestra and other touring shows. But that's not all. There are free concerts in the restored Tabernacle building every weekday from mid-May to August.

Learn more at ExploreLogan.com.





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Our namesake springs are pleasantly hot, odor-free, and full of soothing minerals for swimming and soaking. You won't want to miss the hot pools and Olympic complex at Lava Hot Springs, but did you know that many of our hotels offer their own hot springs pools? Discover your favorite way to take in our famous waters.

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4 DISCOVER DOWNTOWN

Packed with turn-of-the-century charm and locally-owned shops, Downtown Lava is walkable (no car needed!), friendly, and features a vibrant nightlife and amazing dining options.

5 GET OUTSIDE

You can golf nearly year-round at Lava — really! — or make like a local and tube the Portneuf River through town. With so many ways to make memories, you and your family will discover reason after reason to return season after season.

LAVA HOT SPRINGS, ID

HOW WILL YOU LOVE LAVA?

Gather more great ideas at
LavaHotSprings.org

Relax & Rejuvenate

Soak in hot springs, tube the Portneuf River or immerse yourself in the natural beauty of this wellness focused Idaho town.

By Mikaela Ruland

Combine your national park vacation with a getaway that will nourish both your body and your mind in the peaceful town of Lava Hot Springs. Surrounded by beautiful mountains, this locale has long been revered for the purported healing benefits of its natural hot springs. The town has leaned into wellness in recent years and offers not only a way to get out and enjoy the region's incredible natural beauty and hot springs soaks, but a full menu of opportunities to embrace a restorative vacation, from farm-to-table dining to yoga and massage.

In the heart of town you can soak in five sulfur-free, outdoor pools at Lava Hot Springs State Foundation. There are three other hot springs facilities that have public soaking in town, including the Olympic Swimming Complex with water slides. For a really unique and relaxing experience, book a room at one of the many hotels in town that have their own private hot springs.

Psychologists have long touted the benefits of activities that put you in a "flow state"—something that totally absorbs your body and mind and allows you to relax and avoid distraction. You may just find yourself there as you literally flow down the beautiful Portneuf River on an inner tube. Rent a tube and life jacket at one of several stands near the hot springs complex and hop in the river right in town.

To immerse yourself in nature and colorful wildflowers, like Indian Paintbrush and Mountain Bluebell, head to the Idaho Centennial Trail above town. Or, if you'd prefer a less aerobic way to take in the scenery, hop on Blaser Road for a peaceful scenic drive with plenty of opportunities to get out and listen to birdsong and appreciate the flora.

Opened in 2024, the focus at Eruption Brewery & Bistro may be beer, but don't miss the farm-to-table restaurant in a pretty log-and-stone setting. For great, family friendly dining stop by Ye Old Chuckwagon Restaurant for scones and cinnamon buns at breakfast, good-size burgers for lunch and dinner, and an informal, relaxed atmosphere.

If you're really looking for a weekend of mind and body cultivation, visit at the end of May for Spring Into Wellness. You'll find yoga classes, sound baths and nature walks in addition to a variety of speakers on everything from the healing properties of the town's waters to Indigenous medicine and herbology.

Lava Hot Springs isn't just a summer destination. Visit anytime of a year to escape the stresses of everyday life by soaking in the hot pools, getting massages and simply unwinding in a town where you can walk everywhere. In fall, winter and spring, you'll find fewer people in the hot springs and affordable lodging, helping you to stretch your budget for a longer getaway.

Learn more at LavaHotSprings.org.

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Executive King Room (Courtesy of Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Office of Public Affairs)

Choose a Culture Stay

At Shoshone-Bannock Hotel Casino, find a reimagined restaurant and renovated events center, plus affordable hotel rooms and experiences centering Native American culture.

By Amelia Arvesen

Present day southeastern Idaho is the ancestral land of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, comprising the eastern and western bands of the Northern Shoshone and the Bannock people. Today, the Tribes operate the Shoshone-Bannock Hotel Casino, an entertainment destination and cultural landmark on the way to Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks.

Escape the national park crowds by booking a stay at the Shoshone-Bannock Hotel Casino, which has 156 rooms and 11 suites, each with flat-screen, high definition TVs and 24-hour fitness center access. Furnishings are cozy and rustic, guaranteeing restful sleep.

New for 2026 is the Camas Restaurant, the property's redesigned eatery with elegant touches and an upscale menu. Think: fewer finger foods and more fork-and-knife dishes, with Native American flair. The walls will be adorned with artwork commissioned from local artists.

The Donzia Gift Shop is as much of a store as it is an educational stop. Donzia means "wildflower" in Shoshone, Sheldon Moss, public relations specialist for the hotel and casino says. There, visitors can buy beaded jewelry, artwork or other handcrafts made by local community members. It's also a good place to buy a snack, whether you're just passing through or staying for multiple days.

May through September is a great time to visit for milder weather in Idaho but also for the hotel's annual outdoor summer concert series, set in the west parking lot on most weekends. And in August, the destination hosts the Shoshone-Bannock Indian Festival. The Grand Entry at the powwow is open to the public and showcases different kinds of Native American dancing performed by dancers from across the country. Moss says it's mostly attended by other Tribal people, but he'd love to see more non-Tribal visitors come through to experience their culture. Check shobanfestival.com for updates.

If you're on a road trip, the Buffalo Meadows RV Park is a convenient spot to stop along Interstate 15. As the name suggests, buffalo used to roam the grasses there. The campground has 27 pull-through sites with restrooms, showers and laundry facilities on site.

Gaming has long been part of Native American culture since before European settlers arrived, and the traditional games played then are still played today, Moss says. The casino offers 900 of the most popular video gaming machines along with video poker and virtual blackjack. Players can sign up for a tiered program that enables them to use rewards, even if they lose a game.

Also new in 2026 is the renovated 15,000-square-foot events center, which is one of the largest of its kind in Idaho. It's used for weddings, conferences, concerts, comedy shows and Tribal meetings.

Across the property, you'll find many references to the Shoshone and Bannock languages, such as the words for salmon (*agai'*, pronounced ah-guy), bear (*weda'a*, pronounced weh-duh) and coyote (*izhape'e*, pronounced ee-zha-puh). And you might even hear the staff or other visitors greet you with *Tsa'ande Tavai'ye* (pronounced za-an-duh dah-vay-yeh), which means "good day," according to Moss.

"To keep eyes on the culture, we have things named on our property based on words that are Shoshone," Moss adds.

Learn more at ShobanGaming.com.

Marvelous Museums

Check out these two great Idaho attractions.

By Tori Peglar and Lindsey Falkenburg

IDAHO POTATO MUSEUM

It saved Europeans from frequent famines and it was the first vegetable grown in space. There's no better place to learn more about the magnificent, dirt-encrusted potato than at the Idaho Potato Museum in Blackfoot.

After the Spanish conquered the Incas in Peru, they brought the curious tuber that had been cultivated in South America for 7,000 years to Europe during the late 1500s. While Europeans were suspect at first, the plant eventually took root in the fields and minds of many.

Check out the Mr. Potato Head exhibit, the world's largest Pringle and a spud signed by a vice president. For some food for thought, grab a bite to eat at the museum's quaint Potato Station Cafe where you can order baked potatoes (call ahead two hours for these), fries, potato salad and more.

Learn more at IdahoPotatoMuseum.com.

MUSEUM OF IDAHO

Have you ever wanted to wander through an 1800s Western town, hunt a wooly mammoth or dive deep into the world of Galileo? Do all of this and more at the Museum of Idaho, the state's largest history and science museum located in historic, downtown Idaho Falls.

Start by checking out the flagship exhibit, Way Out West, which tells the region's story from prehistoric geology to the future. Then dive into the special exhibits. In 2026, an exhibit on life before dinosaurs takes visitors 290 million years back in time with fossilized skeletons and dig pits. Then, get to know the famous scientist, astronomer and visionary, Galileo at an exhibit starting in October.

Right off the highway, the Museum of Idaho makes for the ideal place to stop and stretch your legs. If you're traveling with kids, the Discovery Room is the perfect place for them to crawl, climb and learn. Swing by the gift shop on the way out for local goodies like potato soap and huckleberry jam.

Learn more at MuseumOfIdaho.org.







Kayaking on the Snake River (Brian Brown, Courtesy Greater Idaho Falls Chamber of Commerce)

On the Fly

Discover six reasons why Idaho Falls is the perfect basecamp. Just two hours from Yellowstone, find direct flights from across the country.

By Mikaela Ruland

1 Get to Yellowstone Faster

Fly into Idaho Falls Regional Airport on one of 16 direct routes from big cities across the U.S. like Dallas and Portland for easy access to the parks. Less than two hours from both Yellowstone and Grand Teton, the airport is served by major airlines including United and American. The city is a great home base with tons of lodging options.

2 See a Penguin

Head to the Idaho Falls Zoo, dubbed "the best little zoo in the West." Small enough to see it all in a couple hours, this zoo has played a large role through its breeding program in helping ensure the survival of endangered species like red pandas and African penguins. It's closed in the winter.

3 Stroll the Greenbelt

Enjoy a walk along the Snake River where human-made waterfalls literally light up the town each night (they're the source for the hydroelectric plant). Paved on both sides for five miles going through downtown, the Greenbelt is dotted with creative benches including one that looks like a grizzly bear. In addition to the falls, there's often live music, a Saturday farmers market and a number of great restaurants. Don't miss Snow Eagle Brewery & Grill's American pub fare and Japanese dishes, or the potato pancakes at Smitty's Pancake & Steakhouse, a local legend served with applesauce, bacon or sour cream.

4 Sip at a Speakeasy

Head underground to XVIII, a speakeasy with delectable cocktails. Utilizing local ingredients, the bar has an upscale, yet rustic feel. You'll find an equally appealing zero-proof menu with ingredients like elderflower tonic and bitters shining without the buzz. XVIII doesn't serve food, but head across the street to The SnakeBite Restaurant, owned by the same group, for gourmet burgers and dishes with a Western flair.

5 Enjoy Live Music

The Mountain America Center, which opened in 2022, is a great spot to take in big name artists, alongside other fun events like monster truck shows and motorcycle ice racing. The Mountain America Center is also home to Idaho Falls' semi-pro hockey team, the Spud Kings. For a more intimate setting, head to The Celt Pub which serves Irish fare and hosts live music many nights and weekends.

6 Stay Downtown

For unique lodging, book a room at Destinations Inn. Located right in the heart of downtown, this 14-room hotel has themed accommodations that will take you around the world. From Paris to Alaska to Thailand, the rooms each have special details that will make you feel like you've been transported. Tour all the rooms on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 1 p.m. Eat at Smokin Fins, just down the street, which is another voyage around the globe with sushi, carne asada tacos and Southern gumbo all sharing a menu.

Learn more at GoIdahoFalls.com.



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The Other Side of the Tetons

By Mikaela Ruland

Whether you like motorized recreation or exploring via your own two feet, there's an adventure for everyone on the Tetons' western and—if you ask a local—better side.

If the feel of a motor purring underneath you is your idea of a perfect day, head to **Island Park**. In the winter, it's a snowmobilers' paradise, but come summer, it shouldn't be missed by ATV enthusiasts and novices alike. At the **Henry's Fork of the Snake River** you can explore hundreds of miles of Forest Service roads, including the 10-mile Big Springs Loop leading to Big Springs, the headwaters of the Snake River. Rent a vehicle at **High Mountain Adventures** in Island Park. Since this area sees a lot of winter snow, motorized trails open a bit later in the season. June through October are the best times to visit for ATVing.

Drive south to **St. Anthony** where you'll find more than 10,000 acres of sprawling sand. Rent a side by side from **PMS Dune & Snow Rentals** for a thrilling afternoon or keep your eyes peeled for elk as you explore on foot. Eastern Idaho is full of amazing off-road opportunities. Download Yellowstone Teton Territory's Off-Road Guide for trail information.

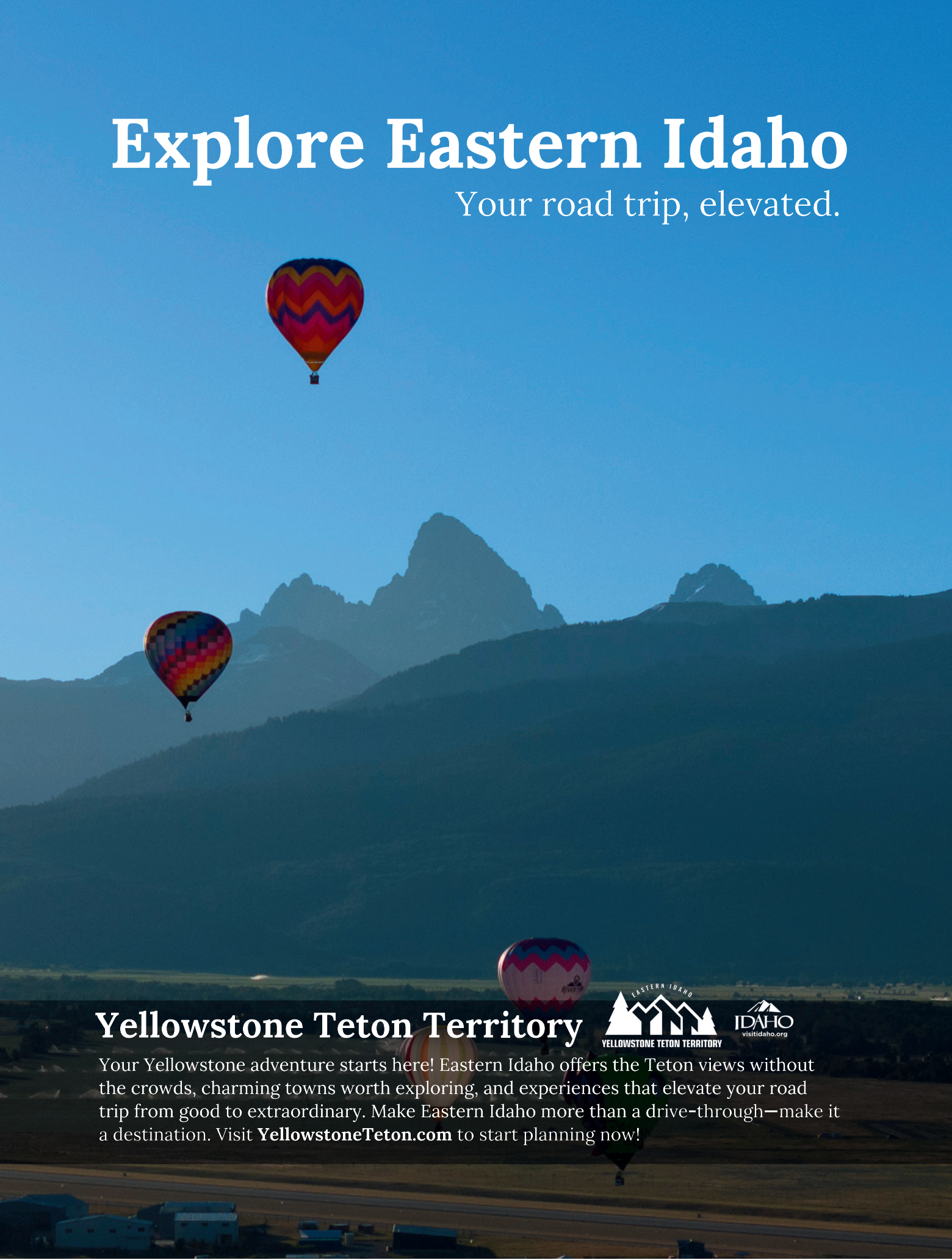
If non-motorized recreation is more your speed, one of the best summer activities on this side of the Tetons is paddleboarding. For a more advanced float, try the **Snake River outside of Swan Valley** and float down the river to Fall Creek Falls. Or, head to **Henry's Fork** outside of St. Anthony where you'll likely spot moose. Beginners will enjoy **Palisades Reservoir** south of **Swan Valley**. Bring your own paddleboard, or rent in Island Park. At the end of a long day on the river, **Victor Emporium** is the place to be. You'll find souvenirs, fly fishing supplies and an old fashioned soda fountain that makes can't-miss milkshakes featuring Idaho's state fruit—the huckleberry.

When you're ready to relax, go to **Ririe**. This family oriented town is a fantastic visit in summer or winter. **Heise Hot Springs** is the perfect place to basecamp. Stay at the springs' campground and enjoy both soaking pools and a pool with slides. Make sure to get a slice at **Heise Pizza Parlor** and play a round of putt-putt, as well. There's even ziplining on site.

Another Ririe favorite is **7N Ranch Resort**. Stay in cabins or the campground and take advantage of the mountain bike course in the summer to get you warmed up for area trails, or the tubing hill in the winter.

Learn more about Yellowstone Teton Territory at YellowstoneTeton.org.

PHOTOS: Fall Creek Falls, Off-roading near St. Anthony (Josh Myers/Courtesy of Yellowstone Teton Territory), Victor Emporium (Nick Cote)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Big Mountain Fun

Right next to Grand Teton National Park, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort offers non-stop adventure. Here are six of our favorites.

By Tori Peglar

1 Via Ferrata

Unlike the world renowned expert climbing routes in the Tetons, the Via Ferrata makes mountain climbing accessible for families and individuals looking for adventure. Accompanied by a guide, you'll secure yourself to cables and move across a mountain face by way of metal ladders, rope walkways and ledges. Book in advance a full-day climb (five hours) with lunch included or a partial-day climb (three hours). Guided, traditional single-pitch rock climbing is also offered for beginner to advanced climbers.

2 Aerial Tram

Take the tram and soar 4,139 vertical feet, passing the notorious Corbet's Couloir on your way to the summit. At the top, check out the Grand Teton Skywalk viewing platform where you can take in stunning views. The platform juts off the mountain 100 feet and is 40 feet tall. Nearby, the new Jackson Hole Mountain Discovery Experience lets you learn more about the flora, fauna and geology of the region. Enjoy world famous waffles at Corbet's Cabin, as well as a wide variety of hiking, running, climbing and sightseeing opportunities.

3 The Wildflower Trail

Get amazing views, pass fields of wildflowers and take breaks on benches tucked in the shade on this must-do hike to the top of Bridger Gondola. It's always free to ride down the gondola or tram, so hike away, knowing you don't have to hike back down.



Hiking under the gondola (Courtesy of Jackson Hole Mountain Resort)

4 Paragliding

You'll see incredible scenery as you paraglide over the Jackson Hole area, flying with a tandem professional pilot from Jackson Hole Paragliding. No previous experience is necessary, but you must weigh between 40 and 220 pounds and be physically fit enough to run. It's recommended that you book in advance.

5 Ropes Course and Bungee Trampoline

This is paradise on earth for kids and adults alike. The 25-foot-high Aerial Adventure Course is a network of cargo nets, balance beams, wobbly bridges and other challenges. You can also try the Bungee Trampoline that safely suspends you up to 24 feet in the air. Kids ages 5 to 7 must be accompanied by a paying adult on the ropes course.

6 Mountain Biking

Feel the rush of biking downhill on exciting mountain trails without having to sweat uphill. The five-minute Teewinot chairlift will bring you and your bike to the top. Or, check out the trails serviced by Sweetwater Gondola, offering riders even more variety. Rent your bike at JH Sports in Teton Village. And if your family is new to mountain biking, set yourself up for success by putting your child in the JH Sports youth bike camp or by hiring a private guide for the day.

Learn more at JacksonHole.com.



Raft the Snake

By Lindsey Falkenburg

Jackson Hole Whitewater has been guiding trips down the Snake River, just south of Grand Teton National Park, for more than 60 years. Choose their whitewater rafting trip which runs an eight-mile stretch of river, notably through Snake River Canyon where you'll find yourself gaping at the high expanse of canyon walls and searching for mountain goats traversing the rock far above. This section of the Snake offers some safe, family friendly Class II and III rapids. Or, book their scenic float which starts at Snake River Ranch. From this private put-in, boaters will enjoy a truly serene float down a very wild stretch of the Snake. It's common to see black bears, eagles, moose, otters and Snake River Ranch's local herd of 200-plus elk, all with the Tetons as a stunning backdrop. Regardless of which trip you choose, you'll spend about an hour and a half on the water and have the pleasure of floating with one of the company's expert guides.

Learn more at JHWW.com.





Picture Perfect Peaks

The iconic Teton mountain range is perhaps one of the National Park System's most photographed landscapes. From sunrise to sunset to the alluring Milky Way, here's how to get your own amazing shot.

By Mikaela Ruland

Even the most casual photographers can't help but be inspired by this incredible national park. No matter where you turn, you'll be met with magnificent views of the Teton Range. While even cellphone photos will be beautiful, it's well worth it to pack your big camera and dedicate some time to getting a great shot. As the light changes throughout the day, and the stars come out, there are endless opportunities to get great photos. Here are three of our favorite locations, along with tips from our friends at Tamron.



Photo by Sean McElhare
F/8; ISO 400; 1/80 second

Sunrise at Schwabacher Landing

From the Schwabacher Landing parking lot, it's a short walk to a stunning viewpoint where the park's namesake peak, the Grand Teton, is reflected in a beaver-dammed channel of the Snake River on still mornings. Access the viewpoint off of Highway 191, approximately halfway between Jackson and Moran. Arrive at least 30 minutes prior to sunrise to give yourself time to set up on the banks of the river, or closer to the parking lot where the wooden fence adds an element of interest. Keep your eyes out for the beavers at work around their dam. They're most active around dawn and dusk, so your sunrise mission might just turn into a wildlife photography session.

▶ **Tamron Tips:** Clean the front element of your lens when shooting into the rising sun. If there's dirt or dust on your front element, you might end up with lens flare in your image. Sunrise is usually a high contrast situation, so be sure to expose for the highlights to maintain detail. To create a starburst effect with the rising sun, stop down your aperture to F/16 or F/22 and wait until the sun just crests the horizon. A wide-angle zoom lens like the Tamron 16-30mm F/2.8 Di III VXD G2 or the new 25-200mm F/2.8-5.6 Di III VXD G2 all-in-one zoom is a great choice for both sunrise and sunset.



Photo by André Costantini
F/4.8; ISO 400; 1/400 second

Sunset at Oxbow Bend

An excellent spot for either sunrise or sunset, Oxbow Bend features an iconic view of Mount Moran above a bend in the Snake River. If you visit on a still afternoon, you may catch glassy conditions on the river's surface, creating the perfect recipe for a reflection. The popular photo spot is located at an overlook on Highway 191 between Jackson Lake Junction and Moran Junction. It's a good idea to arrive early to ensure you get a prime spot to set up. Allow yourself plenty of time to photograph the ever-changing conditions. Even after the sun dips below the mountains, the colors will continue to evolve, especially if there are clouds. Our suggestion? Be sure to stick around through "blue hour". This time of day is the hour just before sunrise or just after sunset when a beautiful blue tint envelopes the landscape. It's a great time to take photos.

▶ **Tamron Tips:** When shooting sunset, set your aperture to F/16 or F/22 to maximize your depth of field. If you're using a tripod, use the lowest ISO to maximize quality. If your lens has VC image stabilization, be sure to turn it off when using a tripod. If you're hand holding, set your ISO to the lowest value that allows a fast enough shutter speed to get a clear image.

Night Skies at Mormon Row

While it's tricky to catch the Milky Way rising over the Tetons due to timing, you can photograph another park icon with the Milky Way pretty much anytime the galactic core is visible: Mormon Row. A small community founded by Mormon settlers in the late 1890s, the still-standing historic barns have become a much loved viewpoint in the park. It's easy to get to the barns, even in the middle of the night. Drive north on Highway 191 from Jackson (past Moose Junction) and take a right on Antelope Flats Road. You'll reach the community in 1.5 miles. Depending on what time of year you visit, the Milky Way will be in a different position in relation to the barns. Be sure to bring a headlamp (preferably with a red light to avoid ruining your night vision) to safely walk around the barns and get yourself in the right spot to capture both the structure and the Milky Way. Remember, light painting is not allowed in Grand Teton, so use a longer exposure to ensure the barn is visible. Don't forget you're in grizzly country. Carry bear spray and avoid traveling alone.



Photo by André Costantini
F/2.8; ISO 3200; 30 seconds

▶ **Tamron Tips:** A fast aperture, ultra wide-angle lens like a Tamron 16-30mm F/2.8 for full-frame or 11-20mm F/2.8 for crop-sensor is best for night photography. Settings will vary based on conditions, but you'll likely want to shoot at F/2.8 at an ISO between 1600 and 6400 and a shutter speed between 10 and 30 seconds. Be sure to have a stable tripod and shutter release or remote timer so you don't shake your camera while taking a long exposure, and turn off your lens' image stabilization. You'll likely need to manually focus as your auto-focus won't be effective in the dark. Use the magnifier on your camera's LCD screen to enlarge a bright star or planet, then move your focus ring back and forth until the point of light is sharp. Zoom in on your first few images to make sure the stars aren't fuzzy. You can use a piece of tape to secure the focus ring, so you don't accidentally bump it.

These tips were sponsored by Tamron. Learn more and find your perfect camera lens at Tamron-americas.com.

Sweet Dreams

Grand Teton National Park is home to world class views, but when your eyes finally close you'll want a soft place to lay your head. These four lodging options in and next to the park are the perfect spot to dream about your magnificent day.

By Tori Peglar



Jenny Lake Lodge (Photo by Nikita Mamochine)

Jackson Lake Lodge

A 385-room lodge with hotel rooms and cottages, a heated swimming pool and several restaurants in the middle of the park, Jackson Lake Lodge gives you a classic Grand Teton experience. Be sure to make reservations to eat dinner in The Mural Dining Room, where you can watch the sunset over the Tetons from floor-to-ceiling panoramic windows.

Colter Bay Village

Sleep in historic, refurbished homesteader cabins relocated from various places in Wyoming, or stay in tent cabins on the shores of Jackson Lake. You can also pull your RV into one of 112 campsites or pitch your tent.* Staying here gives you easy access to a general store, kayaking, horseback riding and more.

Jenny Lake Lodge

Luxury awaits at this lodge on the shores of picturesque Jenny Lake in the form of three types of cabins with incredible access to hiking trails. The five-course restaurant with a sophisticated menu that changes nightly is housed in a 1930s log cabin at the base of the Tetons. Reservations are recommended for lunch and required for dinner.

Headwaters Lodge & Cabins at Flagg Ranch

Stay in a cabin or at the campground at this gorgeous property situated between Grand Teton and Yellowstone, just steps away from the Snake River. With plentiful activities like horseback riding, hiking, fishing and engaging interpretive programs, along with dining and shopping options, the lodge is a wonderful place to truly disconnect from the world and reconnect with your family or friends. Stay in a Standard or Deluxe cabin, or splurge on a Premium cabin which features a front porch with rocking chairs to take in the views. Leave your car behind and walk to nearby hiking trails and the beautiful Snake River from your cabin. Or, fall asleep to the sounds of the river at the campground which has tent and RV sites, along with Camper Cabins.* The campground is also equipped with showers and laundry facilities.

Book your lodge room or cabin up to a year in advance at GTLC.com.
**Campsites are reservable through Recreation.gov.*



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By Amelia Arvesen

Perched at 7,808 feet atop Snow King Mountain Resort, the year-old, fine-dining restaurant Aurora serves dinner nightly alongside panoramic views of the Teton Mountains. Paired with a visit to the observatory and planetarium, it's a high-altitude evening that feels both elevated and accessible, equally suited to families and couples.

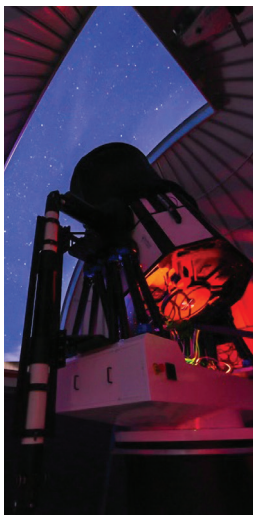
Start the night by hopping on the gondola (free in the evenings) and ride nearly 1,600 feet to the summit. Restaurant reservations are recommended so you can get straight to ordering. Menu highlights include alpine fondue and a cheese cart with artisanal cheeses from around the world. The meat and game selection, such as wild boar, bison, quail and partridge, create a unique mountain dining experience.

Wait until it's dark out—all the better to savor the meal—before walking a short way over to the Snow King Observatory & Planetarium, where you can peer at the stars through a rare one-meter telescope. This year the facility is also debuting a humanoid robot as its new mascot, which will be able to answer questions about science education. Don't worry though: The full-time astronomer has not been replaced and still offers guided storytelling star tours.

In the summer, Snow King Mountain Resorts hosts a concert series with 20 shows of nationally touring bands across genres—from The Black Keys to Turnpike Troubadours—with the mountains as their amphitheater. Bring your own chairs, settle into the open seating and order drinks and food from the vendors on site. "If you're on a Yellowstone road trip and happen to get a ticket, it's a must-do in the summertime," says Ryan Stanley, the resort's general manager.

Another fun summer activity? The half-mile Alpine Slide, full of hairpin turns.

Learn more at SnowKingMountain.com.







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To the Moon & Back Again

Three national park sites, plus one of America's biggest waterfalls, awaits.

By Mikaela Ruland

From lava rock wonderlands to powerful waterfalls and forests replete with moose, south central Idaho provides a veritable cornucopia of experiences for those looking to get off the beaten path and explore their natural surroundings.

Known as the "Niagara of the West" Shoshone Falls is one of the biggest waterfalls in the United States at 212 feet high and 900 feet wide. Visit this massive waterfall, and the scenic Snake River Canyon that forms it, in Twin Falls. You can access the Shoshone Falls viewpoint by car, but it's more fun to take in the entirety of the canyon by bike. Start at the Twin Falls Visitor Center where you can rent bikes and hop on the paved Canyon Rim Trail. If you head west, you can descend into the canyon to enjoy the Snake River. At Centennial Waterfront Park, rent kayaks and stand-up paddleboards to get out on the water.

From Twin Falls, take the stunning Thousand Springs Scenic Byway to reach Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument. Millions of years ago, this part of Idaho wasn't quite so arid. While the fossil beds aren't open to the public, you can stop by the Thousand Springs Visitor Center to see fossils of ancient horses, sabertooth cats and more found there. Rent a kayak from Blue Heart Kayaking and paddle to the incredibly clear waters of Blue Heart Springs. The water looks impossibly vibrant underneath. Then, paddle around the waterfalls of Ritter Island. Fire Pie Pizza in Hagerman is the spot for dinner.

Just north of the Utah border, visit the natural playground of City of Rocks National Reserve and neighboring Castle Rocks State Park. The boulders and rock formations strewn throughout the parks draw rock climbers, but many spots are mellow enough for families to scramble around as well. Spy arches, windows naturally framing the view and more cool formations when you hit the trails. Emigrant Canyon Spring is a must stop where you can still spot deep ruts left behind by tens of thousands of westward-bound covered wagons on the California Trail.

Feel like you've stumbled into a moonscape when you explore the landscape formed by volcanoes 15,000 years ago at Craters of the Moon National Monument. Hike up spatter cones to peer into mini volcanoes, explore lava tube caves and gawk at the imprints left by trees in lava. The 7-mile Loop Road makes for a great scenic drive. Craters of the Moon is an International Dark Sky Park: Camp at the Lava Flow Campground to take it all in.

Learn more at VisitSouthIdaho.com.

