

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

May 2024

805 LIVING

The **Travel** *Issue*



Beat the Heat

Three exciting places to escape the high temperatures this summer.

BY ERIN ROTTMAN

The counterpart to snowbirds, folks dubbed *sunbirds* (or *sweatbirds*) also travel from their homes to more temperate climes. But instead of fleeing the winter cold for warmth, sunbirds leave behind hot summer temperatures in favor of cooler ones. These tend to be found in more northern locations, such as Alaska or Canada, or at higher elevations, where the thermometer stays lower due to low air pressure. Here are three sunbird-worthy destinations that also offer some unrivaled thrills.

Eleven Taylor River Lodge

Walk into a river fed by snowmelt? While research shows that cold water plunges may reduce soreness after exercise and improve cognitive function, the prospect may not be everyone's first idea for how to have a good time. But, at **Eleven Taylor River Lodge** (elevenexperience.com/taylor-river-lodge, from \$2,525/double occupancy cabin, including meals and some activities), near Crested Butte, Colorado, it's a challenge made fun with luxurious amenities and entertaining guides.

It starts in the lodge's bathhouse building, where a guide leads breathing techniques in a cedar sauna. Once hot, everyone heads across the bridge with nervous excitement to brave the Taylor River for 10 seconds, a minute, or whatever's bearable before returning to the sauna. Then it's back to the river for a second dip, maybe a little farther in or for a little longer. Finally, it's over—but the exhilaration remains.

The thermal therapy wellness treatment reflects Eleven Taylor River Lodge's goal to create vacations beyond "a 10." "There's a level that we operate at to deliver an experience that doesn't compare with anything else in the world," says lead guide Reed Betz. "But we also don't take ourselves too



seriously, because we want to have fun."

The property sits just above 8,000 feet near Almont, where the Taylor and East rivers flow into the Gunnison River and average highs hover around 70 degrees Fahrenheit. The rivers are a fly fisher's nirvana, and the lodge, a traveler's delight.

Individual log cabins have been restored with English bath fixtures, custom metalwork by a local blacksmith, and amenities like Marshall speakers

and Aesop bath products. In addition to the main lodge, the property features the Copper John game room cabin (cabins are named for fishing flies), a spa, a trout pond to practice casting, and a climbing wall.

The service is highly personalized. After guests book a stay, an experience manager contacts them to design an itinerary, which in summer can include guided fly-fishing, rock climbing, rafting, hiking to waterfalls, and mountain biking

through high alpine terrain covered in wildflowers.

Guests range in experience from first-timers to experts, Betz says, explaining that the connection to the natural world is more important than any skill level. "When you're standing in the water with a fly rod in your hand," he says, for example, "the water is moving through you, the breeze is moving downstream. Everything else washes away. It's simply you and the river." >



Named for the waterway it fronts, Colorado's Eleven Taylor River Lodge (above) lies at a cool altitude of 8,000 feet. A bedroom (left) in one of eight cabins clustered on the property reveals the nostalgic, rustic style of the interiors. In the lodge's bath house (top), a floor-to-ceiling window opens to bring the outdoors in and guests can swim in a warm saltwater pool or soak in a hot tub. The river (opposite) provides for a variety of adventures, including white-water rafting.