

American Airlines

# *Celebrated Living*

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## AN AMERICAN ORIGINAL

MODERN STYLE  
ROARS BACK  
IN DETROIT

Shinola  
creative director  
Daniel Caudill

INSIDE A SECRET  
WHISKY SOCIETY  
IN THE SCOTTISH  
HIGHLANDS

LAS VEGAS'  
ULTIMATE VIP  
HIDEAWAYS

HOLIDAY DELIGHTS  
FROM NEW YORK  
TO FRANKFURT

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019

Heliskiing above La Thuile in the Italian Alps, an adventure offered by Eleven Experience



ESCAPE

# Into the wild

A Colorado company puts a premium on high-end adventure travel

**D**ays at Chalet Hibou, a modern Savoyard chalet in the rustic village of Le Miroir deep in the French Alps, can make others seem somewhat gray. One cold sunny morning last winter, our little group heliskied high above La Thuile, on the Italian side of the border, gorging on deep virgin powder bowls and vast empty fields, and then landed on the town's Astroturf soccer pitch and ambled into the Alpine-postcard Chalet Eden restaurant for cured Aosta Valley cold cuts and mint-and-pecorino ravioli.

After an afternoon skiing cotton-candy tree runs above the sleepy French resort of Sainte-Foy, we drank old-fashioned in the Hibou hot tub, watching pink jet trails streak silently across the crisp sky. Then came a snowshoe jaunt through the darkness to L'Alpage, an old shepherd's hut where Beaufort cheese and an exquisite *côte de boeuf* were waiting in the candlelit space, antlers on the walls, the Grateful Dead on the stereo. That was a good day. It was also "custom-built" by Eleven Experience, the Colorado-born company leading the charge in the fast-growing world

COURTESY OF ELEVEN EXPERIENCE

of high-end adventure travel, in which a new breed of lodges and tour operators is placing a higher premium on epic wilderness experiences than on thread counts and butler service.

In less than a decade, Eleven Experience has launched 13 locations across four continents, from an old sheep farm in northern Iceland's remote Troll Peninsula, where guests can surf chilly seas and heliski under the northern lights, to the Eleven Mothership, a live-aboard boat for chasing elusive bonefish and tarpon in the mangroves and sand flats of the Bahamas. In the fall, the company added the stilted Rio Palena fishing lodge, with helicopter rides to seek out Chilean Patagonia's oversized wild trout, and Cedar Lodge, on New Zealand's Makarora River, offering some of the world's best fly-fishing on the country's wildly beautiful South Island.

The idea began when Blackstone executive Chad Pike, a passionate skier and fisherman, bought an old miner's saloon in Crested Butte, now a mountain paradise with heli- and cat-ski access to some of the best powder in the Rockies, as well as trout in the nearby Gunnison Valley. In 2011, spying a growing demand for adventure travel, especially from time-strapped fellow finance types, he opened up Crested Butte's Scarp Ridge Lodge to guests, with mountain days and fishing trips arranged by local guides, whom he rechristened "experience managers." Wanting to take things to the next level, he leased an entire powder-reliable mountain, Irwin, exclusively for his guests.

He named the company Eleven, after the *This Is Spinal Tap* idea of turning the volume up to 11, with a goal of giving guests the best day of their lives. As the company has expanded, the core tenets remain skiing and fishing, plus a certain unstuffy hedonism (think Xboxes and bunk beds for the kids). Each property is unique and run by locals, who might serve elk sausage for breakfast in Crested Butte or skyr yogurt in Iceland.

"The top end of travel has definitely changed," says Jake Jones, Eleven Experience's managing director. "People are chasing experiences before luxury. We make



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the food, service and design as good as it can be, but the focus is on the guided activities, always led by locals who are the best at what they do."

At the 16-guest Chalet Hibou, the newer sister property to the equally gorgeous Chalet Pelerin across the road, the core winter activity is the "ski safari" among the soaring mountains of the Tarentaise Valley, including



almost a thousand miles of pistes at seven resorts. Olivier, our guide, seems to know every secret powder stash along the valley. Back at the chalet, the manager, also called Olivier, has a similar knowledge of classic cocktails, and even tailors playlists to the tastes of the group.

“Everything we do is very personalized,” says Jones, whose company encourages buyouts of properties, but can also rent individual rooms. “And we like our staff to be part of the experience, too, rather than silent butlers. We’re trying to create the best day of your life. That should be a blast for everyone.” — TOBY SKINNER

Clockwise from left: Fishing in New Zealand’s Makarora River; dining room at Chalet Hibou, Le Miroir, France; Scarp Ridge Lodge, Crested Butte, Colorado

## MORE ADVENTURE PIONEERS

### Caldera House

Created by Milwaukee Bucks owner and former ski racer Wesley Edens, the eight-bedroom, retro-cool Caldera House in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, puts its focus on expert-driven experiences: backcountry skiing with freeski superstar Griffin Post, landscape photography with wildlife lensman and Emmy winner Dwight Vassel, or mountain running with Eric Orton, featured in the book *Born to Run*. Ski champion Bode Miller, a regular guest, will sometimes host heliski trips, too.

[calderahouse.com](http://calderahouse.com)

### Pelorus

Founded by British army veterans Geordie Mackay-Lewis and Jimmy Carroll, Pelorus specializes in bespoke journeys to hard-to-reach places: living with the Tolai people in Papua New Guinea, say, or learning survival techniques in the deep Amazon with a group of army officers—sometimes followed by campfire learnings from Geordie’s brother, Hamish, a certified life coach.

[pelorusx.com](http://pelorusx.com)

### Extraordinary Adventure Club

Few adventures go as deep as the Extraordinary Adventure Club, a six-month transformational journey for individuals, costing upwards of \$250,000. British Marine Calum Morrison will lead a team of handpicked experts on a preparatory trip to the Highlands or Iceland, followed by a life-coaching program. Finally, a black envelope is presented detailing another epic adventure—driving the length of Africa, say—designed to “shake clients out of their internal narrative.”

[extraordinaryadventureclub.com](http://extraordinaryadventureclub.com)