

JULY 29 - AUGUST 4, 2021

ATW

Next-Level LOCAL LUXURY

WINEINK

Recycling barrels
of fun

p. 04

ASHER ON ASPEN

Ruedi a diamond
in Fryingpan

p. 03

A&E

Intersect Aspen
new twist on fair

p. 14

Forget Europe!

6

EXTRAVAGANT HAVENS FOR A SUMMER ESCAPE

For some of the most exclusive travel experiences in the world, look no further than our own backyard

KATIE SHAPIRO
FOR THE ASPEN TIMES WEEKLY

While floating in the warm saltwater pool at Taylor River Lodge, seemingly weightless and staring at antique antlers lining the walls and the towering reclaimed barn wood ceiling above me, my mind wandered around the world. I recalled some of my most memorable hotel stays, yet came to the realization that one of my favorites so far is only a short drive from home.

Last month, I was fortunate to partake in a pinch-me moment press trip hosted by the Gunnison-Crested Butte Tourism Association — a four-day fly-fishing-focused getaway to Eleven Experience's remote retreat just 30 minutes from downtown, where its global headquarters of luxury adventure lodges is based (and operates three additional guest houses).

Amid the initial June rush of visitors I had observed here in Aspen, I felt relieved to have a respite from the increasingly controversial swell in summer tourism only to return to an even busier scene ahead of the Fourth of July weekend.

According to the latest Stay Aspen Snowmass report, both communities combined are tracking at 77.1% occupancy already for July; it also explains the surge as "a record-breaking pace." The eagerness to get back to travel after last summer's harsher guidelines is obviously one of the reasons for such an increase, but when vacationers are choosing a destination like Aspen-Snowmass, it also means they are willing to spend more.

A recent Washington Post business story identified a "post-COVID luxury travel boom" as "one of the clearest signs of a budding spending surge by wealthy Americans that is likely to tilt the balance of the economy even further toward the well-off and may deepen economic disparities already heightened by the global pandemic."

"We are absolutely seeing an increase in interest for wining, dining, overnighting, adventures and connecting in general," said May Selby, corporate director of public relations at The Little Nell Hotel Group. "Our average daily rate is in the range of \$1,500, our events are sold out ranging from Dinner + A Movie at Ajax Tavern to Ride + Dine from the hotel to a ranch in Old Snowmass to our complimentary garden tours with our head gardener Arabella Beavers — not to mention frequent streaks of full occupancy in the hotel and Residences at The Little Nell."

Selby also confirmed occupancy numbers at the leading local luxury hotel have already surpassed 2019 and attributes the spike to "the summer of revenge travel." And although wealthy Americans are anxious to travel abroad, dispatches from afar have revealed most countries are crushed by crowds, and it's no easy feat to get there with proof of a vaccine and/or a negative coronavirus test result required. Plus, as other variants emerge

there's still a lot of uncertainty.

She added, "We're seeing a very strong appetite for exploring and embracing all that Aspen has to offer from primarily domestic guests — many of whom have shared (with us) they typically visit Europe this season, though with ever-changing restrictions and other personal choices, they've chosen to vacation closer to home and are going to (places like) Aspen, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard and the Hamptons."

Whether you are planning a last-minute summer escape to Aspen or have saved up to splurge on a staycation after staying home for so long, we are lucky to have some of the most exclusive (and spendy) travel experiences in the world in our own backyard. Here are six haute hideouts — either right in town or a road trip away — that are taking luxury travel to the next level.

A GRAND NEW GUEST HOUSE

Aspen Street Lodge

As the first boutique "hotel" to open in more than 25 years in downtown Aspen, newest to the neighborhood is Aspen Street Lodge. Far exceeding the definition of a hotel, though, this grand guest house is only available as a full buyout (\$22,500 per night through the fall; \$25,000 per night during the winter) and accommodates up to 32 guests in its nine impeccably appointed bedrooms, plus a two-bedroom penthouse apartment.

Situated on a storied corner of room and board, once home to the Edelweiss Lodge and later, the Hotel Lenado, Aspen Street Lodge represents a new era of experiential and exclusive accommodations. With in-house general manager Brittany Shami (who brings expertise from previous posts at The Little Nell and The St. Regis Aspen Resort) on call and overseeing a team of local experts — resident

chef, concierge and housekeeping included — no request is too extreme (think al fresco yoga, painting classes and cannabis dinners). Especially for official in-house pro mountaineer and world champion skier Chris Davenport, who is also on hand to take guests out for personally guided adventures from mountain biking to 14er climbing to private ski lessons.

The 26,000-square-foot home away from home is a design marvel, which took six years to complete — dreamt up by the award-winning architects at Forum Phi and built by premier residential builder Madigan + Company (both based in Aspen). Eco-conscious decision-making brought together the use of lighter stone and black Shou Sugi Ban wood on the exterior to mimic the bark of aspen trees with a 20kW photovoltaic solar system and a ground-source heat pump system that produces 360,000 BTU per hour to offset Aspen Street Lodge's carbon footprint.

Inside, Dallas-based interior designer Debra Owens created a modern alpine aesthetic intended to stand apart from a standard hotel with thoughtfully curated touches like hand-painted Porter Teleo wall coverings, and furnishings from Poliform, Christian Liaigre and Paul Smith with Hakwood floors throughout the lodge rooms and custom French oak and steel staircases.

Community spaces like a game room, home theater, fully stocked bar, gear room and a double-sided fireplace-equipped lounge round out the experience, but the spacious rooftop deck with views of Aspen Mountain — from Independence Pass to Shadow Mountain — complete with a heated pool, hot tub, outdoor kitchen and pizza oven is where it's at for the ultimate après ski party. *Aspen Street Lodge, 200 S. Aspen St., Aspen, 970-989-3090, aspenstreetlodge.com*



CLOCKWISE: The Bathhouse at Taylor River Lodge; One of Aspen Street Lodge's many outdoor spaces; Aspen Street Lodge's primary bedroom; The recently renovated EDGE Restaurant & Bar at the Four Seasons Denver.



Presidential Pitstop

Four Seasons Hotel Denver

Following a seven-month, top-to-bottom renovation closure in the historic Larimer Square district, the Four Seasons Hotel Denver opened its doors again in June. Whether you want to adjust to altitude before making your way to Aspen or are seeking a weekend in the Mile High City, the five-star, Five Diamond-designated high-rise is the perfect urban oasis.

While Denver's best boutiques, museums and restaurants are within steps, it's tempting to never leave and spend the day lounging by the rooftop, resort-style pool or splurge on self-care in the full-service spa and salon, which offers an extensive menu of signature treatments. An indulgent dinner downstairs awaits at EDGE Restaurant, which along with the adjoining EDGE Bar also underwent an upgrade and offers a modern twist on classic American steakhouse fare with a new raw bar and custom-built dry aged meat locker with procured world-class cuts (pro tip: split the 30 oz. wagyu tomahawk imported from Japan).

While guest rooms (from \$600 per night) were gorgeously reapointed in icy grays, midnight blues and snowy whites — most with unobstructed Rocky Mountain views — by the Florida-based firm Marzipan, the original creative team when the property first opened in 2010, the most memorable stay is in the Presidential Suite (from \$11,000 per night). Available as large as up to a three-bedroom connected unit, this elegant top-floor residence wows with a well-appointed living and dining room outfitted with original works of local art, a Shibui stone fireplace, private fitness studio, a sauna and K. Kawai baby grand piano where plenty of A-listers have warmed up on the keys before headlining the nearby Ball Arena. **Four Seasons Denver, 1111 14th Street, Denver, 303-389-3000, fourseasons.com**

THE FIVE STAR FAVORITE

The Little Nell

The Little Nell, Aspen's crown jewel of five-star hotels, has set the standard of luxury lodging since it debuted in 1989. Now, 32 years later, the Skico-owned property is still the most coveted room key in town — and the only hotel to offer ski-in/ski-out access to Aspen Mountain.

In 2020, a renovation of the lobby and living room was completed by Luis Bustamante Interiors of Spain and designed to enhance the convivial nature of each space and also honor the hotel's history of celebrating fine art. The new aesthetic celebrates the spirit of Walter Paepcke, the U.S. industrialist, philanthropist and co-founder (with his wife Elizabeth) of the Aspen Institute, Aspen Skiing Co. and Aspen Music Festival and School, whose passion for design lives on across Aspen and beyond.

While each of The Little Nell's 92 guest rooms and (from \$649 per night), the suite bearing his name is the true treasure. This 2,500-square-foot, one-bedroom space (expandable to up to three bedrooms), features a sweeping private terrace with views of the Silver Queen Gondola (and the bustling Ajax Tavern down below) central fireplace, expansive living room, which includes a convenient work station, a dining table for six and an adjacent powder room.

And then there's the art and design details: a Plein Air Series, pieces by John Riepenhoff, an Ajiro Vineyard wall covering by Maya Romanoff, custom Frank Game Table by Mattalano, Mark Albrecht bar stools, Mystere Coffee Table by Tristan Auer and Gem Table by Chai Ming Studios only begin to paint the picture of the singular Paepcke Suite (from \$2,879 per night).

And with any stay, The Little Nell Adventures program offers an exceptional array of guided outings specific to each season. The poshest pick for summer? The Dom Pérignon Stargazing Tour (from \$1,020 for up to three guests), which combines an unforgettable excursion with an illuminated bottle from the Dom Pérignon Luminous Collection. Ascend to the top of Aspen Mountain in the comfort of an Audi (the hotel's automotive partner) where an astronomy expert will provide binoculars and help identify stars, constellations and planets while you enjoy Champagne, light bites and the splendor of the night sky. **The Little Nell, 675 E. Durant Ave., Aspen, 970-920-4600, thelittlenell.com**

BACKCOUNTRY BLISS

Smith Cabin Aspen

A family legacy property spanning five decades on the backside of Ajax, Smith Cabin Aspen is owned and operated by Colter and Bridger Smith, who hold legit longtime local status. Located on Little Annie

Road roughly 35 minutes from downtown Aspen and just four miles from the Sundeck atop Aspen Mountain, they constructed the off-grid, indestructible structure (don't worry, there's still Wi-Fi and radiant heat) with their own hands and help from Bridger's company SmithBuilt, Inc. over a five-year stretch, which was completed a decade ago. In 2016, the brothers decided to open up the 998-square-foot cabin outside of their family for nightly rentals (\$4,500 per night) during the summer and fall months (available through Oct. 15 for the 2021 season).

Three bedrooms and a pull-out sofa accommodate up to four couples comfortably, despite its small size; due to Richmond Ridge's rural-remote zoning restrictions, all dwellings in the area are required to adhere to a maximum of 1,000 square feet. A chef's kitchen, spacious open living and dining areas — hovering wood-burning stove included — and a zen-inspired bathroom with a rustic mountain shower make for an opulent backcountry basecamp. A spacious outdoor deck is equipped with a Weber grill, lounge and dining furniture, outdoor speakers, horseshoes and two fire pits.

With jaw-dropping views in every direction up the Castle Creek and Conundrum Valleys, Smith Cabin Aspen offers an unparalleled jumping off point for outdoor adventures deep in the White River National Forest. **Smith Cabin Aspen, Little Annie Road, Aspen, 970-309-2000, smithcabinaspen.com**

SECLUDED SOJOURNS

Taylor River Lodge

The hike from Aspen to Crested Butte is a rite of passage for residents and visitors alike, and the most epic reward for completing the nearly 11-mile trek is with a stay with Eleven Experience — they'll of course coordinate your pickup at the trailhead. You can drive there, too — by car it's just over 100 miles.

Now with 12 remote locations around the world (the latest is in South Island, New Zealand), the Crested Butte-based, adventure-obsessed company is dedicated to the most serious of thrill seekers, who also appreciate living in the lap of luxury. With three properties located downtown (Sopris House, Scarp Ridge Lodge and Public House Lofts) to lay your head — it's also worth venturing out of town to recuperate at Taylor River Lodge.

Opened in 2017 in nearby Almont on the banks of the Taylor River, it's sort of a sleep-away camp for adults — one that's far more fancy than you could have ever imagined existed as a kid. During the summer, fly fishing is the focus with a stocked trout pond and mile stretch of semi-private river just steps from each of the property's eight cozy cabins (from \$1,960 per night/double occupancy). Eleven's expert staff of guides also arrange for float and wade trips on the nearby Gunnison

River along with your choice of other activities from archery, hatchet throwing and rock climbing to hiking, biking and stand-up paddleboarding. At the end of each action-packed day, après is delivered to your cabin before convening in the Main Lodge for drinks at the horseshoe-shaped bar and dinner featuring ingredients from local farms (breakfast and lunch are also included daily).

Wellness warriors are equally in heaven here, with a breathtaking bathhouse, which features a saltwater pool, hot tub, sauna and steam room and an adjacent spa cabin with two treatment rooms and fitness area. As a result of an increased shift toward domestic travel, Taylor River Lodge opened for the winter season last year for the first time and will continue to feature custom mind, body and spirit programming during the colder months. **Taylor River Lodge, 10931 CO Road 742, Almont, 970-237-5985, elevenexperience.com**

Dunton Hot Springs

Farther south about an hour past Telluride (and 227 miles from Aspen), Dunton Hot Springs is a bona fide dream of a destination — an actual historic ghost town turned Relais & Chateaux rustic hideaway. The former mining town was left largely uninhabited from 1918 until 1994, when London-based German businessman Christoph Henkel and his wife purchased land and ruins — setting out on a seven-year, top-to-bottom historic preservation meets modernization of the existing original log cabins (from \$730 per night/double occupancy) and transformation of the iconic Bathhouse and Saloon (Butch Cassidy's name is even carved into the bar). Where the miners once soaked their tired bones, three naturally-fed, mineral-rich hot springs provide for a pinnacle in post-adventure rejuvenation whether you're horseback riding, biking, fly fishing or hiking across the homestead's 1,600 acres deep in the San Juan Mountains.

This summer, its sister property, Dunton River Camp, reopened for individual tent bookings (during the pandemic, it was only available as a full buyout) with the new Barbara's Bar and reimagined Farm House lodge for communal gourmet meals. Just four miles from the main property, this riverside utopia grants guests a glamping experience in safari-style tents (from \$1,775 per night/double occupancy) with en-suite bathrooms complete with soaking tubs, double vanities and towel warmers. Three meals a day, access to the hot springs and guided outdoor adventure programming is included with every stay before it closes for the season in October. **Dunton Hot Springs, 50014 Road 38, Dolores, 877-288-9922, duntondestinations.com**

Katie Shapiro can be reached at katie@katieshapiromedia.com and followed on Twitter @bykatieshapiro.



CLOCKWISE: A starry night at Taylor River Lodge; Inside Smith Cabin Aspen on the backside of Ajax; A safari-style tent at Dunton River Camp; A jaw-dropping view from Smith Cabin Aspen's outdoor patio; The Paepcke Suite at The Little Nell.