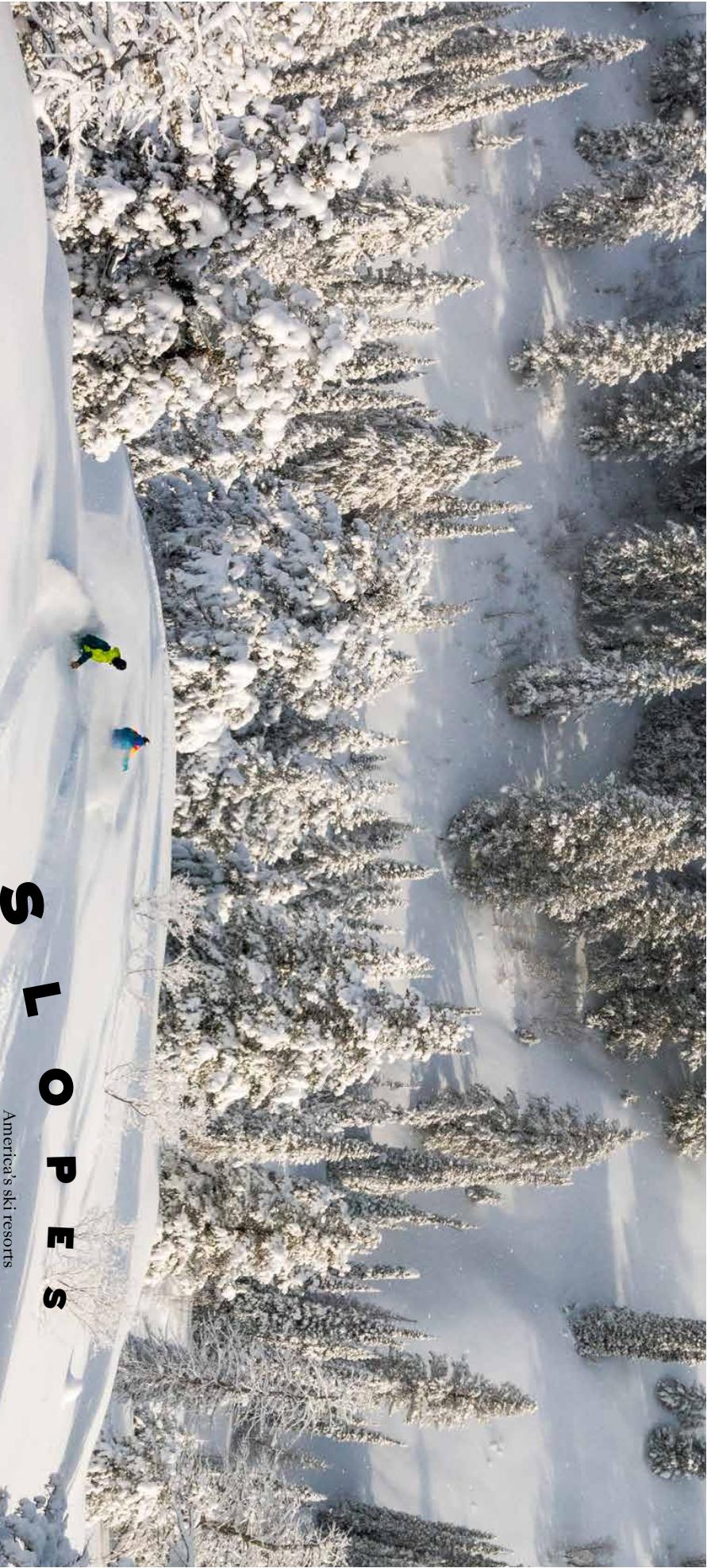


JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2021

DEPARTURES

THE
ESCAPES
ISSUE





HIT THE SLOPES

America's ski resorts
are making it a winter
to remember, with
exclusive mountaintop
experiences, top-notch new
lodges, and a fresh approach
to the après scene.

Making fresh tracks
at Powder Mountain
Resort in Utah.

AT CAMP KASBAH, a new resort on Buttermilk Mountain, guests are welcomed not to a lobby, but to a space called "the guard tower." The octagon-shaped room, with its polished plaster walls and black-and-white mosaic tiles, doesn't watch over anything in particular, but it does guard something magical: an immense glass solarium, which feels like another world. Orange trees and 18-foot-tall bougainvillea hover over a long dining table surrounded by elegant French chairs, and hand-carved Moroccan daybeds are draped with Indian silk.

Though it's just 15 minutes from downtown Aspen, Camp Kasbah (*from \$15,000 per night for up to 14 guests; campkasbah.com*) could just as easily be half a world away—say, in Marrakech or Paris. The retreat, which officially opens this month, is the work of Los Angeles-based developers Mauri Wanke and Tess Ferguson of Native Design & Development. Last year, the duo acquired the 14,000-square-foot

ASPEN IS STILL KING OF THE MOUNTAIN



mansion (initially designed as a private residence by the Uruguayan architect Horacio Ravazzani and completed in 1995) and filled its many spaces—including seven suites, the solarium, a fitness center, and a spa—with art and design pieces and whimsical details from around the world. In their new creation, they have crafted the perfect antidote to pent-up wanderlust, a free-spirited escape where guests are called "campers" and everything is done with a hint of playfulness and heaps of imagination.

In keeping with the theme, Kasbah's hosts call themselves "Camp rangers" (think of them as a more laid-back version of a concierge) who lead guests in a variety of activities. There's the traditional Ukrainian egg-decorating class in the craft room, and champagne sabering lessons in the Great Room. Go for a massage upstairs in the spa overlooking Mount Sopris, or dig through the treasures in the costume closet, which is stocked with vintage hats, scarves, and gloves, to play dress-up for the property's themed dinners. Best of all: There's skiing straight out the back door.

A set of African teak doors connects the solarium to the guest rooms, each of which has its own theme (the Sylph Suite, for example, features wallpaper with stylized celestial motifs), a tub for soaking, zellige tile-work, and a canopy bed draped with fabrics to look like a Berber tent. The primary suite, known as the Sanctuary, comes with its own private courtyard and a pair of marble bathtubs. Downstairs, the Enchanted

COURTESY CAMP KASBAH. PREVIOUS SPREAD: IAN MATTESEN

COURTESY BRUSH CREEK LUXURY RANCH COLLECTION



Aspen Street Lodge (from \$24,000 per night for up to 32 guests; aspenstreetlodge.com) is another exclusive-in-spc property that opened this season. The nine-room, two-suite lodge—[\(continued on p. 94\)](#)

Forest dining room, which has a one-ton smoked-glass table and a treelike chandelier lit by lightbulbs cast as iridescent woodland creatures, is the setting for elaborate omakase and other multicourse feasts that might start with avocado and poblano chips topped with white truffles and togarashi; and end with DIY ice cream sundaes. The 15-acre property is also home to plenty of space that has been left blissfully alone, including a private Nordic-skiing course—just in case the chairlift lines in town don't sound appealing.

Camp Kasbah is a refreshing new face in a ski season that might have been uncharacteristically ho-hum. And it's not alone. In this unusual winter of social distancing, Aspen's off-the-slope appeal has, however improbably, only become more exciting, with new openings that offer especially exclusive experiences and a low-risk social scene. There may not be any dance parties under champagne showers at Cloud 9 or packed live performances at Belly Up, but there is no shortage of places to stay and adventures to be had.

Courtesy Brush Creek Ranch

Brush Creek Ranch
Located 13 miles from Crested Butte Mountain Resort, the town of Irwin, Colorado, gets an average of 450 inches of snow each year—and its peaks are only accessible to the occupants of this six-room lodge and its neighboring guesthouse. Expert guides shuttle skiers via Sno-Cat to more than 1,000 acres in the West Elk range, where the wide bowls and deep powder create some

Twin Farms
The sprawling slopes of Killington may be just 30 miles away, but this Vermont resort's network of downhill and cross-country trails is reserved for a maximum of 40 guests. Even the ascent is exclusive: In lieu of a chairlift, the property's Skier Sherpas—high-powered snowmobiles that can seat up to nine—carry skiers to the top of the mountain. Rooms from \$2,000; twinfarms.com.

Nemacolin Woodlands Resort
Ski day and night at this Pennsylvania spa resort, where only guests have access to Mystic Mountain—and they can even burj it out for an isolated day on the slopes. The three-lift peak has 25 acres of trails covered in man-made and natural snow and is illuminated for after-hours runs. Snowboarders will appreciate the multifeature terrain park. Rooms from \$375; nemacolin.com. —Devon Lev-Tov

FOUR RESORTS WHERE THE MOUNTAIN IS YOURS AND YOURS ALONE

Scarp Ridge Lodge
Ski day and night at this town of Irwin, Colorado, gets an average of 450 inches of snow each year—and its peaks are only accessible to the occupants of this six-room lodge and its neighboring guesthouse. Expert guides shuttle skiers via Sno-Cat to more than 1,000 acres in the West Elk range, where the wide bowls and deep powder create some

of the Rockies' most ideal downhill conditions. Bookouts from \$15,700 for up to ten guests; elevenexperience.com.

THIS WINTER, KNOW YOUR
SKETCHOUTTE

The length of the average ski is about six feet, making the slopes the perfect place to hide out—and stay socially distanced. Across the U.S., the mountain scene will look different from year past, with new rules and more space to twist and schuss the day away. Here's a primer for the season.

Before You Go

Planning is everything this winter as most resorts, including Park City and Stowe, require

Before You Go

Planning is everything at resorts, including

advance reservations and limit daily entry to avoid overcrowding. Other destinations, such as Big Sky, have developed strategies to disperse skiers throughout the resort, giving them a more backcountry feel—but making it necessary to map out your route ahead of time. And skiers should come prepared to wear a face covering around lifts and indoors.

Destinations like Killarney

contactless tickets and touch-free ID cards, which minimized face time around cashiers and at payment points. Now they've built more social distancing into the experience. There will be fewer opportunities to make friends on the mountain-topper committee, as resorts prioritize personal space on lifts rather than pack them full of strangers. But there will be fewer lines to wait through thanks to easier lifts, such as Aspen Snowmass's new Big Brew express, which climbs almost 2,000 feet in less than seven minutes. Those not encouraging indoor dining, many resorts will also offer picnic baskets filled with their most popular dishes or, as at Utah's Powder Mountain, pack windows at each of the mountain's restaurants.

Après-ski may be delayed this year, but it's more intimate and well-kept, in some places, even more exclusive. At Utah's Alta Ski Area, onlyodge guests are allowed onto the Sitzmark Club after a day on the snow. Nearby at Montage Deer Valley, the new Empire Lounge is reserved for just a handful of diners at a time, the Park City hotel will also replace the outdoor terrace seating at its Vista Lounge with heated private-dining igloos. And at Idaho's Sun Valley Resort, the old-school ski social is making a comeback. Personal tailgate parties—well-festooned and out in the open air—have become a favorite way to close out the day. —Kelsey Obergree



Above: Horn & Cantele,
the restaurant at Lone
Mountain Ranch in Montana.
Opposite: Downhill skiing
at Big Sky Resort.

**BIG SKY IS ABOUT TO BE
A BIG DEAL**

CAMPBELL SCHNEEBLY was on her annual ski trip to Big Sky when coronavirus infections started to spread.

ing in New York City. It was early March 2020, and the Manhattan-based literary agent and her family decided to hunker down in the Montana mountains town for a couple of weeks. Weeks turned to months, and by summer they stopped pretending they were going back to the big city.

"We completely shifted all life plans," says St. John, who now runs Big Sky's Arcé Café & Cocina with three other New York expats. "There's a shift happening in this town, and we had an opportunity to be a part of it."

Located halfway between Bozeman and Yeetoo National Park, Big Sky has always been a refuge for movers and shakers coming in from the coasts. The allure is understandable: Montana has the third-lowest population density in the U.S.

Horn & Cantle is the apres reservation of choice. Of course, it doesn't yet rival Aspen—but that's the point, says Trillie Lancey, a broker at Big Sky Sotheby's International Realty. "People feel like they can get in on the ground floor." Even with the recent flurry of new residents—Lancey says her sales doubled from 2019 to 2020, as Big Sky still has room to grow. And then there's the mountain. With an average of 400 inches of snow a year, Big Sky has some of the best and most consistent powder conditions in the U.S.—a reassuring detail for skiers who have had winter trips spoiled by lack of precipitation in California and Colorado. Along with a renovated base lodge and more slopeside dining options, the resort has added high-efficiency Sno-Cats and chairlifts, part of an ambitious plan to be carbon-neutral by 2030.

Still, insists Schmehly, the slopes are no longer the only show in town. "Big Sky is much more than just a place to ski," she says. "The town itself is becoming a destination. It's developing its own character aside from the resort." —*Bruce Wallin*

Spanish Peaks and the Yellowstone Club, the 20-year-old private ski resort that the Bradys and Gateses call a second home. Outside the clubs' gates and beyond the slopes the village, about 15 minutes down the hill from the resort, has taken off too, with new art galleries, boutiques (including a handful of home shops specializing in the ubiquitous Montana-style), restaurants, and brewpubs. Riverhouse BBQ, a Texas Hill Country joint, has become a local favorite, and just yonder at the resort Lone Mountain Ranch (*rooms from \$275 per person; lonemountainranch.com*) the histo-ranch restaurant

on an average day at Big Sky, there's more than an acre of terrain for every skier. All that privacy and epic mountain air have lured plenty of prominent part-time residents, including Tom Brady and Gisele Bündchen, Melinda Gates, and Justin Timberlake and Jessica Biel—all of whom have built vacation homes there. But recently, another wave of transplants has discovered the destination's charms, just as new hotels, shops, and restaurants are turning the seasonal ski resort into a year-round destination.

RETURN TO COSTA RICA**HIT THE SLOPES****THE CALL OF MERIDA**

“RETURN TO COSTA RICA”
JUMP

(CONTINUED FROM P. 65) former hotel—has been redesigned with French oak staircases, rift-sawn oak cabinets, and curvy Poliform furniture. It pairs resort-style perks like a heated pool and an in-house bar with the comforts of home, including an office, a game room, and a kitchen serviced by a private chef.

A few blocks away, the Gant (*rooms from \$495; gantaspen.com*) offers 120 residential-style accommodations featuring full kitchens and full service (including ski butlers). Though the property is a short distance from the Silver Queen Gondola up Aspen Mountain, guests have access to something even better this season: 300,000 acres of forested backcountry terrain accessible only by helicopter, courtesy of the hotel’s partnership with Nomad Inc. Excursions with the outfitter offer the chance to tackle up to 14,000 feet of vertical drops in the San Juan Mountains.

Aspen’s après scene is delivering something new for the times too. At the Little Nell (*rooms from \$1,232; thelittle nell.com*), the always-packed Chair 9 has been turned into a wine bar where private lounge areas can accommodate single parties of up to eight—reservations required—and a DJ safely spins down-tempo tracks from behind a plexiglass partition. At the Hotel Jerome (*rooms from \$833; aubergedesorts.com*), poolside cabanas have been transformed into warming huts where guests can dig in to bowls of ramen and sip hot toddies. And if you can’t score a reservation for the hotel’s speakeasy, Bad Harriet, there’s a solution that might just top any social engagement in town: Made-to-order cocktails delivered straight to your room.—*Jen Murphy*

“THE CALL OF MERIDA”
JUMP

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