

THE WILD WILD WEST

BY LINDSAY MAHER



Picture this: the dusky limbo of day falling into night. Kicking up dust in your shoes, covered faintly in an earthy bronzer, eyes roaming over the mountains against the sky, a dance of blues bleeding into hazy pinks and yellows. This hold-your-breath, etch-into-your-brain fleeting moment is the epitome of humbling insignificance — and we're making sure you find that.

This year, lace up your boots and make the trek west, where America's natural splendors are better seen with your own eyes. Autumn begs for a refresher, and sometimes nothing satisfies that better than nature. Book a stay at one of these resorts and escape your world to be in tune with the rest of it. Before you check your email, take a look outside and awe at the impossible number of stars twinkling above.

MONTANA:

Triple Creek Ranch

75 miles south of Missoula makes Darby, Montana a perfect getaway for both weekend escapist and cross-country visitors.

Triple Creek Ranch is nestled into the Bitterroot Mountain Range and boasts 25 cabins, a string of one-, two- and three-bedroom cabins and ranch homes overlooking the meadows and mountains. The ranch is for ages 16+, the perfect spot for a romantic getaway. Log-post beds and log walls framed with Western fine art value the tradition of retreat; plush blankets and towels, a private hot tub and fully stocked wet bar take it to the next level.

Triple Creek Ranch's five-star dining is an experience unto itself, the chef's adventurous dishes a reflection of the land's energy. Meals can be eaten in the dining room, or you can enjoy them from the comfort of your cabin — why not take time to eat like royalty in your pajamas? For a more intimate experience, opt for the Chef's Table, a seven-course close-up view of the kitchen's inner workings and creations.

Indoor and outdoor activities alike will keep you comfortably busy: from cooking classes to painting workshops, archery lessons to skijoring (one person on skis is pulled along by a horseback rider), hiking the Bitterroots to ice fishing, you won't be wanting for any entertainment. If you're whisking away on a day's journey, be sure to order a packed lunch from the ranch's chef. But easily as enjoyable is a morning lounging around, an in-room massage, a book and a seat on your wraparound porch, wrapped in a blanket, hidden away below the peaks of Montana's splendor. As the day melts away, you'll feel more restored than you ever thought possible.

One thing's for sure: the mountains here are always, always calling.





UTAH:

Sorrel River Ranch

The red mesas of Moab, Utah are reason enough to book a stay with the Sorrel River Ranch. They are a haven of color, seen best when the sun drapes its rays over the rocks and lures every red, orange and brown out. You'll immediately feel unplugged, the sight from your temporary frontyard powerful in its soothing effects. And don't even get me started on the golden hour that seems to last all day, a gift from Mother Nature.

Sorrel River Ranch sits on 160 acres of land, with a number of studios, suites and estates to choose from for your stay. Individually decorated and optimizing style and comfort, no room is a bad one, especially since they all have what everyone wants—a view.

Thirty minutes from Sorrel River Ranch resides Arches National Park and many of the world's greatest sandstone arches. Canyonlands National Park, mostly undisturbed, is another beauty to behold, glorious in its rivered divisions, vistas and backcountry hiking and biking trails.

For a daredevilish fix, try skydiving over Moab and see both national parks and more in one sweeping shot. For early birds wanting to start the day with a less adrenaline-packed activity, book a sunrise hot air balloon ride. Then, spend the afternoon canyoneering to more fully navigate the terrain. Sorrel River Ranch helps you carve every path you wish, and welcomes you back each day with open arms and the chance to relax.

Tired, sore, maybe wind chilled? Enjoy one of the ranch's spa packages, letting your physical aches take a backseat to the memory of the day's adventures. At the River Grill, farm-fresh ingredients are crafted into something exquisite, like their crispy pork belly posole: Moab dining done so, so right. Sorrel River Ranch helps you carve every path you wish, and welcomes you back each day with open arms and the chance to relax.

Rejuvenate at one of the ranch's nightly bonfires for a timeless favorite, s'mores, and take time to stargaze. Maybe stop into the Epic Bar—it's got to be epic, if it's in the name—for a drink and a seat on one of their plush couches (as if it couldn't get any more comfortable). In the lap of a desert luxury, life sure is sweet.



COLORADO:

The Little Nell

Aspen, Colorado's reputation as a ski town is valid, but let's not forget how stunning it is in the winter. Part art scene, part foodie destination and most parts mountain, your senses will explode in the city's wake. It's our most urban destination, but one that will still help you find inner balance.

The Little Nell is a modern marvel, a composition of 92 rooms that bring serenity in simplicity. The creams and blues dominating the color scheme emphasize the beauty of the Aspen landscape, whose town and mountains are the reward outside any given guest window.

It's no surprise that Aspen is a mountain town, but the majesty of their shapes tracing the sky will elicit nothing short of a need to stand in their wake for hours—especially when trees bend with the weight of snow and every turn feels alive and magical. The hotel provides off-road Jeep tours of the area, for a more intimate view of the scene. Take a hike or dust off your skis and poles for some runs down the slope, returning from either or both breathless with exhilaration.

Two celebrated restaurants and four bars grace the hotel's property, so once you're in for the day, you can guiltlessly stay in. You can't go wrong either way: a cheeseburger or lobster roll at the Ajax Tavern, or the cavatelli followed by crème brûlée at element 47. Choose from one of 20,000 bottles of wine in their cellars to sample, or select a beer, cider or cocktail. Rumor has it they've got the best hot chocolate ever, which obviously means you have to go for that alone.

Classic. That's what the hotel is going for, and they sure nail it on the head. Returning to your room every night is the prize for long days exploring, and slipping out every morning is a rejuvenated salutation to the world you can't wait to continue seeing.

You can book any and all of your flights through United Airlines, with airports in or near the cities. For more information, visit www.united.com.

