

TELLURIDE, COLO.

25 Benefiting from a split personality, Telluride, Colo., really does have something for everyone. One reader aptly describes Telluride as “a weird mix of rustic mining town surrounded by grossly conspicuous consumption.” At Mountain Village you can step out of your condo and ski to a bistro for a tall mocha. Or ski down to town (or ride the gondola) for a cup of coffee and a middle-of-the-street conversation with a local who lives in a van and skis 120 days a year. Despite its gloss, Telluride is still rightfully known as a skiers’ town located at the foot of a skiers’ mountain. “Very steep terrain,” one reader says in admiration, while another criticizes that “there are not enough intermediate runs.” With a stunning view of the Coors commercial’s San Juan Mountains, Telluride offers activities for the non ski-addicted as well, with dog sled tours, snowshoe hikes and some of the finest dining and shopping found at 8,750 feet. The flight on a commuter plane over the spectacular Rocky Mountains can be a little hair-raising. (Many skiers opt for Montrose airport and drive 65 miles into Telluride.) But depending on your view, the resort’s remoteness can be poison or pudding. “Accessibility is Telluride’s only drawback, but it does keep lift-lines short,” one reader observes. The typically quiet slopes provide more time for ripping down the moguls on The Plunge or floating down the powder on Gold Hill. “It really is the most beautiful place you’ll ever ski,” one reader says. —Cass Clark

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● **WHAT'S NEW** American Airlines daily nonstop jet service from Dallas/Fort Worth; a \$3.1 million snowmaking upgrade will guarantee early season skiing.

● **A GOOD DEAL** Mention “Skyline Mountain Joy” when making a lodging reservation at Skyline Guest Ranch and receive 25 percent off your lodging. Call (888) 754-1126.

● **MEDALS** **GOLD** Terrain, Challenge, Dining, Scenery; **SILVER** Service, Weather, Lodging, Après-Ski, Off-Hill Activities.

● **HIGH/LOW RANK** Scenery (5), Challenge (13), Dining (14); Lifts (56), Family Programs (67), Accessibility (78).

● **DON'T MISS** If the weather is clear, enjoy a 30-minute drive from town to Trout Lake. Snowshoe around one of Colorado’s most scenic lakes.

● **READER REMARKS** ☺ “Complete package: skiing, town, scenery, the works.” “Challenging skiing. Worth the trip.” ☹ “Very remote. Outdated lifts.” “Becoming a celebrity mecca, so prices are going up.”

THE CANYONS, UTAH

26 Locals say The Canyons has the best terrain of any Park City, Utah, resort and SKI readers agree. They awarded gold medals for both Terrain and Challenge to this eight-peaked ski area that has undergone \$37.5 million in on-mountain improvements and \$130 million in base-village development since it was purchased by the American Skiing Co. in 1997. It’s not just the massive 3,300 acres of terrain but its diversity—acres upon acres of terrain parks, tree-lined steeps, off-piste bowls and glades. The resort even serves up a handful of narrow, winding trails, a throwback to New England skiing (the trails were cut by the resort’s managing director Blaise Carrig, who previously oversaw Sugarbush, Vt.). Readers also praise The Canyon’s lift arsenal, which includes five high-speed quads and an eight-passenger gondola that whisks skiers from the base village into the heart of the Wasatch Range. The work-in-progress village and the lack of parking are downsides. “I will not go back there,” promises one reader, “until they pave the parking lot.” “Base area is a horror,” adds another. But those irritations have eased with last season’s completion of the 364-room Grand Summit Hotel and the maturation of the resort’s village core, which features shops, restaurants and an outdoor pavilion. And don’t forget: Hundreds of eating, drinking and shopping options beckon five minutes away in Park City, while the Salt Lake Airport is a 35-minute drive once the Olympian road projects are finished. “An emerging giant,” says one reader. —A.B.

● **WHAT'S NEW** The 325-acre Dreamscape, the resort’s eighth peak two restaurants: Doc’s and The Cabin, and, perhaps, a Cabriolet people-mover from the parking lot to the base area.

● **A GOOD DEAL** The Canyons links with Park City and Deer Valley on the Silver Passport, a lift ticket good at all three resorts, but not on the same day. Three nights’ lodging is required.

● **MEDALS** **GOLD** Terrain, Challenge, Accessibility; **SILVER** Lifts, Weather

● **HIGH/LOW RANK** Accessibility (5), Lifts (28), Weather (33); Value (56), Family Programs (61), Grooming (68).

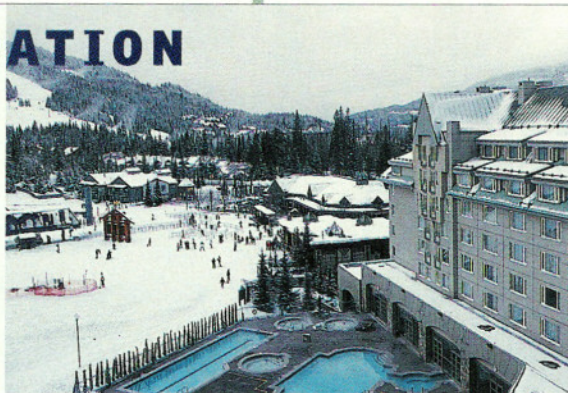
● **DON'T MISS** Intermediates and above can get their first taste of big Western skiing in the uncrowded, snow-clogged Pines area off the north side of the Saddleback Express Lift.

● **READER REMARKS** ☺ “This is going to be the next Vail.” ☹ “A work in progress—and boy does it need work.”

DREAM VACATION

THE TOP 10

1. Whistler/Blackcomb, BC
2. Vail, CO
3. Jackson Hole, WY
4. Aspen Mountain, CO
5. Sun Valley, ID
6. Deer Valley, UT
7. Alta, UT
8. Snowmass, CO
9. Steamboat, CO
10. Telluride, CO



ALADDIN'S LAMP

Dreams are our minds slipping the leash nightly. So we asked readers to go with the flow and tell us where they would visit if given a free “dream ski vacation.” They answered Whistler/Blackcomb, B.C. This Canadian winter wonderland racked up 2 million skier visits for the second consecutive year, the first time that has happened in North America. Visit a dreamier resort? Not likely.