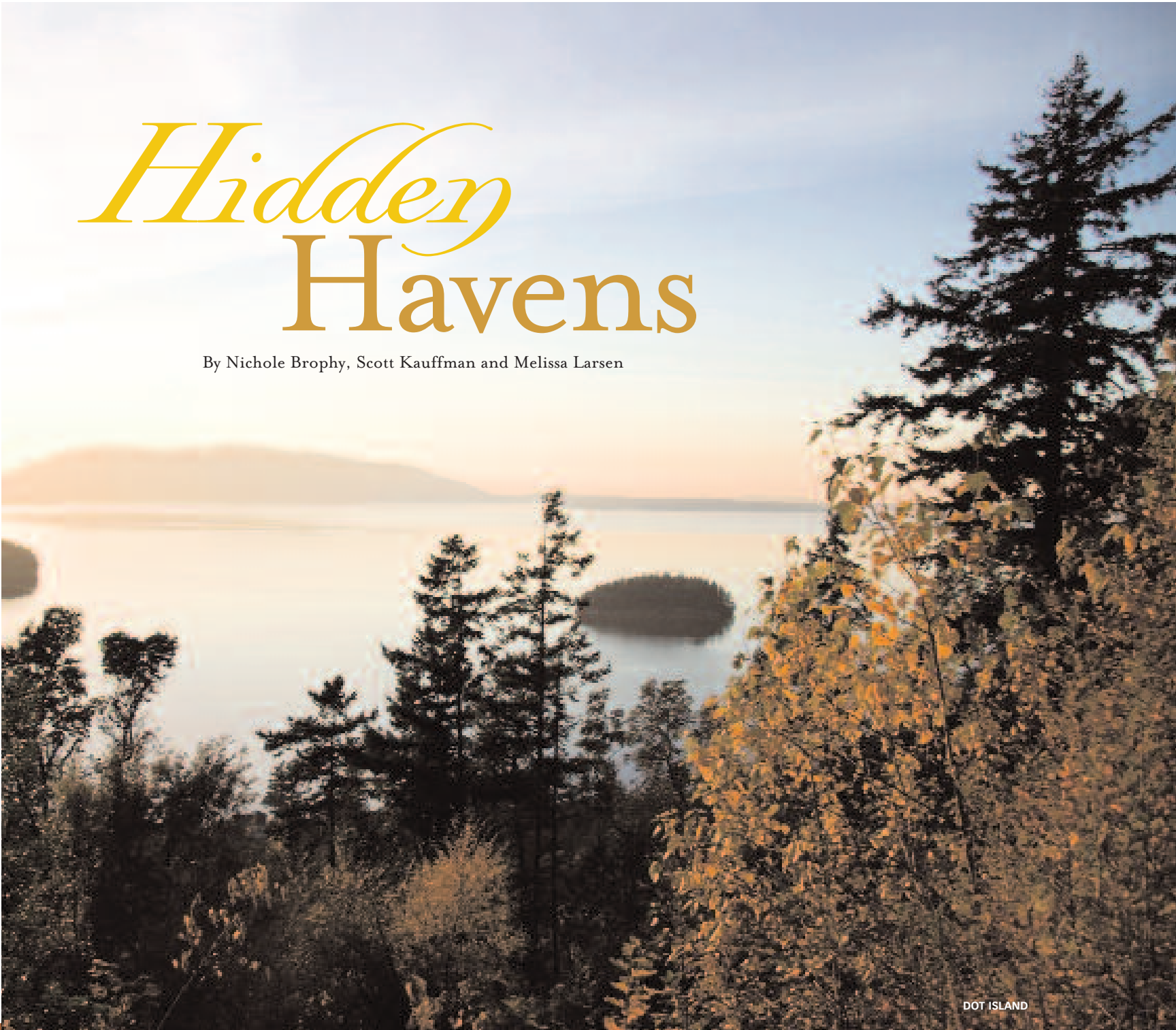


Hidden Havens

By Nichole Brophy, Scott Kauffman and Melissa Larsen



DOT ISLAND

ONE OF THE REASONS WE LOVE THE WESTERN UNITED STATES SO MUCH IS THAT IN THIS SPECIAL REGION, **UNTOUCHED SLICES OF SOLITUDE** AREN'T A THING OF THE PAST. HERE, THERE ARE STILL LITTLE NOOKS AND CRANNIES THAT HAVE YET TO BE DISCOVERED; AND THE FOLLOWING FIVE HAMLETS MAY JUST BE THE WEST'S BEST-KEPT SECRETS. READ ON TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEIR LOVEABLE PERSONALITIES AND THE POCKETS OF LUXURY LIVING THAT LIE WITHIN.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PETER JAMES



BELLINGHAM BAY

to learn more

Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism,
360.671.3990, www.bellingham.org.

Hotel Bellwether, 360.392.3100,
www.hotelbellwether.com.

Mount Baker Ski Area,
www.mtbaker.us.

Nimbus, 360.676.1307,
www.nimbusrestaurant.com.

BELLINGHAM, WASH.

Recently recognized as one of the top paddling towns by *Outside* magazine, Bellingham is adored by residents for its aquatic inclinations. However, this quaint town of 75,000 inhabitants located 90 minutes north of Seattle offers more than kayaking, sailing and whale watching.

On dry land, Mount Baker's jutting snowcapped peak houses the Mount Baker Ski Area (a 45-minute drive away), where powder hounds can downhill and cross-country ski, snowshoe, snowmobile and sled. During the mild summer months, the 10,778-

The most coveted real estate here is perched along the Pacific, with many dwellings overlooking the town's namesake bay.

foot mountain transforms into a hiker's paradise. Back in town, more than 15 trails skirt the city, taking trekkers through parks, harbors and beaches that boast expansive views of Bellingham Bay. Another boon for Bellingham: its proximity to Vancouver and Victoria. These two stellar British Columbia cities are just a quick boat or ferry ride away.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOE STAIANO

After a long day outdoors, residents and visitors can enjoy promenading around Bellingham's two major districts—both the downtown and the historic Fairhaven areas offer excellent fine-dining options. Nimbus, an elegant eatery floating 14 floors above the city in the Bellingham Towers, uses only the freshest locally grown produce in its hip American-style fare. For an after-dinner drink, you can't beat the Piano Bar of the Hotel Bellwether, a 65-room boutique hotel situated directly on Bellingham Bay.

Naturally, as with any city that is lucky enough to have substantial ocean vistas as an amenity, the most coveted real estate here is perched along the Pacific, with many dwellings overlooking the town's namesake bay. Featuring an array of architectural styles, homes in the Edgemoor and Chuckanut neighborhoods showcase sweeping views of the nearby San Juan Islands. Residences here consistently fetch anywhere from \$800,000 to \$4 million. —N.B.

PRESCOTT, ARIZ.

When asked to pinpoint the appeal of Prescott, Dan Luglan's answer is short and sweet: "It is a nice, little town in a beautiful area," says the sales manager of Ruger Ranch. Little as it may be, this north-central Arizona city is rich in history; and its proud Western heritage can still be seen in the rustic storefronts of Whiskey Row, especially in the century-old embossed tin ceiling and gas lamps of The Palace Saloon. To top it off, Prescott's claim to fame might just be its World's Oldest Rodeo, which is widely



to learn more

The Palace Saloon, 928.541.1996,
www.historicpalace.com.

The Prescott Chamber of Commerce,
800.266.7534, www.prescott.org.

Ruger Ranch, 877.818.5155,
www.dlranchproperties.com.

Talking Rock, 866.433.4220,
www.talkingrockranch.com.

accepted as the nation's first professional rodeo. (This summer, the town saddled up for its 121st installment.)

History is hard to miss in Prescott—and we're not just talking about saloons and rodeos. "[As] one of the nation's most beautifully preserved Western towns, more than 750 buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places, including the original [territorial] Governor's Mansion and Sharlot Hall Museum, and numerous Victorian homes and [bed-and-breakfasts]," says Susan Schepman, director of the Prescott Area Coalition for Tourism.

However, you don't necessarily have to settle into an antique abode in order to call Prescott home. Luxury-minded folks are hightailing it to Talking Rock, a master-planned community just outside of town. Jim Jones, the community's director of sales, estimates that about 60 percent of Rock residents are from in state, presumably those who want to escape Phoenix's scorching temperatures and growing population. "[Talking Rock is] very appealing to those people who want peace and quiet and serenity," Jones says. "A small town that is grown up enough with good restaurants, good medical facilities, good shopping—it's not easy finding all of that in an area where the weather is nice." Talking Rock, specifically, promotes a casual Western lifestyle with a laundry list of lush amenities, like on-site dining, a fitness center, a pool and fairways suitable for any skill level. Custom homesites here start in the mid-\$200,000's, and custom homes begin in the mid-\$900,000's. Cottages and range homes are also available.

The 9,000-acre Ruger Ranch is another Prescott-area

development that offers a peaceful, spacious respite to its residents. As of press time, the community's 36-acre spreads were going for nearly \$380,000. —*M.L.*

CODY, WYO.

When worldly travelers think of Wyoming, two places probably come to mind: Yellowstone National Park and Jackson Hole. But there's much more to this Rocky Mountain region than Yellowstone's Old Faithful or Jackson Hole's chic resorts.

If you're searching for a hidden jewel, or the true American West for that matter, look no further than this quaint town in the northwest corner of the Cowboy State. Established in 1896 by the man synonymous with the Wild West, Col. William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, this community of both classic and contemporary Western themes still reflects the vision of its famous founder.

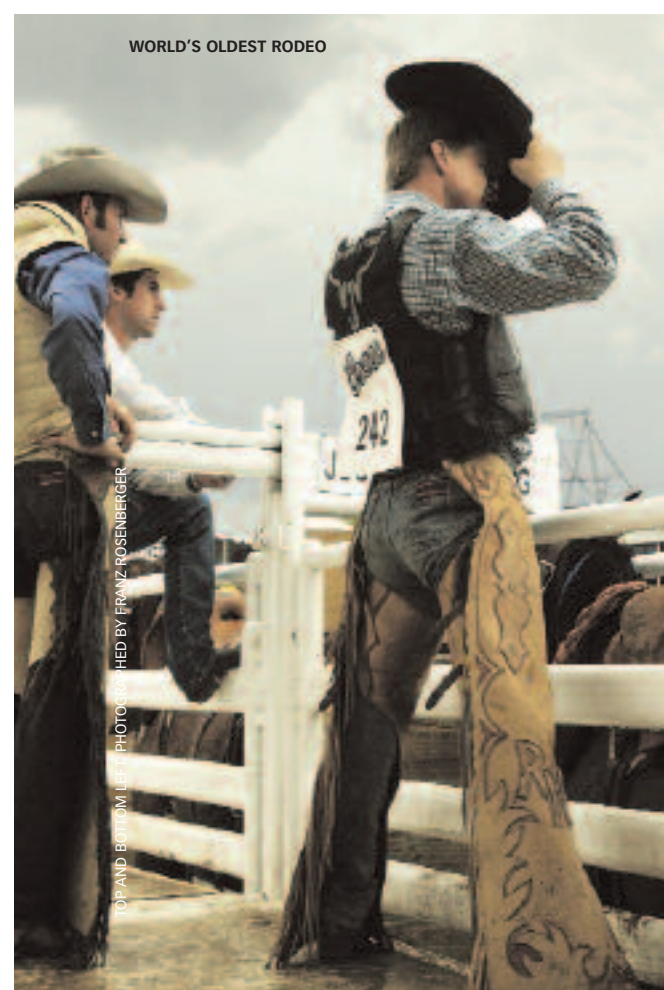
In his illustrious life, Buffalo Bill personified the romantic ideals of the daring frontiersman as a lifelong adventurer, Pony Express rider and Army scout. Today, almost 100 years after Buffalo Bill's death, the man who epitomized the Old West continues to be a major draw in this self-described "Rodeo Capital of the World." For instance, one of Cody's must-visit stops is the ever-popular Buffalo Bill Historical Center, regarded by many as the Smithsonian of the West. Located in downtown Cody (population 9,000), the more than 300,000-sq.-ft. BBHC is the largest museum complex between Chicago and Los Angeles.

For those interested in taking in Wyoming's natural beauty, namely Yellowstone country, Cody couldn't be a better starting

WATSON LAKE

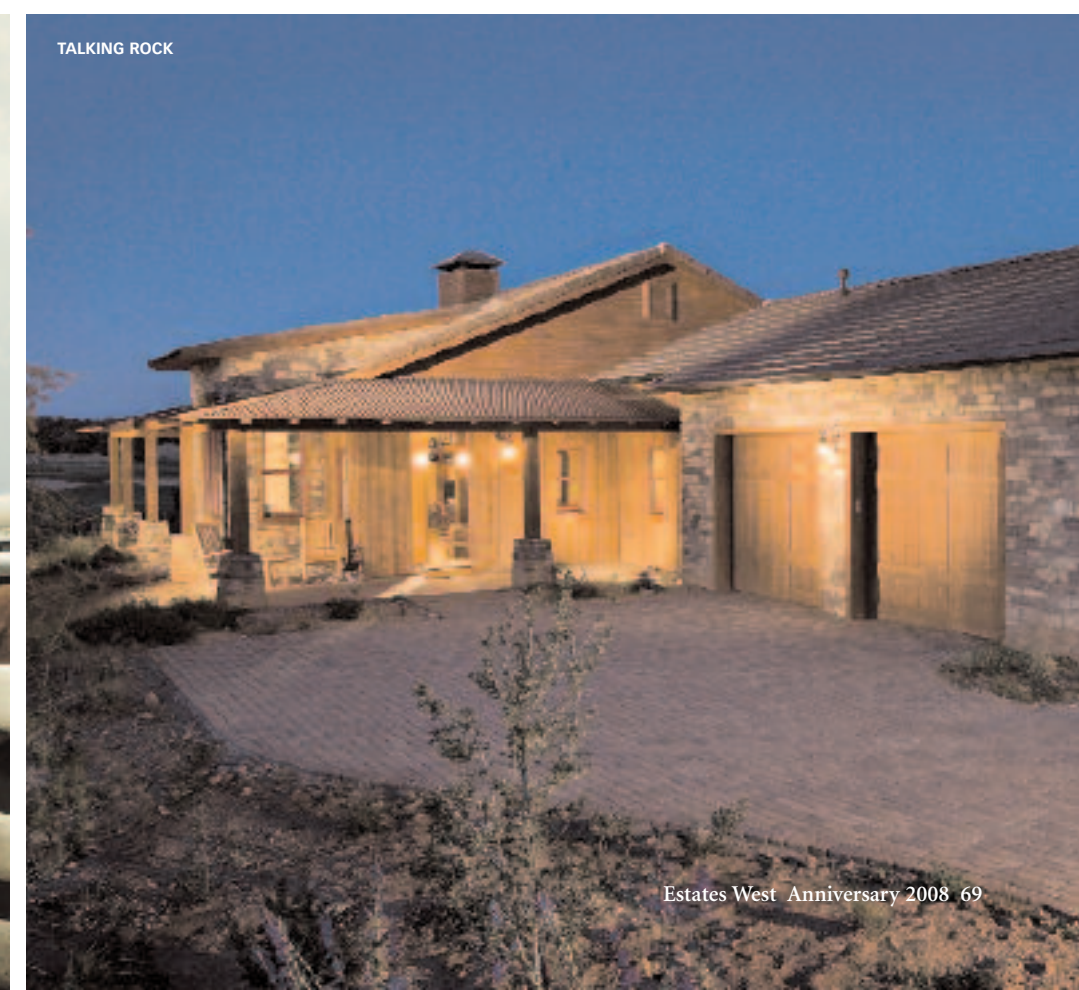


WORLD'S OLDEST RODEO



TOP AND BOTTOM LEFT: PHOTOS COURTESY OF FRANK ROSENBERGER

TALKING ROCK





PHOTOGRAPHED BY SCOTT MORRISON



ST. GEORGE



ST. GEORGE

BOTTOM: PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF RED MOUNTAIN SPA

point. As one heads due west out of town, toward the east gate of Yellowstone and along the North Fork of the Shoshone River, there are a couple of memorable landmarks to see: Buffalo Bill State Park and the beautiful Buffalo Bill Reservoir—the world’s highest concrete dam when it was completed in 1910.

Soon after, one enters the wondrous Wapiti Valley and the Shoshone National Forest. Today the forest is an outdoor mecca with nearly 1,000 miles of trails. And if that’s not enough environmental eye candy, just 52 miles after leaving Cody, the splendor of Yellowstone begins to unfold. President Theodore Roosevelt was so smitten with the Wapiti Valley corridor from Cody to Yellowstone that he called it “the most scenic 52 miles in America.”

Indeed, that’s how the Worthington Group of Wyoming felt when they stumbled upon a special riverfront property in the heart of Wapiti several years ago. Today, the developer is in the process of completing its newest luxury real estate project called Copperleaf, a 553-acre development that features a mile and a half of the North Fork of the Shoshone River and just 131 homesites, which range from one to three acres.

Considered the first upscale master-planned community in this part of Wyoming, Copperleaf personifies Cody and the ideal Western community: It’s small and carefully crafted in concert with its precious natural neighbors, albeit with all the modern amenities, such as a clubhouse.

Even more attractive are the limited number of homesites being offered at this rare riverfront enclave at a fraction of what it would cost in more discovered locales such as Jackson. For example, lots range in price from \$199,500 to \$469,900; meanwhile, Copperleaf is in the process of building 24 villas that start in the \$500,000’s.

Of course, the greatest amenities at Copperleaf are its nearest neighbors: Buffalo Bill State Park, the Shoshone National Forest and Yellowstone. Former Florida resident and National Hockey League player Bob Kudelski, who is also one of the partners of the Copperleaf project, says there is nothing like living in this part of the country. “I love the Rocky Mountain lifestyle,” Kudelski says. “I

like to be outside camping, hiking, fishing. It’s more the scenery than anything else. There are views in every direction and all the wildlife you can imagine.”

Another major draw, adds Kudelski, is being just 20 minutes from Cody, which offers excellent schools, and first-class recreational and medical facilities for such a small town. However, being only 30 minutes from Yellowstone’s 3,472 square miles is hard to beat. “At Copperleaf, we promote outdoor living and an active lifestyle,” Kudelski says. “Having Yellowstone National Park and the Shoshone National Forest literally in your backyard is pretty impressive.” —S.K.

to learn more

Buffalo Bill Historical Center,
307.587.4771, www.bbhc.org.

Cody County Chamber of Commerce,
307.587.2777, www.codychamber.org.

Copperleaf, 866.927.5323, www.discovercopperleaf.com.

ST. GEORGE, UTAH

In the early 1990’s, St. George, Utah, experienced an astonishing growth spurt: In just five years, the population of this scenic spot grew by about 60 percent. Today, the number of residents (which was nearly 70,000 in 2006) is still climbing—just like the St. George dwellers that mount the area’s 1,500-plus rock-climbing routes.

What keeps bringing people to this city in the southwest corner of Utah? To start, outdoor recreation. There are numerous reservoirs in which to boat; Brian Head Resort is nearby for skiers; the area houses national and state parks, including the Zen-inducing Zion National Park; and St. George is a duffer’s dream, with its golf courses regularly receiving recognition from *Golf Digest* and *Links Magazine*. And while such activities can be grueling on the body, St. George is easy on the eyes. “St. George, overall, is red,” says Toni

Faulk, director of marketing for the upscale residential development of The Ledges at St. George. “Red sand, red rocks, red cliffs. It is lovely.”

Folks from around the country are also making a beeline for this spot because of its accessibility to big-city amenities. For instance, St. George’s Red Mountain Spa is one of the nation’s top pampering places, where the treatments are desert-inspired and exploring the resident red rocks on foot or bike is encouraged. (In January, the Red Mountain Spa unveiled 12 new residential villas, featuring fireplaces and floor-to-ceiling windows to take in the sights of St. George.) What’s more, the area “has a huge art contingency,” Faulk says. And if you insist on sparkly lights, Las Vegas is less than two hours away; Salt Lake City is four. Come 2011, it will be even easier to access these surrounding hot spots, as St. George will welcome a new, state-of-the-art airport.

Also in the works is the community of The Ledges at St. George. Here, golf reigns supreme thanks to an award-winning Matt Dye-designed course and a Jack Nicklaus Academy of Golf—one of only a few worldwide—where you can hone your swinging skills in the putting lab. Homes at The Ledges, which sport Spanish Revival and Southwestern architecture, range between \$500,000 and \$8 million; lot prices are \$200,000 to \$1.5 million. —*M.L.*

to learn more

The Ledges of St. George,
435.634.4600, www.ledges.com.

Red Mountain Spa, 877.246.4453,
www.redmountainspa.com.

St. George Area Chamber of Commerce,
435.628.1658, www.stgeorgechamber.com.

MONTROSE, COLO.

Drinking in the crisp Rocky Mountain air from its cozy perch in western Colorado, Montrose is home to a variety of cultural and athletic events, opulent residential developments and a plethora of outdoor activities, all of which have put this lively little town on our radar.

Definitely one of the city’s major boons is the wide range of

festivals and celebrations it hosts throughout the year. During the Ride the Rockies event, the town serves as a midway stop between Durango and Breckenridge when the 400-mile bike ride passes through town. And each May, the Montrose Wine Festival attracts throngs of vino lovers with its lavish showcase of wines from around the country.

Not to be outdone, Mother Nature has a firm hold on the hearts of Montrose locals and guests. Nearby, Gunnison National Park houses Black Canyon, one of the deepest canyons in North America formed from slow-moving water. The canyon’s south rim is the ideal place to cross-country ski or snowshoe in the winter.

Living it up in the wilds of this pristine hot spot, Cornerstone Colorado and The Bridges Golf and Country Club are both located on the outskirts of Montrose and offer historic charm with modern amenities. Cornerstone, a 6,000-acre residential community, is home to a nearly 8,000-yard, par-72 course designed by Greg Norman and an all-encompassing practice facility, which includes a family pitch-n-putt course. The grandeur of the Norman course is complemented by a slew of other amenities, including a resort-style swimming pool, stables, more than 20 miles of hiking trails and access to a slope-side member’s lounge in Telluride. Housing options reflect the diversity of the natural surroundings and comprise golf cabins, 20-plus-acre ranch properties and estate homesteads. Homesites begin at \$300,000, and golf cabins are available from \$2.6 million.

Nearby, The Bridges boasts an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus design on a 400-acre panoramic property. And the homes (starting at \$400,000) take full advantage of their view-heavy location. —*N.B. EW*

to learn more

The Bridges Golf and Country Club,
970.252.1010, www.montrosebridges.com.

Cornerstone Colorado,
877.855.7273, www.cornerstonecolorado.com.

Montrose Chamber of Commerce,
970.249.5000, www.montrosechamber.com.

CORNERSTONE COLORADO



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