

**TETON RIDGE RANCH**

# SKINNYski

## IN STYLE

BY GIGI RAGLAND

**Luxury Nordic retreats across the Rockies**

**W**hen it comes to skiing, the downhill discipline is most often associated with staying at big luxury hotels and condos, while the Nordic style is more prone to a rustic experience where one stays in simple accommodations. Times have changed.

From the Rocky Mountains of the U.S. on up to our Canadian neighbors, a number of beautiful Nordic properties are luxurious in amenities and the snowy playgrounds they provide to guests. Some are full-service hotels that offer spas and a variety of dining experiences, while others offer intimate settings tucked away in the woods. If you're looking to plan a Nordic ski getaway this winter, read on for some special destinations around the West.

### THE RICH UNCLE'S HOME AWAY FROM HOME

#### **Teton Ridge Ranch, Teton, Idaho**

It can't get much better than this: a sprawling mountain lodge surrounded by some of the West's most scenic landscape including Grand Targhee National Forest, and Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. It's the kind of place you wished that your uncle owned. Why? Because you'd be there every chance you got. For starters, there's 30K of groomed Nordic trails right out your door. And the staff knows how to please. The ski guide makes suggestions each morning based on the type of activity you'd like to do. He even takes guests telemark skiing in nearby Grand Targhee.

In the lodge, each of the five guest suites is uniquely decorated with original artwork by local artists. Come nightfall, when you're ready to turn in, there's a tasty treat waiting for you in your room. It might be a chunky yummy cookie or a homemade truffle, just like your mom or auntie would make.

**Favorite Trail:** Teton Ridge & Valley View Loop. With its rolling five miles of forested terrain with mountain outlooks make this is a great scenic beginner/intermediate trail. [Tetonridge.com](http://Tetonridge.com)

### IN THE WILDS OF THE WASATCH

#### **Sundance Resort, Provo Canyon, Utah**

Sundance, the retreat, originated in 1969 by Robert Redford as an experiment in environmental stewardship and artistic expression. Today, you can feast your eyes on 6,000 acres of protected wilderness while enjoying the alpine and Nordic facilities of Sundance, the resort.

The location was a perfect rendezvous point to reconnect with my brother and enjoy a little weekend R & R. His goal was to learn how to cross-country ski; mine was to ski a little, but also discover all the relaxing elements of Sundance. As I headed over to the Art Shack for my jewelry-making class, my brother drove the few miles to the Nordic Center for his first-ever cross-country ski lesson.

I worried he might not like it as much as alpine skiing as I hammered away at a silver bracelet. But when I walked into our cottage a few hours later, where he sat warming his toes in front of the fireplace, he blurted out to my pleasant surprise, "What a great sport, I don't know why I didn't learn cross-country skiing earlier!" He was looking forward to demonstrating his new skills the next day when we would take to the 26 kilometers of groomed trails together.

**Favorite Trail:** Middle Earth. This easy-going trail was a hit with my brother. He mastered the herringbone technique on the uphill, and practiced how to fall properly after a few spills. [Sundanceresort.com](http://Sundanceresort.com)

### ECO-PARKITECTURE ELEGANCE

#### **Devil's Thumb Ranch, Tabernash, Colo.**

Sustainability and luxury go hand-in-hand at the refurbished and renovated Devil's Thumb Ranch. The old lodge was replaced by a stunningly constructed new



**SUNDANCE RESORT**

main lodge modeled after the “parkitecture” of a Pacific Northwest national park lodge, with 52 guestrooms and suites.

There are lots of reasons to feel good while vacationing at Devil’s Thumb. Foodies will appreciate the Rocky Mountain cuisine of executive chef Ken Ohlinger, who creates menus based from the sustainable produce, meat and fish he procures. Make sure to plan enough time to check out the new attractions in the main lodge. Little and big kids alike will enjoy the new game room and movie theatre. And don’t miss the new Ranch Creek Spa, which offers some of the finest natural and organic treatments in the Rockies.

And then there’s my favorite: take a dip in the geo-thermally heated indoor/outdoor pool and hot tub as you watch the snowflakes fall against the backdrop of the Continental Divide. This can be especially soothing after a day of cross-country or skate skiing the seemingly endless network of over 100 kilometers of trails.

**Favorite Trails:** Friends & Screamer. Work your way up near Marker Hill vista and cruise around the Friends intermediate loop, then discover the advanced Screamer for thrills and, hopefully, no spills.

[Devilsthumbbranch.com](http://Devilsthumbbranch.com)



**DEVIL'S THUMB RANCH**

**VISTA VERDE RANCH**



**A COZY RANCH RESPITE  
Vista Verde Ranch, Steamboat Springs, Colorado**

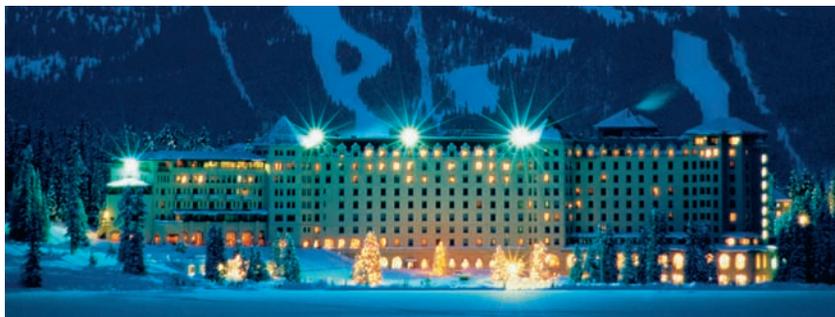
The champagne powder is famous in Steamboat, and at Vista Verde Ranch you’ll have plenty of it. Typically, the area sees about 250–300 inches of cumulative snowfall; winter 2008 saw over 400 inches. While the Ranch offers guided backcountry ski touring, there are also 20K of groomed trails to explore.

Morning breakfasts at the main log house prepare you for an active day. Fresh blueberry pancakes branded with the VVR logo were my favorite. At breakfast, you can expect the friendly ski guides to make the rounds at each table and ask: “So what would you like to do today?” You can ski touring, sledding, snowshoeing, skate or Nordic skiing, or saddle up for a horseback ride. The options are endless.

**Favorite Trail:** Hole in the Wall. Getting to this backcountry trail is part of the fun: it’s a zippy snowmobile ride out to the start. How can you go wrong if it’s one of the guide’s favorite spots, too? Breathtaking scenery awaits you on this intermediate/advanced trail.

[Vistaverde.com](http://Vistaverde.com)

**CALLAGHAN BACKCOUNTRY SKI LODGE**



**CHATEAU LAKE LOUISE**

Devil's Thumb photos: Courtesy of Devil's Thumb Ranch; Sundance photos: Adam Bourne; Vista Verde photos: Gig England; Callaghan photos: Courtesy of Callaghan Backcountry Ski Lodge; Chateau Lake Louise photo: Alberta Tourism

B.C.'S BEST-KEPT BACKCOUNTRY  
SECRET

**Callaghan Backcountry Ski Lodge,  
Callaghan Valley, British Columbia,  
Canada**

Smack-dab in the heart of the Coastal snowbelt guarantees Callaghan Valley abundant snowfalls and a reliable snowpack, which makes Callaghan Backcountry Lodge irresistible with its remote, pristine wilderness setting. The lodge is only accessible by ski-in, snowmobile, snow coach, dog sled or helicopter.

Besides the groomed Nordic trails, the lodge has plenty of backcountry routes that make it one of the best places in BC to go ski touring. It works with Whistler Alpine Guides Bureau to provide an Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) guiding service to alpine ski touring guests.

**Favorite Trail:** Wild Spirit Trail. This is one of the two main access routes to the lodge and is 12.5K. It's considered an aggressive black diamond trail with very steep hills. Advanced and expert skiers love this trail as it's a classic introduction to the West Coast forest ecosystem with majestic old growth trees towering overhead.

**Callaghancountry.com**

HISTORIC LAKESIDE CHATEAU  
**Chateau Lake Louise, Banff National  
Park, Alberta, Canada**

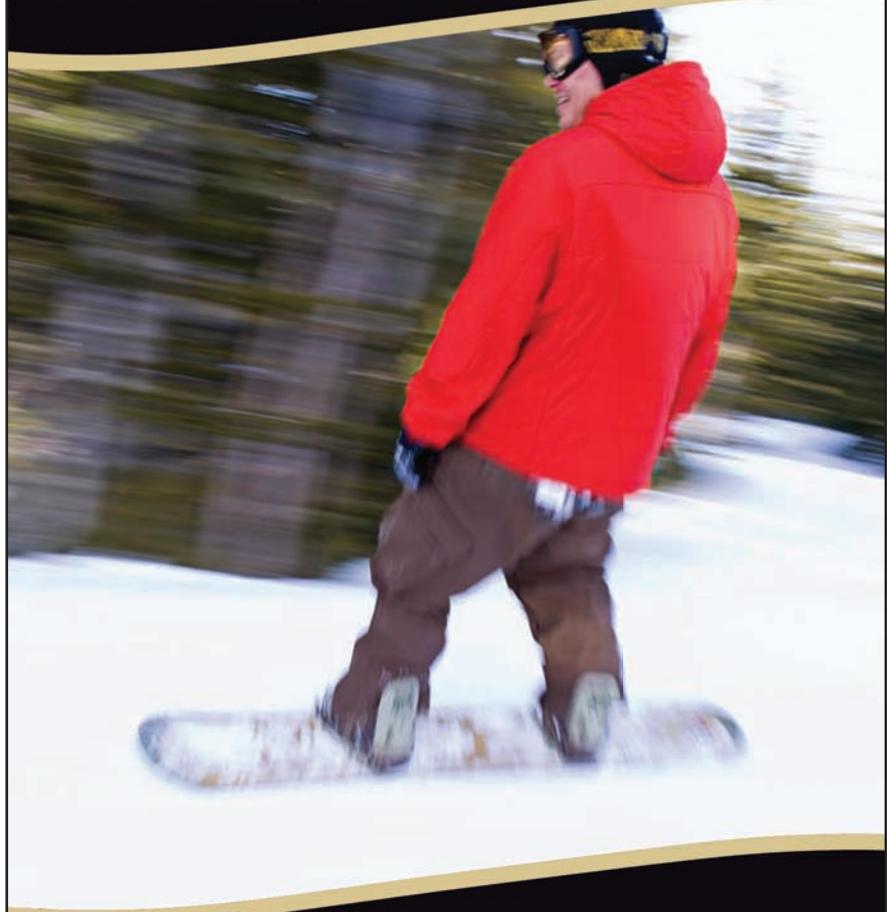
The setting is storybook. A palatial chateau overlooking a World Heritage Site—Lake Louise—and just beyond it sits Victoria Peak with its hanging glaciers. And to stay at the luxurious Chateau grants the opportunity to revel in the ambience of the environment.

Hotel guests can strap on their Nordic skis right outside the doors of Chateau Lake Louise and glide across the frozen lake to connecting trails ringing the Chateau. The Nordic Center provides expert guides that make the experience even more enjoyable by providing tips, advice, snacks and hot drinks. Outside of the hotel's boundaries are numerous trails that will challenge even the most intrepid Nordic enthusiast.

**Favorite Trail:** Fairview Loop. A moderate 7.5K of rolling terrain fringed by forest with glimpses of Lake Louise ending with an exhilarating, winding downhill run.

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