

*For Sunday Paper*

**Telluride: Colorado's Least-Crowded, Most Charismatic Resort Town**  
**By Suzanne Wright**

Telluride isn't easy to get to, but unlike some journeys, it's well worth the trouble. In this remote burg, you'll find laid-back mountain elegance without the glitz of Aspen or the long lift lines of Vail.

Founded in 1878, Telluride is nestled in the San Juan peaks of the Rocky Mountains. A former silver and gold mining town, it now hosts a "white gold rush," with top-notch terrain for beginners, intermediates and expert skiers. Whether you're a beginner or more advanced, their innovative teaching techniques help you get the most out of your time on the mountain.

With just over 2,200 fulltime residents, Telluride is an alpine village at an elevation of 8,725 feet with impeccably restored, multicolored Victorian houses. Just eight blocks wide and 12 blocks long, you don't need a car; you can easily walk the picturesque streets framed by snowy peaks (the nearest stoplight is 45 miles away). I take in the wintry landscape: icicles hanging from the rooflines, bare aspens, the majestic white peaks.

Mountain Village is where the slope action takes place. At 9,540 feet, it's a full-blown resort development, complete with condominiums and luxury hotels, shopping and dining. Family-friendly, both Telluride and Mountain Village are connected by a free, 15-minute gondola ride that operates from 7 a.m. until midnight (complete with wool blankets to keep you warm).

Most of the action after dark is in town. The Camel's Garden, a contemporary property (32 rooms, eight condominiums) has an unbeatable location right at the base of the Telluride gondola, a warm and friendly staff, continental breakfast, wine and cheese in the afternoon, valet ski storage and a 25-foot hot tub with spectacular views of the San Juans. My room has a four-poster bed, a marble bath with oversize tub, Aveda toiletries and—best of all—a sitting room with a gas fireplace.

Telluride boasts more good restaurants per person than any resort in Rockies. Honga's Lotus Petal, serves a wide variety of Asian dishes, including a refreshing cucumber salad, minced chicken dumplings and luscious Thai coconut green curry with eggplant, snow peas and shrimp. At cozy Rustico, I nosh on robust polenta with sausage in a spicy marinara and a musky fettuccine with creamy mushroom sauce. Funky and fantastic La Cocina de Luz is the place for a hearty breakfast of *migas*, eggs scrambled with corn tortilla chips, green chilies, tomatoes and cheese served with black beans and potatoes. Allred's, at gondola Station St. Sophia, is one of the best restaurants in town, according to *USA Today*, *Gourmet* and *The Wine Spectator*. The pumpkin seed crusted quail with winter squash puree, cardamom and espresso rack of lamb with dried black currant bread pudding and a cajeta flan are all superb.

The next day, I go snowshoeing, the fastest-growing winter sport in the U.S. It's low-impact exercise, akin to walking in your dad's too-big shoes. In the woods, it's quiet and pristine; the tracks of snowshoe hare and squirrel are the only demarcation in the powder. The hoar frost is soul stirring, crystalline beauty; the silence mesmerizing. Back in my room, a fireplace warming my calves, I sip bourbon and toast my winter getaway.

### **If You Go**

Almost every outdoor activity you can imagine, including sledding, heli skiing, horseback riding, snowboarding and snowmobiling in the winter. If you are traveling with kids, check out [www.telluridekids.com](http://www.telluridekids.com) before you leave and check into the Mountain Village Activity Center upon your arrival.

**When to Go:** Telluride is a year-round destination. Locals have a saying: "Come for the winter, stay for the summer."

**Where to Stay:** Camel's Garden, [www.camelsgarden.com](http://www.camelsgarden.com) or 1-888-772-2635.

**Where to Eat:** Honga's, 970-728-5134; Rustico, 970-728-4046; La Cocina de Luz, 970-728-9355; Allred's, 970-728-7474.

**What to Do:** World-class Telluride Ski & Golf Company has nearly 600 instructors in high season, [www.tellurideskiresort.com](http://www.tellurideskiresort.com) and offers snowshoe tours and ski instruction.

**More Information:** Visit [www.telluride.com](http://www.telluride.com) for vacation planning information.