

NEW YEAR'S BRUNCH! Truffled Eggs+Caviar+Blinis

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The West Lives Here

MOUNTAIN MODERN

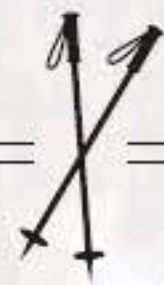
*Smart ski chalets designed
for easygoing holidays*

**An
Inspired
Whistler
Getaway**

**Luxe Living
at Home in
the Rockies**

**Plus
Innovative
Design in
Alberta**





POWDER *PLAY*

*WE HIT THE
SLOPES TO UNCOVER
THE BEST NEW RUNS,
THE COOLEST GEAR AND
THE HEART-POUNGING
VERTICAL DROP YOU'LL
TALK ABOUT FOR YEARS
TO COME. STRAP ON
YOUR SKIS—THE SEASON
STARTS NOW.*

Ski Free

There's something about the perfect powder of Crested Butte that makes every turn feel expertly executed.

GET DOWN UP HIGH

The double whammy of Aspen and Crested Butte covers every skiing base from luxe après to knee-knocking steeps—and everything in between.

by **ANICKA QUIN**

A COUPLE OF days into my tour de Aspen, I was handed a bottle of Champagne. We'd stopped for lunch at Cloud 9, the resort's celebrated mid-mountain, Swiss-inspired restaurant (the former ski patrol shack now dishes out the likes of elk stroganoff, raclette and fondue), and the music had just started to get, well, loud and '80s. Dead or Alive rang over the loudspeakers, and two fifty-something women jumped up to dance. By the time "Blurred Lines" hit, the room exploded—as did a few expertly distributed bottles of Champagne, over the crowd.

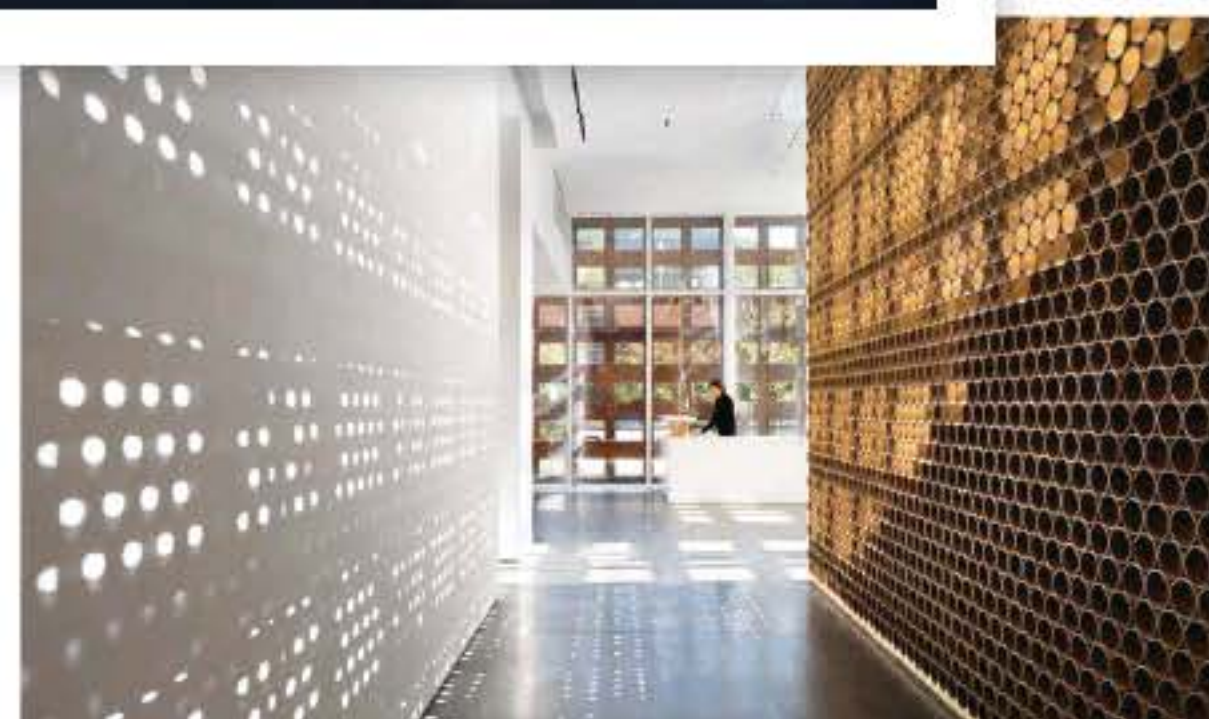
And then we skied home.

Ah, Aspen. The legendary ski resort has the ski vacation down to an art. From the dry powder dusting the hills that makes you feel like a better skier (as I discovered once I came back to the wet coastal stuff in my backyard) to the mandatory refuelling breaks of mile-high apple strudel at Bonnie's restaurant on Ajax Mountain, to the impromptu afternoon dance parties at Cloud 9, this time fuelled with stronger stuff than strudel, it's a ski resort that will have



Snow Job

Aspen's hills (left) are the stuff of legends. Crested Butte (right, top and bottom) is a photo op waiting to happen.



ART OF SKIING

Zippering off to go skiing doesn't usually count as a cultural excursion, but our deep-pocketed friends down in Aspen might be changing that. This season sees the opening of the **Aspen Art Museum** (above), designed by 2014 Pritzker Prize-winning architect **Shigeru Ban** and featuring ultra-contemporary pieces by the likes of Martin Creed, Yves Klein and Cai Guo-Qiang. Next season will see the opening of the **Audain Art Museum** in Whistler, with its Patkau-designed building housing a more classical collection that prominently features Emily Carr and E.J. Hughes. aspenartmuseum.org; audainartmuseum.com

you planning your return visit before you've finished your first one. There's no faux Swiss village but an original mining town at its base, dotted with Prada stores and microbreweries, celebrities and ski bums. That study in contrasts—fur boots in the village and locals hiking up the mountain under their own steam—only adds to its appeal.

And Just Around That Mountain

Good things come to those who wait, yes? Well, the four-hour-plus windy trip through a mountain pass to Crested Butte is bound to have great rewards—and the curse that is CB's white-knuckle drive results in just what you'd hope for. Stock up on Gravl and brave the way in, and you'll be one of only a handful on the mountain that day. Yes, there's loads of extreme terrain for those who roll that way (the drive in wets that whistle for me), but also huge swaths of cruisy blues that seem to always be in sunshine. It also boasts the best ski town in America—and on a snowy day, wandering through its indie shops and restaurants, it's hard to argue that title. Warm up over a wood-fired slice from Secret Stash pizzeria (go for the Notorious F.I.G.: mozzarella, blue and asiago with prosciutto and mission figs), and cool down again with a scoop of Ants on a Log ice cream from Third Bowl (turns out celery and peanut butter is the new Reese's). Wrap up the night under resin antlers with a winter squash cocktail (vodka, butternut squash and spices) from the Dogwood Cocktail Cabin—it's at least another day before you're on the road again.



The Comps

ASPEN

STAY

The recently renovated **Limelight Hotel** is central; many rooms have terraces kitted out with cozy sofas and great views. limelighthotel.com

CRESTED BUTTE

You're here to ski, so stay on-mountain: the **Lodge** puts you 50 yards from the slope in spacious, if straightforward, rooms. skicb.com



APRÈS-SKI

Ask for an Aspen Crud at **J-Bar** at the Hotel Jerome: it's a Prohibition-era drink that's essentially a milkshake—with a bourbon kick. hoteljerome.com

Montanya's distills their own rum on-site (CB's great water source is what drew the owners here from Silverton, Colorado), and makes bombproof cocktails: go for the White Room, made with orgeat and cream. montanyarum.com

GEAR

Three local boys created **Strafe**—clothes designed to work for Aspen-bred hearty souls who hike up the mountain before they ski down. strafeouterwear.com

If you're flying to a destination, carrying skis is a drag. It's also the perfect opportunity to test out a sweet pair of **demo skis** before you buy your next pair—talk to the gear shop about their favourite set that day, and you're in for a treat. skicb.com

CAFFEINE FIX

Bonnie's on Ajax Mountain is a local fixture: 34 years of high-altitude baking. Make it a late breakfast with a side of oatmeal pancakes to your cuppa.

Townie Books is paired with the **Rumors Coffee and Tea House**—grab a white mocha and curl up with Lena Dunham's latest. towniebookscb.com

FUEL



The fish is as fresh as it is on the coast at **Matsuhisa**, famed chef Nobu Matsuhisa's local outpost. matsuhisaaspen.com

Secret Stash pizzeria is legendary all over Colorado—and inspires many a trip to CB just to get a slice of the winner of the World Pizza Challenge, the Notorious F.I.G. stashpizza.com

IN THE KNOW

If there's four inches of powder, **Element 47 in The Little Nell** dishes out the Three Little Pigs: porchetta, pork belly and sausage gravy on French toasted waffles—with a sunny-side egg on top. You're working it off, right? thelittlenell.com

The **Crested Butte Museum** is a surprisingly sweet look into the history of skiing; located in "Tony's Conoco," it's still stocked with many of the hardware items from Tony's time managing the store. crestedbuttemuseum.com

IF YOU DON'T SKI

The **Aspen Center for Environmental Studies** offers guided snowshoe tours at an easy pace for the elevation-challenged. aspennature.org

A quick cat ride takes you to **Uley's Sleigh Ride dinner**: a firelit, five-course dinner mid-mountain in a warm and woodsy cabin. skicb.com/uleys

Great Gear

THE WORKHORSE

It was 10 years ago that the **Völkl Mantra** was first introduced, and no ski has since dominated a field like this Teutonic workhorse. Before, you needed fat skis for powder, shaped for carving, but the Mantra ushered in the era of the all-mountain, a category it still rules. volkl.com



VINTAGE COOL

The last time we got excited about poles was three years before never, but late last year we spotted someone rocking these bamboo numbers from **Soul Poles** and we knew what was on our Christmas list. Twenty-five percent stronger than aluminum, good for the environment and so, so cool. From \$125. soulpoles.com

SWEET RIDE

Burton's **Family Tree Landlord Split** snowboard's innovative structural design allows the backcountry rider to scale inclines with ease and float through even the deepest of powder. Versatile enough for diverse terrain and decorated in paint-like graphics, this deck makes for a visually stunning snowboard. \$850. burton.com

