



CHRISTOPHER MUTHER/GLOBE STAFF

The Springs Motel in the Berkshires.

This Berkshires motel is *not quite ready* for its close-up

NEW ASHFORD — Who can resist the charm of a classic midcentury motor lodge? The sleek lines of the roadside architecture were combined with the new and exciting phenomenon of an affordable vacation just off the freeway. As a result, the motels of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s sprang up like weeds between cracks in the asphalt. Often anchored by a restaurant, a gift shop, and, of course, a pool.

But as midcentury architecture and motor lodges fell out of favor, many of these gems were bulldozed to make room for strip malls, big box stores, and generic family-style dining chains. Some were abandoned as nature had its way with forgotten swimming pools and miles of deserted shag carpets.

In the Berkshires, the Springs Motel, a 1959 motor lodge with a lobby straight out of Palm Springs, faced a similar fate until it was purchased by 34-year-old Lindsey Kurowski last year. Along with three of her siblings



Lindsey Kurowski, owner of the Springs Motel in New Ashford, stands in a room of the hotel before it was renovated.



CHRISTOPHER MUTHER

(plus contributions from her grandmother), she renovated the motel on the Magnolia Network show “Inn the Works.” The reality show followed her as she took the crusty Springs from an eyesore to a polished jewel.

At least, that’s the way it looked on TV. But the motel I saw on the show didn’t match what I saw when I checked in last week. When I stepped into the room, it didn’t possess the charm of the spaces on the show. Instead, the first thing I noticed was a single bent wire hanger dangling sadly on a rod that had clearly been there since 1959 and given a

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SURVEY SAYS

The worst of some recent ‘best’ lists

By Chris Morris
GLOBE STAFF

Welcome back to *Survey Says*, in which we share some of the random, absurd, and occasionally useful polls from the world of travel.

You might think a survey that ranks “the best cities for sandwich lovers” would list places with the actual best-tasting and most innovative sandwiches, but that’s not how these things work, sadly. There was no taste-testing, no talking to local food writers, no on-the-street interviewing going on for Apartment Guide’s survey released earlier this month.

For many so-called “best” lists, it often comes down to quantity over quality, data over human dealings. And if you dig into the reports a little, you’ll eventually learn that.



ILLUSTRATION ALLY RZESA/GLOBE STAFF

“There are 700 cities and towns in the U.S. with a population of more than 50,000, and every one of them loves its sandwiches,” Apartment Guide tells us. “But, we needed to find out which of them were the best cities for sandwiches. *Now, this isn’t where the best sandwiches are, but where access to and availability of sandwiches are second to none.* So, for each of those 700 cities, we researched and uncovered every sin-

gle deli and sandwich shop within the city limits. That’s an incredible 56,000 sandwich spots in all.”

So if you’re looking to relocate and the main factor in your decision is how easy it will be to grab a chicken Caesar wrap on move-in day, you’ll be interested in these results: San Francisco topped the list with 117.03 delis per 100,000 people and 20 delis per square mile, followed by Sarasota, Fla.; Wilmington, Del.; Miami; Jersey City; Pensacola, Fla.; Albany; Berkeley, Calif.; Marietta, Ga.; and Washington, D.C. in the top 10. Boston ranked way down at No. 43 — right behind New York City — with 57.73 delis per 100,000 people and eight delis per square mile.

Another recent “best” list that showed up in my inbox promised “the best winter holiday destinations” — both cold and

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New winter sports gear worth checking out

By Kari Bodnarchuk
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Time to get winter sports gear ready for the season and replace anything that’s worn out or needs upgrading. Some of this year’s new gear reflects the push to provide access to underrepresented groups — clothing for plus-size adventurers and equipment specifically geared to female-identifying winter sports enthusiasts.

Ski and snowboard gear continues to get lighter and more versatile, able to perform like champs on groomers and in the side country — and beyond. Speaking of champs, check out the new line of skis launched this year by New England born-and-raised superstar skier Bode Miller.

Mitts provide comfort and convenience

You’ll wish you could crawl inside Lek’s new Glace 3D Women’s Mitt. These waterproof

mittens have a cushiony sleeping bag-like outer layer (with extra PrimaLoft insulation) and a soft interior with a glove design that keeps your fingers toasty and cocooned in comfort. The tips of the inner finger channels are attached to the mitts, so the liner won’t bunch up or slip out when you remove your hands. The sheepskin leather palms provide good grip and drawstring closures around the wrists help keep out the snow and cold. Pair

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GETTING READY FOR ‘PI’

‘Life of Pi’ actor and Emerson grad Rajesh Bose discusses eating anything on vacation and packing light

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PENNSYLVANIA

HOLIDAYS IN THE BRANDYWINE VALLEY

These elegant Gilded Age estates and gardens pull out all the decorative stops in the winter months

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Left: The parking lot in front of the rooms at the Springs Motel has been turned into a yard for games and relaxing. Below: A single wire hanger greeted the writer in his room. Right: The Honeymoon Suite. Bottom: The lobby.



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This Berkshires motel is still in the works

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slap-dash coat of paint. There were things, quite a few things, that I was willing to overlook: Poorly patched-up walls and bad paint jobs, the tiny freezer in the mini-fridge with enough built-up frost to save the polar bears, and hideous fluorescent lighting. What I couldn't forgive was the bathroom.

I admire that Kurowski kept the original tile, but I couldn't admire the mold. There was mold in the grout and there was mold on the caulk that was flaking away from around the 1959 aluminum windows and crevices surrounding the tub. The toilet was not flushed, and I'll say no more about that.

What in the name of Chip and Joanna Gaines was going on here? I was the only person staying at the hotel that night. There was no staff, just a number to text if I needed anything. To his credit, the gent manning the phone was very responsive. But as a result, I was only able to get a quick peek into the lobby. The area in front of the lobby was transformed into a beer garden. The interior of the trailer that was brought in to be used as a bar for the beer garden was a mess (granted, I shouldn't have been in the trailer, but still...).

In its favor, my room had a comfortable new bed and a new television, plus some fresh furniture. (I wasn't thrilled about the fake plant, but that's a topic for another day.) Also, I couldn't argue with the price of \$140 for the night. But what I expected was something more in

line with Tourists, another motor lodge in the Berkshires that was given a makeover. A pretty spectacular makeover.

I decided the only fair thing to do was to call Kurowski after my stay (as per Globe policy, the hotel didn't know a reporter was staying at the hotel while I was there, and I paid the published rate) and find out what was going on with the Springs Motel. Why was it not the same place I saw on "Inn the Works"?

To her credit, Kurowski was apologetic and took responsibility for the problems that I encountered. Staffing issues have plagued the Springs Motel, just as they have plagued others across the entire hospitality industry. Supply chain issues have also held up things like new windows. But perhaps the biggest issue is perception. While "Inn the Works" presented the Springs Motel as a tidy, finished product by the end of the season, Kurowski said it's still very much a work in progress.

"It's like 'Hey, here's the stuff we did for TV, isn't it great? And now here's the 80 percent that I still need to do over time.' I'm not independently wealthy. So every year I'll just reinvest back into the place," she said. "It's a place that's in process, and I think that that is something that people should get when they watch the show. I come across as a person who's like 'Hey, I've done this before!' But I'm figuring it out and constantly learning.

"I'm still proud to have it open," she said. "We have a ton of people who



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came that really liked it. We had a really busy season, and I think a lot of that is because you can't find a lot of affordable rooms out here."

She was right about that. I scanned reviews of the hotel, and a large percentage of guests gave it high marks. Many were pleased with the outside lawn, which is filled with intimate seating areas, picnic tables, and lawn games. She wisely took the parking spaces in front of the rooms, and turned asphalt into a grass-covered recreation area. Perhaps my perception of the property would have been different if I

had been here during the summer or fall when the lawn was green and filled with people.

A stay at Springs Motel offers a rare look behind the curtain of home renovation shows. What viewers usually see on screen are finished spaces, staged and sparkling. What they don't see are the rooms that weren't renovated, or only partially renovated. The difference here is that at a motel, we get to see those unfinished spaces. We see the cracks in the facade — or at least the mold in the bathrooms.

It's important to mention that not

every room in the Springs Motel was like mine. Two of the cabins on the property were finished, along with a larger room known as the Honeymoon Suite. But sacrifices are made for the magic of television. For instance, when "Inn the Works" started airing, the liquor license for the outdoor beer garden had yet to be approved, despite a scene showing the family imbibing. She said the motel has since obtained its liquor license. But the grind of making renovations on a tight filming schedule makes it impossible to complete everything, she said.

Kurowski, who bought the property for \$833,000 last year, estimated that she has so far spent close to \$500,000 on renovations, and that's just the beginning. Earlier this month she took down part of the hotel that was so dilapidated it couldn't be saved. These are all the not-so-pretty things that cost money, but don't appear on TV. She still has a lot to do. But the good news for the Springs Motel is that it has an owner who cares about the property and is looking at it as a long-range project.

Normally I would permanently write off a place like the Springs Motel, but given her enthusiasm and commitment, I'm curious to see what Kurowski will be able to accomplish. I'll sneak back in a year or two and see if this motel has been given the love it fully deserves. Stay tuned.

Christopher Muther can be reached at christopher.muther@globe.com.

Snow sports gear continues to get lighter and more inclusive

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these Trigger-style mitts with a pole that features Lek's new 3D grip, such as the Carbon 14 3D (\$169.95), and you'll appreciate the pole's wider multi-directional release mechanism, which makes it quicker and easier to engage. \$119.95. www.leki.com/us.

A high-tech, high-visibility helmet
POC's new Levator MIPS helmet blends comfort, convenience, and a crazy-wide field of view. The Levator helmet offers good interior padding, 28 air holes on top and two slits up front for ventilation (and glove-friendly slides for adjusting vents), and top-of-the-line safety features: built-in MIPS to protect your brain in case of a crash and RECCO locator technology. What makes this helmet a winner, though, is the built-in visor, which offers a remarkable 180-degree field of vision (you'll appreciate this on tight runs and busy days), stays attached to the helmet (a great feature if you're one to drop, scratch, or misplace your goggles), and has a POC Clarity lens (developed with Carl Zeiss optics). The helmet also comes with a handy magnetic buckle on the chin strap, removable ear pads, and an adjustable fit system. \$550. <https://na.pocsports.com>.



A lightweight touring pole
Blackcrows' new Duos Freebird touring poles are dependable, durable, easily adjustable, and lighter than some all-carbon poles. These telescoping poles have an aluminum top tube and carbon lower tube and weigh in at just 16 ounces per pair. They adjust from 110 to 140 centimeters (using the quick-release Power Lock 3.0 system on the shaft), giving you a wide range of heights to accommodate changing slopes and conditions. The 13-inch-long foam grip lets you quickly shift your hand position

without adjusting pole length. The poles also have 90mm flexible baskets, tungsten carbide tips, and an aluminum cap on top so poles stay put when planted in the snow (cap side down) on steep slopes. They're at home in bounds and off the grid. \$164.95. www.blackcrows.com.

Plus sizes provide greater access
Outdoor Research extended its plus sizing to 4X this year, giving more people access to technical clothing suitable for skiing, snowshoeing, and other outdoor adventures. The Women's Snowcrew Jacket-Plus and Women's Snowcrew Pants-Plus work great for winter fun. The wind- and waterproof jacket comes in a relaxed fit that makes layering underneath easy. It has an adjustable hood that works with most helmets, pit zips that help with ventilation, a powder skirt, an insulated draft collar at the back of the neck, cozy hand pockets, and a small arm pocket for your lift pass. The pants have some built-in stretch, waist adjustment tabs and belt loops for dialing in the fit for varying conditions, thigh vents, and zippered hand pockets (one of which has an avalanche beacon clip). Men's Snowcrew jacket and pants available up to 3X. \$199 pants, \$329 jacket. www.outdoorresearch.com.

Slay the powder in your Ninja Suit
What makes Airblaster's one-piece hooded base layer better than your parents' thermal underwear? The fitted Classic Ninja Suit hugs your body but offers flexible comfort and breathability thanks to the four-way stretch wicking fabric, while the one-piece hooded style prevents blasts of cold air or snow from getting up your back and down your neck. The suit, available in men's, women's, and youth sizes, also has a long chest zip, a drawstring waist cord, thumb loops on the sleeves, a ponytail opening (on the women's suit), and a clever 350-degree-access zipper that rings your waist and makes bathroom stops relatively quick and easy (the

men's suit also has a front fly). The Ninja Suit comes in fun colors (check out the Far Out starry design), and hoodless and merino wool versions. Now start practicing your ninja ski moves for the slopes. \$79.95-\$269.95. <https://myairblaster.com>.



A boot bag for little rippers
If kids can ride the lifts and rip down the slopes, they can carry their own gear to and from the mountain. Dakine's Youth Boot Pack 45L Backpack fits all the essentials in an easy-to-carry bag that makes it a cinch for kids to pack and compartmentalize their gear — and find everything when needed. The one-size-fits-all pack has adjustable shoulder straps, a protective tarp-lined boot compartment, a main compartment for helmet and lunch, and a front pocket for a hat, gloves, hand warmers, and other small items. The pack is made of recycled polyester material with a water-repellent finish. \$80. www.dakine.com.

This backpack could save your life
If your ski, snowboard, snowshoe, or snowmobiling adventures take you into terrain that could slide, pack along Backcountry Access's new BCA Float E2 avalanche airbag, available in 25- and 35-liter versions. Both waterproof packs have a large easy-access front pocket for your shovel and probe, a long side zipper for accessing the backpack's main compartment, and a handy Side Stash pocket that's reachable with the pack on and can hold climbing skins, gloves, a water bottle, or snacks. Pack your goggles in the lined outer pocket, your helmet in a stowable mesh holder, and your skis, snowboard, snowshoes, or ice axe on the back using compression straps. The Float E2 contains the new Alpride E2 system (significantly smaller and lighter than its predecessor), which

uses a supercapacitor — rather than a compressed air cartridge — to inflate the airbag, meaning you can fly with the pack for far-flung adventures and not have to worry about TSA restrictions. \$1,250-\$1,300. <https://backcountryaccess.com>.

Tip: To help eliminate barriers and enable more women to get professional avalanche training, BCA and the American Avalanche Association have teamed up to offer \$1,500 scholarships for women who want to earn their Professional Level 1 or Level 2 avalanche certification. Apply by Dec. 6 (contact jayne@avalanche.org).

A snowboard built for women
Weston Backcountry, also a leader in offering scholarships for women and underrepresented groups (and supporting backcountry safety and education, in general), has released its first women's-specific swallowtail snowboard, The Revel, available in 143, 148, and 153 cm. The lightweight, playful board suits smaller riders and comes to life after big dumps and in deep powder. The board's wide nose and setback stance allow the board to float while the tail makes it easy to initiate quick turns in the trees. British Columbia backcountry guide and artist Jessa Gilbert created the artwork for the topsheet, depicting waves rising above the Sea of Japan to the peak of Mount Rishiri, a powder lover's paradise. Some proceeds from board sales will provide avalanche education scholarships for female-identifying riders through a partnership between Weston and Canadian Powder Guiding. \$624 snowboard; \$949 splitboard. www.westonbackcountry.com.

A ski with a New England soul
If you need a one-quiver ski that's quick and lively — and at home on New England hardpack (yes, even ice), in the park, and on powdery slopes out west — consider Romp's new Zorro 100 skis. These all-mountain skis, handcrafted in

Crested Butte, Colo., suit riders that want a nimble ski for exploring everything from groomed trails to bumps and playful pockets of fun along the treeline. Romp founders Caleb and Morgan Weinberg grew up in Bath, N.H., and built these skis to handle the steep and cold conditions they experienced at their home mountain: Cannon. The Zorros can hold an edge on bulletproof snow yet offer a fun ride in powder conditions. They come in a wide range of sizes, from 155cm to 190cm. \$799. <https://rompskis.com>.

Meet Bode's new ski line
Bode Miller — the winningest male alpine ski racer in U.S. history — tapped his expertise from years on the slopes, his penchant for thinking outside the box, and his big-picture approach to problem solving to design skis that break the barriers. His new Peak Ski Company, co-founded with entrepreneur Andy Wirth, launched this year, offering four alpine and two crossover sidecountry skis. For New Englanders, the Peak 98 and the slightly lighter 98 SC are the perfect daily drivers that can rip on groomers, plow through powder and mashed potato-like conditions, and provide the quick response needed to maneuver trees. "They're hyper forgiving in any condition," Miller told the Globe. "They're easy and quick to move and they don't take a lot of energy to power up." What makes them unique: the reduced sidecut and the company's proprietary KeyHole Technology, in which the traditional metal in the front of the ski gets laser cut to create a softer shovel that eases into turns and plows through crud. The skis have a remarkable 24-meter turning radius and a long, gentle early rise for a smooth ride. "It's shockingly different, but more movable and easier to ski," says Miller. \$890, <https://peakskis.com>.

Kari Bodnarchuk can be reached at travelwriter@karib.us.