

Minding summer’s measured pace in Telluride

► **COLORADO**
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operated and Rowland didn’t disappoint. After a final steep climb, we heard and then saw Bear Creek Falls. Powered by spring snowmelt, water roared down the mountainside. We had barely let out a collective “ooh!” when the sky released a downpour of rain followed by a curious cross between snow, sleet, and hail that Rowland called “gropple.” It passed almost as quickly as it came and by the time we had retraced our path to town, the sun was shining.

Nature, indeed.

► **MOUNTAIN TIME**
Take a minute (or two) to catch Telluride’s laissez-faire vibe at www.boston.com/travel.

Even with the mercurial weather, most locals proclaim summer their favorite season. We were told repeatedly that people come to Telluride to ski in winter but decide to stay once they have experienced the lazier days of summer.

On a sunny afternoon, half the town’s dog population seemed to be dozing along the main drag, Colorado Avenue. The town’s 15 miles-per-hour speed limit underscores the measured pace, but most people hop the gondola for travel between Telluride (8,750 feet elevation) and the newer cluster of lodgings, restaurants, shops, and luxury homes at Mountain Village (9,500 feet). Visitors have to slow down to adjust to the altitude, which is not a bad thing, we found, as long as you drink plenty of water and go light on the wine.

We had eased our way into town at the Telluride Historical Museum. Exhibits trace area history from the Ute tribe that first established summer camps in the Telluride valley, to the 18th-century Spanish explorers, and on to the late 19th-century mining boom that spawned the current town. “It’s our history,” said Beth Roberts, assistant director, “but it also tells the American story. People came here with big dreams.” The most personal exhibit re-creates the tidy cabin of the “Tomboy Bride,” an intrepid Easterner who wrote a book about living in mining camps with her engineer husband.

When we left at closing time, Lauren Bloemsma, executive director, and her dog Shiprock joined us on a stroll through town. Many of the colorful Victorian-style homes were built between 1890 and 1910 when the town was flush with mining money. Bloemsma studied the now-million-dollar homes with a practiced eye. “You can identify later additions by the wider siding,” she said.

She led us past a row of tiny, brightly painted buildings: former “cribs” that were rented by prostitutes. They sit on Popcorn Alley, so named because the constant opening and closing of doors sounded like popcorn popping. “Fines on prostitution and gambling at one point supported the whole infrastructure of the town,” she said.

But Telluride has a more famous association with illegal activity. On June 24, 1889, Butch Cassidy held up the San Miguel Valley Bank — his first bank robbery.



PHOTOS BY PATRICIA HARRIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Clockwise from above: A gondola ride connects Telluride and Mountain Village; the mountains are never far from town; former “cribs” were rented by prostitutes on Popcorn Alley; local lore says Butch Cassidy frequented the bar at the New Sheridan Hotel.



bery. The Appaloosa Trading Co. (129 West Colorado), where you can buy tooled leather belts and Native American jewelry, occupies the original bank site, while the vault is ensconced at the Sun-glass HQ (201 West Colorado), in the building where the bank relocated after a fire.

Butch Cassidy still has a certain folk appeal. But what about modern celebrities? We had heard that Tom Cruise and Jerry Seinfeld have homes in the area. “Celebrity spotting is a non-event,” said Bloemsma. “If they’re looking to be recognized, they don’t come here. Nobody cares.”

The played-out mining town reinvented itself as a ski destination in the 1970s and a certain ski-bum, laissez-faire attitude prevails. The Last Dollar Saloon (100 East Colorado), in a former mining-era saloon and sporting hall, offers happy hour twice a day. A sign in the window pro-

claims, “Sorry, we’re open.” At the Friday farmers’ market, vendors sell tie-dyed T-shirts along with dog bones, bison and elk meat, and chocolate chip banana bread. The “free box,” a series of cubby holes along the sidewalk where people can leave and take clothing, sporting goods, and household items, speaks volumes about the town. “I know people who get their whole wardrobe from the free box,” Bloemsma said. She was mum on whether Cruise or Seinfeld ever makes donations.

With no celebrities in sight, we spent one morning in search of the spirit of the spunky Tomboy Bride. As we bounced along a rutted dirt road in an open-top four-wheel-drive Pinzgauer, we couldn’t imagine how horse-drawn wagons ever reached the mining camps. The mountain vistas almost distracted us from the sheer drop-off at the edge of the narrow road. “I’ve done this



trip 1,200 times,” driver Dave Rote assured us as he pointed out decayed miner’s cabins and hidden mining shafts. After about 4 miles, we reached the site of the Tomboy Mine. A few crumbling buildings are all that’s left of the camp where 900 people lived a hard life in an idyllic setting. “In the 1890s, they pumped \$62 million worth of ore out of these mountains,” Rote said. “Every 30 days the miners would go into town.”

Telluride’s street layout is virtually unchanged, so those isolated miners could probably still find their way to the New Sheridan Bar (231 West Colorado), reputed to be a Butch Cassidy watering hole. When we stopped in

one evening, we had the perfect low-key celebrity encounter. Geoffrey Scott, still handsome in his late 60s, is best known as the first husband of Krystle Carrington on “Dynasty,” a fame he wears lightly. “I was a ne’er-do-well,” he said with a shrug.

A native of Hollywood, Scott doesn’t seem to miss the bright lights. “This town is filled with the complexities of society,” he said.

And you can’t beat the mountain views. “You never know what lies around the next corner,” he mused. “There are not many places like that.”

Patricia Harris can be reached at harris.lyon@verizon.net.

If you go . . .

How to get there
Telluride Regional Airport has limited commercial air service and is frequently incapacitated by weather. Most travelers fly into Montrose Regional Airport and rent a car for the 90-minute drive to Telluride.

Getting around
A free gondola connects Telluride and Mountain Village. The ride takes about 15 minutes and operates daily 7 a.m.-midnight.

What to do
Telluride Historical Museum
201 West Gregory Ave.
970-728-3344
www.telluridemuseum.org
Tue-Sat 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Thu till 7, Sun 1-5. Adults \$5, seniors \$3.

BootDoctors
Le Chamonix Building
Mountain Village
970-728-8954
www.furtheradventures.com
Half-day guided hikes \$95 per person for groups of 4 or more.

Dave’s Mountain Tours
970-728-9749
www.telluridetours.com
Half-day tour; adults \$80, children \$60.

Where to stay
Inn at Lost Creek
119 Lost Creek Lane
Mountain Village
888-601-5678; 970-728-5678

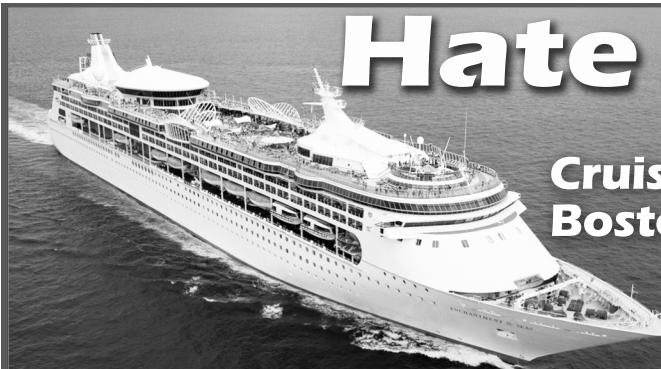
www.innatlostcreek.com
Mountain Village lodging combines rugged stone and timber accents with creature comforts. Each of the 32 suites includes a kitchen, fireplace, washer-dryer, and a steam shower that proved to be a near-cure for the effects of high altitude. Sunset-facing rooms overlook free Wednesday evening summer concerts. For spring and summer, studio suites begin at \$125, one-bedroom suites at \$225.

Where to eat and drink
Allred’s Restaurant
Saint Sophia Gondola Station
970-728-7474
Located at 10,551-foot elevation, the bar at this pricey restaurant features big windows with panoramic views. Bar opens daily at 5 p.m.

Siam Telluride
200 South Davis St.
970-728-6886

This local favorite serves light and spicy traditional Thai fare and unusual fusion dishes such as sliders seasoned with curry paste and apple salsa. Open daily for dinner. Entrees \$12.95-\$23.95.

9545 Restaurant & Bar
Inn at Lost Creek
Varied chile seasonings on grilled skirt steak, boneless baby back ribs, and grilled elk loin strike a strong Southwestern note on this menu for hearty eaters. Open daily for breakfast through dinner. Entrees \$19-\$30.



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Currents

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“Portrait of Dora Maar” will be exhibited in San Francisco.

Kennebunkport addition
Kennebunkport’s newest boutique hotel, Tides Beach Club, opens Thursday in a renovated century-old seaside property. The resort blends architectural elements of the historic

pancy, through June 23 for Sunday to Thursday stays; \$225-\$525 for Memorial Day weekend; and \$300-\$725 in July and August. 207-967-3757, www.tidesbeachclubmaine.com

Picassos in San Francisco
The traveling exhibition “Picasso: Masterpieces from the Musée National Picasso, Paris” began its world tour three years ago. It opens June 11 at San Francisco’s de Young Museum and runs through Oct. 9. The show features 150 paintings, sculptures, prints, and drawings by Pablo Picasso, including masterpieces from his expressionist, cubist, neoclassical, and surreal periods. Rates for day of/advance purchase visits: adults \$25/\$20, seniors \$22/\$17, students \$21/\$16, ages 6-17 \$15/\$10, under 6 free. Reduced tickets offered and extended hours on Wednesdays, June 15-Aug. 31. 415-750-3600, www.deyoungmuseum.org

KARI BODNARCHUK