

Explore

Big Sky

travel

SPECIAL SECTION

CENTRAL AMERICA 4000 miles

KAUAI 3000 miles

MOAB, UT 600 miles

SALMON, ID 300 miles

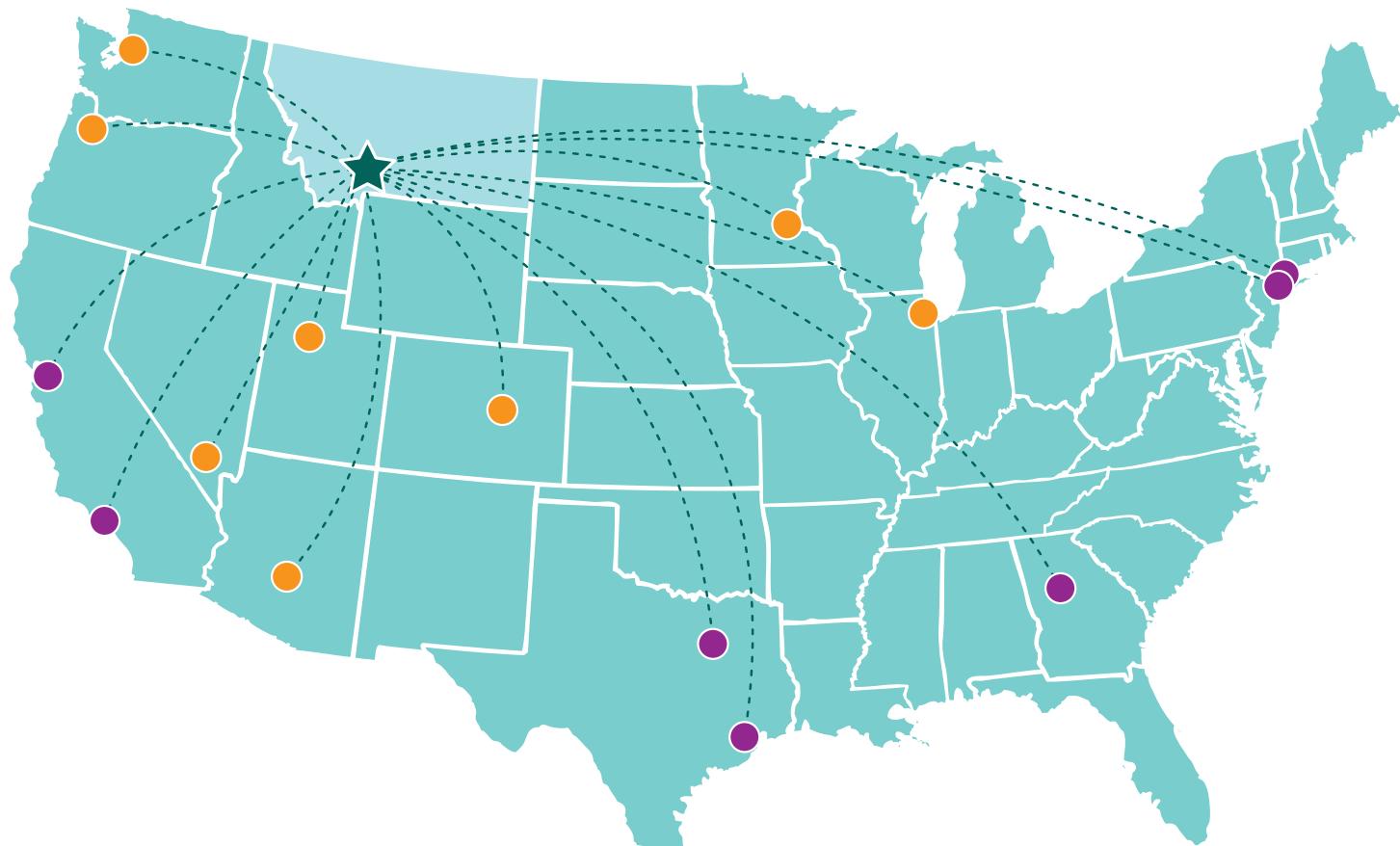
JACKSON, WY 150 miles

CHICO, MT 100 miles

YELLOWSTONE 50 miles

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In 2016, a record 1.1 million passengers passed through the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport, making it Montana's busiest airport. BZN services flights from Delta, United, Alaska Airlines, Allegiant Air, Frontier and American in addition to more than 3,500 chartered flights annually.



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Biking Jackson Hole

BY KRISTIN POPE
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

Whether you're looking for a teeth-rattling downhill ride or a tranquil family outing, the Jackson Hole Valley has something for every biker.

Families and beginners can enjoy paved paths and simple cross-country rides, while more adventurous riders can find thrills on downhill and backcountry routes.

Jackson Hole Mountain Resort's bike park—which opens June 10 for the summer season—is a great place for beginners and intermediates to take a lesson, hone their skills and gain confidence for downhill riding before venturing to Teton Pass's more challenging trails.

For advanced riders wanting to head straight to the goods, Teton Freedom Riders founder Kevin Kavanagh suggests the downhill-only Lithium Trail off the pass, or the 19-mile Cache-Game-West Game-Ferrins loop for a cross-country challenge.

"Biking in Jackson is unbelievable, because we have one of the best, most diversified trail systems in the country," Kavanagh said.

Maps and more information on paths and trails are available at friendsofpathways.org/resources.

Suggested rides

Paved paths

A network of pathways and roads connect Jackson, Wilson and Teton Village, including a pedestrian- and cyclist-only bridge over the Snake River. Grand Teton

National Park offers a popular family-friendly path from Moose to Jenny Lake, and riders of all ages and abilities will enjoy the views from the ride alongside the National Elk Refuge.

Cross-country mountain biking

Both Teton Pass and Jackson Hole Mountain Resort trails have seen major upgrades in recent years. The connector trail at JHMR links the resort's two cross-country trails forming an approximately 5-mile loop. JHMR beginners can enjoy the Saratoga Trail, while advanced riders will find technical challenges and jumps on True Grit. On Teton Pass, the Phillips Ridge and Arrow Trails are popular options.

Downhill and lift-accessed riding

JHMR offers lessons for beginners and intermediates on both cross-country and lift-accessed downhill trails. For advanced riders, there is plenty of adrenaline to be found here, or on Teton Pass with trails such as Lithium, Fuzzy Bunny and Jimmy's Mom, which offer technical terrain, big jumps and gaps.

Backcountry riding

Just outside of town, the Cache Creek area has backcountry riding for all abilities. The Cache Creek Sidewalk Trail to the Putt Putt Trail is perfect for beginners, while intermediate riders can link Putt Putt to the Hagen Trail. Looking for a longer ride? Head up the Cache Creek Sidewalk Trail to the Cache Creek Trail, and then around the back of Snow King to Game Creek, coming out south of town on Highway 89. Be aware that the Cache Creek Trail enters the Gros Ventre Wilderness at mile six, and bikes are not allowed beyond that point.

A version of this story first appeared in the summer 2013 issue of Mountain Outlaw magazine.

Where to stay, eat and play during a Jackson weekend getaway

EBS STAFF

First time in Jackson? Don't sweat it. EBS has you covered with our staff picks on where to stay, eat and, of course, play!

STAY – HOTEL JACKSON

A few blocks off Jackson's downtown square, Hotel Jackson is a 58-bedroom boutique inn with a trendy design, relaxing rooms and attentive service in an incredible location. Rooms at Hotel Jackson are comfortable, quiet and appointed with the rustic, modern mountain luxuries you seek. Hotel Jackson's lobby also features a quaint and quality restaurant, FIGS, serving Mediterranean-inspired, Wyoming fare.

120 N. Glenwood Street, Jackson, Wyoming. hoteljackson.com (307) 733-2200

BRUNCH – CAFÉ GENEVIEVE

Located in a historic log cabin one block east of Town Square, Café Genevieve strikes the perfect pitch of class and comfort. Serving southern-inspired classics fit for a foodie, Café Genevieve offers brunch from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily and is renowned for its scrumptious egg benedicts with options like smoked salmon or house-made Cajun sausage. Miss the brunch cut-off? Don't fret—Café Genevieve segues directly into Jackson's earliest happy hour, followed by a dinner menu sure to satisfy any appetite. Whatever you do, don't leave without trying their signature Pig Candy or grab a package of the tender, sugar and spice-coated bacon and take it with you.

135 E. Broadway, Jackson, Wyoming. genevievejh.com (307) 732-1910

LUNCH – SNAKE RIVER BREWING CO.

Wyoming's oldest brewery offers one of Jackson's best, and most affordable, lunches. Since opening in 2008, head chef Ryan Brogan has been satisfying locals and visitors alike. Favorites include the Roper brisket sandwich and the Salumi wood-fired pizza. Check out the daily rotating beer and lunch specials and wash your lunch down with award-winning Zonker Stout.

265 S. Millward Street, Jackson, Wyoming. snakeriverbrewing.com (307) 739-2337

DINNER – ORSETTO

One of Jackson's newest dining hot spots, Orsetto Italian Bar & Eatery opened in December 2016 to rave reviews for its fresh house-made pastas, friendly and knowledgeable service and chic bistro atmosphere. Spruced up like the "little bear" in a suit for which the restaurant is named, Orsetto serves classic Italian cuisine that will delight the traditionalist and excite the adventurous.

161 N. Center Street, Jackson, Wyoming. orsettojh.com (307) 203-2664



The Antler Arches in "Town Square" are a favorite photo destination for visitors to Jackson.
PHOTO BY TAYLOR-ANN SMITH

CHECK OUT:

MOUNTAIN MAN TOY SHOP

Inspired by the outdoor heritage and lifestyle of Jackson, this shop features an array of handcrafted tools, gifts and accessories for the modern day outdoorsman that make any adventure possible.

98 Center Street, Jackson, Wyoming. mtnmengifts.com (307) 733-4193

STIO

Stio was founded in Jackson to inspire connection with the outdoors through functional products. From insulated jackets to wear-around-town, lightweight backcountry softshells and stylish trucker hats, the Stio Mountain Studio in the heart of town is the perfect stop for local apparel and gifts.

10 E. Broadway, Jackson, Wyoming. stio.com (307) 201-1890

ANTLER ARCHES

A photo in front of one of the iconic antler arches is a must for new Jackson visitors. Located in George Washington Memorial Park, commonly known as "Town Square," the first arch was built in 1953 and the group of four arches have been beloved downtown Jackson monuments ever since. Comprised of shed elk antlers collected from the nearby National Elk Refuge, the arches are an artistic marvel comprised of about 2,000 antlers each and weighing 10,000-12,000 pounds.

Yellowstone in a day

From Bozeman or Big Sky

BY ABBIE DIGEL
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

Don't have time to spend a week exploring Yellowstone, the nation's first national park? It's easy to take a day and see all of the hot spots, get off the beaten track, and make it back in time for dinner. This itinerary involves long hours in the car, but a visit to the park is well worth it, and there's always something to see. Try to travel on a weekday—there will be fewer crowds—and book hotel rooms and campsites months in advance as they sell out quickly in the summer. Don't forget to check out the guest ranches along Highway 191 and in Big Sky.

Morning:

From Bozeman, drive east on I-90 toward Livingston. Want to encounter a griz the safe way? Stop briefly at the Montana Grizzly Bear Encounter, a bear rescue center. On the Jackson Creek exit, just a few miles from Bozeman off of I-90, you can't miss the huge sign. Stay a while and watch the bears play, then chat with one of the caretakers; it's a great way to learn the animals' habits and take in their size. Stop in Livingston for an early lunch at Mark's In and Out at the corner of 8th and Park Street. They serve cheap, old-fashioned burgers, fries and shakes that will hold you over until dinner.



It would be hard to spend a full day in Yellowstone without encountering two of its most iconic features: hot springs and bison. PHOTO BY JOHN LAYSHOCK

Mammoth Area:

Onward to Yellowstone. Take a right on 89 South, which hugs the Yellowstone River, toward Gardiner. In Gardiner, refuel at one of the many coffee shops at the edge of the entrance to the park. Also, stop by the chamber of commerce for information and literature about the Yellowstone.

Time to hit the road. Just past the entrance find the hidden entrance to the Boiling River, an off-the-map and favorite destination for locals. Take time to soak in this unique spot, and then get back on the road and drive five miles south to Mammoth Hot Springs. There is plenty to do and see here. Head into the Albright Visitor Center and Museum, which has undergone renovation and will have its grand reopening celebration on June 14. Spend some time talking to a ranger and visiting the exhibits, then check out the park's most dynamic hydrothermal areas, with features that change constantly.

Still have time to spare? Hit the trail. The easy-to-moderate hike to Bunsen Peak is 4.2 miles, and the top provides panoramic views of other park destinations and the Gallatin Range. Find the trailhead at the entrance of the Old Bunsen Peak Road, five miles south of Mammoth toward Norris.

Canyon Village

This is a must-see, but make it a quick trip in order to take in Yellowstone's most iconic geyser, Old Faithful. The fastest way to see the canyon is to drive approximately five minutes from Canyon Village to North Rim Drive and walk along the paved paths to Red Rock Point, Lookout Point



A wolf crosses the road in Yellowstone National Park. PHOTO BY JOHN LAYSHOCK

or Grand View. From here you can catch a glimpse of the expanse of the canyon, see the waterfall and look northeast down the Yellowstone River.

Old Faithful Area

It's best to check at Canyon Village Visitor Education Center for Old Faithful eruption times (approximately every 90 minutes). From the Canyon Village center, it's about 45 minutes to Old Faithful by car. Arrive early and score a good seat. Check out the Old Faithful Visitor Education Center—the interactive exhibits are great for the kids, and a nice break from the car. Plan accordingly, and you'll be able to make stops along the way to see the world's highest concentration of active geysers.

Fountain Paint Pots

After Old Faithful stop at the Fountain Paint Pots, a favorite feature among Yellowstone guides. It's best to park and walk the boardwalk to view these geothermal features, but there is also an option to drive along the Firehole Lake Drive, a one-way side road that yields great views. The paint pot is located among other features, including the Great Fountain Geyser, another erupting geyser that reaches up to 200 feet.

Old Faithful Area

Exit the park through the west entrance and enter West Yellowstone. The local shop owners here are friendly and informative. Stop for reasonably priced Spanish tapas at a favorite spot, Cafe Madriz, located at the north end of town, then stash the car and walk to the Playmill to catch community theater at its best. The small stage and interactive performances are a relaxing and fun way to end the evening.

A version of this story first appeared in the summer 2015 issue of Explore Yellowstone.



At 10,969 feet, Electric Peak is the tallest mountain in the Gallatin Range and a prominent feature of the park's northwestern corner. NPS PHOTO

Soak it all in at Chico Hot Springs

BY AMANDA EGGERT
EBS SENIOR EDITOR

In my exploration of Montana's hot springs, I've found that there are two main classes of hot springs: older facilities that have become run down and older facilities that have been lovingly maintained.

Chico Hot Springs in Pray, Montana, falls into the latter category. Its halls hold plenty of history—the original lodge was built in 1900 and rumors have it that a ghost still makes the rounds in the Old Lodge—without feeling like the inn's glory days are long gone.

In fact, despite several rounds of additions to increase lodging capacity, last-minute weekend bookings are increasingly hard to come by. Make room reservations several months in advance if you plan to stay on a Friday or Saturday night, when Chico Saloon bustles with live music and dancing.

The Chico Dining Room puts on an incredible spread for Sunday brunch—we're talking eggs benedict, fresh fruit, French toast, made-to-order omelets and a bread pudding that's tough to top—and the dinner is nothing to sneeze at, either. Seafood is flown in fresh, all baking is done on the premises and much of the restaurant's produce is grown in Chico's own garden.

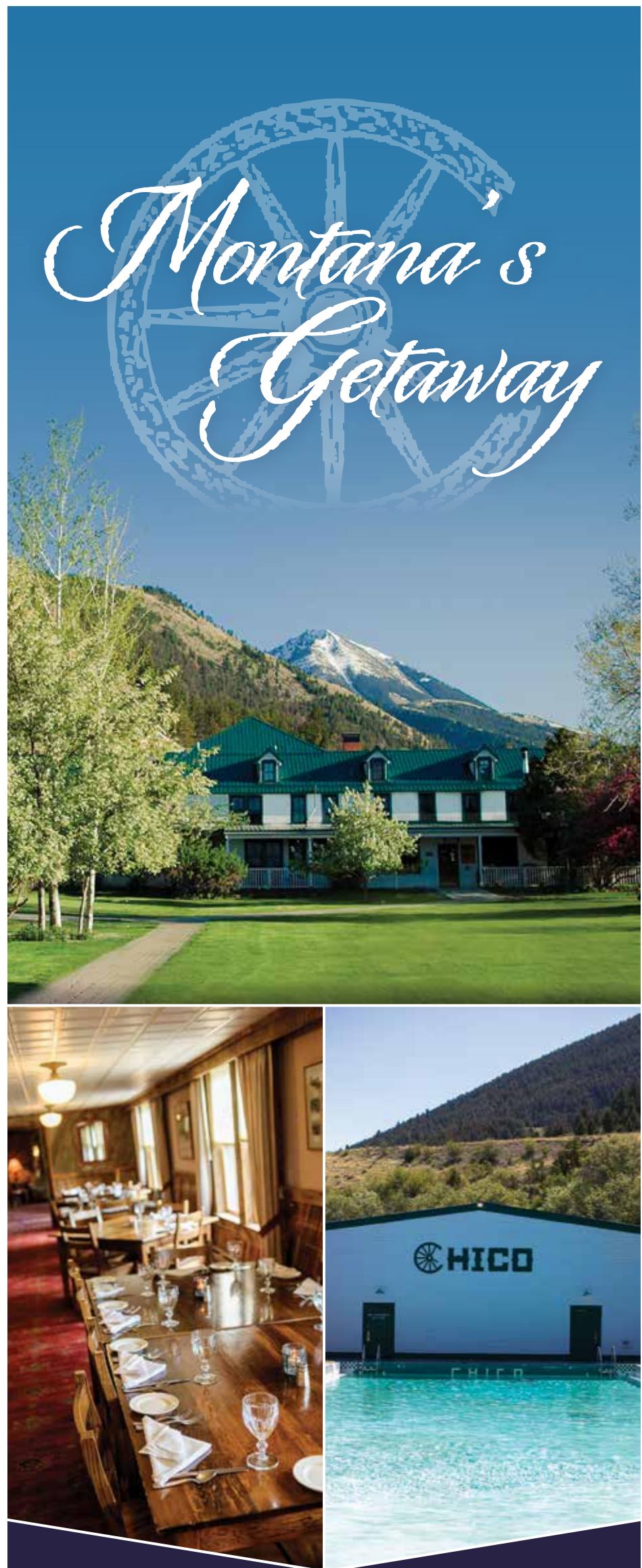
If you want to earn your soak, consider booking a horseback ride, wetting a line in the Yellowstone River or taking a hike in the aptly-named Paradise Valley. In nearby Emigrant, Follow Yer' Nose BBQ, which is run by a pair of brothers from Georgia, serves up some of the best barbecue in Montana.

If outdoor concerts are more your speed, drive 11 miles north to Pine Creek Lodge, which regularly books bands from around the West at their outdoor venue. Their events schedule is available at pinecreeklodgemontana.com/events.

No matter how you plan your Chico getaway, quality opportunities for tasty food, outdoor adventure and oh-so-enjoyable soaking abound. 163 Chico Road, Pray, Montana. chicohotsprings.com (406) 333-4933



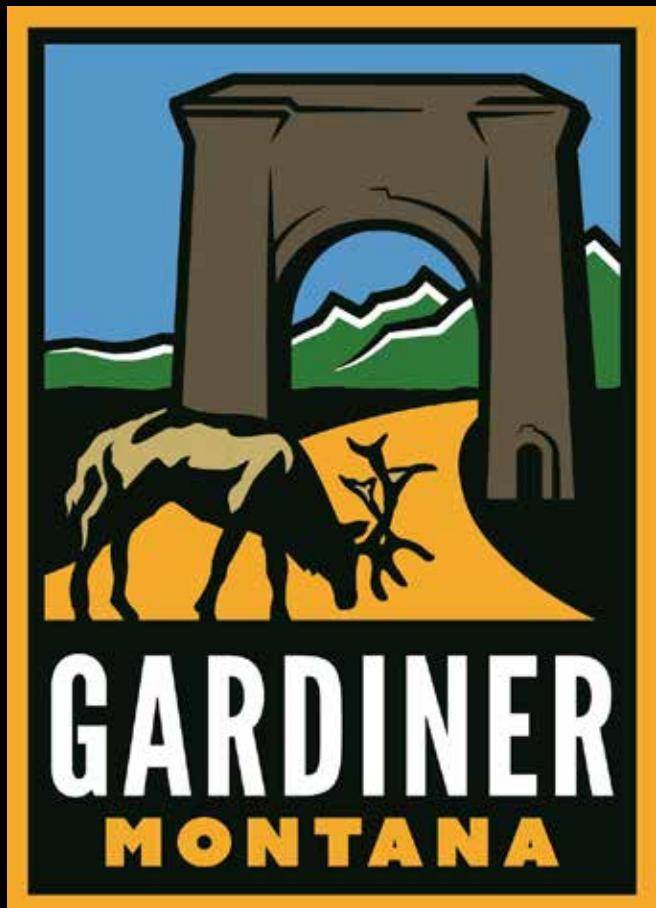
Once touted as a curative for everything from kidney troubles to blood disease and skin orders, the pool at Chico Hot Springs is indisputably relaxing. PHOTO BY AMANDA EGGERT



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Salmon, Idaho:

Central Idaho's hidden secret

BY ERIC LADD
EBS PUBLISHER

Imagine a setting like the Bozeman valley. This place is nestled among lush farm valleys, surrounded by soaring peaks and adjacent to millions of acres of protected public lands. Now cut the population by 90 percent. Welcome to Salmon, Idaho.

Salmon boasts miles upon miles of buffed mountain bike trails that rival any Utah experience—and empty trailheads are the icing on the cake. Stop by the Hub, Salmon's only bike shop, and Max Lohmeyer will get you dialed on his private riding mecca.



Die-hard mountain bikers prep for the starting gun at Discovery Hill in Salmon, Idaho, for "12 Hours of Disco," a 12-hour endurance race held every May. PHOTOS BY SCOTT ELLIOTT



Fill up on veggies at the farmers' market in Salmon City Park, which runs every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. all summer long.

Downtown Salmon is trapped in time, still embracing the slower-paced Western lifestyle with flat bed trailer trucks and horse trailers filling parking lots. Hidden gems like rivers with steelhead trout and remote hot springs make any weekend getaway even better.

Finish the day at the Pork Peddler, a good spot for a pulled pork sandwich or fried mac 'n cheese washed down with a cold beer.

Surrounded by so much national forest, campgrounds abound, but if you want a more civil place to lay your head, get a room at the Stagecoach Inn, a pet-friendly accommodation located along the Salmon River.

Get it now before the rest of Bozeman discovers it!



Salmon, Idaho a rural lifestyle for the outdoorsman at heart. Our favorite way of life is spending time with our beautiful mountains as our backdrop for hunting, fishing, white water rafting, and hiking, skiing, mountain biking, horseback riding; for those who love the outdoors opportunities for fun and exploration are endless.

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Weekend getaway to Moab, a mecca for rock climbers and mountain bikers

BY JOSEPH T. O'CONNOR
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

Nestled between Arches and Canyonlands national parks, Moab is both a sightseer's dream and an outdoor recreationalist's mecca. The parks offer thousands of sandstone arches and canyons for those seeking a beautiful drive peppered with a few hikes, and be sure to look for ancient petroglyphs when you're out walking around. Nearby, the mountain biking, climbing and four-wheeling are unparalleled, with endless scenic trails and rock formations.

Getting here

Drive – 9.5 hours south and bring bike, climbing gear, etc.
Fly – Can be pricey, but flights into Moab's Canyonlands Field Airport, Grand Junction, or Salt Lake City could save you some travel time.

Dining: Desert Bistro

Built in an adobe structure that was once Moab's first dance hall, Desert Bistro specializes in southwestern cuisine. Stop in for smoked rabbit quesadilla, handmade Agnolotti pasta in Marsala wine, or free-range chicken breast with mole, roasted peppers and corn salsa. Desert Bistro features an extensive wine collection.

Tip: For a more intimate setting reserve the wine cellar table, available for up to six people.

Lodging: The Gonzo Inn

The Gonzo Inn, located in the heart of downtown Moab, provides a comfortable and welcoming stay with a 70s-style art deco feel. Go big with the Gonzo Suite, which sleeps up to six, has a jetted tub and offers broad views from a spacious balcony; or take it down a notch in one of its cozy King rooms. With a large outdoor pool and hot tub, you'll be lodging in style and, as its website describes, have found a "funky place to crash."

Featured activity: Mountain biking

Pro—The Slickrock bike trail may be the most famous – and one of the most challenging – mountain bike rides in the nation. A 10.5-mile loop, sections of this epic trail are named "Faith in Friction" and "Steep Creep." Bring your full-suspension, your "A" game, and some Advil for afterward.

Novice—The Bar M Loop is a beginner's double-track trail with outstanding views of Arches National Park. It's approximately 8 miles long and is a perfect introductory trail to get your tires under you.



Stay in the heart of downtown Moab at The Gonzo Inn for a comfortable, convenient stay with a 70s-style art deco feel. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GONZO INN



A typical sunset at Hanalei Bay. PHOTO BY AARON FEINBERG

Kauai, baby

BY ERIC LADD
EBS PUBLISHER

Definition: Aloha
alo: sharing, in the present
oha: joyous affection, joy
ha: life energy, life, breath
The true meaning of this famous Hawaiian term is “in the presence of life.”

When you visit Kauai, you feel the ‘Aloha’ spirit in many ways.

Located on the northern end of the Hawaiian chain, Kauai is 562 square miles and geologically the oldest island. Often referred to as the “garden isle,” it’s blessed with ample fresh water and is truly an island getaway.

With diverse natural resources, Kauai is known for its spiritual nature, lush jungles, the stunning Na Pali coastline and nearby Kalalau Valley overlook. Ancient Taro plant fields dot the landscape, and romantic Hanalei Bay Beach is one of the world’s most beautiful.

Accommodations range from well-organized campgrounds to pampered spa resorts overlooking the ocean. The island’s various adventures are also suited for a range of interests, from families exploring the ocean with dolphins, to adrenaline junkies surfing Kauai’s legendary North Shore breaks.

Here are three ways I recommend to explore Kauai:

Backpacking the Na Pali Coast

Spanning 15 miles and protecting 6,175 acres of isolated, roadless wilderness, the Na Pali coastline is a treasured stop for any visitor to Kauai. As you explore the narrow, winding roads of the North Shore, you’ll end up at Ke’e Beach, which is where the Kalalau Trail begins. Known as one of the most arduous and scenic hikes in the world, the 11-mile trail is a backpacker’s dream.

Farmers and fishermen first settled this region in 1200 A.D. The dramatic setting is home to the largest valley on the North Shore, Kalalau Valley. While many choose to see the Na Pali Coast via helicopter or boat tour, hiking the Kalalau Trail is a journal-worthy adventure.

A solid day, or a civilized two-day journey, this challenging hike is filled with stream crossings; narrow, slick trails; sheer drop-offs and scenic ocean views. The trip takes most hikers an average of five to eight hours each way. While regulated, the trail has become popular—be prepared for a mini-Woodstock style campground at Kalalau Beach, fronted by a mile-long strip of pearl white sand. If you have more time, worthy side activities include hikes to hidden waterfalls and lush jungle pools, bartering with local Kalalau dwellers, and cribbage on the beach.

Tips:

Pack light, bring plenty of water, be prepared to guard yourself from the sun and rain and take extra time to stop and cherish this journey. Treat all drinking water, bring a deck of cards and get ready to see the best sunset of your life.

After mile two, the crowds subside and you’ll have the trail to yourself. Rumor has it you can pay locals to shuttle your gear to the beach via boat.

Must-bring gear: Sarong and hiking poles.

Pampered at the St. Regis Princeville

Blessed daily with the last sunset in the United States, the St. Regis overlooking Hanalei Bay is arguably one of the finest luxury resorts in the world.

With a 93 percent return ratio for employees, and guests arriving from around the globe, this is a special place. Its motto: “Anticipating your expectations.”

Every sunset, St. Regis butler Kaleo Guerrero sabres a bottle of champagne on the resort patio, sharing tales of native Hawaiians in Hanalei and the area’s mystical nature.

The St. Regis Princeville boasts 51 suites with butler service and a cleaning station for hiking boots in the lobby entrance. Sophisticated, yet at home with the laid-back North Shore vibe, its amenities include poolside service, a private, quiet beach and a valet team that helps make the stay at St. Regis both refined and memorable.

You’ll plan to go back.

Tip: Get a taro butter couples massage in the 10,000-square-foot St. Regis Spa. stregisprinceville.com

Exploring the South Shore from Koa Kea

Along the bustling South Shore near the town of Poipu lies a tranquil oasis, Koa Kea. Recently rebuilt after being leveled in the 1992 hurricane Iniki, this small resort has a swank, yet minimalist style, many of its 121 rooms with intimate oceanfront decks. A quiet pool courtyard in the heart of the resort offers guests an exquisite private setting.

Highlights include in-room Nespresso machines, clean, modern décor, quiet, clamshell shaped beaches, calm swimming waters and direct access to some of the best beginner surf. The resort is ideally located near trails, golf, parks and other attractions.

Translated, Koa Kea means “white coral”—a perfect match for the style, look and location of the luxury oceanfront resort.

Tip: Visit the gift shop for jars of Hawaiian-made red salt as a gift to bring home. koakea.com

Where to eat on Kauai

North Shore – The Dolphin

The Dolphin in Hanalei is a fish market, restaurant and sushi lounge. Couple a teriyaki-glazed tuna steak with a coconut porter from the Maui Brewing Company. banaleidolphin.com

South Shore – Red Salt

Red Salt, a quaint restaurant in Koa Kea Resort, serves up massive six-ounce martinis, sushi and mushroom bisque. koakea.com/dining-at-red-salt

Fish tacos – Island Taco

Island Taco in Waimea is a must-stop locals’ favorite. Grab a drink from the smoothie stand across the street and pair it with a seared wasabi ahi taco for mid-day meal perfection. islandfishtaco.com

Hip – Tortilla Republic

With locations in Poipu, Kauai, as well as Laguna Beach and Hollywood, California, this fast-moving establishment features guacamole made fresh at your table, an extensive margarita list and live house music. tortillarepublic.com

Good for the soul

North Shore – Yoga Hanalei

Multiple classes are offered daily; the smell of fresh-roasted coffee surrounds the studio. yogahanalei.com

South Shore – Kalaheo Yoga

Look for a class led by Paul Reynolds in this well-appointed studio. kalaheoyoga.com

This story was first published in the summer 2013 issue of Mountain Outlaw magazine.

Special advertising section

Nicaragua: Land of beaches, blue lagoons and volcanoes

BY PATRICK HIEBERT

In the words of Monty Python, if you remember back that far: Now for something completely different!

Have you ever thought about investing in a second home, future retirement home, or just a nice place by a tropical beach to get away for vacations and earn rental revenue, too?

Has that place in your mind ever been Nicaragua? That's right, I said Nicaragua. While some only remember Nicaragua as a land of revolution—that was many decades ago, by the way—today, Nicaragua is listed as one of the safest countries in the Americas.

Nicaragua is still quite undiscovered, but that's changing quickly. This tropical paradise country has one of the fastest tourism growth rates in the world and is quickly becoming the new "it" place for travel. And from an investment standpoint, Nicaragua is seen as "the next Costa Rica," which has seen an incredible growth in real estate value over the past decade and a half.

Let me tell you a quick story of my experience getting in—or, rather barely getting in—to the foreign real estate market. Maybe it will help you make a decision rather than procrastinating like I did.

In the very early '90s, I went on a vacation to Puerto Vallarta in Mexico. It was one of my first visits to Latin America and I immediately fell in love with the pace of life, friendliness of the people, and of course the climate. I stayed in a resort and decided to walk around and look at the neighborhood.



The sun sets over the Pacific at Gran Pacifica Beach and Golf Resort.

I had no thought of buying a property; it had never crossed my mind. But I came across a for sale sign on a nice home that backed up against a golf course and faced the beautiful Pacific Ocean waves. I remember it like it was yesterday because I really loved the location and the home. It was designed in a Spanish Colonial style with lots of amazing tile work.

I asked what the selling price was and they said, "Well, amigo, it is only \$142,000 and we're quite sure we are going to see some big increases as more people discover our country." First of all, I didn't have \$142,000. But more importantly, I thought I would never risk that amount of money on a property in a developing country, so I didn't buy it.

Less than three years later, I came back to that same resort and went for pretty much that same walk. You guessed it, that same home was back on the market...but this time they were asking over \$600,000. And the story doesn't end there. A few years later, I made the trek back along that same street in Mexico out of curiosity. I couldn't believe that the home was for



Las Perlas Condominium Suite is one of Gran Pacifica's beach properties nestled along 3.5 miles of Pacific coastline. PHOTOS COURTESY OF GRAN PACIFICA

sale again. They were asking over \$1 million dollars this time. Not that many years had gone by from when I had first seen the home.

I told myself that if I ever encountered a similar situation, I would jump on it. Time went by and I didn't have any luck. It took 20 years before I found those same raw ingredients again, this time in Nicaragua. The country is safe, full of friendly and happy people, and has some of the most incredible sites, like the only active volcano in the world that you can drive to the edge of and peer into. It also has some of the best surf breaks in the world, including one right in front of the resort I live on; amazing cultural cities like Granada, the oldest city in the Americas with streets lined with outdoor restaurants; and of course, tropical beaches and amazing climate.

The piece that makes it complete is the inexpensive real estate and low cost of living. Nicaragua is one of the least expensive places to find amazing properties, but that is changing. I'm glad I lived long enough to find this opportunity twice in my life. I missed the booms of Mexico, Panama and Costa Rica but I'm in on the "next Costa Rica" known as Nicaragua. You may want to consider it, too.

I now live full-time at Gran Pacifica Beach and Golf Resort in Nicaragua and I'm loving it. I go for weekends to Panama, Costa Rica, Belize and many other beautiful Central American destinations. I travel quickly and inexpensively since I'm based in the center of them all. It's a great life and investment. Both capital and rental revenues continue to grow alongside the booming tourism industry.

Consider Nicaragua, and if you decide to go for it you can buy me a drink at the beach bar in trade for having done the many years of research for you!



Heading out to surf the empty Asuchillo beach break of central Nicaragua.

Finding Room to Breathe in Sayulita

BY JOSEPH T. O'CONNOR
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

Locals in Sayulita, Mexico, have a saying that you come for a visit but you stay forever.

A small fishing and surf town of approximately 4,000 residents, Sayulita is set in a cove between Punta Mita and San Pancho, 26 miles north along the Pacific coast from Puerto Vallarta, in the state of Nayarit.

The surf break is a two-minute stroll from downtown, where white and burnt orange, adobe-style buildings line cobblestone streets. Early in the morning, the plaza comes alive, the smell of fresh coffee and baked goods filling the warming air.



Set on miles of private beach, the elegant Villa Milagros also boasts a large swimming pool, an infinity pool, and a hot tub on the moon-viewing deck. PHOTOS BY BRIAN NILES

The Huichol, Nayarit's indigenous people, sell colorful art, dolls and handcrafted bowls, jewelry and blankets around the square. Dressed in their traditional white, loose clothing embroidered in bright red, yellow and blue stitching, the Huichol are originally from the Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains in the northeastern corner of Nayarit.

A block west, surfers of all abilities catch the Punta Sayulita break in front of Captain Pablo's Restaurant. Here, ex-pats Paul Southworth, aka Pablo, and his wife Patricia operate an all-things-adventure shop adjacent to their eatery. Hailing from Portland, Oregon, the couple guides surf and snorkel expeditions, as well as sport- and fly-fishing trips, and also rents out sea kayaks and stand-up paddleboards.

Taco stands chock-full of the day's catch grill sizzling tuna and mahi mahi steaks on nearly every street corner. Between them, restaurants with full menus attract dinner guests with sunset ocean views and thatched roofs. Miles of sand beaches beckon hikers with their low-tide rock formations and palm-covered bluffs.

There's a sense of calm in the air here, there's room to breathe.

ALOJAMIENTO

Hotel Kupuri

In the heart of downtown Sayulita, Hotel Kupuri is just steps away from the plaza's restaurants and shopping. Open since 2011, its broad, private courtyard and pool surrounded by tall palms provide peace in the village center.

Kupuri's rooms surround the courtyard's three levels, each one offering wi-fi, air conditioning and sophisticated decor. But the real goods are on the upper tier: The honeymoon suite spans half of the third floor, with a king-sized bed, flat-screen TV and deck overlooking the pool and courtyard.

On the adjacent rooftop patio, a bar and dining area offer an eclectic cocktail list and panoramic views of the ocean and town. hot Elkupuri.com

El Palacio/Casa Milagros

Architect Rogelio Romana designed Villa Milagros to flow seamlessly with the nature in which it stands, the finest Mexican craftsmanship in mind.

This world-class estate has seven bedrooms and 11 bathrooms between its two vacation properties, El Palacio and Casa Milagros. Set on miles of private beach, the elegant villa also boasts a large swimming pool, an infinity pool and a hot tub on the moon-viewing deck.

Guests soak in ocean breezes through the open-air dining room and windows; watch orange-fronted parakeets play among the palms; and fall asleep to set after set of crashing waves.

Complete with a game room housing card, pool and air hockey tables, Palacio—at 8,000 square feet—has three floors with four bedrooms, each with its own flair. Next door, Milagros offers three unique, king-sized bedrooms inside a 2,500-square-foot living space; French doors open onto a patio overlooking the pool, which in turn overlooks the Pacific.
sayulitalife.com/palacio, sayulitalife.com/milagros

ACTIVIDADES

Wet a line/Hang 10. Catch mahi mahi, tuna and sailfish with one of Captain Pablo's fishing tours, and any local restaurant will cook them up on the spot. Or rent a surfboard or standup paddleboard from Patricia's Surf Lessons and Board Rental. Professional instructors will teach you the intricacies of riding a wave at the Punta Sayulita break. captainpablo.com

Blaze a trail. Stroll 15 minutes from downtown Sayulita to Playa de los Muertos, the beautiful local cemetery. Fresh flowers adorn brightly painted crypts and lead to a beach hidden by rock outcroppings. Smaller waves are perfect for kids, and the secluded area is just right for a quiet read in the sun.

Be at one. Yoga Los Sueños, located in the Hotelito Los Sueños, offers a number of classes for you to find your Zen, including Morning Flow, Vinyasa Flow and Kundalini. Vanessa Morrett, one of five instructors, will put your mind and body at ease with her gentle teaching style and expansive knowledge of this ancient practice. hotelitolossuenos.com

TIPS:

Getting there: To get from Puerto Vallarta to Sayulita, either hire a ride with Jose Ramos Taxi Service (sayulitalife.com/ramos-taxi), or take the bus (cross the footbridge over Highway 200 and grab a seat).

When to go: November through May is dry in Sayulita, with high temperatures averaging around 80 F. June through October is the rainy season, with hot and humid conditions.

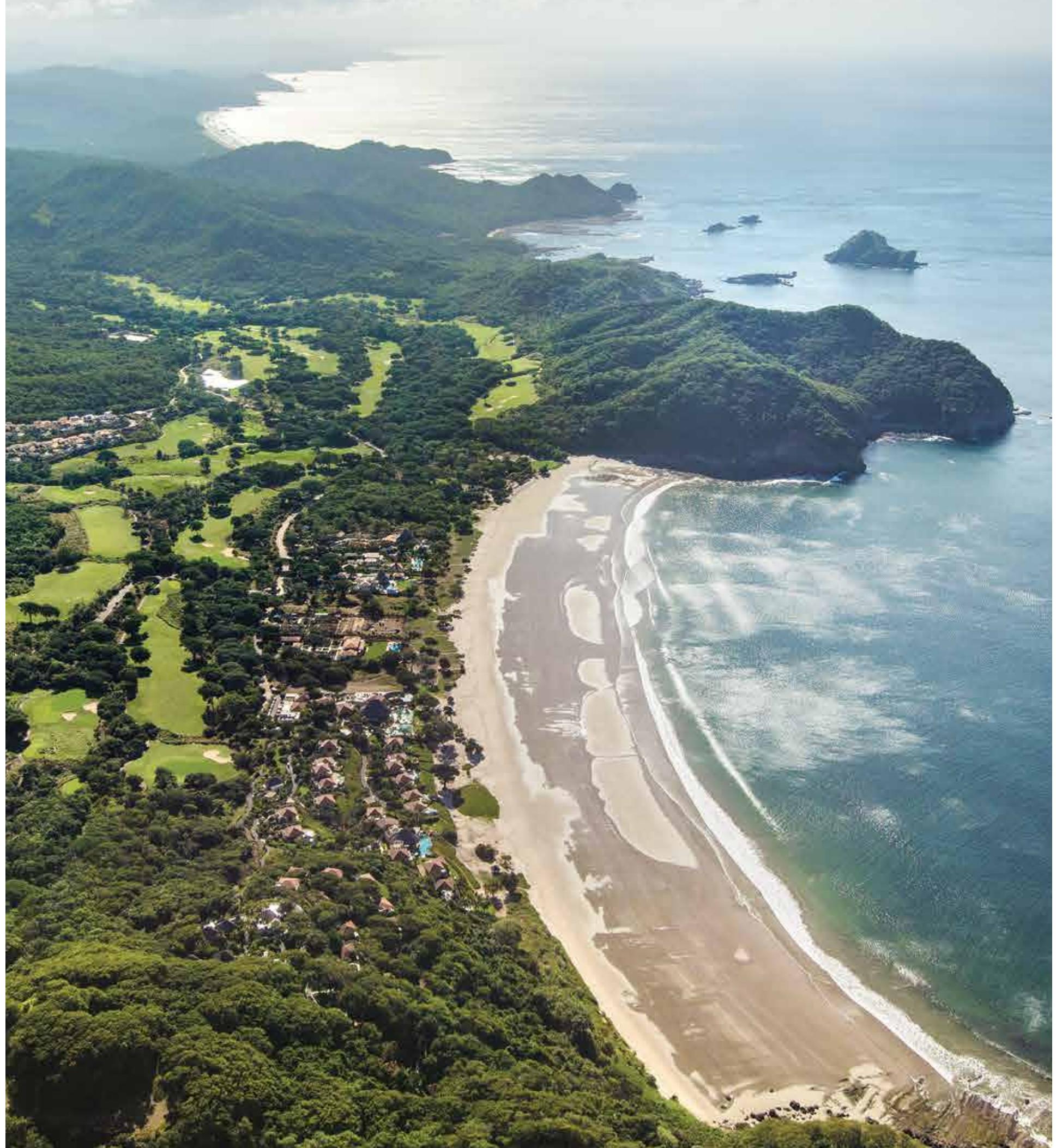
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With the Pacific stretching west to the horizon, the view from El Palacio's expansive second floor open-air living room/dining room/kitchen area is broad and unobstructed.



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