



10 Ways to Do a Colorado Backcountry Vacation

From yurts to cabins to heli-skiing, get out and get away in the mountains



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The mountains are calling you.

While Denver may be fun and exciting and there are plenty of cities worth a visit up and down the Front Range, there's something special about a vacation in the mountains.

Here are our 10 favorite ways to go on a backcountry winter vacation in Colorado.



A person heli-skiing in Colorado.

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1. At heli-ski camp.

Looking for more than a typical ski vacation? [Telluride Ski Resort's Heli-Skiing Camp](#), in partnership with Telluride Helitrax, will bring you heli-skiing in the San Juan backcountry.

But first, this three-day camp will teach you how to master this sport and how to endure the wintery, mountain conditions. So by the time you and your guide are out in nature, you'll be more than prepared for a cold-weather experience like no other.

2. Hyatt style.

Who says backcountry can't also be luxurious and high quality? Check out [Park Hyatt Beaver Creek Resort](#) and Spa's annual Ultimate Winter Experience.

Customize your package to choose your own adventure, from a snow cave lunch to ice climbing to a Snowcat tour up Independence Pass to avalanche training -- all led by the region's top experts.

And while you're in Beaver Creek, of course, set aside some time to hit the slopes on your skis. Bonus: Beaver Creek's ski slopes are among the very best for families. Read more about why we love Beaver Creek for a [family ski vacation here](#).

Want to stay at the Park Hyatt Beaver Creek Resort? Book your stay and learn more about what other traveler's said [here](#).

<http://gocolorado.about.com/od/things-to-do-colorado/tp/8-Ways-to-Do-a-Colorado-Backcountry-Vacation.htm>



Go horseback riding in the winter. Getty Images/Kelly

3. At a dude ranch.

Escape this winter to the [Sundance Trail Guest Ranch](#) in Red Feather Lakes, where you can go on horseback rides through the Roosevelt National Forest. This ranch is open year-round.

Particularly appealing in the winter: a massage followed by stargazing in a hot tub. Or warm up with games, like pool and foosball, or just relaxing by the fire.

Sundance is pet friendly, so bring your furry friend.



Telluride in winter. Getty Images/Norbert Eisele-Hein

4. On a winter picnic.

Here's a new spin on a favorite, romantic, classic activity: a winter picnic, coordinated by [The Hotel Telluride](#). Snowshoe up to the High Camp Hut, in the stunning San Juan Mountains, and regroup with a gourmet picnic lunch.

This new package includes three nights in a "elite view room," breakfast, wine pairing and apps, two massages and more.

Fun fact: On your next snowshoe adventure, look for the Colorado-made [Crescent Moon](#) snowshoes. You can find different styles for different adventures, even snowshoe racing. Which is a *thing*.

Book your stay at [The Hotel Telluride here](#).

5. By an isolated alpine lake.

Who says a waterside vacation is only for warm weather? There's something magical about staying at the [Coulter Lake Guest Ranch](#) in Rifle, tucked into the White River National Forest.

This backcountry getaway is private and serene; there are only six cabins, with lots of privacy.

For some action, take out snowshoes, go sledding or cruise on a snowmobile through the trees; Coulter Lake promises some of the best snowmobiling in Colorado.

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Aspens in Steamboat in the winter. Getty Images/Digital Vision

6. Amid all-inclusive Western hospitality.

Horses with sleigh bells. Beautiful log cabins. And meals prepared for you by a chef three times a day.

Steamboat Springs' [Vista Verde Ranch](#) is an all-inclusive vacation that turns log-cabin living into luxury.

Although Vista Verde's private cabins and tranquil atmosphere is ideal for relaxing and unwinding, you can also get your adrenaline pumping on fat-tire bikes, tubes, horseback, skis and snowshoes.

7. In a yurt.

You can find yurts scattered throughout Colorado, but one great collection of the funky, round buildings are the [Never Summer Nordic](#) yurts in the state park not far from Walden. Pick the yurt that best fits your vacation needs, from only accessible via four-wheel-drive and totally private, to more convenient and handicap-accessible.

Whichever yurt you pick, all are cozy, secluded and come with a wood fireplace to cuddle up next to as the snow falls.

8. Off the grid.

If you want to get off the grid -- no, really, off the grid -- during your mountain vacation, head up to Whitepine's [Tomichi Lodge](#).

This lodge is powered by a hydro-electric system using the gravity energy of creek water, and a solar panel. No cell service. No internet. Just the great outdoors and plenty of peace and quiet.

Tomichi Lodge is perched at an elevation above 10,000 (so stay hydrated and beware of altitude sickness) in the Gunnison National Forest.



Skiers outside a 10th Mountain Division Hut. Getty Images/Randall Levensaler

9. In a hut.

One of the coolest features in Colorado's outdoors is its various "hut systems." These are just a series of huts located in the mountains, right in the action.

In southwestern Colorado, there's the [San Juan Hut System](#), with easy access to 60-plus miles of remote trails and backcountry skiing. Go biking (fat bikes with wide tires are great on the snow), snowshoeing and exploring.

It's highly possible to stay in one of these eight-person huts and never run across other travelers. You'll feel like you have the world all to yourself.

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There's also the [Colorado Hut & Yurt Alliance](#), a collection of more than 130 huts and yurts across the state. This alliance was the first of its kind in the country in 2014. Each lodging option is slightly different, with its own features and fun. Pick the one that best meets your unique needs.

Another well-known hut collection are the nonprofit [10th Mountain Division Huts](#), near Vail. These 34 backcountry huts are connected by about 350 miles of paths.

Their name is in honor of the 10th Mountain Division of the U.S. Army that trained in the region during the '40s. So it's not surprising that these huts offer special veterans programming, as well.

Tip: While in Vail, check out our [favorite five restaurants](#). There are tons of reputable restaurants in Vail, so even if you stay in a remote hut, set aside a day to visit the ski town itself; it's worth it.

Vail is even considered one of [Colorado's healthiest ski resorts](#).



The town of Estes Park covered in snow.

Estes Park

10. Near Rocky Mountain National Park.

A favorite destination for visitors is Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park. If you want to stay in nature near this park, check out the [Estes Park Outfitters Lodge](#) in Estes Park.

Estes has lots of great lodging options, from the prominently located and luxurious Stanley Hotel to convenient cabins at the YMCA of the Rockies (ideal for an [active family vacation in the mountains](#)).

But for a true secluded getaway, the outfitters lodge will surround you with open space, miles of cross-country trails outside your door and private ponds. This retreat is solar-powered and gets its water from Fish Creek, making it an authentic mountain escape where you can go to truly clear your mind.

And in case you need to pop back into the "real world," downtown Estes Park is adorable this time of year. Stroll through the old-fashioned streets with a hot coffee or hot chocolate, and enjoy one of Colorado's most beloved mountain towns.

Make sure you stop for a glass of locally made wine at the Snowy Peaks Winery, not far from a local brewery. Even if you don't drink alcohol or are traveling with kids, ask about Snowy Peaks' great list of juices, including cherry, blackberry and peach.

Cherry juice is especially important in this area, which has a long history of cherry orchards. Keep your eyes peeled for a cherry shop, where you can score the best cherry pie of your life.

Learn more about a vacation to [Estes Park](#) here.