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Weekend Trip Guide: Where to Stay, Eat, and Drink in Telluride, Colorado

If Aspen is where people go to be seen, Telluride is where they actually go to ski.

by [ASHLEY MATEO](#)

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There's no shortage of ski towns and resorts in Colorado: Aspen, Breckenridge, Steamboat, Vail...But Telluride, a former mining town tucked in the southwestern corner of the state, and its ski resort feel like a town first and a ski resort second—and that makes all the difference.

This tiny town, home to a population of just under 2,500, sees about 400,000 people per year. That's partly thanks to the popularity of events like the Telluride Film Festival, the Telluride Bluegrass Festival, the Telluride Jazz Festival, (you get the gist...), not to mention the epic ski terrain right there in the Rocky Mountains. No matter how big the crowds get, though, Telluride still feels small—because it's located in a box canyon, meaning there's only one way in and out and it's surrounded on all other sides by 13,000- to 14,000-foot mountains, it'll probably never lose its small-town charm.

Fun fact: One version of the town's history claims that the name come from the fact that Telluride used to be so remote, miners who set out for the town were told "to hell you ride." Now, there 15 direct flights from 12 major U.S. cities (including New York, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, Phoenix, Charlotte, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Atlanta) to the Telluride/Montrose Regional Airport, which is just 65 miles from the town. Even more flights connect through Denver, making Telluride more accessible than ever—especially for a quickie weekend getaway. Here's how to make the most of your time in this charming ski town.

Where to Stay

There are actually two parts to Telluride: the town and the mountain village. It's easy enough to get between them thanks to a 13-minute gondola ride (it's free, the first and only free public transit gondola in the U.S.). Where you stay depends on the kind of getaway you're looking for.

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Telluride town is teeny—just eight blocks wide and 12 blocks long. That doesn't mean there's nothing to do; those blocks are full of bars, restaurants, boutiques, and historic buildings, not to mention plenty of Victorian-era homes you can rent for yourself on sites like Airbnb and VRBO. I stayed at the Hotel Telluride, a 59-room boutique hotel just a 7-minute or so walk from the gondola and even closer to the center of town. It's all quaint AF and perfect for people who want to avoid some of the touristy, mass-market elements of a ski resort town.

Up in the Mountain Village—which was founded in 1987, after the ski resort officially opened in 1975—you're 9,500 feet above the valley floor and basically in the Uncompahgre National Forest. If you're in Telluride specifically to ski, you can't get closer to the action than this. The Mountain Village offers the kind of European-inspired luxury you'd expect from a ski resort, just on a more intimate scale. Here's where you'll find the Madeline Hotel and Residences, 96 rooms and 29 condos that you can ski right in and out of. Plus, there's a heated pool with epic views for après-ski, which is a pretty solid selling point.

What to Do

If you're heading to Telluride, chances are, you're blocking out some significant time on the mountain. Even beginners would be silly not to; 60 percent of the ski resort's terrain is dedicated to beginner and intermediate skiers and snowboarders. But there are also more extreme trails and four hike-to terrain areas for expert skiers. At nearly 3,000 feet above sea level, any trail you take will reward you with seriously epic views.

If you've had your fill of the slopes, take in the scenery on a fat bike tour. Pick up your bike at [Bootdoctors](#) (in town or in the Mountain Village), then pedal about three miles over the valley floor—570 protected acres around the San Miguel River—to [Telluride Distilling Company](#) tasting room, where you can warm up with one of their popular Telluride Mules (a version of a Moscow Mule), a glass of peppermint schnapps, or a shot of the smoothest vodka you'll ever taste. Right next door is the [Telluride Brewing Company](#) tasting room, where you can sample a variety of beers that are only available in Colorado (they're literally made with snowmelt from the Rockies).

The hiking in Telluride is top-notch. For starters, you know that iconic mountain on the Coors Light packaging? That's Mount Wilson, and it's right in Telluride. It's also a Fourteener, one of the 96 mountain peaks in the U.S. that top 14,000 feet (53 of which are in Colorado, and three of which are in Uncompahgre National Forest). You can climb it (and crack open a Coors at the summit, duh), but it's not for beginners and it's best done with a guide who knows what they're doing. There are plenty of other [trails](#) in the area, too, if you're looking for something less...intense.

Where to Eat

There's no shortage of good food in Telluride—in fact, the town is featured on Bravo's *Top Chef* this season. Grab a table for dinner at [221 South Oak](#), run by chef Eliza Gavin, a season 10 *Top Chef* competitor. The restaurant is inside a refurbished home in the South Oak historic district, and the menu is full of hearty, homemade meals made from local ingredients, like trout with ravioli, and an elk T-bone with goji berry walnut jam.

Or if you want to take mountain dining to the next level (literally), head up to [Alpino Vino](#), which, at 11,966 feet, is the highest elevation fine-dining restaurant in North America. It looks like a charming ski hut, but the rustic vibes give way to a truly five-star dining experience inspired by restaurants in the Italian Alps. Ski in for lunch or take an enclosed snow-coach for dinner.

Take the gondola up to [Alfred's](#), a ski chalet-meets-steakhouse where you can dine at 10,500 feet above sea level. During lunch, you can take in the stunning panoramic views of the ski resort; at dinner, you'll be too busy feasting on Colorado-sourced meals like the rack of lamb and bourbon marinated elk (there are delicious vegetarian dishes, too).

If you're really feeling ~fancy~, book yourself a rez with [Telluride Sleighs and Wagons](#), a glamping-esque dinner experience. They'll pick you up in town, drive you out to the Aldasoro Ranch property, which was established as a sheep ranch back in the early 1920s, transport you to the dining "tents" via horse-drawn wagon (if there isn't enough snow) or sleigh, and wine and dine you while serving up a stunning view of Mount Wilson.

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Before you hit the mountain, hit [The Butcher and the Baker Cafe](#) in town for brunch or coffee and pastries to go. It's the kinda of Instagram-friendly spot you'd expect "influencers" to hang out at, if Telluride were that kind of place (it's not). The muffins and croissants are deliciously oversized and made fresh, and the breakfast sandwich is exactly the kind of filling start you need for a day on the slopes. (It's open for lunch and dinner, too.)

Where to Drink

Ski in for après drinks at [Gorrono Ranch](#), a sprawling former sheep ranch turned bar and restaurant right on the slopes. Even beginners can get there—it's located right off a double green trail. Warm up by the fire inside or grab a chair on one of the multiple wood decks; you can even find seats right on the snow. No matter where you are (seriously, you can even hear them from the chairlift), you'll be able to hear local musicians playing cover tunes.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bck8-k5FO-c/?taken-by=tellurideski>

After skiing, wake yourself up with Telluride's signature cocktail, the Flatliner, at The New Sheridan. It's made with Telluride Distilling Company's vodka (of course), Bailey's Irish Cream, Kahlua, and an espresso shot, and it's pretty much guaranteed to give you a second wind.

In town, you can sip on handcrafted cocktails at [There Bar](#), a tiny (upscale) hole-in-the-wall where you'll be hard-pressed to find seating. Almost everyone recommends the Grapefruit Martini—made with gin and elderflower liqueur, fresh grapefruit, and lime juice—to first-timers with good reason: It's delicious.