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By Kelly Bastone

Snow FINE

Like beach getaways, ski towns are all too often the victims of their own charm: Once discovered by throngs of admirers, they lose their original allure. Not so with these five Western gems, which have kept their charisma and then some. Attractively unpretentious, the following ski towns nevertheless offer slices of luxury living—and drifts of winter fun.



STEAMBOAT SPRINGS



MARABOU LODGE



PHOTOGRAPHED BY CARL SCOTTFIELD

at press time). Phases Three and Four will comprise a full-service condo-hotel. "It's tucked away on the back side of the ski area, in an extraordinary location," says Keith Dowell, owner of Taos Ski Valley Realty. "The views from each residence are spectacular." 505.776.0600, www.thebavarianinnandchalets.com.

Resale residences are available at the **Edelweiss Lodge and Spa**, a high-end, ski-in/ski-out condo-hotel at the main base area. 800.458.8754, www.edelweisslodgeandspa.com.

INSIDER'S TIP: The Children's Center caters to youngsters, but it's cool enough to make you want to be a kid again, too. From kinder-ski outings to attractively painted playrooms, the center makes Taos a great spot for skiers of all ages.

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STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO

VIBE: At Steamboat, the pro skiers whizzing by you are likely under 18. That's because the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club is the largest youth ski training organization in the country, and these whiz kids have Olympians as mentors: The town claims more than 60 Olympic athletes, and many of them—like Billy Kidd, Nelson Carmichael and Travis Mayer—still shred these slopes. "Steamboat's a true family ski area and a true family town," says Jeff Temple, a lifelong Steamboat Springs resident and developer of the town's Marabou community. "I've never seen a place that's as friendly to kids." This former cow town also lays claim to a vibrant agricultural community, meaning hay bales and grazing cattle are common sights; and the town hosts pro rodeos every Friday and Saturday night during the summer. The family emphasis and the ranching culture combine to give Steamboat an appealingly down-to-earth feel that belies its world-class resort status.

SKI SCENE: Steamboat's tree skiing is deservedly famous; and on a powder day, there's no sweeter run than Twilight, with its perfectly spaced aspens. Plus, the resort's more than 330 annual inches of "champagne powder"—the lightest, driest fluff in Colorado—makes the spot the logical choice for powderhounds. "What brought me here in the first place was the big, deep powder snow," says 24-year resident Murray Selleck, manager of local shop Ski Haus. But Selleck, like others, stayed because of Steamboat's strong sense of community and its appeal as a town whose history predates the resort. "It's more like a town with a ski area than the other way around," Selleck explains.

MOVING IN: "Steamboat has more open space than any other ski town in the West," says Pam Vanatta, a broker with Prudential of Steamboat. This is easy to see at communities like Marabou, whose 62 homesites sit five miles from the slopes. When owners aren't busy enjoying all the elbowroom at this 1,300-acre working ranch, they can relax at the Marabou Mountain Camp, a private clubhouse at the Steamboat base area that's equipped with a stocked kitchen, ski lockers and comfy lounge areas. The development's Master Guide program makes pro athletes available for skiing, fishing and other outings, and owners even receive grass-fed beef raised right on Marabou land. Homesites begin at \$2.8 million. 970.879.7919, www.marabouranch.com.

At the Steamboat base area, **One Steamboat Place** offers ski-in/ski-out luxury condominiums and penthouses with a spa, grocery service, private chefs and membership to the nearby Catamount Ranch & Club. Whole ownership is \$2.7 million and up; fractional ownership starts at \$625,000 for a one-eighth share. 866.599.4626, www.onesteamboatplace.com.

Promising "simple, uncomplicated living," **Wildhorse Meadows** will include a mix of town homes, mountain lofts, lodge suites and hotel accommodations. Single-family homesites start at \$450,000; Trailhead Lodge residences go for \$430,000 and up.