



Snow

PLACE LIKE HOME

WITH STUNNING VIEWS, LUXURY LIVING AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES TELLURIDE IS EVERY ROMANTIC'S WINTER WONDERLAND. RACHEL OAKES-ASH GETS COSY WITH THE LOCALS.

CHRISTIE BRINKLEY AND Richard Taubman as well as Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, (in happier days) both picked the Colorado mountain town of Telluride as the backdrop for their wedding vows. And Cameron Diaz and Justin Timberlake are also regularly seen shussing down the winter slopes.

Drive the winding road through the San Juan Mountains into the box canyon of Telluride and you'll see why the romantic hideaway is such a celebrity magnet.

Granite and red sandstone peaks rise over 3,000 metres from the valley floor, creating a natural amphitheatre of wooded alpine terrain that leaves visitors speechless upon first viewing. In summer the vista is filled with lush green alpine woods, come winter it transforms into a snow bunny's delight and the perfect honeymoon spot.

Telluride is divided into the original town on the valley floor at the base of the ski mountain and the 1995 development known as the

Mountain Village, which sits halfway up. Both of Telluride's villages are linked by gondola from morning till midnight when couples can take in the town's lights from the cabin windows.

This sleepy hamlet on the valley floor sports cowboy-style shop facades, home-baked American fare and was the scene of Butch Cassidy's first hold-up at the San Miguel Valley Bank, which gives it a certain amount of historical clout. None of that should deter from its very romantic underbelly.



Lurking behind these street facades is contemporary cuisine of an international standard and a local hospitality typical of Colorado mountain folk – welcoming and immensely friendly. The town only boasts a population of just over 2,000, so if you stay long enough you could get to know just about everyone.

Telluride only became an internationally recognised ski resort in the 1990s when the local mines closed down. It immediately

ensured it a place in the hearts of outdoor lovers who fly fish the San Miguel River in the warmer months and strap on planks and boards when the temperature drops below zero.

Native American Indians referred to this region as the 'Valley of Hanging Waterfalls' and visitors today don trek boots and start hiking to experience the magic themselves. There's plenty to do – summer or winter – from golfing to hunting or riding and hiking to simply reclining miles from anywhere

curled up with your new hubby in front of a log fire.

Telluride locals lead a relaxed lifestyle dictated by the terrain. Both the town and its people have an open heart and a love of all that is good in life, which is infectious to visitors and heaven for newlyweds. The road in to Telluride is also the road out, a cosy thought – no through traffic, just seclusion.

Guaranteed it will be a different you driving out than the one that drove in.

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See

Telluride is all about the view. With majestic mountains, alpine forests, hot springs, rivers and lakes, the town is truly made for postcards. It would be rude for newlyweds not to visit **BRIDAL VEIL FALLS**. The highest waterfall in Colorado, it's a seven km return hike through woods that end at the San Miguel River and the 400-foot falls.

One way to see this spectacular terrain is on horseback with Roudy. This hat and chap-wearing cowboy leads couples on **RIDE WITH ROUDY** mountain treks lasting half a day, a full day, overnight or an all-week pack camp or a romantic sunset ride with dinner for two. www.ridewithroudy.com

The **TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL** is an annual event held every American Labour Day weekend in September. Attracting the likes of Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep to the box canyon, the festival adds casual glamour to this creative town. www.telluridefilmfestival.org

Eat

Perched 3,000 metres up, **ALLREDS** has the best view in town. This restaurant is a private members club for swanky ski folk. Floor to ceiling glass gives a birds-eye view of the mountain terrain with award-winning cuisine to match.

Ph 970 728 7474

HARMONS is an institution in Telluride. Set in an historic train depot and filled with mahogany wood, this contemporary American cuisine restaurant serves up gourmet food with a live piano soundtrack. Great ambience and private nooks and corners.

Ph 970 728 3773

It's all steak and seafood at **THE BLUEPOINT GRILL**, located a block from the gondola in the town of Telluride. It has a typical laidback Telluride style with chic oyster menu and intimate Noir Bar downstairs.

Ph 970 728 8862

Wine connoisseurs head to the **TASTING CELLAR** in the Hotel Columbia for old world décor, 2,000 bottles of wine from 200 vintages and French cuisine to match.

Ph 970 728 1292

Stay

Town of Telluride

Hotel Telluride

199 North Cornet Street, Telluride.

Ph 970 369 1188

Guests rarely venture out of their rooms at the Hotel Telluride. It's the patented Incredible Bed that keeps them behind closed doors. Think natural feather bedding, down comforter, 250 thread count sheets and a selection of pillows to suit all desires. Heaven.

www.thehoteltelluride.com

The New Sheridan Hotel

231 West Colorado Avenue (Main St), Telluride

Ph 970 728 4351

Hark back to the cowboy town of old in these authentic Victorian rooms on the main street of town. Cosy up with fresh chocolate chip cookies before some roof top hot tub action for après ski muscles.

www.newsheridan.com

Mountain Village

The Peaks Resort and Golden Door Spa

136 Country Club Drive, Telluride

Ph 866 282 4557

With true ski-in ski-out access and 174 rooms the only question is, which one? Penthouse, cabin or Alpine Vista? Add the Golden Door Spa and you'll be dragged out come check out time.

www.thepeaksresort.com

Out of Town:

Elk Mountain Resort

97 Elk Walk, Montrose

Ph 970 252 4900

For couples wanting a true nature experience with all the five-star trimmings, Elk Mountain Resort is pure Colorado lodge style. Choose from lodge room or two story cottage and marvel at the mountain vistas and natural forest on all sides. Sleep in and chopper from the resort to the mountains for a day of powder or curl up in front of the fire. Purrrr.

www.elkmountainresort.com

Spurge

Book in for a **GOLDEN DOOR DECADENCE**

spa package. Six hours of body wraps and LaStone therapy followed by a facial and light lunch. The afternoon is spent in the Salon pampering tootsies with a pedi and revitalising tired hands with a manicure.

www.thepeaksresort.com

Telluride is home to **HELITRAX**, Colorado's only heli-skiing company. Ski the untouched slopes of the San Juan Mountain Range on champagne powder, lunch on the mountain in the wilderness, miles from nowhere with just blue skies for company.

www.helitrax.net

You don't get more romantic than cosying up under a bare skin rug on a sled in the snow. Picture mountain dogs leading you and your lover through mountain snow passes, over peaks, ridges, through valleys far from the madding crowds. That's **WINTER MOON SLED DOG ADVENTURES** half day, full day or overnight packages into the wilderness.

Ph 970 729 0058. ■

Fact File:

Where: Telluride, Colorado.

Getting there: The closest town to Telluride is Montrose. United Airlines flies from most Australian capital cities to Los Angeles with connecting flights to Denver and Montrose www.unitedairlines.com.au Telluride also has its own airport serviced by regional airlines.

Best time to go: There's nothing like a snow-capped mountain to inspire romance. Winter is magic in Telluride and the ski season runs from November to early April. For nature lovers spring and summer provide ideal hiking climate, good fishing and long summer days.

