



EMBRACE THE ELEMENTS

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WHEN THE MERCURY takes a dive, our instinct is to head indoors, bundle up, and hibernate until spring. But as any outdoor enthusiast will tell you, the colder months are made for adventure.

Inspired by fire, air, earth, and water, we built this year's winter travel guide around activities that make us not only want to brave the elements, but also welcome winter with open arms. Whether it's conquering the downhill on a ski bike, reveling in a colossal ice castle, or sipping a hot toddy on a rooftop, there's something here for everyone.

Of course, winter's joys go beyond pure adrenaline. To capture the quiet allure of the season, we asked five writers to share moments that stuck with them long after the ground thawed. The soothing power of campfires. A breath of mountain air. The sweetness of a snowfall. The reason to get outside? It's hard for us to think of a reason not to. Go on, winter is waiting.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BLAKE GORDON

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Arenal Volcano on the horizon, Nayara Springs' spa (below), guests in the Costa Rican rainforest (left)



Sleep at the Base of an Active Volcano

ARENAL VOLCANO NATIONAL PARK, COSTA RICA

Nayara Springs has amenities you'd expect from a luxury stay—an infinity pool, a world-renowned spa—but what sets the boutique property apart is its location inside Arenal Volcano National Park. Hike across dried lava fields left over from a 1968 eruption, conquer roaring Class IV rapids on the Sarapiquí River, or get to know the local fauna. Last year, the resort partnered with a wildlife rescue center to build an on-site habitat for sloths, and guests can get up close by volunteering to help feed the three-toed residents. Other highlights include birding expeditions and a nocturnal, wild frog-watching tour.



Cross-Country Ski by Candlelight

MINNEAPOLIS

The cure for cabin fever is the City of Lakes Loppet Ski Festival, held Jan. 31–Feb. 3. The urban cross-country ski event hosts races as well as a nighttime jaunt across the frozen Lake of the Isles. Open to skiers and walkers alike, the path is lined with ice-encased candles, and side spectacles include fire dancers and ice sculptures of world landmarks.

Craft a Molten Masterpiece

SEATTLE

Using a 2,000-degree furnace and some instruction, students at the Seattle Glassblowing Studio shape glass, infuse it with color, and leave with a keepsake (think everything from a pumpkin to a paperweight).

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF NAYARA SPRINGS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY REY LIPEZ (MAYDAN)



Snag a Table at a Hot Dining Experience

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Since opening last year, Maydan has captivated the capital's foodies (and received a James Beard nomination, to boot). Step through the unmarked blue door to take in Middle Eastern flavors and the restaurant's pièce de

résistance: a copper-domed fire pit complete with tandoori ovens and grills for specialties like slow-roasted goat shoulders and saffron-dusted kebabs.

+ WE ALSO LOVE The shabu-shabu dining at Osawa in Pasadena, California

IN MY ELEMENT Sparks of Comfort



MY HUSBAND, DENNIS, and I have birthdays less than a week apart. When they roll around each November, the leaves in Middle Tennessee are ablaze with color and the nights are crisp—perfect camping conditions. Which is why an overnight with a few close friends at Henry Horton State Park, 50 miles south of Nashville, was how we planned to celebrate in 2014.

As the weekend drew near, though, we hit two snags. First, unseasonably cold temperatures crept into the forecast. I thought, *It's nothing an extra blanket and a pair of long johns can't solve.* Second, we learned we were pregnant.

To say we were thrown for a loop is putting it mildly. In our 13 years of marriage, Dennis and I had talked about children from time to time, but producing (and providing for) a functional human seemed daunting for two anxiety Olympians like us, and we'd quietly settled into “DINK” life—dual income, no kids.

We considered canceling the trip altogether, but ultimately forged ahead in a kind of daze. Whether we did it to avoid flaking out on our friends or to try and distract ourselves, it's hard to say. No matter the reason, I trudged into the woods dreading the night ahead of me. It was frigid, and I felt ill and in over my head.

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Hit the Slopes With a Snowkite

LAKE TAHOE AREA

Former North American snowkite champion Tyler Brown founded the Sierra Snowkite Center in California so others could experience the thrill of “catching air.” Snowkiting, which is similar to water-based kiteboarding, takes skiing and snowboarding to the next level with the addition of a wind-powered kite. No prior kiting experience is required (although you should be proficient enough on skis to tackle a green run). Lessons include the kite and plenty of practice time in a snowy meadow before you climb in elevation.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT BANSACK PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KAILLEY LINDMAN

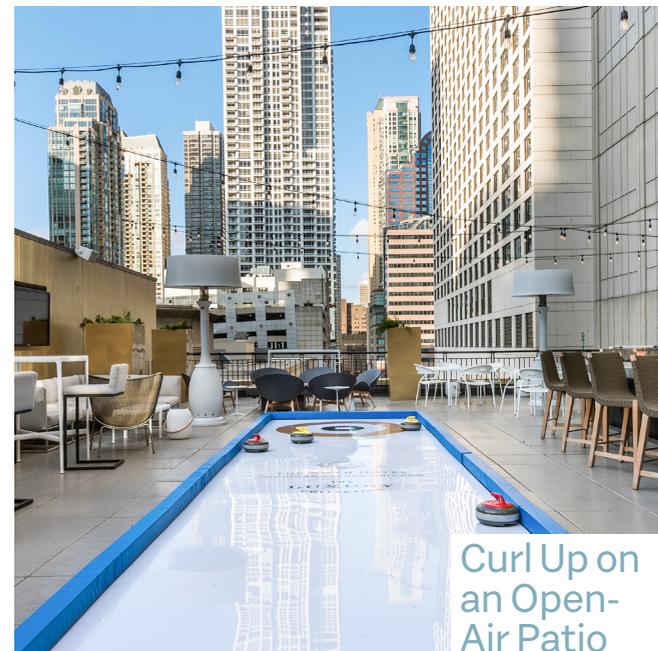
IN MY ELEMENT A Spoonful of Sky



GROWING UP IN Minnesota, a winter day had three possible descriptions: It was about to snow, it was actively snowing, or it had just finished snowing. In this constant snowbound state, my siblings and I looked out the window at the falling fluff and saw more than just the possibility of a day off school. We saw “snow pudding,” a treat that, unlike every other dessert, we could eat any time. Even—and especially—in the morning.

My mom got the idea from an episode of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*. She gave us each a bowl and we would compete to see who could bring back the tallest mound. Once inside, we’d follow the recipe—6 cups snow, 1 cup milk, ½ cup sugar, ½ teaspoon vanilla—and whisk it into an almost gelato-like cream.

Ideal pudding snow is like good skiing snow: airy, fluffy, not too waterlogged. We don’t seem to get snow like it much anymore. But every time we do, the Facebook pages of family members fill with photos of their kids with buckets, collecting a backyard harvest. Recently, on a hot day, my 5-year-old daughter called out: “Daddy, do you remember making snow pudding? It’s like sugar, with some snow. It is soooooo yummy!” It struck me. Another generation looks forward to snow just like we did, not as a source of dread but as something to, literally, eat up. —Dan Simmons



Curl Up on an Open-Air Patio

CHICAGO

Come winter, Upstairs at The Gwen serves a winning combo of curling and cocktails. Reserve a table to give the Scottish sport a go.

+ WE ALSO LOVE

The fire pits and wood-fired pizzas at Gallow Green’s rooftop ski lodge in New York City

Jam Out at Winter Jawn

PHILADELPHIA

This free outdoor music festival has been making (sound) waves since 2011. Past lineups have included acts like Tegan and Sara, Cold War Kids, and Twenty One Pilots. Join in Jan. 26.

Boogie on Down the Mountain

GOVERNMENT CAMP, OREGON

There’s snow tubing, and then there’s *cosmic* snow tubing. Mount Hood Ski-bowl transforms its track every weekend with more than 600,000 LED lights, glow sticks, a laser light show, and a live DJ.

Put the Pedal to the Powder

MIDDLEFIELD, CONNECTICUT

It's like riding a bike, except instead of wheels, the frame is supported by two mini-skis. Ski bikes have command of 80-plus acres of terrain at Powder Ridge Mountain Park & Resort, 30 minutes outside Hartford, Connecticut. Take a lesson first and then explore on your own.

See Penguins on Parade

PITTSBURGH

No need to visit Antarctica to see a march of the penguins. The Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium lets the tuxedoed birds roam free for a meet and greet with visitors on weekends from December through February, weather permitting. The colony, including 33-year-old veterans Mr. T and Mickey, strut their stuff, play in the snow, and pose for pictures.



Trek Into the Backcountry

VALLEY OF FIRE STATE PARK, NEVADA

Step foot in Nevada's largest state park, and it's easy to see how it got its name. The sandstone cliffs and red rock formations evoke leaping flames, glowing embers, and the ash of spent fires. Problem is, in the summer, sweltering 100-degree weather makes it difficult to explore for long. When the temperatures do drop, the park becomes a playground. Its proximity to Las Vegas makes it ideal for day-trippers, while nearly 150 campsites allow adventurers to hit all the highlights, including petrified forests, ancient petroglyphs, and slot canyons galore.

+ WE ALSO LOVE The breathtaking views of Niagara Falls seen from the Goat Island Scenic Walk

IN MY ELEMENT Backyard Playground



AS SOON AS I step out of my car, my running shoes sink into soft powder. Ahead, the Bonneville Shoreline Trail wiggles 100 miles along the Wasatch Range, the Rocky Mountains' western edge, which cradles Logan, Utah, between its jagged cliffs and the bed of the Great Salt Lake.

It's 10 degrees and still dark. Yet I'm joining a few friends for a 7-mile run—our weekend tradition since 2015.

I strap spikes on my shoes, flash my headlamp, and fall in line. The frozen air seizes our burning lungs. We're missing our beds, but within a few short minutes, we start to climb the rocky earth, forced up by the clash of tectonic plates. We pass sagebrush and the bare branches of cottonwood and aspen trees. The blanketed valley sleeps below. In the city, on the plowed streets, my mind can safely drift among life's worries. On the trails, mental wandering is risky. Every step must be plotted.

The thaw comes when the sun climbs to the top of the mountain peaks, and I'm reminded why it's always worth it. It might be the slices of sunlight cut by a tree's shadow or the sprinkle of ice particles in the air or the steam rising off our skin. But something illuminating will inevitably catch our eye and hold us for a long pause before our legs begin to move again.

—Kase Johnstun



PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUSTIN CRONNELLY/TANDEM STOCK, PAUL SELVAGGIO (PENGUINS)



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK PICKTHALL (LIGHTS)

Step Into Another World

SARATOGA, CALIFORNIA

Artist Bruce Munro has created his version of Narnia at the Montalvo Arts Center, a 30-minute drive from San Jose, California. Inspired by C.S. Lewis' classic fantasy series, Munro's exhibition (on view until March) transforms the grounds with 10 light-based works, ranging from a modern take on a lamppost to an illuminated wave of upcycled plastics.

Wander in an Icy Wonderland

MIDWAY, UTAH

Brent Christensen's first "ice castle" was a frozen playground he built for his daughter in the front yard of their home just outside Salt Lake City. Nearly a decade later, he's the mastermind behind an acre-size, 30-foot-tall icicle fortress featuring tunnels, slides, and color-changing lights that enhance the experience at night. No where near Utah? The company, Ice Castles, also oversees creations in Colorado, Minnesota, and New Hampshire. Tickets go quick, as do the castles themselves—they typically open in late December and last, on average, six to eight weeks.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY A.J. MELLOR



Fa-La-La Float

NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA

Dating back to 1908, the Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade is a five-night celebration (Dec. 19–23) that involves 200-plus boats decked out in lights, Christmas trees, and over-the-top decor. To be part of the action, book a spot aboard one of Newport Landing's parade vessels.

Take a Shivering Run Down the River

LAVA HOT SPRINGS, IDAHO

Don your swimsuit (crazy costume optional) and join the Fire & Ice Winterfest's popular polar float on Feb. 2. After braving the frigid quarter-mile route along the Portneuf River, participants warm up at the town's namesake springs.

Harvest Ice (the Old-Fashioned Way)

SOUTH BRISTOL, MAINE

Before refrigerators were the norm, blocks of ice were sawed from frozen waterways, loaded onto ships, and carried to distant ports. The Thompson Ice House Harvesting Museum preserves this tradition by inviting visitors to employ century-old techniques at their annual ice harvest, held Feb. 17. Return in July to sample the bounty at the community's ice cream social.

Skate Beneath the Skies

CORONADO, CALIFORNIA

Located just outside San Diego, Hotel del Coronado transforms its palm tree-lined lawn into an ice skating oasis overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Reserve a table at the rink-side lounge for unlimited hot cocoa and easy access to a fire pit. In town on Dec. 15? Don't miss a special appearance by Olympic gold medalist Tara Lipinski.

+ **WE ALSO LOVE** Rosa Parks Circle, designed by architect Maya Lin, in Grand Rapids, Michigan



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF HOTEL DEL CORONADO

IN MY ELEMENT
Catching Magic



Chill Out
Three more ice-centric experiences

“ICE!” AT GAYLORD HOTELS
Multiple locations

November through January, marvel at indoor displays of colorful, hand-carved ice sculptures inspired by everything from the classic flick *A Christmas Story* to Dr. Seuss’ *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.

TARYN SIMON’S A COLD HOLE
North Adams, Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art invites visitors to literally jump into this interactive exhibition exploring the effects a cold water plunge has on the body. Be sure to reserve a time slot in advance.

BAVARIAN ICEFEST
Leavenworth, Washington

Held Jan. 19–20 in a town that looks like it belongs in the Alps, this annual event features live ice carving, a snowball toss, and quirky games like the “ice cube scramble.”

THE POND WAS a sheet of white, the sky a dome of January’s deepest blue. Waiting for a bite, I hopped from foot to foot above the hole we had carved with a chainsaw. On the shore, an eagle shifted on the limbs of a big pine, equally eager to see what I’d pull up.

The eagle and I were both there for survival, but mine was psychological. He wanted a pike; I wanted to participate instead of hibernate. In Maine, the first ice arrives unwelcome in late fall, barely a skim on the pond where I walk my dog. I put my head down and think bleakly of rising fuel prices. But then winter’s ice thickens, until one day the shacks appear on the river, and my head comes up again. I admire the beautiful pluck of mankind, how we make houses so we can crouch over holes in frozen landscapes, looking for life.

“It is like fishing up moonbeams through the kitchen floor,” the poet Robert P. Tristram Coffin once wrote of ice fishing. There is exactly that component of magic. You have won the right, through your endurance of this hard winter, to walk on the world of fishes and invite them up into your house. The catch tastes of magic, too, cooked on the improbable fire built on ice. On that day, I ate enough to get full on the hard-won delicacy and then tossed the still-meaty bones to the eagle, my companion in winter, who snatched them up. —*Mary Pols*



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Recharge at these five retreats, where the outdoors is part of the draw.

RENDEZVOUS HUTS

Methow Valley, Washington

For a true ski-in, ski-out experience, book one of five rustic cabins set in the Cascade Range. They're each connected by 23 miles of groomed cross-country trails (the closest hut is about 4 miles from the trailhead) and come equipped with the essentials, including woodstoves and board games. *From \$150*

AMANYARA

Providenciales, Turks and Caicos

With amenities like a personal pool and a private chef, it's almost *too* easy to stay put. But beyond the luxe pavilions and multi-bedroom villas, this island hideaway makes the most of its location between a marine national park and a nature reserve. Kayak with the resident naturalist, assist in sea turtle conservation efforts, and end the day with a "stargazing kit" that details the history of constellations. *From \$1,050*

GETAWAY

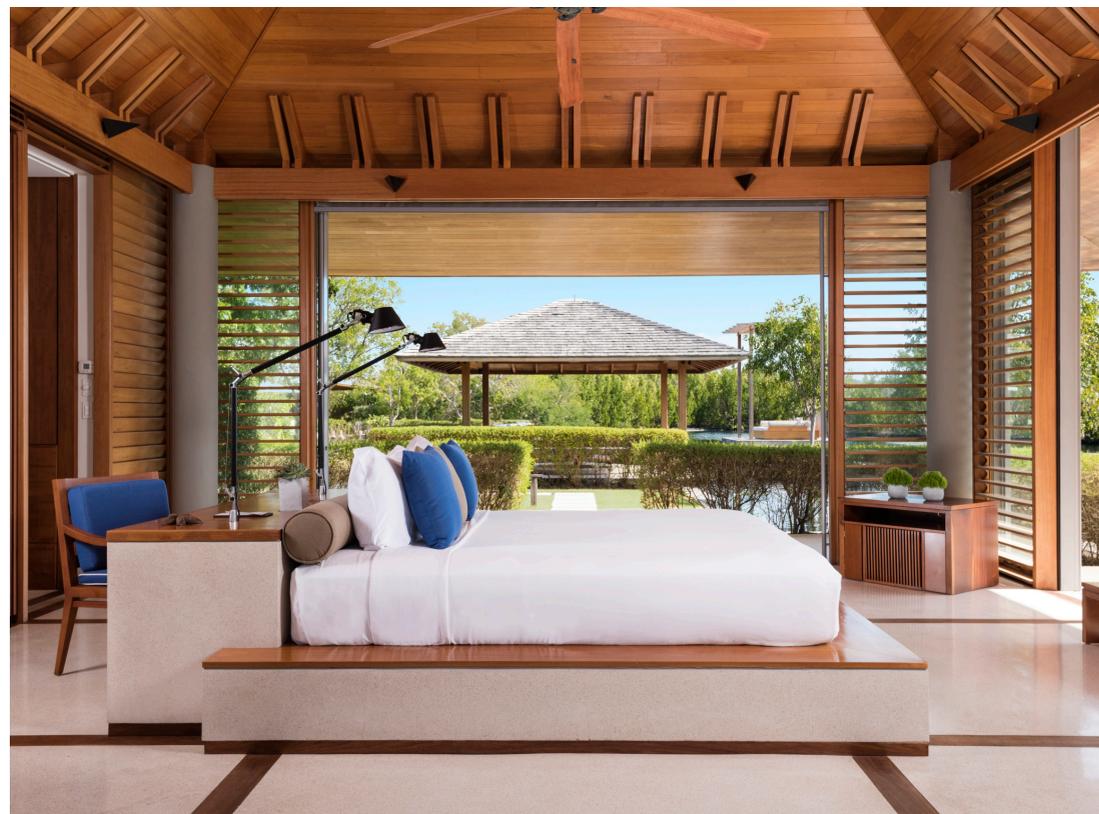
Multiple locations

When Brooklynites Jon Staff and Pete Davis set out to build clusters of tiny cabins in the woods near New York City, Boston, and Washington, D.C., they had a few guiding principles: no Wi-Fi, ever; in addition to indoor kitchenettes, there should be picnic tables and fire rings for al fresco dining; and beds must be within view of a window, so you can wake up surrounded by trees. *From \$99*

GRAND HOTEL GOLF RESORT & SPA

Point Clear, Alabama

Activities abound at this recently renovated 405-room hotel. Play a round of golf on one of two championship courses, fish off the private pier, or while away an afternoon with a game of croquet, cornhole, or bocce ball on the sprawling recreation lawn. *From \$269*



Rustic or ritzy? Rendezvous Huts (pictured), a Getaway cabin (above), Amanyara's open-air suite (top right), and Calistoga Ranch (right)

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES HARRIS (RENDEZVOUS), JOE THOMAS (WOMAN)

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF CALISTOGA RANCH (ALBERGE RESORT'S COLLECTION)

What to Pack

Outfit yourself with these winter wardrobe must-haves.



BOOTS (HIS)

Samuel Hubbard's Winter's Day boot is a slipper, trail boot, dress shoe hybrid. A waterproof membrane keeps feet dry, while a "super grip" sole provides optimal traction during icy days. \$340; samuelhubbard.com



BOOTS (HERS)

Both practical and stylish, the water-resistant ABEO Burnaby boots feature built-in orthotics and a warm shearling lining. Pom-pom tassels add flair. \$160; thewalkingcompany.com

WOOL SCARF

These cozy mufflers are made in the U.S. and inspired by the culture and landscapes of the American Southwest. \$70; pendleton-usa.com



GLACIER GLASSES

Beloved by skiers, climbers, and James Bond, Vuarnet Ice specs block out the glare from sun and snow. The side panels also pop off, leaving a cleaner silhouette for the streets. *From \$280*; us.vuarnet.com



CALISTOGA RANCH

Calistoga, California

This 157-acre property is tucked away in a canyon overlooking Napa Valley and boasts an open-air fitness center, miles of pet-friendly hiking trails, and 50 private guesthouses. Outdoor fireplaces and deck-side hot tubs allow guests to capitalize on the mild NorCal winter. *From \$695*

There were hugs and high-fives as everyone arrived, but no announcement. Dennis and I had agreed it was better to keep our news under wraps so early on. *Just act normal*, I thought as I fumbled through setting up camp. It was a refrain that had been running through my mind for days.

Once we had the fire going, we snuggled down around it against the growing cold, telling stories, laughing, eating s'mores, passing a flask I pretended to nip from, and laughing some more. Hours went by without any of us noticing.

I once read somewhere that engaging the senses is a good way to de-stress, to "live in the moment," as gurus would say. Though I wasn't thinking about that then, the campfire seemed to be delivering its own form of meditation. Its warmth settled on my cheeks and pooled in the folds of the blanket wrapped around me. Its cedar-and-damp-earth smell hung above us,

like breathable nostalgia. It filled conversational lulls with pops and crackles, quick spans where I'd lose myself completely in watching it lap the night air.

In its glow, Dennis' face flickered in the sepia tones of a classic movie. Now and then, our eyes would lock, and we'd silently acknowledge the whopper of a secret we shared. In the unspoken language of people who know each other inside and out, he'd raise an eyebrow to ask if I was OK. I'd smile to tell him I was, and he'd grin back. Same old Dennis ... only not the same. Literally and

figuratively, I was seeing him in a new light. (I couldn't have known it then, but he'd wear that same goofy grin the following July when he held our son for the first time.)

I had expected the fire would keep us warm and toast our marshmallows. But I'd no idea it would kindle a peace in me and melt away the tension I'd been carrying for days. It was another of life's surprises. I pulled my blanket tighter around my shoulders and decided, at least for one night, to let my worries rise like the smoke and drift away.

—Tracy Marsh

I knew the fire would keep us warm and toast our marshmallows. But I'd no idea it would kindle a peace in me.

“Aztec Mentor Program has been fantastic and helped me in getting my first bioengineering position. It has given me a new passion to aid and mentor students into achieving their aspirations and goals just like I was helped by my own mentors. Professionals can build networks to hire the best of the best in the field.”

— Edgar Ramirez, mentored by Michelle Vargas and mentor to Khoa Vo and Julian Navarrete



(L-R) Khoa Vo (2020); Julian Navarrete (2020); Edgar Ramirez (2017), forensic biomechanical reconstructionist, Vanderpol and Associates; Michelle Vargas (Master's 2021), staff mfg/ops quality engineer, Illumina