

GEAR OF THE YEAR: WE'VE GOT THE GOODS

# SKI

# + Top 10 Ski Towns

**Eat. Ski. Drink. Sleep.  
Repeat.**

Our completely opinionated  
guide to North America's  
best ski towns.

**BODE MILLER**  
**Grounded but Still**  
**Flying High**

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**SILVERTON**  
**As Real as It Gets**



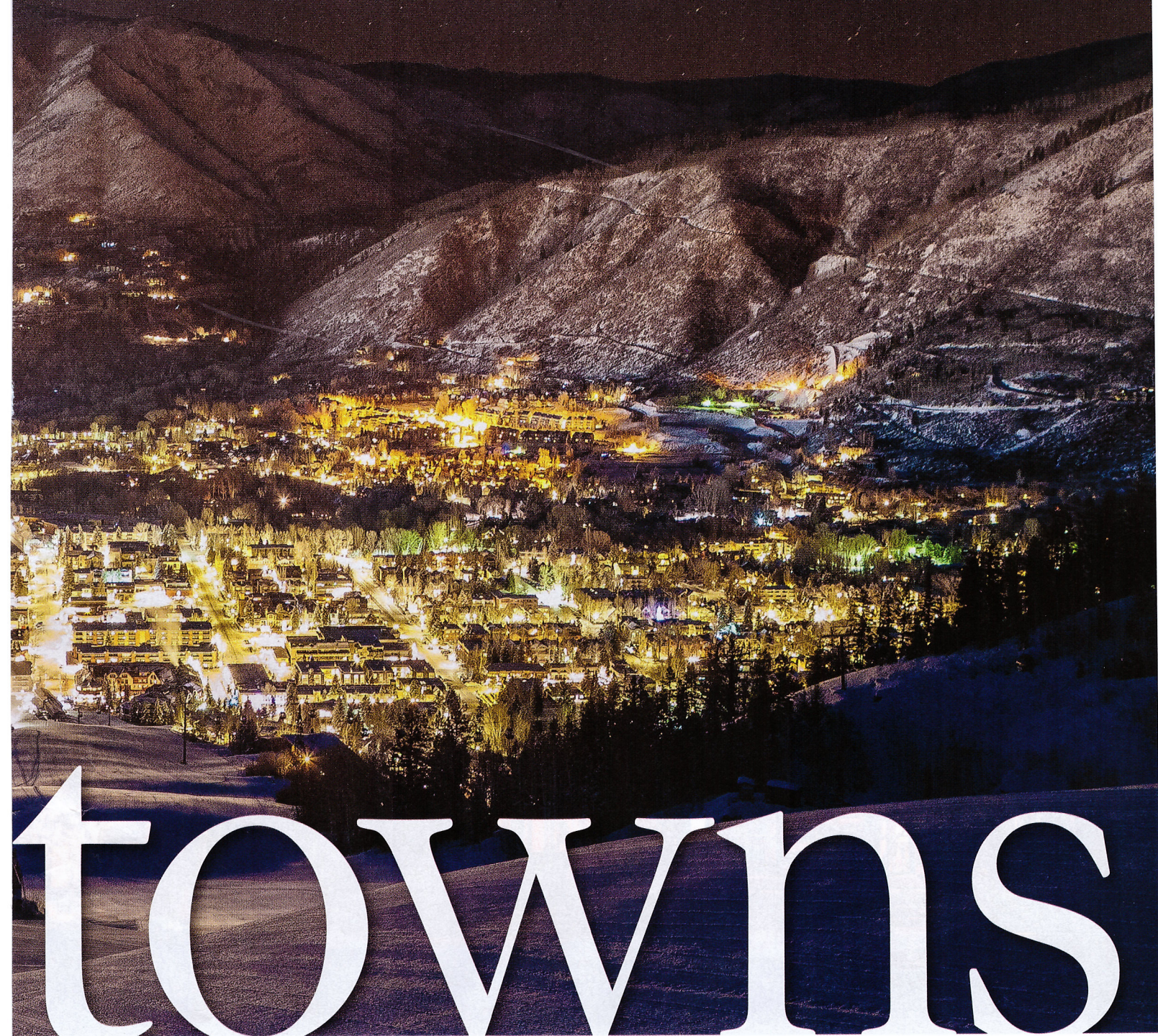
Life is good at the top:  
No. 1-ranked Aspen glows  
golden under the stars.

# top { 2015 } Ski

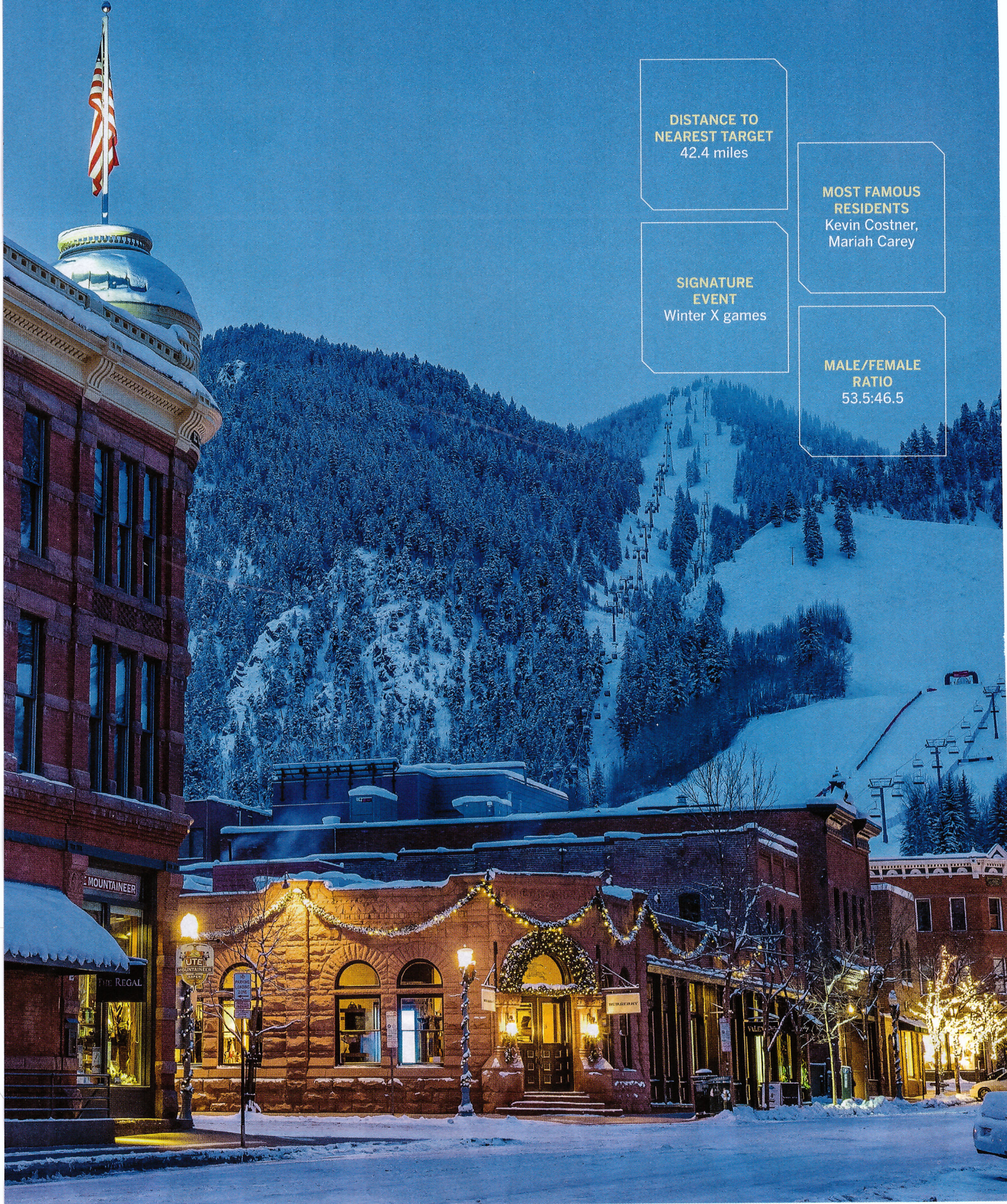


We all have a vision of our ideal ski town: Redbrick facades flanking cobbled streets lined with lit evergreens. White clapboard houses and quaint general stores. Chic village hotels, amazing restaurants, and music venues that don't quit until the wee hours of the morning.

So what makes a great ski town? Different things to different people, no doubt. This is *our* list. It's not scientific—we sent out no surveys. Then again, isn't the best research done by hanging with the locals, dancing on the bar, and snagging a table at that hot new restaurant on the corner? We think so, too.







DISTANCE TO  
NEAREST TARGET  
42.4 miles

MOST FAMOUS  
RESIDENTS  
Kevin Costner,  
Mariah Carey

SIGNATURE  
EVENT  
Winter X games

MALE/FEMALE  
RATIO  
53.5:46.5



## { 2015 TOP SKI TOWNS }

# aspen

colorado

population: 6,728 // median home price: \$4,600,000 // elevation: 7,945 ft.

# 1

**Aspen.** It's one of the most riffed-on ski towns out there. From *Aspen Extreme* to *Dumb and Dumber*, *Us Weekly* to *The New York Times*, the widespread image of Aspen is a glitzy celebrity playground, where the billionaires pushed out the millionaires and where no regular Joe could possibly afford to live.

While this stereotype is based in some fact—at least 50 Forbes billionaires have homes here, Paris Hilton and Mariah

Carey (among many other celebs) keep the paparazzi well employed, and man-fur is a fashion staple over the holidays—peel back the layers of this 145-year-old former mining town and you'll find a surprisingly diverse society.

The fact that a rad ski mountain rises out of downtown Aspen, and three more are quick, free bus rides away, is enough to attract—and retain—many a ski bum. So while a sizable freshman class comes to town every ski season, equally well represented are older-generation lifestyle-prioritizers, some of whom have abandoned Ph.D.- or MBA-track careers to live the dream, and many of whom hit the slopes and bars with an intensity that belies their age. Ski bums of all ages may be working three jobs to pay their way in this pricey resort, but on

a powder morning, no matter the potential wages lost, you'll find them in the gondola line—itsself an interesting cross-section of Aspen society.

Then there are the Aspenites who don't ski, the growing number who came for reasons other than the recreational richness. Aspen's vibrant arts and culture scene, for example, comprises dozens of art galleries, a year-round stream of high-caliber performances, a good chunk of Aspen's 200-plus nonprofits, and its new anchor, a \$45 million, 33,000-square-foot contemporary art museum housed in a giant latticework cube that stands out in this Victorian and Bauhaus-inspired downtown.

In a town where single-family home prices average \$5 million, waiters, plumbers, and ski instructors (and doctors and Realtors) benefit from

ski country's oldest and most robust government-subsidized housing program, which covers some 2,800 units. This means a good balance of duct tape and Dior in town after the evening commute—and a particularly civically involved population. Over 97 percent of Pitkin County voters cast ballots in the 2012 election, and Aspen is home to two thriving daily newspapers—never lacking in letters to the editor—plus a mélange of politically diverse columnists, gadflies, and concerned citizens who regularly spout from their soapboxes on the issue du jour.

If there's any place that reflects all the strata of the local society, it's the Thrift Shop of Aspen, a three-story repository of barely worn designer castoffs and an ungodly amount of other unwanted stuff. The Thrift Shop's customer base is everyone in town (there's no real affordable retail otherwise), and Aspen's philanthropic spirit is reflected in the 140 volunteers who work there (all women, most regular Janes). Thrift Shop sales translate to about half a million dollars in scholarships and nonprofit grants doled out annually. Now that's Aspen's wealth going full circle.

—Catherine Lutz

## { IN WITH THE URBAN: COOLEST SKI CITIES }

### vancouver british columbia

A cosmopolitan city with world-class dining, an amazing market (Granville Island Public Market), eclectic neighborhoods (don't miss the Gastown district), and fabulous hotels, Vancouver is well worth an extra few days on either end of a Whistler trip.

### salt lake city utah

One of the few North American cities you can use as home base for a ski trip, Salt Lake has enjoyed a renaissance over the past few years that's revitalized the sleepy downtown. Now the dining scene has caught the bug. Check out The Rest, Hub & Spoke, and Current Fish & Oyster.

### denver colorado

Yes, pot is legal (and there are dispensaries in almost every neighborhood). But also visit Denver for its up-

and-coming dining scene, arts community, and innovative projects like Union Station, an 1881 Amtrak station that's still in use and now boasts restaurants, bars, shops, and the swanky Crawford Hotel.

### quebec city quebec

Fortified Old Quebec smacks of—and tastes like—Europe. And the neighborhoods outside the walled city offer glimpses of the revival happening there, from the innovative restaurants to the white-walled galleries. Bring your appetite.

### seattle washington

From Pike Place to Pioneer Square, this waterfront city is a great time all year long—with smaller crowds in the winter. A recent technology-company boom has the money flowing in; you can see its ripples in the new hotels, restaurants, and markets.

