

A scenic view of a lake and mountains. In the foreground, a mountain biker wearing a red jacket and a red helmet is riding down a rocky, light-colored slope. The background features a large, dark blue lake, surrounded by green pine trees and distant mountains under a clear sky. The overall scene is bright and sunny, with shadows cast on the ground.

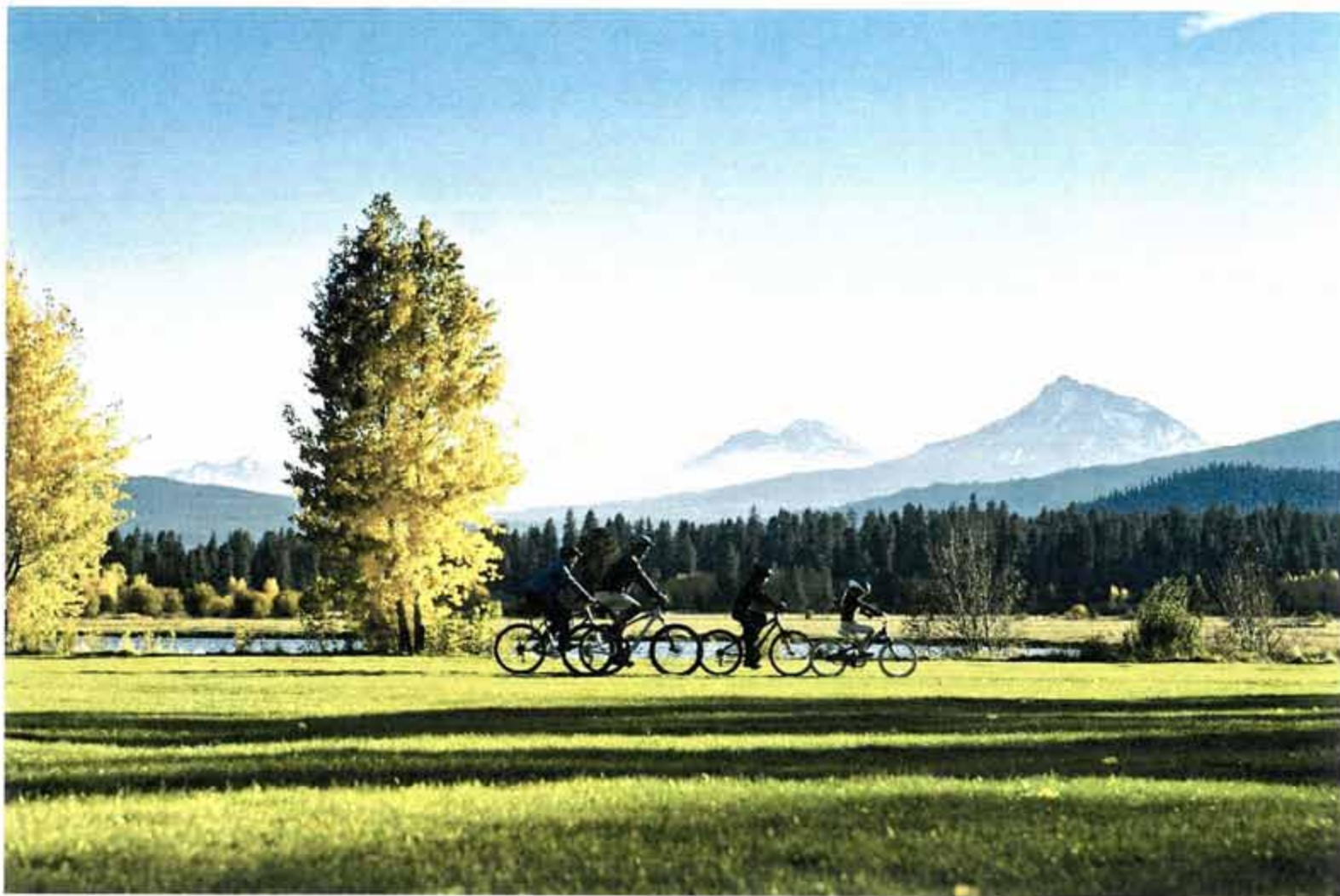
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JUNE 2011

Horizon EDITION

Tahoe Treasures

*Lake and Mountain Adventures
in this Jewel of the Sierra*



Family-Friendly Resorts

By Kim Cooper Findling

THERE'S NO SMILE MORE GRATIFYING THAN YOUR OWN child's, and I'm looking at two huge, toothy grins as my 5-year-old, Libby, and my 3-year-old, Maris, each sit astride a horse at Black Butte Ranch, near the Central Oregon town of Sisters.

My family brought me to Black Butte Ranch several times when I was young, and I still have warm and happy memories of those visits. I'm hoping this weekend will be equally wonderful for my girls.

"Go, horsey!" hollers Maris to Lonesome, her palomino-for-hire. He's one of the 65 horses that were saddled at the ranch's stables this morning in preparation for trail rides that range from two-mile beginners' loops to all-day wilderness trips. Minimum age for trail riders is 7, so the girls are participating in the Lil' Buckaroos program before their horses hit the trail with older riders in the saddles. My father, Bob, is leading Lonesome (and Maris) around an enormous corral, and I notice that Dad's grin is nearly as large as his granddaughter's. My stepmother, Beverly, leads Libby and Paladin, a quarter horse paint, while I take photos to show my husband, Karl, who will join us later today.

Dad, Beverly, the girls and I arrived at the stables around 8 A.M., feeling rested after a good night's sleep at the ranch's Spring Home No. 10. We checked in late yesterday afternoon, delighted to find a four-bedroom home situated amid pines, cedars and aspens—the air fresh and clean, infused with the sweet spiciness of snowbrush. We laughed and joked as we made dinner in the kitchen, and after

sunset, when the daytime high of 90 was on its way to a refreshing nighttime low of about 50, we flipped on the gas fireplace and settled in for an evening of conversation, the two youngsters insistent on staying up with us until their heads began to nod.

Black Butte Ranch, located less than 30 miles west of the Redmond/Bend airport, has 1,156 homes and 103 condominiums on 1,800 acres. Approximately 200 fortunate folks live here all year, enjoying the area's more than 300 days of annual sunshine. Other owners visit periodically for rest, rejuvenation and multigenerational fun, and when they're not here themselves, they allow vacationers such as our family to rent their homes.

Some families—immediate and extended—have returned to Black Butte year after year since the early 1970s, when the working cattle ranch, established in the 1880s, became a residential resort. The ranch is on the eastern flank of the Cascade Range, in a peaceful forest, yet it offers numerous recreational opportunities: 18 miles of often-interconnected biking/walking paths; 19 tennis courts; five swimming pools; three restaurants; kayak/canoe/standup-paddleboard rentals; a 3,000-square-foot spa; and two 18-hole golf courses. The Glaze Meadow course is undergoing a renovation through spring 2012, but junior-golfer rates and golf camps continue to be offered on the Robert Muir Graves-designed, 7,000-yard Big Meadow course.

The ranch can also arrange guided bicycling, fly-fishing, cave-exploration and moonlight-canoeing excursions, and is less than 40 miles from the Mt. Bachelor Ski Resort, which has 71 runs and 3,000-plus acres of lift-accessible terrain. The High Desert Museum, where you can see animals such as bobcats, lynx and river otters, is about 35 miles away.

The ranch's setting and recreational options make it a great vacation spot whether your preference is to sit on a deck and read or to go full-throttle during your stay. And because Black Butte has lodging ranging from one-bedroom condos to six-bedroom homes, it can comfortably accommodate family groups of all sizes for recreation and reunions.

This weekend, I'm rediscovering why so many people have made Black Butte Ranch their destination of choice. After the ride, we purchase a juicy peach for each child at a Saturday Market located by Black Butte's General Store, and then it's time, as Libby puts it, for "swimming, swimming, swimming!" The ranch's Glaze Meadow Recreation Center

has an indoor pool and an outdoor pool, and we start with the outdoor complex—a masterpiece with a green-grass perimeter, a waterfall, a children's pool, a fountain play area, a huge hot tub and lots of lawn chairs.

Thank goodness for grandmothers—Beverly takes over swimming duty while I relax on a chaise longue. As she and the girls giggle and swim and splash, I soak up vitamin D and read a mystery novel that called to me from the shelves of our rental home. I almost sink into a nap ... until I hear the piercing scream of my eldest child. It turns out to be a joyful cry: The trio of swimmers has discovered the water-slide at the indoor pool—a steep, fast ride that elicits happy yelps from Libby a good 25 times. Karl arrives just before run 26, and gleefully joins in the fun.

By the time the six of us enter Robert's Pub several hours later for an early dinner, we've worked up significant appetites. The restaurant has a family-friendly section with red-checkered booths and sleek black tables away from the bar, and offers a children's menu with burgers, chicken fingers, and spaghetti with meatballs. We adults enjoy local microbrews, salmon salads and halibut sandwiches, and everyone agrees on ice cream for dessert. From our table, we can see Black Butte, the ranch's namesake. The butte is actually an extinct cinder cone volcano, which at a peak elevation of 6,400 feet rises about 3,000 feet above the plateau on which the ranch was built.

Sunday morning, we take a quarter-mile hike along a foot/bike path to see the Paulina Springs on the western side of the ranch. If we'd desired, we could have rented bikes from the Glaze Meadow

Lift to family rooms. Escaping at Black Butte Ranch, which has 20 miles of trails.

Before the ranch has a large herd of horses and a bike or guided ride.



bike- and ski-rental/repair shop. As we walk along at a leisurely pace, my father, a retired forester, identifies trees and shrubs for us—snowberry, aspen, grand fir, alder, chinkapin, huckleberry—until we come to a shaded, wooded area sheltering a stream. When we look more closely at the stream, we see the springwater bubbling up and hear its pleasant melody. The scene is picture-perfect, and the girls race toward the trees, pretending to be forest pixies.

Beverly and I have late-morning spa appointments, so our marvelous men take the kids to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Wizard Falls Hatchery, about eight miles northwest of the ranch. I've been to the hatchery before, and can imagine the kids scattering bits of fish food, bought from vending machines for a quarter, into holding ponds as trout leap and fight for nibbles.

I, on the other hand, don't have to lift a finger as I'm soothed by a deep-tissue, eucalyptus-oil massage that eases my chronically sore shoulder. And Beverly is equally pleased with her relaxation massage featuring lavender oil.

Somehow, our treatments also re-energize us for an afternoon of quality family time back at the pool. As three generations enjoy each other's company, strengthen bonds and make the most of these precious moments when we can all be together, I realize that from my perspective as daughter, wife and mother, I couldn't ask for a better vacation.

When evening comes, the grandparents take the girls back to Robert's Pub for kid-focused fare while Karl and I go on a dinner date at the Lodge at Black Butte. The Lodge Restaurant is warmly elegant, with high beams, knotty pine floors and views of the rugged Cascades from the picture windows. We sip an excellent Cabernet blend from Eastern Washington's Maryhill Winery, and peruse a menu that's an excellent compendium of Northwest cuisine. We start with an appetizer of delicious crab cakes, then I savor an entree of pan-seared Alaska halibut with pistachio relish, crispy polenta and champagne beurre blanc, and Karl raves about his alder-smoked chinook salmon. Savoring this night out together, we take our time with our desserts of vanilla cheesecake and milk chocolate panna cotta, and linger over coffee.

The next morning, a glorious sunrise sends rays of light dancing through the trees outside the kitchen window as we gather around the table for the final meal of our family weekend—pancakes and piles of bacon. Maris is still talking about Lonesome, her horse, and Libby has decided she wants to be a professional swimmer when she grows up. Beverly says again how delighted she was to spot a wood duck on the shore of the pond near the lodge yesterday, and Karl and I share how impressed we were with the Lodge Restaurant. "This has been a truly awesome weekend," my father says, and between bites of pancake, we all wholeheartedly agree.

Black Butte Ranch (866-202-8843, www.blackbutteranch.com) is one of the many family-friendly resorts located in the Western United States



and Western Canada. Below are just a few more examples of resorts that are excellent destinations for family get-togethers while also appealing to adult business and leisure travelers.

Big Sky Resort. Big Sky, Montana: Located just 45 miles southwest of Bozeman and just 50 miles northwest of Yellowstone National Park, this mountainous retreat has hotel rooms, cabins, condominiums and private homes, with up to five bedrooms available. Activities include golfing the resort's 18-hole Arnold Palmer-designed course (junior rates and instruction available), swimming in its pools, hiking, mountain biking, fly-fishing, rock climbing, horseback riding, whitewater rafting, archery, paintball, conquering the resort's climbing wall or high-ropes course, or trying the bungee trampoline. Ziplining and trips to Yellowstone are available year-round. Winter recreation includes sleigh rides, snowcat rides, snowshoe tours and tubing as well as skiing or snowboarding on your choice of the resort's more than 150 named runs. The year-round Big Sky Kids Club offers free arts and crafts, drama and various other activities for children who are overnight guests. The Solace Spa—850 square feet between two locations—provides a full range of treatments, and a new approximately 3,000-square-foot spa is expected to be completed in time for the 2011–12 ski season. 800-548-4486; www.bigskyresort.com.

The Coeur d'Alene Resort. Coeur d'Alene, Idaho: This upscale resort on the shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene in Northern Idaho, about 30 miles east of Spokane, has great views of the lake from many guestrooms. The resort offers lake cruises; motorboat, pontoon-boat and watercraft rentals; a world-class, 15,000-square-foot spa; an aquatic center with a children's wading pool and a lap pool; and a lake-

Young golfers are welcome at the Jack Nicklaus-designed Big Sky Golf course in Montana's Big Sky.

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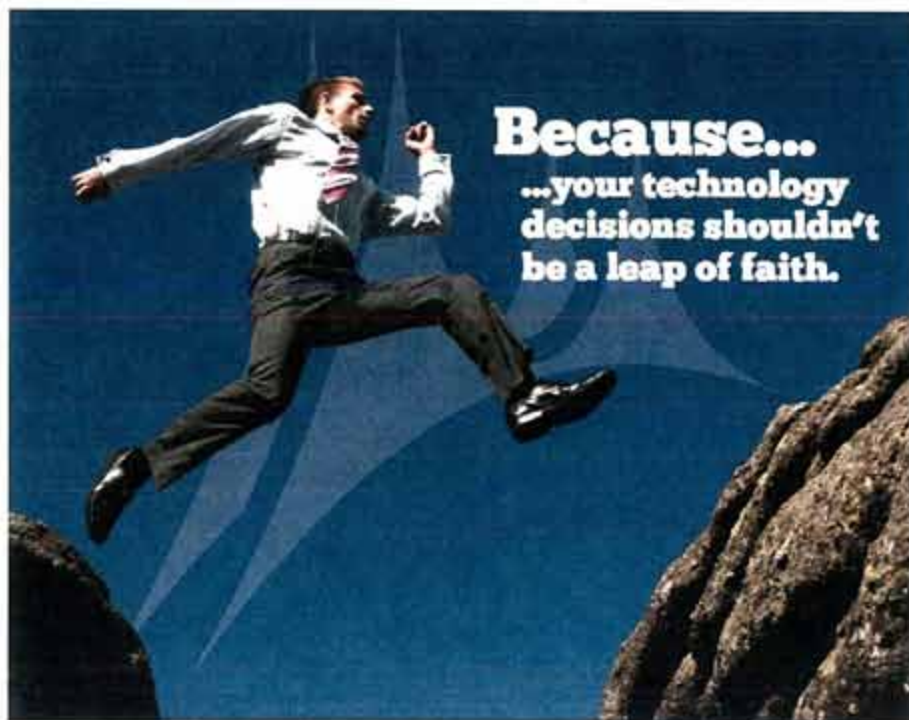
THERE IS A PLACE

side golf course with the world's only par-3, movable, floating-island green. Junior rates and instruction are available. The resort can also make arrangements for fly-fishing, whitewater-rafting, kayaking, hiking, bicycling and horseback-riding adventures, and provide information on area skiing, snowboarding, sledding, tubing and snowshoeing. In addition, it has a children's program with activities ranging from swimming to arts and crafts. The resort is also approximately 20 miles south of the Silverwood Theme Park and Boulder Beach Water Park—the Northwest's largest theme park—which boasts 65 rides/shows/attractions, including thrilling roller coasters, and rides designed for younger as well as older kids. 800-688-5253; www.cdaresort.com.

DoubleTree by Hilton Sonoma—Wine Country, Rohnert Park, California: This Tuscan-style hotel near Santa Rosa has an outdoor pool and tennis courts, is surrounded by a 36-hole golf club, and is located near attractions such as an indoor go-kart track, a paintball facility, bumper boats, miniature golf, a bowling alley and a roller rink. Also in the area are outstanding wineries, beaches and trails; the Safari West Wildlife Preserve; the Charles M. Schulz Museum; and the Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve. 707-584-5466; www.dtsonoma.com.

Fantasyland Hotel at West Edmonton Mall, Edmonton, Alberta: Located in North America's largest shopping and entertainment center, Fantasyland offers rooms with themes ranging from "Polynesian" to "Western" to "Truck." The hotel is a great base from which to explore the 5.3 million-square-foot mall and enjoy its Galaxyland Amusement Park, World Waterpark, Sea Life Caverns aquarium, miniature golf course, ice-skating rink, three-level ropes course, bumper-boats lake, movie theaters, arcade, stores, spas and restaurants. 780-444-3000; www.fantasylandhotel.com.

Great Wolf Lodge—Grand Mound, Washington: Located about 80 miles south of Seattle and about 100 miles north of Portland, the resort has suites that can sleep up to eight, and suites with fun themes such as "KidCabin." The indoor water park—featuring slides, pools, activity areas and hot tubs—is reserved for the use of overnight guests, with water park admission included in the room rates. Amenities include an adults' spa and a kids' spa, an arcade, a teen space, a children's-activities program and daily special events, including Story Time. The lodge also offers an engaging Magi-Quest adventure in which magic wands are used to solve mysteries, enchant objects and



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complete quests. 866-798-9653; www.greatwolf.com/grandmound/waterpark.

Manteo Resort, Kelowna, British Columbia: Set on the shore of Okanagan Lake in Western Canada wine country, Manteo Resort has two- and three-bedroom villas in addition to guestrooms. Hotel amenities include indoor and outdoor pools; an outdoor waterslide; a water-spray park; a private sandy beach; watersports-equipment and canoe, kayak and motorboat rentals; a big-screen movie theater; a putting green; a tennis court; and a playground. During the summer, youngsters can participate in the Kidz Klub program, which features

activities such as crafts, scuba lessons and pizza/movie nights. Visitors also enjoy hiking, mountain biking, golfing and wine touring in the Okanagan region, and winter activities such as skiing, snowboarding, tubing, snowshoeing, ice-skating, sleigh rides, dog-sled tours and snowmobile tours. 800-445-5255; www.manteo.com.


Oregon Garden Resort, Silverton, Oregon: This resort approximately 40 miles southeast of Portland opened in 2008 next to the 80-acre Oregon Garden. The resort has an approximately 4,000-square-foot spa and an outdoor pool. The Oregon Garden contains more than 20 specialty areas,

such as the Lewis and Clark Garden, the Sensory Garden and the Tropical House. The Children's Garden features "weird plants," a "dinosaur dig," a treehouse and a hobbit house. Guests receive complimentary tickets for garden admission during their stay, and also a buffet breakfast. 503-874-2500; www.oregongardenresort.com.

Rancho Las Palmas, Rancho Mirage, California: A recently renovated luxury resort in the Palm Springs area, Rancho Las Palmas has 25 tennis courts and a huge pool facility with a Splashtopia section featuring two 100-foot waterslides, a meandering river and a sandy beach. There's also an adults-only Tranquility Pool. Other amenities include the 20,000-square-foot Spa Las Palmas; 27 holes of golf, with junior rates and junior instruction available; and kids' activities featuring arts and crafts, science, dramatic arts, computer stations and more. Visitors also enjoy area hiking and jogging trails, and shopping and entertainment at The River at Rancho Mirage, with its live music and cascading waterfalls. 866-423-1195; www.rancholaspalmas.com.

Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane, Washington: This hotel along the Spokane River offers rooms with river and downtown views. Guests enjoy the indoor lap pool and the outdoor "lagoon," which has a waterfall and a waterslide, and they can take rides on the Spokane River aboard the *River Queen* sternwheeler. Families also appreciate the Roaring Start Breakfast Buffet, which is free for children ages 10 and younger. The hotel is adjacent to Riverfront Park, whose attractions include the Spokane Falls SkyRide, the 1909 Loeffl Carousel, amusement rides, a miniature golf course, an ice-skating rink, an IMAX theater and access to the 37-mile Centennial Trail. The Red Lion is also near numerous downtown attractions, including the Mobius Kids museum, and convenient to several golf courses and to Inland Northwest ski areas such as the Mt. Spokane Ski & Snowboard Park. In addition, from May to September, the hotel offers a package that includes tickets to the Silverwood theme/water park, which is just 45 miles away. 509-326-8000; www.spokaneredlionpark.com.

The Resort at The Mountain, Welches, Oregon: Located less than an hour east of Portland, this resort in the Mount Hood area has two- and three-bedroom villas as well as guestrooms. Amenities include a 5,000-square-foot spa, an outdoor pool, tennis courts, 27 holes of golf (junior rates and instruction available), an 18-hole putting course, bicycle rentals, outdoor games



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and a children's playground. Area activities and attractions include hiking, horseback riding, rafting, fly-fishing, skiing, snowshoeing, trout farms and the Mt. Hood Adventure Park at Skibowl, which offers fun ranging from miniature golf to ziplining. 877-439-6774; www.theresort.com.

Snowcreek Resort, Mammoth Lakes, California: Guests can book condos or townhomes with up to four bedrooms, and also enjoy the 3,000-square-foot spa, indoor and outdoor pools, tennis courts, racquetball courts, a basketball court, a volleyball court and even personal trainers to provide assistance. The resort manages the nine-hole, Ted Robinson-designed Snowcreek Golf Course, with junior rates and instruction available. Located just minutes from the Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, Snowcreek also offers proximity to recreation such as hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, skiing, snowboarding, tubing, snowshoeing, ice-skating, dog-sled rides, snowcat tours and snowmobiling. More than 400 lakes and hundreds of miles of streams provide opportunities for boating, fishing and swimming. Visitors can also take backcountry treks in the John Muir Wilderness or Ansel Adams Wilderness, and day trips to Devils Postpile National Monument and Yosemite National Park. 800-544-6007; www.snowcreekresort.com.

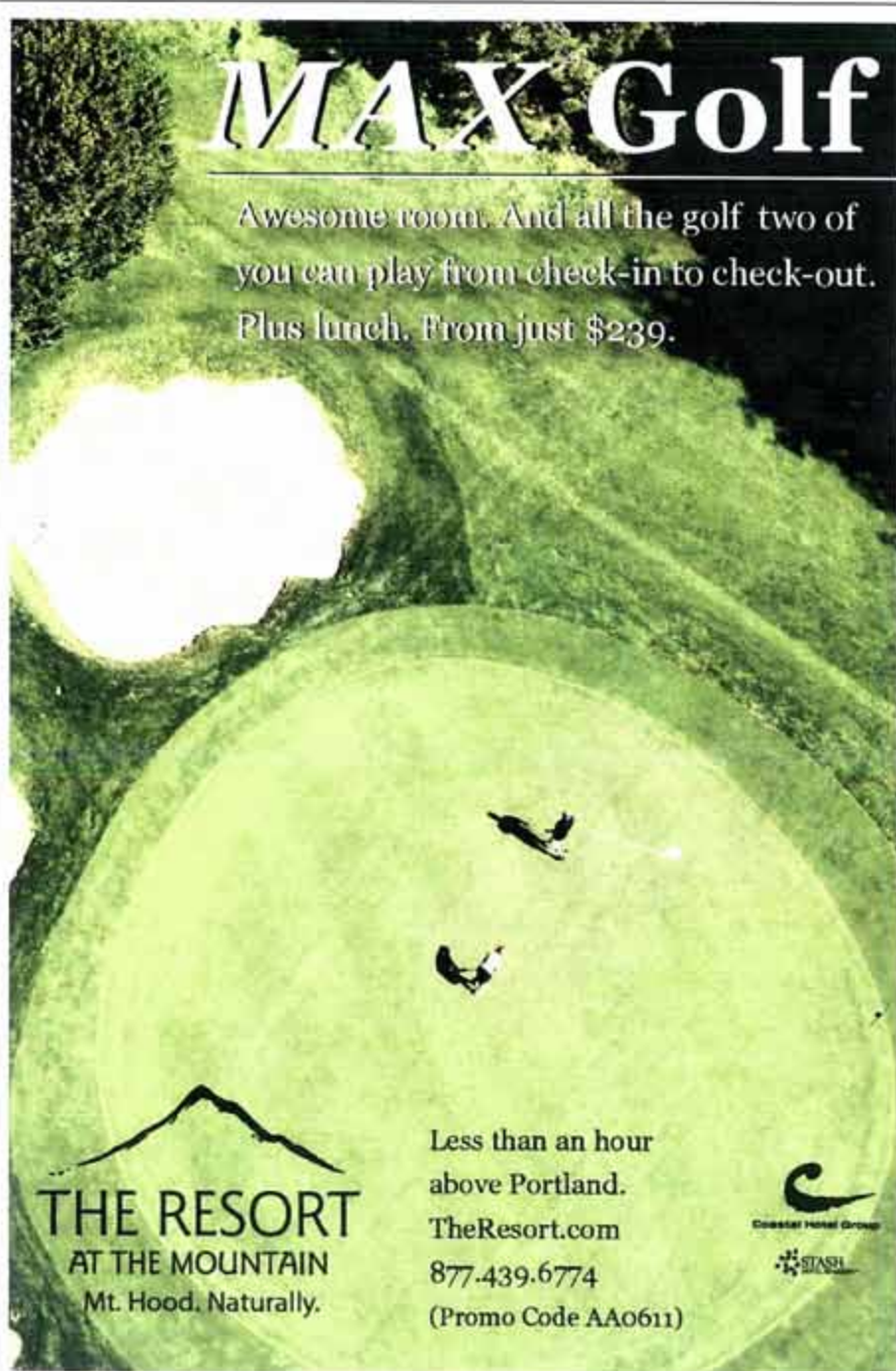
Sunriver Resort, Sunriver, Oregon: Located just 15 miles from Bend, the resort offers accommodations in main lodge guestrooms, cabins, condos and private homes that sleep up to 20 people. Property amenities include four golf courses, with junior instruction available; three swimming pools; a 15,800-square-foot spa; tennis courts; horseback-riding stables; a bicycle-rental facility; and an observatory. Area activities include kayaking, canoeing, stand-up paddling, mountain biking, ATV riding, hiking, whitewater rafting, rock climbing, fly-fishing, paintball, hiking tours of area caves and the Newberry National Volcanic Monument, skiing, snowboarding, dog-sledding, snowmobiling and snowshoeing. The year-round Fort Funnigan kids' program features activities such as biking, volcano tours and tennis camp. The resort provides free shuttle service year-round to Bend and the Mt. Bachelor Ski Resort, about 20 miles to the west. 800-801-8765; www.sunriver-resort.com.

Sun Valley Resort, Sun Valley, Idaho: The Sun Valley Resort complex includes Sun Valley Lodge, Sun Valley Inn, condominiums and cottages. Both the lodge and

the inn have family suites; the condominiums have up to four bedrooms; and the cottages have up to seven bedrooms. The resort has several pools and a spa, and the Sun Valley Village offers shopping, dining and entertainment, including bowling, a game room and a movie theater. Guests also enjoy bicycling, tennis, horseback riding, fly-fishing, paddleboating, golfing (with junior rates and instruction available) and ice-skating shows featuring Olympic athletes. Winter recreation includes skiing or snowboarding on the resort's 80 named runs, tubing, snowshoeing, sleigh rides and heli-skiing. The Sun

Valley Resort ice rink is open year-round. Children's programs, with activities such as swimming, bowling, golf putting, crafts and games, are available. 800-786-8259; www.sunvalley.com. ■

Kim Cooper Findling lives in Bend, Oregon. She is the author of the guidebook Day Trips from Portland, Oregon (Globe Pequot Press, May 2011), and Chance of Sun: An Oregon Memoir (Nestucca Spit Press, August 2011). Alaska Airlines (alaskaair.com, 800-ALASKAAIR) flies daily to numerous areas with family-friendly resorts and activities.



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