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Skip the tropical beach daydreams this winter. There will be plenty of heat in Colorado.

By Ari Bendersky

From February 24 to March 4, Telluride, the unspoiled gem of the San Juan Mountains, will attract a gaggle of gays for the town's fourth annual Gay Ski Week. Packed with activities, the week plays host to gay ski enthusiasts in search of an alternative to the circuit scene of other ski weeks, like Whistler and Aspen. This isn't to say the Calvin Klein Underwear White Party and Blue Ball Pool Party won't attract some debauchery, but the focus is definitely on the powder.

Telluride has been rated one of the toughest ski resorts in North America—and for good reason. The vast number of diamond and double diamond runs pose extreme challenges, but for those a little less seasoned, easier runs abound. And when you tire of the moguls, there are plenty of non-ski activities to fall back on, including snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, fly-fishing, and, of course, hitting the hot tub.

This cozy mountain enclave is anything but fussy. Dressing up means donning your cool denim and hitting the town's hot offerings. Dining options—both upscale and on the cheap—dot the rustic streets of downtown Telluride. Try internationally seasoned American cuisine and sweeping views at [Allred's](#) atop the San Sophia Gondola (970-728-7474), prime surf and turf at the [New Sheridan Chop House](#) (at the New Sheridan Hotel; 970-728-9100), Asian fusion (including fresh sushi flown in daily) at Honga's Lotus Petal & Tea Room (133 S. Oak St.; 970-728-5134), and the romantic [221 South Oak](#) set in an old Victorian home steps from the gondola (970-728-9507).

For lodging, you have two main options: downtown or Mountain Village. The appeal of a ski-in/ski-out option may draw you to the world-renowned [The Peaks Resort and Golden Door Spa](#) (136 Country Club Drive; 866-282-4557) or the [Mountain Lodge](#) (457 Mountain Village Boulevard; 866-368-6867), one of the festival's host locales. If you desire more activity and bustling nightlife, camp out at the top-rated [Hotel Telluride](#) (190 Cornet Street; 970-369-1188) or the 32-room boutique [Inn at Lost Creek](#) (119 Lost Creek Lane; 888.601.LOST), both in the heart of downtown. Most spots feature Old West charm, fireplaces, and hot tubs, so where you land depends on what you want close by. Keep in mind that Telluride is small, and the two areas are connected via a free gondola, a 15-minute ride from one end to the other.

Whether you plan to ski all week or take side trips to the old mining town of (two hours) or (one hour), dubbed the "Switzerland of America." You'll want to return for the week's crowning event: the 14th Annual Telluride AIDS Benefit and Fashion Show, featuring models strutting the catwalk in the likes of Diane von Furstenberg, Kenneth Cole, Theory, and Ginch Gonch (hot guys in skimpy underwear!).

For a full rundown on the week's activities, including links to lodging, head to [TellurideGaySkiWeek.com](http://TellurideGaySkiWeek.com).

Telluride is 360 miles southwest of Denver, but driving, especially in winter, can take up to seven hours. Fly into the Telluride or Montrose airports. American, United, Continental, USAir, and Delta all serve these airports, but many flights connect through Denver from most major cities. American Airlines is an official sponsor and is offering discounted fares by booking through <http://www.aa.com/rainbow> and using the code A8827AS.