

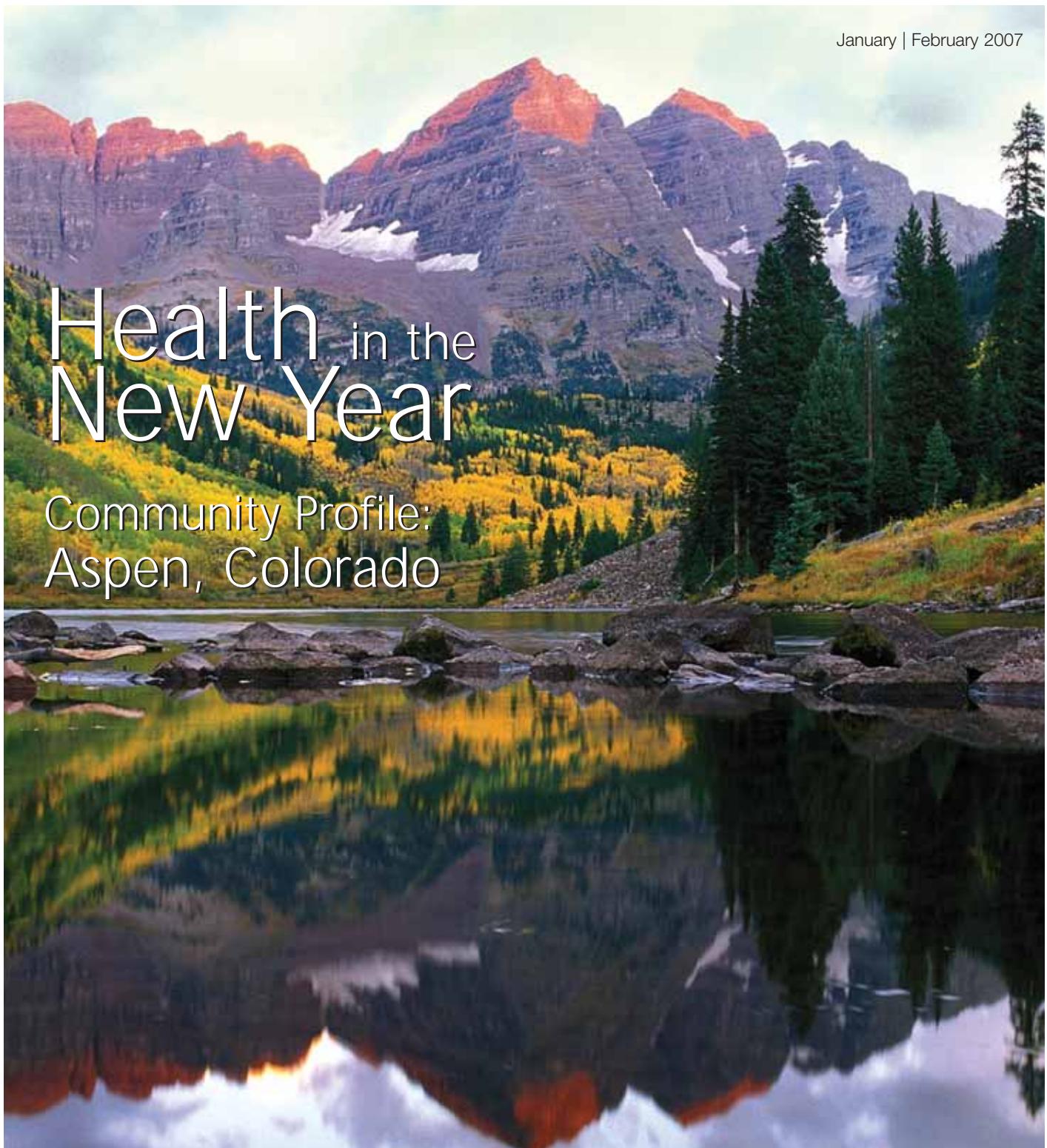
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LIFESTYLE | FAMILY | TRAVEL

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Health in the New Year

Community Profile:
Aspen, Colorado





Health & Fitness **Vacation**





Get Moving!

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PHOTOS PROVIDED BY DAVE GLUNS, NAPA VALLEY BIKE TOURS,
NORTH CAROLINA OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL, TREKAMERICA

Take a fitness vacation
and return home healthier

Vacations are no longer considered an indulgence. Employers, physicians, and mental health workers encourage them as a necessity to a healthy lifestyle. Vacations are as important as eating right, exercising, lowering stress, and getting enough sleep. And while some people's idea of a perfect vacation is lounging by the pool and indulging in all-you-can-eat meals, a growing number of health-conscious people are changing the concept of rest and relaxation by taking fitness vacations.

You don't have to be an athlete to consider an active vacation—there's something for everyone. For the adventurous, there's mountaineering, canyoneering, kayaking, and whitewater rafting. For those who want to see the world, there are walking, biking, hiking, and even horseback riding tours. Need a little more peace in your life? Check out yoga retreats and fitness spas.

Fitness vacations ultimately exercise more than just your body. They can expand your mind and bring out your creativity. They can stimulate your imagination, introduce you to new cultures and ideas—and you may even forge some lifelong friendships.

The following two pages profile some examples to think about when planning your next getaway.



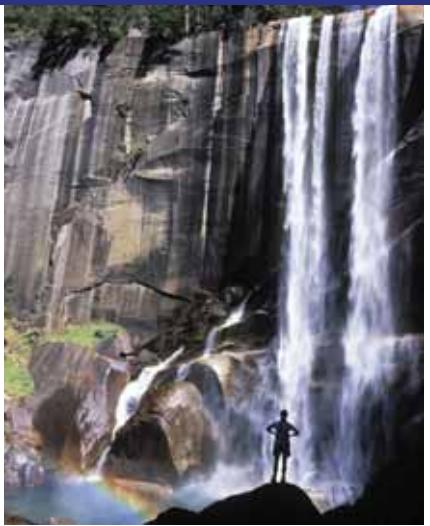
Adventure Vacations

Outward Bound is one of the oldest adventure-education organizations in the world, offering an abundance of what Whitney Setser, admissions adviser of North Carolina Outward Bound School, calls "experiential wilderness programs in spectacular locations throughout the United States and internationally."

The school's Exumas Bahamas Sea Kayaking experience takes you to the Exumas, an area of 365 cays and islands 35 miles southeast of Nassau, Bahamas. While learning kayaking skills, rescue techniques, teamwork, and leadership skills, you will chart a course through pristine seawaters while navigating among hundreds of undeveloped islands. You'll also learn about tides and currents; see exotic fish, birds, and wildlife; and camp on tropical beaches.

"When you work with people in Outward Bound," Setser says, "you get to see their 'ah ha!' moment when they suddenly realize they've done something amazing. It changes people in different ways. It helps young people realize that they have much more potential than they thought they did."

The people who have experienced these expeditions agree. "This course was an opportunity for me to test my limits



physically, mentally, and emotionally," wrote Kristine Nardelli of Atlanta, Georgia. "I feel strongly that I was able to meet my goals or exceed my goals all through the course."

Fitness and Health Spa Vacations

Spas are a good choice for those who are looking for spectacular scenery, outdoor activity, spa cuisine, and luxurious rooms all in one package. Mountain Trek Fitness Retreat & Health Spa is a perfect example, located at an elevation of 2,000 feet in the Kootenay Mountains of southeastern British Columbia. The timber-frame lodge overlooks the 90-mile-long Kootenay Lake and is surrounded by miles of forested land. Renowned for wilderness hiking trails and a successful boot-camp-style weight loss program, the lodge also offers a well-equipped gym, yoga, lake kayaking, and snowshoeing.

"People who come here want to undergo a change and move to another level of health, vitality, fitness, and weight loss," explains Andrea Gower, guest relations administrator at Mountain Trek. "It's a place where you can go through dramatic change. We deal with all aspects of lifestyle and body, from core strengthening and weight training to a cooking class and diet. We address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—and by spiritual, I mean 'life context.' It's a very comprehensive program."

Trails ascend to 7,500 feet, and hikes are graded as beginner, intermediate, and advanced.

Mountain Trek has so many different trails, guests are able to hike a different one each day.

Walking Tours

For those interested in a sightseeing adventure, consider taking a walking tour. Tours are available internationally and are usually arranged by companies that specialize in this type of trip. TrekAmerica, a company specializing in adventure holidays, offers walking tours under its Footloose tours division. "We pride ourselves on being flexible. We call it



(Left to right) Mountain Trek Fitness Retreat & Health Spa; TrekAmerica; Napa Valley Bike Tours; Exumas Bahamas Sea Kayaking.

the freedom of independent travel with the security of a group,” says Dave Dennis, general manager of TrekAmerica. Participants are able to go sightseeing if they don’t feel like walking that day, or guides will arrange alternative activities such as river rafting.

The Western Parks Walk is a 14-day journey that begins in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State. By vehicle and on foot, the tour travels through Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park; explores the lava formations of Craters of the Moon National Monument in Idaho; crosses Nevada’s northern desert plateau into the Sierra Nevada Mountains and Lake Tahoe; camps for three nights in Yosemite National Park; and ends with a sightseeing tour through San Francisco.

Before you come, daily stretching and walking are recommended. “It doesn’t have to be necessarily strenuous. We cater everything to suit all fitness levels,” Dennis says. But be sure to break in any walking shoes or boots that you may buy for this trip. According to Dennis, the worst enemy on this tour is new shoes.

Use a treadmill, city streets, or nearby trails to build up your leg muscles and your endurance. And get the specifics about clothing and equipment from the company to be sure you’re properly equipped.

Biking Vacations

Bike vacations often can be customized to fit your needs and fitness level. Tours are designed for beginners and expert cyclists and often include other activities, such as kayaking and hiking. Napa Valley Bike Tours designs biking vacations that also can include spa treatments, limousines, golfing, riverboat excursions, and hot air ballooning. These



vacations are a good choice for those who would like a little culture served up with their exercise and a posh hotel to unwind in after a full day of sightseeing.

One popular vacation package offered by Napa Valley Bike Tours is their Ride, Wine, and Dine Bicycling Vacation. Experts at the company will customize your tour to fit your budget and your agenda, whether it is a romantic trip, a family reunion, or a group of close friends. They will make all hotel and dining reservations and choose the wineries based on their inside knowledge of the very finest Napa Valley has to offer.

This vacation is geared toward luxury rather than roughing it. You will first check into your hotel and then spend the day cycling, sightseeing, visiting wineries, and learning about the vineyards. The bike tours are scheduled from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., so you can get in a morning swim and an evening massage and still have time to meet new people. “This is a very balanced, something-for-everyone type of vacation,” says Cindy Hesse, vice president of sales and marketing for Napa Valley Bike Tours. “Bicycles are our mode and vehicle of transportation to visit wineries. Napa Valley is known as the Disney World for adults, so why not temper that with a little activity?”

It’s the perfect vacation for a couple in which one person is an experienced cyclist and one person isn’t. For cyclists in the group, there is a 90-minute morning ride of 20 to 30 miles before the daily tour starts. And those who are not as physically fit can opt to take the van and give their legs a rest.

The tour includes a fleet of bicycles. You can choose from road and road-hybrids, mountain bikes, comfort bikes, and even tandems.

Before you schedule any type of fitness vacation, make sure to do some research. Check out the experience level of the guides, the weather for the time of year you’re going, and the equipment you will need. Fitness vacations give you a chance to indulge yourself without the guilt. You may even gain some muscle, lose a few pounds, and return home with a whole new perspective. ■