

Texas's Wide Open Spaces

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NEW WEST

Billing itself as "the ultimate hideout," the chic Lajitas sits on 25,000 acres between Big Bend National and State parks and offers the amenities of contemporary Western living, including an 18-hole golf course with four holes on an island in the Rio Grande and an optional par-one in Mexico, as well as a spa with an aptly named three-treatment, two-and-a-half-hour special called the Escape (\$225). But if you're hankering for the perfect combination of old and new, sign up for the "So You Wanna Be a Cowboy" package: The two-night stay includes custom-fit cowboy boots, a shooting lesson, two half-day horseback rides to a nearby mine and ghost town, gourmet cowboy grub, and accommodations. Prefer to explore the area on a bike? The X Bar Ranch has 16 miles of moderately technical, mostly single-track trails that run through hills, mesquite flats, and dry riverbeds.

NATURAL WONDERS | TEXAS

Big Bend National Park, (432) 477-2251, www.nps.gov/bibe, \$15 (per vehicle) entrance fee

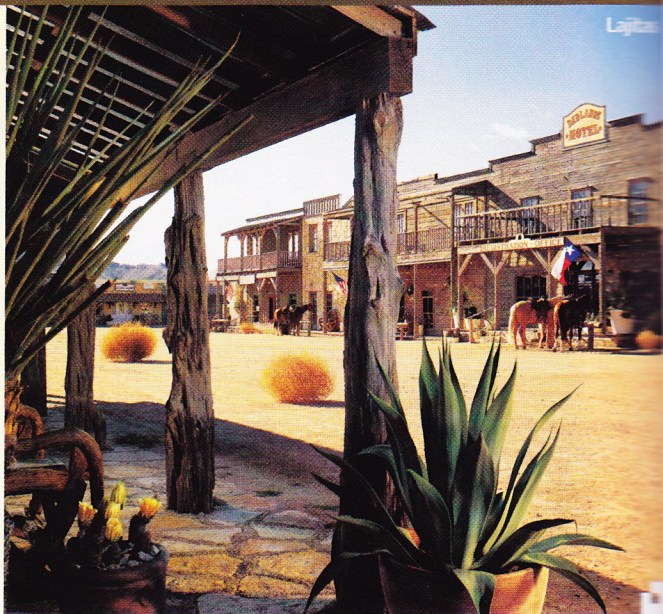
Gage Hotel Marathon, (800) 884-4243, www.gagehotel.com, from \$69

Reata Alpine, (432) 837-9232, 203 North Fifth Street

Big Bend-Rio Grande Hiker, (800) 488-8483, www.theworldoutdoors.com, \$2,295

Lajitas, (877) 525-4827, www.lajitas.com, from \$195

X Bar Ranch, (888) 853-2688, www.xbarranch.com, from \$80



NATURAL WONDERS | UTAH

Arches National Park, (435) 719-2299, www.nps.gov/arch, \$10 (per vehicle) entrance fee

Canyonlands National Park, (435) 719-2313, www.nps.gov/cany, \$10 (per vehicle) entrance fee

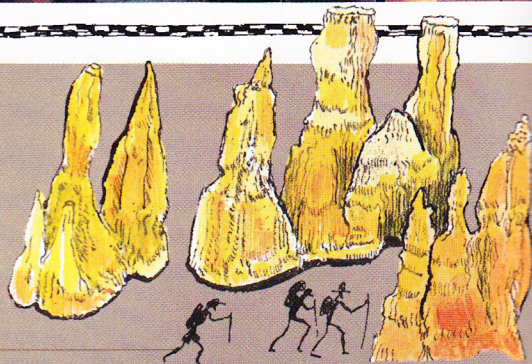
Bryce Canyon National Park, (435) 834-5322, www.nps.gov/brca, \$20 (per vehicle) entrance fee

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, (435) 826-5499, www.ut.blm.gov/monument
Excursions of Escalante, (800) 839-7567, www.excursionsofescalante.com, basic canyoneering trip is \$125 for a full day (includes lunch and transportation)

Red Mountain Spa, St. George, (435) 673-4905, www.redmountainspa.com, from \$239 (inclusive)

Canyonlands' White Rim Road, (435) 719-2313, www.nps.gov/cany/planyourvisit/whiterimroad.htm

Moab Brewery, (435) 259-6333, www.themoabbrewery.com



OLD WEST

The stunning red canyons and stone of southern Utah in Arches and Canyonlands national parks are worth the trip, but far less traveled and just as magnificent is the 19-million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, adjacent to Bryce Canyon National Park and housing a mostly unsung trove of fiery-hued slot canyons. The basic canyoneering trip offered by Excursions of Escalante is an ideal introduction to down climbs and rappelling in these serene canyons; owner and guide Rick Green, named Hiking and Backpacking 2005 Guide of the Year by the *Outdoor Utah Recreation Guide*, takes small groups of aspiring canyoneers only to unpublished canyons.

NEW WEST

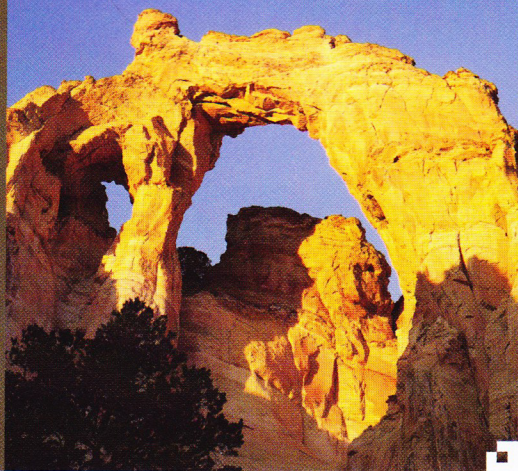
The red rocks take top billing at Red Mountain Spa in St. George, a two-hour drive from Las Vegas. Most everything centers around the dramatic landscape at this health-focused spa, from the daily multilevel guided hikes and rock climbing to orienteering, geology, and archaeology walks. Even the spa treatments, such as the Adobe Lavender Hydrating Cocoon, incorporate the red earth, and canyon stones are used in the Canyon Sage Warm Stone Massage. You'll need your muscles worked over after a jaw-jarring journey down the Canyonlands' White Rim Road, a 100-mile mountain-bike trek that takes you through peerless red-rock country and which is routinely ranked one of the country's great trails. Postride, slake your thirst and swap tales of near-endos at the Moab Brewery. **AW**

www.americanwaymag.com

LORIE A. PARCH is a native of Scottsdale, Arizona, which bills itself as "the West's Most Western Town."

Utah's Red Rocks

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument



Lodgings at the Red Mountain Spa

