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BYLINE: By Rachel Benjamin

HIGHLIGHT:

Whether you prefer your winter retreats hot or cold, we've got you covered.

BODY:

Picturing yourself relaxing in a lounge chair on a white-sand beach lapped by gently rolling surf? Or is your mental snapshot one of cruising down a ski trail surrounded by 14,000-foot-high peaks?

Here you'll find getaway locales from Kauai to Acapulco perfect for basking in the sun with a good book or playing 36 holes of golf every day. Those looking for air cold enough to ensure smooth slopes underneath your skis or snowboard can head to Jackson Hole, Telluride, or Taos. Southwest Airlines Vacations will package your ski trip to Park City, New Mexico, or Lake Tahoe. Big-city devotees can stay close to home while exploring up-to-the-minute dining spots, nightlife, and museums in El Paso or San Antonio. Enjoy this selection of winter retreats, filled with new places to play.

TEXAS

A City of Sun and Smiles

El Paso Convention and Visitors Bureau
800-351-6024
visitelpaso.com

Talk about a winter retreat! Located at the westernmost tip of Texas, El Paso enjoys sunshine more than 302 days of the year. El Paso's pass through the lower Rockies has been a destination for explorers since the conquistadors arrived in 1598. For a focus on winter fun, think Spanish mission tours, shopping in Mexico, hayrides, barbecues, mariachis, and Mexican *folklorico* dancers. You'll find great nightlife and fabulous authentic Mexican food. Golfers, hikers, and mountain bikers will be right at home year-round. Combine your visit to El Paso with a jaunt to its sister city, Juarez, just across the border in Mexico, and you'll enjoy two destinations for the price of one. Savor the warmth of sun and smiles -- and do Texas different!

Major League Resort

League City
South Shore Harbour Resort and Conference Center, 2500 South Shore Harbour
Boulevard, League City
800-442-5005
VisitLeagueCity.com and sshr.com

Conveniently located between Houston and Galveston Island, League City is home to the luxurious South Shore Harbour Resort and Conference Center. Set on the shores of Clear Lake, the resort hosts executive retreats and meetings for some of the nation's largest corporations. Both meeting attendees and vacationers will find an array of recreational activities, including a Scottish links-style 27-hole golf course and a 180-foot tropical pool. The Paradise Reef Restaurant and the Harbour Club Restaurant overlook the pool and a marina. Guests can take tour-boat excursions around Bay Area Houston and Clear Lake. Nearby attractions include Historic League City, Kemah Boardwalk, Galveston's beaches, Space Center Houston, NASA, and quaint fishing villages, and the heart of Houston is only 30 minutes away.

Own Your Own Beachfront Home

Alegria
310 Padre Boulevard, South Padre Island
800-503-6138
alegriasouthpadreisland.com

Alegria, an oceanfront complex on the tropical tip of Texas, will set a new standard for high-rise living on the beach. The buildings will be surrounded by four acres of shimmering pools, lush foliage, and tranquil beaches, and residents will have access to signature services and amenities of a resort hotel. All residences will have large, private oceanfront balconies, tile floors, stone countertops, and oversized showers. Those seeking a second home are looking at South Padre Island because wintertime temperatures, in the low sixties with lots of sun, allow for outdoor beach activity. Pre-construction prices begin at \$ 399,000 for two bedrooms, with three bedrooms also available. Residences are single ownership, but there will be a rental program. The opening is planned for summer 2006.

A City for All Seasons

San Antonio Convention and Visitors Bureau
800-447-3372
sanantoniovisit.com

San Antonio boasts 5 of the 20 most-visited attractions in the Lone Star State: the San Antonio River Walk, the Alamo, SeaWorld San Antonio, Six Flags Fiesta Texas, and the San Antonio Zoo. These are just a few of the reasons this city attracts 20 million visitors annually. San Antonio offers a dynamite combination of history, culture, cuisine, arts, music, family fun, year-round golf, and sporting events. Downtown, the Alamo and the other missions open windows to the past, while restaurants, clubs, and boutiques on the bustling River Walk reveal the city's modern side. If you're considering a weekend getaway, many special events -- including holiday festivities and the annual San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo -- are on tap in the winter.

Residential High-rise Comes to Trendy East Beach

Palisade Palms
601 East Beach Drive, Galveston
888-32-BEACH
PalisadePalms.com

The resort-style Palisade Palms will offer 260 condominium units in two towers set on eight acres of Galveston's East Beach. Residents will have large terraces or

balconies overlooking the Gulf, open kitchens for entertaining, and their choice of designer finishes. Amenities include a Larry North fitness center, two pool areas with a spa and hot tub, and the Beachcombers Kids Club. Prospective residents can stop by the Discover Center in Galveston to see the two 10-foot-tall models, view floor plans, and take virtual tours of the condominiums. There's also a Palisade Palms kiosk at the Galleria in Houston. Groundbreaking is expected this fall, and the first occupants should be able to move in before the end of 2006.

Where the Old World Meets the New

La Mansion del Rio Hotel
112 College Street, San Antonio
800-292-7300, lamansion.com

Watermark Hotel and Spa

212 West Crockett Street, San Antonio
866-605-1212
watermarkhotel.com

La Mansion del Rio and the Watermark are companion properties with distinctly different styles, but each promises the same high standard of service. La Mansion del Rio is tucked into the former St. Mary's College, located in the heart of San Antonio's Cultural Arts District. La Mansion's melding of Spanish Colonial architecture, the award-winning Las Canarias restaurant, and the experienced staff make it popular with travelers worldwide. The more intimate, 99-room Watermark is also on the River Walk, directly across a footbridge from La Mansion. This hotel has hand-forged iron four-poster beds and marble bathrooms in the guest rooms, its restaurant Pesca on the River has an oyster bar, and the elegantly designed spa has four spa guest rooms overlooking the River Walk.

NEW MEXICO

Land of Enchantment

New Mexico Department of Tourism
Santa Fe
800-545-2070
newmexico.org

New Mexico is a land of enchantment, where the diversity of wintertime activities, from skiing and golfing to visiting museums and touring Indian pueblos, will capture your enthusiasm. With nine ski areas stretching from Taos Ski Valley to Ski Apache in Ruidoso, there are plenty of slopes to challenge skiers and snowboarders of varying skill levels. Santa Fe and Taos have dozens of galleries displaying Native American and Western art. Plus museums such as Santa Fe's Museum of Spanish Colonial Art, Albuquerque's Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, and Fort Sumner's Billy the Kid Museum show the many sides of the state's arts, history, and cultures. From spicy Southwestern cuisine to the spectacular sunsets that artists love to paint, New Mexico will captivate you.

A Friendly New Mexico Town

Ruidoso
800-253-2255
ruidoso.net, skiapache.com

Perched high in southern New Mexico's mountains, the resort town of Ruidoso is home to Ski Apache, the state's second-largest ski area. This winter, skiers and snow-boarders exploring the 750 acres of varying terrain will discover a host of new amenities at the resort, including Smokey's Terrain Park, and ski school services that can be researched and booked online, maximizing time on the slopes. Ruidoso embraces winter in style, welcoming the season with the inaugural Snowblast Ruidoso, December 17-18. The snowboard-and-ski-gear expo will feature Warren Miller's new film, *Impact*. Known for its friendly, relaxed atmosphere, Ruidoso has plenty to see and do off the slopes as well. Watch a live performance at the Spencer Theater for the Performing Arts or tour the Hubbard Museum of the American West. Ruidoso's quaint midtown, lit with thousands of white lights in the winter, features unique boutiques and galleries.

Source for Unlimited Spa Treatments

La Posada de Santa Fe Resort and Spa
330 East Palace Avenue
Santa Fe
866-331-ROCK
laposadadesantafe.com

Charming La Posada de Santa Fe has 157 adobe-style rooms and suites set on six acres just two blocks from the historic Plaza, which is surrounded by art galleries, boutiques, and museums. The hotel's award-winning Fuego fine-dining restaurant recently received *Wine Spectator's* coveted Award of Excellence. Ask about the Unlimited Spa Package, available most Sundays through Wednesdays until December 22; it includes unlimited 50-minute spa treatments. The luxurious Avanyu Spa's menu includes treatments that utilize indigenous ingredients, such as the Adobe Mud Wrap or the High Desert Aromatherapy massage. Whether you've just come off the slopes at Ski Santa Fe or played golf on a course that's open year-round, those sore muscles will be soothed by the Avanyu Duet, a four-handed massage.

Ancient Adobe Walls Cocoon a Contemporary Hotel

Hilton of Santa Fe
100 Sandoval Street, Santa Fe
505-988-2811 or 800-336-3676
hiltonofsantafe.com

Surrounded by the centuries-old adobe walls of the original Ortiz Hacienda, the Hilton of Santa Fe is two blocks from the Plaza, the heart of this Southwestern city. The hotel's recent \$ 1.5 million renovation has re-created the Spanish Colonial ambience that existed when the Ortiz family lived on this site. The award-winning Pinon Grill restaurant is actually tucked within the adobe walls of the original hacienda. The dozens of galleries, museums, and shops surrounding the Plaza are open year-round. If you want to spend a day on the slopes, the hotel is just 16 miles from the Santa Fe Ski Basin. Golfing, hiking, fishing, cycling, and drives through the high-desert scenery are other choice activities for wintertime visitors.

A "Cool" Little Mountain Town

Red River Conference Center and Tourist Information
877-754-1708
redriver.org

Located at the southernmost tip of New Mexico's Rocky Mountains, Red River is a ski

vacation paradise, summer vacation heaven, conference center, and resort town all rolled into one. Red River is a family town where people can still go to the parks and take a walk in the woods. Hospitality and mountain magic are what it's all about. Here you'll find lodging from hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and inns to condominiums. Red River offers fishing, birdwatching, hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and snowboarding. Come visit Red River and be welcomed like no place else on earth. Call the Red River Conference Center and Tourist Information Office for a free guide.

It's a Skiers' World

Taos Ski Valley
505-776-2291 or 800-347-7414
skitaos.org

Taos celebrates the New Year with the opening of the luxurious Edelweiss Lodge and Spa. The ski-in/ski-out property has 32 condos, plus an on-hill bistro and bar where day skiers can enjoy lunch or relax apres-ski. The ski slopes range from gentle novice runs to tightly treed glades. Vacationers of all abilities flock here for the famous Ski Weeks, which include six mornings of skiing with top instructors; in the afternoons and evenings many ski buffs hang out with new friends they've met in class. Taos remains for skiers only, and there's a terrain park for the twin-tip set. The resort offers great packages, early-season room rates at half of the high-season rates, and \$ 20 lift tickets from November 29 to December 16.

Vibrant Under a Mantle of Snow

Santa Fe Convention and Visitors Bureau
800-777-2489
santafe.org

When the air turns crisp and there's an inch or two of snow on the central Plaza, Santa Fe is a vibrant city to visit. The museums and galleries are open, restaurants are eager for diners, and lodging is available at up to 40 percent off summer rates. Sixteen miles from the Plaza and high in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains sits Ski Santa Fe, where the even split between intermediate and expert runs ensures an entertaining mix of cruising runs, glade skiing, and steep trails. In November the popular Museum of International Folk Art opens "CAR-NAVAL! Santa Fe," a special 10-month-long exhibit featuring the costumes, sounds, and traditions of pre-Lent carnival celebrations from the Americas and Europe.

COLORADO

Luxury Lodging in Ski Country

Wyndham Peaks Resort and Golden Door Spa
136 Country Club Drive, Telluride
800-789-2220
wyndham.com

Situated at 9,500 feet above sea level in Telluride Mountain Village, the Wyndham Peaks Resort and Golden Door Spa is surrounded by the sheer peaks of the San Juan Mountains. Guests simply step outside and start skiing down the slopes. The resort, a mere gondola ride away from the historic town of Telluride, has a variety of lodging that reflects the region's Southwestern ambience, including guest rooms, suites, 12 penthouse condominiums, and 11 luxurious log-and-stone cabins. The 42,000-

square-foot Golden Door Spa focuses on the rejuvenation of mind, body, and spirit, with a variety of activities and treatments utilizing the Rocky Mountain setting and techniques from Europe and the Far East. KidSpa offers supervised activities for children, and this dog-friendly resort even has spa treatments for your pooch.

WYOMING

Rustic Elegance Comes to a Laid-back Ski Resort

Four Seasons Resort Jackson Hole
7680 Granite Loop Road
Teton Village, Wyoming
800-295-5281
fourseasons.com/jacksonhole

Last winter's opening of the Four Seasons Resort Jackson Hole introduced a new era of luxury to this ski village framed by the Tetons. The 124-room hotel is slopeside at the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, which boasts the longest continuous vertical in the United States -- 4,139 feet -- and a reputation for challenging terrain. From the hotel's slope-side windows guests see a network of novice and intermediate trails spread across Apres Vous, one of Jackson Hole's two mountains. The resort offers early-season packages, such as Ski Free, which includes lift tickets, and the Art of Relaxation, which includes spa treatments. The Four Seasons' concierge can arrange for snowmobiling, a sleigh ride in the National Elk Refuge, or a visit to Yellowstone National Park.

HAWAII

Tropical Island With 162 Fairways

Kaua'i Visitors Bureau
Lihu'e, Hawaii
800-262-1400
kauaivisitorsbureau.com

A golfer's biggest problem on Kauai is choosing the courses to play. This tropical island boasts 162 holes of golf, with several layouts lauded in major golf magazines. And Kauai is so small that no matter where one lodges it's an easy drive to enjoy varying experiences, such as tackling the infamous Prince Course or pairing with locals at Kukuilono.

Golfers' lists of "must play" courses differ, but certain choices keep popping up. Among them are the Robert Trent Jones, Jr.-designed Poipu Bay Resort course, which hosts the PGA Grand Slam of Golf; Princeville Resort's two Trent Jones, Jr., courses, which include the Prince Course, with its 145 slope rating, and the kinder Makai Course; and the island's newest holes in the Robin Nelson-designed **Puakea Golf** Course.

MEXICO

Live Like Royalty in Acapulco

Acapulco Hacienda de los Murcielagos
Privada de Caletilla #40
Colonia las Playas
Acapulco Guerrero
970-920-6532 (The Residence, Aspen)
acapulcohacienda.com

Hacienda de los Murcielagos hugs a rocky cliff in the historic Caleta district, a quick cab ride from Acapulco's lively nightlife and shopping. Guests step back in time to colonial Mexico when visiting this five-bedroom, five-marble-bath villa, which has Spanish fountains, arched passageways, hand-painted tiles, and hand-carved hardwood furniture. Royalty, politicians, and writers have relaxed in the three living rooms and the 1,000-square-foot master bedroom, enjoying meals prepared by a gourmet cook. The Hacienda boasts one of the few private docks in Acapulco, so guests can dive into the Pacific for a swim or board a yacht for a day's outing. For information, contact owner Terry Butler, who lives at the Residence, her boutique hotel in Aspen, Colorado.

GRAPHIC: Photos 1 and 2, no caption; Photo 3, El Paso CVB; Photo 4, Park City Mountain Resort/Eric Schramm; Photo 5, San Antonio CVB; Photo 6, La Mansion del Rio Hotel; Photo 7, Ski Apache; Photo 8, Hilton of Santa Fe; Photo 9, Ski Santa Fe/Michael Darter; Photo 10, Wyndham Peaks Resort and Golden Door Spa

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