

# COME FLY AWAY

Whether you're looking for a beach escape, skiing or a snowy wilderness, three destinations are just a hop, skip and a flight — direct from ORD

BY AMBER GIBSON

## PUNTA MITA, MEXICO

**Stay:** The casita-style guestrooms and suites at Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita (starting at \$495/night; [Fourseasons.com/puntamita](http://Fourseasons.com/puntamita)) offer beachfront access to the Pacific coastline; the resort includes two private beaches with romantic grottos tucked into the Las Cuevas beach cliffs. For a more affordable getaway, try the Playa Escondida (starting at \$165/night; [Playa-escondida.com](http://Playa-escondida.com)) in nearby Sayulita.

**Eat:** If you want to work for your dinner, take a half-day fishing excursion to Bahía de Banderas and spear your own octopus, mahi or snapper and dive for sea urchins, then learn how to cook your fresh catch. Renowned chef Richard Sandoval's Bahía is a great option for al fresco dining on Las Cuevas Beach — plus, a new beachfront



### The octopus catch and cook culinary excursion

Mexican gelateria on Las Manzanillas Beach is the perfect place to grab a refreshing dessert.

**Do:** Enrique Alejos is the cultural concierge at the Four Seasons — a unique position companywide — and for nearly 15 years, he's been creating one-of-a-kind adventures for guests, from private helicopter tours, to tours of the Jose Cuervo distillery in Tequila, to helping baby sea turtles make

their dangerous trek into the ocean. The calm waters of Banderas Bay are also a great place to learn to snorkel, scuba dive and stand-up paddle board.

**Getting there:** United offers direct flights from O'Hare to Puerto Vallarta International Airport (PVR) weekends throughout the winter. From there it's a 45-minute drive to paradise.



Armangani's  
outdoor  
infinity pool





## TELLURIDE, COLORADO

**Stay:** The personalized service at the intimate, 29-room Lumière (starting at \$500/night, 118 Lost Creek) matches this boutique hotel's thoughtful amenities, including personal steam showers in 18 of the suites and homemade pastries in the lobby. Nearby, the Madeline Hotel (starting at \$329/night, 568 Mountain Village) debuts a new porte cochère and outdoor pool this December.

**Eat:** Ostensibly a cocktail bar, There (627 W. Pacific) serves delicious small bites, from elk lettuce wraps to addictive fried Brussels sprouts. At Allred's (Station St. Sophia, at the top of the gondola), enjoy the alpenglow while snacking on potato croutons, a sophisticated alternative to tater tots. The best fine dining in town is at 221 South



Lumière

Oak (221 S. Oak), where Colorado striped bass and juicy lamb T-bones are accompanied by creative vegetarian options and chevre cabernet cheesecake for dessert.

**Do:** Soar like a bird in a two-seater glider plane with Glider Bob (*Glidetelluride.com*) for the best views of the mountains and valley, then traverse the landscape by snowshoe or sleigh. Go ice climbing at Bridal Veil Falls with San Juan Outdoor

Adventures (*Tellurideadventures.com*) — but be warned, this is one of the toughest climbs they offer; ask for Julie Hodson as your guide.

**Getting there:** United offers daily direct flights from O'Hare to Montrose/Telluride Regional Airport (MTJ) beginning December 17; American Airlines offers daily direct flights December 17-January 4, then Saturday flights until April.

## JACKSON, WYOMING

Jackson Hole Mountain Resort (3395 Cody) celebrates its 50th birthday this season — and between January 11-31, ski passes are 50 percent off for skiers who show a season pass from anywhere else in the world.

**Stay:** Brand new Hotel Jackson (starting at \$329/night, 120 N. Glenwood) has a prime downtown location and is tastefully decorated with local western artwork. Amangani (starting at \$700/night, 1535 NE Butte) is the most luxurious and secluded option, with a stunning infinity pool and floor-to-ceiling views of the Teton Range throughout your room — even from the bathtub or shower.

**Eat:** Try FIGS in Hotel Jackson for Mediterranean-inspired fare, or Spur (3385 Cody) in Teton Village for a hearty buffalo sirloin. When it comes to dessert, it's never too cold for ice cream: Moo's Gourmet Ice Cream (110 Center) has been the local favorite for 19 years. Go big



FIGS in Hotel Jackson

or go home with a three-scoop brownie sundae smothered in homemade hot fudge.

**Do:** Grand Teton National Park (*Nps.gov/grte*) is home to diverse ecosystems, from alpine and forest to wetlands and sagebrush flats. In winter, all the wild animals converge on the valley floor, so it's the best time to take a wildlife tour. Amangani's passionate private tour guide, Jared Paul, knows all the best places and times for spotting elk, moose, deer, bears and wolves.

**Getting there:** United offers daily direct flights from O'Hare to Jackson Hole Airport (JAC) beginning December 17; American offers daily direct flights December 17-January 4, then Saturday flights until April.



# Janet Owen

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