

The CSKT Bison Range, managed by the Confederated Séliš and Ksanka Tribes, covers more than 18,500 acres in Montana.

BEST OF THE MOUNTAIN WEST



OUR THIRD ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF THE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS CHANGING THE WAY WE LIVE FOR THE BETTER—FROM A MEGASCULPTURE IN THE NEVADA DESERT TO A RIVERSIDE WINE REGION IN IDAHO TO A MONTANA BISON PRESERVE RECENTLY RETURNED TO INDIGENOUS CONTROL.
EDITED BY JESSICA LARUSSO





ARIZONA > ART

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA MUSEUM OF ART

The day after Thanksgiving in 1985, a couple entered the University of Arizona Museum of Art. The woman distracted a guard while the man went upstairs, and less than 10 minutes later, they left with Willem de Kooning's "Woman-Ochre," the canvas having been crudely sheared from its frame. The whereabouts of the abstract expressionist's work remained a mystery for more than three decades. Then, in 2017, it turned up at the New Mexico estate sale of the deceased presumed thieves: schoolteachers who had hung it in their bedroom, where the piece was obscured by the door anytime it was open. In those intervening years, the 1955 painting's valuation jumped to more than \$100 million, even as its arguably misogynistic content drew controversy. ("Women irritate me sometimes," de Kooning said in 1956. "I painted that irritation in the *Woman* series.") After a painstaking restoration process at Los Angeles' J. Paul Getty Museum, "Woman-Ochre" returned—with a U.S. Department of Homeland Security escort—in September to the Tucson gallery, where it hangs alongside an impressive array of works from other masters, such as Georgia O'Keeffe, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko. —*JL*

COLORADO > GEAR

RIGSTRIPS

It's a tale as old as time: You trudge back to the lot after an epic day on the slopes. You lean your skis against the car to de-layer. And, *every time*, they clatter to the ground, dragging those metal edges right down your paint job. Thankfully, Denver-based RigStrips founders Steven Graf and Zhach Pham created a \$50 solution: a molded, magnetic bit of genius called the SnoStrip with slots where you can securely rest your gear. For summer, switch out your SnoStrip (an updated model, released in October, features deeper grooves and a grippier material) for the SunStrip, similarly designed to prop up fishing poles and bikes. —*Julie Dugdale*

UTAH > LITERATURE

ONE JUMP AT A TIME: MY STORY

From the first time he took the ice at age three in Salt Lake City to winning the men's figure skating gold medal at the 2022 Olympic Games in Beijing, Nathan Chen covers the quadruple loops and lutzes that fueled his journey to international stardom—as well as the falls he endured along the way—in his memoir released in November. With the help of co-writer Alice Park, a *Time* magazine staffer, Chen opens up about knee and hip injuries that threatened his career, his difficulties navigating his relationship with his mother while she served as his coach, and the mental health struggles he confronted with the help of a sports psychologist. The lessons the 23-year-old shares—particularly how finding hobbies outside of figure skating and attending Yale University brought him the balance he needed to succeed on the rink—are poignant reminders for anyone, but especially for today's anxiety-riddled teens. In February, Chen will impart more wisdom to the next generation in a children's picture book. —*JL*



This spread, from left: Courtesy of Bob Demers, University of Arizona; Matthew Stockman/Getty Images; Courtesy of Colette; Lindley Rust

IDAHO > GEAR

WILD RYE

Until recently, many outdoor brands making women's gear were guilty of simply shrinking men's apparel and turning it pink. Frustrated by the resulting dearth of properly fitting, shred-ready get-ups, in 2016 Cassie Abel launched Wild Rye, a women-focused bike, ski, and active lifestyle brand based in Sun Valley. Dedicated to function and fashion in equal measure, with a touch of fun (hello, pandemic-inspired houseplant graphics), Wild Rye makes clothing for women with strong, athletic figures. That means strategically using four-way stretch fabrics that move with a woman's curves; including lots of pockets because, as Abel says, "women carry a lot of shit"; and testing products on women with a range of body sizes. "We are—and always have been—unwaveringly a brand for adventurers who identify as women," Abel says, noting that's precisely why her brand attained B Corp status this year. The certification, which is based on companies' commitments to social and environmental causes, is "a way to really define who we are," she says, "and who we're going to be." Whatever the future holds for Wild Rye, you can bet it will be female. —*CH*



WYOMING > FOOD

COELETTE

Coelette stands out in Jackson's star-studded culinary scene by aiming high—6,000 feet high, to be exact. That's the minimum elevation for the vast majority of ingredients used in the restaurant's self-described "snowline cuisine," which draws inspiration from high-country cultures such as those in Japan, Peru, and the Himalayas. Sam Dawson and Drew Madison, former sous chefs at two-year-old Coelette who took over the head chef duties in August, use pickling, lacto-fermentation, and preserves to extend seasonal produce year-round. Rotating dishes primarily feature goods from local farms, with a few far-flung surprises: Diners might sample poached beef with horseradish skyr (Icelandic yogurt) or a whole snow trout raised in an aquaculture system in Hokkaido, Japan. The cozy dining room is located in a restored 1915 log cabin while the bar—which slings cocktails such as a mezcal-and-brandy hot chocolate with marshmallow foam—is housed in a new, wood-paneled addition. This summer, diners will be able to embrace the high-elevation concept even more literally when Coelette's rooftop deck opens. —*EKH*