

TRAVEL & LEISURE



Westward Bound

Round up the guys. Wyoming's rustic ways get a luxury upgrade in America's picturesque high country.

| By Paul Rubio |

Immersed in a world of extreme natural splendor, Jackson Hole, Wyo., is the gateway to America's wildlife-rich West. But this unspoiled paradise, home to buffalo, wolves, meadows, mountains, geysers and hot springs, isn't just for merely gazing upon.

A montage of picture-perfect small towns dot the panoramas of the legendary Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks, too, where the grandeur of this land transforms into clusters of larger-than-life playgrounds abundant with opportunity for adventure in all seasons.

As autumn's falling leaves make way for winter's magical white scenes, snow-speckled elk scavenge for remaining plant life, and snowcapped mountains transform into award-winning downhill ski slopes, where sledding, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing also abound. Colors explode in spring and summer, when swimming, hiking and fly-fishing rule the land—especially in the nearby communities of Wilson, Jackson and Teton Village, extending into the depths of the national parks. Year-round, the entire region bustles as an epicenter of outdoor enthusiasm.

While a handful of upscale resorts have deftly capitalized on the multiple dimensions of Wyoming's surrounds, this land has also lured some 21,000 well-heeled residents, providing surrounding Teton County with the highest personal per capita income in the country. As savvy jet-setters look beyond traditional hotels and resorts for their ultimate vacations, one emerging Wyoming property management company has focused on the county's superhomes and raised the bar on the entire Jackson Hole experience.

Based smack-dab in the center of Jackson, The Clear Creek Group (theclearcreekgroup.com) manages a diverse portfolio of the region's most exclusive villas and rental homes, perfect for family getaways, guy trips and even couples retreats. From its jaw-dropping contemporary estates parlaying fantasies of an old-school American West to reinvented, rustic-chic 1940s-style cabins, The Clear Creek Group has captured the spotlight in Wyoming's growing villa rental market.

Homes in the group's portfolio range from luxe to superluxe to even uberluxe, so your



SECOND NATURE
The imposing
entrance to
Phillips Ridge



GO WILD!
Clockwise from top left: A female moose roams outside the cabins; a waterfall in Yellowstone National Park; the hot tub at Shooting Star Cabin.



"Homes in the group's portfolio range from luxe to superluxe to even uberluxe, so your man cave for the week could very well include a recording studio, or a bowling alley and movie theater..."



man cave for the week could very well include a recording studio, or a bowling alley and movie theater, like that in Phillips Ridge, one of the group's most coveted homes. Cast over 75 private acres in the town of Wilson, Phillips Ridge perches above the Jackson Hole valley, a double-story man-made marvel of floor-to-ceiling glass panes, colossal tree trunks, handcrafted cast iron and stone-hewn walls. At nearly 10,000 square feet, the personality-driven home sleeps 10 comfortably across five master suite bedrooms and bathrooms, each with its own stone fireplace and terrace.

The design details of Phillips Ridge astound—from a \$20,000 functional art bathtub carved from a single piece of stone, to a pool-sized indoor hot tub modeled after Yellowstone National Park's Grand Prismatic Spring, to the double-sided floating staircase at the home's entrance bound by edgy twig-and-branch handrails. Outdoors, the mammoth Gros Ventre Mountain Range comprises a picture-perfect backdrop for winter libations around the fire pit, a dip in the steaming hot tub or midafternoon fly-fishing on your own private stretch of Fish Creek.

At a more modest 3,200 square feet, The Cabin is another Clear Creek favorite for privacy-seekers, successfully keeping history in style. Dating back to the 1940s, the restored three-bedroom, two-bath home is at once a classic and cozy log cabin and an impressive feat of modern finesse. The decor feeds off a vision combining the region's Native American heritage with the quintessence of rustic luxury. The home's exterior maintains a bucolic and warm facade, unobtrusively blending into its natural surrounds.

Similar-size homes are available in the Shooting Star development of Teton Village. They're idyllic for those wanting immediate access to the region's best ski slopes, excellent restaurants and boutique high-end shopping. These two-, three-, and four-bedroom log cabins are uniquely decorated, while falling in the spectrum of Western contemporary. Each flaunts its own private outdoor hot tub, but certain amenities are shared, such as an award-winning golf course, a full-service gymnasium and an on-demand ski shuttle to and from the slopes.

In the heart of Jackson

WATERFALL PHOTO BY PAUL RIEBER; HOT TUB PHOTO BY GORDON GREGORY



Thankfully, this candid crew also has no qualms revealing what not to do in Jackson, helping visitors steer clear of the tourist traps that have managed to infiltrate this popular destination.

Moreover, Clear Creek's standard amenities commingle old-fashioned hospitality with affluent perfection. Your villa entrance will indeed be a grand one: in winter, a crackling fire awaits; your favorite music echoes through the home; and a kettle of orange wassill (a flavorful cousin of apple cider) bubbles on the stove adjacent to a mound of chocolate chunk cookies. For those family men with kids in tow, anticipate some major spoiling, as the group regularly welcomes incoming tots and preteens with cool toys and gifts that are both age- and gender-specific. The chef-driven male and his missus will appreciate the customary kitchen setup, which would befit even the picky likes of Mario Batali or Bobby Flay. The trimmings are all there, too: think napkins cleaned and pressed, custom plates, cutlery and wine glasses suited to entertain the most discerning dinner guests, and fresh coffee from local roasters.

Between its impeccably curated home portfolio and five-star pampering, Clear Creek delivers a Wild West experience like no other. Now, if you and your crew can just clear your schedules to make it a yearly tradition. ■



LOGGING HOURS

Clockwise from top left: A hot tub beckons; the majestic living room; the log-cabin's luxurious bedroom; all at Phillips Ridge.

itself, the Pearl at Jackson is a rare example of urban, loft-style living in the Wyoming countryside. Popular for short getaways with the boys, the Pearl is ideally located for exploring Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks and rests in the heart of Jackson Hole's dining and bar scene.

However, it's not just this collection of remarkable homes that's contributed to Clear Creek's staunch success. An unwavering commitment to paramount hospitality governs the experience

across all of its rentals. Concierge services commence a month prior to arrival, dishing out priceless insiders' knowledge, taking on the role of travel architect to design bespoke itineraries for an unforgettable Wyoming experience. From hard-to-get dinner reservations at Jackson Hole's hottest restaurants to one-on-one guided hikes and cross-country skiing in Grand Teton National Park with top outfitter The Hole Hiking Experience (holehike.com), consider it done!

PHOTOS BY GORDON GREGORY