

Vail: Just The Way You Like It

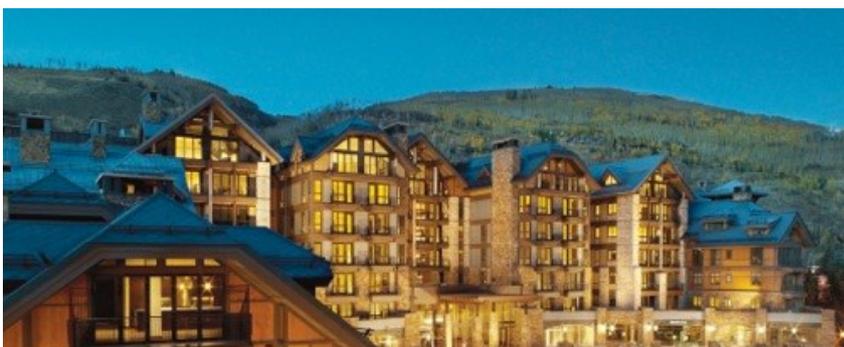
By [Becca Hensley](#) | August 2, 2014 | [Destinations](#), [The Jet-setter](#) | [No comments](#)



Photo courtesy of Elevation Resort at Solaris

Some addresses are better than others.

Stay at [Elevation Resort Residences at Solaris](#), tucked into the heart of Vail, America's toniest ski town, and you'll see what I mean. This brand, spanking new stay concept, a collection of just 19 spacious condos within an urbane, hotel-like complex, redefines what it means to sleep in the mountains. Conceived to be sumptuous enough to coddle, but kitted-out enough to enhance a long term stay with kids and grandparents alike, these sleek, contemporary guestrooms feel more like premium, permanent homes right in the middle of town. With exposed wood, shiny marble, textured stone and snow-white stucco they sprawl out—in some cases—to 4,400 supremely appointed feet. A five minute walk from the gondola, they sit atop a half-moon crescent of galleries, shops, and restaurants—including trendy, see-and-be-seen Matsuhisa, the high-altitude version of Nobu. The complex includes a five-star fitness room, a spa, and a lap pool. With mountain views, fully-equipped kitchens, Aveda amenities, fluffy robes, 24-hour concierge service and free WiFi, the residences might lure you to set up a home office—or, stay in and sip wine from your balcony with mountain views. But part of being in Vail, a high country hamlet just 100 miles west of Denver, is stepping outdoors, breathing in the crisp mountain air and getting your heart aflutter with some sort of exercise (even if that merely means a stroll through the shops).



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Photo courtesy of Elevation Resort at Solaris

And, that's where Elevation Resort Residences at Solaris takes life further up a notch. Managed by insiders who have a little black book vaunting the best outfitters in town, with connections that take decades to make, and touting taste of the most esteemed sort, the resort offers its guests exclusive experiences unavailable anywhere else. That means that whatever you want to do, Elevation has your back—like a tuxedo-wearing bodyguard. Want to learn to fly fish? They'll whisk you away to a private ranch in Wyoming. Need a reservation at a restaurant with a waiting list? They'll get you in. Hanker to have a mountain bike built and crafted to your personal specifications? Done. Begging for babysitting? That's easy. Want to surprise your amour with customized in-room shopping experience? They do it all the time. For winter, Elevation introduces you to the artists at Weston Snowboards who will build you bespoke, high-performance skis or boards. In collaboration with Ski Haus, a storied slope-side ski boutique, Elevation provides ski butlers and lockers for your equipment. That means you—and your family—can go right from S-turns to apres-ski hassle-free.



Photo courtesy of Elevation Resort at Solaris

During my stay at Elevation Resort Residences, I relish summertime in the Rockies. Golden shards of sunlight during the day, cool nights and mornings, a Saturday farmer's market teeming with locally grown produce and in-Valley created foodstuff and wares, free evening concerts, al fresco dining and snow-free bike paths that wend from meadow to mountain define this destination for me. Though notoriously swanky (and you will see fur coats in winter and soaring sandals in summers), Vail still exudes Colorado's earthy cool chic. That means you can dress however you like, and sporting-clothed residents dominate. Radiating nostalgia, the village buzzes with families and children at play. Bikes abound, though Vail has the largest free bus system in the nations, so pedaling isn't necessary. In the river and creeks, fishing folk toss their lines and tubers and rafters float. Well-marked hiking trails lead to mountain summits. And, a sort of general joy and hope fills the air. Vail in summer is the reminder of how things should be all year long if we'd just be open enough for that.



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Photo courtesy of Elevation Resort at Solaris

I test out Elevation's fly fishing package when I stay. A fishing grump, I'm not too excited to spend a day in waders (if you know me, then you understand because I never wear shoes without heels). But, the minute my guide, handsome Alex Garnier from Minturn Anglers, picks me up, I succumb to the adventure. He dresses me not only in waders but some not-too-fashionable waterproof overalls. We drive to a ranch near Wolcott, where Minturn Anglers has sole fishing rights. This time of year in the Vail Valley nature is abundant with outdoors enthusiasts. So, to have a section of the Aspen-cloaked and pine-dotted landscape to ourselves, to hear only the rush of the Eagle River (and not voices), feels like a prayer. We wade through the rapids, my fingers clenched around poor Alex's surely bruised arm, to a river island hideaway. And, that's when the transformation begins. Turns out, I'm not half bad at angling—which is a way of saying that Alex is the best guide/teacher I've had. Minutes turn to hours, the morning fades into the afternoon, and when the gloaming happens, we've had so much fun we've forgotten to eat lunch. But, we've caught some rainbow trout, and I've learned more about flies than most girls will want to know. So you know what I'm doing next year? I'm coming back—and with Alex's help (after a cossetting sleep in my princess-in-the-pea Elevation's bed) I'm going to catch a record Cutthroat trout. Just you wait and see.

Where to Eat and Drink in Vail:

Kelly Liken: Named for its revered chef, the eponymous Kelly Liken gets my vote for the best restaurant in Vail. A farm-to-fork restaurant, the menu evolves, but try to nosh on her potato crusted trout filets, the caramelized brussels or the elk carpaccio salad. If the hand-squeezed tomato martini is offered, don't deny yourself. kellyliken.com

Alpenrose:

Vail dabbles with a Tyrolean village theme, so use that excuse to pig out on pastries and German fare here. alpenrosevail.com

Bully Ranch:

Sit outside here. Sip a mudslide and watch the world go by. Nibble the Asian Pork Shanks or chow down on the Bully Bourbon Burger (with its Jim Beam demi glace) if you're feeling macho.

[Bullyranchrestaurant.com](http://bullyranchrestaurant.com)

Matsuhisa Vail:

Dress up and gobble down King Crab Tempura "Amazu" Sweet Ponzu or Broiled Black Cod with Miso

matsuhisavail.com

Minturn Saloon:

Drive to this charming (even smaller than Vail) town for the margaritas—a real local hangout.

[Minturnsaloon.com](http://minturnsaloon.com)

Mountain Standard:

In the middle of everything, this friendly bar serves classic cocktails. Try the Negroni. [Mtnstandard.com](http://mtnstandard.com)

Distillery:

Sip at 10th Mountain Whiskey & Spirit Company a spirited new whiskey. Their in village tasting room opens this ski season. 10thwhiskey.com

Terra Bistro located in Vail Mountain Lodge:

Drink-Velvet Elvis made with Colorado Vodka, Elderflower Liqueur, Hard Grape Soda.

terrabistrovail.com

To Shop:

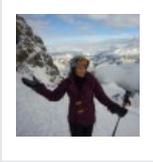
The Golden Bear for handcrafted jewelry. Thegoldenbear.com

Perch: Find upmarket womenswear with flair and accessories here. Perchvail.com

Axel's: The place for men with style. Axelsltd.com

To Book Elevation Resort Residences: elevationresortresidences.com

For more information on Vail: news.vail.vailresorts.com or vail.com



Becca Hensley

Austin-based Becca Hensley has never met a stranger. Award winning, this travel and lifestyle writer, poet and essayist can't resist the unexplored alley, that glass of champagne in an unknown bar or taking the train far beyond her planned destination. An ebullience addicted curiosity seeker, a peripatetic globe trotter, an expert in all things luxe, her work has appeared in hundreds of magazines and newspapers and on myriad websites. She dishes on hotels, food, drink, spas, art, design, people and nature. Read her monthly dispatches in Austin Monthly and San Antonio Magazine. Find her frequently in Washington Flyer, National Geographic Traveler, Toronto Star, Organic Spa, Bridal Guide, Travel Channel, Destinations, Weddings & Honeymoons, Austin American Statesman, Fodors and Virtuoso Traveler.

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