



Elevate Your Travel Plans

This winter, explore dramatic
depths and reach new heights,
from **190'** below sea level
to **12,998'** into the clouds.

/ BY TOMMIE ETHINGTON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRETA RYBUS

-190' Marvel at Millions of Stars

/ Death Valley National Park, California

It may seem counterintuitive, but one of the lowest points in the Western Hemisphere is a prime spot for out-of-this-world stargazing. With its 3 million-plus acres, Death Valley is the largest International Dark Sky Park in the United States. November through April, rangers at the **Furnace Creek Visitor Center** break out four high-powered telescopes and lead space-related programming. The best time to go? Right around the new moon.



13' Submerge Yourself in History

/ Groton, Connecticut

Helmed by the U.S. Navy, the **Submarine Force Library & Museum** offers a dive into the depths of the "Silent Service." Compare scale models, peer through a periscope, and board the decommissioned USS Nautilus, the world's first operational nuclear-powered submarine.

33' Uncover an Arts Scene

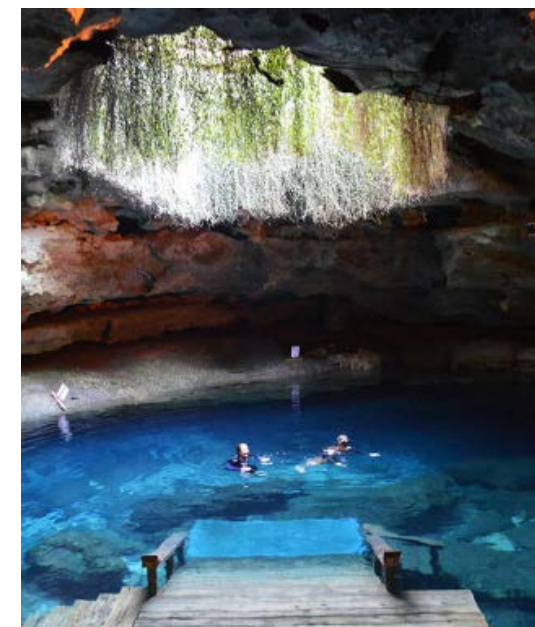
/ New York City

The **NYC Subway Art Tour** isn't your typical gallery walk. When above-ground temps dip below freezing, join Bronx native Darryl Reilly as he takes both tourists and New Yorkers on a three-hour train-hopping exploration of the Big Apple's impressive—but often overlooked—art collection. Embellishing the city's subway stations, designs range from miniature bronze sculptures to whimsical wall mosaics, and each of the 300-plus works commissioned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority tell a story.

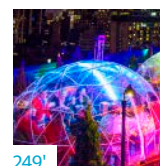
79' Revisit the Ice Age

/ Williston, Florida

Stalactites and fossils adorn the walls and ceiling of **Devil's Den Spring**, a prehistoric cave turned scuba diving training center an hour and a half from Orlando. Snorkel in crystal-clear, 72-degree water, or plunge to its maximum depth 54 feet below.

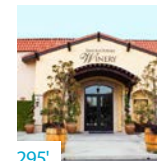


Libations at Every Elevation / Warm up at these five cozy watering holes.



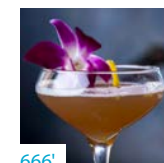
249'
230 FIFTH ROOFTOP BAR
New York City

December through March, enjoy spiced whiskey cocktails and rum-spiked apple cider at this pop-up igloo bar with skyline views.



295'
SAN ANTONIO WINERY
Los Angeles

L.A.'s original urban winery celebrates 100 years with tours and wines produced with grapes from the Riboli family's estate vineyards in Paso Robles, Monterey, and Napa.



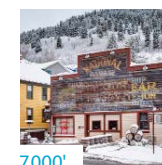
666'
VAULT
Cleveland

The drinks served in these subterranean, century-old bank vaults have cheeky names like Millionaire's Row and Net Worth.



778'
S.D. STRONG DISTILLING
Parkville, Missouri

The nation's only cave distillery makes vodka, whiskey, and gin. If you find yourself in Kansas City on the second Saturday of the month, be sure to stop by for a tour.



7,000'
HIGH WEST SALOON
Park City, Utah

Accessed via Park City Mountain Resort's Quittin' Time run, the world's only ski-in, ski-out distillery delights with whiskey flights, craft beers, and flaky chicken pot pies.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STAN MONIZ/PHOTOGRAPHY/TANDEMSTOCK.COM

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LCDR R. PRESTON, USN (SUBMARINE)

1,213'

Go Spelunking

/ Barra Honda National Park, Costa Rica

Tubular soda straws and furry kinkajous—this park's geological features and fauna evoke visions of another planet. And while the 5,600 acres of tropical dry forest are remarkable, the most impressive thing lies beneath. **Tercio-pelo Cave** is one of 42-known caverns and is best experienced during the dry season (November through April). For a small fee, you'll get admission, gear, and a local guide.



453'

Zip Around Underground

/ Louisville

Set in a former limestone quarry, **Louisville Mega Cavern** makes the most of 17 miles of subterranean passageways with an aerial ropes course, a BMX park, and the world's only fully underground zip line.

961'

Carol in a Cave

/ Hocking Hills State Park, Ohio

A short drive from Columbus, the horseshoe-shaped **Ash Cave** serves as a backdrop for the park's annual holiday celebration. On Dec. 9, meet Santa, belt out holiday tunes, and help decorate a snow-covered tree with edible ornaments for wildlife.

1,860'

Ditch the Indoor Rink

/ Lake Placid, New York

During colder months, the town's **Mirror Lake** becomes a natural ice skating rink with panoramic views of the Adirondack Mountains. More than 2 miles of track provide ample room for cross-country skiing, dog sledding, or your own Miracle on Ice moment.

3,000'

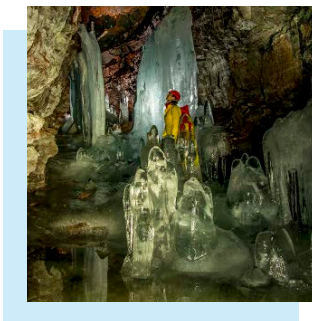
Feast Mountainside

/ Carrabassett Valley, Maine

About halfway up Sugarloaf Mountain Resort's western face, **Bullwinkle's** is the ideal spot for a mid-run snack. Saturday nights after the lifts close, an 18-passenger snowcat carries diners up the mountain for the restaurant's candlelit six-course affair. Seasonal delicacies include elk with elderberry demi-glace and handmade raviolis stuffed with—what else?—Maine lobster.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF LOUISVILLE MEGA CAVERN, SUGARLOAF

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JESSE BARDEN (CRYSTAL ICE CAVE), COURTESY OF QUE BOTTLE



4,800'

Explore an Icy Wonderland

/ Lava Beds National Monument, California

Of the monument's nearly 800 "lava tubes," 20 stay frozen year-round. To experience giant icicles, snowflake-like fringe, and the 50-foot drop into **Crystal Ice Cave**, snag a coveted spot on one of the ranger-led tours, held January through March.

Bullwinkle's

6,086'

Soar Above the Sonoran

/ Phoenix

Arizona Balloon Safaris begin at dawn, but the views are worth the early wake-up call. Once airborne, the 20-passenger balloon (the largest in the country), rises up to 5,000 feet above the illuminated desert, offering glimpses of cactuses, critters, and—on a clear day—views of Flagstaff some 130 miles away. To top it off, the 45-minute flight concludes with a champagne brunch.

6,207'

Relax at an Ancient Spa

/ Ojo Caliente, New Mexico

In the shadow of Pueblo ruins, **Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort & Spa** maintains 11 pools fed by a subterranean volcanic aquifer. Day passes start at \$24, so don't feel guilty about adding on a spa treatment (or two). The salt scrub with blue corn and prickly pear is said to improve circulation and rid the body of impurities.

Gear Guide /

Up your travel game with next-level finds.

WATER BOTTLE



The silicone que Bottle compresses to half its original size, handles hot and cold beverages, and comes in six cheerful colors. From \$20; quebottle.com



BOOTS

Built-in orthotics put the water-resistant shearling ABEO boots a step above. Available in brown, black, and even purple, styles range from traditional to trendy. For around the house, order the equally cozy slippers. From \$110; thewalkingcompany.com



JACKET

After a decade of development, Patagonia released the Micro Puff Hoody in September. It weighs in at just 9.3 ounces. \$299; patagonia.com



WIRELESS EARBUDS

Blending style and practicality, Rowkin Bit Charge Stereo earbuds fit in your pocket and afford 45 hours of play time. The case also doubles as a portable phone charger. \$130; rowkin.com

6,253'

Soak in a Mile-High Hot Spring

/ Stanley, Idaho

Blink and you might miss it. Three hours from Boise, up State Highway 75 north of Stanley, there is a small pull-off in the middle of a bend near milepost 192. Park and climb down the rocky hillside to where a tub—nicknamed **“Boat Box Hot Springs”** by the locals—awaits. Fair warning: The water is a steamy 136 degrees, so cool it off with a few buckets from the glacier-fed Salmon River before hopping in.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRETARVIBUS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIEGOGRANDI / (STOCK BY PYRAMID), CREATIVAIMAGE / (STOCK BY SKING)

8,200'

Traverse the “American Alps”

/ Cascade Mountains, Washington

The adrenaline rush that comes from dropping out of a helicopter to shred untouched powder is hard to beat. A little more than three hours from Seattle, **North Cascade Heli** takes experienced skiers and snowboarders into the backcountry. The price tag is steep but promises seven runs a day and access to 300,000 acres of challenging terrain.



7,100'

See a Man-Made Marvel

/ Puebla, Mexico

The Great Pyramid of Cholula is the world's largest-known monument, but until its rediscovery in 1910, it went unnoticed for centuries. The reason? It's hidden under dirt, thick vegetation, and a Spanish-Colonial church. See an excavated portion, glimpse artifacts at the on-site museum, and trek through 5 miles of underground tunnels.

7,236'

Race Down an Olympic Bobsled Chute

/ Park City, Utah

Fly down the course that ferried athletes to fame in the 2002 Winter Olympics. At **Utah Olympic Park**, a pro tutors you in techniques and helps your team reach speeds of almost 70 miles an hour.

12,998'

Dangle Over the Rockies

/ Breckenridge, Colorado

Before Breckenridge Ski Resort built the **Imperial Express SuperChair**, the highest high-speed quad chairlift in North America, it was a 45-minute hike to the top. Now, you can access those same double-black diamond runs in just under three minutes.



Hibernate at Seven Hot Hotels

From an over-water oasis to a plush treehouse in the forest, these escapes offer the perfect home base for a winter getaway.

3'

Bayou Haven
Bed & Breakfast

/ Slidell, Louisiana

Built on the bayou, this charming B&B mimics the design of a Southern estate from the mid-1800s. Each of the seven elegantly appointed suites is named after a local bird and incorporates accents like a crystal chandelier or an antique claw-foot tub. Don't miss the jazz brunch on Sundays. *From \$201*

7'

The Old Man
and The Sea
Ocean Villas

/ Savaneta, Aruba

This tropical hideaway features three villas suspended on stilts over the Caribbean Sea, and each comes with a private deck, an in-suite wine cooler, and a full breakfast. *From \$540*

208'

Liberty Hotel

/ Boston

This swanky Beacon Hill hotel has mastered the art of the flip. Built as the Charles Street Jail in 1851, it housed some of Beantown's most notorious criminals. Now, the historic catwalk links 298 luxurious rooms, and the former "drunk tank" is the Alibi Bar & Lounge. During the holidays, decked-out Christmas trees hang upside down from the ceiling of the 90-foot rotunda. *From \$389*

267'

TreeHouse
Point

/ Issaquah,
Washington

Owners Pete and Judy Nelson have built an empire with this rustic retreat and nine seasons of the Animal Planet hit *Treehouse Masters*. Designed around its botanical host, each of the six fully furnished, above-ground bungalows is distinct. Added perks include yoga classes, fresh-baked blueberry scones, and access to year-round hiking trails. *From \$290*

377'

Chaa Creek
Luxury Resort

/ San Ignacio, Belize

Named after a Mayan moon goddess, the new two-bedroom lx Chel Villas boast floor-to-ceiling windows and a private veranda in the middle of the rainforest. Pay a visit to the resort's renowned butterfly sanctuary, cool off in the infinity pool, or dine on fresh fruits and veggies picked from the on-site organic farm. Jonesing for an adventure? Your private butler can coordinate everything from birding expeditions to cave tubing. *From \$699*

1,073'

Winvian Farm

/ Morris,
Connecticut

With its rotor blades embedded in the ceiling, a restored 1968 Sea King Pelican helicopter serves as the centerpiece for the resort's 890-square-foot Helicopter Cottage. A wood-burning fireplace and Jacuzzi tub complement original accents, like the pilot and co-pilot seats found in the cockpit. *From \$549*

1,124'

Beckham
Creek Cave

/ Parthenon,
Arkansas

It's rare to find digs where both stalactites and chandeliers hang from the ceiling, but this four-bedroom, four-bath rental marries its natural surroundings with midcentury modern furnishings, a gourmet kitchen, and rainfall shower heads. Outside, explore the Ozark Mountains on horseback or cast a line at the private catch-and-release pond. *From \$1,200*



Liberty
Hotel



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM CROWLEY (TREEHOUSE), COURTESY OF THE LODGE AT CHAA CREEK

TreeHouse
Point



Chaa Creek
Luxury Resort