

Camping & Travel

By Hank Andrews



Travel West

I have two letters in my files, and each attests to the charm and beauty of the West. One letter is from an Ohio friend who moved to Wyoming, and he said simply about it: "I regret more and more that I didn't move out here 20 years ago."

Another letter was from a federal employe who was transferred from the West to Illinois. And he grieved over the fact that instead of hunting elk, he might have to be content with cottontail rabbits. And he rued further the change in the skies from clear blue with fleecy cotton clouds in the West to a dirty gray over Illinois.

All this is a preliminary to the fact that the West not only is a fine place to live, it is a great region to visit on a vacation if you do not live there.

I just returned from two weeks in the high Rockies of Western Colorado, and I must say that this is the kind of country the good Lord must have built for outdoor folks. You have superb scenery, and you have all kinds of ways to enjoy living.

I spent much of my time around Vail, which owes much of its fame as a skiing area to President Ford. Vail is a town that you should visit if you're going through that region on Interstate 70,

which is the great four-lane road that leads from Washington, DC, to the West.

Vail is a small community as resident populations go, but there are 15,000 pillows for visitors to rest their heads at night.

What I liked about the area was the tremendous variety of things to do. One day, I took a horseback ride into the high country and capped the ride with a breakfast atop a mountain. On another day, I went with several friends on a jeep ride to a deep blue lake in high country. In late June, snow still lingered on the mountain tops.

On the ride aboard a horse, I left from the Meadow Mountain Stables, located five miles west of Vail. This stable offers a variety of rides from one hour up. A full day's ride cost \$15.

As for the camper, there is a KOA campground near Vail. Also in the region are the White River and Arapahoe National Forests. And, of course, there is backpacking in the high country of the Colorado Rockies. At Vail the Dick Pownall Mountaineering School offers an all-inclusive price that includes packframes and sacks, warm sleeping bags, tents, compass and other gear.

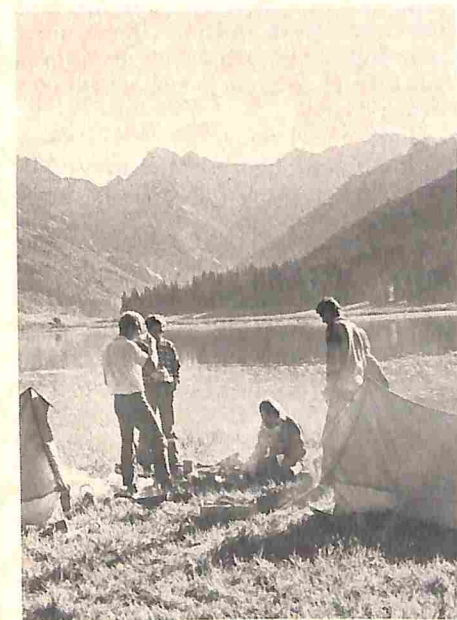
"What amazes me about Vail," one visitor told me, "is that there are so many things to do. There are superb shops in pedestrian malls without auto traffic. There are excellent restaurants. And you can rent bikes, go on hikes, play golf or tennis, fish, take a raft trip, enjoy drama and musical programs, sailing at Dillon Lake. Then, of course, there is skiing in the winter, plus snowmobile trips and ice fishing."

Pam Conklin of Vail Associates Inc. told me that a summer six-day tour package is available at most resort lodges up until September 12 this year and again next year if you want to plan that far in advance.

For this year, the six-day package costs \$60 a person on a double occupancy basis. The package includes lodging, plus a \$20 activity coupon that can be used for jeeping, horseback riding, golf, river rafting or other activities. Information is available by writing Vail Resort Assn., PO Box 1368, Vail, Co 81657.

Colorado seems to have a special love for campers. Just about anywhere you

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Near Vail you can camp in the White River National Forest. Camping equipment may be rented or bought in Vail.

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