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-
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 - EXPERIENCES
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GATEWAY CANYONS RESORT: A MAJESTIC AND LUXURIOUS RETREAT ON COLORADO’S WESTERN SLOPE

SANDY & IRA BORNSTEIN DECEMBER 7, 2018

HOTELS & SPAS 0 COMMENTS

About an hour southwest of Grand Junction, Colorado, in a remote area near the Utah border, [Gateway Canyons Resort](#) invites luxury-oriented guests to partake in the unique beauty of the Unaweep Canyon. Visitors can indulge in onsite deluxe amenities including a boutique spa, participate in daily outdoor adventures, and dine in a handful of restaurants that serve products from local purveyors.

John Hendricks, the founder of the Discovery Channel and Discovery Communications, initially chose this desolate location for his Colorado vacation home. He later designed a lavish resort to share this extraordinary place with affluent travelers who don’t mind traveling to a rural area that offers nothing more than a general store and a gas station.

This distinctive [Noble House Hotel & Resorts](#) property is consistently rated as one of the top 100 resorts in the world. In 2018, Forbes awarded it four stars and the Conde Nast’s Readers’ Choice Awards placed the

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resort as the sixth best in Colorado. In 2017, Travel + Leisure ranked Gateway Canyons Resort as the 52nd top hotel in the world.

Unlike most visitors who fly into Grand Junction Regional Airport and then drive to the town of Gateway, my husband, Ira, and I approached the resort from the opposite direction. From the Four Corners region of Southwestern Colorado, we drove north toward State Highway 141, the Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway. This less frequently traveled roadway treats travelers to a magical red canyon that leads to the minuscule town of Gateway. With few places to pull over on this narrow roadway, we were forced to enjoy each moment as the winding road offered multiple perspectives of Mother Nature's handiwork, amid rocks that showcase millions of years of history. The Ancestral Pueblo, the Fremont peoples, and Ute Native Americans once roamed freely in this region.

Superlative accommodations

After checking in, the front desk greeter loaded our possessions onto a golf cart and we headed to our ground floor, 650-foot Signature Room in the Kayenta Lodge, one of three distinct areas on the resort.

The sitting area was tastefully decorated with solid wood doors and a southwestern motif highlighted with shades of aqua, beige and mauve. A cozy sofa sleeper was positioned across from a wall mounted high-definition TV situated over a two-sided gas fireplace. Other sitting room furnishings included a full-sized desk with chairs and a wet bar equipped with a mini refrigerator and coffee maker.

An entryway led to a bedroom suite with a king-sized bed outfitted with a second TV mounted over the other side of the fireplace, along with a deluxe bathroom that included a two-headed, tiled shower and a free-standing soaking tub. Glass doorways led from both the bedroom and the sitting room to a private stone patio with a multi-person hot tub, a barbecue pit, and enough patio furniture for a small party. Bicycles were placed outside our terrace gate for our private use.



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Spectacular surroundings

Towering red rock canyon walls, a signature feature of this region, surround the resort.

The Native American word Unawep refers to a canyon with two mouths. Nowadays, two creeks have water flowing in opposite directions. According to *Geo Science World* and *Science Daily*, this is the only canyon in the world with two mouths. Geologists do not believe that these creeks were responsible for the remarkable landforms and have devised several hypotheses for the canyon’s origin, since rivers rather than creeks created all of the other Colorado canyons.

Visitors who would prefer not to leave the grounds can explore the adjacent trails on foot or by bicycle. This looped trail system has ample signage and is manageable for most active boomers. For an overview of the trails, I picked up a map from the front desk that distinguishes the trails by using different colors.

During our three-hour hike, we had a preponderance of photo opportunities as the sun shined at different angles on the granite and sandstone landforms and also disappeared behind clouds. No matter where we walked, we couldn’t miss the Palisade, a jagged-edged, rectangular-shaped landform that reaches a pinnacle about 2,000 feet above the valley. We were able to take in the overall beauty of the terrain with minimal interruptions. Only a handful of people were on the trails early in the morning.



Hiking on the scenic Gateway Trails

The onsite trail system is only a small sampling of the local trails. The Adventure Center offers a selection of guided tours and the concierge can recommend additional places that can be reached independently.

Guests wishing to take advantage of the resort’s amenities can choose from two different pool settings as well as an equipped fitness center. Paths connect the lodge communities with the other resort structures. Ponds, trees, native grasses, cactus, and flowering shrubs and plants add to the overall attractiveness of this arid oasis.

The geological landforms along with the manmade gardens inspired wonder and appreciation for Mother Nature.

Maintaining harmony with nature

Builder Hendricks made a conscious effort to maintain a balance between man and nature. Measures were taken to protect the natural terrain and indigenous wildlife and to design buildings that blended with the terrain, while simultaneously reflecting on the history of the Ancestral Puebloans and Spanish explorers. While we never encountered any critters on the resort property, the natural setting energized us and encouraged us to remain outdoors. The earth-toned, adobe-style buildings use alternative and sustainable energy sources including resource conservation, geothermal energy, and solar water heating. Whenever possible, the



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chefs purchase ingredients and food products, as well as wine, from local farmers, regional vineyards, and vendors.

American and Southwestern cuisine

Even though there are only a handful of onsite restaurants favoring American and Southwestern cuisine, we were not disappointed with any of our choices or the prices. Instead of a quick bite at the Kiva Café inside the main building, we took a short walk to Entrada where we ate breakfast at an outside table. Many people huddled near the outdoor fireplaces that tempered the crispness of an August morning in Colorado.

We were content to start each morning with either omelets or lox and bagel plates, as we planned our daily schedule. On the table, we were introduced to Dad’s Jalapeño Sauces from Palisade’s Pear Blossom Farms. The fruits used in these sauces were harvested on the Western Slope of the Rocky Mountains.

After our morning hike and afternoon horseback ride, we retreated inside from the intense heat to nibble on an order of shrimp lettuce cups at the Paradox Grille. On another day, we relaxed by the poolside as we sipped prickly pear margaritas and munched on freshly made chips with guacamole and two homemade salsas.

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GOT CONTRIBUTOR





Shrimp lettuce cups at the Paradox Grill at Gateway Canyons Resort

To celebrate Ira's birthday, we reserved a table at Entrada. We each chose fish dishes, black cod and Alaskan halibut for our main entrée, and shared an appetizer and dessert. Due to dietary restrictions, we didn't order locally-sourced chicken or beef.

Exploring the region via horseback



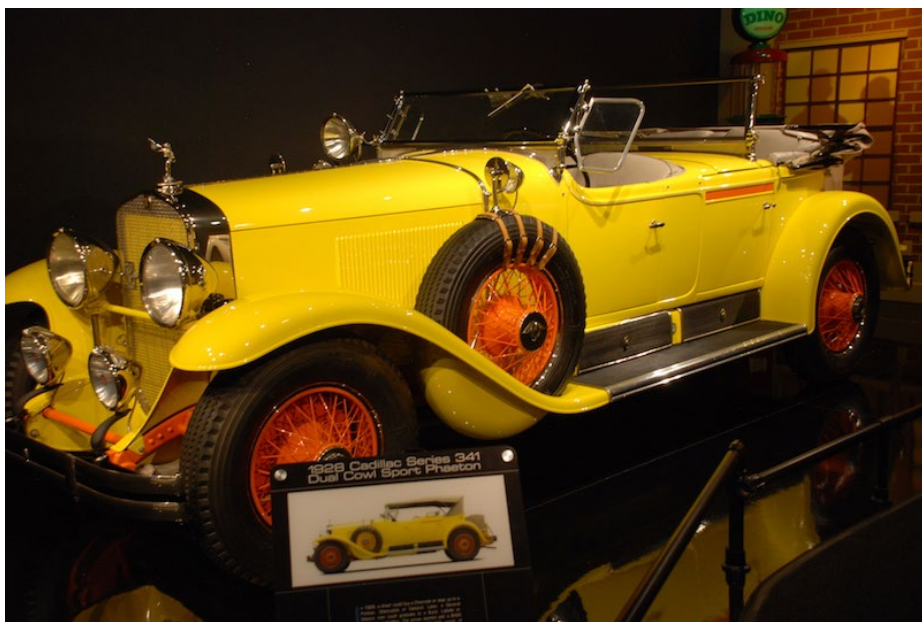
Sandy and Ira on horseback

Whenever we travel to the countryside, we oftentimes explore the terrain by [horseback](#). When I learned that the resort offered trail rides at the nearby Palisades Ranch, I reserved a spot in advance of our arrival. With assistance from the concierge, we chose an afternoon trail ride so that we could take advantage of the cooler temperatures for our morning hike.

Luckily, no one else showed up for the scheduled afternoon ride, so we enjoyed a private experience at a group rate. We rode in open meadows, through forested areas with aspens and cottonwood trees, and up and down ridgelines. Our guide provided time for appreciating our mountainous backdrop as we periodically took photos. The gentle horses were trained to follow the horse in front.

This relatively easy ride is a great introduction for first-time riders and a wonderful opportunity for more experienced riders to take a leisurely two-hour ride at a peaceful Colorado ranch. Had our stay been longer, we would have booked another one.

Added perk... an onsite auto museum



Gateway Canyons Auto Museum

Hendricks showcases his car collection in an impressive museum that is just down the road from the reception building. With ample floor space for more than 50 vehicles, the Gateway Colorado Automobile Museum presents more than a century of car history.

The vehicles are displayed by categories, and the informative and colorful signage offers tremendous insight into the evolution of the automobile industry. Many visitors come just to see the one-of-a-kind 1954 Oldsmobile F-88. In 2005, the car sold for a record 3.24 million dollars. This automobile was created as Oldsmobile's answer to the Chevy Corvette. Miraculously, this concept car was hidden and not destroyed when General Motors decided not to go ahead with another two-seated roadster. Even though I'm not car fanatic, I was impressed by the extensive collection that covers a century from 1906 to 2006.

Spa treatments combat the arid environment

This boutique spa appealed to my inner being. After feeling the effects of an arid, desert environment, I was eager to try the spa's restorative natural ingredients. I scheduled an appointment for the morning of our

departure and chose the Native Desert Sage massage therapy. By using desert sage as a main ingredient, the spa management hopes that guests will feel connected to the desert environment.

Before starting my treatment, I spent some time unwinding in the sauna and sitting in a meditative room. My body was gently exfoliated with generous amounts of Desert Salt Body Polish: Turquoise Sage by Body Bliss. After my toxins were removed by rinsing off the coarse residue in a shower inside the treatment room, I experienced a customized massage that included an application of Turquoise Sage Oil, also by Body Bliss. My parched skin soaked up the emollient like a sponge and my body was thoroughly relaxed by the time I exited the building. I continued to inhale the essence of the sage long after I left the resort.

As Ira and I drove away from the property and continued north toward Grand Junction, we simultaneously asked one another, "How long should we wait until we return to this tranquil retreat?"

What is appealing to the over-50 luxury traveler?

- Many rooms are accessible from the ground floor.
- The serene and majestic atmosphere offers an opportunity to unwind and take a breather from day-to-day stress.
- Unlike many Colorado mountain resorts, Gateway Canyons is at a modest elevation of 4,500 feet above sea level (a lower altitude than Denver).
- The Adventure Center can book upscale adventures including off-road private tours and helicopter rides.

Take note

- Gateway Canyons is in a remote location with only a general store and a gas station.
- The second-floor rooms are accessible only by stairs. If stairs are not an option, notify the resort when making a reservation.
- A 20% gratuity is automatically added to spa treatments and activities.

- Arches National Park and Canyonlands National Park in Utah are approximately 2-1/2 hours away. It is approximately a 2-1/4 hour drive to Telluride.
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IF YOU GO

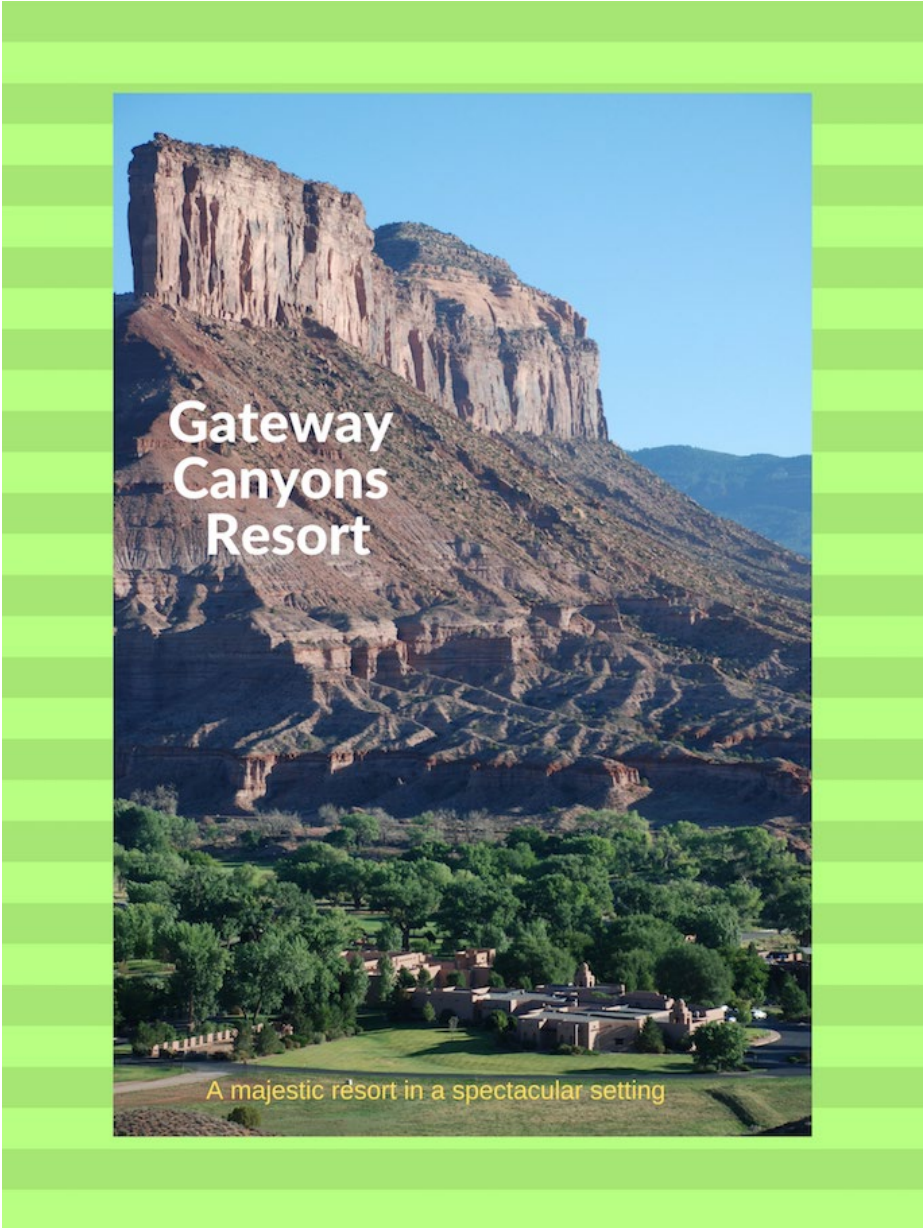
- [Gateway Canyons Resort](#), Gateway, Colorado

All photo credits: Sandy and Ira Bornstein

Disclosure:

The authors received a media rate for their accommodations and a discount on the spa treatment.

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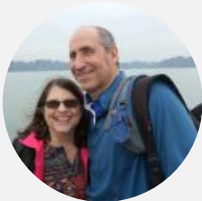
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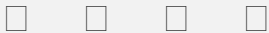


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SANDY & IRA BORNSTEIN

Sandy and Ira split their time between skiing and trekking in the Colorado Rockies and traveling. They have visited more than 40 countries. Sandy lived as an international teacher in India and wrote an award-winning book, "May This Be the Best Year of Your Life," as a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. Their travel stories focus on active midlife and intergenerational adventures, food, historical places, and Jewish cultural sites. Ira assists with photos and edits Sandy’s stories before publication.



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