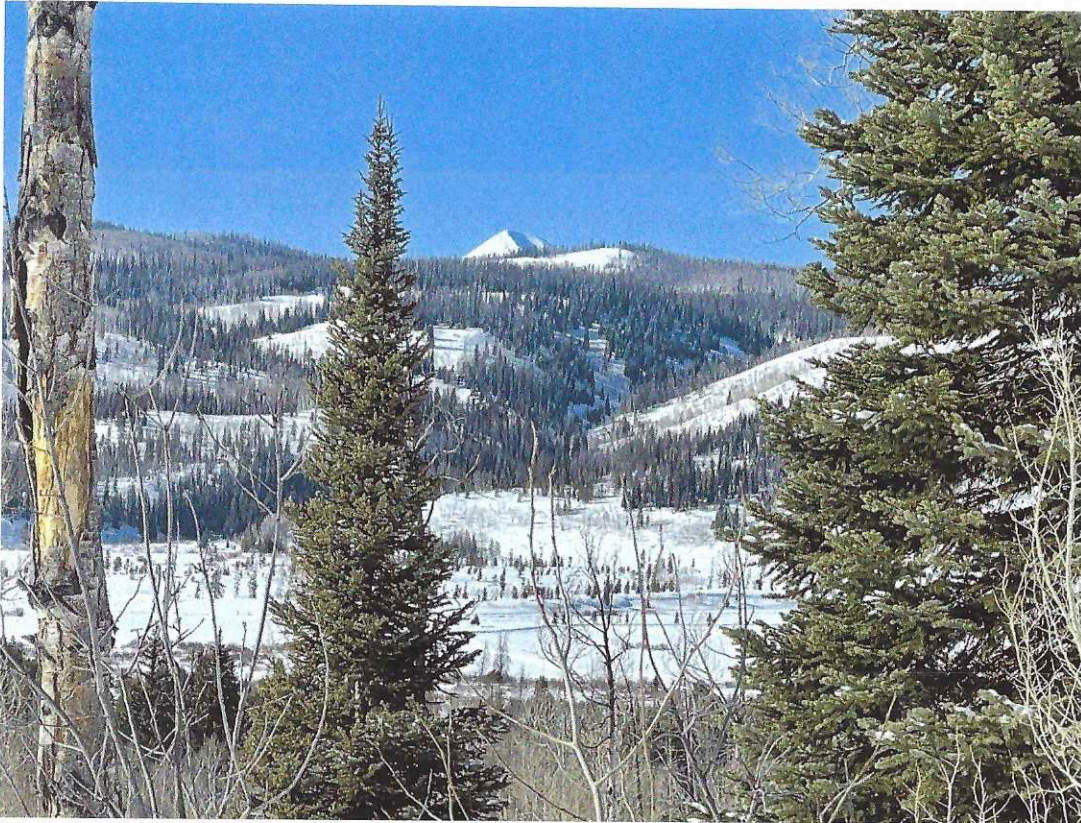




[\(HTTPS://WWW.KUHL.COM/BORNINTHEMOUNTAINS/\)](https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/)



SEASONAL FEATURETTE



Experience the year-round performance with the innovative KÜHL men's convertible pants (<https://www.kuhl.com/kuhl/mens/mens-convertible-pants/>), built to take on any outdoor challenge. Featuring our patented Stealth™ zip-off system, the pant quickly and effortlessly turns to shorts, so you can stay on the move when the weather changes.

FEATURED POST



(<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/tips-to-strengthen-your-immunity/>)

6 Tips to Strengthen Your Immunity (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/tips-to-strengthen-your-immunity/>)

Like it or not, medical experts say that the majority of us will be exposed...

■ CONTINUE READING ([HTTPS://WWW.KUHL.COM/BORNINTHEMOUNTAINS/TIPS-TO-STRENGTHEN-YOUR-IMMUNITY/](https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/tips-to-strengthen-your-immunity/))

SUBSCRIBE

Don't miss new stories and styles!

Reboot and Refresh at Colorado's Vista Verde Ranch

SKIING ([HTTPS://WWW.KUHL.COM/BORNINTHEMOUNTAINS/CATEGORY/SKIING/](https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/category/skiing/))

TRAVEL ([HTTPS://WWW.KUHL.COM/BORNINTHEMOUNTAINS/CATEGORY/TRAVEL/](https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/category/travel/))

TRIP REPORTS ([HTTPS://WWW.KUHL.COM/BORNINTHEMOUNTAINS/CATEGORY/TRIP-REPORTS/](https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/category/trip-reports/))

By Kühl Editor (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/author/ed/>) on March 25, 2021

Like many outdoor enthusiasts, my husband and I spend the winter months participating in winter-themed activities at mountain resorts. Park City (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/park-city-winter-getaway/>), Aspen Snowmass (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/trip-report-aspen-snowmass-ski-resort/>), Winter Park (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/grand-county-colorado-winter-fun/>), and Keystone Resort (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/new-years-tradition-skiing-keystone/>), as well as countless other mountain destinations, offer an abundance of cold weather adventures. But dude ranches take winter vacation to a different level by successfully combining the majesty of the surrounding snow-capped mountain peaks with a

serene environment. I was elated when I received a media invitation to visit Vista Verde Ranch (<https://www.vistaverde.com/>) near Steamboat (<https://www.steamboat.com/>), Colorado.

Enter your email address

GET STARTED

Travel & Arrival

To avoid Denver's weekend traffic, we chose a noon departure time. This decision offered stress free driving on Interstate 70, the ability to navigate meandering rural roads before dark, and the opportunity to unpack our belongings before dinner. Unlike most of Vista Verde Ranch's winter visitors who fly into Yampa Valley Regional Airport and are picked up by the ranch's staff, we experienced Colorado's diverse terrain after we exited Interstate 70 and headed northwest on the less congested US-40.



Scenic drive to Vista Verde Ranch, Colorado

A winter wonderland awaited as we drove down the snow packed driveway to the main lodge. Not a speck of dirt or black ice distracted from the spectacular view of a pristine valley and a field filled with grazing horses. I smiled and breathed deeply as I absorbed the exquisite beauty of the surrounding acreage.

Even before exiting our car, I knew this was a perfect place to reboot. We'd spent almost a year remaining safe from the pandemic and the last seven months coping with Ira's glioblastoma (brain cancer) diagnosis. For a few days, we could disconnect from our daily routines to savor our destination.

Accommodations & Dining

With less than a dozen luxury cabins, the ranch's administrators and staff provide exemplary service to guests. We stayed in the Zirkel cabin, named after the tallest peak in the region (12,180 ft). Even though it was just the two of us, we were assigned a spacious, 1,508 square foot, two-story, three-bedroom cabin abutting a hillside forest of aspen trees. All of the ranch's cabins have easy access to the main lodge, dining room, parking area, fitness center, adventure center, barn, indoor arena, and winter pasture.

RECENT POSTS

The Ultimate Arizona Road Trip Itinerary (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/the-ultimate-arizona-road-trip-itinerary/>)

End of Season Ski Getaway in Vail, Colorado (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/end-of-season-ski-getaway-vail-colorado/>)

An In-Depth Look Into Food for Hiking: Tips and Ideas (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/an-in-depth-look-into-food-for-hiking-tips-ideas/>)

The Complete Camping Food Guide: Prep, Storage, and More (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/the-complete-camping-food-guide-prep-storage-more/>)

Reboot and Refresh at Colorado's Vista Verde Ranch (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/reboot-and-refresh-at-colorado-vista-verde-ranch/>)

CATEGORIES

Trip Reports (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/trip-reports/>)

Product Reviews (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/product-reviews/>)

Profiles (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/profiles/>)

KÜHL Cycling Team (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/kuhl-cycling-team/>)

Mountain Thoughts (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/mountain-thoughts/>)

Raising KÜHL Kids (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/raising-kuhl-kids/>)

ACTIVITIES

Climbing (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/climbing/>)

Cycling (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/cycling/>)

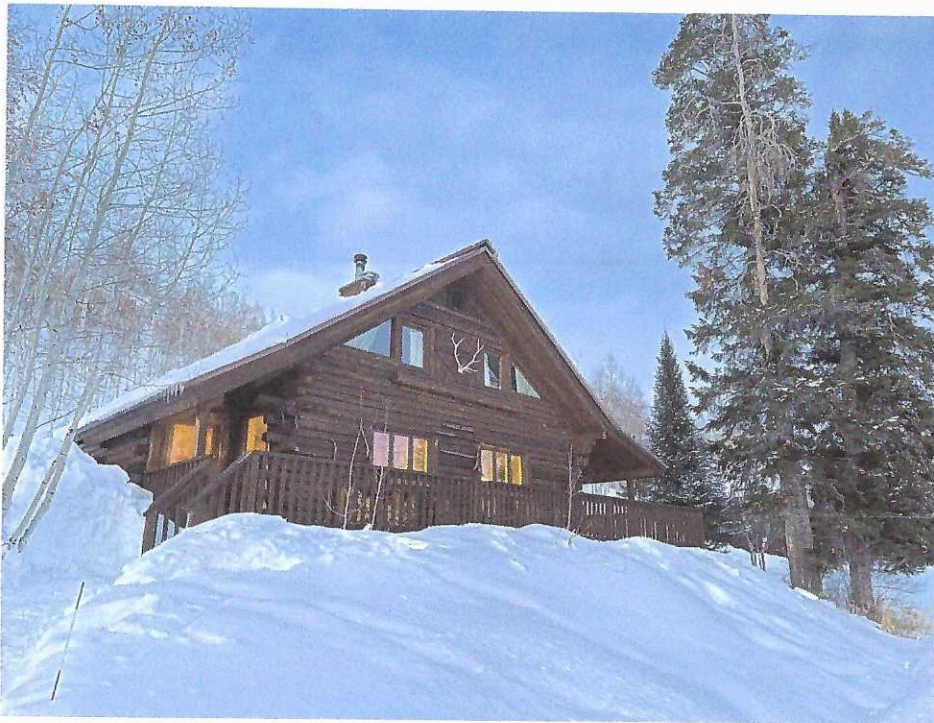
Hiking (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/hiking/>)

Paddling (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/paddling/>)

Running (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/running/>)

Skiing
(<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains>)

Yoga
(<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains>)



Zirkel Cabin, Vista Verde Ranch, Colorado

As the sky over a distant mountain range transformed into an array of pastel colors, we walked down the slick pathway to the main lodge where we could connect to the internet while enjoying a glass of wine. It was relaxing to simply sit in a comfy chair and look out the oversized windows as dusk turned into darkness. By the time the dinner bell rang, we were eager to taste the chef's creations.



Main Lodge, Vista Verde Ranch, Colorado

At our assigned table, we found the dinner menu which included a choice of salads, entrees, sides, and a dessert option. The ranch accommodated our requests for a pescatarian, plant-based diet with minimal sugar.

On the first night, we enjoyed a trout entree as substitute for the beef brisket, pork ribs, barbeque chicken, and Alaskan king crab legs selections. To minimize Ira's sugar intake, the chef created alternative dessert options to limit simple carbohydrates.



Low-sugar dessert at Vista Verde Ranch, Colorado

We never left the dining room hungry. Our meal portions were generous, and the food was tasty. After months and months of preparing our daily meals from scratch, I was content to have someone else do all of the cooking.

Prior to the pandemic, dude ranch experiences promoted the camaraderie of shared dining experiences and the ability to mingle with the staff. During our March visit, we kept our distance from others and opted to dine at our own table. The quality and consistency of the food along with an attentive and personable waitstaff more than made up for our lack of companionship.

Activities

Like other dude ranches, Vista Verde offers a rotating list of indoor and outdoor activities. While most are part of the inclusive pricing, snowmobiling, dogsledding, and other excursions can be arranged for an additional fee. You can also contact Steamboat Ski Resort to purchase a lift ticket.

With only two full days onsite, it wasn't possible to participate in every available activity. If we had stayed longer, we could have enjoyed ice fishing, riding a fat-tire bicycle, exploring the area by cross country skiing, enjoying the local snow tubing, attending a yoga or a photography class, indulging in a massage, relaxing on a horse drawn sleigh ride or participating in an add-on activity. Instead, we chose to focus on three things: snowshoeing, horseback riding, and archery. We also fed the horses.

Horseback Riding

Equestrian activities are the centerpiece of a dude ranch experience. Our first choice was a horsemanship clinic inside the arena. James illustrated how to effectively interact with his horse by demanding a physical presence. At a little over five feet, I found this quite amusing.

However, after I followed some of James' tips, I observed first-hand how my size didn't matter.

Before venturing outside, we mounted our horses and practiced some of our new skills. Our well-trained horses followed James' horse during the short one-hour ride. We stopped occasionally so James could snap a few photos. Our favorite shot was in front of the original homestead building that had been moved from its original location.



Sandy and Ira on trail ride. Original homestead building at Vista Verde Ranch, Colorado

On our second afternoon, we had a private trail ride led by Sophia. She escorted us to another segment of the ranch property for stunning views of the surrounding mountains. Being able to horseback ride in the snow is a novel experience. However, the length and complexity of these winter trail rides stand in sharp contrast to previous horseback riding experiences at other destinations during the spring, summer, and fall months.



Unlike the first morning when we were bundled in multiple layers including snow pants and long underwear, the warmer afternoon temperatures permitted minimal coverage. I was comfortable wearing my KÜHL hoody (<https://www.kuhl.com/kuhl/womens/outerwear-hoodies/>) while Ira had on a KÜHL vest. (<https://www.kuhl.com/kuhl/mens/outerwear/>)

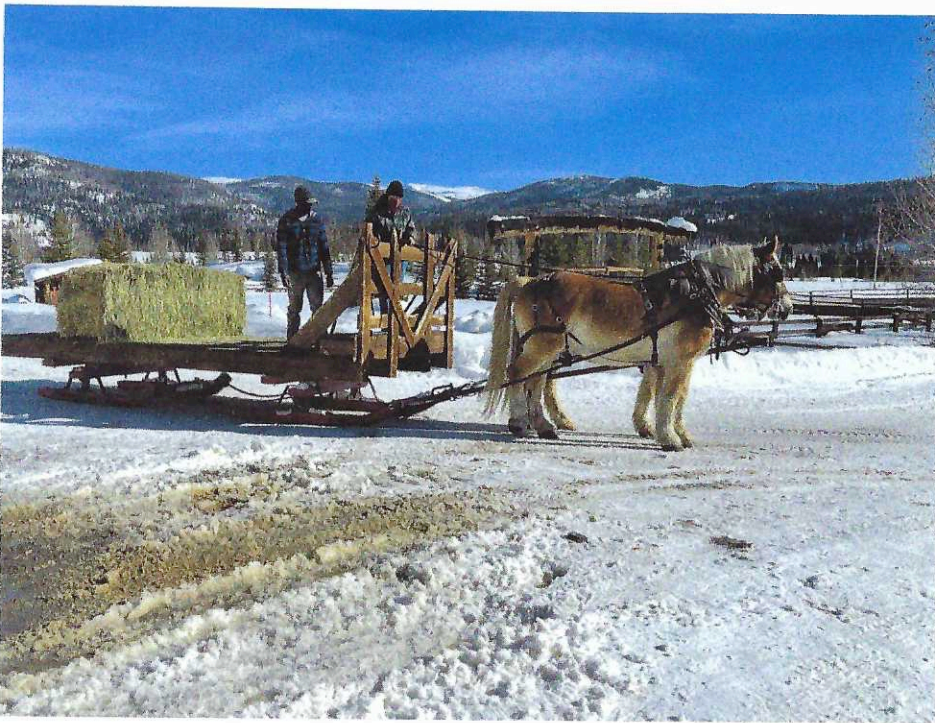
Feed Sleigh

We climbed aboard a wooden cart pulled by two horses and entered the winter pasture. Just like ants who congregate near an ant hill, the horses instinctively headed toward us for their daily sustenance.



Horses march in for their dinner at Vista Verde Ranch, Colorado

Ira, another guest, and James carefully pushed straw off as Sophia prodded the two horses to move forward. In our wake, we left behind clusters of horses surrounding mounds of alfalfa.



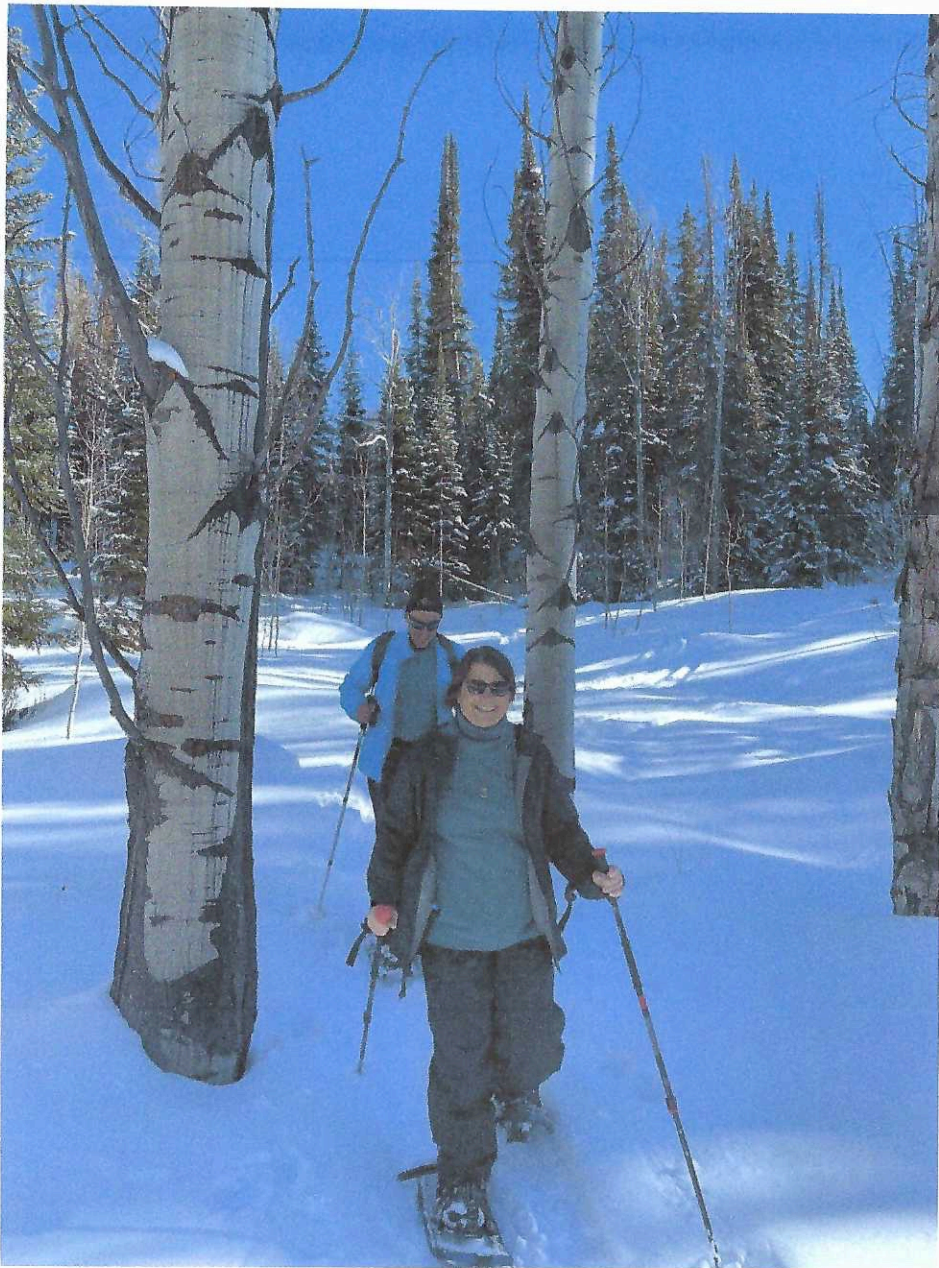
Feed sleigh at Vista Verde Ranch, Colorado

Snowshoeing

Even though the ranch provides snowshoes, we brought our own equipment. A few years ago, we loved our self-guided Latigo Ranch (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/cross-country-skiing-snowshoeing-latigo-ranch/>) trail experience and were eager to see how a guided Vista Verde Ranch experience compared.

During both of our half-day adventures, we were escorted by Miller. Usually, the snowshoe guide leads guests through the valley. Since many visitors come from out of state, this decision accommodates people who have not yet acclimated to higher altitudes. After learning about our frequent Summit County downhill skiing adventures, Miller selected two offsite trailheads for our treks which required a short drive.

At the South Fork Trail, we encountered only one person who was heading back to his car. He alerted us to the preponderance of large footprints left behind by hikers who attempted to climb up the hill in their snow boots.



All smiles snowshoeing on South Fork Trail near Vista Verde Ranch, Colorado.

After we reached a grove of trees, the deep ruts dissipated. In this unspoiled area, we encountered an occasional cross-country ski track and a mixture of animal footprints. Miller led the way through the deep snow and occasionally pointed out a landmark. We stopped sporadically to appreciate the phenomenal alpine environment.

Our second snowshoeing experience was in the Routt National Forest at a place locals call Red Creek Ridge Trail (Forest Service Road 478). Once again, we were trailblazers. Miller purposely led us to a secluded trail where natural wonders abounded.



Sandy snowshoeing near trailhead in Routt National Forest. Pictured in KÜHL Skullcap (<https://www.kuhl.com/kuhl/mens/accessories/merino-skull-cap/>) and Deflekt Hybrid Shell Jacket. (<https://www.kuhl.com/kuhl/womens/outerwear/ws-deflekt-hybrid-shell/>)

The bright blue sky accentuated two notable landmarks – Saddle Mountain and Sand Mountain. Our journey took us through forests filled with quaking aspens, lodgepole pines, blue spruce, and fir trees.

Archery Lesson

After being told during a childhood archery class at Camp Nicolet in Eagle River, Wisconsin that I should avoid bows and arrows, I wasn't sure it was a great idea to endure another potentially embarrassing experience. Back in the 1960s, a handful of my arrows hit a car parked adjacent to the camp's archery range. Decades later, I put the past behind me to enjoy the challenge. This time around, I had greater concerns. I had to avoid injuring one of the barn cats who roamed freely in the arena.

Harold demonstrated how to use the ranch's sophisticated bows with gears to aim at a faded target and a plastic bear. To ease my tension, I made a series of comical remarks about my past experiences and my new concerns. After the first round of arrows, I was redeemed. Not

only did I score a couple of bull's eyes, but I successfully slayed the bear. Ira and I both walked out of the arena with an unexpected skill and hilarious memories.



Sandy takes aim during archery lesson at Vista Verde Ranch. Pictured in KÜHL Athena Pullover (<https://www.kuhl.com/kuhl/womens/long-sleeve/athena-pullover/>).

What to Pack

In advance of our arrival, we read through the ranch's useful packing list to be adequately. We highly recommend:

- Pair of warm boots with excellent traction
- Base layers (<https://www.kuhl.com/kuhl/womens/baselayer/>) for temperature regulation
- Mid layers and outerwear (<https://www.kuhl.com/kuhl/womens/outerwear/>) for easy layering during outdoor activities
- Merino wool skull cap (<https://www.kuhl.com/kuhl/mens/accessories/merino-skull-cap/>) and neck gaiter (<https://www.kuhl.com/kuhl/mens/hats/merino-gaiter/>)
- Slippers to stay warm in log cabin when nighttime temperatures drop

A Fresh Perspective

Our Vista Verde Ranch adventure rejuvenated our spirits and invigorated our bodies. With minimal time spent inside, we maximized our opportunity to engage in winter activities. Walking hand-in-hand with Mother Nature's grandeur reignited our faith. A refreshed mindset caused the day-to-day issues associated with the pandemic and Ira's glioblastoma diagnosis to be less overwhelming. In the wake of our Vista Verde Ranch visit, we were reminded how spending time outside is a vital aspect associated with embracing life.

*When Sandy Bornstein isn't trekking in Colorado or writing, she's traveling with her husband Ira (<http://www.thetravelingbornsteins.com/>). After living as an international teacher in Bangalore, India, Sandy published an award-winning book, *May This Be the Best Year of Your Life* (<https://sandraborstein.com/>), as a resource for people contemplating an expat*