

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

A Design Lover's Guide to Aspen

From hotels designed by AD100 firms to events around Aspen's Bauhaus 100 celebration, this mountain town has something for lovers of the outdoors, arts, and culture

By

Jessica Ritz

Architectural Digest



The Aspen Art Museum, which was designed by the Japanese architect Shigeru Ban. Photo: Michael Moran/OTTO

The world comes to Aspen, a favorite destination for winter-sports enthusiasts and warm-weather nature lovers. This Colorado mountain town has cracked the code for functioning as a year-round home to a population of approximately 7,000 residents—with many more part-timers—that happens to attract major figures in fashion, arts, and culture.

Given its size, Aspen boasts an astoundingly wide number of activities throughout the year. The off-season typically happens after its eponymous trees have hit peak fall foliage, typically in late September, and for a spell during springtime. Other than when the town quiets down while hotels close for maintenance and some businesses briefly shutter, Aspen and the surrounding towns in the Roaring Fork Valley have something to offer for every type of traveler. Here are top picks for an arts-and-culture-centric Aspen visit, perfectly crafted for the design lover in your family.



Aspen is known for some of the most beautiful hiking trails in the country, including the one pictured, which is the Crested Butte side of the West Maroon Trail. / Photo: Emily Chaplin

Where to Stay



Inside of the beautifully designed Hotel Jerome. / Photo: Courtesy of Hotel Jerome

Jerome B. Wheeler's legacy is palpable throughout Aspen, starting with his namesake hotel that the New York City transplant commissioned in the 1880s during the town's mining boom. The approach to hospitality at the **Hotel Jerome**, under ownership by Auberge Resorts since 2012, honors its rich past—nearly everything on display tells a story—with amenities and services updated to contemporary luxury standards. (The J-Bar has attracted the Hollywood glitterati set, as well as onetime Pitkin County Sheriff aspirant Hunter S. Thompson.) Designer Todd-Avery Lenahan of TAL Studio and architects Rowland and Broughton have mastered a certain maximalist Western aesthetic in the

beloved public spaces, and the Hotel Jerome's new Bad Harriett speakeasy located beneath the restored historic 1889 *Aspen Times* building (located across the newly revamped patio) brings a touch of Art Deco–tinged glamour.

The **Little Nell**, Aspen's ski-in/ski-out resort with prime mountain access via the must-ride Silver Queen gondola and winter chair lifts, recently revealed additional updates by AD100 firm Champalimaud Design—with more to come. The Relais & Châteaux property is an exercise in restrained luxury and attentive service that extends to the on-property Element 47 restaurant and Ajax Tavern. (Don't miss the opportunity to schedule a tour of the Nell's award-winning wine cellar.) The 92 rooms, which showcase cool palettes with subtle pops of color, and each with its own fireplace, are perfect for après-ski breaks or relaxing any time of year. The property also manages the Residences at the Little Nell for larger groups and extended stays with its own rooftop pool area, and access to complete hotel services.

Directly across the street, the just-opened W Ski Escape resort is the brand's first North America location, as well as Aspen's first hotel opening in 25 years. The rooftop lounge and pool deck is bound to be a buzzy social hub for visitors and locals alike.

Where to Eat and Drink



Clark's, a chic restaurant that has design hallmarks of the Wild West. / Photo: Courtesy of Clark's

Austin-based **Clark's** makes the counterintuitive act of savoring raw oysters and fresh crudo plates at 8,000 feet above sea level a no-brainer. The dining room, set behind a wood-clad façade with a stepped parapet that evokes the Wild West, smartly incorporates bright, chic coastal vibes with a cozy mountain retreat feel. Clark's is a perfect gathering spot for enjoying seafood and hearty classics, including a serious burger, as well as a robust craft cocktail list.

Betula is another import, this time from the team behind the Bonito restaurant in St. Barts. The upstairs dining room and lounge's open-fire cooking does right by Colorado rack of lamb, served with a balanced sweet-and-savory caponata, and other dishes that reflect chef Laurent Cantineaux's classical French training. (Co-owner and designer Juan Carlos Pérez Febres handles design duties.) While balmy days and evenings last, enjoy alfresco dining on the outdoor patio.

Legit Australian coffee culture is imported to the Rockies at **Victoria + Co.**, which also contains a full menu and bar. **Local Coffee** combines third-wave coffee culture with well-curated retail, featuring a selection of locally crafted accessories and home goods.

What to Do



The Bauhaus centennial celebrations taking place internationally are flourishing in Aspen as part of the regional Bauhaus 100 : Aspen programming. / Photo: Courtesy of the Aspen Institute

Despite local pride in the cluster of historic Victorian homes on the west end and its many masonry landmarks, Aspen has been leaning into a design-forward ethos. To wit: This year marks the fifth anniversary of the **Aspen Art Museum** building, designed by architect Shigeru Ban. (One could joke that in addition to ski season, Aspenites also calendar gala season during the AAM's annual **ArtCrush**.) The rooftop café is another excellent daytime eating and drinking option. Admission to current exhibitions by contemporary artists, including Rashid Johnson, Etel Adnan, and Walter Price, is free.

What's more, the Bauhaus centennial celebrations taking place internationally are flourishing in Aspen as part of the regional **Bauhaus 100: Aspen** programming. Aspen Skiing Company and Aspen Institute founder Walter Paepcke and

his wife, Elizabeth, tapped Austrian native and Bauhaus veteran Herbert Beyer to design all aspects of the expanding winter sports venture Paepcke founded in 1946, turning Beyer into an early branding pioneer and a multidisciplinary powerhouse. The exhibition *bayer & bauhaus: how design shaped aspen* is on view through April 30, 2020 at the second floor gallery of the [Aspen Historical Society's Wheeler/Stallard Museum](#).

For a proper immersion in Paepcke and Beyer's vision that spanned three decades, visit the [Aspen Institute](#) for a walking art and architecture [tour](#) of the 40-acre campus, which is easily accessible by foot, bike, or car. (Knowledgeable guides include landscape architect and Aspen City Council member Ann Mullins.) The Aspen Institute functioned as an evolving laboratory of *gesamtkunstwerk* that dovetailed with the organization's prevailing mind-body-and-spirit philosophy. Beyer's textile work, graphic design, architecture, and early land-art experiments remain visible and intact, along with a stunning Andy Goldsworthy installation and other sensitive additions. The property is part of the [Aspen Meadows resort](#), which is another unique hospitality option, with 98 suites in the original Bauhaus-inspired buildings filled with iconic modern furnishings by Marcel Breuer, Harry Bertolia, and others.

At [Anderson Ranch Arts Center](#) in nearby Snowmass Village, accomplished artists and aspiring creatives, along with every level in between, have engaged in year-round hands-on workshops, lectures, and seminars for over 50 years. Some of the most celebrated names in the art world travel to the scenic compound, such as International Artist Honorees Ai Weiwei and [Nick Cave](#). Aspen architect [Harry Teague](#) designed the ranch's early buildings and oversaw its physical expansion, and Sam Maloof helped establish the woodworking program with his friend, Anderson Ranch founder and ceramicist Paul Soldner. As of this past spring, the nonprofit organization welcomed Helen Molesworth, formerly of the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, as its first Curator-in-Residence. The on-site shop's inventory includes art supplies, student and instructor creations, and artwork from past program participants, such as the [Haas Brothers](#).

Where to Shop



The Elks Building, near the Aspen Art Museum. / Photo: Chris Council and Emily Chaplin

Several blocks downtown are blocked to traffic come weekends from June through October, when the **Aspen Saturday Market** is the main place to shop and socialize. Peruse creative makers and vendors—even a ceramics shop based out of an Airstream trailer—and experience locavore culture thanks to Aspen Center for Environmental Studies' Rock Bottom Ranch and other Roaring Fork Valley area organic and sustainable producers.

Georgia Brown Home is the seasonal Aspen outpost of Los Angeles's Big Daddy Antiques. During its summer through September pop-up showroom, owner Shane Brown assembles an eclectic mix of Western vibes (vintage Navajo rugs, geo stone tables, judiciously chosen items made of hides and horns) juxtaposed with comfortable furnishings and recognizable pieces (Bruno Mathsson Pernilla lounge chairs). Next door at the new **Res Ipsa**, which also has a boutique in Nantucket, Massachusetts, travel-inspired wares range from vintage kilim pillows and rugs to the brand's signature loafers.

While hardly the makings of a spontaneous splurge, a handful of art galleries have established physical presences in Aspen, most notably Marianne Boesky's **Boesky West Gallery** in a downtown building transformed by Annabelle Selldorf. Sanford Biggers curated an exhibition titled *Tricknology* featuring artists ektor garcia and Allison Janae Hamilton; a couple of blocks away at **Baldwin Gallery**, Biggers's own pieces are seen as part of his *Chimera* show.