

FRUGAL TRAVELER | ELAINE GLUSAC

Rustic Comfort, Sometimes at Reduced Rates

Companies are creating accommodations for guests who love the outdoors.

IN 2021, WHEN pandemic restrictions curtailed travel, occupancy at Getaway — a collection of 30 forested properties around the country, with tiny cabins renting from \$109 a night — surged above 99 percent.

“The pandemic was the perfect storm for people to get away in the woods in their own cabins, immerse in nature and be socially distanced,” said Jon Staff, the founder and chief executive of Getaway.

Interest in outdoorsy lodgings has continued. (Getaway’s figures remain high, in the 80 to 90 percent occupancy range.) The campsite booking service Hipcamp has nearly doubled its listings since 2019, and bookings grew sevenfold in that time. New glamping concepts like [Terramor Outdoor Resort](#) in Bar Harbor, Maine, popped up to fill demand for accommodations close to popular parks. In Washington County, Utah, which includes much of Zion National Park, taxes on overnight stays grew to just over \$15 million in 2022 from \$8.9 million in 2019, according to the Greater Zion Convention & Tourism Office.

The trend has nurtured an emerging category of outdoor-themed hotel groups, including Field Station, LOGE Camps, Trailborn and Evo, often positioned near national and state parks and preserves, that encourage adventure while keeping the rates realistic.

To be sure, there are plenty of luxury resorts providing immersion in nature; in fact, ULUM, from the glamping resort company Under Canvas, opened in Moab, Utah, about 30 minutes from Arches National Park, with furnishings by West Elm in 50 safari-style tents, an upscale restaurant, guided adventures and rates starting at \$549 a night.

Additionally, many independent accommodations like the Bluebird Parker Beach Lodge (from \$119), which opened in 2021 on Cape Cod, in Massachusetts, trumpet reasonable rates and access to nature.

The following four new or expanding hotel companies aim to create distinct brands built around adventure and accessibility — financial and otherwise — across the country.

Field Station

When he founded the Santa Barbara, Calif.-

based lodging company AutoCamp in 2013, Neil Dipaola created getaways in nature with customized Airstream trailers. Now with six AutoCamp locations, including a new outpost opening in May near Zion National Park (from \$299), Mr. Dipaola is introducing a more affordable spinoff called Field Station, which will open its first location this month in Moab, Utah (from \$159).

If REI Coop were to take over a Super 8 it might look like Field Station Moab, where the lobby doubles as an outfitter offering rental gear, including mountain bikes. Guides lead programs on how to use a compass or “Leave No Trace” outdoor principles. Rooms are functionally chic, with pegboard walls for hanging gear. Some even have portaledges — hanging tent systems normally used by rock climbers — attached to the walls.

The social life of the hotel revolves around outdoor fire pits where Field Station plans to team up with local guides and athletes to offer evening talks. There is also a coffee shop.

Two more California locations are scheduled to open this year near Joshua Tree National Park and in South Lake Tahoe.

LOGE Camps

These camps were born out of its co-founder and chief executive Cale Genenbacher’s inability to find affordable hotels in outdoor recreation areas with easy access to rental gear, good coffee and a convivial social setting around a bonfire. Before he founded the business, Mr. Genenbacher said, he was in the Army and “slept on the ground for a living, and I wanted something more comfortable.”

Opened in 2017 in the coastal town of Westport, Wash., a few hours from Seattle, the original LOGE serves as a surf camp with boards, kayaks and wetsuits to rent. It offers a shared outdoor kitchen with Traeger grills for guests who want to cook, a cafe, fire pits and weekly outdoor concerts in the summer.

Four similar concepts followed, mostly in mountain towns in California, Oregon and Washington, where rental gear usually includes mountain bikes and inner tubes.

“We believe people bond over elemental things like food, fire and hardship,” Mr.

Genenbacher said. “Hardship doesn’t really exist in the way it used to. So now that’s adventure.”

The rapidly expanding LOGE plans to open six locations this year: in South Fork in Southern Colorado; in St. George, Utah, near Zion; in Taos, N.M.; near Glacier National Park in Montana; in Missoula, Mont.; and at the Crystal Mountain ski area in Washington. An additional four properties in Maine, Massachusetts, New York and Vermont are expected to follow. Rooms start around \$80 a night and peak at around \$250.

Trailborn

Among the new outdoorsy inns, Trailborn targets nature lovers who appreciate contemporary design and full-service restaurants.

The first Trailborn location will make its debut in Estes Park, Colo., the eastern gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park, in July. Trailborn Rocky Mountains consists of two former motels about a mile apart from each other that collectively house 86 rooms, a restaurant, performance area and pools with loaner bikes to transit between them.

Use of organic materials such as light woods and paving stones in a sleek modernist style invites the outdoors into the main lobby at the more central of the two addresses, where a two-story tiled chimney divides the front desk and cafe seating from the Mexican restaurant. Rooms, heavy on blond wood accents, are trimmed in local art and are equipped with coolers for guests to use on day trips (from \$225).

The founding business partners, Ben Weinberg and Mike Weiss, hope to make

Trailborn a community hub with its restaurant and coffee shops and entertainment such as concerts.

Expect future Trailborns in Mendocino, Calif.; the Grand Canyon area; and two locations in North Carolina, including the mountainous Highlands community and oceanfront Wrightsville Beach.

Evo

Since 2001, long before it opened its first hotel in 2022, the outdoor gear brand Evo has been selling skis, mountain bikes, surfboards and skate decks online, adding retail stores in 2005. Three years later, Evo joined the travel industry by offering adventure trips like mountain biking in Ecuador and skiing in Japan.

Last year, it added its first hotel at Campus Salt Lake, a 100,000-square-foot development in Salt Lake City, with tenants that include a yoga studio, a skate park and a bouldering gym for climbers. The concentration of adventure and athletic businesses is designed to attract outdoorsy travelers who might also patronize the hotel’s rooftop bar and coffee shop or spend the night in one of its 50 rooms (from \$199).

Evo is developing a similar concept in Tahoe City, Calif., expected to open next winter, that will include a 47-room hotel as well as a store and cafe, with ready access to bike trails around Lake Tahoe and skiing at Palisades Tahoe, about 15 minutes away.

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A LOGE Camp in Bend, Ore. “We believe people bond over elemental things like food, fire and hardship,” said Cale Genenbacher, the company’s chief executive.