

# Moving mountains

Clients looking for a mountain getaway? The US has it covered, writes Laura French

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From the colourful peaks of the Sierra Nevada to the icy heights of Alaska, the marbled landscapes of Arizona to the snowy slopes of Utah, the US is something of a dream for active types wanting to clamber above the clouds.

But with such a vast offering to choose from, how do you know where to start when it comes to booking the right break?

We've put together a guide to some of the most spectacular mountain ranges across the country, with product to suit every

pendant – from hiking around iconic Yosemite to rafting in the shadow of the immense Denali.

## ► ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Few sights can make your jaw drop so quickly as Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park, scattered with aspen trees glowing orange-gold, and jagged peaks jutting up like iced cakes.

At its heart, of course, is Aspen, a cluster of four ski resorts offering world-class slopes which played host to the World Cup skiing finals last year.

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It's not just about classic skiing here though; Carrier gives visitors the chance to ride a snowcat down the resort's slopes at sunset on its Groom the Mountain experience (exclusive to guests staying at five-star The Little Nell), while Ski Safari has introduced a 10-night Colorado Cat-Ski adventure, taking advanced skiers off-piste in Powder Cat vehicles to glide down untouched snow. The latter includes five nights in Aspen Snowmass and five at the nearby resort of Steamboat, with prices from £3,995 per person, ↻



→ based on two sharing, including B&B accommodation, flights and SUV hire. There's plenty to do in the wider region outside ski season too. "Hiking is the best way to do this park, with more than 300 miles of trails to choose from," says Malcolm Davies, product destination manager for Funway Holidays. "They range from short, flat strolls to extreme climbs and everything in between." No sitting in the Jacuzzi here.

▶ **SIERRA NEVADA**

Just as iconic are the craggy, snow-dusted peaks of California's Sierra Nevada, known for its sequoia-covered landscapes and cobalt-blue lakes.

At its heart is Yosemite, whose granite formations, bottle-green forests and tumbling waterfalls make for proper adventure territory. Key ski areas include Dodge Ridge and High Sierra Snow Play, but it's not only about speeding down the slopes. For something a little different, recommend Intrepid Travel's Lake Tahoe & Yosemite Winter Adventure, which takes clients hiking around the frozen lake with the option to try snowshoeing around ski resort Heavenly Mountain, with prices from £1,674, excluding flights.

But for some really hardcore hiking,

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venture beyond Yosemite. Stretching through three national parks, the John Muir Trail is ideal for those after a real challenge. Grand American Adventures offers a 23-day trip taking in the best of it, giving clients the chance to summit the 4,417m-high Mount Whitney – the tallest mountain in the country's lower 48 states. Prices start at £2,799 including guides, porters and all meals.

▶ **ALASKA RANGE**

Giving Mount Whitney a run for its money is Denali, the highest mountain in North America at a whopping 6,190 metres. Reaching the summit takes serious preparation, but hiking around the national park can be just as rewarding, with majestic peaks, huge glaciers and meltwater rivers carving their way through six million acres of wilderness populated by caribou,

moose, wolves and grizzly bears.

World Expeditions' Great Alaska Adventure takes guests to some of the state's most spectacular spots with glacial hikes, white-water rafting trips and wildlife drives, plus a canoeing trip through the remote Tangle Lakes, a scenic flight over Wrangell-St Elias National Park and plenty more, with prices from £3,190 for 11 days.

▶ **APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS**

The east coast has its fair share of contours too, with the Appalachian Mountains stretching from Canada to Alabama and taking in everything from Vermont's Green Mountains to Pennsylvania's Blue Ridge.

Travel 2 recommends Grand American Adventures' 11-day Appalachian and New England Walk for clients wanting to explore its most impressive peaks. The trip takes in the White Mountains, Baxter State Park and Stowe, plus the less-trodden Acadia National Park.

For those wanting to take it a little easier, suggest a self-drive. First Class Holidays' Classic New England tour is an excellent option, combining Boston, the White Mountains, the Green Mountains, Cape Cod and more with the freedom to take it at your own pace – think sweeping vistas of



**MOUNT RAINIER**

Stretching to 4,392 metres, this volcanic, glacier-topped peak in Washington State offers extensive hiking and biking. North America Travel Service offers a day tour to experience it from Seattle, from £225 per person.

**SAN JACINTO MOUNTAINS**

For a seriously tough, day-long hike, there's Cactus to Clouds, a 21-mile climb that starts in Greater Palm Springs and ascends to the peak of Mount San Jacinto. Best saved for the experienced.

**VAIL**

Offering nearly 200 trails spread across 2,140 hectares, this is the US's most popular ski spot, boasting runs for every level plus the renowned Back Bowls – masses of silky-smooth powder made for those after a challenge.



PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK; PERETZ PARTENSKY/GRAND AMERICAN ADVENTURES

LEFT: Grizzly bear, Denali National Park

BELOW: The John Muir Trail



→ towering peaks and orange-carpeted fields as you meander along, windows down, wind in the hair.

## UTAH HIGHLIGHTS

Back in the wild west, you'll find plenty in the way of hiking and skiing. For the former, look to Zion National Park, whose iconic Angel's Landing is regarded as one of the best short hikes in the country. Stretching just five miles, what it lacks in length it makes up for in steepness, with chains forming handholds on the final stretch and sheer drop-offs on either side. Explore's 14-day Western USA National Parks Explorer combines the park with Bryce Canyon, Death Valley, the Grand Canyon and beyond, from £2,799 per person including flights and accommodation.

It's on the skiing front that this state really excels, though. About an hour north of Salt Lake City is Snowbasin, a lesser-known resort drawing in the luxury crowd. Ski Safari has recently added the resort to its portfolio, with accommodation in nearby Ogden



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giving guests the chance to combine skiing in the day with city life by night.

Park City is the US's biggest linked ski area, with chutes to suit every level including gentle greens, ridge runs overlooking the desert and black diamond slopes for the more advanced.

For a high-end stay here, Carrier recommends the Waldorf Astoria Park City, which offers extras such as dog sledding, bobsledding and tubing, plus a golf course, spa and fire pit where guests sit toasting s'mores of an evening – probably not the first thing you picture when you think of Utah, making it all the more appealing. **TW**



ABOVE: Acadia National Park

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