
The Wild, Luxurious West

by Fredric Hamber

There's the Old West of cattle and rifles, and the New West of designer hiking shorts and mountain bikes. Let's visit a few lesser-known pockets of the West, where trail rides are followed by hot basalt stone massages, picnic lunches appear in wildflower meadows, as if by magic, and evening campfires are followed by opulent sleep in high-thread-count sheets.

Utah: Amangiri

The scent of piñon burning in the fireplaces and mesquite under the cooking grills lets you know that life is good at this privileged spot in southwestern Utah. "The architecture and location are fantastic," says Pacific Heights resident Thomas Wehlen, who visited Amangiri recently with his wife, San Franciscan Eleanor "Ellie" Brigham Wehlen. This is red rock country, the part of the West where sunsets might be best appreciated not by gazing westward, but eastward—toward the entrada sandstone bluffs, which change color with the changing light.

The concrete used for the resort's stunningly simple architectural planes was mixed from the same sandstone, so it blends in perfectly with the surroundings. Geology is a big thing at Amangiri, and it is wondrous for a Northern Californian who has never experienced that terrain to grasp geologic time by realizing the sand beneath one's feet was once an ocean floor. Hikes to nearby caves with petroglyphs are expertly guided by young staff members, many of whom are Utah natives.

In homage to the Aman chain's origins, the resort's menus include Asian dishes, while ingredients are sourced as close to home as possible, including lamb and pork from third generation ranchers and beef from just over the Colorado border. A few slip-ups in the dining room service were evident on a recent visit, but part of manager Christophe Olivro's job is managing expectations of guests who might not understand, for example, why alcohol may not be served in Utah in the mornings.

Under the visionary guidance of spa manager Anthony Andra, last month Amangiri unveiled a new spa menu and wellness program, which offer the services of a wellness coach, as well as nutrition consultations with the resort's chef. Spa treatments incorporate Navaho practices, including burning sage. **Luxury travel consultant Gwen Books** (her clients include Netflix founder Reed Hastings) of Atherton says that a highlight of her stay at Amangiri was the two-and-a-half-hour spa treatment that "ended with a wrap and the recitation of an Indian message, which I found so moving that it brought me to tears."