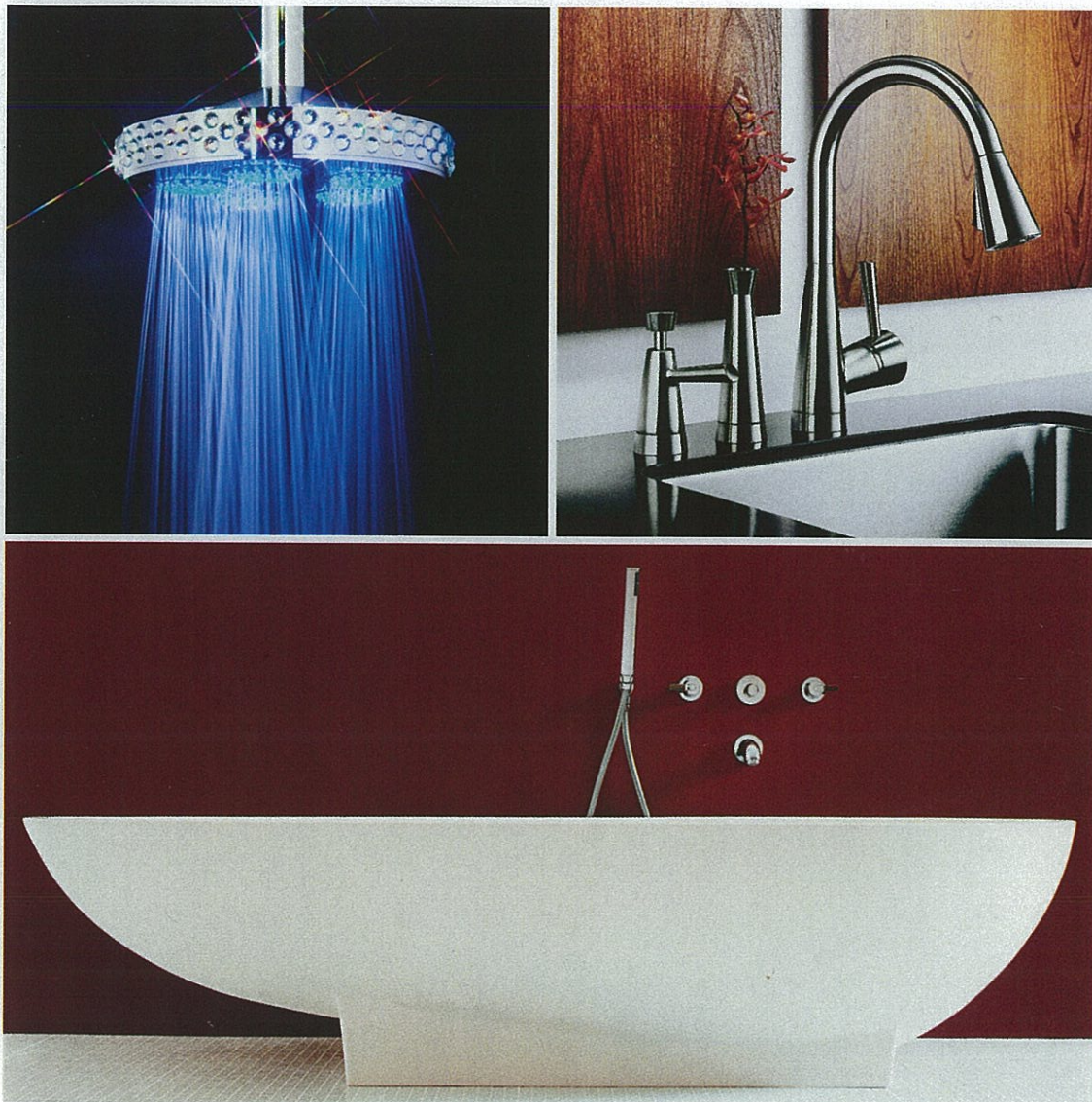


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For years, nature lovers have been describing Grand Targhee, Wyo., as a hidden gem.

Grand Targhee, Wyoming

Everett Potter
09/01/2005

For years, nature lovers have been describing Grand Targhee, Wyo., as a hidden gem. This low-key ski resort on the western flanks of the Teton mountain range lies due west of its more famous neighbor, Jackson Hole, which hugs the eastern side of the same mountains. And it was die-hard skiers who put Targhee, as it is called, on the map. The reason? Targhee averages 500 inches a year of the lightest powder snow found on the planet. And the resort, peopled with local families, day visitors from Jackson Hole and serious ski bums, is never, ever crowded. In a good year, about 150,000 skiers visit. Compare that to an industry behemoth like Vail, which hosts 1.5 million skiers annually, or even nearby Jackson, which welcomes close to 350,000 skiers per year. But while Targhee cannot compete with Vail's size, it does have a very respectable 2,500 skiable acres, some challenging terrain served only by a snowcat and views that stretch more than 100 miles.

A three-bedroom douglas fir-and-stone residence, minutes from the Grand Targhee Resort, is on the market for \$2.25 million (Sotheby's International Realty). *(Click image to enlarge.)*



For years, the biggest challenge has been simply getting to Targhee. From Jackson Hole, it takes at least an hour to drive the 42 miles, crossing the Tetons through the sometimes treacherous Teton Pass. The road descends into Idaho's Teton Valley, passing through the farming towns of Victor and Driggs, and then crosses back into the mountains into Alta, Wyo., and the Targhee National Forest. Ski Hill Road, the final part of the drive, is often banked with walls of snow 8 to 10 feet high, making it look more like a bobsled track. No wonder local powder hounds, like Jackson resident Harrison Ford, have treasured the anonymity of the region for years. Besides, there is almost nowhere to stay. At present, there are just 96 rooms in the entire village. And nightlife is virtually nonexistent.

The pristine powder slopes of the Grand Targhee Resort. *(Click image*



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to enlarge.)

But change is afoot. After years of trying, the resort's owner, George N. Gillett Jr. (who also owns the NHL's Montreal Canadiens), successfully made a land swap with the U.S. Forest Service. This allowed Targhee (which is currently a large, nonresidential region) to submit its master plan for an expanded village for approval in December 2004, a process that will likely take close to two years. At full build-out, Targhee is now proposing 875 lodging and residential units—houses, condos and hotel suites—in a base village. And in typical Targhee fashion, that is 95 units shy of the 970 units approved in a U.S. Forest Service Final Environmental Impact Statement. In short, the town will change, but it will still remain small.

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