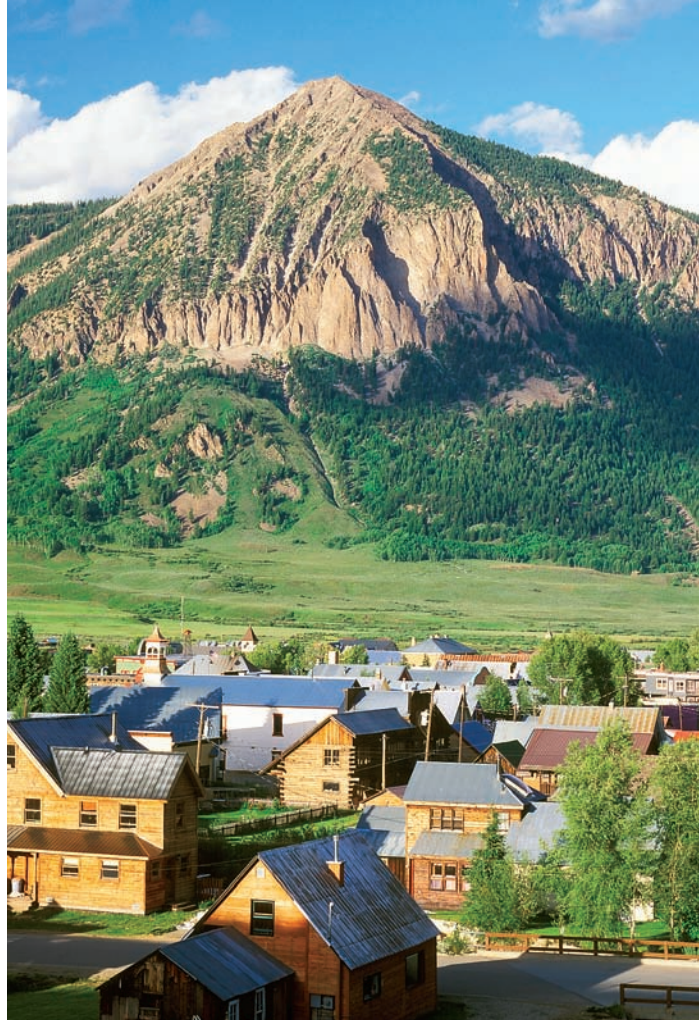


**YOUR TOWN GOT YOU DOWN?
WE'VE GOT YOUR ESCAPE
PLAN. THESE 20 STARS OF
AMERICA'S 21ST-CENTURY
RENAISSANCE ARE RIDING
A WAVE OF CIVIC REINVEN-
TION AND FRESH IDEAS.**

**BEST
TOWNS
2008>**

**PRO-
GRESSIVE
CANDIDATES**



THE WORD ON THE STREET: CRESTED BUTTE

“It’s a beautiful place, the skiing is sick, and the bike trails are sublime. A quirky community of wonderful people.”

—J.C. LEACOCK, SUBSCRIBER

true trail-riding mecca. Even on a sleety night, you’ll see locals taking to the Lower Loop with snow-suited toddlers strapped in back, and half the town volunteers to maintain their beloved trails, like the legendary 401. Fly-fishing, hiking, and skiing are literally just out the back door. —K.A.

THE STATS:

Pop. 1,600

Median age: 31

Med. household income: \$41,250

Med. home value: \$301,100

Avg. commute: 10 mins.

Largest employer: Crested Butte Mountain Resort

9. Crested Butte, Colorado

THE REVIVAL: Crested Butte made its name as a coal town in the 1880s, then relaunched 80 years later as a ski bum’s nirvana. But thanks to inconsistent snowfall and a remote, road’s-end location at the foot of the West Elk Mountains, hard times came calling in the late ’80s.

The energy returned when the town’s eponymous ski resort changed hands in 2004. News of its imminent modernization

triggered a real estate feeding frenzy, with dilapidated Victorians and miners’ shacks alike starting bidding wars. Now, with long-awaited upgrades under way at the ski area—including a totally revamped base area, swank lodges, and the possible, controversial expansion to adjacent Snodgrass Mountain—“Colorado’s last great ski town” is all buzz. Once the holdout of elite athletes, former hippies, and powder dropouts,

down-to-earth CB is attracting a new crop of young families and telecommuters looking for a laid-back and affordable alternative to glitzier counterparts like Telluride and Aspen. There’s a boutique bookbinder on Second Street, a new farmers’ market every Sunday in summer and fall, and a steady stream of locals on cruiser bikes.

THE LIFE: The ’80s saw a slow and steady proliferation of singletrack outside town, making the Butte a



At the Blue Hole, outside Charlottesville

The Third Bowl, Crested Butte Mountain



Bright Idea

Seek Balance

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

(POP. 40,300)

Back in the ’70s, when Charlottesville’s now iconic downtown pedestrian mall was being constructed, three dozen willow oak and ash trees were planted along the central walkway. By the ’90s, the mature trees were paying off, drawing people downtown to the shady sidewalks. C-ville took notice and kicked off a management plan for its urban forests. This year the city is using GPS and satellite imagery to inventory the trees on all its public land and analyze the city’s tree canopy. The information will be used to balance out the natural environment within the urban surroundings, both for environmental benefits, like air quality and carbon sequestration, and for aesthetic appeal. To offset the urban-heat-island effect, the city has installed green roofs on city hall and the police station, with a goal of covering 40 percent of the city in green. Charlottesville is finally reaping the rewards of having planted a few key seeds.

—R.K.