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DREAM TOWNS

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CRESTED BUTTE, CO

Outdoor lovers' paradise

Crested Butte, a resurrected mining village turned adventure-sports destination (population 1,600), sits in a wide, sunny, dead-end valley at the edge of Colorado's **WEST ELK MOUNTAINS**, about 25 miles as the crow flies southwest of Aspen. Unpretentious and personable, CB is a locals' town, buzzing with young families, powder hounds drawn to **CRESTED BUTTE SKI RESORT**, elite athletes, and big-city refugees.

Everybody rides bikes here. This, arguably, is the place where mountain biking was born 30 years ago, and two-wheelers are everywhere: vintage cruisers, circa 1970, adorned with glittery handlebar streamers and bells, left unlocked in tidy, trusting rows outside **CAMP 4 COFFEE**; rusty Schwinn's propped up on kickstands in front of **IZZY'S DELI**; mud-splattered, full-suspension steeds

rolling up Elk Avenue after a blissful beating on the infamous **401 SINGLE-TRACK**.

A recent proposal to begin mining molybdenum (a key element in steelmaking) just outside town on **MT. EMMONS** has drawn the ire of many residents, who came here for the scenery and wilderness access, if not the jobs.

There's plenty to do besides free-wheeling. Cast for brown trout on the fast-flowing **TAYLOR RIVER**, explore nearby **STRAND HILL** on horseback, or scope out downtown's cheerfully redone Victorians and sweet local boutiques like **BEYOND** and **CASA BELLA** (CB prides itself on having only two chain stores and zero stoplights). But the ultimate souvenir is your own refurbished cruiser bike, complete with a miniature Colorado vanity plate that reads **EAT MY DUST**.

—KATIE ARNOLD

MAKE A VISIT

Crested Butte is 28 miles north of Gunnison, on State 135. United Express flies daily from Denver to Gunnison airport, and Alpine Express will shuttle you north (*alpine expressshuttle.com* or 800/822-4844). A good choice for an overnight stay is the Ruby of Crested Butte B&B (from \$169; *therubyofcrestedbutte.com* or 800/390-1338). The Visitor Center (Sixth St./State 135 at Elk Ave; 800/545-4505) is a great one-stop source for maps and info.

MAKE A MOVE

The median home price in 2007 was \$815,000, but local agents say prices are rising. Along with real estate and tourism, telecommuting is big here. Go to *skicb.com* to check out live CB webcams. Best local scuttlebutt: *The Crested Butte News* (*crestedbuttenews.com*).

“THE QUIRKINESS ISN'T MANUFACTURED—THIS IS STILL A REAL TOWN”

—ANDREA GREENE, CO-OWNER OF THE RUBY OF CRESTED BUTTE B&B



Camp 4 Coffee is the preferred fueling station in Crested Butte, CO. LEFT The town competes with California's Marin County as the birthplace of mountain biking.

FROM LEFT: ROB HOWARD, DAVID FENTON (2)