

· WEST END ·
travel

Dunton Hot Springs



Deep in the San Juan Mountains, down a long washboard road lined with aspens and Ponderosa pines, camps the quintessential Colorado town of Dunton. Its saloon, dance hall, outdoor chapel, bathhouse, library, stable and twelve hand-hewn log cabins dot a rugged alpine Eden cradled in snow-capped vistas, warmed with natural hot springs and watered by the meandering west fork of the Delores River.

Here, the panorama is nearly priceless. Nearly, that is, but not quite, because the entire town is available for rent. Yes, the whole kit and kaboodle, in which, according to local lore, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid holed up after robbing the bank in Telluride some 25 miles to the north, can be yours for \$10,000 to \$17,500 per day, depending on the season. No doubt it's a pricey weekend escape but a perfect place for a wedding or corporate function.

However, to call Dunton an actual town requires a bit of romantic imagination. Dunton is a 19th century mining enclave-turned ghost town, reincarnated as a luxury retreat. In 1994, Christoph Henkel and Bernt Kuhlmann, two young Hollywood movie producers, bought the abandoned property and for the next seven to eight years painstakingly restored the outlying structures to their present-day condition as both a tribute to the Wild West and exclusive resort worthy of celebrity status.

Amenities include spa, yoga and gym facilities, all within stunning view of the 14,000-foot El Diente peak. Each cabin is tastefully decorated, some with wood-burning fireplaces. The Bathhouse channels 106-degree water from the area's mineral-rich natural hot springs, and the Saloon operates as the community's keystone, serving culinary delights for breakfast, lunch and dinner from chef Dennis Morrisroe.

Winter and early spring activities include skiing, heli-skiing, hiking and even horseback riding in the canyon country surrounding Dunton's vineyard. Of course, a long languid repose in the mineral-rich hot springs at any one of the six pools is almost a mandatory daily exercise.

Spring season rates begin at \$545 per night for the cozy Forge Cabin adjacent to the Saloon to \$2400 per night for the Potter House, which can accommodate up to ten people. All meals and non-alcoholic beverages are included, and a minimum two-night stay is required. For more information visit www.duntonhotsprings.com.

— *Douglas Baughman*

