

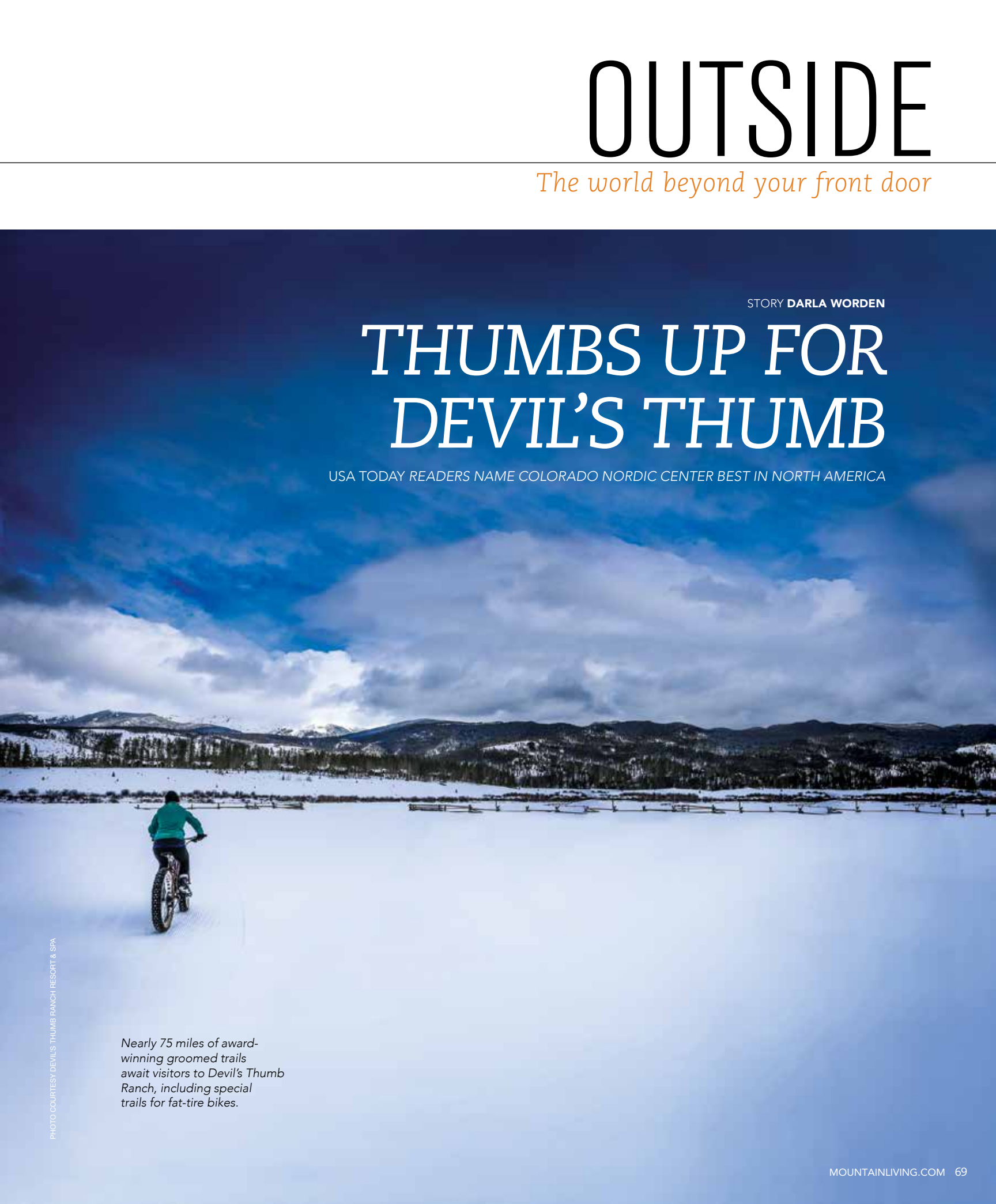
OUTSIDE

The world beyond your front door

STORY **DARLA WORDEN**

THUMBS UP FOR DEVIL'S THUMB

USA TODAY READERS NAME COLORADO NORDIC CENTER BEST IN NORTH AMERICA

A wide-angle photograph of a person riding a fat-tire bike on a snowy trail. The rider is wearing a bright green jacket and dark pants, moving away from the camera. The trail is a wide, flat expanse of snow. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains covered in snow, with some evergreen trees scattered throughout. The sky is a deep blue with large, white, fluffy clouds. The overall scene is serene and captures a winter outdoor activity.

Nearly 75 miles of award-winning groomed trails await visitors to Devil's Thumb Ranch, including special trails for fat-tire bikes.

PHOTO COURTESY DEVIL'S THUMB RANCH RESORT & SPA



Located in Ranch Creek Valley, near Tabernash, Colorado, Devil's Thumb Ranch Resort and Spa

was once a working ranch, then became a modest cross-country ski center with a rustic log cabin lodge attracting day-skiers and families who enjoyed its down-home vibe. In 1994 a group of owners were considering a golf course residential development on the ranch when Bob and Suzanne Fanch began negotiations to buy the property, completing the purchase in 2001. They saw the potential to build only what was necessary to serve their guests' needs in an environmentally friendly way, while at the same time preserving and restoring the land for future generations.

Today, located down a two-lane country road, Devil's Thumb Ranch Resort and Spa consists of a village of buildings perched on the edge of 6,000 acres. The "Parkitecture"-style Main Lodge provides rustically elegant accommodations; Heck's Tavern, serving

breakfast, lunch and dinner; and a gift shop. Guests will find equipment rentals at Zach's Mercantile next door and, a short walk away, award-winning dining at the Ranch House restaurant plus an extensive menu of relaxing treatments at the Ranch Creek Spa. Nearby, additional accommodations are provided in the High Lonesome Lodge, and the private ridge-top cabins are just a short drive away.

Named by Native Americans for the distinctive rocky outcropping above the ranch on the Continental Divide, Devil's Thumb Ranch Resort now encompasses four original ranches—Devil's Thumb, the Diamond Bar T, Ram's Curl and the Black Ranch—and nearly 75 miles of award-winning groomed trails. Two-mile >>

ABOVE: Each room is individually designed with antiques and bed linens curated by the owners.

PHOTOS COURTESY DEVIL'S THUMB RANCH RESORT & SPA



THE SCOOP

GETTING THERE Just 60 miles from Denver

ACCOMMODATIONS are in an elegant rustic style with curated antiques, bathtubs, heated floors and fireplaces at the “Parkitecture”-style Main Lodge, the High Lonesome Lodge and 15 eco-luxe private cabins.

GEAR Zach's Mercantile has everything you need in gear rentals and guides, plus retail sales of extra layers if needed.

SPA The 18,000-square-foot-spa offers an extensive menu of treatments, ready to restore guests after a day on the trails.

RESTAURANTS Fine dining is found at the Ranch House restaurant, with unparalleled views of the valley and distant mountain ranges. Heck's Tavern, with more casual dining, serves breakfast, lunch and dinner in the Main Lodge.



loops provide minimal elevation for beginners, and longer trails with nearly 1,000 feet in elevation gain are accessible for experts. There are ample ways to enjoy the trails: classic, skate ski, snowshoe and even trails specifically for fat bikes.

What is the difference between a downhill resort and a Nordic one? The absence of lifts ... and lift lines. Picture gliding through a snow-covered valley with views of distant peaks in the Continental Divide—you just clip into skis and go, powered by your own energy, sometimes not seeing another skier on the trail.

A place of one-stop shopping for a variety of winter activities, the resort offers sledding, winter horseback riding, ice skating and skijoring—some trails are dog friendly. A hayride to feed the ranch horses is popular with guests of all ages, as is s'mores around a fire pit.

Open year-round, the resort changes gears when the snow melts with ziplining, fly-fishing, mountain biking, hiking and trail rides. Just 90 minutes from Denver, yet Devil's Thumb feels miles away from the hectic pace of city life. The resort has come a long way from its rustic beginnings, and there's a reason it was named the number-one Nordic center by USA Today readers—you'll want to find out for yourself. ○

LEFT, ABOVE: The eco-luxe ridgetop cabins offer a private experience with heated floors, fireplaces and cozy robes. LEFT, BELOW: Heck's Tavern serves breakfast, lunch and dinner—and you'll find Devil Thumb Ranch's own Kobe beef on the menu.

DEVIL'S THUMB RANCH RESORT & SPA
devilthumbbranch.com