

Gold Lake Resort, Ward, CO

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A Camp That's Not for Kids

When Tom Radcliffe of Cascade, Colorado, drove down the unpaved road to Gold Lake Resort and Spa, his heart skipped a beat – not only because he and his wife, Pat, were approaching this idyllic mountain hideaway, but because since he was last there, the place had changed so little. And so much. Forty years ago, Tom, who hailed from Dallas, was a counselor at Gold Lake Camp. "That camp drew me to Colorado," he mused. "It looks remarkably now as it did then."

The resort has maintained the old name and much of the original outward appearance. Many of the eighteen cabins still bear the camp names Tom knew. However, instead of ten kids and a counselor, they have been outfitted for twosomes – and winterized. Cabins are furnished with an eclectic mix of attic antiques, custom peeled-log furniture, and original artwork -- a combination of unpretentious simplicity but unmistakable panache that whispers, "Feel at home here." And couples do, snuggling under sumptuous down comforters, and letting worldly cares drift away.

A large log lodge, once the camp's old dining hall, houses Alice's Restaurant, a spacious, gracious, and refined place to dine. There, the Radcliffes toasted each other, as have so many other couples before sampling a feast prepared by Eric Skokan, the resort's gifted chef. His every meal is of special-occasion quality – and locals from Denver and Boulder often visit Gold Lake to celebrate.

The pine-studded lakeside resort, beneath the brow of the Continental Divide proffers simple, diversions. In winter, there's ice skating, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. Once the snow melts, guests enjoy canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hiking, croquet, or horseback riding. A massage in the small spa is divine any time of year, as are the three lakeside hot tubs, which are equally seductive on cold winter nights and cool summer ones.

More active adventurers make the short drive to Brainard Lake. Where the Brainard Lake Road's plowing ends, marked cross-country and snowshoeing trails lead deep into the white wilderness. In summer, Brainard is the centerpiece of a magnificent basin, with one of America's most spectacular mountain panoramas splayed across the western horizon. Dramatic summits form the heart of the Indian Peaks Wilderness, an unsurpassed high-country hiking mecca. – Claire Walter

IF YOU GO

Gold Lake Mountain Resort & Spa, 3371 Gold Lake Rd., Ward, O 80481; 303-459-3544 or 800-450-3544; www.goldlake.com. 18 cabins. Doubles \$145-\$515 including breakfast (lunch and dinner also served, Mon.-Thurs, Oct.-May).

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