

Speed Pass

A fall weekend is a terrible thing to waste—use these fast escapes to make yours count BY JIM GORMAN

ROCKIES

Cast Away in a Canyon

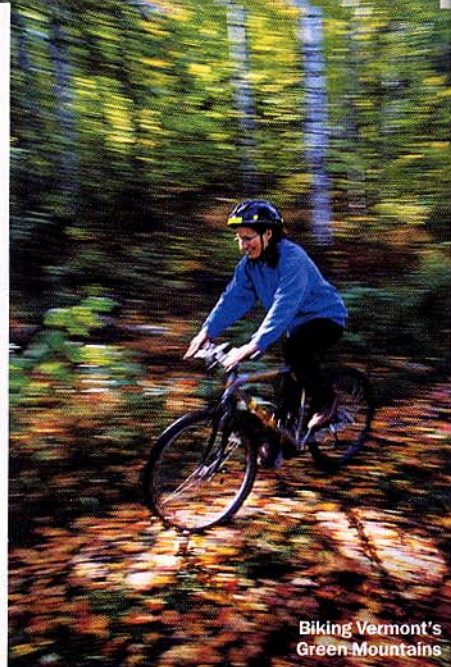
COLORADO • Eat. Sleep. Fish. On a float through the Black Canyon of the Gunnison River, life's priorities quickly fall into place. Guides on Dvorak Kayak & Rafting Expeditions' two-day trips (\$790; www.dvorakexpedition.com) set up your camp, prepare tasty meals, and steer oar rafts through Class III rapids where 10- to 36-inch rainbow trout lurk. Your sole concern: making the perfect fly cast.

Find Yurtopia

IDAHO • Coyote Yurt (\$25 per person; www.svtrek.com), at 8,700 feet, near Sun Valley, is the proverbial catbird seat. Inside, windows are filled with knockout views of the pyramid-shaped Pioneer and Boulder Mountains. Outside, a bonanza of bikable runs, such as Curly's Trail—a 12.5-mile loop—converges on the hut. Coyote sleeps eight and can be reached by foot, bike, or car. Sun Valley Trekking offers a gear shuttle and a "hike-along chef" (\$150) for hike-in guests.

Save Your Hide

MONTANA Lost in the woods with night falling, your best choice for shelter is: a.) a debris hut; b.) an improvised lean-to; c.) a garbage bag. If you answered anything but "c," head to OutdoorSafe's Back Country Survival Techniques course (\$250; www.outdoorsafe.com), held September 1-3 near Missoula. Instructor Peter Kummerfeldt, a former survival training director at the U.S. Air Force Academy, says, "We teach modern survival, not primitive skills—those are useless."



Biking Vermont's Green Mountains

EAST

Hike Mini-Mountains

NORTH CAROLINA • Geologists speculate that the Uwharrie Mountains, east of Charlotte, once made the Rockies look puny. They may be a little less jagged today, measuring just under a thousand feet, but they still pack a wallop. Combine the Uwharrie and Dutchman's Creek Trails for a 28-mile circuit that hugs ridgelines, drops to clear-running streams, and inventories unusual plant pairings, such as Schweinitz's sunflowers and mountain laurels. Alternatively, arrange a car shuttle and hike the 21-mile Uwharrie National Recreational Trail past abandoned homesteads into the Birkhead Mountains Wilderness. Uwharrie National Forest provides maps (www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc).

Ride in Technicolor

VERMONT With Winnebago-driving leaf peepers on the loose, Vermont byways can be a hazard for cyclists. Stay out of harm's way by opting for dirt roads and singletrack on a self-guided inn-to-inn tour in the southern Green Mountains arranged by Extreme Adventures of Vermont (\$470; www.extremeadventuresvt.com). Tell the EA staff in advance how far and how aggressively you plan to ride, and they'll devise a three-day itinerary, pack you a lunch, and vault your luggage ahead to that evening's inn. Lodging options include the very proper Four Columns Inn, where rooms have fireplaces and breakfast is all-you-can-eat.

Join a VIP Rock Show

VIRGINIA Normally, 300-foot-high outcrops in the Middle Atlantic Region attract climbers like enviros to an Al Gore flick. But the Plunge, a granite-greenstone crag near Charlottesville, is red-rope exclusive. For access join OWLS Rock Climbing School's Intensive Climbing Weekend (\$195; www.owlsadventure.com). You'll learn to belay, anchor, and smear—the fine art of trusting all of your weight to a seemingly negligible foothold. "The rock has great texture, so you really gain purchase with your feet," says owner Eric Henyon. Accommodations at nearby Wintergreen Resort range from studios (\$129; www.wintergreenresort.com) to seven-bedroom houses (\$579).

FISH FINDER: Casting for trout in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison River

