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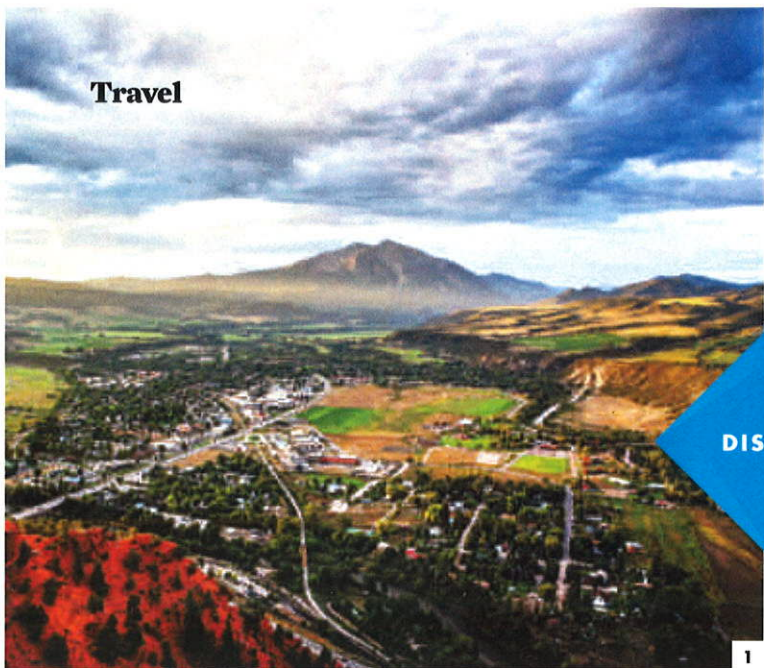
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DISCOVER



1. Downtown Carbondale, as seen from the summit of Red Hill. **2.** The hot springs at Avalanche Ranch. **3.** Town's main dining room. **4.** Grilled cheese goes glam at Town, with fontina and short-rib slices. **5.** Owner Molly Jacober hand-painted this camping trailer at Avalanche Ranch.



A PERFECT DAY IN

CARBONDALE, CO

Inventive chefs and artists lend flair to a low-key ranching town that mirrors Aspen's good looks—without the sticker shock. *By Kelly Bastone*

Outsize art

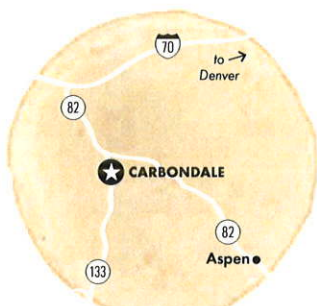
Carbondale's community of artists is much larger and more vibrant than its population (6,489) might suggest. At **Roadside Gallery**, photographer Martin Garfinkel displays his images of neon

signs, classic cars, and other artifacts from two-lane travel. Not all photos are framed: Some are mounted on metal for tabletop display or embellished with neon of their own. Local painters exhibit at **Art 215**, which opened in spring 2013,

while **SAW** is a former auto shop that now serves as a studio for ceramists, jewelry makers, and painters. *Roadside: 320 Main St.; roadsidegallery.com. Art 215: 215 N. 12th St.; art215.net. SAW: 525 Buggy Circle; (970) 618-7479.*

The best meals in Town

Locals mourned when chef Mark Fischer shuttered Six89, the restaurant that put Carbondale on the culinary map, but his new venture is appealing devotees. Opened in



GETTING HERE
Carbondale is 170 miles west of Denver via I-70 and State 82.

2013, **Town** showcases Fischer's flair for attentive cooking in a come-as-you-are setting. "Our goal is approachability," he says. By day, Town is a sandwich counter and coffeehouse; by night, it's a tavern serving Colorado's best craft beers and pastrami lamb. "Braising is an awesome way to create more levels of flavor," says Fischer, who also adds depth by curing, pickling, and preserving local produce. \$\$; 348 Main; towncarbondale.com.

A bread winner

Carbondale's community oven is one of just a handful across the West. Every month, a dedicated group of volunteer bakers fires it up and sends the irresistible aroma of fresh bread wafting through town. "My favorite part is when the bread comes out and everyone talks about how they made it," says local baker Linda Romero Criswell, who also uses the

oven to cook pizzas, casseroles, and even oatmeal. To watch the artisans in action and sample their creations, visit the **Third Street Center** on the first Saturday of every month. \$5 donation suggested; 520 Third St.; carbondalecommunityoven.weebly.com.

Uplifting retail

In Dolores Way, a warehouse district on the edge of town, a pocket of young craftswomen is establishing a new creative haven. At **Osmia Organics**, the very air lifts your spirits: Sarah Villafranco left her medical practice to concoct high-end bath and body products made with organic oils and herbs. Down the street, meanwhile, artist-owner Lea Tyler paints wooden bowls and utensils with kaleidoscopic color at **Tylerware**. *Osmia*: 2607 Dolores Way; osmiaorganics.com. *Tylerware*: 1901 Dolores; tylerware.com.

Real cowboy cuisine

Potato farms and cattle ranches once surrounded Carbondale, and there's still the occasional cattle drive down Main Street. These days, you can sample the area's bounty at the **Carbondale Community Food Cooperative**, a corner grocery store specializing in locally sourced fruits, veggies, cheeses, and meats. "We're extremely fortunate to have farms in every direction and cattle grazing right here in



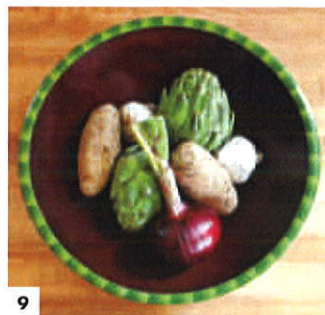
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6. Redbrick buildings and old-fashioned streetlamps give Main Street a classic feel. 7. Audible art: The studios of SAW are housed in a former auto shop. 8. Town's patio is Main Street's unofficial front porch. 9. Hand-painted wooden bowls at Tylerware.

town," says Lisa Ellena, who is the assistant manager of the co-op, which stocks cheeses from nearby Avalanche Cheese Company and beef and lamb raised by the Potter Farms family. 559 Main; carbondalecommunityfoodcoop.org.

An overnight beside hot springs

A 20-minute drive south of Carbondale, the natural hot springs at **Avalanche Ranch** are well worth the detour. Water cascades between three

terraced pools, just a few paces away from the property's 13 rustic log cabins. They require a two-night minimum stay but are still often booked solid. Another option is to reserve one of the wooden wagons that look like tiny camping trailers (only cuter); these three wagons contain little more than a bed but give you round-the-clock access to the springs and their therapeutic serenity. *Cabins from \$150, wagons from \$85*; 12863 State 133, Redstone; avalancheranch.com.

THE LOCAL LOWDOWN

"People here appreciate old-fashioned things, but they're also fearless about breaking ground with new ideas. It's a charming marriage."

—MICHELLE ZINANTI, CARBONDALE POTTER AND PARENT