

Red Rock Adventures For The Whole Family

Having a hard time finding a vacation destination that suits the whole family? Take heart. You aren't alone. Even my husband and I have trouble picking a place for the two of us, and if you need to consider the wishes of kids and possibly another generation, the challenge is even greater.

However, I may have a solution: Gateway Canyons Resort. Located in Western Colorado's red rock country, an hour south of Grand Junction, the resort offers an exceptional number of outdoor activities. These include horseback riding, jeep tours, mountain biking, hiking, climbing, and exploring on ATVs, as well as rafting, kayaking, tubing, and fishing on the Dolores River.

Guests also have the option of sitting by the pool, visiting an on-site auto museum, enjoying fine dining, spending time at the spa, and taking scenic flights in the spiffiest helicopter I've ever seen.

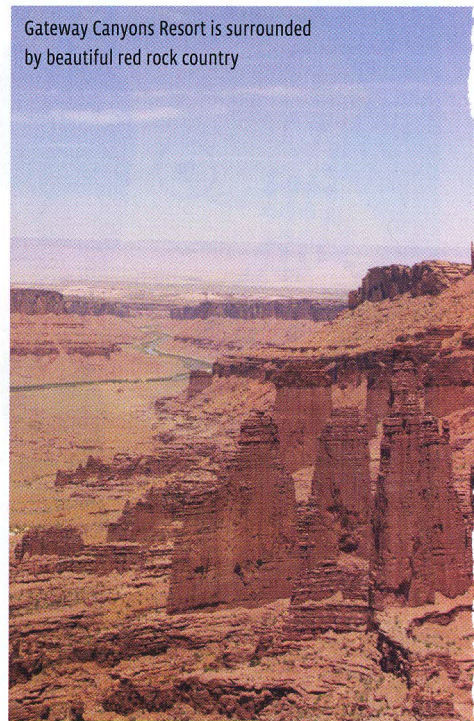
In addition to keeping everyone happy, Gateway Canyons offers numerous learning opportunities. This isn't surprising since the resort belongs to John Hendricks, founder of the Discovery Channel and a pioneer in non-fiction TV. Hendricks has

created a destination where discovery and learning happen naturally.

I realized this when my car-guy husband and I toured the Gateway Auto Museum about a nanosecond after we arrived at the property. In addition to 50 shiny vehicles dating from 1906 to 2006, the museum offers a film narrated by Walter Cronkite, a friend of John Hendricks.

100 Years of Automotive History puts American auto manufacturing into societal perspective. Visitors are encouraged to ponder (will fossil fuels power our cars in the future?) as well as ogle the hard bodies.

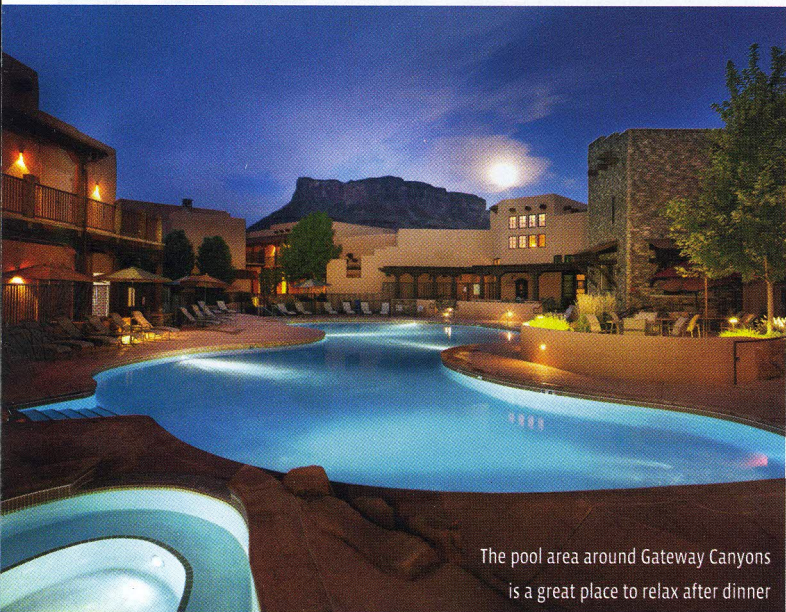
Gateway Canyons Resort is surrounded by beautiful red rock country



The star of Hendricks' collection is a design concept 1954 Oldsmobile F-88 purchased at the Barrett Jackson Classic Car Auction for \$3.24 million. A video running continuously next to the prize vehicle shows the excitement when the gavel came down, ending the bidding process, and setting a record price for an American car.

Since I prefer horses to horsepower, I headed to the equestrian center first thing the next morning. Located at a higher altitude and about 15 miles from the resort, I felt like I had entered another world when red rocks gave way to pine trees and cooler temperatures.

The Stables at Gateway Canyons offers trail rides, private riding lessons, and introductory pony experiences for children. The facility also boards horses and hosts kids' birthday parties. However, I was most interested in the yoga on horseback >>



The pool area around Gateway Canyons is a great place to relax after dinner

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Gateway Auto Museum: 100 Years Of The American Automobile

Impressive cars will be displayed at Pebble Beach during Monterey Week this month, but Discovery Channel founder John Hendricks has a collection of comparable quality at Gateway Canyons Resort. His diverse array of exclusively American autos is displayed in six galleries — each with a special hook that engages the visitor.

The Mass Mobility Gallery marks the American transition from horses to horsepower with a carriage-like 1906 Cadillac Model H Coupe in burgundy. Also here: a handsome bright yellow 1912 Ford Model T Speedster that tempts the visitor to jump in and drive down the nearest dirt road.

The Hollywood Gallery ups the ante with an impressively handsome 1930 Model J Duesenberg LWB Hibbard & Darrin Transformable Cabriolet occupy a red carpet. Nearby, clips from 1930's movies feature stars who bought cars like the ones displayed.

The American Muscle Gallery, again with appropriate period setting, draws you in with a 1967 Ford Shelby Mustang GT-500 and a 1970 Plymouth Barracuda Hemi 'Cuda.

In the Time Line Gallery, the 1954 De Soto Ghia Adventurer II is a stand out. San Diegan Chuck Swimmer — owner of The San Diego Collection — “found” and restored the Ghia and showed it at Pebble Beach in 2010.

The F-88 Olds is the star of Hendricks' collection, but this museum is also very special because it's rarely crowded and visitors are able to enjoy the cars at their own pace in gorgeous surroundings. RICHARD ADAMS



The 1954 Oldsmobile F-88 concept car is the pride of the Gateway Auto Museum

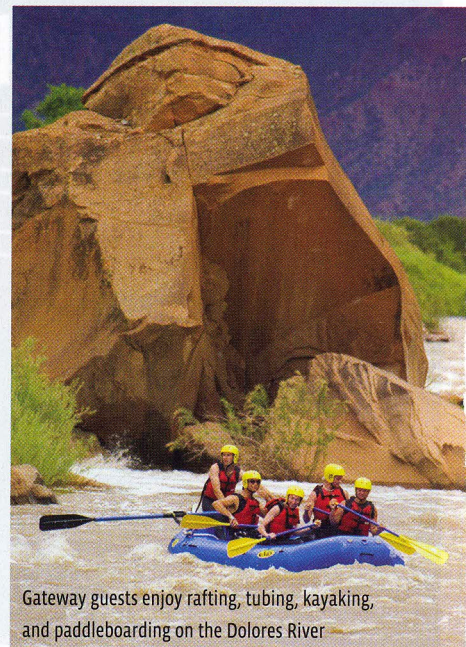
The Gateway Equestrian Center is located in the high country about 15 miles from the resort



<< program and the Equine Assisted Learning experience. The EAL programs are designed to promote teamwork, communication, problem solving skills, and self-awareness. What family couldn't benefit from this kind of personal development?

After lunch, resort staff member Olivier took us on a jeep tour to see an old uranium mine — the product of which was contributed to the Manhattan Project — and he pointed out the five canyons in the region. Hendricks bought about 20,000 acres here in the 1990s, and donated most of it to the Bureau of Land Management and National Forest Service. Today, a series of paths accommodate hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders. Additional trails are also available for jeeps, dirt bikes, and ATVs.

After all this activity, I was happy to turn my tired body over to Margie in the spa. After 90 minutes, I was relaxed and renewed. Margie is so talented that when I learned she often visits family in Oceanside,



Gateway guests enjoy rafting, tubing, kayaking, and paddleboarding on the Dolores River

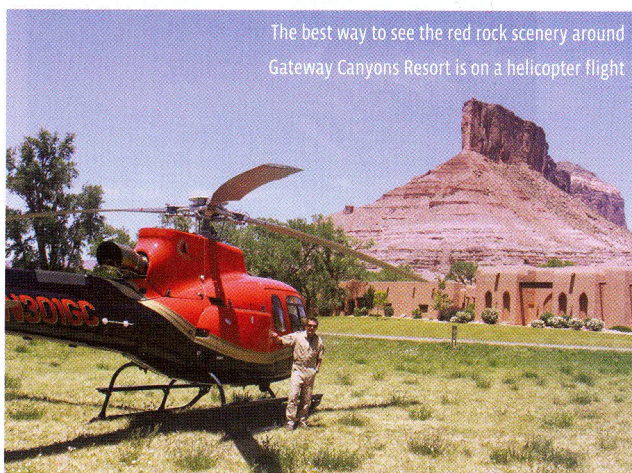
I requested a return engagement at our home in La Jolla.

Lodging at Gateway Canyons is in 58 rooms and suites in pueblo-style buildings. Another 12 casitas are under construction. Our room, number 121, is conveniently located near the swimming pool and has two bedrooms, two bathrooms, two fireplaces, and a private spa pool.

Paradox Grille and Kiva Café are good spots for lunch, but we really enjoyed dinner outdoors at Entrada Restaurant & Lounge, where a fire pit took the chill off the night air. Dining is under the direction of executive chef Ron Rhiver, who wowed us with his preparations of grilled Copper River salmon, baked Colorado striped bass, and seared scallops with Serrano ham and truffled tomatoes.

Like the multiple programs offered on the Discovery Channel, you have to pick and choose at Gateway Canyons Resort. Having said that, I hope everyone opts for a scenic helicopter flight with pilot Mike Gullotti.

On our air tour we saw the steep, rugged peaks of Fisher Towers, Cow Head Rock where Anasazi people lived in caves, and Sky Mesa off La Salle Loop Road where dinosaur tracks have been found. Mike's A-Star 350 B3 by American Eurocopter felt like a posh limo and was large enough to hold the whole family. ELIZABETH HANSEN



The best way to see the red rock scenery around Gateway Canyons Resort is on a helicopter flight

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