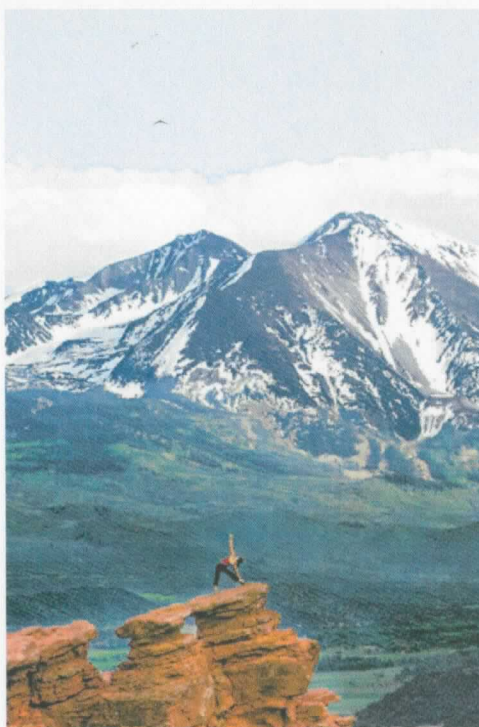




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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
ADVENTURE
DREAM IT. PLAN IT. DO IT.



Photograph by David Clifford

Carbondale, Colorado

Stay: Avalanche Ranch has 14 log cabins overlooking Crystal River (\$139; avalancheranch.com).

Play: The town's 13,800-square-foot North Face Skate-park is one of the country's finest—even without its stunning Mount Sopris views.

Eat: Eco-Goddess Edibles serves vegetarian meals and sustainably harvested fish (eco-goddess.com).

Local intel: aspenpost.net

6. CARBONDALE, COLORADO

A Power Player Breaks Out

Carbondale's urban expats take their city's name as a literal eco-challenge. In the morning, commuters line the bike paths on their way to a growing pack of local environmental companies, like Solar Energy International, Greenspot, and Inpower Systems, and the new rec center and police and fire departments are all solar powered. The occasional cattle drive still passes down Main Street, but it's clear that the town's ranching days are long gone. While still partly in the shadow of Aspen, 30 miles up the road, it's forging its own identity as a self-sustained base for Patagonia-clad Ph.D.'s happy to stay close to home in the White River National Forest—all beneath the 12,000-foot twin peaks of Mount Sopris. For the full perspective on Carbondale, mountain bike or hike up Red Hill to Mushroom Rock, a precipice with views of downtown and the Roaring Fork Valley. On the water, the Colorado Rocky Mountain School has been organizing the Crystal River Kayak Races every spring for the past 44 years, giving weekend warriors the rare chance to race against the handful of world-class whitewater paddlers who live in the area. More serious foam surges on the nearby Roaring Fork, which is now connected to Carbondale by the Rio Grande paved bike path—yet another carbon-free option to do the locals proud.

Population: 5,881

Median home price: \$712,000