Headline: Mountains, slopes and stars define Aspen

Deckhead: Celebrities, skiers flock to the intimate Colorado town

Mountains, snow and stars comprise a Colorado town that offers prime skiing and more celebrities than a Las Vegas heavyweight title fights.

Aspen – also known as “Mini Hollywood – is a sparsely populated Tinseltown blessed with luxurious resorts, magnificent scenery and premium shops, boutiques and restaurants.

The town’s reputation precedes itself. But it’s history piques curiosities. Just how did it become a second home for our country’s brightest stars?

The story dates nearly 90 years ago. The 1936 Olympics included alpine skiing as an event. The sport gained traction, becoming a trendy activity, particularly among the elite.

Businessmen and investors took notice and began building ski resorts in this charming town, knowing it would take the power of celebrities to attract common folks. Movie stars Gary Cooper, Claudette Colbert and Norma Shearer are said to be among the first to visit Aspen in the 1940s. Cooper originally made Aspen almost a second home, making him the town’s first iconic celebrity synonymous with it.

The migration of celebrities enhanced Aspen’s reputation. Visitors shouldn’t be shocked to run into big-screen stars and singers. Leonardo DiCaprio, Will Smith, Elton John and Sting be among the many who consider it a second home.

Celebrities aside, Aspen also is considered one of the U.S.’s best skiing destinations and attracts more than 7 million tourists annually. Skiers and snowboarders seek thrills and entertainment and rarely are disappointed.

Winter-sports enthusiasts find nirvana in Snowmass – Aspen’s largest and most popular ski areas. It offers 150 miles of trails, multiple lifts and an intimate village. Intermediate skiers can take advantage of a host of trails created especially for them.

Novices flock to Buttermilk. Its more than 20 miles of trails are considered an ideal location for beginners. The trails are groomed. And the runs are wide, giving skiers plenty of room to maneuver. Trails also accommodate intermediate and expert skiers, and its 22-foot superpipe is an X Games-inspired course.

Hikers and sightseers flock to Maroon Bells and Independence Pass. Maroon Bells rises more than 14,000 feet and boasts beautiful vistas and magnificent scenery. Its jagged peaks and multicolored slopes make it one of the most photographed sites in North America. Travelers have described Maroon Bells as “stunning,” “awe-inspiring” and “one of the loveliest places on Earth.”

Rent a vehicle at Independence Pass and absorb the 20-mile drive. The scenic road is one of the highest in North America and meanders along the Continental Divide at more than 12,000 feet. Paved hiking trails lead to a sightseeing platform, with jaw-dropping views of the Continental Divide.

Aspen’s variety of eateries and bars are meant to satisfy the tastes of an eclectic group of tourists. Browse through its exclusive shops and boutiques and keep your eyes open for a resident of Tinseltown.

Remain alert. You might only get one chance to shine.

Cutline: BREATHTAKING – Maroon Bells rises into the sky to create a wondrous setting in Aspen, Colorado. Image: Mike & Valerie Mille. Adobe Stock.