

New Year's Eve — Celebrate In Your Style

I'm crazy about fireworks, so it's no wonder that my favorite New Year's Eve memories include beautiful bursts of color at midnight. These occur all over the world, but nowhere are they more spectacular than in Sydney, Australia. Here, the dazzling display appears over the harbor and against the backdrop of the landmark Opera House and Harbour Bridge.

A few years ago, my husband and I watched the show from the city's Royal Botanic Gardens, where we picnicked with lots of locals. The pyrotechnics concluded with the word "peace" spelled out in lights on the bridge, which caused even boisterous Aussies to stop talking and stand in silence for a moment.

The City of Sydney welcomes visitors to enjoy this spectacular event and provides everything you need to know — from vantage points to schedule info — online. (www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nye) »

New Year's Eve Ball
at Interlaken's
Victoria-Jungfrau
Grand Hotel & Spa

New Year's Eve fireworks over Harbour Bridge in Sydney, Australia

« My second favorite New Year's Eve was spent in New York City. The crowd in Times Square was a bit overwhelming, but from the roof of a friend's apartment, we watched at least a half dozen fireworks displays simultaneously — including those in Staten Island, Brooklyn, Central Park, and New Jersey, plus the Empire State Building light show.

While the Ball Drop in Times Square is the best known event in NYC, other options include the guided Brooklyn Bridge Walk into the New Year (walkers reach the top of the bridge in time to see fireworks in five boroughs), a midnight fun run and costume contest, and an alcohol-free party in Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza (including a DJ, at least two bands, and a laser light show).

I like to travel over the holidays, but if that's not your style, San Diego offers lots of appealing alternatives. The Grand Del Mar, with its old-world ambience, provides a change of pace right in our own backyard.

The Grand Del Mar

This year, the resort is offering a New Year's Revelry Package that includes accommodations for two nights, the



New Year's Eve Gala (a five-course dinner with wine pairings, Champagne toast, dancing, and live entertainment), and the New Year's Day breakfast buffet in Amaya restaurant. (www.thegradndelmar.com)

Does your NYE grand plan lean more toward outdoor adventure? And maybe focusing on wellness? The expert staff at Red Mountain Spa in St. George, Utah (about 90 minutes north of Las Vegas) specializes in soothing and rejuvenating world-weary guests. Their Sagestone Spa offers a full range of massages, body treatments, and skin care, and guided walks traverse gorgeous red rock country — a perfect fit with

50- to 60-degree daytime winter temps. Zion and Bryce national parks — with more beautiful terrain — are nearby.

On New Year's Eve, the Mystical Tapas Party will include complimentary mini-spa treatments (including henna painting, hand treatments, and shoulder massages), delicious healthy hors d'oeuvres, white wine mojitos, and Red Mountain's specialty *spagarita*. Clairvoyant Todd Hershey will be mingling with guests and offering insights on what life may bring in the year ahead.

Traveling solo? No worries — about 30 percent of guests are single.



Your wallet, as well as your body and soul, can relax at this scenic hideaway. The tariff includes three healthy meals daily, use of the fitness center and two pools, guided morning hikes, awareness walks, Tai Chi on the Rocks, bike rentals, over 50 fitness classes a week, healthy living classes, and cooking demonstrations. The villa lodging is preferable to the regular guest rooms. Oh, and by the way, pets are welcome and dress is casual. (www.redmountainspa.com)

Red Mountain Spa welcomes teens, but for families with young children, the JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort and Spa in Tucson is a better choice. Their Rising Starr Kids' Club is a full-service recreation program offered daily for children ages 4 to 12. Activities incorporate elements from wildlife, weather, and history specific to Tucson and the surrounding region — including snake painting, Native American headdresses, teepee making, and Native American jewelry making. Geocaching, a modern take on treasure-hunting, is another popular family activity. Guests use a GPS to hide and seek "caches." The Family Fun Package also includes one in-room movie and two pizzas daily, free sodas, and free high-speed Internet. (www.jwmarriottstarrpass.com)

The Tucson Jazz Society will hold its annual gala at the Starr Pass Resort on New Year's Eve. The event attracts jazz lovers from all over the world and is southern Arizona's largest NYE party. See www.ranchandcoast.com for the line-up of entertainers.

January 2, 3, and 4, the Tucson area is hosting a New Year's Competition Pow-Wow and Indian Craft Market at Rillito Raceway Park. Over 50 tribes will compete in dancing, singing, and drumming contests, and authentic handmade crafts and traditional Indian foods will be available for purchase.

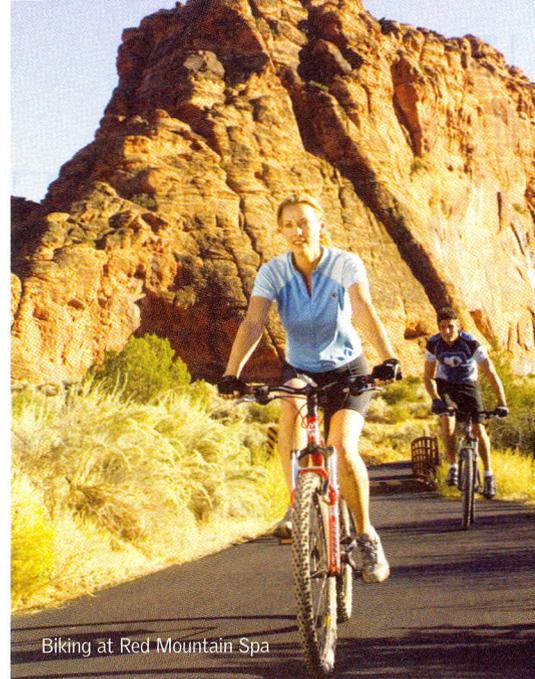
Switzerland is a long way from Arizona, but depending on the outcome of the current financial situation, you may have more than one reason for visiting.

In any case, the New Year's Eve Ball at Interlaken's Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa is a glamorous event in a picture-perfect setting. The hotel is one of the most historic and celebrated resorts in Europe. This year's ball will be themed Venetian Night — black tie, masks optional. Six performers, including the Samuel Ronto Hungarian Quartet and the Steamboat Rats, are on the line-up.

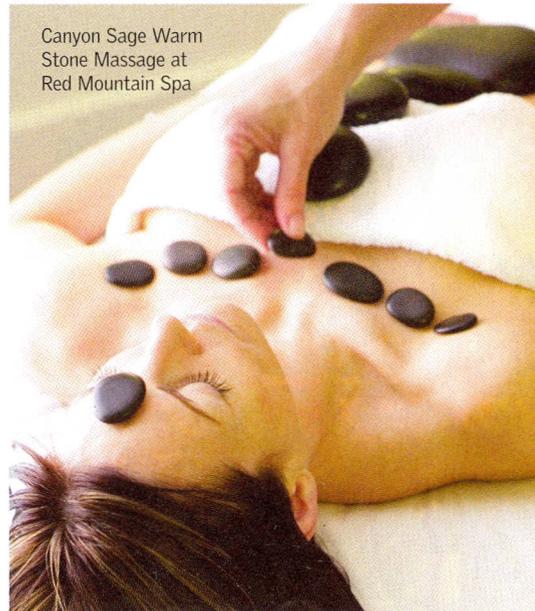
The hotel's New Year's Eve Arrangement package includes a seven-night stay in a superior double room, daily breakfast buffet, and nightly dinners in either La Terrasse, the Jungfrau Brasserie (Swiss specialties), or La Pastateca (traditional Italian). The package also includes the New Year's Eve Buffet and Ball, a children's New Year's Eve party (ideal for those 4 to 11 years), and New Year's Day brunch with jazz, as well as admission to the Victoria Jungfrau Spa, swimming pool, whirlpool, sauna, steam room, gymnastics and keep-fit facilities, and daily Fit & Fun sessions. (www.victoria-jungfrau.ch/en)

Located in the beautiful Bernese Alps, Interlaken offers good skiing and is an ideal base for exploring the surrounding winter wonderland. The cog railway to the snowy peak of the Jungfrau operates year round.

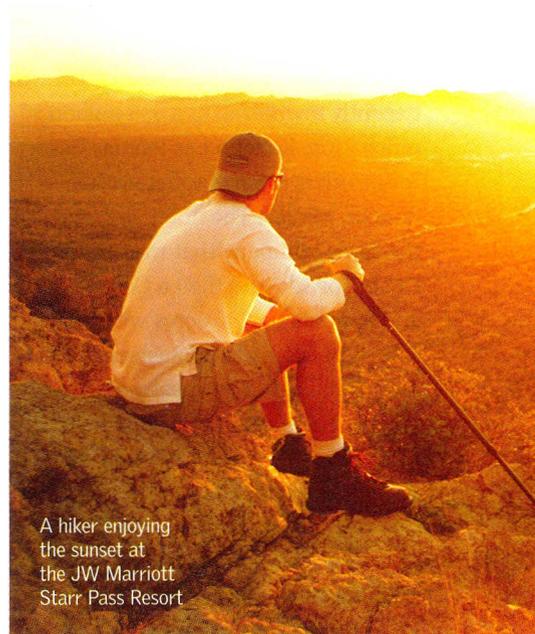
If your NYE style — like mine — includes a passion for pyrotechnics, you'll be glad to know that Interlaken's New Year's Day celebration will feature Swiss rock stars (including the band Roots 66) and a spectacular firework display. — Elizabeth Hansen, photography by Adams/Hansen Stock Photos and courtesy of Red Mountain Spa, The Grand Del Mar, Marriott Starr Pass Resort, and Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa.



Biking at Red Mountain Spa



Canyon Sage Warm Stone Massage at Red Mountain Spa



A hiker enjoying the sunset at the JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort