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Greer's crisp air beckons

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At any time of year, but especially in summer, Greer and the White Mountains beckon visitors. In summer, the lure is the cool, storm-punctuated beauty and exquisite greenery of the mountains and meadows; in winter, it's the average 8 feet of powdery snow and the cold, crisp air that makes you want to fill your lungs to capacity. In spring, trout-filled streams and the Little Colorado River gurgle over rocks and wildflowers fill the meadows. A few months later, fall can take your breath away as the changing leaves transform vistas to gold, with a smattering of red and orange, backed by the evergreen of towering ponderosa pines. Enjoy these Greer highlights:

Butterfly Lodge Museum

This little charmer is a must-see. The museum is housed in a log cabin once owned by writer James Willard Schultz (*My Life as an Indian*, written in 1907, was the first of his 37 books) and his son, Hart Merriam Schultz.

The elder Schultz married a Blackfoot woman, Natahki, in 1879 and their son Hart also was known as Lone Wolf. He became a prolific Western painter and sculptor.

The museum is set in a pine-filled knoll surrounded by meadows and the butterflies that inspired James Schultz to name it Apuni Oyis, Blackfoot for Butterfly Lodge. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the museum is crammed full of the writing and art of the two men, much of it painstakingly recovered by the 30 volunteers who have overseen the property since obtaining it in 1994.

The cabin was built in 1913 by John Butler, the husband of "Aunt Molly" Butler of Molly Butler's Lodge in Greer.

What began as a simple 20-foot by 40-foot hunting lodge is now a 1,300-square-foot tribute to the Schultzes, who lived peaceably among the Mormon families, even though the elder Schultz was known for his hard-drinking, chain-smoking ways.

"These were two very unlikely people to come into a very teeny Mormon community, but he loved the Mormon people and he identified with them, as they too were ostracized by the outside world, and his spirituality was more Native American," explained volunteer curator Karen M. Applewhite, who along with her husband, Sam, were instrumental in saving the cabin from destruction and served on the original board of directors.

So revered is James Willard Schultz in Greer that each August a dramatization of *My Life As an Indian* is held at the Greer Community Center, accompanied by an old-fashioned ice cream social. This year's event is Aug. 18.

Details: The museum is at the southeast corner of Arizona 373 and County Road 1126 in Greer. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursdays-Sundays from Memorial Day through Labor Day. \$2, \$1 for ages 12-17, free for age 11 and younger. 1-(928)-735-7514 or www.wmonline.com/butterflylodge.htm.

4 places to stay

Greer is known for its variety of accommodations, from rustic to luxury, including ranches, lodges, cabins, motels and bed-and-breakfasts. Nestled in the pines and close to trout-filled rivers and streams, each has its own charm.

X Diamond Ranch: For an authentic experience, X Diamond Ranch is a great place to start. If the word "cabin" brings to mind musty, drafty one-room dwellings, think again. How about a two-story beauty with wood floors, stone fireplace, antler chandeliers, fully equipped kitchen, three bedrooms, Jacuzzi and sauna? Now, that's a cabin. At X Diamond Ranch, it's called the Roth House and can accommodate six people. And that's just one of the choices. There's the Headquarters Suite, Ranch Cabin, Metzler Cabin, Butler House and Fisherman's Suite, a two-bedroom cabin on a ridge overlooking the Little Colorado River. It's not unusual to see beavers splashing in their dam pools as you sit on the deck. All the cabins have satellite TV and most have DVD players, with the beauty visible from every window and door, you may not be tempted to use the remote. Cabin rates range from \$110-\$275 for two. Tours of the Little House Museum on the property can be arranged. Ranch buildings are restored to their authentic condition and contain period furniture, clothing and musical instruments. A private stretch of the Little Colorado River is available to fly-fishers for a daily fee.

Details: www.xdiamondranch.com or 1-(928)-333-2286.

Ranch at South Fork: This is a pretty spread with six cabins, including the 3,500-square-foot, three bedroom, 2 1/2-bath Overlook Cabin with a private hot tub and an enormous deck. There are beautiful views in every direction. This cabin starts at \$300 for two, as does the 2,500-square-foot Riverview Cabin. Four other cabins starting at \$125 for two.

Details: www.ranchatsouthfork.com or 1-(928)-333-2286.

Red Setter Inn and Cottages: The Red Setter Inn and Cottages was lauded by Fodor's in 2005 as one of the top 10 bed-and-breakfast Inns in the world. Ten years after it opened, this adults-only B&B is now part of the Greer Lodge Resort, a 20-acre, 140-room property with something for everyone: a luxury bed-and-breakfast, cabins, a country inn and fly-fishing in private streams and ponds.

Details: www.redsettercottages.com or 1-(928)-735-7216. For information about Greer Lodge Resort, www.greerlodgeaz.com.

Molly Butler Lodge: One of the oldest Greer accommodations remains a favorite. Molly Butler Lodge on Main Street has been a lodging and dining mainstay since 1910. Eight of the 11 rooms in the historic "long house" (originally a bunkhouse) retain the names they were given by Molly, the wife of John T. Butler, members of a pioneer family. If you're a fan of taxidermy, the restaurant walls abound with priceless examples of the ample game that still roams the White Mountains.

Details: www.mollybutlerlodge.com or 1-866-288-3167.

4 places to eat

Amberian Peaks Restaurant: Less than three years ago, Ann and Don Poyas of Tucson bought an old ski resort overlooking the village and decided to make it their dream lodge. Today the Amberian Peaks Lodge and Restaurant is a charming and friendly place to visit, especially when you're hungry. Everything is made fresh, from salsas and soups to salad dressings and entrees. Have a vegetarian or vegan in the group? The kitchen is more than accommodating. You can easily make a meal of appetizers: a recent offering included a platter of Spanish cheeses with crostini, tapenade, tomato-pesto relish and fresh fruit, to be enjoyed with wine. The steaks are from naturally fed beef raised on Harris Ranch in central California.

Details: 1 Main St. Lunch, 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Dinner, 5-8:30 p.m. Sunday buffet brunch, 8-11:30 a.m. Closed Thursdays. 1-(928)-735-9977 or www.peaksaz.com.

Rendezvous Diner: When you're looking for good old-fashioned home-cooked meals, follow the locals to Rendezvous Diner in the heart of downtown Greer. It's in one of the town's oldest buildings, built in 1909. Little has been done to change the interior; even the beveled glass windows are intact. Here you'll find country food at its finest, and you can eat indoors or out. The restaurant has been operating for

nearly 30 years, and 6-year owner Pauline Merrill has added her own touches. Try her homemade sweet rolls for breakfast, or the homemade biscuits and gravy. "Everything is homemade, even our pancake mix," she said.

Details: 117 Main St. Breakfast, 7 a.m.-11 a.m. Lunch, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Closed Tuesdays. 1-(928)-735-7483.

373 Bar and Grill Restaurant: You couldn't wish for a better view when dining than at the 373 Bar and Grill Restaurant at Greer Lodge Resort, overlooking the Little Colorado River. From your table on the 5,000-square-foot deck, you can watch the trout jump. Delicious seafood, steaks and prime rib are served indoors and out, and the wine list is top-notch. Resort guests get seating priority, so if you're not staying here, call ahead for dinner reservations. (No reservations taken for breakfast or lunch.)

Details: 44 Main St. hours. Breakfast, 8-11 a.m. Lunch, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Dinner, 5 p.m. until close. 1-(928)-735-7216 or www.greerlodgeaz.com.

Molly Butler Lodge: Since 1910, the restaurant at Molly Butler Lodge has been a favorite with locals and visitors alike. The dinner menu includes steak, chicken, prime rib, trout and "Hot Dang Chili." Entrees start at \$10 and come with soup or salad, fresh-baked bread and a choice of baked potato, rice, cottage fries or cowboy beans. Lunch includes fish 'n' chips, a sourdough burger, grilled sandwiches, salads and more.

Details: 109 Main St. Lunch, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. daily from mid-May through October. Dinner, 5-9 p.m. daily. The bar is open until 1 a.m. 1-(928)-735-7226 or www.mollybutlerlodge.com.

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