

Beach house makeover P. 31

Sunset

2015

TRAVEL AWARDS

THE BEST
HOTELS
VINEYARDS
FAMILY DESTINATIONS
GLAMPING SPOTS
FOOD TOWNS
& MORE

The Resort at Paws Up
WINNER: BEST LUXURY CAMPING &
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JUNE 2015

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A large, stylized graphic for the Sunset Travel Awards 2015. The word "Sunset" is in a white serif font at the top left. "TRAVEL AWARDS" is written in large, gold, 3D block letters with a textured pattern, slanted diagonally across the center. "2015" is in a white serif font at the bottom right. The entire graphic is set within a white hexagonal border on a dark background with intricate gold line patterns. At the top and bottom of the hexagon are stylized sunburst or compass-like motifs.

Sunset TRAVEL AWARDS 2015

THE BEST. Everybody seems to have an opinion on what the best looks like, whether you're talking burritos or original screenplays, Super Bowl ads or handcrafted IPAs.

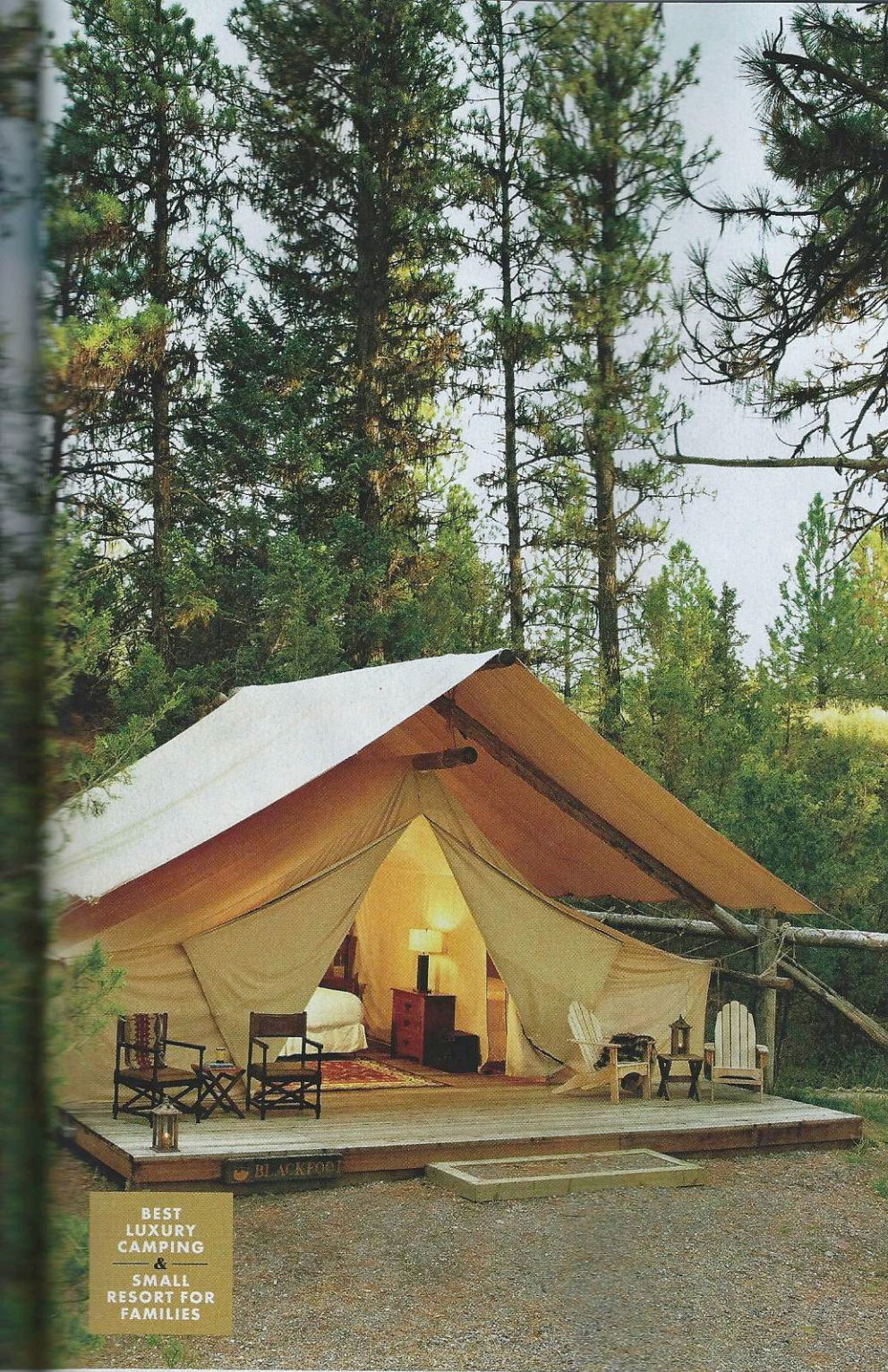
Sunset has an opinion too. And has voiced it in every issue since 1898. We've always aimed to bring you the best of the West. But last summer we decided to do it in a more structured way—we started the *Sunset* Travel Awards, intent on having our say about just what is the West's best beach town, best tasting room, best hotel pool.

To find the best, we drafted 12 travel experts from across the region to be on our Travel Awards Advisory Board (see page 8 for a list of their names). Our editors chose four finalists from each of the 20 categories for which we required an entry (to see all of our finalists, go to sunset.com/travelawards). Then our advisory board convened in Menlo Park to issue the final word, selecting 20 winners over two days of deliberations.

Our in-house editorial team picked another nine winners, including Western Icon awards that went to a trio of destinations that transcend category and attract eager visitors from around the world.

Finally, a vote of readers on our Facebook page determined our Most Outrageous Roadside Attraction.

You want to argue the best? You've come to the right spot. And the winners are ...



BEST OUTDOOR GUIDE



LEL TONE

Lel Tone knows about going the extra mile—her sport demands it. As a helicopter-skiing guide, Tone doesn't take clients on a lift to access runs. No, she flies with them in a chopper to remote terrain. *Sunset's* Andrea Minarcek caught up with Tone, 43, at the Tordrillo Mountain Lodge, in south-central Alaska, where she leads trips, to get the secrets of her slopeside success. tordrillomountainlodge.com.

SUNSET How did you end up as a heli-skiing guide?

TONE I strapped on my first pair of skis at age 2, and I've been skiing ever since.

The secret to being a great guide?

Being able to take people out and work around constraints of fitness or ability. You don't need to be an expert to enjoy heli-skiing. We have all kinds of terrain.

Best clients?

One of my favorite memories is skiing with this one retired couple from Jackson Hole. Heli-skiing in Alaska was on their

bucket list, and at 85 years old, they made it happen. They're out skiing and trying new things, and that's so inspiring.

How do you deal with the danger?

There are plenty of days when the avalanche hazard is high or the snow-pack suspect, and those days are exhausting. That's when this job feels like work. But most often, I have to stop myself and ask: "You're paying me to fly around in a helicopter, get on top of these beautiful peaks, and ski powder all day long?!" Sometimes I do have to pinch myself.

BEST
LUXURY
CAMPING
&
SMALL
RESORT FOR
FAMILIES

The Resort at Paws Up

We're giving two thumbs up to Paws Up, our only double winner. Both the price tag and the amenities are luxe at this Montana ranch, but there's something for everyone: river rafting, cattle drives, hot-air balloons. "In terms of glamping," said one of our judges, "they nail both the glamour and the camping." The deluxe tents—some, like the one above, stand alone and others are part of a cabin rental—come packed with indulgences, from organic spa products to heated bathroom floors. The camping? Your tent sits amid 37,000 wild acres laced with trout streams and horse trails. From \$1,705; pawsup.com.

PERFECT DAY

1. At dawn, the trout are biting on the Blackfoot River, one of the West's finest spots for fly-fishing.
2. But you're hooked on the thought of a massage, so you send the kids off for a kayak lesson.
3. You can meet up later for croquet or a chuck-wagon dinner, but nothing bonds a family like a paintball war.