

EXCLUSIVE!



DEEP TROUBLE

The incredible story of Dave Shaw—trapped at the bottom of a dark underwater cave, tangled up with a dead body, and running out of time...

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AUGUST 2005 WWW.OUTSIDEONLINE.COM

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IN BUENA VISTA, COLORADO
PHOTOGRAPH BY SIAN KENNEDY

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Looking to settle in Shangri-La? Check out ten towns that are making a strong play for perfection, with eco-smart designs, adventure-friendly innovations, and plentiful outdoor playgrounds—plus a commitment to the good life that really hits home. BY MIKE GRUDOWSKI

PLUS: Eight honorable mentions for best place to live—and a sneak peek at Buena Vista, Colorado, where a pair of twenty-something kayakers are building an urban wonderland around a world-class whitewater park

ON THE COVER: PORTLAND, OREGON
PHOTOGRAPH BY CHUCK PEFFLEY/GETTY

58 **Raising the Dead**

At the pitch-black bottom of one of the world's deepest underwater caves, extreme diver Dave Shaw found the body of a young adventurer who'd perished while exploring the sinkhole ten years earlier. He vowed to come back, recover the victim's remains, and return them to a still grieving family. It was a quest that would end with vindication—or haunt the survivors forever.

BY TIM ZIMMERMANN

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Spend time on South America's vagabond highways—particularly if you're a young Israeli—and you'll hear about a legendary compendium of tips, tirades, and travelers' wisdom called simply the Book. Join our man on the back roads of Bolivia and Chile, in search of the planet's wildest guidebook.

BY PATRICK SYMMES



• BUENA VISTA COLORADO

ADVENTURE BY DESIGN

BUILDING THE TOWN OF THE FUTURE FROM THE RIVER UP

THE PLAN WAS AS BOLD as running a Class VI rapid in water wings: Buy a 40-acre parcel of premium Rocky Mountain property with more than 670 feet of river frontage and create a small-town utopia—complete with a half-mile-long whitewater park, live/work spaces, restaurants, bike trails, and tree-lined avenues of shops, coffeehouses, art galleries, and theaters.

"It seemed crazy at first," says Katie Selby, 29, a pro kayaker who, with her 26-year-old brother, Jed (also a professional paddler), is spearheading one of the most ambitious—and, arguably, enlightened—development projects in the West: South Main, in Buena Vista, Colorado, a bucolic burg framed by snowcapped fourteens to the west and high-desert hills to the east. "I was living up in Alaska, paddling, chasing moose and elk around, and Jed kept calling me and pushing the idea, keeping it alive."

Though Jed had settled in central Colorado for the nearby paddling, he wasn't spending much time there. "I was driving all around North America, going to competitions, sleeping in the back of my Subaru, eating fast food," he says. "I just started questioning the whole lifestyle. When this idea began to take hold, I thought, Now I can really make a difference."

The Selbys had grown up in Tucson, Arizona, and both attended Fort Lewis College, in Durango, so they'd witnessed the West's rapid urban growth firsthand. When Jed first laid eyes on the undeveloped, trash-strewn field between the Arkansas River and Buena Vista's 100-year-old historic district, he immediately saw its potential. At the time, it was pegged as the future home of dozens of McMansions that would have shut out public river access. But in 2003, with help from their father, Buzz, a Tucson-based doctor and real estate investor, the siblings came up with the winning \$1.2 million bid and purchased the land. Their next step: nailing down a design for their urban hamlet.

For that, the Selbys—with the help of Florida-based design firm Dover, Kohl & Partners—embraced the principles of New Urbanism, which advocates densely packed, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development as an alternative to sprawl. In South Main's case, that means leafy avenues with gable-roofed Arts and Crafts-style bungalows, quaint frontier Victorian row

houses, awning-shaded storefronts, sidewalks, picket fences—it's Bedford Falls, only populated by kayakers in flip-flops hanging at the coffee shops after thrashing sculpted playholes. The design also includes a riverside park with bike paths, beaches, and a village square surrounded by a retail hub. The remaining space is platted for residential lots (about 200 in all), ranging from \$40,000, for a standard row-house lot, to \$70,000, for a 5,000-square-foot chunk of land for a single-family home—a bargain compared with prices in nearby Summit County.

While the Selbys will oversee development of the river park and green space—underwritten largely by a \$187,000 grant from the state's open-space preservation fund, Great Outdoors Colorado, and \$30,000 from the city of Buena Vista—private

BUENA VISTA KAYAK CLUB: Developers Katie and Jed Selby with their dogs Hurley (left) and Charlie; opposite, South Main's future home



developers will build the homes and businesses, following strict community guidelines. That commercial phase is still a couple of years down the road, says Katie, but reservations for lots in Phase One have been brisk: 24 of the first 26 lots were snatched up within two months of going on sale last spring. Bill Dobson, the realtor handling the project, says he already has a waiting list of 45 people, from young paddling enthusiasts buying a first home to retirees looking to downsize out of their country estates.

That all means a potentially lucrative investment for the Selbys, but the siblings insist the real payoff isn't cash. "Money is just a means to an end," says Katie. "Suburban sprawl is the source of pretty much all the problems that confront our country, from dependence on fossil fuel to water and air pollution to traffic congestion to ecosystem destruction. What's more fulfilling than devoting yourself to solving the biggest issue out there?"

—NICK HEIL

