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**Gold Rush** Behind every good movie is a good backdrop, and New Mexico is proving it's a more practical locale than Hollywood.

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# AMERICANWAY

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UGLY NO MORE

**America Ferrera's**

hit show is in its final season, but that doesn't mean her future will be anything short of beautiful.



# Familiar Vacation



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I'm the type of guy who doesn't do too well with change. I'm still wearing the same clothes from college (and some from high school) because they still fit and they're not all ragged. I still don the same pair of shoes every morning that I bought in the fall of 1996 (these are ragged and they barely fit, but they look cool). I recently drove 50 miles to pick up some printer ink that I bought on Craigslist because even though the

printer itself has been discontinued, the thing still works and I don't want to fuss with a new one. And my cell phone is so old that you have to turn a crank to start it.

My whole repertoire of activities, from my day-to-day life to my future road-trip plans in my wife's 2001, 90,000-mile-plus Jeep Liberty, is practiced in a familiar, consistent manner. All but one, that is. When it comes to traveling and vacationing, I like to let my sails out; I like to let my hair down, so to speak, which is usually easy because I only get one haircut a year and have only gotten one haircut a year since I was 18.

But the older my kids get, the harder it is to vacation. I assume that's because one is four, one is one, and they're both super high-strung. In fact, my wife and I weren't going to vacation at all this year. That's when I had an idea, and it went a little something like this:

My mother lives in Phoenix and has for years. I didn't grow up there, but I've been visiting for so long that I know the town very well. As such, every time I take the family out to Arizona, we visit the old

reliables: the Phoenix Zoo and the McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park. When I booked our trip out there in January, I had the same MO. Yet that's hardly a vacation for my wife and me. We could just as easily make our daughters happy back home with a trip to the Dallas Zoo or to the carousel at Stonebriar Centre mall in Frisco. So, on this trip to Phoenix, I decided to leave the kids with their grandmother for a night and take Kimberly to the Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North. Even though we know the Phoenix/Scottsdale area like the back of our daughters' hands, we've never gone out to the desert to partake in the pampering that the desert is known for. The catch: We only had one night. After all, Kimberly and I have a hard-enough time chasing after our kiddos, so I didn't want to saddle my 60-year-old mother with the terror tandem for too long.

Immediately after checking into our ornate casita and only moments after taking in the untrammelled view of Pinnacle Peak, we saw qualities of the desert that had passed us by over the past decade. The ground was

parched and red, but we reveled in the anomaly that it still managed to produce life, as all the cacti and overgrowth were lush and green. Of course you'd expect such landscapes at the foot of a Four Seasons property, but to be honest, this surpassed even the Four Seasons' standards.

A bottle of wine down, we headed over to the spa for a couples massage. I'd had a massage only one other time in my life, because, well, I don't like them. After 60 minutes with Fists of Fury (my nickname for the masseuse), I now want to get one every single day. And our one-night vacation was topped off by dinner at Talavera. Panoramic views of the Valley of the Sun, a bottle of BV Reserve, and as Kimberly so aptly put it, "the best filet in the history of ever."

The only thing that marred the evening was my attire. "I didn't like that outfit when we were in college," she quipped, "and I don't like it now."

Baby steps.

Adam Pitluk  
Editor