



Autumn Retreats |

AS CREWS PACK UP the stages at Bumbershoot and you pack off the kids for their first day of school this month, it's probably sinking in that summer is already winding down. But that doesn't mean you can't still "get away" while the days are still warm.

For the hard-working Seattleite, *Seattle Business Monthly* offers some examples of fall retreats to keep that summer spirit going a little longer. Whether you're looking for a team-building activity for your office, a relaxing place to hold your next meeting or just a spot to catch the perfect rainbow trout, here are some options to explore before the gray skies return.

The Ruby Runs Through It | W. Michael Hamilton

FINALLY, A FLY-FISHING RETREAT FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T NEED TO FISH ALL THE TIME.

AS THE LAST EDGE of sun slips behind the Tobacco Root Range on an unseasonably warm night in late October, the River Room at Montana's Ruby Springs Lodge comes alive with conversation.

"What I love about this place is that I can bring my wife, Sarah," notes Rich Barton, founder of internet startups Expedia and Zillow.com. "There's no pressure to fish *all* the time, and the amenities and atmosphere almost demand that you don't." Barton is among a large contingent of Northwest CEOs and entrepreneurs who cherish their annual visits to Big Sky country, like pilgrims going to Mecca.

Ruby Springs Lodge (800.278.7829; rubyspringslodge.com) is nestled on the floor of the Ruby River Valley in southwestern Montana, not far from Yellowstone National Park. Surrounded by fields of brightly colored wildflowers, the lodge is just outside of Alder, a tiny town made famous not only for its nearby blue-ribbon trout fishing streams, but also for its mining history. "Alder is just down the road from Virginia City and, in 1863, was one of the greatest gold producers of all time," notes John Sampson, who co-owns Ruby Springs with Paul Mosley.

Sampson and Mosley are the first to tout their strong ties to Seattle and the importance the Emerald City has played in their success. "When we opened in 1995, seventy-five percent of our bookings came from business executives from Seattle," Sampson says.

"Thank God our family and friends liked to fish," Mosley adds, laughing.

The two founders are both Seattle natives who first met in the fifth grade in the Madrona neighborhood. Their friendship continued through high school, with both graduating from Lakeside in 1980. College careers in international finance and political staffing left both men unsatisfied.

In 1992, Sampson and Mosley, who

shared a passion for fly-fishing, followed their dreams and moved to the Ruby Valley to guide fly-fishing clients. After stumbling across 400 acres for sale there, they cobbled together enough money to make a down payment and began planning a luxury lodge. Since then, they have steadily acquired adjacent property, bringing the present-day ranch to 3,500 acres.

Today, Ruby Springs Lodge is proudly referred to as the "Ritz Carlton" of fly-fishing destinations in the West. From April through November, a staff of 38 caters to the every whim of up to 16 guests at a time. It's a welcome escape for hard-working executives—especially those who love to fish. For spouses and friends who are not drawn to the poetry of fly-fishing, the lodge offers guided horseback rides, spa treatments, hiking and sightseeing at nearby historic Virginia City and the Big Hole National Battlefield.

Ruby Springs Lodge is within easy reach of the Madison, Beaverhead, Big Hole and Jefferson—all considered some of the best fly-fishing rivers in the world. The lodge also boasts 10 miles of private fishing on the creek-sized Ruby River, which snakes its way through wheat fields and ranch rangeland.

Seven private cabins, designed by Seattle architect Jim Sanders, stand gracefully along the banks of the meandering Ruby. Each is elegantly appointed with king-sized beds and river-rock fireplaces. Other luxurious amenities include bathrooms with heated tiles, Egyptian cotton towels, sunflower-sized shower heads, large view windows and screened-in porches.

Gourmet breakfasts and dinners are served in the main dining room, while lunches are prepared streamside during the day. European chef Micko Reijo oversees a well appointed kitchen that could easily be found in one of Tom Douglas' top Seattle restaurants.



There's more to Ruby Springs Lodge than just tying flies. Other activities include horseback riding, spa treatments and sightseeing in Montana's colorful historic towns.

Over the years, Northwest business luminaries such as George Argyros, Bill Gates, Sr., and the Nordstrom family have hobnobbed there with a steady stream of celebrities, including David Letterman, Ed Burns and Michael Keaton, to name a few.

Ruby Springs Lodge is easily accessible by air from Seattle via Horizon/Alaska or Sky West/Delta airlines, which fly to either Butte (about an hour's drive from the lodge) or Bozeman (a 90-minute drive). Shuttle service is available if guests decide not to rent a car—a common tactic, since the lodge provides everything most people would need. For guests with their own planes, there is also a private paved landing strip near the lodge.

"Three reasons keep me coming back: world-class fly-fishing, incredible service and fabulous food," says frequent guest John Meisenbach, CEO of Seattle-based employee benefits and insurance brokerage firm MCM. "The fly-fishing guides are knowledgeable, patient and experienced. They always give my wife, Ginny, and [me] a day of memories that linger long after we return to Seattle."