



IMPULSIVE TRAVELER
Up a lazy river
Escape the bustle of downtown Philly in this laidback neighborhood. **F6**

Going Our Way Where best to trip the lights fantastic. **F3**

Click It Now you can select a room with a view. **F4**

CHAT We answer your questions Monday at noon at live.washingtonpost.com.

BED CHECK
So close to Eatly
The main attraction of this midtown Manhattan hotel is just across the street. **F2**



LUIS F. CHAVES

Bob Jiranek, of Danville, Va., on the cross-country course. The 81-year-old held his own with the whippersnappers.



LUIS F. CHAVES

A group of riders takes to the trail in search of cattle that have made their way off the ranch and into a riverbed.



HALEY GOODFELLOW

Bitterroot's cabins are specks in a vast Western landscape that's right out of a John Ford movie.

All duded up



HALEY GOODFELLOW

Oh, give me a home: Even when the skies are cloudy some of the day, Bitterroot Ranch near Dubois, Wyo., is an inviting place.

At Bitterroot Ranch, the West ain't some dog-and-pony show put on for tourists

BY DANA PRIEST

After 10 slow miles on a bumpy dirt road with no other person or dwelling in sight, it crossed my mind that maybe the owners of Bitterroot Ranch didn't really want to be found. There were no signs anywhere, no encouragement that we were getting any closer, or had even made the correct turn off the one-lane road just past the blink-of-an-eye cowboy town of Dubois, in Wyoming's less-traveled Wind River Valley.

There was nothing. No GPS guidance. No cellphone service. No caravan of other rented

four-wheel drives to fall in behind. Nothing. Nothing but 360 degrees of mountain ranges of every size and hue, backlit by a big sky turning purple and orange as the sun set. Gray and white strokes of rainstorms moved across the grassy meadows and sagebrush plains in the distance. I wanted to stop and stare forever. I wanted to keep driving, too, to figure out if we were lost before it became pitch dark.

An old pickup truck raced by in the other direction with the silhouettes of three cowboy hats in the cab. Then another. Then a minivan with even more passengers. Ranch hands? Tourists? Why were they headed in the wrong direction at this hour?

Then, at mile 16, we spotted a cluster of log

cabins tucked in an oasis of trees. Rough cattle fences divided the land, and at last, a small painted sign on a wooden post pointed us down a final, narrow dirt path.

As we were gathering our suitcases from the car, Bayard Kane Fox unfolded his tall, lanky frame from a truck that had pulled in minutes after ours. "Welcome," boomed the 81-year-old, a fishing pole in one hand, the other busy with two happy dogs doing the jig at his feet. "Come on in. Meet Mel."

We'd just missed the other guests, he said. They were the carloads of people that had passed us coming in, headed into town for the weekly rodeo.

So began what I consider to have been the

perfect vacation: a physical challenge in an unfamiliar place more beautiful than my imagination could dream up, with wonderful people from whom we part as new friends. Not to mention the superb ranch-grown food, the handsome rodeo riders, the curious yearlings, the colt that let me lie on the grass beside him, and the well-trained, sure-footed Arabians with their smooth gallops. (Oh, and an unexpected CIA connection. More on that later.)

On the east side of the Continental Divide from Yellowstone National Park, the Wind

RANCH CONTINUED ON F5

Tea and serenity and Buddha

It's easy to get lost in the moment at this monastery in the Taiwanese hills

BY AMBER PARCHER

Special to The Washington Post

The wind chimes were calling. Dozens of them, swirling in the soft April sun like butterflies dancing around a flower, waiting to be noticed.

I padded barefoot toward them across the wooden floor of the temple, forgetting that I'd left my dust-caked shoes at the front entrance.

It was the first of many times that I would be caught in the moment at Fo Guang Shan, a sprawling 55-acre Buddhist monastery in the middle of a bamboo forest at the base of a Taiwanese mountain range. I was there on a weekend silent retreat aimed at introducing foreigners to Buddhism, getting a cultural and spiritual glimpse into this ancient religion and the monks and nuns who have forsaken modern life to abide by its teachings.

But mostly I was enjoying the wind chimes — until I spotted the tea.

A freshly brewed pot rested beneath the chimes on a splintering wooden table. I poured

myself a cup of oolong and cuddled into a nearby plastic chair. About 20 feet below me, a monk was patting dirt around freshly planted pink carnations. But here, high up on this covered porch hugging a tiny temple in a remote corner of the monastery, there was no one but me. And the wind chimes.

A basket of crackers slid onto the table. I looked up. A monk, his head shaven and his gray exercise robes twisting around his slender body, smiled at me. He sat down across the table and poured himself a cup of tea. We shared it in silence, and then he stood up to water the flowers lining the porch railing.

Although I was the only visitor at his temple that morning, the monastics at Fo Guang Shan are used to guests. In fact, they welcome them.

Fo Guang Shan, Mandarin for "Buddha's light mountain," is an active monastery, inside its gates and out. More than 10,000 Westerners visited last year, and with relations warming between China and Taiwan, about 7,000 Chi-

TEMPLE CONTINUED ON F4



RICH J. MATHESON

At 5:30 a.m., before they've had coffee, monastics and visitors on retreat at Fo Guang Shan pray before three 10-foot-tall Buddhas. The monastery is the world headquarters of Humanistic Buddhism.