

BEST OF THE WEST

DECEMBER 2013

Our staffers fought to road test the Electra Townie Go, a new e-bike. You pedal, but a battery and motor offer extra oomph—30 no-sweat miles per charge. \$2,300; electrabike.com.

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GIFT GUIDE

This holiday season, our travel, home, garden, and food editors are giving gorgeous gear and extraordinary experiences.

Photographs by JEFFERY CROSS

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TRAVEL: GOOD TO GO

① A tailored but tough tote from Filson of Seattle (around since the Klondike Gold Rush) will hold plenty and hold up for many a trip. *Canvas carry-all, \$245; filson.com.*

② In flight, the wide lambswool scarf we love is a cozy coverlet; on arrival, it makes even a rumpled traveler look pulled together. *Houndstooth scarf, \$140; alderandcoshop.com.*

③ These sleek, petite new thermoses keep soup hot for up to four hours; they're also perfect for fresh snacks. *Canisters from \$18 each; klean kanteen.com.*

④ Soft, smart, and sustainably made, our favorite iPad cases are fashioned from reclaimed Patagonia fleece or Woolrich wool. *iPad mini sleeve, \$34; reflece.com.*

⑤ The adventurers on your list may take a spill or capsize, but their phones will be fine with the best cases for worst cases: *LifeProof iPhone case (for the iPhone 5 series) from \$80, and LifeJacket float, \$40; lifeproof.com.*

⑥ A signal flag-inspired paint job updates the classic Opinel knife. *Whiskey folding knife, \$68; sonofasailorsupply.com.*

Amazing adventures

Experiences require much less storage space than actual objects do—and often they're more appreciated. These trips are on our travel editors' wish lists:

No phones, laptops, or kids allowed at **Camp Grounded**; it's just adults having fun as they digitally detox in Anderson Valley, California. Hikes and yoga are on the agenda; s'mores are on the menu. *3 nights from \$395 all-inclusive; campgrounded.org.*

Make a motorhead ecstatic

with the **World Class Driving Red Rock Muscle Car Experience**—30 miles behind the wheel on a guided drive through a canyon near Las Vegas in three hot cars. *\$299/driver; worldclassdriving.com.*

For a splurge, there's **Clayoquot Wilderness Resort**. The romantic luxury tents on Vancouver Island are worth a seaplane ride. It's camping without all that pesky... camping. *3 nights from \$5,445 U.S. all-inclusive; wildretreat.com.*

HOME & GARDEN

① For friends dreaming of a holiday getaway but stuck with a staycation: a checked woolen throw that whispers “you’re in a secluded cabin!” *Vintage throw*, \$120; 52 by 78 in.; [schoolhouseelectric.com](#).

② Peace on Earth, good-will to pollinators (and the people who love them). All will enjoy this stylish home for solitary bees, which settle in small cavities. *Bee house*, \$26; [diggardensnursery.com](#).

③ This extra-wide rustproof copper trowel is as useful as it is beautiful. *Castor trowel*, \$58; [shopterrain.com](#).

④ Who wouldn’t enjoy easing into soft, warm slippers at the end of a hard, cold day? Really—we want their names. *Luxe faux-fur scuff slippers*, \$24; [restorationhardware.com](#).

⑤ We love that these glazed stoneware planters from Petersen Pottery Company were inspired by the interplay of sand and fog. *Nantucket pots* from \$30 each; 3½ to 10 in. diameter; [pottedstore.com](#).

⑥ It’ll be hard not to keep it: a copper watering can elegant enough to use as a vase. *X3 watering can*, \$120; [shophorne.com](#).

⑦ The best way to go to the dogs: Present proud owners with a hand-cut silhouette of the family pooch. Available in 38 breeds and 2 sizes (5 by 7 in. and 8 by 10 in.); custom portraits on request. *Dog silhouettes* from \$15 each; [linenworkshop.com](#).

⑧ Give gardens under glass—diamond-shaped terrariums made in Sacramento from upcycled window glass. *Glass Diamond containers* from \$65 each; [mooreaseal.com](#).

⑨ We’re big fans of flannel pj’s, and this pair from NorCal company Coyuchi is just as comfy-cozy as it looks. *Heather pajama set for women or men* from \$212; [coyuchi.com](#).

⑩ Inspired by quartz crystals, a ceramic vessel can hold fruit or flowers—or just sit and look pretty. *Quartz-faceted ceramics* from \$24; [arehome.com](#).

⑪ Pitcher perfect: the recently reissued iconic vessel created by Russel Wright, who brought modern design to the masses. *American Modern pitcher*, \$80; [bauerla.com](#).

⑫ This hand-lettered return-address stamp—in the shape of the sender’s home state—will earn you a thank-you note. *Home State personalized return-address stamp*, \$60; [paperpastries.bigcartel.com](#).



Garden memberships

Treat friends and family to a whole lot of flora all year long with a membership to a local botanical garden. Three winners:

The tropical conservatory at the **Denver Botanic Gardens** offers a model of drought-tolerant landscaping and a respite from winter’s chill. From \$55; [botanicgardens.org](#).

At the **Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens** in San Marino, California, your giftee will find 120 fabulous acres. From \$120; [huntington.org](#).

And anyone in search of a peaceful spot for wandering and contemplation in the heart of the city will love the **Portland Japanese Garden**. From \$55; [japanesegarden.com](#).



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EAT. DRINK. BE MERRY!

① A hand-thrown bowl from Heath Ceramics of Sausalito, California, doesn't just elevate salad—it's a new heirloom. *Classic Holiday Salad Set bowl and tongs*, \$160; heathceramics.com.

② It was meant to be merely a prop, but we fell for this leather-handled tray sold by Heath. *Walnut tray*, \$275; 14 by 21½ in.; heathceramics.com.

③ Our food editors rarely go for jarred sauces, but these zingy Mexican *moles* are an exception. \$36 for 3 (15 oz.) jars; bunchesandbunches.bigcartel.com.

④ Wylie Howell corn whiskey, distilled in Northern California, packs a smooth wallop. The stellar hooch is named after the maker's bootlegger grandpa, who graces the jug. \$119; wyliehowell.com.

⑤ Insert this wine preserver's needle through the cork, shoot argon into the bottle, and pour a glass. The rest will keep for weeks, if not months. *Coravin 1000 system*, \$299; coravin.com.

⑥ With a smart swiveling lid, this container is worth its salt. *Olive wood salt keeper*, \$50; williams-sonoma.com. *Bright Alaea salt*, \$7.50 for a 2.3-oz. jar; atthemeadow.com.

⑦ Drying power plus staying power: Linen tea towels hand-printed in the Bay Area get softer and more absorbent with each wash. \$24 each; [studio patro.com](http://studiopatro.com).



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Food & wine clubs

Some very tasty gift options: Members of the **Venissimo Cheese Lovers Club** receive three cheeses a month from the San Diego shop, along with just the right accompaniment—say, the perfect cracker. \$65/month; venissimo.com.

Sip us as you read us: The **Sunset Magazine Wine Club** sends two medal-winning wines from the *Sunset* International Wine Competition each month. \$130/3 months; sunsetwineclub.com.

A San Francisco fave, **Ritual Coffee Roasters** delivers the caffeine—12 ounces of special seasonal blends—without the crowds. \$20/shipment; ritualroasters.com.

STOCKING STUFFERS

① The bike enthusiast on your list can ring in the new year with this graphic, clear-toned bell. *Pattern bike bell*, \$22; poketo.com.

② These mighty (and mighty cute) magnets are very fridge-worthy—strong enough to hold a dish towel. *Horseshoe magnets*, \$14 each; areaware.com.

③ Our garden editors love these washable, easy-to-work-in gloves—and so will your favorite gardener. *Atlas nitrile gloves*, \$23 for 6 pairs; amazon.com.

④ Made with raw honey by a beekeeping family in Utah, these slightly chewy caramels have a warm, deep sweetness. *Honey caramels* from \$8 for a ¼-lb. box; beesbros.com.

⑤ Let a special someone wake up and smell the roses (to mix exhortations) with an energizing organic rosewater spray designed in Santa Monica. *Rosewater uplifting spray*, \$32 for 1.7 oz.; beautycounter.com.

⑥ Shutterbugs will flip for a set of three slide-on photo lenses (macro, fish-eye, and polarized) made to enhance iPhone picture taking. *iPhone specialty lens set*, \$49; restorationhardware.com.

⑦ A nine-piece sampler of soft, chewy French-style fruit candies from San Francisco's Tout Sweet includes tingling winter flavors like negroni, raspberry fig, and passion fruit. *Pâte de fruit*, \$9; toutsweets.com.

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Presents with a future

Sure, it's fun to bestow great stuff and cool experiences. But our favorite form of holiday giving is making charitable donations—in the name of a loved one or just for the joy of it. To learn more about our staff's favorite causes, check out our masthead (page 4) and Conversations page (page 6). We'd love to hear from you too. Let us know what charities are close to your heart: Go to sunset.com/charities. 🐾