



Iron Mountain Hot Springs and Bathhouse at Sunset

## Explore the COLORADO HISTORIC HOT SPRINGS LOOP

By Heidi Kerr-Schlaefel

The Historic Hot Springs Loop features five destinations, 19 hot springs venues and 720 scenic miles of Colorado driving. Let's face it, most of us will only be able to take weekend trips to these hot springs havens, however, putting all 19 on your travel agenda is a must.

The places on the hot springs loop are delightfully different. Some have ski slopes and nightlife nearby while others are so remote that the stars will shine like you've never seen them before.

I've been to all five destinations on the loop and nearly all 19 of the hot springs facilities, so let's dive into the deep end and explore which should be first up on your must-visit list this winter.

### Steamboat Springs

Today, Steamboat Springs is famous for its champagne powder, but its hot springs were what originally brought people to the area. Native Americans and pioneers flocked to the region to partake in the healing powers of the hot water that gushed up from below ground in Routt County.

Today, there are two hot springs facilities where visitors can experience what the founding fathers of Steamboat Springs so revered. Old Town Hot Springs is conveniently located in downtown Steamboat Springs and offers a number of small hot pools as well as larger pools including a lap pool. Perfect for vacationing families or après ski.

Strawberry Park Hot Springs, is 18 minutes from Steamboat Springs, has recently

undergone renovations to improve the venue as it has become more and more popular over the years. Despite the improvements, Strawberry Park still retains the "wild" and "natural" that has always set it apart from other Colorado hot springs.

### Glenwood Springs

One hundred and fourteen miles south of Steamboat Springs, Glenwood Springs offers an historic hot springs pool, an 84-year-old hot springs spa and a brand new hot springs venue with historic roots.

For 128 years, visitors and residents have been soaking away their cares at Glenwood Hot Springs. This iconic destination plays a part of many Colorado natives' childhood

memories. The 107-room lodge at Glenwood Hot Springs makes it one of the few destinations on the loop a large onsite hotel.

Iron Mountain Hot Springs, perched on the banks of the Colorado River, is a brand new venue in Glenwood Springs, and has quickly gained a loyal following. It sits on a location that was once home to a hot springs facility built out in the early 1900s. Those pools remained active until 1996, when the site was torn down to make room for a water park that was never built.

Iron Mountain has 16 mineral soaking pools, a family swimming pool and a cafe featuring food and adult beverages. An evening soak here affords unforgettable sunset views.

Yampah Spa, also in Glenwood Springs, offers something that's rare in the Colorado hot springs world - vapor caves. These are natural underground hot mineral water baths. In addition to the caves, Yampah Spa offers a variety of health and beauty treatments.

### Ridgway & Ouray

Head south from Glenwood Springs to Ouray County, where you'll find five locations with hot springs offerings. The largest, Ouray Hot Springs Pool is closed for the winter while it undergoes a large renovation. Operating since 1927, the new and improved pool is set to reopen in summer 2017.

Travelers should not be deterred by the pool closure as there are other places to soak in Ouray, including The Historic Wiesbaden Hot Springs Spa & Lodgings, which also has a vapor cave, Box Canyon Lodge & Hot Springs and Twin Peaks Lodge & Hot Springs.

In nearby Ridgway, Orvis offers a Garden of Eden type of hot springs experience, right down to the clothing optional policy. This is one of the most serene hot springs venues I've encountered during my travels around Colorado. There is lodging available at Orvis, and children 18 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

### Pagosa Springs

Continue south into one of the most laid-back areas of Colorado, Pagosa Springs. Life moves at a slower pace in this region and that's why people love it. Pagosa Springs is a true playground for visitors year round whether they like to golf, ski or soak.

Visitors have three very different hot springs venues to choose from in Pagosa Springs. The Springs Resort & Spa offers an upscale experience that's worth every penny. On my first visit, I felt as though I'd been transported from Colorado to a Mexican resort.



Photo courtesy of Visit Pagosa Springs

The Springs Resort & Spa offers multiple lodging options, plus 25 hot springs pools that terrace down to the San Juan River. We love the Relaxation Terrace that offers five pools for those 18-years-old or older. This area, accessible by hotel guests only, offers a true escape from the real world.

Overlook Hot Springs Spa is popular with locals and offers something quite unique from the rest of the venues in this article. Most of their pools are located inside, and features Roman Tubs for soaking. I felt like royalty as I sipped my red wine during my soak in a deep hot pool at Overlook.

Healing Waters Resort & Spa is a hotel featuring an open air hot springs swimming pool and large hot tub. It's an ideal location for exploring downtown Pagosa Springs.

#### Chaffee County

From Pagosa Springs head north towards Chaffee County, the site of six hot springs destinations. Whether you're looking for a spa-like hot springs environment or something more rustic, Chaffee County's got it.

We've visited Mount Princeton Hot Springs a number of times, and this remote venue located between Salida and Buena Vista near Chalk Creek, is a great destination for families or a romantic getaway. The Day Spa & Club is for hotel guests only and is my favorite spot on the large property. And, the Princeton Club Bar onsite is a fun place to catch the Broncos game.

Cottonwood Hot Springs Inn & Spa is a peaceful and rustic hot springs option located in the woods outside of Buena Vista. A few of the "Creekside Cabins" here have private hot springs soaking pools.

Alpine Hot Springs Hideaway, Creekside Hot Springs Cabin and Antero Hot Springs Cabins are all secluded vacation homes located along Chalk Creek and featuring private hot springs pools.

Salida Recreation & Hot Springs Aquatic Center rounds out Chaffee County's offerings. It's the largest hot springs facility in the country and is an active recreation center for the town, plus a fun touristy stop for families who love to swim.

So there you have it, 19 unique destinations to put on your Colorado hot springs bucket list. Just don't forget to pack your swimsuit. Visit the Colorado Historic Hot Springs Loop online at [Colorado.com/hotspringsloop](http://Colorado.com/hotspringsloop).

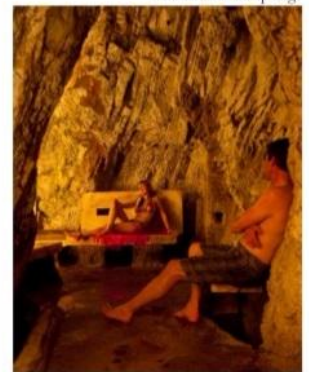
Heidi Kerr-Schlaefer is a freelance writer from Loveland. She is also the founder of [HeidiTown.com](http://HeidiTown.com), an entertaining source for Colorado travel and festival stories.



Big Smiles in the Family Pool at Iron Mountain Hot Springs



Mt Princeton winter courtesy of Mount Princeton Hot Springs



Yampah Vapor Caves, Glenwood Springs