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# Why Fly All The Way to Iceland? Colorado Has Some of the Best Hot Springs Around



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Photo: Courtesy of Colorado Historic Hot Spring Loop



Iceland is one of the world’s great tourism success stories, having tripled its amount of visitors in under ten years. With a population of just 334,000, this tiny island nation attracts a staggering 1.8 million travelers annually, and almost half of those visitors will take a dip in the infamous Blue Lagoon. It’s a touristy (but fun) geothermal spring known for its selfie-stick wielders and whipped-cream silica mud masks. If you can handle crowds and don’t mind the steep \$48 price tag, this Iceland attraction is for you. But while the million people who visit the Lagoon each year can’t be wrong, it would be a disservice—nay, un-American!—not to mention that yes, in fact, the United States has ample hot springs which not only rival Blue Lagoon in terms of comfort and health benefits, but dare we say surpass it when it comes to providing a peaceful, authentic experience.

Hot springs are found in several places throughout the Rocky Mountains, but Colorado offers the most compelling tourism options. The Historic Hot Springs Loop is a tidy organization of nineteen different hot spring attractions across the state, spread across five resort areas: Steamboat Springs, Chaffee County, Pagosa Springs, Ouray and Glenwood Springs. Because each of these destinations is just a couple hours’ drive from the next, working the entire circuit requires little to no advance

planning. Fly into Denver International Airport (or one of the state's regional airports such as Montrose), pick up your rental car, and embark on the most relaxing road trip ever. It's so much easier than having to fly across the Atlantic.



#### Glenwood Hot Springs

Photo: Courtesy of Colorado Historic Hot Spring Loop



Each of the loop's five stops has something different to offer. Pagosa Springs has the world's deepest hot spring—"they simply don't know how deep it is," a resident revealed recently—as well as the most snow in the state during winter months. Glenwood Hot Springs has the world's largest mineral springs pool. And if it's Westworld vibes you're after, consider Dunton's Hot Springs, which are built in an abandoned ghost town on the Dolores River.



Ouray Ice Park

Photo: Courtesy of Ouray Ice Park



Our favorite hot springs town, however, might be Ouray. Nestled at the back end of a valley in the San Juan Mountains, this picture-perfect village is as quaint as Colorado gets (maybe that's why Ralph Lauren built his [Double RL Ranch](#) just a few miles from here), and for a small town, there is plenty to do. Start off your day with one of the talented folks from [San Juan Mountain Guides](#), who will take you to the world-famous [Ouray Ice Park](#) to try your hand at ice climbing. After you've thoroughly bruised your kneecaps and worked up an appetite, drop in for a bite at one of the village's fantastic restaurants—[Ouray Brewery](#) or [Brickhouse 737](#) should do the trick. Then after lunch, mosey on down the street to Ouray's outdoor hot springs, where you can lounge the day away and watch the sun set over jagged mountaintops. Let those achy muscles soak, and you'll see why [balneotherapy](#), the therapeutic use of water, is so beloved in this part of the country—and you'll wonder why anyone ever thought they had to go abroad to experience it.