

Travel

AND RECREATION

Heavenly hot springs

10 Colorado hot spots for a soothing winter soak

By Lora J. Finnegan
Photographs by Douglas Merriam

Shrouded in misty steam and edged by fluffy snowdrifts, a hot springs seems especially warm and welcoming on a cold day in the mountains. If you get a winter chill in Colorado, you don't have to look far for a dip: According to the Colorado Geological Survey, 93 hot springs and geothermal wells dot the state.

Since the late 1850s, visitors have come to Colorado for rejuvenation in a natural brew of minerals, salts, sulfurs, and warm water. Early habitués included everyone from gunslinger Doc Holliday to President Teddy Roosevelt. But during the mid-20th century, interest in mineral baths faded.

Today, thanks to our stress-filled lifestyles, hot springs are in vogue again, and in recent years, a number of Colorado classics have been given facelifts. We've searched out 10 of



Take a walk on a sunken boardwalk past a mineralized fountainhead at the Springs Resort.

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the best thermal resorts in the state—including the most luxurious and the largest. All are developed hot springs that rise from natural sources and all offer spa treatments. See map (above) for locations.

BEST RIVERSIDE SETTING

1 The Springs Resort In southwest Colorado, the Springs pools jut from terraces along the sun-dappled San Juan River. There's an array of 17 pools—from Clouds in My Coffee to the Waterfall—with temperatures ranging from 84° to 114°. The waters are as salty as the ocean and carry a whiff of sulfur. On-site, you'll find a Mediterranean-style bathhouse, a juice bar and cafe, a sports shop, and a spa.

WHERE: 165 Hot Springs Blvd., Pagosa Springs.

COST: Pool use free for hotel guests, \$13 (\$15 Fri-Sat) for nonguests, \$5 for nonguests ages 4-7. Rooms from \$99.

CONTACT: www.pagosahotspings.com, (800) 225-0934, or (970) 264-4168.

BEST MOUNTAIN SETTING

2 Ouray Hot Springs Pool Owned and run by the city of Ouray, this huge outdoor pool holds almost 1 million gallons of water, which bubbles up from natural springs. It's loaded with just about every mineral but sulfur, so the water has no odor. Do laps in the cooler lanes, or bask in a 104° soaking section and drink in the views of the rugged San Juan Mountains.

WHERE: 1200 Main St. (within Ouray Hot Springs Park), Ouray.

COST: Pool use \$8, \$6 seniors and ages 7-17, \$3 ages 3-6.

CONTACT: (970) 325-7073.



Soakers at the Springs Resort enjoy the snowy setting from a terraced pool.

BEST POOLSIDE DECK

3 Wiesbaden Hot Springs Spa and Lodgings Tucked into the mountainside, a 105° outdoor waterfall pool called the Lorelei is enclosed for privacy, yet it's angled so the pool and its deck look out to views of the snow-dusted San Juans. There's also a natural vapor cave with a 108° soaking pool. You don't have to be a hotel guest to use the baths, but do book ahead to soak in the Lorelei. Spa treatments run from massages to reflexology.

WHERE: 625 Fifth St., Ouray.

COST: Lorelei use \$70 per hour for one or two nonguests, \$35 per hour for one or two lodge guests. Rooms from \$120.

CONTACT: www.wiesbadenhotspings.com or (970) 325-4347.

MOST LUXURIOUS

4 Dunton Hot Springs This cluster of 1800s cabins includes a former Pony Express stop. The setting, high in a snowy mountain meadow, is striking. The dozen handsome cabins were

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lovingly restored, and most have Western-style decor—in one, an elk-skin bedspread covers fine linens. Guests can try a massage or soak in the bathhouse, the meadow pool, or a spring sheltered by a tepee.

WHERE: Off State 145 on W. Fork Rd., about 30 miles southwest of Telluride; call for directions.

COST: Use of pool, bathhouse, and other hot springs areas is for guests only. Rooms from \$250 per person, including meals.

CONTACT: (970) 882-4800.

MOST FAMILY-FRIENDLY

📍 **Trimble Hot Springs** “Marilyn Monroe soaked here,” this hot springs’ website proclaims. But don’t look for the Hollywood crowd at Trimble. Today, the springs are a family favorite: clean and inexpensive, with an Olympic-size swimming pool and three smaller soaking pools ranging from 102° to 108°.

WHERE: 6475 County Rd. 203, Durango.

COST: Pool use \$9, \$6.50 ages 2–12.

CONTACT: www.trimblehotsprings.com or (970) 247-0111.

BIGGEST

📍 **Hot Springs Lodge & Pool** This is the big daddy: At 405 feet in length, it’s the world’s largest manmade outdoor mineral hot-springs swimming pool. The pool is such an icon that the Olympic Torch was swum through its waters en route to the 2002 Olympic Winter Games. The large pool is 90°; a separate therapy pool hits 104°.

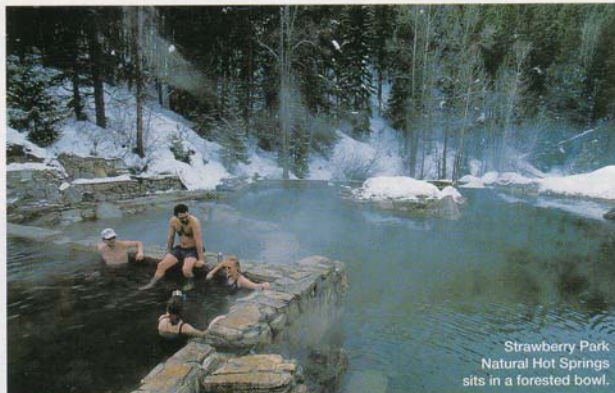
WHERE: 401 N. River Rd., Glenwood Springs.

COST: Pool use free for lodge guests, \$11 nonguests, \$7 nonguests ages 3–12. Rooms from \$105.

CONTACT: www.hot Springspool.com, (800) 537-7946, or (970) 945-6571.

NATURALLY VAPOROUS

📍 **Yampah Spa & Salon—The Hot Springs Vapor Caves** Steaming (125°) mineral-laced waters flow through these rare, naturally created vapor caves to make a perpetual steam bath. You start



Strawberry Park Natural Hot Springs sits in a forested bowl.

in the coolest grotto, then move to three hotter caverns (112° to 117°). When you are suitably relaxed, try a spa treatment, like a mud wrap with Colorado clay.

WHERE: 709 E. Sixth St., Glenwood Springs.

COST: Cave use \$9.75.

CONTACT: www.yampahspa.com or (970) 945-0667.

MOST REMOTE

📍 **Strawberry Park Natural Hot Springs** Rustic and remote—at the end of a 2-mile dirt road—this hot spot is set in a peaceful fir- and aspen-lined bowl. A series of springs gush out of the hillside at about 147° and tumble down into Hot Springs Creek and the pools. Development here is minimal, and the three successive rocky pools—each a different temperature—are largely natural.

WHERE: End of County Rd. 36, about 7 miles north of Steamboat Springs.

COST: Pool use \$10, \$5 ages 13–17, \$3 ages 3–12.

CONTACT: www.strawberryhotsprings.com or (970) 879-0342.

MOST POOLS

📍 **Hot Sulphur Springs Resort and Spa** Tucked in the banks of the Colorado River, the Hot Sulphur Springs were once used by the Ute Indians. Legend has it that first the braves would bathe in the pools, followed by their horses, and—last—the women. In

the 1920s, Denver gangsters used the springs as a hangout. Today the renovated resort is bigger than ever, with 22 pools (95° to 112°), a spa, and a 17-room motel. Children are allowed in three of the pools.

WHERE: 5609 County Rd. 20, Hot Sulphur Springs.

COST: Pool use for guests and nonguests \$15, \$12 ages 6–16. Rooms from \$98.

CONTACT: www.hot Sulphur Springs.com, (800) 510-6235, or (970) 725-3306.

BEST MUD PACK

📍 **Indian Springs Resort** In Idaho Springs, the pool, manmade geothermal caves, and hotel once drew Frank and Jesse James, Sarah Bernhardt, and FDR. In the section that locals call Club Mud, you can give yourself a full-body mud pack, then shower off and relax in the caves’ sunken tubs, which are filled with 104° to 112° springwater. The facility itself is showing its age, but it is handy to visitors from the Front Range.

WHERE: 302 Soda Creek Rd., Idaho Springs (32 miles west of Denver, off I-70).

COST: Pool use free for hotel guests, \$10 (\$12 Fri–Sun) for nonguests; caves \$13 for guests, \$15 (\$17 Fri–Sun) for nonguests; caves and pool combined admission from \$23 for nonguests.

CONTACT: www.indianspringsresort.com or (303) 989-6666. ♦

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