



THE COLORADO HISTORIC HOT SPRINGS LOOP

By Savannah Nelson

Photos and Map Courtesy of Colorado Historic Hot Springs Loop



Western Colorado’s mountains are alive with geothermal energy—warm, mineral-rich waters that have provided comfort and healing for generations. The Colorado Historic Hot Springs Loop (CHHSL) brings together eight of the state’s premier hot springs destinations along roughly 800 miles of scenic highways, connecting 23 distinct soaking experiences across the Rockies.

This circuit offers a blend of history, wellness and adventure—all linked by the soothing allure of naturally heated waters.



A Brief History

Long before Colorado’s resort towns took shape, geothermal springs were sacred places for Indigenous peoples, used for a mix of medicinal, ceremonial and rejuvenating purposes. When European settlers later arrived, the same hot springs quickly became destinations for weary miners and railroad travelers seeking relief. Bathhouses and grand hotels sprang up around the bubbling waters, transforming simple geothermal sites into social and healing centers. Today, this legacy has been preserved through collaboration among local tourism organizations. The Colorado Historic Hot Springs Loop was formally established in 2015 in partnership with the Colorado Tourism Office to highlight this unique collection of geothermal destinations.

The Loop follows a road trip through mountain passes, scenic byways and small towns steeped in frontier history and natural wonder, tied together by some of the state’s best hot springs.



Destinations along the Colorado Historic Hot Springs Loop

GLENWOOD SPRINGS

Glenwood Springs has been drawing visitors to its waters since 1888, when the Glenwood Hot Springs Pool first opened. The massive pool is credited as the largest natural mineral hot springs in the world.

Today, visitors can also enjoy the Iron Mountain Hot Springs, where small, terraced pools overlook the Colorado River, or the Yampah Spa & Vapor Caves, known as the only natural vapor cave in North America.

CARBONDALE, COLORADO

Nearby, Carbondale offers a unique combination of mountain-town charm, local agriculture and outdoor recreation, while its designation as a Colorado Creative District speaks to a flourishing arts culture. A soak at Carbondale's scenic and serene Avalanche Ranch is a clinic in mountain relaxation and rejuvenation.

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Steamboat Springs pairs its famous ski slopes with geothermal luxury. The town's name comes from the "chugging" sound early trappers heard from the natural springs along the Yampa River.

Old Town Hot Springs, located downtown, is a family-friendly facility that has served locals for more than a century. A short drive outside of town, Strawberry Park Hot Springs offers a rustic nature retreat with natural stone pools set alongside Hot Springs Creek.

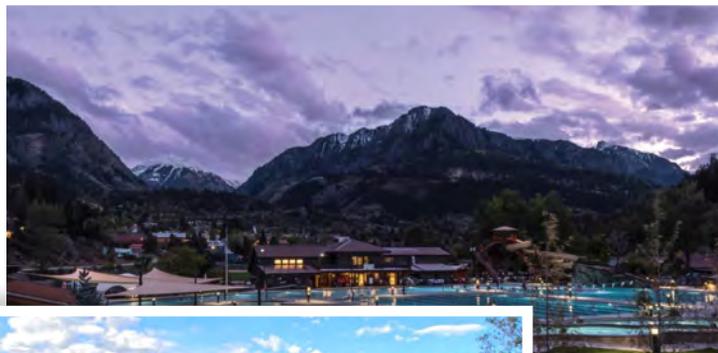
CHAFFEE COUNTY (BUENA VISTA, NATHROP, AND SALIDA)

Set in the Collegiate Peaks region, Chaffee County is home to multiple geothermal treasures and recreation opportunities. The Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort channels Chalk Creek's thermal waters into creek-side stone pools with sweeping mountain views. Cottonwood Hot Springs Inn & Spa provides a quieter, more spiritual atmosphere, while Salida Hot Springs Aquatic Center offers the largest indoor hot springs pool in North America.

PAGOSA SPRINGS

In the state's southwest corner lies Pagosa Springs, home to the world's deepest geothermal aquifer. Visitors soak in a series of riverside pools at The Springs Resort & Spa, Overlook and Healing Waters, each with a distinct vibe.

The town's name—derived from the Ute word "Pagosah," meaning "healing waters"—perfectly encapsulates its essence.



OURAY

Nicknamed the "Switzerland of America," Ouray combines dramatic alpine scenery with frontier charm. The Ouray Hot Springs Pool & Fitness Center, nestled beneath towering cliffs, has been a community geothermal hub since 1927. For those seeking history and intimacy, the Wiesbaden Hot Springs Spa and Lodgings features a naturally heated vapor cave and small soaking pool.

Whether paired with a drive along the Million Dollar Highway or a stroll through Victorian-era streets, Ouray's hot springs embody Colorado's mountain magic.

DURANGO, COLORADO

Durango combines a deep western heritage and modern vibrancy. The town remains true to its mining-and-railroad roots while embracing college-town energy, craft cuisine and outdoor adventure.

A short drive from downtown, Durango Hot Springs sits amid mountain scenery—ideal for pairing an active day with a restorative soak.

SAGUACHE COUNTY, COLORADO

Saguache County offers a more off-the-grid portion of the Loop—deeply scenic, rich with wide-open space. Framed by the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo mountains, the region invites hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing and soaking in quiet solitude. It's home to several distinct hot springs, like Joyful Journey, Sand Dunes Recreation, Splashland and Valley View Hot Springs, where visitors can escape the bustle and reconnect with nature.

At its heart, the Colorado Historic Hot Springs Loop celebrates something timeless: the human instinct to gather, rest and heal in nature's warmth. From the ancient traditions of the Ute people to today's spa retreats, Colorado's hot springs have always been places of renewal.

Head to www.cohotspringsloop.com to learn more about soaking along the Colorado Historic Hot Springs Loop.