

Steamboat Springs Colorado :: World Class Ski Resorts

Surrounded by wide valleys, STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, 65 miles north of Vail, looks like no other Colorado mountain resort. Its roots are in ranching rather than mining, and its downtown area still evokes a pioneer feel - until you spot the upmarket boutiques. In this ski-mad town, rancher-types judge the quality of snowfall by the number of fence wires it covers; they're usually satisfied with a three-wire winter, which corresponds to its average snowfall of 325 inches per year.

The town's top-notch ski resort (lift tickets \$59 per day), snuggled into Mount Werner four miles south of downtown, is boosted by such activities as dogsled expeditions, hot-air ballooning and snowmobiling, available in and around town. A favorite year-round activity is to let all the stress seep out at the secluded 105°F Strawberry Park Hot Springs (daily; 10am-midnight; \$5-10), six miles north of town but only accessible by 4WD in winter.

If you prefer to stay in town, the Steamboat Springs Health and Recreation Center offers hot mineral pools (6.30am-10pm; \$5), as well as workout facilities. In the summertime, opportunities for mountain biking, whitewater rafting and horseback riding abound. Outfitters throughout the town can assist you with gear and guides.

Most winter visitors fly into Yampa Valley Airport, 22 miles out from Steamboat Springs, though it's possible to drive. Weather permitting visitors can drive from Denver over scenic Rabbit Ears Pass, or take the Alpine Taxi shuttle direct from Denver International Airport (tel 970/879-8294 or 1-800/343-7433; \$60). Need Cheap Plane Tickets? AirTicket.com has great rates on Airfare, Last Minute Plane Tickets, and Discount Student Plane Tickets.

Steamboat Springs visitor information center is at 1255 Lincoln Ave, two miles east of downtown (Mon-Sat 9am-6pm, also Sun 9am-6pm during peak times in summer and winter; tel 970/879-0880).

Looking for Good Food? Its everywhere! Try Azteca Taqueria, 402 Lincoln Ave (tel 970/870-9980), they have great inexpensive Mexican takeout. For a casual atmosphere and deli-bakery delights try Winona's, 617 Lincoln Ave (tel

970/879-2483). If you're looking for more stylish dining, Antares, 57-and-a-third 8th St (tel 970/879-9939), is one of Steamboat's very best, serving an eclectic range of fish and meat dishes. If you've got money to spare, try the delicious dinner at Hazie's, up on the mountain (open Tues-Sat for lunch and dinner during ski season, Fri and Sat nights during summer; tel 970/879-6111), which includes a free gondola ride; best of all is their superb \$26 summer-only Sunday brunch.

Microbrews and decent pub food are available near the ski area at The Tugboat Grill and Pub (tel 970/879-7070), which also has live music and a dance floor; The Cellar Lounge, 703 Lincoln Ave (tel 970/871-8917), is a good downtown venue for live bands too. No matter what you're looking for Steamboat Springs Colorado has something for everyone!