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Near Denver, Colorado's Hot Springs Trail (Excerpts)

by Kathryn Brockman



Introduction



The Rocky Mountain state of Colorado has over 29 hot mineral springs where you can soak, swim, and relax, for a few hours or a few weeks. Most are within a 3-hour drive or less over paved roads in any direction from Denver.



There's a hot mineral springs for everyone, including a geothermal pool that tops even Iceland's famed Blue Lagoon!



Plus, lots of local attractions, regional foods, and exciting outdoor activities, all set in diverse terrain and microclimates.



You don't even have to bring a bathing suit—you can buy a one-time-wear swimsuit onsite!



Rocky Mountain Hot



The Rocky Mountains, crested by the Continental Divide, carve a geographically distinct identity between the American West and East. They profoundly affect Colorado climate, temperatures, and terrain.



Their volcanic base continues today to "cook" the waters that flow into Colorado's geothermal, or "Earth-heated," hot mineral springs.



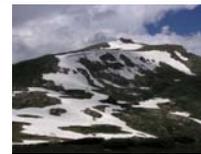
These centuries-old hot springs were a mecca for early North American Indians, then were later developed by pioneering entrepreneurs. Today, some springs are generational-family, company- or individually-owned.



The Pool complex has a public 405- by 100-foot master pool; a 100- by 40-foot therapy pool; 11 Olympic-length swimming lanes; a two-board diving area; and two 47-foot-long tubular waterslides, fed daily with 1.1 million gallons of volcanic water.



Heated Homestead



Grand Avenue is also SR 82, gateway to Independence Pass, which was carved by glaciers and rivers. Don't drive too fast or you'll miss the spectacular scenery that will have you rubbernecking to the 12,095-foot summit. Absolutely stop at the designated rail-guard summit lookout for "Wow!" views and snowball fights.

	At the end of 82, take State Road 24 south, onto US 285 south. Turn right at the Mt. Princeton sign, Country Road 162. The Resort is tucked a mile left, below Chalk Cliff, inside San Isabel National Forest.
	At this secluded, family-owned regional getaway, you can stay put for days! It's all-encompassing, with five 80- x 50-foot hot mineral springs swimming pools with lap lanes, soaking pools, a water slide, various accommodations, and an onsite restaurant--plus gas station and convenience store. Pools are open 9 to 9 daily; \$10 to \$15 admission; free for overnight visitors.
	The next part of the tour takes you from Mt. Princeton Hot Springs Resort for a relaxing dip at Joyful Journey Hot Springs Spa in Moffat, about an hour's drive. Let's pause here to enjoy the ride!



Joyfully Hot

	Grab a hot meal in Villa Grove. Just past it, a cluster of Mongolian-style yurts, North American Indian-style tipis, and futuristic geodesic dome rise from the vast valley floor. Turn left onto SR 17 for Joyful Journey's Hot Springs Spa.
	Three, cozy, outdoor geothermal soaking tubs offer picture-perfect views of the mountains. The 98- to 108° pools are open 10 to 10 daily for \$12 public admission.

	At last, a chance to camp out in a furnished yurt, luxury-style, with built-in skylight and terrific views! Or buy one for about \$7,000!
	38 miles south on SR 17, outside tiny Mosca, is another quirky geothermal soaking springs. But it's not for humans! The average bathers at this 87° hot springs wildlife spa are American alligators, 400 of them, some 60 years old, 19-feet long and weighing 1,000 pounds!
	Hot Mud
	Nearby Conifer is home of Trey Parker, co-creator of the award-winning TV cartoon series, "South Park." It's also where you exit right onto Pleasant Park Road/County Highway 73. This U-turns and backtracks along 285, then veers right onto Evergreen Parkway/CO-73.
	73 ends at Evergreen's downtown intersection, where CO-74 splits. Turn left for Art Gallery Row. A walking replica of the famed 13th-century labyrinth in France's <u>Chartes Cathedral</u> is open for a free walk about at the Church of the Transfiguration.
	Off exit 241A is the newly renovated, two-story, 32-room Indian Hot Springs hotel and spa. A 30-foot-high translucent dome shelters a slice of the South Pacific: a 50- by 40-foot swimming pool, surrounded by over 200 lush tropical plants and trees—but with 90- to 115° geothermal waters.
	Thanks for joining us along Colorado's hot mineral springs trail. There are plenty more along the way, varying in size, temperature, access, seclusion, and views. Once experienced, Colorado's Hot Springs Trail is, simply, unforgettably Hot! And incredibly Cool!