

TRAVEL

This winter trip to Steamboat Springs was one for the ages

There was something for everyone on our multigenerational family getaway

By **Diane Bair and Pamela Wright** Globe Correspondent, Updated November 17, 2022, 10:00 a.m.



Steamboat Ski Resort encompasses 2,965 acres, sprawling over six mountain peaks, with 165 trails. PAMELA WRIGHT

“What was your favorite part of the trip?” we asked our stair-step-aged kids. We were

returning from a multigenerational winter trip to Steamboat Springs, Colo. It was no surprise that each gave a different answer.

“The cowboys and horses!”

“The swimming pool!” (Also known as Old Town Hot Springs.)

“Why Not!” (The 3-mile-long beginner run that we did many times.)

“Skiing at night!”

“The house!” (Our rental house was way cool, more on that later.)

“Not yet!” (1½-year-old Lucca was not ready to leave.)

We’d heard some great things about Steamboat Ski Resort, known for its family-friendly vibe and something-for-everyone terrain. It didn’t disappoint, and now holds first place on our best-ever multigeneration trip list. In addition to its easy-does-it slopes (go somewhere else if you’re looking for Mikaela Shiffrin-worthy double-black-diamond chutes), this Colorado ski area is also known for its cowboy culture and champagne powder, due to its location in a dry pocket of the Rocky Mountains. In fact, the phrase “champagne powder” was coined here, and the resort claims a registered trademark for it.

The Wild West-style town has a variety of off-slope activities, too, including horseback riding, ice skating, snowshoeing, dog sledding, sleigh rides, hot spring soaks, and more. We had big plans to do it all, until we checked into our Moving Mountains rental home. Oh my. Moving Mountains specializes in private luxury home rentals in Steamboat Springs, Vail, Beaver Creek, and Breckenridge (www.movingmountains.com). Our rental, dubbed the Trails Edge Lodge, was a sprawling, 6,000-square-foot, multi-level lodge, overlooking the mountain, and decked out to the max with amenities. We had a big group, and lodging that had space for all of us to hang out together, was a priority. This Moving Mountain ski-in, ski-out property had seven bedrooms, including two

master suites, and a fun, dorm-style kids room; it comfortably slept 16. It also had a media room, family room, living room, game room with billiard and foosball tables, a huge kitchen and dining area, indoor sauna, and outdoor hot tub. We immediately canceled our restaurant reservations for the week, and seriously wondered if we'd want to leave the lodge. But the mountain was calling, and the first evening we headed out to go night skiing. It was the perfect introduction and warm-up to our Steamboat ski vacation.

Steamboat Ski Resort (www.steamboat.com) encompasses 2,965 acres, sprawling over six mountain peaks, with 165 trails. It's best known for its beginner and intermediate terrain, and for its forgiving, thinned-out tree skiing. Most mornings, we'd head to the gondola to access our first-of-the-day runs, including a meander down the Why Not trail, a looping, 3-mile beginner's top-to-bottom ride. The more advanced skiers in the group would veer off to tackle black diamond runs, before meeting back at the base of the gondola for the next trip up the mountain. The Sunshine Express area was also a favorite, with a variety of blue, green, and black runs.



Take a break on the slopes at this fun spot with picnic tables and teepees. This area was the summer hunting grounds for the Yampatika band of the Ute tribe. PAMELA WRIGHT

By the third day, we were ready to give Steamboat's legendary glade skiing a try. (Skiing Magazine cited the resort for "Best Trees.") At the top of Sunshine peak, we went to the backside of Mount Werner, home to Morningside Park, a wide, confidence-boosting 200-acre bowl. We skied the broad, sun-softened slopes, weaving through spaced-out Aspen trees. We ended the day with a crazy ride on the Outlaw Mountain Coaster, a 6,280 linear-foot plunge down the mountain, reaching speeds up to 25 miles per hour. (That may not sound fast, but it sure felt fast.)

This winter season, Steamboat Ski Resort will celebrate its 60th anniversary, and has announced ambitious plans to rebuild its base area, pumping nearly \$200 million into an apres-ski plaza with lodging, restaurants, bars, a “ski beach,” and ice-skating rink. Some locals bemoan the upcoming changes, worried that the resort will lose its downhome, community vibe. We do hope they keep the red wagons (for hauling gear and little kids) and the cowboy attire (love the Stetson-style head gear and western wear!)

The Wild West tie-in is authentic. In the early 1900s, Steamboat Springs, located in lush Yampa Valley, was a hub of cattle ranching, and one of the largest cattle shipping centers of the West. Today, the town is still surrounded by large ranches, and Main Street is filled with historic, turn-of-the-20th-century buildings, housing bars, restaurants, souvenir shops, galleries, and small museums. We enjoyed our browse through Moose Mountain Trading Company (couldn't resist that mini moose made from nuts and bolts) and the kids got souvenir shirts at Sweet Mountain Tees. A handful in our group visited the Tread of Pioneers Museum (www.treadofpioneers.org), offering a glimpse into Steamboat Springs' past, including a 1901 Victorian house with furnished rooms and hands-on exhibits.

Old Town Hot Springs, dubbed Colorado's original natural hot springs resort, operating since the 1880s, is also in town. At one time, Yampa Valley was the summer hunting grounds for the Yampatika band of the Ute tribe, and they considered the spring waters to be sacred places for healing. We found a soak in the 98- to 103-degree spring-fed pools to be the perfect balm for our ski-weary muscles, while the kids appreciated the 230-foot-high waterslides and the in-the-pool climbing wall. Horseback riding, a sleigh ride, and riding the bumper cars on ice at the Howelsen Arena were on our vacation to-do list, but we ran out of time.

We had an early flight back to Boston, departing when the sun's first rays touched Yampa Valley. “Not yet!” Lucca screamed as we boarded the shuttle to the airport. We hear ya, honey.

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