



## Into Steamboat Springs' Backcountry

**C**hampagne Powder® snow falls throughout the Yampa and Elk River Valleys, much to the pleasure of anyone fond of winter recreation, snowy scenes, and catching snowflakes on the tongue.

Although last year's snowfall of over 400 inches a year is compelling enough, World Class skiing at the Steamboat Ski Area, is not the only game around. Over 520,000 acres of National Forest and State Parks and almost 400,000 acres of National Wilderness Areas surround Steamboat Springs, which means a Steamboat Ski vacation can easily combine the resort experience with a backcountry adventure.

### Where to Go:

#### Rabbit Ears Pass:

Named for the remains of a volcano that resemble a pair of rabbit's ears, the pass attracts a variety of outdoor enthusiasts year round. **In the winter the pass is divided into areas of motorized and non-motorized use.** The west side of the pass (closest to Steamboat Springs) is designated non-motorized for snowshoers and skiers while the east side allows snowmobiling. Whether powered by machine or not, all trails weave through pine, spruce, aspen, and fir connecting open meadows and scenic overlooks. Cross-country skiers and snowshoers can reference the **Steamboat Springs Visitors Guide** for maps and trail descriptions including several loops or the popular **Hogan Park Route**, for experts only, that links Rabbit Ears Pass to the Steamboat Ski Area. For the motor inclined, sign up

for a half-day or full-day snowmobile tour with **Steamboat Snowmobile Tours**: 877-879-6500, Steamboatsnowmobile.com.

**Buffalo Pass:** Emerging just behind the Steamboat Ski Area Buffalo Pass often accumulates close to 500 inches of snow per season making it the snowiest location in Colorado. "Buff" Pass is popular among local backcountry skiers and accessible to the public through local and longtime outfitter.



© Larry Pierce/Steamboat Ski Area

#### Elk River Valley and Steamboat Lake:

Travel up north of Steamboat Springs and discover gems of the old western ranching days. Guest ranches sprinkle the rugged terrain, and Steamboat Lake State Park, Pearl Lake State Park, and the Mt. Zirkel Wilderness Area preserve it in its natural state. Visitors can explore the area on a day trip from town and participate in several activities including snowmobiling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and sleigh rides. Or, if visitors choose to stay "up north" choose from a number of unique lodging experiences from quaint cabins to luxury guest ranches.



## Featured Activity:

### Steamboat Powdercats Moonlight Descents

Only one experience beats the exhilaration of skiing Steamboat Springs' backcountry powder guided by Steamboat Powdercats, and that's skiing the same powder by moonlight. If there's one memory to share with friends this is it: climb aboard a heated snowcat as the stars begin to glisten, ride into an eloquent winter wilderness, and then descend open meadows and billowing bowls of untouched powder under the light of the moon.

After a few runs, with warm breaks in between compliments of a comfy heated snowcat, settle in at Steamboat Powdercats' cozy backcountry cabin at 9,000 feet for a delicious 3-course meal, and a few bottles of good wine.

This is one of Steamboat Springs' most unique winter activities coupled by a dining experience like no other. Steamboat Powdercats will cater to the group's desire and design a skiing experience everyone will not soon forget.

All tours are only offered during the 4 days around the full moon of every month:

- ✧ January 2-4, 2007
- ✧ February 1-3, 2007
- ✧ March 1-3, 2007



© Corey Kopischke/Steamboat Powdercats

© Larry Pierce/Steamboat Ski Area



## What to Do:

**Horseback Riding:** It's not so strange to hear folks associate the depth of snowfall with the height of wire fences. "Three-Wire Winters" are the average, and visitors can see it for themselves on a winter horseback ride. Several ranches, most of which are family owned and operated, offer winter horseback riding. Take a break from the slopes, and discover what it was like to explore the area in the beginning of the homesteading era.

**Del's Triangle Three Ranch** (970-879-3495, Steamboathorses.com),

**Dutch Creek Guest Ranch** (800-778-8519, Dutchcreek.com).

**Sleigh Rides: Dutch Creek Ranch** (800-778-8519, Dutchcreek.com),

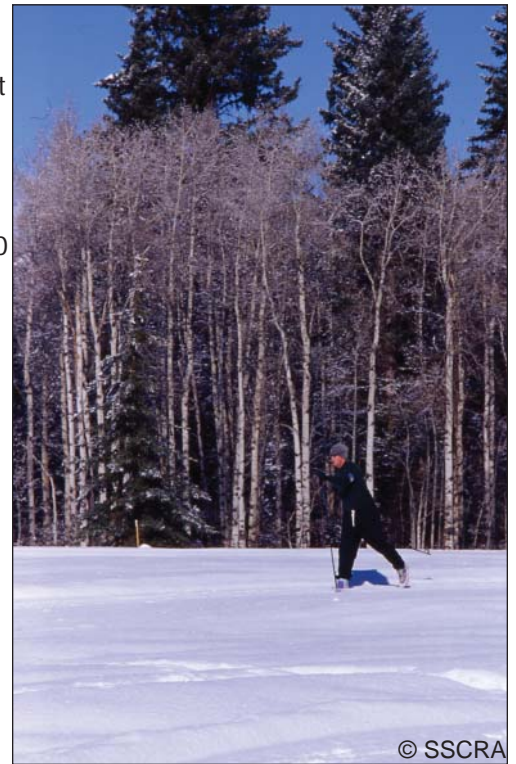
**Elk River Guest Ranch** (800-750-6220, Elkriverguestranch.com), **Sunset Ranch** (970-879-0954, Sunsetranchinc.com).

**Cross Country Skiing:** With hundreds of miles of trail, Steamboat Springs is the **Nordic Center of the Rockies**. While Rabbit Ears Pass is fortified with over 30 miles of trail; the Elk River Valley has two touring centers to choose from surrounded by pristine wilderness. **The Steamboat Lake Touring Center** is located at over 8,000 feet of elevation and offers some of the best early and late season snow in the area. Located within the boundaries of Steamboat Lake State Park the touring center is nestled between Hahn's Peak and Sand Mountain just 40 minutes North of Steamboat

Springs. The touring center features 15 kilometers of groomed trails and all trails are groomed at least twice per week. Most of the terrain in the area is beginner and intermediate but there are a few more challenging runs as well.

**Vista Verde Ski Touring Center** is based at the Vista Verde Guest Ranch near the town of Clark. With 30 km of groomed trails spread out over the 500 acre ranch, there's plenty of room for in-house guests as well as day guests to enjoy the quiet and scenic trails. Most of the trails wind through open meadows or lodgepole pine stands, but a few venture up the challenging hills to panoramic views and quiet glades of aspens. The trails are groomed for both skate and classic skiing, with some trails dedicated to snowshoeing as well.

**Snowshoeing:** Almost anyone can enjoy the fresh air and exercise from snowshoeing, but in Steamboat Springs you can choose from a vigorous work out at 10,000 feet on Rabbit Ears Pass, or a more low-impact workout in the valley at 7,000 feet. With **Rocky Mountain Ventures**, you may also see Elk, Buffalo, and other wildlife. Rocky Mountain Ventures provides snowshoes and transportation (970-870-8448, VerticalGrip.com). Or, learn more about the flora and fauna with an interpretive guide from **Yampatika**(970-871-9151, Yampatika.org), Steamboat Springs' non-profit environmental education organization and try out the **Steamboat Touring Center's** snowshoe track, or head up to Rabbit Ears Pass. If you are interested in a reward, the **Steamboat Ski Area** offers a Guided Gourmet Snowshoe Tour, hike at 9,000 feet to a gourmet lunch with a glass of wine Steamboat.com, 800-922-2722.



© SSCRA



© Larry Pierce/Steamboat Ski Area

**Backcountry/Powdercat Skiing: Steamboat Powder Cats.** Dreaming of untracked powder? Think it's only for the pros, or too remote for the everyman or woman? Dreams can come true. Skiers and snowboarders can float through Champagne Powder® snow on 10,000 permitted acres. No lines except your tracks: 800-288-0543, Steamboatpowdercats.com/winter.

**Snowmobiling: Steamboat Snowmobile Tours** covers Rabbit Ears Pass and the Flattops while **High Mountain Snowmobile Tours** is based off of Seedhouse Road and covers all of northern Routt County. Both tours are operated through Steamboat Snowmobile Tours (877-879-6500, Steamboatsnowmobile.com).

