

STRAWBERRY HOT SPRINGS

John W. Lund, Geo-Heat Center



Overview of Strawberry Hot Springs.

This remote hot springs is located on private land within the Routh National Forest at an elevation of 7,500 feet (2,250m), about 10 miles (16km) north of the town of Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Originally the hot springs were used by the local Ute Indians to heal their body and soul after battle with other tribes. They believed that the vapors contained their creator's essence and soaking in the pools rejuvenated the soul.

European settlers claimed the land in the 1870's and drove the Utes out. What followed was boisterous and destructive use of the springs resulting in trash and poor sanitation that disgusted the Utes. The ownership passed from private partners to The Steamboat Springs Health and Recreation Association, however they provided little supervision of the site, and parties had to often be broken up by the local sheriff. Finally, in 1982 the current owner, Dan Johnson, bought the property and transformed it into a peaceful site to soak. Cabins and rock-lined pools have been built, along with a bathhouse, a changing tepee and massage therapy are available. There is no electricity and only one telephone to help stranded motorists in the winter.

The hot springs issues from rocks on the hillside at 147°F (64°C) and fills several pools arranged on the hillside and creek bottom. These pools are kept at 102°F to 104°F (38°C to 40°C), but bathers can cool off in the ice mountain streams that are slightly warmed by the hot spring water.



The source of the spring.



One of the small pools.

Getting there can be an adventure, especially during winter months. The last eight miles from Steamboat Springs is a gravel road with steep ups and downs, requiring 4-wheel drive or chains in the winter. The county imposes a \$500 fine for drivers who are unfortunate enough to get stuck in the winter. There is a shuttle bus from Steamboat Springs, or as some do, you can cross-country ski the last eight miles.

Obnoxious behavior has been eliminated, mainly due to an entrance fee. After dark, bathing suits are optional and with an adults only requirement. During the day children are welcome. Bus loads of school age children often visit the site. The entire facility can be rented for private functions, as well.



Fish Creek Falls waterfall.



The ticket booth.

The site is in a valley surrounded by Aspen trees, with deer, fox, and birds all around. Nighttime soaking provides an unobstructed view of the stars. The nearby Fish Creek Falls (283 feet high, 86 meters) waterfall is one of the local attractions that is a “must see.”

REFERENCES

Frazier, Deborah, 2000. *Colorado's Hot Springs*, (2nd edition), Pruett Publishing Company, Boulder, Co.

Wambach, Carl, 1999. *Touring Colorado Hot Springs, A Falcon Guide*, Falcon Publishing Company, Boulder, Co.

