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*Steamboat  
Springs*  
**COLORADO**

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# Summer in Steamboat Springs, Colorado

by Lou Jurassic

**F**irst things first. Before I tell you about the summer wonders of a place best known as Ski Town USA, let's get something straight. There's no paddle wheeler plying a river or lake anywhere near Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Never has been. This picturesque mountain hamlet takes its name from a long-defunct hot spring that made a loud hissy noise sort of like a steamboat.

The area's therapeutic springs first enticed summer visitors in the early 1900s. Back then, the winters were too daunting for much leisurely activity. Skiing wasn't a sport; it was a primary mode of winter transportation. (When you get upwards of 300 inches of snow each year it's hard to get around otherwise.) By 1913, townsfolk built a ski jump to amuse themselves. The Olympic training ground and Olympians came later and remain Steamboat's primary claim to fame.

For now, forget about all that deep, white powder and think about the lush green high country summer that follows the snow. Summer in Steamboat was the original top-draw, and the season remains an extraordinary time to visit a mountain town that somehow manages to offer all kinds of A-list recreation without losing a sense of small town normalcy.

Steamboat's unique personality means the best of both worlds for Julie Molema and her husband Peter who moved to Steamboat two years ago. Peter's job as art director of a San Diego-based magazine allows them to live where they like and Julie admits they looked at some "pretty dreamy places—Park City, Aspen, Vail" before settling on the little town just three-hours northwest of Denver.





Julie Molema loves hiking to Rabbit Ears Pass shown in the background.

“My husband really likes a resort atmosphere and I am more of the small town girl. I like a place to feel authentic. In Steamboat we both got what we wanted.”

The couple lives in Steamboat’s Brooklyn neighborhood. “It was originally a separate town that was actually the Red Light District,” Julie Molema explained. “Now it’s right in the heart of town. We’re right next to the Rodeo Grounds and Howelson, the friendly little ski hill with the ski jump. The big resort is about two miles away. We can pretty much walk wherever we want to go.”

Their affinity for walking first drew them to Steamboat, a community renowned for its easy access to wide-open spaces. “There is an amazing trail system on Howelson Hill right in town and some really great hikes on the outskirts. We spend every weekend exploring a new place. Spring Creek trailhead is right on the edge of town. The hike to Fish Creek Falls starts just three miles from Steamboat and the falls are amazing. There are trails all over the Steamboat Ski Area, too. Rabbit Ears Pass is a bit of a drive southeast of town, but we love going up there because there are some

wonderful backcountry hikes in the area. We especially like to go to Dumont Lake where there’s a good chance we’ll run into shepherders and their dogs tending flocks. There are also a lot of hikes into natural hot springs,” she continued.

“These are hikes most anyone can do. Even toward the top of Rabbit Ears where it does get steep at the very end, we’ve had family members with little kids make it. It’s sort of the thing to do: to stand between the ‘ears’ and get your picture taken.”

Mountain bikers also find trails to love around Steamboat. So do horseback riders. The community prides itself on its cowboy attitude and the rodeo grounds near the Molemas’ home stay busy with events every Friday and Saturday night from June 18 to August 21.

“There’s always something going on in the summertime,” Julie Molema said. “We were surprised at the number of art galleries, restaurants and music options. The Strings Music Festival goes on through the end of August. It’s got performances in the pavilion all through the week and on Thursdays they put on free concerts at the Yampa River Botanic Park.”



Steamboat Springs’ downtown



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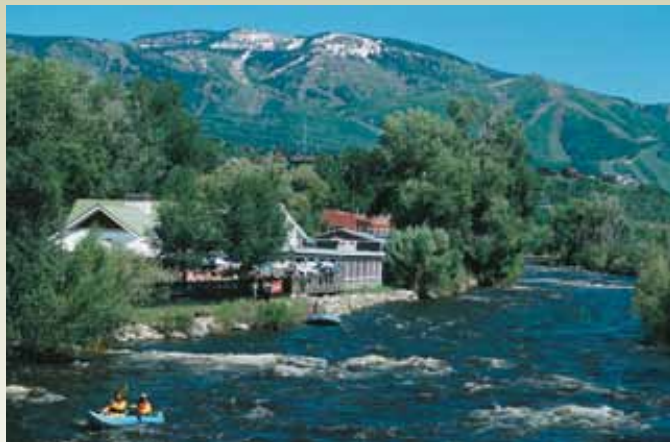
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Steamboat Springs, population just about 10,000, is home to more than 100 bars and restaurants. This is the place to taste authentic Western offerings such as elk, buffalo and Rocky Mountain oysters (the remnants of the process that turns a bull calf into a steer—tastes like fried chicken). There is also a wide variety of ethnic and specialty options including Italian and Mexican restaurants and Sushi bars.

The river runs right through Steamboat's heart and is a focal point for all kinds of summer fun. "Sometimes it's hard to walk down Main or Yampa streets because there are so many people on the sidewalk carrying their tubes," Julie Molema laughed. "It's almost as much fun to watch the river as it is to raft it," she said. "We like to go to the Boathouse Pub. It's a great burger-and-beer place right on the



The Yampa River, a favorite of fishermen and kayakers, becomes a tuber's nirvana in downtown Steamboat Springs. As summer progresses, the water slows to offer an exceptional way to spend an easy afternoon. Tubes are available from a variety of rental shops.

river. They've got two decks facing the water and Howelson Hill. We'll watch the rafters and kayakers in summer and the ski jumpers in winter. Sometimes it's nice just to sit and watch life unfold here. The beauty of Steamboat is that if you want to be busy, you can always find something to do. If you want a little peace and quiet, that's easy to come by as well. We really did find the best of all worlds," she said. ■



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