

## Life on Vacation

A weekly look at the second-home market

### Steamboat Springs, Colo.

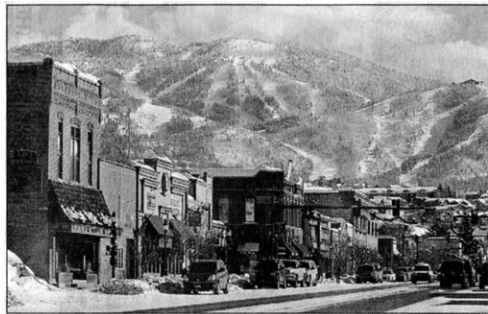
# Still a ski town, but with so much more

By Larry Olmsted  
Special for USA TODAY

Steamboat Springs has cultivated an image as a ski bum paradise, where slopes meet the wooden sidewalks of the Old West. But now, with a billion-dollar urban renewal project and more than \$30 million in ski area improvements, it's attracting more second-home buyers.

Steamboat, which bears the trademarked name "Ski Town USA," has several things that set it apart from other Colorado ski towns. First, there's the snow, which is among the driest and deepest in the country (canny developers also trademarked the phrase "Champagne Powder"). Situated in north-central Colorado, the mountain catches the state's blizzards as well as those that hit Utah and Wyoming and has averaged more than 400 inches of snow the past two winters.

The resort also is a family-friendly destination, ranked best in North America by *SKI* magazine. In addition to the major Steamboat resort, with its acclaimed children's instruction programs, the municipally owned Howelsen Hill has long been a training ground for local kids and future Olympians. Both offer specials aimed at children.



Steamboat Village Brokers Ltd.

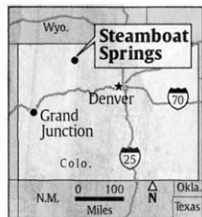
**Visions of Old West:** Steamboat Springs' main drag is a draw, too.

The final attraction is the town itself, just over 2 miles from the ski resort. "People come because they saw the mountain ranked top five by the ski magazines, but then they see Old Town and say, 'Wow, this is cool,'" says David Baldinger Jr., owner of Steamboat Village Brokers. Lincoln Avenue is the main drag, and it has a traditional Main Street setup.

Another difference between Steamboat and other top ski towns is the variety of prices. "You can still buy a ski-in/ski-out one-bedroom condo in the \$200,000s," Baldinger says. "And there will be a \$4 million house a stone's throw away."

### A look at Steamboat Springs neighborhoods

- ▶ **Steamboat Ski Resort.** The base area has a mix of condos and older houses, but the newest projects are also here, including One Steamboat Place. Opening in December, the luxury condos were priced \$2.7 to \$4.4 million, with fractional options as well (onesteamboatplace.com). Older condos begin in the high \$200,000s.
- ▶ **Old Town.** Steamboat Springs has a variety of shops and restaurants; thanks to lower prices, it is popular with year-round residents. "Only about 20% of the residences here are second homes," says realty agent David Baldinger Jr. A three-bedroom single-family house with a mountain view can be had for under \$800,000.
- ▶ **Surrounding ranches and estates.** "We don't have the kind of subdivisions that surround a lot of Colorado towns," Baldinger says. Instead, legacy ranches have been developed into estate homes with community amenities. The most established is the Catamount Ranch and Club, with a golf course, private lake and houses averaging around \$4 million (catamountranchclub.com).



Source: ESRI USA TODAY

#### Best for

Families, powder skiing.

#### Claim to fame

Steamboat has produced more Winter Olympians than any U.S. town.

#### Don't miss

A dip and massage at Strawberry Hot Springs.

#### Getting there

Steamboat/Hayden airport is 25 miles away with non-stop flights from nine cities, including New York and Atlanta.

#### Tourism information

steamboat-chamber.com,  
steamboat.com