

A Snowy Walk Through Glenwood Springs



By Ryan Alford

Living in Colorado, I've had the opportunity to experience visiting several snowshoeing destinations that many people covet and dream about. I take the mountains for granted and I'm not proud of it. They are what I look at often as I go through life in Denver – although I rarely take advantage. However, when I can absorb a majestic Rocky Mountain experience, one Colorado mountain town will forever have my heart: Glenwood Springs. When I visit, I never take it for granted and nor do I want to leave.

I fell in love with Glenwood when I was child – kindergarten to be exact. I had the opportunity to live there for about a year. I watched my father and mother as they worked and thoughtfully raised me through my early life. My father worked in the neighboring town of Parachute. My mother – for a majority of the time – was pregnant with my sister, Lindsey. And she would later be born in Glenwood – a unique fact about her life.

But as a child, I found my fun and thrills within the landscape of Glenwood. Of course, during the winter it would snow often and in great amounts. Life in the early 80s brought Colorado a lot of snow. At the same time, it brought life to Glenwood. Some of my fondest memories include sledding down nearby hills, enjoying the occasional breakfast at Rosie's Little Bavarian Restaurant and soaking in the local Hot Springs Pool.





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For a kid, Glenwood is a place where life begins and then solidifies into a standstill image of winter perfection. For an adult, Glenwood is a playground that transforms complicated surroundings into simple pleasures of relaxation, unique dining experiences and outdoor splendor. When family or friends visit Colorado and ask me



where to go, I always tell them to take a two and half hour drive on I-70 west of Denver.

Although Glenwood Springs isn't generally associated with snowshoeing, it sits close to many of the best winter destinations in the world. Winter is considered Glenwood's off-season, which is advantageous

for snowshoers looking for good deals and exclusivity from the busy ski resorts. Because that's what Glenwood is not – a ski resort. It's somewhat of tourist town, attracting many people to its Hot Springs, but it's definitely not an over-priced vacation spot. The closest ski resort is Sunlight; it's a quaint, full-of-personality resort that's smaller than most in Colorado and cost-friendly.

You will find character and charm in Glenwood; you won't find aristocrats and posh settings. If you want that, Aspen is about an hour south of Glenwood. Although the Aspen experience is a different snowshoeing article altogether, it's the location of Glenwood that will warm your soul and not deplete your wallet.

Spend some time in the hot springs after a long day of snowshoeing and you'll surely be rejuvenated by its healing waters. Enjoy a perfectly cooked steak and a glass of wine at Juicy Lucy's restaurant. Stay at the historical Hotel Colorado and discover why it was called the White House of the West. Relax and replenish your body in the Vapor Caves to cap off your stay. These are just some tastes of what Glenwood Springs truly has to offer the traveling snowshoer.

Hotel Colorado

When I travel to Glenwood, I enjoy staying at the Hotel Colorado. Of course, when I visit, I bring my wife and kids. Glenwood is an excellent family destination and the Hotel Colorado is always very accommodating. It offers a great room and dining experience, all decently priced.

The Hotel is one of Colorado's oldest, built in 1893 – originally built to host some of the world's wealthiest, well-heeled persons. It debuted to an ornate festival of fireworks and an orchestra in the ballroom, all catering to approximately 300 couples.

Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Taft used Hotel Colorado as a summer retreat. For several years in the early twentieth century, the Hotel was known as "the White House of the West." President



Herbert Hoover reportedly gave a speech at the Hotel during a luncheon in 1939. This was near the start of World War II and the end of the Great Depression for the United States.



Also during this period of time, the Hotel was also used as a hospital, as leased by the United States Navy. It served more than 6,500 patients by 1945 – some of which died in the Hotel.

The Unsinkable Molly Brown – survivor of the Titanic tragedy – was a visitor of the Hotel Colorado. The Molly Brown Suite is a tribute to her history and includes photos and memorabilia. If you can afford the extra coin on this suite, it's suggested you take advantage of the unique experience.

Hotel Colorado is said to be haunted. Several ghosts roam the halls and are said to haunt rooms 325, 551 and the tower suites. If you have a chance to take the “haunted room tour” at the Hotel, I

highly suggest you do so...with a group, of course.

When I took the tour, a TV in one of the haunted rooms suddenly turned on for no reason – giving us all a good scare. It was a lot of fun and



well worth the effort.

There are several amenities at the Hotel, including La Provence Spa, Legend's Trading Company Espresso & Juice Bar, free Wi-Fi, and Grand Lobby fireplaces. The Hotel also is home to Baron's restaurant, which features a fine-dining experience and diverse menu selection. You can also enjoy the Polo Wine & Martini Lounge and the Courtyard Café – both are perfect for some rest and relaxation after a long day of snowshoeing.

For more information on the Hotel Colorado, visit www.HotelColorado.com.

My Snowshoe Adventure

Although Glenwood is surrounded by plenty of snowshoeing destinations, I chose to snowshoe around the city. A recent storm dumped about a foot of snow, making it prime conditions.

I woke up to break trail early and get some of the best snow before the first melt. It was a perfect day: Not too much sun, the smell of the hot springs in the cool air, and no work to be done in the near future. I aimed to pass by some of the spots in Glenwood I enjoyed the most.

To get the day started right, I snowshoed around the Hotel Colorado grounds and took a few laps around the hot springs. The snow was wet, making flotation just right for some aggressive hiking. My Atlas 12 Series shoes



needed some major breaking-in, but they performed well. I enjoyed the new Wrapp Pro binding system – easy in, easy out works wonders. If you want a great deal on snowshoes, Atlas is providing buyers with free poles with the purchase of snowshoes. Check out www.AtlasSnowShoe.com for more details.

The 12 Series are solid shoes. After K2 Sports took over Atlas and Tubbs, the manufacturing and brands have taken a major step forward. After putting my Redfeather Blackhawks through hell, I was due for a new pair of snowshoes. The Atlas 12 Series have been great trail buddies, working and performing as advertised. Their virgin run in



Glenwood was much enjoyed. A well-made snowshoe is always welcomed and appreciated.

Now that I worked-up a sweat, it was time to add some energy and calories. I also wanted to eat a good breakfast before trudging

down the Glenwood Canyon trail. This is a great snowshoeing hike if the snow is deep enough. The Canyon is spectacular during the winter and I couldn't wait to get started.

I snowshoed to Rosie's for breakfast, which is a short walk from the Hotel Colorado. This favorite among Glenwood locals has an excellent menu that particularly pleases during the breakfast hours. In fact, Rosie's was one of my favorites when I was kid.

During this visit, I chose a modest oatmeal and fruit serving with a side of toast. Rosie's Belgium Waffles are also wonderful and well-worth the calorie load. It's

Bavarian roots and local popularity have proven to keep it as one of my top places to visit when in Glenwood. Enjoy your breakfast when you're there!

After a hot breakfast, I was eager to get out on the trail. Now mid-morning, the air was still cold and the snow was the perfect depth. As usual, Glenwood Canyon didn't disappoint – the recent snow had left a low mist in the air, lightly brushing the Canyon walls. Snow was in every corner and crevice of the rocks and trees that lived among the Colorado River Valley.

The Canyon is one of the most beautiful places to visit in Colorado. In the early 90s, the Glenwood Canyon Highway was completed and, at the time, was the most expensive



highway project in the United States. The Big Dig in Boston has since taken that crown. But, before the new highway system opened in 1992, the previous highway was a treacherous two-lane road that snaked along the Canyon's floor. It is now part of the Canyon's main bike trail, the very trail I chose to snowshoe on.

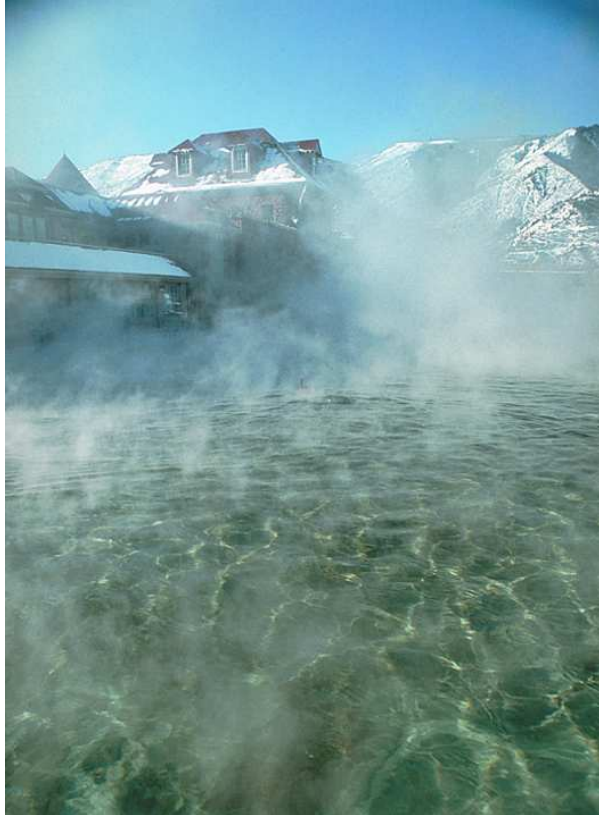
If you're visiting Glenwood Springs, summer or winter, visit Hanging Lake in Glenwood Canyon. The Hanging Lake Trail is open year round and a vigorous snowshoe hike. Although the trail is about 1.2 miles from the start of the trailhead to the top, the elevation gain is 1,020 feet. It's not a hike for the faint of heart for sure. But, once you reach the lake, it's very rewarding. The lake is breathtakingly beautiful and a stunning

indigo blue (as pictured during the summer). For this trip, I could only hike up the trail so far before I was stalled at the trail's steep, rocky outcroppings near the top. I was a lone snowshoer that day, so I didn't feel



comfortable placing my life in too much danger.

After returning to the main trail, the sun peeked out of the clouds and burned off the mist that shrouded the Canyon walls. It was a perfect day for snowshoeing and an even better day to be in Glenwood Canyon. Of course, my next destination was a deserving dip in the Hot Springs.



The Glenwood Hot Springs and Lodge

When driving west to Glenwood Springs along I-70, the first thing many travelers see is the Hot Springs Pool and Lodge. This is the cornerstone of Glenwood's tourist attractions and quite possibly the every day local hangout. When my parents and I were residents, we visited the Hot Springs on a weekly basis – sometimes two or three times a week. The

experience is pleasurable and worthwhile.

During the summer, the Hot Springs Pool and Lodge opens its system of waterslides and miniature golf. Remember, Glenwood's prime season is during the summer. During the winter, the large pool and the smaller therapy pool provide a "soaking" experience that soothes and relaxes strained snowshoe muscles. The pool is



always kept at a comfortable 93 degrees Fahrenheit and the therapy pool averages about 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

When it's really cold in Glenwood, the steam rises from the pools and blankets the landscape. It's an amazing

experience to spend an evening in the Hot Springs after a day of snowshoeing or skiing. I can easily spend a whole day at the springs.

You also have the option of staying at the Hot Springs Lodge, which provides unlimited access to the hot springs pool. This is not a benefit provided at the Hotel Colorado.

For more information about the Hot Springs Pool in Glenwood, visit www.HotSpringsPool.com.

More About Glenwood Springs

*Sunlight Ski Resort – To get away from the pretentious, every day Colorado ski resort, go spend a day at Sunlight. This best kept secret near Glenwood is not only a great inexpensive place to ski, it's also a wonderful snowshoeing destination. For more information about Sunlight, visit www.Sunlightmtn.com.

*Mount Sopris – On a clear day, look south from Glenwood Springs. The ominous mountain you see in the distance is called Mount Sopris. Surprisingly, Sopris is only 12,965 feet in elevation – not among Colorado's



thirteener and fourteener groups. What's even more surprising is that Sopris is made up of two mountains, East Sopris and West Sopris, both the same elevation. It also provides some of the best snowshoeing in the region.

Directions:

From the intersection of Colorado State Highway 82 and Highway 133, head south on Highway 133, through the town of Carbondale and at about two and a half miles from the intersection (mentioned above) you need to turn left (east) on Prince Creek Road. Follow this road for about five miles or so (it turns to dirt at about Mile 1.5) until you come to a potentially confusing intersection. Keep right to follow the road to Dinkle Lake. The

parking area for the trailhead for Mount Sopris is at Dinkle Lake - about a mile and a half from the confusing intersection.

Keep in mind, because of winter conditions many of the roads to Mount Sopris may be closed or potentially treacherous. It's also important to use an all-terrain vehicle that has four-wheel drive to get to the Sopris trails. Be prepared for deep snow and high elevation snowshoeing! Bring plenty of water, food and emergency equipment. Do not snowshoe alone! Do not take chances and be smart about your surroundings. For more information about avalanche awareness, read this article:

www.snowshoemag.com/view_content.cfm?content_id=420.

*The Hot Springs Vapor Caves – If you think the Hot Springs are rewarding, try the Vapor Caves at the Yampah Spa and Salon. After a day of snowshoeing or skiing, pay a small fee to spend some time in the Vapor Caves. This is one of the most relaxing

activities you can pursue in Glenwood Springs. The Caves are natural underground hot mineral water steam baths where hot mineral waters flow through the cave floors at 125 degrees Fahrenheit. For an invigorating experience, fill a bucket with ice-cold



water and slowly dip it over your head to cool off. It's an amazing experience...and the perfect way to relieve stress.

For more information on the Vapor Caves, visit www.YampahSpa.com.

*Redstone, Colorado – You can't visit Glenwood Springs without making a stop in Redstone. This small town is best known for its working artists' studios, fine art galleries and shops filled with handmade crafts and antiques. If you have a night or two to spend elsewhere, I suggest spending it in Redstone. There are several bed and breakfast lodges and inns to choose

from, including the historic Redstone Inn.

The Redstone Castle is also a must-see landmark. Although it's currently closed



for renovations, you can inquire about tours at any of the privately-owned shops in Redstone. The Castle is full of history and features an interior with gold-leaf ceilings, maroon velvet walls, silk brocade upholstery, and marble and mahogany fireplaces.

For more information about Redstone, visit www.RedstoneColorado.com.

*Juicy Lucy's Steakhouse – Every year, I try to take at least two or three major snowshoe trips, which involves taking advantage of lodging and dining extravaganza. When I visit Glenwood, I make a point to stop at Juicy Lucy's Steakhouse. I'm always impressed



with its atmosphere, menu and wine list. Every meal I've had at Juicy Lucy's has been cooked and prepared to my liking – never overdone and never overrated. Although it's dining area is small and sometimes conflicts with the bar crowd, it's worth the time to wait for a table and sit down for a first-class dinner.

I suggest the Caesar Salad (heavy on the anchovies) to start. You can't go wrong with the Porterhouse or the T-

Bone steaks cooked medium-rare, sautéed fresh spinach and Lucy's au Gratin potatoes. For vegetarians, I suggest the Grilled Vegetable Kabobs with sautéed fresh spinach and sautéed button mushrooms. As a wine to go with any steak or veggie medley, I suggest my favorite blend: Bennett Lane Maximus Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah 2004. Although this entire meal isn't on the cheap side, it's an experience that you'll never forget – especially after a day full of recreation and a dip in the Hot Springs.

For more information about Juicy Lucy's Steakhouse, visit

www.JuicyLucysSteakhouse.com.



*Tequila's Mexican Restaurant – If you want a meal that's kinder to your wallet, make a stop at Tequila's Mexican Restaurant. It's my opinion that Tequila's represents the best Mexican food in Colorado. It really is that good. I would suggest the enchilada plate (for vegetarians, choose the all cheese variety) and a very large Margarita. If you're staying at the Hotel Colorado – or any of the surrounding lodges – you can walk back to your room. Tequila's is located across the street from Rosie's Little Bavarian Restaurant on West 6th Street. Have fun!

*Red Rooster Inn Bed and Breakfast – Although I have not had the pleasure of staying at the Red Rooster Inn Bed and Breakfast, I've heard positive things. Red Rooster Inn is located southeast of Glenwood Springs off Highway 82, halfway to Carbondale.



If you're looking to receive top-tier treatment, Red Rooster's Spa Package is suggested. It includes two one-hour massages at Splendor Mountain Spa in downtown Glenwood,

two passes to the Hot Springs Pool, two passes to the Vapor Caves, and a stay at Red Rooster's country guesthouse. Of course, breakfast is included. The Spa Package starts at \$435 for a couple.

Snowshoers have plenty to enjoy while staying at the Red Rooster Inn. When the snow is right, the surrounding trails are perfect for snowshoeing and exploring. I can't wait to stay at the Red Rooster Inn the next time I'm in Glenwood. I'll write more if I do. For more information about Red Rooster Inn, visit www.Red-Rooster-Inn.com.

*For travel and general information on Glenwood Springs, visit www.GlenwoodChamber.com. Photography is courtesy of Kjell Mitchell, Teresa Alford, Ed Kosmicki, GSCRA, Sunlight Ski Resort, Erin Cady and Red Rooster Inn.

