

insider's guide

The town that sends more skiers to the Olympics than any other, **Steamboat Springs, Colorado**, has the best tree skiing in North America, the wackiest winter carnival, and plenty of cool spots to shop, eat and sleep.

Champagne Powder

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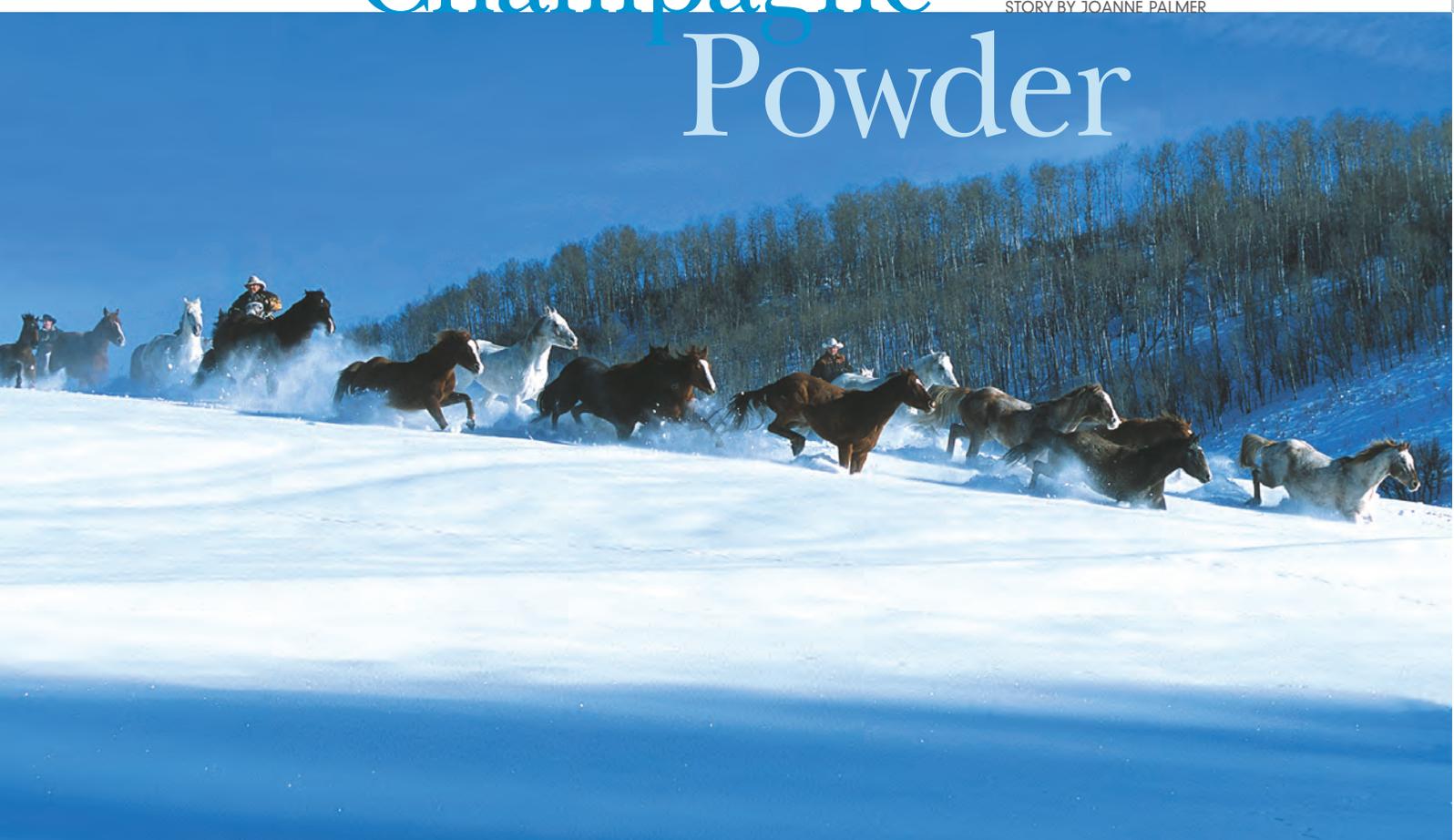


PHOTO COURTESY STEAMBOAT/LARRY PIERCE

THIS PAGE: The Wild West is alive and well in beautiful Steamboat Springs, Colorado. The resort averages over 300 inches of snowfall per year and features 2,939 acres of terrain and over 65 miles of ski trails.

ACCORDING TO LEGEND, once a person visits the Yampa Valley they will be forever compelled to return. One visit to this corner of northwest Colorado—home to pine and aspen forest, the Yampa River and the 10,568-foot Mount Werner—will convince you that the valley is irresistible. Of course, that may have to do with Steamboat Spring's blend of world-class skiing

with small town warmth and charm. Blessed with over 300 inches of snow a year, Steamboat has some of the best skiing and scenery in Colorado. Steamboat's unique geography creates "champagne powder"—the light, fluffy snow skiers dream of. Champagne powder isn't the only extravagance that Steamboat offers. With several art galleries, a chamber-based music fes-



PHOTOS COURTESY STEAMBOAT/LARRY WEBER

LEFT: Idle skis illustrate the depth of fresh snow. RIGHT: Skiers from all over the world travel to Steamboat for its famous champagne powder.

tival, live theater, day spas, intriguing shops, thermal hot springs and over 70 restaurants and bars, Steamboat Springs offers a diverse mix of cultural, culinary and natural splendor to indulge in.

The Art Scene

This winter, Strings in the Mountain Festival of Music will debut a new Winter Concert Series, featuring one contemporary and two classical performances. The series will begin with classical guitarist Richard Coo, a virtuoso of the new classic guitar generation, and will conclude with a performance by violinist Chee-Yun and pianist Wendy Hen. Strings opens its new Festival Park in June at the gateway to the ski mountain.

Housed in the historic train depot at the west end of town is the Eleanor Bliss Center for the Arts and Small Works Gallery. From January 9 to February 8, the depot will fea-

ture an exhibit and sale of the Dyed in the Wool Hookers of Steamboat. Rugs, wall-hangings, pillows and stools with hooked cushions will be among the featured pieces. Call (970) 879-9008 for a full winter schedule. Limited-edition photographic nature prints can be found at Images of Nature (906 Lincoln Avenue). Mountain Tradition (833 Lincoln Avenue) specializes in western wildlife and Native American art. Just off Lincoln Avenue is Two Rivers Gallery (56 Ninth Street), which features 18th- and 19th-century fine art of the American West. On the mountain, the Sheraton Hotel houses the Wild Horse Gallery, showing bronzes and oils by contemporary western realist artists, (970) 879-7660.

Where to Sleep

Steamboat's newest bed-and-breakfast, Colebrook Manor, is a Victorian mansion filled with an exquisite collection of antiques. Suites with fireplaces and full breakfast available, (970) 870-9126. After only three years, Steamboat Grand Resort Hotel achieved a four-star designation by AAA. Spa, fitness center, swimming pool, (970) 871-5500. For other lodging options, call Central Reservations, (800) 922-2722.

Great for Kids

Squeal-o-rama! Kids can't contain their enthusiasm as they swoosh down the hydro-

• Breakfast

- THE SHACK**, 740 Lincoln Avenue. Famous for its warm log-cabin atmosphere and heapin' helpings.
- WINONA'S RESTAURANT & BAKERY**, 627 Lincoln Avenue. Serves outrageous cinnamon rolls, hearty granola and fluffy pancakes.
- MOCHA MOLLY'S**, 635 Lincoln Avenue. A wedge of homemade sunflower oat toast and a hot latte.

• Lunch

- HAZIE'S**, (970) 879-6111. Named for Hazie Werner, mother of three Olympians. Even if you aren't a skier, you can ride the gondola up the mountain for lunch. Reservations recommended.
- SLOPESIDE**, Torian Plum Plaza, (970) 879-2916. Steamboat's favorite ski-in, ski-out restaurant features brick-oven pizza and white chicken chili.

• Dinner

- MAMBO ITALIANO**, 521 Lincoln Avenue, (970) 870-0500. Frank Sinatra tunes, singing chefs, Italian food and a festive atmosphere.
- CAFÉ DIVA**, 1855 Ski Times Square Drive, (970) 871-0508. Small, intimate and romantic, the specialties include elk tenderloin with seared foie gras and morels. Reservations recommended.
- LA MONTANA**, 2500 Village Drive, (970) 879-5800. Try the Camarones (stuffed shrimp topped with jalapeno hollandaise). Reservations recommended.

INSIDER'S TIP:

On powder days, buy First Tracks and Breakfast Buffet tickets the night before. Take the 8:15 a.m. gondola. The secret: ski first, eat later. Early birds get a guided tour for first turns in the champagne powder before the general public tracks it up.
