

Thermal Water Wellness on The Rise

By [Vicky Nash](#) Executive Director , Hot Springs Association | July 2023



The appeal of hot springs runs deep and is steeped in nature.

Geothermal water is special and can only be found in particular areas.

Circumstances have to be just right. This phenomenon is naturally occurring, emerging from deep within the core of the earth. For centuries, Indigenous peoples have considered these waters sacred. Historically, the practice of thermal bathing was performed regularly to treat various ailments and health conditions. In the late-1800s and early-1900s, wealthy patrons checked into sanatoriums for

structured 21-day programs throughout the United States. However, as modern medicine became more prevalent, this practice fell out of favor.

A self-proclaimed Queen of the Hot Springs, I have had the fortune of visiting well over 100 facilities all over the world. My personal preference is to visit a hot springs spa early in the morning, when there are very few other people onsite. I select a 104°F pool, backfloat in the center and begin my sensory ritual. Look up through tree branches at the brilliant blue sky. Listen to the flow of the water. Smell the fresh clean air and the rich minerals. Feel the warmth and weightlessness. Hear and see a soaring eagle overhead. This routine creates a true sense of calm.

When I'm not adding new hot springs to my list, my actual job is the Executive Director of the Hot Springs Association which is the first-ever trade organization specifically established to unify and elevate the hot springs resort and spa industry worldwide. One primary objective of this organization is to increase and enhance the awareness, understanding and perception of the use of hot springs for wellness purposes.

There are approximately 250 commercial hot springs properties throughout the United States. Each place has unique features and different mineral composition depending upon the type of rock beneath the surface. Experiences vary greatly ranging from soaking in a small private tub in a short-term rental to frolicking in the largest hot springs pool on the planet. The Hot Springs Association's [website](#) strives to identify and map all of these extraordinary places.

In the past few years, there has been a renaissance in the popularity of natural mineral springs. Extensive upgrades, expansions, restorations and renovations continue with over 50 projects underway or recently completed. Here are some examples of innovative concepts that specifically incorporate nature into their design.



Rocky Mountain Bliss

[Durango Hot Springs Resort + Spa](#) in the mountains of southwest Colorado continues to add exclusive outdoor geothermal mineral water soaking experiences to their recently renovated property. In April they introduced nine private 4'x4' and 4'x6' Japanese-inspired white cedar wood soaking tubs providing soakers the ability to adjust the water temperature to their personal preference.

A new Zen Garden area will be opening in June with cascading ponds, lush flowering landscaping and water sculptures adjacent to the spa treatment rooms. This new feature is in a natural mountain setting with native plants and unique exotic trees. The garden has three Ofuro tubs on the edge of the ponds with a large communal soaking pool available to guests who have booked a spa treatment or a private soak. The Zen Garden can also be reserved for group events and private functions. An additional investment of \$6-8M in new amenities and property improvements are planned for the next two years.

[The Springs Resort](#) in southern Colorado's town of Pagosa Springs recently added three new nature-based Wellness Activities to its complimentary offerings for overnight hotel guests.

"Wild Yoga" is a yoga session in a natural forest setting emphasizing mindfulness practices and breathing techniques to promote relaxation and reduce stress.

"Hang Time with Sound Bath in Nature" allows participants to relax, rejuvenate in a comfortable tree-hung hammock, and experience singing bowls.

"Mother's Mud," is a unique terra-thermal experience in which guests apply a nourishing mud mixture made with a combination of natural ingredients and mineral water from the Mother Spring. This mixture provides a

one-of-a-kind detoxifying effect that also nourishes and soothes the skin. Guests complete the experience with a refreshing cleanse in the San Juan River.



In addition to the new Wellness Activities, The Springs Resort launched a hot springs-based Detox Experience, a two-day wellness program that promotes nature-based detoxification and rejuvenation. The Detox Experience includes a step-by-step science-based Hot Spring Soaking Guide that helps participants understand how to maximize the benefits of the resort's wide range of pool temperatures and Wellness Activities to eliminate toxins, reduce inflammation, and improve overall health and well-being. This package, which also includes an Energizing Herbal Renewal spa treatment and poolside Vitality Tonics, is designed for individuals seeking to kickstart a healthier lifestyle and those needing a reset from the stresses of everyday life.

In early 2023, The Springs Resort commenced a resort expansion project that will bring 25 additional hot spring pools along the San Juan River. The expansion also includes a dedicated Wellness Activity pool and a geothermal-focused spa offering breathtaking panoramic views of the geothermal wetlands and San Juan mountains. The expansion is expected to be completed in early 2025.



Along the Colorado River

Well-known as the largest hot springs pool in the world, [Glenwood Hot Springs Resort](#) in Glenwood Springs, CO is adding a new swimming area with five additional pools featuring varying water temperatures and a shade pergola and hearth. In addition, the area around the mother spring, named the Yampah Spring by Ute Native Americans, will be landscaped and the mineral water drinking spring reopened. The new swimming area adds hot plunge, cold plunge and infinity-edge pools as well as two pools with waterfalls, including one that will be grotto-like in nature. The expected completion date is sometime in 2024.

A \$10M expansion is nearing completion at [Iron Mountain Hot Springs](#) also in Glenwood Springs, CO. Named "Upriver" because of its location on the bank of the Colorado River, this new section is exclusively for guests over the age of 21 and will nearly double the size of the resort. Ten hot spring pools featuring pebble bottoms will provide a natural foot massage. Other highlights include a cold plunge and a large freshwater pool with a waterfall.



Spiritual Connection

For centuries, Sec-he-the Cahuilla word for the sound of boiling water-has been the center of Tribal life for the Agua Caliente people, imbued with cultural and spiritual significance. The newly opened [Spa at Sec-he](#) in Palm Springs, CA offers a one-of-a-kind Taking of the Waters private mineral bath experience. Guests receive a 15-minute soak in the hot spring water, known to aid the joints and the skin, with the purchase of a treatment or day pass. The hot mineral spring water last saw the Earth's surface more than 12,000 years ago and is made up of a mineral combination only found on the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation. These healing waters bubble up in the private mineral baths, the outdoor mineral pool and the private VIP mineral whirlpool.

A journey through the spa may be enhanced with a stop at the Tranquility Garden, where guests decompress before their treatment. The aroma of the California Redwoods, the flow of the rushing water, the palm trees and desert flora create an indoor oasis representative of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indian reservation.

Urban Oasis Reborn

[Murrieta Hot Springs Resort](#) in Murrieta, CA is undergoing a complete restoration, slated to reopen in late 2023, keeping much of its original Mission Revival-style architecture and landscape design while adding world-class spa treatments, an innovative fitness center, and health-conscious dining options. The centerpiece of the experience is the resort's hot springs, offering dozens of soaking pools filled with natural geothermal water at varying temperatures. Specially designed programs will be available to help visitors maximize the rejuvenating benefits of the springs.

The resort promises to be a haven of vitality, inspiring guests to experience transformational moments that enhance their mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Dr. Marcus Coplin, a naturopathic medical doctor

and Director of Hydrothermal Medicine for the Balneology Institute of America, leads the resort's health and wellness team as Medical Director and has played a crucial role in shaping every aspect of the on-site experience, from the use of the springs to the food served throughout the resort. Personalized sleep optimization programs with customizable room options and a complimentary Sleep Tray help guests feel rejuvenated and more in tune with themselves.

New Construction

Two large-scale projects expected to open in 2024 include Zion Hot Springs, a \$30M development on 16-acres in LaVerkin, Utah near the ever-popular Zion National Park. In the Dallas metroplex, a new waterpark concept called WorldSprings will feature 43 pools grouped in four pods that simulate a variety of mineral compositions from over 20 countries.

A Bright Future

Global Wellness Institute research determined that there are over 35,000 hot springs establishments across 130 countries. The Thermal/Mineral Springs sector was one of the fastest-growing wellness markets from 2017 to 2019, with revenues rising from \$56 billion to \$64 billion (6.8% annual growth). Hit hard by the pandemic, revenues fell -39% in 2020, shrinking the market to \$39 billion. However, the outlook is very strong with 18% annual growth expected through 2025.



Ms. Nash

With extensive travel industry experience spanning 40+ years, Vicky Nash specializes in geothermal tourism management and marketing, providing a global perspective and unique expertise in this field. Ms. Nash serves as Executive Director for the recently formed Hot Springs Association. She is well-known throughout the industry for originating the Hot Springs Connection conference and the Hot Springs of America website. From 2015-2022, she also managed the Colorado Historic Hot Springs Loop, a multi-award-winning marketing collaboration that features the state's premier thermal locales. Her involvement with the Global Wellness Institute's Hot Springs Initiative has facilitated strong relationships with hot springs professionals worldwide.

Extended Biography & Contact Information

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