

HOT SPRINGS



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GRANITE HOT SPRINGS
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About this activity

After a long week of skiing there's nothing more refreshing than a soak in steaming hot mineral waters. The greater Jackson Hole valley is surrounded by thermal waters, but there are a few spots developed for you to enjoy nature's hot tub.

Located 10 miles down a snow-covered trail, Granite Hot Springs is nestled under peaks of the Gros Ventre mountain range and towering pine trees. The 110-degree pool was built in the 30s and is the perfect place to relax and refresh in a winter wonderland. In the winter months, the hot springs are accessible only via snowmobile, dog sled, skiing or fat biking, making it a fun off-day activity.

There are guided snowmobile and dog sled tours that will lead you to the springs and include a soak before heading back or you can choose to rent your own equipment and make it a DIY adventure.

Where old meets new is Astoria Hot Springs, just 15 minutes south of town. Originally built in the 1960s as a family-run commercial resort and community pool, Astoria shut its doors in the 90s. The Astoria Park Conservancy was formed in 2018 and with the Trust for Public Land, campaigned to bring Astoria back to its former glory. Opened in the Fall of 2020 as a non-profit owned and donor-funded park, the new Astoria Hot Springs opened with five natural hot spring-fed pools along the scenic Snake River. While COVID safety procedures are in place, Astoria is open to local residents with a valid ID or current pay stub.

There are undeveloped hot springs around the valley that can be soaked in, like the popular Astoria springs

adjacent to the Snake River and intimate "Hippie Dip" near Granite, but make sure to research the location of the pools and if you can legally and safely soak. The Polecat and Huckleberry Hot Springs in the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway used to be a popular place to hot pot, but a policy change prohibited public entry into geothermal features in National Parks. You are allowed in any creeks or pools not solely of thermal origin, like those warmed by the runoff from nearby hot springs, such as Polecat Creek itself. Also look for warnings like those at Huckleberry and Kelly Warm Springs that have detected the nefarious "Naegleria fowleri, "brain-eating amoebas" to ensure your safety.

Things might look a little different this year, so here are a few things to keep in mind:

- A guided tour is the easiest way to enjoy a day at Granite Hot Springs, and plan ahead when booking your tour. Dog sledding to the springs is one of the more popular and sought after activities so it books quickly.
- Each hot spring is different so make sure to plan ahead – Granite requires a cash fee on site, while Astoria requires reservations made online.
- Group sizes may be limited, so making reservations is key.
- To avoid crowds, at developed and undeveloped springs, visit during weekdays and off-peak times.
- Indoor services may be limited, so call ahead for information and prepare to spend more time outdoors.
- Bring warm clothes and make sure to have a mask. Bring an extra mask in case one gets wet.

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While each spring has different rules and procedures in place, there are a few things across the board each business is doing to keep you safe. Each vendor is limiting the amount of people allowed in a pool – 40 at Granite and 70 at Astoria. This may require you to wait until the pool clears out or only have an hour of soak time at Granite. Each facility is trying to limit the amount of time people spend inside so come ready to swim, bring everything you need and change quickly. “We want people to be outside in the fresh air, but that can only happen if people are responsible,” said Linda Merigliano, resource manager at the Bridger-Teton National Forest. “This is what’s necessary to keep access open.”

- Wear a mask when socially distancing is not an option. Each business has their own mask requirements and is following state and county orders.
- The CDC does not recommend neck gators or buffs for full protection against COVID-19. Dry, double layered face coverings are recommended. Bring an extra in case one gets wet.
- Be flexible, occupancy is limited, and you may have to wait to soak or have a limited soak time.
- Plan ahead and bring everything you need including towels, water, admission fee. It’s also advised to wear your swim gear under your snow clothes to limit time spent indoors.