



## 6 Things to Do in Ouray in the Summer

### Ouray Via Ferrata

The term 'Via Ferrata' is Italian for 'iron road'. It is essentially a climbing route with steel cables, rungs, and ladders attached to a sheer cliff hundreds of feet above the canyon. It is an epic adventure that is not for the faint of heart!

The Ouray Via Ferrata is located in the Uncompahgre Gorge. There are two routes you can choose between, the upstream route and the downstream route. The upstream is more challenging, I recommend the downstream route if this is your first time.

The Via Ferrata is free for the public to use, but you will need to rent the required equipment. There are several outfitters in town, we rented ours from [San Juan Mountain Guides](#). Another great option is [Basecamp Ouray](#).

The basic rental package does not include gloves, but they are essential. You can purchase gloves for \$5 from the shop, or bring your own. The rental is good for the entire day, so you can do multiple routes if you have the time and energy!

The Ouray Via Ferrata is a self-guided route, but guided tours are also available. If you feel more comfortable going with a guide, I recommend booking a trip with San Juan Mountain Guides or Basecamp Ouray.

We chose to do the climb on our own without a guide and the route was easy to follow. We were given a safety demonstration when we picked up the rental gear, and there was a ranger at the beginning of the route to go over safety instructions and answer any questions.

Kids are allowed to do the Ouray Via Ferrata, but they are required to have a guide if they are under 90 lbs. This is for safety reasons and they will weigh them at the beginning of the trail if needed.

I was with my son and nephew who are both 13 years old and they did awesome! I wouldn't recommend bringing kids under 10-12 years, but use your discretion. They will need to be comfortable with heights and be in decent physical condition. There are 2 early exit options if you feel that you can't complete the entire route.

The route is approximately 3/4 miles long. It took us about 3 1/2 hours to complete with snack and water breaks along the way. There are a few flat areas where you can take a little rest, so be sure to bring plenty of water and some snacks.

The canyon is absolutely gorgeous, I couldn't get over the views and the thrill of it all! If you can handle heights, then this is something you won't want to miss!

## Visit Box Canyon Falls

Box Canyon Falls is one of the coolest waterfalls in Colorado, and it's hard to believe it's only 500 feet from the parking lot!

The waterfall is easy to access along a narrow catwalk attached to the canyon wall. It ends at the face of a 285-foot waterfall that thunders through a narrow crevice in the gorge.

This powerful waterfall is a deafening force of nature and you can feel the mist and fury as you get up close.

After viewing the waterfall from above, take a set of stairs down to the bottom where you'll find a cavern next to the river.

There is also a set of stairs near the beginning of the trail that takes you to the High Bridge Trail where you'll find a suspension bridge, an old tunnel, and panoramic views over the gorge and valley.

There is a small fee to visit [Box Canyon Falls](#), click the link for pricing and hours.

## Soak in the Ouray Hot Springs

No visit to Ouray is complete without a soak in the famous Ouray Hot Springs, arguably one of the most scenic public pools in Colorado.

These natural, sulfur-free hot springs have been a favorite relaxation spot for locals and visitors alike for over a century. It is so nice to take a relaxing dip in the mineral-rich waters after a day of adventure.

The complex features multiple pools of varying temperatures from 80-106 degrees. Kids will love the waterslides, rock climbing wall, volleyball net, and rolling log. And parents will love the adults-only soaking pools.

We thought the admission fee to [Ouray Hot Springs](#) was a little high for a public pool, especially since there is an extra fee to add on the waterslides. However, the pool is open until 10 pm in the summer so you can swim for a few hours in the afternoon then come back and soak under the stars at night.

## Drive the Million Dollar Highway to Silverton

The Million Dollar Highway is a scenic stretch of road on U.S. Route 550 that runs from Ouray to Silverton. It is considered one of the most beautiful drives in the US and is known for its jaw-dropping views.

It is also one of the most dangerous with hairpin turns and steep drop-offs. The road doesn't have guard rails, this is to allow room for the snowplows to push the snow off the road. Just take it slow and use extreme caution. I would avoid driving this road during heavy rain or snowstorms if possible.

You'll find several scenic lookout points where you can safely pull over to take photos along the drive. The "Switzerland of America" lookout point is one of the most popular stops and offers an aerial view of Ouray and the surrounding mountains.

It is unclear where the name of the highway originated from, but there are a few theories. Many believe that the name refers to the high cost of construction in the late 1880s, or the rich ore deposits found in the surrounding mountains, or even the million-dollar views that are found on the drive. Personally, I like to think it's because of the priceless views!

Not only is the drive magnificent, but it ends at another darling mining town, Silverton.

Silverton is a fun place to step back in time and imagine what life was like in the late 1800s. Grab a bite to eat at the Lacy Rose Saloon, shop for souvenirs on Greene Street, pick up some homemade fudge at the Old Arcade Trading Co., or take a tour of the Old Hundred Gold Mine.

## Eat at Maggie's Kitchen

In the summer, one of our favorite things to do is grab a bite to eat at a restaurant with an outdoor patio overlooking the cute Main Street.

Ouray's Main Street is lined with historic buildings that house restaurants, shops, and hotels. There are several different restaurants to choose from and Maggie's Kitchen is one of our favorites.

Maggie's serves the best burgers in town with reasonable prices, good portions, and a great ambiance.

The interior is covered with handwritten notes and signatures, you can even add your own! We like sitting outside on the patio on a warm summer evening and watching the people pass by.

Another great option is Ouray Brewery where you'll find a rooftop deck perfect for a sunset dinner.

After your meal, stop by Mouse's Chocolate & Coffee for homemade truffles, pastries, and ice cream. You have to try the scrap cookies made from the scraps of the candies they sell!

A few other restaurant recommendations include The Brickhouse 737, Full Tilt Saloon, Goldbelt Bar & Grill, Timberline Deli, and The Outlaw where you can enjoy your meal with a live piano player.

## Stay at a Lodge with Hot Springs

Ouray is known for its natural hot springs and several of the local hotels and lodges have hot springs on the property.

We stayed at [Box Canyon Lodge](#) and loved the cedar wood hot tubs with mountain views. The rooms were a little dated, but they were reasonably priced for peak season. We also liked that a continental breakfast was included.

The [Twin Peaks Lodge & Hot Springs](#) is located next to Box Canyon Lodge and features beautiful outdoor pools and hot springs. We also love the pizza at the onsite MineShaft Bar Restaurant.

The historic [Wiesbaden Hot Springs & Lodging](#) has unique hot springs, including the vapor cave. The springs are free for hotel guests, or day passes are available for non-guests.

## A Few More of the Best Things to Do in Ouray in the Summer:

- **Bachelor Syracuse Mine:** Take a tour of this old gold and silver mine where you'll explore 1,500 feet into Gold Mountain. They also have gold panning and the Miners Café is open on weekends.
- **Ouray Alchemist Museum:** This obscure museum will take you back in time to experience an old frontier pharmacy. You'll find over 700 hand-blown medicine bottles, many which still contain the original medications and tinctures. The museum can only be visited with a guided tour where you'll hear fascinating stories about what life was like in the late 1800s. Call ahead to schedule a tour.
- **Ouray Perimeter Trail:** This 5.8-mile loop trail follows alongside the mountains surrounding the town and offers impressive views and waterfalls.
- **Lower Cascade Falls:** You'll pass by these falls on the Perimeter Trail, or you can take the 0.3-mile trail from Cascade Falls Park to reach the waterfall.

- **Ridgeway State Park Reservoir:** A great place to bring paddleboards or tubes to relax and play in the water on a summer day.
- **Ouray County Historical Museum:** Stop by this museum to learn about the history of Ouray. You'll find artifacts, exhibits, and historic buildings you can walk through.
- **Jeep Tours:** Several local companies offer guided Jeep tours that take you deep into the San Juan Mountains, exploring old mining roads and ghost towns.

I hope this guide will help you discover the best things to do in Ouray, Colorado in the summer!