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CHANGING SEASONS SET THE PACE IN ESTES PARK

Estes Park, CO — Each of the seasons in this mountain paradise offers its own special appeal and the more variety you experience, the harder it becomes to name a favorite time of year.

Winter in the mountains is a time of peace. It is slower-paced, a time of serenity with snowcapped peaks set against bright blue skies. An abundance of wildlife seeks sustenance at the lower elevations around Estes Park, with warm sunny days and nights designed for curling up in front of the fireplace. The average low temperature is just under freezing and there are days warm enough to play golf. Family outdoor activities include snowshoeing and cross country skiing in Rocky Mountain National Park or around Estes Park, ice skating at the Estes Park skating rink, or just walking along the river or through the village.

Lovers receive special attention on Valentine's weekend, with an opportunity to renew marriage vows in a celebration designed just for them. Every Sunday afternoon from November to April, there is a classical concert at the Stanley Hotel. Theater continues to thrive during the winter with productions to provide escapes to other worlds. For most, however, a winter escape to the mountains offers the perfect chance to be refreshed and invigorated by the pristine beauty of the surroundings.

Springtime in the Rockies brings new life. As the aspen begin to green, the pace of life picks up. The snow begins to melt from sunny southern slopes and longer hikes become possible. In anticipation of the warm weather to come, windows are thrown open to let in the fresh mountain air. Nights are still cool enough for a cozy fire in the fireplace.

And suddenly, it's summer. Life in this mountain village hits its stride with the July 4th celebration, fireworks over Lake Estes and brass band concerts, followed by the annual Rooftop Rodeo. The average high temperature is just over 80 degrees in July — the warmest month — and there's still the occasional night when a fire in the fireplace offers the perfect ending to a day of hiking or horseback riding in the mountains.

Music, theater, and art in Estes Park are as plentiful as wildlife in the park. Attractions in the village allow a change of pace from those offered by nature in the National Park. There's literally something for everyone and more to do than one could accomplish in a whole summer for those who choose to be busy on their vacations.

In the fall, the weather is at its very best and most reliable. There's time for one last trip to the mountains before the snow flies. Your appetites change; hot food regains its appeal; long pants and an extra sweater feel good again.

It's hard to believe that it's already time to watch for the aspen's annual transformation to pure gold, a sight that makes you catch your breath with wonder, year after year. The air is brisk and refreshing. Your step quickens. Perhaps you're ready for a more challenging mountain hike — all the way to Emerald Lake from Bear Lake, or the walk to Alberta Falls, Fern or Cub Lake. A scenic drive along the Peak-to-Peak Scenic Byway, Bear Lake Road or Trail Ridge Road may be appealing. One sign of the change of seasons unique to the mountains is the elk bugling. Bugling is the name given to the call of the bull elk as part of the mating ritual.

For a change of pace from nature's extravagant show, visitors to Estes Park can find entertainment in the annual Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival in early September as well as two outstanding arts and crafts shows and Autumn Gold, a festival of brats and bands. The day after Thanksgiving is the annual "Catch the Glow" Christmas parade and a host of related festivities.

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