

MARCO MEN'S CLUB TOUR
COLORADO'S HISTORIC TRAINS - BACKUP INFORMATION
Bruce Dahlquist – February 24, 2025

Denver.

Denver evolved from a gold mining town during the Pike's Peak Gold Run in 1850.

It is called "The Mile High City" because it is 5,280 feet above sea level.

Denver was the last stagecoach stop on the Smoky Hill Trail, which ran from Kansas to Colorado. It also was a stagecoach stop along the Overland Trail, the Denver to Salt Lake City Route, and other routes.

Buckthorn Exchange - Denver

If you plan to arrive at least a day early, it might be fun to experience Denver 's history as you have dinner. Consider eating at the Buckthorn Exchange, 1000 Osage Street.

The Buckthorn Exchange, founded in 1893, has been listed as a National Historic Landmark. With the history and ambience having been preserved and celebrated, you feel as if you are being taken back into history while you are eating.

Back in the day, the Buckthorn Exchange served cattlemen, miners silver barons, railroad men Indian chiefs, gamblers, etc.

The name came from the Buckthorn Lodge, located across the street from the Rio Grande Railroad. It was here that the railroaders exchanged their paychecks for gold.

The founder, Shorty Zietz, was given the nickname "Shorty" from Chief Sitting Bull. In 1938 the nephew of Sitting Bull gave him the saber of General Custer.

ZeitZ was also a life-long friend of Buffalo Bill Cody.

Over the years, this preserved historic landmark has seen many notable figures, including: Teddy Roosevelt, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Bob Hope, Roy Rogers, Will Rogers, Princess Anne, and many others.

Rocky Mountain National Park

Established as a National Park in 1915, it covers 265,795 acres, with over 77 mountains over 12,00 feet high.

The Rocky Mountains were formed over 75 million years ago because of the upward movements of the tectonic plates.

The first humans arrived 11,000 years ago.

The first Native Americans were the Utes and the Arapahos.

Leadville

Leadville began as a Victorian mining town.

After the California Gold Rush died, gold was discovered nearby. By 1860, 55,000 oz of

gold were mined, worth \$91 million in today's dollars.

Leadville got its name from the lead ore found in the sand. Prospectors found that the sand was 40% lead but yielded 15 oz of silver per ton.

By 1879, the silver boom was in full swing.

Leadville's downtown was designated as a Historic landmark in 1966.

Leadville was the home of the "Unsinkable Molly Brown," who besides surviving the sinking of the Titanic, helped establish the North American Women's Suffrage Movement.

Durango

Its earliest residents were the ancestral Puebloans, over 2,500 years ago.

The town was formed by the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad in 1860 to serve the San Juan Mining District. It provided a reliable source of water and coal for operating smelters to get the precious metals from the ore.

Gold and silver were mined.

Durango was named from Durango, Mexico. The name comes from Basque, Meaning "mater town."

Durango & Silverton Railroad

It was founded in 1879 to deliver mined ore to Silverton to the smelters.

The narrow gauge was implemented because it was easier to move through the mountains, as well as to prevent men and women from sleeping in the same bed.

In 1882, it began to take freight and passengers.

It traveled 18 mph.

Over the years, it transferred over \$300 million in precious minerals.

Many famous movies and tv shows were filmed on the Durango and Silverton Railroad

Including: Around the World in 80 Days (1956), Passage (1957), How the West Was Won (1963), Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969), Support Your Local Gunfighter (1970),

Mesa Verde

Mesa Verde is recognized as a World Heritage Site. Also, in 1906 President Teddy Roosevelt established it as a National Park.

The first signs of settlement occurred around 550 AD.

700 years ago, the ancient Pueblo lived here on the mesas and the cliffs.

Around 1190, they began to build multi-level cliff dwellings in the rock alcoves.

Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad

The Cumbres and Toltec Railroad listed as a National Historic Landmark. was 64 miles in length, being the longest and highest steam railroad.

It was constructed in 1880 as part of the RIO Grande Narrow Gauge and San Juan extension. It served the silver mining district of the San Juan Mountains.

The Royal Gorge Route Railroad

It is known as the most scenic train ride in North America.

The train travels over a 1,000-foot canyon, and at one point is only 30 feet wide.

In 1905, President Teddy Roosevelt described the railroad as “The trip that bankrupts the English language.”

Garden of the Gods

It is named for its massive rock formations and represents 300 million years of geological history.

In 1971, it was designated as a National Natural Landmark.

It has been the backdrop in thousands of films including The Lone Ranger and Tarzan the Ape Man.

Denver & Rio Grande Western Train Line

In 1870, it was a 3-foot-wide narrow gauge railroad running south from Durango, serving as a transcontinental bridge line between Denver and Ogden, Utah. It operated the highest main line railroad in the United States, over 10,240 feet.

In 1889, it was the largest narrow gauge railroad network in North America.

Between 1877 and 1880, there was a war with the ATSF Railroad over the rights-of-way. It included the buying off politicians, hiring gunslingers, as well as Bat Masterson in Dodge City.

Pikes Peak Cog Railroad

It is the highest cog railroad in the world and the highest train in the United States. It was coal fired, being only a 2-foot-wide narrow gauge.

Cripple Creek

Cripple Creek began as a gold mining camp.

It was surveyed in 1873.

The land was bought in 1878 for \$500 and 2 pigs, and was the Broken Box Ranch.

In 1890, gold was discovered, beginning the last gold rush in Colorado.

In 1891, the Independence Mine was one of the largest gold strikes in history.

In 1894, the official name became Cripple Creek. It has 150 active mines and 5,000 residents.

In 1961, Cripple Creek was named a National Historic Landmark.

In 1961 the Band recorded the Tune Cripple Creek, however the tune pre-dated the gold strike, with the lyrics added around the turn of the century. The song wasn't about Cripple Creek Colorado, but was about Wythe County, Virginia.

Summary

The information above was researched from a number of resources to provide background on the places we will be visiting.