

VISIT

**DURANGO**  
C O L O R A D O

**2020 Press Kit**





## Durango's Animas River Valley Promises New Visitor and Roadside Attractions

**Durango, CO – (June 18, 2020)** — [Visit Durango](#) is pleased to share news from North La Plata County, as several local businesses announce exciting new offerings. From reimagined farm-to-table dining and long-awaited spirits, to an extensive renovation of the historic Trimble Hot Springs and tiny-home vacation getaways, La Plata's North County corridor offers more reasons to explore Durango off-the-beaten path.

Follow the picturesque San Juan Skyway Scenic Byway (Hwy 550) north toward Purgatory Ski Resort, located just 27-miles from downtown Durango. Along the way, abundant outdoor recreation and elevated views of the Twilight peaks, Engineer and Spud Mountains beckon travelers seeking out more remote, authentic destinations.

In addition to roadside attractions like Pinkerton Hot Springs, Baker's Bridge and Cascade Canyon and Falls, North La Plata County now offers the following new and exciting attractions for 2020.

### Table-on-the-Farm Dining

The Animas River carves a lush, scenic valley into the towering San Juan Mountains, delivering water and nutrients for some of the richest soils in the region. Home to a plethora of fruits, vegetables, meats, cheeses, and other local food products, the north Animas River valley abundantly provides for Durango's renowned culinary scene.

A pioneer of the sustainable agriculture movement, James Ranch's long-awaited restaurant-on-the-farm concept has finally arrived. Overlooking the fields of the 400-acre ranch, [James Ranch Grill](#) serves up fresh, organic ingredients, including handcrafted burgers, gourmet cheese melts, steak sandwiches, salads, local craft beverages, and more. Located just 10 miles from downtown Durango, James Ranch raises livestock, pigs, and grows organic vegetables using strict sustainable growing practices for over 50-years.

## Small Batch Honey Spirits

Due west of James Ranch, [Honeyville](#) is a third-generation beekeeping and honey-bottling family business first established in 1918. Honeyville's Factory Store offers hand bottled specialty honeys and "everything made with honey" jams, sauces and mixers, which make great Colorado gifts.

This summer Honey House Distillery, located at Honeyville, is bottling its first batch of Straight Bourbon Whiskey, aged in charred American Oak barrels for over four years. Straight Bourbon Whiskey is made from locally grown corn and pure Colorado water – rated as one of the highest quality water sources in the U.S. – and distilled in a custom copper still and joins Honeyville's line of award-winning spirits made using honey.

## Durango Hot Springs & Spa

Just south of James Ranch and Honeyville is a relaxing oasis for travelers touring the North County corridor. The newly renamed [Durango Hot Springs Resort & Spa](#) will provide unparalleled amenities and services through the extensive renovation of the historic Trimble Hot Springs. Durango Hot Springs will expand from one hot pool and an Olympic swimming pool to a series of 12 ADA accessible mineral pools ranging in temperature with various soaking options and spa services.

Phase I will be completed by mid-July with the new swimming pool, four hot springs soaking pools and a completely renovated spa. Six Japanese-style Ofuro tubs will be available on the property, filled to the individual user's desired temperature and refilled after each use. A unique Aquagen system adds microscopic "nono-bubbles" of oxygen infused into some of the hot springs pools, creating a number of health and water quality benefits.

## Tiny-House Living on Vacation

After exploring North La Plata County, stay at the Nugget's new bite-sized designer vacation rentals. Each cabin has its own private hot tub with incredible views of Engineer Mountain and the Needles, located walking distance (about 700 feet) from the [Nugget Mountain Bar](#) and 1/2 mile from Purgatory Resort. The Nugget is the place to be for après ski, hike and bike enthusiasts, featuring a full bar, gourmet food truck, incredible views and a cozy, family-friendly atmosphere. Enjoy live music every Friday and Saturday from the large patio, kick back on the lawn and relax by the gas fire pits.

Stay at the Kerouac Cabin or Hemingway's Hideout for affordable mountain luxury and backcountry adventure at your doorstep. Inspired by the historic D-Log cabin that houses the Nugget Mountain Bar, the cabins are larger and more spacious than a traditional tiny home, custom built using sustainable building practices. Each cabin is equipped with a fully stocked, modern kitchen and amenities range from robes for the private hot tub and a vintage chair lift swing, to the latest tech and high-speed internet. Available now on Airbnb. Please visit [www.durango.org](http://www.durango.org) for travel itineraries and more inspiration.

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# Old West Heritage

## *The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad*



Incorporated in 1881, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad founded Durango to supply miners working in the San Juan Mining District. The narrow gauge railway extension connects the mountain towns of Durango and Silverton, and has traveled the 45-mile route (one way) continuously for over 135 years. Today the [Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad](#) (D&SNGRR) is a Registered Historical Landmark by the National Park Service serving thousands of travelers every year. Visitors can board the historic 1880's Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad (D&SNGRR) for breathtaking views of the rugged [San Juan National Forest](#) and old-world atmosphere.

**PLEASE NOTE!** Due to **COVID-19**, the Train returns to service for the summer season on June 23 with a modified schedule and safety operations plan. Guests can expect modified services, limiting guest capacity as well as implementing enhanced safety procedures in order to improve both employee and guest safety.

"D&SNG remains committed to the health and safety of our guests, employees, partners, and local community. Working closely with regulatory agencies and the state of Colorado, we will begin the summer season with altered services starting June 23 through August 15 or longer, depending on COVID-19 restrictions. We will be running steam and diesel services departing from our Rockwood Depot to Cascade Canyon roundtrip Tuesday through Saturday. Due to restrictions, trains will not run to Silverton through August 15 or until otherwise communicated."

Riders board the train at Rockwood Station and journey roundtrip to Cascade Canyon through the steep mountain canyons and high mountain curves of the pristine San Juan National Forest. Seating choices include traveling in a historic restoration coach or open-air gondola. Please visit [durangotrain.com](http://durangotrain.com) for more info.





## Archeological Center of North America *UNESCO World Heritage Sites*

Visitors can experience the archeological wonders and ancient cave dwellings at nearby UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including [Mesa Verde National Park](#), [Aztec Ruins National Monument](#) and [Chaco Canyon](#), all within an easy day trip of Durango. West of Durango, Mesa Verde Country allows visitors to experience the life of the Ancestral Puebloans.

Mesa Verde Country is known for its archaeology, agriculture and adventure. Two national scenic byways – the San Juan and Trail of the Ancients – pass through Mesa Verde Country. The area is also archaeological hub, featuring the majestic Mesa Verde National Park, and Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. The culinary scene featuring local farm produce, ingredients and beverages, and superb restaurants making these towns a hidden gem for visitors.

Ancient Pueblo cultural sites and artifacts dating back over 2500 years were discovered in the San Juan Basin in the 1880's. Visitors can explore Mesa Verde National Park, the Ute Mountain Tribal Park, Hovenweep National Monument, the Anasazi Heritage Center and Crow Canyon Archaeological Center, or head east to the newly designated Chimney Rock National Monument. The Canyons of the Ancients National Monument features a rugged and breathtaking 176,000-acre landscape that contains the highest known density of archaeological sites in the U.S. The [Lowry Pueblo](#) is the only developed recreation site within the monument, featuring 40 rooms, eight kivas and a Great Kiva.

Nearby Crow Canyon Archaeological Center reconstructs the centuries-long history of the Pueblo Indians through long-term, multidisciplinary research in the American Southwest, with a special emphasis on the Mesa Verde region. Crow Canyon offers education programs in which students—fourth grade through college-level and lifelong adult learners—learn about archaeology and Pueblo Indian history, the scientific process, and the complex interactions between people and their environment.

**Due to COVID-19**, ranger-led tours are cancelled at this time. Park roads are open for self-guided tours only. However many outfitters serving the Durango area offer private tours and transportation. Please visit [durango.org](http://durango.org) for more info.





# Great American Road Trip

## *Escape to Durango*

The **San Juan Skyway Scenic and Historic Byway** travels from Durango and Telluride, to Mesa Verde National Park and back to Durango. The San Juan Byway is a 236-mile loop that winds through dramatic scenery in the shadow of 14,000 foot peaks, including the “Million Dollar Highway” segment from Silverton to Ouray, known as one of the [most scenic drives](#) in America.

Colorado’s newest Scenic and Historic Byway, **Tracks Across Borders** is a richly layered journey through two states spanning southwest Colorado and northern New Mexico. From the romance of the rails and living Native American culture, to breathtaking scenery and endless outdoor recreation, the 125-mile route traces the narrow gauge right-of-way of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, connecting over 800 years of Colorado history.

Tracks Across Borders tells one of Colorado’s greatest stories: the creation and development of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, the state’s first, and ultimately the nation’s largest, narrow gauge railroad system. Once connected via the railroad, Durango, Colorado and Chama, New Mexico serve as gateway cities linking the two National Historic Landmarks.

From the sweeping San Juan Mountains and mesa panoramas to wild, lush riparian ecosystems along the San Juan and Navajo Rivers, the Tracks Across Borders Byway accesses one of Colorado’s least traveled regions. The route offers many unique Colorado stories related to the railroad, and Native American and Hispanic culture and prehistory. Along the way dozens of opportunities beckon travelers to get out of the car and enjoy recreational activities for every age, interest and ability level, including biking, hiking, climbing, jeep tours, fishing, river sports, winter sports, lake activities, and more.





## Arts & Cultural Establishments

Downtown Durango is on the National Register of Historic Districts and overflows with historic hotels, award-winning restaurants, art galleries and boutique shopping. Durango's [thriving art scene](#) showcases contemporary and Native American artists, and over a dozen art galleries from small, local art cooperatives to world-famous works.

A walk down historic Main Avenue reveals over a dozen award-winning art galleries, museums and cultural attractions, including the Durango Arts Center, Durango & Silverton Railroad Museum, Animas Museum, Powerhouse Science Center, and the Durango Fish Hatchery & Wildlife Museum. Visit the Southern Ute Museum or the Center for Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College to gain an understanding of the ancient peoples of the region, and the importance of preserving these cultural resources.

The 12,000-square-foot D&SNG Railroad Museum is tucked in the back of the rail yard, featuring ever-changing exhibits and artifacts that tell the history of railroading, especially on the D&RGW line. Permanent displays include lanterns, locks & keys, photographs, paintings and many of the tools of railroading. Steam locomotives, railroad cars and other equipment dating back to the 1880s are available to see up-close. Pre-arranged, guided tours are offered during business hours. Admission and tours are free, and offered year-round.

The 26th Annual [Durango Autumn Arts Festival](#), a benefit event for the [Durango Arts Center](#), is scheduled for September 9 - 10, 2020 in downtown Durango. The festival will continue with an updated operations and safety plan in response to COVID-19.



# High Mountain Lakes and Streams

With its high mountain creeks, clear streams, lakes, and fantastic rivers, Durango is one of the best fly fishing spots in Colorado. Flowing right through Durango, the Animas River is one of the best Gold Medal Water fly fishing destinations in Colorado. With many spots that are easy to access right from town, the Animas River is one of the easiest and best places to get some fishing in with minimal effort. Home to both rainbow and brown trout, the Animas has produced state-record fish.

Spend an afternoon fly fishing in this beautiful location, where you can watch the Durango & Silverton Train chug by right in front of you and stop in for a quick post-fishing beer at a riverside brewery. Families can take a guided trip to find all of the best fishing spots, or explore the backcountry to catch that next huge rainbow trout. To experience the best fly fishing spots in Colorado, a Durango vacation should be on the top of your list. The local [fishing community](#) is friendly and knowledgeable. There are some excellent guide services in town dedicated to our home waters. If you decide to take a guided trip, you will be treated like a friend and fellow fisherman.

With the addition of [Lake Nighthorse](#) in 2018, visitors can enjoy boating, fishing, swimming and picnicking within just a few miles of downtown Durango and the Animas River. Situated in Ridges Basin surrounded by mountains and ridgelines with dramatic cream-colored cliffs, Lake Nighthorse blends Durango's picturesque scenery with magnificent multi-sport recreational opportunities. Pedal kayaks, SUPs, canoes and fishing gear available. Colorado's newest lake is an extremely significant cultural area decades in the making.

There are hundreds of archaeological sites around the lake, including pit houses, camps, other habitation sites, and even human burial grounds. Some date back to 6500 B.C., but the most revealing sites provided unprecedented insight into the village dynamics of the Pueblo I people, who inhabited the region around 700 to 900 A.D. Visit the [Southern Ute Museum](#) or the [Center for Southwest Studies](#) at Fort Lewis College to gain an understanding of the ancient peoples of the region, and the importance of preserving these cultural resources.

[Vallecito Lake](#) and Lemon Reservoir are stunning mountain lakes, located just 40 minutes from Durango. Visitors can enjoy swimming, fishing, boating, waterskiing, wakeboarding, standup paddle boarding, and dining at Vallecito Lake.



# World-Class Skiing and Year-Round Family Fun



Located just 25 miles north of Durango and surrounded by the majestic San Juan Mountains, Purgatory Resort is the destination for an authentic Colorado mountain experience. The Village Plaza base area features a vibrant assemblage of family friendly activities, lodging, retail shops, restaurants and bars. During winter Purgatory offers affordable lift tickets, few crowds and miles of varied terrain and scenic trails. All kids ages 10 and under ski for free with the Power Kids Pass. In the summer, Purgatory provides hiking and lift-served mountain biking, plus over a dozen family friendly activities, including the area's only Alpine Slide and Mountain Inferno Coaster. Please visit [purgatoryresort.com](http://purgatoryresort.com) to learn more.

In the winter, Purgatory offers 101 trails, seven terrain parks and 1,605 skiable acres. With 12 chairlifts and rarely any lines, skiers enjoy steep gladed trees, wide-open cruisers and everything in between amidst the spectacular scenery of the rugged San Juan Mountains. Other winter activities include dog sledding, tubing, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, horse-drawn sleigh rides, backcountry skiing, snowmobiling and more.

Available year round, the Inferno Mountain Coaster is a family friendly thrill ride with incredible mountain vistas. At nearly 1 mile long (4,000 feet), the Inferno features a 300 foot-vertical drop, nine switchbacks and one loop. Riders have full control of the brakes and speeds up to 25 mph, so it's easy to choose the pace of your adventure. In the summer months, Purgatory provides an exciting zipline, alpine slide, summer tubing, scenic and mountain bike chairlift rides, hiking and mountain bike trails, bungee trampolines, disc golf, UTVs, and paddle boarding. Purgatory is also known for producing a wide array of signature events and festivals throughout the summer.

Home to Durango's only lift-served downhill flow trail, Purgatory's Bike Park features trails for all ability levels and a full schedule of pro-level races, clinics, and new trails for all levels. Visit the [Bike Trail Report](#) tab for other open trails, and [Durango Trails](#) for over 400 miles of singletrack and backcountry trails around Purgatory and Durango.





Incorporated in 1881, Durango was founded by the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. The narrow gauge railway extension connects the towns of Durango and Silverton, and has traveled the same route continuously for nearly 140 years. A National Historic District, downtown Durango overflows with historic hotels, restaurants, art galleries and boutiques. The rugged San Juan Mountains offer spectacular scenery and hundreds of miles of world-class single-track and hiking trails.

Nestled in southwestern Colorado's Animas River Valley and surrounded by rugged peaks, Durango's remote location offers unimpeded access to some of the best cultural, historic and outdoor attractions in Colorado. From outdoor pursuits in the surrounding high desert and mountains, to fresh food raised at high-elevation farms, Native American history and Old West heritage, Durango is Southwest Colorado's premier four-season destination, attracting more than 1.4 million visitors annually.

Visit Durango is a not-for-profit destination organization operating with the mission to promote Durango and La Plata County's multitude of tourism attractions, events and services. Please visit [www.durango.org](http://www.durango.org) for more information.

### **About Visit Durango**

Nestled in southwestern Colorado's Animas River Valley and surrounded by rugged peaks, Durango is home to some of the best outdoor, historic and cultural attractions in the state. Board the historic 1880's D&SNG Railroad for breathtaking views and old-world atmosphere, or visit archeological wonders and ancient cave dwellings at nearby UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Downtown Durango's National Historic District overflows with historic hotels, award winning restaurants, breweries, art galleries, museums, and boutiques. The rugged San Juan National Forest offers hundreds of miles of world-class mountain biking, hiking, rock climbing, and skiing, plus fishing and boating on the Gold Medal Waters of the Animas River. North of Durango, Purgatory Resort features 92 trails, five terrain parks and 1,360 skiable acres.

Durango is easily accessible by US Hwy 550 from the north and south, US Hwy 160 from the east and west, and the Durango-La Plata County Airport. Visit [Durango.org](http://Durango.org) to learn more and follow @visitdurango on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest.