

## Description

The 12.6 Galloping Goose Trail offers a mix of roads and single track as it traverses along segments of the historic Rio Grande Southern railway. It is open to hiking, horses, and mountain biking.

Difficulty: Intermediate biking



Galloping Goose railcar.

## Directions

Travel west out of Telluride on the paved bike path or Highway 145 spur. At approx. 3 miles, turn left (south) onto Highway 145. Follow directions for either the north or south end of the trail.

### North End of Trail (Elevation 8800 feet)

Parking is available on the east side of Hwy 145. Cross the highway and follow Society Drive 1/4 mile to San Miguel River Drive. Take a right on San Miguel River Drive. About 100 yards beyond the bus stop look for a dirt road that drops north toward the San Miguel River. This is the northern end of the Galloping Goose Trail.

### South End of Trail (Elevation 10,250 feet)

Proceed south on Hwy 145 for approx. 11 miles to Lizard Head Pass. Take a right turn into the restroom parking area. Park here. The trail starts across the highway on Forest Service Road 626.

## Trail Highlights

The Galloping Goose Trail follows portions of the Rio Grande Southern (RGS) railroad that ran 163 track miles from Durango to Ridgway, Colorado. The line, completed in 1891, initially ran steam locomotives that transported people and supplies to mining communities of Placerville, Ophir, Rico, and Telluride. From 1931 to 1952, the line ran a fleet of "Galloping Geese" railcars that delivered mail and passengers to towns along the route.

Points of interest along the trail include (refer to map):

1. Trout Lake Trestle - Built by RGS Railroad to replace the original 1891 bridge, after it washed away in a flood in 1909. This trestle was restored in 2005 and is the only large railroad bridge remaining along the Telluride to Rico line.
2. Trout Lake Water Tank - This beautifully restored structure provided water for RGS trains and a popular scenic stop for passengers.
3. Priest Lake Recreation Area - This site area offers limited dispersed camping and a restroom.
4. High Bridges - Portions of the trail here follow the flume that brings water to the Ames hydroelectric plant, the oldest in the state. Two trail bridges span gullies high above Highway 145, offering spectacular views of the mountains in the Lizard Head Wilderness.
5. Ophir Loop - By 1910, this was a bustling settlement, complete with a railroad depot, mining tramway terminals, a post office, boarding house (still standing) stores, and a hotel. Two elaborate bridges for the RGS railway were located here, where the line made a large switch back or "loop" to ascend the canyon.
6. Ilium Power Plant - Trail visitors will pass by Camp Ilium, a church camp that was originally the Ilium Power Plant, one of the earliest AC plants in the state. Look for the stone power house building, built in 1900.
7. Vance Jct. Coal Chutes - These restored bins held coal for refueling locomotives en route to Lizard Head Pass. Men shoveled loads of coal into the bins, then gravity would quickly fill a tender parked on the railroad below the chutes.

# Galloping Goose Trail

## Norwood Ranger District Uncompahgre National Forest



Norwood Ranger District

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