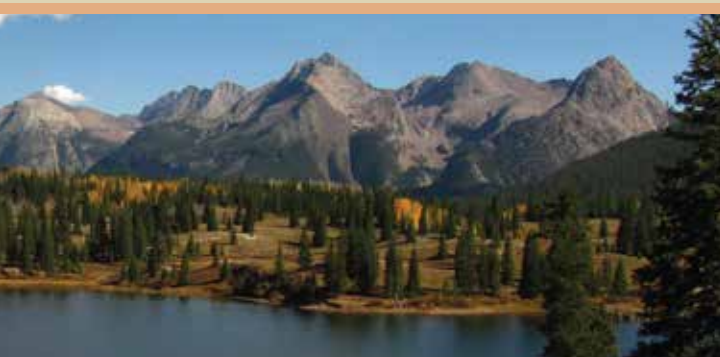


Explore the rich history and culture along the San Juan Skyway

The San Juan Mountains along the San Juan Skyway are one of the highest ranges in the United States, with peaks above 14,000 feet.

The Skyway provides easy access to five National Wilderness Areas and intersects three other Colorado scenic and historic byways.

The San Juan Skyway was designated as a National Forest Scenic Byway in 1988, a State of Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway in 1989, and an All-American Road in 1997.



For more information, please contact:

San Juan Public Lands Center
15 Burnett Court, Durango, CO 81301
970-247-4874 | <http://www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan>
www.blm.gov/col/st/en/fo/sjplc.html

Montrose Public Lands Center
2505 South Townsend, Montrose, CO 81401
970-240-5300

www.blm.gov/col/st/en/fo/ufol/map_sales_information.html

National Scenic Byways
<http://www.fnwa.dot.gov/byways/>

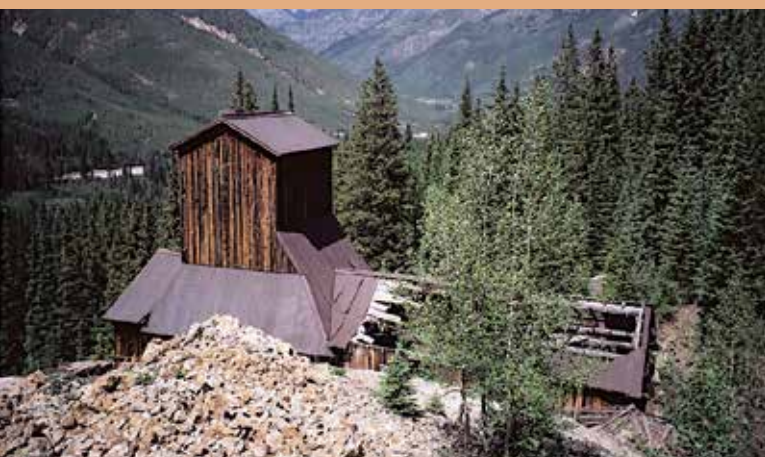
This publication was produced by the San Juan Mountains Association (SJMA) and made possible by these contributors: BLM Tres Rios Field Office; Columbine Ranger District; Durango Area Tourism Office; Durango Wildlife Museum & Fish Hatchery; Galloping Goose; Mancos Valley Chamber of Commerce; New-In-Town Welcome Service; Mesa Verde County; Mesa Verde Museum Association; Ouray Chamber Resort Association; Ouray County Historical Society; Ridgway Chamber Visitor Center & Railroad Museum; Sandra Hilton LLC; San Juan Mountains Association; San Juan Public Lands Center; and Telluride Tourism Board. Design by Lindsay Elworthy of Creative Edge Studio; Photographs Courtesy San Juan National Forest and San Juan Mountains Association, where not otherwise stated. SJMA is the nonprofit 501(c) 3 support partner of the USDA Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.



Photo Credit: MK Gunn

Hikers and backpackers will enjoy numerous trails that include routes up peaks that are over 14,000 feet. History buffs can view mine and mill sites, aerial tram structures, and ghost towns. Historical markers and museums along the Skyway identify important sites and explain the mining history of the area. Photographers, painters, and naturalists will appreciate the abundance of alpine wildflowers found in July and August, and the explosion of color found in September and early October. Mountain bikers will enjoy the exhilarating challenge of riding over the mountain passes. Vehicle recreationists can spend days exploring the designated four-wheel-drive roads. Winter sports enthusiasts will find ample room to ski, snowshoe, snowmobile, or ice climb. Opportunities abound for horseback riding, hunting, fishing, kayaking, rafting, and motorcycle and ATV touring.

The Skyway offers something for everyone



Planning & Safety Tips

- Drive only on designated routes; four-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended for off-highway driving.
- View historic structures from a distance; most sites are privately owned and structures are unstable.
- Help protect your public lands; sites, artifacts, and historical remains are protected by the Archaeological Resource Protection Act of 1979.
- Camp and build fires 200 feet away from water and structures; carry out all garbage.
- Don't feed wildlife; watch for deer and elk along the highway, especially at night.
- Be prepared for changing weather; when hiking, be off high ridges and peaks by noon and seek safe shelter at the first sound of thunder.
- Purify water before drinking from lakes, streams or other natural water sources.
- To avoid altitude sickness, get plenty of rest and resist overdoing activities during your first two days at high altitude. Drink lots of water.

Maps, books, brochures, and information are available at INFORMATION CENTERS AND MUSEUMS along the San Juan Skyway:

<p>DURANGO COLORADO</p> <p>Durango Area Tourism Office 802 Main Avenue, Durango, CO 81301 1-800-525-8855 970-247-3500 www.durango.org</p>	<p>Mesa Verde COUNTRY COLORADO</p> <p>Mesa Verde Country Visitor Information Bureau 928 East Main, Cortez, CO 81321 970-565-8227 www.mesaverdecountry.com</p>
<p>Mancos Valley Chamber of Commerce 101 E. Bauer Avenue, Box 494 Mancos, CO 81328 970-533-7434 www.mancosvalley.com</p>	<p>Ridgway Chamber Visitor Center & Railroad Museum 150 Racecourse Road, Ridgway, CO 81432 970-626-5181 800-220-4959 www.ridgwaycolorado.com</p>
<p>Ouray Chamber Resort Association 1230 Main Street, Ouray, CO 81427 1-800-228-1876 970-325-4746 www.ouraycolorado.com</p>	<p>Telluride Tourism Board PO Box 1009 Telluride, CO 81435 970-728-3041 www.VisitTelluride.com</p>
<p>Anasazi Heritage Center Museum Canyons of the Ancients National Monument 27501 Highway 184, Dolores, CO 81323 970-882-5600 www.blm.gov/col/st/en/fo/ahc.html</p>	<p>Fort Lewis College Center of Southwest Studies 1000 Rim Drive, Durango, CO 81301 970-247-7456 http://swcenter.fortlewis.edu</p>
<p>Animas Museum La Plata County Historical Society 3065 W. 2nd Avenue, Durango, CO 81301 970-259-2402 www.animasmuseum.org</p>	<p>Galloping Goose Historical Society 421 Railroad Avenue, Dolores, CO 81323 970-882-7082 www.gallopinggoose5.com</p>
<p>Columbine Ranger District 367 South Pearl Street, Bayfield, CO 81122 970-884-2512</p>	<p>Mesa Verde Museum Association PO Box 38, Mesa Verde National Park, CO 81330 970-529-4445 www.mesaverde.org</p>
<p>Cortez Chamber of Commerce 31 West Main Street, POB 968 Cortez, CO 81321 (970)565-3414 www.cortezchamber.com</p>	<p>New-In-Town Welcome Service 325 Trout Springs Trail, Durango, CO 81303 970-799-1632 www.newindurango.com</p>
<p>Dolores Public Lands Office Tres Rios Field Office BLM/ Dolores Ranger District, SJNF 29211 Highway 184 Dolores, CO 81323 970-882-7296</p>	<p>Ouray County Historical Society PO Box 151 420 6th Ave, Ouray, CO 81427 970-325-4576 www.ouraycountyhistoricalsociety.org</p>
<p>Dolores Chamber of Commerce 201 Railroad Avenue, PO Box 602 Dolores, CO 81323 970-882-4018 www.doloreschamber.com</p>	<p>San Juan Historical Society 1569 Greene Street, Silverton, CO 81433 970-387-5838 http://sanjuancountyhistoricalsociety.org/</p>
<p>Durango & Silverton Railroad Museum 479 Main Avenue, Durango, CO 81301 970-247-2733 www.durangorain.com</p>	<p>San Juan Public Lands Center 15 Burnett Court, Durango, CO 81301 970-247-4874 http://www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan</p>
<p>Durango Chamber of Commerce 111 S. Camino del Rio, PO Box 2587 Durango, CO 81302 970-247-0312 www.durangobusiness.org</p>	<p>Silverton Area Chamber of Commerce 414 Greene Street, Silverton, CO 81433 970-387-5654 www.silvertoncolorado.com</p>
<p>Durango Wildlife Museum & Fish Hatchery 151 East 16th Avenue, Durango, CO 81301 970-375-6766</p>	<p>Silverton Public Lands Office 1468 Greene Street, Silverton, CO 81433 970-387-5530 (open June to September) http://www.blm.gov/col/st/en/fo/sjplc.html</p>
	<p>Telluride Historical Museum 201 W. Gregory Avenue, Telluride, CO 81435 970-728-3344 www.telluridemuseum.org</p>

Drive the San Juan Skyway and enjoy the world-class scenery



Yankee Girl Mine near Ouray.

mountains. White men broke this treaty by introducing plows into the valleys that had been reserved for the Utes. The Ute Reservation was eventually reduced to a thin strip of land south of the San Juan Mountain region. The mining era brought about rapid changes in transportation and mineral extraction. The early mule pack trains were replaced by the narrow gauge railroad, connecting the booming towns of Silverton, Ouray, Telluride, and Rico. Durango served as an ore smelting and rail center. Farms, ranches, and lumber operations sprang up in the Dolores River Valley. In 1905, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt created the San Juan and Montezuma Forest Reserves to manage the lands for multiple use. Thousands of



In 1859, the first gold rush into the Rocky Mountains began – 250 miles north of the San Juans – and in 1861 the Colorado Territory was created. The Utes, who continued to control much of what is now Colorado and Utah, accepted a treaty in 1868 which established a reservation that included most of the western slope of the Colorado Rockies, including the San Juan Mountains. But the lure of gold and silver in the mountains proved stronger than the government's word. Within two years, gold and silver prospectors were penetrating deep into Ute land in violation of the agreement. A new treaty was reached that allowed mining in the



Ute Indian chiefs pose with their families for this photo taken at an encampment along the Pine River, circa 1900.

The earliest farm plots were cleared more than 2,000 years ago. The population of the area grew slowly developed. By the 13th century, large masonry pueblos occupied the canyon rims and under construction. By the end of the 13th century the Pueblo people had deserted the area, moving to the south and east to join other Puebloans living in what are now called New Mexico and Arizona. Non-native history began with the first recorded Spanish explorations just over two centuries ago. In the late 16th century, Spain created the Province of New Mexico that included the entire San Juan Mountain region. Spanish settlements were never established in the region still controlled by the Utes, but the pioneers of New Mexico likely traveled here to trade with the Utes and prospect for gold and silver. The first Spanish exploration of what is now Southwest Colorado was guided by Utes and occurred in 1765. The Dominguez and Escalante exploration took place in 1776 as these two priests sought to find a new route from Santa Fe to newly established missions on the Pacific Coast.



The San Juan Skyway traverses two billion years of geologic history. Oceans have come and gone. Mountain ranges rose and were erased by glaciers, only to rise again. The remains of the Paleozoic Indians were the first people to arrive in the San Juan Mountain region about 10,000 years ago. The Ute Indians followed, attracted by the ecological diversity that fed, clothed, and housed them. The Utes hunted and gathered in the wilderness as they moved through the rugged, nurturing land.

The San Juan Skyway is one of the most scenic drives in America, spanning elevations from 6,200 feet near Cortez to 11,008 feet at Red Mountain Pass. Along the route you'll find fresh subalpine forests, historic mining towns, expansive cattle ranges, and prehistoric Indian ruins.

Photo Credit: MK Gunn

tourists rode the rails every year to see the mountain splendor and visit the ancient ruins in the San Juan region. Today, 232 miles of the San Juan Skyway travel through the present San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests and the Tres Rios and Uncompahgre field office BLM lands. The history, culture, scenery, and adventure in the area continue to draw millions of visitors annually.

San Juan Skyway





Photo Credit: VisitTelluride.com/Ryan Bonneau

Telluride



The Victorian mining town of Telluride was founded in the late 1800s and is now an international summer festival and ski resort. The town's heritage includes the first bank robbery by the infamous Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch gang on June 24, 1889. This National Historic District offers year-round lodging and cultural events. Four-wheel-drive roads lead to historic mining towns in the nearby Uncompahgre National Forest.

Towering peaks, spectacular waterfalls, and rugged cliffs line the Skyway south of Telluride near the tiny, historic town of Ophir. The famous Ames Power Plant that generated the world's first alternating electric current is located in the San Miguel Valley below the Skyway.



From the highway near Molas Pass, you can see the Weminuche Wilderness, the largest wilderness in Colorado at 499,771 acres, where three fourteeners of the San Juan Mountains (Mount Eolus, Sunlight Peak & Windom Peak) can be seen, in addition to numerous thirteeners and other peaks of note.



Interpretive roadside pull-outs and rest areas like this Molas site are found at numerous locations along the San Juan Skyway.



Rico

Rico offers access to some of Colorado's most spectacular backcountry. In-town highlights include the old Rico courthouse, built in 1893, and the Enterprise Cafe, constructed in 1892.



Photo Credit: Galloping Goose Historical Society

Dolores

Settlement in the Dolores River Valley began in the 1870s. The Galloping Goose Historical Society museum in Dolores is located in a replica of the town's original railroad depot and displays the Rio Grande Southern "Galloping Goose" railcar which is part train, bus, and car. Dolores is also the home to McPhee Reservoir, the second largest body of water in Colorado.



The Navajos called Cortez, Tsaya-toh, meaning "rock water." The spring that once provided water for Navajo sheep also attracted ranchers to the area. Cortez is near the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument and just north of the Four Corners Monument, where one can stand

Cortez



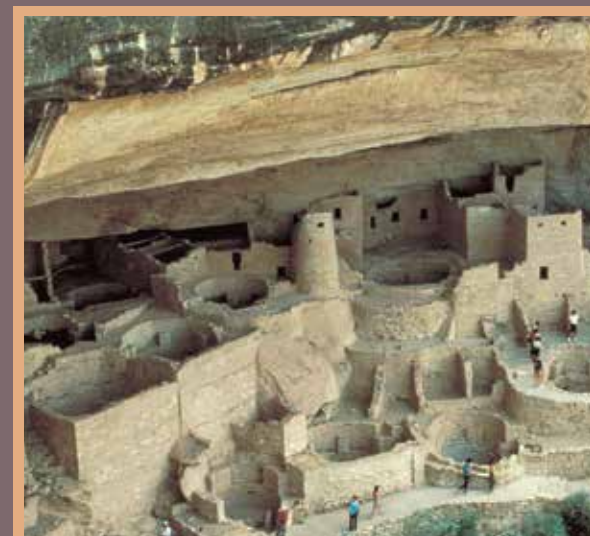
in four states at once – Colorado, Arizona, Utah and New Mexico. Visit the Ute Mountain Tribal Park, Crow Canyon Archaeological Center, Cortez Cultural Center, and art galleries.



It takes about 7 hours to drive the 232-mile San Juan Skyway loop.

The route is a great 2 or 3 day trip with multiple opportunities to stop and enjoy scenic, recreational, and historic sites. Lodging, restaurants, and other services are available in towns along the Skyway. The route is open year-round.

- San Juan Skyway
- Other Road
- Four-Wheel Drive Road
- Interpretive Site Rest Area
- Visitor Center, Public Lands Center, or Museum
- Campground



Mesa Verde National Park

Mesa Verde National Park offers an excellent opportunity to see and experience the life of the Ancestral Puebloans. There are thousands of archaeological sites across the park and excellent interpretive loops and scenic pullouts. Visitors may walk, drive, or take a bus tour through the park. The park is open year-round and takes one to two days to fully explore.



Photo Credit: Ridgway Chamber

Ridgway

Ridgway is a quiet Western town at the base of 14,000 ft. Mt. Sneffels with access to the backcountry from Owl Creek Pass and Dallas Divide. The State Park and Reservoir offer year round activities. Access over 40 miles of single track bike trails from Ridgway.



North in the Montrose area you will find Owl Creek Pass, the Uncompahgre Wilderness, Ute Indian Museum, Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area (62,844 acres), and Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument.

Ouray

Ouray is known as the "Switzerland of America." Most of its buildings were built between 1880 and 1900 and the entire town is a National Historic District. In Ouray, you'll find spectacular waterfalls and a year-round hot springs first used by the Ute Indians for spiritual and medicinal purposes. Four-wheel drive roads to gold and silver mines and ghost towns provide recreational opportunities.

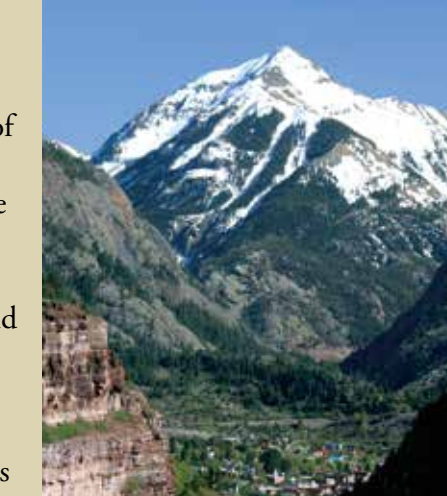
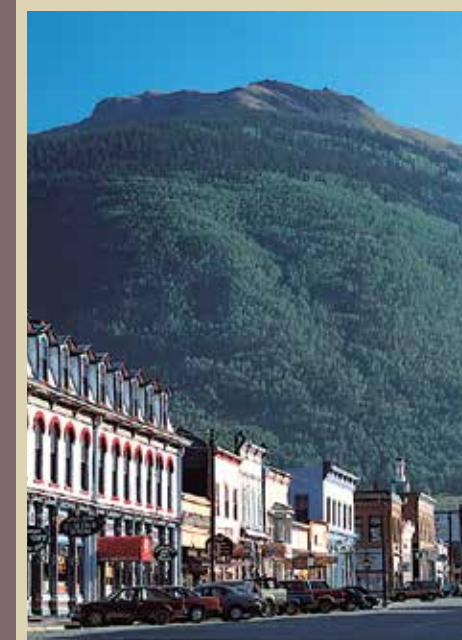


Photo Credit: Ouray Chamber Resort Association

The Million Dollar Highway section of the Skyway between Silverton and Ouray is one of the most scenic and spectacular mountain drives in North America. The famous section of the Skyway winds through the iron-colored Red Mountains, along the sheer sides of the Uncompahgre Gorge, through tunnels and past cascading waterfalls.

Uncompahgre Gorge

The expansive forest viewed from the interpretive overlooks in the Molas and Coal Bank Pass area provides habitat for lynx and marten. The air in this impressive area has earned the distinction of being the cleanest in the nation, and the area includes many lakes and hiking trails. One can even walk part of the 500-mile Colorado Trail that crosses Molas Pass on its way to Denver. You may see bighorn sheep, elk, mountain goats, black bears, and mule deer in the vicinity, as well as fields of blue columbine, the Colorado state flower.



Silverton

The town of Silverton was founded in 1874 and is now a National Historic Landmark. In addition to the courthouse, grand hotels, and magnificent Victorian homes, Silverton once claimed 40 gambling halls, saloons, and "sporting houses." The town's elaborate Victorian architecture reflects the millions of dollars in gold and silver that were mined here during the late 1800s.

In Silverton and Durango, you can board the famous Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad and take a ride back in history.



Photo Credit: Durango Area Tourism Office

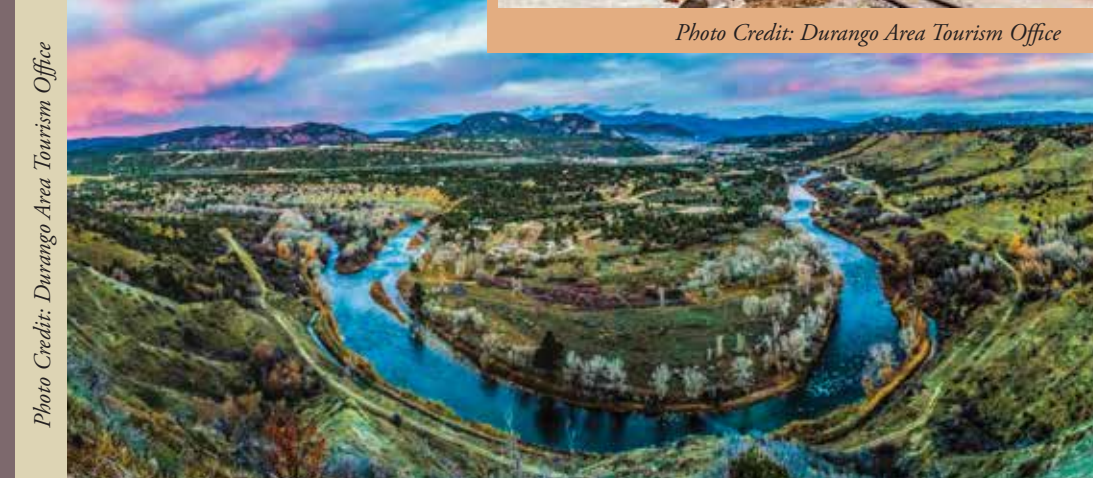
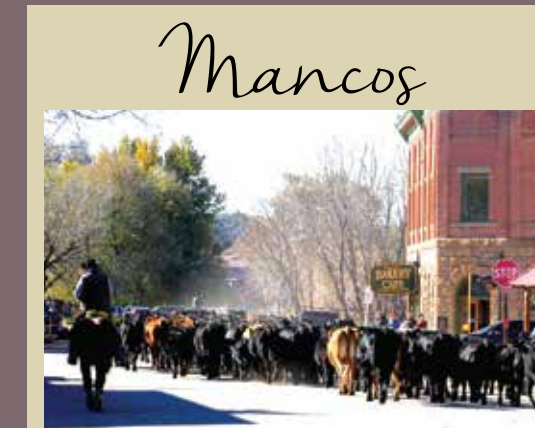


Photo Credit: Durango Area Tourism Office



Mancos

Nestled in the beautiful Mancos Valley, the community of Mancos was home to the famous Wetherill family who discovered the Mesa Verde Cliff dwellings. Mancos is only six miles from the entrance to Mesa Verde National Park and has spectacular mountain views from town all four seasons. Mancos is an active community for outdoor adventurers, a diverse arts community, and a vibrant downtown while still retaining its rich heritage. It is a perfect place to use as a home base to explore the southwest. Mancos is where the west still lives.



Durango



Durango is nestled in the southwestern foothills of the Rocky Mountains in the Animas River Valley, surrounded by the San Juan National Forest and Tres Rios BLM lands. The Animas River runs through downtown and boasts gold medal fly fishing waters, and is popular for whitewater rafting, kayaking and canoeing. Durango is also popular for outdoor activities like hiking, mountain biking, road biking, backpacking, rock climbing, hunting, off-roading, year-round fishing, kayaking and golfing. Home to Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad and a perfect gateway to Mesa Verde National Park and Chimney Rock National Monument.

