



Top of the Rockies Scenic and Historic Byway

.Up here it's all about the spectacular Rocky Mountains – the views, the vistas and the amazing heights. At 10,200 feet, Leadville, surrounded by 14,000-foot behemoths, is the highest incorporated community in the United States. Yet, this is not just about the mountain beauty of snow-capped peaks towering over lush green valleys and canyons, wildlife playing on the mountainsides and picturesque wildflowers. There's also a very intriguing story about the 1860s mining boom that changed Colorado, found in a series of mining towns - one about the gold, silver and other minerals dug out of the mountains – hundreds of millions of dollars of resources that made some people very rich and gained others at least a living. Colossal peaks in this area yielded fortunes of mammoth proportions, like that of Horace Tabor, who became one of the titans of Colorado's silver industry. The 82-mile Top of the Rockies skims across the highest reaches of the Rockies, while passing through mining communities and quaint towns. A 40-mile extension to the byway travels from Aspen to the original beginning of the route at Twin Lakes. Independence Pass starts at 9,200 feet and climbs to 12,095 feet at the summit, ringed with peaks of 13,000 feet including Mt. Champion, Geissler Mountain, Twining Peak, Grizzly Peak and Casco Peak. Enjoy the drive while exploring the story.



The Highest Reaches of the Rockies Experience



Driving the Byway

Your journey begins in Aspen, one of the most delightful historic towns in Colorado. After exploring the great heritage of Aspen's founder at the Wheeler/Stallard Museum and other locations you can stay in the hotel he built. On Day Two, you'll start the day discovering more about ranching in the area, the other side of Colorado, before heading to Twin Lakes and Leadville, featuring absolutely premier mining heritage in a preserved Victorian historic town. When you have thoroughly explored Leadville's many mining heritage locations, you can ride the Leadville and Southern Railroad before moving on to Vail, another premier Colorado town.

Day One



Aspen

Beginning as a Ute Indian camp, Aspen has had a number of different lives in its history. The first miners arrived in 1870 and the town soon became home to over 12,000 miners and their families. Things went quiet in 1893 with the repeal of the Sherman Silver Act and Aspen's population dropped to less than 1,000 as it went into "The Quiet Years." In the late 1940's, Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke arrived in town, with a vision to create a community that embodied Mind, Body and Spirit. That created the civic and cultural renaissance known today as "The Aspen Idea." Skiing came soon after.

Day One

Aspen Walking Tours



The 90-minute Aspen's Past to Present tour traces the town's transformation to a world-famous resort, with a guide who has been doing tours in Aspen for more than a decade. This is a casual walk through the historic downtown, but one on which you can learn the story of this intriguing town. As second 90 minute tour, "Off the Beaten Path" takes you through Aspen's historic west end neighborhood and along the river.

Tour begins at 320 East Hyman Avenue 970-948-4349
Daily 9AM-10PM. 90 minutes, \$35 per person

Wheeler/Stallard Museum



The founder of Aspen was a silver magnate who made a fortune mining the area. Learn Jerome Wheeler's story housed in the 1888 Queen Anne Victorian built to entice his wife, who hated mining camps, to move to Aspen. She never moved, and he never lived in the house, yet the home is furnished to reflect the late 1800s. Second floor exhibits featuring the work of Herbert Bayer, who designed the Bauhaus inspired campus of the Aspen Institute. The museum's Victorian West End Walking Tour delivers little-known facts about the homes and the people who lived in them.

620 West Bleeker Street, Aspen, CO 81611 970-925-3721
Tuesday-Saturday 11AM-5PM, Allow 1 hour, \$10 per person

Wheeler Opera House



Jerome Wheeler built the Wheeler Opera House to bring culture to Aspen to participate in the "Silver Circuit" which brought internationally renowned performances to the mining towns in Colorado. The Opera House underwent a complete overhaul in the 1980s, to become Aspen's premier theatre venue.

320 East Hymen Avenue, Aspen, CO 81611 970-920-5770
Daily Noon-5PM, Walking tour app prior to performances

Aspen Destination Distinctive Accommodations and Dining



Destination Distinctive Accommodations: Hotel Jerome **330 East Main Street, Aspen CO 81611 970-429-5028**

Jerome Wheeler, who co-owned Macy's Department Store, built the Hotel Jerome to give Aspen a hotel that equaled those in Europe in refinements. As one of the first buildings west of the Mississippi to have electric lighting and the only to have an above ground ballroom, the hotel has served as the social hub of Aspen since it opened. In fact, it was the only hotel to survive the silver crash, pre-ski season winters and the Depression. Cowboys and miners once rode their horses through J-Bar's doors to get drinks slung over the original century old maple bar. When Prohibition struck in 1920, J-Bar became a soda fountain, serving drinks spiked with multiple liquors that appeared to be milk.



Red Onion Restaurant 400 East Cooper Avenue Aspen, CO 81611 970-925-9955

The movers and shakers in turn of the century Aspen would have frequented the Red Onion, constructed in 1892. The oldest restaurant in Aspen, the landmark was christened the New Brick Saloon. Local old-timers nicknamed this colorful saloon the 'Red Onion,' meant to convey something out of

Day Two

Holden Marlot Mining and Ranching Museum



During “The Quiet Years” after silver went bust in 1893, a number of residents stayed behind to establish ranches. A museum which features their efforts is housed in a barn, first used for ore processing and then for ranching. A miner’s cabin is located near a transformed Victorian home and a shed moved to the property, on what was the largest industrial complex in the area. The home, dating from 1888 is one of the few completely intact homes from Aspen’s Victorian era, changed little since it was last lived in.

40180 Colorado 82, Aspen, CO 81611 970-925-3721
Tuesday-Saturday 11AM-5PM, Allow 1 hour, \$10 per person

Ashcroft and Independence Ghost Town and Smuggler’s Mine



The town of Ashcroft located 11 miles south of Aspen was bigger and more productive than Aspen until the shallow ore deposits ran out, Today, only the “resident ghosts” are on hand to answer questions. Founded in 1879, Independence is located 16 miles east of Aspen, near Independence Pass. “Resident ghosts” are also on hand here. You can still take a tour of the Smuggler Mine, which produced a record-breaking nugget of silver weighing almost a ton. Guides illustrate first-hand how difficult mining was in the late 19th century.

110 Smuggler Mountain Road, Aspen, CO 81611
970-925-2049



The Twin Lakes Inn Restaurant

6435 East State Highway 82
Twin Lakes, CO 81251
719-486-7965

Located inside the Twin Lakes Inn, the restaurant serves up tasty meals that feature comfortable Colorado and American cuisine in a true Wild West setting.

Leadville Destination Distinctive Accommodations and Dining



Destination Distinctive Accommodations: Delaware Hotel 700 Harrison Avenue, Leadville, CO 80461 800-748-2004

The 1886 Delaware Hotel combines Victorian propriety with the excitement of the “Old Wild West.” As the last remaining grand hotel from the “glory days” of the strike-it-rich era, the hotel is part museum, part gallery, and part country inn, while offering true Western hospitality.



Treeline Kitchen 615 Harrison Avenue Leadville, CO 80461 719-293-2200

Locally owned since 2017, the Treeline Kitchen focuses on sustainable and local sourcing for the best available ingredients to promote sustainability and health.

Day Three



Leadville

Over 150 years of mining in Colorado had a dramatic effect on Colorado's economy. From its earliest gold strikes, Leadville played a central role in the thriving economy, in spite of its Wild West reputation. Gold brought the first 10,000 people to Leadville, and silver brought 20,000 more. At the height of its heyday, there were hotels, saloons, gambling halls, stores, boarding houses, and brothels, while the fortunes of big city industrialists like the Guggenheims, Marshal Field, and David May were being made. Brimming with colorful characters like Horace and Baby Doe Tabor, Doc Holiday, and the Unsinkable Molly Brown, in all 55,000 ounces of gold worth \$91 million were extracted from the mountains. Over 240 million troy ounces of silver were also mined. When the Silver Boom came to an abrupt halt silver prices plummeted, mines closed, and residents left for greener pastures. Leadville has done a remarkable job preserving a 70 square block National Historic District, in addition to the local legends. A 20-square-mile historic mining district, complete with ghost towns, is protected as The Route of the Silver Kings. The Mineral Belt Trail tells more of the story. For those intrigued with mining heritage this is where it is. Aspen to Leadville— 58 miles

Day Four

Historic Walking Tour of Leadville



Take the historic walking tour (pdf included with the detailed itinerary) that takes you past nearly all of the key historic attractions in downtown Leadville.

Tour begins at the 100 Block of West 10th Street, Allow 1 hour

Tabor Opera House



Bringing culture to the remote mountains, Horace Tabor built the Opera House by shipping the stone, brick, iron and Portland cement needed for construction by wagon over Colorado's rough mountain passes. Completed in 100 days, the building included two retail stores, an elegant theater, and a third-floor enclosed skyway to a hotel next door. The interior was adorned with richly painted walls, ceiling frescoes, custom carpets and hand painted stage curtains, which the first gaslights in Leadville made sparkle. Tour the Tabor Suites, historic treasures on the second floor, the ballroom where the Tabor's danced and the elegant performance hall where luminaries like Oscar Wilde, John Philip Sousa, Buffalo Bill and Harry Houdini performed. .

308 Harrison Avenue, Leadville, CO 80461, 719-486-8409.
Tours by reservation only, Allow 1 hour, \$12 per person

National Mining Hall of Fame



The Museum commemorates the men and women who pioneered processing of our nation's underground natural resources. Known as the Smithsonian of the Rockies and the Premier Showcase of American Mining, the museum tells the story of mining, its people, and its impact on the American society. " Over 25,000 square feet of interactive and informative exhibits sharing the narrative of mining and its relationship to our everyday lives.

120 West 9th Street, Leadville, CO 80461 719-486-1229
7 Days, 9AM-4:45PM, Allow 2 hours, \$12 per person.

Day Four

The Tabor Home



When Horace Tabor decided the location of his home on Harrison Avenue was perfect for the Opera House, the residence known as the Tabor Home as moved to its current location. Built during the most exciting time in Horace Tabor's life, when his store, mining claims, and wealth were all increasing, it was also when he met Elizabeth McCourt (Baby Doe) and left his wife for her. As his reputation was in tatters, Augusta went on to become a millionaire in her own right. Today, the Tabor Home features some original Victorian furnishings and household goods, which you can view while tour guides tell the story of financial gain, a devastating divorce, a crumbling career, and ultimate ruin.

116 East Fifth Street, Leadville, CO 80461 719-486 3900

Silver Dollar Saloon



After "Doc" Holliday's gunfight at the O.K. Corral, he moved to Leadville. Trained as a dentist, he was also a notorious gunfighter and gambler, dealing cards, tending bar, and playing the piano. "Molly" (Margaret) Brown, known as "The Unsinkable Molly Brown" and her engineer husband were regulars at the saloon. Step inside and encounter is a windbreak which prevented wives from seeing their husbands inside. The original walk up only bar is flanked by a white oak bar, swinging doors, the mahogany front bar, and 3/4 inch diamond dust mirrors.

315 Harrison Avenue, Leadville, CO 80461 719-486-9914
Regular retail hours

Day Five

Leadville Heritage Museum and Gallery



The Heritage Museum that has been collecting memorabilia since 1971, now displays Victorian furniture, mining artifacts, 10th Mountain Division artifacts, fine art, an assay office (where minerals were tested for purity), theatrical cabinet cards of entertainers who performed in Leadville, and a scale model replica of the world's largest palace of ice.

102 East Ninth Street, Leadville, CO 80461 719-486-1878
7 Days, 10AM-5PM, Allow 30-45 min, \$6 per person

Dexter Cabin and Healy House Museum



Built in 1878 by August Meyer to give his bride a social life, their residence was a sought-after house where boarders played croquet and Nellie Healy entertained. Today it is beautifully restored with lavish Victorian furnishings. Look out onto the formal garden with Victorian urns, statuary, garden benches, and gazebo and stroll through the many native plants. The surprisingly plush 1879 log cabin was built by Leadville banker James Dexter as a hunting lodge. Besides being an avid hunter, he collected coins, gems, etchings, and paintings. The cabin quickly became known as the "stiffest and most exclusive private poker club" in Leadville.

912 Harrison Avenue, Leadville, CO 80461 719-486-0487
Thursday-Saturday 10AM-2PM, Allow 1.5 hours, \$6 per person.

Leadville Colorado and Southern Railroad



Enjoy a railroad journey punctuated with a humorous narrative about Leadville's colorful past. You'll learn about Molly Brown and Horace, Augusta and Baby Doe Tabor, the Guggenheims and Doc Holiday, with spectacular views of Fremont Pass, Mount Massive and Mount Elbert.

326 East Seventh Street, Leadville, CO 80461
719-486-3936, 2.5 hours, Departures vary, \$42 per person

Day Five

Matchless Mine and Baby Doe Cabin



Horace Tabor purchased what would turn out to be one of the richest silver mines in all of Colorado in 1879, enabling he and his mistress-turned-wife "Baby Doe" to live in high style. Even though when Tabor served as a Senator, they flaunted their wealth in Washington, DC, their high-flying lifestyle was not to last. Tabor died in 1899 leaving his family nearly penniless and for nearly 36 years following his death, Elizabeth struggled to profit from the Matchless Mine. She leased the property for iron, zinc, manganese, and silver ore mining operations, though it never produced what it had during the boom days. Elizabeth became a recluse, preferring to spend her time in the small cabin on the Matchless property. Sadly, her body was discovered frozen in the cabin in March of 1935, at age 81.

Country Road 3, Leadville, CO 80461, 719-486-1229
Tuesday-Saturday, 11AM-4:30PM, 1 hour tour, \$12 per person

Red Cliff



The quaint mountain community of Red Cliff, which boomed with saloons, a bank, sawmills and even an opera house, is the oldest town in Eagle County. Today, it attracts rugged individualists who enjoy mountain biking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, kayaking, fly fishing, rock climbing and hiking with fantastic wildflower viewing. Its location high up in the mountains delivers views of Mount of the Holy Cross and the surrounding White River National Forest.

Day Five



Vail

Surrounded by timeless, historic Colorado mining towns, Vail, founded in 1966, is a newcomer among them. Residents are both permanent residents and vacation property owners share a lifestyle that combines one of the best alpine resorts in the world with a friendly, small-town feel. You can enjoy 1,100 acres of open space which accounts for half of all town owned land and any of the 350,000 acres of national forest that surround the town.

Vail Destination Distinctive Accommodations and Dining



Destination Distinctive Accommodations: The Lodge at Vail
174 East Gore Creek Drive, Vail, CO 81657

Pamper yourself with a stay at a luxury Rock Resort in the heart of Vail.



Swiss Chalet Restaurant

20 Vail Road
Vail CO 81567
970-479-5462

An exquisite Vail restaurant serving traditional European cuisine plus authentic hearty regional favorites like Schnitzel and fondue.
