

3 Scenic Byways: Leaf Peeping in Southern Colorado



Even though you may not be in the wilderness, you are in a remote area that has very few services, including cell phone coverage, food, water and fuel. The weather can change quickly and you need to be prepared for times you're outside of and in your vehicle. Pack wisely for all weather conditions and include health and safety kits, appropriate clothing and foot wear, and eco-friendly gear such as reusable water bottles.

Many of the locations you are visiting have plants and animals found nowhere else. At these elevations, the forests and grasslands that surround you have short growing seasons and delicate landscapes that can be easily damaged and take many years to recover. As you look around you will see that these landscapes are changing before your eyes. Forest insects such as bark beetles have moved in and killed large numbers of trees. However, even now, beneath this layer of grey trees, a new crop of young trees are beginning their life cycle. You are experiencing the dynamic powers of nature. Explore our beautiful landscapes, but leave only footprints.

If you like what you see, let it be.

Insider's Tip:
Stop by the Lake City Visitors Center for a Mile Post Guide

Day 1 – Silver Thread Historic and Scenic Byway

LUNCH:
Climb Elevated Eatery in Lake City
[Website >](#)

Elevated comfort food and craft cocktails served with attentive, friendly service.

[Read More >](#)



ACTIVITY:
Bachelor Loop Tour
[Website >](#)

This 17-mile self-guided driving tour showcase amazing foliage and historic mining structures through Creede's silver-mining district.

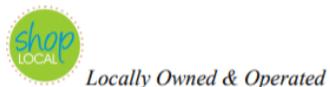
[Read more >](#)



DINNER:
Kip's Grill
[Website >](#)

Kip's Grill now located in Creede, started operating out of a caboose on the side of the Highway in Del Norte, Colorado in 1996. The goal was to create seriously fresh, handmade tacos with amazing flavors

[Read more >](#)



ACTIVITY:

Creede Historic Walking Tour

<https://www.creede.com/component/content/article.html?id=21:museums-historical-sites>

A "Walking Tour" guidebook provides detailed information about Creede's historic buildings and downtown district. Being the only community in Mineral County, Creede serves as the commercial and government center for residents and visitors. Both the Mineral County Courthouse and the Creede Town Hall are located on North Main Street. Rio Grande National Forest maintains the Creede Ranger Station on South Main Street.



Photo: Wikipedia

LODGING:

Aspen Inn & Finding Gems Gift Shop

[Website >](#)

A small inn in a historic building of an old mining town offers accommodations in comfort and natural beauty while retreating from the modern world. The inn is listed on Airbnb and Booking.com or you can call them directly.



Locally Owned & Operated



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5 Steps to Care for Colorado:

“Our communities love sharing their wealth of natural beauty and outdoor experiences with you. All we ask is that you have an amazing time while showing our lands and people plenty of love, kindness and respect. We promise to pay it back tenfold.” <https://www.colorado.com/videos/5-steps-care-coloradans>

Day 2: continuing on the Silver Thread Scenic and Historic Byway

BREAKFAST:

Café Ole

[Website >](#)

Fresh-baked pastries and light breakfast, sandwiches, soups and salads for lunch.



[Read more >](#)



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ACTIVITY:

Pool Table Road

[Website >](#)

Views of golden aspens line Pool Table Road (FR600), just off the Silver Thread.



[CO Trex >](#)

Day 2 – starting on the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and History Byway

LUNCH:

Rubi Slipper

[Website >](#)

The Rubi Slipper in Alamosa has classic American cuisine, and is open for lunch and dinner. Famous for their \$1 Taco Tuesdays, they've extended that special to every day. Enjoy burgers, salads, chili, nachos, and buffalo wings.



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ACTIVITY:

Scenic Drive Along the Autumn Colors

[Website >](#)

Take a brisk fall drive through the southern end of the San Luis Valley to the beautiful San Juan Mountains along the Conejos River. Climb Highway 17 along the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway through colorful aspen trees and crisp mountain air. Enjoy the views from Conejos Canyon Overlook. You may spot the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad train rumbling by.



[Read more >](#)

Insider's Tip:

If you have more time, stop at Elk Creek Bridge just east of Elk Creek Campground (just after Forest Rd 250) before you drive up the switchbacks and take a kayak or tube down the Conejos River (during low water in July and August when it's hot). Stop by and see Elk Meadow Ranch on your way back in Mogote on the southeast side of the Conejos River.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recrea/riogrande/recrea/?recid=29526>

DINNER:

Dos Hermanas

[Website >](#)

For two delicious decades, Dos Hermanas Restaurant has been a destination for Antonito's best homemade recipes and margaritas.

[Read more >](#)



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ACTIVITY:

Rio Grande Natural Area

[Website >](#)

On the way back to Alamosa, turn right on Hwy 142 toward San Luis and drive to the Rio Grande Natural Area at the pull off just west of crossing the Rio Grande (which is one of the best places to view the night sky in Colorado). You might come across a tarantula (one of the few places in Colorado to find them).



[Read more >](#)

Care for Colorado:

Our public lands depend upon you for their survival.

Be a steward of the land and report damage or illegal activities.

https://industry.colorado.com/sites/default/files/Stewardship_one_page_9.pdf

LODGING:

Valley Motel

[Website >](#)

Valley Motel is a family operated independent economy motel located right of Highway 160 in the beautiful town of Alamosa in Colorado's San Luis Valley. It makes an attractive and affordable choice for business and leisure travelers and fulfills the lodging requirements.



[Read more >](#)

Day 3 – continuing on the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway

BREAKFAST:

Milagros Coffee House

[Website >](#)

Drink Coffee....Love Others! Milagros Coffeehouse not only serves a full line of delicious espresso and coffee drinks, teas, and baked goods, we also support the efforts of La Puente Home in combating homelessness and poverty in the San Luis Valley.



[Read more >](#)

ACTIVITY:

Colorado Gators Reptile Park (or UFO tower)

[Website >](#)

There are many species of exotic reptiles on our farm, most of which come from uninformed pet owners, or are sent by police and animal control agencies. We take care of these animals as best we can and display them for the education of the public.



[Read more >](#)

Day 3 – starting on the Scenic Highway of Legends

LUNCH:

Corners Diner, La Veta, CO

[Website >](#)

Old School diner with friendly service and home cooked meals. Serving great American regional breakfast and lunches. "Great food, large portions and friendly service".



[Read more >](#)



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ACTIVITY:

JW Ranch Nature Excursions

[Website >](#)

Fully guided nature excursions on a large mountain ranch in a UTV or 4x4. Observe the abundant wildlife and countless opportunities to photograph beautiful scenery and wild animals.



[Read more >](#)

DINNER:

Dog Bar and Grill in Cuchara, CO

[Website >](#)

Long considered the Heart and Soul of the Cuchara Valley, Dog Bar & Grill is the place to enjoy lunch on the outdoor deck with your favorite canine or a casual dine-in evening for dinner and beverages from a full bar. Live entertainment on weekends thru the summer.

[Read more >](#)



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Insider's Tip:

For a more interesting drive to your final destination for the evening, from Trinidad Lake State Park, take the road over the Trinidad Dam (CR 18.3) to Starkville then north of Santa Fe Trail into Trinidad.

ACTIVITY:

Trinidad Lake State Park

[Website >](#)

Anglers are hooked, wildlife enthusiasts are bedazzled and geologists are intrigued by Trinidad Lake State Park. Great photo opportunities

[Read more >](#)



LODGING:

La Quinta Inn and Suites

[Website >](#)

Take advantage of our pet-friendly hotel's many modern amenities, free hotel features, friendly service, and convenient location near the city's downtown hub.

[Read more >](#)



Day 4 – continuing on Scenic Highway of Legends

BREAKFAST:

La Quinta Inn and Suites

[Website >](#)

Take advantage of our pet-friendly hotel's many modern amenities, free hotel features, friendly service, and convenient location near the city's downtown hub.

[Read more >](#)



Care for Colorado:

These seven principles will help you get Colo-Ready. Respect the place, leave no trace — it sure would help a lot! <https://www.colorado.com/videos/care-colorado>

ACTIVITY:

Art Cartopia Museum

[Website >](#)

Our wondrous array of art cars has finally opened at fantastic location just off of Interstate 25 (exit 15). The museum is open year-round with 25+ art cars on display. That's not all... There is a way cool gift shop, and extraordinary gallery and totally fun makerspace/workshop along with other hands-on activities. One of only 3 car art museums in North America, this is "neo-roadside attraction" is worthy of being a destination

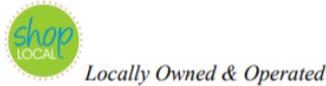
[Read more >](#)



LUNCH:
Mission at the Bell
[Website >](#)

Mission at the Bell is a cozy, family-owned restaurant, (over 20 years in business) serving Tex-Mex style menu items. Located on the basement level of the historic Bell Block building in the Corazon de Trinidad Historic District - Trinidad Colorado.

[Read more >](#)



ACTIVITY:
Wormhole Loop Trails
[Website >](#)

Wormhole Loop Trail is a 2.3 mile moderately trafficked loop trail located near Trinidad, Colorado that offers scenic views and is rated as moderate. The trail is primarily used for hiking, trail running, and mountain biking. Dogs are also able to use this trail.

[CO Trex >](#)

