

The Best of Colorado

31 August – 15 September 2024

Fabulous scenery, wonderful main line trains, impressive narrow gauge steam lines, friendly people and really good food. This is as close as you'll get to the perfect holiday!

Tour Highlights

- One of the most scenic American railroads!
- Ride the Durango-Silverton and the Cumbres and Toltec
- See the best of the BIG trains – Union Pacific on Sherman Hill.
- See the best of the BIG trains – BNSF on the Joint Line.
- Ride the train to the summit of Pikes Peak, 14,110 feet!
- Visit the National Park at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison
- Ride a 1919 Birney streetcar (tram) in Fort Collins.
- Visit the Union Pacific Steam Centre at Cheyenne to see their LARGE steam locomotive collection.
- Plenty of attractions for non-railway enthusiasts.
- Time in Denver, and a ride on its streetcars.
- All the scenic and retail attractions of Colorado – plus LOTS more!

The tour is being run using minibus(s), which will allow flexibility. We have deliberately not included meals (except where shown) in this tour – there is such a wide variety of options, and meals are reasonably priced according to British standards (with enormous portions), we feel it is better to deal with meals on an informal basis when you decide whether a full meal or a snack is appropriate! See our note at the end on “What’s included”.

Saturday 31 August

We can offer departures from London for your flight to Denver for an evening arrival at Denver’s airport. We will meet you in the international arrivals meeting area after you have cleared immigrations and collected bags. Look for a Darjeeling Tours paging board.

There’s a short journey to our home for the next night. If you’re hungry after the flight, we can arrange a visit to one of the local diners.

Sunday 1 September

After breakfast, we visit the **Colorado Railway Museum at Golden**, with plenty of steam and diesel locomotives, both standard and narrow gauge to see. Then it’s the Joint Line. This heads south from Denver and is jointly owned by the two big rail companies in the West – Union Pacific (UP) and BNSF (as successors to the Denver and Rio Grande Western, and the Santa Fe). We can expect to see coal trains – 15,000 tons with three locomotives, all working flat out going south. There are some beautiful spots for photography and we’ll head south to spend the night at Colorado Springs.

Our favourite restaurant here is an American speciality overlooking the railway tracks providing a good opportunity to see & photograph the BNSF & UP freight trains passing by.



Monday 2 September

After breakfast, we take the short journey west to **Manitou Springs** for the newly rebuilt train ride on the rack railway up to the summit of **Pikes Peak**, one of Colorado's famous "fourteeners" – summits over 14,000 feet. The views from the summit are stupendous, north, south, east and west. Several different states are visible, and it is possible to see back to Denver, some 70 miles away. Be warned, at 14,000 feet, the air is thin, so move slowly, and bring something warm to wear – it'll be chilly! There will be time after this for a visit to **The Garden of the Gods**, with amazing sandstone rock formations. What is even more amazing is that these used to be the sea-bed! Overnight in Colorado Springs.



Tuesday 3 September

A short journey west to **Cripple Creek** has us back a century or so, with this small line giving us a 45-minute ride through this old gold-mining district.

We then immediately head south to **Canon City** to arrive at **the Royal Gorge Railroad** for a ride through the Gorge with its famous 'hanging bridge' behind an old GM diesel along a famous section of the former Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad.

You may like to enjoy the lavish food & beverage service on board whilst enjoying the views from an open air flat trolley! The views of the gorge, old mining remains all through the lovely **Arkansas river**.

Return back to the **Santa Fe Depot** where we try our chances to visit the depot if permitted on the day.

In the late afternoon, we'll take the long drive towards Antonito via **Poncha Springs** ready for the next day's trip. We'll stop for the night in Alamosa.

Wednesday 4 September

A full day out on the **Cumbres and Toltec Railway (C&T)**, Our steam-hauled train leaves Antonito at 10:00 and runs behind steam over the San Juan mountains to Chama via the fabulous Tanglefoot Curve and Windy Point, over the summit at 10,000 feet. (Lunch included)

We'll spend the night across to the Chama station. The town has hardly population of 1000 inhabitants with just handful eateries & pubs.



Thursday 5 September

We'll spend the morning chasing the eastbound C&T train up the steep bit from Chama to **Cumbres Pass** – the grade is 1 in 25 most of the way, and the loco REALLY works hard! We will then head west via Pagosa Springs through beautiful Western countryside to Durango, our base for the night. We hope to have a private tour of the Durango & Silverton's loco shed and works with a long-serving D&S employee. Durango, as a holiday town, has a wide variety of restaurants, including a cheap and cheerful, and very entertaining pizza parlour, mainly inhabited by the locals, who are usually very chatty, and interested in hearing how 'foreigners' view life! Overnight in Durango.

Friday 6 September

Our day out on the most famous of Colorado's narrow-gauge lines, the **Durango and Silverton (D&S)**. We'll book in the rearmost gondola (an open car with a roof) and leave Durango at 08:45. This gives us the best views as the train traverses the 'High Line' way above the **Animas River** before following the river valley all the way up to **Silverton**.



There's a couple of hours to explore this fascinating old mining town before the train returns to Durango. We enjoy our dinner in town and then head back to our motel for overnight stay.

Saturday 7 September

For those who wish, we'll chase the two morning trains up to Rockwood for some great photos. Then we will leave Durango and follow the course of the fabled Rio Grande Southern through **Dolores** (where we can stop to visit the '**Galloping Goose**' museum – the Geese were the trademark of this remote line and we've been promised a very short ride up the 100 yards of track outside the restored station). We will drive further via Ophir, Rico and Lizard Head Pass to Montrose, calling at the Ridgway Railway Museum on the way.

Overnight in a motel in Montrose.

Sunday 8 September

We have a day of fabulous scenery. We head east, and will visit another of America's National Parks, **the Black Canyon of the Gunnison**, 2,000feet deep and a worthy second only to the Grand Canyon. We will follow the South Rim to the best viewpoints.

We then continue east, driving round the beautiful **Blue Mesa Reservoir** and into Gunnison, a true Western town. There should be time to visit the **County Pioneer Museum**, close to our motel, which contains the old Denver & Rio Grande locomotive 268 in the famous 'bumblebee' livery.



Monday 9 September

Railway interest and scenery. We'll drive over the **old Marshall Pass**, once on the Rio Grande's narrow gauge main line to Gunnison. Marshall Pass summit used to be in a complete wooden snowshed, remains of which still exist. After passing through **Poncha Springs**, we follow the course of the old Tennessee Pass railroad to **Leadville**, Colorado's best preserved mining town. If we make it in time, we can ride the Leadville Colorado & Southern up to Climax – it's an experience to remember. Dinner is at Quincy's where the only item on the menu is filet mignon of excellent quality! Choice? Yes, there's a choice: what size do you want?

Tuesday 10 September

We continue down to the **Georgetown Loop**, where we can either take a tour of Historic Georgetown or a train trip over the spindly **Devils Gate Bridge** with opportunity to photograph the train.

Further, calling at **Idaho Springs** for a lunch break on the lively 'Miner's St.' where there's plenty of options to eat & drink. Another valid reason is to photograph the plinthed steam loco.



We then climb “Oh my God Road” to Central City, a gold mining town turned casino centre to see a couple of plinthed traditional steam locomotives. Overnight in Fort Collins.

Wednesday 11 September

In the morning, we will have a ride on one of **Fort Collins vintage streetcars**, Birney car number 25, from the City Park down Mountain Avenue. This is an excellent volunteer-run project, and the crew are always willing to talk about their vehicle.



We will then continue to **Cheyenne**, the Union Pacific’s base for its steam locomotives. As a priority, we’ll visit the Union Pacific’s steam centre in Cheyenne where we will be able to view their collection of large steam locomotives, including the 844, a large 4-8-4, and **Big Boy 4014**, an even larger 4-8-8-4 (unless they are out on Union Pacific PR work)..

Thursday 12 September

We will head west to see the best spots on **Sherman Hill** – Borie, Otto Road, Granite, Buford, Tie Siding and Dale Creek to watch the big trains running between the West Coast and Chicago. Watching 15,000 horsepower pulling 15,000 tons up a 1 in 50 grade is awesome!



Back in Cheyenne, the station is well worth visiting in its own right, and we will arrange a visit to the **Cheyenne Depot Museum** there with its superb HO scale model railway. For dinner, there is a bistro at the station, where (weather permitting) it is possible to eat on the old platform one at

the famous brewery & restaurant, within a few feet of transcontinental freight trains pausing for crew changes. . Overnight in Cheyenne.

Friday 13 September

We’ll take an early morning trip the five miles east to the top of **Archer Hill**, a great place to photograph eastbound climbing round an enormous S-bend. In one of Cheyenne’s parks, there is a plinthed “Big Boy”, the twin of the one that Union Pacific have rebuilt.

Mid-morning, we will drive back down the Interstate to Denver calling at **Colorado Model Railroad Museum in Greeley**. one of a kind model railroad of its kind will leave you inspired. Walk through a real caboose, stroll along the mountain vistas and peek into a miniature world of wonder.

We will keep the evening relaxed for a farewell meal.

Saturday 14 September

After breakfast and packing for departure, we will make our last visit to the **Forney Museum** with its collection of steam locomotives and many historic American cars and plenty else. We will then venture out to the **Union Station, Denver** which is worth a photo or two. We catch the equivalent of the “Tube”, a Commuter train in the Denver, Colorado, metropolitan area up to Denver International airport or just about.

We’ll do our best to get you out to the airport for your flight home to ...

Sunday 15 September

...Britain, arriving in the morning.

We will endeavour to provide airport transfers in Denver for those arranging their own flights, but it may be necessary to take a cab or bus (there is an excellent direct hourly bus service from the 'park-and-ride' opposite our motel).

What's included

- Economy class flights from London (but see also below) with British Airways / United if you choose the fully inclusive tour price.
- Continental breakfasts are included at most of our accommodations, but otherwise meals are NOT included. We have deliberately not included meals (except where shown) in this tour – there is such a wide variety of options, and meals are reasonably priced according to British standards (with enormous portions), we feel it is better to deal with meals on an informal basis when you decide whether a full meal or a snack is appropriate! Appetites vary, and all America is full of dining options, from fast food upwards. Our experience is that allowing everyone to make a choice on the day, we all eat where we want, when we want. Your tour manager will be pleased to discuss all the options available at meal times, and we have found that this 'individually cooked' approach works much better, and allows for individual preferences, than a continuing procession of hotel buffets.
- Accommodation is generally in reasonable motels, either a national chain, or individual motels we know well.
- We include all transport (The tour is being run using a minibus, which will allow flexibility), train rides and excursions as set out in the itinerary.
- Services of a Darjeeling Tours Limited Tour Manager.
- Lots of beautiful scenic drives, train rides, and adventure for the fun seeker!
- Tips, Personal and incidental expenses are not included.

Price

Per Person on twin/double sharing basis.

Fully inclusive price from London: £ 4,395 *Limited availability.*

Ground only price: £ 3,595

Single supplement £ 760

Flights

If you would prefer to travel to Denver from a regional UK airport, we will do our best to find you something suitable. It usually works well from Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh, and can sometimes work from other airports too. Please let us know if you require a Premium Economy or Business and we will be happy to quote the supplement.

Please note that all carriers, train times and flight times are subject to change at any time.