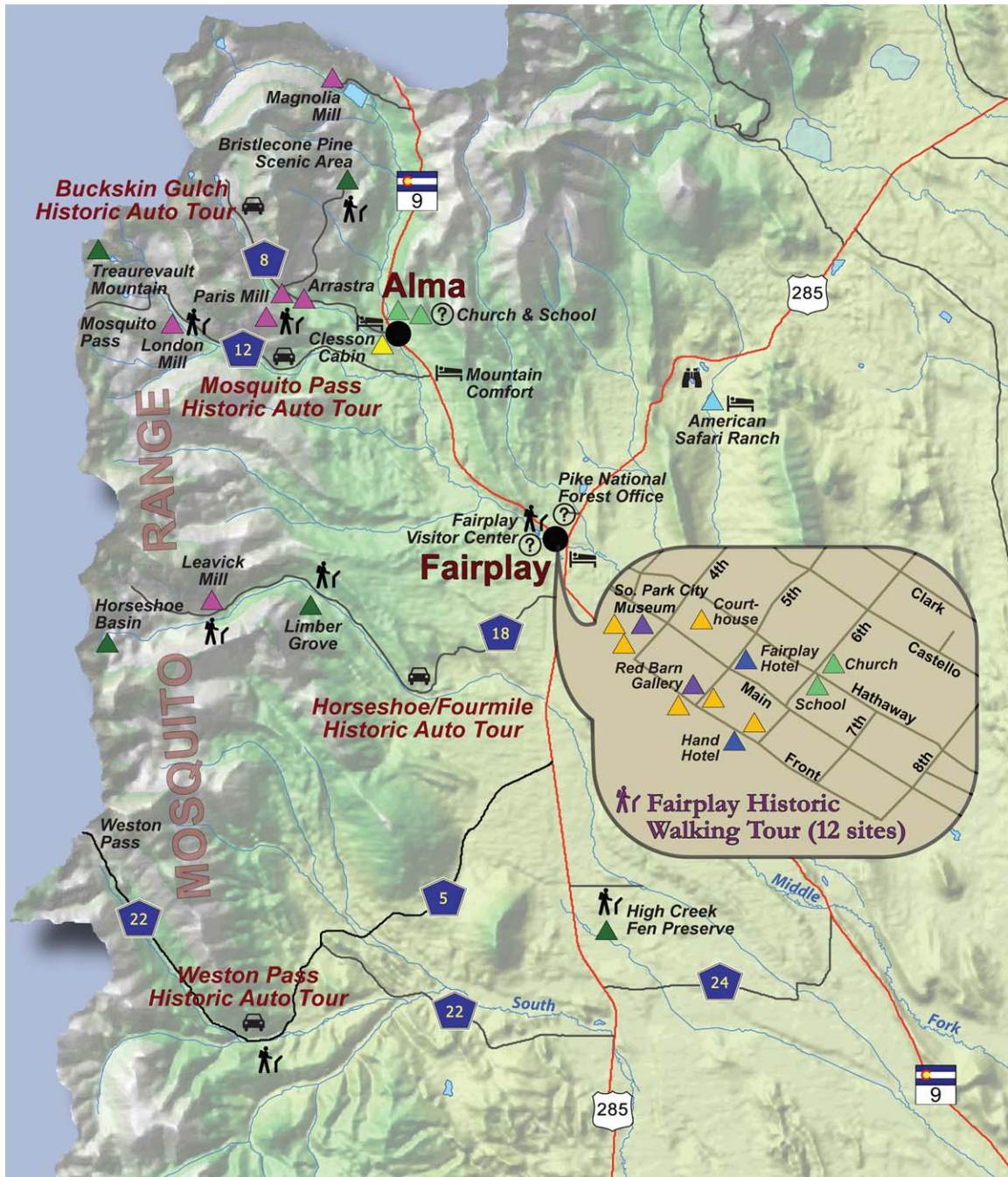


Water, Gold & Silverheels: Fairplay & Alma



Following Native American hunters, Spanish explorers and French trappers, in 1859 prospectors discovered gold in the South Platte River. Fair Play (now Fairplay) was the first mining camp that sprang up in every gulch and gully. Only Fairplay and Alma remain today, but evidence of 19th-Century mines, mills and towns are still visible across this mountain landscape.



South Park City Museum in Fairplay

Duration: 4 Days / 4 Nights

Destinations include:

- *Fairplay Visitor Center and South Park City Museum*
- *Fairplay Historic Walking Tour*
- *Historic Alma*
- *Buckskin Gulch and Bristlecone Pine Scenic Area*
- *Mosquito Pass Historic Auto Tour*
- *Fourmile Creek and Horseshoe Basin*
- *High Creek Fen Wetland*
- *Weston Pass Historic Auto Tour*

Lodging: Options in the Fairplay/Alma area include the Hand Hotel and Riverside Inn Hotel, Western Inn Motel, and the Mountain Comfort Bed & Breakfast Inn. Please see "Visitor Resources" for a more complete description of each lodging facility in the area.

Dining: Several restaurants are open year-round in Fairplay and the South Park Saloon in Alma serves both lunch and dinner.

Day One: Fairplay and South Park City Museum



Start at the Fairplay Visitor Center (100 4th Street) for an orientation to the Fairplay/Alma area. A number of interpretive exhibits at the center depict the mining, ranching and railroad history of South Park, as well as the wealth of natural resources found in this area. Plan on spending several hours touring South Park City Museum.

The museum is a collection of period buildings depicting a mining town from the late 1800s (pictured above). Over 60,000 authentic artifacts characterize the frontier trades and professions of South Park. Seven of the buildings are on their original sites, two of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Other buildings were relocated here from nearby "ghost towns" such as Tarryall, Leavick and Eureka. Before leaving the visitor center, pick up a copy of the Fairplay Historic Walking Tour brochure. This walking tour will take about three hours to visit all 12 sites, including:

1. *Edith Teter School (1881)* - State Register of Historic Properties
2. *South Park Community Church (1874)* - National Register
3. *Fairplay Hotel (1922)* - National Register
4. *Old Park County Courthouse (1874)* - National Register
5. *South Park Lager Beer Brewery (1879)* - National Register
6. *Summer Saloon (1879)* - National Register
7. *Senate Saloon (1870s)* - located on historic Front Street
8. *Odd Fellows Hall (1870s)* - now Calamity's Cabin gift shop
9. *McLaughlin Livery (1870s)* - now Old Red Barn art gallery
10. *The Bank of Fairplay (1882)* - now a dentist's office
11. *Hand Hotel (1931)* - now a bed & breakfast inn
12. *Cohen's Store (1874)* - originally constructed of adobe

Other points of interest on historic Front Street include South Park Pottery, Colorado Mountain Hat Company, Silver Scoop Creamery, the Candle Studio, and the Chocolate Moose coffee shop.

Day Two: Town of Alma and Buckskin Gulch Tour

At 10,578 feet, Alma currently is the highest incorporated town in the United States. Visit Alma Town Hall for an orientation to Alma's historic buildings. The Alma School (now Town Hall) and Community Church (pictured) are both listed on the State Register of Historic Properties, and the 1871 Clesson Cabin is being restored as a visitor center.



Buckskin Gulch Historic Auto Tour begins in downtown Alma, and follows County Road 8 for five miles to Kite Lake (12,000 feet). Sign posts along the route correspond to nine historic sites, including the Paris Mill (pictured), that are interpreted in the Buckskin Gulch historic auto tour brochure. The last mile of road to Kite Lake is too steep and rough for some passenger cars, but this alpine setting is worth the trip for high clearance vehicles.

The Bristlecone Pine Scenic Area requires a three-mile side trip on County Road 787, just past the Paris Mill. This area protects an unusual stand of wind-sculpted bristlecone pine trees. Growing at 11,700 feet, some trees are nearly a thousand years old. Strong winter winds have caused many trees here to take on a tilted appearance. Hiking and bird watching are also popular activities at this site.

Interpretive sites along the Buckskin Gulch Tour route include:

1. Alma Cemetery
2. Buckskin Joe Townsite
3. Gold Arrastra
4. Paris Mill and Hungry Five Mine
5. Windy Ridge and Bristlecone Pine Scenic Area
6. Old mining structures
7. Sweet Home Mine
8. Natural amphitheater on Mt. Bross
9. Kite Lake trailhead and campground

Day Three: Mosquito Pass and Fourmile Creek Tours

These two self-guided historic auto tours can require a full day, depending on how much time is spent at each site. Also, the last four sites on the Mosquito Pass tour require high clearance and four-wheel drive. Stop at the Forest Service Office in Fairplay to obtain copies of the auto tour brochures and inquire about prevailing road conditions.

Mosquito Pass Historic Auto Tour starts at Colorado Highway 9 between Fairplay and Alma, and follows the old stage road (County Road 12) west to the summit of Mosquito Pass. Sign posts along the road correspond to nine historic sites that are interpreted in the auto tour brochure, including the North London Mine (pictured). High clearance and four-wheel drive is required beyond sign post number 6. Notable sites along the way include:



1. *Alma Junction - railroad wye where ore trains turned around*
2. *Park City - mining settlement on the stage route to Leadville*
3. *Lode mining tunnels in fissure veins*
4. *Lindon Mine railroad spur*
5. *1930s wooden tram towers*
6. *1880s aerial tram towers and the London Mill*
7. *1879 Mosquito Pass Wagon Road Company sign*
8. *North London Mine and associated structures*
9. *Mosquito Pass summit*



Fourmile Creek Historic Auto Tour retraces the Denver, South Park & Hilltop Railroad toward Horseshoe Basin. This 11-mile tour begins one mile south of Fairplay on County Road 18. Sign posts along the route correspond to ten different interpretive sites, including the Leavick Mill (pictured).

A short hike up Limber Grove Trail reveals ancient pine trees, some of which are nearly 1000 years old. Sites interpreted in the Horseshoe/Fouremile Historic Auto Tour brochure include the following:

1. *Geologic uplift gives rise to the peaks ahead*
2. *Hand-dug water ditches for mining and irrigation*
3. *Townsite of Peart*
4. *Townsite of Horseshoe*
5. *Bighorn sheep return to Sheep Mountain*
6. *Limber Grove Trail - ancient pine trees*
7. *Mudsill Mine and Mill*
8. *Leavick Mill*
9. *Leavick Townsite*
10. *Last Chance, Hilltop and Dauntless Mines*

Day Four: Weston Pass Road and High Creek Fen

Weston Pass Historic Auto Tour begins on U.S. 285 south of Fairplay and follows County Road 22 to the summit of Weston Pass. The "Road To Riches," as it was known, originally served as a wagon road after the 1860 gold strike near Leadville. Numerous 19th-Century homesteads and ranches (pictured) provide a very scenic backdrop for what was once a busy toll road for wagons hauling freight between South Park and Leadville.



Sign posts along the route correspond to ten sites that are interpreted in the Weston Pass Historic Auto Tour brochure, including:

1. *Historic crossroads known as Twin Bridges*
2. *Early ranch built from native timber*
3. *Philo Weston's historic toll gate*
4. *Buffalo Peaks view*
5. *Beaver dams*
6. *Weston Pass stage road*
7. *Park Place stage stop*

8. *Remnants of historic tree cutting and wildfire*
9. *Ruby Mine site*
10. *Weston Pass summit views*



High Creek Fen (pictured) is a wetland supplied by groundwater that constantly flows to the surface. The fen supports 14 rare plant species that survived here after the glaciers receded. This preserve contains more rare plants than any other wetland in Colorado. Only two or three other wetlands of this type exist in the entire United States. Shorebirds, such as the spotted sandpiper and Wilson's phalarope are also found here. The best time to visit is mid-July when a variety of wildflowers are blooming. This is a very boggy area and there are no established trails. Rubber boots or old shoes are therefore recommended. Owned by The Nature Conservancy, High Creek Fen is about 8.5 miles south of Fairplay on US Highway 285. It can be visited on the way to or back from the Weston Pass tour.