

Trains of the Colorado Rockies

May 23 – 31, 2009

Cost: Starting at \$ 2,789 – this includes 9 days and 12 meals and round trip airfare from Jacksonville Intl Airport

Highlights...Featuring Denver, Rocky Mountain National Park, Georgetown Loop Railroad, Vail, Grand Junction, Durango & Silverton Railroad, Durango, Mesa Verde National Park, Royal Gorge Railroad, Colorado Springs, Pike's Peak Cog Railway, and Garden of the Gods

Day 1: Denver, Colorado - Tour Begins

Traverse the Colorado Rockies with Collette Vacations as you journey through the beauty of nature with Alpine lakes, towering peaks and rolling meadows at every turn. Your tour begins in the Mile High city of Denver, Colorado.

Day 2: Denver - Boulder - Estes Park - Rocky Mountain National Park - Denver

Travel this morning to the resort village of Estes Park, famous for its Stanley Hotel, the inspiration for Stephen King's novel *The Shining*. Enjoy some leisure time to meander among its unique shops and fine galleries. Next stop is Rocky Mountain National Park where you'll discover the true meaning of "panoramic" as you experience some of Mother Nature's most spectacular accomplishments. You will travel across the famed Trail Ridge Road* which forms the highest continuous highway in America reaching heights of 12,183 ft. Its name derives from its proximity to historic pathways used by native people to cross the Rocky Mountains. With its gentle grades and broader curves, this celebrated "Roof of the Rockies" offers massive peaks, rugged canyons and thundering waterfalls as you cross the continental divide en route to Grand Lake and then back to Denver.

Day 3: Denver - Georgetown - Vail - Grand Junction

This morning travel through the Rocky Mountains on a scenic and historic train ride aboard the Georgetown Loop Railroad. Completed in 1884 for the Colorado Central Railway as a means to transport silver in and out of the region, this spectacular stretch of narrow gauge railroad is an engineering marvel and features several horseshoe curves and bridges including the Devil's Gate High Bridge. Next, travel out to the picturesque Alpine village of Vail, founded as a ski resort in 1962 and incorporated as a town in 1966. Lined with spectacular chalets, restaurants, outdoor cafes, shops and numerous cultural activities, this town is one of the finest resort destinations in the world. Later, arrive in Grand Junction, your home for the next two nights.

Day 4: Grand Junction - Colorado National Monument - Grand Junction

Today you will visit one of the grand landscapes of the American West in Colorado National Monument. The establishment of the national monument in 1911 was largely due to the campaigning of one man, John Otto, who explored the canyons and single-handedly built many miles of trails through the area. During your visit you will travel along the Rim Rock to see a colorful panorama of deep, sheer-sided canyons and high rock towers. Later, journey to wine country to learn about one of the region's finest winemaking vineyards and sample the fruits of its labors. Tonight's winemaker's dinner at a lovely vineyard will be an exceptional experience where you can relax and enjoy the company of your fellow travelers.

Day 5: Grand Junction - Silverton - Durango

Today's drive takes you south to the small mining town of Silverton, a national historic landmark. Hidden high in the San Juan Mountains, this town offers spectacular views combined with magnificent Victorian charm. Enjoy some free time in town to explore its historic architecture and buildings - most built between 1882 and 1910 during Silverton's boom times. Then it's "All Aboard" as you embark on the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. This 1881 coal-fired, steam-powered locomotive was built to haul silver and gold ore from the San Juan Mountains...but passengers soon realized it was the view that was truly precious. Today, re-live the scenic journey from Silverton to Durango and be awestruck by its views.

Day 6: Durango - Mesa Verde National Park - Durango

An incredible day awaits at Mesa Verde National Park which preserves the one thousand year culture of the remarkable Anasazi Indians, "the Ancient Ones". Visit the fascinating Spruce Tree Cliff Dwellings and see the famous Cliff Palace, two of the largest cliff dwellings built between AD 1211 and 1278 by the ancestors of the Puebloan peoples of the Southwest. Believed to be home to approximately 80 people, Spruce Tree House was built into a natural cave and found to have 130 rooms and 8 ceremonial chambers. This evening enjoy an Old West adventure filled with traditional cowboy food and entertainment.

Day 7: Durango - Canon City - Colorado Springs

Travel east across southern Colorado to Canon City and the home of the Royal Gorge Railroad. Board the train for a 24-mile ride beneath the highest suspension bridge in the world, the Royal Gorge Bridge, which spans the gorge 1,053 feet above the railroad tracks. It is no understatement to say that this is some of the most spectacular scenery you will ever see.

Day 8: Colorado Springs - Manitou Springs - Colorado Springs

Depart for Manitou Springs and the home of Pike's Peak, the legendary symbol of the 1859 Gold Rush. Upon arrival you will embark on Pike's Peak Cog Railway, the world's highest cog railroad, for an 8.9 mile journey to the top of Pike's Peak (approx. 14,110 ft). During the journey you will see many magnificent views and perhaps see some animals in their native habitat. Later, travel to the Garden of the Gods. Placed on the National Register for Historic Places in 1979, this park offers towering sandstone formations and a wonderful view of Pike's Peak. Tonight join your fellow travelers for a farewell dinner to celebrate a trip filled with scenic delights and railway adventures.

Day 9: Colorado Springs - Tour Ends

Your tour ends today. However, the many wonderful memories you'll have made are yours to take home and enjoy for many years to come.

