

The SIGNAL

DISPATCHES FROM THE ROYAL GORGE



A FAMILY DREAM REALIZED

The story of building America's most scenic mountain railroad

By Mark Greksa

In 1999, we embarked on a journey to resurrect Colorado's most storied and historic rail line in the Royal Gorge. With the help of my family and our talented staff, we began with just five railcars and a cooler full of soft drinks for our guests. Our long-term vision was to honor the railroad's rich history as the finest railway in the country.

We also wanted to create an entirely new Colorado experience featuring excellent food, friendly service and memorable events while sharing the most spectacular scenery in the Rocky Mountain West. Nothing like this had ever been done in the Royal Gorge region.

Just four years later, we began fulfilling our vision with our first multi-course first-class dinner train, selling out every seat in just two weeks. We built new dining cars and added Vista Domes and Deluxe cars. Soon we began offering Breakfast, casual and first-class Lunch, Oktoberfest, Wine Dinners and our popular Santa Express trains. We also built multiple kitchens throughout the train -- because we're a scratch cooking operation that focuses on preparing fresh and delicious food on board the train.

Next, we added full-service bars, offering local brews and wine from around the world along with signature specialty drinks. We also began pursuing sustainability through recycling and seeking out ways to be more earth-friendly.

There are many challenges involved in running a train of this magnitude. Our talented staff of 300+ are responsible

for managing four onboard kitchens, safely operating our trains through this narrow canyon, providing impeccable service, and restoring and maintaining all of our rolling stock. It's a formidable task, but one we approach with unparalleled pride and dedication.

Over the last few years we've been featured on The Food Network, PBS, NPR and in USA Today. It's hard not to love these accolades, but what we love more is ensuring that you, our guest, is happy on every trip through the Royal Gorge.

We've taken many chances and overcome various challenges over the years to make our dream come to life. With the help of a talented and dedicated team, we've become one of Colorado's premier destination attractions and the finest experience in the Royal Gorge region.

We deeply appreciate your patronage and thank you for riding the Royal Gorge Route Railroad.



ROYAL GORGE ROUTE RAILROAD

Running Daily throughout the year

No matter the weather, the views are stunning through the Royal Gorge. Choose your favorite class of service and experience dining in style for breakfast or lunch or dinner. Enjoy the journey!

SPECIAL EVENTS

February

Valentine's Day First Class Lunch & Dinner

Take romance to another level aboard our Valentine's Day Train to be reminded of the three most important things in life: food, wine and love. Not necessarily in that order. Dinner is prepared by our Executive Chef, sourced locally and beautifully presented. In addition to the spectacular scenery and delicious three-course dining experience, this very special event includes a champagne toast and a lovely red rose.

April

Easter Weekend Train

Enjoy Easter weekend with family and friends aboard the Royal Gorge Route Railroad. We offer a special seasonal menu that changes from year to year. Pair your journey with a bottle of wine (or two) and make it extra special.

May

Mother's Day First Class Lunch Train

Pamper mom on this relaxing ride through the beautiful Gorge to properly thank her for all that she's done for you. Our Mother's Day First Class Lunch features three courses, plus a special surprise and glass of sparkling wine just for Mom. Pair your lunch with your favorites from the bar and remember to step outside to our open-air car for the jaw-dropping views and photos. Available Mother's Day weekend.

June - September

Wine Dinner Trains

We host these very special events each year featuring multiple courses, paired with meticulously selected wines from around the world. Relax in style while our knowledgeable waitstaff deliver outstanding wine and food. This is a night out you don't want to miss.

September - October

Oktoberfest - Prost!

Listed as #1 on the Denver Post's Ultimate Guide to Oktoberfest in Colorado, the Royal Gorge Route Oktoberfest train experience is a tradition we relish. Enjoy German-style beer, traditional food, and great service. Available on select departures throughout September and October.





November and December

Santa Express Train - SantaExpressTrain.com

Take a ride on Colorado's premier Christmas Train! Make memories with family and friends, while children enjoy the magic of the season throughout the ride to the North Pole in the Royal Gorge. Children wear their favorite pajamas while Santa's elves bring warm cookies, hot cocoa and an abundance of holiday cheer and games. Once Santa boards the train, he greets every child with a special gift.

We offer departures throughout the day and evening, and delicious entrees are available on every ride, including breakfast on early morning departures, and lunch and dinner on afternoon & evening trains. Full-service bars are also available throughout the ride, with specialty holiday drinks to celebrate the season. Santa Express sells out each year, so be sure to book early at SantaExpressTrain.com!



New Year's Eve Train

Celebrate the New Year in style, aboard the Royal Gorge Route Railroad. Experience the most scenic train ride in Colorado, while enjoying a delicious, chef-prepared multi-course dinner, featuring a complimentary glass of champagne. Special wines are also available, along with a fantastic full-service bar. This special occasion journey is available for First Class and 403 Grill dining for lunch and dinner departures on New Year's Eve and lunch departures on New Year's Day.



Happy Endings Caboose Cafe

Espresso*Ice Cream*Crepes*Burgers*Gifts

Located just west of the train depot, Happy Endings Caboose Cafe offers delicious Italian style espresso coffees, beer, wine, specialty drinks, ice cream, burgers, crepes, and other treats. Stop in to browse our logo wear, sure to put a smile on your face. This historic Great Western caboose was completely refurbished to include a scratch kitchen, espresso bar, retail space, and comfortable indoor seating. Outside you'll also find shaded patio and deck seating for guests of the train and caboose. Stop in before or after your train ride, or anytime you're in the Royal Gorge Region.





1878-'79 - Royal Gorge War: The railroad's initial construction was marred by a two-year struggle between two competing companies, D&RG and Santa Fe, in a race west for silver, igniting a battle true to the old west. The narrow mouth of the canyon created an uncommon strife between rail lines competing for the only route. Eventually, federal courts intervened and D&RG paid \$1.8M to Santa Fe for what they'd built. Tracks from Santa Fe to Pueblo reached Leadville on July 20, 1880.

1879 - Royal Gorge Route Opens - Hanging bridge built: The hanging bridge was built



over the river where the gorge narrows to just 30 feet. Construction cost \$11,759 in 1879 — about \$340,000 today. This engineering marvel has served the main rail line for 118 years.

1905 - President Teddy Roosevelt rides the Royal Gorge Route. Roosevelt described his ride as "the trip that bankrupts the English language." Then, in 1936, while on his campaign trail on the train, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, called it "One of the best loved scenic wonders of America." We couldn't agree more.

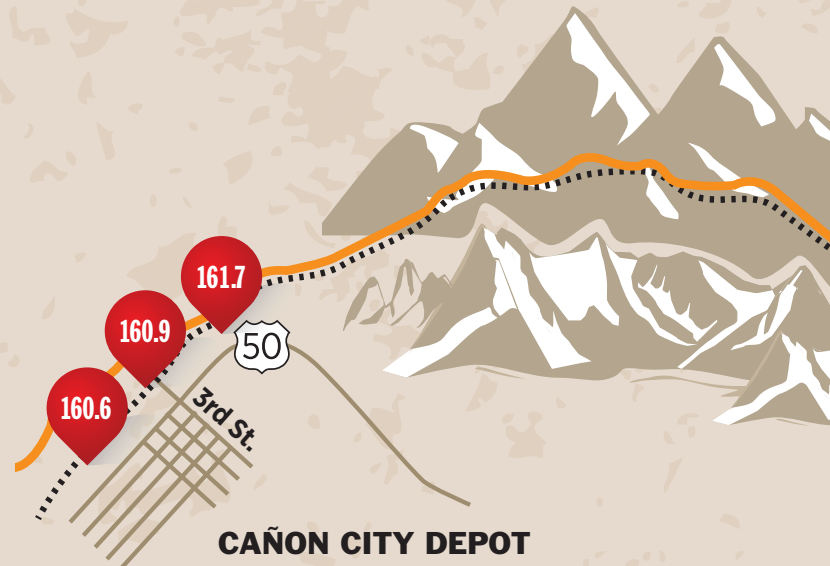


1909 - Water line built: Convicts of the Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility built the wooden water line, remnants of which can be seen about halfway along the route guests ride today. At one time there were 12 suspended footbridges for workers to access the line.

1967 - Train Service Ends: Passenger service between Denver and Salida was discontinued in July of 1967 due in part to the U.S. Postal Service canceling its contract with the train. Travel fads also began to favor more modern modes like airline service.

MILEPOST GUIDE

Watch for black on white mileposts along north side of tracks. They will be numbered mostly in the 160's on this segment of the route through the Royal Gorge, denoting rail miles from Denver, Colorado. Use this simple guide to learn some fascinating facts about what you are looking at just outside your personal window into history. For much more in-depth information, maps, photos and geographical history, be sure to pick up a copy of **RAILS THRU THE GORGE** in our Santa Fe Gift Shop after your return to Canon City.



160.6 Royal Gorge Route Railroad Depot

Originally completed in 1914 by the AT&SF. On June 21, 1921, the Pueblo flood destroyed most of the Santa Fe track between Cañon City and Pueblo. Passenger service ended between those towns, and the depot was used for freight service until 1984.

160.9 Territorial Correctional Facility (on the right)

The older buildings were established in 1871, and are referred to as the old max, this is now a medium security prison. Look closely behind the prison you will see the original rock wall of the older buildings. The prison museum is located on First Street and is opened year-round.

161.7 – 163.0 Tunnel Drive

Tunnel drive is a three mile hiking and biking trail, and was once the home of Cañon City's first gravity water diversion system, started in 1892 and built with convict labor.

165.45 Wooden Water Line (across the river)

Dilapidated but still hanging precariously across the two tributary gullies is Cañon City's oldest water line that was started in 1908 and finished in 1910. This gravity diversion water line pushed water into Cañon City up until 1972.

166.0 Royal Gorge Bridge

The bridge is 1,053' above the train. It is owned by the City of Canon City and run by a concessionaire based out of Dallas, Texas. The bridge charges a fee to walk across it. The best views of the bridge are from the train, so step out onto our open-air car for a view that is simply "priceless."

166.23 Hanging Bridge

This famous bridge is located at the narrowest and deepest point in the gorge. Between 30 and 40 feet separate the walls of the canyon. The bridge developer, C. Shaler Smith was able



1999 - Resurrection of the train line: The former owners of the Georgetown Loop Railroad resurrected the line, and the train first ran with five passenger cars and a cooler with drinks for guests. From humble beginnings, the operation quickly grew with new railcars, offering extraordinary service and dining experiences that the Royal Gorge Route shares with guests today.

2003 - Santa Express Train Launched: The Santa Express Train draws more than 50,000 guests each year on a magical journey to the North Pole in the Royal Gorge. Featuring over

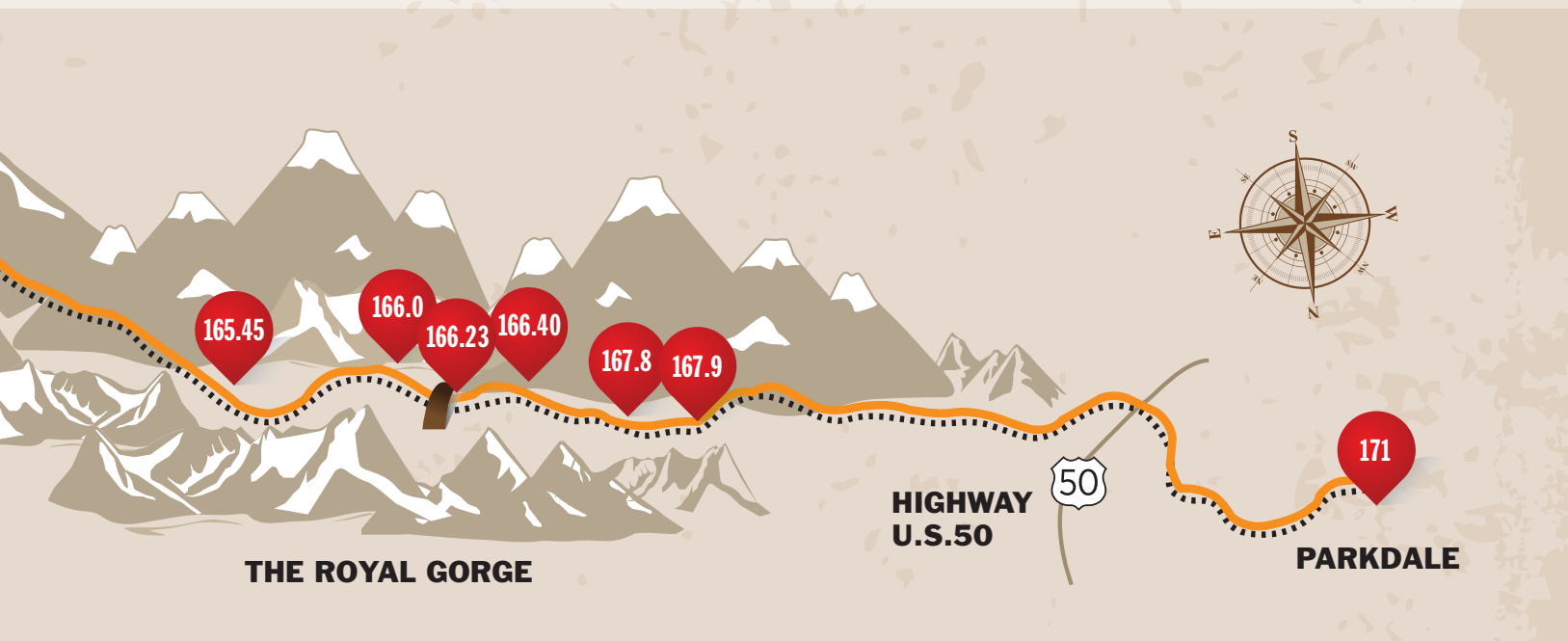
50,000 lights, Santa's workshop, and village, Santa boards the train here with gifts for each child. Enjoy our special holiday menu for lunch and dinner, with drinks and holiday cheer on board the Santa Express Train.

2004 - First Class dining introduced: The train quickly grew beyond Coach Class, adding Vista Dome, and First Class dining options for lunch and dinner. We built four kitchens and full-service bars, and expanded to serve breakfast on 9:30am departures.

2004 - Vista Domes introduced: Next was the

introduction of full-length dome cars. Classes of service expanded from Coach Class to Vista Dome, First Class lunch and dinners, Murder Mystery rides and five-course Wine Dinner Trains. The Royal Gorge Route has more dome cars than any other scenic train in the U.S.

2014 - Deluxe class introduced, fresh menus available throughout the train: Kitchens were remodeled, and the Royal Gorge Route Railroad dining experience evolved again – offering organic and locally sourced ingredients. Our extraordinary scenery, service and dining began drawing international acclaim in publications across the globe.



to conquer the challenge of building in this narrow chasm by constructing a 175-foot (53 m) plate girder suspended on one side under A-frame girders that span the river and are anchored to the rock walls. The Arkansas River is rated Class III-V in this area, and extremely challenging for white-water rafters and kayakers.

166.4 Warming Shack

One of several remaining shacks that were strung along the water line for workers to get out of the cold during frigid winter months.

167.8 Water Line Junction (across the river)

A portion of the old water line makes an inverted u-shaped bend above the ground. During the winter, sawdust was poured into the water line to help seal leaks between the redwood staves.

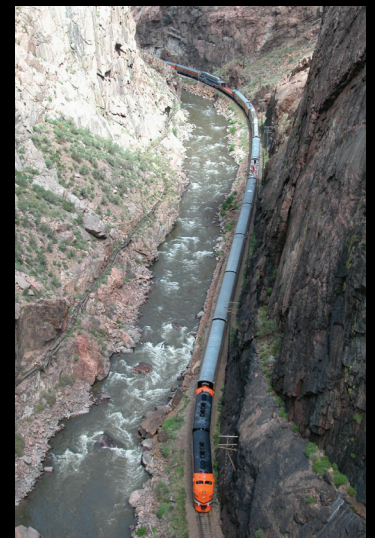
167.9 Caretakers' Homes

(on the left, across the river)

Caretakers were responsible for the upkeep of the water line, dam and head gate. This home was accessed only by the hanging footbridge.

171 Parkdale.

From here, you will head back to Cañon City. This station was once the home of a small community for AT&SF workers who called it Webster. Later, when the D&RG took over in 1880, it was renamed Park Dale, later changed to (one word) Parkdale.



First Class Lunch Trains

Enjoy Colorado's most scenic train as it takes you through the breathtaking Royal Gorge. In addition to the spectacular surroundings, you'll enjoy a three-course gourmet lunch prepared fresh with locally sourced ingredients. Pair your entree with one of our incredible wines from around the world, your favorite Colorado microbrew, or any cocktail that suits your fancy from our full bar. Take in the sights while dining or on one of our first class open-air cars. It's one of the best ways to spend an afternoon with friends and family in sunny Colorado! Available on select 12:30pm departures.



First Class Dinner Trains

There's nothing quite like a First Class Dinner Train experience aboard the Royal Gorge Route Railroad. We offer an experience similar to the Pullman era of First Class dining. As you enjoy the gorgeous views of the Royal Gorge, we'll indulge you with impeccable service and food. White linen tables fill our beautifully renovated, elegant dining cars and Vista Domes. Our First Class service includes an outstanding gourmet three-course dinner prepared from scratch with locally sourced ingredients. Whether you dine in one of our Vista Domes or elegant dining cars, your experience begins with a glass of champagne as well. Pair your dining experience with something from our Conductors Reserve Wine List, or perhaps a special bottle that's on offer that evening. Throughout your journey, take in the stunning golden light and deep shadows of the setting sun in Colorado's grandest canyon. Always an evening to remember! Available throughout the year. Choose from First Class Dome or an Elegant Dining Car.



Conductors Reserve Wine List

We love good wine. Our conductors reserve wine list features outstanding varietals that pair beautifully with our menus. Rather than charging industry standard prices, we have worked with our wine partners to offer our guests fantastic, well-priced bottles not typically found at other fine dining establishments. Enjoy!

Wine Dinner Trains

A few special nights each year we host a multi-course Wine Dinner Train experience. It's a special night with spectacular views at dusk, featuring a one-night-only seasonal menu designed to bring the beauty and the bounty of Colorado together with our favorite wines. It's a pairing you won't experience anywhere else. We also make these special bottles and cases available to guests at special prices. This annual event sells out quickly, so stay tuned for announcements.

Helpful Information:

- Visit the open air observation car as often as you'd like at any point during your trip.
- Restrooms are located both inside the Santa Fe Depot and onboard the train.
- Our 403 Grill Menu is available to all Vista Dome, Deluxe, and Coach guests.
- Wish to upgrade to First Class to enjoy a three-course dining experience? Ask an onboard staff member.
- Our expanded gift shop in the Santa Fe Depot will be open upon your return.
- State laws prohibits outside food or drink onboard. However, bottled water is permitted.
- We love children! Out of courtesy for your fellow passengers, if your child becomes unruly or decides that screaming is an effective form of communication, please be kind and take them to the open-air car. Please keep your children under control and with you at all times. Thank you!

Comfortable Lodging at Royal Gorge Route Inns

Where you stay is as important as the adventure you take. The Royal Gorge Route Railroad now offers beautifully appointed lodging properties, ensuring a very comfortable stay in the Royal Gorge Region. Choose Greenwood Suites for individual rooms in a boutique home setting, or our Fairview Vacation Home for a full home and lovely outdoor space. Both are available for short- and long-term lodging!

Stay in one of our properties to enjoy VIP perks at the Happy Endings Caboose Cafe. Learn more at RoyalGorgeRouteInns.com.



Shopping at the Santa Fe Depot

Don't miss our retail experience located in the Santa Fe Depot. We offer the most expansive shopping experience in the Royal Gorge Region, including Colorado gifts, specialty gourmet items, holiday presents, and luxe goods you won't find anywhere else.

An array of collectibles, gifts, toys, T-shirts, souvenirs, jewelry, books, and other goodies await. Much of what we offer is made right here in the USA. Christmas and holiday gifts for your friends and family are also available year-round. This is where you'll have the opportunity to buy gift certificates as well - good for a Royal Gorge Route Railroad experience or anything else we offer in our shop.

Visit before or after your train ride, or anytime you're in the Royal Gorge Region.



Thank you!

Thank you for riding and dining aboard our train through the Royal Gorge. We are a Colorado family owned business with a passion for creating memories that last a lifetime. We love our stunning views found only within this majestic canyon, delicious food, outstanding service, and most of all, our guests.

We strive to exceed your expectations. If you have any special requests, or if there is anything we can do to make your experience more enjoyable, please let any one of our onboard staff members know. We'll do everything we can to provide the best service and experience the Royal Gorge has to offer.

We enjoy hearing your stories, and seeing your videos and photos online. Please share and tag us on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok! Reposting your memories reminds us to enjoy every moment, especially when you're aboard the Royal Gorge Route Railroad. Follow us on social, and you'll also be eligible to win train tickets and dinner giveaways from time-to-time. We look forward to seeing you again soon.

Mark Greksa - co-owner



MUSCLE COMPLEMENTS ELEGANCE

On board the Royal Gorge Route's railcars & locomotives

Our locomotives and railcars are unlike that of any other scenic railroad in the country. Most impressive are the popular, full-length Vista Domes -- a rare breed. Only 30 cars of this type were ever built, and we own eight of them. Few other railcars offer 360-degree views, all while allowing passengers to ride in comfort and style. You may even notice remnants of their heritage, still evident on vestibule doors.

There's also quite a bit of muscle on board Colorado's first and finest scenic railroad. The F-7s, originally built for the Chicago and Northwestern Railway, numbered 402 and 403, have 1500hp, V16 engines. The tagline "400 miles in 400 minutes," the distance between Chicago and Minneapolis, was the basis for numbering these locomotives.

In 2012, we purchased a more modern and powerful locomotive, the GP40-2, which is often in the lead. Originally built as a freight engine in 1969, it underwent a custom rebuild in 1993 when it entered passenger service. In 2016, we invested in yet another GP40 to bolster our train set. Guests may ride up front with our engineer by booking a Cab Ride to experience one of these locomotives first-hand. You may be riding behind one of our SD40-2's which were purchased in 2021. All three of these locomotives were operating on the Escalante Western Railway, located in Grants, New Mexico.

The Royal Gorge Route's coach cars, as well as its dining cars, are vintage 1950 from Canadian National Railway. Each has been painstakingly rebuilt to reflect the opulence of rail travel from a by-gone era.

Today, our rolling stock includes numerous Diesel-electric Locomotives, eight Vista Domes, three Coaches, four Dining Cars, Deluxe Cars, three open-air cars, seven kitchen cars and three power cars.

THE ROYAL GORGE MANSION

Experience Afternoon Tea at the Mansion

Built in 1884 by Lyman Robison, the Royal Gorge Mansion's elegance and architectural significance is rivaled by few homes in the region. This historic estate is surrounded by manicured grounds, featuring 32 different species of shade and fruit trees, an iron-cast fountain, and 1,400 square feet of custom iron fence adorned with gold-foiled finial accents. Formerly named the Robison Mansion, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

To experience this stunning estate throughout the year, book a reservation for our classic Royal Tea service featuring homemade scones, finger sandwiches, and petit fours, all served in elegant parlors. We host special events regularly, including weddings and holiday parties. We also offer new experiences, like wine tastings and Tea with Santa. Stay tuned for announcements throughout the year!

