

Scenic Drives The Gold Belt Tour



Phantom Canyon Road

This road follows along the route of the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad. Vehicles over 25 feet are not permitted to travel Phantom Canyon Road. The road is unpaved when it enters the Canyon and is unpaved through most of its length. The road winds through the canyon with steep drop-offs, and there are areas where it narrows to one lane with turnouts for passing. The speed limit is 20 mph through most of Phantom Canyon. Suggested one-way driving time between Highway 50/Florence and Victor/Cripple Creek: 1 1/2 hours

Getting There:

From Cañon City, drive 6 miles east of Cañon City on US 50 then turn north at the intersection with County Road 67.

HIGHLIGHTS ALONG PHANTOM CANYON ROAD

1 Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area & State Wildlife Area

Turn east here then north on CR 132 to reach the main trailhead into this rugged and remote area. The Bureau of Land Management and the Colorado Division of Wildlife manage this 27,000 acres to protect its values and wildlife.

2 Indian Springs Trace Fossil Site

This National Natural Landmark contains 460 million year old track trails and burrows of ancient animals. This site is on private land. Contact Indian Springs Campground (719)372-3907 for a tour.

3 Lower & Upper Tunnels

No timbers support these tunnels that were blasted out of solid granite. The lower tunnel was built in 1894 as part of the original railroad grade. After a violent flood in 1895, the upper tunnel was built as part of an effort to raise the railroad tracks out of the path of the floods. The 1895 flood destroyed ten miles of track and The Adelaide station.

4 Steel Bridge

This notable bridge was built in 1897. It replaced a wooden railroad trestle that burned in 1896. Stop here and read about the history of the bridge and the railroad on the interpretive signs.

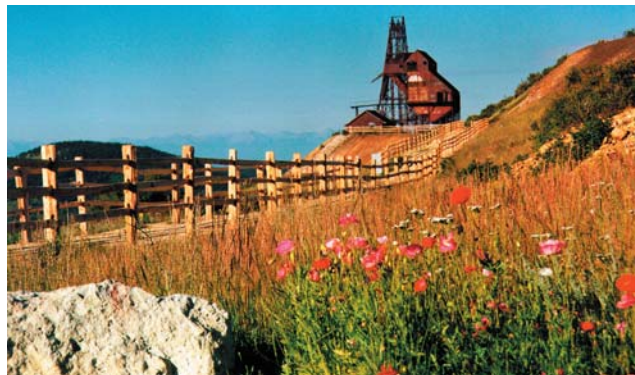
5 Wilbur (Elevation. 8,625 ft.)

This was the largest settlement in Phantom Canyon (Pop. 60). Wilbur boasted a train depot, post office, school and saloon in 1900. Even after the trains stopped running in 1912, several families remained in the area. Phantom Canyon Road opened in 1918, and the remodeled engine house at Wilbur served as a store and restaurant for motorists driving the scenic road.

The Gold Belt Tour has widely varying road conditions. Some roads are unpaved, winding and narrow with steep drop-offs. Please refer to the individual road segment descriptions below to guide your trip planning.



All byway routes are marked with this sign



Shelf Road

The road is paved between Cañon City and Red Canyon Park and unpaved between Red Canyon Park and Cripple Creek. The road narrows to one lane with turnouts for 8 miles where it crosses “The Shelf.” Four-wheel drive is recommended and may be necessary for travel north of Garden Park when the road is wet, snow-covered, or icy. This route is not recommended for large RVs or vehicles towing trailers. Suggested one-way driving time between Cañon City and Cripple Creek: 2 hours.

Getting There:

From Cañon City, turn north at the intersection of Reynolds Avenue and US 50. Reynolds Avenue becomes Field Avenue; Field Avenue becomes Shelf Road.

HIGHLIGHTS ALONG SHELF ROAD

- 6 *Window Rock*
This landmark rock formed as wind and water eroded the 1.7 billion year old granodiorite. Big Horn sheep are frequently seen in this area.
- 7 *Roosevelt & Carlton Tunnels*
- 8 *The Shelf* This section of road perched high above Four Mile Creek has made for a memorable trip since its construction in 1892. Originally, it was a toll road constructed by Cañon City’s business leaders seeking to cash in on the traffic between the mining district and the Arkansas Valley. The toll collectors lived in small cabins nestled at either end of the Shelf and collected tolls every time a wagon or stagecoach passed.
- 9 *Shelf Road Recreation Area*
Climbers come from around the world to scale these limestone cliffs. The climbs are short but very difficult.
- 10 *Red Canyon Park*
This 500-acre park contains unusual red rock formations with spires up to 100 feet tall.

11 *Garden Park Fossil Area*

In 1877, Fremont County’s school superintendent sent some large fossil bones collected from the area to Edward D. Cope, famous paleontologist. The discovery touched off numerous excavations and discoveries spanning well over a century. Well-known dinosaurs excavated here include Allosaurus, Ceratosaurus, Stegosaurus and Diplodocus. The most recent notable discovery occurred in 1992, a nearly complete and fully articulated fossil Stegosaurus skeleton. A 1/4 mile walk along the March Quarry Trail will lead you to an overlook to the Marsh-Felch Quarry.

12 *High Park Road*

The road is paved throughout its entire length. Suggested one-way driving time between Cañon City and Cripple Creek: 1 hour.

Getting There:

From Cañon City, drive 9 miles west of US 50 to Colorado 9, follow Colorado 9 for 10 miles to High Park Road, turn east (right). Easiest Route To Cripple Creek (Elevation. 9,395 ft.)

As the center of finance, politics and entertainment for the mining district, Cripple Creek boasted two opera houses, seventy-five saloons, eight newspapers, and a stock exchange by 1900. Experience a taste of the past by exploring the historic downtown and residential areas, descending into the Mollie Kathleen Gold Mine, touring The Homestead House Museum (an 1890s brothel), and riding the Cripple Creek and Victor Narrow Gauge Railroad. The Cripple Creek District Museum, housed in the historic Midland Terminal Railroad Depot, tells the story of the “The World’s Greatest Gold Camp” with an impressive collection of artifacts and photos. A self-guided walking tour of the historic downtown begins here. Limited stakes gaming has revitalized Cripple Creek’s economy with casinos, shops, and restaurants to enjoy. Cripple Creek even has its own donkey herd, descendants of the animals that once worked in the mines.

13 *Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument*

The peaceful ponderosa pine forests and rolling meadows of modern Florissant are a sharp contrast to the violent volcanic activity that occurred here millions of years ago. Volcanic ash and mudflows preserved a priceless legacy – petrified redwood stumps and delicate plant and insect fossils dating to 35 million years ago. This world-class fossil site, known for its abundant insect and plant fossils, gives us a detailed picture of an ancient environment and a chance to reflect on the ever-changing nature of the earth. The historic Hornbeck Homestead is located at the north end of the Monument.

HIGHLIGHTS ALONG US 50

- 14 *Skyline Drive*
Built in 1903 by prison inmates, Skyline Drive climbs 800 feet above the surrounding valley and offers a panoramic view of Cañon City, the Wet Mountains and the Arkansas Valley. In 1999, a dinosaur trackway was discovered next to Skyline Drive. The trackway may be viewed by parking in the first pull-off then walking a short distance back down the road.
- 15 *Mt. Pisgah and Pikes Peak*
Look north for a postcard view of two of the regions most famous peaks.

For more information visit
www.goldbelthwy.com

SCENIC DRIVING MAP
gold belt highway