

15 Things to do in Durango, Colorado

1. Take a Hike

One of the prettiest and easiest trails (good for your first few days at this high altitude) is to hike up to Spud Lake and have a picnic. It is only about 2 miles and even the drive to the trail head is beautiful.

Our second favorite hike is to the meadow on Engineer Mountain. There are many wild flowers and beautiful views. Once you get to the meadow you will see a log (where folks often sit to rest). You can continue up to the top but is a little tricky and not recommended for children. But do continue a little further and to the left a bit up to the slight ridge you will be treated to beautiful views of Electra Lake. Nice spot for a picnic.

2. Take a Raft Trip

The Animas River runs right through town and is a fun and easy ride for the whole family.

If you want a more exciting ride (Class 4 & 5 rapids) talk with Mountain Waters Rafting. They have an excellent safety record and run other, “wilder” rivers in the area. Call: (970) 259-4191

3. Take a Bike Ride

For mountain biking, it doesn't get much better than at Durango Mountain Resort. (This was the location of the first Mountain Biking World Cup and many other professional mountain bike races). But don't worry, there are easy runs too. You can rent a bike there and take it up the mountain on the chairlift. When you are done biking, take the Alpine Slide down the mountain or have some fun on the bungee trampolines, zip line etc. If you are there during Music in the Mountains (usually mid July to the first week in August) you may be able to catch a free concert in the big tent as the orchestra rehearses.

There is a kid's day camp at Durango Mountain Resort that offers children structured fun activities and leaves time for Mom and Dad to have some time for themselves.

4. Watch the Rodeo

Nothing captures the spirit of the west like a rodeo. They are held at the Fairgrounds (which you will pass on your way into Durango) and the marquee usually tells when they are scheduled. They are usually Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday in the summer around 7pm. To further your, “cowboy” day, catch the Bar D Wranglers performance under the stars. It sounds hokey, but all

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my friends and family members have really enjoyed it. Wonderful singing, some comedy and good dinner under the stars! Call (970) 247-5753 for reservations. They fill up fast!

5. Get Some Exercise

Stop by the Durango Community Rec Center and enjoy the benefits of a full gym and swimming pool. The Rec Center includes racket ball courts, basketball courts, climbing wall, full gym, lap pools, diving boards, and hot tubs. You can also take various sorts of classes that include yoga and spinning.

6. Take a Ride

Take the scenic drive from here north through Silverton, Ouray and then on to Telluride. Just follow Hwy #550 north and when you get to Ridgeway go left. (Best to take a map) this is a beautiful, beautiful drive. Once there you can park free at mountain village and stroll through this darling town (look for the bank that Butch Cassidy and Sundance Kid robbed). Take the free gondola ride into town and have lunch. Keep an eye out for movies stars! The loop takes you back through Lizard Head Pass and into Durango. Plan a whole day to do this. You may wish to call the Telluride Visitors Center or check it out on the since there are often music festivals or some type of activity going on throughout the summer.

7. Take a Soak

Just about 10 minutes north on Hwy # 550 is Trimble Hot Springs. (Watch for the sign on your left) There are natural hot springs, outdoor pools and a day spa. There used to be a fine hotel here and Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable loved this place when there were making westerns here in the 50's

There are also hot springs in Ouray that are similar to Trimble Hot Springs.

There is also a funky motel called Wiesbaden that has underground vapor caves that are a great to soak in. Then you can swim in the spring heated pool. You don't have to stay there to use the caves or pools. You can also get a massage when you stop in as well.

Just beyond Ouray a mile or so are the outdoor hot springs of Orvis. We love to soak in these springs under the moon.

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8. Take a chance

The sky Ute Casino is about 45 minutes away. They have all the gambling you could desire for a small place and often there is entertainment. Not quite Las Vegas but.....

You can always catch a ride from the Double Tree to the Casino and back if desired. The shuttles leave over the course of the day.

9. Get Dramatic

The Melodrama Theater in downtown Durango is a fun diversion for the whole family. If you like melodrama, you will like ours. (970) 247-3400. Afterwards walk down and have your picture take in the historic clothes (dance hall girl, sheriff etc) at Through the Lens.

10. Take a Jeep

The high mountain passes are BEAUTIFUL! Engineer and Imogene are two of our favorites. If you have a 4WD you can drive them yourself but we recommend taking a jeep tour. These are incredibly high narrow passes and it is so nice to really get out there and experience the true Rocky Mountains.

Do not try black bear pass. Even with the pros this is a dangerous pass. Go early in the day due to mountain afternoon showers. We like taking the jeeps out of Ouray or Silverton since you will spend less time on the highway and more time in the mountains. Any off the Jeep Tour companies are good.

11. Visit the National Monument

If you take Hwy #160 South on your way to Pagosa Springs you will see on your right a recently named national monument called Chimney Rock. Every month, during the full moon the rangers lead a fascinating walk as you watch the moon com up on the site. This site was considered sacred and when you see it you will know why. Call first to be sure you can get tickets if you want to go during the full moon.

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12. Ride the Train

The Durango Silverton narrow Gauge Railroad attracts visitors every summer and for a good reason. It is a beautiful ride on a historic railroad that was very much a part of Durango's and Silverton's history. You may wish to take the tour bus, van or an open air jeep because it could save you about 2 hours on the way home. Not only will it cut off a few hours off the trip home but also it takes you over an incredibly beautiful road (listed as 1 of the top 100 most scenic roads in the U.S).

13. Ride a Horse

Just a few miles down Hwy #550 is Rapps Corral. Ann Rapp and her daughter Emily are experienced horsewoman (and have been involved in quite a few movies) and they run a nice operation. Call (970) 247-8454. You can also try Buck's Livery just a few more miles up the road across from Durango Mountain Resort. (970) 385-2110. Ben and Mindy are the owners.

14. Catch Some Fish

Electra Lake (is just 15 min on Hwy #550) is so beautiful. Turn right on Electra Lake Road where Spruce Mesa joins it. You can fish off the shore for a small fee and you don't need a fishing license. You can also call Four Corners River Sports (970) 259-3893 and rent a canoe or kayak for a day or the week. For a wonderful dinner (In case you didn't catch anything) call Scott or Joey and reserve a table at the Electra Lake Sporting Club Restaurant at (970) 247-5180. Open for dinner Thursday through Sunday in the summer. This is one of our favorite places to sit by the window and watch the ducks or catch the twilight on the near 12,000 ft Engineer Mountain in the background is priceless.

15. Get Some History

Mesa Verde National Park is one of the most interesting homes of the Ancient Pueblo's (or cliff dwellers). This is truly fascinating and you can climb into these incredible, "homes" hanging off the cliffs.

Go early in the day and immediately reserve a tour with the ranger for one of the, "houses". Our favorite is the Cliff Palace and The Balcony House (not good if you are afraid of heights). These get booked up fast. You can spend the rest of the day visiting the park and museum. Check out the website or call the park since often there are special events that are fun and interesting. Dress in layers but keep in mind that it is much warmer there than in the mountains. Bring Water!

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Come back to your home-away-from-home, fire up the grill, grab a refreshing beverage and enjoy yourself!