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With so many choices for authentic towns throughout the West to choose from, we couldn't limit ourselves to just 20. Here are five more picks that exemplify the best of the West.

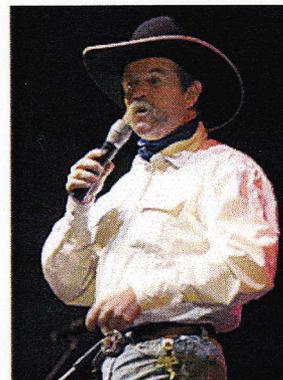
Durango, Colo. (www.durango.org)

Nestled in the San Juan Mountains at 6,512 ft, Durango is a Colorado mountain town that's filled with Western history and shines as an outdoor haven. Serving as a recreational hub for the four corners region, visitors can indulge in hiking, ice climbing, rafting, biking, and cross-country skiing to name just a few outdoor activities.

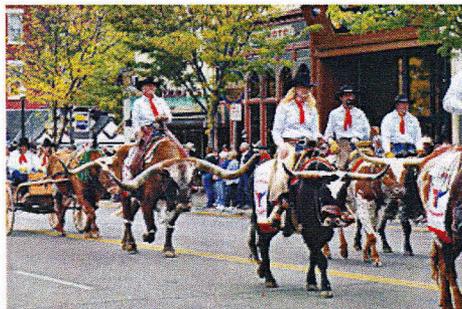
For a more relaxing time, take a scenic tour of the San Juan Mountains on the Durango Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. The train has been in continuous operation for 126 years (www.durangotrain.com). Come in October to witness the Durango Cowboy Gathering, where Western poets and musicians showcase their skills (www.durangocowboygathering.org).

If in search of some Western history, visit the landmark Strater Hotel. Built in 1887, its where Louis L'Armour wrote his western novels the Sacket Series (www.strater.com). Just a short drive away, a view of the Vallecito Lake sitting 8,000 feet above the sea or a hike through an ancient civilization at the Mesa Verde National Park are well worth your time. (www.vallecitolakechamber.com; www.nps.gov/meve).

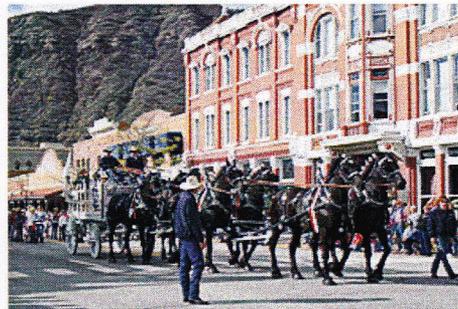
—Nicholas LoVerde



Cowboy poet Waddie Mitchell was one of the featured performers at the Durango Cowboy Poetry Gathering. The Gathering will be held this year at the historic Strater Hotel and features cowboy poet Baxter Black. Photo credit - Waddie Mitchell



Texas Longhorns are part of the big Cowboy Parade on Main Street in Durango, Colorado during the Durango Cowboy Poetry Gathering. The Gathering will be held October 1st - 4th this year and features poet Baxter Black. Photo credit - Eric Pahke



The Preifert Hitch leads the Cowboy Parade in downtown Durango during the Durango Cowboy Poetry Gathering. The Gathering will be held this year October 1st - 4th and features cowboy poet Baxter Black. Photo Credit - Bonnie Nicholl



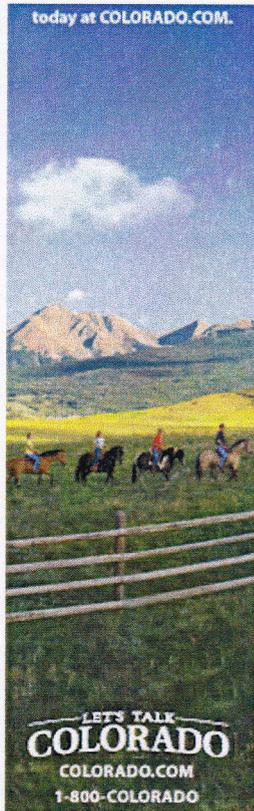
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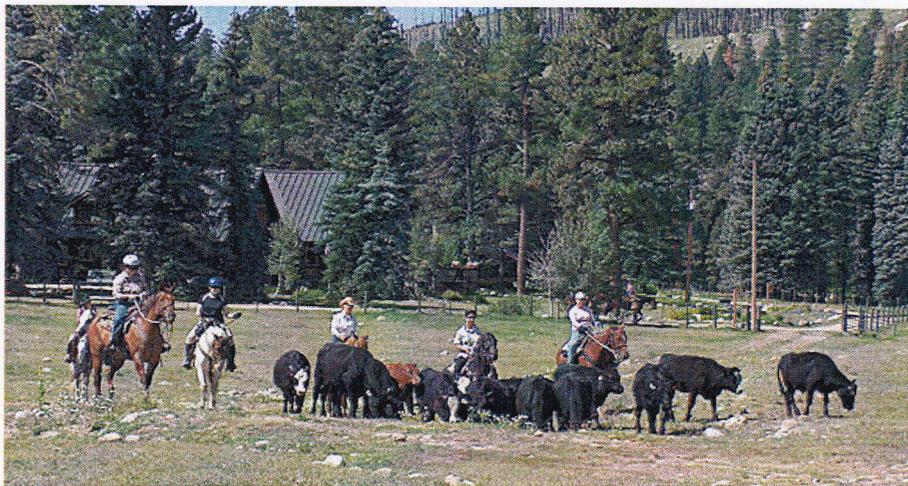
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Wilderness Trails Guest Ranch just northeast of Durango features a series of "Educational Vacations" for horse lovers. Guests are welcome to bring their own horse or use one of the ranch horses. One of the highlights is learning the art of moving cattle. Photo credit: Erika Roberts Wilderness Trails Ranch

Scottsdale, Ariz. (www.scottsdalecvb.com)

Renowned for its identification with some of America's classiest cowboy culture, Scottsdale has a lot to offer in the way of a Western lifestyle. Surrounded by the Sonoran desert in central Arizona, the city serves as a mecca for Western and Southwestern Art.

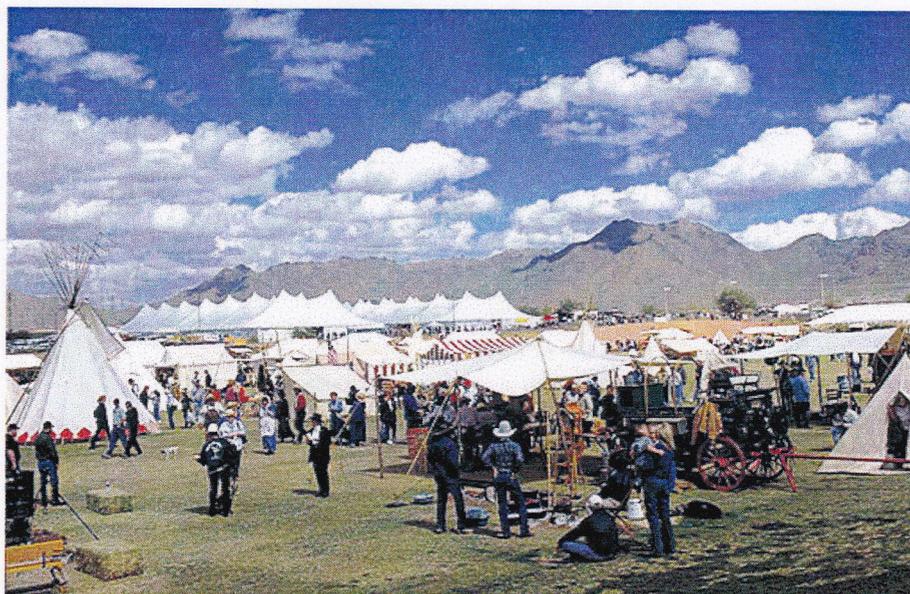
Visitors touring the Scottsdale Art District can wander through the Native American art and jewelry galleries. If you need more Western art and collectibles, head for the Bison Museum where you can view memorabilia from the Dances with Wolves movie, Native American artifacts, and a Buffalo Bill Cody exhibit (www.bisonwesternmuseum.com).

For some cowboy life, head on over to the Festival of the West in late March where you can indulge in everything from Western Music Jamborees to cowboy poetry to the Chuck Wagon Cook Off (www.festivalofthewest.com). A day-trip to the Grand Canyon or a visit to the WestWorld equestrian center can add plenty more fun to the trip.

—Nicholas LoVerde



Fashion spans the centuries at Festival of the West, from this stunning couple's ensemble circa 1880s to contemporary Scottsdale chic. Just come as you are to WestWorld March 19-22. (Photo by Festival of the West)



Blue skies and wide open spaces...visit Festival of the West at WestWorld in Scottsdale for an Old West experience in a gracious atmosphere. (Photo by Festival of the West)

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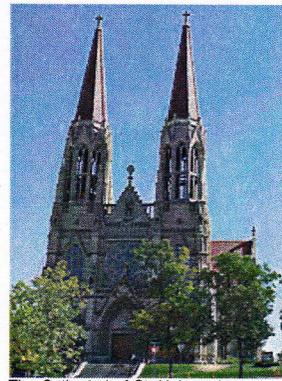
Helena, Mont. (www.helenacvb.visitmt.com)

Nicknamed the “Queen City of the Rockies,” Helena upholds its golden heritage while still being a modern city of the West. Founded in 1864 by four prospectors who discovered gold nearby, the town boomed and by 1888 was home to 50 millionaires—more per capita than any city in the world.

Today, visitors can tour the historic city by walking down a main street called “Last Chance Gulch,” viewing the stately homes that gold built in the city’s Mansion District, or taking a stroll to Reeder’s Alley, a restored mining village. Come to the Wild West Fest in August for Old West Re-enactments, horseback rides, Western singers and more (www.montanalivinghistory.org).

Also in August, you can catch the Western Art Rendezvous and watch the artists in action before you buy the work (www.westrendart.org).

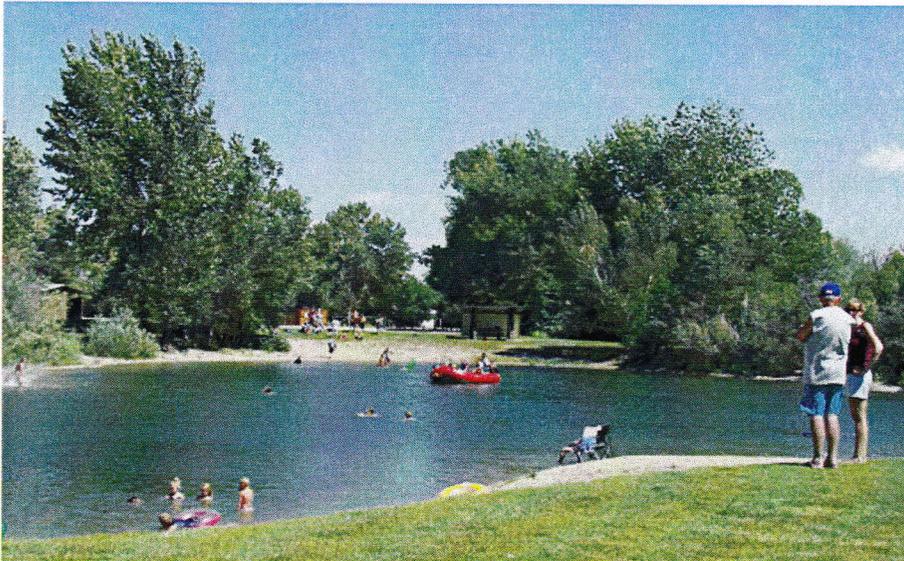
—Nicholas LoVerde



The Cathedral of St. Helena. Image courtesy of the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce.



The Montana State Capitol Building. Image courtesy of the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce.



Spring Meadow Lake State Park. Image courtesy of the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce.

Silver City, Idaho (www.historicsilvercityidaho.com)

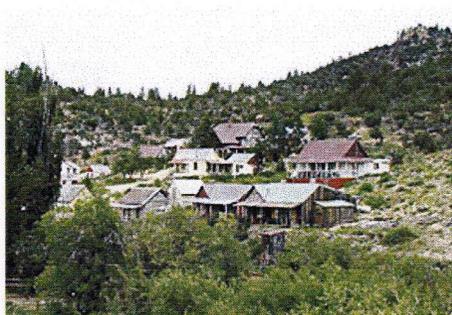
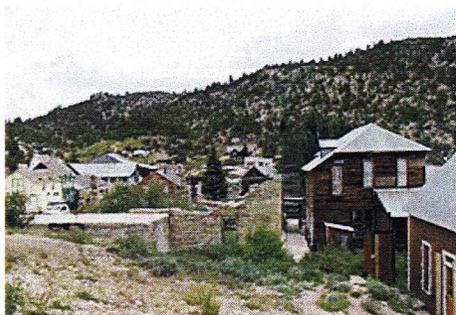
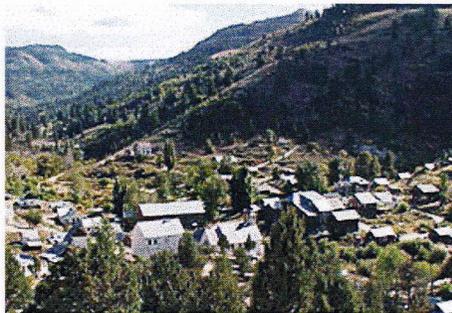
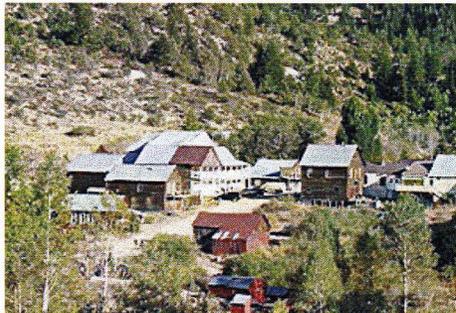
During its heyday from the 1860s to the turn of the 20th century, this mining boomtown consisted

of 12 streets, 75 businesses and a population of around 2,500.

It is said that Silver City produced some \$60 million in precious metals during its 70-plus years of mining. Today, no major mines are in operation, but you can still visit this ghost town and go back in history.

The Idaho Hotel remains basically unchanged from 100 years ago, and Sinker Creek Outfitters can provide a historic ride on horseback exploring the Owyhee Mountains. Get your souvenirs and local mineral samples at Pat's What Not Shop.

—Kevin Carmody



Silver City, N. M. (www.silvercity.org)

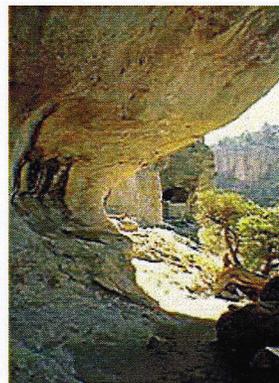
A boomtown for silver in 1870, Silver City avoided the fate of many similar towns after the silver boom busted and by focusing its economy on ranching, which remains one of Silver City's biggest industries to this day.

The town was also the childhood home to Billy the Kid. Today, visitors can stop to get some grub, live music, and entertainment at the Billy the Kid Championship BBQ, Green Chili Cook-Off, and Loco Music Festival every June. To brush up on your Silver City history head over to the Silver City Museum (www.silvercitymuseum.org).

For some geological history visit the City of Rocks State Park where you tour 40 feet tall, 35 million year old rocks

(www.gilawilderness.com/travel/cityofrocksvisitor.htm) and just a two-hour drive away from Silver City, is the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument where visitors can look into the past of the ancient culture of the Mogollon people (www.nps.gov/gicl).

—Nicholas LoVerde



Cliff Dwellings