

Points of Interest

San Isabel National Forest

The San Isabel offers many opportunities to visit and see a variety of historic recreational points of interest. Access to many of the sites (points of interest) is provided along, or near, the routes of the Frontier Pathways Scenic and Historic Byway, and the Scenic Highway of Legends. Some sites are derelict.

Historic Campgrounds & Picnic Areas

The San Isabel area has many historic campgrounds and picnic areas. Some campgrounds were among the earliest built in the national forest system. The site may seem spread far apart, but Forest Service recreational planner Arthur Carhart and later managers of the San Isabel National Forest, planned them so that they formed touring “loops” connected by newly built and improved roads. It was all part of Carhart’s “big plan” to open the forests to public use.

Squirrel Creek Campground

Pueblo Mountain Park

North Creek Campground

South Hardscrabble (Florence) Campground

Rye Mountain Park

Davenport Campground

Ophir Campground

Smith Creek-Hardscrabble Campground

Alvarado Campground

Middle Taylor Campground

South Colony Lakes

Lake Isabel Recreation Area

Spring Creek Campground

Blue Lake Campground

Bear Lake Campground

Lodges & Resorts

Several lodges and resorts are located along your tour. Some are derelict, or only a ruin. Lodges in the San Isabel area were small compared to others in places like Colorado Springs and Rocky Mountain National Park. The San Isabel didn’t attract the wealthier visitors that visited other recreational areas in the Rocky Mountain west. This may have been because most visitors to the San Isabel were working-class people from nearby towns, such as Pueblo and Trinidad.

Squirrel Creek Lodge

Bav-R-Li Lodge

Lake Isabel Lodge

Alpine Lodge (Alvarado)

Sulphur Springs Lodge

Monument Lake Park

Youth Camps

Youth camps were an important part of recreational development in the San Isabel. In the early part of the twentieth century, Americans began to believe that it was healthy to visit the “great outdoors.” This was especially so for children from urban areas like Pueblo.

Apache Camp

Burch Camp, Boy Scouts of

YMCA Camp Jackson
Lazy Acres Girl Scout Camp

America
Whispering Pines Camp

Cabin Communities

Cabin communities were one of the earliest types of recreational development in the San Isabel. Beginning in the 1880s, recreational cabins were built in places Beulah and Rye, west of Pueblo. Unlike most of the recreational developments in the San Isabel, cabins in these communities tended to be owned by well-to-do people. The Wet Mountain Range and Spanish Peaks were the nearest mountains to Kansas and parts of Oklahoma and Texas. Many people from those states built cabins in the San Isabel.

Rye
Beulah
Willow Creek and Lake Isabel

Alvarado
Wahatoya Camp
Cucharas Camp

Recreational Roads

In the early days of mountain recreational planning, the San Isabel was famous for its planned recreational roads. These roads were built to connect campgrounds, resorts and parks throughout an area of 7,500 square miles. Almost all of these 1920s-30s roads are still in use today.

Squirrel Creek Road
North Creek Road
South Hardscrabble Road
North Hardscrabble Canyon
Road
Ophir-Gardner Road

Greenhorn Loop
Rye-Badito Road
Old San Isabel Road
Cordova Pass Road
Badito-La Veta Road

Other Resources

Much of the early recreational work done in the San Isabel was accomplished between 1933-1942 by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC was created in March 1933 as an important part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal Program. Men between the ages of 18 and 25 enrolled voluntarily in the CCC and were assigned to work in camps all over the country. In the San Isabel National Forest there were three CCC camps. They did much of the road improvement work in the forest, planted trees, and cleaned up and restored campgrounds. Two big CCC projects in the San Isabel were the construction of Lake Isabel (1935-41), and construction of much of Pueblo Mountain Park (1934-39).

CCC Camp F-26 Hardscrabble
CCC Camp F-866 Beulah
CCC Camp F-49 Gardner

NORTHERN *Loop*

1 Smith Creek-Hardscrabble Campground

Travel 28 miles west of Pueblo on Highway 96.

Smith Creek-Hardscrabble Campground was first established as an informal camping area along the old wagon road that preceded Highway 96. The campground is mentioned by Arthur Carhart as early as 1919.

In 1933, CCC Camp F-26 built two wells and several campsites. In the 1950s the Forest Service removed the CCC campsites. The replacements can still be seen down an unused road on the left side of the camp. The Forest Service closed the campground in the 1990s.

2 North Hardscrabble Canyon Road

Enter the canyon on Highway 96, 26 miles west of Pueblo.

This road was first used as an important trail by the Ute Indian people. It was later used by Euro-American fur trappers like Kit Carson from the 1820s to the 1840s. In 1848, Major John C. Fremont, the “Pathfinder,” led his soldiers up the steep canyon on his fourth expedition to explore the West. A gold discovery at Rosita near Westcliffe in 1872 led to the old trail’s development as a wagon road. A daily stagecoach went through the canyon from Pueblo to Rosita and back. It took six strong horses to make the climb to the top of the canyon. In 1920, the road was made automobile-accessible, part of Carhart’s plan to open the forests to automobiles.

3. Undeveloped Campground

Travel 27 miles west of Pueblo on Highway 96. Look on the south side of the Highway about ½ mile west of point of interest #1

This is a good example of a camping and picnicking area that was not planned or maintained. Many of these informal campgrounds can be spotted in the San Isabel. This one may date to as early as 1885. Note the large “fire rings.”

4 South Hardscrabble Road

Go 36 miles west of Pueblo on Highway 96. At the junction with Highway 165, turn south. Go 6 miles south to the junction with Forest Road 386.

South Hardscrabble Road was planned by Arthur Carhart in 1919 as one of his “loop tour” roads. The road was built in 1920, over what had been a homesteaders’ wagon road. Parts of the road were improved in 1929-31, following a flood at the west end of the 5 ½ mile long road. Note the attractive mortared stone culvert headwalls on the north side of the road. Many of the road workers were Italian immigrants. They were skilled “rock workers,” as you can see.

5 South Hardscrabble (Florence) Campground

Proceed 2 ½ miles east on Forest Road 386.

In the broadest meadow in the narrow South Hardscrabble Canyon, Arthur Carhart established this campground in 1920. On opening day, guards counted more than 500 automobiles. The campground was closed in 1947. Today, nothing is left of the old campground except a well-head on the north side of the road. You will see this same kind of well-head at three other 1920 campgrounds nearby. It is what archaeologists call a “diagnostic” feature because it can help date an archaeological site like this.

6 Civilian Conservation Corps Camp F-26 Hardscrabble

Go 1 miles east of point of interest #5, on Forest Road 386 at the cattle guard.

You are at the boundary between San Isabel National Forest and a large, private ranch. Not all Forest boundaries are marked this well. You are at the former east entrance to CCC Camp F-26. The camp was located south of South Hardscrabble Creek, and it extended along the creek for nearly one-half mile west. Two hundred young men under supervision of an Army officer and Forest Service staff lived at this base between May 1, 1933, and November 15, 1933.

While they were here, they did campground and road improvements like the cattle-guard at the entrance and concrete bridges. As you travel to Beulah, you will cross several bridges built by Camp F-26 men. If the stream isn't too high, you might want to cross to the south side. See how many foundations of the old CCC camp you can identify. None of the camp buildings remain because the CCC removed everything when they left.

7 North Creek Road

Go 1 ½ miles east on C.R. 386 to the junction with C.R. 387 and turn south.

You may have noticed that the road designation (F.R. to C.R.) changed when you crossed the forest boundary. That's because the Forest Service maintains its own part of the road. Custer County owns and maintains the part that goes through private land. In this part of Colorado, county roads are designated with a "C.R." and Forest Roads with "F.R."

North Creek Road, like South Hardscrabble Canyon Road, was established by Carhart in 1920 as part of what he called the "Beulah Loop."

As you travel south, look for state-of-the-art mountain road engineering features that make this 1920 forest road special. North Creek Road is one of the few remaining intact 1920s professionally designed mountain roads in Colorado.

Arthur Carhart chose the road's location and identified scenic overlooks. The road was designed and built under the supervision of Forest Service District 2 Assistant Chief Engineer James Brownlee. Over a thirty-year career in the Forest Service, Brownlee built many recreational roads in the San Isabel.

Brownlee's mountain roads were innovative for the times. His ditch culverts, used on the steepest road grades, were located about 500 feet apart. Although it cost more money to put in so many culverts, he ensured that the road would not wash out, even in heavy storms. Brownlee's road designs have withstood the test of time. More than eighty years after it was built, North Creek Road is still in good condition.

As you travel south of North Creek Road, see how many ditch culverts you can count. A clue is to always look on the upslope side of the road.

8 North Creek Divide

Go 2 miles south on C.R. 387 from the junction with C.R.386.

This divide was selected by Carhart as a special viewpoint in 1919 when he was making his plans for the San Isabel. He believed that recreational roads should include scenic viewpoints. To the north is Pikes Peak, and to the south are the jagged Scraggy Peaks.

9 North Creek Campground

Travel 3 miles south of North Creek Divide on C.R.387.

This is another of Carhart's early campgrounds, built in 1920. Note the diagnostic well-head, just south of the CCC-built concrete bridge. This campground is no longer maintained by the Forest Service. The wood footbridge crossing to the west side of North Creek was built in the late 1950s. You will see many of these identical bridges throughout forest campgrounds in the San Isabel.

To the northeast, the short stub roads to the former site of the campground's shelter-house. All that is left is a flat area where the shelter was located. Note the old water cistern to the north of the stub road. A pure drinking water source was a hallmark of the San Isabel National Forest's early campgrounds.

10 Beulah Resort Cabins

Travel along C.R. 387 into the village of Beulah, and along Squirrel Creek Road to the entrance of Squirrel Creek Canyon,

Starting in the 1880s, many well-to-do families from Pueblo built summer cabins in the Beulah area. You will pass some of these old cabins as you head south into the Beulah from the North Creek Campground site. Most have been updated and enlarged. If you look carefully, you might see the original log and chinking sections that mark the original structure.

Pass through the village of Beulah, using Pennsylvania Avenue, to the intersection with Squirrel Creek Road (Highway 78). The larger "cabins" located along Squirrel Creek Road were built by some of Pueblo's wealthiest families at the turn of the twentieth century. Today, most of these cabins are lived in all year by retirees and people who commute to work in Pueblo.

Turn west on Squirrel Creek Road. You will cross one of three attractive concrete bridges on Squirrel Creek Road. They were built by Fred Bullen Company in 1916. The Bullen Company built bridges all over the western United States. The Squirrel Creek bridges were constructed by prison laborers from the State Penitentiary in Canon City. One bridge like this was expensive and could use up a small county's entire road budget for a year.

11 Squirrel Creek Recreational Unit

Drive ½ mile to the end of the gate. Access into the canyon is by foot.

Walk west up the Squirrel Creek Road. Note the tulip plants at wide-outs along the south side of the road. These may have been planted as a decorative feature when the road was built in 1919-22. As you head into Squirrel Creek Canyon you will enter the national forest after .3 miles. Almost immediately, with a sharp eye. You will begin to see remains of old stone fireplaces. Soon you will reach the one remaining standing structure, an open shelter. It was built between 1919-27. Note the unique four-sided fireplace in the shelter. This style of fireplace was used by the Forest Service and the San Isabel Public Recreation Association (SIPRA) at nearby North Creek Campground, South Hardscrabble Campground, Davenport Campground, and Ophir Campground.

The trail you are following up the canyon used to be the Squirrel Creek Road until a flood in 1947 washed out some of the road and all sixteen bridges. The road and Squirrel Creek Campground were closed and never reopened.

The former campground was built in twelve "clusters." It extended for two miles into the canyon to the base of Squirrel Creek Hill. Many of the old stone fireplaces, crumbling picnic tables, and several hand pumps mark these old campsites.

Squirrel Creek Campground, the old road, and other features you will walk past, are the remains of the first campground designed by Arthur Carhart. What you see are archaeological remains of the first Forest Service campground designed by a professional recreational planner. The success of Squirrel Creek in 1919 led to the development of similar planned campgrounds throughout the national forest system in the 1920s.

At the base of Squirrel Creek Hill, two miles from the gate, is the entrance to Cascade Trail. The trail was one of the first interpretive foot trails built in the national forest system. The trail was planned by Carhart, and it was built in 1920 by his former professor, Frank

14 Camp Burch, Boy Scouts of America

From Pueblo Mountain Park, take the Tower Trail and Camp Burch Trail one mile west.

Camp Burch was an early Boy Scout camp that served boys from the Pueblo area. The camp was built in 1918 on Forest Service land, immediately to the west of what would become the Pueblo Mountain Park, and just south of Squirrel Creek. The camp was closed in 1947. The walk to the campsite is a short one, but very strenuous.

The camp had a large lodge, a dining hall, and tent sites. The site is located on the east side of South Creek, just before the creek enters scenic Devil's Canyon. All that remains today are foundations and an enormous stone fireplace. In the 1910s and 1920s, many Boy Scout camps like Camp Burch were built. They were established to provide a healthy outlet for urban youth and were supported by local civic leaders. This is the only Boy Scout camp known to have been built in the San Isabel until a much larger camp was established on Highway 165, ten miles west, in the 1960s.

15 Rye Mountain Park

Travel 2 miles east of Beulah on Highway 78. Turn south on the 3-R road and drive approximately 12 miles south to Highway 165. Turn west into the village of Rye. Take Cuerno Verde Road 1 ½ miles west to the park.

Rye Mountain Park was built in 1920 on 100 acres. The park was conceived by Arthur Carhart while he was living temporarily in Rye. It was part of his big plan that included the development of municipal parks adjacent to national forests.

Not one of the 1920s park improvements remain. In 1934 and 1935, the WPA built more than twenty picnic sites and a community shelter. These structures are still (mostly) intact. The park is little used today. It is an excellent example of a New Deal mountain park system, and worth a detour to visit.

16 Old San Isabel Road

Travel ½ mile west from Rye on Highway 165. Turn north at the junction marked "Old San Isabel Road."

This is another example of a former homesteaders' road that was developed for recreational use by automobiles. The road was part of Carhart's recreational development plan for the San Isabel to create loop drives.

The road, a cooperative effort by Pueblo County and the Forest Service, was constructed in 1920 and 1921. It parallels the newer, 1930s Highway 165 for twelve miles, exiting near Lake Isabel.

Old San Isabel Road is an intact early 1920s forest road. It features a rare wood bridge across a branch of the St. Charles River. The road is lightly traveled.

17 YMCA Camp Jackson

Travel 4 miles west of Rye on Highway 165. Or, travel 4 miles south of Lake Isabel on Highway 165.

The YMCA's Camp Jackson was established on 320 acres in 1916. It is still in operation during the summer. The camp caters to both young men and women from the Pueblo area.

The original lodge/dining hall, built in 1922, is still in use. The interior of the lodge features two stone fireplaces and unusual wagon wheel chandeliers. The other buildings on the site were constructed from the 1950s to the present.

18 Lake Isabel Recreation Area

Drive 8 miles west of Rye on Highway 165.

This is the largest mountain recreational site in the San Isabel region. Lake Isabel was built by the CCC from 1934 to 1941, and is an excellent example of a large CCC recreational development.

The recreational complex includes a picnic area and three campgrounds, as well as the lake itself. Only a few CCC-era improvements remain in the campground areas. Most notable are two large log restrooms.

For many years, the Lake Isabel Dam was the largest earthen dam in the country. A parking area on top of the dam allows easy exploration of the lake. The concrete spillway on the north end of the dam is an especially interesting engineering feature.

Lake Isabel Lodge is located on the north side of the lake. The lodge dining room was used by CCC workers for meals. The small cabins associated with the lodge were constructed in the early 1930s. They are of milled lumber construction, and are good examples of the types of early, modest lodge cabins that characterized the San Isabel.

Lake Isabel City, located immediately adjacent to the lodge, was constructed in the 1940s on the former site of the CCC camp. About fifty cabins in a variety of styles are an interesting contrast with the early 1920s cabins, located at the northern base of the dam several hundred yards to the east. These cabins, on Willow Creek, were built with prefabricated materials on what was then Forest land. Cabins could be purchased for as little as \$200. The Forest Service, in the 1910s and 1920s, as a part of its effort to develop recreation, provided inexpensive, long-term leases to the cabin owners. Cabin developments like this were encouraged throughout the national forest system, and many Forest Service cabin communities were built in national forests all over the West. In the 1940s, Forest Service policy changed, and these cabin communities were discontinued. In this case, the owners were given title to their lots by the Service.

19 Bav-R-Li Lodge

Drive 7 miles north of Lake Isabel on Highway 165.

The Bav-R-Li Lodge, no longer in operation, was an early high-country lodge, built around 1910. Typical of San Isabel lodges, it has a small main dining and community building constructed of logs, was several small one-room log cabins located near the main building.

The lodge has been in the same family for four generations. Originally homesteaders, the Moses family began the lodge operation for extra income. In the early days, the lodge catered to hunters. When nearby Squirrel Creek Road was built (1920-22), many visitors drove up Squirrel Creek Canyon and stayed at Bav-R-Li. When the 1947 flood closed Squirrel Creek Road, business fell off.

The beautifully constructed log cabin just west of Bav-R-Li was built by a wealthy Pueblo family as a mountain retreat in the 1920s. Single, privately owned high-country cabins like this are rare.

20 Ophir Campground

Travel ½ mile west of Bav-R-Li Lodge on a signed Forest Service road.

Ophir Campground is another site planned by Carhart in 1919. He originally thought the best use of the site would be a cabin community similar to the one at Willow Creek near Lake Isabel. Instead, a campground was built in 1923 and 1924 with financial help from SIPRA. A community shelter, identical to ones at Squirrel Creek Campground, North Creek, South Hardscrabble and Davenport Campgrounds was featured. The 1920s campsites were replaced in the 1950s, but several fragments of the old stone fireplaces are still visible.

21 Davenport Campground

Take Forest Road 382, off Highway 165, one mile south of Ophir and Bav-R-Li Lodge.

Davenport Campground was also built by SIPRA in cooperation with the Forest Service. Located at the western end of Squirrel Creek Canyon, the campground was developed in 1921 and 1922. The present-day campsites, constructed in the 1960s, overlay earlier 1920s campsites. There are several early stone fireplaces and in-ground garbage units visible. The community shelter foundation is barely visible, including the telltale remnants of a four-sided fireplace.

The Forest Service has long-term plans to make Davenport Campground a “heritage campground,” the first in the Forest System. This will involve taking out the newer facilities and re-building the original shelter and campsites. The campground will be used as an interpretive venue to demonstrate how area campgrounds appeared in the 1920s.

22 Greenhorn Loop

From Highway 165, drive past Ophir Campground on Forest Road 360 6 miles west to the junction with Forest Road 369. Take Forest Road 369 south for 14 miles, where the road dead ends.

This is the only dead-end road envisioned by Carhart. The fourteen-mile-long scenic drive ends at three small glacial lakes at the western base of Greenhorn Peak. There is an undeveloped camping area. A trail goes from the camping area to the crest of Greenhorn Peak. From the peak are views for nearly 200 miles in every direction. The current road was built in the 1960s.

23 Middle Taylor Campground

Drive 8 ½ miles on C.R. 160 west of Westcliffe. For-wheel drive only.

Middle Taylor Campground is one of many undeveloped campgrounds in the San Isabel area. It is a good example of how forest users pick and use informal camping spots when no developed sites are available. Prior to 1919, nearly all national forest camping was in locations like this.

The site is spread out in five clusters of informal campgrounds for a mile along the steep road. One cluster has five picnic tables, the only “improvements” on the site. The famous Rainbow Trail crosses Middle Taylor Creek at the campground’s eastern edge. This trail, 90 miles in length, was once used to drive cattle and sheep into the high mountains.

24 Alvarado Campground

Travel 3 miles south of Westcliffe on Highway 69 to the junction with C.R. 140. Take C.R. 140 7 miles west to the campground entrance.

Alvarado is located in a beautiful spot on the east-slope of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Arthur Carhart envisioned Alvarado as the major recreational hub for the region. In his 1919 San Isabel plans he described it as the “Westcliffe Cluster.”

His ideas were correct. Alvarado Campground is the busiest campground and recreation base in the San Isabel. Many people use the campground as a base to explore the jagged Sangre de Cristo mountains by foot and on horseback. Others use the campground as a base to fish or to take scenic drives throughout the surrounding mountains.

The campground was built on forest land next to the early Clay Ranger Station. In the 1910s, visitors came by wagon or automobile and camped informally near the station. This led to the development of the

Alvarado Campground in 1921-23. This campground was built without help from SIPRA. It contained thirty-two campsites and, by the 1930s, a small amphitheater. The amphitheater was used for evening talks presented by forest rangers.

The early stone campground fireplaces are still in place but are not used. They are located on both sides of Venable Creek. Most people, even local residents, don't know the fireplaces are there because they are hidden by shrubs and trees. New campsites were constructed in the 1960s. These were replaced in the late 1990s by even newer sites. Compare the differences between the modern metal grill fireplaces and the hand-made stone ones.

A large log and stone lodge was built next to Alvarado Campground in the early 1920s. It was called "Abbot's Lodge." The lodge was used by American Legionnaires from all over Colorado until the 1950s. The building became derelict. It was taken down by the Forest Service in the 1980s as a possible safety hazard. The old lodge foundations and a large free-standing stone and mortar fireplace can be seen just to the north of the campground. The old ranger station is gone, too.

In 1921 and 1922, on the south edge of the campground, an early private developer established the Alpine Lodge. Like other San Isabel-area lodges, it was modest in scale. There was a main lodge building, a corral and tack house. There were six milled-lumber cabins built in a large semi-circle around the lodge. Visitors could also camp at tent sites.

The Alpine Lodge is still in operation. The only original structure left from the earlier lodge is the tack house.

As part of the Alpine Lodge development, cabin sites were sold in a pretty meadow just to the east of the lodge and the campground. Many of these small, early cabins are still there. Some of the cabins are used only seasonally. Others are lived in all year. The area is a good example of a high-country cabin community. Cabin sites are very popular and often pass from family member to family member.

25 South Colony Lakes

Take Highway 69 south of Westcliffe 9 miles. Take C.R. 169 from junction west for 8 miles to C.R. 120. Take C.R. 120 for 1 ½ miles to parking area. Travel 6 miles west to South Colony Trail, and another 1 mile north to the Lakes by trail.

The South Colony Lakes is an example of a high-country (11,500 feet), undeveloped campground. It is used as a hiking and fishing base. There are at least ten of these informal campgrounds in the area strung along the eastern crest of the Sangre de Cristos, west of Westcliffe. They are all located in the Sangre de Cristos Wilderness Area.

The South Colony Lakes campground consists of several large fire rings located on a rise above the larger of the lakes. Old-timers and forest service officers believe that camp area has been in use since the turn of the twentieth century. The lakes were accessed by a mining wagon road since the late 1800s.

The South Colony Lakes and similar campgrounds based next to glacial lakes are noted by Carhart in his early recreational plans. It was his vision that areas like the South Colony Lakes and Trapper's Lake in northern Colorado should be left undeveloped. He expressed his ideas about protecting the "wild lands" in an eloquent four-page letter to the naturalist Aldo Leopold in December 1919. Carhart's concepts are recognized by many historians as the genesis of the Wilderness Program.

26 Ophir-Gardner Road

Take Highway 69 30 miles south of Westcliffe to the intersection with C.R. 634 and turn east.

This early county and Forest Service road was another Carhart project. He realized that it was important to connect recreational sites throughout the entire San Isabel with automobile roads. The Ophir-Gardner Road was developed to connect the recreational areas on the eastern side of the Wet Mountains near Beulah with

new sites that he intended to construct in the Spanish Peaks and Culebra Range south of La Veta, 100 miles away.

The shortest and most scenic route to connect the heavily developed Squirrel Creek/Beulah area and the southern mountains would have to be constructed almost from scratch. Carhart selected a route from the Bav-R-Li Lodge on present-day Highway 165 west over the Wet Mountain crest into Huerfano Valley, near Gardner.

The area is visually stunning and afforded many scenic viewing opportunities. The road would also create access to Carhart's planned Greenhorn Loop road at the crest of the Wet Mountains.

However, funds weren't available to construct this important east-west link until the 1930s. The CCC, as it did in many other areas, undertook the project of building the recreation road. The thirty-four-mile scenic route was completed in 1934 and 1935. The CCC workers were based at a camp at the western terminus of the road, at present-day Highway 69. The road features attractive hand-worked mortared stone culvert head-walls, a hallmark of much of the CCC and WPA work in the area.

Southern *Loop*

27 Badito-La Veta Road

From Westcliffe, go south on Highway 69 for 40 miles to the junction with C.R. 520 and turn south.

The Badito Road is one of the oldest roads in southern Colorado. It was a part of the early eighteenth century Trappers' Trail, and was later called the Military Road. The road skirts the southern base of Greenhorn Peak, and the Greenhorn (or Wet) Mountains. Before then, the route was used as the shortest distance from the Plains to the western mountain passes.

In the late 1860s, the town of Badito was established where Highway 69 and C.R. 520 intersect. You can see adobe ruins of the town east of the highway on both sides of Huerfano Creek. Until 1872, Badito was the county seat for all of southeastern Colorado all the way to the Kansas border.

La Veta, twenty miles south of Badito, was established in 1869. The old trail, then a military and stage road, was the only route between the two early towns. In 1919, Carhart identified the route as a key intersecting piece of the road grid that he proposed for recreational development of the region. The Badito-La Veta Road would help tie the Beulah and Westcliffe recreational centers to new campgrounds he proposed for the Spanish Peaks and Culebra Mountain areas south of La Veta. It would also link up with the Ophir-Gardner Road he was proposing.

In the 1920s, the road was made serviceable for automobile travel. In the 1930s, the CCC further improved the road. Today, you can see the elaborate, mortared stone culvert head-walls that the CCC constructed. These old culverts still serve to keep the road from eroding.

28 Sulphur Springs Resort

Go 1 mile south of La Veta on Highway 12. Take the C.R. 421 junction west for 5 miles to the resort.

This early resort was established in 1879. It is still operating today. The resort is located at a mineral spring in the Culebra Mountain Range. The springs are known to have been used by the Ute people prior to the arrival of Euro-Americans in 1862. The canyon where the spring and resort are located is called Indian Springs. Until the 1920s and 1930s, Americans, like the Utes and Europeans, "took the waters," believing that bathing in mineral springs promoted good health and cured various maladies.

The resort is (and was) modest in size, in contrast with the large spas located near cities such as Colorado Springs. The resort is almost completely intact today. Facilities include an 1880s main lodge, a large

dining and dance hall, six original cabins and a large bathhouse. The springs are improved with elaborate, mortared rock and concrete pools. Sulphur Springs is an outstanding example of a small late nineteenth and twentieth-century health resort.

29 Wahatoya Camp

Drive six miles south of La Veta on C.R. 360.

This special mountain cabin community is located in a deep canyon, surrounded on three sides by national forest. The community consists of fifty-two recreational cabins. The cabins were built beginning in the 1930s, mostly by families from western Kansas. The cabin community is still called Little Kansas by some of the local people.

The cabins stretch southward up the canyon and along the Wahatoya Creek for nearly a mile. They are located close together along both sides of the creek. Unlike most cabin communities in the San Isabel, Wahatoya is seasonal. No one lives here in the winter.

30 Spring Creek Campground

Drive South of La Veta 10 miles on Highway 12. Campground is on the west side of the highway.

This small campground has an early history. Spring Creek was established by the Forest Service sometime in the 1920s or 1930s. The campground is recorded on pre-1937 recreation maps of San Isabel. The campground was one of several campgrounds in the Spanish Peaks-Culebra area proposed by Arthur Carhart.

Today, Spring Creek Campground is comprised of three picnic areas built in the 1990s. The earlier 1920s-30s campground improvements were replaced in the 1950s. These 1950s campsites were then replaced by the three 1990s picnic sites. Nothing is left of the original campground except a possible 1920s stone fireplace fragment.

31 Blue Lake(s) Campground

Travel south of La Veta 12 miles on Highway 12. Take a west turn on F.R. 422 and follow for 3 miles up to the campground.

Blue Lake Campground was the centerpiece of Carhart's plans for the Spanish Peaks-Culebra section of the San Isabel. He ensured that a road was built over Cucharas Pass to the south to provide access from Trinidad, and that a stub road was then built for the three miles to a new campground.

He was helped financially and politically by the Spanish Peaks Mountain Playground Association. The association, in cooperation with Carhart and Forest Service, helped to build a small resort area at the base of the Blue Lakes in 1920 and 1921. In 1922, the Blue Lakes Campground was developed. The primary users of this new campground were people from Trinidad, Aguilar, Stonewall and La Veta.

The association's resort buildings were removed sometime in the 1930s after the association became inactive. There are no known records that show the design of the original 1920s campground. What you see today was built in the 1960s and 1970s and is still in use.

Just to the east of the present campground are the remains of several stone fireplaces and firebricks, similar to ones found in the Beulah area from the 1920s. If you walk 300 feet north of the main camp, crossing the creek, you will also find the remains of what might have been a small recreation pond from the 1920s. Carhart mentions such a pond in his early notes.

32 Bear Lake Campground

Drive 1 mile west of Blue Lakes Campground on F.R. 422.

Bear Lake Campground is the sister campground to Blue Lakes Campground, although it was probably built several years later. The current campground is from the 1950s and 1960s. Possible historical 1920s features include several large fire rings on the south side of the lake, and a portion of what may have been an early access road to the camp.

33 Cordova Pass Road

Travel Highway 12, south of La Veta 13 miles. Take the Cordova Pass Road junction east at the crest of Cucharas Pass.

This road was another important “connector” loop-tour road proposed by Carhart in 1919. The thirty-four-mile-long road wasn’t completed until 1934. CCC workers from Stonewall completed the road after local efforts over the years failed. The road connected Aguilar, near present day Interstate 25, with the heart of the Spanish Peaks-Culebra recreation area.

Several miles east of Cordova Pass (11,253 feet) is Apishipa Arch, a special feature on the road. The arch is carved through a “hog-back” and cars pass through the carved arch. The arch appears to be faced with mortared rock. Can you tell if the stonework is real-or just made to look real?

Several miles further toward Aguilar the road leaves the national forest. The exit is marked by several typical CCC-era posts and a steel-rail cattle guard like the ones you may have noted on South Hardscrabble and North Creek Roads north of Beulah. If you stop and look carefully at the rails you may be able to make out some welded initials, a date (1938), and “Valentine.” That is the name of a well-known ranching family which still operates in the area.

34 Monument Lake Park

Drive 6 miles south of Cucharas Pass on Highway 12 or 30 miles west of Trinidad on Highway 12.

Monument Lake Park was built with WPA Labor in the mid-1930s. Monument Lake already existed, but a long dam was built at the south end of the lake that doubled its size. The park was developed by the City of Trinidad, and is still owned by the city.

The park is located on 600 acres surrounded by national forest. Park buildings are all constructed in the Pueblo Adobe style that was popular in the first half of the twentieth century. Major buildings include an intact main lodge building, a period dining hall, fifteen adobe cabins with outdoor fireplaces, a large bath house, a boat house and a massive stone and mortar zoo that once housed bears, wolves and lions. Until the 1960s, bison roamed freely throughout the park.

The park featured a former trout fish hatchery once operated by the Issac Walton League. The hatchery includes several rearing ponds, fish runs and a fish nursery building-all constructed of local stone. It closed in the late 1950s.

The 400-ft-long dam is also made of stone. The two-mile park service road crosses the dam and circles the entire lake. At the north end of the lake are two large camping areas, completely bare of any improvements.

This little-known municipal park, similar in some ways to the Pueblo Mountain Park but on an even more massive scale, is worth a special detour. It is open seasonally.

35 Whispering Pines Camp

Go .25 miles west of Stonewall on Highway 12.

Whispering Pines Camp was built in 1918 by the Colorado Fuel & Iron Corporation (CF&I) as a summer camp for boys and girls. The camp was attended by children from the company's numerous coal mine camps in southern Colorado.

Whispering Pine Camp operated as a youth camp until the 1940s when it was converted to a corporate retreat for company executives. The camp, and 50,000 surrounding acres, were sold to the Cabot family in the 1980s. The camp isn't open to the public nor is it visible from Highway 12. The camp consists of several intact buildings from 1918 and from the 1920s. Buildings include a main lodge, a well-house, caretaker building, tack room and the original 1918 peeled spruce-log flagpole.

The camp was an important public relations asset to CF&I, particularly in rebuilding the company's image and the Rockefeller family image, after the disastrous 1914 Ludlow Massacre. Camp activities are heavily featured in CF&I newsletters dated between 1918 and the 1930s.