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**2024  
Press Kit**



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# Company Profile

## *Historic Railroad in Colorado's San Juan Mountains*

Established in 1881 by the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad (D&SNGRR) has been transporting travelers of all ages through the remote, beautiful wilderness and high-mountain landscape of the San Juan National Forest for 143 years.

Owned and operated by American Heritage Railways, the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad delivers an immersive journey through Colorado's San Juan Mountains, combining the region's rich history with modern-day adventure and amenities.

In 2024, all D&SNGRR steam locomotives have been upgraded from coal to oil fuel, reducing environmental impact while preserving the traditional steam-powered operation that defines the historic train experience. These locomotives continue to run on steam power, with oil now used to heat the water that generates the steam. The last coal powered train ran on March 23, 2024.

New this year, D&SNGRR introduced the Highline Express, an early evening steam train excursion that offers passengers greater flexibility in their travel options. D&SNGRR's shortest summer excursion and only evening option takes passengers along the famous Highline and Horseshoe Curve with stunning views 400 feet above the Animas River.

D&SNGRR is committed to protecting the landscapes of the San Juan National Forest and preserving the region's rich history. Significant efforts are made to balance modern needs with the preservation of its historic, one-of-a-kind equipment and infrastructure.

After years of planning, design, and permitting, it was determined that Bridge 495A required a complete replacement. Instead of ongoing repairs or retrofitting, a new bridge was constructed and completed in 2024. The goal remains to ensure the long-term viability of this historic rail line while honoring its past. Discover more at [durangotrain.com](https://durangotrain.com).

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# A World-Renowned Scenic Train Ride

*Travel back in time on steam locomotives through wild, mountain landscapes*

A registered National Historic Landmark, the D&SNGRR railroad in Southwestern Colorado was first constructed to carry silver and gold ore mined from the San Juan Mountains.

Today, the train is renowned as one of America's most scenic train rides. People of all ages from around the world are invited to experience authentic sights and sounds of the Old West while traveling the same route prospectors used over a century ago.

Vintage steam-powered locomotives and meticulously refurbished Victorian era coaches transport passengers back in time as they travel the 45.4-mile route along the Animas River between the towns of Durango and Silverton

The D&SNGRR operates year-round, with full service to Silverton in the summer and shorter excursions to Cascade Canyon. During winter the train takes passengers on scenic excursions from Durango to Cascade Canyon in heated train cars, and hosts The Polar Express™ beloved holiday train ride.



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# D&SNGRR Voted Best Scenic Train Ride in USA

*Rated “Best Scenic Train Ride” by USA Today 10Best Readers’ Choice Awards*

**Durango, Colo. – (June 5, 2024)** – The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad (D&SNGRR), a 143-year-old railroad based in Southwestern Colorado, has been voted as the “Best Scenic Train Ride in America” in the 2024 USA Today 10Best Readers’ Choice Travel Awards.

The number one ranking reflects the votes of travel enthusiasts across America who appreciate the historic D&SNGRR’s unmatched scenery, access to pristine wilderness, tour packages, and exceptional guest experiences.

“We are honored to be recognized as the Best Scenic Train Ride in America by USA Today readers,” said John Harper, General Manager and COO of American Heritage Railways. “The award is a testament to our dedicated team and the timeless history, adventure and natural beauty that our railroad offers. American Heritage Railways also wants to acknowledge our sister railroad, the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad, which ranked fourth. This recognition underscores our commitment to preserving and promoting the tourism railroad industry.”



Recognized as the top scenic train ride in the country by USA Today, D&SNGRR welcomes travelers and adventure seekers from around the world. D&SNGRR offers year-round excursions and specially themed event trains, including the Scenic Round Trip Silverton Train, Locomotive and Motor Car Rides, Skyway Tour, Wilderness Access stops for the Colorado Trail and Chicago Basin, Brew Train, the iconic Polar Express™ Train Ride, and more.

The annual USA Today 10Best Readers' Choice Awards recognize the top 20 nominees in travel and lifestyle categories. Before the public cast their votes, a panel of experts and USA Today 10Best editors nominated hundreds of heritage railroads across the nation. For a full list of winners, please visit [10best.usatoday.com](https://10best.usatoday.com).

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# D&SNGRR Announces New Highline Express

*Early evening train excursion adds more flexible travel experiences*

**Durango, Colo. – (June 26, 2024)** – The historic Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad (D&SNGRR) is excited to announce the new Highline Express early evening steam train, starting July 1, 2024. This 3.5 hour round trip excursion caters to travelers seeking more flexibility and options while exploring the region.

The Highline Express is D&SNGRR's shortest summer excursion and its only evening option, showcasing some of the railway's most iconic scenery. The steam locomotive travels through Colorado's scenic Animas Valley and over some of the railway's most famous features, including the Highline, a section of track perched 400 feet above the Animas River, and Horseshoe Curve.

The journey includes a brief stop at Rockwood Station, where passengers can stretch their legs and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere. The Highline Express will offer beverages, snacks, and light meal options for purchase along the journey.

"Our new Highline Express is a direct response to the increasing demand for more flexible travel experiences," said Jeff Johnson, Vice President and General Manager, D&SNGRR.



"This evening excursion offers a condensed but immersive experience of the Animas Valley and iconic canyon views along the highline, allowing even the busiest travelers to appreciate the beauty and history of our region."

The Highline Express will depart Durango at 4:30 pm and return by 8:10 pm on select days in July. This exciting new offering is ideal for nature lovers, photographers, history buffs, train enthusiasts, multigenerational families, and anyone looking for a relaxing evening outing.

Tickets for the Highline Express are limited, with only 10 exclusive evening excursions available in July. More dates may be added later this summer, but availability is not guaranteed. Visit [durangotrain.com/ride-us](https://durangotrain.com/ride-us) for more details.

# D&SNGRR Announces Fall Photography Special

*New for 2024, D&SNGRR debuts night photography shoots along the line*

**Durango, Colo. – (August 20, 2024)** – Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad (D&SNGRR) announces the Fall Photography Special, offering photographers a rare chance to capture nighttime images of the historic steam train as it travels through iconic locations along the Animas River Canyon.

New this season, D&SNGRR is offering night photography shoots directly along the line, as previous night sessions have been held at the depot. Led by renowned railroad photographer Pete Lerro, this excursion will provide opportunities to capture the dramatic beauty of the steam train, powered by a K-28 class locomotive, against the backdrop of the San Juan Mountains. Taking place September 14-16, this exclusive event also includes a new one-night option.

The photo train will stop at five distinct locations, all professionally lit by Lerro, offering participants the chance to capture both still and action shots. Each session will feature different run-by locations to ensure a variety of images.



## 2024 Fall Photography Special Schedule

- September 14, 6:40 pm: Durango Train Departure
- September 15, 4:30 am: Silverton Train Arrival
- September 15, 5 am: Silverton Bus Departure
- September 15, 5 pm: Silverton Bus Departure
- September 15, 7 pm: Silverton Train Departure
- September 16, 5 am: Durango Train Arrival

The two-night experience, priced at \$1360, includes coach seating, train and bus fare, and a souvenir mug. For those preferring a shorter session, a new one-night option is available for \$800. To secure a spot, reservations must be made by phone by calling 1-877-872-4607. Visit [durangotrain.com/events/fall-photographers-special](https://durangotrain.com/events/fall-photographers-special).

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# Announcing 2024 *The Polar Express*<sup>™</sup> Train Ride

*Theatrical re-creation of the beloved holiday story returns to the D&SNGRR*

**Durango, Colo. – (September TK, 2024) –** The historic Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad (D&SNGRR) is excited to announce the return of *The Polar Express*<sup>™</sup> Train Ride for the 2024 holiday season. The festive journey begins on Friday, November 22, 2024, and runs on most days through Saturday, January 4, 2025.

This beloved experience brings to life the holiday classic, *The Polar Express*, by Chris Van Allsburg, through an immersive, theatrical re-creation. Families board the historic steam train, painted like the one from the book and movie, and beautifully decorated for the holidays.

Departing from the downtown Durango Depot, the vintage steam locomotive transports passengers through winter landscapes on the way to the North Pole. Onboard, guests enjoy readings from the book while dancing chefs serve hot chocolate and cookies. Upon arrival at the North Pole, an incredible light show set to holiday music delights passengers. On the return trip, Santa and his elves board the train, visiting each coach to present the first gift of Christmas to every passenger.

The roundtrip journey lasts approximately 65 minutes. However, guests should plan on spending about 2 hours to enjoy the full experience, including a holiday-themed display at the D&SNGRR Railroad Museum and optional photos with Santa following the train ride.



Passengers are encouraged to wear pajamas to capture the Christmas spirit and dress in layers for warmth, although the train cars are heated.

The *Polar Express*<sup>™</sup> starts on Friday, November 22, 2024, and operates most days through Saturday, January 4, 2025, with multiple evening departures. The train will not operate on November 28, December 2-4, December 9-10, or December 25.

Adult ticket prices range from \$39 to \$93, while children's tickets range from \$29 to \$83, depending on the train, class of service, and date. Guests can save over 35 percent on tickets by booking a "value" day for the *Polar Express* on select dates, subject to availability. Reservations can be made online at [durangotrain.com/events/the-polar-express-train-ride](https://durangotrain.com/events/the-polar-express-train-ride).



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# Summer Excursions



## Scenic Round Trip Silverton Train

A full-day, round-trip excursion from Durango to Silverton with breathtaking views. Travel through remote wilderness, over the Animas River Gorge and across remarkable railway features.



## Cascade Canyon Express

Travel deep into forested mountains with amazing canyon views. The train travels halfway to Silverton, stopping at Cascade Canyon for a one-hour layover, the perfect setting for lunch, photo opportunities, or a stroll along the Animas River.



## Highline Express

D&SNGRR's shortest summer excursion and only evening option, this exclusive route crosses the Highline and Horseshoe Curve, offering breathtaking views 400 feet above the Animas River.



## Skyway Tour

Combine a one-way train on the D&SNGRR with a motorcoach ride. Two options allow guests to take the train to Silverton and return to Durango via bus, or take a bus to Silverton and return to Durango via the train.



## Wilderness Access Points

*Needleton* is a popular stop for trekkers heading into Chicago Basin, while *Elk Park* provides access to the Weminuche Wilderness, Continental Divide Trail and Colorado Trail.

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# Winter Excursions

*A scenic winter ride through Colorado's Rocky Mountains aboard steam locomotives*

**Cascade Canyon Winter Train: Nov. 23, 2024 - May 2, 2025**

Departing from the Durango Depot, historic steam locomotives transport passengers back in time, through the remote winter landscapes of Colorado's San Juan Mountains while riding in the comfort of heated coaches.

The route travels 26 miles along the Animas River from Durango to Cascade Canyon, revealing some of the railway's most iconic features like the Highline, a section of track perched 400 feet above the river.

The 5.25-hour round-trip experience includes a 60-minute stop at picturesque Cascade Canyon, where passengers can enjoy a fireside lunch, take photos, or a winter stroll along the Animas River.

This winter scenic train ride is ideal for nature lovers, photographers, history buffs, train enthusiasts, multigenerational families, and anyone looking for a relaxing winter outing. Learn more at [durangotrain.com](https://durangotrain.com).



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# Signature Events

*Embrace the spirit of each season aboard the historic D&SNGRR*



## **Fall Photography Special - Sept. 14-16, 2024**

Featuring a weekend of night photo shoots in the Animas River Canyon. Led by expert night train photographer Pete Lerro, photographers will capture iconic locations along the historic railway under LED lighting.



## **Cowboy Poetry Train - Oct. 4, 2024**

Enjoy true Western poets, acoustic entertainment, and outstanding fall foliage on this special train ride. The journey to Silverton features cowboy poetry and songs that bring tears to the eyes and keep everyone in stitches.



## **The Polar Express™ - Nov. 22, 2024 - Jan. 4, 2025**

Ring in the holidays by traveling to the North Pole aboard a historic D&SNGRR steam train. Based on Chris Van Allsburg's beloved book, this enchanting ride includes hot cocoa, storytelling, and a visit from Santa, bringing the holiday to life for travelers of all ages.

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# Class of Service

*From first-class splendor to open-air gondolas each train car provides a unique experience*



**Presidential and First-Class:** Elegantly appointed seating areas, tables, and observation platforms take guests back in time with early 20th-century luxury. All first-class and presidential class cars include an onboard attendant, unlimited non-alcoholic beverages, a morning pastry, a souvenir mug, and one tote bag per couple or group.



**Deluxe Class:** Travel in comfort and style with roomy, overstuffed seating in enclosed coaches with large windows or open-air gondolas and expansive views.



**Standard Class:** Choose between vintage enclosed coach seating or an open-air gondola to be even closer to the sights and sounds of this historic adventure.



**Amenities:** All trains offer a concession car with a variety of snacks and drinks available for purchase. Boxed lunches are available for pre-order. Lunch must be purchased at least one day in advance.

# D&SNG Railroad Museum

*A free, must-see attraction in the heart of downtown Durango*

The 12,000-square-foot D&SNG Railroad Museum is free and open to the public with something for all ages to explore.

Several steam locomotives and railroad cars are on display, including a sleeper car and other equipment dating back to the 1880s. Adults and kids alike can explore the cab of a locomotive, see the view from the fireman and engineer's seats, and handle the levers and gauges they have only seen from afar.

The museum focuses on the history of the local railroad with collections of regional memorabilia, railroad history books, displays of lanterns, locks and keys, and tools of railroading. It also contains several vintage automobiles from the turn of the century.

Discover the charm of antique toys and relive the nostalgia of childhood with a 800-square-foot model railroad and several vintage toy soldier displays.

Located in the rail yard of the historic Durango Depot, the museum is open daily from 7 am to 7 pm during the summer and from 7 am to 6 pm during May, early June, and October.

During the winter, the museum is open 10 am to 4 pm from Monday through Saturday, and is closed on Sunday.

Visit [durangotrain.com/dsng-museum](http://durangotrain.com/dsng-museum) to learn more.

