

VISIT

WET MOUNTAIN VALLEY CUSTER COUNTY GUIDEBOOK



WELCOME TO THE WET MOUNTAIN VALLEY



PHOTO © DEB ADAMS

COME FOR THE MOUNTAINS, STAY FOR THE STARS

Consider yourself invited to our quaint mountain towns, majestic national forests and breathtaking wilderness areas. Climb our mountain peaks, hike our trails with vistas as far as the eye can see and cast your line across one of our pristine mountain lakes and streams.

Welcome to Custer County and the **Wet Mountain Valley**, a very special and magical area of two charming small towns drawn together by geography and purpose. Within this **Custer County Guidebook** you'll learn about activities for the whole family —

from the arts, music and theater to historic preservation and land conservation — there's an endless variety of things to explore and enjoy.

Custer County Tourism is proud of the commitment to fostering economic vitality and a strong sense of community while preserving and enhancing the historic heritage of the Wet Mountain Valley. Whether you've come to experience our ranching heritage through the **Stampede Rodeo** and **Custer County Fair**, observe the dark skies at the **Smokey Jack Observatory**, attend one of our many music festivals and theater productions or just wander

around Main Street and enjoy the small town charm of our shops, restaurants and art galleries — you'll find there are many other activities that make **staying a few extra days in Custer County worth your while**. After a day of fresh mountain air or an evening at a concert or theater production, you'll want to dine at one of our restaurants and spend comfortable nights at one of a variety of accommodations — everything from motels and inns to cabins, vacation rentals, tent camping and RV parks.

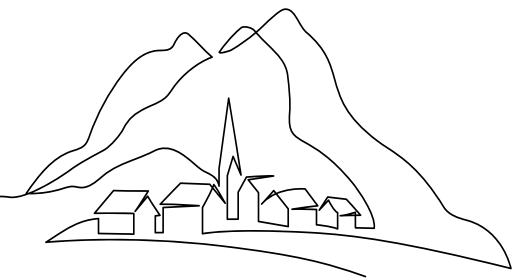
We take pride in putting as much accurate and reliable

information together in this **Custer County Guidebook**, but please make sure to visit our website **VisitWetMountainValley.com**. It will have the most updated details on current events to make your visit outstanding. Be sure to **sign up for our monthly eNewsletter** as well.

If this is your first time to our wonderful **Wet Mountain Valley**, we hope you'll return often to partake in the wide choice of activities our little community has to offer. And if you're a regular visitor, welcome back.

**RELAX AND UNWIND.
WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE!**

COMMUNITIES



Tucked between the **Sangre de Cristo and Wet Mountains** in Southern Colorado, the **Wet Mountain Valley** is a beacon for anyone seeking the Colorado of yesteryear where expansive ranches ruled the day and dark skies ruled the night. Comprised of two towns (Silver Cliff and Westcliffe) and two communities (San Isabel and Wetmore) — the Wet Mountain Valley is home to more than **200 miles of hiking trails** and **52 alpine lakes**, making it an ideal location for anyone who wants to get lost in **Colorado's great outdoors**.

The valley's rich ranching culture is alive and well thanks to multiple conservation easements, which have helped to preserve large swaths of land needed to run several successful ranches, and at night, the valley's incredible stars become the main attraction. The stars in the Wet Mountain Valley are so incredible that Westcliffe and Silver Cliff earned **Colorado's first International Dark Sky Community** designation in 2015, and the community continues to serve as a **leader in Colorado's Dark Sky movement**.



SILVER CLIFF

The **Town of Silver Cliff** was formed in the late 1870s to house the miners of its namesake, the **Silver Cliff Mining District**, which encompassed dozens of mining claims like the **Bull-Domingo and Geyser Mines**. The town was incorporated in 1879 and had 5,040 residents by the 1880 census — making it the third most populous town in Colorado after Denver and Leadville. Silver Cliff was the county seat from 1886 (when the town won the seat from Rosita) to 1928 (when the seat moved to nearby Westcliffe).

WESTCLIFFE

A statutory town that is the current county seat of Custer County with an elevation of 7,867 ft (2,398m), **Westcliffe** had its start in 1881 when



the **Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad** was extended to that point. In 1885, Englishman **Dr. J.W. Bell** named Westcliffe after the British resort community **Westcliff-on-Sea**. By 1890, mining had diminished and Westcliffe began to thrive as its ranching history began.

Situated between the Wet Mountains and the mighty Sangre de Cristos, the town sits in a broad valley generously watered by snow melt and filled with lush meadows and pastures. It is a place where you can't help but see the vastness of nature.

SAN ISABEL

Like many, you probably enjoy the **wide array of recreational opportunities on Forest Service lands**. The whole concept of hiking, camping and fishing on public lands had its beginnings right here in Custer County. In 1919, a Forest Service employee, **Arthur Carhart**, determined these vast national forests might have another calling.

In the late 1930s, **Lake Isabel** was developed for non-motorized boating and fishing — **the first lake created solely for recreation**.

Carhart's legacy and his vision continue to live on at every Forest



Service campground and picnic site in America. And to think it all began in the **San Isabel National Forest**, right here in Custer County.

WETMORE

These days the community of **Wetmore** in northeastern Custer County is just a spot on the map for visitors traveling to and from the Wet Mountain Valley. It's been that way for the past several hundred years. For centuries prior, it was an important junction for native tribes, Spanish conquistadors and early explorers. The community is named for **William and Frances Wetmore**, who acquired and developed 160 acres.



THE MOUNTAINS



Nestled between the **Sangre de Cristo Mountains** and the gently rolling **Wet Mountains**, the **Wet Mountain Valley** has more than its share of magnificent scenery and recreational possibilities.

SANGRE DE CRISTO WILDERNESS

Lofty crags, massive peaks, cascading waterfalls and hidden alpine lakes are the hallmark of the Sangres. The **Sangre de Cristos** are the southernmost subrange of the Rocky Mountains and hold a **unique geological place among the Colorado mountain ranges**. The only fault-block mountains in the state, the Sangres easily rate as the most abrupt, with peaks that soar 7,000 feet above the **San Luis and Wet Mountain Valleys** in only a few horizontal miles. The Sangre de Cristos are **one of the longest mountain chains on Earth**.

Congress designated 238,000 acres the **Sangre de Cristo Wilderness** as the flagship of the 1993 Colorado Wilderness Act. While the range contains eight 14ers, only four (the Crestone group) are included in the wilderness.

The **Rainbow Trail** is nearly 100 miles long on the eastern slope, at an altitude between 9,000 and 10,000 feet, and provides access to most of the lake and peak trails on the east side of the Sangre de Cristo range (**Music Pass, Lake of the Clouds** and **Phantom Terrace**, to name a few).

RAINBOW TRAIL

You can access the Rainbow Trail at about 16 different locations with half of them requiring a 4WD vehicle. The **Rainbow Trail** offers easy to moderate hiking with meadows filled with wildflowers in summer, brilliant aspens in the fall and towering pines all year long.

Besides hiking, the Rainbow Trail offers a number of activity options including ATVs no more than 50 inches wide, horseback riding, snowshoeing and hunting. **The trail is accessible year-round**. Dogs are allowed but must be kept on leash.



PHOTO: DEB ADAMS

WET MOUNTAINS

Most of the Wets are located within Custer County. **Greenhorn Peak** and part of the range are in Huerfano County and Pueblo County.

Within the mountains, CO-96 weaves its way down to Wetmore by way of **Hardscrabble Canyon** and is one of only three main exits from the valley. The other highway is CO-165, which travels through the range to Rye and Colorado City and can provide access to **Bishop Castle** and **Lake Isabel**.

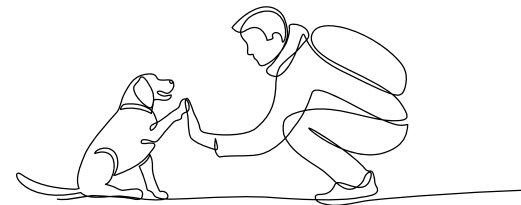
The Wet Mountains offer hiking trails for all fitness levels and many trails allow motorized vehicles.

TRAILS FOR ALL

A grassroots, all-volunteer effort to improve people's well-being through the care, creation, use and promotion of trails in and around Custer County. **Trails for All** believes spending time in the great outdoors contributes to a higher quality of life. Their published **Hiking Guide for the Sangre de Cristo and the Wet Mountains** is available locally at **All the Range**. The guide is an invaluable tool for anyone wishing to explore the two mountain ranges. TrailsForAll.co

COLORADO OPEN LANDS

A non-profit land trust that exists to **protect and preserve Colorado's land and water resources**. They work primarily with private landowners to place voluntary agreements called conservation easements on their property. The process is driven by the wishes of the landowner with the goal of protecting open space, water and wildlife habitat — forever. They believe that the unmatched quality of life that Colorado offers is directly tied to our natural resources and that we can **preserve that quality of life by protecting the most special places**, like the Wet Mountain Valley. ColoradoOpenLands.org



MOUNTAIN READINESS

Leave no trace. Be prepared for ever-changing weather with layers of clothing. Drink plenty of water to adjust to altitude and dry climate. Use plenty of sunscreen as the sun is intensified at higher elevations.

MUSIC PASS

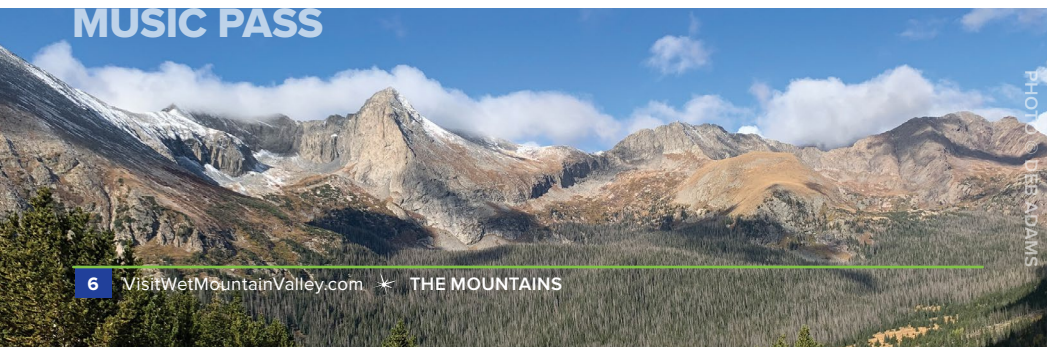


PHOTO: DEB ADAMS

STARGAZING

PHOTO © SCOTT DANKOF

DARK SKY COMMUNITY

The **Wet Mountain Valley** is known for sweeping mountain vistas with big open skies, but it's the **incredible night sky that makes an overnight stay a must**. In 2015, the towns of Westcliffe and Silver Cliff were certified by the **International Dark Sky Association** as **Colorado's First Dark Sky Community**, the **9th Dark Sky Community in the world**, and with an elevation of 7,900 feet, the highest anywhere. People from all over come to Custer County for a **world-class stargazing experience**.



environment, but for the incredible experience of viewing the night sky as previous generations did.

SMOKEY JACK OBSERVATORY

The **SJO** (known by its acronym) is the perfect place to view the majestic night sky — it boasts a retractable roof and a 14-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope to get the best view possible. The outdoor amphitheater has comfortably-spaced bench seating, a large viewing screen, restrooms and a 6-telescope pad.

[The Bluff & Summit Park](#)



PHOTO © DEB YARRA

THE SJO

SJO STAR PARTIES

Viewers will be dazzled with the incredible objects and sights of the night sky above us. Dates and times for Public Star Parties can be found on our website. You can also book a **Private Star Party** with a trained Star Guide from May to September. [DarkSkiesColorado.org](#)

STARGAZING ETIQUETTE

Stargazing has been a human pastime for centuries and today astronomy-based events and activities provide excellent opportunities to **celebrate the cosmos together**. Whether it is your first time attending or you are a star party veteran, stargazing etiquette is critical to ensuring everyone has a safe and relaxing good time. [VisitWetMountainValley.com/stargazing-etiquette/](#)



COLORADO STARGAZING

Take a self-guided tour of some of Colorado's darkest skies and brightest stars with **Colorado Stargazing: Experience the Night**. Go to [Colorado.com/coloradostargazing](#) to find **Westcliffe** and **Silver Cliff** along with other featured locations that include

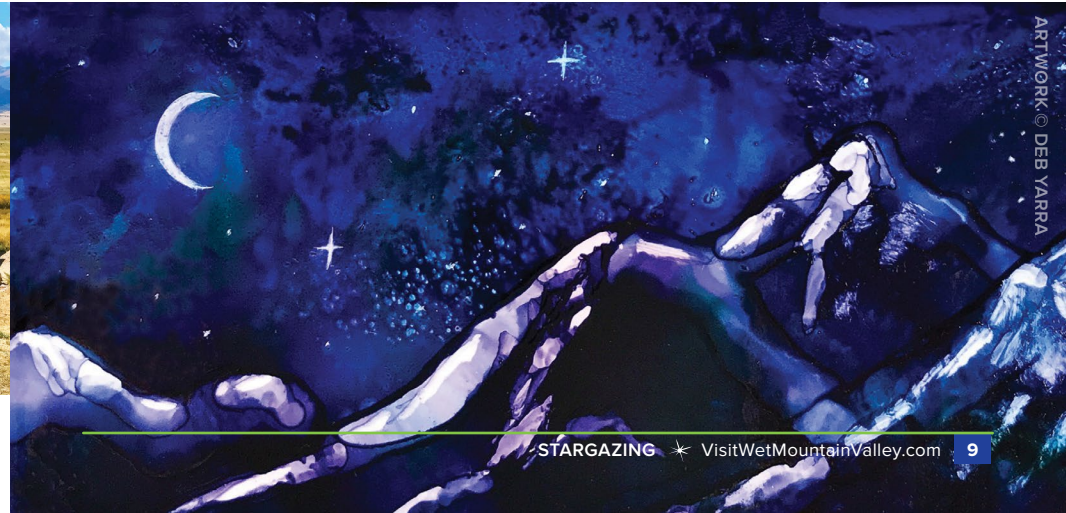
International Dark Sky

Association designated places and areas in the designation process. All of these communities are unified by their high elevation and low humidity, allowing for some of the **best stargazing in the world**.

This comprehensive stargazing resource includes a map, stargazing event listings, the best places to stargaze, suggestions for daytime activities and more. [Colorado.com/coloradostargazing](#)

DARK SKIES OF THE WET MOUNTAIN VALLEY

Since 1998, **Dark Skies Inc.**, has been working to reduce local light pollution and create public awareness of this **valuable and irreplaceable part of our western heritage**. An unpolluted night sky is a natural resource to be treasured and preserved, not only for the well-being of our community and



ARTWORK © DEB YARRA

HISTORY

Ancient paleo nomads were here as early as 10,000 years ago. **Native Utes** inhabited the Wet Mountain Valley at least as early as the 1500s. As nomadic hunter-gatherers, they took advantage of southern Colorado's mild summers to hunt game and forage edible plants. SouthernUte-nsn.gov/history/

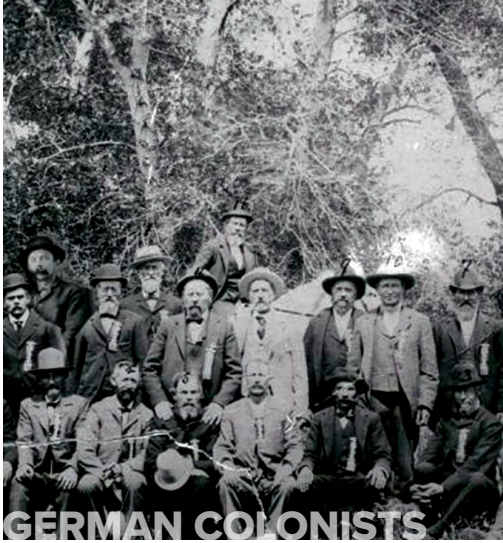
Present day Custer County was part of Spain from the mid-16th century until 1821 and part of Mexico from 1821 to 1848.



The 1870s, however, would forever change Custer County's landscape and culture.

A group of **German colonists** arrived from Chicago and settled in Colfax, a dozen miles

southwest of Westcliffe in 1870. As the first colonization company formed in the U.S., these brave settlers started their new lives with the nearly impossible switch from factory work to farming. When a proposed amendment legalizing group filings was voted down, the company folded, families disbanded and Colfax disappeared. A few families chose to remain and many of their **descendants still live in Custer County.**



The same year the German colonists arrived, **Edwin Beckwith** brought his first herd of cattle to the **Wet Mountain Valley** and would eventually own one of the largest cattle operations in Colorado. Other cattlemen followed, settling in all parts of the valley where land was prime for growing hay and raising livestock.

The **1874 discovery of copper and silver** south of present-day Rosita brought people in by scores and put the **Wet Mountain Valley** on the map.

As Rosita's population swelled, the Colorado Legislature officially created Custer County in 1877, naming it in honor of **Lt. Colonel George Armstrong Custer**, who died the previous year while leading the 7th Cavalry Regiment at the **Battle of the Little Bighorn** in Montana Territory against a coalition of Native American tribes. This battle action became romanticized and lives on in infamy as "Custer's Last Stand."

FRONTIER PATHWAYS BYWAY

Explorers once traveled over the Wet Mountains and into Custer County via a trail marking the intersection of several different territories. That trail is now the **Frontier Pathways Scenic & Historic Byway**, two highways passing historic sites and paying homage to the region's long and varied past.

The **103-mile Frontier Pathways Scenic Byway** runs from Westcliffe to Pueblo, with a second branch to Colorado City. Snowcapped mountains, jagged canyons, carpeted meadows and aspen-covered hillsides make this one of the **most stunning drives in all of Colorado.**

Popular stops between Westcliffe and Pueblo along CO-96 include **Jackson Hill**, an old stage stop where travelers exchanged tired horses for well-rested animals, and **Lake Pueblo State Park**, a year-round spot for recreation.

Bishop Castle, a quirky structure built entirely by one man, and **Lake Isabel**, a favored vacation destination, draw visitors off CO-165.

Tapped by the **U.S. Secretary of Transportation** as a **National Scenic Byway** in 1998, **Frontier Pathways Scenic Byway** is one of only 13 in Colorado to receive this designation.

FRONTIER PATHWAYS SCENIC & HISTORIC BYWAY



HERITAGE

ALL ABOARD WESTCLIFFE

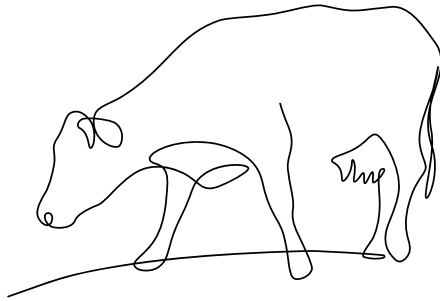
AAW is dedicated to telling the story of the railroad and its **impact on economic development and the social fabric of the Wet Mountain Valley** — through preservation, restoration, education and display. In 1990, the AAW group of volunteers acquired and **restored the original 1901 Denver and Rio Grande Depot and single stall engine house** (the last of its kind in Colorado). AAW also features a late 1800s restored all-wood caboose and outfit car open for tours. In 2021, AAW acquired a **1936 vintage model railroad** that's on display with other in-progress layouts in the basement of the Heritage Center. AAW comprises three museums: **Main Street Depot, Engine House and the Model Train Museum.**

[102 Main Street & 110 Rosita Avenue](#)

SILVER CLIFF MUSEUM

Housed in the original **Silver Cliff Town Hall and Firehouse**, the **Silver Cliff Museum** takes the visitor back to a time when everyday life revolved around the mining industry. The **Museum houses an extensive collection** of period furnishings, household items, clothing, fire fighting equipment and items used in the mining industry. Photographs of mines and miners, fire fighting companies and everyday people help bring history to life once more.

[610 E. Main Street, Silver Cliff](#)



BECKWITH RANCH

Located about five miles north of Westcliffe, this ranch is one of the most picturesque and historically significant sites in Custer County. In 1874, brothers **Elton and Edwin Beckwith** came west and began one of the largest cattle operations in Colorado.

The Friends of Beckwith Ranch have restored the house, outbuildings and corrals back to their 1903 condition with ten+ buildings listed on the **National Register of Historic Places**. Visitors get the opportunity to experience the **old West's ranching heritage** in a very impressive style.

[64169 Highway 69](#)



MUSIC MEADOWS RANCH

This stunning **4,000-acre authentic working cattle ranch** helps visitors learn the basics of grooming and saddling to confident horsemanship on well-

trained mounts. You can enjoy the opportunity to join the ranch hands in some real work moving cattle to fresh pasture. The historic ranch house is also available for a family or small group gatherings. **Music Meadows Ranch** is geared for sharing every season with a highly-curated experience learning about and enjoying **various aspects of horsemanship and the ranching life first-hand.**

[6076 County Road 119](#)

BEAR BASIN RANCH

A 3,500-acre working horse ranch located 11 miles east of Silver Cliff, the red-roofed buildings date from the 1880s and are surrounded in all directions with **broad vistas of both the Sangre de Cristo and Wet Mountains**. Horses are ready to take visitors on adventures through rolling hills, prairie and aspen groves. The land is protected under a conservation easement and, among other things, was once a summer campground for the **Ute tribes**



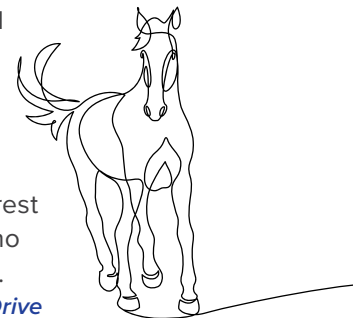
who left their mark throughout the property. Hunting, fishing and other pack adventures are offered by **Bear Basin Pack Trips** in the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness. All adventures are tailored to the experience and ability of the individual or group.

[473 County Road 271](#)

THE PINES RANCH

People have been restoring their body, mind and spirit for over 130 years at **The Pines Ranch**, an expansive retreat located at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Today the **ranch continues to be a restful escape** where they host retreats, cabin rentals, family reunions and weddings.

The Pines Ranch's passion is providing rest to people who serve others. [379 Chalice Drive](#)



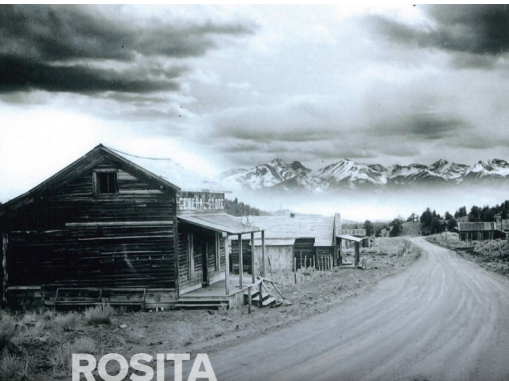
HERITAGE



ROSITA

Although a few families resided in **Rosita** as early as 1860, the discovery of silver created a population boom when a vein of ore was found in 1871 in nearby **Rosita Hills** that attracted prospectors to the area. They went on to extract precious metals over 15 years, drawing hundreds of miners to a camp that became Rosita.

Rosita, Spanish for "Little Rose," drew its name for the many wild roses that still grow in the area.



Rosita boomed to a population of 1,500 by 1878 and took the county seat that same year, a position it held until 1886 when Silver Cliff won it.

Today, Rosita is a collection of houses for both full- and part-time residents, an old cemetery and an abandoned post office that spent time as a fine-dining restaurant. You can still sense its history as you gaze out on amazing scenery.

County Road 341

HILLSIDE

The historic community of **Hillside** is a 9-acre property anchoring the north end of the **Wet Mountain Valley**, 12 miles north of Westcliffe. It has served as a local hub for the ranching community since the early 1900s.

The Hillside Hall, once the most hopping dance hall in the valley, was previously home for the **Grange**, an agricultural association popular in the late 19th/early 20th centuries.

Five beautifully renovated cottages on-site are vacation rentals. Today, **Hillside** is a venue for weddings, reunions and other group events making this scenic private property the perfect setting for life-long memory making.

59424 Highway 69, Hillside

SILVER WEST FEEDSTORE

This historic building and downtown anchor was built in the early 1880s and was used as a feed store in the valley for over 60 years as a gathering place for ranchers. It was used for other things up until the early 1990s. From 2002-2007, the three-story post and beam building was totally restored to its original integrity.

The restaurant and outdoor patio is on the ground level and the land behind the building was turned into a park with a covered amphitheater for live theater and music. Today, it is a local favorite for dining as well as a private and spacious outdoor venue for special events, weddings, concerts and social gatherings.

116 N. Second Street



HISTORIC JONES THEATER

Built as a saloon and pool hall in 1931, the building was the Canda Theater in 1936 and became the **Jones Theater** in 1963.

In 1992, Anne Kimbell Relph, a former actress of film, stage and television, bought the **Historic Jones Theater** and saved it from becoming a laundromat.

This purchase became an important Custer County cornerstone serving as the home for the **WCPA (Westcliffe Center for the Performing Arts)** which provides live theater, the occasional movie and special events for visitors and locals alike.

119 Main Street



GETTING HERE

Stunning scenery fills the drive into Custer County with two lane highways that wind over mountain passes and slip through canyons. We aren't far from some of Colorado's largest cities. Flights into **Colorado Springs, Denver** and **Pueblo** provide reasonable driving distances to the Wet Mountain Valley.

Stop by the **Custer County Welcome Center** to pick up maps and materials for your outdoor adventure.

ROADS LESS TRAVELED

CO Highways 96 and 69 are the two roads that drop into the Wet Mountain Valley. It is a very scenic drive whether over **Hardscrabble Pass** with towering rock formations or along the gently rolling valley floor. Drive carefully, obey the speed limit and watch for wildlife.



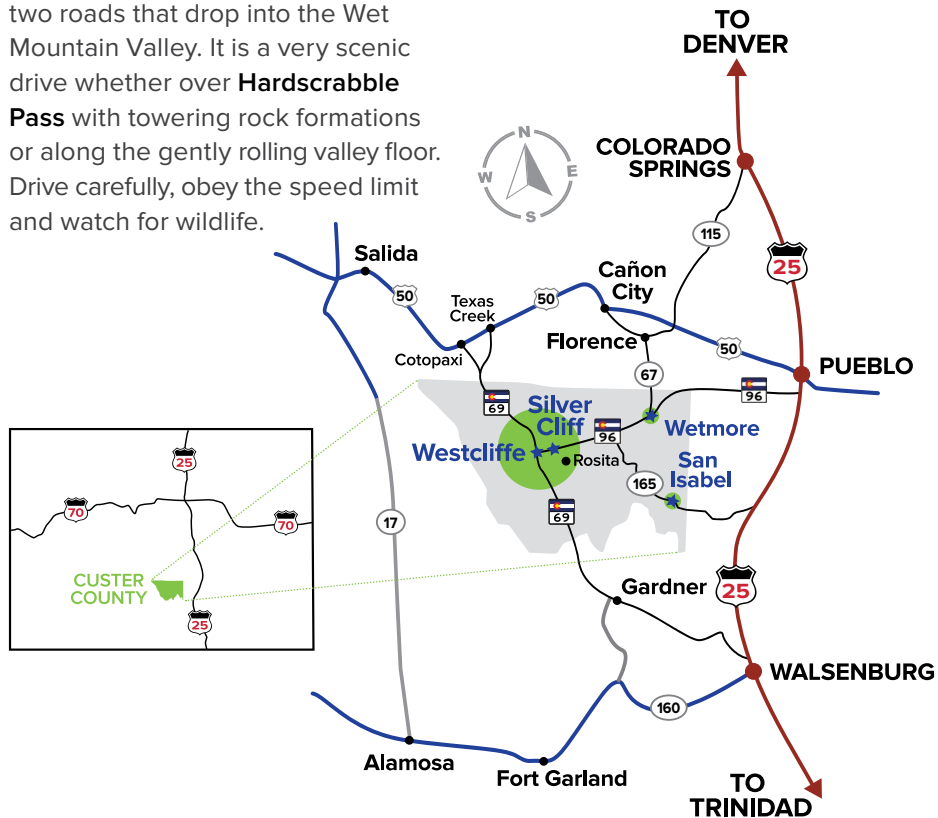
SILVERWEST AIRPORT

Aircraft are welcome to fly directly into **Butler Field at SilverWest Airport** (located 10 miles south of Westcliffe). Two airport courtesy cars are available free of charge (first-come, first-served) to those arriving by aircraft to visit Custer County.

SilverWestAirport.custercountygov.com/

EV STATIONS

There are Level 2 and Level 3 EV charging stations available in town. See the list of EV Station locations on the town map or visit our website.



ANNUAL EVENTS

While the Wet Mountain Valley is magnificent year-round, our major annual events are generally warm-weather summer delights that are fun for the entire family.

JULY

CUSTER COUNTY 4TH OF JULY

Observe our nation's independence during **Custer County's Fourth of July** celebration with a pancake breakfast and an old-fashioned small-town parade in the morning. The celebration continues at **DeWeese Reservoir** in the evening with an impressive fireworks show. [AAW Heritage Center & DeWeese Reservoir](#)

CUSTER COUNTY FAIR

With a rich ranching history, the fair highlights a variety of projects by **4-H** and **Future Farmers of America** members.

The **Custer County Fair** aims to educate, provide experience, teach sportsmanship and encourage cooperation by all participants.

Come enjoy the **rich agricultural history** of the area and have a great time at the **Custer County Fair**, an annual tradition since 1947. [Westcliffe Fairgrounds](#)



WESTCLIFFE PRCA & WPRA STAMPEDE RODEO

Celebrate **Custer County's** ranching history on the third weekend of each July at the **granddaddy of our summer events**.

Sponsored by **The Wet Mountain Valley Saddle Club**, this PRCA-sanctioned event begins on Friday with the traditional **Ranch Rodeo**. Saturday morning's parade down Main Street features rodeo personalities — including



the **Rodeo Queen and her Court** — along with their equine partners, sponsors and more. Roping, bronc and bull riding and barrel-racing events fill the Saturday and Sunday schedules while kids get in

on the action with **mutton-busting competitions** and **stick-horse races**.

Experience Colorado's western lifestyle for yourself at the **Westcliffe Stampede Rodeo** where cowboys and cowgirls compete for cash prizes and everyone has an enjoyable time. [Westcliffe Fairgrounds & Main Street](#)



PHOTO © LEXI CHRISTOPHER

WESTCLIFFE STAMPEDE RODEO

JULY / AUGUST

WESTCLIFFE CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS LIVE THEATER

Setting the cultural bar for the Wet Mountain Valley, **The Westcliffe Center for the Performing Arts (WCPA)** presents topical, inspiring live theater with carefully curated plays each summer. Plays are performed on Friday and Saturday evenings with a matinee on Sunday. *Historic Jones Theater*

SHAKESPEARE IN THE SANGRES

As the sun sets over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, enjoy a picnic on the lawn followed by an evening of Shakespeare in an outdoor amphitheater. Every year **WCPA** selects one (sometimes more) of the **Bard's plays** to present live for two evenings and a Sunday matinee. *Silver West Feedstore Amphitheater*

SILVERWEST AIRFEST

Fly in or drive on out and enjoy our beautiful mountains as a backdrop to **vintage and private airplane viewing and flight demonstrations**, live music, as well as food throughout the day starting with a **free pancake breakfast**. *Butler Field at SilverWest Airport*



WESTCLIFFE FRIENDS OF THE NRA

Join Westcliffe Friends of the NRA for an **entertaining and festive evening** at A Painted View Ranch with fun games, chances to **win prizes and a live auction** to benefit needs of local organizations. *A Painted View Ranch*

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER

TASTE OF THE VALLEY

Taste of the Valley is one of Custer County's premier events of the year where guests gather in celebration and support of **KLZR 91.7 Community Radio**. The event, hosted at various locations, **combines great food and wine** with our Valley's iconic scenery and warm hospitality. All funds raised go toward the operation of KLZR, the Voice of the Wet Mountain Valley. *KLZR.org/events/*

SEPTEMBER

HIGH ALTITUDE HORSEPOWER CAR SHOW

Held annually on Labor Day Saturday, enter your antique, vintage, classic, rat rod or hot rod/muscle car while you **share the day with other car enthusiasts** or just come enjoy the cars on Main Street and vote for your favorites. A **pancake breakfast** provided by the **Wet Mountain Valley Rotary Club** is offered as a fundraiser for their scholarship fund. *Westcliffe Main Street*



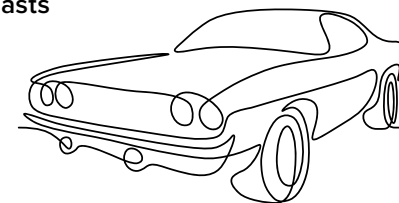
PHOTO © DEB ADAMS

SHAKESPEARE IN THE SANGRES

LABOR DAY FIBER ARTS WEEKEND

Olde Schoolhouse Quilters, **Westcliffe Art Quilters** and **Wet Mountain Weavers** each present a fiber arts show beginning midweek and continuing through the Labor Day weekend. Marvel at the **artistic design, creativity** and craftsmanship on display.

The Olde Schoolhouse Quilters show is an awesome display of quilts of all sizes and themes. **The Westcliffe Art Quilters** showcase unique fiber art quilts created using a wide variety of mixed media techniques on fabric. Enjoy a **tactile and visual adventure**



exploring the art and craft created by the **Wet Mountain Weavers**, including luxurious and elegant clothing and jewelry, accessories, home decor, sculpture and toys. *Westcliffe (3 locations)*

MUSIC EVENTS



JULY

HIGH MOUNTAIN HAY FEVER BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

Bluegrass enthusiasts from across the country come to the Wet Mountain Valley every July. Free from the sprawl and congestion of larger festivals, this premier event offers nationally-recognized talent while a circus tent provides the stage for old-time legends and cutting-edge new talent.

While top performers set this four-day festival apart, a children's program, workshops and late-night jam sessions in the camping area **make it fun for the entire family.**



The **High Mountain Hay Fever Festival Association** hosts the event each year on the second weekend in July and donates proceeds to other non-profits serving the Wet Mountain Valley. *The Bluff & Summit Park*

JULY / AUGUST

SUMMER IN THE PARK CONCERTS

There is nothing like free, live music in a beautiful setting. The annual "Summer in the Park" concert series, hosted by **KLZR 91.7 FM**, are held on Sunday afternoons. Get ready for hours of entertainment at one of Colorado's prettiest outdoor venues. Each year's lineup is unique and includes **Folk, Singer/Songwriter,**

Americana and Bluegrass.
Silver West Feedstore Amphitheater

SEPTEMBER

HIGH PEAKS MUSIC FESTIVAL

Relish true **Americana music** at this one-day, family-friendly extravaganza presented by Custer County's community radio, **KLZR 91.7 FM.** Music fans gather annually on the second Saturday in September in the Wet Mountain Valley for this one-day event featuring some of the area's **finest musical talent.**



Bring chairs or blankets for seating to wind down the summer music scene set against one of Colorado's most spectacular backdrops, the Sangre de Cristo mountain range. *Silver West Feedstore Amphitheater*

BLUES, BREWS & BBQS

Blues, Brews & BBQs brings together all the cool elements for a full day of listening to Blues while drinking some brews and feasting on some finger-licking barbecue.

This event attracts Blues fans with an **outstanding line-up of musicians and bands** performing on the third Saturday in September. Bring chairs or blankets to get comfortable



in the outdoor setting. This is the prime fundraiser for the **American Legion 170**, a local volunteer organization that provides physical and financial support to the area's veterans and veteran widows. *Silver West Feedstore Amphitheater*

FALL / WINTER / SPRING

IN CONCERT: CLASSICAL MUSIC IN THE VALLEY

Founded in 2003 to support and promote live, classical music in Custer County, **In Concert: Classical Music in the Valley** presents a series of three annual concerts from world-renowned musical artists in a truly intimate setting. *Historic Jones Theater*

SUMMER IN THE PARK



OUR TOWN

SHOP LOCAL

Slow down and stroll around to browse through the unique “Mom & Pop” shops that are certain to delight with their charming gift items, small town souvenirs and merchandise.

ALL THE RANGE

Whether you're hiking, camping, hunting or just enjoying, **All the Range** is the shop to **start your outdoor adventure and get Dark Sky merchandise**. It has great gear to fit the needs of easy hikers to avid mountain enthusiasts.

212 Main Street

ART GALLERIES

Art galleries **showcase local and regional artists** with artwork media including oils, watercolors, pottery, jewelry, sculpture, wood turning, metal sculptures, minerals and gems and unique alpaca art and apparel.

CLIFF LANES ENTERTAINMENT

Gather family and friends to knock down pins in an eight-lane bowling facility. There is also a game arcade and local favorite diner, **Rancher's Roost**.

25 Main Street



ARTWORK © ANDY MAST

FOOD FARE

Specialty coffee, sweet shops and restaurants. Grab it to go or sit back to relax and chat in the friendly spaces and outdoor places around town. **See the full list of eating establishments on the town map.**

PLANET WALK

Planet Walk is an **interpretive, self-guided walking adventure** of a four billion-to-one scale model of the entire Solar System and other wonders — right on Main Street. The interpretive signs along the way are designed to give a **conceptual understanding** of the nature of the objects and other aspects **across our Solar System and beyond** with text, colorful imagery and audio guides.



THE ARTS

SANGRES ART GUILD

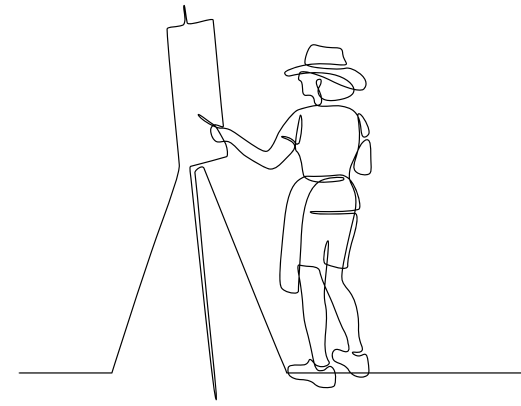
In the Wet Mountain Valley you will find an **arts-centered destination** filled with creative and vibrant people. The **Sangres Art Guild** forms a hub for the valley's creative opportunities fostering community engagement in the visual arts.

WEST END ARTS

Creativity abounds at the west end of town — artists and galleries, designers, entertainers, a jewelry-smith and more. Explore the local arts anytime you're in town. **Walk the Blocks**, happening every Second Saturday from June to September is a great way to see local artworks and meet the artists.

ALLA PRIMA WESTCLIFFE

Dazzling autumn days allow for the **ultimate alla prima painting**



experience in the Wet Mountain Valley with sweeping scenic views of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, intimate outdoor scenes, historic architecture and special events.

ARTS HULLABALOO

Three days of family fun in the fall celebrating the visual arts, performing arts and musical arts, to name a few. **The Sangres Art Guild**, in partnership with **Rebecca's Fund**, hosts this annual family-friendly event — **guaranteed to share the joy of creating for kids of all ages.**



ARTWORK © JACCI EMMERLE

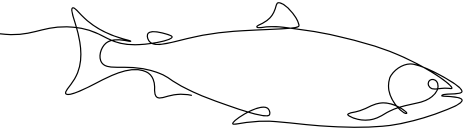
OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

HIKING

The Sangre de Cristo Mountains and Wet Mountains offer **excellent hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing**. Snow or rain gear should be carried at all times.

The **Rainbow Trail** is a moderate hiking trail with altitudes between 9,000 - 10,000 feet. Mountain bikes, ATVs, dirt bikes and horses are only permitted on part of the trail.

During warmer months, excellent access from the Rainbow Trail to the higher country offers unparalleled beauty and incredible alpine lakes and views. **Be a well-prepared hiker.**



FISHING

From **clear lakes to rippling creeks** and the **nearby Arkansas River**, a visit to the Wet Mountain Valley offers anglers of all abilities a chance to fish among some of **Colorado's most spectacular scenery**.

DeWeese Reservoir allows boats for fishermen only (no recreational boating). Take a scenic drive to **Lake Isabel** for a day of fishing along the shore or in a non-motorized boat. Or hike into the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness where you'll find dozens of **high-altitude lakes and streams, many with native trout**.

HORSEBACK RIDING

Leave your worries behind, feel the beauty of nature and let it touch your soul. Enjoy a spectacular outdoor experience on horseback.

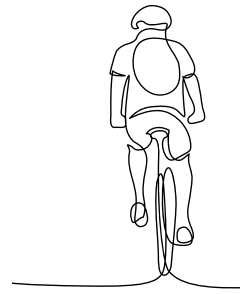
Local ranches offer wonderful horseback riding opportunities and more in the Sangre de Cristo wilderness. Experience a **cattle drive or be part of a guided pack trip**.

HUNTING

Custer County's open, **quiet spaces attract hunters** seeking a wide spectrum of Colorado wildlife. Our **Game Management Units, State Wildlife Areas and private ranches** are home to **elk, mule deer, black bears, mountain lions, turkeys** and more. Whether you bag a buck or walk away empty handed, success comes from **spending time outdoors with friends and family** in one of Colorado's most beautiful counties.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

From alpine lakes to mountain passes, our **off-road trails guarantee high adventure**. Although the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness is off-limits to mechanized vehicles, several forest roads are carved from the wilderness offering rugged tracks to high basins. All county roads (but not state highways 69/96/165) are open to off-road vehicles.



BIKING

Custer County's mountain peaks and wild landscapes create some of **Colorado's most scenic bike rides**

with endless miles of dirt roads to mountain bike or gravel grind and explore roads less traveled.

CAMPING

Custer County's forests and wilderness provide a **wide variety of camping opportunities** for those seeking the tranquility of sleeping under the stars.

Custer County not only has **hundreds of miles of trails for backcountry camping, conveniently located campgrounds accommodate tents and RVs**. Under rugged, 14,000-foot peaks and nestled among aspens and ponderosa pine, **designated campgrounds offer quick access** to a multitude of outdoor activities.

LEAVE NO TRACE

We are fortunate to have these grand natural places. **Please do your part and leave the wilderness areas better than you found them**. Below are the **Seven Principles of Leave No Trace**.

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Others



UNWIND & BE KIND

We are a small community with limited resources. Consider the Wet Mountain Valley **a place to slow down, unwind, unplug and be patient**. Breathe in the fresh mountain air and enjoy the views.

We care for Colorado and thank you for keeping our valley clean, pristine and beautiful.



AREA ATTRACTIONS

BISHOP CASTLE

Many travelers are surprised to find a **castle in the middle of the Wet Mountains**. This one-man project was started by Jim Bishop in 1969. All of the work has been done with a wheelbarrow and shovel. Complete with large Gothic windows and steel walkways, **Bishop Castle is a spectacular, must-see sight**. This free attraction is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year-round. BishopCastle.org
12705 CO-165, Rye

LAKE ISABEL

Just a few miles south of Bishop Castle, you'll find **Lake Isabel** along the CO 165 portion of the **Frontier Pathways Scenic Byway**. This popular



camping and recreation destination not only offers a day filled with beautiful scenery but also excellent fishing, paddling, hiking, biking and trails for ATVs. Enjoy dining at **The Lodge at San Isabel**. SanIsabelLodging.com
59 County Road 371, Rye

MISSION: WOLF

Connect with nature and wolves at **Mission: Wolf**, a peaceful **sanctuary for captive wolves and wolf-dog crosses**.

All the animals at Mission: Wolf were saved from being caged and now live in a **sanctuary devoted to their well-being**. Mission: Wolf's goal is simple. By encouraging a connection between people and the Earth, it inspires future stewards of the environment. MissionWolf.org
13388 County Road 634

EDEN WEST RANCH

Colorado Mountain Lavender, on the grounds of Eden West Ranch, is a family lavender farm in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains. **Tour the lavender fields** and browse the on-site farm shop for a variety of products produced on the farm. Enjoy **lavender ice cream** and picnic under the willows or by the creek. ColoradoMountainLavender.com
5968 CO-69N, Cotopaxi



GREAT SAND DUNES NAT'L PARK & PRESERVE

LAKE PUEBLO STATE PARK

The 11-mile **Lake Pueblo** and surrounding 7,000 acres provide facilities for **all types of recreation**. Popular activities include boating, fishing, swimming, water skiing, camping, hiking and picnicking. A **Colorado State Parks Pass** may be required and can be purchased on site. CPW.state.co.us/placestogo/parks
640 Pueblo Reservoir Road, Pueblo

ROYAL GORGE

At 1,250-feet deep, the **Royal Gorge** in Cañon City is **one of the deepest canyons in Colorado** and often called the "Grand Canyon of the Arkansas River." The **Royal Gorge Bridge** was built in 1929, spanning 955 feet above the river it is the **highest suspension bridge in North America**. You can walk across the Royal Gorge Bridge at the Royal Gorge Bridge & Park



where **jaw-dropping views and extreme adrenaline rides** await. It includes a state-of-the-art visitor center, gondola rides across the gorge and a children's play land. RoyalGorgeBridge.com
4218 County Road 3A, Cañon City

GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE

Recognized as a national park in 2004, it boasts **North America's highest sand dunes** and is the perfect spring or fall getaway. It's a beautiful two-hour drive from Custer County to go around the Sangre de Cristo mountain range.

At the **Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve** you'll find 30 square miles of steep and shifting sand dunes to explore. With no designated trails, visitors are able to roam freely.

NPS.gov/grsa
11500 State Highway 150, Mosca

OUR PARKS



Over 320 sunny days a year await you in Custer County, so check out one of our local parks and take some time to unwind and relax.

THE BLUFF & SUMMIT PARK

Overlooking an **absolutely stunning view** of the Wet Mountain Valley at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, visitors can relax and enjoy the view or a picnic as well as permitted weddings, concerts and outdoor events.

S. Adams Boulevard & Main Street

DUNDEE MEMORIAL DOG PARK

Super fun park with gardens, paths and outdoor artwork plus off-leash enclosures for large and small dogs.

1100 Broadway Street, Silver Cliff

HERMIT PARK

Avail yourself of the tennis/pickle ball courts, a large covered pavilion with picnic tables (water and electricity available) and a large multi-purpose playing field for a game of soccer, football or **just enjoying the day.**

1 Hermit Road

JESS PRICE MEMORIAL PARK

This **charming park offers outdoor markets and fairs** in the summer and is a nice place to have a picnic or read a book while enjoying the mountain views. Public restrooms are open year-round.

315 Main Street

MEMORIAL PARK

Located on the west side of town across from Hermit Park, Memorial Park has a delightful playground, two covered pavilions with picnic tables, a baseball field, public restrooms and **large grassy areas for any number of activities.**

305 Hermit Road

POCKET PARK

This **small park is big in ways to entertain the family.** Play checkers or chess, ladder toss, bean bag toss, bocce and be sure to enjoy the artistic fence.

111 Main Street

SILVER CLIFF COMMUNITY PARK

This **local sports park** supports all sorts of athletic endeavors: baseball and softball fields, batting cage, basketball court, sand volleyball court, horseshoe pits, picnic pavilion with fire pit, playground, skateboard park, large multi-purpose ice skating/in-line skating rink, pickle ball courts, concession stand/announcer booth.

1099 Fourth Street, Silver Cliff

CARE FOR COLORADO

Custer County Tourism is a member of the **Care for Colorado Coalition**, a group of organizations across the state **committed to promoting responsible travel** and the stewardship of cultural and historic sites, trails, parks and open spaces and more.

Our communities love sharing their **wealth of natural beauty and outdoor** experiences with you. All we ask is that you have an amazing time while showing our lands and people **plenty of love, kindness and respect.** We promise to pay it back tenfold.

When you're exploring the wonderful Wet Mountain Valley, please follow these principles:

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

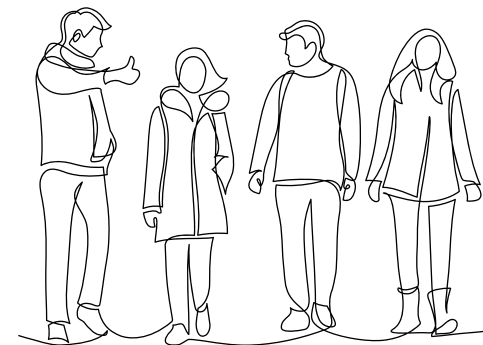
Find your way to less-visited and off-peak areas to maximize your connection with these special places.

STICK TO TRAILS

With so many trails in Custer County, there's no need to venture beyond them. By sticking to them, you're helping natural areas stay natural.

TRASH THE TRASH

Pack it in, pack it out or pick it up to leave a place better than you found it. Put litter, even crumbs, peels and cores, in your nearest waste or recycling bin.



LEAVE IT AS YOU FIND IT

Leave plants, rocks and historical items as you find them so others experience the joy of discovery.

BE CAREFUL WITH FIRE

Colorado's low humidity has perks but it can also create dry, dangerous conditions. Keep campfires small and manageable to avoid sparking wildfires.

KEEP WILDLIFE WILD

Colorado is home to tens of thousands of furry, scaly and feathered creatures.

To keep them — and you — safe, don't approach them.

SHARE OUR TRAILS AND PARKS

Chances are you're not out in nature to people watch, so try out Custer County's lesser-known trails and parks.



MORE INFO

See the **town map** for the latest Custer County community resources or visit our website at VisitWetMountainValley.com

KLZR RADIO

KLZR 91.7 FM, broadcasting from Westcliffe, is the **Voice of the Wet Mountain Valley**. 100% community-powered with volunteers, KLZR provides musical programming 24/7/365 featuring **daily news programming**, the **community calendar**, special and emergency reports and a **variety of information and music shows** with local DJs.

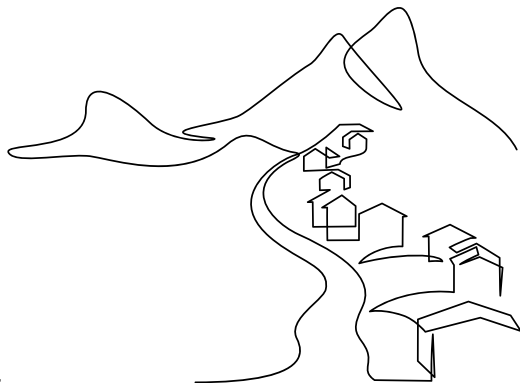
KLZR annually sponsors **High Peaks Music Festival**, **Summer Concerts in the Park**, **2nd Street Block Parties** and **Taste of the Valley**.

Catch up on KLZR at 91.7 FM or listen online at KLZR.org.

WET MOUNTAIN TRIBUNE

Visitors to the area can learn more about local events and activities by picking up a copy of the weekly **Wet Mountain Tribune** (available at their office on the corner of Main and 3rd Streets and various locations in Custer County).

Founded in 1883, the paper is the oldest commercial business in the county as well as one of the oldest continuously-published community newspapers in all of Colorado. **216 Main Street**



PUBLIC RESTROOMS

- Jess Price Memorial Park
315 Main Street
- Memorial Park
305 Hermit Road
- Summit Park
100 S. Adams Boulevard
- West Custer County Library
209 Main Street

WATER DISPENSERS

- IceBorn Wet Mountain Valley Ice & Water
423 Main Street, Silver Cliff
(Kiosk open 24 hours)
- Sunflower Natural Foods
405 Main Street

ATM LOCATIONS

- JR's Fuel Stop (Shell Station)
425 S. Sixth Street
- Kirkpatrick Bank
8 Bassick Place
- Lowe's Market
50 Main Street
(Open every day 8am to 8pm)
- United Business Bank
102 S. Adams Boulevard

STOP BY

Pick up **maps, brochures and other materials** to help make your visit epic!

Custer County Tourism

Welcome Center

107 N. Third Street
Westcliffe, CO 81252

WEBSITE

You'll find the **most updated details** about **where you can stay** in our amazing valley, **local businesses** that may come in handy during your visit and a **calendar of upcoming events** with overviews describing some of our most **interesting community assets** and more at: VisitWetMountainValley.com

GET IN TOUCH



Info@VisitWetMountainValley.com



Facebook.com/VisitWetMountainValley



Instagram.com/TheWetMountainValley



(719) 480-7230

STAY IN TOUCH

Sign up for our eNewsletter:

VisitWetMountainValley.com/sign-up-for-the-e-newsletter/

DOWNLOAD THE PDF



Scan QR code to view and download the interactive PDF version of this **Custer County Guidebook** and quickly follow links for the latest details.



Come for the mountains, stay for the stars.

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CUSTER COUNTY TOURISM
107 N. THIRD STREET / PO BOX 150
WESTCLIFFE, CO 81252
VISITWETMOUNTAINVALLEY.COM

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