

A New Take on the Old West in Golden, Colorado

From Buffalo Bill to Steam Trains, Historic Homesteads to the History of Brewing, Colorado's First Capital City Has Seen it All – and It's All Still Here to Be Seen

GOLDEN, COLORADO, JULY 15, 2016 High on a mountain top, overlooking snowcapped peaks to the west and the pretty town of Golden, Colorado to the east, is the quiet grave of the world's first superstar. Not Elvis – he was not even born until 18 years after this superstar was laid to rest. No, this is the grave of Col. Buffalo Bill Cody. Today, Buffalo Bill is remembered as a historical figure, but from 1883 to 1913, he created the first show business world tour -- "Buffalo Bill's Wild West." There has never been anything else quite like it.

While Beyonce's current world tour has 20 backup dancers and will be held in 41 cities, Buffalo Bill performed in more than 1,000 cities in a dozen nations with a cast of 640 cowboys, Indians, vaqueros and rough riders. It took a special train of 52 box cars to move his show, which included the third largest buffalo herd on earth.

Kings, queens and presidents attended his shows and it is estimated that more than 25 million words were written about Buffalo Bill during his lifetime, making his silver goatee, buckskin jacket and wide Stetson hat more recognizable and famous than anyone in the world. When he died in 1917 while visiting his sister in Denver, his body was put on view in the state capitol and his funeral was (and still is!) the largest ever held in Colorado.

You can get a glimpse of this superstar and his exciting life as an army scout, Pony Express rider, buffalo hunter and showman, at the Buffalo Bill Memorial Museum. Located on top of Lookout Mountain, just a short walk from his gravesite, the museum has many of his costumes, guns, hats and posters from the show, as well other artifacts from the many people who appeared in his shows, including gunfighter Wild Bill Hickock and Chief Sitting Bull, who wiped out Custer at the Little Big Horn. Kids (and adults) can try on western outfits for Facebook photos, and the view from the museum is the best in all of Denver. So is the drive to the museum, up the twisting Lariat Loop Trail. The world's best cyclists have twice pedaled up this torturous climb in the USA Pro Challenge. Every day, dozens of bicyclists come up the mountain, while hang gliders float down.

Buffalo Bill allegedly chose this pretty spot to be buried because it afforded such spectacular views of both the plains and the mountains. But Golden, Colorado also played an important role in settling the West and there are many other places to get the story. Here are a few:

The Homesteaders & Goldminers: Golden was Colorado's first capital and the closest town to the goldfields that sparked the Gold Rush of 1859. The Golden History Center has exhibits on the town's history and the Gold Rush that brought 100,000 men and women across the Great Plains in just two years in the hopes of striking it rich. On the other side of a fast rushing river is Clear Creek History Park, the complete homestead of the Pearce Ranch in Golden Gate Canyon that has been relocated to this beautiful spot, complete with barns, chickens and a farm house. Tours let you see what it was really like living in the Old West, and kids love meeting and feeding the chickens.

The Railroads:

It was the railroads that "won the West," and the largest collection of steam locomotives and cars in Colorado is located nearby at the Colorado Railroad Museum. Most fun of all, the museum has a half mile circle of track and daily throughout the summer, they fire up one of their many operating steam locomotives and pull passengers around this giant model railroad, steam whistles blowing and bells clanging. On the other weekends, they have a Galloping Goose – an old Pierce Arrow limousine that was put on wheels with a bus on back that used to run over the Rocky Mountains near Telluride. The museum has indoor and outdoor model train displays, and during the holiday season they stage the fabulous Polar Express, where Santa comes on board a steam train and every passenger gets a silver bell.

The Dinosaurs:

We're talking *real* Old West history here, but the Golden area was once a tropical swamp filled with dinosaurs, and the first T-Rex bones were found in Golden on top of South Table Mountain. The Triceratops Trail runs for 1.5 miles through Golden and you can see 100 million year old footprints of a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, *Edmontosaurus*, and *Triceratops*. Nearby at Dinosaur Ridge, you can see actual dinosaur bones still in rocks and examine hundreds of dinosaur footprints. A museum tells the story of the "dinosaur gold rush" that was unleashed in 1877 when Arthur Lakes, a professor at the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, discovered the first dinosaur bones and thrilled the world, sending hundreds of scientists to the Golden area to look for more fossils.

The Brewers:

What would the Old West be without a saloon? And saloons need beer. In 1872, a young brewer from Germany was walking along Clear Creek in Golden when he discovered many cool springs of crystal pure water bubbling up from the ground. He knew water was a major ingredient in beer, so with a partner, he bought the land around the springs and turned an abandoned tannery nearby into a brewery. His name was Adolph Herrman Coors, and today his brewery is the largest single-site brewery in the world.

Coors Brewery produces 13 million barrels of beer a year, which translates to 4.3 billion bottles – or about 221,000 bottles of beer for every resident in Golden. And Coors isn't the only brewery in town. There are five other award-winning craft breweries located here, as well as a distillery. Buffalo Bill, who was known to have a fondness for alcohol, would be proud.

The brewery has an excellent tour where you can see and learn how beer is made, and also discover the history of beer brewing in Colorado. After the tour, those over 21 can sample three free beers. What better way is there to discover the Old West in Colorado?

BUFFALO BILL DAYS GALLOPS INTO GOLDEN, JULY 28-31, 2016

Golden will once again be the center of the rip-roaring Old West when it hosts the annual Buffalo Bill Days celebration, July 29-31, 2016. The three-day Western event dates back to the 1940's, when it began as a trail ride up Lookout Mountain to Buffalo Bill's grave. Today, it's a Western parade, concerts and Golden's largest annual event.

This year's activities include **Cody's Wild West**, the "**Best of the West**" Parade, **Muttin' Bustin'**, live music, an orphan car and a classic car show, a golf tournament, food and merchandise vendors and much more. It all begins Thursday, July 28, 2016 with the golf tournament at Applewood Golf Course.

The "Best of the West Parade" starts at 10 a.m. on Saturday, July 30 and winds through downtown Golden with 70 horses, floats, bands, collectable cars, and a variety of surprises.

Immediately after the parade, "Cody's Wild West" is a 90-minute extravaganza for the whole family with a Civil War cannon, military flag detail, live American eagle from HawkQuest, bagpipers and drum corps, flag-flying horsemen, and of course, the great showman himself, William Frederick "Buffalo Bill" Cody.

There will be Colorado sharpshooters on fast horses, local legend Hazel Miller singing the national anthem, Mexican dancers, shooting exhibitions by Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley, traditional songs and dances by Native Americans, roper-extraordinaire Craig Ingram and his wife Audrey performing amazing lasso tricks, the Westernaires doing amazing feats of horsemanship, and the 79th Highlanders bagpipe band with Celtic dancers.

Cody's Wild West will take place at 12:30 pm., Saturday July 30 following the conclusion of the "Best of the West" parade in Lions Park ballfields on 10th St.

For more information: visitgolden.com/buffalo-bill-days-golden