



## **Rail Travel Renaissance: Historic Hotels of the Rockies Are Ready With Amtrak Packages, Museum Tours and a Strong Train Heritage**

*Many travelers have a fascination with trains and riding the rails is again a popular alternative form of transportation. With the resurrection of train travel, the Historic Hotels of the Rockies association is responding by emphasizing their railroad roots. Vacationers are encouraged to learn about the legacy of western railroads and to experience these historical sites firsthand.*

Rocky Mountain States, USA ([PRWEB](#)) May 6, 2009 -- The romance of western train travel permeates throughout the Historic Hotels of the Rockies. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, these lodging properties were built to accommodate the rapid growth of this mode of transportation. Today these hotel gems are emphasizing their railroad heritage and their strong connection to the rails. Throughout the Rocky Mountain states, travelers can still ride a train to their favorite destinations or visit train museums and historical sites.

Jim Osterfoss, President of the Historic Hotels of the Rockies says, "Heritage Tourism is on the rise and there are a lot of train enthusiasts and railroad buffs out there. All of our member properties have some kind of link with historic train travel. It is a unique common denominator."

The railroads were key to transportation and commerce at the turn of the 20th century, and the Historic Hotels of the Rockies were built originally to offer lodging and dining for those traveling into the western territories for either pleasure or for potential profits. These hotels witnessed the true settling of the American West and the dominance of train travel, and will be there for the upcoming rail renaissance.

### **Ride the Empire Builder Train to Izaak Walton Inn, Montana**

Not much has changed in upper Montana since 1939, when the Great Northern Railroad constructed the Izaak Walton Inn adjacent to the rail yard for the use of railroad personnel. Today in Essex, Montana, the Amtrak Empire Builder line enters the town by following the southern boundary of Glacier National Park, and the staff at the Izaak Walton Inn still comes outside to wave at the engineers as the trains pass, twice daily.

In stark contrast, when the rail lines routed commerce away from the thriving river town of Fort Benton, MT, there were soon no visitors for the new and stately Grand Union Hotel. Montana's oldest operating hotel has been beautifully restored and is open for business.

### **Cheyenne, Wyoming First Populated by Transcontinental Train Workers**

The Nagle Warren Mansion was built in 1888 to showcase the success associated with the wealthiest city of its size in the world, although the town's first residents were men who moved west to work on the tracks that would unite the U.S. east coast with its west coast: the Transcontinental Railroad.

By 1911, rail commerce was so brisk that the city needed a first class accommodation, and the Plains Hotel

opened its doors directly across from the Union Pacific Depot, now the Cheyenne Depot Museum. The Plains Hotel was a favored destination for the early captains of the mining, oil, and cattle industries and for leading members of government.

A decade before the Plains Hotel opened, however, Buffalo Bill Cody recognized the importance of rail travel for tourism and he convinced the Burlington railroad to build a spur up to the town of Cody, WY. In the same year (1902) he opened his Irma Hotel. The famed Cody Gunfighters still perform in front of the Irma nightly throughout the summer.

The Elk Mountain Hotel followed the Irma in 1905, and is built on the site of the original Overland Stage station in the town of Elk Mountain. For a period of years, the railroad served the nearby town of Carbon and the coal mines.

A 28 mile stretch of rail was also built from the national network up to Buffalo, WY to haul coal from the nearby mines, but rail travelers could stay at the grand and renowned Occidental Hotel, founded in 1880.

#### Train Still Available From Denver to Historic Hotel Colorado

As the 19th century came to a close and the train routes facilitated greater access to the breathtaking Rocky Mountains, the Hotel Colorado opened its doors to travelers and spa seekers alike. This grand hotel, built in 1883, included the opportunity to partake of healing hot spring water funneled out of the Colorado River and into a private pool. Amtrak has daily train service on the California Zephyr from Denver to Glenwood Springs today, and the depot is just across the Colorado River from the historic hotel.

The Riverside Hotel, opened in 1903, served a similar travel market. The depot for the Rocky Mountain Railroad was built just 500 yards west of the Riverside. Trains didn't run at night, so all passengers would depart the train and head into Hot Sulphur Springs for a meal, possibly a soak in the hot springs of the Colorado River, and a bed.

The rail lines built in other parts of Colorado in the late 1800s were primarily to aid the mining industry. The silver boom in Leadville brought the train, and in 1886 the Delaware Hotel was built. A year later, the Strater Hotel opened in Durango, a town founded in 1880 by the Denver and Rio Grande railroad. Now the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad offers scenic trips year-round. The railroad did not come into Telluride until 1890, and the New Sheridan Hotel was then erected in 1895, and remains as the heart of historic downtown.

#### The Plaza Hotel in the Original Las Vegas (New Mexico) Hub

Just three years after the arrival of the AT&SF railroad, the Plaza Hotel opened its doors (1882) and became the "Belle of the Southwest." Las Vegas was already commercially successful because of its location on the Santa Fe Trail, but the advantage of the train fueled an economic growth that demanded a fine hotel to be the centerpiece of the town's plaza.

## Tourism Now Gold for Black Hills of South Dakota

Although mining first brought the Chicago and Northwestern railroad, when the Hotel Alex Johnson opened in 1928 in Rapid City, SD, it was a tribute to the Lakota Sioux culture and to the western history of South Dakota. Construction on Mount Rushmore had begun in 1927.

Barely a generation has passed since the Rocky Mountains were the wild West so often depicted in today's theme parks. The preservation of the historic buildings in the strategic towns along the original railroad lines are an affordable and accessible avenue for travelers in the upcoming vacation season. For travel information, go to [www.historichotels.com](http://www.historichotels.com).

## About Historic Hotels of the Rockies

An eclectic collection of vintage properties, the Historic Hotels of the Rockies resurrect the glory days of the late 1800's and early 1900's. For detailed information on each hotel, go to [www.historic-hotels.com](http://www.historic-hotels.com).

For a press kit and press releases, go to [http://www.historic-hotels.com/press\\_room/hotel\\_news\\_mainview2](http://www.historic-hotels.com/press_room/hotel_news_mainview2)

### Media Contact:

Jim Osterfoss, President

Historic Hotels of the Rockies

307-637-3333

jim (at) nwmbb (dot) com

or

Vicky Nash, PR Representative

Resort Trends, Inc. - Tourism & Resort Communications

970-948-4923

Vicky (at) ResortTrends (dot) com

###



### **Contact Information**

**Jim Osterfoss, President**

Historic Hotels of the Rockies

<http://www.historic-hotels.com/>

307-637-3333

**Vicky Nash**

Resort Trends, Inc.

<http://www.resorttrends.com/pressroom/historichotelsoftherockies.html>

970-948-4923

### **Online Web 2.0 Version**

You can read the online version of this press release [here](#).

### **PRWebPodcast Available**

[Listen to Podcast MP3](#) [Listen to Podcast iTunes](#) [Listen to Podcast OGG](#)