

Tales and Trails of Colorado Ghost Mines – Fairplay

June 12 – 13, 2023

\$175. with credit. \$120. without credit.

1 graduate hour credit Colorado School of Mines

Day 1: Class will begin in Fairplay, Colorado at 8:00 a.m. as we slip back in time to the excitement of the Colorado Gold Rush Days. Gold was first discovered in Colorado in a remote gulch just west of the current town of Fairplay. What is the Colorado Mineral Belt and why are gold, silver, lead and zinc still found here? Why are there 34 authentic buildings from ghost towns around Colorado in this quaint little town? Just imagine exploring all of those 1600 time period artifacts as we take the Fairplay Ghost Town Tour. How did Fairplay get its name? Who were Father Dyer and Chicken Bill? Who was Silverheels, and why does this 1850's dance hall girl still reportedly haunt the Alma Cemetery, which one of the most fascinating historic cemeteries in Colorado, and hides mysteries and tales of gold day fervor. At the old site of the town of Buckskin Joe, we will search for timbers, teacups, and a strange purple glass that contains manganese and turns colors after years of UV light exposure. We will then continue up Buckskin Creek to view an old arrastra, which was used to grind the ore and was pulled by mules. Further up the canyon, we will view the old Paris Mill site where the ore was crushed by heavy machinery and processed through amalgamation for concentration. We will spend some time poking through the mining tailings that often contain galena and pyrite. Old mine sites dot the timberline mountain sides all the way to Kite Lake at the foot of Mt. Bross, a 14,000 foot peak. We will then journey to the site of the Windy Ridge Bristlecone Pines. Bristlecones often live over 3,000 years and are the longest lived conifer tree. One tree in Nevada is thought to be 5,000 years old. We will then return to Fairplay and spend the night in the historic Fairplay Hotel, where we will find if the tales of the ghosts who haunt it are true.

Day 2: Daylight will find us exploring the phenomenal London Mine ruins which are part way up Mosquito Pass. These ruins are some of the most extensive in the area and are located high above timberline. An intense 4 WD road traverses beyond the London Mine ruins and travels over Mosquito Pass into Leadville, which was the route of the gold ore and mail delivered by skiers in the golden days of the 1800's. What is left of the tiny ghost town of Mosquito? How does the alpine ecosystem of Colorado function with such a short growing season? On the drive up to the London Mine, we will pass through 3 of Colorado's ecosystems. The beautiful drive up Horseshoe Gulch will lead us to explore the famous Leavick Ghost Town, Hilltop and Last Chance Mines and the mill that concentrated their gold, silver and zinc ore. Remnants of the framework of a tramway that brought the ore to the mill from the Hilltop Mine are still visible at Leavick. This site also has fascinating glacial geology with nearby Horseshoe Cirque,

formed from Pleistocene Glaciation. These ghost towns are some of the most photographed in Colorado. Returning to Fairplay, we will explore a huge dredge sites in South Park and learn about mining techniques, from panning for placer gold to hydraulicking, sluicing, dredging and hard rock mining. When did the railroads arrive and why is there a turntable in the tiny ghost town of Como? Did elephants really push the train through a blinding blizzard? Find out the answers to these questions as you explore the Tales and Trails of the South Park ghost towns.