

Dear Friends,

Greetings once again from **Hart Ranch, Rapid City, South Dakota.**

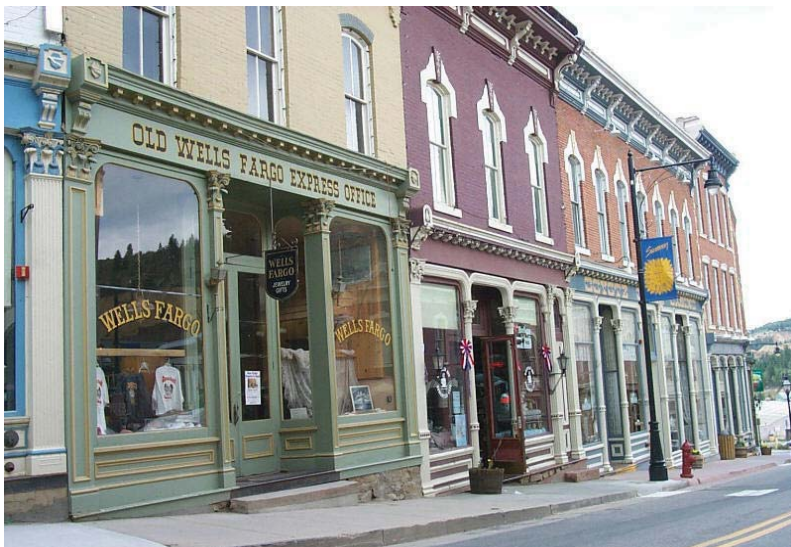
Once again we are writing from South Dakota and playing catch up. This time we want to tell you about three delightful, high altitude towns in the Colorado Rockies. On May 27, 2010, we left **Moab, Utah** and headed for the Elks Lodge in **Grand Junction, Colorado**. It was an easy drive and we like to stop in Grand Junction as staying at the Elks is very inexpensive and their food is quite good. After a good nights rest, we got off to an early start in the morning because we knew we had some serious mountains to climb and the going would be slow.

Our goal was to reach the fun and historic gold mining town of **Blackhawk, Colorado**. There is always a lot going on in Blackhawk, plus gambling is legal there, which results in lots of alcohol, food, and casinos. Right next door to Blackhawk is another old mining town with legalized gambling called **Central City**. Both towns are fun, but being historic, the streets are narrow so parking is a bit of a problem. Actually, for a motorhome, it's a major problem.



**Main Street, Blackhawk, Colorado.**

Downtown Blackhawk is a bit over 8,000 feet high and Central City is higher yet at over 9,000 feet. Both towns are very scenic and it was clear that we were going to have a good time.



**Main Street, Central City, Colorado.**

As soon as we hit town, it was very clear that parking would be a serious issue. **Tim's** camper van was pulling a trailer with a motorcycle in it and our motorhome was also pulling a trailer with a motorcycle in it. There was no way we could fit in any of the outdoor parking lots and the parking garages were equally hopeless. We carry an extensive collection of books describing RV camping sites. Ah ha, not too far away was a State Park with camping sites. After miles of dusty narrow dirt roads, we found it and made a loop. What a disappointment. There was nothing big enough for us. So it was back to town. Just as we were wondering what to do next, we saw a sign pointing up a steep hill that claimed parking. Up the hill we went and finally came to what appeared to be an empty parking lot. It wasn't too level, but it was paved and we were the only ones there. We set up camp, pulled the motorcycles out of the trailers and headed into town for dinner. **Little did we know that we were camped at over 9,000 feet.**



**Parking at over 9,000 feet overlooking Blackhawk, Colorado.**



**Town of Blackhawk from above.**

About half way down the mountain from our camping spot was a good view of Blackhawk, Colorado (see above photo.) After making camp, we rode the bikes into town, had dinner, came back to the RVs and crashed. We were tired, but we thought it was from driving all day. At this point we had no idea that Blackhawk was over 8,000 feet and we were camped at 9,000 feet. Oh yeah, the air was extremely clear, a little cold, and there was plenty of snow on the peaks around us. Maybe the snow at the end of May should have been a clue.

The next day we took the bikes back to town, had an inexpensive breakfast and toured around Blackhawk and Central City on the free trolley that runs every half hour. We also rode to another fun and historic mining town by the name of **Georgetown**. Wow, what a fun place and also over 9,000 feet. Georgetown has a wonderful old narrow gauge steam railroad. (The Georgetown Loop Railroad.) We just had to ride it. Unfortunately, it was too late in the day so we bought tickets for the next day. Part way through the ride, it's possible to get off for a couple of hours and tour an old silver mine. Oh yeah, we had to do that too.



**Georgetown Loop Railroad, Georgetown, Colorado.**

The train is just barely out of the station when it crosses the Georgetown ravine on a narrow bridge. Wow, if you're afraid of heights, this gets your adrenaline flowing. The conductor was absolutely fabulous and kept a running dialogue of the area's history for the whole trip. It is indeed, an amazing high altitude area with some of the original mines over 12,000 feet in altitude. Most of the miners were actually imported from Scotland. The history of this region is absolutely fascinating and if you'd like to know more, please check out this link: [http://www.georgetownlooprr.com/about\\_us/history.shtml](http://www.georgetownlooprr.com/about_us/history.shtml)



**Main Street of Georgetown, Colorado.**

This little mountain town reminded us of our old hometown of Weaverville, California. There is just no doubt about it, we have a thing for historic mining towns. But back to the railroad adventure and our stop at the **Lebanon Silver Mine**.



**The entrance to the Lebanon Silver Mine.**



**Our friend, Tim, 500 feet back into the mine.**

After the mine tour, it was back on the train to the station in Georgetown. From there, we rode into Georgetown for an ice cream sundae and from Georgetown we rode back to the RVs. After letting our dogs out for a run, it was back into Blackhawk for a free dinner. It wasn't good, but it was free. From there it was back up the mountain and into bed.

On our fourth morning on the mountain top, Tim hobbled over to our motorhome in serious respiratory distress. He flat couldn't breathe. We got him inside, got him warm, and helped him relax. It was clear that our high altitude adventure had to end. We managed to get packed up and pointed the RVs downhill toward Denver.

All in all, the high altitude historic mining areas in the Colorado Rockies are absolutely fascinating. If you're in good health, and can take the altitude, we strongly recommend this adventure. "Got oxygen?" It was more than a slogan.

Until next time, home is where we park it.

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