

Van Houton coal town ruins

NRA Whittington Center - south of Raton, NM

Distance from Casa del Gavilan: 37 miles – 45 minutes

Trail length: ½ mile each way. Other trails and roads also available.

Elevation change: 150 feet

Difficulty: Easy walking on dirt roads. Some trails more rugged.

Points of interest: Ruins and foundations of homes, stores, businesses, and mining works. One mine entrance still open, though gated.

Buildings are well-marked and many have signs explaining life

during the days when men with mules mined coal in Van Houten.

Points of interest: Ruins of coal mining town of Van Houton which was active during the first half of the 20th century. Several buildings are still standing, but most have been torn down leaving only the foundations.

No fee or reservations required. Just show up at the entrance and request permission to visit Van Houten. Phone: 800-494-4853

From: <http://ghosttowns.placesandpics.com/new-mexico/van-houten-nm/>

Lesser-known than nearby Dawson, Van Houten began in 1902 as the mining camp of Willow, New Mexico. That same year the post office name was changed to Van Houten after the president of the coal company. The post office was discontinued in 1952, and by 1954 the mining was stopped.

Nearly all of the structures were demolished, but there is still plenty to see at the site of Van Houten. The house foundations remain intact, laid out in careful grids, marking the neighborhoods where 1,500 people once lived. One house remains standing. Industrial foundations, at least one original mine entrance, and the mule barns are also visible.

Van Houten is a rarity in New Mexico ghost towns; it is in excellent condition, is being carefully preserved as-is by the current owners, and is open to the public on a conditional basis. The town site is located on the N.R.A. Whittington Center property and is accessible with permission, which generally involves checking in at the visitor center and signing a waiver at the security gate. Some areas of the town are off-limits for visitor safety on account of the nearby shooting ranges. The entire town site can be off-limits during certain times.

The Ghost Town of Van Houten is generally open dawn to dusk every day of the year (weather permitting) and is accessed through The Whittington Center. Take Highway 64 north from Cimarron (toward Raton) 31 miles to The Whittington Center on your left. As you enter the Center, bear left to the covered entrance/exit canopy. Tell the greeter you'd like to visit Van Houten. All occupants of your vehicle will be asked to sign a waiver to access the property.

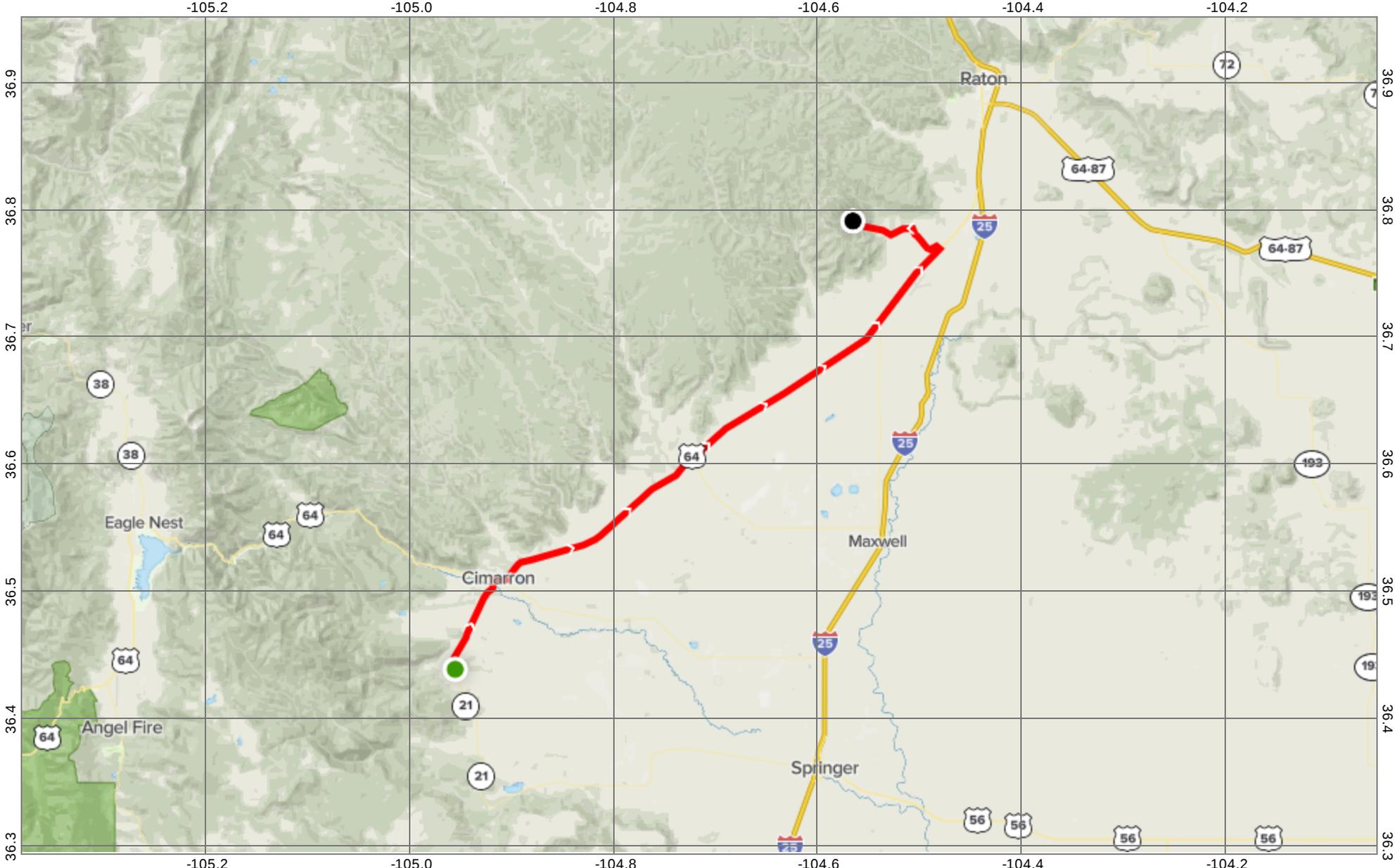
Once you are approved to proceed, drive straight back on Road A two miles to where it ends at Road C. As you pass the statue of "The Scout" you are crossing the ruts of the Santa Fe Trail which was in use from 1821 until the railroad arrived in 1880. The Santa Fe Trail continued south, passing in front of the Casa del Gavilan along Highway 21. Turn left onto Road C and follow it three miles past several shooting ranges, and straight into the entrance to the Van Houten townsite.

Many of the foundations and structures have signs indicating what the building was, as well as additional information. The first part of the road is easily accessed in a car. Beyond the "Doctor's Office" on the right (middle photograph above) the road gets more difficult and may not be accessible to other than 4 wheel drive vehicles. You may want to consider parking here and walking the half-mile to the mine entrance. Follow the main road up the hill beyond the doctor's office. The roads to the left go up the hill to other foundations. Stay to the right, pass the information plaques for the Mule Barn, and continue to the gated mine opening. The distance from the "Van Houten Mines" entrance sign to the gated mine opening is 1 ½ miles. Other mine entrances in the area have been closed. Avoid driving back to the mine when wet as the road may be slippery.

The Whittington Center takes very good care of the Van Houten site and welcomes visitors free of charge. Please use caution while on the site, do not enter any of the structures, and pack out all of your trash. The Whittington Center also has an excellent museum, gift shop, and restaurant open to the public. While the facility is operated by the National Rifle Association, they welcome non-members to visit the Whittington Center.



Van Houten



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