

Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge: A Quick History

Duane Smith does a wonderful job explaining the spectacular engineering feats that were necessary to conquer the rugged, isolated mountains of the San Juan country. The rich gold and silver strikes occurring around Silverton needed the cheap and reliable transportation afforded by the railroad. By July 1881, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad had reached Durango. Its goal was Silverton and northward to the rich San Juan mines. Not only did the construction crews battle the rugged, steep mountains - they had to deal with the deep snow and constant danger of avalanches. For many years the railroad was the only way in and out of Silverton. Today it is still a lifeline for the town as it brings thousands of tourists each day during the summer to get a glimpse of Silverton's colorful history and unique natural setting.

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