



DAY TRIP TO ANIMAS FORKS

From Silverton · San Juan County, Colorado



GOLD MINING



Photo: Adam Baker from Houston / Moscow / Toulouse (travel a lot), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0

BLM PUBLIC LAND

Owned by the Bureau of Land Management. Nine buildings stabilized and restored; the BLM asks visitors to stay out of them.

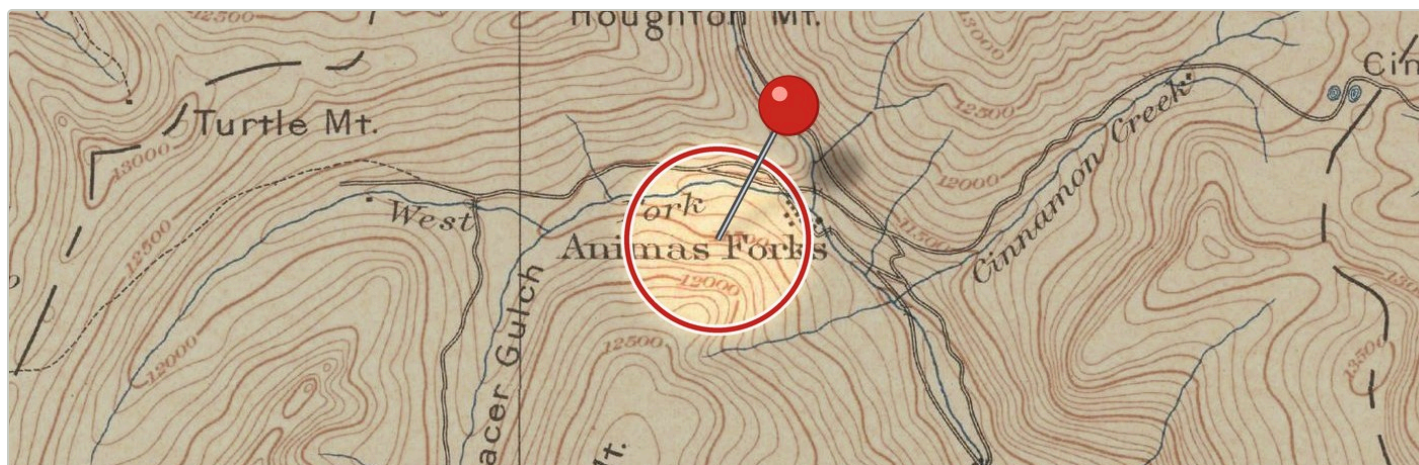
The BLM's Alpine Loop guide lists Animas Forks among its half-day trips from Silverton, four to six hours, on a road it rates 2WD accessible in summer. The BLM page lists no services at the site, so bring food, water and warm layers.

A SAMPLE DAY

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| ☐ Morning | Leave Silverton on County Road 2, up the Animas River, about an hour. |
| ☐ Late morning | Walk the townsite, read the interpretive signs and see the jail from outside. |
| ☐ Midday | Picnic away from the buildings, then compare the scene with the 1870s and 1880s photos below. |
| ☐ Afternoon | Head back down to Silverton. |

WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- **The houses against the peaks.** Shoot from the slope above town to set the buildings against the mountains.
- **Then and now.** Main Street in the late 1800s, in the gallery, makes a good comparison shot.
- **Drones.** The BLM page doesn't cover drones. Check with the Gunnison Field Office before flying.



USGS topographic map, 1897 (public domain). The ring and pin mark the town.

DAY TRIP ESSENTIALS

DRIVE	12 mi, about 57 min each way from downtown Silverton. From Durango: 61 mi, about 1 h 55 min.
OPEN	Public land, no posted hours. The BLM rates the road best from May to October; the county lists it closed in winter.
ADMISSION	The BLM page lists no fee and refers questions to the Gunnison Field Office (970-642-4940).
TIME ON SITE	The BLM doesn't say. Its half-day trip from Silverton includes the drive.
RESTROOMS	The BLM page doesn't mention restrooms. Plan on Silverton.
FOOD AND WATER	No food or water is listed at the site. Bring them from Silverton, and the BLM asks visitors not to eat right beside the buildings.
ON FOOT	Look from outside. The BLM asks visitors not to enter historic structures, which are unstable, and to keep pets leashed.
ALTITUDE	About 11,200 feet. The BLM warns that the air is thin and every activity is harder.
WEBSITE	blm.gov/visit/animas-forks

BEFORE YOU GO

- Check the status with the land manager before you go; conditions change.
- Stay out of mine shafts, tunnels and unstable buildings.
- Leave artifacts where they lie. Removing them can be a crime.
- Carry water, a paper map and a charged phone; signal is often poor.

Coordinates 37.93111, -107.57139 • 37°55'52"N
107°34'17"W

Full guide abandonedtowns.com/colorado/animas-forks/

Directions [Google Maps](#)

Details checked October 2026. Hours, prices and access change: confirm before you go.