



DAY TRIP TO INDEPENDENCE

From Victor · Teller County, Colorado



GOLD MINING



Photo: Photograph not credited, Wikimedia Commons, Public domain

ERASED BY MINING

Gone: the Victor Heritage Society reported in 2018 that 21st-century surface mining had erased the townsite. The Vindicator's headframe and buildings still stand on the open trail beside it, per a hiking video posted July 2026.

Independence itself is gone, but the walk beside it is one of the best in the Cripple Creek district. Drive three miles from Victor through Goldfield to the Vindicator Valley Trail and walk its two-mile loop past the Vindicator mine's headframe and ore house, with the working open pit in view. The trail crosses private land: stay on the marked trail and keep away from the mine fences.

A SAMPLE DAY

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| ☐ Morning | Drive north from Victor on County Road 81 through Goldfield to the trail parking. |
| ☐ Late morning | Walk the Vindicator Valley loop: the Vindicator headframe and ore house, the Lillie foundation and the signs. |
| ☐ Midday | From the high point, look across to the open pit where Independence stood. |
| ☐ Afternoon | Back to Victor for lunch and its mining-era downtown. |

WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- **The Vindicator headframe.** Frame it against Pikes Peak or the mine benches behind.
- **Old and new mining.** From the top of the loop, a long lens puts the timber headframes and the modern pit in one picture.



USGS topographic map, 1894 (public domain). The ring and pin mark the town.

DAY TRIP ESSENTIALS

DRIVE	3 mi, about 8 min each way from downtown Victor. From Colorado Springs: 45 mi, about 1 h 17 min.
TRAIL	Vindicator Valley Trail, a loop of about 2 miles with 336 feet of climbing and a high point of 10,218 feet, per Hiking Project.
HOURS	Dawn to dusk, every day of the year, per the Trails and Open Space Coalition.
PARKING	A small gravel lot off County Road 81 north of Goldfield; free but limited, per the Trails and Open Space Coalition.
RULES	The trail crosses private land: stay on the marked trail. Dogs must be leashed. Bikes and horses are allowed.
SHADE AND WATER	Shade is limited. Bring water and sun protection.
WINTER	Traction devices or snowshoes may be needed.

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 38.73222, -105.13666 • 38°43'56"N
105°08'12"W

Full guide abandonedtowns.com/colorado/independence-teller/

Directions [Google Maps](#) to Vindicator Valley Trail parking on County Road 81

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