



DAY TRIP TO SAINT ELMO

From Buena Vista · Chaffee County, Colorado



GOLD MINING



Photo: Dariusz Kowalczyk, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0

A FEW RESIDENTS

Privately owned historic district with a few full-time residents. The general store is open in summer.

Saint Elmo is an easy half day from Buena Vista, and a summer trip if you want the store open. The town is small and easy to see on foot. Bring lunch and water: the store sells snacks, drinks and ice cream, and that's all the food we found on site.

A SAMPLE DAY

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|------------------------------------|---|
| ☐ 9 a.m. | Leave Buena Vista. South on US 24 and US 285, then up Chalk Creek Canyon on CR 162, about 50 minutes in all. |
| ☐ 10 a.m. | The store opens. Walk Main Street from end to end. In older photos the store carries painted Miners Exchange lettering. |
| ☐ 11 a.m. | Find the schoolhouse and the rebuilt town hall, then drive just east of town to the Iron City campground and its cemetery road. |
| ☐ Noon | Eat a packed lunch. The store sells snacks and ice cream. |
| ☐ Afternoon | Drive back down the canyon to Buena Vista, or, with a four-wheel-drive and good weather in July or August, take on Tincup Pass. |

WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- **The Main Street row.** Shoot the false fronts from the far side of the street with the mountains behind, as in the photo at the top of this page.
- **The store front.** The painted Miners Exchange lettering seen in older photos reads best in soft light.
- **Board sidewalks.** Get low along the boardwalk for a long view down the row.
- **Drones.** No source we read covers drones. The buildings and lots are private, so ask before flying.



USGS topographic map, 1940 (public domain). The ring and pin mark the town.

DAY TRIP ESSENTIALS

DRIVE	25 mi, about 52 min each way from downtown Buena Vista. From Denver: 140 mi, about 3 h 27 min.
OPEN	The streets are a public county road. The general store opens from Mother's Day weekend to the last Sunday of September, "typically 10ish to 4ish" every day; it posts changes on its Facebook page.
STORE	St. Elmo General Store , 25865 CR 162, Nathrop. 719-395-2117. Antiques, souvenirs, snacks, cold drinks and ice cream.
ADMISSION	No admission is mentioned in any source we read. The buildings are private.
RESTROOMS	The store's site doesn't list public restrooms. Plan on Buena Vista or Nathrop.
ON FOOT	Stay on the streets. Don't climb on porches or go into buildings or yards.
ALTITUDE	About 9,960 feet. Bring a jacket even in summer.

BEFORE YOU GO

- Check the status with the land manager before you go; conditions change.
- Keep out of unstable buildings and off fenced ruins.
- 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 38.70472, -106.34500 · 38°42'17"N
106°20'42"W

Full guide abandonedtowns.com/colorado/saint-elmo/

Directions [Google Maps](#)

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