



## DRY CIMARRON STATE SCENIC & HISTORIC BYWAY

Length: 192 Miles (309 Kilometers)  
 Duration: 2 Days, 2 Nights or 1 Day, Halfway & Back  
 Elevations: 5,050 feet (1,540 meters) to 6,640 feet (2,025 meters)

The spectacular volcanic cones, buttes, mesas, and the many grassed-over lava flows along this back road between the cities of **Raton** and **Clayton** were the inspirational setting of rancher-author Max Evans's famed *Hi-Lo Country*, where, in his fictional, 1950s-era novellas (and a recent Hollywood movie of the same name), hard-luck cowboys Dusty Jones and Wrangler Lewis worked the JL Ranch.

Famed illustrator, naturalist, and author Ernest Thompson Seton found the landscape invigorating, too. Seton, who had arrived in 1893 to rid the Cross L Ranch of wolves, turned his 1894 capture of a local, legendary wolf into a short story entitled "Lobo, King of the Currumpaw" in his popular book, *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898).

In **Raton**, among the 25 preserved historic buildings on First and Second Streets are the **Raton Museum**, the **Wells Fargo Building**, and the restored **Shuler Theater**, built in 1915.

East of Raton, and north of the hilltop mansion ruin of entrepreneur A. D. Ensign, is **Sugarite Canyon State Park** and the remains of the mining camp of Sugarite (1908-41), whose coal heated homes as far away as Kansas and Oklahoma.

Farther east, climb onto the grassy flats of long **Johnson Mesa**. Past the empty farming town of **Bell** (1880s-1933), as a gradual descent of the mesa begins, look south. Among the nearby folds of land is **Wild Horse Arroyo**. That's the world-renowned **Folsom Man Site**, where black cowboy George McJunkin found an ancient bison bone in 1908. After his 1922 death, colleagues unearthed more bones as well as fluted, stone spear points, pushing back the human race's North American existence to 8,800 B.C.

In the town of **Folsom**, visit the **Folsom Museum**. In the local cemetery are McJunkin's grave and a granite memorial above the grave of Sarah J. Rooke, who had stayed at her switchboard the night of August 27, 1908, to warn residents of an approaching flood. She was among its 17 victims. Ironically, the rains that had exposed the bison bones for McJunkin, had also wrought the flood that took Rooke's life.

Southwest of Folsom is the symmetrical cinder cone of **Capulin Volcano National Monument**. From its summit,

glimpse into its crater or enjoy a panorama of some of the 47 volcanic craters and lava domes lurking between Raton and Clayton. The view from atop the cone, active 60,000 years ago, extends into Texas, Oklahoma, and Colorado. Also visible to the south is massive **Sierra Grande**. A shield volcano, it's the largest stand-alone mountain in the U.S.

En route to lunch in the town of **Des Moines**, note the switchbacks of the railroad tracks between Folsom and Des Moines. That's where Thomas "Black Jack" Ketchum tried robbing the Colorado & Southern Railroad train solo in 1899. He was shot in the arm and captured, taken to jail in Clayton, convicted of attempted train robbery, and hanged in 1901. His grave is in the Clayton cemetery.

Just east of the national monument swung an extension of the famed **Goodnight-Loving Trail** in 1868-75; it turned north-west and went over **Trinchera Pass** into Colorado. **The Fort Union Military Freight Road** to Granada, Colorado, also swung east of the national monument in 1872-73, through **Toll Gate Canyon** and nearby **Emery Gap**.

Farther east, along the **Dry Cimarron River Valley**, await the nearby **Travesser Creek Overlook** and the distinctive Dakota Sandstone formations of **Battleship** and **Wedding Cake**.

In **Clayton Lake State Park**, gawk at over 500 dinosaur tracks of eight prehistoric animals (among them the three-toed, herbivorous ancestors of hadrosaurs or duck-billed dinosaurs). Uncovered in 1982, the 100 million-year-old tracks are the largest cache of its kind in North America. In Clayton, dine at the recently restored, 26-room **Eklund Hotel**, built in 1892, and visit the **Herzstein Memorial Museum**.

Using U.S. Highway 64/87 for the return leg, the byway can be enjoyed as a two-day, two-night intercity trek, or as a day trip from either city out to Folsom and the nearby national monument and back.

Gas, food, and lodging abound in Raton and Clayton. In between there are gas stations in Capulin and Des Moines, and a café in Des Moines. For group rates, lodging, restaurants and museums, and annual events, contact:

**Capulin Volcano National Monument**  
 575-278-2201  
[www.nps.gov/cavo](http://www.nps.gov/cavo)

**Clayton/Union County Chamber of Commerce**  
 800-390-7858 or 575-374-9253  
[www.claytonnewmexico.org](http://www.claytonnewmexico.org)  
[cuchamber@plateautel.net](mailto:cuchamber@plateautel.net)

**Raton Chamber & Tourist Information Center**  
 800-638-6161 or 575-445-3689  
[www.raton.info](http://www.raton.info)  
[ratonchamber@bacavalley.com](mailto:ratonchamber@bacavalley.com)



Eklund Hotel / Mike Pitel.

East Moreno Ranch, Colfax County

