

Moment Narrative

The Silver Queen of the Rockies

The car engine shuts off, and silence fills the air, reminiscent of silver and gold mining times. Like in the best of Wild Western movies, saloons, hotels, and car wrecks decorated with skeletons announce the arrival of Halloween, gracing this ancient city in a 19th-century style. Hanging tilted, a “closed” sign rests at the post office, and Silverton’s 700 inhabitants hide scattered in the arms of the Animas River Canyon.

Like a messenger of this ancient town, the railroad that once thrived in the face of the San Juan mines in the 1880s now stands as a testament to local culture and quiet dignity.

From afar, the eerie sound of a wooden swing door pierces the silence, the call of an afternoon stop by the pub. Strolling through the town, each step releases a cloud of dust into the air like pixie dust, dancing in tradition. There before me rises the Brown Bear pub, just how I imagined it in my wildest dreams. Oh, watch the spider web, and not to mention the presence of my all-time favorite smile, the vibrantly orange and ever-so-benevolent pumpkin smile. Just at its entrance, the American flag flutters in the light breeze. The wooden swing door opens to the aroma of an American dream, the scent of mouthwatering fries, crisp burgers, and the silent sizzle of Coca-Cola.

The wooden floor creaks with each step, and liquors line the bar. Out comes a lady, ever so jubilant and spirited—the first Silverton local we have met. Taking the plastic menu, my eyes open wide. This is really the American dream. While the burgers are being made, the Brown Bear Café takes me on a journey through its past and that of Silverton. Frames of black and white pictures hang on the wall, telling of Silverton's gold and silver mining past, and its railroad, like a local legend. No wonder the pub-styled café is so aligned with Silverton's tradition, for after it served as the town’s butcher shop in 1893, in 1933 it became the San Juan Bar. San Juan, like the mines of San Juan.

With greasy hands and ketchup lips, we walk back out onto desolate streets through the pub’s wooden swing door one last time.

As I walk towards the local legend, I become aware of the San Juan Mountains surrounding the town like a guardian, casting shadows over Silverton. Their rugged peaks and towering grandeur let the laws of nature fall into place beautifully. One of those moments when we realize we humans aren’t that big after all. Resting before me in quiet dignity is the vein and heart of Silverton—the railroad and an ancient rail car. I wonder what stories you have to tell and what adventures you have lived. One thing is evident: you have one beautiful working place, in fact, one of America’s most alluring and authentic railroad experiences.

As we leave you in wonder and set off on our next adventure, I find myself wondering what it must be like to live here, living along profound ancient routes, alongside the town’s legend, and amidst nature’s marvels. How seasons change, and communities fortify. And what future awaits this small town, big at heart? Somehow, I feel like your chapter is yet to be completed, and the closing of your book doesn't mean the end of a story.

See you soon, “The Silver Queen of the Rockies.”

Moment Snapshot

The Silver Queen of the Rockies

The car engine stops; silence fills the air, echoing silver and gold mining times. Saloons, hotels, and skeleton-adorned wrecks grace the streets, while Silverton's 700 souls hide in the Animas River Canyon.

The old railroad stands, a testament to local culture and quiet dignity. A wooden swing door creaks at the Brown Bear pub – American flags flutter, burgers sizzle, and pumpkin smiles beam. Black-and-white photos whisper the town's history. Mountains surround the town like guardians, peaks towering in grandeur.

Here, humanity feels small, tradition strong, and life beautifully measured. Silverton's story continues, heart beating through its rails.

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