



DELTA COUNTY, COLO. PRESS KIT



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Delta County, Colo., is located on Colorado’s western slope at the base of Grand Mesa, one of the largest flat top mountains in the world. An agricultural and heritage hotbed, this region is home to the communities of Cedaredge, Crawford, Delta, Eckert, Hotchkiss, Orchard City and Paonia. To learn more, visit www.westerncolorado.org or contact Gaylene Ore at 970.877.2536 / Gaylene@orecommunications.com.

DELTA COUNTY FACT SHEET

Line of business: The Delta County Tourism Cabinet provides the communities and visitors of Delta County with services and information about area lodging, events and attractions on "Our Side of the Divide."

Web Site: www.westerncolorado.org

Getting to Delta Co.: Delta County is located on Colorado's western slope, about 267 miles southwest of Denver. Visitors may fly directly into the area via Montrose Regional Airport (20 miles from the City of Delta) or Grand Junction Regional Airport (40 miles from the City of Delta). Delta County is accessed by Highways 50, 92 and 133.

Communities: Delta County is home to the communities of Austin, Cory, Delta, Eckert, Cedaredge, Crawford, Orchard City, Hotchkiss and Paonia.

History: Delta County was created by the Colorado legislature on February 11, 1883. The county was named for the City of Delta, which gets its moniker for its location on the delta of the Uncompahgre River. Delta County's story is about the pioneers of agriculture, mining, land and water development.

Activities:

Boating	OHV Riding
Camping	Orchard Tours
Cross-Country Skiing	Rafting
Farm Dinners	Scenic Drives
Fly-Fishing	Shopping
Golfing	Snowmobiling
Hiking	Snowshoeing
Hunting	Wilderness Camping
Kayaking	Wildlife Viewing
Mountain Biking	Wine Tasting

Attractions:

- Grand Mesa:** one of the world's largest flat-topped mountains
- Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park North Rim:** boasting 2,000-foot sheer walls, celebrated it's 10 year anniversary as a National Park in 2009
- Gunnison River:** one of the premiere fly fishing destinations; "Gold Medal" waters
- Ute Council Tree:** the 200-year old meeting place of the Ute tribes
- Wineries:** Delta County is home to 11 wineries and tasting rooms
- West Elk Loop Scenic Byway:** 205-mile loop that begins in Hotchkiss
- Grand Mesa National Scenic & Historic Byway:** 63 mile route, originating in Cedaredge

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CEDAREGE

Elevation 6,264 ft.

Pop. 2,252

History: Aptly named for residing at the "edge of the cedars" of the Grand Mesa, the town of Cedaredge was officially incorporated on March 25, 1907.

What to Do: Cedaredge is the 'Gateway to the Grand Mesa' (www.grandmesabyway.org), and is filled with outdoor activities for enthusiast of all interests including fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, camping and hunting. Cedaredge is also home to Pioneer Town, a 19th-Century western village complete with board walk, frontier museum and over 20 original or reconstructed buildings, including a jail, schoolhouse, saloon and blacksmith's shop. Visit www.cedaredgecolorado.com for more information.

Lodging: Visitors to Cedaredge can choose between bed-and-breakfasts, motels, camping, lodges and cabins. For a complete list visit www.westerncolorado.org and click on Cedaredge and Lodging.

Cedaredge Area Chamber of Commerce (www.cedaredgechamber.com)

245 W. Main Street / P.O. Box 278

Cedaredge, CO 81413

970-856-6961

Annual Events:

Cedaredge Little Britches Rodeo is held for three days each July for girls and boys to compete in rodeo events and families and other spectators can enjoy the classic car show and rodeo parade.

Cedaredge Apple Fest occurs every October and festivities include booths, games and every known way to prepare and enjoy the world-renowned apple! Don't miss the scarecrow contest and antique tractor show.

Sled Dog Racing will occur in February. The International Rocky Mountain High Sled Dog Sprints continue to return to Cedaredge for the beauty of the Grand Mesa.

CRAWFORD

Elevation 6,520 ft.

Population 392

History: Named after Captain George A. Crawford whose idea to start a post office in this area resulted in the growth of a town, the town of Crawford. Crawford is the high-altitude beauty of the North Fork Valley.

What to Do: Crawford is the gateway to the **North Rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park** (www.nps.gov/blca/index.htm) which provides numerous outdoor activities such as snowshoeing, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing in the winter and hiking, biking and photography in the summer. Visit the **Crawford State Park** (<http://parks.state.co.us/Parks/Crawford>) for many other outdoor sports, including hiking, fishing, biking, boating... the list goes on! Visit www.crawfordcountry.org for more information.

Lodging: Overnight accommodations are plentiful in Crawford. Stay at any of the charming bed and breakfasts, motels, campsites, lodges and cabins. For a complete list visit www.westerncolorado.org and click on Crawford and Lodging.

Crawford Area Chamber of Commerce (www.crawfordcountry.org)

PO Box 22

Crawford, CO 81415

970-921-4000

Annual Events:

Crawford Pioneer Days, held in June to celebrate Crawford's western heritage. Good times are had by all viewing magnificent fireworks, enjoying delicious food, and watching the parade and melodrama.

Crawford Render the Rock, a challenge for artists of all ages from amateur to professional, this outdoor art event is held from dawn to dusk on one Saturday in September. Participants render their interpretation of the local landscape in any media they choose. The creative day is followed by a reception and live and silent auctions. Spectators can view, free of charge, the inspired artwork in the field.

DELTA

Elevation 4,953 ft.

Population 6,954

History: The City of Delta, the namesake and seat of Delta County, was originally set up as a trading post for Ute Indians and the new settlers from the east. Delta is situated where the Uncompahgre and Gunnison Rivers come together.

What to Do: While in Delta, be sure to stop at Ft. Uncompahgre, a reconstruction of the original trading post used by traders, trappers and Native Americans. The Delta County Historical Museum, housed in the old firehouse, is a must see for the history buff and the inner science buff in all of us — fossils, dinosaur bones, and a butterfly exhibit which includes some of the only-known specimens of now extinct species are on-hand to quench the learning thirst. Take some time to visit the “City of Murals” and hike in the newly designated Dominguez / Escalante National Wilderness Areas. You will discover lots of wall art in Delta, murals on the walls of the city’s buildings and rock art on the walls of its canyons.

Lodging: Many buildings in Delta are on the local historic register and state register. Enjoy an historic property or one of the many other bed-and-breakfasts, motels, camping, lodges and cabins. For a complete list visit www.westerncolorado.org and click on Delta and Lodging.

Delta Area Chamber of Commerce (www.deltacolorado.org)

301 Main Street

Delta, CO 81416

970-874-8616

Annual Events:

Council Tree Pow Wow and Cultural Festival (www.counciltreepowwow.org) held each September to honor the heritage of the Ute Indians culture. Throughout this three-day celebration, attendees can watch the brightly-colored dancers, enjoy mesmerizing singing competitions, browse and mingle among the American Indian artisans’ craft booths, taste authentic American Indian foods, and tour a real tipi in the Tipi Village.

Deltarado Days, includes pancake breakfasts, classic cars shows, music, food, parade, sporting events and so much more. Held every July.

ECKERT/ORCHARD CITY

Elevation 5,040 ft.

Population 3,203

History: Orchard City is the product of three small, historical communities: Eckert, Austin and Cory. The small populations banded together in order to reach sufficient finances to bond for the construction of a much-needed water pipeline.

What to Do: Enjoy a relaxing afternoon at **Surface Creek Winery & Art Gallery** (www.surfacecreek.com) where you can participate in a local artisan wine tasting, followed by a viewing of the featured fine art. Orchard City is a short drive from the outdoor playground of the **Grand Mesa** and the rest of Delta County is at the doorstep.

Town of Orchard City

9661 2100 Rd.

Orchard City, CO 81410

Phone: 970-835-3337

Annual Events:

Eckert Crane Days is celebrated each spring when the Sandhill Cranes make a stop in town. Bird enthusiasts can observe the elegant creatures as they take a break from their migration south.
www.eckertcranedays.com

HOTCHKISS

Elevation 5,351 ft.

Population 1,084

History: This little town along the West Elk Loop is named after the man who led the first group of settlers to the area, Enos T. Hotchkiss. Hotchkiss was incorporated in 1900 only months after Mr. Hotchkiss's death. The town's namesake is an inductee into the Cowboy Hall of Fame.

What to Do: While you are in Hotchkiss, touted as "the friendliest town this side of the divide," your time can be filled with a tour of the facilities at the **Hotchkiss National Fish Hatchery** (www.fws.gov/hotchkiss), an educational visit to the **Hotchkiss-Crawford Historical Society Museum** (<http://hchm.freehostia.com>), or an outing to the impressive **Creamery Arts Center** (www.creameryartscenter.org). Also, make time to visit the local orchards and antique shops.

Lodging: Visitors to Hotchkiss can choose from several lovely bed and breakfasts, motels, camping, lodges and cabins. For a complete list visit www.westerncolorado.org and click on Hotchkiss and Lodging.

Hotchkiss Community Chamber of Commerce (www.hotchkisschamber.com)

PO Box 158

Hotchkiss, CO 81419

970-872-3226

Annual Events:

The Delta County Fair and CPRA Rodeo, early each August the Delta County Fairgrounds in Hotchkiss fill with fair-goers from across the county and beyond. Spectators and participants gather to compare blue-ribbon pies, farm fresh vegetables, and prize-winning 4-H animals.

Hotchkiss Sheep Camp Stock Dog Trials held annually each May to test the abilities of "man's best friend" and his handler at gathering and herding wooly sheep. The fun continues with great food and Camp Wagon Contests.

PAONIA

Elevation 5,645 ft.

Population 1,633

History: Founded in the late 1880's by Samuel Wade, Paonia was named for the "peony" flower that Mr. Wade brought with him to the valley. Originally called "Paeonia" after the Latin name for the flower, the Post Office Department only approved the spelling by dropping one of the three vowels, thus becoming Paonia. Officially incorporated in 1902, Paonia celebrated its centennial in 2002.

What to Do: Proudly, **Paonia Park** is the social heart of town. The town park occupies an entire city block and is filled with amenities for all ages including picnic tables, playground, skate park, teen center, sports field and an impressive canopy of tall trees in a wide variety of species. It is this canopy that makes Paonia a Tree City USA selection year after year. Orchards a plenty provide locals and visitors with enormous amounts of fresh fruit from crisp apples and juicy peaches to tart cherries and mouthwatering apricots, prunes, pears and grapes. The plentiful fruits can be found at the local farmer's market (**Paonia North Fork Farmer's Market**, 3rd & Grand Streets, May-October, Saturday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.). Other great attractions of Paonia include wine tastings, theater and **Paonia State Park** (<http://parks.state.co.us/Parks/paonia>).

Lodging: Visitors to Paonia can find pleasant accommodations among several Inns and Bed and Breakfasts in town. **Fresh & Wyld Farmhouse Inn** was recently named by *Sunset* magazine as one of the top 10 working farms to visit. For a complete list of lodgings go to www.westerncolorado.org and click on Paonia and then lodging.

Paonia Chamber Of Commerce (www.paoniachamber.com)

132 Grand Ave.

Paonia, CO 81428

970-527-3886

Annual Events:

Mountain Harvest Festival (www.mountainharvestfestival.com), a free 3 day celebration held annually on the last full weekend of September, features musical performances, poetry, art, crafts, a street dance, wine tasting and a chili cook off.

Paonia Cherry Days, the annual three day celebration of Paonia's prized cherries happens every 4th of July. Festivities include a carnival, parade, fireworks, food and craft booths and of course cherries and more cherries!

Top of the Rockies Rally, an annual BMW motorcycle festival bringing enthusiasts to town for several days of food, music, vendors, group rides, seminars and of course showing off lots of beautiful bikes. The rally is held in late July each year.

DELTA COUNTY: A HISTORY & HERITAGE HOTBED

More than 100 years ago the Delta County area was the homeland of the Ute Indian people. Today, visitors can learn about the cultural traditions of western Colorado by visiting Delta County.

Must-See Museums & Historical Sites

The town of **Delta**, strategically located at the confluence of the Uncompahgre and Gunnison Rivers, was originally set up as a trading post for Utes and the early day settlers. **Fort Uncompahgre** was originally built in 1828 and was recreated in 1989. The modern day fort is a reconstruction of the original trading post that was used by traders, trappers and Native Americans. Step back in time at this history museum located at the entrance to the 265-acre **Confluence Park**, where visitors are led through the trading post by interpreters decked out in period clothing.

Delta's 200-year old **Ute Council Tree** is an historic cottonwood that was designated a Colorado Landmark and is dedicated in memory of the Ute tribe's Chief Ouray and his wife, Chipeta. Interestingly, Chipeta is said to be the only Indian woman ever permitted to sit in council meetings, which were held at this site.

Also in Delta, visit the **Delta County Historical Museum**, which is housed in an old fire house. Here, you can see many items of interest from Delta's pioneer days, such as house wares, toys, clothing and early farming and ranch utensils. Fossil, dinosaur bones and a world-class butterfly exhibit with specimens from all over the world are on display here. The museum also has on display a robe from the 1800s that was worn by the King of Siam. Additionally, there is an eight-foot tall clock that used to be in the French palace of Louis the 14th. It is said to be one of only three clocks he owned. The museum also displays a bridle crafted by the western legend Tom Horn. Many people stop in to hear the story of the McCarty Gang and the hero William Ray Simpson, a local hardware store owner who brought the gang down.

In Cedaredge, stop by **Pioneer Town** (www.pioneertown.org), to get a taste of frontier life during the past century. The museum's signature wooden silos are the last remaining structures of the Bar I Ranch, a cattle ranch that was established in the early 1880s. Walk along the wooden sidewalks of Main Street to visit the early-day businesses like a general store, print shop, saloon, bank, barbershop (which doubled as a dental office) and the jail house. The fossilized jawbone of a rare Mosasaur, a marine reptile, is also housed at the museum.

The **Hotchkiss-Crawford Museum** (970.872.3780) in Hotchkiss offer ample history experiences. Among the items on display are grinding stones, a lard press, post card photos from 1910, a butter churn, stamps used for fruit boxes and photos of Crawford from bygone days. Appointments can be arranged by calling the museum.

In Paonia the historic **Bowie Schoolhouse** has been moved to its current location from the Bowie mining camp. Here, visitors may see textbooks the students used, trophies they won and carvings on the desks. The museum is open through Labor Day 1-4 p.m.

Historic Architecture

Many of the buildings in Delta are on the local and state historic registers. **The Fairlamb House Bed and Breakfast** was built in 1906 and was the first house in the area built by workers on an eight-hour work day. The Victorian house is constructed of Delta Brick from the Delta Brick and Tile Company. The historic **Westways Court Motel** was built in 1946 and still boasts its signature iconic neon sign. Many of the buildings in Eckert are built using local volcanic rock. **The Eckert Presbyterian Church** is nearly 100 years old and also boasts some fine examples of this unique rockwork. The historic **Eckert Creamery**, now a site for retail space, sold butter to the public until the 1980s. The Surface Creek Winery and Gallery doubles as an Oddfellows Hall on Sundays and sells wine and art the rest of the week. **The Brass Hotel** in Paonia is more than 100 years old and has been used as a lodging establishment throughout its history. It is now Bed and Breakfast. **The Lovett House** in Cedaredge was the original post office for the community and now serves as a delightful B&B. While in Cedaredge stop into the **AppleShed Art Complex**, once an apple packing shed, it is now used as retail space selling art, furniture, gifts and lattes.

Cultural Celebrations

Delta County events and celebrations pay homage to the region's history and heritage. In May the **Hotchkiss Sheep Camp Stock Dog Trials** demonstrate the area's sheep ranching tradition. In June take in the **Crawford Pioneer Days Celebration**. This tribute to Crawford's western heritage includes a huge parade, elk calling contests, a melodrama, entertainment and local arts and crafts. **The Western Slope Little Britches Rodeo**, held every July in Cedaredge, is the longest continuous Little Britches rodeo in the country. The **Council Tree Pow Wow & Cultural Festival** (www.counciltreepowow.org), is held in Delta's Confluence Park every September. The festival is a three-day swirl of Indian regalia, ancient drum beats and authentic tribal dances.

VISITORS INVITED TO INDULGE IN “DELICIOUS SIDE” OF DELTA COUNTY

Agriculture has been a way of life in Delta County since pioneers settled the area. Modern-day Delta County beckons visitors to experience its many orchards, vineyards, farms and ranches. The area's cool mountain nights combine with warm, sunny days to produce flavors you will want to sink your teeth into. So what are you waiting for? Log on to www.westerncolorado.org to download a self-guided tour of the delicious side of Delta County.

Roadside Produce Stands & Farmers Markets

Growing at 5,000 to 7,000 feet, Delta County has some of the highest elevations of apple orchards in the world. Delta County also produces large crops of cherries, peaches, pears and apricots. From July through October, local farmers showcase their crops, many of which are organically grown, at roadside stands sprinkled throughout the countryside. Tips on canning and preserving your tasty treasures, as well as delicious recipes, can be found at most of the stands. Along the way watch for banners that indicate when a visit or tour is available at the farms and ranches. Additionally, the communities of Cedaredge, Delta and Paonia each host farmers' markets during the summer, offering another opportunity for you to get a taste of what this region is all about.

Wineries & Tasting Rooms

Delta County's famed fruit growing abilities have made it a hotbed for vintners, as well. Grape harvest is usually between mid-August and mid-October, with the season typically peaking in September. If you time your visit right you might even be able to take part in “the crush” when the harvested grapes are smashed down in preparation for the winemaking process. According to local wine experts, Delta County grapes are best suited for Burgundy, Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Gewurztraminer and Chardonnay. The area boasts 11 wineries, five tasting rooms, two distilleries and even a new hard cider mill. Some tasting rooms require reservations, so it is recommended that you call ahead.

Ranches & Farms

Delta County's rich, fertile valley also provides nutritious feed for livestock and, consequently, the North Fork and Surface Creek Valleys are home to herds of cattle, bison, ostrich and elk. The ranchers here have been perfecting their craft since the early 1900s and are some of the best in the industry. Delta County ranchers have won awards for natural/organic production, leanness, marbling, milk and egg production and other nutritional characteristics. Additionally, local cattlemen have been awarded for their conservation efforts. The ranchers have formed several marketing co-ops to sell branded beef.

Homestead Market & Meats with locations in Paonia and Delta, carries products from many Delta County ranches, including elk, lamb, beef and salsas made from local farms and fruit orchards.

Hardins, on the way to Hotchkiss, also carries local elk and bison meat plus other products from the county. **Cedaredge Meats** carries local beef and bison along with countywide products.

Festivals & Celebrations

Delta County residents certainly know how to celebrate the fruits of their labor, and they do so with several signature events held every year. **High Wire Ranch and Leroux Creek Vineyards** team up for the **Wine and Buffalo Feast** (970-835-7600) in May. Dine on the ranch, located in Hotchkiss, and enjoy appetizers, three entrees, side dishes and dessert. Leroux Creek wines are also available.

Paonia's Cherry Days takes place each year around the Fourth of July. The event includes a dance, an old-fashioned parade, a carnival, a classic car show, a community barbeque and a silent auction.

The Mountain Harvest Festival (www.mountainharvestfestival.com) is hosted in Paonia each September and celebrates the bounty of the land and local artists. Enjoy a chili cook off, a pie bake off, live music, a street fair, kids activities and, of course, a plethora of fresh produce.

The first weekend in October, Cedaredge plays host to **AppleFest**, in honor of the community's premiere crop. Festivities include the Surface Creek Valley's biggest formal event of the year, the **Golden Gala**. Also on tap—the volunteer fire department's five-alarm chili cook off, music, entertainment, booths and activities along Main Street.

DELTA COUNTY'S FARM FRESH FOCUS A FEAST FOR VACATIONERS

More than 13 million visitors take part in some form of agritourism activity each year, contributing \$2.2 billion to Colorado's economy, according to Colorado State University Extension researchers. With more than 281,000 acres dedicated to agriculture, Delta County offers a cornucopia of farm-related activities.

Farm and Orchard Tours

All signs point to fresh produce in Delta County – well, *some* signs do, anyway. Visitors can look for posted banners indicating that farms and orchards are open for tours. A self-guided tour map is downloadable at www.westerncolorado.org and offers a taste of Delta County's agriculture heritage.

At **Rivendell Farm**, near Delta, for example, summer visitors are invited to roll up their sleeves and harvest crops of potatoes, heirloom tomatoes, corn and beans. In Hotchkiss stop by **Big B's Organic Cider Mill** (www.freshapplecider.com) to experience a live demonstration of a working cider mill and a 100-year old apple packing factory. Top off your tour with a cider tasting in a true organic country store. **First Fruits Organic Farms** (970.527.122 or 970.527.3157) in Paonia offers on-farm sales and u-pick orchards, featuring certified organic mountain grown fruits and vegetables.

Livestock ranchers raise more than just cattle in Delta County. Buffalo, elk, llama and exotic fowl (for both food and feathers) compliment the beef industry. **High Wire Ranch** in Hotchkiss (www.highwireranch.com) raises elk and bison. Once a year they host an outdoor feast with a local winemaker. At **Grand Mesa Alpacas** in Cedaredge (www.grandmesaalpacas.com) tourists can get up close and personal with these cuddly creatures. This working alpaca ranch teaches tourists about alpacas, their fiber, history future and the industry.

Homestead Beef located in Paonia and Delta carries products from many Delta County ranches — elk, lamb, beef and salsas made from local fruit orchards. **Hardins** market, located just outside of Hotchkiss, also carries local elk and bison meat, plus other products from the county.

Farm Dinners & Cooking Classes

There are plenty of places to taste the fruits of the Delta County farmers' labor. The county's popular outdoor, family-style farm dinners featuring local produce, meat and wine and typically range from \$60 to \$100. For instance, **Zephyros Farm and Garden** (www.zephyrosfarmandgarden.com) near Paonia, has hosted dinner guests for the last four years. Visit www.zephyrosfarmandgarden.com to learn more.

Another notable stop in Paonia is **Fresh and Wyld Farmhouse Inn and Gardens** (www.freshandwyldinn.com), which hosts a communal-style home cooked meal made primarily from organic and locally-grown food every Friday. Also on the menu: Saturday Suppers. These gourmet affairs feature a four- to five-course meal, as well as local wines and beer. Sunday brunch – complete with live local music - is also a local favorite, and is served from May until October. Additionally, the inn offers cooking classes and workshops. Visit the Web site for a complete list, or to make a reservation.

At **Leroux Creek Inn** (www.lerouxcreekinn.com) in Hotchkiss, the chef prepares classic French cuisine using local produce and meat or fish from organic farms and ranches in Delta County. This summer the inn will host French cooking classes on Monday nights, call ahead (970-872-4746) for reservations and details.

FIVE FUN FACTS ABOUT DELTA COUNTY AGRITOURISM

Delta County is thriving as an agritourism hot-spot. Here are just five reasons why Delta County is cream of the crop when it comes to farm-fresh fun.

1. All in the Family

According to the 2007 Agriculture Census there are 1,294 farms (covering 252,530 acres). That adds up to more than one farm for every square mile in the entire county! Plus, more than 90 percent of all farms in Delta County are operated by a family or individual.

2. Corner on the Market

Delta County is ahead of the game when it comes to growing produce. In fact, there are more than 2,500 acres of orchards across Delta County. Whatever your farm-fresh fancy, there is an orchard to suite your taste. Here is a list of the crops and peak harvest dates:

<u>Crop:</u>	<u>Noteworthy:</u>	<u>Peak Harvest:</u>
Cherries	71% of Colorado's cherries	Mid-June - mid-July
Apples	77% of Colorado's apples	Mid-Aug. - Nov.
Grapes	2nd largest grape harvest in Colorado	Sept. – mid-Oct.
Peaches	2nd Largest Peach Harvest in Colorado	Aug. - mid-Sept.
Pears	53% of Colorado's Pears	Mid-Aug. – Sept.

Visit <http://www.westerncolorado.org/tours.html> for a downloadable map of farms and ranches in the region. Or, pick up these locally-grown goodies at Delta County's farmers markets:

Delta Main Street Market

4th and Main Street
July-September
Wednesdays, 5 - 8 p.m.

Paonia North Fork Farmer's Market

3rd & Grand Streets
May-October
Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

3. In Vino Veritas

Delta County is home to 11 wineries, five tasting rooms, two distilleries and a hard cider mill. Visit <http://www.westerncolorado.org/pdf/WineMap.pdf> for a map of wineries, tasting rooms and vineyards throughout Delta County.

4. You are my Sunshine

Delta County boasts an average of 300+ days of sunshine a year, practically guaranteeing your outing in Delta County's great outdoors to be bright and beautiful. Take advantage of the sunlight to explore Grand Mesa, one of the world's largest flat-topped mountains; the Black Canyon National Park North rim; the Gunnison River's Gold Medal fly-fishing waters; or simply hit the road and take in the views and vistas from one of Delta County's scenic byways, such as the West Elk or Grand Mesa.

5. Farm Heritage Celebrations

Delta County's agriculture heritage is on display throughout the year at the county's numerous agriculture-related festivals and events. For example, Paonia's Cherry Days and Delta's Deltarado Days (both held in July) are among the longest-running festivals in Colorado. Other events include the West Elks Premier Vintage Wine Festival in Paonia in August and Mountain Harvest Festival in Paonia in September. Visit <http://www.westerncolorado.org/cal/month.php> for a complete list of events and festivals.

SIZZLING SUMMER FUN

Beat the heat by chilling out in Delta County. Here are just five reasons why you should choose “Our Side of the Divide” for your summer getaway.

1. Tasty Tours and Treks

A visit to Delta County just wouldn't be complete without a taste of this region's roots—the fresh produce that is grown here. From late June through October roadside stands will treat you to cherries, peaches, apricots, apples and more. Bison, beef, ostrich and elk are all raised and sold in Delta County. The area also boasts 11 wineries, five tasting rooms, two distilleries and a new hard cider mill. You can log on to <http://www.westerncolorado.org/itineraries.htm> to download a tour to best suit your taste.

2. Park it Here

There are enough reservoirs, parks and forests in Delta County to keep the adventurer busy for days! The north rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, near Crawford, features spectacular views and unprecedented heights, which you can view from the park's many trails. Bordering the Black Canyon is the Gunnison Gorge, a designated National Conservation Area. This is the place to go for Gold Medal fishing and unparalleled whitewater rafting. Get a Guide and Go!

The Crawford, Paonia and Sweitzer Reservoirs offer great opportunities for picnicking, boating, water skiing, camping, swimming and fishing. Nearby, Crawford State Park provides a scenic refuge from the everyday, with fishing, hiking and water sports. In Paonia State Park you can picnic near a babbling stream and water-ski on a mountain reservoir. The park's many wildflowers make it the perfect place to snap a family photo. Confluence Park in Delta boasts 265 acres dedicated to trails, a bike path, picnic sites, fishing lakes, river access and a fitness course.

The Grand Mesa National Forest, West Elk Wilderness Area and the Uncompahgre National Forest are also part of Delta County. Hunting, fishing, backpacking, hiking, mountain biking, camping and horseback riding are all available here.

3. “Reel” Fun

There are many places in Delta County to cast your line to try to hook a big one. The Gunnison, Uncompahgre and North Fork Rivers are an angler's paradise. The more than 300 lakes on Grand Mesa provide ample room to find your own favorite fishing hole. And the **Hotchkiss National Fish Hatchery** is a great place for kids to learn the sport. The hatchery consists of a hatchery building with a small visitor center and tank room, residences, 32 outdoor concrete raceways, 24 nursery tanks, and 6 earthen ponds. To purchase licenses online visit www.wildlife.state.co.us. Don't forget those Gold Medal Waters in the Gunnison Gorge.

4. Driving it Home

Delta County enjoys three scenic byways. Dinosaur Diamond features the paleontology of the area. Dinosaur bones, evidence of early man's inhabitation and geographic timelines are all part of the experience. The West Elk Loop is a 205-mile trek that links the recreational, historical and conservationist aspects of the Delta County communities. The Grand Mesa National Scenic and Historic Byway features more than 300 lakes, providing easy access to camping, fishing and boating.

If driving a golf ball is more your speed check out our two 18-hole golf courses, Deer Creek Golf Course (www.deercreekvillage-golf.com) in Cedaredge and Devil's Thumb Golf Club (www.deltagolf.org) in Delta. Deer Creek stretches from 5,100 to 6,450 yards allowing golfers of all abilities to test their skills. Devil's Thumb is described as a "prairie style" course with no trees and only one water hazard.

5. Family Festivals

Delta County's festivals pay homage to the area's proud heritage and history. Here's a look at some of the signature summer events.

June – Crawford Pioneer Days – www.crawfordcolorado.org

This celebration pays homage to Crawford's heritage. The weekend festivities include a parade, old-fashioned melodrama, elk calling contest and a fireworks finale.

July – Paonia's Annual Cherry Days – www.paoniachamber.com

Showcasing the "best cherries in Colorado," this celebration also includes a parade, arts, crafts, a carnival, music and fun for the whole family.

July – Deltarado Days, Delta – www.deltacolorado.org

This authentic Western fiesta dates back to 1936 and includes food, live music, mule and donkey races, a rodeo, tractor pull and coal shoveling just to name a few!

DELTA COUNTY SUMMER EVENTS CELEBRATE AGRICULTURAL BOUNTY

Since its founding in 1883, Colorado's Delta County has been a center for ranching, farming, viticulture and orchard crops. During the summer, towns throughout the county celebrate this legacy with plenty of tasty, fun and educational events.

***Kids Pasta Night (Hotchkiss, ongoing)** Every Monday evening during the summer, kids from different schools in the North Fork Valley, together with their parents, create and serve meals using local produce and products. Proceeds go to nonprofit organizations chosen by the kids. (kidspastaproject@gmail.com)

***French Cooking Classes (Hotchkiss, call for schedule)** Monday evenings at Leroux Creek Inn are devoted to the art of easy French cooking. (970.872.4746/www.lerouxcreekinn.com)

***Mountain Valley Winefest (Cedaredge, June 20)** This benefit for the Delta County Memorial Hospital features the products of local vineyards and wineries.

***Paonia Cherry Days (Paonia, July Fourth)** Held annually on the Fourth of July, Cherry Days is one the oldest continuously-running, annual outdoor festivals in Colorado. In addition to a parade and fireworks, the festival includes food, live entertainment, arts and crafts, and a family carnival. (www.paoniachamber.com)

***Little Britches Rodeo (Cedaredge, July)** During this week-long event, future rodeo stars compete in one of the oldest Little Britches Rodeos in the country. Other activities include a classic car show and rodeo parade. (970.856.6676)

***31st Annual Pioneer Days (Crawford, July)** The area's western heritage is celebrated with a parade, old-fashioned Melodrama, fireworks and more. (970.921.4000)

***West Elks Premier Vintage Wine Festival (Paonia, August)** Delta County is part of the West Elks American Viticulture Area. This festival features tastings of new releases, as well as wine maker dinners, food and wine pairings sessions, music and more. (www.paoniachamber.com)

***Delta County Fair (Hotchkiss, August)** Enjoy live entertainment, great food and a rodeo, as well as such typical county fair competitions as livestock, produce, canned goods, quilts, and sewing. (970.874.9197)

***Tomato Canning Class (Paonia, August)** Learn the secrets of canning fresh tomatoes and try your hand at making salsa, tomato sauces and stewed tomatoes. Class fee includes a gourmet sandwich lunch, recipes and a jar or two of each product. (970.527.4374 or www.freshandwyld.com)

***Food, Farm, Film & Wine Festival (Paonia, August)** Fresh & Wyld, the area's local and organic produce organization, hosts a weekend full of movies, farm and winery tours, a Farm Dinner and brunch. (970.527.4389 or www.Freshandwyld.com)

***Taste the Valley (Paonia, August)** Cooking demonstrations and tastings featuring the best local

ingredients is what this foodie festival is all about. Sponsored by the Black Canyon Land Trust and Leroux Creek Inn. (www.blackcanyonlandtrust.org)

***Dinner in the Vineyard (Paonia, August)** Enjoy five courses, five wines, local produce, music, and beautiful scenery at Stone Cottage Cellars. (www.stonecottagecellars.com)

***Peach Canning Class (Paonia, September)** Learn the secrets of canning fresh peaches and try your hand at peach salsa, peach jam and Peaches in Champagne Sauce. Class fee includes a gourmet sandwich lunch, recipes and a jar or two of each product. (970.527.4374 or www.freshandwyld.com)

***A Celebration in the Field (Paonia, September)** Chefs and students from the Culinary School of the Rockies prepare an amazing farm feast under the stars at Zephyros Farm. (www.zephyrosfarmandgarden.com)

***9th Annual Mountain Harvest Festival (Paonia, September)** This is the area's premier agricultural celebration. In addition to live entertainment, arts and crafts, farmers market and food vendors, there is a pie contest, chili cook-off, organic farm tours, and workshops on beekeeping, livestock and poultry. (970.527.3424)

***Make Your Own Tour:** The Delta County Tourism Web site has made self-guided tour maps available for download at <http://www.westerncolorado.org/tours.html> . Here you'll find maps for farm/ranch tours, wineries, bike tours and even birding.

ENJOY NATURE'S COAT OF MANY COLORS IN DELTA COUNTY EACH FALL

When summer gives up her fight, fall's glory comes to life. In Delta County, the changing of the color guard is an autumnal rite of passage that is well worth the wait. Typically, the best time to view the fall foliage in this area of western Colorado is late September through early October. If you have a hankering for the hues, fill your gas tank and pack your camera so you can enjoy one (or all!) of these three scenic drives in Delta County.

Along the way, be sure to keep your eye out for roadside stands that will be loaded with the products of the annual fall harvest, such as apples, potatoes, squash and onions. And, consider timing your trip around one of the fall festivals celebrating the season to round out your Delta County autumn vacation.

West Elk Loop

The West Elk Scenic and Historic Byway (<http://www.byways.org/explore/byways/2120/>) is a 205-mile loop that takes six to eight hours to complete (though you can always tackle just a portion of it, then turn back). The West Elk Loop derives its name from the West Elk Mountains, which the route circumnavigates. Major geological upheavals created the rugged landscape and rare natural beauty the drive traverses.

The scenic trek begins in Hotchkiss and continues on to Paonia. About 12 miles past Paonia, you'll pass through Somerset, a small mining community with three working coal mines. East of Somerset, take County Road 12, leading to Kebler Pass -- a dirt road that is accessible by car during the summer and fall, and only by snowmobile in the wintertime. Kebler Pass weaves through pine forests and huge aspen groves, and is considered one of the most spectacular places to view fall colors in Colorado.

Continuing on, you will see the Gunnison River, and Blue Mesa, Morrow Point and Crystal lakes. Shortly after crossing the Lake Fork Bridge, watch for Colorado Highway 92, which leads to the north rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The park is marking its 10th anniversary as a national park this year, and there are plenty of turnouts and picnic areas where you can stop to celebrate. You'll also find trailheads to explore the park, and see the sheer canyon walls from which Black Canyon derives its name -- and that drop 2,000 feet into the river below.

The West Elk Loop continues into Crawford, where you can visit to Crawford State Park, popular with boaters, fisherman and campers. To complete the loop, travel 10 miles north of Crawford back into Hotchkiss.

Grand Mesa Scenic and Historic Byway

Trekking across one of the world's largest flat-topped mountains that the Ute Indians called "Thunder Mountain," the 63-mile Grand Mesa Scenic and Historic Byway (www.grandmesabyway.org) Starts in the town of Cedaredge. The byway has earned the apt nickname, "The Alpine Oasis in the Sapphire Sky."

From Cedaredge, head north on Highway 65 and up (quite literally -- the Mesa's summit is at nearly 11,000 feet!) onto Grand Mesa. On the drive up, you will travel from fruit-filled orchards to hillsides covered with pinon and juniper, and eventually to forests of spruce, fir and aspen. Along the route are plenty of picnic areas, scenic overlooks and lakes (300 of them) to explore.

Escalante Canyon

Escalante Canyon is part of the newly designated Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/denca.html>), located just outside of the city of Delta. Escalante Canyon offers solitude and rugged, desert-scape beauty, large mesas cut by red canyon walls, and Native American petroglyphs. This stretch of the Gunnison River also offers some great canoe stretches and milder river fun.

To enter Escalante Canyon, drive north of Delta on U.S. Highway 50 for about 12 miles. A turnoff will take you southwest onto Escalante Canyon Road, a dirt road that is easily accessible with a two-wheel-drive car. Continue through privately owned pastures until you reach the BLM signs marking public access.

Stretch your legs on McCarty Trail, located about four miles into the canyon. Keep an eye out for wildlife, such as desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, golden eagle, turkey, elk, mountain lion, black bear and the collared lizard.

Fall Festivals

For even more of an experience, combine a fall foliage drive with one of the area's fall festivals. Visit www.westerncolorado.org for additional events and details.

Plein Air Dinner Series at Jack Rabbit Hill: September, Hotchkiss (<http://www.jackrabbithill.com/2009PleinAirFarmDinnerSeries.htm>) - Noted Colorado chefs will showcase the bounty from the area's farmers, ranchers and food artisans at this series of dinners hosted at Jack Rabbit Hill, which features organically-grown wines. The cost is \$75 per guest.

Fridays at the Farmhouse – Fresh & Wyld Farmhouse Inn: Fridays throughout the year, Paonia – (www.freshandwyldinn.com/fridaysatthefarmhouse.html) Every Friday the inn serves a communal style home-cooked meal, made from organic and locally-grown food whenever possible. Cost is \$15 per person, and reservations are required.

Color Sunday Week: last week of September, Grand Mesa (www.grandmesabyway.org) – Hosted on Grand Mesa, this annual event celebrates the colors of the season.

Mountain Harvest Festival: last weekend of September, Paonia (www.mountainharvestfestival.com) – The free, hometown celebration pays homage to the bounty of its harvest of art, music and agriculture. Enjoy live music, a kid's activity area, local handmade arts and crafts, local food, agricultural workshops and local beer and wine.

Colorado Art Ranch Artposium: last weekend of September, throughout Delta County (<http://www.coloradoartranch.org/current.htm>) – This event takes a look at how we are growing and eating food today, how art influences agriculture and vice versa, and how food defines culture, community and family. Festivities include workshops, an artposium, farm and winery dinners, and more.

AppleFest: First weekend in October, Cedaredge (www.cedaredgecolorado.com) – This "growing" festival celebrates the area's fruit-growing heritage. Enjoy the Golden Gala formal, a chili cook-off, music, booths and activities throughout the town.

A WINTER ESCAPE FROM THE ORDINARY

Delta County offers a unique perspective on Colorado winter. Here, the pace is a little slower; though the scenery and activities rival anything else Colorado has to offer.

If you want to carve fresh tracks in Colorado's famous champagne powder without battling the crowds, **Powderhorn Resort** (www.powderhorn.com) is just the ticket. A local favorite, this ski area offers affordable, uncrowded and challenging slopes for skiers and boarders. Powderhorn, which averages 250 inches of snow each season, sits on the edge of the Grand Mesa, one of the largest flattops mountains in the world.

During the winter, **Grand Mesa's** 800-square miles of lakes, meadows and forests are transformed into a haven for cold-weather recreation enthusiasts. The magic of Grand Mesa is immediately apparent when you travel the scenic route along Highway 65 that leads to the veritable playground at the 11,000-foot summit. Grand Mesa averages about 420 inches of snowfall a year and is home to 400 miles of winter trails and the longest snowmobile trail in North America—the 123-mile-long **Powderhorn to Sunlight Trail**. In addition to snowmobiling, visitors may also enjoy cross-country skiing, backcountry skiing and snowshoeing. **The Grand Mesa Nordic Council** (<http://home.mesastate.edu/~jerry/gmnc/>) grooms trails and sponsors a number of events on Grand Mesa, including: races, kids' events and demonstrations.

If spectator sports are more your speed, take in one of the sled dog races hosted on Grand Mesa, where professional, gold medal winning mushers, as well as internationally-acclaimed skijorers, compete. The flat nature of the Grand Mesa terrain provides an opportunity for the drivers—and dogs—to display the best of their abilities. Enjoy the Cedaredge Challenge Sled Dog Race in December and an internationally-sanctioned sprint race in February 2009.

When visiting the area, you may stay in one of the many lodging options in the nearby communities, or rent a cabin on the mesa, where the winter wonderland will be literally at your doorstep. **Grand Mesa Lodge** (800.551.6372), located 16 miles north of Cedaredge on Highway 65 near milepost marker 28, offers attractively-furnished log cabins, complete with fully-equipped kitchens, gas heat and bathrooms with showers. One cabin features a rock fireplace and a lake view, and motel units are also available. Grand Mesa Lodge also offers guided snowmobile tours.

Spruce Lodge (www.sprucelodgecolorado.com) sits on top of Grand Mesa and also rents snowmobiles onsite. Located sixteen miles north of Cedaredge and one miles south of Highway 65 and the Visitors Center on Forest Road 121, the lodge features completely remodeled cabins with queen beds, living rooms and a kitchenette. Each cabin also has a fireplace where you can warm yourself after a day of fun in the sun and snow.

DELTA COUNTY HOME TO THE LONGEST SNOWMOBILING TRAIL IN THE LOWER 48

Home to more than 400 miles of winter trails, Delta County, Colo., welcomes winter trail sports enthusiasts with open arms. Snow blankets averaging 420 inches (35 feet) on the Grand Mesa in the wintertime create a winter playground and a perfect perch from which to catch amazing views of the world's largest flat-topped mountain and its surroundings.

Whether you're looking for snowshoeing, cross-country skiing or snowmobiling, there is trail system on which you can channel your inner snow bunny. As a general rule, snowmobile trails are flagged with orange markers, while Nordic (cross-country and snowshoeing) trails are flagged with blue.

Sunlight to Powderhorn Trail – Stretching an impressive 123-miles, this is the longest snowmobile trail in the lower 48. The main section of trail is nicknamed “The SP” for Sunlight to Powderhorn. The rest of the trails are numbered according to the mile marker where they intersect The SP as you travel east.

Skyway Trail System – Made up of several gentle trails, the Skyway System offers a relatively easy but pleasing-to-the-nature-lover's-eye way to spend a day snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. The northeastern section of the system provides views of the Book Cliffs, eroded shale walls named for their resemblance to books lined up on a shelf. Groomed by the Grand Mesa Nordic Council (<http://home.mesastate.edu/~jerry/gmnc/>) the trails are shared between snowshoers, classic, and skate cross country skiers.

County Line Trail System – Linked to the Skyway Trail System by a one-mile trail, the County Line System offers an even easier selection of groomed cross country ski and snowshoeing trails but without losing the extraordinary views. The system's southern trails boast splendid views of the majestic San Juan Mountains.

Ward Lake Trail System – Looking for a more challenging outing? The Ward Lake Trail system offers cross country skiers and snowshoers a more extensive selection of marked, groomed and non-groomed trails with a 500-foot elevation difference between its lowest and highest portions.

ECKERT CRANE DAYS JUST ONE WAY DELTA COUNTY "GOES TO THE BIRDS"

Delta County is a haven for birdwatchers of all levels. Canyon Wrens, White Pelicans, Purple Martins, Wild Turkeys, Bald Eagles and many other birds of prey call Delta County home. Within a 20-mile radius of the town of Delta, birders can see birds in a wealth of geographic habitats, including everything from canyon walls to desert-like clay dunes and high alpine mountains.

The area may be best known as a migration stop for the Greater Sandhill Cranes, which flock to Fruitgrowers Reservoir in Eckert, Colo., every spring as they return to their nesting areas to the North. People from all over the region come to celebrate this annual rite of spring with **Eckert Crane Days** (www.eckertcranedays.com), taking place over two weekends at the end of March. The event is co-sponsored by Eckert's Surface Creek Winery & Gallery and the Black Canyon Chapter of the Audubon Society.

"It's so easy to open the door to bird watching with the cranes because you can get so close to them here," says Surface Creek Winery's Jim Durr, event coordinator. "We can see as many as 15,000 to 18,000 or more cranes in Eckert from early March to mid-April. They come here for a 'one night stand' to rest, feed and regroup. The following morning they lift off in an organized mayhem of flight with unforgettable sights and sounds."

Crane Days Saturday events include liftoff and landing viewings and two presentations a day. The event culminates with a concert featuring a local band, hosted at the old Eckert Creamery Building.

Durr says there are a few rules of etiquette to keep in mind when crane watching. "People should keep their distance, and get closer with binoculars to give the cranes their space to feed and rest. The birds tend to land on private property so it's important to heed the signs about parking, trespassing and viewing the birds. It's also important to remember that by not disturbing the cranes you also respect the experiences of the other birders."

HUNTING IN DELTA COUNTY

Whether their interests lean toward big game, waterfowl, or anything in between, hunters set their sights on Delta County. The West Elk Wilderness - the fifth largest wilderness in Colorado - is located just outside of Crawford on the eastern edge of Delta County and offers some of the best elk hunting in Colorado. Deer, antelope, bear and mountain lion are also plentiful here.

Located along the western edge of Delta County, the Uncompahgre Plateau is nationally-renowned for its hunting hot spots. Crawford State Park in the southern portion of Delta County boasts great waterfowl hunting. Finally, the Grand Mesa National Forest in northern Delta County is also abundant with wildlife.

Upland game bird hunting is at its finest in Delta County. Join a club or call to reserve a trip with one of the guides. Black Canyon Wing and Clay (www.bcwandc.com) or Gunnison River Expeditions/North Rim Hunt Club (www.gunnisonriverexpeditions.com) can help you stake out the best spots in the area. High quality amenities and accommodations are available.

Big game hunting outfitters and guides know the habitats and terrain for the most successful hunting expeditions. Contact Uncompahgre Hunt Club (www.uncompahgrehuntclub.com) or Bryce Outfitting (www.bryceoutfitting.com).

Visit the Colorado Division of Wildlife website (<http://wildlife.state.co.us/>) for information on season dates, licensing regulations and fees.