

# AREQUA GULCH TALLEST BRIDGE

Just west of Victor on Highway 67, you will cross the highest bridge on the Colorado State Highway system. The bridge across Arequa Gulch was built in 2000-2001 as part of a highway realignment project to accommodate the expansion of the Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mining Company (CC&V). CC&V financed the design and construction.

Completed in just 11 months, the \$18 million realignment project is one of the largest highway projects in the state to be financed completely with private dollars.

The 1,218-foot long bridge over Arequa Gulch is 250 feet tall at its highest point, is the tallest bridge of Colorado's 8,479 bridges on the state highway system. The bridge provides travelers with unparalleled views of the Sangre De Cristo Mountain Range.

A scenic pullout area and trailhead on the south end enables travelers to hike to a view of the mountain range and the valley far below. There are also a series of signs explaining the modern mining process.



Arequa Gulch is named for a rancher and early pioneer of the area, Ben Requa. He was living in the area, then El Paso County, as early as 1868, when it was a large ranching/grazing community. Cripple Creek gold discoverer Bob Womack named the gulch, which stretches from under the Arequa Gulch Bridge down to Cripple Creek (the creek) and Shelf Road, for Requa. Womack knew Requa from his visits to Requa's general store in Fountain near Colorado Springs. Once home to the community of Arequa, the gulch is now abandoned. The streets in the town were named for US presidents and lots reportedly sold for \$320,000. The "A" was added sometime later; its source is unknown. A post office was located in the town in 1894 for two months and there was a cemetery that served the town's 100 residents. The town's largest claim to fame was the Arequa chlorination plant where gold was processed for a short time.

## SCENIC ROUTES

### FOR RAILS

The Phantom Canyon Road is one of the most scenic and historic drives in Colorado. The route, which follows the 1890's bed of the Florence & Cripple Creek Railroad (F&CC), increases in elevation from 5,500 to 9,500 feet and offers the chance to see a wide range of plants and wildlife in their natural setting.

The F&CC was built in 1894 as the first connection from Florence to the gold-fields of Cripple Creek and Victor. The unique bridges and tunnels offer a visual link to the area's historic past.

Following Eight Mile Canyon, the railroad hauled gold ore from the mines of Cripple Creek & Victor to processing mills in Florence from 1893 to 1912. The F&CC was a popular passenger route as well, making a social connection between the gold fields and Florence and Canon City.

The F&CC was shut down July 12, 1912 when a huge flood roared down the canyon, ripping out track and 12 bridges.

The route was opened as an auto road in 1918 and today is part of the Gold Belt National Scenic Byway. The old Steel Bridge, two tunnels, and other historic sites are part of the drive.

The Midland Terminal, which ran from Colorado Springs up to Cripple Creek, opened July 4, 1894 three days after the F&CC arrived. Four passenger trains per day ran on the tracks and gold was hauled to a processing plant on Colorado Springs' west side.

The railroad, which is now Highway 67 from Divide to Cripple Creek, closed in 1949 when it was no longer necessary to haul gold down the mountain for processing.

Today the Cripple & Victor Narrow Gauge is only remaining railroad trip.

## GOLD CAMP ROAD SHORTLINE TO COLORADO SPRINGS

Railroads were the lifeline of the gold mining district in the early days. Three railroads serviced this area, including the Short Line, or the Colorado Springs & Cripple Creek District Railway. The Shortline was the shortest route from the gold-fields to Colorado Springs and operated two

passenger trains each way every day starting in April of 1901.

The 46-mile route cost over \$4.5 million in 1900 value and was paid for by wealthy mine owners. Over 220 box cars and 60 ore cars brought ore from the Cripple Creek and Victor mines down the mountain to the mills in and around Colorado Springs.

During the summer it is said that over 50,000 tourists traveled the route, one of them was

Theodore Roosevelt, who proclaimed "This is the ride that bankrupts the English language!" Service on the route ended in 1920. In 1924 the road was opened as the Corley Mountain Highway, operating as a toll road until 1939. Later it became Gold Camp Road.

The Gold Camp Road winds from Teller County 81 north of Victor down the mountain canyons to Old Stage Road near the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs. A tunnel in the last leg of the route washed out in the mid 1980s and that portion of the original road is routed to the Old Stage Road - and is open to Colorado Springs. The road is maintained, though can be washboard and in winter may require four-wheel drive or chains. The scenery is spectacular and includes towering rock formations, overviews of Colorado Springs and in the fall, brilliant gold aspen stands.

The best way to find Gold Camp Road is traveling from Gillett south on County Road 81 or from Victor north on Teller County Rd 81 - the intersection is marked with a US Forest Service sign and a directional map sign.

