

FESTIVAL CAPITAL OF THE WEST

By Kay Montgomery

The town sits in a box canyon with steep forested mountains and cliffs on two sides, and is hemmed in at one end of this canyon by two enormous falls. Access to this canyon is by a single steep paved road or by one of two pack-mule- ready passes for very hardy four- wheel vehicles. The small airport is a challenging alternative due to adverse weather and mountain terrain.

This town of Telluride is located in the southwest corner of Colorado at an elevation of 8,750 feet, with a population of 2300 dedicated souls, dedicated to the beauty of this Alpine setting and the outdoor life. It bears a National Historic Landmark label, and gold was discovered here in 1858. Telluride was slow to develop due to the isolated location, but a toll road opened for wagons in 1881. It was evidently open for business in 1889 for the likes of Butch Cassidy when he robbed the San Miguel Bank of the sum of \$24,580. This was his first recorded robbery, but he went on to greater glories during an association with his gang.

This beautiful, isolated setting is the unlikely backdrop for almost thirty festivals during the short summer season from the end of May until October. These festivals are a mix of serious and whimsical, fun and funny, creative and bizarre, and a great source of entertainment for thousands of visitors from all areas of the country and beyond.

Beginning in May we have the Mountain Film Festival and the Literary Arts Festival which includes performance and literary burlesque and “hike- to” readings. June begins the intense scheduling with the Balloon Festival, the Wild, Wild West Festival which brings inner city Boys and Girls Clubs, The Wow Festival, which means health and fitness, and for the past 43 years, the Telluride Bluegrass Festival. The Wine Festival and the Plein Air Festival are also in June.

Mid-summer means the 4th of July, The Telluride Art and Architecture, Yoga, Jazz and Chamber Music Festivals. Late summer and fall mean the Mushroom Festival, where we learn that mushroom identification is vital to enjoying that mushroom beer and mushroom ice cream. Enjoyed are The Film Festival, and Cars and Colors Festival, an automotive celebration and road rally displaying the glorious September foliage. October means the Horror Festival, fantasy and Science Fiction with features and short films.

There is often one day during this summer period with absolutely nothing scheduled, and it cries for a festival, so the Nothing Day Festival was founded. In addition to all of the many

festivals, there are sporting events most weekends, including the Telluride 100 Mountain Bike Ride and the Hardrock 100 Endurance Race, all extreme sports

All of this will end the day that skiing begins in November, when the snow is deep and welcoming, and when several Snow Festivals are born. Be aware there is always an opportunity in this high altitude box canyon on any day for another festival to break out, or at least another Nothing Day Festival.