

San Luis Valley

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Best Places to Eat

- » Pachelli's Deli & Bakery (p317)
- » Cel Dor Asado (p305)
- » San Luis Valley Brewing Company (p312)

Best Places to Stay

- » Mansion B&B (p317)
- » Historic Windsor Hotel (p319)
- » USFS Mogote Camp-ground (p316)

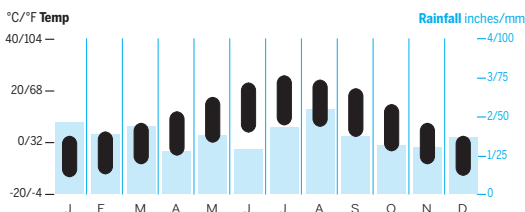
Why Go?

Couched between jagged mountains, the wide plains of San Luis Valley are home to farm towns, wetland wildlife sanctuaries and the stark beauty of the Great Sand Dunes.

Look to the east: the 14,000ft crags of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains are as arresting as their name suggests. Here lies Colorado's least trampled wilderness – Crestone Peak was the last of Colorado's 14ers to be climbed and huge herds of bighorn sheep, Colorado's state animal, scramble up the rough slopes. Now look west: across the broad plain there's another view of the volcanic San Juan Mountains, where the Rio Grande's headwaters flow by the historic mining camps. In the south of this immense valley the landscape is dotted with adobe churches and historic Hispanic villages to evoke images of the old southwest, while the Great Sand Dunes National Park looks like a misplaced patch of the Sahara.

When to Go?

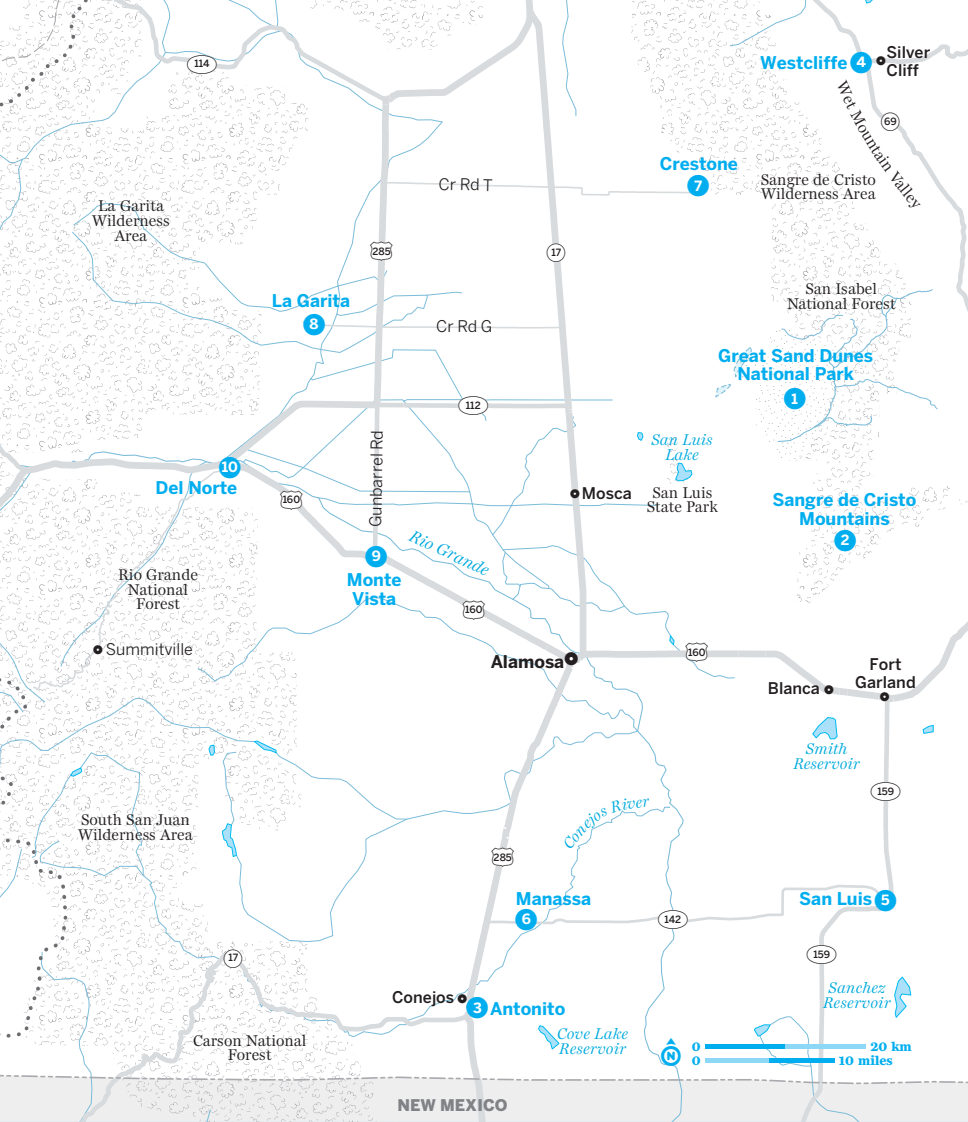
Salida



May–September
Hike under blue skies in the volcanic ranges of the region.

October & November
Changing aspens make rail rides a spectacular display of color.

December–April
Wild winds and snow see visitors huddle in fire-warmed cabins.



San Luis Valley Highlights

- 1 Board down the towering sand dunes at **Great Sand Dunes National Park** (p307)
- 2 Follow a herd of bighorn sheep on the hills of **Music Pass** (p304), in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains
- 3 Chug across the mountains on the **Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad** (p315)
- 4 Catch Colorado's best bluegrass pickers at the **High Mountain Hay Fever Bluegrass Festival** (p305)
- 5 Follow the Penitente Brotherhood at San Luis' **Stations of the Cross** (p313)
- 6 Throw a punch at the tiny **Jack Dempsey Museum** (p314)
- 7 Get zen at **Crestone** (p306), a new-age spiritual hub
- 8 Climb the ragged ash formations of **La Garita** (p317)
- 9 Watch a drive-in movie from your room at the **Best Western Movie Manor Motor Inn** (p317)
- 10 Have a pint at Del Norte's **Three Barrel Brewery** (p319)