

# High Country Boreas Pass Summit Self Guided Driving Tour

## Boreas Pass Summit

**Round Trip Distance: 20 Miles (~15 Miles Dirt Road)**

**Driving Time: 1 Hour**

**Car Difficulty (1 to 10): 7**

**Driving Difficulty (1 to 10): 7**

**Maximum Altitude: 11,493 (Boreas Pass)**

**Altitude Change from Breckenridge Altitude: 1800**

**Web Site: <http://www.themoens.com/Photos/Hike/boreasPass/main.htm>**



Boreas Pass Summit has some remains of one of the most important developments in the mining history of Breckenridge, namely the Denver, South Park, and Pacific Railroad. Few events in the history of Summit County carry more importance than the 1882 arrival of the railroad. The DSP&P originated in Denver but began its long and tortuous climb to Breckenridge from the town of Como in South Park.

Today, visitors can see several reconstructed buildings similar to those which occupied what then was known as Breckenridge Pass. The railroad men who built the line renamed the pass "Boreas" after the Greek god of the north wind. A section house, engine house, telegraph house, coal storage facility, 9000-gallon water tank, engine turntable, and other buildings were located atop the pass, the second highest (11,493 ft.) railroad station in the world at the time.

The largest building standing today, on the northern side of the road, is the Section House which was the headquarters for the crew which maintained and managed the track into Breckenridge. Today, the Summit Huts Association maintains the Section House as a ski-camping facility in the winter and staffs the House with a guide in the summer to assist visitors at the site. Careful inspection of the fields on the south side of the road, across from the Section House, will reveal the remains of the engine house, built in 1883 and burned to the ground in 1909. Around 1885, a 600-ft. snow shed was built over the summit as well to shelter the trains from the fierce winter storms and to maintain a track clear of snow. This shed also burned to the ground, in 1899. It was replaced with a shed nearly 1000 feet long the same year. Eventually, the snow shed idea was abandoned, since the sheds were very expensive to maintain and had a habit of burning down very easily as coal-burning, smoke-belching locomotives passed through the sheds. The last big snow shed burned down in 1934.

Service over the pass to Breckenridge was discontinued in 1936 but not before probably thousands of tons of mining equipment and supplies, thousands of passengers, and probably thousands of tons of mined products made their way to and from the mining camps in and around Breckenridge. It was no coincidence that the "hardrock" mining boom - the use of underground mining techniques to recover gold, silver, lead, and zinc - really began in the early 1880s. Only the railroad could haul the very heavy and bulky machinery needed to build the mines and smelters of this era, could bring in supplies to "feed" the mines and mining camps, and could haul the bounty recovered from the ground to smelters east of the Rockies, in Denver and other points east.

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**Directions:** The Boreas Pass Summit is located approximately nine miles to the east between Breckenridge and Como in South Park on the Boreas Pass Road. From Blue River Plaza in the center of Breckenridge, proceed south on Main Street (toward Hoosier Pass and Fairplay) approximately one-half mile to the stoplight at Boreas Pass Road. A Conoco gas station is on the right (west) side of the road. Turn left onto Boreas Pass Road and proceed 3 to 4 miles on paved road and an additional 4 to 5 miles on a narrow dirt road (the road is in excellent condition and can easily and safely be driven with a standard car). The Section House and several other buildings are clearly visible on the left (north) side of the road at the top of the pass.