



VIRGINIA CITY FACT SHEET

LOCATION: At 6,200 feet on Mount Davidson, historic Virginia City is 25 miles from Reno and 45 miles from Lake Tahoe. Like many cities in Nevada, Virginia City was a mining “boomtown” with more than \$400 million in gold and silver mined. In today’s prices, that’s more than \$20 billion dollars.

HISTORY: The 19th century mining bonanza turned Virginia City into the most important industrial city between Denver and San Francisco, and it turned destitute prospectors from all over the world into millionaires. They built mansions, hospitals, churches, opera houses and schools and imported furniture, fashions and entertainment from Europe and the Orient. The riches helped finance the Civil War and went on to build empires around the world, including San Francisco, a city built with Comstock silver. While the Virginia Truckee Railroad transported bullion from the rural highlands of Virginia City to Carson City, the *Territorial Enterprise*, with literary whiz Mark Twain, delivered news of the day to the vibrant mining metropolis of 25,000 citizens at its peak.

VIRGINIA & TRUCKEE RAILROAD: Virginia City is home to the historic Virginia & Truckee Railroad, Nevada’s most famous short line that connected Reno with Carson City, Virginia City and Minden. Operating for 80 years, the V&T was Nevada’s Bonanza Railroad as it hauled valuable Comstock ore to quartz reduction mills located at Silver City and along the Carson River. In 2009 a \$30 million expansion was completed on the V&T Railroad. The V&T now connects Carson City to Virginia City on the historic long line for weekend trips and offers daily round trips between Gold Hill and Virginia City.

VIRGINIA CITY MUSEUMS: Virginia City’s history is widely celebrated downtown with a multitude of museums featuring Mark Twain’s writing, bonanza king and telecom giant John Mackay, the critical importance of police and fire, the connection with famous Madame Julia Bulette and the role of a Civil War general.

- ***The "Way It Was Museum":*** A trip back in time shows how things that mattered in life worked for Virginia City. See the works of milling and mining with old Cornish pumps and check out costumed mannequins, mineral collections, a fully-equipped blacksmith shop, rare photographs and information on the Sutro tunnel mule train. The tunnel, created by San Francisco investor Adolph Sutro in 1869, was designed to ventilate the mines, drain water and provide escape for miners.
- ***Historic Fourth Ward School Museum & Archives:*** Opened on Nov. 28, 1876, the Fourth Ward School was built to honor the nation’s centennial. With the ability to accommodate more than 1,000 students, it boasted state-of-the-art heating, ventilation and sanitation systems, as well as water piped to all floors. From the turn of the century through the 1920s, Fourth Ward teachers educated hundreds of students, but the declining fortunes of the mining district and diminishing population caused the student body to shrink. Today, visitors tour the historic school, view the rotating exhibits, search the archives and learn about the rich history of Virginia City and the Comstock Lode.
- ***LEC #1 Comstock Firemen's Museum:*** Public safety was tested during the Comstock time and time again – including the Great Fire of 1875, which leveled much of the town. The volunteer firemen of the Virginia City area were members of a system dating back to the first American Fire Co. organized by Benjamin Franklin.

- **Piper's Opera House:** Built in the 1880s, Piper's Opera House attracted famous stars from Europe and the United States and is listed by the League of Historic Theaters. One of the most significant vintage theaters on the West Coast, this stage once welcomed President Grant, Buffalo Bill, Al Jolson and Mark Twain. Today Piper's Opera House is a sought after Performing Arts Center. Theatrical performances, concerts, non-profit events and more continue to keep this historic house alive. Self-guided tours are available.
- **Additional museums:** Comstock Gold Mill, Comstock History Center, The Mackay Mansion, The Marshall Mint Museum, Piper's Opera House, St. Mary's Art Center, Saint Mary's in the Mountains Catholic Church, Silver Terrace Cemetery, Courthouse Slammer and County Museum and The Washoe Club Haunted Museum.

CEMETERY GIN: For many years, Virginia City, Nevada, has been having fun with the "Cemetery Gin" name using it as part of a tall tale from the Comstock's rich mining days of the 1850s. No more. Spearheaded by the Virginia City Tourism Commission, the gin is a product of Frey Ranch Estate Distillery, located in Fallon, Nevada, where all the ingredients were grown, it was distilled and bottled. A Nevada born spirit from the town that helped bring Nevada to statehood just over 150 years ago, the gin's signature ingredient is Nevada pine nuts found exclusively from the region. The bottle design was birthed under the premise that it needed to stand out from other gin products and be highly desirable. To accomplish this, it is designed in deep black with gold accents, a peep-thru window displays a vintage 1850s horse-drawn hearse. The product is available for purchase at the Virginia City Visitors Center and several retail outlets throughout northern Nevada.

HAUNTED: Virginia City boasts its notoriety of being one of three of the most haunted towns in the United States, along with Savannah and Charleston. Other worldly "haunts" exist during Halloween as Virginia City celebrates its history and offers safe trick-or-treating for kids at local shops. A Ghosts & Goblins parade runs down C Street, the city's main drag, October 31, 5 p.m.

Guided ghost walking tours of the town are offered daily. One tour, Bats in the Belfry, starts each tour at the haunted Silver Queen Hotel where guests can also get a chance to experience the supernatural in a comfortable hotel room for \$50 to \$125 per night.

LODGING: Virginia City and Gold Hill, the area known as the Comstock, has more than 200 rooms available for the traveler to stay. Spend the night in the Silverland Inn & Suites or one of several quaint bed and breakfast inns.

- **Bed and Breakfasts:** The "B" Street House Inn, originally built in 1875, underwent an award-winning restoration in 2007 and is now a three-bedroom guest inn. Edith Palmer's Country Inn was established in a Victorian home built in 1863. Originally, the rock building to the rear of Edith Palmer's was used as a cider factory. After the Great Fire of 1875 burned down most of Virginia City, Herman J. Harris bought the lots on where the Cobb Mansion is located, and built a home that now serves as the property.
- **Hotels and Motels:** Clean and comfortable with a Victorian flavor, hotels offer modern and historic Comstock flair. Properties include: Gold Hill Hotel, Silver Queen Hotel, Silverland Inn and Suites, Virginia City Motel, Tahoe House Hotel, Sugarloaf Mountain Motel & Market and Comstock Lodge.

VIRGINIA CITY SALOONS: No other type of business dominates the landscape of this historic mining town like Virginia City's saloons and restaurants. Many date back to the Comstock period including maintaining the 19th century look and displaying antiques. Noted saloons include:

- **Red Dog Saloon:** More peaceful, loving gatherings may have come in the 20th century when the likes of legendary rock singer Janis Joplin making an appearance at the Red Dog Saloon in 1968 with the house act Big Brother Holding Co. – which became her backup band after they met in San Francisco.
- **Ponderosa Saloon:** As mystery has it, the Bank of California walk-in vault of 1864, which now sits in the Ponderosa Saloon, was robbed in 1927 with much of the \$32,000 unrecovered. The money is believed to be hidden in the hills of Six Mile Canyon, once home to large mining and milling operations. The saloon also offers visitors a tour of the underground mine.
- **The Millionaires Washoe Club:** It still wields the closest thing to opulence and age in this old western town. The original chandeliers hang from the ceiling at the oldest saloon in Virginia City.
- **Bucket of Blood:** A friendly competition ensues between the Silver Queen Hotel's saloon and the Bucket of Blood bar on the other side of the street over who makes the best Bloody Mary in town.

MINES & MINE TOURS

Silver and gold made Virginia City an iconic mining town, one that will forever be recognized as one of the greatest. It also formed the character of Nevada and the nation.

- **Chollar Mine Tours:** With its riches first located in 1859, Virginia City's Chollar Mine (later the Chollar-Potosi) was one of the leading producers on the Comstock. Over the next 80 years, miners blasted and carted out some \$17 million in gold and silver. The Nevada Mill was erected here in 1887 to process the vast amounts of ore taken out of the Chollar Mine. Today the mine is open for visitors. A guided tour lasts a half hour and is a 400 ft., level walk.
- **Ponderosa Mine Tour:** The Best and Belcher Mine is a 25-minute guided tour with more 300 pieces of antique mining equipment on display. See complete underground mine workings including tunnels, crosscuts, drifts, stopes, raises, winzes and shafts.
- **Comstock Gold Mill:** Virginia City's mining history comes alive with an operating 1860s Joshua Hendy (built in San Francisco) two stamp Gold Mill. See how gold was processed from ore to recovery.

EVENTS:

- **February:** Devil Made Me Do It Saloon Crawl and Father Daughter Day & Dance
- **March:** Rocky Mountain Oyster Fry and Saint Patrick's Day Parade
- **April:** Virginia City Grand Prix
- **May:** Chili on the Comstock
- **July:** Fourth of July Parade & Fireworks Spectacular
- **August:** Hot August Nights and the Fiesta del Charro
- **September:** Comstock Civil War Days & Labor Day Parade, International Camel & Ostrich Races, Street Vibrations Fall Rally
- **October:** Virginia City World Championship Outhouse Races and Hauntober
- **November:** Virginia City Veteran's Day Parade
- **December:** Believe Again – Christmas on the Comstock

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