CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL DAYS BRINGS BUSINESS, TRAIL LOVERS TO SILVER CITY

Silver City, Nm. (April 16, 2018) – From April 27-29, Silver City will welcome outdoor enthusiasts from around the world to celebrate Continental Divide Trail Days, a free three-day festival that provides an important annual economic boost to the town.

“The CDT has really put Silver City on the map. Every year, I meet hundreds of visitors who are interested in hiking the Trail, whether it's for one day or six months,” said Rebecca Martin, Silver City’s Visitor Services & Tourism Coordinator. “Trail Days is a special event because it brings the hiking community together with the people of Silver City, and everyone gets to celebrate what the Trail means to them. It’s a chance for people from all over the world to experience our unique little town, and many of them end up returning.”

In 2014, Silver City became the first Continental Divide Trail (CDT) Gateway Community, a designation that recognizes towns and counties along the CDT for their part in promoting awareness and stewardship of the 3,100-mile National Scenic Trail and creating a welcoming environment for Trail users. Silver City quickly embraced its new identity as a “trail town,” and began hosting Trail Days in 2015 as a way to showcase the town's beauty and outdoor culture.

“Over the past few years, Trail Days and the kickoff of the CDT hiking season has become one of the best times of year for our store,” said Chris Schlabach, owner of local business Gila Hike and Bike. “We’re paying close attention to hikers’ needs and have built our inventory around them. The CDT in Silver City is a big boost for local businesses, and I can’t wait to see what happens as it continues to grow in popularity.”

Schlabach is not alone in seeing his business grow thanks to outdoor destinations like the CDT. Outdoor recreation is an important economic driver in New Mexico, generating $9.9 billion in annual consumer spending and 99,000 jobs, according to a report by the Outdoor Industry Association. And in 2017, 88% of small business owners surveyed along the CDT reported that people using the trail have a positive impact on business in their communities.

One of those people is Whitney LaRuffa, who hiked the entire length of the CDT in 2015 and now serves as President of the American Long Distance Hiking Association (ALDHA)-West. “I’ve attended Trail Days every year since it began in 2015, and watched it grow from a small event to a large one,” said LaRuffa. “Out of all the locations that ALDHA-West holds events, Silver City is unique, and every year I look forward to celebrating the Trail, eating the amazing food, and soaking in the hot springs!”

Attendees of Trail Days 2018 will enjoy events ranging from an outdoor gear expo and crosscut saw demonstration to a community hike and trail cleanup. Unique to this year's festivities is a 40th birthday bash for the CDT, which was designated by Congress as a National Scenic Trail in 1978. The party, which takes place on Friday, April 27 at the Seedboat Gallery, will feature local music, door prizes, beer and wine and of course, a giant birthday cake.

The Continental Divide Trail Coalition, which organizes the festival, notes on its website that all events at Trail Days are free and open to the public, and encourages those unfamiliar with the CDT to learn more by joining in the festivities. To see the full schedule of events, visit continentaldividetrail.org/trail-days-2018/.
About the Continental Divide Trail
The CDT is one of the world’s premiere long-distance trails, stretching 3,100 miles from Mexico to Canada along the Continental Divide. Designated by Congress in 1978, the CDT is the highest, most challenging and most remote of the 11 National Scenic Trails. It provides recreational opportunities ranging from hiking to horseback riding to hunting for thousands of visitors each year. While 95% of the CDT is located on public land, approximately 150 miles are still in need of protection.

About the Continental Divide Trail Coalition
The CDTC was founded in 2012 by volunteers and recreationists hoping to provide a unified voice for the Trail. Working hand-in-hand with the U.S. Forest Service and other federal land management agencies, the CDTC is a non-profit partner supporting stewardship of the CDT. The mission of the CDTC is to complete, promote and protect the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, a world-class national resource. For more information, please visit continentaldividetrail.org.

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