

Weather

The San Luis Valley is a semi-arid, high mountain alpine valley ecosystem. At this altitude, the mountains that edge the Valley protect it, and create unique and variable weather. Conditions can vary significantly from one part of the Valley to another, and can change rapidly in any area. The valley floor receives an average annual precipitation of 7.57", and most agricultural crops are irrigated throughout the growing season.

By contrast, the Crestone-Baca community lies in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and therefore receives considerably more precipitation. The fifteen year average annual precipitation at the Crestone-Baca station is 14.41." Snowfall averages 70" annually.

January is considered the coldest month of the year in the San Luis Valley. On occasion, the Alamosa weather station reports the coldest temperature in the nation. In the foothills, wintertime low temperatures can be 10-15 degrees F warmer than in Alamosa. July is the warmest month on the average, in Crestone-Baca, with average highs 82.3 degrees F, and average lows 50.8 degrees F.

Since the San Luis Valley is ringed with high mountains, the San Juans to the west and the Sangre de Cristos to the east, some stormy weather goes over or around the valley. Often in the summer, however, we have thunderstorms in the afternoons that produce lightning. Hikers are advised to retreat to lower elevations at such times.

Records for 1951-1978, Temperature:

Two years in ten will have a maximum over 90° F and a minimum under 22° F, the coldest months being December, January, and February. Average daily temperature throughout those years was 42.5°.

Precipitation: Average 8.64 inches. The average number of days with more than 0.10 inches of precipitation per year is 30.

Growing Season: The length of the growing season, if the daily minimum temperature is:

PROBABILITY	HIGHER THAN 24° F	HIGHER THAN 28° F	HIGHER THAN 32° F
9 YEARS IN 10	139 DAYS	111 DAYS	79 DAYS
8 YEARS IN 10	146 DAYS	118 DAYS	87 DAYS
7 YEARS IN 10	159 DAYS	133 DAYS	101 DAYS
6 YEARS IN 10	172 DAYS	147 DAYS	116 DAYS
5 YEARS IN 10	179 DAYS	155 DAYS	124 DAYS

Harold Reinhart, Crestone 719 256-4809

Additional Sources of Information

National Weather Service

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov>719 589-3232

Highway Conditions

<http://www.truckz.com/highwayinfo/hiwayCO.htm>303 639-1111 or 1234
<http://www.1800drivers.com>

Weather Information303 398-3964

<http://www.cnn.com.weather> • enter zip code for current weather, allergy report, etc.
<http://www.wunderground.com> • enter zip code for current weather, allergy report, etc.

Weather Station Project PLEASE CONTRIBUTE!

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), with ScSEED and other Valley agencies and citizens, is seeking funds and locations for Weather Stations in Saguache County. Call Jim Sperry or Tracy Miller, NRCS 719 754-3400 (See Resource Guide, Ecology - NRCS; Organizations, Associations & Foundations - ScSEED.)