



“All you’ve got to do is decide to go and the hardest part is over. So go!”

TONY WHEELER, COFOUNDER – LONELY PLANET

PAGE
1

PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

- 25 Top Experiences 4
- Welcome to Colorado 17
- Need to Know 18
- If You Like 20
- Month by Month 24
- Itineraries 27
- Outdoors 31
- Rocky Mountain 31
- Road Trips 39
- Travel with Children 47
- Regions at a Glance 49



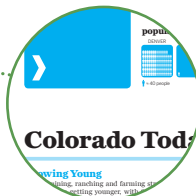
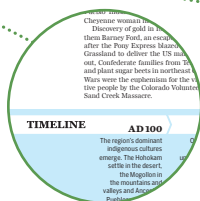
PAGE
345

UNDERSTAND COLORADO

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

- Colorado Today 346
- History 348
- Way of Life 353
- The Arts 356
- Colorado Cuisine 359
- Wildlife & the Land 362
- Dinosaurs 365



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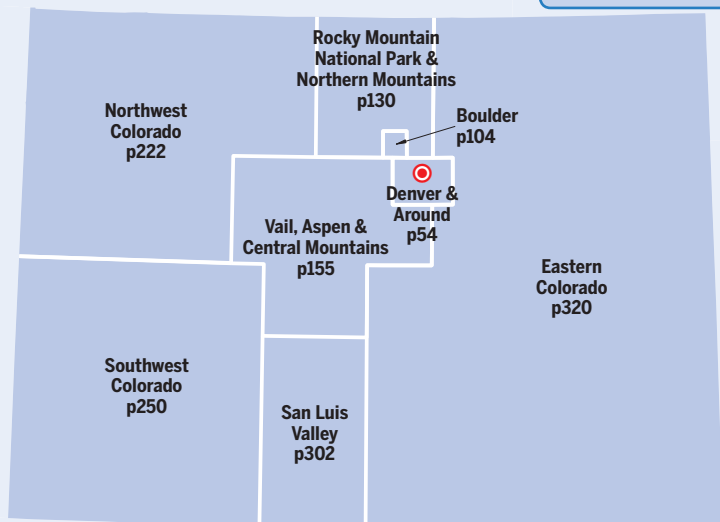


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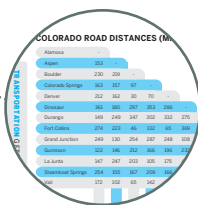


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TOP EXPERIENCES MAP **NEXT PAGE**



Directory A–Z 368
 Transportation **375**
 Index 384
 Map Legend 391



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

**Nate Cavalieri, Adam Skolnick,
Rowan McKinnon**

Colorado



Dinosaur National Monument

Touch a dinosaur (p234)

Steamboat Springs

A down-to-earth, unpretentious ski town (p223)

Rocky Mountain National Park

Untamed splendor (p131)

Aspen

Cowboy grit, Hollywood glam, fresh powder (p194)

Colorado National Monument

Red-rock formations (p243)

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park

(p252)

Durango

Rich in history, yet elegantly modernized (p275)

Mesa Verde National Park

Relics of a civilization (p289)

Silverton

A vintage town with a classic railroad (p273)

Top Experiences >

Boulder

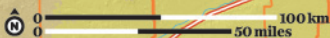
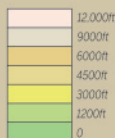
A sweet location and a progressive soul (p104)

Fort Collins

A town of bikes and microbrews (p145)

NEBRASKA

ELEVATION



Julesburg

Sterling

Fort Morgan

EASTERN COLORADO

Bonny State Park

Denver

Adventurous, cosmopolitan and uniquely Western (p54)

KANSAS

Colorado Springs & Garden of the Gods

Bouldered peaks (p321)

Cache la Poudre River

Fort Collins

Glen Haven
Estes Park

Boulder

Nederland

Golden

Denver

Idaho Springs

Morrison

Bailey

COLORADO

Pike National Forest

Garden of the Gods

Colorado Springs

Cañon City

Florence

Silver Cliff

Lake Pueblo State Park

Westcliffe

Great Sand Dunes National Park

Blanca

La Veta

Fort Garland

San Luis

Trinidad State Park

Trinidad

Adobe Creek Reservoir

John Martin Reservoir

Great Plains Reservoirs

John Martin Reservoir State Park

La Junta

Purgatoire River

Comanche National Grassland

NEW MEXICO

OKLAHOMA

Great Sand Dunes National Park

Majestic sand dunes (p307)



Look out for these icons:



Our author's recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

DENVER & AROUND54

DENVER.....56

AROUND DENVER.....95

Golden.....95

Mt Evans.....98

Idaho Springs & Georgetown.....99

St Mary's Glacier.....100

Empire.....101

Denver Mountain Parks & Platte River.....101

BOULDER.....104

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK & NORTHERN MOUNTAINS130

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK.....131

ESTES PARK.....137

AROUND ESTES PARK...143

Glen Haven.....143

NEDERLAND.....144

ELDORA SKI AREA.....144

INDIAN PEAKS WILDERNESS AREA.....145

FORT COLLINS.....145

RED FEATHER LAKES....150

CACHE LA POUFRE RIVER.....151

GRAND LAKE.....151

GRANBY.....154

VAIL, ASPEN & CENTRAL MOUNTAINS155

DENVER TO VAIL.....158

Winter Park & Fraser.....158

The Moffat Rd & Rollins Pass.....160

Arapahoe Basin Ski Area.....161

Keystone Ski Resort.....162

Montezuma.....162

Dillon.....163

Frisco.....164

Copper Mountain Ski Resort.....167

BRECKENRIDGE.....169

VAIL.....180

BEAVER CREEK.....191

ASPEN.....194

AROUND ASPEN.....208

Maroon Bells.....208

Basalt.....209

ALONG HWYS 24 & 85...210

Minturn.....210

Red Cliff.....211

Leadville.....212

Fairplay.....215

Twin Lakes.....215

Buena Vista.....217

Bailey.....220

NORTHWEST COLORADO222

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS.....223

AROUND STEAMBOAT SPRINGS.....231

Stagecoach State Park...231

Mt Zirkel Wilderness...231

Hahns Peak.....231

WALDEN.....232

KREMMLING.....232

HOT SULPHUR SPRINGS.....233

CRAIG.....234

DINOSAUR NATIONAL MONUMENT.....234

SOUTH OF DINOSAUR NATIONAL MONUMENT.....236

Dinosaur.....236

Rangely.....236

Cañon Pintado National Historic District.....236

MEEKER.....237

ALONG I-70.....237

Glenwood Springs.....237

Carbondale.....242

Marble.....242

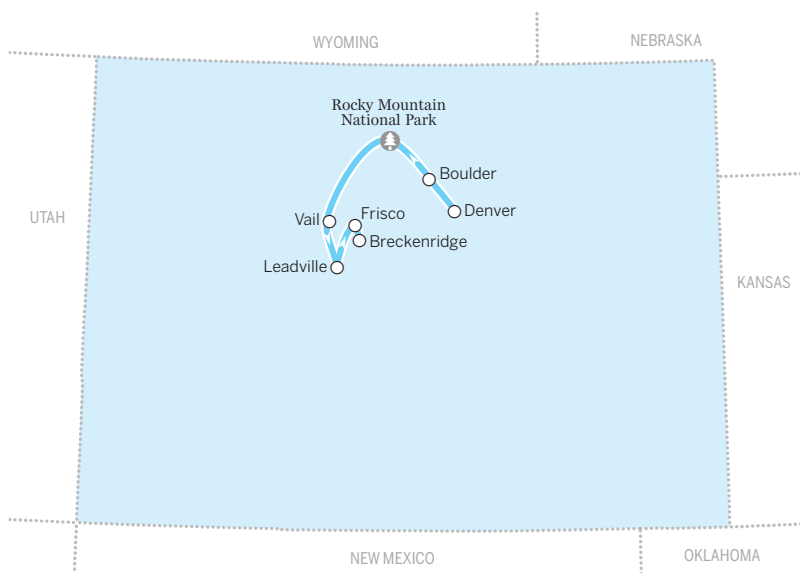
Crystal.....242

On the Road

Colorado National Monument.....	243	South Fork.....	283	MONTE VISTA.....	316
Grand Junction.....	244	Around South Fork.....	284	LA GARITA.....	317
Fruita.....	248	Creede & Around.....	284	DEL NORTE.....	318
Grand Mesa.....	249	Lake City & Around.....	287		
SOUTHWEST COLORADO.....	250	MESA VERDE & THE FOUR CORNERS.....	289	EASTERN COLORADO.....	320
GRAND JUNCTION TO CORTEZ.....	252	Mesa Verde National Park.....	289	COLORADO SPRINGS...	321
CRESTED BUTTE & GUNNISON.....	252	Mancos.....	294	SOUTHERN FRONT RANGE.....	331
Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.....	252	Cortez.....	296	Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument.....	331
Montrose.....	254	Dolores.....	298	Pueblo.....	332
Curecanti National Recreation Area.....	257	Rico.....	299	Cañon City & Royal Gorge.....	334
Gunnison.....	257	Hovenweep National Monument.....	300	Florence.....	336
Crested Butte.....	259	Four Corners Navajo Tribal Park.....	300	La Veta & Around.....	337
Paonia.....	262	Ute Mountain Indian Reservation.....	301	Trinidad.....	338
Delta.....	262	SAN LUIS VALLEY...302		SANTA FE TRAIL.....	341
TELLURIDE.....	264	WESTCLIFFE & SILVER CLIFF.....	304	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site.....	341
SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS.....	269	CRESTONE.....	306	Boggsville Historic Site...341	
Ridgway.....	269	GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL PARK.....	307	Fort Lyon.....	342
Ouray & the Million Dollar Hwy.....	270	SAN LUIS STATE PARK...310		Timpas & the Comanche National Grassland.....	342
Silverton.....	273	BLANCA.....	310	NORTHEAST COLORADO.....	342
Durango.....	275	FORT GARLAND.....	310	Pawnee National Grassland.....	342
Chimney Rock Archaeological Area.....	281	ALAMOSA & AROUND...311		Fort Morgan.....	343
Pagosa Springs.....	281	SAN LUIS.....	313	Sterling.....	343
		ANTONITO.....	314	Julesberg.....	344
		CONEJOS RIVER.....	315		

itineraries

Whether you've got four days or 40, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travelers.



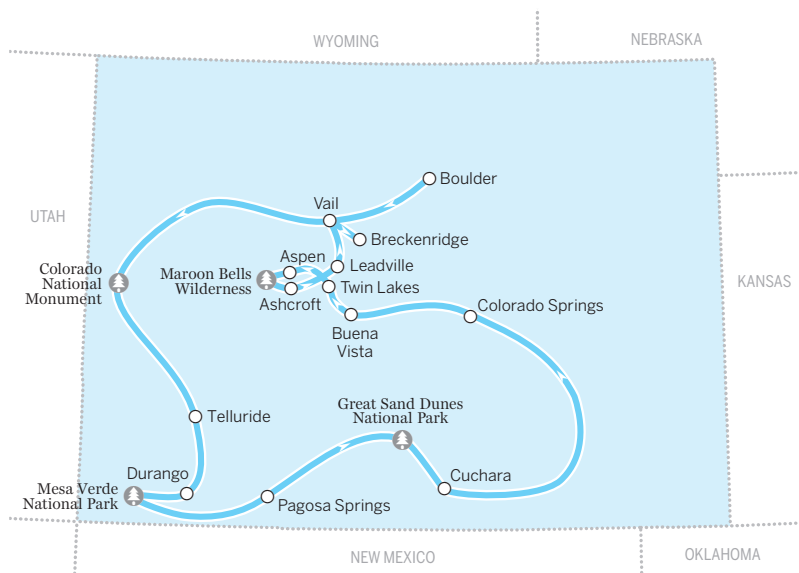
One Week

Denver & the Northern Rockies

A combination of the oh-so urban and the rustic mountain adventure is yours on this unforgettable road trip. Spend a couple of days in **Denver**, riding the bike paths, shopping in Cherry Creek and South Broadway, dining and partying in LoDo and taking in a ball game. Head north through fun and funky **Boulder** to **Rocky Mountain National Park** to spend a few days in the wilderness.

Hit the road south on Hwy 40 through Winter Park then west on I-70 to **Vail**, where there's technical downhill mountain biking and access to a network of bike paths that lead all the way to Breckenridge. Consider a river trip or perhaps a paraglide, and take the gondola up to Eagle's Nest for a taste of the Continental Divide.

Then drive the backroads through Minturn and Red Cliff into **Leadville**, where you can stroll through history before taking Hwy 91 through lonely mountain towns, back to Hwy 6, into **Frisco** and onto **Breckenridge**. Spend your last days here, exploring the quaint historical district in the evenings and biking and hiking in the daylight. Get in a river trip before heading back to Denver.



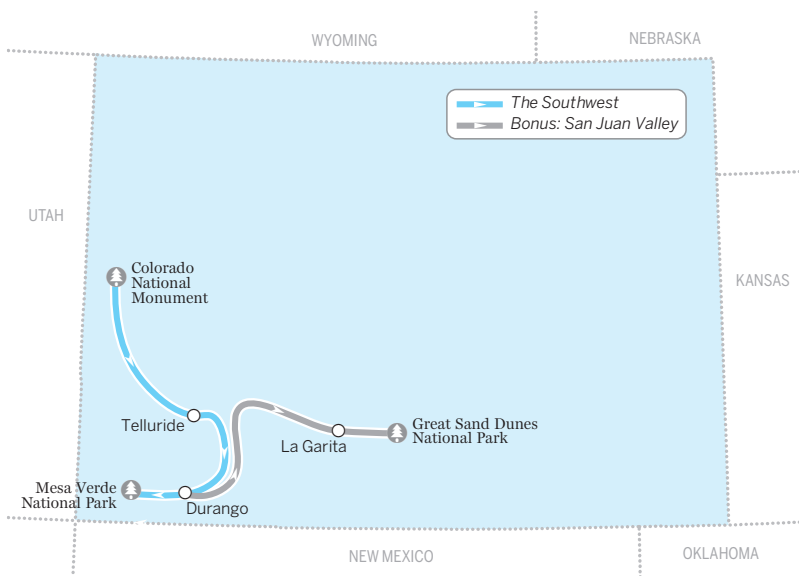
Two Weeks (Spring–Fall)

The State of Colorado

Fly into the bedouin-esque compound that is Denver International Airport, rent a car and head up to eco-groovy **Boulder**. This is the time to get your outdoor gear prepped and stretch your legs and lungs by hitting one of the many bike paths or, if you're in Boulder, hike the Royal Arch Trail.

Head west on I-70 to **Vail**, where you can run a river, get in some downhill mountain biking and enjoy a sushi feast at Osaki's before continuing west to the stunning climbing mecca of **Colorado National Monument**. Camp overnight and hit Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness the next day for a hike in Rattlesnake Canyon. Head south and climb back into the Rockies and into hippie-chic **Telluride** before heading south to **Durango**, where you can hop the **Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad**.

Next go deep into the Four Corners to see **Mesa Verde Cliff Dwellings**, then dip into **Pagosa Springs**. If you're here in the middle to late summer, consider a two-day backpacking trip in the nearby San Juan high country. Otherwise take the 160 east to the **Great Sand Dunes National Park** on your way to **Cuchara** in the Spanish Peaks Wilderness – another fine under-the-radar hiking destination. Indulge yourself with a night at the Broadmoor in **Colorado Springs** on your way north to Hwy 285, which you'll take to Hwy 24 and the up-and-coming paddlers' paradise of **Buena Vista**, a great place to get into some white water. There's free camping and some sweet B&Bs here, too. Then head north on Hwy 24 and turn onto Hwy 82 through **Twin Lakes**, over Independence Pass (with epic Continental Divide views), and into tony, musical, adventurous **Aspen**. Hike in the **Maroon Bells Wilderness**, bicycle to **Ashcroft** and eat at the **Pine Creek Cookhouse**. And when you've had your fill, double back over Independence Pass, through **Leadville**, stop for fuel at the Minturn Saloon, before winding your way through **Vail** and into historic **Breckenridge** for one last day and night of cycling, hiking, hot tubbing and star gazing.



Five Days

The Southwest

Head south from Grand Junction into the stunning **Colorado National Monument** – a climbing paradise. Camp overnight and hit Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness and a hike beneath nine rock arches in Rattlesnake Canyon before nesting in über-groovy **Telluride**. Surrounded on three sides by towering 13,000ft peaks, Telluride is all strong coffee, historic buildings and big nature. You have some hiking to do here, whether it's to the top of Ajax Peak, Bridal Veil Falls (Colorado's highest waterfall; 365ft) or to the summit of 14,246ft Mt Wilson, in the Lizard Head Wilderness Area.

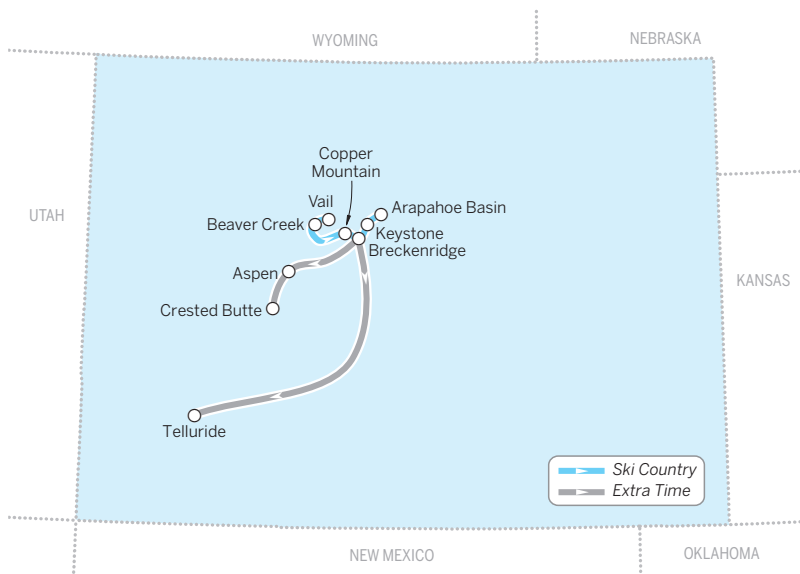
Drive the **Million Dollar Hwy** through Silverton to **Durango**, where you can hop the **Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad** (a must). Explore the turquoise jewelry and art galleries of the town before driving deeper into the Four Corners and **Mesa Verde National Park**. These Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings are massive and transporting: every breath of whistling wind has more meaning here. Spend the night beneath the stars here and you might feel your mind wander deep into dreamtime.

Three More Days

Bonus: San Juan Valley

If you're lucky enough to have the time, the southwest does deserve a full week. This way you can spend more time in Telluride, ensure you don't miss **Durango's** train ride and take your time on the **Million Dollar Hwy**. Then you can hike back-country trails through luscious **San Luis Valley**, where the terrain includes out-of-nowhere volcanic rock formations, and Hispanic adobe churches sprout in otherwise classic high-country alpine zones.

We love the hikes into Penitente Canyon; trails are best accessed from **La Garita**. From here you can head east to the **Great Sand Dunes National Park**, or if you're a cyclist you might disregard Pagosa Springs and the San Juans entirely, and instead head from Mesa Verde back to **Fruita**, outside of Grand Junction, where you have the best single-track mountain biking in the US at your doorstep.



Five Days

Ski Country

Begin the experience in **Vail** (just three hours from Denver and a shorter hop from Eagle County Airport), where you'll have access to the most acreage (5289 to be exact) of any ski area in the state. What makes Vail so special is the back bowl terrain (over 3000 acres). That's where you'll find the experts, unless they happen to be at the three terrain parks. Lift tickets in Vail can also be used at **Beaver Creek**, which fancies itself even more exclusive than Vail. It was built to attract the 1976 Olympics (it didn't), but still boasts a World Cup downhill course.

Spend your next three days in Summit County. Base yourself out of **Breckenridge**, which has a nice percentage of beginner runs, and some killer chutes and tree runs, and a ski resort spread over four mountains. Summit County is also well connected by free public transport, which means you can get from here to the night slopes at **Keystone** and over to **Copper Mountain**, too. And your lift ticket is also good at **Arapahoe Basin** if you fancy a whiff of 'the Beach.'

Four More Days

Extra Time

Those with more time up their sleeves will be able to hit more classic Colorado ski areas. In that case, we'd advise you to make **Breckenridge** your first stop. It's closer to Denver than Vail, and you get more free public transit access to neighboring resorts than in Vail (although, to be fair, the free public transit within Vail and Beaver Creek is great, too).

From Breckenridge you should head further west to **Aspen**, where you can ski on four mountains: Aspen, Aspen Highlands, Snowmass and Buttermilk, home to the Winter X Games. Also, Aspen has the best parties. Spend two nights here then, when you get your fill of fluff and nose-upwardness, venture to nearby but remote **Crested Butte**, on the other side of the Maroon Bells, with over 1000 skiable acres, a healthy chunk of intermediate runs and a massive superpipe. Or ditch the Aspen idea entirely and go from Breck to **Telluride** in one long day. Catering to the expert skier, Telluride, locals like to say, is what Aspen used to be.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Nate Cavalieri

Denver, Boulder, Northern Mountains, Northwest Colorado, Southwest Colorado, San Luis Valley Nate's first extended stay in Colorado was unexpected:

his touring rock band couldn't afford the gas to get out of Fort Collins. His next several trips through the state were more intentional, hiking and camping in the Rockies and the parks in the southwest. He's authored a handful of titles for Lonely Planet on California, the western United States and Latin America. After

a year-long trip around the world in 2010, he now lives with his better half in Brooklyn, New York.



Adam Skolnick

Boulder, Central Mountains, Eastern Colorado Adam is a third-generation Los Angeleno whose family moved from the old country to Boyle Heights, the Fairfax district and finally to Santa Monica. A freelance journalist, he writes about travel, culture, health, sports and the environment for Lonely Planet, *Men's Health*, *Outside*, *Travel & Leisure* and *Spa*. He worked on nine previous Lonely Planet guidebooks and has written a few unsold screenplays. He lives in Santa

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Rowan McKinnon

Denver, Southwest Colorado Rowan is an Australian freelance travel writer and lapsed rock musician. He lives in Melbourne with his partner and children. Rowan leapt at the chance of working in Colorado and casting his antipodean eye across its rarefied Rocky Mountains landscapes, its cities and its rural communities. Rowan's written about the US, the Caribbean and Australia, but his

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