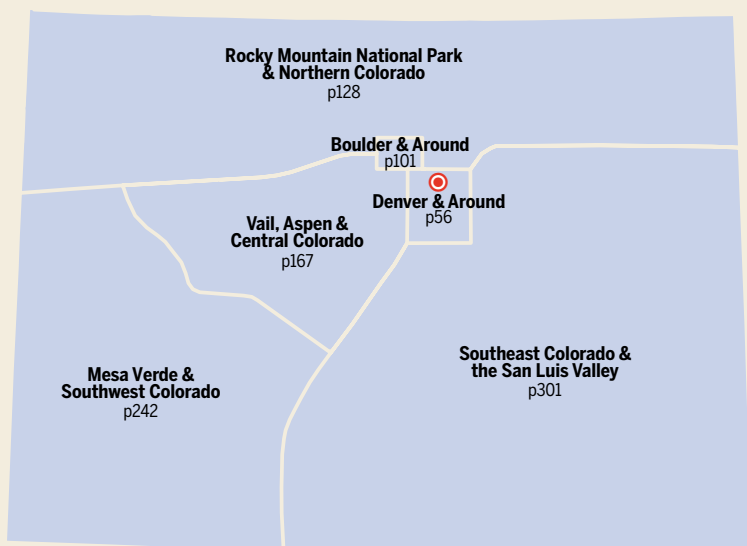




# Colorado



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

**Carolyn McCarthy,**  
**Greg Benchwick, Christopher Pitts**

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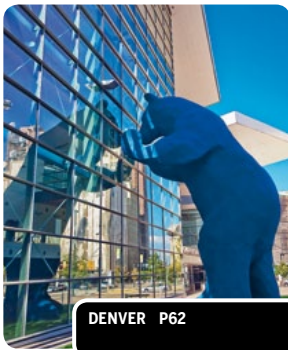
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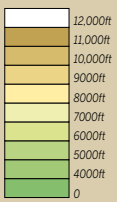
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# Colorado



**ELEVATION**



**Steamboat Springs**  
Cowboy town & powder hub (p155)

**Rocky Mountain National Park**  
Rockies splendor (p130)

**Dinosaur National Monument**  
Dinosaurs & rock art (p163)

**Aspen**  
Hollywood hits the slopes (p216)

**Crested Butte**  
Adorable ski & bike mecca (p286)

**Million Dollar Highway**  
Dizzy mountain vistas (p263)

**Mesa Verde National Park**  
Ancient cliff dwellings (p244)

**Durango**  
Old West meets outdoor adventure (p268)

WYOMING

NORTHWEST COLORADO

NORTHERN MOUNTAINS

UTAH

CENTRAL MOUNTAINS

SOUTHWEST COLORADO

SAN LUIS VALLEY

ARIZONA

**Fort Collins**

College town of bikes and beers (p142)

**ROAD DISTANCES (miles)**

Note: Distances are approximate

Boulder	175					
Colorado Springs	160	95				
Denver	160	25	70			
Durango	240	360	320	340		
Grand Junction	130	260	310	245	165	
Vail	100	110	160	100	290	150
	Aspen	Boulder	Colorado Springs	Denver	Durango	Grand Junction

NEBRASKA

**Boulder**

Colorado's take on Utopia (p103)

EASTERN COLORADO

**Denver**

The cosmopolitan West (p59)

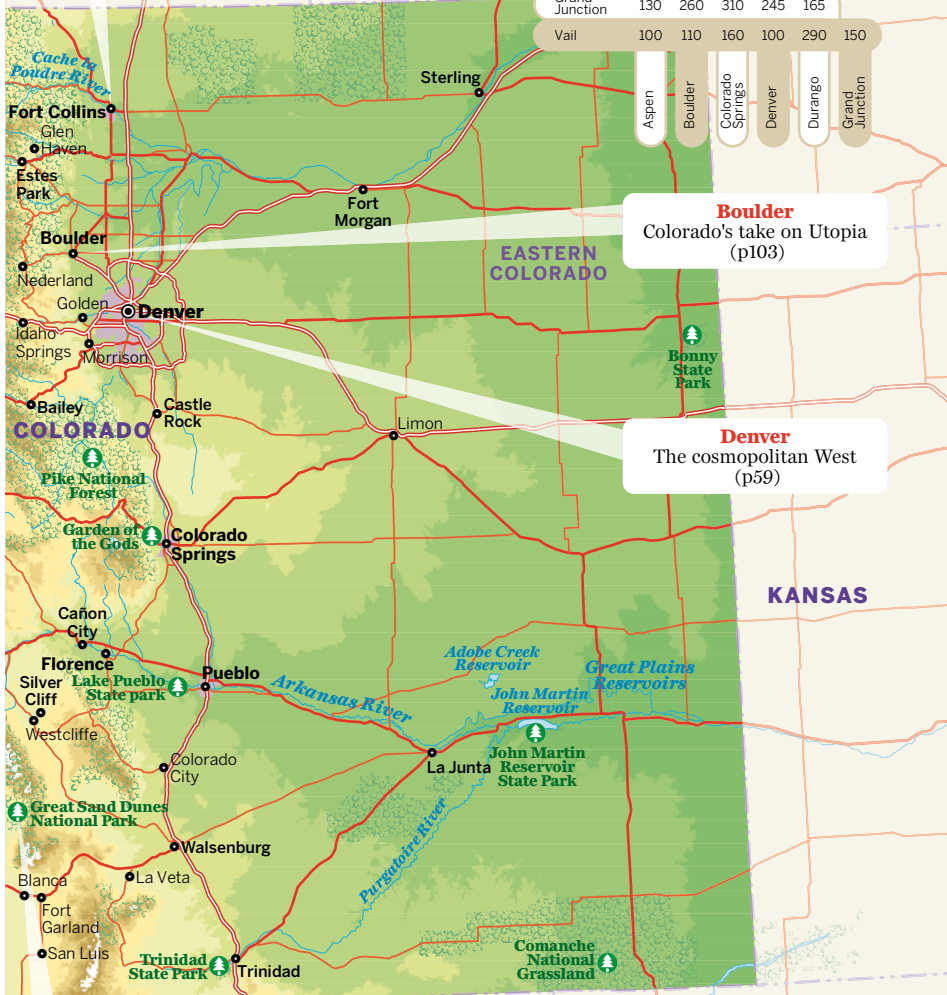
KANSAS

**Great Sand Dunes National Park**

Majestic sand dunes (p324)

NEW MEXICO

OKLAHOMA



# Itineraries



## Denver & the Northern Rockies

Combining urban-infused energy with mountain escape, this is one unforgettable road trip from late spring to fall. Spend a couple of days in **Denver**, riding the bikepaths, sampling the upstart restaurants and luminary bars of the Highlands and taking in a ball game. Head north through fun and funky **Boulder** to **Rocky Mountain National Park** to spend a few days in massive 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 bikepaths that lead all the way to Breckenridge. Consider a river trip or perhaps a paraglide, and take the gondola up to Eagle's Nest.

From Vail drive the back roads through Minturn 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**. Luxuriate in your last days here, exploring the quaint historical district in the evenings and cycling and hiking during long summer days. Get in a river trip before heading back to Denver.



**2**  
WEEKS

## The State of Colorado

Fly into the tented compound of Denver International Airport, made to echo mountain peaks. For this summer-fall itinerary, rent a car and motor to **Boulder**. Stretch your legs and prep your lungs by cycling the bikepaths and hitting the trails of Chataqua Park between sampling farm-to-table fare, coffee houses and congenial brewpubs.

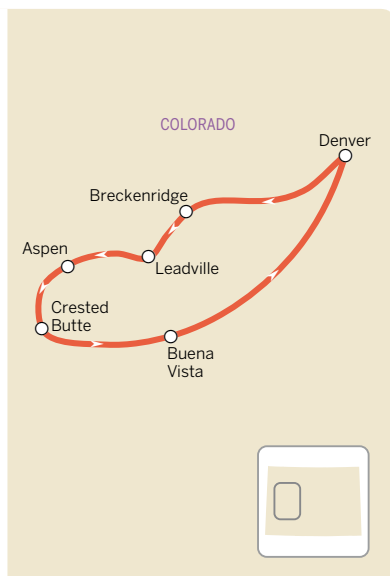
Head west on I-70, stopping in **Vail**, where you can run a river, cover thrilling terrain by downhill mountain biking and enjoy a sushi feast at Matsuhisa. Continue west to the stunning Wild West scenery of **Colorado National Monument**, with crumbling red-rock mesas and deep canyons. Camp overnight and hit **Fruita** for extraordinary desert singletrack or **Palisade** for a day-long wine-tasting meander through the vineyards. Head south to the enchanted San Juan Mountains.

Climb back into the high country and dead-end in historic **Telluride**, in a stunning box canyon surrounded by steep peaks. Here you can take in a festival, ride the free gondola and soak in the chic mountain vibe. Head out through scenic ranch country, hitting the hot springs outside **Ridgway**. If you're here in middle to late summer, consider a two-day backpacking trip in the nearby San Juan high country. Explore funky **Ouray** and link to **Silverton** via the wild Million Dollar Hwy, a sinuous and steep journey through three mountain passes. If you need a break from being behind the wheel, drop into good-vibe **Durango** via the **Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad**.

Detour to **Mesa Verde National Park** to explore stunning cliff dwellings. Camp here or enjoy a B&B in nearby Mancos. On your way east, take a soak in **Pagosa Springs**. Take Hwy 160 east to the **Great Sand Dunes National Park** on your way to **Salida** and the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness for world-class white-water rafting and hiking with grizzled mountain goats.

Take Hwy 24 west to **Colorado Springs**, where you can indulge with a night at the Broadmoor.



5  
DAYS

## Ski Country

Vacationing skiers and boarders should take advantage of resort alliances. **Vail** has a five-mountain alliance that's hard to beat. Shuttle here from Denver, spending at least two days exploring the mother of all North American resorts. The vast back-bowl terrain is where you'll find the experts, unless they're at the terrain parks. Nearby **Beaver Creek** rings even more exclusive. Spend your next three days in Summit County. Base yourself in **Breckenridge**, which has plenty of beginner runs alongside some killer chutes and tree runs. Summit County's free public transportation can zip you to family-friendly **Keystone**, with ice skating and night skiing. Your lift ticket also serves funky **Arapahoe Basin** if you fancy a whiff of 'the Beach.'

Or hit the locals' faves. The Rocky Mountain Super Pass Plus covers Winter Park, Copper Mountain and Steamboat Springs. Start with two to three days at **Steamboat**, a real Western town with gorgeous glades and deep powder. Move on to **Winter Park**, hitting the Mary Jane's moguls. Zip out to I-70 and the easy charm of **Copper Mountain** before heading back to Denver.

1  
WEEK

## Rocky Mountain High

Fuel up with a great diner breakfast in Denver before jumping on I-70 to begin this summer high-country trip. Veer off for **Breckenridge**, soaking up the Victorian ambience, stargazing from a hot tub and summiting your first 14er. Continue south to **Leadville**, a good lunch stop, then scoot south on Hwy 82 towards Twin Lakes. From here, climb to the heavens (with panoramas of the Continental Divide) on curvy Independence Pass, which plumbs you right into idyllic **Aspen**.

In Aspen, spend two nights hiking in the Maroon Bells Wilderness, cycling to Ashcroft and eating at the Pine Creek Cookhouse. Continue to nearby but remote **Crested Butte** via the summer-only Kebler Pass. The wildflower capital of Colorado, charming CB also boasts outstanding hiking, festivals and singletrack trails.

Next stop is the Arkansas River, the delight of anglers and rafters. Enjoy the cute Western ambience of **Buena Vista** and Salida. Take in the picturesque ghost town of St Elmo and soak in the healing waters of Mt Princeton Hot Springs. Meander back to Denver via the mountain route of Hwy 285.





## 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



### Carolyn McCarthy

**Coordinating Author, Boulder & Around, Mesa Verde & Southwest Colorado**

Carolyn fell for the Rockies as an undergraduate at Colorado College, where she hiked, skied, camped and paddled while reading the classics. For this title she sampled mountain distilleries, dodged a wildfire and heard even more Old West ghost stories. Carolyn has contributed to more than 20 Lonely Planet titles, specializing in the American West and Latin America, and has written for *National Geographic*, *Outside*, *Lonely Planet Magazine* and other publications. Carolyn also wrote the Plan Your Trip, Understand and Survival Guide chapters for this guidebook.



### Greg Benchwick

**Denver & Around, Rocky Mountain National Park & Northern Colorado**

A Colorado native, Greg's been all over the Centennial State. He taught skiing in Vail, walked through fire pits in campsites across the state and attended journalism school in Boulder. He calls Denver's Highlands home.

Read more about Greg at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/gbenchwick](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/gbenchwick)



### Christopher Pitts

**Vail, Aspen & Central Colorado, Southeast Colorado & the San Luis Valley**

Chris first drove west on a family road trip across the country and instantly fell in love with Colorado's star-studded nights. After four years at Colorado College, he decided to move up to Boulder for grad school – but only after mastering Chinese first. Fifteen years, several continents and two kids later, he finally made it to the end of what is normally a 90-minute drive. He currently divides his time between writing, dad-dom and exploring Colorado's wilder corners.

Read more about Christopher at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/christopherpitts](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/christopherpitts)

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