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ASPEN SNOWMASS
SNOWMASS BIKE PARK
ON THE COVER

1,700 Ride the Rockies cyclists head south on Colorado Highway 133 toward McClure Pass and on to Hotchkiss on the morning of June 13, 2019, after staying in Carbondale the night before.

(Photo by Anna Stonehouse/The Aspen Times)
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do something MAJOR
A steady addition of mountain biking trails in recent years paid off last winter when the Roaring Fork Valley was designated a Gold Level Ride Center by the International Mountain Biking Association.

The valley was recognized for more than 300 miles of single-track trails and dozens of miles of additional routes friendly for mountain bikers between Aspen and Glenwood Springs.

IT WAS THE FIRST GOLD-LEVEL DESIGNATION IN COLORADO AND JUST THE SEVENTH WORLDWIDE.

The recognition will alert people traveling to the Roaring Fork Valley that there are challenging trails to seek out throughout the area, said Mike Pritchard, executive director of the Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association. The nonprofit organization plays a key role in designing trails and organizing volunteer labor and professional trail building. The designation may also build greater awareness about the superb system within the valley, he said.

“We want people who live here to appreciate what we’ve got and support it,” Pritchard said.

All areas of the Roaring Fork Valley — which includes Snowmass Village, Basalt and Carbondale — contribute to the outstanding network. The days are long gone when riders had to travel to Aspen exclusively for good trails.

The city of Aspen, Pitkin County Open Space and Trails program and U.S. Forest Service have expanded the Smuggler Mountain-Hunter Creek Valley-Four Corners trails into a world-class network with slow, steady additions and improvements over the last decade.

Pitkin County’s acquisition of the property that became Sky Mountain Park allowed for intermediate flow trails — without technical challenges — that attract a wide variety of riders. Aspen Skiing Co. keeps adding trails for downhill thrill seekers at its bike park at Snowmass. Challenging cross-country trails also abound around the village.

Some of the biggest draws in the midvalley are the various loops possible by combing the Glassier Trail, Buckhorn Traverse, Buckhorn Trail and Vasten Trail, all relatively recent additions. The Glassier-Buckhorn Loop, rideable in either direction, provides 15.5 miles of run. The addition of the 6-mile Vasten single-track trail creates a longer day in the saddle for riders.

All those routes are single-track trails and all are located on a geographic feature called the Crown, a prominent hillside between the valley floor and Mount Sopris. The trails are generally buffed out, with just a few technical spots. They provide a moderate physical challenge.

“They were designed to be pretty friendly for climbing,” Pritchard said.

The trails on the Basalt/Emma side of the Crown can be linked to the Prince Creek trail network, making for a long, challenging day.

Pritchard said the trails aren’t overwhelmed yet. They are open to foot and bike traffic. The farther a rider gets from trailheads, the less likely to run into trail runners or hikers, Pritchard said. Other trails are dedicated to equestrian use.

Riders in the midvalley also have Basalt Mountain’s single-track routes available again after closures during and after the Lake Christine Fire in summer 2018.

The Mill Creek Trail as well as the longer Upper Basalt Mountain/Cattle Creek loop transformed over the course of the summer from a barren wasteland to routes lined with blooming fireweed and rapidly growing aspen tree saplings. Blackened conifer tree trunks will be part of the landscape for decades, but the fire opened up big vistas along the trails.

“Basalt Mountain is a pretty cool place to visit after the fire,” Pritchard said.

Mill Creek is a popular route when riders are pressed for time. It involves an easy climb up a Forest Service road and a quick
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One of the best ways to research trails in the Roaring Fork Valley is to use www.mtbproject.com. Riders can search by area, such as Basalt or Aspen, or look up a specific trail. They can get directions, a map, elevation gain and loss and the high and low points on the trail.

“Descent via single-track trail.

The Upper Basalt Mountain trail provides a stiff climb though one that isn’t technical until the road gives way to a single-track route. After additional climbing through rock gardens, riders connect to a steep, technical descent on the Cattle Creek Trail.

“It’s just a good, physical challenge,” Pritchard said.

Both trails provide a ringside seat for fire recovery ecology.

In the lower valley, the Grandstaff Trail in Glenwood Springs’ backyard and the new network in South Canyon have been popular additions.

The Roaring Fork Valley received bronze-level recognition for its mountain bike trail system in 2014. The International Mountain Bike Association provided a detailed report on strengths of the system and what was lacking. That provided a guide for local cycling enthusiasts to add trail types, mileage and services. Crown Mountain Park in El Jebel will play an increasingly important role in appealing to a broad spectrum of skills, according to Pritchard.

The park in the El Jebel area currently has a BMX racetrack and a kids’ strider track. In the spring it is scheduled to add two lanes of mirrored asphalt pump track that can accommodate races and a progressive dirt jump park with features to accommodate beginners to experts, according to Nate Grinzinger, park and recreation manager at Crown Mountain Park.

By early July, the park hopes to complete a cross-country cycling skills course with a variety of features. It will be a place where individual riders can sharpen their skills and families can take a short spin.

“This park will be designed for all ages and all abilities. This will be one of the top parks in the state. A learning progression like this is very unique and will evolve our biking community significantly.”

— Nate Grinzinger
Park and recreation manager, Crown Mountain Park

“We are creating a new generation of bikers who will go out into our gold-level biking trails,” he added.
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Road biking is one of the most popular summer activities in Colorado for both visitors and locals alike, and the central Rockies are home to some of the best biking routes you’ll find. From scenic canyons to high river valleys, and from thickly forested roads to rocky top vistas, you’ll encounter world-class scenery wherever you go.

But before you head out into the unknown, you might want to consider both the amount of time you have to ride and the level of riding you’re looking for. Lucky for you, there are many great choices — from short rides in the range of 25 miles, (1–2 hours) to medium rides of around 50 miles, (2–4 hours) to century rides (4–8 hours), you’ll find them all here. You’ll also find everything from routes that can be ridden with ease, to some that are much more challenging.

**ROUTES OUT OF ASPEN**

**SHORT RIDES**

*Maroon Creek Road* – 22 miles round trip. This is one of the most popular short rides out of Aspen. Its popularity is due not only to its serene ascent through the heavily forested Maroon Creek Valley, but also for its destination — Maroon Lake, the popular viewing spot for the Maroon Bells.

*Castle Creek Road* – 24 miles round trip. Like Maroon Creek Road, Castle Creek Road winds its way through a gorgeous mountain valley and ends up at a classic Colorado destination – the ghost town of Ashcroft.

**MEDIUM RIDES**

*Independence Pass* – 40 mile round trip. This classic Colorado road ride winds its way through thick forests and clings to the side of mountains high above the headwaters of the Roaring Fork River before the final (steep!) push up to the 12,095-foot summit on the Continental Divide.

*Rio Grande Trail to Carbondale* – 60 miles round trip. This trail is built on the old Rio Grande Railroad route from Aspen to Glenwood Springs, and is relatively flat and well maintained. Head for Carbondale’s downtown to grab a bite before cruising back up the trail.

**CENTURY RIDES**

*Chapman Lake* – 95 miles round trip. For the first 19 miles of this ride, you’ll follow the Rio Grande Trail through Snowmass Canyon. Turn right at Basalt and head up the beautiful Fryingpan Valley where you’ll ascend to Ruedi Reservoir before leveling out around Meredith.

*Hanging Lake* – 100 miles round trip. Take the Rio Grande Trail to Glenwood Springs, and then connect to the Glenwood Canyon Trail for the final 10 miles to the Hanging Lake parking lot. If you’re up for it, add the 1-mile hike up to the lake – one of Colorado’s premier destinations. (A permit is required for the hike.)

**ROUTES OUT OF CARBONDALE AND GLENWOOD SPRINGS**

**SHORT TO MEDIUM RIDES**

*4 Mile Road* – 20 miles round trip. The road starts where Glenwood’s Midland Avenue leaves off, and follows Fourmile Creek up a scenic winding valley to Sunlight Mountain Resort.
Crystal Valley Trail/Prince Creek Road – 20 miles round trip from Carbondale. With a wide-open view of majestic Mount Sopris, this trail is popular both for its scenery and easy riding. Pair it with a 6 mile detour up Prince Creek Road if you want a little bit longer ride.

Missouri Heights loops – 20 to 50 miles. Missouri Heights, just north of Carbondale, includes several scenic, low traffic roads that you can loop in any combination. Head up Catherine Store Road, Cattle Creek Road, Spring Valley Road, or Red Canyon Road, loop back down and use the Rio Grande Trail as a connector.

Thompson Creek Road and Hardwick Bridge Road – 30 to 40 miles from Carbondale or Gleenwood Springs. Thompson Creek Road ascends 6 miles to the iconic Thompson Divide area west of Carbondale. Pair it with Hardwick Bridge Road, which traverses the west side of the Roaring Fork Valley, and use the Rio Grande Trail as a connector.

Glenwood Canyon Trail – 32 miles round trip. This popular ride has some of the best scenery you’ll find anywhere with its vertical canyon walls and view of the Colorado River, and the ride is smooth and easy.

CENTURY RIDEs

Colorado River Road to McCoy – 104 miles round trip. This ride starts in Glenwood Springs and is a popular extension of the Glenwood Canyon Trail. The Colorado River Road is a beautiful 35-mile ride that follows the Colorado River from Dotsero north to the town of McCoy.

McClure Pass – 91 miles round trip. Take Highway 133 straight south out of Carbondale and stay on it all the way to the top of the 8,769 foot pass. Stop over at Redstone to fuel up on the way, and at Penny Hot Springs to relieve sore muscles on the return trip.

ROUTES OUT OF GRAND JUNCTION

SHORT RIDES

Palisade Wine and Fruit Tour – 23 miles. This scenic loop starts at Palisade’s downtown area and zig-zags its way through some of the agricultural community’s most beautiful rural areas.

Little Park Road/DS Road – 29 or 56 miles. Little Park Road has some spectacular views, but it’s a steep ride up — ascending over 2,500 feet in the first few miles. Return on Monument Road for the short ride, or take the out-and-back DS Road until the pavement ends for the longer ride.

MEDIUM RIDEs

Colorado National Monument Loop – 38 miles. Called the “crown jewel” of road biking in the Grand Valley, the loop starts on Monument Road just west of downtown Grand Junction before heading into the park, (entrance fee required) looping around Rim Rock Drive and returning on the Riverfront bike trail.

Grand Mesa Hill Climb – 63 miles round trip. This might be one of the more difficult, and beautiful, rides you’ll ever take, with over 6,000 feet of climbing. Start at the Highway 65 exit of of I-70 and follow the road along Plateau Creek for 10 miles, then its uphill all the way to the 10,839-foot summit.

CENTURY RIDEs

Unaweep Canyon – 88 miles round trip. This gorgeous out-and-back route through a majestic canyon starts at the Gunnison River of Highway 50 and heads southwest until the turnaround at Gateway on the Dolores River.
You can find a wide range of trails in Pitkin County, from smooth, fun rollers to dedicated, double-black downhills. There are trail systems in Aspen and Snowmass Village, and the towns can be linked by trail. Ride in a ski area, ride away from a ski area, ride close to wilderness. No matter where you go, there’s usually climbing. For the fit, there are numerous routes that string together several trails for long loop rides, and some more isolated trails that require local knowledge.

**Buttermilk Bowls, Aspen**

**Getting there:**
Begin at the base of Buttermilk on the Tiehack side and start your ascent on the right side of the summer work road. Take a left at the fork on Oregon Trail. The trail will begin as a double track and become single, then end abruptly when it meets the Buttermilk Ski Area summer road. Continue on the road and make a left for the long climb. About a half mile past the Cliffhouse, you’ll reach the top of the West Buttermilk ski lift, where you’ll find the Buttermilk Bowls Trail.

**Trail talk:**
From the top, take in views of Maroon Creek valley and Pyramid Peak. Portions are closed May 15-June 20 for elk calving season.

**BUTTERMILK BOWLS LOOP**

**DISTANCE:** 8.8 miles

**DIFFICULTY:** Difficult

**THE DIRT:** This loop is a steady grind with amazing single-track on the descent. It’s difficult because it’s steep, but it’s not overly technical, with 60 percent single-track.

**GOVERNMENT TRAIL**

**DISTANCE:** 6.6 miles

**DIFFICULTY:** Difficult

**THE DIRT:** This trail is typically ridden from Snowmass to Buttermilk, but can be ridden in the opposite direction for more climbing. It has several technical, rocky areas that require stream crossings.
Lincoln Creek, Aspen

Getting there:

Start on CO 82 in Aspen and head east toward Independence Pass and Lincoln Creek Road. You’ll parallel the creek until reaching the reservoir. Once you reach the reservoir, if you continue ahead, you’ll reach the Ruby ghost town. Depending on the time of year, the road to the ghost town can have water crossings and it is almost always rocky and more technical than the first stretch.

Trail talk:

It’s easy to turn back whenever time or energy demands, but pedal all the way to Ruby if you can. The views are worth it. This is a seasonal dirt road and closed in winter.

LINCOLN CREEK ROAD TO RUBY GHOST TOWN

DISTANCE: 21.7 miles

DIFFICULTY: Easy/intermediate

THE DIRT: We suggest an out-and-back version of this ride. There is some technical riding beyond the reservoir, but the riding is moderate and beautiful in the high-alpine country. There’s no single-track on this ride, but there is a good amount of climbing on the road. The beauty is that you can turn around anywhere on the ride if you get tired or weather becomes problematic.
Smuggler, Aspen

Getting there:
Head to Smuggler Mountain Road to access the trailhead, which is on the city’s northeast corner. There’s parking up the dirt road and to the right. If it’s full, there’s an overflow lot nearby on Park Circle.

Trail talk:
Smuggler Mountain Road itself also is popular with hikers and dog walkers. The road offers great views and access to a number of trail networks.

**HUMMINGBIRD**
**DISTANCE:** 1.8 miles  
**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate  
**THE DIRT:** Hummingbird is a great connector for longer rides or fun on its own. It’s Hunter Creek’s first machine-built trail.

**HUNTER CREEK TRAIL**
**DISTANCE:** 4 miles  
**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate  
**THE DIRT:** This trail actually starts on the Rio Grande Trail in Aspen. It eventually becomes a steep hiking trail. The far eastern end of the trail is close to the Hunter-Frying Pan Wilderness boundary, which makes for a beautiful out-and-back ride. The far end of the trail is much more technical. Near the upper trailhead, the ride becomes rocky. Most riders avoid this stretch by hitting the Verena Mallory single-track for a half-mile detour. Most people access this route from the parking lot at the Upper Hunter Creek Trailhead. From here, it’s a fast descent.

**SMUGGLER-HUNTER CREEK LOOP RIDE**
**DISTANCE:** 9.6 miles  
**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate  
**THE DIRT:** Smuggler and Hunter Creek Loops are mostly intermediate rides, but there are expert technical challenges along the way. And of course, it all starts with a rigorous ride up Smuggler Mountain Road. Descend Tootsie Roll Trail until you reach the intersection with Lollipop Trail. Lollipop terminates on an old mining route. Turn right and continue downhill on the single-track, past a Jeep road intersection. You’ll reach a second intersection with views of the Hunter Creek Valley floor. Continue left until you hit the Iowa Shaft Trail. At the end of Iowa Shaft, make right and continue to the Hunter Creek Trail connection.
SMUGGLER-HUNTER-VANHORN-HOBBIT-SECRET-SUNNYSIDE LOOP RIDE

DISTANCE: 17.7 miles

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate/difficult

THE DIRT: From Smuggler Mountain Road, climb the dirt road to the Smuggler Observation Deck. The main route continues to the left of the kiosk on Hunter Creek Cutoff Trail, which leads all the way to Hunter Creek Trail. Make a right on the Hunter Creek Trail and follow it for several hundred yards before crossing the 10th Mountain Bridge. Stay left, which will drop you into a White River National Forest parking area. From the parking area, you’ll climb Red Mountain Road.

This difficult ride (3,200 feet of elevation) offers lots of opportunity for climbing and plenty of descending through diverse landscapes. Almost all of the descents are on single-track. After the climb up Red Mountain Road, go toward Van Horn Park through the grassy meadow to Hunter Creek overlook. The ride continues to Hobbit Trail, where you’ll experience a steep and grueling climb until the awesome descent to 4 Corners. While most of the ride is intermediate, the Sunnyside Trail is difficult with steep terrain and lots of rocky, rooted sections. After a technical downhill, you’ll grab the Rio Grande Trail and head back toward Aspen.
Snowmass Trails, Snowmass

Getting there:

There are a number of ways to access the Snowmass Trail system, including the gondola. For the loop, start at the Snowmass Recreation Center and ride on the Brush Creek Bike Path until you cross Brush Creek Road. There you will hit the Ditch Trail.

Trail talk:

Snowmass is full of rides with beautiful scenery, including aspen trees, wildflowers and meadows.

SNOWMASS TRAILS TO ASPEN SHUTTLE RIDE

DISTANCE: 17.6 miles
DIFFICULTY: Difficult

THE DIRT: Start at the small, dirt parking lot on Owl Creek Road, then ride the Owl Creek Bike Path for about 50 yards to Tom Blake Trail. Don’t be confused by the brief paved interruption on Tom Blake Trail (the uphill on Faraway Road), which eventually leads to Hidden Lane (also paved). Make a right and descend Wood Road. Make a left and a short single-track leads you to Fanny Hill Ski Slope.

This is one way to ride from Snowmass ski area to the base at Buttermilk. Connect along Sleigh Ride, The Ditch, Connector and West Government. You can make a complete loop by riding the Owl Creek Trail paved bike path or venturing through Sky Mountain Park single-track. Riders will enjoy miles of single track through Aspen groves and forest. Technical rocky areas and roots offer a challenge for even the experienced.

THE SNOWMASS LOOP

DISTANCE: 24.1 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate

THE DIRT: Snowmass has one of the best single-track riding systems in Colorado and it continues to expand. Riders experience rolling jump lines on Deadline Trail, forests and flowers on Tom Blake Trail, rocks and grassy meadows on Cross Mountain Trail and epic mountain views on the fast, smooth descent of Rim Trail. Ride the loop clockwise, and try to make it to Rim Trail, the most beautiful portion. Make sure to grab a bike trail map before you head out to explore; there’s a lot to see.

RIM TRAIL LOOP

DISTANCE: 10.5 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate

THE DIRT: Park at the Rodeo Lot in Snowmass Village. Ride up Brush Creek Pike Path to just below the ski area. Cross Brush Creek Road before the final turn to the ski area and ride Divide Road to the Rim Trail trailhead.
RIM TRAIL LOOP (continued)

This single-track loop includes lots of climbing on a bike path to 7 miles of single-track. There's about 1,800 feet of elevation change, so it's a challenging ride. You'll start off with a quick climb. Check out the incredible 360 degree views at the top before descending on some fun and fast single-track. From here, it's pure descent to the parking lot.
Sky Mountain, Snowmass

Getting there:
Park at Buttermilk Ski Area and hit the Buttermilk Connector Trail, which leads to Owl Creek Trail. As the path veers away from the airport runway and starts to climb, make a right on Airline Trail to begin your ascent.

Trail talk:
Note that the sections of the ride within Sky Mountain Park will be affected by the annual wildlife closure from Dec. 1 to May 15. Dogs are not allowed within the park.

SKY MOUNTAIN PARK LOOP
DISTANCE: 18.6 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: Sky Mountain Park includes the ridgeline between Brush and Owl Creeks, with amazing views of Aspen, Snowmass, Independence Pass, the Elk Mountain Range and downvalley. From Airline Trail, turn left onto Skyline Ridge Trail. Take it to Deadline Trail. At the end of Deadline, make a hard left onto Highline Trail. Follow it until you make a right to join Lowline Trail, which loops back to Highline. You’ll end up near the base of Viewline Trail and a kiosk, where you can take Ditchline Trail to the Brush Creek Bike Path to finish your ride.
Hay Park, El Jebel

Getting there:
From Carbondale, take CO-133 south and turn left on Prince Creek Road. After a few miles, the road turns to dirt. You’ll top out at an intersection; from there, turn right and proceed a few miles to the parking lot. From there, you’ll head across the road and begin climbing. (You should see a trail marker and kiosk.)

Trail talk:
The scenery draws people to Hay Park, and it keeps them coming back. The rocky first mile of climbing makes for a difficult ride, but the views are worth it.

HAY PARK

DISTANCE: 18.6 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate

THE DIRT: Grind up the trail. You’ll know you’ve hit the halfway point when you come to a left switchback. At a cattle gate, the trail will smooth out and the ride will become more enjoyable. There’s one intersection on the trail. Here, bear left toward Hay Park; the right path would take you toward Thomas Lakes and Mount Sopris. You’ll come to a stream crossing and then ride along the river. Eventually, you’ll enter a lower meadow and cross a wooden bridge. A final climb will take you through another cattle gate. After about 4 miles, you’ll find yourself in the upper meadow, which offers captivating views of Capitol Peak. From here, you can turn around and enjoy a fast return trip or plow forward for 5 more miles of difficult single-track on the way to Capitol Creek Road.
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Snowmass is at the heart of Colorado’s first and only IMBA-certified Gold-Level Ride Center. Let your outside side ride free on 90+ miles of singletrack, including lift-served and cross country terrain that’s fun for every age and ability. Learn more at GO SNOWMASS.COM

Pitkin County

On the roads

Get your lungs and your heart pumping with road rides at Aspen’s elevated altitude. Though the elevation will always add a challenge, the area offers rides at a variety of levels. No matter where you go, though, you’re sure to be surrounded by stunning scenery. Don’t forget your camera!

Castle Creek Road

Getting there:
From the Aspen roundabout, turn onto Castle Creek Road. This will take you directly to Ashcroft.

Trail talk:
This ride ends at Ashcroft ghost town, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Admission is $3, and dogs are not allowed.

CASTLE CREEK

DISTANCE: 11 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: You’ll climb about 1,800 feet over the course of this ride, which runs alongside the road’s namesake creek. If you’d like to continue past Ashcroft, you’ll find even more stunning views as you approach Taylor Pass. This ride is especially beautiful during the fall, as the leaves begin to turn color.
Owl Creek and Brush Creek, Snowmass

Getting there:
From the Aspen roundabout, take CO-82 west for 1.4 miles, then turn left onto Owl Creek Road. You’ll stay on it for 6 miles, and it turns into Brush Creek Road. At the next traffic circle, take the third exit onto Wood Road. There’s plenty of parking around Snowmass Village. Alternatively, take the bus from anywhere in the Roaring Fork Valley.

Trail talk:
These trails are friendly for beginner to intermediate riders, and they still offer much of the beauty you expect on Aspen’s more iconic rides.

OWL CREEK AND BRUSH CREEK LOOP
DISTANCE: 15 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: This loop provides some challenge thanks to its combination of downhill and uphill. You’ll climb 1,251 feet, with 1,424 feet of descent. Starting and finishing in Snowmass Village makes this accessible and perfectly positions you to take in the restaurant scene after the ride.

OWL CREEK TRAIL
DISTANCE: 5.5 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: This trail is one of Aspen’s easier rides. But don’t let that fool you; there’s still a fair amount of climbing, with 398 feet of ascent and 764 feet of descent if you ride in the suggested direction. Begin in Snowmass Village and end near Buttermilk Ski Area. There are also offshoot trails along the way.

BRUSH CREEK BIKE PATH
DISTANCE: 6 miles
DIFFICULTY: Easy
THE DIRT: Switch bikes and this route with some of the mountain biking trails, such as Rim Trail, Highline Trail and Tom Blake, for even more adventure.
Independence Pass, Aspen

Getting there:

From Aspen, continue through town by heading east on Main Street. Remaining on CO-82 will quickly take you to Independence Pass.

Trail talk:

The pass closes for the winter, typically October to May, so make the most of it during the warmer months.

INDEPENDENCE PASS

DISTANCE: 10 miles
DIFFICULTY: Difficult

THE DIRT: Get out on this classic road ride early in the season by signing up for Ride for the Pass. The annual ride takes place before the road opens for the season, so you don’t have to worry about cars. It begins 5 miles east of Aspen and offers two stopping points: one 2 miles in, and the second 10 miles in. Learn more at independencepass.org. You can also ride on your own, but watch out for traffic while you climb those 4,000 feet!
**Maroon Bells, Aspen**

**Getting there:**
From the Aspen roundabout, take the Maroon Creek Road exit. Parking is available at Aspen Highlands ski area.

**Trail talk:**
This pair of mountains are the most photographed in the country, and it’s easy to see why. Immerse yourself in the scenery by taking it in on two wheels.

**MAROON BELLS**

**DISTANCE:** 8 miles  
**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate

**THE DIRT:** If the uphill ride is too much, hitch a ride to the top of the climb with Blazing Adventures shuttle service. The ride back downhill will be a breeze.

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Photo by Maria Wimmer
Garfield County offers a wide variety of mountain bike trails — smooth dirt and rocky descents; short, rollercoaster funfests; and long, challenging epics. Plus, terrain spans rocky desert to cool, green forests.

There are lots of trails close to towns (or in them), and some that require a long drive into national forest land.

See if you can pry secrets from local bike shops, or at least get advice on trail conditions.

Red Hill, Carbondale

Getting there

For access, park just north of the intersection of Colorado highways 82 and 133, about a mile north of Carbondale’s roundabout.

Trail talk

This area offers a wide variety of single-track ranging from casual meadow rides to technical climbs and descents. Within easy riding distance of Carbondale, Red Hill is popular with bikers, hikers and dog walkers. But the farther from the trailhead you go, the more solitude you’ll find. The easiest riding is also farthest from the trailhead.

THREE GULCH

DISTANCE: 1.1 miles
DIFFICULTY: Difficult

THE DIRT: This trail offers a technical, fun and challenging grunt of a climb into the generally flowy Red Hill trail area. This is the easiest way up, though “the ramp” near the end challenges most riders.

BLUE RIBBON

DISTANCE: 1.3 miles
DIFFICULTY: Difficult

THE DIRT: This is a popular way back down the hill. It’s also a harder way up than Three Gulch, but after the junction with Three Gulch, riding up is easy until a steep climb to the top.

ELK TRAVERSE

DISTANCE: 1.6 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate to difficult

THE DIRT: This trail is a fun and sometimes technical side-hill route that connects the Red Hill Loop with the farther-out (and less-traveled) Northside Loop and associated loops.

NORTHSIDE LOOP

DISTANCE: 4.9 miles
DIFFICULTY: Moderate

THE DIRT: The longest trail in Red Hill is a mostly easy ride through meadows, but it also includes some rocky sections in pinyon-juniper.

RED HILL LOOP

DISTANCE: 6 miles
DIFFICULTY: Moderate

THE DIRT: The “Lunch Loops” of Carbondale, this combo throws together Three Gulch, Blue Ribbon, Bogus, Faerie, Skeeter’s Ridge, Roller Coaster and Blue Ribbon (again) for a 6-mile funfest.
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CYCLING SAFETY TIPS:

BE SAFE
• When riding with traffic, obey all traffic signs and signals.
• Yield to pedestrians, skaters and horses.
• Trail users must stop at all roads and yield to automobile traffic.

BE SEEN
• Dismount and establish eye contact with drivers before entering a crosswalk.
• Wear bright/reflective materials and use lights and reflectors at night.

BIKE LOADING ON RFTA BUSES:
(Available during summer/fall months)
• $2/trip on a space-available basis.
• Not all bus stops allow bike loading.
• Call 970.925.8484 to plan your trip.
**Hubbard Mesa, Rifle**

**Getting there:**
From I-70, take exit 90 for Colorado Highway 13 towards Rifle. Travel approximately 0.2 miles and turn right onto Highway 13 North. Travel 1.5 miles and turn left on West 16th Street. Turn onto Rifle Bypass after 0.6 miles then continue on County Road 244 (Fravert Reservoir Road). Turn right on County Road 290 and travel approximately 1 mile to the parking lot.

**Trail talk:**
This desert riding area is a maze of unmarked trails and roads. The best advice is to head to the parking area and explore. Riders can also park across from the Forest Service and ride up Fravert Reservoir Road for a warm-up.

Want a little guidance? Post in the Rifle Area Mountain Biking Organization Facebook group. Members are frequently willing to join others on the trail.

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**Boy Scout/Forest Hollow Loop, Glenwood Springs**

**Getting there:**
As Glenwood’s true classic ride, these trails can be ridden in an exhausting (but satisfying) 18-mile loop. Park in town somewhere (that serves your favorite beverage, perhaps) and head south about 3 miles on the Rio Grande Trail to the dirt Red Canyon Road.

**Trail talk:**
This is also a popular hiking area, so be prepared to yield right of way. Though this loop will make you sweat, it’ll also reward you with stunning views of Glenwood Canyon and the Colorado River.

**BOY SCOUT/FOREST HOLLOW LOOP**

**DISTANCE:** 18 miles

**DIFFICULTY:** Moderate

**THE DIRT:** The climbing begins on Red Canyon Road. After another 3 miles, turn left on Lookout Mountain Road — a rougher road with even more climbing and lots of sun exposure — for 1.5 miles to a parking lot for a four-wheel-drive road. Here is where the fun begins, though there is still some climbing on this rolling road. After not quite 2 miles, you’re finally at the single-track that heads down (down! finally!) Bear Creek. After 0.75 mile, turn left on Forest Hollow, which rarely changes in elevation for 5.6 miles as it travels the side hill above the Colorado River through cool Douglas fir and scratchy oak brush. The flat trail continues to the south, but turn right onto Boy Scout Trail, a fun, moderate/difficult, sometimes rocky and steep 2.5-mile single-track that drops you back into town to your waiting car and refreshment.
Wulfsohn, Glenwood Springs

Getting there:
From downtown Glenwood Springs, travel west on Eighth Street. Turn right onto Midland Avenue at the light, then left on Wulfsohn Road at the Community Center.

Trail talk:
Wulfsohn trails range from really easy to fairly difficult. Nothing is too long, and trails are close to town for a quick ride. Add a little mileage and an easy warm-up by parking at the Jeanne Golay Trailhead and riding Olsen Trail over to Wulfsohn. With the newly opened Grandstaff Trail, you can create a loop by linking Wulfsohn, Olsen, Grandstaff, Jeanne Golay and Stevie Bob for 12.1 miles of fun.

DEFIANCE
DISTANCE: 1.4 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate/Difficult
THE DIRT: Probably the system’s crown jewel, Defiance climbs up the hillside through oak brush with some tight turns, steep climbs and even a few rocks. Ride back on Stevie Bob, or add in Wulfsohn North for the whole experience.

GRANDSTAFF
DISTANCE: 3.4 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate to Difficult
THE DIRT: A fun, flowy, jumpy downhill trail, though only the lower portion is downhill only. Climb up Jeanne Golay Trail to reduce rider conflicts.

WULFSOHN TRAIL - NORTH
DISTANCE: 0.5 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: This trail is a good, rocky, intermediate single-track accessing the park or leading to views at the Wave on the Colorado River.
Prince Creek, Carbondale

**Getting there**

From Carbondale’s roundabout, travel about 1.5 miles south to Prince Creek Road. Turn left, and then travel about 1.25 miles to the Bull Pen parking lot.

**Trail talk**

The Prince Creek area offers easier riding than Red Hill through meadows and pinyon-juniper; one of the trails takes you over a car. You can opt out, but there are ramps built so you can ride over it lengthwise. Also, if you like climbing, give Innie a spin. There are additionally four-wheel drive roads that riders use to climb to the top of Crown, which they ride down on a combination of four-wheel drive roads, plus named and unnamed trails. Trails start about 3 miles from Carbondale, and lots of people ride up the pavement to get there.

**NORTH PORCUPINE**

**DISTANCE:** 2.5 miles  
**DIFFICULTY:** Easy  
**THE DIRT:** North Porcupine is considered a fun, rolling ride that offers views of Carbondale below. The trail takes riders far from the trailhead with little climbing, and a lung-busting loop can be made using Innie and Outie.

**Buckhorn/Glassier Loop**

**DISTANCE:** 15.4 miles  
**DIFFICULTY:** Intermediate  
**THE DIRT:** This loop combines some of the newer, purpose-built trails in the Prince Creek area with the paved Rio Grande Trail. The loop can be ridden in either direction, but the southern portion of Buckhorn Traverse is a flow trail designed to be ridden in a clockwise direction. A new trail is expected to be added in this area in summer 2019.
New Castle Trails, New Castle

Getting there:
Just as the name suggests, this system of trails is in the heart of New Castle. There’s plenty of parking at Alder Park. From US-6 in New Castle, head north (away from the interstate) on Castle Valley Boulevard. You’ll stay on Castle Valley for 1.6 miles before turning right onto Alder Avenue. Remain on Alder for a half mile, when you’ll reach the park.

Trail talk:
The system offers 11 miles of fun, mostly at an intermediate level. Regardless of what’s on your agenda, you’ll start by taking Alder Park Connector to Colorow Trail Connector. Turn left for Stairway to Heaven or Colorow Trail West, or head right for Colorow Trail East. Then it’s time to cut loose. And hey, the fun isn’t limited to the three trails we’ve highlighted. Take the map and explore. Note that this Bureau of Land Management property is closed from Dec. 1 to April 15.

STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN
DISTANCE: 2 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: The group New Castle Trails completed this one in 2017, and it quickly became an area favorite. You’ll climb up through a number of switchbacks — a fun and twisty way to ascend. It’s a great way to climb to other trails in the network; turn left for exploration, or a right to loop down Colorow Trail East. Stairway to Heaven is also a rip-roaring good time on the downhill — and less technical than the neighboring Colorow east and west trails.

COLOROW TRAIL WEST
DISTANCE: 1.1 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate to difficult
THE DIRT: Want a serious workout? Get to climbing. This trail is a fun one to descend, as well, with its steep, rocky run. Watch out for hikers and dog walkers.

COLOROW TRAIL EAST
DISTANCE: 1.1 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: This single-track trail offers great views of New Castle. The trail is mostly smooth, but steep portions and switchbacks will challenge you. Watch out, also, for hikers and dog walkers.

Photo by Kyle Mills
Lorax, Carbondale

Getting there:
From downtown Carbondale, head to the roundabout and continue to the other side of Main Street. From the roundabout, you’ll remain on Main/County Road 106 for 0.9 miles. Hang a left on County Road 108, and remain on it for 3.4 miles. The trailhead will be on your left.

Trail talk:
Lorax is an isolated trail, but it’s worth the trip. The trail closes for the winter, usually Dec. 1 to April 15.

LORAX
DISTANCE: 5 miles
DIFFICULTY: Difficult
THE DIRT: Lorax stands alone off Thompson Creek Road. After a rough, rocky start, this moderate trail rolls through punchy climbs and descents to a loop. It is not as well known as Red Hill or Prince Creek, but it’s no secret. Nevertheless, you might get it all to yourself.

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Garfield County has plenty of roads favored by bicyclists, but it also boasts three fantastic paved bike trails where riders can enjoy pedaling without worrying about cars. Scenery varies from the iconic Mount Sopris to the stunning Glenwood Canyon to lush, green agricultural fields. Bikers can climb Missouri Heights above Carbondale and connect to several paved and unpaved roads for loop rides. Grind up to the cooler air of Sunlight Mountain Resort outside of Glenwood Springs for a 25-mile out-and-back. There are also miles of roads connecting New Castle to Rifle on the north side of Interstate 70 that are good for riding.

**Rio Grande Trail, Glenwood Springs To Aspen**

**Getting there:**

The Rio Grande Trail climbs gently along the Roaring Fork River 42 miles and 2,100 vertical feet from Glenwood Springs to Aspen. There are many entry points along the way; visit rfta.com for more information.

**Trail talk:**

The section east of Carbondale between Catherine Bridge and Rock Bottom Ranch is closed until May 1 to protect wildlife, but riders can detour on county roads and rejoin the trail a few miles farther along.

**Distance:** 42 miles

**Difficulty:** Easy

**The dirt:** Roaring Fork Transportation Authority operates a bike bus beginning mid-June through the end of August that can take riders toward or all the way to Aspen for a long downhill back to Glenwood. Visit rfta.com/bikesonbuses.html for availability, rates and schedules.

**Glenwood Canyon Recreation Trail, Glenwood Springs**

**Getting there:**

This trail starts near Glenwood Hot Springs at Yampah Vapor Caves on the north side of the Colorado River. Within a mile, the trail crosses to the south side of Interstate 70 and follows the serpentine route of the Colorado River through Glenwood Canyon’s 16 miles of lush pockets and towering cliffs. The trail passes by four rest areas — No Name, Grizzly Creek, Hanging Lake and Bair Ranch — making it easy to ride shorter parts of the trail or to explore other attractions like the Hanging Lake foot trail.

**Trail talk:**

This bike path is easy for all levels, and offers incredible views as it snakes through Glenwood Canyon.

**Distance:** 16.2 miles

**Difficulty:** Easy

**The dirt:** The bike path is often open in April after rock debris is cleared. Winter snow, however, lingers in some years, and floodwaters sometimes close it during spring runoff. Inquire about seasonal conditions at a local bike shop. Shuttles into the canyon are available.
Mesa County features some of the best mountain biking in the country. Enjoy great views; test your mental and physical strength; and make riding part of your healthy lifestyle.

Stop in at local bike shops for trail tips, touring opportunities and tunes. You won’t be disappointed with single-track and trails made for every level spanning Grand Junction, Fruita, Palisade and even farther afield.

See you on the trails!

18 Road trails area, Fruita

Getting there:
As you cruise through miles of farmland on your way to the trailhead, you’ll be reminded that Fruita is a tale of two happily coinciding communities — farming and riding. There are several ways to get to 18 Road, depending on which way you’re coming from. If you’re in Fruita, get on Maple Road and head north out of town for about 4 miles. Hang a right on N 3/10 Road until you hit a “T” intersection. That’s 18 Road. Follow it north to the single-track promised land.

Trail talk:
We’re calling this the 18 Road area. But when you start talking to locals, you’ll find they also refer to it as the “North Fruita Desert” and “The Bookcliffs.” Who cares what it’s called! All you need to know is this area — created by a group of locals in the mid-1990s — is single-track at its best. Take a day, two days or set up camp and stay awhile. Some folks never leave. The elevation varies from 5,300 to 7,200 feet, and skill level ranges from easy to difficult. It’s miles of single-track for your pleasure.

EDGE LOOP

DISTANCE: 28-mile loop
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate to Difficult
THE DIRT: Thinking about biting off a multi-day trip like Kokopelli or Tabeguache? You might start by spending a day on “The Edge.” It gets you on top of the Bookcliffs and allows you to soak up the site of the mountain-biking heaven below. It’s long, it’s remote, it’s beautiful.

CHUTES & LADDERS

DISTANCE: 7 miles
DIFFICULTY: Difficult
THE DIRT: If you want 7 miles of pure fun, this is the trail for you! After climbing up Prime Cut, you’ll see a steep, intimidating hill with a trail attached to it. That’s the start of Chutes & Ladders. The trail is considered expert for its tricky climbs, technical mini-sections and short up-hill jaunts. It eventually turns into fantastic downhill — sweet, smooth, swoopy riding for nearly 3 miles. Once you wipe the gigantic grin off your face, you’ll take a short trip across the desert and land back at the trailhead.

THE FRONTSIDE

DISTANCE: 10.5 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: Be prepared to climb, but you know what climbing means — killer downhill fun. Views at the top are incredible.

WESTERN ZIPPITY

DISTANCE: 4.5 miles
DIFFICULTY: Easy
THE DIRT: Most people recommend this trail as a way to hop up to Zippity-Do-Da, but it’s a fun ride in itself. Western Zippity is fast, flowing and it’s sure to leave a smile on your face. If you take Frontside to Western Zippity from the top, it brings you to the west side of Zippity-Do-Da, which seems like “no man’s land” due to its peaceful solitude and proximity to the Bookcliffs.

JOE’S RIDGE

DISTANCE: 2 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: Ledges are the biggest challenge on this trail. Joe’s Ridge is caught by riding up either the road or Prime Cut and heading west. It leads to a small climb, which is where the fun begins. Experienced riders are known for letting go of the brakes in this section to enjoy the trail’s natural flow. Be cautious as you ride and gain speed — a wrong twist in the handlebars could send you flying. Don’t forget to stop and look around. Joe’s Ridge leads into MoJoe, which helps riders connect to the trailhead.
Lunch Loops, Grand Junction

Getting there:
At the intersection of First Street and Grand Avenue in downtown Grand Junction, head west for about 1 mile on Grand (aka Highway 340), following the signs directing you to the Colorado National Monument. Cross the bridge and you’ll come to Monument Road; hang a left taking you toward Colorado National Monument. Follow that road for 2 miles. You’ll see the parking lot for Lunch Loops on the left.

Trail talk:
It's a technical system of trails that locals love, particularly Grand Junction residents who can walk out the front door, jump on their bikes and ride a few miles to the trailhead. It's called the Lunch Loops because locals can easily jump on for a quick lunchtime ride.

KID’S MEAL / PUMP TRACK
DISTANCE: 1-2 miles
DIFFICULTY: Easy
THE DIRT: It's a one-of-a-kind bike skills park and pump track with dirt jump lines and more. Then warm up your riding skills on the Kid’s Meal single-track trail that circumnavigates the Lunch Loops trailhead area.

ANDY’S LOOP
DISTANCE: 8 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate to difficult
THE DIRT: Andy's is a great technical ride with lots of climbing and lots of challenges. Don't be ashamed to hop out of the saddle on portions, because it gets pretty steep. There are a lot of rocks in this system of trails, and they don't give much when you land on them.

GUNNY LOOP
DISTANCE: 5 miles, give or take
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate to difficult
THE DIRT: Gunny is kind of a loner, off by itself on the other side of Little Park Road, but don't cast off this ride just because it looks like a castaway. Gunny is a blast. As with most of the trails in the Lunch Loops area, if you're not on your A-game, Gunny will eat your lunch.

PET-E- KES
DISTANCE: 1 mile or so
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate, Difficult
THE DIRT: Community members built this trail in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management. It's named for Pete Larson, a former teacher and BLM employee. This trail is a great way to get to higher ground — tight single-track with lots of switchbacks. It's a good way to hone your technical skills. Beware, fall the wrong way in some areas and you won't stop sliding for 10 or 12 feet and three or four cactuses.

EAGLE’S WING & EAGLE’S TAIL
DISTANCE: 5 miles, give or take
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: The Eagles are at the heart of the Lunch Loop Trails area. If you ride into Lunch Loops not knowing where you're going, there's a good chance you'll land on a Wing or a Tail. That's not a bad thing. Get to the top of Eagle’s Wing, take a few minutes to soak up the view and gain an understanding of why it was named. As with most of the rides in this area, there are more rocks than you can shake a punctured tube at.

FREE LUNCH
DISTANCE: 1 mile
DIFFICULTY: Depends on how fast you burn down it
THE DIRT: This black diamond freeride was dedicated in November 2007. Free Lunch is the first officially sanctioned freeride trail on BLM lands. To minimize conflicts with other trail users, the trail is open to mountain bikes only, and it is restricted to downhill travel. If the last jump you did was over your buddy in the driveway as a kid using a propped-up piece of plywood, it's in your best interest to avoid the jumps, drops and rocks on this trail. But make sure you watch the people who do have the ability — it's an incredible spectacle. Pucker-Up is also a designated downhill MTB trail — one-way and no hiking.

MIRAMONTE RIM
DISTANCE: 1.8 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: If drops, swoopy single-track and exposure are your thing, then Lunch Loops’ Miramonte Rim is perfect for you. This looped trail is a great addition to your ride if you are playing around on Clunker and Bunker or coming down from High Noon or Holy Cross. This ride can be ridden clockwise or counter-clockwise. If you ride it clockwise, you will have several drops ranging from 3 to 7 inches. If you ride counterclockwise, you will hit flowing single-track and descend until you reach several technical climbs. Don’t forget to enjoy the views when at the north side of the trail.

THREE SISTERS
DISTANCE: 1-3 miles
DIFFICULTY: Easy/Intermediate
THE DIRT: These trails meander through the Three Sisters area of Lunch Loops. Single-track swoops and slides through 3-4 miles of rocky terrain. It includes sections where beginners and even some intermediate riders may have to hop off, but it is still fun to ride. It is often used as a warm-up ride. Yes-N-DeeDee takes you to the top of Curt’s Lane, which can be used to head back down to finish with Kid’s Meal or connect to the other trails like Miramonte.
Kokopelli Loop, Fruita

Getting there:
Drive 12 miles west of Grand Junction on Interstate 70 and get off at Loma, exit 15.

Trail talk:
Throw a camera in your daypack. You’re going to want to get out of the saddle a few times and soak up the views overlooking the Colorado River snaking through the rock walls of the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area. The views alone make riding this area worth your time. Oh yeah — the single-track is pretty cool, too.

STEVE’S LOOP
DISTANCE: 2.9 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate
THE DIRT: If you’re out for a cruise on Mary’s and want to pick up a few more miles, Steve’s offers some nice additional scenery worth checking out. Ride it counterclockwise and enjoy the views. It’ll add anywhere from a half hour to an hour to your ride.

LION’S LOOP
DISTANCE: 7.8 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate to Difficult
THE DIRT: You can ride this single-track fun as a loop or to connect with other trails. It continues on the same theme as the other Kokopelli rides — be ready for rocks and a challenge. The Fruita Fat Tire Guidebook offers great advice on different ways to ride one of the classic area trails.

HORSETHIEF BENCH LOOP
DISTANCE: 3.6 miles
DIFFICULTY: Intermediate to Difficult
THE DIRT: The worst part of this trail is all the grit you get in your teeth from the goofy grin you can’t wipe off your face as you tear through looping single-track. Slow down a bit at the Colorado River overlooks because there’s a bit of exposure — but more importantly, the view is great.
For more maps, features and riding tips on the area, go to aspentimes.com/cycling
**JULY 18 | 7:30 A.M. | Sunlight Showdown**
13 miles with 3,000 feet in gain at Sunlight Mountain Resort. Sign up for the run on Sunday as well & compete for a season pass. Sunlight Mountain Resort | $50 | www.bikesignup.com/Race/Info/CO/GlenwoodSprings/SunlightShowdown

**JULY 25 8 A.M. | Power of Four Mountain Bike Race**
Power of Four will include tons of climbing as it travels 25 miles in Snowmass with 5,000 feet of gain. Snowmass Village | $80-$200 aspensnowmass.com

**JULY 26, 8 A.M. | Porcupine Bike Loop Race**
The annual Porcupine Bike Loop Race requires costumes and helmets. The mountain bike event leaves from the bike valet tent at Mountain Fair, then tackles the single-track of Prince Creek. Expect doughnuts, bacon and beer (for those of age) along the way. Sopris Park, Carbondale alohamountaincycley.com

**AUG. 8 | 8 A.M. - 9:30 P.M. | Rides and Reggae Festival**
A celebration of all things trails, mountain biking, music and community. New Castle | newcastletrails.com

**AUG. 15-16 | VIDA MTB Series Women’s Skills Clinic**
The VIDA MTB Series focuses on making you a better rider through increased confidence and an improved understanding of the relationship between you and your bike. Snowmass | $395 www.vidamtmb.com/2020-snowmass

**SEPT. 5 | Wild Horse Gravel**
Wild Horse Gravel showcases the unique high desertscape of the Western Slope. Hosted on the luxury High Lonesome Ranch, riders will be treated to a country cook-out, campfire, cabins, camping – or glamping – and the best local music. De Beque | $140 | www.rollmassif.com/wildhorse/

**SEPT. 6 | 7 A.M. | Grand Traverse Mountain Bike Race**
The 40-mile mountain bike race will start in Aspen and finish in Crested Butte. Part of the Triple Crown Series started by the more famous winter ski race, the mountain bike race is the day after a foot race from Crested Butte to Aspen. Aspen Mountain 1A Base Area | $105-$240 summer.thegrandtraverse.org

**SEPT. 6 | Powderhorn Enduro**
Round 4 of Revolution Enduro series features a dramatic setting at the edge of the Grand Mesa and a great mix of technical trails. Powderhorn Mountain Resort | $110-$130 revolutionenduro.com

**SEPT. 12-13 | Deserts Edge Triathlon Festival**
Enjoy an off-road XTERRA triathlon Saturday and road triathlons Sunday. Both days include sprint and Olympic distances. Highline State Park, Fruita | $80-$265 desertsedgetri.itsyourrace.com

**SEPT. 18-19 | 18 Hours of Fruita**
Midnight Race solo or as a team on single-track during this 18-hour event. Check in begins at 6 p.m. Highline Lake State Park, Fruita | $235-$680 18hrsoffruita.com

**SEPT. 19 | Tour de Vineyards**
Celebrate the fall with a scenic tour of Colorado’s wine country. Choose between a leisurely 23-mile route that follows the Palisade Fruit & Wine Byway and the more challenging 58-mile route that adds on a loop up and over the Reeder Mesa Climb. Palisade | $70-$160 www.rollmassif.com/tourdevineyards/

**SEPT. 19 | 8 A.M.-5 P.M. | Rifle Adventure Weekend: Roan Cliff Chaos mountain bike races**
Beginner, intermediate & advanced mountain bike races in the Hubbard Mesa area. Rifle | visitrifle.com/western-adventure-weekend/

**SEPT. 26 | Tour of the Moon**
The Tour of the Moon was made famous in the 1980s Coors Classic and later in the cycling movie “American Flyers.” Register early — it sells out! Colorado National Monument, Grand Junction | $125 | www.rollmassif.com/tourofthemoon/

**SEPT. 26-27 | Snowmassive Chase**
Colorado High School Cycling League Race #3 Snowmass | coloradomtb.org

**OCT. 10 | Co2uT**
Each of five routes offers gravel-loving terrain, quad-busting hills, breathtaking views and wildlife. Fruita | www.desertgravel.com

**LATE FALL | Aloha Shaka Cross Series**
The annual cyclo-cross series returns for the fall, with grass, pavement & dirt events. Roaring Fork High School, Carbondale | $30 adults; $25 17 and younger; 9 and younger free; $5 off registration with a nonperishable food item | alohamountaincycley.com
**Pitkin County**

**ASPEN**
- Basalt Bike & Ski
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 400 E. Cooper Ave.
  - 970-925-7662
  - basaltbikeandski.com
- Aspen Bicycles
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 555 E. Durant Ave. Unit 1F
  - 970-429-8053
  - aspenbicycles.com
- Aspen Velo Bike Shop
  - **RENT**
  - 465 N. Mill St.
  - 970-925-1495
  - aspenvelo.com
- Four Mountain Sports
  - **BUY** RENT
  - MULTIPLE LOCATIONS
  - 970-920-2337
- Aspen Highlands
  - 00076 Boomerang Road
  - 970-544-3013
- Base Village at Snowmass
  - Snowmass Village, next to Elk Camp Gondola
  - Starts June 23
  - 970-923-0430
- Snowmass Village Mall
  - 45 Village Square
  - 970-923-2337
  - aspensnowmass.com
- Hub Of Aspen
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 616 E. Hyman Ave.
  - 970-924-7970
  - hubofaspen.com
- Ute City Cycles
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 231 E. Main St.
  - 970-920-3325
  - facebook.com/utecitycycles
- **BASALT**
  - Basalt Bike & Ski
    - **BUY** RENT
    - 731 E. Valley Road
    - 970-927-3460
    - basaltbikeandski.com

**Garfield County**

**CARBONDALE**
- Aloha Mountain Cycles
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 580 Colorado 133
  - 970-963-2500
  - alohamountaincycley.com
- Basalt Bike & Ski
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 571 Colorado 133
  - 970-963-0128
  - basaltbikeandski.com
- Why Cycles/Revel Bikes
  - **BUY**
  - 770 Industry Place
  - 801-698-3678
  - Whycycles.com

**GLENWOOD SPRINGS**
- Canyon Bikes
  - **RENT** SHUTTLE
  - 319 Sixth St.
  - 970-945-6605
  - canyonbikes.com
- Colorado Ebikes of Glenwood Springs
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 1301 Grand Ave. Suite A
  - 970-948-1292
  - coebikesofgws.com
- Glenwood Adventure Company
  - **RENT** SHUTTLE
  - 723 Cooper Ave.
  - 970-945-7529
  - glenwoodadventure.com
- Sunlight Ski & Bike Shop
  - **BUY** RENT SHUTTLE
  - 309 Ninth St.
  - 970-945-9245
  - sunlightmta.com/rental-shop

**Mesa County**

**FRUITA**
- Colorado Backcountry Biker
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 150 S. Park Square
  - 970-858-3917
  - backcountrybiker.com
- Over The Edge Sports
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 202 E. Aspen Ave.
  - 970-858-7220
  - oteports.com

**GRAND JUNCTION**
- Bicycle Outfitters
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 537 N. First St.
  - 970-245-2699
  - gbicycles.com
- The Bicycle Studio
  - **BIKE FIT**
  - 2497 Power Road #4
  - 970-255-0055
  - bicyclestudigj.com
- The Bike Shop
  - **BUY**
  - 950 North Ave. Unit 108
  - 970-243-0807
  - thebikeshopji.com
- The Board & Buckle Co.
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 2822 North Ave.
  - 970-242-9285
  - boardandbuckle.com

**NEW CASTLE**
- Bob’s New Castle Bicycle Repair
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 298 W. Main St.
  - 970-984-3503

**Browns**
- Brown Cycles
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 549 Main St.
  - 970-245-7939
  - browncycles.com
- Colorado Electric Bikes
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 561 25 Road
  - 970-242-3126
  - coloradoebikes.com
- Discount Bicycle Warehouse
  - **BUY**
  - 437 South Ave.
  - 307-421-0649
  - discountbicyclewarehouse.azurewebsites.net
- Electric Bike Shop
  - **BUY**
  - 1650 Highway 50
  - 970-242-0540
  - electricbikeshop.net
- Grassroots Cycles
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 401 Colorado Ave.
  - 970-243-2453
  - grassroots-cycles.com
- Punk Wrench
  - 1430 Main St.
  - 970-200-3467

**RUBY CANYON Cycles**
- **BUY** RENT
  - 301 Main St.
  - 970-241-0141
  - rubycanyoncycles.com

**PUNGEA**
- Rapid Creek Cycles
  - **BUY** RENT
  - 239 S. Main St.
  - 970-464-9266
  - rapidcreekcycles.com

**Mobile Shops**
- Roadrunner Mobile Bike Service
  - Serving Rifle to Carbondale
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Rolling through the Roaring Fork Valley?

Take your riding to new heights

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Special to Cycling 2020

Mountain-biking trails in the Roaring Fork Valley rightfully earned international acclaim last fall with Gold Level status (see pages 6-8), but if road riding is more your style the valley has you covered as well.

Perhaps one of Colorado’s best-kept secrets, the county roads that weave through Missouri Heights in the midvalley have become some of my favorite places to put together a solid mix of rides.

Key ingredients for a great road cycling area include: loops (as opposed to out and backs), a variety of distances and choices, great views, climbs and fast descents, safe access, and low auto traffic.

Missouri Heights, which stretches from Glenwood Springs to El Jebel on the northeast side of Highway 82, checks all these boxes.

There are five access roads, with the Upper Cattle Creek (Wendy’s Hill) as southern-most (closest to Aspen) access road and Red Canyon Road as the northern-most (closest to Glenwood Springs).

Missouri Heights has more variety for great loops than perhaps any riding area I’ve ever been to. The outer loop from Cattle Creek to Red Canyon and back on the Rio Grande trail is about 40 miles with 2,700 feet of climbing. You can double up the climbing by cutting back up Lower Cattle Creek Road and still not have to touch the same road twice.

Looking for a huge loop? You can ride up Cottonwood Canyon and over to Gypsum and then ride back along the bike path through Glenwood Canyon and up the Rio Grande Trail. This loop is about 80 miles with about 5,000 feet of climbing and you’ll have about 15 miles of dirt. You’ll want to make sure you have plenty of spare tubes and a raincoat for any unexpected weather. (That’s true of almost any Colorado ride over 20 miles.)

If you don’t have much time and want a shorter loop, there are great options from any of the access points.

The next requirement for a great riding area is the view; and it’s hard to beat the views from Missouri Heights. They are spectacular year-round. Riding up Cattle Creek in the fall when the scrub oaks are changing colors is wonderful. And the top of every climb, you’re greeted with the majesty of the 12,996-foot Mount Sopris, which towers over Carbondale. The scarred landscape of Basalt Mountain from the 2018 Lake Christine Fire is eerie, but an intriguing view as well.

Climbs and descents are a must for any great road ride. Nothing gets as monotonous as pounding out mile after mile on the flats with little change in cadence. Regardless of which access point you choose, you’ll be climbing to get up to Missouri Heights.

The area lacks a really long climb, but there are plenty of 2-mile to 5-mile climbs of varying steepness. Upper Cattle Creek (Wendy’s Hill) is a perfect climb for 20-minute hill repeats. It’s a 6% average pitch at almost exactly 3 miles, with 1,000 vertical feet of climbing. And what goes up must come down, so you’ll have plenty of descents to get the adrenaline going. All of the Missouri Heights descents are fast and fun.

Safe access is another requirement for a great road riding area. And the Rio Grande Trail — threading more than 40 miles through the valley from Glenwood Springs all the way to Aspen — provides a great corridor and access to the roads up Missouri Heights. Crystal Springs Road is actually one of my favorite access points to Missouri Heights, and is the only access point without a direct connection from the bike path. Getting to Crystal Springs Road requires you to ride on Highway 82 downvalley from the Catherine Store Road, but the shoulder is wide and it is only 2 miles. The climb is relatively short and steep, and just as I’m getting tired of climbing, it’s over and I get a great descent.

Finally, lightly trafficked roads are perhaps the most important characteristic for an enjoyable ride. There is very little traffic anywhere on Missouri Heights. The busiest sections of road are Upper Cattle Creek until about Fender Lane and Spring Valley Road up to Colorado Mountain College. And when I say heavily trafficked, I mean that during rush hour two or three cars will pass you every minute. Other than that, you may only see a half-dozen cars on the rest of the ride.

Missouri Heights is probably one of the best-kept secrets for road riding in Colorado. It has something for everyone and has so many unexpected options to explore.

Good riding!
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