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Colorado Trail "End to End" Guide

Written by Paul "Mags" Magnanti
Monday, 06 February 2006

A planning guide for the Colorado Trail . Has information on Colorado Trail resupply, Colorado Trail thru-hiking, and other information useful for a person on a long hike of the Colorado Trail. The current version was revised in Feb 2010.



The Colorado Trail "End to End" Guide

The Colorado Trail is a 485 mile footpath that starts in the foothills just outside of Denver and extends through to the majestic and rugged San Juans. In between those two points are sweeping views, gorgeous wildflowers and an experience in the mountains you will not forget.

While this handout will help you prepare for the basics on a journey of this trail, it is not the only item you need for information to complete the Colorado Trail. As always, you should consult with other resources before heading out on an extended trek in the mountains.

THE COLORADO TRAIL AT A GLANCE

- Official route is approx. 485 miles in length
- Northeastern terminus just outside of Denver in Waterton Canyon State Park
- Southwestern terminus just outside of Durango, CO
- Highest official point is 13240 ft
- Lowest point is 5520 ft
- The CDT and the Colorado Trail share the same treadway for 200 miles
- It takes most hikers 4-6 weeks to hike the trail.
- Five weeks is a very average pace.
- Well marked and easy to follow (by Western trail standards)
- Horses and mountain bikers (in non-wilderness areas) are also allowed in addition to hikers

WHEN TO DO THE COLORADO TRAIL

The window for hiking the Colorado Trail is relatively narrow. Generally speaking, the window for hiking the CT is no earlier than mid-late June and ending no later than late September/ early October. Before mid-late June there is generally too much snow in the high country; after late September/early October there is a very great chance there will be a snowstorm where the snow will accumulate and not melt the following day. This time frame is just a rule of thumb that can change depending upon snow pack, rate of snow melt and an early winter. The rule of thumb is pretty accurate however.

Pros and Cons of hiking in the Summer

PROS	CONS
More daylight for hiking	More people
Generally warmer weather	Lightning danger
Wildflowers are in full bloom	May be too much snow in a high snow year, esp. if start in mid-June
Water is flowing well (generally)	

Pros and Cons of hiking in the Fall

(Note: Fall generally comes to the Colorado high country by late August)

PROS	CONS
Cool crisp weather	Less daylight
Less people	Always a chance of freak snowstorm
Aspen are changing, gorgeous!	In a low snow year water flowing less
Elks bugling	Colder at night
Less danger of lightning	

About lightning: Lightning is the fact of nature many CTers have the most concern about. During the Colorado summer, thunderstorms start brewing around 1 or so in the afternoon and go until late afternoon. Almost like clockwork! When planning your mileage for the day, try to keep this fact in mind. Ma Nature doesn't always keep to this schedule, but she sure is consistent about if for the most part!

About "Da Bears": While there are black bears on the Colorado Trail, they are not even as remotely aggressive as their High Sierra cousins. The black bears tend to stick to the valleys and are not habituated to backpackers like their Sierra cousins. A bear canister is overkill (IMO); normal bear precautions should be plenty.

SOUTHBOUND vs. NORTHBOUND

Southbound: Starting from Denver eases a hiker into the higher elevations, starts off more gentle, more options to bail out if you need some RnR. You also get to end in the San Juans; a much more scenic ending than Waterton Canyon. Due to the elevation factor, this method is preferred for people from outside of Colorado. Durango is easier to leave and enter than Waterton Canyon.

Northbound: You do face some of the hardest terrain and higher elevation right away, end in the more subtle Waterton Canyon. End of trip will prove to be easy terrain wise. If you start late in the season, going Denver bound extends the window of hiking by one or two weeks to early-mid October.

GUIDEBOOKS AND MAPS

Guidebooks:

The Colorado Trail: The Official Guidebook, Seventh Revised Edition. By The Colorado Trail Foundation

For a general overview of the trail, includes re-supply info, USFS maps, and general description of the trail. The 7th revised edition has more detailed resupply info, as well as more detailed GPS info. Also has some general tips on lightweight backpacking; very progressive for a guidebook! My good friend **Linda Jeffers (aka GottaGo)** has many pics in this new guidebook. Woo hoo! The main difference between the 7th edition and 7th REVISED edition is that the revised edition now includes information on the Cataract and Clear Creek reroutes. As always, check the Colorado Trail Foundation's website for latest trail re-routes and information.

The Colorado Trail: The Trailside Databook, Fourth Edition. By The Colorado Trail Foundation

The Colorado Trail's equivalent to the AT databook. Though not quite small enough to fit in a shirt pocket, still compact. Ounce for ounce and dollar for dollar, the most valuable guidebook for the CT.

Maps:

USFS Maps in Guidebook: Some basic maps do come with the guidebook, but they are limited in scope, do not show alternate routes/bailout points and have no topo lines. Some people find them adequate; I do not like using them. YMMV.

The Colorado Trail Map Book: A new map set available on the the Colorado Trail Foundation website for \$45:

CT Topo Map Book: *Detailed, up-to-date topographic maps and waypoints help you navigate The Colorado Trail and plan your trips. Includes recent trail reroutes in Clear Creek and Cataract Ridge. Soft cover, 8.5" x 11" and spiral bound to lay flat for ease of use, it weighs only 14.5 ounces. Can be disassembled allowing users to carry just what they need. (Paper is not waterproof and packing in a Ziploc bag is recommended.) Includes 73 pages of full color, shaded relief topo maps detailing The Colorado Trail and the bicycle detours around Wilderness areas. Magnetic declinations for compass users. Complete printed list of nearly 1200 GPS waypoints in UTM & Lat Long formats. Additional detail is available on*
http://bearcreeksurvey.com/colorado_trail_mapbook.htm

Note: These maps are very detailed, however they only show the CT corridor. If you want to take alt routes, "bag" some of the more obscure 14ers or prefer a wider view than just the CT corridor (for bailout points perhaps) you may want to take different maps or the Bear Creek maps with the appropriate sections of the **DeLorme Gazetteer for Colorado**. Taking the narrow corridor maps with the appropriate Gazetteer maps are a strategy many CDT hiker use for their thru-hikes FWIW.

Trails Illustrated Maps: Very detailed with a nice overview of not just the trail, but surrounding trails as well. Good if you plan on taking alternate routes and/or doing 14ers. They are water resistant. Cost ~\$11 ea. A bit heavy. You need thirteen maps to complete the trail, so it can be an expensive option. Being a Colorado resident, already owned many of the maps anyway so it was an option that worked for me.

If you decide to use the TI maps, you will need the following to cover the whole trail:

- #104 Idaho Springs/Loveland Pass
- #105 Tarryall Mountains/Kenosha Pass
- #108 Vail/Frisco/Dillon
- #109 Breckenridge/Tennessee Pass
- #126 Holy Cross/Reudi Reservoir
- #127 Aspen/Independence Pass
- #129 Buena Vista/Collegiate Peaks
- #130 Salida/St. Elmo/Shavano Peak
- #135 Deckers/Rampart Range
- #139 La Garita/Cochetopa
- #140 Weminuche Wilderness
- #141 Silverton/Ouray/Telluride/Lake City
- #144 Durango/Cortez

The guidebook, databook and map book can be ordered from the Colorado Trail Foundation. Many bookstores in Colorado have the guidebook and data book. Amazon and other online resources also carry the guidebook. Trails Illustrated maps can be found at www.trailsillustrated.com and many local outfitter stores in Colorado

GPS Waypoints: For those who wish to enter waypoints for their GPS and do not wish to manually enter them, Bear Creek Survey has their waypoints avail for **downloading to your GPS**

Profile Maps: Chris Johnson aka Mr. Parkay has **free profile maps of the Colorado Trail** avail for downloading

PERMITS: No permits are needed to hike the Colorado Trail. In some areas, such as Holy Cross Wilderness, there is a self-signed permit station when entering the wilderness areas. There is no charge for this permit.

EQUIPMENT FOR THE COLORADO TRAIL

If you are an AT or another long trail veteran, most of your equipment and clothing choices should work fine. There are some caveats that do apply:

- You are hiking at altitude! UV radiation is more intense; sun exposure is a major concern. Sunglasses and sun protection are a must! Wear sunscreen and/or a large hat, long sleeves and long pants. Even the dime store sunglasses now have 100% UVA and UVB protection.
- You will want to be hydrated as well. The sun exposure means you are more likely to get dehydrated. A dehydrated body does not work efficiently. Drink!
- If you are hammock camper, you will have to be more careful in picking you campsites. Much of the CT is above tree line; so less options.
- If you use canisters for fuel, be aware there are less gear stores than on the AT. Depending upon your route/pace/amount of meals cooked, you may have to mail canisters by surface mail and mark accordingly. Ken and Marcia Powers (GottaWalk) have an excellent FAQ on mailing fuel canisters and other fuel types:

http://www.gottawalk.com/shipping_fuel.htm

Canisters should be found at the following places:

- Denver area - Pick one!
- Breckenridge - Mt Outfitters - 970-453-2201
- Leadville - Bill's Sporting Goods - 719-486-0739 Sawatch Backcountry 719-486-2271
- Buena Vista - Trailhead Sports - 719-395-8002
- Salida - Salida Mt Sports - 719-539-4400
- Creede - San Juan Sports - 719-658-2482
- Lake City - Sportsman Out door and Fly Shop - 970-944-2526
- Silverton - Outdoor World - 970-387-5628
- Gunnison - A few different choices
- Durango - Many choices as well (if not as many as Denver..go figure! ;D)

Note: There may be more stores than listed. Feedback always welcome. I'd be lying if I said I visited or know about every outdoor store in the state. ;)

- White gas and Heet/denatured alcohol are found fairly easily in most re-supply areas

RESUPPLY

Re-supply is similar to the PCT: Not overly hard but less choices and longer hitches than the AT. Because of the relatively short length of the CT, mail drops are a viable option for many thru-hikers. Below is a list of some popular re-supply areas with approximate mileage to each from a Denver start. Also have a brief description of each town for supply purposes. This is not a complete description by any means, but does give a brief overview of some the more popular options.

Please Note: As with all mountain areas, the places below can be busy on weekends and holidays on or before Labor Day Weekend. Don't be surprised if the accommodations are full on a busy summer weekend!

<i>Resupply Spot</i>	<i>Miles from Denver</i>	<i>Miles from Trail</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Buffalo Creek	26.8	3.2	Very soon into the trail if you need to bail or just want to get a cold Coke. Small general store with marginal resupply. PO.
Bailey	41	8	Small town that has suffered from the expansion of Denver suburbs to the north. of HHWY 285. Lodging (just outside of town), restaurants, With the grocery stores opening up the highway in recent years, the resupply is somewhere between marginal and moderate now at the gas station and the small grocery store. May be an option you need some RnR while getting your trail legs. FS-560 gets a decent amount of traffic on a weekend.
Jefferson	72	4.5	General Store for marginal re-supply. Post Office. Two restaurants (one in general store) and an ice cream place.
Breckenridge/Frisco	104.9	4	<i>Breck:</i> Full service town. Bus will stop at trailhead and take you into and out of town for free. Fireside Inn is hiker friendly hostel for only \$25 a night! Takes maildrops via UPS only . www.firesideinn.com <i>Frisco:</i> The same free bus will take you into the other direction to Frisco. Frisco is a full service town with less expensive lodgings (esp. if you want a private room).
Copper Mtn / Frisco	117.7	On trail; Frisco is about 5 miles away by free bus service	<i>Copper:</i> Ski Resort, NO LONGER HAS POST OFFICE! Very marginal resupply. Many restaurants. Do not follow the route listed in the guidebook. Follow CT into Copper at American Eagle Ski Lift. Follow side trail into "town". <i>Frisco:</i> You can pick up the same free bus in Copper (Summit Stage) as for Breck. Will take you into Frisco.
Leadville	143.1 (via US 24 at Tennessee Pass) 156.7 (via Haggerman Rd FS-105)	9.5 11.0 8.0	Full service town. Leadville Hostel. Takes maildrops. Hostel has shuttle service. www.leadvillehostel.com The FS roads see a fair amount of traffic, esp, on a weekend. Could be an easy hitch. US 24 at Tennessee Pass sees the most traffic. Many people bagging Elbert and Massive make hitching from Half-moon easy as well (esp. on weekends)

	169.7 (via Halfmoon Creek Rd. FS-110)		
Twin Lakes	176.9	On trail or 1-3 miles. Depends if you use alt. roadwalk route, old CT over Hope Pass or current CT route	General store with PO, marginal re-supply. Two small motels. Other lodging (cabins, lodges) just outside of "town".
Buena Vista	190.8 (via Clear Creek Rd/RT 390 then US 24) 209.3 (via RT 365) 215.9 (via Middle Cottonwood Cr Rd 306)	~12 6.5 9.5	Full service town. Different lodging options. The roads see a fair amount of traffic, esp. on a weekend. Could be an easy hitch. 306 has the most traffic of the three roads by far.
Princeton Hot Springs	229.6	On Trail	On-trail resort. General store w/marginal to moderate re-supply. Restaurant, lodging, hot springs you can soak in for a day. May take maildrops www.mtprinceton.com
Salida Monarch Spur RV Campground Monarch Mountain Lodge	247.4 (via CO-240) 253 (via US 50)	13.5 miles to Salida 13 miles to Salida 1 Mile East to Monarch Spur CG 4.5 Miles West to Lodge	TH at 240 is for "Angel of Shavano", a 14er. On weekends, there could be a decent amount of traffic. Otherwise you may want to hike 5.7 more miles to US 50, then hitch. US 50 is a much busier road. Salida is a full service town. Circle R will shuttle back to trail for \$15 as of 2006 Simple Lodge and Hostel \$22/nt for bunk as of 2009. In downtown near all amenities. They do take maildrops. Offer unofficial shuttle service and can arrange shuttles with other area businesses (many local places shuttle MTBikers to the nearby Monarch Crest Trail that is part of the CT/CDT). Offer bikes for getting around town. www.simplelodge.com Monarch Spur RV campground is 1 mile East. May take maildrops. www.monarchspurrvpark.com Monarch Mountain Lodge takes maildrops. http://www.monarchmountainlodge.com/
Saguache / Gunnison	317.0 miles	Sauguache is approx 30 miles EAST. Gunnison is approx 40 miles WEST. It is a two part hitch via 114 and 50	Note: I was hesitant to add this info, but I have received some e-mails about it. I also had to use this point as a bail out point during a very heavy snow storm on my CDT hike in 2006. Though this is a hard and long hitch in both directions, it could be useful for patient people and/or those who really need to bail. Saguache: This county seat, but dying town, has a few small businesses that have been known to be for sale. As for this writing in 2009, the town does have two gas stations for min - moderate resupply, restaurants (breakfast, lunch, dinner), lodging and a post office. Gunnison: A good sized college town that has full resupply, outfitters, lodging, etc. Everything a hiker may need and more.
Creede	343 (via FS-503 @ San Luis Pass) 357.8 (via Spring Creek Pass/ RT 149)	10 miles, two of which is a hike down a trail to trailhead parking lot 30 miles. HARD HITCH FROM THIS PASS!!!	Getting into Creede requires some finagling. The FS road requires a walk down to a semi-official parking area at Equity Mine and hoping for traffic. The other way involves a notoriously hard hitch. If you do get down to the TH parking lot, it is sometimes an easy hitch into Creede, esp. on a weekend and/or during hunting season as people are heading back to town. Road essentially only goes into and out of Creede. Many people use this road to "bag" San Luis Peak and do the self guided Bachelor City mining tour. Mountain Man Rafting also offers rides to Equity Mine and shuttles to Spring Creek Pass. Creede has a good grocery store with moderate to full service resupply. Snowshoe Lodge is reasonable in price. Other more \$\$\$ options, too. Has an outfitter as well. I am not kidding about this being a hard hitch from Spring Creek Pass at RT 149! Read the following trailjournals entry if you don't believe me :D http://www.trailjournals.com/entry.cfm?id=178626
Lake City	357.8 (via Spring Creek Pass/ RT 149)	17 miles	HARD HITCH!!! Decent grocery stores (moderate resupply). Restaurants. T-Bear campground has super nice people. Has heated cabins. Will take maildrops; possible shuttle back up to trail. Coffee and pastry in the morning.

Silverton	409	5.5 miles	<p>Silverton is an easy hitch. Small, touristy town. Can do full re-supply at grocery store. Outfitter. Prospector Hotel in Silverton likes hikers. Will do basic shuttles. \$45/night as of 2005. Near all amenities. Will shuttle back to trail. www.tbearscampground.com</p>
Molas Lake CG		~1/2 mile to CG	<p>There is a hostel in Silverton as well that is under new ownership as of 2006. http://www.hostelz.com/hostel/26890-The-Silverton-Inn-%26-Hostel</p> <p>Mike Felix, a 2009 CT hiker, states "...<i>chill and hiker friendly. ...they don't run the tightest ship. The caretaker (Francisco)...prefers face-to-face interaction. So, it's not the easiest to reserve, etc. but if you do stay there, it is really pretty cool.</i>"</p> <p>San Juan Backcountry http://www.sanjuanbackcountry.com/ will do extensive shuttles all over the San Juan area. Advanced reservations suggested.</p> <p>Campground is in pretty location. Nice people. Takes maildrops via *** UPS ONLY ***. If you use US mail, the package will go to the Silverton PO. The small camp store with very marginal resupply is apparently no more. Address: Molas Lake Campground US 550 N. Silverton, CO 81433</p>
Durango	482.9	End of the trail	<p>Treat yourself to a beer and a burger. Mail yourself some comfy clothes! Trail ends 3 miles from outskirts of this full service town. Should be easy hitch into town. After a long absence, there is a hostel in Durango again (if one mile outside of downtown): the Durango Hometown Hostel. http://www.durangohometownhostel.com/</p> <p>Congrats!</p>

Marginal resupply - Soda, chips, snacks. Maybe some ramen or canned goods if you are lucky.. Hard resupply basically.

Moderate resupply - All the basics, if not many choices. Your typical small town grocery store. You'll be able to get everything you need for a few days of trail.

Full Service - Has a super market, often an outfitter of some sort. Anything you need will probably be in this town.

CACHING: Every-so-often, I get an inquiry asking about caching supplies along the trail. As the hitches are easy with ample resupply, it is not an option that makes much sense logistically (have to drive A LOT to drop caches and A LOT to pick up caches). But it is an option that could work for some people esp in long stretches (e.g. at Spring Creek Pass) or if you absolutely do not want to hitch. James and Rebecca hiked the CT in 2009 using bear canisters cached along the trail. As they stated "***If you take this method, please note that it is not okay to leave a bunch of flimsy Rubbermade bins in the forest. Bears will find your food and eat it. All.***" . Here's their link if you are curious about how and where they cached supplies:

http://www.gps.caltech.edu/~rebeccaw/ColoradoTrail_planning.html

ALTERNATE ROUTES AND 14ers

One of the big attractions of the Colorado Trail is the alternate routes that can be done. Some people choose to walk the CDT for a bit, others choose to follow some harder but more scenic routes, still others take alternates that encompass doing 14ers then dropping back to the CT. Look at your maps and see what looks good to you! I took two alternate routes that added a fair amount of elevation gain and about ten miles to my overall route. Below are the two routes I took. There are others as well. Be sure to consult your guidebooks and/or maps to get back to the CT!

Hope Pass: The old Colorado Trail route (and current CDT route) is harder but much more scenic than official CT. At 12540' the views are breathtaking. Hope Pass is also the literal highpoint of the Leadville 100 ultramarathon that takes place in mid-August. After coming down Hope Pass, you go right and eventually connect back up to the CT on a dirt road. **Or you can do the alternate below...**

Missouri Gulch: Not too long after Hope Pass, you will go by the historic town of Vicksburg. This town is actually a historic site that has been re-built. Shortly after this town, you will come to a trailhead for Missouri Gulch. This alternate is far prettier than dirt road of the official CT. Much harder, though. This alternate has you surrounded by three 14ers (Missouri, Belford, Oxford) and is an incredible view. If you are into peak bagging, this route is esp. good as the 14ers are easily accessible. The views from up to and at Elkhorn Pass are stunning. You follow the trail and connect back to the CT in a valley.

Colorado 14ers: The 14ers are the high peaks in Colorado. There are fifty-eight of these 14000+ foot mountains in Colorado, many of these along the CT itself. Many CTers can't resist climbing these immense peaks. Three of the more popular ones (due to accessibility and able to make a loop with the peak and CT) are:

1. Mt Elbert - Highest peak in Colorado. Near Leadville and Twin Lakes. Many choose to go off the CT, summit and come down another trail.

2. Mt Massive - Second highest peak, just down the trail from Elbert.

3. San Luis Peak - You climb to San Luis Pass at 12500 on the CT. Just a little over 1500 (and 1.5 miles) is the top of San Luis Peak. One of the least climbed 14ers. Very accessible from the CT, can make a loop as well

Please Note: There are other 14ers near the CT as well. The above are just three of the most popular. Consult your guidebook and maps if you want to know about more 14ers that can be done from the CT. Climbing the 14ers is a very popular activity in Colorado. Especially on weekends you will see many people on a summit. Climbing 14ers means you are above tree line more. You will be more exposed and at higher altitude. Be careful! As the saying goes "***There are old mountaineers and there are bold mountaineers. There are very few old and bold mountaineers.***" If in doubt about the weather head down and don't climb up to the summit.

GETTING TO AND FROM DENVER

The following info is from the Colorado Trail Website: <http://www.coloradotrail.org/faq.html#26>

Jest Bill: There is another bus, the 63X that goes to Lockheed Martin from the Mineral Ave. terminal at around 6:00 AM. According to RTD it will let you off on Rt. 121 before going into Lockheed Martin. From there, it's not a long walk to the entrance of the Waterton Canyon Recreational Area--the trailhead. "Official" instructions may not mention that bus because it will be a walk along the highway. Nevertheless, a ~ .3 miles or so of that vs. 9 miles of bike path might be worth it.

(see **SECTION HIKING TRANSPORTATION** for more info on RTD)

Mags: Also, you can try asking on the Colorado Trail list on www.trailforums.com, there have been people willing to do shuttles.

LEAVING A CAR AT WATERTON CANYON:

I've been asked about leaving a car at Waterton Canyon. Waterton Canyon is a very busy trailhead with a lot of parking space. There trailhead is also on a busy road. It should be safe. But nothing is 100%!

Thanks to Justin "Chewy" Edge for forwarding this info from the Colorado Trail Foundation:

Yes, it's fine to leave your car in the parking lot. Here's the info we have as of late 2005:

Michelle at Waterton Canyon would like people to call 303-979-4129 and give them the make of the car, license plate, etc. so that they know the car has not been abandoned. They can leave cars there while thru-hiking the CT. Common sense would advise against leaving any valuables in your car for an extended period of time. The Waterboard is not responsible for your vehicle.

Getting to and from Durango

Getting back to Denver or into Durango you have a few different options. There is a small airport in Durango. You could rent a car at this airport as well. The Doubletree Hotel in downtown Durango also has car rentals. About a 20-30 minute walk from downtown there is a Greyhound station. As of 2004, it was \$70 (and 12 hrs travel time) to go from Durango to Denver. Once in Denver, you can do a quick walk to the RTD station on 16th Street and grab an RTD bus to the airport. (see below for more info on RTD)

Another option is to fly into Albuquerque and take the Greyhound to (or from Durango).

Hiking the Colorado Trail with a Dog

Dogs are allowed on the majority on the Colorado Trail. Be sure to follow leash laws and be respectful of your fellow hikers and wildlife.

The only place where dogs are not allowed is the stretch of trail in Waterton Canyon.

For the dog owner, there is an alt route that is described in the Colorado Trail Guidebook.

Take the **Indian Creek Equestrian Trail** located on Hwy 67 approx 10 miles from the small town of Sedalia. Follow this trail approx 6 miles to connect to the Colorado Trail at mile mark 8.8 at Bear Creek.

Directions to this alt route are as follows from

http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc/recreation/camping/spl_camping_ic_area.shtml

To reach this area, take U.S. Highway 85 south to Sedalia then take Highway 67 to the junction with Rampart Range Road. To access all the following sites turn left on to Rampart Range Road, this is a dirt road that is heavily traveled; please abide by posted speed limits.

Map provided of this area by the Colorado Trail Foundation:

http://www.coloradotrail.org/forms/Seg1Map_Singletrack_Dogs.pdf

Naturally, getting to and from this area will require more than the standard logistics. You may have to find a willing friend in the area or contact a shuttle service. Still, for a person hoping to hike with a dog on the CT, it provides a good option.

Section Hiking Transportation

Greyhound: With the ending of Greyhound routes in many of the rural areas of Colorado, using "the dog" is an option that is not as viable for section hikers. Currently (December 2005), the routes offered by Greyhound for Colorado Trail purposes are: Denver to Durango, Durango to Denver, Silverton to Durango, Durango to Silverton, Denver to Silverton, Silverton to Denver.

Greyhound also goes to the town of Frisco. From Frisco you can take a Summit Stage Bus to Copper or the trailhead out of Breck/Frisco. See below for more info on Summit Stage.

Some hikers have found Albuquerque to be an easier stop to or from Durango as well. Albuquerque has connecting flights, if not as many options as Denver.

<http://www.greyhound.com>

Summit Stage: Summit Stage is the free bus service that goes along the various mountain towns. You could catch a Greyhound bus to Frisco and from there take the free Summit Stage Bus to the trailhead just outside of Breck/Frisco or to Copper Mountain. Naturally, you can reverse the route and take the Summit Stage from the trailheads at Breck/Frisco or Copper and go to Frisco and catch a Greyhound or Amtrak back to Denver (or Durango). <http://www.summitstage.com/>

Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD): Not only for section hikers! RTD has buses from the airport (DIA) to the trailhead. (See above in "Getting to and from Denver"). If you take the Greyhound to get back to Denver from Durango, you can also use the RTD station on 16th and Market St. to get back to the airport for any flights out of Denver. The RTD station is about a 20 minute walk from the Greyhound station. If you take the train (see below), you can pick up the light rail at Union Station. <http://www.rtd-denver.com/>

Colorado Mountain Express: If you'd rather keep your transportation needs simple, Colorado Mountain Express offers shuttles to and from the airport directly to and from Summit Country. <http://www.ridecme.com/>

Durango - Silverton Narragow Gauge Rail Road: A unique way to get to and from the Colorado Trail! This tourist train will drop you/pick up in Durango, Silverton and also has a spot in middle of the San Juans at the Elk Park stop. A little expensive, but an interesting way to see the mountains. <http://www.durangotrain.com/about-us/wilderness-access>

Wilderness Journeys and Pagosa Outfitters: Offers shuttles in Durango/Pagosa Springs/Wolf Creek Pass

area. <http://www.pagosarrafting.com/>

San Juan Backcountry San Juan Backcountry <http://www.sanjuanbackcountry.com/> will do extensive shuttles all over the San Juan area. Advanced reservations suggested.

Dee Hive Tours and Transportation: Based in Leadville. According to their website: *Transportation between all points in Leadville and Lake County and all points in Colorado. Including Trail Heads, Ski Areas, and much more. We gladly accommodate Down Hill and Cross Country Skiers, Hikers, Bikers, Backpackers and their equipment.* <http://www.leadville.com/deetours/>

Gunnison Valley Rural Transportation Authority: In brief, this new bus line (Jan 14, 2009) makes it easier to get from Denver (and DIA) to such places along or near the Colorado Trail (within hitching distance) such as Poncha Springs, Salida, Jefferson and Buena Vista. With this bus line, you can mix and match flying, local transit (RTD) and train to get to more places for hiking in CO. <http://www.gunnisonvalleyrta.org/denver-bus-schedule.php>

Amtrak: I had an e-mail asking about using the train to get to the Colorado Trail. Here's a brief synopsis. If someone wants to do more more thorough research, I'll gladly add it. ;) In brief, the major train stations in Denver are **Union Station** and the **Denver Greyhound Station**. From there, you can access such services as Greyhound, Gunnison Valley RTA, RTD, etc to get to various points on the Colorado Trail. Amtrak also stops in **Frisco**. From there you can use the Summit Stage bus to get to the Colorado Trail. <http://www.amtrak.com>

Shuttles: Shuttles are probably your best bet as a Colorado Trail section hiker. In 2004, I met a hiker who contacted the Colorado Trail foundation for possible shuttle info. They gave him the name of a person to call. The Colorado Trail foundation can be reached at 303.384-3279, www.coloradotrail.org The Leadville Hostel (<http://www.leadvillhostel.com>) also advertises shuttle services. On the Colorado Trail forum at www.trailforums.com people have offered to do shuttles as well. Try asking on the forums, you just may luck out.

OTHER RESOURCES

The Colorado Trail Foundation: The first place to stop for info on the Colorado Trail www.coloradotrail.org

Trailquest: Has a nice link about re-supply options and has more town details that my doc does not have <http://trailquest.net/RM2003ctjrnl.html>

Trailforums: Has a reasonably active Colorado Trail forum; as mentioned you may be able to find a person to shuttle you to a trailhead on this list www.trailforums.com

CDT-L: Though this mailing list is CDT focused, there is some overlap with Colorado Trail info as well. www.backcountry.net

Trailjournals.com: Has quite a few journals for the Colorado Trail with pictures www.trailjournals.com

Whitblaze.net: This very active AT website now has an "OTHER TRAILS" section. There is currently a Colorado Trail forum that is now getting more use. <http://www.whiteblaze.net>

Mags' Journals and Photos: Yours truly has his Colorado Trail photos and journals on line www.pmags.com

Along The Colorado Trail: (book) Photography by John Fielder, Journal by M. John Fayhee. Great pics! John Fielder is arguably the best Colorado outdoor photographer

If you have additional questions or about this document or the Colorado Trail in general, then please feel free to e-mail me (Paul Magnanti) at This email address is being protected from spam bots, you need Javascript enabled to view it. New info and feedback is always welcome too! Please try to have a subject line with **COLORADO TRAIL** somewhere in the text. Makes it easier to filter my mail. Thanks!

Best of luck on your Colorado Trail journey!

--Paul "Mags" Magnanti

Many thanks to Almanac, Bearpaw, Matt Cecere, Rick "Rickles McPickles" Armstrong, Randy Brown, Book Burner, Chewy, Dirty Bird, Mike Felix, Jest Bill, Little Bear, Mr. Clippy, Profile, Henry Shires, Skeemer, ,Skittles and Bill Webster who all added some input to this doc.

Special thanks to Rain Maker; whose original doc provided part of the inspiration for mine! You can all thank my friend Keith McGuinness who did the Colorado Trail in 2005. He picked my brain for an hour or so at a coffee shop in Boulder just before he did the CT. Out of that conversation this doc was written.

Finally, a **very big thanks** to the many volunteers at the Colorado Trail Foundation who make this fine trail possible!

Colorado Trail "End to End" Guide – first version June 2005

Revised:

December 2005, May 2006, February 2007, July 2007, August 2007, November 2007, July 2007, August 2007, November 2007, April 2008, July 2008, August 2008, October 2008, January 2009, July 2009, August 2009, September 2009




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 **Natasha Walter-Fisk**  |24.8.192.Xxx |2009-07-30 00:08:20



Great info! Thanks a million.

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 **Brian**  |192.91.172.Xxx |2009-08-10 15:06:31

Another con for summer would be the increase in mosquitos. I've always seen the worst mosquitos in the mountains during mid-July.

Reply | Quote

 **Paul Mags - Mossies**  |76.120.61.Xxx |2009-08-25 09:50:49

I can honestly say that, overall, I do not find insects to be a huge problem in the CO backcountry..esp on or near the divide. Then again, my baseline for bad/many insects is the Sierra in June or July. :O YMMV.

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