

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

DAY 4 – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15

Steamboat Springs Loop – 52 miles

Most of today's ride is through undulating topography of Upper Cretaceous sandstone, shale, and coal of the Mesaverde Group (82 to 72 million years old), material that was deposited near the shore of an ancient seaway. Both underground and open-pit mines extract coal from 3- to 20-foot (1- to 6-m) thick seams in this area. The Flat Tops, the aptly named mountains to the southwest, are capped by volcanic lava flows of Tertiary age.

DAY 3 – TUESDAY, JUNE 14

Edwards to Steamboat Springs – 80 miles

Heading north from Wolcott, we skirt the eastern edge of the White River Plateau. Uplifted during the Laramide Orogeny (about 70 to 50 million years ago), the area was formerly a lowland that accumulated nearly 8,000 ft (2,440 m) of Paleozoic sedimentary rocks and 7,000 ft (2,135 m) of Mesozoic rocks. Spires or "fingers" of rock along our route are volcanic necks, the hardened remains of former conduits of Tertiary volcanoes.

Day 3

EDWARDS

DAY 2 – MONDAY, JUNE 13

Buena Vista to Edwards – 76 miles

Today we'll ride northward up the Arkansas River Valley between the Sawatch (west) and Mosquito (east) Ranges. Sedimentary rocks in the ranges dip away from the valley forming a broad anticline. The Arkansas Valley defines the northern extension of the Rio Grande Rift, which began forming 30 to 26 million years ago. The headwaters of the Arkansas River lie below Mt. Elbert, Colorado's tallest peak (at 14,433 ft; 4,399 m). Northeast of Tennessee Pass (10,424 ft; 3,177 m), a tabular granitic intrusion of Laramide age (about 50 million years old) forms a high ridge. Farther down the Eagle River valley, Paleozoic sedimentary rocks come into view.

DAY 5 – THURSDAY, JUNE 16

Steamboat Springs to Granby – 78 miles

As we leave Steamboat Springs, we climb out of the Yampa River valley up the steep face of the Park Range through Precambrian gneiss and schist and then through granitic rocks to Rabbit Ears Pass. North of the pass, you'll see the distinctive double towers of Rabbit Ears Peak before you begin your descent. The peak is made up of volcanic material that erupted between 33 and 23 million years ago from the Rabbit Ears Range to the east. Later erosion sculpted the peak into the "rabbit ears" we see today. Passing Wolford Mountain Reservoir, the top half of the mountain to the east has trees growing on coarse Precambrian granite, which has been thrust over barren Cretaceous shale below. At Kremmling, our route joins the Colorado River as we pedal east up the valley into a canyon cut through a variety of rock types sliced by faults. The canyon opens into Middle Park, the middle of three relatively featureless surfaces in the high mountains of Colorado.

Day 5

GRANBY



Andrew Peters photo

GEORGETOWN

DAY 6 – FRIDAY, JUNE 17

Granby to Georgetown – 50 miles

FINISH

Today we'll see evidence of glaciation that occurred tens of thousands of years ago. Glacial outwash (deposits of sand and gravel carried by running water from a melting glacier) form terraces in the Fraser Valley; glacial moraines (ridges made up of mixtures of rock material of various sizes and shapes) create hummocky terrain near Winter Park. On the descent from Berthoud Pass, astride the northeast-southwest trending Colorado Mineral Belt, we pass the turnoff to the Henderson Mine, the largest primary producer of molybdenum in the world.

Day 6

START

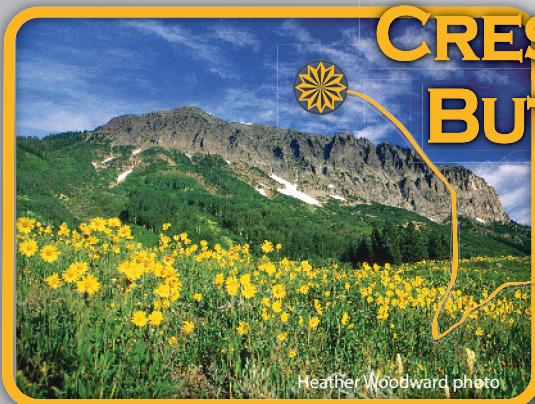
DAY 1 – SUNDAY, JUNE 12

Crested Butte to Buena Vista – 76 miles

A classic mining town, Crested Butte was incorporated in 1880 to supply nearby gold and silver mines. By 1882, coal mining was prevalent. Pedaling up the Taylor River drainage from Almont toward Cottonwood Pass will take us through Taylor Park, a basin that subsided along a fault as the mountains rose on the east side during the Miocene (about 20 million years ago). We cross over the Sawatch Range at Cottonwood Pass (12,126 ft; 3,696 m) through some of the highest mountains in Colorado. The Sawatch Range is composed of Precambrian-age basement rocks (1,400 to 1,800 million years old)—mostly granites and some gneisses.

Day 1

CRESTED BUTTE



Heather Woodward photo

BUENA VISTA



Claire Zelig photo