



Coloradans are a Lycra-obsessed bunch, but that passion for two-wheeled fun hits an extreme level of excitement when the snow first melts. With dry roads and sunny days stretching out ahead of us, we're joining the frenzy—and helping you do the same—by highlighting some of the best road cycling routes (for beginners and experts alike!) along the Front Range and in Colorado's famed high country. Clip in and enjoy the ride.

EDITED BY LINDSEY B. KOEHLER

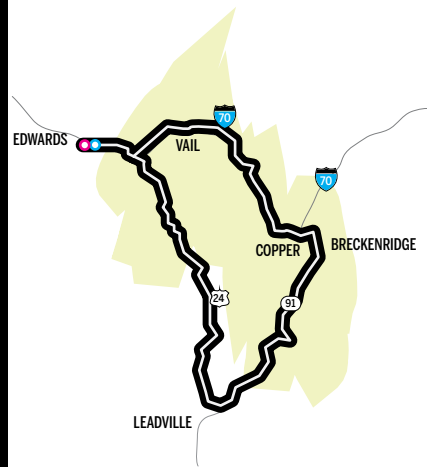


OXYGEN DEBT
Vail Pass' 10,617-foot high
point makes this classic
climb a serious challenge.





APRÈS-RIDE REVELRY
Bristol Brewing's craft beer goes down smooth after a spin up Cheyenne Cañon.



BEAVER CREEK

THE RIDE: The Copper Triangle
DISTANCE: 92 miles round-trip
TIME: 7 to 8 hours
DIFFICULTY: Hard

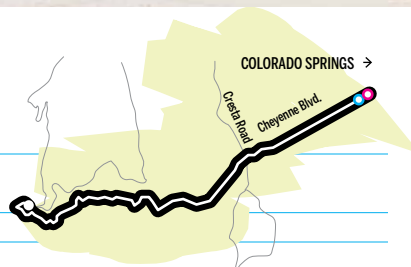
→ This variation of the popular Copper Triangle route—one of Colorado's classic alpine road cycling events, which begins at Copper Mountain Resort each August—tacks on 14 miles to start and finish in Beaver Creek and flows the opposite direction. This lung-burner is a high-altitude adventure: The route never dips below 7,400 feet in elevation, and riders spend about 31 miles above 10,000 feet. All told, roadies will log more than 6,000 feet of climbing and summit three passes: Tennessee (10,200 feet), Fremont (11,279 feet), and Vail (10,617 feet).

From the base village in Beaver Creek, you'll roll down to Avon on Village Road and turn right along Stone Creek Drive/U.S. 6 as it follows the Eagle River to U.S. Highway 24. Stay right on 24 heading into Minturn—and then start climbing. The road kicks up sharply as it ascends to the deserted mining town of Gilman, drops down to Turkey Creek, and then winds up past Camp Hale, the training site of World War II's 10th Mountain Division, to Ski Cooper at the top of Tennessee Pass.

A short downhill to the junction with Colorado Highway 91, just north of Leadville, is your first chance to reload on drinks and food at one of the gas stations at the end of

COLORADO SPRINGS

THE RIDE: Cheyenne Cañon
DISTANCE: 11.4 miles round-trip
TIME: 1 hour or less
DIFFICULTY: Hard



→ Nearly every cyclist living in or around Colorado Springs, including international pros and riders training at the U.S. Olympic Complex, uses this climb to test his or her fitness level. Anything under 20 minutes qualifies a rider as a "competitive amateur racer," according to Chris Carmichael, a Springs resident and former U.S. Olympic cycling coach.

From Bristol Brewing (located where South Tejon Street turns into Cheyenne Boulevard), warm up with a 2.6-mile spin along Cheyenne Boulevard to the gate at the canyon entrance. Here, the road enters North Cheyenne Cañon Park and shoots up more than 1,100 feet over 3.1 miles with an average grade of seven percent. The road winds through red rock walls and is kept cool by a nearby creek and dense pine trees. A short 14 percent pitch halfway up will slow you to a crawl, but the ride mellows out shortly thereafter, switchbacking through the forest until the pavement ends at Gold Camp Road.

As you catch your breath at 7,400 feet at a dirt parking area near the top, feel free to compare your time from the gate to the summit to the record held by Boulder-based pro Tom Danielson of the Garmin-Sharp squad: 13 minutes, 34 seconds. Or ignore your competitive fire and simply enjoy the view east through the canyon, with Colorado Springs in the distance.

The descent retraces your route—be wary of vehicles on blind corners (you'll easily exceed the posted limit of 25 mph) as well as cars pulling out of the parking lot at Helen Hunt Falls. Upon your return to the brewery, salute your ride with a pint of Red Rocket Pale Ale. —Grant Davis

REST STOP

At **Helen Hunt Falls**, take a breather or a bathroom break; it's only a short distance to the top from this small park, which sidles up to the creek as it tumbles down a series of falls. Dip your feet in the water or kick back on one of the picnic tables.

ALTERNATE RIDE

Pikes Peak Highway (Hard)
In 2013, the toll road to the top of Pikes Peak opened to cyclists—it's completely paved now—creating one of the most demanding rides in North America. The 8,100-foot climb starts in downtown Colorado Springs (at about 6,000 feet in elevation), rolls through Manitou Springs, and then rises up Highway 24 to Fountain Avenue, which leads to the Pikes Peak tollway entrance. From there it's 19 miles to the mountain's 14,117-foot summit. Toll: \$12 per person, cash or credit. Distance: 60 miles round-trip.



For interactive route maps and downloadable GPS files, visit 5280.com/roadcycling.



town before heading north on 91 up Fremont Pass. Highway 91's shoulder is wide, the grade is steady, and, in July, the Arkansas River Valley should be blossoming with alpine wildflowers. The summit of the pass is a bit anticlimactic thanks to the sprawling Climax mine facility at the top, but the smooth blacktop and views on the ride down to Copper Mountain Resort make up for the industrial feel. Take care on the stretch between miles 56 and 59: The posted speed limit is 65 mph, and there's no shoulder on which to take refuge.

At Copper, riders will leave the road to pedal the dedicated bike path over Vail Pass, down through the town of Vail, and back to Avon. After 25 easy downhill miles, the nasty, 500-foot climb back into Beaver Creek shouldn't hurt—at least not too much. —GD

REFUEL

Grab snacks in Copper to ferry up to the rest area atop Vail Pass for a picnic. The site offers views of the peaks that form the backside of Breckenridge, a just reward for wrapping up the last big climb of the day. It's (almost) all downhill from that point.

ALTERNATE RIDE

Eagle River Ramble (Easy)

For a mellow ride out of Beaver Creek, this is about as easy as it gets. Start from the base village, head down Village Road, and then turn left at the roundabout in Avon, taking U.S. 6 west along the Eagle River Valley through Edwards to Wolcott, 13.5 miles downvalley. You can continue toward Eagle or simply turn around. Just be aware that it's an uphill pedal on the way back.

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

THE RIDE: Steamboat Springs to Lake Catamount

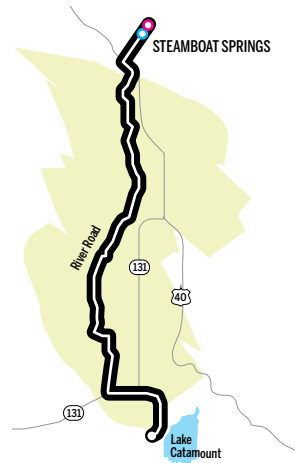
DISTANCE: 22 miles round-trip

TIME: 1.5 hours

DIFFICULTY: Easy

➔ This undulating, two-lane route hugs the edge of the Yampa Valley and delivers sweeping views of cowboy country: Horses and cattle graze grassy meadows, weathered barns shelter tractors, and Mt. Werner looms large above the plains. From downtown Steamboat Springs, cross the Yampa River at Fifth Street and turn left onto River Road (CR 14). The first quarter mile idles through a series of stop signs in Brooklyn, a residential neighborhood and a former red-light district during pioneer times. The houses and auto traffic disappear as the route squeezes between the Yampa and its steep bluffs, climbing gradually on an upstream course into ranchland.

The intersection of Mt. Werner Road (which joins CR 14 from the left)



ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

Colorado cyclists are never hard up for routes with stunning scenery.



BIKE TOWN USA
Steamboat Springs offers road cycling options that rival its ski slopes.



signals the start of the rolling hills. A short descent provides the ride's first burst of speed as the panoramas widen on your left: Irrigation channels spider across pastures of silky green grasses that turn gold come midsummer. At this point, the rollers have your engines working at a respectably high rpm. Veer right at the junction where CR 14F joins 14, then turn left and cross the railroad tracks to follow Hudspeth Lane (CR 14E), a buttery-smooth contrast to River Road's bumpy chip seal. Here, hilly meadows swell around you, hiding all traces of development and letting you dissolve among the grass, summits, and big sky. Jog left onto Highway 131 (where cars zoom at 65 mph), ride about a mile, and turn right onto CR 18, which leads to Lake Catamount, a placid, cattail-rimmed pond shimmering at the foot of the Park Range. Songbirds and herons distract you along the gradual two-mile climb to the water's edge and your turnaround point. —*Kelly Bastone*



REFUEL

Craving more than just waterside views? Catamount Ranch & Club operates the **Lake House Grille**, and although it doesn't advertise (you won't see any mention of this restaurant in Steamboat's Dining Guide), it's open to the public—and serves killer fish tacos. The lakeside dining room offers lunch daily in the summer from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., but the choicest seats are on the open-air deck that overlooks blue waters ringed by green mountainsides. 970-871-9229, catamountranchclub.com

ALTERNATE ROUTE

Emerald Mountain Circuit
(Moderate)

The 35-mile Emerald Mountain circuit is a longer, steeper, hillier challenge for intermediate-level cyclists. From Steamboat Springs, cross the river at 13th Street and follow Twentymile Road (CR 33) along the edge of the Yampa Valley, savoring views northward toward Hahns Peak and Sleeping Giant (in the spring, their snowy slopes contrast prettily with the wildflower-filled ranch meadows you pass). Turn left onto Cow Creek Road (CR 45) and follow its dirt course up a series of aspen-covered hills. Veer left onto CR 41, descend to the Hilton Gulch schoolhouse, and turn left onto paved CR 35 for a thrillingly fast, curving descent back into the Yampa Valley (pick up River Road/CR 14 to return downtown).

BOULDER

THE RIDE: Peak to Peak Highway

DISTANCE: 60 miles round-trip

TIME: 3.5 to 5 hours

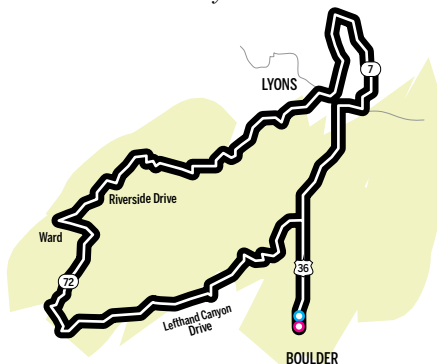
DIFFICULTY: Moderate to hard

➔ To begin this classic Boulder ride, you'll want to meet your riding partners—the more the merrier, we say—at Amante Coffee on Broadway, which is the Grand Central Station for many rides departing B-town. Grab a quick Amantino to enjoy on the sunny patio, and then pop next door to Boulder Cycle Sport if you need an extra tube or an energy bar.

From Amante, roll north on Broadway to reach Highway 36 and take a left. You'll enjoy the flat to rolling warm-up as you ride north on 36 toward Lyons; this section is a quick 12 miles with sweeping vistas out over the Eastern Plains. At the T-intersection in Lyons, turn left onto CO 7. The road climbs imperceptibly at first, meandering among red sandstone faces before gradually giving way to steeper gradients and soaring granite walls. On midsummer mornings, shady nooks yet to be warmed by the sun provide respite from the heat. Find one, take a long swig from your water bottle, and relish the moment.

As you continue to climb on CO 7, keep an eye out for Riverside Drive (CR 103) on the left, and duck into this quiet, treelined lane for a hidden gem: the Raymond General Store (summer hours: Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.), where a cold Coke and a smile from the proprietors will revive your spirits—and your weary legs. Then keep spinning up this secluded shortcut until you reach CO 72, aka the famous Peak to Peak Highway.

You'll bear left (south) on CO 72 to find that stunning views of the Indian Peaks Wilderness area help keep your mind off the giant rollers that ascend all the way to Ward. Once you've reached Ward, you can pat yourself on your Lycra-covered back: Your climbing is over. Turn left on Nelson Street, refill bottles at the general store, then enjoy the winding descent—all 4,000 vertical feet of it—through Lefthand Canyon, back onto Highway 36, and around that right-hand turn for the gentle spin back to town. —*Joe Lindsey*



PIT STOP

In the era of the \$7 cup of coffee, it's refreshing that at Lyons' **Barking Dog Cafe** you can get a cup of joe and a giant chocolate-chip muffin for less than \$5. Add clean bathrooms, free Wi-Fi, friendly staff, and a spot to refill your water bottles and it's the perfect place to prep for the day's big climb. 431 Main St., Lyons, 303-823-9600

ALTERNATE ROUTE

Neva Loop
(Easy)

If 5,000 feet of climbing sounds like a bit much, opt for this short, flat ride on farm roads north of Boulder. Again, start at Amante. After hitting Highway 36, you'll pedal for about 2.5 miles before bearing right onto Neva Road, where you'll enjoy the recently expanded shoulder. After 63rd back to town. Tip: Skip the maddening, freewaylike Diagonal at the last part of your journey. Instead, cross Diagonal on 63rd and head south before turning right on Spine Road; then go right on Jay back to 36, then north back to Amante. It's slightly longer, but much more enjoyable.

FROM TOP: JAMIE KRIPKE; COURTESY OF CATAMOUNT RANCH & CLUB



QUINTESSENTIAL COLORADO
The ride from Boulder to Lyons and back via the Peak to Peak is a classic Front Range route.

Boulder's Best Climbs

In 2011, Boulder resident Tejay van Garderen became the first American to don the King of the Mountains jersey in the history of the Tour de France. Then, in the 2012 race, he nabbed the Best Young Rider jersey and placed fifth overall. Who better, then, to decree the best hill climbs in Boulder? Here, van Garderen's five top quad-burning routes. —*Jayme Moye*

THE RIDE: Super James
DISTANCE: 40 miles round-trip
TIME: 2.5 hours
DIFFICULTY: Hard

After a gradual climb up Lefthand Canyon Drive, Super James gets nasty by mile 14, gaining 1,600 feet of elevation in the following 3.75 miles—two of which are hard-packed dirt. Views of the snow-capped Indian Peaks and a well-earned descent through Ward via the Peak to Peak (CO 72) help ease the pain.

THE RIDE: Boulder to Estes Park
DISTANCE: 78 miles round-trip
TIME: 5.5 to 6 hours
DIFFICULTY: Moderate

This long, steady climb ascends from Lyons up the South St. Vrain Canyon on CO 7 to the Peak to Peak and finally skirts Rocky Mountain National Park before gently sloping into the town of Estes Park and bombing back down to Lyons on Highway 36. Do this classic sightseeing loop on a weekday to minimize car traffic.

THE RIDE: Super Flag
DISTANCE: 10 miles round-trip
TIME: 45 minutes

DIFFICULTY: Hard
The steep switchbacks on this relentless five-mile climb from Chautauqua Park up Flagstaff Road mimic those in Europe—and provide a bird's-eye view of Boulder. You can say you conquered Flagstaff Mountain if you call it quits at the amphitheater (mile three)—but the true summit is a bit farther up the road, at about 7,000 feet (look for the mailboxes).

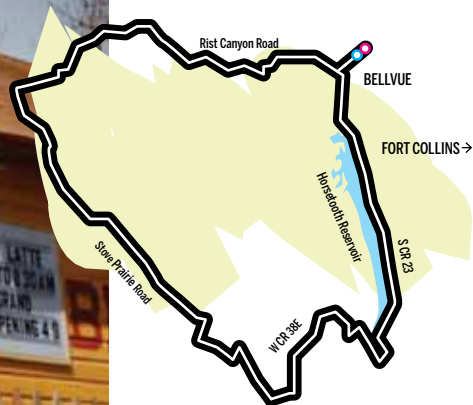
THE RIDE: Magnolia
DISTANCE: 9 miles round-trip
TIME: 1 hour

DIFFICULTY: Hard
Boulder's monster climb, up Magnolia Road, starts at the Justice Center on Sixth Street and Canyon Boulevard and gains more than 2,000 feet of elevation in a muscle-killing

4.5 miles. With an average grade of 9 percent (maxing out at 17 percent) and seriously tight turns, the descent is less vomit-inducing than the climb, but it's challenging in its own right.

THE RIDE: Carter Lake
DISTANCE: 65 miles round-trip
TIME: 4 hours

DIFFICULTY: Moderate
A favorite of weekend warriors and pros alike, the Carter Lake loop starts at the Boulder Reservoir and travels up Highway 36 to Hygiene via St. Vrain Road, passing through gently undulating hills, prairies, and farms. Then it's a straight shot on North 75th, a right on Woodland Road, and a left on S CR 23E before you turn on W CR 8E, where a short but satisfying climb up to Carter Lake marks the scenic finale, as well as the turnaround point.



FUEL UP

Bellvue Bean in Bellvue is cyclist central, marking the beginning and end of nearly every local group ride. Start with a breakfast burrito and a coffee and grab something for the road. After the ride, finish with a Rist Reuben and a smoothie. Cyclists get five percent off everything, and local musicians take the stage a couple of times a month on Saturday evenings. 5032 Rist Canyon Road, Bellvue, 970-484-0511, bellvuebean.com

ALTERNATE ROUTE

Centennial Drive Loop (Easy)

In the mood for a less leg-busting climb? Get all the beauty of Horsetooth Reservoir without having to climb Rist Canyon by using Fort Collins' multi-use trail system. The 23-mile Centennial Drive Loop starts at Bellvue Bean and heads east through the plains to Fort Collins via the 11-mile riverside Poudre Trail. Pick up the Spring Creek Trail for seven miles to reach W CR 38E, then turn right on Centennial Drive when you hit the reservoir.

BELLVUE

THE RIDE: Rist Canyon Loop

DISTANCE: 42 miles round-trip

TIME: 3 to 4 hours

DIFFICULTY: Moderate to hard

➔ Arguably the most epic road ride in northern Colorado—for both scenery and terrain—the Rist Canyon loop begins and ends in the hamlet of Bellvue, near Fort Collins. From Bellvue Bean, head west on Rist Canyon Road, which quickly climbs out of bucolic rolling farmland into the Roosevelt National Forest, gaining nearly 3,000 feet of elevation in 11 miles. The final few switchbacks are unapologetically steep, which means you'll want to stop for a breather at the top and enjoy the endless views of the Buckhorn Canyon Valley crowned by the 12,000-foot Mummy Range.

Take it easy on the descent: Two miles after the left-hand (south) turn onto Stove Prairie Road (CR 27) lurk three cattle guards (read: cyclist-swallowing metal grates) that span the entire width of the road. Having slowly passed over these teeth-rattlers, you'll want to stay on the brakes through the twisty narrows of Buckhorn Canyon and watch for slow-moving traffic. As the road continues (it'll change names to Buckhorn Road) to drop into Masonville (the 25-mile point), things begin to feel less remote courtesy of summertime tourists towing their toys to the water. You'll stay on Buckhorn Road/CR 27 until you veer onto W CR 38E near Masonville. Remain on W CR 38E until you hang a left onto

▲ HOT SPOT

Downtown Bellvue—and the Bellvue Bean in particular—is a popular spot to meet before rides.

Centennial Drive (S CR 23) for a ride along the edge of Horsetooth Reservoir. You'll have to deal with some motor vehicle traffic, but the route is pretty enough to make up for having to share the asphalt. The road offers sweeping views of Fort Collins to the east and glimpses of the cobalt waters of the reservoir to the west. Save a little bit of juice for the end—the route finishes with a series of three short, punchy climbs along the water before rolling back through the alfalfa fields into Bellvue. —JM



ASPEN

THE RIDE: Maroon Bells

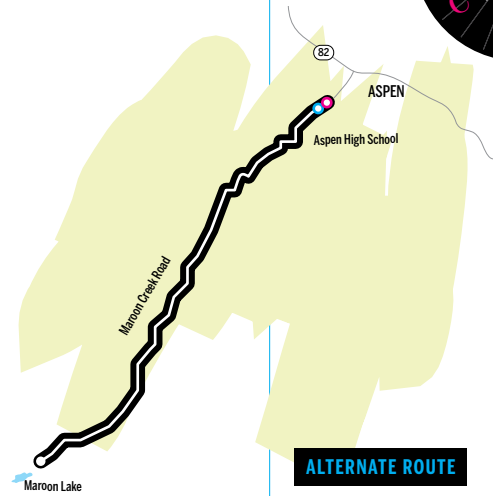
DISTANCE: 18 miles round-trip

TIME: 60 minutes

DIFFICULTY: Moderate

➔ If you only have time for one ride in Aspen, Maroon Creek Road to “the Bells” is a must. The gradual nine-mile climb delivers you to Maroon Lake, a picturesque pool of ice-cold water that stands at the base of the world-famous peaks. Begin by parking at Aspen High School (on High School Road). Saddle up and shoot south on Maroon Creek Road, passing the Aspen Recreation Center and Aspen Highlands ski area. Here, the road narrows and begins to undulate, but the route is paved and relatively smooth. Come summertime, Maroon Creek Road is closed to all motorized traffic with the exception of buses. Translation: Cyclists (and the occasional inline skater) rule this concrete expanse as it sweeps its way up the valley.

Watch for gravel and farm vehicles at mile 2.6, which marks the entrance to T-Lazy-7, a working dude ranch. Give the llamas, goats, and horses a nod as you cruise by. If you need to catch your breath, there are campgrounds with decent pull-offs and stunning views of alpine meadows and deeply carved avalanche chutes. The road steepens, but keep your eye on the horizon: Pyramid Peak (the Bells’ companion mountain) will soon appear. The last push, a bit of a leg-burner, takes you through aspen groves that dapple the light, leaves rustling in the wind. Just when it feels like too much, the majestic Maroon Bells edge into view and show you where you’re going. Pull off at the turnaround and dismount for a quick walk to the lake. Take some smartphone snaps and fuel up for the return, which is a fast downhill where you can reach speeds of 40 mph. —*Amanda M. Faison*



ALTERNATE ROUTE

Extended Maroon Bells (Hard)

Add more mileage by sailing past your car (parked at Aspen High School) on Maroon Creek Road to the roundabout. Take your first right onto Castle Creek Road and follow it 11 miles until it dead-ends into dirt at the base of Hayden Peak. The road, which offers some lung-busting climbs, takes you past the ghost town of Ashcroft, a once-thriving mining community of 2,000. This route is not closed to traffic, so be vigilant.

REFUEL

Head back to town for lunch at Victoria’s Espresso & Wine Bar on Durant Avenue. The Israeli couscous salad replaces lost carbs, and an ice-cold beer will do you good. Bonus: Don’t leave without sampling the fresh-baked pastries. 510 E. Durant Ave., Aspen, 970-920-3001, victoriasespresso.com



RINGING ENDORSEMENT

For sheer beauty, there’s no better place to spin to than the Maroon Bells near Aspen.

PARK IT
Begin and end your ride
in two of Denver's most
iconic playgrounds.



DENVER

THE RIDE: Confluence Park to Cherry Creek State Park

DISTANCE: 28.4 miles round-trip

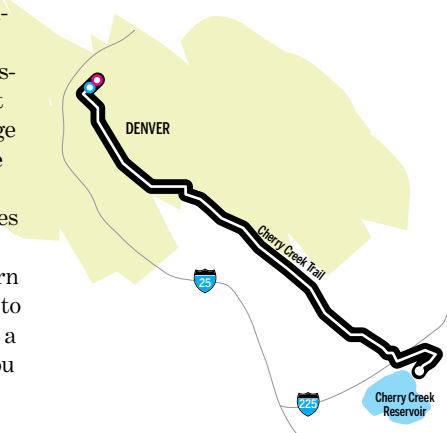
TIME: 1.75 to 2.5 hours

DIFFICULTY: Easy

➔ Like a bowl of green chile or grabbing a drink at the Cruise Room, this ride is classic Denver. Flat enough for novices, but long enough for more accomplished riders to get a decent workout, the best part of this ride may be the fact that once you clip in, you won't have to battle any car traffic—zero!—for close to 30 miles.

Meet your riding buddies at Confluence Park; if you want an espresso for a little bit of legal performance enhancement, stop by the Starbucks in REI (the sporting-goods behemoth also boasts a stocked bike department complete with mechanic services). Then take the gentle ramp down to the Cherry Creek Trail. (On weekends during the summer, the trail can be congested, so be courteous and holler “on your left” when passing slower riders.) The path gradually climbs—although it's almost imperceptible on the pleasantly undulating trail—as you head toward the state park. There's a very short uphill section as you skirt the John F. Kennedy Golf Course and then a nice downhill before the only real climb of the ride. Once you pass under Interstate 225, you'll climb until you run into South Parker Road. It's not the stuff of the Pyrenees, but one pitch does hit a quad-killing 10 percent gradient and will most certainly get your attention. Then you'll ease your way toward the reservoir, with magnificent views of the Front Range and the meadows of the park as your backdrop. Fill up your water bottles at the reservoir's beach (summer only), then turn around and bomb back to downtown Denver with a nice tailwind helping you along the way.

—Geoff Van Dyke



HAPPY HOUR

Having done your duty and burned a good number of calories, head to the Denver Beer Co., which is just a few blocks from REI, where you wrapped up your ride. Sure, Gatorade is a good post-ride drink, but we like to think a Graham Cracker Porter—or, really, anything the neighborhood brewery has on tap—is essentially replacing the carbs we lost on our afternoon ride.

1695 Platte St., 303-433-2739, denverbeerco.com

ALTERNATE ROUTE

Lookout Mountain
(Hard)

One of Denver's other timeless rides heads in the opposite direction: Start at Confluence Park, work your way through LoHi to 32nd Avenue, and head west to Golden. Pass the Colorado School of Mines; cross busy Highway 6; and then begin the epic Front Range climb up Lookout Mountain. At an average gradient of six percent, it's not the hardest climb you'll ever experience, but there are no false flats on this uphill (until the very end at least), so there's nowhere to hide. Be conservative on the descent, as there can be a decent amount of traffic on the road and gravel sometimes litters the turns.

GEAR

Wish List

From tasty snacks to comfy saddles, treat yourself to these cycling must-haves.

By Kelsey Lindsey & Morgan Tilton

● = A Colorado company

● The ELITE Barrier Vest from Pearl Izumi, \$80

WHY WE WANT IT: Colorado's erratic weather can leave cyclists sweating one minute and facing a brisk wind chill the next. Waterproof panels and the vented back on this vest keep you prepared for Mother Nature's mood swings. Bonus: The lightweight fabric allows you to scrunch up the vest and stow it in a pocket.



WHERE TO GET IT: pearlizumi.com

● Organic Stinger Waffles from Honey Stinger, \$1.39 each

WHY WE WANT IT: Whether you're cycling up Colorado's high mountain passes, pedaling on one of the state's famous bike paths, or furiously spinning along high prairie farm roads, you'll find fast energy (and deliciousness) when you bite into this soft and chewy miniwaffle that's layered with just-sweet-enough organic honey. Also: Try the chocolate, lemon, strawberry, or vanilla flavors.

WHERE TO GET IT: honestinger.com

● The PhD Cycle Ultra Light Mini sock from SmartWool, \$15.95

WHY WE WANT IT: Cyclists need aerodynamic, nonchafing garments—fitted jerseys, padded bibs—and these virtually seamless socks have your feet covered, keeping the sweat (and the toe wedgie) far away.

WHERE TO GET IT: smartwool.com



The Edge 810 bike computer from Garmin, \$699.99

WHY WE WANT IT: Any device that allows cyclists to shamelessly post every aspect—from speed and heart rate to power output and total feet climbed—of their recent rides on social media is a winner in our book. Some may call it oversharing—we call it spreading the love.

WHERE TO GET IT: Pedal Pushers Cyclery, pedalpusherscyclery.com

The Antares Versus saddle from Fi'zi:k, starting at \$140

WHY WE WANT IT: When potholes, choppy asphalt, and cattle guards (hey, this is Colorado) threaten to assault your backside, this seat's strategically placed channel will save your, um, sensitive parts and keep you powering your pedals forward.

WHERE TO GET IT: Wheat Ridge Cyclery, ridewrc.com

◆ A custom bike from Moots, prices vary

WHY WE WANT IT: Three words—custom, titanium, bike. Hand-built right here in Colorado, these cycles are molded based on personal measurements to create a completely custom ride. Excuse us as we wipe the drool off our handlebar tape.

WHERE TO GET IT: Vecchio's Bicycletteria, vecchios.com

The MTB-7 Rescue Tool from Park Tool, \$20

WHY WE WANT IT:

With seven different hex wrenches and two tire levers, this gadget has

what we need for an on-the-road repair—plus a bottle opener for that après-ride beer.

WHERE TO GET IT: Denver Bicycle, denverbicycleonline.com



BRECKENRIDGE

THE RIDE: Lake Dillon Loop

DISTANCE: 31 miles round-trip

TIME: 2 hours

DIFFICULTY: Moderate

➔ With nonstop alpine scenery and one of the best recreational pathway systems in the state, Summit County is a road cyclist's dream. The Lake Dillon Loop, beginning in Breckenridge, combines a casual spin around the marinas of the Dillon Reservoir with a short but satisfying climb up Swan Mountain. From the Breckenridge Recreation Center on Airport Road, head north on the Blue River Recpath nine miles to Frisco. It's easy to speed on this descending path, but be wary of dogs, strollers, and other cyclists. In Frisco, take the Dillon Dam Recpath east and pedal a relatively flat six miles along the scenic northern shoreline to Dillon. Pick up the Snake River Recpath there and cross over its namesake while relishing the spectacular views of Keystone Mountain. After about a mile, hang a right onto the Swan Mountain Recpath to complete the loop around Lake Dillon.

At the southern tip of the lake, the Swan Mountain Recpath begins the four-mile climb to Sapphire Point, located midway between Keystone and Breck at 9,500 feet. Dismount and walk the short pedestrian path to the overlook for photo-worthy vistas of Lake Dillon and the White River National Forest, as well as the Gore and Tenmile mountain ranges. Bid the bike path a brief farewell and descend two crazy-fast miles down Swan Mountain Road (watch

▼ SMOOTH RIDE The Blue River Recpath connects Breckenridge and Frisco with nine miles of silky trail.

for cars!). At the bottom, cross over Highway 9 and look for the recpath to return to the recreation center in Breckenridge. —JM



HAPPY HOUR

The **Breckenridge Distillery** is located just off the Blue River Recpath on the way back to the Breckenridge Recreation Center. Exit the bike path by turning right on Coyne Valley Road; ride a half-mile and turn left on Airport Road. The world's highest distillery is a half-mile down on the right and offers complimentary drop-in tours every day except Monday. Ask the bartender to show you the back room, where the staff plays with one-offs and infusions. 1925 Airport Road, Breckenridge, 970-547-9759, breckenridgedistillery.com

ALTERNATE ROUTE

Extended Lake Dillon Loop
(Moderate)

Add a second ski resort (and an extra 10 miles) to the original ride with an out-and-back to Keystone. Instead of turning right onto the Swan Mountain Recpath to complete the Lake Dillon Loop, follow the Snake River five miles into the town of Keystone. The asphalt is a bit more worn on this section of the route, but there's no difficult climbing until a short kick at the very end, just before the path terminates in the Mountain House parking lot. You'll follow the same route back. ▲▲