

RIDING THE COLORADO TRAIL HORSEBACK

PREFACE

Riding The Colorado Trail on horseback is really great. Your trail ride is likely to become a cherished memory. The Colorado Trail is a 483 mile recreational trail that crosses the Rocky Mountains from Denver to Durango, passing through six National Forests, six Wilderness areas, traversing five major river systems and penetrating eight of the state's mountain ranges. The Colorado Trail is unique in that it was established and is cared for almost entirely by volunteers, "Friends of The Colorado Trail." The work is organized by The Colorado Trail Foundation, a nonprofit organization funded mainly through private contributions. Trail care is in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service.

This information assists equestrians in planning their trips. You'll find recommendations here as well as mention of other resources. Enjoy The Colorado Trail.

PREPARATION

- Maps, CT Map Book shop.ColoradoTrail.org
- Colorado Trail Official Guidebook shop.ColoradoTrail.org
- Altitude Training for horse and rider
- Training horses for encounters with other users (backpackers & bicyclists, etc.)
- Know the area you are riding - fire restrictions, water, etc. For abnormal conditions posted on ColoradoTrail.org, refer to website page entitled Colorado Trail Resources by Segment (<http://www.coloradotrail.org/segments.html>) under the Trip Planning menu.
- Equipment – what you need and have it accounted for, including cell phone
- Get your stock used to all new feed before you go
- How much feed will you need, before, during and after the ride. Mock up daily ration and multiply
- Shoeing – one week before your trip
- Food Drops
- Support Crew
- Contingency Plans

PLANNING

- Plan to ride only 2.5 to 3 miles an hour -packed
- Depending on the grades, plan no more than 10 to 20 miles a day. (at most)
- Plan to start early everyday in hopes to get over the passes before afternoon storms
- Ride agenda – carefully read CTF Guidebook for overall planning i.e.: overnights where to camp, water, alternate exits incase of emergency
- Daily duties – Setting tree lines, pitching tents, cooking, cleanup
- Place important items within reach of packs while on the trail as in saws, first aid kit (people and horse), easy boots, raingear water filters, any items you may need on the ride.
- Wild animal concerns
- Check all equipment against list at least a week prior to departure, ensure all equipment is in good repair (personal and group)

DAY RIDES

- Anywhere from the Front Range, Segment 1 at Waterton Canyon to the end of Segment 5 at Kenosha Pass. These segments can easily be driven to and done in a day, if planned properly.
- Can ride more miles per day if not packed
- Don't forget the important items such as - first aid kit, warm clothing. Bring enough minimal equipment for overnight survival, extra food, emergency blanket.

MORE THAN A DAY RIDE

- Know where to start trail with trailer access and pull out with trailer access. (If it is still listed as trailer access then plan in advance to drive and check it out)
- Ideally group size should not exceed 10 stock animals.
- If you have no support crew, plan extra time to move vehicles from beginning to end this may take hours so an extra day may be needed.
- Plan campsites carefully and allow enough time to get there. i.e.: don't camp at top of mountains, take grades into consideration.
- Be careful not to vary from original plan if you get to your destination early (just enjoy the time) the next segment could be more difficult than anticipated and may stress the horses.
- Camp sites should be large and open enough to allow plenty of room for the horses and tents, without disturbing the land more than necessary.
- Chose your dates carefully for the segments you plan to ride. i.e.: altitude, temperatures, snow, and water.
- Have support crew lined up with agenda of night camps, and expected time of arrivals at end point. Contingency plan discussed if late or alternate take out place is necessary.
- Know all available alternative exits in each segment in case of emergency.

THROUGH RIDE

FROM BEGINNING TO END

- Riding the entire length of The Colorado Trail is extremely demanding.
- From north to south you gain 89,354 feet in elevation
- Once the trail has climbed from Waterton Canyon to Georgia Pass, a distance of about 80 miles, it almost never descends to 8,000 feet until its terminus near Junction Creek.
- Most of the CT crosses the state at nine, ten, eleven, twelve and even thirteen thousand feet.
- This makes for countless magnificent vistas, but possible hazards.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Trail Use and Etiquette

- Stay on the trails and avoid shortcuts
- Be courteous and yield to others when you can
- Travel in small groups

Courtesy

- Plan to encounter other users along the trail incl. cyclists & motorcycles
- Choose horses that aren't too spooky when encountering other users
- Be ready & willing to educate other users on pointers when encountering horses
- Recommend to other users that they begin talking with horse riders at their earliest chance and explain that their voice is calming to the horses

- Explain that horses eyesight is poor and the human voice helps them identify oncoming users, lowering the risk of them getting spooked

Stock Containment

- Use highlines and tree saver straps
- Learn about various temporary corrals & fences

Pack it in – Pack it out

- What comes in must come out – no exceptions.
- When you leave, scatter rocks, logs, unused wood, and horse manure so your spot looks undisturbed

TRAIL CONCERNS

Weather

- Snow storms, gale force winds, stifling heat, lightning, hail, hypothermia-inducing rains and crisp days of utter perfection can materialize on any given summer day

Losing your horses in the back country

- Put dog tags on their halters
- Only graze a few horses at a time even with hobbles

Health and wellness

- Ensure good health and wellness of human and horse due to demands of the trail

Other

- Responsibility to remove a deceased horse is of the horse owner.

Segments 1-3 and 6

Bicycles

Segment 21

Steep ridge, rockslide

Segment 22

Highest Point 13,271 ft. below Coney, 4-foot rock step-up

Segment 24

Elk Creek - 30 switchbacks down (500 ft elev. loss), rock wall, steep narrow trail, Narrow Gauge Train, 35 switchbacks up

Segment 27

Indian Trail Ridge

Steep, narrow, drop offs on both sides, bridge, drop into Taylor Lake

Segment 28

Kennebec Pass – drop offs are precipitous in places

Sliderock Canyon – steep narrow trail, steep decent

Bicycles

FAVORITE PLACES TO CAMP

Segment 6 - Georgia Pass

Segment 12 - Rainbow Lake

Segment 16 - Marshall Pass (cabin)

Segment 16 - Camron Park

Segment 17 - Baldy Lake (0.5 miles off the trail)

Segment 22 - Town of Carson (cabins)

Segment 23 - Pole Creek

Segment 25 – Molas Lake and Hidden Lake (10.3 miles in to the alpine lake, just a 1/8 mile off trail)

Segment 28 – Taylor Lake

ACCESS POINTS FOR HORSE TRAILERS

Good Access

Segment 1 (Waterton Canyon) to **Segment 19** (Eddisville Trailhead) has trailer access at each segment, with the exception of Sargents Mesa. You can access Sargents Mesa it is just a little tight, recommend access is Cameron Park.

Segment 22 (Spring Creek)

Segment 24 (Rio Grande)

Segment 25 (Molas Pass)

Segment 26 (Bolam Pass)

Difficult Access

Segment 23 (Carson Saddle)

No Access

Segment 20 (San Luis Pass)

Segment 26 (Hotel Draw) road states no trailers

Segment 28 (Cumberland Basin) 4x4 at the top.

Refer to CT Guidebook and Data book for FS road conditions

Do research prior to departure

POSSIBLE PLACES TO STAY WITH YOUR HORSES

Segment 13/14 - Mt Princeton Stables/Hot springs (Cogins required)

Segment 18 – Quarter Circle-Circle Ranch

Segment 22 – Ryan’s Roost, Lake City

Segment 25 – Molas Lake

Segment 28 – Horseman’s Lodge, Bayfield

Other locations may be available just call Chamber of Commerce or scout out other locations

RESOURCES (Are available at The Colorado Trail Office or ordered on line)

7th Edition CT Official Guidebook (LINK to CT Store)

Detailed trail information, section by section. Don’t do the trail without it

Completely updated with all the latest re-routes

Expert advice on planning your CT experience

Fascinating information on CT natural and human history

Detailed descriptions for every mile

Information for re-supply and near by towns

Trail profiles showing all the ups and downs

Full color maps for every segment

Complete GPS mapping information

Over 90 gorgeous full color photos

Trip logs to record your adventure

CT Trailside Data-book (LINK to CT Store)

Details miles, significant areas, elevation, latitude-longitude, profile of elevation gain and

loss in miles

Maps on CD: The Colorado Trail Official Reference Map Series (CDROM) (LINK to CT Store)

www.coloradotrail.org

Who We Are
Volunteer
Contribute
Trip Planning
Trail Crews
Adopt a Trail
Outdoor Workshops
Supported Treks
Frequently Asked Questions
Tread Lines Newsletters
Media Center

Colorado Trail Foundation

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(For contacts of people who will give details about the trail segments you are planning to travel)

PACKING IN THE BACK COUNTRY

Please refer to numerous books on the subject and web sites as in:

http://www.packsaddleshop.com/packing_tips.html

<http://www.horsemuletrails.com/packh.html>

Equipment list can be found at:

<http://www.isuedu/outdoor/horse/htm>

Do not under estimate the importance of education in proper packing techniques,

- Accurate weighing and balancing
- Trained and conditioned pack animals
- Proper equipment

QUESTIONS

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