

Denver Round-Trip

Scenic Colorado – one week

Driving Distance: 1100 driving miles
Driving Time: 25 Hours Approx
Recommended Trip: 7 Days

Day 1: Leaving Denver, head towards Estes Park, the entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park. Drive along Trail Ridge Road/Beaver Meadow Road, a designated All-American Road and one of the few paved roads in North America that leads to a high, alpine glacier basin. This scenic byway the National Park from Estes Park to Grand Lake. Continue on towards Central City, where your host tonight will be the local KOA campground. As you cross the Continental Divide at 11,307-ft Berthoud Pass, there are great views into lower elevations. Take the evening to explore the historic Central City where Colorado's first gold rush kicked off in 1859.

Day 2: Today you'll drive towards Grand Junction. This drive offers the full spectrum of the grandeur of Colorado's Rocky Mountains. As you pass through the Glenwood Canyon be sure to stop at the Hanging Lake Falls and the Hot Springs Pool. Tonight you'll be staying at the Grand Junction /Clifton KOA.

Day 3: Drive to Cortez today. Don't take the direct way, but rather the Grand Mesa Scenic and Historic Byway following Highway 65, one of only 14 officially designated National Scenic Byways. You'll be going through Grand Mesa National Forest with its semiarid environment and little vegetation. The road climbs through pine forests allowing a great view from 11,000 feet above sea level. Later this route will take you along the edge of the Uncompahgre Plateau and the San Juan National Forest, always following San Juan Skyway, the second All-American Road on this tour. You'll drive through old West towns like Telluride and later Durango, all in the shadow of impressive 14,000-foot peaks. Tonight you'll be staying at Cortez/Mesa Verde KOA.

Day 4: Spend most of the day exploring the Mesa Verde National Park where you can view the ruins of Anasazi villages and dwellings, which were built between 550 and 1270 AD. Later you'll transfer to the Durango North KOA. You could take a ride on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. This 8 hour ride winds through the rugged San Juan region to the historic mining town of Silverton.

Day 5: After leaving the plateau and canyon country around Durango you'll drive back up into the mountains following the so-called Million Dollar Highway, named because it is said that every mile of this road must have cost a million dollars. The route crosses rugged granite ranges, often cresting heights over 10,000 feet, for example at the Coal Bank Pass. As you draw nearer to Gunnison you'll drive into the canyons formed by the Black Mesa Range. Your host this evening is the Gunnison KOA.

Day 6: Enjoy the trip to Cripple Creek, Colorado, where you'll stay at the Cripple Creek KOA. Fun fact: you are at the highest KOA in the world at 10,000 feet above sea level. Take a trip on the Cripple Creek-Victor Narrow Gauge Railroad for a lively tour of Wild West ghost towns and old gold mines. Or join a guided tour of the Mollie Kathleen mine, which descends 1000 feet into the mountain.

Day 7: On your way back to Denver today you might want to stop near Manitou Springs and visit the Cave of the Winds and take a tour of these 21 well lit caverns. You could also visit the nearby Garden of the Gods Park, with some of its red and white sandstone monoliths being between 100 million and 300 million years old.