

The Colorado Trail “End to End” Guide

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A guide for planning long hikes on The Colorado Trail. Town info, resupply, alt routes, and general info. Revised May 2015.

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About The Colorado Trail and the “End to End” Guide

Note: *This guide has been, and always will be, free. I've been asked why I don't charge for it. Why? Because this guide is a labor of love and I enjoy giving back. However, if you like this guide and find it useful, consider donating to The Colorado Trail Foundation. They do astounding work maintaining, protecting and promoting the trail. If you can hike a 500 mile long trail, you can also donate a few bucks to a great group.*

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 Glance

Want to know the major details about The Colorado Trail?. Here are the details in a nutshell:

- Official length of trail is 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
- According to the latest figures, The Colorado Trail averages 10347' throughout its length!
- The CDT and The Colorado Trail share the same treadway for 234 miles; over 300 if you take the Collegiate West option.
- 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. If you are Denver bound, the hiking season can be extended about 1 to 2 weeks as you will be in the lower elevations. This time frame is just a rule of thumb that can change depending upon snow pack, hiking pace, rate of snow melt and an early winter. The rule of thumb is pretty accurate however. [This link from The Colorado Trail Foundation may be useful as well.](#)

Hiking The Colorado Trail During 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)	More insects
	Monsoon season in ~mid-July to ~mid-late August . Lots of torrential downpours in the afternoon.

Hiking The Colorado Trail During the Fall

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	

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

Now, with changing weather patterns, the above rules of thumb are getting skewed. As I type this note, it is Sept 8, 2013. Still 90+ F days in the foothills with frequent afternoon t-storms as well. Very unusual and, if the hot and dry patterns hold going forward in the years ahead, hard to tell what is in store! Monsoon season may be off, possibly more wildfires and a prolonged Fall/later winter. We'll see what Ma Nature does. That's about all we can do.

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 it 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](#).

SOUTHWEST vs. NORTHEAST on The Colorado Trail

Southwest / Durango Bound 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 has less transportation options to get back home vs. Denver.

Northeast / Denver Bound: 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. Ending in Denver is also much easier logistically to get back home vs Durango.

Starting in Denver

There are three popular places to start the Colorado Trail from Denver.

The Official Start – Waterton Canyon

Waterton Canyon is the official Denver terminus of The Colorado Trail

[Details here....](#)

Waterton Canyon is perhaps the logistically easiest of the three popular starts in terms of getting to, is the official trail terminus and allows the CT hiker to ease into the trail gently. Seeing the bighorns at the dam is always a treat, too.

This start does not allow dogs or camping however. It is also essentially a wide dirt road and is a very popular trail running/biking/fishing area so not the most remote feeling start.

The Dog Friendly Start – Indian Creek Trail

Have a dog and do not want to skip ahead to segment two? [You could do this dog-friendly alternate](#) (with somewhat hard logistics).

If you wish to have long term parking for this alternate, for Denver in general, here's some info posted online:

If you're starting at Indian Creek TH, parking in Sedalia might be convenient for you. Maybe phone Sedalia RV Storage (303) 688-3842, owner Jim Sikora, and get a price quote etc. There are many other RV storage places where you might also inquire but some won't take cars.

Other people have confirmed that this is a good option. As of June 2014, they charge \$38/mo .

Besides allowing dogs, the alternate start has a campground at the start of the alternate and camping is allowed along the way.

The Scenic Alternate – Roxborough State Park

Another alternate start could be to [take this alternate not far from Waterton Canyon](#) . [Roxborough State Park](#) does not allow camping or dogs, but is an interesting and scenic alternative. [Take trail #800](#) to hook on The Colorado Trail again. It hooks up again just after Waterton Canyon at Lenny's Rest.

[Here's a little report I wrote about it](#). Makes a nice way to start The Colorado Trail. (With some caveats: There is an entrance fee, no overnight parking, no camping, no horses, and no MTBikes or dogs)

If you do not find a shuttle (see below), you can get there via these instructions:

- [Airport bus "Skyride" to Market Street Station \(10\\$\)](#) –
- walk to nearby light rail station on 16th Street mall. [Take Light Rail to Mineral – Littleton station \(2\\$\)](#)
- Take taxi to Roxborough State Park (~\$35)

[Excellent overview of the three alternates via The Colorado Trail Foundation.](#)

[Starting from Durango? See below!](#)

Guidebooks

The following are good Guidebooks for The Colorado Trail

- [The Colorado Trail: The Official Guidebook, Eighth Edition. By The Colorado Trail Foundation](#)
For a general overview of the trail, includes expanded re-supply info vs previous editions, USFS maps, and general description of the trail. The eighth edition is totally revised and has much info useful for a long distance hiker on the CT. Yours truly wrote the section on lightweight backpacking. As always, check The Colorado Trail Foundation's website for latest trail re-routes and information.
- [The Colorado Trail: The Trailside Databook, Fifth Edition. By The Colorado Trail Foundation](#) The Colorado Trail's equivalent to the AT databook. Compact enough for a good sized cargo pocket. Ounce for ounce and dollar for dollar, the most valuable guidebook for the CT. The 5th edition is completely revised with basic maps showing side trails, has excellent "quick and dirty" resupply info, water info, campsite info and gives details for the Collegiate West alternate (*but not the ~23 miles of the 2014 re-routes around the Tincup area*) and has information on bike detours for wilderness areas.
- Jackie "Yogi" McDonnell now has a [Colorado Trail Handbook](#) similar to her PCT and CDT handbooks. More detailed info for pre-trail planning and very detailed information for the towns. Useful if you are new to long distance hiking and need help with what gear to bring, how to do mail drops and so on and/or like more extensive information about towns and resources avail.

Maps:

The following represent a wide range of map resources for The Colorado Trail.

- **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 map set available on the [The Colorado Trail Foundation website for \\$46.95](#):
- **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](#) or the [Benchmark Atlas](#). Taking the narrow corridor maps with the appropriate atlas maps are a strategy many CDT hiker use for their thru-hikes FWIW.

- Another option is the new [MOUNTAIN MAPS – SAWATCH RANGE](#) map that show alternate routes, 14ers and bailout points between Leadville and the CDT/CT junction to the south (. Sections 10-15 in the guidebook.)
- [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 ~\$12 ea. A bit heavy. You need fourteen 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 do not plan on hiking in Colorado again any time soon, the other map resources are a better investment.
- [Postholer.com](#) now has a CT Databook and maps available
- Erik the Black also has a [Colorado Trail Atlas](#) available (maps, town guide and databook for the CT corridor and some alt routes)
- The [Latitude 40 Maps](#) aren't as detailed as other maps, but cover a wider area. Good for on-trail hiking and bail out points. The new maps for the Collegiates (Buena Vista and Salida) are confirmed to cover the new Collegiate West route as well. The Summit County, Salida/BV and Durango maps cover the CT from Kenosha Pass (70 miles) to the end. Less money than using all TI maps if, again, with less detail.
- [Guthook](#) now has a [Colorado Trail app](#) for iOS and Android platforms. Maps, trail info, profiles, resupply info as well as info for the Collegiate West option (including 2014 re-route) and mountain bike detours.

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 outfitting stores in Colorado. 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
 - #110 Leadville/Fairplay
 - #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
- **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.

Collegiate West Alternate

As of 2013, there is a higher alternate route on The Colorado Trail that takes in the existing Continental Divide National Scenic Trail through the Collegiate Peaks. This route is the same length as the existing CT (~80 miles) though this section, but offers a higher ridge walk alternative that many people may find interesting. Alpine lakes, ridge walks and above tree line views are to be found. [See below for more info.](#)

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 want to be more careful in picking your campsites. Some 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.](#)

Canisters should be found at the following places:

- Denver area – Pick one!
- Bailey Country Store – Small amount of canisters in Summer 2014. May want to call ahead. 303-816-9383
- Breckenridge – Mt Outfitters – 970-453-2201
- Twin Lakes – General Store – 719-486-2196 Limited quantity reported; may want to call ahead
- Leadville – Leadville Outdoors (719) 486-7392
- Buena Vista – Trailhead Sports – 719-395-8002
- Salida – Salida Mt Sports – 719-539-4400
- Creede – San Juan Sports – 719-658-2482
- Lake City – Sportsman Outdoor and Fly Shop – 970-944-2526 High Country Market 970 944-0161
- 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. ☺ Also, the small towns stores can change or run out of inventory esp as more people hike The Colorado Trail. Always good to call ahead.*

- White gas and Heet/denatured alcohol are found fairly easily in most re-supply areas. Heet is usually found in gas stations, hardware stores, auto supply stores, grocery stores and convenience stores in the automotive section mixed in with oil, transmission fluid, etc.

Resupply

Resupply 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!

Resupply Spot	Miles From Denver	Miles From Trail	Notes
Denver	0.0	0.0	A large metro area with everything you may need. Near the downtown area there is an REI, and a hostel . The hostel is not far from the Market street station bus station if you should take the RTD airport bus (see below). The hostel is also close to the REI . Denver now has very convenient bike kiosks where bikes can be rented by the hour or even the day. Perfect for getting around the immediate area quickly!
Buffalo Creek	26.9	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 inside general store. Ask nicely and you may be able to get package outside or normal business hours.
Bailey	40.5	8	Lodging (just outside of town), restaurants, The resupply is marginal at the gas station. Sasquatch Outpost and Bailey Country Store reopened in summer of 2013 with moderate resupply with hiker specific items including fuel canisters. May have lodging avail. Shuttle back to trail Call 303-816-9383 for avail. Gas station as well for min resupply. Town does have PO if you want do a maildrop. Bailey 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 / Fairplay	71.7 S	4.5 S	Jefferson: General Store for marginal to moderate resupply. Hungry Moose Caboose has BBQ. The market is hiker friendly and will take packages. http://jefferson-market.com/ Use FedEx or UPS. Post Office is now located in "Pony Espresso" coffee shop. Beer and wine also avail here. Fairplay: Small, compact town past Jefferson with everything a hiker may need. Good sized grocery store, lodging, restaurants. Relatively easy hitch on 285. Rumored to be the inspiration for the show " South Park "! From this point, Bailey may also be hitched back to ~19 miles north on 285.

Breckenridge/Frisco/Dillion	104.4	4	<p>Breck: 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</p> <p>New hostel called The Bivvi offers a \$30 bunk and breakfast stay. Mention online posts for the discount “Hot tub...outdoor firepit..draft beer”. On free bus line and next to Breck brew pub! Takes mail drops. See website for more info.</p> <p>Frisco: 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). I’ve been know to frequent the Backcountry Brewery there once or twice. @</p> <p>Silverthorne/Dillon: The Summit County Bus will also take you a little further into nearby Dillon/Silverhotne. More lodging, stores and BREW PUBS!</p>
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Copper Mtn / Frisco	118.8	0	<p>Copper: Ski Resort, NO LONGER HAS POST OFFICE! Very marginal resupply. Many restaurants. Follow CT into Copper at American Eagle Ski Lift. Follow side trail into “town”.Frisco: You can pick up the same free bus in Copper (Summit Stage) as for Breck. Will take you into Frisco.</p>
Leadville	142.6 via US 24 at Tennessee Pass	9.5	<p>Full service town. Leadville Hostel takes maildrops. Hostel has shuttle service for neaby trailheads and areas. www.leadvillehostel.com</p>
	156.7 via Haggerman Rd FS-105	11.0	<p>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)</p>
	169.7 via Halfmoon Creek Rd. FS-110	8.0	
Twin Lakes	175.2	On trail or 1-3 miles. Depends if you use alt. roadwalk route, old CT over Hope Pass or current CT route	<p>General store with marginal to moderate resupply. Has basic backpacking food and supplies. Post office in Twin Lakes CO is closing June 06 2013. Contact the General Store at 719-486-2196 regarding how to send resupply packages there More info from the new owners here. Looks to really hiker friendly! http://www.twinlakesgs.com/Two small motels. Other lodging (cabins, lodges) just outside of “town”.Patrick “Gumby” Basso reports: Twin Lakes now has a Hostel for \$40/night associated with the Twin Lakes Inn. Very Clean and New. The food at the Twin Lakes Inn is very good. – Great apple glaze pork spare ribs – yummy + beer.</p>

Collegiate West alt route info is below Durango.

Collegiate West alt starts just past here at mile 13.7 of segment 11. Please see below Durango for resupply info on Collegiate West alt route

Buena Vista	190.8 via Clear Creek Rd/RT 390 then US 24	~20	Full service town. Different lodging options.. All roads see a fair amount of traffic esp on a weekend, but 306 sees the most traffic and is by far the easiest hitch.
	209.3 via 365	6.5	
	215.9 via 306	9.5	
Mt. Princeton Hot Springs	229.6	0	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 if you call ahead. www.mtprinceton.com
Salida Monarch Spur RVCampground	247.4 via CO 252.5 via US 50	13 to Salida	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 m more miles to US 50, then hitch. US 50 is a much busier road. Simple Lodge and Hostel \$25/nt for bunk as of 2012. In downtown near all amenities. They do take mail drops. Offers 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 Headwater IPA at Amica brewpub highly recommended by Ed Hyatt! Monarch Spur RV campground is 1 mile East. May take maildrops. http://www.monarchspurrvcampground.com/ The Monarch Mountain Lodge is about five miles below the pass. They will let you park there for \$5/nt if doing the Collegiate Loop.
COLLEGIATE WEST ALT ROUTE ENDS HERE AND REJOINS CT	266.8		
Sargents	266.8	15	Tough hitch on low traffic road. Marginal resupply. PO. Lodging in cabins. Bar and grill. http://www.tomichicreektradingpost.com/
Saguache / Gunnison	302.4	Sauguache is approx 30 miles EAST.	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 2013, the town does have two gas stations for min – moderate resupply, restaurants (breakfast, lunch, dinner), lodging and a post office.
		Gunnison is approx 40 miles WEST. It is a two part hitch via 114 and 50	Gunnison: A good sized college town that has full resupply, outfitters, lodging, etc. Everything a hiker may need and more. The Wanderlust Hostel has been recommended by other hikers. They will take maildrops. Look at their website for contact info to inquire more. The owners seem super hiker friendly.

ALSO: A trail angel by the name of "Apple" has been known to camp out in this area with goodies, holding maildrops and possible shuttles for hikers to Gunnison. BUT, trail angels do this out of generosity. I would not count on this as a normal service..but rather a nice bonus if available. See [The Colorado Trail forums at www.trailforums.com](http://www.trailforums.com) for more details. He occasionally posts there.

Creede	342.6 via FS-503 @ San Luis Pass	10 – ~2 miles of hiking to a TH parking lot first. Then about 8 miles to town down a jeep road	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 hitch that is reported to be much easier than in years past.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. Cookerhiker also reports that " <i>The owner of San Juan Sports offers rides to the Trailhead up that 4WD road</i> "
	357.4 via Spring Creek Pass at 149		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. Reported to be easier hitch now than in years past.
Lake City	357.4 via Spring Creek Pass at 149	17	Much easier hitch now than in years past. Lake City has become one of the "go to" places on the CT and CDT. From Lucky at Raven's Rest: . <i>Just wanted to let you know that we formed a group called Lake City Trail Angels. The goal is to assist hikers any way we can... (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Lake-City-Trail-Angels/626227070796756) and we will do our best to help them out. Lucky states a daily shuttle will be done from Spring Creek Pass to Lake City (and back) daily. Check Facebook page for more details/questions.</i> Decent grocery stores (moderate to full resupply). High Country Market actively seeking hiker input on what to stock. Restaurants. Elkhorn RV resort has tent sites and heated camper cabins. May take maildrops if you call ahead. http://www.elkhornrvresort.com/ 2012 thru-hiker Dogwood reports the The Raven's Rest hostel is hiker friendly and run by AT/PCT alumni. In downtown near amenities. They take maildrops. Offers communal kitchen, work for stay, \$25 night. Thinking of offering shuttles in 2014. Silver Spur Motel reported to be good as well. Local businesses offer possible shuttles out of town.
Molas Lake Campground	409.2	~.5 m to campground off CT	Campground is in pretty location . Takes maildrops via UPS, USPS and FedEx. Please call 970-759-2218 to set up mailings. No supplies.

Silverton	410.7	5.5 m	<p>Silverton is an easy hitch. Small, touristy town. Can do moderate re-supply at the small grocery store. Outfitter. Prospector Hotel in Silverton likes hikers. Will do basic shuttles. ~\$55/nt Near all amenities. Will shuttle back to trail.</p> <p>www.prospectormotel.com There is a hostel in Silverton: <i>The Blair Street Hostel. 970-903-1495. \$18 for a space in the bunkhouse, \$25 for a space in a dorm room, \$12 for a tent site, \$45 and up for a private room (\$65 and \$85, I believe), plus tax. She is accepting hiker boxes at P.O. Box 916, Silverton, CO 81433 5\$ shuttle back to trail. https://www.facebook.com/hostelblairstreet"</i>San Juan</p> <p>Backcountry http://www.sanjuanbackcountry.com/ will do extensive shuttles all over the San Juan area. Advanced reservations suggested.</p>
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Durango	484.6	End of Trail	<p>Treat yourself to a beer and a burger. Mail yourself some comfy clothes! Trail ends ~4 miles from outskirts of this full service town. Should be easy hitch into town. the Durango Hometown Hostel is closed as of Aug 2013. Cookerhiker reports "At the end of our successful Colorado Trail thruhike, Northern Harrier and I celebrated with a free brew at Carver's in Durango. They offer a free CT Ale to all thruhikers. Very satisfying." FREE BEER! 'nuff said.</p>
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COLLEGIATE WEST ALT ROUTE RESUPPLY INFO STARTS HERE. THE MILEAGE MARKERS WILL BE DIFFERENT FROM COLLEGIATE EAST RESUPPLY ABOVE.		THE TWO ROUTES DIVERGE AT ~ MILE 185 AND CONVERGE AGAIN AT ~MILE 266	
B. Vista or Cottonwood Hot Springs	212	19 to BV 14 to Cottonwood	Cottonwood Hot springs could work for a maildrop. Lodging avail too. Or hitch into B. Vista
Taylor Park Trading Post	217.4	11	Cottonwood Pass Rd Marginal resupply, maildrops, bar and grill, lodging http://www.taylorparktradingpost.com/
Tincup	228.3	8.5	Restored mining town. Small restaurant and snack-type store. Very hard hitch and climb. Not suggested. http://www.pitkincolorado.com/tincup/
St. Elmo	234.4	4	Marginal resupply at general store St. Elmo is easier to reach and get to than Tincup above. Contact for possible maildrops.
Mt. Princeton Hot Springs	234.4	15	Could be tough hitch. See above for more details
Monarch Mountain Lodge (Garfield)	249.4	2	see above

Monarch Crest Store	260.2	0	On trail store. Marginal resupply. Cafeteria. Takes maildrops via UPS only. 719-539-409124500 Hwy 50 West Salida, CO 81201
Gunnison	260.2	42	<i>OBVIOUSLY A DIFFERENT HITCH HERE VS COLLEGIATE EAST. THIS HITCH IS AT MONARCH CREST (HWY 50) AND NOT HWY 114 THEN 50 AS WITH THE COLLEGIATE EAST ROUTE. see above for info on "Gunny"</i>
Salida	260.2	22	see above

- **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, lodging, restaurants, 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.the2016plan.com/coloradotrail/planning.html>

Also, I saw a presentation at [Neptune Mountaineering](#) where the two hikers cleverly used metal ammo boxes from the [surplus store as well](#). These sturdy, metal boxes are often used in National Park Service backcountry campsites to critter proof food. At ~\$20 ea, considerably less expensive than bear canisters, too.

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 some alternate route ideas. There are others as well. Be sure to consult your guidebooks and/or maps to get back to the CT! **NO REALLY, BE SURE TO TAKE MAPS IF YOU DO ALTERNATE ROUTES!**

Lost Creek Wilderness High Route: Interested in exploring some high country soon into your trip? Take the Lost Creek High Route! This is a mainly-off trail route that takes in the highest peak in the [Kenosha Range](#) (Peak 12429'; unofficially called Peak X) in the Lost Creek Wilderness and is a high route parallel to The Colorado Trail below. To access this route (Durango bound), take the Brookside-McCurdy Trail north off the CT. At a saddle between two peaks, head off trail and west towards Kenosha Pass along the ridge. You are now on the backbone of the Kenosha Mountains. The off-trail hiking is easy to navigate, but challenging in terms of elevation gain and loss. Follow this route to the Ben Tyler trail junction (unofficially called "Platosha Pass") and then head south to rejoin The Colorado Trail. If you want to continue the high country route (and add a fair amount of mileage) continue into the Platte River Mountain range and follow [the range to North Twin Cone Peak](#), follow the long and meandering dirt road down to Kenosha Pass and rejoin The Colorado Trail. The views from North Twin Cone are quite exquisite, but the road walk can be tiring after a long day. You will need Trails Illustrated Map #105. Please note that while this route is easy to follow with basic map reading skills, it is not marked. Water is also scarce along the ridge itself. Consider it a scenic alternative for more experienced hikers.

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... (Use Trails Illustrated Map #127)

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 Elk Head Pass are stunning. You follow the trail and connect back to the CT in a valley. (Use Trails Illustrated Maps #127 and #129)

Collegiate West / CDT Alternate: After Hope Pass, rather than turn towards Missouri Gulch, follow the designated Continental Divide Trail route from Hope Pass to where it meets up with The Colorado Trail again at the Fooses Creek trail near Monarch Pass. This route is higher than the Colorado Trail (and sometimes more exposed) and can provide another high country alternate for those who wish to take it. The Latitude 40 series and the Guthhook app /Bear Creek Survey Maps also have this route, including the 2014 re-routes, in detail

Speaking of the Collegiate West loop, this newer alt route combined with the traditional CT will make a wonderful ~160 mile CT/CDT loop with beautiful scenery and easy logistics. [A map book of this loop is also available.](#) A good overview with planning info [from David Collins of Clever Hiker](#) is available, too.

Beer Thirty Hike: Not an alternate per se, but an easy way to do a 14 mile/3500' gain slack pack [between Breck and Copper](#) using the Summit County Bus transit system. [Info here.](#) Reverse the route if Durango bound. If you are not a purist, you can even veer off the CT and hike directly into Frisco via the Peaks Trail right to the [Frisco Backcountry Brewery!](#) @

Note that the Mountain Maps-Sawatch Range will also work for the alt. routes between Hope Pass and Monarch Pass. It does NOT have 2014 Collegiate West re-route however.

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. [Jamie Compos has a nice list of 14ers near The Colorado Trail and corresponding Trails Illustrated maps to hike them. Scroll down the page until you see the appropriate section.](#) Consult your guidebook and maps if you want to know more about the 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

Here's how to get to the trailhead via public transport: –

- [Airport bus "Skyride" to Market Street Station \(\\$10\)](#) –
- walk to nearby light rail station on 16th Street mall. [Take Light Rail to Mineral – Littleton station \(\\$2\)](#)
- Taxi to Waterton Canyon TH (\$20)

(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 originally. [The updated page is here.](#)

Yes, it's fine to leave your car in the parking lot....

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.

Another option is the Sedalia RV storage listed earlier.

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. [Frontier Airlines](#) has flights to and from Durango and Denver for less than \$150 one-way. If you feel comfortable booking a flight in advance and can stick to the schedule, a great way to go. The number of these flights have been cut back so you will have to book well in advance. [United Airlines](#) also has one way flights from Durango to Denver but, though more numerous, reported to be more expensive.

Bus service is avail again for Durango to Grand Junction via [Road Runner Transit](#). In Grand Junction, you can catch a Greyhound bus back to Denver. You can reverse the route to get into Durango. ([see info below in Section Hiking Transportation for The Colorado Trail](#))

Note that [Grand Junction has a decent sized airport](#) with regular flights to/from Denver. Car rentals also available.

Another option is to fly into Albuquerque and get to and from Durango via other means.

Once into Durango, it is a ~4 mile walk from the downtown area to the Durango terminus of The Colorado Trail (Kennebec Trailhead) at Junction Creek Road. An easy walk or hitch (or at least partial hitch) to the trail head. If you start The Colorado Trail later in the day, [there is also a campground about two miles from the the Durango Terminus of The Colorado Trail.](#)

Naturally, this is a good place to crash if you end The Colorado Trail later in the day and don't wish to push on into Durango that night.

Directions to the Junction Creek Trailhead from Durango.com:

From Durango, head north on Main Avenue, and turn left onto 25th Street, Junction Creek Road. Travel on [Junction Creek Road](#) for about 3 miles to where it enters the San Juan National Forest. A parking area is located on the left, near the trailhead.

For long term parking in Durango, you may want to ask on Whiteblaze and Trailforums.com. (see below in [OTHER RESOURCES](#)). People have offered to do long term parking in the past for a Durango start. If that does not work out, there is the Durango airport at \$7 a day as well. [The Durango and Silverton NG railroad also offers long term parking for \\$7 a day.](#) It is located near downtown Durango, so perhaps more convenient than the airport if other options can't be found.

Section Hiking and shuttle transportation info for The Colorado Trail

The following are ways you can section hike The Colorado Trail:

- **Greyhound** goes to the town of Frisco to and fom Denver. 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. Greyhound will also go to

and from Denver, CO and Grand Junction, CO. Road Runner transit had plans to go from Grand Junction to Durango, but those plans seem on hold.

- **Albuquerque, NM** is an option some people use for flying into or out of. With Greyhound service ending on Sept 6, 2011 into Durango, this option may be more difficult.
- **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.
<http://www.summitstage.com/>
- As of Jan 2011, [the Summit Stage also connects Frisco to Leadville for \\$5](#). Makes doing section hikes easier!
- **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](#)"). 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 Narrow 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/wilderness-access>
- **Wilderness Journeys and Pagosa Outfitters:** Offers shuttles in Durango/Pagosa Springs/Wolf Creek Pass area. <http://www.pagosarafting.com/>
- **San Juan Backcountry** San Juan Backcountry <http://www.sanjuanbackcountry.com/> will do extensive shuttles all over the San Juan area. Advanced reservations suggested.
- **Buckhorn Limousine** Carl Geer at [Backpackinglight.com](http://www.backpackinglight.com) reports "*... run by a friend of mine and he offers, despite the name, really inexpensive shuttles to and from any destination in the southwest. He knows his stuff and spends thirty plus days backpacking in the Weminuche and the San Juans every Summer. Call this number 970-769-0933 and tell them Carl sent you. He can transport up to 7 people with gear at a time in a super clean new suburban. Visit his web site at www.buckhornlimousine.com*"
- **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 bus line makes it easier to get from Denver (and DIA) to such places along or near The Colorado Trail (within hitching distance) such 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>
- **Arrow/Blackhill Stage Lines** works with the above and could be useful, too
<http://www.blackhillsstagelines.com/schedules.asp>
- **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 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.

- **Getting into Lake City or Creede:** A fair amount of people ask about getting into these remote towns deep in the San Juans. Jerry Brown of Bear Creek Survey posted this info on Trailforums.com : *There is a regional airport in Alamosa with United and US Air. [Alamosa Bus Company](#) can probably set something up to take you to Creede. They advertise transportation to the Creede Repertoire Theater so maybe you could get some sort of group deal. Phone 719 1589-3384*

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 a good option.

Other Resources for The Colorado Trail

Here are some other resources about The Colorado Trail:

- The Colorado Trail Foundation: The first place to stop for info on The Colorado Trail www.coloradotrail.org
- The CTF also maintains an active [Facebook page](#) Excellent resource for current trail conditions, closures and other important information. Update frequently.
- Mirroring other popular trails, Facebook pages for the current year hikers are cropping up. [Here is one for 2015 as an example](#). Presumably, 201x will have their own pages, too.
- **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
- Postholer.com has quite a few journals, too along with a Google Map overlay of The Colorado Trail
- **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
- A recent account of thru-hiking the CT just came out by Bill “Cookerhiker” Cooke, **Shades of Gray, Splashes of Color**. [Check it out!](#)
- ..and, finally, [a nice video from Wesley “Crusher” Trimble to whet the appetite!](#)

Once you have completed The Colorado Trail, be sure to fill out [The Colorado Trail Completers form](#). The CTF will mail you a rather nice looking certificate to add to your mementos from your CT hike.

If you have additional questions or about this document or The Colorado Trail in general, then [please feel free to e-mail me](#). 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**

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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

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