

# WESTERN SPIRIT

Cycling Adventures



## Rocky Mountain Loop Road Tour 5 days/4 nights

### DAY 1



Colorado is known for its high mountain passes and breathtaking vistas, so on this trip we don't waste any time delivering the goods. After a short shuttle from Grand Junction we start our week by climbing the scenic and historic Grand Mesa Byway. The byway starts climbing through the picturesque canyon of Plateau Creek to cool evergreen forests 11,000 feet above sea level. The mesa is home to all kinds of wildlife and more than 300 stream fed lakes, so as we climb up to our highpoint we will have beauty all around us to ease the suffering. After topping out and a nice picnic lunch, we begin our descent into the fruit growing town of Cedaredge. From here we bear east and do a bit more climbing through some classic farm land which eventually leads us right to our evening destination. Tomorrow we head to Gunnison.

TOTAL MILEAGE: 64 miles  
Elevation Gain: 6,950 feet  
Elevation Loss: 5,200 feet  
Ride high point: 10,800 feet on Grand Mesa

### DAY 2



After a hearty breakfast we begin our journey south towards Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. On scenic Route 92 we wind our way up and down, then in and out through this backcountry byway that seems built for road biking. Very little traffic, a challenging route and fantastic scenery make this day one to look forward to. There is no huge mountain pass today, but the cumulative

elevation gain will surely make for some tired legs and hungry bellies. Once we pop out at the Gunnison River, we make our way along Blue Mesa Reservoir and the Curecanti National Recreation Area. We wind through the Gunnison Gorge and with the Elk Mountains to the north, finally roll into the beautiful Gunnison Valley. With a big ranching heritage, and a down home feel, Gunnison will give us a chance to kick back, have a big ol' cowboy dinner, watch the sun set over the Elks and dream about the high mountain passes of days to come.

TOTAL MILEAGE: 85 miles  
Elevation Gain: 5,800 feet  
Elevation Loss: 2,800 feet  
Ride high point: 8,600 feet on Scenic Rte 92

### DAY 3



If you like climbing and don't mind an extra challenge along the way, today's your day. We'll start riding a bit earlier since afternoon thunderstorms are not uncommon during Colorado summers. Today's challenge is the famous climb up to Cottonwood Pass. This pass sits at a whopping 12,126 feet and usually does not even open until Memorial Day, when the road is finally snow free. From Gunnison the climb represents a 4,500 foot vertical gain and if that's not enough, the final 16 miles of climbing are actually on a compacted dirt surface. With the local road department's annual mag-chloride treatment, the surface is fine for road bikes and provides just a little extra challenge for our ascent. The paved downhill to our night's destination

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in Buena Vista is pure reward for a big day in the saddle. Our lodging is nestled right in the Arkansas River Valley with the mighty Sawatch Range providing the backdrop.

TOTAL MILEAGE: 69 miles  
Elevation Gain: 4,500 feet  
Elevation Loss: 4,200 feet  
Ride high point: 12,126 feet on Cottonwood Pass

## DAY 4



If yesterday's climb was the "Mont Ventoux" of the Tour de France, then today is the "Alpe d'Huez." Yes another day of climbing through the legendary Colorado Rockies and yes, another 12,000 foot pass. This time it's all paved, but not necessarily any easier. Our route takes us up the Arkansas Valley, until we turn west and head up toward Twin Lakes. From here the road twists and turns as it steadily climbs toward the sky. We pass in the shadow of Mt. Elbert (at 14,433 feet it's Colorado's tallest peak) and test our legs on the big climb up Independence Pass. Just a few feet lower than Cottonwood Pass, this one will take most of the morning to tackle and most of the evening to talk about. From the top it's practically all downhill into Colorado's tinsel town, also known as the town of Aspen. It is nestled right in the heart of Colorado and the perfect place to spend our last night in the Rocky Mountains.

TOTAL MILEAGE: 60 miles  
Elevation Gain: 4,100 feet  
Elevation Loss: 4,200 feet  
Ride high point: 12,095 feet on Independence Pass.

## DAY 5



Our final day brings us down valley from Aspen and past the twin summits of Mount Sopris which is the northwestern edge of the West Elk Loop. This magnificent landscape has been home to generations of Native Americans, most recently the Utes. We ride past the earthen coke ovens at Redstone which bear witness to the toil that built the communities of today. White settlers originally came in search of minerals and stayed to farm and ranch. The raging waters of the Crystal River remind us of where all that snow goes in the summer.

Today's final climb over 8,755 foot McClure Pass will give us one final challenge before coming back towards the farmland of Paonia. The riding on this day will feel a bit easier since our elevation stays lower overall, but we still do a good 50 miles before lunch. The trip ends with a picnic lunch at one of our favorite area fruit stands before shuttling back to Grand Junction in the afternoon.

TOTAL MILEAGE: 54 miles  
Elevation Gain: 1,800 feet  
Elevation Loss: 3,000 feet  
Ride high point: 8,755 feet on McClure Pass

## RIDE NOTES

This tour contains some very challenging riding on narrow, steep mountain passes. A high level of fitness is required to enjoyably complete the route. A support van will be there so you can "control" your challenge, but only you can turn your pedals. If you do not consider yourself to be an expert rider and doubt your ability to complete this tour, please call us and we can help you determine whether this trip is appropriate for you. Itineraries are subject to change due to weather, road conditions, rider safety, and other factors which may affect the logistics of the trip.

To fully enjoy Colorado's amazing riding, training is required. Working up to these mileages over several months will help you enjoy the tour that much more once the big week finally comes. Having good low gears on your bike that you can spin as much as possible will also help ease the challenge of multiple days of climbing.

Overall Rating: Advanced

Physical Difficulty: Very difficult. High elevations, steep climbs, long miles.

Altitude: 4,000 - 12,000 feet

## Travel Logistics

### MEETING PLACE AND TIME

#### Grand Junction, CO

This trip will meet at 8:00 AM MST at the Clarion Inn, 755 Horizon Dr., Grand Junction, Colorado, 970-243-6790. You will need to spend the night before in Grand Junction.

### ENDING TIME

We will return to Grand Junction between 4:00-5:00 PM on the last day.

### SHIPPING YOUR BIKE

If you are shipping your bike, send it to:

**Western Spirit Cycling**  
478 Mill Creek Dr.  
Moab, UT 84532

It is critical that you include your name and tour date on the outside of the box. If you choose this service, you must get this organized through our office. It is imperative to have your bike finely tuned and cleaned before your tour so you know it is in top running condition.

### GETTING TO GRAND JUNCTION, CO

#### Driving

Grand Junction is 250 miles west of Denver and 50 miles east of the Utah/Colorado state line on I-70.

#### Flying into Grand Junction

Airport Code: GJT

### TAXI SERVICE

Sunshine Taxi: 970-245-8294

### LODGING BEFORE YOUR TRIP

It is a good idea to book your rooms in advance; here are a few recommendations:

#### Clarion Inn

970-243-6790, 888-489-9796

This is where the trip will meet—mention that you are on a Western Spirit trip. They have storage available

while you are on your trip.

#### Ramada Inn

970-243-5150, 800-272-6232

#### Best Western Sandman

970-243-4150

#### Quality Inn of Grand Junction

970-245-7200, 800-790-2661

All of these hotels offer airport shuttles.

### ACCOMMODATIONS DURING YOUR TRIP

Prices are based on double occupancy. If you are traveling alone, we will pair you with another guest. If you prefer your own room, ask about the single supplement and we will accommodate if available.

## Packing for your trip

Be sure to bring everything on this list. We have carefully developed this list to insure your comfort on the tour regardless of the weather. If you are prepared for extreme weather, it is an adventure. If you are not prepared it can be a serious problem. We recommend the layering system, including a wicking or long underwear layer, an insulating layer and a weather barrier for wind and rain. This list reflects that philosophy. Weather can be unpredictable, and road cycling can be chilly, so be sure to bring all the warm clothing and rain gear listed!

**HOW TO PACK:** The bulk of your gear and clothing will ride in the Western Spirit support vehicle (preferably in a large duffle bag) and will not generally be accessible during the day. Your small daypack will be used to store things needed during the day such as rain gear, prescription drugs and sunscreen. While this trip is vehicle supported there will be extended times when you are away from the vehicle. You will need to be able to carry a tube, pump, water and some extra clothing.

#### WHAT WE PROVIDE:

- ✓ meals, snacks, water, electrolyte drinks, non-alcoholic drinks
- ✓ 2 large cycling water bottles
- ✓ sunscreen & bug spray

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- ✓ bike stand and lube
- ✓ guides bring their own tools
- ✓ first aid kit with basic medications

## BRINGING OR RENTING

- road bike:
  - if you're bringing your own bike, make sure to bring a pump, tire levers, spare tubes, and optional CO2 cartridges.
  - if you're renting, we will provide all the above items. Rental bikes have 2 water bottle cages on them. Our rentals come with flat pedals. You are welcome to bring your own shoe-pedal combination if you prefer.
- helmet (gratis w/rental bike)

## CYCLING CLOTHING

- cycling or hiking shoes
- 3 - 5 pair cycling shorts
- 3 - 5 cycling jerseys
- long sleeve jersey
- cycling socks
- windbreaker
- knee warmers/warm tights
- cycling gloves (including warm gloves)
- ear band
- booties
- rain jacket (Gore-Tex or similar)
- rain pants (Gore-Tex or similar)

## CASUAL CLOTHING

- 2 pair shorts
- 2 pair long pants
- shirts (long and short sleeve)
- one nice dinner outfit
- socks
- jammies
- pile or fleece jacket
- warm gloves and hat
- swim suit
- comfortable walking shoes

- sandals

## PERSONAL

- sunscreen & lip balm
- medication (epi pen, inhaler)
- personal items and toiletries
- toothbrush/paste
- brush/comb
- cash for souvenirs
- cash for tipping guides: your guides work as a team and share all of their gratuities. A tip of 5-10% of the price of your trip given to either one of your guides when you return to civilization is a great way to say thanks for a job well done.

## GEAR

- sunglasses
- hat or visor
- 2 large water bottles (provided by WSC)
- riding hydration pack
- day pack (see HOW TO PACK, above)

## OPTIONAL

- camera, extra batteries
- binoculars
- alcoholic or any of your favorite beverages (your guides will pack these)
- books or maps
- we encourage you to turn your devices off, however, if you cannot we recommend putting your phone on airplane mode to save power. If you feel that you need to recharge your devices during the day, we recommend a portable USB charger with 1-2 charges
- charger for phone or other devices at hotel

