

Colorado: Aspen to Vail, Valleys of the Rockies

Bike Vacation Only

Colorado's renowned Rockies have never been so bike-friendly! We've mapped out a Colorado bike tour that descends through canyons and traces valley floors with ease ... mostly on paved, car-free bike paths. Ride among vistas at once sublime and splendid, with ample time to explore. Gaze upon "The Bells," twin peaks rising to the heavens above and reflected in Maroon Lake below. Discover the Colorado Silver Boom during an interpretive walk in a deserted mining town. Take time off the saddle to soak in the culture and charms of the region's most beloved towns—Aspen, Vail, Frisco, and Breckenridge. And savor the locally sourced farm cuisine and craft beer for which the region is so famous. Hit the heights, VBT style!



Cultural Highlights

- Ride among alpine peaks and breathe bracingly clean air as you discover the majestic beauty of the Colorado Rockies
- Enjoy easy, hand-selected routes that take advantage of descending canyons, valley floors, recreational trails, and paved bike paths
- Learn about early settlers and the history of the 19th-century Colorado Silver Boom during an interpretive walk through a deserted mining town
- Delight in the intimate charms of Aspen and Vail – Colorado's celebrated high mountain towns
- Savor hand-picked selections from Aspen's local food scene, sampling fresh fare from

- surrounding valley farms
- Taste local beers from Colorado’s burgeoning microbreweries
- Marvel at the breathtaking views of “The Bells,” twin 14,000-foot summits mirrored in sublime reflection at Maroon Lake
- Cycle the gradual descent through the Roaring Fork Valley on the car-free Rio Grande Trail from Aspen to Glenwood Springs
- Relax your biking muscles in the soothing mineral waters of the world’s largest hot springs pool, just steps from your historic hotel in Glenwood Springs
- Explore the historic towns of Frisco and Breckenridge following a sensational descent from Vail Pass
- Celebrate the best of Colorado’s soaring mountains on an exhilarating and easy bicycling vacation

What to Expect

This tour offers easy to moderate riding on paved BIKE PATHS (80%). Several rides are downhill and feature an overall loss in elevation. This trip is ideal for guests who are not comfortable riding in traffic as the bike paths are secluded and protected from roads and vehicles. The moderate component is due to the fact that higher elevation may cause fatigue (Aspen altitude is 8,000ft, Glenwood Springs is 5,800ft, and Vail is 8,100ft). Guests must hydrate, pace themselves, and respect their limits. VBT van support is available throughout the trip for shuttle assistance as needed. Typical recreational path features should be noted such as shared users and road intersections. There are several extended downhill sections that may be challenging for guests who are not comfortable descending. Options for additional miles and extended climbs can be made available for those interested.

Tour Duration: 6 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 6 - 42

Average Cycling Time: 01:15 - 03:30

Group size: 20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Jun 70°/41°, Jul 79°/47°, Aug 78°/45°, Sep 67°/37°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Jun 1.5, Jul 1.5, Aug 1.4, Sep 1.3

DAY 1: Arrive in Aspen

VBT-Bicycle-Vacation-only guests: VBT offers a shuttle from Denver International Airport (DEN) to The Gant in Aspen, departing the airport at 10:30 a.m.

Please meet the shuttle at the Denver International Airport West Terminal, Door 510, Island 1 Limo and Taxi. Your shuttle bus will display an "MPG Express" sign, and the driver will be holding a VBT sign. The shuttle will depart promptly at 10:30 a.m. Please enjoy an early lunch or pack a snack to eat during your transfer. If you are arriving after this shuttle departs or your flight is delayed, you must make your own arrangements to The Gant. Travel time is approximately four hours. Colorado Mountain Express and MPG Express offer shared-ride shuttles.

Alternately, you may choose to fly into Aspen/Pitkin County Airport (ASE), which is only five miles from The Gant. From this airport, you are responsible for your transportation to the resort. Shared-ride shuttles and taxis are available in the airport's arrivals hall. Taxi fares are approximately \$25-\$35.

For guests driving to the tour, parking is available in Aspen at the Rio Grande Parking Garage, 427 Rio Grande Place. Vehicles can use the parking facility 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Any car that is going to be left in the facility for more than 72 hours needs to register at the attendant booth. Charges per vehicle are dependent on the length of your stay. The Parking Garage contact phone number is 970.920.5430.

VBT Pre-Trip Extension guests: You have another morning to enjoy Denver. At 11:00 a.m., meet your shuttle for your transfer to The Gant in Aspen. Please be ready with your luggage and meet the driver at the concierge desk just inside the Tremont Place entrance on the ground floor. The shuttle will be coming from the airport with arriving VBT guests. The driver will be holding a VBT sign.

All VBT guests: Meet at The Gant, scenically located at the foot of Aspen Mountain in the town's quiet southeast end. Upon check-in, you receive your welcome package, full of useful information.

After settling in, meet your trip leaders at 3:30 p.m. for a safety and bike-fitting session. Your Colorado bike tour begins with a warm-up ride through the town's Victorian west end. Aspen's residential history is on full display along these charming streets. You return to The Gant via a scenic riverside bike path. Tonight, get to know your fellow travelers and learn about the upcoming week during a casual reception hosted by your trip leaders. Later, stroll into town for an included dinner at one of Aspen's acclaimed restaurants. After, you'll want to take your time, and maybe a detour, on the walk back to the inn, savoring the stunning mountain views and colorful shops in this idyllic, car-free village.

Accommodation: The Gant, Aspen

Included Meals: Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 6 miles

Afternoon

Warm-up ride: 6 miles

What to Expect: Ride directly from the inn across town to Cemetery Lane Trail, a tree-lined dedicated bike path with stunning mountain vistas. Views of the Roaring Fork River are a constant companion on this easy familiarization ride.

DAY 2: Maroon Bells / Castle Creek Valley

This morning, you shuttle to the White River National Forest and the foot of the Elk Mountains. Here you view one of the most photographed sites in North America and one of Colorado's most magnificent vistas – Maroon Bells. These two towering peaks, at about 14,000 feet, are mirrored in the glassy surface of Maroon Lake, creating a spellbinding tableau. There'll be time to enjoy an easy walk along the lake's shore and savor the views in this most pristine alpine environment.

After, stop for a hearty lunch at the legendary Pine Creek Cookhouse, set in a cozy remote log cabin with sweeping panoramas. Continue on to explore Ashcroft Ghost Town, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This historic mining town was bolstered by a silver boom, then crushed by a sudden bust, in the late 1800s. You step back in time during a fascinating interpretive walk among the restored remains of the saloon, post office, and hotel.

Later, an afternoon of cycling takes you through majestic groves of aspen trees and past sloping hills. Your route follows the gentle contours of Castle Creek Valley. Enjoy an 11-mile descent that delivers you back into Aspen.

The evening is yours to explore Aspen. Perhaps you'll board the Silver Queen Gondola in the heart of the village for a silent ride up to the 11,000-foot summit of Aspen Mountain. Dinner is on your own at one of Aspen's many restaurants.

Accommodation: The Gant, Aspen

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Walk Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 1.5 miles

Morning

Maroon Lake Scenic Trail Walk: 1.5 miles

What to Expect: The Maroon Lake Scenic Loop Trail is well-marked and features level terrain. Traverse a meadow to the far end of Maroon Lake. Walk past a beaver pond and cross a creek before retracing your steps around the shore back to the parking area.

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 miles

Afternoon

Ashcroft to Aspen: 12 miles

What to Expect: Begin your ride "up valley" on Castle Creek Road. A gentle, 11-mile descent brings you to the head of the Marolt Trail. Then you follow the recreation path past the Holden Marolt Mining and Ranching Museum and continue through Aspen to your hotel.

DAY 3: Rio Grande Recreation Trail / Optional River Rafting / Hot Springs Pool

Today, you ride the length of the Roaring Fork Valley, and do so almost entirely on a car-free recreation path. Throughout the day, you lose about 2,100 feet in elevation over 44 miles, a gentle downhill ride on the Rio Grande Trail past breathtaking brick-red canyon cliffs. Along the way, you may stop at your leisure for lunch in the down-to-earth mountain enclave of Carbondale, set where the Roaring Fork and Crystal Rivers meet.

At ride's end, you arrive in Glenwood Springs and your home for the night, the venerable Hotel Colorado. While the guest rooms are modest by today's standards, the hotel is ideal for our short visit and boasts a rich history and lovely setting.

This afternoon, you may choose to raft the Colorado River on a Shoshone Rapids run or an easy float trip. The excursion lasts about three hours and costs approximately \$50.00 per person. Your trip leaders will provide more information and help with arrangements.

After a rewarding day amid the splendor of Colorado, you enjoy dinner in a private room at the hotel.

After, walk next door and join locals for a sociable evening at the town's enormous hot spring pool, said to be the world's largest. It spans more than two city blocks and has drawn visitors since Glenwood Springs was first on the map. This is the perfect muscle-soothing prescription for a good night's sleep.

Accommodation: Hotel Colorado, Glenwood Springs

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 30-44 miles

Morning

Aspen to Carbondale: 30 miles

Afternoon

Carbondale to Glenwood Springs: 14 miles

What to Expect: Following a final spin through downtown Aspen, hop on the Rio Grande Trail, an entirely car-free recreational path, all the way to Glenwood Springs. Open views and brick-red canyon cliffs paint the landscape as you descend the valley to Carbondale for lunch. Afterward, cycle or shuttle to Glenwood Springs.

DAY 4: Glenwood Canyon Recreation Trail / Eagle / Vail Village

After breakfast, cycle east directly from your hotel onto the Glenwood Canyon Trail, a magnificent car-free bike path that cuts through a towering gorge. The Colorado River is your constant companion this morning as you climb slightly uphill out of the canyon, watching for bighorn sheep and bald eagles high on the jagged canyon walls. You arrive in the town of Eagle in time to savor a lunch prepared by your trip leaders. Enjoy sampling local craft beer as you catch up with your travel companions.

After, a short shuttle brings you to your final destination of the week – Vail Village. The iconic resort town sings with Colorado splendor. Mountains rise in every direction as Gore Creek courses through the village, complete with quaint cobblestone streets.

You check in to your delightful accommodations just steps from the base of Vail Mountain. Opened as one of Vail's first great European-style lodges in the 1960s, Tivoli Lodge has been reinvented from the ground up, yet remains steeped in old-world charm and suffused with Tyrolean tradition, ambiance, and hospitality. Dinner is on your own, with many wonderful options along the pedestrian streets outside your door. On many Wednesday nights in June, July, and August, Vail Valley Music Festival events unfold

throughout the town (vailmusicfestival.org).

Accommodation: Tivoli Lodge, Vail

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 13-32 miles

Morning

Glenwood to Dotsero: 18 miles

Dotsero to Eagle: 14 miles

What to Expect: Choose your own ride this morning. Opt for a shorter or longer ride as you make your way east from Glenwood Springs on the car-free Glenwood Canyon Recreation Trail. Unlike rides on previous days, you will experience a gradual increase in elevation as you make your way out of the canyon.

DAY 5: Vail Pass / Breckenridge

After breakfast, you shuttle to the top of Vail Pass, then ride down the east side to Breckenridge. This is the spectacular Ten Mile Canyon National Recreation Trail, a paved bike path offering incredible alpine views all around. You cycle downhill to Copper Mountain Village, then follow a more gradual descent to Frisco, a quaint small town with curious cafés and shops. Your final stretch passes the tranquil Dillon Reservoir and delivers you into Breckenridge, which boasts the largest historic district in Colorado. There'll be time to linger in "Breck," grabbing some lunch and browsing the scenic main street.

Shuttle back to Vail for an afternoon at leisure so you can further explore the town. This evening, celebrate your Colorado cycling tour over a memorable farewell dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Accommodation: Tivoli Lodge, Vail

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 13-22 miles

Morning

Vail Pass to Frisco: 13 miles

Frisco to Breckenridge: 9 miles

What to Expect: Following a short shuttle to the top of Vail Pass, begin a gentle yet breathtaking descent to Copper Mountain Village, then to the town of Frisco. Shuttle from there or continue on the bike path past scenic Dillon Reservoir up to Breckenridge. You gain some elevation on this more moderate stretch of the route. You ride today on a paved, car-free bike path.

DAY 6: Depart for home

Relax over breakfast at the lodge this morning before saying goodbye to your trip leaders and fellow travelers.

VBT has made arrangements for a shuttle from the inn back to Denver International Airport (DEN), departing at 9:00 a.m. and arriving at the airport at 11:30 a.m. We recommend flights departing no earlier than 1:30 p.m. If you need to get back to the airport prior to that time, the transfer back to Denver will be at your own expense. Colorado Mountain Express and MPG Express offer shared-ride shuttles.

If you drove to the start of the tour, your trip leaders will transfer you back to Aspen at 9:00 a.m., arriving at 11:30 a.m. You may also use this transfer if you are flying out of Aspen/Pitkin Airport (ASE).

Included Meals: Breakfast