

Ride The Rockies – Denver Post Articles

Cyclists who win a spot in the 2014 [Ride The Rockies](#) tour this June will climb a cumulative [28,265 feet](#) in elevation, a little more than the [height of K2](#), the world's second-highest peak.

The route describes a 473-mile loop that begins June 8 in Boulder and ends June 13 in Golden via Winter Park, Steamboat Springs, Avon and Breckenridge.

"Cyclists will be tested right out of the gate," said tour director Chandler Smith. "It's one of the most aggressive days of climbing that we've seen."

The first day sends cyclists up [Boulder Canyon](#), repaired after damage from the September floods, and over the [Peak to Peak Highway](#), the [Central City Parkway](#) and [Berthoud Pass](#). That's a total of 83 steep, demanding miles and an elevation gain of nearly 8,900 feet, nearly a third of the week's climbing.

The second day, at 94 miles, is the longest, with riders on busy U.S. 40 charged with crossing [Muddy Pass \(8,710 feet\)](#) and [Rabbit Ears Pass \(9,426 feet\)](#). The riders spend two nights in Steamboat Springs, with an optional 53-mile loop through Oak Creek and Twenty-Mile Road.

From Steamboat Springs, riders head 82 miles to Avon via State Bridge on June 11. The route to Breckenridge crosses [Battle Mountain \(9,231 feet\)](#), [Tennessee Pass \(10,424 feet\)](#) and [Fremont Pass \(11,318 feet\)](#) — two-thirds of the iconic [Copper Triangle](#) ride. The final day reaches Golden via [Swan Mountain \(9,520 feet\)](#), [Loveland Pass \(11,990 feet\)](#) and [Lookout Mountain \(7,508 feet\)](#).

This is the [29th anniversary](#) of [Ride The Rockies](#). Participation is by electronic lottery, a technological leap from hand-delivered applications that once arrived taped to boxes of pizza and children's drawings.

Tour director Chandler Smith expects approximately 3,500 people to apply for the 2,000 slots available to registered riders. The \$500 registration fee includes medical support, luggage transportation, aid-station support, entertainment and a bicycle jersey.

Apply online at [ridetherockies.com](#); applications must be filed between before March 2.

Nonprofit organizations in host communities are invited to apply for Denver Post Community Foundation grants. Groups that serve children, youths, recreation and literacy can learn more by visiting [denverpostcommunity.com](#). Over the past 13 years, more than \$520,000 in grants has gone to Ride The Rockies host communities.

Claire Martin: 303-954-1477, cmartin@denverpost.com or twitter.com/byclairemartin

BERTHOUD PASS BLIZZARD TEMPORARILY DERAILS RIDE THE ROCKIES

About 200 cyclists participating in the Ride the Rockies tour needed a lift on Berthoud Pass on Sunday because of [blizzardlike conditions](#) caused by the upper-level cold that swept in from the northwest Sunday afternoon.

[PHOTOS: 2014 Ride the Rockies Day 1](#)

The same system spawned [thunderstorms, hail, lightning and at least one tornado](#) in the eastern Denver metro area and a rare mountain tornado reported in Park County.



A cold scene atop Berthoud Pass - riders who climbed 10,000 feet are stuck 2+ hrs. Colorado State Police have blocked the descent due to snow, fog and ice. (*Bruce Finley, The Denver Post*)

Riders reported hypothermia-like symptoms and some minor injuries from falls caused by the snow-slick roads, said Nowell Curran, a deputy chief with Grand County EMS.

Agencies in the area were marshaling vehicles to transport the riders about 15 miles to the Grand Park Community Recreation Center in Fraser.

"Basically, we're just trying to get some cold people down to a warm building," Curran said.

The [six-day ride began Sunday morning](#) in Boulder with about 2,000 riders who were slated to cover 89 miles on the first day, eventually crossing 471 miles and six mountain passes.

Joey Bunch: 303-954-1174, jbunch@denverpost.com or twitter.com/joeybunch

Ride The Rockies Day One Recap: Boulder to Winter Park



A reminder at the first turn on the first day of Ride The Rockies 2014. (Joe Murphy, *The Denver Post*)



Cyclists make their way up Boulder Canyon near Boulder on June 8, 2014, the first day of the Ride The Rockies cycling tour. (Helen H. Richardson, *The Denver Post*)

On day six people were still talking about day one. Between the how-far-did-you-make-it's and the praise for the support response in the snow storm atop Berthoud Pass, there was plenty to talk about. The first day of Ride The Rockies, which started in Boulder and ended in Winter Park, gave cyclists a dose of adventure not often seen on the tour.

“C’mon Steve! This is what I paid for, Steve!” one cyclist, climbing Berthoud Pass, was heard saying to her riding partner.

The conditions in the afternoon on the final climb up Berthoud Pass forced Ride The Rockies staff to end the day’s ride. They shuttled riders into Winter Park from the top, if they made it, or from the base.



This man sang and played the guitar along the Peak to Peak Highway on day one of Ride The Rockies. Just him and his guitar. No car in sight. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)



The weather turns nasty at the summit of Berthoud Pass during Day 1 of Ride The Rockies on Sunday. Many cyclists were stopped from descending the pass to complete the day's course. (Joe Murphy, *The Denver Post*)

By Bryan Boyle

The Denver Post

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UPDATED: 06/11/2014 06:03:56 PM MDT



Day 2 of Ride the Rockies took cyclists over two mountain passes Monday. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — Temperatures hovering in the upper 20s at Winter Park early Monday morning served as a chilling reminder to Ride the Rockies cyclists of the blizzard at Berthoud Pass the previous day that brought Day 1 of the 29th annual cycling tour in Colorado to a premature end for many of the 2,000 registered cyclists.

However, as atypical as Day 1 shook out, Day 2 to Steamboat Springs over two mountain passes and across 95 miles proved quintessential RTR.

By the 17th mile in Granby, sunny and clear skies escorted cyclists through Hot Sulphur Springs and Kremmling, and then over a pair of mountain passes — Muddy and Rabbit Ears — before descending 15 miles into Steamboat Springs.

RIDE THE ROCKIES BLOG



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The tour will camp for two nights Monday and Tuesday in Steamboat after averaging 92 miles and 7,000 feet of elevation gain during the first two days.

The Day 3 course Tuesday is a 54-mile loop — billed as a "false recovery ride" — starting and ending here in Steamboat Springs and rolling through Oak Creek along Colorado 131 and county roads.

The tour leaves Steamboat Springs on Wednesday for an 82-mile ride to Avon.

Bryan Boyle: 303-954-1311, bboyle@denverpost.com or [@bboyle](https://twitter.com/bboyle)

Ride The Rockies Day Two Recap: Winter Park to Steamboat Springs



Cyclists leave Winter Park on day two of Ride The Rockies 2014. (Joe Murphy, *The Denver Post*)

Riders woke Monday to iced-over bikes and below-freezing temperatures. Before the tour, some considered day two's 95 miles and 4,213' of vertical climb as formidable as day one's challenges. The cold didn't help: It was 29 degrees at 6:30 a.m. in Winter Park, and 31 at 7:30 a.m.. The route's layout didn't help either: The biggest climb of the day, [Rabbit Ears Pass](#), came at the end of the day.

Overheard that morning: "It's easier to pack your bag when you're wearing half your clothes."



A hot air balloon descends outside of Winter Park the morning of June 9, 2014, day two of Ride The Rockies. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)



Cyclists climb Rabbit Ears Pass near Steamboat Springs on day two of Ride The Rockies. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)

RIDE THE ROCKIES TOUR OFFERS REST, REWARD IN STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

By Bryan Boyle

The Denver Post

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Mechanic Bill Marshall of WD-40 Bike uses a high pressure hose to wash away a few road miles for a participant. Riders spent day three touring the Steamboat Springs area. (John F.Russell/*The Steamboat Pilot*)

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — After the first two days averaged 92 miles of distance and 7,000 feet of elevation gain, the 29th annual Ride The Rockies tour rolled its 2,000 cyclists into Steamboat Springs on Monday for both respite and reward.

Respite came Tuesday with the option to ride what was billed by tour officials as a "false recovery ride." Reward came in the form of a two-night stay in Ski Town, U.S.A., allowing cyclists a chance at not doing a few things: not waking at dawn, not striking tents, not packing bags and not riding all sunlit hours.

The Day 3 course started and finished Tuesday at the Ride The Rockies' base camp at Steamboat Springs ski resort. It led cyclists on a 54-mile loop along mostly rolling terrain through the wide-open ranchlands of the surrounding area that showcased grasses brilliant with at least a half-dozen shades of green.

[RIDE THE ROCKIES BLOG](#)



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Of course, the trek after the 20th mile at Oak Creek featured a series of robust climbs to remain true to the watchword of this year's tour: climbing. The Day 3 course gained only 400 fewer feet in elevation despite a 41-mile difference than Day 2 in mileage. This allowed for some fast descents, too, emboldened by the dearth of motorist traffic on Routt County roads.

With the tour half-over after Tuesday's ride, Ride The Rockies is bound for Avon on Wednesday via an 82-mile course that gains 5,139 feet of elevation.

"Get an early start," advised tour officials, for headwinds often prevail after 10 a.m.

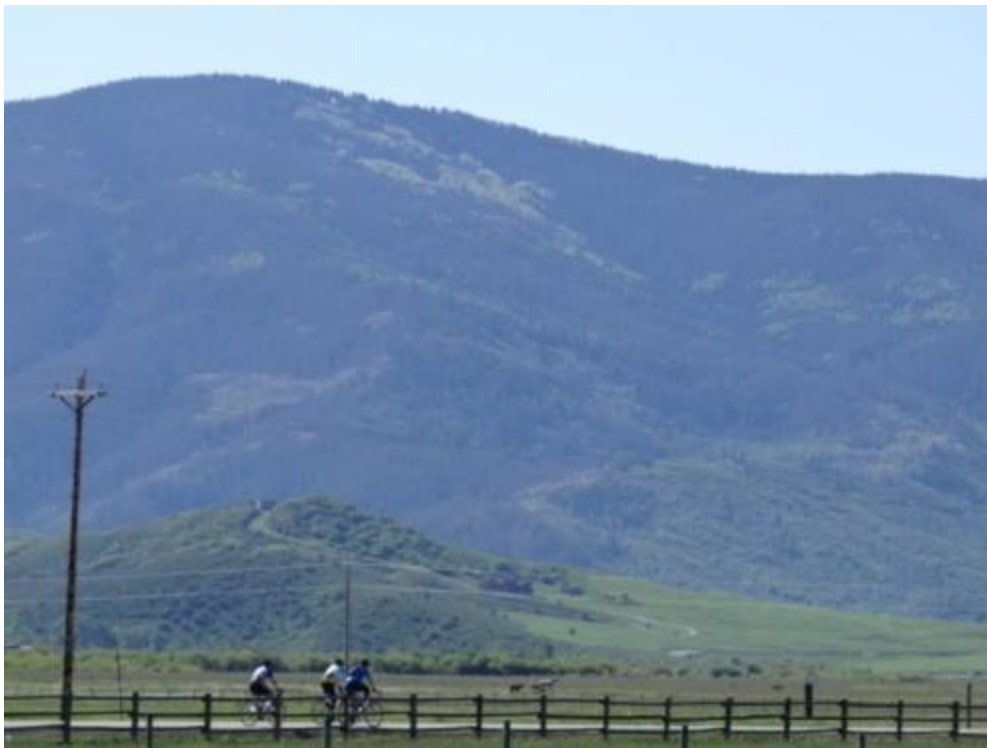
The tour stops Thursday in Breckenridge before finishing Friday in Golden.

Bryan Boyle: 303-954-1311, [@boyle](#) or bboyle@denverpost.com

Ride The Rockies Day Three Recap: Steamboat Springs loop



Cyclists leave Steamboat Springs the morning of June 10th, 2014 on day three of Ride The Rockies. (Joe Murphy, *The Denver Post*)



Cyclists ride past a fence on the way out of Steamboat Springs. (Joe Murphy, *The Denver Post*)

How many people took day three, the only optional day of the route, off? The bike corral was 70 percent full at 8:15 a.m., a sight never seen on any other day of the tour. Those who spent the day with their family and friends, or exploring Steamboat Springs, missed 57 miles of rolling hills punctuated by two surprisingly steep climbs — right at the end.



A cyclist climbs one of the final ascents of day three. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)



Riders at the top of one of the final climbs on day three of Ride The Rockies. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)

RIDE THE ROCKIES TOUR TAKES CYCLISTS ON DAY 4 TO AVON

By Bryan Boyle

The Denver Post

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A bicyclist makes her way through Oak Creek Canyon on Wednesday as part of the annual Ride The Rockies bike tour. (*John Russell, Steamboat Pilot*)

AVON — The 29th annual Ride The Rockies tour departed Steamboat Springs on Wednesday morning after a two-night stay, which was designed to offer its 2,000 registered cyclists a chance to recover from a taxing first two days.

The Day 4 route on Wednesday was familiar to those riders who opted Day 3 to take the "false recovery ride," which was a 54-mile loop starting and ending in Steamboat Springs.

(The first two days were 89 and 95 miles, respectively.) The first 20 miles on Day 3 and Day 4 were identical.

From the 20th mile at Oak Creek, cyclists followed a gradual climb paralleling the Yampa River, affording comfortable travel at miles per hour in the teens as well as scenery of both mountain ranges and rock formations.

The route then led cyclists over State Bridge and a surging Colorado River before a swift descent into the fourth of four aid stations in Wolcott.

Next, a gradual climb of 10 miles through Edwards led cyclists to their destination of Avon.

Day 5 of the six-day, 471-mile tour leaves Avon on Thursday for a 74-mile trip to Breckenridge over two mountain passes — Tennessee and Fremont.

The sixth and final day summits Loveland Pass and Lookout Mountain over 77 miles to finish in Golden.

Bryan Boyle: 303-954-1311, [@boyle](#) or bboyle@denverpost.com

Ride The Rockies Day Four Recap: Steamboat Springs to Avon



Riders stop to take photos near a field outside of Toponas on June 11, 2014, day four of Ride The Rockies. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)

We learned — at the end of day four — that day four was the last easy day that we'd have. We were all bummed. One of us, looking at the map of day five and day six routes, muttered “Jesus.”

Day four had its charms: The gentle flats of the Yampa Valley, the herd/horde of sheep on the climb up Wolcott Gap (see Bryan Boyle's video below), and the clouds that kept the sun away most of the day.



Cyclists ride along Highway 131 near Steamboat Springs. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)



Riders descend from Wolcott Gap. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)

By Greg Olson

Special to The Denver Post

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Matt Winter, 34, a Denver banker, sets up a tent on a Breckenridge baseball field. (*Alli Langley, Summit Daily News*)

BRECKENRIDGE — The Day 5 route has three mountain passes, with views and fun descents. We were met with head winds riding out of Avon early Thursday. They slightly subsided as we turned up U.S. 24 into Minturn to begin our day of climbing. The ride up to Battle Mountain was a nice, quick pace, and the descent to Aid Station 1 was through the brisk morning air. You ride by historic 10th Mountain Division training sites.

Topping out at Tennessee Pass, we refilled our water bottles and headed to the edge of Leadville to turn onto Colorado 91 to make our way up the last pass.

The ride up to Fremont Pass is a long approach, and the serious climbing begins only a couple of miles from the top. Since this is the last pass of the day, we have burgers grilling and the DJ is playing songs and has games for us to win an RTR T-shirt.

Descending to Copper Mountain, you have to stop and take in the views and snap a couple of pictures. It is truly the top of the Rockies.

Once we were down at Copper Mountain, we jumped on the bike path that took us through Frisco, riding through forests missing trees that were removed due to beetle kill.

We finally arrived at the Breckenridge Recreation Center, where we were greeted by the amazing volunteers and RTR staff.

Greg Olson is vice president of ER Marketing, a professional speaker and author, and an avid cyclist.

Ride The Rockies Day Five Recap: Avon to Breckenridge



A cyclist takes a break from the climb up Tennessee Pass on day five of Ride The Rockies. (Joe Murphy, *The Denver Post*)



A cyclist crosses Red Cliff Bridge the morning of June 12, 2014, day five of Ride The Rockies.
(Joe Murphy, *The Denver Post*)

If the days of the tour were students in gym class and it was time to pick teams, day five would be the one picked first. The numerous, unrelenting ascents were muted by the beauty of the route. The three mountain passes packed into the 74 miles of road and bike trail.

Overheard: “I just had my hip rebuilt two months ago.”



Clouds top Fremont Pass. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)



Cyclists descend Fremont Pass. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)

Cyclists enjoy panoramic views on Lookout Mountain before tour's final descent

By **Bryan Boyle**

The Denver Post

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Lauren Kehn, right, Davis Phinney Foundation For Parkinson's Victory Crew program manager, celebrates at the finish line area. (*Andy Cross, The Denver Post*)

GOLDEN — The sixth and final day of the 29th annual Ride The Rockies cycling tour got underway Friday beneath a cloudless sky in Breckenridge for a 77-mile journey to Golden.

Within the first 5 miles, the registered 2,000 cyclists found themselves again climbing — this tour's watchword. Swan Mountain provided a steep ascent beyond the morning sun's reach before a speedy descent into Keystone. This only preceded the sixth of six mountain passes conquered during the tour, which saw approximately 30,000 feet of elevation gain overall.

As cyclists made their slow, steady climb of Loveland Pass, the sun shone over the peaks like a spotlight from the rafters, highlighting the tour's last great act of collective endurance and grit.



Cyclists descend into Keystone after climbing Swan Mountain on Friday during Day 6 of Ride The Rockies. (Joe Murphy, *The Denver Post*)

Terrific winds in most every direction harried riders from the summit through the descent to Loveland Ski Area, from which the route took a variety of bike trails and frontage roads to Idaho Springs, before a triple threat of climbs completed the tour.

First came Floyd Hill, which went like rotisserie chicken — a slow roaster as the temperatures climbed as rapidly as the grade. Next came an Interstate 70 cameo, with a gradual climb through a pair of exits.

The tour's final climb: Lookout Mountain, which provided panoramic views of the Denver area before leading riders down 6 miles to downtown Golden and the finish line under its iconic arch.

Bryan Boyle: 303-954-1311, [@boyle](#) or bboyle@denverpost.com

Ride The Rockies Day Six Recap: Breckenridge to Golden



Kim Graves of Denver brews coffee on June 13, 2014, the morning of day six of Ride The Rockies in Breckenridge. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)

It was a Geiger counter kind of a day: starting at 9,500' elevation up to almost 12,000', and down to 6,000' at the end. Day six packed the wallop that is Loveland Pass into its 77 miles (4,821' vertical), but it also packed some surprise climbs at the end when you thought you were almost done.



Cyclists climb Loveland Pass, skiers ski Arapahoe Basin. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)



The tops of the mountains look awful close when you're closing in on the top of Loveland Pass. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)



Riders go up, down Lookout Mountain.



The finish line under Golden's arches is in sight. (*Joe Murphy, The Denver Post*)