

Aspen Ranger District  
806 W. Hallam  
Aspen, CO 81611  
(970) 925-3445—Voice  
(970) 925-5277—Fax



United States Department of Agriculture



## FOUR WHEEL DRIVE ROADS IN THE ASPEN AREA

Nearly all the trips described here can be done as one day excursions. Some may be more pleasant if you camp overnight--trying to cover too many miles in a day can be exhausting!

The routes included vary greatly in character. Some go through dramatic high altitude tundra amid the snow covered peaks, while others roll through aspen groves and flowery meadows dotted with lakes.

Be prepared for emergencies. Take spare parts, tools and adequate clothing. For safety's sake, take along a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, drinking water, flashlight, matches, blankets and flares. Unlike highway driving in which gasoline consumption and mileage are definitely related, backcountry mountain driving, much of it low gear up steep hills, can consume ten times as much gas per mile as smooth road driving. It's best to start with a full tank and have at least one five-gallon spare with you.

Yield the right-of-way to motorists traveling uphill. Failure to yield causes vehicles to lose forward momentum.

Is four-wheel drive necessary? Roads which are designated 4WD are generally steep, rutted, rocky, narrow and sometimes, swampy. The ideal vehicle for them is narrow, has a short wheel-base, four wheel drive and high road clearance. High road clearance is probably the most important of these factors. 4WD roads are sometimes composed of rocks the size of basketballs or larger. Not all the roads are rocky and for these any vehicles with enough traction to climb very steep hills will suffice. A good pickup truck with enough load in the bed can manage a good portion of the 4WD roads in the area.

**LENADO/KOBEY PARK** Kobey Park, above the old sawmill at Lenado, is an old logging area. It affords a beautiful view of the Elk Mountains, Williams Mountains and the Sawatch Range. A superb view of Mt. Yeckel can be found at the end of Road #526. This is a favorite trip in the autumn when the leaves are turning. 4WD is not required for most of the trip. To reach Lenado, take Highway 82 south west of Aspen to the Woody Creek Turn-off on your right. At the bottom of the hill and across the bridge turn left to the Woody Creek Tavern. About 1/4 mile past the tavern make a very sharp right and drive 10 miles to the scenic semi-ghost town of Lenado. From there continue on up the road to Kobey Park.

**TURQUOISE LAKE** This is a one day excursion through spectacular country. Take Highway 82 east out of Aspen over Independence Pass and turn north on Highway 24 toward Leadville. Take the Turquoise Lake turnoff and pass the lake on the west side, continuing over beautiful Hagerman Pass. #105 goes to Thomasville and Ruedi Reservoir. From Ruedi to Basalt and back to Aspen takes about an hour. The entire trip takes 4 to 5 hours.

**GRIZZLY RESERVOIR/RUBY** 11 miles east of Aspen, Lincoln Creek Road leads south from Highway 82 to Grizzly Reservoir (about 6 miles). There is camping available on the road and at the Campground at the reservoir. Fishing is good in the stream and the reservoir. From Grizzly to the ghost town of Ruby the road is only suitable for 4WD vehicles. Ruby is situated in an open tundra covered basin. Although there is no sign of a road beyond Ruby, traces of an old wagon trail can be seen over the continental divide a mile to the east. Two small lakes, Anderson and Petroleum, are short hikes from the road.

**ASPEN MOUNTAIN/RICHMOND HILL/TAYLOR PASS** During the summer, vehicles of all types can be seen driving up the service road on Aspen Mountain. This is a private road which the Aspen Skiing Co. may close from time to time. The road is very steep in places and only the lowest gear can make the grade. There is a great view of Aspen the entire way. An alternate ascent or descent that is somewhat easier is Midnight Mine Road #118. The mine road is on the left approximately 2 1/2 miles up Castle Creek Road. This route will take you through Queens Gulch. Richmond Hill, running southeast from the top of Aspen Mountain, is a gentle, rolling route among evergreens until you reach the open fields of tundra beyond McArthur Mountain. This area provides outstanding views in all directions and offers a unique experience for the mountain traveler. Snow persists well into June at this altitude and the road can be muddy and rutted in places. It is approximately 12 miles from Aspen to Taylor Pass via Castle Creek Road. An alternate route back to Aspen is Express Creek Road to Castle Creek Road.

**MONTEZUMA BASIN** The road leaves Castle Creek Road 1 3/4 miles beyond Ashcroft. In three miles the Mace Cabin is passed on the right. In 1/4 mile the road to Pearl Pass forks steeply to the left. The Montezuma Road becomes worse and, in some cases, follows a stream bed. It climbs well above timberline and continues for a mile or so through fields of rocks tinted with lichen of various colors. This road was built to serve the Montezuma Mine and debris from the mine is found along the way.

**PEARL PASS** The Pearl Pass Road diverges from the Montezuma Road shortly after the Mace cabin. It passes near the Taggart Hut and goes over a section called Slippery Rocks which will test the mettle of most drivers and all passengers! The road climbs through fields of alpine wildflowers. Pearl Pass is one of the last passes to open in the spring--as late as the end of July. The route is approximately 8 miles one-way to the top of the pass. Once over the pass the route is not terribly demanding except for a section of marsh. An alternate route back to Aspen is from Crested Butte. Take Highway 12 over Kebler Pass to Paonia Reservoir. Drive north on Highway 133 over McClure Pass to Carbondale and turn east on Highway 82 to Aspen. This route is faster, though longer in miles (about a three hour drive) and very scenic.

**EXPRESS CREEK/TAYLOR PASS/CRESTED BUTTE** The Taylor Pass route to Crested Butte is a popular high altitude 4WD route. It begins at Express Creek Road, on your left, shortly past Elk Mountain Lodge on Castle Creek Road. The terrain around the pass is exceptionally rugged and beautiful with best panoramas in all directions. The road descending from the pass is very rocky and slippery and will be slow going. Once the route joins with the Dirt Creek Road and follows the Taylor River, you can move more rapidly. Scenic Italian and Cement Creek Road lead to Crested Butte.

**MARBLE/CRYSTAL** The drive to Marble takes about 1 1/2 hours. Go west of Aspen on Highway 82 for 30 miles to Carbondale and turn left onto Highway 133. Drive 28 miles to the Marble turnoff on your left. To go to the Crystal Mill and Crystal City, continue through the town and pass Beaver Lake. The road heads uphill and goes over smooth rock. 1 mile from Marble there is a fork in the road--turn right. The road immediately heads downhill, then goes on to the Crystal Mill. The mill is one of the most photographed sites in Colorado. Continue to Crystal City. The road is narrow and moderately difficult. From Crystal you can take the left hand fork to Lead King Basin where a few small mines operate. This is a scenic road with a succession of waterfalls adjacent to the road. Lost Trails Creek Road can be used for the return trip. The right fork in Crystal leads to Schofield Pass--an extremely dangerous and very narrow road. It is littered with the remains of cars which have driven off the edge. It is not recommended.