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United States Department of Agriculture



4WD

PEARL PASS ROAD #102

Length: 6.5 miles one-way (10.5 km);

Difficulty: Difficult

Trail Use: Moderate

Beginning Elevation: 9,728 feet (2965 m)

Ending Elevation: 12,705 feet (3872 m)

USGS Map(s): Hayden Peak

ATTRACTIONS/CONSIDERATIONS: There is often snow on the road well into late July and some years the snow does not melt sufficiently to allow passage. This route passes near the Tagert Hut, then over a section called Slippery Rocks, which will test the mettle of most drivers and all passengers! The road climbs through fields of alpine flowers (it is unlawful to pick Columbine - the Colorado State Flower). Pearl Pass is one of the last passes to open in this part of the Rockies.

ACCESS: Travel 1/2 mile west on Highway 82 from Aspen to the Roundabout. Go around the Roundabout and turn right onto Castle Creek Road. The beginning of this route is about 2 miles beyond Ashcroft.

NARRATIVE: The first 1/2 mile is fairly level, then the road begins to climb. There are some steep uphill and at the 1 1/2 mile mark there is a foot bridge, here you will need to ford the stream. The road continues to climb through spruce groves crossing a vehicle bridge and immediately becoming steeper and more rugged. Three miles up the road the Mace cabin is on the right. A 1/4 mile past the cabin the road to Pearl Pass forks steeply to the left. Keep left (the right fork goes to Montezuma Basin, refer to that flyer for further information). The road climbs steeply, there are rough, rocky sections and you'll want to be sure that everyone is wearing a seat belt. 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 east on Highway 82 to Aspen. This route is faster, though longer in miles, (about 3 hours) and very scenic.

ETHICS/REGULATIONS: Motorized vehicles are not allowed within adjacent Wilderness Areas. Before you go out, check into available routes, their conditions, ownership of land, posted areas, regulations that apply and the following rules:

- * Be sure your machine is as quiet as possible.
- * Avoid wetlands, streams, and steep hills where your tracks may cause damage.
- * **Sanitation** - Bury human waste 100 feet from water and 6 inches in the soil.
- * Avoid running over young trees, shrubs and grasses--**Stay on established routes!**
- * Ford streams at designated sites only.

PACK IT IN—PACK IT OUT!! LEAVE NO TRACE!!

This map is intended for use as a general guide only, not for actual land navigation. The White River National Forest suggests purchasing a topographical trail map prior to your 4WD trip.