ROCKY MOUNTAIN MAGIC

Discover hot springs, ancient ruins and the Old West on this 1,284-mile road trip.
There are few road trips that take you to the base of towering peaks, the heart of red-rock canyons, the front door of ancient ruins and the rim of the Grand Canyon.

Start in Rocky Mountain National Park, an alpine paradise dotted by clear lakes, bighorn sheep and stunning peaks. Take Trail Ridge Road, the highest paved road in the National Park Service, through the park to its west side, exiting at Grand Lake. From there, you’ll head to Kremmling before turning onto one of Colorado’s most scenic routes, Hwy. 9, which runs along the clear waters of the Colorado River until it reaches I-70. Continue to Grand Junction, heading south to visit Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park in Montrose and then Mesa Verde National Park in Cortez.

Established by President Theodore Roosevelt, Mesa Verde was the first national park created to “preserve the works of man.” It preserves the cultural heritage left behind by Ancestral Puebloans who inhabited the area from 600 to 1300.

From there, you’ll point your wheels toward Monument Valley, a gathering of dramatic sandstone buttes that reach for the deep blue sky above. It’s in the heart of the Navajo Nation, and you can get guided vehicle and horse tours from local guides. Then head to Grand Canyon National Park via Cameron, Ariz. (see page 6-21 to learn more). On your way back to Denver, visit Farmington, N.M., before heading to Durango, one of Colorado’s best university towns. Continue north to take a dip in Pagosa Springs’ legendary hot springs and then press on to Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve in Alamosa, Colo. Some of our favorite roadside stops follow in the next several pages.
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK’S TOP SIX

Here are our favorite things to do in Rocky Mountain National Park.

1. WATCH THE SUN RISE

Wake up early to get to Bear Lake, a 1.1-mile hike around the lake, to catch the sunlight rising over Hallett Peak and Flattop Mountain. Arrive 30 minutes before dawn.

2. CLIMB LONGS PEAK

If you’re a strong hiker who has trained extensively, head to Longs Peak, the park’s tallest mountain at 14,259 feet. Summiting can take up to 15 hours, so start really early [many begin long before dawn with headlamps] to beat afternoon storms.
3
GO HORSEBACK RIDING
Saddle up with Sombrero Ranches at the Moraine Park and Glacier Creek stables.

4
WATCH WILDLIFE
Spot moose in the Kawuneeche Valley along the Colorado River and in the willows west of the Continental Divide.

5
SEE THE SUNSET
Stop at the Alpine Visitor Center at the top of Trail Ridge Road and take a short hike up for an amazing Rocky Mountain sunset.

6
HIKE FROM GRAND LAKE
Adams Falls Trail is a .3-mile hike along the East Inlet Trail. If you continue on the trail, you’ll find yourself in a large valley with a river, small ponds and incredible views. You can walk for miles before turning back.

PHOTOS: Grant Ordelheide (hikers); Fullerton Images (horseback riding); Jeff Stevenson (Bear Lake); Depositphotos/rodbakimbrow (Longs Peak); Depositphotos (moose), NPS/Flickr by Jacob W. Frank (sunset); Gloria Wadzinski (Adams Falls Trail)
DISCOVER MESA VERDE’S BEST

You could spend weeks exploring every nook and cranny of Mesa Verde National Park, a cultural gem located in southwestern Colorado. But what if you only have a day or two? Here are some of the park’s best spots.

By Mikaela Ruland

EARLY BIRD GETS THE BEST TOUR

Buy tickets in advance at recreation.gov for the Balcony House Sunrise or Earlybird Tour. These early tours will let you experience one of Mesa Verde’s most adventurous cliff dwellings before the heat of the day. You’ll climb with a ranger up exposed ladders and through narrow tunnels to explore Balcony House, an Ancestral Puebloan compound on the side of a cliff. Sound like a little more adventure than you’re up for? Be at the Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center when it opens at 7:30 a.m. to get same-day tickets to the more moderate Cliff Palace Tour. While you still have to climb exposed ladders, they are shorter and there is no crawling through tight tunnels involved.

TAKE A HIKE

Hike the 2.4-mile Petroglyph Trail and see the only petroglyphs in the park. Start early to avoid the heat and keep an eye out for wildlife such as coyotes, black bears, turkey vultures, jackrabbits and wild horses, which are actually an invasive species.

TOUR THE FAR VIEW SITES

On this .75-mile loop, you’ll realize that Mesa Verde is much more than just cliff dwellings. The Ancestral Puebloans lived in villages on the top of the mesa before moving down into the cliffs. The loop will take you past the Far View House, four other villages and a dry reservoir.

VIEW THE PARK FROM A LOOKOUT

Evidence of fire is obvious as you drive through the park. Stop by the Park Point Fire Lookout to get a feel for what watching for fires must have been like. Originally built in 1939 and remodeled in 2009, the fire lookout is the highest point in the park.

PHOTOS: ©George H.H. Huey / Alamy (Mesa Verde Cliff Palace); Topher Yanagihara (Mikaela Ruland crawling through tunnel at Balcony House); Depositphotos (Park ranger climbing 32-foot ladder to Balcony House)
OTHERWORLDLY ADVENTURES AWAIT

It’s the sound of a railroad whistle echoing in the distance. It’s the feeling of awe at discovering an ancient civilization built into cliff walls. It’s hiking to 14,000 feet and finding more than a view.

It’s more adventure at every turn!

Get inspired at durango.org | #VisitDurango
MONUMENTAL SIGHT

It’s difficult to keep your eyes on the road as you drive through Monument Valley. That’s because the views of the sandstone buttes beyond your windshield are astonishing. Take a couple of extra minutes to stop at the various pull-outs and get out of your car to really experience this iconic landscape. Made famous beginning in the late 1930s when Hollywood director John Ford began filming his westerns here, Monument Valley became the front door to the great American West, if only as a myth, for millions of audiences. It sits in the heart of the Navajo Nation, home to an estimated 350,000 Navajo who live on the 17.5-million-acre reservation.

PHOTO: Depositphotos (West Mitten Butte, left, and East Mitten, right, in Monument Valley, Utah)
In Navajo, yá'át'ééh means “welcome.” Dive deep into Navajo culture with these four stops in Farmington, N.M. Plus Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness area, dotted by spires, sculpted rock and colorful hills, is just 35 miles away.

By Mikaela Ruland and Tori Peglar

TRADING POSTS
To get a taste of Native American culture and support local artisans, stop by Hogback Trading Co. or Fifth Generation Trading Co. Hogback is in a Hogan-shaped building and specializes in items used in traditional Native American ceremonies. Fifth Generation buys directly from native artisans and is located right in Farmington. Both trading posts offer Native American jewelry, Navajo rugs, baskets and alabaster sculptures. Find Hogback at 3221 Hwy. 64, Waterflow, N.M. Fifth Generation is at 232 W Broadway, Farmington, N.M.

DINÉTAH ROCK & PUEBLITOS
Explore some of the more than 200 Navajo pueblos built between 1680 and 1775. Simon Canyon Ruin is a one-room structure that was built on top of a 20-foot-high boulder in 1754. It can be accessed via the Simon Canyon Recreation area 3.4 miles below the Navajo Dam. A half-mile hike will bring you to the ruin.

KOKOPELLI’S CAVE
Originally conceived to be geologist Bruce Black’s office, Kokopelli’s Cave is a spectacularly wonderful bed-and-breakfast venue. Hike along a sandstone path to get to your 1,700-foot cave suite equipped with a kitchen, Jacuzzi tub, queen-sized bed and a replica Native American kiva. Sunset views of Shiprock, a sacred Navajo mountain, are gorgeous. Learn more at kokoscave.us.

MUSEUM OF NAVAJO ART AND CULTURE
Stop by the new Museum of Navajo Art and Culture to learn more about the Navajo people, native to the Four Corners Region, through their intricate artwork such as rugs, blankets, jewelery and folk art. With a significant collection of textiles from the 1900s through present time, the museum celebrates Navajo artisans past and present. Find the museum at 301 W Main St, Farmington, N.M.

Learn more at Farmington Museum and Visitor Center, 3041 East Main St. or at farmingtonnm.org

MyGrandCanyonPark.com • 43
Here’s how to make El Moro Tavern’s roasted marrow bones appetizer.

SERVES 2

INGREDIENTS:
- 4 marrow bones
- 2 cups parsley leaves, minced
- ¼ cup capers
- 4 oz. shallots, minced
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. anchovy paste
- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Sliced baguette, grilled, for serving

DIRECTIONS:
Preheat oven to 425-degrees.
Add parsley, capers, shallots, lemon juice and anchovy paste to a blender. Blend on medium speed, slowly adding olive oil. Refrigerate.

Sprinkle marrow bones with coarse kosher salt and pepper. Bake for 11-13 minutes and then cool for 2 minutes. Spread parsley sauce on a plate. Place the marrow bones on top of the sauce and enjoy with a baguette.
Wish you had a guide while touring to and inside the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park or Grand Canyon West? Download the GyPSy Guide App.

"We recognized that travelers preferred to set their own pace and itinerary but still enjoyed a fun, informative and educational guided experience" says Rick Bulich of GyPSy Guide. "That became our inspiration. How do we re-create that experience for people who want to remain independent and self-tour in their own vehicle?"

The app uses your device’s location service to automatically play entertaining commentary about the behind-the-scenes stories, historical events and notable geologic formations as you drive. In doing so, it tells you about upcoming sights, so you have time to make an informed decision as to whether you want to stop. Because the app relies on your phone’s GPS signal, not cell towers, no cell, network or WiFi is required while touring.

Visit gypsyguide.com to learn more.
When you stay at the Yavapai Lodge in Grand Canyon National Park, you’ll experience a piece of the park's history, but you’ll also be actively participating in its future.

Located about a mile from the rim, the lodge was built in 1958 during the National Park Service’s building boom to prepare for its 50th anniversary. It was part of the so-called Mission 66 program, designed to increase park infrastructure to serve the crowds of post-World War II visitors. The lodge itself is reminiscent of Route 66 motels. Today, all rooms have been upgraded, including air-conditioning in every unit, new in 2019.

Nestled in a ponderosa pine forest, you’ll see wildlife, such as elk, deer and squirrels on your visit.

“It’s so peaceful here in the woods,” says Yavapai’s lodging director Amy Neil. “There’s something very special about being in the middle of the bustle of the park and still having this sense of solitude.”

Staying in the lodge, you’ll feel its commitment to the park’s future. It starts the second you pull in. With plenty of parking, you can leave your car at the lodge and take the park’s shuttle to get to all the stops you want to see, lowering your carbon footprint.

You can join Yavapai Lodge and the National Park Service in giving back on the South Rim every Thursday morning to pick up litter, including micro trash, and to learn more about why trash matters.

After a day exploring the park, head back to the lodge to relax. Outdoor games like cornhole give you an excuse to connect with other travelers. Stop by the Yavapai Coffee Shop for a scoop of ice cream with flavors like Grand Canyon Caramel Crunch and Moose Tracks.

Or head to the Yavapai Tavern where you’ll find a beautiful patio, equipped with heaters for chilly nights, a fire pit and a Southwestern-inspired menu from Chef Justin Warnat with a focus on local ingredients and sustainability. Try the Loaded Elk Burger made from elk raised in Colorado and topped with local poblano peppers. Or, go plant-based with the Power Plant Burger. The locally made 100-percent vegan patty packs 16 grams of plant-based protein and is covered with Hatch green chile cheddar cheese and homemade Southwestern sauce. Wash it down with one of several locally brewed beers on draft.

Book a room today or learn more at visitgrandcanyon.com. Sign up to volunteer with the lodge and park service at nps.gov/grca/getinvolved/dnps-litter.htm.
The view at the Grand Canyon is extraordinary. So is the impression it will make on you. Nearby Yavapai Lodge and Trailer Village RV Park give you the perfect vantage point, within Grand Canyon National Park and just a short walk from the South Rim. Enjoy easy access to Yavapai Restaurant, Yavapai Tavern, Yavapai Coffee Shop and Canyon Village Market & Deli. Here, your family has a comfortable basecamp for adventure. If it feels like a different world, that’s because it is.

Book your bucket list escape today. Go to VisitGrandCanyon.com or call 877-404-4611.
These versatile models combine the lightweight comfort of a sneaker with the support of a hiking boot – perfect for the trails on your National Parks travels.

MEN’S & WOMEN’S SIZES AVAILABLE | #lowaboots

Find LOWA Boots at one of these authorized dealers or visit lowaboots.com to find a dealer near you:

GORE-TEX, GTX, GORE, and GUARANTEED TO KEEP YOU DRY and design are registered trademarks of W.L. Gore & Associates Inc. Photo: ©Benjamin Pfitsher. ©2019-2020 LOWA Boots, LLC.