

RIDE: Rim Rock Drive (Total Distance: 44 miles/70.4 km)

A favorite among Colorado cyclists, this ride along the Rim Rock Drive will take you through one of the most scenic roads in Colorado. This stretch of high plateau road through Colorado National Monument offers 22 miles of breathtaking panoramic views and numerous overlooks. It was part of the now defunct Coors Classic Bicycle Race (formerly known as Red Zinger) and it also appeared in the bicycle movie classic, *The American Flyer*.

You will start your ride from the East (Grand Junction) Entrance to the park. If you are driving to the destination, you will find plenty of parking available on both sides of the park's entrance. As of March 2006, the park entrance is US\$ 7.00 per vehicle and will cover all the occupants within a single vehicle; the fee for an individual bicyclist is \$4.00.

The ride will begin to climb steeply for the first few miles, taking you through the first and longest (about 300 ft) of the three tunnels you will encounter on the ride. After about 4 mi/6.5km, you will reach the top of the mesa and from that point the road will roll only slightly up and down before its descent towards the Visitor Center and eventually down to the East (Fruita) Entrance to the park.

The Visitor Center is a good place to stop for information about the park, to refuel on your drinks, use the toilettes, and take a break to enjoy the scenic overlooks. From the Visitor Center it is only 5 more miles (8 km) of nice downhill to the East Entrance of the park and the end of the OUT leg of this ride. You can also choose to ride this route in the reverse direction and begin at the West Entrance to the park; however, the climb back (after 22 miles/35km) from the East Entrance up to the top is much harder.



Technical & Other Information (Distance, Profile, Surface, Parking, Hazards, etc.)

Ride Ratings:

Distance: 44 mi /70.4 km (*Out & Back*)

Total Climbing: 8,996 ft/2,742 m

Surface: Paved

Traffic Volume: Light (although it can get very busy on popular weekends); the ride follows Colorado National Monument park road.

Start: East Entrance to the park about 4 miles/6 km SW from Grand Junction on Monument Road.

Turnaround Point: The West Entrance to the park, about 2 miles (4 km) south of Fruita.

Average Riding Time: 2 hrs *Out* and 2 hrs *Back*

Parking: Parking is available at both entrances to the park. If you decide to forego the climb from East Entrance to the top of the mesa, you can drive up and find parking at the Cold Shivers Point and begin your ride from there. Don't forget to get an entrance fee sticker for your bike and your car if you choose this option.

How to Get There: Westbound: Highway I-70 to Grand Junction, exit at Horizon Drive, Exit 31 to East Entrance. Eastbound: Highway I-70 to Fruita, Colorado, Exit 19 to West Entrance.

Other Access Points: This ride is best accessed from its starting point at the East Entrance, but it can also be ridden in reverse order.

Hazards: Riding shoulder along the road on this ride is very minimal or non-existent.

Very busy tourist traffic on popular weekends in summer.

Many narrow sections and steep drop-offs with no guard rails.

Several short tunnels.

When to Ride: Although it is possible to ride this route year round (except on snow days), the best time is early-to-late spring or early-to-mid autumn. Summer can get pretty hot. If you can, try to ride it on a weekday, as weekend traffic can get busy and slow.

Other: On hot summer days, take plenty of water/fluids with you (it can get very hot and dry in mid afternoon). On colder days, bring a jacket and gloves to keep you warm on the long descents.

Refreshment Opportunities

On this ride there is only one opportunity to stop for refreshment - the Visitor Center. From the West Entrance, the end of the OUT

leg of this ride, you can go north for about 3 miles (5 km) to Fruita - a town with plenty of refreshments and full service bike shop.

Points of Interest

The ride takes you through the Colorado National Monument with plenty of sheer-walled canyons, towering monoliths, colorful formations, desert bighorn sheep, and soaring eagles. The historic Rim Rock Drive offers 22 miles of breathtaking panoramic views and numerous overlooks for you to enjoy.

Contributed by Marcel De Lorean in January 2006 - Ride Day: June 5th, 2005