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**MOUNTAIN BIKER'S GUIDE
TO
CRESTED BUTTE**

BY JAMES ANDERSON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SUZANNE KENNEDY

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BY JAMES ANDERSON

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INTRODUCTION

There are many great places to mountain bike. But what in particular makes Crested Butte great for mountain biking?

First and most important, Crested Butte has superb riding. The roads and single track vary in difficulty and length and take you places beautiful, interesting and historic. You can ride to remote alpine lakes, high vistas, ghost towns and old mining sites. You'll find steep uphill climbs followed by miles of downhill on technical single track; rides that snake for miles to passes above treeline; rides that cross wide, cold, raging streams; rides that traverse valleys thick with wildflowers and tight steep switchbacks that cross massive snowfields and let you gaze back fifty miles down a crystal clear valley.

Besides excellent trail riding, Crested Butte has complete services to take care of you and your bike. You can get your bike repaired, rent or buy a new one and get parts or tools as well as camping gear and touring equipment.

After a long day's ride, there is plenty to make your evening in Crested Butte enjoyable too: good restaurants, featuring a wide variety of cuisines, scores of lodging options and plenty of free camping. There are summer events and live entertainment. The nightlife ranges from bars, to dance music, to theater, to a place to walk alone under the stars.

In the pages that follow is information to help you plan and prepare for a mountain biking trip to Crested Butte. There are discussions on climate, altitude, how to dress for the riding,

local history and where to go for more information. Once here, the trail descriptions should help you find the trailheads and perhaps point out details you might otherwise miss.

I hope too, that if you have only heard about Crested Butte, you'll get a better sense of why so many mountain bikers feel it's the Mountain Bike Capitol of the world.

AUTHORS WARNING, DISCLAIMER, ETC.

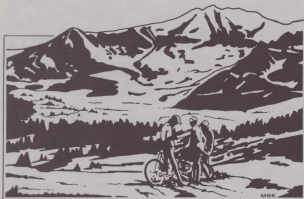
Back country biking in an area like Crested Butte can be serious stuff. Weather, altitude, injury and breakdowns are all potential parts of recreation in mountainous backcountry. Nowhere should you construe I am encouraging or recommending that you ride something, go somewhere, or try something. I don't know you or what your abilities and skills are. I don't know what conditions you are facing at the time you are undertaking it. No book, or even personal guide, can do for you what you must be ready to do for yourself. The back country offers opportunities to learn about yourself and grow. I hope you'll find your time here satisfying and enriching.

NOTE ON MAP

This book was written to be used with the **Crested Butte Bike Trails** map. If you do not have it this book will not be as useful in the trail guide section. If you would like the map, it is available in Crested Butte at the Alpiner/Bicycles etc. or by phone. The map is printed on waterproof paper and is a reduction of several topo maps making it an excellent navigation tool that will hold up even in the rain or folded repeatedly in a bike bag. (SEE REFERENCE)

NOTE ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

There is plenty of riding that never crosses private land, but especially close to Crested Butte private land exists in many places. Please respect posted property and do not trespass. I have tried to indicate where trails that have been used in the past are no longer usable because of changes in private property status or for other reasons, but in time there will be further changes. It's a good idea to ask locally if you're planning to ride something that crosses private land.



CHAPTER 1

DRIVING TO CRESTED BUTTE

Crested Butte is about 210 miles southwest of Denver, 155 miles west of Grand Junction, 205 miles north of Durango and 28 miles north of Gunnison on Colorado 135. Flights arrive daily in Gunnison direct from many parts of the country and through Denver.

In the summer months a few alternate routes exist into Crested Butte. Kebler Pass Road, an ancient game trail used by the Ute Indians, opens around Memorial Day. It's now a good gravel road that connects Crested Butte to Aspen, Glenwood Springs, Delta and Grand Junction. Numerous trailheads into the West Elk Wilderness are found along Kebler, making it an excellent access road for hikers and backpackers. Kebler Road is reached from the west off Colorado 130, immediately south of the Paonia Reservoir and 14 miles north of Paonia.

Cottonwood Pass Road offers a fair weather route into the Crested Butte area from the east. Cottonwood begins as Colorado 306 in Buena Vista, heading west off State Hwy. 24. On the east side of Cottonwood Pass, the road has been regraded and paved and work is continuing toward the pass in 1988. West of the pass the road can get washboardy and dusty, but the views, as you descend in to Taylor Park, make the drive worth the inconvenience.

CHAPTER 1

GETTING TO CRESTED BUTTE

Once into Taylor Park follow the paved road around Taylor Reservoir and into Taylor Canyon. The road winds down along the river for several miles. Watch for a shortcut just past Harmel's Ranch, to the right. Jack's Cabin cutoff, a gravel shortcut to Hwy. 135 and Crested Butte saves a couple miles though you'll miss the last few turns of Taylor Canyon.

Other unpaved roads into the Crested Butte area are beyond the capabilities of two wheel drive and low clearance four-wheel drive vehicles. Many years they are impassable to all vehicles much of the summer due to deteriorated road conditions and remaining snow. In those fortunate years the roads become trails again, accessible only to bikers and hikers.

BIKING TO CRESTED BUTTE

On pavement and better gravel roads, biking options into Crested Butte are about the same as a car's. Colorado Hwy. 135 is 30 paved miles of narrow, winding road. Though it's used by many road bikers and bike tourists coming into the area, it's a dangerous road with few shoulders, blind corners, and sharp dropoffs. Traffic using the road is often anxious to arrive for their vacation or to get home and vehicle speeds are usually excessive. USE EXTREME CAUTION if attempting this route. Happily, there are some options.

From the south, to avoid dangerous Hwy. 135, take Ohio Creek Road 2 miles north of Gunnison. It's a signed turn, and becomes gravel after a few miles. The road climbs to Ohio Pass and shortly thereafter connects to Kebler Pass Road, eight miles from Crested Butte. It's downhill from there. Though the Ohio Pass route is longer, climbs to 10,000 ft. before dropping back to Crested Butte and often does not open until mid-June, if you have the time and seek a quiet route it's a good option. The last eight miles on Kebler Road can get a little busy but traffic will be moving fairly slow (35 mph).

From the north, (Aspen, Carbondale, Glenwood Springs) and from the West, (Paonia, Delta, Grand Junction) Kebler Pass Road offers a gravel route through magnificent wild country. Kebler is a wonderful bike route though its gentle grade and shortcut status make it a popular route for autos too. Dusty conditions from steady traffic frequently prevail on certain stretches. Heaviest use occurs between Crested Butte and Kebler Pass with some traffic beyond the pass headed to Lost Lake. Often, beyond Lost Lake, motorized use is lighter, except on weekends when the entire length of Kebler is busy.

Another northern route into Crested Butte is via Marble, Crystal Canyon, and over Schofield Pass. From Carbondale head south on Colorado 133. Just before the steep climb

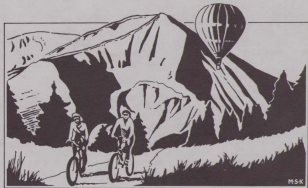
toward McClure Pass, take a left and ride to Marble. Continue through Marble, to Crystal and up through the Crystal Canyon across Schofield Park and up to Schofield Pass. From Crystal, through the canyon and to Schofield Pass, very little traffic will be encountered due to poor, narrow road conditions. At Schofield Pass its mostly downhill to Crested Butte. This tour is described in **ADVANCED RIDES**.

From Aspen, Pearl Pass is an arduous, breath taking journey of about 40 miles into Crested Butte. This is an advanced route and if you're loaded down with touring gear plan on an overnight stay between towns. A more detailed description of Pearl Pass appears under **ADVANCED RIDES**.

Trail 406/Taylor Pass is also a high back country route into Crested Butte from the Aspen area.. Details about it can be found in **ADVANCED RIDES**.

From the east, Cottonwood Pass is a beautiful though heavily travelled route. It is described in **DRIVING TO CRESTED BUTTE** at the beginning of this chapter. You descend on the west side of Cottonwood Pass, into Taylor Park, where there are many challenging rides. Several off-road routes can be ridden from Taylor park into Crested Butte, though they are beyond the scope of this book. In general, Taylor Park sees more motorbike use on trails than does Crested Butte.

By studying maps and considering your time and capabilities there are many routes in and out of Crested Butte that avoid the pavement.



CHAPTER 2

CRESTED BUTTE MOUNTAIN BIKE HISTORY-BRIEFLY

Crested Butte has been a part of mountain biking since the sport began. Locals modified old balloon tired bikes for transportation and a way to get around on the mining roads that snaked up into the surrounding mountains. Though it was Marin County, California, that became the focal point for bike building and design, Crested Butte has been sought out since the beginning of this sport, as a special place to ride and gather with fellow enthusiasts. In 1976, according to legend, a small band of CB locals rode to Aspen over the horrendously steep and rocky Pearl Pass wagon road on their somewhat modified clunkers, responding to a perceived challenge from a group who'd made the same trip from Aspen on motorbikes. In 1978, when another intrepid band of mountain bikers rerode Pearl Pass to Aspen, to get drinks at the Jerome Bar, the longest running, still occurring, Fat Tire biking event was born. It has evolved over the years into a week of riding, racing and revelry in early September but it still concludes with a mass ride from Crested Butte to Aspen via Pearl Pass.

Today, Crested Butte continues to be an active part of Mountain Biking in all respects. A town of just a thousand permanent residents, most of whom ride mountain bikes, it has two bike shops; a mountain bike chapter of the Colorado Mountain Club which leads rides throughout the summer; Fat Tire Bike Week, a full blown biking celebration; a newly founded Fat Tire Hall of Fame and Museum and what many feel is one of

the most beautiful settings in Colorado to start some of the best mountain bike rides in the world.

CRESTED BUTTE'S BIKING SEASON

Some Crested Butte residents bike year round. A small, flat town like Crested Butte is well suited to it even with a fresh foot of powder on the streets. But if backcountry biking and warm weather are more what you have in mind during your visit here are some guidelines to planning your visit.

1.) In general, the best months for backcountry biking are mid-June, July, August and most of September. Those are the safest months to plan riding here when snow and extreme cold will not be major factors (though they can always be minor factors).

2.) Every biking season starts and ends differently. A late spring blizzard can produce avalanches that close a particular road or trail through an entire season. An early fall storm can block those same routes in September. It is possible, some years, to bike certain trails in early May, and continue biking into November.

3.) If you are planning to be here before July and have specific trails you intend to ride call Alpineer/Bike's Etc. to an early season report. Someone around the shop has probably ridden where you are thinking of going and we'll give you up to date trail information. (SEE REFERENCE)

FACILITIES IN CRESTED BUTTE

What visitors find when they come to Crested Butte in the summer is a winter resort town prepared to handle winter ski crowds, often under-used during the quieter snowless months.

Summers are getting busier in Crested Butte, but it's still possible to get a room without reservations and to dine without the long waits typical during the ski season. If your lodging needs are particular, or if your time is short, then it's still wise to reserve ahead as much as possible. Some summer events and conferences have filled the town to near capacity for short periods in recent years.

RESTAURANTS/FOOD

There are more than 25 restaurants in Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte. Among the cuisines available are Mexican, French, Oriental, American (steaks, prime rib),

Italian, Pizza, Fresh Fish, Cajun, traditional hearty breakfasts, a bakery, and an assortment of bar food. If you choose to prepare your own food there is a supermarket, a deli/quick mart and a natural food store. Call the Chamber of Commerce for further information.

ACCOMMODATIONS

You can choose accommodations that range from a luxurious suite in a lavish hotel that has several bars and restaurants under one roof, to renting a condo complete with hot tubs, to an overnight in a Bed and Breakfast, to a \$12/night bunkhouse with breakfast, to inexpensive motels, to renting an entire home by the week. No matter what you're looking for in lodging you're likely to find it. Call the Chamber of Commerce for further information.

CAMPING IN GENERAL

There are 6 National Forest Campgrounds in the Crested Butte area. National Forest sites generally have picnic tables, fire pits and level areas for parking vehicles or pitching tents. There are outhouses (it's a good idea to bring toilet paper), garbage dumpsters and occasionally a water supply.

In the national forest around Crested Butte, you can camp outside of campgrounds as well. Nice sites can be found up the Gothic and Slate River roads. Many spots get used often enough they'll have simple fire circles and good places for tents and parking already established.

If you want to get away from everyone, there are many potential campsites that will only be visible when you're away from the road, on a quiet trail.

For specific details on camping contact the National Forest Service office in Gunnison. (SEE REFERENCE)

There are no private campgrounds in Crested Butte.

There are occasional sightings of black bear in the mountains around Crested Butte and its wise to use standard precautions with food at campsites. Keep food stored in cars, and out of tents. Keep campsites clean, and get rid of garbage in dumpsters, or keep in your vehicle.

NATIONAL FOREST CAMPGROUNDS

EVERY PEAK 9,600 ft./10 SITES/NO WATER/FREE
GOthic 9600 ft./4 SITES/NO WATER/FREE

In the Gothic valley are the Avery Peak and Gothic campgrounds. There is no water available at these campgrounds and they have been free the past few years.

Their location, about 8 miles from Crested Butte, makes them convenient to town and good starting points for longer rides to Emerald Lake, Schofield Pass, Crystal townsite and Marble. Both campgrounds are a couple miles past Gothic.

LAKE IRWIN 10,200 ft./27 SITES/WATER/FEE

Up Kebler Pass Road, just before the pass (Crested Butte side), is the road to the Lake Irwin campground. Nearby are Lake Irwin and the Irwin Lodge. This campground received extensive work in 1987 and has well laid-out sites, nice views, access to a small lake and drinking water. It also tends to fill quickly throughout the summer. The 1988 fee is \$7.00 per night. Follow Kebler Pass Road out of Crested Butte, about 8 miles to a signed fork to the right. The campground is about two miles further up the road.

CEMENT CREEK 9,000 ft /12 SITES/WATER/FEE

Up Cement Creek Road, about 4 miles from Hwy. 135 is the cement Creek campground. About 12 miles from CB, 8 of those miles on busy highway, it is not especially convenient to Crested Butte. Access to CB is also possible riding Trail 409 thus eliminating 6 of the 8 highway miles with a nice single track ride. The 1988 fee is \$7.00 per night. It is convenient to the start of Trail 409 via Walrod Gulch, Rosebud Gulch trail, Reno Divide, Block and Tackle Pass, Crystal Basin, and Trail 406- Taylor Pass to Aspen.

ALMONT 8,000 ft./10 SITES/WATER/FEE

Located alongside Hwy 135 and the Gunnison river, about 1 mile south of , this campground is not well located for most rides in the Crested Butte area. Access to any trails requires some riding on busy Hwy 135. It may be a good place to stay upon arriving in the area late in the day as campgrounds closer to CB could be full. Supplies and gas are available in Almont. The 1988 fee is \$7.00 per night.

LOST LAKE 9,600 ft./10 SITES/WATER/FEE

Located about 16 miles from Crested Butte this campground is a little too far away from Crested Butte to be convenient for mountain bike rides. It is also surrounded by wilderness area which is not open to biking, so not many riding opportunities exist. I've included it because it may be a good stopping place for those biking into or out of the Crested Butte area on Kebler Pass Road. It has water, beautiful sites on a lake, good hiking and is very popular and so often full. The 1988 fee is \$7.00 per night.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS IN GENERAL

Though the scope of this book is to provide information about mountain biking, there are plenty of other activities that can be a part of your visit. A brief description of some of those activities and events follows. For details or dates call the Crested Butte Chamber of Commerce, address and phone listed in REFERENCE.

HIKING

There are tremendous hiking opportunities around Crested Butte. Often a good ride combines a hike to a nearby peak or waterfall or into an area inaccessible by bike. Additionally Crested Butte is surrounded by several Wilderness areas that offer many hiking, backpacking and horsepacking routes. Aspen can be reached by East and West Maroon passes in a day's hike.

ATHLETIC CLUBS

At present two local facilities offer olympic and lap pools, weight rooms, saunas, steam rooms and jacuzzis, indoor tennis, handball and raquetball courts and a golf course. Crested Butte also has a public outdoor tennis court.

FAT TIRE BIKE WEEK

The longest running still occurring Mountain Bike Festival. Held in early September, it's a week of riding, rodeo's, trials, parties and some great racing. (SEE REFERENCE)

CRESTED BUTTE CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Opened in 1987, the center has been bringing music, comedy and serving as location for Crested Butte's well-known theater groups. Check local papers for current events.

ARTS FAIR WEEKEND

This juried fair fills Elk Avenue with booths of objects d'art from all around the Western region. In recent years this has been a very popular and busy event.

AERIAL WEEKEND

Stunt planes, hot air balloons, hang gliders, ultralights, parachutists and food booths in the town park make this a nice diversion, especially after a good ride.

WILDFLOWER FESTIVAL

The festival features workshops in natural history, photography, and landscaping set in Colorado's official wildflower capitol. Guided mountain bike rides are planned as well.

JULY FOURTH CELEBRATION

The parade, the picnics, the spirit of independence, and even a few fire crackers make this a great holiday that kicks off the opening of the summer season in Crested Butte. Usually held around July 4.

MOUNTAIN WEATHER IN GENERAL

Crested Butte's weather is a mixture of pattern and surprise. Summer days often start out clear and crisp. The sun warms the air and melts the frost on the grass. Through the morning clouds start to build, advancing from the west, piling up thousands of feet as they are pushed against the mountains. Mid-afternoon often brings brief showers or an intense thunder and lightning storm. By sunset, vermilion light glows against the retreating thunderheads. Evenings are clear and full of stars, or so goes the pattern.

The surprise can be a rainless month of sun or three days of windy downpours. It might be a late morning storm that finds you near a pass in a sudden onslaught of wind, sleet and rain. Lightning shatters a tree you had thought of taking cover under a moment earlier. The surprise can be a sunny, hot day in Crested Butte, while on Pearl Pass you plod through six inches of fresh snow in tennis shoes and shorts.

Much of the beauty and the intensity of being in the mountains is being in mountain weather. The rain, the wind, even hail and snow are exhilarating if you're properly dressed or under cover. Such experiences create memories that remain sharp and stimulating for a lifetime. Being under-dressed and exposed in extreme weather can leave you shaken, injured or possibly dead. Recreating in mountain weather in any season means being aware of its potential as well as your own and preparing accordingly. (SEE DRESSING APPROPRIATELY)

HYPOTHERMIA

People die from hypothermia in the summer as well as the winter. Hypothermia victims most often find themselves in temperatures between 30-50 degrees farenheight. If that seems odd, read on.

A human body's core temperature must be kept within a few degrees of 98.6. If core temperature drops even a few degrees hypothermia sets in. At first, you shiver and feel the chill. What makes hypothermia so dangerous is that as it advances your brain starts to shut down. You stop shivering,

your reason diminishes and you no longer feel cold. You'll even tell companions that you're ok.

I saw the effects of hypothermia on my wife on a cold, rainy raft trip. At first she complained about the cold and shivered but in less than an hour she grew quieter, stopped shivering and mumbled about not feeling too bad. When questioned directly, she insisted she was ok and not to bother about her. At the rest stop she would not accept offered help until it was given without choice. These were all symptoms of mild hypothermia and I had not known any of them. Her core temperature had probably dropped around 8 degrees. In less than an hour, her thinking had become too impaired from the cold to adequately judge how cold she was. I was hesitant to insist that she get help but when I mentioned her symptoms to the boatmen they knew what was happening and dealt with it immediately. They poured hot water from a thermos into her socks and mittens and blankets were wrapped around her. She began to come around, finally feeling how chilled she was. She started shivering again.

Alone, in such a condition, or with companions unable to recognize and treat her, she could have deteriorated further. Had her core temperature dropped a few more degrees, to below 90 degrees, she would have lost more muscle functions, her mind would have become more sluggish and walking would have become very difficult. Had her temperature dropped much lower she could have started slipping out of consciousness. Without help, she would have become unconscious and eventually her heart would have stopped. But well before that point, attempts to warm her would have likely proven futile and only served to increase the flow of cold blood back to her heart, dropping her temperature even further. It is very difficult to help victims of hypothermia who reach this advanced state. The best treatment of hypothermia is prevention and to prevent it you must be able to recognize its symptoms.

Biking in a cold mountain downpour is hardly different than rafting in a cold mountain river. When conditions like rain and wind make hypothermia likely its time to stop and talk a little. Get a reading on each other. If someone's speech is sluggish, if someone seem unusually quiet or is stiff and stumbling don't let it go. Those are the first signs and the best time to treat a potential hypothermic situation. Get the person dry. Reduce their rate of heat loss by getting them out of the wind and covered up. Create heat, build a fire, surround them with other bodies if nothing else is possible. Try to get them to generate some heat themselves, by moving around.

Hypothermia is a serious problem that needs to be understood if you spend time outside, away from immediate warmth and protection.

HIGH ALTITUDE

Crested Butte sits nearly 9000 ft. above sea level. Many rides take you up another two to four thousand feet. If Crested Butte is where you'll first use your lungs and muscles hard, take it easy. Stay well below your typical level of exertion for a day or two. If you don't exercise much and you're out of your altitude it's a double whammy to your cardiovascular system. A remote section of single track is no place to stress test your heart for the first time.

Every year thousands of people visit Crested Butte and many take their first mountain bike rides into the surrounding back country with no more than a healthy appetite and a good tan at days end. Knowing your limits is a vital part of knowing what risks you can take. You may think altitude is a minor consideration but even a well-conditioned athlete can suffer from its effects. If you get to high altitude (above 8,000 ft.), and don't feel quite right, the following is a brief description of symptoms and sometimes effective treatments.

Common symptoms of Acute Mountain sickness are headache, dizziness, fatigue, shortness of breath, loss of appetite, nausea, and generally feeling bad all over, like a flu or hangover.

Treat it by avoiding heavy exertion, though light exercise is better than total rest. Sleep is not helpful so don't over indulge. Much discomfort at higher altitudes is experienced while trying to sleep. Avoid sedatives, drink extra water and eat light, high carbohydrate meals. Avoid tobacco and alcohol.

You'll usually notice symptoms 12 to 24 hours after arriving and in most cases these symptoms diminish without treatment after three days. If your symptoms persist or are more severe consult a physician.



CHAPTER 3

CRESTED BUTTE-8885 ft.

Crested Butte came into existence in the 1880's as a result of mining strikes in the area. First gold and silver were discovered nearby, then excellent deposits of anthracite coal were found in Crested Butte. Unlike the nearby towns of Ruby, Irwin, Gothic, Pittsburg and others, that grew overnight to populations of several thousand and died nearly as fast, Crested Butte serviced the boom towns while never becoming a boom town itself. Later coal was mined for many years allowing a more enduring community to develop than local gold and silver towns produced.

In 1952, the coal mines closed and the rails that had hauled Crested Butte's coal to Gunnison were pulled up. Crested Butte had to find other ways to survive.

A few new mines were opened on Mt. Emmons but they didn't last. Gradually, it has become the skiers, fishermen, hunters, and most recently the mountain bikers that have come to mine Crested Butte's other natural resources. Today, peace and quiet, blue skies, clean air, and friendly people are as scarce and as precious as gold and silver ever were and are all found abundantly in Crested Butte.

It's hard to imagine now, stepping out on a street in Crested Butte, under the clear blue sky, that a few years back the air was choked with the black smoke of coking ovens. 150 of them lined the tracks that ran through the present industrial

section of town. Many dramatic changes have occurred to transform Crested Butte's economy into the recreational mountain resort it is today. Looking at that past a moment can enrich your experience while riding here today.

Most of Crested Butte's local roads were built around a century ago to provide access to the mines and the towns that grew nearby. The vague ruts of a trail that climbs through an uninhabited valley might have been, a century ago, a well travelled route. Many of those routes teemed with mule and burrow trains hauling ore from mine sites to rail heads. Though little remains, homes, saloons, stores, hotels, churches, jails, and occasionally even an opera house lined streets filled with miners, heading to and stumbling from saloons. Wagons, pulled supplies of flour, guns, whiskey, shovels and picks. Newcomers wandered through the towns on wooden sidewalks, looking for work or a place to get cleaned up or somewhere to sleep.

For a few months or years these mines and towns grew dramatically, often dying quickly when the ore was gone. Stores were boarded up as the miners moved on. The towns fell silent and the roads unused. A few winters and a few avalanches later, nothing but old broken bottles or a tumbled foundation might remain. A length of rusted waterpipe, sticking unexpectedly from the ground, surrounded by wildflowers, might puzzle you. Without knowing the past of that place all you see are the faint tracks you're trying to negotiate.

There are several books about the ghost towns and mines in the Crested Butte vicinity that can provide rich detail and description of the early days in this area. They can be located at numerous shops in the area. What follows are a few facts about some of the nearby townsites that you may encounter on your rides.

Please remember that townsites and mines are often private property and permission should be obtained before entering buildings or trespassing.

IRWIN-RUBY (TOWNSITE)-10,300 ft.

EXISTED: 1879-85, PEAK YEAR 1882

BUILDINGS: HOTELS, 23 SALOONS, GAMBLING HALLS, SEVERAL PARLORS, CHURCHES, A SCHOOL, & JAIL (MAIN STREET WAS A MILE LONG)

NOTABLE: VISITED BY PRESIDENT GRANT, WILD BILL HICKOCK (RUMORED), TEDDY ROOSEVELT.

DETAILS: Though little of Irwin-Ruby remains it was in its heyday a large and bustling town with a main street over a mile long. The first winter, as miners arrived, they built their shacks with timber cut by digging down into the snow. In spring, when the snow had melted they found ten foot stumps indicating just

how deep the snow had been that previous winter. Some of those "stumps" are still visible today. (SEE KEBLER PASS RIDE)

PITTSBURG (TOWNSITE)-9300 ft.

ORE MINED: GOLD, SILVER, LEAD (AUGUSTA MINE)

DETAILS: Pittsburg never managed to have much of a permanent settlement due to the ferocity and frequency of snowslides in the winter. Much of its mineral wealth is reputed to remain. Several summer homes remain in the area. (SEE PITTSBURG RIDE)

GOTHIC -9470 ft.

YEARS OCCUPIED: 1879-84

POPULATION PEAK: 8,000

BUILDINGS: TWO SCHOOLS, 3 SAWMILLS, TWO HOTELS,

DANCE HALLS, SALOONS, PARLORS

MINED: GOLD AND SILVER

NOTABLE: VISITED BY GENERAL GRANT

DETAILS: In the fall of 1878, Truman Blacett discovered and removed \$600 worth of silver before the snows came. Though he claimed to have shared his discovery with only two people, upon his return in the spring of 1879, over 200 people had set up camp and staked claims.

Gothic grew from its first visitor in 1878, to about 5000 people in the early 1880's. At its height Gothic had several hotels and boarding houses, shops, saloons, a smelter, three sawmills, a public school and a dance hall. The town was visited by President Ulysses Grant on his world trip and the Olds Hotel renamed itself in his honor though eventually settling on the Gothic Hotel, until its demise.

Today, Gothic is home to the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory. Founded in 1928, by a professor at nearby Western State College, a variety of research is carried on including the ecology of mountain streams, acid precipitation in alpine lakes, investigations of stressed ecosystems and population dynamics of various animals, birds and insects. In the summer, a roadside visitor center is open to provide information. (SEE GOTHIC RIDE)

CRYSTAL (TOWNSITE)-9440 ft.

YEARS OCCUPIED: 1880-90'S (STILL OCCUPIED)

POPULATION AVERAGE: 500

MINED: SILVER, LEAD, ZINC

BUILDINGS: HOTEL, POST OFFICE, GENERAL STORE, SALOONS, POOL HALL AND THE CRYSTAL CLUB

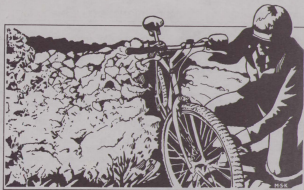
DETAILS: Al and Fred Johnson ran much of Crystal, operating the Hotel, General store and the Newspaper. They also established mail service to Crested Butte via Crystal Canyon, a

treacherous winter route they "snowshoed" on early versions of today's skis.

Crystal makes a good destination for rides through the Crystal Canyon. A number of buildings and an often photographed wooden powerhouse still stand. Snacks are sometimes available at a small store. (SEE CRYSTAL TOWNSITE RIDE)

MARBLE-7950 ft.

DETAILS: Marble is not really a ghost town having permanent, year round residents. Though quite a distance from Crested Butte, it is a popular endurance ride. Its nearby marble quarries provided the white marble used in the Lincoln monument and the statue at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington, DC. Although only a short distance from Crystal, there is a loss of over a thousand feet in elevation that has to be reclinbed if returning to Crested Butte. (SEE MARBLE RIDE)



CHAPTER 4

PROTECTING YOUR BODY/CLOTHING

As an industry grows to create, promote and sell clothing for bikers, it seems increasingly difficult to keep it simple, while being adequately prepared. Crested Butte's summer can include a wide range of temperatures, wind speeds and moisture levels. A simple day ride may be a still, warm pedal past wildflowers and fat marmots sunning themselves on rocks or it can change quickly to a windy rain turning to hail, sleet and snow within the same afternoon... even within the same hour.

In general, it is easiest and most cost-effective to dress in layers. The inner layer, next to your skin, is what you'll wear in the heat and the sun. T-shirts, shorts, tank tops, lycra shorts, etc. are inner layers. A hydrophobic synthetic is a popular choice as sweat passes through it keeping you drier.

On top of this minimal first layer you need to include an insulating layer for the worst possible conditions you can expect. Best is an air trapping synthetic like capilene, pile, or a natural product like wool that will not retain much sweat or moisture. Insulation is often bulky and this is often the layer dispensed with during the warmest months.

The outer layer is for wet and wind protection. It can be an expensive goretex garment or an inexpensive coated nylon

jacket. Even a garbage bag with a hole for your head will protect you from wind, rain or snow in an emergency.

With those three layers you can meet most weather situations comfortably. The concept of layering is straight forward and easy to understand. The expression of that concept in actual items of clothing drives a huge industry whose products vary in style, price and effectiveness in achieving those rather simple goals. Shop carefully. Good luck.

Rain at high altitude can turn to sleet, hail or snow and temperatures near freezing during summer storms are common. High winds often accompany storms further lowering temperatures due to windchill. If you plan to ride during a storm you'll increase windchill, lowering temperatures further. While pedaling generates heat, rides back to Crested Butte are often downhill and you'll be coasting, not pedaling.

To ride while it's raining, your raingear needs to be well suited to biking. Hoods should not obstruct your vision. A brimmed cap worn under a hood keeps it from flapping in your face. Pants should not restrict your ability to pedal while not being so loose as to get caught in the chain or wheels. Hands and feet are the hardest to keep warm. Consider carrying extra socks and polypro gloves for such situations.

Don't depend on trees at high altitude for protection as they are often a point lightning seeks...and finds.

PROTECTING YOUR SKIN/SUNBURN

Sunny days at high altitude means suntan or more often sunburn. Colorado suffers one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the United States. Most Coloradans get plenty of sun, summer and winter, which high altitude intensifies. To adequately protect your skin, you need to use a sunblock rated at 20 SPF or higher. You'll still tan, just not burn. If you are highly sensitive to sun, Bullfrog makes a 36 SPF sunblock that will block sun completely. All sunblocks should be reapplied, even those rated as waterproof, after sweating a lot. Re-apply too if you strip down in the heat and expose unprotected skin. Hats, long-sleeved shirts and loose fitting long pants will break up continuous exposure to the sun. If you have dry skin you'll find you need to moisturize your skin and lips more often.

PROTECTING YOUR EYES/SUNGLASSES

At high altitude, cheapo sunglasses won't do. Atmosphere screens the ultraviolet(UV) rays that burn your skin and damage underprotected eyes. At higher altitudes there

is less atmosphere and so less screening. Not all sunglasses filter 100% UV rays, but sunglasses can and up here should. If you use inadequate eyewear you can do more damage than wearing nothing. That's because without any protection, you squint to keep out the bright visible light but with darkened underprotective lenses your pupils open wider, deceived by darkness, letting in more damaging UV rays. If in doubt about your glasses invest in a good pair. Many of the eyeshields designed for biking offer 100% (UV) protection. Eyeshields are an excellent way to keep mud, dirt, dust, rocks, wind and cow pie fragments out of your eyes as well.

PROTECTING YOUR HEAD/HELMETS

Helmets are a great idea. In general, many local Crested Butte riders have been slow to use them, while most visitors to Crested Butte do. Certainly our local heads are not harder, nor does repeated bashing into trees, rocks and the ground toughen them up. The new lightweight helmets are very comfortable, cool and pass ANSI safety standards. Head trauma is ugly stuff. Use a helmet.

PROTECTING YOUR HANDS/BIKING GLOVES

I have yet to see the perfect mountain biking glove. There are well made gloves that do not adequately protect palms, and good shock absorbing gloves that do not hold up very long. Gloves get dirty, so being able to wash them seems like a good idea. In that respect synthetic leathers and lycra may prove to be the best materials. I like real leather's ability to wear if it's sewn well. Many morning rides start out cold and a pair of polypro liners under gloves work well and store compactly. In fact just this morning I experienced a cold spring ride where just the addition of lightweight polypro gloves kept my hands warm all day. In a downpour fingers and toes are the first to go. What to do? Plastic bags?

PROTECTING FEET/SHOES AND STREAM CROSSINGS

I am not partial to special shoes for Mountain biking. Mountain bike rides are often also hikes, by choice or steepness of terrain. A stiff-soled shoe is not always a pleasant hiking shoe. If you need the support the stiffened soles offer, then get them. A pair of light-weight hiking shoes seems to do well in most cases for many.

Stream crossings are another matter. Stream water was snow a few minutes before it gets to you, standing contemplatively, at the stream's edge. That water is cold. If you make the crossing in your riding shoes you have to wear them wet afterwards. If you cross without shoes your feet get icy cold, fast. What are the conditions at the time you cross? A warm day, with lots of time to rewarm your feet? Or are you rushed and trying to beat or handle a storm you're already chilled from? I recommend extra footwear for stream crossings. Sandals and socks, an old pair of sneakers, kayaker booties, reef walkers. You'll get two things: protection from the cold and protection from the stream bottom, which might be slippery, sharp and likely uneven. If you wear your riding shoes it's worth removing them after crossing, wringing out your hydrophobic socks (polypro/wool) and pulling liners out of the shoes for a few minutes. The humidity is usually low and you'll find your shoes are fairly dry in a short time.

WATER, GIARDIA AND DEHYDRATION

Plan to treat, filter, or boil any extra water you didn't bring from a safe source (i.e. town or campground pumps) on rides. Open water, (water in streams, ponds and pools), cannot be assumed safe. Though a past safe water source may still be ok, contamination can occur anytime an infected animal uses those sources. Last weeks safe supply may not be safe when you fill your water bottle today.

What may be in the water? Giardia, a tiny parasite that is found in open water throughout the USA. It is carried to water sources by high altitude dwelling animals like marmots, beaver, and cattle. Once in your intestinal system, it won't usually show up for a few days. If it does, it tends to turn your guts inside out with diarrhea, gas, and nausea, nonstop until you get medication to kill it off. Some people's reaction to the cure is as bad as the disease. Clean looking, clear water is not a test for safe water. If you intend to purify water by boiling it, remember, water boils at a lower temperature as you rise in elevation. You have to increase boiling time to purify that water. Purification tablets, though not tasty or healthy long term, are a convenient, short term means of getting safe water. Filtration is also a good method of cleaning up water, including giardia, if the filter states its screens are fine enough, and if the filter is properly maintained.

How much water should you carry on a full day ride? Two oversized bottles are not always going to be enough, though that is often what is easily carried on a bike's existing mounts. Starting out in the cool of the morning, it's difficult to

imagine how thirsty you can get after spending hours, climbing several thousand feet, in the intense sun. When your throat is finally parched, it's too late to take more water along. As you try to quench your thirst, an "extra" bottle does not seem so extravagant.

There can be no simple rule about how much is enough, except your own experience and anticipating the conditions you are likely to encounter on your ride. Despite the relatively cool temperatures in the mountains, low humidity, intense sun and higher altitude contribute to fairly rapid dehydration. Taking a few purification tablets in a first aid kit or carrying a water filter are possible alternatives to attaching water bottles all over you and your bike.

FOOD, STASHES AND HITTING THE WALL

Food is a highly personal topic. Some people love fruit on rides while others can't digest it without discomfort. What you bring is what you eat. Most folks have a favorite trail snack, a variety of gorp, glops or munchies. Take enough, more than you think you'll need. Try to keep a stash of high energy, well packaged food in bar form or an equivalent that can always travel with you. Hitting the wall, or reaching exhaustion can usually be managed with some food and water and rest. Without those simple resources, even trying to walk can overwhelm you.

I watched a friend "hit the wall" on a desert ride in Utah a few years ago. We were riding in a hot, remote canyon miles from water or help. Poorly prepared, we had run short on water and were out of food. Our only smart move that day was riding with others better prepared than we were. They had an orange, a few cookies and a little water to spare. At her low point she was unable to push her bike or herself up the hill we had to climb. She was literally out of gas. In 20 minutes, with the snacks and a little water she was on her feet, pushing her own bike again. Without something as simple as a piece of fruit and a snack it would have been much harder to manage that situation. It's wise to over-estimate your food requirements and you'll have something to share if the need arises.

SKILLS/CLIMBING

Going up at high altitude. Why do it? Why go up when it requires so much effort? Plenty of reasons. It's good for you. It builds character. It gets easier with time. Don't buy it, do you?

Climbing is as much mental attitude as physical strength. If one hill seems big then climb something twice as big and then try the first. The only thing that's changed is your mental attitude. To enjoy the riding around Crested Butte, you will have to climb, no way out of it. But there are some things to remember.

First, you'll usually climb at the beginning of a ride and descend at the end. In mountain riding you work first and play coming home.

Second, when you climb you get to see something new. The payoff of a long hard climb is the rest at the top and a great view. That's why you came wasn't it? To see something new and spectacular and to tell someone back home about.

Third, if you go up long enough what you get to ride down gets geometrically better. This is a personal equation, but it works for me. The views, the sense of satisfaction, the extended downhill ride...all contribute.

Fourth, the up is the part that makes you stronger, better winded and able to do the same climb more easily next time. So in the end you climb because what other choice do you have?

SKILLS/DESCENDING

If riding up is the mental and physical challenge, riding down is the emotional release. A book could be written on how to ride down, yet I have never read more than a few lines that have been helpful in improving my technique. That said I will not attempt to make you a good downhiller. If you like reading about technique, many Mountain Bike magazines feature articles by people attempting to put into words what they do when they ride.

Ok, one tip. Lower your saddle on steep downhills and then move your butt back over your rear wheel. That single thing helps me the most in managing scary steep down stuff.

It is easy to go down fast but it is not always very wise. Even with a helmet and protective clothing there are risks going down fast on roads and trails. There is also the other person who may be coming up what you are going down.

If you have not ridden the trail before approach it as though it may contain your worst nightmare just down and around the corner. Nightmares come in the form of trees across the trail, porcupines wadding on the trail, and a group of lawyers horsepacking with extremely skittish horses. If you cannot stop within the distance you can see you have to be ready for someone or something to be there. Looking around corners is not possible, but looking at the furthest visible point

in that corner gives you that extra split second to see "it" and react.

Learn to read the trail. I learned the concept from a motorbiker turned mountain biker. He looked down the trail, seeing what he would soon be on top of so he could prepare to jump a gully at its narrowest point, hop a rock and not ram it, avoid a sandy shoulder, and most importantly see what was down the road a moment or so away.

Ask yourself, often, if there is a reason for going so fast. Sometimes there is. But I find more often I am willing to do my downhill with an alternative approach than "how fast". I would like to mountain bike injury-free for many years and I accept that going down fast is probably the biggest risk to that goal.

A final reason for slowing down on the downhills comes from my wife who says after the long climb she deserves the slow downhill as a chance to look around and enjoy the view she's earned, relishing the pleasure of an extended coast.

SKILLS/STREAM CROSSING

Crossing some water is a given with almost any ride you'll take around Crested Butte. When roads get bridges they often get a lot of other improvements which make them usable by every other kind of transport and less enjoyable for mountain biking. The techniques for stream crossings are pretty straightforward.

Assess what you'll cross. Obviously some stuff is suitable for just riding through, keeping your feet out of the water as well as possible. When in doubt, stop. Water bends light and rarely is it possible to judge depth accurately by an up trail glance.

Streams are usually deepest where they are narrowest, shallowest where they are widest. Currents tend to cut around corners and obstacles that change deposition rates. Usually, but not always, being on a path means you'll be at a pretty good place for a stream crossing. Its worth looking around sometimes, especially with wider streams or during times of high runoff for alternative crossings.

If you can't see the bottom you don't know what's there. Cloudy water makes deep holes look the same as shallow puddles.

Crossing with your bike: you can carry it or you can push it. Different situations demand different solutions. When you carry your bike you put less in the current to get caught by the current but you have more load, are more off-balance and a slippery stretch or an uneven section can be more difficult to

manage. Pushing your bike is like getting a rolling cane, sort of. You can brace yourself on the bike and gain some stability against the current but the bike itself will create resistance and may slide if the current is strong or the bottom slick. Then you'll have to work to keep your balance and try to hang onto your bike. Water can also get into bearings.

Cross with bike upstream or downstream from you?
Down: better it get away from you, than careen into you, knocking you over.

This gets said often and is important. Back country biking in an area like Crested Butte can become challenging very fast. A stream crossing is a puzzle to be studied, reasoned out and solved. If the puzzle is beyond your abilities, it's time to turn back, or get help, or spend some time working it out. It's not time to plunge in "over your head", lose your bike and nearly drown crawling to the streams edge in the setting sun as your friend's voices disappear down the trail. That, is just another puzzle to solve. (see also Clothing, protecting feet)

BREAKDOWNS--WHAT CAN GO WRONG? WHO WILL FIX IT?

Potential types of breakdowns include flat tires, damaged valve in tube, broken spoke, broken or bent axle, broken derailleur or brake cable, broken handlebar, broken stem, broken brake handle, pedal snaps off, crankarm breaks or falls off spindle, wheel gets out of true, frame is bent or breaks, seatpost bends or breaks, jockey wheel comes off, chain breaks or sticks on links or links get bent, chaining gets bent, bike won't shift, freewheel won't engage wheel, saddle rails shear off, rack comes loose, headset gets a lot of play or seizes up, brake shoe pops under rim...well, you wondered.

That's only a partial list of possibilities. If some of those items sound unfamiliar, then it would be hard for you to check them out not to mention fix the damage. If you can check it out yourself then do it. You'll likely have more tools in your car than on the trail. "Loose, unadjusted, out of true, frayed, snapped, and damaged beyond repair" are not concepts to explore first hand in the back country if at all possible.

If you do not or choose not to repair and maintain your mountain bike and you arrive in town with a problem, or a question, you can get assistance in Crested Butte. Bicycles, Etc. is open 7 days a week, sells and services bikes and stocks a full line of tools, parts, and related outdoor gear including maps, clothes and camping items. Everyone in the shop bikes and knows the area. (SEE REFERENCE)

HOW CAN I BE PREPARED FOR BREAKDOWNS?

Read books, take classes, try what you learn on your bike, hang out with other bikers who work on their bikes, ask questions, get an instructional video, read the how to sections in biking magazines and try to fix your friends bike.

If there is a theme to this book it is:

Do not consider for the very first time how little you know and how poorly prepared you are AFTER you are already in the back country, broken down. If you are not equipped with the skills, tools and parts to fix your bike then you must be prepared to:

- walk back even in rain or snow.
- ask for help IF someone is around.
- give up and die.

WHAT IF I BREAK DOWN ANYWAY?

Difficult question. Do you know what went wrong? Does anyone with you or that you can flag down know? Can you or anyone around fix it? Are you on a road or a trail? Can you get to a road and flag down help, or a ride?

Its difficult to provide any specific answers when so many possibilities exist. Take each situation a step at a time and consider your options. Don't panic. Try to keep perspective and ask the most important questions like "Am I ok?" rather than dwelling on relative insignificants like, "I'll be late for the happy-hour in town".

Hopefully, you are reading this in the comfort of an overstuffed chair, weeks before you'll confront anything resembling a back country crisis, realizing what a wonderful perspective foresight brings. Breakdowns are better prevented by preparation than managed on the trail.

EQUIPMENT/A FEW WORDS ON TOOLS

Take tools you know how to use. Learn how to use some basic tools if you plan to spend much time riding far from civilization. There may be other persons in the back country who are better prepared than you to cope with your problem and there may not be. Assuming others will rescue you is asking for trouble. Sooner or later you'll break down if you spend enough time riding in remote places. Don't assume others on the road are riding as far or where you will. Don't assume, because others seem cavalier about their water

supply, tools, or raingear, that they know what they're doing. They may think you'll be out there to rescue them.

If you don't want to trouble yourself with the skills and tools to manage routine breakdowns, then ride with someone who does. If you're unwilling to do even that, then ask yourself if there aren't easier, faster, less expensive ways to severely inconvenience and/or kill yourself?

EQUIPMENT/A BRIEF LIST OF TOOLS

This list assumes you can use these tools and will take what you need, depending on specific circumstances. (i.e. don't carry what someone else has, you shouldn't need a crank puller if you don't carry a spare crank arm, and a five mile ride has less risk than a fifty-mile ride)

The list:

- pump** or **compressed air cartridges**: air cartridges work but are a one shot deal and are best used with a new tube as a leaky patch may leave you with no way to inflate the tube. Large volume pumps fill mountain tires quicker than skinny road bike pumps.
- chain oil** (most common thing I forget to do so carrying won't be necessary.)
- tire tools**:
 - /wrench for axle nuts if not quick release.
 - /tire irons (mostly plastic now one or two).
 - /patch kit, or new tube.
- spoke wrench?** cut the spoke if broke
- chain tool**: drives the rivet pin that assembles and disassembles a chain. One special use is to shorten chain, bypassing a broken rear derailleur creating a single speed driveline that will allow you to pedal home.
- adjusting tools**: check over your bike, you will need a small flat and/or phillips, and a 4,5,& 6mm allen wrench assortment to tighten and adjust most of the parts attached to your bike. Not every bike needs every tool, and odd bikes will need odd tools. These tools should fit: front and rear derailleur adjusting screws and clamp bolts, brake and thumb shifter levers, stem bolt, clamp bolt for the handlebars, seatpost seat clamp, cable clamps for brakes and derailleurs. Fittings for the brake shoe adjustment. Pedals often can be tightened by a 6mm allen.
- headset tools**: a tough one. Headsets loosen up but the required tools are large and impractical for off road tool kits. I have improvised by altering tools not intended for such purposes, but have recently found roller bearing

headsets seem less likely to loosen, thus eliminating the need for these tools.

EQUIPMENT/A COUPLE TIPS

One persons tip is another's, "I never". Proceed with caution.

Don't set brakes too tight. Leave adjusting barrels out so if you damage a wheel you can set brakes loosely and finish the ride without repairs.

Low air pressure allows some tires to slip on some rims which can slice valves stems and produces an irreparable leak. Keep tire pressure high enough(35 lbs.) or carry a tube not just a patch kit.

Crested Butte does not have thorns. Most flats are caused by low tire pressure and the tire slipping and cutting the valve stem or pinching a tube on the rim, known as "snake bite".

Know how to fix a flat by doing it before you're in the "woods" and you'll have the skill to fix the most frequent thing that goes wrong.

EQUIPMENT/A FEW WORDS ON PARTS

The following list isn't complete and often will be more than you'll take. The value of such a list is primarily to suggest what can break and would be necessary, along with the proper skills and tools, if repairs were made. Look over your bike and try to evaluate what is worn or unusual enough to make carrying a spare worthwhile, or better yet fix it. The list:

Inner tube, patch kit, brake and derailleur cable, spokes, chainring bolts and spacers, ball bearings, axles, cartridge wheel bearing, braze on bolts, rack mount bolts, crank bolts, the various sizes of nuts and bolts required to refit mounted parts, extra chain links.

EQUIPMENT/MAPS & COMPASSES BRIEFLY

Much of the biking in the Crested Butte area is on roads or well used trails, but there are also dead end spurs and some forks that never get mentioned. On any unfamiliar ride its wise to carry a map. Even when the plan is to ride a familiar trail, situations arise that make a map indispensable. A route may seem different or may have changed due to downed trees or

erosion. Other bikers may have created alternate routes you're unfamiliar with. If you make a wrong turn you may want to check if there's an alternative to backtracking, or the one person in your group familiar with the route breaks down or is injured and you must find the route back.

Though much of your riding may not require a compass for technical map work, a compass is handy for general orientation in unfamiliar country. Just knowing which way is north can answer a lot of questions.

The following maps, as well as compasses, altimeters, slope gauges and related supplies can be purchased from the Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. (SEE REFERENCE)

Crested Butte Bike Trails Map— the map this book is written to be used with. A reduction of several topographical maps covering terrain about 20-30 miles around Crested Butte. Printed on waterproof stock.

Gunnison National Forest Map— shows roads, land use, some private inholdings, wilderness boundaries, and other Forest details such as campgrounds, NFS trails with trail numbers.

Topographic Maps— for areas around Crested Butte. Topo maps are also displayed as a single map at the Alpineer. Useful for trip and ride planning.

WHAT IF I GET LOST?

Use common sense and don't panic. Use what you know. If you have a map, when did you last know where you were? What have you done since that point? Did you cross trails, roads, rivers, or pass buildings that might be indicated on the map and locate you more accurately? Do you have a compass? If so, can you orient yourself any better by process of elimination?

If you are still lost as light is getting thin, you'll have to consider bivouacking for the night. Can you stay warm? Can you protect yourself from rain or snow? Are you away from high, exposed areas that will be colder, windier and maybe hit by a night lightning storm?

Does anyone know you're overdue? If not, you'll have to try to manage this one yourself. Can you see any fires? Maybe others are camping nearby. Do you see lights from homes, or even town? Again, I hope you're reading this before you've found yourself in this situation. (SEE EQUIPMENT/SURVIVAL KIT)

EQUIPMENT/FIRST AID KIT

What you usually need is a way to clean, sterilize and protect wounds from further injury. Antiseptic, bandage materials and a mild topical pain killer should do.

If you get too much sun, you need sunburn ointment. Try carrying and using sunscreen. Bug juice can go here too as well as water purifying tablets and something for headaches. If you have special needs, build around them for the time they'll be needed. A simple first aid kit is more likely to get carried and thus prove more useful than a bulging complete kit left behind.

EQUIPMENT/SURVIVAL KIT

You want to survive, right? No one plans to be trapped overnight in storm without food and with a mangled bike, but some of us find ourselves in such situations anyway. I took a survival class once and we had to "survive" a night in the woods with our pocket survival kits and the clothes we had on. A great experience. You need very little to manage a variety of situations, but choosing to carry the little you need is the key to being prepared. A garbage bag, tea, sugar, matches, bouillon cubes, cotton balls(kindling), a knife, and everything in a container liquids can be heated in is a pocket survival kit. I add a high energy bar and substitute a space blanket for a garbage bag. The formula? Retain heat, create heat, consume liquids, caffeine, salt and sugar. You just may make it. Survival kits require too little space to even debate their worth, yet almost no one carries them. If you want to be a genius in a survival crisis pack these few items. You'll stand a much better chance of surviving.



CHAPTER 5

BIKEABLE PASSES NEAR CRESTED BUTTE

OHIO-10,033 ft.
KEBLER-10,000 ft.
SCHOFIELD-10,707 ft.
TAYLOR-11,928 ft.
PEARL-12,705 ft.
PARADISE DIVIDE-11,280 ft. (APPROX)
GUNSITE-12,090 ft.
DAISY- 11,700 ft. (APPROX)

RIDING IN WILDERNESS AREAS

Bicycles are not permitted in the wilderness due to an interpretation of the 1964 Wilderness Act. That interpretation defines a bike as a mechanized vehicle. Whatever your opinion of that interpretation, and of a bike's impact on wilderness it is the law. Check the Gunnison National Forest map for wilderness boundaries. Crested Butte is surrounded by wilderness areas as well as national forest. Knowing whether you are in wilderness is your responsibility. The future view taken towards mountain biking in other kinds of public land may well be affected by how bikers handle existing responsibilities.

RIDING ON PRIVATE LAND

The town of Crested Butte is a small island of development surrounded by a vast sea of undeveloped land. A significant part of that undeveloped land is privately owned and consequently may be closed to public use. Land owners are entitled to decide who can use their land and who can't. As a biker, on trails that occasionally cross sections of private land you need to know if you're on private land and if that land is open to your use. The first way to determine the status of private land on a trail is to look for signs posted where trails cross private land. A second method is to ask locally about a trail's status. At Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. we try to keep updated about changes in trails including trail sections that may be legal to ride where someone may mistakenly be trying to keep bikers out.

Where there have been closures or other problems I've tried to list them in the trail guide section of this book. Situations change though and its best to ask for current trail status upon arrival in town.

One of the arguments against providing trail information like that found in this book is that it encourages more people to ride in the back country and thereby increases the risk of abuse. I think abuse is a greater problem when people just go riding uninformed. Already a few trails that cross private land have been closed by landowners. When there has been no apparent problems the closures have been difficult to understand. In other circumstances, land owners have had specific complaints that have included littering, damaged fences, fires and fire scars and camping without permission. If these claims are true, it's not hard to understand owners' reluctance to allow further use of their land.

As a part of providing trail information I want to encourage you to think before crossing a closed fence, tampering with a sign or riding where it's obvious a landowner is asking you not to go. Crested Butte's tremendous variety of quality back country riding depends upon each of us respecting private landowners' rights to control access to their land.

WHY ALL THE RIDES ON THE MAP AREN'T IN THE BOOK

Several reasons. Some trails are on private land and due to disputes are best not mentioned. Some trails are very vague and difficult to navigate and even a lengthy wordy attempt to describe them would result in getting someone lost. Some rides seem best left for another volume.

KEY WORDS USED IN TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS

THREE KINDS OF RIDES-

These three categories are starting points for evaluating the rides that follow. Certain rides may seem misplaced, but usually the error will be a conservative one. Many factors play a part in any evaluation so broad. Use these as useful over generalizations.

BEGINNING RIDES- These rides will generally be short (less than four hours), fairly level and require only a little technical skill. Any ride that includes single track will be more difficult to inexperienced riders than one that stays on gravel.

INTERMEDIATE RIDES- This includes a wide range of ride lengths and difficulties. Some rides may seem too easy but are here because of short, difficult sections that could prove too much for beginners. It also may have some sections that are advanced but by getting off and walking the situation can be handled.

ADVANCED RIDES- A ride becomes advanced because of its length, its difficulty, its technical requirements or some combination of those features.

MAP KEY#- Corresponds to Crested Butte Bike Trail Map.

TERRAIN- This is the same key used in the Crested Butte Bike Trail Map.

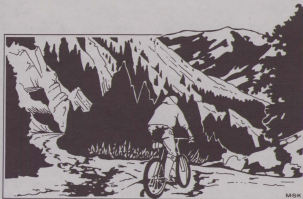
- 1- Paved Roads
- 2- 2WD Dirt Roads
- 3- 4WD Dirt Roads
- 4- Bad 4WD Dirt Roads
- 5- Very Bad Jeep Roads
- 6- Single Track
- 7- Technical Single Track
- 8- Extreme Single Track
- 9- Push Bike
- 10- 3 Point Climbing, Carry Bike

LENGTH- The ride in miles, assuming you begin in Crested Butte.

DIRECTION TO RIDE: Some loop rides are more enjoyable, or more ridable if ridden in a particular direction.

SEASON- A very general guide to when a trail may be completely open. Remaining snow and early season weather affect openings. Trails with similar orientation and elevation open consistently in relation to each other. Sections of trail open earlier than listed.

DETAILS: Trailhead locations, specific qualities of the ride and information that may prove useful in navigation.



CHAPTER 6

CEMENT CREEK

MAP KEY#:3

TERRAIN: 1,2,3

LENGTH: 35 MILES RT (from Crested Butte)

SEASON: EARLY, MID-MAY/JUNE

DETAILS:

Cement Creek Road is a gentle grade that follows the Cement Creek back over its 12 miles and makes a nice day ride. For a shorter ride drive to a suitable turnout on Cement Creek Road if you have opted not to bike the eight miles of pavement from town. Cement Creek Road continues to be passable to 2WD vehicles for about 4 miles, though pullouts become fewer past the Cement Creek Ranch.

Whether you've parked or ridden to the area of the Ranch continue on up the road passing a few summer home sites. Climb through another narrow canyon with a nice picnic area in the second switchback. Cement Creek tumbles below. Look for a place to park here if you're still driving. The road flattens out again for several miles winding up through an open valley and aspen groves. You'll have increasingly nice views of the Italian Peaks to the right. The road continues gaining elevation more steeply in the vicinity of Hunter Hill. It eventually becomes a trail and hooks around to East Brush Creek. The route is vague higher up, difficult to describe, and this ride description, being easier, does not appropriately extend there anyway. When the road or your time demands you turn back return the same way to town or where you've parked.

GOTHIC/RMBL

MAP KEY#:11

TERRAIN: 1,2

LENGTH: 18 MILES ROUND TRIP

SEASON: EARLY, MID-MAY/JUNE

DETAILS:

The ride to Gothic is an easy introduction to the Crested Butte area. Gothic Road takes you up the pavement to Mt. Crested Butte, past the ski area, summer homes, the town hall and out to the East River valley. You'll gain all your elevation in the first three miles of your ride settling into a gently rolling ride to Gothic. The views into the East river valley are beautiful, as are the wildflowers along the road throughout most of the summer.

Details of Gothic the mining town appear in HISTORY. Today, Gothic is home to the Rocky Mountain Biological Lab (RMBL). They have used some of the mining towns original buildings and constructed many more for their research needs. This is private land so ask before wandering around. They have a small store and information booth at roadside in the summer.

A good hike to Judd Falls lays just beyond Gothic. Ride through Gothic and follow the signed fork to the right up a short steep climb to a parking area. The trail is a little vague at places but you'll come out on a road that runs back into Gothic and up into the Raggeds Wilderness and Copper Lake, another good day hike. The hike to Copper Lake is about 4 miles and brings you to a beautiful, high mountain lake with dramatic views of the surrounding ranges.

Judd Falls is near the point you first encounter the road. It can be a little tough to find. Biking is not permitted up the road because the Raggeds Wilderness begins at Gothic's edge. The road is maintained because it provides access to a mining site.

If you choose to continue past Gothic and the Judd Falls turnout, the road remains quite flat for several miles passing good trout fishing and Avery Peak and Gothic Campgrounds.

KEBLER PASS AND VICINITY (IRWIN LAKE, OHIO PASS)

MAP KEY#:16 (ALSO 10,15,21)

TERRAIN: 2

LENGTH: 14 MILES ROUND TRIP FROM BIKES, ETC.

SEASON: EARLY. KEBLER CLEARED BY MEMORIAL DAY.

DETAILS:

The ride to Keblor Pass is good road. It sees a lot of traffic and dust at times. Don't let that discourage you though. Early mornings and week days are better times to use this road to connect you to some nice areas. If you ride up to the pass you'll find the Irwin cemetery. Stones and markers are still visible.

OPTIONAL RIDES IN KEBLER PASS VICINITY:

1) About a half mile before Keblor pass is a signed fork to the right for the Lake Irwin Campground; take it and then a left at the next fork. The road climbs gradually to a small lake, with picnicking and fishing; a campground, with good water, and access to Irwin Lodge, where accommodations and dining are available. Call ahead for reservations. At the Lake you'll be at well over 10,000 ft. of elevation. Short hikes get you excellent views of the surrounding Ruby, Anthracite and West Elk ranges.

2) A second fork on the main road, to the left, just below Keblor Pass, goes to Ohio Pass. If you ride the mile from the fork, you'll get a beautiful view of the Ohio Valley and the dramatic peaks of the Castle Mountain range. If you continue beyond and down from Ohio Pass, the road drops fast into the Ohio valley and eventually meets Hwy. 135 a few miles north of Gunnison. This could be used as an alternate route in or out of Crested Butte.

On the short road to Ohio Pass, a fork to the right leads to the old minesite of Floresta. Though this has been a popular ride in past years Floresta is private property and the owner has asked that no one trespass.

3) Beyond Keblor Pass, the road drops for a couple miles and continues about twenty miles to Hwy. 133. Along its length are the West Elk Range, numerous beaver ponds, great stands of aspens and deep canyons. Many feel Keblor Pass road is one of the most beautiful roads in the state. A fall ride through the aspens, turning gold, is spectacular.

About sixteen miles from Crested Butte on Keblor is the road to Lost Lake Campground. Two miles from the turnout are nice campsites and good water are available at this popular and often filled campground. Good hikes start there too.

LOWER LOOP

MAP KEY TRAIL#: 18

TERRAIN: 1,2,6

LENGTH: 10 MI. (FROM BIKES ETC.)

SEASON: AVERAGE, MID TO LATE JUNE, NORTH SLOPES.

SUGGESTED DIRECTION TO RIDE: CLOCKWISE

DETAILS:

This ride may NOT be rideable as a loop. Part of the trail crosses private land and local inquiry should be made before riding private sections.

Some new trail sections have been built as alternative routes to the private land section but as of this writing there are still questions as to whether they will prove to be a long term solution.

From town, leave Alpineer/Bike's Etc. ride down Elk Ave to 2nd ave, take a right and ride north to Butte street at the edge of town. Take a left and follow the road over a cattle crossing out of town. This road gradually winds back past the Peanut Mine until joining up with an old rail grade. This is the area that is intermittently private and closed. Posted gates should be respected. If all is open and ok, look for a single track leading up through a pair of closely spaced trees; this begins the single track section. For the next couple miles, follow the single track along the river and bear right at the forks. They will bring you back to the rail grade and a bridged stream crossing where you join the Slate River road and can make the return to town.

If private land closure blocks the beginning section it is possible to ride all the single track section by going out the Slate River road and riding toward town on the single track, then back-tracking at the No Trespassing sign. Take the Gunsite Pass road turn on the Slate River Road and just over the bridge keep left onto the single track that stays along the river.

PITTSBURG/TOWNSITE

MAP KEY#: (Not keyed, Slate River Road.)

TERRAIN: 1,2

LENGTH: 14 MILES RT

SEASON: EARLY, MID-MAY/JUNE

DETAILS:

Like the ride to Gothic this ride is the beginning segment of longer rides and loops. The ride to Pittsburg makes a good beginning ride by itself though, taking you up a beautiful valley past beaver ponds and beside a picturesque river.

Leaving Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. proceed through the main intersection and ride toward the ski area on Gothic Road. After leaving town the first road to the left is Slate River Road. It's marked with a National Forest sign. The ride is fairly flat most of the nine miles to Pittsburg, climbing gently as the road follows the Slate river. Trailheads for Gunsite Pass, Oh-Be-Joyful, Poverty Gulch and the lower loop are passed on the ride. Beaver ponds can be seen about six miles back.

At Pittsburg the road begins climbing steeply for several miles eventually topping out at Paradise Divide. The road to the left that crosses Slate River starts the Poverty Gulch and Daisy Pass trail. The summer homes in Pittsburg are all on private land as is the small pond and the owners ask that you not trespass.

Return to Crested Butte the way you came.

SCHOFIELD PASS/EMERALD LAKE

MAP KEY#: 28

TERRAIN: 2

LENGTH: 30 RT.

SEASON: MID-JUNE. HIGH, PROTECTED AREAS.

DETAILS:

From Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. take Gothic Road to Mt. Crested Butte. Continue on through Gothic, the site of the rocky Mountain Biological Lab and up the road about 4 miles until the road begins to climb more steeply. Continue up this steeper section for a couple miles to the sign for the Emerald Lake turnoff. Emerald Lake has picnicking, fishing and is a beautiful spot to spend a few hours. If you stay right not taking the Emerald Lake turnoff, you'll climb another mile to Schofield Pass and get some excellent views of Emerald Lake on the way. Return the same way you came unless combining this ride with Paradise Divide loop or you're continuing to Crystal/Marble.

WASHINGTON GULCH/SLATE RIVER LOOP

MAP KEY#:39

TERRAIN:1,2

LENGTH:22 RT.

SEASON: MID-JUNE. HIGH AND PROTECTED SPOTS.

DIRECTION TO RIDE:COUNTER-CLOCKWISE

DETAILS:

Proceed from Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. toward ski area on Gothic Road. Take the second left, the road to Meridian Lake Estates. This is Washington Gulch Road. Ride up the valley about 6 miles from the turnoff, gradually climbing until a small group of private cabins are encountered. This is Elkton, an old mining site. The cabins are all on private land and the owners ask that you not trespass.

Above Elkton, the road switches back to the left and climbs steeply over a small summit and then drops down in about a mile to another road. Go left and down a steep series of switch backs into the Slate River Valley. If you take a right at the intersection you'll climb another mile to Paradise Divide which affords an excellent view back down the Slate River Valley and up to Yule Pass. At the bottom of the down section the road rolls along the river and then drops into a small canyon. The road goes down again and you'll come into the few summer homes of Pittsburg, marked with a sign. These homes are on private land and the owners ask that you not trespass. Return to Crested Butte by the Slate river Road. (SEE PITTSBURG in both rides and history)



CHAPTER 7

FARRIS CREEK LOOP

MAP KEY#:9

TERRAIN:1,2,3,6,7

LENGTH: 20 MILES RT.

SEASON: EARLY. LATE MAY. NORTH FACING MAY BE LATER.

DIRECTION TO RIDE: COUNTER CLOCKWISE

DETAILS:

From Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. take Highway 135 south 2 miles to Skyland resort turnoff. Take the left and head out Brush Creek Road, past the airport, around Crested Butte mountain and past the small ranch on the left. Take the turn to the right at 5.7 miles. This is generally a closed gate, please be sure to close it. The road climbs steeply about half a mile.

At the top of the climb continue straight, not to the left on a trail that continues climbing to the top of Strand Hill. At about 6.6 miles there is another fence crossing, a small downhill and to the right you'll spot the end of trail 409.

Continue along the trail, mostly double ruts and single track now, steadily climbing a gentle grade past Beaver ponds at about 8.2 miles. More climbing now through aspen groves until at 9.7 miles you top out. Its all down from here, and some of the trail will become very steep. NOTE: after a short distance you'll reach a third fence which may be closed. Be sure to anticipate this as the preceding trail is steep and fast.

After the fence, the trail becomes a steep, rocky single track for what seems like a good long ride; it's about a mile.

As you break out into a meadow at the bottom, Brush Creek Road is visible across the way, along with the start of Teocalli Ridge/Deer Creek trail climbing up from it. Keep watching for a single track branching sharply to the left at about 10.8 miles. It's a well used rut, not to be confused with the game trails all over the area. You have a choice to continue down across the river connecting up with Middle Brush and returning by it or taking the single track to the left. NOTE: The single track appears to cross Brush creek at this point on the CB Bike Trails Map. It does not. If you take the single track you'll have two small creek crossings. If you continue to the road you will have to cross much larger Brush Creek twice at the Middle and West forks.

If you take the single track left, it passes through some aspen groves. Watch for downed trees. At about 11.5 miles the trail goes through brush and splits in several directions that all come together higher up. In this mess of trails there is a small creek to cross. Continue following the trail, at 11.7 a fork is open to the right, blocked by a tree to the left. Take the open right route. At 12.7 miles, an irrigation ditch that can be crossed on rocks just to the right of the trail if the water level is low enough. Proceed on Brush Creek to the left, back around Crested Butte Mountain, to Hwy 135 into town.

If you do not take the final single track and proceed ahead you'll make two river crossings. The second crossing, at West Brush Creek, is a little deceptive. You'll have to proceed up the creek to your right a few dozen feet before encountering the road again. After the stream crossing the return is pretty straight forward, passing through a small corral, leave gates as you find them then continue back along Brush Creek Road past the ranch and out to the highway and return to town.

GUNSITE PASS

MAP KEY#:13 (WITHOUT COPLEY LAKE LOOP)

TERRAIN:2-5

LENGTH: 20 MILES RT.

SEASON: LATE JUNE/JULY. NORTH FACING, HIGH.

DETAILS:

Riding Gunsite is an endurance test. Going up, it works your legs and lungs. Coming down, it tests your stamina riding continual switchbacks. For all its work though, Gunsite provides some nice views from many points on the climb.

The map indicates this is a loop ride, but because the trail is difficult to describe after Gunsite Pass and because of some private land problems, I am not going to attempt a description of the Copley Lake section. It should be ridden with someone who knows the route if there are no property problems. My description will be the ride to Gunsite Pass and a return the same way.

If the Lower Loop is open you can ride it out to the end of the single track, take the left fork just before the old rail bridge river crossing. Otherwise take Slate River Road to the Gunsite Pass sign at about 5 miles, go left across old rail bridge, and follow the road up.(SEE L. LOOP/SLATE RIVER ROAD.)

After a switch backing climb of about 4 miles, you'll leave the Slate River valley. Below you'll be able to see the double tracks of Oh-Be-Joyful winding up the valley. Some nice falls can be seen as well. There is only one fork on this route, several miles up. Stay to the right. Continue into Redwell Basin where you'll get a good view of the final climb to Gunsite Pass.

On that final climb don't be fooled into thinking the other visible roads are shortcuts to that last incline. You'll be able to see higher up they do not connect with anything else.

From the summit of Gunsite if you do a little climbing to the left you can look down into Crested Butte. The trail to Copley Lake takes off to the right. To the left the road is on private property and the owners ask that you not trespass.

Return to Crested Butte down the road you climbed and back on Slate River Road or the Lower Loop if it's open.

OH-BE-JOYFUL

MAP KEY#: 20

TERRAIN: 2,3,6

LENGTH: 17 RT.

SEASON: EARLY/MID JUNE.

DETAILS:

Oh-Be-Joyful can be started two ways. Take Slate River Road out to the signed turn, cross the Slate River and begin up. The other route is to ride the Lower Loop if it's open, or take the Slate River Road to the Gunsite Pass turnoff, cross the old rail bridge following the road around to the right. Just before it starts climbing, watch for a right-branching single track. This route snakes through the woods and brings you to Oh-Be-Joyful creek, a sometimes smaller stream crossing. A waterfall is visible just upstream and makes a nice short ride by itself.

After getting to the beginning by either route, start up the 4WD road. The route gradually deteriorates from jeep road to trail and always stays to the right of the stream. Along the way there are nice views of a couple waterfalls if enough snow remains to fuel them. About 4 miles back the trail gets very steep starting a climb toward Oh-Be-Joyful Pass, which is the boundary of wilderness. Other trails into the Peeler Lakes and Daisy Pass areas are reached up toward the pass. These would be good options for hiking. Return when you've reached steep enough terrain, the way you came.

PARADISE LOOP (VIA GOTHIC, SCHOFIELD PASS)

MAP KEY#: 22

TERRAIN: 1,2,3

LENGTH: 30 MILES ROUND TRIP

SEASON: LATE JUNE, SNOWFIELDS LINGER LATER

DIRECTION TO RIDE: COUNTER CLOCKWISE

DETAILS:

This is a loop over Paradise Divide with several return options. From Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. start up Gothic road through Gothic and on over Schofield Pass. Just after the pass, there is a road fork; go left dropping into Elko Park, a nice open valley at the south end of Schofield Park.

There is a nice little side ride to a falls and old mining site that will take an extra hour including gawk time. To get to the falls continue on the ride across Elko Park. Where the road divides take the right fork making a stream crossing and then right again back-tracking the same general direction you've just come across the meadows. The trail will dip and rise a few times until you get to a collection of old mining gear. Lay down your bikes and hike toward the sound of the falls. Note, DO NOT continue riding up the valley you can see a road climbs. That's the route up Rock Creek. Its an ok ride but not the one I'm describing.

Back to the main ride. From the fork, now bearing left at that point begin a steep section of climb. This road will eventually flatten out across a small valley, Paradise Basin, and climb once again to the Paradise Divide. Tremendous views from the top. A couple pretty little ponds. A few campsites. A good place to take a break.

After dropping down from Paradise Divide on the narrow shelf road just as you enter the trees that obstruct your view of the Slate valley, there will be a road choice.

RETURN OPTION #1/SLATE RIVER

MAP KEY#:(FORK JUST SOUTH OF PARADISE BASIN ON MAP)

LENGTH:(INCLUDED AS THE 30 MI RT.)

DETAILS:

If you continue straight you'll drop into the Slate River Valley and return along that drainage into CB. The first section drops quite steeply and in a short distance you will have lost almost all your elevation gain, the return ride into CB on the Slate river Road is fairly flat to rolling.

RETURN OPTION #2/WASHINGTON GULCH

MAP KEY#:39

LENGTH:(AS PART OF THE RIDE STILL 30 RT.)

DETAILS:

If you bear left at the fork in the trees you'll climb a little and cross a saddle into Washington Gulch for your return to CB. The road is mostly down once over the hump and though it starts out steep it becomes a gradual downhill ride until you connect with the pavement just below Mt. CB and a fast couple miles of pavement back to CB.

RETURN OPTION #3/TRAIL 403/GOTHIC ROAD (EXPERT)

MAP KEY#: 34, 11

TERRAIN: 7, THEN 1, 2

LENGTH: A 2 MILE SECTION, ADD ABOUT 4 MI. TO LOOP

DIRECTION TO RIDE: WASH. GULCH TO Gothic CG.

DETAILS:

Taking the right fork and climbing into Washington gulch, you'll see a small side road/trail near the small summit that's been plowed. Take it. It winds past a mine and switch-backs up, almost disappearing, but a second trail sign should guide you. About 100 feet past that second sign a small single track takes off to the right. Trail 403 is a steep Expert Level ride on single track down into the Gothic valley. The trail remains technical throughout its descent with few breaks. The final downhill section is a series of switch backs through high vegetation in the summer months that makes riding quite challenging. Trail exits into Gothic campground. Take the gravel road right returning to CB via Gothic and Mt. CB.

POVERTY GULCH

MAP KEY#: 25

TERRAIN: 2, 3

LENGTH: 22 RT.

SEASON: AVERAGE/LATE. MID-JUNE/JULY. PROTECTED, HIGH

DETAILS:

Follow the trail description to PITTSBURG in Beginner Rides. In Pittsburg, take the left fork across the Slate River. The road climbs pretty steadily for the next mile and a half, offering nice views of the surrounding countryside and then forks. To the right, it continues more steeply to an old mine. The left fork sends you across another stream, and up towards Daisy Pass, a ride guaranteed to have you pushing/carrying your bike some of the way. Daisy Pass is not described as it is a vague trail and would be easy to get lost on. Ride it with someone who's knows the way.

SILVER QUEEN/SKI AREA

MAP KEY#:29

TERRAIN: 1-3

LENGTH: 15 RT.

SEASON: AVERAGE. MID/LATE JUNE. HIGH ELEVATION.

DETAILS:

This is a ride on maintenance roads to the top of the ski area. A short hike from the trail brings you to the summit of Crested Butte Mountain.

From Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. take Gothic Road to the ski area, and ride the loop road to the Emmons Building, the ski area's main unit. Ride past the ticket windows and take the road that switchbacks up. The road has a few forks but you're going to the top and the main road is easy to follow. The road ends at the top of the Silver Queen lift near a footpath that will take you to a boulder field which you'll have to negotiate to the summit. Enjoy the view, add your name to the jar and return as you came.

SMITH HILL LOOP

MAP KEY#: 12

DETAILS:

This ride is NOT RECOMMENDED because of private land problems.

UPPER LOOP

MAP KEY TRAIL#: 37

TERRAIN: 1,6,7

LENGTH: 10 MI. (FROM BICYCLES ETC.)

SEASON: EARLY, MID-MAY. FIRST SINGLE TRACK OPEN

RECOMMENDED DIRECTION TO RIDE: CLOCKWISE

DETAILS:

I had originally placed this trail in BEGINNING RIDES but after another look it seemed the several downhill sections were a bit too technical to toss at someone expecting a beginners ride. Much of this ride is easy single track but the couple nasty sections keep it interesting.

Leave Bicycles Etc. and at the main intersection take Gothic Road toward the ski areas. Near the top of the hill, (2.4 mi) turn right at the Hunter Hill Road sign. Follow this road around, past a signed driveway to The Overlook, to the first switchback. Look for a single track that veers to the left. This is the trail. Follow the trail the next mile and a half through 3 fence crossings. Close these if you find them closed. At the archery range sign (the third fence), use the trail to the left to extend the ride. The trail straight ahead drops down out of the woods and back to the gravel road, around a small lake and out to the return road.

If you've gone left tend to the right at subsequent forks to stay out of technical woods riding, to the left to get deeper in. Its quite a maze of trails but continue in the general direction you've been going until the trails join for a quick climb to a ravine ride. You'll have several steep sections to descend and ascend in the next section of trail.

Where the two trails rejoin at the lake, follow the road around Skyland Country Club and back to the highway, then two miles back to town.

TRAIL 401 LOOP

MAP KEY#:33

TERRAIN: 1,2,7

LENGTH: 30 MILES RT (FROM CB)

SEASON: AVERAGE, MID/LATE JUNE. HIGH ELEVATION

DIRECTION TO RIDE: CLOCKWISE

DETAILS:

This is a great ride. Allow plenty of time for route finding as a few sections are difficult to follow.

Proceed from Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. on Gothic Road through Mt. Crested Butte, out East River Valley, through Gothic and up to Schofield Pass. (SEE Gothic, SCHOFIELD/EMERALD LAKE rides for details).

At Schofield Pass, look for a steep trail to the right. This is a carry-your-bike trail. Proceed up about a mile until the trail peters out in a small ravine. Go right into a meadow. This is the tough part. Across that meadow is the trail, but there is no established trail, that I know of, to it. So bushwack keeping in mind that 401 goes back down the Gothic Valley. Don't wander too far east, work south. When you encounter the trail, go right. Soon you'll attain a high view down on the valley you rode up.

Now it's easier. Follow the narrow single track as it winds south. This can get fairly technical at times, and if you're unnerved by heights you may choose to walk some sections. There is a route choice at Rustlers gulch, a marked fork, otherwise you'll continue down single track to Gothic.

NOTE: This trail is used by horse packers coming out of the Maroon Bells Wilderness. You may encounter horses. The trail is narrow and steep so dismount and be courteous if you encounter horses and riders.

Return to Crested Butte by Gothic Road from either Rustler's Gulch (an early shortcut) or Gothic where 401 encounters the Judd Falls road that brings you back to Gothic road.

TRAIL 409 (VIA WALROD GULCH)

MAP KEY#: 38,35

TERRAIN: 1-3,6,7

LENGTH: 28 RT. FROM CB

SEASON: EARLY, LATE MAY/JUNE. SNOW IN TREES

DIRECTION TO RIDE: COUNTER-CLOCKWISE

DETAILS:

Starting from Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. proceed south on Hwy. 135 for about 7.5 miles to the Crested Butte South turnoff. Go left. Proceed up the pavement that becomes gravel 3.0 miles. (If you have no odometer, the trail is the second double track on the LEFT from the highway. Eagle-eyed riders will spot a Trail 409 sign above the road about 1 mile from the highway. That is NOT the section of Trail 409 to take unless you want to carry your bike up a very steep trail. Continue on, past the Star Valley Ranch.) The trailhead is a rough, narrow jeep road that climbs left. For confirmation, if you overshoot the trailhead you'll encounter a second jeep road in about 100 feet that cuts back to the first. A telephone cable stakepost labelled with the number 542 is a good reference point.

Follow the jeep road up for .6 mi. You'll notice two powerlines join the road, each reinforced to keep them upright. Between these two poles the single track begins, taking off to the left at a small rock cairn.

The trail sweeps back left and up, around the hills above the same area you rode from the highway. You'll pass the steep trail section from the road where 409 actually joins the trail you're on. Continue riding the single track through stands of aspen. Then begin the long downhill. The trail crosses private land for a short stretch but a new route has been constructed around the private section and should be signed by summer '88. This is a good trail to ask about locally before riding in case there are any problems with the private land. At the bottom of the downhill cross a small dam, and join the Farris Creek trail taking a left (unless you want to ride Farris Creek) and climb to a gate crossing. Follow on around and down to Brush Creek Road and another gate crossing. Take the road left to the pavement and into town.



CHAPTER 8

ASPEN VIA E.BRUSH/406/TAYLOR PASS

MAP KEY#:01

TERRAIN:1-4,6-9

LENGTH:40 MILES (ONE WAY)

SEASON:MID-LATE JULY

DETAILS:

Were this not one of only two routes between Aspen and Crested Butte I would not try to describe it. Sections of the trail need work, are difficult to follow and may cross mining claims/private land. This area is a future project for the Colorado Mountain Club and may become an even more popular route to Aspen if it becomes better marked and maintained. It stays a little lower and is less rocky than Pearl Pass. Until the necessary improvements are made, the best recommendation I can make is to ask at Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. for detailed instructions.

ASPEN VIA PEARL PASS

MAP KEY#:23

TERRAIN: 1-5

LENGTH:39 MILES (ONE WAY)

SEASON: LATE. AUG .ASPEN SIDE OF PASS LATEST.

DETAILS:

This is a premier ride. Although it's become very popular in recent years, it hasn't gotten easier, just more popular. Do not set out to ride to Aspen, or from Aspen to Crested Butte, without taking the precautions that a technical, high altitude ride deserves.

Weather near Pearl Pass can turn nasty and be winter-like any month of the year. Blizzards in July are not unknown so be sure to bring clothing, raingear, extra food and water. This is a forty mile ride that is very steep on either side of the pass for several miles. Those loaded with touring gear should consider breaking the ride with an overnight stay low enough to avoid exposure to a night storm.

Starting at Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. head south 2 miles, on Hwy. 135, to Skyland turnoff. Go left and ride north on Brush Creek, past a small ranch. You will reach a fenced corral at about 8 miles. The property here is private on either side of the road, so remain on the road and pass on through. The road climbs gradually now getting more rugged. Not far beyond the corral the road forks. The left route climbs to Teocall Ridge, the right continues up Middle Brush.

Beyond the fork about .5 mile there is a stream crossing. The trail on the other side is not readily visible standing at the edge of West Brush, but proceed across and downstream. A few dozen feet and you'll see where the trail continues.

At the signs that indicate Farris Creek to the right, Middle Brush to the left and a dead end 300 ft. straight ahead take the dead end. Its the old road grade. Slides have made it a narrow and somewhat steeply dropped off route but its flat and avoids the much steeper climb and descent if you follow Middle Brush. Whichever route you take you come out along the river and roll awhile past some open meadows. Continue up the valley, make another stream crossing and soon after you'll hit the Middle/East Brush forks at about 11.5 miles, go left at fork, staying on Middle Brush Road. (Take a right for Block and Tackle and see Pg.54 for continuing description).

The road climbs steadily now through aspen groves and open areas. If there has been enough snow a nice falls drops above and to the left a mile past the East Brush fork. After passing the Twin Lakes trail cutoff at about 14.5 miles, make another stream crossing, and about three quarters of a mile later a last stream crossing on a bridge. This is a good resting

point. From then on, the trail climbs very steeply to the pass. Most folks will have to push or carry their bikes for several miles. The trail goes above treeline through here and gets very rocky in sections. There is a false summit about one-half mile before reaching Pearl Pass. Finally, at Pearl Pass you have achieved a bit of altitude, a great view and its mostly down from there.

Follow the road over the pass possibly through snowfields for a ways. The road is rough and becomes a stream bed at places making riding difficult. The water strips out all but the larger rocks. The road smooths near the Taggart Hut and you'll have less trouble riding from there. Join pavement at Ashcroft, turn left and continue down for about thirteen miles to the outskirts of Aspen. That's it. If you intend to water at the traditional spot from this ride the Jerome Bar is located in the newly redone Jerome Hotel.

The return is, of course, just the opposite of what you did. An alternative is to arrange transportation to Marble and make that ride back to Crested Butte or take Trail 406. (SEE CRESTED BUTTE TO MARBLE AND TRAIL 406)

CRYSTAL TOWNSITE VIA SCHOFIELD

MAP KEY#:6

TERRAIN: 1-4

LENGTH: 38 RT

SEASON: LATE JUNE/JULY. HIGH, PROTECTED

DETAILS:

This is a long day ride, with 3300 ft. of elevation change through steep, narrow terrain. Allot a full day and leave early. Water is usually available in Crystal. Take Gothic Road to Schofield Pass, continue into Schofield Park by staying right at Schofield Pass. Beyond Schofield Park, ride down over a small bridge, waterfall to the right. NOTE: Just before this small bridge is a single track to the left that bypasses the large stream crossing further down the road. Its a little rocky and steep but often easier than the stream.

At the head of Crystal Canyon is a stream crossing. If water level is high, take care to cross safely. Once on the other side the road is narrow, steep and a good challenge. About a half mile down you'll cross a bridge just below some falls and pools called the Devils Punchbowl. Continue down possibly over a snow bridge taking care to stay to the right and not get into the middle of the snow span which can and has collapsed in the past.

The Ute Indians, the first human inhabitants of the area, put a curse on the canyon when they were driven out of the area. As for horror stories, quite a number of idiots have attempted to drive through the canyon in sub-adequate vehicles. Some overturned in the river below. Others made it. Bikes are a much more sensible way to ride through Crystal Canyon.

A few miles below the bridge, break into forest and soon after, the townsite of Crystal. There is a small store open in the summer with snacks and pop cooling in buckets of cold water. There are other miscellaneous souvenirs too but I have always been so focused on candy bars and pop by the time I arrive, I don't recall much about them. Return the way you came. (SEE CRYSTAL in HISTORY)

MARBLE VIA SCHOFIELD

MAP KEY: 19

TERRAIN: 1-4

LENGTH: 50 MILES RT.

SEASON: LATE JUNE/JULY. HIGH, PROTECTED

DETAILS:

This ride is an extension of the Crystal Townsite ride. Read the first for a trail description to Crystal. Beyond Crystal, the road to Marble loses about thirteen hundred feet of elevation that must be gained on your return trip, unless you are riding this route one way. 2WD vehicles can get to Marble on paved road, so this ride is often used as a route into or out of Crested Butte, leaving vehicles in Marble. There is vehicle traffic on the road between Marble and Crystal and dust is sometimes a problem.

If you are considering this ride, read the description of Marble in HISTORY. The ride to the quarries will require a few extra hours. It is likely too much to try in a single day's ride from Crested Butte.

BLOCK AND TACKLE LOOP

MAP KEY#: 2

TERRAIN: 1-3,6,7

LENGTH: 36

SEASON: LATE JUNE. HIGH, PROTECTED AREAS.

SUGGESTED DIRECTION TO RIDE: EITHER.

DETAILS:

Block and Tackle can be ridden either from East Brush to Cement Creek or vice-versa. The trail is difficult to describe as it starts from Cement Creek, so this description will be from the East Brush side.

Use the trail description from ASPEN/PEARL PASS ride to the Middle Brush/East Brush fork. At the fork go right and continue about 2.75 miles to the signed Block and Tackle trail fork. Make the stream crossing and start the steep push up the hill about a mile. The downhill into the Cement Creek valley is fast and fun. Take a right on Cement Creek road and ride to the pavement and back into town. Also a return on Trail 409 is possible by riding up Walrod gulch. (SEE TRAIL 409/WALROD GULCH in Intermediate rides.)

TEOCALLI RIDGE LOOP

MAP KEY#: 32

TERRAIN: 1-4,7,8

LENGTH: 30

SEASON: MID/LATE JUNE. NORTH FACING.

DIRECTION TO RIDE: CLOCKWISE

DETAILS: (Includes West Brush Creek)

Starting at Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. head south 2 miles, on Hwy. 135, to the Skyland turnoff. Go left and ride north on Brush Creek Road, past the small ranch. You will reach a fenced corral at about 8 miles. The property here is private on either side of the road, so remain on the road and pass on through. The road will climb gradually now, getting more rugged. Not far beyond the corral, the road forks. The left route climbs to Teocalli Ridge, the right continues up Middle Brush.

(mileages are from this fork.) Take the left fork, which is West Brush Creek trail, the approach to Teocalli Ridge. Climb gradually, crossing West Brush Creek at about 2 miles. At about 3.5 miles the jeep road becomes a steeper trail. (This is the point the West Brush Creek trail ride would end and return). Do not take the left fork where the trail switches back to the right at about 4 miles. Continue climbing, pushing up onto the ridge. Stay right at the fork at about 5 miles, begin to descend off the high point at about 5.5 miles and stay left at the fork at about 6 miles, where the trail switches back. Head down the steeps. About 8.5 miles, there is a second stream crossing, the Middle Brush Creek, once over you'll encounter Middle Brush Road. This is the approach route to Pearl Pass to the left. Go right and head down. Stay right at the fork with East Brush Creek Road, cross Middle Brush Creek at about 10 miles, and at about 11.5 miles cross West Brush again and rejoin the fork you began at about 12 miles. Return to town the way you came.

WEST BRUSH CREEK

MAP KEY#: 40

TERRAIN: 1-3

LENGTH: 22 RT.

SEASON: EARLY. MID-MAY/JUNE. SNOW MAY REMAIN HIGHER.

DETAILS: (SEE TEOCALLI RIDGE LOOP FOR DESCRIPTION)

TRAIL 403 (via Washington Gulch/Gothic Road)

MAP KEY#: 34

TERRAIN: 1,2,7

LENGTH: 27 MILES ROUND TRIP

SEASON: LATE. LATE JUNE/JULY. MOSTLY NORTH FACING.

DIRECTION TO RIDE: CLOCKWISE

DETAILS:

Proceed from Alpineer/Bicycles, Etc. toward ski area on Gothic Road. Take the second left, the road to Meridian Lake Estates. This is Washington Gulch Road. Ride up the valley about 6 miles from the turnoff gradually climbing until a small group of cabins are encountered. This is Elkton, an old mining site. The cabins are all on private land and the owners ask that you not trespass.

Past Elkton the road switches back to the left and climbs a bit more. Near the summit watch for a jeep road right that has been plowed across, take it past a minesite and make a few short steep climbs. Pass first a white sign, and then a brown one each labeled trail 403. Watch for a single track that takes off to the right about 100 ft. past that second sign. This is the beginning of Trail 403.

Once on the single track the trail climbs and crosses over the saddleback into Gothic Valley, dropping steeply through high meadows, clumps of forest, and the Rock Creek drainage. This is steep trail, and technical riding. Watch out for downed trees through the woods.

In the final section, the trail switchbacks through high vegetation making it a very challenging ride. Trail exits in the Gothic campground. Exit campground, at the road go right, back toward Crested Butte via Gothic and Mt. Crested Butte.

FOR REFERENCE
NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM

CHAPTER 9

REFERENCE

The following is a list of addresses and phone numbers for the organizations, agencies, and businesses that may be helpful in planning, or getting additional information and resources.

- Alpineer** 303-349-5210. 419 6th st. Box 208 Crested Butte, Co. 81224. (*Camping gear, maps, books, clothing, raingear, general info on camping weather, trails*).
- Bicycles, Etc.** 303-349-6286. 419 6th st. Box 813 Crested Butte, Co. 81224. (*Bicycle sales, service and rentals. Complete line of parts, touring gear, tools and trail info. Also bikes shipped to all 50 states*).
- Bicycle and Equipment Rental** 800-448-7889 (*Toll free. For general info call Bicycles, Etc.*)
- Colorado State Patrol** 303-641-6382
- Crested Butte Chamber of Commerce** 303-349-6438. 405 2nd ave. Box 1288, Crested Butte, Co. 81224. (*Date of events, info on restaurants and lodging*).
- Emergency** 911
- Fat Tire Bike Week/Fat Tire Hall of Fame & Museum** 800-821-3718(*outside Colo*)/ 800-447-7669(*in Colo*)-Dave Lindsey 303-349-7514.(*information*)
- Gunnison National Forest** 303-641-0471, 216 N.Colorado Gunnison, Colorado. 81230 (*Campground, forest regulation, road and trail info*)
- Paradise Bikes**-303-349-6324, 224 Elk Ave. Crested Butte, CO. 81224 (*Bike sales, service and rentals*)
- Sheriff's Department**-(*non emergency*) 303-641-1113