



MG CAR CLUB, ROCKY MOUNTAIN CENTRE

Lariat Trail Loop "Loopapalooza" Tour 13 May 2023

Route Instructions are in bold

History notes are shaded

MILE The Denver Mountain Parks are celebrating their 110th Anniversary in 2023. Today we are driving by several Mountain Parks. Bathrooms are available throughout the route.

Today's Lariat Loop Tour will take us through 40 miles of Denver's Mountain Parks system. The Lariat Loop opened to motorists in 1915. Between 1912 and 1941, Denver purchased and constructed 47 Mountain Parks connected by scenic drives. The oldest parks in the Denver Mountain Parks system are destinations on what is now called the Lariat Loop National Scenic Byway. The City of Denver owns approximately 13,500 acres of mountain land located in the counties of: Clear Creek, Douglas, Grand, and Jefferson. The mountain park system was planned and designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., nationally recognized landscape architect; Saco Rienk DeBoer, Denver landscape architect; and Jules Jacques Benois Benedict and Burnham Hoyt, prominent Denver architects.

Denver's unique linkage of mountain parks and scenic drives preserved scenic and recreational mountain resources within easy reach of Denver residents, expanded the normal vision of urban parks and parkways, and set the stage for regional open space planning in Colorado. The development of the Denver Mountain Parks reflects three 20th century national movements: the City Beautiful, the National and State Park, and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Meet on Morrison Road, just west of C-470 in the parking lot across Rooney Road from the Phillips 66 gas station.

0.00 Right on Rooney Road north to Alameda Avenue

This area was home to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. Alexander Rooney homesteaded here in 1860, his family building several stone houses and barns in the area. The Rooney's, as had the Ute's, noticed plant and animal fossils. In 1877, a Colorado School of Mines professor discovered dinosaur fossils, including a Stegosaurus (Colorado's State fossil) who lived here 150 million years ago in the late Jurassic Period. Dinosaur tracks were discovered during the 1937 construction of West Alameda Parkway over the Dinosaur Ridge hogback. These tracks are from the Early Cretaceous Period, 100 million years ago.

2.30 Left on Alameda Avenue, over C-470, to Dinosaur Ridge Visitor Center parking lot. 6,049' elevation

2.60 Right into Dinosaur Ridge Visitor Center parking lot

Our Lariat Loop Trail Tour starts after you have had an opportunity to look around the signage and the history of the Rooney Ranch.

0.00 ZERO YOUR ODOMETER. Turn left at the STOP sign exit from the parking lot onto Alameda Avenue. At the STOP Light, cross over C-470

0.30 Right on Rooney Road south to Morrison Road, CO 8

George Morrison built a three story building here in 1874 which stood for 9 decades. It housed a Jesuit College. In 1888 the college moved to Denver's Berkeley neighborhood and became Regis College. Dinosaur Ridge is included in the Morrison National History Area.

2.60 Right on Morrison Road through Morrison to Red Rocks Park Entrance 3

Red Rocks 868 acre area, (called "Garden of the Angels" (1870s–1906) by some early settlers and then as the "Garden of the Titans" until 1928) was acquired by Denver in 1928. In 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Congress created the New Deal programs to help the nation out of the Great Depression. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), enlisted young men to help conserve the nation's natural resources. George Cranmer, Manager for Denver Parks, saw an opportunity to use the CCC to implement his grand plan to convert the Red Rocks Park into a formal outdoor theater. The project was approved for federal funding in 1935. Construction began when 200 CCC men arrived from Durango and began working on roadways and bank side sloping. The seating area work began in 1936. Part of George Cranmer's vision required an architect skilled enough to incorporate the natural acoustics of Red Rocks within formal theater elements. Once the amphitheater project was approved, the city and county of Denver appointed Burnham F. Hoyt as the head architect. Hoyt, a native of Denver, had already attained national recognition prior to designing the Red Rocks Amphitheatre. He designed continental seating, in which no center aisle exists; instead, there is enough space between each row to allow audience members easy access to their seats.

3.40 Right at Red Rocks Park Entrance 3 onto Red Rocks Park Road

3.70 Right on Red Rocks Park Road

4.40 STOP sign, Stay on Red Rocks Park Road through STOP sign

4.80 Left on Red Rocks Trail Road (by hut)

5.30 Left on West Alameda Parkway

5.60 Left on Trading Post Road

6.00 Right on Shiprock Road, before the Trading Post building

7.20 Right on Bear Creek Canyon Road, CO 74

Bear Creek Canyon is the south entry to the Lariat Loop. In 1917 large stone pillars marking the "Entrance to the Denver Mountain Parks" were erected at the start of both Bear Creek and Lookout Mountain roads. The pillars at the base of Bear Creek Canyon in Morrison have been removed, but the pillars near the bottom of Lookout Mountain still stand.

8.50 Hole in the Rock. Look left and to the top of the ridge for the Hole, between Mile Markers 17 and 16. Mile Marker numbers become lower going west.

10.50 Idledale

This unincorporated town sits at 6,700 feet. Idledale was called Starbuck Heights, after John Starbuck who won the location in a poker game, until 1933 when Bear Creek flooded and wiped out the area. Dunafon Castle can be rented for weddings.

11.50 Lair O' the Bear

Lair O' the Bear Jeffco Park is nestled in a steep canyon about six miles east of Evergreen, Colorado. John and Matilda Johnson emigrated from Sweden with their two young boys and purchased the narrow meadow in 1902. They named it Mountain Nook Ranch, built a four-bedroom house and raised Red Durham cattle. Their two sons, Finis and Francis, attended school in nearby Starbuck.

13.10 Corwina Denver Mountain Park

14.10 O'Fallon Denver Mountain Park

Nearby **Mount Falcon Park** was promoted as a Summer White House for the Presidents of the USA. The cornerstone of Colorado yule marble was laid on July 4, 1914 on this proposed site for the building.

14.50 Kittridge

Kittridge is named for C.M. Kittridge. Charles Kittridge completed the seven story office building located in downtown Denver at 16th and Glenarm in 1891.

16.80 Evergreen

Evergreen Lake was created by the Evergreen Dam, built in 1924-1925. The dam is located in Denver's Dedisse Park. The damn was built by MGCC member Tom Cox's father who was a Civil Engineer with the National Bureau of Standards. Tom's dad was also involved with the Hoover and Glen Canyon dams, the Roberts Water Tunnel, and worked with Charles Vail, Chief Engineer for the Colorado Department of Highways, on I-70 route development.

17.30 Right at Stoplight, continue on CO 74 West to I-70 East

Evergreen was settled in 1859 as a ranching community. Denver residents soon discovered the area and began building summer home homes and hunting cabins. The Hiwan Homestead, built in 1893, was home to one of Colorado's first women doctors. You'll drive by Elk Meadow Park.

20.20 Elk Meadow Park

As you approach Squaw Mountain Road, CO 103, you could take this pass to **Echo Lake and Summit Lake Denver Mountain Parks** in Clear Creek County. Echo Lake Park, established in 1921, has an impressive Rustic style lodge designed by prominent Denver architect J.J.B. Benedict. Summit Lake Park, opened in 1924, straddles Mount Evans Road. As the highest park within the Denver Mountain Parks system (12,800 feet), Summit Lake contains a stone shelter house designed by J.J.B. Benedict and constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s. George Cranmer, Manager for Denver Parks, purchased land in Grand County opening **Winter Park Ski Area** for the 1939–40 season.

22.00 Straight on CO 74 at Squaw Pass Rd intersection. Formerly Squaw, now called Mestaa'Èhehe Pass. CO 103 leads to additional Denver Mountain Parks.

Bergan Park is named for Thomas Bergan who built a log cabin here in 1859. The 25.06-acre site was acquired by Denver in 1915. The stone pavilion, well house, and restroom located within the park were designed by Jules J.B. Benedict.

24.80 Right onto I-70 East at Entrance 252. Stay in right lane to Exit 253, Chief Hosa

25.70 Right at Exit 253 into Chief Hosa for a look at the Lodge built for the Denver Mountain Park Campground

25.90 Right on Genesee Drive to Chief Hosa Lodge

Chief Hosa Lodge, designed by architect Jules Benedict became the city's first mountain lodge opening in 1918. Using timber and stone from the immediate area, Benedict designed the lodge to blend into the hillside. He named the lodge after a Southern Arapaho tribal leader who was given the honorary title 'Hosa' by the Ute tribe, which meant 'peaceful and beautiful'. The setting features sweeping views of the Continental Divide, along with its stone and log construction, the Chief Hosa Lodge is the ideal venue for a rustic Colorado wedding and is a National Historic Site.

Drive a short distance on Genesee Drive to see the front of Chief Hosa Lodge. Stop and read next instruction. Turn around 180 degrees in the road and entryway.

Sight seeing Opportunities! These next three short excursions are likely drive's you have never done.

26.00 #1 - Right on Genesee Lane to Patrick House Trailhead to see the Bison herd (bathroom). Return to Chief Hosa

27.70 STOP sign. Right on Genesee Drive to drive over I-70

27.90 #2 - Right on Stapleton Drive to Beaver Brook Bison Overlook (bathroom). Return back toward Chief Hosa, Exit 253

The purchase of Genesee Park began in 1911, followed by Lookout Mountain in 1913. The opening ceremony for these two parks was August 27, 1913. The Lariat Hiking Trail begins in Golden, climbs to Lookout Mountain, and then traverses to Genesee. By 1918, the 2,423 acre [Genesee Park](#) featured a game preserve, bison herd (1914), campground, and the rustic Chief Hosa Lodge. Motorists chugged along the hairpin turns of the dramatic Lariat Trail Road up Lookout Mountain, and hikers made their way along the Beaver Brook Trail.

29.20 STOP sign. Left over I-70

29.30 Left onto I-70 East to Exit 254

30.20 Right at Exit 254, Genesee Park

30.60 #3 - Right at STOP sign on Exit 254.

30.70 #3 - Right on Genesee Mountain Road into Genesee Mountain Park

32.10 Genesee Park turn around at gates at top of mountain. Return downhill to first STOP sign in Genesee, Exit 254

This is the eastern edge of the Chief Hosa/Genesee Park Area. Before I-70 was built on top of US 40 this was an alternate route south of US 40 through the Mountain Parks. As you return, there are views of Denver through the trees on the right.

33.50 STOP sign. Left to cross over I-70

33.60 Right on US 40 East, toward Buffalo Bill Museum and Lookout Mountain

34.10 - Woody Allen's "Sleeper" House can be seen through the trees to the south, above I-70.

34.90 Left on Lookout Mountain Rd

36.30 Left on Colorow Road at Boettcher Mansion/Lookout Mtn Preserve sign

Colorow was a Ute Mountain Ute Chief who lived and traveled throughout Colorado's Rocky Mountains and eastern Utah. He was a skilled hunter, horseman, warrior, and involved in treaty negotiations with the U.S. government. Colorow was born a Comanche in 1810 and at age five was kidnapped, and raised, by the Muache band of Utes. He received the nickname "Red" or "Colorado" for his reddish skin tone compared to the Utes. He fought alongside Chief Ouray for the return of stolen horses from the Arapaho and Cheyenne and in other battles near Aspen and Table Mesa. Colorow's Utes lived in mountain valleys (Roaring Fork and Gunnison) and the foothills. They camped on Lookout Mountain and the Rooney Valley (Dinosaur Ridge) to provide pastures for horses and goats. He is in the Jefferson County Hall of Fame. Colorow Point Park, in Golden, Colorado is on the National Register of Historic Places.

37.40 Left into the Lookout Mountain Reserve, Boettcher Mansion

Take some time for a tour of the Lookout Mountain Reserve and learn about Jeffco's Open Space system of 56,000 acres of preserved land, 27 parks, and 261 miles of trails.

37.70 Exit Parking Lot, Right on Colorow Road to Buffalo Bill Museum

38.50 Left on Lookout Mtn Rd to Buffalo Bill Museum

38.70 Left into Buffalo Bill Museum, parking lot, and store

William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody died in 1917 and was buried in Lookout Mountain Park, part of the Denver Mountain Parks. Louisa Cody, his widow, is also "buried on the mountain overlooking the Great Plains where he had spent much of his life."

39.10 Exit Parking Lot, Left on Lookout Mountain Road

Planned and built by William "Cement Bill" Williams from about 1910 to 1914, the Lariat Trail Scenic Mountain Drive winds roughly five miles and 1,500 feet from Golden to the top of Lookout Mountain. One of the earliest scenic mountain drives in Colorado, the road provided access to the new Denver Mountain Parks. The Lariat Trail became tremendously popular as the rise of automobile tourism and the opening of Denver's mountain parks led Denverites and other tourists to explore the foothills by car. When William "Buffalo Bill" Cody was buried on Lookout Mountain in 1917, at least 20,000 people used the road to attend the ceremony. That summer nearly 70,000 cars traveled to Denver's Mountain Parks, many using the Lariat Trail. In 1918 more than 116,000 cars drove the road.

43.30 Speed Humps!

43.60 Stone Pillars

In 1917, these large stone pillars marked "Entrance to Denver's Mountain Parks" were erected at the start of the Lookout Mountain road by Finlay L. MacFarland. These rock pillars were the Start Line for the SCCA's Buffalo Bill Hill Climb in the 1950's. In the 1954 event MGCC members ran and were Hill Climb Marshals. Mary Burns (TC) took 1st place in the Women's Class, followed by Ila Anderson (TD Blower), Martha Zeitlow (TF), Hazel Marble (TD), Dorothy Heller (TD Blower). In the Men's under 1500cc Class F Production: Ray Meyers (TD) 2nd. Over 1500cc Class E: Larry Heller (TD Blown) 2nd, R.W. Kastner (TD Blown) 3rd.

Decision Point: You can choose to complete the Lariat Loop five miles south at Red Rocks Entrance 1, then return to Golden for lunch. OR Turn left here and follow 19th Street into Golden for lunch on Ford Street or Washington Street.

44.10 Right at Traffic Circle

44.20 Merge on US 6 East

45.40 Right on Heritage Road

Straight south through three Roundabouts

46.30 Heritage Square former entrance

On the right, you are passing by the former site of Heritage Square, 1959-2018, a Victorian style theme park and shopping village with an Alpine Slide in Golden. It was originally built as Magic Mountain in 1957–59. MGCC members attended many Car Shows and Melodramas at Heritage Square.

46.50 Merge onto US 40 West

47.50 Pass under I-70

Now Hogback Road

48.90 Red Rocks Entrance 1. This is the end of our Lariat Loop Trail Tour.

Return to Lunch options in Golden

0.00 Turn around and head North on Hogback Road

1.20 Pass under I-70

2.40 Left on Heritage Road

Straight north through three Roundabouts

3.40 Left on US 6 West

4.50 Exit Right on Lookout Mountain/19th Street Exit

Right on 19th Street

5.30 Left on Ford Street

5.90 The Golden Mill "Food Hall" 1012 Ford St, Golden, CO 80401. Corner of Ford and Water Streets

6.00 Parking lot (former CoorsTek) 1 block north of Golden Mill

You may also choose to eat at one of the many Washington Street restaurants.

