

Denver's Dirt

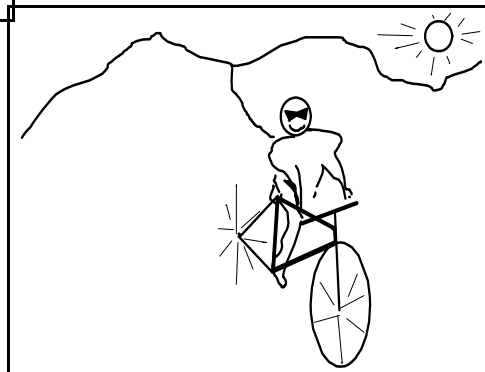
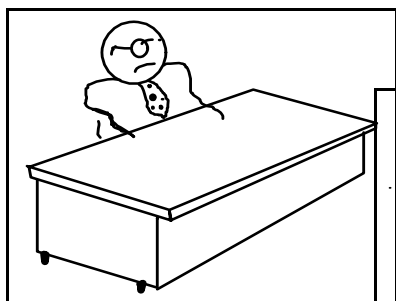
30 areas within 30 minutes of Denver

By Dr. Flip

- All single track rides
- All for *Mountain* bikes
- All close-in, after-work rides
- All Legal
- No Gravel Roads
- Some easy (not many)
- Most Thrilling
- All Fun

Including

- Dr. Flip's little known tips of bike and trail.



The Rides (roughly in order of increasing difficulty...)

Standley Lake State Park

Crown Hill

Rock Creek Farm

El Dorado to Marshall Ditch

Fairmount Canal Trail

Highline Canal Trail

Cherry Creek State Park

Bear Creek Lake State Park

Chatfield Lake State Park

Lair O' The Bear

Santa Fe Trail

Hogback Trail South, Going North and Going South

Fox Run Regional Park

Genesee Mountain Park

Greenbelt Plateau

Hogback On North Side of I-70

South Table Mountain

Green Mountain / Hayden Park

Matthews Winters

Meyer Ranch

Chimney Gulch

Manor House Trail

Dinosaur Ridge / Dakota Ridge Trail

North Table Mountain

Waterton Canyon to Roxborough Park

Red Rocks Loop Trail

Lookout Mountain Loop

Deer Creek Canyon

Three Sisters / Alderfer

Apex

Waterton Canyon and Segment 1 of the Colorado Trail

Reynolds Park

Golden Gate Canyon State Park

Mt Falcon

Elk Meadows

White Ranch

Beaver Brook

Favorites

My wife, Jacque and I frequently visit other biking areas and know how difficult it is to find the right flavor area to suit our personal tastes without wasting a lot of everyone's time asking around. Here is a list of our favorites and a quick description.

Dr. Flip's Favorites:

Elk Meadows - hard climb, lots of moves

White Ranch - hard climb, lots of deer, lots of miles.

Dinosaur Ridge Natural Landmark - very technical, love the dino tracks!

Matthews Winters - the game here is to make all of the moves without a dab.

Jacque's Favorites:

Meyer Ranch - in the forest, a few moves, the 1,000+ foot climb is not easy.

Green Mountain / Hayden Park - best "nooner", excellent night ride, good in winter.

Three Sisters / Alderfer - hard, but not too hard, technical but not too technical.

Mt Falcon - major grind to the top for the best technical section on Devil's Elbow.

Easy Favorites:

Fox Run Regional Park - the informative plaques gently educate

High Line Canal - a long easy ride

Cherry Creek State Park - riparian trails

Santa Fe Trail - Another long easy, different geology near Colorado Springs.

Bear Creek Lake Park - the climb up Mount Carbon can be avoided.

Endurance Favorites:

If you are looking a long, first class ride head for White Ranch or the Colorado Trail. The Waterton Canyon ride is only the first segment of the Colorado Trail as it heads for Durango. The Colorado Trail starts at the Strontia Springs Dam and is 50 miles of Grade A single track to the Lost Creek Wilderness Area. Rather tough as it climbs out of the foothills. Not too technical.

Winter Rides:

Green Mountain - faces mostly south, no trees.

White Ranch - Belcher Hill is mostly treeless.

Mt Falcon - Castle Trail is mostly treeless.

Dakota Ridge - ridge top faces south and dries fast.

Chatfield, Cherry Cr. Bear Cr Lk reservoir

Dr. Flip's First Tip - Mountain biking is dangerous. Certain Death. Every trail in this book is dangerous. There are tons of ways to die. If the rocks, trees and cliffs don't get you, then the bears, mountain lions and rattlesnakes surely will. If you manage to survive these dangers, starvation, dehydration and altitude sickness will certainly finish you off and the coyotes will clean up the pieces. Don't even consider trying it. How's *that* for a disclaimer?

The Trails and the Tips

When Jacque and I bought two mountain bikes, we knew neither where to go, nor what to do when we got there. Our guide describes the trails that we discovered and the trials that taught us how to ride.

Great mountain bike rides within ½ hour of Denver? Lots of them? If you are like we were, the burning question was "Where can we ride?". We didn't have a clue. We got kicked out of a couple of places, started collecting guidebooks and maps and eventually found out. One of the top 5 favorite outdoor recreational activities in Colorado is "Mountain Biking - *on the road!*" Hopefully our guide will show you how easy it is to get your new bike dirty.

One problem that none of these guide books addressed was the need for fast access to the ride areas. We have regular jobs, so if we want to ride much, it has got to be after work. If you can get to your ride in ½ hour, you have as much as 3 hours to ride in the summer evenings. That's a lot of riding! Mornings are even better with the coolness of first light at 5AM.

These are all single track rides. There are no gravel roads. There are no city paved bike paths. These are just great *mountain bike* rides. After all, that is why you paid all that good money for a *mountain* bike wasn't it? I don't know what sort of bike it takes to ride these trails. Once I saw a stout young lady on a 10 speed "Girls" frame coming down a rock strewn trail at White Ranch. The wheels were still turning and forks were still in front. Bottom line: if you got it - ride it.

Lurking just off all of these trails are innocuous looking little cactus but you won't see them under the grass. These little guys will make your tubes leak like a shower head with a half dozen holes every time you roll over one. Don't ride off the trails (this is not an "eco" thing - you're just going to get lots of flats). I have tried the "Tuffy" tire liners and they work. I have a couple of the thicker "thorn proof" tubes and have never gotten a flat with these either - principally because they are so heavy they stay in the basement.

I must confess that I have taken a little liberty in recording the amount of time that it takes to drive to many of these places. All are close. If you hit the fringe of greater metropolitan Denver at V_{\max} plus, all are truly within 30 minutes. I don't think you are going to get upset with me though, there is some good dirt out there - and its not far away!

Dr. Flip's Tip for Groupies - The Denver Bicycle Touring Club (756-7240) has organized mountain bike rides on Saturdays and Sundays, many week nights and seminars on technique.

Your Gear

Many of the tougher trails go up rather steeply. Personally, I favor high gear ratios to climb steep hills. A rear cassette with a 30 or 32 tooth biggest gear is nice, but 28 is more common. I think that a 24 tooth granny gear front chaining is a minimum and a 22 tooth preferable if you plan on enjoying these trails. The number of teeth is usually stamped on each gear. (You are in your lowest gear when you have the smallest front chaining and the largest rear cog selected.) If you have a 26 or 28 tooth front small chaining, you will find yourself pushing and feeling like you haven't got what it takes when all it takes is better gearing. Go to your bike shop, spend \$15 for a gear and have a friend put it on. Every time I put a lower gear on Jacques bike, she would click into it and wonder how she ever made it up without it.

Nearly all of these destinations have a selection of rides to choose from. Some are quite easy and some are downright nasty. Please don't let this deter you. There is no shame in walking your bike over a tough bit of trail. *Most* bikers do! Only you will discover which flavor trails you enjoy the most.

*But remember, these are all single track routes and even the easiest has rocky sections that await the unwary. Wear a helmet. The probability of a crash is not reduced because you are a cautious beginner.. Wear a helmet. Experts simply crash going faster. Wear a helmet - you **will** crash.*

The first year Jacques and I started riding, we both ruined expensive sunglasses by planting them into rocks. Only our helmets and our chins saved the rest of our faces. My helmet **has** saved me from being knocked out. Wear a Helmet.

Survival

Generally these are short rides in an area with lots of other users so you're going to have to work really hard to get lost, hypothermic, dehydrated or even seriously scared. Always fill your water bottle (*all* of the water sources in these high use areas have been polluted with *Giardia Lamblia*). Let experience guide your selection of your "kit".

After a few embarrassing episodes and a couple of walks back to the car, you will develop your own set of priorities. These trails are not remote, so if you get into trouble with a breakdown, flat or injury, there are usually lots of fellow bikers to help

you out. Or, you can just get out your cellphone and call your wife like I saw a guy on Green Mountain do when his chain broke.

I have never seen a mountain lion or bear while biking these trails, but I have thought of what I would do in case I did. I have seen deer,

elk, coyote, wild turkey, partridge, bald eagles and a profusion of wildflowers while riding these trails. It sure is great to have such a collection of world class trails at our fingertips.

Dr. Flip's Tip for Explorers: Here is rare instance where your tax dollars can pay off - US Geological Service (USGS) maps for \$2.50. With a "7.5 Minute Quad" (about 2000' x 2000' with 40 foot contours). you can ride the trail without leaving your kitchen table. Depending on the actual trail conditions, a 500' elevation gain in one mile is tough but practical, more than that and you had better plan on pushing your bike The USGS Maps Sales Office is located between Kipling and Simms on Alameda.

My "Rating Method" is somewhat tongue-in-cheek. "Physical" refers to how much strength or endurance the trail requires. "Technical" refers to the fun factor.

Physical

Easy Nothing in life that is fun is easy, but this is a good place to start.

Energetic A *Strong* newcomer might enjoy this. He will need several rest stops. You could easily lose a friend here (as in "How would you like to try mountain biking?")

Nasty You will be using your lowest gear and wishing for lower.

Technical

Tame Roots and ruts don't count if there is enough room to ride around them

Interesting Water bars and switchbacks will present a challenge. You are expected to push here and there.

Tricky If you can ride it without a dab, I'll take my hat off to you. Switchbacks, logs and lots of rocks.

Real Tricky If you try to ride it - you will surely die.

Ride time means the time spent pedaling, *not the time it takes to ride the route*. These figure can easily double or triple if you stop to smell the columbines and watch the deer.

Denver's Dirt comes in a variety of grades:

Maintenance road - 4WD or better road that is closed to general traffic so you don't have to worry about traffic

Grade A Single Track - typical of the Jeffco Mountain Parks, well constructed and well maintained.

Narrow Single Track - probably natural - made by animals (hikers, horses, ...), usually difficult.

Bentonite clay – This is something that is fun until it gets wet. Then it's worse than the La Brea Tar Pits.

Altitude and elevation gain/loss notes are useful for a couple of reasons. Generally rides with less than 500' of elevation gain can be fun for anyone with a bit of panting and pushing. Some of the rides that top out over 8,000 feet might be a out-of-body experience for someone fresh off the airplane from sea level.

"Bailout" is not meant to mean anything belittling. If convenient easier alternatives exist, these routes may be taken by part of your group so that no one gets committed to more than is individually pleasant. With prearranged meeting spots, you do not have to lose the camaraderie of your group or the pleasure of individual tastes. There is nothing more irritating than listening to the incessant whining of someone with a broken arm pushing their bike home.

Please!

Many of these rides are in the Jefferson County Open Space Park system. The parking lots are safe, the trails are well maintained, each trailhead supplies free maps, there is no daily use fee, toilets are clean and many have organized activities. I hope that you appreciate the wonderful job that Jeffco has done and do not make their task

harder by misusing our parks.

There is a growing sense of antagonism as more and more mountain bikers go hurtling down the trails. The Jefferson County Board of Commissioners has been considering banning mountain bikes from some of these areas as Boulder County has already done. This is a very real possibility and there is something that you can do about it - ***Be A Considerate Biker!*** Just follow the rules:

Yield to everyone else. Mountain bikes have the least right-of-way of any other trail user, including hikers.

Yield to other mountain bikers coming uphill.

"Yield" does not mean yelling "on yer right!" as you careen past a hiker and his 5 year old son. Yield means give up the trail. Put yourself in their position and recall how uneasy you feel when you meet someone on the trail with a gun. You aren't really sure what he's going to do with it or where he's going to point it, whether he is careless or safety conscious. You can reassure the people you meet on the trail if you show them that you are in control by slowing down and asking their permission to pass. Frequently hikers get off the trail to let us pass. This is not required, it is *nice* of them. Slow down and say "Thanks".

Things change quickly in our urban environment. Where once we were welcome, may now be someone's home. If you find my directions point to someone's front yard - sorry.

Dr. Flip loves to find "treasure". That is what I call all of the goodies I find along the trail. One year I found 4 tire pumps. Use tape or a cable tie to secure the pump in the plastic clips that hold it aboard lest I find yours.

Building a Great Mountain Bike Park System

Like I said, Jefferson County has done a really outstanding job. It is a testimony of "long-term" commitment in urban recreational planning. As you ride these trails, you might enjoy not just the span of time, but all of the participants that have contributed to our trails.

About 300 million years ago our planners forefathers flooded the low lying area of Denver with the Paleozoic Seas whose shifting beaches and dunes formed the sandstone Red Rocks Formation (Mt. Falcon, Matthews Winters). Due to bad planning, the Ancestral Rockies were dozed back down leaving only the highest like Mount Evans. This served as a base when things heated up in the during the middle Jurassic Period (150 million years ago) when the area was again covered with a shallow sea that formed the complex Fountain / Morrison / Dakota Formations. Somehow they recruited a crew of dinosaurs to stomp around (you can still see the tracks on Dakota Ridge). Unfortunately, OSHA not being what it is today, some of them died on the job and were dug out in the 1870's and are currently on exhibit in the Denver Natural History Museum. Things could have been worse. For example the Boulder area had so many die off that the remains formed the Marshall Coal Fields (Greenbelt Plateau). Our planners let the mud settle until the last of the inland seas retreated around 60 million years ago when the present Rocky Mountains lifted up forming the foothills that take your breath away as you huff and puff your way up (White Ranch, Apex, Mt. Falcon).

Finally during the Tertiary Period around 30 thousand years ago, as a sort of icing on the cake, they blew off a bunch of volcanos that formed the rides on North Table Mountain, South Table Mountain and Green Mountain. Recently, a few settlers were selected to add local "color" to the parks by building little towns (Matthews Winters) or huge houses (Mt Falcon) and then abandoning them. Sometimes the route that we ride was used by wagons to haul supplies to the gold miners (Apex) or to haul skiers uphill (Meyer Ranch). Other times, the locals were just plain old hard working ranchers (White Ranch, Walker Ranch Loop). But no matter what your perspective of the history, there is a lot to discover, admire and learn.

Dr. Flip's Shifty Tip #1 - *Shift!* You just paid hundreds of dollars for 18, 21, 24, or 27 gears. Use them. Don't hang around in the wrong gear. The best pedal cadence is 1 revolution per second.

Flowers & Birds

You are going to see lots of wildlife, perhaps this will help...

Pasque Flower - I am always so happy to see this little guy because then I know its really spring. Frequently seen poking through a snowbank, Pasque Flowers are both unique in appearance and common in our front range. Look for a blue, hairy stemmed, tulip shaped flower.

Sand Lilly - another sure sign that winter is over. This white lily is easy to identify by its 6 petalled flowers lying low amongst its tubular leaves alongside the trail.

Larkspur - This common blue flower blankets the fields in the summer. Larkspur and Purple Loco are fatally poisonous to cattle. Look for tall blue-violet flowers with a prominent backward projecting "spur".

Columbine - Stop and admire the complex beauty and subtle pastel colors of the Colorado State flower. The best place to view these is Meyer Ranch near the end of June. Some varieties lack the backward projecting spurs.

Yucca - although you may have discovered that you don't want to get too close to this prickly guy when you are pedaling, the flowers are distinctive. Large cream colored, bulb shaped flowers on a tall stalk make an interesting snack.

Oregon Creeping Grape - The leaves resemble holly. The creeping stems end in dense clusters of yellow flowers. Used by the Indians as a source of yellow dye.

Fairy Slipper - If you see a small pink flower as you ride along in the woods, stop to see if you have found a Fairy Slipper. You will have to lay down to admire this tiny beauty and its classic orchid shape.

Steller's Jay - If you see a flash of iridescent blue, that's him.

Brush Jay - A drab looking bluish jay without a topnotch.

Clark's Nutcracker - Commonly called "Camp Robber", these tan colored, jay sized birds will frequently feed from your hand if you hold a raisin or chunk of Power Bar above your head.

Humming Birds - are everywhere. The distinctive buzzing call sounds like a fast moving grasshopper. Although they look cute they get into some intense territorial discussions.

Nuf talk - let's ride!

Standley Lake State Park

Length of Ride:

2 miles, another 2 or 3 miles to Wadsworth along Big Dry Creek

Ride time:

30 minutes

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

nil

Type of trail surface:

single track

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Tame

Where:

Go west on I-70 to Wadsworth. Turn north on Wadsworth to 88th Ave. Go west on 88th until it doglegs south of Standley Lake and becomes 86th. Continue for about ½ mile to the Jefferson County Open Space parking lot on the north side of the road at the north end of Simms.

Highlights:

Nice lakeside area for picnics. Lots of grassy space for games. The waterfront is very nice, with sandy beaches, but you cannot swim - something about bodily contact with Broomfield's drinking water. It must be illegal for the water skiers to fall. If you ride off the trails, the sand burrs will get you.

Description:

The trail forms a 2 to 3 mile loop around the southwest corner of the lake. Starting at the parking lot, take the trail down to the lakeshore. Follow the lakeshore west to the west end of the lake. You can return to the parking lot by going uphill (south) to the irrigation ditch and following that back or continue around the lake to the peninsula (which is sometimes an island). The trail is generally smooth and pleasant.

Take the service road to the dam and follow any of the many trails down to the outlet, Big Dry Creek. A large area below the dam of mixed up trails leads to a nice "municipal" dirt path along the south side of the creek that crosses over a bridge about ½ mile from the dam. The trail ends at Wadsworth Blvd.

Dr. Flip's Shifty Tip #2 - Learn to anticipate your shifts. You cannot shift when the chain is under strain. Downshift before it's too late.

Dr. Flip's Shifty Tip #3 - After you shift, you must rotate the pedal for the chain to engage the new gear. Don't shift, roll downhill and then stand on the pedal, expecting your new gear to be ready for the climb. All you will get is gnashed gears.

Crown Hill

Length of Ride:

2 miles loop around the lake

Ride time:

30 minutes

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

nil

Type of trail surface:

Paved bike path and single track.

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Tame

Where:

Park on the south side of the park on 26th ave between Kipling and Wadsworth.

Highlights:

A couple of small lakes, flat.

Description:

6.5 miles of trails, a mixture of dirt and paved.

Dr. Flip's Tips on Clips #1: Toeclips are difficult to "get" and make you feel like you are going to go down with the ship if you tip over. However, they keep your feet on the pedals and without them, sooner or later you will be doing the dreaded "Flying W" which happens when you go bouncing over a bump, lose both pedals and come down hard on the seat instead of the pedals (this doesn't sound too bad until you think about it).

Dr. Flip's Trailside Guide to Self-Fulfilling Prophecies and Other Life Lessons: See that rock in the middle of the trail? Lots of room on either side, right? Forget the room. Look at the rock. Don't take your eyes off the rock. After all, that's the problem. The rock. Getting closer. Closer. *Aw rats!* (flip).

Rock Creek Farm

Length of Ride:

3 miles out-and-back

Ride time:

30 minutes

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

nil

Type of trail surface:

single track

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Tame

Where:

Drive northwest on Highway 36 towards Boulder. Exit headed north at the Superior Exit. Immediately turn east on Dillon Road. Go east 3 miles and turn south on 104th Street. Go about 1 mile and park on the west side near the sign. Alternately proceed east on Dillon to a parking lot ½ mile further past the 104th intersection.

Highlights:

3½ miles of trails between fields and across a little dam. Lots of fishermen, ducks and a swan or two.

Description:

The ride across the dam consists of riding around fishermen and their kids, dogs, poles, tackle boxes and other toys. After that the trail heads north into following the farming access routes to the Dillon Road parking lot.

Dr. Flip's Tips on Clips #2:

When you get your bike, remove the toe straps. This will allow you to practice using the toeclips.

After you are able to flip the clips up and get your foot into them without looking down, replace the straps.

Dr. Flip's Tip on Gasoline: Once as I was driving across the Bay Bridge in San Francisco, the car sputtered and died. She "bonked", "hit the wall", ran out of gas. I coasted to a stop in one of the pullouts with visions of a \$100 towing fee to get me off the bridge. "No problem" I said to myself as I emptied all of the camp stoves into the gas tank. The car coughed and protested, but made it to a gas station. The body's favorite "gasoline" is carbohydrate derived glucose in the blood. When this energy source is used up after about 2 hours of exercise, you "run out of gas". The body must resort to its alternative energy source - fat. Your body will protest and be unable to make the dynamic, high energy moves that it can while running on carbo, but it will make it to the next gas station.

El Dorado to Marshall Ditch

Length of Ride:

5 miles out-and-back

Ride time:

One hour

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

nil

Type of trail surface:

Well maintained access road

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Tame

Dr. Flip's food for thought: As the blood glycogen decreases, the body starts converting the most readily available source into energy. This will be any carbohydrates that you have been eating since the ride started. So, if you are going on an all day ride - start eating soon after you start riding and nibble your way along.

Where:

Drive west on I-70 to Highway 58 through Golden to Highway 93. Go north. As you near Boulder, watch for the El Dorado sign. Turn west on Highway 170, drive about a mile and watch for the parking lot on the south side of the road.

Highlights:

This ride follows an irrigation ditch. This means that it is an essentially level ride. The aqueduct winds through the plains for several miles of easy riding. There are a few trails that branch off of the ditch and head uphill, but if you go on these, watch out for cactus.

Description:

Ride along the ditch. When you get bored, ride back. This was the first trail that Jacque and I found after we got kicked out of a Boulder County trail by the park ranger. Boulder County has a more restrictive attitude towards mountain bikes than Jefferson County does. There is a picnic area about ¼ mile down the trail. After 2 miles you can cross the ditch and head up a trail in a gully that steepens and crosses under Highway 93. The tunnel is full of swift nests. I told Jacque to be careful because they were Corinthian Cave Worms and for a second she believed me. She *hates* worms.

Fairmount Canal Trail

Length of Ride:

10 miles out-and-back

Ride time:

1½ hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

nil

Type of trail surface:

Well maintained access road

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Tame

Where:

Drive west on I-70 to Highway 58. Go west through Golden to the last light and turn north on Highway 93. Go about 5 miles to 66th Ave.. Turn east on 66th Ave. about ¼ mile and park somewhere (I have not found a good place that does not involve paying the entrance fee to Arvada Reservoir). The trail starts on the south side of the road.

Highlights:

This ride follows another irrigation ditch starting at the Arvada Reservoir and ending at 44th Ave in Golden. There are a few dipsy doodles, but its mostly level trail. You will have to share the trail with more horses and runners than other bikers. The ride skirts around the east side of North Table Mountain. You get to peek into the back yards of the very nice homes along the side of the trail.

Description:

Ride to 44th Ave. It is about 6 miles. There is a one mile long side trail heading north after you cross Easley Road.

The body's ability to burn fat improves with use. Go on longer rides to get into the fat burning mode and build stamina. Note that it doesn't help to go on long *hard* rides, just long rides. Hard does build muscles, but muscles do no good without fuel.

Highline Canal Trail

Length of Ride:

30 miles out-and-back, many more miles of trails to explore.

Ride time:

5 hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

nil

Type of trail surface:

All access road, some sand.

Physical challenge:

Easy to moderate (it's a long ride)

Technical challenge:

Tame

Where:

Go south on Santa Fe from I-470. The parking lot is on the east in about 1 mile.

Highlights:

This is one of the longest easy trails around. Don't ride in the sandy sections of trail - sandburrs!

Description:

From the parking lot, the trail goes both east and west. Going west, the trail ends after only a couple of miles, but can be regained in Chatfield State Park. Going east, the trail meanders through the suburbs of Denver for miles and miles.

Dr. Flip Fit Tip #1: Raise your seat up. The best height for non-technical riding or climbing is when your heel of a fully extended leg just touches the pedal.

Dr. Flip's Fit Tip #2: What size bike? Stand-over height is important. You will suddenly be forced to dismount and straddle your bike. Get plenty of clearance. The "frame size" as measured from the bottom bracket to the top of the seat tube doesn't mean as much in mountain bike as it does in road bikes. If your bike has a sloping top tube, the frame size will be smaller for a given wheelbase. If in doubt, go for small - they are easier to push!

Cherry Creek State Park

Length of Ride:

10 mile loop around the lake, more trails to explore.

Ride time:

Two hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

100'

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track and pavement over the dam.

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Tame

Where:

Find an access at any place around the lake.

Highlights:

A ten mile, mostly easy loop around Cherry Creek Reservoir. Combination paved bike paths and dirt trails. Stay away in the summer - too many people.

Description:

A combination of dirt and paved bike trails encircle the lake. The area to the southeast along Cherry Creek is the most interesting. Mind the signs, bikes are not permitted on some of the birding trails. As with all of the reservoirs, the best time to ride is winter, when there is no mud and the lakeshore is frozen. During the early summer, many of the dirt trails are underwater.

Dr. Flip's Fit Tip #3 A wide comfortable "Fat Boy" saddle is great for touring, but doesn't cut the mustard when the going gets technical. Then you need a narrow saddle that allows you to push the bike out in front of you without making you go bowlegged. I have two saddles and change them depending on the ride.

Dr Flip and his Flippettes: Where do I take my girlfriend on her first mountain bike ride? Well, this really depends on what you want to accomplish. If you want to impress her with your virility and insure that she never throws a leg over another bike for the rest of her life, take her to White Ranch, ride a couple of hundred yards up ahead and as she arrives panting and sweating say "Ready?" and take off. On the other hand, if you want her to enjoy the experience, take her and one of her friends to Fox Run, Cherry Creek, Fairmont Trail or one of the other really easy rides. Ride behind her to allow her to set the pace.

Bear Creek Lake State Park

Length of Ride:

About 6 miles

Ride time:

a couple of hours to ride around the lake.

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

The top of Mt Carbon is 5,772'. The lake is 5,575'.

Type of trail surface:

Paved bike path and good dirt trails. Bentonite clay – stay away after a rain.

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Tame, descent of Mount Carbon is definitely interesting.

Where:

Access from Morrison exit of I-470. Go east ¼ mile and turn south into the entrance. Also access from Hwy 285 at the Fort to "Soda Lakes". Park outside of the park entrance booth in the large paved parking lot. Bikes get in free (cars don't). Another parking lot is on the northwest corner of E-470 and Morrison Road.

Highlights:

Combination of paved and dirt bike paths. Several lakes, picnic tables and concession stands distributed throughout the park. Lots of dirt trails to explore because there are no maps. This is my favorite place to take a newcomer. The trails along Bear Creek are nice, the climb up Mount Carbon is not easy and there is a paved bike path close at hand in case anyone wants to return early.

Description:

I like to start at the northwest corner of the park. Ride over the bridge over Bear Creek headed south on the paved bike path. At the first sign of dirt, immediately after the bridge, head east along the creek. The trail follows the creek and turns into a dirt service road. Follow the road as it bends around on itself and heads generally west. You are now above and just south of the trail along Bear Creek that you just rode.

When you come to a graded dirt road, turn hard left, staying on the single track. This trail runs parallel to the road and soon crosses the road. Once across, bear right and downhill. The trail winds briefly along another creek. If there is a bridge, use it, if not, proceed ahead and use the bridge at the bike path. Recover the trail immediately on the other side of the bridge and follow it to the base of Mount Carbon. Ascend Mount Carbon, either by the paved path or by one of the trails. Once atop Mount Carbon head due east to the ridge. Take the trail along the ridge or the trail that bisects the basin.

Follow any trail going east or take the bike path down. You will find yourself at the bottom of the dam. Watch for model sailplanes slope soaring along the dam. Stay on the dirt singletrack until you get to the graded dirt service road going to the top of the dam. Once atop the dam, you can follow the paved road back to your car or take any of the dirt trails on the north side of the creek. Avoid the area north of the creek if wet.

Chatfield Lake State Park

Length of Ride:

About 10 miles, I got lost.

Ride time:

Two to three hours to ride around the lake via Titan Rd.

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

nil

Type of trail surface:

Paved bike path and good dirt trails.

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Tame

Where:

Take Wadsworth south from I-470. Go less than a mile to the parking lot at the intersection of Deer Creek Road on the west.

Highlights:

Combination of paved and dirt bike paths. One of the largest lakes around. The riparian environment along the South Platte and Plum Creek is very native. The heron rookery is worth the visit. This is a good winter ride when the lake is frozen.

Description:

Ride across Wadsworth and into the Visitor's Center. A loop around the lake on good paved bike paths, old broken asphalt paths and dirt would be about 10 miles. I tried to find a dirt path but a couple of too big to wade creeks blocked the path (it was winter). You can follow Plum Creek as it heads southeast to Titan Road. Go east on Titan Rd to Santa Fe north to the I-470 bike path to return to your car.

Dr. Flip's Itchy Tip: Poison Ivy is surprisingly common here in hot, dry Colorado. The identifying features are smooth edged oval leaves with pointed tips in groups of three. The glossy leaves are a deep verdant green in the June turning to a beautiful red gold in September. The allergic reaction usually sets in the following day and lasts for several days. Each reaction to exposure is worse than the last. If you think you've touched the leaves, wash with cold water and soap.

Dr. Flip's tip for Skinless Thighs (no chickens here!): Those Spandex dweeb shorts are admittedly difficult to be seen in. Well, actually considering their color schemes, they are only too easy to be seen in. What I mean is, its difficult to *imagine oneself* in a pair. But, when you take a fall and the spandex hugs your thighs like a second skin, you will appreciate not having your old baggy shorts on that ride up and expose *your* skin to the chomping gravel.

Lair O' The Bear

Length of Ride:

2 miles

Ride time:

15 minutes

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

6,500'

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Interesting in spots

Where:

Go south on I-470 to the Morrison Exit. Go west, straight through Morrison, entering Bear Creek Canyon. Continue past the town of Idledale about ½ mile. Jefferson County Open Space Park, Lair O' The Bear is on the south side of Highway 74.

Highlights:

A babbling brook (complete with a fishing bridge!), short wide trails and lots of picnic tables make this an excellent first time *mountain bike* ride. It is a little out of the way, so there isn't usually a lot of people here. The trails are short, so you will have no trouble keeping your group together. This is a good place to see an amazing Water Ouzel. If you are fortunate enough to see one, its worth the entire trip. (I won't tell you - go find out. A description is on the backside of the Jeffco map). This is the best place to get your first taste of *technical* mountain biking (if you fall off the cliff, you're not too far from the road so the ambulance can haul you away).

Description:

Pick up a free map and start riding. The trails are uneventful except for the upper part of Bruin Bluff where the switchbacks get real tight. The switchbacks even have little cliffs to fall off if you miss a turn. After you have ridden it one way, go back in the opposite direction. The trail has only about 200' of elevation gain above the creek.

Dr. Flip's Fit Tip #5: After finding the correct saddle height, move the saddle fore and aft until a plumb line dropped from the center of the knee intersects with the pedal axle when the crank arm is horizontal.

Santa Fe Trail

Length of Ride:

28 miles out-and-back

Ride time:

4 hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

A few hundred feet of gentle rolling hills.

Type of trail surface:

Well maintained, wide, multi use trail.

Physical challenge:

Energetic due the length of the ride.

Technical challenge:

Tame

Where:

Drive south on I-25 to the Monument exit #161. Turn west, then northwest on Hwy 105 to Palmer Lake. Park along the south edge of the lake at the trailhead.

Highlights:

This makes a nice winter ride because its long and free of snow. Elephant Rocks can be seen from the trail. Most of the trail is an old railroad bed.

Description:

Start riding south. Turn around when you feel like it.

Dr. Flip's Fit Tip #4: Although its tempting to make a small frame fit by raising the seat, if the frame is too small, your back will be bowed when you ride and you will get sore shoulders.

Dr. Flip's Fit Tip #6 - The distance from the plane of the saddle to the top of the handlebars is called the "drop". Most new bike riders like to start out with the handlebars above the plane of the seat by a couple of inches. After your back muscles strengthen and your neck muscles stretch, you can start to lower your handlebars for more power on the flats. But, this puts more weight on the front tire and reduces your ability to lift the front end up over obstacles.

Hogback Trail South, Going North and Going South

Length of Ride:

2 to 5 miles out-and-back

Ride time:

1 hour or less

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

300' saddle to gain going either way.

Type of trail surface:

Single track

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Tame

Where:

Drive west on I-70 to E-470 south. Exit at the Ken Caryl Exit west. Drive through the traffic light just west of the hogback and park on the north side. This trail is allegedly "owned" by the Ken Caryl housing development ("homes starting in the \$500s"), but it is also administered by Jeffco Open Space.

Highlights:

Another Jefferson County trail, impressive rock formations as you bike past the uplifted sandstone strata. Rather easy trail with some gradual elevation gain.

Description:

Bike north between the Morrison sandstone formation to the east and the Red Rocks formation to the west. The trail bends to the west at Dutch Creek in a little over a mile and ends at the road to the Manor House Restaurant. If you follow the hogback north, you can find a rough trail along Dutch Creek that goes under E-470.

From the same parking spot, bike straight south to regain the trail as it follows the gentle terrain between the two hogbacks. The trail ends at Deer Creek Canyon Road after 2 miles.

Dr. Flip's Tip for Stream Crossings. You can use your bike as a support as you tiptoe from rock to rock in that futile effort to keep your shoes dry.

Dr. Flip's Tip for River Crossings. After the water depth reaches your knees, the bike tends to be swept away. It is easier to carry it. The added weight will help hold you down to prevent *you* from being swept away.

Fox Run Regional Park

Length of Ride:

4 miles

Ride time:

1 hour

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

200'

Type of trail surface:

Wide, well maintained trails, some sand.

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Tame

Where:

Go south on I-25 to exit 158 (Baptist Road). Head east until the road curves then turn left on Becky Lane. Go .5 mile and turn left on Stella Drive. Go .5 miles to the park entrance. If you find the main park entrance too congested, continue on Stella to Rollercoaster Road. Turn left and find a trailhead parking lot in about a mile.

Highlights:

This is a real gem! There are lots of informative signs (I learned that knick-knick was the original gorp!). There is a very pleasant picnic area with a pavilion set in the middle of a lake. Fishing for kids seems to be popular as well as kids fishing. Although this area is east of I-25 it is covered with pine trees due to a underlying rock formation that traps the water near the surface.

Description:

About 5 miles of easy trails with interpretive signs every couple of hundred yards to keep the neophyte rider's mind off biking. An *excellent* place to take a first timer. There are other trails west of south entrance of park.

Dr. Flip's Tip for Rad Stream Crossing - want to keep your feet dry? It is the front wheel that splashes the water all over your shoes. So wheelie across. Obviously check out the streambed *before* you try this.

Dr. Flip's Tips for Fellow Velo Vampires - The view of Denver's lights at night is really the great. Green Mountain is a very pleasant late evening ride when the temperature has dropped a few degrees and the city starts to light up. If you try night riding, I have found that lots of cheap lights are almost as effective as an expensive rig. I look like a rolling Christmas tree. I have one light on my frame, one on the handlebars and one on my helmet (which shows where I am headed, where I am going to be headed and where I want to go - the object is to get them all pointed at the same spot on the trail).

Genesee Mountain Park

Length of Ride:

Up to 6 miles

Ride time:

One hour

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

The roads and trails undulate a few hundred feet.

Type of trail surface:

Gravel roads and abandoned 4WD roads.

Physical challenge:

Energetic

Technical challenge:

Mildly Interesting

Where:

Drive West on I-70 to the Genesee Exit. Turn south, cross over I-70 then turn west and follow the winding road. Take the gravel road headed downhill after about 2 miles. Continue a couple of miles to a fork in the road.

Highlights:

Where else can you go to show your friends a real live buffalo? The buffalo and elk herds are kept in large fenced areas that adjoin the public access areas. Tons of picnic tables, outhouses and the general trappings of a city park.

Description:

The trails aren't much, too bad - they could be. Find any of the old blocked off 4WD trails and start riding. From the fork in the road, a nice trail gains the ridge and heads northwest.

Dr. Flip says "Let's roll." You've heard it before, but it's true - warmup really is important. The capillaries in the alveoli in the lungs have to expand to pull in the needed oxygen. The capillaries in the legs have to expand to deliver the oxygen to the muscles. Until this happens, you will feel strong, but the muscles will be running in the anaerobic mode, building up a load of lactic acid that you will have to carry through the rest of the ride. Pedal easy for at least 15 minutes before you push hard.

Greenbelt Plateau

Length of Ride:

4 miles out-and-back

Ride time:

1 hour

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

100'

Type of trail surface:

Well maintained access road and good single track

Physical challenge:

Easy

Technical challenge:

Tame

Where:

Drive north on I-25 to Wadsworth Blvd. Exit on Wadsworth headed south, but at the first light, head west on Highway 128. Drive nearly to Highway 93 and park on the north side of the road.

Highlights:

Although the landscape looks pretty bleak at the start, the north end has a few trees.

Description:

The trail heads north. There is not a lot of choice here. Although there are several branches that look interesting, Boulder County is a bit more restrictive about bikers than Jefferson County, so pay attention to the signs that direct your path. The trail drops down to Marshall Road at the north end. The climb back up will bring a bead of sweat to your brow.

Dr. Flip's Tip for Carrying your Bike:

Many times, it is easier to carry your bike than it is to push it. How you carry it depends on how far and the geometry of your bike.

For short carries, simply grab the top tube and rest your wrist on your shoulder.

Put your arm under the top tube, hoist the bike on your shoulder and put your hand on the handlebars to keep them from smacking you in the face..

Hook the nose of the saddle over your shoulder.

Put the top tube across your back. Grab the stem or handlebar with one hand, the seatpost with the other (doesn't work too well in the trees).

Hogback On North Side of I-70

Length of Ride:

One mile out-and-back (more like up-and-down)

Ride time:

15 minutes

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

300'

Type of trail surface:

narrow single track

Physical challenge:

Nasty

Technical challenge:

Interesting

Description:

Arrive early at the popular Park-N-Ride on the northeast corner of I-70 and the Morrison exit? Grab your bike and take the steeply ascending trail on the east side of the parking lot. It ducks under the fence and winds its way north gradually petering out.

Dr. Flip's Tips for High Speed Cruisers:

Carry most of your weight on the pedals. Keep the pedals horizontal.

Push your rear past the rear of the seat and clamp the seat in your thighs.

Flex you elbows outward and lower your chest.

If you sit on the seat, straighten one leg and lower one pedal, your cruising days will be very short. The first unexpected bump will transmit its upward force straight through your locked knee and planted bum. You will find yourself experiencing the fear of flying.

South Table Mountain

Length of Ride:

8 miles

Ride time:

Two hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

Ride starts at 5,600', top of Table Mountain is 6,250'

Type of trail surface:

Abandoned roads and single track. Bentonite clay – stay away after a rain.

Physical challenge:

Energetic to get to the top, then pretty easy.

Technical challenge:

Tame with a few interesting rocks here and there.

Where:

Go west on I-70 to the Youngsfield Road exit. Go west on Youngsfield to the Rolling Meadows Country Club to the south. Park near the club parking lot. There are routes (easier climbs) starting at the Applewood Valley Church and The National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

Highlights:

Here is a bit of the wilderness right in the middle of town. South Table Mountain is bordered by Golden on the west, Highway 58 on the north and I-70 on the south and east. The ride to the top is only about 400' on a not-too-steep climb. Once on the top of this large mesa, a maze of trails branch in all directions. At the western edge, the overlook down into Golden is striking with evidence of activities of previous times. An old gun club's clubhouse and trap ranges invite closer investigation. Dark rock with gas pockets is evidence of the Golden Fault, which produced South Table Mountain.

Description:

Ride through the club entrance and bike south and west through opening in the fence then head straight west following the electrical poles up to the top of the mesa. About half way up you will encounter the largest poison ivy *trees* that you have ever seen. The trail is rather narrow and you have to carefully duck and thread your way around and under this glossy three leaved forest. As you near the top you will notice an old stone building perched on the edge of the small cliff above you. Once on the top of the mesa, head west to the mesa's highest rocky point overlooking Golden. There are other access trails to the top that can be gained by following the irrigation ditch east along the base of the mountain if you want to avoid the poison ivy. If its wet - go somewhere else. The high clay content of the soil and the flat poor drainage of the mesa top makes this thoroughly unpleasant. Once, in order to stay out of the tenacious clay, I tried to avoid the trails, going cross country instead. Big mistake. After patching nine cactus holes in my front tube, I ended up throwing both tubes away.

Green Mountain / Hayden Park

Length of Ride:

4 miles up 'n down. 8 mile loop. A few more miles of interconnecting trails.

Ride time:

30 minutes to the top and back. A bit over an hour for the loop.

Altitude / Elevation Gain:

Parking lot is 6,010', top is 6,855'

Type of trail surface:

4WD maintenance road to top or single track. Bentonite clay – stay away after a rain.

Physical challenge:

Energetic

Technical challenge:

Interesting

Where:

Take I-70 West to the Colfax Ave exit. Go west on Colfax, through the 6th ave intersection about a mile to Rooney Road heading south (near the Bullwhackers parking lot). Go south on Rooney Road, under I-70, past an electrical substation to a parking lot on the east side of Rooney Rd.

Highlights:

Boring! Hot! There are two trees on the entire mountain. Best prairie dog towns with attendant Prairie Falcons and coyotes shopping for dinner. The trail gains about 800' right off the bat, so it's a serious grunt. *But* - because it faces mostly south, it is the first ride to dry out. Green Mountain can be ridden all winter! Also, if you are desperate like me and have a job, Green Mountain makes a great night time ride before daylight savings time kicks in. This large elevated hump is criss crossed with trails. You cannot get lost, but you can spend several hours poking around. If it has rained recently, avoid Green Mountain like the plague. Like its brothers to the north, Green Mountain is made of bentonite. The clay adheres tenaciously to bike tires, chainstays, derailleurs and brakes. I have had to carry my bike *down* the road when the tires were so stuck that they would not turn. Some of the half million dollar homes on the north side of Green Mountain are slowly sliding downhill.

Green Mountain is a wonderful place in May and June for wildflowers. On one ride I counted 23 different varieties of wildflowers.

Description:

The free maps do not get real high grades - they are pretty worthless even if you can find one. From the parking lot on Rooney Road, go over E-470 and follow the 4WD service road which leads to a radio tower at the top. Once over E-470 note the single track coming in from the southeast. You are going to make a big clockwise circle, returning on this path. Follow the road as it turns first to the left then right, climbs a steep section and then levels out (briefly). Look off to the north side of the road for a single track headed north. Follow this sometimes narrow, sometimes buffed (depends more on the season than anything else) trail as it meanders generally north and ascends the north west corner of the mountain. You will intersect the service road near the top of the mountain. If you miss the singletrack - follow the service road. There is about 700' of elevation gain in a series of steep steps to the top. At the last switchback to the right, look north to see the single track trail intersecting.

Proceed the short distance to the very top. Stop to admire the view of Denver. As you head towards the radio towers, you begin to notice lots of trails branching off of the road. Basically turn right for a shorter ride, left for a longer ride. All of the trails wind up near the base of the mountain along Alameda Parkway to the south. You will contour along the south and southwest sides to end up near the footbridge over E-470. My favorite trail is the one that contours off to the right about 200 meters north the radio tower. Follow the flow of this trail down headed generally south until you reach the base of Green Mountain.

Take the trail west as it parallels Alameda Parkway past a couple of smaller parking lots and continue around the base of the mountain to the north, returning to your car.

Bailouts:

For a short, low intensity ride, take the trail headed southeast once over the E-470 walkway. There are 5 or 6 miles of easy but interesting out-and-back as you contour along the base of Green Mountain. A few climbs and rocky gullies will add enough excitement to keep everyone happy.

Dr. Flip's field repair school 101: When I was a kid, my skis always used to break. My mother would berate me and ask how I could possibly break yet another pair of skis. My response was usually "I donno Ma, I was just skiing along and *snap!*" Here is a list of the problems that you will probably have to deal with if you ride once or twice a week.

Flat Tires - I usually carry a spare tube (as well as a patch kit) in case of a "snakebite" puncture where the tube gets caught between the rim and a rock. This will produce a tear too big for a patch. Sometimes, its just quicker to replace the tube and fix it later at home. You need a tire spoon, tire patch kit and air pump. The new "glueless" patches work great.

Broken chain - This happens surprisingly often. You need a chain tool to push a pin out and shorten the chain by one link (no problem - don't select big front, big rear gear combination).

Brake adjustment and derailleur cable adjustment - Unscrewing the cable adjustment outward makes the sheath longer and has the effect of tightening in the inner cable.

Loose headset - new bike owners, especially aluminum bikes, take note! Your headset *will* loosen. Check for it by locking your front brake and rocking your bike forward and aft.

Matthews Winters

Length of Ride:

5 miles

Ride time:

One hour

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

Parking lot is 6,400', top of ride is 6,800'.

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track

Physical challenge:

Energetic

Technical challenge:

Tricky

Where:

Take I-70 west to the Morrison exit. Turn south on Highway 26, go under I-70 and look for the Jefferson County Open Space Parks sign on the west side of the road about 100 m south of the underpass. This is a really convenient after work ride.

Highlights:

This is one of my favorites. Not only is it convenient, but it is a tricky little devil. There isn't much here besides one figure 8 loop that adds up to about 5 miles. The trail is, as with all Jefferson County Open Space Parks, wonderfully maintained and eminently suited to single track riding. The elevation gain is only about 400' making it one of the least strenuous of the front range rides.

Description:

Grab a free map. You start at the very top of two circles connected by a common trail. Both circles are best taken counterclockwise. From the parking lot, the Red Rocks Trail will gain a bit of altitude. Check out the old cemetery near the trail junction. Continue on Red Rocks and contour along dipping through a couple of stream beds. Go up the Morrison Slide Trail. The trail switchbacks up the north side of the plateau. The switchbacks are the tricky bits. Once on the top, continue to the south end of the plateau for a nice overlook before starting down. You can see the town of Morrison with Mt. Falcon just beyond to the south, Green Mountain looms slightly higher than you to the northeast. The decent is even more rad than the ascent (that's why counterclockwise is suggested). The switchbacks seem tighter with water bars placed at the most inopportune places in the turn. At the bottom of the decent, get back on the Red Rocks Trail headed north, back towards the parking lot. You go straight up to the little saddle. Say "Moab, Moab, Moab ..." as you ride up the bit of slickrock to gain the saddle. Pause here to explore the side trail south. It only goes about 50 m to the top of the sandstone outcrop, but the view is nice and you have a perfect vantage point to watch other bikers struggle up to the saddle (about 1 in 10 make it up without pushing). After the saddle, the trail turns north and contours along the base of the plateau that is now above you. Beware of poison ivy along this stretch, there are some healthy specimens. Soon you will rejoin the trail you left. Pause at the little slickrock blob 20 meters west of the trail near the double dips. Grab your granny, lower your upper body and bike to the top. When you reach the trail intersection near the cemetery, turn east down Village Walk Trail (the Mt. Veron ruins) and hippitty hop over the water bars along the gently curving downhill.

Bailouts: Village Walk Trail loop is a 1 mile introduction to mountain biking. If you avoid the Morrison Slide Trail and the climb to the top of the plateau, the ride becomes a much easier out-and-back.

Dr. Flip's Tip for new downhillers:
Lower your seat about 3". Most Colorado rides are characterized by mile after mile of uphill, then a downhill blast. Lowering your seat will make it easier for you to keep weight on the pedals and keep the bike in front of you. If you are faced with a climb on the way back, either raise your seat or stand up to climb.

Meyer Ranch

Length of Ride:

5 miles as described, another mile of intersecting trails can be connected.

Ride time:

One hour

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

Trail starts at 7,875', highest point is 8,750'

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track

Physical challenge:

Energetic

Technical challenge:

Interesting

Where:

Drive west on I-70, turn south on E-470. Take Highway 285 west through Turkey Creek Canyon. Just before reaching Aspen Park, *immediately* at the bottom of the hill onto South Turkey Creek Road (sometimes this is a tough turn due to traffic from ahead and behind), turn left onto the side road and thence into the parking lot of Meyers Ranch.

Highlights:

Meyer's Ranch is a great summer evening ride. It is generally about 10 to 15 degrees cooler and the shade of the pine forest is welcome. For some reason, this is a kinder, gentler ride. The trail has a very respectable 1,000' elevation gain, so I don't know why it seems easy. There are only a couple of "tricky bits" near the top of the old ski hill just before the upper loop. If you feel you have done especially well, ride up Highway 285 a half mile to the hot dog (believe me - you'll know when you see it) and treat yourself to an ice cream cone. Elk are frequently seen in the evening, grazing in the meadows. In mid summer you may see a Fairy Slipper orchid if you are lucky.

Description:

Always stay left. This is not a large area, the ride will add up to about 5 miles. There is a gazebo with a picnic table about halfway up which makes a nice spot to munch a granola bar. There are some shaded and quiet picnic tables near the bottom, so if you brought your supper, go back to the car and haul it up to the picnic tables. In June, the Columbines are everywhere (they only last a few weeks though).

Keep a log of your rides - it is a powerful motivational tool to see how much more you are riding this year compared to last year.

An MBA graduate does a tricky section: Scan ahead 30 feet to develop a *strategy*. Then focus on the 2 feet ahead of your front tire to deal with the *tactical* issues. Tell the *team* the plan.

Eyes - don't focus on the obstacles - focus on the solutions.

Arms - flex the elbows outward.

Upper body - get low to the handlebars for maneuverability.

Butt - scoot back an inch to increase traction.

Legs - better pace yourself cuz we've got that cux section coming up and we want to clean it!

Vary the modality of the situation as secondary parametric effects minimize your personal comfort zone (get ready to dab).

Chimney Gulch

Length of Ride:

Two mile down-and-around or up-and-down

Ride time:

30 minutes

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

400'

Type of trail surface:

Narrow single track, semi-maintained

Physical challenge:

Easy (if you take the road back up) or nasty (if you bike back up the Trail).

Technical challenge:

Tricky

Where:

Drive west on I-70 to Highway 58 through Golden. Turn south at the last light on Highway 6. Turn west on 19th Street, bend south as it becomes Lookout Mountain Road. Drive through two prominent stone pillars and continue about ½ mile to a turnout on the south. Just as the road ascends above the rooftops, a small sign on the right announces "Chimney Gulch".

Highlights:

The ride back up is steep and traction difficult.

Description:

The trail follows an irrigation ditch for awhile until it crosses a subdivision road. Then it does some serious tight switchbacking. When you think its all over at Hwy 6, you will find a little tunnel as the trail continues down to Clear Creek. The trail surface is hard, packed sand, so it is tough to maintain traction on the way up. You can bike back up the trail or out via the gravel road. Follow the road for a ¼ mile until you can get back on Hwy 6.

Dr. Flip's Sure Fire Prescription for Pain: When you get to a difficult section of downhill trail, resist the temptation to straddle the top tube, put a foot down and scooter yourself along - get behind the saddle before you put a foot down or get off and walk your bike. How fast can you run with a bike between your legs?

Manor House Trail

Length of Ride:

5 mile out-and-back

Ride time:

One hour

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

700'

Type of trail surface:

Well maintained access road

Physical challenge:

Energetic

Technical challenge:

Mildly interesting

Where:

Drive west on I-70 to E-470 south. Exit west on the Ken Caryl Road. Follow the west side of the hogback and dogleg north to the Manor House Restaurant. Park.

Highlights:

This is a former 4WD access that is now closed to motorized traffic. There are many side trails. The signage indicates that the local subdivision (Deer Creek - "Homes in the mid 500's") has taken quite an interest in keeping people out, but the Jefferson County Open Space sign welcomes all non-motorized users.

Description:

The ride starts along the north side of the restaurant and heads west. The trail generally switchbacks a couple of times to gain the ridge you see and then heads northwest under the power lines which is as far as I went.

Dr. Flip's Field Repair 201: If you ride more, more will happen...

Brake Pad Dive - happens when a poorly adjusted pad dives under the rim creating lots of drag but no effective braking. Needs the correct sized wrench to readjust. Lacking that, muscle it back into position.

Broken cables - about once a year, a cable breaks. If it's a brake cable, no problem - you've got two anyway. If it's a derailleur cable, no problem - you're just stuck in low if it's the front, high if it's the back.

Loose handlebars - needs the right sized allen wrench, takes about 30 seconds. Riding with loose bars is very dangerous. If you have an "Ahead" style, tighten the allen screws on the *side* of the stem (the one on top sets the bearing force).

Bent Wheels - needs a spoke wrench. Seldom is a wheel bent so badly that it must be repaired on the trail.

Blown Tire - If you bend your wheel enough, the tire will rub on the brake pad. It only takes about 2 seconds for the brake pad to cut through the sidewall. Find something to cover the tear such as a branch or piece of your plastic tire patch kit box. Hold it in place as you re-install and re-inflate the tube.

Dinosaur Ridge / Dakota Ridge Trail / "The Hogback"

Length of Ride:

5 miles

Ride time:

One and a half hours.

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

The parking lot is at 6,400'. The ridge is about 400' high.

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track with lots of rocks and some sand

Physical challenge:

Energetic to nasty

Technical challenge:

Tricky

Where:

Take I-70 to the Morrison Exit, turn south on Highway 26. Go under I-70 and park on the east side of Highway 26 in the Park-n-Ride lot.

Highlights:

Dinosaur Ridge was a major source of fossils near the turn of the century when first discovered in the Morrison Formation. If you look east as you drive along Highway 26, you will see several fossil mine sites. The dinosaur tracks on the east side of the ridge is worth the trip even if you do not ride. Ride up and over Rooney Road to inspect the informative plaques. The rocks lining the west side of the road on the west side of the ridge contain many fossils in their natural state. The steep, sandy, south facing nature of the trail makes it an excellent wet day ride. The Dakota Ridge Trail is short but (very) energetic. The ride is generally a steep narrow trail on rock or rocky terrain. There are lots of opportunities for excitement (read endos, crashes, broken bits, etc).

Description:

Ride through the gate on the south end of the parking lot, and up the short service road to the trail about two-thirds of the way up this road. The trail heads south, contouring up to meet the ridge top. The ride along the top of the ridge winds among thirsty trees and inspiring rock outcrops. Soon the trail intersects Rooney Road as it crosses the ridge. The trail continues on the south side of Rooney Road, ascending the east side of the hogback and dropping down the west side to Highway 26.

If it is a wet day, avoid the service road at the beginning of the ride - it is not really gravel but sticky clay. Instead, park at the Rooney Road saddle and ride up the trail starting on the east side of the ridge at the Dakota Trail sign. Gain the top of the ridge and bike your way north until you finally overlook I-70. Going up is very technical.

Dr. Flip's Tip for Descending Tight Switchbacks: Lower the **outside** foot and point the inside knee in the direction you want to go. Take the **inside** foot off the pedal. This does two important things; the inside leg is free to dab, and the outside leg does not have to change position when the inside leg goes down. Your weight is already on the outside pedal.

North Table Mountain

Length of Ride:

7 mile loop

Ride time:

2 hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

The car is parked at about 5,500'. The highest point is 5,500'

Type of trail surface:

Narrow single track, well maintained access roads. Bentonite clay – stay away after a rain.

Physical challenge:

Energetic

Technical challenge:

Midly interesting

Where:

Go west on I-70 to Highway 58 west to Golden. Look to the north and you will see the large flat topped mesa. You will soon be up there looking down at the cars on Highway 58. Exit on Washington Street headed north. Go to Nova and turn east. Turn south on Ford, east on 1st, south on Partridge, east on Ptarmigan and it will turn into Perry. A handwritten sign welcomes you. Another entrance is located at the intersection of Wyoming and Deer Springs Lane off of Ford further north and west.

Highlights:

If you thought that South Table Mountain was wild, wait til you ride North Table Mountain. The place abounds with deer, but they are not the same variety as the White Ranch kind right across the highway - these deer start running when you are ¼ mile away. They don't see very many bikers. The mesa top is about 600' above the surrounding plains, so you have your work cut out for you. Although the trails are generally not very difficult, it is so unused that some places are pretty gnarly. Besides, most people walk up.

Description:

The trail heads generally north and angles steeply up the side of the mesa. There are many other approaches, but the two on the northwest corner are the only ones that I have found that do not involve crossing someone's fence. You will have to push your bike in several places and carry it as the trail surmounts the rimrock. On top of the mesa, there are basically two trails. An east west trail bisects the mesa. The west portion of the trail is a fine dirt road. The east end deteriorates rapidly into a rocky descent down towards the Fairmount Trail. The other trail departs north from the middle of the east west trail. This old road passes close by the radio tower and descends to what appears to be a private access point. The trail continues around the north west side of the mountain, with a spur dropping into the (very posh) horse riding stables. The trail does continue to contour around the east side of the mountain, but I did not.

Dr. Flip's Tip for getting over those pesky uphill waterbars and other obstacles: *Lift* your front tire over it, *pause* to let your back tire contact, *thrust* the bike forward with your hips and arms, *then* pedal.

Waterton Canyon to Roxborough Park

Length of Ride:

17 miles total in a loop at the end of a 6 mile out-and-back.

Ride time:

3-4 hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

The car is parked at 5,500'. The dam is at 5,800'. The top of the ridge is 6,500'.

Type of trail surface:

Well maintained access road to the dam, the grade A single track beyond.

Physical challenge:

Easy to the dam, then energetic

Technical challenge:

Tame to the dam, then interesting

Where:

Drive west on I-70 to E-470 to Wadsworth Blvd. Go south. Watch for the Waterton Canyon signs and park on the east side of the road.

Highlights:

Waterton Canyon belongs to the Denver Water Board. The access road up the canyon to Strontia Springs Dam is long, easy and sometimes crowded with hikers, fishermen and families on outings (but no traffic). The 6 mile ride along the South Fork of the Platte River is peaceful and the river is very enchanting with lots of turnouts to stop and play in the water. Waterton Canyon hosts a large number of mountain sheep, which you will probably see if you watch the canyon sides. Things changes when you begin the singletrack. There are few people, it is neither easy nor boring. You will be on the Colorado Trail for about one mile. The Roxborough loop is about 4 miles long.

Description:

Ride up the road, pass Strontia Springs Dam. As the road steepens note the road intersecting from the southeast - you will be returning on this road. When the road switchbacks to the right, continue straight and look for the Colorado Trail at the corner of the switchback. Take the Colorado Trail about 1 mile to the top of the ridge. Turn southeast at the little bench atop the ridge. Follow this trail for a couple of miles to a trail intersection. Turn left to return to Strontia Springs Dam, right to Roxborough Park boundary.

Bailouts:

The dam is a pleasant and popular gathering spot that is passed in both directions. If you ride the additional mile to the top to the ridge, it is only a 15 minute proposition to return to the dam by retracing the ascent on a very lovely trail.

Red Rocks Loop Trail

Length of Ride:

6 miles

Ride time:

2 hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

The car is parked at 6,050', the highest point is about 6,800'.

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track. Dakota Ridge is rocky and sandy.

Physical challenge:

Energetic to nasty

Technical challenge:

Tricky

Where:

Go west on I-70 to the Morrison Exit,. Turn south on Highway 26. Go past Rooney Road and the Red Rocks Park entrance to the next entrance about ½ mile further south. Turn west and park in one of the turnoffs.

Highlights:

This little loop ride can be almost easy if you stay low around Matthew Winters instead of going over the top of the plateau and take Highway 26 back to your car. The rock formations atop Dakota Ridge and along Red Rocks Trail remind one of Mecca, oops, I mean Moab.

Description:

The Red Rocks Trail leaves the road heading northwest about ¼ mile from Highway 26. The trail climbs north gently up to the south edge of Matthew Winters Park (avoid the south going trail at the intersection above the second road). Soon the trail steepens and passes under some impressive sandstone outcrops. The trail steepens some more and you reach a "T" intersection below a small saddle to the east. The aggro group will want to go west (Morrison Slide Trail), up the switchbacks to the top of the plateau. The tranquil group should continue on Red Rocks Trail east to contour below the plateau. Both trails rejoin just before entering a creek gully. Continue north, finally reaching the Matthews Winters parking lot. Go east across Highway 26 and bike up the access road to top of the ridge to gain the Dakota Trail (the awful part). Ride south along the ridge top to Rooney Road. Cross Rooney Road and pick up the trail again. After regaining the ridge top, the trail will switchback down the west side.

Bailouts:

This is a nice ride for a group of mixed ability riders. Park at Matthews and reverse the route, go south on Red Rocks Trail. Send the aggro guys up the Morrison Slide Trail to rejoin just below the slickrock saddle. Continue along the Red Rocks Trail to Highway 26. It is an easy 15 minute ride up the highway to the car. The rest can cross the highway and continue up the Dakota Ridge Trail. Another bailout at Rooney Rd is a further option.

"I'm awesome! I'm in the groove. I'm totally honed. I'm book'n. Hmm, I'm going *waaay* too fast! Ohmygod! I'll never make that turn, *I'm gonna die!*"

Dr. Flip's Tip for Max Brake Mode: Push the bike way out in front of you. This does two things; 1. lowers your center of gravity and 2. Puts maximum weight on the rear tire.

Lock the rear tire - what the hell, no sense telling you otherwise, cuz this is panic time and you're going to do it anyway. With your weight holding the rear down, the front tire is now capable of contributing a lot of stopping power without skidding or without you going over the bars. Use it.

Lookout Mountain Loop

Length of Ride:

9 mile loop

Ride time:

2 hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

The car is parked at 6,050'. The highest point on Lookout Mountain is 7,520'

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track (Apex), little used roads, narrow single track (Chimney Gulch).

Physical challenge:

Energetic

Technical challenge:

Tricky (Chimney Gulch)

Where:

Drive West on I-70 to Highway 58. Go west, through Golden. Turn south on Highway 6. Go up a hill to the first traffic light on 19th St. Turn west. Park on Lookout Mountain Road, just past the two prominent distinctive stone pillars, built in 1917 to celebrate Denver's mountain parks.

Highlights:

This ride links a series of rather obscure trails to form an exciting orienteering challenge. The ride is a giant clockwise loop starting at the bottom of Lookout Mountain. The next checkpoint is Apex Park. Apex Gulch trail leads to Lookout Mountain Road near the top. Then the singletrack Lookout Mountain Trail up and over the very top back down to Windy Saddle. Here you grab a super gnarly awful-track back down to the bottom of Lookout Mountain and your car.

Description:

OK Scouts, grab your brownies (small "b" girls - don't get excited) and let's go. Go through the gate and follow the 4WD road up towards the tanks. Bend south as the road nears the tanks and attain the next small ridge. Look for the single track under the power transmission tower sitting atop the hogback. Also try to identify the Alpine Slide and the brown water tanks near Apex Park. Follow the road as it peters out to become a trail going generally downhill. Soon you will intersect a better dirt road. Turn uphill, southwest and follow this as it doubles back on itself headed southeast under the power transmission lines.

This road soon peters out as well as it heads east along a fence and drops down again. This intersects another dirt road. You are now directly under the power transmission tower atop the hogback. Follow this dirt road about 100 meters until you are admonished to go no further at the risk of death. Look to the east 10 meters and there is the singletrack that you saw from the ridge a mile away. Follow it up the hogback headed generally south and intersect Somerset Road in the subdivision. Follow Somerset uphill to the southwest until you get to Childen. Go right on Childen, then right into the 4th Street cul-de-sac. Go to the fire hydrant and find a trail headed south. It soon ends at a small playground, but on the other side of the playground is a wide paved bike path. Follow this to the trail up Apex Gulch (if you enter the Heritage Square parking lot - you missed it by about 100 meters). Collect your orienteering badge.

Follow Apex Gulch Trail up, keeping the creek on your left. Soon you will see the houses on the ridge straight ahead. That is where you are headed. When you reach the wedge shaped one that looks like a Battle Cruiser from *The Empire Strikes Back*, you are almost at the top of Apex Gulch. You will emerge on Lookout Mountain Road. Go about 20 meters north to Colorow Road and find the Lookout Mountain Trail along side the east side of the road. This trail follows Colorow Road up to the top of Lookout Mountain and along the west side of the Jefferson County Nature Center. At the Nature Center entrance, the trail crosses the road and becomes a serious singletrack down. The trail intersects the Beaver Brook Trail in about a mile. Head east for Windy Saddle. When you reach Lookout Mountain Road again, go straight across, check your brakes and dive down the remnant of a trail (Chimney Gulch). I wouldn't waste my time trying to get up this trail, but it is almost possible to go down *Nobody* goes down Chimney Gulch

Trail - stay on the road for a much quicker and easier descent. You end up at the top of Chimney Gulch
Trail sign with your car a couple of hundred meters down the road.

Dr. Flip's Tip for getting over those pesky downhill waterbars and other obstacles: lift your front wheel enough to clear the log, lift your rear tire just before it hits the log by pulling up on the pedals. If you are using toeclips, remember to point your toes up in order to lift the bike, otherwise your feet will come out of the pedals.

Deer Creek Canyon

Length of Ride:

7 miles out-and-back with a loop on top, another mile to the top of Plymouth Mountain.

Ride time:

2 hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

Parking lot is 6,000', top of Red Mesa Loop is 7,400'

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track

Physical challenge:

Nasty

Technical challenge:

Interesting

Where:

From E-470 exit on southbound Kipling Parkway. Go with the flow as it become Ute Ave and then Deer Creek Canyon Road. About 4 miles from E-470, turn south on Grizzly Road for about a quarter mile. The Jefferson County Open Space Park is on the west side of the road.

Highlights:

One of the newest Open Space Parks with separate trails for hikers and bikers. Well, actually, bikers aren't permitted on some of the hiking trails, but the hikers have access to all of the trails. Don't fret - there's plenty to climb. Most of the trail is in the woods, so this is a nice alternative on hot sunny afternoons.

Description:

There is really only one trail. Head south from the parking lot up Plymouth Creek Trail. After about 2 miles, you can go up Plymouth Mountain or continue up Plymouth Creek Trail to Red Mesa Loop. Elevation gain is a bit over a thousand feet in both cases with a couple of very steep sections to test your traction.

Dr. Flip's Clipless Pointer.
Pointing your *toe*, together with your inside knee in the direction of an intended turn pretensions the release springs in the pedal. When things get exciting in the middle of the turn, your foot will pop out automatically and be ready to dab.

Dr. Flip is Clueless - I mean Clipless: If you ride clipless, start by loosening the clips to the minimum retention force and repeat to yourself "rotate to release, rotate to release, rotate..."

Three Sisters / Alderfer

Length of Ride:

9 mile loop with a couple more miles of interconnecting trails

Ride time:

2 hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

Car is at 7,600', to of Evergreen Mountain is 8,536'.

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track

Physical challenge:

Energetic

Technical challenge:

Interesting

Where:

Drive west on I-70 to E-470 south. Take Highway 73 west through Morrison to Evergreen. Turn south at the last stoplight in town following Highway 73. Turn west in about ½ mile on Buffalo Park Road. Follow this for about 3 miles. The Jefferson County Open Space Park sign is on the north side of the road. There is another parking lot further on complete with picnic tables, maps and restrooms.

Highlights:

The technical, yet gentle nature of this area makes it another of my favorites. It stretches the limits of the ½ hour requirement though. But it is so nice that I snuck it in anyway. The area has been expanded recently so that it has nearly doubled in size. Basically, the trails around the "Three Sisters" (three rocky knobs) are more technical and the trails up Evergreen Mountain are wide and gently graded (but nonetheless it is nearly 1,000' up).

Description:

Get a free map, there are lots of trail choices here. From the (lower) parking, the Hidden Fawn Trail is pleasant and easy, until you turn on the Sisters Trail which is steep, rocky and technical. After gaining the saddle between the sisters, make your way to the upper parking lot. Cross the highway and start up Wild Iris Loop (the field is full of them in late spring). Connect with the moderately graded Evergreen Mountain Trail West and continue up to the Summit Trail (this trail is not on the map). Go up, eat lunch, come back down. At the intersection, follow Evergreen Mountain Trail East back down to the lower parking lot.

Bailouts:

If you take the "Sisters" loop clockwise instead of counterclockwise as I have described, it is much easier.

Dr. Flip's Tip for Descending Radical Switchbacks:

Push the bike out in front of you so that you are slightly behind your seat.

Keep your outside foot on the pedal, if you put a foot down, plan on dabbing the inside foot. So straighten the outside leg and weight the outside pedal. Now you are ready to dab.

Lose all speed until you are going as slow as you comfortably can ("Maneuvering thrusters only, Scotty"). Don't lock your rear brake. If you do, your rear wheel will skid downhill, increasing the angle through which you have to turn your bike.

Turn downhill (this is the part that most people have trouble with)! Now apply heavy front brake. With the front wheel below you, it has a lot of weight on it and will effectively slow you down. You won't go over if you have your weight back behind the seat.

Wave your inside foot in the air - go ahead and laugh, but it helps!

After you have passed through the perpendicular, you can lock your rear wheel. Now a skid will help you.

Apex

Length of Ride:

6 mile loop with a several more miles of trails

Ride time:

1½ hours

Altitude / Elevation Gain:

The parking lot is 6,150', the top of Indian Mountain is 7,281'. You lose about 400' on Grubstake Trail which must be regained.

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track

Physical challenge:

Most energetic

Technical challenge:

Most interesting

Where:

Drive west on I-70 to the Morrison Exit. Go north on Highway 26 towards Golden. The entrance to Heritage Square Shopping Center is about a mile down the hill and on the west side. Stay in the lower parking lot and drive to the northern end.

Highlights

This Jefferson County Open Space Park has more trees than most, so the northern side can be pleasant on a hot day. The trails are steep and Apex Trail in Apex Gulch is pretty rocky in places. There is about 1,000' of elevation gain from the parking lot to the high point on Indian Mountain.

Description:

Ride generally west through the somewhat confusing fences and roads to the portal of Apex Gulch. The trail meets Pick N' Sledge Trail in about ¾ mile. Turn up Pick N' Sledge to a knobby overlook. Follow Grubstake Loop down and back up. This goes down a bit and into the forest before starting a serious climb back almost to the top of Indian Mountain. Go back down Grubstake Loop the way you came up for two switchbacks and take the Bonanza shortcut back down to Grubstake Loop. Bike back over a short section of trail and regain the shoulder. Take Pick N' Sledge up to

intersect the Sluice box Trail just below the summit of Indian Mountain. The trail down Sluice box is a series of challenging switchbacks. Soon you will rejoin Apex Trail and head down the gulch and back to the car. This route samples many of the trails in the park and adds up to less than 6 miles.

Another alternative is to continue up Apex Gulch until just after the wooden bridge. Then take a left headed south and gain the ridge across the creek. The trail basically follows the Apex Gulch back down but adds quite a bit of interest and distance as it winds through the woods.

Bailouts:

It's a small area with lots of shortcuts.

Dr. Flip's Field Repair 401: Sooner or later someone in your group will lodge their wheel between two big rocks and dump the bike. The result is an interesting study in the topography of a potato chip. The rim will be so badly bent that there is no hope of the wheel passing between the brake pads. Here is your chance to step forward and hero yourself. The solution is simplicity itself. First, put that pitiful spoke wrench back - we've got major surgery to perform here. Remove the wheel. Lay it on the ground and stand on the high spots. Stomp on them if you have to. Don't be gentle, dear. When you have leveled the wheel sufficiently to pass between the brake pads, use the spoke wrench to true the wheel to your satisfaction.

Waterton Canyon and Segment 1 of the Colorado Trail

Length of Ride:

33 miles out-and-back

Ride time:

6 hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

Start at 5,500', top out at 7,300', but drop down 1,200' to the Platte.

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track

Physical challenge:

Nasty

Technical challenge:

Interesting

Where:

Go west on I-70 to E-470 south (only). Go south on E-470 to Wadsworth Ave. Go south on Wadsworth to the signs on the east side of the road indicating the park entrance.

Highlights:

Waterton Canyon belongs to the Denver Water Board. The access road up the canyon to Strontia Springs Dam is long, easy and crowded with hikers, fishermen and families on outings (but no traffic). The ride along the South Fork of the Platte River is peaceful and the river is very enchanting with lots of turnouts to stop and play in the river. Waterton Canyon hosts a large number of Big Horn Sheep, which you will probably see if you watch the canyon sides. Things change when you begin the Colorado Trail. There are few people, it is not easy, not boring but it is still quite long. The Colorado Trail represents some of the state's best biking (when it's not in a wilderness area), starts here and ends up 470 miles later in Durango.

Description:

Unless you have 100 mile legs, this is going to be an out and back ride. Basically, the ride is about 6 miles to the dam, then about 10 miles of the Colorado Trail. As you ride up the access road, glance to the west and notice Strontia Springs Dam. The road steepens and at the first switchback look straight ahead to the start of the single track. The trail enters the forest and ascends the ridge the Platte River has cut through. Once atop the ridge you will continue west passing several creek gullies until the trail begins an unrelenting 5 mile climb.

After sharing about ½ mile to the trail with motorcycles, you top out on a ridge. The trail continues to contour along the north side of the mountain still heading west. Then it drops steeply down to the Platte River at Confluence Park and the picturesque abandoned South Platte Hotel. If you avoid the last couple of miles and the associated loss of 1,000', the ride makes a nice day trip. If you drop into Confluence Park, it might be nice to have shuttled a car here.

The nicest part of the trail can be accessed by riding "backwards" from Confluence Park to Strontia Springs Dam, avoiding the Waterton Canyon road. Locate the Colorado Trail about ½ mile up the South Fork of the South Platte as it climbs up the mountainside. It is *not* either of the two trails along the river.

Bailouts:

Because the ride is basically an out-and-back, you can turn back anytime. A nice intermediate destination is the ridge top after the motorcycle trail intersection.

Dr. Flip's tip for avoiding hospital air - focus on the landing - not on the jump. After all, the real excitement doesn't start until after you land.

Reynolds Park

Length of Ride:

There are 6 miles of trails.

Ride time:

2 hours

Altitude / Elevation Gain:

Lower parking lot is 7,084', the 1,000' climb is steep

Type of trail surface:

Part of Raven's Roost is a 4WD maintenance road. The rest is grade A single track.

Physical challenge:

Interesting

Technical challenge:

Tough

Where:

This one pushes the ½ hour limit, but take Highway 285 west through Aspen Park and Conifer to County Road #97, the Kennedy Gulch Road, also called the Foxton Road. After going southeast for about 5 miles you enter the park.

Highlights:

Reynolds Park is far enough out of the city that it does not get the user density that the other rides receive. The park is also tucked up in the foothills enough to stay cool in the summer. The ride up to Eagle's View is energetic but not particularly technical. It is easy to see why this was a former "getaway" during the first half of this century. The North Fork of the South Platte River cuts through beautiful granite monoliths. Check out Chair Rocks and Cathedral Spires if you have time to drive back through Foxton. There are campgrounds in this Jeffco Park (advance reservations are required, 271-5925) as well as the National Forest Top-O-The-World campground nearby.

Description:

The Raven's Roost Trail starts an aggressive climb up from the parking lot, never relenting until you have gained almost 1,000'. Take the side trip to Eagle's View and return via Oxen Draw. The Hummingbird Trail on the north side of the road is much more "user friendly" but still steep, gaining only a few hundred feet from the (upper) parking lot, losing it to cross the road then returning via Songbird Gulch to the parking lot. All of the trails in the park are quite wide and generally not too technical. However, Oxen Draw is an exception. This trail follows a creek bottom and crosses it about a dozen times. The result is a rocky trail with lots of exciting possibilities.

Bailouts:

The car is always within a few minutes.

Dr. Flip's Tip for Really Gnarly Descents:

Plant the seat in your stomach (get *waaay* back dude!).

Use both brakes. If your rear wheel locks up, ease up on it and clamp down harder on the front.

If the situation starts to deteriorate, put one foot down (keeping the other in the clip). This is the "Tripod Position" - you can practically walk your bike down.

If it really goes to hell, just let go and stand up (you can only do this if you are *behind* the saddle)!

Meyers Homestead Trail and Walker Ranch Loop

Length of Ride:

Meyers is 5 miles. The Loop is 8 miles.

Ride time:

Meyers is an hour. Loop takes about 2 hours.

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

The Loop descends twice to cross the creek, each time losing then regaining about 1,000'. Meyers is a 600' ascent.

Type of trail surface:

Meyers is 4WD maintenance road, Loop is mostly Grade A single track.

Physical challenge:

Meyers is moderate, Loop is nasty

Technical challenge:

Meyers is tame, Loop is real tricky

Where:

Psssst - hey buddy! Want to know a secret? Here's a shortcut that makes this really great Boulder ride only a half hour drive from Denver. Take I-70 west. Turn west on Hwy 58 to Golden. Turn north on Hwy 93. Go about 9 miles north to the traffic light and turn west on Hwy 72 into Coal Creek Canyon. Go up the canyon about 7 miles to the little community of Coal Creek. In the center of "town", take the only paved road on the north side, (Crescent) for about 2 miles until it ends in a "T" intersection. Turn right on this dirt road for about 1 mile. Just after crossing the railroad tracks you will see a parking lot on the east side of the road. Park. If it takes over 30 minutes to get there - sue me, but only after you've ridden it.

Highlights:

This is a popular Boulder ride which means that there may be quite a few bikers on the weekends. The ride is really first rate though and worth the price. The Walker Ranch Loop is about 9 miles of pretty technical riding including about a quarter mile of portage. Meyers Gulch is a 5 mile out-and-back ride that is a moderate grade most of the way ending in a nice overlook into Boulder Canyon, Sugarloaf Mountain and beyond to the Continental Divide. There are many old ruins of the Walker Ranch homestead and the Meyers sawmill. Maps are at some of the trailheads.

Description:

The ride is easiest if done counterclockwise which is the way that you will naturally flow into the trail. Take Crescent Meadows Trail out of the parking lot headed downhill to the east. The trail goes generally down for about 3 miles to South Boulder Creek where you must dismount and carry your bike down the tough bit. Don't put your bike down when you get to the bottom because you have to carry it over a couple of small boulder fields to a bridge over the creek. The Eldorado Canyon Trail is now an abandoned 4WD road which ascends steeply. After three "dipsy doodles" watch for Columbine Gulch Trail on the left. Ascend this lovely (technical) singletrack to the top of a ridge (if you miss the Columbine Gulch Trail you will arrive at a parking lot on Bison Road). Exit the loop trail system at the next parking lot where the descending trail becomes South Boulder Creek Trail. Go out to the paved Flagstaff Mountain Road. Follow it uphill (north) for about ¼ mile and enter the Meyers Gulch trail on the west side of the road. This is about 5 miles out and back. Go back to the parking lot that you left and take the South Boulder Creek Trail down to (guess what!) South Boulder Creek - and a really pleasant spot for a picnic. After crossing the creek you ascend back to your parking lot.

Bailouts:

Bike out to the road and continue along for about ¼ mile to the South Boulder Creek Trail headed down (north). Bike up the other side of South Boulder Creek to the paved road to Meyers Homestead Trail. Although you go down and up about 1,000' it is not particularly technical and a lot shorter.

Dr. Flip's Tips on Clips:
First there were pedals.
Racers would tape or tie
their feet to the pedal.
Then toeclips became *de
rigueur*. So what do you
call a toeclip that you
cannot see *Clipless!* Make
no mistake - you are now
even more firmly attached
than ever.

Golden Gate Canyon State Park

Length of Ride:

8 mile loop

Ride time:

2 hours

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

The car is 7,700'. The top of Windy Peak is 9,141.

Type of trail surface:

Good single track to gnarly creek bottom.

Physical challenge:

Energetic

Technical challenge:

Tricky

Where:

Drive west on I-70 to Highway 58 towards Golden. Go through Golden to the last traffic light and turn north on Highway 93. After about a mile, you will see the Golden Gate Canyon State Park sign directing you to turn west on Golden Gate Canyon County Road #70. Drive about 15 miles.

Highlights:

There is an entrance fee that you must pay at the southern entrance of the park. The park is not heavily used by mountain bikers, so once you get away from the road, you will be pretty undisturbed by other users. There are 60 miles of trails making this an all day kind of place. The trails have a unique marking system. Each trail is named after an indigenous animal and the trail marker is the footprint - but that is not all. The background (circle, square, diamond) denotes the difficulty of the trail. There are several camping options, ranging from car camping to back country camping to back country shelters. Call 470-1144.

Zen and the Art of True Wheels. Riding the tougher trails will inevitably result in bent rims. Truing your rims is easy and is one of those therapeutic exercises that eases the mind. Note that the spokes go to alternate sides of the hub. Find the most out-of-true spot on your rim by noting where it rubs on the brake pad. Loosen the spoke going to the hub on the same side as the brake pad one turn and tighten the spoke on the side away from the brake pad. Simple! "Tighten" means screwing the nipple down the threaded spoke towards the hub. As you level out the worst spots, tighten your brake cable to bring the pads in closer as you adjust the spoke nuts in finer increments.

Description:

I tried the eastern end loop in the park, starting at Ranch Ponds on the Eagle Trail to the Buffalo Trail to the Mountain Lion Trail. When Mountain Lion Trail drops into Deer Creek on the North side of the loop the going becomes a rocky, rooty, generally gnarly creek bottom that will test your abilities. I fell off about 6 times in this 3 mile stretch. Staying on the Windy Peak ridge might be a better idea.

Mt Falcon

Length of Ride:

Up to the first shelter and back is over 5 miles. "Every Stinking Inch" can be ridden as 3 loops with very little backtracking and adds up to 12 miles. A loop from the upper parking lot to the Walker Ranch ruins and Eagle Eye shelter is about 2 miles.

Ride time:

If you make it to the shelter up Castle Trail in less than 30 minutes, you get a prize.

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

Lower parking lot is 6,000', the first shelter is 7,250' (1,250' gain). Eagle Eye Shelter is another 500' up. The tower on Tower Trail is 7,850'.

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track.

Physical challenge:

A ride to the Walker Ruins from the upper parking lot is easy. The Castle Trail is nasty

Technical challenge:

A ride to the Walker Ruins from the upper parking lot is tame. Old Ute and Devil's Elbow Trails are tricky.

Where:

There are two parking lots for Mt Falcon. To get to the lower lot, take I-70 west to E-470. Go south on E-470 to the Morrison Exit. Go west, through Morrison and turn south at the last traffic light, staying on Highway 8. Go up the hill and look for the Jefferson County Open Space Park, Mt Falcon sign at the top of the hill. Turn west on the gravel road (Forest) and north at the first opportunity (Vine).

To get to the upper parking lot, take Highway 285 west up Turkey Creek Canyon. Turn north at Parmalee Gulch County Road #120. Go a couple of miles and turn right on Picuris Road and right on Nambo Road.

If you see direction signs contradicting these directions - follow the signs.

Highlights:

If you start at the bottom, Mt. Falcon is one tough sucker. Castle Trail climbs steadily up 1,200'. The steady grade is actually a boon, because there are no leg burning "steps". The Walker Ranch ruins are an interesting historical destination. There is a flock of wild turkeys that frequent the area in the evenings. I have seen elk in the morning. Castle Trail is moderately well exposed and the drainage is good enough to make it ride-able most of the way up during the winter. Eagle's Eye Shelter is seldom crowded and worth the effort to get there. Mt Falcon has enough trails and size to keep you busy all day. On days when its not crowded, the downhill back down Castle Trail is among the best around (but please stop and give way to the uphill riders and walkers!).

Description:

Lock your car, take one of the free maps and two water bottles. Castle Trail starts out gently, deceiving you into thinking that you have an easy ride ahead. Things change quickly. The trail enters a gully and climbs steeply out over a series of water bars. After you are out in the open, look up to the west and you will see the trail switchbacking up the mountain. Go up. Keep going up. A short level section is encountered about halfway up with some nice shade from the pines. From here, the trail climbs steadily south. When you enter the woods again, you have only one switchback to go. At the "top" (there is still more up to go, but it isn't nearly as steep) is a nice little gazebo. Wipe the sweat off, get your breath back as quickly as possible so that you can greet all of the knackered bikers huffing and puffing up the hill with a big smile. Continue on the Castle Trail to the Walker Ranch ruins (the "castle") and past to the upper parking lot. Off to the south is Eagle's Eye Shelter, a vantage point overlooking the valley to the southwest. You can see Highway 285 heading towards Conifer and the Indian Hills area.

If you start at the upper parking lot, there are several easy going trails, but watch out for Parmalee Gulch Trail. This one takes you into the valley below Falcon's Roost and the big burn area then back up to the

ridge to the east. Meadow Trail to Old Ute Trail to Devils Elbow and back has some steep but short climbs mixed together with some nice technical challenge. Tower Trail over the top accesses a lookout tower. The upper parking lot has a pleasant picnic area but can be crowded on weekends.

Bailouts:

A combination of easy and hard riding can be accessed from the upper parking lot by combining a ride to the Walker Ranch ruins with excursions down Parmalee Gulch, Devil's Elbow, Two Dog Trail and Walker's Dream. The group can rejoin at the trail intersections. Finish with a ride across Meadow Trail back to the car.

Dr. Flip's Humble Tip - Feeling cocky? So was I one winter day at Mt. Falcon. I was riding strong up the Castle Trail and saw another biker ahead. "Catchum." I said to myself. This guy was no slouch, but near the top the gap narrowed. I knew that the snow would make the tricky bits on the last switchback really hard. I was right, neither of us could clean the rocks. But when I caught up with Rex Patrick, I felt no joy of victory, simply the greatest admiration, watching him wrestle his bike over the snow covered rocks with only one leg!

Dr. Flip's tip for Bunny Hoppers: Try it. You will quickly discover that this is impossible, it is just a ruse to make you feel inadequate and uncoordinated. But try it again, and again, and again and then you will think (just for a second) that this might be conceivable.

Start on a hard surface. Lean up against a wall or car to get your toeclips. Stand on the pedals. Ready?

Both brakes on and weight back, now jerk the front wheel off the ground an inch or so. Keep popping it until you fall off.

When you can hop the front wheel for 20 or 30 seconds without falling off, weight forward and start hopping the back wheel (only). Remember, lift with your feet.

Set up for a really big hop and lift both wheels simultaneously off of the ground while turning the bike. (Only sturdy mountain bike rims can take this without turning into potato chips.)

Pretty soon (actually, incredibly soon, once you believe its possible), you can remain stationary, bouncing like an idling spaceship.

So now, when you are totally honed and cooking down a trail and come upon a rock that would have blasted you into outer space, just say to yourself "No problem" and hop it.

Elk Meadows

Length of Ride:

The ride around the meadow is just over 5 miles. "Every Right Turn" is over 11 miles. A couple more miles of interconnecting trails can be added.

Ride time:

If you can get to the top in an hour you can beat me.

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

Lowest point 7,600', top of Bergen Peak is 9,708'. Bring your friends from New York, hammer to the top and watch them feint.

Type of trail surface:

All first class single track.

Physical challenge:

Meadow is easy to energetic, the rest is nasty

Technical challenge:

Meadow is mildly interesting, the rest is tricky

Where:

Drive west on I-70 to the El Rancho exit. Go south through Hiwan and Bergen Park to the Elk Meadows Jefferson County Open Space Park on the west side of the road. There is another parking lot if you continue to the next right and go about a mile on Stagecoach Road.

Highlights:

This is a very nice all day area. It is high enough so that it is relatively cool in the summertime. The view from the top of Bergen Peak looks out over the lower foothills and beyond to the plains. Look west towards the Mt. Evans massif. Pike's Peak stands out to the south. The ride up to the top of Bergen Peak is rugged and a thorough workout gaining over 2,000' of elevation from the lower parking lot. The 37 switchbacks to the top contribute a technical seasoning to this ride. The ride suggested passes through Jefferson County Open Space, Denver Mountain Parks space and Colorado Division of Wildlife area - glad you guys got it together! As the name implies, elk frequently graze in the lower meadows.

Description:

Get the map, two water bottles and dust off your granny gear - you'll need it. The general plan is a counter-clockwise circumambulation (circumcycluation?) of the park. Head up Meadow View Trail to Too Long Trail. Switchback after switchback leads to the Bergen Peak Trail (headed up of course) with still more switchbacks. The view from the top is outstanding. Far to the east you can see Denver's infamous DIA. After a long pause at the peak, return to the intersection, turn south on Too Long Trail back down to Meadow View. Wend your way back to the car via any of the trails in the meadow.

Bailouts:

The trails through the meadow are all pleasant and rather smooth. If you stay low, it is a none-to-shabby ride from the upper parking lot, around the meadow and back. The pleasant, wide and mostly obstacle free trails make an ideal first time mountain bike experience, offering enough uphill to give the newcomer a workout and the likelihood of seeing some wildlife to hold their interest.

White Ranch

Length of Ride:

The ride up to the intersection of Longhorn and back down is over two miles of tough climbing. "Take every right turn" will add up to nearly 14 miles of the best of White Ranch in a counterclockwise circumculation. Many more interconnecting trails exist.

Ride time:

30 minutes to all day long.

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

1750' up the Belcher Hill Trail. Longhorn descends 500', Rawhide descends 300', both of which have to be biked back up. Lower parking lot is 6150', top of Belcher Hill is 7900' (1750' elevation differential).

Type of trail surface:

Parts of Belcher Hill, Sawmill and Rawhide are semi-maintained 4WD for Jeffco maintenance vehicles. All other trails are grade A single track. Mustang is the most technical.

Physical challenge:

Nasty

Technical challenge:

Tricky

Where:

White Ranch has two entrances. If you start at the lower one, you have *lots* of elevation to gain. If you go to the upper one, the trails are almost easy (well, no, I don't think any of the trails at White Ranch are easy).

To get to the upper parking lot, take I-70 West to Highway 58 to Golden. Go through Golden and turn north on Highway 93 (the last traffic light). Go about a mile to the Golden Gate Canyon Park sign. Turn west on this county road number 70. Go about 4 miles the Crawford Gulch County Road #57. The parking lot is towards the east.

To get to the lower lot, follow the above instructions but pass Golden Gate Canyon turnoff. Proceed north on Highway 93 another mile to the Jefferson County White Ranch sign at 56th Ave. Take this road west for about a mile and find the parking lot tucked between the signs admonishing you to stay out of the private ranch on the right and not to come near the gun club on the left.

Highlights:

White Ranch is big. This can easily be an all day destination without having to retrace your steps. There are two camping areas, each about a mile from the upper parking lot. There seems to be enough bears around that the upper campground has warnings posted. Camping is free but you must pick up a permit in Golden (business hours, 700 Jefferson Parkway, Suite 100, phone 271-5925). In the evenings you will probably see deer. In the fall, I have heard elk. That black guy you see with tassels out the top of his long ears is called an Abert Squirrel. If you start at the lower parking lot, White Ranch is the toughest ride around.

Description:

Saddle up with two water bottles and your granny gear. Check out the bulletin board for the latest official instructions on what to do in case you have to discuss trail usage with a mountain lion. Grab a map. The first half mile is fun, dodging through boulders on the sandy Belcher Hill Trail. After the second bridge over the creek, you get your first taste of the real White Ranch. Very steep and moderately long uphill climbs are interspersed with very long and moderately steep uphill climbs. After a gnarly rocky section look for the Longhorn trail branching off the main (Belcher Hill) trail. Take the Longhorn, past the Mustang Trail intersection and the Leaning Tree (Leaning Tree does not lean - *you* lean up against it as you gasp for air) to the Shorthorn cutoff. I heartily recommend the Shorthorn cutoff. If you follow the Longhorn, you lose over 500' hard earned feet that have to be regained. Watch for deer in the evening. They are abundant in this part of the park. The Shorthorn contours north and west along the mountainside until it rejoins the Longhorn trail. Follow the Longhorn up to the middle parking lot. Contour along the Sawmill

trail back to the Belcher Hill trail and follow the Belcher Hill trail up to the top. Congratulations - you have gained nearly 1,800'. The Mustang trail back down follows the west edge of the park in a wooded draw. This trail is not very popular (means you're on your own) and rather technical. You will pass over Belcher Hill trail and end up by Leaning Tree. From here it's a high speed blast back to the car with the only difficulties being getting out of the creek and avoiding a crash in the rocks in the sandy snakey section.

Dr. Stephen Hawkings' Mountain Bike Tip: In the area of a severe gravity well such as a black hole or White Ranch, the space-time plane becomes distorted. The effect of this distortion is to shrink the event horizon to as little as 2 to 3 feet in front of the front tire during the climb up. However, during the descent the opposite effect takes place, stretching the event horizon as much as 100 feet ahead. Small geophysical anomalies, mainly in the space plane of the trail continuum, even at this distance can have disastrous effects unless the rider is constantly probing the edge of the event horizon and adjusting his spatial trajectory accordingly.

Dr. Flip's Short Trip Kit -
never leave the car without it!
Spare tube
Tire lever
"Glueless" patch
I just load up my pockets,
figure I can borrow a pump.

If you start at either the upper or middle parking lot, take the Rawhide Trail into the northwestern corner of the Park. Although not as steep once you have gained the upper reaches of the park, The Rawhide Trail still has a bit of a kick to it.

Bailouts:

The easiest ride at White Ranch is starting from the middle parking lot, down Rawhide following the maintenance road to Wrangler's Run. Follow this downstream intersecting Rawhide again in about ½ mile. Go north (left) on Rawhide. Continue back to the car. This is about a 5 mile loop through my favorite part of White Ranch - its cool from the shade of the forest and less traffic than the rest of the trails.

Dr. Flip has had to push Ol' Mutt back to the car on several occasions. He has also gotten cold, hungry and thirsty while riding. Here is my "kit" list for longer trips.

Waterproof matches, actually a couple of kitchen matches wrapped in toilet paper and soaked in wax, small flashlight, insect repellent.

Water resistant nylon windbreaker & balaclava

Energy bars & Iodine tablets for water purification

Tire patch kit, 2 spare tubes, tire pump, chain tool, jackknife, allen wrenches, 10 mm wrench, small tube of chain oil, extra crank bolt.

All of this fits nicely into a medium sized seat pack with room for lunch (and I have used every item - except the matches).

Beaver Brook

Length of Ride:

10 to 20 miles of out-and-back depending on how far you push it (literally).

Ride time:

4 hours to all day

Altitude/Elevation Gain:

The trail contours along at about 7,000'

Type of trail surface:

Grade A single track deteriorating to narrow single track with several portages.

Physical challenge:

Nasty

Technical challenge:

Real Tricky

Where:

Drive West on I-70 to Highway 58. Continue through Golden. Turn south on Highway 6. Go up a hill and turn west at 19th St. Go uphill and turn south as the road becomes Lookout Mountain Road through two prominent distinctive stone pillars. After a couple of switchbacks, the road levels out. Park in the large gravel turnout on the west side of the road before the next series of switchbacks. If you enter the trees, you have gone too far. This is also known as Windy Saddle.

Highlights:

The Beaver Brook Trail is the only "Gonzo" trail that I have to offer. There are a couple of places, nay - *several* places where you carry your bike instead of vice versa. This is a really obscure trail with few other users so you're on your own. Although you can look down on Highway 6 in Clear Creek Canyon to the north and I-70 and the Genesee Hills homes are just over the ridge to the south of you, the feeling is one of remoteness. Its nice. I guess its all relative - Beaver Brook is near the top of Jacque's "Most Hated Trails" list.

Description:

At the trailhead, a new map has been installed, but that just shows Beaver Brook heading off into the sunset after about a mile. Soon after starting you will encounter the first of two boulder fields that you must portage (carry - not push) your bike through. Not bad, maybe 50 meters each. The trail is rather rustic in places which means that you have to carry your bike around some "cliffettes" and push in quite a few more. The trail has mile markers nailed to trees regularly at first, then less frequently. After about 6 miles you cross a 4WD road. If you take this road south you can escape. Go north on the 4WD road a short distance to regain the trail as it continues on. After about 14 miles you will find yourself about 2/3 of the way down into Clear Creek Canyon facing the prospect of bushwhacking the rest of the way down to Clear Creek and Highway 6 or continuing steeply back up to the top of the ridge to the south where the ride ends after a few more miles in the Denver Genesee Mountain Park at the Chief Hosa Exit of I-70.

Bailouts:

This is the only trail where I have almost had to spend the night out. One night after work Jacque was busy, White Ranch was closed so I decided to go exploring. I had seen the Beaver Brook Trail sign and read that it was a short (har har) trail. After glancing at the old weathered wooden map I expected 0.6 miles of riding and return. After several miles, I concluded that someone with a sense of humor had carved the decimal point into the wooden map and maybe it was a 6 mile trail. When I passed the 13 mile sign it was getting late so I decided to bail out. The trail descends at this point to a small feeder stream into Clear Creek. I bushwhacked down the stream to find myself between Tunnel 2 and Tunnel 3 of Highway 6. Clear Creek is a misnomer; it is neither clear nor is it a creek. It would qualify as a river in any other place. Highway 6 is on the other side. After trying 3 times in the lowering gloom to get across, I had visions of Rocky Mountain Rescue ferrying me and my bike across in their little inflatable raft on tomorrow's 6 o'clock news. No Way! I finally floundered across near the downstream side of Tunnel 2. This left several miles of riding in the dark back to the car with long since empty water bottles.

The Last Ride

Jacque said "Let's buy mountain bikes." I said "Nah, we'd ride them a couple of times, then they would gather dust and then I would have to sell them."

"Buy mountain bikes." She said.

So we bought two. We loved it. We loaded them in the car and took them everywhere. We biked trails in Utah, Montana, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Nevada, Montana, Idaho, Alberta, British Columbia and New Zealand. We especially enjoyed our new excuse to get out into the Colorado mountains, to see the birds, the flowers and the animals. Jacque loved watching the deer. In a way I was right because by the end of the first summer I bought a new bike and did have to sell the first one.

We spent every summer weekend and many weekday evenings on our bikes - it was exercise in its most concentrated form. Soon we were both more fit than ever before in our lives. Biking became a lifestyle. Then one day Jacque said "Take me for one last ride."

We drove to the top of Mount Falcon and rode the easy trails to the ruins. She was so weak that I had to ride beside her and push her up the gentle grades. We stopped to sit on a rock in the sun surrounded by a dusting of early October snow. It was a cold. We could see a Steller's Jay in the treetops and watched some deer foraging in the snow. I like to think they came just to say good bye.

Jacque died two days later. At her memorial service one of our close friends told us how her 7 year old daughter asked if Jacque had her bike with her in Heaven. Yes, I think she does. I've been back to that rock. The jay is gone. The deer are gone. But most of all, Jacque is gone. Before she died, I told Jacque I would put together a little book of the trails that we discovered and the tricks that we learned so that others might benefit from the delightful times that we shared and wonderful gift that she had left for me. Jacque liked that.

I spread her ashes in a mountain meadow filled with Elephant Heads and Monks Hoods that grew along one of our favorite high country trails. I am sure the deer visit her every day.

Happy trails, gentle sweetheart.