



# The Alpine Loop

## Back Country Byway



## Map & Guide

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

## Contact Us

### Bureau of Land Management

Gunnison Field Office: (970) 642-4940

### U.S. Forest Service

Columbine Ranger District: (970) 884-2512

Gunnison Ranger District: (970) 641-0471

Norwood Ranger District: (970) 874-6600

Ouray Ranger District: (970) 240-5300

### Ouray Chamber Resort Association

Visitor Information Center:

(970) 325-4746 • (800) 569-1876

[www.ouraycolorado.com](http://www.ouraycolorado.com)

### Silver Thread

Alpine Loop Interpretive Center:

(970) 944-2527 • (800) 569-1874

[www.lakecity.com](http://www.lakecity.com)

### Silverton Area Chamber of Commerce

Visitor Information Center:

(970) 387-5654 • (800) 752-4494

[www.silvertoncolorado.com](http://www.silvertoncolorado.com)

### Telluride Area Visitor Information

(970) 728-3041 • (888) 605-2578

[www.visittelluride.com](http://www.visittelluride.com)

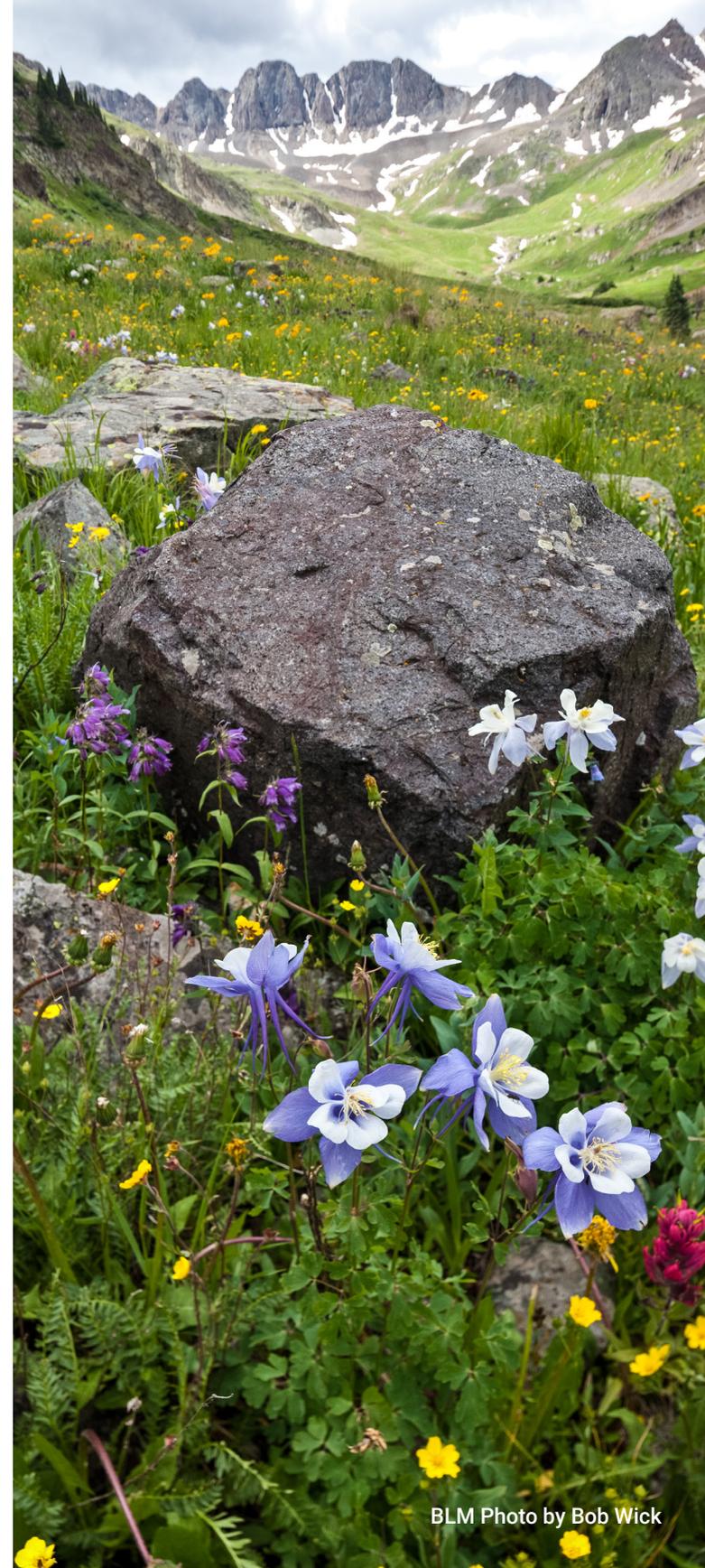
The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages more than 8.3 million acres of public lands and more than 27 million acres of mineral estate in Colorado. BLM lands in Colorado range from alpine tundra, colorful canyons and mesas in the southwest, to rolling sage covered hills in the northwest. The BLM has activities and programs for all public land users to enjoy. Visit [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov) to learn more about your public lands.

### Accessibility

The BLM is dedicated to ensuring that everyone has an equitable opportunity to access their public lands by providing access to facilities, programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. To learn more visit [www.blm.gov/accessible-recreation](http://www.blm.gov/accessible-recreation).

BLM/CO/GI-23/006

Cover Photo by ©Jerry Sintz

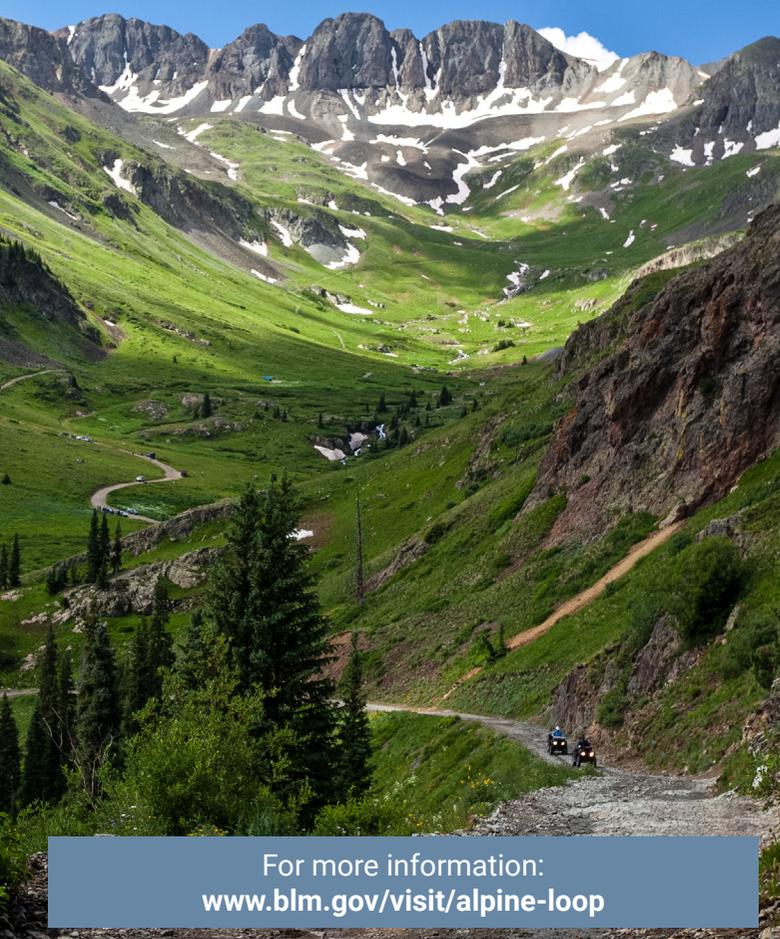


BLM Photo by Bob Wick

# The Alpine Loop Back Country Byway Off-Highway Vehicle Guide

Welcome to the Alpine Loop Back Country Byway. This often rugged road winds through the spectacular scenery of the San Juan Mountains, connecting the communities of Lake City, Silverton and Ouray. Managed for high-clearance vehicles and demanding a leisurely pace, the 65-mile loop provides the chance to slow down and experience the hard rock mining history of the area. Most travel routes are available by full size 4x4s, though utility terrain vehicles, all-terrain vehicles and motorcycles are popular modes of transportation.

Tackling the loop in its entirety is easily an all-day event. However, the main loop is only part of the experience; miles of designated side routes allow visitors to either take a short tour or extend their trip to multiple days.



For more information:  
[www.blm.gov/visit/alpine-loop](http://www.blm.gov/visit/alpine-loop)

BLM Photo by Bob Wick



## Safety

- Make sure you are not the only one who knows your travel plans; give yourself more time than you think you need.
- Do your homework and research before you begin your trip. Know your routes and destination.
- Know how far you are going and where to stop for gas.
- Make sure you have enough water, fuel, rest and experience to make it to your destination.
- Know your abilities: if you have to ask yourself if your “expertise” is enough to negotiate a harder trail, it probably isn’t.
- Many of the historical sites contain mining passages and buildings—DO NOT enter them. These structures are not stable and may collapse.
- Not all of the land along the Alpine Loop is public; respect private property.
- Electronics and wireless devices DO NOT work in most areas within the Alpine Loop—download or print maps, destination and emergency contact information.

**In the event of an emergency, dial 911 or contact the Sheriff’s office:**

Hindsale County	(970) 944-2291
Ouray County	(970) 325-7272
San Juan County	(970) 387-5531
San Miguel County	(970) 728-1911

## Tread Lightly

The Alpine Loop passes through one of the most scenic and fragile regions of the country. The alpine vegetation is incredibly vulnerable to damage by vehicle traffic and can take decades to recover.

To preserve this unique landscape for your next trip, or the trips of your grandchildren, please stay on designated routes and follow the Tread Lightly Ethics.

## Stay Out, Stay Alive

Part of the attractiveness of the Alpine Loop is the rich mining history of the region. Along with the rustic buildings and captivating stories lies danger in the form of unstable structures in mine shafts and mine openings. These features pose many threats (building collapse, fall hazards, low air quality, etc.). The words to live by in this area are: “Stay Out, Stay Alive.”

## Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are non-renewable and include historic and prehistoric artifacts, structures, sites and materials important for their irreplaceable values.

When you visit a historic site, follow these simple steps to help ensure its preservation.

- Be respectful to the area.
- Stay on established trails and roads when riding or driving.
- Be careful around historic buildings; they are not stable.
- Do not camp, smoke or build campfires within 150 feet of historic buildings.
- Keep pets leashed while visiting these sites.
- Avoid eating near the sites— animals and insects can damage resources.
- Do not remove any of the artifacts you find.
- Do not deface the buildings (trying to remove graffiti could do more harm than good).
- Do not enter historical structures.
- Do not camp or build campfires within 800 feet of Animas Forks Historic Site.

Report looting and vandalism to BLM Law Enforcement at (970) 642-4940 and the Colorado State Patrol at (970) 249-4392.



BLM Photo by Bob Wick

## Starting in Silverton?

### Short Trip (about two hours)

- Mayflower Mill
- Howardsville (formerly Bullion City)
- Minnie Gulch and Maggie Gulch

### Half-day trip (about four to six hours)

- Eureka (2WD accessible)
- Animas Forks (2WD accessible)
- Scenic loop through Gladstone, Hurricane Pass and California Gulch
- Historic Loop through Placer Gulch and Picayune Gulch

For more information:  
[www.silvertoncolorado.com](http://www.silvertoncolorado.com)

## Starting in Lake City?

### Short trip (about two hours)

- Pike Snowden Cabin
- Capitol City
- Lake San Cristobal

### Half-day trip (about four to six hours)

- Whitmore Falls
- Rose's Cabin
- Scenic and historic route through Engineer Pass to Mineral Point
- Scenic and historic route through Cinnamon Pass to Animas Forks
- American Basin

For more information:  
[www.lakecity.com](http://www.lakecity.com)

## Starting in Ouray?

### Short trip (about two hours)

- Camp Bird
- Yankee Boy Basin

### Half-day trip (about four to six hours)

- Yankee Girl Mine
- Corkscrew Gulch
- Gladstone
- Poughkeepsie Gulch (This is extremely rugged terrain. Extensive experience handling a vehicle in rough conditions is demanded. A high-clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle is required, and a winch is almost mandatory. If you have limited or no experience with traveling in steep and rugged terrain, please use the Engineer Pass route.)
- Lake Como

For more information:  
[www.ouraycolorado.com](http://www.ouraycolorado.com)

## Rules of the Road

- Uphill traffic has the right-of-way, but common courtesy works best.
- Motorized vehicles must stay on designated routes as depicted on this map.
- When traveling the Alpine Loop Back Country Byway, clockwise travel is recommended.
- Check with local cities and counties for additional regulations.

Before your adventure begins, familiarize yourself with Colorado's Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Program, and its related information and brochures, to ensure your safety and enjoyment as a responsible rider.

Registering a new vehicle, renewing a registration and purchasing use permits for out-of-state vehicles help fund trail maintenance and construction, trailheads, parking areas, trail signs, maps, and land acquisition. All OHVs operated on **designated OHV routes or trails** in Colorado must display a current registration sticker from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife OHV Program.

All OHVs and motor vehicles with a valid license plate must also display a current OHV use permit sticker when traveling on designated OHV trails in Colorado.

OHVs include motorcycles, dirt bikes, UTVs, ATVs, and dune buggies that are operated on public land or trails in Colorado.



Photo by ©Jerry Sintz



BLM Photo by Bob Wick

## High Tundra Weather

Alpine tundra occupies high-mountain summits, slopes and ridges above timberline. The weather and climate are more dynamic and severe:

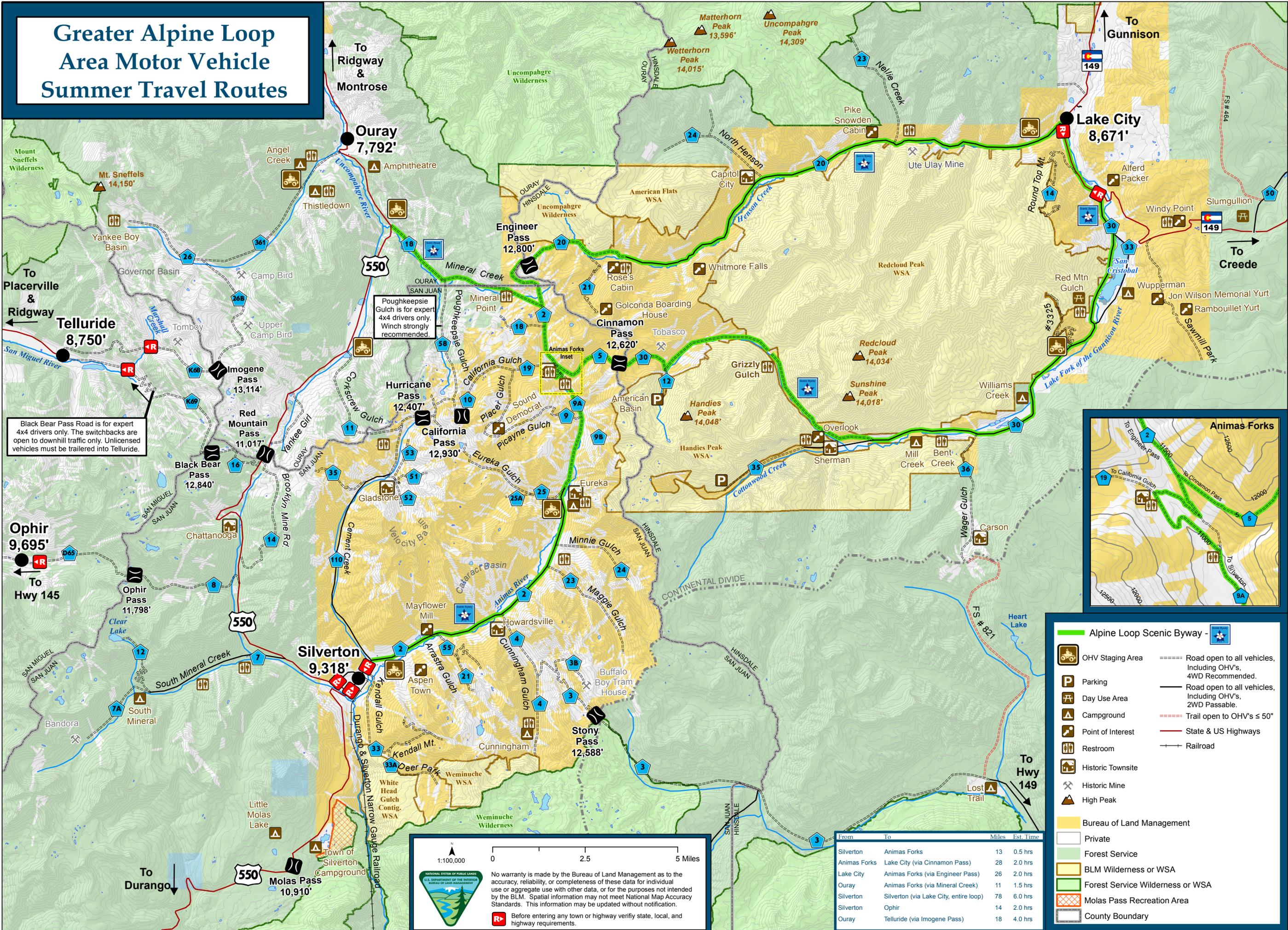
- The air is thinner, making every activity more difficult.
- The air gets colder as the elevation increases.
- High winds are common above the timberline.
- There is no shelter from the sun, wind or precipitation.

## Designated Routes and Resource Protection

The Alpine Loop's natural resources (such as vegetation and wildlife) are susceptible to human impact. One person leaving the designated route could cause damage that takes decades to repair—others doing the same compounds that effect.

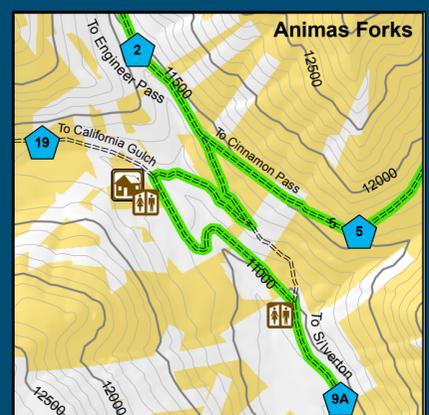
Adventure and exploration are exciting and invigorating, but don't get carried away. Blazing a new trail could result in legal action and a hefty fine in addition to the damage it causes.

# Greater Alpine Loop Area Motor Vehicle Summer Travel Routes



Black Bear Pass Road is for expert 4x4 drivers only. The switchbacks are open to downhill traffic only. Unlicensed vehicles must be trailed into Telluride.

Poughkeepsie Gulch is for expert 4x4 drivers only. Winch strongly recommended.



From	To	Miles	Est. Time
Silverton	Animas Forks	13	0.5 hrs
Animas Forks	Lake City (via Cinnamon Pass)	28	2.0 hrs
Lake City	Animas Forks (via Engineer Pass)	26	2.0 hrs
Ouray	Animas Forks (via Mineral Creek)	11	1.5 hrs
Silverton	Silverton (via Lake City, entire loop)	78	6.0 hrs
Silverton	Ophir	14	2.0 hrs
Ouray	Telluride (via Imogene Pass)	18	4.0 hrs

1:100,000  
0 2.5 5 Miles

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Before entering any town or highway verify state, local, and highway requirements.