

Colorado River Headwaters Byway

Dropping 1,700 feet in elevation from end to end, the Colorado River Headwaters Byway follows the Colorado past reservoirs and lush ranchlands, and through narrow canyons flanked by the railroad. Wildlife abounds and access to miles of public land offers year-round recreation and views of mountain landscapes and geology.



Length: 69 miles / 110.4 km

Time 90 minutes to drive or three
to to six hours to enjoy this

Allow: byway

Local Information

**Grand Lake Area Chamber of
Commerce**

970-627-3402

**Greater Granby Chamber of
Commerce**

970-887-2311

1-800-325-1661

Send E-mail

Visitor Services



Camping

Camping services are available through Rocky Mountain National Park, Arapaho National Recreation Area, and Pioneer Park in Hot Sulphur Springs.



Food

There are places to buy food along the byway.



Gasoline

Gasoline is available.



Information

Visitors can obtain byway information at the Grand Lake, Granby, and Kremmling Chambers of Commerce, as well as at the Kaufmann House Museum in Grand Lake, the Pioneer Village Museum in Hot Sulphur Springs, and the Heritage Park Museum in Kremmling. Byway brochures are available at the U.S. Forest Service and BLM offices, as well as at recreation/tour businesses located at Rancho del Rio and State Bridge. In addition, many businesses along the route offer visitor information.



Lodging

Overnight lodging is available along the byway.



Phone

Public phones are available along the byway.



Restrooms

There are toilet facilities along the byway.



Retail

There are places to shop along the byway.

Special Considerations

The road between Kremmling and State Bridge is a gravel road and offers limited visitor services. This road is not suitable for buses or large RVs.

A fishing license is required for people 16 years or older.

Do not feed or try to touch any wild creature.

Always watch for animals crossing the road. Deer and elk are seldom alone; if you see one animal cross the road, look out for others that may follow.

From the lower boundary of Byers Canyon to Troublesome Creek (five miles west of Kremmling), fishers may use flies and lures, catch and release only, meaning all trout must be returned to the water immediately upon the catch.

Fishing is allowed on public water, and even if the access is from public waters, *permission must be obtained in order to fish on private waters.*

The entire route is accessible year-round. US Highways 34, 40 and 9 are well-maintained two-lane highways, offering safe road conditions in all but the worst winter storms. The Trough Road, also known as Grand County Road 1, is a wide, graded gravel road that is well-maintained and open year around. It will accommodate all vehicles at reductions from normal highway speeds averaging 45 mph. Drivers in large RVs lacking experience on winding, steeper graded roads will need to exercise caution and travel at a slower rate of speed while traveling this 35-mile stretch of the byway.

The entire byway accommodates handicapped travelers, with numerous locations offering accessible restrooms and interpretive information. Pioneer Park in Hot Sulphur Springs provides handicapped fishing access. Three museums along the route provide staff assistance for visually-impaired guests. BLM managed sites along the Trough Road offer facilities for those with physical disabilities. Information is also available at U.S. Forest Service and BLM offices on the route.

Seasons

Best Time to Drive

Summer and fall provide the best opportunities to enjoy outdoor historic resources, but three museums provide information during winter months.

Fall

Fall is a gorgeous time to drive the byway, as it is filled with changing aspen leaves and fall colors.

High Season

During the summer, traffic on Highway 34 may be slower than normal in the Grand Lake area, as this route continues into Rocky Mountain National Park.

Winter

During the winter there are many activities to enjoy along the byway, such as skiing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, and snowshoeing.

Map and Directions



Legend:

Point of Interest	Campground	Featured Byway	Water	State Border
Park	Picnic/Rest Area	America's Byways	Wildlife Refuge	Urban Area
Mountain	Interstate	Other Byway	Wilderness Area	Tribal Nation
City	U.S. Highway	Other Trail Road	Other Federal Lands	Military Base
Capital	State Highway	Trail	Other State Lands	

Driving Directions

The byway begins just to the west of the Grand Lake Chamber of Commerce.

- Travel southwest along US 34 until you come to US 40.

- Turn northwest onto US 40 and continue through Sulphur Springs to CO 9, or 6th Street in Kremmling, CO.
- Continue southwest along CO 9 until you meet County Road 1/Trough Road.
- Exit right onto County Road 1/Trough Road and continue until you reach CO 131 where the byway ends.

Getting to the Byway



Nearby cities

Denver, CO (104 miles / 167.37 km, 2 hours 10 minutes)

Start: ⊙ 4600 Washington St. Denver, CO
 N 39.780° W 104.979° [?]

Directions:

- Get on I-70 west out of Denver.
- Keep to the right and merge onto US-40 west.
- Follow US-40 until the intersection with US-34.
- Stay on US-34 until you reach Grand Lake.
- The byway begins at the Grand Lake Visitor Center.

Junction with byway: * Intersection of Portal Rd. and Mountain Ave. in Grand Lake, CO
 N 40.255° W 105.825° [?]



Road Trip: Historical Tour of the Colorado River Headwaters Byway

Departure: Farr Pumping Plant and Colorado-Big Thompson Project, Colorado

Destination: Hot Sulphur Springs Resort Site, Colorado

Time to allow: 1 day

This tour will follow the Colorado River down the Byway with stops at historical sites that have either affected the water flow or have historical significance to the area. The trip can be completed in one day but in order to really experience the region, it is best to allow for at least one overnight stay in the communities at either end of the tour. Grand Lake offers the visitor plenty of hotels, bed and breakfasts inns and restaurants to enjoy. Or perhaps an overnight stay at the Hot Sulphur Springs Resort sounds appealing - with a relaxing evening soaking the day's activities away in the hot springs.

Day 1

- **Start: Farr Pumping Plant and Colorado-Big Thompson Project**

While Grand Lake is a natural lake, two adjoining mountain lakes are actually man-made reservoirs. In an enormous undertaking called the Colorado Big Thompson Project, Shadow Mountain and Granby were built as reservoirs to collect the waters of the upper Colorado River.

The Colorado-Big Thompson Project takes water from Grand Lake on the western side of the Continental Divide to the Big Thompson River on the east. The water flows through a 13-mile tunnel beneath Rocky Mountain National Park at the eastern edge of Grand Lake. In order to supply the residential and farming needs of Northeastern Colorado, the project was begun in 1938 and continued through the years of World War II.

- **Stop 1: Lake Granby and Colorado-Big Thompson Water Project**



From previous stop: 5 minutes

Directions: Return to Hwy 34 from the Farr Pumping plant. Turn left heading south on Hwy 34 toward Granby.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

The interpretive display at Lake Granby Overlook tells the story of the Water supply as well as the Town that once existed there before the Water Project created the Lake. It also gives a great view of Lake Granby and the Arapaho National Recreation Area.

- **Stop 2: Windy Gap Reservoir and the Colorado-Big Thompson Project**



From previous stop: 7 minutes / 8 mi (12.8 km)

Directions: Continue south on Hwy 34 to the junction of Hwy 34 and 40. Turn right heading west on Hwy 40 about 2 miles. Windy Gap is on the south side of the Hwy.

Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour

Windy Gap was a late developing controversy that followed Colorado-Big Thompson (CBT) from the 1960s into the 1980s. In 1966, six east slope cities began seeking CBT's unused capacity to bring more than 30,000 acre-feet of water from Windy Gap Reservoir, on the Colorado River below Lake Granby at the mouth of the Fraser River. Reclamation backed the plan, but environmentalists and Western Coloradoans were livid. West slope residents were afraid of "total depletion" of the Colorado River by greedy farmers and communities across the Divide.

Also the Windy Gap Watchable Wildlife roadside pull-off offers a seasonal rest area and covered picnic tables.

• **Stop 3: Pioneer Park in Hot Sulphur Springs**



From previous stop: 6 minutes / 7 mi (11.2 km)

Directions: Continue on Hwy 40 from Windy Gap to the Town of Hot Sulphur Springs. At the western edge of the town turn right go one block turn left the park is immediately across the bridge.

Suggested time at this stop: 3 hours

One of the finest amenities the town has to offer is Pioneer Park, an 80-acre open space park located along the banks of the Colorado River. Originally, the site served as the location of a railroad depot and refueling station. Now the park offers overnight camping and day use areas, handicapped-accessible Gold Medal fishing and access to an extensive trail system providing miles of hiking, biking and snowmobile trails. Wildlife abounds in the park as well, providing numerous opportunities to see songbirds and water fowl, along with elk, deer, skunks, raccoons, coyotes, fox, and the occasional bear.

- **End: Hot Sulphur Springs Resort Site**



From previous stop: 1 minute / 0.1 mi (0.2 km)

Directions: The Hot Springs Resort is less than one half a mile continuing on the same county road as Pioneer Park. It can be seen from the Byway.

Hot springs located next to the Colorado River in the town of Hot Sulphur Springs were used by the Ute Indians to ease rheumatism and arthritis. The Utes even treated their sick horses in the hot soothing mineral water. By 1870, William N. Byers, a land speculator as well as the founder of the Rocky Mountain News, had built a resort at the hot springs. By the early 1900s, it was the most popular hot springs resort in the Rocky Mountains with trainloads of people arriving daily to take to the waters. Today, the newly renovated resort is still a popular spot with a spa, inside and outside pools and lodging. The resort has been in operation continually for the past 140 years.

Totals for Day 1

Total Distance Traveled: 15.1 miles / 24.2 km

Total Travel Time: 19 minutes

Total Stopping Time: 4 hours 30 minutes