

[Ancient History Meets Modern Fun in Mountains & Mesas](#)

COLO-ROAD TRIPS

ESTABLISHED IN 2017

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6
days

COLO-ROAD TRIPS

— K TO 5TH GRADE —
EDUCATIONAL ITINERARIES

Get ready to take the kiddos' learning to new heights with Colo-Road Trips Educational Itineraries, trips crafted with plenty of hands-on learning, educational adventures and, of course, stops for ice cream. Each was designed with kids from kindergarten to 5th grade in mind, but the activities, outings and accommodations will be enjoyed by children of all ages — yes, that's you, moms and dads. Supplement your trip with trivia, educational videos and games — or just hop in the car and go!

Fantastic experiences await you in the Mountains & Mesas region. Discover our earliest living creatures and humans, while immersing yourself in beautiful settings and awesome adventures. Watch history and science come alive in this area as you explore the remnants of dinosaurs and prairie dogs. So, get ready to load up the kids, strap in your bikes, pack your hiking boots and hit the road!

[Get more educational Colo-Road Trips >>](#)

Grab Your Supplies
Pencils Up!

While all that is truly needed is your kids' sense of adventure, a notebook, a writing utensil and plenty of colored pencils will come in handy.

Day
1

Activity
Welcome to Fruita: Fruita Welcome Center

The Fruita Welcome Center is a great place to get an overview of the places you will go. The kids will love checking

out the helicopter memorial and reading about the exploits of Butch Cassidy and the Hole in the Wall Gang. Don't forget to snap a family pic in front of the Welcome to Colorful Colorado sign — it's a Colorado tradition!

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity
All the Places You Will Go!

Where will your adventures take you? Explore the path you will take during your road trip at the Fruita Welcome Center. [Get activity](#).

Lunch
Hot Tomato Pizza

Get in line and order your pie, then snag a seat on the sunny patio. The vibe at this Western Slope staple is part energetic buzz, part laid back comfort. You can't go wrong with specialty pizzas like Granny's Pesto or the Stinky Deluxe, or build your own with fresh, locally sourced toppings. The kids will love the healthy sodas made with fair-trade cane syrup and natural flavors.

[Visit Website](#)

Activity
Dinosaur Journey

History comes alive at Dinosaur Journey where real fossils, cast skeletons and robotic reconstructions of dinosaurs tell the story of life in prehistoric western Colorado. You'll see discovery in action, with a viewable paleontology laboratory where dinosaur bones are prepared for display, an earthquake simulator, a sandbox for making your own dinosaur tracks and a "quarry site" where kids can uncover actual Jurassic dinosaur bones.

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity
Age of the Dinosaurs

Discover the differences between various dinosaurs at Dinosaur Journey, a great place to learn all about paleontology. [Get activity](#).

Extra Credit

Adventure on Riggs Hill Trail

Looking for adventure? Hike a [dinosaur trail](#)! [Riggs Hill Trail](#) offers opportunities to learn about the paleontology, history, geology and geography of the area. [Get extra credit activity](#).

Itinerary Tip

It's time to ride out!

Make your way east toward Grand Junction from Fruita.

Dinner

Main Street Cafe

Step back in time at this fun and funky 1950s-style diner in downtown Grand Junction. The authentic memorabilia adorning the walls will inspire conversation about a special time in our history. Choose from blue-plate specials, burgers, sandwiches and more, and be sure to order dessert from the old-fashioned, drug-store-style soda fountain.

[Visit Website](#)

Activity

Get Air at the Silo Trampoline Park

Bounce away pent-up energy at this incredible indoor playground. In addition to thousands of square feet of trampolines, the whole family will have fun on bouncy basketball and dodgeball courts, the climbing wall, slackline and more. Little jumpers under 46 inches tall can have a ball in their own special area.

[Visit Website](#)

Itinerary Tip

Imondi Wake Zone

Visiting in the summer? Learn to wakeboard at [Imondi Wake Zone](#), Colorado's only wakeboarding park. The unique cable-wakeboarding system means no boat required! Splash around at the aqua park with bouncy floats, jumps, slides and more. Then try your hand at paddleboarding, or just cool off in this unique water park.

Lodging
Hotel Maverick

Give the kiddos an early taste of college life with a stay at the Hotel Maverick, right on the Colorado Mesa University campus. You'll feel inspired while you explore the vibrant campus before taking in the panoramic views from the hotel's rooftop deck, complete with firepits.

[Visit Website](#)

Day
2

Breakfast
Main Street Bagels Artisan Bakery & Cafe

Linger over coffee, bagels and baked goods while the kids are busy having fun in the play area. This family-run, downtown breakfast spot is popular among locals and visitors alike. Get an extra coffee to go and check out the public art on the downtown mall.

[Visit Website](#)

Activity
Colorado National Monument

Marvel at the giant boulders, balanced rocks, steep canyons and wonder-inducing tunnels of the Colorado National Monument. Leave plenty of time to stretch little legs on the short Devil's Kitchen trail and scope out the jaw-dropping views from the many scenic overlooks.

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity A Changing Landscape

Just how did all those geologic features get created in Colorado National Monument? Learn the answers and more while enjoying art time as you sketch the monument's fantastical geological features. [Get activity.](#)

Itinerary Tip Entering Mountain Bike Territory

The Mountains & Mesas region of Colorado is world-renowned for its mountain biking trails. Don't miss a chance to check out the wide variety of trails from [Fruita](#) to [Grand Junction](#) to [Palisade](#) and beyond. You'll find something for every skill set, but [Rustler's Loop](#) is not to be missed! Interpretive signs along this beginner-to-intermediate trail educate new and seasoned riders about everything from cornering and climbing to trail etiquette and the local ecology.

Lunch Palisade Brewing Company

Grab a table on the huge patio and start your lunch with an order of Joe's Smoked Bones. The kids can nosh on grilled cheese or quesadillas, while the grownups choose from delicious smoked-meat sandwiches, salads and burgers.

[Visit Website](#)

Itinerary Tip Grand Mesa & Land's End

Drive to Delta via the [Grand Mesa scenic byway](#), where you'll pass through old-growth forests, lush meadows and huge stands of aspen trees. Can you count how many lakes you see? There are more than 200 on the Grand Mesa!

If there's time, take a slight detour to the historical ranger observatory at the Land's End area. You will be able to see all the way to Utah and central Colorado from this view point. The [Land's End Observatory](#) is approximately 10 miles off the main Grand Mesa scenic byway.

Activity Fort Uncompahgre Interpretive Center

Imagine standing in the exact spot where trappers and Native Americans traded furs for guns, knives, beads

and other goods along the Old Spanish Trail. The kids will love checking out the real furs and hides in the trade room while getting a taste of frontier life at Fort Uncompahgre Interpretive Center, an authentic replica of an 1820s trading post.

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity
Stone Age to Iron Age

Travel back in time at Fort Uncompahgre and learn about the trading that took place in the area years before Colorado was a state. [Get activity.](#)

Dinner
Daveto's

Who's hungry? Get started with an order of garlic pizza strips, then sit back and browse the extensive menu for pizza, pastas, salads, subs and calzones. The reasonably priced kids' menu has a mix of everything any choosy eater could want. Save room for desserts like the fruit pizza, the strawberry-peach cobbler or classic tiramisu.

[Visit Website](#)

Trivia
How Much Do You Remember?

As you wrap up the day see how much you remember from Colorado National Monument and Fort Uncompahgre. [Get trivia activity.](#)

Activity
City of Delta Murals

Head out on a scavenger hunt to see how many murals you can find in Delta, nicknamed "The City of Murals." Can you find the hardware store? You'll do a double-take deciding if it's real or a painting! Ask everyone to choose their favorite mural and explain why they like it.

[Visit Website](#)

Itinerary Tip
Playtime in Confluence Park

Check out [Confluence Park in Delta](#) and explore its brand-new bike-pump track and miles of riverside trails for biking, hiking or simply strolling. Cast a fishing line or put in for a paddle on the 70-acre lake.

Lodging
Riverwood Inn

Play a game of tag on the large lawn before settling in for the night at this classic road-side motel situated on the banks of the Gunnison River.

[Visit Website](#)

Day
3

Breakfast
Doghouse Espresso

You're in the doghouse — but this time it's OK! This cozy and eclectic coffee shop is very welcoming to families and kids. Indulge in home-baked pastries and cinnamon rolls or dig into breakfast burritos and homemade quiche.

[Visit Website](#)

Itinerary Tip
Let's head to Black Canyon of the Gunnison!

Drive to the main (south) entrance of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park via Hwy. 50.

Activity
Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park

One of the country's newest national parks, Black Canyon of the Gunnison wows visitors with its steep canyon walls, dark rock formations and the roaring Gunnison River way down below.

(Photo credit: NPS/Lisa Lynch)

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity
Poetic Canyon

Capture this shockingly beautiful geological wonder through words by writing a poem about the vistas at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. [Get activity.](#)

Extra Credit
Talking Dogs at Curecanti National Recreation Area

[Curecanti National Recreation Area](#) is home to some amazing animals, including the very communicative Gunnison Prairie Dogs. [Get extra credit activity.](#)

Itinerary Tip
Get Some Grub in Gunnison

Head over to Gunnison for some serious grub after your expedition through the national park.

Lunch
Backcountry Cafe

Relax on the shady patio while you plan your afternoon adventures. The kids will love the choices on the Little Shredder's menu, and the grownups can't go wrong with wraps, salads, subs and burgers. Don't forget fries and onion rings for the table!

[Visit Website](#)

Itinerary Tip
Gunnison Whitewater Park

If you've never seen river surfing, it is a sight to behold! You'll all be amazed watching kayakers and surfers navigate the obstacles at [Gunnison Whitewater Park](#). Stretch your legs on a walk along the nature trail that meanders through the riparian habitat. Be sure to pick up a brochure at the start to help you identify the various trees, shrubs and wildflowers.

Itinerary Tip
Cruise to Crested Butte

Once you've explored the park, hop in the car and head over to Crested Butte.

Activity
Lower Loop Trail

What happens when all the snow melts and the sun shines bright and warm? Wildflowers! Crested Butte is known throughout Colorado for its spectacular wildflowers, and you'll get their full effect on this easy, family-friendly trail.



[Map the Trail](#)

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity

Care for Colorado — Emoji Style

So much natural beauty greets a visitor on Lower Loop Trail. How can we protect this trail, as well as ALL of Colorado's outdoors, now and in the future? By following the seven Care for Colorado Principles. [Get activity.](#)

Dinner
Secret Stash

What exactly is Stashmosphere? Find out at this award-winning restaurant where the pizza is the talk of the town — and for good reason. Kids can also order delicious bow-tie pasta exactly how they want it: topped with meatballs, marinara, plain ol' butter or healthy chicken and broccoli.

[Visit Website](#)

Activity
Crested Butte Summer Adventure Park

Soar as high as the mountains on the park's zipline and bungee trampolines and get an extra rush of adrenaline on the bag jump. Even the little ones can reach their peak on the rock-climbing pinnacle, where there are three levels of routes to both challenge and reward.

[Visit Website](#)

Itinerary Tip

Summer Chairlift Rides

Soak in the summer views with a scenic ride on the [Silver Queen Express chairlift](#). Travel round trip, or unload at the top for a family-friendly hike.

Lodging

Old Town Inn

Have fun exploring historic downtown Crested Butte from this family-owned and -operated inn. You'll have access to cruiser bikes in summer and sleds and snowshoes in winter — all free to hotel guests! Come home to freshly baked cookies in the afternoon, then get a good night's sleep in the large suite with a pull-out sofa.

[Visit Website](#)

Day

4

Breakfast

The W Cafe

How will the kids ever choose from the Mickey, M&M or chocolate-chip pancakes? If it makes you feel just a tiny bit healthier, order up a side of blueberries or strawberries.

[Visit Website](#)

Activity
Ute Indian Museum

Kids and adults will be amazed to discover how our present culture is uniquely and intricately connected to the past through thoughtful exhibits and displays at the Ute Indian Museum. Kids will especially enjoy learning how the Ute children played — with dolls, toys, games and races — when they weren't busy with chores!

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity
Nomadic Life

One of the most popular exhibits at the Ute Indian Museum is the hands-on teepee exhibit. Explore the display and compare the nomadic life of living in a teepee to your life today. [Get activity.](#)

Lunch
Panny's Pizzeria

The kids can build their own pie or order just a slice at this famed pizza joint. This spot is well known for their delicious "Panwich," which is a classic calzone made with a sweet homemade white sauce. It's a must-have according to locals. And be sure to wash it all down with a root-beer float!

[Visit Website](#)

Activity
Ridgway Railroad Museum

The birthplace of the Rio Grande Southern Railroad, Ridgway is dedicated to preserving the history of railroading in the area. Get up close and personal with a variety of historical trains and equipment at the Ridgway Railroad

Museum. Depending on when you visit, you may even get to take a ride on a historical mail car!

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity

Galloping Goose

Ridgway Railroad Museum has three of the seven original Galloping Geese onsite. Find out what makes these one-of-a-kind railcars stand out. [Get activity](#).

Itinerary Tip

Box Canyon Falls Park

Take the kids on an [easy hike](#) to these stunning waterfalls. Interpretive trails throughout [Box Canyon Falls Park](#) will guide you through learning about snowmelt, flora and fauna. Stop in the visitor's center for more information.

Dinner

The Outlaw

Go back in time and enjoy all the Western memorabilia on display at The Outlaw, including old family photos and even The Duke's (a.k.a. John Wayne's) hat! Cheese ravioli, spaghetti with meatballs and burgers fit the bill for the kiddos, while grownups can feast on tender prime rib and steaks.

[Visit Website](#)

Trivia

How Much Do You Remember?

Now that you've visited the Ute Indian Museum and Ridgway Railroad Museum, let's see how much you remember. [Get trivia activity](#).

Activity

Ouray Hot Springs

Be as lazy or lively as you like at the Ouray Hot Springs pool! Feeling lazy? Soak in the geothermally heated pools while gazing at 13,000-foot snow-capped peaks. Still have lots of energy? Race down the water slides, tackle the obstacle course, scale the climbing wall or team up for water volleyball and basketball.

[Visit Website](#)

Lodging

Twin Peaks Lodge & Hot Springs

Hit the playground before calling it a night at this pet-friendly hotel on the river. If you didn't make it to the Ouray Hot Springs Pool, not to worry. The hotel also has a pool and indoor and outdoor hot springs.

[Visit Website](#)

Itinerary Tip

Telluride Day Trip

Consider adding on a day trip to [Telluride](#). Once a small mining community, the town is now famous for its slopes and peaks. You'll also enjoy a spectacular drive before learning about the town's rich history. Delve into the past at the Tomboy Ghost Town or take a free scenic gondola ride. Bonus points if you can find out how Telluride got its name!

Day

5

Breakfast

Artisan Bakery

You'll want to leave plenty of time for the drive to Durango on the stunning Million Dollar Highway. Load up on homemade scones, muffins, pastries and breakfast sandwiches — plus delicious espresso drinks — and grab a loaf of bread fresh from the oven for easy snacking along the way.

[Visit Website](#)

Activity

Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad

Create family memories sure to last a lifetime as you travel through unbelievable scenery on this historic narrow-gauge railroad that takes you back to early railroad days. Settle in behind the steam engine and enjoy the magic of this 45-mile journey through the dramatic San Juan Mountains. The kids will enjoy sharing their excitement with you as you take in spectacular sights not accessible from the highway.

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity

Scenic Letter

As you immerse yourself in the mountain scenery and the magic of traveling by train, capture the experience by writing a letter to friends and family detailing the highlights of your trip on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. [Get activity](#).

Extra Credit

Panning for Gold at the Old Hundred Gold Mine

Learn about gold mining in the area during a tour of the [Old Hundred Gold Mine](#). At the end of your tour, try your hand at gold panning and take home what you find! [Get extra credit activity](#).

Lunch

2nd Deli & Spirits

Order sandwiches, chips and drinks to go from 2nd Deli and head to Santa Rita Park. Grab a picnic table or spread out on the grass and watch the rafters and river surfers ride the rapids.

[Visit Website](#)

Activity
Santa Rita Park

You choose the adventure at Santa Rita Park in Durango. Hop on your bikes to explore the mountain-bike trails, hike the Animas River Trail or try your luck at fly-fishing.



[Map the Trail](#)

[Visit Website](#)

Itinerary Tip

Side Trip in Pagosa Springs

Extend your stay with a side trip to [Pagosa Springs](#). The kids will love tubing on this gentle stretch of the San Juan River while parents soak in the natural hot springs.

Dinner
Steamworks Brewing Co.

Talk about kid friendly! The little ones will be kept busy with the kids' menu complete with coloring, mazes and word searches, while the grownups can relax and enjoy dinner and adult conversation. Added bonus: The kids menu features everything from simple (grilled cheese) to sophisticated (grilled salmon).

[Visit Website](#)

Activity
The Powerhouse Science Center

Is someone in your family always asking the question “why?” They never knew they were using the scientific method to understand the world around them! Take questioning to the next level at the Powerhouse Science Center, where kids can test their hypotheses at the many hands-on stations.

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity
Scientifically Speaking

There’s so much to explore at the Powerhouse Science Center. This K-W-L activity helps narrow your focus to one or two exhibits you want to learn more about. Not familiar with K-W-L? It’s an easy way to identify what you already know, what you want to know and what you learned! [Get activity](#).

Lodging
Doubletree Hotel

Take a spin or stroll on the Animas River Trail, splash in the indoor pool, then settle into your room with beautiful river views. Road-weary kiddos will love the fact that you can walk to downtown for dinner, shopping and exploring.

[Visit Website](#)

Day
6

Breakfast
Absolute Bakery & Cafe

Stop in Mancos at the Absolute Bakery & Cafe for a delicious breakfast and homemade treats for your trip to Mesa Verde National Park. The kids will drool over the giant cinnamon rolls made from scratch ... and be forewarned — their bite-sized cookies are just delightful!

[Visit Website](#)

Itinerary Tip
Early birds get the worm!

Get up bright and early and make your way toward Cortez.

Activity

Mesa Verde National Park

Established in 1906 as a national park to interpret and preserve the 700-year-old Ancestral Puebloan heritage, this World Heritage Site includes 600 cliff dwellings and 5,000 archaeological sites. Kids will love exploring the Visitors Center. And be sure to sign up for a guided tour of one of the cliff dwellings if you have time!

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity

Spruce Tree House

Learn what the notable features of Mesa Verde's cliff dwellings are and how the Ancestral Puebloans lived at Spruce Tree House in Mesa Verde National Park. [Get activity](#).

Lunch

La Casita de Cortez

Dig into kid-sized portions of authentic Mexican favorites like quesadillas, enchiladas, tacos and burritos. For the more discerning palates, there's also chicken fingers, corn dogs or mac and cheese. Adults will savor some of the best Mexican food in southwest Colorado.

[Visit Website](#)

Activity

Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center & Museum

Travel back in time at the Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center as you explore the museum focusing on Ancestral Puebloan, Native American and other historic cultures in the Four Corners region. Venture just outside

the museum to discover the Escalante Pueblo, a compact village of the mid-1100s, and the Dominguez Pueblo, a four-room structure that was likely home to one or two families.

[Visit Website](#)

Educational Activity

Native Plants

Find out which native plants can be found in the area and how they were used by Ancestral Puebloans at Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center & Museum. [Get activity.](#)

Trivia

How Much Do You Remember?

Now that you've experienced Mesa Verde National Park and Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum, it's time to see how much you remember. [Get trivia activity.](#)

Dinner

River Bar and Grill

Food tastes better on the water! Slow it all down to the sounds of the river while you dine on the sunny patio. You'll have plenty to choose from, including pizza, calzones, hot and cold sandwiches, steaks, wraps and burgers.

[Visit Website](#)

Activity

Phil's World Trail System Mountain Biking & Hiking Trails

Here there's plenty of trails to thrill every little ripper in the family, as well as the bigger ones. It's a great opportunity for the whole family to hone their skills, learn new ones and learn about trail stewardship.



[Map the Trail](#)

[Visit Website](#)

Itinerary Tip

Pedal the Peaks Bike Rentals

Didn't bring bikes? That's OK. [Pedal the Peaks](#) has everything you need!

Sustainability Activity

Care for Colorado: The Etiquette of Trails

These trails are open to hikers, too, so be sure to share the trail. Need a trail etiquette refresher? Check out this fun [Care for Colorado video](#). You'll find a handy bike-tool stand at the trailhead, along with picnic tables, porta-potties and a donation box. Many trails are built and maintained by volunteer trail groups, such as the [Southwest Colorado Cycling Club](#), so consider making a donation. Every little bit helps!

Lodging

Holiday Inn Express Mesa Verde

Book the King Kids Suite where the kiddos can play and sleep in their own separate area, modeled after an Old West fort. They'll likely spend hours hanging out and playing with the game console on the bunk beds. The pool is also shaped after a famous cartoon character. Can they guess which one?

[Visit Website](#)

Itinerary Tip

Four Corners National Monument

Take a side trip to [Four Corners National Monument](#), where you can stand in four states at once or race between the states. You can also learn more about the Navajo Nation. It's a unique experience the kids will never forget.