



## SPOTLIGHT ON LOVELAND2020 #3

June 20 - 27, 2020

The Ranch Events Complex Loveland, CO



We've asked our friends and members of the Colorado Airstream Club to give rally attendees some pointers as you begin to plan your routes to the Loveland2020 Rally. **THANK YOU** Rich Nortnik for your insightful travel and mountain driving tips below:

### ALL ROADS LEAD TO LOVELAND

**By Rich Nortnik; Member, Colorado Airstream Club, #3174**

We're so excited to have you join us in Loveland! Colorado is known for its beauty, sunshine and western hospitality. We hope that you will get to experience all of these and more during your visit.

To help with planning your journey to Loveland, we'd like to introduce six routes for your consideration. Of course, we know that WBAC members are an adventurous group and you'll find your own magical way to and from the Rally. Maybe these six routes will help to get you started on your planning.

#### Travelling I-25 in Colorado

The Rally location lies immediately to the east of I-25. Since you'll likely utilize this major road on your journey to or from Loveland, and during the Rally, we'd like to describe this busy thoroughfare. I-25 dissects the state and runs from border to border. Colorado has experienced significant growth in recent years and all roads are much busier. The geography that lies just to the east of the Rockies and runs north and south from Ft. Collins in the north to Pueblo in the south is referred to as the "Front Range." The Front Range has experienced the largest growth in Colorado and as a result, I-25 has become a very busy highway.

If you're coming from the north on I-25 into Colorado, you'll begin to encounter heavier traffic at Ft. Collins, just inside the border. The traffic will grow as you continue south to Denver. There is very heavy commuter traffic in the morning from Loveland to Denver, so avoid going south to Denver early in the morning if possible. The same is true during the late afternoon and evening hours when coming north from Denver to Loveland.

When coming to Denver from the south on I-25, you'll see heavier traffic between Pueblo and Colorado Springs, and it increases as you near Denver. I-25, from just north of Colorado Springs to Castle Rock, is undergoing major construction. You won't encounter total road closures, but two lanes have been narrowed and speeds have been reduced. You might want to consider taking US 83 (aka "Parker Road") from just north of Colorado Springs to E-470, and then take E-470 around the east side of the metro

area and reconnect with I-25 on the north side of the metro area. US 83 is a busy two-lane road, but you'll keep moving. E-470 is a toll road, so expect to pay upwards to \$60 for a car and trailer. For that price, you'll avoid the construction on I-25 and the heavy downtown traffic.

I-25 through downtown Denver is always very busy but can be bumper to bumper during rush hours. If your destination is in downtown or near downtown, alternate routes are suggested. Seek out one of our Colorado club members to get advice on alternate routes into the downtown area from Loveland.

### **Route 1: Northeast**

The Northeast route primarily utilizes I-76, which begins in southwestern Nebraska, just north of the Colorado border. I-76 begins at an intersection with I-80, just west of Ogallala, Nebraska. Continue south on I-76 through Ft. Morgan. Near Wiggins, turn onto US 34 and head west through farmland into Greeley and eventually Loveland. When US 34 intersects with I-25, you will be very near the Rally location. US 34 is a major highway in northeast Colorado. Continuing west on US 34 through Loveland will take you to Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park.

Most of you are likely familiar with I-80. It's one of the most heavily traveled interstates, east and west, through the United States. While it may be the fastest route to Colorado from the Northeast, it has at least two limitations. One is that it is heavily traveled by trucks and secondly, parts of I-80, like most of our interstates today, are starting to show wear and tear. There's quite a bit of new construction typically on I-80 so you may encounter some detours or delays.

I-76 is not as heavily traveled by trucks as I-80 and it's in generally good condition. An alternate route would be to stay on I-80, continue to Cheyenne, and take I-25 south to Loveland.

There are several routes through Nebraska that can be used as alternates to I-80. Coming from Minnesota recently, we took I-90 west to US 83 and turned south through the farmland of South Dakota and Nebraska. We camped at Merritt Reservoir State Recreation Area near Valentine, Nebraska. We then continued US 83 to North Platte. US 83 will eventually take you to McCook, Nebraska, where it intersects with US 34. Turn west on US 34 and you'll eventually connect with I-25 at the Rally site.

If you use I-90, you could continue west and visit the spectacular Badlands National Park. Then continue to Rapid City and journey through the Black Hills. From the Black Hills, you could choose to go west and connect with I-25 or you could choose to go south on H 71 or US 385 and eventually connect with I-76 at either Sterling or Ft. Morgan, Colorado.

### **Route 2: I-70 from the East**

Coming to Colorado directly from the east, the most popular route would be I-70. I-70 intersects with I-25 just on the north side of downtown Denver. There are many jokes about travelling I-70 through Kansas and eastern Colorado, some comparing the experience to watching paint dry. We, on the other hand, never tire of the trip. We find the farmland and prairies to be beautiful, and if you look closely, you can see some spectacular scenery. By the way, the state parks in both Kansas and Colorado are excellent. One of our favorite Kansas parks is Cedar Bluff, near Hayes. It's a convenient place to stay before your final leg into Colorado.

As you begin to enter the Denver metro area on I-70, traffic will begin to increase quickly. You have a choice of three routes to Loveland when you get into the metro area. The first is to take E-470 north, which is highly recommended. You'll connect with I-25 north of the metro area and have a short drive to Loveland. This is a toll road so expect fees to be upwards to \$50. Secondly, you can continue I-70 and take I-270 north to I-25. If you choose not to take E-470, we highly encourage you to take I-270. If

you do not turn at I-270, you continue I-70 to I-25. Note that I-70 is undergoing major construction from I-270 to I-25. Traffic is usually very heavy and bumper to bumper during rush hour.

If you want to avoid I-70 as many people do, there are several alternative highways that can be taken through Kansas and Nebraska. Most are two lane paved roads in good condition and take you through rolling farmland and plains.

### **Route 3: South**

The south route is the most common route people use coming from New Mexico or the southwest. The primary road is I-25 which runs north and south from the northern Wyoming border all the way to El Paso Texas. There are several alternate routes that can be used to come up to Loveland from the south and southwest. Southwest Colorado is beautiful and offers spectacular views of several mountain ranges. Several alternate routes will utilize US 285, which begins in New Mexico and eventually comes into Denver. It is primarily a two-lane paved highway and is heavily travelled. Try to avoid travelling US 285 into Denver later in the day on weekends. Traffic in the summer is usually very busy on the weekend, especially Sunday afternoons.

Coming from the southwest into Colorado, a beautiful route is to utilize US 550 through Durango to Montrose. You'll travel into the San Juan Range over Red Mountain Pass and the "Million Dollar Highway". In Montrose, US 550 intersects with US 50, which will take you through Gunnison, over Monarch Pass and eventually intersect with US 285, near Salida.

While US 550 from Durango to Montrose is in excellent shape, you'll be traversing Red Mountain Pass and the Million Dollar Highway so if you're not experienced in mountain driving, you might want to think about another route.

If you're coming into Colorado from Flagstaff, another route to consider is a beautiful drive that takes you through the Navajo Nation. You'll have an opportunity to visit Monument Valley. Take US 191 through Blanding, Utah and continue north through Moab. Just a little north of Moab, you connect with I-70, which will allow you to take the west route into Colorado. When you're at Moab, you'll be close to several National Parks.

If you're coming from some parts of Texas, an alternate route to consider is US 287 which comes into Colorado in the far southeast corner of the state. When you get to Lamar, you can either go west to I-25 or continue to Limon, Colorado and catch I-70. Our recommendation would be for you to take I-70 and turn onto E-470 just before you enter the Denver metro area.

### **Route 4: West**

This route primarily utilizes I-70, the primary highway that connects metro Denver to the mountains, the western slope and Utah. I-70 is generally in good condition and the truck traffic compared to I-40 or I-80 is moderate.

An entire article could be written about things to see and do in Utah. Suffice it to say, that it's very much worth your time to explore Utah on your way to or from the Rally.

As you enter Colorado and approach the continental divide on I-70, you'll encounter a couple of major passes. The first is Vail Pass. Vail Pass is a beautiful drive over the continental divide and while it's in good condition and is not a nerve-racking mountain pass, it will test your driving capabilities and the towing capacity on your vehicle. Try to avoid weekends, especially later in the day, as traffic from Vail to Denver on weekends is heavy.

The second major pass you'll drive on your way east to Denver is the Eisenhower Tunnel. While technically it's not a pass, it's a very long incline from the town of Dillon to the top where you enter the tunnel. Thank goodness it's a three-lane highway east bound, going up to the tunnel. You'll likely encounter trucks going slowly utilizing the slow lane. If you maintain your speed at 60 to 65 mph, you can use the middle or second lane all the way to the top. Just maintain a consistent speed. We suggest staying out of the third lane or fast lane.

An alternate route to consider is turning on H 9 at Silverthorne, just before you begin the climb to Eisenhower, and proceed north to Kremmling, where you can catch US 40. Take US 40 north to H 14. See the Northwest route for more information on H 14.

Our best advice on going over any of our mountain passes is to be patient and take it easy. It may be better to follow a truck slowly over Vail, than to get in the fast lane and find that you're impeding traffic behind you.

An alternate route to Loveland off I-70 is to turn north at Rifle, Colorado, and take H 13 to Craig, Colorado, where you can use the Northwest route, described below, into Loveland.

### **Route 5: Northwest**

This route primarily utilizes US 40, which you can catch in Nevada, or if you're coming in from the northwest on I-80, you can turn south onto US 191 at Rock Springs, Wyoming and head to Craig, Colorado. From Craig, you proceed eastbound on US 40 to Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Just outside of Steamboat Springs, near the summit of Rabbit Ears Pass, you'll turn left or east on H 14, which will take you through Walden, Colorado, over Cameron Pass, into the Poudre Valley. When you exit Poudre Canyon on US 287, you'll be just a short distance from Ft. Collins and Loveland. This is a beautiful drive and gives you a chance to see one of the more popular ski areas in Colorado as well as to see the northwest mountains of the Rockies in Colorado. There are many beautiful camping locations on this drive, including Yampa State Park and State Forest State Park, one of the most beautiful parks in the state.

### **Route 6: North**

Route six, the northern route, utilizes primarily I-25. If you're coming in from Northern California or the northwest, you might want to use I-80, which intersects with I-25 in Cheyenne, Wyoming. You could also take a popular cut off in Laramie, Wyoming, utilizing US 287 which will take you directly into Ft. Collins, Colorado. From Ft. Collins, you could choose to utilize I-25 to Loveland or continue US 287 which intersects with US 34.

Coming from Alberta, the most direct route from Edmonton is Route 2 south to Calgary, Route 4 to the border, I-15 south to Billings, MT, where you pick up I-90 and then connect with I-25 near Buffalo, WY. Once on I-25, it's a direct shot south to Loveland. Utilizing I-25 from the border with Canada will take you primarily through grassland and rolling hills with no passes and no mountains to cross.

# TIPS FOR MOUNTAIN DRIVING

I've been pulling a trailer through the mountains for about 13 years, ever since we bought our first Airstream. But one thing experienced drivers will tell you is that you'll never have enough experience driving through the mountains. Every time I navigate the hills with our Airstream, I learn something new. I hope I can share in this article some of the things that I've learned through the years that may be helpful to you.

Please don't take driving through the mountains as a problem. Just like with anything else dealing with your Airstream, you'll learn tricks and tips and through experience. You'll eventually acquire all that you need to know to safely navigate our beautiful roads in Colorado. Driving the mountains does not have to be a hair-raising experience. Most incidents are caused by speed, following too close or stupid things other drivers may do.

## **Trip Planning**

Try to plan your trip so that you minimize risks and congestion. To the extent possible, plan your trip so that you arrive at more challenging stretches, like mountain passes, at days and times when traffic is as light as possible.

## **Slow down and have patience**

Especially in driving our mountain roads, my best advice is to slow down, be patient and enjoy the ride. You'll get to your destination a few minutes later, but you and your family will be safe. If you look suddenly in your mirror or camera and find five cars behind you on a two-lane road, don't panic. Continue driving and when it's safe, pull over into a turnout and wait until all the traffic behind you clears. You'll be less stressed, and the drivers will love you for your courtesy.

## **Know the capabilities of your vehicles**

It's important to know how your tow vehicle and trailer will operate when you ascend and descend steep hills. Adjust how you drive to the capacity of your vehicles. If you're going 65 mph, can you accelerate to 75 or 80 in a short distance on a grade. If you decelerate to 20 mph, can you accelerate back to 65 in a short distance? Most importantly, are your brakes in good working order?

Remember that not all tow vehicles are created equal. A 3/4-ton diesel (e.g. F-250), has size and technology that makes it behave differently than a 1/2 ton (e.g. F-150). Understand those differences and adjust your driving.

## **What's the greater challenge, driving up a pass or going down?**

Going up and down require equal attention, they just offer different challenges. Going down a steep hill requires paying attention and controlling your vehicles, maintaining a safe speed and not causing undue stress on your vehicles.

## **Driving an incline**

As stated earlier, it's important to know the capabilities of your vehicles, especially the tow vehicle, before beginning to ascend a steep incline. At the risk of stating the obvious, everything changes for your tow vehicle when you're pulling a heavy trailer up a hill at altitude. Your car or truck may be able to pull your trailer reasonably well on relatively flat ground at sea level. It's only when you start pulling up the west side of Vail Pass, for example, will you understand fully the towing capability of your tow vehicle.

You know already the importance of driving with an awareness of your surroundings. This becomes crucial when driving in the mountains. Let me explain by way of an example. Imagine that you're eastbound on I-70 over Vail. There's light traffic and you're cruising up the west side of the Pass at about 60 mph in the right lane. Coming to a wide sweeping curve lets you see ahead for a good half mile or so. There's a truck in the right lane going very slowly, obviously struggling with the grade and the load. Now is when you want to think through your strategy for dealing with the slow-moving truck. You need to have your strategy *now*, not when you pull up immediately behind the truck. If you wait too long and get behind the truck, you will be forced to slow down to the speed of the truck. By that time, you may have lost any option to move safely into the left lane so that you can pass. Additionally, by slowing down to match the speed of the truck ahead, you lose forward momentum, and you may need to just stay behind the truck until you get to a clear wide opening in the left lane to pass.

A better option than coming up behind the truck is to immediately survey your surroundings. How much traffic is behind or in the left lane? In a few seconds you're determining when you can safely move into the left lane and pass the slow-moving truck.

After you're able to safely move into the left lane, your primary goal then becomes to pass that truck as quickly as possible and move back into the right lane as soon as you've passed and can safely move over. Newcomers to mountain driving will sometimes get nervous when passing a vehicle on a mountain road, especially a big truck. The first reaction is often to slow down. Try to avoid this and maintain your speed until you are safely past the truck and can move back to the right lane. Slowing down when passing can create a hazardous situation for the traffic following you, and you lose forward momentum, making it more difficult to get past the truck quickly.

Sometimes it's just safer to stay in the right lane, even if it means following a slow-moving truck. Again, using Vail as an example, if you're nearing the summit, it might be better to avoid creating a dangerous situation by trying to pass a truck when in five minutes you're going to be at the summit.

Watch your temperature gauges closely when ascending steep hills, especially on hot, summer days.

## **Descending**

One of the things I love about mountain driving is that you must *drive* in the mountains. You can't let your vehicle just take you over the pass. It requires some skill and focus as well as a knowledge of your equipment. This is very much the case when coming down a steep grade.

When descending, the objective is to always maintain control. First, and foremost, this means keeping your speed under control, always matching your speed to the capabilities of your vehicles and to the road conditions so that you can come to a stop or avoid an obstacle while being in control.

The combined weight of your vehicles and the laws of physics are wanting to push you down the hill. You counter this using the technology in your vehicles. This includes the brakes in both the tow vehicle and the trailer and deployment of the technology in your tow vehicle which includes a combination of engine braking and transmission.

There are few absolute rules for mountain driving. The one that comes closest is the one that says **do not ride your brakes when descending a long hill**. At the bottom of steep hills, such as Vail or Berthoud, you'll often see trucks pulled over with smoke coming from their brakes. This won't happen to you because you'll keep your speed down, use the technology in your tow vehicle, and apply your brakes as sparingly as possible. When you do use the brakes, use them to bring your speed down below your target level and then release them so that the brakes have a chance to cool. When descending and need to slow down, assuming you're in the lowest gear possible given your speed, use

your brake controller to use the trailer brakes. If that's not enough, use your tow vehicle brakes, but only in short bursts, taking foot off pedal periodically to allow brakes to cool. Overheating can lead to brake fade. Check your brakes frequently. Make sure your brake controller is functioning properly, as you can use your controller to manually apply braking to your trailer.

### **Driving two lane roads**

As you explore Colorado mountains, you'll encounter many two-lane highways. Even some of the busiest, major highways are primarily two-lane roads. Many have frequent passing lanes, but they're still two-lane roads. It's important to be aware of your surroundings when driving in the mountains and no truer is this than when driving two-lane roads. If you were the only vehicle on the road, it would be a piece of cake. Choose a safe speed and drive leisurely up or down the roads. But it's rarely that simple, especially as more and more people are driving into the mountains.

Be aware of the traffic that's behind you on a two-lane road. I installed a camera several years ago, and I can't be without it now. If you use your camera or mirrors to always know about the traffic behind you, driving on two lane roads becomes much easier. If I'm driving a road that doesn't provide frequent passing lanes, I make it a practice to pull over when it's safe to do so and let traffic clear from behind me. I do this to be courteous to the other drivers, but it's an important safety habit. If you have just a few cars behind you for very long, and they can't legally pass you, it's inevitable that someone will get impatient and do something stupid, like try to pass you on a double yellow line, thus putting everyone in harm's way. On some stretches, I've pulled over four or five times to let traffic clear.

When pulling off a road to let traffic pass, only do it when you can bring your speed down to near zero and when you won't hit a deep shoulder causing damage. Pull over far enough so vehicles behind you can pass safely. Get totally off the road. Unfortunately, in my opinion, Colorado does not provide enough turnoffs on many of the two-lane roads, so it's incumbent on you to find a safe place to pull over.

Lastly, when driving two-lane roads, be careful, especially on curves, to avoid getting off the pavement onto the shoulder. Many of the roads do not have adequate shoulders or there may be a drop off from the pavement that can damage your vehicles. It's another reason to keep your speed under control.

### **Additional Tips for mountain driving**

- Your GPS may not always work in the mountains. Study your map before your trip, so you can anticipate intersections and turns.
- Watch carefully for wildlife on mountain roads, especially for deer early in the morning or late at night. Another good reason to watch your speed, especially around blind corners.
- Be mindful of changing weather conditions. Especially on declines, if it's raining, allow additional space for braking. Allow plenty of space to the vehicle in front of you and avoid quick stops.
- Turn on tow/haul mode. Driving in the mountains is when you really find out about the advantages of this technology. It provides more torque when climbing and more engine braking when descending. If you're driving a diesel it might engage the exhaust brake.
- Truckers tell you to descend the hill in the same gear as you ascended. Learn to use the manual shifting capability even if you have an automatic transmission. Proper use of your gears will help keep your speed under control. The general rule is that you want to take full advantage of your tow vehicle's engine and transmission to minimize the use of your brake pedal. Watch your tachometer when using manual shifting.

- Know your escape route. (Some of our major highways have runaway truck ramps, designed for trucks when the brakes have failed.)
- Seek out other experienced drivers that may have advice that I didn't cover in this article.

I've tried to include here a few points that I consider important, but you'll eventually develop your own list. Meanwhile, take it easy and enjoy the ride. As the signs say at the borders: "Welcome to Colorful Colorado!"

We hope this information will be of help to you in planning your trip. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Safe travels!  
Rich Nortnik

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A great International Rally includes opportunities to learn about your Airstream and the Airstream lifestyle. If you are willing to share your experience with rally participants in Loveland, please contact [lovelandpresentations@airstreamclub.org](mailto:lovelandpresentations@airstreamclub.org).



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