

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO BACKCOUNTRY SAFETY

OURAY COUNTY



Ouray County backcountry is vast and beautiful, but it can change in an instant.
Be prepared. Recreate responsibly for your safety and the safety of others.

Ouray County Sheriff's Office
Non Emergency Line
970-252-4020



This brochure was created in partnership
with Ouray County, Ouray County Sheriff's
Office, Ouray County Public Health,
Ouray County Emergency Services.



4X4 & OHV GUIDELINES *Uphill traffic has the right of way. Yield to hikers, cyclist and animals.*

Stay The Trail | Keep your vehicle on the trail at all times. This includes parking at trail heads. **Don't Pummel the Tundra!** What is tundra? At high altitudes, tundra is the thin layer of grasses, small forbs, and flowers living over rocky, inorganic soils found near or above treeline and high altitudes. Driving on the tundra leaves scars for years to come.

Know Where to Go | Is the trail open to and a designated route for your vehicle? Vehicles over 50" wide must remain on 4x4 routes. Vehicles 50" and under may use the ATV routes.

Staging Pull off the road at the trailhead to prepare your vehicle and group. Allow access to the trail while staging.

Take it Slow | Enjoy the trail and scenery. Most speed limits are **15mph** unless otherwise posted.

Let 'Em Pass! | Pull over to the side of the trail and stop to let faster vehicles pass. Choose a wider spot in the trail to maximize safety and avoid vegetation damage.

Find Your Line | Aim your tires at rocks and other obstacles. Drive over obstacles to avoid trail widening and creating bypasses.

Keep Count | Using hand signals is a great way to let others know how many riders or vehicles are behind you. A closed fist means that the final rider of the group has passed.

Pack it Out | Leave the trail cleaner than you found it. Take the time to stop and pick up trash. Always take out what you brought in.





OURAY COUNTY GETTING THERE



COLORADO
Department of Transportation

Route Information • Speeds limits • Estimated Trip Times • Travel Alerts • Road Closures • Road Cams • Road Conditions • Traction Laws

www.COtrip.org

PARKING

Backcountry users should park in clearly marked and designated parking areas, and use extreme caution when leaving vehicles or trailers on the side of the road. Vehicles may be ticketed or towed in no parking areas.



When parking, look for caution signs in areas that indicate no stopping or standing at the location.

Hwy 550 parking is limited. Look for designated parking at the summit of:

- Red Mountain Pass Summit—Near mile marker 80 • Ironton Park – Near mile marker 86
- Idarado Mine Overlook – Just south of mile marker 82 between 82 and 81



BE COVID CAUTIOUS

For unvaccinated people, outdoor activities that allow plenty of space between you and others pose a lower risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus than indoor activities do. Being outside offers other benefits, too. It provides an emotional boost and can help you feel less tense, stressed, angry or depressed. And sunlight can give your body vitamin D, too. If you are not vaccinated and traveling to the high country in a car with vaccinated friends, it's recommended that you wear a mask while in the vehicle.

TAKE THE PLEDGE

"I pledge to follow the guidelines below so that I may understand the risks involved in exploring the backcountry and will do my best to play it safe." — colorado.com/BackcountryPledge



Know Your Destination

Always tell someone where you are going and when you will be back home. Weather in the high country can change quickly. Check recent weather and trip reports at CDOT's COtrip.org for travel warnings on mountain passes before you set out. Have a plan B if you arrive to find the trailhead closed, crowded, or encounter unsafe conditions. Know and respect trail and area closures. **HWY 550 will have many delays this summer and fall due to fiber optic installation between Ouray and Silverton.**

Know Your Equipment

Before going out, always have an emergency kit in your vehicle. Include extra supplies like water, food, sunscreen, and warm layers of clothing. If you enter into remote terrain, make sure you have a shovel, winch, and a GPS locator if you have no cell coverage.



Know The Weather

Weather can be unexpected and change quickly, and monsoons, heavy rains, and mudslides can often strike throughout the summer.



OurayCountyCO.gov
About Us/Weather tab

Know Your Limits

Have the proper equipment or bring an experienced friend or use a professional guide. Many guides for 4x4 or climbing are available for hire in Ouray. Be confident in your ability to use or drive your equipment safely by seeking education and training.

Stick To The Trails

By sticking to trails and camping at least 200 feet from lakes, rivers, and streams, you're helping natural areas stay natural.

Even though shortcuts can be tempting, please don't take them. A few extra strides on the path will protect plants and animals. Fines and fees will be charged if you are caught driving or camping on the tundra or other designated no camping areas. Never camp on private property.

Recreate Inclusively

Show respect for others in the outdoors while welcoming all types of recreation, identities, and abilities.

Recreate Considerately

Excessive noise, uncontrolled pets, and damaged surroundings take away from the experience of other outdoor enthusiasts.



CARE FOR COLORADO

CARE FOR COLORADO PRINCIPLES



When it comes to your trash and or waste, please always carry out what you bring in.

- Use refillable water bottles to cut down on plastic bottle waste.
- Wash whatever else needs cleaning at least 200 feet from waterways, and use biodegradable soap.
- If you have to poo, walk at least 70 steps from trails, water, and people. Dig a cat hole 6 inches deep, do your thing in the hole, cover it and pack out your TP. Or, use a wag bag (a disposable bag found in most outdoor stores), so you can pack out your waste.

Be Careful With Fire

- Always check for fire restrictions before you leave.
- When putting out a fire, water it until you can handle the embers. *Never let a fire burn unattended.*
- The best place to build a fire is within an existing fire ring. Keep the fire small and burning only for the time you are using it. Allow the wood to burn completely to ash. Put out fires with water, not dirt. Dirt may not completely extinguish the fire.
- Always put cigarettes out completely, and don't leave your butts behind.

Leave It As You Found It

- Leave plants, rocks and historical items as you find them, so others experience the joy of discovery.
- Please don't pick the wildflowers but do take photos!



PLEASE KEEP WILDLIFE WILD

Wild animals are naturally afraid of humans. Animals that become accustomed to humans approaching or feeding them become dangerous. Confrontations with bears and cougars are rare. In recent years, attacks by bears and wildlife are most commonly the direct result of people approaching the animals for photographs, hiking off trails in dense brush, or feeding them.

Colorado is home to many wild creatures.

To keep them and you safe, please know the following:

- Don't approach them.
- Do not feed them.
- Most wildlife is most active during the early mornings and late afternoons.
- Be extra careful of baby wildlife and their protective mothers.
- Keep dogs leashed. If not, your dog will run back to you, and the bear will chase it back to you.
- Do let bears know you're there by wearing bear bells so as not to surprise them.
- Don't run from bears.
- Bring bear spray.
- Ensure all food and trash are in a fully closed and locked vehicle with all the windows rolled up.
- Do not leave food or trash in unlocked coolers.
- No food in tents, even wrappers attract bears.



FIRE RESTRICTIONS

**Know all 3 of Colorado's Fire Restriction Phases. It only takes one spark to ignite a wildfire.
Please do your part and protect our beautiful mountains.**

The restrictions are categorized by "STAGE," depending on severity. To make the various types of bans easier to understand, we've described what each "STAGE" means to outdoor recreation.

Please know that breaking the rules set up in these restrictions can result in criminal charges (fines and imprisonment); they're also crucial for you to follow to prevent wildfires. Preventing wildfires is a team effort by everyone that steps foot on at-risk terrain.

PENALTIES FOR LEAVING A CAMPFIRE UNATTENDED OR VIOLATING FIRE RESTRICTIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Any person that leaves a fire unattended or fail to thoroughly extinguish a fire before leaving can be fined \$50.
- Any person who starts, builds, tends, or maintains a fire in violation of fire restrictions can be charged with a class 2 misdemeanor and fined \$250-\$1000.
- Any person who knowingly violates fire restrictions can be charged with a class 6 felony.
- Any person who starts, builds, tends or maintains a fire in a careless and reckless manner that indicates a lack of due regard for the fire hazard present, or willful disregard for the safety of persons and property, can be charged with a misdemeanor and fined \$1000.
- In addition to the penalties, the court may require that fire suppression costs due to a wildfire be reimbursed. (Colorado Revises Statutes - 33-15-106)

STAGE 1 Fire Restrictions

The following acts are prohibited:

- Building or using a fire outside of a developed campsite.
- Smoking except while in a vehicle, building, developed campsite, or a barren or cleared area.
- Use of all fireworks and use of explosives.
- Operating any internal or external combustion engine without a functioning spark-arresting device. Chainsaws etc.

STAGE 2 FIRE RESTRICTIONS

Policies put in place by "Stage 1" restrictions are intensified. The following acts are prohibited:

- Building or using a fire of any kind.
- Smoking anywhere except in an enclosed vehicle or building.
- Possessing or using any kind of pyrotechnic device (including all fireworks).
- Use of an explosive. Target shooting etc.
- Use of equipment powered by an internal combustion engine between 1PM and 1AM (including chainsaws).
- Operating any internal or external combustion engine without a functioning spark-arresting device. Chainsaws etc.
- Using any kind of torch with an open flame (includes welding).
- Use of motor vehicles off of official roads except parking in spots devoid of vegetation less than 10 feet from roadways and parking overnight at developed campgrounds and trailheads.

STAGE 3 Fire Restrictions

These areas are completely closed down due to extreme risk. Only persons with specific written permission for fire entry may be allowed in: official fire fighting-related personnel, and at times, owners and lessees of land.



Use this piece for guidance, but always check with local authorities for official policies.

Stay current with Ouray County's fire bans by checking any of the following websites or social media platforms.

Ouray County Sheriff: <https://ouraycountyco.gov/152/Sheriff>

Grand Mesa Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gmug>
www.coemergency.com

BACKCOUNTRY QUICK SAFETY TIPS CHECKLIST

- ✓ Tell someone where you are going
- ✓ Wear a backpack, proper clothing & helmet
- ✓ Bring water & food
- ✓ Bring first aid kit
- ✓ Bring emergency road pack in vehicle
(Food, water, blankets, extra gloves, and boots, etc.)

- ✓ Watch for marked "No Parking" areas that are rock fall areas and designated for turnarounds.
- ✓ Bring a map, cell phone, GPS locator, or other devices (in case you have no cell coverage)
- ✓ Recreate with a buddy. Don't venture out alone.
- ✓ Check the weather forecasts



CORSAR CARD COLORADO OUTDOOR RECREATION SEARCH AND RESCUE

The CORSAR card is available for only \$3 for a one-year card and \$12 for five-year card.

Colorado residents and visitors are well served by dedicated volunteer search and rescue teams. By purchasing a Colorado Outdoor Recreation Search and Rescue (CORSAR) card, you are contributing to the Search and Rescue Fund, which reimburses teams for costs incurred in search and rescues activities across the State of Colorado.

The CORSAR card is not insurance and does not reimburse individuals, nor does it pay for medical transport. The Search and Rescue fund (SAR) was created to reimburse political subdivisions and search and rescue organizations for the costs incurred in conducting search and rescue operations and to provide funding for the purchase of search and rescue-related equipment.

*Support our local Ouray Mountain Rescue Team by purchasing and downloading your CORSAR Card today at:
Dola.colorado.gov/sar/cardPurchase.jsf*

Ouray County Sheriff's Office
Non Emergency Lines: 970-249-9110 & 970-252-4020
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www.ouraycountyco.gov/152/Sheriff

Grand Mesa Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests
fs.usda.gov/detail/gmug
Facebook.com/GMUG.NF

