

Colorado Trip Update with Supplemental Information

August 12, 2026

References

- [Visit Ouray Colorado – Homepage](#)
- *Planning for the Colorado Field Trip (Fall 2026)* - Dennis Fritsche - [PDF](#)
- [Photographing the Southwest: Colorado & New Mexico: Martres, Laurent: 9780916189143: Amazon.com: Books](#)
- [Artists on the Loose by Alan Whiteside | Blurb Books](#)

Supplemental Information

- Satellite Phone Rental (Thanks Chris Fitch)
 - [Iridium 9505A Satellite Phone Rental | Globalcom Satellite Phones](#)
- Starlink Mini Internet Connection (Thanks Janice Goetz)
 - [Starlink | Mini](#)
- Million-Dollar Highway Photography Guide (Thanks Clive Fernando and AI) [PDF](#)
- Jeep Tours (Thanks Anita Oakley)
 - Switzerland of America Jeep Adventures [Switzerland of America - Jeep Rentals and Jeep Tours in Ouray Colorado](#)
 - Yankee Boy Basin [Yankee Boy Basin - Switzerland of America](#)
 - Others Available
- Per Cliff, the Jeep Rental Companies will generally provide maps about where novice off-road drivers can drive.

My Trips to the San Juan Mountains

- Central and West - Silverton, Durango, Ouray, Ridgeway, Telluride
- First trip - September 20-22, 2010
 - Shorts weather, no snow on mountains
 - Patchy fall color
 - Dry
 - Toyota 4Runner
- Second Trip (with DCC) – September 30 – October 6, 2022
 - Cool, snowed in mountains first night
 - WOW! Fall colors
 - Wet, some roads not advisable for passenger cars
 - Acura MDX AWD



2010



2022

San Juan Mountains – A New Adventure

- PPC Trip – September 28 – October 2, 2026 (Lexus TX350)
- Weather/snow – unknown
- Color – unknown, but under stress due to drought
 - Color may be late or muted, or leaves might turn brown and fall off (leaving nothing but classic aspen tree trunks)
- Conditions – unknown
 - Drought says dry but Monsoon season still active (a flood watch today 8/12/2026)
- Heavy monsoons caused river flooding exasperated by the fire runoff and has caused landslides temporarily closing roads including Highway 550 to Silverton.
- Wildfires are still burning throughout the west/southwest. Gold Mountain fire is closest to Ouray.

Gold Mountain Fire as of 20260812, 1:57PM



Incident Details

Discovered	Jun 27, 2026 11:33 PM
Complexity	Type 2 Incident
Size	39646 Acres (160.4 km ²)
Contained	87%
24hr Growth	0 Acres
Cause	Undetermined
Region	Rocky Mountain
County	Ouray
Lat/Lng	38.0329, -107.6640
Responders	134
Active	45 Days
Updated	19 hours ago
Last checked	1:56 PM

Trip Outlook

- We can say the Fall Colors will be less than WOW!
- Plans will need to be adjusted based on real-time conditions
- Our group has our plans going and coming and have options for Day Trips

Our Group Itinerary

2026			Stay	
Day	Date	Activity	City	Hotel
Sat	26-Sep	Travel	Clayton, NM	Quality Inn and Suites
Sun	27-Sep	Travel/Evening Shoot GSD	Great Sand Dunes	Sand Dunes Lodge
Mon	28-Sep	Morning Shoot GSD/Scenic Drive to Ouray	Ouray	Ouray River Resort
Tue	29-Sep	Day Trip	Ouray	Ouray River Resort
Wed	30-Sep	Day Trip	Ouray	Ouray River Resort
Thu	1-Oct	Day Trip	Ouray	Ouray River Resort
Fri	2-Oct	Day Trip	Ouray	Ouray River Resort
Sat	3-Oct	Scenic Drive to Durango via Mesa Verde	Durango	Durango Lodge
Sun	4-Oct	Train ride - all day until 5:30	Bloomfield, NM	Best Western Territorial Inn & Suites
Mon	5-Oct	Highway 550 - Chaco Canyon, Black Place	Bernalillo	Holiday Inn Express
Tue	6-Oct	Travel - Cap Rock Canyon	Turkey	Hotel Tukey
Wed	7-Oct	Travel	Plano	Home

Caution

- Many of these day trips are on unpaved roads ranging from well-maintained gravel to rocky and rutted.
- IN GOOD WEATHER CONDITIONS - some are suitable for reasonably robust passenger cars and SUV's.
- You must do your own research about the roads and your vehicle.
- I have driven roads with ease one time and had to turned around another – don't push it just because you started on a road.
- Last Dollar Road is notoriously dangerous in wet weather, even for 4-wheel drive.
- Consider renting a jeep. But stay on roads suitable for novice off-roaders.

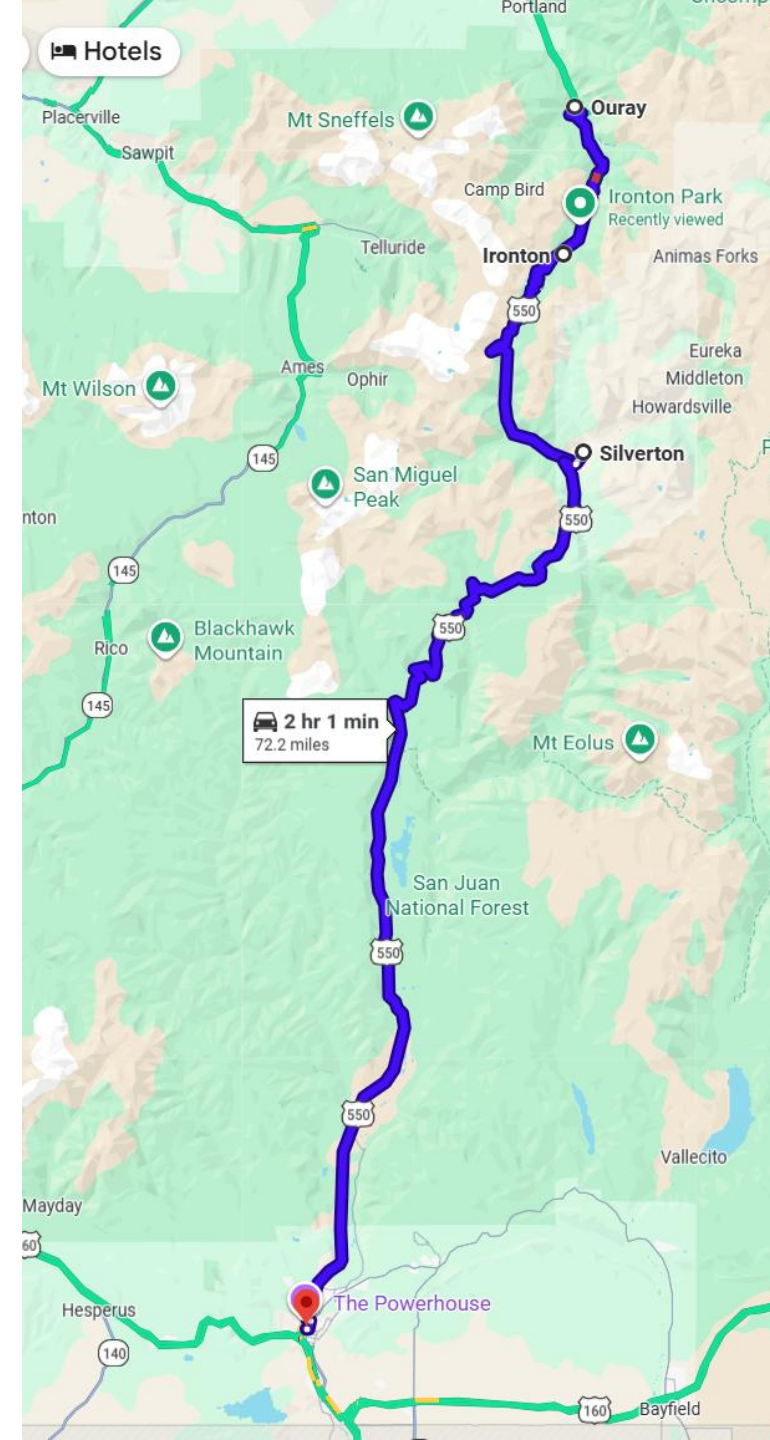
Driving Off-Road

- Capability of vehicle and driver determine where to drive.
- A 4WD might make the vehicle capable but does nothing for the driver's capability, except to

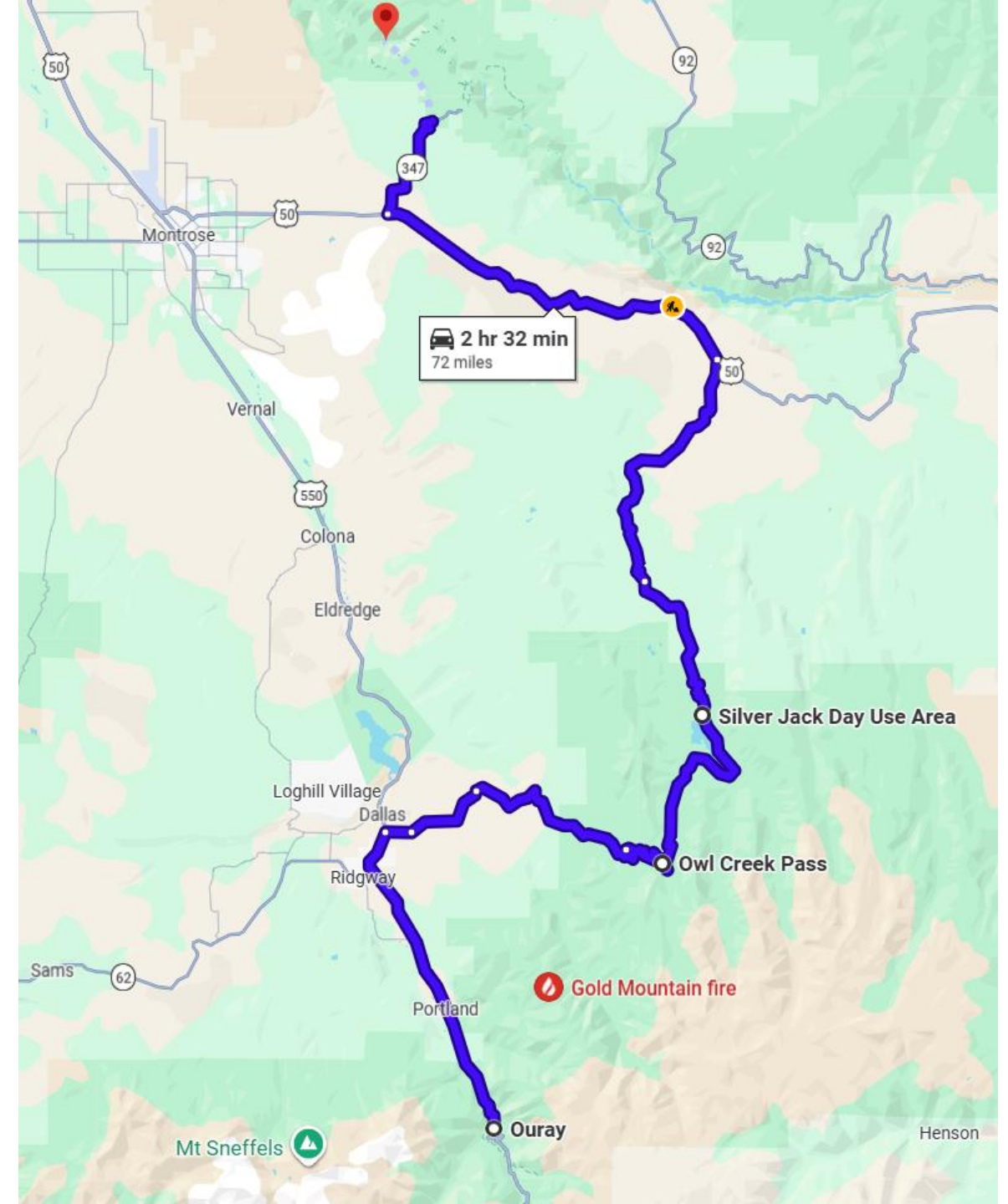
give the driver more confidence than capability.

USE CAUTION

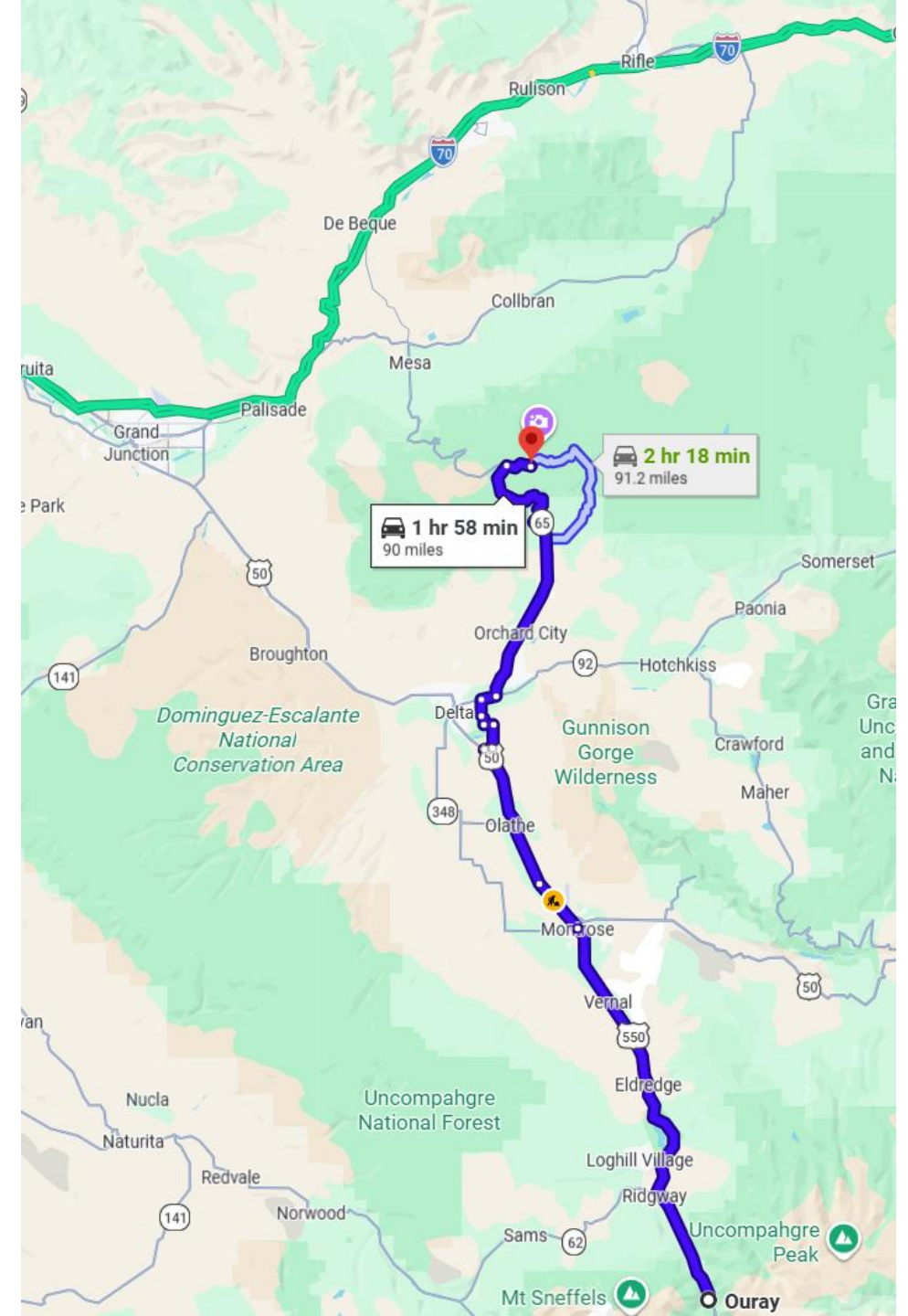
- Day Trip – Million Dollar Highway
- Explore Ouray
- Visitor Center for up-to-date info
- Ouray to Silverton
 - Box Creek Canyon
 - Ironton
 - Red Mountain
 - Silverton
- Silverton to Durango
- Return same way
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1l8r8JpGo9o> takes 2 hours to watch - Nancy road every mile



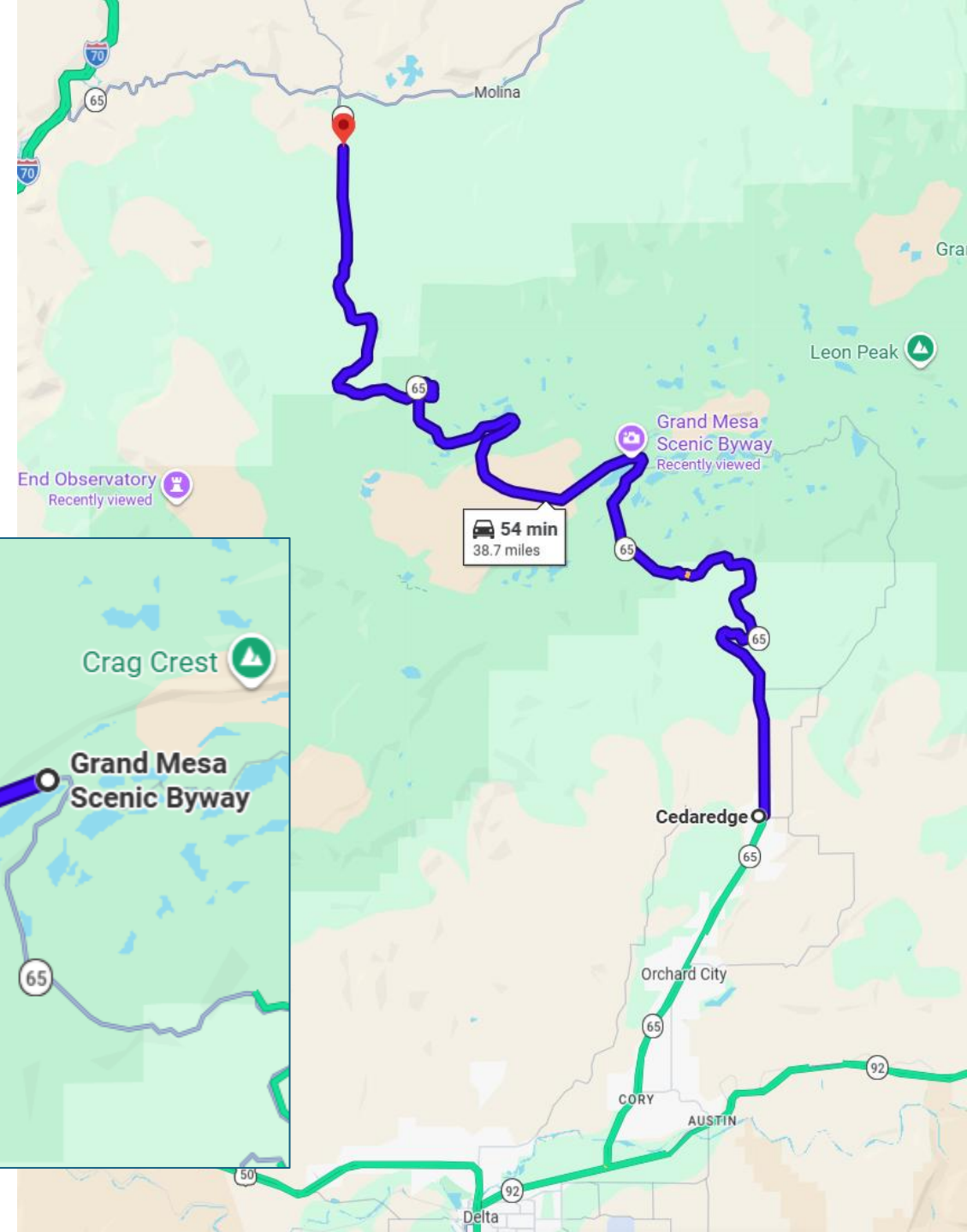
- Day Trip
- Ouray to Black Canyon of the Gunnison via Owl Creek Pass and Back via Montrose/550
- <https://youtu.be/aPcQb74FgNw?si=Luwo1iLPPfK2XCdV>
- Option continue to Grand Mesa



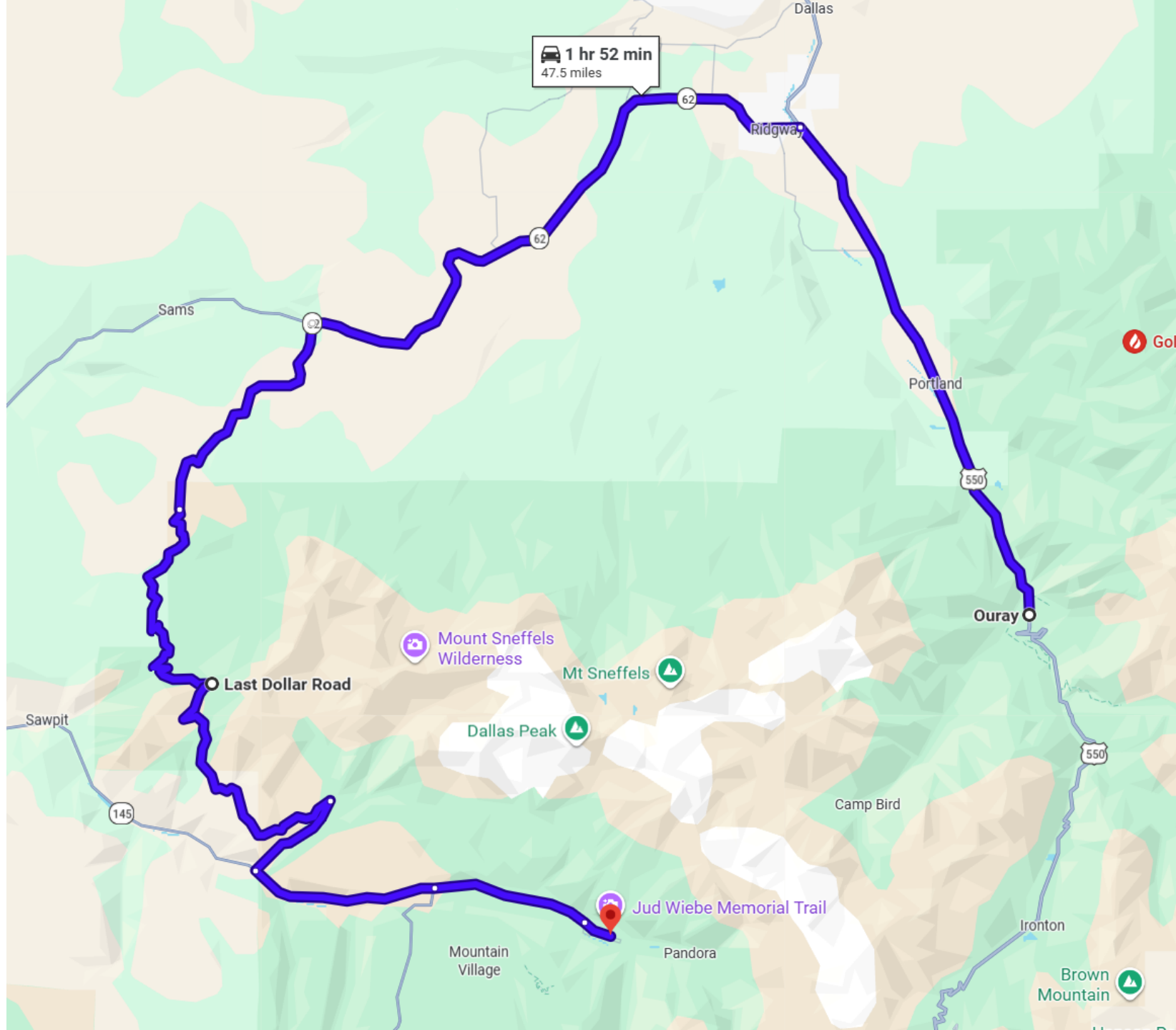
- Day Trip Grand Mesa
- This distinctive formation, with its flat top and steep cliff sides, covers hundreds of square miles. It's the largest flat-top mountain in the world — and, consequently, is chock-full of things to do all year long. Grand Mesa boasts more than 300 stream-fed alpine lakes at elevations over 11,000 feet, not to mention enough wildlife to keep anglers, photographers, and hikers alike entertained for days.



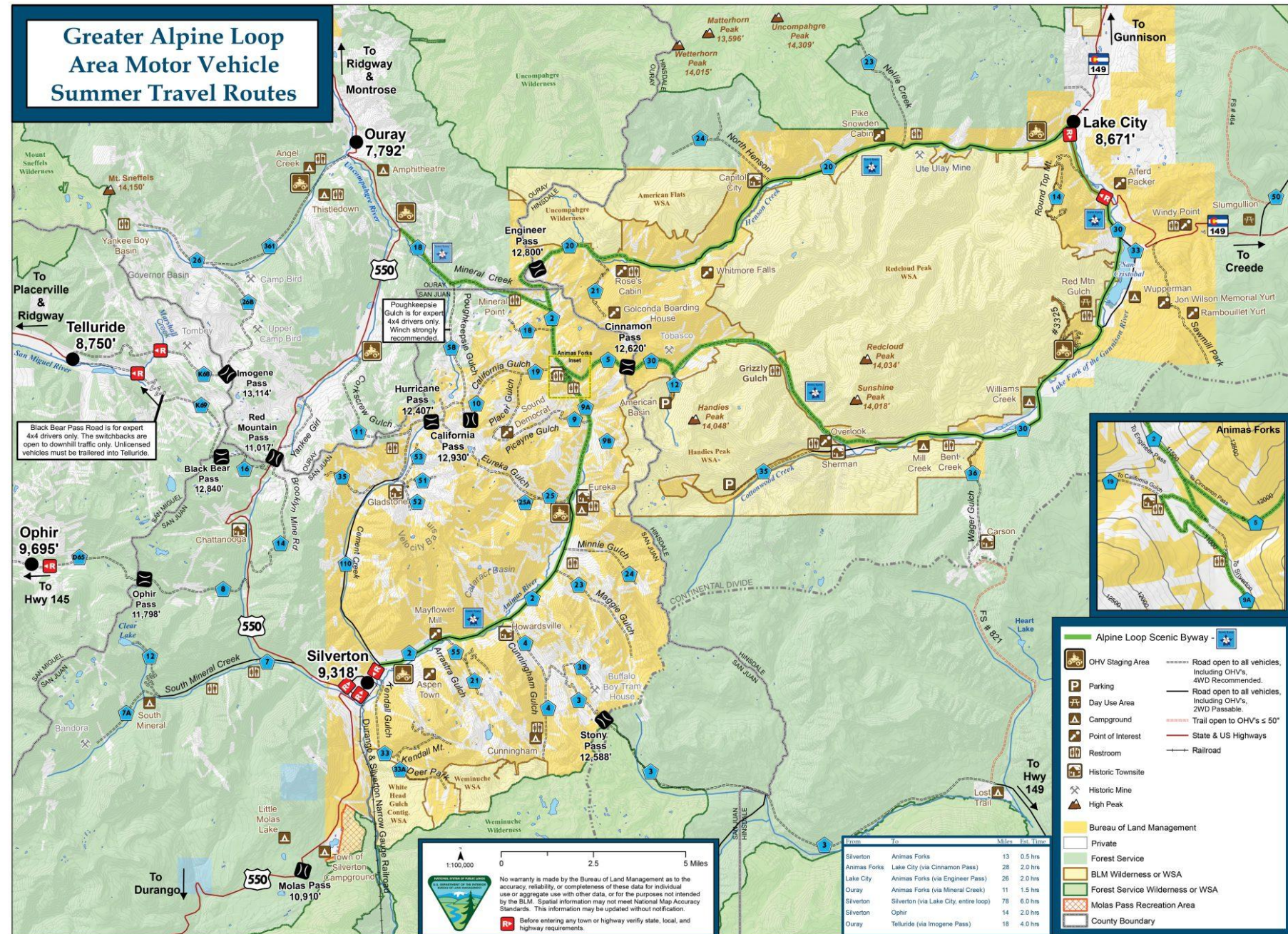
- Grand Mesa Scenic Byway
- Highway 65 from Cedaredge to Mesa
- Side trip to Lands End Observatory



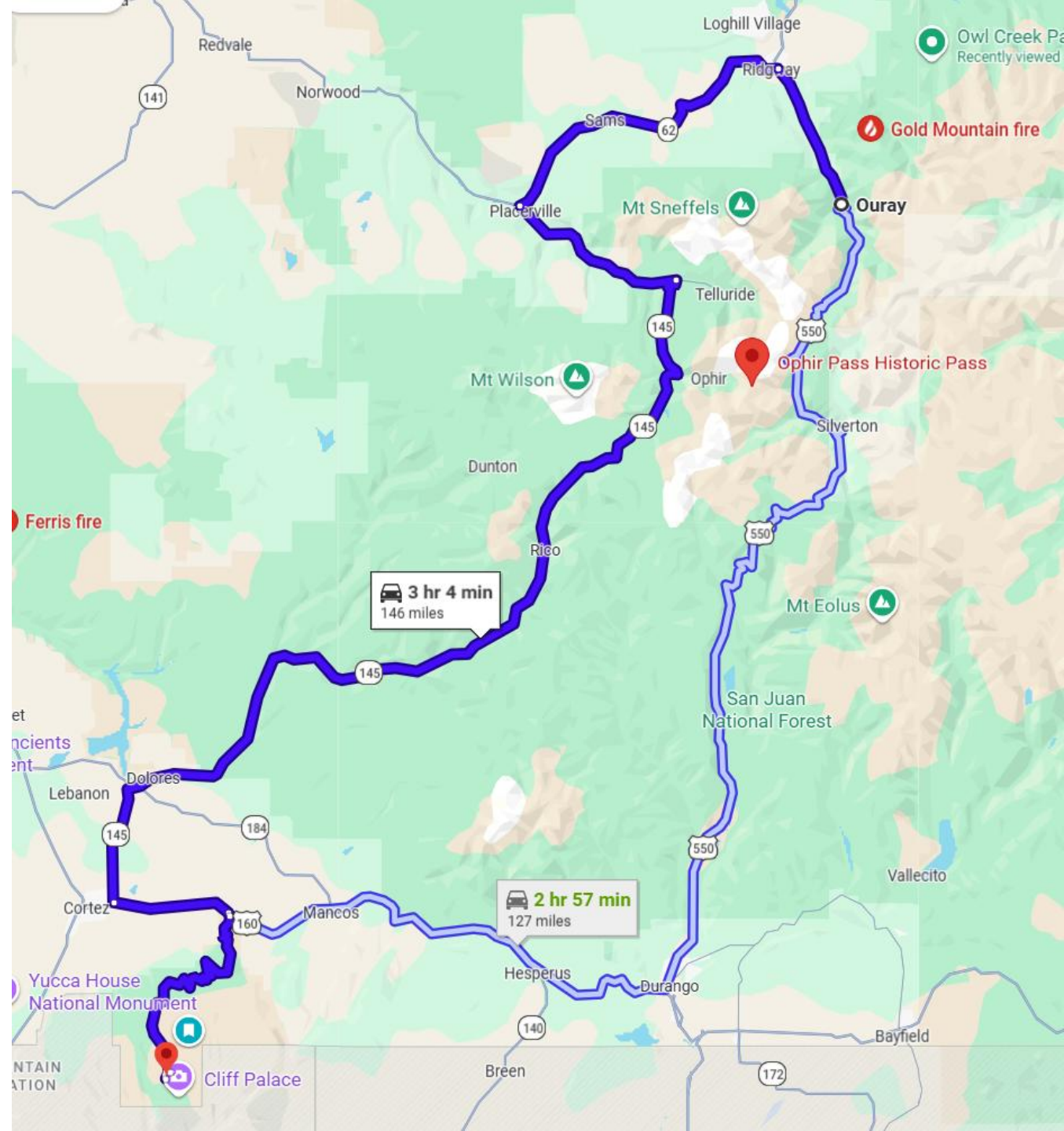
- Day Trip
- Ouray to Telluride via Last Dollar Road
- County Roads 4 & 5 & 7



- Day Trip
- Caution: Do not overextend
- Alpine Loop (Accessible portions)
- Driving the Alpine Loop: Mile-by-Mile Guide from Lake City | Lake City - A Peak Experience



- Saturday, October 3
- Scenic Drive to Durango for Train
 - Mesa Verde
 - Others



- **Sunday, October 4**
 - Train ride
 - Stay in Broomfield
- **Monday, October 5**
 - Visit Aztec Ruins if can get into the Kiva.
 - Chaco Canyon
 - Black Place
 - Stay in Bernalillo
- **Tuesday, October 6**
 - Route to Turkey
 - Caprock Canyon
- **Wednesday, October 7**
 - Drive Home

