

## Scenic Routes to Mancos

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### From East:

#### Garden City, KS to Mancos (480 miles)

US 50 west to La Junta, CO (about 155 miles). At La Junta, take Rt 10 west. Follow Rt 10 to Walsenburg (about 70 miles). At Walsenburg, Rt 10 becomes US 160. Follow US 160 west to Mancos about (250 miles).

This route, while mostly straight and flat, avoids superslab. It crosses the eastern prairie and between La Junta and Walsenburg, follows the old Mountain Route of the Santa Fe Trail. There are places where you can still see wagon ruts dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, if you know where to look. This stretch is lonely and devoid of services, so if you're riding a bike with a small tank, be sure to fill up in La Junta.

From Walsenburg west you will be on a somewhat busy road, but traffic typically moves well. You'll cross a couple of mountain passes (La Veta, Wolf Creek) between Walsenburg and Mancos.

#### Limon, CO to Mancos (450 miles)

US 24 west to Colorado Springs (about 70 miles). Work your way through Colorado Springs, and continue on US 24 west to Johnson Village (about 90 miles). At Johnson Village, go south on US 285 to Poncha Springs (about 20 miles). Go west on US 50 over Monarch Pass, through Gunnison to Montrose (about 125 miles). In Montrose, go south on US 550 to Ridgway (about 25 miles). Go west on Rt 62 to Placerville (about 25 miles). Go south on Rt 145 over Lizardhead Pass, through Rico And Dolores to Rt 184 (about 75 miles). Go south on Rt 184 to Mancos (about 20 miles).

Limon to Colorado Springs is a prairie crossing. Colorado Springs is the last real city you'll see along this route, and once you climb out into the mountains west of the city, you'll be in high country the rest of the way. After you top Wilkerson Pass, you'll cross South Park, a high valley that's often windy. **Beware of enthusiastic speed limit enforcement on US 285 between Johnson Village and Poncha Springs.**

Poncha Springs to Montrose is a nice ride on one of the few east/west routes through the Rockies. **Be respectful of the curves on the west (downhill) side of Monarch Pass.** The ride from Ridgway to Mancos is a great motorcycle route, and you'll have forgotten all about the prairie and the cities you crossed earlier.

## **From South:**

### **Raton, NM to Mancos (325 miles)**

I-25 north to Trinidad (about 20 miles) at exit 14A. Turn left to Rt 12 west (Highway of Legends). Follow Rt 12 signs as the road zigzags out of town to the west. Continue on Rt 12 through Stonewall, over Cuchara Pass to La Veta (about 70 miles). Just past La Veta, go west on US 160 to Mancos (about 230 miles).

The Highway of Legends (Rt 12) is a fine ride, with light traffic (once away from Trinidad), nice sweepers and great views. The US 160 leg takes you over La Veta and Wolf Creek Passes, and though US 160 is a major east/west route, traffic generally moves well.

### **Taos, NM to Mancos (230 miles)**

North through Taos to US 64. West on US 64 through Tres Piedras and Tierra Amarilla to Chama (about 95 miles). After fueling up at Chama, continue west on US 64 to Biggs (about 15 miles) and go north on US 84 to US 160 east of Pagosa Springs (about 35 miles). Go west on Pagosa Springs to Mancos (about 85 miles).

This route crosses some beautiful and lonely country between Taos and Pagosa Springs. **Be sure to fill your tank in Taos.** US 64 crosses the Rio Grande Gorge, worth a stop. Just west of the gorge, keep an eye out for the Earthship community on the right side of the highway.

### **Albuquerque, NM to Mancos (270 miles)**

I-25 north from Albuquerque to exit 242. North on US 550 through Cuba to Bloomfield (about 150 miles). At Bloomfield, go west on US 64 to Shiprock (about 40 miles). At Shiprock, go north on US 491 to Cortez (about 45 miles). At Cortez, go east on US 160 to Mancos (about 15 miles).

This route crosses a lot of Indian reservation land, passing through the Zia, Jemez, Jicarilla Apache, Navajo and Ute Mountain reservations. Gasoline is available in all towns mentioned above.

## **From West:**

### **Flagstaff, AZ to Mancos (285 miles)**

North on US 89 to US 160 (about 65 miles). Continue on US 160 through the four corners to Cortez, CO and east to Mancos (about 220 miles).

Crossing Hopi, Navajo and Ute Mountain Indian reservations, you'll see plenty of classic southwestern countryside, with mesas, buttes and desert for miles around. You'll be thinking Captain America and Billy. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated while passing through this very arid country, and monitor your fuel supply.

### **Green River, UT to Mancos (185 miles)**

I-70 east to exit 180 (about 20 miles). South on US 191 through Moab and La Sal Junction to Monticello (about 85 miles). East on US 491 to Cortez (about 65 miles). East on US 160 to Mancos (about 15 miles).

US 191 crosses the Colorado River just north of Moab, with beautiful red rock country all around, then parallels the La Sal mountain range before crossing east into farming country north of Cortez.

### **Green River, UT to Mancos, alternate route (260 miles)**

I-70 east to exit 180 (about 20 miles). South on US 191 through Moab to La Sal Junction (about 55 miles). East on Rt 46 into Colorado. Road becomes Rt 90. Stop at Bedrock Store (about 35 miles) for a cold drink. Continue east on Rt 90 to Rt 141 (about 20 miles). Go east on Rt 141. About 5 miles east of Naturita, Rt 141 heads south, but you want to continue east (straight) on Rt 145 through Norwood, Placerville (turn right at Placerville to stay on Rt 145), Rico and Dolores to Rt 184 (about 115 miles). Go south (left) on Rt 184 to Mancos (about 18 miles).

This is a longer route from Green River, with some very nice riding from La Sal Junction into Colorado and along the Dolores/San Miguel river valley, down Norwood Hill, up over Lizardhead Pass. Beautiful and varied scenery and topography from red rock canyon to high mountain passes. The Bedrock to Norwood stretch can be hot in July, so drink plenty of water.

## **From North:**

### **Cheyenne WY to Mancos (605 miles)**

I-80 west to exit 313 (about 50 miles). Rt 230 south to Colorado state line (about 40 miles). Road becomes Rt 127; continue south to Northgate (about 12 miles). At Northgate, continue south on Rt 125 to Walden (about 12 miles). At Walden, go south on Rt 14 to Muddy Pass (about 35 miles). At Muddy Pass, go south on US 40 about 20 miles, and turn right (west) on Rt 134. Go over Gore Pass to Toponas (about 20 miles). At Toponas, go south on Rt 131 to Wolcott (about 35 miles). Take I-70 east to exit 171 (about 15 miles). At exit 171, go south on US 24 to Buena Vista. Just south of Buena Vista, the road becomes US 285 (about 70 miles). Continue south on US 285 to Poncha Springs (about 25 miles). At Poncha Springs, go west on US 50 over Monarch Pass, through Gunnison to Montrose (about 125 miles). At Montrose, go south on US 550 to Ridgway (about 30 miles). At Ridgway, go west on Rt 62 to Placerville (about 25 miles). At Placerville, go south on Rt 145 over Lizardhead Pass, through Rico and Dolores to Rt 184 (about 75 miles). Go south on Rt 184 to Mancos (about 18 miles).

This route crosses some very nice open country, and lightly traveled Gore Pass is an unexpected treasure. Just south of I-70 is Minturn, home of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Brigade training camp. Remains of the camp are visible along east side of the road. Leadville, CO, south of Minturn, is the incorporated town with the highest elevation in the country, at 10,000'.

**Be alert for enthusiastic speed limit enforcement between Leadville and Poncha Springs!**