

HeartCycle Bicycle Touring Club
MILLION DOLLAR VIEWS ALONG THE MILLION DOLLAR
HIGHWAY, SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS, COLORADO

- Dates:** Orientation meeting in Durango on Saturday, June 24, 2023. Riding Sunday, June 25, through Friday, June 30, with one rest day in Ouray. Depart Saturday, July 1 (lodging last night included).
- Leaders:** Janet Slate and Roger Sass;
SAGs: Mary Ann Loeffler and Martha MacCormack
- Miles:** Approximately 215 miles and 14,000 feet of elevation gain (with extra climbing options)
- Rating:** Intermediate/Advanced. The mileage is not far but some of the grades are steep. Guardrails are absent along much of Hwy 550; riders need to be experienced enough that that does not rattle them.
- Riders:** 30
- Price:** \$1,800 (double occupancy). \$450 at registration. Balance due March 23, 2023. Single supplements are limited, and the cost is \$2,700.
- Cancellation:** [Standard cancellation policy](#). Travel insurance is recommended.

OVERVIEW

Arguably the most beautiful part of Colorado, the San Juan Mountains along U.S. Highway 550 (the Million Dollar Highway) offer stunning views in every direction that are best enjoyed by bicycle. Late June is the perfect time of year to ride in southwestern Colorado; monsoons don't start until July. The weather is sunny with average lows in the 50s and average highs in the 70s. Join Roger, Janet, Mary Ann, and Martha for spectacular scenery, unforgettable riding, good food, and fun. The first day of riding will be a loop in the Durango area, then we head north into the San Juan Mountains for overnights in historic Silverton and Ouray. We'll spend enough time in these historic towns to enjoy their charm, and maybe a hike or hot springs.

A limited number of bicycles may be transported from Denver and back for a \$150.00 fee.

ITINERARY

Day 0: Saturday, June 24. Arrival and orientation meeting at 5:00 PM in Durango.

Day 1: Sunday, June 25 – Durango area – 41 miles, 2500 feet. This loop ride takes us past Fort Lewis College, ranked USA Cycling’s #1 Division I team in the nation four times in five disciplines, out past Lake Nighthorse, a reservoir southwest of Durango named in honor of former U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, toward Breen and Hesperus, and back through Wildcat Canyon (Colorado Highway 141). HeartCycle will host a group meal this evening.



By Jeffrey Beall – Own work, CC BY 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=81402953>

Day 2: Monday, June 26 – Durango to Silverton – 52 miles, 5550 feet.

Heading north, we take Florida Road and County Road 250 for ~18 miles before we join U.S. Highway 550, up past the local ski area (Purgatory), over Coal Bank Pass (10,640 ft), down about 1000 feet, then climb up to Molas Pass (10,910 ft), where the views are spectacular. A quick 7-mile descent takes us to our hotel in historic Silverton (9318 ft), home to two new breweries.

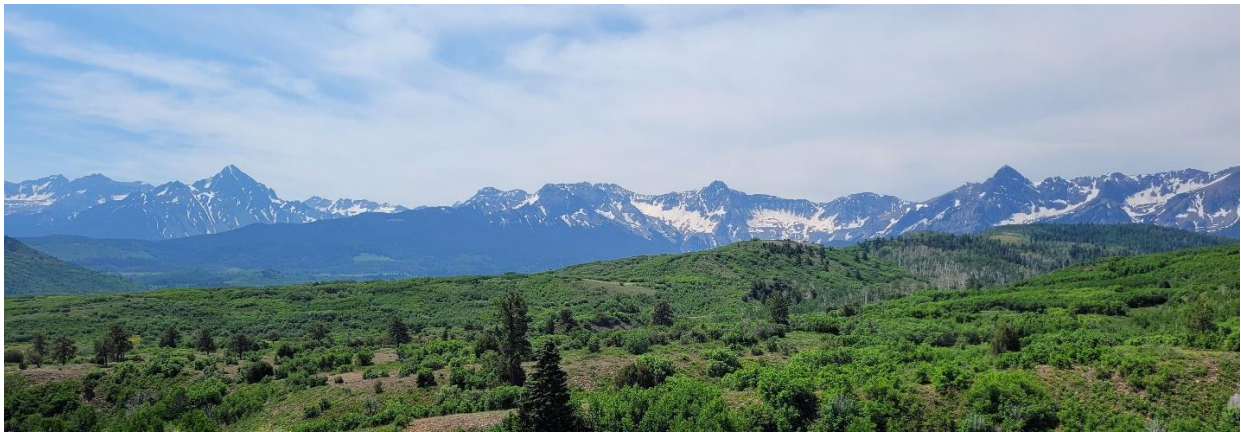


Day 3: Tuesday, June 27 – Silverton to Ouray (by way of Ridgway—and Dallas Divide, if you want) – 45 miles, 2650 feet (or ~66 mi, ~4650 feet).

Getting back out to Hwy 550, we begin our 10-mile ascent of Red Mountain Pass (11,018 ft). The descent to Ouray is technical with sharp turns and narrow lanes. Between Silverton and Ouray, 70 named avalanche paths intersect Highway 550. We'll pass Ouray and head to Ridgway, a growing town, known as the gateway to the San Juan Mountains. Intrepid riders may decide to continue their ride to Dallas Divide where they'll be treated to a magnificent view of the Sneffels Range. We'll all make our way back to Ouray where we'll spend two nights.

Day 4: Wednesday, June 28 – Ouray.

Situated between steep mountains, Ouray (7792 feet) is known as the “Switzerland of America” because of the high mountains surrounding the town. Named after Chief Ouray of the Ute tribe, the small valley limits the population, which was 1,046 people in the 2020 census. Despite the size, you’ll find plenty to do in the quaint downtown, famous hot springs, or numerous hiking opportunities in Ouray—or go for a bike ride!



By Bede735 – Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29351598>

Day 5: Thursday, June 29 – Ouray to Silverton – 23 miles, 3350 feet. A short but steep ride along the famed Million Dollar Highway over Red Mountain Pass will have us back in Silverton with time to enjoy the town and environs. Steep drop-offs without guardrails make the ascent exciting and the views better. Hold your lane; the vehicles are not in a hurry.



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Day 6: Friday, June 30 – Silverton to Durango – 52 miles, 3200 feet. Not much of a warmup as we climb the 7 miles up to Molas Pass, so enjoy the view. A 4.5-mile descent followed by a 3-mile ascent has us at the top of Coal Bank Pass in short order. The first 5.5 miles of the descent off Coal Bank Pass is steep with some sharp turns. The remaining 2000 ft to Durango is gentler except for the section below Purgatory—enjoy! We get off Hwy 550 to take quiet 2-lane County Road 250, then CR 240 (Florida Rd) back to our hotel in Durango.

Saturday, July 1. We say our goodbyes and depart Durango.

For more information, please contact Janet Slate at jslate@ultrasys.net or Roger Sass at rogersass@hotmail.com.