I'm not a robot

A four-season state with almost unlimited sunny days, Colorado boasts the top-ranked ski resorts in the US, towering dunes, white water rapids and 39,000 miles of hiking trails. It also has 42 state parks and four national parks, including the incredibly popular Rocky Mountain National Park. Quite the outdoor paradise!But there's more to Colorado than stunning landscapes and scenic beauty. The state has a thriving cultural and live music scene, exciting cities, charming mountain towns and some of the best craft brews in the US. With so many options it can be hard to know where to start these are the best experiences in Colorado.1. Explore ancient cliff dwellings at Mesa VerdeMesa Verde National Park is a one-of-a-kind place, the largest and best-preserved Native American archaeological site in the US. Nestled in a stunning landscape of canyons and mesas near the Four Corners region, Mesa Verde is home to more than 5000 Ancestral Puebloan sites that developed over hundreds of years before being abruptly abandoned in 1300CE for reasons still unknown.What remains is one of the most exhilarating adventures in the West: clambering down ladders, crawling through tight tunnels, and peering into elaborate cliff dwellings, all to puzzle over what life was once like here.2. Enjoy the fall colors in AspenJust beyond the cowboy-meets-Hollywood glam of Aspen, the twin Maroon Bell mountains rise dramatically over a long mirrored lake. Surrounded by thick aspen groves, fall brings a sea of fluttering yellow and orange leaves. Its sublime, a dream, and one of the best places in the state to see fall colors.Planning tip: The trail near the lake can get crowded this time of year, especially in late September when the leaves are at their peak. Arrive before 8am for a parking spot, some solitude and the best chance at seeing wildlife. Otherwise, take the shuttle from town and hike deep into the aspen groves towards Crater Lake to take in the beauty without the crowd. Advertisement Visitors camping in Rocky Mountain National Park. Damon Shaw/Shutterstock 3. Hike in Rocky Mountain National ParkThe number one tourist draw in the state, Rocky Mountain National Park is quintessentially Colorado, attracting over 4.5 million visitors a year. Every view is a picture postcard: a vast landscape of soaring granite peaks (77 of its mountains top 12,000 feet), 147 shimmering lakes, flower-filled meadows and lush alpine forests.But its no secret that RMNP can get jam-packed, especially in summer. Lose the crowds by leaving the roadside viewpoints and lacing up your hiking boots instead.The park has 300 miles of trails catering to all levels of ability and ambition, from an easy stroll around Bear Lake to an epic trek up Longs Peak. Impressive vistas and perfect solitude also can be found on hundreds of thousands of acres of backcountry, areas home to herds of elk, scattered bighorn sheep, black bears and more. The exterior of a historic boarded post office in St Elmo. John Elk/Getty Images 4. Visit the ghost town of St ElmoFollowing a bumpy dirt road to the abandoned mining settlement of St Elmo, its easy to imagine the prospectors who plied this same roadway, following tales of precious metal found deep in the Rockies. Tucked into the base of the Collegiate Peaks, St Elmo is Colorados best-preserved ghost town.More than 40 buildings are still standing, most dating to the 1880s when the town hit its apex. Wandering past the saloon, billiards hall, courthouse and jail, visitors get a peek into Colorados past, when gold and silver ruled these hills. It serves as a modern-day reminder of the quick riches and busted dreams of the past, the making and breaking of the West.5. Throw back a Colorado craft brewColorado takes its beer seriously, treating craft brewing like a high art. Almost any town you visit from tiny Del Norte to beer-centric Fort Collins has a favorite local brew or two (or 20). One things for sure: you wont go thirsty for an IPA in Colorado.Planning tip: If youre here in October, try to score tickets to the Great American Beer Festival. Held in Denver, the festival draws more than 1000 master brewers from across the nation, vying for Best of Show medals in categories like Best Coffee Beer, Best Barrel-Aged Strong Beer and many more. The famed Red Rocks amphitheater on a sunny day. Capture Light/Shutterstock 6. Catch a concert at Red RocksTheres just something magical about experiencing a concert at Red Rocksthe sounds of instruments and song, the sight of people dancing, the dark sky scattered with stars and the iconic 400-foot-high red sandstone monoliths standing guard on either side. Once a sacred gathering place of the Ute tribe, today Red Rocks is world-renowned for its natural acoustics and stunning beauty, a one-of-a-kind amphitheater.Its no surprise big-name bands like The Beatles, U2, Jimi Hendrix and The Grateful Dead have played and recorded albums here and that the venue continues to draw the worlds best musicians and performers. Just 15 miles from Denver, its easily accessible, too.Planning tip: Do as the locals do and arrive early to catch the sunset before the show.7. Soak in Glenwood Hot SpringsPerched at the end of a gorgeous canyon at the confluence of the Colorado and Roaring Fork Rivers, present-day Glenwood Hot Springs have been treasured for their healing properties for centuries. Long before the arrival of Europeans, the Ute bathed in these same steamy thermal waters, which they called yampah (great medicine).Today, a historic resort sits on the site and the hot springs pump out 3.5 million gallons of mineral water a day, which flows through two pools, one a whopping 400ft long.Planning tip: Temperatures range from 93F to 104F, warm enough to soak in even on a snowy January day. Bring your swimsuit and, if need be, your ski hat. A stretch of the scenic Million Dollar Highway with a sheer drop on one side. Shutterstock 8. Drive the Million Dollar HighwayDeep in the San Juan Mountains, the Million Dollar Highway connects the towns of Ouray and Silverton. It is a mind-blowingly scenic drive and one of Colorados best road trips. Twenty-five miles of hairpin turns and tight S-bends cut through the Uncompahgre Gorge, whose steep mountainsides loom large and close, rising into lofty, mist-shrouded peaks, while the valley floor lies far below, dotted with fir trees and wildflowers. Advertisement Planning tip: Drive with caution. The road is formidable, even in good weather, and the lack of guardrails doesnt help. Take advantage of pullouts. The Red Mountain Pass (11,018ft) is a favorite for its 360-degree views.9. Hula hoop in TellurideIt supposedly all started back in the '90s when Colorado ski bum band String Cheese Incident started chucking hula hoops into the crowd at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival. Festival-goers turned the toys into dance partners, and the fad stuck. You can count on a large contingent of "hoopers" at every Telluride Bluegrass Festival show.Its just one of the many odd-ball pleasures of this amazing celebration of folk music and mountain life, held in Telluride every summer and drawing big-name bands and thousands of revelers. Telluride itself is stunningly beautiful, nestled in a narrow box canyon, surrounded on three sides by rugged peaks and even a waterfall. It's not easy to get to, but it's well worth the effort. A spectacular sand dune next to a forest-covered mountain in Great Sand Dunes National Park. Galyna Andrushko/Shutterstock 10. Surf down the tallest dunes in North AmericaGreat Sand Dunes National Park sits like a surreal work of art next to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, an undulating dune field covering more than 30 square miles, its sandy peaks reaching hundreds of feet above the brush-covered valley floor. Climbing the dunes can be slow going one step forward and a half step back in the ever-shifting sand but that makes sand surfing down all the sweeter.Special wood boards make for the best ride, and they can be rented from the Great Sand Dunes Oasis just outside the park or in nearby Alamosa. Sport your ski goggles and long socks, if you got em the sand gets everywhere.Planning tip: If youre here in late spring, count yourself lucky. The Medano Creek emerges temporarily alongside the dunes, creating a beach for paddling tubing, and, of course, sandcastle-making.11. Discover the Mile High Citys street artUnexpected and fabulous, Denvers trendiest neighborhood, RiNo (River North) a one-time industrial wasteland that's now the heart of cool is draped in murals covering every sort of surface, from restaurant doorways and parking lot walls to alleyways, power boxes and garage doors.Bright, opinionated, and ever-changing, the artwork stops you in your tracks, speaking volumes about Denvers diversity of people and thought, and its history and day-to-day life. Prepare to be wowed. Kayakers weaving through rapids on the Arkansas River. SWKrullImaging/Getty Images 12. Paddle the Arkansas RiverBrace yourself for icy waters as you paddle into a roaring set of waves on the Arkansas River, one of the longest and wildest rivers in the state. With more than 150 miles of open water running from Leadville to the scenic Royal Gorge, the Arkansas has everything from extreme rapids to mellow ripples and includes the iconic class-II run through Browns Canyon National Monument.Planning tip: The best paddling happens between late May and early July. Pick up a trip in Buena Vista or Caon City.13. Visit Vail, the state's best ski resortYou might think Vail is merely a playground for the rich and famous, and not a serious ski resort. Think again: beyond the glitz and glam (and shocking prices), Vail is truly one of the worlds finest places to take to the slopes, boasting more than 5000 skiable acres, 195 trails and some of the best on- and off-piste terrain anywhere.The front side is a paradise of silky corduroy Vails groomers are artists indeed ranging from mellow greens to long rowdy black diamonds like Blue Ox. But dont miss the backside, especially the legendary Blue Sky Basin and seven count em, seven bowls. Theres so much steep n deep that youll lose track of what youve skied or ridden. Colorado has many outstanding ski resorts, true, but Vail will steal your heart. A viewing platform at the Dinosaur National Monument. Zack Frank/Shutterstock 14. Touch dinosaur bonesA must-see stop for dinophiles is Dinosaur National Monument, located in the desolate northwest corner of Colorado. Its one of the few places on Earth where you can actually reach out and touch a dinosaur skeleton, snarling in its final pose, petrified eternally in rock and stone.Home to one the largest fossil beds in North America, the dinosaur quarry here also shows off some 1500 prehistoric bones embedded in a cliff face. Youll see everything from allosaurus to stegosaurus.Planning tip: Ranger-led walks, talks and tours explain the site, and a bunch of hands-on exhibits add to the fun. The cog train at the summit of Pikes Peak, Colorado. Margaret.Wiktor/Shutterstock 15. Summit a fourteenerStanding at the peak of a 14,000-foot mountain, taking in the view from the top of the world, is practically a rite of passage in Colorado. The states 50-plus "fourteeners" offer access and challenge to all levels of hikers, from those reachable only with technical climbing expertise to the two peaks with roads right to the top.Drive to the top of Pikes Peak, hike the 3-mile trail to Quandary Peak near Breckenridge in Summit County or scale Mt Elbert (the tallest of them all). No matter, they all deliver big.Planning tip:Travel the old-fashioned way to Pikes Peak aboard the cog train. One of only two cog railways in the US, it first carried passengers in 1892.16. Sport your Stetson at the National Western Stock ShowSaddle up for one of the countrys biggest stock shows the National Western Stock Show a Denver tradition since 1906. Held every January, come here for more than 20 rodeos, 15,000 farm animals, dancing horses, dog shows and even yoga with baby goats.Dont miss the iconic kick-off parade, when dozens of Longhorn cattle are herded right through downtown Denver, high heels and power suits giving way to cowboy hats, chaps and impressive belt buckles. The historic Durango to Silverton train passing through the San Juan Mountains. Nick Fox/Shutterstock 17. Travel back in time on the Durango and Silverton RailroadLittle has changed in the Rocky Mountains in the 142 years since the Durango & Silverton Railroad first steamed along steep cliff edges, following the course of the Animas River.Its still all majestically rugged and lush with deep forests and panoramic vistas. Deer sightings are frequent, and some lucky visitors may get a glimpse of a moose, bears or mountain goats perched precariously on impossibly narrow rock shelves. For the most spectacular views, step onto the outdoor observation deck on the back of the train.Thisfamily-friendly trip loops between Durango and Silverton; the latter is a former mining town, which at 9318ft above sea level, is among the highest in the US. There's a two-hour layover before the train starts its return journey, giving you some time to explore the charming streets of Silverton, or you can spend the night and get to know the town and beautiful surrounding area better.18. Sample Colorado wines in Grand ValleyAmong the most elevated wine regions in the world, the Grand Valley American Viticultural Area (AVA) is home to over a quarter of the wineries in the state. Spanning over 75,000 acres along the Colorado River and sheltered by Grand Mesa, the world's largest flattop mountain, Grand Valley encompasses two-thirds of Colorado vineyard acreage.Bordered by the Rocky Mountains to the east and centered around Grand Junction and Palisade, there are more than 30 wonderful winerieswaiting to be explored. All are set amidst red rocks, deep canyons, natural arches, lakes, high desert landscapes, orchardsand the stunning McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area. The clapboard exterior of the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park. gregobagel/Getty Images 19. Explore one of the countrys most haunted hotelsAuthor Stephen King stayed at The Stanley Hotel, had a bad dream and was inspired to write his bestselling novel, The Shining, which later became a hit film. The building is considered one of the most haunted spaces in the US and you can book a space on The Shining Tour to learn more about what inspired King to write his terrifying novel.But you don't have to be a ghost hunter to enjoy the hotel's luxurious accommodations, architectural elegance, excellent restaurant and historic ambiance. Open since 1909 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Stanley is five miles from Rocky Mountain National Park, making it the perfect base for exploring the wild Colorado landscapes.20. Celebrate Elktober in Estes ParkHundreds of elk call the beautiful mountain village of Estes Park home each fall, frequenting its downtown streets and parks. The annual, three-day Elk Fest has been celebrated at the end of September since 1999 and features food, vendors, music, bugling contests and celebrations of Native American culture.The weekend starts with the Rut Run 5Krace along a scenic course of river views, brilliant fall colors and chances for elk encounters.Local tip: Remember, this is a celebration of rut season and the bull elks are very territorial. Keep your distance. It's a great weekend of fun for the whole family. A cowboy leading a packhorse across a meadow next to the San Juan Mountains in Colorado. Joseph Sohm/Shutterstock 21. Live the cowboy lifestyleEver hankered to go on a cattle drive, sing songs around the campfire or saddle up for a guided tour on horseback through meadows and into the forests of the Rocky Mountains? Do all of this and more without compromising on comfort at the 8500-acre C Lazy U Ranch in Granby. Traditional cowboys may not have enjoyed gourmet meals, an onsite sommelier, deluxe accommodations and fun activities, but life's too short not to lean into a little luxury. This dude ranch is a great option for a family vacation in the great outdoors a range of kids clubs cater to little ranchers of all ages, giving parents some welcome time alone. Geography & Travel States & Other Subdivisions Colorado, constituent state of the United States of America. It is classified as one of the Mountain states, although only about half of its area lies in the Rocky Mountains. It borders Wyoming and Nebraska to the north, Nebraska and Kansas to the east, Oklahoma and New Mexico to the south, Arizona to the southwest, and Utah to the west. Colorado was admitted to the union on August 1, 1876, as the 38th state. The capital is Denver.Denver, Colorado: skylineSkyline of Denver, Colorado, U.S., at dusk.Colorados history is written in the names of its cities, towns, mountain ranges, and passes. Native American, French, and Spanish names alternate with those of frontier Americans, and many ghost towns are reminders of the thousands of prospectors and homesteaders who streamed into the territory in the mid-19th century to pursue dreams of gold, silver, and grain bonanzas. Vast cattle ranges and agricultural acreage fed by huge irrigation projects are characteristic of present-day Colorado, as are the diversified industries and the educational and research facilities in the states urban centers. Area 104,094 square miles (269,603 square km). Population (2020) 5,773,714; (2024 est.) 5,957,493. Capital: Denver Population1: (2020) 5,773,714; (2024 est.) 5,957,493 Governor: Jared Polis (Democrat) Date Of Admission: August 1, 1876 State Nickname: Centennial State State Motto: Nil Sine Numine (Nothing Without Providence) State Bird: lark bunting State Flower: white and lavender columbine State Song: Where the Columbines Grow Rocky Mountain High Seats In U.S. House Of Representatives: 8 of (435) Time Zone: Mountain (GMT 7 hours) Total Area (Sq Km): 269,603 Total Area (Sq Mi): 104,094 Colorados natural landscape ranges from the flat grass-covered eastern plainsthe High Plains of the Great Plainsthrough the rolling hilly Colorado Piedmont paralleling the Rocky Mountain front, to the high and numerous mountain ranges and plateaus in the western portion of the state that make up the southern Rocky Mountains and the Colorado Plateau. Within those areas the state rises from about 3,350 feet (1,020 meters) in elevation in the east to more than 14,000 feet (4,300 meters) in the Rockies. Lack of water is the dominant characteristic of Colorados eastern plains region. The Arkansas and South Platte are the states major eastern rivers, but both rise in the mountains to the west. Many other rivers are dry during much of the year, and the land is flat to gently rolling. Underlain by layered rocks, sandstones, shales, and limestones covered by short-grass vegetation, the natural environment is inhabited by prairie dogs, jackrabbits, coyotes, rattlesnakes, antelope, and such birds as the meadowlark and the lark bunting. The climate, flatness, and layered rocks have produced fertile soils that lack only moisture. Nearly all the plains are covered by brown soils, which support a strong mat of buffalo and grama grass, a valued resource for cattle grazing. About 50 miles (80 km) wide and 275 miles (440 km) long, the Colorado Piedmont is a picturesque hilly to mountainous landscape sandwiched between the plains and the mountains. It encompasses all the states large urban complexes, its major transport arteries, most of its industry, most of its major colleges and universities, and four-fifths of its people. The layered rocks have been uptilted and dissected into prominent stream divides and deep valleys by the major rivers and numerous smaller streams that discharge onto the piedmont from the mountains. The terrain, ground cover, and climatic conditions provide suitable habitats for rabbits, waterfowl, pheasants, coyotes, deer, raccoon, and, on the arid foothills and unirrigated uplands, rattlesnakes. Many species of birds prevail, of which the meadowlark, the crow, the dove, and the western magpie are most numerous. The climate and land of the Colorado Piedmont attract tourists, homeseekers, and, beyond the rapidly growing urban centers, farmers. The major cities and the wealthy farm areas both lie where the streams have broadened the valleys. Among the attractive features of the landscape is the agglomeration of high, dramatically shaped red sandstone formations northwest of Colorado Springs known as the Garden of the Gods. In the foothills southwest of Denver is one of the worlds largest and most-beautiful outdoor amphitheaters, Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre. Since 1880 more than 400 reservoirs have been built in the piedmont to store water for irrigation. Those sites are meccas for water sports, hunting, and house building. The western half of Colorado includes the huge mountain upthrust, comprising much of the southern Rocky Mountains and the Colorado Plateau, where mesas and mountain ranges alternate with broad intervening valleys and deep narrow canyons. With its copious precipitation, that mountain land provides water for six states and Mexico, principally via the Colorado River, which rises in the northern mountains and flows south and then west through the state until it enters eastern Utah. The drainage pattern from the Rockies is oriented by the mountains themselves, which form the Continental Divide, the main watershed boundary of the continent. The region west of the divide is commonly called the western slope. The mountainous portion of Colorado comprises a great number of individual mountain ranges. In the north and northwest the Front Range, the Medicine Bow Mountains, the Park Range, and the Rabbit Ears Range are major uplifts, and Rocky Mountain National Park (established 1915) in the western part of the Front Range is a popular destination for tourists and outdoors enthusiasts. The western and southwestern extremities of the state comprise the tilted and acutely uplifted layered rock of the Colorado Plateau. The Grand Mesa and the White River Plateau, both above 10,000 feet (3,000 meters), are major attractions. The region contains several national monuments and parks, most of them primarily scenic, while Mesa Verde National Park, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1978, preserves the remnants of cliff-dwelling Native American settlements. The San Juan Mountainsa large, heavily ice-dissected volcanic plateaurises to over 13,000 feet (4,000 meters) in the southwest; within those mountains are the headwaters of the Rio Grande, one of the longest rivers in North America. The Sangre de Cristo Range is a linear range in the south-central region of the state. At its western base are some of the largest sand dunes in the interior of the North American continent, an area of 60 square miles (155 square km) set aside in 1932 as Great Sand Dunes National Monument and elevated to national park status and expanded to more than twice its original size in 2004. The Sawatch, Colorados highest range and the central core of the Colorado Rockies, consists of Mount Elbertat 14,440 feet (4,401 meters) the highest point in the stateand many other elevations above 14,000 feet. The Colorado Rockies contain a significant share of the U.S. public domain in the form of 11 national forests, which total about 22,000 square miles (57,000 square km) of land. (Another national forest lies partly in the state.) There are some 53 peaks above 14,000 feet in elevation and 831 peaks between 11,000 and 14,000 feet (3,400 and 4,300 meters). Home North America United States Colorado Colorado is a landlocked state located in the central United States. It borders Kansas in the east, Utah in the west, Arizona in the southwest, Nebraska and Wyoming in the North, and New Mexico and Oklahoma in the south. It is one of only three states with straight latitude and longitude lines for its borders. Colorados name comes from Spanish, meaning colored red after the regions red sandstones. It also has the nickname, The Centennial State, originating from being the 38th state incorporated into the Union in 1876, 100 years after the countrys independence. Many people refer to it as Colorful Colorado as well, due to its diverse scenery of rivers, mountains, and plains. Area Colorado has a land area of 104,094 mi (269,602 km), making it the eighth largest state in the US. It is about nine times larger than Belgium and half the size of France. Compared to other US States, it is about three times the size of Maine. Population and Cities Colorado has a population of a little over 5.8 million people, making it the country's 21st most populous state. The capital is Denver, which is also the most populous city with a little over 700,000 residents. Other large cities in the state include Colorado Springs and Aurora. Geographic Regions The Great Plains The Great Plains stretch from the Kansas-Nebraska border in the East through Central Colorado. It consists of flat, grassy high plains, home to many ranches and farms. More towards the state's center, the Great Plains also incorporates the Colorado Piedmont, a hilly terrain transitioning between the flat plains and the Rocky Mountains. The Rocky Mountains The Rocky Mountains region extends from the states northwest corner through the southcenter. An array of mountain ranges compose the area, including Front Range, San Juan, Medicine Bow, and Sawatch. The mountain ranges here generally have very high elevations compared to the more northern Rockies. The Colorado Plateaus Just west of the Rocky Mountains lie the Colorado Plateaus, a lengthy, arid tableland with tall plateaus ranging from 4,000 to 8,000 feet (1,200 to 2,400 meters) in height. Mountain peaks in this zone also tower, some rising over 12,000 feet (3,700 meters) high. The Wyoming Basin The Wyoming Basin is a flat plateau that interrupts the Rocky Mountains in Northwest Colorado. The altitude of this region, however, remains high. It also has some lower, isolated mountains throughout. It consists of a semiarid climate, presenting hot summers and cold winters. Sagebrush steppe covers much of the dry terrain. The State of Colorado is divided into 64 counties. In alphabetical order, these counties are: Adams, Alamosa, Arapahoe, Archuleta, Baca, Bent, Boulder, Broomfield, Chaffee, Cheyenne, Clear Creek, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Custer, Delta, Denver, Dolores, Douglas, Eagle, El Paso, Elbert, Fremont, Garfield, Gilpin, Grand, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Huerfano, Jackson, Jefferson, Kiowa, Kit Carson, La Plata, Lake, Larimer, Las Animas, Lincoln, Logan, Mesa, Mineral, Moffat, Montezuma, Montrose, Morgan, Otero, Ouray, Park, Phillips, Pitkin, Prowers, Pueblo, Rio Blanco, Rio Grande, Routt, Saguache, San Juan, San Miguel, Sedgwick, Summit, Teller, Washington, Weld, and Yuma. With an area of 269,837 sq. km, Colorado is the 8th largest and the 21st most populous state in the USA. Located in the South Platte River Valley, Denver is the capital, the largest, and the most populous city in Colorado. Since the elevation of Denver is exactly one mile above sea level, it has been nicknamed the Mile High City. Denver serves as an industrial, cultural, commercial, manufacturing, and transportation hub of the state. The city hosts many mining and energy companies, due to its location near the mineral-rich Rocky Mountains. The capital city is known for beer brewing and it also functions as an important business hub for several large companies that are active in the central United States. The State of Colorado is located in the west-central region (or Mountain State area) of the United States. The landlocked state is bordered by the states of Utah in the west, by Wyoming in the north, by Nebraska in the northeast, by Kansas in the east, by Oklahoma in the southeast, by New Mexico in the south and by Arizona in the southwest. Regional Maps: Map of North America This page was last updated on May 21, 2024 Colorado is a state located in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States of America. It may also be considered as part of the Western and Southwestern regions. The state's population is one of the fastest growing, with many migrants coming from California and the U.S. East Coast. Denver is the capital and most populous city of Colorado.Colorado is one of only four states in the United States to share a common border (known as Four Corners), along with Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. It is one of three U.S. states, along with Wyoming and Utah, that lack any natural borders and have boundaries represented by only latitude and longitude lines.From west to east, the state is comprised of desert-like basins turning into plateaus, then alpine mountains, and then the grasslands of the Great Plains. Colorado has more than 50 mountain peaks more than 14,000 feet tall, including Pikes Peak, whose lone peak is visible from near the Kansas border (190 miles away) on clear days. Native American tribes have played an influential role in the state's settlement and culture. Both Plains Indians, mainly Arapaho and Cheyenne and Great Basin Indians, mainly Ute served as early guides and teachers to westward bound pioneers. At the same time, Colorado's historical legacy includes the infamous Sand Creek Massacre, in which as many as 400 unarmed Native Americans camped on the banks of the Sand Creek were attacked and lost their lives in the pre-dawn hours of November 29, 1864. Today Native place-names, folktales, music, and dance are a part of the Colorado culture, as are Native artwork and jewelry.GeographyColorado is defined as the geoellipsoidal rectangle that stretches from 37N to 41N latitude and from 10203'W to 10903'W longitude (25W to 32W from the Washington Meridian). Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah are the only three U.S. states that lack natural borders and have only lines of latitude and longitude for boundaries. When government surveyors established the border markers for the Territory of Colorado, minor surveying errors created several small kinks along the borders, most notably along the border with the Territory of Utah.[5]The summit of Mount Elbert at 14,440feet (4,401m) elevation in Lake County is the state's highest point and the highest point in the entire Rocky Mountains.[2] Colorado is the only U.S. state that lies entirely above 1,000meters (3,281ft) elevation. The point where the Arikaree River flows out of Colorado into Kansas is the lowest point in the state at 3,315feet (1,010m) elevation, which is the highest low point of any U.S. state.[6][2]Nearly half of the state is flat in stark contrast to Colorado's rugged Rocky Mountains.East of the Southern Rocky Mountains are the Colorado Eastern Plains of the High Plains, the section of the Great Plains within Colorado at elevations ranging from 3,315 to 6,562 feet (1,010 to 2,000 m). The states of Kansas and Nebraska border Colorado to the east. The plains are sparsely settled, with most population along the South Platte and Arkansas Rivers. Precipitation is meager, averaging from 12 to 18 inches (300 to 450 mm) annually. There is some irrigated farming, but much of the land is used for dry-land farming or ranching. The bulk of Colorado's population lives along the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains, a region partially protected from prevailing storms by the high mountains to the west. The densely populated area is beset with smog from its vehicles and factories. The Continental Divide dips down to 11,990feet (3,655m) at Loveland Pass.The Continental Divide stretches across the crest of the Rocky Mountains. Water west of the Continental Divide drains west into the Sea of Cortez via the Colorado River.Within the Rocky Mountains are several large parks or high broad basins. In the north, on the east side of the Continental Divide, is North Park. North Park is drained by the North Platte River, which flows north into Wyoming. Just south but on the west side of the Continental Divide is Middle Park, drained by the Colorado River. South Park is the headwaters of the South Platte River. To the south lies the San Luis Valley, the headwaters of the Rio Grande, which drains into New Mexico. Across the Sangre de Cristo Range, to the east of the San Luis Valley, lies the Wet Mountain Valley. These basins, particularly the San Luis Valley, lie along the Rio Grande Rift, a major geological formation, and its branches. The Rocky Mountains within Colorado contain 53 peaks that are 14,000feet (4,267m) or higher elevation, known as fourteeners. The mountains are timbered with conifers and aspen to the tree line, at an elevation of about 12,140feet (3,700m) in southern Colorado to about 10,500feet (3,200m) in northern Colorado; above this, only alpine vegetation grows. The Colorado Rockies are snow-covered only in the winter; most snow melts by mid-August with the exception of a few small glaciers. Pikes Peak seen from the Cathedral Valley of Garden of the Gods.Much of the fame of Pikes Peak is due to its location along the eastern edge of the Rockies. Pikes Peak is the easternmost 4,200-meter (13,780 ft) mountain peak in the United States. Unlike most other similarly tall mountains in Colorado, it serves as a visible landmark for many miles to the east, far into the Great Plains of Colorado; it comes into view from a distance of more than 130miles (210km). On a clear day, the peak can be seen from Denver (over 60miles (97km) north), and from locations near the Kansas border to the east.The region stretching from the San Juan Mountains in the southwest to Boulder and Central City contains most of the historic gold- and silver-mining districts of Colorado.The Western Slope is generally drained by the Colorado River and its tributaries. Notable to the south are the San Juan Mountains, an extremely rugged mountain range, and to the west of the San Juans, the Colorado Plateau, a high desert bordering southern Utah. Grand Junction is the largest city on the Western Slope. To the southeast of Grand Junction is Grand Mesa, the world's largest flat-topped mountain. Farther east are the ski resorts of Aspen, Vail, Crested Butte, and Steamboat Springs. The northwestern corner of Colorado bordering northern Utah and western Wyoming is mostly sparsely populated rangeland.Climate Spring melt at Bear Lake in Rocky Mountains National Park.The climate of Colorado is quite complex compared to most of the United States. The typical south-north/cooler-warmer variation in other states is not generally applicable in Colorado. Mountains and surrounding valleys greatly affect local climate. As a general rule, with an increase in elevation comes a decrease in temperature and an increase in precipitation. A main climatic division in Colorado occurs between the Rocky Mountains on the west and the plains on the east; the foothills form a transitional zone between the two.Extreme weatherExtreme weather is a common occurrence in Colorado. Thunderstorms are common east of the Continental Divide in the spring and summer, and Colorado is one of the leading states with deaths due to lightning. Hail is a common sight in the mountains east of the divide and in the northwestern part of the state. While not as common as some of the states to the east, much of the Eastern Plains are prone to tornadoes. Floods are also a factor in the plains, partly due to heavy snow in the mountains followed by a warm, dry period that swells rivers with melted snow. Colorado is also known for its droughts that occur every few years, causing major wildfires.The highest temperature ever recorded in Colorado was 118F (48C) on July 11, 1888, at Bennett, while the lowest was -61F (-52C) on February 1, 1985, at Maybell.[7][8]Eastern Plains Center pivot irrigation of wheat growing in Yuma County.The climate of the Eastern Plains is a semi-arid continental climate of low humidity and moderately low precipitation, usually from 10 to 15inches (250 to 380 mm) annually. The area is known for its abundant sunshine and cool clear nights. About 75 percent of the precipitation falls within the growing season, from April to September, but this area is very prone to droughts. Most of the precipitation comes in the form of thunderstorms, which are often severe, and the form of major snowstorms that happen most often in the early spring and in late autumn, and sometimes winter, from low pressures that bring the right conditions. Otherwise, winters tend to be drier and cold. The Front Range cities closer to the mountains tend to be warmer in the winter due to chinook winds that warm the area, sometimes bringing temperatures up to 60F (16C) or higher in the winter.[9]West of the plains and foothills View of the Western Slope from Grand Junction. Spruce Tree House in Mesa Verde National Park Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site West of the plains and foothills, the weather of Colorado is much less uniform. Even places a few miles (kilometers) apart can experience vastly different weather, depending on the topography of the area. Most valleys also have a semi-arid climate, which becomes an alpine climate at higher elevations. Generally, the wettest season is in the winter, while June is the driest month, which is the opposite of precipitation patterns in the east. The mountains have cool summers with many days of high temperatures around 60F (16 C) and 70F (21 C), although frequent thunderstorms can cause a sudden drop in temperatures. Summer nights are cool, or even cold at the highest altitudes, which can sometimes have snow in the middle of summer. The winters bring abundant, powdery snowfall to the mountains, which the skiers love. There can be many days with abundant sunshine in between major storms.The Western Slope has high summer temperatures similar to those found on the plains, while the winters tend to be slightly cooler due to the lack of any warming winds that are common in the plains and Front Range. Other areas in the west have their own unique climate. The San Luis Valley is generally dry with little rain or snow.Flora and faunaColorado's range of habitats, from plains to mountains, allows for a variety of both plant and animal life. Grasses predominate on the prairie, while pines, spruce, birch, aspen, and alder trees are found at the higher elevations. Above the treeline is an area of alpine tundra where more than 450 types of lichen grow. The mesas are covered with pines, sagebrush, and cacti.The herds of buffalo, pronghorns, and deer that once thrived on the prairie have been replaced by smaller mammals: prairie dogs, foxes, coyotes, and small rodents.The mountains are home to bears, mountain goats, deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, wolves, mountain lions, otters, martens, weasels, mink, and small rodents. Beaver, too, have returned.Protected areasNationally Protected Areas in Colorado include:Four National ParksBlack Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Mesa Verde National Park, and Rocky Mountain National Park. Six U.S. National MonumentsCanyons of the Ancients National Monument, Colorado National Monument, Dinosaur National Monument, Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, Hovenweep National Monument, and Yucca House National Monument. Two United States National Historic SitesBent's Old Fort National Historic Site and Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site. There are also 32 Historic and Scenic Trails, 2 National recreation areas, 11 National forests, 2 National grasslands, 7 National wildlife refuges, and 41 National wilderness areas.History The ruins of the Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde as photographed by Gustaf Nordenskild in 1891.The region that is today the state of Colorado has been inhabited by Native Americans for more than 13 millennia. The ancient Pueblo peoples lived in the valleys and mesas of the Colorado Plateau. The Ute inhabited the valleys of the southern and western Rocky Mountains. The Arapaho and the Cheyenne moved west to hunt across the High Plains.Conflicting claimsThe United States acquired a territorial claim to the eastern flank of the Rocky Mountains with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. The U.S. claim conflicted with Spain's claim that a huge region surrounding its colony of Santa F de Nuevo Mjico was its sovereign trading zone. Bent's Old Fort along the Arkansas River operated from 1833 to 1849.The United States relinquished its claim to all land south and west of the Arkansas River as part of the U.S. purchase of Florida from Spain in 1819. Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, but it surrendered its northern territories to the United States after the Mexican-American War in 1848. The United States divided the area of the future Colorado among the Territory of New Mexico and the Territory of Utah (organized in 1850), and the Territory of Kansas and the Territory of Nebraska (organized in 1854).Most American settlers traveling west to Oregon or California avoided the rugged Rocky Mountains and instead followed the North Platte River and Sweetwater River through what is now Wyoming. In 1851, Hispanic settlers from Taos New Mexico, settled the village of San Luis, then in the New Mexico Territory but now considered Colorado's first permanent European settlement.Discovery of gold and silverGold was discovered along the South Platte River in western Kansas Territory in July 1858, precipitating the Pikes Peak Gold Rush. The placer gold deposits along the rivers and streams of the region rapidly played out, but miners soon discovered far more valuable seams of hard rock gold, silver, and other minerals in the nearby mountains. A lithograph of the Denver City mining camp in 1859.The election of Abraham Lincoln as U.S. president in 1860 led to the secession of six slave states and the threat of civil war. Seeking to augment the political power of the free states, the Republican-led U.S. Congress hurriedly admitted the eastern portion of the Territory of Kansas to the Union as the free State of Kansas, leaving the western portion of the territory, and its gold fields, unorganized. The Georgetown Loop of the Colorado Central Railroad as photographed by William H. Jackson in 1899.Thirty days later, outgoing U.S. President James Buchanan signed an act of Congress organizing the free Territory of Colorado.[10] The name Colorado was chosen because it was commonly believed that the Colorado River originated in the territory. Early explorers identified Colorado's Gunnison River as the headwaters of the Colorado River, though the Grand River (Colorado) was later identified as the headwaters. Finally in 1916, E.C. LaRue, of the United States Geological Survey, identified the Green River in Wyoming as the proper headwaters of the Colorado River. Colorado state history plaqueOn August 1, 1876, (28 days after the Centennial of the United States), U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant signed a proclamation admitting Colorado to the Union as the 38th state and earning it the moniker "Centennial State".[11] The discovery of a major silver lode near Leadville in 1878 triggered the Colorado Silver Boom. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 invigorated silver mining, but the act's repeal in 1893 led to a major collapse of the state's economy.Colorado women were granted the right to vote in 1893, making Colorado the first U.S. state to grant universal suffrage by popular vote.Modern periodBy the 1930 census, the population of Colorado exceeded one million residents. The state suffered through the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, but a major wave of immigration following World War II boosted Colorado's fortunes. Tourism became a mainstay of the state economy, and high technology became an important economic engine. Colorado's population exceeded 4.3 million by the 2000 census.Government and Politics The Colorado State Capitol in DenverThe governor heads the state's executive branch. The Colorado Supreme Court is the highest judicial body in the state. The state legislative body is the Colorado General Assembly, which is made up of two houses, the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House has 65 members and the Senate has 35. The 2005 Colorado General Assembly was the first to be controlled by the Democrats in forty years. Colorado is considered a swing state in both state and federal elections. Coloradans elected 17 Democrats and 12 Republicans to the governorship in the last 100 years. In presidential politics, Colorado supported Democrats Bill Clinton in 1992 and Barack Obama in 2008, and supported Republican presidential nominee Robert J. Dole in 1996 and George W. Bush in 2000 and 2004.Colorado politics has the contrast of conservative cities and liberal cities. Democrats are strongest in metropolitan Denver, the college towns of Fort Collins and Boulder, southern Colorado (including Pueblo), and a few western ski resort counties. The Republicans are strongest in the Eastern Plains, Colorado Springs, Greeley, some Denver suburbs, and the western half of the state (including Grand Junction).Economy The Denver financial district along 17th Street is known as the "Wall Street of the West"The state's economy broadened from its mid-nineteenth- century roots in mining when irrigated agriculture developed, and by the late nineteenth century, raising livestock had become important. Early industry was based on the extraction and processing of minerals and agricultural products. Current agricultural products are cattle, wheat, dairy products, corn, and hay.The Bureau of Economic Analysis estimates that the total state product in

exhilarating vistas from Grand Mesa, world's largest flattop mountain, the region is rich in western history, Victorian architecture and Native American cultures.Cities[edit]Denver - the vibrant Mile-High City, capital of the state.Blackhawk - Small city west of Denver known for its Opera House and casinos.Boulder - a colorful college town in the foothills of the Rockies not far from Denver, but a world unto its own.Caon City - Home of The Canon City Queen Anne Tea House, the Royal Gorge, and Supermax Prison.Central City - Small city west of Denver known for its Opera House and casinos.Colorado Springs - Colorado's second-largest city, with many natural attractions such as Pike's Peak and the "Garden of the Gods" not far away.Durango - Historic frontier city, with its famous narrow-gauge railroad and nearby Mesa Verde National Park.Fort Collins - historic town which has become a hip university city.Golden - historic town in the foothills known for multiple breweries including Coors and Golden City. Also home to Colorado School of Mines.Other destinations[edit] Sunrise at Mesa Verde National Park near Cortez Understand[edit]History[edit]Composer Igor Stravinsky once rode a ski lift in Aspen in the summertime, while Prospector Alferd Packer dined on human flesh near Lake City. Inventor Nikola Tesla created artificial lightning hundreds of feet long in Colorado Springs, and Writer Oscar Wilde attended a fancy dinner party at the bottom of a Leadville silver mine. Outlaw Butch Cassidy robbed the bank in Telluride, while Lawman Doc Holliday and Showman Buffalo Bill were buried in Glenwood Springs and Denver, respectively. All are part of the quirky and sometimes colorful history of Colorado.Around 15,000 years ago, Native Americans migrated to Colorado, a nomadic group of hunter-gatherers distributed on the plains as well as the western plateaus. The first agricultural communities appeared on the Eastern Plains approximately 5,000 years ago. Circa 600 AD, the Ancient Pueblo Peoples began building elaborate communities in Southwestern Colorado in the Mesa Verde area. Other Native American groups, including the Arapaho, Apache, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, Shoshone and Utes have called Colorado home.The Spanish were the first Europeans in the area. In 1541, Coronado led an expedition north through Colorado from Mexico in search of the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola, where the streets were supposed to be paved with gold. A midsummer Columbine (the state flower) on Arapahoe Pass Trail near BoulderIn 1803, Emperor Napoleon Buonaparte sold the United States a vast tract of land known as the "Louisiana Purchase," an area which included Colorado. Lieutenant Zebulon Pike explored the recently purchased territory at President Thomas Jefferson's behest. Pike and his men "discovered" the 14,000 ft (4, 268 m) peak near Colorado Springs, which today bears his name. From the 1820s through the 1840s, fur trappers and mountain men began harvesting highly-valued beaver and buffalo pelts for the Eastern U.S. and Europe. Trading posts were established for barter with the Native Americans, while trade routes sprang up between the United States and Mexico.In 1858, gold was discovered at the mouth of Dry Creek in the present-day Denver suburb of Englewood, triggering the "Pike's Peak or Bust" gold rush of 1858-59. Approximately 50,000 people immigrated to Colorado in search of gold, creating the first large scale permanent settlements. Hard rock silver and gold mining towns were established throughout the territory. A new town named Denver City was founded in honor of James W. Denver, governor of Kansas Territory. In 1876, Colorado was admitted as the thirty-eighth state in the union. Colorado was called the "Centennial State" in honor of the one-hundredth anniversary of the U.S. Declaration of Independence.In 1912, Hot Sulphur Springs hosted a ski jumping tournament and invited the Denver press. From this humble beginning, Colorado's ski industry was born. A handful of early ski runs were built around the state over the next 20 years, with the Highland-Bavarian Corporation beginning a rudimentary development of Aspen. World War II and the arrival of the 10th Mountain Division to train near Minturn ushered in the mid-20th century explosion of Colorado ski resorts. Trained for high alpine combat in Italy, the alumni of the 10th Mountain Division returned to the U.S. after the war to build Aspen, Vail and Arapahoe Basin. By the 1960s, Colorado was a popular global destination for alpine skiing, with travelers drawn to the state's sunny days and champagne snow.Geography[edit] View from Telluride ski slopes.Colorado is split down the middle north to south by the Rocky Mountains. To the east is a region of high plains, arid and wide open. To the west are rugged mountains arranged in various groups or ranges. Meandering through the mountains is an imaginary line called the Continental Divide. This marks the flow of precipitation. Rain falling on the west of the Divide makes its way to the Pacific Ocean. Rain on the east makes its way to the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean.Colorado has 54 mountain peaks above 14,000 ft (4,267 m) of elevation. The highest peak, Mount Elbert, rises to 14,440 ft (4,401 m) above sea level making it the highest peak in the North American Rockies. Tourism is a major industry, with skiing/snowboarding, hiking/camping, hunting, mountaineering and fishing as large sources of income for the state economy.Colorado's population was 4,301,261 in the 2000 census, and the state's population is growing, particularly in the large towns along the Front Range where the prairie and mountains meet. These towns include the capital, Denver, and Colorado Springs, Boulder, Longmont, Loveland and Fort Collins. Many of the residents of Colorado migrated from other states so being a "Colorado Native" is a point of pride with many people.Climate[edit]Those who've never been to Colorado might imagine a frigid, snowy states. However, Denver's 300 sunny days a year and overall mild temperatures are a point of pride among Coloradoans. Due to the Rocky Mountains which split the state in half, climate differs greatly from east to west, low to high. The weather changes rapidly and unpredictably, so be prepared for anything if you're traveling in most seasons. Colorado is also an exceptionally dry state, and has suffered through several recent droughts. Drink lots of water and stay hydrated.Winter is generally cold, though the weather is drastically different depending on elevation. While the mountains are likely to experience frequent snow storms - guaranteeing lots of fresh powder for skiing - these become less and less frequent as one travels down on the Eastern slopes. Lower elevations to the east of the Rockies experience occasional snow storms and even huge blizzards, but low temperatures seldom last long, and the winter is frequently interrupted by warm days with temperatures in the 50s, 60s, or even higher. Bring warm snow clothes, but also a light jacket. While March is the snowiest month of the year, the warm days of spring are more frequent in this month, and even in the mountains it is not unusual for temperatures to rise to the 60s or above, making for some very interesting skiing.Spring is generally brief and mild. Snow is not uncommon as late as May, even in lower elevation cities, and some ski resorts stay open as late as July. However, except during snow, the temperatures are warm and pleasant. Be prepared for rapid changes - its not unusual for there to be 80 degree temperatures during the day and snow in the evening.Summer is perhaps Colorado's most predictable season. While some ski resorts may stay open until July, don't be deceived: the temperatures are warm, even in the mountains. While days in the 80s and 90s are frequent, higher temperatures are not unheard of. Fortunately, Colorado's low humidity means that even the hottest days don't pack the punch of heat in more humid regions. Summer does arrive later in the mountains, and some peaks have snow all year round. Still, even at the higher elevation, summer days tend to be warm, though nights are cooler. Afternoon thunderstorms are frequent starting in mid-July and continuing until about mid-September. Though very heavy, these are usually brief, lasting from as short as half an hour to two or three hours. Though they are a great relief from the dry days of earlier summer, lightning is dangerous and a huge risk factor for forest fires. These afternoon thunderstorms are especially severe in the eastern plain region of Colorado, and tornadoes also occur during this time. South Eastern Colorado has very desert-like summers, including flora and fauna, and shares many similarities to nearby New Mexico.Fall is another relatively short season in Colorado. While daytime temperatures tend to stay warm, nighttime temperatures begin to drop starting in late August. Aspens, the primary native deciduous tree, changes colors in mid September. The first snow usually arrives sometime in October at lower elevations, though even earlier snows are not unheard of, and fairly common in the mountains.Talk[edit]While English is the official language of Colorado, Spanish is also widely spoken (20% of the population speaks it). There are large Latino populations in Denver, Pueblo and in the San Luis Valley.Get in[edit]By plane[edit]All major airlines fly into Denver International Airport (code: DEN) as it is the major hub for the region, and in fact the ninth busiest airport in the world.Here are some of the airports servicing Colorado:CITYIATAICAOAIRPORTAspenASEKASEAspen-Pitkin County Airport (Sardy Field) Colorado SpringsCOSKCOSCity of Colorado Springs Municipal AirportCortezCEZKCEZCortez Municipal AirportDenverDENKDENDenver International AirportDurangoDROKDRODurango-La Plata County AirportEagleEGEKEGEEagle County Regional AirportFort Collins / LovelandFNLKFNLFort Collins-Loveland Municipal AirportGrand JunctionGJTKGJTGrand Junction Regional Airport (Walker Field)GunnisonGUCKGUCGunnison-Crested Butte Regional AirportHaydenHDNKHDNYampa Valley Airport (Yampa Valley Regional)MontroseMTJKMTJMontrose Regional AirportTellurideTEXKTEXTelluride Regional AirportBy train[edit] The Durango-Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad.Amtrak [4] runs the California Zephyr [5] from Emeryville to Chicago, stopping in Denver, Fort Morgan, Winter Park, Granby, Glenwood Springs, and Grand Junction.Through the Eastern Plains, Amtrak runs the Southwest Chief [6]: from Chicago to Los Angeles, stopping in Lamar, La Junta, and Trinidad.For more information, see Wikitravel's article Rail travel in the United States.Get around[edit]The legal driving age in Colorado is 15 on a learners permit, 16 on a restricted license, and 17 on a unrestricted license. Drivers under 18 cannot have any passengers under 21 for the first 6 months of being licensed, unless it's an immediate family member. At 6 months 1 passenger under 21 is allowed and unrestricted after 1 year. Driving between midnight and 5 a.m. is also prohibited until the driver has been licensed for one year or turns 18.If you want to travel the state, then you will most likely need to rent a vehicle. Prices are the same as across the United States.The state is roughly quartered by two major Interstates, the north-south running I-25 and the east-west running I-70. (I-76 also enters the state in the Northeast from Nebraska). Outside of the Front Range, the rest of the state is traversed by small highways and county roads. The major cities of the greater Denver area (Denver, Aurora, Boulder, Lakewood, Littleton, Longmont, Broomfield) are linked by bus transportation using RTD. Service south to Castle Rock and Colorado Springs is provided by FREX. The cost is very reasonable and the buses run regular schedules. Longer distance buses are run by Greyhound [7], Black Hills Stage Lines [8] and, more recently, Bustang [9]. Greyhound services stops along the two major Colorado Interstates, as well as parts of US Highway 40 in the state's northwest corner. Black Hills runs services to smaller towns in Colorado's mountains (such as Gunnison, Buena Vista, and Alamosa) and connects them with the state's transport hub, Denver. Bustang is centered around Denver's Union Station and has three routes: West line to Glenwood Springs, North line to Fort Collins, and South line to Pueblo. Times and fares can be found at their sites.Taxis and shuttle services are also available throughout the state.See[edit]Some of Colorado's most iconic natural beauty lies outside its national parks, and in its many national monuments, national forests and state parks. Other areas of federally protected scenic beauty in Colorado include: National Recreation Trails, National Recreation Areas, National Grasslands, National Wildlife Refuges and National Wilderness Areas. The Bureau of Land Management also has extensive public land holdings. National monuments[edit]Archeological and geological points of interest abound throughout Colorado's national monument system.Canyons of the Ancients National Monument [10] - In Southwestern Colorado. Contains more than 6,000 archaeological sites, representing Ancestral Puebloan and other Native American cultures.Colorado National Monument [11] - Near Grand Junction. Rim Rock Drive and trail system through red sandstone pillars, arches and other strange rock formations that rise hundreds of feet above the Grand Valley.Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument [12] - Near Florissant, west of Pike's Peak. Yes, there really are petrified redwood trees in Colorado, preserved in a rain of volcanic ash during the Pleistocene Era. Up to 1,700 different species have been found, making this one of the most diverse fossil beds in the world.Hovenweep National Monument [13] - Near Cortez. Protects six Ancestral Puebloan villages spread over a twenty-mile expanse of mesa tops and canyons along the Utah-Colorado border. Iconic to the monument are the multi-storied ruins.Yucca House National Monument [14] - Near Cortez. An entire unexcavated city of Ancestral Puebloan houses, built between 1150 and 1300 A.D.National historic trails[edit] Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site near La JuntaConnecting countries, colonies and cultures, these trails were a key part of European settlement of the Western U.S.Old Spanish National Historic Trail [15] - Winding through southwestern Colorado, this 1820s trade route leads from Abiquiu, New Mexico, to Los Angeles, California.Pony Express National Historic Trail [16] Through the Eastern Plains. Even though it was in operation for only 18 months in the early 1860s, and was shut down with the advent of the transcontinental telegraph, the Pony Express has become an indelible part of Wild West lore.Santa Fe National Historic Trail [17] Through the Eastern Plains. Commercial route between Missouri and Santa Fe, New Mexico. The U.S. Army marched along this trail to invade Mexico during the Mexican-American War, the U.S. conquering and annexing California, Nevada, and Utah, as well as parts of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Wyoming in the process.National historic sites[edit]Colorado's two national historic sites tell the story, for both good and ill, of European/U.S. relations with Native Americans.Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site [18] - Near La Junta. A restored adobe fur trading post from the 1840s. Learn about the authentic Old West history of traders, trappers and Native Americans, all of whom came to the fort to barter.Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site [19] - Near Chivington. Another dark chapter in U.S. relations with Native Americans. In 1864, soldiers from the U.S. military attacked a peaceful encampment of Cheyenne and Arapaho along Sand Creek, on the Eastern Plains. Out of a group of largely women, children and the elderly, 150 were killed.National scenic trails[edit]Solitude and amazing natural scenery await visitors to Colorado's version of the Appalachian Trail.Continental Divide National Scenic Trail [20] - Follows the backbone of the Rocky Mountains for 3,100 mi (4,828 km) , from Canada to Mexico. Largely high alpine hiking in pristine wilderness areas. Trail never deviates more than 8 mi (13 km) from the Continental Divide.National forests[edit]There are 11 national forests in Colorado. Here a few of note with famous landmarks.Pike National Forest [21] - Near Colorado Springs. Home of Pikes Peak [22], the most visited mountain in North America and the second most visited mountain in the world behind Japan's Mount Fuji. Be sure to drive to the top or ride the Pikes Peak Cog Railway [23].San Isabel National Forest - The true high country in Colorado, with 19 of the state's "14ers," including Mount Elbert, the highest peak in Colorado. Contains many famous mountain ranges: the Sawatch, Collegiate Peaks, Sangre de Cristos and Spanish Peaks.White River National Forest [24] - Home of the famous Maroon Bells Range, near Aspen. Also home to the pilgrimage site of Mount Holy Cross [25], a 14,005 ft (4,267 m) peak with deep snow-filled crevasses on its face that form a massive crucifix. Near Vail.State parks[edit] Recreation and rugged natural beauty are the common denominators for Colorado's 44 state parks.Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area [26] - Near Buena Vista. Recognized as one of the nation's most popular locations for whitewater rafting and kayaking on the Arkansas River - the most commercially rafted river in the world.City parks[edit]Wilderness areas are hard to define in Colorado, with many of the state's most visited attractions administered by towns and cities. There are many places of cultural and historical significance, as well.Chautauqua Park [27] - Home of one of the few remaining Chautauqua lecture halls (a National Historic Landmark), this recreation area abuts the jutting red sandstone crags of the Flatirons, a symbol of Boulder.Denver City Park - Designed in 1882, this graceful urban playground houses both the Denver Zoo [28] and the Museum of Nature & Science [29].Garden of the Gods [30] - Administered by Colorado Springs, the red rock pillars, arches and bluffs frame snow covered Pikes Peak in the distance. An easy hike, bike ride, or way to exhaust the memory on your digital camera.John Denver Sanctuary - In Aspen. Fan pilgrimage site and monument to the folk artist who gave so many a "Rocky Mountain High."Red Rocks Amphitheater[31]. - Located in Morrison on the western edge of Denver, an outdoor concert venue with amazing natural beauty that provides a great view of Denver below. Visit the Rock and Roll Museum at the top of Red Rocks, eat in the restaurant, hike the red sandstone and scrub oak trails for their scenic beauty and wildlife.Royal Gorge [32] - Caon City runs a theme park on the rim of this 1,250 ft (380 m) deep canyon, including the Royal Gorge Bridge, highest suspension bridge in the world. (Not for acrophobes).Popular Attractions[edit]Air Force Academy Chapel [33] - In Colorado Springs. Built in 1962, this white spired building is considered a premiere example of Modernist architecture. Designated a National Historic Landmark.Buffalo Bill Museum And Grave [34] - In Golden. Just a stone's throw away from the bristling microwave and communications towers of Denver's TV and radio stations, Buffalo Bill's final resting place is a strange blend of the Old and New West.Celestial Seasonings Tour [35] - In Boulder. Popular free tour of the herbal tea factory, including the overpowering vapors of the spearmint room. Lots of hot tea and free samples.Crow Canyon Archaeological Center [36] - Go on a real archeological dig of Pueblo peoples who lived near Mesa Verde National Park.Denver Mint [37] - Located in downtown Denver. The single largest producer of coins in the world. Free tour, but be sure to go to their web site and book your reservations in advance.Denver Art Museum [38] - Architect Daniel Libeskind designed the new wing of the museum, a thrusting ship-like prow of titanium and glass. Collections include work by Man Ray, Andy Warhol, David Hockney and Philip Guston, as well as an important collection of Western art.Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad [39] - Built by the Denver & Rio Grande Railway in 1879, this steam locomotive carries tourists between Durango and Silverton.Glenwood Springs Hot Springs Pool & Spa [40] - One of the largest hot springs pool in the world. For more Colorado geothermal pools, see the Wikitravel article, hot springs.Kit Carson County Carousel [41] - In Burlington near the Kansas border. After being buried for decades inside its terminal in feed corn, this 100 year old carousel is still in working order and with its original paint.South Park [42] - Near Fairplay. Sadly, no Stan, Kyle, Kenny or Cartman from the eponymous TV cartoon series. But there are some seriously pretty mountains and scenery in this 10,000 ft (3,000 m) plateau.Scenic Drives[edit]Pike's Peak - Beautiful drive to the summit of Pike's Peak.Independence Pass -Highest paved pass in Colorado, Highway 82 near Aspen. Summit reaches 12,000 ft. Very scenic drive, road becomes one lane at points. Closed November (Thanksgiving) through May (Memorial Day).Million Dollar Highway - Incredible scenery between Ouray and Silverton first opened by Otto Mears in late 1800s. Road is opened year round.Do[edit] Fall Foliage on the Grand Mesa, ColoradoSnowmobiling[edit]Colorado is home to some of the best snowmobiling in the country. Glenwood Springs is surrounded by two areas, White River National Forest and the Grand Mesa. Trail riding on groomed trails, hill climbing, deep powder carving, scenic views, with a mixture of trees and meadows. These areas get an average of 35 feet of snow a year.Fishing[edit]With 6,000 miles of streams and more than 2,000 lakes and reservoirs to choose from, you can fish for over 35 species of both warm- and cold-water fish. Outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy angling, high mountain stream fishing and ice fishing in Colorado. Don't forget to watch the seasons set by the state [43] and obtain your fishing license. Otherwise, you may be facing a stiff fine.Gaming[edit]There are a number of historic towns in Colorado that offer casino gambling. The three most famous are Black Hawk, Central City and Cripple Creek. Local officials are in the process of raising maximum bets from $5 to $100, allowing for more Las Vegas-style gaming. The Ute Reservation in the Southwestern corner of the state also runs casinos.Hiking[edit]Colorado has a seemingly endless amount of hiking trails. Colorado hiking trails can lead you through various terrain, including deserts, mountains, canyons, and more.Mountain climbing[edit]Of the 54 so-called "Fourteeners" (those mountains with an elevation above 14,000 ft., or 4,267 m), many can be climbed without ropes or technical experience. The rewards are breathtaking. The current standard among introductory guidebooks to routes on Fourteeners is Borneman and Lampert, "A Climbing Guide to Colorado's Fourteeners." This book is updated frequently to reflect changes in access restrictions (several are on private land or have private holdings high on the mountain that interfere with some routes), and the latest edition as of 2005 is ISBN 0871088509. Many people also find Gerry Roach's (the second person in the world to summit all of the "Seven Summits") book, "Colorado's Fourteeners: From Hikes to Climbs" ISBN: 1555914128 to be a comprehensive guidebook for hiking and climbing these Colorado giants. Colorado has more "14ers" than any other state in the USA. Be prepared for crowds on some of the more popular summits during the summer on weekends. Also be prepared for an outing, as conditions can and do change rapidly on Colorado's high mountains.There are also many "high Thirteeners" that are nearly as rewarding to climb as the Fourteeners, while typically far less crowded with would-be mountaineers. Some of the high Thirteeners are more technically difficult than any Fourteener and require rope and technical expertise.Mountain Biking[edit]Colorado is one of the best places in the world to go mountain biking. The choice of location will depend on the season. Crested Butte, Steamboat Springs, Winter Park, Salida, Leadville, Vail, and Summit County all offer world class mountain bike trails, but many are only ridable after the snow melts in June and before the snow returns in September or October. Year-round options exist as conditions are perfect in Canon City,Grand Junction, and Fruita, which offer desert trails similar to the famous bike trails in Moab, UT. The trails along the Front Range, near Denver, Boulder, Fort Collins, and Colorado Springs are also excellent and, since they are located at various elevations, offer riding almost year-round. Additionally, most ski resorts offer lift-served mountain biking; Keystone, Winter Park, and Sol Vista resorts are among the most notable.Skiing/Snowboarding[edit]Colorado is one of the world's top destinations for alpine skiing, snowboarding, and other winter mountain sports. Home to 26 ski areas and resorts, Colorado offers the perfect location to take a family or solo or couples vacation to. From beginners to expert mountains, these resorts are open to anyone. Even for the non skiers, the resorts and ski towns offer shopping, spas, tubing and any multiple other fun attractions to enjoy. Many of these resorts are only 1-2 hours outside of Denver.Ski resorts[edit] Whitewater Rafting[edit]Skiing isn't the only reason thousands of people travel to Colorado each year. During the summer months, Colorado offers, perhaps, some of the best white water rafting in the country. The Arkansas River is one of the most rafted river in the country with over 50,000 rafters experiencing the pounding white water of "The Ark", as the locals call it. Many of the outfitters are less than 2 hours outside of Denver and offer a variety of trips for all ages and experience levels.Golden has a world-class kayak course that is free and open to mostly year round use. There are several kayak shops in Golden, and they also have demos and clinics on various dates.Many of the mountain towns along the Colorado and Arkansas Rivers offer whitewater rafting excursions. You can choose a half-day, full-day or overnight trip.Wildlife Viewing[edit]It's not hard to spot wildlife in Colorado. There is a diversity of wild animals maintained by the Colorado Division of Wildlife [44]. Elk, mule deer, moose, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, antelope, brown bears, mountain lions and a smattering of bobcats range the national parks, forests and state parks. Migratory birds such as hummingbirds and the sandhill cranes return each year to their summer habitat. Look for "Wildlife Viewing Area" signs along the highways and interstates. Or simply venture into any wilderness area. You will need binoculars, a camera, as well as good luck and patience. I-70 at Genesse Park - This western suburb of Denver in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains is home to the City of Denver's Buffalo herd. Pull off the Interstate and snap a few photos with the bison in the foreground and the snow capped Continental Divide in the distance.Mount Evans - Also off I-70 Near Idaho Springs. Drive the Mount Evans Scenic Byway & Wilderness [45], the highest paved road in the U.S. More often than not, you will see a herd of shaggy white mountain goats on the drive.I-70 through Georgetown - Just west of Denver. Around the Downieville Starbucks, start scanning the north side of the Interstate. A herd of bighorn sheep routinely grazes on the steep slopes, often venturing as close as the shoulder of the highway.Alamosa/Monte Vista/Baca National Wildlife Refuge Complex [46] - Near Alamosa. Threatened bird is the largest crane in North America. Each October and March, 3,000 -5,000 cranes make a migratory stopover. In the spring the San Luis Valley celebrates the Monte Vista Crane Festival [47] to honor this impressive bird.Gould - In the North Park area of the state near Wyoming, is the Moose Watching Capital of the state, while Colorado in general is home to the southernmost moose population in North America.Rocky Mountain National Park is a wonderful place to look for elk. Fall days are the best time of the year to enjoy watching elk. Herds can be spotted all through the park and the elk's bugling is an almost constant noise during some times of the year.Festivals & events[edit]Palisade Peach Festival[48]Colorado State Fair[49] - In Pueblo. Rodeo, concerts, tigers, sea lions, fair rides and fair food.Cherry Creek Arts Festival Held every Independence Day weekend in the Cherry Creek section of town, this is an outdoor festival full of shopping and food.Frozen Dead Guy Days Held in March in Nederland. It commemorates the story of still frozen human remains. A variety of humorous activities are conducted in his name.Harvest Festival [50] Held in early September in suburban [Arvada]. It commemorates the farming history of the city.Kite Festival Held in early April in suburban [Arvada]. It is an outdoor festival full of kites and all things related to flying them.Mesa Verde Country Indian Arts & Culture Festival. May is archaeology month in Colorado and there is no better place to celebrate than Mesa Verde Country, the archaeological center of America. Archaeology ties all of us to the heritage we proudly share with the Ancestral Pueblo people from the past and the Native Americans living here today.Mesa Verde Country Wine & Art Festival [51].Old South Gaylord Street Festival Held every Memorial Day weekend, this festival started when several local stores held sidewalk sales at the same time. They decided to coordinate their efforts next year, and now decades later vendors from all over the state set up tents. Many of the goods on sale are handmade, and there is plenty of food, live music and fair-style attractions as well.Strawberry Days Every June Glenwood Springs holds a festival and carnival with something for everyone of every age to enjoy. They serve free Strawberries and Ice Cream on Saturday of the event. This events goes back over hundred years. It is the longest running festival west of the Mississippi River. The festival was started to celebrate the strawberry harvest and to gather with friends and family to celebrate the warm days of summer ahead.Taste of Colorado Every year in downtown over 40 restaurants set up booths near the state capitol in Civic Center Park to celebrate the weekend. Admission is free but tickets are needed for the carnival rides and other attractions.Eat[edit]Colorado is filled with a large variety of restaurants with different cuisines. You can find almost everything you would ever want to eat or drink. But what, exactly, is Colorado cuisine? There are several indigenous foods worth trying, sought out for their associations with this Rocky Mountain state. First, there is the clich Denver Omelette, an egg dish prepared with cheddar cheese, diced ham, onions, and green bell peppers. It probably originated on Western cattle drives, cooked up by cowboys, and most likely was not invented by a French gastronome as a "dnuer omelette," or a tasteless American omelette deprived of all class. Contrary to popular belief, you can get a Denver Omelette in Denver, but it will simply be one egg item out of many on the menu. This omelette doesn't inspire the hometown pride of, say, a Philly cheesesteak in Philadelphia.Along with Pasadena, California, and Louisville, Kentucky, Denver is one of three cities that claim to have invented that quintessential American food, the cheeseburger. Made with American cheese layered on top of a patty of ground beef, cooked on a griddle or grill, and placed on a bun with the usual sides of pickles, onions, lettuce, tomatoes, and condiments, the cheeseburger is a fast food classic. In 1935, Louis Ballast of the Humpty Dumpty Drive-In in Denver received a trademark on the term, "cheeseburger." So Denver was arguably not the first place of origin for the cheeseburger, but it's the official one. Sometime during your stay, a giggling friend will attempt to get you to eat a plate of Rocky Mountain Oysters. When asked, even your waiter or waitress will be coy about giving a straight answer. Don't worry, however. There are no fresh water molluscs thriving at high altitude. These oysters are bull or sheep testicles, flour battered and pan fried.Many chefs reference Colorado's pioneering past and work with fresh game. Quail, rabbit, elk, venison, moose and even rattlesnake are served, ranging from the kitchen tables of families that still hunt all the way to four star restaurants.Three meats, however, have deep associations with Colorado: Buffalo, Colorado Rack of Lamb, and Fresh Water Trout. More aptly described as "bison," buffaloes once roamed the Great Plains of the U.S. in the millions. Nearly hunted to extinction for their hides, buffalo have been making a quiet comeback on ranches as a heart-healthy alternative to other meats. It is lower in cholesterol than either chicken or beef. Buffalo is a red meat best served medium rare--cooked too long and it will toughen. A plethora of restaurants serve bison as steaks, hamburgers and jerky, and in pot roast, meat loaf, even tacos and spaghetti. If you have access to a grill during your stay, buy some ground bison at the supermarket and make your own buffalo burgers. (Just be sure to mix the meat with oatmeal and egg as a binding agent, since bison is so lean, it tends to fall apart).One hundred years ago, Greek immigrants settled in Western Colorado, bringing with them a millennia-old sheep raising tradition. Many of these high mountain ranches have morphed into the state's ski resorts, but a handful remain. In summer time, young lambs are still grilled in open charcoal pits in the Greek fashion, while Colorado lamb is a much sought-after gourmet ingredient. Be sure to ask for all-natural lamb raised in Colorado with no growth stimulants or added hormones.Hiding in pools in mountain streams are wild brown, speckled and rainbow trout. The rainbow is a fresh water cousin of the salmon. Catching these skittish fish in the outback of the Rockies is half the challenge, since they are extremely sensitive to vibrations and hide when something approaches the stream. But once caught, trout meat is very flavorful and clean, if prone to tiny, throat-sticking bones. During the late summer months, be sure to try some of Colorado's best produce. Melons from Rocky Ford, sweet corn from Olathe, peaches from Palisade, cherries from Paonia and chili peppers from Anaheim will enhance any Colorado vacation.Parker Days (Parker Days), O'Brien Park, [x]. A four day festival that includes carnival rides, petting zoo, arts and crafts booths along with local and national bands performing on the KYGO stage. free. Drink[edit]The legal drinking and purchasing age of alcoholic beverages is 21. Under age drinking is taken very seriously so if you are in a club or bar and appear to be under 30 you should be ready to present identification showing your age. However, Colorado is one of the 17 states that doesn't penalize a minor for consuming alcohol if he/she is discovered to have been drinking alcohol through his/her reporting a medical emergency for another under age drinker. Another exception to allow the under age consumption of alcoholic beverages is on private non-alcohol selling premises with parental presence and consent. More exceptions are for educational purposes (Example: student in culinary school), religious purposes, and medical purposes. Semillon grapes await pressing, PalisadeColorado and drinking are often linked. It dates back to the grizzled fur trapping, mountain man days of the 1840s, when some of the state's pioneers would hole up in Bent's Fort and drink themselves blind with earthen jugs of "trade whiskey' - a dubious combination of "red eye" whiskey, hot chili peppers, plug tobacco and gunpowder. (A gourmet recreation of the drink can still be sampled at The Fort Restaurant [52], in Morrison, Colorado). Colorado is considered to be the microbrew capital of the United States. (Denver is sometimes referred to as the, "Napa Valley of Microbreweries"). The magazine "Modern Drunkard" is headquartered in Denver. Brewpubs are open in almost every town. One of the most popular adult tourist activities in Colorado is the Brewery Tour circuit. From the megabrewer Coors in Golden, to the refined tastes of New Belgium Brewing in Fort Collins, the Front Range of Colorado offers many opportunities to see beer being made.Denver also hosts the Great American Beer Festival [53] every Fall. This three day bacchanal celebrates micro, medium and mega brews from across the country with awards handed out to the judges picks for best brews.There are also less celebrated, but equally worthy, meaderies and vineyards throughout the state. Colorado's nascent wine industry has exploded in the last 20 years. While there are now over 70 wineries in Colorado, ranging from the mountains to the plains, the communities of Grand Junction and Palisade on the Western Slope rightly label themselves as, Colorado's Wine Country. [54] The high desert farming town of Palisade witnessed the birth of the state's modern vineyards in the '70s and early '80s. Even today, a majority of the state's wine grapes are grown in this tiny Victorian town in the federally-designated Grand Valley AmericanViticultural Area. (AVA). Palisade also hosts the Colorado Mountain Winefest [55] every September at harvest time.The earliest history of wine in Colorado, however, dates back to the nineteenth century. The first recorded wine production in Colorado was 1899. It was Colorado Governor George A. Crawford, the founder of Grand Junction in 1881, who first saw the Grand Valleys potential for grape production. Crawford planted 60 acres of wine grapes and other fruit on Rapid Creek above Palisade. Unfortunately, these early forays into viticulture ended with Prohibition in 1916. The General Assembly of Colorado enacted a statute and Colorado went "dry" four years before the passage of the 18th Amendment, which created national prohibition. Commercial winemaking ceased in Colorado and Palisade's grape vines were ripped out of the ground by authorities. It took over 70 years for the state's wine industry to reestablish itself. Newer to the scene are Colorado's hard liquor and spirits distillers. A handful of artisan distillers such as Stranahan's in Denver and Peach Street Distillers in Palisade are creating bourbon, whiskey, gin and other flavored hard grained alcoholic beverages in limited batches. One note of caution - some people find that their alcohol tolerance is lower at higher altitudes. Drink slowly until you acclimatise.Stay safe[edit] Pikes Peak viewed through an arch at Garden of the Gods in Colorado SpringsAltitude Sickness[edit]Colorado is one of the highest elevation states in the US. Its average elevation is around 6,800 ft with Denver at 5,280 ft above sea level. Colorado Rocky Mountain elevation can go up as high as 15,000 ft. It's wise to take precautions as altitude sickness can and do occur anywhere above 5,000 ft.Law enforcement in Colorado[edit]Colorado State Patrol has jurisdiction within the entire stateCSP utilizes grey/black patrol carsDenver Metro Police has jurisdiction in Denver.Denver police are white cars.Local cities and towns have jursidiction within their area. County Sheriffs also provide law enforcement protection.Mine and Quarry Safety[edit]It is illegal and dangerous to enter mines and quarries. Never explore a Mine or a Quarry either active or abandoned it could lead to injuries or death!Doing so can cause injury or death.Dangers of exploring mines and quarriesunexploded ordnance and blasting capsDangerous chemicals and toxic gasdangerous animals, wolves, rats and venomous snakes Guns[edit]Residents of Colorado are allowed to open/conceal carry firearms after a thorough out extensive background check and training. Be aware that it is illegal to carry a firearm into the Denver area.Hydration[edit]Dehydration is a serious concern. The aridity of the air is deceptive--you will perspire and exhale moisture from your mouth and nose without even realizing it. If you're going to hike anywhere in Colorado, take plenty of water (at least one gallon per person, per day), decent nonslip boots or sneakers, as well as layers of clothing. Always hike with a waterproof jacket--more people die of hypothermia in Colorado in the summer simply by being caught unawares. Let people know where you are going and when you expect to get back. Be careful and watch for lightning while hiking, especially in the high country. It's often best to hike in the early morning to avoid the possibility of hitting an afternoon thunderstorm.Tornadoes[edit] Mountain goat on Mount Huron near LeadvilleThe eastern plains region of Colorado is in tornado alley.Tornadoes and severe thunderstorms with high winds and hail are not uncommon during the spring and summer months. Make sure you keep a radio on in the car. Should you hear the tornado sirens sounding, locate a suitable tornado shelter at once--do not stay outdoors to get a picture! Also, do not try to outrun the tornado in your car! You may wind up driving directly into the tornado's path. Should the skies be cloudy, and the light take on a greenish-yellow cast, this is an indication of an imminent hail storm--again, seek shelter at once.Keep in mind, these storms are spread over a wide area and many residents have never seen a tornado; however, Colorado residents do not hesitate to run to the basement/cellar if a tornado warning is announced. Refer to the Tornado safety article for analysis of the issues here.Rattlesnakes[edit]Of the 25 species of snakes in Colorado, three are venomous: the western rattlesnake, which lives almost everywhere, the massasauga, which is limited to the grassy lands of the Eastern Plains and the Midget Faded Rattlesnake which lives around the Contential Divide. If you are afraid of snakes, head for the cool, highest elevations of the Rockies. Western rattlers can't live above 7,500 to 9,500 ft (2134 to 2743 m). Rattlesnakes are more afraid of you than you are of them. If you hear a rattle, it's a warning. Freeze and look around for the snake. Move cautiously away from the snake once you locate it, even if it means cutting your hike short.Do not try to kill or further antagonize the snake, as this may lead to additional bites.If you are bitten, the good news is that you almost certainly will live through the painful experience. Remain as calm as possible. Rattlesnake venom is essentially digestive enzymes, and will break down tissue around the bite. Try not to move much (which spreads the venom) unless you must do so. Painful swelling of lymph nodes in the groin or armpit usually occurs within one hour if the bite is on the leg or arm. Call emergency medical services (911) and/or a poison control center. There is anti-venom available for use against all native pit vipers in the US.Drugs[edit] A marijuana dispensary in Denver Alongside with Washington, Colorado is the world's first fully regulated cannabis market for adults. However, laws are strict and similar to the state's laws for alcoholic beverages. Anyone must be 21 or older to consume, possess, or purchase marijuana - it doesn't matter if its for recreational or medicinal reasons and it is strictly enforced. Anyone may possess up to 1 ounce of recreational marijuana, travel within the state with said product, and it is also legal to give cannabis as a gift to someone who's of legal age. Patients that are prescribed can possess up to 2 ounces of medicinal marijuana.Bear in mind that consumption of marijuana in public is illegal and enforced, therefore you should consume it only in private or places that allow it. It is illegal to smoke/consume marijuana on someone else's private property without their consent.Keep in mind that marijuana is still illegal under federal law, so you could still be under scrutiny. Do not bring marijuana out of the state, or into any Indian Reservation that deemed it illegal, nor any federal enclave, or you will be charged under both state and federal law. Cannabis is prohibited at the Denver International Airport.Summer wildfires[edit]In the state of Colorado wildfires can occur during periods of warm and hot weather. Wildfires can be dangerous and deadly. Don't leave cigarettes or throw them on the ground. Make sure campfire is out when not using it and never leave a campfire unattended.Winter Storms[edit]Winter storms are common in the state of Colorado and it can be very cold and brutal during winterYou should exercise extreme caution while driving especially if you plan to travel through the mountain passes and roads during winter weather.Some highways and road passes on the mountain side are closed during winter due to extreme conditions and avalanche danger.Higher elevations can still have snow left over even during the early summer seasons. Major snow storms can also close highways east of Denver in Colorado plains. T