

Transportation
Getting to and around Crested Butte
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It's Good News/Bad News. The bad is that it's difficult to get to CB but that's the good news too. No daytrippers from Denver and in season very short to non-existent lift lines.

There are four major departure points to get to CB once you're in Colorado—Denver, Colorado Springs, Montrose and Gunnison. We'll cover each via air and road.

Via Air

Denver is served via many airlines from all parts of the country. Airfares are usually the cheapest and if you're going to want a car and don't mind a long five hour drive (making it a long travel day) and want to save on airfare, then Denver is the way to go.

Colorado Springs is served by several airlines, sometimes has bargain airfares but usually slightly more than Denver and less than Montrose and Gunnison. The drive is an hour shorter but the stretch on Route 50 until you get past Salida runs along a river and is very curvy. It's two lanes and not many opportunities to pass if you get stuck behind a slow moving truck or RV.

All driving routes from Denver and Colorado Springs take you over Monarch pass on Route 50 east of Gunnison. Although in the many years that we've driven over Monarch, we've never run into bad weather or a closure, it can happen during a winter storm.

Montrose in the 2006-07 season was served by Delta, US Air, American and Continental. It's an easy 1hr. 10 minute drive to Gunnison and another 40 minutes to CB. All two lane roads, flat, some curves from Montrose but not mountain driving. If you're able to get a non-stop from Chicago, Houston or other city to Montrose and can avoid a change elsewhere, Montrose is a time efficient way to go. Airfares once upon a time were much cheaper than into Gunnison but this past season were comparable. The Montrose airport is wide open and usually smooth flying. Most flyers are headed to Telluride but shuttle service is available from Montrose to CB.

Gunnison is the closest airport and only 30 miles, 40 minutes from CB via car or Alpine Express shuttle service. Service historically has been on United from Denver or American (Dallas) or Continental (Houston). A local association has to

offer guarantees to get service to Gunnison and even with that, the pricing can be a bit steep. Book early. As weekend flights get filled early, the prices go up, sometimes rather significantly. The Denver connection usually is the most direct route with shortest layover. The disadvantage, however, is that on both the large jets in season and the commuter jets the flight to Gunnison at 35 minutes is at lower altitude and over the mountains and can be quite bumpy, even on what appears to be a clear day- even though the airport itself is in a valley and wide open.

Via Car

Before getting to specific routes, a couple of driving tips. First, if possible avoid driving at night. Whether it's road conditions or wandering wildlife, both can potentially put more excitement in your life than necessary. You do not want to round a curve (as we have) and find a deer staring at you. Secondly, as you approach CB on Route 135, you will encounter speed limit signs with decreasing numbers, the last of which will be 15 mph. Likewise, after two stops signs, heading up to the mountain it remains 15 mph for a short stretch. They mean 15! The local police readily ticket above 15. One sightseeing note—coming up Rt. 135 from Gunnison, once you pass Almont, passengers should keep a look out up in the trees along the river. In winter months, if you see a big black thing high up with a white top, that's a black eagle perched waiting for a fish to meander by. With an eagle eye (pun intended) you're apt to see at least one, probably 2 or 3 on your way to CB. Maybe some other wildlife in the hills.

From Denver—There are two primary routes to get to CB. Our preferred route is taking Route 70 west to Copper Mountain, turning south at Copper on Route 91 which merges with Route 24, and following 24 to Route 50. Turn right on 50 and go all the way to Gunnison. At the light in “downtown” Gunnison, turn right onto Route 135 and it's 30 miles to CB. The first 20 miles south off of 70 is mountain driving and can be snow covered, but the rest of the trip to 50 through Leadville and Buena Vista is easy driving on two lane roads. Pretty empty in winter, busier in summer. There's a long valley south of BV and a straight stretch of road (although you may think you're in the middle of nowhere, be advised it's heavily patrolled) passing Mt. Harvard, Yale and Princeton—all above 14,000 ft. Route 50 is also an easy drive, except as noted above the road conditions for 5 miles or so before and after Monarch peak can be snowy/icy. Colorado does a very good job of keeping roads plowed in winter, and we've found this route at generally lower altitudes to be the easiest driving and least troublesome. It also provides more opportunities for passing slow moving vehicles. A number of restaurants and gas stations can be found in Buena Vista.

A second route which cuts through at an angle is taking 70 west, picking up 470 south in Denver to 285, which then angles through the mountains until it hits 24 a mile or two south of BV. Then follow 24 south to 50 as above. It's four lanes for a while out of Denver, then two. Some claim it's shorter but we've found not by much if at all. And it's not as easy driving. The two lane section is curvy in

places and not as conducive to passing. Before Christmas, it's heavy traffic with city folks heading to and fro buying Christmas trees in the country and should be avoided.

There are other alternatives. Taking Route 9 south at Frisco past Breckinridge (before getting to Copper Mtn.) through Fairplay and connecting with 24 is one, but again it's longer and not as easy driving. If you happen to be coming from the west or visiting Vail first, pick up Route 24 west of Vail and go through Minturn. The first 20-30 miles south off of 70 can be difficult as they are often shaded and therefore slippery in winter.

From Colorado Springs—From the airport, to avoid wasting a half hour going to Pueblo on Route 25 and then west on 50, pick up Route 115. On maps it looks like you can pick up 115 off of 25 but you can't. You must cross 25 and pick up 115 a mile or two further west. (Get specific instructions from your rental agent.) 115 hits 50 about 20 miles west of Pueblo. As mentioned before, 50 is fairly curvy and passing is difficult as it winds its way along the river until Salida. In summer, there's heavy traffic with busses towing rafts and carrying rafters along this stretch.

A summer alternative is to take 24 west from Colorado Springs to just south of Buena Vista, and then a mile or so north in "downtown" BV take the road west to Cottonwood pass, past the Taylor reservoir and Taylor river to 135 near Almont. This avoids Gunnison, however, where better grocery shopping at Safeway or City Market (Kroger) than at Clark's Mkt. in CB can be found, if you need provisions for your stay. The route west of BV is very scenic, but it's mountain driving and can be slow with summer vacationers. Locals claim it takes an hour less (3 instead of 4) from CB to CS airport, but having done it twice, we don't agree. You can still plan on 4 hours. (Note: 24 is mostly east/west from CS but once it gets to BV, it runs north/south—hence its arrival at 70 west of Vail.)

From Montrose—as described above, an easy drive to CB. One hour ten minutes to Gunnison on Route 50 and another forty on Route 135 to CB. If you have to make connections to fly to CB and can get to Montrose without, then the time will probably be the same or less and not having to worry about making a connection and less likelihood of lost baggage makes Montrose a good alternative. The one downside is if your Montrose flight is cancelled there isn't much backup.

From Gunnison—an easy drive to CB on mostly straight two lane road at lower altitudes. Road almost always clear in winter. In fact, lack of snow until you near CB on the way up can be a bit disconcerting about whether there is in fact a ski area and sufficient snow to ski on (if you've not been there before).

Rental Cars—Hertz, Avis and Budget are at the Gunnison airport. Dollar is a few blocks away and will pick up/deliver with a shuttle service. Dollar as a result

usually a few dollars cheaper, and best bet is to call the Dollar office in Gunnison rather than the national 800 number. They are willing to deal sometimes. Cheaper rates typically available with other companies at Denver, Colorado Springs and Montrose, but if a problem occurs, it's nice to be able to call one of the four located in Gunnison for an exchange. (We had a problem with Alamo in Montrose—didn't have the full size we reserved, said only a PT Cruiser available which proved to be a disaster on snow in spite of our asking about it, and then we had a bit of a hassle getting them to send driver and exchange which they did two days later. This, however, is the exception. We've had no other problems with rental cars in the last 15 years going to CB.)

In and around Crested Butte
Do you need a car in Crested Butte?

If you're driving your own car or are renting for certain, then the rest of the discussion is irrelevant.

In summer almost certainly yes. There's much to see and explore in the area and the convenience of going to town at will means you'll want to have a car. The same shuttle services (described below) do however run in the summer as well as winter.

In the winter, it depends—primarily on the makeup of your group and the likelihood of your dining in or eating out. It's convenient to have a car and not wait for the shuttle bus if you want to head to CB from the mountain (3 miles) but having a car parked in the garage only to use once a day, maybe twice is a bit of an unnecessary expense.

There are two shuttle bus runs from the base area. One which services our Black Bear and Treasury Point units heads south and covers Crystal, Castle and Hunter Hill Roads. It runs every half hour (and times may vary from year to year). The shuttle passes the TP units and turns around a few yards up the road. If you're standing at either TP driveway, it will stop and pick you up. (TP 3 is at one drive entrance, TP 15 at the other—and both just 50 ft. from front door to road). The next stop is at the Westwall Lodge 300 yards back down Hunter Hill where you can get off and use the Westwall lift up and ski to the base area or continue on to the base area. Black Bear is directly across the street from Westwall so this stop serves BB as well. It's a 5 minute trip to the base area and about a 20 minute trip back. It's a fairly easy walk to/from TP/Westwall also, even with ski boots and carrying equipment—if you see you're going to miss the shuttle from the base area back to TP and don't feel like waiting. Of course, BB is virtually ski in/ski out with just a very short walk across the street.

The town shuttle runs every 15 minutes from the base area on the mountain into CB and makes 6 stops: 1. at the beginning of Elk Ave (downtown) known at the 4-way stop. 2. At the other end of Elk Ave. 3. One block over in front of Slogar

restaurant 4. by the shopping center (grocery market, movie, other) 5. at the 4-way stop again heading back 6. at the Gas Café a few blocks toward the mountain. The combination of the condo shuttle and town shuttle gets you to and from our TP and BB units into CB. (Note: the mountain is in a separate town with a different zip code—Mt. CB. Two mayors, two city councils etc. Don't ask!) It's a question of cost and convenience as to whether you want to have your own vehicle or use the shuttle service.

Note: If you do have your own vehicle, even though you might see some of the new developments going in from the Gold Link and Prospect chairlifts and runs, a drive around the backside of the mountain to see what's happening with new developments and some of the older homes (up Anthracite drive, for example) is worth a few minutes. Continue up Gothic Road, visit Gold Link subdivision and the new Prospect subdivision. Also, a drive around Skyland (golf course and club) just south of town would be worthwhile.