

## 2008 SWFWDA SUMMER QUARTERLY TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS

### 1. CARNAGE CANYON & CHINAMAN GULCH

**RUN DATES:** Jul 31 & Aug 2

**RATING:** CC 10 & CG 8

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 7.3 mi

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 5-6 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** Carnage Canyon is a nationally recognized extreme trail. Users of Carnage Canyon are expected to clean up any type of fluid spills, immediately. Chinaman Gulch: Difficult: The rockiest part of the trail is within the first half mile. Chinaman Gulch is narrow and sandy with isolated rock obstacles. Two obstacles in the gulch can be completely bypassed, while a third has a moderate approach on one side. A narrow trail climbs tightly through the trees out of the gulch, then descends a rocky ridge back to the start of loop. The trail is better suited for modified vehicles with lockers and skid plates. Carnage Canyon: An extreme trail for radically modified vehicles. Minimum 35-inch tires with lockers both ends. Even with this equipment, you'll need to winch much of the time. Mechanical failure and body damage are a common occurrence.

### 2. IRON CHEST

**RATING:** 7-8

**RUN DATE:** Jul 31 & Aug 2

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 5.8 mi

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 4-5 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** Classic hard-core trail with historic structures at Iron Chest Mine. The buildings at Iron Chest Mine are over 100 years old and are in relatively good condition given the 12,000-ft. altitude. A giant pulley lies on the ground in front of a large tram house with tram towers going down the mountain. Take a short 250-yard hike to the interesting Ghost House near start of trail. The cabin was built in 1886. Flattened tin cans were used as roof shingles. Iron Chest has always been known for its difficult boulder field. When the boulders were pushed aside to allow maintenance at the mine, many hard-core enthusiasts were disappointed. The boulders have returned and the trail is now harder than ever, 33-inch tires and two lockers are recommended.

### 3. CHINAMAN GULCH

**RATING:** 8

**RUN DATE:** Aug 1

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 7.3 mi

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 3 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** Chinaman Gulch: Difficult: The rockiest part of the trail is within the first half mile. Chinaman Gulch is narrow and sandy with isolated rock obstacles. Two obstacles in the gulch can be completely bypassed, while a third has a moderate approach on one side. A narrow trail climbs tightly through the trees out of the gulch, then descends a rocky ridge back to the start of loop. The trail is better suited for modified vehicles with lockers and skid plates.

### 4. GRIZZLY LAKE

**RATING:** 7

**RUN DATE:** Jul 31 & Aug 1

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 5.4 mi

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 4-5 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** The lake, with the surrounding mountains, is pure Colorado beauty. This can be a hard moderate trail mainly due to a difficult rock obstacle that follows a stream

crossing at the beginning. Wet tires can make climbing the rock challenging. The remainder of the trail is mostly moderate with a few marginally difficult muddy and rocky places. The trail is not recommended for stock vehicles. There is a chance for sheet metal and or rocker panel damage.

## **5. HALFMOON CREEK & IRON MIKE MINE**

**RATING:** 6

**RUN DATE:** Jul 31

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 10 mi (20 mi round trip) Approximate total mileage from Northrop and return is 84 mi.

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 6 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** This little-known in and out trail takes you along both North and South Halfmoon Creek, between 14,000-foot mountains, to a Mine in a desolate basin. You see a little of everything, including rock obstacles, water crossings, tight brush, big trees, and the awesome sight of huge mountains above timberline.

Follow North Halfmoon Creek, CR 110, to a fork in the road. You'll have Mount Massive on your right until this fork. The right fork takes you the rest of the way down North Halfmoon Creek, a fairly mellow trail. The left fork takes you down South Halfmoon Creek that starts at a water crossing. This is the suggested route. Cross the Creek and find yourself at the first obstacle. These rocks should give some stock 4x4 vehicles a good challenge, especially those new to moderate trails. After a few more rock obstacles you find yourself in the trees and brush with both brushing against your vehicle all the time (this isn't good for a new paint job).

Once you get above timberline you'll be in a beautiful, green valley. Follow the trail to the Iron Mike Mine remains. You can continue a bit past the Mine to a turnaround at the end of the line. Stop here, turn the vehicles off, and take it all in. At this point you can look back the way you came and you'll have French Mountain behind you, Casco Peak immediately to your right, and the very impressive 14er Mount Elbert in front of you. It's difficult to take in the size of this huge mountain towering over you. Return the way you came, exploring the rest of North Halfmoon Creek if you have the time.

## **6. HANCOCK PASS/ALPINE TUNNEL/WILLIAMS PASS**

**RATING:** 3

**RUN DATE:** Aug 1 & 2

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 20 mi.

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 4-5 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** This trail offers just the right amount of challenge for aggressive, stock SUVs. There are outstanding views on the upper section. Two side trips are recommended: The first is to Hancock Lake, which requires passing through a fairly rocky section. The second is to the Alpine Tunnel over a well-maintained and easy ledge road. This road has signs along the way to explain the history of the area. ATVs can unload at a small parking area near Hancock Townsite. Hancock Road and the Alpine Tunnel Road were built along the original railroad bed that passed through the Alpine Tunnel in the 1880s. Notice the black soot that still clings to the side of the road at various points along the way. Structures along the road serviced the railroad. At one time you could drive to the north side of the tunnel, but the road is now closed and you must hike or bike. For many years, the 4x4 road over Williams Pass was permanently closed. But, in recent years, the Forest Service decided to open the road during August. There are several fairly rocky sections but this trail is passable by stock, high-clearance vehicles with low-range gearing. Skid plates are helpful. The drive should not be attempted if snow is on the trail. Alpine Tunnel Road 839 is an easy graded gravel road.

## **7. HANCOCK PASS/TOMICHI PASS**

**RATING:** 5

**RUN DATE:** Jul 31 and Aug 2

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 20 mi.

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 6 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** This trail crosses both Hancock and Tomichi Passes. This trail offers just the right amount of challenge for aggressive, stock SUVs. There are outstanding views on the upper section. Two side trips are recommended: The first is to Hancock Lake, which requires passing through a fairly rocky section. The second is to the Alpine Tunnel over a well-maintained and easy ledge road. This road has signs along the way to explain the history of the area. Hancock Road and the Alpine Tunnel Road were built along the original railroad bed that passed through the Alpine Tunnel in the 1880s. Notice the black soot that still clings to the side of the road at various points along the way. Structures along the road serviced the railroad. Tomichi Pass is a moderate to trail that doesn't involve serious rock crawling. Views going up are spectacular but the driver won't be able to enjoy them until he reaches the pass. Don't start up the trail if someone is coming down even though uphill drivers have the right of way. The area is remote, so make sure you go with another vehicle. The town of Tomichi (near site of cemetery) had a population of 1500 during the boom years of the 1880s. The silver crash of 1893 brought an end to the town. In 1896 a few prospectors returned, but most were killed in 1899 when a snow slide destroyed the town. Remnants of building foundations can be found with patient examination of the area. This rating is based on the narrowness of the trail rather than the road surface. Passing is extremely difficult on the north side. You may have to back up a considerable distance if you meet another vehicle. There are no hard-core obstacles, but several places are moderately rocky. Do not drive this trail if it is snow covered. Snow sometimes remains on the trail in late July. Be careful crossing deteriorating log bridge at bog, spikes sticking out of the logs have been known to "eat" tires. Trail is suitable for stock, high-clearance SUVs with low-range gearing. Not recommended for novice drivers or anyone afraid of heights. You will return via Hancock Pass.

## **8. POMEROY LAKES/MARY MURPHY MINE/MT PRINCETON**

**CB CHANNEL:** 8

**RATING:** 5

**RUN DATE:** Aug 1

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 20 mi.

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 6-7 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** A great little trip for the family. You can see a well preserved cabin and mine within a mile of the start. There are still remnants of an aerial tramway that once carried ore down to the railroad. The hardy hiker can find fishing at the two Pomeroy Lakes. Several historic mine buildings remain intact. Very narrow shelf road climbs to Mary Murphy Mine. Mary Murphy Mill can be reached over easy terrain. Difficult portions of trail are not suitable for stock vehicles. Mt Princeton is a popular tourist road because of its easy access. A relatively short drive to outstanding views. Road does not go all the way to top. Enjoy famous Mount Princeton Hot Springs. A few small camp spots along route. ATVs and dirt bikes are allowed, but area can get congested. Most of the road is easy except near top. Narrow shelf road may be intimidating to some. Most stock SUVs can do it. Low range is required for steep climbs. Snow may block trail in June and early July

## **9. MOUNT ANTERO AND BROWNS LAKES**

**RATING:** 6

**RUN DATE:** Jul 31/Aug 2

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 22 mi.

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 7 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** No other trail used in the Quarterly gives the sensation of being so high. You need not drive all the way to the top to enjoy yourself. Except for the last half mile, the road surface is not difficult but the trail is extremely narrow above timberline. Several of the switchbacks are very tight and require backing up to make the turns. The end of the trail nears 14,000 feet, so adequate power and low range are absolutely necessary. Extremely narrow shelf road with tight switchbacks. Small SUVs with low-range gearing and high clearance can drive all but last half mile to top of Mt. Antero. Recommended for experienced drivers. Snow melts late.

## **10. MOSQUITO PASS AND WESTON PASS**

**RATING:** 4

**RUN DATE:** Jul 31

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 17 mi w/o going over Weston Pass. – 39 with Weston Pass. (about 90 mi round trip w/o Weston pass to trail and return to Nathrop. Returning over Weston Pass the round trip road miles are about 65.)

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 6-8 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** Mosquito Pass is the highest pass road in Colorado open to travel. Views from the 13,185 foot summit are impressive on a clear day. Legal side roads can be difficult, especially Birdseye Gulch, which includes a nasty mud bog. Great area to explore on an ATV. Seasonal wildflowers. This short-lived trail was actively used in the 1870s as the quickest way to reach western mining activities. Like so many of these high pass roads, travelers eventually found it easier to take longer but lower routes like Weston Pass. In the late 1870s, Leadville was the most famous silver mining camp in the world and by the 1890s, it was the second largest city in Colorado. Today, Leadville is home to the National Mining Museum. View mines from a distance—they are dangerous and private. The upper portion of the trail is narrow and rocky on both sides of pass but suitable for aggressive, high-clearance, stock sport utility vehicles. Road is closed when blocked by snow, which can occur well into late summer. Check with the Bureau of Land Management or the Pike National Forest for road conditions.

Weston Pass is a beautiful drive along the south fork of the South Platte River. There are two forest service campgrounds on the east side of the pass plus numerous other camping places on both sides of the pass. On the whole, a pleasant drive over a relatively low 11,921ft.pass. Forest campground and many great dispersed camp spots along South Fork of South Platte River and Big Union Creek. Good fishing. Several hiking trails lead to the nearby Buffalo Peaks Wilderness. Wildflowers. ATVs permitted. In 1879 this was a busy stage coach route with hundreds of passengers making the trip to Leadville everyday. Suitable for passenger cars in good weather on the east side. High clearance is needed on the west side.

## **11. BALDWIN LAKES & BOULDER MT.**

**RATING:** 3

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 22 mi

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 5-7 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** This route features scenic, remote, and lesser-traveled back roads. Camp and fish at Baldwin Lakes. Great for ATVs, especially narrower Boulder Mountain. Staging at several wide spots near start. Rocky, narrow road suitable for aggressive, high-clearance SUVs. Oversize vehicles should not attempt Boulder Mountain. Marginally difficult above Baldwin Lakes. Snow melts late.

## **12. TIN CUP/SAINT ELMO**

**RATING:** 3

**RUN DATE:** Jul 31 & Aug 1

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 26 mi

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 4-5 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** A beautiful high-elevation route starting and ending at historic, quaint mountain towns. Saint Elmo is one of the most popular ghost towns in Colorado. All of the buildings are privately owned and a few are occupied by active businesses. Tincup is a small residential community with many century-old buildings. A tiny steepled white church in the center of town punctuates the photogenic setting. Good area for ATVs. Saint Elmo, Romley, and Iron City are the three main towns that served the prosperous Chalk Creek Mining District. Saint Elmo was settled in 1878 and grew to a population of about 2,000. Like so many mining towns, the most prosperous businesses were saloons, dance halls and bawdy houses. In 1881, Saint Elmo became an important station for the Denver, South Park and Pacific Railroad. During the construction of the Alpine Tunnel, Saint Elmo was a bustling supply center. At that time, Saint Elmo had multiple merchandise stores, hotels, restaurants and a weekly newspaper. By 1910, with mines failing and the Alpine Tunnel closed, Saint Elmo lost its favor. When the last mine, Mary Murphy, closed down in 1920, Saint Elmo was finished. Contrary to popular belief, Tincup is not a ghost town. Most of the old cabins in town have been restored to their original condition and are occupied. Still, one gets the impression the town is 150 years old. Rocky at the top with one short section of narrow shelf road at 12,000 feet that often remains snow covered into early July. After the snow clears, this trail is suitable for any high-clearance, 4-wheel-drive SUV with low-range gearing. Saint Elmo can be reached by car. The optional "Old Tincup" route has one difficult rocky section.

### **13. MEDANO PASS**

**RATING:** 2-3

**RUN DATE:** Jul 31

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 19.9 mi (see description below)

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 10 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** This will be the longest trail offered during the Quarterly because of the road trip required to reach the trailhead and back. It is about 75 mi to the trailhead and 75 mi back after completing the trail. The trail is not difficult trail but it unique due to the Great Sand Dunes. The trail runs next to and through the dunes which are the tallest in North America. Medano Pass is unique because of the sand you can travel in between rocky areas and many water crossings.

### **14. LOST CANYON & VICKSBURG/WINFIELD GHOST TOWNS**

**RATING:** 3

**RUN DATE:** Aug 2

**TRAIL LENGTH:** 20 mi. (The trail turn off is about 20 mi north of Northrop, the total mileage is about 60.)

**APPROXIMATE TIME TO RUN:** 4-5 hours

**TRAIL DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:** This easy trail explores Lost Canyon which is north of Buena Vista off Hwy 24 and the two restored mining towns of Vicksburg and Winfield. The Lost Canyon trail ends at an overlook looking down into the canyon and Twin Lakes Reservoir. The road to Vicksburg and Winfield is on the road to Clear Creek Reservoir. There is a small museum at Vicksburg run by the great-granddaughter of one of the original inhabitants. There are a number of restored private cabins/buildings. Winfield has a restored miner's cabin and schoolhouse.