

Fall Color Tours Guidebook

References: **Video: All about FCT** <https://youtu.be/vhEYQTgUgUA>

Video: You made the top 50 <https://youtu.be/H2p9X54ouWY>

Registration form: Email Mike at m38mike@gmail.com

Introduction: I am putting together this guidebook for Fall Color Tours (FCT) to help answer questions from new participants in this adventure, and to help experienced participants enjoy their time here more than before. Nothing that I include here is absolutely permanent, written in stone, or cast in cement. It is all subject to change, but it is the best advice that I can offer at this time. By reading this document I hope you'll get a very good understanding of what to expect, how we operate, what to bring, and the lessons learned by those who came before you. I will try to keep it brief but informative, comprehensive but concise. With that as an introduction, let's get into it.



Mike and Nancy Picard, your Hosts for the Fall Color Tours

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I. What to expect on this adventure

This experience can be a truly memorable one if you come with a good attitude, you've done good maintenance on your Jeep, and you've reviewed this guidebook. Everyone here wants to enjoy driving their Jeep on rugged trails high in the Rocky Mountains. They also want the security of knowing that if they have a problem, there are other Jeepers around who can help them solve that problem. The other guests may show an interest in your Jeep, and what you've done with it. Show it off a little. And spend some time exploring the many other Jeeps that will be here.

Sunday is training day. We highly recommend that all new folks attend the training on Sunday afternoon. The knowledge we share will help you enjoy your experience and may prevent you from having an accident out on the trail. Monday through Thursday we offer 3 different tours each day. You are free to choose the tours you want to go on up to the time the tour leaves. You are also free to decide not to go on any tours if you want to take a day off to do something else. Friday is the grand tour along Aspen Ridge. We'll split all the Jeeps into two equal groups. One group will start at the north end of Aspen Ridge and one group will start at the south end. Each group will drive along the ridge stopping to enjoy the views and the history. We will all meet up for lunch at a grand viewpoint. Saturday is when most of our guests leave for home. Those who stick around may put together an impromptu tour to some local feature. Every evening it seems we have something going on in the shop. Could be repairs, could be folks playing guitar, might be folks just enjoying each other's company and telling stories. Join us each evening for an hour or three.

We have a motto here, "No Jeep Left Behind". That means if you have a major mechanical problem and can no longer drive your Jeep, we will find a way to get it back to the shop at Thirsty Dirt Ranch for repairs. We have seen all manner of failures out on the trails, and we have always managed to get every Jeep back to the ranch that same day. Part of our success in doing this depends on fellow Jeepers stepping up to help out. Whether it's offering a tool to help fix a problem, or offering a part, or helping to tow a broken Jeep, it's this attitude of mutual support that makes our tours so enjoyable.

Some days on the trail are warm and dusty. Some are cool and wet. Most days are the warm and dusty kind. There will be lots of opportunities to lay the windshield down and enjoy the view and the breeze as we travel through forests and meadows, over rocky ridges and down along quiet streams. Be ready for a truly memorable adventure.

II. Registration and Lottery

The first step toward attending the Fall Color Tours is sending in your registration. I get the form established online very early in January. Much of our program is based on the information on this form. It also includes the waiver that needs to be signed with a real signature. The primary use of the form is to establish who will be in the lottery to attend. I limit the event to about 50 Jeeps. That is a number that my staff and I can work with on a daily basis for the week. Many more Jeeps than that and the event is no longer fun for us. It becomes a job. That's not what we want. We want to enjoy our guests, and each day driving in the mountains.

The lottery works like this. The first name on each registration is entered into an Excel spreadsheet, in the first column (A). In the second column (B) I insert a formula that calculates a random number between 5 and 150. I'll run the formulas to develop a random number for each name. I will copy the values to column C. Then I sort the spreadsheet based on the values in Column C, from low to high. That establishes who will be in the 50 Primary slots, and who will be Alternates. I maintain the Alternate list in order from lower number to higher numbers. That will be the order that I use to contact Alternates when I have to replace a Primary who has withdrawn. In years past I have reached out to Alternates who were 30+ positions from the start of the Alternate list.

I will reach out to all the Primaries with an email notifying them they made the Primary list on March 1st. I will do the same with all the Alternates. ***The difference is that I need to hear back from every Primary within three weeks.*** If I don't, then the ones who don't reply to me may forfeit their slot and I'll start contacting Alternates to fill those slots. I'm doing this to make sure that every Primary is aware they got selected. I don't want to hear from someone that they didn't know what their status was. I will also publish the list of Primaries, and the list of Alternates, on March 1st for everyone to see. I encourage everyone to go to either THECJ2APAGE.COM or to Facebook to go see the lists on March 1st.

In late March I will advertise 4 jobs to all of the Alternates to see if they are willing to work for an opportunity to attend FCT. None of the jobs are hard or take a long time to complete. They are: collect trash in the shop; collect trash at the portable toilets; clean the shop bathroom; clean the two showers in the shower shed. At the end of March I will run a lottery for each group of folks who put their name in for one of the jobs. That lottery will select the person that I will offer the job to. You can put in for any or all of the jobs, but you must be on the Alternate list to put in for a job. The idea is to offer a way for an Alternate who is way back on the list to have a chance to come to FCT. And by having these 4 jobs taken care of, that frees me up to take care of other business, or time to make new friends or visit with old friends.

III. Preparing your Jeep

Once you know that you have a Primary slot for FCT, the next step is to make sure your Jeep is ready for this adventure. One thing we've learned over the years is that if your Jeep has a weakness, the long days, high elevations, and rugged trails will expose that weakness and something will fail. Then you'll be "that guy" that gets towed back to the Thirsty Dirt Ranch (TDR) shop for repairs. We've found that folks who do a good job preparing their Jeeps will spend their time enjoying trails and new friends, instead of making repairs during the week. Having said that, we also know that 70+ year old machines can break something no matter how well they are prepared. But good prep work reduces that chance.

Most of the prep work is simply routine maintenance. Oil changes, COMPLETE lubrication, checking all fluid levels, looking for loose bolts, replacing worn out tires, cleaning and tightening electrical connections. Replace worn out components like failing generators or starters. If the engine smokes, look to see if it needs new rings or get the valves adjusted. If you bring a blue-smoker, you'll be at the back of every tour you go on so others won't be breathing your fumes.



Once you're comfortable with your prep work, then take your Jeep on a 100+ mile road trip to make sure nothing else will fail. Try to get some 4wd time in that road trip. While you are here, you may spend most of the day in 4wd, Low range, driving the trails.

You will also have to drive some highway miles at 40-45 mph getting to and from the trails. Can your Jeep drive 50 mph? Can it stay there for an hour without overheating? Our tour convoys typically drive at 40 mph, but if

the line gets spread out you may need to speed up to 50 to catch up with the rest of the group.

Part of getting your Jeep ready is adding tools and parts to fix problems. See Section X for a discussion of what to bring for the Jeep, and for you. Be sure those items are on your packing list for the trip. Don't leave them on the workbench back home. You'll regret it if you happen to need that one part, or one tool, that got left at home.

Fortunately, the TDR shop has lots of tools and parts, so we should be able to take care of you – after tour hours. Not for taking on the trails.

IV. Where is the Thirsty Dirt Ranch?

The address is 20123 Hideout Lane, Nathrop, CO 81236. You can look it up online.

A. Directions from the south

If you are coming from AZ or south UT you'll want to come east on Hwy 50 over 11,312 foot high Monarch Pass. If you're coming from TX or south KS you'll want to come west on Hwy 50. If you're coming from NM then Hwy 285 is for you. You will go over Poncha Pass at 9,010 feet. Hwy 50 and 285 meet in Poncha Springs. From there go north on Hwy 285 for 12 miles. At County Road (CR) 270, go left (west). There is a turn lane. Follow CR 270 for 2 miles. At the 4-way intersection turn right (north). That is still CR 270. Go about 1.7 miles, then turn right (east) on CR 282. It's a gravel road. Go about ¼ mile then turn right (south) on Old Ranch Loop. It's gravel. Go about ½ mile then turn right (south) on Hideout Lane. This road will have yellow Jeep signs posted. Go 100 yards and drive into the Thirsty Dirt Ranch driveway. Pull up to the shop where someone will meet you.

B. Directions from the north

If you're coming west on I-70, get off at Copper Mountain and take Hwy 91 over 11,319 foot tall Fremont Pass to Leadville. At Leadville take Hwy 24 south toward Buena Vista. An alternative route is to take Hwy 24 from Limon through Colorado Springs over Ute Pass, Wilkerson Pass, and Trout Creek Pass to Buena Vista. All of those passes are about 9,500 feet high.

If you're coming east on I-70, get off at Minturn and take Hwy 24 over 10,423 foot high Tennessee Pass through Leadville to Buena Vista. From Buena Vista go south on Hwy 285 about 5 miles. Go through Nathrop, but don't blink, you'll miss it. At 1.7 miles south of Nathrop, turn right (west) on CR 280. Drive almost 2 miles and turn left (south) on CR 282, a gravel road. Go ¼ mile and turn left (east) onto Old Ranch Loop. Follow that for almost one mile then turn left on Hideout lane. Go 100 yards and drive into the Thirsty Dirt Ranch driveway. Pull up to the shop where someone will meet you.

V. We've arrived, what now?

A. Check in

Once you have pulled up to the shop, someone will greet you there and help get you oriented to where everything is. They will check your registration to see if any changes need to be made. If you are staying at a hotel, you will be shown where to park your trailer and where to leave your Jeep. The staff can answer your questions or give you tips on local services. **We would prefer if you would arrive between 6:00am and 9:00pm.** If you arrive in the middle of the night, then drive around the right side (west side) of the shop and go park out by the rest of the trailers. In the morning someone will come find you and get you checked in. If it's during the day and everyone is out on a tour, go around the right (west) side of the shop and park by the trailers. Walk around to see where things are located. As soon as a staff member returns, we'll get you checked in and let you know where everything is located.

B. Select camp site



If you are planning to camp at Thirsty Dirt Ranch, the staff will help you learn where the camping sites are, as well as other key facilities. I mow my field where the good camping areas are. Where it's been mowed, I've also removed 98% of the cactus. I may miss a few here and there. My property is home to small barrel cactus and prickly pear cactus. Feel free to bring one or more home as a souvenir. I also prefer that you don't drive where the grass is tall. I've had one fire start from grass touching a catalytic converter. I really don't need another. The ground is fairly level, but not very smooth. If you're tent camping be sure to bring a good air mattress or a cot. The ground is not comfortable to sleep on.

VI. Thirsty Dirt Ranch Facilities

A. Camp Sites

Some camp sites are designated, most are simply places with short vegetation. The ground is lumpy because it's covered with bunch grass, not turf grass. So the grass grows in clumps. Not a problem if you're above ground over wheels. But in a tent it creates an uneven floor. Because of the openness and potential for wind, be sure to use good stakes to anchor your tent. On RV's, don't leave your canopies extended.

B. Showers

I've built a two-stall shower shed for guests to use. Each stall has its own hot water heater. These are cleaned each day. They are open 24 hours a day. They have lights, locks on the doors, heaters, ventilation fans, sitting benches, clothes hooks on the walls, mirrors, and baskets in the shower for your shower products. We do not provide towels so you need to bring your own.

C. Water

We have a good producing well at TDR. On the northwest corner of the shop, there is a double sink and a water faucet outside that is there to provide water to your water jug or your water tank. The water's been tested and is free of heavy metals, arsenic, lead, and other contaminants found in the mountains. You can wash dishes in the sink but do not clean parts with solvents there. You would damage my septic system.

D. Shop

Inside the shop we have a two-post lift, several sets of hand tools, lots of air tools and a large air compressor tank and compressor. We have a 20-ton press, a paint booth, a sandblast room, a tire changing machine, a wheel balancer, and a parts cleaning tank. We have floor jacks, a couple of rolling chests for tools, a few work benches that can be moved around, an engine hoist, a transmission jack, battery chargers, power tools, and a 4'x8' pegboard full of tools. There is a half-bathroom there with a sink and flush toilet.

E. Electric power

On each of the outside corners of the shop building is an outlet with either two or four outlets with 20-amp service. Bring your own extension cords if you want to get hooked into power. Or if you bring your own generator, I've got a camping area for those who need to use generators to keep their systems charged. We encourage and use extensive solar power at TDR.

F. Trash

We will have a 10-yard dumpster available for you to get rid of trash. Please put all trash in bags before tossing it in the dumpster. That helps to keep the wind from blowing trash out of the dumpster and across our land.

G. Toilets

We will have a half dozen portable toilets spread around the camping areas. We also have the half-bathroom in the shop. We do not have a dump station for black water in your camper tanks.

H. Trailer Parking

For everyone who brings a Jeep on a trailer, but especially for those who are staying in hotels, I have a large area set aside just for trailer parking. All the trailers are parked side by side so every trailer can be accessed both front and back at any time.

I. Jeep Parking

Typically for folks staying away from TDR, we like to have them park their Jeeps along the driveway in front of the house. It's become kind of a "Willys Walk". For those who are camped at TDR, keeping your Jeep at your campsite is the norm. A few folks will drive their Jeeps to and from their hotels.

J. Radio Rack

Inside the shop next to the bathroom is a rack of radios that are available for folks to use if they don't have their own radio. We use radios extensively during the tours to let everyone know of wildlife sightings, directions at intersections, pass information about breakdowns, and line up Jeeps for great scenery shots. We encourage everyone to have their own radio to use during the tours. There are nine radios on this rack. You can sign them out each day and return them back to the charger at the end of each day.

K. Bringing Dogs

We enjoy meeting dogs, and many of our Jeep friends like to bring their dogs along with them. But we've got a few rules about bringing dogs here. First, we've got a herd of cats that keep our rodent population down. They live in the shop and hunt around all our outbuildings. If your dog is a cat chaser, or cat eater, we don't want it here. If your dog has ever bitten anyone, even you, we don't want it here. I don't need to test my homeowner's insurance for your desire to bring a biting dog along. If your dog likes to bark at everything or everyone we don't need it here. Folks want to be able to sleep without a barking dog next door. Dogs need to go with you on tours. I don't want dogs tied up outside all day, and my neighbors don't want to listen to a pack of barking dogs. There are acres of land available to walk your dog for it to do its business. But be careful, there is cactus in places on many of those acres. Until your dog learns about cactus, it could be painful pulling thorns out of paws. If you decide to walk your dog where I've mowed and pulled the cactus, please pick up after your dog and get rid of the pile in a trash can so no one will step in it.

L. Campfires

Generally, in mid-September my county has a fire ban in effect. Even if the county doesn't, the conditions here at Thirsty Dirt Ranch are dry. And with a small breeze a spark from a small fire can become a large blaze very quickly. For that reason, we don't allow wood or charcoal fires. Propane campfires or stoves are fine. If you can turn the

fire off with a valve, then it's OK. We encourage you to have a fire extinguisher close to any appliance that has a flame in case something else catches fire.



M. Quiet time

Most folks camped at TDR like to turn in early, so we'd like to have all noisy activity done before 9 pm. That includes generators. Some folks will stay up around a campfire until much later, and that's OK. We'd like generators not started until after 6 am.

VII. Who are the Staff?

A. Support Staff

First and foremost is my wife, Nancy. She does so much to help me make this whole event work. She checks my work to make sure I don't make mistakes. She manages the check-in process and keeps track of who is not here yet. She is in charge of hat sales and has a wealth of knowledge about the local area. She enjoys driving the Blue Mule.



Traci Clark; author, photographer, financial coordinator for donations, gifts, and prizes. Without her help we could not afford to keep operating this event.



Kate Cary, sister of mine, master coffee maker. She's the one responsible for great shop coffee every morning. She also helps with general administration.



Brad Reighard, Radio master. He has the tools, the technology, and the smarts to fix your radio problems, or teach you the basics in how to use your radio. He's been a participant for many years and now he's our newest staff member.



B. Guides

These are the guys who will take you far down the valley or high up into the mountains in search of grand view and sometimes high adventure. If you choose to follow them, they will share some wonderful rides with you, and guarantee that if your Jeep breaks down, these guys will find a way to get your Jeep back to the ranch for repairs. So follow them through the forests. Listen to them on the radios. Learn about mountain driving in old Jeeps from them.

Bruce Walker, the guide who's been with me the longest. Been to every FCT except one. Excellent mechanic, Army Veteran, purveyor of profound wisdom. He prefers to guide on some of our easier routes. He is on channel FRS-2.



Rick Gibson, our newest addition to the guide team. Experienced driver, mechanic, knows the area well, willing to step up. He is on channel FRS-7.



Ron Dennis, the high adventure guide. He's the guy who will take you on trails that will really test your skills, and your Jeep's ability. He also lives nearby. He uses FRS-5.



Jeff Petrowich, “Jpet”, been coming to FCT for over a decade. He’s been over most of the trails and stepped up to help us expand our tour offerings. He’s on FRS-6



Mike Picard, your host for FCT. I’ve lived here since 2005 and worked for the US Forest Service. That helped me learn the roads and trails that we use. I’m on FRS-4.



VIII. Thirsty Dirt Ranch School of Mountain Driving

A. Purpose

To educate participants with tips and advice that will help them enjoy the FCT more than they could without this knowledge. To help participants safely navigate some of the hazardous conditions they will encounter on the trails. It is very highly recommended for first timers, optional for those who have been here before.

B. Teachers

The five guides; Bruce, Rick, Ron, Jeff, and Mike. 100+ years of off-road experience.

C. Schedule

The school starts at 1:00pm on Sunday afternoon in the shop. We start with discussions about what to expect, what to bring, answer questions, and how we operate. Then we have a driving exercise to teach the preferred technique for driving up and down steep slopes. Following that, there will be a shake down ride in the National Forest a few miles from the ranch. The ride will check to see how well your Jeep will perform at higher elevations. Expect to be done about 3:30pm.

D. Subjects

Tools, parts, personal gear, convoy operations, driving techniques, radio use, safety, altitude sickness, injuries, breakdowns, photography, souvenirs, and questions.

IX. Daily Schedule

A. Early Morning

You can start your day with a free cup of coffee in the shop. We have the 100-cup pot started at 5:00 am every day. This is the time for checking your Jeep, loading lunches and gear, making sure the gas tank is full.

B. Driver's Meeting

It starts at 8:30 am every weekday morning with the ringing of the school bell. Mike conducts this meeting for all drivers and anyone else who wants to listen. Mike will talk about the rides for the day. He also will mention if anything special is happening later in the day. He will designate radio frequencies for each tour. He will answer questions about anything FCT related. It lasts between 10 minutes and a half hour.

C. Daily Tours

There will be three tours on Monday through Thursday starting by 9:00am. On Friday there will be two tour groups on one tour. The groups will simply see the tour in opposite directions. Tours will return to TDR from early afternoon until late evening, depending on any breakdowns while on the trail. The guides will do their best to answer

questions along the way. We guarantee that they can bring you back to TDR from any place they take you.

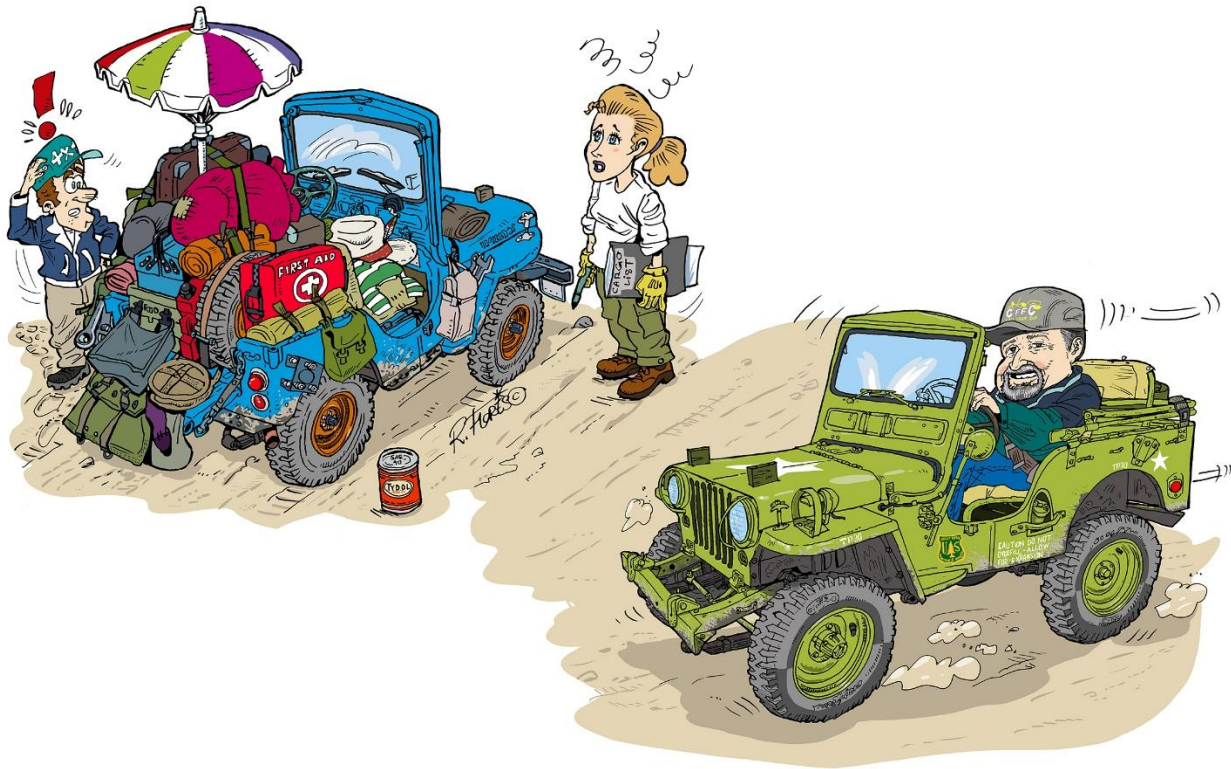
D. Prep for next day

Once you get back to TDR, it's time to think about what needs to be done to get ready for the next day. If you have a loose part, or a broken part, then fix it. The shop has spare parts. Fill up your gas tank so you're ready to go. Clean out your trash and reload some water bottles.

E. Socialize

End of the day is a good time to wander around and look at other Jeeps. Go visit with the folks camped next door. Come into the shop and see who's doing a Jeep repair, or listen to some musicians pickin' and grinnin'. Maybe make dinner plans with some new friends at a local restaurant.

X. What to take on tours



A. Jeep stuff

What do you need to keep your Jeep rolling? Maybe a spare tire. One year we had 22 flat tires during the week. Gas cans are a welcome addition, especially if you go on one of Ron's long-distance tours. Tools are always a good addition. A jack so you can change a tire. Spare parts, like a carb, fuel pump, points, condenser, spark plugs, extra

wire, universal joints, C-shackle, water pump, flashlight, antifreeze or water, quart of oil, nuts and bolts, tow straps, jumper cables. Some kind of top or cover to protect you in case of rain or intense sunlight. And general items like duct tape, bailing wire, plastic bags, paper towels, hand cleaner.

B. Personal stuff

Spare jacket, could be a rain jacket. Backpack or day pack to put things in. Extra gloves, bandana, sunglasses, cooler with drinks, lunch, extra snacks, a hat (sun or cold protection), camera, note pad and pen, field guides for trees, flowers, birds, animals, rocks, folding chair, or other items you may want. Lip balm for dry lips, and lotion for dry skin are good. Sunscreen to protect you from the intense sunlight is good. Handi-wipes are good for cleaning up before a meal or after a repair.

XI. I broke down, what to do?

A. Notify Tour Guide

If you have a radio, call your guide and let him know. If you don't have a radio, find someone who does to make the call. Otherwise, the guide will continue driving away from you because he doesn't know you stopped.

B. Diagnosis

Figure out what the problem is. Enlist someone's help when needed to help watch or listen for the problem. Once the primary problem is found, check to see if anything else is affected. Do you have the tools or the parts to fix the problem?

C. Field repairs

If you have the tools and parts, go to work on the problem. Have someone with a radio standing by to keep the guide and the rest of the group informed. If you need a tool or part, use the radio to see who might have what you need. If you need help, use the radio to make that known. Your guides will support you any way they can to get your repair made so the tour can continue.

D. Major Breakdown

If your problem cannot be fixed in the field, then your guide will make a plan to get you towed or hauled back to TDR. At that time you can decide to fix your jeep or take it home. Most will try to fix their Jeeps. We've rebuilt engines to get folks back on the trail.

“No Jeep Left Behind!”



XII. Other Useful Information

A. Elevations

Thirsty Dirt Ranch sits at 8,020 feet above sea level. Most of our tours will take you up to 10,000 feet. Some will go over 12,000 to as high as 13,000 feet. If your engine is well tuned it will continue to work as well as possible in that thin air. You will see a notable decrease in power. Everyone will have the same issue. At that altitude, you will be in low range and driving slowly anyway so it won't matter.

B. Altitude Sickness

One of the side effects of travelling at high elevations, is a condition known as Altitude sickness. Symptoms are dizziness, nausea, disorientation, weakness, difficulty breathing, fatigue, and in bad cases, passing out. Treatment includes drinking plenty of water, taking aspirin, resting, and returning to a lower elevation. We have never had any bad cases, but some folks have had mild symptoms. Let your guide know if you are experiencing any of these symptoms. Arriving at TDR a day or two early can help your body get acclimated to the higher elevations.

C. Parts Suppliers

In both Buena Vista and in Salida we have some parts supply houses. BV has NAPA and O'Reilly's. Salida has NAPA, O'Reilly's, Car Quest, and Auto Zone. They have a good selection of generic parts like wire or batteries. Jeep parts they can usually get

overnight from Denver if ordered before 4:00 pm. The shop at TDR has a large selection of flatfender Jeep parts on hand. Just ask Mike.

D. Groceries

Buena Vista has a City Market store, part of the Kroger chain, and a LaGree's Market. There is also a small natural foods store. Salida has a Walmart, Safeway, and Natural Grocers food stores. They are usually open from 6 am to about 9 pm daily.

E. Restaurants

There are a couple dozen restaurants between BV and Salida. Only about 4 or 5 are open for breakfast. A few are closed by supper time. Check with the locals, or those who have been here many times before to get recommendations. The Chamber of Commerce web sites maintain lists of the local eateries.

F. Fuel

One thing we learned is that modern unleaded gas with 10% alcohol added tends to cause vapor locking in our old engines. It's a condition where gas bubbles develop in the fuel line and affect fuel delivery to the carb. It's usually caused by heat, but can be caused by altitude as well. We recommend using gasoline without the added alcohol. That's hard to find, but our local gas station, the Sugar Shack, carries premium gas without alcohol added. It costs more, but it significantly reduces the occurrence of vapor lock in our engines. The Big-O-Tire shop on Hwy 50 east of Salida also carries non-alcohol gas, and it's better priced than the Sugar Shack.

G. Tires

We recommend that you check your tires for serviceable condition. If you are seeing dry rot cracks developing, it may be time to replace them. The rough surfaces you'll drive over on the tours will aggravate any weakness your tires may have. The other issue with tires is pressure. As you go up in elevation the effective pressure in your tires will increase. We recommend that most Jeep tires should be about 20 lbs pressure. More pressure will lead to a harder ride and possibly reduced traction.

We also suggest you take a good look at your trailer tires. They often get overlooked. Make sure they are close to their max pressure when carrying a load. Every year we hear about someone having to replace a flat on their trailer while traveling to or from FCT. Good tires on your trailer are cheap insurance toward more trouble-free travel.

H. Radios

We use FRS/GMRS channels 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 for our tours. Colorado has designated channel 3 for Search and Rescue use. FRS stands for Family Radio Service. GMRS is General Mobile Radio Service. A HAM radio license is not needed if you are using the FRS frequencies and less than 2 watts of power. We recommend that participants get a programmable hand-held radio. Typically sold to HAM radio operators, they can be programmed for the FRS channels and low power so a license is not needed to use them. Outdoor sports stores sell FRS radios that have short, fixed antennas for about \$40 to \$90 a pair. Those will work, but they usually work on ½ watt of power so they don't transmit far, and the quality of the sound from the speaker is low. The radios we

recommend will provide much better transmitting and receiving signals, and far better sound from their speakers.

Good radios that are inexpensive are Baofeng UV-5R, the TYT UV88, the Retevis RT85, and the Rugged Radio GMR2. Prices for these radios go from \$30 up to \$80 each. Other hand-held radios that use FRS or GMRS channels and have fixed antennas will work. These four recommended radios are programmable and may need to be programmed to be able to use the FRS frequencies. I will have a designated radio guy for solving any radio issues that attendees may have. He will be there to program radios. I have a rack of Baofeng UV-5R radios to loan out each day. I use them because they are cheap, rugged, and pretty reliable. I paid about \$30 each for them.

I. Alcohol

Alcohol is part of the social fabric of FCT. We accept it. I enjoy a cold beer, or glass of red wine most evenings. It is allowed out on the trails as well, in moderation. We do not accept drunk driving. Anyone driving drunk will be asked to leave FCT. A beer or wine with lunch is fine. Drinks in the evening are often enjoyed and shared between new friends. We ask that if you do drink, don't become obnoxious or belligerent. We're all here to have a good time. Please don't ruin it for others.

J. Firearms

Pistols are permitted on our tours. Colorado and Chaffee County allow open carry of pistols without a permit. If you carry concealed, make sure you have a permit from your home state, and that your state has reciprocity with Colorado. We do not want or need long guns on our tours. If you have firearms that you would like to shoot while you are here, our county has a very good shooting range just 5 miles from our ranch, and it's free for anyone to use. Ammunition is readily available at hardware stores, farm stores, and gun shops in town.

K. Towing over Mountain Passes

I often get questions about towing trailers over mountain passes. I do it a lot, and here is what I recommend. When you start up a long, steady grade toward a mountain pass, take your automatic transmission out of overdrive and use the regular drive gear to start. When your truck gets to the point where you cannot accelerate in drive, then slow down and drop into 2nd gear. Turn on your emergency flashers. The transmission will work much better pulling the load over the mountain in 2nd gear. It will not heat up as much as if you stayed in drive. Take your time. Watch your engine and transmission temperatures. If they get too hot, find a turn-out and pull over. Leave them running and give them time to cool down before continuing. If you are running your air conditioning when the engine is getting hot, turn off the AC. It just adds to the heat load. Most of the mountain pass highways have passing lanes every so often so traffic behind you can get safely around you if you are going slowly.

When you start down the other side, don't be quick to shift into overdrive. You may want to stay in a lower gear, even with an automatic transmission. This will help you maintain a slower speed going down. With a trailer behind you, your truck is going to want to speed up way too fast. And your brakes will not last long if you have to ride

them for the next 15 to 20 miles to keep your speed down. Use your engine to help keep your speed down. If Drive is too fast, then slow down and shift to 2nd. Yes you may be driving slower than you'd like, but it's better than going too fast and losing control on a curve with no guardrail. And most mountain pass highways in Colorado don't have guardrails everywhere. Some have no guardrails at all.

L. Weather

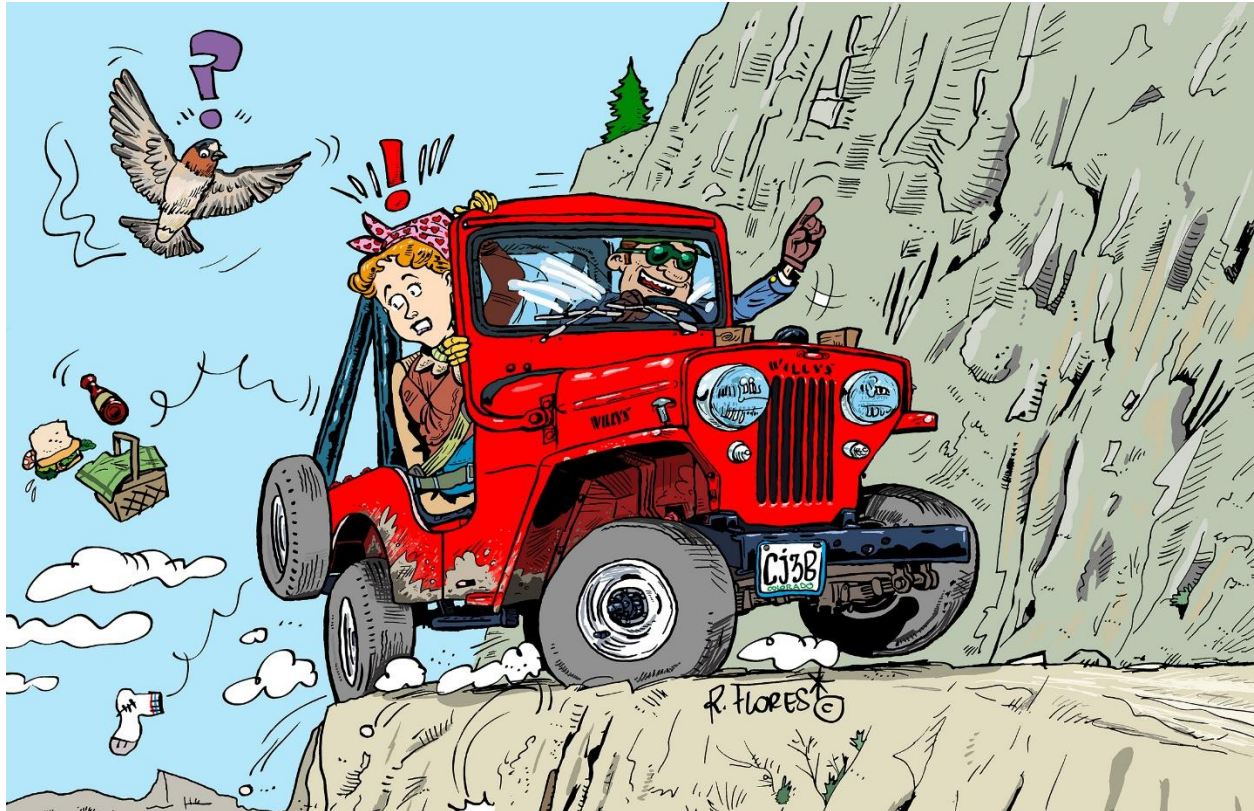
What can you expect for weather during FCT? Conditions will be dry. The sky will be blue most days with scattered clouds. There may be a chance of thunder storms, but that should only be one or two days. If we do get rain, it will be very, very cold rain. Most days will start with clear skies and temperatures in the high 30's. The air will be calm, or moving less than 5 mph. The temperature range will be from 25 to 45 degrees at sunrise. The intense sunshine will warm things up quickly. By the time we leave on the tours at 9:00 the temperature will be in the 50's. If the sky stays clear, then by lunch time temps at higher elevations will be in the 60's. Down in the valley the temps will reach into the 70's in the afternoon. The breeze will pick up as the day goes on. Afternoon breezes are often around 10 mph. But if we get a storm over the mountains, we could see winds near 30 mph, or more at TDR. Humidity will often get down into single digits during the afternoon. Then go up to about 70% overnight. You will not usually find dew here in the morning. We have had snow fall in the mountains during some of our tours. It can also fall at the ranch in September. Bring an extra blanket or two so you'll sleep warm at night.

M. Convoy Operations

Traveling in a tour convoy is like playing "follow the leader" mixed with "Simon says". You go where the leader goes and do what the leader does. And if he says that we're going to do something, then plan on doing it. The guide will lead you in single file down county roads and along state highways. Speeds will be up to 40 mph. If anyone is not keeping up the guide needs to hear about it so he can adjust his speed or find a place to pull the group over and fix the problem if that's appropriate. When the group gets onto a Forest Service road or trail, he will slow down. You should be able to keep up with the Jeep in front of you, and you should watch for the Jeep behind you as well. When there is a fork in the road, watch for the Jeep behind you so they will know the correct way to go. That is when radios are very useful. Then everyone knows that there is a turn coming up, and which way to go.

When driving along the state highways, we usually ride on the shoulder, to the right of the white fog line. That's what we call the "Willys Lane". Many of the state highways have wide shoulders so farm vehicles can move along the road without slowing traffic on their side of the highway. We take advantage of this as we travel along the highway. But the State Patrol only wants us to do that with groups of 4 or more Jeeps. With one, two or three Jeeps you should be in the regular travel lane until you have at least a couple of vehicles behind you. Then you can pull on to the shoulder to let them pass. Be alert to bicyclists using the wide shoulders. It's good for them too.

The last Jeep in a tour is known as the “tail gunner”. His job is to let the guide know when the group has passed each notable road feature. He will call the guide on the radio when he passes the fork in the road and say which fork he took. By doing this if someone takes the wrong fork the group can stop and fix the problem right away. This will keep folks from getting lost by taking the wrong road. Staying on the right road is one good reason to keep the Jeep in front of you in sight. By giving the guide this information regularly, the guide can estimate how far apart the convoy has spread. It is common for a group of 25 Jeeps to get stretched out over 3 or more miles when drivers don't keep each other in sight. Be sure to watch your speed on the trails. There are no guardrails to keep you from running off the road.



Sometimes at rest stops the guide will want to park Jeeps a certain way to provide a good photo opportunity with a dramatic mountain scene as a background. This is where each driver needs to pay attention, especially if he doesn't have a radio, and play follow the leader. Park like the Jeep in front of you parked, either nose to tail, or side by side, facing the same way.

At the end of the tour, as all the Jeeps are heading back to the TDR, some Jeeps may want to drop out of the line and go to an auto parts store, or a grocery store. Many will want to go straight to the Sugar Shack gas station to fill up their gas tanks for tomorrow. Then each Jeep will find its way back to TDR in small groups, or on its own.

N. Visitors

We often get visitors here at TDR during FCT. Folks come to see old friends from across the country. I strongly discourage visitors coming to the ranch in the morning when we're working to get ready for the day's tours. There is already a lot of vehicles and traffic moving in the morning. I don't want visitors adding to the traffic flow. I would greatly prefer that any visitors do their visiting in the afternoon or evening hours. So, if you've got friends coming to see you, have them stop by later in the day. Or if you'd prefer, take the day off from tours to spend time with your friends.

O. Souvenirs

We always have hats for sale. We get ball caps each year in a different color than in past years. They are embroidered with our logo, and the year. We also have boonie hats for sale that have been embroidered with our logo on the top. We have those in tan and OD green. All of the hats are fully adjustable for size. We don't buy large quantities and sometimes we may run out of one type of hat. If we do we usually can place an additional order for more hats and mail them to those who want them.

Some years we may have other items for sale, such as bandanas, insulated steel coffee mugs, or decals. Those items depend on who we can find to produce them.

P. Colorado OHV Permits

A Colorado OHV Permit is required for all plated, street legal vehicles (resident and nonresident) when traveling on any designated OHV trail and/or open area for recreational use on public lands. The OHV Permit sticker must be properly displayed on the vehicle, or the owner must carry the non-stick bright green OHV Permit.

Purchase online (<https://www.cpwshop.com/home.page>) or by phone (800) 244-5613 and the bright green non-stick permit will arrive by mail in approximately 10-20 business days. Your permit confirmation receipt will be sent to your email address on file shortly after your purchase. It includes the Temporary Authorization Number (TAN), valid for 45 days, and is the authorization to ride while you wait for your OHV permit to arrive in the mail. Make sure you print or download your confirmation receipt. Carry it with you.

Customers who have purchased a CPW wildlife (hunting or fishing) license, have made a reservation with cpwshop.com or reserveamerica.com, or have registered an OHV, snowmobile, or vessel with CPW in the past, LOOK UP YOUR PROFILE using an identifier (eg driver's license, CID) and date of birth.

If you never used the CPW IPAWS site, have never purchased a CPW wildlife license, permit, registration, or reservation, or do not have a Reserve America account, please create an individual account.

Q. Cartoon Credits

Cartoons are courtesy of the excellent artist, Roberto Flores.



Photo credit: Dave Luber

~~ THE END ~~

Room for your notes here.