

Sample file

CYCLING

COLORADO'S MOUNTAIN PASSES

Kurt Magsamen


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INTRODUCTION

The history of cycling is archived in bike shop bathrooms around the world. Faded posters tell the stories of the great ones: Eddy Merckx, Bernard Hinault, Greg LeMond, and now Lance Armstrong summit the great passes of Europe, cheered by thousands, grimacing toward victory. Even for ordinary cyclists, the allure of famous climbs such as Alpe d'Huez is inspiring. Just riding up a road like that is a worthy accomplishment, even if it's not part of a 2,400-mile race. Fortunately, Europe isn't the only place to find inspiring climbs. There are plenty in Colorado.

Colorado's shape is a big box that surrounds the greatest concentration of high peaks in the Lower 48. Beautiful, challenging mountain roads knit this box together, encompassing thirty-eight paved passes ranging in elevation from 9,000 to 12,000 feet. Certainly there are more passes on routes consisting of dirt, rock, or trail and scree, but this book is written for anyone looking for concise, concentrated, and useful information on Colorado's road-bikeable passes.

I've been riding in Colorado for twenty years and, always, the high passes have had a special attraction not unlike the summits of big peaks. The roar of a roadside river, the windblown wildflowers, and the striking change of view as you hit the top are just some of the pleasures that make all the high-altitude grinding worthwhile.

Whenever I wanted to ride a pass, the first source of information was whatever tattered road atlas was at hand. These contain precious little information for a cyclist. How steep is the grade? How sustained? A summit elevation is fine, if it's on