

Colorado place to go high-plains drifting

Ride the rails to see best of the Centennial State

Colorado is a colorful state. White snowcapped mountains stand tall above vibrant trees and red rocks.

Red enhances Colorado's stately splendor. Even its name comes from the Spanish term for the ruddy stones of the native sandstone. Colorado certainly is special and it has the places to prove it.

Garden of the Gods is home to many of the state's uniquely beautiful sandstone-rock formations. Located outside of Colorado Springs, the solemn red giants, with names like Tower of Babel and Kissing Camels, are set against the backdrop of Pike's Peak.

The Pike's Peak Cog Railway is the world's highest of its kind. It's transported travelers to the rocky pinnacle since 1891. The scenery inspired Katherine Lee Bates to write the lyrics to "America the Beautiful" in 1893. The surroundings include otherworldly rock formations, dense stands of aspen and the rugged peaks of the Continental Divide.

The Royal Gorge Bridge is the world's highest suspension bridge. It hovers 955 feet above the Arkansas River. America's steepest Incline Railway slides 1,500 feet to the canyon floor beneath the bridge. Riders descend inside tiny, two-person cages at a 45-degree angle for the



FULL STEAM AHEAD – The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad has been running strong through Colorado since 1880. *Image: Bob. Adobe Stock.*

six-minute trip down to the river.

The southern Rocky Mountains is home to the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. Tucked away in a corner, it's mostly unchanged from the day the initial whistle sounded in 1880. The railway is an authentic artifact of the Old West and remains a phenomenal example of the steam era of mountain

railroading.

Clinging to the sheer rock faces, the eight-hour journey climbs more than 10,000 feet up Cumbres Pass. The train snakes along a narrow ledge and from here, the view is to the bottom of the gorge. Later, the grassy hills flatten into a broad plain as the steam locomotive chugs into Antonito, Colorado.

Durango's mountainous topography might only be matched by its colorful past. The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad has been in operation more than a century. Once used to haul gold and silver, the open gondola cars offer vertigo-inducing views along a dizzying series of switchbacks. The narrow gauge 36-inch tracks (standard gauge is 56.5 inches) installed easier around the sharp curves

Traveling through the breathtaking canyons of San Juan National Forest, the steam train takes 3.5 hours to complete the 45-mile route to Silverton, a National Historic Landmark with a fine, Victorian-era downtown.

The Colorado National Monument is located near Grand Junction and preserves one of the grand landscapes of the American West. Towering multi-hued monoliths erupt from rock layers that are nearly 2 billion years old. The canyons are etched deep into sandstone, while pinion pines and junipers crown the high desert plateau.

Rim Rock Drive climbs 2,300 feet, as it circles sheer-sided canyons and enormous rock towers. Workers used picks, shovels and sheer muscle to remove massive amounts of rocks and debris to create the route.

Princess improves Plus, Premier packages

Adds casual dining, delivery service, more; no price increases

Princess Cruises continuously works to make sure its guests have the best services. It's most recent updates are to its Princess Plus and Princess Premier packages.

These packages, which give guests access to more amenities, will be more inclusive with no additional cost. The inclusions include casual dining, OceanNow delivery service, room service and express Green Lane embarkation.

Indulge in more casual dining. The Plus and Premier allow guests to enjoy savory prix fixe dining options in the ship's casual eateries, including Vines, Salty Dog Pub, O'Malleys, Ocean Terrace, Planks, Steamers, Alfredo's and GiGi's.

The addition of three-course, pre-fixed menus give Plus and Premier cruisers more food options without extra charges. For those who prefer sailing on Princess Standard, the casual **pix** fixe dining will be \$14.99 and individual selections will continue with a la carte pricing.

Princess' revolutionary OceanNow on-demand, location-based delivery requires a nominal one-time activation fee of \$14.99 per guest, per voyage. The access fee will be waived for all guests sailing on Plus or Premier packages.

Staterooms often serve as sanctuaries. To maximize the stateroom experience, Plus and Premier participants will have the standard \$5 per delivery room-service fee waived.

The Princess App boasts an enhanced OceanReady process. It helps the cruise



UPPING THE ANTE – Princess Cruises is making its guests stay even more comfortable by adding to the benefits of its Plus and Premier packages. *Image: Princess.*

line deliver a smooth and quick embarkation process. Guests achieve express "Green Lane Status" by ensuring all travel information and documents are complete and by having the Princess Medallion delivered to homes before embarkation day when they'll proceed directly to the ship with no lines or hassles.

Plus and Premier packages include complimentary delivery of the Medallion to their homes. For guests on Standard fares, a nominal shipping fee of \$10 per stateroom will be added on Medallion/Accessory orders shipped to homes.

A breakdown of what Plus and Premier offer guests:

PLUS

- Cost is \$60 per person per day and covers drinks up to \$15, specialty coffees, smoothies, bottled water and 25% off bottles of wine.
- Unlimited MedallionNet 2.0 with Fleetwide Starlink and 5G for single device.
- Daily crew appreciation (gratuities).
- Two prix fixe meals at any casual dining location per voyage.
- Free OceanNow delivery service activation.

- Complimentary room service.
- "Green Lane" express boarding (free Medallion delivery service included).
- Two boutique fitness classes per voyage.
- Two premium crafted desserts per day.
- Unlimited premium fresh juices.

PREMIER

- Cost \$80 per person per day and covers drinks up to \$20, champagne by the glass, specialty coffees, smoothies, bottled waters and 25% off bottles of wine.
- Unlimited MedallionNet 2.0 with Fleetwide Starlink and 5G for up to four devices.
- Daily crew appreciation (gratuities).
- Two nights of specialty dining.
- Unlimited prix fixe meals at any casual dining location.
- Free OceanNow delivery service activation.
- Complimentary room service.
- "Green Lane" express boarding (free Medallion delivery service included).
- Reserved seating in the Princess Theater.
- Unlimited boutique fitness classes per voyage.
- Unlimited crafted desserts.
- Unlimited premium juices.
- Unlimited digital photo package / Princess Prizes.
- Complimentary Medallion accessory.

Know the ‘CARBs’ of operating an EV

AAA offers advice before making first purchase

Contemplating the purchase of an electric vehicle can be overwhelming. Questions abound and curiosities kick in. But AAA is here to help by offering a simple way to remember what you need to know. Just manage your CARBs.

AAA conducted a focus group to better understand the first-time drivers’ experience in an EV. Respondents reported driving years from 13 to 45 years. Through their points of view, study participants identified that you need to consider these CARBs before or while driving an EV:

CHARGE: EVs rely on batteries to power their motors and propel the wheels into motion. The battery’s charge is essential and maintaining a full charge is crucial. To charge an EV, it must be connected to a charging station, which provides the necessary power source. Once connected, the EV’s charging port and onboard charger work congruently to convert external power into battery charge. Charging levels include:

- Level 1 (120V) – Charge your EV with Level 1 charging by using a standard household outlet and the 120 volts charging cord that comes with the vehicle.
- Level 2 (240V) – Level 2 charging



IT’S ELECTRIC – First-time EV buyers should be familiar with the levels of charging. Image: Southworks. Adobe Stock.

uses 240 volts, similar to your oven, for faster charging of your EV.

- DC fast charging – These chargers can be found at public-charging stations for a quicker charge time compared to Level 1 and 2 stations. They’re ideal if you need a boost of power in a shorter amount of time.

ACCELERATION: EVs generally are faster than gas-powered counterparts. In vehicles, torque is the rotational force created by an engine or motor that turns the wheels to make it move down the road. EVs need less time for energy to make it to the wheels as compared to gasoline cars, which need time for fuel and air to burn and expand in the engine.

RIDE: EVs don’t emit engine or exhaust noise, making them quieter than their gas counterparts. A slight sound from their tires and mild wind noise make EVs quiet to drive. Handling of the vehicle can be appreciated more because of the low center of gravity, making the EV easier to turn at reasonable speeds. Inside, the vehicle-user interface dashboard incorporates modern technology and influences how users interact with EVs.

BRAKE: Brake pads create friction to slow the wheels’ movement in gas-powered cars. The friction turns some of the kinetic energy of wheel rotation into heat and slows the vehicle. In an EV, the system automatically uses the electric drivetrain (depending on the settings) that can cause the car to slow down without engaging the brake pedal – known as regenerative braking. The EV captures the energy released during the braking process and uses it to recharge its battery. This makes EVs more efficient and helps extend their overall range. A “jarring” feeling often kicks in the moment the driver takes their foot off the acceleration pedal.

Most EVs allow the adjustment to the sensitivity of regenerative braking. Setting it to a minimum will help avoid the harsh sensation.