



CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL COALITION EQUESTRIAN RESOURCES

General Recommendations

PREPARATION

- Go on practice rides before leaving home to prepare yourself and your horses.
- Practice setting up camp ahead of time so you have a routine and can save yourself time and stress on the trail.
- Practice your horse containment strategy, whether using hobbles, picketing, or high-lining home, where it's okay for things to go wrong.
- Establish a routine and place for each of your important items. For example, know where your collapsible buckets are, set specific pockets for brushes, etc.
- When planning remember that the experience and ability level of your horse is very important.
- Horses should be well shod.
- Britching and a breast collar is highly recommended to secure tack through tough terrain.
- Because of the rough terrain along the trail, it is important to know where meadows are ahead of time so you can plan stops and have sufficient feed for your horses.
- When planning, call the U.S. Forest Service Ranger Districts you plan to travel through and ask to speak to backcountry rangers for more information. If the Ranger District does not have the information, it can be worthwhile asking for a list of outfitters for the area who may be willing to talk with you.
- Only certified weed-free hay is allowed on Forest Service lands, Wilderness Areas, and National Parks. Check the local regulations for more specific information and resources.
- When you are planning to travel above treeline, consider bringing hay cubes - as much as 10lbs/horse/day for mid summer.
- Know who/where reliable veterinarian care can be found along or near the trail if your horse gets hurt.
- Horsepacking guidebooks are limited, so learning from outfitters and other riders can be extremely helpful. Hiking guidebooks can be informational, but don't provide sufficient information for planning a packing trip.
- Planning layover days, two nights in the same place, is important to rest and graze your horses.
- Know what the state and land regulations are for horse health certificates and stock travel.

ON THE TRAIL

- Stay away from established hiker campsites while camping so that your horses can have more space.
- Similarly, make sure to follow Leave No Trace Principles and find spaces with wide open areas so horses can graze and you can reduce their impact.
- "When you're traveling with horses very little of it is about you. It's about the horses and your needs come secondary." - Jodie Morton
- Go over passes in the morning rather than the afternoon to avoid lightning.
- In non-wilderness areas you are likely to encounter mountain bikers who are traveling fast. This means that though they are supposed to yield, they may not see you before you see or hear them.
- Horses will need to eat all night if you are riding all day, so make sure to pick campsites with good grazing options when available.
- Fences and Gates: Most fences and gates along the CDT are designed and installed for stock but there are still several known and unknown fences that do not have proper bypass gates installed.
- Forage and Water: Much of the CDT, especially in Colorado, is above tree line and equestrian users should pay close attention to the availability of forage close to the trail as well as availability of water for stock overnight.



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Recommended Rides and Trail Etiquette

RECOMMENDED DAY RIDES

- Glacier National Park: Chief Mountain over Red Gap Pass to Many Glacier. This trip is a 25+ mile day with significant elevation gain, but is a fantastic ride if you and your horse are up for it.
- Out and back from Two Medicine to Pitamakan Pass (to Oldman or Pitamakan Lake). The ride is 20+ miles, but beautiful and very worth it.

RECOMMENDED MULTI-DAY RIDES

- Sections of the CDT that overlap with the Colorado Trail (300+ miles in Colorado) are fantastic because the trail is so established and easy to follow. Keep in mind the huge elevation change (impacts to horses).
- Sections in the Bob Marshall Wilderness are amazing. Make sure to go in with all the feed that you need as there typically isn't any grazing for the first 60 miles heading north from Benchmark. Remember that everything that you take into wilderness areas has to be weed free and you need to carry certification with you.
- The Wind River Range in Wyoming - 100 miles mostly on the CDT. There is an extensive trail system in that area that can allow for modified sections.

TRAIL ETIQUETTE

- While horses have the right of way on trails, non-equestrian users don't always know this. Hiker education about yielding to horses is increasing, but in general, don't expect hikers to know.
- Given this, it can be wise to call greetings to give hikers a heads up because you are likely to hear/see them before they see you.
- If you encounter another string of horses, the group with the shorter string is supposed to give way to longer pack strings. This rule may need to be changed depending on terrain, so be prepared to communicate with other groups to navigate difficult terrain.
- Remember that as horses leave more evidence of being there, it's suggested that you spread horse poop after camping overnight.



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Section Notes

SECTIONS NOT TO RIDE *

- South of Lordsburg, New Mexico. Due to lack of bypass gates and known and unknown fences, this part of the trail is very difficult to ride.
- In New Mexico in general you will encounter more barbed wire, fence crossings, and cattle guards. The vast majority of this is not horse friendly unless you have a support crew. There is limited water in southern New Mexico as well, though it is possible to ride from Ghost Ranch north. You should be able to find comments in Guthook.
- Between Berthoud Pass and Rainbow Rd Access Point, Colorado. There was a recent rockslide and no clear trail left making it dangerous to take stock over.
- Grays Peak in Colorado is not open to stock. Skip this section.
- Rabbit Ears Pass in Colorado - there is no shoulder and blind corners.

*These are recommendations from specific individuals who have ridden parts of or all of the trail. Depending on trail conditions each season, this list may change and be longer.

SECTIONS TO TAKE SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

- Parts of Glacier National Park, for example Piegan Pass. These sections are not for inexperienced or intermediate riders as there is a lot at stake. You may find yourself climbing rock walls with 12 inches of space on either side. It will be a judgement call so you must know your horses.
- For people doing day rides and those who don't usually go out into this kind of terrain, be very careful in Glacier National Park
- Bob Marshall can be hard because there isn't much grass or feed for the first few days.



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Trailheads, Campsite, and Trailers

Not all trailheads that access the CDT have enough space for horse trailer parking or turn around. If you have a specific trailhead or access point in mind, we recommend that you contact the local land manager's office to determine if there is room for your trailer at the trailhead. For some trailheads, CDTC has listed horse trailer parking information on our interactive map. Access the map at: <https://continentaldivide-trail.org/cdnst-interactive-map/>.

STOCK CAMPSITE CONSIDERATIONS

- In Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks there are specified campsites. You need a permit for both ahead of time. It's recommended that you apply for permits as soon as they open for the season.
- Keep in mind that campsites can be closed due to bear activity.
- Because there are limited stock campsites in the parks, being prepared is key because there are not alternatives if the campsites are full.
- There is no grazing allowed at campsites in Glacier National Park. The horses have to be tied to rails at the campsites.
- In Yellowstone National Park, stock is not allowed to be on a highline overnight.
- Use common sense when finding dispersed campsites. Choose as wide an area as possible (so you can set up a big electric fence, for example) to minimize impact on grass. Don't high-line your horses anywhere with soft ground.
- If you use a picket, think about moving it around to reduce the impact of grazing on the area.
- To plan, look at topographical maps, Guthook for water sources, trail maps, etc. Look for green areas on topo maps where you might be more likely to find water. Generally speaking, you want to camp near water so you don't have to bucket out for the horses.

TRAILER ACCESS SUGGESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- If your trailer is longer than 24 ft, you may have trouble even at the listed trailer-friendly trailheads due to tight switchbacks or other road conditions.
- Berthoud Pass in Colorado is easy for a drop, but not for parking trailers overnight.
- Note that planning for trailer parking is very different if you are supported versus if you are unsupported. Unsupported you might have two trucks and trailers which means you will need to leave them for an extended period of time.
- Trailer access In Wyoming:
- Big Sandy Opening trailhead is tight for anything longer than a 24 ft trailer.
- The west side of the Wind River Range is generally very accessible with a trailer.
- Green River Lakes trailhead is on an extremely bad road. It can take up to 2 hrs to drive 22 miles.
- New Forks Lakes and Elkhart Park trailheads (South of Green River Lakes) are great trailheads for horses.



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Packing Recommendations

CONSIDERATIONS

- It can be easy to overpack at the start. It is best to start thinking about what you don't need to decrease weight in any way possible. Every ounce you can get rid of is important in reducing weight for your horses and will make a huge difference to the condition of the horses. Example: switching to ultralight tents, water filter, and stove, and limiting yourself to essential items.
- How much you can bring also depends on everyone's position and what they have to travel with/how many horses.
- A saw is essential as horse packers end up clearing the trails, especially in the early season.
- Collapsible water buckets make hauling water into camp and watering horses much easier.
- Bringing bells for the horses at night can be particularly helpful for hearing them moving around - especially if they get scared by an animal or run off.

