



Due to unprecedented and historic fire conditions, U.S. Forest Service-Arapaho & Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland is temporarily closing all National Forest land in Clear Creek, Jefferson, Gilpin, Boulder, and Larimer counties. The decision to be re-evaluated daily. SEE CLOSURE ORDER

[Colorado Trails](#) > Balanced Rock Road

Balanced Rock Road

Monument, [Colorado](#) (El Paso County)

Last Updated: 02/15/2020



Information	Nearby Trails
Status:	Open
Typically Open:	Year Round
Difficulty:	3-4 (MODERATE)
Length:	7.5 miles
Highest Elevation:	9351 feet
Duration:	About 1 hour, 30 minutes
Shape of Trail:	Out & Back
Best Direction to Travel:	N/A
Nearest Town:	Monument
Nearest Town w/ Services:	Monument
Official Road Name:	322
Management Agency:	Pike National Forest Pikes Peak Ranger

Showing 11 trails within 2 miles

- [Rampart Range Road](#) (0.01 mi to TH)
- [Rupp Gulch- Rampart Range FS Road 300V](#) (0.08 mi to TH)
- [Soldier Mountain- Rampart Range FS Road 300U](#) (0.27 mi to TH)
- [Mount Herman Road](#) (0.79 mi to TH)
- [Beaver Creek Road FS Rd. 315](#) (1.82 mi to TH)
- [Ice Cave Road](#) (1.99 mi to TH)
- [Powerline East Road](#) (2.24 mi to TH)
- [Hotel Gulch](#) (2.32 mi to TH)
- [Ensign Gulch](#) (2.53 mi to TH)
- [Powerline South Road](#) (2.95 mi to TH)
- [Hell Creek Road](#) (5.02 mi to TH)

Highlights



This is a fun off-road trail that's close to Colorado Springs and easily accessible to those in Denver and other points along the front range. Trails within the Rampart Range can provide a challenge to vehicles that are a little more than stock yet still offers some fun routes for more built rigs. The Mount Herman Road (FS 320) drive up to the trail gives you great views of Monument and Black Forest. The southern section of the Rampart Range is notable for unique rock formations consisting of large boulder piles and valleys filled with rock outcroppings, dense forests and fine gravel soil. Open during all seasons (except rare closures for excessive precipitation), the Rampart Range portion of Pike National Forest offers year-round 4x4 adventure!

Route Information

Advanced Rating System

Recommended Vehicle:

Stock SUV with High Clearance and 4 Low

Concerns:

- | | | |
|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| ✓ None | ✓ Short Wheelbase Only | ✓ Impassable When Wet |
| ✓ No Full Size | ✓ Narrow Shelf Road | ✓ Deep Sand |
| ✓ Body Damage | ✓ Mild Off Camber | ✓ Mud |
| ✓ Width | ✓ Moderate Off Camber | ✓ Pinstriping |
| ✓ Height | ✓ Extreme Off Camber | ✓ High Water Crossings |

Summary:

The ruts at Waypoint 10 are the most difficult obstacle.

Technical Rating: 3-4 (MODERATE)

Typically, more rock or undulated road surface. Potential rocks and/or tree stumps less than 12" tall and/or vertical ledges less than 12" tall and/or near vertical ledges or waterfalls less than 24" inches. Tire placement becomes more difficult. Can be steep.

[Read more about our rating system](#)

Description

Balanced Rock Road (FS 322) is a gradual winding and twisting trail that becomes more difficult the further one proceeds. Much of the early segments run along a broad ridge. These early segments pose no challenge to a high clearance vehicle, and it is not uncommon to encounter a 2WD pickup truck or crossover SUV in the first half of the trail. Beyond WP 04, the trail traverses some side hills with more significant ascents and descents. It has frequent drainage diversion piles which pose break-over challenges for low clearance, long-wheelbase vehicles. Beyond WP 07, these obstacles are exaggerated, and ruts formed from erosion (both parallel to- and perpendicular to the trail) complicate passage. WP 10, for example, includes several off-camber ruts which should not be attempted by low-clearance vehicles. From this point, the trail descends rapidly and emerges in a narrow valley. The narrow valley opens to a meadow and a stream which flows into Upper Reservoir, just 200 yards beyond the Forest Service gate where the road terminates (WP 12).

Waypoints

1. Trailhead (0 mi)



The trailhead is on the east side of Rampart Range Road (FS 300), approximately one mile north of the Mount Herman Road (FS 320) intersection with Rampart Range Road. It is marked with a brown US Forest Service sign.

2. Straight on 322 (0.7 mi)



Continue straight on FS 322. WP 02 is an intersection with an unmarked trail on the right side.

3. Left Hairpin Curve (1 mi)



Follow the curve to the left. FS 322 intersects with a hiking trail near the apex of a hairpin curve.

4. Straight at Guardrail Pullout (2 mi)



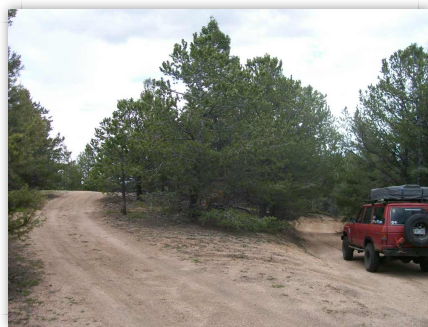
Proceed straight on FS 322. There is an unmarked pullout which appears to have been a trail in the past. It has been blocked by a metal guardrail.

5. Straight at Balanced Rock (2.3 mi)



Proceed straight. The balanced rock feature (for which this trail is named) is located to your left.

6. Right at Unmarked Intersection (2.8 mi)



Where the trail traverses a hillside, often there is an alternate trail over the top which forms a short bypass loop. This is one instance.

7. Left at Hilltop Campsite (4.1 mi)



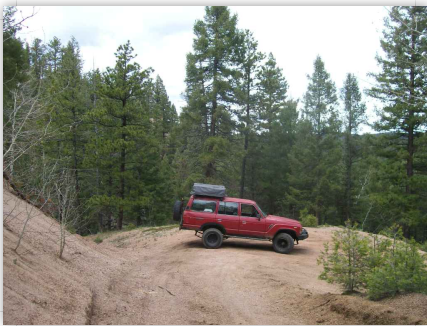
The spur trail located here dead-ends at a pleasant campsite suitable for 1-3 vehicles. After this point, the trail begins a significant descent, and the views only get better!

8. Straight at Ridge Campsite (5.3 mi)



This waypoint is a narrow ridge that affords spectacular views in almost all directions.

9. Right at Hairpin Curve (6.3 mi)



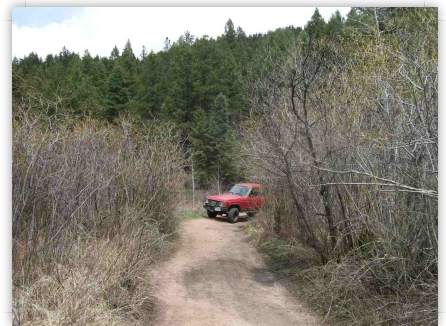
This is a tight curve on a steep grade. A wide sweeping turn is possible, but anticipate making a 3-point turn.

10. Straight through Deep Ruts (6.5 mi)



The ruts and camber here are significant enough to warrant a waypoint. Not recommended for low clearance vehicles.

11. Left at Meadow Campsite (6.7 mi)



Make a left turn here to follow FS 322 to its termination. The rough and rutted trail emerges to a narrow and relatively flat valley. A flowing stream hosts dense willows that prevent line-of-sight further down the trail.

12. End Balanced Rock Road (7.5 mi)



A short drive in the widening valley comes to an abrupt halt at the Forest Service gate. With the seasonal snowmelt peaking, the stream was broad and relatively deep at this point. Do not attempt to bypass the gate; this is the end of FS 322, so establish camp here, or park nearby and pack your gear 200 yards to make camp in vicinity of the Upper Reservoir.

Directions to Trailhead

Trailhead Coordinates: [39.066690, -105.023280](#)

Starting Point: Denver

From Denver, take I-25 to exit 187 and Happy Canyon Road and Highway 85. Just before the town of Sedalia, turn south on Highway 67. Follow this to the turn for Rampart Range Road on the left. If you get to the town of Moonridge you've gone too far. Take Rampart Range Road 31 miles south to the trailhead.

Alternatively, drive to Monument on Interstate 25 and take Exit 161, Monument and Palmer Lake. Turn west towards the mountains. Beyond the traffic signals, the road becomes 2nd Street. Proceed slowly on 2nd Street (20 MPH speed limit) for approximately one mile and cross the railroad tracks. Turn left on Mitchell Road, travel south for approximately one mile where you see Dirty Woman Park on your left. Make a right turn on Mount Herman Road (FS 320) and proceed 11.5 miles up the mountain to the intersection of Rampart Range Road (FS 300). At this intersection, turn right (north) and travel approximately one mile. The Balanced Rock trailhead is on your right.

Camping

✓ Dispersed

There are numerous sites along Balanced Rock Road which are suitable for dispersed camping, individually or with a small group (2-3 vehicles). The earlier segment of the trail (WP 01 to WP 04) contains areas which would support a larger group (5-7 vehicles).

Good camping sites exist on nearby trails such as spurs off of Rampart Range Road and FS Roads such as Winding Stairs/Ice Cave Loop (323/324) and Hotel Gulch (346).

USFS and commercial campgrounds are located in/around Woodland Park as well as motels in Woodland Park and Monument.

Campfires are allowed, however do check with the Pikes Peak Ranger District for current restrictions. Stay the trail and practice "leave no trace" camp methods--if you pack it in, please pack it out.



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