



30 minutes from cleveland
CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

Essential Experience Cycle under a leafy green canopy beside the twisting Cuyahoga River on the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath.

Your Perfect Day

8:30 a.m. After an increasingly rural drive south from the city, stop by the Countryside Farmers' Market (Saturday stalls open at 9 a.m.; cvcountryside.org), near the town of Peninsula. Pick up a croissant and lunch (locally made goat cheese and baguettes).

9:30 a.m. Park at the Peninsula Depot **Visitor Center**, formerly a 19th-century train station, and grab a map of the canal system.

10 a.m. Rent bikes at nearby Century Cycle (1621 Main St., centurycycles.com; \$8 per hour) and take a leisurely 13-mile ride north along the river.

11:30 a.m. Pull out the picnic fare at the damlike Lock 39, one of 16 antique locks that once controlled water levels along the canal.

12:50 p.m. Head back about a mile and a half to the Canal **Visitor Center** and hoist your bike onto the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (\$2). Take a load off while the train **travels** the length of the park, past meadows and forests.

1:10 p.m. Disembark at the Boston Mill Station and pedal north to Stanford Trail. Lock up your bike and hike the 1.75-mile trail that ends at the 60-foot Brandywine Falls, cascading over sandstone.

4:45 p.m. Ride 3 miles to return your wheels before closing time. Board the southbound train for a round-trip **tour** of this end of the park, through wetlands and farm fields. Watch for deer.

6:30 p.m. Toast your **tour** with a Great Lakes Brewing Company IPA beer at the nearby Winking Lizard Tavern (1615 N. Main St.; beers from \$5.50).

Don't Forget: bug spray, windbreaker and athletic shoes

Extend the Trip: Listen to the rush of the falls at the 163-year-old Inn at Brandywine Falls. (8230 Brandywine Road, Sagamore Hills, innatbrandywinefalls.com; doubles from \$139)

Our adventure guides: Mary Pat Doorley, park ranger, Cuyahoga Valley National Park • Doug Trattner, author of *Moon Cleveland*

90 minutes from denver
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Essential Experience Drive on some of the highest roads in the country, over the spine of the Continental Divide and surrounded by 12,000-foot peaks.

Your Perfect Day

6 a.m. Beat the commuters out of Denver: The flat interstate gives way to curvy country roads.

7:30 a.m. Leave your car at the Park & Ride lot at the Bear Lake route and hop the bus to the Glacier Gorge Trailhead.

10 a.m. Hike the 2.8-mile round-trip Mills Lake Trail, a relatively gentle trek that rewards with sweeping mountain vistas of snowy Longs Peak.

1 p.m. On the way back, eat your bagged lunch while perched on a boulder at Alberta Falls, and watch the cold snowmelt plunging between the rocks.

2 p.m. Shuttle back to your car and drive through pine forests to the north entrance of the park, just past the Fall River **Visitor Center**.

3 p.m. Saddle up for a two-hour horseback ride with National Park Gateway Stables (two-hour horse rental \$50, skhorses.com) along the gurgling Fall River, backdropped by the snowcapped Mummy Range (the mountains actually look like a mummy sleeping). Keep an eye peeled for bighorn sheep, deer, elk and coyotes.

1:5 p.m. Buckle up: The no-guardrail Old Fall River Road runs 11 miles on a gravel path through the wilderness. Return via Trail Ridge Road, the highest continuous paved road in the nation, reaching over 12,000 feet in a windswept, Arctic-like tundra, with no trees interrupting the vista of mountains.

8 p.m. Drive 20 miles toward Denver, and sip a pint of brew and catch a music set at Oskar Blues Grill & Brew (303 Main St., Lyons, oskarblues.com; beers from \$4.50).

Don't Forget: rain slicker, sunglasses to combat snow glare, and a packed lunch

Extend the Trip: Shoot an arrow or cast a fly rod at the YMCA of the Rockies, renting two-bedroom cabins from \$124 and lodge rooms from \$109. (2515 Tunnel Road, Estes Park, ymcarockies.org)

Our adventure guides: Kyle Patterson, park ranger, Rocky Mountain National Park • Eric Peterson, author of *Frommer's Colorado*

