

SKI SEASON PLANNING

# Denver to the Slopes Planning Guide

Drive times, route conditions, resort logistics, and why the ride to the mountain sets the tone for the entire trip.

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## Resort Distance & Drive Time from DEN

RESORT	MILES	CLEAR ROADS	STORM DAY	ROUTE
Arapahoe Basin	95	1 hr 45 min	3+ hrs	I-70 → Loveland Pass or Tunnel
Breckenridge	104	1 hr 50 min	3+ hrs	I-70 → Exit 203 → Hwy 9
Copper Mountain	95	1 hr 40 min	3+ hrs	I-70 → Exit 195
Keystone	95	1 hr 45 min	3+ hrs	I-70 → Exit 205 → US-6
Vail	120	2 hrs	3.5+ hrs	I-70 → Exit 176
Beaver Creek	125	2 hrs 10 min	3.5+ hrs	I-70 → Exit 167
Winter Park	80	1 hr 30 min	2.5+ hrs	I-70 → US-40 or Berthoud Pass
Steamboat	165	3 hrs	4.5+ hrs	I-70 → Hwy 9 → US-40
Aspen	200	3 hrs 30 min	5+ hrs	I-70 → Glenwood → Hwy 82
Telluride	330	6 hrs	7+ hrs	I-70 → US-50 → Hwy 62/145

### I-70 CORRIDOR REALITY CHECK

I-70 westbound on Saturday mornings and eastbound on Sunday afternoons is the worst traffic corridor in Colorado. A "2-hour drive" to Vail can become 4+ hours. Leave before 7 AM or after 11 AM to avoid the worst of it.

## Pre-Trip Checklist

- Check CDOT road conditions.** cotrip.org has real-time closures, chain laws, and travel times. Check the morning of.
- Know the Traction Law.** September 1 – May 31, Colorado requires AWD/4WD or approved traction devices on I-70 mountain corridors. Fines start at \$130 and jump to \$650+ if you block traffic.
- Pack for altitude.** Denver is 5,280 feet. The resorts are 8,000–12,000+ feet. Hydrate aggressively, go easy on alcohol the first day, and bring layers for 40-degree temperature swings.
- Plan luggage.** Ski bags, boot bags, regular luggage, and gear for 4+ people don't fit in a sedan. A Suburban or Sprinter is the right call for groups.

## Transportation Options Compared

OPTION	COST (APPROX.)	PROS	CONS
Rental car	\$60–120/day + gas	Flexibility, explore the area	Traction Law risk, parking (\$30–50/day at resorts), stressful mountain driving, no AWD guarantee
Shared shuttle	\$50–80/person	Budget-friendly for solo/couples	Fixed schedules, multiple stops, long ride times, limited luggage
Rideshare	\$150–300 one-way	Door to door	Surge pricing in storms, no AWD guarantee, driver may decline mountain routes
Private SUV	\$350–600 one-way	AWD guaranteed, professional driver, direct route, luggage capacity, stress-free	Higher per-trip cost (but splits well for groups of 3–6)

### THE MATH ON PRIVATE VS. RENTAL

A group of 4 to Vail: rental car (\$100/day × 3 days) + gas (\$60) + parking (\$45/day × 3) + chain rental (\$50) = \$545.  
Private SUV round-trip: \$800–1,000 — and nobody white-knuckles Vail Pass in a snowstorm.

## Day-of-Travel Timeline

TIME	ACTION
Night before	Check cotrip.org and weather forecast. Confirm pickup time with your driver.
6:00 AM	Target departure for Saturday arrivals (before I-70 traffic builds).
En route	Driver monitors CDOT alerts. If Eisenhower Tunnel backs up, alternate routes (Loveland Pass, US-40) are already planned.
Arrival	Drop at the resort lobby, not a parking garage. Luggage handled. Walk straight to check-in.
Return day	Depart by 1 PM or wait until after 6 PM to avoid the eastbound I-70 crush.

# What to Pack in the Vehicle

## Essentials

- Water bottles (altitude dehydrates fast)

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- Snacks for the drive

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- Phone chargers

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- Sunscreen (UV is intense at altitude)

## Gear Check

- Ski/board bags secured

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- Boot bags (don't wear ski boots in the car)

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- Helmet and goggles accessible

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- Warm layers for the walk from drop-off to lodge

# Skip the rental counter, the chain law stress, and the I-70 white-knuckle drive.

Arion's AWD fleet and ice-trained chauffeurs get you to any Colorado resort — door to lodge, luggage handled, zero stress.  
Private SUVs and Sprinters for groups of any size.

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