

## Rangely's Wild Horse Tour Loop

If you don't know where to go to see wild horses in Rio Blanco County, here is a route we recommend. But allow plenty of time: expect to spend six or more hours.

- Sometimes you'll be fortunate enough to encounter a large herd early in the tour, and can spend some time just watching that herd, and then return home.
- Other times, you'll have to invest several hours just to find a herd.
- You should look for wild horses on a dry, sunny day.
- You need a reliable vehicle, water, food, and a warm jacket, and maybe some rain gear just in case, because you are headed for remote country'.
- You also need binoculars.
- And a camera would be nice, too.

Although you'll be on maintained county roads, most of them are unpaved and in rugged terrain. So a four wheel drive vehicle will make your tour a bit safer, especially on County Road 103.

The wild horse loop begins in Rangely

- Head east on Highway 64 toward: Meeker for 11 miles,
- Then turn right on Rio Blanco County Road 122, a dirt road.
- About 13 miles from Highway 64, County Road 122 intersects with County Road 103;
- Turn right and head south on County Road 103.
- About 13 miles south of the 122/103 county road intersection look for County Road 24, the Airplane Ridge Road.
- Turn left on Airplane Ridge Road and proceed 11 mile until you encounter RBC 24X.
- Go north on 24X for about 8 miles to County Road. 122.
- Turn left on 122.
- This road will take you back to Colorado 64 where you started.

### **TOUR HIGHLIGHTS**

When you first leave the pavement on County Road 122 you'll drive through a pinyon and juniper woodland on your way to Calamity Ridge.

Fletcher Draw will be to your left at first, but later Spring Creek Canyon will appear on your right.

The Spring Creek high country is almost 2000 feet higher than Rangely. There is generally more rainfall at these higher elevations, so the vegetation changes along the route.

Mountain shrub oak and service-berry replace the pinyon and juniper, and the trees on the steep north slopes across the canyon are aspen and Douglas fir.

County Road 103 traverses the ridge line between the Douglas Creek and Piceance Creek basins:

- Piceance basin will be to your left and the Douglas basin is on your right.

- This ridge line, known as the Cathedral Bluffs, is extraordinarily scenic.
- On a clear day the La Sal Mountains near Moab, Utah are visible to the southwest.
- Colorado's Flattops Wilderness are visible to the east.
- The Piceance Creek basin incidentally, has vast oil and natural gas deposits, and also is the only place in the world that has natural deposits of sodium bicarbonate.
- Look for a radio facility on the west side of County Road 103.
- Immediately after passing that facility watch for wild horses near the top of the Cathedral Bluffs, as on the ridge lines to the east.

One particularly conspicuous telltale sign that horses are in the area is the presence of fresh 'stud piles' or droppings along the roadways.

About four miles down Airplane Ridge Road, scan the country to the north with binoculars and you'll likely see horses.

County Road 24X will take you onto 84 Mesa, a broad plateau dominated by sagebrush.

This is an excellent place to see wild horses, particularly in spring and fall. If water is available in local reservoirs, you'll see horses here during the summer, too.