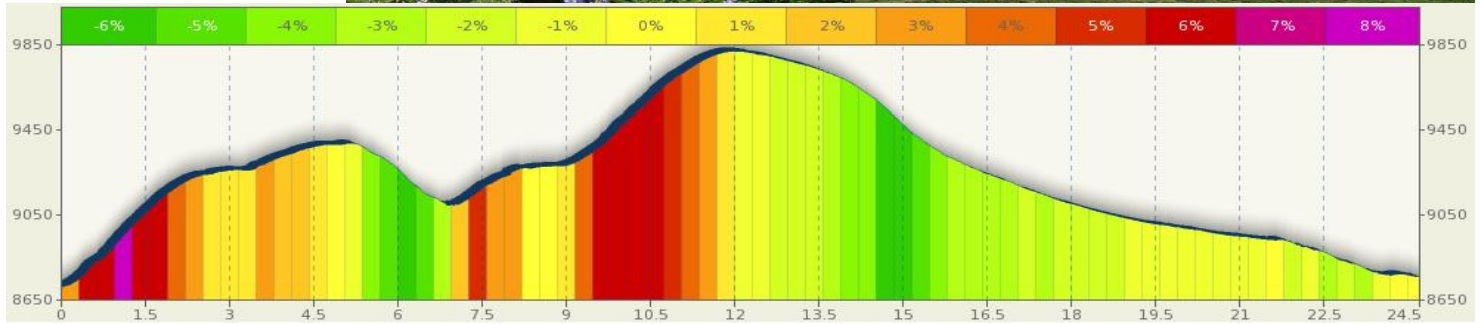


Last Update: May 2009



# Lizard Head Pass



## Fact Sheet

*Distance to Summit:* Telluride: 12 mi  
Rico: 12.5 mi

*Total Climb:* N-S 1,900 Ft  
S-N 2,000 Ft

*Difficulty:* N-S Moderate  
S-N Easy

*Maximum Grade Climbing:* N-S 8%  
S-N 6%

*Maximum Altitude:* 10,250 Ft

*Starting/Ending Alt:* Telluride- 8650 ft  
Rico- 8825 ft

### Ride Tips:

- Carry rain and cold weather gear on this ride. It can snow year-round and can rain daily in afternoon
- There are virtually no services outside of Telluride
- Carry extra water as there are no services during climbs
- The North side of the pass is fairly shaded, so it could be quite cool.

## Summary

I love this pass and have ridden it three times in each direction. I got wet five of the six times. For what ever reason, just about every time I've done



this ride, it rains. However, because of the frequent rain on this pass it is green green green. Lots of trees, grass and flowers.

One thing I toiled with was my rating for the pass. The

## Services

Your main services are going to be in Telluride. On the west side of town is a very good grocery store with all the food types you'll ever need. The town itself is filled with restaurants, stores, outfitters and bike

shops (oh yea, an coffee shops). You can also take the free gondola to Mountain Village at the top of the ski area and have access to a condo city and shopping area in the sky moderate out of Telluride was pretty easy to give. The climb in the first mile hits 8% and you have a fairly steep five mile climb from the start. A short downhill and then a consistent more or less 6% climb to the pass. OK, that's a moderate. But from Rico to the pass, I'd



say this is on the hard side of easy. It's a long 12 mile climb, but the grades are fairly shal-

low, maxing at about 6%. The downside to this is if you go on



to Telluride, you have a nasty two mile climb interrupting your downhill. I don't know about you, but I really don't like climbing during my downhills, which is why I prefer the N-S climb.

As for the pass itself, the north side of the pass offers much more scenery. (Cont'd Pg 3)





## Lizard Head Pass (Cont'd)

(From Page 1)

Starting just outside of Telluride, you are greeted with an eye popping, leg burning climb. It's only about 5 miles long, but it is a bit of a grind on cold legs. Even starting in Telluride it self doesn't loosen up up



much. Grin and bear it... the scenery is awesome.

After the first five miles you, unfortunately, have to give up some of your hard earned climbing as you drop into a valley near the town of Ophir. It's a nice downhill but hard to enjoy because it is fairly short and you know in the back of your mind that you'll have to work to take back the lost altitude.

When you come out of the valley, you'll have a good mile of climbing at around 6% before the grade backs off to an

easy 1%-2% for a couple of miles. Get your energy back here, eat a snack, and hydrate yourself as around mile 9 and for the next three miles (which



is short by Colorado standards) you'll be climbing a 6% to 7% grade. Again, the scenery is beautiful and if you are riding in the morning, it will be cool and sunny.

Once at the top, you don't have an immediate downhill. It's actually rather flat, and any kind of head wind will negate the 1% or so downhill grade. It's not until you pass the Lizard Head rock formation on your right that you will begin to feel the real pull of gravity. The roads are fairly wide and in good shape, but you won't get too much speed as the south side is just not that steep.

If climbing the pass from Rico,

you'll have a 3% to 4% grade immediately out of town for a couple of miles and then the grade really back off for four to five miles. You can rally get into a nice rhythm pedaling here as it just is not very steep.

The real climbing starts about



nine miles out of Rico and only goes for two or three miles at 5% to 6%. The scenery is not as dramatic on this side of the pass, but it is still nice and green.

As you get to the top of the pass, you will be rewarded with a nice shallow grade: Mostly 1% and 2%. Unlike other passes, this is steeper toward the bottom and easier at the top. And, as mentioned before, if you go to Telluride, remember that climb you'll have in the middle of your downhill.

**The north side of the pass is fairly shaded and can be quite cold, so dress accordingly.**

**The south side climb is longer, but not as steep as the north side. That makes this a fairly easy climb.**



## Alternate Route

There really are no alternate routes for this ride. You can extend your south side ride by starting or ending in Cortez or Mancos, but that's about it.

Instead, you may want to consider hiking or four-wheeling in the San Juans. There are a huge number of ghost towns

worth visiting and some truly spooky roads to drive on.

The road out of Ophir over Ophir pass can be done with an SUV or 4WD car. Black Bear mine out of Telluride, well, use a jeep. Animas Forks out of Silverton is a fantastic ghost town with lots of re-

maining buildings to explore and it can be reached by car. Beyond Animas Forks, however, use a jeep for some real back country adventure. Don't bring your SUV or Outback on these roads, you won't have enough clearance and the edges will seem awful close. Have fun.