



Blue Bars

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CC of Illinois Trip to Colorado

The Corvette Club of Illinois is not a "sit around and chat about cars" kind of club. We take it to the road, we enjoy great fellowship and lots of activities, and we drive and show our cars to raise funds for good causes in our community. We also like to travel. We really like to travel!

In early June, 21 well-shined Corvettes departed Champaign, IL, bound for Frisco, CO, and the Colorado Barbeque Challenge. The trip had been meticulously planned by CCI club president Doug Hanner and VP Art Rapp with input from the club members.

Day One saw the group stopping first in historic Springfield, IL, for (a more than ample) breakfast, then on we went. As we prepared to stop for fuel west of Hannibal, MO, we could feel a little breeze starting to kick up. When we got out of our cars, we found that the "little breeze" was actually flailing away at about 30 knots! As all Corvette owners know, the car is amazingly stable in strong wind, today being no exception. From there, we made good time through the rest of the morning into the afternoon, stopping only for a quick "mickey lunch" near Hamilton, MO, and for fuel.

With just over 600 miles of driving behind us after Day One, we settled in for the evening at Salina, KS. Some sage traveler advice here: Don't plan on dining in a restaurant with failed air conditioning on a 90-degree day. But in true CCI spirit, we still ate well, laughed well and enjoyed the progress of our trip.

The next day would bring more adventure, as we departed Salina at 7 a.m. and headed on toward Colorado. We switched from I-70 to US 40 in order to obtain a more scenic view. As we drove west, the winds from the Rockies became more noticeable, and soon we found

view from the top is without equal. It leaves you literally breathless. Though none of us drove to the top, we did have some rather gutsy members who took a harrowing bike ride from the summit back to the bottom of the mountain.

After two days in Colorado Springs, the beautiful train of Corvettes headed for Cripple Creek. Stopping there for a meal and some sightseeing, many in the CCI were enjoying the beauty of local scenery, while anticipating our ultimate destination, which was not far away. We were at just under two miles in elevation, and for Illinois flatlanders this meant breathing deeply and moving a little more slowly. There was always something interesting to see in every direction. At Cripple Creek, the historic architecture, the narrow-gauge gold mine train, the casinos and photography were typical treats for us. The story of Cripple Creek is a microcosm of our great country, in that hard work can lead to great rewards, but such rewards can be quickly lost in one poor business decision. Massive fortunes were certainly made and lost in this mining town, where almost 1000 tons of gold have been mined from this location since its discovery.

From Cripple Creek, we had roughly another hour or so behind the wheel until we arrived in Frisco. This would be our home for the next few days. This charming small town, a near neighbor to Breckenridge, stands at about 10,000 feet elevation. Some of the CCI tourists adjusted immediately to the altitude while some never did. But the Corvettes, it should be noted, had no difficulty throughout. Fortunately, the trip was not hampered by car problems, save one. At Frisco, photography, outlet shopping, sightseeing, reading, various side trips and white-water rafting, peaceful resting, and, of course, the local barbeque cook-off were widely enjoyed.

The trip went as planned through most of the first week, but things were about to take a turn. Forest fires were raging across most of Northeastern Colorado, sweeping away homes, wildlife habitats, timber, and infrastructure. Though Frisco was a comparatively long way from the flames at the time, we awoke most days to see our cars blanketed in a light layer of grey ash, a reminder of the natural disaster happening to the north and elsewhere around us.

ourselves in a full-on dust cloud, complete with blowing tumbleweed, which by now was a common sight. Some light sand-pitting of the car's glass and paint was noted by some drivers, but most came through relatively well. With 300 more miles still ahead of us, we stopped for lunch in Kit Carson, CO. We enjoyed a local buffet and the amazing humor and fellowship that typifies every CCI trip or event.

At last, nightfall would find us rolling into Colorado Springs, 1036 miles from home. Before us stood the timeless beauty and iconic majesty of the Rocky Mountains. We checked in at the hotel, but many of the group were soon ready to motor on out to see some local attractions. We managed to work in a trip to nearby Seven Falls, which is a very photogenic and worthwhile attraction. Later in the week, we would cruise to and through the famous Garden of the Gods, and also take in a first-rate Western show at the Flying W Ranch. More on that later.

Of course, a visit to Pikes Peak and its amazing cog rail train to the top had to be on the agenda. At 14,115 feet, the peak is among Colorado's 54 mountains that stand more than 14,000 feet above mean sea level. It rises up to 8,400 feet above Colorado Springs, and the

Before we'd see home again, we would spin the odometers to the tune of 2200 miles or more. Some members would take a southerly route home, some would return by way of the Dakotas and Mount Rushmore, and still others would dash straight east. Shortly after we left Frisco and headed home by our several routes, we learned that the Flying W Ranch, where we had experienced such outstanding entertainment, had burned to the ground, along with several other places we had been only days before. The people there had been so friendly and welcoming, we could not help but sense their loss. Boulder and Colorado Springs would have to engage in a fight for life and safety that would intensify and continue days after we left.

But the collective take-away from the CCI Colorado trip was still a very good one in the end. Careful planning, careful driving, a spirit of good will, and good car preparation and maintenance all played an important part in delivering a vacation experience that the CCI travelers loved and that none will ever forget. Would we do it again? Absolutely. But at the moment, our future plans call next for some vacation travel in a different direction - East!

Article and photos submitted by Steve and Carolyn Brown, CC of Illinois.

