

GRAND ADVENTURES START WITH **A PLAN**

Before setting out, take a look at these tips to help ensure your journey is as safe as it is memorable. As always, pack out all trash and bring plenty of water.



BE PREPARED

Mountain weather changes quickly. Bring layers and sun protection, and check lake, trail, or river conditions before heading out.



KNOW YOUR LIMITS

Cold water, high elevation, and rugged terrain require awareness. Always choose activities that match your skills and experience.



HAVE A BACKUP PLAN

Parking areas and access points fill early. Keep alternate trails, launches, or recreation spots in mind.



SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RESPONSIBLE RECREATION IN GRAND COUNTY.

DID YOU
KNOW

UNTIL 1921, THE RIVER'S UPPER PORTION WAS KNOWN AS THE GRAND RIVER, FOR WHICH GRAND COUNTY WAS NAMED.

THE COLORADO RIVER BEGINS AT ROUGHLY 10,000 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL.

GORE CANYON IS APPROXIMATELY 1,000 FEET DEEP AND IS AMONG THE MOST CHALLENGING COMMERCIALY RAFTED STRETCHES IN COLORADO.

THE COLORADO RIVER RUNS ABOUT 1,450 MILES, WIDENING FROM 50 FEET NEAR ITS HEADWATERS TO NEARLY A QUARTER MILE IN SOME PLACES.



THE MAKING OF A MIGHTY RIVER

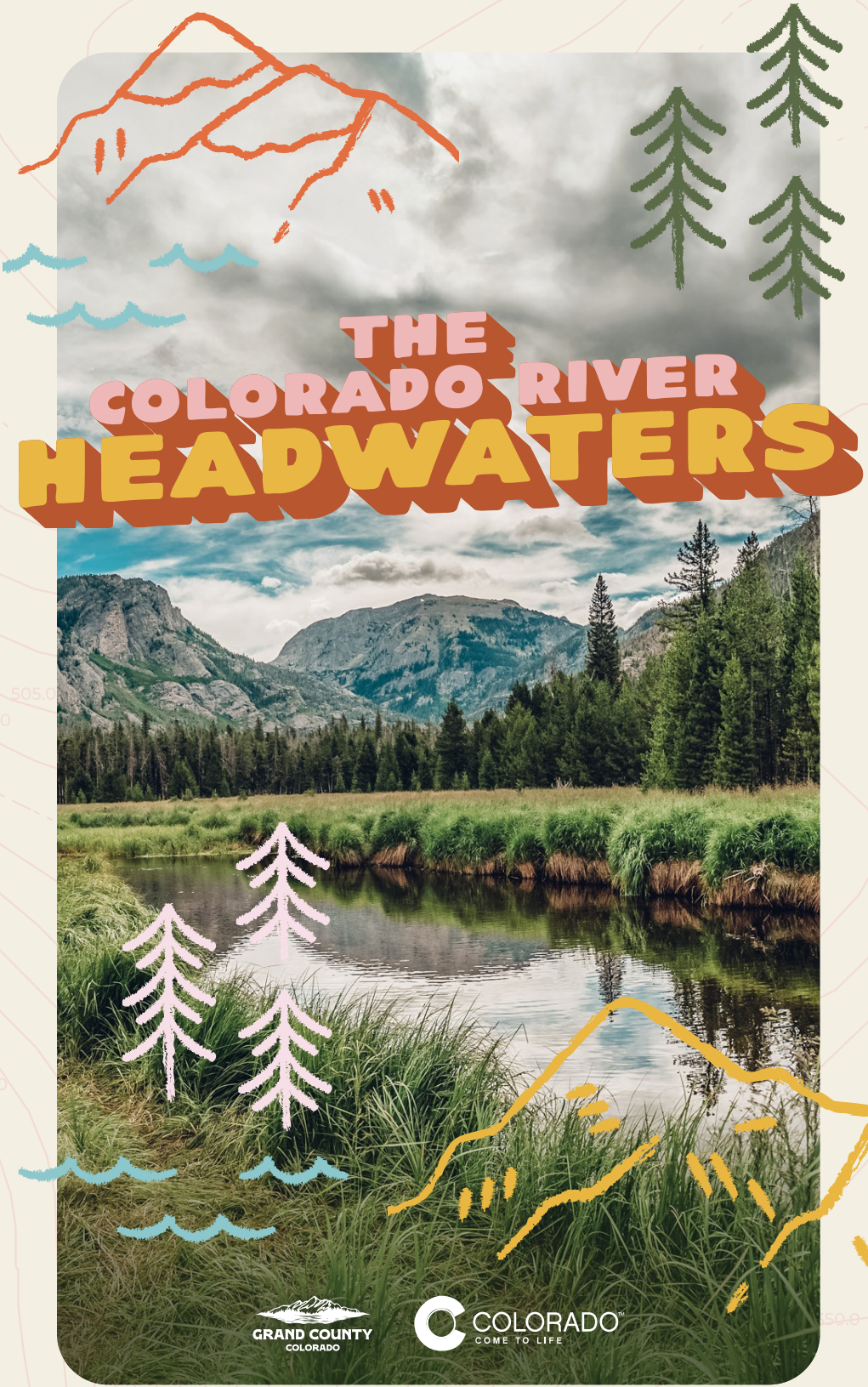
High in the mountains of Grand County, the Colorado River begins quietly. Snow gathers along the Continental Divide, melts beneath the spring sun, and threads through alpine tundra before forming a discernible stream. What starts as a narrow ribbon eventually travels more than 1,400 miles across the American West.

In these early miles, the river carves sweeping valleys, mirrors jagged peaks, and fills lakes that have defined recreation and settlement for generations. Towns like Grand Lake and Granby grew alongside its banks, while canyons and confluences reveal the force building within the current.

Today, the headwaters remain a place to stand close to the source—to hike lush passes, paddle open reservoirs, watch wildlife, and trace the river as it gathers strength and heads west.



SCAN TO EXPLORE THE FULL STORY OF THE HEADWATERS.



MAP IT OUT & FOLLOW THE FLOW

1 SHADOW MOUNTAIN RESERVOIR

Reservoir regulating water flow between Grand Lake and Lake Granby within the headwaters system.

2 HOT SULPHUR SPRINGS

Historic town known for its mineral-rich hot springs, with the river flowing directly through downtown.

3 BYERS CANYON

Narrow canyon carved by the river along U.S. Highway 40.

4 KREMMLING - CONFLUENCE AREA

Major meeting point of the Colorado and Blue rivers.

5 ARAPAHO NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Protected recreation area surrounding Lake Granby, Shadow Mountain, and Grand Lake.

6 POUDRE PASS WAGON ROAD

Historic wagon route crossing the Divide near the river's source.

7 COLORADO RIVER HEADWATERS

Source of the Colorado River near La Poudre Pass in Rocky Mountain National Park.

8 BLUE RIVER

Key tributary flowing from Summit County to the Colorado River near Kremmling.

9 WILLOW CREEK RESERVOIR

Small reservoir west of Lake Granby along a Colorado River tributary.

10 WINDY GAP RESERVOIR

Diversion reservoir near Granby, moving water across the Divide.



BEYOND THE SURFACE: HEADWATERS HIGHLIGHTS

11 LA POUDRE PASS

(lah POO-der pass)

Tucked along the Divide in Rocky Mountain National Park, La Poudre Pass marks the river's origin. Snowfields gather here, releasing meltwater that slips west. Stand at this high, windswept crossing, and you're witnessing the Colorado River in its most humble form.

12 KAWUNEECHE VALLEY

(kah-woo-NEECH-ee valley)

Broad and verdant, Kawuneeche Valley stretches beneath towering peaks just north of Grand Lake. Willow-lined wetlands cradle the river as it meanders through open meadowland. Elk and moose graze, and the landscape feels almost untouched.

13 GRAND LAKE

Colorado's largest natural lake shimmers at the edge of the town that bears its name, where boardwalk storefronts and alpine ridgelines meet. Long before highways, this was a gathering place and gateway. Today, boats drift across deep blue water that feeds the river's growing course.

14 LAKE GRANBY

Lake Granby is the largest reservoir in the Colorado River Headwaters region. Fed by mountain runoff and connected to Shadow Mountain Reservoir and Grand Lake, it stores and moves water through the headwaters system while offering a range of water activities.

15 GORE CANYON

South of Kremmling, the river tightens and surges through steep granite walls. Gore Canyon is swift, powerful, and uncompromising—a stretch revered by seasoned rafters. Here, the Colorado sheds its gentle beginnings and moves with unmistakable force.

16 HEADWATERS JOURNEY MUSEUM

Located in Winter Park, this immersive museum follows the Colorado River from mountain origins to desert expanses. Through interactive exhibits and layered storytelling, visitors gain perspective on the river's reach—and the communities shaped by its flow.