


Maps, they can save your trip



Tips
from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Robert Frost wrote the poem “The Road Not Taken” in 1916. I broke down on that particular road once, in a blinding blizzard. Had to be the same one.

I have always taken the road less traveled. Those roads are the reason we recreate outdoors. Anyone can go down the path of least resistance, but it is when the going gets tough that our real outdoor nature takes over. There is so much more to see and experience, the farther you get away from civilization. Problem is, there are not any good maps for the road not taken.

Maps have come a long way over the years. I remember when you went to a service station, and were given free road maps. Of course, they also checked your oil, tire pressure, filled the tank, and washed the windshield. They even let you use the restroom. The key to the restroom was attached to a cinder block so you wouldn't steal it.

Those free maps showed the major, and a few of the minor thoroughfares, State and Federal highways, towns, villages and parks. If you were heading on a road less travelled by, the maps were useless. The only way you knew you were on one of those roads was when you saw some other adventurer broken down. Everyone else spent the rest of the time trying to figure out how to refold the map correctly.

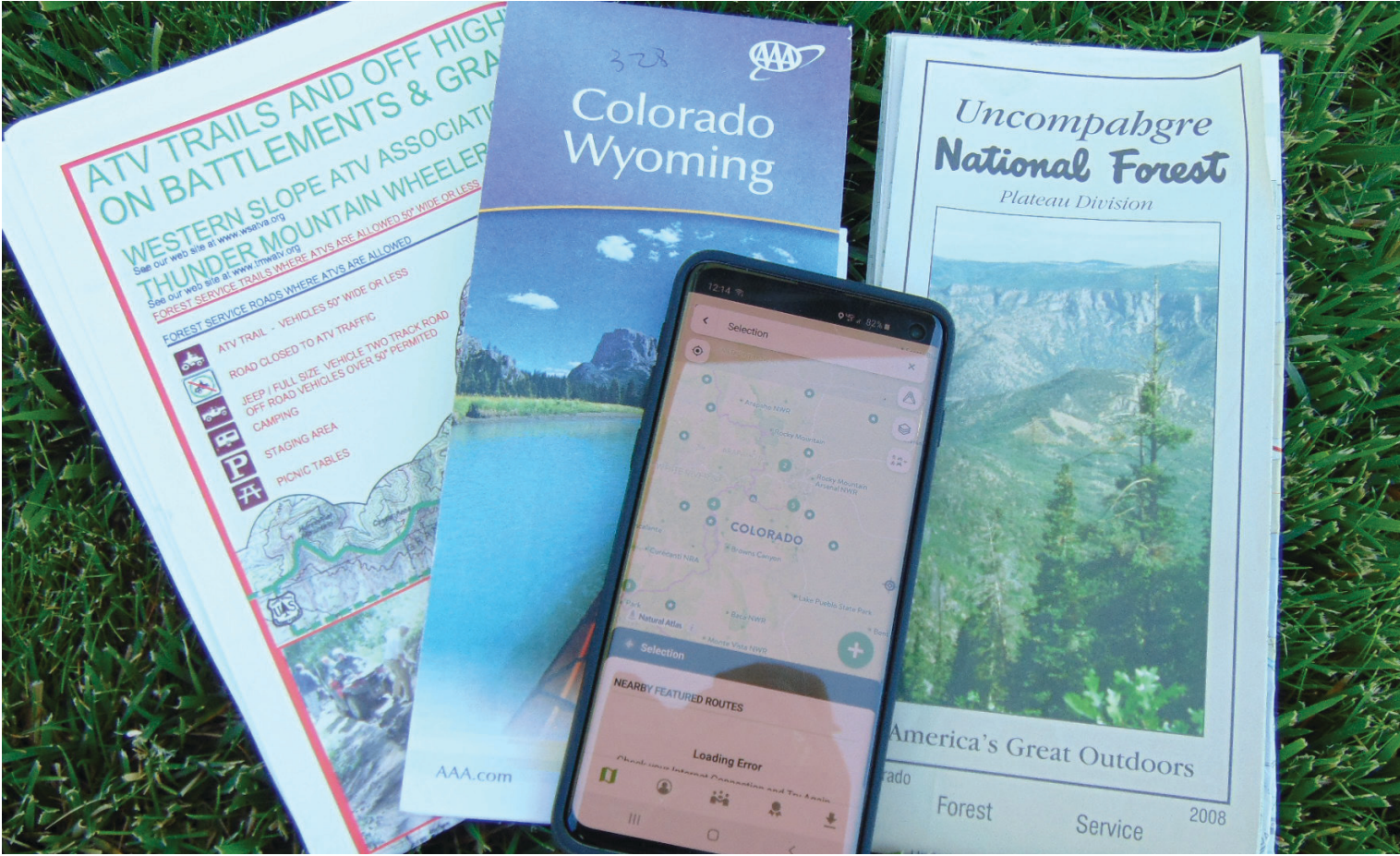
If you wanted maps of off-road places, your only known source was a quadrangle map from the Government. The United States Geological Survey created the 7.5-minute series map sometimes called the quadrangle map. They were usually named after some local physiographic feature covered by the map.

Names like “Creek Bed Of No Return” or “Dead-end Road With No Turn Around” would have been good, but more common were names like “Pine Tree” or “Pretty Creek”

The old maps did have topographic lines to show altitude, general steepness of terrain, creeks, rivers, and dotted lines representing trails. The surveyors who created these maps had a sadistic sense of humor because they really never identified tough spots on a trail. Most of us did not know how to read those maps anyway, but some comments by the surveyors like, “don't go down this trail,” or “super steep and scary, best turn around here,” would have been appreciated.

For those of you who prefer a map you can open up and lay-out on the hood of the car, pay a visit to the local National Forest Office or the Bureau of Land Management Office, (BLM) both here in Montrose.

Available is a fold-out map



(Above) Maps have come a long way since the days of the service station freebies. (Right) A new app is available to smart phone users called COTREX and is a very useful map program for anyone who recreates outdoors in our state. Best of all, it's free. (Submitted photos/Mark Rackay)

of the Uncompahgre National Forest. The maps are printed for each National Forest and are updated every few years. For a nominal fee, they are available in a paper, or for a few bucks more, in a waterproof edition.

I prefer the waterproof edition because one of these maps lives in the box on my ATV, and one lives in the glove box of the truck. I might point out that the maps are still no easier to fold back up the correct way.

These Forest service maps show just about all the roads, trails, ATV/motorcycle, people trails, horse trails and jeep roads. Also given is local information for lakes, creeks, streams, rivers, ponds, springs and buildings.

I use these maps to plan an excursion and throughout the trip. With a compass, map and GPS, there really is no excuse for getting lost (but I will probably find a way). The maps will also enhance a trip because they point out things and points of interest you probably didn't know existed.

For the modern outdoor person, you need not look any further than your cell phone. Earlier this year, Colorado Department of Natural Resources and Colorado Parks and Wildlife released the Colorado Trail Explorer, or COTREX as it is called, as their official trail app.

COTREX is free for mobile phones and devices, so the price is right. The app shows over 39,000 miles of trails in the State database, and can be used to navigate trails of federal, state, local and private lands with public access.

The app was designed for all types of trail users including, hiking and backpacking, horses, trail biking, and all motorized off-roading. Anyone who enjoys the public lands of our state can use this app.

If you are planning a trip centered on that portion of the map known as “nowhere” and cell

service is but a distant memory, have no fear. Maps can be downloaded ahead of time for use throughout your trip, and it does not require cell service to reference. Check out you app store on your device for this free app.

For those of you wanting something more check out On X maps. These maps are a tool that shows marked property boundaries, public and private landowner names, and all in an easy to read format.

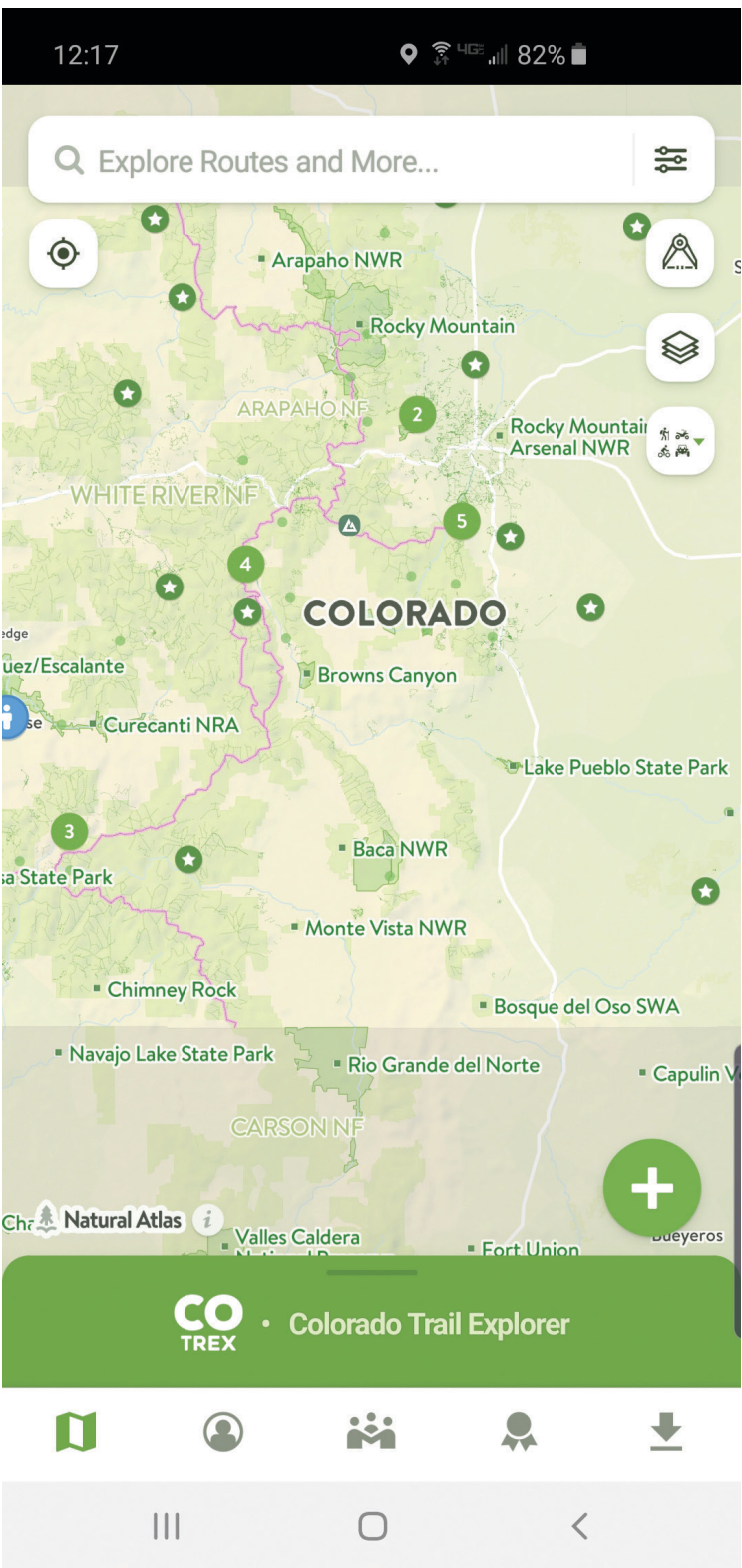
The program is available as a subscription on your mobile phone. You can access saved maps from anywhere and locate yourself in the wilderness. The GPS in your mobile phone does not require a network connection in most instances.

On X maps use a 1: 24-scale topographic map as a base map, or you can option to use satellite imagery for the base. All points of interest, public access points and trails are all shown clearly on the map. The information can be updated through a service provided by On X.

The On X maps are also available in a chip format that can be loaded directly into your GPS. All of the same information available on the app version is now on your GPS, with the exception of satellite imagery. The chip works especially well with Garmin brand GPS units. The chip covers the entire State of Colorado and can be updated as well.

There are a number of topographic map apps and programs available for your GPS and cell phones. I have used a number of them and have found these two to be the best for my purposes in the great outdoors. Since the COTREX is free, there is no reason not to give it a try.

I am not sure where Robert Frost wound up on his road less travelled by. He may still be out there for all I know. If you



decide to hit that same road you will probably run into me along the way. I will be the guy in the big white four-wheel-drive truck, trying to figure out how to fold the map.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in

search of adventure and serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

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