



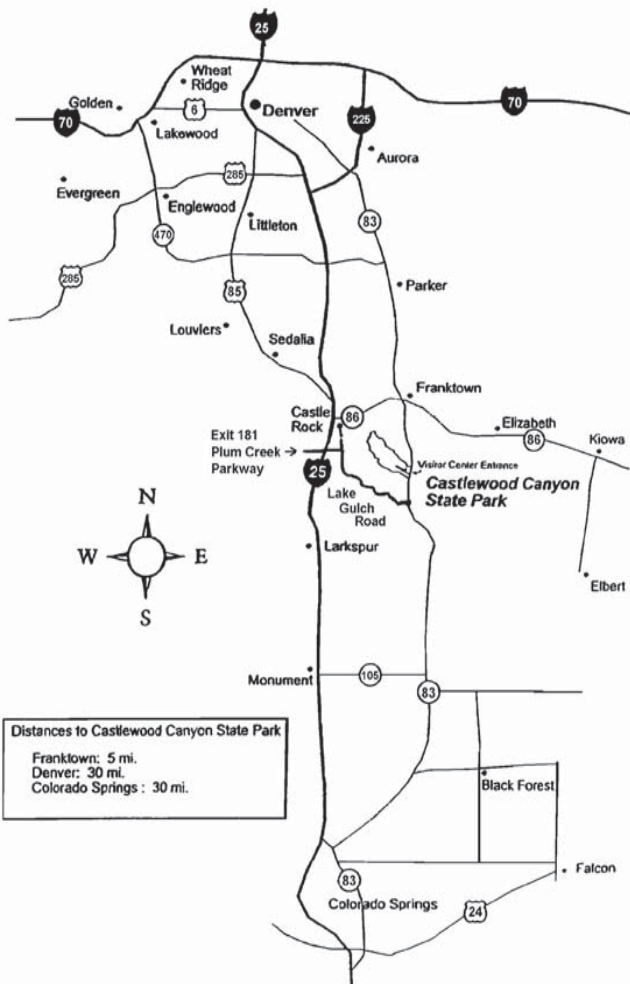
The View from Under the Bridge

As part of the 2003 bridge reconstruction, a walkway was built under the south end of the bridge. Take a naturalist-led hike that includes the walkway and you'll enjoy the views from this unique vantage point.

As you look up the canyon to the east and down canyon, past the Bridge Canyon Overlook, see if you can spot any animals or birds. Beaver, porcupine and mountain lion have all been sighted in the canyon below the bridge. If you look closely, you may see a kingfisher hunting or a great horned owl taking a daytime nap.

Directly under the bridge are two plaques that commemorate the bridge's construction in 1946 and its reconstruction in 2003. Exposed bedrock below the plaques gives budding geologists a chance to examine two of the defining rocks of the park – Castle Rock conglomerate and ignimbrite (rhyolite).

To Get There



Colorado State Parks

Castlewood Canyon State Park

2989 S. State Highway 83

Franktown, CO 80116

303-688-5242

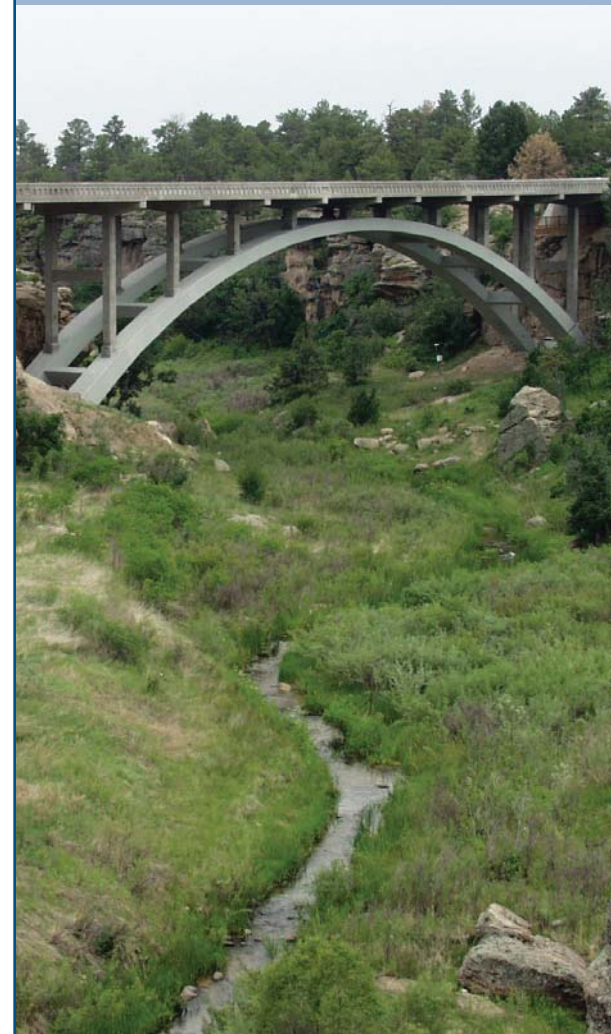
Email: castlewood.canyon@state.co.us

www.parks.state.co.us

CSP-CAST-200-4/07

Castlewood Canyon State Park

Bridge to Nowhere





The Story of the Bridge to Nowhere

Whether you've driven over the bridge one time or a hundred, you may not have known that you were driving over the "Bridge to Nowhere"

We're referring to the bridge that is approximately five miles south of Franktown on Highway 83.

From the bridge crossing over Castlewood Canyon, you can see the flagpole of the Castlewood Canyon Visitor Center and the timbered structure that is the park's Bridge Canyon Overlook.

Just how did this bridge, which clearly goes somewhere today, get that name? Like many things in and near Castlewood Canyon State Park, there's an interesting story about it. This story starts over 80 years ago.

Replacing the "Ribbon of Death"

Before there was Interstate 25 linking Denver and Colorado Springs, there was a dirt road between the two cities. The old road generally followed the same path as today's interstate highway, but so many accidents occurred that locals began calling it the "ribbon of death."

In the 1920s, the State of Colorado decided to take action and build a safer route. Rather than improve the existing road, state engineers decided to build a new one. They chose a route farther east, perhaps finding it fitting that Colorado's newest road would follow some of the state's oldest "roads", including the Cherokee Trail, Miner's Trail and Trappers Trail.

By the 1930s, the new Colorado Highway 83 had been paved from Denver to Franktown. Just south of Franktown was the road builders' biggest obstacle: the 232-foot-wide Wildcat Canyon. (The canyon was renamed Castlewood Canyon in the 1920s). A graceful, arched bridge was designed and built to span the canyon – one of only six such bridges in Colorado at the time. Construction was completed in 1946, according to a plaque under the south end of the bridge. It seemed clear sailing now for the road to be completed to Colorado Springs.

But plans changed. State engineers were told to abandon further work on the road. It had been decided, based on politics of the time, that the "ribbon of death" route was once again to be the preferred one between Denver and Colorado Springs. The pavement of Highway 83 came to an abrupt end at the north end of the sparkling new bridge, leading to the nickname, "The Bridge to Nowhere."

Actually, the road continued south to Colorado Springs, but it was an unimproved dirt road – and stayed that way for two decades. In the mid-1960s, the dirt road was finally paved.

Even Bridges to Nowhere Wear Out

Ironically, the bridge over Castlewood Canyon, once the "Bridge to Nowhere," has been so heavily traveled since its completion in 1946, and has suffered such deterioration, that it eventually needed attention. To minimize cost, save time and preserve the now historic character of the bridge, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) decided to repair and enlarge it instead of replacing it.

Construction began in summer 2003 and was completed in four months. If the bridge doesn't look different, you're right. The graceful arch of the original bridge still spans the canyon, while the deck and columns were replaced with new ones to make a safer and wider road surface by nine feet. The new foundation was placed on the bridge's old foundation.

