

Garfield County is situated approximately 150 miles west of Denver, and 330 miles southeast of Salt Lake City, Utah. The county is bisected by a 70-mile stretch of Interstate 70, which parallels the Colorado River. The western portion of the county is a sparsely populated, high desert plateau, while the eastern side includes the western foothills of the Rocky Mountains and most of the county's 58,000 residents. Garfield County covers 2,958 square miles, or 1,893,120 acres.

Approximately 60 percent of all Garfield County lands are federally managed by either the Bureau of Land Management (615,973 acres), the U.S. Forest Service (515,865 acres) or the Bureau of Reclamation (2,335 acres).

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Garfield County and its neighbors; Rio Blanco County to the north; Mesa County to the south; and Pitkin County to the southeast, form an integrated economic region. Mesa, Rio Blanco and Garfield counties share a common reliance on natural resource extraction, tourism and ranching. Mesa County's Grand Junction, the largest community in the region, is a shopping, health care and services destination for many residents of western Colorado, as well as for multiple Utah communities to the west.

Pitkin County, and the resort towns of Aspen and Snowmass Village, adjoin Garfield County on its southeastern boundary. During the winter, the only automobile access to these resorts is through the communities of Glenwood Springs and Carbondale along Highway 82, through the Roaring Fork Valley.

As a result, many residents who work in Pitkin County reside within Garfield County.

Across the county's diverse mountain and desert topography, the climate is generally determined by elevation and aspect. Like any mountain climate, occasional seasonal extremes occur, but they are moderated by a majority of consistently pleasant weather. In the western and lower reaches of the county, where summer highs can hit 100 degrees, mild winters are often conducive to longer golf seasons than surrounding areas. In the high country at Ski Sunlight, or on the lofty plateaus of the Flat Tops, subzero temperatures and deep winter snowpacks yield in summer to cool breezes, lush wildflower meadows and perennial streams. The sun in the county delivers intense rays year-round, through clean, clear mountain air.

CLIMATE

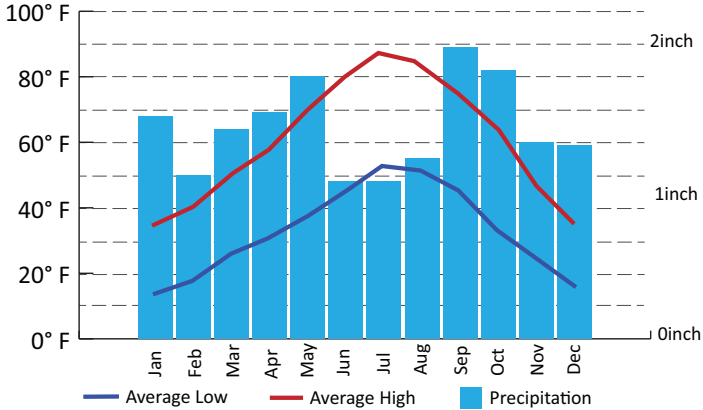


Figure 2: Glenwood Springs Climate Chart
Source: U.S. Climate Data

During the day, the temperature can change quickly, which makes it advisable to be prepared for sudden weather variations. This is true particularly at higher elevations, where storms may arrive quickly. It is not unheard of to have measurable snowfalls above 11,000 feet during any summer month. Conversely, January thaws can make mid-winter feel like spring.

A sunshine index for Glenwood Springs shows the city is sunny 71 percent of the time. Average temperatures in January are in the low-to-mid 20s; while July temperatures are in the low-to-mid 70s. Annual average precipitation is about 18 inches, keeping things green in spring and summer, and covering areas of the county in snow during the winter months.