

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

WEATHER INFORMATION--ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Weather is a concern of everyone. Weather determines what to do, where to go and how long to stay.

The high country of Rocky Mountain National Park produces a variable weather pattern primarily due to differences in altitude, slope and exposure. Elevation plays an extremely important role. At most of the improved campgrounds (9400' and below) weather is often more pleasant than above Bear Lake, on Trail Ridge Road or on Longs Peak, where it may be snowing (even in July).

Another consideration is the difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures. Summer days (July and August) may reach well into the 70's or 80's and drop into the 40's at night. Warm clothing and rain gear will make your stay more enjoyable.

The Continental Divide runs along the crest of the range of high peaks in a northwest to southeast direction through the center of the Park. Because of this there are two weather patterns. One is typical of the east side (Estes Park) and the other of the west side (Grand Lake).

The following weather summaries and brief, generalized weather description are representative of the Estes Park area which has the greater percentage of visitors. Conditions vary from year to year.

WINTER - December, January, February, March

The Park experiences a wide variety of conditions throughout the winter. Contrary to popular thought, the east slope of Rocky Mountain National Park at lower elevations is usually free of deep snow, while at the high elevations arctic conditions prevail with sudden blizzards and high winds. Most high country overnight trips require gear suitable for temperatures to -35° or more. A sudden increase in wind or a sudden snowstorm can change an otherwise beautiful day into a bone-chilling experience. Skiing and snowshoeing conditions are best in January, February, March.

SPRING - April, May

Spring comes to the lower elevations in late April and creeps up the mountainside to reach the sub-alpine country in June. Spring flowers start blooming at lower elevations in late April and early May. Trails are still snow covered through April and in high country through May. Trail Ridge Road opens late May.

SUMMER - June, July, August

From mid-June through August at lower elevations. July and August on the tundra. Arctic tundra flowers start blooming in late June and early July. Afternoon showers are normal.

FALL - September, October, November

September brings clear, crisp air, blue skies and mostly dry weather. However an early snowstorm is not uncommon. The aspen leaves start changing color mid-September (in good years) and the mating season of the elk lasts into October. Trail Ridge Road usually closes sometime in October.

## MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY

(Temperatures are for the headquarters area (7800'). Progressively colder temperatures exist at higher elevations.)

January - The coldest month. Oftentimes there may be 25" of snow at the Hidden Valley Ski Area (10,000') and Bear Lake (9,400'), while at lower elevations, such as Park Headquarters there may be little or no snow. Avg. Temps.: 15 to 50 day, -10 to 35 night.

February - More snow, violent to gusty winds. Skiing and snowshoeing are usually good. Avg. Temps.: 25 to 55 day, -5 to 30 night.

March - The Park receives more moisture in March than in January or February. Normally a windy month. Avg. Temps.: 30 to 60 day, 5 to 35 night.

April - Usually a wet month with one or two inches of precipitation common in the form of rain at lower elevations and snow at higher elevations. Trails are still snow covered. Nevertheless, many sunny, warm days break through. Avg. Temps.: 40 to 65 day, 15 to 35 night.

May - Snow is rarely found at lower elevations but snowstorms still occur in the high country. Precipitation is usually less than one inch as a pattern develops of short afternoon showers so typical of this region. This pattern lasts throughout the summer. Avg. Temps.: 45 to 70 day, 20 to 40 night.

June - An inch or more of rain. Snow remains on Longs Peak and on other high points. Avg. Temps.: 55 to 80 day, 25 to 45 night.

July - The warmest month in the Park. An inch or more of rain, usually in the form of afternoon showers. Avg. Temps.: 70 to 85 day, 35 to 55 night.

August - Usually the wettest month with an average of 2" of rain. Temperatures run about the same as July.

September - Mixed rain and snow start again. Trail Ridge Road may be closed at times. Avg. Temps.: 55 to 75 day, 30 to 50 night.

October - An inch or so of precipitation is common and the west side begins to receive more snow than the east side. Avg. Temps.: 45 to 70 day, 20 to 40 night.

November - Precipitation (snow) is light. Skiing is not generally satisfactory this early in the season. Avg. Temps.: 30 to 55 day, 0 to 30 night.

December - Snow is usually scarce. Gusty winds. Skiing conditions are marginal. Avg. Temps.: 20 to 50 day, -5 to 40 night.