

Rocky Mountain National Park

HIGH COUNTRY HEADLINES



Winter 2005-06

October 30 - April 1



Enjoying Winter

Reflected sunlight sparkles in the snow. Tracks of tiny mice and great elk cross your trail. Frozen alpine lakes ringed by massive peaks can be reached by snowshoe, ski, and even on foot. For those who are prepared, winter in Rocky Mountain National Park is a beautiful time full of crisp adventures.



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The contents of this newspaper are designed to help you comfortably and safely enjoy this high and wild park during its longest season. Information on visitor centers, primary phone numbers, winter travel, and recreation are on pages 2 and 3. Free ranger-led programs are listed on page 4. Camping is described on page 5. Some popular trails are listed on pages 6 and 7. The back page has a winter park map showing major year-round routes and facilities.

There is no more important season than winter to ask a ranger about current park conditions. Park roads often exemplify winter in the mountains, with snow, ice, and gusty winds frequent roadway companions. Trails may be good for snowshoeing or skiing one day, but poor the next. Stop in at the nearest visitor center (Beaver Meadows and Kawuneeche are open year-round) for up-to-the-minute information and suggestions tailored to your interests and current conditions.

If you enter the park from the west (Grand Lake), you're in for a winter treat. Cross-country skiing can be excellent through

most of the winter. Easy trails head toward Lulu City or Sun Valley, and many more challenging options are also available. On the east side of the park (Estes Park area), snowshoeing is more reliable than cross-country skiing. The lofty peaks of Rocky Mountain National Park tend to catch and hold more snow on their western slopes than on the east, allowing some east-side park trails to be hikeable through much of the winter. The Bear Lake area usually has excellent snowshoeing through middle and late winter, as does the Glacier Gorge area. Dream Lake, Mills Lake, and the Loch are spectacular winter snowshoe destinations. Easy trails circle Sprague and Lily lakes.

Rocky Mountain is the loftiest national park in the contiguous forty-eight states. When nature permits, you can drive higher on the nation's highest paved through-road – Trail Ridge (12,183') – than is possible in any other national park. Winter comes early to Trail Ridge Road, typically closing the road for the winter by mid-October. During mid-winter, powerful winds, often gusting to hurricane-force velocities, create frequent blizzard conditions on this road. Especially because of the winds and resultant deep

drifts, Trail Ridge Road is too dangerous to try to keep fully open through the winter. Yet much of the park is still open year-round. You can drive to magnificent view areas like Many Parks Curve and Bear Lake on the east, and through the spectacular Kawuneeche Valley on the west.

You will pass many trails that can provide a real taste of wild mountains in their longest season. A snowshoe or ski tour will reveal some of the beauty unique to winter. Here are ice-filled cascades and waterfalls, and massive peaks sparkling with snow against dark rock. Elk, coyotes, deer, snowshoe hares, and many other mammals remain active in the park through the winter, covered in dense winter coats. Hardy birds stay north for the season, ranging in color from that of winter (the ptarmigan), to that of night (the raven), to a combination that includes both those hues and more (the magpie).

Enjoy this long quiet season in Rocky Mountain National Park.

- Peter Allen



The hearty magpie remains active throughout the long Rocky Mountain winter.



The ptarmigan changes from mottled brown-grey plumage in summer to the color of winter.



The tiny pika stays active during the winter, eating plants it dries during the summer.

You Need to Know

Visitor Centers



Park visitor centers are the places to find out what you need to know. All have knowledgeable staff, printed information on many topics, and great bookstores stocked with all the best books for finding that perfect trail and learning what makes Rocky Mountain such an awesome national park. Each visitor center has its own special features.

West of the Divide – Grand Lake Area Kawuneeche Visitor Center

Open daily 8-4:30 except Dec. 25. Features free movie and slide shows, exhibits on how to plan your visit, bookstore, backcountry camping permits.



East of the Divide – Estes Park Area

Beaver Meadows Visitor Center

Open daily 8-4:30 except Dec. 25. Features free movie, bookstore, large 3-D park orientation map, backcountry camping permits in nearby building.



Fall River Visitor Center

Open Saturdays & Sundays 9-4, except Dec. 25. Also open Nov. 25, Dec. 26-30, and Feb. 20. Features life-sized wildlife displays, a discovery room where kids can touch objects and dress up as rangers, Native Americans, and pioneers, and a bookstore.



Heart of the Rockies

Teachers, Parents, Students!

Rocky Mountain National Park's "Heart of the Rockies" education program provides an outdoor classroom to children throughout this region. Teachers who are interested in participating in this program may contact the park's Education Specialist at (970) 586-3777, or through the website at heartoftherockies.net



This Park Paper

High Country Headlines is produced by the staff of Rocky Mountain National Park in cooperation with—and with funding provided by—the Rocky Mountain Nature Association.

Edited and designed by Peter Allen

Printed on recycled paper



Park Phone Numbers



Call Park Information (970) 586-1206 with your questions. We are available to assist you from 8 to 4:30.

Dial 911 or (970) 586-1203 for emergencies.



Hearing impaired persons may call the TTY at (970) 586-1319 from 8 to 5.

Pets



Pets are not allowed on park trails or in the backcountry. Please observe signs; some winter-closed gravel roads are managed as backcountry trails during this season.

Pets are allowed in campgrounds, picnic areas and along roadsides. They must be on a leash (6' or less) and attended at all times. Never leave pets unattended in your vehicle. Kennels are available locally.

Fishing



Obtain specific park regulations at visitor centers or park entrance stations. To fish in Rocky Mountain National Park, you must have a valid Colorado state fishing license.

No Hunting or Firearms

Hunting is not allowed in Rocky Mountain National Park. All firearms and weapons are prohibited.

Lost and Found

Please turn found items in at any park visitor center. To inquire about lost items, call the Backcountry Office at (970) 586-1242.

Winds frequently create a halo of blowing snow surrounding peaks in the park.



Weather and Road Conditions

Winter driving conditions can change rapidly. For Rocky Mountain National Park daily road and driving conditions, stop in at a visitor center or call (970) 586-1206. Snow tires or chains may be recommended during periods of snow. After hours, a recorded message at (970) 586-1333 provides daily updates on park road and weather conditions.

During winter, lower elevation park roads remain open. *The high central portion of Trail Ridge Road is closed between Many Parks Curve and the Colorado River Trailhead.* The treeless, open central section of Trail Ridge Road experiences strong winds and blizzard conditions, making it unsafe to maintain through the winter. For Colorado state road conditions, call (303) 639-1111 or (877) 315-ROAD.

The central part of Trail Ridge Road (at right) is closed for the winter. Check at visitor centers for all road conditions.



Bear Lake Road

Bear Lake Road is kept open during the winter. The road is plowed, but may be closed for clearing after any significant snowfall. Please call (970) 586-1206 for current conditions.

High Country Survival

Avalanches

Colorado has more known avalanches than any other state. Avoid skiing or snowshoeing in steep gullies where avalanches could occur. Open slopes of 30 to 45 degrees can be loaded with dangerous masses of snow, easily triggered by the presence of one or more backcountry travelers.



Wear an electronic transceiver inside your jacket when traversing avalanche terrain. If you are caught in an avalanche, make swimming motions and try to stay on top of the snow. Discard all equipment and try to remain calm.

For current avalanche conditions, check at a park visitor center or call (970)586-1206.

High Elevation

The high elevations of Rocky Mountain National Park, combined with dry air, may bring on symptoms of high altitude sickness. These include nausea, dizziness, headache, insomnia, rapid heartbeat, and shortness of breath. If you experience these symptoms, descend to a lower elevation. To minimize high altitude effects on your body, increase water intake, avoid alcohol, eat lightly and frequently, and get plenty of rest.



Ultraviolet radiation is also a threat at high elevations, even during the dead of winter. Wear sunglasses with uv protection to prevent eye damage. Wear a hat and use sunscreen to prevent sunburn.

Sledding and Snow Play

There is only one place in RMNP open to sledding and downhill sliding on snow: Hidden Valley. Snow conditions are sometimes poor to marginal. Check at a visitor center or call (970) 586-1206 for current information.



©Jane Lopez

Be aware of cold weather, chilling wind, and the effects of hypothermia. Safety is your responsibility!

At Hidden Valley the fenced snowplay hill is for the use of sleds, tubes, and saucers. Skiers, snowboarders, and snowshoers must exercise caution when passing through sledding-snowplay areas. Slow down and yield the right of way when descending. On weekends and holidays, skilled park staff, mostly volunteers, are on duty. For your safety and enjoyment, please follow their guidance.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a serious and sometimes fatal condition brought on by exposure to wet and cold. The core body temperature drops to a level which impairs normal muscle and brain activities. Symptoms include drowsiness, loss of judgment or coordination, slurred speech, and uncontrolled shivering. If these symptoms occur, warm the chilled person with dry clothing and warm, nonalcoholic liquids, get back to your car and seek medical attention.



This Mom has prepared her child well for enjoying time out in the park.

Avoid these effects by carrying a windproof/snowproof outer shell and extra layers of clothing. Drink plenty of water; high elevation, wind, and cold dry us out and chill us.

Backcountry Travel

Be prepared for all types of weather, no matter what activity you are enjoying in the national park. Unforeseen weather conditions can change a short afternoon hike, ski, or snowshoe trip into an unpleasant experience.

Severe storms can impose life threatening hazards only one or two miles from your car. Carry a stormproof outer shell and extra clothing. Be equipped with detailed topographic maps and a compass.

Leave your itinerary with a friend or relative so they know when to expect your return, and obtain a required backcountry permit for any overnight trip. It is safer to travel with a companion than alone.

Don't depend upon a cell phone for emergency help; many locations in this rugged park are not serviced.

Streams, Lakes, and Giardia

Don't drink water directly from park streams or lakes. Giardia is a microscopic organism found in lakes, streams, and possibly snow. It also lives in the digestive systems of wildlife and humans. Giardia enters surface water when animals or humans defecate in or near water. Giardia can cause diarrhea, cramps, bloating, and weight loss. To prevent giardiasis, bring water to a full rolling boil for at least 5 minutes, or use a water filtration system that eliminates the organism.

Keep Wildlife Wild

Never feed wildlife. A fine may be issued to violators. Animals can kick, bite or gore you. They can become dependent on human food and lose the ability to feed naturally. Wildlife also carry diseases which can be transmitted to humans, like rabies and plague. Photograph animals from the roadside.



Ranger Led Programs



Wheelchair
Accessible
Programs

East of the Divide - Estes Park area

Snowshoe Tours —by reservation only*—

Time/Program	Days Offered	Description
Snowshoe Ecology Walk* 12:30 PM 2 hours	Sa Su W January 7 – March 26	Take a beginner level snowshoe tour with a ranger and explore the natural world of a subalpine forest. No previous experience is necessary.

*Making Reservations— Snowshoe Tours

Reservations are necessary and may be made no more than seven days in advance.
Call (970) 586-1223 from 8 AM – 4 PM daily.

There is a limit of 6 people per reservation for this 2 hour program. For safety reasons, children under 8 years old are not allowed on this activity. Sleds, skis, hikers, and children in backpacks are not permitted. You must provide your own snowshoes. They can be rented in Estes Park sporting goods stores.

Groups

Part of an organized group? Please call (970) 586-3777.




Full Moon Walk —by reservation only—



Full Moon Walk	Nov. 15 Dec. 15 Jan. 12 Feb. 13	The hour of moonrise changes as the seasons progress. Program times will adjust accordingly. Call (970) 586-1223 a week ahead for times, locations and reservations.
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Evening Programs - East

Beaver Meadows Evening Program 7 PM 1 hour	every Sa except 12/24 and 12/31 	Enjoy a wide variety of informative and entertaining programs. Meet in the downstairs auditorium at Beaver Meadows Visitor Center. No program is offered 12/24 or 12/31.
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Junior Rangers- Parkwide



Free junior ranger books are available at park visitor centers. A successfully completed book earns a badge!

West of the Divide - Grand Lake area

Ski and Snowshoe Tours

Time/Program	Days Offered	Description
Ski the Wilderness in Winter 1 PM 2 hours	Sa December 10 – February 25 except 12/24	Ski a snow-draped landscape and learn about the Kawuneeche Valley. Join a park ranger at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center at 1 PM for this 2-hour cross-country ski tour. Children under 8 years of age are not allowed on this activity. You must provide your own skis and poles with large baskets.
Snowshoe in the Kawuneeche 9 AM 2 hours	Su December 11 – March 12 except 12/25	Take an intermediate level 2-hour snowshoe tour with a ranger. This is a more rigorous tour with altitude gains of up to 500'. Meet at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center. Please bring your own snowshoes and ski poles with large baskets. Children under 8 years of age are not allowed on this activity. Call (970) 627-3471 from 8:00 AM-4:30 PM to make reservations.
Snowshoe in the Kawuneeche 1 PM 2 hours	Su December 11 – March 12 except 12/25	Join a beginner level 2-hour snowshoe tour with a ranger. Meet at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center. Please bring your own snowshoes and ski poles with large baskets. Children under 8 years of age are not allowed on this activity. Call (970) 627-3471 from 8:00 AM-4:30 PM to make reservations.

Evening Programs - West

Saturday Night in the Park 7 PM 1 hour	second Sa each month 	Enjoy an evening program the second Saturday of each month in the auditorium at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center. For a description of topics, inquire at the front desk.
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Park Book Stores

At RMNA Bookstores, Your Purchase Makes A Difference

The best Rocky Mountain National Park books, maps and other interesting items are right here, at one of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association (RMNA) bookstores located around the park. And when you make a purchase from our non-profit organization, proceeds are returned to the park, supporting important educational, interpretive and research programs. Drop by today.



Visit the Rocky Mountain Nature Association bookstores at:
Beaver Meadows Visitor Center
Fall River Visitor Center • Kawuneeche Visitor Center



Camping

Campgrounds

Reservations for summer camping at Moraine Park and Glacier Basin campgrounds can be made in advance. Call 1-800-365-2267 for further information. Longs Peak and designated sections of Moraine Park and Timber Creek campgrounds are open all winter. Water and dump station facilities are not available during the winter.

	Fee per night	Elevation— ft...	Stay limit (nights)	Public phone
Longs Peak 26 campsites Open all year - tents only	\$14	9,400	14	no
Moraine Park 77 campsites Open all year. 	\$14	8,150	14	yes
Timber Creek 20 campsites Open all year.	\$14	8,900	14	yes

Backcountry Camping Permits

Permits are required for all backcountry overnight camping. Camping is allowed only in designated areas. Winter-season permits may be obtained at the Backcountry Office (east) or Kawuneeche Visitor Center (west), or by self-registration at some park locations. For further information call (970) 586-1242 or write to: Backcountry Office, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, Colorado 80517.



Leave No Trace

With over 3 million visitors every year, the wild lands of Rocky Mountain National Park are being heavily used. In snowshoeing, camping, and all your park activities, do your part to preserve this national treasure by following these seven easy principles:

Plan ahead and prepare

Travel and camp on durable surfaces

Dispose of waste properly

Leave what you find

Minimize campfire impacts

Respect Wildlife

Be considerate of other visitors



Your Fees Improve the Park

New restrooms, refurbished campsites, rebuilt trails, educational displays, bus shelters, and many other improvements have been made to this park through use of your entrance and camping fees.

In 1996 a far-sighted program was authorized by the U.S. Congress which allowed National Parks to keep the majority of entrance fees (80%) collected at their sites, and to use these fees to address huge repair, rehabilitation, and renovation needs. For many years, park budgets had been insufficient to keep up with increasing costs of maintaining facilities and services for an ever-growing public. In 2004, the Congress extended this successful program through 2014.

Since the beginning of this program, over \$21 million dollars has been spent to make repairs, renovations and improvements throughout Rocky Mountain National Park.

Some examples of how fees have improved your park facilities:

Park and Ride:

As part of free summer shuttle buses in the Bear Lake Road area, bus shelters, restrooms, and a parking lot were constructed at Park & Ride. The shuttle system allows easy access to spectacular hiking.

Campgrounds:

Campsites in the three largest campgrounds in Rocky Mountain National Park have new tables, grills, restrooms, graded tent platforms, graded parking, and graded walks. Fully wheelchair accessible sites have been created in these campgrounds. Much bare earth has been revegetated with native plants. The park has rebuilt 269 campsites.

Hidden Valley Picnic Area

Picnic tables, restrooms, and a trail are part of a major restoration of the Hidden Valley area which was recently completed. In winter, this area provides an area for sledding and snow play, complete with a warming hut and heated restrooms.



Restrooms:

Rocky Mountain National Park has replaced all 33 roadside vault toilets, using a modern, well-vented, solar-assisted design.



Resource Management and Research:

Fee monies have improved natural resources by restoring species like greenback cutthroat trout, removing noxious weeds, revegetating impacted areas with native plants, improving scientific knowledge of park resources, and supporting the monitoring of bighorn sheep, moose, elk, mountain lions, bears, and raptors.

The park also has used fee monies to restore historic McGraw Ranch for use as a research facility by cooperating researchers studying critical park components. To best manage a national park, solid scientific knowledge must be available upon which to make sound decisions.

Films and Exhibits:

The park installed state-of-the-art theater electronics to show its spectacular new orientation movie at Beaver Meadows and Kawuneeche Visitor Centers. Eighty-two old roadside panels have been replaced with high-quality, full color displays. These large signs provide interesting information on the park's natural and cultural highlights, as well as important tips on recreation and use.

Trails:

More than 25 miles of trails in all areas of the park have been rebuilt or improved.

Winter Trails by Snowshoe, Ski and Foot



©Audrey Stevens

With over 350 miles of trails, the park offers a vast array of choices. A small sampling of trails are described below. When properly equipped, snowshoeing and skiing at Rocky Mountain National Park is often inspiring and invigorating. Skiing is typically better on the west side of the park (Grand Lake entrance), as snow depths are greater than on the eastern slope. Even for short day tours, be sure to pack gear for all types of weather (sun, snow, wind). Strong winds are quite common, and windproof clothing is essential gear to wear or carry.



Trail Tips: Be prepared for the rigors of high elevation - drink plenty of water, and travel at a pace where you can still talk and breathe easily. If you feel poorly, descend to a lower elevation. Know park regulations. Pack it in, pack it out - including remains of all your food (pits, peels, etc.), as well as facial tissues. Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects where you find them. Let nature's sounds prevail; avoid loud voices and noises. No pets are allowed on park trails.



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Trails on the East Side of the Park

Trail	Location	Round Trip Distance	Elevation Gain	Cool Stuff
Upper Beaver Meadows	Upper Beaver Meadows Road (gated) off Trail Ridge Road, 2 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.	3-4 miles	140 feet	A fine winter hike along a gated dirt road, with an option for making a 3.5 mile loop by taking a trail just inside the barricade, which joins the end of the road in 1.5 miles.
Sprague Lake	Sprague Lake on Bear Lake Road.	.5 mile	10 feet	A good place for a short winter walk, or sometimes to try out those cross-country skis on a frozen lake. Good views of the Continental Divide.
Chasm Falls	West Alluvial Fan at gated end of Endovalley Road off Hwy 34	5 miles	400 feet	Follows summer roads which are closed to winter traffic. At 1.5 miles, take the right fork up Old Fall River Road to beautiful Chasm Falls.
Lily Lake	Lily Lake on Highway 7, south of Estes Park.	.7 mile	5 feet	Trail around lake often suitable for walking in boots; or as a short snowshoe or ski. Beautiful views of high park peaks. Longer trails start from here too.
Dream Lake	Bear Lake on Bear Lake Road, 10 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.	2.2 miles	425 feet	A good snowshoe tour to one of the most photographed lakes in the park.
Emerald Lake	Bear Lake on Bear Lake Road, 10 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.	3.6 miles	605 feet	An intermediate snowshoe for good route-finders. Tour ascends to an alpine lake. Check at a visitor center for route details.
Bierstadt Lake	Bear Lake on Bear Lake Road, 10 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.	3.2 miles	235 feet	A nice snowshoe or ski tour, if started at Bear Lake. Also possible as a steeper snowshoe/hiking tour from the Bierstadt Lake Trailhead.
Mills Lake	Glacier Gorge on Bear Lake Road.	5.6 miles	730 feet	An excellent winter snowshoe trail to a spectacular peak-rimmed lake. Magnificent views abound. Check at a visitor center for route details.
The Loch	Glacier Gorge on Bear Lake Road.	6 miles	970 feet	An excellent winter snowshoe trail to another spectacular peak-rimmed lake. Magnificent views abound. Check at a visitor center for route details.
Mill Creek	Hollowell Park on Bear Lake Road.	3.2 miles	600 feet	A quiet winter snowshoe on a lesser-used trail. Check at a visitor center for details and current conditions.

Trail	Location	Round Trip Distance	Elevation Gain	Cool Stuff
Cub Lake	Cub Lake in Moraine Park off the Bear Lake Road.	4.6 miles	540 feet	A moderate hike/snowshoe; lower sections are often hikeable. The last mile often has ice or snow. Bring snowshoes, even if it looks open at the beginning.
The Pool	Fern Lake on Cub Lake Road near Moraine Park Campground.	4.9 miles	245 feet	Meadows, aspen groves, ponds and conifer forests highlight this easy, nearly level trail. A snowshoe or hike, depending upon snow conditions.
Sandbeach Lake	Wild Basin off Highway 7, south of Estes Park	8.4 miles	1970 feet	Trail ascends steeply through sunny forest; a steady uphill hike. Snowshoes often are not needed for the lower trail sections.
Ouzel Falls	Wild Basin off Highway 7, south of Estes Park.	5.4 miles	950 feet	Frozen waterfalls and beautiful views await on this snowshoe tour. Often some icy patches on the trail.
Trail Ridge Road	The gated winter closure at Many Parks Curve on Trail Ridge Road.	2+ miles	200+ feet	Follows the summer road which is closed to winter traffic. Beautiful views; often windy. Snowshoes usually best.
Deer Mountain	Deer Ridge Junction 4.5 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center along Trail Ridge Road.	6 miles	1075 feet	A strenuous snowshoe or hike to the windblown top of Deer Mountain. The lower portion tends to be open and hikeable; upper switchbacks snowy.
Lawn Lake	Lawn Lake Trailhead on Fall River Road.	12.4 miles	2250 feet	A strenuous snowshoe to a high mountain lake. After a mile, the trail follows scenic Roaring River.

Trails on the West Side of the Park -
Where snow conditions are generally better

Trail	Location	Round Trip Distance	Elevation Gain	Cool Stuff
Tonahutu Creek Trail	The Kawuneeche Visitor Center , north of Grand Lake.	4 miles	300 feet	From the Visitor Center, an easy 2 mile ski to Grand Lake. A longer option is an 8 mile round trip to Big Meadows (700' elevation gain).
Adams Falls	East Inlet , on West Portal Road, at the far east end of Grand Lake village.	.6 miles	80 feet	A beautiful snowshoe or intermediate-level ski tour. The trail continues to First Meadows (2 mile round trip), with a great view of Mt. Craig.
Sun Valley Trail	Harbison Picnic Area 1 mile north of the Kawuneeche Visitor Center.	2.5 miles	50 feet	An easy ski or snowshoe loop through woods and open meadow. Be sure to look for orange trail markers at trail junctions.
Green Mountain Trail	Green Mountain Trailhead 3 miles north of the Kawuneeche Visitor Center.	4 miles	600 feet	An intermediate ski or snowshoe to Big Meadows. A longer, more difficult loop is also possible.
Coyote Valley Trail	Coyote Valley Trailhead in the Kawuneeche Valley.	1 mile	10 feet	A level trail adjacent to the Colorado River. An easy choice to test those skis or showshoes.
Colorado River Trail (Lulu City)	The end of the plowed road in the Kawuneeche Valley 10 miles north of the Kawuneeche Visitor Center.	7.4 miles	350 feet	A gentle ski tour with some views of the Colorado River. Historic sites of Shipler Cabins and Lulu City add to the natural attractions of this tour.

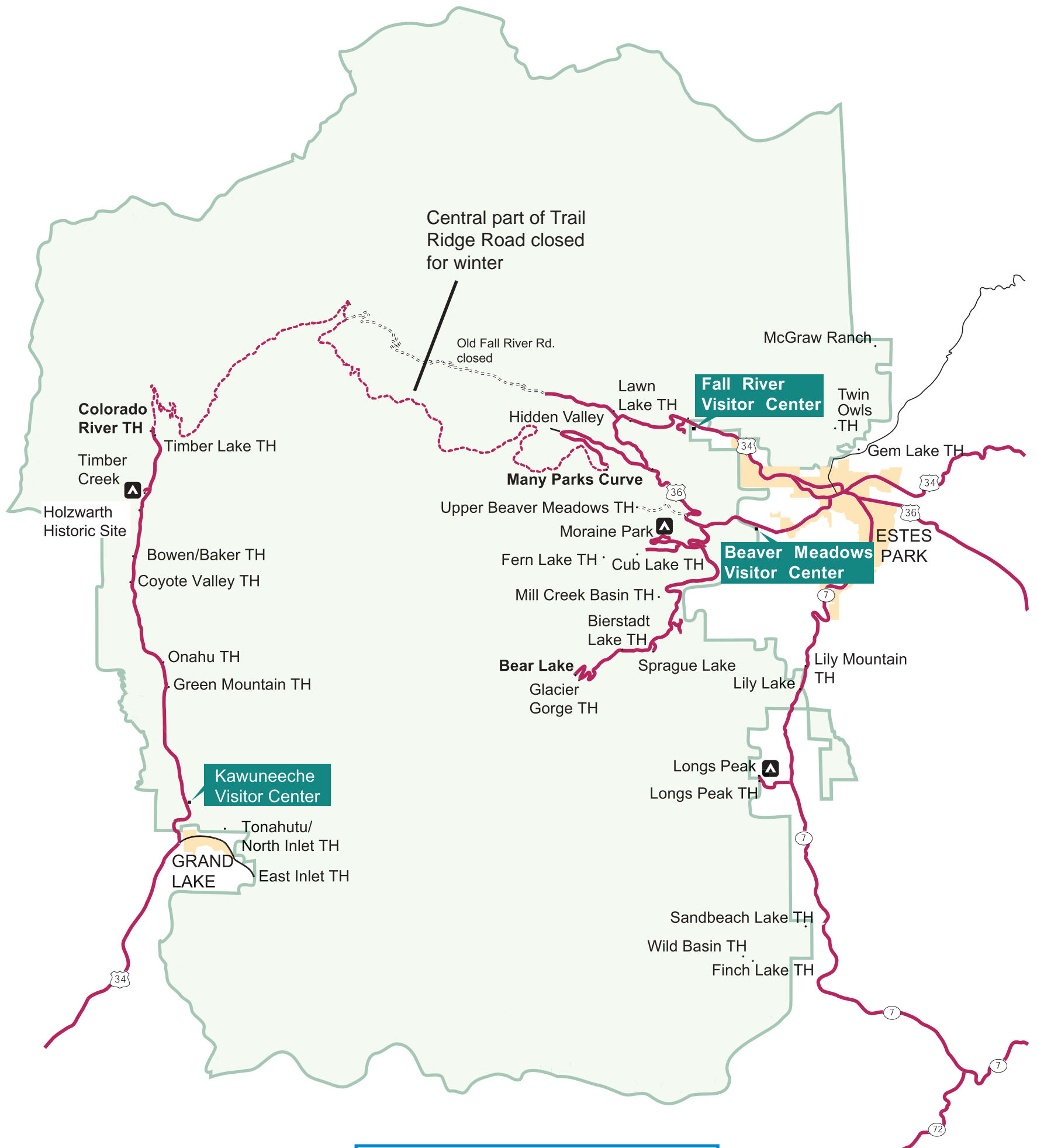
Rocky Mountain National Park



The high central portion of Trail Ridge Road is closed for the winter.

Entering from either the East or the West offers many options for snowshoeing, hiking, wildlife viewing, and enjoying the crispness of winter.

Take a look through this paper at some of the things that you can do in the quietest season in Rocky Mountain National Park. Magnificent scenery, wildlife large and small, frozen lakes and waterfalls, and the still of the winter forest await.



LEGEND	
	Paved Roads
	Unpaved Road
	Roads Closed in Winter