

# Rocky Mountain NATIONAL PARK



The Official Newspaper and Trip Planner of Rocky Mountain National Park

2018–2019 Winter | November 4, 2018–March 17, 2019



NPS PHOTO / CRYSTAL BRINDLE

## Help Us Protect Your Park

Set aside more than 100 years ago, Rocky Mountain National Park has been entrusted to your care. Please take pride in your park and treat it with respect! Generations of future visitors will thank you.

### How can you help protect Rocky?

- Read and follow important safety information on page 2, then take the Rocky Pledge. Our rules and regulations weren't invented to ruin anyone's fun—they were created to keep you safe and to keep your park beautiful. Read and take heed!

- Be kind to fellow visitors and park staff. As Rocky continues to grow in popularity, crowded roads, packed parking lots, and lines at restrooms and visitor centers are becoming more common. This can be frustrating, but please be patient. We're all here to enjoy Rocky's splendor.
- Plan ahead for your next visit, whether tomorrow or in a decade. Planning ahead can help you avoid the not-so-fun stuff so that you have more time and energy to enjoy the totally-fun stuff. For details, visit our website at [nps.gov/romo/](https://nps.gov/romo/).



**PLEDGE**  
to  
**PROTECT**

Rocky Mountain National Park  
#rockypledge

### Contact Us

**Trail Ridge Road Status**  
970 586-1222

**Hidden Valley Snowplay Status**  
970 586-1333

**Park Information**  
970 586-1206

**TTY**  
970 586-1319

**Emergencies**  
911

website [nps.gov/romo/](https://nps.gov/romo/)  
instagram [@RockyNPS](https://www.instagram.com/RockyNPS) #RMNP  
facebook.com/[RockyNPS](https://www.facebook.com/RockyNPS)  
twitter [@RockyNPS](https://twitter.com/RockyNPS)  
youtube.com/user/[RockyNPS](https://www.youtube.com/user/RockyNPS)

## Things to Do in a Day or Less

**Take a Scenic Drive**  
PAGE 4

Driving Rocky's roads is a great way to explore the park. Learn more about our roads and famous drives, including times of the year when some major roads are closed to motorized traffic.

**Get Into Winter**  
PAGE 8

In winter, ice and snow transform the park and offer new experiences. Check out our winter activity guide to get a better sense of what's open, what's closed, and how you can enjoy the season.

**Watch Wildlife**  
PAGE 9

Rocky is home to many animals, big and small. While we're unable to tell you exactly where wildlife will be (they are wild, after all!), we have a great guide inside to help you learn more.

**Hike a Trail**  
PAGE 10

Rocky has trails for every age and ability. Find a trail, check your packing list against our recommended items, and learn where you can get even more in-depth info.

**See Visitor Centers**  
PROGRAM GUIDE

Visitor centers are a great way to explore the park's wonders. See your program guide for opening and closing dates and times and general descriptions.

**Join a Ranger**  
PROGRAM GUIDE

Year-round, Rocky offers ranger-led programs on a variety of awesome topics. Check out our program guide to find the perfect program for you and yours.

# Safety

It is your responsibility to be safe and to know and obey park rules. You can find park safety information, rules, and regulations at visitor centers, entrance stations, trailhead bulletin boards, and the park website at [nps.gov/romo](https://nps.gov/romo).

## The Rocky Pledge

“To preserve unimpaired for this and future generations the beauty, history, and wildness therein, I pledge to protect Rocky Mountain National Park.”



PLEDGE  
to  
PROTECT

Rocky Mountain National Park  
#rockypledge

- To prevent fire scars and human-caused fires, I pledge to never build a fire outside of a campground or picnic area fire ring.
- To protect plants, meadows, and alpine tundra, I pledge to park and drive only on designated asphalt or gravel parking areas.
- To respect other visitors' experiences, if I need to go but am not near a restroom, I pledge to leave no trace by stepping well away from the trail and water sources, burying my waste at least six inches deep or packing it out in a waste bag, and carrying out my toilet paper.
- To respect Rocky's wild creatures and to protect myself, I pledge to watch wildlife from a distance that doesn't disturb them in any way. I will never feed an animal—doing so causes it harm.

- To respect history, heritage, and natural processes, I pledge to remove nothing from the park except my own and others' trash—not even a flower. I will leave no trace of my visit so that the next person can experience the same beauty as I did.
- To keep my pet, wildlife, and other visitors safe, I pledge to keep my leashed pet only on roads, in campgrounds, and in picnic and parking areas. I will never take my dog on Rocky's trails, meadows, or tundra areas.
- To preserve them for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations, I pledge to honor, respect, and protect all our national parks and public lands.

### **Altitude Sickness affects many visitors every year.**

Symptoms include headaches, nausea, fatigue, dizziness, vomiting, and in acute situations, even unconsciousness. Altitude can also aggravate preexisting conditions like heart and lung disease. Take your time, drink plenty of water, eat lightly, and rest. The only cure for altitude sickness is to go down to a lower altitude.

### **Avalanches can be easily triggered by backcountry travelers.**

The park does not do any avalanche control. Never assume trails are free of avalanche hazard. Wear an electronic transceiver when traversing avalanche terrain, and avoid skiing or snowshoeing in steep gullies. If caught in an avalanche, make swimming motions and try to stay on top of the snow. For current conditions, visit [avalanche.state.co.us](https://avalanche.state.co.us), check at a visitor center, or call 970 586-1206.

 **Bicycles** are prohibited on trails. They are permitted on all roads open to motor vehicles, paved and dirt, unless otherwise posted. There are no designated bicycle lanes in the park. Roads are narrow with few or no shoulders—ride with care. By law, you must ride single file. Shuttle buses do not accept bicycles. Visit [go.nps.gov/RockyBicycling](https://go.nps.gov/RockyBicycling).

 **Campfires** are permitted **only** in campgrounds and picnic areas with fire grates. During high fire danger, campfires may be prohibited. You can purchase firewood at campgrounds in summer. Collecting vegetation, dead or alive, is prohibited.

 **Cell Service is unavailable in much of the park.** Don't depend on a cell phone for emergency help.

 **Drones are not allowed anywhere in Rocky Mountain National Park.** This includes launching, landing, and operating drones.

 **Falling Trees are an ever-present hazard** and can fall without warning. Be extra careful around dead trees when it's windy or following a snowstorm.

 **Firearm Possession** in the park is permitted for those legally authorized to possess firearms under federal, Colorado, or local laws. However, hunting, recreational shooting, and target practice are illegal. Federal law prohibits firearms in park buildings and facilities. Those legally allowed to carry firearms must comply with all applicable state and federal firearm laws.

 **Fishing** requires a Colorado state fishing license. Trout in the park include brown, brook, rainbow, and cutthroat (including the protected Colorado River and greenback). Not all park lakes have reproducing fish populations. For more information, visit [go.nps.gov/RockyFishing](https://go.nps.gov/RockyFishing).

 **Hypothermia can happen any time of year.** Watch for drowsiness, impaired judgment, excessive shivering, and slurred speech. To prevent, wear insulated, wind-proof layers and drink plenty of fluids.

 **Lightning regularly strikes in Rocky.** There is no safe place in the backcountry when lightning strikes. Check the forecast before heading out. Watch for building storm clouds. Plan activities so you can quickly return to your car if a storm begins. If hiking, plan to return to the trailhead before noon, and return to the trailhead immediately if you hear thunder.

 **Marijuana possession and use is illegal in Rocky Mountain National Park and all federal lands,** even though small amounts of recreational marijuana are legal in Colorado.

### **Pets are prohibited on ALL park trails, tundra, and meadow areas.**

Leashed pets are only allowed in picnic areas, parking lots, campgrounds, and along roadsides. Never leave pets in vehicles if it puts them in danger or they become a public nuisance. When outside vehicles, pets must be on leashes no longer than six feet. **Service animals** that have been individually trained to perform specific tasks for the benefit of persons with disabilities are allowed in the park. **Emotional support (“therapy animals”) and service-animals-in-training** are not service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act and may not access trails or other non-motorized areas.

 **Purify all water from rivers, lakes, and streams before drinking.** Park waters may contain parasites like giardia and cryptosporidium.

 **Rivers and Streams can be deadly.** Park waters are frigid. Powerful currents can knock you over and pull you downstream or underwater, where you may become trapped. Streamside rocks are often slippery, and nearby water may be deep. Always closely supervise children around all water but especially near rivers and streams.

 **Take only pictures.** It is illegal to take any natural features including pinecones, rocks, antlers, and artifacts or to disturb soil, rocks, or vegetation (including flowers). Metal detector use is prohibited.

 **Wilderness Travel** should be done in a group, not alone. Leave a detailed trip itinerary with a friend. This helps park authorities if you fail to return. Mountain weather changes quickly. If conditions are more difficult than anticipated, turn around. Longs Peak, a popular climb, can have treacherous ice and snow any time of year. Camping is only allowed in designated sites.



### KEEP WILDLIFE WILD **Never feed or approach wildlife**

Many amazing animals call Rocky home. To keep them and you safe and comfortable:

- Obey wildlife closure areas and “no stopping” traffic zones.
- Use parking areas along the road. If not available, pull your vehicle completely off the road and do not park on vegetation.
- Keep a safe distance. If you cause an animal to move or change behavior, you are too close! Approaching an animal puts you at risk and may cause it stress, leading to disease and illness.
- Never feed wildlife, including birds and chipmunks.



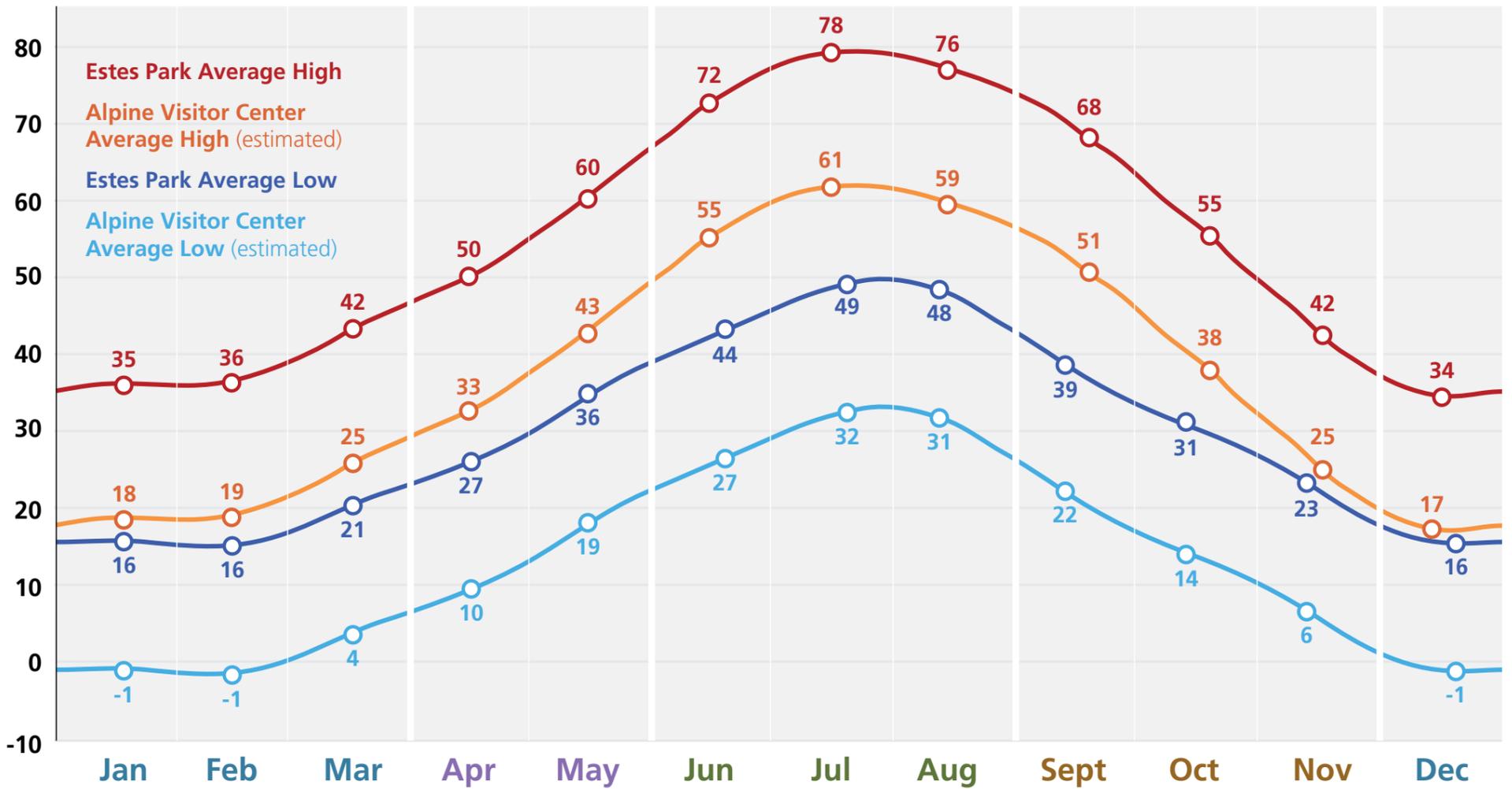
### **Bears and Mountain Lions**

Seeing a bear or mountain lion is rare, and interactions are even more rare. However, keep the following in mind:

- Travel in groups and make noise as you hike closely together. Keep children close! A predator does not distinguish a running child from running prey.
- If you see a bear or mountain lion, stop, stay calm, and back away slowly. Never approach wildlife or turn your back and run. Stand tall and look large. Raise your arms. Protect small children by picking them up.
- If approached, make loud noises, shout, clap hands, bang pots or pans, and fight back if attacked.

See Camping, page 11, to learn how to properly store food and other scented items.

# Weather



## Winter

December–March

Cold temperatures, high winds, and ice and snow define winter at Rocky Mountain National Park. Skiing and snowshoeing conditions are best in January, February, and March.

### Estes Park area

Usually free of deep snow. Winds are often extremely high (50+ mph gusts).

### Higher elevations

Arctic conditions: sudden blizzards, damaging winds, deep snowpack.

### Grand Lake area

Deeper snow common. Winds less extreme. Clearer and colder than the east side of the park.

## Spring

April–May

A warm, sunny day can make it seem that summer's arrived early, only to be followed by a day of cold temperatures and heavy snowfall. Expect snow and ice on most if not all trails.

### Montane

(8000–9500 ft, 2450–2900 m) Spring arrives here first, usually in late April.

### Subalpine

(9500–11,500 ft, 2900–3500 m) Spring is just reaching the sub-alpine country in June.

## Summer

June–August

Sunny mornings, afternoon thunderstorms (often with dangerous lightning), and clear, cool nights. This is the busiest time of year in the park. Most park facilities are open.

### Alpine

(11,500+ ft, 3500+ m) Magnificent wildflowers bloom from late June to early August.

Snow can stick around in gorges and other shaded areas well into summer.

## Fall

September–November

Expect clear crisp air, blue skies, and generally dry weather mixed with the occasional early snowstorm. Trail Ridge Road usually closes for the winter by mid-October.

### Fall colors

Aspen leaves start changing in mid-September. Fall color is magical but usually brief, lasting only a few weeks.

### Elk rut

Elk mating season begins in September and continues through mid-October.

## Why is it colder at elevation?

Take a look at the temperature chart above. **The Alpine Visitor Center is, on average, 15–20 degrees colder than Estes Park, yet it's only a few miles away as the crow flies.**

### How can this be?

**Elevation**, which measures a location's height above sea level.

Most people live relatively close to sea level (maybe you do, too), so they don't know about the big effect elevation has on almost every everything, from solar radiation to weather to—you guessed it—temperature. But here in Rocky, where elevations start at around 7,500 ft, you can experience these changes firsthand!

**For every 1,000 feet gained in elevation, temperature decreases 3–5°F. Why?**

- **The atmosphere gets thinner.** With less air and clouds between the ground and the darkness of space, less of the sun's heat is trapped and re-radiated back to Earth.
- **Air pressure drops.** This causes the temperature of air, a gas, to decrease.

Add to these factors more exposure to extreme wind and weather, and it's no wonder a warm day at the park entrances can be much chillier in the mountains.

## What clothes should I bring?

Dressing for a trip to the mountains is part of the adventure.

As you can see, conditions vary wildly throughout the year and between different elevations. But conditions also vary wildly even within the same day!

A single summer day could bring clear skies and frosty breath in the morning; blistering sun and sweat at noon; and a thunderstorm in the afternoon with a 20 degree temperature drop, lightning, rain, and hail.

A winter day can go from still with warm sun to howling wind and white-out conditions in a matter of minutes.

How can you prepare for such wild weather?

- **Always carry wind and waterproof outerwear.** Sudden cold rainstorms happen even in summer, and chilling winds are common.
- **Bring warm, quick-drying layers to adjust to changing temperatures.**
- **Wear closed-toe, durable footwear. The park is rarely entirely without ice and snow.**
- **Bring a warm hat and gloves—even in summer.**
- **Protect yourself from the sun** with clothing, sunscreen, and sunglasses. UV radiation is much higher at elevation.

# Scenic Drives

## Driving Conditions Through the Seasons

### Winter

December–March

While Bear Lake Road and other major paved roads remain open (weather permitting), smaller park roads, Old Fall River Road, and most of Trail Ridge Road are closed. Winter driving conditions are possible at any time—be prepared.

### Spring

April–May

Snow, ice, rain, sun—anything’s possible in spring. Some smaller roads open, weather permitting.

### Summer

June–August

It’s prime time at Rocky. Nearly all park roads, including Trail Ridge Road, open by Memorial Day (weather permitting). Old Fall River Road opens latest in the season, in early July.

### Fall

September–November

Snow and ice are back on the menu—be prepared. Old Fall River Road closes by early October. Trail Ridge usually closes in mid-October but depends on the year’s specific weather conditions.

## Trail Ridge Road

### CLOSED TO MOTORIZED VEHICLES

Due to extreme winter conditions at elevation, Trail Ridge Road is closed to motorized vehicles from, generally, late October until late May. Pedestrian traffic is still allowed. Pets on leash are allowed until November 30 but are prohibited December 1–April 1.

Stretching 50 miles, from Estes Park in the east to Grand Lake in the west, Trail Ridge Road is the highest continuous paved highway in North America.

Winding across the alpine tundra’s vastness to a high point of 12,183 ft (3713 m), the route offers thrilling views, scenic pullouts, wildlife sightings, and spectacular alpine wildflower displays.

A trip up Trail Ridge Road is like traveling to the Arctic. By 11,400 ft (3475 m), the average annual temperature is so cold that none of Rocky’s trees can survive. Called treeline, you’ll know you’re above it when the trees disappear and the views stretch to forever.



Alpine Visitor Center covered in snow.

NPS PHOTO

## Old Fall River Road

### CLOSED TO MOTORIZED VEHICLES

Due to extreme winter conditions at elevation, Old Fall River Road is closed to motorized vehicles from October 1–early July. Pedestrian traffic is still allowed. Pets on leash are allowed until November 30 but are prohibited December 1–April 1.

Completed in 1920, Old Fall River Road was the first auto route in the park offering access to the alpine tundra. It follows a route long used by Native American tribes, including Ute and Arapaho.

Old Fall River Road is a “motor nature trail.” Gravel and dirt, one-way uphill, with no guardrails and tight switchbacks, vehicles 25 feet and longer or with trailers are not allowed. The 9-mile long road leads from Horseshoe Park up a deeply cut valley to Fall River Pass at 11,796 ft (3595 m), where it joins Trail Ridge Road at the Alpine Visitor Center.

## Stay Safe

- **Trail Ridge Road is narrow, winding, and has few guardrails.** Drive carefully.
- **Lightning can kill you.** If thunderstorms are approaching or if you see or hear lightning, immediately seek shelter in your car or a building.
- **High elevation can make you feel sick and aggravate preexisting conditions.** See page 2 for details.
- **Temperatures on the tundra can be 20 to 30° F (10 to 15° C) colder than park entrances, and weather changes quickly.** Always bring warm, windproof layers, including a hat and gloves, even on warm days.
- **Sunlight is intense at elevation.** Even on cool, cloudy days, UV levels can be extreme. Wear sunglasses that block UV to protect your eyes. Use sunscreen and wear a hat. Consider full-coverage clothing for long outings.

## Protect the Tundra

While seemingly hardy, the tundra is in fact quite fragile. Repeated footsteps often destroy tundra plants. Recovery can take hundreds of years.

- **You must stay on trails in the park’s six Tundra Protection Areas:**
  - Alpine View Trail
  - Alpine Visitor Center area
  - Forest Canyon overlook
  - Gore Range overlook
  - Rock Cut overlook
  - Tundra Communities Trail
- **Never pick flowers or plants.**
- **Never feed or approach wildlife, no matter how small.**
- **Park only in designated areas, never on vegetation.**
- **Pets are prohibited on ALL tundra areas.**



## Traffic, Parking, and Shuttle Buses

Rocky hosted about 4.5 million visitors in 2017. With most visitors arriving by car, this means park roads can get extremely busy and parking extremely limited.

We understand this can be frustrating—but we’re all here to enjoy and celebrate Rocky.

Help yourself and other visitors keep fun levels high and stress levels low by being courteous to other motorists, obeying posted speed limits, and watching for visitors and wildlife in parking lots and near roadways.

- Roads are busiest from 9 am to 3 pm during the summer and on fall weekends. Arrive early or late to avoid the crowds.
- Parking at our most popular trailheads can fill as early as 6:30am. Even less popular trailheads will fill by early morning and on winter weekends. If you’re planning to hike, start early!
- In summer, consider riding the shuttle from the Estes Park Visitor Center (park pass required) or Park & Ride. Save money on gas, skip the traffic, and enjoy mountain views while someone else drives! Learn more on the back page.

# Winter Program Guide



Enjoying Dream Lake in winter.

NPS PHOTO / BONNIE BEACH

## Visitor Centers

### Beaver Meadows Visitor Center

Open 9am to 4:30pm through 3/1/19

Open 8am to 4:30pm starting 3/2/19

Closed 11/22 and 12/25

Near Beaver Meadows Entrance on US Hwy 36. Information, bookstore, and park movie. For wilderness camping permits, follow the trail east of the visitor center to the Wilderness Office.

### Fall River Visitor Center

Open 9am to 4pm on 11/23–25,

12/1–2, 12/8–9, 12/15–30

Closed 12/25

Near the Fall River Entrance on US Hwy 34. Life-sized wildlife displays, bookstore, and new Arts Alive Activity Center (all ages welcome).

### Kawuneeche Visitor Center

Call 970 586-1513 for winter hours

Closed 11/22 and 12/25

On US Hwy 34 north of Grand Lake. Information, maps, free park movie, exhibits, a bookstore, and wilderness camping permits.



### Activities and Talks

Quick, casual, and interactive, talks and activities are great for all ages and abilities! Learn about bears, elk, the coming winter season, and so much more.



### Walks and Hikes

From brief strolls to true hikes, these programs get you moving. Birds, lakes, flowers, waterfalls, geology, history—join a ranger to discover new trails and ideas.



### Special Events

#### Walk in the Moonlight

11/21, 12/22, 1/19, 2/19, 3/20

Time and location varies by month

**Reservations required no more than 7 days in advance.** Call 970 586-1223 9am to 4pm daily. Maximum six people per reservation. Outdoor clothing and gear appropriate for the conditions are required.

#### Holiday Programming

Join us over the holidays for fun family activities. The park will be offering special programs to celebrate the winter season. Check our website, stop by a visitor center, or call 970 586-1206 for specific topics and times.

#### Part of an Organized Group?

Park rangers may be available to provide special programs. Call 970 586-1338 to make reservations in advance.



# Ranger-led Programs

## East Side

 Wheelchair-accessible

ACTIVITIES AND TALKS	LENGTH	LOCATION	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>Winter Wonders!</b>  Have you ever wondered how animals endure winter? Join a ranger to find out the many surprising ways animals thrive in a winter landscape.	20–30 minute talk	Beaver Meadows Visitor Center	10 am						10 am
<b>Snowshoe Ecology Walk</b> Come snowshoe with a ranger. Learn techniques to traverse various terrain as you explore the natural world of a subalpine forest. <b>No previous experience needed. Bring your own snowshoes. Ages 8 and up only. No more than six people per reservation. Jan 6–Mar 17</b>	2 hours	<b>Reservations required no more than 7 days in advance.</b> 970 586-1223 9 am to 4 pm	12:30 pm <b>NO PROGRAM 1/20, 2/17</b>					12:30 pm	

## West Side

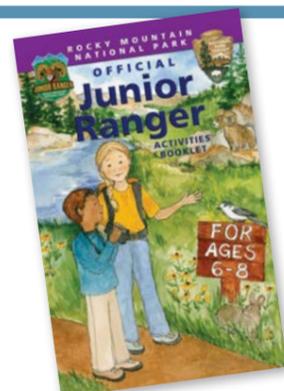
TALKS AND ACTIVITIES	LENGTH	LOCATION	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>Ski the Wilderness in Winter</b> Join a park ranger for a mostly-level beginner cross country ski tour while you talk about surviving in the Wilderness. <b>Bring your own skis and poles with large baskets. Ages 8 and up only. Jan 26–Feb 23</b>	1.5 hours	<b>Reservations required no more than 7 days in advance.</b> 970 586-1513							10 am
<b>Beginner Snowshoe</b> Join a park ranger for a mostly-level snowshoe hike to find out how Rocky changes in the winter. <b>Bring your own snowshoes and ski poles with large baskets. Ages 8 and up only. Dec 29–Mar 2</b>	2 hours	<b>Reservations required no more than 7 days in advance.</b> 970 586-1513							1:30 pm



## Become a Junior Ranger

Junior Rangers have fun discovering the natural world and learning why we need to protect our national parks. We need the help of all our rangers to keep Rocky protected for years to come. Pick up a free Junior Ranger activity booklet at any visitor contact station, discover the park, and become a ranger by earning your badge!

There are activity books for kids ages 5 and under, 6–8, and 9 and up. The park’s Junior Ranger Program is funded by the Rocky Mountain Conservancy and is a great way to get kids out exploring and discovering their national park.





Like to sled? You can at Hidden Valley. Learn more on the next page!

NPS PHOTO / ANN SCHONLAU



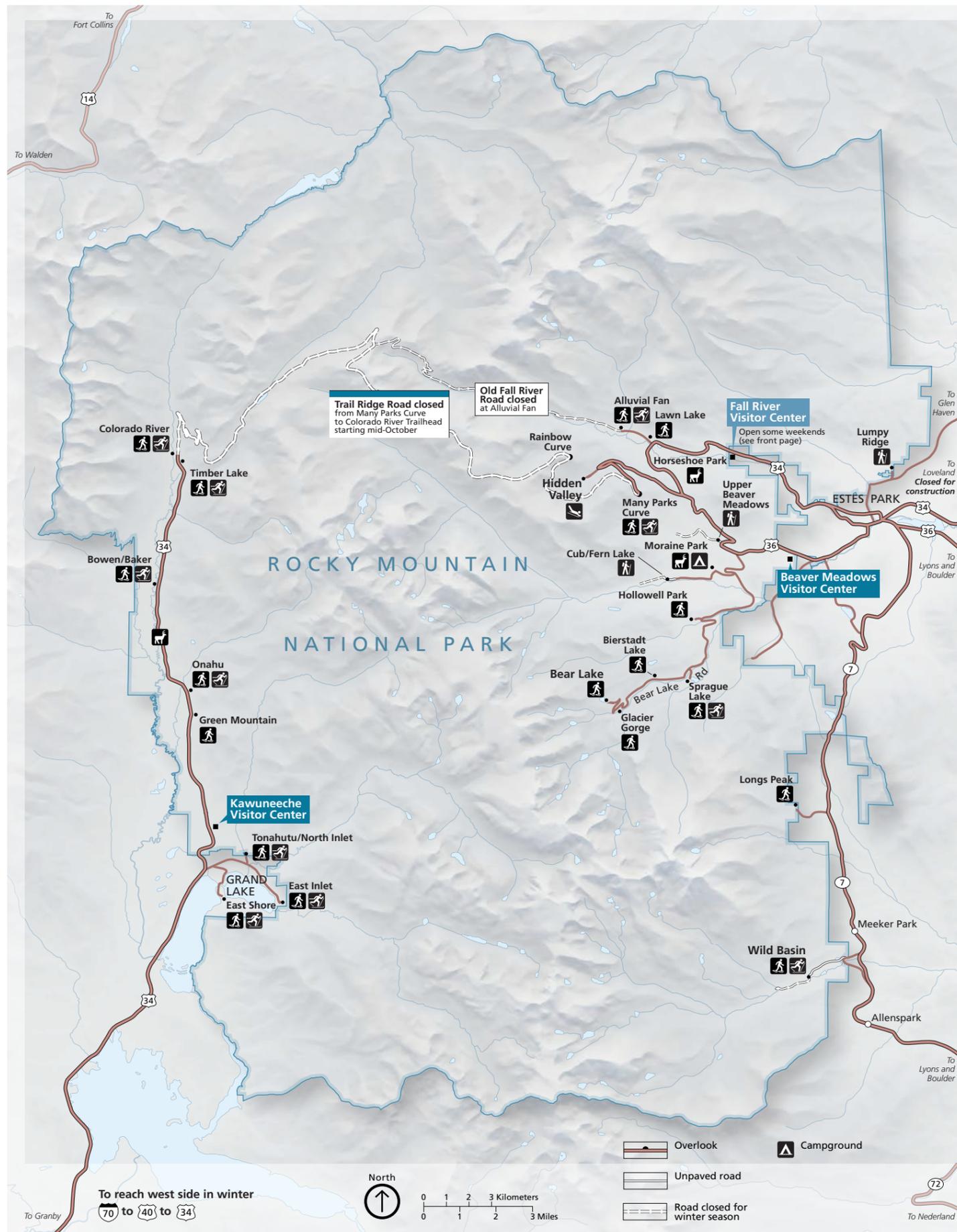
Fresh snow is a beautiful thing, whether on ponderosa pines at lower elevations or craggy rock faces on the highest peaks.

NPS PHOTO / HOPE OZOLINS



Wildlife are still active in winter. Though their numbers, location, and behaviors shift with the season, there are still sightings to be had.

NPS PHOTO / KIM GROSSMAN



# Winter Activity Guide

Use this map and guide to plan winter activities and experience this special season.

**Hidden Valley Snowplay Area**      **Status Line**  
970 586-1333

## View Wildlife

Seeing wildlife in winter is a thrill. Bring your field guides, binoculars, and cameras.

- ✓ Elk and mule deer are most active at dawn and dusk and are usually seen in meadows like Horseshoe Park and Moraine Park.
- ✓ Moose are best found along the Colorado River on the park's west side.
- ✓ Bighorn sheep may be seen along the Highway 34/Fall River corridor on the park's east side.
- ✓ Coyotes may be seen any time of day.
- ✓ Black-billed magpies, Steller's jays, and Clark's nutcrackers are some of our year-round birds.

## Hike

Believe it or not, it's still possible to hike in winter. Lower-elevation trails on the park's east side are often free of deep snow.

While skis or snowshoes aren't required, packed snow and ice can be extremely slippery. Stabilizer devices and poles are highly recommended to prevent dangerous falls and make your hike safe and enjoyable. Stay away from dangerous slopes and snowfields. When in doubt, turn around.

## Snowshoe

Ever thought: I'd like to hike in the winter and see the park's beautiful backcountry, but there's all that snow? Consider snowshoeing!

No training is necessary—if you can hike, you can snowshoe. Most park trails can be explored with snowshoes. Snowshoes and waterproof boots are essential. While optional, poles help maintain balance, and waterproof pants or gaiters help keep you warm and dry.

## Cross-country Ski

Picture yourself gliding through a silent forest full of fresh, white snow. Cross-country skiing is a rejuvenating sport that pairs exercise with the beauty of nature.

In general, cross-country skiing is easier on the west side of the park (gentler terrain and deeper snow). However, you're welcome to strap on your skis throughout the park. Skis and poles with large baskets are required. Waterproof pants or gaiters help keep you warm and dry. Skiers must be in control at all times and give notice when approaching others on the trail.

## Sled

Want to sled? Go to the only place in the park it's allowed: Hidden Valley! No tows are provided up this fairly gentle hill, so you'll get a workout as you walk your sled, saucer, or tube up the slope and then enjoy a breather on the fun ride down.

Restrooms are available by the parking lot. A warming room is available when an attendant is present. Stay alert: skiers, snowboarders, and snowshoers may pass through. Park rangers and volunteers aren't always on duty; sled at your own risk.

## Backcountry Ski/Ride

For the experienced and well-prepared, Rocky's steep terrain provides many opportunities for backcountry skiers and snowboarders. (Skiing and snowboarding are not allowed in the Hidden Valley snowplay area. You may pass through, but slow down and yield the right of way to sledders.)

Be prepared for variable snow conditions and harsh weather. Much of the park is in avalanche terrain. Check the avalanche forecast at [avalanche.state.co.us](http://avalanche.state.co.us). At a minimum, carry an avalanche beacon, probe, and shovel, and know how to use them. Be self-reliant. Your safety is your responsibility.

## Notes and Tips

### Stay Safe

Always be prepared for snow, freezing temperatures, short winter days, cold winds, and changing weather. Layer up with insulated, waterproof clothing, wear sunglasses, and use sunscreen.

### Know Where You Are

Navigating in winter can be extremely difficult. Park trails are not marked for winter use, and you can't depend on others' tracks. Have and know how to use a topographic map and compass. When used correctly, GPS units can be very helpful.

### Share the Trail

Don't walk or snowshoe in ski tracks: it creates dangerous conditions for skiers that could result in injury. Let others know when you're approaching them and pass with care.

### What If I Don't Have My Own Equipment?

You can rent or purchase equipment in Estes Park and Grand Lake, including snowshoes, skis, poles, boots, sleds, tubes, saucers, gaiters, and stabilizers.

**Avalanches can be easily triggered by backcountry travelers. Educate yourself and stay alert.**

# Wildlife



KEEP WILDLIFE WILD

**Never feed or approach wildlife**

Many amazing animals call Rocky home. To keep them and you safe and comfortable:

- Obey wildlife closure areas and “no stopping” traffic zones.
- Use parking areas along the road. If not available, pull your vehicle completely off the road and do not park on vegetation.

- Keep a safe distance. If you cause an animal to move or change behavior, you are too close! Approaching an animal puts you at risk and may cause it stress, leading to disease and illness.
- Never feed wildlife, including birds and chipmunks.

## Wild and Watchable

With elk, bighorn sheep, mule deer and moose calling Rocky Mountain National Park home, it’s no surprise that wildlife watching is rated the number-one activity by many of Rocky’s visitors. Park roads provide access to this wonderful world, so bring your binoculars and don’t forget your camera — you never know when you may see something!

The park’s great large-animal population makes it one of the country’s top wildlife watching destinations. But also found in Rocky Mountain National Park are nearly 60 other species of mammals, more than 270 recorded bird species, four amphibians (including the endangered boreal toad), two reptiles, 11 species of fish, and countless insects, including a surprisingly large number of butterflies.

For the bird aficionados, keep an eye out for the birds that call Rocky home. Steller’s Jays, with their striking blue bodies, are year-round residents, as are Canada Jays, Clark’s Nutcrackers, and the iridescent, long-tailed Black-billed Magpies. Other birds, like the tiny, brilliant Broad-tailed Hummingbirds and Western Tanagers come here to nest and raise their young in the summers, wintering in warmer places.



### Elk

**Habitat**  
Meadows, meadow-forest boundaries. Common at lower elevations spring–fall.

**Viewing tips**  
Look at dusk and dawn in Horseshoe Park, Moraine Park, Upper Beaver Meadows, and Harbison and Holzwarth meadows. During the fall mating season, bull elk can be heard bugling as they attempt to attract harems of cow elk.



### Moose

**Habitat**  
Streambeds and meadows

**Viewing tips**  
These large mammals frequent willow thickets along the Colorado River in the Kawuneeche Valley on the park’s west side and are increasingly being seen on the park’s east side.



### Bighorn Sheep

**Habitat**  
Rocky mountainsides and canyons

**Viewing tips**  
May through mid-August, often seen along US Hwy 34/Fall River corridor on park’s east side, or high on Trail Ridge Road and the rocky alpine of the park’s west side. Look for lambs around mid-June.



### Black Bear

**Habitat**  
All habitats throughout the park

**Viewing tips**  
Black bears range over large areas—sightings are a rare treat and should be treated with respect (see detailed tips on page 2). There are no grizzly bears in Rocky—if you see a bear, it’s a black bear.



### Coyote

**Habitat**  
All habitats throughout the park

**Viewing tips**  
Can be seen parkwide at any time of day. Yipping and howling is sometimes heard in the evening and morning.



### Mule Deer

**Habitat**  
All habitats throughout the park

**Viewing tips**  
At lower elevations, mule deer are most often found in open areas, usually at dawn and dusk.



### Yellow-bellied Marmot

**Habitat**  
Rock piles

**Viewing tips**  
Look for marmots sunbathing on rock outcroppings on the tundra along Trail Ridge and Old Fall River roads.



### Pika

**Habitat**  
Rock piles at higher elevations

**Viewing tips**  
Listen for its sharp, distinctive bark and watch for movement among the rocks.

# Hiking

## Hiking Essentials

- ✓ Sturdy footwear
- ✓ Rain gear
- ✓ Layered clothing
- ✓ Jacket/sweater and long pants
- ✓ Gloves, hat, extra socks
- ✓ Sunscreen, hat, sunglasses
- ✓ Whistle and waterproof matches
- ✓ Headlamp or flashlight
- ✓ High-energy snacks
- ✓ Plenty of water
- ✓ First-aid supplies
- ✓ Topo map and compass or GPS

- Pets are prohibited on **all** park trails, tundra, and meadow areas (see page 2).
- Don't hike alone. Keep your group together.
- Weather conditions can change quickly. Always be willing to turn around.

## Gentle Trails

### East Side

 Strollers allowed

 Wheelchair-accessible trail

TRAIL	TRAILHEAD	DISTANCE <i>ROUND TRIP</i>	ELEVATION GAIN	HIGHLIGHTS
<b>Bear Lake</b>  	End of Bear Lake Road	0.5 mi <i>0.8 km</i>	20 ft <i>6 m</i>	Follow a self-guiding nature trail around beautiful Bear Lake. Trail often has snow well into June.
<b>Hidden Valley Nature Trail</b>	Hidden Valley	0.5 mi <i>0.8 km</i>	20 ft <i>6 m</i>	Follow a nature trail through the subalpine forests of Hidden Valley.
<b>Lily Lake</b>  	Lily Lake Trailhead <i>south of Estes Park on Highway 7</i>	0.8 mi <i>1.3 km</i>	20 ft <i>6 m</i>	A level walk around Lily Lake featuring wildflowers, waterfowl, and mountain views.
<b>Moraine Park Discovery Center Nature Trail</b>	Bear Lake Road	0.5 mi <i>0.8 km</i>	20 ft <i>6 m</i>	Self-guiding trail booklet available. Winds up and down hillside behind Discovery Center.
<b>Sprague Lake</b>  	Bear Lake Road	0.5 mi <i>0.8 km</i>	10 ft <i>3 m</i>	Packed gravel, level grade trail around lovely lake.

### Trail Ridge Road

**THESE TRAILS ARE INACCESSIBLE IN WINTER**

TRAIL	TRAILHEAD	DISTANCE <i>ROUND TRIP</i>	ELEVATION GAIN	HIGHLIGHTS
<b>Alpine Ridge Trail</b>	Alpine Visitor Center	0.5 <i>0.8 km</i>	209 ft <i>64 m</i>	Amazing views in all directions from this small summit. Keep an eye on the sky: if storms approach, stay off!
<b>Tundra Communities Trail</b> 	Rock Cut	0.6 <i>1.0 km</i>	260 ft <i>79 m</i>	View the miniature world of the alpine tundra and enjoy sweeping views of the park. Keep an eye on the sky: if storms approach, stay off!

### West Side

TRAIL	TRAILHEAD	DISTANCE <i>ROUND TRIP</i>	ELEVATION GAIN	HIGHLIGHTS
<b>Adams Falls</b>	East Inlet Trailhead <i>far east end of Grand Lake</i>	0.6 mi <i>1 km</i>	80 ft <i>24 m</i>	A beautiful short hike near Grand Lake. Trail continues beyond the falls to lush meadows with mountain views.
<b>Coyote Valley Trail</b>  	Coyote Valley Trailhead <i>TRAILHEAD ROAD CLOSED IN WINTER</i> <i>6 miles north of Kawuneeche Visitor Center</i>	1 mi <i>1.6 km</i>	10 ft <i>3 m</i>	Follows bank of the Colorado River with views of Never Summer Mountains. Look for wildlife. Packed gravel, level grade.
<b>Holzwarth Historic Site</b> 	US Hwy 34 <i>8 miles north of Kawuneeche Visitor Center</i>	1 mi <i>1.6 km</i>	10 ft <i>3 m</i>	Explore a historic homestead cabin and 1920s dude ranch. Brochures, interpretive signs.

## Leave No Trace

Treating your park with respect is essential—both to protect the park and to provide a better experience for all park visitors.

- Use town, park, and trailhead restroom facilities whenever possible. If you're on the trail and have to go, move well away from the trail; bury your waste at least 6" deep; and pack out your toilet paper.
- Do not remove anything from the park, including rocks, plants, and antlers. In addition to being illegal, removing these things means the next person after you won't be able to enjoy them as you did.
- Campfires are absolutely illegal outside of designated fire rings in park campgrounds and picnic areas. Illegal campfires scar the landscape and can grow into deadly wildfires.

## More Challenging Hikes

Looking for longer, steeper, more demanding hikes? Rocky has plenty to offer.

More difficult hikes require a higher level of fitness; more planning and safety preparations; and a greater knowledge with and comfort in the wilderness.

If you feel you meet these requirements:

- Research hikes online at [nps.gov/romo/](https://nps.gov/romo/).
- Talk with a ranger at any of our visitor centers or staffed trailheads.
- Visit one of our nature store locations and purchase a high-quality, detailed map and guidebook.

## Longs Peak

**The Keyhole Route to the summit of Longs Peak (14,259 ft / 4346 m) is NOT a hike.** It is a climb that crosses enormous sheer vertical rock faces—often with falling rocks—and requires scrambling where an unroped fall would likely be fatal. The route has narrow ledges, loose rock, and steep cliffs.

The terrain requires a high level of fitness and good route-finding and scrambling skills.

Injuries requiring rescue are very dangerous and take hours, if not days, to evacuate.

If you are considering climbing Longs Peak, detailed information is available on the park website ([go.nps.gov/LongsPeak](https://go.nps.gov/LongsPeak)) or at Longs Peak Ranger Station (closed in winter). In general, the most snow- and ice-free time of year is mid-July through mid-September.

# Camping

CAMPGROUND	RESERVABLE	FIREWOOD AND ICE	MAX RV TRAILER LENGTH	SUMMER DUMP STATION	DESIGNATED ACCESSIBLE SITES	TENT PAD SIZE	SUMMER FLUSH TOILETS	DESCRIPTION
<b>Aspenglen</b> 8,220 feet 52 sites late May – late Sep	Yes. May fill by reservation.	Yes	30 ft	No. Use Glacier Basin, Moraine Park, or Timber Creek	Yes	13 x 15 ft	Yes	In pine forest by rushing Fall River just inside the Fall River Entrance on US Hwy 34 west of Estes Park.
<b>Glacier Basin</b> 8,500 feet 150 sites, 13 group sites late May – mid-Sep	Yes. May fill by reservation.	Yes	35 ft	Yes	Yes	Varies	Yes	On Bear Lake Road across from the Park & Ride. Hazard trees were removed so no shade in C, D, Group Loops, but there are good views and night sky, and it's good for slideouts.
<b>Longs Peak</b> 9,405 feet 26 sites late June – mid-Sep	No. All sites are first-come, first-served.	Firewood summer only (No ice)	Tents only	No	No	13 x 15 ft	No, vault toilets only	In pine forest nine miles south of Estes Park off Highway 7.
<b>Moraine Park</b> 8,160 feet 244 sites summer, 77 sites winter Open year-round Reservable for summer	May fill by reservation in summer. First-come, first-served in winter.	Yes, summer only	Limited number of sites up to 40 ft	Yes	Yes	Varies	Yes, except B Loop (vault toilets)	In pine forest above meadows of Moraine Park. A short drive from Beaver Meadows Entrance on Bear Lake Road.
<b>Timber Creek</b> 8,900 feet 98 sites late May – late Sep	No. All sites are first-come, first-served.	Firewood only	30 ft	Yes	Yes	Varies	Yes	Only campground on park's west side. Near Colorado River ten miles north of Grand Lake on US Hwy 34.

Overnight stays in Rocky Mountain National Park must be in a campground or designated wilderness site. You are not allowed to stay overnight in a car or RV along roads or at trailheads.

All park campgrounds usually fill on summer days and fall weekends. Reservations for late-May through September can be made six months to one day in advance and are highly recommended. To make a reservation:

- [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov)
- 877 444-6777

## Fees to Camp

- When the water is on (summer), all campgrounds are **\$26 per night**.

- When the water is off (winter), Moraine Park Campground Loop B is **\$18 per night**.
- America the Beautiful Senior and Access Pass holders receive a 50 percent discount on camping fees

## Stay Limits

You can stay no more than seven nights TOTAL between June 1 and September 30, plus an additional 14 nights from October 1 to May 31. Stay limits are on a parkwide, rather than per campground, basis.

## At All Standard Campsites

- Eight people or less may camp at a given site.
- All campsites, including RV sites,

have a tent pad, picnic table, and fire grate.

- Shared food storage lockers are available throughout all campgrounds.
- There are no electric, water, or sewer hookups at any park campsites.

## Food Storage

Do not attract wildlife, including black bears, to your campsite.

Improperly stored or unattended food items will result in a violation notice. Food items include food, drinks, drinking containers, toiletries, cosmetics, pet food and bowls, odoriferous attractants, cleaning supplies, and garbage, including empty cans, food wrappers,

etc. These must be disposed of in trash or recycling receptacles.

In campgrounds, store all food items in food storage lockers. If full, store food:

- Inside vehicle trunks with windows closed and doors locked.
- If you don't have a trunk, put items in the passenger compartment as low as possible and covered from sight, with windows closed and doors locked.
- If driving a convertible or motorcycle, use food storage lockers, available in all park campgrounds. Food storage lockers are shared with other visitors and cannot be locked. Food storage lockers are shown on all campground maps.

# Wilderness Camping

## Permits and Fees

Overnight stays in the wilderness require a permit available at the Beaver Meadows Wilderness Office or Kawuneeche Visitor Center. To learn more or make a reservation (highly recommended for summer), visit [go.nps.gov/RockyWildernessCamping](http://go.nps.gov/RockyWildernessCamping).

A \$26 fee is required between May 1 and October 31. This nonrefundable, non-exchangeable fee must be paid when reservations are made.

To protect visitors and wildlife, wilderness campers must use carry in/carry out, commercially-manufactured, hard-sided, bear-resistant food storage containers in all areas of the park between April 1 and October 31. Containers may be rented or purchased at outdoor shops in nearby communities.

## Leave No Trace

About 4.5 million people visit Rocky every year. Whether hiking, camping, or driving, keep your park beautiful by practicing Leave No Trace Ethics.

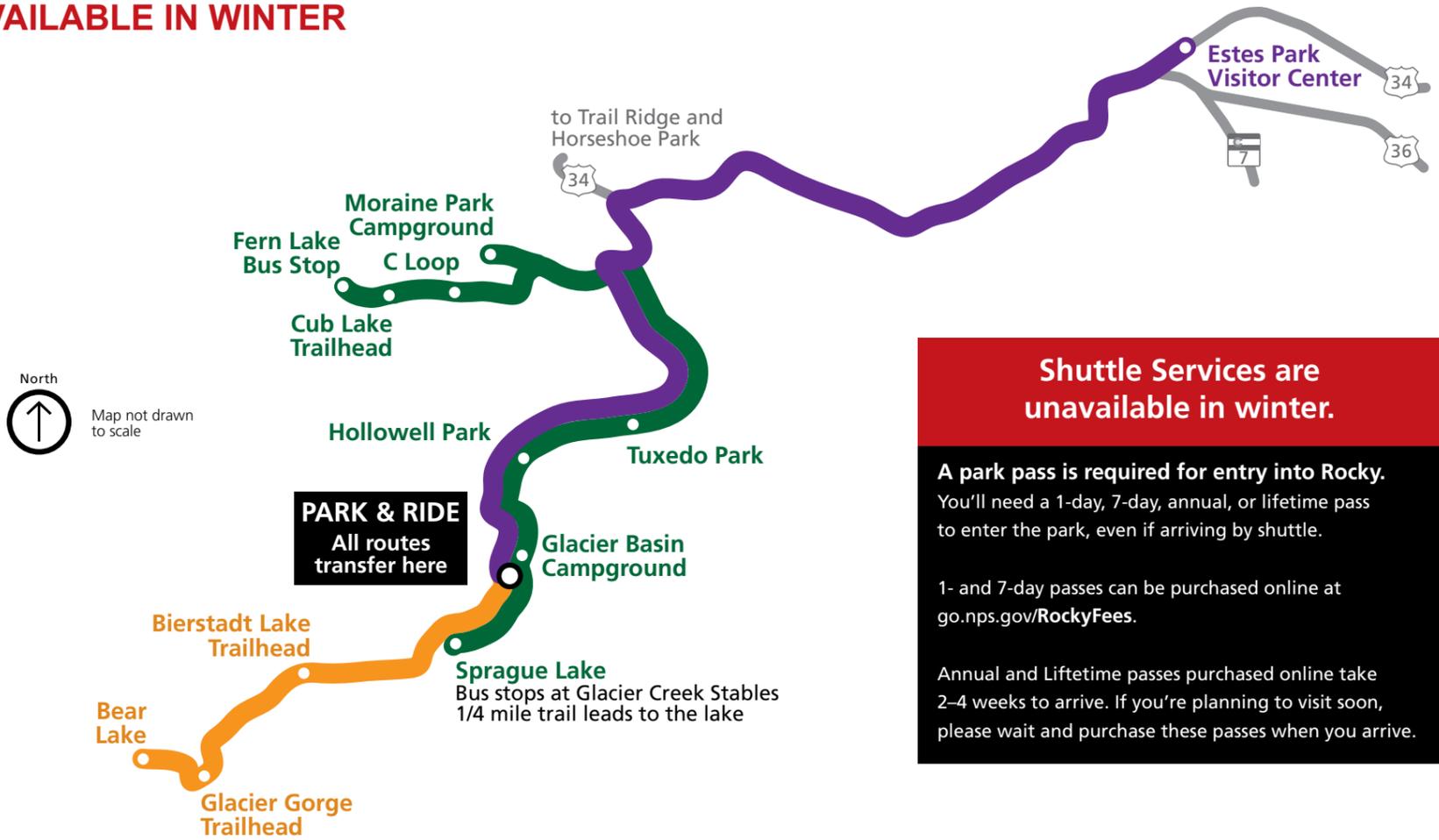
- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be considerate of others

## Sprague Lake Accessible Wilderness Campsite

Contact the Wilderness Office at 970 586-1242. 12 campers with up to five wheelchair users can stay at the site. A \$26 administrative permit fee is required from May 1 to October 31.

# Park Shuttle Bus

UNAVAILABLE IN WINTER



**Shuttle Services are unavailable in winter.**

A park pass is required for entry into Rocky. You'll need a 1-day, 7-day, annual, or lifetime pass to enter the park, even if arriving by shuttle.

1- and 7-day passes can be purchased online at [go.nps.gov/RockyFees](http://go.nps.gov/RockyFees).

Annual and Lifetime passes purchased online take 2-4 weeks to arrive. If you're planning to visit soon, please wait and purchase these passes when you arrive.

## 2019 Shuttle Service at a Glance

ROUTE	SCHEDULE	DATES
Hiker Shuttle Express	Hourly 7:30 am to 10 am 30 min 10 am to 6 pm Hourly 6 pm to 8 pm	Daily May 25–Sep 13 Weekends Only Sep 14–Oct 14
Bear Lake Route	10–15 min 7 am to 7:30 pm	Daily May 25–Oct 14
Moraine Park Route	30 min 7 am to 7:30 pm	Daily May 25–Oct 14

There are no shuttle bus services on the west side of the park or across Trail Ridge Road. There are several commercial shuttle tours in the Estes area. Contact the Estes Park Visitor Center for information. **800 443-7837** or [visitestespark.com](http://visitestespark.com)

Most shuttle buses are accessible and can accommodate wheelchairs. Contact shuttle staff or rangers if accommodation is needed.

Dogs are not allowed on shuttle buses. *Except service animals that have been individually trained to perform specific tasks for the benefit of persons with disabilities (see page 2 for more).*

There are no bike racks on shuttle buses.

**At Rocky Mountain Conservancy Nature Stores, YOUR PURCHASE MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

The best Rocky Mountain National Park t-shirts, games, toys, books, maps and other interesting items are here, at any of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Nature Stores located in park visitor centers. When you make a purchase from our nonprofit organization, proceeds are returned to the park, supporting important educational and research programs. Drop by today.

**Visit Conservancy Nature Stores at:**  
 Alpine Visitor Center 🐾 Beaver Meadows Visitor Center  
 Fall River Visitor Center 🐾 Kawuneeche Visitor Center  
 🐾 Moraine Park Visitor Center

[www.RMConservancy.org](http://www.RMConservancy.org)



## ROCKY MOUNTAIN FIELD INSTITUTE EDUCATIONAL BUS TOURS IN ROCKY!

- Grand Lake Safari Adventure**  
Tuesdays, June 9 - August 25
- Journey to the Top! Trail Ridge Rd Adventure**  
Wednesdays & Thursdays, June 10 - Sept. 3
- Trail Ridge Sunset Safari Adventure**  
Fridays, June 13 - September 5
- Elk Expeditions** Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays & Mondays Sept. 10 - October 17

Call 970-586-3262 or register at park visitor centers!

[www.RMConservancy.org](http://www.RMConservancy.org)

**Want one?**

The Rocky Mountain National Park license plate from the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. Proceeds benefit Rocky Mountain National Park!

[www.RMConservancy.org](http://www.RMConservancy.org)

**Elevate Your Shopping Experience**

Take the trail to the clouds and not only will you find breathtaking vistas, you'll find the best selection of Rocky Mountain National Park souvenirs including an amazing selection of authentic Native American gifts. Plus, enjoy a bite to eat at our café and coffee bar.

VISIT US AT THE TOP OF TRAIL RIDGE ROAD

[trailridgegiftstore.com](http://trailridgegiftstore.com)