

Rocky Mountain

Official Map and Guide

Rocky Mountain National Park
Colorado

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The snow-mantled peaks of Rocky Mountain National Park rise above verdant subalpine valleys and glistening lakes. One-third of the park is above tree line, and here tundra predominates—a major reason why these peaks and valleys have been set aside as a national park. The first Europeans to see this area were French fur traders. In 1859 Joel Estes and his son, Milton, rode into the valley that bears their name. Few others settled in this

rugged country, and about 1909 Enos Mills, a naturalist, writer, and conservationist, began to campaign for preservation of this pristine area. Mills' campaign succeeded, and the area became Rocky Mountain National Park in 1915. A feature of the park is the marked differences found with the changing elevation. At lower levels in the foothills and mountain ecosystem, open stands of ponderosa pine and juniper grow on the slopes facing

the sun; on cooler north slopes are Douglas fir. Gracing the streamsides are blue spruces intermixed with dense stands of lodgepole pines. Here and there appear groves of aspen. Wildflowers dot meadows and glades. Higher still, forests of Englemann spruce and subalpine fir take over in the subalpine ecosystem. Openings in these cool, dark forests produce wildflower gardens of rare beauty and luxuriance where the blue Colorado columbine

reigns. At the upper edges of this zone the trees are twisted, grotesque, and hug the ground. Then the trees disappear and you are in alpine tundra—a harsh, fragile world. Here more than one-quarter of the plants you will see can also be found in the Arctic. From the valleys to its mountaintops, Rocky Mountain National Park encompasses many worlds. We invite you to explore them.

Wildlife and Tundra



As you explore you will occasionally come upon wildlife that add moments of excitement to your time in the park. Many small

mammals always seem to be around, but larger animals such as wapiti (elk) and deer are generally seen at dawn or in late



evening. Bighorns, the living symbol of Rocky Mountain National Park, venture out at midday into Horseshoe Park near

Sheep Lakes where there is a natural mineral lick. Please observe them from the parking lot. You may also see a gray jay



perched on a blue spruce. The wild, eerie, yipping song of the coyote is familiar on fall and winter evenings at Moraine Park



and Horseshoe Park. Beaver, which are common in many streams, are often easy to find. All you need to do is spend a little time around their ponds and lodges in the evening. They usually begin working around sunset and continue long after dark. Above tree line in the alpine tundra, the yellow-bellied marmot suns itself on the rocks. The tundra, which is home to other small animals as well, is a flower-rich

meadowland that grows above tree line. The tundra is a harsh world where the growing season is very short—sometimes less than 10 weeks. Five-year-old plants are sometimes smaller than the end of your finger. The tundra is a fragile world where recovery from severe damage may take several hundred years.

Getting to Know Rocky Mountain National Park



The Visitor Centers

Become acquainted with the park through its program of guided walks, campfire talks, and other services. Pick up a schedule at one of the visitor centers. Stop at park headquarters or the Kawuneeche Visitor Center, both of which are open all year. See the exhibits at the Alpine Visitor Center, which is open June through September, and at the Moraine Park Museum and Lily Lake Visitor Center, which are open May to September. The staff at the visitor centers can help you plan your time in the park. Wayside exhibits and self-guiding trails also will help you enjoy your stay in the park. About 3 million people come to Rocky Mountain National Park each year. Most arrive in the summer, so consider making your trip in September or October when the weather is pleasant, the aspens are golden, and the crowds are gone.

Driving

Trail Ridge Road, designated as an "All-American Road" in 1936, is one of the great alpine highways in the United States. It crosses the park from east to west and then drops into the Kawuneeche Valley, where the North Fork of the Colorado River flows. The road's winding course takes you 12,183 feet above sea level and into a world akin to Earth's arctic regions. It is usually open from Memorial Day to mid-October depending on snowfall. If you are pulling a trailer you will notice reduced power at this high elevation. Take three or four hours for this 50-mile scenic drive, stopping at the overlooks to absorb far-spreading views of Rocky Mountain's peaks and valleys. As you travel along Trail Ridge Road, above tree line, you are on the "roof of the Rockies" with superlative vistas of glacier-carved peaks on

every side. For a closer look at the alpine world walk to Forest Canyon Overlook or take the half-hour round-trip to the Tundra Communities Trail. Remember, the alpine tundra ecosystem is extremely fragile; stay on the paths. Also stop at Fall River Pass, 11,796 feet, to visit the Alpine Visitor Center, where exhibits explain the life of the alpine tundra.

Old Fall River Road, the original road crossing the mountains, runs from Horseshoe Park west to Fall River Pass. West of Endovalley picnic area, it is one-way uphill. The gravel road switchbacks up a narrow mountain valley, giving you an idea of what it was like to travel across the mountains in the early days of the automobile. Because of sharp switchbacks, pulled trailers are not allowed and maximum vehicle length is 25 feet. A guide booklet, available at the visitor centers, tells what you can expect.

Take Bear Lake Road, 10 miles long, if you have an extra hour or an extra day. This is one of the few paved roads in the Rockies that leads to the heart of a high mountain basin. The area is heavily used and is often congested. You can expect that parking lots here and at Glacier Gorge Junction will be full between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. on summer days.

Don't forget: park roads are not high-speed highways but scenic drives. Speed limits and traffic laws are enforced. Please obey signs. Report all accidents to the nearest park ranger station. There are no service stations within the park, so check your gasoline and other needs. Cars tuned for lower elevations often overheat and may vapor lock. If your car acts as if it isn't getting gas, pull off the road at the nearest pullout, stop your engine, and allow it to cool. If snow or cold water is available, put it on your fuel pump and the line leading to the carburetor. Let your car cool for 15 minutes before trying to start it again.

Horseback Riding

Horses with guides can be hired at two locations inside the park on the east side, or from a number of livery shops outside the east and west park boundaries during the summer season. Horses or any other trail stock are not permitted to travel crosscountry. The park maintains more than 260 miles of trails open to private and commercial horse users. Ask a park ranger which trails are open or closed to stock use.



Camping

The camping limit parkwide is seven days, June through September; Longs Peak campground (tents only) has a three-day limit. Campgrounds fill early each day in summer. Quiet hours are from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. There are no showers or recreational vehicle connections in any campground. Dump stations are at Moraine Park, Glacier Basin, and Timber Creek. Telephones are at Moraine Park, Glacier Basin, Timber Creek, and Aspenglen. Wood fires are permitted only in fire grates in campgrounds and picnic areas. Wood gathering is prohibited. Firewood bundles are sold at campgrounds. Pets are permitted in campgrounds on a leash shorter than six feet. Complete services are available at Estes Park, east of the park, and at Grand Lake to the west. Reservations for Moraine Park and Glacier Basin family camping, and for Glacier Basin Group Area, are available during summer from DESTINET. Call 800-365-2267, or write: DESTINET, 9450 Carroll Park Dr., San Diego, CA 92121-2256. Reservations may be made as early as five months in advance. For back-



country camping and bivouac climbing permits and information, call 970-586-1242.

Fishing

In the mountain streams and lakes of Rocky Mountain National Park are four species of trout: German brown, rainbow, brook, and cutthroat. These cold waters may not produce large fish, but you will enjoy the superb mountain scenery as you fish. You must have a valid Colorado fishing license. Use of live bait is prohibited except under certain special conditions. Review the special fishing regulations at park headquarters or at the nearest park ranger station before you fish. Fishing is not permitted in Bear Lake at any time. Some waters on the west side of the park are restricted to protect reintroduced Colorado River cutthroat trout. Other lakes and streams on the east side are also closed to protect the greenback cutthroat trout that is being reintroduced to its native habitat. Check with a ranger for details.



Climbing

Rocky Mountain National Park offers a variety of challenging ascents for climbers throughout the year. The Colorado Mountain School is the park's concessioner, operating a climbing school and guide service. For information call 970-586-5758.

Technical climbs do not require registration either at the trailhead or in advance, but permits are always required for overnight bivouacs. It is your responsibility to leave details about your destination with someone who can report your absence if you happen to be overdue. For information about permits and regulations see the Backpacking section on the

reverse side. Minimum impact climbing techniques are essential to the preservation of this proposed wilderness area. Motorized drills are prohibited to avoid damaged rock and disturbance to raptor habitat, and to eliminate noise from nondeveloped areas in the park. Climbers are urged to leave no trace behind by using brown-colored chalk, neutral-colored webbing, and traveling on established trails. Pack out what you pack in, so that others may enjoy their climbing experiences.

High-elevation travel should never be attempted without adequate knowledge or experience. Longs Peak, the highest of the park's 113 named mountains, can be negotiated during late summer without technical equipment. The north and east faces are for technical climbing only. Even though technical equipment is not needed, the lengthy climb via the Keyhole route is demanding. The elevation gain is 4,700 feet and the 16-mile round trip can take up to 12 hours. Be sure you are acclimated to high elevations and in good physical condition before you try this rigorous trip. When ascending Longs Peak, as with any climb in Rocky Mountain National Park, be prepared for sudden changes in the weather and start before 3 a.m. to avoid afternoon lightning storms.

Winter Activities

Winter means snow in the Rockies and snow means skiing—crosscountry skiing in the lower valleys and winter mountaineering in the high country. Access roads from the east are kept open and provide the winter traveler with a panorama of the high mountains.

Three campgrounds are open all year—Longs Peak, Timber Creek, and Moraine Park. Tim-



ber Creek campground is not plowed once the snows begin, so you have to carry your supplies to your campsite. None of the campgrounds has water in winter.

If you are going into the backcountry overnight, you will need a backcountry permit, available at park headquarters or the Kawuneeche Visitor Center. Some areas are closed to overnight camping, and the danger of avalanches frequently exists. So plan your trip carefully, checking with park rangers for the latest information on the areas in which you plan to travel.

Never travel alone; tell someone of your plans. Take extra supplies in case you are forced to bivouac overnight; assistance may be hours or days away. Winter in the Rockies can mean sudden storms and sub-zero temperatures at any time.

Hypothermia, or loss of body heat through exposure, is a danger that can be encountered any time of the year. If anyone exhibits shivering, slurred speech, incoherence, stumbling, or drowsiness, get the person out of the wet, cold, and wind, and into shelter and dry clothing. The quickest way to warm the victim is to place the person in a dry sleeping bag with another person.

General Information

Rocky Mountain National Park, 970-586-1206, is in north central Colorado. From the east it can be reached by automobile on U.S. 34, U.S. 36, and Colo. 7, and from the west by U.S. 40 and U.S. 34. The nearest major rail, air, and bus terminals are at Denver, 70 miles from Estes Park, and at Cheyenne, 91 miles to the northeast. Bus service from Denver to Estes Park is available from several companies; check with a travel agent for precise information.

INTERNATIONAL BIOSPHERE RESERVE In 1976 the natural ecosystems of the park, which represent the Rocky Mountain Biogeographic Province, received recognition through the United Nations "Man and Biosphere" program as an International Biosphere Reserve. The reserve is part of a network of protected samples of the world's major ecosystem types that is devoted to conservation of nature and genetic material and to scientific research in the service of humanity. It provides a standard against which the effects of human impact on the environment can be measured.

ACCOMMODATIONS There are no motels or hotels in the park. For information about facilities adjacent to the park, write to the Chamber of Commerce in Estes Park, CO 80517, or in Grand Lake, CO 80447.

SPRAGUE LAKE CAMP This backcountry camping area is specially designed for persons with disabilities. Located at Sprague Lake, the site will accommodate 12 campers maximum with up to six wheelchairs. Call 970-586-1242 for reservations.

FOREST FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM Be careful with fire. Rocky Mountain National Park was established in part to preserve the beautiful mixed forest of aspen, pine, spruce, and fir that characterizes the area. Fires caused by careless people present a major threat. Lightning-caused forest fires, however, are a natural and necessary part of forest life, fostering natural cycles of burning and regrowth.

PARK REGULATIONS Pets must be under physical control and cannot be left unattended. They are not allowed on trails or in areas not accessible by automobile. • Camping is permitted only in designated areas. • Vehicles must remain on roads or in parking areas. • Leaving property unattended for longer than 24 hours without prior permission is prohibited. • Stopping or parking on roads is prohibited. Park only in designated parking areas. • Seatbelt and child restraining laws apply. Buckle up! • All wildlife is protected from hunting or harassment. Do not

feed or try to touch any wild creature. Feeding rodents and birds increases the population to abnormal, unhealthy levels and tends to make them other than wild animals. Let them remain wild. You can better your chances of viewing wildlife by not stalking them; it only frightens them and ruins the opportunity for others. • Do not pick wildflowers or damage plants; berry picking for immediate consumption is allowed. Federal law prohibits the destruction, injury, disturbance, or removal of public property, cultural resources, or natural features, including plants, animals, and rocks. Violation may result in fines and/or imprisonment. • When fishing use artificial lures or flies only; however, children 12 years of age and under may use bait in open park waters, but not in catch-release areas. • Bicycles are allowed only on designated roads, never on trails or in the backcountry. • Alcoholic beverages It is illegal to have opened alcoholic beverages in a vehicle while on park roads. All DUI (driving under the influence) laws apply.

HAZARDS Serious accidents have occurred on snow and ice fields in summer. Stay back from the edge of steep snow slopes or cornices and avoid sliding on snow and ice unless you are experienced and properly equipped.

Remember: mountain climbing is a technical sport requiring extensive training, skill, conditioning, and proper equipment. Do not attempt rock climbs or "scrambling" up steep slopes beyond your ability and experience. Registration with a park ranger is not required for daylong technical climbs.

Waterfalls can be deceptively dangerous. And, although they appear small, streams are especially hazardous in spring when the water is high and turbulent.

Beware of thunderstorms. The accompanying lightning can kill or cause serious injury. Get off ridges or peaks and avoid exposed lone objects such as a large rock, tree, or telephone line. If riding horseback, get off and away from your horse.

The only bears in this park are black bears; color phases range from black to cinnamon. There are no grizzlies. Bears can be particularly dangerous if provoked while feeding or when a sow has cubs present, but bears are unpredictable anytime. Never feed bears! Store food in closed cars or tie objects above ground between two trees if in the backcountry. Do not keep food in tents.

Drivers should be on the alert for animals crossing roads, especially at dawn or twilight or when roads become wet.

Trail Ridge Road reaches elevations dangerous to persons with heart conditions and other physical impairments. Even healthy persons are normally winded by the slightest exertion at these elevations.

When leaving your car unattended, please be certain it is locked, and all valuables are out of sight. Do not leave valuables at your tent. If a theft should occur, notify a ranger.

Giardiasis, caused by drinking contaminated water, is a debilitating intestinal disorder. Do not assume that stream and lake water is safe to drink. Carry your own water or treat it—by filtering, adding chemicals, or boiling—before using.

OVERUSE You can help protect the park by staying on the trails (especially on the tundra), by not short-cutting trail switchbacks, and by following marked routes over lingering snowfields that cover some trails early in the summer. Tundra is especially fragile. Its plants may need several hundred years to recover from trampling and resultant soil erosion.

Plant communities are especially subject to damage when soil is wet. Pay particular attention at these times.

CHILDREN Cases involving lost and missing children are increasing in national parks; report missing children to a ranger immediately. Adults should supervise children at all times.

EMERGENCIES For emergencies or assistance in the park, call either park headquarters at 970-586-1399 or 911.

NATIONAL FORESTS For information about the national forests near the park, contact: Arapaho National Forest (Granby) 970-887-4100 or Roosevelt National Forest (Fort Collins) 970-498-2770.

ADMINISTRATION Rocky Mountain National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. For more information write to: Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, CO 80517. On the Internet find Rocky Mountain at <http://www.nps.gov/romo>.

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Hiking

Rocky Mountain is a park for hikers. More than 355 miles of trails provide access to remote sections of the park so you can escape the crowds and savor the streams, meadows, and mountains. For detailed information on elevations, lakes, and hiking trails, buy a U.S. Geological Survey topographic map or other guide at a visitor center. Because great numbers of people visit the park in summer, some trails are heavily used. To avoid congestion, ask a ranger to suggest lightly used trails.

INTERPRETIVE TRAILS For on-your-own learning experiences, the park offers self-

guiding trails. Pick up a folder describing features along these trails at the trailhead or a visitor center. Distances are for round trips.
Bear Lake Nature Trail This stroll around an alpine lake tells the story of glaciation and sub-alpine life. Distance: 0.5 mile; Elevation: 9,475 feet.
Never Summer Ranch The landscape and cabins tell the story of early 20th-century homesteading and dude ranch life. Distance: 1 mile; Elevation: 9,000 feet.
Lulu City Only traces of log cabins remain of a once-booming mining town. Distance: 7.2 miles; Elevation: 9,300 feet.

Moraine Park Nature Trail This easy stroll helps you identify local plants and animals. Distance: 0.25 mile; Elevation: 8,000 feet.
Sprague Lake Nature Trail This level walking trail is ideal for visitors with disabilities. Distance: 0.5 mile; Elevation: 8,710 feet.
Tundra World Short trails lead from both the Forest Canyon and Rock Cut overlooks. Elevation: 11,600 and 12,210 feet.



Backpacking

Step into the wilderness, get away from the crowds, and come into the backcountry. Because the wilderness is fragile, special care must be taken.

Please follow these regulations: • A permit is required for all overnight stays in the backcountry. Reservations may be made in advance. Day-of-trip permits may be obtained in person year-round. Call the backcountry office at 970-586-1242 for information. • Backcountry camping is limited to seven nights between June and September and 14 more nights during the remainder of the year. Back-

country camping is allowed in designated campsites only, unless authorized by permit. • Camp no closer than 200 feet to a source of water and do not dump soapy water or food scraps into a stream or lake. • Dispose of human waste away from water sources. Dig a shallow hole for use and refill with soil and sod or pack it out. • Wood fires are permitted only in metal fire rings. Use only dead and down wood. Where there are no fire rings, you must use a lightweight portable stove. • No pets are permitted on trails or in the backcountry.

