



# A PARK HIGH AND WILD

Encompassing 415 square miles of rock-ribbed wildness, Rocky Mountain National Park is a land of superlatives.

Here, more than 110 of the peaks that soar above 10,000 feet elevation have names, such as Cirrus, Chiefs Head, Isolation, Little Matterhorn, Mummy and Storm. A few high points remain nameless, perhaps awaiting their turn.

Seventy-two mountains exceed 12,000 feet, topping off at 14,259 feet on the expansive summit of Longs Peak. The mountains provide Rocky Mountain National Park with its sense of wonder and inspiration. These great peaks contribute mightily to the “wild, fantastic views” that thrilled noted British visitor Isabella Bird more than a century ago.

Today, Rocky Mountain’s sky-scraping summits overlook cities and towns experiencing surging population growth. Each year, approximately three million people visit the park, many driving its roads and hiking a trail system that if linked together would extend from Denver almost to Santa Fe. Despite the changes around and within, Rocky Mountain National Park is a bastion of preservation. And there’s more to this park than mountains.

More than 100 square miles of the park are alpine tundra, a land above the trees. Trail Ridge Road and Old Fall River Road offer easy summer access to this wide-open, windswept ecosystem where the startling views seem to span forever.

The Continental Divide runs northwest to southeast through the park on its course from Alaska. Snowmelt and rainwater to the west of the Great Divide flow toward the Pacific Ocean; runoff to the east is bound for the distant Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean.

Rocky Mountain also is home to lakes, about 150 of them. Some occupy serene forested settings. Others are perched on almost inaccessible shelves high in the park’s wilderness, remaining frozen most of the year.

Throughout Rocky Mountain National Park, the unforgettable sound of rushing mountain waters breaks the wilderness silence. The high country gives rise to small streams and great rivers, notably the Colorado, the Cache la Poudre and the Big Thompson.

Several of the park’s more than 450 miles of streams tumble down waterfalls that bear such names as Alberta, Ouzel, Timberline and Thunder.



Rocky Mountain National Park is a hiker’s paradise with access to stunning scenery and amazing wildlife viewing. (Lisa Thompson)

Stands of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, aspen, subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce adorn the mountainsides. The forests are interspersed with mountain meadows that fill with colorful wildflowers during the brief high country summer.

This magnificent mountain country is roamed by an amazing array of wildlife. Rocky Mountain ranks as one of America’s premier wildlife watching destinations, showcasing majestic elk, sure-footed bighorn sheep, hardy ptarmigan and soaring birds of prey.

People, too, are a part of the Rocky Mountain National Park wilderness. Hikers walk trails used by Indian hunting parties many centuries ago. Fishermen stalk trout in streams where trappers once sought beaver. The failed efforts of prospectors are remembered at Lulu City, an abandoned mining town on the park’s west side. The Moraine Park Visitor Center and the Holzwarth Historic Site recall the early days of tourism.

But nature reigns supreme here, from the highest summits to the lowest

valley floors. The park is a wild preserve where people – in their own special ways – experience nature in all its splendor. Rocky Mountain is a place where families enjoy short strolls down a hiking trail and picnics at the water’s edge. It’s also a park where daring mountaineers pit their skills against vertical cliffs of granite.

This high, wild national park offers abundant outdoor opportunities. And those “wild, fantastic views” are out there, awaiting discovery. ■

## Planning, Preparation Essential For Park Visits

No matter what the season, visits to the stunning wilderness of Rocky Mountain National Park require planning and preparation. A few tips:

- ✱ Most visitors arrive during the summer months. Expect lots of company on roads, along popular trails and in parking areas, especially between Memorial Day and Labor Day, when camping reservations inside the park and lodging reservations outside the park are imperative.
- ✱ Don’t push your physical limits in this region located above 8,000 feet. Altitude sickness symptoms include shortness of breath, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, rapid heartbeat and insomnia. If symptoms persist, go to lower elevations.
- ✱ Beware of falling trees. Increasing numbers of dead trees creates an ever-present hazard for park visitors. Trees can fall without warning, especially on windy days or after a snowstorm, when branches are laden with snow.
- ✱ Staying well-hydrated is very important while visiting the park, but there is limited drinking water available. Please bring your own reusable water containers and refill them at park visitor centers.
- ✱ Order trip planning materials from pages 10 and 11 of this publication. Products featured in the 2011 *Guide* –

including those recommended in the book icons appearing on some of the following pages – are particularly helpful in preparing for a trip to the park.

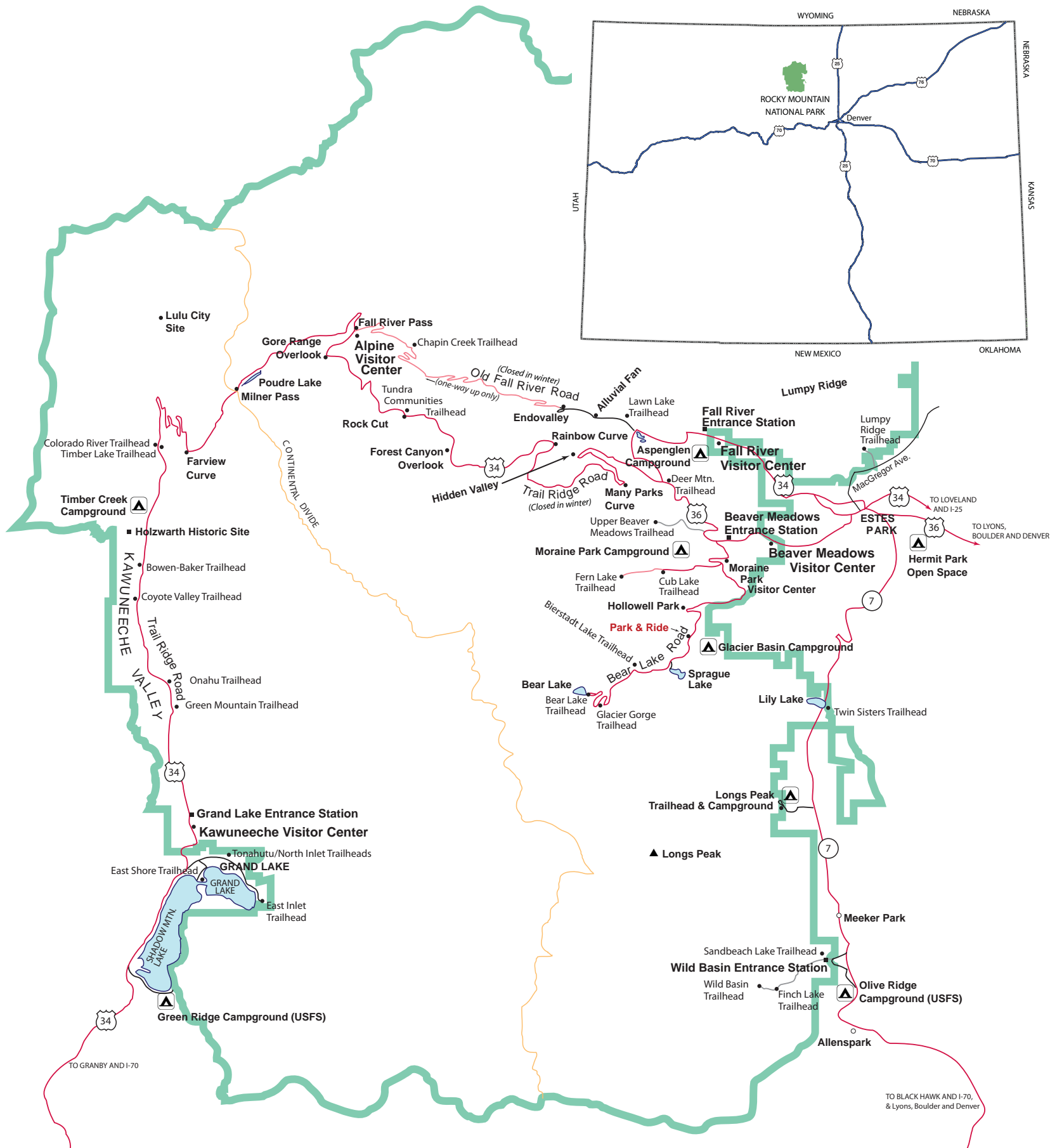
- ✱ Upon arrival, stop by a park visitor center for current information on everything from road and weather conditions to hiking trails, camping and ranger-led programs.
- ✱ For further information, visit the park’s official website at [nps.gov/romo](http://nps.gov/romo) or call the Rocky Mountain National Park Information Office (970-586-1206). ■

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# Park Map



## Bear Lake Road & Hiker Shuttle Services

The Bear Lake Road corridor is served by two shuttle routes:  
**Bear Lake Route** **Moraine Park Route**  
The shuttle is free to park visitors.

Rocky Mountain National Park and the Town of Estes Park operate a Hiker Shuttle connecting the town's visitor center, the park's Beaver Meadows Visitor Center and the Park & Ride shuttle bus parking area on Bear Lake Road. The shuttle is free, but a park pass (available in automated fee machines at the Estes Park and Beaver Meadows visitor centers) is required.

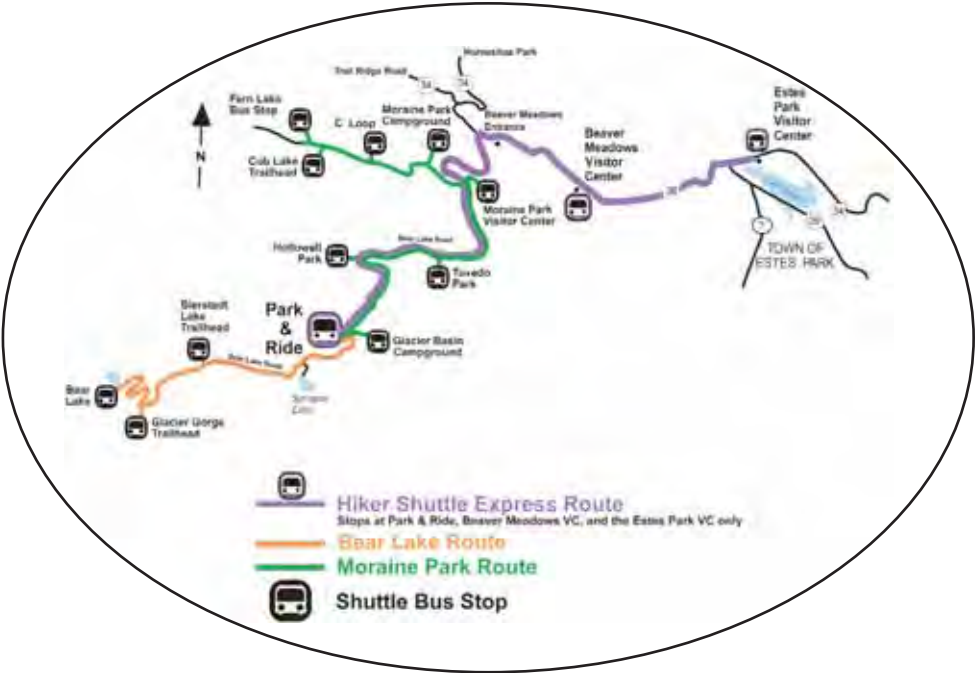
Please call 970-586-1206 or visit  
[nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/shuttle\\_bus\\_route.htm](https://nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/shuttle_bus_route.htm)  
for the 2011 shuttle schedules.

### 2011 Shuttle Bus Operations

**Bear Lake Shuttle Routes**  
**(Bear Lake and Moraine Park)**  
May 28, 29 and 30  
June 4 and 5  
June 11 – October 2 daily service

**Hiker Shuttle**  
(express route between Estes Park Visitor Center – Beaver Meadows VC – Park & Ride)  
June 25 – September 5 daily service  
Then weekends only through October 2

Trail Ridge Road Tours: TBD





# Answer Page



## WEATHER

Rocky Mountain National Park weather always is changeable, sometimes extreme. Temperatures drop and precipitation increases as elevation is gained, so be prepared for chilly conditions – especially at higher altitudes – year-round. Bring appropriate footwear and clothing for each season, including rainwear for summer storms and winter gear designed to protect against extreme cold and wind. Layers of warm clothing are recommended.

What to expect each season:

### SUMMER (JUNE, JULY, AUGUST)

Sunny mornings; afternoon thunderstorms, possibly accompanied by dangerous lightning; clear, cool nights.

### FALL (SEPT., OCT.)

Frosty mornings; pleasant, usually clear afternoons; chilly nights; the possibility of early snowstorms.

### WINTER (NOV.-MARCH)

Conditions range from cool to extreme; high winds, great temperature ranges and blizzard conditions are not uncommon.

### SPRING (APRIL, MAY)

Unpredictable, alternating between warm and cold, wet and dry; deep, wet snowfalls often occur.

For information on Colorado road conditions, call 877-315-7623, or visit [www.cotrip.org](http://www.cotrip.org).

## PARK ALWAYS OPEN

Rocky Mountain National Park is open 24 hours a day year-round. Visitors can enter or exit at any time. If they intend to stay overnight, visitors must be in a designated campground site or a backcountry campsite reserved by a valid permit.

## ENTRANCE FEES

A seven-day automobile pass for individuals and families costs \$20. A one-week pass for pedestrians, bicycles, motorcycles and mopeds is \$10 per person, not to exceed \$20 per vehicle. An annual pass for Rocky Mountain National Park allows unlimited entry to this park for \$40 a year.

The \$80 America the Beautiful – National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass is good for one year's entry to all U.S. recreation areas where entrance fees are charged. The America the Beautiful – Senior Pass, a lifetime pass to all federal recreation areas issued to citizens or permanent residents age 62 and over, is available for a one-time processing fee of \$10. The America the Beautiful – Access Pass is a free lifetime pass issued to blind or permanently disabled U.S. citizens and permanent residents.

All passes are available at all park entrance stations.

## BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING PERMITS



Permits are required for all camping in backcountry sites and zones. Carry-in/carry-out food storage canisters are required of all backcountry campers below treeline between May 1 and October 31. There are inherent risks to traveling and

## 2011 CAMPGROUND INFORMATION

### ASPENGLÉN

Campsites available May 25-Sept. 25. Reservations recommended (call 877-444-6777 or visit [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov)). Camping fee \$20 a night. Located in a pine forest near Fall River.



### GLACIER BASIN

Campsites available May 25-Sept. 11. The A and B loops are first-come, first-served. Reservations recommended for the C, D and group loops (call 877-444-6777 or visit [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov)). Camping fee \$20 a night. Pine beetle outbreak has resulted in the removal of most of the trees in the C,D and group loops, so there is no shade in these sites.

### LONGS PEAK

Open year-round (water is usually on from late May to mid-September). First-come, first-served. Tents only. Camping fee \$20 a night when water is on, \$14 a night when water is off. Campsites are situated in pine forest.

### MORAINE PARK

Open year-round (water is usually on from mid-May to early October). Reservations recommended from May 25 to October 1 (call 877-444-6777 or visit [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov)). Camping fee \$20 a night when water is on, \$14 a night when water is off. Located in a ponderosa pine forest above Moraine Park meadows.

### TIMBER CREEK

Open year-round. First-come, first-served. Camping fee \$20 a night when water is on, \$14 a night when water is off. Water is usually available from late-May to mid-Sept. Pine beetle outbreak has resulted in the removal of most of the trees in this campground, so there is no shade in the sites.

A seven-night stay limit is in place at all park campgrounds from June 1-Sept. 30. An additional 14 nights are allowed at the year-round campgrounds from October through May. Reservations may be made up to six months in advance. During summer and fall, park campgrounds fill daily by mid-morning.■

For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/camping.htm](http://www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/camping.htm)

camping in the backcountry. One of those risks is hazard trees. Camp safely away from standing dead trees. An administrative fee of \$20 is charged for backcountry camping between May 1 and October 31. Obtain permits by mail or in person year-round at the Backcountry Office next door to the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center and at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center. For details and further reservation information, visit:

[nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/backcountry.htm](http://nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/backcountry.htm)

## RANGER-LED PROGRAMS

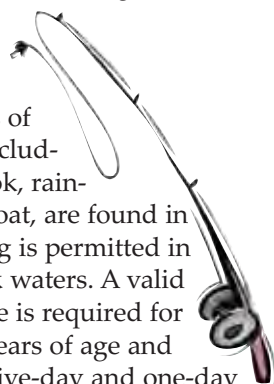
A wide range of ranger-led walks, talks and evening programs is offered throughout the summer. In winter, ski and snowshoe treks are available by reservation. Programs are listed in the official park newspaper. For further information, call 970-586-1206 or visit: [nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/ranger\\_led\\_activities.htm](http://nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/ranger_led_activities.htm)

## FISHING

Populations of trout species, including brown, brook, rainbow and cutthroat, are found in the park. Fishing is permitted in designated park waters. A valid Colorado license is required for all persons 16 years of age and older. Annual, five-day and one-day resident and non-resident licenses are available. Licenses are sold in neighboring communities.

Some lakes and streams are closed to fishing to protect threatened native species. Other areas are catch-and-release only, with special regulations in place. Detailed information, including license fees, open and closed waters, methods of capture and limits on size and possession, is available at park visitor centers, ranger stations and online at:

[nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/fishing.htm](http://nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/fishing.htm)



## HORSEBACK RIDING

Several liverys are located in and around the park. More than 260 miles of park trails are open to horses.



## BICYCLING

Bicycling is allowed on all park roads, unless otherwise posted. Bicycling is not permitted on any trails. Road biking in the park is strenuous, with great elevation gain, narrow, winding roads and no shoulders. Plan ahead for changeable weather, afternoon thunderstorms and high winds above treeline. Be well supplied with water and food. Bicyclists must ride single-file only with the flow of traffic, and they must obey all traffic regulations. Motorists: Give ample room when passing bicyclists.

## PETS

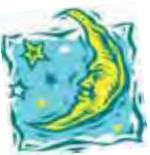
Leashed pets are allowed only in areas accessed by vehicles, including roadsides, picnic areas and campgrounds. Leashes must be no longer than six feet. Pets are not permitted on trails or in the backcountry. They are allowed on national forest trails. Boarding facilities are available in nearby communities.

## Food & Water

In summer, the only place to purchase food and beverages in the park is the Trail Ridge Store, adjacent to the Alpine Visitor Center. When shuttle buses are operating, bottled water is sold at the Park & Ride. The park encourages limiting the use of plastic water bottles by refilling reusable water containers at visitor centers and campgrounds. Recycling containers are available parkwide. In winter, water is only available at open visitor centers. Restaurants and grocery stores are located in nearby communities.

## LODGING & VISITOR SERVICES

No lodging is available inside the park, but hundreds of accommodations are located in nearby communities. Contact the Estes Park Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-443-7837, 970-577-9900, ([visitestes-park.com](http://visitestes-park.com))) and the Grand Lake Chamber of Commerce (800-531-1019, 970-627-3402, [grandlakechamber.com](http://grandlakechamber.com)) for information on everything from lodging, camping, restaurants and retail stores to guided tours, recreational opportunities, instruction and gear sales or rentals.



## NATIONAL FORESTS

Area Forest Service lands offer campgrounds and other recreational opportunities, including hiking, water recreation, four-wheeling, hunting, mountain biking and winter sports. Arapaho and Roosevelt national forests (970-295-6700 Fort Collins, 303-541-2500 Boulder); Arapaho National Recreation Area, located near Grand Lake, (970-887-4100). Visit [www.fs.fed.us/r2/arnf/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/arnf/)

## PHONE NUMBERS & WEBSITES

Park website: [nps.gov/romo](http://nps.gov/romo)  
General park information: 970-586-1206

Trail Ridge Road status: 970-586-1222

Campground reservations:

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

Backcountry information: 970-586-1242

Emergencies: 911 or 970-586-1203

Colorado Travel and Tourism:

800-COLORADO, [colorado.com](http://colorado.com)■



## SERVICES IN THE PARK

### Climbing

COLORADO  
MOUNTAIN SCHOOL  
970-586-5758  
[cmschool.com](http://cmschool.com)



### Gift Store & Cafe

TRAIL RIDGE STORE & CAFE  
970-586-2133  
[trailridgegiftstore.com](http://trailridgegiftstore.com)

### Horseback Riding

ASPEN LODGE  
970-586-8133  
[aspenlodge.net](http://aspenlodge.net)

HI COUNTRY STABLES  
970-586-2327 & 586-3244  
[sombbrero.com](http://sombbrero.com)

MEEKER PARK LODGE  
303-747-2266  
[meekerparklodge.com](http://meekerparklodge.com)

COWPOKE CORNER CORRAL  
970-586-5890  
[cowpokecornercorral.com](http://cowpokecornercorral.com)

NATIONAL PARK  
GATEWAY STABLES  
970-586-5269  
[cowpokecornercorral.com](http://cowpokecornercorral.com)

SOMBRERO RANCH STABLES  
970-586-4577  
[sombbrero.com](http://sombbrero.com)

WILD BASIN LIVERY  
303-747-2222 & 747-2274  
[wildbasinlodge.com](http://wildbasinlodge.com)

WINDING RIVER RESORT  
970-627-3215  
[windingriverresort.com](http://windingriverresort.com)

YMCA OF THE ROCKIES  
970-586-3341  
[jacksonstables.com](http://jacksonstables.com)







# Suggested Activities

## A WEEK IN THE PARK Rocky Offers Plenty To Ponder

When famed *Rocky Mountain News* editor William Byers visited this region back in 1864, he tried to climb Longs Peak. Byers failed, but he had a memorable experience making it to the summit of neighboring Mount Meeker.

To anyone planning a visit to this stretch of the Rockies, Byers advised a trip of at least eight days. Of course, he traveled by horseback and it took him a couple of days just to get here from Denver. But a week in this area definitely is worth considering, especially if you're in search of the perfect trip. Some suggestions on how to spend seven days in Rocky.

**DAY ONE:** Time to stretch those legs. Pick a gentle trail for a stroll. Amble toward a waterfall (maybe Copeland, Adams or Alberta) or around a popular lake (perhaps Bear, Sprague or Lily). Many people require a day or two to get used to the altitude, and some time spent sauntering at the park's lower elevations is a good idea.

**DAY TWO:** If you're feeling acclimated to the elevation, explore the high country by car. The trip across Trail Ridge Road is punctuated by many pullovers that will introduce you to the region. There's lots to

cost, you can learn a lot from experts about subjects such as outdoor skills, nature writing, photography, art and history. (Reservations are required. For information and registration, call 970-586-3262 or visit [rmna.org](http://rmna.org).)

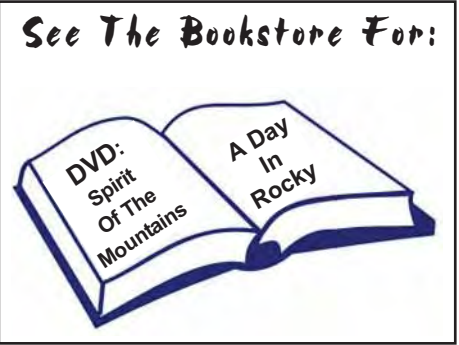
**DAY SIX:** Now that you're better acclimated, it's time to try a more rigorous hike. High country lakes are especially popular destinations. Today, you also can apply what you learned from your chats with rangers, the bird-watching trip and your seminar.

**DAY SEVEN:** Try something new. Perhaps you've never ridden a horse, been fly fishing, climbed a mountain or sketched an alpine scene. Here's your chance. After you've sampled one or two Rocky Mountain wonders, you'll find there's a lot more to do than you thought. But after this first week, you're off to a great start.■



Fun, affordable and taught by top-flight instructors, Rocky Mountain Field Seminars offer expert insights into the park's myriad wonders. (Joan Nesselroad)

Find more information about  
Rocky Mountain Field Seminars at:  
[www.rmna.org](http://www.rmna.org)



see – scenery, wildlife and wildflowers. A leisurely drive with lots of stops, short walks and chats with the rangers will make this a memorable outing. Top off your full day with an evening ranger talk at one of the campgrounds or visitor centers. (Check at a visitor center or call 970-586-1206 for topics and times.)

**DAY THREE:** Begin your morning with a ranger-led birdwatching expedition. (See the park newspaper for programs.) You do not have to be an avid birdwatcher to enjoy an introduction to this informative and interesting activity. In only an hour or two, you can learn a lot about the park and its wild inhabitants. Spend the rest of the day driving up the Old Fall River Road to Fall River Pass, pausing for a picnic along the way.




**DAY FOUR:** Do what the locals do: Hike the backcountry. Pick a more ambitious walk to a location suited to your ability. (See page 7 of this publication for hiking suggestions.) Plan to spend the whole day outdoors. Figure on an afternoon rain shower.

**DAY FIVE:** Take a Rocky Mountain Field Seminar. The non-profit Rocky Mountain Nature Association offers half-day, day-long and multi-day classes on all sorts of natural and cultural history subjects. In a short time and at a reasonable




## A DAY IN THE PARK You'll See Mountains, And Much More

What can we see in a single day in Rocky Mountain National Park? Lots of mountains, that's for sure. What-ever else you see here depends on what you're looking for.

Several park rangers and local residents were asked what they'd suggest if a traveler had only a single day to spend exploring the park. Here's what they recommend:

-  **Drive Trail Ridge Road.** It is one of America's most spectacular scenic drives. Stopping at various vista points – from Many Parks Curve to Farview Curve – and soaking in the grandeur can make this trip last all day long, two or three hours at the least.
-  **Take a hike.** Rocky Mountain National Park is one of the most user-friendly parks in the nation. There are lots of trails and a wide variety of destinations, from lakes and waterfalls to summits, forests and meadows. An hour or two of strolling allows you to get an enticing sample of Rocky Mountain's renowned backcountry.
-  **Watch for wildlife.** Viewing the great variety of animals and birds is one of the most popular activities in

the park. A few words of warning: Mind your manners, respect their privacy and never feed them.


-  **Take pictures.** These mountains are perfect subjects for photography. Because wildlife is abundant and the mountain scenes tend to change hourly with varying light, clouds and shadows, the park is a great place to capture the spectacular Colorado Rockies with a camera.
-  **Visit a visitor center or historical site.** Places such as the Moraine Park Visitor Center (filled with natural history exhibits) or the Holzwarth Historic Site (preserving a historical resort) help us understand what the area was like before the park was formed.
-  **Enjoy a picnic.** Many places within the park provide pleasant outdoor settings made better with food, friends and family. Whether it takes place somewhere along the roadway, in one of the dozens of picnic areas or simply on a flat rock out in the woods, a picnic is one of life's little pleasures – easily organized and long remembered.■

## Discover Nature With Your Kids


Kids are born naturalists. They access the natural world by asking questions. Introducing children to the outdoors can begin at any time, but why not begin early? And why not start them out in Rocky Mountain National Park, one of the country's premier outdoor wonderlands?


Infants can be carried in a front pack, which can be tucked inside the jacket if it's chilly. Hike anywhere. The stunning scenery and the fresh mountain air will put them to sleep in short order.


Toddler begin to more actively interact with nature. It is a time of observation, of making connections and stockpiling information. This is a wonderful time to introduce them to one of the many discovery trips found around the park. A few suggestions:

-  Explore the edges of Bear Lake while enjoying the guidebook-guided trail tour that explains the area's


interesting natural and human history. Water holds an amazing variety of plant and animal life that will pique a child's curiosity.


-  Discover Rocky Mountain's wonderful wildlife. At particular times throughout the year (ask a park ranger), the bighorn sheep come down to Sheep Lakes. Kids especially enjoy watching them cross the road after the lambs are born.

-  Kids a little bit older might enjoy expending energy hiking along a trail, but most seem happiest thoroughly exploring a smaller area. On any hike with 3 to 6 year olds, it's a good idea to include a magnifying glass in the backpack. Textures of trees, plants, bugs and rocks are exciting when viewed close-up.

-  Children love climbing on rocks. The trail to Gem Lake is a rocky paradise lined by boulders that are perfectly arranged for climbing. The

scenery is inspiring for parents and kids alike.

-  In the early summer, enjoy the amazing display of colorful wildflowers found along the trails to Cub Lake and around Lily Lake. Have the youngsters keep an eye out for hummingbirds that may be visiting the flowers. Watch for beaver activity along streams. Beaver dams, active or abandoned, are easy to spot, and stream banks are ideal places to look for animal tracks.

-  Kids ages 12 and under have fun learning about the park through the popular Junior Ranger program. Age-specific Junior Ranger activities booklets are available for free at visitor centers throughout the park in both English and Spanish. After completing the activities in the colorful, heavily illustrated booklets, youngsters are awarded an official Rocky Mountain National Park Junior ranger badge.■





# Scenic Drives



Magnificent mountain scenery is commonplace along Trail Ridge Road, a summer-only highway that climbs to a high point of 12,183 feet in Rocky Mountain National Park. (Dean Martinson)

## TRAIL RIDGE ROAD

### Sweeping Vistas Abound On This ‘Sensational’ Highway

Trail Ridge Road, Rocky Mountain National Park’s renowned highway to the sky, inspired awe before the first motorist ever traveled it. “It is hard to describe what a sensation this new road is going to make,” predicted Horace Albright, director of the National Park Service, in 1931 during the road’s construction. “You will have the whole sweep of the Rockies before you in all directions.”

The next year, Rocky Mountain’s wilderness interior was introduced to the first travelers along an auto route Denver’s *Rocky Mountain News* proclaimed a “scenic wonder road of the world.”

Was all this simply exaggeration? Hardly.

Spanning the 50 miles between Estes Park on the park’s east side and Grand Lake on the west, Trail Ridge Road more than lives up to its early billing. Eleven miles of this high highway travel above treeline, the elevation near 11,000 feet where the park’s evergreen forests come to a halt. As it winds across the alpine tundra’s vastness to its high point at 12,183 feet elevation, Trail Ridge Road offers motorists thrilling views, wildlife sightings and spectacular alpine wildflower displays.

Whether they begin their journey at Estes Park or Grand Lake, Trail Ridge Road travelers climb some 4,000 feet in a matter of minutes. The changes that occur en route are fascinating to observe. Montane woodlands of aspen and ponderosa pine soon give way to thick sub-alpine forests of fir and spruce. At tree-line, the last stunted, wind-battered trees yield to the alpine tundra.

Up on that cold, windswept world, conditions resemble those found in the

Canadian or Alaskan Arctic. The tundra normally is windy and 20 to 30 degrees cooler than Estes Park or Grand Lake. The sun beats down with high-ultraviolet intensity. The vistas, best enjoyed from one of several marked road pullovers, are extravagant, sweeping north to Wyoming, east across the Front Range cities and Great Plains, south and west into the heart of the Rockies.

For all its harshness, the Trail Ridge tundra is a place of vibrant life and vivid colors. Pikas, marmots, ptarmigans and bighorn sheep may be seen. About 200 species of tiny alpine plants hug the ground. Despite a growing season that lasts less than 50 days, many plants bloom exuberantly, adorning the green summer tundra with swatches of yellow, red, pink, blue, purple and white. All colors are seen from the Tundra Communities Trail, a half-hour walk beginning near the parking area at Rock Cut.

Below treeline, forested moraines, great heaps of earth and rock debris left behind by melting Ice Age glaciers, rise above lush mountain meadows. The Continental Divide, where streamflows are separated east from west, is crossed at Milner Pass, located in subalpine woodlands at a surprisingly low 10,120 feet elevation. Moose munch greenery in the upper reaches of the Colorado River, which flows through the scenic Kawuneeche Valley. Grazing elk greet sunrise and sunset in many of the park’s forest-rimmed meadows.

Trail Ridge Road is a paved two-lane U.S. Highway (34) with no shoulders or guardrails. The road is only open when weather conditions are favorable, usually late-May through mid-October.

At all elevations, the drive on Trail Ridge Road is a memorable adventure. Put aside at least a half day for the trip. Longer, if possible.

It’s worth the time. The experience, to be sure, is hard to describe.■

More information about Trail Ridge Road available at: [www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/trail\\_ridge\\_road.htm](http://www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/trail_ridge_road.htm) and [www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/road\\_status.htm](http://www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/road_status.htm)

## OLD FALL RIVER ROAD

### Route Offers A Look At Rocky’s Nature Close-Up

Completed in 1920, Old Fall River Road earned the distinction of being the first auto route in Rocky Mountain National Park offering access to the alpine tundra. In the minds of many visitors, this beloved byway through the wilds remains foremost.

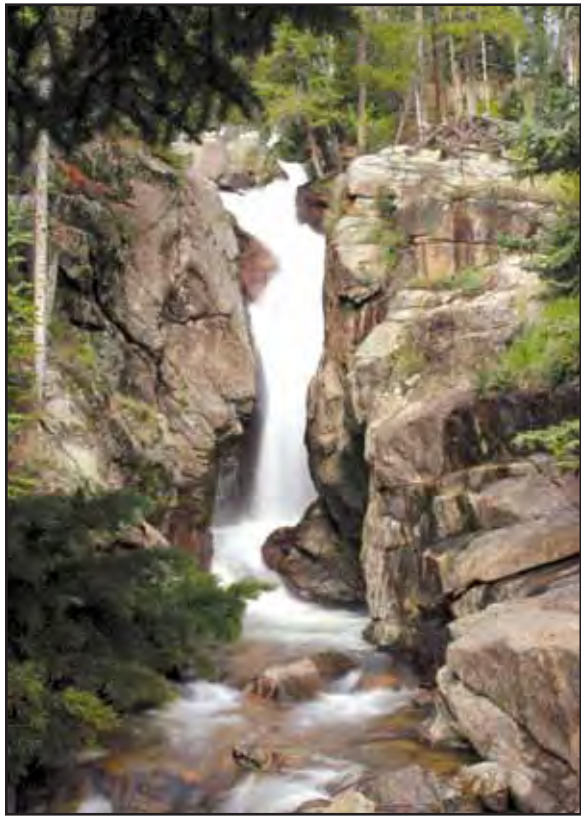
Trail Ridge Road is well known as “the nation’s highest continuous paved highway.” Old Fall River Road is a “motor nature trail.” Primarily gravel, one-way uphill, with no guardrails and punctuated by tight switchbacks, the slower-paced, 11-mile-long Old Fall River Road doesn’t receive the attention paid to Trail Ridge Road. It leads travelers from Horseshoe Park (just west of the Fall River Entrance) up a deeply cut valley to Fall River Pass, 11,796 feet above sea level. The posted speed limit is 15 miles per hour, a clear indication that a drive up Old Fall River Road is not for the impatient.

The road is narrow and curved. Vehicles more than 25 feet long and vehicles with trailers are prohibited. In some places, the trees of the montane and subalpine forests are so close that motorists can touch them. Old Fall River Road is ideal for visitors seeking intimacy with nature.

The road follows a route taken long ago by Indian hunters who came to the park area in search of its abundant game. Early in the trip, travelers pass an alluvial fan scoured out by the devastating 1982 Lawn Lake flood. Nearby is the site of a labor camp that housed state convicts who worked on the road project many decades ago. For these men, crime did not pay. The laborers were forced to build the three-mile stretch of road to the scenic respite of Chasm Falls with no more than hand tools at their disposal.

After passing Willow Park, where elk often graze, Old Fall River Road enters the alpine tundra. Awaiting there is the Fall River Cirque, birthplace of glaciers that once worked their way through the mountain valleys. The road traverses the headwall of this amphitheater-like formation before joining Trail Ridge Road near the Alpine Visitor Center at Fall River Pass.

Ahead lie the wonders of Trail Ridge Road, which leads travelers east to Estes Park or southwest to Grand Lake. Behind, but not soon forgotten, is that winding old route that offers travelers a taste of auto travel in days gone by and a look at Rocky Mountain’s nature close-up.■



Chasm Falls is just one of the many natural wonders awaiting travelers along Old Fall River Road. (Richard Youngblood)

### When Are The Park Roads Open?

Trail Ridge Road usually opens for the season on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend. It is not uncommon for the road to be closed temporarily during the summer season because of snowfalls. Heavy snows typically close the road for the winter season in mid- to late October.

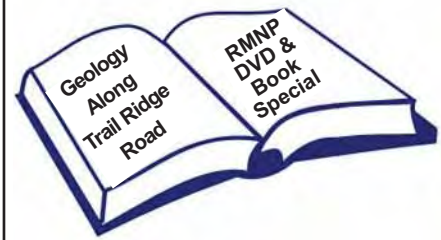
Old Fall River Road usually is open from early July to late September.

Bear Lake Road is open year-round, but visitors are strongly urged to take advantage of the free Bear Lake Road corridor shuttle bus service available from late May through September. (See page 2 for information.)■



Early visitors enjoying the view from Old Fall River Road.

See The Bookstore For:







# Hiking & Climbing

## ENJOY – AND PROTECT – ROCKY’S ALPINE TUNDRA

More than one-quarter of Rocky Mountain National Park is alpine tundra, which begins at elevations above 11,000 feet and boasts some of the most dramatic mountain scenery imaginable.

Many tundra trekkers are captivated by sweeping views encompassing rock, ice, sky and distant ranges. But pausing to take in the subtle wonders of the alpine world can enhance the hiking experience. The vast, wide-open landscape in this land above the trees tells some amazing stories of adaptation and survival.

Animals such as pikas and marmots can be found in rocky areas, where they persevere in an arctic-like

climate. Elk find relief from summer’s heat in this high-altitude environment. Several species of birds spend the summer on the tundra, including horned larks, well-camouflaged ptarmigans and American pipits. Tiny alpine flowers bloom in abundance during the short growing season, their stunning colors inviting hikers to bend down for a close-up look.

With the exception of four Tundra Protection Areas located at the Alpine Visitor Center, Rock Cut, Forest Canyon Overlook and Gore Range Overlook, visitors are permitted to hike on the tundra throughout the park. Alpine plants may be adaptable to the rugged climate above treeline,

but they are no match for the soles of hiking boots. Areas repeatedly trod by hikers can take decades to recover as the short alpine growing season provides only a few weeks for damaged plant communities to heal.

To minimize impact and preserve this fragile environment, please follow a few simple guidelines:

- ❁ Obey regulations prohibiting off-trail hiking in the four Tundra Protection Areas. These zones are located in places where visitation is highest, and hikers must stay on marked trails.
- ❁ Always stay on hiking trails where they exist.
- ❁ Walk on rocks or snow when possible to avoid contact with the alpine tundra’s fragile plant life.
- ❁ Minimize trampling. When hiking off-trail across the open tundra, never walk single-file.■



Alpine avens, King’s crown, chiming bells and other exquisite alpine plants are easily damaged by careless hikers. (Nancy Wilson)

Learn more about Rocky’s alpine tundra at: [www.nps.gov/romo/naturescience/alpine\\_tundra\\_ecosystem.htm](http://www.nps.gov/romo/naturescience/alpine_tundra_ecosystem.htm)

## Climbing For Technical Types

Mountain adventures in the park are not limited to hiking. Technical climbing routes abound east of the Continental Divide.

Lower-elevation climbing is especially popular on Lumpy Ridge. Less-accessible technical climbing routes can be found high above treeline. They often involve a lengthy hike, higher elevations and considerably greater skill and risk.

For more information about specific climbing sites, safety precautions and regulations, contact the park’s Backcountry Office at 970-586-1242.■

### Know Before You Hike...


- **Stay together** – never leave someone alone in the backcountry, and always keep your kids close.
- **Leave detailed plans** of your itinerary, and stick to the plan!
- **Be aware of falling trees**, which are hazards throughout the park
- **Be prepared for changing weather.** Avoid being above treeline when afternoon thunderstorms occur.
- **Drink lots of water** to stay hydrated in this dry climate, and bring high-energy snacks to fuel your hike
- **Practice Leave No Trace ethics:** plan ahead and prepare; travel on durable surfaces; dispose of waste properly; leave what you find; respect wildlife; be considerate of other visitors.

**Always remember:**  
pets are not allowed on any park trails!


### See The Bookstore For:

Alpine Wild-flowers of the Rocky Mtns.

T.I. Topo Maps



The Guide is published annually by Rocky Mountain National Park and the Rocky Mountain Nature Association.



RMNA.ORG

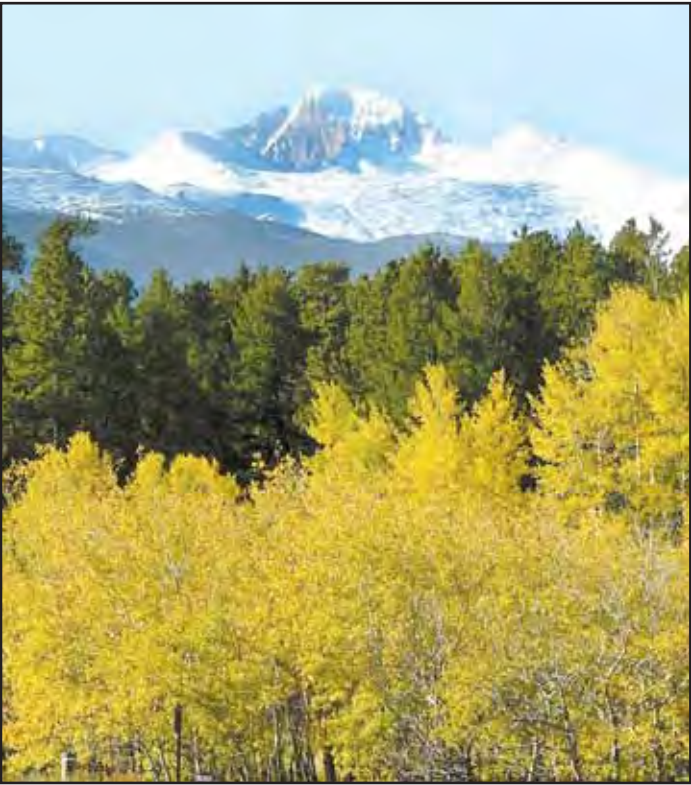
## LONGS PEAK MUCH MORE THAN A MOUNTAIN

At 14,259 feet, Longs Peak towers above all other summits in Rocky Mountain National Park. The flat-topped monarch is seen from almost anywhere. Different angles show the great mountain’s unique profiles. Changing weather reflects Longs Peak’s many moods.

In the summertime – the season when thousands climb to Longs’ summit – those moods can be unpredictable. Variable weather, including snow, cold temperatures and gusty winds can occur at any time. Most days see clouds building in the afternoon sky, often exploding in storms of brief, heavy rain, thunder and dangerous lightning. Most people start hiking well before dawn to avoid these weather-related hazards.

The Keyhole Route, usually free of ice and snow between mid-July and early September, is a strenuous eight miles one-way with an elevation gain of 4,850 feet. This challenging route was the choice of British adventurer Isabella Bird in 1873. Her words of wonder and praise for Longs Peak, which concluded that it was “much more than a mountain,” ring true today as if the ink in her book, *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains*, was still fresh.

Bird, who ascended Longs in the company of mountain man “Rocky Mountain Jim” Nugent, was not the first woman to climb Longs Peak. She was preceded to the summit that same year by Anna Dickinson. Both followed in the footsteps of Addie Alexander and a “Miss Bartlett,” two women who successfully climbed Longs in 1871.



Much of the year, snow covers Longs Peak, the park’s highest mountain summit. (Linda Wold)

Agnes Vaille and more than 50 other climbers have lost their lives on Longs Peak. It is not a mountain tolerant of the unprepared.

Keyhole Route climbers should be properly outfitted with sturdy footwear, layers of clothing, high-energy food and plenty of water. Use caution when ascending or descending steep areas. Don’t be too proud to back off when bad weather threatens or when conditions are marginal.

Climbing Longs Peak is an experience not easily forgotten. But it is essential to be prepared, to be aware of surroundings and weather conditions, and always to use common sense. Have a safe trip.■

Learn more about climbing Longs Peak at: [www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/longspeak.htm](http://www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/longspeak.htm)



“Are we there yet?”  
“How much farther? I have to go to the bathroom!”

Guess what? Those kids in the back seat are the future stewards of Rocky Mountain National Park. Help ensure that today’s children are prepared to care for the park tomorrow...

### THE NEXT GENERATION FUND

Learn more at [nextgenerationfund.org](http://nextgenerationfund.org) or call 970-586-0108  
A fundraising campaign of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association







# Popular Hikes

Destination	Trailhead	Distance (one-way in miles)
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## Lakes

<b>NYMPH LAKE</b> This is a great “get into shape” hike for new park arrivals.	<b>Bear Lake</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>DREAM LAKE</b> Dramatic scenery rewards hikers making this short climb.	<b>Bear Lake</b>	<b>1.1</b>
<b>BIERSTADT LAKE</b> This popular mountain lake is nestled in heavy timber.	<b>Bierstadt Lake</b> <b>Bear Lake</b>	<b>1.4</b> <b>1.6</b>
<b>THE POOL</b> A gurgling stream waterpocket offers a peaceful respite.	<b>Fern Lake</b>	<b>1.7</b>
<b>EMERALD LAKE</b> Mountains rise steeply above this popular hiking destination.	<b>Bear Lake</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>GEM LAKE</b> The trail to this pretty lake usually is hikable year-round.	<b>Lumpy Ridge</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>LAKE HAIYAHA</b> Haiyaha is almost surrounded by the Continental Divide.	<b>Bear Lake</b>	<b>2.1</b>
<b>CUB LAKE</b> The trail travels through abundant early summer wildflowers.	<b>Cub Lake</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>MILLS LAKE</b> Sweeping mountain scenery surrounds this lovely lake.	<b>Glacier Gorge</b>	<b>2.8</b>
<b>THE LOCH</b> The popular lake occupies an inspiring mountain setting.	<b>Glacier Gorge</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>FERN LAKE</b> A tourist lodge once occupied Fern Lake’s scenic shoreline.	<b>Fern Lake</b>	<b>3.8</b>
<b>ODESSA LAKE</b> Dramatic peaks loom above this spectacular mountain lake.	<b>Bear Lake</b> <b>Fern Lake</b>	<b>4.1</b> <b>4.4</b>
<b>CHASM LAKE</b> Do not feed the begging marmots on the rugged lakeshore.	<b>Longs Peak</b>	<b>4.2</b>
<b>SANDBEACH LAKE</b> A steady climb rewards hikers with fine Wild Basin scenery.	<b>Sandbeach Lake</b>	<b>4.2</b>
<b>FINCH LAKE</b> Remnants of the 1978 Ouzel Fire highlight this Wild Basin trek.	<b>Finch Lake</b>	<b>4.5</b>
<b>YPSILON LAKE</b> Views of Ypsilon Mountain grace the Mummy Range lake.	<b>Lawn Lake</b>	<b>4.5</b>
<b>TIMBER LAKE</b> This picturesque spot is located on Rocky’s wild west side.	<b>Timber Lake</b>	<b>4.8</b>
<b>SKY POND</b> Sweeping Divide views surround an awesome destination.	<b>Glacier Gorge</b>	<b>4.9</b>
<b>BLACK LAKE</b> This mountain lake is set above dramatic Ribbon Falls.	<b>Glacier Gorge</b>	<b>5.0</b>
<b>LONE PINE LAKE</b> A sheer rock wall ascends from Lone Pine’s far shore.	<b>East Inlet</b>	<b>5.5</b>



<b>BLUEBIRD LAKE</b> Gorgeous wildflowers highlight this hike in Rocky’s southeast.	<b>Wild Basin</b>	<b>6.0</b>
<b>LAWN LAKE</b> It’s a steep hike to this Mummy Range lake.	<b>Lawn Lake</b>	<b>6.2</b>
<b>PEAR LAKE</b> Hikers find solitude at a remote Wild Basin area destination.	<b>Finch Lake</b>	<b>6.5</b>
<b>THUNDER LAKE</b> This high-elevation lake occupies a flower-filled meadow.	<b>Wild Basin</b>	<b>6.8</b>
<b>LAKE VERNA</b> Fjord-like Lake Verna rewards the ambitious hiker.	<b>East Inlet</b>	<b>6.9</b>
<b>LION LAKE No. 1</b> Wildflowers grow in profusion at this subalpine lake.	<b>Wild Basin</b>	<b>7.0</b>
<b>SPIRIT LAKE</b> Some hike to the remote west side lake toting fishing poles.	<b>East Inlet</b>	<b>7.8</b>
<b>LAKE NOKONI</b> Tranquility and solitude abound at this distant west side lake.	<b>North Inlet</b>	<b>9.9</b>
<b>LAKE NANITA</b> Hiking in the park’s interior is a true wilderness experience.	<b>North Inlet</b>	<b>11.0</b>

## Accessible and Family-friendly Trails

	<b>ALLUVIAL FAN</b> A quarter-mile paved interpretive trail connects two parking areas located at this flood-scoured feature.	<b>Endovalley Road</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>Strollers permitted</b>
	<b>HOLZWARTH HISTORIC SITE</b> It’s a short walk on a level gravel trail to this dude ranch complex developed in the early 1900s.	<b>Trail Ridge Road</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>Strollers permitted</b>
	<b>SPRAGUE LAKE</b> Spectacular views of the Continental Divide grace this level, hardened trail. An accessible campsite is located in the area.	<b>Sprague Lake</b>	<b>0.5 (loop)</b>	<b>Strollers permitted</b>
	<b>BEAR LAKE NATURE TRAIL</b> An excellent booklet-guided nature trail circles this popular subalpine lake at the end of Bear Lake Road.	<b>Bear Lake</b>	<b>0.6 (loop)</b>	<b>Partially accessible (strollers permitted)</b>
	<b>LILY LAKE</b> Look for wildflowers in the spring and early summer along the level gravel trail around a pretty mountain lake.	<b>Lily Lake</b>	<b>0.7 (loop)</b>	<b>Strollers permitted</b>
	<b>COYOTE VALLEY</b> Elk and moose sometimes are seen from this level gravel trail, especially during the early morning and early evening.	<b>Coyote Valley</b>	<b>1.0 (loop)</b>	<b>Strollers permitted</b>
	<b>ADAMS FALLS</b> It’s a short hike to a dramatic waterfall near Grand Lake on the west side of the park.	<b>East Inlet Trailhead</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>Hiking trail</b>
	<b>MORaine PARK VISITOR CENTER NATURE TRAIL</b> Interpretive signs and a full-color booklet guide visitors along this scenic nature trail in Moraine Park.	<b>Moraine Park Visitor Center</b>	<b>0.6 (loop)</b>	<b>Hiking trail</b>

## Waterfalls

<b>COPELAND FALLS</b> This easy hike to a beautiful setting is ideal for families.	<b>Wild Basin</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>ALBERTA FALLS</b> This dramatic waterfall is a popular park destination.	<b>Glacier Gorge</b> <b>Bear Lake</b>	<b>0.8</b> <b>0.9</b>
<b>CALYPSO CASCADES</b> The waterfall was named in honor of the calypso orchid.	<b>Wild Basin</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>FERN FALLS</b> This refreshing, inspiring place is perfect for trail breaks.	<b>Fern Lake</b>	<b>2.7</b>
<b>OUZEL FALLS</b> These scenic falls are frequently photographed.	<b>Wild Basin</b>	<b>2.7</b>
<b>CASCADE FALLS</b> A gentle hike through a lodgepole forest brings hikers here.	<b>North Inlet</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>TIMBERLINE FALLS</b> Seeing this jewel of a waterfall is well worth the climb.	<b>Glacier Gorge</b>	<b>4.0</b>

## HIKING ESSENTIALS

- ✓ Sturdy hiking boots
  - ✓ Rain gear
  - ✓ Layered clothing
  - ✓ Sweater or fleece jacket
  - ✓ Long pants
  - ✓ Mittens
  - ✓ Hat
  - ✓ Extra socks
  - ✓ Sun block
  - ✓ Sunglasses
  - ✓ Flashlight
  - ✓ Nutritious snacks
- 
  - ✓ First aid kit
  - ✓ Plenty of water
  - ✓ Map and compass or other navigational aid

## Mountain Summits

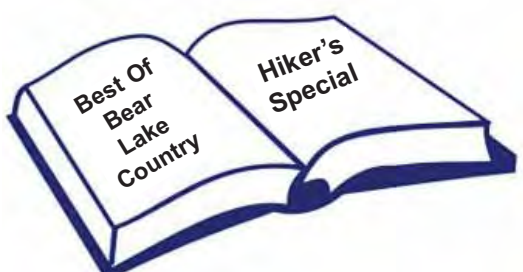
All hikes to mountain summits are strenuous. Be sure to thoroughly research your route ahead of time and pack plenty of food, water and extra clothing.

<b>DEER MTN. (10,013’)</b> Fine views make this a great picnic destination.	<b>Deer Mountain</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>YPSILON MTN. (13,514’)</b> Some route finding is required as no marked trail leads to Ypsilon’s scenic summit.	<b>Chapin Creek</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>TWIN SISTERS PEAKS (11,428’)</b> These two peaks offer outstanding vistas. Don’t be misled by a false summit along the way.	<b>Twin Sisters</b>	<b>3.9</b>
<b>FLATTOP MTN. (12,324’)</b> It’s an arduous climb to this peak offering panoramic views and access to many other great mountain summits.	<b>Bear Lake</b>	<b>4.4</b>
<b>ESTES CONE (11,006’)</b> The views from the top of this peak are some of the finest in the park. Be prepared for a steep, rough trail after Storm Pass.	<b>Lily Lake</b>	<b>3.7</b>

## Historic Sites

<b>TUNDRA COMMUNITIES TRAIL</b> ( <i>Strollers permitted</i> ) This paved trail at Rock Cut along Trail Ridge Road leads to panoramic views of the alpine tundra at the Toll Memorial.	<b>0.5</b>
<b>EUGENIA MINE</b> Mine remains in the Longs Peak area recall the dashed hopes of early prospectors.	<b>Longs Peak</b> <b>1.4</b>
<b>LULU CITY</b> This 1800s mining camp boomed briefly and went bust.	<b>Colorado River</b> <b>3.7</b>

## See The Bookstore For:







## WILD & WATCHABLE

Rocky Mountain National Park visitors have a passion for viewing wild animals, especially the large ones. With elk, bighorn sheep, mule deer and moose calling the park home, it's no surprise that wildlife watching is rated the number-one activity by a vast majority of Rocky's visitors.

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 280 recorded bird species, six amphibians (including the endangered boreal toad), one reptile (the harmless garter snake), 11 species of fish and countless insects, including a surprisingly large number of butterflies. On this page are a few of the wild residents park visitors might encounter.



### MULE DEER

**Habitat:** All habitats

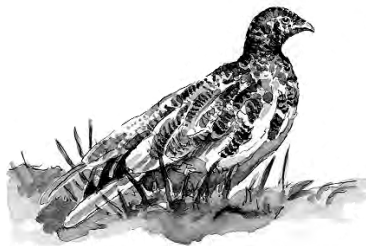
**Viewing Tips:** At lower elevations, mule deer are most often found in open areas.



### COYOTE

**Habitat:** All habitats

**Viewing Tips:** The coyote's yipping and howling sometimes is heard in the evening and morning.



### WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN

**Habitat:** Around willows and rock outcrops on the alpine tundra

**Viewing Tips:** Look carefully. Their excellent camouflage makes ptarmigans hard to spot.



### BIGHORN SHEEP

**Habitat:** Rocky mountainsides and canyons

**Viewing Tips:** Bighorn sheep often are seen at Sheep Lakes from May through mid-August. Keep your eyes peeled for lambs around mid-June.



### YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOT

**Habitat:** Rock piles

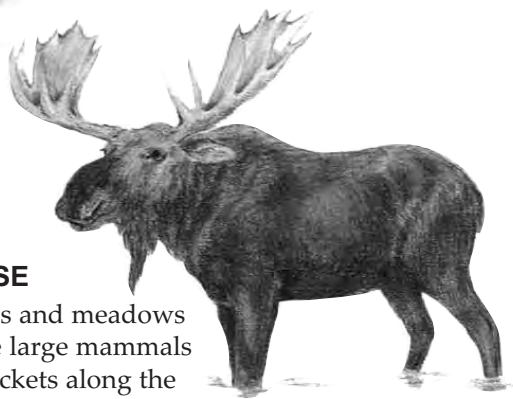
**Viewing Tips:** Look for marmots sunbathing on the tundra along Trail Ridge and Old Fall River roads.



### MOOSE

**Habitat:** Stream beds and meadows

**Viewing Tips:** These large mammals frequent willow thickets along the Colorado River in the Kawuneeche Valley on the park's west side.



### PIKA

**Habitat:** Rock piles at higher elevations

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



### ELK

**Habitat:** Meadows, and where meadows and forests meet. Common at lower elevations in the fall, winter and spring

**Viewing Tips:** Look for elk at dawn and dusk. During the fall mating season, bull elk can be heard bugling and seen sparring with their large antlers.

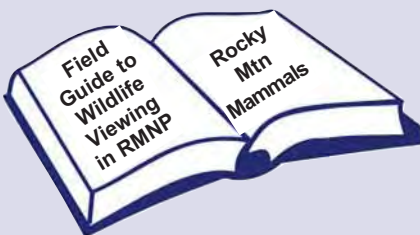


## How To Best Enjoy Watching Wildlife

- Never, ever feed wildlife. Feeding reduces its ability to survive the long mountain winter. When they panhandle by roadsides, animals fall easy prey to automobiles. As they become habituated to humans and lose their natural fear, the animals become aggressive and may be destroyed. Feeding or harassing wildlife is illegal in all national parks.
- Watch from a distance. Use binoculars or a telephoto lens to get close-up views. Following larger animals too closely to get a photograph or a better look can stress them and threaten their health. If animals notice you or if they seem nervous, you are too close. Move away quietly.
- Obey all signs posting closed areas. At different times of the year, some areas are closed to protect wildlife during nesting, mating and birthing seasons.
- Use of wildlife calls and spotlights is illegal. They stress animals and alter their natural behavior.

- Keep pets in your vehicle. They may scare wildlife, and wild animals can hurt your pet.
- Large animals such as elk, sheep, bears and mountain lions can be dangerous. Check at visitor centers for valuable tips on safety around wildlife.
- Drive slowly and cautiously. Watch for animals crossing the road. Deer and elk are seldom alone. If you see one animal, look for others that may follow.
- Stop your car to watch animals only if you can pull off the road safely. Do not block traffic.
- When possible, get away from roadsides and sit quietly to observe and listen for wildlife. Talk only when necessary, and do so quietly so you don't disturb the animals or other wildlife watchers. If viewing from your vehicle, turn off the motor.■

### See The Bookstore For:







## PEACE, NATURE PREVAIL DURING THE QUIET SEASONS

Summer in Rocky Mountain National Park means green meadows, shimmering lakes, plentiful wildlife and flower shows on the alpine tundra. But to many visitors, memories of the warmer months also include full campgrounds, long searches for parking spaces and jockeying with other visitors for the perfect shot of a popular lake or waterfall.

It's certainly possible to find quiet places in the summertime, but many visitors are discovering the fall, winter and spring seasons, when peace prevails at Rocky Mountain.

The park is open year-round. Only Trail Ridge Road, Old Fall River Road and some secondary dirt roads are closed by winter's heavy snows, but both sides of the park always have miles of open roads to explore.

More than half of the park's approximately three million annual visitors arrive during June, July and August, leaving the remainder of the year relatively uncrowded. An average winter day sees only one-tenth the number of people visiting than a typical summer day.

In addition to the quiet, off-season Rocky Mountain National Park offers an ever-changing palette of colors and a near-full slate of activities.

As summer becomes **autumn**, the shortening days trigger changes in the natural world. Two of the park's most anticipated events occur in September and October.

Elk begin moving to lower elevations in preparation for the rut, or mating season. Bulls display magnificent racks of antlers, and their eerie bugling carries across the meadows and forests. Weekend evenings attract many elk watchers to meadow areas, but visitors who choose a weekday – or even better, an early morning – may witness these animals in relative solitude. Favorite elk viewing areas include Horseshoe Park, Beaver Meadows and Moraine Park on the park's east side; Harbison Meadow and the meadow at the Holzwarth Historic Site on the west side.

Coinciding with the elk rut are the yellows, golds and oranges of changing leaves. Aspen trees, which occur on both sides of the park, offer the most brilliant colors. A walk through the autumn forests also reveals reds and golds of numerous understory plants. Autumn days often are splendid – crisp and clear with an occasional snowfall.

**Winter** begins early at Rocky Mountain's high elevations. By mid-November, the Kawuneeche Valley

often has enough snow for snowshoe treks and long, gentle cross-country ski tours.

Favorite west side cross-country ski areas include the Bowen-Baker and Holzwarth Historic Site areas, which feature beginner-level routes. The Colorado River Trail and the East and North Inlet trails lead to intermediate and more difficult terrain.

East of the Continental Divide, snows accumulate later in the season. By December, trails from the Bear Lake and Glacier Gorge trailheads lead snowshoers and intermediate-to-advanced skiers to numerous frozen subalpine lakes. The Wild Basin and Glacier Basin areas have gentler terrain for beginner and intermediate cross-country skiers.

For those not looking for snow, some east side hiking trails remain surprisingly snow-free – or nearly so – year-round. Conditions change regularly throughout the season, so be sure to check at a visitor center for the latest hiking, snow and avalanche conditions before starting out.

Wildlife viewing is especially rewarding in the wintertime. The sights of a coyote hunting in a snow-covered meadow, of herds of elk with their breath condensing in the air, of a cow and a calf moose silhouetted against the snow, are unforgettable park images.

**Spring** arrives at different times in the park, depending on elevation and slope. In the Kawuneeche Valley and Bear Lake areas, late-lying snow still pleases skiers and snowshoers. Meanwhile, lower-elevation areas are starting to bud and bloom.



Winter brings snow, serenity and regular wildlife sightings to Rocky Mountain National Park. The park's fall, winter and spring seasons offer smaller crowds and plentiful activities. (Dick Orleans)

Mountain bluebirds, which start returning from their winter grounds in early March, are brilliant in flight. Beginning in mid-March, look for nesting raptors on Lumpy Ridge as peregrine and prairie falcons, golden eagles, red-tailed hawks and ravens nest on the warm, sunny cliffs. In early April, stroll Moraine Park to search for the season's first wildflowers, including tulip-shaped pasqueflowers, pink spring-beauties and yellow sage buttercups. Also in early April, ground squirrels and marmots emerge from hibernation.

As the spring season progresses, the melting snowline climbs higher into the mountains. Following soon are

summer and summer's crowds. But those relatively few people who visited the park during the fall, winter and spring, Rocky Mountain's quiet seasons, know they and nature shared some very special moments indeed. ■

Discover more winter activities in Rocky at: [www.nps.gov/romo/playourvisit/winter\\_activities.htm](http://www.nps.gov/romo/playourvisit/winter_activities.htm)

## Scenery And Solitude Await On Rocky's West Side

Rich in its variety of resources and human history, the park's Colorado River District west of the Continental Divide is filled with opportunities for adventure, exploration, solitude and reflection.

The Utes and Arapahos were the most recent American Indians to frequent the area. They did not settle permanently, but their passages over high mountain passes within the park were regular occurrences. Active settlement in the park's west began during the late 1800s, when ranchers and miners first entered the Kawuneeche Valley. The Civilian Conservation Corps was active during the 1930s, building trails, roadways and a fire lookout in the park, and reservoirs on its borders.

The landscape has changed over the years, but evidence of earlier inhabitants and spectacular views are there for discovery.

A pleasant 3 3/4 miles of hiking along the Colorado River from the Colorado River Trailhead leads to Lulu City, site of an early mining town. The Holzwarth Historic Site, a dude ranch that opened in 1920, is reached after a short walk across a large meadow.

For those who favor longer, more strenuous hikes, the Shadow Mountain Fire Lookout and the Top of the Devil's Staircase are recommended destinations.

The hike to the Shadow Mountain Lookout on the East Shore Trail, which begins at the East Shore Trailhead south of Grand Lake, covers six miles round trip and 1,700 feet in elevation gain.

The lookout affords unparalleled views of the headwaters of the Colorado River, glimpses of the Continental

Divide, a panoramic view of the three lakes – Granby, Shadow Mountain and Grand – and sightings of impressive mountains, including the Vasquez, Indian Peaks and Gore ranges.

Completed in 1933, this fire lookout was staffed seasonally over several decades. It was occupied as recently as the early 1990s, when fire danger was exceptionally high. Restored in the mid-1990s, the fire lookout is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Hikers begin their approximately seven-mile (round trip) hike to the Top of the Devil's Staircase at the East Inlet Trailhead immediately southeast of the town of Grand Lake. A while after passing a small but exquisite waterfall, the ascent becomes increasingly aggressive, climbing steadily for the next mile.

Hikers see blackened aspen trees and related signs of the Mount Cairns fire of 1994. They pause to enjoy the emerging westward views of Grand Lake as they climb the Devil's Staircase. This section of trail seemingly was etched out of the rock wall. Finally, after a sharp switchback, the trail arrives at its destination, a rock shelf offering spectacular views. ■



Shadow Mountain Lookout







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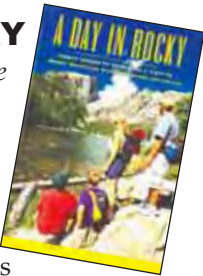


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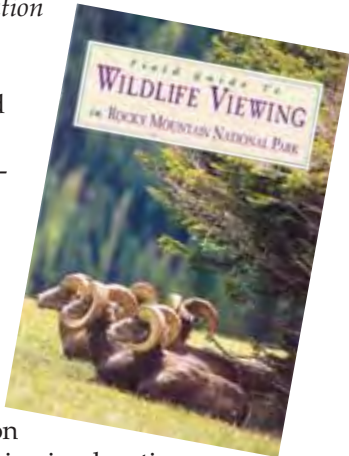
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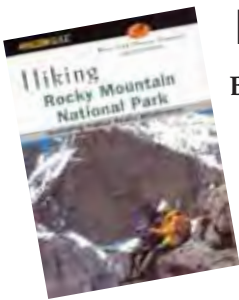
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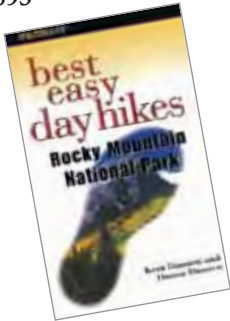


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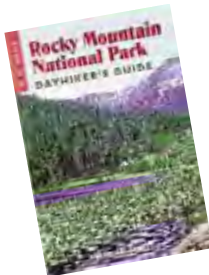
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# Calendar

Event	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Winter Activities Season												
Black Bear Cubs Born												
Mountain Bluebirds Return												
Ice Out At The Loch												
Bird Migrations												
Bighorn Lambs Born												
Elk Calves Born												
Park's Summer Season												
Trail Ridge Road Open												
Orchids In Bloom												
Tundra Flowers In Bloom												
Wildflower Season Peaks												
Colo. Columbines In Bloom												
Old Fall River Road Open												
Heart Of Elk Rutting Season												
Aspen Turn												
Bighorn Sheep Mating Season												
Rangers Lead Walks & Talks												



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[www.nps.gov/romo/forkids](http://www.nps.gov/romo/forkids) (click on **Junior Ranger**)  
[www.heartoftherockies.net](http://www.heartoftherockies.net) (click on **Just for Kids!**)