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YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE PARKS

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

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WELCOME

Welcome to Rocky Mountain National Park and some of the highest mountains in the continental United States. This “park in the sky” captures the full grandeur of the Rocky Mountains and is understandably one of the country’s most frequently visited national parks.

“This is a beautiful world, and all who go out under the open sky will feel the gentle, kindly influence of nature and hear her good tidings,” wrote Enos Mills, a dedicated naturalist whose vision and determination helped to save this spectacular land.

The park unveils a stunning array of **mountain peaks**, 77 of which reach elevations of 12,000 feet or more. Forests of pine, spruce and fir tower over wide valleys where aspen and willow line meandering streams.

At the highest elevations, above the treeline, is the fascinating, arctic-like alpine tundra, fraught with blizzards in winter and filled with flowered meadows in summer. All of this is just 65 miles northwest of Denver.

Colorado and Rocky Mountain National Park offer visitors a variety of activities throughout the year, ranging from snow-related pursuits during the winter, to hiking, rock climbing, camping and fishing during the summer. Plan visits to the park during different seasons so that you may experience all of its wonders.

During your visit, please remember to respect the park’s fragile resources and minimize human impact. With all of our help, its natural resources will continue to be protected and preserved for future generations.

This guide to Rocky Mountain National Park is provided by Xanterra Parks & Resorts® and *American Park Network* and is designed to enhance your appreciation and enjoyment of the park. It has been made possible by the support of the sponsors whose messages appear inside. Have a great time in the park!

FUN FACTS

Established: Congress passed the Rocky Mountain National Park act in 1915 focused on preserving the Rockies’ natural wonders, especially the tundra environment.

Land Area: The park protects over 265,000 acres.

Highest Elevation: The summit of Longs Peak reaches 14,259 feet.

Natural Features: Rocky Mountain National Park is the highest national park in the country, with elevations ranging from 7,860 feet to 14,259 feet. There are 77 peaks above 12,000 feet.

Popular Activities: Summer and fall are best for hiking, climbing and fishing. Winter is great for snowshoeing and wildlife watching—elk, deer and coyotes are active.

Bicycling: Trail Ridge Road and the Horseshoe Park Estes Park Loop are the main bicycle routes. There are no designated bike lanes along park roads. Bicycling is not allowed on park trails.

Hiking: There are more than 350 miles of trails to explore.

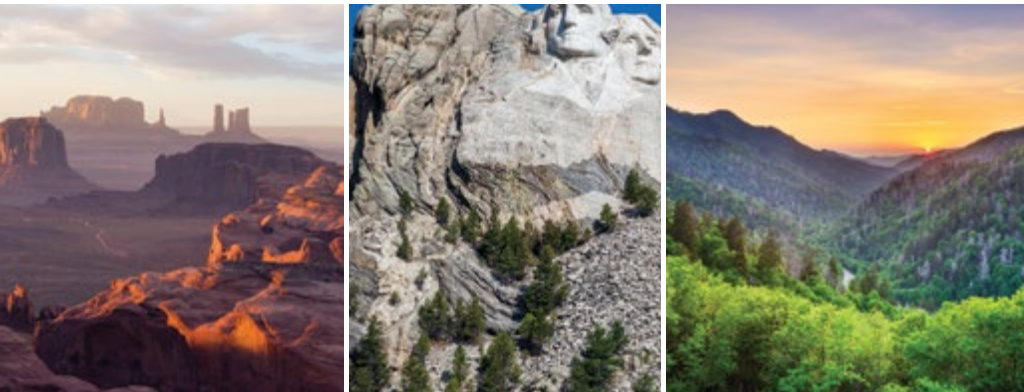
Camping: There are five drive-in campgrounds and more than 180 wilderness campsites. Permits are required for overnight stays in the wilderness.

Zion National Park is the result of erosion, sedimentary uplift, and Stephanie Shinmachi.

Members of the National Park Foundation community, like Stephanie, volunteer in parks across America, supporting everything the National Park Service does, from conservation to education. Find your park and join today.



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nationalparks.org



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CONTENTS



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Welcome	2
What's New!	6
Plan Your Visit	8
Park Regulations & Safety	15
Who's Who at the Park	18
History & Culture	19
Preservation	24
Estes Park	28
Centerfold Map	
Grand Lake	31
Things To Do	34
Sights To See	40
Camping	42
Walking & Hiking	44
Just for Kids	46
Nature & Wildlife	47
Photography	52
If You Only Have a Day	56

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WHAT'S NEW! WHY PARKS MATTER

“There is nothing so American as
our national parks.”

— Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Access to parks is one of the things that's truly great about life in America. Not just national parks, like FDR stated, but *all* parks. Parks afford everyone, regardless of race, income, social status or age, the opportunity to escape the concrete jungle and step into the wild. It doesn't matter whether it's a small step into a local park or a giant leap into the backcountry. The effect is the same. Time in nature feels good. Other values that parks bring may be less obvious. Since we take care of the things we value, I'd like to highlight a few other benefits we all receive from public lands:

Economic Impact America's federal, state and local parks and public lands generate \$200 billion in annual economic activity and support more than one million jobs! You might help a dozen businesses during a weekend hiking trip. Imagine the impact of a week-long national park adventure. Parks raise property values, too!

Conservation Trees produce the oxygen we need to survive, but did you know that they also help save money? It's estimated that trees in cities save \$400 billion in costs to retain stormwater. A single tree can store 100 gallons or more, which helps keep streets from flooding and reduces the need for artificial storage facilities. A tree can also absorb as much as three tons of carbon gas during its lifetime.



Mark, Joel & Alex — Support parks, stay healthy!

Take a deep breath in a park and you'll immediately know the value of greenspace.

Health & Wellness Studies show a high correlation between time spent in parks and improved health (and, in my view, happiness). You move more when you're outside, which decreases stress, makes you more fit and reduces the risk of many health issues, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. Exercise (which parks inspire) also positively impacts your cholesterol levels. A few years ago, I started bicycling to work every day. A year later, my overall cholesterol went down while my HDL—the “good” cholesterol—went up. The results of a small change in your exercise routine can be amazing! Parks invite this change.

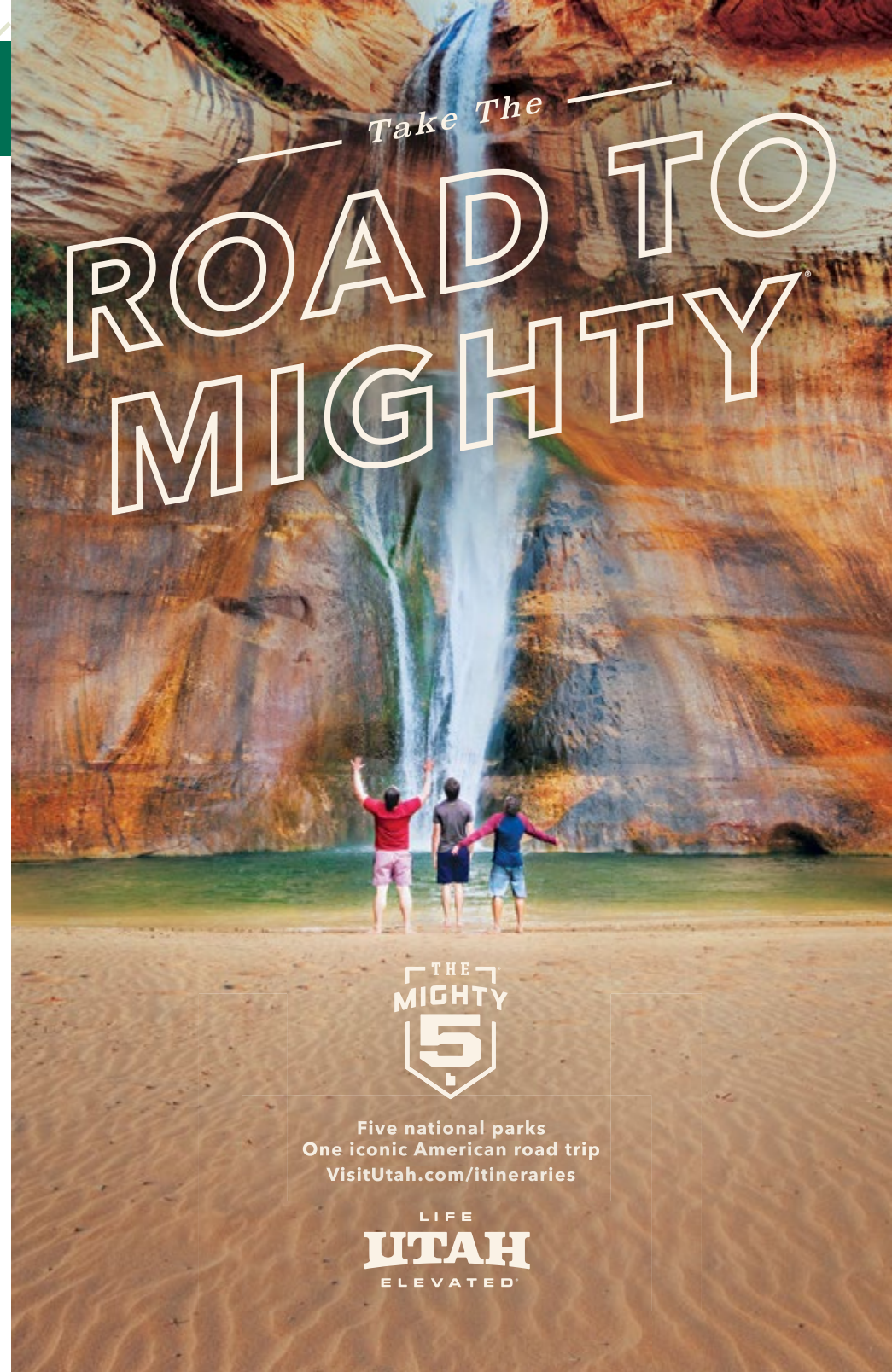
The value of parks is undeniable, so follow FDR's lead and support our public lands. It's the all-American thing to do. (Congress, take note!) You'll save the country money while improving our nation's health—and your own, too. Not a bad combination!

mark@americanparknetwork.com



GET CONNECTED AT YOUR FAVORITE PARKS!

Parks are about enjoying nature, but what if you want to share a great picture or are awaiting an important email? If you're looking to add connectivity to your park, or if you already have Wi-Fi and would like help adding content or generating sponsor revenues, please let us know at wifi@americanparknetwork.com.



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GETTING TO THE PARK

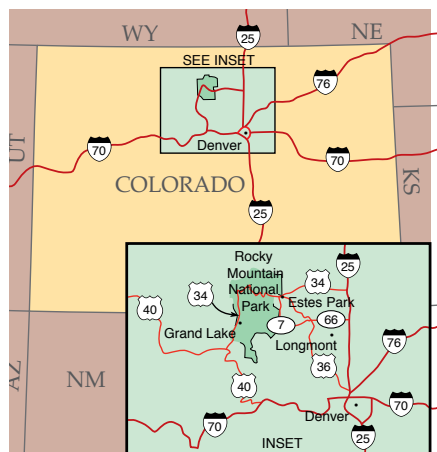
There is no air, rail or bus service directly to the park. Amtrak serves Granby, Co., where **rental cars** are available at Avalanche Car Rental (advance reservations recommended); call (888) 437-4101 or visit avscars.com.

Estes Park Shuttle & Mountain Tours provides transit from Denver to Estes Park (advance reservations necessary); call (970) 586-5151 or visit estesparkshuttle.com. In Estes Park, rental cars are available at Estes Park Rent-A-Car at 1110 Woodstock Drive; please call (970) 577-9715.

You can enter Rocky Mountain National Park from the west via U.S. 34 from Grand Lake, or from the east via either U.S. 34 or U.S. 36 from Estes Park.

OPERATING HOURS AND ENTRANCE FEES

Rocky Mountain National Park is open 24 hours a day, year-round. Park visitor centers are closed on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.



Daily entrance fees are \$20 per vehicle and motorcycle, and \$10 per hiker and bicyclist. A seven-day pass is \$30 per vehicle, \$25 per motorcycle and \$15 per hiker and bicyclist. An annual Rocky Mountain Pass is \$60 and is available at any park entrance. An annual combined pass to Rocky Mountain National Park and Arapahoe National Recreation Area costs \$70 and is available at any park entrance station.

EVERY KID IN A PARK

To help engage and create our next generation of park visitors, supporters and advocates, the Obama administration, in partnership with the Federal Land Management agencies, launched the Every Kid in a Park initiative. The immediate goal is to provide an opportunity for each and every 4th grade student or home-schooled 10-year-old across the country to experience their federal public lands and waters in person.

All kids in the fourth grade have access to their own Every Kid in a Park pass at everykidinapark.gov. This pass admits the pass owner and any accompanying passengers in a private non-commercial vehicle to the park.

You can obtain the pass by visiting everykidinapark.gov and you must print it and present it at the park. The Every Kid in a Park pass is valid until August 31, 2017.

PARK ROADS

You can drive through the park along Trail Ridge Road, either from Grand Lake in the west, or from the Beaver Meadows or Fall River entrance stations in the east. Heavy winter snows close the upper reaches of Trail Ridge Road, usually sometime be-



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tween mid-October and early November. Weather permitting, the road normally reopens on Memorial Day weekend, although weather can cause temporary closures throughout late May and during the first part of June.

During peak times, NPS may temporarily restrict vehicle access to popular areas of the park due to congestion, especially during busy summer weekends. In 2016, the park service restricted access in the Bear Lake corridor, the Wild Basin area and at Alpine Visitor Center.

Park roads that are open year-round include Trail Ridge Road to Many Parks Curve (eight miles) on the east side and to the Colorado River Trailhead (10 miles) on the west side. Scenic Bear Lake Road, which takes you well into the park, stays open on the east side. These roads may close briefly due to heavy snowfall. For the most up-to-date status of Trail Ridge Road, which is available 24 hours a day, please call (970) 586-1222. This line is updated any time the road's sta-

tus changes. For other road and general park information, please call (970) 586-1206.

PARK SHUTTLES

The **Bear Lake** and **Moraine Park shuttle buses** provide service within the park, and the **Hiker Shuttle** runs on an express route between the Estes Park Visitor Center and Beaver Meadow Visitor Center. A park pass or entrance fee is required to board the Hiker Shuttle. Visitors can now purchase 1 or 7-day passes online. Visit nps.gov/romo to purchase passes. Schedules vary by date and time of day; check the park newspaper, contact the park at (970) 586-1206 or visit nps.gov/romo.

BUS TOURS

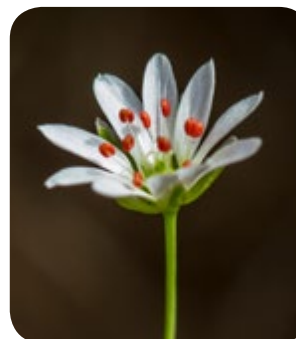
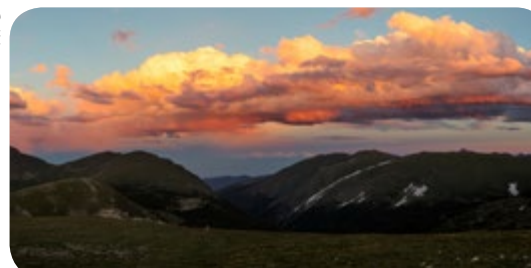
Several private companies conduct bus tours in the park. For more information about these tours, stop by the Estes Park Visitor Center, located at 500 Big Thompson Ave. in Estes Park, or call (800) 443-7837.

FEDERAL RECREATION LANDS PASSES

A federal recreation pass is helpful if you plan to visit many national parks, forests or other federal lands. For information, call (888) 275-8747 or visit store.usgs.gov/pass

Type	Cost	Availability	Details
Annual Pass	\$80 \$20	General Public	This one-year pass is available on site, by phone or online (see above). New annual Senior Pass coming in 2017
Senior Pass	\$10	U.S. residents age 62+	This lifetime pass is available on site or via mail order. ID required. Cost of the lifetime Senior Pass will increase to \$80 in 2017.
Military Pass	Free	U.S. military members and their dependents	This one-year pass is available on site. ID (CAC Card or DoD Form 1173) required.
Access Pass	Free	U.S. residents with permanent disabilities	This lifetime pass is available on site or via mail order. ID and documentation required.
Volunteer Pass	Free	250 cumulative volunteer service hours	Inquire locally to obtain information about this one-year pass.

NPS



Rocky Mountain National Park's abundant wildlife and beautiful landscapes will inspire any visitor.

VISITOR CENTERS

The park's five visitor centers are staffed by NPS rangers and volunteers who protect the park and ensure that your visit is a pleasant one. They are available to address any questions.

Visitor center hours vary throughout the year. Please check the park newspaper, call (970) 586-1206 or visit nps.gov/romo for schedules. All park visitor centers are closed on Thanksgiving and December 25.

Entering the park on U.S. 36 from the east by way of Estes Park, stop at the

Beaver Meadows Visitor Center. View an excellent film and a relief model of the park to help you plan your stay. The **Wilderness Office** is located adjacent to the visitor center.

Located in the eastern part of the park on U.S. 34, the **Fall River Visitor Center** has beautiful wildlife displays and a discovery room for children of all ages.

Situated in a historically significant building, the **Moraine Park Discovery Center** is located on Bear Lake Road, about 2.5 miles southwest of the U.S. 36

entrance on the eastern side of the park. This historic facility has a variety of fun, hands-on exhibits designed by the Denver Museum of Natural History.

The **Kawuneeche Visitor Center** is located to the north of the town of Grand Lake, on the western side of the park. Exhibits and a beautiful park film will help you plan your visit. Wilderness permits are issued here as well.

Located atop Fall River Pass at 11,796 feet, the **Alpine Visitor Center** is the highest elevation visitor center in the National Park system. It is accessible from both the east and west entrances in summer. Here you'll find exhibits about the natural history of the alpine tundra. The Trail Ridge gift shop and snack bar are located next door.

The **Sheep Lakes Information Station** is 1.8 miles west of the Fall River Entrance on U.S. Highway 34 in Horseshoe Park. Visitors can get information about animals in the park at this premier wildlife viewing spot, where you may see bighorn sheep, elk, badgers and coyotes.

PARK INFORMATION

To obtain an information packet including a park map and newspaper, please call (970) 586-1206, e-mail romo_information@nps.gov, or write: Information Office, Rocky Mountain National Park, 1000 Highway 36, Estes Park, CO 80517. Extensive information is available online at nps.gov/romo. Here you'll also find links to the park's Twitter, Facebook and other social media pages.

PARK NEWSPAPER

The park newspaper provides seasonal information about park activities, ranger-led programs, trails, and campgrounds. You can pick up a free copy at any entrance station or visitor center in the park or download it at nps.gov/romo.

VISITOR SERVICES

Park entrances in the well-developed towns of Estes Park (east) and Grand Lake (west) offer many services. Full-service **banks** and **ATMs, post offices, gas stations, medical/dental services,**

religious services, public showers, laundry facilities, veterinarians, pet boarding and other pet services are all available in nearby communities. **Internet** access is available in Grand Lake at the Juniper Library, (970) 627-8353, and in Estes Park at the Estes Park Public Library, (970) 586-8116.

WEATHER

In the park, the weather can change quickly at any time of the year, and a wide variation between day and nighttime temperatures is typical. The hike you begin on a cloudless morning may end in a downpour or thunderstorm. Snow is possible at any time of year. Be prepared by wearing proper footwear, and taking extra clothing and rain gear when hiking.

LODGING AND DINING

A variety of restaurants and comfortable accommodations are available in the towns of Estes Park and Grand Lake. See the corresponding chapters of this guide for more information.

WILDERNESS PERMITS

Permits are not required for day use in the wilderness, however they are required for overnight stays (violators will be fined). Make your permit reservation in advance online (October 1 to December 31 and March 1 to May 15), or by mail or in person any time. Make your in-person reservation at the Wilderness Office next to Beaver Meadows Visitor Center on the east side of the park, or at the Wilderness Office inside the Kawuneeche Visitor Center on the west side of the park.

A \$26 administrative fee is charged from May to October for each wilderness trip reservation. Wilderness permit hold-

ers must also pay park entrance fees. Due to recurring wildlife incidents, all food items and garbage must be secured inside commercially-made, carry-in/carry-out, bear-resistant food storage canisters between May 1 and October 31 in park wilderness areas below tree line and in the Boulder Field on Longs Peak. Other methods of food storage are not permitted in the wilderness during this period.

There are inherent risks to traveling and camping in the wilderness. One of those risks is hazard trees. Be watchful for dead standing trees that could blow over or fall as you hike and when you set up camp.

For more information, please call the Wilderness Office at (970) 586-1242 or write to: Wilderness Office, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, CO 80517.



IMPORTANT NUMBERS	
General Park Information	(970) 586-1206; TTY (970) 586-1319 nps.gov/romo ; romo_information@nps.gov
Trail Ridge Road Status (24 hours)	(970) 586-1222
Lost and Found	(970) 586-1242
Emergencies	911
Camping Reservations Aspenglen, Moraine Park & Glacier Basin	(877) 444-6777 recreation.gov ; reserveamerica.com
Backcountry Camping Information	(970) 586-1242
Lodging Estes Park Visitor Center Grand Lake Chamber of Commerce	(800) 443-7837 • visitestespark.com (800) 531-1019 • grandlakechamber.com
Colorado Department of Transportation Road Conditions	(877) 315-7623 (in state) or (303) 639-1111 cotrip.org

GIFT SHOPS AND BOOKSTORES

The **Trail Ridge Store**, located atop Trail Ridge Road, is a unique place to stretch your legs, enjoy a hot beverage or bite to eat, shop for distinctive collections of regional and handmade gifts and Native American crafts, and find the perfect souvenir. For more information, visit trailridgegiftstore.com.

There are many gift shops in Estes Park and Grand Lake. The park visitor centers also have bookstores, where helpful literature, books and other specialty items are available.

LOST AND FOUND

Lost and found claims can be made at the Backcountry Office. For more information, please call (970) 586-1242.

STORES AND SUPPLIES

The **Café at Trail Ridge** near the Alpine Visitor Center serves sandwiches, salads and snacks. Ice, firewood, kindling, charcoal, lighter fluid, soft drinks and ice cream are sold at all park campgrounds during summer (Longs Peak and Timber Creek campgrounds only sell firewood). There are **grocery stores** and **sporting goods shops** in Estes Park and Grand Lake. Estes Park and Granby have **pharmacies**.

SPECIAL SERVICES †

Designated parking spaces for visitors with disabilities, including ramps where necessary, are at all visitor centers. Most restrooms in the park are **wheelchair accessible**. The park's orientation film is captioned, and its TTY number is (970) 586-1319. Inquire at any visitor center about accessible services.

Two campgrounds, Moraine Park and Timber Creek, have accessible campsites. The wilderness **Sprague Lake Accessible Camp** is located off a 120-yard spur of the Sprague Lake Trail.

The group campsite is designed to accommodate all visitors with disabilities. The camp is 0.5 mile from the parking lot via a packed gravel, level grade trail. Use of this camp is by reservation only and there is a three night camping limit. To make reservations, contact the Backcountry Office at Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, CO 80517; or call (970) 586-1242.

Several park trails are wheelchair-accessible. The 0.5-mile **Sprague Lake Trail** loops around beautiful Sprague Lake.

The accessible **Coyote Valley Trail** is located six miles north of the park's west entrance. This one-mile packed gravel, level trail follows the Colorado River through meadows with insightful interpretive signs along the way. Accessible restrooms and parking are available at the trailhead.

The first portion of the 0.5-mile packed gravel trail around **Bear Lake** is accessible in either direction; farther along, grades exceed 8 percent in places.

The **Lily Lake Nature Trail**, seven miles south of Estes Park on Colorado Highway 7, is encircled by a 0.75-mile packed gravel, level trail.

TEMPORARY CLOSURES

In order to protect park resources, the Superintendent may close areas of the park throughout the year. Temporary closures and usage restrictions allow hazard tree removal; protect elk, raptors and bighorn sheep; and protect fragile tundra. Some wilderness campsites, trailhead parking areas and picnic areas may be temporarily closed. Call (970) 586-1206 for more information or visit nps.gov/romo for park alerts and closure information. For updates on the current status of specific wilderness campsites call the park's Wilderness Office at (970) 586-1242.



PARK REGULATIONS & SAFETY

You can make the most of your visit to Rocky Mountain National Park by planning ahead and becoming acquainted with some simple safety precautions and park rules.



PARK REGULATIONS

Help preserve and protect the park by honoring the following NPS regulations.

CAMPING

Please camp only within designated campsite areas.

FIREARMS AND FIREWORKS

By federal law, people who can legally possess **firearms** under federal, Colorado and local laws may have firearms in Rocky Mountain National Park. It is the visitor's responsibility to know, understand and comply with all applicable firearms laws. Firearms are prohibited in certain facilities within the park, and signs are posted at public entrances. Hunting, recreational shooting and target practice are not allowed in Rocky Mountain National Park. Call the park Information Office at (970) 586-1206 if you have any questions. Other types of weapons that are not **firearms** are prohibited. The use of **fireworks** and **firecrackers** is prohibited.

FIRES AND FIREWOOD

Gathering **firewood** within the park is prohibited. Purchase bundles of firewood at campgrounds and in neighboring towns. **Fires** may be built in established fire grates only. Put out fires properly. Remove any

trash from fire grates and dispose of it in a proper receptacle.

HIKING

Always stay on established trails—“shortcutting” damages the environment. Always remember to **pack out** everything that you pack in.

PETS

Pets are prohibited on all Rocky Mountain National Park trails, tundra, and meadow areas. They are permitted in campgrounds, picnic areas and along roads, provided they are on leashes not exceeding six feet. For the safety of your pet and the benefit of the park wildlife and other visitors, please do not leave them unattended. You may not leave your pet unattended in vehicles if it creates a danger to the animal or if the animal becomes a public nuisance. Pets may not be left tied to vehicles, trees or other objects. If pet owners wish to hike with their dogs, many alternatives exist on trails outside Rocky Mountain National Park; check at a visitor center for information. Pet services and kennels are available in nearby communities.

VANDALISM

Please take home only pictures and memories. **Vandalism** or removal of rocks, plants, fossils, antlers or any item is strictly prohibited. Some of the park's wildflowers are protected species. Please don't pick or trample any plants or wildflowers.

WILDLIFE

It is illegal to feed, pet, hunt, capture or disturb wildlife in any way. While some ani-



NPS

Wildlife and people are bound to cross paths in the park; maintain a safe distance and keep wild things wild.

mals seem accustomed to people, they are wild and may cause injury. Take wildlife pictures from the road or trailside, and remember to keep a safe distance!



SAFETY TIPS

Please review and observe the following tips, which are designed to enhance your safety and enjoyment. *Safety is your responsibility!*

MOUNTAIN HEALTH

Visitors from lower elevations may experience **altitude sickness**: shortness of breath, fatigue, dizziness, headache, rapid heartbeat and occasionally nausea. It takes several days to adjust to the elevation change, but symptoms can be minimized by resting, eating lightly, drinking more water, avoiding cigarettes, alcohol and caffeine, and limiting strenuous activity. Seek relief by

heading to a lower elevation.

Hypothermia occurs when you are so chilled that your body can no longer warm itself. This can happen at any time, even on a cool summer day, if you are tired and wet. Warning signals include uncontrolled shivering and disorientation. Seek shelter and warm yourself with dry clothing and by drinking warm liquids. Seek medical assistance if symptoms persist.

HIKING

Falling trees are an ever-present hazard in the forest. Be aware of your surroundings. Dead trees can fall without warning, especially on windy days or following a snowstorm when branches are covered with snow.

Avoid traveling alone in the backcountry and always **stay together** as a group. Detailed information concerning your trip itinerary should be left with a responsible person so park rangers can be notified if you fail to return. Safety is your responsibility.

Lightning poses a hazard at all altitudes. If you are hiking and see a storm coming, retreat to a building or car. Be well below treeline before the storm hits.

Wear sturdy footwear when hiking. To prevent **blisters**, wear comfortable, broken-in shoes or boots that suit your needs and the terrain. Likewise, choose quality outdoor socks to wear for cushioning and protection.

Fires and floods may damage areas of the park. Wilderness travelers may encounter damaged or impassible trails, damaged or missing bridges and missing directional signs. Off-trail travel is not recommended in burned areas.

In winter, snow avalanche danger is often high. Stay back from steep snow slopes and cornices, and ask a ranger about current avalanche potential.

Most of the park is designated wilderness, where self-reliance and adventure are expected. Be prepared to take responsibility for your actions. Remember, safety is your responsibility.

WEATHER

Be prepared for **rapid changes in weather** year-round. Expect snow, gusty winds, and cold temperatures at any time. Carry extra clothing and rain gear. **Snow** often lingers well into the summer on mountain trails. It's easy to lose your footing on the slippery snow; wear proper footwear. If **lightning** storms approach, quickly get inside a vehicle or building, or if hiking, get below treeline.

WATER SAFETY

Swimming isn't recommended in lakes, rivers or tributaries. The water is very cold and the current is strong. Don't risk it.

Giardia lamblia flourishes in the streams and lakes of the Rockies. This tiny proto-

zoan causes *Giardiasis*, which can cause diarrhea, cramps and bloating. Always **carry adequate water** supplies and never drink water from streams or lakes unless you can purify it using a filter or iodine or by boiling it for 10 minutes.

EMERGENCIES

For emergency medical assistance, contact a ranger or visitor center or call 911. **Do not depend on a cell phone** for emergency help. Many locations in this rugged park are not serviced.

TICKS

Ticks, like mosquitoes, feed on blood from larger, warm-blooded animals to reproduce and can carry disease. Ticks are found throughout the park, particularly in the meadows, usually March through June. Avoid brushing against shrubs and walking through tall grass, use repellent and check for ticks regularly. If a tick becomes embedded, remove it carefully and completely with tweezers. Unremoved parts of the tick can cause serious illness. Seek medical attention if a rash appears at the site of the bite and you experience flu-like symptoms.



PACKING ESSENTIALS

Don't hit the trail without:

- Topographic Map & Compass + GPS
- Whistle
- Flashlight or Headlamp
- Sunglasses, Sunscreen and Hat
- High-energy Food & Plenty of Water
- Appropriate Clothing & Extra Layers
- Waterproof Matches
- Insect Repellent
- Pocket Knife
- First-Aid Kit
- Sturdy Footwear



WHO'S WHO AT THE PARK

At Rocky Mountain National Park, a number of different organizations are dedicated to making sure you have a memorable and safe experience.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS)

The National Park Service (NPS) is the federal custodian of Rocky Mountain National Park. As an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the NPS has the responsibility of preserving and protecting the natural and cultural assets of our national parks, protecting the wildlife therein and providing for the park's public use and enjoyment. For more information, please call (970) 586-1206 or visit nps.gov/romo.

XANTERRA PARKS & RESORTS®

Xanterra Parks & Resorts®, the nation's largest park management company, operates the Café at Trail Ridge and the Trail Ridge Store at Rocky Mountain National Park. The café and store are located near the Alpine Visitor Center. Call (970) 586-2133 or visit trailridgegiftstore.com for more information.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONSERVANCY

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization authorized by Congress to support the educational and visitor service activities of the National Park Service and to operate sales outlets within Rocky Mountain National Park, Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, and several U.S. Forest Service visitor centers and state park locations. Since 1931, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy,

formerly the Rocky Mountain Nature Association, has been publishing and selling books, maps and other educational items to help visitors understand park features and values.

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy further supports the National Park Service's interpretive mission by providing opportunities to learn about and explore Rocky Mountain National Park through the Rocky Mountain Field Institute programs. A wide selection of outdoor field seminars for adults, youth, families and groups is available. For more information, see the "Things to Do" chapter.

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy also serves the park through philanthropy, raising funds for projects in Rocky Mountain National Park and other public lands in the Rocky Mountain region. Since 1985, the conservancy has raised more than \$20 million for historic building restoration, trail construction, land protection and construction of visitor-use facilities including visitor centers, amphitheaters, museums, restrooms and accessible trails.

The conservancy's Next Generation Fund is an ongoing fundraising effort that supports educational programs for youth in Rocky Mountain National Park. The Next Generation Fund supports innovative programs and experiences for kids to help cultivate the conservationists of tomorrow. Visit rmconservancy.org to learn more.

Oh, Ranger!
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HISTORY & CULTURE

During the Ice Age, massive glaciers ground the landscape, shaping the meadows and peaks, and making the present-day park area an inhospitable land. It was not until some 11,000 years ago that humans began venturing into its valleys and mountains.

NATIVE PEOPLES

We know that even though the area was never the year-round home of early native peoples, the green valleys, tundra meadows and crystal lakes became favored summer hunting grounds for one particular group, the Ute tribe. In setting up their camps, they made use of the straight and slender lodgepole pine as tepee poles. Until the late 1700s, the Utes controlled the mountain territories. It was the Arapaho, venturing west from the Great Plains in search of bigger game, that drove the Utes beyond the Continental Divide. They were the area's first "tourists," for they left no trace of permanent settlements.

Teepee rings and other signs of summer camps were still evident by the time the first settlers arrived, but few vestiges of those times remain today.

EARLY EXPLORERS AND SETTLERS

The U.S. government acquired the lands that later became Rocky Mountain National Park as part of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. But French trappers, and the Spanish explorers who preceded them, seem to have skirted the current park boundaries in their wilderness forays. Even Major Stephen H. Long and his expedition forces avoided these rugged barricades in 1820—Long was never closer than 40 miles to the peak named for him.

Alexey Kamenskly



Hike to the majestic Ouzel Falls and see other falls and cascades along the way.

Published in 1843, *Scenes in the Rocky Mountains* described the explorations of Rufus Sage from Connecticut. It was the first account of the area's wonders to reach unbelieving Easterners. Sage spent four years in the Rockies and hunted deer for a month in the area we know as Estes Park.

The first settler in the area was Joel Estes, a Kentuckian with wanderlust. In 1860, Estes moved into a hunting cabin, where he stayed with his family. Winters proved too harsh for cattle, so six years later Estes sold out for a yoke of oxen. The Estes cabin was converted into guest accommodations in 1867, and from then on the number of visitors to the area grew steadily.

The west side of the Rockies was also attractive to settlers. In 1865, Grand Lake's first permanent white resident, "Judge" Jo-



Clockwise from top left: No Credit; Everett Historical; Wikimedia

Clockwise from top left: The Ute people are the oldest residents of Colorado. This photo of an Ute chief is from 1874. • President Woodrow Wilson signed legislation to protect the park. • Lulu City was a mining town in the late 1800's in what is now Rocky Mountain National Park

seph Wescott, came to Hot Sulphur Springs seeking the benefits of the waters. By 1877, he was Grand Lake's first postmaster. The Proctor family, friends of Wescott, arrived that same year and spent their summers on the lake until 1885. The Proctor's home, like many early settlers' homes, was not built to withstand the winters, which slowed the population growth of the area.

A MOUNTAIN MECCA

The Rockies continued to attract the adventurous, including the great explorer, John Wesley Powell, who conquered the summit of Longs Peak in 1868. Just five years later, Anna Dickinson became the first woman to successfully climb it.

Isabella Bird, an Englishwoman and the first female member of the Royal Geographic Society, visited Estes Park in the fall of 1873. Bird's book, titled *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, attracted many people to the area, as did Frederick Chapin's *Mountaineering in Colorado*. While much of the West was attracting homesteaders, the Rockies were establishing themselves as a popular tourist destination.

During that time, an Irish earl, Lord Dunraven, arrived and laid questionable claim to 15,000 acres as his private game preserve. He also built the fine Estes Park Hotel, locally known as the English Hotel.

By 1874, a stage line ran between Estes Park and Longmont by way of North Saint Vrain Canyon.

MINERS AND HOMESTEADERS

Because large veins of silver and gold had been discovered in other parts of the Rockies, miners considered the area a land of opportunity. They headed here in droves in the late 1870s during Colorado's gold rush. In 1879, Lulu City was founded in what is now the northwest part of the park. It became a booming mining town with a raucous reputation. Four years later, it was nearly deserted because the region's mineral riches were far less than what had been anticipated.

When the miners and first settlers arrived, the supply of game seemed endless. Bear, deer and elk were abundant. To feed the boomtown demand, commer-

cial hunters went to work. A single hunter could deliver a weekly supply of three tons of assorted big-game meat. By 1900, large game was almost gone from the east side of the park.

The rousing boom times yielded to an industrious homesteading period. Grand Lake became the supply and equipment depot for the boomtowns, and for a time, it was the county seat. Unfortunately, homesteading proved as difficult as mining.

Ranchers and farmers felt that the real wealth of the Rockies lay in its water and they fought over rights to it. They built ambitious canal systems to transfer water from the wetter western slopes to the drier eastern plains. The Grand Ditch in the Never Summer Range in the park intercepted several stream tributaries of the Colorado River and diverted them for irrigating eastern plains crops.

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DUDE RANCHES

A new enterprise, dude ranches, showed promise. Hotel de Hardscrabble, or Camp Wheeler, was one of the more successful ventures of the day. Built at the foot of Milner Pass, the cabin and tent resort housed guests who came on horseback and by wagon over rutty roads from Grand Lake or by an Indian trail from Estes Park. The ranch was known for its excellent meals of wild game and the hunting and fishing opportunities nearby.

PROTECTING THE ROCKIES

In 1903, F.O. Stanley, inventor of the Stanley Steamer automobile, came to Estes Park for his health. Impressed by the beauty of the valley and grateful for the improvement in his health, he decided to invest his money and his future there. In 1909, he opened the elegant Stanley Hotel, a classic hostelry exemplifying the golden age of touring.

Largely due to Stanley's efforts, the Estes Park Protective and Improvement Association was established to protect local wildflowers and wildlife as well as to improve roads and trails. It was the start of a conservation ethic that has become increasingly important and complex.

NATIONAL PARK STATUS

Enos Mills, who came to the Longs Peak area in 1884 when he was 14 years old, was important to the future of the area. A dedicated naturalist, he wrote eloquent books about the area's natural history. In 1902, Mills bought the Longs Peak Inn and began to conduct local nature trips.

In 1909, Mills first proposed that the area become the nation's 10th national park to preserve the wildlands from in-


appropriate use. He spent several years lecturing across the nation, writing thousands of letters and articles and lobbying Congress to create a new park that would stretch from the Wyoming border south to Pikes Peak, covering more than 1,000 square miles. Most civic leaders supported the idea, as did the Denver Chamber of Commerce and the Colorado Mountain Club. In general, mining, logging and agricultural interests opposed it. The compromise drafted by James G. Rogers, the first president of the Colorado Mountain Club, was the establishment of a smaller park (with an area of 358.3 square miles). On January 26, 1915, under President Woodrow Wilson, this land was declared Rocky Mountain National Park.

The park has since grown to 415 square miles. Today, it stands as a legacy to those pioneers who looked beyond its harvestable resources to its more lasting values.

Oh, Ranger!

FUN FACTS

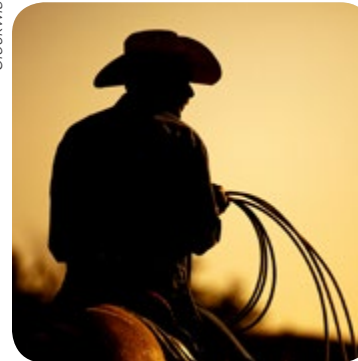
Q. IS IT TRUE THAT AMERICA'S FIRST FEMALE NATURE GUIDES WORKED IN THE PARK?



A. Yes! Rocky Mountain National Park licensed the nation's first female nature guides in 1917. The guides, sisters Ester and Elizabeth Burnell, learned the naturalist trade from advocate and author Enos Mills.

For answers to all your questions, go to **OhRanger.com**

Clockwise from top left: NPS; NPS; alptraum/Stock



Clockwise from top: The land that makes up Rocky Mountain National Park was acquired in the Louisiana Purchase; In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps cut trails, constructed buildings, and cleaned up lakes in the park; Visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park have been marveling at the sweeping landscape for more than a century; The Rocky Mountains have a long history of range riders and cowboys.



PRESERVATION

Until 1915, when Congress voted to establish this land as a national park, the area's valleys had been threatened by agricultural development, its wildlife endangered by hunting, and its hills, mountains and forests distressed by mining and logging.

It would be wonderful if that act had been all that was needed to protect the park. In the years that have followed, however, new challenges have arisen and today there are matters of serious concern, not only to conservationists, but to all who love and enjoy the park.

CONCERNS

Increased numbers of visitors within the park exert tremendous stress on the environment. When a majority of the park's annual visitors congregate in a few favored

spots, these areas are often critically damaged, in effect being "loved to death." For this reason, NPS may temporarily restrict vehicle access to busy areas of the park, especially on summer weekends. The Bear Lake Road corridor, Wild Basin area and Alpine Visitor Center all experienced restricted access during 2016.

NPS implemented a wilderness permit system to limit the number of backpackers using a specific area at any particular time. This system protects those sites and introduces these campers to beautiful areas that they might otherwise have overlooked.

Another threat to the park's well-being is the effect of continuing commercial and residential development encircling the park. Not only does land development limit the animals' winter ranges and migratory routes, endangering their survival, but it also alters and impairs the park's environment by increasing erosion and pollution, and disturbing the soils, vegetation and natural vistas.

MANAGING THE PARK: A BALANCING ACT

Naturalist John Muir once said, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it is hitched to everything else in the universe."

The park's resource stewardship staff is continually working to maintain the balance of the park's precious ecosystems. Careful planning and positive action are required as the park moves forward with its preservation efforts.

Park biologists recognize that the Rocky Mountain ecosystem doesn't stop at the park's boundaries, and work with local organizations to protect the park resources



Volunteers help educate future generations about the park. This volunteer is helping with the park's popular Junior Ranger program.

SEE SOME OTHER FAMOUS ROCK GROUPS



After Rocky Mountain National Park, visit the other end of the Rockies in Cody, Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park. With the historic town founded by Buffalo Bill, wildlife, peaks and much more, you'll be ready to rock.

PLAN YOUR TRIP
AT YELLOWSTONECOUNTRY.ORG OR CALL 1-800-393-2639

Buffalo Bill's
CODY/YELLOWSTONE COUNTRY

Fly into Cody via Delta and United Airlines





Many of the park's trails are in wilderness areas. Respect the habitat and practice 'Leave No Trace'.

beyond its borders. For example, the park collaborates with the state of Colorado to monitor air quality and manage elk populations.

The park is committed to restoring as much of the interior of the park as possible to pre-settlement conditions. Several lodges predating the park have been removed, as was a nine-hole golf course in Moraine Park. The downhill skiing facility at Hidden Valley was closed in 1992, and the area has been restored. An aqueduct and three dams built prior to the establishment of the park were purchased and removed and restoration of the former reservoirs completed.

The park's wilderness permit system, initiated in 1972, has established a means to limit camping in the wilderness to reduce human impact on the environment.

Potentially destructive recreational activi-

ties are prohibited within the park. Off-road recreational vehicle use, the use of bicycles on trails and hang gliding or paragliding from mountaintops (such as Longs Peak) is strictly forbidden. Please see the "Things To Do" chapter for more information about park activities.

CELEBRATING WILDERNESS

More than 250,000 acres within Rocky Mountain National Park are designated wilderness, which protects, forever, the wild values of this spectacular park.

As always, Rocky Mountain National Park must maintain a careful balance between preserving the park and providing for its visitors' enjoyment. It is a major task, one that requires all users to accept some responsibility as park stewards. Working together, park staff and visitors can ensure the survival of this precious wonderland.

NPS



NPS

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The Volunteer Program at Rocky Mountain National Park is one of the largest volunteer programs in the National Park Service, with approximately 1,700 volunteers every year.

- **Keep wildlife wild. Don't feed the animals and birds.** As strange as it may seem, not feeding them greatly protects their welfare. When wild animals and birds become dependent on humans for food, they lose their ability to forage and cease to be part of the balance of nature. The animals can no longer fend for themselves and are left at risk when handouts disappear at the end of the summer season. As Enos Mills said, "It is better to let the wild beast run and let the wild bird fly; each harbors best in his native nest, even as you and I."
- **Reuse and recycle** water bottles, plates and cups! Disposable items may make camp cleanup easier, but after they are thrown away they become a permanent part of the landscape. Bring your own reusable water bottles and refill them at park visitor centers. Use biodegradable packaging, as well as aluminum cans and glass bottles that can be recycled.

Recycling receptacles are available throughout the park.

- **Pack a small litter sack** with you when you hike and pack out more litter than you bring in. No one expects you to shoulder the burden of keeping the entire park clean, but there is a real satisfaction in knowing that you left the area in better shape than you found it.
- **Volunteer in the parks!** For more information about how to volunteer in Rocky Mountain National Park, visit nps.gov/romo or call (970) 586-1330. On a larger scale, there are programs such as **Take Pride in America**, in which groups can work together to clean up an area, improve hiking trails where erosion and overuse are taking a toll, or identify and remove exotic plants that might encroach on native species. Visit volunteer.gov or nps.gov/romo for more information.



ESTES PARK

At the eastern entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park, the village of Estes Park hosts more than 2 million travelers from around the world each year. Much of the commercial activity that takes place in Estes Park is due to the proximity of the national park and the ease with which park guests can access dining, shopping, lodging and other amenities. The national park—much of which is designated wilderness—is preserved in its natural state, offering guests the same natural Rocky Mountain experience throughout history.

Surrounded by snowcapped peaks ranging from 8,500 to more than 14,000 feet tall, the town complements the alpine views with downtown mountain gardens, grassy picnic areas, aspen groves, wildflowers and a river walk.

Estes Park provides a wide variety of cultural offerings. Visitors can enjoy chamber orchestras and jazz performances, as well as theater and concerts. Art galleries feature artistic works ranging from oil and watercolor paintings to woodcarvings and hand-blown glass.

Activities abound in Estes Park all year long. In addition to horse shows and rodeos, horseback riding, water activities (including boating and fishing on Lake Estes), shopping, biking and hiking are local favorites. Wintertime visitors enjoy snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, sledding and ice skating. Because the valley is surrounded by high, protective peaks, winter temperatures are mild. The area is not isolated—with no mountain passes to cross, the routes to Denver, Boulder, Fort Collins and other metropolitan areas are always open.

ACCOMMODATIONS

About 150 hotels, motels, lodges, bed and breakfasts, ranches, cabins, cottages, condominiums and campgrounds accommodate out-of-town guests to Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park. There are lodging options in every category, from rustic cabins to elegant resorts. Getting a good night's sleep is only a phone call or a mouse click away. Go to visitestespark.com for lodging availability and reservations.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For lodging referrals and information about services, dining, shopping, outdoor activities, local attractions and happenings and special events, contact the **Estes Park Visitor Center**, 500 Big Thompson Avenue (U.S. 34), P.O. Box 4426, Estes Park, CO 80517. Log on to visitestespark.com for more information or call (800) 443-7837 for assistance. The visitor center is open daily except for New Year's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

For information about exploring **Roosevelt National Forest**, contact the Arapaho & Roosevelt National Forests, Pawnee National Grassland Office at 2150 Centre Ave., Bldg. E, Fort Collins, CO 80526; (970)-295-6700.

Rocky Mountain National Park information can be found at nps.gov/romo or by calling (970) 586-1206.

Michael Langley



Estes Park, a gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park, boasts a wide variety of cultural offerings, dining options and activities, including the popular ghost tour at the Stanley Hotel.

DINING

Whether you are on the run or prefer a leisurely experience, you can choose from Estes Park's nearly 70 restaurants and cafés. Southwest, Thai, Chinese and Italian fare are among the selections available. Local cuisine such as fresh trout and wild game are expertly prepared by area chefs.

VISITOR SERVICES

Estes Park is a year-round community with services and businesses to meet every need, from modern medical facilities to corporate services. These include ATMs and banking services; gasoline stations and automobile and RV service; kennels for dogs and cats (reservations recommended); a post office; equipment and supplies for rent; and secretarial, copy and fax services. The experts can be found at the Estes Park Visitor Center,

located at 500 Big Thompson Avenue or by calling **(800) 44-ESTES**.

GIFTS

More than 200 unique locally owned shops in the Estes Park area offer an unsurpassed variety of goods and unique products. Handcrafted Western arts, crafts and jewelry, elegant gifts, collectors' items and fine apparel can be found in Estes Park. Most shops will ship purchases to any location within the United States.

MEDICAL SERVICES

In an emergency, call 911. The Estes Park Medical Center is a full-service hospital with a fully staffed, 24-hour emergency room. Additional emergency transportation by ambulance and helicopter is available.

Local family physicians, specialists, chiropractors, dentists and pharmacists can assist Estes Park vacationers and residents. For outpatient and clinical appointments and information, call the Estes Park Medical Center at (970) 586-2317, or contact the Timberline Medical Clinic at (970) 586-2343.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

More than two dozen churches, chapels and groups in the Estes Park area represent over the Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Anglican, Lutheran, Evangelical Free and Baptist churches, the Church of Christ, Pentecostal, Jehovah's Witnesses, Quaker, Christian Science, Baha'i, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All are located in inspirational settings and welcome the opportunity to share their ministries with guests.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Every month of the year brings a special event to Estes Park. A brief sampling:

Visit the **Wool Market and Fiber Festival**, held the second weekend in June, to experience shearing contests, browse an amazing selection of yarns and goods, and to watch competitions involving Colorado's champion goats, rabbits, sheep, llamas and alpacas.

During the second week in July, Estes Park hosts the **Rooftop Rodeo**, a western tradition that features a parade, hosts rodeo competitions and honors the annual Rooftop Rodeo Queen.

The **Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival** comes to town the weekend after Labor Day. Celtic competitions, demonstrations and celebrations highlight the weekend-long event.

The Fine Arts Guild sponsors the **Juried Fine Arts and Crafts Festival** held downtown every September.

Visit Estes Park



The Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival features traditional dance.

A series of **fall festivals** and events from September into October feature fine arts, showcase live music and celebrate the famous elk population of the Estes Valley. Autumn has become one of the most cherished times in Estes Park, and the festivals bring it all to life.

The day after Thanksgiving, Estes Park comes alive with **Catch the Glow**, a nighttime light parade to mark the illumination of the town's giant holiday display of murals and holiday lights. Activities include hayrides, visits with Santa and carolers along the town's main street. The day ends with a lighted parade at 5:30 p.m. About 30,000 people attend the event each year.



GRAND LAKE

Situated at the western border of Rocky Mountain National Park, near the headwaters of the Colorado River, Grand Lake is Colorado's largest natural lake. The village of Grand Lake—surrounded by Shadow Mountain, Grand Lake, Rocky Mountain National Park and Arapaho National Recreation Area—is the western gateway to the park and provides numerous visitor services and activities.

A travel destination point for more than 100 years, Grand Lake has carefully preserved its heritage as one of Colorado's oldest resort communities. Throughout town, you'll find the unique architectural style of a split lodgepole pine facade, wooden boardwalks and a rustic Western touch. The historic Kauffman House museum, a former stage stop and hotel built in 1892, provides a glimpse into life in the early days of Grand Lake.

Summer visitors enjoy fishing, mountain biking, boating, horseback riding, waterskiing, hiking, camping, birdwatching, rafting, festivals, shopping, live musical theater, swimming and picnicking at the town beach, and ATVing and dirt biking in the adjacent national forest. The Grand Lake Golf Course ranks as one of Colorado's 20 best.

In **winter**, you can snowmobile straight from your hotel room, through town and out onto hundreds of miles of groomed trails in the adjacent national forest. The trail system surrounding Grand Lake is consistently ranked in the top ten snowmobile trail systems in the country.

Alpine skiing is available at three major ski areas in the county, all within 50 minutes of Grand Lake. There are unlimited cross-coun-

try skiing opportunities in Rocky Mountain National Park and a maintained, cross-country ski trail system at the Grand Lake Ski Touring Center. The town has an ice-skating rink as well as plenty of good sledding hills and ice fishing sites.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Mountain log cabins and lodges, house-keeping rooms, condos, guest ranches, bed and breakfasts and motels are among the many accommodations available in Grand Lake. Overnight campgrounds for

CONTACT INFORMATION

Lodging, services and special events information are available at the **Grand Lake Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center**, located at the town entrance on U.S. 34 (the Colorado River Headwaters Scenic Byway). It is open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily. Contact the Chamber at P.O. Box 429, Grand Lake, CO 80447; call (970) 627-3402 or visit grandlakechamber.com. For a vacation planning packet, call (800) 531-1019.

For activities information, contact the **Grand Lake Metropolitan Recreation District**, P.O. Box 590, Grand Lake, CO 80447; (970) 627-8328 or visit online at grandlakerecreation.com. Its central offices, the Grand Lake Golf Course and the Ski Touring Center are located two miles off U.S. 34 at the end of County Road 48 (Golf Course Road). For more golf or ski information, call the Pro Shop/Ski Shop at (970) 627-8008, or the Grand Lake Chamber of Commerce.



Clockwise from top left: Square SM; Jay Erikson; Billy Hatham; Photo Project 2007

Situated at the western border of Rocky Mountain National Park, Grand Lake has been a popular travel destination for more than a century. Surrounded by mountains, the community offers activities that will be popular with your entire family.

tent and RV camping can also be found in the area.

DINING AND NIGHTLIFE

Many restaurants, cafés and saloons offer a variety of cuisine. Evening activities, including entertainment, dancing, and family-friendly events, are available year-round. Rocky Mountain Repertory Theatre performs Monday through Saturday nights at the theater on Grand Avenue, June through August, and weekends in September. Please call (970) 627-3421 for ticket and show information or visit rockymountainrep.com.

VISITOR SERVICES

You'll find visitor services in Grand Lake or the neighboring community of Granby.

These include banking and fax services, gasoline stations, a kennel and veterinarian (Granby only), Laundromat, pharmacy (Granby only), and a post office. Boat, kayak, personal watercraft, scooter, ATV and mountain bike rentals are offered in summer. Snowmobile, cross-country ski and snowshoe rentals are available in winter.

Along the boardwalk in Grand Lake you'll find grocery and sporting goods stores, as well as numerous specialty shops featuring handsome gifts, collectors' items and apparel.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Grand Lake has emergency medical technicians on duty 24 hours a day. To report an accident, fire or medical emer-

gency, call 911 or (970) 725-3343. Granby and Kremmling are served by the Middle Park Medical Center. Call (970) 887-5800 for the Granby location and (970) 724-3442 for Kremmling.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Weekly worship services are held in four locations within Grand Lake and include Catholic, Living Word Christian Presbyterian and Evangelical denominations.

SPECIAL EVENTS

January and February are prime time for winter activities like ice fishing derbies, Snocross snowmobile races, full moon cross-country ski trips, and the Concerts in the Pines music series. Don't miss the **Winter Carnival**, held on the first weekend of February. In June, the **Grand Lake Festival of the Arts** and the **Annual Chili**

Cook-off take place in the town square.

July Fourth features an awesome fireworks display over the lake and during the months of July and August, **Western Weekend** celebrates the town's cowboy and pioneer heritage. You can try farm-raised buffalo at the **Buffalo Barbecue and Parade**, watch the **Grand Lake Regatta** and **Lipton Cup Races**, or even check out the **Reptilian Ball**.

Several **golf tournaments** are held from June through September, and fall brings the **Fall Arts Festival**, a celebration of the changing color of the aspen trees.

Come November and December, holiday festivities include an **Arts and Crafts Bazaar**, the **Lighting of Grand Lake**, sleigh rides, caroling, a holiday melodrama, snowman contest, a full moon ski event and ice skating.

**Make your visit to
Rocky Mountain National Park
an adventure with the
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- **Tours**
- **Guided hikes**
- **Expert instructors**

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**Rocky Mountain
Conservancy**

**Information & registration at
RMConservancy.org
970-586-3262**



THINGS TO DO

Rocky Mountain National Park is more than just a summer destination. Visitors who enjoy the freedom and space found here in the summer often come back to enjoy the beauty of fall, winter and spring when the park is less crowded. Regardless of the season, the park will always offer a wide range of memorable experiences.



SPRING, SUMMER & FALL

PARK PROGRAMS

Park rangers conduct a variety of fun and educational summer activities, such as campfire programs, short nature walks and longer guided hikes, hands-on activities and talks. You can watch informative films at Beaver Meadows and Kawuneeche visitor centers or go to evening programs at some park campgrounds.

Visitors can enjoy the Rocky's spectacular night sky at special ranger-led astronomy programs. Even the Milky Way is visible on a clear night. Check the park newspaper for current programs and schedules.

NATURE TRAILS

You can buy booklets at visitor centers that provide self-guided walking, hiking and driving tours through various scenic areas of the park.

HIKING

Hiking is one of the most popular activities in Rocky Mountain National Park. Over

355 miles of trails lead to wilderness lakes, waterfalls and mountain summits. Trails vary in steepness and length, from an easy half-mile stroll to all-day treks. See the "Walking & Hiking" chapter for more information.

CLIMBING AND MOUNTAINEERING

The diversity of peaks and granite rock formations in the park provide for a wide spectrum of climbing including rock, big wall, snow and ice, bouldering and mountaineering.

One of the most popular climbs in Rocky Mountain National Park is the **Keyhole Route** on Longs Peak. Because snow and ice often linger on this high mountain, this climb is best attempted in summer between mid-July and early September. It is a strenuous hike to reach the Keyhole, and the climb beyond that involves rock scrambling and exposure where a fall could result in serious injury or death. This high-elevation climb requires planning and preparation. On average, it takes 10-12 hours to complete this climb, so an early start is advised to avoid afternoon thunderstorms and other challenges. Please refer to the park website or ask at visitor centers for additional information and current conditions on Longs Peak.

For safety considerations, climbers are encouraged to notify family or friends of their plans and contact them at the completion of any climb; you are responsible for notifying them when you return. Hazards, in the form of violent weather (lightning, wind, snow and rainstorms), snowfields (even in summer), and the dangers associated with climbing cause injuries every year and can ruin a vacation.



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333 E Wonderview Ave, Estes Park, CO 80517

Do not rely on cell phones in Rocky Mountain National Park. Many locations in this rugged park have no service. Remember, safety is your responsibility.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Special programs for children help them learn about the park's wild wonders. Ask at visitor centers about the park's Junior Ranger Program. Age-appropriate activity booklets are available for children, and when they finish the activities and complete the booklet, rangers will award them Junior Ranger badges. There are activity books for kids five and under, six to eight and nine and up. Complete listings of youth programs can be found in the park newspaper. An adult must accompany children at all times. For more information about these programs, and other fun activities for children, please see the "Just for Kids" chapter of this guide.

OUTDOOR FIELD ADVENTURES

The Rocky Mountain Field Institute in Rocky Mountain National Park is one of the oldest national park field programs in the United States. Courses are offered for adults, youth and families in ecology, photography, natural and cultural history, outdoor skills and hiking, art, nature writing and more. Educational adventures by bus and motor coach tours are also available.

Custom courses can be designed for any group including corporate retreats, Master Gardeners and family reunions. Continuing education credit for teachers is available for all courses and many multi-day courses are eligible for graduate and undergraduate credit through Colorado State University.

The institute is a program of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, formerly

the Rocky Mountain Nature Association. For more information, including a schedule, course descriptions, instructor biographies and applicable fees, visit rmconservancy.org. To register for a course or design a custom course for a group, call the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Field Institute at (970) 586-3262, email rachel.balduzzi@rmconservancy.org, visit rmconservancy.org or write to 1895 Fall River Road, Estes Park, CO 80517.

SADDLE RIDES

Saddle up and take a scenic ride into the park's high country. Guided rides can take you to a variety of beautiful places. For a complete listing of concession-operated horse stables, please call the park or visit nps.gov/romo.

Private horses and llamas taken into the wilderness are subject to the same regulations as commercial packers. The use of livestock is restricted to certain trails. Weed-free feed is required. Ask at a visitor center for the *Horses and Other Pack Animals* brochure, which explains regulations on taking animals into the wilderness. It is also available online at nps.gov/romo.

BICYCLING

Bicycles are permitted on all park roads that are open to motor vehicles, unless otherwise posted.

There are no designated bike paths along roadways, and shoulders are narrow. Due to the park's mountainous environment, most routes are strenuous. An early start is recommended to avoid heavier traffic and storms. Be prepared for frequent late morning and early afternoon thunderstorms, cold temperatures, high altitudes, narrow winding roads and heavy traffic. Bicyclists may only ride single file in the park. There is an

entrance fee for people entering the park on bicycles. Some roads open to bicyclists and pedestrians in late April, weather permitting, even before they open to vehicles.

FISHING

Fishing is allowed in most streams and lakes, except Bear Lake. A Colorado state license, available in neighboring towns, is required. Ask for a fishing brochure, which includes information about size limits and catch-and-release requirements, at any park visitor center. The regulations are also available online at nps.gov/romo.

SWIMMING

The high altitude of Rocky Mountain National Park keeps streams too cold for swimming (temperatures may be less than 50°F in mid-summer), and snowmelt causes fast-flowing water, creating dan-

gerous conditions. In some cases, hypothermia can set in within 15 minutes. Swimming is not recommended in lakes, rivers or tributaries. Check with the Estes Valley Recreation and Parks Department about its indoor pool.



WINTER

Winter is the off-season in the park, but there is still a lot to do and see. Be sure to ask the park ranger on duty about current weather and snow conditions.

WILDLIFE WATCHING

Elk and deer are often seen along roadsides near Estes Park and Grand Lake, wisely taking advantage of plowed paths when snow depths make travel difficult.

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Coyotes are also active at this time. Remember that the winter months place additional stress on animals. Please watch them quietly from a distance.

PARK PROGRAMS

Rangers present fun and interesting programs year-round; check the park newspaper for current schedules. The spectacular free, captioned park film is available at the Beaver Meadows and Kawuneeche visitor centers daily.

SNOWSHOEING AND CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

January, February and March are the best months for snowpack. Earlier in the year, snowpack may be spotty at lower elevations, especially on the east side. New snow on ice and wetter snowfall on top of light, dry snow create avalanche conditions, so choose your routes with great care and deliberation.

Ranger-led cross-country ski and snowshoe tours are offered on the park's west side; ranger-led snowshoe tours are offered on the park's east side. Check the park newspaper or call (970) 586-1206 for schedules. Reservations are required.

SNOWMOBILING

Snowmobiling is prohibited in the park, except for a short linkage between the Town of Grand Lake and the extensive trail system in the adjacent Arapaho National Forest.

BACKPACKING

Many backpacking areas are accessible during the winter months. Chances of snowfall gradually increase from September onward.

In winter, wilderness permits are by

self-registration with permit boxes at several locations. There is no fee between November 1 and April 30; in season, the fee is \$26 per reservation. For more information about wilderness permits, please see the "Plan Your Visit" chapter or call the park's Wilderness Office at (970) 586-1242.

ICE FISHING

Ice fishing in Rocky Mountain National Park requires a Colorado State fishing license and all fishing regulations apply. Ice fishing is permitted in the park except at Bear Lake. You may need skis or snowshoes to reach certain ice fishing sites. In designated wilderness, no mechanical means are allowed, so hand augurs only.

WINTER CAMPING

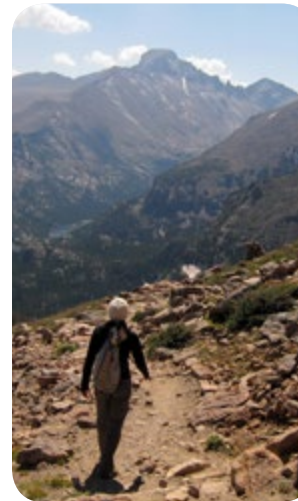
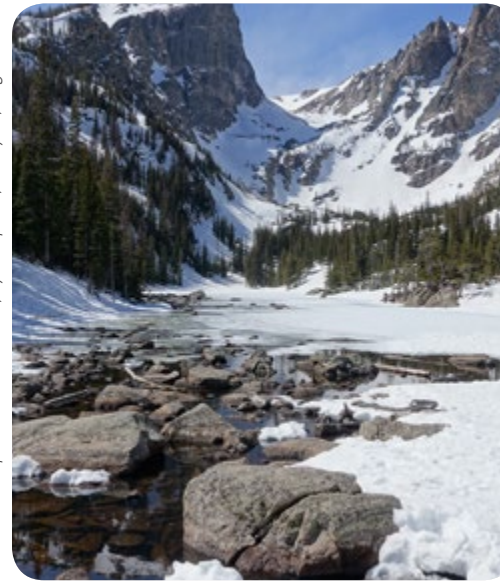
As winter extends its grip on the park, some campgrounds close. Moraine Park Campground (one loop) on the east side stays open year-round. In winter, water is turned off and dump stations are closed to prevent frozen pipes. For additional information, please visit nps.gov/romo, call the park at (970) 586-1206, or ask at park visitor centers. More information can also be found in the "Camping" chapter of this guide.

Lodging accommodations are available year-round in the nearby towns of Estes Park and Grand Lake. For more information, refer to the corresponding chapters of this guide.

WINTER SAFETY

Before undertaking any outdoor recreation in winter, be sure to know the conditions, have the proper equipment and know your own limitations. Safety is your responsibility.

Clockwise from top left: Scott McLeod; Tyler Cipriani; Daveynn; Miguel Vieira



No matter what time of year you visit, there are fun things to do in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Falling trees are an ever-present hazard, especially on windy days or following snowstorms when branches are snow-laden. Trees can fall without warning, so always be watchful in forested areas.

Avalanches can be triggered on seemingly gentle slopes. Ground blizzards

(blowing snow caused by high winds) can reduce visibility to zero and wind chills may drop temperatures dramatically. These are extreme examples, but please remember that outdoor recreation of any type in the Rocky Mountain winter is nothing to treat lightly.



SIGHTS TO SEE

Rocky Mountain National park encompasses a wide variety of environments—from lush valleys to craggy peaks. This living showcase of the grandeur of the Rockies provides opportunities for countless breathtaking experiences and adventures.

TRAIL RIDGE ROAD

The park's heavily traveled "highway to the sky" is the highest continuous paved road in the United States. At its highest point, the road is 12,183 feet in elevation. Having been called a "scenic wonder road of the world," it takes the traveler through the park's many life zones, including aspen forests, alpine tundra and spectacular fields of wildflowers. The road's numerous pull-offs, many of which are above treeline, offer incredible views of the Rockies and wildlife sighting opportunities. Weather permitting, it is usually open Memorial Day through mid-October.

Along the road, stop at the **Alpine Visitor Center**, the highest elevation visitor center in the National Park Service (11,796 feet), located at Fall River Pass. Here you can go for a ranger-led walk in the "Land Above the Trees" and view displays and exhibits about life in the alpine tundra and the creation and maintenance of Trail Ridge Road. Here you'll also find a bookstore, restrooms and the **Trail Ridge Store**, which has a gift shop and café.

MILNER PASS

At 10,758 feet, Milner Pass straddles the Continental Divide. Stop here to take a photo by the sign showing that water flowing to the east reaches the Atlantic Ocean and water flowing to the west reaches the Pacific Ocean. This is also a good place to look—from a distance—for shy bighorn sheep.

HOLZWARTH HISTORIC SITE

Stroll among 1920s buildings at this former guest ranch on the Colorado River. It is open to visitors during the summer and features 12 small cabins including the Mama cabin, named after Sophia Holzwarth, who ran the rustic resort. Holzwarth Historic Site is located on U.S. 34, about seven miles north of the Grand Lake Entrance Station. It can be reached via a half-mile walkway from the parking lot. A brochure is available at the trailhead.

BEAR LAKE

Explore the edges of this pristine lovely sub-alpine lake to learn more about the area's natural and human history. A 0.5-mile nature trail circles Bear Lake, tucked into the spruce and fir forest at the base of Hallett Peak and Flattop Mountain. The lake is just a few yards from the end of Bear Lake Road.

OLD FALL RIVER ROAD

Old Fall River Road is an historic one-way dirt road from the east side of the park to the summit of Fall River Pass. The 11-mile road offers a leisurely journey and a close-up view of nature. The road usually opens to vehicles around July 4th.

NPS



Rocky Mountain National Park's variety of environments, from craggy peaks to lush valleys, offer countless opportunities for adventure.

SEE THE PARK UP CLOSE

Don't miss an opportunity to get out of your car and see the park up close by exploring the wilderness! Rocky has more than 355 miles of trails that lead to lakesides and mountain peaks and everything in between. Getting out into the park increases your chances of spotting wildlife and provides an opportunity to glimpse scenic vistas not visible from the road. Rangers also lead walks in the park, including tundra nature walks in summer and snowshoe walks in winter.

SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

In **summer**, especially June and July, wildflowers blanket the meadows and hillsides. **Autumn** is great for relaxing among the golden aspens or enjoying the rowdier antics of the elk rut (mating season). **Year-round**, look for wildlife like elk, mule deer, moose, bighorn sheep, black bears, coyotes and scores of smaller animals. Over 200 bird species, including eagles, hawks and songbirds soar the skies and flit through shrubs and trees.

Oh, Ranger!
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CAMPING

Five drive-in campgrounds in Rocky Mountain National Park provide a variety of camping experiences for tents, RVs and groups.

Three campgrounds—Aspenglen, Glacier Basin and Moraine Park are on the reservation system; Longs Peak and Timber Creek campgrounds are on a first-come, first-served basis. Except for Longs Peak Campground, which is open to tent camping only, all campgrounds can accommodate tent trailers, tents, pick-up campers, RVs and motor homes. *For additional RV information, visit gocampingamerica.com.*

Camping is only permitted in the park's roadside campgrounds. Campgrounds fill quickly from mid-June through mid-Septem-

ber and on holiday weekends, so it's wise to plan ahead. Summer reservations are highly recommended; please call (877) 444-6777 or visit recreation.gov. Water is turned off during the winter to prevent frozen pipes; winter campers should bring their own water. Campsite fees are \$26 per night when the water is on, \$18 when the water is off.

Camping is limited to seven days in the summer (June to September) and an additional 14 days in the winter. These limits are for the entire park, not each campground.

There are no hookups or showers in any of the park campgrounds. A solar-heated shower bag stall facility (no running water here) at Moraine Park Campground is available; there are no other shower facilities in the park.

CAMPGROUNDS

Campground	Dates of Operation	# of Sites	Type of Sites	Location
Aspenglen*	May 25; last night to stay is Sept. 26	52	tent/RV	5 miles west of Estes Park near Fall River Entrance
Glacier Basin*	May 25 to Sept. 11	150 13	tent/RV group	9 miles west of Estes Park on Bear Lake Road
Longs Peak	June 30 to Sept. 14	26	tent	10 miles south of Estes Park and one mile west off Highway 7
Moraine Park*	Year-round; reservations recommended May 25 to Oct. 10; winter is first-come, first-served	244	tent/RV	3 miles west of Beaver Meadows Visitor Center on Bear Lake Road.
Timber Creek	May 25 to October 10	98	tent/RV	10 miles north of Grand Lake on Trail Ridge Road

*Reservations are recommended at Aspenglen, Glacier Basin and Moraine Park. You can make reservations up to six months in advance (one year for group sites) by calling (877) 444-6777 or visiting recreation.gov or reserveamerica.com. A VISA or MasterCard number is required for reservations. Longs Peak and Timber Creek are first-come, first-served.

NPS



There are five drive-in campgrounds in Rocky Mountain National Park. Remember to practice Leave No Trace principles during your stay.

WILDERNESS CAMPING

There are more than 180 wilderness campsites in the park. **Two Wilderness Offices issue permits** (required for overnight stays) and provide information; one is located adjacent to Beaver Meadows Visitor Center (east side), and the other is in the Kawuneeche Visitor Center (west side). Both are open daily; hours vary throughout the year. For additional important wilderness information, please refer to the Wilderness Permits section of the "Plan Your Visit" chapter.

FIREWOOD

During the summer months, firewood is sold at all campgrounds. Campers are encouraged to purchase firewood in the

area(s) where they are camping. Bringing firewood into the park from home is discouraged since it may hold harmful insects that could be spread to Rocky Mountain National Park.

PRESERVATION

Whether you're staying at a developed campground or trekking out into the wilderness, please remember to practice "Leave No Trace" principles.

Help keep wildlife wild by storing food properly and keeping a safe distance from animals. Remember: you're a visitor in their home!

Ask at a visitor center or wilderness office for tips about how to be a good steward of the park.



WALKING & HIKING

More than 350 miles of trails lead to crystal-clear mountain lakes, lacy waterfalls and breathtaking views for hikers of every skill level. Trails range from easy and flat to vertical ascents that challenge the most experienced hiker.

If the plans for your trek include an overnight stay in the wilderness, you'll need a wilderness permit. See the "Plan Your Visit" chapter for more information.

The following chart of walks and hikes will give you ideas on where to begin your exploration of the park. You may also want to purchase a copy of a self-guiding hiking book available at visitor centers.

Many hiking areas become congested in summer and fall. Plan to start your hike early (before 8:00 a.m.) or later in the day (after 3:00 p.m.)

HIKING SAFETY

Please follow these commonsense tips as well as those outlined in the "Park Regulations & Safety" chapter.

- Always carry plenty of water and extra food.
- Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions; dress in layers and bring rain gear.
- Wear comfortable, sturdy shoes or boots and quality outdoor socks.
- Hikers should always stay together; avoid hiking alone. If you hit the trail as a group, stay a group.
- Keep your party together and set your pace to the slowest hiker.
- Plan your route and share your itinerary with a friend so someone can look for you if you don't return as scheduled. Be sure to let them know when you return.
- Know your limitations and remember

F. Delventhal



The park is full of quiet trails through lush forests that lead to clear, cool lakes.

that heavy loads, young children or bad weather may slow your progress.

- Floods and fires may damage some areas of the park. Hikers may encounter damaged or impassible trails and bridges. For current conditions visit nps.gov/romo or call (970) 586-1206. Most of the park is designated wilderness, where self-reliance is expected. Be prepared to take responsibility for your actions. Remember, safety is your responsibility.

WINTER HIKING

Hiking is not recommended in deep snow. It exhausts the hiker and ruins trails used by cross-country skiers and snowshoers. Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing are great ways to enjoy the winter snow; see the "Things to Do" chapter for more information.

While upper elevations often lie under deep drifts, trails below 8,700 feet are often sufficiently free of snow to allow for winter hiking. Gem Lake, The Pool, Cub Lake and Chasm Falls are often accessible during the winter. Ask about current conditions at park visitor centers.



WALKING & HIKING TRAILS

Trailhead (starting elevation, ft.)	Destination	Distance (one-way, mi.)	Elevation Gain (ft.)	Difficulty*
Bear Lake† (9,475)	Around Lake	0.5	20	Easy
	Alberta Falls	0.9	220	Fairly Easy
	Nymph Lake	0.5	225	Fairly Easy
	Bierstadt Lake	1.6	255	Moderate
	Dream Lake	1.1	425	Moderate
	Emerald Lake	1.8	605	Moderate
	Lake Haiyaha	2.1	745	Moderate
	Lake Helene	2.9	1,215	Moderate
	Odessa Lake	4.1	1,215	Moderate
	Flattop Mountain	4.4	2,849	Strenuous
Bierstadt Lake Trailhead (8,850)	Bierstadt Lake	1.4	566	Moderate
Colorado River Trailhead (9,010)	Lulu City Site	3.7	300	Moderate
Cub Lake Trailhead (8,080)	Cub Lake	2.3	540	Moderate
Deer Ridge Junction (8,930)	Deer Mountain	3.0	1,083	Moderate
East Inlet Trailhead (8,400)	Adams Falls	0.3	79	Easy
	Lone Pine Lake	5.5	1,494	Strenuous
	Lake Verna	6.9	1,809	Strenuous
Fern Lake Trailhead (8,155)	Spirit Lake	7.75	1,899	Strenuous
	The Pool	1.7	245	Fairly Easy
	Fern Falls	2.5	645	Moderate
Finch Lake Trailhead (8,470)	Fern Lake	3.8	1,375	Fairly hard
	Odessa Lake	4.9	1,865	Strenuous
	Finch Lake	4.5	1,442	Moderate
Glacier Gorge† (9,240)	Pear Lake	6.5	2,112	Strenuous
	Alberta Falls	0.8	160	Easy
	The Loch	3.0	990	Moderate
	Mills Lake	2.8	750	Moderate
	Andrews Glacier	5.3	2,510	Strenuous
	Black Lake	5.0	1,430	Strenuous
Longs Peak Ranger Station (9,300)	Sky Pond	4.9	1,710	Strenuous
	Eugenia Mine	1.4	508	Moderate
	Chasm Lake	4.2	2,360	Strenuous
Lumpy Ridge (7,840)	Gem Lake	1.6	1,000	Moderate
North Inlet Trailhead (8,520)	Cascade Falls	3.5	300	Moderate
	Lake Nanita	11.0	2,240	Strenuous
	Lake Nokoni	9.9	2,240	Strenuous
Rock Cut (12,110)	Toll Memorial	0.5	200	Moderate
Timber Lake Trailhead (9,000)	Timber Lake	4.8	2,060	Strenuous
Twin Sisters Trailhead (9,090)	Twin Sisters Peak	3.7	2,338	Strenuous
Wild Basin Ranger Station (8,500)	Copeland Falls	0.3	15	Easy
	Calypto Cascades	1.8	700	Moderate
	Ouzel Falls	2.7	950	Moderate
	Ouzel Lake	4.9	1,510	Moderate
	Bluebird Lake	6.0	2,478	Strenuous
	Lion Lake No. 1	7.0	2,565	Strenuous
Thunder Lake	6.8	2,074	Strenuous	

* Difficulty levels can vary depending on the physical fitness of the hiker. Ask a park ranger to recommend a hike that's right for you.

† All destinations from Glacier Gorge can be reached from Bear Lake; add 0.1 mile to trail distance



JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM

Kids of all ages can earn a Junior Ranger badge by completing activities about park preservation, flora and fauna, and the environment. Stop by a visitor center to get a Junior Ranger booklet and for more information. Junior Ranger booklets are also available in Spanish. All versions are available online at nps.gov/romo.

RANGER-LED PROGRAMS

Many park programs feature hands-on activities about the park. For example, at the **Skins and Things** talk, kids—and adults—can touch animal skulls and hides while learning about moose, elk, bighorn sheep, bobcats and other creatures.

Bring your Junior Ranger booklet to earn credit for participating. Kids can attend an astronomy program to earn a special Junior Ranger Night Explorer Patch. Check the park newspaper or at a visitor center for times.

HORSEBACK RIDES

Saddle up a horse and ride into the high country. This is a wonderful way for older children to see more alpine country. Sign up for guided rides that allow you to **go fishing** for German brown, brook, rainbow and cutthroat trout. A state fishing license is required for those age 16 and older. Glacier Creek Stables [(970) 586-3244] and Moraine Park Stables [(970) 586-2327] are located in the park. Many other stables located just outside are also permitted to conduct rides into the park.

NATURAL HISTORY

Check out the Moraine Park Discovery Center to see fun hands-on exhibits created by the Denver Museum of Natural History. Play the “animal, vegetable, mineral” game after learning about the geology and wildlife of the Rockies.

PARK MOVIE

Watch the park movie, which features amazing aerial footage of the park’s rugged high country along with wildlife and various park resources. The stunning 23-minute film can be seen during normal business hours at the **Beaver Meadows** and **Kawuneeche visitor centers**.

HANDS-ON EXHIBIT

“Discover” **Rocky in a special hands-on exhibit** at Fall River Visitor Center. Kids can also talk to rangers and shop in the bookstore. An added bonus is that you can eat a meal and buy gifts right next door! There are accessible and family restrooms.

DUDE RANCH

Visit a dude ranch at the Holzwarth Historic Site. In summer, the park offers guided tours of this historic guest ranch, where kids can see furnishings, tools and other equipment.

LAND ABOVE THE TREES

Learn about the park’s alpine tundra at the Alpine Visitor Center, where kids can go for a ranger-led walk in the *Land Above the Trees*. Also view exhibits about the tundra, purchase books, eat snacks and buy gifts! There are accessible restrooms.

Rocky Mountain National Park is home to more than 1,000 species of plants, 280 types of birds and over 60 species of mammals. Some are easy to spot while others remain elusive, but all are part of the park’s ecosystem. The incredible diversity of plant and animal life in the park reflects three distinct life systems that correspond to elevation—montane, sub-alpine and alpine. Riparian communities, which cross all of these zones, support flora and fauna along rivers and streams.

PLANTS

On the dry, sunny slopes and open valleys facing south at the lower levels east of the Divide (7,000 to 9,500 feet elevation) you can find the early-blooming **Easter daisy** (*Townsendia exscapa*) and the **ponderosa pine** (*Pinus ponderosa*),

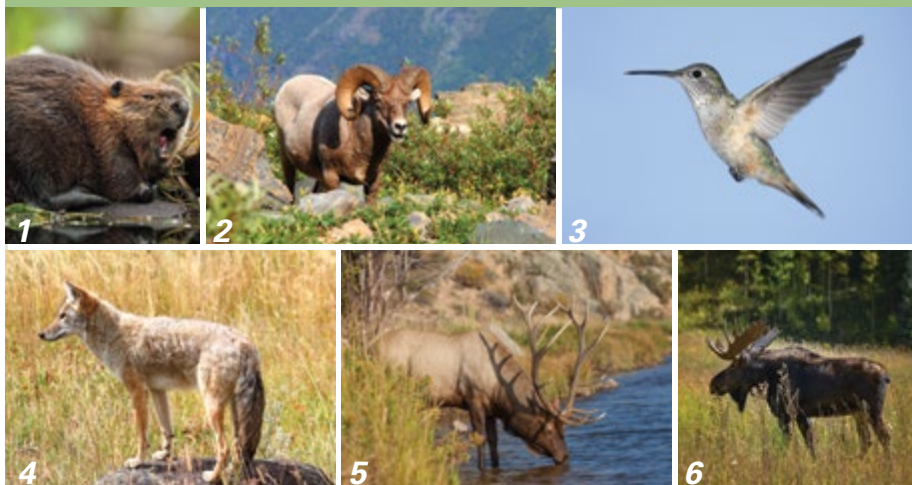
which is distinguished by its “puzzle bark.” The north-facing, moister slopes support **Douglas fir** (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and **lodgepole pine** (*Pinus contorta*) and a smaller population of ponderosa. The **Pasqueflower** (*Anemone patens*) blooms in April, while in May the **western wallflower** (*Erysimum capitatum*) and **golden banner** (*Thermopsis divaricarpa*) fill meadows with yellow blossoms. In June, **Colorado columbine** (*Aquilegia coerulea*), the state flower of Colorado, can be found in montane groves of **quaking aspen** (*Populus tremuloides*), and fragrant **wild roses** (*Rosa woodsii*) on sunny hillsides. **Lodgepole pine** (*Pinus contorta* var. *latifolia*) have grown where forest fires historically cleared the ground, though they are currently under attack by pine bark beetles. **Engelmann spruce** (*Picea engelmannii*) and **subalpine fir** (*Abies lasiocarpa*) take over at the subalpine elevation (9,500 to 11,500 feet). The **fairy slipper** (*Calypso bulbosa*), a member of the orchid family, blooms in June in shady forests. In windblown areas, **limber pine** (*Pinus flexilis*) is bent and twisted into bizarre shapes. Strong, cold winds may destroy new growth on the windward side of the trees leaving permanent growth on the protected side only. Such trees are often called, “banner” or “flag” trees. Approaching the treeline (above which trees do not grow), new seedlings often germinate only on sheltered sides of rocks where they can be protected from the wind. Growing only as high as the rocks that provide them protection, these stunted krummholz trees may be several hundred years old.



Kimron Berlin

Wild roses grow on sunny hillsides in Rocky Mountain National Park.

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE



1 BEAVER (*Castor Canadensis*)

Beavers are seen mostly at dawn and dusk, but evidence of their presence is visible along streams and ponds where they cut aspen trees and willows for food and to construct dams. The resulting stumps appear to have been sliced at sharp angles with a hatchet. • **Weight** 40-60 lbs • **Size** 35-50 in long, including tail • **Active** year-round

2 BIGHORN SHEEP (*Ovis Canadensis*)

Males have curved horns and females have short pointed ones. All have great agility on steep crags. In winter, they are seen outside the park in Big Thompson Canyon and along Fall River. During lambing season, Sheep Lakes can be a good place to spot them with their lambs. • **Weight** 100-300 lbs • **Size** 2.5-3.5 ft tall • **Active** year-round

3 BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD

(*Selasphorus platycercus*)

If you're wearing red, you may be startled if this small, shiny bird flies within inches of you. Males have a red throat, and females have a white one; both have iridescent green backs and bronze on their tails. On chilly nights, they enter torpor, slowing their heart rate and conserving energy to stay warm. • **Weight** 0.1-0.14 oz • **Size** 4 in long • **Active** in summer

4 COYOTE (*Canis latrans*)

This buff-colored canine resembles a wolf but has a smaller build, narrower muzzle and larger ears. It is the most important predator in the park for maintaining the balance of nature. You may hear coyotes howling at night, but if you encounter one, keep your distance. • **Weight** 20-50 lbs • **Size** 40-52 in long • **Active** year-round

5 ELK (*Cervus Elaphus*)

Elk generally summer high in the tundra, moving to lower elevations in fall, when they are often seen in meadows or at forest edges. During the rut (mating season), bulls bugle a mix of shrill whistles and grunts to attract females. Ask at a visitor center about where and how to watch elk. • **Weight** 500-1,100 lbs • **Size** 4-5 ft tall at shoulders • **Active** year-round

6 MOOSE (*Alces alces*)

Moose are reclusive, but are sometimes spotted among willows in Kawuneeche Valley, and are increasingly seen on the east side. They travel in search of food, but return annually to their favorite seasonal habitat. Males have large antlers shaped like clawed scoops; females have none. • **Weight** 700-1,400 lbs • **Size** 6-9 ft long • **Active** year-round

The alpine area, situated above the treeline (approximately 11,500 feet elevation and above), is a land of extremes. To survive here, you must be able to endure hurricane-force winds, arctic temperatures and a radically shortened growing season. To adapt, alpine plants such as the bright yellow **alpine avens** (*Acomastylis rossii*) and tiny pink **moss campion** (*Silene acaulis* spp. *subacaulencens*) form dense mats, while showy **Alpine sunflowers** (*Rydbergia grandiflora* [*Hymenozys grandiflora*]) are covered—flowers, leaves and stems—with soft white hairs for warmth. Tundra plants grow low and slow and have a number of adaptations, including dense hairs on stems and leaves to stay warm and diffuse solar rays, red pigments that convert sunlight into heat and screen out ultra-violet radiation, and mat-like growth patterns to avoid harsh alpine winds.

WILDLIFE WATCHING

One of the most popular activities at the park is wildlife watching. As you look for wildlife, remember that the animals and birds in the park are wild, and should be watched from a distance. They can kick, bite and gore, so don't approach or harass them.

For example, in the spring, cow elk and moose are protective of their babies, and in the fall during mating season, large bull elk and moose can be aggressive. If you encounter an animal when hiking, make sure to stay on the trail.

Also, do not feed wildlife, including birds and squirrels. Leave them wild so they don't spread disease, turn into beggars, or become dependent on human foods, which can cause them to lose their ability to feed naturally.



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MORE WATCHABLE WILDLIFE



1 MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD
(*SIALIA CURRUCOIDES*)

These birds twitter about in trees and meadows. Males are pure sky blue on their backs and have paler colored feathers below. Females are duller blue and grey. Bluebird numbers have decreased as habitat is cleared for development, but civic groups are working to revitalize them.

• **Weight** 1 oz • **Size** 7 in long • **Active** March-September

2 MOUNTAIN LION (*FELIS CONCOLOR*)

Mountain lions are extremely secretive and rarely seen. If you encounter one, back away slowly without turning your back. Make yourself look as large as possible, keep small children with you and yell loudly. If attacked, fight back.

3 MULE DEER (*ODOCOILEUS HEMIONUS*)

This deer's large, mule-like ears earned them their name. Mule deer are smaller than elk and frequent the edges of meadows near park roads. They move with great speed and dexterity over rough terrain, eat plants and twigs, and are active at dusk and dawn.

• **Weight** 70-475 lbs • **Size** 4-7.5 ft long • **Active** year-round

4 OSPREY (*PANDION HALIAETUS*)

Ospreys can be seen soaring through the skies at lower elevations near Grand Lake. Their diets consist almost entirely of fish, which they have become well adapted to catch. Their barbed talons, closeable nostrils and reversible toes help secure their catch.

• **Weight** 3-5 lbs • **Size** 21-24 in long, 6 ft wingspan • **Active** in summer

5 PEREGRINE FALCON (*FALCO PEREGRINUS*)

These chocolate-brown, crow-sized raptors are the fastest of all birds. They average 30 mph flights, and can swoop in a 200 mph vertical dive to capture prey. "Peregrine" means wanderer and they have one of the longest migrations of any North American raptor.

6 STELLER'S JAY (*CYANOCITTA STELLERI*)

The Steller's jay is recognizable by its crest and vibrant blue and black color. Its distinct cry sounds like, "SHAACK! SHAACK!" but it can also mimic other birds' calls, including those of hawks and warblers. It has the most extensive range of any North American jay.

• **Weight** 4 oz • **Size** 12 in from tip to tail • **Active** year-round



BEARS AND BEAR SAFETY

Black bears, which actually range in color from blond to black, exist in small numbers (20–24) in the park, mostly in wilderness areas. Black bears are active from spring through fall, moving through the woods and mountains eating berries, fish or whatever food they can find.

After fattening up in the autumn on as many as 20,000 calories a day, black bears slumber from late November to March, living on stored fat. Their dens may be in rock caverns, excavated holes beneath shrubs or trees, in hollow logs or rotten trees, or in brush thickets.

They weigh between 200 and 600 pounds and can be five to six feet long.

While exciting to see on rare occasions in the park, never approach a bear, especially one with cubs. **If you see a black bear**, stop and do not run. Stay calm and pick up small children. If a bear approaches you, stand up tall and make loud noises. If attacked, fight back.

Don't make human food available to bears. Keep all food and other scented

Jim Kruger/Stock



A small population of black bears inhabit the park's wilderness.

items like toiletries out of sight in bear-resistant containers. Human-fed bears usually end up as chronic problems and need to be removed from the park. And remember, "a fed bear is a dead bear."

CAMPSITE CRITTERS

Abundant and active, the **golden-mantled ground squirrel** (*Spermophilus lateralis*), **Wyoming ground squirrel** (*Spermophilus elegans*), **Least chipmunk** (*Tamias quadrivittatus*), **chickaree** (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) and **yellow-bellied marmot** (*Marmota flaviventris*) are rodents commonly seen at campgrounds, along trails, in picnic areas and at overlooks. Do not lure any animal with food—if they become dependent on handouts, they cease to live in their natural, wild state. As potential carriers of rabies, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and bubonic plague, all rodents should be admired from a distance.

BIRDWATCHING

Many bird species found in the park call the mountainous habitats in the southern Rockies home. Specialty species include: **white-tailed ptarmigan, dusky grouse, gray jay, Clark's nutcracker, red-naped sapsucker, red-shafted flicker, mountain chickadee, pygmy nuthatch, American dipper, western tanager, pine grosbeak, red crossbill, Townsend's solitaire, yellow-rumped warbler, brown-capped rosy-finch, mountain bluebird, hermit thrush, rufous hummingbird and black-billed magpie.**

In 2000, the park was designated as a Globally Important Bird Area, recognizing its vital role in the perpetuation of birds.



PHOTOGRAPHY

The ecosystems of America's national and state parks and public lands are among the most diverse on the planet—from the wetlands of the Everglades to the temperate rain forests of Olympic National Park and the deserts of Death Valley to the mountains of Yellowstone and Grand Tetons. For both aspiring and experienced photographers, the goal of any trip to a national park is to capture its endemic wildlife.

Taking photographs of animals presents a unique set of challenges. Landscapes cooperate; wildlife does not. Not only are animals likely to react to a photographer's presence, but they are also driven by their own instincts and behavior, which can make capturing them difficult. The tips below will help you compose better wildlife images of all creatures great and small—from the bison to the tiniest hummingbird and everything in between.

- **Use a tripod.** If you are using a large telephoto lens, consider investing in a gimbal head, which will make it easier to track your subject.
- **Know your subject.** Before you take out your camera, understand your subject's

behavior so that you can be prepared for what it will do next.

- **The eyes have it.** Capturing your subject's eyes will lead the viewer into the picture and make your image more impactful. Always keep the eyes in focus and try to place them in the power points (the intersection of rule of third guidelines).
- **Keep a safe distance.** You'll want to keep a minimum of 25 yards between you and your subject and more than 75 yards for larger predators. That means that you'll need a big telephoto lens if you want to get up close and personal.
- **Shoot in burst mode.** Instead of taking a single frame, increase the probability that you'll capture the behavior, head position or angle by capturing multiple frames.
- **Be prepared.** Wildlife, and particularly birds, move quickly and without provocation. Practice your panning skills to better catch birds when they alight.
- **Timing is everything.** The best time to photograph wildlife is during the golden hours—at dusk and dawn—when the light is soft and less likely to cast harsh shadows across your subject's face.
- **Keep it simple.** The easiest way to draw attention to your subject is to use a simple background. Use a shallow depth of field to blur any distracting backgrounds.
- **Aim for the action.** Make your image more compelling by capturing your subject exhibiting its natural behavior—flying, hunting, eating or caring for young.

The best way to take better photographs is to practice, and you don't need to go far. Buy a bird feeder and build a studio in your backyard, where you'll be able to create your own version of *A Star(ling) is Born*.



JPeche/iStock

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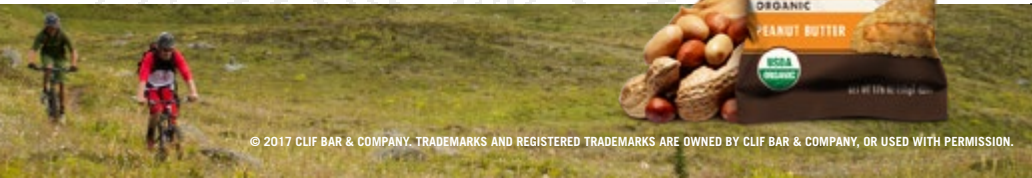
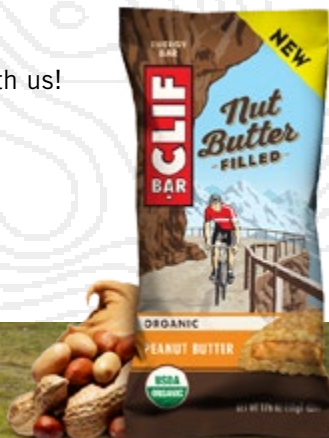
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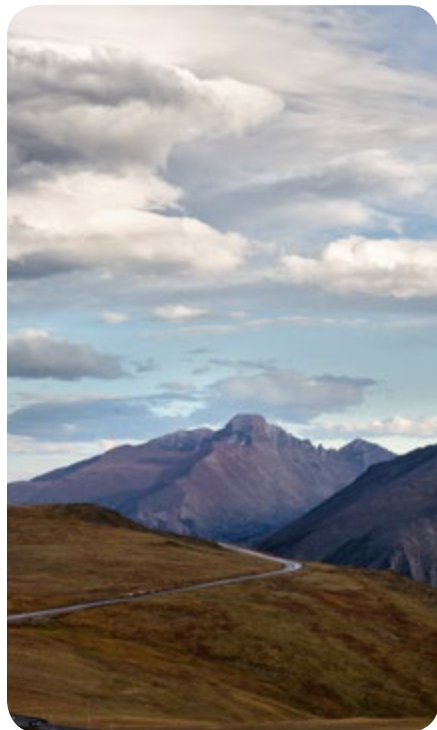


IF YOU ONLY HAVE A DAY

To make the most out of your trip to Rocky Mountain National Park, first stop by a visitor center to get an overview, check for any closures, and decide which part of the park you'd most like to visit. Below are a few suggestions.

TRAIL RIDGE ROAD

You can see many of the park's highlights by driving along **Trail Ridge Road**, much of which follows the trail once used by the Ute and other American Indian tribes. The road traverses ridgetops from Deer Ridge, near the Beaver Meadows



RondaKimbrow/iStock

Take a drive along Trail Ridge Road, which winds past some of the park's most majestic peaks.

Entrance Station in the east, to Grand Lake at the western entrance. At elevations of 8,000 feet to more than 12,000 feet, it is the highest continuous paved highway in the U.S. The trip is 42.5 miles between Deer Ridge Junction and Grand Lake, and 48 miles between the park's east boundary and Grand Lake. Along the route you'll find extraordinary vistas on both sides of the **Continental Divide**, the mountain spine that determines whether the water from a stream is destined for the Atlantic or the Pacific Ocean. Views overlook fantastic rock formations on craggy mountain slopes, wooded valleys and silver streams. It's not unusual to see mule deer and elk by the roadway.

TUNDRA COMMUNITIES TRAIL

Take a one-hour trail hike on the **Tundra Communities Trail** (from Rock Cut, six miles east of the Alpine Visitor Center). Located in the center of tundra meadows, there is nowhere else quite like it south of the Arctic Circle.

BEAR LAKE ROAD

One of the most popular areas of the park is the Bear Lake corridor. Bear Lake Road leads to magnificent scenery on the east side of the park. A first stop along this beautiful drive is the **Moraine Park Discovery Center**, then stroll around scenic **Sprague Lake** and **Bear Lake**. Along this road are several trailheads to popular hiking destinations, and a variety of picnic areas. Most of this is also accessed by a free summer shuttle bus. Fun activities include hiking, picnicking, fishing and horseback riding.

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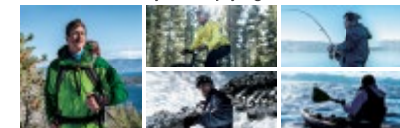


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