

Rocky Mountain

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Rocky Mountain National Park
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National Park
Colorado

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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The snow-mantled peaks of Rocky Mountain National Park rise above verdant alpine valleys and glistening lakes. One third of the park is above tree line, and here tundra predominates—a major reason why these peaks and valleys have been set aside as a national park. This area was first traversed by settlers in 1859 when Joel Estes and his son, Milton, rode into the valley that bears their name. Few settlers came into this rugged country,

and about 1900 Enos Mills, a naturalist, writer, and conservationist, began to campaign for preservation of this pristine area. Mills' campaign succeeded, and the area then became Rocky Mountain National Park in 1915. A feature of the park is the marked differences found with the changing elevation. At lower levels, open stands of ponderosa pine and juniper grow on the slopes facing the sun; on cooler north slopes are Douglas-fir. Gracing the

streamsides are blue spruces intermixed with dense stands of lodgepole pines. Here and there appear groves of aspen. Wildflowers dot meadows and glades. Above 2,700 meters (9,000 feet) forests of Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir take over. Openings in these cool, dark forests produce wildflower gardens of rare beauty and luxuriance, where the blue Columbine reigns. At the upper edges of this zone, the trees are twisted,

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

Wildlife and Tundra



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

Many small mammals seem always to be around, but larger animals such as waptiti (elk) and deer generally are

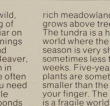
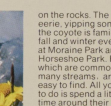


seen only at dawn or in late evening. Bighorn—the living symbol of Rocky Mountain National Park—ventures here from the parking lot. You

Horseshoe Park near Sheep Lakes where there is a natural mineral lick. Please observe them from the parking lot. You



may also see a gray jay perched on a blue spruce. Above tree line in the tundra area, the yellow-belly marmot suns itself

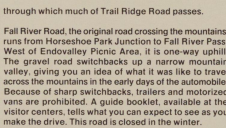


rich meadowland that grows above tree line. The tundra is a harsh world where the growing season is very short—sometimes less than 10 weeks. Five-year-old plants are sometimes smaller than the end of your finger. The tundra is a fragile world where recovery from severe damage may take several hundred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

Getting to Know Rocky Mountain National Park



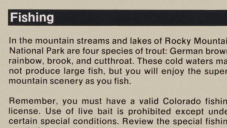
through which much of Trail Ridge Road passes. Fall River Road, the original road crossing the mountains, runs from Horseshoe Park Junction to Fall River Pass. West of Endovalee Picnic Area, it is one way uphill. The gravel road switchbacks up a narrow mountain valley, giving you an idea of what it was like to travel across the mountains in the early days of the automobile. Because of sharp switchbacks, trailers and motorized vans are prohibited. A guide booklet, available at the visitor centers, tells what you can expect as you make the drive. This road is closed in the winter.



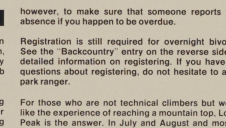
Take Bear Lake Road if you have an extra hour or an extra day. This is one of the few paved roads in the Rockies that leads to the heart of a high mountain basin, the area is heavily used and is often congested. Parking lots here and at Glacier Gorge Junction will be full between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. on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



Five park campgrounds—Moraine Park, Glacier Basin, Aspenglen, Longs Peak, and Timber Creek—provide an enjoyable way to become acquainted with Rocky Mountain. Camping is limited to three days at Longs Peak and seven days at the other sites. In summer you will find that campgrounds usually fill to capacity early each day. Organized group campsites at Glacier Basin campground can be reserved. Longs Peak is restricted to tent camping. There are no electrical, water, or sewer connections in any of the campgrounds. Sewer dump stations are at Moraine Park, Glacier Basin, and Timber Creek campgrounds. Public telephones are located at Moraine Park, Glacier Basin, and Aspenglen. A full range of services is available outside the park at Estes Park on the east and at Grand Lake on the west.



Wood fires are permitted in the fire grates at campgrounds and picnic areas. A written permit is required for all fires outside those areas. Wood gathering is prohibited except when authorized at backcountry campsites. Firewood bundles are sold at campgrounds and at a number of locations outside the park. Pets are permitted in campgrounds provided that they are on a leash less than 3 meters (10 feet) in length. There are private kennels in Estes Park.



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The Visitor Centers

Become acquainted with the park through its guided walks, campfire talks, and other services. These programs begin in early June and extend into September. Pick up a schedule at one of the visitor centers. Stop at headquarters, which is open all year, and see the exhibits at Alpine Visitor Center, open June through September, and at the Moraine Park Visitor Center, open May to October. The staff at the visitor centers can answer your questions and help you plan your time in the park. Wayside exhibits and self-guiding trails also will help you enjoy your stay in the park.

Driving

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

Camping

Horses with guides can be hired at two locations inside the park on the east side, or from a number of liveryes outside the park on the east and west park boundaries during the summer season. Horses, or any other trail stock, are not permitted to travel crosscountry. A number of trails are closed to stock use altogether. Please check with a park ranger if you have a question about which trails these are.

Fishing

In the mountain streams and lakes of Rocky Mountain National Park are four species of trout: German brown, rainbow, brook, and cutthroat. These cold waters may not produce large fish, but you will enjoy the superb mountain scenery as you fish.

Climbing

For the climber Rocky Mountain National Park offers a variety of challenging ascents throughout the year. A park concessioner operates a technical climbing school and guide service that provides climbing and mountaineering instruction. For more information, contact park headquarters.

General Information

Rocky Mountain National Park is in north central Colorado. From the east it can be reached by automobile on U.S. 34, U.S. 36, and Colo. 7, and from the west by U.S. 40. The nearest major rail, air and bus terminals are at Denver, 105 kilometers (65 miles) from Estes Park, or at Cheyenne, 146 kilometers (91 miles) to the northeast. Gray Line Tours makes connections with transcontinental airlines, railroads, and buses at Denver. You can get further information by writing to Estes Park Bus Company, Estes Park, CO 80517, or by calling 303-586-3301.

Accommodations

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

Handicapped

This backcountry camping area is specifically designed for the disabled. It will accommodate ten campers and a maximum of five wheelchair users. Call 303-586-2371 for further details.

Forest Fire Management Program

Be careful with fire. Rocky Mountain National Park was established in part to preserve the beautiful mixed forest of aspens, pines, spruce, and firs that characterize the area. Fires caused by careless people present a major threat to this vegetation. Lightning-caused forest fires, however, are a natural and necessary part of forest life, fostering natural cycles of burning and regrowth.

Regulations

Dogs, cats, and other pets must be under physical control at all times. They are not allowed on trails or in areas not accessible by automobile.

Camping

Camping is permitted only in designated areas. Vehicles must remain on roads or in parking areas. Parking any vehicle or leaving property unattended for longer than 24 hours without prior permission is prohibited.

Hitchhiking

All wildlife is protected from hunting or harassment. Please do not feed or attempt to touch any wild creature. Feeding rodents and birds increases the

Hazards

When fishing use artificial lures of flies only; however, children 12 years of age and under may fish with bait in all waters in the park open to fishing.

Scrambling

Up steep slopes that are beyond your ability and experience. Registration with a park ranger is required for all technical climbs.

Winter Activities

Winter means snow in the Rockies and snow means skiing—crosscountry skiing in the lower valleys, winter mountaineering in the high country, and downhill skiing at Hidden Valley, 11 kilometers (7 miles) from the Fall River Entrance and almost 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the Beaver Meadows Entrance. Access roads from the east are kept open and provide the winter traveler with a panorama of the high mountains.

Map Dept.

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Hiking

Rocky Mountain is a park for hikers. More than 480 kilometers (300 miles) of trails provide access to the remote sections of the park so you can get away from the crowds and savor the streams, meadows, and mountains. For detailed information on elevations, lakes, and hiking trails, purchase a U.S. Geological Survey topographic map or other guides at any visitor center. Because of the great numbers of people in the park during the summer, some trails are heavily used. If you wish to avoid this congestion, ask a ranger to suggest lightly used trails.

INTERPRETIVE TRAILS If you prefer on-your-own learning experiences, the park has a number of self-guiding trails. Folders describing features along the

trails can be picked up at the trailheads or visitor centers. Distances are for round trips.

BEAR LAKE NATURE TRAIL This stroll around an alpine lake tells the story of glaciation and subalpine life. Distance: 0.8 kilometer (0.5 mile). Elevation: 2,888 meters (9,475 feet).

NEVER SUMMER RANCH The landscape and cabins tell the story of homesteading and dude ranch life in the central Rockies during the early 20th century. Distance: 1.6 kilometers (1 mile). Elevation: 2,743 meters (9,000 feet).

LONGS PEAK TRAIL The main hiking trail to the park's highest peak leads through subalpine forests, tundra, and glacial landscapes. Distance: 26 kilometers

(16 miles). Elevation: 2,812 to 4,345 meters (9,554 to 14,255 feet).

LULU CITY Traces of log cabins are all that remain of a once-booming mining town. Distance: 11.6 kilometers (7.2 miles). Elevation: 2,835 meters (9,300 feet).

MORAINE PARK NATURE TRAIL This easy stroll helps you identify local plants and animals. Distance: 0.4 kilometer (0.25 mile). Elevation: 2,438 meters (8,000 feet).

SPRAGUE LAKE FIVE SENSES TRAIL Ideal for wheelchair visitors, this is a level walk to use all your senses. Distance: 0.8 kilometer (0.5 mile). Elevation: 2,860 meters (9,370 feet).

TUNDRA WORLD Short trails lead from both the



Forest Canyon and Rock Cut overlooks. Elevation: 3,335 and 3,752 meters (11,000 and 12,310 feet).

WILD BASIN This is a wild corner of the park with scenic glaciated valleys, streams, and waterfalls. Distances: up to 26 kilometers (16 miles). Elevation: 2,582 to 3,353 meters (8,470 to 11,000 feet).

BACKCOUNTRY Step into the wilderness, get away from the crowd, and come into the backcountry. Because the wilderness is fragile, special care must be taken. Please follow these REGULATIONS: A permit is required for all overnight stays in the backcountry. The free permits may be obtained in advance or upon arrival at park headquarters, the West Unit Office, and at most ranger stations. B Backcountry

camping is limited to seven nights between June and September and 15 more nights during the remainder of the year. Backcountry camping is allowed in designated campsites only, unless authorized by permit. Camp no closer than 30 meters (100 feet) to a source of water and do not dump soapy water or food scraps into a stream or lake. Dispose of human waste away from water sources. Dig a shallow hole for use and refill with soil and sod. Wood fires are permitted only in metal fire rings. Use only dead and down wood. Where there are no fire rings, you must use a lightweight portable stove. No pets are permitted in the backcountry.

