

Winter Day Hikes



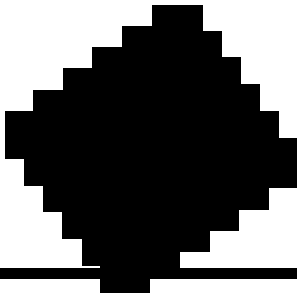
EAST OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE



Winter brings deep snows to Rocky Mountain National Park west of the Continental Divide. Lighter snowfall on the east side of the park leaves low elevation trails open for hiking. Trails below 8,700 feet (2,700 m) offer diverse opportunities to those who wish to travel without the aid

of skis or snow shoes. The trails listed below are some of the more accessible hikes available to winter visitors. Before each outing, check with park rangers for local snow conditions and current avalanche hazards. The distances listed for the following hikes are one-way.

THE POOL (8,280 ft, 2,520 m)



Difficulty: Easy
Distance: 2.5 mi (4 km)
Elevation gain: 200 ft (60 m)

Trailhead: At road closure on Moraine Park Road past Cub Lake Trailhead. Follow signs to Fern Lake Trailhead.

The Pool is a turbulent water pocket formed below the confluences of Spruce and Fern Creeks with the Big Thompson River. The winter route is along a gravel road, which soon narrows to a trail at the Fern Lake Trailhead. While hiking this relatively flat trail along the Big Thompson River, look for beaver-cut aspen, frozen waterfalls on the cliffs, and the Arch Rocks.

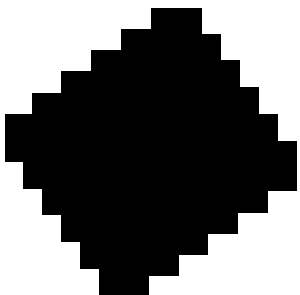
CUB LAKE (8,600 ft, 2,620 m)

Difficulty: Moderate
Distance: 2.3 mi (3.7 km)
Elevation gain: 540 ft (165 m)

Trailhead: Cub Lake
From Bear Lake Road, turn at Moraine Park; follow signs to Cub Lake Trailhead

The Cub Lake trail begins in the willow thickets along the Big Thompson River and continues upward through stands of pine and aspen. Hiking the trail, you pass through a varied landscape of moraines, cliffs, streams and ponds. Ice or deep snow sometimes makes the last mile difficult, and may require the use of skis or snowshoes. This hike may be combined with The Pool hike for a 6 mile loop by taking a connecting trail beyond Cub Lake to The Pool. This section of trail may also contain deep snow or ice.

CHASM FALLS (8,960 ft, 2,730 m)



Difficulty: Moderate
Distance: 2.5 mi (4 km)
Elevation gain: 400 ft (120 m)

Trailhead: West Alluvial Fan
Follow Highway 34 into Horseshoe Park. Turn onto Endovalley Road at the west end of Horseshoe Park and follow Endovalley Road over the bridge to the road closure.

From the West Alluvial Fan parking lot, hike 1.5 miles (2.4 km) to the junction of Endovalley Road and Old Fall River Road. Along the way, you pass the remains of cabins used by the prison laborers who built Old Fall River Road early in the century. At the road junction, take the right fork and continue up Old Fall River Road one mile to the falls. Upon reaching Chasm Falls notice beautiful, but dangerous, ice formations. Negotiate this zone with caution.

GEM LAKE
(8,800 ft, 2,680 m)

Difficulty: Moderate
Distance: 1.8 mi (2.9 km)
Elevation gain: 910 ft (275 m)

Trailhead: Twin Owls
Drive north from downtown Estes Park on MacGregor Avenue. Cross Hwy. 34 bypass and continue to sharp right turn and sign for MacGregor Ranch. Follow the blacktop ranch road to the parking lot.

The shallow waters of Gem Lake are cradled high among the rounded granite domes of Lumpy Ridge. Untouched by glaciation, this outcrop of 1.8 billion-year-old granite has been sculpted by wind and chemical erosion into a backbone-like ridge. Signs of these erosional forces--pillars, potholes, and balanced rocks--appear midway along the trail to Gem Lake. Other highpoints include spectacular views of the Estes Valley and Continental Divide, and a curious balanced rock called Paul Bunyan's Boot.

DEER MOUNTAIN
(10,013 ft, 3,050 m)

Difficulty: Strenuous
Distance: 3 mi (4.8 km)
Elevation gain: 1,075 ft (325 m)

Trailhead: Deer Ridge Junction
From Park Headquarters drive 4.5 miles (7.2 km) on Highway 36 to roadside parking.

The route up Deer Mountain begins in a stand of mature ponderosa pine and winds upward past lodgepole pine, aspen, and limber pine to the summit plateau, which offers spectacular views of the Continental Divide. While the lower trail generally has little snow, you can expect packed and drifted snow on the switchbacks. Snow cover on the summit may be three to five feet deep, making snowshoes or skis necessary for safe travel.

UPPER BEAVER MEADOWS
(8,300 ft, 2530 m)

Difficulty: Easy
Distance: 1.5 mi (2.4 km) by trail
Elevation gain: 140 ft (43 m)

Trailhead: Upper Beaver Meadows Road
From Park Headquarters drive 2 miles (3.2 km) and look for the closed gate on the west side of the road in a hairpin curve. Park off the road surface on gravel.

Upper Beaver Meadows offers two hiking routes--the road which winds along the north side of Beaver Creek for two miles (3.2 km) and a trail that leaves the dirt road on the left, just inside the barricade. The trail crosses the stream and runs along the south side of the meadow at the base of the moraine. The trail and road meet at the parking area at the west end of Beaver Meadows. You may choose to make a loop by using both the road and trail, or you may follow either route in both directions. Hiking along the trail, you may see elk bedded down among trees near the trail or along the stream.

HIKING SAFETY

Winter in Rocky Mountain National Park is an inviting yet silently dangerous time for hikers. The season brings short days with strong winds, low temperatures, and rapidly changing weather. Be prepared for these conditions by carrying extra clothing for layering, as well as water and high energy food.

Prevent frostbite by keeping your extremities and face well protected. Watch for the first warning signs of frostbite--a tingling, then numbing feeling.

Avoid hiking in deep snow which is quickly fatiguing and creates hazardous holes for skiers and snowshoers who follow. When conditions are icy, use instep crampons or ski poles for extra safety.

EMERGENCIES

For emergencies in the park contact the nearest park ranger or Park Headquarters at **(970) 586-1399** or call **911**

Emergency Phones are located at the Bear Lake parking lot, Cow Creek Trailhead, Lawn Lake Trailhead, and Longs Peak and Wild Basin Ranger Stations.

For general park information call (970) 586-1206