

# WELCOME

This visitor guide, combined with your park map, has the essential info you need for a fun, safe, and successful visit to Rocky Mountain National Park.

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# Safety Is Our Number One Priority

Rocky is modifying access and visitor services to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Some facilities and events will be closed or canceled.

Check locally and on the park website for current information, and continue to follow CDC guidelines. Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

**Come prepared.** Visitor services are limited. A reduced number of visitors will be allowed in facilities at a given time.

**Face masks** are required inside all visitor facilities, and when in areas where social distancing cannot be maintained. This includes narrow or busy trails, parking lots, pull-offs, and overlooks.

**Maintain social distancing of six feet whenever possible,** especially in busy areas.

**Follow current local, state, and national health guidance:**

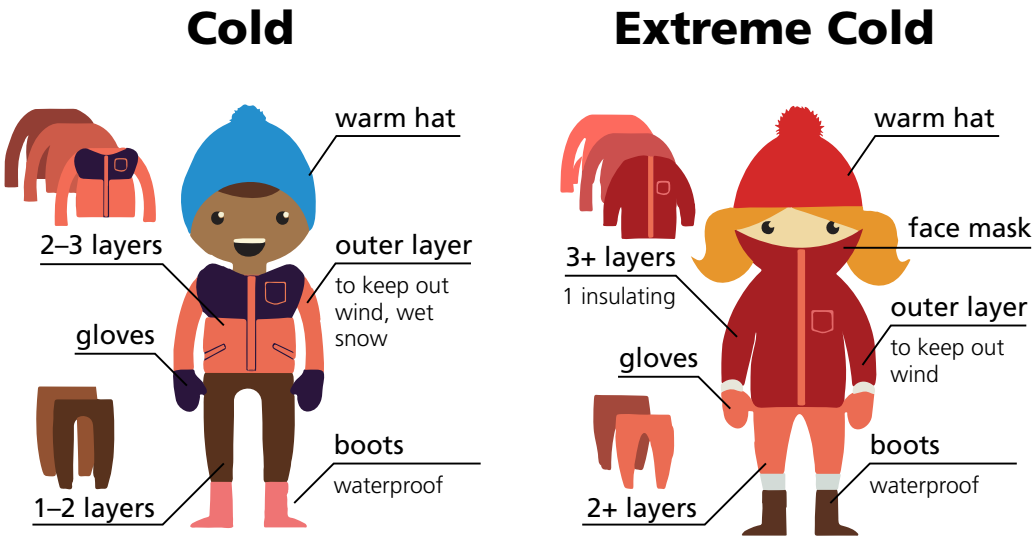
- **If you're sick, don't visit the park.**
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue or the inside of your elbow.

## Dress for Success

With the right clothing and gear, the mountains are an incredible place for winter adventures. Without them, winter in the mountains is extremely dangerous.

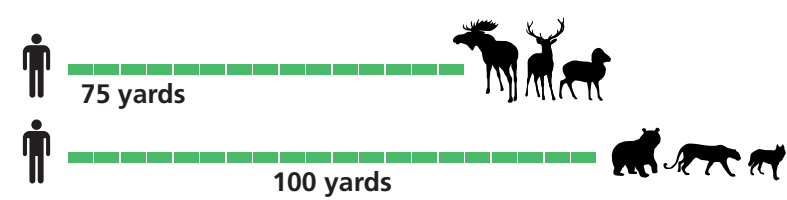
**Hypothermia is a serious risk.** Watch for sleepiness, impaired judgment, lots of shivering, and slurred speech.

**Get a grip!** Traction devices are always recommended when walking on ice and packed snow.



## Never Approach Wildlife 🐾

Keep a safe distance from wildlife—it's the law.



**Never feed wildlife, including birds and chipmunks.** It's illegal. It makes the animals unhealthy. You could be bitten, scratched, kicked, thrown, or trampled.

**If you see a bear or mountain lion,** stop, stay calm, and back away. Never turn your back or run away. Stand tall and raise your arms to look large. Pick up small children.

## Weather and Altitude ☁️

**Winters at Rocky are extreme,** with very cold temperatures, howling winds, feet of snow, and conditions that can change suddenly.

**Avalanches can be easily triggered when traveling in the wilderness.** The park doesn't do any avalanche control. For current conditions, check locally or visit [colorado.gov/avalanche](https://colorado.gov/avalanche)

**Altitude sickness affects many visitors every year.** Symptoms include headache, nausea, fatigue, dizziness, vomiting, and even unconsciousness. Altitude can also aggravate preexisting conditions like heart and lung disease. Take your time, drink water, eat, and rest. The only cure for altitude sickness is to go down to a lower altitude.

## Food, Water, Restrooms, and Roads 🚗

**There are no food services in the park at this time of year.** Food is available in the park's gateway communities.

**Safe-to-drink water is available at some facilities.** Don't assume water will be available at your destination. Water from lakes and streams isn't safe to drink unless you treat or filter it first.

**Limited trailhead and facility restrooms that meet public health guidance will be open.** If you have to go but aren't near a restroom, you must step well away from the trail and water sources, bury your waste at least six inches deep or pack it out in a bag, and carry out your toilet paper.

**Smaller park roads, Old Fall River Road, and most of Trail Ridge Road are closed. Winter driving conditions are possible at any time—be prepared.** Bear Lake Road and other major paved roads remain open (weather permitting).

**Driving between Estes Park and Grand Lake requires a significant detour.**

## CONTACT

Hidden Valley  
Snowplay Status  
970 586-1333

Park Information  
970 586-1206

Emergencies  
Call or text 911

Website  
[nps.gov/romo](https://nps.gov/romo)

Social Media  
[@RockyNPS](https://twitter.com/RockyNPS)

## Visitor Centers

Park rangers may be available at the following visitor centers:

- Beaver Meadows
- Kawuneeche

A reduced number of visitors will be allowed in facilities at a given time. Call the Information Office for the latest info: 970-586-1206

Rocky Mountain Conservancy nature stores are open at the following visitor centers:

- Beaver Meadows
- Fall River
- Kawuneeche

Rocky-themed merchandise can also be purchased online: [rmconservancy.org](http://rmconservancy.org).



Great Horned Owlets

## Rocky Pocket Ranger

No ranger-led programs are being offered this winter.

As an alternative, we’ve created a Rocky Pocket Ranger, a collection of fun activities for all ages to help you learn about and explore the park. Go to the next page to begin your adventure.



Spruce tree cones

## Become a Junior Ranger

Junior Rangers at Rocky have fun discovering the natural world and learning why we need to protect our national parks. We need the help of all our rangers to keep Rocky protected for many years to come!

There are activity books for kids ages 5 and under, 6–8, and 9+. Learn more at [go.nps.gov/RockyJr](http://go.nps.gov/RockyJr).



## Watch Wildlife

All animals at Rocky are wild and unpredictable. They are not pets. Never feed or approach wildlife: you could be hurt or issued a fine (learn more on front page).

If stopping a vehicle to view wildlife, pull all the way off the road, with all four wheels past the white line. Do not park on vegetation.

Visit [go.nps.gov/RockyWildlife](http://go.nps.gov/RockyWildlife) for more info.



Elk



Bighorn Sheep



Mule Deer



Black Bear



Coyote

## And More...

### Bicycling

Bicycles are allowed on all roads open to motor vehicles unless otherwise posted. You must ride single file. They aren’t allowed on trails except the East Shore Trail near Grand Lake. Learn more: [go.nps.gov/RockyBicycling](http://go.nps.gov/RockyBicycling).

### Camping

Overnight stays must be in a campground or designated wilderness site. A portion of Moraine Campground is open first-come, first-served in winter. Learn more about summer 2021 camping: [go.nps.gov/RockyCamping](http://go.nps.gov/RockyCamping).

### Fishing

A Colorado state fishing license is required. Trout in the park include brown, brook, rainbow, and cutthroat. Not all park lakes have reproducing populations. Learn more: [go.nps.gov/RockyFishing](http://go.nps.gov/RockyFishing).

### Holzwarth Historic Site

Once a lodge, this historic site on the park’s west side is now preserved for your enjoyment. Explore the grounds and read educational signage on a short walk. Learn more: [go.nps.gov/Holzwarth](http://go.nps.gov/Holzwarth).

### Horseback Riding

Horses have been part of Rocky’s tradition since its designation in 1915. Horses, mules, ponies, llamas, and burros are allowed on park trails. No goats are allowed on park trails. Learn more: [go.nps.gov/RockyHorses](http://go.nps.gov/RockyHorses).

### Wilderness Camping

Overnight wilderness stays in winter are a serious endeavor, requiring significant skill and planning. To learn more, visit the Beaver Meadows Wilderness Office or visit [go.nps.gov/RockyWildernessCamping](http://go.nps.gov/RockyWildernessCamping).



# ACTIVITY TIPS

When you head outdoors, you leave behind established food, water, and restroom facilities; shelter from sun, wind, and weather; and easy access to emergency services.

## Before heading to the park:

- ✓ **Be prepared.** Bring the right gear: layers of clothing, warm outer layers, sunglasses and sunscreen, and lots of water and snacks.
- ✓ **Don't rely on cell phones.** Many areas have no service.
- ✓ **Carry a map and compass (or GPS) and know how to use them.**
- ✓ **Leave pets at home.** Pets are prohibited on all park trails.
- ✓ **Discuss your plans with family, friends, and park staff at visitor centers.**

Navigating in winter can be hard. Use these tips for a safe trip:

- ✓ **Snowshoes and traction devices are recommended during winter and spring.**
- ✓ **Park trails are not marked or maintained for winter use. Route-finding skills are important. Don't rely on other's tracks which can lead you astray.**
- ✓ **Snow-covered landscapes look very different than in summer. Snow can be deep once you are off-trail.**
- ✓ **Streams and lakes can have thin ice and be very dangerous.**
- ✓ **Be avalanche aware. Visit [colorado.gov/avalanche](https://colorado.gov/avalanche) for the latest forecast.**
- ✓ **Weather and trail conditions can change quickly as snow falls and melts. Always be willing to turn around.**

# Recommended Routes

TRAILHEAD	DESTINATION	DISTANCE (ONE WAY)	DIFFICULTY	FEATURES
Bear Lake	Bierstadt Lake	1.6 mi	Moderate	Dense spruce-fir forest; ends at a lake surrounded by spruce and fir trees.
	Emerald Lake	1.8 mi	Strenuous	Landscape views of the iconic Longs Peak; Two named lakes along the way - Nymph and Dream.
Deer Mountain	Deer Mountain	3.0 mi	Strenuous	Switchbacks through trees with a great view of the park.
Wild Basin <i>Distances are from winter recreation parking</i>	Copeland Falls	1.5 mi	Easy	Follow a winding river through pine and aspen forests to a waterfall.
	Calypso Cascade	3 mi	Moderate	Follow a winding river through pine and aspen forests to a waterfall. Copeland Falls is on the way.
	Ouzel Falls	3.9 mi	Moderate	Follow a winding river through pine and aspen forests to a waterfall. Copeland Falls and Calypso Cascade are along the way.
Fall River Road	Picnic Area	~1 mi	Easy / Flat	Snowshoe along a road through thick aspen trees and a densely wooded forest to a picnic area.
East Inlet	Meadow Overlook	0.5 mi	Easy	Snowshoe past the frozen and snow covered Adams Falls to a meadow with views of Mount Craig and surrounding peaks.
Green Mountain	Big Meadows	1.8 mi	Moderate	Snowshoe through the lodgepole pine forest to scenic Big Meadows.
Coyote Valley	Kawuneeche Valley	0.5 mi	Easy	Snowshoe through the forest and across the Colorado River to explore the Kawuneeche Valley with views of the Never Summer Mountains.
Holzwarth Historic Site	Historic Homestead	0.5 mi	Easy	Snowshoe across the Kawuneeche Valley to explore the historic homestead and 1920's era dude ranch.
Colorado River	Lulu City Site	3.7 mi	Moderate	Snowshoe along the Colorado River, through forests and meadows, to the site of Lulu City. Route traverses avalanche terrain.

**The Keyhole Route to the summit of Longs Peak is NOT a hike.** It's a climb that crosses huge vertical rock faces and requires scrambling where an unroped fall would likely be fatal. Do not take this climb lightly—especially in winter.

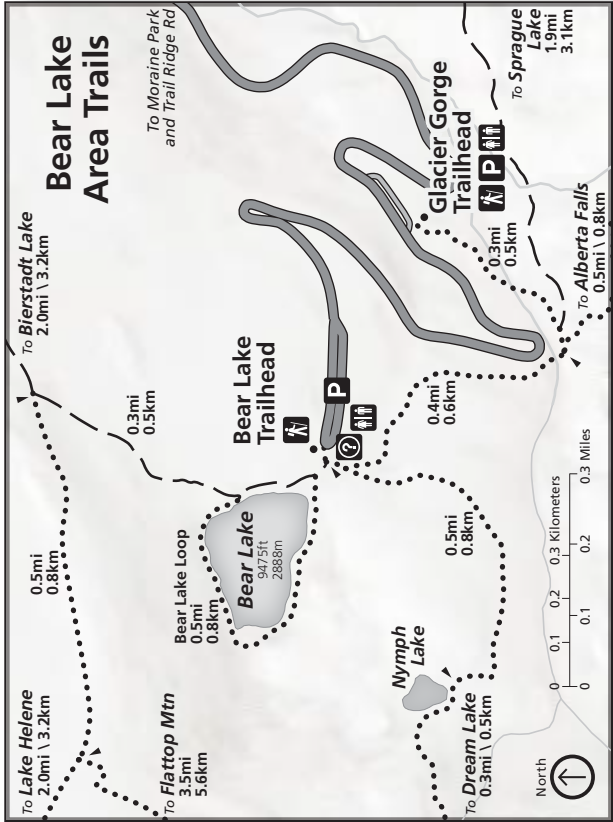
The terrain requires a high level of fitness and route-finding skills. Visitors have been injured and even died on this route. Injuries requiring rescue are very dangerous and take hours, if not days, to evacuate.

Detailed info is available at [go.nps.gov/LongsPeak](https://go.nps.gov/LongsPeak).



Longs Peak

# Bear Lake Corridor Trails



DESTINATION one way from nearest TH	DISTANCE		ELEVATION GAIN	
	mi	km	ft	m
Alberta Falls	0.8	1.3	160	49
Bear Lake Loop	0.5	0.8	20	6
Bierstadt Lake <small>from Bear Lake Trailhead</small>	2.3	3.7	-34	-10
Cub Lake	2.3	3.7	540	165
Dream Lake	0.8	1.3	425	130
Emerald Lake	1.5	2.4	605	184
Fern Lake	3.8	6.1	1,375	419
Lake Helene	2.9	4.7	1,215	370
Mills Lake	1.8	2.9	750	229
Nymph Lake	0.5	0.8	225	69
Sprague Lake Loop	0.5	0.8	20	6
The Loch	2.1	3.4	990	302
The Pool	2.5	4.0	245	75

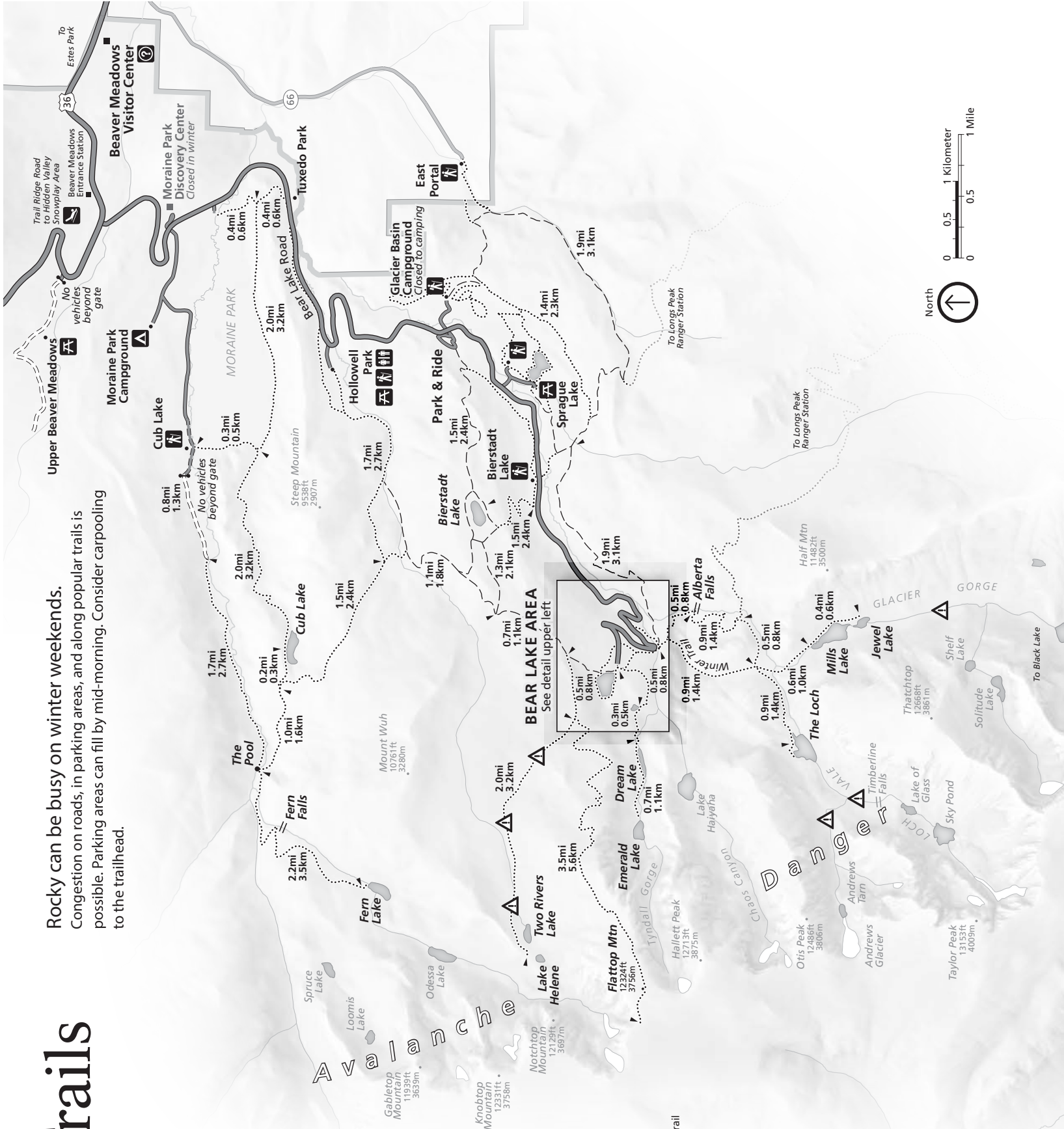
All Glacier Gorge trails can be accessed from Bear Lake. Add 0.1 miles to trail distance.

Shuttle buses do not operate in winter.

High risk avalanche areas are marked, but avalanches can happen almost anywhere in this area.

# Route Guide

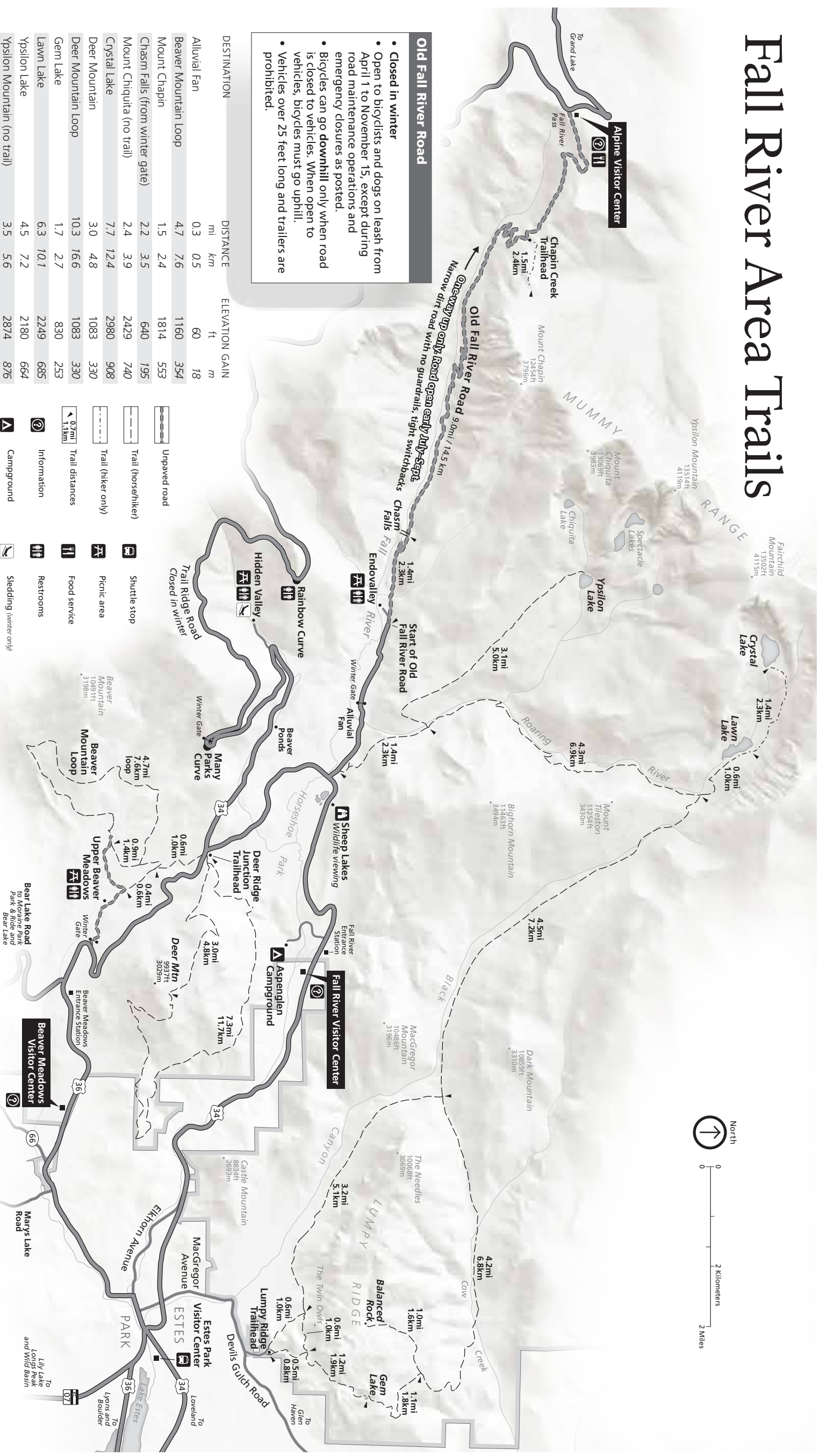
**Rocky can be busy on winter weekends.** Congestion on roads, in parking areas, and along popular trails is possible. Parking areas can fill by mid-morning. Consider carpooling to the trailhead.





# Route Guide

# Fall River Area Trails



All distances are one way from nearest trailhead.

## View Wildlife 🦌

**Seeing wildlife in winter is a thrill.** Bring your field guides, binoculars, and cameras.

- ✓ Elk and mule deer are most active at dawn and dusk and are usually seen in meadows like Horseshoe Park, Moraine Park and Harbison Meadow.
- ✓ Moose are best found along the Colorado River on the park's west side.
- ✓ Bighorn sheep may be seen along the Highway 34/ Fall River corridor on the park's east side.
- ✓ Coyotes may be seen any time of day.
- ✓ Black-billed magpies, Steller's jays, and Clark's nutcrackers are some of our year-round birds.

## Sled 🛷

**Want to sled? Go to the only place in the park it's allowed: Hidden Valley!** No tows are provided up this fairly gentle hill, so you'll get a workout as you walk your sled, saucer, or tube up the slope and then enjoy a breather on the fun ride down.

Restrooms are available by the parking lot. Stay alert: skiers, snowboarders, and snowshoers may pass through. Park rangers and volunteers aren't always on duty; sled at your own risk. For status call 970-586-1333.

## Cross-country Ski 🛹

**Picture yourself gliding through a silent forest full of fresh, white snow. Cross-country skiing is a rejuvenating sport that pairs exercise with the beauty of nature.**

In general, cross-country skiing is easier on the west side of the park (gentler terrain and deeper snow). However, you're welcome to strap on your skis throughout the park. Skis and poles with large baskets are required. Waterproof pants or gaiters help keep you warm and dry. Skiers must be in control at all times and give notice when approaching others on the trail.

## Hike 🚶

**Believe it or not, it's still possible to hike in winter.** Lower-elevation trails on the park's east side are often free of deep snow.

While skis or snowshoes aren't required, packed snow and ice can be extremely slippery. Stabilizer devices and poles are highly recommended to prevent dangerous falls and make your hike safe and enjoyable. Stay away from dangerous slopes and snowfields. When in doubt, turn around.

## Snowshoe 🚶

**Ever thought: I'd like to hike in the winter and see the park's beautiful backcountry, but there's all that snow? Consider snowshoeing!**

Snowshoes, waterproof boots, and layers of clothing are essential. While optional, poles help maintain balance, and waterproof pants or gaiters help keep you warm and dry. Park trails are not marked or maintained in winter. Route finding skills are important. Don't rely on other's tracks which can lead you astray.

## Backcountry Ski/Ride 🛹

**For the experienced and well-prepared, Rocky's steep terrain provides many opportunities for backcountry skiers and snowboarders.** (Skiing and snowboarding are not allowed in the Hidden Valley snowplay area. You may pass through, but slow down and yield the right of way to sledgers.)

Be prepared for variable snow conditions and harsh weather. Much of the park is in avalanche terrain. Check the avalanche forecast at [avalanche.state.co.us](http://avalanche.state.co.us). At a minimum, carry an avalanche beacon, probe, and shovel, and know how to use them. Be self-reliant. Your safety is your responsibility.

## Notes and Tips

**Dress for Success**  
See the front page for clothing recommendations. Even though it might be cold, the sun is still intense at elevation, especially when reflecting off snow. Don't forget sunglasses and sunscreen when you venture out.

**Know Where You Are**  
Navigating in winter can be extremely difficult. Park trails are not marked for winter use, and you can't depend on others' tracks. Have and know how to use a topographic map and compass. When used correctly, GPS units can be very helpful. Don't rely on cell phones; service is unreliable.

**What If I Don't Have My Own Equipment?**  
You can rent or purchase equipment in Estes Park and Grand Lake, including snowshoes, cross-country skis, poles, boots, sleds, tubes, saucers, gaiters, and stabilizers.



Snowshoeing is always an adventure!



## "Spring" in Rocky May Surprise You

When you think of spring what comes to mind? Feet of snow, ice, howling winds, and winter storm warnings? No? Then spring in Rocky might surprise you!

As elevation increases, average annual temperature decreases. With even the lowest parts of the park sitting above 7,000 feet (2,130 m), this means that sub-freezing temperatures often extend into June (and in the high mountains, year-round).

This also means that, even though there may be little or no snow and somewhat warm temps near park entrances, conditions will quickly change as you drive farther into the park.

Still, while spring here might be different than what you're used to, it still shows its beautiful signs. And with the proper planning, it's a great season to visit. Read on to learn more about how to have a safe, memorable visit.



Sprague Lake in April

## The Right Stuff

Spring is a time of change. Weather shifts rapidly. Trails are different from mile to mile and day to day. When hiking in spring, bring the right gear so that you'll be safe and comfortable in whatever conditions greet you during your visit. Bring:

- ✓ Multiple warm layers. Adjust to ever-changing conditions by shedding and donning layers as needed.
- ✓ A warm hat and gloves. You'll be glad you have them!
- ✓ Warm waterproof shoes. Snow, slush, and mud are common in spring—often all on the same trail.
- ✓ Wind- and waterproof outer layers. Strong, bitterly-cold wind is common in Rocky. Heavy, wet snow—whether falling from the sky or melting off of trees—and rain are always a possibility.
- ✓ A thick coat. When the weather shifts and the going gets tough, being able to throw on a big, warm coat during rest stops can be a lifesaver.
- ✓ Traction devices (see photo at right). Packed snow and ice are common throughout the park and can cause dangerous slips and falls. Traction devices give you piece of mind and can help you reach your hiking objectives.



An example traction device.

## Signs of the Season



Spring runoff under snow.



Pasqueflowers, the first flowers to bloom in spring.



Mountain bluebirds, one of the first migratory birds to return.




Fresh May snow dusts ponderosa pine needles.




# Safety and Regulations


**It is your responsibility to be safe and to know and obey park rules. You can find park safety information, rules, and regulations at visitor centers, entrance stations, trailhead bulletin boards, and the park website at [nps.gov/romo](https://nps.gov/romo).**


 **Campfires are permitted only in campgrounds and picnic areas with fire grates.** During high fire danger, campfires may be prohibited. Collecting vegetation, dead or alive, is prohibited. Extinguish and dispose of charcoal and ash.


**Cell service is unavailable in much of the park.** Don't depend on a cell phone for emergency help.

**Drones are not allowed anywhere in Rocky Mountain National Park.** This includes launching, landing, and operating drones.


 **Falling trees are an ever-present hazard and can fall without warning.** Be extra careful around dead trees when it's windy or following a snowstorm.


 **Firearm possession** in the park is permitted for those legally authorized to possess firearms under federal, Colorado, or local laws. However, hunting, recreational shooting, and target practice are illegal. Federal law prohibits firearms in park buildings and facilities. Those legally allowed to carry firearms must comply with all applicable state and federal firearm laws.


 **Marijuana possession and use is illegal in Rocky Mountain National Park and all federal lands,** even though small amounts of recreational marijuana are legal in Colorado.

 **Pets are prohibited on ALL park trails, tundra, and meadow areas.** Leashed pets are only allowed in picnic areas, parking lots, campgrounds, and along roadsides. Never leave pets in vehicles if it puts them in danger or they become a public nuisance. When outside vehicles, pets must be on leashes no longer than six feet. Pets may not be left tied to vehicles, trees, or other objects. Service animals that have been individually trained to perform specific tasks for the benefit of persons with disabilities are allowed in the park.

Emotional support ("therapy animals") and service-animals-in-training are not service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act and may not access trails or other non-motorized areas.

 **Rivers and streams can be deadly.** Park waters are frigid. Powerful currents can knock you over and pull you downstream or underwater, where you may become trapped. Streamside rocks are often slippery, and nearby water may be deep. Always closely supervise children around all water but especially near rivers and streams.

 **Take only pictures.** It is illegal to take any natural features including pinecones, rocks, antlers, and artifacts or to disturb soil, rocks, or vegetation (including flowers). Metal detector use is prohibited.

 **Wilderness travel** should be done in a group, not alone. Leave a detailed trip itinerary with a friend—this helps park authorities if you fail to return. Mountain weather changes quickly. If conditions are more difficult than anticipated, turn around. Camping is only allowed in designated sites with a permit.



An on-snow hike to Dream and Emerald lakes using poles and traction devices.