

# BOULDER

## HIKING GUIDE



### How to Hike Happy

#### Altitude Awareness

Boulder is 5,430 feet above sea level and, as you might imagine, the air is a little thinner up here. To help avoid altitude sickness – typified by headaches, nausea and fatigue – make sure to drink more water than usual, curb your alcohol consumption and protect yourself from the sun.

#### Sunscreen

Cover yourself with sunscreen and bring a hat. Boulder is a mile closer to the sun than the sandy beaches on the coast, which means it's easier to get a sunburn up here.

#### Water and Food

Our climate is very dry, and it's easy to get dehydrated. Drink often, even if you don't feel thirsty. Be sure to take plenty of water with you whenever you are hiking. Bring along an energy bar or two in case your energy level drops or you spend more time on the trail than planned!

#### Care for Colorado

Picking flowers, collecting rocks and picking berries may not seem to be a big deal, but it means others won't have a chance to enjoy them. With millions of people visiting Open Space and Mountain Parks, the less impact we each make, the longer we will enjoy what we have. Learn more at [bouldercoloradousa.com/cc](https://bouldercoloradousa.com/cc).

#### Stick to the Trail

Traveling on the trail leaves room for wildlife and their homes. Shortcutting trails causes erosion. Be ready to get muddy and step right through puddles. Boots dry overnight; plants take years to recover.

#### Share Our Trails

We all enjoy the outdoors in different ways. Pay attention, expect to encounter others and be courteous. Yield to all.

#### Dogs

On most trails, visitors can walk their dogs on leash. If dog guardians wish to walk their dogs off leash, they must be registered in Boulder's Voice and Sight Tag Program. Learn more at [voiceandsight.org](https://voiceandsight.org).



Boulder Convention and Visitors Bureau  
2440 Pearl St. Boulder, CO 80302  
800.444.0447 | 303.442.2911 [BoulderColoradoUSA.com](https://BoulderColoradoUSA.com)

City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks  
303.441.3440 • [osmp.org](https://osmp.org)

## Summer Weekend Hiker Shuttles

Memorial Day Weekend–Labor Day\*

Full details at [BoulderColoradoUSA.com/shuttles](https://BoulderColoradoUSA.com/shuttles)



#### Chautauqua Park to Park Shuttle

Ride the free weekend shuttle to get to Chautauqua stress-free and to avoid parking fees. Simply park for free at 5 downtown parking garages, CU Regent lot or New Vista High School, and then hop on the shuttle.

- FREE pickups every 15 minutes
- Saturdays and Sundays, 8am–8pm (plus Memorial Day, Labor Day and Fourth of July, 8am–8pm)
- Dogs, strollers and gear welcome



#### Hessie

#### Trailhead Shuttle

Ride to several popular hiking trails in the Indian Peaks Wilderness where parking is scarce. Take a bus from Boulder to the shuttle: Ride the RTD Bus Route NB from the downtown Boulder station to Nederland High School (fares apply).

\*Operates late May to early October.

- FREE pickups every 15 minutes
- Pickup at Nederland High School
- Friday 6:30am–6pm, Saturday 6:30am–8pm and Sunday 6:30am–6pm (plus holidays)
- Leashed dogs welcome
- Bikes are not allowed



#### Eldo Shuttle

Parking is limited at Eldorado Canyon State Park, and when it's full, cars are turned away. Instead, pick up the shuttle from the University of Colorado Regent Lot (Broadway and Regent) or one of five other stops shown on the map below.

- FREE pickups every 20 minutes
- Saturdays and Sundays, 8am–7pm (plus holidays)
- Brief transfer at SH 93 & 170
- Bikes (3 per shuttle), climbing gear, leashed dogs and strollers welcome

A valid state parks pass is required for those 16 and older to ride the shuttle. Bring your annual pass, purchase a day pass at [cpwshop.com](https://cpwshop.com) or bring \$4 exact cash.



#### Bustang to Rocky Mountain National Park

Catch the Bustang at Table Mesa Park-N-Ride and cruise from Boulder to Estes Park Visitor Center where you can transfer to a RMNP shuttle to Bear Lake Road. A valid park pass ([nps.gov/romo](https://nps.gov/romo)) is required to ride the shuttle into RMNP. Bus tickets are \$5 each way and must be purchased in advance.

\*Operates early July to early October.

Schedules and info at [BoulderColoradoUSA.com/shuttles](https://BoulderColoradoUSA.com/shuttles).

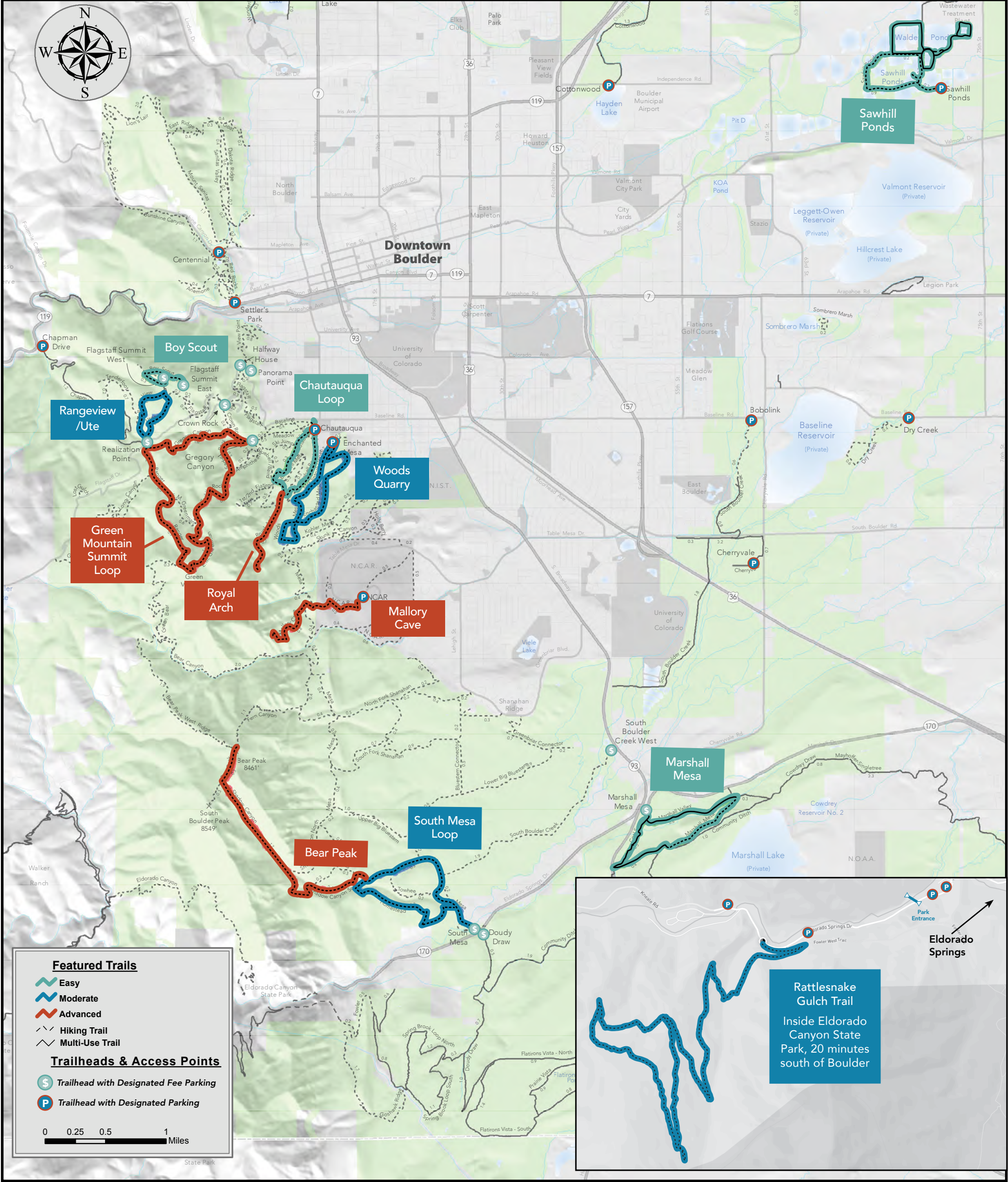
## BOULDER HIKER SHUTTLES

CHAUTAUQUA PARK

HESSIE TRAILHEAD

ELDORADO CANYON STATE PARK

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK



### How to Find Accessible Trails

Boulder's outdoor beauty is available to all. Find 30 trails suitable for people experiencing disabilities and personalized hand-cycle tours available at [AccessibleOSMP.org](https://AccessibleOSMP.org).

### Go for a Winter Hike

Enjoy fewer hikers, bright-blue skies and the occasional quiet blanket of snow. Snow cleats recommended.





# BOULDER

## HIKING GUIDE

### KEY

Dogs allowed (on leash)



Wheelchair Accessible



Parking Fee



Biking Trail, Too



Restroom



Fishing†



Great for Winter Hiking



Served by Park to Park Bus



Served by Eldo Shuttle



The Chautauqua Trailhead and Eldorado Canyon State Park are very popular and parking is scarce. You can avoid the congestion by taking a free shuttle to these locations on weekends Memorial Day–Labor Day. See more information on reverse.

† Must have a valid Colorado fishing license. Learn more at [cpw.state.co.us](http://cpw.state.co.us).



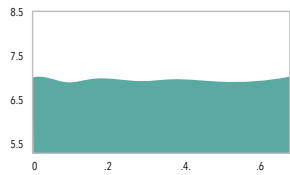
## Boulder's Outdoor-Loving Legacy

From its earliest days, Boulder has been a city that's appreciated its beautiful natural surroundings. In 1896, the Boulder-Colorado Sanitarium, considered something of a health sanctuary and spa, opened at the base of Boulder's mountains with trails outside its back door. It drew guests who retreated into the piney hills for exercise, fresh air and sunshine. In 1898, the Colorado Chautauqua was built at the foot of the red rock formations known as the Flatirons. It was a family retreat created in the tradition of national Chautauquas of the time, focusing on culture, music and nature. In 1967, Boulder became the first city in the U.S. to tax itself to acquire funds to be used specifically for the acquisition, management and maintenance of open space.

Boulder continues to passionately protect some 45,000 acres of unspoiled open space, which visitors can access via 300 miles of hiking and biking trails. We welcome you to this outdoor playground.

## EASY

Boy Scout Trail



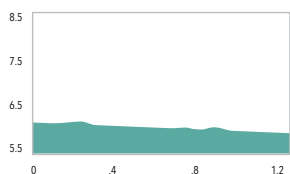
This family-friendly hike has forest-framed views and boulder-strewn terrain ending in a breathtaking lookout at May's Point. It becomes a fantastic kingdom of rock castles and trees for kids to scramble over, climb on and hide behind. Take a brief detour on the Sensory Trail, where signage will instruct you to smell the bark of a ponderosa pine, listen for birds of prey or take a seat to "rest and remember family and friends." The trail entrance is located across from the Flagstaff Nature Center, great for children and typically open May–Sept., Fri–Sun, 10:30am–4pm.

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to parking at "Flagstaff Nature Center." The trail starts directly across the street from here.

Cars not registered in Boulder County must pay a \$5 parking fee at the parking lot.



## Sawhill Ponds

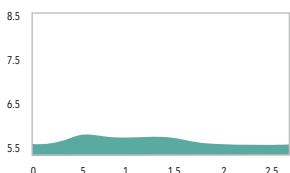


Sometimes you need a bit of distance from the mountains to fully take in their grandeur. This peaceful spot east of town is perfect for that purpose, with unfettered vistas of the Flatirons and the massive peaks beyond – all reflected in a collection of 18 ponds. This area was a gravel mine in the 1960s and 70s. The ponds are now protected wetlands and a bird-watching hot spot (especially in March when waterfowl migrate through). The trails are flat, easy, wheelchair accessible and replete with wildlife in every season.

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to parking at "Sawhill Ponds Trailhead."



## Marshall Mesa Loop



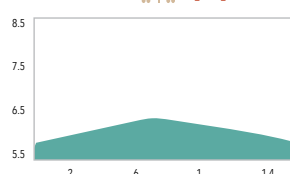
Traverse a wide-open landscape south of town that's as rich in coal mining history (explained by excellent interpretive signs) as it is with Flatirons views. The land preserves a rare remnant of dry tall-grass prairie where wildflowers bloom through spring, summer and fall. The geology of this area is particularly special, with rippled rocks showing evidence of ancient seas and visible fractures resulting from the upthrust of the Rocky Mountains. Download a brochure at [bouldercolorado.gov/osp/learning](http://bouldercolorado.gov/osp/learning).

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to parking at "Marshall Mesa Trailhead."

Cars not registered in Boulder County must pay a \$5 parking fee at the parking lot.



## Chautauqua Loop



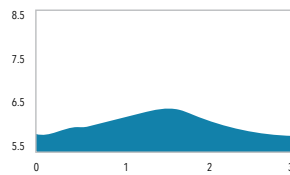
It's easy to see why this is Boulder's signature hiking area: Snap a photo in front of the iconic Flatirons and then hike right up to these spectacular, slanting slabs of sandstone (say that five times fast!). As you start out on the Chautauqua Trail, you'll find that the hike is steeper than it appears, so take your time. The trails wind in and out of pine forests and grassy meadows. Stop to smell a fragrant ponderosa pine trunk, have a seat on a sun-warmed boulder and admire the city views below.

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to parking at "Chautauqua Trailhead." See reverse for information on the Park to Park shuttle, available Memorial Day–Labor Day.



## MODERATE

South Mesa Loop



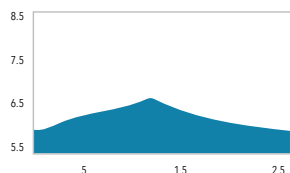
This hiking area is known for its historic homestead vestiges and a landscape that's a pleasing mix of rolling meadows and hilly pine forests, loaded with wildflowers and birds. The adventure starts right away, as you cross two bridges over the clear, babbling South Boulder Creek. In the springtime, keep your eyes peeled for domestic irises, planted by homesteaders over 100 years ago.

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to parking at "South Mesa Trailhead."

Cars not registered in Boulder County must pay a \$5 parking fee at the parking lot.



## Woods Quarry Trail

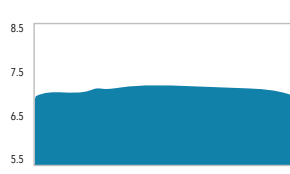


Discover an old stone quarry where large sandstone slabs have been rearranged into an outdoor living room by a few creative folks. Bring a picnic to fully enjoy this unique spot. Start on Bluebell Road, then take the Mesa Trail to a fork, then go right on Woods Quarry. After enjoying the scenic viewpoint, head back down on the loop to pass by a mysterious, old stone cabin.

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to parking at "Chautauqua Trailhead." See reverse for information on the Park to Park shuttle, available Memorial Day–Labor Day.



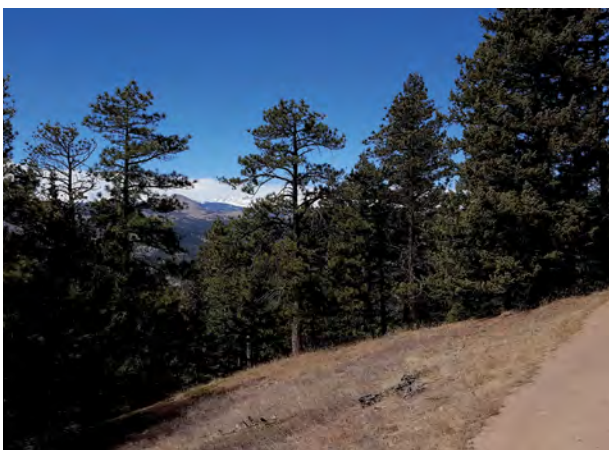
## Range View/Ute Trails



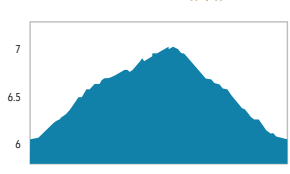
On the hunt for a cool and shady hike? Range View Trail is just the ticket, looping through quiet stands of Douglas fir, ponderosa pines and junipers. The moderate terrain and incredible views westward to the snowcapped Indian Peaks Wilderness, and some of the tallest peaks in Colorado, make this a lovely hike for all seasons. You can return the way you came, or make it a loop on the Ute Trail.

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to parking at "Realization Point."

Cars not registered in Boulder County must pay a \$5 parking fee at the parking lot.



## Rattlesnake Gulch Trail



The dramatic, striated walls of Eldorado Canyon State Park are just 20 minutes south of Boulder. Rattlesnake Gulch is one of the park's signature trails that will take you past spectacular views of the canyon and Colorado's eastern plains in the distance. You'll also pass the remnants of historic Crags Hotel, which was built in 1908 but burned down in 1913. Continue on to the Continental Divide Overlook, and have your camera ready. This is a lollipop trail with unique features to capture your imagination.

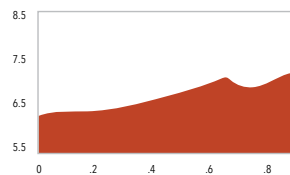
Please note, state park entry fees are required.

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to Eldorado Canyon State Park. The park is very busy and has limited parking on weekends. When parking is full, cars are turned away. See reverse for information on the Eldo Shuttle, available on weekends Memorial Day–Labor Day.



## ADVANCED

Royal Arch Trail

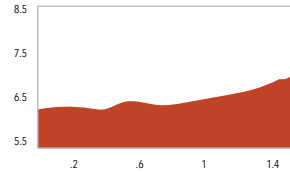


**This trail will be closed for repairs through fall 2021.** This thigh-burner is well worth it for the reward at the end: a massive, sandstone arch that frames views of Boulder and beyond. It is the most popular trail in Boulder for a reason. You'll start at the Chautauqua Trailhead, take Bluebell Road to the Bluebell Shelter, then follow signs for the Royal Arch Trail. The terrain is often stair-stepper-like, so be prepared to have some "are we there yet?" moments.

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to parking at "Chautauqua Trailhead." See reverse for information on the Park to Park shuttle, available Memorial Day–Labor Day.



## Mallory Cave Trail

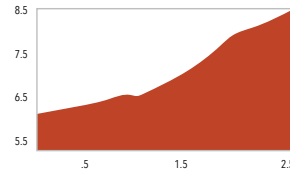


For a few years, this entire trail was closed to protect a rare colony of bats from white-nose fungus infection. These days only the last section of the trail is closed April–September and the cave at the end is guarded from human entry with a rather artfully designed iron gate. The terrain of this trail is steep, heading up the mountainside for spectacular views, and the last section (open Oct.–March) is a serious scramble to reach the cave. Mallory Cave Trail is one of several in a network that leaves from the parking lot of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR).

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to parking at "NCAR."



## Bear Peak

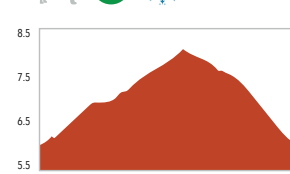


With a 8,461-foot summit and views of Longs Peak from its summit, Bear Peak is a legitimate mountain climb (so prepare accordingly), yet it is conveniently accessed right within Boulder's city limits. There are several access options. This shorter (yet steeper) South Mesa Trailhead option starts off on Mesa Trail and connects with Shadow Canyon South, which is cool, shady and tucked down in a canyon. The final stretch is a scramble to the exposed summit at 8,461 feet. Peak baggers can pop over to the adjacent South Boulder Peak (at 8,549 feet) to get a two-for-one.

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to parking at "South Mesa Trailhead."



## Green Mountain Summit Loop



At 8,144 feet, Green Mountain is third-tallest peak in Boulder's mountain backdrop. You will leave from the Gregory Canyon Trailhead and take your loop in the direction of either Gregory Canyon or Saddle Rock. Both are strenuous climbs up the cool and shady north side of the mountain through lush forests and beside seasonal trickling streams. After the final lung-busting stretch, you'll be rewarded by 360-degree views and, in summer, swarms of butterflies. This mountain climb is a serious endeavor, so prepare accordingly.

**Directions:** Use Google Maps for navigation to parking at "Gregory Canyon Trailhead."

Cars not registered in Boulder County must pay a \$5 parking fee at the parking lot.



Photos, left to right: Rich Grant, Wendy Marie Stuart, NOAA ESRL, Nina B/Shutterstock.com, Jonathan B. Auerbach, Emiliano Lake-Herrera, Dave Sutherland, Philip Yates, Ann G. Duncan, Ann G. Duncan, Dave Sutherland, Gwen Gray, Emma Zilber (emmazphotography.com), Erin Byrne, Tracy Schaeffer, Andrew Magill-Flick Creative Commons, Rich Grant