

Media Contacts:



VISIT
ESTES PARK
VisitEstesPark.com

Rachel Oppermann
Visit Estes Park
roppermann@visitestespark.com
(970) 586-0500

TURNER
EstesPark@turnerpr.com
(303) 333-1402

Visit Estes Park Fact Sheet

About Estes Park

Estes Park is a small mountain town that offers seemingly endless activities for outdoor lovers, nature enthusiasts, active couples and families of all sizes. Estes Park is surrounded on all three sides by nationally protected land, including Rocky Mountain National Park and Roosevelt National Forest. Incorporated in 1917, the town is a year-round destination with more than 100 hotels, motels, lodges, bed and breakfasts, guest ranches, cabins and cottages, condominiums and campgrounds.

Population

6,352 people (2018); approx. 2,400 elk “residents;” burgeoning moose population

Location

Estes Park is located at the base of the Colorado Rocky Mountains, just 90 minutes northwest of Denver. Denver International Airport is the closest airport to Estes; transportation options include rental cars and shuttle service.

Weather

Estes Park is a four-season destination, experiencing beautiful springs, summers, falls and winters. The town’s mountain setting at 7,522 feet above sea level (2,293 meters) provides cool temperatures during the summer, averaging mid-70s from June through August. The winter sees moderate snow, and most days are sunny. The most snowfall tends to occur in March and April.

History

Estes Park has been a playground for lovers of the outdoors for thousands of years. The first people to visit the area were ancestors of today’s Native Americans, who hunted big game animals in the area. The Arapahoe and Ute tribes routinely visited Estes Park during the summer months to enjoy the ideal climate.

In October 1859, Joel Estes made his first hunting trip to the Estes Valley. As a farmer-turned-minor-turned cattle rancher, Estes believed the valley held promise and moved to the area with his family. Others, intrigued by the possibilities of the valley, followed the Estes family and settled the land. In 1864 William Byers, then editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*, named the area in honor of his hosts, Joel Estes and his family. The town of Estes Park was incorporated in April 1917.

Superlatives

Estes Park has some of the best of the best in the world including:

- **Trail Ridge Road** - Highest continuously paved road in the U.S., peaking at 12,183 feet (3,713 meters).
- **YMCA of the Rockies Estes Park** – World’s largest YMCA facility
- **Rocky Mountain National Park** – Nation’s third most visited national park
- **Baldpate Key Museum** – World’s largest collection of keys
- **Elk Population** – One of the highest concentrations of elk in the U.S.
- **Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival** – The largest cultural festival of its kind west of the Mississippi River.
- **Historic Park Theatre** – Oldest single house motion picture theatre in the United States that was originally built as a movie theatre and is still operating today.

Top Activities

There are a myriad of activities to enjoy year-round in Estes Park including:

- **Active Pursuits:**
 - Hiking, Rock Climbing & Ice Climbing
 - Snowshoeing
 - Cross-country & Backcountry Skiing
 - Cycling & Mountain Biking
 - High Altitude Training & Trail Running
 - Cliff Camping
 - Climbing the Via Ferrata
- **Water Adventures:**
 - Fishing & Fly Fishing
 - Boating & Kayaking
 - Standup Paddleboarding
- **Nature Excursions:**
 - Photography Safaris & Nature Classes
 - Birding, Wildlife Viewing
 - Horseback Riding
 - Stargazing Classes
- **Scenic Drives:**
 - Trail Ridge Road
 - Peak to Peak Scenic Byway
 - Fall River Road
 - Off-roading & Jeep Tours
- **Leisure Activities:**
 - Golfing - Estes Park boasts two regulation golf courses, as well as multiple miniature courses for family fun
 - Shopping - More than 300 boutique shops

Key Attractions

- **The Stanley Hotel:** Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the 110-year-old Stanley Hotel is famous for its iconic architecture and spectacular setting overlooking Rocky Mountain National Park. Guests have a choice of lodging: the historic hotel, adjacent boutique lodge or nearby

luxurious Aspire Residences, and the opportunity to take guided excursions into Rocky Mountain National Park. Historic and Night Spirit Tours run daily and world-class entertainers, musicians, comedians and inspirational speakers perform on site regularly through the Stanley Live Concert Series.

- **MacGregor Ranch:** The MacGregor Ranch is the last remaining working cattle ranch in Estes Park. Built in 1873 the MacGregor Ranch is one of few sites operating as both a working ranch and youth education center. It offers a window into the past for guests who can observe horses, ranch hands working the field and cattle grazing the meadow.
- **Baldpate Inn Key Museum:** Named after the mystery novel, "*Seven Keys to Baldpate*," the Baldpate Inn opened in 1917. In keeping with the story line of the novel, the proprietors gave each guest to the Inn their very own key. The tradition ended during World War I, but loyal guests returned every year with their own keys from exotic locales around the world, thus creating the world's largest key collection, now boasting more than 20,000 keys including those from the Pentagon, Westminster Abby, Mozart's wine cellar, and even Frankenstein's castle.
- **Historic Park Theatre:** Historic Park Theatre, the oldest operating movie theatre west of the Mississippi River, was built in 1913. The theatre has been renovated and still shows films today. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Estes Park Museum:** The Estes Park Museum was founded by volunteers in 1962. The Museum's purpose is to collect, interpret and preserve local history, as well as to present exhibits, programs and events for the education and benefit of residents and guests of all ages. There is no admission.
- **Historic Fall River Hydroplant:** The hydroplant was built by F.O. Stanley in 1909 to power the Stanley Hotel, and was the source for power in the Town of Estes Park. The plant now serves as an interpretive center open to the public and features the original equipment installed by Stanley.
- **Estes Park Memorial Observatory:** Opened in 2009, the observatory has a 16-foot dome which allows guests to enjoy Estes Park's clear, star filled skies and star gaze through a 12-inch computer controlled telescope.
- **Open Air Adventure Park:** This family owned and operated aerial adventure park is a course fit for thrill seekers ages five and up. The 90-minute adventure consists of 32 different elements at 10 and 21 feet above ground.
- **Aerial Tramway:** One of the few European-style cable cars operating in the U.S., the aerial tramway provides riders with a bird's-eye view of Estes Park from the end of May through early September.
- **Lake Estes Marina:** Open from May through early October, the marina offers rentals from kayaks to pontoon boats to paddleboards, as well as pedal cart and cruise bike rentals to enjoy on a ride along the Lake Estes Trail.
- **Kent Mountain Adventure Center's Via Ferrata:** New in 2019, visitors can experience Kent Mountain Adventure Center's Via Ferrata ("Iron Path"). Both experienced and non-experienced climbers can enjoy the challenge of scaling a 600-foot cliff while being safely secured to anchored steel cables, and with the help of natural rock features, ladders and steel steps.

Key Natural Features

- **Rocky Mountain National Park:** Encompassing 415 (668 Kilometers) square miles with more than 350 miles (563 kilometers) of hiking trails, Rocky Mountain National Park boasts 114 peaks over 10,000 feet high (3,048 meters), 700 species of wildflowers and 150 named lakes. Wildlife viewers will see elk, mule deer, moose, bighorn sheep, eagles, hawks and other small animals in the park.
- **Roosevelt National Forest:** A variety of recreational activities are available here including camping, picnicking, scenic drives, wildlife viewing, hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, rafting, four-wheel driving, dirt biking, skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, hunting and horseback riding.
- **Bear Lake:** At 9,475 feet (2,888 meters), Bear Lake is the most easily accessed alpine lake in Rocky Mountain National Park. Its .65 mile (1 kilometer) nature trail loop provides close-up views of two of the Park's signature peaks: Hallett and Longs. Hallett Peak is one of the most photographed peaks in all of Rocky Mountain National Park.
- **Longs Peak:** Longs Peak is a particularly distinctive mountain within Rocky Mountain National Park. Towering at more than 14,259 feet (4,346 meters), Longs Peak is the tallest mountain, and only "14er" in the entire park.
- **Old Man Mountain:** Towering above Fall River and to the west of Estes Park, Old Man Mountain and its breathtaking granite peak now appears on America's list of important 'Sacred Sites'. It stands about 655 feet (200 meters) above the surrounding valleys.
- **Hermit Park:** Located in the Estes Valley, Hermit Park encompasses 1,362 acres (551 hectares). It includes hiking trails, camping grounds and spots for special events.

Meetings & Weddings

The town's mountain scenery provides the perfect backdrop for all types of special events ranging in attendance from five to 2,500. The Estes Park Events Complex, the Pavilion at the Stanley Hotel, Estes Park Center-YMCA of the Rockies, Della Terra Mountain Chateau and the Estes Park Conference Center at The Ridgeline Hotel are just a few of the many indoor venue options offering over 100,000 square feet of space.

Dining

Fine dining options

- Cascades at the Stanley Hotel
- Seasoned – an American Bistro
- Twin Owls Steakhouse

Casual dining options

- Bird & Jim's
- Claire's on the Park
- Sweet Basilico

- The Other Side
- The Rock Inn Mountain Tavern
- Mama Rose's
- Baldpate Inn (seasonal)

Budget-friendly dining options

- Smokin' Daves BBQ & Taphouse
- Poppy's Pizza & Grill
- Nepal's Cafe
- Claire's on the Park
- Ed's Cantina
- Wild Rose
- Himalayan Curry & Kebob

Craft beer, wine, and spirits

- Estes Park Brewery
- Lumpy Ridge Brewing Co.
- Rock Cut Brewing Company
- Snowy Peaks Winery
- Elkins Distilling Co.

Signature Annual Events

- **Winter Festival/Trails Day (January)** – The Estes Park Winter Festival showcases everything that the snowy town offers in the winter with a wide range of activities including local wine and beer tastings, live music, a chili cook-off, an interactive ice castle and more.
- **Bigfoot Days (April – CANCELLED FOR 2020)** – The legend of Bigfoot has been known far and wide for decades, with a number of sightings within Rocky Mountain National Park and Estes Park in recent years. Estes Park's Bigfoot Days includes a Bigfoot-themed dinner, 5K race, food trucks, live music, Bigfoot dance off and more.
- **JazzFest (June – CANCELLED FOR 2020)** – Held the first weekend in June, JazzFest offers two days of free jazz concerts at the outdoor amphitheater at Performance Park accompanied by a self-guided Art Walk of Estes Park galleries.
- **Wool Market (June – CANCELLED FOR 2020)** – Estes Park's Wool Market is one of the largest and longest running all-natural fiber markets in North America focusing on how wool is obtained, prepared, spun and weaved. This event includes sheepherding demonstrations, crafts, and more than 50 booths showcasing homespun wares.
- **Scandinavian Midsummer Festival (June – CANCELLED FOR 2020)** – Celebrating the summer solstice, the Estes Park Scandinavian Midsummer Festival is a weekend full of European culture and traditions. Festivities include a Viking reenactment, Saab and Volvo auto show, craft and art fair, and dancing.
- **4th of July Weekend Celebration (July)** – The idyllic All-American destination, Estes Park sparks alive with one of the most spectacular firework displays in Colorado. Weekend celebrations also include the "Coolest Car Show," live bands, the Independence Day pancake breakfast and tons of activities for kids.

- **Rooftop Rodeo (July – CANCELLED FOR 2020)** – One of Estes Park’s most popular events, the Rooftop Rodeo includes bronco riding, steer wrestling, barrel racing, and bull riding. The event also features western food, libations, and live music – ideal for a western-themed getaway. The rodeo has been voted the “Best Small Rodeo of the Year” five times, and won the PRCA Mountain States Circuit Medium Rodeo of the Year accolade in 2014, along with its Most Improved Rodeo of the Year award in 2015.
- **Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival (September)** – Held the weekend after Labor Day, the Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival celebrates Celtic heritage with a parade, pipe bands, Highland and Irish dance competitions, folk music, International Jousting Championships, nightly concerts and more. This Estes Park festival is the largest in the West.
- **Autumn Gold Festival (September)** – Gold aspen leaves, crisp fall air, and the sound of elk bugling combine to create the perfect setting for this festival of bands, brats, and beer. Free family activities and a \$5,000 grand prize raffle drawing are just a few of the event’s highlights.
- **Elk Fest (Elktober)** – Premiering the first weekend in October, ElkFest is a celebration of all things Wapiti, the nearly 2,400 American elk that call Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park their home. Seminars, a bugling contest, elk tours, a Mountain Man encampment, Native American music and dancing, and edible products from elk are all featured.
- **Fall Back Beer Festival (October/November)** – During this festival held each year during daylight saving time, guests can taste more than 100 different beers from breweries across Colorado, attend beer-centric seminars, and watch demonstrations from equipment fabricators.
- **Catch the Glow (November)** – Known for festive holiday décor, Estes Park invites guests to “Catch the Glow” the day after Thanksgiving each year. The day’s big event is the Catch the Glow Christmas parade, drawing an estimated 25,000 spectators from around the region to line Elkhorn Avenue, Estes Park’s main street, to watch the floats go by and ring in the holiday season!

Top Accolades

“Best Adventure Vacations to Take in 2019”

- *Smarter Travel*, 2019

“Best Summer Vacations to Take in 2019”

- Oyster.com

“Best Mountain Town”

- *Sunset.com*, 2018

“Top-Rated Vacation Destinations in North America”

- *Expedia*, 2018

“Best Weekend Getaways with Kids”

- *Vacationidea.com*, 2018

“Best in Travel 2017”

- *Money Magazine*, 2017

“Top 20 Mountain Trips”

- *Sunset.com*

“#1 Family Day Trip”

- *Colorado Parent*, 2017 Family Favorites Awards

“Destinations on the Rise – U.S. ”

- TripAdvisor, 2016 Travelers' Choice Awards
- "Top 10 Tourist Towns for Family Travel"
- *FamilyFun*, 2015 Travel Awards
- "America's Most Scenic Roads"
- *Travel + Leisure*, 2015
- "Best Small Towns"
- *The Huffington Post*, 2015
- "20 Best Small Towns to Visit in 2015"
- *Smithsonian*, 2015
- "America's Coolest Small Towns"
- *Budget Travel*, 2014
- "America's Favorite Towns"
- *Travel + Leisure*, 2013

Address

Visit Estes Park – The Destination Marketing Office
 1230 Big Thompson Ave.
 P.O. Box 4426
 Estes Park, Colorado 80517
 (970) 586-0500

Digital Channels

www.VisitEstesPark.com
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