

Rocky Mountain National Park



Your Park in Winter

Reflected sunlight sparkles in the snow. Tracks of tiny mice and great elk cross your trail. Frozen alpine lakes ringed by massive peaks can be reached by snowshoe, ski, and even on foot. For those who are prepared, winter in Rocky Mountain National Park is a beautiful time full of crisp adventures.

This newspaper is designed to help you comfortably and safely enjoy this high and wild park during its longest season. Information on visitor centers, important phone numbers, winter travel, and recreation are on pages 2 and 3. Free ranger-led programs are listed on page 4. Camping is described on page 5. Some popular trails are listed on pages 6 and 7. The back page has a winter park map showing major year-round routes and facilities.

There is no more important season than winter to ask a ranger about current park conditions. Park roads often exemplify winter in the mountains, with snow, ice, and gusty winds frequent roadway companions. Trails may be good for snowshoeing or skiing one day, but poor the next. Stop in at the nearest visitor center (Beaver Meadows and Kawuneeche are open year-round) for information and suggestions tailored to your interests and current conditions.

If you enter the park from the west (Grand Lake), you're in for a winter treat. Cross-country skiing can be excellent through most of the winter. Easy trails head toward Lulu City or Sun Valley, and many more challenging options are also available. On the east side of the park (Estes Park area), snowshoeing is more reliable than cross-country skiing. The lofty peaks of Rocky Mountain National Park tend to catch and hold more snow on their western slopes than on the east, allowing some east-side park trails to be hikeable through much of the winter. The Bear Lake area usually has excellent snowshoeing through middle and late winter, as does the Glacier Gorge area. Dream Lake, Mills Lake, and the Loch are spectacular winter snowshoe destinations. Easy trails circle Sprague and Lily Lakes.

Rocky Mountain is the loftiest national park in the contiguous forty-eight states. When nature permits, you can drive higher on the nation's highest paved through-road – Trail Ridge (12,183') – than is possible in any other national park. Winter comes early to Trail Ridge Road, typically closing the road for the winter by mid-October. During mid-winter, powerful winds, often gusting to hurricane-force velocities, create frequent blizzard conditions on this road. Especially because of the winds and resultant deep drifts, Trail Ridge Road is too dangerous

to try to keep fully open through the winter. Yet much of the park is still open year-round. You can drive to magnificent view areas like Many Parks Curve and Bear Lake on the east, and through the spectacular Kawuneeche Valley on the west.

You will drive by many trails that can provide a real taste of wild mountains in their longest season. A snowshoe or ski tour will reveal some of the beauty unique to winter. Here are ice-filled cascades and waterfalls, and massive peaks sparkling with snow against dark rock. Elk, coyotes, deer, snowshoe hares, and many other mammals remain active in the park through the winter, covered in dense winter coats. Hardy birds stay north for the season, ranging in color from that of winter (the ptarmigan), to that of night (the raven), to a combination that includes both those hues and more (the magpie).

Enjoy this long quiet season in Rocky Mountain National Park.

- Peter Allen



The hearty magpie remains active throughout the long Rocky Mountain winter.



The ptarmigan changes from mottled brown-grey plumage in summer to the color of winter.



The tiny pika stays active during the winter, eating plants it dries during the summer

INSIDE:

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You Need to Know

Visitor Centers



Park visitor centers are the places to find out what you need to know. All have knowledgeable staff, printed information on many topics, and great bookstores stocked with all the best books for finding that perfect trail and learning what makes Rocky Mountain such an awesome national park. Each visitor center has its own special features.

West of the Divide – Grand Lake Area Kawuneeche Visitor Center

Open daily 8-4:30
except Dec. 25. Features
free movie and slide shows,
exhibits on how to plan your
visit, bookstore, backcountry
camping permits.



East of the Divide – Estes Park Area Beaver Meadows Visitor Center

Open daily 8-4:30
except Dec. 25.
Features free movie,
bookstore, 3-D park orientation
map, backcountry camping
permits in nearby building.

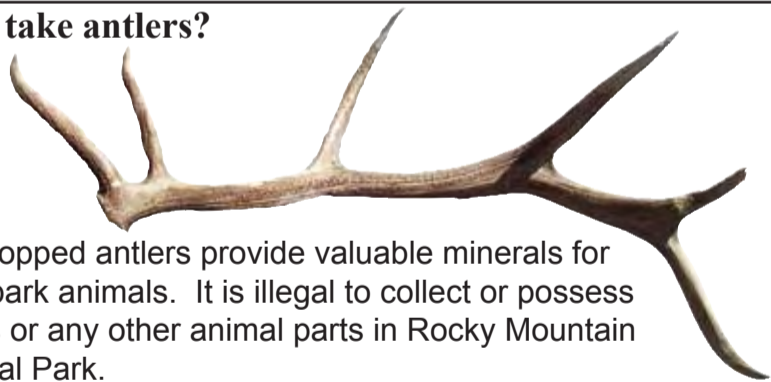


Fall River Visitor Center

Open Saturdays & Sundays
9-4. Also open Nov. 23, Dec.
26-28, and Feb. 18. Features
life-sized wildlife displays, a
discovery room where kids can
touch objects and dress up as
rangers, Native Americans and
pioneers, and a bookstore.



Can I take antlers?



No. Dropped antlers provide valuable minerals for other park animals. It is illegal to collect or possess antlers or any other animal parts in Rocky Mountain National Park.

International Sister Parks

Rocky Mountain National Park and the Tatra National Parks (Slovakia and Poland) have formally become sister parks. Sharing rugged, beautiful mountain terrain and similar ecosystems, three parks are exchanging information and expertise to better manage these great preserves for the benefit of all who may enjoy them.

Heart of the Rockies

Teachers, Parents, Students!

Rocky Mountain National Park's "Heart of the Rockies" education program provides an outdoor classroom to children throughout this region. Interested teachers may contact the park's Education Specialist at (970) 586-3777, or on-line at heartoftherockies.net



Park Phone Numbers and Website



Call Park Information (970) 586-1206 with your questions. We are available to assist you from 8 to 4:30.

Dial 911 or (970) 586-1203 for emergencies.

The Official Park Website is nps.gov/romo

Pets



Pets are not allowed on park trails or in the backcountry. Please observe signs; some winter-closed gravel roads are managed as backcountry trails during this season.

Pets are allowed in campgrounds, picnic areas and along roadsides. They must be on a leash (6' or less) and attended at all times. Never leave pets unattended in your vehicle. Kennels are available locally.

Fishing



Obtain specific park regulations at visitor centers or park entrance stations. To fish in Rocky Mountain National Park, you must have a valid Colorado state fishing license.

No Hunting or Firearms

Hunting is not allowed in Rocky Mountain National Park. All firearms and weapons are prohibited.

Lost and Found

Please turn found items in at any park visitor center. To inquire about lost items, call the Backcountry Office at (970) 586-1242.



Weather and Road Conditions

Winter driving conditions can change rapidly. For Rocky Mountain National Park daily road and driving conditions, stop in at a visitor center or call (970) 586-1206. Snow tires or chains may be recommended during periods of snow. After hours, a recorded message at (970) 586-1333 provides daily updates on park road and weather conditions.

During winter, lower elevation park roads remain open. *The high central portion of Trail Ridge Road is closed between Many Parks Curve and the Colorado River Trailhead.* The treeless, open central section of Trail Ridge Road experiences strong winds and blizzard conditions, making it unsafe to maintain through the winter. For Colorado state road conditions, call (877) 315-ROAD or (303) 639-1111.

The central part of Trail Ridge Road (at right) is closed for the winter. Check at visitor centers for all road conditions.



This Park Paper

High Country Headlines is produced by the staff of Rocky Mountain National Park in cooperation with— and with funding provided by— the Rocky Mountain Nature Association. Edited and designed by Peter Allen.

High Country Survival

Stay Together!

Avoid traveling alone in the backcountry and always stay together as a group. Detailed information regarding your trip itinerary should be left with a responsible person so park authorities can be notified if you fail to return. Safety is your responsibility!

Backcountry Travel

Be prepared for all types of weather, no matter what activity you are enjoying in the national park. Unforeseen weather conditions can change a short afternoon hike, ski, or snowshoe trip into an unpleasant experience.

Severe storms can impose life threatening hazards only one or two miles from your car. Carry a stormproof outer shell and extra clothing. Be equipped with detailed topographic maps and a compass. Obtain a required backcountry permit for any overnight trip.

Don't depend upon a cell phone for emergency help; many locations in this rugged park are not serviced.

Avalanches

Colorado has more known avalanches than any other state. Avoid skiing or snowshoeing in steep gullies where avalanches could occur. Open slopes of 30 to 45 degrees can be loaded with dangerous masses of snow, easily triggered by backcountry travelers. Wear an electronic transceiver when traversing avalanche terrain. If you are caught in an avalanche, make swimming motions and try to stay on top of the snow.

For current avalanche conditions, check at a visitor center or call (970)586-1206.

Keep Wildlife Wild

Never feed wildlife. A fine may be issued to violators. Animals can kick, bite or gore you. They can become dependent on human food and lose the ability to feed naturally. Wildlife also carry diseases which can be transmitted to humans, like rabies and plague. Photograph animals from the roadside.



High Elevation

The high elevations of Rocky Mountain National Park, combined with dry air, may bring on symptoms of high altitude sickness. These include nausea, dizziness, headache, insomnia, rapid heartbeat, and shortness of breath. If you experience these symptoms, descend to a lower elevation. To minimize altitude effects, increase water intake, avoid alcohol and caffeine, eat lightly and frequently, and get plenty of rest.

Ultraviolet radiation is also strong at high elevations, even during winter. Wear sunglasses, a hat, and use sunscreen.

Hypothermia

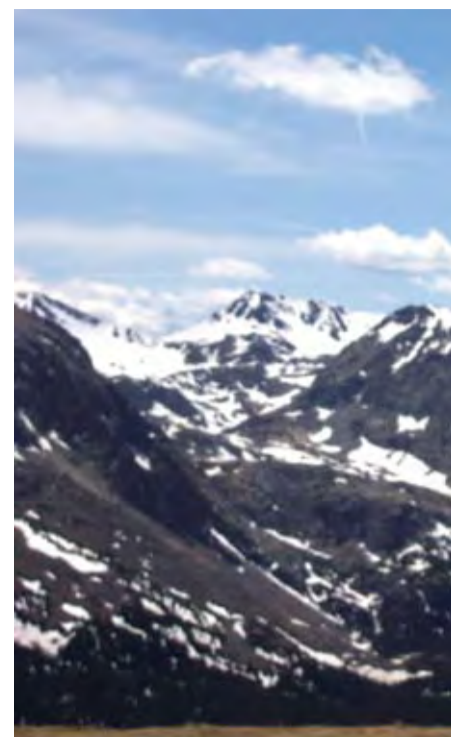
Hypothermia is a serious and sometimes fatal condition brought on by exposure to wet and cold. The core body temperature drops to a level that impairs normal muscle and brain activities. Symptoms include drowsiness, loss of judgment or coordination, slurred speech, and uncontrolled shivering. If these symptoms occur, warm the chilled person with dry clothing and warm, nonalcoholic liquids. Get back to your car and seek medical attention.

Carry a windproof/snowproof outer shell and extra layers of clothing. Drink plenty of water; high elevation, wind, and cold dry us out and chill us.

Sledding and Snow Play

There is only one place in RMNP open to sledding and downhill sliding on snow: Hidden Valley. Snow conditions are sometimes poor to marginal. Check at a visitor center or call (970) 586-1206 for current information. Be aware of cold weather, chilling wind, and the effects of hypothermia.

At Hidden Valley the fenced snowplay hill is for the use of sleds, tubes, and saucers. Skiers, snowboarders, and snowshoers must exercise caution when passing through sledding-snowplay areas. Slow down and yield the right of way when descending. On weekends and holidays, skilled park staff, often volunteers, are on duty. For your safety and enjoyment, please follow their guidance.



This Mom has prepared her child well for enjoying time out in the park.



Ranger Led Programs



Wheelchair
Accessible
Programs

East of the Divide - Estes Park area

Short Talks

Time/Program	Days Offered	Description
Skins and Skulls 3 PM 20-30 minute talk	Sa Su November 24 – April 27	Want to pet an elk or cuddle up to a bear? Come to Beaver Meadows Visitor Center to <u>safely</u> feel skins and skulls while learning about park wildlife.

Snowshoe Tours –by reservation only*–

Snowshoe Ecology Walk* 12:30 PM 2 hours	Sa Su W January 5 – March 30	Take a beginner-level snowshoe tour with a ranger and explore the natural world of a subalpine forest. No previous experience needed.
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*Making Reservations– Snowshoe Tours

Reservations are necessary and may be made no more than seven days in advance.

Call (970) 586-1223 from 8 AM – 4 PM daily.


There is a limit of 6 people per reservation for this 2 hour program. For safety reasons, children under 8 years old are not allowed on this activity. Sleds, skis, hikers, and children in backpacks are not permitted. You must provide your own snowshoes. They can be rented in Estes Park sporting goods stores.

Groups

Part of an organized group? Please call (970) 586-3777.



Evening Programs - East

Beaver Meadows Evening Program 7 PM 1 hour	Every Sa 	Enjoy a wide variety of informative and entertaining programs. Meet in the downstairs auditorium at Beaver Meadows Visitor Center. No program is offered 12/22 or 12/29.
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Visitor Centers

Check at a visitor center for the latest road, trail, weather, and ranger-led program information. Two visitor centers, Beaver Meadows (east side) and Kawuneeche (west side) are open daily from 8 AM through 4:30 PM, except December 25.

More detail on these visitor centers, and the Fall River Visitor Center (primarily open weekends, 9-4), is on page 2 of this paper.

Free Park Movie

See the stunning 23 minute park movie at the Beaver Meadows and Kawuneeche Visitor Centers during normal business hours. This movie features spectacular aerial footage of the park's rugged high country, as well as of wildlife and other park resources.

Junior Rangers- Parkwide

Free junior ranger books are available at park visitor centers. A successfully completed book earns a badge!



West of the Divide - Grand Lake area


Ski and Snowshoe Tours –by reservation only–

Reservations are required for West-side winter tours, and may be made no more than seven days in advance.

Call (970) 627-3471 from 8 AM–4:30 PM to make reservations.

Time/Program	Days Offered	Description
Ski the Wilderness in Winter 10 AM 1.5 hours	Sa December 8 – February 23	Ski a snow-draped landscape and learn about the Kawuneeche Valley. Join a park ranger at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center at 10 AM for this 1.5-hour cross-country ski tour. Children under 8 years of age are not allowed on this activity. You must provide your own skis and poles with large baskets.
Snowshoe in the Kawuneeche 1:30 PM 2 hours	Sa December 8 – March 8	Take an intermediate level 2-hour snowshoe tour with a ranger. This is a more rigorous tour with altitude gains of up to 500'. Meet at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center. Please bring your own snowshoes and ski poles with large baskets. Children under 8 years of age are not allowed on this activity.
Snowshoe in the Kawuneeche 1:30 PM 2 hours	Su December 9 – March 2	Join a beginner level 2-hour snowshoe tour with a ranger. Meet at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center. Please bring your own snowshoes and ski poles with large baskets. Children under 8 years of age are not allowed on this activity.

Evening Programs - West

Saturday Night in the Park 7 PM 1 hour 	Second Saturday of the month	Enjoy an evening program the second Saturday of each month in the auditorium at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center. For a description of topics, inquire at the front desk.
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Park Book Stores

At RMNA Bookstores, Your Purchase Makes A Difference

The best Rocky Mountain National Park books, maps and other interesting items are right here, at one of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association (RMNA) bookstores located around the park. And when you make a purchase from our non-profit organization, proceeds are returned to the park, supporting important educational, interpretive and research programs. Drop by today.

Visit the Rocky Mountain Nature Association bookstores at:
Beaver Meadows Visitor Center
Fall River Visitor Center • Kawuneeche Visitor Center



Rocky Mountain Nature Association • P.O. Box 3100, Estes Park, CO 80517 • (970) 586-0108 • rmna.org



Camping

Campgrounds

Reservations for summer camping at Moraine Park and Glacier Basin campgrounds may be made up to six months in advance. Call 877-444-6777 for further information. Longs Peak and designated sections of Moraine Park and Timber Creek campgrounds are open all winter. Water and dump station facilities are not available during the winter.

	Fee per night	Elevation—ft.	Stay limit (nights)	Public phone
Longs Peak 26 campsites Open all year - tents only	\$14	9,400	14	no
Moraine Park 77 campsites Open all year. 	\$14	8,150	14	yes
Timber Creek 20 campsites Open all year.	\$14	8,900	14	yes

Backcountry Camping Permits

Permits are required for all backcountry overnight camping. Camping is allowed only in designated areas. Winter-season permits may be obtained at the Backcountry Office (east) or Kawuneeche Visitor Center (west), or by self-registration at some park locations. For further information call (970) 586-1242 or write to: Backcountry Office, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, Colorado 80517.



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Leave No Trace

With 2.9 million visitors every year, the wild lands of Rocky Mountain National Park are being heavily used. In snowshoeing, camping, and all your park activities, do your part to preserve this national treasure by following these seven easy principles:

- Plan ahead and prepare**
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces**
- Dispose of waste properly**
- Leave what you find**
- Minimize campfire impacts**
- Respect Wildlife**
- Be considerate of other visitors**



West Side Wonders

What makes a perfect Rocky Mountain winter experience? Dramatic snow-covered peaks? Gliding on skis through a silent forest? Moose lounging in pristine meadows blanketed white? A family on snowshoes enjoying a trek to a frozen waterfall? These dreams and more can be enjoyed on the west side of Rocky Mountain National Park, by visiting the park via its Grand Lake entrance.

Skiing/Snowshoeing

Heavy snowfall on the west side of the park results in outstanding cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Visitors strapping on skis or snowshoes for the first time may want to explore Sun Valley Trail, a loop that meanders through woods and open meadows along the Colorado River and offers breathtaking views of the Never Summer Range.

Another short jaunt leads to ice-shrouded Adams Falls. This 0.6 mile round trip includes a short hill that can sometimes be icy. Beyond the falls, more than a mile of level trail offers spectacular mountain vistas. Experienced skiers and snowshoers can continue up into the mountains on this or other trails.

Many routes are appropriate for both skis and snowshoes, with snowshoers being careful to keep to the side of ski tracks. Stop by the Kawuneeche Visitor Center for information on a variety of suggested routes for all skill levels.



©Harry Canon

Cross-country ski touring is often excellent on the park's west side.



Consistent winter snow on the park's west side makes the area ideal for winter recreation.

©Harry Canon

Sightseeing

Prefer to experience the charm of winter from the comfort of a vehicle? Ten miles of road through the Kawuneeche Valley are plowed for travel. Take the time to enjoy spectacular views of the snow-clad Never Summer Range. Watch for moose along the banks of the frozen Colorado River.



©Harry Canon

Ranger-Guided Activities

Interested in learning more about the winter wilderness while you explore? Rangers on the west side of the park offer ski tours Saturday mornings, December 8-February 23. Snowshoe tours are offered weekend afternoons December 8-March 8. Call 970-627-3471 for details. Reservations are required.



©Katy Sykes

Winter Trails by Snowshoe, Ski and Foot



©Audrey Stevens

With over 350 miles of trails, the park offers a vast array of choices. A small sampling of trails are described below. When properly equipped, snowshoeing and skiing at Rocky Mountain National Park is often inspiring and invigorating. Skiing is typically better on the west side of the park (Grand Lake entrance), as snow depths are greater than on the eastern slope. Even for short day tours, be sure to pack gear for all types of weather (sun, snow, wind). Strong winds are quite common, and windproof clothing is essential gear to wear or carry.



©Jane Lopez

Trail Tips: Be prepared for the rigors of high elevation - drink plenty of water, and travel at a pace where you can still talk and breathe easily. If you feel poorly, descend to a lower elevation. Know park regulations. Pack it in, pack it out - including remains of all your food (pits, peels, etc.), as well as facial tissues. Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects where you find them. Let nature's sounds prevail; avoid loud voices and noises. No pets are allowed on park trails.

Trails on the East Side of the Park

Trail	Trailhead Location	Round Trip Distance	Elevation Gain	Cool Stuff
Upper Beaver Meadows	Upper Beaver Meadows Road (gated) off Trail Ridge Road, 2 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.	3-4 miles	140 feet	A fine winter hike along a gated dirt road, with an option for making a 3.5 mile loop by taking a trail just inside the barricade, which joins the end of the road in 1.5 miles.
Sprague Lake	Sprague Lake on Bear Lake Road.	.5 mile	10 feet	A good place for a short winter walk, or sometimes to try out those cross-country skis on a frozen lake. Good views of the Continental Divide.
Chasm Falls	West Alluvial Fan at gated end of Endovalley Road off Hwy 34.	5 miles	400 feet	Follows summer roads which are closed to winter traffic. At 1.5 miles, take the right fork up Old Fall River Road to beautiful Chasm Falls.
Lily Lake	Lily Lake on Highway 7, south of Estes Park.	.7 mile	5 feet	Trail around lake often suitable for walking in boots; or as a short snowshoe or ski. Beautiful views of high park peaks. Longer trails start from here too.
Dream Lake	Bear Lake on Bear Lake Road, 10 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.	2.2 miles	425 feet	A good snowshoe tour to one of the most photographed lakes in the park.
Emerald Lake	Bear Lake on Bear Lake Road, 10 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.	3.6 miles	605 feet	An intermediate snowshoe for good route-finders. Tour ascends to an alpine lake. Check at a visitor center for route details.
Bierstadt Lake	Bear Lake on Bear Lake Road, 10 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.	3.2 miles	235 feet	A nice snowshoe or ski tour, if started at Bear Lake. Also possible as a steeper snowshoe/hiking tour from the Bierstadt Lake Trailhead.
Mills Lake	Glacier Gorge on Bear Lake Road.	5.6 miles	730 feet	An excellent winter snowshoe trail to a spectacular peak-rimmed lake. Magnificent views abound. Check at a visitor center for route details.
The Loch	Glacier Gorge on Bear Lake Road.	6.2 miles	970 feet	An excellent winter snowshoe trail to another spectacular peak-rimmed lake. Magnificent views abound. Check at a visitor center for route details.
Mill Creek	Hollowell Park on Bear Lake Road.	3.2 miles	600 feet	A quiet winter snowshoe on a lesser-used trail. Check at a visitor center for details and current conditions.

Trail	Trailhead Location	Round Trip Distance	Elevation Gain	Cool Stuff
Cub Lake	Cub Lake in Moraine Park off the Bear Lake Road.	4.6 miles	540 feet	A moderate hike/snowshoe; lower sections are often hikeable. The last mile often has ice or snow. Bring snowshoes, even if it looks open at the beginning.
The Pool	Fern Lake on Cub Lake Road near Moraine Park Campground.	3.4 miles	245 feet	Meadows, aspen groves, ponds and conifer forests highlight this easy, nearly level trail. A snowshoe or hike, depending upon snow conditions.
Sandbeach Lake	Wild Basin off Highway 7, south of Estes Park.	8.4 miles	1970 feet	Trail ascends steeply through sunny forest; a steady uphill hike. Snowshoes often are not needed for the lower trail sections.
Ouzel Falls	Wild Basin off Highway 7, south of Estes Park.	5.4 miles	950 feet	Frozen waterfalls and beautiful views await on this snowshoe tour. Often some icy patches on the trail.
Trail Ridge Road	The gated winter closure at Many Parks Curve on Trail Ridge Road.	2+ miles	200+ feet	Follows the summer road which is closed to winter traffic. Beautiful views; often windy. Snowshoes usually best.
Deer Mountain	Deer Ridge Junction 4.5 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center along Trail Ridge Road.	6 miles	1075 feet	A strenuous snowshoe or hike to the windblown top of Deer Mountain. The lower portion tends to be open and hikeable; upper switchbacks snowy.
Lawn Lake	Lawn Lake Trailhead on Fall River Road.	12.4 miles	2250 feet	A strenuous snowshoe to a high mountain lake. After a mile, the trail follows scenic Roaring River.

**Trails on the West Side of the Park -
Where snow conditions are generally better**

Trail	Trailhead Location	Round Trip Distance	Elevation Gain	Cool Stuff
Tonahutu Creek Trail	The Kawuneeche Visitor Center , north of Grand Lake.	4 miles	300 feet	From the visitor center, an easy 2 mile ski to Grand Lake. A longer option is an 8 mile round trip to Big Meadows (700' elevation gain).
Adams Falls	East Inlet , on West Portal Road, at the far east end of Grand Lake village.	.6 miles	80 feet	A beautiful snowshoe or intermediate-level ski tour. The trail continues to First Meadows (2 mile round trip), with a great view of Mt. Craig.
Sun Valley Trail	Harbison Picnic Area 1 mile north of the Kawuneeche Visitor Center.	2.5 miles	50 feet	An easy ski or snowshoe loop through woods and open meadow. Be sure to look for orange trail markers at trail junctions.
Green Mountain Trail	Green Mountain Trailhead 3 miles north of the Kawuneeche Visitor Center.	4 miles	600 feet	An intermediate ski or snowshoe to Big Meadows. A longer, more difficult loop is also possible.
Coyote Valley Trail	Coyote Valley Trailhead in the Kawuneeche Valley.	1 mile	10 feet	A level trail adjacent to the Colorado River. An easy choice to test those skis or snowshoes.
Colorado River Trail (Lulu City)	The end of the plowed road in the Kawuneeche Valley 10 miles north of the Kawuneeche Visitor Center.	7.4 miles	350 feet	A gentle ski tour with some views of the Colorado River. Historic sites of Shipler Cabins and Lulu City add to the natural attractions of this tour.

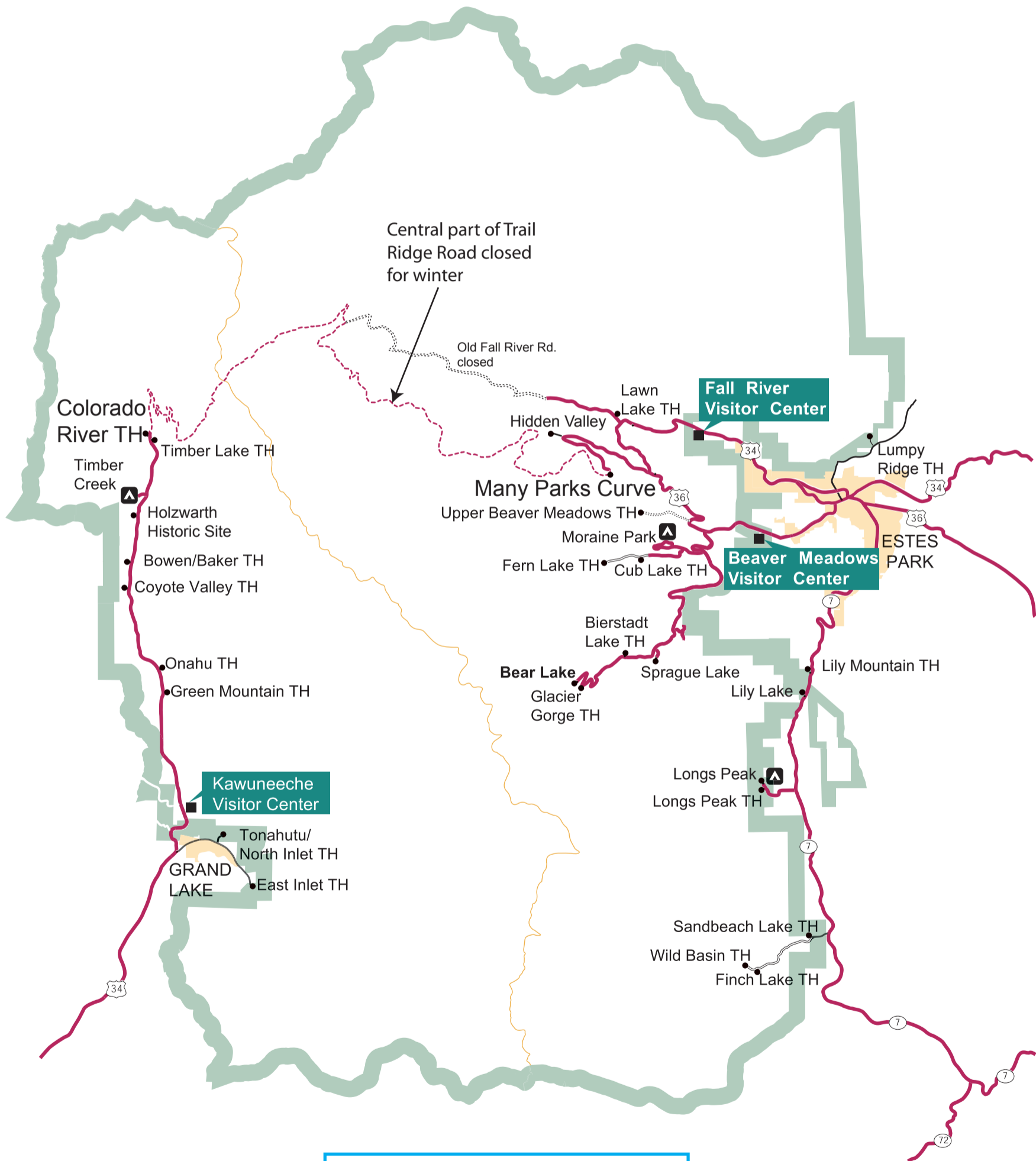
Rocky Mountain National Park



The high central portion of Trail Ridge Road is closed for the winter.

Entering from either the East or the West offers many options for snowshoeing, hiking, wildlife viewing, and enjoying the crispness of winter.

Take a look through this paper at some of the things that you can do in the quietest season in Rocky Mountain National Park. Magnificent scenery, wildlife large and small, frozen lakes and waterfalls, and the still of the winter forest await.



LEGEND	
	Paved Roads
	Unpaved Road
	Roads Closed in Winter