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
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 8:4-3:30 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, large 3-D park orientation map, backcountry camping permits in nearby building.

Fall River Visitor Center
Open Saturdays & Sundays 9-4. Also open Nov. 24, Dec. 26-29, and Feb. 19. 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.

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 (303) 639-1111 or (877) 315-ROAD.

Bear Lake Road

Bear Lake Road is kept open during the winter. The road is plowed, but may be closed for clearing after any significant snowfall. Please call (970) 586-1206 for current conditions.

High Country Headline 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

Printed on recycled paper

This Park Paper

Teachers, Parents, Students!
Rocky Mountain National Park’s “Heart of the Rockies” education program provides an outdoor classroom to children throughout this region. Teachers who are interested in participating in this program may contact the park’s Education Specialist at (970) 586-3777, or through the website at heartoftherockies.net
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.

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.

Streams, Lakes, and Giardia
Don't drink water directly from park streams or lakes. Giardia, a microscopic organism found in lakes, streams, and snow, can cause diarrhea, cramps, bloating, and weight loss. To prevent giardiasis, bring water to a full rolling boil for at least 5 minutes, or use a water filtration system that eliminates the organism.

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.

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 which 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.

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, 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.

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

Ranger Led Programs

**East of the Divide - Estes Park area**

**Visitor Centers**

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.

**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!

**Evening Programs - East**

Beaver Meadows 
Evening Program
7 PM 
1 hour

Enjoy a wide variety of informative and entertaining programs. Meet in the downstairs auditorium at Beaver Meadows Visitor Center. No program is offered 12/23 or 12/30.

**Evening Programs - West**

Saturday Night in the Park
7 PM 
1 hour

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.

**Ski and Snowshoe Tours**

**Time/Program** | **Days Offered** | **Description**
--- | --- | ---
**Ski the Wilderness in Winter**
9 AM 
2 hours

Take a beginner-level snowshoe tour with a ranger and explore the natural world of a subalpine forest. No previous experience is necessary.

*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.

**Ski the Wilderness in Winter**
9 AM 
2 hours

Ski a snow-draped landscape and learn about the Kawuneeche Valley. Join a park ranger at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center at 9 AM for this 2-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. Call (970) 627-3471 from 8 AM – 4:30 PM to make reservations.

**Ski the Winter Wilderness**
9 AM 
2 hours

Join a beginner 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.

**Free Park Movie**

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
Campgrounds
Reservations for summer camping at Moraine Park and Glacier Basin campgrounds can be made in advance. Call 800-365-2267 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campground</th>
<th>Fee per night</th>
<th>Elevation-ft</th>
<th>Stay limit (nights)</th>
<th>Public phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longs Peak</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>9,400</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 campsites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open all year - tents only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moraine Park</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>8,150</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 campsites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open all year.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber Creek</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>8,900</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 campsites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open all year.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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 Kawuneeche Valley 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 roundtrip 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 or to register for a variety of suggested routes for all skill levels.

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

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 9-February 24. Snowshoe tours are offered by reservation weekend afternoons December 9-March 11. Call the visitor center at 970-627-3471 for details.

©Peter Allen
©Harry Canon
©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.

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

©Harry Canon
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.

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Trailhead Location</th>
<th>Round Trip Distance</th>
<th>Elevation Gain</th>
<th>Cool Stuff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper Beaver Meadows</td>
<td>Upper Beaver Meadows Road (gated) off Trail Ridge Road, 2 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center</td>
<td>3.4 miles</td>
<td>140 feet</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sprague Lake</td>
<td>Sprague Lake on Bear Lake Road.</td>
<td>.5 mile</td>
<td>10 feet</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chasm Falls</td>
<td>West Alluvial Fan at gated end of Endovalley Road off Hwy 34</td>
<td>5 miles</td>
<td>400 feet</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily Lake</td>
<td>Lily Lake on Highway 7, south of Estes Park.</td>
<td>.7 mile</td>
<td>5 feet</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dream Lake</td>
<td>Bear Lake on Bear Lake Road, 10 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center</td>
<td>2.2 miles</td>
<td>425 feet</td>
<td>A good snowshoe tour to one of the most photographed lakes in the park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerald Lake</td>
<td>Bear Lake on Bear Lake Road, 10 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center</td>
<td>3.6 miles</td>
<td>605 feet</td>
<td>An intermediate snowshoe for good route-finders. Tour ascends to an alpine lake. Check at a visitor center for route details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bierstadt Lake</td>
<td>Bear Lake on Bear Lake Road, 10 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center</td>
<td>3.2 miles</td>
<td>235 feet</td>
<td>A nice snowshoe or ski tour, if started at Bear Lake. Also possible as a steeper snowshoe/hiking tour from the Bierstadt Lake Trailhead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mills Lake</td>
<td>Glacier Gorge on Bear Lake Road.</td>
<td>5.6 miles</td>
<td>730 feet</td>
<td>An excellent winter snowshoe trail to a spectacular peak-rimmed lake. Magnificent views abound. Check at a visitor center for route details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Loch</td>
<td>Glacier Gorge on Bear Lake Road.</td>
<td>6 miles</td>
<td>970 feet</td>
<td>An excellent winter snowshoe trail to another spectacular peak-rimmed lake. Magnificent views abound. Check at a visitor center for route details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill Creek</td>
<td>Hollowell Park on Bear Lake Road.</td>
<td>3.2 miles</td>
<td>600 feet</td>
<td>A quiet winter snowshoe on a lesser-used trail. Check at a visitor center for details and current conditions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deer Ridge Junction
4.5 miles from Beaver Meadows Visitor Center along Trail Ridge Road.

A strenuous snowshoe or hike to the windblown top of Deer Mountain. The lower portion tends to be open and hikeable; upper switchbacks snowy.

---

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Trailhead Location</th>
<th>Round Trip Distance</th>
<th>Elevation Gain</th>
<th>Cool Stuff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tonahutu Creek Trail</strong></td>
<td>The Kawuneeche Visitor Center, north of Grand Lake.</td>
<td>4 miles</td>
<td>300 feet</td>
<td>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).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adams Falls</strong></td>
<td>East Inlet, on West Portal Road, at the far east end of Grand Lake village.</td>
<td>.6 miles</td>
<td>80 feet</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sun Valley Trail</strong></td>
<td>Harbison Picnic Area 1 mile north of the Kawuneeche Visitor Center.</td>
<td>2.5 miles</td>
<td>50 feet</td>
<td>An easy ski or snowshoe loop through woods and open meadow. Be sure to look for orange trail markers at trail junctions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green Mountain Trail</strong></td>
<td>Green Mountain Trailhead 3 miles north of the Kawuneeche Visitor Center.</td>
<td>4 miles</td>
<td>600 feet</td>
<td>An intermediate ski or snowshoe to Big Meadows. A longer, more difficult loop is also possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coyote Valley Trail</strong></td>
<td>Coyote Valley Trailhead in the Kawuneeche Valley.</td>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>10 feet</td>
<td>A level trail adjacent to the Colorado River. An easy choice to test those skis or snowshoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colorado River Trail (Lulu City)</strong></td>
<td>The end of the plowed road in the Kawuneeche Valley 10 miles north of the Kawuneeche Visitor Center.</td>
<td>7.4 miles</td>
<td>350 feet</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.