



Roaming Rocky Podcast Script

Winter Recreation

(elk bugling)

(Narrator) Hi, welcome to Rocky Mountain National park. My name is Ranger Cynthia Langguth and today we're going to talk about the opportunities that exist here in Rocky in the winter. Winter is a great time to visit the park. You've got beautiful mountain scenery covered in snow, it's quiet and peaceful. It really is a good time to get out and explore. So, hopefully, after this program today you're going to have a better idea of how to explore confidently and safely. Whether you're just taking a walk around Sprague Lake, which is nice and easy, or heading into the park's backcountry, for an adventurous ice climb there really is something for everyone in Rocky Mountain National Park.

I recommend starting to plan for your winter visit before you even leave home.

The park website is a great place to start. You can get directions, information on fees and visitor center hours, as well as a host of other interesting facts.

Rocky Mountain National Park is also on Twitter. Here you can get the latest word on what's happening in the park.

The Colorado Avalanche Information Center is another great website to check out, especially if you are planning on heading into the park's backcountry. Be sure to check the avalanche danger along the Front Range of Colorado, where Rocky is located.

Once you arrive it's always a good idea to stop in to one of the three visitor centers that are open in winter. Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, just off Hwy 36 and Fall River Visitor Center on Hwy 34 are both located on the east side of the park. The Kawuneechee Visitor Center is on the west side. After you stop in to the visitor center and get your questions answered by a friendly park ranger, you could head out for a driving tour, keeping in mind that not all roads are open in the park in winter. Trail Ridge Road, which travels across the high mountains, is of course closed, typically from sometime in October through late May. On the east side of the park, the Bear Lake Road is open all the way to Bear Lake. You can also drive to the scenic overlook at Many Parks Curve and visit the Horseshoe Park area. On the west side of the park, the road is open as far as the Colorado River trailhead. Keep in mind that all of these roads are open weather permitting, and even on a beautiful blue sky day, the roads many still be icy and snow packed. Please drive carefully.

With that in mind, driving through the park can be a real treat. Many of the pull offs offer stunning views of the snow packed peaks and broad valleys, as well as the foothills. Peaks you are familiar with in summer take on a completely different mood during the long winter months.

In addition to beautiful vistas, you also stand a good chance of seeing some wildlife during this quieter season. Many animals move to lower elevations in the winter, so keep your eye out for herds of elk in the meadows on the east side of the park, and maybe even moose if you venture to the west side. Bighorn Sheep sometimes venture down to lick minerals off the road surface. You may also see a coyote or red fox out looking for dinner. If you are really lucky you may catch a glimpse of one of the park residents in their winter coats. The snowshoe hare and the ermine, or long tailed weasel, and the ptarmigan all trade their brown summer color for a coat of white in winter.

Maybe after cruising around the park in your car, you want to get out and take in some of the winter activities. Hidden Valley snow play area is a great place to spend some time.

There are heated restrooms and, on the weekends, the warming hut is open.

This is the perfect AND ONLY place that allows tubing and sledding in the park.

Another great winter activity is snowshoeing. The park offers ranger-guided snowshoe walks during January, February and March, on both the east and the west sides. But this is also a great activity to get out and try on your own. Hey...if you can walk you can snowshoe...

Cross-country skiing can make another wonderful winter outing. Many places, especially on the west side of the park, offer perfect terrain for cross country skiing.

Be sure to stop into one of those visitor centers to get advice on the best places to go as well as the current conditions. The park has terrain for snowshoers and skiers that will suit everyone...from the beginner to the person seeking more challenge.

Speaking of challenge...if you are looking for even more adventure...ice climbing is quite popular during the winter months. Places where the water seeps and flows during the summer freeze up in winter to form beautiful ice waterfalls that just beckon to be climbed by an adventurous few, including park rangers. Remember, this is a technical sport that takes a lot of skill and proper equipment.

Now this unique natural environment that you enjoy today at Rocky, is one of the reasons it was set aside as a national park in 1915 and why almost all of the park was designated as wilderness by congress in 2009.

So, hopefully, you have a better idea of the opportunities that exist here in Rocky Mountain National Park in winter. It really is a great time to get out and explore and, hopefully, I'll see you out on the trails.

(music in the background)

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Park information is available at 970-586-1206 or on-line at www.nps.gov/romo

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