Welcome to the backcountry wilderness of Rocky Mountain National Park. We hope you will use this guide to plan a safe, enjoyable and memorable trip. This guide includes information on how to plan for your trip, obtain a backcountry permit, use the trails, set up camp, hike in a cross-country area, and care for the backcountry.

There are many sources on backcountry hiking and camping. Publications and maps may be ordered by contacting the Rocky Mountain Nature Association at www.rmna.org or calling (970) 586-0121.

Planning your trip
The first step in planning your trip is to decide where you want to camp and for what length of time. We suggest you purchase a Rocky Mountain National Park topographical map to choose a destination and route. You can then use the map on the inside of this guide, to select backcountry campsites.

As you plan your trip, take into consideration the physical condition of the least experienced member of your party, and the distance and elevation gain from the trailhead to your destination.

Rocky Mountain National Park is a high elevation park. If you live at sea level, it will take you several days to become acclimated to this elevation. Most trails begin above 7,000 feet (2,000 meters) and climb abruptly higher. If you are not acclimated, you can get high altitude sickness. Rangers recommend that you spend at least one night at 7,000 or 8,000 feet (2,000 or 2,500 meters) prior to setting out. This will allow your body to begin to adjust to the elevation.

When you visit or call the park, discuss your plans with a ranger. Find out whether snow has melted from the trails and destination where you wish to hike. Check the weather forecast before starting on your trip. Be aware that mountain weather changes very quickly. Within just a few hours, bright sunny skies may give way to raging storms. High winds often occur in the high country. Wind chill accelerates the lowering of body temperature which can result in hypothermia.

Proper clothing is your first line of defense against cold. Plan to dress in layers so you can regulate your temperature by bundling up or peeling down. Be sure to pack rain and storm gear.

Remember, you assume complete responsibility for your own safety and that of your group while hiking in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Take the time to learn the seven Leave No Trace ethics, how to backpack safely, and how to care for the environment. Always remember this is your park. Its 265,828 acres are a resource for not only you but many future generations. Because the backcountry regions of the park have greatly increased in popularity over the last few years, we need to enlist your support as “keepers of the royal lands,” the historic charge given to park rangers.

We hope you enjoy your stay in one of America’s premier backpacking destinations.
THE PERMIT
You must have a backcountry permit to camp overnight in the backcountry of Rocky Mountain National Park. You can pick one up at the Headquarters Backcountry Office (beside the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center on Highway 36 west of Estes Park, CO) or at the Kawuneeche Visitor Center (Highway 34, north of Grand Lake, CO).

To minimize impact on the park’s resources, the number of permits issued is limited.

Reservations for Summer Permits:  
March 1 thru May 15  By phone, mail or in person
May 16 thru Sept. 30  By mail or in person

Reservations for Winter, Spring, & Fall Permits:  
Jan 1 thru May 15  By phone, mail or in person
Oct 1 thru Dec 31  By phone, mail or in person
May 16 thru Sept 30  By mail or in person

Write: Rocky Mountain National Park  
Backcountry Office  
1000 W. Hwy 36  
Estes Park, CO  80517

Call: (970) 586-1242  
TTY: (970) 586-1319

For reservations, use the attached “Trip Planning Worksheet” (page 7) or a separate piece paper:
• Include your name, address, zip code and telephone number.
• List an itinerary with dates corresponding to campsites or cross-country areas where you plan to stay. If you plan to stay in a cross-country area, indicate the area(s) where you wish to camp.
• Specify the number of people that will be in your party. (Limit of seven per party for individual campsites and cross-country areas. Limit of eight to 12 per party for group campsites.)

There is a $20 administrative fee for permits during peak season periods (non-refundable and non-exchangeable). Fees are not to be sent when requesting reservations, but are payable (by exact cash or check or credit card) when the permit is issued.

During the winter and early spring, when the backcountry is not as frequently used, you may self-register at the Wild Basin Entrance, Longs Peak Ranger Station, Dunraven Trailhead, and Fall River and Beaver Meadows entrance stations. During the busy summer months, if you have a permit reservation, you must pick up the permit by 10 a.m. on the first day of your planned backcountry stay; otherwise, the permit will be canceled in its entirety, and given to other backpackers. If you know you will not be using your permit, please cancel your reservation as soon as possible.

June through September, campers may stay in the backcountry for a maximum of 7 nights. October through May, campers may stay in the backcountry a maximum of 14 nights with no more than a total of 21 nights per year.

How to Use the Permit
Your permit is a contract between you and the National Park Service stating that you agree to treat the backcountry with respect and that you will take care of the wilderness.

You will see backcountry regulations on the back of each permit. Read, understand, sign, and obey them. The Backcountry Use Permit must be easily accessible and with you at all times. A Tent Tag must be displayed on the outside of your pack while hiking to your campsite and on your tent at the campsite. The permit indicates the number of people in your party, and specifies a campsite for each night you are in the backcountry. You must stick with your planned itinerary so that campsites do not become overcrowded and overused.

In addition to a permit, you will receive a dash tag, to be placed on the dashboard of your vehicle. Since overnight parking is only allowed with a backcountry permit, failure to properly display a dash tag may result in a citation and/or a towing fee.

PERMIT PARAMETERS
Designated sites
• Individual sites: For parties of one to seven people. Each party is assigned one campsite. Each camping area has one to six sites.

We recommend you travel in small parties as fewer people per site leave less impact on Rocky's fragile backcountry.

• Group sites: For parties of eight to 12 people. Groups must camp at special sites. Because of impact caused by group interaction in and between sites (site spread, social trails, etc.), groups over seven persons may not camp in neighboring individual sites but must use group sites or split up and camp at least one mile apart.

• No more than three consecutive nights in one camp area.

Cross-country Areas
Cross-country areas are the least traveled and least accessible places in Rocky Mountain National Park. Stock are not permitted to travel in these areas. Those who travel here must be skilled with a map and compass and must be proficient in Leave No Trace camping and hiking ethics and techniques. Cross-country areas are remote areas characterized by rugged terrain, dense forests, icy streams and wet bogs. These areas are below treeline. Fires are not allowed. There are no developed campsites, no developed trails, and no pit toilets.

The following regulations and guidelines, in addition to those listed above, apply to cross-country area campers.

• Have no more than seven people in your party.
• Plan more hiking time to get to your destination than if you were on a trail.
• Use a portable stove for cooking.
• Stay within the boundaries of the cross-country area.
• Camp at least 70 adult steps (200 feet/60 meters) away from any water source.
• Be out of sight and sound of any other party.
• Move your camp at least one mile (1.6 kilometers) each day.
• No more than two consecutive nights in one cross-country area.
Climbers and Bivouac Camps

If you plan to bivouac, you must obtain a bivy permit. The following rules apply for bivouacs:
- You may have no more than four people in your party.
- All in the party must climb.
- You must bivy in the area specified on your permit.
- Bivys must be on rock or snow.
- Bivys must be set up at dusk and taken down by dawn.
- No tents or structures are permitted.
- Fires are not allowed.
- Helmets are advised for climbing.
- No more than three consecutive nights in one bivy area.

Sprague Lake Camp

This is a special wheelchair-accessible backcountry campsite near Sprague Lake. It is ½ - mile (one kilometer) from the trailhead to the campsite.

The camp accommodates up to 12 campers including a maximum of five wheelchair users.

To make reservations please read the section entitled THE PERMIT.

Packing with Horses or Llamas

There are special campsites and rules for overnight camping with stock. Some trails are closed to stock use. Call (970) 586-1206 or (970) 586-1242 for information about packing with stock. Ask for the Horse and Pack Animals brochure.

“When in the wilds, we must not carry our problems with us or the joy is lost.”

-Sigurd Olson

Backcountry Guide 3
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Campsite Name</th>
<th>East Inlet Trailhead</th>
<th>Number of sites</th>
<th>Distance in miles</th>
<th>Elevation in feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>061</td>
<td>East Meadow</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>8,550</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>062</td>
<td>Lower East Inlet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>8,640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>063</td>
<td>Cat's Lair</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>9,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>064</td>
<td>Gray Jay Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>9,650</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>065</td>
<td>Slickrock</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>066</td>
<td>Solitaire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>10,120</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>067</td>
<td>Upper East Inlet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>10,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>068</td>
<td>Lake Verna</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>10,280</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North Inlet Area</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Distance in miles</th>
<th>Elevation in feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>069</td>
<td></td>
<td>Summerland Park</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>070</td>
<td></td>
<td>Twinberry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>071</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cascade Falls (Closed)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>072</td>
<td></td>
<td>Big Pool</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>073</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grouseberry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>074</td>
<td></td>
<td>North Inlet Group (stock) (WF)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>075</td>
<td></td>
<td>Foot Bridge (Closed)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>076</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ptarmigan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>077</td>
<td></td>
<td>Porcupine (WF)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>078</td>
<td></td>
<td>North Inlet Junction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>079</td>
<td></td>
<td>North Inlet Falls</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>080</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pine Marten</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>081</td>
<td></td>
<td>July</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tonahutu Area</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Distance in miles</th>
<th>Elevation in feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>082</td>
<td></td>
<td>Green Mountain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>083</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paint Brush</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>084</td>
<td></td>
<td>South Meadows</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>085</td>
<td></td>
<td>Big Meadows Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>086</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sunset</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>087</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>088</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Granite Falls</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>089</td>
<td></td>
<td>Granite Falls</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>090</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tonahutu Meadows</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>091</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tonahutu Group (stock) (WF)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>092</td>
<td></td>
<td>Renegade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>093</td>
<td></td>
<td>Haynach (1 llama)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>094</td>
<td></td>
<td>Timberline Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>095</td>
<td></td>
<td>Onahu Creek</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>096</td>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Onahu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>097</td>
<td></td>
<td>Onahu Bridge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timber Lake Area</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Distance in miles</th>
<th>Elevation in feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>098</td>
<td></td>
<td>Timber Creek</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>099</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jackstraw</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rockslide</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td></td>
<td>Snowbird</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never Summer Area</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Distance in miles</th>
<th>Elevation in feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td></td>
<td>Valley View</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td>Red Gulch Group (Closed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hitches Gulch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dutch Town (Closed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stage Road (Closed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ditch Camp (group/stock)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skeleton Gulch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td></td>
<td>Box Canyon (Closed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hague Creek Area</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Distance in miles</th>
<th>Elevation in feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td></td>
<td>La Poudre Pass</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corral Creek Trailhead</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Distance in miles</th>
<th>Elevation in feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cache</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapin Creek Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hague Creek (group/stock)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
<td>Desolation (Closed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flatiron</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mummy Pass Creek (WF)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A Dispersed Camping Zone (DCZ) is similar to a Cross-country Area, except that you may stay three consecutive nights, and you do not have to move each night.

* Mileages listed are from the nearest trailhead (not all trailheads are listed).

* All sites are stoves only unless designated (WF), where wood fires are permitted in grates provided at the site and no fire ban is in effect. Use dead and down wood only.

* The higher the elevation the later the site melts out from snow. For current conditions contact the Backcountry Office (970) 586-1242.
At Camp

When you arrive at your destination, you will see trail signs that show where to find campsites. Pitch your tent in designated areas. Never dig or trench around a tent.

There are no grizzly bears in Rocky Mountain National Park, but black bears do live here. Help park rangers keep bears and other animals (including mice, marmots, martens, porcupines, elk and deer) from becoming a problem, by carefully securing your food and garbage.

A carry-in/carry-out bear resistant food storage canister is required May - October for backcountry camping below treeline and the Boulderfield on Longs Peak. All food, scented items, and trash must be kept in the canister, and placed 70 adult steps away from campsite. Keep a clean camp!

Camp safely away from standing dead trees as near as is safely possible to the silver metal arrowhead that marks the site.

Preventing Bear and Mountain Lion Encounters

Bear and mountain lion encounters can be potentially dangerous and can occur anywhere in the park. Ask for park information regarding proper wildlife interaction procedures. Keep your group close together, protect small children by picking them up, and never run.

Preparing Meals at Camp

Cook meals with a portable stove. Do not plan to build a fire. Fires are comforting and aesthetically pleasing, but they cause considerable impact on the backcountry. Wood is better used as habitat for wild creatures than as fuel for campers whose lives do not depend upon forest resources.

Campfires have potential to get out of control if not well tended. For these reasons, fires are allowed in only a few designated campsites which have metal fire rings.

Never take food in the sleeping area. Separate where you cook and eat from where you sleep. Keep all scented items out of your tent including soap, deodorant, and toothpaste.

Seal uneaten food scraps and all garbage in airtight containers or storage bags and secure in bear canister. Carry all garbage out of the backcountry.

Drinking Water

Always purify the drinking water you get in the backcountry by using one of the following methods:

• Filter water with a water filter system that eliminates giardia.
• Boil water for 1 minute and add an additional minute for each 1000 ft above sea level (example: 10,000 feet = 11 minutes).
• Use water purifying tablets or drops that eliminate giardia.

Wash Water

Carry water at least 70 adult steps (200 feet/60 meters) from a lake or stream to wash yourself or your dishes. Use biodegradable soap. When disposing of wash water, first filter all food scraps with a small screen. Pack the food scraps into an airtight container, secure in bear canister to be carried out later. Toss out the wash water by throwing it over a wide area.

• Never wash directly in a lake or stream.
• Do not scatter food scraps in the water or on the ground.
• Do not throw food into pit toilets.
• Pack out all food scraps, trash and uneaten food.

Backcountry Sanitation

There are pit toilets at many backcountry campsites. When a pit toilet is not available, do the following:

• Urinate in rocky places that won’t be damaged by animals who dig for salts and minerals found in urine.
• Dig a hole, 6 inches (15 centimeters) deep, for fecal waste using a small trowel or pack out waste and paper.
• Be sure that you defecate at least 70 adult steps (200 feet/60 meters) from camp, water or trails.
• Do not bury sanitary napkins, tampons, or paper wipes. Dispose of them in an airtight container and pack them out.
• Wash hands with biodegradable soap. Giardia and other diseases are frequently spread by unsanitary practices.

Fishing

To fish in Rocky Mountain National Park, you must have a Colorado state fishing license. You may purchase licenses at local sporting goods stores.

Check at Rocky Mountain National Park visitor centers for fishing regulations, which vary at different lakes and streams in the park. Check at a visitor center or view www.nps.gov/romo for current fishing regulations and information.
Leaving the Backcountry
If you end a trip early, notify the backcountry office to cancel the permit, so other backpackers may use your site.
Please report all unusual wildlife sightings, trail conditions, or incidents to a ranger.
Pack out all your garbage and that of others less considerate.
If you see any violations of rules and regulations, please report them to a ranger as soon as possible.
You can find showers and laundry facilities in Estes Park and in Grand Lake.
These lands were set aside for you by our foreparents. It is our most sincere hope that you have an inspiring, refreshing and renewing backcountry wilderness experience in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Leave No Trace
Join park rangers in protecting the natural conditions of the backcountry while hiking and camping.

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

Ask a park ranger how you can Leave No Trace on your backcountry visit or contact: Leave No Trace Inc. P.O. Box 997 Boulder, CO 80306 or www.lnt.org.

TRIP PLANNING WORKSHEET
Rocky Mountain National Park - Backcountry Office
1000 W. Hwy 36
Estes Park CO 80517
(970) 586-1242
(This is NOT a Permit. Send no money with this request.)

Last Name ___________________________ # in Party _______ # of Stock _______
First Name ___________________________
Address_____________________________
____________________________________
City______________________________
State_____________ Zip________________
Phone_____________________________

Trailhead In ____________________________
Trailhead Out ____________________________
Vehicle License #_____________________
State_______________________________

First Choice
Night(s) of __________________________ Campsite(s) _______________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

Second Choice
Night(s) of __________________________ Campsite(s) _______________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

If the site(s) you request on the date(s) you request are already taken, we will assign alternate sites as close to your requested sites as possible.

Please complete fully and mail to the address above.
“Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books; if we drive the few remaining wild species into zoos or extinction; if we pollute the last clear air and dirty the last clear streams and push our paved roads through the last of silences.”

-Wallace Stegner