Be Smart: for Your Survival and to Enjoy Your Climb

For more information and latest conditions report visit
nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/longspeak.htm

Scan this with your mobile device to download .pdf

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Essentials to Wear and Carry

- Lots of water
- High-energy food
- Layers of clothing (jackets & pants), including insulating, windproof clothing like synthetic or wool
- Sturdy footwear & extra socks
- Storm gear
- Hat and gloves
- Sunglasses with UV protection
- Sunscreen
- First aid kit
- Topographic map & compass/GPS
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Waterproof matches
- Pocket knife
- Whistle
- Common sense!

The Keyhole Route to the summit of Longs Peak (14,259 feet), one of the most popular routes in Colorado, is an extraordinary climbing experience. The route circumnavigates the upper mountain on the way to the summit, providing stunning views.

In general, the most snow-free and ice-free time of year to climb Longs Peak is mid-July through mid-September. However, weather and conditions vary so it’s best to check with a ranger or online for current conditions, 970-586-1206 or nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/longspeak.htm.

The Keyhole Route is NOT a hike! It is a climb that crosses enormous sheer vertical rock faces, often with falling rocks, requiring scrambling, where an unroped fall would likely be fatal. The route has narrow ledges, loose rock, and steep cliffs. The terrain requires good route-finding and scrambling skills. Use caution, as injuries requiring rescue are very dangerous and take many hours, if not days, to evacuate.

The best route follows red and yellow bull’s-eyes. If you lose the bull’s-eyes you are likely off-route and will encounter more difficult climbing with more severe consequences. It is important to retrace your steps back to the bull’s-eyes before continuing, rather than short-cutting.

There is no way to predict weather on Longs Peak. The Keyhole Route can experience winter-like conditions at any time, requiring greater skill and judgment. Be prepared to turn back during sudden, drastic weather changes.

The high elevation may affect your condition and judgment. Careful descent is the best treatment.

Don’t have summit fever: Enjoy the experience, but be willing to turn around at any time.
1. The Keyhole from The Boulder Field

Upon reaching the Boulder Field, the hiking trail ends. From here you will cross boulder field terrain to reach The Keyhole. The Keyhole is where the climbing route to the summit begins.

2. The Ledges

From The Keyhole, locate the first of a series of red and yellow ‘bull’s eyes’ markings indicating the best route to and from the summit. Travel across a series of very narrow ledges along a cliff edge. Carefully climb a constricted slot-like section with two iron bars drilled into the rock. Continue upward toward the high point along the Ledges section. Then follow a gradually descending traverse to the base of The Trough. Take note of the Ledges/Trough junction, as some climbers have had difficulty locating this point while on the descent.

3. Looking Down on The Trough

Continue up to the broad gulley called The Trough. This section is full of loose rock. Be careful of other climbers and rockfall. At the top of The Trough, you will come to a short steep section. Carefully climb this section to the start of the Narrows.

4. The Narrows

The Narrows crosses a sheer verticle rock face on a narrow ledge. A series of boulders and hand holds will assist you on this constricted ledge. Continue to the base of the Homestretch.

5. The Homestretch

The Homestretch is a polished granite slab that guards the summit. This section requires scrambling with your hand and feet. This section can have ice and snow throughout the summer. Although many options exist, the bull’s-eyes will generally provide you with the best route to the summit.

6. The Summit

Once you’ve reached the summit, you are halfway on your journey. Take a moment to have a snack and catch your breath. Be sure to be off the summit early in the day. Although they occur at any time, afternoon thunderstorms are likely in the summer months and will greatly increase the difficulty and time required to descend. Remember to use caution and stick to the route. Most accidents occur on the way down.

The Keyhole Route (late summer conditions)
The Keyhole Route on Longs Peak circumnavigates the upper mountain on the way to the summit.

Narrow ledges, loose rock, and steep cliffs characterize this route. Sudden weather changes including high winds, freezing temperatures, rain, snow, and lightning are common. Be willing to turn around at any time.

All brochure photos were taken in August