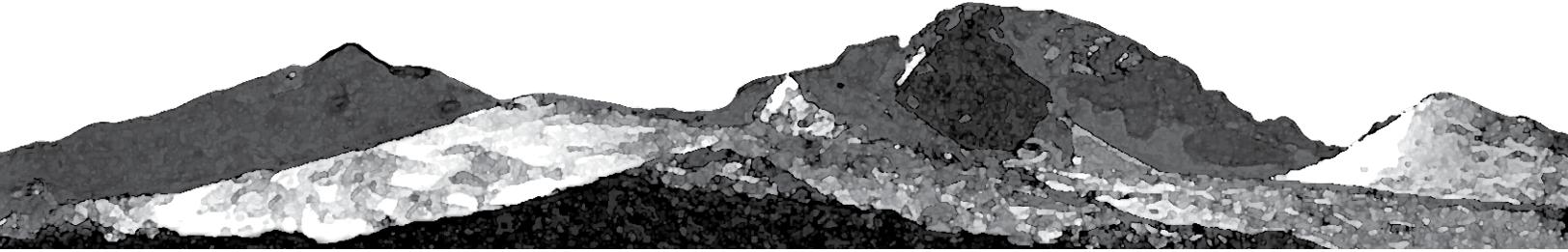




Longs Peak

An ascent of Longs Peak (14,259 ft - 4347 m) provides an exhilarating alpine experience for visitors in good physical condition. Safety precautions should be taken to ensure a safe and enjoyable climb to the highest peak in Rocky Mountain National Park.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Natural hazards cannot be controlled; their effects on you as a backcountry traveler can only be mitigated. Weather conditions can and do change within a matter of minutes. Winter-like storms can occur at any time of the year and are often accompanied by lightning, rain, snow and hail. At the first sign of a storm, it is prudent to return to the safety of tree line and lower elevations. In the event of electrical storms, avoid solitary trees, spread out from other hikers and seek out safety in low lying areas.

Climbers will be fighting gravity every step of their way. In addition to elevation gain, all backcountry travelers in Rocky Mountain National Park will need to consider the hazards of falling trees. Camping among beetle-killed trees is to be avoided. Also, while ascending the upper expanses of Longs Peak, climbers will be exposed to loose rock. Watch your footing and alert others below when loose rocks begin to tumble.

Some hiking routes in the Longs Peak area cross avalanche paths. Climbers should have proper training, knowledge and equipment when traveling through possible avalanche terrain.

Ascending too rapidly to higher elevations can result in mountain sickness. Breathing difficulties, nausea, headache and lethargy are symptoms of mountain sickness. This condition may develop rapidly and the consequences can be deadly. The best course of action is to immediately descend to lower elevations. Climbers are encouraged to spend time acclimatizing by embarking on shorter hikes at altitude.

Hypothermia occurs when a person's core temperature drops below normal. It can happen at any time of the year. Symptoms may include shivering, mental confusion and loss of coordination. Dress in layers and carry a hat, rain gear and extra wool or synthetic insulating layers. Cotton does not retain warmth when wet.

The combination of physical exertion and the cold dry air of Longs Peak will rapidly dehydrate climbers. Dehydration is often a contributing factor to other, more serious injuries and ailments. There is no potable water available on the trail. All water in the backcountry must be filtered by boiling or other mechanical means. A minimum of four liters is recommended.

PLANNING

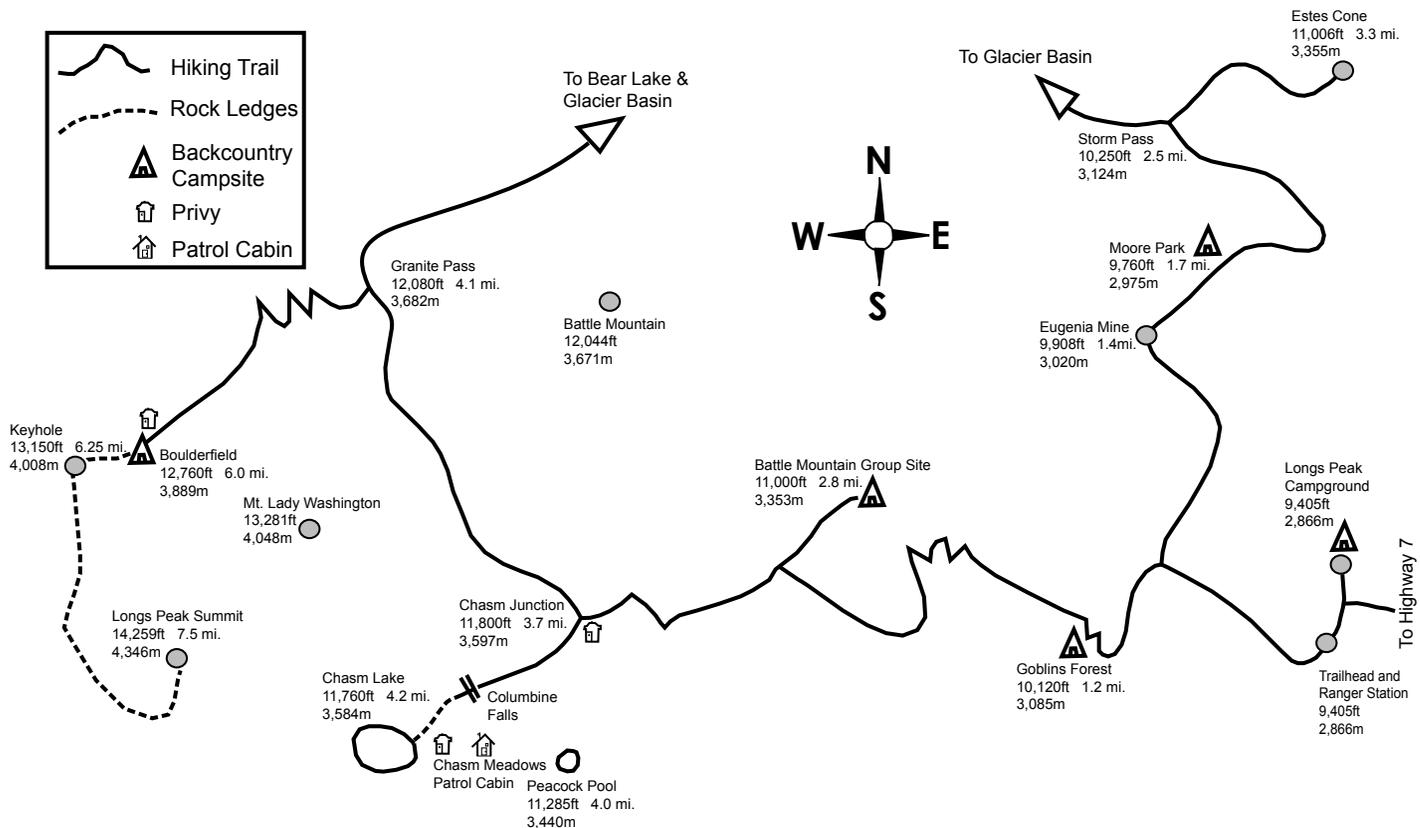
The hike is long and strenuous, with a continuous elevation gain of 4,850 feet over 7.5 miles. For many climbers, the last mile and a half will be the most challenging. Proper physical conditioning is paramount.

Climbers should be prepared for sudden, drastic changes in weather conditions. This often includes rain, snow and sleet in the middle of summer. Serviceable rain gear and insulating layers are essential for a comfortable ascent. In addition to proper clothing, climbers should, at a minimum carry the **TEN ESSENTIALS**

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Map | 6. Headlamp |
| 2. Compass (recommended) or GPS | 7. First aid kit |
| 3. Sunglasses and sunscreen | 8. Fire starter |
| 4. Extra food and water | 9. Matches |
| 5. Extra clothes | 10. Knife |

It Is Your Responsibility . . .

Arrange ahead of time for someone to notify the national park if you are overdue!



TO THE TOP

Approach

The Longs Peak Ranger Station is one mile off Highway 7, nine miles south of Estes Park, and is open daily during the summer from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Keyhole Route

The most popular route up Longs Peak is the Keyhole Route. From the Longs Peak Ranger Station, the East Longs Peak Trail switchbacks for 6 miles through sub-alpine and alpine forest before emerging into the Boulder Field. The Keyhole Route begins here. From the Boulder Field, where the route begins, is a strenuous hiking trail. From the Boulder Field, ascend west to "The Keyhole" and traverse south across a steep ledge system on the west face. Ascend "The Trough", then traverse another ledge system called the "Narrows." The "Homestretch" is the final scramble to the summit. The route from "The Keyhole" to the summit is marked with yellow and red bulls-eyes painted on the rock. *Time for the round trip averages between 8 and 15 hours.*

Seasons

Depending upon weather conditions, climbers stand the best chance of ideal trail conditions between mid-July and mid-September. During this time, the Keyhole Route is generally snow and ice free. Climbers should be prepared to turn back in the event that they encounter unfavorable climbing conditions.

For more information please visit:
<http://www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/longspeak.htm>

Equipment

Be prepared for sudden, drastic weather changes. The following items, as a minimum, should be taken on a one-day summer ascent of Longs Peak:

- sturdy hiking boots
- extra wool sweater or synthetic pile jacket
- long pants
- wind and water resistant jacket and pants
- flashlight
- gloves
- hat
- spare socks
- food
- water



Regulations

Rangers strictly enforce park regulations. You may view a complete list of regulations at any ranger station. Please note these particular regulations:

- ◆ Pets are prohibited on trails or anywhere in the backcountry.
- ◆ Backcountry campers must have a valid **Backcountry Use Permit**.
- ◆ Wood fires are prohibited in the Longs Peak backcountry.
- ◆ Feeding wildlife is prohibited.

Camping

Longs Peak Campground is located near the trailhead and is on a first-come, first-served basis. The 26-site campground is for **TENTS ONLY** with a maximum stay of seven nights during the summer season.

Strategies for Success

Begin your climb before 3:00 a.m. in order to be off the summit before noon. Afternoon lightning storms are common and can be fatal. If lightning occurs, get off ridges and summits. Conditioning hikes are advised. A slow, steady pace is an important key to success. Sign in at the trail register. Always let a friend or family member know your expected return time.

Backcountry Use Permit

A permit is required for overnight stays at the Boulderfield, Battle Mountain, and Goblins Forest backcountry sites along the Longs Peak Trail. Permits are available from ranger stations in summer or the backcountry office year round. Reservations may be made starting March 1st by calling (970) 586-1242 or writing to: Backcountry Office, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park CO 80517. No phone reservations are accepted between May 15 and September 30. Sites are limited. There is an administrative fee for each permit.

For your safety and the protection of park wildlife, carry in/carry out food storage canisters are required of all park backcountry campers in areas below treeline between May 1 and October 1.

Canisters may be rented or purchased at outdoor shops in surrounding communities. Pack out all garbage.