

# Hiking at Mountain Campus

Hiking opportunities include easy walks around campus, longer day hikes and challenging climbs. The following descriptions are meant to serve only as guides to these hikes; we recommend that you consult a topographic map of the area you plan to visit. In May and June, the upper portions of the trails near timberline can be completely covered with snow, making for difficult route finding. Mountain Campus is located at 9,000 ft./2,743 m.

## VALLEY WALKS

### View Rock • Easy • 20 minutes r/t

From the east side of the dining hall, proceed along the trail past the recreation hall and softball field. Follow the trail to the footbridge and cross the river. After crossing the bridge, follow the boardwalk through the willows and continue up the embankment. View Rock is on top of the rise to the right, overlooking the stream and the Mummy Range. The highest point visible from here is the permanent snowfield on the west ridge of Rowe Mountain (13,184 ft./ 4,018 m.). Evidence of the July 1994 wildfire is visible to the east and west.

### Valley Circuit • Easy • 45 minutes r/t

From View Rock, regain the trail and follow it toward the Challenge Ropes Course. Before reaching the course turn right and cut through the meadow to the road. When you reach the road, turn right, walk past a few private cabins on your left until a double-track trail forks off to the right. Turning right at the fork will return you to campus immediately; continuing straight along the road will take another 20 minutes. Eventually, another trail to the right leads to a foot bridge, crossing the South Fork of the Cache La Poudre and continuing to a double-track trail. Turn right and follow the trail past several of the old Koenig cabins, ending at the South Dorm.

See the other side of this guide for more routes!

# Tips to Remember

A Colorado fishing license is required at Mountain Campus. Mountain bikes are prohibited in the Comanche Peak Wilderness. Wilderness permits (obtainable in the Mountain Campus Office) are required to spend the night in Rocky Mountain National Park. When overnight camping, take precautions with food to prevent bear issues; bear-proof canisters are required in RMNP. Snakes and problematic spiders are rare at 9,000 ft; however, ticks are common and should be prepared for. Be sure socks and boots fit and put tape on any “hot spots” before blisters can form.



Marked trails lead to major points of interest throughout the area. Hikers are encouraged to stay on the trails since they usually provide the safest and easiest route from point to point. More importantly, the practice will help protect delicate ecosystems.



Extreme fire danger is often present. Camping stoves are required and smoking is not allowed on trails. Camping is not permitted at Mountain Campus.



In order to protect the bountiful wildlife found in the area, dogs must be kept on a leash at all times. Dogs are not permitted on Mountain Campus or in Rocky Mountain National Park.



# Essentials to Pack

- Navigation (map and compass)
- Sun protection (sunglasses and sunscreen)
- Insulation (waterproof and extra clothing)
- Illumination (headlamp/flashlight)
- First-aid supplies
- Fire (waterproof matches/lighter/candles)
- Repair kit and tools
- Nutrition (extra food)
- Hydration (extra water)
- Emergency shelter
- Insect repellent
- Signaling devices (whistle and small mirror)

# Area Wildlife

Be on the lookout for these animals during your hike:

- Yellow-bellied marmot:** a beaver-like animal that prefers rock piles in subalpine meadows as habitat
- Pika:** a short-eared cousin to the rabbit with a high-pitched squeak
- Ptarmigan:** a bird in the grouse family, with a white tail and a soft, low hoot
- Elk:** a large species of deer; males have long antlers and may be heard making a bugling sound
- Moose:** the largest member of the deer family; males have broad, flat antlers and can be aggressive when provoked

# Mountain Safety Principles

Follow these principles to help assure a safe and successful adventure!

**Safety First:** Always let someone know your hiking plans and only travel alone if you have the fitness and experience base needed. Leave your planned itinerary with our staff and check the current weather forecast at the Mountain Campus Main Office. Bring an area map, compass, and a whistle. These steps will help you avoid getting lost, but if you should get truly lost, remain calm, sit down by a large tree, or find protection in the rocks above tree line and wait.

**Hypothermia:** Broadly defined, hypothermia is chilling of the body core. It's brought on by wind, wet, and cold conditions. It can happen at any time of year. Dress in layers with wicking next to the skin, an insulating layer, and a windproof and waterproof outer layer. Cotton fabrics (t-shirts and jeans) are useless as insulators when wet. Remember to eat and stay hydrated.

**Water Treatment:** Giardia and other digestive tract ailments can be brought on by drinking untreated water from rivers, streams, lakes, and snowmelt. Boil, filter, or treat with chemicals or UVA devices before drinking area surface water. Water carried from taps at campus will suffice for short day hikes. Staying hydrated in the mountains is difficult, so drinking lots of water is essential.

**Lightning:** Get an early “alpine” start on all area climbs (Stormy, Fall, Signal, and Comanche Peaks) and any hike going above treeline. Violent electrical storms are common from June through August. Summits should be reached no later than 1 p.m. Be conservative; turn back when the weather looks bad. If caught in a storm above treeline, stay off ridges and other high points, spread out, and squat or sit on a foam pad. CPR (rescue breathing) can save the life of a hiking partner struck by lightning.

**Altitude Disorders:** Everyone adjusts to altitude differently. Drink lots of water and slow down. Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) is rare below 14,000 ft. This condition can be dangerous if accompanied by High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) or High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE). Loss of coordination (Ataxia) is not a good sign. All of these conditions can be remedied by descending to a lower altitude and seeking medical treatment if necessary.



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YEAR-ROUND

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# HIKING GUIDE

# WELCOME TO THE CSU MOUNTAIN CAMPUS!

This guide will help you safely enjoy the high mountain environment surrounding the CSU Mountain Campus while minimizing the human impact on this special area that includes Roosevelt National Forest, Comanche Peak Wilderness, and Rocky Mountain National Park.

## Protecting Our Natural World

In an effort to minimize the human impact on the valley and surrounding areas, please observe and practice the following Leave No Trace principles.

### Plan Ahead and Prepare

Know the regulations/special concerns for the area you'll visit. Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.

### Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grass, or snow. Camp at least 200 feet from lakes and streams. Good campsites are found, not made.

#### In popular areas:

Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites; keep campsites small. Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.

#### In pristine areas:

Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails. Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

### Leave What You Find

Examine, but do not touch cultural or historical structures and artifacts. Leave rocks, plants, and other natural objects as you find them.

### Dispose of Waste Properly

Pack it in; pack it out (trash, toilet paper, hygiene products, leftover food). Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails, then cover and disguise. Carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes to wash dishes. Scatter strained water.

### Minimize Campfire Impacts

Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light. Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires. Keep fires small, and use sticks that can be broken by hand. Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out fires completely, and then scatter cool ashes.

### Respect Wildlife

Observe wildlife from a distance; do not follow, approach, or feed animals. Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely. Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.

### Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Respect other visitors; avoid loud voices and noises. Be courteous; yield to other users on the trail. Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.

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MOUNTAIN CAMPUS  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

An equal-access and equal-opportunity University.  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

## MOUNTAIN CAMPUS AREA SUMMITTS

There are many "non-technical" climbs in the area that do not require special equipment; however, they are long, physically demanding, all-day climbs. If you plan to attempt any climb in the area, please notify the Mountain Campus Main Office of your intentions. Be sure to get an alpine start and carry the ten essentials to be prepared for a safe ascent.

Signal Mountain (11,262 ft./3,433 m.)      Comanche Peak (12,702 ft./3,872 m.)  
 Stormy Peaks (12,148 ft./3,703 m.)      Hagues Peak (13,560 ft./4,133 m.)  
 Fall Mountain (12,258 ft./3,736 m.)

## GREATER AREA HIKES

### Signal Mountain Climb • Challenging • 6-8 hours r/t

The hike begins approximately two miles down the Pingree Park Road. From the trailhead, drop down, and then up over a ridge. Turn right when the trail meets an old road. Soon you will cross Pennock Creek on a footbridge (left). Follow the trail as it parallels the stream on your right. The beaver ponds are approximately half way to the top, where the trail crosses to the right side of a smaller stream and begins to climb. After about one hour you will pass a spectacular rock spire and the trail continues to climb until reaching a saddle and old road. From here, look right and pick up the trail again, climbing toward tree line. From tree line, proceed through the alpine tundra on a faint trail up and right to the summit of Signal Mountain (11,262 ft./3,433 m.). Nearby South Signal Mountain is 14 feet lower. Although tempting, the cross-country hike from Signal Mountain to Stormy Peaks is very difficult.

### Comanche & Brown's Lakes • Challenging • 8 hours r/t

Both of these lakes are accessed via a trail off the Hourglass/Comanche Reservoir Road. Drive through Sky Ranch, up the steep hill to a parking area. From this trailhead, follow the trail to Comanche Reservoir and continue along the trail on the north (right) side of the reservoir. Follow the trail past the far end of the reservoir to a junction. For Comanche Lake, turn left, crossing the creek and proceeding uphill. For Brown's Lake, proceed straight, past the first junction. Turn right at the next junction, climbing to Brown's Lake (1 hour from junction). Good fishing can be found at both lakes. Check at the Mountain Campus Office for private property restrictions before starting this hike. *Please note: an alternate route to Comanche and Brown's Lakes is via Crown Point Road; the turnoff is approximately 12 miles from CSU Mountain Campus.*

## STORMY PEAKS TRAILHEAD HIKES

### Denny's Point • Easy • 1 hour r/t

Access the Stormy Peaks trail by passing to the left of View Rock and continuing to the road. Turn left on the road and look for the Stormy Peaks trailhead. The trail traverses through burned forest and climbs a series of switchbacks. When the trail flattens look for a sign to Denny's Point and the trail going left. At the crest you will be rewarded with the finest view of the Mummy in the area. Best views are in the early morning.

### Twin Lakes • Easy • 1.5 hours r/t

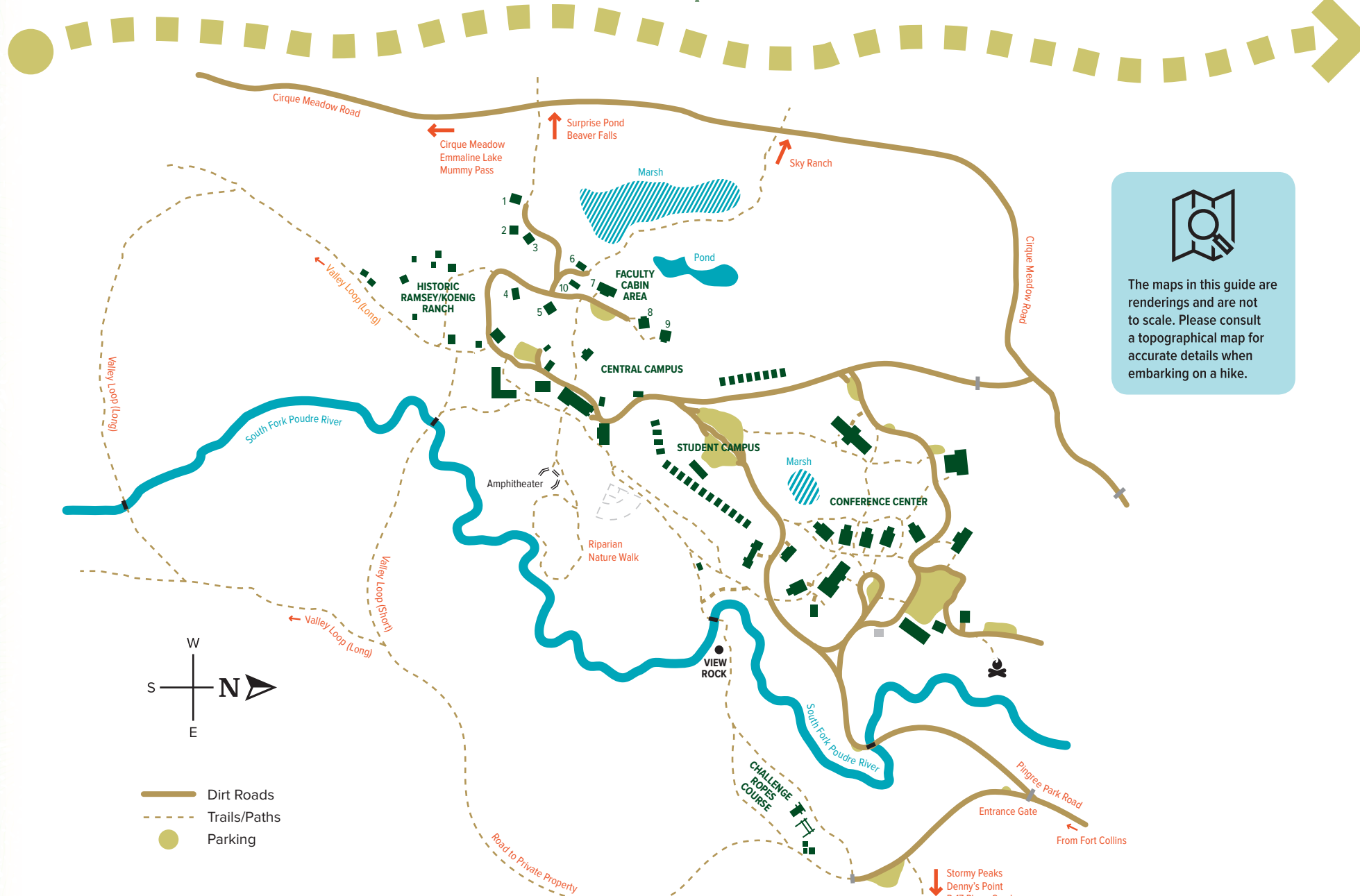
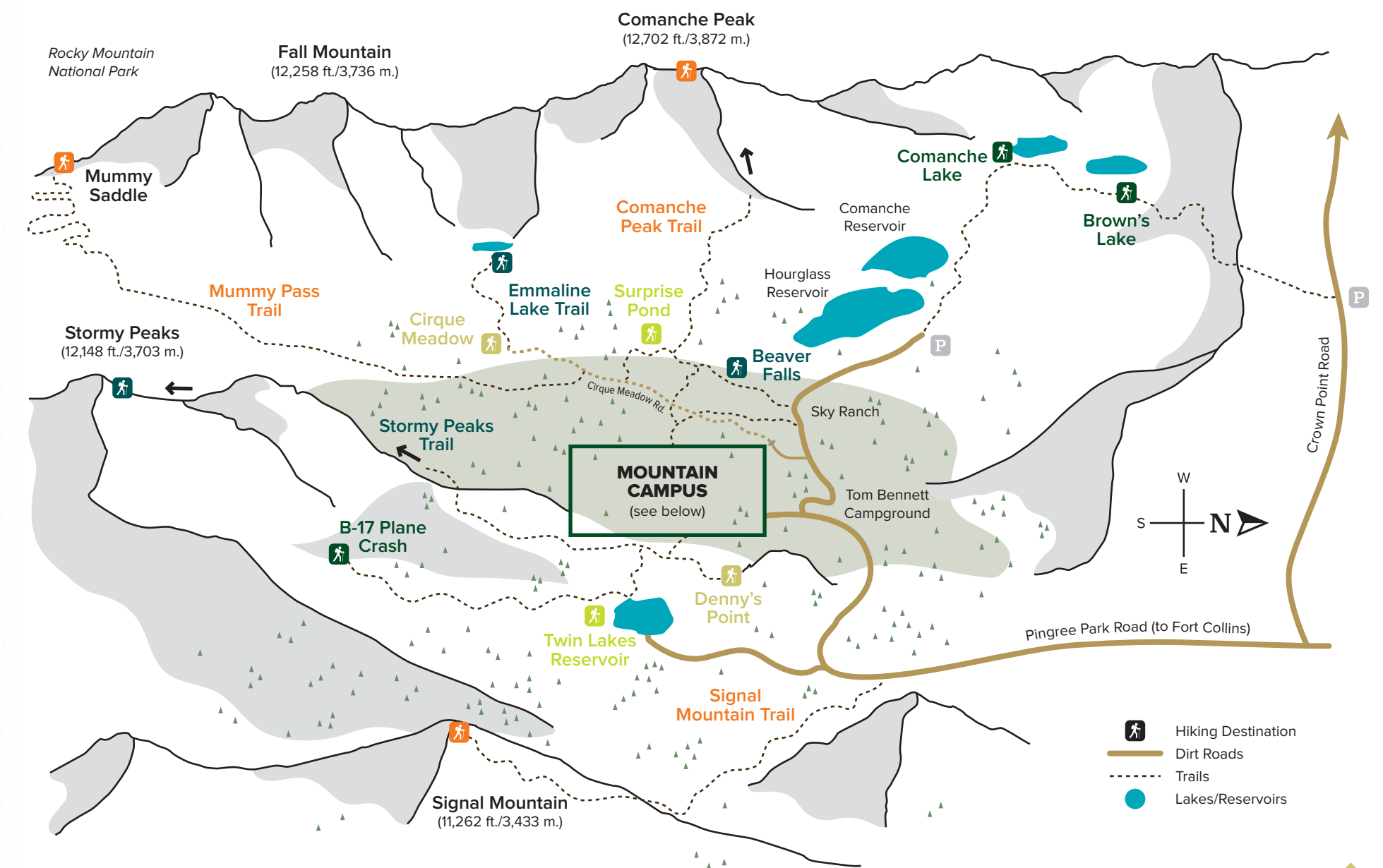
Follow the Denny's Point description. Pass the Denny's Point sign and stay on the main trail until you reach the Twin Lakes junction going left. Continue up the trail until you reach Twin Lakes.

### B-17 Plane Crash • Moderate • 3-4 hours r/t

Follow the Denny's Point and Twin Lakes descriptions. Once at Twin Lakes, follow the trail to the right around the west end of the reservoir. Continue along the trail going to the right. Veer left at the fork (old sawmill off to the right). As the trail narrows, pass three posts and climb a steep hill entering the wilderness area. Follow a trail along a ditch, then through a clearing. Continue on the trail to the boulder field where the remains of the plane can be seen. Many hikers have problems finding the crash site; pay careful attention to trail markers (cairns etc.). There is a memorial stone on Mountain Campus along the trail before crossing the river.

### Stormy Peaks Climb • Challenging • 6-8 hours r/t

Follow the Denny's Point and Twin Lakes descriptions. At the Twin Lakes junction, continue straight on the main trail to go to Stormy Peaks. After about one hour of following the trail southward along the ridge, there is a good rest stop marking the halfway point of the climb with an excellent view of the valley. The trail continues upward, entering Rocky Mountain National Park. From here the trail becomes more difficult and at times seems to vanish. Look for blazes on trees and cairns (piles of rocks) to guide you. Just below timberline (11,500 ft./3,505 m.) you will pass the Stormy Peaks Campsites on your left. Continue along the trail through an alpine meadow. Alpine flowers in this area are best viewed in June and early July. You can climb directly up and left or stay with the trail to the pass and ascend left from there. There are several false peaks before you reach the true summit (12,148 ft./3,703 m.). The views include Longs Peak to the south. Return the same way.



## CIRQUE MEADOW ROAD - MUMMY PASS TRAILHEAD HIKES

### Cirque Meadow • Moderate • 3-4 hours r/t

Follow the trail leaving uphill from the west side of the dining hall; stay left as you pass several staff cabins. Access to the Cirque Meadow Road is via the cut-off trail starting beyond Cabin One. Proceed uphill until reaching the Cirque Meadow Road (an old logging road now closed to vehicle traffic). Turn left. You will gradually climb upward with occasional views left to the valley below. Cross Fall Creek on the foot bridges and walk past the Mummy Pass trailhead. Proceed up the road to the meadow and soon you will be treated to a spectacular view of Fall Mountain and the ridges and cirques above.

### Surprise Pond Loop • Moderate • 2 hours r/t

Follow the Cirque Meadow description to the road. At the junction with Cirque Meadow Road, proceed straight across the road and climb the trail as it switchbacks onto the ridge. Continue past the first signed trail junction, keeping left. At the second trail junction follow the sign to the left. The trail climbs gradually through the burned lodgepole forest. Soon the trail veers left and traverses a hillside. The trail then veers right and reaches Surprise Pond, where you least expect it! Continue along the trail (pond to the right) and descend to Cirque Meadow Road just below Fall Creek. Descend the road (left) to the Mountain Campus cut-off.

### Beaver Falls • Moderate • 3 hours r/t

Follow the Surprise Pond description to the second trail junction and proceed straight ahead. The trail initially travels through the burn area with wet, marshy spots, climbs up and down, and crosses a small creek, until finally arriving at the top of the cascading falls. Be aware of the wet slippery rocks. Return the same way. Beaver Falls can also be reached via the trail to Sky Ranch. Follow the trail leaving uphill from the west side of the dining hall; at the top of the hill veer left and then turn right at the sign for Sky Ranch. This trail crosses the Cirque Meadow Road, continues on to the foot bridge over Beaver Creek, through a campground, ending at the Sky Ranch road. Once at the road turn left and continue along the road through the camp. Just past the last cabin, the road starts to climb steeply uphill. Find a trail on the left side of the road and follow it to the falls. The two options above can be combined to make this a loop hike. The recommended direction is via the Surprise Pond description, returning through Sky Ranch. This requires you to ford the river at the top of the falls; please take extreme caution when crossing.

### Emmaline Lake • Challenging • 6-8 hours r/t

From Cirque Meadow, cross a footbridge (right) and walk along an old logging road to the upper end of the meadow. The road turns to a trail which winds through the forest, staying near the stream. The trail takes some sharp turns and is easily lost. Continue upward through the last steep section to Cirque Lake and then Emmaline Lake. The view here is breathtaking. Ancient glaciers once carved out this entire area. Comanche Peak can be seen at the west end of the cirques. *Warning: the snow chutes and steep rock gullies above Emmaline Lake are dangerous and should only be climbed by properly equipped and experienced mountaineers.*

### Mummy Pass • Challenging • 6-8 hours r/t

At the Mummy Pass trailhead (see Cirque Meadow description) ascend the switchback trail which eventually goes above timberline onto the alpine tundra and enters Rocky Mountain National Park. The uphill section between tree line and the park boundary has seen the demise of many a lowland hiker; pace yourself and you will eventually make it up. The trail continues over the top of the saddle (a good place to turn around), down and around the "head" of the Mummy, and on to the true pass. This hike takes you through spectacular, but exposed terrain. Take precautions against wind, rain, and electrical storms.

### Comanche Peak Climb • Challenging • 8 hours r/t

This is a difficult and beautiful hike on an incomplete trail. Follow the Surprise Pond description to a trail junction (Comanche Peak) at the crest of the ridge before reaching the pond. Hike along the ridge until the trail makes a sharp right hand turn. Switchback up a steep forested slope until the trail ends. Follow cairns and traverse upward through the trees, small boulder fields, and open hillsides toward a large snowfield. This section is difficult to follow, particularly in the early summer months. Ascend the right (west) side of this large snowfield that can be seen from the valley. This snowfield is typically melted out by mid-August. Continue along the broad ridge to the summit of Comanche Peak (12,702 ft./3,872 m.). From the true summit you can look directly down into the Emmaline Lake basin. Descend the way you came. A return hike alternative (weather permitting) is to continue to the top of the cirques, over Fall Mountain (12,258 ft./3,736 m.), descending the north side of the Mummy's head. This descent route connects you with the Mummy Pass trail near the Rocky Mountain National Park boundary. *Caution: the hike to Comanche Peak demands an early (alpine) start to avoid lightning and requires experience navigating without a trail.*

*(r/t = conservative round-trip time)*

The maps in this guide are renderings and are not to scale. Please consult a topographical map for accurate details when embarking on a hike.