

HIKES NEAR VAIL ON THE WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST — EAGLE-HOLY CROSS RANGER DISTRICT

The Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District of the White River National Forest has endless activities for you to discover while visiting the area. This “quicksheet” showcases hiking trails as well as safety measures and outdoor ethics to consider while exploring the National Forest. For more information, please call us at (970) 827-5715, visit our website at www.fs.usda.gov/whiteriver or stop by our office which is located just off Interstate 70 at Exit 171 M-F 8:00am to 4:30pm. Have fun and be safe!



SAFETY IN THE MOUNTAINS: BE PREPARED

Most accidents that occur in the mountains are preventable; being prepared will help ensure a fun and incident-free trip. Here are a few tips:

FOOD AND WATER

Make sure to have enough water to stay hydrated on your hike. For day hikes, at least 2 liters of water per person is recommended. Do not drink water directly from streams or lakes without filtering it first. Hiking burns calories! Make sure to bring high-calorie and protein-filled snacks to maintain safe energy levels. Do not drink from streams, creeks or lakes without using a water filter system.

ADEQUATE FOOTWEAR

Be prepared to hike in varying and uneven terrain. Wear sturdy, closed-toed shoes that provide ankle support.

THUNDERSTORMS

Afternoon thunderstorms are common in the mountains so be sure to check the local weather forecast. Bring rain gear and be conscious of where you are located when a thunderstorm is approaching. Being above tree line increases your chances of being struck by lightning.

ALTITUDE SICKNESS

Vail is located at approximately 8,250ft. If you are coming from a lower altitude, you may feel the effects of altitude sickness. If you are hiking and begin feeling symptoms of altitude sickness descend in elevation and drink water to negate the symptoms. Symptoms include nausea, headache, and lightheadedness.

WILDLIFE

The area is home to many species including black bear, mountain lion, deer, elk, moose, raptors, songbirds, and small mammals. Give all wildlife ample space and respect their habitat. Do not feed or harass wildlife. If your presence causes them to move, you are too close. Keep dogs leashed or under control at all times not allowing them to harass wildlife.

SUN EXPOSURE

Hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen are important to help reduce your risk of sunburn, and other conditions related to sun exposure.



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NORTH TRAIL (Closed April 15 to June 15 for deer migration)

Length: 9 mi.

Open to: Hiking, Biking, Horseback

Difficulty: Moderate

Begin/End Elevation: 8,254'/8,127'

Trail Description: This trail traverses the slopes above Vail and provides sweeping vistas of the Vail Valley, Vail Mountain, the Gore Range, and Mount of the Holy Cross. The trail is easily accessible from local hotels and from the town's free bus service. It is a popular hike for all ages. Dogs must be leashed on the North Trail.

Access from Vail: Buffehr Creek Trailhead: Travel west on I-70 to Exit 173 for West Vail. Turn right and proceed east on the North Frontage Road for 0.5 miles to Buffehr Creek Road. Turn left and continue to the parking lot on the left.

Red Sandstone Trailhead: From I-70 Exit 176, travel west for ~1 mile on the North Frontage Road to Red Sandstone Road. Turn right onto Red Sandstone Road, and proceed 0.4 miles to the parking area on the left at the first switchback.

SON OF MIDDLE CREEK (Closed April 15 to June 15 for deer migration)

Length: 3.6 mi.

Open to: Hiking, Biking, Horseback

Difficulty: Moderate

Begin/End Elevation: 8,336'/9,406'

Trail Description: Son of Middle Creek trail ascends the hillside on the north side of I-70, offering views of Vail Mountain and the Town of Vail. After a mile, it crosses a bridge over Middle Creek in a cool spruce/fir forest. This is a great destination for families. The trail continues climbing after the bridge to its junction with the North Trail at 2 miles, then gradually meanders through a lodgepole pine forest for another 1.5 miles to its terminus at Lost Lake Road.

Access from Vail: Take I-70 Exit 176 and cross under I-70 to the north side of the highway. At the roundabout, take the Spraddle Creek Road exit. The parking lot for Son of Middle Creek trail is 100 yards ahead on the left.

LOST LAKE

Length: 3.5 mi.

Open to: Hiking, Biking, Horseback

Difficulty: Easier

Begin/End Elevation: 8,132'/8,795'

Trail Description: Lost Lake trail follows a ridgeline north of Vail and offers incredible views of the Gore Range and Mount of the Holy Cross before reaching a picturesque lake nestled in the trees..

Access from Vail: From I-70 Exit 176, travel west for ~1 mile on the North Frontage Road to Red Sandstone Road. Turn right and follow the paved road 0.5 mile. Stay left and follow signs approximately 5 miles to Lost Lake Trailhead on the right.

MEADOW MOUNTAIN

Length: 4.5 mi.

Open to: Hiking, Biking, Horseback

Difficulty: Moderate

Begin/End Elevation: 7,750'/9,756'

Trail Description: The Meadow Mountain trail follows an old logging road above Dowd Junction. Popular year-round, the trail is family and dog friendly. It climbs through meadows that were once home to a very prosperous lettuce farm. Views span from the Gore Range to Tennessee Pass.

Access From Vail: Travel west on I-70 to exit 171 for Minturn, Leadville, and Hwy 24. Exit here and turn right (south). Just past the interstate look for a large parking lot on the right. The trail begins from the south end of the parking lot near the white house.

GROUSE LAKE

Length: 4.8 mi.

Open to: Hiking, Horseback

Difficulty: Difficult

Begin/End Elevation: 7,835'/10,614'

Trail Description: Grouse Lake trail begins on a logging road but turns to singletrack after 0.3 mile. At the signed junction with West Grouse Creek trail at 1 mile, keep left. The trail continues climbing through mixed forests and provides access to the Holy Cross Wilderness at Grouse Lake. If camping overnight, please visit the Ranger Station to learn about Holy Cross Wilderness regulations.

Access From Vail: Travel west on I-70 to exit 171 for Minturn and Highway 24. Merge right and follow Hwy 24 south for approximately 1 mile. Trailhead is on right side of the road.

TWO ELK (Closed May 6—June 30 for elk calving)

Length: 11 mi.

Open to: Hiking, Biking, Horseback

Difficulty: Moderate

Begin/End Elevation: 8,030'/8,772'

Trail Description: The Two Elk National Recreation Trail climbs out of Minturn and follows the creek and enters Vail's Back Bowls. The trail passes three chairlifts and continues climbing to Two Elk Pass before descending to the Vail Pass Recreation Path above East Vail. Scenic vistas of Mount of the Holy Cross and Battle Mountain are prevalent throughout the hike.

Access From Vail: Travel west on I-70 to exit 171 for Minturn. Merge right and travel south 2.7 miles and turn left onto Cemetery Road. Cross the bridge and tracks and proceed onto FSR# 762. Follow this rough, dirt road about 1.8 miles until it ends at the trailhead.