

# Long Hikes

## **Flattop Mountain Trailhead**

- Flattop Mountain
- Hallett Peak
- Otis Peak
- Taylor Peak
- Notchtop Mountain
- Andrews Glacier

This trail starts at the Flattop Mountain Trailhead. See the Lake Helene description of where the trailhead is located. Stay on the Flattop Mountain trail until you come to the trail split that goes to Odessa and Fern Lakes. Take the Flattop Mountain trail that goes South (left) up Flattop Mountain. On your way up Flattop Mountain you will pass the Dream Lake overlook and the Emerald Lake overlook, which provide a great view of these lakes.

Continue up the Flattop Mountain trail until you reach the top of Flattop Mountain. The trail up Flattop Mountain is about 4.5 miles long with an elevation gain of 2,874 feet. Once on the top of Flattop Mountain you can hike across the tundra and climb to any

of the peaks listed. Hallett Peak, Otis Peak and Taylor Peak are South (left) of Flattop Mountain. Notchttop Mountain is North (right) of Flattop mountain. Hallett Peak is another 7/10 of a mile from Flattop Mountain with an additional elevation gain of 389 feet. Otis Peak is another 1.5 miles from Flattop Mountain with an additional elevation gain of 506 feet. Taylor Peak is another 2.6 miles from Flattop Mountain with an additional elevation gain of 1,173 feet. Notchttop Mountain is another 1.6 miles from Flattop Mountain with an elevation loss of 164 feet. The return trip is the same way you came up to the mountain or peak, unless you choose to go down Andrews Glacier.

Andrews Glacier lies between Otis Peak and Taylor Peak. You should always check with the rangers to see if it is safe to descend down the glacier. In low snow years the glacier is too dangerous to descend. I would also recommend ice cleats for your hiking boots which will make descending the glacier easier to accomplish. If you decide to descend down Andrews Glacier stay to the right side of the glacier, since there are usually deep crevices on the left side of the glacier. Descending Andrews Glacier will eventually bring you to the trail that leads to Timberline Falls and the Loch. You want to turn North (left) at the trail junction unless you want to go to Timberline Falls, then turn right. Andrews Glacier is another 1.5 miles from Flattop Mountain with an elevation loss of 74 feet. The descent down Andrews Glacier and down the Loch Trail to the Glacier Gorge Trailhead is an additional 5.1 miles.

## **Odessa and Fern Lakes**

This trail starts at the Flattop Mountain Trailhead. See the Lake Helene description of where the trailhead is located. Stay on the Flattop Mountain trail until you come to the trail split that goes to Odessa and Fern Lakes. Take the Odessa and Fern Lake Trail that goes West (straight). Continue on the trail until you come to the head of the Odessa Gorge where Lake Helene is located. The trail goes around the bend to the right and heads down the Odessa Gorge to Odessa Lake and then Fern Lake. As you head down the trail from Fern Lake, you will come to Fern Falls and the trail junction with the Cub Lake trail. You can either continue to go down the Fern Lake trail to the Pool and Arch Rock to the Fern Lake Trailhead or go down via the Cub Lake trail to the Cub Lake Trailhead. If you have two vehicles you can park one at the Fern Lake Trailhead and then drive to Bear Lake to start the hike, which will climb 1,130 feet up to Lake Helene and then descend 2,430 feet to the Fern Lake Trailhead. The total length of this hike is about 8.9 miles. If you don't have two vehicles you can use the shuttle system. However, if you end up at the Fern Lake Trailhead, you will have to walk another mile to get to the shuttle bus stop at the Cub Lake Trailhead.

## **Ute Trail**

This trail runs from the Alpine Visitor Center down to Milner Pass and the Continental Divide. However, you do not have to hike all the way down to Milner Pass. You can hike to Forest Canyon Pass which is about 2.3 miles downhill from the Alpine Visitor Center. At this point you will see a mountain to the South with snow on the East and North sides. I like to hike off trail and climb this mountain by angling up to the North snowfield through the trees and bushes to the tundra leading to the North snowfield. When hiking off trail, you should hike at a 45 degree angle constantly switching back and forth as you climb the mountain. Once you climb above the snowfield there is a vast amount of tundra that is fairly flat that you can walk on and there is a plateau on the back side of the mountain where you will be the only hikers and can walk around at your leisure. If you don't want to hike off trail you can also hike all the way down to Milner Pass and the Continental Divide which is about 4.5 miles long with the total elevation loss of 1,038 feet. If you have not parked a second vehicle at Milner Pass you will have to hike back up to the Alpine Visitor Center which is about 4.5 miles long with an elevation gain of 1,038 feet. I have seen large herds of Elk and Ptarmigan on this hike when I hike off trail. If you like tundra hiking this is a great way to do it with having to hike up to the tundra. I usually drive up the Old Fall River Road trying to get to the Alpine Visitor Center by 8:00 a.m. and then drive down Trail Ridge Road on the way back.

## **Black Lake**

This trail starts at the Glacier Gorge Trailhead. See the Mills Lake hike description to follow the trail to Mills Lake. After Mills Lake the trail continues South past Jewel Lake to Black Lake. The trail to Black Lake is about 4.9 miles long with an elevation gain of 1,440 feet. If you still have energy left you can continue on to Blue Lake or Frozen Lake which sits on a granite shelf above Black Lake. Blue Lake is about 6/10 of a mile above Black Lake with an elevation gain of another 520 feet. Frozen Lake is about 1.2 miles above Black Lake with an elevation gain of another 960 feet. The return trip is the same way you came up to the lake.

### **Lake of Glass & Sky Pond**

This trail starts at the Glacier Gorge Trail Head. See the Loch hike description to follow the trail to Timberline Falls. To reach the Lake of Glass or Sky Pond you must climb up the rocks to the right of the Timberline Falls. This is not easy due to the wet rocks from the mist from the falls. The trail to the Lake of Glass is about 4.2 miles long with an elevation gain of 1,640 feet. Sky Pond is about 2/10 of a mile from the Lake of Glass, with an additional elevation gain of 80 feet. The return trip is the same way you came up to the lake.

### **Little Yellowstone**

This trail starts at the Colorado River Trail Head on Trail Ridge Road on the western side of Rocky Mountain National Park. You need to get an early start to drive over Trail Ridge Road and down to the Colorado River Trail Head. This area is called Little Yellowstone because of the steep canyon walls and yellow volcanic rocks. The trail to Little Yellowstone is about 5.9 miles long with an elevation gain of 1,060 feet. The return trip is the same way you came to Little Yellowstone.

## **Mount Ida**

This trail starts at Milner Pass at the Continental Divide. The trail proceeds through the forest until you come to a trail split with the UTE trail to the Alpine Visitors Center going North (left) and the Mount Ida trail going South (right). The trail to Mount Ida is largely above tree line and I was nearly killed by lightning on this trail, so you need to watch for storms coming from the North, which is behind you as you hike to Mount Ida. The trail to Mount Ida is about 4.9 miles long with an elevation gain of 2,122 feet. You get tremendous views of the Gorge Lakes from Mount Ida. The return trip is the same way you came to Mount Ida.

## **The Six Lake Hike**

This hike starts at Bear Lake. Drive to the Bear Lake Parking Area and proceed from the Bear Lake Parking Area to Bear Lake. After viewing Bear Lake proceed back to the Bear Lake Trailhead and take the trail that goes to Nymph Lake, Dream Lake and Emerald Lake. Hike to each of these lakes in sequence as described in the short hikes "Tyndall Gorge Lakes". After viewing Emerald Lake hike back to Dream Lake and take the trail South (right) to Lake Haiyaha. After viewing Lake Haiyaha start back on the trail to Dream Lake. As you approach the water flowing out of Lake Haiyaha you should notice a trail that goes East (right) that follows the water downhill. Take this trail and follow it to the Mills Lake and the Loch trail junction. At the junction, follow the Mills Lake trail South (left) to Mills Lake. I usually eat lunch at Mills Lake. After viewing Mills Lake proceed back down the Mills Lake trail past Alberta Falls to the Glacier Gorge Parking Area. This hike is about 8.2 miles long with an elevation gain of 970 feet and an elevation loss of 1,240 feet. You can catch the shuttle bus at the Glacier Gorge Parking Area to take you back to the Bear Lake Parking Area.

## **Longs Peak**

This trail starts at the Longs Peak Trail Head, which is South of Estes Park on highway 7. This hike is very strenuous and difficult. If you are afraid of heights or narrow paths with steep drop offs of thousands of feet, this hike is not for you. The hike up Longs Peak is about 7.4 miles long with an elevation gain of

4,859 feet. When I hiked Longs Peak, we started at 3:00 am and hiked by flashlight for several hours. You should be at tree line by 6:00 am to watch the sunrise over Twin Sisters. You should be at the Boulder Field by 8:00 am and using the Keyhole Route, you should be on top by 10:00 am. You need to be in excellent physical condition, properly acclimated and know how to set a good hiking pace if you want to climb this peak. I would recommend that you read "Longs Peak its story and climbing guide" before you try and climb this peak. If you want to get a taste of climbing this peak, I would recommend that you hike to Chasm Lake at the base of the 1,500-foot East face of Longs Peak. The trail to Chasm Lake is about 4.2 miles long with an elevation gain of 2,380 feet. The return trip is the same way you came up the mountain.