

Crested Butte Hiking Guide

On two feet around Crested Butte

Wherever you go in the Crested Butte area, you're never far from some of the most magnificent National Forest land in the country. Whether your preference is for day trips, overnight backpacking, or multiple day traverses and loops in the West Elk mountain range, the Crested Butte area offers a hike for everyone.



Hiking Guidelines

Some things to remember before you head for the hills:

1. Leave your itinerary, and a map marked with the trail you plan to hike, with someone you trust.
2. Wear appropriate, supportive footwear designed for the length of your hike and the expected terrain. On rocky trails, wear high-topped boots that help prevent your ankle from slipping and twisting.
3. Bring extra clothing--polypropylene and pile are better than cotton, because they won't lose their insulating value when they get wet--and extra food.
4. Bring iodine tablets or a pump-type water filter to purify stream or spring water for drinking.
5. Stash lip balm rated SPF-15 or higher and hard candy in a pocket or fanny pack; it helps avoid "cotton-mouth" on the trail.
6. Start off slowly to avoid getting tired partway through your hike.
7. Stay on the trail. Don't shortcut through switchbacks or skirt puddles and mud in the middle of a trail: it causes erosion problems.
8. Bring a simple first-aid kit, sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat.
9. Bring an empty sack to pick up trailside trash left by careless hikers.
10. Cross streams carefully, and never at high flows.
11. Leave all gates closed unless sign says to leave open.
12. Yield to horses and livestock. Bikes yield to hikers.
13. Keep dogs on leash or at your side at all times. Do not allow them to chase wildlife or livestock.
14. Utilize established campsites and fire rings.
15. Extinguish campfires before sleeping or leaving.

Discussions About Hiking

Local Hiking Trails

Beaver Ponds Trail #516 This is an easy trail, approximately 1/2 mile in length and has benches and interpretive signs. The trail begins off the Ohio Creek Road 22 miles north of hwy 135 and ends at a large beaver pond where a picnic ground is provided. Fishing is available in the ponds.

Difficulty: Easy

Boulder Creek Trail #478 The trail head is out of Gold Creek Campground. The trail climbs steadily, with lots of switch backs, to Boulder Lake. 8 Miles round trip.

Difficulty: Strenuous

Conundrum Trail #1981 The trail leaves one mile west from Gothic (trail 739), hike up to Judd Falls following the Copper Creek trail. Continue along until markers to Copper Pass/Triangle Pass (trail 1981) are seen. Follow the trail over Triangle Pass and down into the valley along Conundrum Creek, this leads to

Conundrum Hot Springs. The trail winds through forests and eventually along steep, slide hill with much loose rock. 9 miles one way.

Difficulty: Strenuous

Curecanti Creek It descends from the rim of the upper Black Canyon to Morrow Point Lake, following Curecanti Creek. It ends at the lake with a view of the Curecanti Needle. 4 miles round trip. The trail head begins at Pioneer Point, off hwy 92, 5.7 miles west of it's junction with hwy 50.

Difficulty: Moderate

Dyke Trail You should arrange for car shuttle if hiking this trail. Leave one car at Horse Ranch Park, where hike will end. Take Kebler Pass Road (County Road 12) west for 6 miles, then turn right to Irwin Lake (Forest Road 826). Drive to Irwin Campground and park. Hike up road, then fork left. Continue on jeep road for about 1/2 mile. Look for Dyke Trail signs on left. 5 - 6 miles.

Difficulty: Moderate

Elk Creek/Gunsight Pass Take Kebler Pass Road west for 4.6 miles to a steep ravine on your right. Park here. Hike trail on right up left side of stream. At the Standard Mine, take right road uphill to the top of Gunsight Pass. Return down the same way you came. You can see many old mines on this hike; avoid shafts, dangerous openings and equipment. 4 - 5 miles.

Difficulty: Strenuous

Green Lake Start from the Crested Butte Nordic Center at 2nd and Whiterock. Follow the trail up the Bench southbound. Turn right on Wildcat Road, continue on trail past dead end of road. Turn right on Trapper's Crossing Road. Watch for sign to Green Lake Trail on left. Gorgeous picnic spot. 7 miles round trip.

Difficulty: Moderate

Henry Lake #429 The trail takes off at Lottis Creek Campground (in Taylor Canyon) and is 14 miles round trip. It is rough and steep. There is fishing at Henry Lake.

Difficulty: Strenuous

Lamphier Lake Trail #428 The trail head is out of Gold Creek Campground, 100 yards past the campground itself. The trail follows the creek, winding its way through aspen and pine up to the remote lake. 6 miles round trip. The trail head is on the top of Gunsight Pass, one more mile.

Difficulty: Moderate

Mill Castle Trail #450 The trail begins on Mill Creek Road, a two wheel drive road. The trail goes over Storm Pass (12,440ft.) and very steep on both sides. This is one of the most scenic trails in the West Elk Wilderness, but only experienced hikers should attempt this 14.3 mile hike. The first 5 miles are easy, the rest is more strenuous.

Difficulty: Moderate

Mysterious Lake Starts off Trail Creek Road approximately 5 miles from Spring Creek Reservoir. It is 5 miles long. Some previous hiking experience is desirable. There is fishing at Mysterious Lake.

Difficulty: Moderate

Neversink Trail short trail along the Gunnison River, leaving from Neversink day use area in Curecanti National Recreation Area on Highway 50, 5 miles west of Gunnison. the tree shaded walk is 1.5 miles round trip on flat terrain.

Difficulty: Easy

Peanut Lake/Lower Loop Probably the most popular "quick trail" because of its vicinity. On the corner of 1st street and Elk, go north on on 1st. Then turn left

on Butte Ave. Park your car on the side of the road and walk Peanut Road to Peanut Lake. The trail will turn into Lower Loop. 2 to 3 miles. Great beginner trail or when hiking with small children.

Difficulty: Easy

Snodgrass Mountain Take Gothic Road north past the stables. Park at Snodgrass trailhead on left. Cross over fence stile form. Please obey any seasonal closure signs on gate. You can reach the top of Snodgrass Mountain on the dirt road. Trail to left past second gate, ends in Washington Gulch. 5 miles to top and back.

Difficulty: Moderate

Splain's Gulch This one is a nice short hike. Start off west on Kebler Pass Road (County Road 12). Drive 5 miles to Forest Road 885. Turn left and park. Hike on the road or various trails. This hike is 4 miles with beautiful forest.

Difficulty: Easy

Strand Hill/Ferris Creek Tak Hwy. 135 south for 2 miles. Turn left at Brush Creek Road and follow past Cold Springs Ranch (on your left). Park about 1/2 mile past the ranch at trailhead on your right. Walk a short distance to Ferris Creek Road. Remember to close gates behind you. Trail is steep in places for about one mile, then levels out. At fork on top of hill, follow dirt road to Ferris Creek and around Strand Hill. Alternatively, at the fork turn left and climb Strand Hill. After two miles of climbing, turn left on singletrack into a meadow and descend through aspen forest for several miles. At the botom, follow the trail right, then left to Brush Creek Road. This hike is 5-6 miles long.

Difficulty: Moderate

Summerville Trail #430 Summerville trail begins in Taylor River Canyon, approximately 1 mile below Lodgepole Campground, and goes through Crystal Creek Drainage to fossil Ridge. The trail is approximately 11 miles long. The area is remote and few people go into it. Steep with switchbacks.

Difficulty: Strenuous

Swampy Pass Trail #439 The trail head is located off Ohio Creek Road (County Rd 730). The trail climbs gradually through aspen and pine overlooking the scenic Ohio Valley and the Castles. 8 miles to Swampy Pass.

Difficulty: Moderate

Timberline Trail #414 This trail starts just below Mirror Lake Campground and crosses the Cottonwood Pass Road 8.5 miles to the north. Both points are accessible by automobile. Timberline Trail offers superb views of Taylor Park.

Difficulty: Moderate

Upper Loop This is a 6 mile hike. Hikers take opposite direction to bikers. From the new school, follow road past gravel mine on Town Ranch to Brush Creek Road. Turn left, then left again on Skyland Drive. Trail continues past gate at Grant Lake and ends on Hunter Hill Road in Mt. Crested Butte. Return down Gothic Road to Crested Butte. Great scenery of the Mountain and Town.

Difficulty: Moderate

Walrod Gulch Loop Starting from the Town of Crested Butte, take Hwy. 135 south 6.8 miles to Cement Creek Road. Turn left and continue on Cement Creek Road for 1.5 miles. Park in turnout at Trail #409 trailhead. Begin trail at #409 trailhead climbing steeply up trail and enjoying forest scenery as well as caves towards your right. At top, take right fork and follow to Walrod Gulch jeep road. Turn right on road and descend to Cement Creek Road. Turn right to return to vehicle. 3 - 4 mile trail.

Difficulty: Moderate

Yule Pass Take Gothic Road north from Crested Butte, past the cemetery. Turn left on Slate River Road and continue for about 9.5 miles to Paradise Divide. Road is steep and narrow at the top. Park at Paradise Divide and hike on jeep road to Yule Pass. You can also hike off-trail to Treasury, Purple or Cinnamon Mountains from Yule Pass Trail. You'll see great views and many wildflowers. 4 miles.

Difficulty: Moderate

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