



Visit Estes Park  
The Destination  
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## How to make the most of your visit to Rocky Mountain National Park this summer

Rocky Mountain National Park was the 3<sup>rd</sup> most visited national park in 2018 and so far, 2019 looks like a repeat. But don't turn back. Here are our best tips for seeing Rocky—and more—on your trip to Estes this summer.

**Go early or go late.** Rocky's busiest time is between 10am and 3pm; as early as 8am the popular Bear Lake Trailhead is full, and by 9:30am road restrictions are going into effect and lines are forming at the entrance stations. Arriving before or after this time period is a very good bet to avoid crowds. Yes, the standard script is to go adventure in the park *then* hang out in town, getting a bite to eat or wandering the shops. But mixing it up has its advantages. The sun's rise or fall as seen from Trail Ridge Road is one.

**Wait it out around town.** Another advantage? Fewer crowds in town. While everyone else is in the park hit Lake Estes (they rent stand up paddle boards, pontoon boats, kayaks and bikes and the mountain view is to die for) or the Open Air Adventure Park. Try your hand at rock climbing, mountain biking, or Estes Park's newest attraction: Kent Mountain Adventure Center's via ferrata. Have a tasty lunch and visit your selection of Estes Park's craft breweries, wineries, patio bars, or the distillery. Wander the shops with a specialty coffee in hand.

**Explore the national forest instead.** Roosevelt National Forest surrounds Estes Park where Rocky does not and affords more, generally less crowded, outdoor opportunities. Dogs are allowed in the national forests, as well as mountain bikes and off-road vehicles. Insider tip: views from the national forest into the national park are spectacular!

**Our most sage advice: make a weekend of it.** Stay overnight in Estes before your big day in the park. Not only will you feel rested for your hike, but waking up in Estes will allow you to get to the park earlier, take the afternoon off to experience Estes Park, then take an evening hike before settling back in on a patio somewhere. At least that's one way to do it. And the more time you spend here, the more time you have to nail your itinerary. Consider staying in the Fall River Road corridor; it is the quieter corner of Estes, is home to the lesser-used entrance to Rocky and is literally in the woods, giving it an "away from it all" feel.

Overall, know these Rocky Mountain National Park facts and consider them when making travel plans:

- The busiest time in the park is between 10am and 3pm. Lines have formed and trailheads will be full as late as 9:30am.
- There is free parking and a shuttle service from the Estes Park Visitor Center. An entrance pass is required to ride.
- You can buy an entrance pass online. Cutting down the amount of time you spend at the entrance gate cuts down the amount of time everyone spends at the entrance gate.
- Lines to speak to park rangers are long. Knowing where you want to go within the park in advance will help you one more line.

*Visit Estes Park's mission: We drive sustainable year-round economic growth by encouraging visitor demand. For more details about VEP go to [VisitEstesPark.com](http://VisitEstesPark.com).*

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