



Visit Estes Park
The Destination
Marketing Organization
VisitEstesPark.com

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Visit Estes Park Fact Sheet

About Estes Park

Just 90 minutes from Denver and nestled at the base of the Rocky Mountains, Estes Park offers seemingly endless activities for outdoor lovers, nature enthusiasts, active couples and families of all sizes. Surrounded on all four sides by nationally protected land, including Rocky Mountain National Park, year-round pursuits fueled by “leg-power” include everything from hiking, horseback riding, fly fishing, wildlife and bird watching, to snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and much more. Estes Park is a year-round destination with more than 100 hotels, motels, lodges, bed and breakfasts, guest ranches, cabins and cottages, condominiums and campgrounds.

Location

Estes Park is located at the base of the Colorado Rocky Mountains, just 70 miles northwest of Denver. Denver International Airport is the closest airport to Estes; and transportation options include rental cars and shuttle service

Weather

Estes Park is a four-season destination, experiencing beautiful springs, summers, falls and winters. The town’s mountain setting provides cool, temperate summers, averaging mid-70s from June through August. The winters see snow, though most days are sunny. The biggest snow months tend to be March and April.

History

Estes Park has been a playground for lovers of the outdoors for thousands of years. The first people to visit the area were ancestors of today’s Native Americans, who hunted big game animals in the area. The Arapahoe and Ute tribes routinely visited Estes Park during the summer months to enjoy the ideal climate.

In October of 1859, Joel Estes made his first hunting trip to the Estes Valley. As a cattle rancher, Estes believed the valley held promise and moved to the town with his family. Others, intrigued by the possibilities of the valley, followed the Estes family and settled the land. In 1864 William Byers, then editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*, named the area in honor of his hosts, Joel Estes and his family. The town of Estes Park then became incorporated in April 1917.

Top Activities

There are a myriad of activities to enjoy year-round in Estes Park including:

- **Hiking & Rock Climbing** – Rocky Mountain National Park and Roosevelt National Forest feature numerous hiking trails, and the mountainous landscape provides ideal sites for rock climbers of all skill levels. Guests can take guided hiking tours, multi-day inn-to-inn trips, or learn to rock climb with one of the world-class experts who call Estes Park home.
- **Biking** – As an annual segment of the USA Pro Challenge Professional Cycling Race route, Estes Park is a perfect place to bike, whether road or mountain. The town features several bike shops that host guided tours, rent bikes for all skill levels, and offer assistance finding trails.
- **Fishing, Fly Fishing, Boating** – Lake Estes, with its spectacular views of the surrounding mountains and valley, features a marina that offers boat rentals from kayaks to pontoon boats, and has a boat launch available for private water craft.
- **Scenic Drives** – In the warmer months (spring through fall), there are several scenic drives throughout Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park, including Trail Ridge Road – the highest continuously paved road peaking at 12,183 ft. Fall River Road also features plenty of stunning mountain and wildlife scenery.
- **Nature Photography Classes, Birding, Wildlife Watching** – Because of its dramatic natural surroundings, Estes Park is home to an abundance of wildlife – including elk mule deer, moose, hawks, eagles and big horn sheep. For optimal wildlife viewing, guests can take a customized wildlife and nature photography tour, head to Rocky Mountain National Park with a set of binoculars, or even stroll the streets of town, where elk are often as comfortable (and visible) as human residents.
- **Snowshoeing & Ice Climbing** – Because Estes Park is not a giant ski resort town, alternative winter sports such as snowshoeing and ice climbing are some of the most popular seasonal activities. Many of the trails and natural areas available to hikers in the warmer months are open to snowshoers in the winter months. Ice climbing is also extremely popular in Estes Park, featuring some of America's best natural ice columns to climb.
- **Horseback Riding** – As part of the authentic feel of the town, horseback rides through Rocky Mountain National Park and some other wooded trails herald back to the Old West. Guests can take guided tours through some of the same trails taken by the original residents of the area.
- **Off-Roading & Jeep Tours** – Guests can enjoy the breathtaking views and exciting landscape of Estes Park on any number of Jeep tours or guided excursions in other off-road vehicles. Offering a

completely different perspective than hiking trails and paved roads, the off-roading excursions are a great way to get an up-close look at parts of nature not always seen on the well-traveled paths.

- **Running** – As with many sports found in Estes Park, several world-class runners live in and visit Estes Park for altitude training. The destination is home to several trail running and triathlon training camps, and the abundance of trails in the area allow guests to train at their personal level.

Key Attractions

- **MacGregor Ranch:** The MacGregor Ranch is the last remaining working cattle ranch in Estes Park. Built in 1873 the MacGregor Ranch is one of few sites operating as both a working ranch and youth education center. It offers a window into the past for guests who can observe horses, ranch hands working the field and cattle grazing the meadow.
- **Baldpate Inn Key Museum:** Named after the mystery novel, *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, the Baldpate Inn opened in 1917. In keeping with the story line of the novel, the proprietors gave each guest to the Inn their very own key. The tradition ended during World War I, but loyal guests returned every year with their own keys from exotic locales around the world, thus creating the world's largest key collection, now boasting more than 20,000 keys including those from the Pentagon, Westminster Abby, Mozart's wine cellar, and even Frankenstein's castle.
- **McGraw Ranch:** The ranch was established in 1884 as a cattle ranch. In 1935 it was converted to a guest ranch before being purchased by the National Park Service decades later. It is the only intact dude ranch in Rocky Mountain National Park and is currently used as a research center by the National Park Service.
- **Park Theatre:** Park Theatre, the oldest operating movie theatre west of the Mississippi River, was built in 1913. The theatre has been renovated and still shows films today. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Estes Park Museum:** The Estes Park Museum was founded by volunteers in 1962. The Museum's purpose is to collect, interpret and preserve local history, as well as to present exhibits, programs and events for the education and benefit of residents and guests of all ages. Admission is free.
- **Hydroplant Museum:** The Hydroplant was built by F.O. Stanley in 1909 to power the Stanley Hotel. The plant now serves as an interpretive center open to the public and features the original equipment installed by Stanley.
- **William Allen White Cabin:** This rustic cabin overlooking Moraine Park in Rocky Mountain National Park was formerly inhabited by newspaper editor William Allen White. It is now the home of Rocky Mountain National Park's Artist-In-Residence Program where artists

can stay and work while visiting Rocky Mountain National Park to gain inspiration.

- **The Observatory:** Opened in 2009, the Observatory has a 16-foot dome which allows guests to enjoy Estes Park's clear, star filled skies and star gaze through a 12-inch computer controlled telescope.

Key Natural Features

- **Rocky Mountain National Park:** Encompassing 415 square miles with more than 350 miles of hiking trails, Rocky Mountain National Park boasts 114 peaks over 10,000 feet high, 700 species of wildflowers and 150 named lakes. Wildlife viewers will see elk, mule deer, moose, bighorn sheep, eagles, hawks and other small animals in the Park.
- **Roosevelt National Forest:** A variety of recreational activities are available here including camping, picnicking, scenic drives, wildlife viewing, hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, rafting, , four-wheel driving, dirt biking, skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, hunting and horseback riding.
- **Bear Lake:** At 9,475 feet, Bear Lake is the most easily accessed alpine lake in Rocky Mountain National Park. Its .65 mile nature trail loop provides close-up views of two of the Park's signature peaks: Hallett and Longs. Hallett Peak is one of the most photographed peaks in all of Rocky Mountain National Park.
- **Longs Peak:** Longs Peak is a particularly distinctive mountain within Rocky Mountain National Park. Towering at more than 14,259 feet, Longs Peak is the tallest mountain in the entire region.
- **Old Man Mountain:** Towering above Fall River and to the west of Estes Park, Old Man Mountain and its breathtaking granite peak now appears on America's list of important 'Sacred Sites'. It stands about 655 feet above the surrounding valleys.
- **Hermit Park:** Located in the Estes Valley, Hermit Park encompasses 1,362 acres. It includes hiking trails, camping grounds and spots for special events.

Family-Friendly Destination

Estes Park is the perfect family vacation destination. In Estes Park, there is no limit to the amount of enjoyable activities that will appeal to the whole family all year long. The area offers many summer activities including horseback riding, 9- and 18-hole golf courses, hiking, fishing, a marina with boat rentals, miniature golf, ziplining, bumper cars, bumper boats, go carts, and more. There are evening shows, classical concerts and free outdoor musical performances nearly every day during summer months. In the winter, families enjoy snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and sledding. There are plenty of lodging options, from affordable to high-end, that can meet every family's needs.

Dining

Fine dining options

- Cascades at the Stanley Hotel
- Chalet Room at Marys Lake Lodge
- Inn of Glen Haven
- Twin Owls Steakhouse

Casual dining options

- Sweet Basilico
- Other Side
- Rock Inn Mountain Tavern
- Mama Rose's
- The Tavern Room at Marys Lake Lodge
- Baldpate Inn (seasonal)

Budget-friendly dining options

- Smokin' Daves BBQ & Taphouse
- Poppy's Pizza & Pub
- Molly B's Restaurant
- Nepals Café
- Claire's on the Park
- Casa Grande
- Ed's Cantina

Signature Annual Events

- **Winter Festival/Winter Trails (January)** – Winter Festival, which saw more than 7,000 attendees in 2013, showcases everything that Estes Park offers in the winter with a wide range of activities including local wine and beer tastings, live music, a chili cook-off, an interactive ice castle and more! Winter Trails Day (held during Winter Festival) draws nearly 1,000 guests annually. Participants have the opportunity to learn all there is to know about snowshoeing and enjoy free snowshoe demonstrations to Ranger-led hikes into Rocky Mountain National Park.
- **JazzFest (May)** – Held the second week of May, JazzFest offers two days of free jazz concerts at the outdoor amphitheater at Performance Park accompanied by a self-guided Art Walk of Estes Park galleries.
- **Wool Market (June)** – Estes Park's Wool Market is one of the largest and longest running all-natural fiber markets in North America focusing on how wool is obtained, prepared, spun and weaved. This event includes shepherding demonstrations, crafts and over 50 booths showcasing homespun wares.
- **Rooftop Rodeo (July)** – As one of Estes Park's most popular events, the Rooftop Rodeo includes bronco riding, steer wrestling, barrel racing and bull riding. The event also features western food, libations and live music – ideal for a western-themed getaway. The rodeo has been voted the "Best Small Rodeo of the Year" five times, and nominated for "Best Medium Size Rodeo" in 2012 and 2013.

- **Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival (September)** – Held the weekend after Labor Day, the Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival celebrates Celtic heritage with a parade, pipe bands, Highland and Irish dance competitions, folk music, International Jousting Championships, nightly concerts and more. The Estes Park festival is the largest in the West.
- **ElkFest (October)** – Premiering the weekend before Columbus Day, ElkFest is a celebration of all things Wapiti, the nearly 2,400 American elk that call Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park their home. Seminars, a bugling contest, elk tours, a Mountain Man encampment, Native American music and dancing, and edible products from elk are all featured.
- **Catch the Glow (November)** – Known for festive holiday décor, Estes Park invites guests to, “Catch the Glow” the day after Thanksgiving each year. The day’s big event is the Catch the Glow Christmas parade, drawing nearly 25,000 spectators from around the region to line Elkhorn Avenue, Estes Park’s main street, to watch the floats go by and ring in the holiday season!

Top Accolades

“Top 25 Destinations in the United States”

- Trip Advisor, 2011, 2010 & 2008 Travelers Choice Awards

“Top Ten America’s Scenic Roads – Trail Ridge Road”

- *Travel + Leisure*, 2011

“Best Colorado Road Trip for Families”

- *Colorado Parent* 2011 & 2012 Family Favorites

“Top 10 Outdoor & Adventure Destinations in the World”

- Trip Advisor, 2010 Travelers Choice Awards

“Outstanding Small Rodeo in US” (Rooftop Rodeo)

- PRCA, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011

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