

# Rocky Mountain National Park & Northern Mountains

## Includes »

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK . . . . .	131
ESTES PARK . . . . .	137
NEDERLAND . . . . .	144
ELDORA SKI AREA . . . . .	144
INDIAN PEAKS WILDERNESS AREA . . . . .	145
FORT COLLINS . . . . .	145
RED FEATHER LAKES . . . . .	150
CACHE LA POUDRÉ RIVER . . . . .	151
GRAND LAKE . . . . .	151
GRANBY . . . . .	154

## Best Places to Eat

- » Wild Mountain Smokehouse & Brewery (p144)
- » Backcountry Provisions (p148)
- » Big Horn Restaurant (p141)
- » Tasty Harmony (p148)

## Best Places to Stay

- » YMCA of the Rockies (p140)
- » Armstrong Hotel (p147)
- » Longs Peak Campground (p135)
- » Stanley Hotel (p140)

## Why Go?

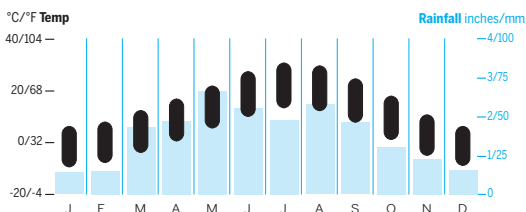
With one foot on either side of the continental divide and behemoths of granite in every direction, Colorado's Northern Mountains allow visitors a glimpse of the top of the world.

With some of the state's most dramatic alpine environments, the northern Rockies make an irresistible call to mountain-lovers, regardless of whether the season calls for mounting them in hiking boots or shushing down on a pair of skis. This is where you come to ski if you'd rather skip the Aspen attitude, go backcountry skiing or just get out on a pair of snowshoes.

In the spring, summer and autumn, hiking and biking in state and national parks and forests continue to draw visitors. Many of the ski resorts transform into groomed mountain-biking areas, and campers make for high-altitude lakes. There's also top-notch fishing, rafting and kayaking, weathered ghost towns, horseback riding, camping and touring the mountains until well after autumn turns the aspens to gold.

## When to Go?

### Estes Park



**June–September** Sunshine, perfect hiking and monstrous thunderheads attract visitors.

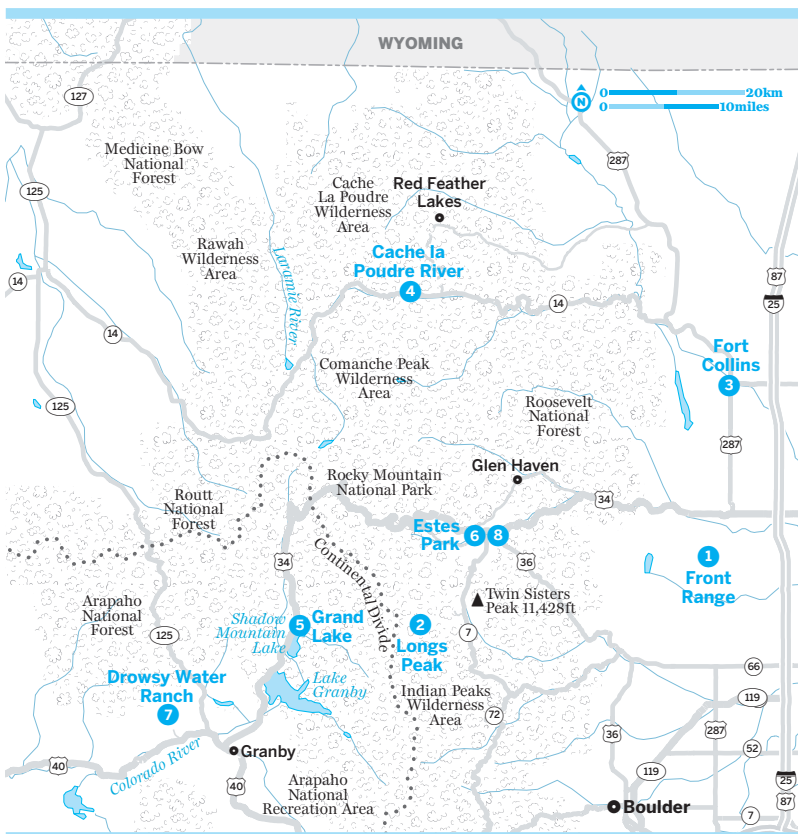
**September–October** Temperatures drop and the tourists vacate. The aspens turn golden.

**November–May** Crisp air and tons of snowfall bring skiers to low-key resort areas.

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Though Rocky Mountain National Park doesn't rank among the largest national parks in the USA (it's *only* 265,000 acres), it's rightly among one of the most popular, hosting 3 million visitors every year.

This is a place of natural spectacle on every scale: from hulking granite formations – many taller than 12,000ft, some over 130 million years old – to the delicate yellow burst of the glacier lily, one of the dozen alpine wildflowers that explode in a short, colorful life at the edge of receding snowfields for a few days every spring.



### Northern Mountains Highlights

- 1 Watch a thunderhead roll over the rugged peaks of the **Front Range**
- 2 Scramble to the top of **Longs Peak** (p133), one of Colorado's proud 14ers
- 3 Ride a cruiser to **New Belgium Brewery** (p147) for a tour and tasting of Colorado microbrew
- 4 Cast a fly for wild trout in the rushing waters of the **Cache la Poudre River** (p151)
- 5 Hike all day before curing up by the fire at **Grand Lake's Shadowcliff Lodge & Retreat Center** (p153)
- 6 Climb the Rockies after some classes from **Colorado Mountain School** (p139)
- 7 Live out the cowboy fantasy ride the range at **Drowsy Water Ranch** (p154)
- 8 Creep yourself out at the **Stanley Hotel** (p140), inspiration for Stephen King's thriller *The Shining*