

Rocky Mountains

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Root Down (p744)
- ➔ Salt (p749)
- ➔ Rickshaw (p798)
- ➔ Pine Creek Cookhouse (p761)
- ➔ Silk Road (p791)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Curtis (p742)
- ➔ Boise Guest House (p796)
- ➔ Chautauqua Lodge (p748)
- ➔ Alpine House (p785)
- ➔ Old Faithful Inn (p781)

Why Go?

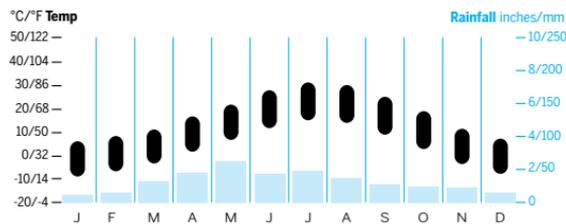
The high backbone of the lower 48, the Rockies are nature on steroids, with rows of snowcapped peaks, rugged canyons and wild rivers running buckshot over the Western states. With its beauty and vitality, it's no wonder that 100 years ago, it beckoned ailing patients with last-ditch hopes for cures.

The healing power of the Rocky Mountains persists. You can choose between tranquility (try Wyoming, the USA's most under-populated state) and adrenaline (measured in vertical drop). Locals love a good frozen, wet or mud-spattered adventure and, with plenty of climbing, skiing and white-water paddling, it's easy to join in. Afterwards, relax by soaking in hot springs under a roof of stars, sipping cold microbrews or feasting farm-to-table style.

Lastly, don't miss the supersized charms of Yellowstone, Rocky Mountain, Grand Teton and Glacier national parks, where the big five (grizzly bears, moose, bison, mountain lions and wolves) still roam wild.

When to Go

Denver



Jun-Aug Long days of sunshine ideal for cycling, hiking, farmers markets and summer festivals.

Sep & Oct Fall foliage coincides with terrific lodging deals.

Jan & Feb Snow dusted peaks, powdery slopes, après-ski parties deluxe.

DON'T MISS

Don a Stetson hat and gallop the sagebrush wilderness of Wyoming or Montana. Guest ranches offer memorable summer rides in the Rockies.

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Hub city** Denver (population 600,000)
- ➔ **Mountains** Colorado has the most summits over 14,000ft in the continental US
- ➔ **Time zone** Mountain (two hours behind NYC)

Did You Know?

Pitch your tent in Yellowstone National Park and you'll be sleeping atop one of the world's largest supervolcanoes. It's active every 640,000 years: an eruption is due soon – give or take 10,000 years.

Resources

- ➔ **Denver Post** (www.denverpost.com) The region's top newspaper
- ➔ **5280** (www.5280.com) Denver's best monthly magazine
- ➔ **Discount Ski Rental** (www.rentskis.com) At major resorts
- ➔ **14ers** (www.14ers.com) Resource for hikers climbing the Rockies' highest summits

Getting There & Around

Denver (DEN) has the only major international airport in the region. Both Denver and Colorado Springs offer flights on smaller planes to Jackson, WY, Boise, ID, Bozeman, MT, Aspen, CO, and other destinations.

Two Amtrak train routes pass through the region. *California Zephyr*, traveling daily between Emeryville, CA and Chicago, IL, has six stops in Colorado, including Denver, Fraser-Winter Park, Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction. *Empire Builder* runs daily from Seattle, WA, or Portland, OR, to Chicago, IL, with 12 stops in Montana (including Whitefish and East and West Glacier) and one stop in Idaho at Sandpoint.

Greyhound travels some parts of the Rocky Mountains. But to really get out and explore you'll need a car.

NATIONAL PARKS

The region is home to some of the USA's biggest national parks. In Colorado, **Rocky Mountain National Park** offers awesome hiking through alpine forests and tundra. There's also the Sahara-like wonder of **Great Sand Dunes National Park** and **Mesa Verde National Park**, an archaeological preserve with elaborate cliff-side dwellings.

Wyoming has **Grand Teton National Park**, with dramatic craggy peaks, and **Yellowstone National Park**, the country's first national park, a true wonderland of volcanic geysers, hot springs and forested mountains. In Montana, **Glacier National Park** features high sedimentary peaks, small glaciers and lots of wildlife, including grizzly bears. Idaho is home to **Hells Canyon National Recreation Area**, where the Snake River carves the deepest canyon in North America. **National Park Service** (NPS; www.nps.gov) also manages over two dozen other historic sites, monuments, nature preserves and recreational areas in Idaho.

Best in Outdoor Instruction

With plenty of wilderness and tough terrain, the Rockies are a natural school for outdoor skills, and a perfect place to observe nature in action.

- ➔ **Chicks with Picks** (p766) Fun ice-climbing clinics for women, by women.
- ➔ **Yellowstone Institute** (www.yellowstoneassociation.org) Study wolves, ecology or arts with experts in the park.
- ➔ **Teton Science Schools Ecology** (p784) Best for kids; both about nature and experiencing it.
- ➔ **Colorado Mountain School** (p753) Climb a peak safely or learn belay skills.