

Rocky Mountains

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Best Places to Eat

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- ➔ Rickshaw (p298)
- ➔ Sweet Melissa's (p273)
- ➔ Silk Road (p291)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Curtis (p239)
- ➔ Boise Guest House (p296)
- ➔ Chautauqua Lodge (p246)
- ➔ Alpine House (p275)
- ➔ Old Faithful Inn (p282)

Why Go?

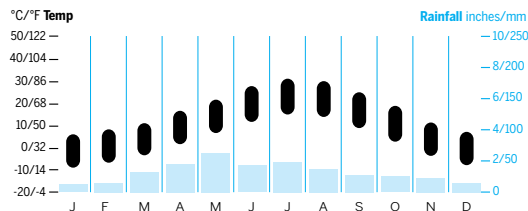
The high backbone of the lower 48, the Rockies are nature on steroids, with rows of snowcapped peaks, rugged canyons and wild rivers running buckshot over the western states. With its beauty and vitality, it's no wonder that 100 years ago, this region beckoned ailing patients with last-ditch hopes for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

The healing power of the Rocky Mountains persists. You can choose between tranquillity (try Wyoming, the USA's least-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 super-sized 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 for biking, hiking, farmers markets and summer festivals.

Sep & Oct Fall foliage coincides with terrific lodging deals.

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

History

Before the late 18th century, when French trappers and Spaniards stepped in, the Rocky Mountain area was a land of many tribes, including the Nez Percé, the Shoshone, the Crow, the Lakota and the Ute.

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark claimed enduring fame after the USA bought almost all of present-day Montana, Wyoming and eastern Colorado in the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. Their epic survey covered 8000 miles in three years. Their success urged on other adventurers, setting migration in motion. Wagon trains voyaged to the Rockies right into the 20th century, only temporarily slowed by the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad across southern Wyoming in the late 1860s.

To accommodate settlers, the US purged the western frontier of the Spanish, the British and, in a truly shameful era, most of the Native American population. The gov-

ernment signed endless treaties to defuse Native American objections to increasing settlement but always reneged and shunted tribes onto smaller reservations. Gold-miners' incursions into Native American territory in Montana and the building of US Army forts along the Bozeman Trail ignited a series of wars with the Lakota, Cheyenne, Arapaho and others.

Gold and silver mania preceded Colorado's entry to statehood in 1876. Statehood soon followed for Montana (1889), Wyoming (1890) and Idaho (1890). Miners, white farmers and ranchers were the people with power in the late 19th century.

Mining, grazing and timber played major roles in regional economic development, sparking growth in financial and industrial support. They also subjected the region to boom-and-bust cycles by unsustainable resource management.

ROCKY MOUNTAINS IN...

Two Weeks

Start your Rocky Mountain odyssey in the **Denver** area. Go tubing, vintage-clothes shopping or biking in outdoor-mad, boho **Boulder**, then soak up the liberal rays eaves-dropping at a sidewalk cafe. Enjoy the vistas of the **Rocky Mountain National Park** before heading west on I-70 to play in the mountains around **Breckenridge**, which also has some of the best beginner slopes in Colorado. Go to ski and mountain-bike mecca **Steamboat Springs** before crossing the border into Wyoming.

Get a taste of prairie-town life in **Laramie**, then stop in **Lander**, rock-climbing destination extraordinaire. Continue north to chic **Jackson** and the majestic **Grand Teton National Park** before hitting iconic **Yellowstone National Park**. Save at least three days for exploring this geyser-packed wonderland.

Cross the state line into 'big sky country' and slowly make your way northwest through Montana, stopping in funky **Bozeman** and lively **Missoula** before visiting **Flathead Lake**. Wrap up your trip in Idaho, exploring Basque culture in up-and-coming **Boise**.

One Month

With a month on your hands, you can really delve into the region's off-the-beaten-path treasures. Follow the two-week itinerary, but dip southwest in Colorado – a developing wine region – before visiting Wyoming. Ride the 4WD trails around **Ouray**. Be sure to visit **Mesa Verde National Park** and its ancient cliff dwellings.

In Montana, you'll want to get lost backpacking in the **Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex** and visit **Glacier National Park** before the glaciers disappear altogether. In Idaho, spend more time playing in **Sun Valley** and be sure to explore the shops, pubs and yummy organic restaurants in delightful little **Ketchum**. With a one-month trip, you also have time to drive along a few of Idaho's fantastically remote scenic byways. Make sure you cruise Hwy 75 from Sun Valley north to **Stanley**. Situated on the wide banks of the Salmon River, this stunning mountain hamlet is completely surrounded by national forestland and wilderness areas. Stanley is also blessed with world-class trout fishing and mild to wild rafting.

Take **Hwy 21** (the Ponderosa Pine Scenic Byway) from Stanley to Boise. This scenic drive takes you through miles of dense ponderosa forests and past some excellent, solitary riverside camping spots – some of which come with their own natural hot-springs pools.