



## CO-OP JOURNAL

STORIES OF A LIFE OUTDOORS  [\(https://www.rei.com/blog\)](https://www.rei.com/blog)

[HOME \(HTTPS://WWW.REI.COM/BLOG\)](https://www.rei.com/blog) >

[HIKE \(HTTPS://WWW.REI.COM/BLOG/ACTIVITY/HIKE\)](https://www.rei.com/blog/activity/hike)

RATE THIS STORY:

# TOP TRAILS AND ALES IN COLORADO

2 VOTES SO FAR

[ERIC SMITH \(HTTPS://WWW.REI.COM/BLOG/BIO/ERIC-SMITH\)](https://www.rei.com/blog/bio/eric-smith) //

### **A taste of the Centennial State's best craft brews and backcountry hikes**

Colorado is a beer lover's mecca. The state boasts 284 craft breweries, or 7.3 breweries per 100,000 residents of legal drinking age, ranking third in the U.S., according to the [Brewers Association's](https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics/by-state/?state=CO) most recent data (<https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics/by-state/?state=CO>). And its seemingly infinite backcountry is overflowing with numerous trails that begin just around the bend or down a dusty road from many of those breweries.

Below are some of Colorado's best trails and ales. But because the list represents only a fraction of what's out there, consider it a sampler pack, a flight, a mere taster tray that should inspire you to further explore our broader offerings. Venture throughout the state in search of great hikes. And bottoms up as you raise a glass of Colorado craft beer to toast the adventures just completed—and the ones yet to come.

# Mountain Sun Pub and Brewery: Boulder

Picking a favorite Boulder brewery is like picking a favorite child or dog. You love them all equally. But there's a lot to love about the always packed Mountain Sun Pub and Brewery (<http://mountainsunpub.com/>), which has been serving up good beer, good food, and good vibes since 1993. This Pearl Street institution is one of the closest breweries to Boulder's best hikes, and sipping a Colorado Kind Ale, FYIPA, or other tasty selection paired with a bison burger (Insider tip: on a pretzel bun!) is an apt reward for summiting a nearby peak.

**[Mount Sanitas Loop]** Just as breweries abound in Boulder, so do trails. One of the most popular is Mount Sanitas, a 3.2-mile loop (<https://www.hikingproject.com/trail/7000000/mount-sanitas-loop>) steep enough to warrant a cold brew afterward but close enough to knock out after work. Interesting etymological note: The peak is named for the Boulder Sanitarium and therefore the correct pronunciation (<https://bouldercolorado.gov/osmp/cultural-resources-sanitas-hike>) is *SAN-eh-tas* (emphasis on the first syllable), not *san-EE-tis*.



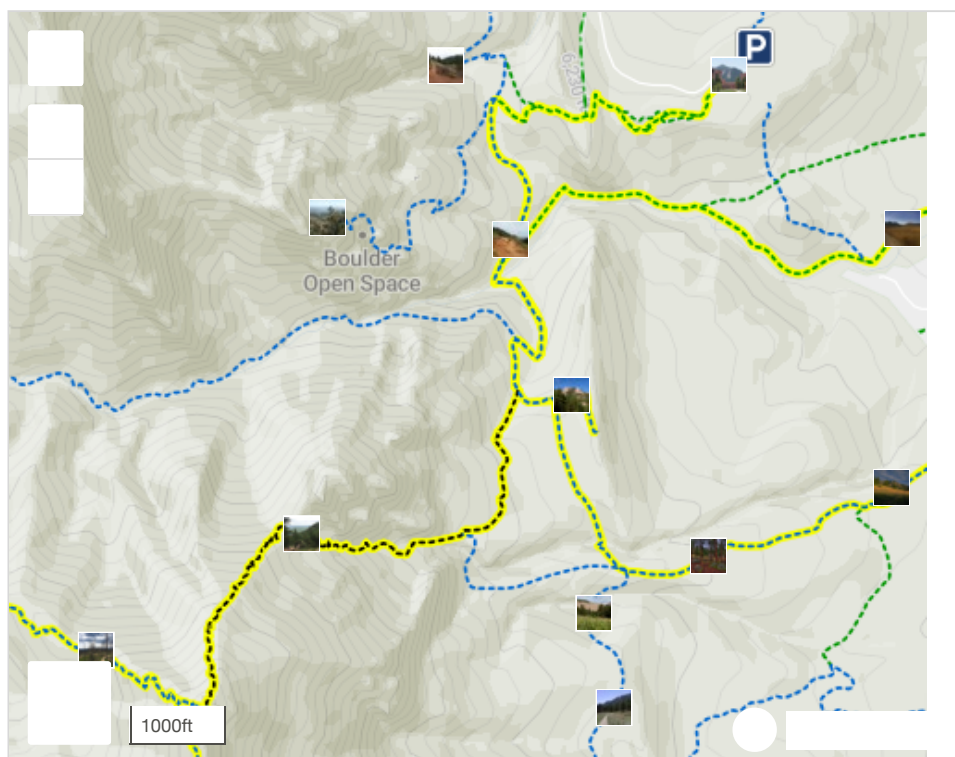
*Dog tired on the Summit, Mount Sanitas, Boulder / Photo: Sandy Smith*

**[Bear Peak]** Closer to Mountain Sun's sister pub, [Southern Sun Pub and Brewery](http://mountainsunpub.com/locations.php) (<http://mountainsunpub.com/locations.php>), the 5.7-mile-long hike to Bear Peak is one of the top-rated in all of Colorado. The 2,649 feet of elevation gain lead to sweeping views of Pikes Peak, Longs



Peak, Lyons, and Fort Collins on a clear day. It's a "must-do hike for Boulder locals and visitors alike," according to Hiking Project editor [Brian Smith](#)

(<http://www.hikingproject.com/user/7001191/brian-smith>).



### Bear Peak

★★★★★ Boulder, CO



5.7 mi  
Length

2,649 ft  
Ascent

-2,649 ft  
Descent

"A must-do hike for Boulder locals and visitors alike!"

Details at

# Broken Compass Brewing: Breckenridge

After exploring the Summit County backcountry, set your coordinates for [Broken Compass Brewing Co.](#) (<http://www.brokencompassbrewing.com/>) and then get lost—the brewery's tagline—in its wide array of brews. All the pours are worth a taste, but top choices include the award-winning Ginger Pale Ale (which took silver in the Herb and Spice Beer category at the 2016 Great American Beer Festival), the signature Coconut Porter, and the Chili Pepper Pale Ale. Breckenridge has many après hiking locales, but there's no better place to get your bearings than Broken Compass.

**[Mohawk Lakes]** The out-and-back [Mohawk Lakes Trail](#)

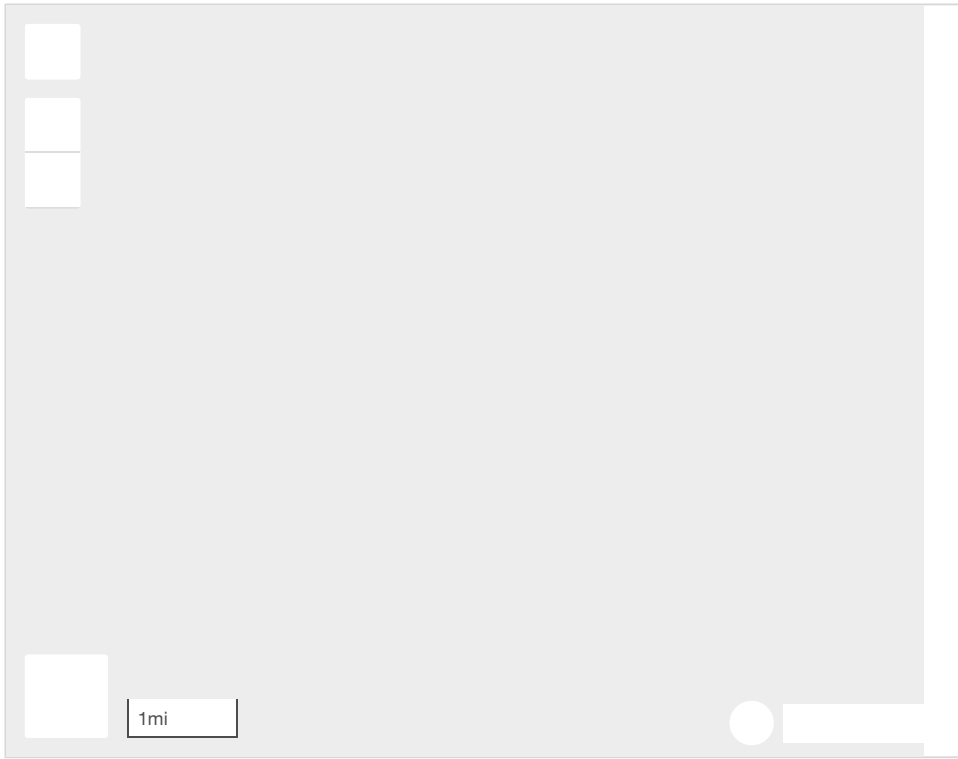
(<https://www.hikingproject.com/trail/7006806>) takes hikers past three lakes: Mayflower, Lower Mohawk, and Upper Mohawk, as well as the cabins and equipment of an old, deserted gold mine. Hiking Project staffer [Tom Robson](#) (<http://www.hikingproject.com/user/5907560/tom-robson>) says Mohawk Lakes Trail is "a fairly easy hike providing awesome views from a high alpine lake."



*Mohawk Lakes / Photo: Sandy Smith*

**[Peaks Trail]** Popular with mountain bikers and hikers, the eight-mile Peaks Trail connecting Frisco and Breckenridge is a perfect trek along the Tenmile Range before après festivities commence.





**Peaks Trail**

★★★★★ Frisco, CO

	8.0 mi Length	1,213 ft Ascent	-307 ft Descent
---	------------------	--------------------	--------------------

“A popular trail for good reasons. It's a rolling forested trail with diverse...”

[Details at](#)

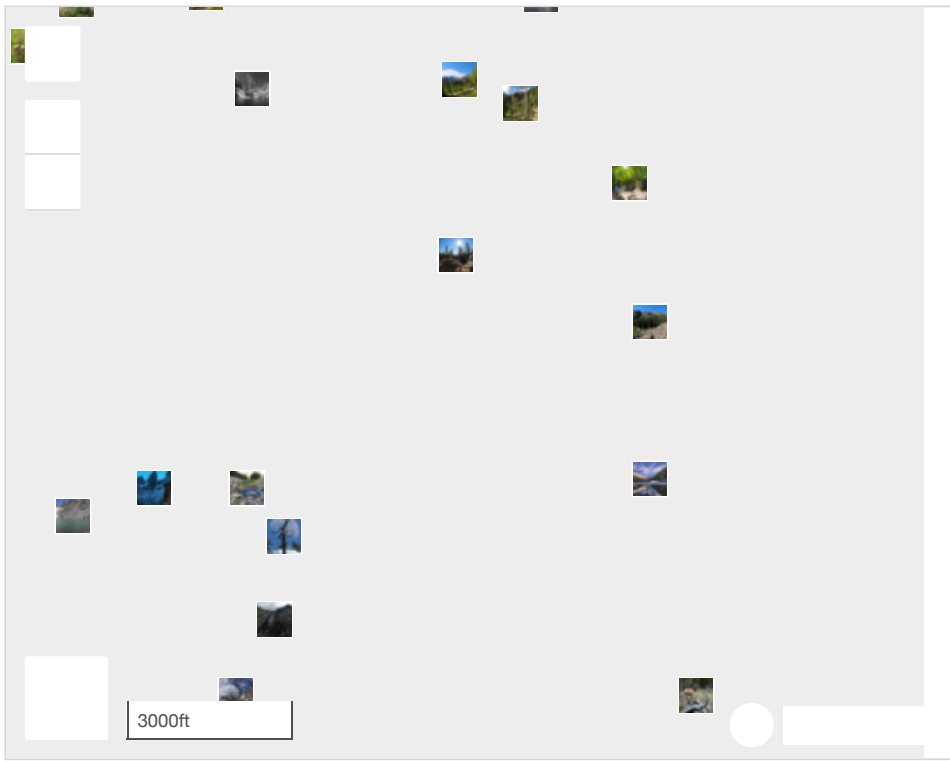
# Rock Cut Brewing: Estes Park

After hiking in neighboring Rocky Mountain National Park, head to Estes Park’s Rock Cut Brewing Co. (<http://www.rockcutbrewing.com/>), one of a few craft breweries in this gateway to many of Colorado’s top trails, to revel in and recap the day’s explorations. Ample outdoor seating provides good views of surrounding mountains and makes a picturesque setting for enjoying a Kind Coffee Cascadian Ale, which Rock Cut brews by adding Kind Coffee to its Black IPA.



*Rock Cut Brewing, Estes Park / Photo: Sandy Smith*

**[Sky Pond]** Rated the third-best hike in Colorado, the hike to Sky Pond takes you along a canyon, through heavy woods, and eventually to Timberline Falls and two alpine lakes. Beware as it's "a little longer than suggested on the app, but a phenomenal hike nonetheless," says Hiking Project user [Alex Hagen](https://www.hikingproject.com/user/7109172/alex-hagen) (<https://www.hikingproject.com/user/7109172/alex-hagen>). But "the scramble is just challenging enough and the views are great."



### Sky Pond

★★★★★ Estes Park, CO



8.3 mi  
Length

2,000 ft  
Ascent

-1,999 ft  
Descent

“Sky Pond is in a deep valley carved by Taylor Glacier and capped by Taylor an...”

Details at

# Telluride Brewing: Telluride

On the edge of this box canyon ski town, just off of Highway 145 and tucked away in a strip mall, Telluride Brewing Co. (<http://www.telluridebrewingco.com/>) attracts the area’s hardest adventurers after a day on the trails. Its Bridal Veil Rye Pale Ale is the perfect post-hike beer, while Tempter is one of the best IPAs in Colorado. Face Down Brown took home Bronze at the 2016 Great American Beer Festival in the American-Style Brown Ale category.

**[Telluride Trail]** Hike up and back down this trail (<https://www.hikingproject.com/trail/7018681/telluride-trail>) that doubles as a blue ski run in winter, or take the gondola up and just hike down. Before your descent, however, stop for some panoramic photos of Telluride below and the jagged peaks in every direction.

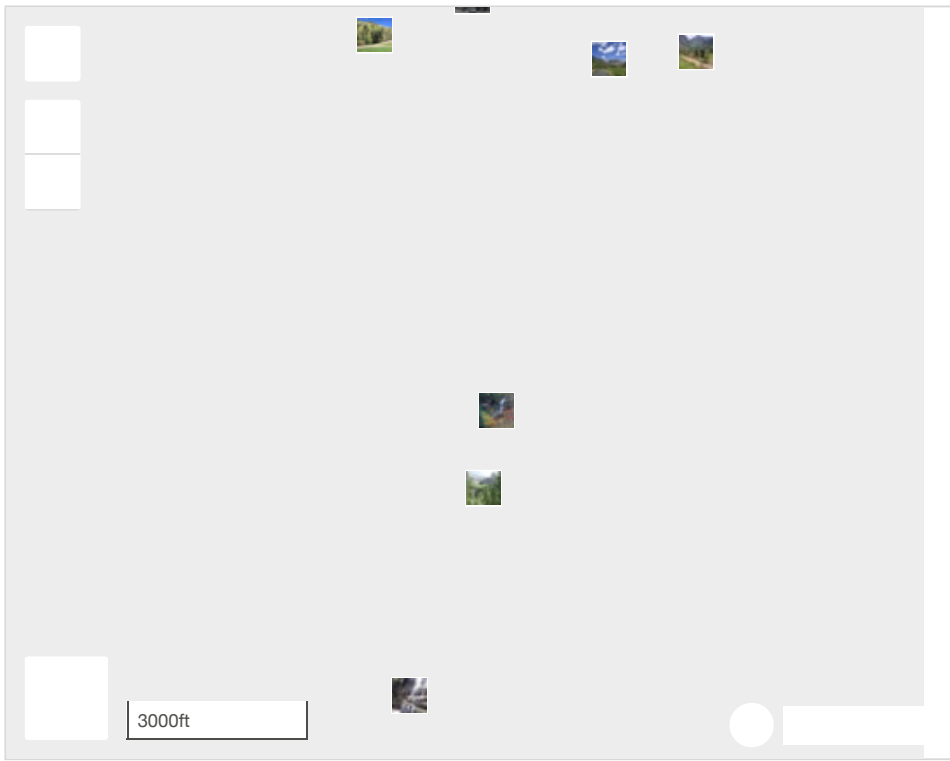




*Telluride Trail / Photo: Sandy Smith*

**[Bear Creek Falls]** An essential falls destination in Telluride, the trail also leads to other hikes, including Ballard Mountain, La Junta Basin, [Wasatch Trail #508](https://www.hikingproject.com/trail/7011507/wasatch-trail-508) (<https://www.hikingproject.com/trail/7011507/wasatch-trail-508>) and Gold Hill, among others.





### Bear Creek Falls

★★★★★ Telluride, CO



4.7 mi  
Length

1,076 ft  
Ascent

-1,076 ft  
Descent

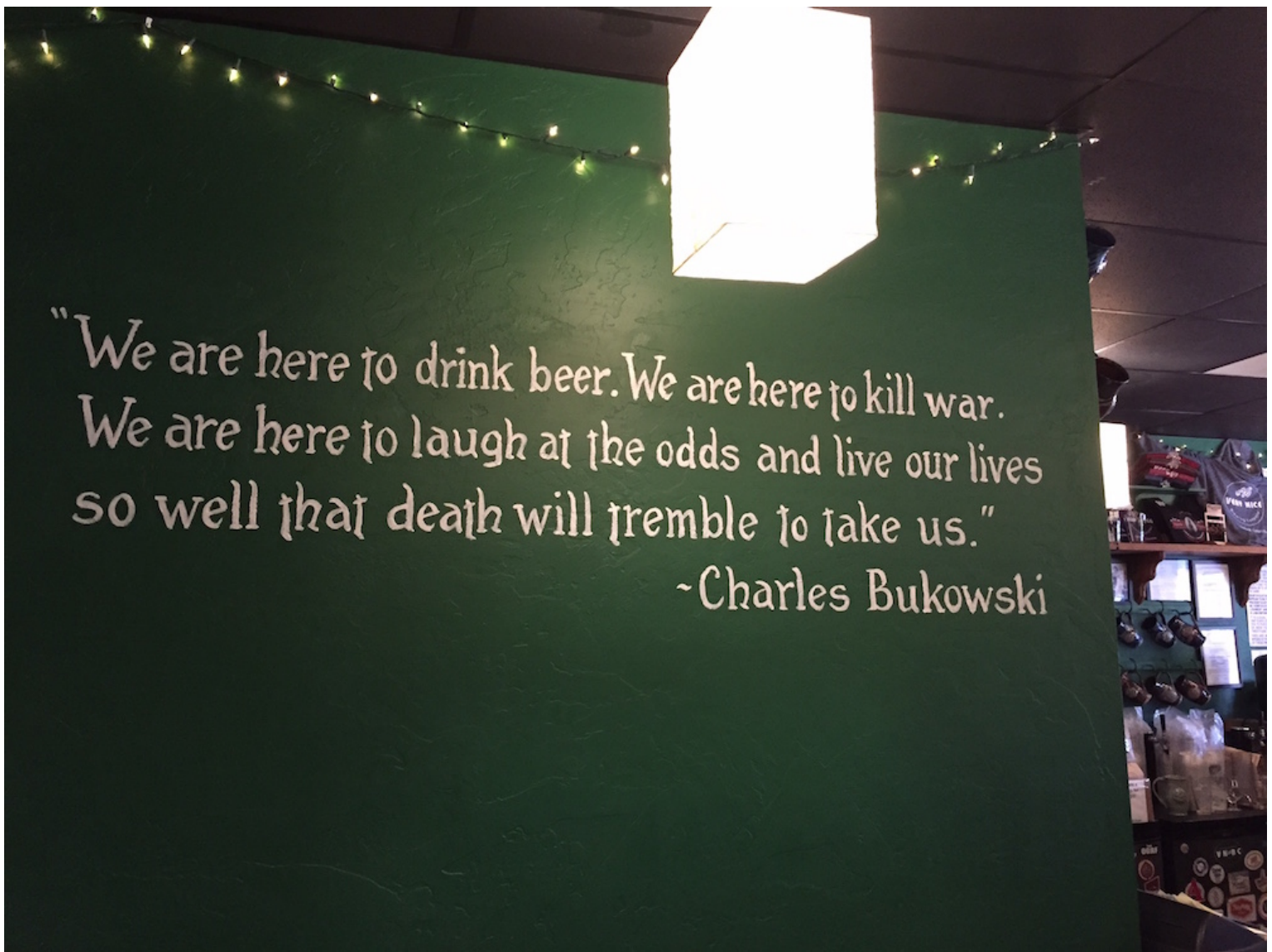
"This quick route gives a true taste of Telluride and it's breathtaking landsc..."

Details at

# Very Nice Brewing: Nederland

"We are here to drink beer. We are here to kill war. We are here to laugh at the odds and live our lives so well that death will tremble to take us." This Charles Bukowski quote adorns a wall behind the bar at Nederland's [Very Nice Brewing Co.](http://www.verynicebrewing.com/), which is indeed the ideal spot to drink beer and live well whether you hiked nearby [Indian Peaks Wilderness](https://www.hikingproject.com/directory/8007427/indian-peaks-wilderness) or paid homage to Grandpa Bredo during Ned's signature event, [Frozen Dead Guy Days](http://frozendeadduydays.org/).





*Very Nice Brewing / Photo: Sandy Smith*

**[High Lonesome Loop]** A long hike (16.5 miles) with plenty of vertical (3,353 feet), [High Lonesome Loop](https://www.hikingproject.com/trail/7006795/high-lonesome-loop) (<https://www.hikingproject.com/trail/7006795/high-lonesome-loop>) begins at the Hessie trailhead and is a "backcountry trail providing the best of high alpine hiking, with stunning views along the Divide," says Hiking Project user [Tiffanie Beal](https://www.hikingproject.com/user/7017631/tiffanie-beal) (<https://www.hikingproject.com/user/7017631/tiffanie-beal>).

**[Arapaho Glacier Trail]** Access the popular Arapaho Glacier Trail by heading a few miles up the Peak to Peak Highway from Nederland and going west toward Rainbow Lakes Trailhead.





Recommend Share

Sort by Oldest



Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS ?

Name

Be the first to comment.

Subscribe Add Disqus to your site Add Disqus Add Privacy

Yosemite National Park

HOME (HTTPS://WWW.REI.COM/BLOG) >

SNOWSPORTS (HTTPS://WWW.REI.COM/BLOG/ACTIVITY/SNOWSPORTS)

RATE THIS STORY:

3 VOTES SO FAR

# WHY YOU SHOULD VISIT A NATIONAL PARK THIS WINTER

CAITLIN MORAN (HTTPS://WWW.REI.COM/BLOG/BIO/CAITLIN-MORAN) // JANUARY 5, 2018

HOME (HTTPS://WWW.REI.COM/BLOG) >

SNOWSPORTS (HTTPS://WWW.REI.COM/BLOG/ACTIVITY/SNOWSPORTS)

Think national parks are just a

summer thing? Think again. Sure, access is limited in some places and the weather can be unpredictable, but those who venture into the parks during the winter months are typically rewarded with thinner crowds, abundant lodging options and a wilderness experience that feels more, well ... wild.

Here are a few reasons to pack your warmest puffy and get out there this winter:

## Try a winter-only activity

Our national parks have more to offer than just hiking and camping (although those are still options in many places). If you're ready to get your winter wonderland on, grab your skis or snowshoes and head to [Olympic National Park's Hurricane Ridge](https://www.nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/hurricane-ridge-in-winter.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/hurricane-ridge-in-winter.htm>).

Olympic is one of only three national parks with ski areas, the other two being Yosemite and Cuyahoga Valley in Ohio. With just 10 runs and 800 feet of vertical, the nonprofit [Hurricane Ridge Ski and Snowboard Area](https://hurricaneridge.com/) (<https://hurricaneridge.com/>) isn't a destination for big resort skiers. But a steady stream of local regulars and outside visitors are drawn to the ridge's laid-back atmosphere and the access it provides to the park's rugged backcountry terrain.



*Olympic National Park in Washington is one of only three national parks with ski areas. (Photo Credit: Caitlin Moran)*



“There are pro snowboarders with their kids and hillbilly loggers,” says Frank Crippen, who runs the ski school. “It’s very eclectic.”

From the ski area’s main rope tow, backcountry skiers and snowboards can traverse out along the ridge and enjoy views that stretch across the Strait of Juan de Fuca into Canada, before dropping in on one of dozens of lines back to the main road. Huff it back up to the parking lot, or [hitch a ride with William H. Nelson](#) (<http://www.goallpoints.com/index.html>) (yes, that’s his real name), a silver-bearded shuttle bus driver who schleps skiers and their gear back up the hill in exchange for tips. For an extended tour, the two- to three-day [ski traverse between Hurricane Ridge and Deer Park](#) (<http://www.nwhikers.net/forums/viewtopic.php?p=1039831>) is a Northwest classic.



*Seattle skier Michael Houston takes a backcountry lap in Olympic National Park, just beyond the boundary of Hurricane Ridge Ski Area. A rope-tow ride and ridge traverse connect those with the proper experience and equipment to dozens of backcountry runs. (Photo Credit: Caitlin Moran)*

Not into skiing? Many national parks, including [Olympic](https://www.nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/ranger-led-programs.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/ranger-led-programs.htm>) and [Yosemite](https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/interp.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/interp.htm>), offer ranger-led snowshoe walks during the winter months. Or, for a real winter treat, check out the [ice-skating rink at Yosemite’s Half Dome](#)



**Village** (<http://www.travelyosemite.com/winter/half-dome-village-ice-skating-rink/>). A tradition since 1928, the rink is open from mid-November to mid-March, weather permitting. Between laps, warm up at the campfire with a hot cocoa.

## See familiar places in a new light

Yosemite's massive glacier-carved valley is a breathtaking sight in any season, but it's only the off-season visitors who get to see Half Dome and El Cap dusted in winter white. Winter also brings a better chance of spotting bobcats and other animals that generally stay hidden during the warmer months.

"It's quiet, it's beautiful, there's great wildlife viewing, and it's very peaceful," says Scott Gediman, a Yosemite ranger and spokesman.



*A dusting of snow covers Yosemite Valley as seen from Valley View in the early morning during the winter. Yosemite National Park, California.*

Many of the campgrounds in the valley stay open year-round, and snow is generally only a concern at higher elevations, according to Gediman. Some of the park's waterfalls—including 594-foot **Nevada Falls** (<https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/vernalnevadatrail.htm>)—run year-round and will partially freeze if the temperatures drop low enough.



Closed roadways around Yosemite, meanwhile, become a playground for cross-country skiers (<https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/upload/badger-winter.pdf>). Beginners will enjoy the groomed trail that follows Glacier Point Road, and experienced skiers can follow one of three trails for 10 miles to Ostrander Lake, where a snack bar is converted into an overnight ski hut (<https://www.yosemiteconservancy.org/facilities-reservation>) during the winter months.



*Oak in the Yosemite Valley and Half Dome in winter, Yosemite National Park, California.*

## **Find R&R amid thinner crowds**

Spend a summer weekend in one of America's more popular national parks, and you'll soon discover how exhausting it can be to fight traffic and navigate through the sea of selfie sticks on crowded trails. If you're looking for rest and relaxation, the off-season is a much better time to visit.

Take Acadia National Park, located along Maine's rugged Atlantic coastline. In the summertime, the park typically sees around 500,000 visitors per month. December through March, that number drops below 20,000.





*Jordan Pond, Acadia National Park, Maine.*

Snowfall closes many of the roads through Acadia, but several of the park's main attractions remain accessible (<https://www.nps.gov/acad/planyourvisit/winteractivities.htm>) for those willing to strap on snowshoes or cross-country skis. One potential destination: Cadillac Mountain (<https://www.hikingproject.com/trail/7007383/cadillac-north-ridge-trail>), a drive-up attraction in summer that turns into a (much quieter) 2- to 4-mile hike or snowshoe come winter. Many of the businesses and attractions in adjacent Bar Harbor remain open year-round, and visitors turn out for annual events like the Winter Beer Fest (<http://www.barharborinfo.com/Events/Bar-Harbor-Winter-Beer-Fest.aspx>) and Village Holidays celebration.

Back at Olympic, the park's expansive coastline—accessible year-round but busiest in summer—becomes a backpacker's paradise for those who wait for a dry weather window. Or you can watch the storms roll in from a room at the cozy Kalaloch Lodge (<https://www.thekalalochlodge.com/stay/main-lodge>) and explore the tide pools at nearby Beach 4.





© 2017 RECREATIONAL EQUIPMENT, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REI AND THE REI CO-OP LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS OF RECREATIONAL EQUIPMENT, INC.

