

Kaiyote Tours

Backpacking Backcountry Sites

These are a few of our favorite places to camp. There are many more options. The park has over 120 locations for backcountry sites. There are more than 300 total backcountry sites available.

These descriptions are based on a 3 day/2 night trip when we have a day in the middle to day hike from camp. If you are booking a 2 day/1 night trip, then there may not be enough time to hike to the day hike destination in the description.

Eastside sites originate in Estes Park
Westside sites originate in Grand Lake

You can choose a location on either side of Rocky Mountain National Park whether you are staying in Estes Park or Grand Lake

Mummy Range Area (east side)

1) Golden Banner: This site is a 2.5 mile hike in and is located at 9,620 feet. It is a 1,120 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Golden Banner site, we can day hike to Lawn Lake. From this site it is a 4 mile hike to Lawn Lake and the lake is at 10,987 feet. The Golden Banner site is located at the edge of the Roaring River between the willows in the river bed and the pines of the forest. It is a sunny location.

2) Lawn Lake: This site is a 6.2 mile hike in and is located at 10,987 feet. It is a 2,477 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Lawn Lake site, we can day hike 1.6 miles to Crystal Lakes at 11,500 feet. Beyond there we can continue hiking up to The Saddle at 12,398 feet. The Saddle is alpine tundra and is the low area that is in between Fairchild Mountain (13,502 feet) and Hagues Peak (13,560 feet). The Lawn Lake site is located at the base of Mummy Mountain (13,425 feet) near the lake in the pines. This is a good area to see Big Horn Sheep. This site has dramatic views of the lake and the surrounding mountains. If you are interested in summiting big peaks, this area is a good place to camp. All the peaks in this description can be hiked up.

Wild Basin Area (east side)

1) Campers Creek: This site is a 2.3 mile hike in and is located at 9,600 feet. It is a 1,288 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Campers Creek site, we can day hike to Sandbeach Lake. From this site it is a 1.1 mile hike to Sandbeach Lake and the lake is at 10,283 feet. From Sandbeach Lake, we can hike an additional 1.2 miles to the Orton Ridge. The ridge is above the trees and is alpine tundra at an elevation of 11,524 feet. The Campers Creek site is located in the pine forest and at the edge of Campers Creek.

2) Beaver Mill: This site is a 3 mile hike in and is located at 9,640 feet. It is a 1,328 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Beaver Mill site, we can day hike to

Sandbeach Lake. From this site it is a 1.1 mile hike to Sandbeach and the lake is at 10,283 feet. From Sandbeach Lake, we can hike an additional 1.2 miles to the Orton Ridge. The ridge is above the trees and is alpine tundra at an elevation of 11,524 feet. The Beaver Mill site is located in the pine forest and at the edge of Hunters Creek.

3) Sandbeach Lake: This site is a 4.2 mile hike in and is located at 10,283 feet. It is a 1,971 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Sandbeach Lake site, we can hike an additional 1.2 miles to the Orton Ridge. The ridge is above the trees and is alpine tundra at an elevation of 11,524 feet. If you are interested in summiting Chiefs Head Peak (13,576 feet), it is an additional 3.6 miles from Sandbeach Lake. The Sandbeach Lake site is located in the pine forest and near the lake.

4) North St. Vrain: This site is a 3.5 mile hike in and is located at 9,560 feet. It is a 1,060 foot elevation gain to the site. From the St Vrain site, we can day hike to either Thunder Lake (3.3 miles and located at 10,574 feet) or to Ouzel Lake (2 miles and located at 10,020 feet) The St. Vrain site is located in the pine forest and near the St Vrain River.

5) Ouzel Lake: This site is a 4.9 mile hike in and is located at 10,020 feet. It is a 1,520 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Ouzel Lake site, we can day hike to Bluebird Lake. From this site it is a 2 mile hike to Bluebird Lake and the lake is at 10,978 feet. It is a very beautiful place to camp and one of our favorites. If you are interested in summiting Mount Copeland, it is an additional 2.7 miles to the summit at 13,176 feet.

6) Upper Ouzel Creek: This site is a 5.6 mile hike in and is located at 10,600 feet. It is a 2,478 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Upper Ouzel Creek site, we can day hike to Bluebird Lake. From this site it is a .7 mile hike to Bluebird Lake and the lake is at 10,978 feet. An additional .9 miles past Bluebird Lake, is Pipit Lake at 11,420 feet. An additional .6 miles past Pipit Lake, is Isolation Lake at 11,980 feet. It is possible to summit both Isolation Peak and Mahana Peak from the Upper Ouzel site. From the site it is 2.3 – 2.5 miles to Isolation Peak (13,118) and/or Mahana Peak (12,632 feet). The Upper Ouzel Creek site is located in the pines and has great views of the Copeland Ridge across the creek drainage.

7) Thunder Lake: This site is a 6.8 mile hike in and is located at 10,574 feet. It is a 2,074 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Thunder Lake site, we can day hike 1 mile to the Boulder-Grand Pass at 12,061 feet. The Boulder-Grand Pass is alpine tundra and is the low area that is in between Tanima Peak (12,420 feet) and Mount Alice (13,310 feet). This site has dramatic views of the lake and the surrounding mountains. If you are interested in summiting big peaks, this area is a good place to camp. All the peaks in this description can be hiked up. The Thunder Lake site is located in the pines just a short walk from the lake.

8) Pear Lake: This site is either a 4.5 or 6.6 mile hike in depending on the route. The shorter mileage is the more challenging route. Pear Lake is located at 10,582 feet. It is a 2,112 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Pear site, there is a

series of three lakes known as the Hutcheson Lakes. The lakes are located .8 – 1.6 miles from Pear Lake and the highest one is located at 11,180 feet. The Pear Lake site is located in the pines just a short walk from the lake. There are great views of the mountains from Pear Lake.

Bear Lake Area (east side)

1) Boulder Brook: This site is a 3.9 mile hike in and is located at 10,200 feet. It is a 960 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Boulder Brook site, we can day hike to Granite Pass, the Boulderfield, the Keyhole or the Chasm Lake overlook along the Longs Peak trail. It is a 2.7 – 4.9 mile hike to the various locations of Granite Pass (12,060 feet), the Boulderfield (12,760 feet), the Keyhole (13,160 feet) or the Chasm Lake overlook (13,100 feet). It is also possible to summit Mount Lady Washington (13,281 feet) or Storm Peak (13,326 feet) from this location. From the Boulder Brook site, it is a 5.9 mile hike to the summit of Longs Peak (14,259 feet). The Boulder Brook site is located in the pines near Boulder Brook. There are great views of the Mummy Range and the continental divide from Boulder Brook.

East Inlet Area (west side)

1) Slickrock: This site is a 6 mile hike in and is located at 10,000 feet. It is a 1,609 foot elevation gain to the site. The Slickrock site is located .6 miles past Lone Pine Lake on the East Inlet Trail. From the Slickrock site, we can day hike .9 miles to Lake Verna (10,280 feet) and an additional .8 miles to Spirit Lake (10,300 feet). This is a good area to see moose. The Slickrock site is located in the pine forest.

2) Lake Verna: This site is a 6.9 mile hike in and is located at 10,280 feet. It is a 1,809 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Lake Verna site, we can day hike .8 miles to Spirit Lake (10,300 feet), an additional .6 miles to Fourth Lake (10,380 feet) and then an additional .9 miles to Fifth Lake (10,860 feet). This is a good area to see moose. The Lake Verna site is located in the pine forest near the edge of the lake.

North Inlet Area (west side)

1) Big Pool: This site is a 5 mile hike in and is located at 9,160 feet. It is a 620 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Big Pool site, we can day hike 2.6 miles to the North Inlet Falls (9,480 feet). The Big Pool site is located in the pine forest near the North Inlet Pool.

2) Pine Marten: This site is a 7.8 mile hike in and is located at 9,560 feet. It is a 1,020 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Pine Marten site, we can day hike 2.5 miles to Lake Nakoni (10,780 feet) and an additional .8 miles to Lake Nanita (10,780 feet). The Pine Marten site is located in the pine forest near the edge of the North Inlet Creek.

Tonahutu Area (west side)

1) South Meadow: This site is a 2.4 mile hike in and is located at 9,450 feet. It is a 640 foot elevation gain to the site. From the South Meadow site, we can day hike 3 miles to Granite Falls (9,800 feet). This is a good area to see moose. The South Meadow site is located at the edge of the Tonahutu Creek in between the pine forest and the willows along the creek.

2) Sunset: This site is a 3 mile hike in and is located at 9,550 feet. It is a 750 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Sunset site, we can day hike 2.4 miles to Granite Falls (9,800 feet) and an additional .8 miles to Tonahutu Meadows (10,050 feet). This is a good area to see moose. The Sunset site is located at the edge of the Tonahutu Creek in the pine forest.

3) Tonahutu Meadows: This site is a 6.2 mile hike in and is located at 10,050 feet. It is a 1,256 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Tonahutu Meadows site, we can day hike 2.5 miles to Haynach Lakes (11,060 feet). This is a good area to see moose. The Tonahutu Meadows site is located at the edge of the Tonahutu Creek in the pine forest.

4) Haynach: This site is a 7.2 mile hike in and is located at 10,760 feet. It is a 1,966 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Haynach site, we can day hike 1.5 miles to Haynach Lakes (11,060 feet). This is a good area to see moose. The Haynach site is located at the edge of Haynach Creek in the pines with great views of the surrounding mountains.

Timber Creek Area (west side)

1) Timber Creek: This site is a 3 mile hike in and is located at 10,400 feet. It is a 1,400 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Timber Creek site, we can day hike 2 miles to Timber Lake (11,060 feet). From Timber Lake it is another 1.6 miles to the top of Mount Ida (12,880 feet). The Timber Creek site is located in the pine forest at the edge of Timber Creek.

2) Snowbird: This site is a 4.6 mile hike in and is located at 11,010 feet. It is a 2,010 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Snowbird site, we can day hike .4 miles to Timber Lake (11,060 feet). From Timber Lake it is another 1.6 miles to the top of Mount Ida (12,880 feet). The Snowbird site is located in the pine forest.

Never Summer Range Area (west side)

1) Box Canyon: This site is a 5.5 mile hike in and is located at 10,480 feet. It is a 1,420 foot elevation gain to the site. From the Box Canyon site, we can day hike 1.6 miles to Thunder Pass (11,331 feet) and an additional .6 miles to the summit of Mount Lulu (12,228 feet). The Box Canyon site is located in the pine forest.

2) Skeleton Gulch: This site is a 6.2 mile hike in and is located at 10,560 feet. It is a 1,540 foot elevation gain to the site. The Skeleton gulch site is a beautiful

place to camp. There is a lot of day hiking option to several ridges and peaks in the area. This is a good area to Big Horn Sheep. The Skeleton Gulch site is located in the pine forest at the edge of Sawmill Creek.

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