

## **Doggie Hikes**

Most people come to Estes Park to take advantage of the expansive trail systems in Rocky Mountain National Park. The unmatched beauty coupled with relatively easy access makes it hard to stay out of the hills. However, dogs are not allowed on trails in the National Park. The only places that they are allowed are in cars along roadways.

Many people love to travel with their dogs and are surprised to find out that they are not allowed to take them into the National Park. As one of our dog policies, McGregor Mountain Lodge does not allow dogs to be left unattended in any of our dog-friendly cabins, which makes it hard for people to get out and enjoy what Estes Park and the National Park has to offer. But there is a little known secret that lies to the North, East and South of Estes Park known as Roosevelt National Forest and Arapahoe National Forest (which contains much of the Indian Peaks Wilderness).

I say it's a secret because when mentioned to guests at the lodge, no one has heard of it or knows where it is. But it is 1.3 million acres of beautiful Colorado high-country waiting for you and your leashed pup to explore. Below are a few generally outlined hikes with enough info to get you started in the right direction.

### **Triangle Mountain**

A couple of miles East of Glen Haven on Devils Gulch Road you will come to the "North Fork Picnic Ground" on the right side of the road. This should be labeled on the USGS Glen Haven Topo Quad. The summit of Triangle Mountain is WNW of the trailhead. Cross the road to find the beginning of the trail.

The trail here is mostly a social trail. Not an officially maintained trail but made from hiker traffic over the years. It begins steeply in a climb of about 100+ feet and then levels out a bit heading generally NW. You will be provided wonderful views along the way on this difficult trail, making the ~1.25 miles and ~1,150 feet of elevation gain to the summit worth the effort. *(Dogs can be off leash)*

### **Crosier Mountain**

This popular hike starts just east of the Glen Haven Post office behind some stables. There is a sign about 100 feet away showing the start to the trail, which will travel uphill to hikers right.

Continue up hill until you drop slightly into the drainage below Piper Meadows. You will then start climbing up along the side of Piper Meadows all the way to the summit. Note that you will come to some trail junctions. These are fairly straight foreword but take note of these junctions for your descent back to the trailhead.

The total elevation gain is around 2,100 feet and it is roughly four miles from the trailhead to the summit. *(Dogs can be off leash)*

### **Lion Gulch**

Another popular day hiking spot, this trailhead originates on hwy 36 about eight miles east of Estes Park. There is a large parking area with a trailhead on the right side of the road as you're heading from Estes Park.

The main destination along this trail is Homestead Meadows. Around Homestead Meadows you will find eight homesteads in the general area, ranging from the late 1800's to early 1900's. You first drop to the Little Thompson River and then you begin climbing gently through another gulch along a smaller stream until you reach the meadows.

This hike is anywhere from 5 miles to 9 miles, round trip, depending on how many homesteads you want to visit. (*Dogs can be off leash*)

### **Lily Mountain**

This is a great hiking spot near Estes Park. Drive out of Estes Park on Hwy 7 for about 6 miles. Look closely for a small turnoff on the right, there is also a small brown sign marked "Lily Mountain." This is all on National Forest land just outside the National Park boundary.

The ascent begins very mildly, even dropping in elevation for a bit as you head north, parallel to hwy 7. You then begin climbing back toward the summit on a steepening trail. You will come to a fork in the trail, stay left and then follow cairns to the summit. The summit requires a little scrambling over rocks. Some dogs can handle it, and for others, it's the end of the road. Note, you will not pass any water on the trail so make sure to have plenty for both you and the pooch! (*Dogs can be off leash*)

### **Lake Estes Trail**

This is the paved trail that goes all the way around Lake Estes for approx. four miles. You can access this trail at many points around the lake. On the south side of the lake you can walk under Hwy 36 along the path to the Dog Park, where you can let your dog run around off leash and even swim in the lake. (*Except for the Dog Park, your dog must be leashed along the Lake Estes Trail*)

## **Indian Peaks Wilderness**

The Indian Peaks Wilderness is an amazingly beautiful place that rivals Rocky Mountain National Park in its grandeur and beauty. Dogs are allowed everywhere that people are allowed but are required to be on a leash at all times, even off trail.

I recommend buying a guide book on the Indian Peaks simply because it is so large and there are so many destinations. However, most people do start their adventures there from the Brainard Lake Recreation Area. There is a fee to use this area (around six dollars for a day). It gives you access to many trailheads and virtually endless destinations.

Look at hiking to Long Lake, Lake Isabelle and/or Blue Lake. Some great summits for dogs are Mt. Audubon, Pawnee Peak and Mt. Toll. Pawnee to Toll is a great link up with a dog.

## Sources

We recommend using the above information just as suggestions and as a start for your doggy hiking research. Please consult books, maps and more reliable information when making your final decisions on where to take your dog hiking.

We recommend:

“Canine Colorado – Where to Go and What to do with Your Dog” By Cindy Hirschfeld  
<http://www.amazon.com/Canine-Colorado-Where-What-Your/dp/1555912397>

“Best Hikes with Dogs – Colorado” By Ania Savage  
[http://www.amazon.com/Best-Hikes-Dogs-Colorado-Savage/dp/0898869684/ref=pd\\_bxgy\\_b\\_img\\_b/102-4903731-5782548](http://www.amazon.com/Best-Hikes-Dogs-Colorado-Savage/dp/0898869684/ref=pd_bxgy_b_img_b/102-4903731-5782548)

“Hiking Rocky Mountain National Park Including Indian Peaks” By Kent & Donna  
Dannen  
<http://www.amazon.com/Hiking-Rocky-Mountain-National-Park/dp/0762722452>