

# The 20+ Best Hikes In Boulder To Do This Year

Boulder, CO, is located at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. This city has no shortage of outdoor experiences or wildlife. In addition to mountain biking and rock climbing, Boulder is home to an abundance of hiking trails. The trails in Boulder are filled with families, friends, and solo hikers on any day of the week. To help you pick the best one for you, we've listed some of the best hikes in Boulder, CO. Some are easy, some are difficult, but all of them are sure to have beautiful sights!

## 1. [Fowler Trail](#)

4 miles | Easy | 433 Foot Elevation Change

The Fowler Trail is one of the easy hikes in Boulder and is located in the Eldorado Canyon State Park. This family-friendly hike is the perfect option to see wildlife and watch rock climbers while taking in the beautiful view of the surrounding canyon. Dogs are welcome on the trail; just make sure to keep them on leash. There is a parking area at Rattlesnake Gulch Trailhead where the hike begins.

This trail can be hiked year-round - just make sure to watch out for ice!

## 2. [McClintock Trail Hike](#)

1.9 miles | Easy | 419 Foot Elevation Change

The McClintock Trail Hike is one of the easy hikes in Boulder, and the best time to visit is definitely in the summer. This hike is an all-skill level hike that boasts lush greenery, wildflowers, and a variety of shrubs and flowing grasses throughout the summer. The landscape is also dominated by pine and some deciduous trees. Along the hike, you'll catch a glimpse of the Flatirons. Unfortunately, this is not a dog-friendly hike, so leave your furry friends at home.

## 3. [Ceran St. Vrain](#)

3.8 Miles | Easy | 807 Foot Elevation Change

Ceran St. Vrain is another easy hike in Boulder, CO, full of beautiful scenery and wildlife. This hike is an easy trail through the forest that will shade hikers on even the sunniest days. The trail follows South St. Vrain Creek for most of the hike through dense pine forests, patches, and wildflowers. Finally, the trail ends and connects with National Forest System Road 252.1. The way back on Ceran St. Vrain trail is uphill but only a gentle incline.

The Ceran St. Vrain trail includes a few unofficial backcountry campsites once you cross the footbridge over the creek if you are interested in an overnight stay.

#### 4. [Sawhill Ponds](#)

1.6 Miles | Easy | 22 Foot Elevation Change

The trail at Sawhill Ponds is one of the best hikes in Boulder. It is incredibly unique because it circles a wetlands habitat that you do not usually find in the plains of Colorado. Yet, surprisingly, the ponds are human-made. The Sawhill Ponds are against a backdrop of plains and rising foothills and indeed a sight to enjoy.

Sawhill Ponds provide a mix of plant and animal life that can interest anyone. Coyotes and foxes hunt in the nearby plains, birds, and insects use the trees as shelter, and waterfowl enjoy the ponds. The trail is another one of the easy hikes in Boulder and an enjoyable one. Perfect for a relaxing afternoon or bird-watching.

#### 5. [South Boulder Creek Trail](#)

6.6 Miles | Easy | 170 Foot Elevation Change

This easy trail in Boulder is well-known for all skill levels and is located in East Boulder Community Park. This trail includes a cement path and a gravel path in areas and accessible parking spaces off of Baseline Road on the north end of the trail. The best part of this hike is the number of wildlife visitors reported seeing. While this hike won't take you through the mountains or the forest, you might have a chance to see a mountain lion, but it's more likely you will see an abundance of deer, cows, smaller birds, and even a stray coyote.

This trail is easily connected to several other trails nearby.

#### 6. [Enchanted Mesa Trail](#)

1.9 Miles | Moderate | 344 Foot Elevation Change

The name Enchanted Mesa Trail makes this hike sound like a magical journey, and this less crowded trail with its Ponderosa pines, wildflowers, and wildlife will definitely provide a fun adventure if you are looking for a short but moderate hike near Boulder. The Enchanted Mesa trail is located in the Ridgway State Park and is one of the best hikes in Boulder if you want a great view of the Enchanted Mesa, Ridgway Reservoir, and the surrounding mountains. Once you're on the trail, you'll be able to see Mt. Sneffels in the distance!

#### 7. [Red Rocks Trail](#)

1.3 Miles | Moderate | 393 Foot Elevation Change

This short one-mile loop is a unique getaway that offers scenic views of Boulder and massive rock formations, not to be confused with Red Rocks in Denver. This is the perfect hike if you are interested in bouldering or just want to admire the giant rocks that jut out of the ground to transform the landscape.

There is also an option to add an additional .8 mile to the hike by taking the Anemone trail to the west, adding a further 400ft elevation change that will provide views of the City of Boulder, Red Rocks Park, and the Colorado Front Range.

### **8. [Green Mountain West Trail](#)**

4 Miles | Moderate | 721 Foot Elevation Change

The Green Mountain West Trail was recently rerouted in 2019 and is one of the best hikes in Boulder to catch the incredible sunsets Colorado has to offer. This trail offers stunning views that show foothills, plains, and mountains. Once hikers make it to the summit, a summit marker will help find the peaks in the surrounding mountain ranges. Additionally, this hike is the best spot to grab the perfect Instagram photo for a shorter distance.

### **9. [Mallory Cave Trail](#)**

3.4 Miles | Moderate | 803 Foot Elevation Change

A pleasant surprise on this list is that Boulder has a bat cave! It's not the most leisurely hike to access it, but it is filled with challenging climbs, pine forest, and stunning views.

While the cave itself is closed to protect the Townsend Big-Eared Bats, visitors can still admire the cave from the outside at the end of the trail. The climb up to the cave's gate is closed April 1 - October 1 each year to protect the rare bat colony from a fungal infection. This is definitely the best hike in Boulder, CO, if you love a challenge and want to try to catch a glimpse of the bats.

### **10. [Eldorado Canyon Trail](#)**

6.6 Miles | Moderate | 1,994 Foot Elevation Change

The Eldorado Canyon Trail is a year-round trail located in Eldorado Canyon State Park. While the park has an \$8 entrance fee, it is worth visiting for the fantastic views and challenging climb. In addition, many people use the trails for horseback riding and snowshoeing in the winter. The State Park is one of the three major rock-climbing areas in Boulder so you might see a few people dangling from the rocks but it makes for an interesting hike. Other hikers have reported seeing rattlesnakes close to the trail so make sure to be aware of your surroundings.

### **11. [Flagstaff Mountain](#)**

5.4 Miles | Moderate | 1,430 Foot Elevation Change

Flagstaff Mountain is along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains and features several hiking trails. The main Flagstaff Mountain trail is a convenient hike that takes you from the bottom to close to the summit. While this is not the location for a quiet hike, it is close to the city and the best hike in Boulder for a trail run, hike, or bike ride. This is another hike where dogs are not allowed, so be sure to keep your furry friends at home for this one.

## 12. [Gregory Canyon](#)

3.6 Miles | Moderate | 1,197 Foot Elevation Change

This moderate trail hike around Gregory Canyon is filled with wildflowers and a beautifully forested mountainside. Gregory Canyon is only 2 miles from downtown Boulder, and this untouched beauty will give you that authentic wilderness feel. The Gregory Canyon trail makes a whole 3.6-mile hike if done as a loop. Black bears and mountain lions inhabit this area, so keep your eyes out for wildlife!

## 13. [Lion's Lair Spur Trail](#)

4.1 Miles | Moderate | 810 Foot Elevation Change

This trail is a new addition to Boulder's trail network, as it was recently completed in 2014. Keep in mind that no dogs are allowed here. This trail will take you through a series of switchbacks through the Ponderosa forest. As you ascend the trail, you can enjoy the view of high peaks in the distance. Then, either return the way you came or make a longer loop by following the other trail options down.

The trail got its name from the Mountain Lions that live nearby. It is one of the more frequent areas to spot mountain lions; it's rare, but keep your eyes out!

## 14. [Lost Lake via Hessie Trail](#)

4.4 Miles | Moderate | 807 Foot Elevation Change

The trailhead to Hessie Trail is about a 30-minute drive from Boulder but definitely worth it if you are looking for a challenging hike with an alpine lake at the end. The trail is rocky in spots, gains elevation quickly, and takes you through a pine forest. Once you reach the emerald alpine lake, you are welcome to swim in it if you so choose! There are also eight lakeside campsites available on a first-come, first-served basis.

## 15. [Walker Ranch Loop](#)

7.9 Miles | Moderate | 1,610 Foot Elevation Change

The Walker Ranch Loop is a hiking and mountain biking trail that traverses through Walker Ranch Park and part of El Dorado Canyon State Park. The trail is primarily gravel and loose dirt, and you may even pass a horseback rider or two on your journey. This moderately challenging hike will provide hikers with an abundance of sights, including forests, a rocky canyon, and distant views of the Continental Divide and Gross Reservoir Dam.

## 16. [Mount Sanitas](#)

3.2 Miles | Moderate to Difficult | 1,256 Foot Elevation Change

Mount Sanitas is a "must-do" hike on several Boulder hiking lists, including Alltrails. The Centennial trailhead is accessible from downtown Boulder and is genuinely one of the best hikes in Boulder to do when you're in town. This trail is steep, with a few high steps on logs and boulders. Don't be tricked into thinking you reached the summit early - there are a few false summits. Still, once you finally reach the true summit, you will have unobstructed views of the city of Boulder and partially obstructed views of Indian Peaks to the west.

### 17. [Royal Arch](#)

4 Miles | Difficult | 1,492 Foot Elevation Change

While it is only a short hike, the destination of the Royal Arch is a favorite among tourists and locals alike. Before even beginning, the trail hikers are greeted by views of the towering Flatirons in the distance. Once you enter the woods, prepare for a steep and steady climb through pine forests as you make your way to the arch. Once you finally make it to the top, you'll be able to enjoy nature's creation in its fullest glory.

### 18. [First and Second Flatirons Loop](#)

2.4 Miles | Difficult | 1,400 Foot Elevation Change

The Flatirons are one of the first things you see as you head into the Boulder valley from Denver that are genuinely the icons of Boulder. This is the best hike in Boulder if you want to experience the Flatirons in a short but challenging hike. The trail runs steeply uphill from the start, and you may want to take frequent breaks on your way up, but there you will have plenty of flatiron views, wildflowers, and prairie grasses to admire.

### 19. [Bear Peak Trail](#)

7.8 Miles | Difficult | 2,880 Foot Elevation Change

Bear Peak is Boulder's second tallest peak at 8,461 feet high. If you're up for the challenge, you'll find yourself hiking through lush evergreen forests to the summit, which will surprise you with amazing views of the Front Range peaks and views of the cityscape. Many reviewers on the hiking forums recommend doing this hike clockwise for a less strenuous journey - either way, this may be one of the best hikes in Boulder for 360-degree views.

### 20. [Boulder Skyline Traverse](#)

29.9 Miles | Quite Difficult | 10,380 Foot Elevation Change

The Boulder Skyline Traverse is the most challenging hike on the list and a favorite among backpackers and serious trail runners, but it is the best hike in Boulder for traversing five of the tallest mountains. These mountains include South Boulder Peak (8,549 ft), Beak Peak (8,459), Green Mountain (8,150 ft), Flagstaff Mountain (6,983 ft), and Mt. Sanitas (6,843 ft).

The system of well-maintained and connected trails throughout the area will keep you moving on your hike through a variety of ecosystems, ranging from grassland to pine forests and mountain streams.

## 21. [Chasm Lake](#)

8.4 Miles | Difficult | 2,450 Foot Elevation Change

Chasm Lake is the only hike on our list in Rocky Mountain National Park. This hike will take you above the tree line so make sure you are prepared for the elements. Chasm Lake is the best hike in Boulder, Co, if you want to traverse several of Boulder County's life zones. The hike begins in the woods at the trailhead, and you'll pass a few streams where eventually you will find in the Sub-Alpine surrounded by "stunted wood" trees, also known as Krumholz. You will find yourself in the Alpine for the last section of your hike, where you may find some wildflower patches. This hike is more of a gradual climb.

## 22. [South Boulder Peak](#)

8 Miles | Difficult | 2,880 Foot Elevation Change

There are several ways to hike to the South Boulder Peak - the Mesa Trail to the west is the most heavily trafficked trail, but for our recommendation, we suggest starting from the Towhee Trail. You'll begin your hike in the foothills of Towhee Trail and connect to Shadow Canyon Trail until you reach the top of South Boulder Peak. It's well worth the over 2,000-foot elevation change for the total panoramic views you'll get at the top! Pikes Peak is visible to the south, Mount Evans to the southwest, you'll be able to see the full Indian Peaks range, and Longs Peak in the northwest. This hike is another one of Boulder's best hikes, for panoramic views. You won't want to miss this hike for your next Instagram photo set!

## Hiking Tips To Keep In Mind

1. **Leave No Trace** - When hiking and enjoying nature, be sure to take all of your trash out with you and not leave any garbage behind on the trail. Another part of "Leave No Trace" is making sure that you leave everything as you found it. Make sure to not disturb any habitats or any natural areas.
2. **Pack Enough Water** - You can never have too much water when you are out on the trail! Make sure that you have enough for the distance of your hike.
3. **Sun and Bug Protection** - You will be likely to encounter pesky bugs while hiking, so make sure to utilize bug spray or use protective clothing before you hit the trail. The same goes for sun protection! Nobody enjoys leaving a fun hike with a sunburn.
4. **Trail Maps** - Many ranger stations or visitor centers offer trail maps, but it is recommended that you have one with you while hiking. There are many apps available like [Alltrails](#) to help you on your adventure.
5. **Parking** - Many of these trails are highly trafficked and popular. Make sure to do some additional research before showing up to make sure you have a place to park. The

reviews on Alltrails are a great place to start as other users leave helpful suggestions for additional parking locations.

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