

UNCROWDED HIKES aka Doggie Hikes

Trailheads (THs) for Hikes in the National Forest near Estes Park
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INTRODUCTION

"The mountains don't care." Not only are slips, storms, falling rock, and other mishaps inevitable, when those woes come during a hike, help may not come. You will meet few folks on most of these hikes. Let responsible people know where you go and when you return. Prepare to spend the night. Guidebooks tell more.

In these notes EASY means a wide trail, often an old road, with few if any steep sections. MODERATE means a trail which an agile horse could traverse even on its steep parts. DIFFICULT can be off trail routes which might require using hands for balance. However, no hike is difficult in the rock climbing sense. People can use hiking sticks on all of these routes. The chart at the end of the pamphlet summarizes the hikes.

Directions are from Estes Park. All distances are approximate. In the accompanying map GREEN means a hike on a road, YELLOW indicates an established trail and RED indicates a bushwhack, possibly with scratch trails. Road, trail, bushwhack correlates generally, but not precisely, with EASY, MODERATE, and HARD. The maps are printed from TOPO! software available at www.topo.com. Using that software to print a map of an intended route is useful preparation for a hike. However most of the hikes east of Estes are on the Geological Survey's Glen Haven quad, available in stores. Names in quotation marks are not on Geological Survey maps. Trailheads (THs) with an asterisk (*) have fuller descriptions in published guidebooks. Trailheads with a hatchmark (#) hold snow longer than the others. Optional SIDE TRIPS are noted separately in the text and chart. THROUGH TRIPS require vehicles at start and finish.

Although I ALWAYS carry a compass, I rarely consult it. On most of these hikes the specific direction of the trail may not be the general direction that the route takes. While writing these instructions and consulting maps I have discovered errors in my sense of specific directions. If your compass reading differs from the stated direction please let me know.

I invite your suggestions, questions and criticisms. Unless you demur I will acknowledge your help in the next version of this guide. Jim Disney has not stinted in offering suggestions. I thank him. Dick Rush kept many of these trails clear and inspired others to do so.

Sarah, Paula, Ron, Vern, Jim, Tim & Ann, Byron and many boon companions have joined me on these and other hikes. Without their inspiration I would be a 300 pound couch potato with a remote control device grafted into my hand. Banjo, our departed dachshund could sniff back to our start point from any place on an off-trail route, a more difficult task than finding a summit. Those of us without a dog's nose must NOTE WELL OUR BACK TRAIL.

This pamphlet describes 25 trailheads (THs). Twelve are east of Estes Park, seven off Devils gulch Road (DGR) and five off Highway 34. South of Estes we have five THs off Highway 36 toward Lyons and seven THs off Highway 7 to and beyond Allenspark. Since some trailheads have more than one hike, these notes describe more than 24 trips.

DEVILS GULCH ROAD

The first seven trailheads are on Devils Gulch Road (DGR), the paved county road between Estes Park and Drake. It starts as McGregor Avenue by the police station in Estes Park. When McGregor crosses Bypass Highway 34 three tenths of a mile north of the Municipal Building it becomes DGR. In about a mile it passes McGregor Ranch, in another mile Gem Lake TH, and at mile 4, the road to McGraw Ranch. These three trailheads enter Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) wherein dogs are banned from hikes. In another mile the road drops steeply down toward Glen Haven.

Note your mileage to the nearest tenth of a mile or set your car odometer to 0.0 at the lowest switchback of the double pair of switchbacks.

3 TRANSFORMERS # - moderate

Two tenths mile east, down from the lowest switchback on the Devil's Gulch Road is an unofficial trailhead. Park on the right side of the road (southside) in a wide pullout, big enough for several cars. Across the road is a set of electric poles with three gray-white transformers in their crossbars. Go down across an abandoned side road and north across the drainage beside the road. Then contour northeast to find a scratch trail which heads north up a small gully. About 150 yards from where you parked, this is a public gateway to a vale of Forest Service land.

The scratch trail climbs up to the northwest less than half a mile and less than 300 vertical feet. You'll turn the ridge about 80 feet above a small saddle leading north to an obvious rock summit (**dis**recommended because it requires the agility and audacity of teenagers). The scratch trail continues west and meets an unmaintained trail coming up from the right, from that saddle. The trail is obvious, even in winter because off the trail is so much brush. Someone, not me, removed some deadfall between here and where the trail contours and descends into the drainage. More deadfall should be expected every season.

After 300 yards or so of up and mostly down scrambling, including detours where deadfall was not cleared, the rough trail meets the rising drainage. Call this place "trail crossing". From here a disused horse trail climbs up a gentle valley half a mile to our destination, a saddle east of Cow Creek. Private property is below about 1/4 mile further on this old horse trail/old road. To the right (north), up 300 vertical feet, the steep ridge between this unnamed drainage and West Creek gives satisfying views of West Creek, Fox Creek drainage and Bulwark ridge. To the left one could contour less than 1/2 mile SE to a narrower drainage that leads up SW to another higher saddle or down NE back to "trail crossing".

Return on the scratch trail. Private land on the ridge top to the south stops public access. North from trail crossing down the drainage into West Creek leads to private land, where even an irate landowner would be nothing in comparison to the horrible bushwhack.

WEST CREEK - easy

Both sides of Devil's Gulch Road (DGR) below "three transformers trailhead" are private land to beyond Glen Haven. We have been politely welcomed by homeowners as we WALK up the West Creek road into what is now Forest Service land. That road begins .7 miles below the three transformers. But there is no place to park. So find West Creek Road then find a satisfactory pull out along Devils Gulch Road (DGR) to park. The right (south) side of the road .3 miles below West Creek Road is one place to park.

West Creek Road on the left side of DGR leads west and down. In the summer a white pipe gate is locked to all but residents' vehicles. The road continues west past summer cabins and year round homes. It crosses West Creek and passes more houses as it enters the West Creek narrows. Beyond are scattered summer homes. After 3/4 mile a locked gate marks the beginning of forest service land, once private, but traded back to the government. 200 yards further, after the road crosses to the south side of the creek, beaver workings on the right have flooded a footbridge and former private improvements. Beyond here a double wide culvert is eroding, making the road impassable to sedans. A twisty quarter mile further a small barn on the left and beyond a falling house and garage mark a summer home where this author was a guest in the late 1950s. Beyond that the road turns right up the hill to a secluded modern home now federal property. Where the road turns north an unmaintained trail continues west. In 200 yards find a sloping ten foot waterfall. A little further the unmaintained trail twice crosses the creek on iffy log bridges and winds for a hard mile until it reaches mile two, a trail junction above which the creek side trail is maintained by volunteers. From that junction it is a long mile to the N/S trending Boundary Trail and from there a short mile west along West Creek Trail to seldom visited West Creek Falls. But dogs have to stop at RMNP boundary 1/4 mile below the falls. Of course **the more prudent of us turned around when the road turned into trail.**

SIDE TRIP, FOX CREEK ROAD - moderate A Larimer County trail comes over the ridge from Fox Creek to the north and joins West Creek at the two mile mark. For a mile this horse trail climbs and traverses the south side and descends the north side of the 350-foot-high ridge. (a nearly obliterated old trail goes atop the ridge and accesses one of the finest rock summits found here or anywhere) The horse trail emerges near Cheeley Camp at the end of Fox Creek Road, which has no public parking. It is one and a half miles from there to Glen Haven

and another two miles back to parking near West Creek trailhead. So the total of this loop trip would be close to 7 miles.

SIDE TRIP, FOX CREEK FALLS - difficult The boundary trail joins West Creek Trail on the left about three and a half miles up from DGR. Its 700 foot high crossing of Sheep Mountain east ridge from McGraw (Indian Head) Ranch (part of RMNP) is a shorter but steeper route to this point on West Creek. After three hundred yards of shared trail, the Boundary Trail veers north up the hill away from West Creek. It climbs six tenths of a mile and 600 vertical feet to a wide ridgeline. Then it drops 120 vertical feet in three tenths of a mile to Fox Creek. (Go no further on the Boundary Trail with your dog since it enters RMNP in a few yards) Turn right on the scratch trail down the left bank of Fox Creek. In about 180 yards find a two foot fall across sloping slick rock. Cautiously scramble to the bottom of that rock, cross the creek and work down another 100 yards to the higher set of falls below. These are Fox Creek Falls.

TRIANGLE MOUNTAIN - difficult (the first 50 yards up 100 vertical feet) then moderate

Drive about two miles east of (down from) Glen Haven on the Devils Gulch Road. Pass "Glen Haven Picnic Ground and park at "North Fork Picnic Ground" on the right side (east side) of the road. Find a steep scratch trail on the opposite (west) side of the road. Scramble up and slightly left for less than 50 yards. Here you find that the scratch trail turns right and follows the ridgeline first NW in a shallow climb. When the ridge levels out in a broad saddle follow the scratch trail first to the right, then left across the SE facing hillside. The ridge temporarily broadens so that the trail has a tendency to braid and is not on any arete. Note landmarks here to use on the descent. But above that bulge the trail becomes less steep and offers views both north and south. When rocky prominences block the path from staying on the ridgeline, passage is usually to the left (the south).

The view to the north beyond Dunraven Glade, beyond the east extension of Bulwark Ridge, and beyond Miller Creek is the long ridge from the Signal Mountains to Storm Mountain on the east. The rocky high point of that tree covered ridge about a mile east of Donner Pass is a "ranked" but officially unnamed mountain. A former county official has suggested "Homeview", an appropriate name, since this high summit is visible from a lot of homes on the plains. To the south survey the gullies on the north side of Crosier Mountain. You may see DGR below.

Hike the long mile and 1200 vertical feet past the false summits to the top of Triangle Mountain. The view to the west up the valley of the North Fork (of Big Thompson) reaches to the Mummy Range. In other directions most of the routes off Devils Gulch Road are discernible. It is safer, if not easier, if you scramble the last few yards to the summit from the north.

A long established lightly used scrambling route comes to the summit from the NW ridge, but it has tricky route finding and must cross a point where two corners of private land touch. Residents of Glen Haven approach the summit on the broad ridge to the south through private land. So, in the absence of previous arrangements and knowledge, **descend the ridge you climbed.**

DUNRAVEN TRAILHEAD* - easy (North Fork of the Big Thompson River)

About 2 miles east of Glen Haven on the twisty "Devils Gulch" road is a junction usually marked with "house for sale" signs. This turn to the north crosses a cement county bridge and curves left toward the northwest. A large forest service parking lot with modern pit toilets is at the west end of this two mile gravel road. This is Dunraven Trailhead. It offers two popular hikes in the National Forest.

Named because it is the old route westward to Lord Dunraven's hunting lodge, the "North Fork" trail starts south (sic) from the parking lot. It soon turns west and descends to the river, which it follows for nearly a mile. This course evades an unnecessary road walk up and across the saddle east of Cheeley Camp. The routing also avoids intruding into the main street of the camp. The first half mile above Cheeley Camp is an old road. Almost three miles finds a celebrated destination, Lord Dunraven's old hunting camp (also misnamed Deserted Village). Steeper continuation goes past Forest Service tent sites, up the north side of the valley to the boundary of RMNP at four and a half miles. Forest Service volunteers (more are needed and invited) do minimal trail maintenance in early spring.

SIDE TRIP: LOWER BULWARK RIDGE - moderate A hike with more climbing from

this trailhead is Bulwark Ridge. Walk up the road that goes west from the parking lot. After a quarter mile, at the highest point of the road, a forest service sign points northeast to a steep trail which switchbacks to the top of the Bulwark Ridge. This waterless trail then ascends the initially gentle ridge one tranquil mile to the Comanche Peak Wilderness. Here is where to turn around.

SIDE SIDE TRIP: After a mile, when the Bulwark Ridge trail reaches the very ridgeline, a trail junction sign offers Indian Trail for your consideration. Trending north it drops 800 feet in a mile. You must climb back unless you have arrangements to meet a vehicle on a private road.

(Two THROUGH HIKES starting on the Bulwark Trail over Donner Pass or over the Signal Mountains* have opposite trailheads far from Estes Park. This guide will not provide instructions for either hike.)

CROSIER MOUNTAIN WEST (also known as Glen Haven Trailhead)* # - moderate

Crosier Mountain has three northside trailheads. The most traveled is the one that starts at Glen Haven just east of the Post Office up a driveway behind the stable. Walk about fifty yards to the sign showing the rocky trail bearing up to the right. A big black friendly labrador (perhaps that's redundant) may come over to say hello and has accompanied selected parties to Crosier summit. This trail climbs generally south a few hundred vertical feet to a broad saddle, drops sixty vertical feet or so to a drainage from Piper Meadows, then climbs a total of more than 2,000 feet and four or five miles to the summit of Crosier Mountain. Once away from Glen Haven, the trail is on public land, but private land, some marked by barbed wire fence, is close by. Piper Meadows, the expanse to the right of the trail about a mile up, is mostly private. An obvious Elk Route crosses the trail at right angles several hundred yards after you reach Piper Meadows. Not far above that, the trail switchbacks east into forest and soon reaches a saddle. There a trail comes up from the Barrow Pit Trailhead. (See the 2d paragraph of "Barrow Pit Trailhead" for the continuation to Crosier summit)

BARROW PIT TRAILHEAD # - moderate

A little over 2 miles east of Glen Haven just beyond the turnoff to Dunraven Trailhead but on the south side of the Devils Gulch Road pavement is the large pullout called the Barrow Pit Trail to Crosier Mountain. I also call it the Middle T.H. The trail starts at the east side of the parking. Almost immediately it turns right (to avoid private property). The route passes through north facing forests on ridges and in small drainages. After about 1200 vertical feet and 2 miles it meets the Crosier Mountain trail from Glen Haven. 200 yards below the junction of West and Middle Crosier trails is a signed quick (5 minute) side trip to Coyote Point, a panoramic opportunity.

Above the junction (halfway to the Crosier summit) the trail rises two miles and 900 vertical feet through lodgepole pine to a point east of Crosier summit. At the higher trail junction the right hand trail climbs 1/2 mile and 500 steep feet to the summit. The left hand trail goes down to the next trailhead:

CROSIER EAST (GARDEN GROVE) TRAILHEAD - moderate

This forest service trailhead has various names. "Crosier East" seems to me most descriptive. The trailhead is an inconspicuous signed parking pullout for a few cars on the south side of the Devils Gulch Road less than half a mile from where DGR crosses to the south side of the river and the canyon widens into a valley. The trail cascends west then south then east in an arc around an open area which is public land after the first 50 yards or so. (an inconspicuous abandoned trail goes up the fall line and meets the more sensible trail at the top SE corner of the open area) the trail traverses the north facing mountainside and gullies for about a mile.

The trail turns from trending east to trending south. This gentler stretch is 160 vertical feet above the Sullivan Park. The trail continues south then west across a wide open former pasture. Then it climbs south to a ridgeline and a mile west along the head of True Gulch and up to a flat ridgeline. It is nearly four miles from the Garden Grove T.H. to the junction of the trail from Glen Haven/Barrow Pit trailheads mentioned above. (A few hundred yards east of that highest junction, the cairned route from Long Gulch joins this trail from the south. Do not try to descend that unless you have previously come up that way and are sure where to go.)

SIDE TRIP FROM CROSIER EAST TO SULLIVAN PARK - moderate After climbing about a mile the trail rounds a second ridgeline and trends southward. An abandoned homestead lies a quarter mile east and 160 vertical feet below. A remnant of a cabin is near the meeting of the drainage to your east and the drainage from Sullivan Park. A route south from the deteriorated cabin up the drainage through Sullivan Park could take you to the saddle at the top of the trail up Sullivan Gulch (see below). This side trip is a longer, mellower route to that saddle than the Sullivan Gulch trail.

THROUGH TRIP: Start at one of the three Crosier Mountain trailheads and finish at another.

HWY 34 BETWEEN ESTES PARK AND LOVELAND

Highway 34 descends Big Thompson Canyon through Drake and eventually to Loveland. **Note your mileage** at Mall Road, which joins Highway 34 from the right just below Lake Estes. MOUNT OLYMPUS # - difficult

Nine tenths of a mile from Mall Road down Big Thompson Canyon a sign on the right side of the highway indicates you are entering the National Forest. Park in that pullout. The hillside up to the south is RNF (Roosevelt National Forest) land. The summit of Mount Olympus is on a SSE bearing almost 1500 feet above. A reasonable route slants uphill to the east and southeast for about 700 feet, then switches back to the right and slants SW up to the summit.

After scrambling 30 to 60 vertical feet you may find animal trails leading to the left. Pick whichever one of these seem most likely to gain height to the southeast. Zigzag. Whichever route you choose, you will see better ones above and below you. About 500 vertical feet and a mile from the car in a SE bearing is a dirt road trending N to S. (This dirt road, which leaves Hwy 34 three miles below our parking, accesses a house in a private inholding. Although the road here is on public land, it starts on private property and crosses a target shooting lease, (precluding public access.) Hike south (right) on that road a half mile to the east ridge of Mt. Olympus. Private property lies somewhere beyond this saddle. ("Noel's Knob" to the east is not safely climbable without a rope) This high point of the road is a sensible place to turn right onto the ridge line. Bushwhack SW up to the summit.

The summit may be on private land, but I have not found so much as an old fenceline to mark where. The property owners can be fairly certain that no one will intrude on their privacy by descending the cliff which is the south face of Mt. Olympus. No point provides a finer view of the Estes Valley and the high peaks of RMNP beyond than the high summit of Mt. Olympus.

Unless you left inedible breadcrumbs, it will be impossible to return to your car on exactly the same paths(?) you ascended. The gullies directly between you and the car can get awfully steep. I recommend a general reversal of your ascent which would be NE down to the road, SW down to the car with lots of micro zigzags to avoid the steepest lines.

CALL BOX- moderate

About 2.4 miles downriver from Mall Road is a blue and yellow "Call Box", an emergency telephone, on the left side of the road. The paved pull off is large enough to park several cars.

Stand at the call box and look NW past the telephone pole. 30 yards away at eye level a faint red paint mark is the start of more paint and cairns. These mark a route north into the National Forest. The line of cairns which trends to the right then left cross the ridge and descend to a horse trail trending NW. One fine hike from there is to follow the horse trail a few hundred yards till it crosses a saddle on the ridge. First in a gully, then on the ridgeline, climb north to whichever high point seems a worthy goal. The high point of the N/S trending ridge is about 600 vertical feet above your parking. You may return to your vehicle on the same line you ascended.

THROUGH TRIP: For those wanting a long hike to a second vehicle it is possible to hike all the way to Hidden Meadow trailhead (see below). A map is a necessity. Bushwhack and scramble half a mile north of the high point, then NW along the top of the ridge. You have to drop about 120 feet to a wide saddle and then ascend eastward across the head of an unnamed creek. (If you ascend northward you can reach an officially named rock dome called the Camel)

A shallow traverse of less than a mile reaches a point on the ridge west of Dark Canyon. Descend northeastward into Dark Canyon to find a former road mostly washed away. Descend Dark Canyon about a half mile to where a side drainage (almost as wide as Dark Canyon) comes in from the left (NE). From the SE an old road comes down to this confluence. Scramble up the precipitous bank east of the confluence and ascend the vanishing road SE then NE (or climb the steep gully directly). At the top of the gully or road go east across the ridge and find the obvious Jeep road which descends one mile to Hidden Meadow trailhead. (see below)

"HIDDEN MEADOW" - easy or moderate

A fat cement pillar on the left side of Hwy. 34 about 4.2 miles downriver from Mall Road marks a Forest Service access. (This is 7.4 miles upriver from Drake on the right side) The road looks like a private driveway and does give access to a home about 40 yards up on the right. The road becomes rutted and rocky but is OK for sedans driven carefully. After a few rods it passes a private gate on the left and curves up to a double level parking area with a Forest Service sign. Park where you will not block other cars. After 20 or so visits I have seen another car here only twice. But evidence of skeet shooting is obvious lots of places even though a gun club has a shooting range two miles away across the highway and river. You may hear their shooting during this hike. The fenced-off old road to the left goes to a wide sloping meadow less than half a mile up that old road. The gated road to the right winds up nearly a mile through public land to private property. The following description will go up the fenced-off road, through the meadow, past some side attractions and eventually down the public portion of the rarely used winding road.

An opening allows pedestrian access through the barbed wire fence to the left of the lower parking area. Pass under thick overhead telephone cable. The old foundations are from an early homestead once acquired by Hewlett Packard (HP) for an employee recreation area and later traded back to the F. S. The road disappears in the grass of the meadow beyond. HP seems to have drilled water wells in the meadow. An old well house and other remnants make the meadow a satisfying destination in itself. The road reappears at the west side of the meadow over toward the left. Or hikers could follow a scratch trail up the main drainage coming from the northwest. (The drainage from the north connects to the other (winding) road we saw going right at the parking area.) Both the road which appears across the meadow and the drainage scratch trail come together at a saddle on a ridge about half a mile above the meadow.

At the ridge the usual route is to turn right and follow a line of cairns up an initially steep scratch trail. (The less traveled road is to hike west and south downhill till you find the old road into Dark Canyon. Then you could reverse the route at the end of the "CALL BOX" description above) The cairned scratch trail ascends 200 yards or so to a ridgeline trending eastward. There cairned routes divide.

The inspiring side route up the rocky east ridge is worth the 15 minute round trip to all but acrophobics. The panorama from the comfortable throne above may take longer than 15 minutes to abandon. The east trending cairns covers about a hundred yards along the south side of the rock. Then they go up slightly exposed slickrock to the "crux" of the hike. An exposed easy move on the right or a scramble up a shallow open corner to the left puts the hiker on the wide ridge. The summit is 30 feet higher and another hundred yards east. Evidence suggests that in the last four years increasing numbers have visited this "Long Comfort". The drainages of Long Gulch are two miles to the east and the roofs of Glen Comfort are to the southwest. Take caution during the 200 yards back down to the junction of cairns.

Those who want sunny slopes return the way they came. But a fine loop trail goes northeast from where the "Long Comfort" ridge joins the north trending ridge. Descend with the cairns gently down to the saddle about 150 yards northeast. The cairns continue down an east trending gully with some deadfall. Bear right where the gully widens and soon come upon the winding road. The private property is to the east whither the road rises. Just below the cemented portion we could bear right and "bushwhack" down the grass to the wide meadow. Or we could descend the road about a mile to our parking area.

LONG GULCH # - hard

Where Hwy 34 makes a northward loop approximately 6.9 miles below Mall Road (4.7

miles above Drake) it crosses a culvert. The sidestream which the culvert crosses is the drainage from Long Gulch. The closest parking is a two car pull out on the opposite side of the road for cars coming from Estes. I drove east till I could safely turn the car around. Crossing the highway is the most dangerous part of these hikes.

Long Gulch is a narrow canyon for the last mile before it joins the Big Thompson River. A scratch trail starts up the left side of Long Gulch. Cross the drainage as you prefer. Just above the little waterfall (passed by scrambling left if the rock is too wet to go right) is a steep gully to the right. Just beyond the steep gully is the remnant of a road which must have once come down Long Gulch. (destroyed in the flood of 1976?) Our route, the floor of Long Gulch twists generally west about a quarter of a mile. Then the canyon makes a 90 degree right turn to the north. After about 200 yards, the canyon turns 90 degrees to the left. and enters private property. Find a spot a little up the hill and declare this your destination. or . . .

Turn right and go up the side drainage till you can hike up the ridge to the right. On the top of this subsidiary ridge a line of cairns climbs to the left. If you lose the line of cairns ("ducks" in California lingo) switchback gently to the north and you will find them again. About 500 vertical feet and 500 yards above the point where it leaves Long Gulch the cairned route gets steep, but it soon finds a shallower bench trending NW/SE. The cairns pass the shoulder of this bench and climb steeply again for another 500 vertical feet. Even if you lose the cairns you can find the East Crosier trail (see description above, the last of the Devils Gulch group) by ascending north-northeast. Unless you have a dog with our former dachshund's nose, leave bread crumbs or keep checking your back route if you want to be able to retrace your route. Many cliffs and rocks on the south side of Crosier Mountain make a random descent problematic.

Many places along the route offer satisfying turn around spots. Very satisfying, too would be to summit Crosier Mountain by continuing to the East Crosier Trail, turning left (west) and continuing to the top. THROUGH TRIP: Ascend this route and descend a Crosier Mountain route. Beware of trying to descend this Long Gulch route without first having ascended it.

SULLIVAN GULCH-moderate (but steep)

Down the Big Thompson River 9.3 miles below Mall Road and only 2.3 miles upstream from Drake is a short road on the north side of the highway. This steep "driveway" has room to carefully park four or five cars on a slope. A small sign indicates a trail starting up the bottom of a steep gully through the ponderosas.

The roughness and steepness of this trail prevent it from being an "easy" hike. About 150 yards up, the remnant of the road ends at a long abandoned glory hole. The trail ascends the right side of the gully for a short way, then the left then back to the right. Much further the trail crosses back to the left and reaches a steep small meadow. Continue on the left side through switchbacks to the saddle on Crosier Mountain east ridge. You have climbed over 800 vertical feet in about a mile.

The most sensible continuation of the Sullivan Gulch hike for those who wish to have a longer day is to drop north 200 feet and a quarter mile down the drainage to what may be the finest secluded homestead in these hills, Sullivan Park. All but the foundations have deteriorated. The north sloping meadow views the wide north. We found water, always scarce on Crosier Mountain, at the junction of our descent drainage and a drainage from the left (west). That same left hand drainage leads up 200 yards to the East Crosier Trail. (see above) If you have two vehicles you can make this a THROUGH TRIP, the easiest one in this hiking guide.

SIDE TRIP TO HIGH POINT(S) - easy Turn right (east) and follow the ridgeline to one or two high points on the extended east ridge of Crosier. The ridge widens and offers views to the north (of Storm Mountain and its ridges) and to the south (of the ridges from Pole Hill to Sugar Loaf). The rocky point ahead and to the right is the imperceptibly lower of two high points. It requires scrambling to reach the top. The higher point is ahead to the left. A scratch trail does cross the north slope of the first (right hand) point and crosses a saddle between the two points. The last 30 feet of the left summit requires the use of hands to reach the very top. From either summit you can look east and see the bulk of "Round Mountain" (aka Sheep Mountain)

SOUTH OF ESTES PARK

HWY 36, FROM ESTES TO LYONS PROVIDES ACCESS TO FIVE TRAILHEADS.

PIERSON PARK - easy

The closest of these trailheads (THs) is Pierson Park TH above Fish Creek Road. Fish Creek Road is a right turn just south Lake Estes. About two miles south on the left is Little Valley Road, a forest service (FS) road which passes private houses. Follow FS signs about two miles (a right turn, a meadow, a left turn and four switchbacks) to a gate just above the fifth switch back, which is FS land. The last few hundred yards are rather rough road but passable to sedans when dry. The ridge top just below the gate offers parking for several cars. The FS gate is locked from the end of hunting season till the end of spring wetness. The first five hundred yards above the gate is the worst of the four wheel drive road and is as rough as the hill beyond the Pole Hill gate.

After the first five hundred yards of steepness, the 4WD road offers fine, almost level strolling. At half a mile a side road bears right. THIS IS THE FIRST JUNCTION. It could be your descent route if you take right hand roads further along on the hike. The shallower route continues on the left branch. On the way, three hundred yards beyond the first fork a side road, blocked by a gate, bears left. (This is the return route for a loop I am about to describe) THIS IS THE SECOND JUNCTION. The main road bears right. This stroll route is minimally maintained, the road by an annual contractor and the trail portion by FS volunteers. You are walking in the middle of what is called Pierson Park on U.S. Geological Survey maps.

In less than a mile the road again forks. THIS IS THE THIRD JUNCTION. Our choice, the left, goes a stone's throw to a railed in parking area at the north side of a small meadow. Go through the railing, cross the meadow and find a trail heading east. (I'd tell you to stay on the main road, which circles the small meadow on the north and west, but the trail is not obvious from that route on the main road. See below for MAIN ROAD option.)

We will follow this trail about a half a mile. It goes up, then down. The trail continues east even though an old road bears left and down to private holdings in a big drainage meadow. We will hike to a large FS information sign where an old road, now a trail comes up from the left. The sign has useful information. (If we were on a long through hike we would turn right, follow the trail down to Homestead Meadows, and all the way to Lion Gulch.) This "loop on a stick" route turns left, goes down the trail (old road) to the private holdings in the big drainage meadow. The route follows the trail in drainage for about a mile past a small pond. Take the private road sloping up to the left and return to the SECOND JUNCTION. Follow the main 4WD road back down the way you came. The total distance of this loop on a stick hike is about four miles.

MAIN ROAD option for longer hikes.

At the THIRD JUNCTION, instead of going left to the loop hike, bear right on the main road. In less than a hundred yards a right turn goes up 4WD side roads to a short loop or longer loop back to the FIRST JUNCTION. These 4WD roads are steeper than the ones so far.

If you ignore that right turn up 4WD side roads you will be on the main 4WD road to House Rock, three and a half miles and several hundred feet of elevation loss and gain to the south. (see HOUSE ROCK TH on Highway 7) A shorter option is to proceed south three tenths of a mile. Find the blocked off old road going to the left. Follow that old road till you see a point 400 feet higher than the trail on the right across a dried up pond, now a meadow. Bushwhack on a compass heading till you reach that high point. You will "bag" a ranked Colorado "mountain". Paula and I named it Twin Lion, since it is between Twin Sister mountain and Lion Head, both named on the topo maps. This summit is visible from many points in Estes Valley. Return the way you came. The old trail, whence you departed at the dried pond, used to connect to the Homestead Meadows trail; but it is now overgrown and crossed by old roads.

The highest place on Highway 36 is just over two and a half miles south of Lake Estes. This high point is where travelers from Lyon first see Estes Valley. The Pole Hill Road goes east from here.

THIS HIGH POINT ON HWY 36 IS THE STARTING POINT FOR MILEAGES ON HWY 36.

POLE HILL ROAD - easy to moderate (you have many choices)

The Forest Service access road to Pole Hill begins here at what I call mile 0.0. The subdivision road winds and climbs east past houses for .9 miles to where the road becomes level. (The right hand road, which we ignore, goes up to more houses.) Straight ahead and to the left is a parking area for two cars. (Leave one space clear so other vehicles can turn around.) The gate is closed from late fall till the Pole Hill road dries out sometime in late spring or early summer. Hikers will find more tranquility when the gate is closed. Park here unless the gate is open and you have an off-road vehicle which you want to abuse.

The walk on the four wheel drive (4WD) Jeep road starts almost level for a few hundred feet. Looking to the north you can see some of the "Doggie Hikes East of Estes Park" if you know where to look. Just beyond, the steepest part of the road (and the hike) is another few hundred feet. Most 4WD users are considerate and thoughtful. But sometimes you will find litter left by summertime joy riders. Power lines parallel the road where it reaches a high point. The road drops for a few hundred feet then rises, passes through a cattle guard and reaches a Y in the road.

Nearly to this point the road has had private property within at most a quarter mile north and south. Solitude Creek, just over the rise to the east is mostly public property from 9,000 feet near Panorama Peak to 7,500 feet at a quarter mile of its joining Noels Draw. Our routes will not drop below the 8,400 foot contour.

MAIN TRIP, WEST RIDGE OF PANORAMA PEAK - moderate From the "Y" the right hand road rises toward the west ridge of Panorama Peak less than a mile southeast and less than 400 feet higher than the Y. When the right hand road levels and curves to the left bear right and proceed up the ridgeline. There are traces of a long abandoned track. Continue east past a false summit to the highpoint of "Panorama West. From the high point of "Panorama West" you have three choices: Turn around and retrace the ridge back to the road. Bushwhack north down to the road and turn left. Or follow the ridgeline east and down Turn left on the road and left at the next junction. These three choices return you whence you came.

SIDE TRIP, NORTH RIDGE OF PANORAMA PEAK - moderate If you want more hiking go east down the ridge. You will use an old road before reaching the saddle 120 feet lower and a quarter mile east. Just beyond the saddle you will find a four wheel drive (4WD) road. Turn right and climb east 300 yards. (If you turn left and then left again after a 300 yard descent you will be on the road you started on.) After a 300 yard ascent find a junction.

The locked gate and stout fence up to the right prevent access to leased land. Panorama Peak is 300 feet up and half a mile east. That summit has been leased to an Estes Park company which takes folks in 4WD trucks to the viewpoint and to steak fries. Their "wilderness adventure" surely must be a fine trip.

Our route descends the 4WD road a few score yards NNE to a decision point. If you crave a challenge (see appendix) leave the road by hiking up the blocked off road to the right. Reach the ridgeline which is the north ridge of Panorama Peak. Turn left (NNW) and find point 9096. Descend the ridgeline north then northwest to @ 8,400 feet where you will find Pole Hill Road. Turn left (generally SW) and walk down then up about a mile back to the Y in the road. The other choice at the decision point is to turn left when the 4WD road does so and follow the road as it descends Solitude Creek. (The spur which goes left (WSW) immediately after the 4WD road crosses Solitude drainage connects with the "right hand road" we chose at the Y in the road.) In a little bit more than a mile you will reach Pole Hill Road without having to bushwhack over point 9096. Turn left then left again and head west and south on the Pole Hill Road for about half a mile.

Hey. We are back at the Y in the Pole Hill Road.

SIDE TRIP FROM POLE HILL ROAD, THE NOTCH AND SOLITUDE CREEK - easy Take the left hand road at the Y. It rises then contours then drops to a "tee" in the road. To the right is

upper Solitude Creek, which we descended in the previous paragraph. Left at the tee goes NW down 120 feet then up 80 to The Notch. This 4WD road has fine views of the valley of Estes Park and of the high mountains beyond. Adventurous hikers can continue on the road past the 8470 high point. The road twists east and 120 feet down to the middle reaches of Solitude Creek. (Hikers with a map to avoid private land and a yen to an "adventure" [see appendix] could hike a 5 mile round trip from here to Sugarloaf Mountain) In half a mile the Notch Road climbs back to Pole Hill Road. Turn right (SW) and right again after a 200 yard rise and you'll be at the "tee" in 100 yards more. Return the way you came.

HELL CANYON ROAD-easy

About 1.7 miles down from Pole Hill Road is the inconspicuous forest access, Hell Canyon Road. A small brown forest sign "Hell Canyon Road" marks the road just north (uphill) from the commercial campground. Drive one quarter of a mile uphill to the gate just inside public land. Park and walk more than a mile and more than 600 vertical feet to the high point of Hell Canyon Road. Again, this is a road to hike during the locked gate season (November through May, depending on weather conditions). There are residents who may use the road then, but I have not seen them on my occasional visits. Ice can sheet the road which can be treacherous without instep crampons.

Various hardy (foolhardy?) routes on public land give access to the south ridge of Panorama Peak, to the north approach to Elk Ridge and to Nixon Park. You are welcome to discuss them with me.

LION GULCH * # - moderate

About 4.6 down Hwy 36 from its high point, on the right hand (west) side of the road is a huge parking lot for Lion Gulch Trailhead. Much of this trail is on the north facing wall of a narrow canyon, so the trail holds ice longer than its elevation would suggest. The trail climbs more than 1200 feet before the gulch widens enough to provide much of a view. Many hikers consider the task of getting to Homestead Meadows well worth the trouble.

Because of the location of the highway and a resultant constructed drainage for the Little Thompson the start of the trail is the most contrary to the principles of lazy hiking in the state of Colorado. (California, with great population pressures, has trails with more discouraging beginnings, but their perverseness is intentional.) The trail is well marked, It leaves from the uphill corner of the parking lot and drops (sic) south (sic) into the drainage. It crosses west over the Little Thompson on an engineered bridge and proceeds north across Lion Gulch on a smaller bridge. The trail climbs steeply, generally north then west and back down to stream level to bypass a narrow part of Lion Gulch. The trail proceeds generally west up Lion Gulch, first on the north then on the south side, then back on the north.

After more than two miles, and one thousand feet of net elevation gain Lion Gulch widens. Interpretative signs suggest homesteads to visit. Near the first big sign a wide trail, formerly a road comes down from the ridge 200 feet higher and half a mile to the south. That old Jeep road gives access to Kenny Mountain, more homesteads and even Pierson Park, a long climb from the Lion gulch trailhead. Staying straight on the trail takes you to other homesteads and eventually private property.

Unless you have a car at Pierson park or permission to cross private land to the north or to the south of Homestead Meadows, you must descend the trail you climbed.

JOHNNY PARK (EAST ACCESS) - easy

Although this "trailhead" is almost 14 miles away from Estes Park it is on maintained highway and road for all but the last seven tenths of a mile. Moreover three jeep roads allowing side by side walking leave from the parking spot to at least four side trips

Drive south on highway 36 seven and a half miles from Pole Hill Road. Take the county maintained Big Elk Meadows Road (CR 47) on the right which goes to a substantial group of homes in the private meadows about six miles away. The road to Johnny Park turns off at 3

miles. (If you like steep hiking on mostly unused 4WD roads, you could ascend the gully coming down from the left at 2.6 miles. The red/white barrier gate marks this "short cut" up the drainage.) At 3.0 miles bear left off the main road and proceed .7 miles up a passable gravel road.

Unless you have a high clearance four wheel drive vehicle, this is as far as you will want drive. The Forest Service locks the gate from after hunting season till dry-out in June or so. Just 50 vertical feet above the parking lot a wide trampled saddle has 4WD roads heading east or west. East goes toward Buttonrock Mountain, west goes through Johnny Park and is called the Johnny Park Road. (Most 4WD vehicles could get to Meeker Park on this road if all the gates are unlocked.) Once you are at this wide trampled saddle you will be able to look south over the North St. Vrain river drainage and Longmont's Buttonrock Reservoir.

Johnny Park is an inconspicuous sloping meadow half a mile to the southwest about 400 vertical feet above the parking area. There the road becomes less steep. Go another half mile to be 400 yards east of an unnamed tree covered summit. The next mile west from mile two on Johnny Park Road is relatively level. Absent the noise and dust from summertime vehicles, it is a lovely walk. When the road starts to drop so do your chances for getting back to your vehicle. A Forest Service gate, locked during winter and spring, indicates when the road starts to pass through private land. Further description can be found under Johnny Park West trailhead (see below under Hwy 7).

SIDE TRIP, RANKED SUMMIT - moderate One mile from sedan parking you are 400 yards east of an unimposing summit. At 8,572 feet, this is the highest point near Johnny Park Road. Since there is more than 300 feet of vertical drop between this high point and any higher point it is a "ranked summit" and a worthy goal by some lights. Peering south from this summit you can see the high point of a ridge which leads south to North Sheep Mountain.

SIDE TRIP, NORTH SHEEP MOUNTAIN - hard By following Johnny Park Road a total of two miles you could reach a saddle connecting the high point 8,572 and North Sheep Ridge. Slightly east of that saddle a scratch trail leads south to North Sheep Mountain. This "trail" bypasses the highest point of North Sheep ridge and approaches the named "North Sheep Mountain." This named point and its sister, South Sheep Mountain, are impressive portals for North St. Vrain Creek. These rock prominences are lower than nearby foothills but are recognizable from the plains.

SIDE TRIP TO BUTTON ROCK - moderate (difficult if you try to climb Button Rock itself)

Use the same trailhead as Johnny Park Road. Hike east on the Jeep road. It winds around the high points on the ridge. Stay on the roads closest to the ridgeline. After 3/4 of a mile gaining and losing 200 vertical feet approach a wide forested saddle. (The "shortcut" from mile 2.6 on CR 47 comes in here from the left) The Jeep road passes a barricade on the right side of the ridge. It climbs more than 300 feet with southward draining Rattlesnake Gulch on your right. The road comes out on a ridge with drainage down to the north. Turn around and look at a fine view of Meeker and Longs before you enter trees and reach the saddle on the northwest ridge of Button Rock Mountain. The northeast ridge of Button Rock Mountain prevents any view of Button Rock itself. You are 400 vertical feet above the Johnny Park parking but you had to lose and regain about 250 feet extra.

The road toward Button Rock drops more than 100 vertical feet east of the saddle. Contouring across the northeast side of Button Rock Mountain might seem less strenuous, but the truly lazy hiker will follow the road even at the expense of having to climb back up to the saddle ENE of Button Rock Mountain. A strenuous scratch trail from private property in Pinewood Springs comes into this saddle from the east. The Jeep road goes south across this latest saddle and down a few hundred feet to an abrupt end. Button Rock itself can be seen up to the east through the trees. It is the more eastern of the two prominent rock summits above you on the north. A route scales the southwest corner of what looks like a button from the plains. Don't go there.

(The author, bushwhacking with two companions who should have known better, once contoured across the east side of Button Rock Mountain to its east ridge and hiked to ranked summit 7790'. Failure to find a direct way down to the vehicle parked at Button Rock Reservoir trailhead engendered justifiable recriminations. See appendix, "Treks, Hikes, and Expeditions.")

SIDE TRIP TO BUTTON ROCK MOUNTAIN: By now you have figured out that there is a Button Rock and there is a Button Rock Mountain, 500 feet higher and a mile to the southwest of

the Rock. You could turn south at the saddle on the northwest ridge of Button Rock Mountain and bushwhack up the ridge 450 vertical feet and about a mile to the elusive summit of Button Rock Mountain. You would probably find an old road that goes north to south across the broad summit plateau. You might even find the black spray-paint marked route that left the road 300 yards west of the NW saddle. You do not get many views from the forested whaleback that hides the actual summit.

SIDE TRIP TO POPE'S HILL - difficult Just over two miles on the Big Elk Meadows Road you should pass the most difficult side trip in this guide. Park on the side of the road when it starts to climb away from the Little Thompson. Bushwhack down to and across the Little Thompson. Work your way up the right side (the north side) of the creek. You will find traces of an old road at creek level. Follow it. This oldest of roads is a discovery well worth the effort of finding. Above the confluence with a drainage from the left (southwest), you will head north, southwest, west and then south again all in six tenths of a mile. Coming down from the right is a very steep scratch trail that leads to an exposed rock saddle between Popes Hill and the massive south side of Kenny Mountain. If you scramble up to the saddle you will probably be able to route find your way to the summit of Popes Hill - - unless you have acrophobia, i.e. good sense. You may not need a rope to ascend, but you'll probably need one to get down.

This ends the description of five Forest Service trailheads south from Estes Park on Highway 36.

**HWY 7, THE ALLENSPARK HIGHWAY ACCESSES FIVE TRAILHEADS (THs)
USE MARYS LAKE RD., ABOUT 4 MILES SOUTH OF ESTES TO MARK YOUR ODOMETER.**

UPPER FISH CREEK TRAILHEAD # - easy

At the wide right hand curve .45 mile south of Mary's Lake Road is Fish Creek Way on the left. About all a driver from the north can see is its stop sign sticking up into the sky. Its less than right angle is hidden till you have turned. (I don't know why more cars don't drive off the embankment there). Drive three tenths of a mile south on Fish Creek Way but continue straight on the dirt road toward Cheeley Camp instead of turning left on the main road.. Six tenths of a mile further, park where the road turns left. The gated unmaintained road going straight ahead is our trail. It gently climbs three tenths of a mile to a sharp left curve below a house and across the drainage on a broken culvert. (The "Horse Trail" about halfway along this stretch cuts this left curve and avoids the house and broken culvert, but its passage through lodgepole pine blocks the wider views from the road. Perhaps use the horse trail for a short loop walk.) The unmaintained road is a Larimer County trail which makes one big switchback in its 650 foot rise to Bald Pate Inn (see Bald Pate Inn TH below). With a car at Lily Lake Visitor Center parking lot you and your party can climb almost 700 feet in about two miles without having to test knee joints in a descent. In winter time there are treacherous ice sheets waiting the unwary.

LILY MOUNTAIN TRAILHEAD # - moderate

Southbound (uphill) on highway 7 between Estes Park and Allenspark about 2.65 miles from Marys Lake Rd. is the well marked Lily Mountain trailhead. Although a RMNP boundary sign is beside the yellow call box, the trail itself is on Forest Service land and thus OK for dogs. Fanatic peak baggers shun the route because it traverses north on the east side of Lily Mountain for more than a mile, gaining a net elevation of 100 feet. The trail then switches to the southwest and climbs more than 900 feet in a mile. Some folks see the first mile as an opportunity to hike without lots of effort. People with hearing better than mine can listen to cars ascending and descending Highway 7 which parallels the trail. Those who do climb the whole distance find scrambling is necessary to reach the top at an elevation of 9786 feet. The summit view is worth the effort to reach it.

BALD PATE INN TRAILHEAD # - easy

Lily Lake visitor center is east across highway 7 from Lily Lake itself. (3.15 miles south on Hwy 7 from its junction with Mary's Lake Rd.) Large parking lots are on both sides of the road. The public road heading NW downhill from the entrance to the Visitor Center lot on the left (east) goes about 400 yards to Bald Pate Inn. Continue walking through the lower parking lot. This old road, once the main road between Estes Park and Allenspark provides special views. Up to the right are the Crags, the northern outliers of Twin Sisters Peaks. To the left is upper Fish Creek and beyond, the part of Estes Valley south of Prospect Mountain. When the road switches back, look up at the east wall of Lily Mountain to sight traffic on Highway 7. Less than two miles and less than 700 vertical feet below is Upper Fish Creek TH. If you left a vehicle there you can enjoy the easiest spectacular walk in these notes.

HOUSE ROCK ROAD TRAILHEAD* - easy

Five and a half miles south of Lily Lake, up over Wind River Pass, down past Longs Peak and just after the small green Meeker Park sign is the Cabin Creek Road. (8.7 miles from Mary's Lake Rd.) Meeker Park Lodge is visible straight ahead 100 yards down the highway. Make a hard left at the forest access sign to Cabin Creek Rd. (Boulder County Road 82) If you pass Meeker Park Lodge on the left you went too far) The dirt road wends down past cabins to a tee at just less than one mile. Turn right at the tee, and proceed across a drainage from the right and across Cabin Creek another mile. If your car has sufficient clearance drive a few dozen yards up this Jeep road and park. Just beyond is a gate with the usual winter/spring closure. Another few rods above the gate the road levels. It curves east then north again in and out of the trees. After a largish meadow (note the interpretive sign) this intermittently smooth road climbs across an east sloping hillside. After walking about a mile in the eroded tread and entering more trees, you will find an old four way junction. The road to the right is almost obliterated. The 4WD road to the left dead ends beyond the wide ridge with a fine view of Meeker's east slope. Our road to House Rock goes straight ahead, bears left then turns sharply right to climb a south sloping hill. Such slopes harbor the first ticks in the spring. But if you follow our dog he will have swept up most of them. It switches left, enters a lodgepole forest (note the interpretive sign) and after another mile (mile two from the car) passes flats on the right where hunters like to camp. The road crosses a drainage, contour east a few hundred yards and then switches back to climb north to the saddle between House Rock and Twin Sisters' south ridge. The hike is here three miles from your vehicle parked just off Cabin Creek Road. So far the hike has been "easy". Keep it that way by retracing your steps.

SIDE TRIP TO HIGH POINT: - hard House Rock does rise the requisite 300 feet above this, its highest saddle, to attain the distinction of being a ranked summit, separate in peak-bagger calculations from its nearby higher neighbors. Compulsives will want to find some steep scramble route to the summit. Even our dachshund was able to do so with just one lift on the north rocks near the top. A scratch trail heads east till it gets steep. Then the route bears southeast around the cliffs then east again, straight up to above cliffs on the right. Bushwhack southeast across a small summit plateau and scramble up the north ridge on the summit rocks. This fine summit view is one of the few in these notes from which Longs Peak cannot be seen. The close inspection of the east side of Twin Sisters may inspire some mistaken ambitions. Look instead to Elk Meadows below to the east and Kenny Mountain beyond.

THROUGH TRIP: PIERSON PARK:- easy A much longer hike drops north down the rough 4WD road. After descending more than one and a half miles the road emerges from trees at a junction. Make a left (north) and hike up 650 vertical feet in about two and a half miles. A few hundred yards beyond the highest point of this road you enter Pierson Park. Taking the north pointing road at each junction leads you to the Pierson Park TH one and a half miles more (see above, the first TH off Hwy 7). The total mileage between sedan accessible trailheads is eight and a half miles.

JOHNNY PARK WEST TRAILHEAD - easy

About one and a half miles beyond the House Rock Road the Johnny Park 4WD Road goes straight when Cabin Creek Road curves to the left. With care a sedan can park on that rough road in the space before the gate, which is locked from the end of hunting season till the end of spring wetness. Driving or walking one must stay on the right of way since both roads are on private land. Short easy side roads to the right into public land lead up to saddles with fine overlooks into the spectacular North St. Vrain drainage. At eight tenths of a mile the road to Johnny Park turns a sharp right to the north and downhill. It is three miles from the western end of Johnny Park road, where your vehicle is parked, to the Forest Service gate described in the Hwy 36 Johnny Park East trailhead notes (above).

SIDE TRIP: "HUNTERS' SPUR" - easy This spur provides solitude except during hunting season. 1.2 miles east of House Rock Road is a 4WD track to the north. Park on the main road. The first quarter mile climbs steeply up loose gravel. Thereafter it winds about a mile north through rocks and trees. An unranked summit is 600 feet up above and half a mile north of the main road parking.

ROCK CREEK (SKI ROAD) TRAILHEAD* # - easy for a mile, moderate any further

Allenspark is about 16 miles south of Estes Park. (12.5 miles on highway 7 from Mary's Lake Road) South of Allenspark a (Boulder) County Road curves into the drainage on the south side of Meadow Mountain. Drive into town on the old highway and follow it downhill about .6 mile. The rocks from bypass highway 7 loom above you on the left. Turn right on the graded gravel road and proceed half a mile to a tee in the road. Turn left (right goes back into downtown Allenspark). Park when you are beyond private property a little over a mile from the tee. In snowy years wheeled traffic stops here in the winter.

The road enters trees, then divides in less than half a mile. The right hand road climbs to the Meadow Mountain Trailhead a scant half mile from the junction. There the St. Vrain Mountain Trail goes a few hundred yards to a wilderness boundary and about two miles to the ridgeline between Meadow Mountain and St. Vrain Mountain. The saddle is the boundary to Rocky Mountain National Park wherein dogs are banned. The trail goes on the RMNP side of the divide, but it is possible to stay on the east side of the divide outside of the Park. You and your dogs could climb up the east slopes of point 11478 and from there head SSE to hike south on the St. Vrain Mountain Trail. It is hard to find even traces of the trail coming up from Rock Creek. But you will eventually find the Rock Creek Trail if you zigzag down the south side of the drainage.

The left hand road descends to Rock Creek then ascends three and a half miles (2500 vertical feet) to a tee which is the St Vrain Mountain trail. However, above treeline the trail is difficult to find. Although it is a long hard climb this is the nearest and shortest doggie hike to timberline near Estes Park.

TAYLOR ROAD TRAILHEAD - easy

Just under 15 miles south of Marys Lake Road on Hwy 7 is the left hand (east) turn onto Taylor Road. (It's 2.4 miles south of Allenspark just beyond the top of the long hill.) Proceed past houses on the graded dirt road .25 miles over a ridge to a junction. Continue straight and curve right to the passenger car trailhead at .7 miles. There is room to park half a dozen sedans. Four wheel drive vehicles can proceed nine tenths of a mile more to the Bright Trailhead.

The first hike from here I will call "Taylor Mesa Meander." A "loop on a short stick", it is an enjoyable doggie hike with fine views and even a pond: Three hundred yards up the 4WD road from the sedan parking find a wide gully coming down from the left. A closed Jeep road goes past the Aspen grove up the right side of the gully. The road soon becomes a trail curling west to north to the ridge top. The closed road reappears and generally follows the top of the ridge SW to NE. After a mile of winding among high points on the ridge, the closed road rejoins the 4WD road about half a mile north of the parking. The whole loop on a short stick is less than two and a half miles.

SIDE TRIP: TAYLOR MOUNTAIN = hard Near where "Taylor Mesa Meander" rejoins the 4WD extension of Taylor Road, the west ridge of Taylor Mountain joins "Taylor Mesa". A rarely used 4WD track drops east at that point (about .4 miles from the parking). Follow that 4WD

trace until it gets steep at the base of Taylor Mountain. Look for cairns going SE up the 500 foot west face. The route switches back NE and reaches the north ridge of Taylor Mountain. There it divides. One branch goes south up to the amorphous high point on Taylor Mountain. The round trip is not much more than three miles and 800 vertical feet from sedan parking to the summit and back.

SIDE TRIP, BIG JOHN MOUNTAIN - hard The left branch of the Taylor Mountain cairned route drops 200 feet to the saddle between Taylor and Big John. The cairns become scarce but the 300foot, half mile ascent to the Big John summit is straightforward. The only rational way back is to retrace steps making sure not to miss the apex of the connecting ridge.

SIDE TRIP: BRIGHT TRAIL - moderate Less than a mile north of sedan parking on Taylor Road the 4WD road comes to a signed trailhead leading NW down into North St. Vrain Creek. The trail drops 1100 vertical feet in about a mile and a half. At the bottom a trail descends along the river all the way to Button Rock Reservoir more than five miles below. Hike as far as you wish but recall that at the end of the day you must ascend those 1100 vertical feet and hike at least five miles round trip (four if you used 4WD) just to return from where you first reached the riverbank. Up at the end of hike is hard up.

I'd like to declare this guide complete. The truth is that every time I take a hike I see others I'd like to traipse and add to this guide. Please add yours.

TREKS, HIKES, & EXPEDITIONS "THE" HIERARCHY

Walk:	No destination or elevation gain was intended.
Trip:	Walkers may have reached a destination.
Event:	Some members of the group did reach a destination.
Enterprise:	The group overcame the odd mishap.
Adventure:	Unexpected mishaps did not prevent a sense of success.
Occasion:	All reached an intended goal and pleasant fatigue.
Challenge:	Intelligent participants put a halt to the adventure.
Undertaking:	Members of the group exchanged recriminations.
Ordeal:	All of the group regretted the undertaking.
Tale:	Regret. Persistent pain. Retching.
Incident:	Participants continue to insult one another even now.
Epic:	Regret. Productive retching. Recriminations. Revenge.
Saga:	An epic with deaths.
Legend:	Reports of cannibalism could not be suppressed.