



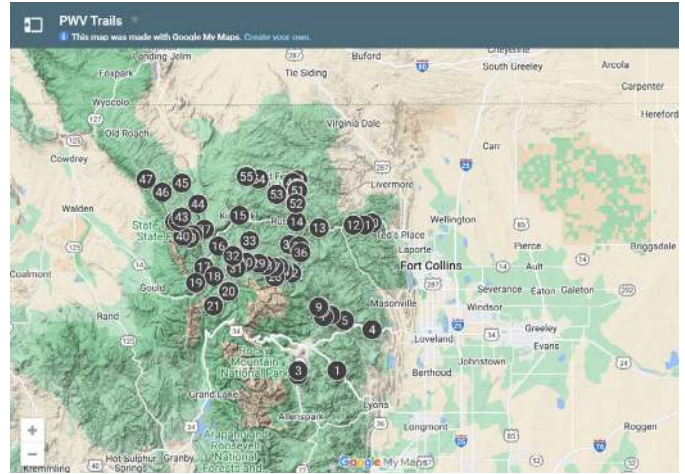
Recommended Trails for Children

IN THE CANYON LAKES RANGER DISTRICT,
ARAPAHO-ROOSEVELT NATIONAL FORESTS



Notes

- These trail descriptions highlight features of interest to young families within the first mile or two of the trailhead.
- For complete trail descriptions, including an interactive map of trail locations, conditions and closures, see the “Trails” tab at www.pwv.org.
- Elevations are given in feet.
- Experts recommend focusing on the journey, not the destination, for young hikers.
- For preparation, safety precautions and a fun scavenger hunt, look for the brochure, “Hiking With Kids in the Canyon Lakes Ranger District, Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest”, also on the “Trails” tab under Trails by Interest > Hiking with Kids at www.pwv.org.



Online interactive map of trails at pwv.org/trails/find-a-trail

Key

P

recommended for preschool age

E

recommended for elementary age

Y

can be hiked year-round, weather and snow permitting

♥

Poudre Wilderness Volunteers favorites

Trail Descriptions

Estes Park Area



Exploring along the North Fork Trail

NORTH FORK ♥ E Y

Beginning Elevation: 7,868' | Peak Elevation: 8,961'
One-Way Length: 4.4 miles (0.7 mile to the bridge over North Fork Big Thompson River)

The ridge to the river is moderate, and then the trail is very gentle. The river area offers a great variety of flora, and there are side areas where water play is possible most of the year. Let the kids look for worms or larvae under the rocks in the river where/when it is low - just don't leave the critters out of the water too long, or the critters will die. Historic cabin remains may be found off a side trail at 3 miles. See the entire trail description for directions and details.



Lower Poudre Canyon



HEWLETT GULCH P E Y

Beginning Elevation: 5,680' | Peak Elevation: 6,794'
One-Way Length: 3 miles (to end of creek portion)

Stay on trail or worn areas to avoid poison ivy and rattlesnakes. Don't let the kids get ahead of you! Gentle trail with twelve creek crossings on logs in less than two miles. The creek allows for water play and fun stone-stepping crossings. Let the kids look for worms or larvae under the rocks in the creek - just don't leave the critters out of the water too long, or the critters will die. Take a photo of the homestead map at the trailhead, and turn your hike into a treasure hunt for historical structures. At 2 miles, the trail splits; take the trail on the right for gentle trail, more creek crossings and a small canyon. Both the Hewlett and High Park Fires hit this trail in 2012, and results can be seen, plus some of nature's revival.

YOUNG GULCH ♥ P E Y

Beginning Elevation: 5,829' | Peak Elevation: 7,008'
One-Way Length: 5.3 miles

Stay on trail or worn areas to avoid poison ivy and rattlesnakes. Don't let the kids get ahead of you! And watch out for bicycles. The trail follows a creek drainage, but much of it is up along the hillside. Bridges at 0.3, 0.6 and 0.8 mile have creek access. The creek crossings beyond are wading or single log crossings, but some of them are quite high and narrow, with no railing; use caution. The creek allows for water play. Let the kids look for worms or larvae under the rocks in the creek - just don't leave the critters out of the water too long, or the critters will die. Past about 1.7 miles, this area was severely burned in the High Park Fire in 2012. Few trees have grown back, but look for young aspen in the valley. Then, the flood of 2013 wiped out the entire trail, and reconstruction was completed late 2019. This is generally a sunny trail.

LOWER DADD GULCH ♥ P E Y

Beginning Elevation: 7,024' | Peak Elevation: 8,489'
One Way Length: 3.4 miles

Follows a small creek with many crossings, though the creek may be dry late summer to autumn in dry years. The creek allows for water play and fun stone-stepping crossings. Some of the log crossings are quite high and narrow, with no railing; use caution. Let the kids look for worms or larvae under the rocks in the creek - just don't leave the critters out of the water too long, or the critters will die. Mixed forest with much diversity. Being north-facing and forested, the trail is mostly shady.

MT. MCCONNELL & KREUTZER E NATURE TRAIL

Beginning Elevation: 6,651' | Peak Elevation: 7,998'
Round-Trip Length: 4.4 miles

Steeper than many trails. Educational signs can be found along Kreutzer Nature Trail. Good hikers can get to the top of the summit of Mt. McConnel with wide views. The eastern portion of the summit trail is a primitive trail and not recommended due to poor footing and steep side slopes.

Pingree Park Area



LITTLE BEAVER CREEK ♥ P E

Beginning Elevation: 8,151' | Peak Elevation: 9,785'
One-Way Length: 7.0 miles

The trailhead is a half mile west from Pingree Park Road, turning at mile 6.3 along a rough road, Old Flowers Road (which is fine for all but the lowest clearance vehicles). Hiking through shady forest over a couple small ridges, after 0.7 mile the trail follows the creek, crossing twice over nice two-log stringer bridges, each with a railing. The creek allows for water play. You may let the kids look for worms or larvae under the rocks in the creek - just don't leave the critters out of the water too long, or the critters will die. The first mile of the trail goes through patches of burn from the Cameron Peak Fire of 2020, which offers a good chance for older kids to see various natural fire recovery stages. Lots of ecological diversity.

SIGNAL MOUNTAIN E E

Beginning Elevation: 8,628' | Peak Elevation: 11,053'
One-Way Length: 5.9 miles

First 0.1 mile is a steep downhill, then over a ridge. At 0.4 mile, you are in the Pennock Creek valley, and there is an old log structure near the creek. A foot bridge crosses the creek at 0.8 mile, and an old dam is just across the creek there. The trail gets just a little steeper at 1.8 miles, then remains of beaver ponds turning into meadows can be seen at 2.8 miles. The creek allows for water play. You may let the kids look for worms or larvae under the rocks in the creek - just don't leave the critters out of the water too long, or the critters will die.





Upper Poudre Canyon

BIG SOUTH

Beginning Elevation: 8,457' | Peak Elevation: 9,553'
One-Way Length: 6.9 miles

There are many opportunities to see and hear the Wild and Scenic Poudre River, and only a quarter mile to the first overlook, which is a nice picnic rock. This is a class 5 river section in the early summer; be cautious. One can see some fire damage and regrowth, but the trail was not heavily affected in the Cameron Peak Fire of 2020 for the first three miles.

BLUE LAKE

Beginning Elevation: 9,482' | Peak Elevation: 11,040'
One-Way Length: 6.9 miles

At 0.25 mile there is a bridge over Joe Wright Creek, then a nice overlook at 1.5 miles, just before the second bridge. The trail is gentle until the Rawah Wilderness Boundary at 2.5 miles but with some steep side slopes. From about mile 0.5 to mile 4, it is severely burned from the Cameron Peak Fire of 2020. However, it is a good place to view the forest regeneration through abundant wildflowers in early summer.

CORRAL CREEK & UPPER BIG SOUTH

Beginning Elevation: 10,056' | Peak Elevation: 10,056'
One-Way Length: 5.3 miles

There are interesting rock formations and views of the Poudre River. Chance to see moose. Although the Upper Big South Trail was severely affected by the Cameron Peak Fire of 2020, Corral Creek Trail (first 1.5 miles) was mildly or only moderately affected – and an educational opportunity for viewing fire recovery in mild and moderate burns.

MONTGOMERY PASS

Beginning Elevation: 10,009' | Peak Elevation: 10,990'
One-Way Length: 1.9 miles

Steeper than most of these trails. About 1 1/3 miles to Montgomery Cabin remains, 2 miles to Montgomery Pass, with great views and tundra landscape. Not a good day on the top if it's windy or there is lightning, though.

NEOTA CREEK

Beginning Elevation: 10,212; Peak Elevation: 10,400.
One-Way Length: 1.6 miles

This trail is very gentle all the way. Mixed forest and meadow. Lovely flowers in the summer. Chance to see moose. The trail tends to hold water and mud, especially early in the season.

TRAP PARK

Beginning Elevation: 9,967' | Peak Elevation: 10,547'
One-Way Length: 3.1 miles

After about a mile climb, the trail reaches the lower part of Trap Park (the big meadow) and creek. This first creek crossing always requires wading. The creek allows for water play, though it is always very cold. You may let the kids look for worms or larvae under the rocks in the creek - just don't leave the critters out of the water too long, or the critters will die. Keep your eye out for moose, beautiful subalpine flowers and beautiful views.

Rawah Wilderness

MCINTYRE

Beginning Elevation: 8,432' | Peak Elevation: 9,926'
One-Way Length: 9.6 miles

The first mile goes over a ridge to a bridge over McIntyre Creek, then steadily up but not too steep along the beautiful creek. In late June and early July the wildflowers are abundant.

WEST BRANCH

Beginning Elevation: 8,560' | Peak Elevation: 11,171'
One-Way Length: 7.1 miles

The first mile is mostly gentle, then over some ridges to a crossing of the West Branch of the Laramie River, at 3.5 miles. Much forest diversity. Very lovely in autumn, too.





Red Feather Lakes



There are several other trails in the area off of these listed. Many granite rock outcroppings along all these trails – great for rock scrambling. Primarily Ponderosa pine forest and meadow. Moose in the area – and elk in autumn, winter and early spring.

GRANITE RIDGE **P E Y** & MOLLY LAKE

Beginning Elevation: 8,591' | Peak Elevation: 8,648'
One-Way Length: 3.7 miles (+ 0.1 mile for Molly Lake Spur)

This former road is extremely gentle. Molly Lake (sometimes pond) is only 0.8 mile from the trailhead.

LADY MOON **♥ P E Y** & DISAPPOINTMENT FALLS

Beginning Elevation: 8,146' | Peak Elevation: 8,328'
One-Way Length: 2.6 miles (+ 0.6 mile for Disappointment Falls Spur)

This trail is quite gentle. One can access this trail from Lady Moon Trailhead or Elkhorn Creek Trailhead, as well. The remains of an old log hay barn beckon along Disappointment Falls Spur. The falls is a nice little falls, with a cozy shaded area and usually plenty of water in the spring and early summer and rarely dry. Look for evidence of beaver along Elkhorn Creek, and moose and elk throughout. The creek allows for water play. With many aspen in the area, this is a beautiful autumn hike. It is only a mile to the waterfall from the Elkhorn Creek Trailhead.



Pawnee National Grasslands

PAWNEE BUTTES **P E Y**

Beginning Elevation: 5,420' | Peak Elevation: 5,420'
One-Way Length: 1.7 miles

Stay on the trail or worn areas to avoid poison ivy and rattlesnakes. Don't let your kids get ahead of you! This area can be very hot in summer; be sure to have plenty of water and sun gear. The trail is very gentle, located in a shortgrass prairie with tall buttes, and many birds nest on or near the buttes. One can find lots of wildflowers in the spring. The Overlook and Lips Bluff areas are closed from March 1 through June 30 due to raptor nesting.



Pawnee Buttes | Photo Credit: Jim Shaklee

FROG POND **♥ P E Y** & EAST DOWDY LAKE

Beginning Elevation: 8,172' | Peak Elevation: 8,177'
One-Way Length: 2.7 miles

This is a very gentle trail with a lot of shade on the east end.

MT. MARGARET **♥ P E Y**

Beginning Elevation: 8,097' | Peak Elevation: 8,208'
One-Way Length: 3.8 miles

This is a very gentle trail, and quite sunny – crossing Lone Pine Creek at 0.8 mile. There are many granite rock formations for rock scrambling.

NORTH LONE PINE **♥ P E**

Beginning Elevation: 9,348' | Peak Elevation: 10,689'
One-Way Length: 4.6 miles

The trail follows the creek, which allows for water play and some stone hopping crossings. You may let the kids look for worms or larvae under the rocks in the creek - just don't leave the critters out of the water too long, or the critters will die. The first mile and a half is very shady. Normally Dead Man Road (CR 86) is open all summer and fall. Check the Larimer County Road Closures page to be sure, especially early in the summer, at <https://www.larimer.gov/roads/closures>.