



Kelly Bastone

Jeni Garcia and Ben Russell break trail on Rabbit Ears Pass' west summit loop.

Steamboat Springs lies against the western ridge of the Continental Divide and is nearly surrounded by the 520,000-acre Routt National Forest and three wilderness areas. Add to that mix two ski areas, four Colorado State Parks, hot springs, lakes, rivers and trail systems that offer outdoor enthusiasts an endless supply of adventures. There are more than 1,000 square miles of multi-use public lands surrounding Steamboat, enough terrain for every backcountry whim, whether you're a novice or an adrenaline junkie.

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Snowmobile Routes

<p>◆◆ 1A North: Continental Divide</p> <p>Location: Rabbit Ears Pass to Buffalo Pass Route description: Start at Dumont or Muddy Creek trailhead. Open meadows and dense forests. Very popular route.</p>	15 miles
<p>◆◆ 1A South: Continental Divide</p> <p>Location: Rabbit Ears Pass to Rock Creek on Gore Pass Route description: Start at Muddy Creek or Gore Pass. Longer, less crowded trail. Numerous non-maintained routes in the Gore Pass area.</p>	26 miles
<p>◆◆ 1D Buffalo Pass</p> <p>Location: Dry Lake to Buffalo Pass Route description: Limited parking at Dry Lake. Multiple use area. Crowded on lower sections with skiers and snowcats. Opens up above the switchbacks. Stay on groomed route until after switchbacks.</p>	8 miles
<p>● 1E Grizzly Creek</p> <p>Location: Grizzly Creek Guard Station to Buffalo Pass Route description: Access Grizzly Creek from Colorado 14 in North Park. Alternative access to Buffalo Pass.</p>	8 miles
<p>● 1F Sawmill Creek</p> <p>Location: Intersection of 1E to Rabbit Ears Pass Route description: Forms a 40-mile loop with 1A and 1E.</p>	16 miles
<p>◆◆ 1G Round Lake Cutoff</p> <p>Location: Round Lake to 1F trail Route description: Route not groomed or maintained. Know where you're going. Have map and compass.</p>	4 miles
<p>◆◆ 5A South Walton Peak</p> <p>Location: Muddy Creek or Dumont Lake to South Walton Peak Route description: Nice views as route climbs South Walton Peak. Be aware that nearby North Walton Peak is for non-motorized recreation.</p>	6 miles

Additional trails are located elsewhere in the forest. Contact the U.S. Forest Service for maps and more information or visit the website: www.fs.fed.us/mbr/rd-hpbe. Source: All material supplied by the U.S. Forest Service

Backcountry Information

Cross Country Ski General Information

1. Park only in designated areas. These are identified by large trailhead parking signs.
2. Skiing is recommended in areas north and south of U.S. 40 from the West Summit east to Walton Creek.
3. Ski routes are marked with blue diamonds on trees. Bamboo poles are used to mark the trail route through open areas when snow depth permits. After heavy snowfalls, the posts and poles may be covered with snow and not visible.
4. Routes are not groomed and have sections of steep ascent and descent. Skiers should have the skills to handle varied terrain and snow conditions before attempting these routes. The exception is Bruce's Trail, which is occasionally groomed in early ski season.
5. Dogs' feet may damage ski tracks. Dog droppings should be removed from the trail.

Snowshoe General Information

Snowshoers are welcome to use the marked cross country ski routes on Rabbit Ears Pass, but they should travel parallel to the ski tracks, not on them. Snowshoes damage ski tracks. Recommended routes for snowshoeing are Walton Peak Loop and Bruce's Trail.

Snowmobile General Information

1. Park only in designated areas. These are identified by large trailhead parking signs.
2. Snowmobile use areas are north and south of U.S. 40, from Walton Creek to Muddy Pass. Please respect non-motorized areas.
3. Snowmobile trails are maintained by volunteers from Routt Powder Riders.
4. Snowmobile routes are marked with orange diamonds on trees. Poles are used to mark the trail routes through open areas.

Non-Motorized Areas

Two areas, the west side of Rabbit Ears Pass on U.S. 40 and an area by the Dry Lake Campground on the Buffalo Pass Road, are managed for non-motorized recreation. These areas are marked on trailhead maps and on the ground. These areas are closed to motorized users. Violations are punishable.

Wilderness

Mount Zirkel and the Sarvis Creek wilderness areas are closed to snowmobiles. Violations are punishable.

Cross Country Ski & Snowshoe Routes

- **1A West Summit Loop A** **3.7 miles**
 USGS maps: Mount Werner, Walton Peak, Blacktail Mountain quads
Access: Travel east of Steamboat Springs on U.S. 40 approximately 13 miles to the West Summit parking area on Rabbit Ears Pass.
Route description: Begin on the north side of the road. Skiing the route in a clockwise direction is less difficult, with gentler climbs and steeper descents through open and wooded areas. Views of the Yampa Valley and the Flat Tops are spectacular. The West Summit loops and surrounding terrain are the most popular skiing areas on the Hahn's Peak/Bears Ears Ranger District.
- ◆◆ **1B West Summit Loop B** **4 miles**
 USGS maps: Mount Werner, Walton Peak
Access: This route is reached by skiing counterclockwise on 1A. Ski past the first junction with 1B and climb to the top of the ridge. At the second junction, on the ridgetop, ski 1B to the east. This route is best skied in a clockwise direction.
Route description: This route has several steep ascents and descents through heavy timber and open parks.
- ◆◆ **1C South Summit Loop** **3 miles**
 USGS map: Walton Peak
Access: This route begins at the West Summit parking area. Park on the south side of the highway.
Route description: Travel counter-clockwise for the best downhill runs. The route begins by following an old road. Woods, open meadows and some steep descents are encountered. This route connects with route 3B midway around the loop. Past this junction, the route follows the telephone lines and old highway, paralleling U.S. 40. The final portion follows the meadow edge back to the West Summit, then retraces the first segment of old road.
- **1D Bruce's Trail** **3.1 miles**
 USGS map: Mount Werner
Access: Travel east of Steamboat Springs on U.S. 40 approximately 14 miles to the parking area on the north side of the highway. A short spur connects the parking lot to the main trail.
Route description: Designed wide to accommodate both skating and traditional skiing techniques. The trail is machine-groomed in the early ski season. The upper loop provides easy skiing, while the lower loop has a moderate difficulty rating. The tight loop design and proximity to the highway make this trail a good choice for a ski workout, a short day, or for skiers wishing to remain relatively close to their vehicles.
- ◆◆ **2A Hogan Park Route** **7 miles**
 USGS maps: Mount Werner, Walton Peak
Access: Travel east of Steamboat Springs on U.S. 40 approximately 18 miles to the Walton Peak parking area. One way, to base of Morningside Lift.
Route description: This route is recommended for experts only. If you plan to descend Mount Werner through the Steamboat Ski Area, safety straps are required. Begin on the north side of the highway just west of the large cut bank. The route crosses large open parks and many streams. Steep ascents and descents will be encountered. During heavy snowfall or whiteout conditions, the route is very difficult to follow across the large parks. Carry emergency/survival gear. If lift is not operating, climb 1 mile to top of lift, then descend 3 miles to ski area base.
- **2B Fox Curve Loop** **3 miles**
 USGS map: Mount Werner
Access: Travel approximately 17 miles east of Steamboat Springs on U.S. 40 to the Fox Curve parking area. Parking on north side of highway.
Route description: This route has varied terrain including steep ascents and descents. Use caution when crossing Walton Creek.
- ◆ **3A Walton Creek Loop** **1.6 miles**
 USGS map: Mount Werner
Access: Travel east of Steamboat Springs on U.S. 40 approximately 18 miles to the Walton Creek parking area on Rabbit Ears Pass. The parking area is on the south side of the highway.
Route description: Begin at the knoll south of the parking lot and follow the powerline a short distance to the west. Turn south across Walton Creek and through Walton Creek Campground. The junction of route 3B is reached in the meadow south of the campground. Past this junction, the route makes a steep ascent over a ridge and down an open slope to Walton Creek and the junction of route 3C. Follow Walton Creek back to the parking area.
- ◆◆ **3B Par-A-Llel Route** **2 miles**
 USGS maps: Mount Werner, Walton Peak
Access: This route can be accessed from route 1C, beginning at the West Summit parking area on the south side of the highway, or from route 3A, beginning at the Walton Creek parking area.
Route description: This route connects routes 1C and 3A. Skiing it west to east provides more exciting downhill runs; skiing east to west involves more climbing, though much of it is gentle. Starting at the junction of 1C and 3B (west end), the route goes up a gentle slope and drops into a stream valley. Use caution when crossing streams and beaver ponds on this route as they may be only partially frozen. Heavy timber and open meadows.
- **3C North Walton Peak Route** **3 miles**
 USGS maps: Mount Werner, Walton Peak
Access: Travel east of Steamboat Springs on U.S. 40 approximately 18 miles to the Walton Creek parking area.
Route description: This is the most popular route for telemarking. Begin at the knoll to the south of the parking area and head southeast and downhill through the trees following route 3A. Approximately 1/2 mile from the parking area is the junction of 3A and 3C. The route crosses Walton Creek and travels through wooded areas and open meadows. It connects to Forest Road 302 and follows it to the top of North Walton Peak. Opportunities for steep runs exist on the slopes of this peak.

Level of Difficulty Key: ● Easier ■ Moderate ■◆ More difficult ◆ Difficult ◆◆ Most difficult, expert only

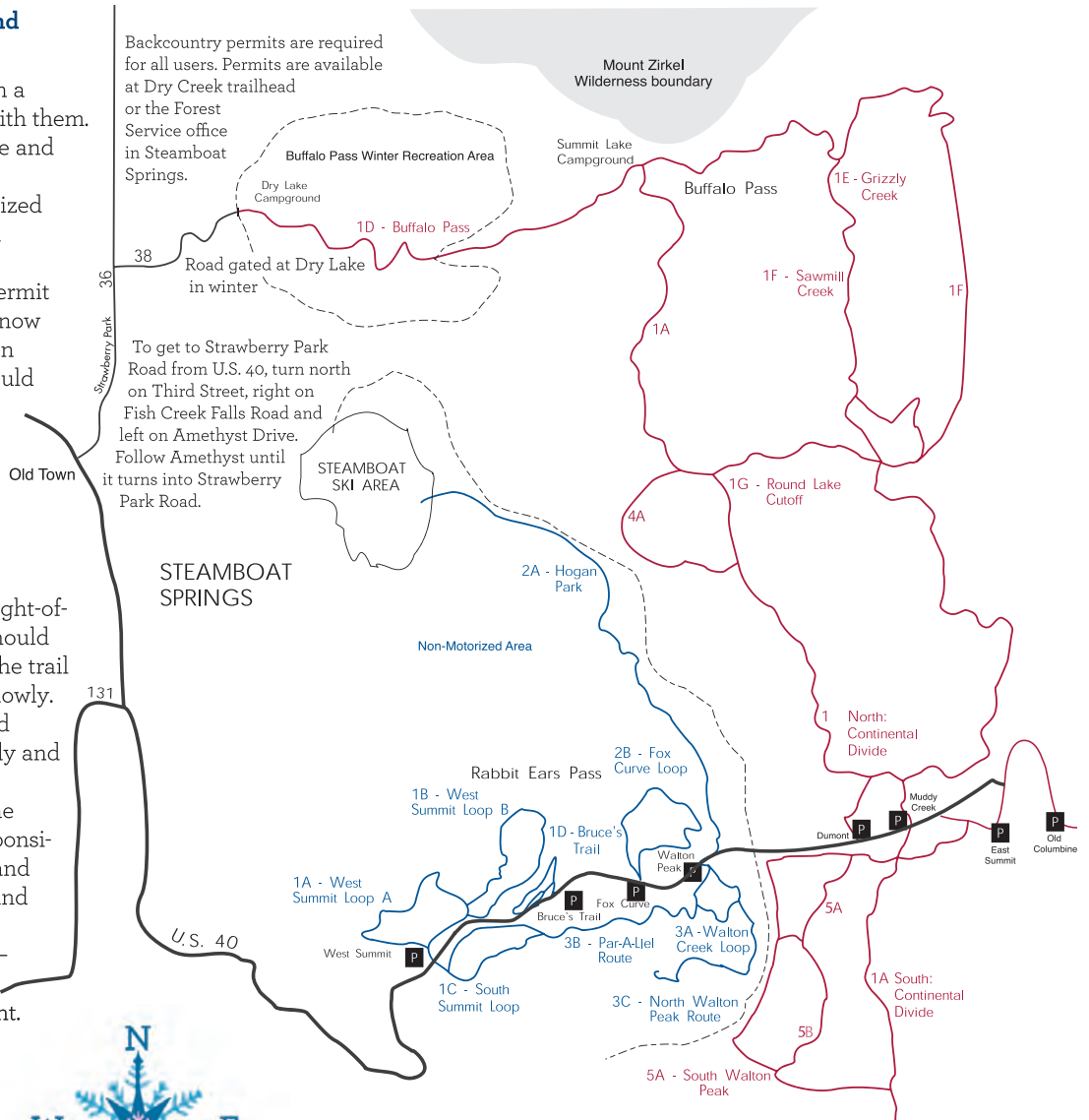
Backcountry Area Trail Map

Buffalo Pass Terms and Conditions:

- All users must obtain a permit and carry it with them.
- Within the mixed use and commercial area, all over-the-snow motorized vehicles must stay on designated routes.
- Failure to obtain a permit or to keep over-the-snow motorized vehicles on designated routes could result in fines or the loss of privileges to use the area.

Safety and Etiquette Recommendations:

- Snowcats have the right-of-way; snowmobiles should move to the side of the trail and pass snowcats slowly.
- There are many blind corners – travel slowly and be aware of others.
- There is no avalanche control. It is your responsibility to know snow and weather conditions and your own ability.
- Skiers and boarders – conserve powder. Keep your tracks tight.



For a description of the trails depicted on map, see VG58-59



Legend

General location of trail is indicated. For a more complete trail map, contact Routt National Forest, 879-1870, 925 Weiss Dr., Steamboat Springs

- Cross country ski trail
- Snowmobile trailhead
- - - Non-motorized area boundary. Non-motorized use on the west side. Multiple use on the east side.

Sources: Routt County, Routt Powder Riders and the U.S. Forest Service.

Backcountry Contact Information

Colorado Avalanche Information Ctr.
970-275-5360 | caic.state.co.us/

**Routt National Forest Hahns Peak/
Bears Ears Ranger District**
925 Weiss Dr | Steamboat Springs 80487
970-870-2299 | fs.fed.us/r2/mbr/rd-hpbe

Routt Nat'l Forest Yampa Ranger Dist.
PO Box 7 | 300 Roselawn | Yampa 80483
970-638-4516 | fs.fed.us/r2/mbr/rd-yampa

Stagecoach State Park
PO Box 98 | Oak Creek 80468
970-736-2436 | coloradoparks.org

Steamboat Lake State Park
PO Box 667 | 61855 Routt County Rd 129
Clark 80428 | 970-879-3922 | coloradoparks.org

Steamboat Ski Touring Center
PO Box 775401 | 2000 Clubhouse Dr
Steamboat Springs 80477 | 970-879-8180



Being Prepared

The one common denominator of all backcountry enthusiasts is an emphasis on safety. Routt County Search and Rescue offers the following tips:

- Never go alone.
- Tell your friends your destination and expected time of return. Leave a note in your car at the trailhead with this information, especially if you change your plans.
- Take a map and compass and know how to use them.
- Know your physical condition.
- Check with your doctor to see if changes in medication are recommended for high altitude or strenuous exercise. Make sure your partners are aware of any medical conditions.
- Listen to local weather reports and prepare for extreme conditions.
- Dress in layers and take adequate clothing. Also bring a space blanket.
- Bring more water than you think you will need and plenty of food.
- Take emergency rations. Carry a tin cup and a small stove or matches and fire-starting gear. Know how to use the fire-starting equipment.
- Be aware of your surroundings and the weather. Regularly look backward and around you. Note landmarks and compass bearings. Keep in mind your return route.
- If you get confused, STOP! Stay put and stay warm.
- Adjustable poles, climbing skins, shovel and avalanche transceiver are the core components of any backcountry skier's gear list. Practice with them and develop a rescue plan.
- Buy a hiking certificate or hunting license at any sporting goods store. By doing so, you are vested in the Colorado Search and Rescue fund, which will cover the costs associated with rescue efforts, should you become lost or injured. Registering a snowmobile at any Colorado State Park office has the same effect.

Elk are a common sighting in the Yampa Valley and surrounding mountains.