

Adventure Hiking in Ouray

Any of the trails listed in this brochure can be completed in less than a day unless otherwise indicated.

You will find the terrain in the Ouray area to be generally steeper than in most other areas, so hiking time for various distances may be different than you are accustomed to. From the short stroll up Cascade Falls, a good first-time introduction to area hiking, to the challenge of the Horsethief/Bear Creek Loop Trail, the region has something for hikers of all interests and abilities.

Whether you are an experienced or novice hiker, you should gradually allow yourself to become acclimated to the elevation before taking strenuous hiking trips. Jogging or walking at lower elevations prior to coming to Ouray, or just starting out here with a couple of short hikes, will help significantly. Don't hike alone. If you do, however, always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return. It is extremely important that you report back to this person when you return so that the Ouray Mountain Rescue isn't called out unnecessarily.

Weather conditions in the mountains can change suddenly and without warning. Always carry warm clothing, plenty of food and water, and proper emergency first-aid supplies. Sunscreen is also a must in the clear air at these altitudes. You don't want a sunburn to ruin your vacation. Be sure to take along a good topographical map, too.

Many of the area hikes are relatively difficult compared to most flatland trails. The Hiking Trails of Ouray County, a customized area topographical map and guide, is an excellent source for detailed information regarding the difficulty level, attractions, hazards and location of the trailhead for each of our area hikes. You can purchase one of these maps at many of Ouray's shops and hotels.

This particular brochure only briefly describes some of the area hikes but does categorize them by difficulty level. Do not attempt to hike any of the more difficult trails based on information obtained from this brochure. Hiking Trails of Ouray County would be a wise investment for any of the more complex hikes. Books on area hiking are also available. Ouray Hiking Guide and Trails Less Traveled by Kelvin Kent are sold at some local shops and hotels.

Some hiking trails cross private property. Be sure to respect this land by staying on the trail. Pack out garbage and leave old buildings, flora and fauna undisturbed.

This brochure is presented as a courtesy to visitors. No warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the safety or ongoing validity of information listed herein. The Ouray Chamber Resort Association or its agents are not responsible for any liability arising from the use of the information.

***** For more information on these hikes please refer to "Hiking Trails of Ouray County" available at the Ouray Visitors Center and local bookstores.**

HIKES - SHORT AND SWEET

Box Cañon Falls Trail

If you haven't seen Box Cañon Falls, consider it a must. The entrance is two blocks up hill at the west end of Third Avenue. During the summer months there is a small fee to see the falls but it is worth much more than what they charge.

After you've been into the canyon and seen the falls itself, you have the option of climbing a series of stairs and then following a 1/4-mile trail to a bridge far above the canyon. The views from there are spectacular.

Hiking Time: From the west end of Third Avenue, a visit to see the Box Cañon Falls and hike to the top should take less than 1 hour.

Lower Cascade Falls Trail

Cascade Falls is the waterfall in the northeast corner of Ouray, visible from almost any location in town. The 1/4-mile hike to the base of the falls is worth the time and effort. In fact, consider taking a picnic along. There are plenty of places where you can sit and enjoy a peaceful, relaxing lunch.

You can reach the falls by hiking uphill from Main Street on 8th Avenue. It is only a two-block distance to the beginning of the trail,

but is quite steep. Or drive up to the end of 8th, park in the small parking area and walk from there.

Hiking Time: From anywhere in Ouray, this round-trip walk to the base of Cascade Falls should take about 45 minutes, additional time if you spend much time at the top.. Children love this short hike.

Portland Trail

This is a slightly longer hike than the two previously mentioned but is easy and one which children enjoy.

The trailhead starts a short distance up the dirt road just after you turn onto the Amphitheater Campground road. Park your car at the base of this dirt road and hike to the trailhead.

The trail follows Portland Creek that meanders through the basin above the Amphitheater. This trail makes a 3.8-mile tour of this beautiful, rolling basin and gains only 900 feet along its various ups and downs. The trail ends in the campground. From there, walk downhill on the paved campground road to your car.

Hiking Time: This hike will take about 3 hours.

Ice Park Trail

The Uncompahgre River flows into Ouray from Poughkeepsie Gulch joining Red Mountain Creek along the way. Over millions of years, these streams have created a magnificent gorge that parallels Hwy 550 into Ouray.

The Ice Park trailhead is located just after you turn onto the Camp Bird Mine Road. You will find the trailhead marker just beyond the CDOT maintenance yard and downhill from the high bridge. The hike follows along the gorge about one-half mile. The trail will cross the river just this side of a century-old dam, the water from which is used to generate electricity at Ouray's hydroelectric plant. The plant went unused for many years until about 1992, at which time the one hundred year old penstock pipeline was replaced and was allowed to carry water to generate reserve electricity for the town once more. After crossing the river, you will return via the trail on the other side of the gorge and return back just above the original trailhead on the uphill side of the bridge.

Hiking Time: It should take about 1 hour to complete this hike.

Baby Bathtubs

This is a great hike to acclimate to Ouray's altitude and one that is good to do if you have small children.

Drive two switchbacks south of Ouray on Hwy 550 to the Amphitheater Campground road. Just after you turn, park on your left just this side of the first bridge. Cross over the bridge on foot and the trailhead is just to your right after crossing. This trail offers beautiful scenery in a .3 mile stroll to a horse crossing below a bridge. Return as you came or follow the Portland Trail back for a loop trip.

Hiking Time: This beautiful hike can be done in 30 to 45 minutes.

Old Twin Peaks Trail to the Overlook

This is a short, but very steep, hike. The resulting views, however, make it all worthwhile.

From Oak Street on the west side of town, walk straight up Queen Street; the road curves slightly to the right as you pass the log home on your left. The trail takes off to the right just after a gate. Stop at the overlook and return or you can continue further on this extremely difficult hiking adventure. If you plan to go on, be sure you refer to the map, *Hiking Trails of Ouray County*, for additional information.

Hiking Time: This is a quick one - 30 minutes.

HIKES-LONGER / MODERATE

Oak Creek Trail to the Creek Crossing

Refer to Hiking Trails of Ouray County for detailed information.

You can reach this trailhead either by foot or 4-wheel drive vehicle. Both the Oak Creek and Twin Peaks Trails follow the same path for the first mile. At the point where they split, take the left fork, following signs saying Oak Creek Trail. After branching off, you reach this picturesque canyon after about one-half mile, and the falls shortly thereafter. For a moderate hike return once you reach this creek crossing. Round trip is 3.6 miles.

Hiking Time: From the trailhead it should take about 4 hours to complete this hike.

Lower Blues Lakes Trail from East Dallas Road

Refer to Hiking Trails of Ouray County for detailed information.

This is a magnificent hike. The scenery is spectacular around every turn so it is one that never gets tedious. The trail to the lower lakes is safe and not too difficult for children who are used to hiking. Round-trip is 6.6 miles.

Hiking Time: The drive to the trailhead takes about 1 hour. Although the trail map says the hiking time is 3 to 4 hours, allow a little longer for this round-trip.

Blaine Basin Trail

Refer to Hiking Trails of Ouray County for detailed information.

Directions to this trailhead are the same as those to the "Lower Blue Lakes From East Dallas Road" recommended previously. From the trailhead parking area, the Blaine Basin Trail takes off to the left and over the bridge.

The hike to the basin is an easy grade through forests, partly along Wilson Creek. From the basin, you have spectacular panoramic views of the north face of Mount Sneffels and nearby peaks. The round trip is 6.4 miles.

Hiking Time: The drive to the trailhead can take about 1 hour. The actual hiking time is about 3 to 4 hours.

HIKES-LONGER / DIFFICULT

Bear Creek Trail

Refer to Hiking Trails of Ouray County for detailed information

This is an awesome hike and is a favorite of many locals. This is a National Recreation Trail -- one of only a few designated in the USA as an especially scenic hike.

If you have a fear of heights and narrow ledges, you might think twice about this particular trail. It is also not recommended for venture-some children. Don't get caught on the shelf portion of this hike in a thunderstorm, so know the forecast before heading out.

The Grizzly Bear Mine, reached after 2.5 miles, is a great place to stop for lunch. You can then continue on 1.7 miles to the Yellow Jacket Mine or call it a day and return.

Hiking Time: Plan to spend 8 hours if you go to the Yellow Jacket Mine but only about 5 hours if you return after exploring the Grizzly Bear Mine site.

Weehawken Trail to the Alpine Mine

Refer to Hiking Trails of Ouray County for detailed information.

The trailhead for the Weehawken Trail is a short drive up the Camp Bird Mine road.

This hike starts out through aspen groves and open meadows with beautiful views of the Mt. Hayden area. After 1.6 miles, fork off to the right, climbing steeply to the Alpine Mine and then beyond to a magnificent overlook of the town of Ouray. This round-trip hike is 5.2 miles.

Hiking Time: Plan about 5 hours to complete this hike.

Upper Cascade Falls Trail

Refer to Hiking Trails of Ouray County for detailed information.

If you've ever wondered about that old metal corrugated building 2,300 feet up the mountainside in the northeast corner of Ouray, it is

the old Chief Ouray Mine bunkhouse and machinery building. This is the culmination of the Upper Cascade Falls Trail and wow, what a view!

The trailhead is in the Amphitheater Campground just south of Ouray. The first half hour of the hike is sheltered but when traversing the switchbacks at the upper portion of the trail, the sun can be quite hot during the summer months. Be sure to take plenty of water and sunscreen. It is best to start early in the morning to complete this 4.9 mile hike during the cooler part of the day.

Hiking Time: Plan about 5 hours to complete this hike.

Ice Lake Trail

Since this hike is not in Ouray County, it is not included in the Hiking Trails of Ouray County map. Information regarding this hike can be found either on the USGS Topographical Ophir Map or in Kelvin Kent's book, the Ouray Hiking Guide.

This is a favorite trail of many Ouray visitors. It offers dramatic scenery, waterfalls, meadows abundant with wildflowers, alpine tundra and glacial lakes--providing more scenic beauty and Kodak moments than any one person can handle in a day. Much of this trail is only moderately difficult, with only two very steep sections.

Hiking Time: It takes about 45 minutes to drive to the trailhead just north of Silverton. Allow about 6 hours of hiking time to complete this magnificent adventure.

HIKES-DIFFICULT / TECHNICAL

Twin Peaks Trail

Refer to Hiking Trails of Ouray County for detailed information. This 6.4 mile round-trip hike is extremely deceptive. It starts out

General Information

There are many more spectacular and challenging hiking trails throughout the area. The ones mentioned in this brochure are the ones most familiar to locals and most commonly enjoyed by guests.

If you had not already guessed, we do highly recommend purchasing a Hiking Trails of Ouray County map and guide if you will be hiking any of the more difficult trails or are planning multiple days of hiking.

The following information is provided by the offices of the Uncompahgre National Forest:

“Water is the lifeblood of all species. Keep it pure. Wash at least 100 feet from water sources. Also, due to natural organisms, water taken from streams or lakes should be boiled or filtered through purifiers before you consume it.

“To keep water pure, bury any human waste six inches deep at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.

“Please keep dogs leashed. Loose dogs can harass wildlife and stock, and can cause conflicts with other visitors.

“Pack out all of your trash, including toilet tissue.

Revised: April 2008

Information is subject to change

rather mildly, following the same path as the Oak Creek Trail, an easier hike mentioned earlier. After it splits off, it can become extremely demanding, challenging even the most avid hiker. It can be windy and cold at the top so be sure to take a jacket along for protection.

Many of the published aerial photographs of Ouray have been taken from this spectacular vantage point.

Hiking Time: This can take as long as 6 to 7 hours.

Blue Lakes Trail, Lower Lakes to Blue Lakes Pass

Refer to Hiking Trails of Ouray County for detailed information.

This hike is a continuation of a previously mentioned, easier hike - Blue Lakes From East Dallas Road (CR 7). Beyond the Lower Lakes, the trail steepens and the final ascent to Blue Lakes Pass rates a 5 on anyone's difficulty scale.

Hiking Time: It takes about 1 hour to drive to the trail-head. Once you begin this hike, allow about 8 to 9 hours to complete this 11.4 miles round-trip hike.

Horsethief Trail to Bridge of Heaven

Refer to Hiking Trails of Ouray County for detailed information.

Many of the avid hikers who come to Ouray consider this to be one of the finest trails in the area. During this hike you will have panoramic views of Ouray, many of this area's 13,000 and 14,000-foot peaks, and much of the surrounding San Juan Mountains and the La Sal Mountains in Utah. It is one breathtaking experience after another. This must be why they call it the Bridge of Heaven.

Hiking Time: It takes about 30 minutes to drive to the trailhead and a 4-wheel drive vehicle is highly recommended. Once you start off on this trek, allow about 7 hours to complete the 8.4 miles round trip hike.

Information presented by Ouray Chamber Resort Association

P.O. Box 145 • Ouray, CO 81427 • 800.228.1876 • www.ouraycolorado.com