

Details of Suggested Hike Prior to Reunion by Lyle Bailk

Folks have been requesting details on a possible hike prior to the September Hikanation Reunion in Estes Park. This is what I have been planning:

I had the following hike recommended by an online friend of mine who is an avid hiker and Colorado resident.

Please contact lylebailk@gmail.com prior to March 1st if you would like to join us.

Grand Lake to Bear Lake, via Big meadows and Bighorn Flats. Sept 15,16, and 17, 2015.

Actually, this was just a portion of his recommended hike, but since we wish to keep the mileage down and just enjoy ourselves, I cut his suggestion in half. Here are the parts of his description that apply:

“Here is a backpacking trip that takes in the high country of the Continental Divide on a wide plateau. Where you can follow a famous long distance hiking trail for a bit. A loop where there is a good chance you’ll see big horn sheep.”

“In short, a loop that takes in what many people picture as the quintessential Colorado experience of backpacking: Wide open spaces, limitless vistas and big mountains.”

Here is his description, with photos, of this section, albeit in the opposite direction from what we will do:

From this trailhead, ascend up the Flattop Mountain Trail. This area will be busy, but not nearly as busy as Bear Lake below. On this hike, you’ll gain almost half of the elevation gain for this trip (almost 2900’)! So keep that pleasant fact in mind as you amble up the trail with full packs. The worse of climbing is being done right away. [\(We will descend this at the very end\)](#)



Of course, it isn’t too bad when you have some of the finest views in Colorado on the way up and at the top. Enjoy the views of nearby Longs Peak, have a bit to eat at the edge of a glacier and enjoy the fact you are on now on the backbone of the continent while on you walk along the Continental Divide Trail.

At Flat Top, you may elect to take a side trip up to Hallet Peak. Otherwise, continue on the Tonahutu Creek Trail. There is a good chance you'll have this area to yourself.

The views on Bighorn Flats and towards Sprague Pass are some of the best in the park. You'll often see bighorn sheep on the northern side of this area, too.



As you make your way down the trail and into the trees, you will pass several backcountry sites that make a great place to camp for the first night on a three day trip. You are in trees and it is peaceful.



Along the way on this trail, you'll encounter the area called aptly enough Big Meadows. The hiking is easy and gentle along the creek.

Continue to follow the Tonahutu Trail to near Grand Lake.

Our total mileage will be roughly 17 miles over two and a half days.

- First day (half day, actually) (Sept. 15) about 3.5 miles.
- Second day (Sept. 16) about 6 miles.
- Third day (Sept 17) about 7.5 with substantial elevation loss.

We need permits to camp in the RMNP Back country, and those are not available until after March 1st. So I cannot finalize plans until after that date.

We are limited to 7 persons per group, so we will need to know who plans to participate in this hike by March 1st. If there are more than 7 folks interested, we could possibly arrange for two groups, with some hiking the other half of the loop, if necessary. So far, we have Ed Snyder and I planning to make the hike.

RMNP also requires bear canisters for any camping below tree line. Ed and I each have a large size canister that would hold food for two or three persons for this short of trip. Otherwise, they can be purchased online, then sold on E bay for close to your purchase price after the hike, or they can be rented online. We can discuss this as the time gets closer.

Trails Illustrated Topographic Map #200, Rocky Mountain national Park, includes this hike.

I have some extra gear if you no longer have usable/suitable equipment. Let me know and we can scrounge around.