



Outdoor Action

Mt. Princeton Climb Trip Description

Mt. Princeton

Here is a description of the route that we will be taking from Gerry Roach's Book, Colorado Fourteeners.

"Princeton is a singular mountain. It is a true monarch as its neighbors are far lower and far away. Princeton is one of Colorado's most powerful peaks. Its summit is less than 9 miles southwest of Buena Vista, and the peak rises abruptly out of the Arkansas River Valley.

Princeton is the most visible of the Collegiate fourteeners. As you descend west in to the Arkansas River Valley on U.S. 285, Princeton stares you smack in the face for many miles. You cannot ignore its gaze."

The Route

The route is described as a Class 2 route which means off-trail hiking with some scrambling over large rocks on the upper sections. There are two possible starting points for the Mount Princeton climb, a lower trailhead at 8,900 feet and a higher trailhead at 11,000 feet. The upper point is only accessible by four-wheel-drive vehicles over a narrow, one-lane dirt road. The large size of our group makes it unfeasible to transport people above 8,900 feet. This means a round trip hike of 13 miles, which makes for a challenging day when climbing 5,297 feet in 6 miles (an average of 882 feet per mile). The first 4 miles of hiking will be along the dirt road.

Here is Gerry Roach's description of the route.

"Follow the Mount Princeton Road to a tree line at 11,820 feet. Leave the road just as it starts to head south toward Bristlecone Park and climb north on a trail to a small ridge at 12,000 feet. The trail-road junction is not well marked and is easy to miss. You can see Princeton's upper slopes from the ridge.

Continue on the trail as it climbs west across a north-facing slope below Point 13,300 (alias Tigger's Peak). The trail is not destined for Princeton's summit but for an old mine at 13,100 feet east of the summit. Do not follow the trail all the way to the mine as the slope above the mine is unpleasant. Leave the trail between 12,700 feet and 12,900 feet and climb south west up talus (large rocks) to Princeton's southeast ridge. Follow the easy southeast ridge to the summit."

Logistical & Safety Issues

Our goal is to have an enjoyable day on Mt. Princeton celebrating the 250th anniversary. Reaching the summit will depend on many factors such as weather, hiking pace, and physical condition. Even on a beautiful day we anticipate that there will be some people who reach the summit and others who do not. In the end, it's the journey and the camaraderie that are important.

Due to the large number of participants it will be necessary to break up into smaller groups and stagger our launch from the parking lot. We will use the hikes on Thursday to help sort out hiking speeds and groupings for the climb. We will assign you to hiking groups on Thursday evening. If you want to stay together with others in your party, then the faster people will need to hike with the slower paced folks. In families with children, parents will need to decide how to group the family. At least one parent must attend a child or children who are hiking. Because afternoon thunderstorms are common during the summer, we will need to be off the exposed ridge and back at treeline around 1:00 PM. Each group will have an experienced trip leader to supervise. We will get an early start and carefully monitor the progress of each group towards the summit. Based on the hiking time of each group, the leader will decide whether there is enough time to get to the summit and back down by 1:00 PM

or not. If the leader determines that the group needs to turn back before the summit, then everyone is expected to cheerfully comply. Remember this is for your safety and the safety of the others in your group. No one will be allowed to hike solo.

There will be several manned checkpoints along the way with staff in case people need to rest or decide to turn back. Walkie talkies will allow us to keep in touch with all the groups on the mountain. We will also have two four-wheel drive vehicles at the upper parking area for emergencies. In case of a bad weather, we will postpone the climb to Saturday, July 19.

After the climb, we will all rendezvous back at the Mt. Princeton Hot Springs resort to enjoy a real Western barbecue. After all that high altitude exertion, everyone will be ready for a great meal.

Children: Children 8 years and up can participate in the climb although younger children are unlikely to reach the summit. You should think about the age, physical condition and hiking experience of your child. Children under 10 are unlikely to be able to hike quickly enough to get up to the summit and back before the 1:00 PM deadline. The South Summit (12,960 feet) is a more realistic goal for kids and still a fun hike. It is 8 miles round trip with 4,060 feet of elevation (an average of 507 feet per mile). Families with children in backpacks are encouraged to do the South Summit hike. We will hike towards the South Summit and get as high as we can. Leaders will determine when to head back based on the hiking time and the need to get back to treeline around 1:00 PM. Children seven and under can participate in the Child Care program (you must register in advance) or can stay with a parent or guardian at the Ponderosa Lodge.

Western Barbecue: For those who don't participate in the hike. We will have transportation over to the Mt. Princeton Hot Springs resort on Friday afternoon to join everyone for the western barbecue.

Hiking Times

The hiking times depend on your physical condition level and how well you do at altitude. Here is a sample chart that indicates the approximate round trip hiking time based on the average hiking time per mile and including time for the ascent and descent. As you can see, for individuals hiking at more than 30 minutes per mile, it won't be possible to reach the summit and get back down below treeline (11,820 feet) by about 1:00 PM. Group leaders will keep careful track of each group's pace and will turn back if the group cannot reach the summit in time.

Hiking Pace for 1 mile in minutes	Miles Round Trip	Total Hiking time in hours	Departure Time	Arrive at Summit	Return to Base at 8,900 ft
20	13	6.1	5:30 AM	9:31 AM	11:36 PM
25	13	7.6	5:30 AM	10:31 AM	1:07 PM
30	13	9.2	5:30 AM	11:32 AM	2:39 PM
35	13	10.7	5:30 AM	12:32 PM	4:10 PM

Conditioning & Acclimatization

The route up Mt. Princeton itself is not especially difficult in terms of terrain, but it does involve a lot of elevation gain (5,297 feet) and a reasonably long hiking distance (round trip 13 miles). That is compounded by the effects of being at high altitude. It is very important that you read the enclosed article on High Altitude Illnesses so you understand the possible risks. Over 10,000 feet about 75% of people will experience mild symptoms of altitude illness.

The altitude will be the major "huffing and puffing" factor. It is important that you be in good aerobic condition before the climb. This means some form of regular aerobic activity 30 to 60 minutes a day **at least** 3 to 4 times a

week for 2 to 3 months leading up to the climb. Aerobic exercise that includes hills, stair climbers, or running stairs, are particularly helpful in preparing your legs for a long uphill hike. If you are not on any regular exercise program, you should consult your physician before you commence your training program and before going on this climb. Please fill out the enclosed health history form accurately so we have pertinent information about you for the climb. There are certain medical conditions that could preclude your participation in the climb. One equipment suggestion, if you have any knee problems, you need to think about how the hike could effect your knees. The descent is generally tougher on knees. Trekking poles (basically ski poles) can help reduce the pounding and strain knees take on the way down (helpful even for people without knee problems).

On Thursday, July 17, we will offer half-day and full-day acclimatization hikes in and around Buena Vista. These will be fun opportunities to explore the area as well as to get in some additional acclimatization time. Hiking up to a higher elevation and then going back down to sleep (the “climb high/sleep low” approach) will help your body acclimatize. These hikes will also give us a chance to evaluate and compare people’s hiking abilities and pace in order to organize appropriate groups for the Mt. Princeton climb the next day. Everyone who plans to hike Mt. Princeton should plan to go on one of the hikes.

Mt. Princeton Only Participants: For those from Colorado who are only coming up for the climb, or others who will be in the area and are only participating in the climb, please note that we will be getting a very early start (5:30 AM). You should arrive in the Buena Vista area on Thursday, July 17. You should plan to attend the climb briefing meeting which will be held at the Ponderosa Lodge on Thursday at 8:00 PM. This is the time that we will set up the groups for the hike. It won’t be possible to effectively distribute people if we just meet at the trail head on Friday. Since you may not be able to make the acclimatization hikes on Thursday, you need to know your basic hiking pace at altitude and whether you can sustain that for 13 miles. If you have questions, please contact Rick Curtis.

Optional Day Trip Activities

For those who are participating in the full five-day program, we have a range of exciting optional outdoor activities planned. Outdoor Action is working with American Adventures Expeditions, an outfitter based in Buena Vista to provide the following options for Wednesday, July 16 and Saturday, July 19. Participants will also be required to sign release of liability forms with the outfitter.

Wednesday, July 16

Wednesday is exploration day. You can select from a range of different outdoor activities exploring the beautiful Rocky Mountains.

Mountain Biking

The San Isabel National Forest land has hundreds of miles of trails for mountain biking. Your day trip can be a gentle ride down a country road or an adventurous single track trail high into the mountains. Sites include ghost towns, abandoned mines, beautiful valleys, mountain lakes and streams. Your mountain biking experience and physical condition will help us determine the appropriate trip. Guides will first outfit you with a quality mountain bike (if you bring your own bike, it must past American Adventure Expedition’s equipment criteria). Experienced guides will then lead you off on a fun-filled morning ride that will teach you basic mountain bike handling skills. After a relaxing lunch, you’ll spend the remainder of the day exploring local trails. Minimum age for children is 6. It is essential that we know your height and weight on your health history form in order to get you a bike that will fit properly. If you have previous biking experience, please describe it on the application so we can place you on an appropriate trip.

Whitewater Kayaking

This one-day kayaking instructional program is geared for a range of abilities from beginner to intermediate (Class II level). The instructors from American Adventure Expeditions are American Canoe Association certified. Everyone will start on the lake for an introduction to strokes. Beginners will spend the day on flatwater learning basic strikes and maneuvering. More experienced paddlers will move to the river and practice skills on easy whitewater. You'll spend time learning to read water, practicing river-running strategies, and learning personal and group paddling safety. Minimum age for children is 12. Please indicate any previous kayaking experience on your application. Non-swimmers will not be allowed to participate.

Rock Climbing & Rappelling

You will spend the day at a local climbing site learning basic climbing techniques and belaying with instructors from American Adventure Expeditions. The rocks provide a range of difficulty of climbs from beginner to intermediate. Climbing is a fun activity for kids who are great natural climbers. Minimum age for children is 6.

Fly Fishing

With experienced fishing guides you can spend the day fishing some of the best spots in the Arkansas River Valley. Beginners can learn the basics of fly fishing and experienced folks can tune up their technique. Bring your own gear or use equipment from American Adventure Expeditions. Fishing licenses are available from American Adventure Expeditions.

Horseback Riding

We are offering both a morning and an afternoon horseback riding trip on through the spectacular mountain scenery of the Upper Arkansas Valley with Monarch Mountain Ranch. Minimum age for children is 6 years old and a minimum weight of 40 pounds.

Thursday, July 17

Acclimatization Hikes

On Thursday we will do half-day and full-day hikes. These will be fun opportunities to explore the Rockies as well as get better acclimatized. Everyone should plan to go on one of the hikes if you plan to hike Mt. Princeton. This is our opportunity to check out people's hiking paces in order to arrange hiking groups for the Mt. Princeton Climb. No age limit for children, but you should be prepared to pack toddlers on your back.

Team Building Course

For those who don't want to do a full-day hike, we will offer a half-day hike and an afternoon session on the Team Building Course at the Ponderosa Lodge. The Team Building Course presents a series of group problem solving initiatives that are fun, creative, and teach you to work together as a group. It's a great activity for families and for getting us all pumped up to work together on doing the climb on Mt. Princeton on Friday. Minimum age for children is 6.

Saturday, July 19

Whitewater Rafting

The Arkansas River offers tremendous Class II - Class III whitewater through Brown's Canyon. This is a great trip for rafters of all experience levels and includes 22 miles of rapids like Pinball, Big Drop, Staircase, Squeeze Play, and Twin Falls. Minimum age for children is 6. Non-swimmers will not be allowed to participate.