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United States Department of Agriculture



HIKING

CRESTED BUTTE **CONUNDRUM CREEK TRAIL OVER TRIANGLE PASS TO GOTHIC**

Length: 19 miles one-way (30.6 km)

Difficulty: Difficult

Trail Use: Heavy

Beginning Elevation: 8,700 feet (2652 m)

Highest Elevation: 12,900 feet (3932 m)

USGS Map(s): Hayden Peak, Maroon Bells, Gothic

PERMIT INFORMATION: In order to provide quality recreation experiences and to protect the wilderness lands the Forest Service must gather data regarding visitor use and travel patterns. **Each party overnighing** in the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness is **required to self-register at the Trailhead and to carry a copy of the registration with them** during their visit. There is no fee charged and no limit to the number of permits issued.

DAY/BACKPACKING OVERVIEW: The longest and most difficult route to Crested Butte is also the most adventurous. Because of the length of the hike, backpackers often spend a night or two at the Conundrum Hot Springs and /or Copper Lake. The moderate trail to Conundrum Hot Springs is followed by a difficult climb to the top of Triangle Pass. A side trip to Copper Pass is well worth the few minutes detour. This long hike offers magnificent wilderness scenery, fields of columbine and other wildflowers, depending on the season, and several river crossings. The trail ends in 2 miles past the small town of Gothic, 7 miles from Crested Butte. Gothic provides lodging and specialized facilities for groups involved in agricultural and environmental experiments. Transportation from the trailhead parking area to Crested Butte should be arranged in advance. **This trail is most often hiked as an overnight but for those hardy day hikers an early start is critical as thunderstorms are common on the pass in the early afternoon. Wading streams in early summer can be treacherous. Sandals or boat shoes are strongly recommended. Wading barefoot can be extremely dangerous. Be sure to unbuckle your pack when navigating any high stream crossing.**

ACCESS: Drive 1/2 of a mile west of Aspen on Highway 82 to the Roundabout. Go around the Roundabout and turn right onto Castle Creek Road. Drive 5 miles and turn right onto Conundrum Road. Continue 1.1 miles to the parking lot at the trailhead. Be careful not to stray onto the numerous private drives along the road. Parking is limited. If the lot is full, return to Castle Creek Road where parking is provided. Do not park on Conundrum Road. This narrow road is on a County right-of-way over private property. Parking is prohibited and cars are towed.

NARRATIVE: Use the Conundrum Creek Trail Guide until you reach the hot springs. A dip in the springs is always an award at this juncture. The trail continues beyond the springs, meandering through the woods as it follows the right side of the creek. After leaving the woods the trail gradually climbs through tundra and meadows towards Triangle Pass. As the trail becomes harder to follow scattered cairns mark the way. The ascent becomes very steep, switchbacking to the top of the pass. A long traverse to the right marks the final climb. The rocky knoll of Triangle Pass offers a glorious view of the Conundrum Valley. Copper Pass is visible to the right as the trail starts to descend. Follow the trail through a scree field for 3/4 of a mile to an intersection for Copper Pass. A trail to the right offers a short detour of 5 minutes to the 12,500 foot Copper Pass with spectacular views of the East Maroon Creek basin. Returning to the main trail, the scree field descent continues for another 1-1/2 miles. After leaving the scree field, the trail enters the woods where an intersection sign is posted indicating a trail to the right for Copper Lake and the East Maroon Trail. Copper Lake is about a 10 minute walk and a beautiful spot for overnight camping. The trail to Gothic is straight ahead, continuing its steep descent and soon joining with an old jeep road. Continue the descent on the jeep road as several false trails appear on either side. When the trail levels, several small streams will need to be crossed. Look for support from walking sticks left on either side of the crossing.

If using the sticks, please leave them for the next hikers. After the crossings the trail enters a wide valley. Soon, but still in the distance, the sound of roaring water can be heard. This is the sound of Judd Falls located in a deep canyon off to the left and well worth a stop. A trail register located at the falls indicates that Copper Lake is 4 miles behind you. A gate crosses the road indicating private property and the trail bears to the right meandering for 1/2 of a mile through an aspen grove to the upper parking lot of the trailhead. Another parking lot closer to Gothic is 1/2 of a mile to the left on the dirt road. If hitchhiking into Crested Butte, it is wise to ask for rides from passersby as soon as you reach Judd Falls as it is frequented by visitors from Crested Butte.

ETHICS/REGULATIONS: The Capitol Creek Trail is within the Maroon Bell-Snowmass Wilderness, please educate yourself about Wilderness Ethics and the following rules:

- * **DOGS MUST BE LEASHED** out of consideration for both other people and wildlife.
- * Limit group sizes to 10 people and 15 stock/pack animals.
- * **SANITATION** - bury human waste 100 feet from water and 6 inches in the soil.
- * Lightweight campstoves are recommended and required above the timberline.

PACK IT IN—PACK IT OUT!! LEAVE NO TRACE!!

WILDERNESS AREAS are in a delicate state of natural balance, they are not renewable resources. Any careless act by man can upset this natural balance and result in the destruction of the beauty found in the wilderness. By following the above ethics and regulations you can help protect and preserve the natural features of the wilderness for future visits. **Please, respect the land and right of others!**