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BACKCOUNTRY CACHE

A Newsletter for Members of CMC Backpacking Section

January 2025

CHAIR'S CORNER - Louise Campbell-Blair

Our winter backpacking season is in full swing with brave (and well insulated) members enjoying camping in the snow. However, I expect many of us are thinking ahead to the trips we'll take when the snow melts. Your BPX Committee has been hard at work preparing for the upcoming summer and fall seasons. We're not only launching new trip styles, but also focusing on helping you to be better prepared for your adventures.



Mark your calendars! 'Stake your Claim for BPX Trip Leaders' will take place on **March 19** followed by 'Trips Roll Out for BPX Members & Leaders' on **April 23**. Registration for both events will open soon, and we will keep you posted on their locations.

Meanwhile, I'm diving into a new personal project; lightening my load and embracing lightweight backpacking. It's a big investment, but I'm excited to do the research and explore this over the winter months.

Stay connected with us – we love hearing from you on our socials and at cmcbpx@gmail.com. And of course, stay warm out there!

UPCOMING BPX TRIPS

Sat, Feb 15, 2025 — Sun, Feb 16, 2025 [Wind River Loop, RMNP](#).

This trip will be on snowshoe and will involve camping on snow. If the Wind River drainage is booked, we will select another nearby one. We will look for a camping spot about 1.5 miles from the trailhead. Previous winter camping experience is required, preferably including completion of the Winter Camping School.

BPX TRIP REPORTS

Aspenglen Campground - Rocky Mountain National Park

Trip Leaders Daniel Schweissing, Sandy Heise, Garrett Pettingell - Denver Group

Seven hardy BPX members gathered at Aspenglen Campground in RMNP for the weekend of January 11-12. At noon, it was already quite cold but the spirit of these well-prepared campers remained warm and happy as they set up their lodging for the night and firmed-up plans for the rest of the weekend. Later in the afternoon, we set out from the Glacier Gorge TH to find the frozen Alberta Falls, and returned by moonlight. Then we had a warm campfire, hot dinner, and fun conversations before settling into our down sleeping bags for the night.

After enjoying a toasty sleep, the group broke into two, each with a BPX leader, and journeyed to separate areas in RMNP (Wild Basin and Mummy Range) to recon backcountry campsites for future BPX winter backpacking trips. Both groups had great fun finding the sites and identifying nearby trails for related dayhikes.

Thanks to leaders Daniel Schweissing, Sandy Heise, and Garrett Pettingell for organizing and leading this trip, and to all of our adventurous campers.

Be sure to watch for future winter camping trip announcements. This activity is not only satisfying in itself, but is especially helpful to anyone who aspires to climb higher mountains or do multi-day snow climbs or ski trips. It's also a great way for recent graduates of Winter Camping School to continue practicing and developing their skills. And you'll never have to deal with crowds!



BACKCOUNTRY PERMIT TIME

Get Your 2025 Plans Ready: Dates and Info about Backcountry Permits

Let's talk about the only 2025 resolution that matters. "This year, I want to get out and backpack more."

Knowing when backcountry permits become available is the first step in securing your spot in some of Colorado's most sought-after backpacking destinations. In this guide, we'll walk you through the permit opening dates for 4 iconic backpacking areas so you can mark your calendar, set a reminder, and be ready to reserve your adventure. Let's get planning!

In order of open dates:

Great Sand Dunes National Park - OPEN NOW!

What you need to know: This national park is quieter than Rocky, but has some amazing backcountry options! You can camp on the sand dunes (called Dunes Backcountry) or in designated sites off of the dunes along the Sand Ramp Trail. Lisa Shroyer led a trip to the Little Medano site in 2024; read her trip report [here](#).

The best time to go is mid May through mid June.

- **Reservation Availability:** Permits are available year-round on a rolling basis, 3 months prior to the trip start date.
- **Learn about backpacking Great Sand Dunes** [here](#).
- **Book permits** [here](#)

Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness

What you need to know: The “Four Pass Loop” is one of the nation’s most beloved and popular backpacking circuits. Getting these permits is competitive! There are different backcountry zones for permits, so plan your itinerary carefully (remember, there are 4 passes) and book zones that make sense. [Here](#) is a BPX route with a suggested itinerary for reference.

- **Reservation Opening Date:** February 15, 2025 at 8 a.m. MST
- **Book permits** [here](#)

Rocky Mountain National Park

What you need to know: There are 12 permit zones for RMNP, so it’s helpful to research where you want to camp ahead of permit open dates. The Wild Basin zone is a popular one with BPX trip leaders, with some great options for easy and challenging hikes, including campsites near high alpine lakes.

- **Reservation Opening Date:** March 1, 2025 at 8 a.m. MST
- **Learn about RMNP backpacking** [here](#)
- **Book permits / campsites** [here](#)

Indian Peaks Wilderness

What you need to know: There are 17 backcountry zones in this popular and epic wilderness area, so study the [map](#) before booking permits. The most popular backpacking zone (and most competitive) is Crater Lake BZ, which gets you near the iconic Crater Lake with its reflection of Lone Eagle Peak. To tackle the epic (but challenging) Buchanan-Pawnee loop, you need to book permits for multiple zones and plan the itinerary carefully.

- **Reservation Opening Date:** March 4, 2025 at 8 a.m. MST
- **Applicable Dates:** Permits for trips between June 1 and September 15, 2025
- **Reserve permits** [here](#)

Please note that reservation opening times are subject to change; it's advisable to check the respective [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov)



BPX trip to Great Sand Dunes in May 2024

TREAD LIGHTLY

Sustainability, Recycling, Leave No Trace



Contact Lens recycling – yes you can! Shocked at how much waste you generate from Daily or Multiday Contact Lens? Bausch and Lomb will recycle all kinds of lenses and blister packs into new contact lenses. You can find their collection bins in almost every optical center. Simply search for the location nearest to you at this link: <https://www.bauschrecycles.com>.

DENVER WILDERNESS TREKKING SCHOOL - Starts April 8

Hiking may not be as easy as it looks! Do you know all you need for staying found, for braving Colorado's rapidly changing weather, for handling an emergency? Wilderness Trekking School (WTS) is for all – whether you want to bag a few 14ers – OR – just want to enjoy the scenery. WTS is a comprehensive course on day hiking in the mountains, with no prerequisites. If you're new to hiking, WTS provides the opportunity to learn how to travel safely and confidently in the backcountry. If you're an experienced hiker, WTS gives you a chance to review and enhance your skills, and possibly to fill in some gaps. It is also a great introduction to the Colorado Mountain Club and a place to meet new friends. Student ages range from 18 to 80, with about half under 40. WTS is a prerequisite for Backpacking School, Alpine Scrambling Course, and Technical Climbing Schools.

The course consists of streaming videos on your own, 5 Tuesday night in-person small group meetings (with a possible Zoom option), 5 field days, and weekly homework (yes, really!). Students are divided into groups of 8-11 people, based on preferred field day, with consideration as possible for fitness level.

The curriculum includes safe backcountry travel techniques and opportunity to practice them in a supportive environment. Students plan and complete a graduation hike with their field group. WTS is a great place to learn and practice new skills, make new friends, and become a safer, more confident backcountry traveler.

Tuition is \$170 until March for current CMC Members. On and after Wednesday April 2, tuition is \$190. Registration opens in mid-January.

For more information, including a complete schedule of lectures and field trips and enrollment instructions, please visit our web site at [Wilderness Trekking School](#), or search “wts denver” on CMC.org. Information is also available by calling the CMC office at 303-279-3080.

“This course is way beyond what I thought it was going to be - it has challenged me physically and emotionally (I have overcome many fears).” –WTS Student

“I thought I came into the class with a lot knowledge, but I learned far more than I expected!” –WTS Student

SCHOOLS/EVENTS

DENVER

DAY HIKER SCHOOL Virtual Alternative to WTS. More info [here](#)

TRIP LEADER SCHOOL More info [here](#)

WILDERNESS TREKKING SCHOOL Starts [Apr 8](#)

BACKPACKING SCHOOL Starts [May 7](#)

CPR/AED [Jan 22](#) [Feb 27](#)

AVALANCHE TERRAIN AVOIDANCE [Jan 25](#) [Feb 15](#)

AIARE 1 Starts [Jan 31](#) [Feb 21](#) [Mar 14](#)

AIARE 2 Starts [Mar 11](#)

AVALANCHE RESCUE [Feb 8](#) [Feb 15](#)

WINTER CAMPING SCHOOL Starts [Feb 11](#)

PIKES PEAK

WTS - WILDERNESS FUNDAMENTALS Starts [Feb 3](#)

AIARE AVALANCHE RESCUE [Mar 2](#)

WINTER WILDERNESS SURVIVAL Starts [Mar 5](#)

NORTHERN COLORADO

AVALANCHE RESCUE [Mar 8](#)

AIARE 1 Starts [Mar 28](#)

MOUNTAIN HIKING COURSE Starts [Mar 10](#)

STATE

WILDERNESS FIRST AID/FIRST RESPONDER Multiple Offerings - Check CMC Website [here](#)

Continue to check the CMC Website for additional courses.

BPX MEMBER INFO

BPX FACEBOOK: [BPX FB](#) Send Photos and Trips Reports to post on BPX Facebook Page
to: maggie.burns1@gmail.com

BPX INSTAGRAM: [@co_backpacking_bpx](#)

BPX LINKS: Click [here](#) for BPX web page, [here](#) for BPX Member Benefits, and [here](#) for CMC Member

Benefits.

BPX MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL: When renewing your CMC Membership, remember to choose the Backpacking Section for an additional \$20 on the **SELECT YOUR SECTIONS** page. You can also join/renew your BPX membership any time by calling the CMC Office at (303) 279-3080.

DENVER GROUP MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES: [here](#)

COLORADO ROAD INFORMATION: [here](#)

FIRE INFO: [National Interagency Fire Center News](#) [Colorado Fire Restrictions](#) [Wildfire Risk Management Checklist](#)

CMC Backpacking Section Supports Leave No Trace

CMC connects Coloradans with more than 3,000 trips, hikes and activities annually. Members also receive huge deals on outdoor gear, lodging, events and more.

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