

BRECKENRIDGE 2024

Those of you who joined us in 2014, when we last visited Breckenridge, may recognize a few of the hikes...if not by name, then perhaps by their photographs. Several others are new. So, if you're averse to hiking the same trails that you hiked in 2014, there are other options for you. And, as is customary on overnight trips, there is flexibility on which days hikes are scheduled.

Our first hike, [Cross Creek](#), will be enroute to Breckenridge. South of Minturn, about 2 miles up the Tigiwon Road, this trail follows Cross Creek on a moderate grade. We plan to hike in 5± miles (1400') and back. This hike is also one of the day-hike options for those of you who aren't joining us in Breckenridge. We'll depart No Name en masse at 7:00, with a pit stop in Edwards. We'll tailgate at the trailhead, rather than in Breckenridge. Gerry Vanderbeek will be on hand to brief us on Tuesday's Decalibron...or Calibron...hike for the peak-baggers amongst us. And I'll brief you on our less challenging Tuesday hikes.

After we check in at the Residence Inn (or elsewhere) you're on your own for dinner or to soak in the hot tub (remember your bathing suits). There are many dining options close to the Residence Inn. Hopefully the Labor Day crowd would have subsided by then, although a few Denverites may layover for dinner to avoid the heavy afternoon crush of traffic on I-70. Been there!

Our two peak climbs, the Decalibron...or just Calibron...and Quandary are tentatively scheduled on Tuesday and Thursday, respectively. Inclement weather on either of those days could precipitate their cancellation, so be prepared to make last minute adjustments to your schedule. Gerry Vanderbeek will lead the former, although he is loathe to climb Democrat again (having just done it earlier this week...hence the "Calibron" variant). If you're keen to climb Democrat, you can negotiate that with Gerry. Currently, there are 9 people who've expressed an interest in it, while 9 people also have signed up for Quandary, which requires a reservation to park at the trailhead. The 9 Quandary Peak-baggers have made reservations to park two vehicles at the trailhead, and there is room for one more person in Robin Van Norman's vehicle (total of 5/vehicle). Let Robin know ASAP if you're interested in joining her carpool. Though this hike has no designated leader, the route is fairly straightforward, and you'll have the company of lots of other peak-baggers...a perhaps a few mountain goats (the 4-legged kind).

On **Tuesday**, in addition to the aforementioned peaks, there are two that originate at the [Willowbrook Trailhead](#) north of Silverthorne. Willowbrook Road is 1.8 miles north of I-70 on the left of Hwy 9. Follow Willowbrook Road 1.1 miles to the trailhead on the left. The longer **Willow Lakes Trail** (below) climbs 2500' in 6 miles to several spectacular alpine lakes with a parapet-like ridge as their backdrop. Cindy and I did this in 2014, via a much longer 9-mile route from Mesa Cortina (when we were 10 years younger). It was during that hike that we discovered this shorter option, and I vowed it do it that way next time. The other Willowbrook option (Gore Range Trail #60) follows **South Willow Creek** to the left, climbing 1100' in 3.5 miles to its namesake falls (spur trail to falls may not be marked). But if you're keen to climb 2800', you can do so by passing the spur trail to the falls on your way to Red Buffalo Pass...6 miles one-way. One caveat, however: this area had been devastated by fire shortly before our visit in 2014, and there was still a lot of burnt, dead, standing timber that creaked and groaned in the breeze...a little disconcerting, considering how breezy it was that day. But I expect most of this timber has been either blown down or salvaged since then.



The [Summit County Recpath](#) is a mostly paved, multipurpose path that loops almost 20 miles around Lake Dillon. I've selected a segment of the Recpath that avoids the most heavily congested area on the west side of the lake. It's 7 miles (one-way) from the **Lake Dillon Marina** to the **Sapphire Point Overlook**, with 700' of elevation gain. You may hike it as a through hike, with shuttle, or as an out-and-back hike, however far you choose, from either end. I've designed this to be a do-it-yourselfer, but if you decide to do it as a through hike, you'll need at least two vehicles...one at either end. From Hwy 9 south of Frisco, drive 1.9 miles on Swan Mountain Road to Sapphire Point, drop one vehicle there and continue across Swan Mountain to US 6 at the traffic light and turn left. Drive 3.3 miles on US 6 to the next traffic light. Turn left on Lake Dillon Drive and drive ½ mile to the marina. Then hike back on the Recpath to the Overlook and shuttle back to the Marina. A portion of the RecPath is on Dillon area roads. Start at the eastern end of the Marina parking lot, follow the Recpath to Gold Run Circle and follow the Circle to the right. Then turn right on Tenderfoot Street, and follow it until you pick up the Recpath again, where Tenderfoot turns left toward US 6. If you decide to hike from the Overlook to the Marina, you'd first need to drop a vehicle at the Marina, then drive back up Swan Mountain Road to the Overlook. But your hike would be mostly downhill in that direction.

On **Wednesday**, there are two hikes north of Breckenridge, [Oro Grande](#) and [Tenderfoot Mountain](#), which share a trailhead east of Dillon, and two south of Breckenridge, **Crystal Lakes** and **Mohawk Lakes**, both of which also share a trailhead...or to be accurate, two trailheads.

The **Oro Grande Trail** travels roughly 4 miles parallel to US 6 between the towns of Dillon and Keystone, with no more than 1000' of gain. **Tenderfoot Mountain** is a bit more ambitious, soaring some 2400' above Dillon via a sinuous 6-mile single-track trail. Follow **Oro Grande** about ¼ mile to reach the **Tenderfoot Trail**, which bears left uphill.

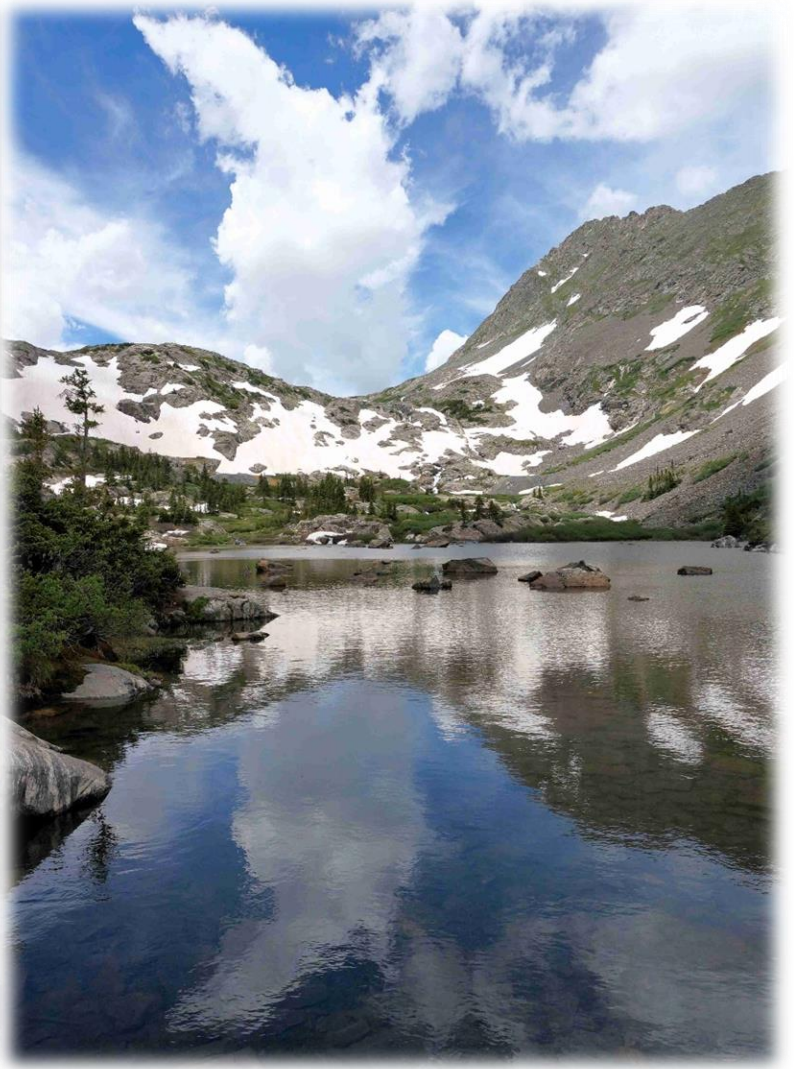
Since it's been 10 years since our last visit to this area, my recollection of the latter two hikes was a little foggy. I was under the misconception that we had done them on different days. But a search of my digital photo archives revealed that in 2014 my photos were all taken on the same day. While [Crystal Lakes and Mohawk Lakes](#) easily can be done on separate days from the same lower Spruce Creek TH, they can almost as easily be done on the same day from the upper Spruce Creek TH. The lower TH is readily accessible in 2WD, but it will be necessary to scout the upper TH to determine if 4WD is required to reach it.

Left: Crystal Peak through the ruins of an old mining camp shack.

Below: Bullwheel (remnants of an ore car cableway).



Next page clockwise from top left:
Continental Falls (Mohawk Lakes);
Upper Mohawk Lake;
Upper Willow Lake



On **Thursday**, in addition to the aforementioned [Quandary Peak](#) climb, less ambitious hikers have two options to choose from: The [Hippo-Campion Loop](#) via the Colorado Trail is located off Hwy 9 between Breckenridge and Swan Mountain Road. Turn right from Hwy 9 at Revett Drive, 0.4 mile north of traffic light at Tiger Road. Then follow Revett Drive 0.4 mile to the trailhead.

[McCullough Gulch](#) has two trailheads: the upper trailhead is accessed from the Quandary Peak parking lot (reservation required) via a free shuttle; the lower trailhead is more readily accessible, directly off Hwy 9 on the right side, about 5.6 miles south of the Residence Inn. From the lower trailhead, it's about 5 miles to the second lake at 12555', with 2200' of gain. I've also seen this hike described by AllTrails as the [McCullough Gulch Waterfall Trail](#) (are you paying attention, Leonard?). However, AllTrails only describes a 1.8-mile segment of the trail, beginning at the upper trailhead and ending at the first lake.

Our final day, Friday, will take us back west on I-70, with a choice of either [Wheeler Lake/Uneva Pass](#) or [Pitkin Creek Falls/Lake](#). The former, east of the Copper Mountain exit from I-70 (MM197), climbs 1400' in 3.5 miles to the lakes, or 2300' in 6 miles to the pass. The latter trail is east of the East Vail I-70 exit (#180) on the north frontage road. It climbs 1900' in 3 miles to the falls, 2900' in 5.5 miles to the lake.

Salmon Lake (near Willow Lakes)





Above: Another Lost Lake along the Uneva Pass Trail (Copper Mountain in background)

Below: Old man of the mountains (near Uneva Pass)

