VAIL HIKING GUIDE

TOWN OF VAIL

VAIL
Like nothing on earth.™

HIKING IN VAIL

Welcome to Vail. Vail is home to some of the most beautiful hiking in Colorado. The trails in East Vail, West Vail, and on Vail Mountain provide gorgeous hiking along mountain streams, past waterfalls, through aspen forests and much more. There is something for everyone, with hikes ranging from easy, paved trails, to difficult, uphill hikes. **Happy hiking!**

VAIL RECREATION DISTRICT

The Vail Recreation District offers half day and full day adult guided hikes. Join a Vail Nature Center naturalist on hikes throughout the Holy Cross and Eagles Nest Wilderness. Hikes are at a pace that allows participants to enjoy the flora and fauna along the trail. Reservations are required. Please call (970)479-2291 or email nature@vailrec.com for more information.

DAY HIKING FAQ

Can I bring my dog?
- Yes! Dogs are permitted on all hiking trails in the valley. Please keep your dog on a leash out of consideration for other people and local wildlife. Dogs are not permitted to ride up the Vail gondola.

How much water should I bring?
- Always bring more water than you think you will need. A good rule of thumb is three quarts per person, per day; depending on the length of hike, weather conditions, and your personal level of fitness.

Can I hike in sneakers?
- Sneakers or tennis shoes should be fine for flat, well maintained trails. For longer, more difficult trails, you may wish to consider a sturdier hiking shoe or boot. Footwear designed for hiking offers more support and grip on loose/slippery surfaces.

How should I introduce my young children to hiking?
- Be sure to introduce children to hiking gradually. Look for shorter and easier hikes, and plan on heading back before reaching the end of the trail. Take your time, and be prepared to carry a straggler. Take frequent breaks, and be sure to bring a first-aid kit.

What should I wear when I hike?
- The weather in Colorado can change very quickly. Dressing in layers is always a good idea to allow yourself to regulate your temperature more effectively. Be sure to prepare for rain as showers can appear quickly. A good pair of hiking socks will make life easier.

What should I do in case of lightning?
- At the first sign of an approaching storm (thunder, dark storm clouds) turn back and head for the trailhead. Most storms occur in the afternoons, so getting an early start is a good idea to avoid bad weather. If a storm is unavoidable, find an area protected by a low clump of trees. Never stand under a large tree in the open. If no shelter is available crouch low and have as little contact with the ground as possible.

What food should I bring on a day hike?
- Bring foods that pack a lot of energy, but will stand up to being in a pack while hiking. Foods such as apples and oranges, trail mix, chocolate, and energy bars are great.

WHAT TO BRING

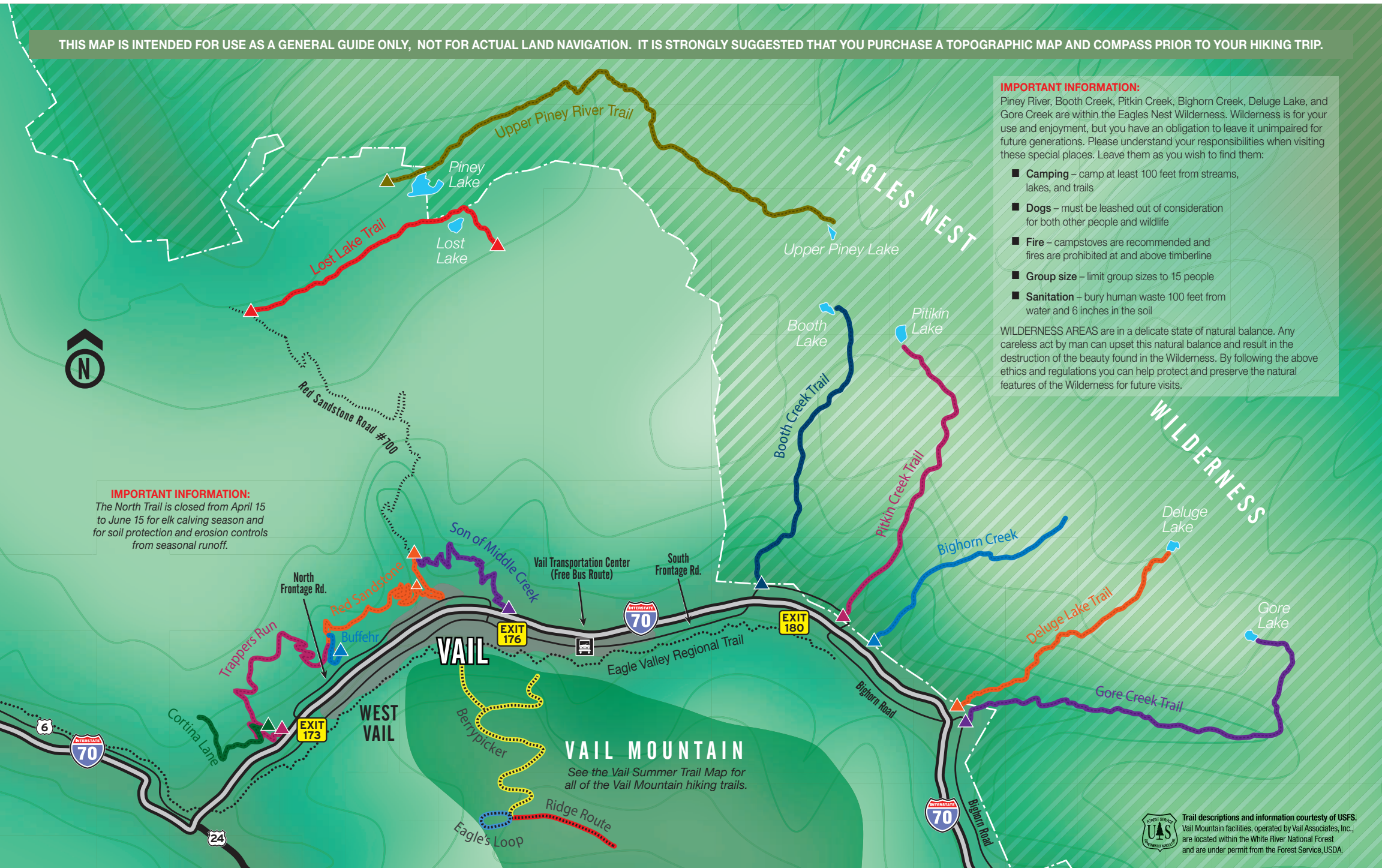
This list is intentionally extensive:

- Water
- Extra Clothing *(Socks)*
- Rain Protection
- First Aid Kit
- Sun Protection *(30 SPF minimum)*
- Food/Snacks
- Camera
- Backpack
- Cell Phone
- Compass
- GPS
- Sturdy Shoes
- Flashlight
- Sun Glasses
- Camera
- Shady Hat

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Many trailheads are accessible via the free Town of Vail bus system. The East Vail and West Vail bus routes all end/begin at the Vail Transportation Center in Vail Village. Head to www.vailgov.com for detailed bus schedules and more information.

THIS MAP IS INTENDED FOR USE AS A GENERAL GUIDE ONLY, NOT FOR ACTUAL LAND NAVIGATION. IT IS STRONGLY SUGGESTED THAT YOU PURCHASE A TOPOGRAPHIC MAP AND COMPASS PRIOR TO YOUR HIKING TRIP.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION:
The North Trail is closed from April 15 to June 15 for elk calving season and for soil protection and erosion controls from seasonal runoff.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:
Piney River, Booth Creek, Pitkin Creek, Bighorn Creek, Deluge Lake, and Gore Creek are within the Eagles Nest Wilderness. Wilderness is for your use and enjoyment, but you have an obligation to leave it unimpaired for future generations. Please understand your responsibilities when visiting these special places. Leave them as you wish to find them:

- **Camping** – camp at least 100 feet from streams, lakes, and trails
- **Dogs** – must be leashed out of consideration for both other people and wildlife
- **Fire** – campstoves are recommended and fires are prohibited at and above timberline
- **Group size** – limit group sizes to 15 people
- **Sanitation** – bury human waste 100 feet from water and 6 inches in the soil

WILDERNESS AREAS are in a delicate state of natural balance. 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.

Trail descriptions and information courtesy of USFS. Vail Mountain facilities, operated by Vail Associates, Inc., are located within the White River National Forest and are under permit from the Forest Service, USDA.

CORTINA LANE TO BUFFEHR CREEK (NORTH TRAIL)

Length: 3.8 miles (one way)
Trail Use: High
Difficulty: Moderate
Open To: Hiking, Biking, Horseback
Beginning Elevation: 8,212 ft.
Ending Elevation: 8,127 ft.
Elevation Gain: +1375 ft. - 1460 ft. = - 85 ft.
USGS Map(s): Vail West

Trail Highlights: Walk 1/8 mile to the Davos singletrack, take the right fork onto Davos singletrack. After 1 mile, at the signed junction, turn right onto the North Trail. The trail climbs gently and then curves around into a drainage of mixed pine and aspen. The trail continues to climb to the section's high point. From here the views to the south and west of Holy Cross Wilderness and the Gore Range are excellent. After winding through another drainage, the North Trail begins its descent into Buffehr Creek via a series of switchbacks. At a pile of downed aspens, turn right to continue the descent to Buffehr Creek. Staying straight takes you to Red Sandstone via the Buffehr Creek Singletrack. At the bottom of the descent, turn left onto Garmisch Trail; follow it to the Buffehr Creek bridge.

Access from Vail: Travel west on I-70 to Exit 173 for West Vail. Proceed north from the roundabout on the north side of I-70. Turn left at the yield sign onto Chamonix Lane. At Arosa, turn right and veer right onto Davos Trail road. Take the next right on to Cortina, which will take you to the trailhead. There is limited parking at the end of the road.

BUFFEHR CREEK TO RED SANDSTONE (NORTH TRAIL)

Length: 3.75 miles (one way)
Trail Use: High
Difficulty: Moderate
Open To: Hiking, Biking, Horseback
Beginning Elevation: 8,127 ft.
Ending Elevation: 8,254 ft.
Elevation Gain: +977 ft. - 850 ft. = + 127 ft.
USGS Map(s): Vail West

Trail Highlights: From the Buffehr Creek Bridge, proceed about 1/4 mile on the Buffehr Creek Trail before turning right at the first junction (the trail to the left is the Garmisch Trail). Continue north approximately another 1/2 mile, ascending a series of switchbacks, to the North Trail junction and take a right. This section is now both the Buffehr Creek Trail and North Trail. After passing a beaver pond on the right and passing a pile of avalanche debris, cross Buffehr Creek. From Buffehr Creek, climb steeply for approximately one mile on an open hillside. At the top of the switchbacks, take the right fork onto the North Trail (this is where the Buffehr Creek Trail departs the North Trail and heads left/north). From here the trail enters an aspen stand, and openings along the way provide scenic views to the south and east. Take note of the old lean-to after leaving the back of the drainage. Begin the descent to Red Sandstone via a series of switchbacks where the stand of aspen begins to thin. The first couple switchbacks offer outstanding views of the Gore Range and the Red Sandstone drainage.

Access from Vail: Travel west on I-70 to Exit 173 for West Vail. Turn right and proceed east on the North Frontage Road for 0.5 miles to Buffehr Creek Road. Turn left and continue to the bridge. There is limited parking at 2 pull-offs just beyond the bridge. Bus route/stop: West Vail Green Bus – Buffehr Creek.

RED SANDSTONE TO SON OF MIDDLE CREEK (NORTH TRAIL)

Length: 3.9 miles (one way)
Trail Use: High
Difficulty: Moderate
Open To: Hiking, Biking, Horseback
Beginning Elevation: 8,254 ft.
Ending Elevation: 8,204 ft.
Elevation Gain: +1113 ft. - 1163 ft. = -50 ft.
USGS Map(s): Vail West, Vail East

Trail Highlights: Follow switchbacks as you climb steadily for about 2.3 miles to an intersection with the Son of Middle Creek Trail #2136. Views from here are excellent as this is one of the two highest points on the entire length of the North Trail. Stay right here and descend the last 1.6 miles of the North Trail to the Spraddle Creek Road on the north side of the I-70 Exit 176 for Vail.

Access from Vail: From Exit 176 for Vail, travel west about 1 mile on the North Frontage Road to Red Sandstone Road. Turn right onto Red Sandstone Road and proceed for 1.3 miles to a gate and the second of two intersections with the North Trail. This is the trailhead on the right.

TRAPPER'S RUN

Length: 0.7 miles (one way)
Trail Use: High
Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
Open To: Hiking, Biking, Horseback
Beginning Elevation: 7,923 ft.
Ending Elevation: 8,300 ft.
Elevation Gain: +377 ft. - 0 ft. = +377 ft.
USGS Map(s): Minturn

Trail Highlights: The trail climbs gradually through pine and aspen. Along the way there are some good views of Vail Mountain. The trail ends on Davos Road, also known as Cortina Lane. Turning right on it will take you to the Davos Singletrack. Turn left up the Singletrack to access the North Trail.

Access from Vail: Travel west on I-70 to Exit 173 for West Vail. Proceed west on the North Frontage Road for 1/4 mile. The trailhead is on the left at the first turn in the road. Parking is available on the right just before the turn in the road. Bus route/stop: West Vail Green/Red Bus – Chamonix.

DELUGE LAKE TRAIL

Length: 3.8 miles (one way)
Trail Use: Moderate
Difficulty: More Difficult
Open To: Hiking, Horseback
Beginning Elevation: 8,710 ft.
Ending Elevation: 11,746 ft.
Elevation Gain: +3102 ft.-66 ft. = +3036 ft.
USGS Map(s): Vail East

Trail Highlights: There are 2 trailheads starting at this location. After 0.1 miles, the Deluge Lake Trail turns left and the Gore Creek Trail continues straight. Take this left onto the narrow trail which heads north before curving and heading northeast the rest of the way. The trail will pass through several boulder fields, and then cling to a very steep slope as it climbs through aspen woods. Don't step off the trail's downhill side to let other hikers pass. The trail climbs steeply for the first 3 miles, gaining about 2,500 feet. At mile 3.2, the trail drops to Deluge Creek where you need to find the tricky spot to cross the creek. The trail is gentler now, and if it becomes confusing, you can follow the creek to the lake where views to the Sawatch Range and Mount of the Holy Cross emerge.

Access from Vail: Travel east on I-70 to exit 180, exit here and turn right onto Bighorn Road. Continue on this road about 2 miles to a small parking area on the left just before the Gore Creek Campground. Bus route/stop: East Vail Bus – Main Gore/Bighorn.

GORE CREEK TRAIL

Length: 5.48 miles to Gore Lake (one way)
Trail Use: High
Difficulty: Moderate to More Difficult
Open To: Hiking, Horseback
Beginning Elevation: 8,711 ft.
Ending Elevation: 11,390 ft.
Elevation Gain: +2,755 ft.-76 ft. = +2,679 ft.
USGS Map(s): Vail East

Trail Highlights: The first 4 miles of the trail climb alongside Gore Creek. There are some short steep sections along the way. The trail winds through meadows and aspen groves which change to conifer stands as the elevation increases. At mile 4, the trail forks; straight ahead goes over Red Buffalo Pass to Summit County, the left fork goes to Gore Lake. From the fork, the trail climbs though spruce and fir forest into the alpine tundra to Gore Lake. The trail is steeper in this section.

Attractions: A short hike along Gore Creek can provide pleasant picnic spots or great fishing opportunities. This trail is one of the most popular in the Eagle's Nest wilderness. Please help lessen the impact of humans in this area by packing out your trash and trash that has been left by others. If you plan on camping overnight at the lake, please use a backpacking stove - there is little wood left in the vicinity.

Access from Vail: Take Exit 180 from I-70 for East Vail. If traveling eastbound, turn right at the bottom of off-ramp. If traveling westbound, turn left at the bottom of the off ramp. Continue east down Bighorn Road almost to the end, approximately 2.5 miles. The trailhead is on the left before you reach the Gore Creek campground. Parking is limited. Please park at the trailhead, not at the campground. Bus route/stop: East Vail Bus – Main Gore/Bighorn.

LOST LAKE TRAIL

Length: 3.73 miles between trailheads
Trail Use: Moderate
Difficulty: Easiest
Open To: Hiking, Biking, Horseback, OHV
Beginning Elevation: 9,651 ft.
Ending Elevation: 10,043 ft.
Elevation Gain: +808 ft. - 416 ft. = +392 ft.
USGS Map(s): Vail West

Trail Highlights: From the west trailhead, the trail follows a ridge dividing the Piney and Red Sandstone drainages while traveling though lodgepole pine and aspen groves. Where the trail forks to the left to Piney Lake, go straight. The trail gradually climbs 600 feet to the trail's high point then drops slightly to Lost Lake. Continue .75 mile on the trail to reach the east trailhead. This portion of the trail passes through forest and meadows and crosses Red Sandstone Creek.

Access from Vail: From I-70, take Exit 176 for Vail. Turn to the north and proceed on North Frontage Road to Red Sandstone Road #700:

- WEST TRAILHEAD – continue up Road #700 for 6 miles to the trailhead parking on the right.
- EAST TRAILHEAD – proceed up Road #700 to the first right turn, Lost Lake Road #786. Follow this very rough 4WD road to the trailhead taking a left turn at each fork.

PITKIN CREEK TRAIL

Length: 4.5 miles (one way)
Trail Use: Moderate
Difficulty: Moderate to More difficult
Open To: Hiking
Beginning Elevation: 8500 ft. Ending Elevation: 11,400 ft.
Elevation Gain: +2900 ft.– 0 ft. = +2900 ft.
USGS Map(s): East Vail

Trail Highlights: The first mile of the trail is strenuous as it climbs steeply out of Vail. Fallen trees along the trail are evidence of past avalanches. The grade levels out somewhat as the trail passes through mature aspen groves and spruce-fir forests and a series of moraines from an ancient glacial retreat. After about 2.5 miles, steep switchbacks reveal the first of two waterfalls on Pitkin Creek about 200 yards to the east. After a number of false summits, the trail reaches Pitkin Lake, nestled beneath an arc of gray granite in the alpine tundra.

Access from Vail: Travel east from Vail on I-70 to Exit 180 for East Vail. Exit here, turn left, and pass under the interstate. Turn right onto the North Frontage Road and continue to the trailhead on the left side of the road before the Pitkin Creek Townhomes. Bus route/stop: East Vail Bus – Main Gore/Bighorn.

UPPER PINEY RIVER TRAIL

Length: 7.02 miles (one way)
Trail Use: Moderate to High
Difficulty: Easy to More Difficult
Open To: Hiking, Horseback
Beginning Elevation: 9,397 ft.
Ending Elevation: 11,102 ft.
Elevation Gain: +1,866 ft.-161 ft. = +1,705 ft.
USGS Map(s): Vail West, Vail East

Trail Highlights: From the trailhead it is a gradual climb for about 3 miles to a cascading waterfall which makes a good destination for the average hiker. The trail becomes less distinct after the falls. Continue along the north side of the river. The trail during the first 4 miles transitions from aspen groves to spruce and fir stands. After mile 4, the trail enters a section of alternating meadows and thick forests that offer many good camping opportunities. The trail then crosses the river several times leading to a small lake at mile 5.7. The next 1.3 miles, to Upper Piney Lake, becomes more rigorous because the trail is steep and can be difficult to follow in some places. It is advised that for the last 1.3 miles, it may be advantageous to have a topographic map, as the trail can be difficult to follow.

Attractions: The lower part of the trail is one of the most popular hiking and horseback trails with the waterfalls at mile 3 as a great destination. This trail provides access to Mt. Powell (13,534 ft.) and the entire length of Piney River for fishing. Beyond mile 5.7, fewer people and horses use the trail and the area becomes increasingly remote.

Access from Vail: From I-70, take Exit 176 for Vail. Take the North Frontage Road west to Red Sandstone Road. Turn north here and follow the paved road about 0.7 miles to a fork with a dirt road on the left. There should be a Forest Service sign indicating this is Red Sandstone Road #700 (Reset your odometer here). Continue up this road about 2.7 miles to an intersection with the Lost Lake Road (#786) and continue left. At mile 6.5 you will pass Red and White Mtn Road-FSR 734. At mile 6.7 you will pass the Lost Lake Trail parking lot on the right and then reach an intersection where the Muddy Pass/Moniger Road goes left. Stay right here. (Some maps show the Red Sandstone Road changing number from FSR 700 to FSR 701 at this point, and some don't, but regardless, you stay right to get to Piney Lake and the Upper Piney River Trail). At mile 9.1, you will cross the Piney River and see a trailhead for Lower Piney River Trail - FDT 1885 on the left. Stay right and reach a Forest Service parking lot on the right at mile 10.65 before the entrance to Piney River Ranch (private property). The trailhead is on the north side (left side of the parking lot as one faces the Piney River Ranch entrance) of the parking lot. If visiting the ranch, you can drive further to their parking lot.

BIGHORN CREEK TRAIL

Length: 3.25 miles (one way)
Trail Use: High
Difficulty: More Difficult
Open To: Hiking, Horseback
Beginning Elevation: 8,608 ft.
Ending Elevation: 10,788 ft.
Elevation Gain: +2,180 ft.-0 ft. = +2,180 ft.
USGS Map(s): Vail East

Trail Highlights: The first 1/2 mile of the trail climbs steeply out of Vail, then more gradually climbs up through stands of aspen and pine. The trail passes beaver ponds and the remains of old mining camps as well as Bighorn Falls. Near mile 2, the views of Vail and Bighorn drainage are exceptional. Around mile 3, the trail passes through open meadows and stands of subalpine fir and Englemann spruce, offering a chance to see the Grand Traverse, a continuous 12,000 foot ridge connecting all the peaks and high drainages of the Gore Range. The trail ends at an old homestead cabin located on private property.

Attractions: The Bighorn Creek Trail is less steep than the other East Vail trails. It is generally a fairly easy walk. Just before mile 2 and past a large fern grove, there is a side trail to an overlook down the steep drop to Bighorn Creek. This point makes a good destination for short hikes. The cabin is unlocked to offer shelter for hikers. Please respect this private property and help protect it for others to use and enjoy.

Access from Vail: Travel east on I-70 to exit 180, exit here and turn right onto the Bighorn Road. Proceed 1 mile to Columbine Drive, turn left. Continue to the end of the pavement as the road passes under the interstate through a narrow passage. There is limited parking at the end of the road. Bus route/stop: East Vail Bus – Columbine/Bighorn Rd.

BOOTH CREEK TRAIL

Length: 4.1 miles (one way)
Trail Use: High
Difficulty: Moderate to more difficult
Open To: Hiking, Horseback
Beginning Elevation: 8,400 ft.
Ending Elevation: 11,480 ft.
Elevation Gain: +3036 ft.-0 ft. = +3036 ft.
USGS Map(s): East Vail

Trail Highlights: The trail climbs steeply from the trailhead through aspen groves for the first mile. Then, the trail climbs more gradually following along Booth Creek. At mile 2, the trail passes 60 foot Booth Creek Falls. Beyond the falls, early season hikers may encounter snow patches as the trail winds through conifer forests and meadows filled with wildflowers. Above 10,000 feet the trees thin and the terrain changes offering views of the Gore Range. The last 1/4 mile to Booth Lake is steep and rocky.

Access from Vail: Travel east from Vail on I-70 to Exit 180 for East Vail. Exit here and turn left, pass under the interstate and turn left onto the north frontage road. Proceed about 1 mile to Booth Creek Road, turn right and continue up this road to the parking area at the end of the road. Bus route/stop: East Vail Bus – Booth Falls.

VAIL MOUNTAIN HIKES

Trail Highlights: Vail Mountain offers hiking for all ability levels. Head to **VAIL.com** or see the Vail Mountain Summer Trail map for more details. The Ticket Office and Mountain Information Center in Lionshead are also great resources for hiking information.

BERRYPICKER

This intermediate trail winds down from Mid-Vail or Adventure Ridge to Vail Village or Lonshead. For additional challenge, hike to the top from the base. 3.2 miles (5.1 km) one way from/to Lionshead, 2-3 hours one way.

EAGLE'S LOOP

Great for the beginner hiker with access from the top of hte Eagle Bahn Gondola. 1 mile (1.6 km)

RIDGE ROUTE

Intermediate ridge climb from Adventure Ridge to Wildwood and back with spectacular views. 1.4 miles (2.3km) 1.5-2 hours one way.

EAGLE VALLEY REGIONAL TRAIL

Trail Highlights: The Eagle Valley Regional Trail runs the length of the Gore Creek/Vail Valley. The trail includes a mix of paved trail alongside the frontage road, trail separated from roads and running alongside Gore Creek and road shoulders designated as trail connector sections. The trail is accessible throughout Lionshead and Vail Village along gore creek. The trail enters into Vail Golf Course area and continues up Vail Pass to the East, and continues approximately 10 miles west of Vail to Edwards.