



## Mount Elbert

At 14,433 feet, Mount Elbert is the highest peak in Colorado and the second highest peak in the lower 48 states coming in just 63 feet below the tallest peak, Mount Whitney in the High Sierras of California. Mount Elbert, as well as Elbert County and the town of Elbert, Colorado, were named after Samuel H. Elbert (1822-1899). Elbert was an outstanding and widely known civic leader in the Territory and State of Colorado. He served as Colorado's Territorial Secretary, Territorial Governor, and State Supreme Court Justice. Active in the formulation of mining legislation and reclamation projects, he promoted concepts of conservation that were ahead of their time.

### Trails

#### **North Elbert Trail 4.3 miles (one way), 4400 feet gain**

From Leadville, travel 3 miles south on US 24. Take Colorado 300 west  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile to Lake County Road 11. Follow signs to Elbert Creek Campground. The trailhead is just west of this campground on the south side of road.

From the trailhead follow the Colorado Trail South. Then veer right at the junction of the Colorado Trail and the Mount Elbert Trail. Follow the trail to the summit.

#### **South (Main) Elbert Trail 5.8 miles from 2WD road (4 miles from 4WD road), 4800 feet**

From Leadville, travel 15 miles south on US 24 to Highway 82 (Independence Pass). Travel west on Hwy 82 3.75 miles to Lake County Road 24 and turn right. Go north 1.5 miles to Shore Pretty overlook. 4WD vehicles can travel an additional 1.8 miles on Forest Service Road 125.1B.

From the end of 125.1B, follow the Colorado trail, crossing a small stream and passing a small pond on your right. Turn left onto the South Elbert Trail. Follow this trail as it climbs well-defined ridge to the summit.

### Maps

USGS: Mount Elbert

Trails Illustrated: #127 Independence Pass  
#110 Leadville/ Fairplay

### 14er Safety

**Temperature:** Expect temperatures to decrease 5 degree with every 1000 foot gain in elevation.

**Wind:** this is a high wind environment. Alpine winds have been recorded at over 200 mph, with 75 mph gusts common. Combine decreasing temperature with high wind and a beautiful sunny day can become a health risk if you are not properly prepared.

**Thunderstorms:** Thunderstorms occur frequently in the afternoons, so be off the summit by noon! They can build rapidly, therefore keep an eye on the weather and get below treeline at the first sign of a thunder storm.





**Sunlight:** there is twice as much ultraviolet radiation and 25% more light than at sea level. Therefore, a wide brim hat, sunscreen, and sunglasses are all highly recommended.

**Have an emergency plan:** Let someone know your location and when you plan to return. Make sure you call them as soon as you have phone coverage.

**Prepare yourself:** This will not be a walk in the park! Prepare yourself physically and mentally. Get an early start (pre-dawn in most cases) and be off the summit by noon to avoid exposure to afternoon thunderstorms.

**Prepare your Pack:** Have a good comfortable backpack. Pack plenty of water, high energy snacks, first aid kit, rain gear, warm clothing, eye protection, sun protection, lightweight shelter, human waste disposal bag.

**Carry human waste disposal bags and take your waste out with you:** Do not use catholes, for the soil bacteria necessary for breaking down human waste is not as effective at high altitudes.

**Proper footwear:** Fourteener trails are designed as Most Difficult hiker trails, sturdy hiking boots are essential! To protect the surrounding plants, stay on the constructed trail, even if there is snow, mud, or gravel. To protect your public lands, stay on the constructed trail. Alpine plants are extremely fragile; as few as 5 footsteps can kill plants leading to soil erosion.

**Other Important Gear:** Snow gaiters and an ice axe are essential when you are travelling across snowfields. Practice using your ice axe to self-arrest before you are in an emergency situation.

**Taking your dog?** Some mountains are better for dogs and some are very hard on your dog's pads. Do your research. To protect your dog, wildlife, and the enjoyment of others, keep your dog on a leash. Don't forget to carry extra water, a water container, and high energy dog treats.

**Going out overnight?** Have material to construct a bear hang and a waterproof container for your food. Hang food from tree limbs 12 feet off the ground, 6 feet from the tree's trunk, and 6 feet below the supporting limb.

## **Regulations**

Remember you are within a National Forest and a high impact area. Special restrictions apply, including:

- Camping and fires prohibited within 200 ft of water and trails
- Organized groups required to obtain approval from the Forest Service.
- Shortcutting switchbacks is prohibited
- Dogs must be under physical restraint



## **Climbing Ethics**

Climbing Fourteeners is a popular activity, the mountains are crowded. Do your part to protect your lands.

### **Plan Ahead and Prepare**

- Educate yourself before your trip. Research the area/route, know what to expect.
- With your climbing companions discuss and agree upon your goals. Never get separated.
- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area. If possible, avoid weekends and holidays.

### **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces**

- Stay on the trail. Walk single file. Give the right of way to uphill climbers.
- Wear hiking boots. Protect trailside plants, stay in the center of the trail, even when muddy.
- Don't "scree". Avoid steep loose slopes prone to erosion and vegetation loss.
- Use already established campsites that are at least 200 feet from water & the trail.
- Do Not Camp Above Treeline. It is not safe and kills fragile alpine tundra.
- Store food and toiletries properly. Expect bears.

### **Dispose of Waste Properly**

- Pack it in, Pack it out. Leave nothing behind, even organic waste.
- Pack out your poop. Carry human waste disposal bags and take your waste out with you.
- Pack out toilet paper and feminine hygiene products.

### **Leave What You Find**

- Do not take flowers, berries, or rocks.
- Preserve our past. Do not take cultural artifacts. Do not touch historical structures.
- Do not build cairns, dig trenches, or build camp structures.

### **Minimize Campfire Impact**

- Use a camp stove to cook meals.
- Campfires are not an essential part of camping. Campfires scar the land.

### **Respect Wildlife**

- Keep your dog on a leash or leave them at home.
- View wildlife from a distance. Never feed or disturb them.

### **Be Considerate of Other Visitors**

- Keep your dog on a leash or leave them at home
- Keep group size small (2-4 people).
- Let nature's sound prevail. Avoid loud voices. Use earphones for music.

## **For More Information**

*The Colorado 14ers: The Standard Routes* By: Colorado Mountain Club

*14ers.com*: Use "starred" routes these are the standard routes

For more information on Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics go to <http://lnt.org>

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