

The Grand Mesa Feud Hike Through History

The lakes featured on the enclosed Ward Lakes hiking trails map have a turbulent history. Several short hikes will take you by the sites of the following story.

Old time residents felt very strongly about their right to fish, or maybe it was their disregard for other people's rights to own a lake. Whatever the case, the Grand Mesa Feud was a long-term battle between fish poachers and private property owners. While most settlers homesteaded in the valley in order to raise and harvest crops, a few men homesteaded on top of Grand Mesa in order to harvest fish. Locals were not understanding of this idea, so they continued to fish.



FISH HATCHERY ON ALEXANDER LAKE
PHOTO: DELTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The feud heated up in 1896 when William Radcliffe, an English aristocrat, arrived on the Grand Mesa. Mr. Radcliffe was not well received by many of the local residents. He acquired the title and fishing rights to the Alexander group of lakes and set to work improving the existing fish hatchery and hotel on the shore of Alexander Lake. No amount of fishing permits would pacify those who trespassed on his property and caught his fish. The funny thing is, many of the fish poachers would have "shot the pants off" anyone trying to steal a calf from their own herd.

As a last resort, Radcliffe posted state game wardens at the lakes. Tragedy struck when W.A. Womack, a local rancher intent on fishing, taunted a bit too much and was shot by warden Frank Mahaney. Womack died on the shore of Island Lake. An outraged mob of over 100 men gathered and proceeded to burn the hotel and everything Radcliffe owned while he was away. Radcliffe never returned to western Colorado.



RADCLIFFE HOTEL ON ALEXANDER LAKE, circa 1896-1901.
PHOTO: DELTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



WILLIAM RADCLIFFE AS HE APPEARED
IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS IN
JULY, 1901
PHOTO: DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY,
WESTERN HISTORY DEPARTMENT



L21 ON GRAND MESA
PHOTO: GRAND MESA BYWAY ASSOCIATION

Grand Mesa The Flat Top Mountain

The Grand Mesa retains its nice flat tabletop thanks to a cap of basalt it acquired over nine million years ago. As the basalt lava flowed from fissures (cracks in the earth), it filled a wide flat valley. Eventually, the soft rock around the basalt valley eroded away leaving a mesa high in the air. Later (14,000 years ago), ice caps rearranged rocky debris into troughs that caught melting snow to form more than 300 lakes and reservoirs on top of the Grand Mesa.



I'M A MARMOT - THE LARGEST OF THE SQUIRREL FAMILY
PHOTO: GRAND MESA BYWAY ASSOCIATION

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Grand Mesa Visitor Center



VISITOR CENTER VIEW FROM LOWER PARKING LOT
PHOTO: GRAND MESA BYWAY ASSOCIATION

The National Forest Visitor Center is the perfect place to learn more about the Grand Mesa. Staff is available to answer questions on recreation opportunities, natural resources and the area. Exhibits reveal more stories about the Grand Mesa and a wide selection of books are available to purchase. The visitor center is open between 9 AM and 5 PM daily, including week-ends, during the summer. (970) 856-4153.

Fish Report

Besides scenic hiking areas, the Mesa Lakes and Ward Lakes areas shown on the enclosed maps are popular areas for fishing. The lakes accessible by main roads are stocked with mature Rainbow Trout a couple times in early summer. South Mesa Lake has a naturally reproducing Brook Trout population and Lost Lake is occasionally stocked with fingerling Cutthroat Trout. A fishing license is required, as well as knowing the fishing regulations.



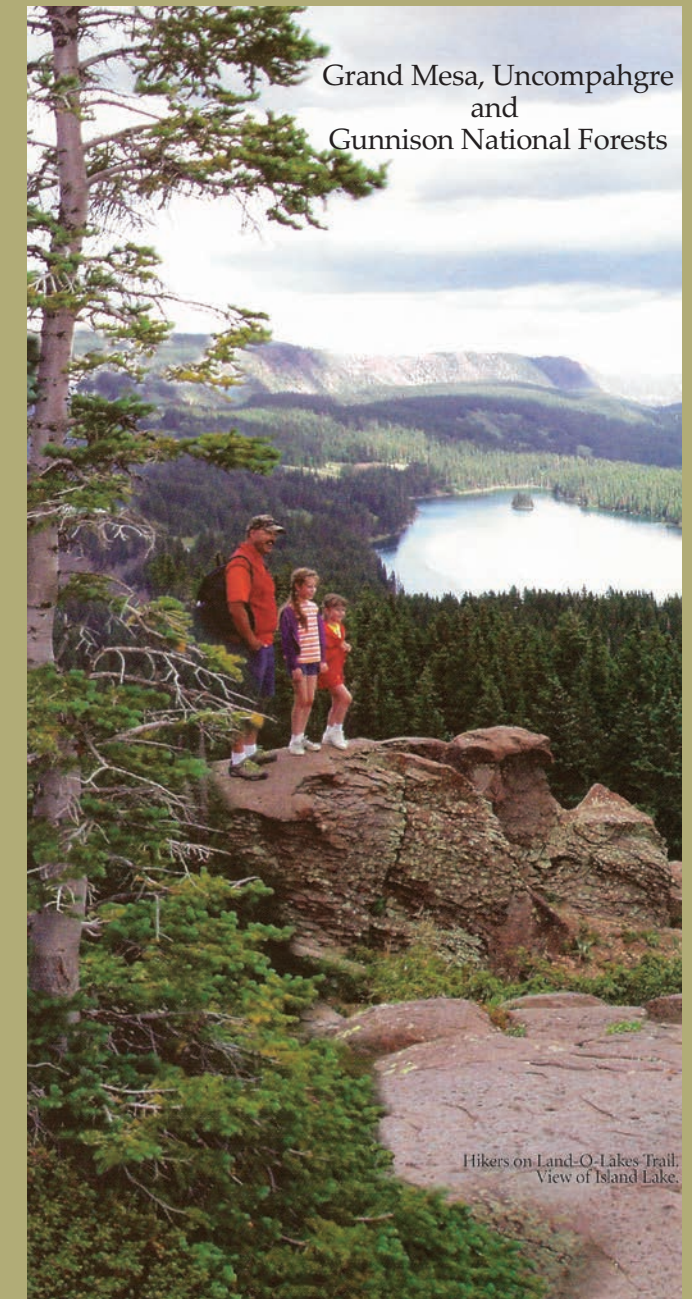
FOREST ENTRANCE ON NORTH SIDE
PHOTO: GRAND MESA BYWAY ASSOCIATION

For More Information:

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests	Supervisors Office
Grand Valley Ranger District	2250 Highway 50
2777 Cross Road Blvd, Unit A	Delta, Colorado, 81416
Grand Junction, Colorado, 81506	(970) 874-6600
(970) 242-8211	

Grand Mesa SHORT HIKES

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre
and
Gunnison National Forests



Hikers on Land-O-Lakes Trail.
View of Island Lake.





PHOTO: DELTA COUNTY TOURISM

Trail Tips:

Trails are generally free of snow July to mid-October.

All trails are open to hikers. Most are also open to mountain bikers and equestrians. Please check the Grand Mesa National Forest Travel Map for specific restrictions.

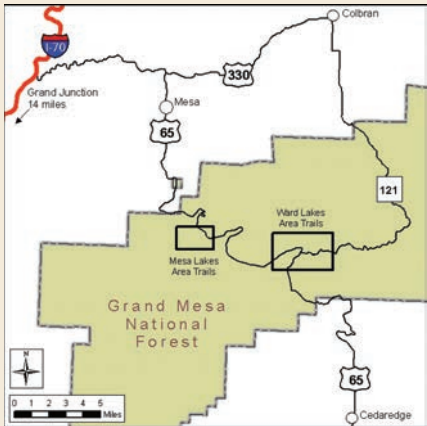
Please maintain control of your pet at all times.

Weather conditions change rapidly. Be prepared for cool temperatures, rain showers, lightning, and mid-afternoon thunderstorms.

Wear ample mosquito repellent. Mosquitoes are plentiful from mid-June through August.

Bring plenty of drinking water and snacks.

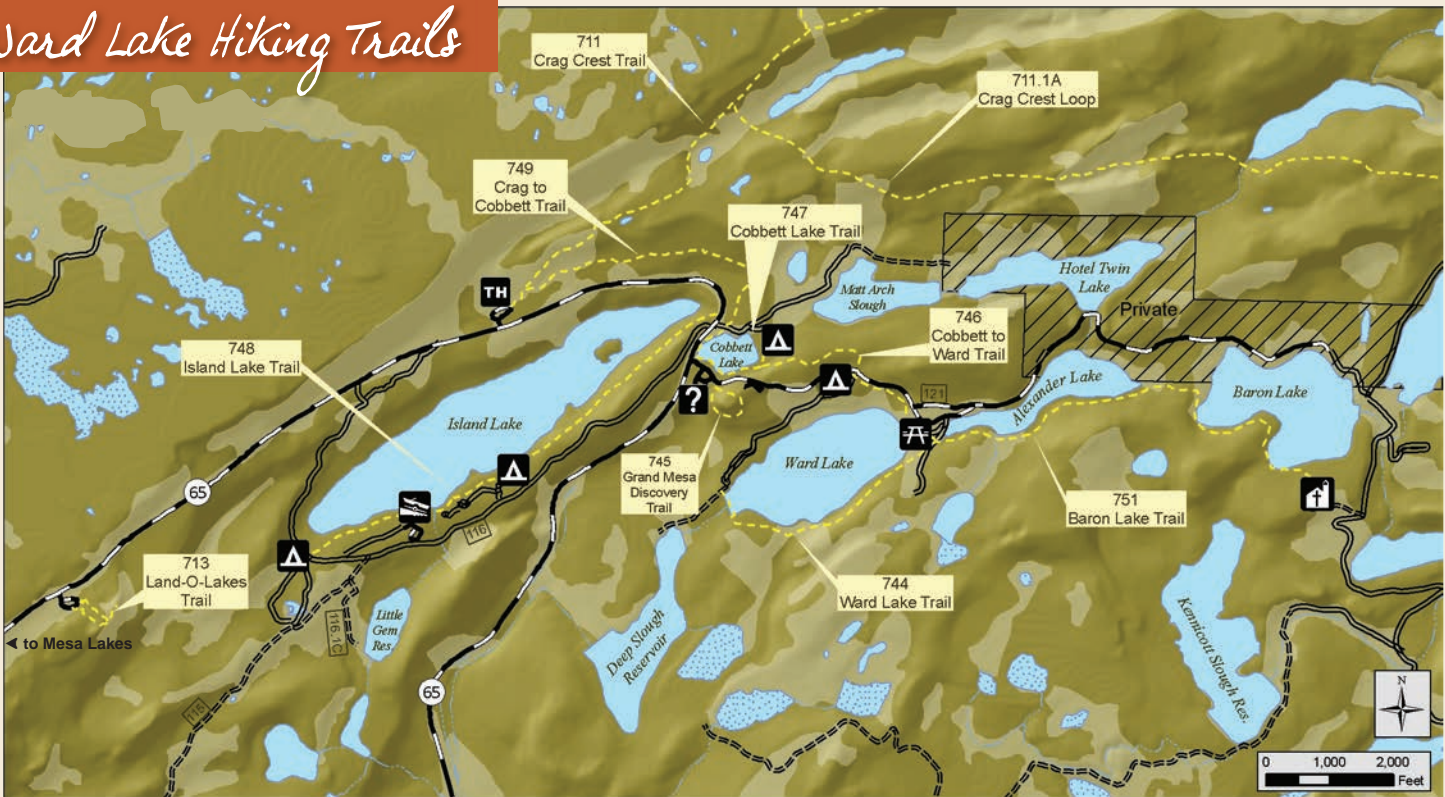
Trails are at an elevation of 9,000 to 11,000 feet. Altitude can cause symptoms such as faster breathing and shortness of breath. These are normal responses of your body. However, headache, nausea, vomiting or unusual tiredness are symptoms of altitude sickness. A person with altitude sickness should rest, eat quick energy foods, drink water and start down the mountain as soon as possible.



Mesa Lakes Hiking Trails



Ward Lake Hiking Trails



Trail Information

Mesa Lake Area Trails:	Length	Difficulty	Info
Mesa Lake Shoreline #503	1.5	E	3-foot wide surface trail; provides loop around Mesa Lake. Lakes, forest, and basalt rock fields. Trail climbs several hundred feet in elevation.
Lost Lake #502	1.5	M	Forest, meadow, 2 miles to rim of Mesa with views of Mesa Creek.
Rim View Trail #533	2.9	M	Connects Mesa Lake Shore Trail to Rim View Trail.
Glacier Springs Cut-off #537	0.5	M	Down Mesa Creek Drainage to Hwy. 65.
Mesa Creek Trail #505	1.2	M	Ends at top of Powderhorn Ski Area, near Lift #2.
West Bench Trail #501	5.9	M	

TH PARKING is available at Jumbo reservoir, along Hwy. 65, and at Glacier Springs Picnic Area (south of Beaver Lake) for Mesa Lake Trails.

Ward Lake Area Trails:	Length	Difficulty	Info
Land-O-Lakes #713	0.5	E	Paved trail, 4 interpretive signs, and outstanding views. Circles Ward Lake, connects campground and picnic area.
Ward Lake #744	1.25	E	Self-guiding interpretive trail at Grand Mesa Visitor Center. Circles Cobbett Lake. Connects Cobbett Campground to Ward Campground and Lake.
GM Discovery Trail #745	0.3	E	Connects Cobbett Lake/Campground to Crag Crest Trail.
Cobbett Lake #747	0.6	E	Trail along south shore. Connects campgrounds, boat launch, and GM Visitor Center.
Cobbett Lake #746	0.3	E	Connects Ward Way Picnic Area to Baron Lake. Passes Alexander Lake.
Cobbett to Crag Crest #749	1.0	M	Loop trail. Consult Crag Crest Trail Brochure.
Island Lake #748	1.7	E	
Baron Lake #751	1.3	E	
Crag Crest #711 & 711.1A	10.3	D	

TH PARKING is available at the Grand Mesa Visitor Center for all Ward Lake Area Trails. Land-O-Lakes has its own parking area.