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United States Department of Agriculture



**BIKING**

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## TWO ELK TRAIL #2005

**Length:** 11 miles (one way)

**Difficulty:** More Difficult

**Beginning Elevation:** 8,772 ft. (east trailhead)

**Elevation Gain:** +2324 ft. - 3066 ft. = -742 ft.

**Trail Use:** Moderate to High

**Open To:** Hiking, Biking, Horseback

**Ending Elevation:** 8,030 ft. (west trailhead)

**USGS Map(s):** Minturn, Red Cliff, Vail East

### Access from Vail:

**EAST TRAILHEAD:** Travel east on I-70 to exit 180 for East Vail. Turn right and travel 2.3 miles east on the south frontage road, passing under the interstate and past the Gore Creek Campground. Park just beyond at the road closure gate and ride 1.8 miles up the old Vail Pass road, today's recreation path, to the Two Elk trailhead on the right.

**WEST TRAILHEAD:** Travel west on I-70 to exit 171 for Minturn, Leadville, and Hwy 24. Turn right and travel south 2.7 miles and into Minturn to Cemetery Bridge. Turn left, cross the bridge and tracks, then proceed south past the cemetery. Go right at the first fork and left at the second fork. Follow this somewhat rough dirt road about 1.8 miles and park at the trailhead at the end.

**Trail Highlights:** From the east trailhead, follow the Old Vail Pass road, now the Vail Pass Recreation Path, 1.8 miles to the junction with the true Two Elk Trailhead on the right. The trail drops from the recreation path to a bridge crossing the Black Gore Creek, then passes under I-70 into the tight Timber Creek canyon which is a cool shady forest alongside the creek. At mile 2.6 the trail makes a sharp right across a third bridge before starting the steepest climb. The majority of the trail's altitude gain happens in this next difficult 1.5 miles to the Two Elk Pass summit. The summit is marked, but does not provide the scenic vista encountered on some of the higher summits. As you ride on, the trees open up to reveal views of the Gore Range, Sawatch Range, and Vail's back bowls. The rest of the trail is a challenging single-track descent. **Note: the next portion of the trail that crosses through the bottom of Vail's back bowls, and travels alongside the Two Elk Creek, is closed for elk calving from May 6 to July 1.** Soon the single-track trail joins up with a service road; ride along this but keep your eyes open for the trail which breaks off of the service road about 100 yards before the road reaches the first chairlift. Remain alert on this trail, as it is very rocky and has many turns in it. After 9 miles of trail riding, you will cross the Two Elk Bridge. Just a little further on is another bridge just before reaching the West Trailhead and the conclusion of this ride.

**Comments:** *Note: Officially, the east trailhead of the Two Elk National Recreation Trail is at its junction with the Old Vail Pass trail, but the mileages on these descriptions include the 1.8 miles of the Old Vail Pass trail you must ride to get to the trailhead.* A designated National Scenic Trail, Two Elk Trail can be ridden in either direction, although the Trail Highlights section, above, details the more popular east to west route. Two cars are needed to ride the 11 mile length of the trail one-way. Another option is to ride Hwy. 24 from the West Trailhead to the bike path at Dowd Junction and back to the East Trailhead to complete a loop ride.

**ETHICS/REGULATIONS:** Mountain biking provides the opportunity to "get away from it all." Careless operation of your bike can cause damage and may result in closing of areas to mountain bike enthusiasts. Respect the environment and other trail users. By using common sense and common courtesy, what is available today will be here to enjoy tomorrow:

- \* **Always stay on designated roads and trails;** off-trail riding is not permitted on the White River National Forest.
- \* Obtain a map of the area you wish to explore and determine which areas are open for use.
- \* Avoid trails that are obviously wet and muddy to avoid trail damage.
- \* When descending, apply enough brake to maintain control, but avoid locking your bike's wheels, which can start a rut, leading to erosion.
- \* Cross streams at fording points only.
- \* Wilderness areas are managed to maintain their primitive character and to provide opportunities for solitude. These designated areas are solely for non-mechanized travel—access is restricted to foot and horseback only. Sorry, no OHVs or bicycles.
- \* For tips on techniques and responsible recreation, visit [www.treadlightly.org](http://www.treadlightly.org).

**PACK IT IN - PACK IT OUT!! TREAD LIGHTLY!!**

**This map is intended for use as a general guide only, not for actual land navigation. The White River National Forest strongly suggests purchasing a topographic map and compass prior to your hiking trip.**



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