

# The Ascent: A Guided Climb Through Colorado's 14ers

58 summits in 36 trips, building up  
**skill, stamina, & courage**  
along the way

created by  
Luke Anderson  
Updated in 2025

Trip	Summit(s) Achieved	Trip Type	Trip Length	Drive from Denver	Planning Notes & Tips
------	--------------------	-----------	-------------	-------------------	-----------------------

## Stage 1: Trailhead | 5 trips, 9 summits

→ Get a taste for the sport with these starter summits, all day trips within a couple hours of Denver. Bring a friend!

□ #1	<b>Mt. Sherman</b>	Day Trip	1 day	2hr	Safest bet for a first outing.
□ #2	<b>Mt. Bierstadt</b>	Day Trip	1 day	1.5hr	A touch of a summit scramble.
□ #3	<b>Quandary Peak</b>	Day Trip	1 day	2hr	Short, but consistently steep.
□ #4	<b>Grays Peak &amp; Torreys Peak</b>	Day Trip	1 day	1.5hr	2nd summit is a mental push.
□ #5	<b>Mt. Democrat, Mt. Cameron, Mt. Lincoln &amp; Mt. Bross</b>	Day Trip	1 day	2hr	Consider all 4 in a big day, or just save Democrat for a return trip.

### Things To Know As You Start Your Journey

- Created for the average, busy, non-hardcore hiker
- Emphasis on efficiency, safety, & learning curve
- Standard/easiest route unless otherwise noted
- Assumes use of any stock AWD/4WD vehicle
- Study routes in Gerry Roach's guidebook (buy it!)
- Print route photos & check conditions on 14ers.com

## Stage 2: Switchbacks | 15 trips, 18 summits

→ Are your next 15 Saturdays free? Not anymore! Build your stamina and your résumé on these long but great days.

□ #1	<b>Huron Peak</b>	Day Trip	1 day	3hr	A friendly, scenic stroll from the 4WD trailhead (TH).
□ #2	<b>Mt. Elbert</b>	Day Trip	1 day	2.5hr	East Ridge is simplest, but pick any route you like.
□ #3	<b>Mt. Princeton</b>	Day Trip	1 day	3hr	Be brave and rumble to the 4WD TH. A rather short but mostly rocky walk from there.
□ #4	<b>Mt. Yale</b>	Day Trip	1 day	2.5hr	A well-rounded tour of intermediate 14er features. You'll want to repeat this one.
□ #5	<b>Mt. Oxford &amp; Mt. Belford</b>	Day Trip	1 day	2.5hr	A hard-earned doubleheader above a beautiful valley. Keep Missouri separate...
□ #6	<b>Missouri Mountain</b>	Day Trip	1 day	2.5hr	... unless you're up for a very full 3-peak day. Come back for this one, or camp in the Gulch!
□ #7	<b>Mt. Massive</b>	Day Trip	1 day	2.5hr	SW Slopes route is steep but much shorter than the standard route.
□ #8	<b>Mt. Columbia</b>	Day Trip	1 day	3hr	A pleasant outing on its own. Save the Harvard traverse for a return trip.
□ #9	<b>La Plata Peak</b>	Day Trip	1 day	2.5hr	A beautiful tour (like Yale), but a hefty and relentless 4,200-foot gain.
□ #10	<b>Pikes Peak</b>	Day Trip	1 day	2hr	NW Slopes (Crag's) route is a more typical 14er hike than Barr Trail.
□ #11	<b>Mt. Harvard</b>	Day Trip*	1 day*	3hr	A surprisingly long slog with a spicy finish. Start early or add an overnight.
□ #12	<b>Mt. Shavano &amp; Tabeguache Peak</b>	Day Trip*	1 day*	3hr	Gaining Shavano's 4,400 feet in just over 4 miles is a heavy lift. Luckily, Tab is an easy bonus prize. Consider car-camping at one of many free spots along the road to the TH.
□ #13	<b>Mt. of the Holy Cross</b>	Day Trip*	1 day*	2.5hr	5,600 ft. of total gain in one day is really rough; consider making it into a mini-backpacking trip.
□ #14	<b>Mt. Antero</b>	Day Trip*	1 day*	2.5hr	Finish off the Sawatch range! All routes are long; consider the more scenic Little Brown's Creek.
□ #15	<b>Castle Peak &amp; Conundrum Peak</b>	Day Trip*	1 day*	4hr	This memorable trek often involves crossing (and then glissading down!) big snowfields well into summer. The push to Castle's summit has a few tricky moves, but Conundrum's an easy bonus.

\* consider camping at/near trailhead (#11, #12, #14, #15) or along the route (#11, #13, #14) to ease the burden on these long days

**Green Peak** = Beginner  
**Blue Peak** = Intermediate  
**Orange Peak** = Advanced  
**Red Peak** = Expert

Pick up the pace in  
**Stage 2** by hitting  
two Sawatch Range  
peaks in a weekend

## Stage 3: Tree Line | 5 trips, 5 summits

→ It's time to overcome your wary feelings about two things: Class 3 climbing, and long drives to obscure parts of the state. Buy a helmet, and buckle up!

□ #1	<b>Mt. Blue Sky via Sawtooth (repeating Mt. Bierstadt)</b>	Day Trip	1 day	1.5hr	Welcome to your first Class 3 experience. Brief but memorable exposure and scrambling. Study the route carefully, & try not to get lost on the descent after summiting Blue Sky.
□ #2	<b>Longs Peak</b>	Day Trip	1 day	1.5hr	Kudos if you've held out this long before giving in to Longs' allure. You're ready!
□ #3	<b>Mt. Sneffels</b>	Car Camp	1.5 days	6hr	You're committed now, so it's a good time to cross the state & knock this one out.
□ #4	<b>Mt. Lindsey</b>	Car Camp	1.5 days	4hr	This remote peak offers an epic journey across diverse terrain with a rocky finish.
□ #5	<b>Culebra Peak</b>	Car Camp	1.5 days	4hr	Time to pony up the \$150 (www.cielo-vista-ranch.info); it's worth it. Enjoy the untrailed experience!

Halfway there!

## Stage 4: Talus | 5 trips, 11 summits

→ Ready to start relying on that built-up stamina and those saved-up vacation days? Prepare to see some of the state's most beautiful places - you've earned it.

□ #1	<b>San Luis Peak, Redcloud Peak, Sunshine Peak &amp; Handies Peak</b>	Car Camp	3.5 days	5.5hr + 2hr	Drive to Creede & car camp at West Willow Creek 4WD TH; climb San Luis (South Ridge route), drive 2 more hours & car camp at Silver Creek-Grizzly Gulch TH; climb Red+Sun & return to same camp; climb Handies (West Slopes is easiest but East Slopes is a nice adventure), & drive home.
□ #2	<b>Blanca Peak &amp; Ellingwood Point</b>	Backpack	2 days	4hr	Only the most hardcore 4WD can shorten this one, so just park at the main TH & sweat it out. Day 1: Camp at Lake Como. Day 2: Summit both, wink at Little Bear, pack out, & head home.
□ #3	<b>Challenger Point &amp; Kit Carson Peak</b>	Backpack	2 days	4hr	Day 1: Explore the quirky town of Crestone, then hike to & camp at the gorgeous Willow Lake. Day 2: Trudge up Challenger, carefully stay on route to Kit's summit, pack out, & head home.
□ #4	<b>Wetterhorn Peak &amp; Uncompahgre Peak</b>	Backpack	2-3 days	5.5hr	Both beauties can be done from Matterhorn Creek TH. Day 1: Pack in 2.5 miles to trail junction. Day 2: Zip up Wett (helmets on!) then trek over to Unc (long day!). Or save Unc for Day 3 before packing out.
□ #5	<b>Snowmass Mountain</b>	Backpack	2 days	3.5hr	Day 1: Pack to the lake. Day 2: Climb, pack out, & drive home late. (Or relax & pack out on Day 3.)

## Stage 5: Scramble | 4 trips, 13 summits

→ Study and prepare carefully for these Big Four outings that will test your skill, stamina, and courage. Nerves give way to ecstasy atop these thrilling summits. Believe in yourself.

□ #1	<b>Humboldt Peak, Crestone Peak, &amp; Crestone Needle</b>	Backpack	3.5 days	3.5hr	Day 1, afternoon: Drive to TH and car-camp. Day 2: Pack to S. Colony Lakes, drop pack, summit Humboldt, & camp by lakes. Day 3: C. Peak, relax. Day 4: C. Needle, pack out, drive home.
□ #2	<b>Sunlight Peak, Windom Peak, North Eolus, &amp; Mt. Eolus</b>	Hotel, Backpack	4.5 days	6.5hr	Book train tickets & hotels in advance! Day 1: Drive to Durango & lodge. Day 2: Train, hike to Chicago Basin. Day 3: Climb Sun+Win. Day 4: Climb Eoluses, pack out, lodge. Day 5: Drive home.
□ #3	<b>Wilson Peak, Mt. Wilson, &amp; El Diente Peak</b>	Backpack	3-4 days	6.5hr	Camping at scenic Navajo Lake is a great start for W. Peak, but Mt. W and ED are both best ascended from the south, in a long day (or camp) from Kilpacker TH. (North routes from the lake are very dicey!)
□ #4	<b>Maroon Peak, N. Maroon Peak, &amp; Pyramid Peak</b>	Backpack	3.5 days	4hr	Day 1, afternoon: Drive to Maroon Lake, or Aspen Highlands & shuttle; find a numbered campsite by Crater Lake. Day 2: Maroon. Day 3: N. Maroon. Day 4: Pyramid, pack out, & drive home.

## Stage 6: Summit Crux | 2 trips, 2 summits

→ You have earned the right to return to two areas you've been before to finish the job. Approach these two trophies with the reverence they're due, and you'll come out on top.

□ #1	<b>Little Bear Peak</b>	Backpack	2 days	4hr	Day 1: See Blanca/Ell trip. Day 2: Start super early on a weekday! Climb, pack out, & exhale.
□ #2	<b>Capitol Peak</b>	Backpack	2 days	4hr	Day 1: Drive & pack into Capitol Lake. Day 2: Start early, stay safe, pack out, & celebrate!

