

SPOKE TALK



Bikepacking offers fun, adventure

While ago, I did not really love mountain biking, but last weekend, I did something really cool that I have never done before. I went bikepacking.



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Bikepacking is where you put packs on your bikes, and you pack things like a tent, food, water and sleeping bags. You go biking, and then you camp at night, and then ride more the next day. I thought it was really fun. I would like to do it, again.

For my first bikepacking trip, we drove to Breckenridge and rode the Peaks Trail all the way to Frisco. From Frisco, we rode about 8 miles of bike path back to the car in Breckenridge. When we started off, I was worried it was going to be a bit long for me, but once we got to the real trailhead to the Peaks Trail, I told myself I could do it.

It was hard, but after about three long hours of riding, we found a good campsite and set up the tent. It was so nice there. It was quiet and a little cold.

I was so hungry that my mouth was watering. When the Mountain House backpackers meals were ready to eat, I nearly jumped with joy. When I had my first bite of food, it tasted so good. I guess anything tastes good when you are biking all day.

After eating the real dinner food, we ate the raspberry crumble. It was another backpacker meal, but this one was a desert. It was like raspberry sauce and then you added chocolate cookie crumbs. Once it was mixed, it looked like bear poop. It tasted amazing, so it did not really matter, and it was something to laugh at.

We slept in our tent, and thank god, we remembered the rainily because it rained all night. When we woke up in the morning, the skies were clear, and I was rested.

After we started riding that day, I slid on a root on a steep hill and went over my handlebars. It hurt a lot. I skinned my knee and hurt my shoulder. We sat for a while, but then we kept on riding. After we got to Frisco, we had about 8 miles of riding on the core trail back to our car in Breckenridge.

I did it!

Gigi Lobeck is a 10-year-old Routt County resident and cyclist.

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SHELBY REARDON/STAFF

Rabbit Ears Peak peers over a field of wildflowers.

Rabbit Ears Peak

Climb to the ears and wade through wildflowers on a trail just outside of town

The trailhead for Rabbit Ears Peak was packed. Packed like your suitcase going back home after spending Christmas at grandma's. Cars stretched out of the



Shelby Reardon

lot and down the road toward Dumont Lake Campground off of U.S. Highway 40 on Rabbit Ears Pass. Thankfully, we were leaving, not arriving.

Rabbit Ears Peak is a relatively easy, accessible and close-by hike. It's the image seen on Steamboat postcards and paintings and even the name of the historic downtown motel. For that reason, I wasn't surprised it was busy, just happy we started early.

If I were to describe the hike in one word, it would be leisurely. The trail is actually a forest road, so it's wide and easy to navigate and fairly flat. After a brief trek on Forest Road 311, take a right at a small lot and sign that says 291. This will bring you all the way up to the top. The pointy rocks that earned Rabbit Ears Pass its name peer down over fields of wildflowers.

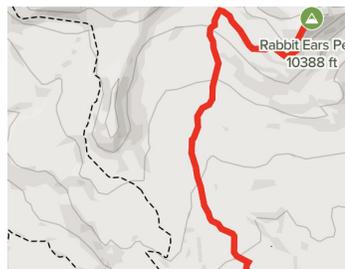
The hike isn't jam packed with features like waterfalls or river crossings or Alpine lakes. It's a simple, beautiful walk through wide-open meadows full of flowers and every color of the rainbow. There was a single stream that tickled our ears with its gentle trickle and granted the dogs a drink.

The final stretch makes you work for the views. There is a steep, but short, climb up the dirt road, but once it's done, you're at



SHELBY REARDON/STAFF

There is one section of the Rabbit Ears Peak trail on Rabbit Ears Pass that is a little hard to track. Here is a suggested route.



GRAPHIC ONLINE

View a map of the trail at SteamboatPilot.com.

the top.

There are plenty of views to be seen from the base of the rock formation, but if you want to get closer to the ears, there's the smallest bit of scrambling involved. The trail isn't super clear, but it's not hard to guess where you're supposed to go. In case you aren't the best guesser, here is what I determined to be the easiest route:

Staring at the rocks from the top of the hill, look left. Head up whatever semblance

of trail calls to you. Then, turn right to get behind a small boulder. Once past the large rock, turn left around the corner and the trail should be clear again.

You can't get to the actual "ears," but where the trail stops is on the lower wall of one of the ears. The view isn't equal to that from a large peak, but it's enjoyable nonetheless. The hawks screeching and swooping around the tops of the rock pillars were the highlight of reaching the top. One perched on a cliffside over a white-stained shelf of rock that held screaming fledglings.

I know Rabbit Ears is busy, and it's usually full of visitors, but it's an iconic part of Steamboat. A lot of people who grew up in Steamboat, including my hiking partner that day, have never done Rabbit Ears, perhaps because they take it for granted. It's right there and will always be right there. But it might not always be there. In 2017, the formation went floppy after losing a large chunk of one of the ears to erosion. While there is still a substantial amount of rock up there, it's hard to say when Rabbit Ears will become Rabbit Ear.

So while the bunny is still around, get up there and be a tourist in your own town.