

COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

Eldorado Canyon State Park

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Eldorado Canyon has timed vehicle entry from May to September. See inside for more information.

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Nature's Forces - Geology

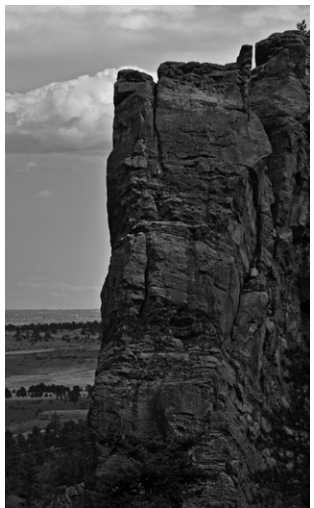
In the space of one mile, the cliffs of Eldorado Canyon reveal a 1.6 billion year panorama of geologic history. The oldest rocks in the park, the granite exposed at the west end, formed when molten magma seeped from the earth's core through cracks in its crust, still deep beneath the earth's surface. As the magma slowly cooled, its quartz, feldspar and biotite components solidified into interlocking crystals to make this light gray igneous rock.

Overlying the granite is quartzite, which started out as thick layers of eroded sand about 1.6 billion years ago. Further erosion buried the sand to a great depth, where heat and pressure compacted it into sandstone, a sedimentary rock. As folding and faulting of the earth's crust pushed the sandstone closer to the earth's core, increasing heat and pressure compressed it into a metamorphic rock. This prominent grayish quartzite can be seen at Supremacy Rock and along Rattlesnake Gulch.

Roughly 300 million years ago the Ancestral Rocky Mountains were uplifted in the same position as the present day Rockies, about 30 miles west of the park. As these granite mountains eroded, streams deposited thick layers of sand and pebbles, which compacted into sandstone as it was buried to increasing depths. This rock is known as the Fountain Formation, which is also exposed in Boulder's Flatirons and Red Rocks Amphitheater. The reddish coloring is the result of the iron ore called hematite. Most of the canyon's high cliffs - The Bastille, Wind Tower, Redgarden Wall, West Ridge, Peanuts and Rincon Wall - are made of this rock.

280 million years ago a desert existed east of the Rocky Mountains. Windblown sand dunes were deposited above the Fountain Formation, and then compacted into sandstone 240 million years ago. This is the youngest rock in the park, known as the Lyons Formation, and is exposed at the Rotwand Wall.

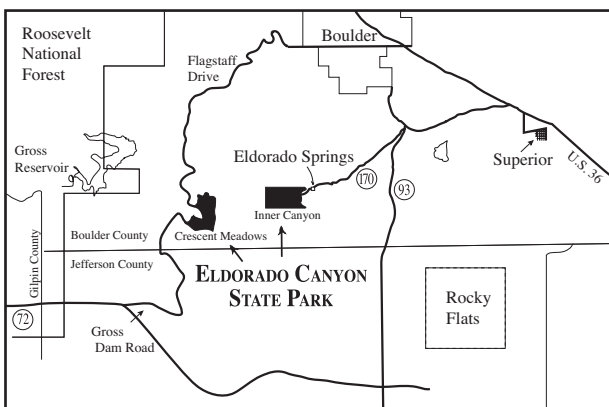
The uplifting of the modern Rocky Mountains 65 million years ago caused the previously horizontal layers of the Fountain and Lyons formations to tilt, which is clearly visible on the sheer cliff walls where South Boulder Creek has slowly eroded through the layers. The softer areas of rock have eroded faster, creating ravines leaving the harder rock sections in stunning ridges. The tilted layers also carry groundwater from the Rockies down and eastward to a depth of 8,000 feet before it is forced back to the surface as the artesian spring just east of the park entrance.



► LOCATION

From Boulder: Take Broadway/State Highway 93 south from Boulder, turn west (right) onto Colorado 170 and then continue about three miles to the town of Eldorado Springs. Highway 170 dead-ends at the town, and a dirt road continues. The park is located at the end of the dirt road on the left.

From Denver: Take I-25 north to State Highway 36, go west towards Boulder. Exit at “Louisville-Superior” (you will also see signs for Eldorado Springs and Highway 170) and turn south (left) at the light. Follow signs to Eldorado Springs/Highway 170 (turning right on Marshall Road/Highway 170). You will turn into the Superior Marketplace, as Highway 170 travels around the marketplace and eventually leads you 7.4 miles to Eldorado Canyon. Highway 170 dead-ends at the town of Eldorado Springs, and the road continues as a dirt road. The park is located at the end of the dirt road on the left.



Eldorado Canyon State Park

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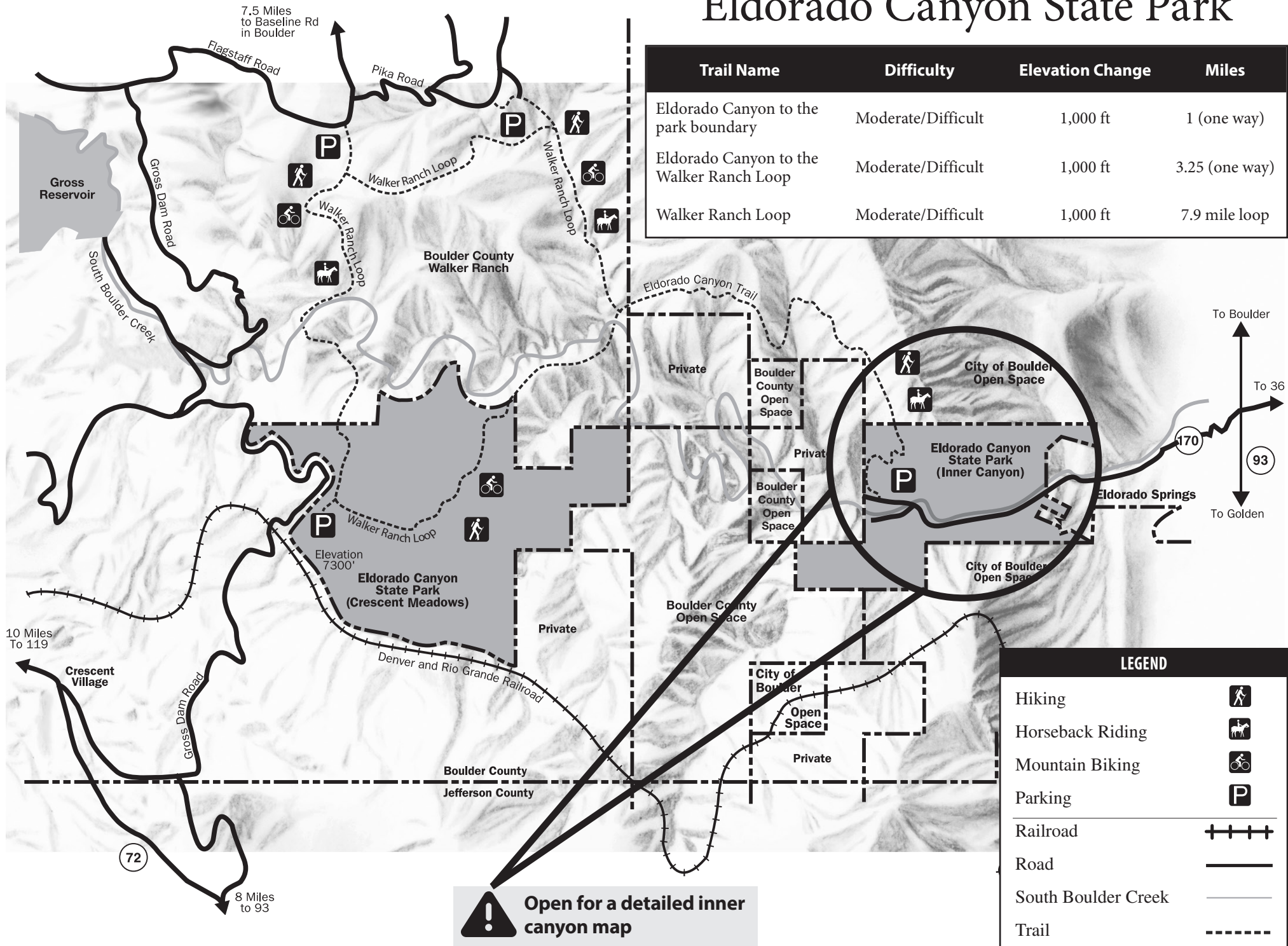
SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE

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Trail Name	Difficulty	Elevation Change	Miles
Eldorado Canyon to the park boundary	Moderate/Difficult	1,000 ft	1 (one way)
Eldorado Canyon to the Walker Ranch Loop	Moderate/Difficult	1,000 ft	3.25 (one way)
Walker Ranch Loop	Moderate/Difficult	1,000 ft	7.9 mile loop



**LIVE LIFE
OUTSIDE**

Reservations are limited. Plan ahead. For more information visit cpw.info/eldorado-reserve