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ALPINE BACKPACKING IN THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS

TRIP SUMMARY

HIGHLIGHTS

- Backpacking in a spectacular alpine environment
- Gaining confidence in your outdoors knowledge and skills
- Sitting under the stars with new friends
- Luxuriating in the soothing waters of the hot springs

Phone: 877-439-4042

Outside the US: 970-833-3132

Email: info@goodadventure.com

TRIP AT A GLANCE

Location:	Snowy Mountains, Wyoming
Activities:	Backpacking
Arrive:	Arrive Denver (DEN) anytime on Day 1
Depart:	From the Denver airport at 4 p.m. on Day 7. You can plan to fly out any time after 5:30 p.m.

TRIP OVERVIEW

The wild west is full of granite spires, crystalline lakes, and cowboy sunsets. Wyoming is home to one such well-kept secret, Medicine Bow National Forest. Here you can walk among fields of brilliant wildflowers with everything you need on your back, warm your feet by an open fire, and relax at the end of an invigorating hiking day with a mug of hot chocolate. Backpacking done right! After a few nights in the wilderness, unwind in the rich mineral waters of the Saratoga Hot Springs, “where rustic elegance meets the great outdoors”. This trip is perfect for any hiker wishing to acquire or refine basic camping skills and for those hoping to just enjoy alpine beauty.

RATING

This trip is rated a 3 and is appropriate for women in good condition who want to learn or refine backpacking skills in a spectacular alpine setting. While you will be carrying a 30-pound pack on a trail where there are some sustained ascents and descents, the mileage is quite moderate to allow time to learn and practice skills. Rating: 1 2 [3] 4 5. A rating of 3 requires aerobic conditioning for a minimum of 30 - 45 minutes 3 to 4 days a week.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 1 - 2 experienced AGC guides based on group size
- Two nights double occupancy lodging and four nights camping
- All meals from breakfast on Day 2 to lunch on Day 7
- Transportation from Denver to Snowy Mountains and back
- Group camping, cooking, and safety equipment

Not included: Airfare to Denver, alcoholic beverages, guide gratuities, personal backpacking equipment including backpacks and sleeping bags (these can be rented from the Denver REI)

OUR ITINERARY

Below is the itinerary we have planned for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

Arrive Denver (DEN) anytime. We will be spending the first night at a hotel with an airport shuttle. We will not be formally gathering as a group this evening and it's yours to spend as you choose.

DAY 2

We all gather at the hotel at 9 a.m. for our official first group meeting. Before leaving Denver, we will take time to review the essentials of backpacking equipment, including what to bring, packing, and getting the best personal fit for your backpack. Most people discover that carrying 30 pounds is very manageable with a properly fitting backpack. We'll stop at Denver's "LoDo" district with an opportunity to purchase last minute gear at the REI Flagship store, or take a walk along the South Platte River for those who don't want to shop. We then head north for a 3-hour drive to an established Forest Service campsite at Vedauwoo, Wyoming. Pronounced "vee-da-woo", our campsite is surrounded by aspen and pine forests as well as giant granite boulders and rock-outcroppings that are popular with rock climbers. After dinner we'll take a hike among the jumbled rocks, with an opportunity to try "bouldering", which is practicing rock climbing movement near the ground. (B, L, D)

DAY 3

After an early breakfast and practice packing up camp, we take a beautiful 2-hour drive through part of the Snowy Mountain Scenic Byway. We'll drive through sagebrush prairie at the lower elevations to lodgepole pine and spruce-fir forests. The Snowy Range, at 9,000 to 12,000 feet above sea level, is aptly named for the heavy annual snowfall and striking white granite peaks. To help us acclimatize to the 10,000-foot elevation, we will stay another night at an established Forest Service campground. We'll go for an altitude acclimatizing hike of 2-3 miles through spires of Englemann spruce trees and fields of colorful wildflowers. After our hike we will continue to learn backpacking basics such as Leave No Trace ethics, and health and safety preparation for the backcountry including altitude illness prevention, sanitation, water purification, foot care, cooking in the backcountry and more. (B, L, D)

DAY 4

Putting everything we've learned into practice, this morning we pack up all our gear and carry everything we need about 4-miles through spectacular scenery into the backcountry near Gap Lakes. Glaciers gouged this area thousands of year ago, creating lake after lake. Today many snowfields remain all summer, gripping the mountain slopes and hanging over many of the lakes, white snow contrasting with blue water. The trail is rocky in some places and soft tundra in others. Gradually we hike up to a meadow protected by trees to our primitive campsite. We'll backpack past trees twisted by the harsh alpine environment, known as "Krummholz" or "bent trees" and a beautiful array of wildflowers, true highlights of the alpine scenery. At 12,013 feet, is the highest point in the range and provides a great landmark during most of our journey. A variety of birds, such as the Clark's Nutcracker, chickadee, and hairy woodpecker will become familiar as well as the squeaks, whistles and chubby bodies of the small alpine marmots and pikas. Moose, elk, deer, pronghorn antelope, beaver, and pine martins also live in the wilds here. After creating a Leave No Trace campsite, we will have time for exploration, fishing, wildflower i.d., or map and compass skills, depending on individual interests. Dinner is gourmet, backpacking style, and those who want to practice cooking in the backcountry are welcome to help. (B, L, D)

DAY 5

We plan to stay at the same campsite tonight, so we can explore the spectacular area without carrying our full loads. We have a variety of choices for the day, including climbing Brown's Peak, taking a refreshing dip in one of the lakes, exploring routes to other alpine lakes such as Sheep Lake for fishing, or nature exploration. There are many small lakes nestled against high escarpments that are home to rainbow, cutthroat, and brook trout -making this trip a great opportunity to practice angling skills. Anyone interested can learn backcountry cooking skills while helping to create another tasty feast for dinner. Weather permitting, star gazing is fantastic at this elevation! (B, L, D)

DAY 6

After breakfast we pack-up and hike back to our starting point. We will enjoy a last alpine lake-side lunch and then drive about an hour to Saratoga, Wyoming to soak our muscles in the "Place of the Magic Water" at Saratoga Inn Hot Springs. The Inn has a hot spring-fed swimming pool and soaking tubs covered by teepees – a unique western experience! Our last night celebration dinner will be at a local restaurant and we will undoubtedly enjoy sleeping in soft beds tonight. (B, L, D)

DAY 7

We drive back to Denver today, stopping for lunch and a short last hike near Prospect Ponds. We'll be back at the airport by 4 p.m. and you can plan flights out after 5:30 p.m. (B, L)

ADDITIONAL TRIP INFORMATION

GETTING THERE

If you are flying, plan to arrive at the Denver International Airport (DEN). All major airlines as well as many of the lower cost competitors have scheduled flights.

If you are driving, there is long-term parking available near the airport and we will provide instructions for meeting closer to the trip.

GETTING BACK

We will arrive at the Denver airport at 4 p.m. on Day 7. You can plan to fly out any time after 5:30 p.m.

AIRFARE

If you would like assistance with airfare, we recommend contacting our AirDesk Partner, [Exito Travel](#). Start by submitting this [form](#). Just fill in your dates and destinations, including any additional notes about preferred carriers, class of service, possible stopovers, etc., and an agent will typically respond via email within a few hours. If you prefer to call, the number is 800-655-4053; be sure to tell them you are traveling with Adventures in Good Company.

Please note: Most of the international airlines are in-network for Exito, so they do not charge extra for their services (and often have access to discounted rates). When necessary, processing fees out-of-network carriers are minimal at around \$35-\$50 per ticket.

ACCOMMODATIONS

We'll spend our first night in a convenient Marriott hotel near the Denver airport, in double occupancy (or single occupancy if you opted for the single supplement) and four nights in tents (two women per tent). Our last night will be at the charming western-themed Saratoga Hot Springs resort, a wonderful and relaxing reward after our nights spent outside.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We recommend that you purchase a travel protection plan to help protect you and your travel investment against the unexpected. For your convenience, we offer travel protection through Travelex Insurance Services. For more information on the available plans or to enroll, visit www.travelexinsurance.com or call 1-800-228-9792 and reference location number 06-0331.

Travelex Insurance Services, Inc CA Agency License #0D10209. All products listed are underwritten by, Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance Company, NAIC #22276.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellation charges reflect the many expenses Adventures in Good Company cannot recover if you cancel, even if you must do so due to illness, injury, or personal emergencies. These fees are not meant to be punitive. The charges made reflect the expenses Adventures in Good Company has incurred in administering your reservation and planning for your participation. We recognize that the majority of those who cancel their reservations do so out of necessity. Please note that we do not make any refunds for any unused portion of your trip, not arriving, arriving late, or leaving the trip early.

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