

Pikes Peak Loop

The Pikes Peak Loop is a 5 mile trail in the Cathedral Pines area (Holmes and Vessey). This is a beautiful trail in the trees with a nice combination of shade and open areas. The trail winds through the Cathedral Pines community, with many wild flowers, aspen and pine trees, and lots of peace and quiet.

Location and Parking

From Shoup Road go North on Holmes approximately 1.75 miles. Turn left on Vessey Rd into Cathedral Pines (there will be a large stone sign saying Cathedral Pines). Take an immediate left into a crushed blacktop parking area. There is plenty of room for multiple cars and horse trailers. From the parking lot on the North side (next to Vessey Road) there is an obvious path from the parking lot. Walk .27 miles on this dirt path to reach the loop.

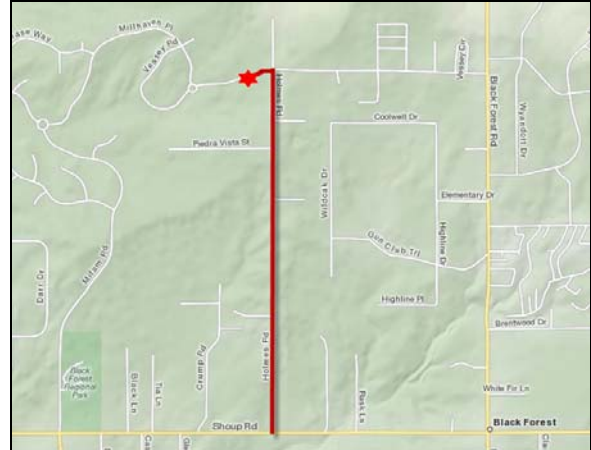


Figure 1: Map to the parking area

Trail Details Summary

Trail Length: 5.12 miles

Public/Private: Public

Average Trail Width: Approximately 5 feet

Trail Material: Mostly packed dirt. One small section of rock

Trail Activities:

Bicycles: Yes Dogs: Leashed

Hiking: Yes Horses: Partial (see notes below)

Motorized Vehicles: No

Accessibility: Trail is well maintained except for first .27 miles from the parking lot to the trailhead. Strollers should have no issue on 98% of the trail. Other 2% is passable but not ideal.

Topography

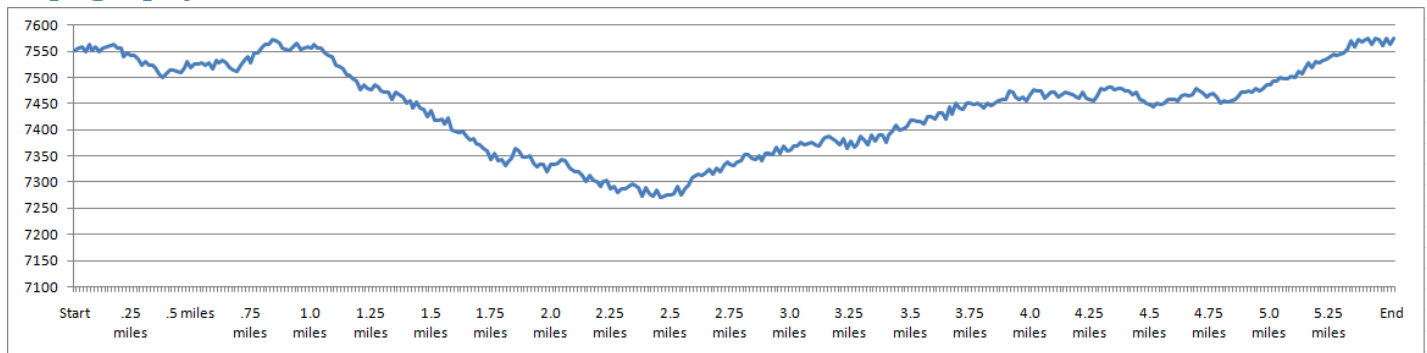


Figure 2: Elevation Chart

Trailhead

From the parking lot on the North side (next to Vessey Road) there is an obvious path from the parking lot. Walk .27 miles on this dirt path to reach the loop.



Figure 3: Trail entrance from parking lot

The Trail

The first 0.27 miles from the parking lot to the loop are the worst trail conditions you will find, but they are still quite good. At mile 0.27 you come to the Pikes Peak Loop. At the sign turn right (North) and you immediately hit Vessey Road. Head 50 feet east (toward the parking lot) on the road and the trail resumes on your left. Follow the trail through the wildflowers, and enjoy the Peak views along the way.



Figure 4: .27 mile sign to enter the loop



Figure 5: View of Pikes Peak

At 0.92 miles you come to a junction with the Humboldt Trail. Stay right and on the Pikes Peak Loop. At 1.45 miles is the junction for the Torrey's Peak Trail, and again stay to the right for the Pikes Peak Loop. These trails are like the spokes of a bicycle wheel. The Pikes Peak Trail is the outer loop and the Humboldt and Torrey's Peak Trail head into the center of the loop.

Keep your eyes out for wildlife, as there is a protected wildlife area to the north, and you never know when a deer or a rabbit will walk by.

At mile 1.63 you come out of the trees and hit a road (which is actually a driveway). Veer slightly to the right and follow the road toward the open gate. In about 100 feet the trail resumes on the left, just before you hit the gate. Follow this trail up a short hill and then you are back into a pine forest. You follow along the back yard of a couple beautiful homes and hopefully through some wild flowers.



Figure 6: Follow the road 100' to rejoin the trail



Figure 7: Wild flowers along the path



Figure 8: The trail through the trees



Figure 9: The drainage rocks

At mile 2.34 you come to another driveway with a gate on your right. The trail resumes immediately across the driveway. You are now out of the trees and have to cross a drainage field of rocks. There is a small path around the rocks (on the left) if you are pushing a stroller or unable to cross the rocks. For .15 miles you are out of the trees and can enjoy a beautiful view of the Air Force Academy.



Figure 10: The Air Force Academy

You are back in the trees soon, and at mile 2.49 you reach the only true steep part of the trail. It lasts 100 feet or so, but it is steep so watch your footing as you climb back into the trees. The path winds through the trees and behind a couple more houses.

Mile 2.97 is where the no horses section ends. The trail ends on a paved road here. Turn right and head .15 miles on the pavement and the path continues on the left. There is a yellow pedestrian crossing sign that will alert you of the trail on the left. Additionally there is a large stone Cathedral Pines entrance sign. The trail is immediately behind the sign. This portion of the trail climbs at a gradual pace along the backyards of some beautiful homes. The path curves through the trees and provides good shade and lots of bird sightings.



Figure 11: Trail continues behind the Cathedral Pines sign

At mile 3.7 the Pikes Peak Loop trail crosses Milam Road. Watch for cars and the trail picks up immediately on the other side of the road. At mile 3.83 you enter Black Forest Regional Park (although there is no sign) and there is a fence to your left where there used to be a trail. Stay on the obvious path and do not veer right. In .11 miles you come to a fork in the path (see middle picture below). Veer left to stay on the Pikes Peak Loop. Going to the right is a single track path that will take you into Black Forest Regional Park.



Figure 12: The trail across Milam



Figure 13: Mile 3.94 junction



Figure 14: A lone columbine on the trail

After turning left at the 3.94 mile junction you will ascend a small hill. Follow this windy path past the 4.21 mile turn off to the Community Center and the 4.49 turn off. Both of these trails will bring you to the center of the loop and the Cathedral Pines Community Center. Continue on the Pikes Peak Loop another .4 miles, and you'll be back to where you started. Turn right here (4.89 miles) to return to your car, or continue straight for another loop on this great trail.



Figure 15: Wild flowers on the trail



Figure 16: The trail winding through the trees



Figure 17: Nodding Onion on the trail

