

West Ranch Trail Descriptions

August 2010

I. Trails on the west side of West Ranch Trail

The Fire Road

Access from the Gatehouse is to the south; cross the creek and go straight up the hill. From there, the Fire Road leads to Station A, a well pump house and further to Ladybug Rock.

Wood Lily Trail provides another access to the Fire Road. It starts via the dam on Pond 3 connecting to Station A. The orange wood lilies are extremely rare; they bloom at the end of June or early July. In the winter, this is a really nice snowshoe trail.

The Shoot: Steeper access to the Fire Road is near the mailbox of No. 34. It is a two-lane cleared path, straight up the hill. This is too steep for horses, and at the bottom the meadow is marshy well into July.

The Spur: Yet another access to the Fire Road is south of Pond 2, at the northern boundary line of No. 26, eventually intersecting with Gatehouse Trail.

The Fire Road was cut a few years ago as a firebreak; a myriad of slash piles document the huge effort. The trail itself is a broad, grassy road. The west border of West Ranch is marked by a barbed-wire fence. In the northern part at the Gate House, the Fire Road only climbs moderately. For horse people: this is a canter opportunity, or a relaxed ride side-by-side. It goes through the cleared pine forest and it may be hot around noon, but it's shady in the morning and afternoon.

Ladybug Trail

Ladybug Rock is the highest point in West Ranch, almost 8,000 feet high. The rocks turn orange in the summer with millions of ladybugs.

The trail is basically the continuation of the Fire Road. It is accessible from Wood Lily Trail, which starts across the dam at Pond 3 (north of No. 37). It leads to Station A at the Fire Road, where you can go either north towards the Gatehouse or south up to Ladybug Rock.

The section up to Ladybug Rock is a steep climb in parts. At the ridge, the Fire Road runs below Ladybug Rocks. In a small meadow near the end of the Fire Road, keep your eyes open for a trail that forks to the south-west and leads through scrub oak to the lookout on the rocks. It continues past the rocks leading back to the Fire Road (this part is not marked yet).

Where the Fire Road ends, a smaller path picks up that leads down through two vast meadows with stunning views of Mount Evans, the plains, Devil's Thumb, and even Pike's Peak that peaks through. This is a wonderful place for a sunny picnic. Continuing, the way down is not too steep; it runs through a landlocked and unmarked Denver Mountain Park and then through the scrub oak along the fence which is private property, then via the lot of Dukes (No. 53). The trail is mostly in the shade of trees. It ends at West Ranch Trail in a small ravine with young Aspens (across the driveway of No. 52).

The last part of this trail is on private property!

Gatehouse Trail

starts above the Gatehouse like the Fire Road and runs parallel to it, only lower and in the shade. It goes past prominent "Boogie's Rock" and down into Elk Meadow across from No. 26/28 (this is where it connects with Stagecoach Trail across West Ranch Trail). About half way, it forks with a "spur" of the Fire Road, which will take you back to the main Fire Road on the ridge. In the northernmost section, Gatehouse Trail is steep in parts.

Elk Meadow Trail

starts at the Gatehouse and runs parallel to West Ranch Trail down in the meadows. Stay on the east side of the creek, and where it gets narrower, the path will lead you through the monstrous old fir and spruce trees. By Pond 3 just north of No. 37, you will connect with West Ranch Trail. The meadow can be swampy in the spring and will have very tall grass in the summer. Great for horses!

Once again, going east and across West Ranch Trail south of No. 28, you can connect to Stagecoach Trail.

II. Trails on the East Side of West Ranch Trail

Stagecoach Trail

starts in the draw south of No. 28 and leads up to the Ken-Caryl border which is marked with white poles. Don't miss a stand of unbelievably tall Aspens to the south in a valley, about half-way of the trail. The trail leaves the old stagecoach road and crosses the creek; this upcoming part is called Currant Trail.

Currant Trail

leads from Stagecoach Trail to "Checkpoint Charlie" along the border with KC. The path is full of currants. It leads through the woods, in view of some meadows to the north, which are on KC terrain. Keep your eyes open for clumps of Rocky Mountain Maple, too.

At "Checkpoint Charlie" (a gate secured with barbed wire) you hook up with one branch of Turkey Roost Trail, which is a dirt service road.

Turkey Roost Trail

begins north of No. 40 up the Xcel service road (don't park on the dirt road but along West Ranch Trail).

The east branch leads past "Checkpoint Charlie" and connects with Currant Trail; the west branch leads to Turkey Roost picnic area; make sure to not go past the orange poles that mark lot No. 38.

To the south, Turkey Roost Trail hooks up with Turk's Trail. Leave the service road before it leads down the curve to West Ranch Trail and go south-east uphill. There is another, less obvious road. The road ends and you find yourself on an open saddle behind No. 42. The top of this hill is private property; please stay on the trail. Turk's Trail then leads down to Bob's Rock; more to the north east, Aspen Grove Loop leads down past Tony's Rock and reconnects with Turk's Trail further south.

Turk's Trail

Apparently, Turk was the son of the Whites who cleared this trail with his Boy Scouts. Turk's Trail leads through the scrub oak in switchbacks. It is sunny, rocky, and steep. Quite a challenge, especially for horses! The views are very rewarding, though!

It starts next to No. 44. Go down into the meadow, past Pond 4 and down into the draw; always stay north of the creek.

Turk's Trail forks with Raspberry Trail, which continues along the creek straight east, while Turk's Trail leads up north through the scrub oak (don't miss the fork, it is marked with red ribbons); it heads to Twin Pines (view of the hogback), then turns up west toward Bob's Rock (views of Green Mountain; then further west up to the ridge (views of North Ranch/KC village). The second rock formation more to the north is Tony's Rock; Aspen Grove Trail leads to this one, forking from Turk's Trail between Twin Pines and Bob's Rock, and then merges back with Turk's Trail on the ridge.

On the ridge turn north to hook up with Turkey Roost Trail, which takes you back to WR Trail between Nos. 38 and 40.

Aspen Grove Trail

From the highest point of Turk's Trail on the meadowy saddle it heads east down past Tony's Rock in a curve through an Aspen Grove back to Turk's Trail onto Twin Pines.

Raspberry Trail

is the extension of the first part of Turk's Trail, along the creek in a shady pine forest; it heads straight east to the border to KC. Well before the trail leads into Ken-Caryl terrain (marked by blue trail markers), another trail crosses the creek and leads south straight uphill along the border; this is Michael's Trail. Raspberry Trail is the perfect cool and shady trail for a hot, summer day, especially when the raspberries are ripe.

Michael's Trail

Toward the end of Raspberry Trail, about 50 yards before the border to KC, Michael's Trail crosses the creek and heads up the steep slope in switchbacks through the pine wood. It continues south across the saddle, through the scrub oak, always along KC border, offering great views onto the plains.

You may exit the trail between No. 11 and 12 into the cul-de-sac West Ranch Road, or you may continue southwest, on Lupine Trail, to the ridge of NOT (Not Our Top) Mountain.

Michael's Trail is entirely on private property! Please be respectful.

Lupine Trail

Access is from the cul-de-sac West Ranch Road, between Nos. 11 and 12. Enter at the fire hydrant, and keep right. At the T-crossing, Michael's Trail forks off to the east, while Lupine Trails heads southwest.

Descend slightly down into the valley below No. 12, and then up across a meadowy slope with small fir trees toward the top of NOT Mountain. The trail leads up to the ridge along the border to Ken Caryl. The very top of this mountain is beyond West Ranch property. On the ridge, you can take Ridge Trail Loop which offers two trails down to the Water Road: one below the top, the other further north, close to No. 14 lot, on a less steep path.

Lupine trail is on private property close to the cul-de-sac! Please be respectful.

Ridge Trail Loop (on NOT Mountain)

The very top of this mountain is technically KC terrain, hence its name: Not Our Top.

Access is from the Water Road south of No. 48. Where the road curves sharply to the south, you go up the slope to the ridge; look for orange markers! Make sure you stay as far away as possible from No. 14. On the ridge, you can continue towards the summit in the south. Before the last steep pitch to the summit, there is a fork.

You can either descend east on Lupine Trail to the cul-de-sac or further on Michael's Trail. Or you can descend west, along a stand of pine trees, down to the Water Road. About halfway down, you see Stargazer Rock on your left: When you are at the same height, it looks like an Easter Island Head in profile looking at the sky.

This trail is steep in parts. For horses, it is advised to only go up on it and not down, and you need an experienced horse in any case.

Back on the Water Road, you may proceed on Massey Draw Trail, down into the draw to the pump house of Station B. Or you turn back on the Water Road, up toward West Ranch Trail.

Massey Draw Trail

begins south of # 48. In the first part, it is the Water Road that leads into a wide, grassy valley to the pump house of Station B and further to one of our wells (which is on KC terrain). A well visible orange West Ranch sign tells you where the border is. Shortly before this sign the trail leaves the meadow and goes up through the pine forest to cross the ridge on the south. The trail goes past the paddock of No. 56 and down to a shady grass road. On the road, turn right and proceed past the pond to your left.

If you stay on the grass road and keep left wherever it forks, it'll take you up to a saddle right next to Kaehler's barn.

You may choose a detour: shortly after the pond, you turn sharp left into an old small mica mine (surface mining). This is where a mountain lion is supposed to have its den. Leave the mine on your right and go up to the ridge, and you'll arrive at a grassy platform with views onto Denver and the plains. The trails leads back to Kaehler's barn.

The road continues past Kaehler's barn down to the most beautiful aspen grove and further into a lush meadow at the foot of Rocky Top, with abundant wildflowers in the summer. The grass road ends at the horse fence of No. 60. Shortly before you arrive at the fence, turn right uphill into the scrub oak. The trail stays close to the horse fence and ends at West Ranch Trail between No. 58 and 60.

South of the pond, including the Mica Mine, the trail is on private property. Please be respectful. Lot owners welcome hikers and horseback riders, but no mountain bikes.

Please be aware that West Ranch trails are for the exclusive use of West Ranch residents and guests.