



**Rocky Mountain National Park Trip Notes
Includes Colorado Springs and Kansas City
July 30 – August 11, 2015**

Why Colorado? Because it's there, its dramatic, my www.ParksPlusHiking.com tour group was offering the tour, I wanted to visit NJ friends who moved to Colorado Springs, and I had a need to drop down in Kansas City for a family reunion. Enough? Did I mention the dramatic and wonderful hiking? My friends Steve and Nola the hiking leaders? My nephew Colin going with me? What more could anyone ask for!

Hey, I just turned 70. This is a big deal to be trying to keep up with the young ones. I'm blessed.

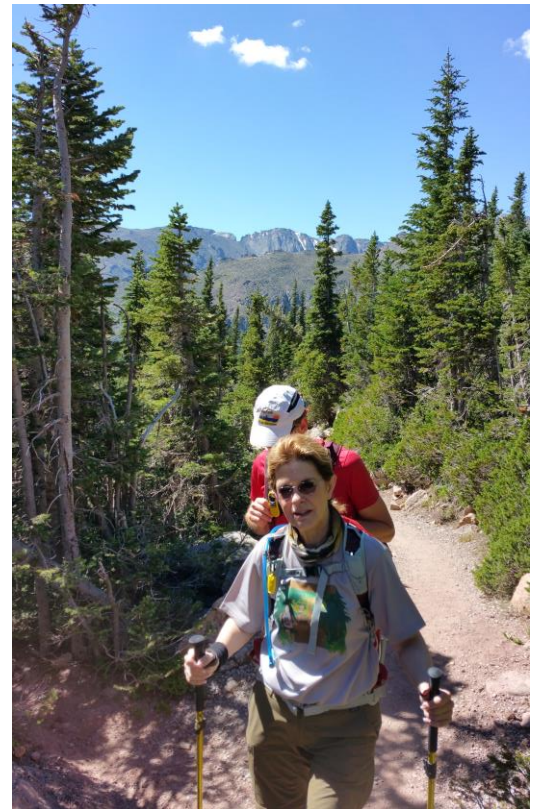
Traveling alone – thanks for this article Beverly. I'm flattered but probably not so wise or smart, sometimes lonely, always realizing there are a lot of other 'explorers' out there, and yet always loving being like a cat and able to change my direction at any time. There are lots of benefits to traveling alone, especially when you have a home-body who loves you and talks to you every day and you know they'll be there when you come home – and that there will be something to talk about! From Elite Daily: People Who Travel Alone All Have One Thing In Common: They're Wise, from Bev: *"There's nothing quite like waking up by yourself in an unfamiliar place with nothing to do but explore. It's simultaneously invigorating and unnerving.*

But the frightening aspects of it are precisely what make it so intoxicating. Adventurous souls are infatuated with uncharted territory. They're driven by wanderlust, and a perpetual desire to embrace the unfamiliar. Those ...
<http://elitedaily.com/life/travel-alone-wise/1131083/>

Colorado Friendly? Surely yes! Yet every time I asked a friendly hiker or stranger where they were from, it was NOT Colorado. Maybe hiking or living in Colorado makes one friendly? Here's a recent list of un-friendly cities some of which sure surprise me.

Un-friendliest Cities in America | TIME - <http://time.com/3996721/america-unfriendliest-cities/>

Love Colorado? Who doesn't! "28 reasons to love Colorado"
<http://www.movoto.com/co/moving-to-colorado/>



Yet here are “30 funny and repetitive reasons why Colorado sucks”

<http://yobeat.com/2014/08/07/32-reasons-colorado-sucks/>

I notice they didn't mention the floods, the high winds, the fires, the dryness tearing at your skin, etc. which the Colorado folks seem to simply take in stride. Maybe the legal weed helps? Seriously, it is a great place and deserves the term “God's Country”. It is however a lot of the same and I mean a whole lot of mountains and something for everyone and so nice that a lot of people come to enjoy it. If you want dramatic mountains, there are many other places as stunning or more so.

True confessions: I want to stay living in New Jersey. I have nearby the big city of NYC where virtually everything is available, woods, trails, farm lands, casinos, friendly people, the ocean shore with cool ocean breezes, mild weather due to the ocean effect, sea level so I can breathe, less traffic than I found around Denver, etc. etc. So I say – as long as I can afford the crazy taxes.

True from Colin: He wants to return to Rocky Mountains still again. Here's a classic shot of him enjoying the terrain.



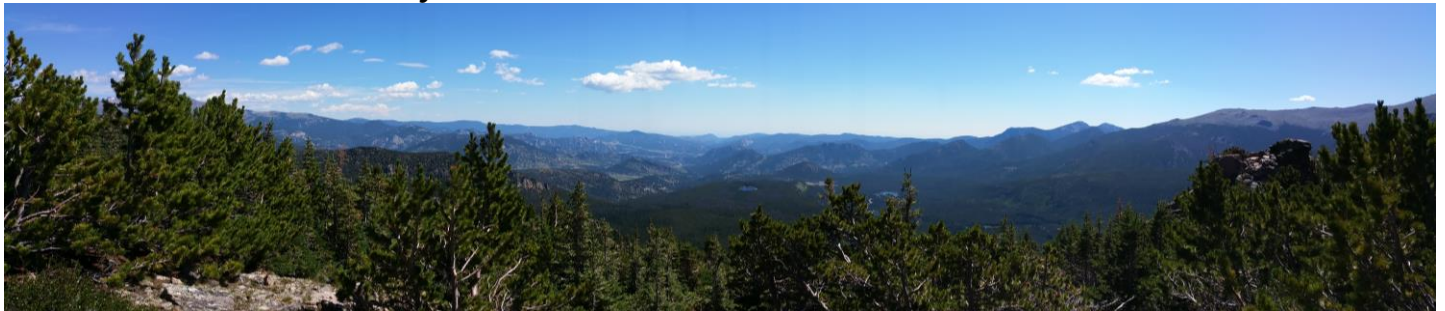
How Walking in Nature Changes the Brain - NYTimes.com

<http://mobile.nytimes.com/blogs/well/2015/07/22/how-nature-changes-the-brain/?referrer=>

My Moto Exactly - The Value of Travel by Rick Steves:

<http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxRainier-Rick-Steves-The-Val>

Estes Panorama as taken by Colin:



Hike to Chasm Lake – one of our tough hikes.

<http://www.rockymountainhikingtrails.com/chasm-lake.htm>

Trip notes sent home:

Day 1 in Colorado Springs – out my hotel window:

Colorado notes on first day of hike - After a couple days in Colorado Springs hiking and touring with my New Jersey friends who have moved to Colorado Springs, I am now in Estes Park on the edge of Rocky Mountain national Park.

In Colorado Springs Dave and Dana took me on a hike out past Manitou Springs and Woodland Lakes into the Divide and up a rather steep slope to a lovely waterfall and all along was a

rushing stream. It was steep enough that on the way down I was double glad to find a young hunk to hold my arm and keep me from slipping down. Dave had promised to do that for me but he seemed to have his work cut out for him keeping his dog named C.C. on the leash. We all enjoyed a picnic Lakeside in Woodland Lakes thereafter.

Our first night we had gone into old town Colorado City and found a lovely wine bar and then a barbecue place in town. We wandered the streets a little bit and we then went back on my last day for the rather large farmers market. We went to the famous Broadmoor hotel where on the edge is an ice-skating Museum and Hall of Fame. It was well worth-while but probably only for

those who follow ice-skating. Fortunately Dana does.

We enjoyed a drive through the Garden of the Gods and a visit to their newly renovated and hugely better visitor center. Then we went over to the trading post on the other side of the park where I can always find something to buy.

They cooked a meal for me at their new house where I was glad I didn't take up their hospitality and stay with them because a couple hours after I left another group of visitors arrived. I have stayed before and did again this time about 10 minutes away at the Marriott Tech Center. They joined me there for breakfast one of the mornings.

My rental car and I returned to Denver where I met up with nephew Colin on Saturday night. The trip from Colorado Springs to Denver reminded me of the statistics of how fast Colorado Springs is growing. There are enough cars and traffic backup on the road to make you wonder if you are in Los Angeles. Me, I had nothing else to do anyway so it didn't trouble me. The scenery is magnificent.

Colin and I made some restaurant attempts and learned that business is quite good. I don't wait for food so we ended up at a bar at our second place and had one of their deep dish pizzas.

Sunday morning gave us a pick up by our hiking leaders and about a 2 Hour drive to our first hike. As you will see by the video, the weather was next to perfect. Yet there were clouds in the distance and we were watching and once we got to the top and the Glen Lake and halfway through our lunch, the thunder and potential storm scurried us out of there. On the way down we stop to put on rain gear (though Colin decided that he wanted to play in the rain and did not.). The shower became a torrent. The torrent became hail. The trail became a torrent in itself and left some rather big puddles. It all pretty much ended by the time we were down and done.



The weather prediction is as usual for this time of the year and that is rain most days but generally only a storm in the afternoon. We were back in town to be tourists and took the opportunity to get a more substantial poncho for Colin.

Accommodations in Estes Park are pretty much as usual but the simple hotel on the edge of town has been newly renovated. Best of all its deck and porch hangs over a rushing stream. With evenings being much cooler and screens on the window I should be able to enjoy the sound of water through the night.

And on that I will say good night and should also say "wish you were here."

Day 2 hike - Lakes and more lakes

One pedometer showed 15 miles today. We hiked pretty much straight from 8:30 to 4pm with a short lunch stop. Here is a picture of Colin at an upper lake.



We went up to about 9500' elevation and some of us really got some breathing exercise.

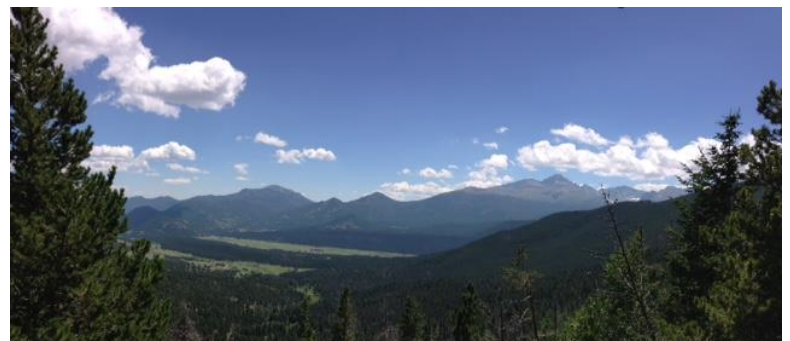
The weather held and it only dropped a few sprinkles on us and the weather thus was mostly a delight. Every time the cloud covered us and we thought it might rain it felt particularly good. We probably have Colin to thank for the good weather because we went off to sporting goods stores last night and found him a better poncho.

He might need it tomorrow because we go up to about 12,000 feet of elevation, hopefully part of that by means of the van, and if there's any rain it will be very cool. Rain had been predicted for most every day this week. And that is no complaint because I would rather have rain than heat.

I've decided that I had enough fun for the day so I am curled up in my bed quite early and skipping dinner. Well, if you know me I'm not exactly skipping dinner, but I am skipping the restaurant visit. (I travel with sandwiches.)

Life is more than good. I'm blessed. And now off to my daily FaceTime with Tom who joins me in Kansas City on Saturday.

Day 3 panorama - Up off the highest highway in the country but about 2 hours hiking to get it.



Started at 41 degrees and windy and ended at 70 degrees so layers on. Layers off.

With a very loud windy video entitled “a very high hike” with huge amounts of wind that could pick you up off your feet. Almost as loud as the Mexican restaurant for dinner.

Colin building a balanced cairn:



Colin and Steve often build Cairns along the trail. Sometimes we see huge ones as high as a person. Steve and Colin's dad, Carl, did the same thing in the Columbia River Gorge hike.

But by the time we got back down to this cairn, see picture, the wind had blown it over. The wind was at times almost enough to blow me over.

It was a big day with the hike to Flat rock being of the most difficult rating. It was only 4 1/2 miles to the top, but it was up to 12,500 feet of elevation causing most all of us to huff and puff on the steep stair-step of rocks. We added over 3000 feet of elevation gain in this very thin air; I was thrilled to be one of two who got to the top whereas three turned back. It took us all day.

Truth in packaging or a disclosure: those three were old folks. At least in their 60s. Smile.

Day 4 - partway to the top of Flat rock and only partway up but fully out of breath. I sent video of Colin voicing his willingness to do all the parks he can.

Day 4 (2) – later with another video highlighted “made it to the top.” The video was fuzzy and I claimed it maybe had to do with the wind blowing so hard. Smile. Or maybe it was my hand and entire body quivering so much once I got to the top. No doubt, Colin made it to the top a long time before I did. But I felt thrilled to have done it at all. Colin and I were with leader Steve. Leader Nola turned around with the other three hiking participants.

Colin would have liked to go one mountain up higher. Yet there were some dark clouds and one doesn't want to get caught on this moonscape in any kind of electrical storm.

Day 5 - at the base of Long's Peak -

Another toughie as much because of the high elevation at about 12,000 feet but also because we climbed about 2500 feet. The last bit was very much a scramble and Colin helped me negotiate the rocks. Much of it took hands and feet both. Well for me, maybe not for him.

I was not too happy with our leaders suggesting that I take it simple and easy like the Old Mountaineer hikers. I like to go, and then stop, then go again. Jeff Galloway method. Anything else then I call it as boring as a treadmill.

But the view and the destination was well worth it. Today was the first day that I saw Rocky Mountain national Park with a dramatic scene. It has all been lovely but more and more and more of the same. Different: Long's Peak!

Rocky Mountain national Park is a wonderful destination in the middle of our country that attracts the droves of hikers. That is more than wonderful. It is however always starting at a higher elevation which is tough on us with sea level legs. It is also huge but much the same unlike national parks like the Grand Canyon, or Bryce, or Zion, or Yosemite, or Yellowstone.

I am glad I came and I have one more day of hiking before returning to Denver and flying out to Kansas City for a small family reunion.

Sent video, but here are some photos by Nola. Colin wants to return to get to the very top. Nola has done it. Everyone agrees it's pretty difficult. This was plenty enough for me.



Miscellaneous photos from camera:



Our first day, before the rains came, which fortunately they never really came again.



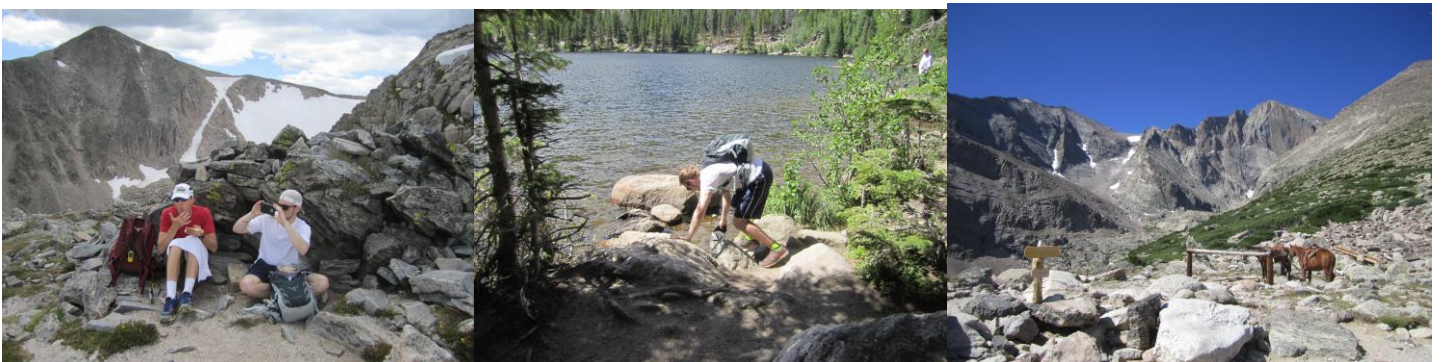
This momma and baby wisely got out of the rains into a perfect shelter. Above is the best part of our first hotel – a deck over the fast moving river giving us a lovely sound all night. See those woodpeckers? The first of a lot of wildlife.



Found on the trail, between wildlife, this little tyke was so proud of his new backpack with a fluid bladder and hose, and finally I showed him that it had a built-in whistle too. I suspect his mother then hated me for the rest of the day as the whistle was non-stop as we left him. Little baby duckies out on the marshlands, then two wild hikers hamming it up: Steve and Colin, also showing how cold it was.



On the way up to Flat rock, it was really Pica-ville as the little critters were everywhere with their peeps and even modeling.



It was cold so the boys were seeking shelter for their picnic. Me, I was painfully aware of there being no porta potties, no bushes, cold and wet, so I hurried down the hill. Colin never met a body of water he didn't like or didn't put his hand or feet in. He's his mother's boy – a water baby.



Those little specs are hikers – where we'd be scrambling next. See the porta potty? It was almost tall enough for privacy.



On the way down from Chasm Lake with Longs Peak still farther up than any of us could go – though Nola did once and Colin wants to. On the last day we climbed a couple hours to a 360 degree view where Nola could tell us what we'd seen and where we'd been.

After the hike – on to Kansas City where Tom would meet me

Included a visit to the Nelson-Atkins Art Museum. Of interest about art becoming irrelevant and why art museum architects are becoming so important on their own. Starting with Bilbao where we're going in October. Or with the Guggenheim drawing crowds with Harley Davidsons where I visited last month. Or the new Whitney drawing record crowds, where I visited last month.

<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/how-art-became-irrelevant/>

Family get-together Saturday evening



Daughter Alayna, Grandson Joseph, Nephew Calvin, Joseph's girlfriend Brittany with two dogs and Alayna, Sister Beverly with Alayna and one of her four dogs.

Sunday took us to Crowne Center and the Aquarium followed by the afternoon in the Nelson-Atkins Art Museum. We drove the newer Power and Light district and the new Sydney-like Opera/Theatre Complex. Monday we had some time with Marie for outfitting for school clothes and supplies.

Lots of changes in Kansas City. We drove around Briarcliff which used to be the hill above the folks "Indian Hills" home that was only full of trash. Now it's million dollar homes.

Luxury Living in Downtown Kansas City – WSJ:

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/luxury-living-in-downtown-kansas-city-1438868713>

Us? We would ride the area and reminisce about old times, checking out the apartment where we met in August 1968, the school where Tom finished his degree, the old family homestead up on Indian Hills, and downtown Parkville a couple times, finishing off with both BBQ meal and a Mexican meal.

Next? With only a couple days between trips, I might stop the trip report syndrome. It only started as a means of helping marathoners, yet then I found writing a diary pleasurable. Will I still when I'm pressed?

I'm immediately off to Seattle for hiking the Volcanoes of Mt Rainier and St Helens. Home 2 days before leaving with Tom to Yosemite (staying at the Ahwahnee!), then hiking Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Home 2 days before off to Croatia's Dalmatian Coast for more hiking. I'll have a full week before Tom and I go to Madrid as tourists mid-October, with my hiking in the Basque region starting in Bilbao, then our few days in San Sebastian. November is 9 days in Rome for my 6th trip there; December is 2 weeks solo in Paris; then to Lisbon for 10 days for the holidays. 2016 is getting full too and I can only hope my legs will let me keep going.

Itinerary

Thu Jul 30 - Diana

11:00am Depart Newark EWR via UA#1184
1:10pm Arrive Denver

Rental Car Hertz

Hotel Colorado Springs Marriott Tech Center – 2 nights
5580 Tech Center Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80919 Tele: 719 260 1800

Afternoon/evening with Dave and Dana

Fri Jul 31

Hike with Dave and Dana then BBQ or grocery store for dinner

If Skating Museum with Dana only Tue-Fri to 4pm

Sat Aug 1 - Diana

Old Colorado market in morning

PM Drive to Denver and turn in Rental Car

- Colin

4:40pm Depart Indianapolis IND via UA3695

5:22pm Arrive Denver DEN

Free shuttle to hotel

Host Hotel Hampton Inn at airport – other airport location

Hotel Residence Inn by Marriott airport at Gateway– 2 rooms
16490 East 40th Circle, Aurora, CO 80011

From www.ParksPlusHiking.com - Established in 1915, Rocky Mountain National Park marks its centennial next year and Parks Plus plans to visit there. When we do, Nola will also experience a "going home" of sorts as Rocky was the destination of many of her memorable childhood family vacations. Rocky Mountain National Park boasts magnificent vistas of glorious high mountain peaks, sparkling lakes, and stunning alpine wildflowers. Numerous elk, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and other critters roam the park's high country and meadows. Our six-day tour promises to be quite the adventure as we celebrate the park's important milestone--a true Rocky Mountain high!

Sun Aug 2 - Day 1

9:00am Start of hike – come with luggage and dressed to hike

Gem Lake Distance: 4 mi Difficulty: 3

Departing Denver mid-morning, we will head to our warm-up hike for the upcoming week, Gem Lake-- a destination nestled in the smooth rock outcroppings of Lumpy Ridge (a rock climber's delight we venture to add). During our moderate climb to the lake, we'll acclimatize to the altitude while admiring views of the park's high country to the south and west. After the hike we'll make our way to Estes Park and our cozy riverside lodge for the next three nights.

Lodging: Murphy's River Lodge – 1st of 3 nights

481 West Elkhorn Ave, Estes Park, Colorado, 80517 Tele: 970 480 5081
info@murphysriverlodge.com <http://www.murphysriverlodge.com/>
yes coffee and coffee pot

From hotel website: Nestled along the beautiful clear flowing water of the Fall River. Murphy's River Lodge is only 2 blocks from historic downtown Estes Park and was wonderfully remodeled in 2011.

- Newly renovated, clean, and comfortable rooms
- Heating and air conditioning in every room
- Free, expanded continental breakfast
- Free WiFi throughout the hotel
- Heated, indoor pool and hot tub
- Refrigerator, microwave, and DVD player in every room.

Among the most beautiful hotels and resorts in Estes Park, CO. Come and stay with us and have your picture taken in the big rocking chair and we'll even frame it for you.

Mon Aug 3 - Day 2

Fern/Cub Lake Loop Distance: 11 mi Difficulty: 4

This morning we'll head to Moraine Park, a grassy, wildflower-filled meadow known as a favorite breeding ground of wapiti or North American elk. Once on the trail, we'll leave the meadow and ascend past The Pool and Fern Falls to lovely Fern Lake. We'll then see the fresh, new growth of green understory as the recently burned forest regenerates on our loop back to the trailhead via Cub Lake.

Lodging: Murphy's River Lodge – 2nd of 3 nights

Tue Aug 4 - Day 3

Milner/Forest Canyon Pass, Timberline Pass Distance: 8 mi Difficulty: 4

Don't forget your camera as today we venture up Trail Ridge Road, which tops out at 12,183' as the highest continuous paved road in the United States and is an adventure in and of itself. Our first hike explores wildflowers of the alpine and subalpine life zones from the Continental Divide at Milner Pass to Forest Canyon Pass. After a brief visit to the Alpine Visitor Center, we'll stop partway down Trail Ridge and hike Timberline Pass, a trail once used by Arapaho and Ute Indians on their way to winter and summer hunting grounds on the Great Plains.

Lodging: Murphy's River Lodge – 3rd of 3 nights

Wed Aug 5 - Day 4

Flattop Mountain Distance: 9 mi Difficulty: 5

Flattop Mountain rising above beautiful Bear Lake is our destination for Day 4. Since the Bear Lake road is closed daily to vehicles in the summer, an early shuttle ride awaits us. Once on the trail, we'll be treated to views of Dream and Emerald Lakes, the Mummy and Never Summer Range, and much more. We'll also look for marmots, pikas, ptarmigan, elk, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats as we climb above tree line to our ultimate destination--broad, spacious, nearly level Flattop Mountain. After the hike, we'll head to historic Marys Lake Lodge for the final two nights of the tour.

Lodging: (The Historic) Marys Lake Lodge – 1st of 2 nights
2625 Marys Lake Rd, Estes Park, CO 80517 Tele: 970-586-5958 or 877-442-MARY
info@marylakeslodge.com <http://maryslakelodge.com/>
Yes coffee and coffee pot

Historic Studio Lodge Rooms sleep two and feature a queen bed, ¾ bathroom, cable TV with DVD player, coffee maker, window air conditioner and free Wi-Fi. Located in the historic lodge building.

History from website: Marys Lake Lodge has enjoyed decades of tourists passing through its rustic lobby. The memories captured in its walls live in the hearts of people all over the world. Hundreds of thousands of visitors have spent the night, enjoyed a great meal, and taken pleasure in the roaring fire in the lobby. The building has earned its place on the State Register of Historic Properties for its unique character. Over one hundred years ago, visitors first started coming to the property when the John Jones family opened their homestead to travelers. The Jones family moved to the Estes Valley in 1896, and soon after built the Rockdale Cottages on their land just south of Marys Lake. After creating a lucrative business for their family, the Jones' sold the Rockdale Cottages to their son-in-law, Charles Robbins. The Rockdale Hotel opened Friday, September 13, 1913, as a two-story lodge.

Nestled at the base of Rams Horn Mountain on the Eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. Our beautiful Estes Park lodging is just an hour or so from most Colorado front range cities and offers breathtaking views of the Continental Divide. Timeless elegance, coupled with modern amenities will satisfy all your vacation requirements. Come experience the beauty of Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park, and let the staff at Marys Lake Lodge and Resort make your vacation a memorable one. Completely restored to its original grandeur. We have two options for Estes Park accommodations: the main lodge offers historic suites with sitting rooms and private baths.

Thu Aug 6 - Day 5

Chasm Lake Distance: 9 mi Difficulty: 5

On Day 5 we visit amazing, glacier-sculpted Chasm Lake. True to our philosophy, this is a strenuous hike, but don't let the climb to the lake deter you. The view is worth the effort as the lake sits in a lovely cirque at the base of incredible 14,255' Longs Peak's sheer Diamond East Face. As we enjoy a lake-side lunch, we'll scan for rock climbers on the Diamond Face and also marvel at Longs Peak's neighbor, Mount Meeker (13,911'). The "eep!" of a pika may have you looking amongst the rocks to observe these little alpine creatures.

Lodging: Marys Lake Lodge – 2nd of 2 nights

Fri Aug 7 - Day 6

Deer Mountain Distance: 6 mi Difficulty: 3

Deer Mountain, above Horseshoe Park, is the destination for the final hike of our tour. Once again, we'll ascend through lodgepole pine to views of yet another side of Longs Peak and also of Mounts Chapin, Chiquita, and Ypsilon in the distant Mummy Range. Our post-hike reward is lunch in Estes Park, after which we will make our way back to the Denver to say our goodbyes.

5:00pm Return to Denver

Host Hotel Hampton Inn at other airport location

Hotel Residence Inn by Marriott at Gateway airport – 2 rooms

Sat Aug 8 – Colin

9:55am Depart Denver DEN via UA#6192

2:25pm Arrive Indianapolis IND

- Tom

8:24am Depart Newark EWR via UA#4234

10:36am Arrive Kansas City MCI

- Diana

9:59am Depart Denver DEN via UA#3378
12:37pm Arrive Kansas City MCI

Rental Car Hertz

Hotel Residence Inn Kansas City Airport
10300 North Ambassador Drive, Kansas City, MO 64153 Tele: 816 741 2300

Dinner in Plattsburg

Sun Aug 9

Nelson-Atkins Art Gallery and café; Plaza; Hallmark/Crowne Center and Union Station for aquarium

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art - Philip Haas: The Four Seasons

http://www.nelson-atkins.org/art/exhibitions/philip-haas.cfm?utm_source=NA&utm_medium=button&utm_campaign=haas

Plattsburg Cemeteries: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA6sV92KVT4&sns=em>

Mon Aug 10

Mid-PM Booked with Marie –Alayna has Monday 4:30pm Yoga class; Alayna off Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

Residence Inn has social hour in evening

Tue Aug 11

Turn in rental car

5:46pm Depart Kansas City MCI via UA#3491
9:35pm Arrive Newark EWR