

Saint Mary's Peak

(Moderate climb)

DIRECTIONS TO TRAILHEAD: Drive time is an hour and 45 minutes. From Triple Creek Ranch driveway, turn left onto West Fork Road for 8.5 miles and take a left onto US-93 N. Take US-93 N for 36.6 miles to Indian Prairie Road (marked by a US Forest Service sign). Follow this road for 11 miles to the trailhead. The trailhead area has room for about 15 cars and has a restroom.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION: This 4.5-mile hike is well marked and clearly defined. The climb, however, is more strenuous than many people expect: elevation gain from the trailhead to the top is approximately 2,500 feet. The trail ascends steadily throughout its length. The trail starts with switchbacks through the trees for the first 1.5 miles. At about one-quarter mile, fifty feet left of the trail, there is a spring which features benches and a horse trough.

At about two miles, a side path forks to the left, stay on the main trail. This side path leads down to a shallow lake. At 2.5 miles the trail starts to switchback again across the bare rock face of the ridge. The course is easy to follow and the mountain top remains in view at all times. The summit, at 9,350 feet, offers a splendid view of the surrounding Bitterroot peaks, the valley, and the Sapphire range to the east. The summit of St. Mary Mountain is the site of a spindly US Forest Service fire control tower.

SPECIAL NOTES: The three rest stops along the trail were built by Father Ravalli Council of the Knights of Columbus. Each year this Catholic organization sponsors a religious pilgrimage to St. Mark Peak. The event generally begins early on a Sunday morning in mid-August. They stop at each of the three rest areas for a brief religious service and celebrate mass at the top.

Have Fun & ENJOY!