

# La Plata Peak Hike – Quick Guide

Colorado's 5th Highest Peak | 14,336 ft

## Trail Basics

- Route: Northwest Ridge via La Plata Gulch Trail
- Distance: 9.25 miles round trip
- Elevation Gain: ~4,500 ft
- Trailhead Elevation: ~10,040 ft
- Summit Elevation: 14,336 ft
- Difficulty: Class 2 (Some Scrambling)
- See my Route Via GAIA GPS

## Getting There & Parking

- Trailhead located off Colorado 82, 14.6 miles west of US 24 near Twin Lakes
- Parking available at La Plata Gulch Trailhead (arrive early on weekends)
- No fees or permits required (check local regulations before hiking)

## What to Expect

- Forest approach with two creek crossings
- Steep climb begins around 10,400 ft
- Narrow gully with switchbacks at 11,800 ft
- Flat area at 12,300 ft with distinctive square boulder
- Gain northwest ridge at 12,750 ft; rugged talus route
- Key tip: At the rocky buttress, the trail fades west before regaining the ridge
- Steep push to 13,500 ft, easier trail above 14,000 ft
- Final climb to summit at 14,336 ft

## Recommended Gear

- Footwear with good traction
- Layered clothing + waterproof/windproof jacket
- 2–3 liters water + electrolytes
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, hat
- Map/GPS or trail app
- Trekking poles (optional but helpful)
- High-energy snacks
- Basic first aid kit + headlamp
- See the list of the 10 Essentials for hiking

## Best Time to Hike

- July to September: Best weather & trail conditions
- Avoid spring/early summer due to lingering snow
- Start early to avoid afternoon thunderstorms

## **Safety & Altitude Awareness**

- Watch for Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) symptoms: headache, nausea, dizziness, fatigue
- If symptoms occur: stop climbing, rest, hydrate, descend if needed
- Check weather forecast before starting
- Inform someone of your plans
- Pace yourself; take breaks often
- In August 2025, wildfire smoke reduced visibility — be prepared for changing conditions
- Carry microspikes if snow remains near 13,500 ft

## **Emergency Contacts & Info**

- Local Search & Rescue: 911 or Lake County Sheriff / Search & Rescue
- Cell service is limited; carry an emergency communication device (Garmin InReach, Zoleo, or SPOT)
- Always leave your hiking plan with someone before heading out

Enjoy the climb, respect the mountain, and stay safe!