

Frommer's® Travel Experts for **50 YEARS**

FREE Newsletters! Win a FREE Trip!

Search in... This Park Go

[Home](#) [Destinations](#) [Hotels](#) [Trip Ideas](#) [Deals & News](#) [Book a Trip](#) [Tips & Tools](#) [Travel Talk](#) [Bookstore](#)

Rocky Mountain National Park

[Email](#) [Print](#) [RSS](#)

- ▶ [Introduction](#)
- ▶ [Planning a Trip](#)
- ▶ [Rocky Mountain National Park Hotels](#)
- ▶ [Rocky Mountain National Park Attractions](#)
 - ▶ [List All](#)
 - ▶ [Overview](#)
 - ▶ [The Grand Ditch](#)
- ▶ [In Depth](#)
- ▶ [Side Trips](#)
- ▶ [Active Pursuits](#)
- ▶ [Suggested Itineraries](#)
- ▶ [Exploring the Backcountry](#)
- ▶ [A Nature Guide](#)
- ▶ [Hikes](#)
- ▶ [Exploring the Area](#)
- ▶ [Rocky Mountain National Park Events](#)
- ▶ [Rocky Mountain National Park Maps](#)
- ▶ [Message Boards](#)
- ▶ [Index](#)

The Grand Ditch

For the pioneers and settlers who invaded the American West in the late 1800s and early 1900s, water was in many cases more precious than gold and silver. And so it was, in the 1880s, that work began on the creation of a channel to divert water from the Grand River (later renamed the Colorado River) on the west side of the Continental Divide, and to deliver it to thirsty farms east of the mountains.

Considered an engineering marvel at the time, the channel began sending water eastward in 1890 with 8 miles of ditch across a high mountain pass, dug by hand primarily by Japanese and Mexican laborers. By 1936, with the help of machinery, the ditch extended to 14 miles, leaving what some visitors consider an unsightly scar through the heart of Rocky Mountain National Park. First called the Grand River Ditch, it was renamed the Grand Ditch after the name of the Grand River was changed to the Colorado River in 1921.

Still in use today, the ditch is about 20 feet wide and 6 feet deep, although the water is usually no more than 3 feet deep. It runs east from Baker Creek, at an elevation of about 10,300 feet, to La Poudre Pass, at an elevation of 10,179 feet, a grade of less than .2%. From Poudre Pass, water flows into a reservoir, then into the Cache la Poudre River, and finally to farmers and municipalities on the state's eastern plains near Fort Collins. However, the National Park Service has questioned the allocation of the water, and in recent years it has argued in court that the support of plant life, animal habitat, and other aspects of nature are just as valid as the needs of man for agriculture and drinking water.

An immediate effect of this water theft was a reduction in the fish population in the Colorado River. The water flow was cut in half, not only limiting the number of fish it could support but also causing an increase in the water temperature, which further endangered the fish.

Hikers will get a close-up view of the ditch, whether they want it or not, along the Grand Ditch Trail, which also offers some pleasant scenic views. The Ditch is also clearly visible from the Coyote Valley Nature Trail, a few miles south.

[Back to Top](#)

[Email](#) [Print](#) [RSS](#)



Frommer's Rocky Mountain National Park, 4th Edition

Author: Barbara Laine
Pub Date: April 22, 2005
Price: \$11.99

Rocky Mountain National Park

Buy Now!



Everything You Need for an Unforgettable Vacation!

Related Titles:

- ▶ [Arizona For Dummies, 4th Edition](#)
- ▶ [Colorado & the Rockies For Dummies, 2nd Edition](#)
- ▶ [Frommer's American Southwest, 2nd Edition](#)

Sponsored Links:

[What's This?](#)

- ▶ Experience real adventure. Free DVD proves how much fun RVing can be.
- ▶ Star Alliance: Win the experience of a lifetime when you do business face to face

Ads by Google

- ▶ **Rocky Mountain Natl. Park:**
Plan your Estes Park vacation hereLodging, dining, activities & more
www.estespark-colorado.com
- ▶ **Rocky Mountains:**
Tourism BC Official Summer Site.Ideas for Getaways in the Rockies
HelloBC.com/CanadianRockies
- ▶ **Official Estes Park Info:**
Lodging, Dining, Shopping, & MoreVisit Rocky Mountain National Park
www.EstesParkCVB.com

BOOK A TRIP



Travelocity.com is one of the most powerful one-stop travel sites on the Internet providing online reservation capabilities for air, car, hotel and package.

[Home](#) | [Destinations](#) | [Hotels](#) | [Trip Ideas](#) | [Deals & News](#) | [Book a Trip](#) | [Tips & Tools](#) | [Travel Talk](#) | [Bookstore](#)
[About Frommer's](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Help](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Advertise With Us](#)

Add Frommers.com RSS Feed  (What's This?)
Add Frommers.com Deals & News to Your Web Site



Add Frommers.com Podcast  (What's This?)

© 2000-2007 by Wiley Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

[Home](#) > [Destinations](#) > [North America](#) > [USA](#) > [Colorado](#) > [Northern Rockies](#) > [Rocky Mountain National Park](#) > [Attractions](#) > **The Grand Ditch**