

Key:

Vertical Gain/Steepness: **E=Easy**, 0' to 400' gain per mile
 M=Moderate, 400' to 800' gain per mile
 D=Difficult, 800' to 1200' gain per mile
 X=Extreme, 1200' + gain per mile

Surface/Terrain: **E=Easy**, mostly sand, dirt or pine needle covered on established trail
 M=Moderate, small rocks and roots present on established trail
 D=Difficult, loose and rocky on established trail
 X=Extreme, very loose, with large rocks and possibly scrambling required. Trail
 may not be established or easily recognizable

Trail Name:

North Taylor Creek Trail (Trail # 1348, TH Elev. 9,875'), sometimes called the trail to Megan Lake

Trail Location:

From CO Hwy 69 in Westcliffe, drive west on CR 160 (Hermit Road) on paved road for 2.7 miles, then continue on gravel another 3.2 miles and turn right (northwest) on CR 164. Go another 1.5 miles to CR 172 and turn left (west). Then after 0.2 miles turn left (southwest) on CR 173, which will become FDR 173. Follow FDR 173 for 2.25 miles to the trailhead (Trail 1348). Until one reaches FDR 173, all roads are accessible with a standard 2WD vehicle. There are a few short sections on FDR 173 where a 4WD vehicle may be needed. If the road is dry, a higher-clearance 2WD vehicle may be sufficient if handled with great care. Maps: USGS Topo Quads Horn Peak and Rito Alto Peak; USFS San Isabel National Forest; National Geographic Trails Illustrated Map Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Trail Summary:

Accessibility: This trail is in the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness and is accessible only via foot and horse travel.

Trail Length and Type: 5 miles total, in and out

Vertical Gain and Steepness: 1,720' gain; 28% E, 56% M, 16% D

Surface/Terrain: 25% E, 65% M, 10% D

Trail Experience:

The North Taylor Creek Trail begins at 9,840' elevation at the trailhead and ends at 11,560' at Megan Lake in a large basin below Rito Alto Peak (13,794'). It follows the creek fairly closely through tall coniferous forests in the lower reaches and below the lake but tracks somewhat north along a wide bench in the middle section with lots of aspens.

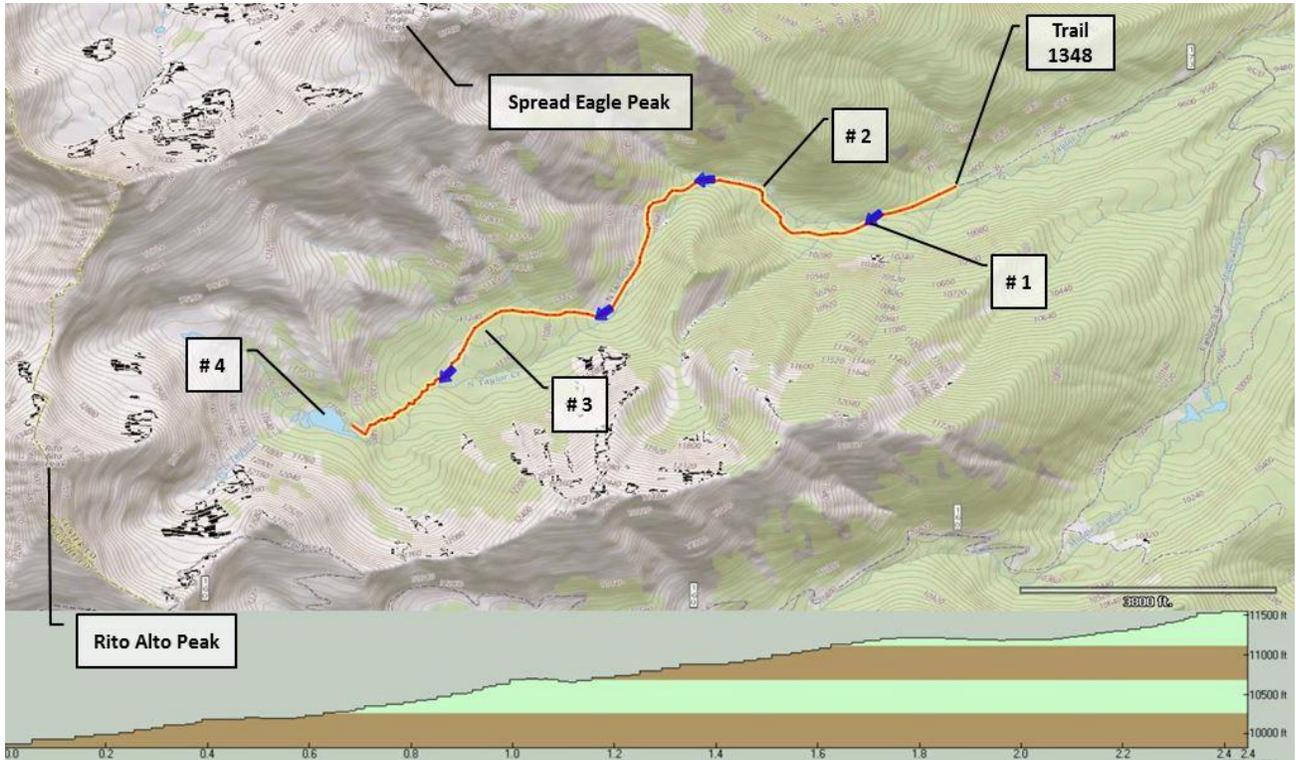
The first section of the trail goes through rocky glacial till before reaching the first creek crossing after only three-tenths of a mile. In late spring heavy snow melt may swell the creek and make it somewhat difficult to

cross (at least while staying dry). The trail rises steeply for a short distance above the creek crossing but soon is just a moderate climb coming to the second creek crossing at .7 miles at about 10,300' elevation. There are several cascades below and above this second crossing. One of the more difficult parts of the trail is the steep climb above the creek before reaching a wide bench where one can enjoy views of the southeastern side of Spread Eagle Peak (13,423'). The trail, while clearly visible, narrows due to shrubs and aspens that encroach along the pathway for the next mile before reaching a large meadow at 2.0 miles and an elevation of 11,220'. The trail is very faint as it crosses the meadow; stay along the right edge (north side) of the meadow until the trail re-enters the trees. After traversing a wet area just past the meadow the trail goes through a number of switchbacks before popping out on a rock outcropping at 2.4 miles and an elevation of 11,530' overlooking cascading falls in the creek just below Megan Lake with great views to the east back down Taylor Creek.

The last section of the trail is a bit steep as it follows the creek up to the outlet of Megan Lake at 2.5 miles and an elevation of 11,560'. Megan Lake sits just at tree line with bristlecone pines growing on the ledge/ridge that blocks the basin forming the lake. The lake is very shallow but does contain a few small trout. Rito Alto Peak rises to the west of the lake with "Cloud Peak" (actually officially unnamed, 13,524') to the northwest and Spread Eagle Peak to the north; to the south is the unnamed ridge that runs up to Hermit Pass, but Hermit Road can't be seen from the lake. With difficulty (due to rocks and brush) one might spot some of the wreckage of a B-25D Army Air Corps bomber that crashed into the eastern face of Rito Alto Peak just above Megan Lake on July 28, 1943, claiming the lives of the three crewmen having flown out of a practice airfield in La Junta, Colorado.

(map on next page)

Map - North Taylor Creek Trail (Trail # 1348)



- # 1 – 0.3 mi - First crossing of North Taylor Creek
- # 2 – 0.7 mi - Second crossing of North Taylor Creek
- # 3 – 2.0 mi - Big Meadow
- # 4 – 2.5 mi - Megan Lake

The Legal Stuff: The information contained in these trail summaries is intended to be a supplement to the typical tools and references used by people who are well prepared to venture into the mountains. Always carry a map specific to the area you are exploring. Failure to have the necessary experience, physical conditioning, and supplies or equipment can result in injury or death. Trails For All provides no warranties, either express or implied, that the information provided in our published Trail Summaries is 100% accurate or reliable. By using any information provided, you agree to absolve Trails For All from any responsibility for damage or other liability arising from the use of Trails For All Trail Summaries.

10 ESSENTIALS
For Hiking, Camping, Fishing,
Backpacking, Hunting &
Other Outdoor Activities



ALL THE RANGE

1. **Hydration:**
Water Filter, Extra Water
2. **Navigation:**
Map, Compass
3. **Sun Protection:**
Sunglasses, Sunscreen
4. **First Aid:**
First Aid Kit
5. **Shelter:**
Emergency Shelter, Bag
6. **Fire:**
Waterproof Matches, Fire Starter
7. **Illumination:**
Head Lamp, Flash Light
8. **Insulation:**
Extra Clothing, Gloves, Head Protection
9. **Nutrition:**
Extra Food for Overnight
10. **Knife Kit:**
Cutting Tool, Fishing Gear, Paracord, Whistle

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