

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:

Dry Creek Trail, Sangre De Cristo Wilderness (USFS Trail 1343), via Horn Creek Trailhead

Trail Location:

Take Highway 69 south 3.4 miles from Westcliffe to County Road 140 (Schoolfield Lane). Turn right on CR 140 and travel 1.9 miles to CR 129 (Macey Lane). Turn left (south) on CR 129 for 2.0 miles to CR 130 (Horn Road). Turn right (west) on CR 130 and follow about 2.5 miles to a stop sign, then right (well marked with USFS signs) till you come to a parking area with a sign for "Rainbow Trail 45". The main Horn Creek Trailhead and toilet are .2 miles farther to the south.

Trail Summary:

Accessibility: A difficult trail located in the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness. Foot and horseback travel only. The trail is 4.2 miles long from the Horn Creek Trailhead, and accesses the Dry Creek Lakes. The hike can be done in as a day hike or overnight.

Trail Length and Type: 8.4 miles total, in and out

Vertical Gain and Steepness: 2900' gain, 60% M, 40% D

Surface/Terrain: 100% D

Trail Experience:

Even though only a little over four miles long, this is a strenuous hike due to the condition of the trail and elevation gain. But, if you like solitude in a high-mountain cirque, this is the hike for you. Unless you are up for deep snow on steep inclines, this is a summer-only hike (late May-November). A summer hike will also reveal bountiful flowers, wildlife, and fishing in the lakes. While this hike can easily be done in a day, it is best experienced with an overnight stay near the lakes at trails end.

The Hike:

Picking the correct trail can be a little confusing at the Horn Creek Trailhead, as signs are lacking. I suggest parking at the first parking area as you enter USFS land. There is a sign designating a spur to the Rainbow Trail (#45). Follow it southwest for about 800 feet, where you will come to a trail intersection. Take the right trail (heading west), and follow it for .25 miles, to the intersection with the Rainbow Trail. Turn right (north) on the Rainbow Trail for about .2 miles, and take the Dry Creek Trail (1343) to the left (west). Here you begin the steep and rocky climb up the trail.

At the 1.5 mile point you will cross Dry Creek (logs allow a dry crossing), then enjoy a "somewhat less steep" stretch as the trail leaves the creek temporarily to bypass cliffs near falls and meanders through forest. Here you will experience a wide variety of wildflowers throughout the summer months. There are several good camping sites midway through the hike, but views are limited. At the three mile point, you will begin to see a large moraine rock feature (a mass of rocks and sediment carried down and deposited by a glacier) to your left. The views of the ridges and surrounding mountains begin to improve here, and there are more good campsites among tall trees as you approach the final, steep ascent at mile four. Even though the last quarter mile is steep and rocky, I recommend the campsites above the lakes if the weather is decent.

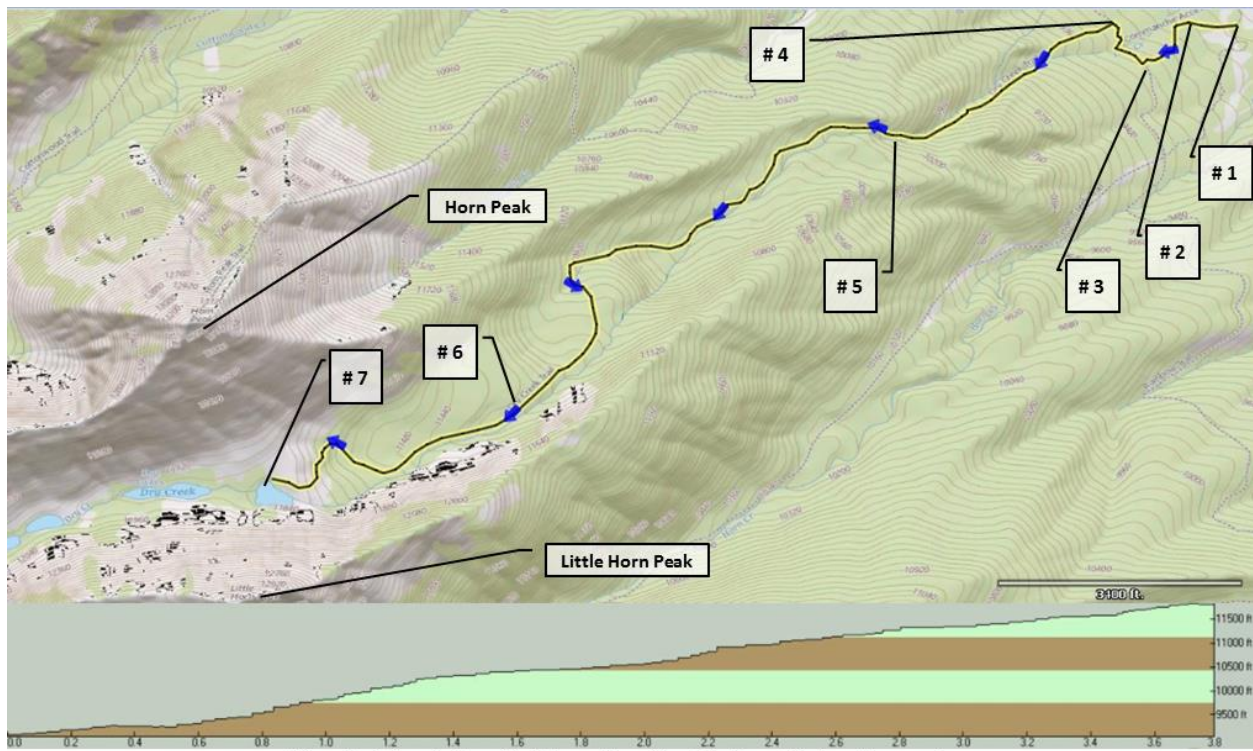
The trail basically ends at the first lake, and there are some low shrubs and rocks to the north and above the lakes that afford some protection from the weather, and the views of the surrounding cirque and down the valley are spectacular. There are also some campsites on the south side of the lower lake. There are four total lakes, but you'll have to bushwhack through dense shrubs if you want to go past the lowest lake. If you do overnight at the lakes, please tread lightly and leave no trace, and enjoy the beauty and solitude of this hidden mountain gem at the end of the Dry Creek Trail.

Other options:

From the end of the trail at the Dry Lakes, Horn Peak is accessible from the grassy slopes above the second lake. While there are no established trails, you can hike up the angling slopes above the second lake toward the low point on the ridge between Horn Peak and the range crest. The scree above the second lake should be avoided at all costs. Fluted Peak and Little Horn Peak are also nearby and easily accessible.

(map on next page)

Map – Dry Lakes Trail (Trail # 1343):



- #1 – mile 0.0 - Rainbow Trail Spur - Horn Creek Trailhead (first parking area)
- #2 – mile 0.15 - Trail intersection, stay right (heading west)
- #3 – mile 0.4 - Rainbow Trail (1336); turn right (North)
- #4 – mile 0.6 - Dry Creek Trail (1343); turn left (West)
- #5 – mile 1.5 - Creek crossing
- #6 – mile 3.0 - Moraine
- #7 – mile 4.2 - Lower Dry 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

WESTLIFE MOUNTAINEERING & OUTDOOR GEAR COLORADO

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

210 Main Street, Westcliffe, CO 81252
918.333.3338 • 1-800-66-2TRAIL • @AllTheRangeMountaineering



