

Arapaho Pass and Lake Dorothy by Dave Cooper



Snowshoers at Lake Dorothy, with excellent views of the Indian Peaks in the distance-small.jpg

As the snow melts in the high country and access roads open, some excellent trail hikes become more reasonable one day objectives. One of these is in the popular Indian Peaks Wilderness, accessed via the Fourth Of July Campground.

Friends and I were there recently and found that the road above the town of Hessie had recently been plowed, making it possible to drive all the way to the campground and trailhead.

This is the access point for countless hiking and climbing opportunities. A good day hike is to head up to Arapaho Pass and nearby Lake Dorothy, still largely frozen on May 17th. The views of the Indian Peaks from the pass are some of the best you'll find.

Remember: this is a tricky time of year. The snow is often frozen in the morning when you head up the trail, only to soften later in the day, making some kind of flotation (snow shoes or skis) essential. Although it is tempting to leave the snowshoes behind, it is worth carrying a little extra weight on your back to minimize the postholing on the way out. By the way, this trail is popular among expert backcountry skiers

Getting to the Trailhead: From Nederland (west of Boulder on US119), drive west on US119 to the Eldora junction at the edge of town. Turn right here and head west, staying straight after 1.4 miles where the road to the Eldora Ski area takes off to the left.

At 4.0 miles the road turns to dirt (shortly after passing through the town of Eldora). Continue to the Buckingham campground (shown on the map as the Fourth of July campground) at 8.8 miles. Trailhead parking is just uphill from the campground.

Hike Statistics: Trailhead to Lake Dorothy gains 1980 feet in 3.6 miles one way.

Difficulty: A moderate trail hike, requiring snowshoes in the springtime.

USGS Quad: Monarch Lake, CO; East Portal, CO

as a way to access some wonderful spring skiing, though if you do this, be prepared to carry your skis some distance along the trail.



Skier and faithful companion enjoying some spring skiing above Lake Dorothy-small.jpg

Hike Description

From the upper parking area, take the trail northwest, passing a trail junction for Diamond Lake after 1.1 miles and continuing on to the Fourth of July mine at mile 2.1. The mine is located below the rugged south face of South Arapaho Peak, and there are still relics of the mining operation to be seen here.



Remnants of the Fourth of July Mine with the rugged south face of South Arapaho Peak in the background - small.jpg

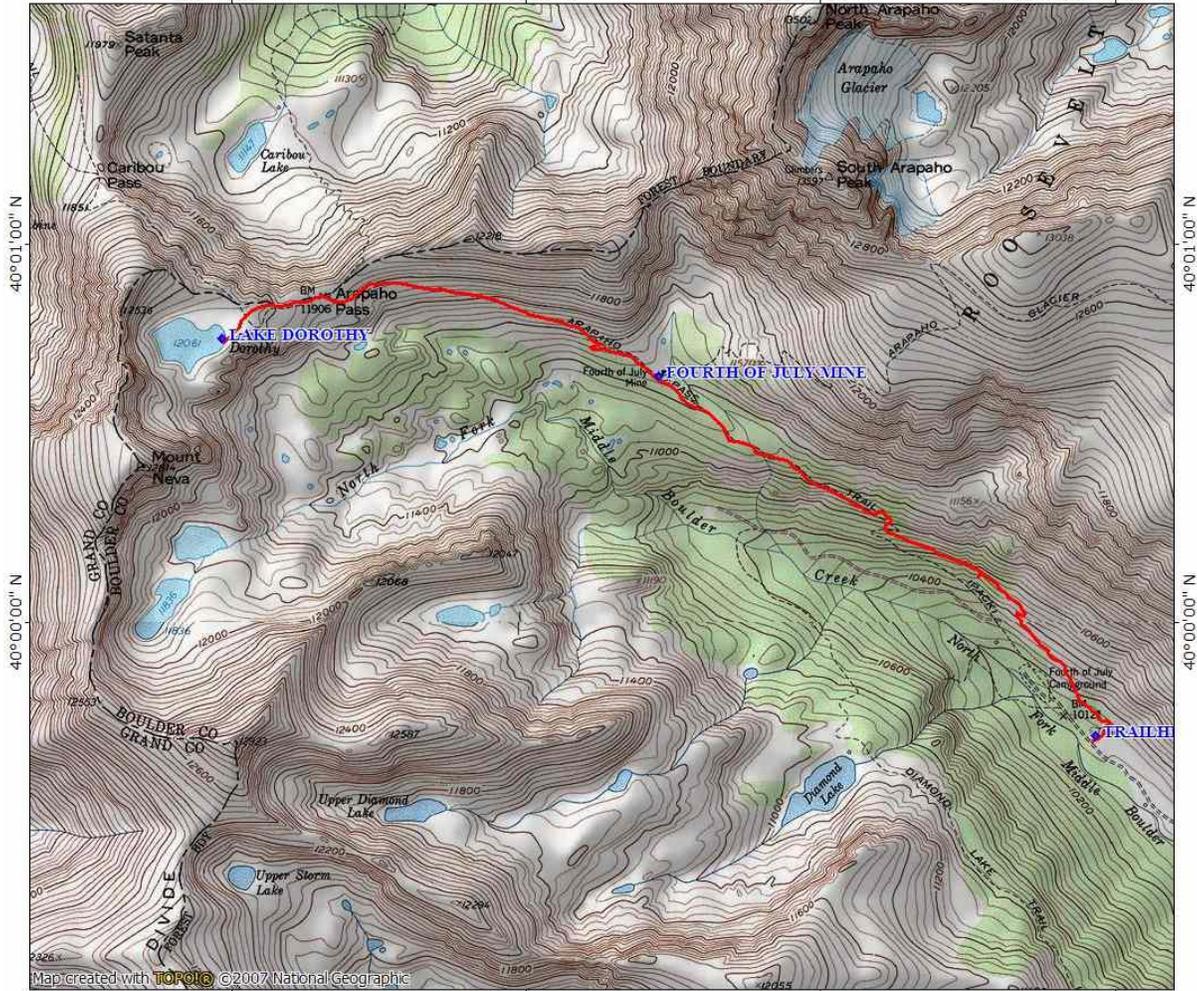
From the mine the trail contours along the hillside to reach Arapaho Pass after 3.0 miles. Take a few minutes to enjoy the views and see if you can identify Navajo and Apache Peaks to the north.

Continue on the left hand fork, signed to Caribou Pass and Lake Dorothy, and reach the lake in one third of a mile. Lake Dorothy lies nestled under the north ridge of Mount Neva. This makes a good lunch spot.

Retrace your steps back to the parking area.

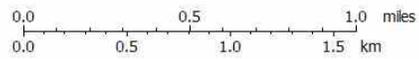
TOPO! map printed on 05/23/07 from "Arapaho Pass and lake dorothy.tpo"

105°41'00" W 105°40'00" W 105°39'00" W WGS84 105°38'00" W



Map created with ©2007 National Geographic

105°41'00" W 105°40'00" W 105°39'00" W WGS84 105°38'00" W



GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)

TRAILHEAD: 39,59,42N / 105,38,4W, 10108 feet

FOURTH OF JULY MINE: 40,0,39N / 105,39,33W, 11243 feet

LAKE DOROTHY: 40,0,45N / 105,41,2W, 12074 feet

