

## A Spring hike on the Barr Trail (Pikes Peak)

by Dave Cooper



*The east face of Pikes Peak, framed by the rock formations of the Garden of the Gods- compressed*

The Barr Trail starts in Manitou Springs and heads all the way up the East Face of Pikes Peak. Hikers and runners make good use of the trail year-round, though late winter and early spring are my favorite seasons.

The trail offers many options. Possibilities include a trail run up to Barr Camp and back, an extended hike to the A-frame at treeline, or you may want to continue on to the summit. Especially in the snowy seasons the 25 mile and 7500 foot round trip to the summit is a bit much for one day. Even reaching the A-frame and descending makes a substantial day hike.

I recently made the trek to the A-frame, making a relaxed day out of it by stopping for an enjoyable break at Barr Camp, sipping hot chocolate and chatting with the hosts. This is a great place to spend a night on your way up to do a climb of the peak. On previous visits we've stayed here on our way to the north face snow climbs, later in the spring.

An added bonus is to catch sunrise in the nearby Garden of the Gods. The red rock framing Pikes Peak creates a classic scene.

**Getting to the Trailhead:** If arriving from the east, take US24 west from Colorado Springs and exit onto Manitou Avenue. Follow Manitou Avenue west through the town of Manitou Springs for 1.5 miles to Ruxton Avenue. Turn left on Ruxton Avenue, following signs to the Cog Railway, and drive 0.8 miles to Hydro Street, a steep, short road to the right (just past the railway building) which leads to the Barr Trail parking lot (signed). Note that this parking lot fills up quickly and that parking is not allowed at the Cog Railway parking area unless you have a ticket.

**Hike Statistics:** Trailhead to Barr Camp (10,200 feet): 3800 feet of total elevation gain in 11.8 miles round trip.  
Trailhead to the A-frame (11,900 feet): 5200 feet of total elevation gain in 16 miles round trip.

**Difficulty:** A moderate to strenuous trail hike, partly on snow-packed trails. Snow shoes may be required above Barr Camp.

**USGS Quad:** Manitou Springs, CO; Pikes Peak, CO



*The east face of Pikes Peak, framed by the rock formations of the Garden of the Gods –compressed.jpg*

#### **Hike Description**

From the parking area start hiking up the well signed trail. This first part of the trail, “the Incline”, is well known to runners for its unrelenting grade and endless switchbacks. Even at this time of the year this lower section can be quite hot, so is best hiked in the early morning. Stay right at the first trail junction after 0.3 miles and reach the junction with the trail to the top of the Incline after gaining 2100 feet in 2.5 miles.



The grade eases somewhat from this point but as of March 26<sup>th</sup>. there was snow on the trail shortly beyond this point. The trail is so well tracked as far as Barr Camp that snowshoes are usually not required, though gaiters might be welcome.

Continue on through pine forest, catching occasional glimpses of the peak through clearings. Metal signs along the way keep you informed as to your progress. Barr Camp, reached at mile 5.9, makes a good place to take a break. Beyond this point the trail is less travelled, so snow shoes may be necessary.

*Good views of Pikes Peak from the Barr Trail - compressed.jpg*

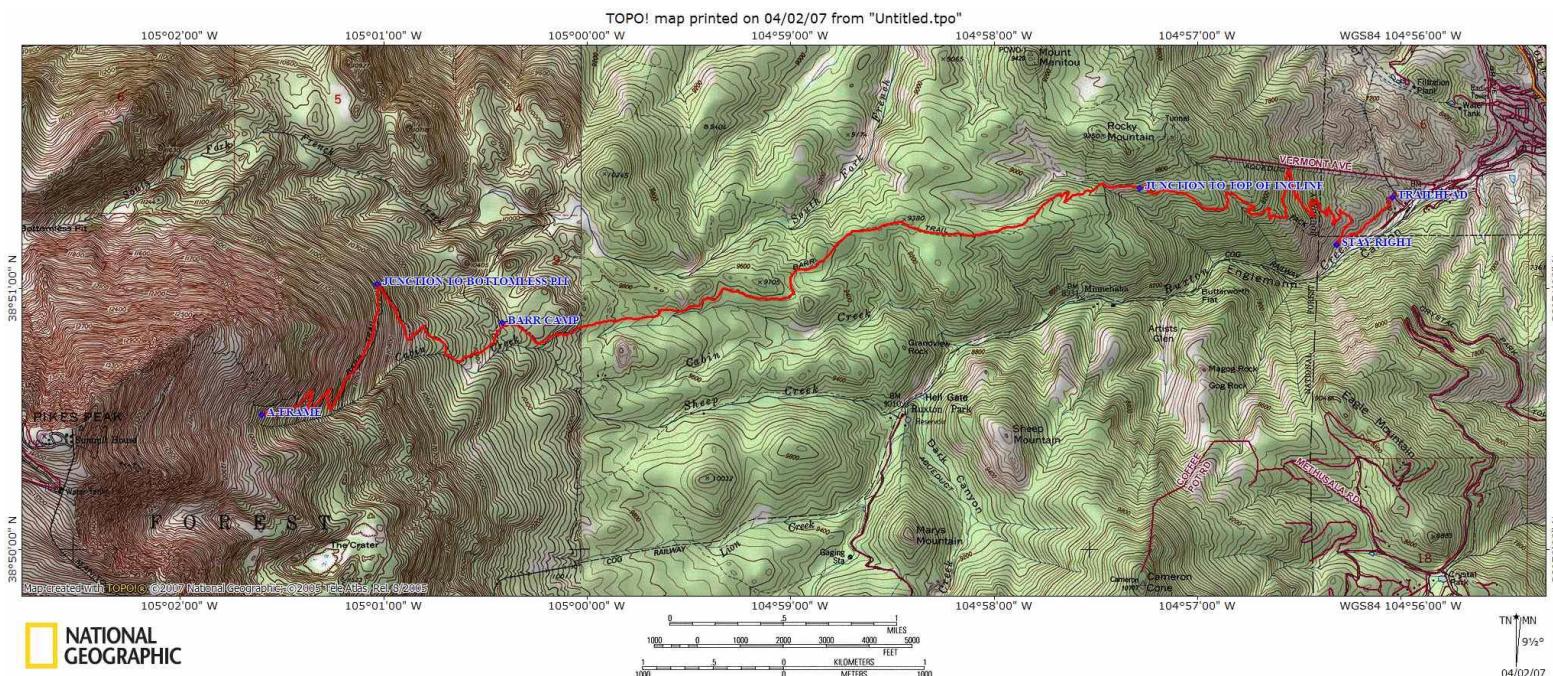
Continue up the trail, passing a junction for the Bottomless Pit at mile 6.8. There is likely to be enough of a track above Barr Camp to follow and when I was there it was very obvious if I stepped off the track – I would sink in several feet. As the trail nears treeline it switchbacks along the north side of the Cabin Creek drainage. In this area the trail may be less distinct and requires that you pay more attention. The A-frame is nestled just below treeline on the north side of the Cabin Creek drainage. A small ridge actually separates the two so the structure isn’t readily visible from the drainage. On one occasion a few years ago we were

having so much fun glissading down the shallow snow gully that descends from the summit that we missed the A-frame and had to climb back up.

*The A-frame-compressed.jpg*



Barr Camp is hosted year-round and offers overnight accommodations in a remote and rustic setting. The \$20 fee (off-season rate) includes a mattress and breakfast (bring a sleeping bag), while dinner is an additional \$7. Reservations are required. These can be made at [www.barrcamp.com](http://www.barrcamp.com).



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

PARKING: 38,51,21N / 104,56,2W, 6637 feet

STAY RIGHT: 38,51,10N / 104,56,19W, 7054 feet

JUNCTION - TO TOP OF INCLINE: 38,51,23N / 104,57,17W, 8688 feet

JUNCTION - TO BOTTOMLESS PIT: 38,51,1N / 105,1,2W, 10817 feet

A FRAME: 38,50,31N / 105,1,36W, 11913 feet

