

Elliott Ridge and Meridian Peak

by Dave Cooper



The Gore Range in early morning light seen from Meridian Peak-small.jpg

Quite unique in Colorado, Elliott Ridge on the west side of the Gore Range consists of a broad, gentle ridge that runs above treeline for about six miles. Now a part of the Eagles Nest Wilderness Area, Elliott Ridge was used to graze sheep as long ago as the early 1900's. Some stone structures along the ridge may have been built as shelters by the shepherders, though this is just speculation.

The normal end point for this hike is Meridian Peak, a gentle summit lying directly across from Eagles Nest, although as a fellow hiker we met said, "the trail is the destination". This easy ridge walk along an old jeep road allows you to enjoy spectacular views of the rugged Gore Range to the east and the Holy Cross Wilderness to the west.

The driving approach is a little tedious, but I think you'll agree that it is well worth it.

Hike Description

Getting to the Trailhead: From the Silverthorne exit (Exit 205) off I-70, drive north on Highway 9 for 27.3 miles. Turn left (west) onto Spring Creek Road (Grand County Road 10) and measure from here. At 5.9 miles cross a cattle grid and stay straight immediately beyond, where the Dice Hill road takes off to the right. At mile 7.0 take the right fork on Forest Service Road 1831. At mile 9.3 you will reach another junction. Turn left as FSR1831 continues towards Mahan Lake (signed). Stay straight (on FSR1831) at mile 11.3, where another road comes in from your left.

At mile 12.3 you will reach another intersection, where the left turn is signed to Mahan Lakes. Turn right here and descend a steep, rough and possibly muddy road to the trailhead at 12.4 miles. This last tenth of a mile is definitely not suitable for passenger cars.

Hike Statistics: From the Elliott Ridge Trailhead to the summit of Meridian Peak (12,426 feet): 1780 feet of total elevation gain in 12.2 miles round trip.

Difficulty: An easy trail hike along a broad, gentle ridge, mostly above treeline
USGS Quad:- Piney Peak, CO.

From the trailhead, the trail heads south, initially staying to the west of the ridge top below treeline. After 0.9 miles the old jeep road reaches the crest of the ridge and from this point on generally meanders close to the ridgeline. The walking is easy and quite delightful, offering views down towards Mahan Lake and others on your left and the Holy Cross Wilderness in the distance to your right.

Hiking along the broad expanses of Elliott Ridge-small.jpg

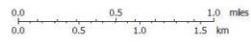
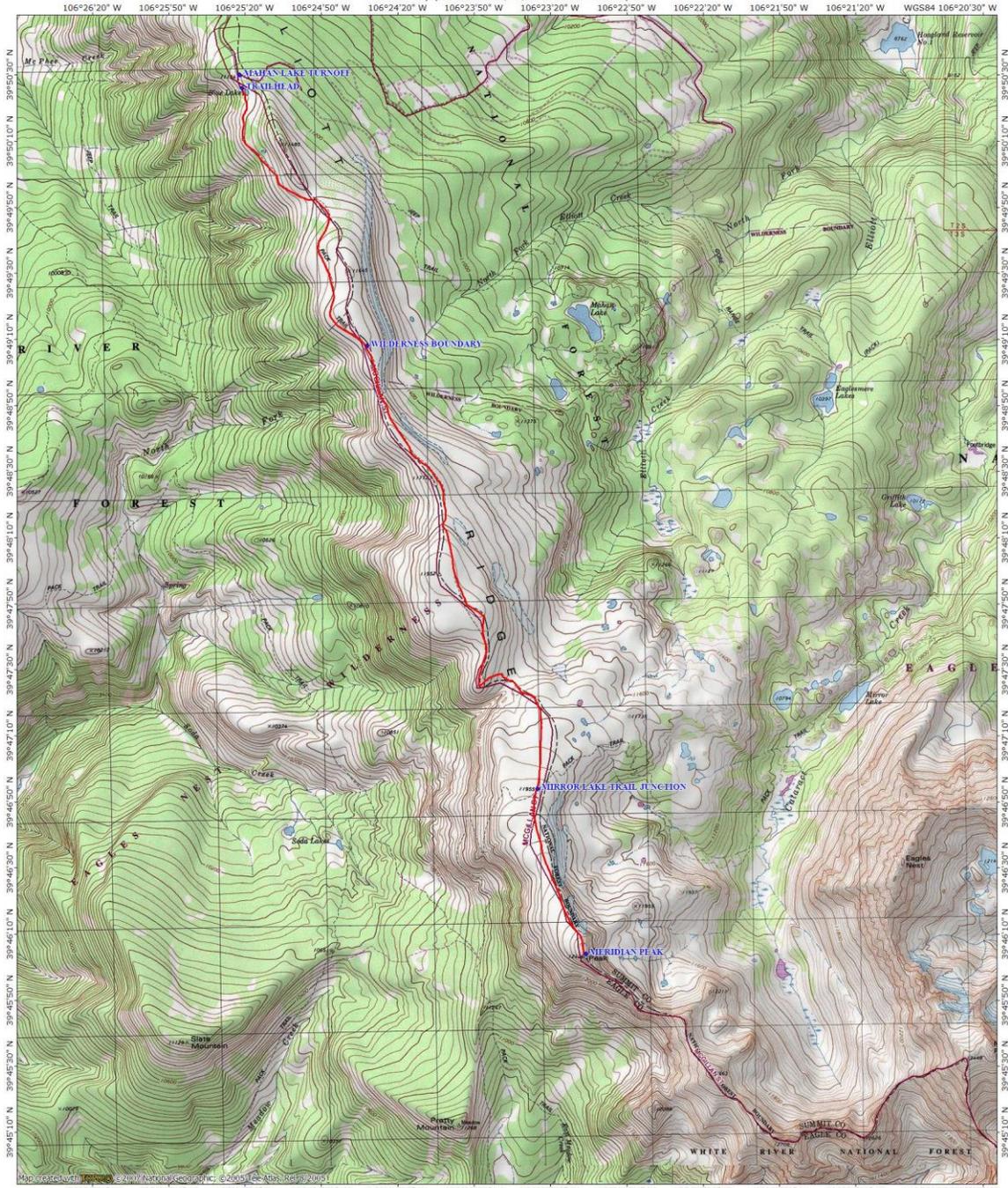
After 1.9 miles reach the Wilderness Boundary and cross a faint trail signed to Mirror Lake after 5.0 miles. The massive peak to your left is Eagles Nest, with Mount Powell beyond. In the early morning light, ridge upon ridge stretches away into the distance.



One of the old stone structures along the ridge-small.jpg

Beyond the Mirror Lake trail crossing, the trail climbs a little more steeply as it heads to the summit of Meridian Peak (12,426 feet) after 6.1 miles. This is a good place to turn around, unless you're planning to run the much more rugged ridge south of Meridian.

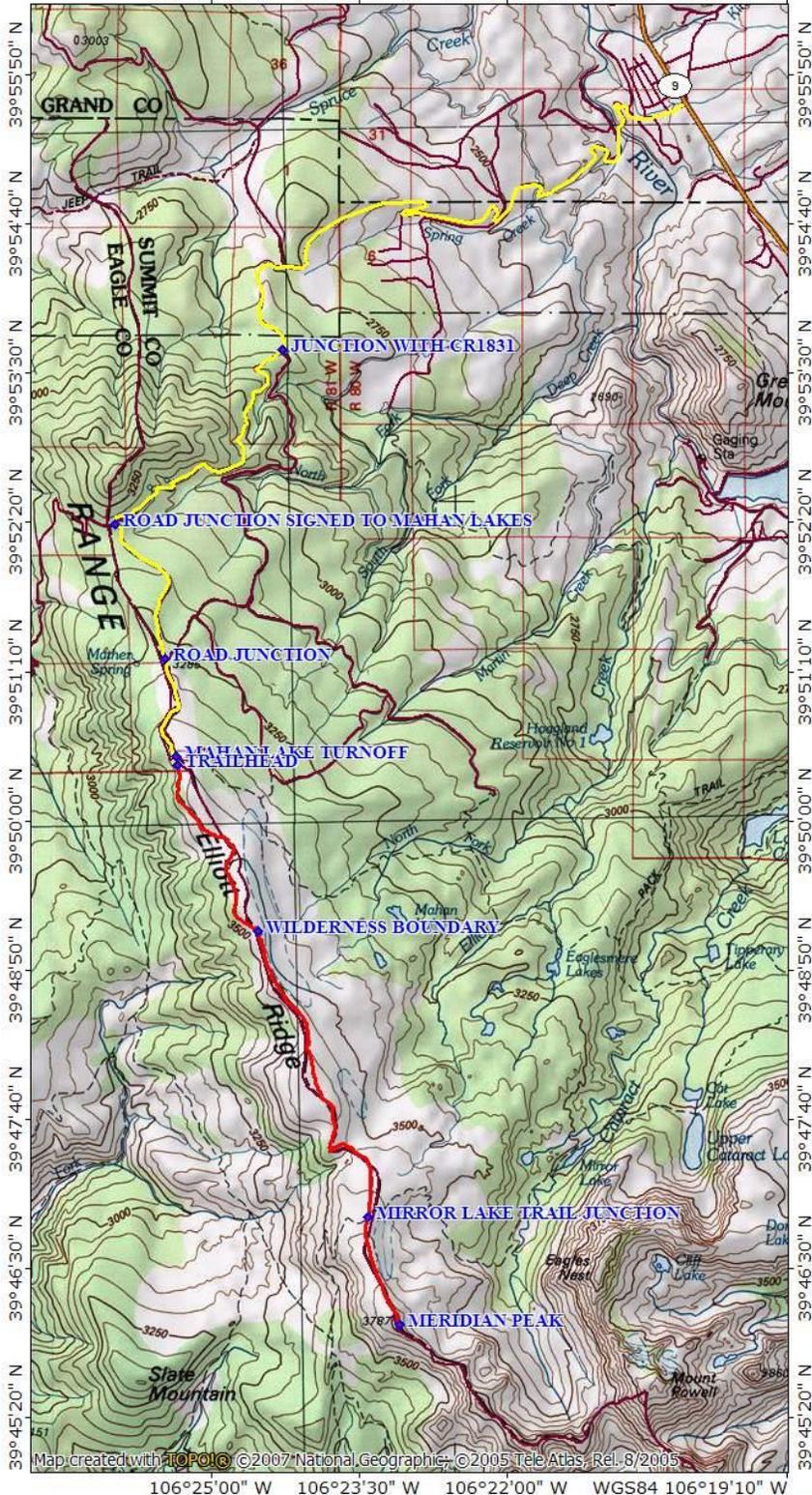
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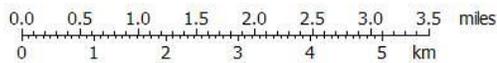
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106°25'00" W 106°23'30" W 106°22'00" W WGS84 106°19'10" W



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



TN MN

10°

08/14/07

GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)
 JUNCTION WITH CR1831: 39,53,41N / 106,24,17W, 9426 feet
 ROAD JUNCTION SIGNED TO MAHAN LAKES: 39,52,19N / 106,25,59W, 10453 feet
 ROAD JUNCTION: 39,51,16N / 106,25,28W, 10768 feet
 MAHAN LAKE TURNOFF: 39,50,30N / 106,25,22W, 11106 feet
 TRAILHEAD: 39,50,26N / 106,25,21W, 11171 feet
 WILDERNESS BOUNDARY: 39,49,8N / 106,24,32W, 11640 feet
 MIRROR LAKE TRAIL JUNCTION: 39,46,54N / 106,23,25W, 11972 feet
 MERIDIAN PEAK: 39,46,4N / 106,23,6W, 12408 feet

