

**Mount Sherman in Winter**  
by Dave Cooper



*Late afternoon light on Mt. Sherman-compressed*

Mount Sherman in winter is a lonely, windswept place with a raw beauty that few experience.

Extremely popular in the summer months due to its relative ease of ascent, the longer approach and often severe weather in winter tend to reduce the numbers considerably.

Add the need to choose a safe route (the summer trail is not appropriate for winter ascents due to a cornice which forms at the Sherman-Sheridan saddle) and most people will find a winter ascent of the peak a worthwhile challenge. If you have the requisite skills and level of preparedness then I think you will agree that it can be a rewarding experience.

On a few occasions the snow conditions might warrant a ski ascent/descent, but most of the time you are likely to encounter boilerplate crust, often with sastrugi (frozen waves of snow) which makes the skiing difficult. Long sections of the road may also be blown clear. Better to use snowshoes for this one.

**Getting to the Trailhead:** From the traffic light in Fairplay, head south on US Highway 285. After 1.2 miles turn right (west) on Park County Road 18 and drive 9.4 miles on this road to the point where plowing ceases. Make sure you stay straight (left) on CR18 after 1.2 miles, where the road turns to gravel.

**Hike Statistics:** Trailhead to the summit of Mount Sherman(14,036 feet): 3100 feet of total elevation gain in 4.6 miles one way.

**Difficulty:** Winter mountaineering at high altitude. Snowshoes and ice axe required. Routefinding skills required for summit slopes. Check weather and avalanche conditions beforehand.

**USGS Quad:** Mount Sherman, CO

## Hike Description

From the parking area at the end of the plowed road, start walking up the road, passing the remains of the ghost town of Leavick after 1.0 mile. Directly ahead of you at this point is the well-named Horseshoe Mountain.

*The old mill at Leavick-compressed*



*The striking view of Horseshoe Mountain from Leavick township-compressed*

Continue along the road, reaching the closed gate (the summer trailhead) 2.8 miles from your vehicle. Make your way to a flat area at 12,900 feet near the Hilltop Mine. At this point your route will diverge from the summer trail, which heads up towards the Sheridan/Sherman saddle. Luckily the winds that load the slopes below this saddle also scour other slopes clear, so it

is often possible to find a safe route either up to a point higher on Sherman's southwest ridge or on occasion, over to the Sherman/White Ridge saddle to the southeast of Sherman.

On a recent visit I found good conditions that allowed access to Sherman's southwest ridge on 25 degree slopes of scree alternating with boilerplate snow, reaching the ridge at 13,600 feet. From here it is a simple hike northeast to the summit, which can be a challenge to identify with the many nearly-equal elevation bumps. An ice axe is advised for the steeper snow sections.

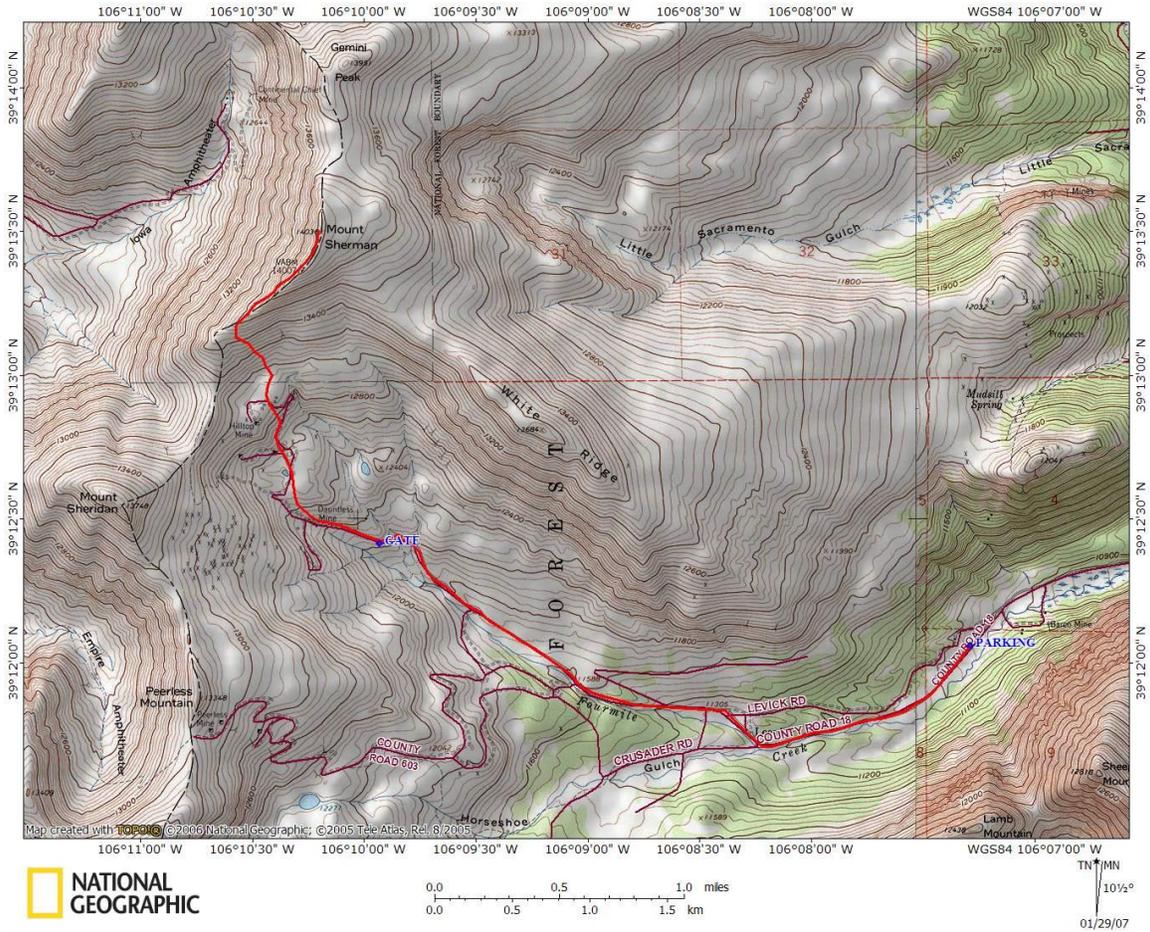
Descend by reversing your ascent route.



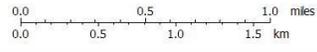
*Approaching Sherman's summit*



*The summit of Mt. Sherman in winter-compressed*



**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**



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10 1/2°  
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