

North Twin Cone

by Dave Cooper



Approaching North Twin Cone Peak-small.jpg

This week's hike takes us to a high, windswept winter summit just south of Kenosha Pass off Highway 285. At the northern edge of the Kenosha Mountains, North Twin Cone Peak, one of the highest summits in the range at 12,319 feet, is visible from many locations along the highway.

One of a group of three summits, North Twin Cone is sometimes approached from the Ben Tyler Trailhead, but in winter the approach from Kenosha Pass makes more sense, especially if skiing, since the approach is on a road. In fact, while we opted for snowshoes on our recent outing, on the way down we both wished we had skis to make the 6 miles of gentle downhill more fun. While we did encounter short sections of the road that had sparse snow cover, and one short stretch near the beginning of the switchbacks that was very icy, catch this trail after a new snowfall and the skiing would be excellent.

Getting to the Trailhead: Drive to the summit of Kenosha Pass on Highway 285, approximately 19 miles west of the town of Bailey.

At the Pass, turn east on an unplowed road (can be drifted in, so not recommended for 2-wheel drive vehicles) and drive 0.2 mile to a parking area immediately before the campground.

Since the campground is open year-round, the Forest Service (South Platte Ranger District) charges a use fee of \$4 per day to park here. If you prefer, you can park at one of the parking areas located at Kenosha Pass and walk or ski the extra 0.2 miles.

Hike Statistics: From the parking area to the summit of North Twin Cone Peak (12,319 feet) you'll gain 2500 feet and lose 200 feet (to be re-climbed on the way out) in 6.1 miles, for a total elevation gain of 2700 feet in 12.2 miles round trip.

Difficulty: A long but relatively easy snowshoe or ski, mostly on a forestry road, to a gentle summit.

USGS Quad: Jefferson, CO; Mount Logan, CO

North Twin Cone makes a nice long outing to a scenic summit (though when we were there recently an approaching storm limited visibility), and provides the opportunity to bag a winter peak with little objective hazard. That doesn't mean you should take this trip lightly, though. You still need to be prepared for potential cold, windy conditions and possibly poor visibility.

Hike Description

The Twin Cone Road, labeled on maps as County Road 872, is signed as Forest Service Road 126. Take this road from the vicinity of the campground parking area (near the outhouses). Be careful not to take FSR 126A. Our road initially heads east then southeast, reaching a closed gate after 0.8 mile. Signs at this gate indicate that you are entering private property and that you must stay on the road (a public right of way) for the next 1.5 miles. Follow the road to the second gate closure where you re-enter public lands at mile 2.1.

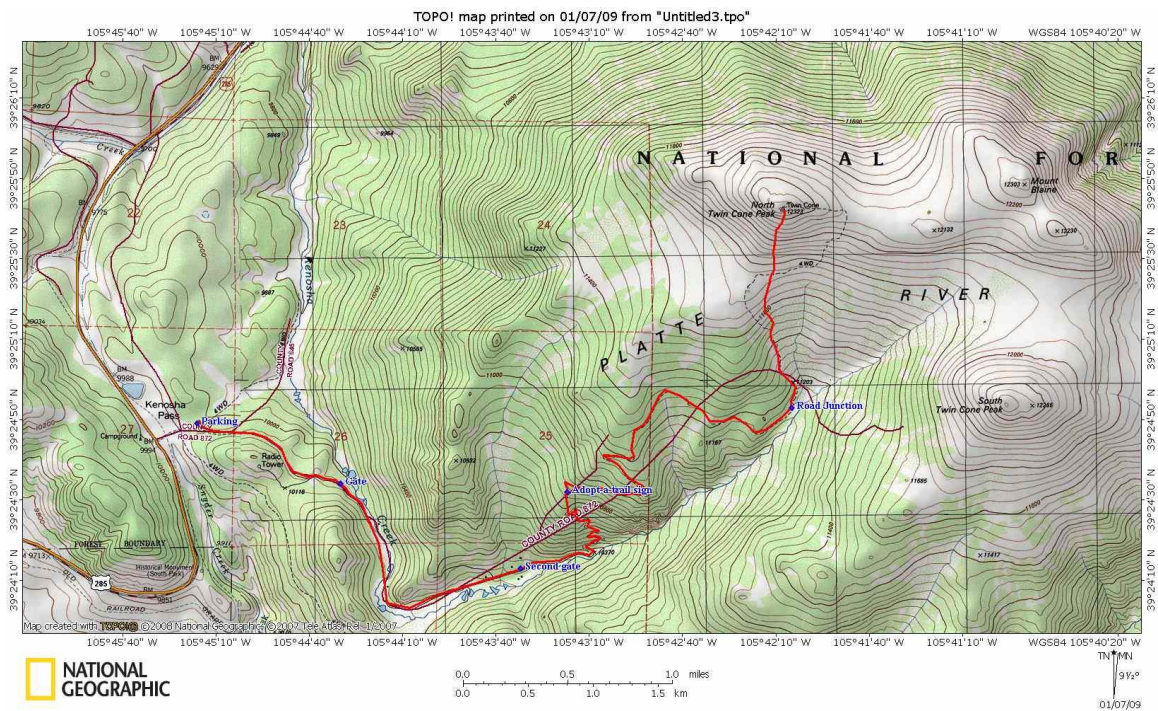


Signage at the first gate - stay on road for next 1.5 miles-small.jpg

Continue along the road to the start, at mile 2.5, of what seem an interminable number of switchbacks and negotiate these through an area of cliffs. There are several good opportunities to look back at the expanse of South Park in this section. At mile 3.0 you're finally done with the switchbacks. Pass a sign at mile 3.1 (Adopt-a-Trail sign) and follow the road as it almost immediately cuts back to the right (east). The road meanders back and forth up a broad ridge before dropping back down into the Kenosha Creek drainage at mile 5.0. At mile 5.1 you will reach a signed road junction with a good view of your objective, almost straight ahead. Turn left here and follow the road as it climbs more steeply towards the south ridge of North Twin Cone Peak. The road may be difficult to follow after the junction, but generally curves around to the right of treeline. Trees give way to willows as you gain elevation. Pick a path through these beasts, aiming for the wind-scoured slopes of the peak, and hike up easy slopes to the summit, obvious by the large antenna, solar panels and building occupying the top.



Hiking along the snow-covered road just before reaching the switchbacks-small.jpg



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

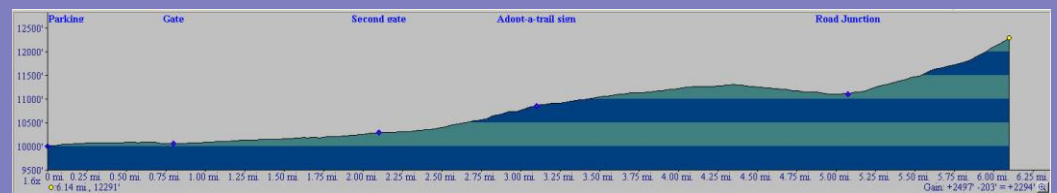
Parking, 39,24,49,-105,45,16,10046 feet

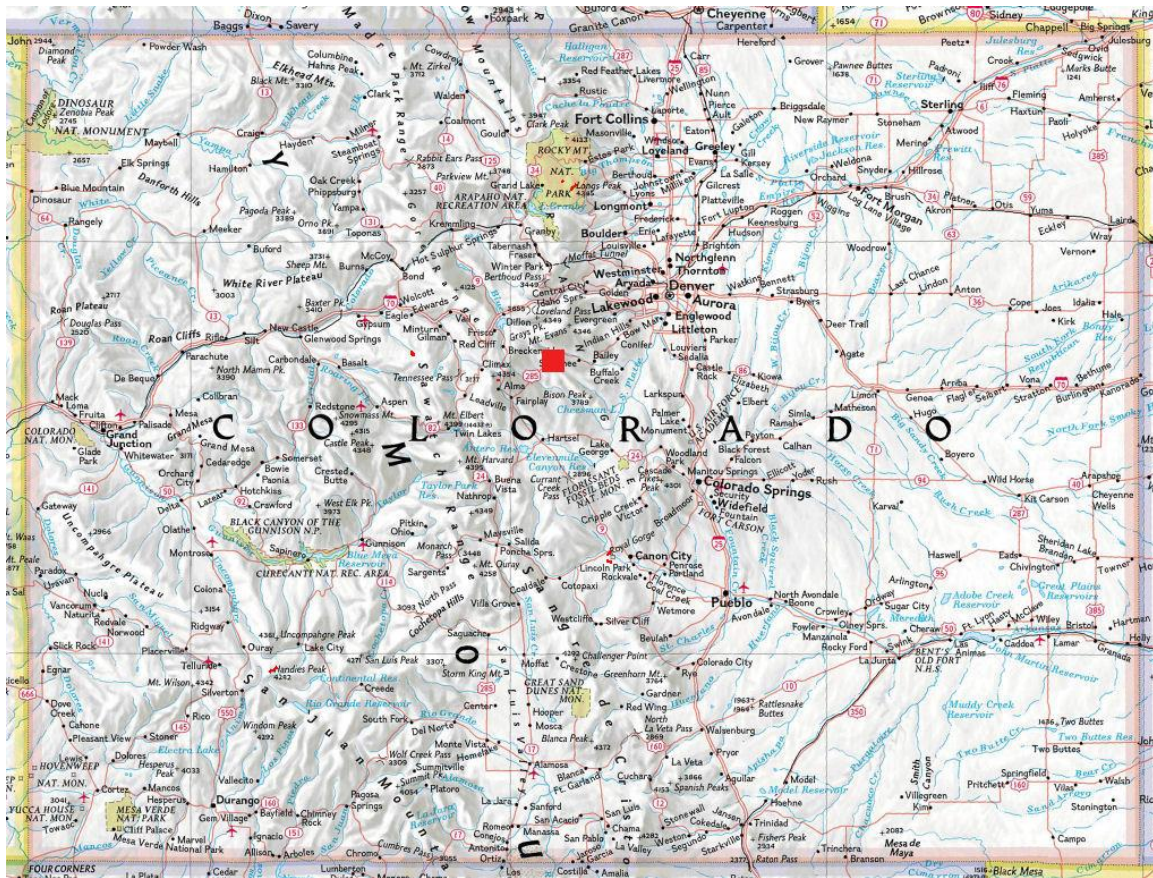
Gate, 39,24,34,-105,44,30,10082 feet

Second gate, 39,24,13,-105,43,32,10292 feet

Adopt-a-trail sign, 39,24,32,-105,43,17,10909 feet

Road Junction, 39,24,53,-105,42,5,11109 feet





Important update on trailhead parking in and around Montezuma.

The parking area for Sts. John and the Wild Irishman Mine is now closed. The small parking area at the junction of Sts. John Road and Montezuma Road, that the County has historically plowed for skier/snowshoer parking, is now posted no parking. A phone call to the Dillon Ranger District confirmed that the town no longer allows parking either at this trailhead or at the Webster Pass trailhead. Skiers and snowshoers must park either at the Deer Creek trailhead 1.2 miles south, or at the Peru Creek trailhead, 0.7 miles north on the Montezuma Road.