

Peter Estin Hut via the Ironedge Trail / Hat Creek
– Backcountry Ski Tour / Snowshoe to a 10th. Mountain Division Hut
by Dave Cooper

Colorado is fortunate to have several wonderful hut systems inspired by the European mountain huts. Over the years we have had the good fortune to stay at a number of these. My favorite remains the Peter Estin hut located south of Eagle. My first visit was in the 1980's and most recent over the past Christmas holiday. We found that this hut still offers an affordable, comfortable mountain retreat in spectacular surroundings.



The Peter Estin Hut offers an idyllic retreat and lots of opportunities for snowshoe/ skiing adventures

This hut offers sleeping accommodations for 16, wood-burning stoves and propane stove-tops for heat and cooking respectively, so all you need to take is a sleeping bag and your food to enjoy a multi-day backcountry experience (we usually take along our own pillowcases, too). So, get together with a group of friends and enjoy time away from TV and telephones. Unless your group fills up the whole cabin you will often be able to enjoy the company of other groups staying there.

The two routes to the hut from the Yeoman Park Trailhead offer a choice of

Getting to the Trailhead: From I-70, take Exit 147 (Eagle) and head south, crossing the river bridge. Turn right on Grand Avenue (old SR 6) and drive to Broadway. Turn south and drive to Fifth Street. Turn left (east) on Fifth and drive one block to Capitol Street. Turn south (right) again on Capitol and drive 0.5 miles before turning southeast (left) onto Brush Creek Road. Follow Brush Creek Road from it's intersection with Capitol Street for 9.7 miles to a Y-junction. Turn left onto East Brush Creek Road (snowy but plowed) and take this road to a parking area after 6 more miles, just beyond the bridge over East Brush Creek.

Hike Statistics:

Peter Estin hut via Ironedge Trail: Intermediate/Advanced Ski. Gain 2200 feet in 4.2 miles (Note: the grade averages 22% for about 2 miles in the toughest section).

Hat Creek: Intermediate Ski. Lose 2200 feet in 7.5 miles.

a steep, sometimes narrow trail or a longer but gentler road. Our choice was to ascend the steeper but much shorter route, then descend the road on the way out. That is the route described here.

Either of these trails makes for a fine day outing, although the extra length of the Hat Creek route may make for a very long day unless you're fast.

Ascent Trail Description

A note: the trail follows blue plastic diamonds or blue-painted arrows on trees. However, in some areas these may be challenging to follow. It is recommended that you have map and compass, or better still a GPS unit with route pre-entered.

From the parking area head back across the bridge to the north side of East Brush Creek and immediately turn right on the E. Brush Creek Road as it heads east up the drainage. Stay straight after 0.43 miles at the sign indicating you are one mile from the Fulford Cave Campground, and stay straight again at 1.1 miles where a trail takes off to your left.

After 1.5 miles you will reach the Fulford Cave Campground. Follow the road as it contours around the north side of the small lake and becomes the Ironedge Trail. Do not take the trail that forks left just past the lake (this goes to Lake Charles). Shortly after the lake the road ends at some private buildings. The trail continues to the right of these buildings and immediately becomes a narrow, winding and steep trail which will test the best skiers if you elect to descend this way (especially when burdened with a heavy pack). Climbing skins will probably be helpful to skiers for the next couple of miles. The trail eventually relents as it emerges from the trees near Ironedge Saddle at about 10,800 feet, and continues south towards the hut, making a small jog to the east at waypoint "LEFT TURN" where a sign indicates that no snowmobiles are allowed. The trail enters a small stand of trees just before the hut. The hut is perched on the far side of these trees (waypoint "PETER ESTIN HUT"), overlooking a cleared slope and affording great views south to the Elk and Massive Ranges.



*Good views
await from the
Peter Estin
Hut*



Around the hut

If you have the time and energy, consider exploring some fine powder snow on the north slopes behind the hut. Skiers will find glades and tight tree skiing to satisfy most ability levels, though the terrain is generally not steep. Another destination for skiers and snowshoers alike is Charles Peak, east-south-east of the hut. The snow here, on the open slopes at 12,000 feet, can be windblown and sun-baked. The same is true of the open slopes immediately south of the hut, which can provide deep, hero powder or breakable crust.

The Descent

As I mentioned, the Ironedge Trail requires advanced skiing skills to descend, so many skiers will prefer to descend the road down Hat Creek. This will often be a fun, fast run, but

Fine powder awaits on the slopes north of the hut

hopefully without the “piledriver” effect that a heavy pack creates when you do a faceplant!

Snowshoers should do equally well descending either trail, though the 8 miles can take a while to walk down.

From the hut, ski a short distance west to the hut’s entrance gate, where you meet the road, usually well tracked. Turn right (north-west) on the road and follow it down to the Ironedge saddle. (The guidebook suggests following the Ironedge Trail from the hut to this saddle – it’s up to you.) From the saddle the road turns west and stays north then east of Hat Creek, becoming increasingly obvious. After approximately 7.5 miles the road comes out in Yeoman Park at the campground. From here walk a couple of hundred yards back to the parking area.



Ready to head down

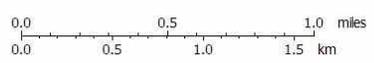
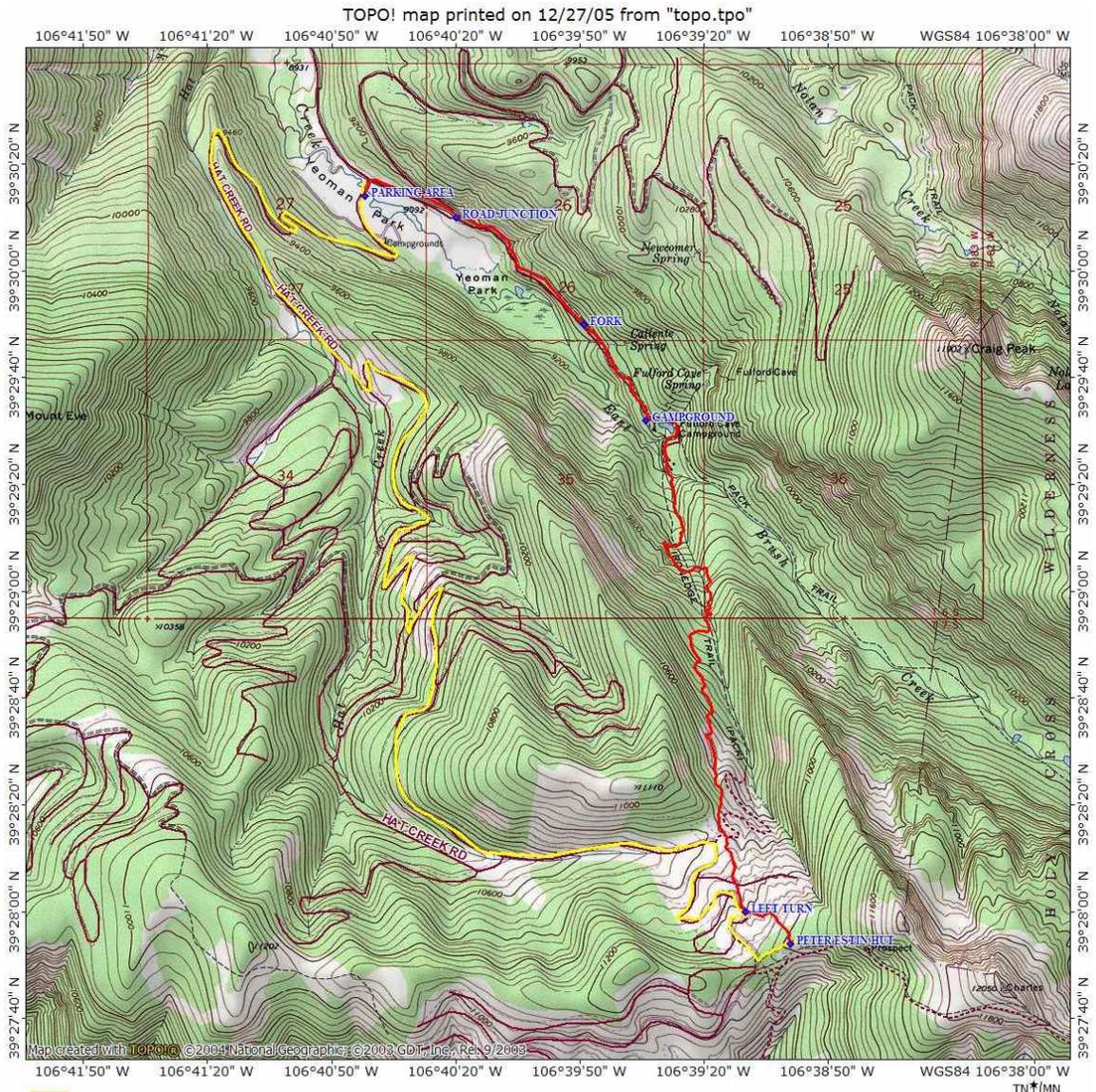
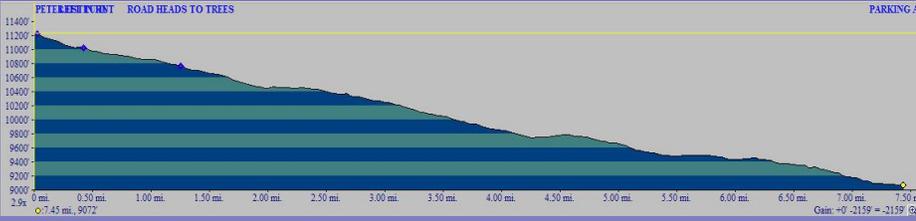
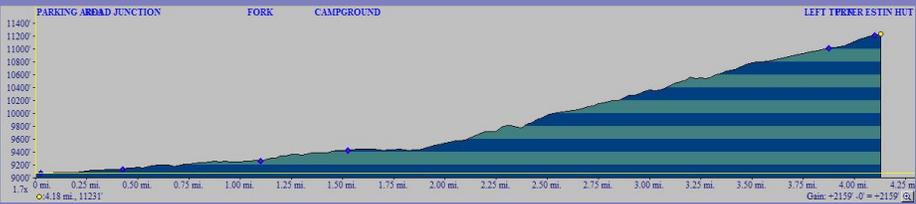
Resources:

It costs \$28 per person per night to stay at the Peter Estlin Hut.

For more information on the 10th. Mountain Hut System, including booking and availability information, go to www.huts.com

For detailed information on routes to all of the huts in the system, see the excellent guidebook: **Colorado Tenth Mountain Huts and Trails: The Official Guide to America's Largest Backcountry Ski Hut System** by Louis W. Dawson II

GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)
 PARKING AREA: 39,30,14N / 106,40,42W , 9072 feet
 ROAD JUNCTION: 39,30,10N / 106,40,20W , 9114 feet
 FORK: 39,29,50N / 106, 39,49W , 9396 feet
 CAMPGROUND: 39,29,32N / 106,39,34W , 9495 feet
 LEFT TURN: 39,28,0N / 106,39,10W , 11037 feet
 PETER ESTIN HUT:39,27,54N / 106,38,59W , 11,200 feet



TN MN
11°
12/27/05

