

Twin Sisters Peaks (11,413 feet and 11,428 feet)

by Dave Cooper

Picture yourself hiking up the Longs Peak trail in the pre-dawn light. As the sun crests the horizon you turn around to see the Front Range bathed in a sea of low cloud. The only landmarks visible are the double summits of the Twin Sisters, emerging from the fog.

Getting to the Trailhead: To reach the turnoff for the Twin Sisters Trailhead drive south on State Highway 7 for 6.6 miles, measured from its intersection with US Highway 36 in the town of Estes Park. This is also 8.8 miles north of Allenspark on Highway 7. Turn east and drive past the Lily Lake Visitor Center (directly opposite Lily Lake) to the road closure. Parking is only allowed on the right hand side of the road, and fills up quickly.

Each time that I've been fortunate enough to witness this spectacular sunrise I would tell myself that I needed to climb these peaks, but it wasn't until a friend enthusiastically recommended this hike recently that I finally put it on my to-do list. The views from the summit, of Longs Peak and Mount Meeker, provided an interesting juxtaposition to my prior viewpoint.



Sunrise over the Twin Sisters

Hike Description

It is important to note that the trailhead used is not the one shown on the USGS maps. Presumably the trail has been re-routed at some point in the past. The current trail joins the trail shown on the map at about 9800 feet.

Hike Statistics: Trailhead to the summit of the western Twin is 2400 feet of total elevation gain in 3.1 miles one way.

Difficulty: A moderate trail hike.

USGS Quad: Longs Peak, CO

From the parking area pass through the gate closure and follow the access road for 100 yards to the trailhead, located at the first bend in the road, marked by an information kiosk. As the switchbacking trail gradually gains altitude it crosses and re-crosses the boundary between Forest Service and National Park Service jurisdictions. Through the trees you will occasionally catch glimpses of Longs Peak, but it isn't until you reach the summit of the Twin Sisters that you will have an unobstructed view.



IMG_2786-01 Looking up at the double summits from treeline

The trail eventually cuts over to the east side of the mountain, shortly before reaching treeline. Beyond this point the trail becomes increasingly rocky. After reaching a small saddle dominated by a large antenna, turn right and pass a small stone building, following a more primitive trail to the summit of the western Sister. This viewpoint will afford an excellent view of Rocky Mountain National Park. Directly across the valley to the southwest, the Diamond on the east face of Longs Peak dominates, while to the northwest there is a good view of the famous Y-couloir

on Ypsilon Peak.



The rugged east face of Longs. Mount Meeker is at left



