

Ute Peak

by Dave Cooper



Ute Peak on the left, with the impressivel-corniced false summit of Point 12,254 on the right

The Williams Fork Mountains comprise a small, little-known chain of peaks that extend west from the Eisenhower Tunnel along the north side of I-70 before turning to the north and running along the east side of Highway 9 for twenty-five miles.

This relatively gentle range offers good hiking and ski-touring possibilities. Ute Peak, located south of Ute Pass, is one of the most accessible peaks in the range and its long north ridge makes for a great spring outing, either on snowshoes or skis. Another bonus is that the peak provides the ultimate panoramic view of the entire Gore Range, from Buffalo Mountain to Eagles Nest.

Getting to the Trailhead: From the Silverthorne exit (Exit 205) off I-70, drive north on Highway 9 for 12.7 miles. Turn right (east) onto the Ute Pass Road (Grand County Road 15) - also signed to the Henderson Mine. Drive 5.3 miles to the summit of Ute Pass and park in the parking area on the right.

Hike Statistics: From Ute Pass to the summit of Ute Peak (12,303 feet): 2730 feet of total elevation gain in 7.1 miles round trip.

Difficulty: A moderate snowshoe to a peak well above treeline with some routefinding required. Take a map and compass and also preferably a GPS to navigate through the trees. An advanced ski tour, requiring the ability to ski the sometimes-tight trees on the way down.



Panorama of the Gore Range from the summit of Ute Peak-small.jpg

Hike Description

From the parking area snowshoe or ski southwest across an open area for 100 yards, reaching a trail marker at the edge of the trees. Follow the trail (hopefully previously tracked) as it wanders first left then back to the right up the gentle ridge. A small saddle after 0.4 mile will afford you a nice view of the Gore Range. Continue up the ridge. Expect to lose the trail at some point, even though it is well-blazed (actually, the blazes may well be below the snow). In any case, the summer trail makes a large detour at one point to join the trail coming up from the Williams Fork valley. With snow on the route it is better to just stay close to the ridge crest. (Note: for more information on the summer trail, see “Hiking Colorado’s Roadless Trails” by Penelope Purdy - CMC Press).

After 2.5 miles you’ll reach treeline, and the steepest section of the route. This slope is short and quickly deposits you back on the trail, visible now as it cuts across wind-scoured slopes to the right (west) of Point 12,104. As you round Point 12,104 you’ll see a corniced peak ahead. This is a false summit (Point 12,254). Follow the trail as it heads back to the ridge, then cuts across the right flank of Point 12,254. Stay away from the cornice - on May 4th the cornice was in dangerous condition.

After passing Point 12,254, stay straight (south) as it curves around to reach the base of the summit block. Follow a faint trail up to the left of the cliff band, then walk easily to the summit, marked with a large metal pipe.

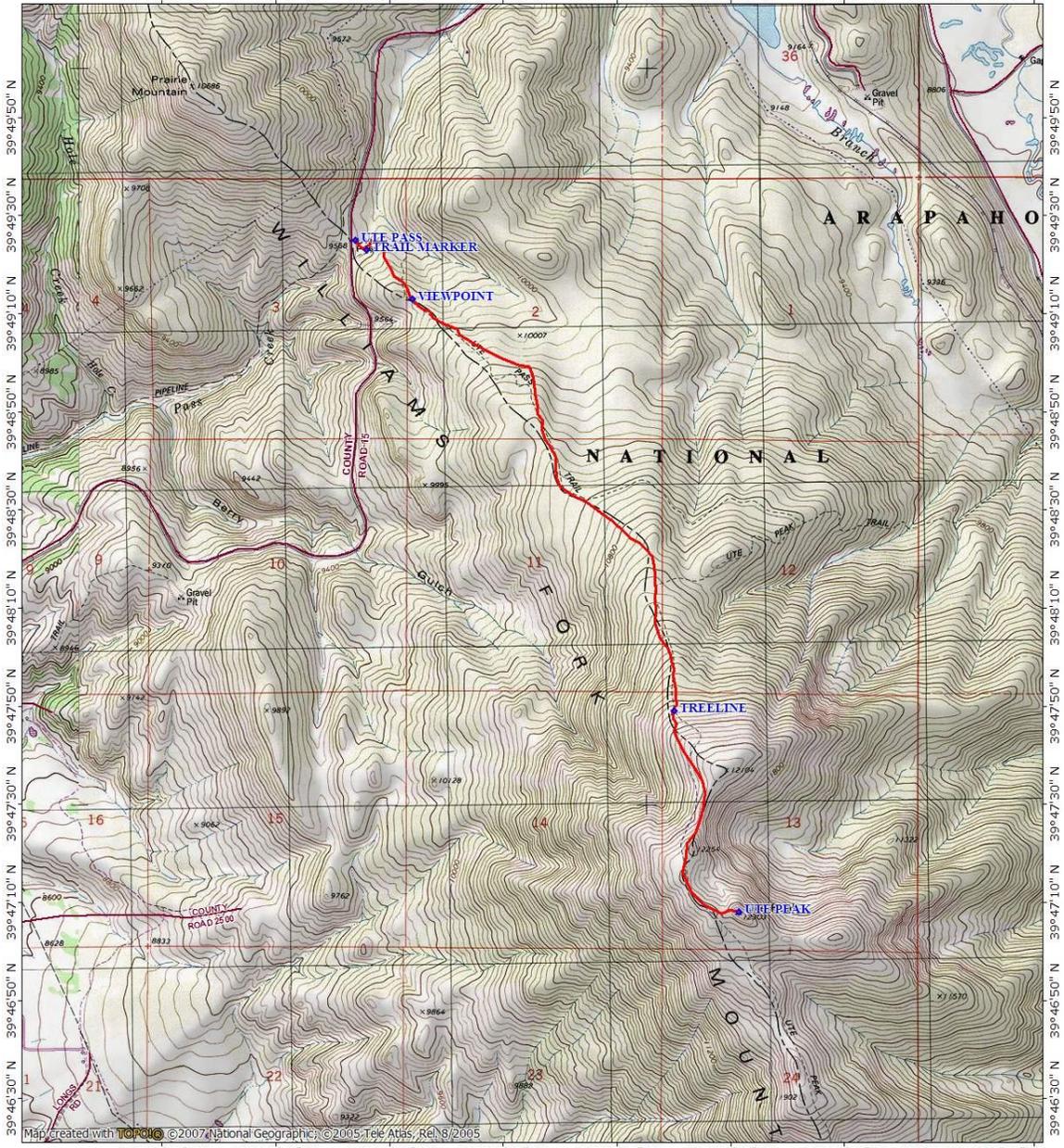
After a pleasant lunch spent admiring the views, reverse you tracks for the descent.



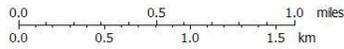
Approaching the summit block-small.JPG

TOPO! map printed on 05/05/08 from "Untitled3.tpo"

106°07'10" W 106°06'40" W 106°06'10" W 106°05'40" W 106°05'10" W 106°04'40" W 106°04'10" W WGS84 106°03'20" W



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GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)
 UTE PASS: 39,49,25N / 106,6,19W, 9606 feet
 TRAIL MARKER: 39,49,23N / 106,6,16W, 9652 feet
 VIEWPOINT: 39,49,13N / 106,6,4W, 9869 feet
 TREELINE: 39,47,49N / 106,4,55W, 11686 feet
 UTE PEAK: 39,47,8N / 106,4,38W, 12292 feet

