

CLOUD PEAK WILDERNESS

Cloud Peak Wilderness Area is located inside Bighorn National Forest, in Northern Wyoming. The wilderness area covers **189,039 acres of the Bighorn Mountain Range**, including the highest mountain (Cloud Peak). Cloud Peak Wilderness Area gets its name from, well, Cloud Peak. At **13,167 feet**, Cloud Peak is the highest and most notable mountain in the Bighorn Range. At 7,067 feet, the mountain also has the second highest topographic prominence in Wyoming. Cloud Peak Wilderness was officially created in 1984 by the Wyoming Wilderness Act, but it had been protected as a Primitive Area since 1932. The wilderness area is known for its sheer cliff rock faces and glacier carved valleys. Cloud Peak Glacier is contained in a deep cirque on the northeast side of Cloud Peak. The glacier is the last remaining glacier in the Bighorn range. Cloud Peak Wilderness, and the Bighorn range are a great way to enjoy the Rockies and avoid the crowds of Grand Teton and Yellowstone.

BACKPACKING PERMITS

Before you set out, it's important to mention that you need a backpacking permit to enter Cloud Peak Wilderness. You can self-register for permits on the Forest Service website. After you complete the form you will need two copies. Keep one copy with you while you're in the wilderness area and drop off the other in a registration box outside each ranger district office. There's no permit fee to hike in the wilderness area. **It's very important that everyone fills out the permit registration form before entering Cloud Peak Wilderness area.** Not only is it illegal to not register, the permits will make you aware of the special rules for the wilderness area and it helps the forest service get funding for maintaining the area. The permits provide the forest service with information about how utilized the wilderness area is. Here's the regulations for what is prohibited as stated on the permits:

- Entering or being in the Cloud Peak Wilderness without current required registration in possession
- Open campfires above 9,200 feet elevations. Chemical stoves are permitted.
- Campfires below 9,200 feet must be on a fire blanket or within a fire pan.
- No campfires within 300 feet of lakes, streams, or designated trails
- No possessing any part of a tree above 9,200 feet elevation.
- No camping within 100 feet of lakes and streams.
- No hitching a horse/pack animal to a live tree, except while loading or unloading.
- No hitching a horse/pack animal within 100 feet of lakes and streams.
- Failure to dispose of garbage/waste.
- No groups of more than 10 people or more than 15 pack animals. You may have 12 people in a group if one person is trained in "Leave No Trace" and has their certificate with them.
- No short cutting on trail switchbacks.
- Using a cart, bicycle, or other vehicle.
- Failure to dispose of solid human waste by packing it out.
- Camping in violation of posted instructions.

TROUT FISHING

Cloud Peak Wilderness has some great Rocky Mountain alpine lake trout fishing. Wyoming Game and Fish Department does a great job stocking these lakes every year with trout.

Mainly you can find the following species: Brook Trout, Brown Trout, Cutthroat, Greyling, Golden Trout, Rainbow, Lake and Tiger Trout.

BACKPACKING TRAILS

Cloud Peak Wilderness contains several notable hiking trails which one of them is Lost Twin Lakes trail. This is a great trail that ends with an incredible view of the lakes. There are also several other great hiking trails within the wilderness area.

LOST TWIN LAKES

Lost Twin Lakes is a fairly short hike for a multi-day backpacking trip, but the view and fishing at the lake is some of the best. The trail begins at West Tensleep Campground parking lot. It's 6.1 miles and a 1,500 feet elevation gain from the parking lot trailhead to reach Lost Twin Lakes. You'll pass Mirror Lake at approximately the 3 mile mark. You might camp and fish near Mirror Lake. Mirror Lake is a beautiful lake and when you get there you understand why it has its name. The lake is shielded from view along the trail by trees so you'll have to keep an eye out if you want to stop here. The lake will be to your left when you come to a meadow after about 3 miles. You most likely find moose in this area especially during the evening hours.

From Mirror Lake, it's about 3 miles to reach Lost Twin Lakes. It's hard to describe just how big some of the views here are.

CLOUD PEAK SUMMIT

As mentioned before, Cloud Peak is the highest mountain in the Bighorn range, and the fourth highest point in Wyoming. The least technical route, and the way most people go, starts on the Misty Moon Trail at West Tensleep Campground. The Misty Moon trail is labeled as trail #63 on Forest Service maps. Follow this trail for 7 miles and you will reach Misty Moon Lake. You will pass Lake Helen at the 5-mile mark and Lake Marion at 6 before arriving at Misty Moon. Follow the trail around the lake until you reach the Lake Solitude Trail. This trail should be marked as #38 on Forest Service maps. Stay on the Lake Solitude trail until you get to the Paint Rock Creek drainage. From here until the summit you'll have to follow the rock cairns to stay on the trail. Rock cairns are stacks of rocks that are used to mark trails in areas where trails are hard to follow, such as exposed bedrock or marshes. You can find the Cloud Peak summit at (44.382188, -107.173955). The total elevation of Cloud Peak is 13,167 feet and it's one of the most prominent points in Wyoming, so make sure to take some pictures when you get there! It's about a 23-mile hike round trip to the summit, so the popular way to do this hike is to turn it into a three-day backpacking trip. Most people will hike to Misty Moon Lake on the first day and camp overnight there. Then they'll summit Cloud Peak and hike back down to Misty Moon on the second day. On the third day they'll hike back out of the wilderness area. The total distance from West Tensleep to Cloud Peak's summit is about 23 miles.

BOMBER MOUNTAIN

Bomber Mountain is an especially cool hike within Cloud Peak Wilderness. The mountain got its name after a B-17 crashed into it near the summit in 1943. The wreckage of the plane is still on the mountain and is accessible by hiking trail. A B-17 nicknamed "Scharazad" was flying from Pendleton, Oregon to Grand Island, Nebraska on June 28, 1943 when it lost radio contact around midnight. It had been scheduled to continue on to England where it would participate in bombing raids with the 383rd bomber group. The army conducted two searches of the Bighorn area looking for the plane but they were unsuccessful. The wreckage was not found until 1945 when two cowboys saw something shiny on the mountainside and made the climb to investigate. There's now a memorial plaque dedicated to the crew 1.5 miles away on the shore of Florence Lake.

Bomber Mountain has an elevation of about 12,840 feet and borders the south side of Cloud Peak. Start this hike as if you were summiting Cloud Peak as described above. Hike to Misty Moon Lake and then get onto Lake Solitude trail (#038). The top of the mountain is a rock scramble above the tree line. The wreckage is located directly above the northern shore of Florence Lake. This hike is about 22 miles round trip from the trailhead at West Tensleep.

WHAT TO BRING

There are several campfire restrictions in Cloud Peak Wilderness, so you'll definitely need a backpacking stove. The high elevation causes it to get chilly at night here, so extra layers and a warm sleeping bag are a must. Any month of the year it can get down to as low as 35 degrees Fahrenheit at night including snow falling! There are lots of water sources in the lakes and streams but you'll still want to make sure you bring a filter/purification tablets. Here's a list of some of the important things.

- Solid/sturdy over the ankle hiking boots
- Several hiking socks to change
- Cloud Peak Wilderness backcountry permits
- Bighorn Mountains Trail Map
- Rain gear (The weather can change fast at these elevations)
- Backpacking stove
- Your favorite backpacking meals
- Water filter/purification tablets
- Layers
- Warm sleeping bag
- Lightweight sleeping pad
- First Aid supplies
- Mirror for signaling
- Backpack (Internal or external frame)
- Fishing equipment
- Fishing license
- Camera
- Personal waist bags

Information brought to you by



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Tread Lightly! Inc.
(800) 966-9900

Leave No Trace
(800) 332-4100

Bighorn National Forest Service
(307) 684-7806

Bureau of Land Management
(307) 684-1100