

BARR LAKE STATE PARK: LAKE PERIMETER TRAIL

15

IN BRIEF

The Lake Perimeter Trail at Barr Lake offers a rare opportunity to explore a major prairie reservoir in Colorado. The lake is lined with cottonwoods, marshes, and aquatic plants. Its southern half has been designated as a wildlife refuge to shelter animals and birds, including the 350 species of birds that have been spotted here.

DESCRIPTION

Turn right out of the parking lot and the area around the Barr Lake Nature Center. The trail begins 100 yards from the lake, and it was muddy when we hiked in late fall. Cottonwood trees provide some shade in the morning and complete shade in the afternoon. Along with cottonwood trees, irrigation ditches line the trail, and two such ditches are found to the left and right of the trailhead. The trail starts counterclockwise from the nature center, and the mile markers are for those traveling the other direction on the Pioneer Trail to the wildlife observation station and gazebo on the lake.

You see houses at the beginning of the trail, but they disappear as prairie meadows and cottonwood trees take over all line of sight. Early in the trail, hikers may encounter horseback riders and mountain bikers. Continue to a



KEY AT-A-GLANCE INFORMATION

LENGTH: 9.2 miles

CONFIGURATION: Loop

DIFFICULTY: Easy

SCENERY: Lake, prairie, cottonwoods, dam, and irrigation ditches

EXPOSURE: Shaded in cottonwoods, open and exposed in other areas

TRAFFIC: Mild

TRAIL SURFACE: Paved, dirt

HIKING TIME: 4.5 hours

SEASON: All year, muddy in shoulder seasons

ACCESS: \$5 or Colorado State Park Pass, open 5 a.m.–10 p.m.; Crest Trail is closed Wednesdays and Saturdays October–February.

MAPS: USGS Brighton, Mile High Lakes

FACILITIES: Pay phone, restrooms, nature center, ranger station; picnic areas with tables and grills

SPECIAL COMMENTS: No pets. No swimming or wading; boating is permitted. Collecting living or dead plants, wood, or animals (wildlife and insects) is prohibited. Fishing and waterfowl hunting is permitted. Sturdy shoes are recommended. Irrigation companies use the trail; hikers are asked to yield right of way to their personnel and equipment.

Directions



From Denver, take I-76 northeast to the Bromley Lane exit. Take a left, going east on Picadilly Road, then another left, going south to the park entrance. Follow the paved road from the ranger station to the nature center and the trailhead.

GPS Trailhead Coordinates

UTM Zone (WGS84) 13S

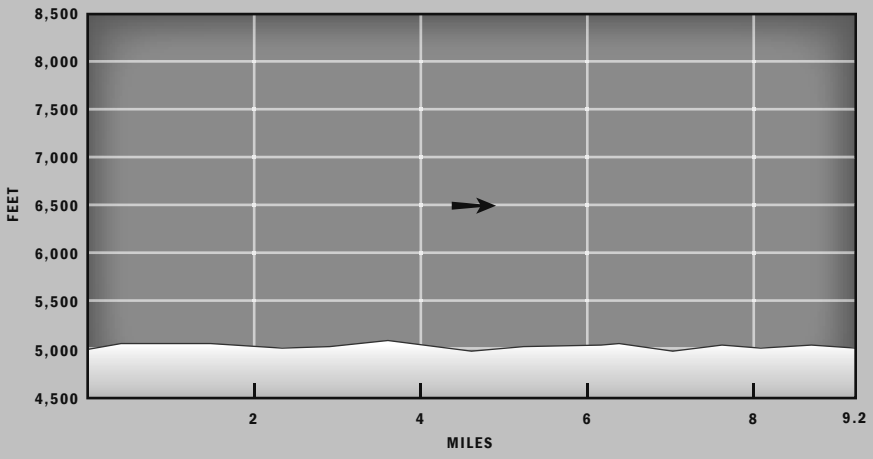
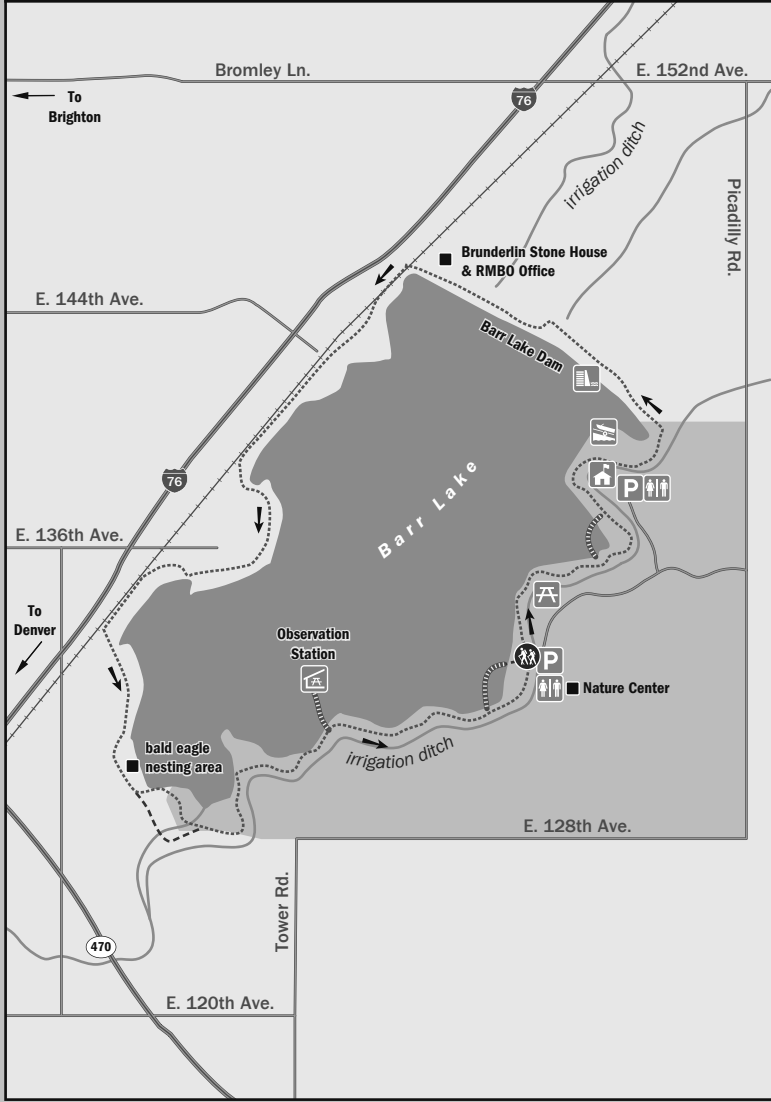
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Latitude N 39.935337°

Longitude W 104.750937°

15 Barr Lake State Park: Lake Perimeter Trail **N** 0 0.4 0.8
mile





Lake Perimeter Trail offers incredible views across Barr Lake.

parking area (for boat-ramp users) and a gate; cross the paved road and go through the gate on the other side. The dam comes into view across the lake. Continue around to the east. At the northeast corner of the lake is a big sign that says the lake is 8.8 miles around. Go left here and follow the dirt road that travels to the back of the dam.

At this point, the grass-covered dam is to the left and elevated about 10 feet above the trail. On the right is an irrigated field, but no other signs of civilization are visible here.

Pass mile marker 7 and continue to pass these mile markers going backward. Due to the unique views and ease of the trail, they seem to go by rather quickly. Cross an irrigation ditch where the water exits the reservoir. Numbered blinds for bird hunting line the trail.

Continue left up the dam on the Barr Lake Crest Trail. The hill is steep for 100 yards, but it deposits hikers directly onto the top of the dam. The trails run parallel at this point, one on the top and the other on the bottom to the right. From here you see views of the mountains, including, most prominently, Longs Peak.

The upper and lower trails merge at the northwest part of the dam. Pass the Bruderlin Stone House and the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory office. Veer left, continue along the lake, and travel alongside I-76 with its traffic noise. A gate and private property are to the left, and the trail veers to the right of that, with barbed wire on both sides. The western side of the lake is the wildlife refuge,

which does not have as much traffic as the other side. The trail, which is double-track dirt with low grasses on either side, runs about 0.25 miles from the lake. Go through an opening in the fence, cross the road, and enter the gate on the other side. Continue on an old doubletrack along train tracks to the right.

While the trail is flat, various thorns have collected and are quite dense here. Continue along the lake and take a left before the next gate. Bear left down a small hill toward the lake. Continue straight behind a dozen homes, some with horses in back. The trail takes a sharp right after the last house.

Quite a few marshes are along the trail, and to the right is a cattle pasture and a bald eagle nesting area. Warning signs advise all trail users to stay out.

Take a left at an intersection of the trail and the main road; do not go straight on the main road. The trail is now a well-maintained gravel walking path. This area of the reservoir is a little more active, with more bald eagles and more signs of human life. Cross the bridge over a large irrigation ditch and continue as the trail rejoins a service road. Go left; pass the gazebo and boardwalk on the lake used for wildlife viewing. Pass another observation area and head back to the parking lot.

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

The Gazebo Trail (or Pioneer Trail) is a shorter (3 miles) trail at Barr Lake. For more information: parks.state.co.us.