

14ers for families

a guide to colorado's famous,
family friendly mountains



aly gallagher

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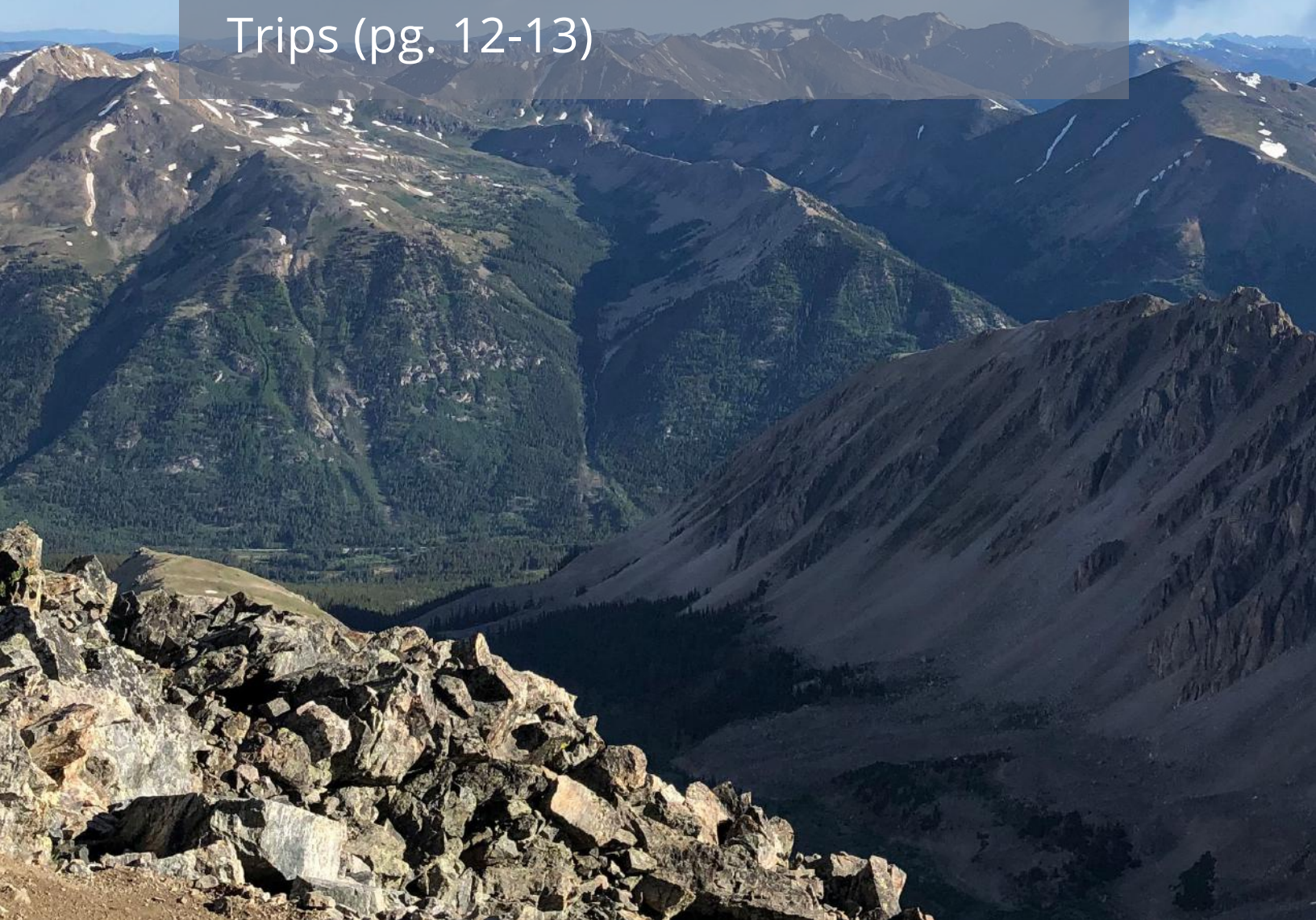
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What's a 14er?

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Colorado is home to fifty-eight 14,000' mountains, commonly referred to as 14ers. Nestled in the Rocky Mountains, 14ers are popular attractions for outdoor lovers. With breathtaking views and gorgeous terrain, 14ers offer a fun, challenging escape from urban life.

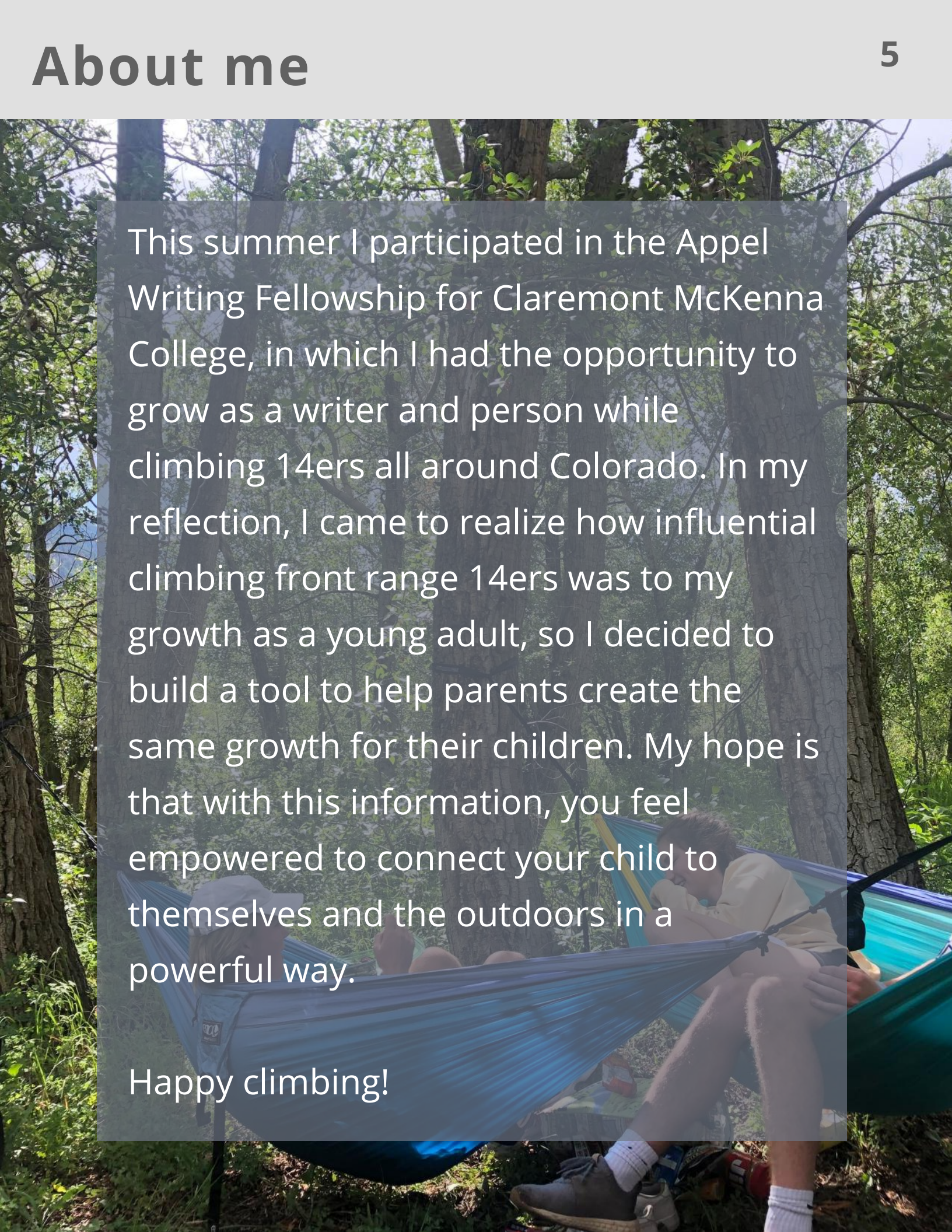


Why hike with your kids?

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This 14ers guide is intended for parents interested in hiking with their young children and teenagers. I began hiking as a child, summiting my first 14er at eight years old. I attribute much of my character development from lessons I learned hiking. Grit begins early. Hiking will challenge your children to overcome discomfort and facilitate valuable life lesson such as perseverance and drive. Additionally, hiking as a family deepens parent-child and sibling relationships.



A person is lying in a blue hammock, suspended between trees in a lush green forest. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and shorts. The background is filled with tall trees and dense foliage, creating a serene outdoor setting. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent dark grey rectangle in the center of the image.

This summer I participated in the Appel Writing Fellowship for Claremont McKenna College, in which I had the opportunity to grow as a writer and person while climbing 14ers all around Colorado. In my reflection, I came to realize how influential climbing front range 14ers was to my growth as a young adult, so I decided to build a tool to help parents create the same growth for their children. My hope is that with this information, you feel empowered to connect your child to themselves and the outdoors in a powerful way.

Happy climbing!

Technical Gear

The 10 Essentials

- Water (2 liters per person)
- Small pack
- Headlamp + extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Shovel and TP
- Map with trail information
- Sunscreen
- Lip balm with SPF
- Light hiking boots
- Trekking poles

Bring a large backpack(s) with all the extra water and gear. Be sure to have your children carry their own gloves, hat, small water bottle.

Don't forget water for you dog if you plan on taking it along!

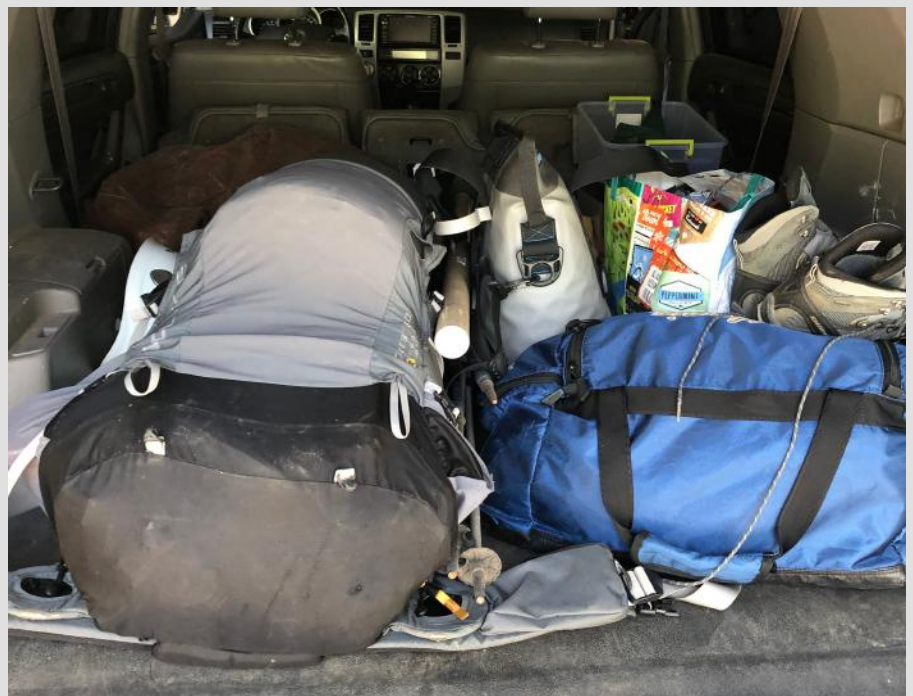
Clothes

Wear:

- T-shirt
- Long underwear/leggings
- Hiking socks

Bring:

- Warm hat
- Sunhat
- Small gloves
- Fleece jacket
- Rain jacket
- Shorts



My car ready for a weekend of climbing, including 14ers Mt. Plata and Mt. Massive

Snacks

When hiking gets tough, the right snack has the power to raise morale and motivate your child to the top. It's very important to eat, so let them choose what they want. As a child, I loved to suck on Jolly Ranchers as I was walking, especially when I was feeling tired. Here's a list of all my favorites:

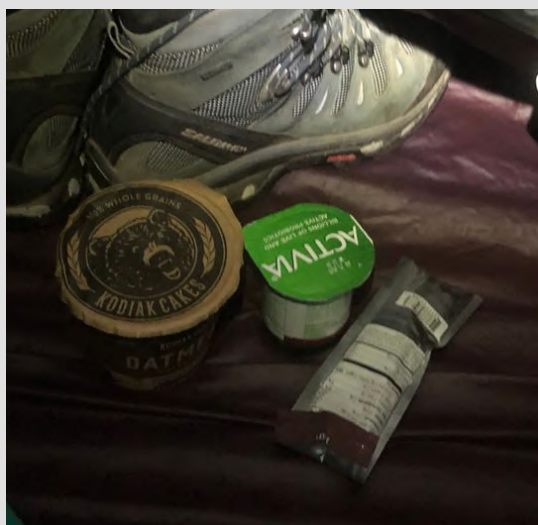
- apples
- peanut butter packets
- protein bar
- hard candy or gummies
- trail mix
- beef jerky



Breakfast

A perfect breakfast is essential to starting the day right. Make sure you get some good protein and carbohydrates. Also, bring your child's favorite baked goods. The mornings are early, cold, and uncomfortable - a treat will be a welcome surprise! My favorite was always a krispy kreme donut.

- oatmeal
- protein bar
- fruit
- pastry/favorite sweet



Lunch

There are two ways to do lunch - small or big. Your lunch should depend on the duration and level of physical demand of your hike. When I was young, I always really looked forward to a meal. I've grown to prefer small snacking now as opposed to a meal, but remember always looking forward to pesto pasta at the top! Here are some suggestions!

- summer sausage + babybel cheese
- pasta salad
- sandwich
- lunchables
- protein bar



Weather

Generally, always plan to be **off the mountain by mid-day**. Being above tree-line in a storm is extremely dangerous, and thunderstorms can roll in quickly. Bad weather - such as lightning, wind, fog, etc - can put your family in a **life threatening situation**. Afternoon storms are common in summer months. When planning your trip, take a look at the 10-day forecast and avoid days with a high likelihood of lightning. Ensure your families safety by **always checking the weather** the night before and getting below tree-line by 11am! Given the threat of thunderstorms, the best time to climb is late August - early September.

Pace

Pace will be **different for everyone**, depending on your families physical and mental shape. For many, the mental challenge will prove to be more difficult than the climb itself. To be successful set up your family with a slow pace with few stops. Keep in mind that it will take longer to traverse along rocky terrain. Coming down the mountain is commonly faster, although it can feel harder on your body. Make sure to familiarize yourself with the **specific mileage and elevation gain** of you climb to get a feel for how your family will approach it. Check out a possible trip at the end of the guide for an example!

- Before you attempt your families first 14er, train by taking long walks with backpacks (preferably with elevation gain). Make sure that you children are comfortable walking for 3-4 hours.
- Talk to your children about time ("We should be on the top by lunch time"). Do not focus on the top - more often then not you can't see it due to false summits.
- During the climb when kids want to stop, point out a rock outcropping in the distance where we will stop next. Do not stop for long. Parents hold the snacks/ water so that kids do not have to take off their backpacks. Be sure that everyone drinks plenty of water.
- For me, music was very helpful to forget about how uncomfortable it seemed at the time.
- To carry a lighter load, drop a water bottle around half-way up to pick up and drink on your way down. Make sure to not forget it!
- Lastly, let your children pick their absolute favorite dinner for a celebratory feast!

Your first 14er: Mt. Sherman ¹²

Ideal first trip for an adult with a young climber
(suitable for 10 to 12 years olds and up)

Where: Mt. Sherman on Southwest Ridge, one of the easiest 14ers in Colorado

When: Looking at a 10-day forecast, select a weekday in mid-August forecasted to be sunny and clear with minimal wind and zero change of precipitation/lighting. The Mt. Sherman climb begins above tree-line so there is no cover if lighting rolls in. Be prepared for a cold morning.

How:

1. Using 14ers.com or similar guide book, review the route. I always print out photos to bring with me on the climb. Getting lost, even for a small period of time, is demoralizing and potentially dangerous.
2. Stay in a Fairplay hotel the night before. This allows your child to sleep until 6:00am and get a reasonable start at the trailhead by 8:00am. With such a late start, it is imperative that there is little to no chance of lightning.
4. The trailhead gate at 12,000 ft can be reached by passenger car. See 14ers.com for details.
5. The hike will take anywhere from 3-6 hours, but with clear weather there is no rush - just focus on the climb.

If your family enjoys your first 14er, here are some other great ones around two hours from Denver.

Front Range:

- Grays (7.5 miles, 3,000' gain)
- Torreys (7.5 miles, 3,000' gain)
- Grays & Torreys Combo (8 miles, 3,600' gain)
- Mt. Evans (5.5 miles, 2,000' gain)
- Quandary (6.75 miles, 3,450' gain)
- Mt. Bierstadt (7.0 miles, 2,850' gain)

Mosquito Range:

- Mt. Sherman (5.25 miles, 2,100' gain)
- Mt. Lincoln (6 miles, 2,600' gain)
- Mt. Cameron (4.75 miles, 2,250' gain)
- Mt. Democrat (4 miles, 2,150' gain)
- Mt. Bross (3.25 miles, 2,250' gain)
- Lincoln, Cameron, Democrat, Bross Combo (7.25 miles, 3,700' gain)

Sawatch Range:

- Mt. Elbert (9.50 miles, 4,700' gain)
- Mt. Princeton (6.50 miles, 3,200' gain)
- Huron Peak (6.50 miles, 3,500' gain)

Be prepared, safety always comes first! Know your route and the weather. Bring plenty of water, as well as the appropriate gear. And don't forget to have fun! See you on the mountain.

Aly Gallagher

Safety Disclaimer

Mountaineering requires sound judgment and adequate physical conditioning. The information contained in this guide may not be accurate and care should be taken when following any of the route descriptions posted on this site. When hiking or climbing, always utilize multiple navigation methods (including paper maps) and be aware of your surroundings. The described hiking and backcountry ski routes are located in terrain that can change dramatically due to erosion, human intervention, weather and other factors. Even daily changes in weather can cause a route to become more dangerous.

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