

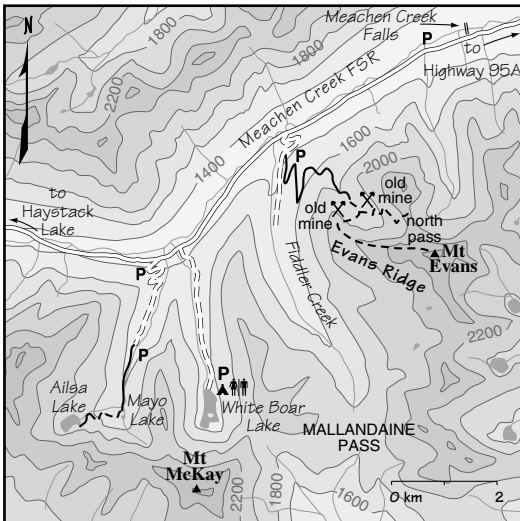
## 64 MOUNT EVANS TRAIL

The scenic Mount Evans fills me with awe for the majesty of the Purcell highcountry.

The air is cool in the dense forest near Fiddler Creek, where old growth larch trees provide shelter and shade under their finely needled branches. Cool creeks tumble down nearby and the breeze whispers in the tall trees. Protected from the wind and hot sun, hikers and wildlife use this well-built and graded forest trail.

Above the forest, the land opens into a rocky subalpine basin, below the northwestern head-wall of Mount Evans at 2728 m (8951 ft.). The hike to the top of Mount Evans is too far for a day hike. It is an enjoyable weekend trip to the basin camp spot and then up to the summit the following day.

*I feel an admiration for the hard physical work that the men expended who first chopped out this bush path over 80 years ago. The historic, well-constructed Evans trail and their old mining cabin in the basin are silent testimonies to their genuinely dedicated efforts. In the wilderness, they worked with hand tools and built lasting quality. The old trail ascends a steep hillside up through thick forest and is still wide, smooth and stable after all this time.*



**Rating** moderate

**Time** day hike to basin

**Distance** 6.7 km to basin, additional 6 km to summit

**Elevation gain** to basin 457 m (1500 ft.)

basin 1860 m (6100 ft.)

Mount Evans 2728 m (8950 ft.)

**Trail** old larch trees, routefind to summit, excellent trail in forest to subalpine basin below cliffs

**Map** 82F/9 St. Mary Lake

**Trail map** page 200

### Drive

**Road** last 1.1 km rough, two-wheel drive high clearance

**Road map** page 180

For directions to Meachen Creek Road see page 197.

- 0 km At the junction of St. Mary Lake Road and St. Mary River Road, turn left (south) on to the St. Mary River Road. Cross a wooden bridge.
- 0.6 km Turn right at the second dirt road (south) on to St. Mary/Hellroaring Creek FS Road.
- 1.6 km Turn right on to St. Mary/Meachen Creek FS Road.
- 14 km Before the 14-km sign, turn left (south) uphill for unsigned Mount Evans/Fiddler Creek Road. You may have to move some rocks out of the way.
- 15.1 km Drive for 1.1 km on Fiddler Creek Road to a trail sign or footpath, uphill on the left (east). Drive past the trailhead about 100 m to a wider spot for parking.



*In 1934, Charlie and Bill Evans at their three cabins by Meachen Creek. Photo by Marjean Selby.*

Brothers Bill and Charlie Evans, from Marysville, built the trail to the rocky subalpine upper basin below Mount Evans. This basin was known as Pollen Basin, named after Col. C. H. Pollen. The Evans trail was a mining access to one of their productive copper showings. The Evans brothers prospected in summer and trapped in winter for over 25 years, starting about 1915 and continuing until the 1940s. In the rugged Pollen Basin, the brothers built a small cabin. Marked on the old log Evans cabin walls, visitors signed their names and dates with charcoal and pen onto the wood. The dates start from the 1930s and continue to the present.

In 1934, Marjean and her sister Helen McClure were the first two women to climb Mount Evans. Young women at the time, Marjean (now Selby) and Helen rode horses 16 km from Marysville and up Meachen

Creek for another 11 km to the Evans brothers' three lower cabins. The three cabins were along Meachen Creek. They stayed at one of the lower cabins with the brothers for several days and helped pick wild raspberries for the brothers' popular jam. Marjean claimed to get more thorns than berries.

Three of them, Bill Evans, Marjean and Helen McClure, hiked the trail to the upper cabin and climbed to the Mount Evans summit. The climb is not technical, but the last section is very rugged and exposed up steep rocks.

"I was pretty darned scared," Marjean said, remembering that the narrow ledge of rock was only a few feet thick just before the summit. Women climbers at the time were uncommon and local newspapers ran photos and a story of their Mount Evans climb.

Meachen Creek used to be called White-Fish Creek. The name was changed to Meachen Creek after Locky Meachen, who lived at the west end of St. Mary Lake, along the horse trail leading up Meachen Creek. One Evans brother made fiddles, and named the access tributary to their Evans Mountain trail, Fiddler Creek. Mount Evans was also named after these well-liked brothers.

The hike to the Pollen Basin (also called the Mount Evans Basin) climbs from the trailhead along the Fiddler Creek Road and generally heads south and southeast. Follow the wide and straightforward trail as it gains elevation steadily through an old growth western larch, balsam fir and pine forest. It takes two to three hours of climbing to reach the basin. Once in the basin, hike east along the trail. In about 500 m a small creek is on your left, and the remains of the old Evans brothers' cabin sits in a clearing on the right. With the passage of time and the temporary nature of wood, this once inviting and habitable cabin is now ruined, as its old roof collapsed during the winter of 1995.

You can find a tranquil spot to set up a single tent in the bottom of a mossy area, just upstream from the cabin site, on the south side of the creek. Cross the creek from the cabin and scramble around a large boulder. Intersect the trail up that heads southeast through the basin on the rocks. Follow the talus trail for about half a kilometre and the trail dips down into the gully again by the creek. The trickling stream spreads into a very tiny pond and beside it is an inviting spot for a single tent.

Keep following the shreds of a trail past the pond for about 50 m (southeast) to old copper mineral workings (trenches in the bedrock). The trail carries on through the rocky basin.

The summit route gains another 869

m (2850 ft.) from the basin. To reach the summit of stately Mount Evans, hike along the trail past the mining site and stay on the south side (right when facing the headwall). Climb the indistinct trail up the boulder slope and beside the alpine larch trees. The trail angles back west, intersecting the ridge line just above the old cabin site.

From the ridge, routefind and bushwhack up through an old burn, rocky outcroppings and over talus rocks, heading east. The straight line distance is only 3 km along the ridge. Yet it takes several hours to reach the top. Rock scramble up the exposed, steep last couple of hundred metres.

Rather than hiking to the summit, another option is to explore the rocky basin. Walk upstream (southeast) past the miners' trenches. At the bottom of the basin follow a good talus trail as it continues east up the rocks. This historic trail traverses the northern side (left side when facing the mountain) to a second miner trench, at the base of the headwall.

The trail branches near the base of the dark grey cliffs. Follow the right fork as it leads into the thin veil of a waterfall and the miners' trench. On the left fork the path continues to zigzag up the steepening slope under a northern pass at 2255 m (7400 ft.). The trail doesn't continue all the way to the pass, but serious scrambling will get you there. Views from high up on this slope show the rounded summits above Meachen Creek.

The Evans Mountain trail offers benefits for every hiker, from the soothing forest hiking to rock scrambling in the alpine. It is an enjoyable day hike or overnight adventure.