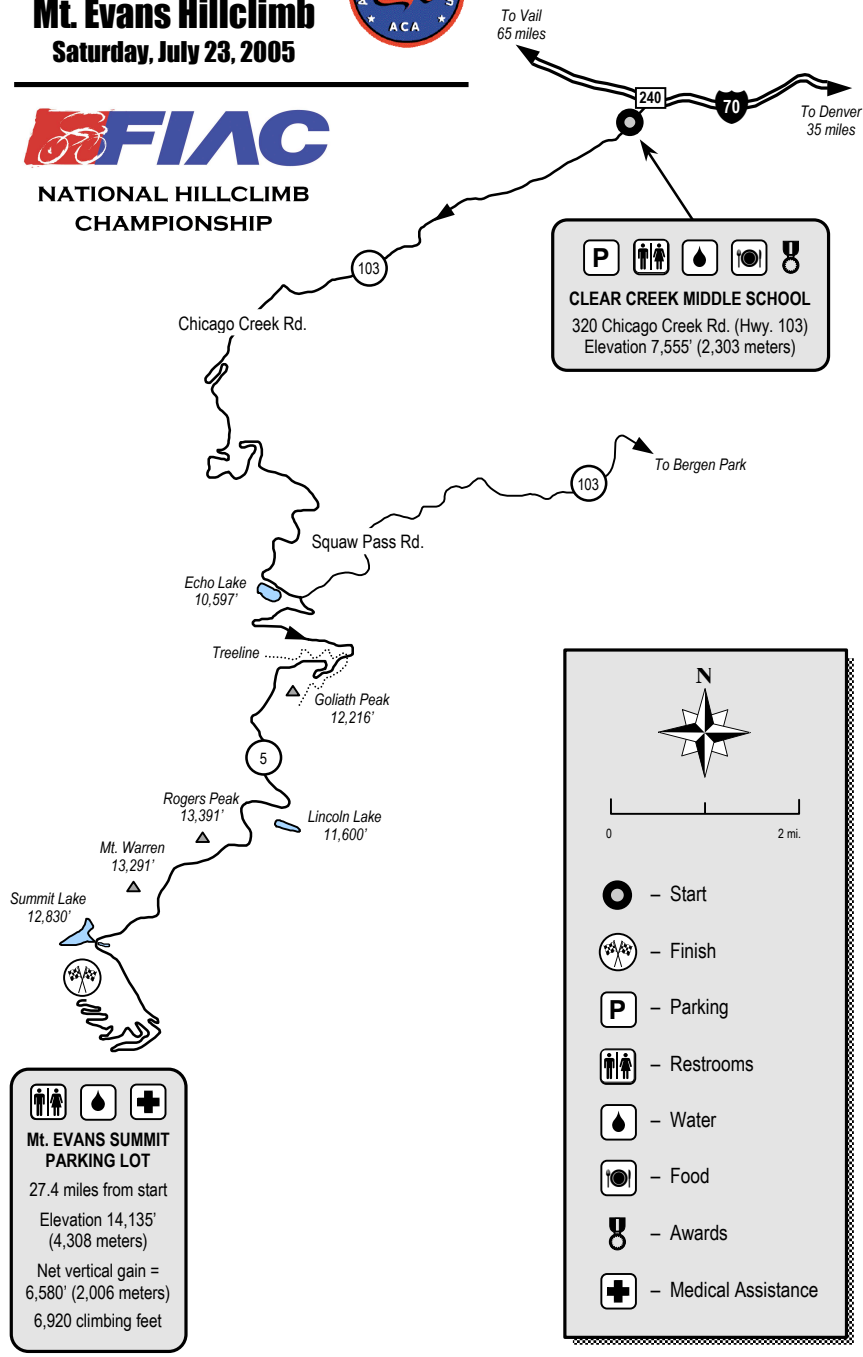


**40th Annual
Bob Cook Memorial
Mt. Evans Hillclimb
Saturday, July 23, 2005**



**FIAC
NATIONAL HILLCLIMB
CHAMPIONSHIP**



The Mount Evans Scenic & Historic Byway is the highest paved automobile road in North America. From historic Idaho Springs, 35 miles west of Denver, the 28-mile drive ends at the summit of Mt. Evans. Work on the road began in 1915, as part of the Peak-to-Peak Highway, a road system designed to connect Colorado's northern 'fourteeners.' Although a portion of the Byway (Highway 103) is open year 'round to Echo Lake, the road to the summit usually closes in mid-September and does not re-open until Memorial Day weekend, due to the 10 to 75-foot snow drifts on that accumulate during the winter.

On the way up, you will pass several mountain lakes, including Echo Lake, at 10,600 feet, Lincoln Lake, at 11,700 feet, and Summit Lake, at 12,830 feet. There are trailheads from the road leading to each lake, and more than 100 miles of hiking trails on Mt. Evans in all. One of the best places to hike is in the Mount Goliath Natural Area, between Echo and Lincoln Lakes. From the upper trailhead you can visit the Alpine Garden, which has a spectacular floral display, then descend into a grove of bristlecone pines, some of which are thousands of years old. Many of them are "flag trees," since their branches grow only on the side away from the prevailing wind.

There are three plant and animal zones along the Byway. The first, the montane zone, is the traditional forest environment at the beginning of the Byway, around 7,000 feet. Here, you'll see ponderosa pine and Douglas fir, along with deer, weasel, porcupine, fox, chipmunk, squirrel, black bear and beavers.

The subalpine zone begins at 8,000 feet. Vegetation varies here, but you still can see the bristlecone pines, dense thickets of skinny lodgepoles, aspens, and Englemann spruce. The lodgepole cones adapted to survive many fires by producing lots of seed, which makes for a dense forest. Although you may get a glimpse of elk, the subalpine zone is home to smaller animals like the yellow-bellied marmot, badger, ermines, and pikas.

At 12,000 feet, you'll cross the timberline and enter the alpine zone, one of the few areas below the Arctic Circle where alpine tundra is found. Intense solar radiation, high winds, and freezing temperatures limit vegetation to lichens, wildflowers, and other small plants specially adapted to the short growing season. There are still areas along the road trying to re-vegetate years after clear-cutting took place for the road construction, and the flora is extremely vulnerable. Please remember that this is a fragile ecosystem; stay on marked trails, and be careful not to disturb fragile growth.

Animal species present include the ptarmigan, white mountain goat, and sure-footed bighorn sheep (Colorado's state animal). You can tell a ram's age by the rings of growth laid in the curl the horns on the male bighorn sheep, but this is no petting zoo – these are wild animals that bite and ram with their horns, and there is a fine for anyone caught feeding the animals. Again, please keep a respectful distance.

From the 14,264-foot summit of Mt. Evans, you can view the entire Front Range and the Continental Divide, and downtown Denver. The Meyer-Womble Observatory, completed in 1972 and upgraded in 1996, is located here. It is the highest operating observatory in the western U.S., and was the highest in the world until 2000, while the U.S. Weather Station nearby is the second-highest manned station in the country. The University of Denver's high altitude laboratory is located at Echo Lake, but is open to the public on a reservation basis only.

The U.S. Forest Service Clear Creek Ranger's Station on Highway 103 in Idaho Springs has detailed interpretive information about on the area, including a video, audio tape and printed materials, while further information can be found at the Heritage Museum & Visitors Center at 2060 Miner St. in Idaho Springs. The Forest Service also maintains three picnic areas and a campground along the Byway.

Sudden changes in weather are common along the Byway. Daytime temperatures often plummet with the arrival of a cloud or the stirring of the wind. Expect at least a 15 degree difference between Idaho Springs and the summit of Mt. Evans. Dress warmly and always take a jacket or sweater when exploring the upper elevations. Snow is possible at any time, and in summer thunder showers are frequent in the afternoon.

For more information, see

- <http://www.clearcreekcounty.org/mtevens.html>
- <http://www.mountevans.com>
- <http://www.munyon.net/mtevens/intro.html>
- http://www.fourteeners.org/14er_main.htm
- <http://www.coloradobyways.org/Main.cfm>
- <http://www.wakeolda.com/Photos/mtevens99>
- http://www.14ers.com/photos/MtEvans/p_mtevens.html