

**ABOUT THE TRAIL**

→ **DISTANCE** 106 km (66 mi) approx.

→ **DURATION** 5 to 7 days

→ **LEVEL** Challenging

Montana’s Beartooth Range is one of the most dramatic, challenging, and solitary places to hike in the contiguous United States. Located just over 100 km (62 mi) northeast of Yellowstone National Park, the mountains resemble a fusion between the Swiss Alps and the Tibetan Plateau. As with the Alps, they contain towering granite peaks, glacier-sculpted valleys, and serene alpine lakes (not much in the way of chocolate, unfortunately). And just as with Tibet’s “Rooftop of the World,” the Beartooth Mountains are also known for their treeless, windswept, and bone-chillingly cold plateau landscape.

The Beartooth Mountains are one of two distinct ranges that form the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness (3,820 sq km [944,00 acres]) of Montana and Wyoming. The Absaroka Range is lower in elevation, more forested, and—unlike the granite-laden Beartooths—it consists primarily of volcanic and metamorphic rocks. Together, they constitute one of the most

pristine and unheralded regions of America’s West. However, if you had to choose just one of the two areas in which to spend a hiking holiday, it’s hard to go past the higher and more spectacular Beartooths.

The trekking possibilities here are practically limitless. For newbies and intermediate ramblers, the best choice is the appropriately named Beaten Path. Measuring 42 km (26 mi) in length, it runs in a southwesterly direction across the range from East Rosebud Trailhead to just outside of Cooke City (population: 140). As you might expect, the Beaten Path is a well-maintained and easy-to-follow trail that sees a relatively high amount of foot traffic. Most importantly, it includes oodles of beautiful mountain scenery, and though it may not be as difficult as other hiking options in the Beartooths, it’s by no means a poor man’s option.

For those who aspire to go beyond the Beaten Path—both literally and metaphorically—an excellent choice is the Beartooth High Route (BHR). The BHR is a mostly off-trail 106 km (66 mi) loop hike pioneered by American long-distance hikers Steven Shattuck and Andrew Bentz in 2016. From a logistical standpoint, it has the advantage of starting and finishing at the same place, meaning that you don’t have to worry about long shuttles or unpredictable hitchhikes back to your vehicle. (Note: There are no public transport options for the Beartooth Range.)



**“Be sure to go for at least one swim during your time in the Beartooth Range. There are very few things in life as invigorating as taking a dip in a remote mountain lake surrounded by nothing but peaks and blues skies.”**

← Striding out on the Beartooth High Route.  
↑ The view from Granite Peak (3,904 m [12,807 ft]), looking south towards Sky Top Lakes.  
← Crystal-clear lakes and soaring peaks.