

Pancake Rocks - Divide

Direction to trailhead: Take US 50 west for 10 miles to CO 9 (Figure 1). Turn right (north) onto Colorado (CO) 9 then continue for 8.6 miles to County Road (CR) 11 (High Park Road). Drive 18.5 miles to CR 1 then turn right onto CR 1 and continue to Cripple Creek. From Cripple Creek take CO 67 north for about 8.8 miles to the old sealed up tunnel (Figure 2). The trail head and parking areas are just to the south of the boarded up tunnel and on the east side of the highway (Figure 1). About 60.2 miles one way from Canon City.

Length of hike: 6 miles (round trip)

Beginning elevation: 9683 feet

Elevation gain: 1389 feet

Difficulty: Difficult

Description: The trail head is just to the south of the boarded up tunnel and on the east side of the highway (Figure 2). From the trailhead the trail goes southeast up a 345 foot ramp that parallels the highway. At the end of the ramp the trail makes a sharp curve to the north and continues for 500 feet where it turns east, following the marshy shoreline of Oil Creek. After 3/4th of a mile from the trail head, the trail intersects another trail (WP1). This other trail goes north to the Horse Thief Playground. The Pancake Rock/Horse Thief Falls trail continues east and after another 1/4th mile intersects the Pancake Rocks trail (WP2). Turn right (south) and follow the Pancake Rocks trail for two miles to the Pancake Rocks overlook. From WP2 the trail climbs steadily and steeply for about 1.3 miles with several sharp turns, and gaining about 800 feet in altitude (Figure 1). This lower section of the trail goes through a spruce forest with wild flowers adding color in scattered small meadows where sunlight reaches the forest floor. As the trail gains in elevation, bristle cone pines begin to appear among the spruce. As you continue to gain in elevation they become more common and larger in size. After you reach the highest elevation the trail (11041 feet), the trail takes some short descents and ascents, going through mountain meadows surrounded by Colorado blue and bristle cone pines. The trail loses about 134 feet in elevation as it descends to the Pan Cake Rocks at the end of the trail. The pancake rock formations are well worth the hike (Figures 3 and 4) as are the fabulous views to the south, southeast and southwest (Figure 5).

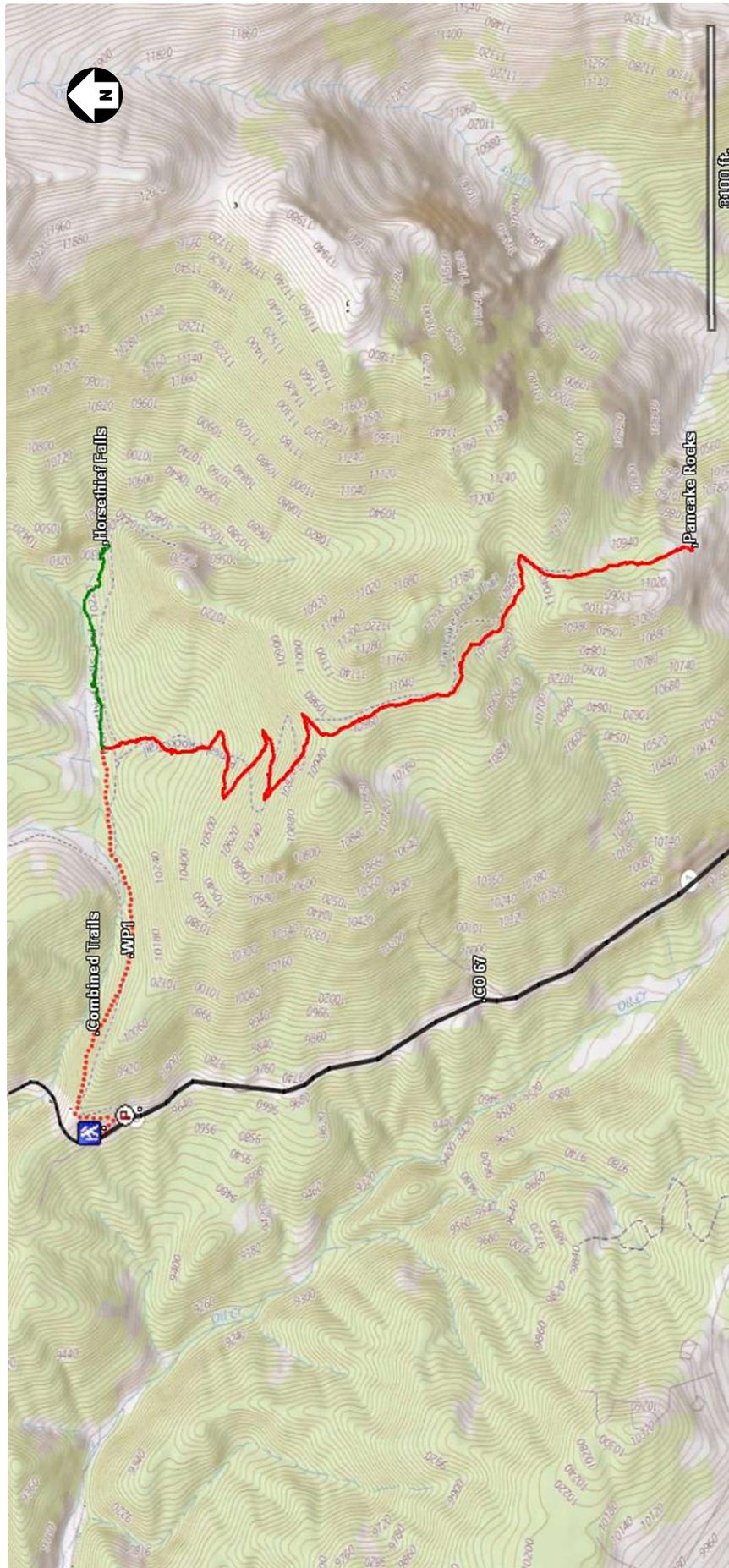


Figure 1. Map of Pancake Rocks and Horse Thief Falls Trails



Figure 3. Pancake Rock Formation



Figure 4. Pancake Rock Formation



Figure 5. View from Pancake Rocks