

## COME TO THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN RENDEZVOUS IN JULY

By Sherry Sayers and Terry Lunghofer

Come one, come all to the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous in July, where we have planned six signature walking events for your pleasure to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AVA.

We will have a meet-up point where you can register for all six events and then walk them at your leisure. Keep in mind that the end of July gets hot here, so we are recommending you try and start your walks early in the mornings. Here is a summary of the walks; check out the listed websites on each walk for more information:

1) The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge is in the NE Denver Metropolitan Area. With 20 miles of trails covering prairie grasslands, riparian areas, and small lakes, the opportunities for observing wildlife, restored grasslands, and the Colorado Front Range are exceptional. A choice of two 5K trails and a 10K trail are offered. The terrain is relatively flat and mostly treeless. The refuge is open from sunrise to 8:00 PM, and there is no fee for this federal reserve. In addition to the hiking trails, there is a driving trail to follow after completing your walk to see the resident bison herd and other wildlife. Check out <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/rocky-mountain-arsenal>.

2) The Black Forest Regional Park is a large natural area covered with Ponderosa Pine open forest with numerous trails in gentle terrain. See how Mother Nature on the high plains has spent 14 years recovering from a forest fire. Enjoy the powerful images of the Rampart Range and Pikes Peak to the west. Enjoy the quiet of this rural park. The Black Forest area is northeast of Colorado Springs. Check out <https://parks.elpasoco.com/parks-and-recreation/black-forest-regional-park/>.

3) The Paint Mines Interpretative Park in Calhan is about 37 miles east of Colorado Springs and is a geological marvel. The park has four miles of trails and covers 750 acres, containing grassland and geologic formations of hoodoos, colored clay and sandstone-capped spires. Unfortunately, I spotted only one tree in the entire park, so this is definitely a walk that you need to do in the early morning and carry lots of water. There is no fee. Check out <https://parks.elpasoco.com/parks-and-recreation/paint-mines-interpretive-park/>.

4) Stratton Open Space spans 318 acres and has 15 miles of trails right in the heart of Colorado Springs. It has great views of the city, and travels through pine forests and meadows. Mountain bikers are allowed, but for the most part, they are pretty respectful. There are a few uphill and some rocky, tree-rooted trails, but as I mentioned, the views are worth it. Take your time and bring plenty of water. Check out <https://coloradosprings.gov/stratton>.

5) The Garden of the Gods is a National Natural Landmark with more trails (23 miles) than you can walk and more views than you can photograph. Large natural sandstone monoliths, as well

as numerous smaller formations, are reached on the trails throughout the park. Scenery within the area, as well as outward to the mountains, is unparalleled. Do the walk and make the time to explore the rest afterwards. One-track trails, improved trails, and some paved trails are part of the experience. Check out <https://gardenofgods.com/>.

6) Last but not least, is our mining adventure walk in Victor, known as the City of Mines. Victor is approximately 47 miles from Colorado Springs, and sits at around 10,000 feet, so we recommend you do this one last to get acclimatized to the altitude. The 10K goes to the Vindicator Valley Trail where you will wind around the historic Independence mining camp where Winfield Scott Stratton discovered gold around 1891. Yes, this is the same Mr. Stratton that Stratton Open Space is named for. Victor is also home to Rita, the Rock Planter Troll, so you will have the opportunity to do a separate walk to visit her. Again, make sure you carry plenty of water and take your time in order to breathe. Check out <https://victorcolorado.com/>.

We only have five clubs in the Rocky Mountain Region, but they are all very dedicated and work hard to maintain some amazing year-round and seasonal events for you to enjoy and we will highlight some of their best walks. Please plan to spend some extra time in our region to take part in these unique walks that our clubs have available for you to enjoy.

See you in July and stay tuned for more information on lodging and the location of the registration site!