

My Favorite

Colorado Paddling

Destinations

By Mike Le Blanc



Everyone has their favorite local paddling spots and destinations and here are some of mine for you to try.

Living in Longmont, my local paddling spot is Union Reservoir, east of town, which is a city run park and allows only wakeless speed boating, sailboats and paddlecraft. It is where I go to get my workout and usually there are no crowds at all.

Travelling north of Longmont you will find two reservoirs west of Berthoud that are State Parks. The first is Lonetree Reservoir, which is near the foothills and has a heron rookery on the east side to paddle over and see.

North is Bodecker Reservoir which is smaller but is also a nice paddle and usually not crowded. Continuing on to Loveland, you can paddle Boyd Lake State Park. I find that if you paddle here, it is best to start early in the morning and avoid the water and jet skiers.

Our club paddles at Boulder Reservoir, which is also close to the metropolitan area and is near to most of us.

Other front range lakes and reservoirs I have been on are Horsetooth Reservoir, Carter Lake, Barr Lake State Park, Chatfield Reservoir and Cherry Creek Reservoir. Most of these are usually quite busy with motorized watercraft.

I really enjoy paddling some mountain lakes and reservoirs. The ones that I usually go up and paddle a few times each summer are Grand Lake and Shadow Mountain Reservoir. They are 81 miles from my house and we drive over Trail Ridge Road and enjoy the scenic drive. Shadow Mountain Reservoir has some scenic areas at the south end where the osprey nest and some picnic areas on the islands. Grand Lake joins Shadow Mountain through a canal, and you can paddle through it and see the homes and cabins around the lake. We put in at Pine Beach or Green Ridge Picnic Area on Shadow Mountain Reservoir. Both have good parking and access.

I think one of the most scenic lakes to paddle is Turquoise Lake, just below Leadville. You're paddling in a very beautiful area with Mt. Massive and Mt. Elbert off in the distance and you can look up and see Leadville too.

Campgrounds skirt the lake, with our favorite being May

Queen at the west end of the lake. Boat traffic is almost nil on the lake, and most are fishermen, but campgrounds are usually full, so make reservations. The Colorado Trail is accessible from the area and other trails too.

Another reservoir that is beautiful is Blue Mesa Reservoir, west of Gunnison. The west end of the reservoir is the most scenic with 3 canyons, Lake Fork, Soap Creek and West Elk. You can paddle in and out of them and see the beautiful canyon walls and rock formations. Lake Fork is the longest (approximately 7 miles) and is a canyon with sheer rock walls and a narrowing passage as you come to the far end.

The only thing I don't care for is the long drive to get there, 250 miles from Longmont. Camping is available along the main lake or at the end of Soap Creek Arm (Ponderosa Campground). One warning is that the wind can come up quickly in the afternoon, so be prepared to head for shore.

The reservoir has 96 miles of shoreline and is 20 miles long and is basically the start of the scenic Black Canyon of the Gunnison River.

A few other mountain reservoirs I have been on are Willow Creek Reservoir, Granby, Dillon and Reudi Reservoirs.

These are some of my favorite paddling spots that I really enjoy paddling, and can be yours too. Just give them a try.

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Colorado Paddling Destinations

Barr Lake	Granby Reservoir
Blue Mesa Reservoir	Grand Lake
Bodecker Reservoir	Horsetooth Reservoir
Boulder Reservoir	Lonetree Reservoir
Boyd Lake	Reudi Reservoir
Carter Lake	Shadow Mountain Reservoir
Chatfield Reservoir	Turquoise Lake
Cherry Creek Reservoir	Union Reservoir
Dillon Reservoir	Willow Creek Reservoir