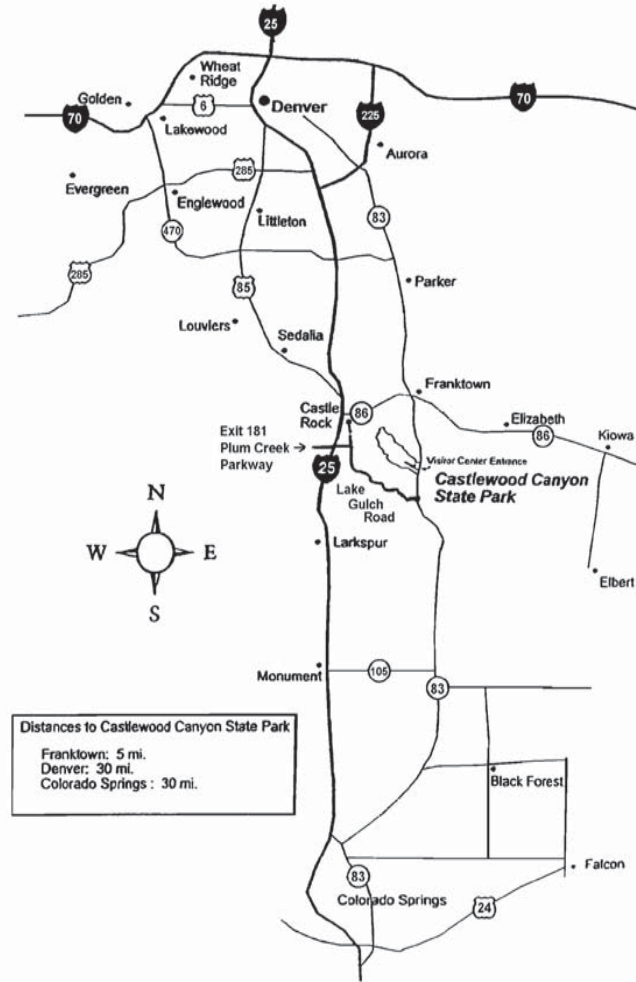


Park Highlights

- Four ecosystems within walking distance of one another—Grasslands, Montane Shrublands, Montane Forest and Riparian (living near water).
- A wide variety of birds, flowers, grasses, shrubs and trees. Watch for mountain bluebirds arriving in March and black turkey vultures soaring over the canyons from April through September. Sniff the thick, scaly, yellow-brown bark of the ponderosa pine to reveal the scent of butterscotch.
- 12 miles of trails, each with their own “personality”, including the calm, cool Inner Canyon Trail and the exciting warm Rim Rock Trail.
- Ruins of an 1890 dam that burst in 1933, sending a wall of water that floods downtown Denver.
- Castle Rock Conglomerate—the signature rock of the canyon walls. Look for the rocks imbedded in the conglomerate, like chocolate chips in cookie dough. Why are some of those rocks smooth and round while others are rough and angular?
- An 1894 homestead with walls still standing from the family’s concrete home built in the 1920s. What clues about their life can you discover as you walk around the site? Did they have livestock?
- A Visitor Center with a video presentation about the park and a gift shop with nature-themed books, apparel, postcards and other items for adults and children.

To Get There



Castlewood Canyon State Park

2989 S. State Highway 83

Franktown, CO 80116

303-688-5242

Email: castlewood.canyon@state.co.us

www.parks.state.co.us

CSP-CAST-200-4/07

Castlewood Canyon State Park

A Brief History

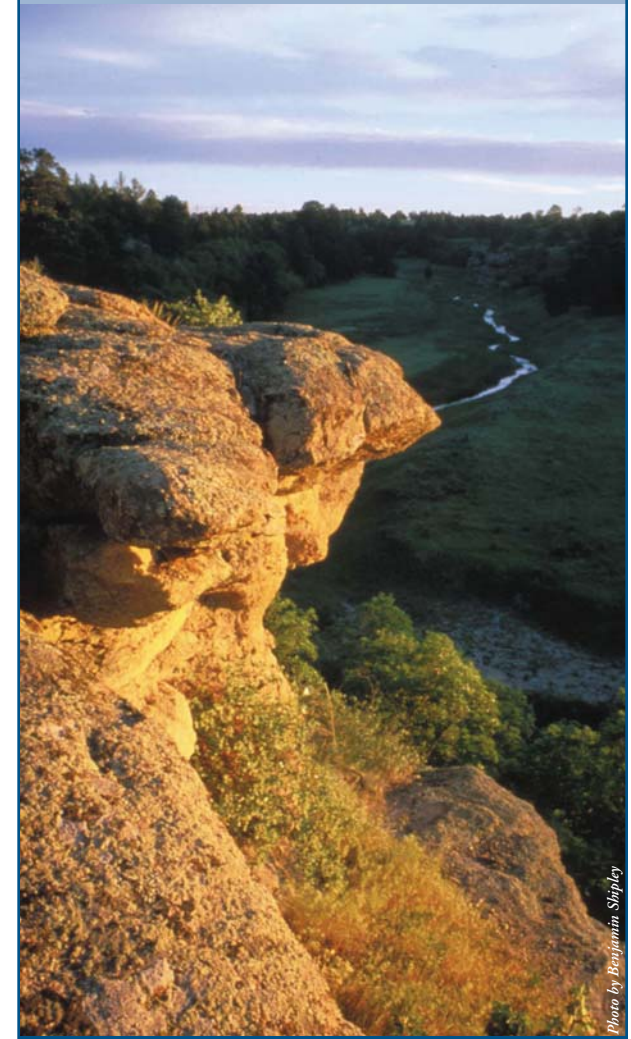


Photo by Benjamin Shipley





Our story begins with the land...

The story of Castlewood Canyon State Park begins more than 60 million years ago, when the area was a tropical rainforest. The rising of the Rockies, the down cutting of the ancient rivers, the massive eruption of a prehistoric volcano, and the rushing torrents of floods carved the landscape that is the park today. How do we know these events occurred? No human being saw them.

We know they occurred because we can read them in the rocks. Look for patterns. Can you imagine a flowing river creating that pattern? Look at that piece of rock—the one with the sharp, clear edges. Can you imagine the superheated volcanic ash that turned into that rock?

The canyon itself is relatively young, maybe only about 100,000 years old. But still no human being saw it forming.



The First People

Human history in the park begins relatively recently in geologic time—only about 5,000 years ago. Beginning about 2,000 years ago, groups of hunter-gatherers lived in shelter caves in the area. They were not a tribe or nation. They were small family groups consisting of perhaps 15 to 30 individuals. Evidence of winter camps of Plains Indians such as the Arapaho, Ute, Pawnee and Cheyenne have been found in the canyons of the park. These sites date back to the 1700s and early 1800s.

Logging and gold brought the first white settlers to the Castlewood Canyon area in the 1860s. They called it Wildcat Canyon. Homesteading began in the 1880s, as ranchers and farmers, including the family of Patrick and Margaret Lucas, were lured to the area by the promise of readily accessible irrigation water from the Castlewood Canyon Dam, completed in 1890.



Scraper



Point

A \$10 land purchase...

In 1961, Lawrence P. Brown deeded 87 acres of the Lucas Homestead land, located north of the Castlewood Dam ruins, to the state park system, receiving a payment of \$10. The area officially became Castlewood Canyon State Park in 1964.

The park bought 792 acres at the end of the 1970s, growing to almost 900 acres of unique riparian, canyon, forest and grassland. This area borders County Road 51 on the west side of the park. Planning and construction of much of the park's infrastructure began in the late 1980s. Trails were built, often with significant support from Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado. The Visitor Center and east entrance of the park (from Highway 83) opened to the public in August of 1993.

The park has continued to expand into the 21st Century. The most recent land acquisition completes the circle of the park's story to date. The original Lucas Homestead site totaled 160 acres. The first land donation for the park in 1961 was just over half of these acres. In 2002, the remaining 73 acres were purchased and the park now owns the total site—and an important piece of its human history. The park currently preserves 2,303 acres of this unique landscape.

