

Boulder Trailhead Parking and Fees

Four different authorities charge for parking at Boulder trailheads, and one permit does not cover all of them. Here is the whole picture on one page.

Every trailhead, side by side

Where	Fee	Who pays	Reservation	The catch
Chautauqua	Free weekdays; \$2.50/hr on summer weekends	Everyone, regardless of plate	No	Its own paid system, separate from the OSMP permit. A permit does not cover it.
Flagstaff Road (six pay stations)	\$5/day or \$25/year	Vehicles NOT registered in Boulder County	No	Stations operate 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. A Boulder County plate parks free.
NCAR Mesa Lab	Free	Everyone	No	Free parking and free admission. No public transit up the mesa.
Centennial Trailhead (Mount Sanitas)	Not a listed OSMP fee location	Everyone	No	31 spaces plus 2 ADA. Small, and it fills.
Eldorado Canyon State Park	\$10 daily vehicle pass	Everyone	Yes, timed entry in season	State park, not city. There is NO public parking in the town of Eldorado Springs.
Betasso Preserve	Free	Everyone	No	Boulder County land, so OSMP's Voice and Sight dog tag does NOT apply here.
Boulder Reservoir	Seasonal entry fee	Everyone	No	Fees stop being charged in November. Dogs banned May 15 to Labor Day.
Downtown / Boulder Creek Path	Street and garage rates	Everyone	No	The creek path is the one major trail you can reach without a trailhead fee.

The three ways to pay nothing

- Go on a weekday. Chautauqua’s hourly charge applies on summer weekends only.
- Take the free summer shuttle, running May 23 through September 7, 2026.
- Start somewhere off the fee list. NCAR, Betasso and the Boulder Creek Path are free to park and free to enter.

The Chautauqua space-count problem

Worth knowing if you are planning around capacity: the City of Boulder publishes two different numbers for how many spaces the Chautauqua lot has. Its trailhead page says 48. Its own CC0 open-data GIS layer says 58. Neither is dated. We report both rather than guessing which is current, because for the most fought-over parking lot in the city, the fact that the record contradicts itself is the story.