



Source: Sonja Wilkinson via Unsplash

## VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY

# Rocky Mountain National Park

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Timed entry to manage high visitor influx
- Day-use management Environmental Assessment
- Collaborative decision making and public input

## FACTS

**4.5 million**  
visitors per year

**44% increase**  
in visitation from 2012-2019

## MORE INFORMATION

[RMNP Day Use Visitor Access Strategy](#)

## SUMMARY

Rocky Mountain National Park, celebrated for its stunning landscapes and historical significance, has experienced a rapid influx of visitors in recent years. Highly concentrated visitor use in key destinations has resulted in the creation of visitor trails, widening of existing paths, and adverse effects on soil, vegetation, and water quality. The influx of visitors leads to natural and cultural resource damage. Sensitive environments, such as alpine tundra, are impacted through soil compaction, erosion, and potential harm to nonrenewable resources which may also include culturally significant archaeological sites. Not always visible to the public, these sites risk permanent loss due to visitor-created trails.

Another factor with increased visitors has been roadway congestion and illegal roadside parking. The congestion and illegal parking exacerbate resource damage, affecting soil, vegetation, and historic resources. It also contributes to air quality concerns, with exhaust deposition of heavy metals and environmental contaminants.

## MANAGEMENT OUTCOMES

In response to environmental and safety concerns, the park conducted a trial of day-use management strategies from 2016 to 2023. The proposed alternatives, detailed in the Draft Environmental Assessment, suggested two distinct timed-entry systems for the Bear Lake Road Corridor and the rest of the park. The park also asked for public input until December 14, 2023. This collaborative approach for feedback reflects a commitment to balancing conservation with creating quality visitor experiences. Contributors included the National Park Service, members of Associated Tribal Nations, private landowners, the local community, and visitors.