

Cirque
Planning Page,
CNMTC

Cirque of the Towers

ON-LINE QUOTES

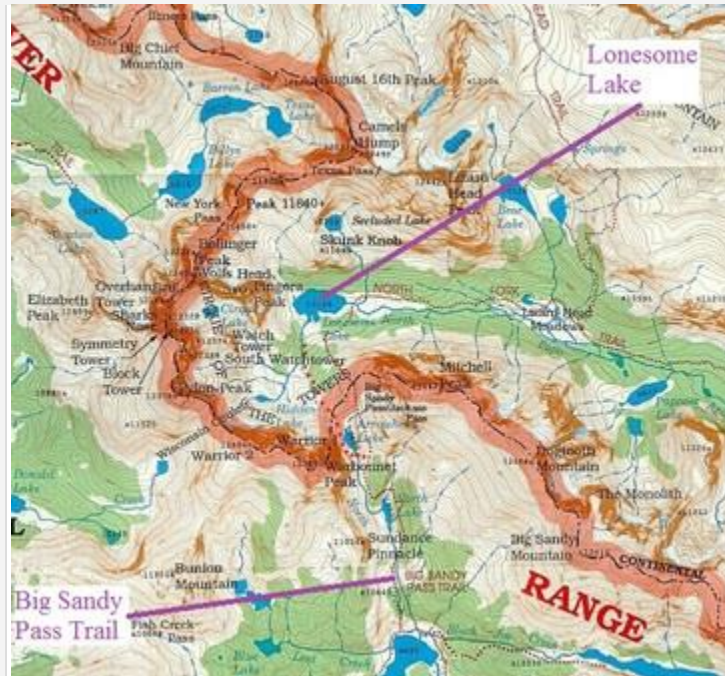
This is an alpine climber's Disney Land. With routes from class 2 walk-ups to 5.11b technical routes, there is something for everyone.

Source: [SummitPost.org's Page for Cirque of the Towers](#)

A superb alpine climbing area with some of the most stunning scenery in the Winds. Home of the classic Northeast Face on Pingora and East Ridge of Wolf's Head.

Source: [MP.com's Page for Cirque of the Towers](#)





PLANNING & INFORMATION

Land Manager Details

The approach to the Cirque starts in the Bridger National Forest and soon crosses into the Bridger Wilderness. At Jackass Pass, it crosses into the Popo Agie Wilderness of Shoshone National Forest.

Bridger Wilderness Office: Pinedale, WY; 307-367-4326

Popo Agie Wilderness Office: Lander, WY; 307-332-5460

Number for SAR/climb emergencies: ?

Bears

Excerpts from Earthwalk Press "South Wind River Range; Hiking Map and Guide":

Black bears have lost their fear of humans and shown unnatural aggression in these areas: Big Sandy, ..., Cirque of the Towers, ..., Lonesome, Arrowhead and North Lakes. Store food properly and be very careful in these areas.

Separate cooking and sleeping areas by at least 100 yards and maintain a clean camp free of food scraps and odors. Don't sleep in the clothes you cooked in. Never leave food or garbage in your tent or unattended Store garbage in sealed

double plastic bags and pack it out.

Excerpts from Bridger-Teto & Shoshone National Forest "Food Storage and Sanitation Order" ...

- Bear-resistant container certified through the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Courtesy Inspection Program (may be certified by the local district ranger or their designated representative(s) if it meets the IGBC criteria);
- or, suspend food/garbage at least 10 feet clear of the ground at all points and four feet horizontally from any supporting tree or pole, or
- or see [Bear Food Storage Order](#)

Information on How to Get There

[SummitPost.org's Page for Cirque of the Towers](#) lightly discusses various ways of getting to Cirque of the Towers. Then ...

Tentatively, I am assuming we'd start at the Big Sandy opening/trailhead. In the past, there has been a modest night fee to camp at the Big Sandy Campground at the trailhead. Then 5.2 trail miles to Big Sandy Lake. From there it is roughly another 3 miles: up to Jackass Pass; to North Lake; to the north of Arrowhead Lake; perhaps to Lonesome Lake; and then probably to the west side of the Cirque where Pingora, Wolf's Head, and the majority of the climbing is.

total miles: ~8+

elevation gain: ~1500 feet

elevation loss: ~450 feet

About camp sites, from SummitPost.org: *In the Cirque, most backpackers and fishermen camp closer to Lonesome Lake on the southern shores, but with the bad water in the lake and the distance to the climbs, this is pointless for climbers. Better water and campsites for climbers are found in the rocky meadows of the western part of the Cirque directly south or southeast of Pingora. The stream from Hidden Lake directly below Warrior Peaks is a better source of water. Treat or filter all water in the Cirque. There are a lot of campsites around Big Sandy Lake, but they are extremely overused, and are primarily used by backpackers and fishermen. Bears are a problem both at Big Sandy Lake and in the Cirque. Bear resistant canisters and tactics are recommended.*

Random comment from [an MP.com forum](#): *don't go over jackass... It is a waste. Go on the climbers trail from near Arrowhead lake, and up towards Warbonnet. It is listed in the newer Cirque/Deeplake book.*

Pack Animals

Links to pack-animal services:

[Allen's Diamond 4 Ranch](#); "Reservations by early spring highly recommended." They can do either a Spot Pack Trip where you ride or a Gear Drop where you hike with a day pack. They pack in as far as Lonesome Lake. For gear, 140 lbs max per horse. 2 days worth of fees for a roundtrip in and out. So 4 days if using their services to get in **and** out. Or just 2 days for one-way services.

\$200 per day for wrangler. \$200 per day per pack/saddle horse. One wrangler is sent for every 4 saddle/pack horses. Add on tax (5%?) and gratuities (10-15%).

One possible scenario for just a Gear Drop one-way: some could hike in over Jackass Pass with day packs; meet pack horses near Lonesome Lake; alternatively, hire a horse to ride to Lonesome Lake; then carry/ferry gear about 2 miles (unconfirmed distance) to camp sites convenient for climbing. For the exit, some carry out all gear and trash back over Jackass Pass; others might hire wrangler, pack horse, and (if riding out) saddle horse.

From the "Trip Planning Information" linked on the above page for Allen's D4 Ranch: For Spot Pack Trips, be at the ranch by 7:30 AM with gear packed and ready to go on a pack horse. Weekends are busy so if you want more flexibility look into booking midweek. Several smaller bags are best for packing and balancing. Nylon zipper bags work well for most of your groceries. One recommended duffel is Campmor's 12" X 24" 'Outdoor Products Basic Duffels. Large army duffels and long tent poles do not fit. 12" X 24" is a max size for pack horses although frame backpacks are okay if you need them, one on either side of the horse. "Playmate" size coolers are okay; no large ice chests.

Wranglers will turn around and bring the empty horses out in the same day, making a long day for the horses and wranglers, often getting home after dark. Be efficient! A 15% gratuity, split among

your wranglers, is customary.

[Lander Llama Company](#); Based on their services-offered page, they do not explicitly pack and drop off gear; the llamas can be rented by themselves (involves some training) or guide(s) and llamas can be rented for a trip; wouldn't hurt for someone to call and confirm this.

Some online threads about pack services:

[Porter help in the Wind Rivers summer of 2014](#)

[Wind River pack outfitter recommendations?](#) (2009)

[Wind River horse pack ride share](#) (2008)

[Horse Pack outfitters for Wind Rivers??](#) (2006)

Links to Possible Routes of Interest

Here are some recently (7/2014) made PDFs with beta: [Selected SummitPost Pages \(no guarantees!\)](#).

Just a collecting place of routes (not a recommendation); most quotes are from Kelsey's 2013 guide; links are to SummitPost.org and MountainProject.com - there usually links below to one or the other but I haven't tried to post all available links (i.e., search if you want more online info) ...

Sundance Pinnacle

- South Ridge; I, 4th class; visible on approach via Jackass Pass; "several exquisite pitches on low-angle slabs are involved; you can lengthen the climb by ascending 5th-class corners near the east face's left edge;"
- Northwest Ridge; I, 5.0/5.2; "an enjoyable three pitch route"

Dog Tooth Peak

- West Slope; I, 2nd class; start from Big Sandy Lake (on approach/exit?); "one of the Wind Rivers most pleasant walkups"

Bollinger Peak

- [North East Ridge](#); I, 3rd class; "scrambling over large, frost-shattered slabs is rather pleasant"

Lizard Head Peak

- Southeast Ridge; II, 5.5; "pleasant but rarely climbed"; mostly easy but passes a prominent tower - traverse east face
- [Southwest Gullies](#); Class 4 with some low Class 5

Camel's Hump

- Southwest Slope; I, 3rd class; "much to recommend it as the pleasantest nontechnical route in the Cirque."
- West Ridge; I, 5.5; "the route is worth mentioning because it is fun"

Mitchell Peak

- [South Slopes](#); off-trail walk-up;
- Northeast Slope; I, 3rd class; "profusion of flowers that make it a magical place and an attractive nontechnical route"
- [North Face Left](#); III, 5.7; "while not a classic climb, the route offers a good crux pitch, variety, and an opportunity that isn't overly challenging to spend a day on a large face."
- [North Face Center-Ecclesiastes](#); IV, 5.9; "classic"

Pylon Peak

- west slopes are a Class 2 scramble; NW ridge is Class 3

Shark's Nose

- [Northwest Buttress](#); II, 5.6; "climbing is enjoyable, the route finding challenging, and the exposure invigorating"
- Southwest Face; III, 5.8; "classic; study the line before starting up"
- North Face Right; III, 5.8; "fine route"

Elizabeth Peak

- South Slope; I, 3rd; "because of the granite's quality, the puzzle is a pleasant one, with the summit's identity not revealed until the end."

Overhanging Tower

- [Northwest Ridge/West Face](#); easy 5th
- Ridge Tower; II, 5.3; "as pleasant an easy rock route as the Cirque offers - as many as ten pitches on low-angle but solid rock"

Pingora

- [South Buttress](#); 5.6, 8 pitches; popular
- [Northeast Face](#); 5.8+, 12 pitches; North American Classic

Warbonnet

- [Northeast Face, Left](#); 5.7, 6 pitches; "an adventure climb"

Wolfs Head

- [East Ridge](#); 5.6, 10 pitches; North American classic.

Cirque Traverse

- 5.7 to 5.9; link-up of all the major peaks; "one to two days"

Trip Reports from Others

[Pingora - NE Face](#) - includes a rack suggestion

[South Buttress of Pingora and East Ridge of Wolf's Head Linkup](#); same authors as above trip report; contains links for climb and rap beta; this can of course be broken up into two climbs on two separate days.

Maps

Google Maps:

- [Albuquerque NM to Rawlins WY](#)
- [Rawlins WY to Boulder WY](#)
- [Boulder WY to Big Sandy Opening trail head](#)
- [Rawlins WY to Fort Washakie WY](#)
- [Boulder WY and Fort Washakie WY](#); Boulder may be nearest 'town' to the Big Sandy Trailhead; Fort Washakie appears to be nearest 'town' to Dickinson Park Trailhead and so Allen's Diamond 4 Ranch

Here is a file that can be loaded into Google Earth, intended for just getting oriented (perhaps to be later replaced or augmented by something better):

[rought_ge_information.kmz](#)

[Southern Wind River Hiking Map, 2005](#)

[Grand Tetons Association's](#)

Recreational Map of Wyoming

Revised regularly; touted by some to be the best map for finding the way to the trailhead

[Beartooth Publishing Wind River](#)

Range South 1:50,000 (latest printing 2010) shown as of 1/2014 to be temporarily out of stock at <http://www.beartoothpublishing.com/windriversouth.php>

Guide Books

(have not looked at any of these so can't vouch for them; also, some material is from old references - might be newer stuff out there)

[Kelsey's guide book: *Climbing*](#)

and Hiking in the Wind River

Mountains, 3rd 2013; ISBN-13:

9780762780785 "this guide is the only comprehensive collection of

information available to climbers"

Bechtel, Josephson, Pflughoft, Kelsey, Abegg, Beckey, Anderson
Driese guide: *Cirque of the Towers & Deep Lake. A Select Guide to the Wind Rivers' Best Rock Climbing.* 2008

Finis Mitchell's mostly-for-hiking guide: *Wind River Trails*, 1999.
ISBN-10: 0874806267; ISBN-13: 978-0874806267

Roper & Steck's book has a couple routes in the area *Fifty Classic Climbs of North America* 1996;
ISBN-10: 0871568845; ISBN-13: 978-0871568847

[Return to: Meetup Suggestions](#)