

How to Hike Flattop Mountain Trail

The hike begins at the southeast corner of the parking lot by the pay station. Put one foot in front of the other. :) More specifically, walk about 30 feet take a hard right up the ramp following the direction of the arrow that says "Flattop Trail." A few minutes later the trail opens up above tree-line and you come to a bench and a sign that says "Don't Bail the Trail." Take a RIGHT.

Now you're walking up and around *Blueberry Hill*. On the opposite side of *Blueberry Hill* is your second intersection at the first **lower** saddleback. Take a RIGHT in front of the post with the sign on it that reads "Flattop Peak Trail → *Moderate Difficulty to 2nd Saddle.*" You're now 1/3 of the way to the top.

After taking your second right, you will pass a post with a sign that says "Difficult Trail to Flattop Peak. Adult Supervision of Children Highly Recommended." You will then walk a bit then round a corner to the left where you will encounter railroad tie steps. They provide very firm footing. There are hundreds of them. They give your thighs a good workout.

When the railroad tie steps end you are 2/3 of the way to the top at the second **higher** saddleback. Some hikers pause here for a few minutes and re-energize for the final 1/3 push to the top.

Just below the top is a rock head-wall. It's hand-over-hand. It's so much fun. When you finish climbing the headwall and summit, there is an American flag planted on the top.

On average it takes 1 hour to get from the parking lot to the top. A one hour ascent allows for half an hour to walk around the mountain's flat top and photograph the great views.

The turnaround window is 2:45 to 3 p.m. Turn around at 2:45 if you're a slower hiker or if you think you'll need to go slow coming down the headwall. If you're a fit, fast hiker, turnaround no later than 3 p.m. Respecting the turnaround window should get everyone back to the parking lot at or before 4 p.m. The van leaves at 4 p.m. Please be courteous to timely hikers who often have schedules to keep. Another reason to finish hiking by 4 is because Pete (your driver) is needed downtown at the busy bike rental at 4:30 when a staff member's shift ends.

If you're a fast hiker and get to the top in 45 minutes or less, you will have time to go to the second peak behind the Flattop peak. **Just remember to turn around no later than 3:00 p.m.** If you're a really fast hiker you can run along a ridge line between the second peak behind Flattop and the third one. Just remember turn around no later than 3.

If you are a slow, steady, determined hiker who wants to go to the top, you must summit no later than 3:00 p.m. and then promptly turn around for the descent. Also remember to take a right on the circular Blueberry Loop trail (lower third of the mountain) because it is shorter and faster than the route you took up.

If it is 3:00 p.m. and you're still climbing the headwall do not go to the top! Anyone who needs more than 90 minutes to summit will have difficulty going the last leg to the top and even more trouble descending it. Pulling yourself up the headwall is much easier than picking your way down it. Don't risk getting hurt, making fellow hikers wait, or missing the van. If you can't make it back by 4:00 p.m then call or text Pete at 907-250-1170 so he will know whether you are almost home and hustling or if you're too far up and opted to take it slow and call a cab.

For the descent retrace the route you took up except when you get to first **lower** saddleback, instead of turning left the way you walked up, take a RIGHT because it is a one-way trail around Blueberry Hill. Taking a right and walking the one-way trail on the lower third of the mountain is better because it is shorter and you will see something different than what you saw on the first third of your hike up.

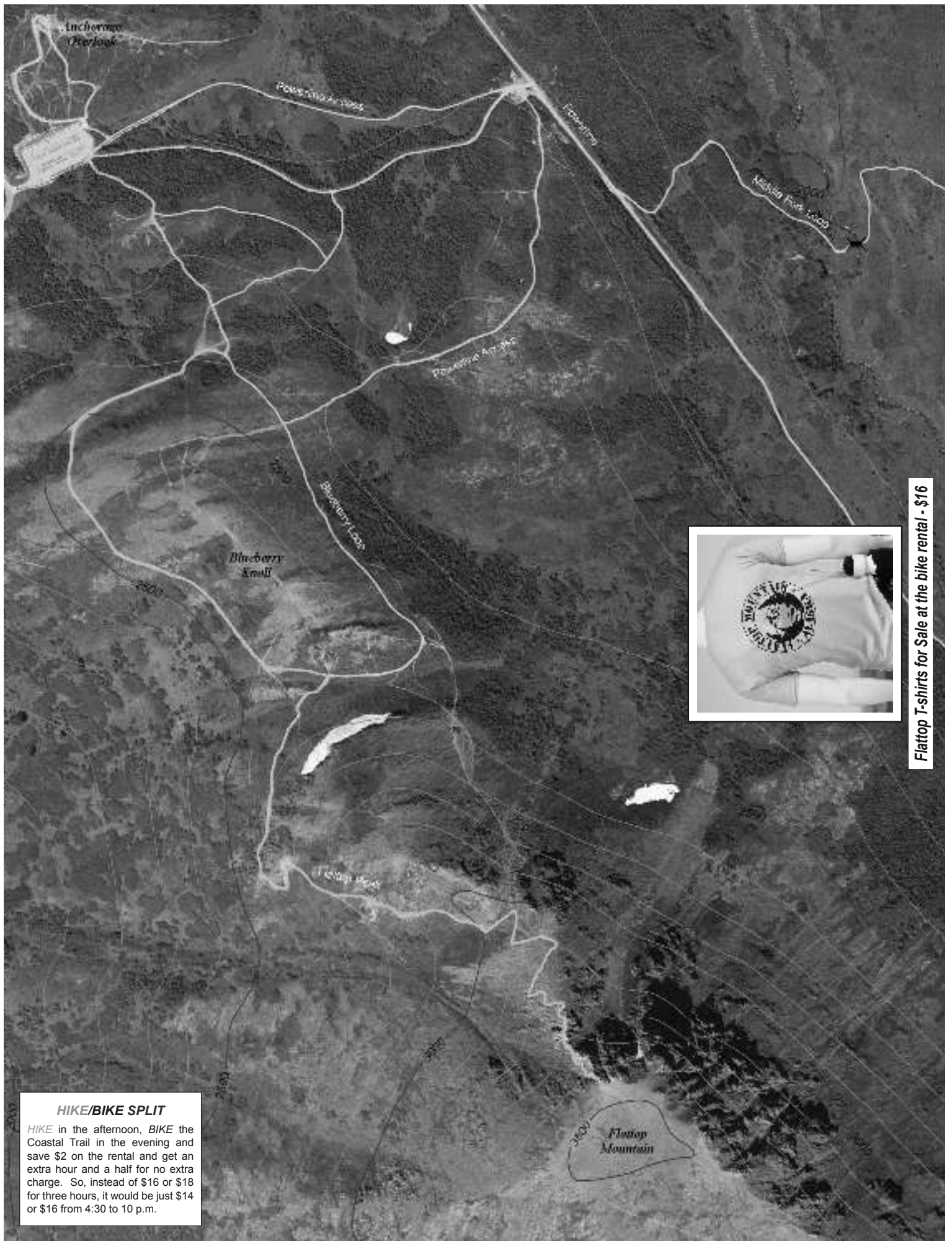
While the 2:45 - 3:00 p.m. turnaround window works real well, it is not fail safe. So from time to time on the descent, please check your watch, cell phone clock, fitbit, Garmen or other electronic time-telling device to ensure you're on track for a 4:00 p.m. return to the parking lot. For example, If it is 3:40 and you're still descending the railroad tie steps, then you're running five to ten minutes late. Don't panic, you can make up the time. After you take the right turn onto Blueberry Loop trail at the first lower saddleback, step on the gas. In other words, depending on the time, make haste, jog, or run through this wide, flat, smooth, safe-to-sprint section of the trail.

NOTE: Be sure not to confuse the first lower saddleback with the second higher saddleback. The first lower saddleback is on the opposite side of Blueberry Hill. The second higher saddleback is at the top of the railroad tie steps. There's an old abandoned trail from the second higher saddleback. While aggressive hikers (like Pete) enjoy this "shortcut" because they can fly down the scree (loose rocks), most people want and need the firm footing provided by the railroad tie steps. (If Pete passed you hiking up, it doesn't mean he's still behind you. He might already be back at the van!)

If you return to the parking lot before 4 pm and you still want to hike some more, the 1/4-mile-long circular paved/fenced "Overlook Trail" begins and ends on the north end of the parking lot. It takes no more than ten minutes to walk it. So long as you won't worry about being back by 4pm, it's a pleasant post-Flattop stroll.

Pete's cell phone number is **907-250-1170**. Phone number downtown at the bike rental is **907-279-3334**.

Over→



HIKE/BIKE SPLIT

HIKE in the afternoon, BIKE the Coastal Trail in the evening and save \$2 on the rental and get an extra hour and a half for no extra charge. So, instead of \$16 or \$18 for three hours, it would be just \$14 or \$16 from 4:30 to 10 p.m.

Flattop T-shirts for Sale at the bike rental - \$16