



ROCKY MOUNTAIN
BRIDE
— ELOPEMENT GUIDE —

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Meet Nina!

I'm Nina Larsen Reed, a born-and-raised Norwegian who moved to the mountains of Colorado in 2010, and fell in love hard. I fell in love with the boundless blue skies, the never-ending hiking trails, and with a splitboarder named Justin. And as I spent more time exploring Colorado, I realized how much I love sharing this playground I call home with couples like you.

If you want to elope, you need so much more than some stranger with a camera.

I've photographed over 150 couples across the Rocky Mountains, but more importantly, I help my couples plan their dream elopements in a place I know and love. From location scouting to vendor recommendations, your photographer should help you plan the best day ever!



PLANNING AN ELOPEMENT IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

So, you want to elope in Colorado? I did the same thing, nine years ago. And since then, I've helped over one hundred couples plan their dream adventure elopements in the Rocky Mountains, and captured tens of thousands of photos of epic moments and mountains as a Colorado elopement photographer.

If you're not sure how to even start planning your Colorado elopement, you're in the right place. I'll show you the best places to elope, how to get your marriage license, recommend the best Colorado elopement vendors, and hopefully teach you some stuff you didn't even know you needed to know. Let's get to it.



THE PERKS OF *Eloping in Colorado*

SELF-SOLEMNIZE YOUR MARRIAGE

Did you know that you and your partner can legally marry yourselves in Colorado, without an officiant or witnesses?

Only a few states allow you to marry yourselves without an officiant, and Colorado is one of them. *Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., California, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Nevada, and Wisconsin all have some variations of self-solemnizing, but these states have stricter requirements than Colorado.*

YOU DON'T NEED WITNESSES

Colorado is the only state where you don't need an officiant or witnesses to be legally married. So if you've been dreaming about a private elopement for just the two of you, Colorado is the way to go!

ACCESSIBLE MOUNTAINS

Nowhere else in the United States can you drive a car up a mountain at over 11,000 ft of elevation – and here you can go up to 14,000 ft!

Now I'm personally a huge fan of hiking (or skiing) into the mountains to get away from people, but I think it's pretty darn cool that you can get epic mountain views for your elopement without first having to train for it. A Colorado elopement really is accessible for everybody!





THE PERKS OF
Weekday Elopements

1. MORE PRIVACY

You can get privacy on weekends if you're willing to hike a bit, but the easier access locations are all very busy on weekends in summer.

2. LESS TRAFFIC

Driving I-70 to the mountains from Denver is notoriously slow on weekends, both in summer and winter. And driving through the entrance gates of Rocky Mountain National Park can take over an hour on weekends, when it's two minutes on a Tuesday morning.

3. EASIER RESERVATIONS

If you're looking to reserve a ceremony site, or even book an airBnB, you'll have a much easier time getting the date and location you want if you elope on a weekday.

4. MORE VENDORS AVAILABLE

Many of the best Colorado elopement vendors are fully booked on weekends over a year in advance. With a weekday elopement, you'll have more vendors to choose from.

5. MAKE A VACATION OF IT

You're getting married! Build in a couple of days before and after your elopement day. Make sure that you have at least one weekday in Colorado before your elopement, so that you can pick up your marriage license. If you can, give yourselves at least two days to acclimate if you're coming from sea level.



WHEN IS THE BEST TIME to elope in Colorado?

If you live in Colorado, you already know that our weather is very unpredictable.

July through September are the only months where you are unlikely to see snow in Colorado. Eloping in summer will give you the most amount of locations to choose from, and the least amount of weather related stress. If you want wildflowers, the end of July is your best bet! Eloping in the winter months often means empty trails and epic frozen alpine lakes.



WHAT TO WEAR FOR YOUR *Colorado elopement*

CHOOSING SHOES

The most important part of your elopement outfits is footwear. Seriously. If your feet are warm, dry, and comfortable, it's amazing how long you can enjoy the outdoors, even in snow or cold weather. High heels are best saved for indoors, or to be worn sparingly if you have a flat and easily accessible ceremony site.

And don't forget about men's shoes. Dress shoes are notoriously slippery, especially in snow and on grass, so pick a pair of shoes with some tread.



WEDDING DRESSES

Heavy structured dresses with corsets are incredibly uncomfortable for any amount of hiking. When you're trying on dresses, move around lots. Try sitting down, or even sitting on the floor. Bend over, raise your arms over your head, and give it a twirl. If you're uncomfortable at the bridal salon, I guarantee you'll be regretting your choice at your elopement, no matter how good your dress looks in photos.

STAYING WARM

If I haven't already made it clear, Colorado weather is unpredictable. Even when it's 90 degrees in Denver, it can be down in the 40s at 12,000 ft. Always plan on bringing a jacket or other layers to stay warm. Denim jackets, leather jackets, shawls, chunky sweaters, and overcoats all look great with a wedding dress!

You can also buy nude fleece-lined leggings to wear under your dress. Or if you're wearing a suit, consider a merino wool underlayer for winter elopements. Warm socks are key, and wool is the best – Smartwool and Darn Tough are my personal favorites.



"The best part of eloping?
There are no rules here."

- NINA LARSEN REED





THE BEST ELOPEMENT locations in Colorado

Wondering where you can have your Colorado elopement? There are countless incredible locations where you can elope in Colorado. Some locations require a rental fee or wedding permit, while others are completely open for you to go hike into the wilderness and exchange vows where you feel like it. If you're overwhelmed by the options, contact a Colorado elopement photographer to get help from a local to find the best spot for you.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Rocky Mountain National Park is one of the most popular places to elope in Colorado, and for good reason. The park has beautiful ceremony sites, like 3M Curve and Sprague Lake, and you can easily reserve your spot with a \$250 permit.



SPRAGUE LAKE

Sprague Lake is one of the most beautiful designated wedding locations in Rocky Mountain National Park. While you can elope anywhere around the lake, the dock is the perfect spot to avoid having hikers in the background of your photos. Sprague Lake is accessible year-round, and especially beautiful in winter when the lake is frozen over.



MAROON BELLS AMPHITHEATER

Maroon Bells are often called the most photographed mountains in Colorado, and I don't think they're wrong. You can rent the amphitheater for intimate weddings with up to 50 guests, which is the best way to get private space in an otherwise busy area, even if you have no guests. Maroon Bells is great for elopements that need easy accessibility.





BRAINARD LAKE

Brainard Lake is an easily accessible high alpine lake in Boulder County, and one of my favorite places for summer elopements. You can drive to the lake in summer (late June through early October), or hike there in winter along the snow-covered road. Please be aware that Brainard Lake has different rules from the nearby Indian Peaks Wilderness, which has a very strict permit requirement for groups with more than 8 people total.



BOULDER OPEN SPACE & MOUNTAIN PARKS

Looking for mountain vibes while staying close to Denver and city comforts? It doesn't get better than Boulder! (Okay, I'm biased because I live here.) But Boulder is perfect if you're bringing more guests to your elopement, since you can rent one of the many picnic shelters and outdoor ceremony sites. Lost Gulch, Chautauqua, and Sunrise Amphitheater are three of the most popular places to elope in Boulder.





LOVELAND PASS

Loveland Pass is another very popular place to elope in the Colorado mountains. The high alpine pass is open year round, with the exception of a few days a year when avalanches close the road. You can get incredible mountain views right off the side of the road, but I highly recommend hiking along the trails to get away from all the tourists.



HOW TO OBTAIN YOUR *Marriage License*

Getting your marriage license in Colorado is easy. You can get it at any Colorado county clerk's office, even if it's not the same county as the one where you're eloping. Most offices are open 8am-4:30pm Monday through Friday, and you can show up for a 20-30 minute walk-in appointment. You can't apply for the marriage license online, but you can fill out parts of your application online, then complete it in person.

When you arrive in Colorado, you need to get your marriage license before your elopement day. Once it's been issued, you have 35 days to use it before it expires. You cannot backdate the license if you forget to apply in advance, so this part is important! After your elopement, you can drop it off in person where you got it, or mail it in to have it officially recorded.

In order to get your marriage license, you need to bring:

- ☐ ID (driver's license or passport)
- ☐ Social security numbers
- ☐ \$30 fee (payable in cash, check, or credit card)

Eloping in Colorado?

Let me make it easy for you.

I know these mountains like you know the love of your life.

larsenphoto.co

