



**HIKING - FOREST SERVICE - ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

NATIONAL FOREST – San Juan RANGER DISTRICT - Columbine

Updated: May, 2003

Pine River Trail #523 to Emerald Lake #528 to Flint Creek #527

Length: 43.1 mi / 69.4 km

Use: Heavy use in some areas

Difficulty: Strenuous

USGS Map (s):

Vallecito Reservoir,

Granite Peak, Emerald Lake, Granite Lake,

Starting Elevation: 8,000'

Trailhead at Pine River Campground

Ending Elevation: 8,000'

Trailhead at Pine River Campground

Highest Elevation: 12,000'

Access # 1:

From Bayfield, head north on County Road (CR) #501, also called the Vallecito Road. Take that road north 22 miles around Vallecito Reservoir. Turn left on the Pine River turnoff – FS #602. Take the road 3.8 miles to the Pine River Campground.

Access # 2:

From Durango, head north on Florida Road (CR #240) for 14 miles. Continue on CR #240 for 2 miles past the turnoff for Lemon Reservoir. Turn north onto CR #501. Take that road north 12 miles around Vallecito Reservoir. Turn left on the Pine River turnoff–FS #602. Take the road 3.8 miles to the Pine River Campground.

Attractions & Considerations:

The Pine River Trail begins through a private gate next to Granite Peaks Ranch. Please stay on the trail, and camping is prohibited. Aspens, ponderosa pines, and conifers are in abundance along the trail as you follow the Pine (or Piños) River north.

The boundary of the Weminuche Wilderness is 2.7 miles up the trail, and the turnoff to Emerald Lake is at mile 6.3 (Trail #528). The trail continues to ascend, sometimes gradually and sometimes moderately, toward Emerald Lake (mile 10), and continues more steeply to Moon Lake and a spectacular view of Mount Oso at mile 14. Past Emerald Lake there are creek crossings, and if it has been a wet year you will have a muddy trail as you climb up the Lake Creek drainage.

The trail forks at mile 19.3 and you continue on the Rock Creek Trail to the north. Head right to continue this loop. You will be hiking steep switchbacks, high tundra, and level terrain as you head down the Flint Creek Trail #527, past Flint Lake, toward the junction with the Pine River Trail #523.

The alpine meadows are full of blooming wildflowers in late July and in August. There are excellent views and photographic possibilities. Water can be found off the trail in most of the tributaries, but due to Giardia it should be filtered. As with all high-altitude areas, storms can move in rapidly, bringing severe wind, lightning, rain, snow, or hail—at any time of year. Plan accordingly.

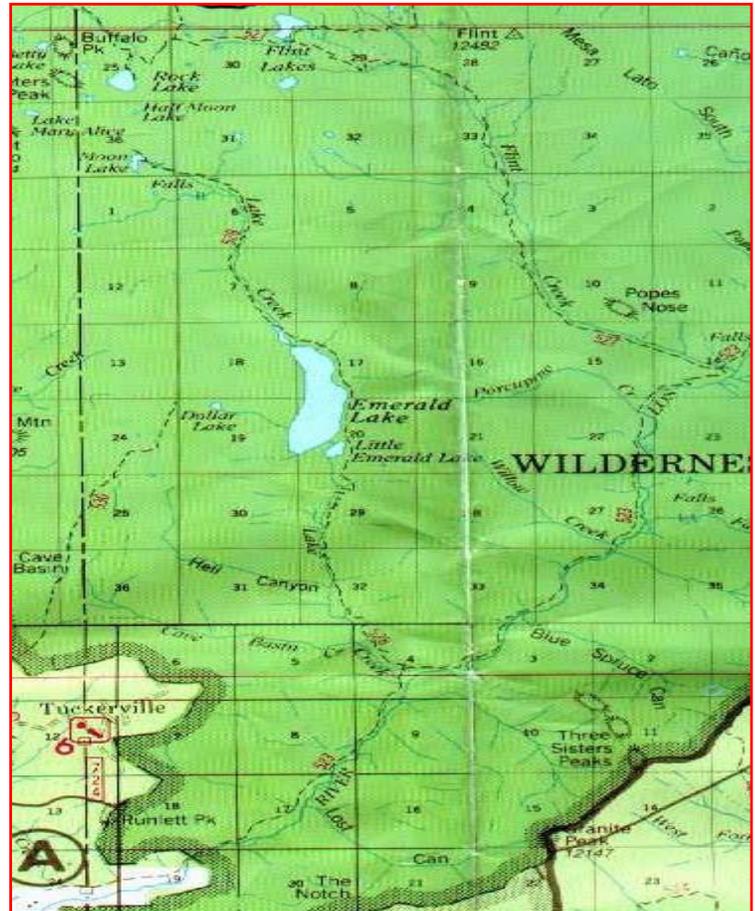
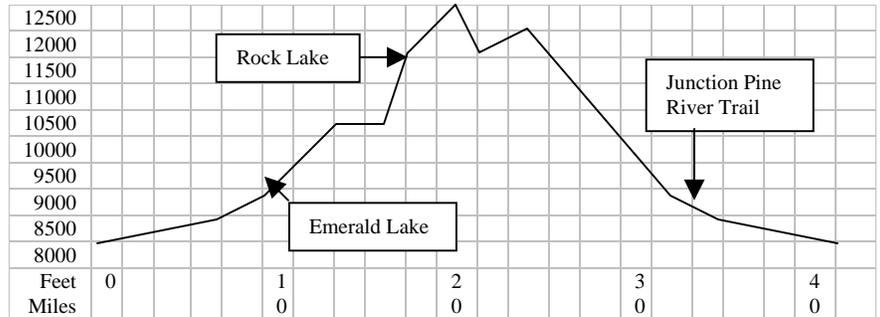
Fishing Considerations:

Between the Vallecito Reservoir and the Weminuche Wilderness, the river flows through about 3 miles of private land, but from the Wilderness boundary to the Continental Divide, the river offers some of the finest fly-fishing found anywhere. The trout in the Wilderness are wild fish. They include rainbows, brookies, browns, and cutthroats. Please check the fishing regulations regarding limits, allowable lures, and restrictions on certain lakes, rivers, etc.

Weminuche Wilderness Regulations:

- Group size is limited to 15 people.
- In the area surrounding Emerald Lake and Little Emerald Lake, camping, campfires, and grazing or restraining stock are not allowed, except in designated sites.
- Camping is not allowed within 100 feet of any water source.
- Outfitter-guides who receive any form of compensation must obtain a special-use permit to operate on public land.
- Possession of motorized equipment and mechanized means of transport are not permitted.
- Recreational livestock are prohibited from being restrained within 100 feet of lakeshores and streams or within riparian areas.

Recommended Season
Spring ← Summer → Fall Winter



Scan of the San Juan National Forest Map
Forest Service maps and other publications are available at the Public Lands Center, in the Durango Tech Center, ½ mile west of Durango off Highway 160, or by calling (970) 247-4874.
www.sjma.org