



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

**NATIONAL FOREST – San Juan RANGER DISTRICT - Columbine**

Updated: May 2003

**Vallecito Creek Trail #529 to Rock Creek Trail #529 to Flint Creek Trail #527 to Pine River Trail #523**

Length: 38.5 mi / 62 km

**Use:** Medium

**Difficulty:** Strenuous

**USGS Map (s):** Vallecito Reservoir, Columbine Pass, Storm King Peak, Rio Grande, Pyramid, Emerald Lake, Granite Peak

**Starting Elevation:** 8,000'

Trailhead at Vallecito Lake Campground

**Ending Elevation:** 8,000'

Pine River Trailhead

**Highest Elevation:** 12,000'

**Access # 1:**

From Bayfield, head north on County Road (CR) #240, also called the Vallecito Road, for 7 miles until you reach CR #501. Take that road north 3 miles to Vallecito Reservoir and continue on the west side of the reservoir for an additional 7 miles to the Vallecito Campground, where the trailhead is.

**Access # 2:**

From Durango, head north on Florida Road for 9 miles until you reach CR #240. Take that road to the east 2 miles to CR #501 and continue north on #501 to Vallecito Reservoir. Continue on the west side of the reservoir for an additional 7 miles to the Vallecito Campground, where the trailhead is.

**Attractions & Considerations:**

The Vallecito Creek Trail begins in the Vallecito Campground. The hike begins in a steep canyon with ponderosa pine forest, aspens, and conifers. After .6 miles you enter the Weminuche Wilderness. The trail climbs gradually as you follow Vallecito Creek north. You will cross Taylor Creek, Vallecito Creek, and Second Creek as you continue on through meadows and aspen groves. After 11 miles you will cross Roell Creek. Look for waterfalls, cascades, and pools as the trail steepens.

The portion of the Vallecito Creek Trail that this hike follows stays completely within the gently ascending drainage bottom. The Vallecito Creek Trail crosses the creek on a number of occasions, but all crossings are via well-constructed bridges. At about mile 17, take the Rock Creek Trail #655 east (a steep 1,000' climb before the trail levels off into a large meadow), and continue on the trail 5.5 miles past Rock Lake to Flint Lakes (at timberline). At this point the upper end of the Flint Creek Trail #527 joins the Rock Creek Trail. Take the Flint Creek Trail southeast—following the drainage—for 7 miles to reach the junction with the Pine River Trail #523. From there it is another 12 miles to the Pine River Trailhead.

The alpine meadows are full of blooming wildflowers in late July and August. This area has 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 any time of the year. Plan accordingly.

**Fishing Considerations:**

Wild rainbow, cutthroat, and brook trout are in Vallecito Creek. The fish are appropriate for the size of the stream, generally 8-to-12-inch range. Deeper water may have trout of 16 inches, but they are not found often. The river offers some of the finest fly-fishing found anywhere. The entire Vallecito Creek drainage in the Weminuche Wilderness is managed as fly-and-lure-only water, with a bag and possession 2 limit. Rock Lake is rated fair for cutthroat and Flint Lake good for cutthroat. The area of the Weminuche Wilderness containing Rock, Flint, and Moon Lakes has enough high-elevation lakes to keep a fisherman busy for years. Most of the lakes hold good populations of cutthroat, rainbow, and brook trout. 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.
- 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

