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Taos, NM 87413
(505) 632-2956
Jicarilla RD
1110 Rio Vista Lane, #2
Bloomfield, NM 87413
(575) 758-6200
Camino Real RD
P.O. Box 68
15160 SR 75
Peñasco, NM 87553
(575) 587-2255
Tres Piedras RD
P.O. Box 38
SR 115, Bldg. 358
Canjilon, NM 87515
(575) 684-2489
Tres Piedras, NM 87577
(575) 758-8678

For maps and other information, contact:



2018



Carson National Forest

Pocket Guide



New Mexico



¡BIENVENIDOS! Welcome to Carson National Forest



Photo by Jim O'Donnell

Wheeler Peak in winter

Recreation

Carson National Forest offers year-round recreational opportunities. Over one million people visit the forest annually, 89 percent of whom come for recreational purposes. Recreation and tourism are the largest economic contributors to this area. The magnificent mountain scenery and cool summer temperatures lure vacationers to enjoy the peace and quiet for fishing, hunting, camping, birding, biking, hiking, backpacking, four-wheel drive exploring, photography, and plein air painting. Winter activities include skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling. Permitted outfitters are available to guide and assist visitors with many of these activities. Both the Enchanted Circle and High Road to Taos Scenic Byways offer passenger car access to many trailheads and access points. Most developed campgrounds open the weekend before Memorial Day and some open sooner. Many campsites, including sites for large groups and campgrounds near fishing areas such as Agua Piedra, Hopewell Lake, and Elephant Rock, can be reserved at www.Recreation.gov.

There are numerous miles of non-motorized and motorized forest system trails on the Carson. Many trails follow creeks or provide access to mountaintops and vary in level of maintenance across the forest. The Carson has several trails of national significance and recognition including three National Recreation Trails (Columbine-Twining, South Boundary, and Jicarita Peak trails), two National Historic Trails (The Camino Real de Tierra Adentro Trail and the Old Spanish Trail), and one National Scenic Trail (Continental Divide Trail). Most unimproved (high-clearance) forest system roads are open to off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, but please remain on designated open roads and trails as listed in the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). Traveling cross-country, taking shortcuts, and cutting switchbacks damages fragile resources. The MVUM and other maps are available at district offices and online. System roads may be closed seasonally due to weather conditions and for the protection of wildlife.



Photo by Gak Stamm

Fishing at Hopewell Lake

Named after fabled frontier scout Kit Carson, Carson National Forest spans much of Northern New Mexico, and is part of the Forest Service's Southwestern Region. The Carson boasts over 1.5 million acres of spectacular mountain scenery, winter and summer recreation, diverse wildlife, solitude, historic and cultural sites, as well as sources for grazing, mining, logging, and firewood collecting. The Carson Forest Supervisor's office in Taos oversees ranger district offices in Peñasco, Questa, Tres Piedras, Canjilon, El Rito, and Bloomfield.

The eastern part of the Carson is noted for virgin spruce-fir forests, high alpine valleys, and cool mountain streams. Elevations range from just over 7,000 feet near the town of Taos to 13,161 feet at Wheeler Peak, the highest point in New Mexico.

Crossing the Rio Grande, the Carson becomes high plateau from 8,000 to nearly 11,000 feet in elevation. Open meadows, rich in wild flowers, are interspersed with stands of spruce, fir, and aspen. Farther to the west, the remote Jicarilla District contains high mesas, ponderosa pine, piñon-juniper forests, and a large herd of wild horses.



Photo by Gak Stamm

Snowshoeing at US Hill



Photo by Angie Higdon

Wild horses on the Jicarilla Ranger District

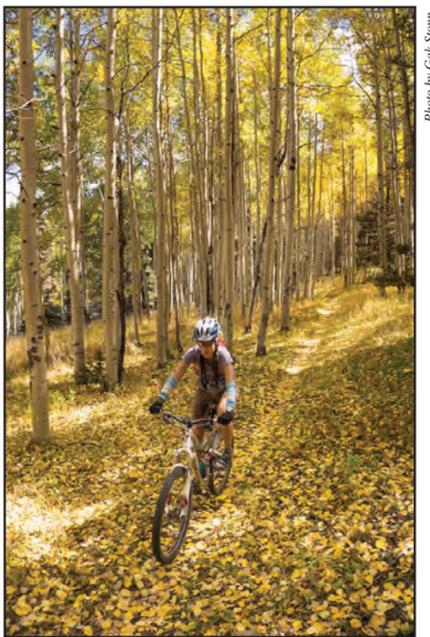


Photo by Gak Stamm

Biking on the Camino Real Ranger District

The Carson has 400 miles of cold mountain streams and numerous lakes, many stocked with native trout by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Popular fishing streams include La Junta, Santa Barbara, El Rito, Rio Pueblo, Rio Hondo, Rio Costilla, Red River, Rio San Antonio, and of course, the nearby Rio Grande. Anglers preferring lakes travel to Hopewell or Cabresto, among many others. Fishing and hunting are open to anyone with a license, which is regulated by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Water from the Carson National Forest provides drinking and irrigation water for many communities in New Mexico.

Some of the finest alpine downhill skiing in the US is found at Taos Ski Valley, Red River, and Sipapu Ski Areas. While nordic skiing can be found throughout the forest, the Enchanted Forest Cross-Country Ski Area provides miles of groomed cross-country ski trails.

Water

Water is the lifeblood for all activities and is especially vital in the arid Southwest. Most of the water in this region comes from the Tusas and Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The Forest Service is charged with protecting and improving the water producing capabilities of these watersheds. Rain and snow on the Carson brings 12 to 40 inches of water per year. Trees, grass, and shrubs use some of this moisture. Their roots stabilize the soil, allowing the remaining water to feed underground basins, creeks, springs, and manmade water developments. The Carson contributes over 40 percent of the waters that flow into the Rio Grande.

Wildlife

Each year thousands of visitors come to the Carson to fish, hunt, and view wildlife, providing an important source of income for businesses and local communities. Big game species such as black bear, elk, and mule deer are common on the Carson. Bighorn sheep are frequently seen at higher elevations and pronghorn antelope forage on the grasslands.

Other wildlife include the reclusive mountain lion, porcupine, bobcat, various smaller mammals, and almost 134 species of birds. Due to its wide range of elevations and corresponding vegetation types, the forest has a diverse fauna that includes 53 fish species, 13 amphibians, 28 reptiles, 110 mammals, and 341 invertebrates.

The unique 100,000 acre Valle Vidal Unit, donated by Pennzoil Company in 1982, boasts spectacular scenery with vast open meadows and abundant wildflowers. Management of this area prioritizes wildlife, which includes a trophy elk herd of up to 2,000 head. Motorized travel is restricted and special hunting and fishing seasons and bag limits have been implemented. Two seasonal closures, one winter and one spring, help elk conserve resources during harsh winter weather and protect them during spring calving season.

In addition to regular hunting and fishing licenses, Habitat Improvement Stamps are required in some areas of the Carson. These are available at many local sporting goods stores along with regular licenses and printed copies of New Mexico Game and Fish Regulations. Some fishing is limited to artificial lures with a single barbless hook. For a full list of requirements check the New Mexico Game and Fish Regulations.



Photo by Gak Stamm

Shree Ponds on Valle Vidal



Photo by Gak Stamm

San Antonio Mountain on Tres Piedras Ranger District

Wilderness

Roughly 8 percent of Carson National Forest (over 130,000 acres) contains congressionally designated wilderness. These areas are lands set aside to preserve wild America, where humans are only visitors, the environment is untrammeled and unconstrained, and land management activities take a back seat to natural processes. In wilderness, there are no roads; travel is by foot, horseback, or canoe. Mechanized equipment, including bicycles and drones, is not allowed. Group size is limited to 15 people to protect resources. Whether in wilderness or elsewhere on public lands, please pack out your trash!

Designated wilderness areas in the Carson include Wheeler Peak, Latir Peak, Cruces Basin, Columbine-Hondo, Chama River, and Pecos.



Eagle Rock Lake

Community Partnerships

Increasing demand for the ecosystem services provided by public lands such as Carson National Forest drives the need to engage further with community partners to accomplish land management goals. Forest personnel meet with local communities and partners such as the Enchanted Circle Trails Alliance, Del Norte Mountain Bike Alliance, Rio Grande Water Fund, Nature Conservancy, and Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, to name a few. Projects focus on maintaining sustainable trail systems and recreation facilities, restoring fire resiliency, improving the ecosystem resiliency of streams and wetlands, and involving people in outdoor conservation education activities. If you would like to be a Forest Volunteer, please contact the nearest district office or one of these organizations.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Be Responsible

Campfires are allowed in the forest except during times of extreme fire danger. Before you head into the forest, always check to see if campfire restrictions are in place for your destination. NEVER build a fire on a windy day. NEVER leave a campfire unattended – keep a shovel and water close by. ALWAYS put your campfire out COLD; mix and stir coals with water and dirt. Crush cigarette butts completely.

Public land is managed in trust for all citizens and international visitors. Inform yourself regarding local conditions and requirements for your safety by checking with local offices, reading signs, and reviewing bulletin boards. Changing terrain and weather conditions present a variety of hazards, including but not limited to snow, landslides, slick roads, falling trees or limbs, high waters, wild animals, severe weather, becoming lost or overexerted, hypothermia, and exposure to the unreasonable acts of other people. Please recognize hazards and take precautions.

After camping for 14 days, campers must move a minimum of three miles (or to another developed campground) and can stay an additional 14 days, for a maximum of 28 days in a 45 day period.

Other Points of Interest

Other points of interest in the area include the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River, and the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument (administered by the Bureau of Land Management). Several Indian tribes in the vicinity also welcome visitors into their historic villages to view ceremonies throughout the year.

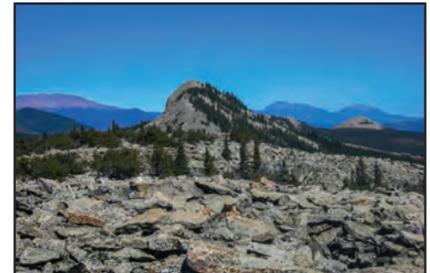


Photo by Jim O'Donnell

Ash Mountain on Valle Vidal

To view the current Carson Pocket Guide and MVUM maps with your smart device, you may scan the QR codes below.



<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/carson/maps-pubs>



https://www.fs.fed.us/r3/gis/USFS_Southwestern_Region_MVUM_Repository.html