

Carson National Forest

Camino Real District Taos Area & Penasco

Is the place to be when the snow is on the hills

Taos Ski Valley, Red River and Sipapu Ski Areas are all located on portions of the National Forest and provide downhill and Nordic skiing. Plenty of opportunities for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling and sledding also exist on the Carson.

Detailed guides for many of the trails listed are available at Carson National Forest offices.

Some trails are shared by cross-country skiers, snowshoers, and snowmobilers. Please keep trails safe by operating snowmobiles at minimum speed near skiers or snowshoers and maintaining minimum speed until well beyond those on foot. Skiers and snowshoers should also be alert for snowmobilers. Some trails are designated for skiers only and some for snowmobiles only. Restrictions are posted, but check with the local Forest Service office for more information.

Beware of Hazards

Many people are unaware of the hazards of winter recreation. A "Winter Recreation Safety Guide" is available at all Forest Service offices. Also please stop by or call any Forest Service office for information about possible trail closures, avalanche hazards, weather conditions, and new trails not shown on the map. Local Forest Service addresses and phone numbers are listed. Please do not cross-country ski, snowshoe or snowmobile alone if you are inexperienced and /or unfamiliar with the terrain. Most shops which rent equipment can also advise you on trails.

Food and Water

A good rule is "lightweight but loaded," meaning loaded with calories. Plan your meals to ensure a diet of high energy foods. Water is often difficult to find in winter. All that is available may be what you carry in containers or melt from snow. The body loses as much as 2-4 quarts of liquid per day under exertion. Eating snow provides only limited water (10-20%), drains energy and cools the body temperature. Avoid melting snow by body contact. Travel equipped with proper implements to melt snow. Save your energy.

Litter and Sanitation

Litter is ugly-particularly when viewed against a mantle of white snow. Please carry out what you carry in. Please do not leave human waste near streams and lakes.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is aggravated by wind, exhaustion, and being wet. Avoid wearing cotton next to your body, as cotton will soak up perspiration and cool your skin. Hypothermia is the number one killer of outdoor recreationists.

Protect Wildlife

Please view big game animals from a distance. They work hard to survive during the winter. Snowmobilers who chase and harass wildlife usually do not realize the hardships they cause. Occasionally death is the result. State laws prohibit harassing wildlife.

Beware of Avalanches

Avalanches can occur at any time during the winter. Avoid mountainous terrain after heavy snowfalls or prolonged periods of high wind. Stay on the windblown side of ridges. Avoid crossing steep side hills and entering narrow, steep canyons.

Camino Real District

The following ski area, trails and snow play areas are in the Taos, Penasco, and Angel Fire vicinity. The places listed are some of the more popular area open to both snowmobiles and cross-country skiers. Additional forest roads are available but not described here. (See the Carson Map). Feel free to explore. The Vallecitos area, however, is closed to all use in order to provide an undisturbed wintering area for deer and elk. Recreation Opportunity Guides (ROGs) are available describing, any of these trails in more detail.



Gallegos Peak

The trailhead is located on State Hwy 518 just south of U.S. Hill Vista on the left (east) side of the highway coming from Taos. Parking is available on the east side. With gentle to moderate slopes, the trail is signed at the entrance and easy to follow. Take Forest Road 442 all the way to Gallegos Peak-approximately 6 miles. There are beautiful views of the Wheeler Peak country along the way. Gallegos Park also provides a spectacular view of Jicarita Peak and the Pecos Wilderness. **USGS Quad: Tres Ritos, Cerro Vista**



Picuris Lookout

From State Hwy 68 in Taos, follow State Hwy 518 approximately 14 miles south. The trail takes off on the right (west) side of the highway at U.S. Hill (Forest Road 114). Parking is available on both sides of the highway. Picuris Road is closed to snowmobiles; however, the meadow area along Highway 518 is open to snowmobiles. There are exceptional views of Penasco, Truchas Peaks, Espanola, Jemez and the Sangre de Cristo Range. Snow melts early on some south-facing slopes. Picuris Road ascends through ponderosa pine, aspen and into spruce-fir before it reaches Picuris Peak lookout. The elevation gain is moderate until the last 1-1/2 miles, at which point the grade increases significantly. **USGS Quad: Pueblo Peak, Palo Flechado**



Amole Canyon

From Taos, follow State Hwy 518 south past U.S. Hill approximately 2 miles. Parking is available on the left side (east) of the highway (Forest Road 4 entrance).

Amole Canyon has been a favorite cross-country skiing area for many years. Taos Sports Associates-Nordic constructed a 3.1 mile (5km) trail which is groomed as people and equipment permit.

The upper and lower loops are located on old logging roads. These 2 trails are not groomed on a regular basis. The Amole Loop is closed to snowmobiles.

Length:

- Amole Loop 3.1 miles (5k)
- Lower Loop 6.1 miles (9.8k)
- Upper Loop 7.2 miles (11.6k)

A detailed map of the area is available at the trailhead or Ranger District offices.

The Amole Loop is an excellent beginners trail with its gentle slopes and open ponderosa pine stands and meadows. There is only a 300' elevation gradient from start to finish. The trail was designed with all skill levels in mind and there are detours around the steeper slopes to accommodate to novice.

The Lower Loop and Upper Loop are old existing logging roads and the historic Comales Sheep Driveway. The Driveway was used for many years by local sheep men driving their stock from winter range near Taos to summer range in the high country.

The Lower Loop is rated as most difficult due to the ¼ mile of 20% grade. This portion is narrow and not recommended unless one has mastered steep, narrow courses.

The Upper Loop has a more gentle nature although it is approximately 1 mile longer. Near the head of Amole Canyon there are approximately 200 yards of 20% grade. Recommended direction of travel for both the Upper and Lower Loop is up Amole Canyon. There are signs at intersections and blue diamonds designate the courses. For the adventurous, there are many unmarked logging roads in the area. Please do not travel alone. There is no patrol.



Capulin/La Sombra

This is a 1-1/2 mile cross-country trail located 5 miles east of Taos on Hwy 64. It parallels the Capulin and La Sombra Campgrounds and is ideal for skating with cross-country skis on a flat trail. There is an ice cave at the south end of Capulin Campground. Parking is available at the campground entrances.



Mondragon Canyon

Designated for skiers only, the trail is 8 miles long, signed at the entrance and consists of moderate to fairly steep slopes. The trailhead is located on Hwy 6 about 8 miles east of Taos. A small parking area is located opposite the entrance on the north side of the highway.



Garcia Park for Skiers

The Trailhead is located at the junction of Valle Escondido Road and Forest Road 437 just south of the Hwy 64 turnoff. There is a small area for parking. The ski trail follows Forest Road 437 to Garcia Park. It is closed to snowmobiles except for the first ¼ mile which is open to both uses. Please stay off the snowmobile route. There are beautiful views of the Wheeler Peak country from the trail. **USGS Quad: Shady Brook**



OK Canyon

Open to skiers only, this trail is 3 miles long and signed at the entrance. It starts in a broad, gently-sloping meadow. The trailhead is located about 2 miles southwest of Palo Flechado Pass (about 16 miles east of Taos) on Hwy 64. Parking is available at the trailhead on the opposite (south) side of the highway. **USGS Quad: Pueblo Peak, Palo Flechado**



La Jara Canyon

Open to skiers only, this is a good area for beginners with gentle slopes and generally good snow conditions all winter. The trail is 2 miles long. The trailhead is located on the horseshoe curve just west of Palo Flechado Pass on Hwy 64. Parking is available at the trailhead. **USGS Quad: Palo Flechado**



Santa Barbara Campground Area

The road is kept open up to the Forest boundary which is 3.5 miles from the campground. This route is used by cross-country skiers and snowmobilers. Snow conditions vary on this road because of the aspect: it may be muddy along the first few miles. The Hodges and Santa Barbara area lies approximately 7 miles southeast of Penasco via State Highways 75 and 73 and Forest Road 116. The highways and Forest Road 116 are generally kept in good condition up to the Forest boundary. From the boundary to Santa Barbara Campground, Forest Road 116 is not plowed and access is limited. Parking is very limited. **USGS Quad: El Valle, Jicarita Peak**



Santa Barbara

The trailhead entrance lies just below Santa Barbara Campground and is southeast of Penasco via State Highways 75 and 73 and Forest Road 116. Roads are generally in good condition (plowed) up to the Forest boundary. It is approximately 3 miles from the boundary to the trailhead entrance. Parking is limited. Trail 24 is located at the Middle Fork, Trail 25 at the West Fork, and Trail 26 at the East Fork. Cross-country travel into the Pecos Wilderness is becoming more popular with many taking day hikes through the Middle Fork Trail. The terrain will vary along these trails with the gentlest gradient located in the first 4 to 5 miles, becoming progressively steeper. Snow depth also increases. South slopes will sometimes have bare spots. Be prepared for adverse weather in the wilderness. Always beware of avalanche! **USGS Quad: Jicarita Peak, Pecos Falls**

Snow Play Area

U.S. Hill

This area is heavily used by young sledders. Located adjacent to the trailhead for Picuris Lookout and Gallegos Peak trail, Parking is available on the left (east) side, coming from Taos. The area is located approximately 12 miles south of Taos on Highway 518, just past the U.S. Hill Vista. Please watch your children and look out for others. **USGS Quad: Tres Ritos**

Developed Ski Area: Downhill

Sipapu Ski Area

- Open: 9a.m.-4 p.m.
- Elevation: 8,200-9,255
- Terrain: 41 Trails
- 20% beginner
- 40% intermediate
- 25% advanced
- 15% expert
- Lifts: 4 lifts
 - 2 platter lifts
 - 2 triple chairs

Also: Cross-country and snowmobile trails