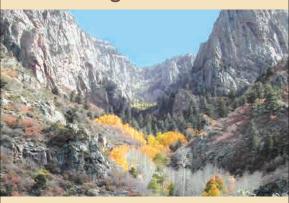




# Cibola

# National Forest and Grasslands Mountainair and Sandia **Ranger District**



**Pocket Guide** 

### **New Mexico**

#### Revised 2023



#### For maps and other information, contact:

Cibola National Forest 2113 Osuna Road NE Albuquerque, NM 87113-1001 Phone: (505) 346-3900 www.fs.usda.gov/cibola

Mountainair Ranger District 40 Ranger Station Road Mountainair, NM 87036 (505) 847-2990

Sandia Ranger District 11776 Hwy. 337 South Tijeras, NM 87059 (505) 281-3304

For Group Recreation Reservations Call 1-877-444-6777 or visit www.recreation.gov

RG-R3-03-14

# ¡Bienvenidos! Welcome to the Sandia and Mountainair Ranger Districts

Mountainair Ranger District, encompasses two mountain ranges. The Gallinas Mountains are a small isolated range west of Corona, with an elevation of 8,637 feet at Gallinas Peak, the highest point. The Manzano Mountains are a long, narrow range running north and south with elevations ranging from 6,000 to 10,098 feet at Manzano Peak. The area slopes purchase, you need to know a bit about your gently up from the Estancia Valley to about 8,000 feet and then rises abruptly to the peak. The west side drops sharply into the uplands of the Rio Grande Valley.

The Manzanos are deceptive. When viewed from highways and roads surrounding them, they exhibit little outstanding scenery. Their real natural beauty is best appreciated at close range. Forest Road 245 from the community of Manzano provides the only vehicle access to the crest, Capilla Peak. People are surprised when they arrive at the summit and view the spectacular scenery in all directions.

# Autumn Colors



The yellows of aspen, reds of maple, and oranges of oak create a visual feast from mid-September through mid-October. The brilliant red maples of Fourth of July Canyon in the Manzano Mountains create an ideal place for fall picnics. Patches of aspen interspersed with maple render surrounding mountainsides outstanding. Sandia Crest Scenic Byway offers aspen views and access to trails winding among the aspens. A 2-mile hike on Crest Trail 130 north from the crest area takes you to one of the most beautiful aspen stands. In Las Huertas Canyon, the scarlet of Virginia creeper, maples and sumac mix with the gold of aspen and box elder along a sparkling creek whose banks are filled with asters and other fall-blooming wildflowers.



# Cultural Resources



Evidence of the people who once lived on the Sandia and Mountainair Ranger Districts can be found throughout the forest and convey a rich cultural history that spans over 13, 000 years. To date, almost 3,000 archaeological sites have been recorded on the districts. These include the remnants of single-family homes, agrarian villages. Spanish missions agricultural fields, hunting camps, rock art sites, trails, wagon roads, homesteads, and mines. The artifacts and the architectural remains associated with these sites provide important information about the culture of the inhabitants, the relationships between communities in the greater Southwest, and the time period the site was occupied. If you encounter an archaeological site

while visiting the forest, please help us protect it by not damaging the site or collecting artifacts. All artifacts—pottery sherds, stone tools, bone fragments—are cherished traces of our ancestors AND protected by law

Some sites you may wish to visit are: Sandia Cave, a Folsom period site in the scenic La Huertas Canyon near Placitas; Kiwanis Cabin, located on the crest of the Sandia Mountains. The site is a unique stone cabin constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s; and Tijeras Pueblo Interpretive Site and Museum. Tijeras Pueblo is an ancestral site to the modern community of Isleta Pueblo and was occupied in the 14th and 15th centuries. It is located behind Sandia Ranger Station. Guided interpretive tours of Tijeras Pueblo are available. Call the Ranger



# Wilderness

Recreation Fees

and Passes

If you're ready to recreate on your national

forest the activity you want to do may require a recreation fee. Many places on the forest

are free of charge, however certain sites that

offer amenities, require a day use fee. To

recreation plans for the next year. Your best

value may be a single-day pass, these may

be purchased at the site you visit or on line

through www.recreation.gov. If you're a

frequent visitor to one or more sites, an

annual pass that covers a forest or region

may be the best buy. An Interagency Annual Pass may be your best value if you plan to

visit many different federal lands across the nation that include lands managed by other federal agencies. You may also qualify for the Interagency Senior passes or Interagency

Access Pass. Fourth grade students qualify

for a free Every Kid Outdoors Pass. Inquire

which pass is right for you at your local

Forest Service office.

make the best choice on which pass to

Sandia Mountain Wilderness, established through the Endangered American Wilderness Act of 1978, comprises 30,981 acres of the Sandia Ranger District's 100,555 acres. Acquisition of the Elena Gallegos Grant in 1981 increased it to 37,232 acres.

Hikers, horseback riders, backpackers and campers are all welcome in the wilderness. Maximum allowable group size is 15—a limit of 10 is recommended. These limits help preserve the wilderness solitude for everyone. There are more than 217 miles of hiking trails with an implicit promise of unique sights and sounds. As a designated wilderness, motorized and/or mechanized equipment, including bicycles, are prohibited.

Manzano Mountain Wilderness, created by the same act, encompasses 36.970 acres. The word "Manzano" is Spanish for "apple tree." In the 1700s, explorers visiting a small village on the mountains' eastern edge noted apple trees growing in the village. The trees appeared to be very old but no one knew how or when they arrived; apple trees are not native to New Mexico. Both the village and the mountains became known as Manzano.

Elevations in the wilderness range from 6,000 feet to 10,098 feet at Manzano Peak. Beginning in piñon-juniper woodlands at the lower elevations, as you gradually climb higher in elevation you find yourself in ponderosa pine stands, and fianlly at the higher elevations you end up in a mixed conifer forest. Terrain is steep and rugged, cut with canyons and rock outcrops. A well-developed trail system is little used, though road access to trailheads is good. Camping is somewhat limited by a lack of reliable water sources

#### Sandia Ranger District

Just east of Albuquerque is the most visited mountain range in New Mexico. More than 2 million people journey to the Sandias each year. The reasons are fairly obvious: summer air is refreshingly cool in contrast to the warmer climate at lower elevations and the possibilities for fun and relaxation are abundant during each of the four seasons. Over 1/4 million visitors a year ride Sandia Peak Tram to the mountaintop to see a dazzling sunset and the glittering carpet of Albuquerque lights below. The crest observation deck hosts over 1/2 million visitors annually, providing magnificent panoramas and nearby access to nature trails.



The Turquoise Trail also winds its way around the Sandia Mountains One portion includes Sandia Crest National Scenic Byway while the

other portion leads to Santa Fe. The Turquoise Trail is an adventure in itself as it passes through "old west" towns like Golden, Madrid, and Cerrillos. Take time to enjoy the views and nostalgia along this historic route.

# Recreation Opportunities



Sledding at the Capulin Snowplay Area

The Sandia Ranger District welcomes recreationalists of multiple kinds. Although Cedro Group Reservation Campground is the only developed campground on Sandia Ranger District, the Sandias are a treasure trove for backpack campers, birdwatchers, wildflower enthusiasts and photographers. Sandia Peak Tram, at 2.7 miles, is the world's longest double jig-back tram. It carries visitors, hang gliders and skiers to the mountaintop year-round. There are two launch sites for hang gliding in the Sandias. All hang glider pilots must be fully rated to launch from either site—watching hang gliders launch is a spectacular sight

When winter snows cover the Sandias, the area provides downhill and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snow sledding opportunities. Sandia Peak Ski Area offers a variety of downhill ski runs ranging from beginner to expert. Capulin Snow Play Area near Capulin Picnic Site is a unique winter recreation site with two inner tube runs.

With the rapid population growth of the Rio Grande and Estancia Valleys, the Manzanos are being recognized for their developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. There are six developed recreation sites in the Manzanos ranging in elevation from 6,200 feet to 9,200 feet and over 100 miles of trails. See the web sites listed on the back cover of this map for

#### Additional Recreation

Contact New Mexico State Parks and Recreation at (888) NM PARKS for Manzano State Park.

Contact USDI National Park Service at (505) 847-2585 for Salinas National Monument, (505) 899-0205 for Petroglyph National Monument.

Contact City of Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Open Space Division at (505) 452-5200 for Carolino Canyon Park and Elena Gallegos Park.

# Wildlife

(including some very unique alpine ones) and trees attract visitors to the Sandia Mountains, many come just to watch raptors or birds of prey. Majestic hunters of the sky, raptors are found in most of the western United States and include hawks, eagles and falcons.

Although the many wildflowers

Each spring and fall thousands migrate along the crest of the Manzano and Sandia Mountains. These predatory birds nest in areas as far away



and winter in Mexico and Central America.

Daily counts of migrating birds are conducted each March, April, September and October by Hawk Watch International to determine the number and kind of raptors that migrate through the area. These counts are valuable for assessing raptor population trends and overall ecosystem health.

There is a veritable treasure trove of birds, both common and rare, residing in the Sandias. Other wildlife you may encounter include mule deer, black bear, tassel-eared squirrels and cottontail rabbits. Snakes (including rattlesnakes) are common.



Rough-legged Hawk (courtesy Hawk Watch International)

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