

# Cibola

## National Forest and Grasslands Mountainair and Sandia Ranger District



Pocket Guide

### New Mexico

Revised 2023



For maps and other  
information, contact:

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Mountainair, NM 87036  
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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 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



Rocky Mountain maple

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.



Fall in the Manzano Mountains



View from Sandia Crest towards Manzano Mountains

## Cultural Resources



Kiwanis Cabin, built in 1936 by Company 814 of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

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 Station at (505) 281-3304.



Tijeras Pueblo Museum



Pictograph near Sandia District

## 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 make the best choice on which pass to purchase, you need to know a bit about your 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](http://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.

## 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 trail maps.

## 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

Although the many wildflowers (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.

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





