Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Coronado National Forest, Douglas Ranger District | RG-R3-05-39 | Revised May 2026



Rucker Canyon

Miles of scenic forest roads and trails invite you to explore the sprawling grasslands, stunning peaks, and wooded canyons of the remote Rucker Basin in the Chiricahua Mountains.

Photo © Kile Stumbo/Wild AZ

Know before you go

LOCATION: Located approximately 1 hour (40 miles) north of Douglas, AZ in the Chiricahua Mountains at 5,500 ft. elevation.

WATER: No drinking water is available. Bring plenty with you. Natural water sources must be purified before use.

CAMPING: Dispersed and developed sites. Fee required at Walnut Grove Campground. Pay with cash or check on site.

SEASONS: Year-round. Be prepared for extreme heat and monsoon storms during summer and cold weather in winter.

ROAD INFO: Dirt roads with creek crossings; high-clearance recommended. Roads may be impassable after rain or snow.

FLOOD WARNING: Check the forecast and radar apps! Distant storms upstream can cause flash floods in Rucker Canyon. Do not drive on FR 74E along Rucker Creek if rain is forecast. See map.

Attractions



CAMP RUCKER HISTORIC DISTRICT
Between 1878 and 1880, this remote army outpost served as a base for companies of Indian Scouts and their officers. The area was later homesteaded by a series of ranchers before being acquired by the US Forest Service in 1970. Buildings and foundations remain from both eras. The site, located 100 yards from FR 74, is accessible only by foot or horseback. See map and info on next page.



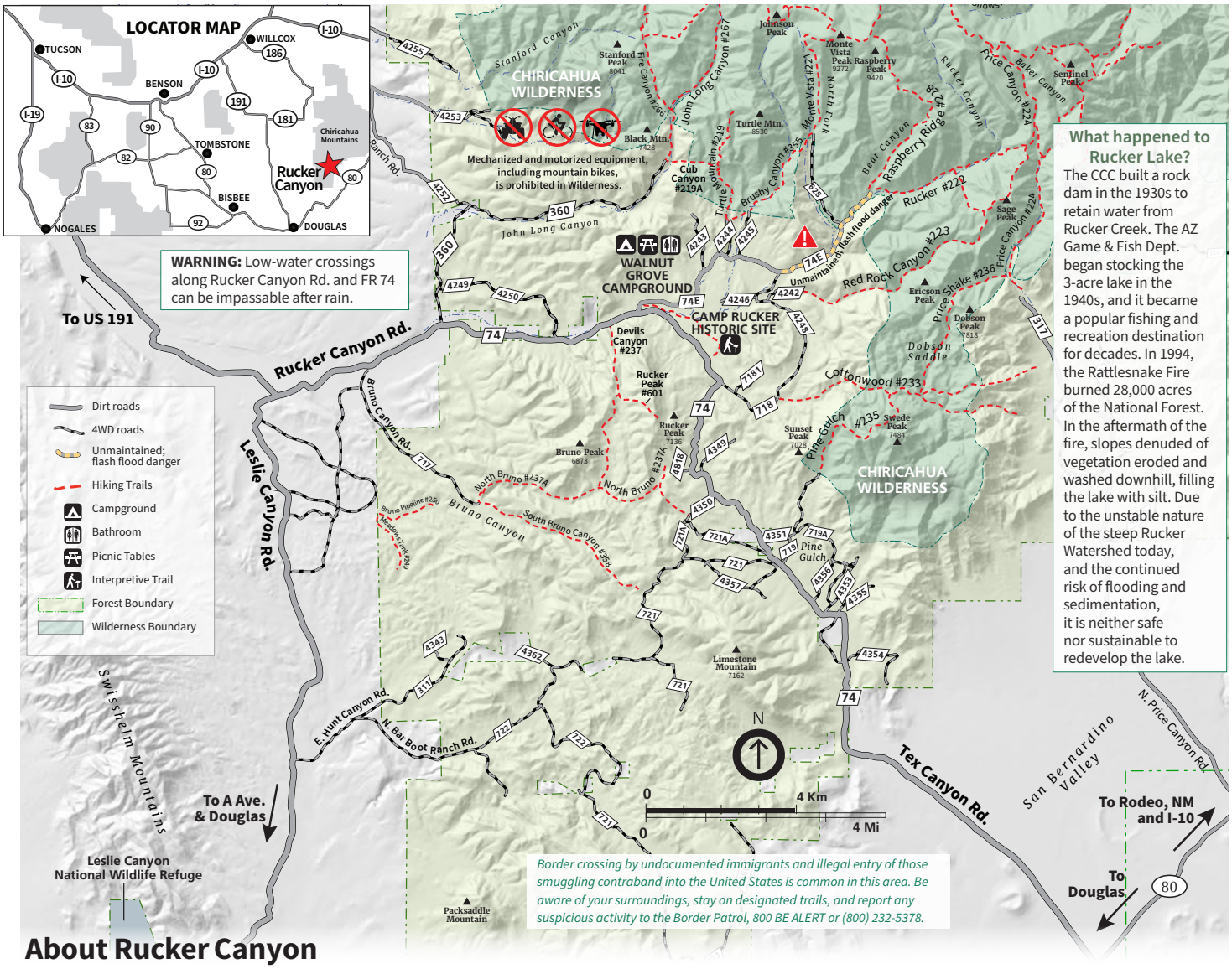
RUCKER CANYON
From volcanic rock spires eroded by wind to more recent effects of fire and flood, this canyon displays the powerful forces of nature. Rucker Creek flows as a perennial trickle, but can rapidly turn into a torrent with seasonal storms. A forest of pines, cypress, and sycamore lines the canyon, harboring a myriad of wildlife and offering shade for picnics or hikes along the canyon trails. See map on next page.

Recreation opportunities

Hiking	Multiple trails branch out from the Rucker Basin and lead into the Chiricahua Wilderness. Many trails have been damaged by wildfire. Be prepared for rugged trail conditions and difficult route finding. A map, compass, and GPS are strongly recommended. See map and descriptions on next page.
Cycling	The scenic dirt Forest Roads throughout the Rucker Basin offer endless biking opportunities for gravel bikes, e-bikes, and mountain bikes. Note that this is a remote area with limited cell service: Be prepared with plenty of water, food, a repair kit, and spare tires. Ride alert and single file.
Wildlife viewing	Varied topography, sprawling grasslands, and perennial water make the Rucker Basin an incredible place to view wildlife, including Gould's turkey, Coues' white-tailed deer, javelina, coatimundi, black bear, and numerous species of songbirds and hawks.
Camping	**Walnut Grove Campground (Fee required):** New in 2024, this developed campground, amid a grove of walnut, oak, and juniper, has vault toilets and 10 sites for tents or trailers with picnic tables and fire rings with grills. No drinking water is available. No hookups. Pay with cash or check on site. **Dispersed Camping (Free):** Undeveloped, primitive sites are available along FR 74 and FR 74E. Vehicles must stay within 300 ft. of the centerline of forest roads. Always follow the Dispersed Camping Best Practices that are available on the Coronado National Forest website. **WARNING:** Do not drive or camp along the dead-end FR 74E north of Red Rock Canyon if rain is predicted; this section of the canyon is prone to flash flooding.
Scenic driving	Forest roads throughout the Rucker Basin offer scenic routes for high-clearance vehicles, including the **Rucker-Tex Canyon Scenic Route #74** (an 80-mile loop from Douglas), as well as more challenging 4WD routes for OHVs. See map on next page and refer to the Douglas Ranger District Motor Vehicle Use Map. Roads may be impassable after rain or snow. **Please stay on designated motor vehicle routes!**

EMERGENCY OR FIRE: DIAL 911 **DOUGLAS RANGER STATION: (520) 364-3468**

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About Rucker Canyon

People have inhabited the Chiricahua Mountains for thousands of years. Evidence of Indigenous structures and tools in the area indicates that the Rucker Basin provided plentiful resources for early peoples to survive—and even thrive.

Once called White River, Rucker Creek now bears the name of Army Lt. John Rucker, who drowned here in 1878 attempting to save Lt. Austin Henely as he was swept away by high water in this flood-prone canyon.

Camp Rucker served as a base for Apache Indian Scouts and their officers, including Rucker and Henely, from 1878 to 1880. The US Army relied on Apache scouts, known as courageous warriors and skilled trackers, to locate any Chiricahua Apache attempting to evade capture and deportation to reservations. The Indian Scouts earned the same pay as regular troops; however, they were eventually sent away as prisoners, too.

Some structures from the Army Camp are visible today at the Camp Rucker Historic Site, along with buildings of the families that ranched here between 1884 and 1943.

The US Forest Service acquired the property in 1970 and works to preserve and interpret the site for visitors. The Rucker Canyon Archaeological District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. Visit Camp Rucker to learn more about the history of the area and imagine what life was like living in this remarkable canyon long ago.

Multiuse Trails

WARNING: Trails in the Rucker Basin are minimally maintained, and some have been damaged by wildfire. Be prepared for rugged conditions and difficult route finding. A map, compass, and GPS are highly recommended.

Devils Canyon #237	3.2 mi. (one way)	From the small trailhead off FR 74, this trail ascends the canyon shaded by stands of riparian trees and guarded by mysterious rock formations. Trail distance is to the junction with with North Bruno Canyon. An 0.8-mi. spur trail leads to Rucker Peak.
Turtle Mountain #219	2.3 mi. (one way)	Trail crews have been working to restore this trail, making it an enjoyable hike with great views of the Rucker Basin. From the end of FR 4244, the trail passes Sycamore Spring on its way up Sycamore Canyon before ascending a southern finger of Turtle Mountain.
Brushy Canyon #355	2.5 mi. (one way)	This trail enters the Chiricahua Wilderness as it winds up Brushy Canyon en route to the junction with Monte Vista Trail #221. The trail crosses the creekbed multiple times before a series of switchbacks starts the climb out of the canyon.
Rucker #222	4.5 mi. (one way)	Start at the end of FR 74E, and follow this shaded trail as it weaves along Rucker Creek. Watch for rock cairns to stay on trail at creek crossings, downed trees, or other obstacles. After approximately 2.5 miles, the trail turns to the northeast and climbs steeply out of the canyon to the junction with Trail #224. Enjoy excellent scenery and wildlife viewing all along this route.

Map updated May 2026 (Trail distances are approximate.)

Produced by the Public Lands Interpretive Association www.publiclands.org