



CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL DAY & OVERNIGHT HIKES NEW MEXICO



PHOTO BY ERIC "DG" SHAW



CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL COALITION VISIT NEW MEXICO

Day & Overnight Hikes on the Continental Divide Trail

The Land of Enchantment offers many wonderful CDT experiences! From the rugged Rocky Mountains to the desert grasslands of the Chihuahuan Desert, the CDT extends for 820 miles in New Mexico, running through the present-day and ancestral lands of numerous Native American tribes including the Chiricahua Apache, Pueblo, Western Apache, Ute, Diné (Navajo), and Zuni tribes. New Mexico is home to pronghorn antelope, roadrunners, gila monsters, javelinas, and turkey vultures, as well as ponderosa pines, cottonwoods, aspens, mesquite, prickly pears, and yuccas.

In this guide, you'll find the state's best day and overnight hikes on the CDT, organized from south to north.

ELEVATION: Many of these hikes are at elevations above 5,000 ft. Remember to bring plenty of water, sun protection, extra food, and know that a hike at elevation may be more challenging than a similar hike at sea level.

DRY CLIMATE: New Mexico gets an average of 14 inches of rain for the entire year. You will likely be hiking in a very dry climate, so bring plenty of water and stay hydrated.

NAVIGATION: Download the CDTC mapset at <https://continentaldividetrail.org/maps>. The Guthook Guides phone application also provides a trail map and user-friendly, crowd-sourced waypoint information for the entire CDT.

Hike Types:  OUT-AND-BACK  POINT-TO-POINT  LOOP



Southern Terminus of the CDT to Highway 81

Length: 25.3 miles
Difficulty: Moderate



PHOTO BY AMANDA WHELOCK

Begin at the Mexican border and experience the Big Hatchet Mountains Wilderness Study Area. Enjoy expansive views of the mountains and Big Hatchet Peak in the open desert. The biggest challenge of this route is that there is no visible trail - just BLM roads that intersect with the CDT. Navigate by following the CDT-blazed sign poles. In the spring, you'll see blooming ocotillo and hummingbirds, along with common jackrabbits and mule deer. There is very limited water in this section, so carry all your water. In the spring and fall, you may be able to purchase a water cache from CDTC at continentaldividetrail.org/southern-terminus-shuttle/. A state lands permit is required for this section. You can purchase one at continentaldividetrail.org/nmpermit/.

Closest Town: Lordsburg

Directions from Lordsburg: Take I-10 E for 25.5 miles. Take exit 49 to merge onto NM-146 and continue for 10.3 miles. Turn left onto NM-9 E for 0.4 miles and then turn right onto NM-81 S and continue for 27.6 miles. Turn left onto Commodore Rd and stay on this road for 21.4 miles, following the turns, until you reach Crazy Cook Monument.

Maps: USGS 7.5 quadrangles: Campbell Well, Sheridan Canyon, Hatchet Ranch, and Big Hatchet Peak; CDTC Map Set: Maps 001 - 004, Section NM01.

For More Information: BLM Las Cruces District Office: (575)-525-4300. For information about the southern terminus shuttle, visit continentaldividetrail.org/southern-terminus-shuttle/.



Burro Mountains and Burro Peak

Length: 8 miles

Difficulty: Moderate



THE VIEW NORTH OF BURRO PEAK.
PHOTO BY JOHNNY CARR

Trek across the landscape that inspired the prehistoric Mimbres Indians, whose artistic culture flourished until about 1150 A.D. and where struggles between Apaches and Buffalo soldiers marked the period from 1868 until the capture of Geronimo in 1886. This hike can be done as an out-and-back or 8-mile hike from Burro Peak Trailhead to C-Bar Ranch Road with a car parked at either end.

Closest Town: Silver City

Directions from Silver City: To get to the Burro Peak Trailhead, travel approximately 19.2 miles southwest on NM-90 W. Take a right onto Chisom Trail Rd and you will find the trailhead 400 ft down the road on the left.

Directions to C-Bar Ranch Road: For southern access, travel approximately 25 miles on NM-90 W until the intersection with C-Bar Ranch Road on the left. Access the trail through a gate on the north side of the highway. The section also crosses two forest roads, The Walking X Road (FR 861) and the Gold Gulch Road (FR 860), that intersect with NM-90. You can access the trail from these roads as well. Note that both forest roads are in arroyo bottoms that are sandy and soft most of the time.

Maps: USGS 7.5 Quadrangle: Burro Peak; USFS: Gila National Forest – Forest Visitor Map; CDTC Map Set: Maps 008-010, Section NM03.

For More Information: Silver City Ranger District, Gila National Forest: (575)-388-8201.



Little Walnut Trailhead

Length: 3 miles

Difficulty: Easy



ENJOYING LITTLE WALNUT TRAIL. PHOTO
BY JOHNNY CARR

This trail offers an easy opportunity to experience the CDT. There are a few spots that are a bit rocky and a couple short uphill, but overall this section of the CDT is a good hike for any skill level. Heading north on the CDT, you will find a green gate about 1.5 miles from the trailhead. This is a great place to enjoy the view and stop for a snack!

Closest Town: Silver City

Directions from Silver City: From the Visitors Center parking lot, turn north onto N. Hudson Street. Turn left onto US-180 on 14th Street. At the second stop light, turn right onto Little Walnut Road. Continue on Little Walnut Road for 5 miles. At the fork in the road, turn left, staying on Little Walnut Road. Continue for 1 mile and turn left when you come to Owens Road, staying on Little Walnut Road. Continue for one more mile. Little Walnut Road turns into North Fork Walnut Creek Road. There are parking options on either side of the road.

Maps: USGS 7.5 quadrangle: Silver City; CDTC Mapset: Map 027, Section NM07.

For More Information: Silver City Ranger District, Gila National Forest: (575)-388-8201.



Lake Roberts/ Hwy 35 to Sapillo Creek

Length: Variable
(5 - 12 miles)

Difficulty: Easy



A RIDE ON THE CDT NORTH OF HWY 35.
PHOTO BY DAN CARTER

This is a great hike, especially if you would like to spend a night at Sapillo Campground. Leaving Hwy 35 and hiking north on the CDT you will get to enjoy a relatively flat trail that meanders through grassland and sparse forest. After 2.5 miles, you'll reach Sapillo Creek, which offers refreshing shade and typically has water. Continue on the trail for 2.5 more miles and enjoy rewarding views of the surrounding area. Continue one mile further, and you'll reach Brannen Park. Here you'll find old corrals, seasonal water, and good camping and picnic spots.

Closest Town: Silver City

Directions from Silver City: Take US-180 E/Silver Heights Blvd for 7.5 miles. Turn left onto NM-152 N and continue for 14.3 miles. Then turn left onto NM-35 N. Lower Rocky Trailhead will be on the right after 20.3 miles.

Map: USGS 7.5 quadrangle: North Star Mesa; CDTC Map Set: Map 031, Section NM09.

For More Information: Gila National Forest, Silver City Ranger District: (575)-388-8201, and Wilderness Ranger District: (575)-536-2250.



Tsoodzil (Mt. Taylor)

Length: 6.2 miles

Difficulty: Moderate to Difficult



THE CIBOLA NATIONAL FOREST
NORTH OF TSOODZIL. PHOTO BY
WHITNEY LARUFFA

Leave from the Gooseberry Springs Trailhead across the road from the parking lot. While this hike is 6.2 miles, it is considered moderate to difficult due to the 2,000 feet you'll gain in elevation from the trailhead, situated at an altitude of 9,175 feet. Should you choose to shorten the hike and turn around before the summit, you'll still enjoy superb vistas on this CDT alternate.

Most choose to take this scenic trail along the dormant stratovolcano, but for a gentler hike, take the official CDT route, which wraps around Tsoodzil at lower elevation. Tsoodzil is one of the four sacred mountains marking Dinétah, the traditional Navajo territory, and the four cardinal directions.

Closest Town: Grants

Directions from Grants: From Grants, take Lobo Canyon Rd (NM 547) towards Tsoodzil (Mt. Taylor). After driving for 11 miles, turn right onto the upper loop of Forest Rd 193 and continue east for 5 miles to a small parking lot on the right. You will see the Gooseberry Springs Trailhead right across the road.

Maps: USGS 7.5 quadrangles: Lobo Springs and Mount Taylor; USFS: Cibola National Forest - Forest Visitor Map; CDTC Map Set: Maps 084-085, Section NM21.

For More Information: Cibola National Forest, Mt. Taylor Ranger District: (505)-287-8833.



El Malpais: Zuni-Acoma and Chain of Craters

Length: Variable (5 - 10 miles)

Difficulty: Moderate



A COOLED LAVA FLOW IN
EL MALPAIS NATIONAL MONUMENT.
PHOTO BY MATT BERGER

Within El Malpais National Monument, the CDT shares a path with the Zuni-Acoma Trail, an ancient route connecting the Pueblos of Zuni and Acoma, which has witnessed over 1,000 years of human travel and use. While the full trail is 30 miles, a good option is to access the lava terrain of the Zuni-Acoma Trail for an out-and-back just a few miles south of the northern monument boundary sign on the south side of Hwy 53. Wear sturdy boots to navigate the rugged, often sharp lava. You can hike up to 5 miles before the lava becomes more rugged. A visit to El Calderon, just over 5 miles southwest of the Zuni-Acoma Trail on the south side of Hwy 53, is also highly recommended. There, you can explore caves, lava flow sinks, and beautiful sandstone formations.

Closest Town: Grants

Directions from Grants: The Zuni-Acoma Trail begins on NM-53 16 miles south of I-40 and 1.5 miles into the park from the northern monument boundary sign. For the Chain of Craters hike, from Grants, travel south 23 miles on NM-53. At mile 23, travel south on NM-42 towards Cerro Bandera. From this point, hikers can travel south through the Chain of Craters area for up to 18 miles.

Maps: BLM – Acoma Pueblo, Zuni, Fence Lake, Grants, and El Malpais Recreation Guide Map; CDTC Map Set: 076-078, Section NM19.

For More Information: BLM, El Malpais National Conservation Area Ranger Station: (505)-761-8700; NPS, El Malpais National Monument Visitor Center: (505)-876-2783.



Mesa Portales

Length: 7 miles

Difficulty: Moderate to Difficult



THE VIEW FROM CUBA MESA.
PHOTO BY RYAN CHOI

Explore the sandstone cliffs and piñon-juniper woodlands of Mesa Portales while taking in panoramic views of nearby mesas, Cabezon Peak, and the Nacimiento and Sandia Mountains. Begin by following the CDT along a dirt roadway for approximately 1.5 miles before crossing the wide Chijuilla Wash. From here, posts and cairns mark the way through a wide arroyo to the top of Mesa Portales. The CDT continues to follow the mesa rim for another 2 miles. The trail continues southbound, but this is a good turn around spot. Mountain bikes and dogs are allowed on this section of trail. Shade is scarce, so be sure to pack plenty of water.

Closest Town: Cuba

Directions from Cuba: Drive 0.9 miles south to NM-197. Turn right onto NM-197. Proceed 4.3 miles to the dirt road on the left. Park or continue down the dirt road past sandstone bluffs to the large Chijuilla Wash.

Maps: USGS 7.5 quadrangles: Mesa Portales and Headcut Reservoir; CDTC Map Set: Map 097 and 098, Section NM24.

For More Information: BLM, Rio Puerco Field Office: (505)-761-8700; CDTC Cuba Gateway Community webpage: continentaldividetrail.org/cdt-gateway-communities/cuba.



San Gregorio Lake and San Pedro Parks Wilderness

Length: 15.2 miles
Difficulty: Moderate



ENTERING SAN PEDRO PARKS WILDERNESS.
PHOTO BY WHITNEY LARUFFA

Leaving from the Vacas/San Gregorio Lake Trailhead, this hike combines the Vacas, Los Pinos, and Lucero Trails for a loop that includes a section of the CDT. The best time for this hike is June through October. The CDT climbs to the beautiful San Pedro Parks Wilderness and then heads northeast towards the Chama River. Follow the CDT for 5.4 miles before reaching a junction with the Los Pinos Trail. Continue on the Los Pinos Trail for 2.8 miles before turning left onto the Lucero Trail and walking almost 4 miles to reach the CDT again. Turn right and continue 3 miles back to the trailhead. The 41,132 acre San Pedro Parks Wilderness contains many trails, allowing for different loop hikes. These trail segments offer remarkable solitude and abundant vegetation and wildlife. Rainstorms in July and August dot the landscape with wildflowers. Trout, including the native Rio Grand Cutthroat, dwell in the streams. The wilderness is also accessible from NM-126 for winter sports.

Closest Town: Cuba

Directions from Cuba: To get to the San Gregorio Reservoir and Vacas Trail, take NM-126 east for about 10 miles. Turn north onto Forest Road 70 and go about 3 miles to the Vacas Trailhead. There is ample parking and toilet facilities.

Maps: USGS 7.5 quadrangles: Gallina and Nacimiento Peak; San Pedro Parks Wilderness: Santa Fe National Forest; CDTC Map Set: Maps 100 and 101, Section NM25.

For More Information: Santa Fe National Forest's Cuba Ranger District: (505)-438-7840.



Ojitos Canyon

Length: Variable (1 - 10.7 miles)
Difficulty: Moderate



FALL COLORS NEAR THE RIO CHAMA.
PHOTO BY WHITNEY LARUFFA

Painter Georgia O'Keeffe found inspiration in these lands. Start this hike at Skull Bridge, near Abiquiu Reservoir to hike north among the area's renowned red and orange sandstone cliffs. The Rio Chama is one of the most impressive rivers in New Mexico and attracts kayakers, rafters, and canoers to the canyon. On the trail, a gradual elevation gain into Ojitos Canyon provides a rewarding view of one of the most picturesque sites in all of New Mexico. This is also a popular trail for equestrian users.

Closest Town: Chama

Directions from Chama: Drive south on US-84 E/US-64 E for 41.4 miles. Turn right onto Forest Road 151 and continue northwest along the Rio Chama for 8.2 miles to Skull Bridge and the intersection with Forest Rd 474 on the left. The bridge is closed to vehicular traffic and can be accessed along a dirt road coinciding with the CDT.

Maps: USGS 7.5 quadrangles: Echo Amphitheater and Laguna Peak; CDTC Map Set: Maps 104 and 105, Sections NM 26 and NM 27.

For More Information: Santa Fe National Forest, Coyote Ranger District: (505)-638-5526.



Overnight on the CDT from Hopewell Lake

Length: Variable (1 - 14 miles)

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate



ON THE CDT NEAR HOPEWELL LAKE CAMPGROUND. PHOTO BY MORGAN ANDERSON

Camp at Hopewell Lake Campground and set off on two day hikes — one headed north, the other headed south on the CDT. To the south, the CDT meanders through a mixed forest with 456 feet of elevation gain in the first 6.7 miles. To the north, the trail crosses US-64 and winds through sparse forest and grassland. The campground has picnic tables, vault toilets, and water, which is turned off in winter. You'll find the trail crossing at the end of the campground loop or the road to Hopewell Lake. If you plan to dispersed camp on the CDT, you must camp 300 feet away from the highway and designated camping areas.

Closest Town: Chama

Directions from Chama: Head south on NM-17 S/Terrace Ave toward 6th St for 1.5 miles. Continue onto US-64 E/US-84 E for 13.9 miles. Turn left onto US-64 E and continue for 29.9 miles. Turn right and continue onto Forest Rd 42B for 0.3 miles before reaching the campground.

Maps: USGS 7.5 quadrangle: Burned Mountain; USFS: Carson National Forest - Forest Visitor Map.

For More Information: Carson National Forest, Tres Piedras Ranger District: (575)-758-8678.



Cumbres Pass on the CDT

Length: 9 miles

Difficulty: Moderate



SUMMIT OF CUMBRES PASS. PHOTO BY AMANDA WHELLOCK

Experience the West's great railroad history firsthand! Take a ride from Antonito, CO, to Cumbres Pass just north of the Colorado-New Mexico border on the historic Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, then hike on the CDT. If you're not riding the train, park at the spur to the south of the train station - the CDT leaves from the parking lot. Heading north, you'll gradually climb through open, grassy meadows and cool subalpine forest with fantastic views of the surrounding mountains. You'll encounter a 25 foot waterfall at mile 2.8. About 1.7 miles after, you'll reach a long, prominent ridge at 11,000 feet. The trail follows this ridge north through spectacular mountain scenery, but this is a good turnaround spot and picnic site with a view of the Rio Chama Valley below.

Closest Town: Chama

Directions from Chama: Drive 12 miles (into CO) on NM-17 N/CO-17 N and look for the Cumbres Pass Train Station and CDT on your left.

Maps: USGS 7.5 quadrangles: W Fork Rio Brazos, Cumbres, and Archuleta Cr; CDTC Map Set: Maps 117 and 118, Sections NM31 and CO01.

For More Information: Chama Visitor Center: (575)-756-2306.

Did you know?

- New Mexico's state flower is the Yucca flower, the state animal is the black bear, and the state bird is the greater roadrunner. You can see all three of these state symbols on the CDT!
- New Mexico is the nation's 5th largest state by land area.



PHOTO BY ERIC "DG" SHAW

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