

MARKETAOS
A PUBLIC/PRIVATE INITIATIVE
DEDICATED TO PROMOTING TAOS



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Bureau of Land Management
Taos Field Office

Río Grande is
NEW MEXICO *True*



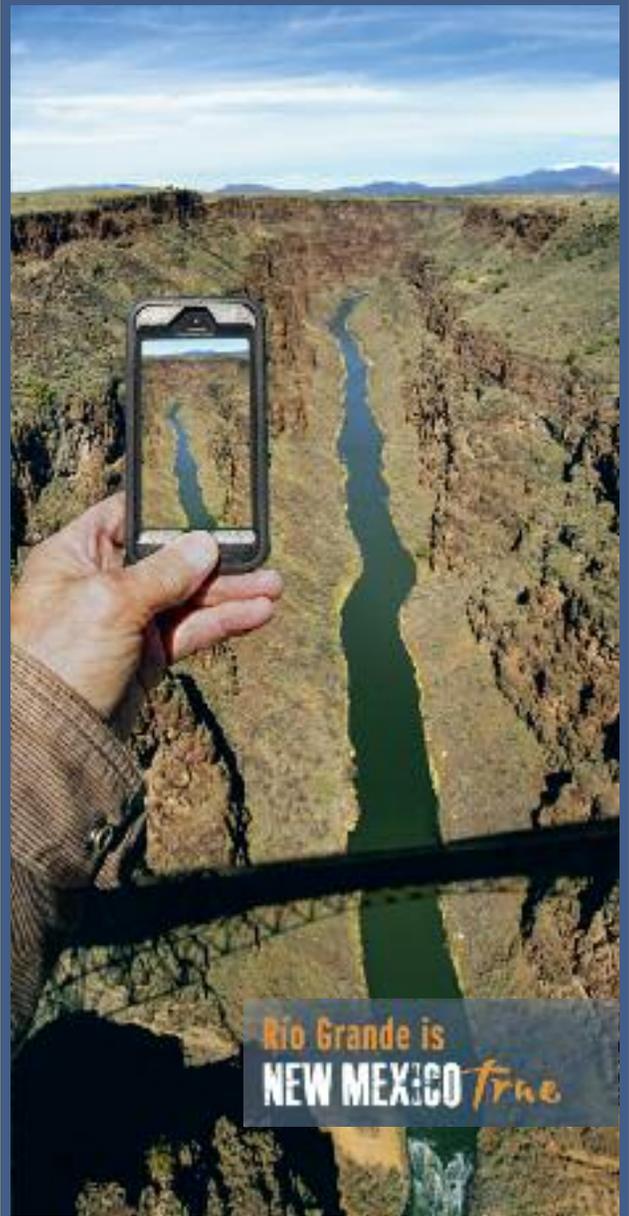
Questa Mine

PHOTOS: LOOKING NORTH FROM RÍO GRANDE
GORGE BRIDGE. RÍO GRANDE GORGE BRIDGE AND
SANGRE DE CRISTO MOUNTAINS. BY GERAIN T SMITH.

800.816.1516 TAOS.org

RÍO GRANDE DEL NORTE National Monument

A Guide to Over 300,000 Acres of
Natural Wonders in Taos, New Mexico



TAOS.org/nationalmonument

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New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is a nonprofit member-supported organization dedicated to protecting and restoring New Mexico's beautiful public lands, precious waters and wildlife. We worked for the protection of the Río Grande Del Norte National Monument for more than a decade. Join us in our work to keep New Mexico wild by becoming a member!

NEW MEXICO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE

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The Río Grande del Norte is one of the most stunning areas of New Mexico, with incredible wildlands and waters that are rich in both wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities. Throughout the U.S. The Wilderness Society works to protect the nation's most treasured public lands like these.

THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

505.247.0834
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¡Bienvenidos a
El Río Grande del Norte!

You are invited to explore el Río Grande del Norte National Monument, one of the newest in the nation, through this self-guided tour. The 310,528-acre monument—the majority of which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)—encompasses some of the most spectacular lands in all of the country, offering a wide range of outstanding recreational opportunities.

At the center of the monument the mighty Río Grande cuts into the thick lava flows of the Río Grande Rift Valley that make up the Taos Plateau. Two hundred feet deep at the Colorado border the Río Grande Gorge is one hundred and fifty feet across. West of Questa, where Big Arsenic Spring bubbles from the rock and piñon jays flock in the winter, the river is a glinting green ribbon eight hundred feet down; the opposite rim, where on summer mornings golden eagles soar southward in pairs, is over half a mile away. A bit further south at John Dunn Bridge the river enters the Taos Box, an 18-mile stretch of 900-foot cliffs and huge rapids that empty at the historic Taos Junction Bridge. Multitudes of wildlife species thrive in the diversity of habitat, and the petroglyphs of ancient cultures are to be found at nearly every turn in the trail.

The Río Grande del Norte also encompasses one of the great migratory bird routes in the world. Eagles, falcons and hawks make the basalt walls of the Gorge their nesting homes. Ospreys, scaups, hummingbirds, herons, avocets, merlins and willits all traverse the Gorge. The sound of sandhill cranes migrating south can be deafening while on an October hike in the tablelands west of the river. It's that western plateau that is perhaps the most wild. From the edge of the Gorge to the Tusas Mountains in the west, vast grass

■

and sagebrush mesas intersperse forested slopes of volcanic intrusions such as Cerro Chiflo, Cerro del Aire, Montosos and Cerro de la Olla. It is on these mesas and volcanic cones and domes where vast herds of pronghorn and elk find winter forage and calve late in the spring.

The monument is roughly bounded by the Gorge on the east and US Highway 285 on the west. The northern portion spills over US Highway 285, encompassing the broad, gently-rolling grass and sagebrush plains of the Río San Antonio Wilderness Study Area (WSA), bisected by yet another gorge where raptors nest in 200-foot-high lava walls and conifers clamber down to the trout-filled waters of the Río de los Pinos.

Perhaps the crown jewel of this whole area is Ute Mountain, a 10,093-foot-high volcanic cone rising nearly 3,000 feet above the surrounding plain. The steep slopes of Ute are covered in piñon at the base as well as pockets of ponderosa, aspen, white pine and Douglas fir in the higher elevations. From grassy meadows of blue grama, western wheatgrass and Indian ricegrass where the trees thin on the slopes of Ute, the Gorge is a jagged slash dividing the volcano from its sister cones to the west. Snow-capped Mount Blanca rises to the north, just across the state line. The whole Sangre de Cristo range rises to the east, peaking at Wheeler, the highest mountain in the state and Pueblo Peak, the sacred mountain of the original inhabitants of the region.

This complex landscape and the monument's unique position along the great rift and between two mountain ranges lend it a wealth of recreational opportunities from top to bottom.

The Gorge itself is famous among kayakers and rafters. From the mighty Class IV rapids in the Taos Box to the mellower but no-less-impressive run among towering cottonwoods below the Taos Junction Bridge,

■

the Río Grande offers something for all skill levels.

The Gorge also hosts some of New Mexico's top fishing waters as well as numerous hiking trails and mountain biking trails along the rim and into some of the more remote areas of the monument, particularly on the western plateau.

Both the size and remote setting of the national monument make it one of the better hunting areas in New Mexico, offering pronghorn, muledeer and elk hunting opportunities.

Several sections of the monument stand out for recreation, among them the Wild Rivers Area. Spreading over the confluence of the Río Grande and the Red River, both were designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers in 1968. Wild Rivers hosts a number of campgrounds, hiking and biking trails and fabulous views of the Gorge, the mountains and the Taos Plateau. To the south you will find the Orilla Verde Recreation area with camping at the edge of the river. The Taos Valley Overlook area offers excellent mountain biking experiences punctuated by amazing views of the landscape.

The human history of this landscape stretches back at least 15,000 years and every culture has left its memory on the landscape. From thousands-of-years-old hunting sites to Pueblo, Ute and Comanche petroglyphs dating back hundreds of years, to the sheep camps and abandoned homesteads of the early part of the 20th century, the creation of the national monument is yet another chapter in the evolution of this great land. You are encouraged to find your memories in the wildlands of northern New Mexico.

Welcome!
¡Bienvenidos!
Na-Tah-La-Wamah!

Compiled by Jim O'Donnell

EXPLORE YOUR NATIONAL MONUMENT

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PHOTOS ABOVE RIGHT, BALD EAGLE. PETROGLYPHS NEAR JOHN DUNN BRIDGE. SILKY PASQUE FLOWER. BELOW, MOUNTAIN BIKER AT TAOS VALLEY OVERLOOK.

OBJECTS OF VALUE AND A LOVE OF THE LAND



The Río Grande del Norte National Monument was established to protect the geological features, diverse ecosystem, wildlife and cultural resources of this great landscape. You can help to ensure these objects are available to visitors in the future by observing the following ethics:

Study the areas of the national monument you plan to visit. Make yourself aware of any particular policies in place for that area including fishing and hunting regulations and areas of critical environmental concern. Prepare yourself for the extreme and variable weather conditions that frequent the national monument. Bring water and emergency supplies.

Reduce your impact on the landscape by only driving on designated roads, biking on designated routes and hiking on designated trails. Avoid stream and river crossings to minimize erosion. Choose campsites carefully to avoid unnecessary damage to vegetation or cultural resource sites. Do not drive on roads when wet.

Dispose of your waste properly. Observe a "pack it in, pack it out" ethic, inspect your campsites for trash, use biodegradable soaps and keep human waste far from water sources.

Take only pictures and leave only footprints. Do not touch cultural structures or artifacts, leave natural objects as you found them and do not build new structures such as furniture or trenches on the landscape.

The Río Grande del Norte National Monument spreads across a high desert plateau and is sensitive to fire. Avoid making campfires outside of designated campfire locations or existing fire rings; use a portable camp stove instead. Any fires you do make, keep them small. Make sure campfires are properly extinguished.

When watching wildlife, observe them from a distance and never feed wild animals. Please leave your pets at home; if this is not possible, please keep them on a leash. Avoid wildlife during mating, nesting or times when they are rearing their young.

Finally, be considerate of other visitors. Respect them, their property and their experience of the national monument.



1 TAOS JUNCTION BRIDGE AND ORILLA VERDE

*Camping • Picnicking • Fishing
Boating • Hiking • Wildlife Viewing
Biking • Petroglyphs • Solitude*



Nestled along the banks of the mighty Río Grande, hundreds of feet deep inside the towering walls of the Gorge, Orilla Verde (“green banks”) straddles the river for several miles south of Taos Junction Bridge.

While the climate along the river is semi-arid, the dramatic shift in elevation creates a great number of ecotones and a wealth of plant and animal life. As one of the few natural crossings in the river, the area attracted ancient peoples who left their mark through petroglyphs and *tipi* rings.

That diversity in the landscape likewise creates a wide range of recreational opportunities. Seven campgrounds, picnic areas and two group shelters are located along the river, as are several boat launches.

ORILLA VERDE AND SANGRE DE CRISTO MOUNTAINS.

THE VISITORS CENTER IN PILAR PROVIDES TRIP-PLANNING INFORMATION. THIS LANDSCAPE HAS INSPIRED ARTISTS FOR GENERATIONS.



CAMPING UNDER DARK SKIES OF ORILLA VERDE.



Known for healthy populations of rainbow and brown trout as well as northern pike, it is well-suited to fishing.

Several trails depart from near the river. All are steep and challenging but well worth the effort and a number are decorated with ancient petroglyphs.

The Río Grande Gorge Visitor Center is located in the gateway community of Pilar at the intersection of New Mexico State Road 570 and New Mexico State Road 68. From May 1 through October, the Visitor Center and bookstore are open seven days per week from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Winter hours are from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. seven days per week.

Distance from Taos Plaza: 22 miles

Directions: Take New Mexico State Road 68 sixteen miles southwest to Pilar. Turn right onto New Mexico State Road 570. Drive about two miles to reach the monument and Orilla Verde. New Mexico State Road 570 continues along the river for six miles before reaching Taos Junction Bridge.

Fees are charged for use of campgrounds and developed access sites in Orilla Verde.

THIS SECTION OF RÍO GRANDE PROVIDES CALM BOATING WATERS.



2 TAOS VALLEY OVERLOOK

Biking • Hiking • Horseback Riding
Wildlife Viewing



TAOS VALLEY
JUST BEFORE
SUNSET.

The 2,600-acre Taos Valley Overlook sits on the rim of the Gorge above the Taos Junction Bridge and Orilla Verde. Dedicated to nonmotorized recreation, the sagebrush mesa is laced with an interconnected system of easy- to moderate-level mountain biking and hiking trails—also suitable for horseback riding. The trails all descend gently through the sage, rabbitbrush, Navajo tea and occasional piñon or juniper trees, to the expansive views of the Overlook at the edge of the Gorge. Several trails link up with paths climbing from the river.

The Rift Valley Trail provides an excellent nine-mile loop that is perfect for the novice but also attracts more advanced bikers.

The Slide Trail offers access to the whole area as well as the confluence of the Río Grande and the Río Pueblo de Taos, down the long-closed roadbed from Santa Fe to Taos.

ORILLA VERDE FROM TAOS VALLEY OVERLOOK.



ROCKY
MOUNTAIN
BIG HORN
SHEEP.



Coyotes, deer, elk and bighorn sheep can all be found in the dips and gullies of the mesa, while loud flocks of piñon jays race in waves across the landscape. Bald and golden eagles out on the hunt are another common site from the Overlook.

Distance from Taos Plaza: 10 miles

Directions: Take New Mexico State Road 68 south for about 10 miles. The Overlook trail parking lot is located on the west side of the road near mile markers 36.

The Slide Trailhead. Take New Mexico State Road 68 south for about 5.5 miles. Turn right on County Road 110.

Follow C110 approximately four miles to where the trailhead is located at the rim of the Río Pueblo de Taos canyon.



MOUNTAIN
BIKING ON
THE OVER-
LOOK TRAILS.





BACK
COUNTRY
HIKING ON
WEST RIM
TRAIL.
BUILDING
THE HIGH
BRIDGE
C. 1963.



3 RÍO GRANDE GORGE “HIGH BRIDGE” AND WEST RIM TRAIL

*Wildlife Viewing • Hiking
Mountain Biking • Local Arts & Crafts*

The Río Grande Gorge Bridge, known locally as the “High Bridge,” is a massive steel arch crossing the Río Grande Gorge northwest of Taos. Spanning 1,280 feet and secured nearly 565 feet above the river, the bridge is the seventh highest in the United States.

The High Bridge offers stunning views at every turn. From the sidewalks that line the bridge, the view straight down into the Gorge is breathtaking. To the east, tower the peaks of the Sangre de Cristo mountain range.

On the west side of the bridge is a rest area where you will



TAOS MESA
FROM AN
ULTALIGHT.

RÍO GRANDE
GORGE
BRIDGE
FROM THE
TAOS BOX.

find parking, picnic tables, restrooms and the trailhead for the nine-mile West Rim Trail. This moderate hike heads south to Orilla Verde and is perfect for those seeking an easy walk or bike ride. Going south, away from the bridge, you have an amazing view as the high peaks spread before you and the nearly 600 foot Gorge plummets down to your left. Returning north you see the bridge arching over the Gorge and framing the river below. The West Rim Trail can also be accessed on the south end off New Mexico State Road 567 at the north end of Orilla Verde.

Distance from Taos Plaza: 12 miles

Directions: Follow US Highway 64/ New Mexico State Road 522 north for approximately 3.5 miles to the last traffic signal as you head north toward the village of Questa. Turn west on US Highway 64 and travel about 8 miles. Cross the bridge and the parking area is on the left.

4 JOHN DUNN BRIDGE RECREATION SITE

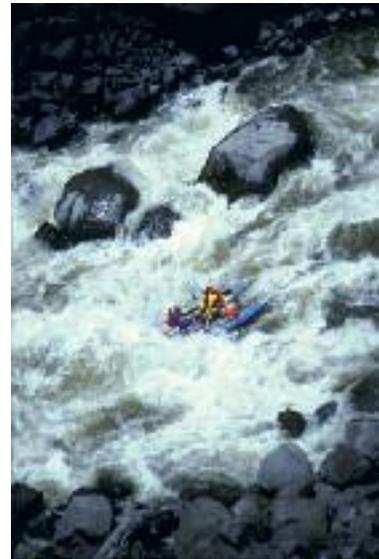
Hiking • Fishing • Picnicking
Rafting • Kayaking • Rock Climbing
Bird-watching • Hot Springs



BALLOONING OVER JOHN DUNN BRIDGE. ROCK CLIMBING AT JOHN'S WALL AT HONDO CREEK. MANBY HOT SPRINGS.

John Dunn Bridge is one of only three river crossings in the national monument. The bridge spans the Río Grande just a few yards above the confluence with the Río Hondo. The original bridge washed out and was rebuilt in 1908 by local businessman John Dunn, who ran a stagecoach and mail service from the west side. At one time there was a hotel, bar, restaurant and gambling parlor on the site—today, almost none of this remains. The current bridge, the third one at this location, was built in 1930.

As one of the only drivable access points to the river in the national monument, the location sees a large number of visitors who come for the excellent fishing and picnicking along the banks of the river. It is also the main launch point for rafters and kayakers pushing south into the



WHITEWATER IN THE TAOS BOX.

650 foot walls and the 18-mile stretch of the river known as the Taos Box. A small hiking trail runs north of the bridge along the eastern shore but becomes very rough after just a mile.

Five climbing walls hosting all skill levels are likewise located in the John Dunn area, as is the Black Rock Hot Springs, just a short hike down from the first switchback on the dirt road after you cross the river. Numerous Native American petroglyphs cover the cliff faces that line the Río Grande and, on chilly mornings, hot air balloons often float over the bridge and down the canyon.

Distance from Taos Plaza: 14 miles

Directions: Follow US Highway 64 /New Mexico State Road 522 north for about 9 miles. Turn left onto County Road B-007. Follow B-007 west for about 2 miles. Bear right down a curve and then left down a steep road to the bridge, about 2.5 additional miles.

MANBY HOT SPRINGS HOTEL AND BRIDGE, C. 1910.



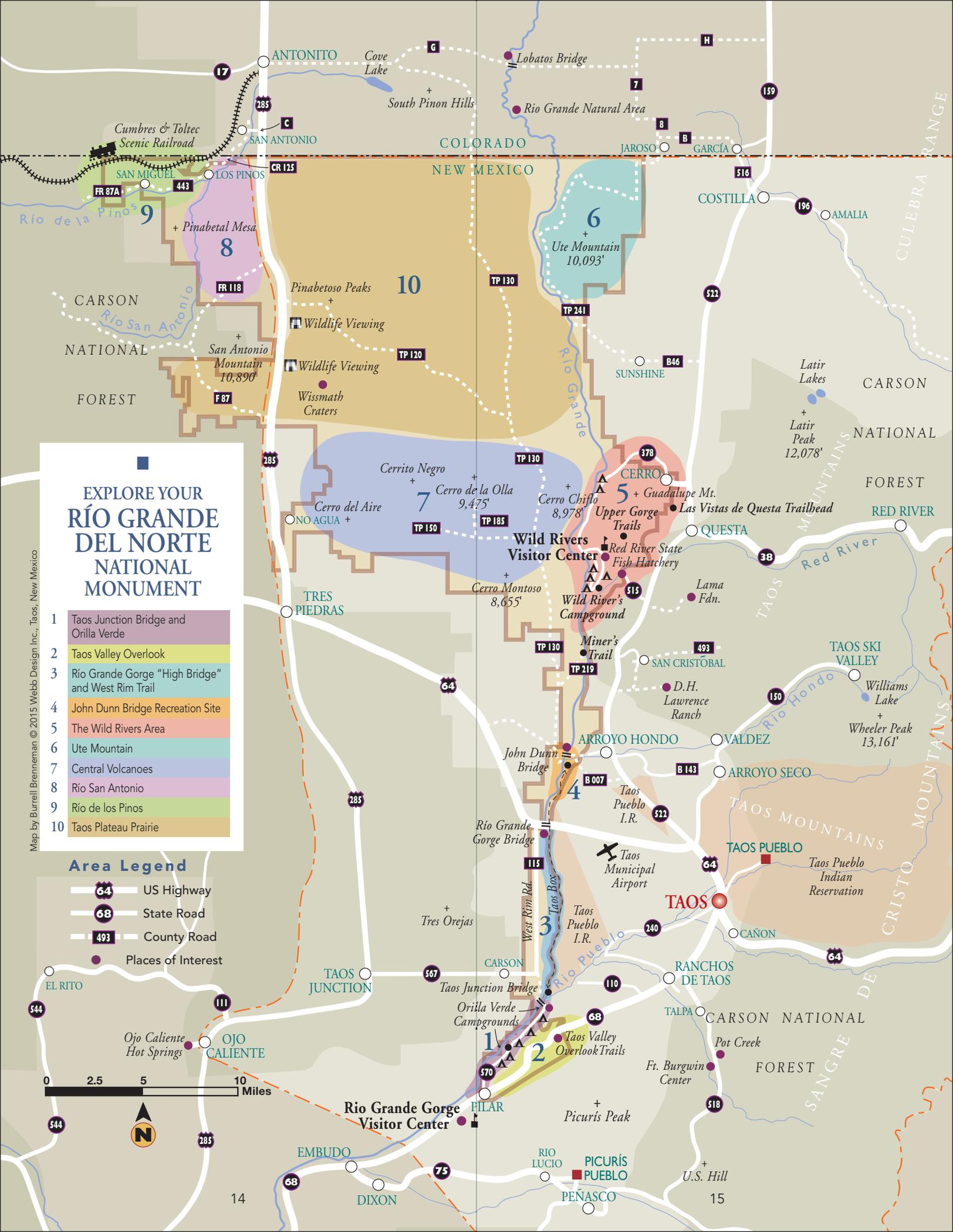
EXPLORE YOUR RÍO GRANDE DEL NORTE NATIONAL MONUMENT

- 1 Taos Junction Bridge and Orilla Verde
- 2 Taos Valley Overlook
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- 4 John Dunn Bridge Recreation Site
- 5 The Wild Rivers Area
- 6 Ute Mountain
- 7 Central Volcanoes
- 8 Río San Antonio
- 9 Río de los Pinos
- 10 Taos Plateau Prairie

Area Legend

- US Highway
- State Road
- County Road
- Places of Interest

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



5 WILD RIVERS AREA

Hiking • Camping • Fishing • Picnicking
Cross-country Skiing • Mountain Biking



**LITTLE
ARSENIC
SPRINGS
TRAIL.**

Cutting through the volcanic underside of the high plains of the Taos Plateau, the Río Grande rushes 800 feet below the spectacular La Junta Point at the Wild Rivers Area. Without a doubt one of the most impressive views in a state full of impressive views, La Junta towers above the confluence of the Río Grande and the Red River.

The dramatic shift in ecosystems from the rim of the Gorge to the riverbanks creates an amazing variety in flora and fauna. From ancient stands of piñon and juniper on top, down to ponderosa pine forests at the lower elevations, the area hosts a wide variety of birds including red-tailed hawks, eagles, falcons and blue birds. Mule deer, mountain lion, bobcat and prairie dogs also frequent the area.

Wild Rivers offers a universally accessible visitor center, overlook, picnic areas with tables and grills, drinking fountains and restrooms. There are also two group shelters and five developed campgrounds. A few campsites, accessible only by hiking, are located at the bottom of the Gorge.

The 13-mile Wild Rivers Backcountry Byway is a paved driving loop circling the entire recreation area. Within that loop is a graveled path that can be used for biking in the summer and cross-country skiing in the winter. Along the rim are several easy trails including a half-mile-long interpretive trail.

For the more adventurous, a number of challenging hiking trails leave from the rim for the banks of the Río Grande. The nearby Guadalupe Mountains are also accessible by foot.



**LLAMA
TREKKING
AT CEBOLLA
MESA.**

Two other access points are available. The Pescado Trail leaves for the Visitor Center from the Red River Fish Hatchery while the Cebolla Mesa Trail leaves from Forest Service lands south of the Red River and drops to the bank near the confluence of the two great rivers.

Don't forget to bring enough water for your trip!

The Visitor Center is open daily during the summer and on holiday weekends during the winter.

Distance from Taos Plaza: 40 miles

Directions: Follow US Highway 64/New Mexico State Road 522 approximately 27 miles north to the village of Questa. Three miles north of the only stoplight in Questa, turn left onto New Mexico 378 and follow the road about 12 miles southwest to The Wild Rivers.

The turnoff for Cebolla Mesa is located 19 miles north of Taos Plaza along New Mexico State Road 522. Turn left onto Forest Road 9 and follow it to the rim of the Gorge. The turnoff for the Red River Fish Hatchery is located 22.5 miles north of Taos Plaza along New Mexico State Road 522. Turn left onto State Road 515.

Wild Rivers is a fee area so be sure to stop at the pay station on the way in.

**RED RIVER FISH HATCHERY FROM PESCADO TRAIL.
BLM VISITOR CENTER AT WILD RIVERS.**



6 UTE MOUNTAIN

Hiking • Biking • Backpacking
Wildlife Viewing • Camping • Hunting
Horseback Riding • Stargazing



At 10,093' Ute Mountain is the highest point of the Río Grande del Norte National Monument. The rugged volcanic mountain juts dramatically nearly 3,000 feet up from the sage flats and grasslands at its base just south of the Colorado border. The striking rise offers a remarkable contrast to the nearby Gorge cutting along its western flank.

Ute and the surrounding volcanic cones are relics of an age when the Río Grande Rift valley spread and opened massive lava flows across the plateau.

The Ute Mountain area offers outstanding opportunities for solitude and wilderness-style recreation. The craggy landscape,

**UTE
MOUNTAIN
FROM LEE
TRAIL.**

LOOKING NORTHWEST FROM UTE MOUNTAIN.



**UTE
MOUNTAIN.**

free of designated trails, provides fabulous primitive recreational opportunities and some of the best stargazing skies in the nation.

Sharp elevation gain along the forested slopes of the mountain creates a great diversity of wildlife habitat. The steep slopes of Ute Mountain are covered in piñon at the base just above grassy meadows of blue grama, western wheatgrass and Indian ricegrass. The climb brings you into pockets of ponderosa, aspen, white pine and Douglas fir in the higher elevations where the trees thin and the sky opens to a one-of-a-kind vista. Beware of rattlesnakes and prickly vegetation. Be sure to bring plenty of water.

Distance from Taos Plaza: 45 miles

Directions: Follow US Highway 64/New Mexico State Road 522 north through the village of Questa and then just over the state line in Colorado. Turn left on County Road B toward the village of Jaroso, Colorado. Turn south and follow the signs into the Ute Mountain Area.

ACEQUIA HEADGATES NEAR UTE MOUNTAIN.



7 CENTRAL VOLCANOES

Hiking • Biking • Backpacking
Wildlife Viewing • Camping • Hunting
Horseback Riding • Stargazing

One of the more remote areas of the national monument, the Central Volcanoes Region is dominated by a series of extinct volcanic cones jutting from the sagebrush plateau. The cones generally date from 1.8 to 4 million years but the oldest dates to 22 million years ago, a time when the Río Grande Rift opened, spilling massive flows of basalt and rhyolite lava over what is now northern New Mexico.

The largest of the imposing cones are Cerro de la Olla (9,475 feet), Cerro del Aire (9,023 feet), Cerro Montoso (8,655 feet) and Cerro Chiflo (8,976 feet). Each offers ample opportunities for solitude, hiking, camping, wildlife watching and hunting. Of these, Cerro de la Olla is the most accessible. The landscape is extremely rough and challenging however, and proper preparation is required for a safe adventure in this area of the national monument. Be aware of potential thunderstorms as the roads are impassible when wet. Tell someone where you're headed. Bring extra supplies including plenty of water. Bring your cell phone. Four-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended.

Thanks to the porous volcanic substrate there is very little surface water in the area. This lack of water kept permanent settlement out of the area for thousands of years. It wasn't until the late 19th century that Hispanic sheep herders began

SAGEBRUSH-COVERED WILD LANDS.



**ANCIENT
LAVA FLOWS
MAKE UP
A LARGE
PORTION
OF THE
MONUMENT.**

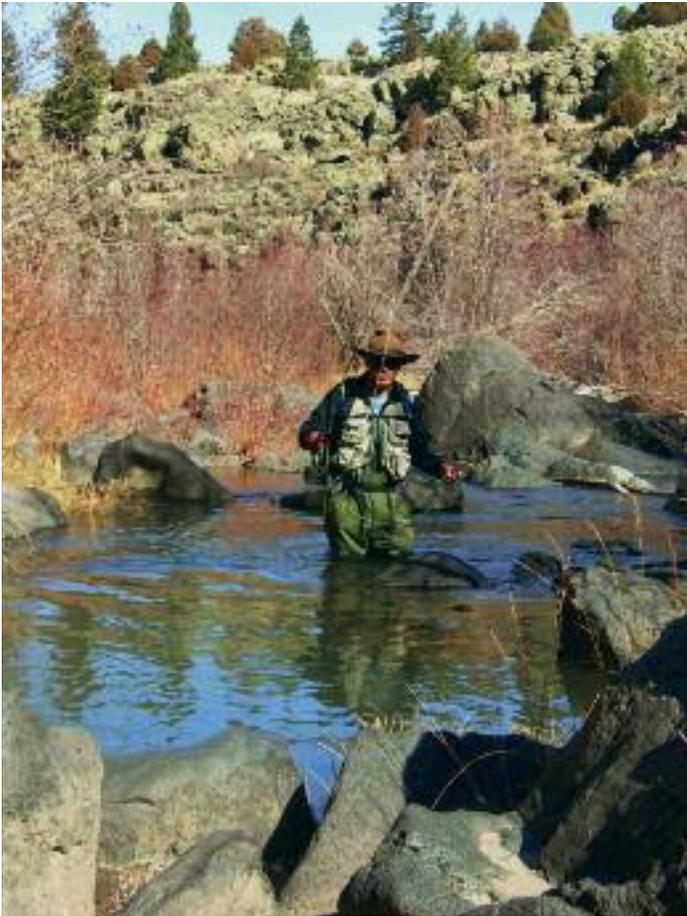
using the area on a seasonal basis. It wasn't until 1918 that 15-20 families, many of whom were veterans of World War I, made an attempt at homesteading. By 1933, they were gone.

Distance from Taos Plaza: 20 miles

Directions: Go north along US Highway 64 to the last traffic signal as you head north toward the village of Questa. Turn west on US Highway 64 and travel about 8 miles to the Río Grande Gorge Bridge. Continue northwest for about 3 miles to a dirt road on the right. Follow this road straight east for several miles then turn north onto TP130. Few roads are maintained, and summer rains or winter snows make for treacherous conditions. Inquire with BLM-Taos for current conditions (see page 29) and plan for possible emergencies.



VOLCANIC CONES AT PINABETOSO PEAKS.



8 RÍO SAN ANTONIO

*Fishing • Camping • Hiking
Bird-watching • Wildlife Viewing
Hunting • Cross-country Skiing*

Rolling grasslands dominate the 7,050-acre Río San Antonio Wilderness Study Area (WSA) anchoring the northwest corner of the Río Grande del Norte National Monument. Flowing from the Tusas Mountains to the west and sitting just below the extinct volcano known as San Antonio Mountain (10,908 feet), the Río San Antonio itself cuts the wilderness study area nearly in half as an inky gorge through local basalt layers. Many think of it as a miniature of the Río Grande Gorge. One of the special things about this river is that you barely know it is there until you are on the rim of the canyon. The grass and the flatness of the tablelands on either side effectively hide the river from view.

There are no designated trails in the area and the river is considered one of New Mexico's best fly fishing waters.

For wildlife viewers, this is an amazing area. The open terrain provides incredible visibility. Everything from elk to mule deer,

**FLY FISHING
ON RÍO SAN
ANTONIO.**



**SAN ANTONIO
MOUNTAIN.**

pronghorn, black bear, mountain lions, coyotes, prairie dogs, wild turkey and raptors such as red-tail hawks, bald eagles and peregrine falcons can be found here.

It is worth noting that New Mexico conservation organizations have recommended that the San Antonio WSA is part of a larger 25,100 acres of wilderness quality lands. So your options to roam this vast open landscape are more numerous than the official boundaries suggest—just don't do it in a vehicle.

Distance from Taos Plaza: 51 miles

Directions: Drive north along US Highway 64 to the last traffic signal as you head north toward the village of Questa. Turn west on US Highway 64 and continue to the village of Tres Piedras. Turn north on US Highway 285 and drive about 15 miles north. Turn west onto Forest Road 118 north of San Antonio Mountain and drive about 3 miles to a small dirt trail that goes north along the eastern side of the little canyon. Four-wheel drives recommended.

**RÍO SAN
ANTONIO
WILDERNESS
STUDY AREA.**



9 RÍO DE LOS PINOS

Fishing • Hiking • Mountain Biking
Wildlife Viewing • Camping
Horseback Riding

The hauntingly beautiful River of the Pines flows from Colorado's San Juan Mountains into New Mexico where it loops through deep canyons, a nearly pristine pine forest and past several expansive meadows. After nearly twenty miles, it runs back across the Colorado border and meets the Río San Antonio near the terminus of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad at the village of Antonito.

The New Mexico portion of the loop runs through a mix of private lands, Carson National Forest and the Río de los Pinos Wildlife and Fishing Area, managed by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. The Río de los Pinos is one of the premier fly-fishing rivers in New Mexico with healthy populations of both rainbow and brown trout. The best action comes in the early autumn when the browns grow aggressive and give anglers quite the workout.

FLY FISHING ON THE RÍO DE LOS PINOS.



ELK HERD IN WINTERTIME.

The relatively unspoiled nature of this section of the Pinos creates a sanctuary for wildlife, including resident elk populations. Several beaver ponds offer haven for a variety of water fowl while bobcats, black bear, mountain lion, mink, turkey, and eagles roam the forests and canyons of the area.

Distance from Taos Plaza: 71 miles

Directions: Go north along US Highway 64 to the last traffic signal as you head north toward the village of Questa. Turn west on US Highway 64 and continue to the village of Tres Piedras. Turn north on US Highway 285 and drive about 20 miles north, just across the Colorado border. Turn west on County Road C to the village of San Antonio. Take County Road 12.5 southwest to County Road 443 and back across the state border into the area.

WATER STOP ON CUMBRES & TOLTEC SCENIC RAILROAD.



10 TAOS PLATEAU PRAIRIE

Bird-watching • Hiking
Wildlife Viewing • Hunting
Camping • Stargazing • Mountain Biking



WALKING
RAIN AT
SUNSET.

The vast grassland prairies of the north central portion of the national monument lie atop the Taos Plateau volcanic field, the second largest volcanic field in the Río Grande Rift. Covering a significant portion of the monument, the Taos Plateau Prairie ecosystem is made up of sheet flows of basalt and rhyolite lava. The Pinabetoso Peaks located on the southwestern end of this region are some of the youngest volcanic cones in the national monument.

This is an incredibly remote and wild landscape comprised of rolling hills of winterfat and grama grass, sage and cactus. For such a seemingly desolate area, the plateau hosts a wide array of wildlife including scaled quail, mountain plover, western burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk

PINABETOSO PEAKS.



TAOS
PLATEAU
PRAIRIE WITH
SANGRE DE
CRISTO
MOUNTAINS.

and a whole host of migratory birds. Gunnison's prairie dogs, pronghorn, swift fox, badger, box turtles and tarantulas can also be found in the grasslands.

Well-known for its hunting opportunities and sky watching, the Taos Plateau Prairie also offers opportunities for hiking, camping and mountain biking.

This area is remote and rough. There is little water available and when wet, the dirt roads turn to a sticky mud that will easily suck in a car. Plan your trip to this area of the national monument accordingly.



ANCIENT
CAMPSITE
IN A
SEASONAL
PLAYA.

Distance from Taos Plaza: 50 miles

Directions: Drive north along US Highway 64 to the last traffic signal as you head north toward the village of Questa. Turn west on US Highway 64 and continue to the village of Tres Piedras. Turn right on US Highway 285 and drive about 17 miles north. Turn east onto a signed BLM Road (TP120) towards Pinabetoso Peaks. The prairie spreads to the north.

SPONSORS



Taos Land Trust

Taos Land Trust conserves open, productive and natural lands for the benefit of the community and culture of northern New Mexico. 575.751.3138, taoslandtrust.org



Albuquerque Wildlife Federation

Follow Aldo Leopold's legacy of conservation and join us for volunteer projects restoring New Mexico's wild lands. Facebook. MeetUp. ABQ.nmwildlife.org



Cottam's Rio Grande River Trips

Full and half-day white-water rafting adventures for ALL levels. Taos Box, Racecourse, or Scenic Lower Gorge. Paddleboards and funyaks. 800.322.8267, cottamsriogranderafting.com



Geraint Smith Photography

Full and half-day photo tours and workshops in the unique, enchanting landscape of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. 505.501.4880, geraintsmith.com/phototours.html



Jim O'Donnell Photography

Specializing in conservation, landscape and travel photography for online and print publications. Fine art prints, tours, lessons available. 575.779.1181, jimodonnellphotography.com



Los Ríos River Runners

NM's oldest, most-experienced rafting company. Mild to wild, white water for everyone. Half-day, full-day, and overnights. 575.776.8854, losriosriverrunners.com



Mountain Skills Rock Guides, LLC

The best national monument experience!! First time beginners to experts. Enjoy rock climbing with AMGA-certified guides. Great family fun! 575.776.2222, climptaos.com



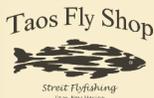
New Wave Rafting

Providing top notch raft trips on the Río Grande since 1980. Half-day, full-day (and multi-day trips on the Río Chama). 800.984.1444, NewWaveRafting.com



Río Grande del Norte: An Intimate Portrait

A book of photographs from the Upper Río Grande Region of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado by photographer Geraint Smith. 160pp, \$35. 505.501.4880, geraintsmith.com/book



Taos Fly Shop

We've been guiding the Río Grande for 40 years. Big wild trout galore! Visit our complete fly shop in Taos. 575.751.1312, taosflyshop.com



Wild Earth Llama Adventures

Llama Trekking in the Río Grande Gorge! Explore the national monument with a gentle and sure-footed llama! Naturalist guides. Gourmet meals. 800.758.5262, LlamaAdventures.com

VISITOR RESOURCES



Bureau of Land Management, Taos Field Office

The BLM operates two monument welcome centers: in Pilar (open year-round) 575.751.4891 and at Wild Rivers Area (open summer months) 575.586.1150. The BLM leads hikes in Río Grande del Norte National Monument from May to September to help the public learn more about geologic, wildlife, ecological and cultural treasures of your national monument. This is an excellent way to learn more about and to experience the area. BLM.gov/nm/riograndedelnorte



Public Lands Interpretive Association

BLM's nonprofit partner at Río Grande Gorge and Wild Rivers visitor centers, providing educational and interpretive merchandise for visitors. 505.345.9498, publiclands.org



Village of Questa Visitor Center

Gateway to the Wild Rivers Area of the Río Grande del Norte. Hiking, camping info and maps. Open May-September. #1 New Mexico Highway 38 in Questa. 575.613.2852, Questa-NM.com



Taos Visitor Center

On New Mexico State Road 68 at US Highway 64. Pick up visitor information and browse arts and crafts made locally. 575.758.3873, taos.org/visitor-center

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