

Welcome Hikers!

Here are some of the most beautiful and least used hiking trails in Colorado. This guide is intended to help you choose a hike that is appropriate for your skill level, your desire for different types of scenery, and the amount of time and ambition you have available to hike. It should not replace detailed maps and up-to-the-minute local information. Conditions of the trails can vary due to flooding, landslides or other natural causes. Most of these trails are managed for a variety of uses; you may encounter mountain bikes, horseback riders, and/or dirt bikes. There are also many other hiking trails in the area. Contact the local offices of the land management agencies for the most current information.

Hiking in the Rockies: can be a different experience for hikers used to other climates. There are a few special precautions you need to take to make sure your hike is an unforgettable and enjoyable one.

High Altitude Awareness: These hikes range from 5,000 feet to over 12,000 feet in elevation. Many people can have symptoms of high altitude sickness even at the lowest of these elevations. The most common symptom is a headache. This can be followed by nausea, vomiting, disorientation and loss of consciousness. In severe cases, the victim can die. There is a simple remedy: get to a lower altitude as quickly as possible. Avoid dehydration by taking plenty of drinking water with you. Most people can avoid symptoms by allowing themselves two days of relative inaction to acclimatize.

Weather: "one minute sunshine, the next a blizzard," is a often-heard description of our mountain areas, even in summer. The best advice is to pay strict attention to the weather forecast, and be prepared for extreme changes in weather. One of the greatest dangers in high-altitude hiking is the thunderstorm that can build up at a moment's notice. If you are caught in one, abandon high ground as quickly as possible to avoid lightning. Do not camp in streambeds or low lying areas since they are prone to flash flooding. Flash floods can originate miles from the scene of their greatest destruction—don't assume if it isn't raining where you are then there is no chance of flooding.

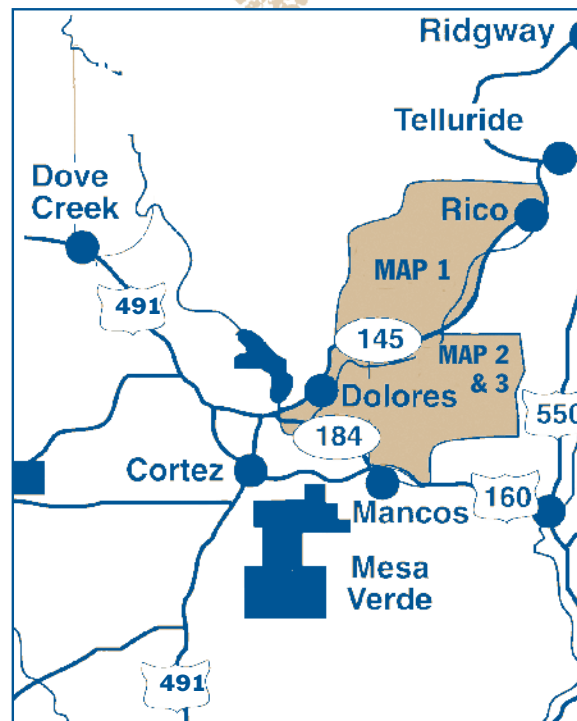
Don't Drink the Water: Giardiasis, a virulent amoebic dysentery, occurs in all open waters in the state. It causes extreme intestinal discomfort, diarrhea and subsequent dehydration, and often requires hospitalization for treatment. Do not drink untreated water. Boiling the water for

several minutes will kill the organisms. Alternately, use a chemical water purification tablet or liquid. Do not take water from streams that have oddly colored (red and yellow) streambeds. These streams are often contaminated by naturally occurring mercury and lead and other heavy metals.

Wildlife Means Wild: Part of the attraction of hiking and backpacking is the chance of closer contact with wild things. But for safety's sake, maintain a respectful distance from the animals you meet. Animals that are startled, surprised or that feel trapped can be unpredictable and dangerous. Keeping campsites clean and food put away will keep bears, skunks, and other creatures from getting too close for comfort.

Above All, Enjoy! These few precautions will help you avoid most problems on your hike, letting you truly enjoy the wonderful experience of hiking in Mesa Verde Country."

Other Information: For the most up-to-date information on these and other public hiking trails in the area, contact the appropriate land management agency.



HIKING

2006 EDITION

Guide to Scenic Hiking Trails in Mesa Verde Country™

CORTEZ • DOLORES • MANCOS



Experience Colorado from the Beginning!

Mesa Verde Country™ is filled with adventure all year long. Come back again and again!

- Archaeological center of the United States
- Home to Mesa Verde National Park
- Trail of the Ancients National Scenic Byway
- Fine accommodations and restaurants for all budgets
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- Indian dancers, storytellers, art, pottery, and trading posts
- Excellent area hiking, camping, bicycling and fishing on public lands
- Beautiful 18-hole golf course

We have additional brochures about area Day Trips, Archaeology Tours, Hiking, Fishing and even Skiing. Just ask, they're free!



VISITOR INFORMATION BUREAU
P.O. Box HH, Cortez, Colorado 81321
800-253-1616 (USA and Canada)
www.mesaverdecountry.com

Bring your fishing pole: Many of these trails take you into some of the best fishing streams in the state. Rainbow, Cutthroat, Brown and Brook trout are easily enticed by artificial flies in these crystal clear backcountry brooks. The fish range from pan-size in the high mountain streams to sixteen inches in the Dolores river catch-and-release area. Bear, Chicken, Fish and Stoner Creeks, and the Dolores, West Dolores, and West Mancos rivers are all good fishing streams.



Priest Gulch Trails (FST 645 & 201)

Starting elevation: 8050 ft (Priest Gulch Trailhead, Highway 145, across from the Priest Gulch campground)
Highest elevation: 12,150 ft (Sockrider Peak)
Ending elevation: 11320 ft (Junction with Calico Trail)
Trail length one-way: 7.5 mi junction with the Calico Trail.
Maps: See map 1, SJNF* map, USGS 7 1/2' Quads – Wallace Ranch, Clyde Lake, Rico, Dolores Peak
Difficulty: Moderate-Difficult

Directions to trailhead:
From Dolores on Highway 145, travel northeast for approximately 23 miles. The trailhead is clearly marked on the north side of the highway; the turn is next to a private driveway.

For a five-mile loop, take the Priest Gulch Cutoff Trail #201 at mile 1.5, which will take you up (it is steep!) to the lower portion of the Calico Trail and back down to the Priest Gulch Trailhead.

As the trail climbs in elevation alongside Priest Gulch drainage, it passes thru lush meadows and a forest of spruce, fir, and aspen. This trail intersects with the Calico Trail around mile 7.5. For a sixteen-mile loop hike, take the lower portion of the Calico Trail back to the Priest Gulch Trailhead. If on horseback, be aware the final stretch of the lower portion of the Calico Trail is very steep as it drops down into the Dolores River Canyon.

*SJNF -San Juan National Forest map



Calico Trails (FST 208 & 649)

Starting elevation: 10,500 ft (Calico Trailhead, FDR 471 near the Meadows)
Highest elevation: 12,150 ft (Sockrider Peak)
Ending elevation: 8050 ft (Priest Gulch Trailhead)
Trail length one-way: 19.2 mi
Maps: See map 1, SJNF map, USGS 7 1/2' maps
Quads – Wallace Ranch, Clyde Lake, Rico, Dolores Peak
Difficulty: Moderate-Difficult

Directions to the Upper Calico Trailhead:
From Dolores on Highway 145, travel east for approximately 43 miles, and take the north end of the West Fork Road (FDR 535) turnoff, which is across the highway from Cayton Campground (7 miles north of Rico). The road switch backs out of the Dolores River Canyon for several miles, then turns south on the Eagle Creek Road (FDR 471). The trailhead is approximately one mile down this road.

The Calico Trail is comprised of two sections; the ‘Upper’ and ‘Lower’. A loop hike is possible using the upper portion of the Calico Trail, which is also a designated National Recreation Trail (NRT). Starting from the Meadows at the Calico Trailhead, the Winter Trail (# 202) branches to the northwest. The trail descends gradually for the first 2 miles, and then drops into the West Dolores Canyon arriving just east of Dunton, 8770 ft. The trail (now the Falls Creek Trail, # 640) then starts up Fall Creek Canyon, and climbs rapidly to join the Calico just northeast of Johnny Bull Mountain. From there it’s up over Sockrider Peak and back down to the Meadows. Total round trip is about 13 miles.

The lower portion of the trail (# 649) can be accessed via the Priest Gulch Trailhead, (# 645, see Priest Gulch for trailhead location). Originally designed as a stock drive into the high country, this trail was built through the efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) in the 1930’s. Beginning at the Priest Gulch Trailhead, the Lower Calico trail begins by crossing Priest Gulch Creek via a walking bridge, and starts up a fairly steep accent up a redrock ridge via many switchbacks. It will be a steady climb for about 1.4 miles through a mixed ponderosa pine and aspen forest before leveling out. For a loop hike using the lower portion of the trail, you can take the Priest Gulch Cut-off (Trail 201) at mile 2.3 which will cut over to Priest Gulch trail and back down to the Priest Gulch Trailhead for approximately a 5 mile loop hike.



The Mesa Verde Trails

Hiking in Mesa Verde National Park is strictly limited to a few short hiking trails. Due to the fragile nature of the park's numerous archaeological sites, all hiking in the backcountry and into cliff dwellings is restricted to designated sites. Please contact the park for current and specific trail information.

The main park hiking trails include three quiet but spectacular walks in the Morefield Campground area. The first ascends Point Lookout, a prominent ridge that overlooks both the Mancos and Montezuma Valleys. The spectacular site may have been used as a signal relay point for the U. S. Cavalry in the 19th century. The second is the Knife Edge Trail, a nostalgic remnant of the old park access road. This easy trail skirts the base of the sandstone cliffs, which form the dramatic landscape of the Mesa Verde's northern escarpment. The third trail, Prater Ridge, is the longest trail open in the park. The seven-mile loop winds along the top of Prater Ridge and offers the adventurous hiker a quiet walk through the park's highland ecosystem.

A second set of trails emanates from the area near Spruce Tree House and the Chapin Mesa Archaeological Museum. Two trails, the Petroglyph Point Trail and the Spruce Canyon Trail begin together near the Spruce Tree Ruin. The trails soon diverge allowing hikers to choose between a 2.8-mile loop that passes by a panel of spectacular rock art, and a shorter loop walk, which provides hikers with a glimpse of the canyon bottom environment.

The park also has a few short trails that provide excellent photographic opportunities of cliff dwellings and other archaeological sites. A few of these are Soda Canyon/Balcony House overlook trail, the Cedar Tree Faring House trail, and several short walks to ruins overlooks along the Wetherill Mesa Road. For seasonal trail information and permission on hikes in Mesa Verde National Park, contact any park ranger before starting. Remember Federal laws protect all artifacts on public lands. Leave all artifacts where you found them for others to enjoy as well.



Dolores River Canyon

Starting elevation: 6220 ft
Lowest elevation: 5550 ft
Ending elevation: 6070 ft
Trail length one-way: 15 mi. to Dolores Ford, 11 mi.
From the ford to Hwy 141
Maps: BLM "Dove Creek", USGS 7 1/2' maps: Secret Canyon, Joe Davis Hill, Hamm Canyon.
Difficulty: Easy, to moderate

This trail leads you into a near-Grand Canyon backcountry experience. The trail starts just out of Dove Creek and follows the bottom of the Dolores canyon for almost its full course. Over the first part of the hike, the top of the canyon walls is three-quarters of a mile above you. The first eleven miles is an even, two-track road taking you through this display of red-rock geology.

Toward the end of this stretch, the valley widens as the river eases toward the east in preparation for the Pyramid Rock gooseneck. The river loops around the north side of the rock while the trail crosses a rise between the Pyramid and the canyon wall. This might be a good turning point as the trail gets rougher and there is a ford another four miles ahead. At this point, the canyon is only about 1500 feet deep, but on the opposite side of the river, most of that elevation is in the form of the spectacular Joe Davis Hill Cliff, nearly 600 feet high. Do not attempt to cross the river if the flow is above 100 cfs. Call the Dolores Public Lands Office for flow information (970) 882-7296 or visit the San Juan Resource Area website at www.co.blm.gov/sjra/sjdolores.htm.

After you cross the river, the trail continues along the base of the hill and then around into a narrow defile, the narrowest section of the canyon. The country opens up after that area, and the road climbs out of the river bottom, over the narrow part of another gooseneck, and then out of the canyon. After crossing Disappointment Creek, the trail winds up on San Miguel County Road 13 just off Highway 141.



The Lizard Head Wilderness Trails

The Lizard Head Wilderness Area is one of the most rugged and pristine sections of Southwest Colorado. Most of the hiking trail mileage in this 41,492-acre area is near or well above timberline. There are three 14,000 ft. peaks within the area, with Mount Wilson (14,246 ft.) being one of the most difficult of Colorado's Fourteeners to climb, requiring technical expertise and equipment. The eastern portion of the area is well hiked, with the Navajo Lake, Lizard Head, Bilk Basin, Cross Mountain, and Woods Lake Trails covering the territory well. Be aware that campfires are prohibited in Navajo Basin.

The western portion of the area is accessible only to those hikers willing to travel cross-country. There are no established hiking trails west of the Navajo Lake Trail and north of the Groundhog Stock Drive Trail.

The San Juan National Forest and the Uncompahgre National Forest have jointly published an excellent brochure on the hiking opportunities available in the wilderness area. Their brochure also outlines some of the hazards of high-altitude hiking, and suggests some minimum impact techniques that are useful for any hikers, anywhere. The brochure is available from the Dolores Ranger District of the SJNF, or the Norwood Ranger District of the Uncompahgre National Forest. Stop at either of these offices for more information on trail conditions, access and difficulty.



Fish Creek Trail (FST 647)

Starting elevation: 8190 ft (West Fork Road, FDR 535)
Ending elevation: 10,150 ft (FDR 404)
Trail length one-way: 9.5 mi
Maps: See Map 1, SJNF, USGS 7 1/2' maps: Clyde Lake, Groundhog Mountain.
Difficulty: Moderate

This trail is accessed from the West Fork Road (FDR 535) by turning on to FDR 726 (through the Fish Creek Ranch gate) and continuing another 1.5 miles to the Fish Creek State Wildlife Area. The first 1.5 miles of the trail follows Fish Creek, and takes you back on National Forest lands. After the trail crosses Little Fish Creek, it begins to skirt Black Mesa. It is a consistent, gentle climb around to Willow Creek, which flows in from the east with the trail swinging around to the north to the 8.5 mile mark. From there, the trail climbs out of the canyon, up the side of Black Mesa, to FDR # 404, which will take you to FDR #611 and Dunton. As the name implies, there is usually good trout fishing in Fish Creek.



Upper Dolores Trails

The Stoner Trails – (FST 624, 625)

Starting elevation: 7560 ft (Lower Stoner Trail Head)

Ending elevation: 11,650 ft. (Calico Trail)

Trail length one-way: 17.5 mi.

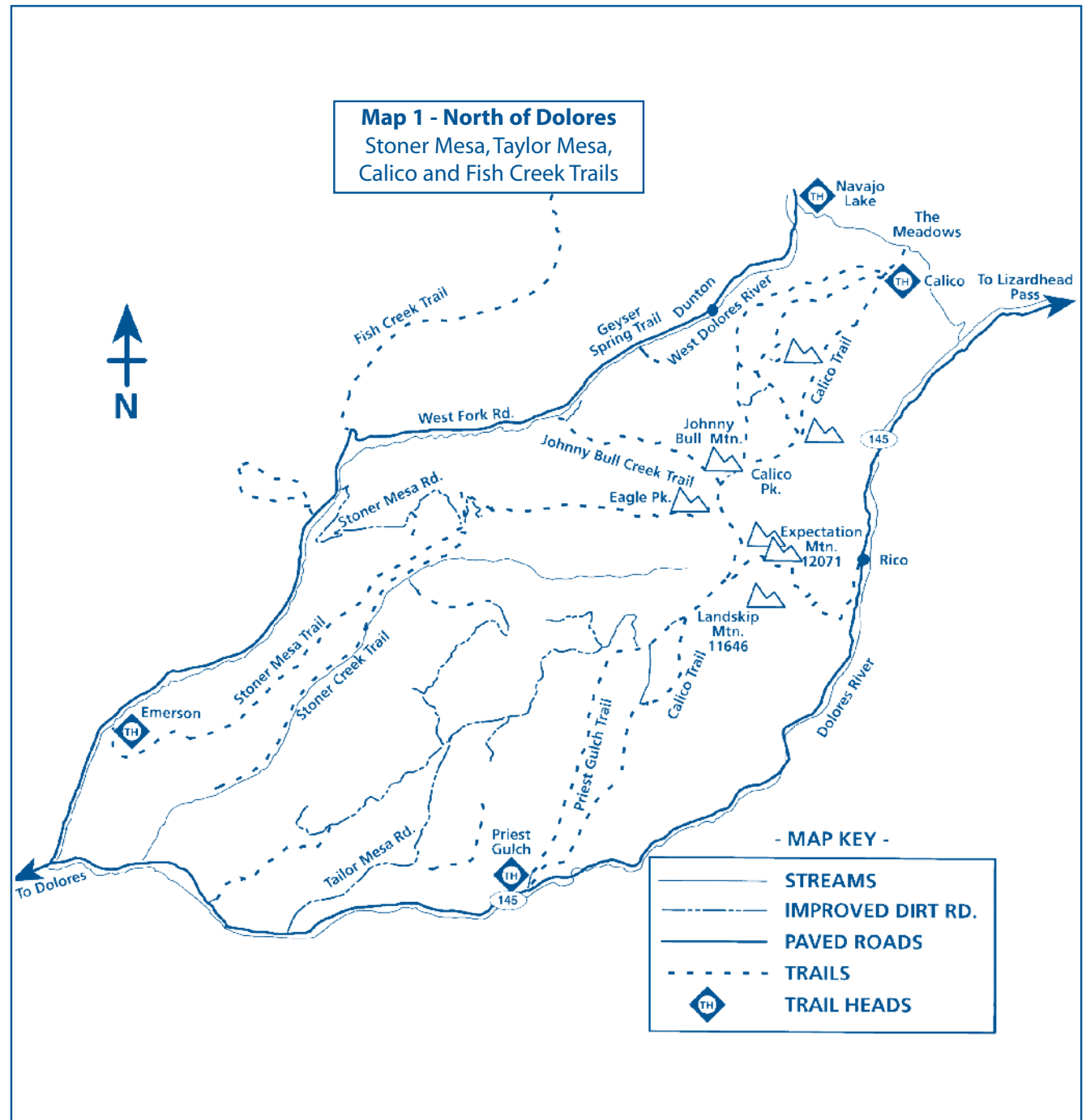
Maps: See Map 1, SJNF map, USGS 7 1/2" maps Stoner, Nipple Mountain, Clyde Lake, Rico.

Difficulty: Moderate to difficult.

The Stoner Mesa Trail (# 624) starts across the West Fork of the Dolores River from the Lower Stoner Trailhead on the West Fork Road (FDR 535) about three miles from the Highway 145 turnoff. The trail immediately climbs the mesa side and tops out at 8700 ft. within the first two miles. The trail then climbs steadily northeasterly for ten miles where it meets the Twin Springs Trail (# 739) at Twin Springs. At this point you are above 9800 ft. and you can choose to go over the top of the mountain ahead on the Stoner Mesa Trail or you can skirt the mountain to the east and join the Stoner Creek Trail. The Stoner Mesa trail continues 2.5 miles, over the mountain and back down to a valley. Then it's a fairly steep climb for almost three miles to an elevation of 11,600 ft where you circle 12,113 ft. Eagle Peak and arrive at the Calico Trail (# 641) crossing between Eagle Peak and Calico Peak.

The Stoner Creek Trail (# 625) breaks away from the Stoner Mesa Trail at Twin Springs, and drops into Stoner Canyon. It is not recommended to go beyond the junction with the Spring Creek Trail, which is 1.25 miles down the trail once you reach the bottom of Stoner Creek. The lower Stoner Creek Trail is not maintained and there is no outlet across private land at the bottom end.

The Spring Creek Trail (FST 627), however, gives you an opportunity to see some beautiful remote country and takes you on top of Taylor Mesa where you can terminate your trip on FDR #547. This will add an additional 2.3 miles to your trip from the bottom of Stoner Creek.



North of Mancos

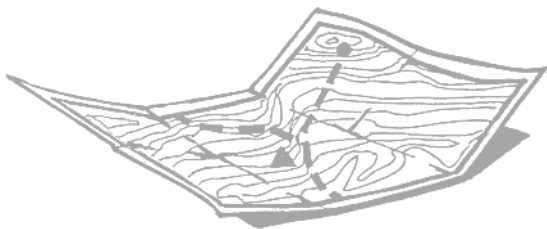
Haycamp Mesa and the Western La Plata Mountains offer hiking in the lush backcountry around the headwaters of the Mancos River on the south, and the near-vertical valleys that feed the Dolores River to the North. The trail system feeds into the Colorado Trail and includes many well-maintained branches and approaches to the 400-mile cross-state trail.



Indian Ridge Trail/ Colorado Trail (FST 520)

Starting elevation: 11,620 ft (Sharkstooth Trail)
Highest elevation: 12,150 ft
Ending elevation: 11,800 ft (Grindstone Lake Trail)
Trail length one-way: 4.25 mi
Maps: See Map 2, SJNF, USGS 7 1/2' maps: La Plata
Difficulty: Moderate

The portion of Indian Ridge Trail described here is useful in negotiating a loop hike involving Sharkstooth, Bear Creek and Grindstone Creek trails. Indian Ridge is a portion of the Colorado Trail that extends both north and south from the La Platas. Indian Ridge is not easily accessible from roads, but is well tied-in to the rest of the area hiking trails. The quickest approach starts at the Kennebec Trailhead at the north end of La Plata Canyon. Follow Sharkstooth Trail west for a mile, and then turn north onto the Indian Ridge Trail. The trail climbs for about 3/4 mile, then holds onto 12,000 ft of elevation for two miles. The views into the Animas River valley and the Montolores area are spectacular. The trail descends to about 11,800 ft and then runs for about a mile to the top of the Grindstone Creek Trail. (See Bear Creek for loop options)

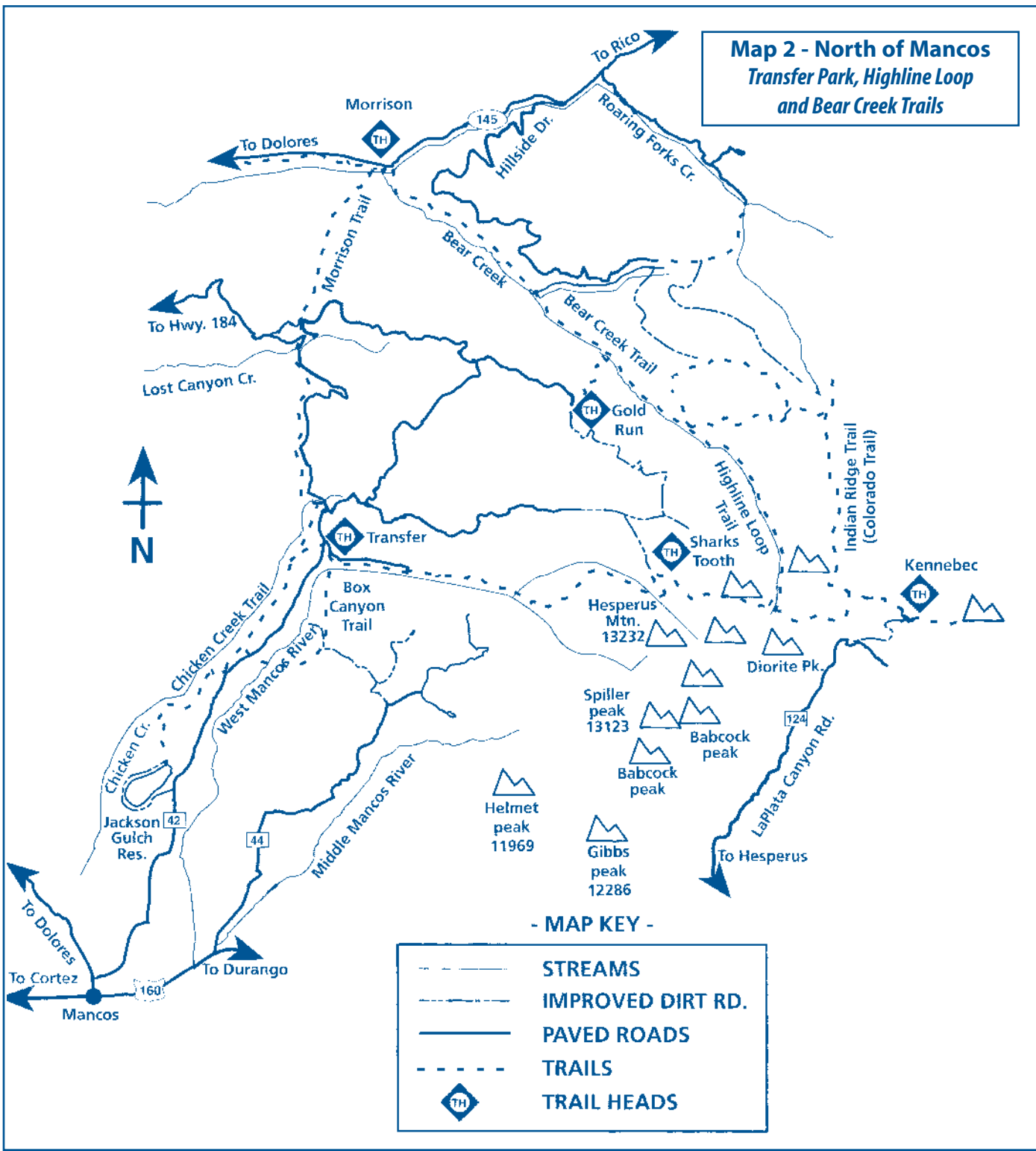


Bear Creek Trail (FST 607)

Starting elevation: 7,960 ft (Bear Creek Trailhead)
Ending elevation: 11,200 ft (junction with Sharkstooth Trail)
Trail length one-way: 12.5 mi
Maps: See Map 2, SJNF, USGS 7 1/2' maps: Wallace Ranch, Orphan Butte, La Plata
Difficulty: Moderate

From Dolores on Highway 145, travel east for 22 miles. The trailhead is clearly marked on the highway, and begins approximately 1/4 mile east (upstream) from the confluence of Bear Creek and the Dolores River. The trail traverses the entire length of Bear Creek, all the way to the headwaters where it intersects the Sharkstooth Trail. The following trails intersect Bear Creek Trail and provide alternative access points: Little Bear Creek Trail #609 – branches off the Bear Creek Trail at mile four and is a 2.6-mile climb to the Little Bear Creek Trailhead access, which is via Hillside Drive (FDR #436). Many portions of the Little Bear Trail may be difficult to find and can be quite steep. Gold Run Trail #618 – branches off at mile six. This is a fairly steep trail but has several switchbacks and is designed to accommodate pack animals. Trail length is 2.5 miles to the Gold Run Trailhead, which is accessed via the West Mancos Road (FDR #561). There is a well-established trailhead with parking, pit toilets and a corral. This is a day-use area only. Grindstone #608/Loop #658 Trails – both these trails branch off at mile 7.75 and end at the Grindstone Trailhead via Hillside Drive (FDR #436). The upper portion of Bear Creek Trail, from Grindstone Creek (mile 7.75) to the junction with Sharkstooth Trail forms the lower portion of the Highline Loop National Recreation Trail (#520). To continue on this route you will go east once you are on the Sharkstooth Trail #620 to the junction with the Indian Ridge Trail #520. To complete a loop back down to Bear Creek you can drop back down via the Loop or Grindstone Trail.

Map 2 - North of Mancos
Transfer Park, Highline Loop
and Bear Creek Trails



- MAP KEY -

	STREAMS
	IMPROVED DIRT RD.
	PAVED ROADS
	TRAILS
	TRAIL HEADS

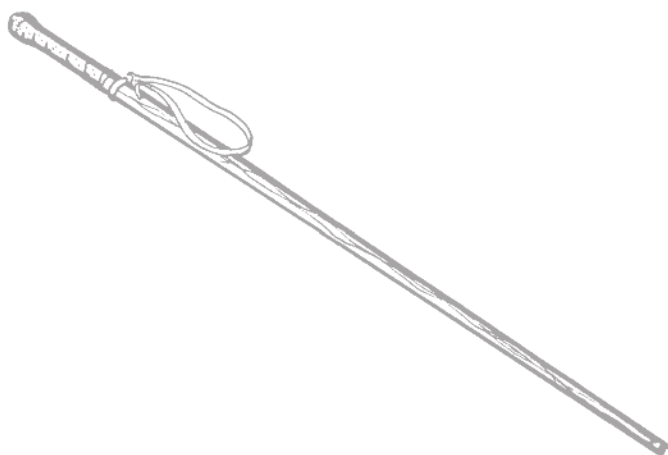


Sharktooth Trail (FST 620)

Starting elevation: 10,900 ft
 Highest elevation: 11,990 ft
 Ending elevation: 11,625 ft (Kennebec Pass Trailhead)
 Trail length one-way: 6.8 mi
 Maps: See Map 2, SJNF, USGS 71/2' maps: La Plata
 Difficulty: Moderate to difficult

Take West Mancos Road #561 to Spruce Mill Road #360, about 2 miles past Transfer. Continue another 6 miles to FDR# 346, than another mile to the Sharktooth Trailhead. When the roads are bad it is easier to start the hike from Twin Lakes. The trail climbs immediately to the pass between Sharktooth and Centennial peaks. There is a short loop hike to Windy Williams Mine interpretive site on the way to the pass. The trail then drops to meet the end of the Bear Creek Trail at 11,200 ft, then climbs again to the divide north of Diorite Peak. The trail circles to the north, up a creek bed, around a small lake (Taylor Lake), then ends at Kennebec Pass, which can be accessed via La Plata County Road #124.

See the Bear Creek Trail and Indian Ridge Trail for additional information on loop hikes using the Sharktooth Trail.



Owens Basin Trail (FST 746)

Owens Basin Trail (FST 746)
 Starting elevation: 9284 ft
 Ending elevation: 1100 ft
 Trail length one-way: 3.5 mi
 Maps: See Map 2, SJNF, USGS 71/2' maps: Rampart Hills & La Plata
 Difficulty: Moderate to difficult

This is a short hike, but very scenic and offers no other loops unless you wish to take off cross-country. It does, however, take you on a breath-taking hike above tree line behind the magnificent La Plata Mountains and past historical structures that are remnants of a once busy mining community.

To access the Owens Basin Trailhead from Mancos, go east for 2.5 miles, turn left (north) on the Echo Basin Road, (County Road 44), and continue to the Forest Boundary where the road now becomes #566. Stay on the northern portion of #566, as it becomes a loop around Burnt Ridge. Turn off on 566A and follow this road down to the parking lot, which is adjacent to the West Mancos River.

The first 100 yards of the trail begins on the south side of the river. The trail then crosses the river where it joins up with the West Mancos Trail #621. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CROSS THE RIVER DURING SPRING RUNOFF!** The two trails split after 1/2 mile, with the West Mancos Trail heading towards the North Fork of the West Mancos River and the Owens Basin Trail heading up the South Fork.

The trail turns into an old mining road as it works its way up towards Owens Basin, which is nestled between Spiller, Babcock, Mount Moss and the fabulous Hesperus Peak. There is an old miners cabin and other mining structures to inspect as you enjoy a steady climb up the Basin. The trail ends in a slide rock area. Going back down is much easier and you can enjoy the view the second time-around, as you won't be gasping for oxygen.

The Transfer Recreation Area

The Transfer Recreation Area, which includes a campground, picnic area, scenic overlook, and large corral for overnight stock, is also the hub for several trailheads. Included are the Big Al, West Mancos, Transfer, Rim, Chicken Creek, Morrison, and the Aspen Loop ATV trail. Access the Transfer Recreation area from the West Mancos Road (FDR 561), approximately 11 miles northeast of Mancos. The campground turnoff will be off to the right. See Map 3 for more information.



Big Al Trail (FST 630)

Starting elevation: 8,900ft Ending elevation: 8,950ft
Trail length one-way: .5 miles
Maps: See Map 3, SJNF, USGS 7 1/2' maps: Rampart Hills
Difficulty: Easy

Located just past the scenic over-look pull out, once you have made the right turn off of 561, the Big Al trail is a 1/2-mile, surfaced, barrier-free trail leading to a deck that offers dramatic views of West Mancos Canyon and the La Plata Mountains.

This trail is closed to bikes, horses, and motorized vehicles. Interpretive signs along the way point out flora and fauna, and there are benches making this an ideal hiking venue for small children and seniors, or for just taking a leisurely stroll from the adjacent campground. Don't forget your camera!



West Mancos (FST 621)

Starting elevation: 8,900ft Transfer Recreation Area
Ending elevation: 10,900ft (Sharkstooth Trailhead)
Trail length one-way: 10 miles
Maps: See Map 3, SJNF, USGS 7 1/2' maps: Rampart Hills, La Plata
Difficulty: Moderate

Located adjacent to the Big Al Trailhead is the West Mancos and Transfer Trailhead. These trails share one trail for the first 1/2 mile. The trail immediately drops down into the West Mancos River Canyon via several switchbacks. After approximately 1/2 mile the trail splits, with the West Mancos continuing up river, and the Transfer trail heading down river. Due to the steep nature of the upper portion of this trail, it can be very tricky in wet conditions and if using this trail in early spring, be aware of downed trees and the trail sloughing off in places. Be especially careful if you are on horseback.

The West Mancos Trail continues upstream on the west side of the canyon before dropping to the West Mancos River level, then climbs steeply to Horsefly Flat, an open, grassy area. The trail ends at the Sharkstooth Trailhead, which is located at the base of Hesperus Peak.



Transfer Trail

Starting elevation: 8,900ft Transfer Recreation Area
Ending elevation: 8,250ft merges with Box Canyon Trail #617
Trail Length one-way: approximately 1.5 miles
Maps: See Map 3, SJNF, USGS 7 1/2' maps: Rampart Hills
Difficulty: Moderate

The Transfer Trail winds down to the West Mancos River and heads downstream until it intersects with the Box Canyon Trail. If you want to make a loop hike you can head uphill on the Box Canyon Trail and pick up the Rim Trail, which is located above the Box Canyon Trailhead. The length of this loop is approximately 3 miles. (The Box Canyon Trailhead is located on the West Mancos Road, one-mile south of Transfer CG).



Rim Trail (FST 613)

Starting elevation: 8,900 ft, Transfer Recreation Area
Ending elevation: 8,200 ft, trail merges with the Box Canyon Trail #617, and then intersects the Chicken Creek Trail.
Trail Length one-way: 3 miles
Maps: See Map 3, SJNF, USGS 7 1/2' maps: Rampart Hills
Difficulty: Moderate

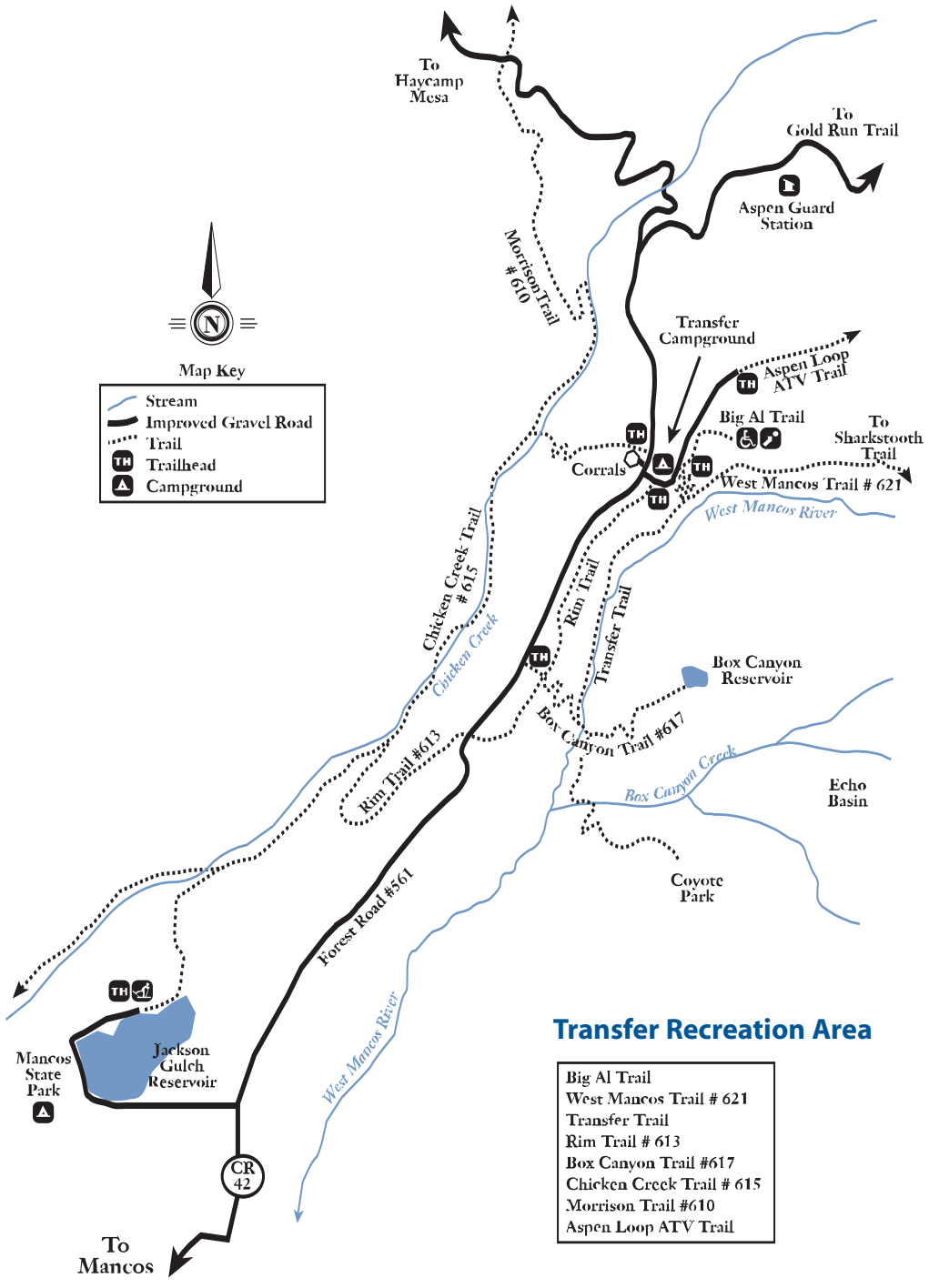
The trailhead is at the West Mancos Overlook, which is located on the right side of the road as you take the Transfer Campground turnoff from FDR 561. The trail begins by dropping slightly below the rim of the canyon and traverses the rim until it joins up with the Box Canyon Trail access road. From there you must continue down the Box Canyon Trail access road towards the canyon rim until you pick up the trail again, which traverses along the top of the rim to Doc Lowell Flats. Follow the two-track road out and across the West Mancos Road, and pick up the trail again on the other side. The trail will wind down into Chicken Creek and intersect with the Chicken Creek Trail #615.



Aspen Loop ATV Trail

The Aspen Loop Trail is a multipurpose trail constructed by the San Juan National Forest and the Four Corners Trail Club. The trail is open to ATV's, motorized trail bikes, horseback riders, hikers, and mountain bikes. This 39-mile loop trail was designated as an ATV trail to accommodate motorized recreation enthusiasts. The parking lot is designed as a turn-around to accommodate trailer parking. For more information and a brochure on the trail, contact the Dolores Public Lands Office at (970) 882-7296 or drop by at 100 North Sixth Street, in Dolores.

Map 3





Box Canyon Trail (FST 617)

Starting elevation: 8720 ft, West Mancos Road (FDR #561)
Ending elevation: 9185 ft, Golconda and West Mancos Trail

Trail Length one-way: 5.8 miles

Maps: See Map 3, SJNF, USGS 7 1/2' maps: Rampart Hills
Difficulty: Moderate

The Box Canyon Trailhead is located on the West Mancos Rd (#561), approximately 1 mile south of Transfer. There is parking available at the trailhead. The trail drops immediately down into the West Mancos River Canyon via several switchbacks. After about 3/4 mile the trail crosses the West Mancos River then starts climbing the opposite canyon wall, heading downstream to Box Canyon Creek. The trail makes a turn up the Box Canyon Creek and tops out on the Echo Basin Side. The trail continues to Gray Beal Springs, then turns into an old (now closed) jeep trail which crosses the mesa, passing the Box Canyon and Slate Reservoirs before dropping into Deer Lick Creek Follow the trail (also an old closed jeep trail) down to the West Mancos River. Cross the river and head upstream (to your right) paralleling an allotment fence until you reach a gate. As soon as you go through the gate you will see the West Mancos trail and you will be at Golconda (the location of an old post office and supply store that serviced miners in the late 1800's/early 1900's).



Coyote Park Trail

Starting elevation: 8720 ft, Box Canyon Trailhead

Ending elevation: 8700 ft, FDR 329 in Echo Basin

Trail Length one-way: 3 miles

Maps: See Map 3, SJNF, USGS 7 1/2' maps: Rampart Hills
Difficulty: Moderate to Difficult

For an alternative hike using the Box Canyon Trail, cross Box Canyon Creek, and climb up the south side of Box Canyon. It will take you up to Coyote Park. Come through the meadow and there will be a closure gate to your left. Forest road 329 is behind the gate. Head up the 329 road and turn right on FDR # 331, which will take you to T-Down corrals and the Echo Basin Road (FDR #566).



The Chicken Creek Trail (FST 615)

Starting Elevation: - 7,900 ft, (Mancos State Park)

Ending Elevation: 8,900 ft (Transfer)

Trail Length one-way: 7.8 miles

Maps: Map 3, SJNF, USGS 7 .5' maps: Rampart Hills & Wallace Ranch

Difficulty: Moderate

The actual trailhead for Chicken Creek is located at Mancos State Park, seven miles south of Transfer Recreation area. Keep in mind there is a fee if you park your vehicle at the Mancos State Park. Beginning on the north shore of Jackson Gulch Reservoir, the trail crosses over the top of a small mesa and drops into Chicken Creek. From there, the trail faithfully follows the creek bed for 7.5 miles before merging with the Morrison trail. If you want to loop back to your vehicle you can turn right when you meet the Morrison trail and climb out of Chicken Creek towards Transfer Recreation area. Cross the West Mancos Road (FDR 561) and pick up the Rim Trail at the West Mancos Overlook. The Rim Trail eventually merges with the lower end of the Chicken Creek Trail; hang a left (south) and follow the trail back to Mancos State Park. This is approximately a sixteen-mile loop.



Morrison Trail (FST 610)

Morrison Trail (FST 610)

Starting Elevation: 7,960 (Highway 145, Bear Creek)

Ending Elevation: 8,900 - Transfer

Trail Length one-way: 9.25 miles

Maps: See Map 3, SJNF, USGS 7 .5' maps: Rampart Hills & Wallace Ranch
Difficulty: Moderate

The Morrison Trail is now accessed via the new Bear Creek Trailhead. From Dolores on Highway 145, travel east for 22 miles. The trailhead is clearly marked on the highway, and begins approximately 1/4 mile east (upstream) from the confluence of Bear Creek and the Dolores River. Beginning on the Bear Creek trail, the Morrison Trail junction is 1/2 mile from the trailhead. The trail climbs out of the Dolores River valley and tops the Haycamp Mesa in 2.25 miles at 9785 ft. The trail crosses Rock Springs Road (FDR #556), and then descends into Lost Canyon where it also crosses the Lost Canyon Road (FDR #560). The trail climbs out of Lost Canyon then gradually drops down in the Chicken Creek drainage and meets up with the Chicken Creek Trail. You can either turn left (east) and climb out of Chicken Creek to Transfer, or continue on down the Chicken Creek Trail.