

Wilderness.net's Cebolla Wilderness Fact Sheet



Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Cebolla Wilderness in 1987 and it now has a total of 61,600 acres. All of the wilderness is in New Mexico and is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

Description

Cebolla Wilderness, part of El Malpais National Conservation Area, lies just across State Highway 117 from West Malpais Wilderness but offers easier traveling than the ominously raw volcanic terrain of the badlands. Cebolla shares its eastern border with the Acoma Indian Reservation, but you should avoid crossing the border without first checking with the reservation manager. Primitive two-track trails provide effortless hiking up Cebolla Canyon, Sand Canyon, and Armijo Canyon, all of which feature sandstone bluffs and sandy side washes beneath high mesas, ranging in elevation from about 7,000 to 8,350 feet. Look for evidence of past habitation, from ancient petroglyphs to the ruins of Depression-era homesteads. La Ventana Natural Arch, eroded from sandstone laid down when dinosaurs ruled this territory, anchors the northern portion of what is now primarily forested rimrock. Vertical escarpments provide excellent nesting habitat for golden eagles, prairie falcons, red-tail hawks, and great horned owls. Vegetation is juniper and piñon dominate with ponderosa pine found on north facing slopes. Of the trails that provide access to this area, La Ventana Arch Trail extends only a few hundred feet to a good viewpoint, Narrows Rim Trail goes for about 3.5 miles along the rim of the mesa with excellent views of lava flows and ending at a viewpoint of La Ventana Arch, Lobo Canyon Trail leads to a petroglyph and is about 0.75 miles roundtrip, and Homestead Canyon Trail and Armijo Canyon Trail are both about 3.75 miles long. Carry plenty of water, as you won't find any here.

Leave No Trace

How to follow the seven standard Leave No Trace principles differs in different parts of the country (desert vs. Rocky Mountains). Click on any of the principles listed below to learn more about how they apply in the Cebolla Wilderness.

1. [Plan Ahead and Prepare](#)
2. [Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces](#)
3. [Dispose of Waste Properly](#)
4. [Leave What You Find](#)
5. [Minimize Campfire Impacts](#)
6. [Respect Wildlife](#)
7. [Be Considerate of Other Visitors](#)

For more information on Leave No Trace, [Visit the Leave No Trace, Inc. website.](#)

Location

The Cebolla Wilderness is located in Cibola County 20 miles south of Grants, NM.

Area Management

The Cebolla Wilderness is part of the 110 million acre National Wilderness Preservation System. This System of lands provides clean air, water, and habitat critical for rare and endangered plants and animals. In wilderness, you can enjoy challenging recreational activities like hiking, backpacking, climbing, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, horse packing, bird watching, stargazing, and extraordinary opportunities for solitude. You play an important role in helping to *"secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness"* as called for by the Congress of the United States through the Wilderness Act of 1964. Please follow the requirements outlined below and use Leave No Trace techniques when visiting the Cebolla Wilderness to ensure protection of this unique area.

The Cebolla Wilderness area is managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1974 and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Manual 6340 - Management of Designated Wilderness Areas.

A person with a disability that requires the use of a wheelchair in wilderness may do so if the wheelchair meets the definition in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The term wheelchair means a device that is solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion, and is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area.

Contacts

Rio Puerco Field Office

100 Sun Avenue NE
Pan American Bldg.
Suite 330

Albuquerque, NM 87109

Restrictions: Rio Puerco Bureau of Land Management office hours are 7:45 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday.

Phone: 505-761-8700

Links to Other Websites

[BLM Cebolla Wilderness webpage](#)

[Contact the BLM](#)

Links on Wilderness.net

[National, Regional and Local Wilderness Organizations \(NGOs\)](#)

A listing of societies, organizations, coalitions and other wilderness-related advocacy and stewardship groups.

[Career and Volunteer Opportunities](#)

A listing of sites providing information about wilderness- and environmentally-related career and volunteer opportunities.

Applicable Wilderness Law(s)

Law	Date	Acreage Change (in acres)
Public Law 100-225	December 31, 1987	60,000

(No official title, designates New Mexico wildernesses) - Public law 100-225 (12/31/1987) To establish the El Malpais National Monument and the El Malpais National Conservation Area in the State of New Mexico, to authorize the Masau Trail, and for other purposes

 [download 100-225](#)

General Trip Planning Information

La Ventana Arch Trail

From Interstate 40, drive south on NM Hwy 117 for approximately 8.5 miles from the BLM Ranger Station (17.5 miles from I-40) to the parking area on the left. The arch is visible from the road and the trail is only a few hundred feet long to a good view point.

Narrows Rim Trail

The trailhead and parking area for the Narrows Rim Trail are located at the south end of the Narrows Picnic Area 21.5 miles south of I-40 on NM 117. The trail is approximately 3.5 miles (7 miles round trip) along the rim of the mesa with excellent views of the lava flows and ending at a viewpoint of La Ventana Arch.

Lobo Canyon Trail

From I-40, drive 26 miles south on NM Hwy 117 to the Cebolla Canyon Rd. Drive approximately 5 miles (passing the Sand Canyon Rd. at approximately 3 miles) to a parking area on the right side of the road. The trailhead is on the north side of the road and leads to a petroglyph area. The hike is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile roundtrip.

Homestead Canyon Trail

From I-40, drive 31.6 miles south on NM Hwy 117 to CR 41 (gravel, known as “the Pietown road”). Drive south on CR 41 for approximately 2.3 miles to Homestead Canyon Rd and turn left. Drive for just over 1 mile to a parking area on the wilderness boundary. The trail is a closed road $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles long connecting to the Sand Canyon Road.

Armijo Canyon Trail

From I-40, drive 31.6 miles south on NM Hwy 117 to CR 41 (gravel, known as “the Pietown road”). Drive south on CR 41 for approximately 3.7 miles until you reach a sign for Armijo Canyon, which will be on the east side of the road. Turn left and after approximately 1.5 miles there is a parking area at the wilderness boundary. Hike past the fence and along a closed 2-track road for approximately $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles long connecting to the Sand Canyon Road.

Recreational Opportunities

The 61,600 acre Cebolla Wilderness is made up of Sandstone mesas, canyons, and grassy valleys. Juniper and piñon dominate and ponderosa pine is found on north facing slopes. Vertical escarpments provide excellent nesting habitat for golden eagles, prairie falcons, red-tail hawks, and great horned owls. The Cebolla Wilderness is rich in prehistoric archaeological sites, petroglyphs, and historic homesteads. One notable archaeological site is the Dittert Site. Sometime between A.D. 1000 and 1300, the Dittert Site was built and inhabited by the ancestors of modern Pueblo Indian people. The Cebolla Wilderness also contains La Ventana Natural Arch, a dramatic arch sculpted through wind and water erosion in the sandstone cliffs. The Wilderness is located within the El Malpais National Conservation Area.

In general, the area offers opportunities for hiking, camping, horseback riding and wildlife viewing.

Climate and Special Equipment Needs

There are no reliable water sources in Cebolla Wilderness or in the surrounding area. Visitors must carry all the water they will need for the duration of the trip.

The trailhead for the La Ventana Arch trail, and the first portion of the trail are accessible for people with disabilities.

Safety and Current Conditions

The La Ventana Arch and Narrows Rim Trails are accessed by paved roads. All other trails are dirt roads requiring suitable clearance. Conditions of roads can change at any time due to weather. Drivers should avoid dirt roads during rain or snow. Drivers should be cautious of wash-out following rain or snowmelt.

Though camping in the Wilderness is a rewarding experience, there are no reliable water sources. Visitors must carry all the water they will need for the duration of the trip.

Dirt roads in this area can become very slick, sticky, and sometimes impassable during and after rain and snowfall. Check local weather information or contact the El Malpais Ranger station (505-280-2918) prior to travel.