NOTICE: Sheep grazing is permitted in the Uncompahgre Wilderness, and livestock protection dogs may be encountered near bands of sheep. To minimize potential conflicts, please keep your distance. Do not approach, harass, or in any way threaten the sheep or dogs. Keep pets under physical restraint.

WARNING: Do not use this map for wilderness navigation. It is intended for general reference only. Detailed maps are available at the locations shown on the back panel.
Welcome To The Wild
Uncompahgre Wilderness

Location
Southwestern Colorado
Ouray, Gunnison, & Hinsdale Counties

Access
10 Trailheads
110 Miles of Designated Trail

Season
Late June to Mid September
Passes May Remain Snowbound

Weather
30-80 Degrees (F)
Frequent Rain, Occasional Snow

Use
Moderate to High
High on Weekends & Holidays

Difficulty
Moderate to Severe
Rugged Terrain, High Altitude

Restrictions
See Below for More Information

The Uncompahgre Wilderness is located in the spectacular San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado. It boasts two of Colorado’s famed “fourteener” mountains and many other peaks over 13,000 feet. This is a landscape defined by towering rock, expansive alpine tundra, and forested canyons. Originally known as the Big Blue Wilderness, it was added to the National Wilderness Preservation System by Congress in 1980 and expanded in 1993 to include adjacent land administered by the Bureau of Land Management. The Uncompahgre Wilderness now totals 102,721 acres.

The San Juan Mountains were born of fire and shaped by ice. The origins of the San Juans lie in an immense dome formed by tectonic activity during the Laramide Orogeny about 65 million years ago. About 35 million years ago, the dome cracked and buckled as it yielded to tremendous pressure from the magma below. After millions of years of volcanic fury, the San Juans were covered in massive glaciers that carved the rugged landscape seen today.

The San Juans are highly mineralized and were at the heart of Colorado’s silver and gold mining history. Many relics of the past can still be seen in these mountains, adding a unique human dimension to the wilderness experience.

What Is Wilderness?

America’s Enduring Resource

Many Lasting Things

Wilderness offers sanctuary for wildlife, protects watersheds, and is a living link to our natural heritage. It preserves a piece of a lost landscape and possesses ecological, cultural, scientific, educational, recreational, and/or spiritual values.

Wilderness Wise

Know Before You Go

This area was designated as “wilderness” by Congress to provide you and future generations with the benefits of an enduring primitive resource that is unimpaired by human civilization. Expect to encounter the challenges and inherent risks of mountain weather, wild and rugged terrain, wildlife, and other natural hazards. Your safety is your responsibility. Be prepared!

Please help protect this special area by practicing Leave No Trace outdoor ethics and respecting all Restrictions. Thank you for your cooperation and have a safe and enjoyable visit!

What Is Wilderness?

Many Lasting Things

Wilderness areas are designated by Congress to protect places with rare primeval character from an expanding human civilization. They are managed to preserve their “wildness” and to provide opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude. Wilderness is an American legacy.

Restractions

Uncompahgre Wilderness

To protect wilderness and the experiences of others, the following acts are PROHIBITED within the Uncompahgre Wilderness:

1. Camping within 100 feet of a water source or designated trail. Over 200 feet is preferred.
2. Building a campfire within 100 feet of a water source or designated trail.
3. Restoring a saddle or pack animal within 200 feet of a water source or designated trail.
4. Groups exceeding 15 persons and/or 25 heartbeats, including pack and saddle stock. Larger groups must separate into smaller groups and remain at least one mile apart at all times.
5. Failing to properly dispose of all garbage (pack it out) and leaving human waste in an exposed or unsanitary manner.
6. Shortcutting a switchback in a trail.
7. Collecting or harming butterflies in any stage of their life cycle from June 1 to August 30.
8. Damaging any natural feature. This includes, but is not limited to: falling or damaging trees, trenched and vandalism.
9. Building any structure or improvement. This includes, but is not limited to: huts, shelters, platforms.
10. Mechanized transportation or motorized equipment. This includes, but is not limited to: motor vehicles, bicycles, carts, and chain saws.

Other restrictions may apply. For more information, contact the Ouray Ranger District: (970) 240-5300.

Leave No Trace

Outdoor Ethics

Plan Ahead & Prepare

Know before you go. Learn everything you can about the area you plan to visit and the regulations for its use.

Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces

Use established campsites and trails, where available. Avoid sites just beginning to show impacts. Keep campsites at least 200 feet from water, designated trails, and occupied campsites.

Dispose of Waste Properly

Pack it in, pack it out! Burry human waste in a cathole 6-8 inches deep and at least 200 feet from water. Wash yourself and your dishes at least 200 feet from water.

Leave What You Find

Do not damage, deface, or remove natural objects or cultural artifacts. Leave these for others to enjoy.

Minimize Use & Impacts of Fire

Use a lightweight stove, instead of a fire. If you build a fire, use only small dead wood found on the ground and use existing fire rings.

Respect Wildlife

Watch wildlife from a distance and never approach, feed, or follow it. Seal food tightly and store it out of reach. Control pets at all times or consider leaving them at home.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Don’t let your fun disturb others. Preserve the natural quiet. When you meet others on the trail, step off the downhill side and speak softly until they pass.

Please Keep It Wild

Practice Leave No Trace