



Wild Rivers Back Country Byway

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The Rio Grande or "Great River" has sliced an 800-foot deep volcanic canyon through the remote high plains of northern New Mexico, rich with history, rugged beauty, and thrilling recreational opportunities. The Wild Rivers Backcountry Byway, winding 13 miles along the rim of the Rio Grande gorge, offers access to spectacular overlooks, including the confluence of the Rio Grande and the Red River below La Junta Point. Start the byway, an extension of NM Hwy. 378 through BLM land, a couple of miles north of Questa through the agricultural village of Cerro, and then follow it up toward the state's northern border. Whether you're an active sportsperson, or just looking to soak up mountain scenery, the byway puts you in the midst of treasured back country. The route is maintained year-round, but check on road conditions during winter weather.

Wild Rivers Recreation Area

Wild Rivers has five developed campgrounds and a picnic area, each with tables, grills, drinking water and restroom facilities. 22 developed campsites are along the Gorge Rim. Four trails access 16 designated primitive river campsites, requiring a hike in, also are available. The upper reaches of the Rio Grande are a whitewater wonderland for kayakers and rafters in years of abundant snowfall, with Class 4 Razorblade Rapids near Ute Mountain, and Class 3 rapids at the Red River Confluence Run. Anglers find the challenge of rainbow and brown trout and northern pike enhanced by the rush of rapids echoing off the cliffs framing a sliver of sky.

Miles of rim and river trails offer a variety of hiking options in the Recreation Area. Most trails begin from campgrounds where day use parking areas are available. Trails are steep and hiking can be strenuous. Good physical condition, sturdy shoes, and plenty of drinking water are required. Mountain bikers have several great dedicated trails to explore as well. For more information on other trails in the recreation area, check with the visitor center, in Cerro. At the center, check out the mural painted by a collaboration of New Mexico artists who share a passion for this area and its wildlife.

www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/recreation/taos/wild_rivers_rec_area

Rio Grande Gorge

The gorge runs through the basalt flows of the Taos Plateau. The Sangre de Cristo Mountains edge the horizon to the east, with the Tusas Mountains to the west, while numerous dormant volcano cones pop up intermittently out of the broad flatlands of sage in between. The canyon ecosystem descends 800 feet from rim to river, creating a unique diversity in animal and plant life, with ancient piñon and juniper forests home to 500 year-old trees. Many petroglyphs are visible along the gorge trails. In addition to world-class rafting, the gorge offers steep pocketed rock-climbing.

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