

About the BLM's Wild and Scenic Rivers

Experience the beauty of the Wild Rivers and Orilla Verde Recreation Areas, two national Wild and Scenic Rivers protected by Congress.

The Rio Grande and Red River are preserved in their natural free-flowing state for present and future generations to enjoy and appreciate.

BLM lands lie interspersed with private and Native American lands; please respect landowners wishes for privacy.

This area is public land managed by the BLM. We ask you to be good stewards to preserve the area for future generations!

Fees, Reservations & Other Information

Orilla Verde and Wild Rivers are U.S. designated fee areas. Open year-round, fees are charged for day use and camping at developed sites within the Recreation Areas. Individual campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Group shelters at each area may be reserved at (505) 758-8851.

Camping is permitted in designated sites only and fires must be contained in grills or fire pans (if no fire restrictions are in place). Bring your own cookstove and/or firewood.

Recycle Bins and Trash Receptacles are located throughout the Recreation Area. Please use them. *Pack Out What You Pack In.*

Pets are welcomed throughout the Recreation Areas, but must be kept under control and on a leash at all times. Pets are not permitted on Big Arsenic Trail or at freshwater springs. Please be considerate of others, clean up after your pet, and observe quiet hours.

Cultural Resources sites and artifacts dating back many centuries have been found within the Recreation Areas.

Please protect these valuable resources of the past. Removal or disturbance of these artifacts destroys valuable information and is punishable by fines and or imprisonment.

How To Get There

Taos is located in north central New Mexico approximately 70 miles northeast of Santa Fe.

Air and bus lines serve the region. From Santa Fe, driving time is 1.2 hours; from Albuquerque, 2.2 hours.

The Wild Rivers Recreation Area is 35 miles north of Taos; take Highway 522 to NM 378. The Orilla Verde Recreation Area is 16 miles south of Taos; take Highway 68, then turn onto NM 570 at Pilar, NM.

Visitor Centers

Rio Grande Gorge
(505) 751-4899

Taos Field Office
(505) 758-8851

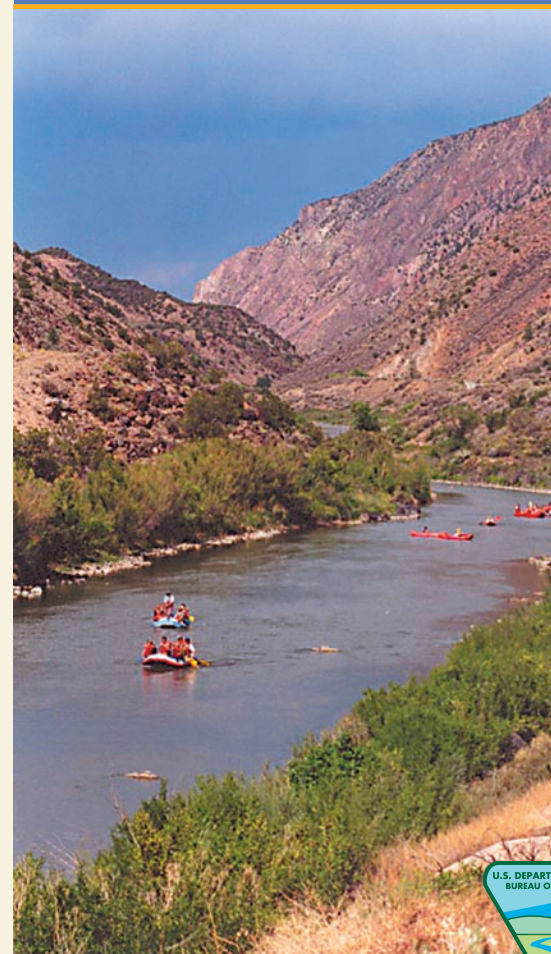
Wild Rivers • Zimmerman
(505) 770-1600

BLM Website
www.nm.blm.gov

BLM/NM/GI-05-02-1220

RIO GRANDE GORGE VISITOR GUIDE

WILD RIVERS & ORILLA VERDE RECREATION AREAS



New Mexico • Texas • Oklahoma • Kansas



Bureau of Land Management
TAOS FIELD OFFICE

BLM

WELCOME TO THE RIO GRANDE

The Rio Grande travels 1,885 miles from the mountains of southern Colorado and north-central New Mexico to the Gulf of Mexico.

In northern New Mexico, the river cuts through the ancient Taos volcanic plateau to form the 78-mile long Rio Grande Gorge.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers two Recreation Areas along the Gorge: Wild Rivers to the north of Taos and Orilla Verde to the south of Taos.

The Recreation Areas are open year-round, with limited facilities available in winter, because of potential difficult access and lack of water.

The climate is semi-arid with summer thunderstorms common in July and August. Snow is possible from November through March. Summer temperatures range from 45° to 90° F and in the winter from -15° to 45° F.

Elevation ranges from 6,000 to 8,000 feet.

Weather conditions during the winter vary depending on elevation; higher elevations get more snow, while areas within the Gorge get less direct sunlight. Call ahead for weather conditions.

The Rio Grande Gorge and Wild Rivers Visitor Centers are open daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and additional hours as staffing permits. Interpretive displays are available.

CAMPING is available in small campgrounds in both Recreation Areas. Primitive sites are available along the river at both locations. Winter camping is offered with limited facilities.

Developed campgrounds suitable for tents or RVs, with restrooms, water, picnic tables and grills are located on the rim of the Gorge at Wild Rivers and at river level at Orilla Verde. Electrical and water hook-ups are available only at Orilla Verde.

Individual campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

River campsite fees are charged per night and require a hike in.

Group shelters are available at La Junta and El Aguaje campgrounds in Wild Rivers; Taos Junction and Rio Bravo campgrounds in Orilla Verde. Group Shelters are available for day use and for overnight use by reservation only. Each accommodates up to 40 people. To reserve a group shelter, call (505) 758-8851.

Camping fees are charged per night for one vehicle, and an additional fee for two vehicles per night per site. The maximum is 2 vehicles and 15 people per site. For an extra fee, additional vehicles may be parked in day use parking areas. Pay stations are located at each campground and change is available at the Visitor Centers or from Park Rangers.

Campfires are allowed only in grills or fire pans. Camp stoves are recommended. **Firewood collection is not allowed—please bring your own campfire fuel or check at the Visitor Centers where firewood may be available for sale.**

Water spigot use for public health and safety—bathing, washing dishes or clothes is prohibited at water spigots. Please do not hook RVs up to water spigots.

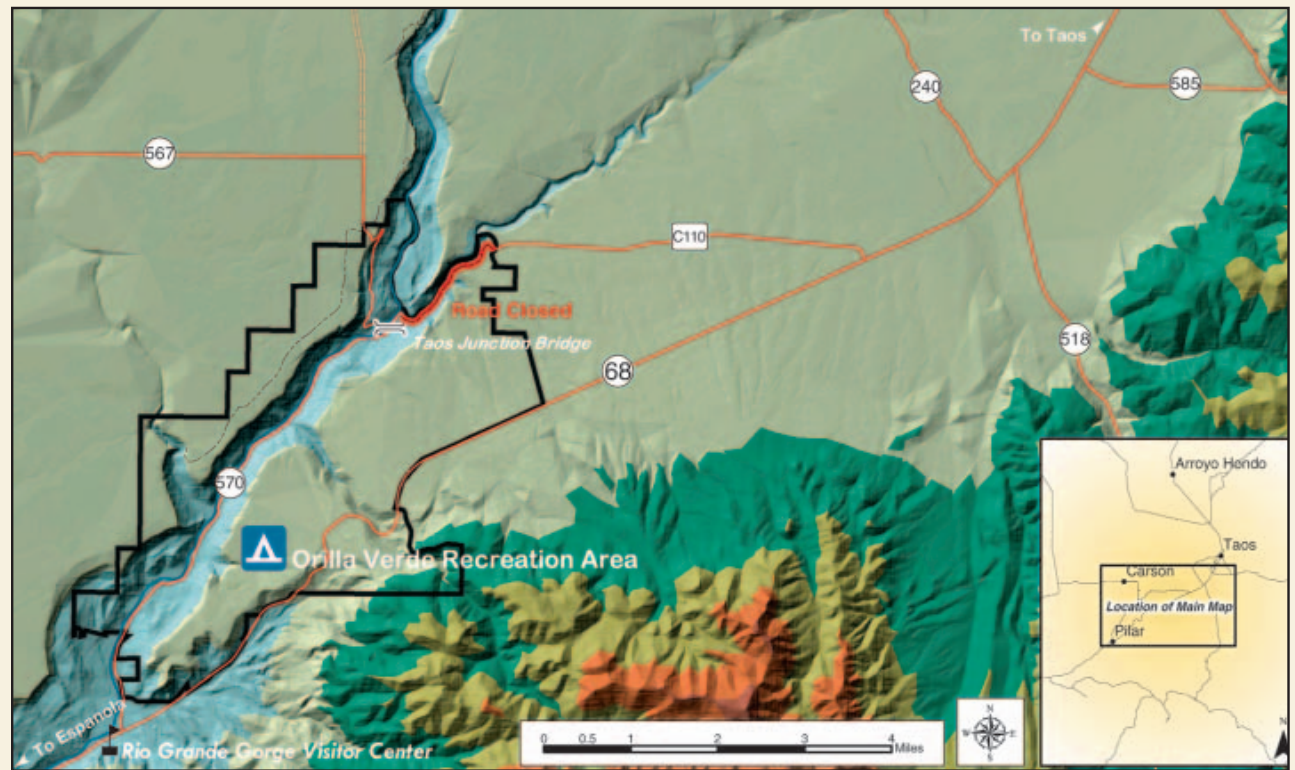
Gas, groceries, and all services are available in Taos, 16 miles away from both campgrounds. Limited services are available in the small communities nearby.

ORILLA VERDE RECREATION AREA

At Orilla Verde, located 16 miles south of Taos off Highway 68, the road winds through the Gorge at river level, providing easy access for fishermen, white-water rafters, and campers.

This is a riparian area of cottonwood and willow growing along the riverbanks, providing homes for a variety of small birds. Beaver and muskrat often swim near the shore, and the air is filled with the sound of flowing water.

Remnants of ancient lava flows, tumbled into rockslides of dark basalt long ago, can be seen by looking upward from the bottom of the Gorge.



Hiking

Twenty-two miles of rim and river trails offer a variety of hiking options. Most trails begin from campgrounds where day use parking areas are available. **CAUTION: Trails are steep and hiking can be strenuous. Good physical condition, sturdy shoes and plenty of drinking water are requirements.**

The Recreation Areas offer good beginner and intermediate trails, from five to ten miles in length, which can be traversed most of the year. The trails pass through pinon-juniper forest and open sageland; they are best enjoyed in the early morning or late afternoon rather than in the heat of the day. The Rinconada loop trail at Wild Rivers is suitable for children.

Orilla Verde trails offer a gentler hiking experience. All trails afford the opportunity to see interesting vegetation and geology. Get hiking information and maps from the Field Office, Visitor Centers, and the website.

Serious hikers might want to visit Wild Rivers, as there is a greater concentration of trails offering a variety of experiences. Several trails lead from the rim of the Gorge down to the banks of the river.

Biking

Unless posted otherwise, all BLM trails are open to biking as well as hiking. The mountain biking opportunities in northern New Mexico are outstanding in terms of scenic value and variety of riding experience. BLM lands offer challenge and reward for the beginner and expert alike.

Rock Climbing

There are two locations for rock climbing: Dead Cholla, off the West Rim Trail above Orilla Verde, and John's Wall, near the John Dunn bridge.

Boating

River rafting is very popular throughout the Gorge. Brochures for private boaters are available at the visitor

centers. Commercial float trips are also offered through outfitters licensed by the BLM. Ask for a commercial boaters brochure. Motorized watercraft are not allowed in the Rio Grande Gorge.

Boating within the Wild Rivers Recreation Area can be hazardous and requires expert whitewater skills and specialized equipment. Prior to launching, all boaters must register or obtain a permit at the Visitor Center or Little Arsenic Trailhead. Call 1-888-882-6188 for more river information.

Natural Hot Springs

Manby (Stagecoach) Springs are located on the east bank of the Rio Grande. Access is from US 64 then onto a private road. Please observe speed limits.

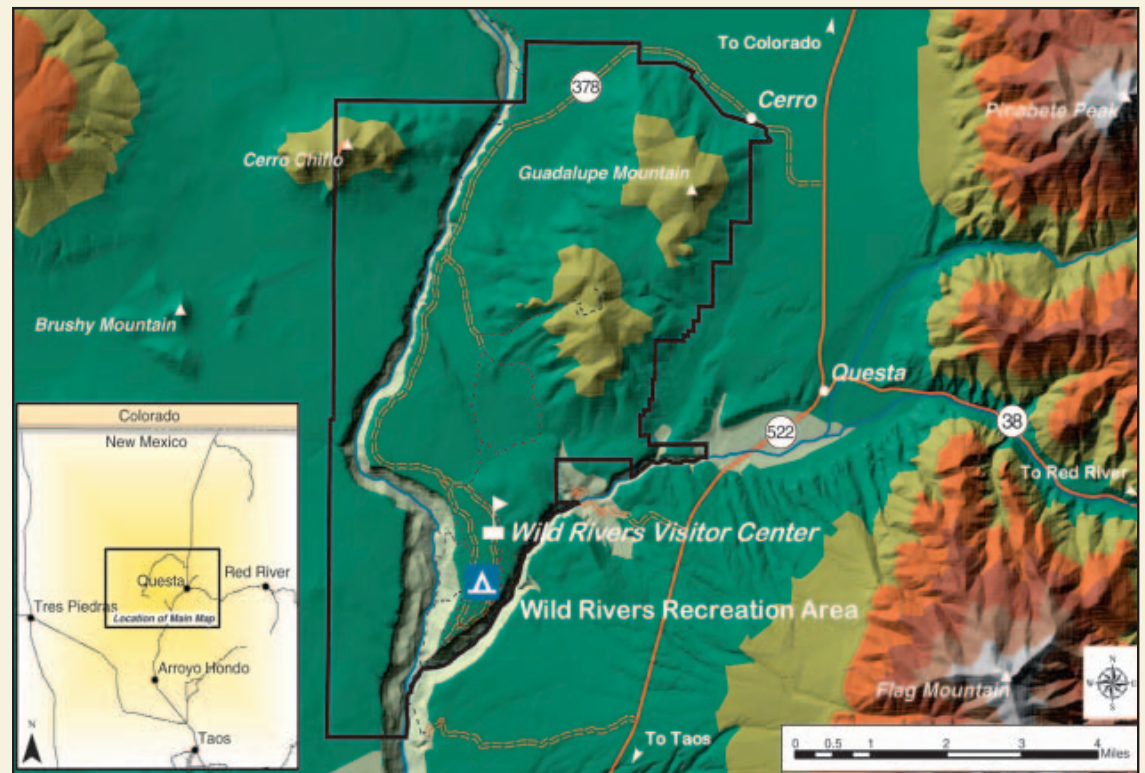
Black Rock (John Dunn) Springs are located on the west bank of the Rio Grande just below the John Dunn Bridge. Access is from NM 522 then onto a county road to the bridge.

WILD RIVERS RECREATION AREA

The Wild Rivers Recreation Area is located 35 miles north of Taos, at the confluence of the Red River and the Rio Grande. Take a scenic drive 800 feet above the river. The trails pass through open sage land on the mesa and enter an ancient pinon-juniper forest.

A Visitor Center and several small developed campgrounds are located near the rim of the Gorge. Visitors may see mule deer, elk, red-tailed hawks, and other residents of the upland forest. Overlooks offer long-distance views and vistas of the Gorge.

Numerous trails for hiking and biking wind throughout the area, several trails descending steeply to river level, where fishing (and camping) are popular activities for those who can make the descent.



Birding

Birding may be enjoyed throughout the Rio Grande corridor. Migratory waterfowl travel through the Rio Grande Flyway, moving from their breeding to wintering grounds, and summer finds mallards and great blue herons on the river.

Perhaps the best place for birdwatching is in the lower Gorge near Pilar. Here is a cottonwood-willow riparian community that is crucial to a significant number of migratory bird species. Bald eagles are known to winter in this area; Southwestern willow flycatchers nest in the streamside willows.

At Wild Rivers, watch for red-tailed hawk, golden eagle, Canada goose, and American kestrel, as well as great horned owl.

Fishing

Fishing is permitted throughout the Gorge; fishermen 12 years and older must have a valid license and

habitat stamp in their possession. New Mexico's state fish, the Rio Grande cutthroat trout, is found in some stretches of the Rio. Non-native species are the German brown and rainbow trout, and Northern pike. Fishing regulations are available in the Visitor Centers.

The Red River supports a fishery of rainbow trout stocked by the Red River Fish Hatchery located upstream from the Wild Rivers Recreation Area. To improve trout fisheries, special trout waters are designated on all river sections within the Recreation Areas. The daily bag limit and possession is four fish per license holder.

Equestrian Use

Equestrian use in the campgrounds is prohibited.

Parking

Parking for day users not requiring facilities is available at designated sites in the campgrounds and at established pullouts along the highway. Please do not occupy designated sites if facilities are not needed.

Swimming

Swimming and tubing are not recommended during most of the year. *CAUTION: Swimming is dangerous and not recommended due to swift currents and cold temperatures.* Public nudity is not allowed in the Recreation Areas.

Firearms and Fireworks

Discharging firearms and fireworks or any other implement capable of causing injury or damage to property is PROHIBITED within the Recreation Areas' boundaries.

Hunting

Hunting is not available in most of the Recreation Areas. Hunters are responsible for knowing where and when hunting is permitted.

Vehicle Use

Off-highway vehicles (OHV) and all terrain vehicles (ATV) must stay on established roads. Free play is prohibited.