

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Phones for emergency use are at Tinkertown Museum, Sandia Peak Ski Area, and the Sandia Crest House.

In Bernalillo County

911

**Sandoval County
Sheriff's Office**

Law Enforcement
1-(800) 862-4357

Sandia Ranger District

Law Enforcement and Fires
(505) 281-3304

For More Information

USDA Forest Service
Sandia Ranger District
11776 Highway 337
Tijeras, New Mexico 87059
(505) 281-3304

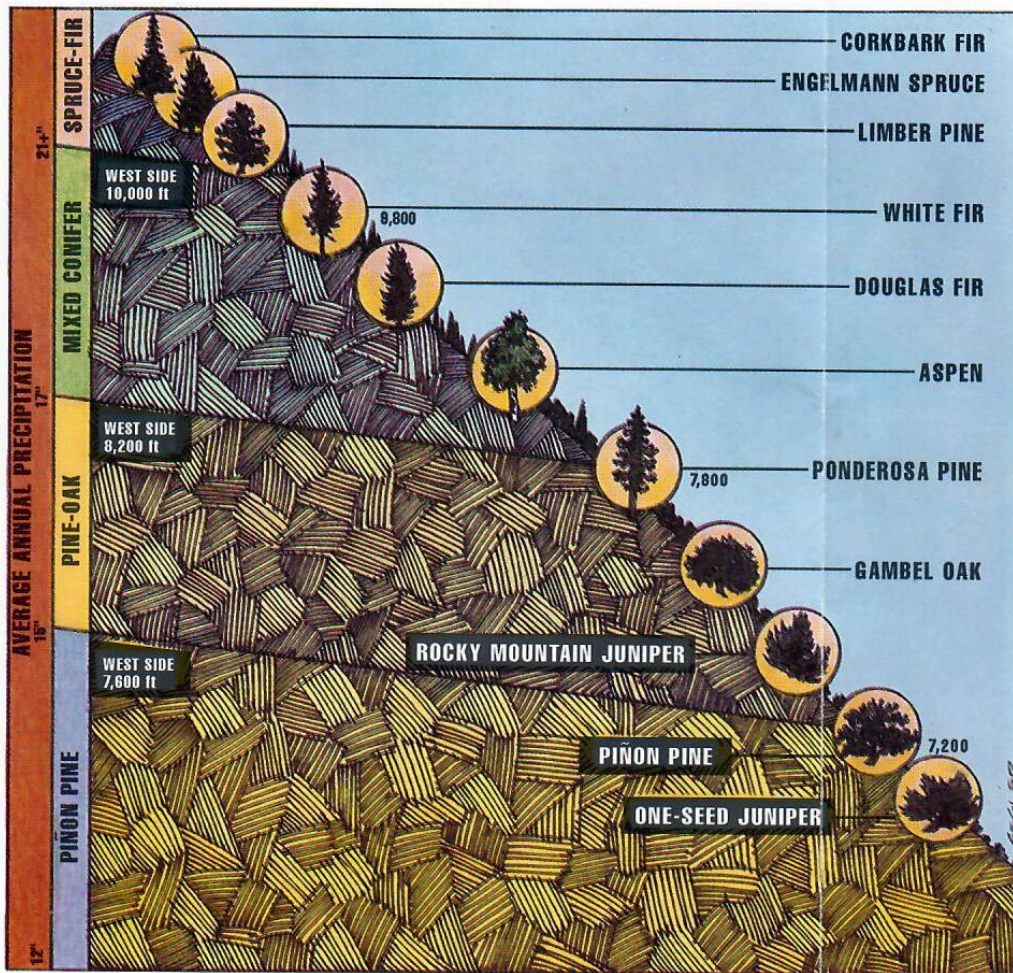
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Raccoon
Procyon lotor



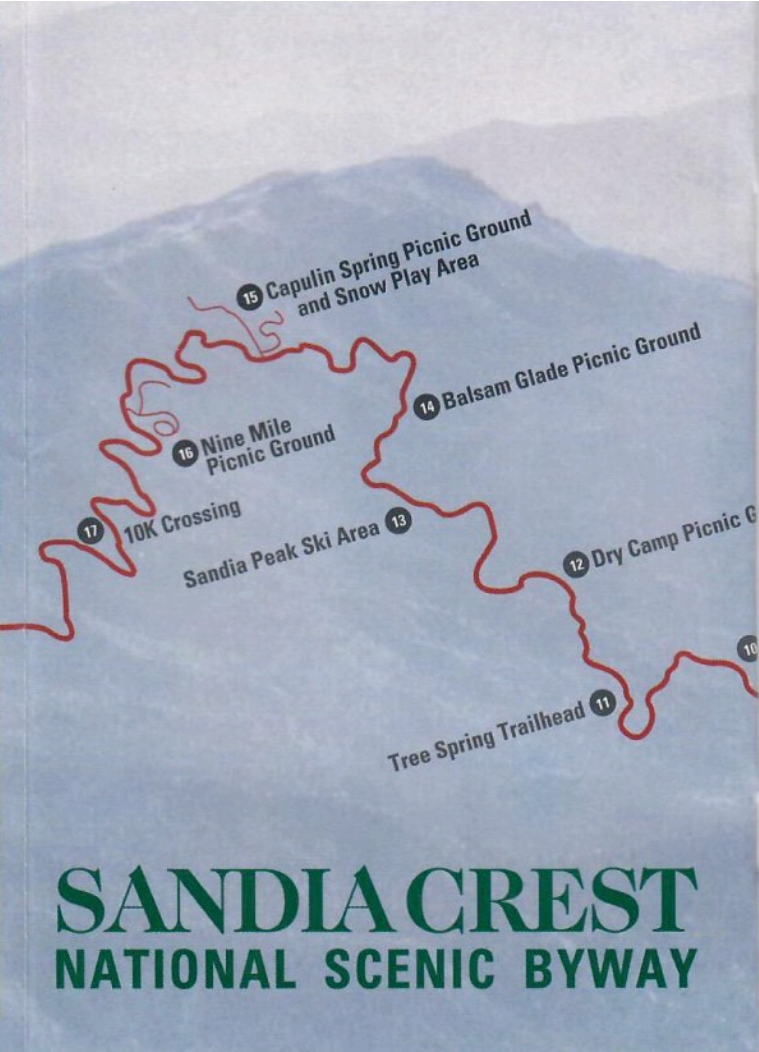
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WELCOME TO SANDIA CREST NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

New Mexico to Canada in 13 Miles!

New Mexico State Road 536 (Sandia Crest Road) is a U.S. Forest Service National Scenic Byway. This tour of the scenic byway will take you 13.6 miles from the junction with State Highway 14 to the 10,678-foot crest of Sandia Mountain. You will gain 3,828 feet in elevation and temperatures may drop as much as 20 degrees. Notice the change in plant life as you ascend. Every 1,000 feet of elevation gain is similar to traveling 300 to 600 miles north. The climb up Sandia Mountain will take you through the vegetative zones you would see on a trip north to Hudson Bay, Canada. Along the tour we will introduce you to these four vegetative types as well as some of the other natural, cultural, and recreational points of interest in this part of the Sandia Ranger District.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Look for numbered Scenic Byway signs along the road. They correspond to the numbered points of interest in this guide. Some of



our facilities are accessible to disabled users. They are indicated by the universal disabled user symbol.

WHAT TO TAKE

Temperatures at the Crest may be 20 degrees cooler than in Albuquerque so bring a coat. You may also need sunscreen and a hat. A camera and binoculars will come in handy. Bring boots if you plan on hiking. There are restrooms and water at several facilities, a food service at the ski area, and a snack and gift shop at the Crest.

**SANDIA CREST
NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY**

HISTORY

The Crest Road began as a series of informal wood cutting routes and logging skid trails. In the 1930's these routes were linked by a road to the Crest from the Loop Road at Balsam Glade. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) helped install the culverts and walls in the new road. In 1974 the New Mexico State Highway Department began to reconstruct the road from Sandia Peak Ski Area to the Crest. Many sharp curves were eliminated and the road was widened. This project was completed in 1982 to its current design.

BE RESPONSIBLE

Place your garbage in trash cans (where they are available) or pack it out with you. Stay on the trails. Leave wildflowers and other plants where they grow to allow others to enjoy them. Pets can be disturbing to native wildlife and vegetation. Please leave them at home. If you do bring them, they must be on a leash and should be dusted with flea powder to avoid contracting bubonic plague.

WARNINGS

The road is winding and slick when wet or icy. Travel trailers and recreational vehicles are not recommended past Doc Long Picnic Ground. Be prepared, alert, and cautious for natural hazards. Rattlesnakes are common. Electrical storms can be particularly hazardous at the Crest. The tour will end at 10,678 feet above sea level. At this elevation you may experience a shortness of breath and physical activity will take more energy.

ound

Old Ways and New Uses

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NM 536

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2 Ancient Riverbeds

1 The Triangle

NM 14



Winter 1939

1**The Triangle • 6,850 feet**

As you reach the junction of NM 14 and NM 536 (the scenic byway), you are greeted by the Sandia Crest National Scenic Byway sign. It was built in cooperation with many local partners who donated time and money. This junction is locally known as the “Triangle.”

Some of the old homes and the church visible from here are part of the Village of San Antonito, an Hispanic community dating back to the mid 1800s. The village lies within the piñon-juniper belt. This type of vegetation is found from northern Mexico to southern Colorado and is also known as the Upper Sonoran zone. Piñon pine, Rocky Mountain juniper and one-seed juniper are the predominant trees in this “pygmy forest.”

2**Ancient Riverbeds • 7,000 feet**

Here and elsewhere, between the “Triangle” and the Forest Boundary ahead, are dark, reddish-brown rocks. These are sandstones and shales deposited by ancient rivers more than 280 million years ago. The rocks are red because of a high iron oxide content. This formation is called Abo sandstone.

3**Tinkertown Museum • 7,040 feet**

The Tinkertown Museum is on the south side of the highway. This is a privately owned and operated business showcasing contemporary miniatures, “mechanical” shows, and more than 600 hand-carved wooden people. It is open seasonally and there is an admission fee.

Just north of here is the site of the main camp for the CCC “boys” who did construction work in the Sandias. In addition to work on the highway, these young men worked on picnic grounds, water systems, shelters, fences, trails, a ski lodge, and the ranger station in Tijeras.



CCC camp in Sandia Park, 1933 to 1940

4**Entering Cibola National Forest • 7,130 feet**

Welcome to the Cibola National Forest and its pine-oak forest! Ponderosa pines and Gambel oaks are the predominant trees here. Together, they range from 8,500' elevation in Mexico to 4,000' elevation in southern Wyoming.

Congress dedicated this area as National Forest in 1907. Sandia Mountain is part of the Sandia Ranger District of the Cibola National Forest. The primary emphasis here is on recreation, wildlife, and watershed management. No commercial logging has taken place since 1969 and no livestock grazing since 1951.

5**Fluctuating Seafloor • 7,160 feet**

The dark gray, layered rock to the right is limestone and shale. These rocks were deposited 300 million years ago by a shallow sea. Most of New Mexico was a seafloor then. When sea level fluctuated, alternating layers of limestone (deep water) and shale (shallow water) were deposited. This formation is known as Madera limestone.

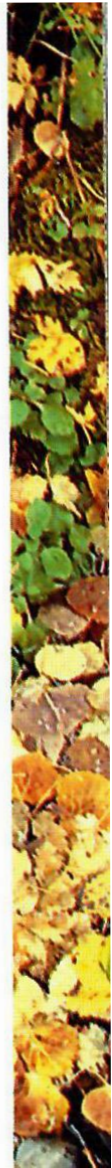
6**Sulphur & Cienega Canyon Picnic Grounds • 7,240 feet**

Access to ❖ Faulty Trail and Cienega Trail Part of the Cienega Canyon Picnic Ground is accessible to disabled individuals including a barrier-free nature trail with both braille and arabic lettered signs.

**7****Great Unconformity • 7,280 feet**

Consider the layers of rock formations to be like the pages in a geologic history book. Here, limestone that is thought to be three hundred million years old, lies directly on granite that is one billion, three hundred fifty million years old. More than one billion, fifty million years worth of geologic history pages are missing!

Scientists are unsure of what happened during that time. We can guess that a once magnificent, granite mountain was eroded to its roots. As an ancient ocean covered the remains of the mountain, limestone was deposited on its worn surface.

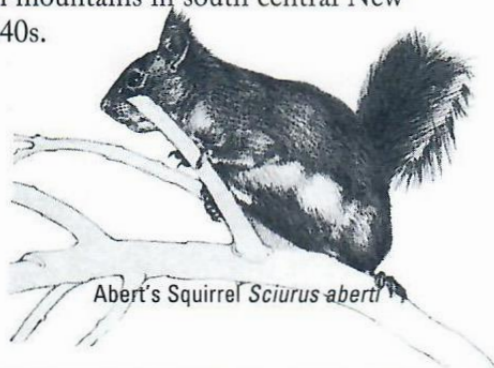


8

Doc Long Picnic Ground • 7,360 feet

Access to ❖ Bill Spring Trail, Oso Corredor Trail, Faulty Trail This picnic ground is named for Dr. William H. Long. He worked in New Mexico from 1910 to the mid 1930s as one of three forest pathologists in the country studying tree diseases. Dr. Long studied dwarf mistletoe and root rot at an experimental area here before the construction of the picnic ground. Later, the CCC boys from Sandia Park built the picnic ground in 1935. The log shelter is most of what remains of their work here.

While at Doc Long you may see the Abert's squirrel. Ponderosa pine forest is prime habitat for them. The squirrels that now thrive here are descendants of several Abert's squirrels transplanted from mountains in south central New Mexico in the 1940s.



Abert's Squirrel *Sciurus aberti*



Mule Deer *Odocoileus hemionus*



9

Tejano Canyon • 7,800 to 8,280 feet

For the next mile and one-half you will be traveling through Tejano (Texan) canyon. Madera limestone forms the southwest-facing escarpment. These slopes of the canyon are covered with mountain mahogany, and Gambel's oak. They are favorite winter food for mule deer. Natural forest fires play an important role in maintaining the health of this mountain shrub plant community.

The north-facing slopes and canyon bottoms are very different. They are often deep in snow in the winter and shaded in the summer. These slopes are covered with white fir and Douglas-fir, providing cool summer refuge for a variety of animals.

10 Old Ways and New Uses

As you gaze down the east side of Sandia Mountain, think about the people who have depended on this mountain for many of life's necessities. Over thousands of years, activities like hunting, gathering, mining, irrigation, and worshiping have been part of the traditional ways of American Indian tribes. In the 1700 and 1800s, the mountain served as a common-use area for land grants. It was converted to public ownership with the dedication of the National Forest in 1907. Our land managers must consider the growing demands of today's users while continuing to recognize and honor many traditional uses and values held by the descendants of the peoples who were on the land before us.

11 Tree Spring Trailhead • 8,480 feet

Access to ♦ *Tree Spring Trail, Oso Corridor Trail, 10K Trail and South Crest Trail*
This ascent has brought you north into Canada. This is the fir-aspen belt, or Canadian zone. The Douglas-fir, white fir, and quaking aspen found here grow near sea level in Canada.

Tree Spring trail is named for a nearby spring that some say originated under a tree



stump. Water is precious anywhere in New Mexico, so the spring has been impounded to form a wildlife drinker. Animals can water here even during the driest seasons. Those that commonly use the spring are mule deer, black bear, red squirrels, Steller's Jays, bats, and some migrating neotropical birds. This tiny ecosystem

around the spring is fragile and animals that depend on it are shy. Please do not disturb their habitat.



Black Bear
Ursus americanus

12 Dry Camp Picnic Ground • 8,640 feet

Just east of here is an abandoned mine adit. If you walk into the picnic ground and look through the trees, you may see the mine entrance and tailings on the flanks of Tecolote Peak. Before World War II, prospectors searched the Sandias looking for gold, silver, lead or copper. Few fortunes were made. Mining in the Sandias is now mostly non-existent.



13

Sandia Peak Ski Area • 8,609 feet

The ski area operates as a year-round recreation attraction under a special-use permit with the Forest Service. This type of permit allows businesses to use National Forest lands for public benefit. Permit fees received from businesses like this go into the National Treasury. Twenty-five percent of this money is returned to the county where it was collected to pay for schools and roads.

In 1936 the Albuquerque Ski Club first skied at an area near Tree Spring. The following year the Forest Service agreed to develop La Madera, now known as Sandia Peak Ski Area. In 1938 the CCC cleared the ski slopes and built a day lodge with the logs. The old lodge was then replaced by the existing lodge in 1983.

The length of the ski season in the Sandias varies greatly. The 1966/67 season was the shortest - only five days! The longest season was 1972/73. That winter skiers saw 148 ski days from late November to late April. The ski area now makes snow on the lower runs to extend the season.

One of the chair lifts is operated in the summer to take mountain bicyclists and sightseers to the Peak. If dining is on your agenda, you can enjoy a fine meal at the peak year round, and gaze below at the twinkling lights of Albuquerque.



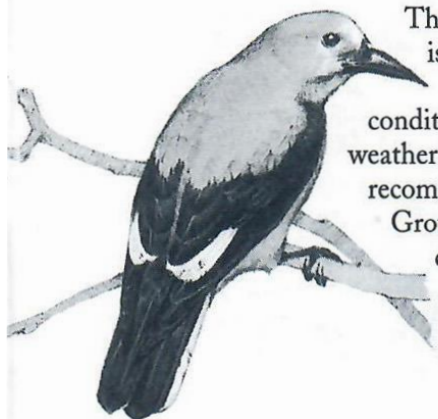
La Madera Ski Lodge 1941

14

Balsam Glade Picnic Ground • 8,651 feet

Balsam Glade marks the turn off to the Las Huertas Canyon Road. This road was opened in 1924. It was part of the Loop Road that began in Albuquerque, and looped around the mountain through Tijeras, Sandia Park, Balsam Glade, Placitas, and Bernalillo. A special dedication ceremony was here on October 4, 1924. Over 200 cars arrived, bringing more than 700 people to Balsam Glade.





The Las Huertas Canyon Road is passable with most vehicles, but it is not surfaced and conditions can be rough in wet weather. Car trailers are not recommended. Las Huertas Picnic Ground lies about four miles down the canyon.

Clark's Nutcracker
Nucifraga columbiana

15 Capulin Spring Picnic Ground and Snow Play Area • 8,840 feet

Access to ❖ trail to Capulin Peak

The snow play area here is usually open from December through March.

Capulin Peak, to the northeast, is the site of an early wooden Forest Service lookout tower. Lookouts like this one were connected by galvanized wire telephone line. They were the major fire warning systems for Forest Rangers early in this century. This tower operated until 1948, when it burned down.



16 Nine Mile Picnic Ground • 9,200 feet

Watch for the Clark's nutcracker, a common bird in this area. If you find them begging for handouts, discourage them. Natural food is best. Steller's Jays, flickers, chickadees, nuthatches, and Audubon's warblers are also found here. The open area encourages lush growth of wild raspberries that birds and people alike enjoy. It is locally known as "Raspberry Heaven."



17 10K Crossing • 10,000 feet

Access to ❖ 10K Trail

The spruce-fir belt (or Hudsonian zone) occurs from here to the crest of Sandia Mountain. Many of the plants found at these elevations also grow near Hudson Bay, Canada. The trees here must survive the wettest, windiest, coldest climates among the life zones that trees occupy on earth. The extreme temperatures and high winds limit the diversity of plant and animal life.



Many of the wildflowers growing in this zone require a long period of cold weather before their seeds can germinate. Two plants that you may find here are fairy slippers and coral root orchids. If you find them, take only photos so that others may enjoy their fragile beauty.



Fairy Slipper Orchid
Calypso bulbosa

18 Ellis Trailhead • 10,260 feet

Access to ❖ *Ellis Trail, upper Tram terminal, South Crest Trail*

From here you can access a variety of pleasant trails to the north or south. Remember though, that the Sandia Mountain Wilderness is about one and one-half mile in either direction. Federal law prohibits the use of mountain bikes in the Wilderness.



19 Raptor Perch • 10,540 feet

Notice the large power line that stretches across the highway above you. This power line was designed and installed with special forethought for birds of prey (or raptors) like hawks and falcons that use the area as a flyway. Raptors use the poles of the power line as a perch. Here, the lines had to be installed close together to cross the highway at a safe height. A perch was built on the poles above the lines to allow for a safe landing by these majestic birds.

20 Sandia Crest • 10,678 feet

Access to ❖ *North Crest Trail, South Crest Trail, La Luz Trail* The Sandia Crest National Scenic Byway ends here at the Crest. Take a walk up to the observation deck and take in the 360-degree view. Looking to the west you can see metropolitan Albuquerque, the Rio Grande, and distant Mt. Taylor (11,301 feet). Sandia Mountain is part of the

Rio Grande Rift Zone – a giant block of the earth's crust tipped up sideways. As the Sandia Block tilted up 15 degrees, the Rio Grande trough sank. This earth movement created the western escarpment of Sandia Mountain on which you are now standing. To imagine



just how much the earth moved, remember the Great Unconformity that you saw earlier. It occurs a few hundred feet below you here. This same formation lies 15,000 feet below sea level under Albuquerque.

The Sandia Mountain Wilderness lies to the west, at your feet. Congress designated the western escarpment as Wilderness in 1978. These lands are now preserved for quiet solitude and traditional cultural activities of native people and urban dwellers, alike.

Looking to the north you will see the steel forest of Sandia Crest Electronic Site. Electronic use of this site began in 1945 with a New Mexico State Police transmitter, and it has grown to be a major communication link for the Southwest.

Turning to the east you are looking into the Estancia Valley. These foothills and valleys have been occupied by



humans for the past 1,000 years. Sandia Mountain has been an important hunting ground for the residents of the area for all these years.

To the south you view the spine of Sandia Crest arching over to South Peak (9,782 feet). In the foreground you will see the Sandia Crest House. From

its opening in 1954, it has grown to become a popular gift shop and welcome snack bar. La Luz Trail heads down into Albuquerque from a point below here. The Crest Nature Trail also begins to the south. The first 400 feet of the trail are wheelchair accessible, leading to a scenic overlook.

Take some time to explore and reflect on this majestic place. Sandia Mountain is one of the sacred places of local native cultures. Show it the respect it deserves and have a safe, enjoyable return drive down the Scenic Byway.