

**Order of the Arrow
Camping Guide
Part 4**

**Lincoln
National Forest
Camps and
Recreation
Areas**

Introduction

The Lincoln National Forest is located in south central New Mexico. The Forest is managed as several districts. The Guadalupe district is the southern most and is adjacent to Guadalupe National Park. The northern most districts are the Smokey Bear, which includes the Capitan Mountain, and White Mountain Wilderness Areas. The central districts include the Cloudcroft and Mayhill districts. The forest has numerous recreation areas. The elevation ranges from 4200 to over 11,500 feet near Sierra Blanca Peak and includes desert to the alpine life zones. Additional can be obtained at:

Forest Supervisor Lincoln National Forest Federal Building Eleventh and New York Alamogordo, NM 88310 505-437-6030	Mayhill Ranger Station P.O. Box 5 Mayhill, NM 88339 505-687-3411	Smokey Bear Ranger Station 901 Mechem Drive Ruidoso, NM 88345 505-257-4095
Cloudcroft Ranger Station P.O. Box 288 Cloudcroft, NM 88317 505-682-2551	Guadalupe Ranger Station Federal Building, Room 159 Carlsbad, NM 88220 505-885-4181	

The Lincoln National Forest is usually somewhat drier than the Gila. It can not be recommended too strongly, that one should contact the Forest Service before planning any trip to the Lincoln to obtain the information about forest closures, fire restrictions, forest fires, water availability, flash floods and other dangers.

Sitting Bull Falls

Sitting Bull Falls is an oasis 44 miles southwest of Carlsbad, NM in the heart of Lincoln National Forest. Named by pioneers for an Arapaho Indian and not the famous Sioux Chief, Sitting Bull Falls pay tribute to a man who brought the Ghost Dance religion to Indians in this region. There are springs and special geological features, hiking and nature studies besides the falls. It is a one half mile hike to the falls, best viewed in the morning light, a 75 foot travertine bluff with pools at the base. A trail continues 1.9 miles to the canyon rim and spring. Off trail exploring is permitted, but be very cautious, since falls' mist makes the rocks very slippery. Water available is available in the picnic area only. Camping allowed on public lands nearby with permission. Take US Highway 180 and 62 towards Carlsbad. Continue 7 miles past White City to NM 408. Turn left on NM 137 and then right on NM 276. USGS Maps: Queen and Red Bluff Draw.

Last Chance Canyon

Last Chance Canyon trailhead is located approximately 1/4 mile before arriving at Sitting Bull Falls. A primitive road (276B) may be taken to the parking area or a developed parking area may be used. The trail continues up Last Chance Canyon with numerous camping areas along the way. Water is available in the stream but is intermittent. At approximately 5 miles the trail comes to a pump house. USGS Maps: Queen and Red Bluff Draw

Three Rivers

Three Rivers Campground, about two hours drive from Las Cruces, can be reached by staying on US 54 out of Alamogordo and through Tularosa to the turnoff for the Three Rivers Petroglyph site. The turnoff road is paved only a short distance, but the remaining dirt road is fairly well maintained. There is one ford where the road crosses a small stream in a large arroyo, definitely a potential problem spot after a heavy rain. The fee campground has six developed campsites (concrete table and fireplace with grill) and numerous undeveloped sites of varying sizes. Restroom facilities are provided, and there are two pipe corrals. Potable water is available at the Petroglyph site but not at the campground. From the campground, trails lead into the White Mountain Wilderness area. Trail #44 is well marked, and follows the creek up Three Rivers Canyon, to a junction with the Crest Trail, #25, just east of Elk point with many potential campsites along the route. The first two miles are broad and level, very easy walking, but after crossing the creek the trail gradually becomes steeper and rockier. The elevation gain is approximately 3500 feet on the six miles of trail. The creek has numerous pools that hold small trout. Nature study opportunities abound as the first two and a half miles of the trail pass through three life zones. Whether going for a stop and flop camp in the campground with a hike up the trail or a backpacking excursion up the canyon, Three Rivers is an excellent spot for outdoor activity. This is bear country so plan accordingly. USGS Map: Nogal Peak

Bonita Spring and Spring Cabin Hike

Drive to Ruidoso and proceed north on NM 48 through Alto. Turn left on NM 107 in Angus. Stay to the left at the fork at approximately 1-1/2 miles. Continue past Bonita Lake on Forest Road #107 and stay to the left at the fork at approximately 3-1/2 miles beyond Bonita Lake. Continue on Forest Road #107 past the riding stables on to the trailhead. This is the trailhead for trail #36. Camping is available at the trailhead. Restroom facilities are available but there is no potable water. Numerous hiking options exist. Leave the trailhead and proceed up trail #36 that traces Bonito creek. Bonito seep is an excellent stop for lunch and to refill the canteens. Continue on trail #36 to the crest, trail #25 and then proceed north. The trail follows the crest closely and provides beautiful vistas. At approximately five miles turn left to the Spring Cabin. A spring is available to the north west of the cabin. A wonderful meadow under the pines makes a great place to spend the night. Return the following morning back to the trail junction and follow trail #37 to trail #36 for the return to the trailhead. For those with transportation support, take the crest trail south to trail #44 to drop into the Three Rivers trail head. Argentine peak is an excellent diversion to the north of the trail #25 and trail #37 junctions. USGS Map: Nogal Peak