



Canyons of the Ancients Mountain Bike Trail System

Trail Name	Miles	Kilometers	Trail Difficulty	Rating	MTB Project Ranking		
					System	Colorado	National
East Rock Creek Trail	5.1	8.2	◆ Intermediate / Difficult	3.7	1	977	10,510
Sand Canyon Trail	3.6	5.8	◆ Intermediate / Difficult	3.5	2	1,012	10,727
North Connector	0.7	1.1	● Easy / Intermediate	-	-	-	-
South Connector	1.1	1.8	■ Intermediate	-	-	-	-
Canyons of the Ancients Loop	7.1	11.4	◆ Intermediate / Difficult	3.2	1	289	2,539

Trail Difficulty, Rating, and Ranking based on the MTB Project (www.mtbproject.com)

Trail Difficulty Key

- Easy 5% grade; 2 inch obstacles
- Intermediate 10% grade; 8 inch obstacles
- ◆ Difficult 15% grade; 15 inch obstacles, occasional harder sections
- ◆ Extreme Difficulty 20% grade, 15+ inch obstacles, many harder sections

Land Manager

BLM Colorado – Tres Rios Field Office
 29211 Highway 184
 Dolores, CO 81323
 (970) 882-7296
www.blm.gov/colorado

Trails Maintenance & Building

Southwest Colorado Cycling Association (SWCCA)
 PO Box 1302
 Cortez, CO 81321
 (970) 560-5659
www.swccycling.com

MTB Project Trail Comments



Bikes must stay on the main trail. Please walk the short spur trails to the archeological sites.

East Rock Creek Trail



To reach the McElmo Canyon trailhead, head south of Cortez on Highway 491. Turn right (west) on County Road G at the signs for the airport and/or Hovenweep National Monument. Go 12 miles on this paved road. Trailhead parking is an unimproved slickrock surface on the north (right) side of the road. No water or other services are available.

The trail is well marked with maps at every major intersection. Start up the Sand Canyon Trail and in about 1/4-mile watch for the Blue Bike Trail - No equestrian use allowed - that branches to the left. This connector is clearly marked. Follow it to the junction with East Rock Creek then take a right. From there simply follow the loop counterclockwise back to this point and then retrace your steps on the first two trails to get back to the parking lot.

If you want a longer ride add the Sand Canyon Trail to the east and/or the Rock Creek Trail that loops west. The Rock Creek Trail (not East Rock Creek) is more technical. Sand Canyon is easier. These trails are rideable almost year round, but get hot in the summer.

Sand Canyon Trail

Sand Canyon contains many Puebloan archaeological sites.

The trail is open to hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking, but the upper section is steep and rugged. Part of the singletrack dirt trail crosses slick rock marked with rock cairns. The trail could be shuttled by leaving one vehicle at Sand Canyon Pueblo, and leave a second vehicle at the bottom (south) end of the trail in McElmo Canyon. There is a very steep section with 30 switchbacks about 4.5 miles into the ride. It's only about 1/2 mile and will be a hike-a-bike for most people. Because it's uphill from the McElmo parking lot, you can turn around anytime and enjoy the downhill back to your vehicle.

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Canyons of the Ancients Loop

This trail consists of the southern part of Sand Canyon Trail, North and South Connectors, and the western portion of East Rock Creek Trail.