



**Mancos Mountain Bike Trail System**

Trail Name	Miles	Kilometers	Trail Difficulty	Rating	MTB Project Ranking			
					System	Colorado	National	
<b>Mancos State Park</b>								
Black Bear Trail	1.4	2.3	Easy/Intermediate	2	2	2,071	20,195	
Chicken Creek Trail	7.5	12.1	Intermediate/Difficult	2	1	2,001	19,884	
<b>San Juan National Forest</b>								
Mancos Box Canyon Trail	6.3	10.2	Difficult	3	14	1,453	13,762	
Mancos Rim Trail	1.2	2	Intermediate/Difficult	2	23	2,091	20,317	
West Mancos Trail	4	6.5	Difficult	3	16	1,487	13,997	

Trail Difficulty, Rating, and Ranking based on the MTB Project ([www.mtbproject.com](http://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

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## MTB Project Trail Comments

### Mancos State Park

#### Black Bear Trail

From the trailhead, go up the Chicken Creek Trail for a few hundred feet and bear right. Black Bear Trail follows an old road to the northeast, gradually rising. This is a pleasant, easy trail which then curves back to the southeast through large ponderosas with an oak understory. The trail descends a steep loose section before reconnecting with the Chicken Creek Trail.

#### Chicken Creek Trail

The south trailhead for this route is located at the northwest corner of Jackson Gulch Reservoir in Mancos State Park. There is a pit toilet at the trailhead. The trail heads north passing the Black Bear Trail and crossing a broad open valley. It then descends into the Chicken Creek drainage on what appears to be the old road to Deans Sawmill. At one point, this road is blocked by a huge boulder that has slid down the hill, but you can ride around it. After crossing Chicken Creek, the road mostly stays on the west side. Note that all the crossings on this trail are easy rides or stone stepping under normal flow conditions.

The Deans Sawmill site has some small metal artifacts, but also portions of the firebox, boiler, and stack of a steam engine. The engine seems to have been abandoned, then at some later point it was cut up for scrap. For some reason the final pieces were not hauled off. I like to speculate that the boulder blocked access, providing us a lucky glimpse of history. From the sawmill site, the most technical section of the trail extends for about 1.5 miles north. The trail hugs the east wall of the valley and there are lots of rocks, roots, and hikes. But there are also some pleasant interludes.

The trail turns east, crossing a small meadow where there are possible remains of a cabin. After about 400 feet there is a level area with a curious artifact. It is a small very heavy coal stove. This area is only a few hundred feet from FR561, so it is likely that a road came down into this area and there were some dwellings. From this area north, the trail is often on old logging road grades. There are still plenty of rocks, roots, and climbs but it is generally less technical. Rim Trail comes in from the east, and from here north the trail is open to off highway motorcycles (OHMs) so it is wider and most deadfalls are cleared. Finally, the trail intersects Morrison Trail. Turning east, it climbs to the northern Chicken Creek Trailhead which has a parking area.

Camping is prohibited within one mile of Transfer CG. Options: To the south, 416 at Doc Lowell Flats is a large area. Going north beyond the intersection of 327 and 350, there are large flat areas not far up 327 and about 2 miles up around 561D. I have gotten AT&T cell reception in these higher areas when there is none in the Transfer area.

## San Juan National Forest

### Mancos Box Canyon Trail

And off the rim you go! The first quarter-mile drops 400 feet as you plunge down narrow, steep, and chunky switchbacks.

At the creek you'll see signs for horse and hiker routes. The latter refers to a log bridge that is washed out as of July 2014. Just splash across the creek. The other side of the creek is almost as steep and even narrower. This section, unfortunately, is mostly hike-a-bike. And then suddenly, it's over. You emerge on a gently rising plateau. Be sure to close the gate at 1.4 miles. Threading along cow trails you'll pass the grandly-named Box Canyon Reservoir, a large and muddy stock tank. Right about four miles into the ride, you'll reach a four-way intersection. Turn left. If you were to stay straight or turn right here, you'd join the Mancos Box Canyon Spur.

Cruising on through sparse aspens, you descend into the Deer Lick Creek drainage. Except for roots, this is less chunky and more gradual than the west end plunge. Deer Lick opens into a meadow that eventually deposits you beside the West Mancos River. After splashing through two crossings, you emerge to find a very steep climb and then a river-bank ride to the old site of Golconda. Here you can pick up the West Mancos Trail to continue the loop.

Given the steepness of the west end gorge crossing, riders might want to consider riding this trail in the opposite direction. They could take West Mancos Trail downhill then climb gradually up Deer Lick. This would save the plunge down and the hike-a-bike up for the very end. This is a remote area with no cell coverage. Riders should be well-prepared with repair and weather gear.

### Mancos Rim Trail

This trail runs along the rim of the West Mancos River gorge, with nice views. There are some exposed sections with cliffs just off the trail, so ride with caution. The Mancos Rim Trail can be ridden as part of a loop beginning with Mancos Box Canyon and West Mancos Trail, or the reverse.

### West Mancos Trail

This is an outrageously rocky trail running through the West Mancos River gorge.

Begin at Golconda and ride 0.6 miles up the road. Turn left onto singletrack and the fun begins. There are some smooth sections, but mostly it is unrelenting chunk. Cliff bands have funneled a steady supply of talus down into the gorge and the tread is correspondingly rocky. This trail can be ridden uphill from Mancos Box Canyon to form a loop. This is quite a grind and requires extensive walking. A better option might be to ride down this trail, then climb gradually up Mancos Box Canyon from the east end.