

70 million years of history...

Looking out over the desert badlands, it is hard to imagine that this same area was once covered by water. But about 70 million years ago it was! Then the oceans withdrew and the dinosaurs that once ruled the earth vanished – scientists are still not sure why. Then the face of the land changed, when between 50 and 30 million years ago the Rocky Mountains rose to the north and east and other mountains formed the west.

New kinds of animals (the mammals) developed in these new lands. They had fur instead of scales and gave birth to live young instead of laying eggs. Plants were different too, as there was much more rain. Temperatures were more equable than they are now, as summers were cooler and winters were warmer.



How the Rocks Formed

As rains washed down into the San Juan Basin from surrounding mountains, the water carried with it sand and silt from the mountains. Streams and rivers formed, flowing into a rich land of grasslands, marshes, lakes and forests. Horses, camels, wild dogs, huge cats and bears – some looking very different from their descendants today – made this area home. Slowly the streams eroded the highlands and filled the basin with more than 10,000 feet of sand and silt.

Over time these deposits formed the layers of rock you see around Angel Peak. The top layer you can see is mostly sandstone, much harder than the siltstones and mudstones below it. And as generations of animals and plants lived and died here, they were buried in the sand and silt, then preserved as fossils.

Fossils

You can see many kinds of fossils at Angel Peak Scenic Area – bones of animals, prints of leaves, and even whole branches and trunks of trees. If you are interested in fossils, you can collect a limited amount of fossils of plants, insects, shell and petrified wood on BLM land. Under Federal Law, you CANNOT collect fossils of animals with bones (vertebrates). You may not sell any fossil that you collect from Federal land.

Approximately 2.5 to 3 million years ago the “Ice Age” began, causing the land to become much colder and drier. Although the great ice sheets never covered this area, as they melted, the water formed great rivers and streams that flowed through this area, cutting the deep canyons that you see. Because the top sandstone layer (San Jose Formation) was harder than the layers beneath (Nacimient Formation), parts of the sandstone remained. Today you can see how rain water running down the face of the Nacimient Formation continues to erode it, forming the canyons and gullies of Kutz Canyon Paleontological Area to the north.

The Land Today

About 12,000 years ago the Ice Age ended and the land became hotter and drier. Now the area is home to plants and animals that can survive this harsh environment. You will see that many plants have small leaves that help them save water.

Cacti save water in their stems, their “spines” are actually tiny leaves. To avoid the heat, most of the animals in the area are active at night or early and late in the day. Be observant and you may see deer, coyotes, rabbits, snakes, lizards, horned lizards, ravens and many kinds of birds.

How to get there

Angel Peak is located off of US 550, 16 miles south of Bloomfield, turn east on CR 7175. There is no charge to visit or camp at Angel Peak Recreation Area. The road into Angel Peak is graveled, but may become impassible in bad weather.

Alternatively, access to the canyon land to the north (Kutz Canyon) can be from CR 7020. Unsigned, this road is directly across from CR 7010 where the divided highway by median merges into an undivided highway.

This road and other oil field roads are impassible in inclement weather.



New Mexico, USA

Aztec Visitor Center

110 N. Ash Avenue

Aztec, NM 87410

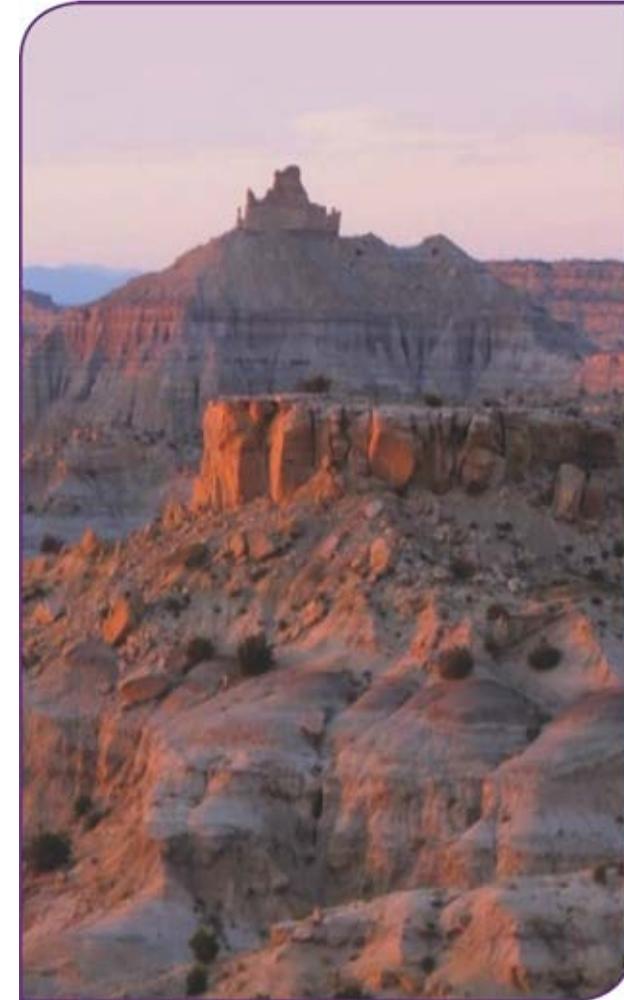
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ANGEL PEAK SCENIC AREA



EXPLORE

www.aztecnm.com (888) 543-4629

City of Aztec Public WiFi



Facilities

There are three picnic areas and a campground within Angel Peak Scenic Area. Each site has shelters with tables and fire rings with metal grates. Sage and Cliffs Picnic areas and the campground have vault toilets. The campground has nine camping spaces and a short nature trail that passes through native desert plants and ends at a bench overlooking the canyon. There is no electricity or trash pickup in the scenic area.

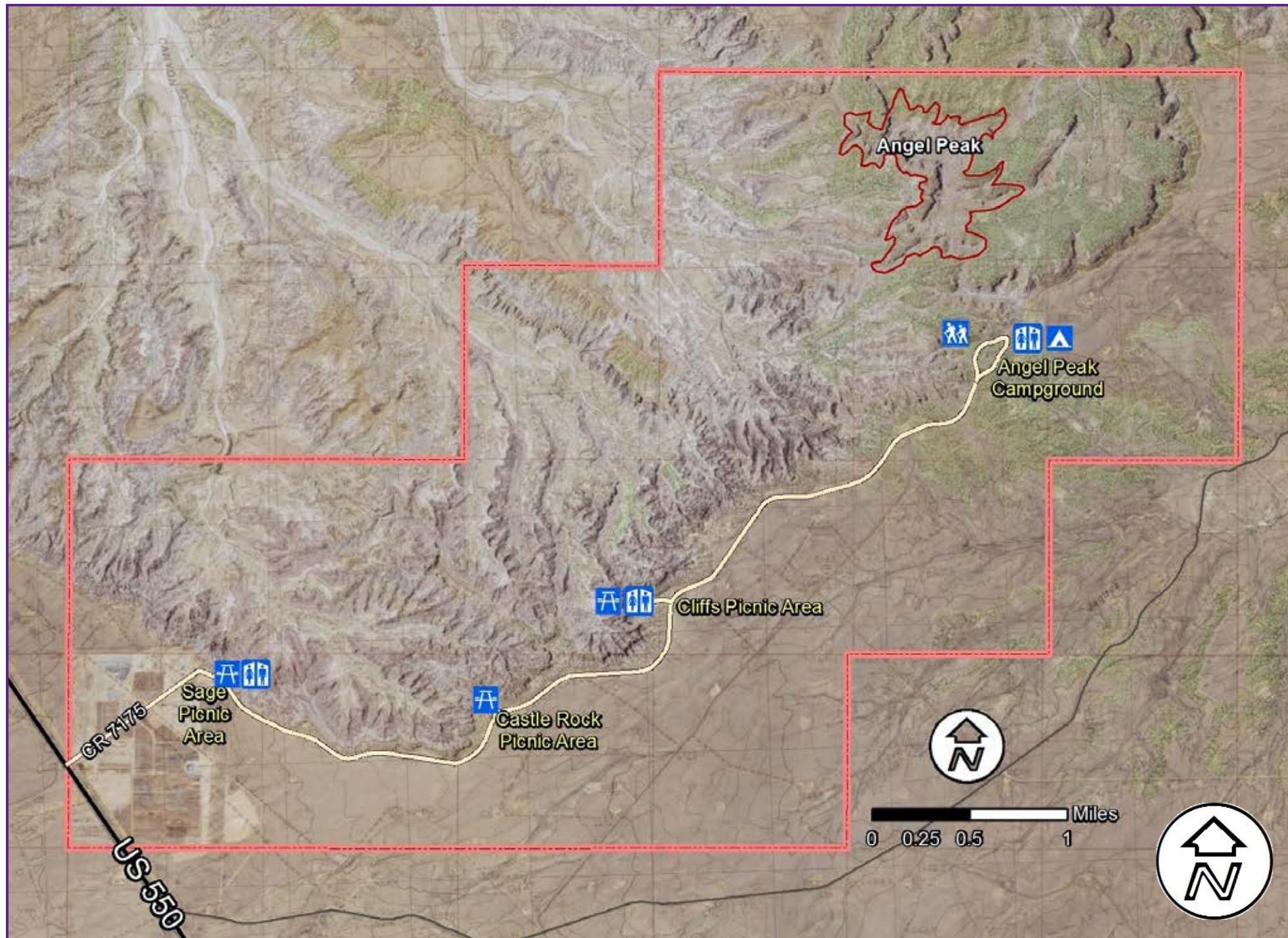


Please pack out what you pack in. Please note that there is no water available in the scenic area, bring plenty of water.

There is active oil and gas development in the area. For your safety, stay away from the oil and gas facilities. Motorized vehicles and mountain bikes must stay on established roads. Off-highway vehicles are permitted only on established roads and in dry washes wider than a vehicle. Shooting is not allowed.

Report destruction or vandalism to:

US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
6251 College Boulevard
Farmington, NM 87402
(505) 564-7600



Stay Safe and Enjoy Your Visit!

Remember that rattlesnakes, scorpions and venomous spiders live in the area.

The area can get extremely hot. Be sure to bring a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water!