



USING THE SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST AND COUNTY OPEN SPACE

The Los Alamos County Trail Network is open to non-motorized use only.

Resource Protection: All cultural resources such as Ancestral Pueblo room blocks, pot sherds, petroglyphs, and historical artifacts are protected by Federal and State law. Let all cultural resources lie undisturbed.

Share the Trail: These are multi-use trails for pedestrians, equestrians, and bicyclists. Bicyclists should yield to all other users.

Dogs in Los Alamos County Open Space: All dogs must be on a leash when within 100 yards of a trailhead. Dogs must be under voice and sight control at all times.

Safety: When exploring trails, always carry water, sunscreen, a hat, extra clothing, a flashlight, and a navigational aid.



The foothills, canyons, and mesas in and around Los Alamos are linked by a 58-mile network of trails. Hikers, runners, horseback riders, mountain bikers, and other trail users delight in the variety of trails from which to choose. The trails offer a quick escape from the hectic pace in the town; a route by which to commute to work; an easy stroll or a physical challenge; and a chance to observe wildlife or to soak in impressive views. The County Trail Network links with over 100 miles of trails on the surrounding Santa Fe National Forest and the adjacent Valles Caldera National Preserve.

For more information on Los Alamos County Open Space and Trails, visit www.losalamosnm.us/parks. For additional maps and forest information, contact the Española Ranger District, Santa Fe National Forest at 505 753-7331 or www.fs.usda.gov/santafe.

Download maps and trail descriptions to your mobile device at www.everytrail.com



LOS ALAMOS COUNTY TRAIL NETWORK GUIDE



MITCHELL TRAILHEAD



Guaje Ridge Trail

The Mitchell Trailhead offers access to some of Los Alamos' most popular trail destinations. Hikers can choose an easy trip up Rendija Canyon, the challenging climb to the Natural Arch, or the day-long excursion along the spectacular Guaje Ridge. Although the trailhead is located on county open space, most of the trails accessed from this point are on the Santa Fe National Forest. Common rules and recommendations for both the county and the Forest Service are found on the back of this brochure.

Finding the Trailhead: From 15th Street and Central Avenue in downtown Los Alamos, head west (towards the Jemez Mountains) on Central. In 0.8 miles, past Ashley Pond and the Aquatic Center, turn right onto Diamond Drive. Pass the Los Alamos High School and in a half mile, the road swings to the east. Continue 0.1 mile past the traffic signal at the Diamond/ Arkansas/38th Street intersection, turn left onto 35th Street. Climb to a T-intersection and turn left onto Arizona Avenue. The trailhead is about 0.5 miles west on Arizona, with a parking area for two vehicles and additional parking along the street.



MITCHELL LOOP

Length: 2.4 miles
Fitness Level: easy
Trail surface: packed dirt, rock

Elevation Gain: 400 feet
Features: wildfire recovery, views
Recommended for foot traffic only

The Mitchell Trail, resident David Mitchell's Eagle Scout project in 1974, connects Los Alamos with Guaje Canyon. The trail ascends 1,500 in 2.4 miles to reach the top of Guaje Ridge, but there is an easier journey of the same distance that connects the modern Mitchell Trail with David's original route. The loop ascends Rendija Canyon through the Cerro Grande burn scar where vegetative recovery has healed the landscape. The return leg climbs then descends along a low ridge with 360-degree views. The trip makes a nice winter hike or a perfect after dinner stroll.

From the trailhead, travel up hill along the Mitchell Trail. Meet the Perimeter Trail coming in from the left, go over a low ridge, and continue straight when the Perimeter Trail heads to the right. Skirt below a water tank and make a crossing of a dry stream channel. Pass the return leg of the loop, marked with a rock cairn, on the left and continue up the canyon. The trail makes several crossings of the channel, and then passes the Natural Arch Trail on the right. About 0.4 mile from the arch trail, make another two stream crossings. Just beyond the second crossing, watch for a rock cairn marking the Original Mitchell Trail on the left side of the channel. Turn left onto that trail, climb several switchbacks, and reach the ridge top. From here it is a mile-long easy descent back the the Mitchell Trail. Watch for the Natural Arch to the left and enjoy the views of Los Alamos along the way. When you reach the Mitchell Trail, turn right and retrace the last quarter mile back to the trailhead.



NATURAL ARCH TRAIL

Length: 1.5 miles
Fitness Level: challenging
Trail surface: packed dirt, rock scrambling

Elevation Gain: 600 feet
Features: natural arch, views
Foot traffic only

The short but challenging trip to the natural arch requires some rock scrambling, route-finding, and patience. Not everyone finds the arch on their first attempt as they lose the path that ascends the crag in which the arch is located. The route—the last section is not really a trail—is irregularly marked with rock cairns and a boot-worn path over the rocks. You must watch your footing at all times, but there is never exposure to a possible long fall. A successful journey ends by passing under the arch and enjoying the view through the window of rock.

From the trailhead, travel up hill along the Mitchell Trail. Meet the Perimeter Trail coming in from the left, go over a low ridge, and continue straight when the Perimeter Trail heads to the right. Skirt below a water tank and make a crossing of a dry stream channel. The trail makes several crossings of the channel, and about a half mile from the start meets the Natural Arch Trail on the right. Head up this trail, which for the first 200 yards is an easy to follow path. The path soon fades and begins to climb up the rocks. Look for cairns, bedrock that is lighter in color than the surrounding rocks from boot-wear, stairs, narrow chutes, and natural rock ramps. You won't see the arch until you are within 100 feet of it. When you spot the arch, climb the rocks to enjoy the view from under the span. Return to the trailhead by the same route.



GUAJE RIDGE/PERIMETER LOOP

Length: 10.5 miles
Fitness Level: difficult
Trail surface: packed dirt

Elevation Gain: 1,800 feet
Features: 360-degree views
Mitchell Trail recommended for foot traffic only

Guaje Ridge dominates the northern skyline of Los Alamos. Combined with the Perimeter and other trails, the ridge offers one of the premier trips in the area, a long but rewarding loop through the Cerro Grande burn scar. The loop uses the Mitchell Trail to gain 1,500 feet in the first 2.5 miles, then gradually loses that elevation along 3.5 miles of Guaje Ridge. Almost the entire route is in the Cerro Grande burn scar, and some of it was returned by the Las Conchas fire.

Head up the Mitchell Trail. The first section is a gentle climb mostly in the canyon bottom, but in one mile the trail turns north and ascends steeply to the first saddle. The climb isn't over here, as Guaje Ridge, hidden until now, is still ahead. Gain another 400 feet over the next half mile to reach the ridge. Near a plaque honoring trailbuilder David Mitchell, turn right onto the Guaje Ridge Trail. Most of the next three miles offer stunning views in all directions. The trail is easy to follow but is badly eroded in spots.

Reach the Upper Guaje Road (Forest Trail 802) about 6 miles from the start. Turn left and head down the steep road for a quarter mile. At a small saddle, turn right onto the unmarked Cabra Loop Trail. Wind over mesas and through canyons to meet the Rendija Trail in the bottom of Rendija Canyon. Bear right and in a few minutes continue straight to head through the Rendija Crack. On the west side of the crack, stay in the canyon bottom. In a tenth mile, bear left out of the canyon bottom and reach Forest Trail 802. Turn left onto the road for a few yards, then pick up the Perimeter Trail on the right. Follow this trail 2 miles to the Mitchell Trail, and turn left to return to the trailhead.

