

Northern New Mexico Loop 2019

- [Northern New Mexico Loop Preview](#)
- [Santa Fe Start](#) June 10
- [To the Rio Grande](#)
- [Bandelier](#)
- [Jemez River](#)
- [Warm and Hot](#)
- [Parks and CDT](#) June 15
- [Ojitos Canyon and Rim](#)
- [Ghost Ranch Nero](#)
- [Box, Ridge, Highlands](#)
- [Grass, Creek, Canyon](#)
- [Lagunitas](#) June 20
- [Cumbres Pass](#)
- [Osier](#)
- [Rio San Antonio](#)
- [High Plains](#)
- [Dunn Bridge](#) June 25
- [Questa](#)
- [Rendezvous Taos Ski Valley](#)
- [Manzanitas Trail Zero](#)
- [Red River](#)
- [Latir](#)
- [Monsoon and Valle Vidal](#) July 1
- [Eagle Nest](#)
- [Angel Fire](#)
- [Obstacles](#)
- [Pecos Wilderness North](#) July 5
- [Pecos Memories](#)
- [Trails End Santa Fe](#) July 7



Northern New Mexico Loop Preview

Tomorrow I start hiking the Northern New Mexico Loop (NNML), starting and ending in Santa Fe, NM. This trail was stitched together from existing trails and dirt roads by Brett Tucker (BlisterFree), the same trail wizard that created the [Grand Enchantment Trail](#).



The trail hits some really nifty locations in northern New Mexico, including the Jemez, Ghost Ranch, near Chama, Questa, Taos Ski Valley, Red River, Eagle Nest, Angel Fire, Sipapu, and the Pecos Wilderness.

Santa Fe Start

- NNML 2019 Day 1, June 10, Monday.
- Start mile 0, Santa Fe plaza.
- End mile 16, hilltop between Headquarters Well and Twelve Hundred Well.
- Miles walked: 16

Departing from my daughter's Albuquerque apartment in the morning (trail name Literally) I hike to Downtown train station and take the Rail Runner to Santa Fe Depot.



I join a [walking tour Santa Fe](#) of Santa Fe, given by the History Museum. We each wore little radios with earbuds, so the tour guide did not need to talk loudly for us to hear.



This is an important address connected with World War 2. Any guesses as to its significance?



Hint: PO Box 1663.

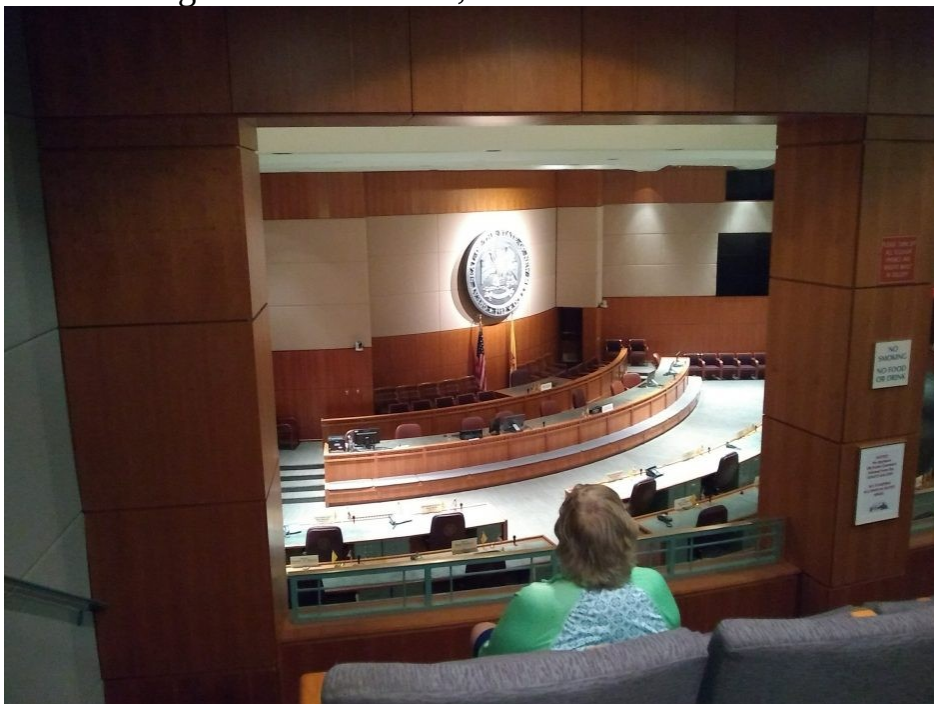
We saw several hidden courtyards.



I did not realize La Fonda Hotel was a Harvey House, with Mary Coulter as architect.



We visited the Round House, with offices for the New Mexico governor and legislature. The building is full of artwork, almost its own museum.



Finally, I start hiking out of the city at 1PM, using open space trails and community trails.



The route passes by markers for a short section of Camino Real Trail.



Camp is atop a hill, and tomorrow is the Rio Grande.

To the Rio Grande

- NNML 2019 Day 2, June 11, Tuesday.
- Start mile 16, hilltop between Headquarters Well and Twelve Hundred Well.
- End Twelve Hundred Well, mile 19.
- Miles walked: 11 to Rio Grande ford location, then 8 miles back to Twelve Hundred Well.

A series of jeep tracks and dirt roads lead to corrals with water at Twelve Hundred Well.



More road and a long stretch of cross country (no trail) descend down to the Rio Grande Gorge.





The river is high and running fast, and the distance across seems a really far.



My judgement was a ford was not entirely safe. My plan with the spouse (trail name Cairn) was for me to walk back to Twelve Hundred, and she would pick me up tomorrow morning to drive around to the other side. New Mexico had a lot of snow melt this year, and the river has been running really high. Sigh.

Bandelier

- NNML 2019 Day 3, June 12, Wednesday
- Start Twelve Hundred Well, mile 19
- End mile 32, West Alamo Rim Trail
- Miles walked: 3 miles to car, then after transport to Bandelier National Monument visitor center, 8 miles on Burro Trail south to Rio Grande ford at mile 28, then north along West Alamo Rim Trail to mile 32

Google Maps said we could drive up to my campsite at 1200 Well, but never trust that website on dirt roads. *Cairn* and I pre-arranged a meeting spot a few miles away near a mine and better road– good thing too, the proposed route was sometimes non-existent. *Cairn* drives me to White Rock, where I get the shuttle in to Bandelier National Monument.



Like larger national parks, Bandelier no longer allows most cars to drive within the monument during summer months.



How did we allow our young children to climb these ladders 140 feet to the highest dwellings?



After touring the cliff dwellings, I climb up switchbacks and head south. The trail is along flat narrow ridge with glorious views on both sides.



The trail meets the Rio Grande, where my hike was so rudely interrupted yesterday by high water.



On the way north, now back on the official NNML route, the rim is still rather flat, though not so narrow.



I run out of daylight and energy at about the same time.

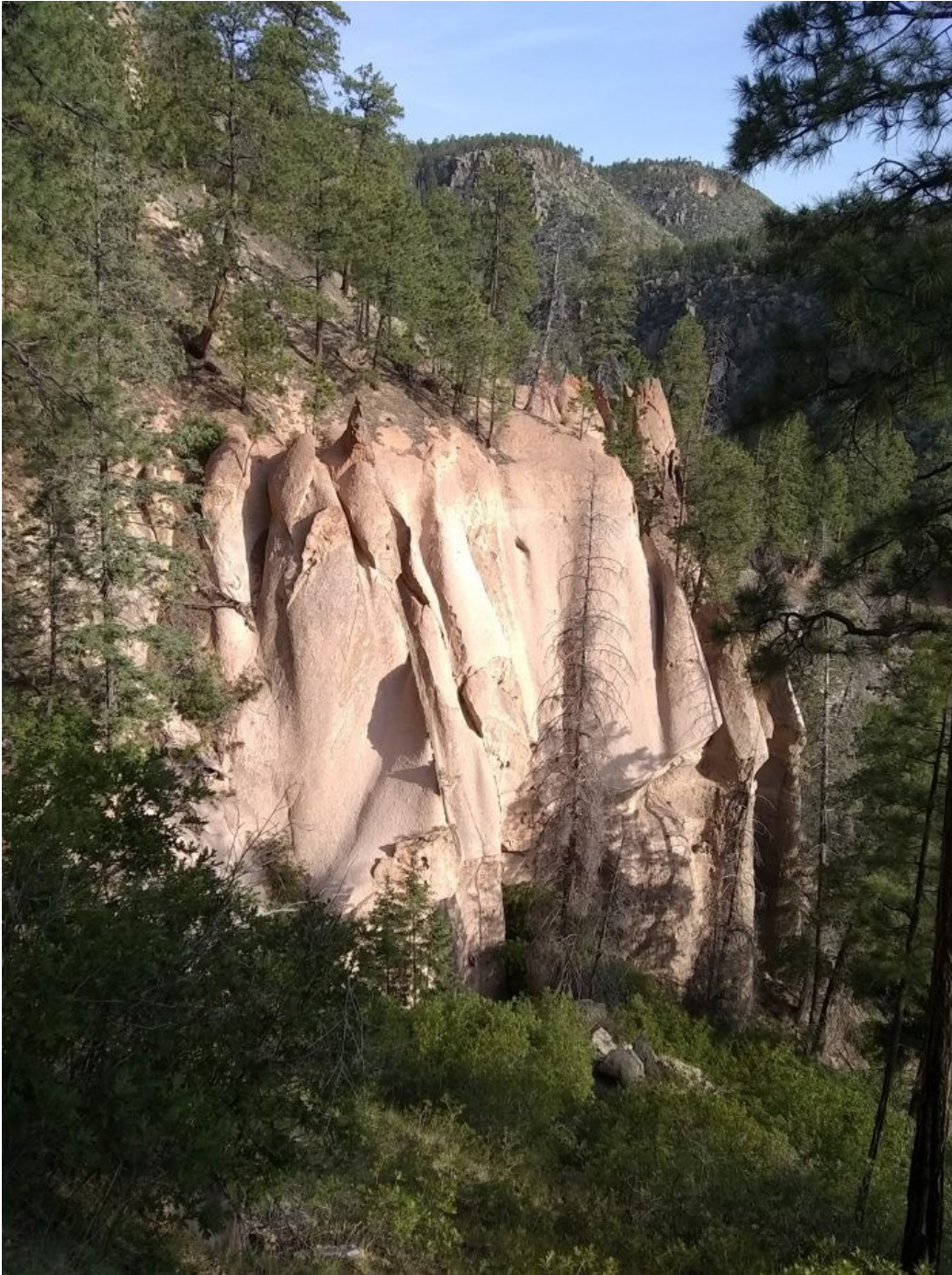
Jemez River

- NNML 2019 Day 4, June 13, Thursday
- Start mile 32, West Alamo Rim
- End near mile 57, past NM4 crossing
- Miles walked: 25

Continuing along the ridge, I come to the Stone Lions, a sort of religious shrine.



The route joins the Alamo Spring Trail, and water is running in the canyon. Large rock outcroppings seem characteristic of the Jemez Mountains.



Along Forest Road 287 is a large burn, recovering.

The route goes along the south edge of the Valle Caldera National Preserve, overlooking a vast green valley.



Later the route goes along the East Fork of the Jemez River, with some rock hopping necessary.



One section of trail is closed for forest “restoration”, and needed to be bypassed.

Finished audiobook [Walkaway](#), by Cory Doctorow.

Warm and Hot

- NNML 2019 Day 5, June 14, Friday
- Start near mile 57, past NM4 crossing
- End mile 80, Calaveras Well
- Miles walked: 23

Trail 137 comes out to Jemez Falls Campground, and continues on to McCauley Hot Spring, really a warm spring, but still nice.



Trail 137 ends at Battleship Rock Campground.



After a couple mile roadwalk on NM4, I get to La Cueva, and a country store where I can resupply and get wifi. No cell signal gets down these deep canyons. Afterwards I road walk some more, and then follow trail along the San Antonio Creek to the San Antonio Hot Springs.



Three other people are at the springs, but no one tries to talk over the sound of falling water.



Following the long green valley along the creek, I connect up to another narrow long river valley following the Rio Cebolla, with a lot of cattle grazing.



Camp is near Calaveras Well, marked as a dry well, but now a solar pump with full tank.



The day has been filled with sweet memories. When the kids were younger, we often went out to the Jemez for hikes or car camping, so Jemez Falls Campground, Battleship Rock, La Cueva, and the hot springs all call to mind family trips.

- Finished audiobook [The Elusive Pimpernel](#), by Baroness Orczy.

Parks and CDT

- NNML 2019 Day 6, June 15, Saturday
- Start mile 80, Calaveras Well
- End mile 106, near NM96
- Miles walked: 26

The route continues on a pipeline road, steep and not maintained for general use. Then on to good dirt forest service roads, with a few campers and tents. Finally the route goes cross country on ridge which broadens into a mesa.



Sometimes the trail is swampy, and grass starts getting higher.



The cross country route merges with Penas Negras Trail 32. Many dead trees have fallen, and there has been some attempt to saw logs and clear the trail, but trees fall faster than they can be cleared. About a mile of scrambling over fallen logs is a tough obstacle course.



Our route joins the CDT at San Pedro Parks. (Park here means high meadow, I think.)
Several elk graze, too far to photograph.



There is snow on the trail at 10.5k elevation, at least in shady spots. Good to know when I hit higher elevations. Most of the trip to date has been around 8k elevation.



The Parks trails are still soggy from snow melt.



Coming down the mesa one sees many dead trees. I do not remember so much tree kill when I was here in 2013, so need to refer back to my journal.



I meet Backcountry Horsemen, Jemez Chapter, just finishing sawing logs.



The CDT seems well maintained here, and one can navigate by edges of logs.



Rain threatens all around, and finally gets serious, so I quit early, camping among the first stand of sagebrush seen on this trip.

Ojitos Canyon and Rim

- NNML 2019 Day 7, June 16, Sunday
- Start mile 106, near NM96 (sec2mile41)
- End mile 135, near Living Museum Ranch (sec2mile70)
- Miles walked: 29

Climbing down into Ojitos Canyon, multi-colored sandstone cliffs appear, announcing we are near Ghost Ranch.



The path down into the canyon follows a creek, now running, with about twenty crossings.



Coming further out of the canyon the cliffs are not so hidden behind the trees.



Past the canyon the trail crosses the Chama River at Skull Crossing Bridge, with raft riders nearby.



Now is time to climb the Rim Trail with marvelous views, changing with the angle of the sun and shadows from clouds.





Climbing down from the rim, I camp close to the Ghost Ranch boundary, but also stopping to get out of rain again.



Ghost Ranch Nero

- NNML 2019 Day 8, June 17, Monday
- Start mile 135, near Living Museum Ranch (sec2mile70)
- End mile 137 (sec2mile72)
- Miles walked: 2

The Living Museum near where I camped seems to be defunct now, and the route should now bypass them. The Ghost Ranch welcome center would not open until 8AM, but hiker *Zipperhead* was there to give me info on wifi, showers, laundry, meals, and so forth. She would depart later in the morning, with a huge pack.

(No photo at request of hiker.)

After the office opens, I get signed up for a tent site and lunch ticket. More than one meal in the cafeteria would cause me to overeat and feel awful all night, from previous experience in towns. The staff does not allow campers to pick a tent site and set up before 2PM, but I can shower and do laundry and sort out my supplies that were mailed here, and have a snack, all of which greatly improve morale.



On a walking tour of the history of Ghost Ranch, I learn about its early days in cattle rustling and dude ranching, and Georgia O'Keefe's stay here, and poker games and saucy dalliances.



After lunch in the dining hall, I tour the paleontology and cultural museums, quite well done.





Upon setting up a tent, much of the afternoon is spent in equipment repair. The campground has a common room and kitchen, handy for working while escaping the afternoon rains.



(“Nero” means nearly-zero miles walked in a day.)

Box, Ridge, Highlands

- NNML 2019 Day 9, June 18, Tuesday
- Start mile 137, Ghost Ranch (sec3mile0)
- End mile 160 Caño Canyon (sec3mile23)
- Miles walked: 23

Going north out of Ghost Ranch, the trail climbs out of a box canyon that rustlers used to pen up their stolen cattle.





Sometimes my route departs the CDT and then joins it again in a few miles. Climbing on dirt road we get to a path along a ridge, with views of snow-capped mountains in the distance. The snow might not be in focus by my poor little camera, so take my word on it.



Later we get to open meadows and scrub oak, with cattle grazing, a kind of highlands as elevation gets to 9.5k.



After threatening all afternoon, heavy rain comes at 6PM, forcing an early end to hiking. My body is doing something weird, with chills, nausea, and low energy, and I fall asleep right away with no dinner. Later in the night I wake up better and eat a midnight meal. Whatever was going on is fixed, apparently. This happened once on the Grand Enchantment Trail.

Grass, Creek, Canyon

- NNML 2019 Day 10, June 19, Wednesday
- Start mile 160 Caño Canyon (sec3mile23)
- End mile 183 near Turkey Lake (sec3mile46)
- Miles walked: 23

Climbing higher, the oak is replaced by aspen and mixed conifer, and the grass meadows remain.



In the distance is the village of Canjillon, and the trail goes by Upper Canjillon Lake.



In the shade of trees at 10k elevation some snow remains on the trail, but only for a brief segment.



Much of the day is spent walking along creeks in grassy canyons, bordered by stands of trees. Plenty of water sources were running today, perhaps helped by recent rain.



The NNML departs from the official CDT in more places than noted on our maps, perhaps due to the CDT moving more route off of dirt roads and onto dedicated trail each year. I saw one hiker toward the end of the day snacking beside a river, but got the impression she did not want to talk, so smiled and walked on by. No rain today, after several days of precipitation.

- Finished audiobook [New Arabian Nights](#), by Robert Louis Stevenson

Lagunitas

- NNML 2019 Day 11, June 20, Thursday
- Start mile 183 near Turkey Lake (sec3mile46)
- End mile 208, 3 miles from Chama spur trails (sec3mile71)
- Miles walked: 25

Hopewell Lake appears in early morning, a man-made lake stocked with plenty of fish, with several campsites in use and several people fishing.



The terrain is still meadows with aspen and spruce. Any pine seems to be dead from beetle or other cause. Plenty of seasonal creeks are running due to snow melt or recent rain, and marshy spots on the trail can be expected.



Al is a south-bound section hiker, ending at Cuba. We talked a bunch. He warns of several miles of snow with post-holing on the Chama access trail.



The trail climbs a bit, with some changes– more rocks, now bunch grass, and still plenty of aspen.



At Lagunitas Campground are many small lakes, quite nice. When I see so many lakes together on a map, I think glacier activity helped form them. Wonder if that happened here? I have a friend who is doing a trail maintenance project here later this year, so I try to spot what they will be working on.





Climbing beyond the many pretty lakes, the trail goes along a ridge with steep dirt drop-off, as if from landslide



Camp is in an area with some snow hiding trail.



Now at 10.7k elevation, wind is rushing through the trees all night.

- Finished audiobook [The Little Nugget](#), by P.G. Wodehouse.

Cumbres Pass

- NNML 2019 Day 12, June 21, Friday
- Start mile 208, 3 miles from Chama spur trails (sec3mile71)
- End mile 17 of Chama spur trail at Cumbres Pass, then hitch into town
- Miles walked: 20

The terrain remains bunch grass meadows bordered with aspen and spruces, though now the ground and pathway is often rocky.



As the hiker Al warned, deep snow hides the trail, starting about 7 miles from the end. Some post-holing happens, though not as much as anticipated. A large number of downed trees enhance the challenge.



Eagle Eyes and *Pretzel* are section hiking north from Cuba. They have a couple more weeks left, but (wisely, I think) will not hike further north into Colorado, because of the snow. Love those Australian accents.



The view down to Cumbres Pass is quite pleasing. Snow is still lurking to hide the trail, to frustrate hikers trying to get out fast and hitch early enough to finish town chores.



Few cars are on the highway (CO17), but I finally get a ride after a 45 minute wait. During my last visit I stayed at Fosters, but they are full up today. Instead, I try the Y Motel at the other end of town, across from the supermarket, about two miles from the train station.

- Finished audiobook [Uneasy Money](#), by P.G. Wodehouse

Osier

- NNML 2019 Day 13, June 22, Saturday
- Start mile 17 of Chama spur trail at Cumbres Pass
- End mile 10 of Chama spur trail
- Miles walked: 7

The Cumbres & Toltec Railroad runs a vintage coal-fired steam engine with train up a 4% grade, over Cumbres Pass, between Chama and Antonito, CO. That's my way back up the mountain after resupply, much more fun than hitching.



The passenger cars, with their stained wood and cast metal features, bring the passenger to an earlier time.



The views are memorable.



I have a choice on how to get back to the NNML. My ticket takes me to Osier Station, and after a provided AYCE lunch in their cafeteria return to Cumbres Pass. At Osier Station the trail back to the NNML is shorter and lower elevation, with no snow likely, BUT has a ford of the Rio de Los Pinos shortly after starting. The trail back from Cumbres Pass is longer, and since I already hiked in this way I know it has snow hiding the trail and several downed trees, and will be frigid at higher elevation. The train goes along the Rio for several miles, and it is clearly very high and fast with the large snow-melt this year. The conductor says hikers have left recently from Osier Station, so a crossing is possible.



My gut says go back to Cumbres. The train stops there at 3PM, so my hiking time is limited, meaning camping at high elevation.

I meet the dog *Mars* and his hiker buddy, north-bound on the CDT. Southern Colorado has huge snow, so they need to figure out what to do.



Hiking with a canine friend has extra complications, such as skipping up to Wyoming like some hikers is harder if you cannot ride Greyhound.

Heavy snow starts suddenly around 7PM, so I quickly put up a tent on uneven ground and climb inside for a cold night.

Rio San Antonio

- NNML 2019 Day 14, June 23, Sunday
- Start mile 10 of Chama spur trail
- End along Rio San Antonio NNML mile 224 (sec4mile14)
- Miles walked: 24

Cyclists doing the bicycle version of the CDT greet me and chat on the road up to Brazos Ridge.



Another couple of bikers, *Jake* and *Melissa* from Europe, camped with the previous group, but are taking a slower pace.



Brazos Ridge Overlook has good views.



Finally back on the NNML, I go past a strange rock formation of self-stacking blocks.



The trail continues with mountain meadows bordered with stands of trees. The trail follows Beaver Creek, then up Diablo Creek, and finally Rio San Antonio, for several miles and the rest of the day.



Sheep rest in the shade.



High Plains

- NNML 2019 Day 15, June 24, Monday
- Start along Rio San Antonio mile 224 (sec4mile14)
- End near Arroyo Punche corral mile 248 (sec4mile38)
- Miles walked: 24
-

Continuing along the Rio San Antonio, less open meadow and more shrubs and brambles are growing along the banks.



Near a private holding a large truck is thoroughly stuck in the mud. What is the story here?



For a couple of miles following the river is rather challenging, with rocky cliffs on both sides, many downfalls, and thick vegetation.



Climbing up San Antonio Mountain means a 2.5k elevation change, both up and down. I take the alternate route up, with less cross-country, but lose trail near the top among the fallen trees.



Coming down the mountain I use the alternate route that avoids private property but is nearly all cross-country navigation. The vista to the east is stunning, such a flat plain with isolated mountain, possibly volcanic in origin, and a line of huge snow-capped mountain in back.



Where is the Rio Grande? Here is another view from the heights, looking more to the north.



Down on flat ground, we are still at 8k elevation. Plants are scattered shrubs and grass, with a scattering of lava rock. Here is a group of yucca in bloom



Why?



Cannot end with that. Here is another view from the top.



Dunn Bridge

- NNML 2019 Day 16, June 25, Tuesday
- Start near Arroyo Punche corral mile 248 (sec4mile38)
- End on mile 22 of Rio Grande Highwater Trail, which departs from NNML at mile 260 (sec4mile50)
- Miles walked: 34

After the route goes around one of those isolated rounded hills, I have a choice of continuing to Sheep's Crossing to ford the Rio Grande, or take the alternate route south along BLM dirt roads for 15 or so miles to [John Dunn Bridge](#), and then back up. Since this is such a high snow-melt year, I choose bridge. Most of the day is road walk, so crank up the audiobooks, stretch out the stride, and the view mostly looks like this.



Later a whole forest of dead sagebrush, with just a few living ones near the road, come into view. Is this a bad omen with my namesake?



Near the bridge site high vertical cliffs on both sides constrain the water to a narrow channel, compared to what was at the Bandelier crossing.



Here is the bridge. Several people are taking in or launching rafts and watercraft at a nearby ramp.



One rafter tells me I made a good choice skipping Sheep Crossing.



John Dunn built a hotel near the bridge, whose remains can be seen today.



On the other side of the river is the village of Arroyo Hondo, which I must pass to get to public lands, so the day is late when I find a campsite.

- Finished audiobook [The Black Tulip](#), by Alexander Dumas.

Questa

- NNML 2019 Day 17, June 26, Wednesday
- Start mile 22 of Rio Grande Highwater route
- End mile 34 of Highwater route
- Miles walked: 12

All morning the route is on forest service road, until arriving in Questa, a small village located close to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and near trails into the Rio Grande Gorge. I get cleaned up at Questa Lodge, a pleasant RV park along the Red River, the type of campground that has decorative gardens and shady trees and even a river walk near my tent.



A recently restored adobe church represents the village's historic roots.



Tomorrow I hope to meet friends near my trail.

- Finished audiobook [The Man Who Knew Too Much](#), by G.K. Chesterton.

Rendezvous Taos Ski Valley

- NNML 2019 Day 18, June 27, Thursday
- Start Questa mile 272 (sec5mile0)
- End near Taos Ski Valley, mile 285 (sec5mile13)
- Miles walked: 13

After walking for a few miles along the highway east out of Questa, Columbine Campground appears. Columbine Creek Trail heads south and up along the creek, with no wet foot crossings necessary, climbing to 11k elevation.



Reaching the ridge, mountains and ski trails offer views.





Gavilan Trail down the mountain is steep with loose rocks.

Emerging at the edge of Taos Ski Valley village, I walk along the highway for two miles west, where members of the [NMVFO](#) (New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors) are arriving at a campsite, to work on nearby trails for several days.



What serendipity that the group's schedule matches mine, and that their camp is so close to my route! Some members are surprised to see me, knowing that I am out hiking. I camp here tonight, and will pause my journey for a day to help with trail work.

Manzanitas Trail Zero

- NNML 2019 Day 19, June 28, Friday
- Start near Taos Ski Valley, mile 285 (sec5mile13)
- End near Taos Ski Valley, mile 285 (sec5mile13)
- Miles walked: 0

Gary, the cook for this project, is up early preparing breakfast. I had not been on one of Gary's projects before, but he has much experience cooking for CDT and NMVFO projects, and he has also adopted a section of CDT trail, which I also plan to do this year.



He has a custom chuck-wagon rig and all his own kitchen equipment.



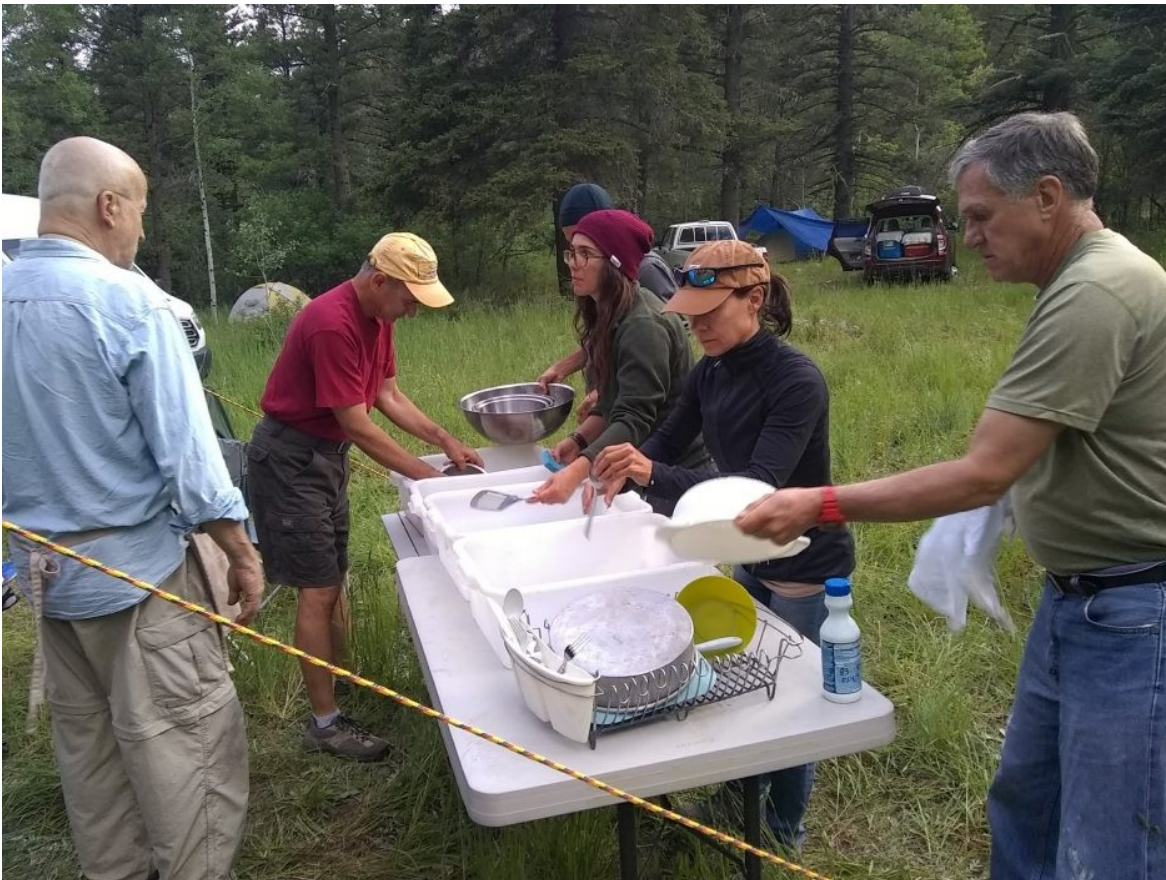
The trail we are working on today is Manzanitas, which goes between Hondo Canyon and the ridge, parallel to Gavilan and other trails in this system. We do lopping, sawing downed trees, fixing drainage to the creek we are hiking along, and repairing tread.



A team of two bring a long crosscut saw up near the ridge and work down, while the rest of us use smaller saws to clear what trees we can manage.



After a full day, Gary presents lasagna and peach cobbler from dutch ovens.



It has been a challenging day of physical effort, rewarding to fix trail and spend time with old friends and new. I can only spare this one day working on trail, but the rest of the group will be here several days. Courtney, Dave, Todd, Lynn, Mark, Jenny, Charlie R, Gary, and Ed are awesome volunteers and made my day here a happy one.

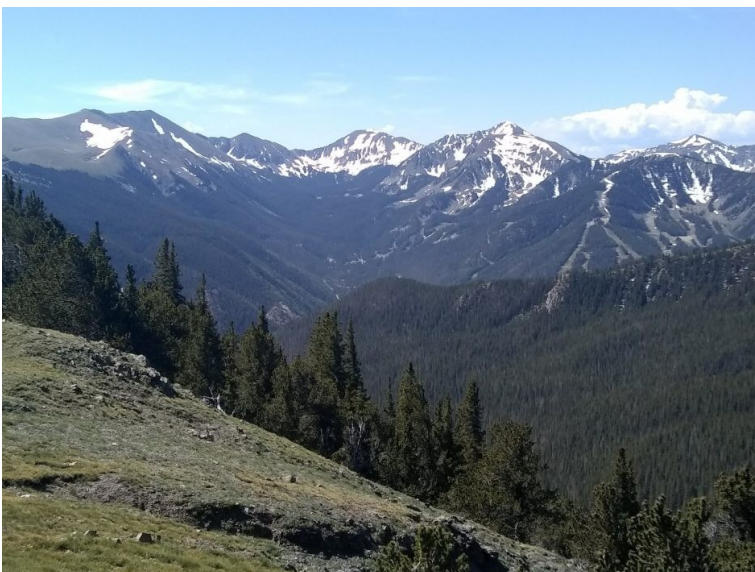
Red River

- NNML 2019 Day 20, June 29, Saturday
- Start near Taos Ski Valley, mile 285 (sec5mile13)
- End near one mile from Elephant Rock, mile 315 (sec6mile6)
- Miles walked: 21

Departing my friends at the NMVFO, I walk up the road to Taos Ski Valley resort.



Wheeler Peak likely has too much snow for a fun ascent, so the bypass route is up Long Canyon.



A snowy traverse leads down to Goose Lake.



Goose Lake is at the base of Gold Hill.



Down Goose Creek for several miles, snow initially hides the trail, but further down the path is well-maintained with recent sawing.



Getting to NM578, everyone seems to have a pickup truck towing an ATV trailer.



Close into the town of Red River, boats and mules mingle together in one corral.



Red River is a bustling tourist town with many visitors today. So many people, a plethora of shops, a surfeit of bars, a gaggle of eateries, a surplus of kitsch, a bonus of Texans. I take shelter from the rain under a pavilion near the visitor center to charge electronics and eat snacks.



An ATV trail climbs up a ridge past town, where rain starts again while pitching the tent, and continues late into the night.



Latir

- NNML 2019 Day 21, June 30, Sunday
- Start one mile from Elephant Rock mile 315 (sec6mile6)
- End near grant boundary mile 335 (sec6mile26)
- Miles walked: 20

The route goes along a ridge, with view of a moly mine.



After several miles on ridge, the ATV trail descends to Cabresto Creek



Cabresto Lake has several visitors today in ATVs and trucks.



Following the creek up, the trail then starts climbing up Latir Mesa through snow drifts that hide trail. The top has plenty of ups and downs, so “mesa” seems odd here.



On top are wondrous views along high meadows.



To the east, through the haze, I can make out San Antonio Mountain and the Rio Grande Gorge.



Since these goats are on a mesa instead of a mountain, they are mesa goats, not mountain goats. They allow me to pass on the trail without moving away.



Following cairns in the high meadow, it seems to be the top of the world, at 12.6k elevation.



My camera can barely capture the glory.



And more.



Finally I climb down on switchbacks and across snow field, and go along wilderness boundary in rain that continues all evening.

Monsoon and Valle Vidal

- NNML 2019 Day 22, July 1, Monday
- Start near grant boundary mile 335 (sec6mile26)
- End on trail up to Baldy, (sec6mile51)
- Miles walked: 25

The route today follows cross-country and along faint two-track, along creeks in meadows, from Cabresto Creek to Bitter Creek to Gold Creek, Comanche Creek to Vidal Creek.



The meadows remind me of Valle Grande, with small creeks winding back and forth on their way through the field, narrow width, with grass right to the edge, no transition to a dirt bank.



Clayton Camp on the map, Philmont Cabin on the sign, has just started a restoration project, with workers on site.



Rain starts at 1:30 and goes hard until 4:30. I decide to keep hiking rather than wait it out, probably for the best since it would have been such a long wait. My rain coat gives up eventually, though I keep warm by hiking hard, and try to dry off after the rain by hiking hard and long again.



Camp is up pretty high, on the approach to Baldy, over 11k, so expect a cold night in the tent, and yes, rain starts again as dark falls.

Eagle Nest

- NNML 2019 Day 23, July 2, Tuesday
- Start on trail up to Baldy, (sec6mile51)
- End town of Eagle Nest, mile 375 (sec6mile66)
- Miles walked: 15

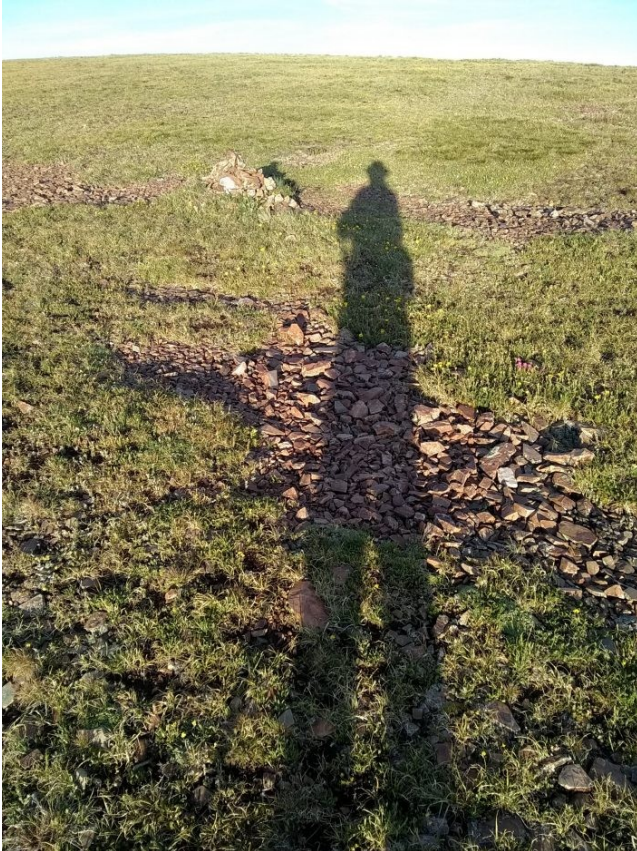
Continuing to climb, Baldy Mountain becomes visible, at a stately height of 12.4k.



Down below, at my destination of Eagle Nest, the town and lake have a blanket of clouds.



As the sun rises, I play with shadows.



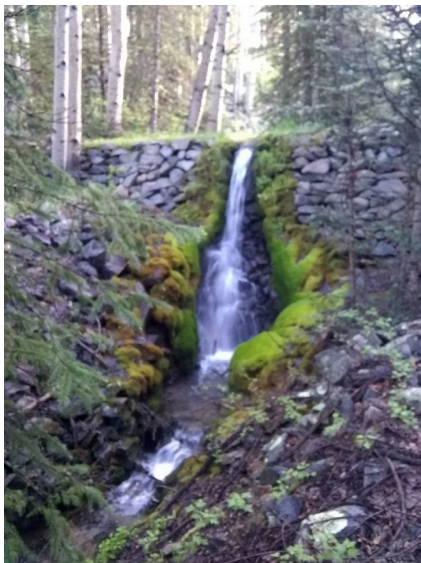
At the beginning of the final ascent to Baldy, remains of a cabin and mine are found. Are these original or a recreation?



Jumping ahead, here is a historical marker in town that gives info about the mine at Baldy.



Wind picks up, and I skip the final summit to Baldy, taking the Baldy Bypass route. On the way back to the main route is a creek with unused trail, but an enormous amount of rock work to keep Willow Creek in its banks. What is the story here?



Another mine is on this route.



The route ascending to Touch-Me-Not Mountain begins in cross country across meadow, but soon enters trees closely spaced and with deadfalls, making slow going.



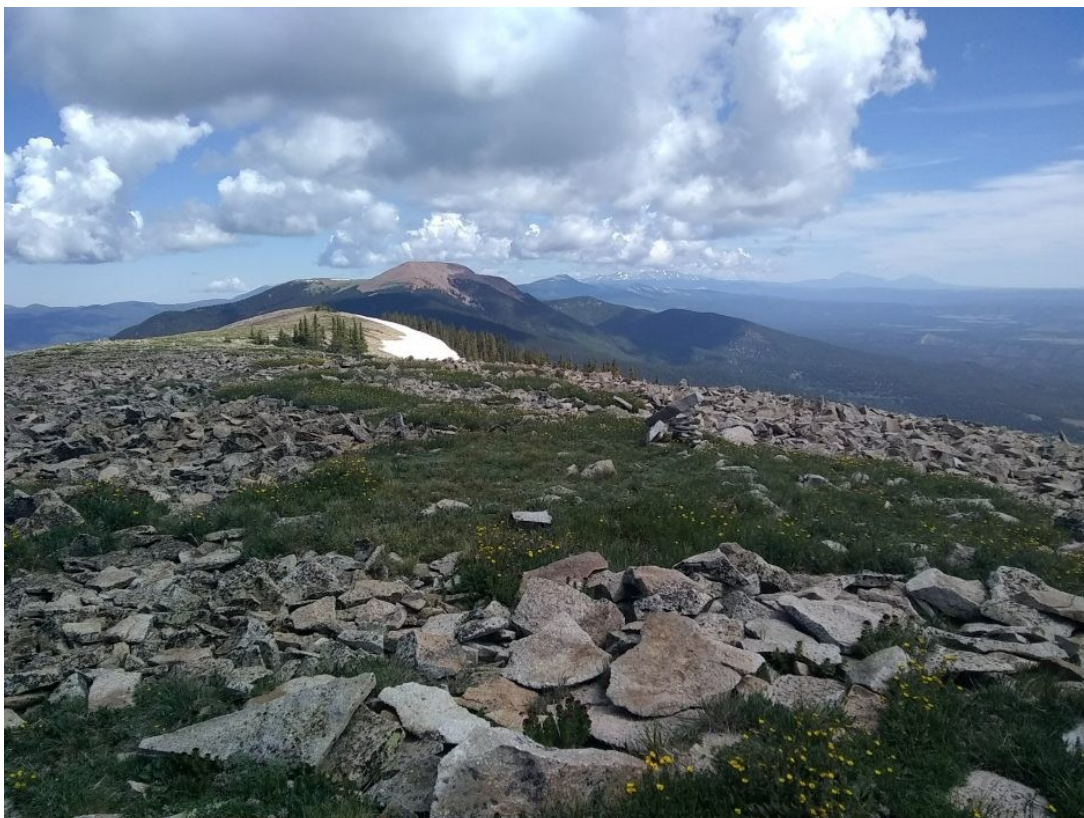
Soon fields of talus, with an occasional cairn, must be traversed.



Nearer the summit little islands of alpine vegetation grow among the rocks, delicate mixtures of plants that should not be stepped on, for they take so long to get established.



The view from the peak (12k) reaches further than my camera can manage.



On the way down to town, it tries to rain some more. Sigh. Treated myself to a motel room to dry off and recharge.



Angel Fire

- NNML 2019 Day 24, July 3, Wednesday
- Start town of Eagle Nest, mile 375 (sec7mile0)
- End Osha Peak Spring, mile 401 (sec8mile10)
- Miles walked: 26

The early morning walk along the eight mile length of Eagle Nest Lake was peaceful.



Eagle Nest Lake State Park has day use and campsite locations.



The Lakeview Trail is overgrown in places.



A few miles of road walk brings me to the village of Angel Fire, where I pick up my last supply box at the post office. Further down is a small ski area with condos.



They seem to be doing a controlled burn nearby, in the direction I will be hiking.



The way out of town is along a greenway trail, that also serves as a fire break.



No rain today, and the weather is warmer. The forest is dense with trees, lower altitude mountains, a different brushy feel compared to before Eagle Nest, with several open meadows along Trail 1, Elliot Barker Trail.



I camp near a spring and have a warmer night, for once.

Obstacles

- NNML 2019 Day 25, July 4, Thursday
- Start Osha Peak Spring, mile 401 (sec8mile10)
- End Agua Piedra Campground near Sipapu, mile 426 (sec8mile35)
- Miles walked: 25

Trail 1 (Elliot Barker Trail) continues south, along logging roads and some cairned trail, and eventually fades to a cross-country route. On forest road, someone is having a bad day.



While we are talking, an ATV and Jeep come by to help, so I move on. Near Cerro Vista as the route climbs to 11.9k elevation, snow blocks the way for a short traverse.





Past the snow he views from here are quite grand.





A 4WD from Texas is surprised anyone else is up here. They plan to watch the fireworks from Taos up here tonight.



At another high point, Cerra Olla peak at 11.9k, snow hides the route for a longer ordeal among the trees.



The rest of the day should be all downhill, pretty easy, right? While pausing for a snack, I get a visitor.



A view of a nearby mountain shows a huge number of logging roads.



Is this an older style of logging that needs so many roads, or else what is going on here? The mountain I am on seems to have the same large network of logging roads, and on my route the authorities have apparently decided to close several of the roads by blocking with trees uprooted and laid across the road, and by making huge divots with a backhoe. This is a recent project, as some of the spruce needles are still green. When my route comes to an intersection, all the other roads are similarly blocked.





Rather than closing the road with just a few trees near intersections, the barriers are randomly placed all along the road, to absolutely prevent some determined 4WD enthusiast from cutting just a few trees to re-open a route. I am stepping over hundreds of trees, literally, to get past.



Finally I climb down to lower elevations, near the Sipapu ski resort, and decide to stay in a Forest Service campground so I can hear other families and smell campfires and hear generators, my own little way to observe July 4.

Pecos Wilderness North

- NNML 2019 Day 26, July 5, Friday
- Start Agua Piedra Campground near Sipapu, mile 426 (sec9mile0)
- End near Skyline Trail, mile 443 (sec9mile17)
- Miles walked: 17

I had never visited the ski resort Sipapu, so walk a couple of miles on the road to check it out.



The ski trail map shows one main lift, with several black diamond trails.



The general store and cafe are not open until later in the morning, and my trail awaits impatiently. The route climbs up 4k of elevation change to the Divide Trail, and starting at Jicarta Peak remains above treeline for 12 miles.



The trail is at first poorly marked with few cairns and several false cattle trails, but improves further on with good cairns. Views reward the hiker.



Although having hiked the Pecos Wilderness before I had never come in from the north boundary or been this far north, so this is new to me. The way is often rocky, with spans of talus, and other times alpine meadow.



Bighorn sheep do not seem troubled by humans here.



Two of these sheep looked ready to butt heads before I came along. The cairns in this section are well-built and regularly spaced, with no visible tread.



Joining Skyline Trail, I am about to go even higher, but pause and end the day early, dropping down into a meadow below to shelter from the wind and weather.





Pecos Memories

- NNML 2019 Day 27, July 6, Saturday
- Start near Skyline Trail, mile 443 (sec9mile17)
- End just past Spirit Lake, mile (sec9mile44)
- Miles walked: 27

In the morning I start up Skyline Trail.



The route goes up high on a ridge, with no tree cover for some miles.



Chimayosos Peak is the first of many mountaintops to be passed today.



Two of the three Truchas Peaks come closer into view.



Truchas Lakes is at the base of Middle Truchas Peak, partially hidden by cloud.



Snow hides the trail when a few trees provide shade. Be careful not to follow game trails instead of the real path.



I see over two dozen backpackers out on this July 4 weekend, the most I ever saw in a New Mexico hiking area.

Thunder starts at the climb up to Trailriders Wall, a high ridge with normally fine views. Today rain starts just as I gain the ridge. These kite-flyers decide to delay their flight until after precipitation.



Rain continues until just as I step off the Wall.



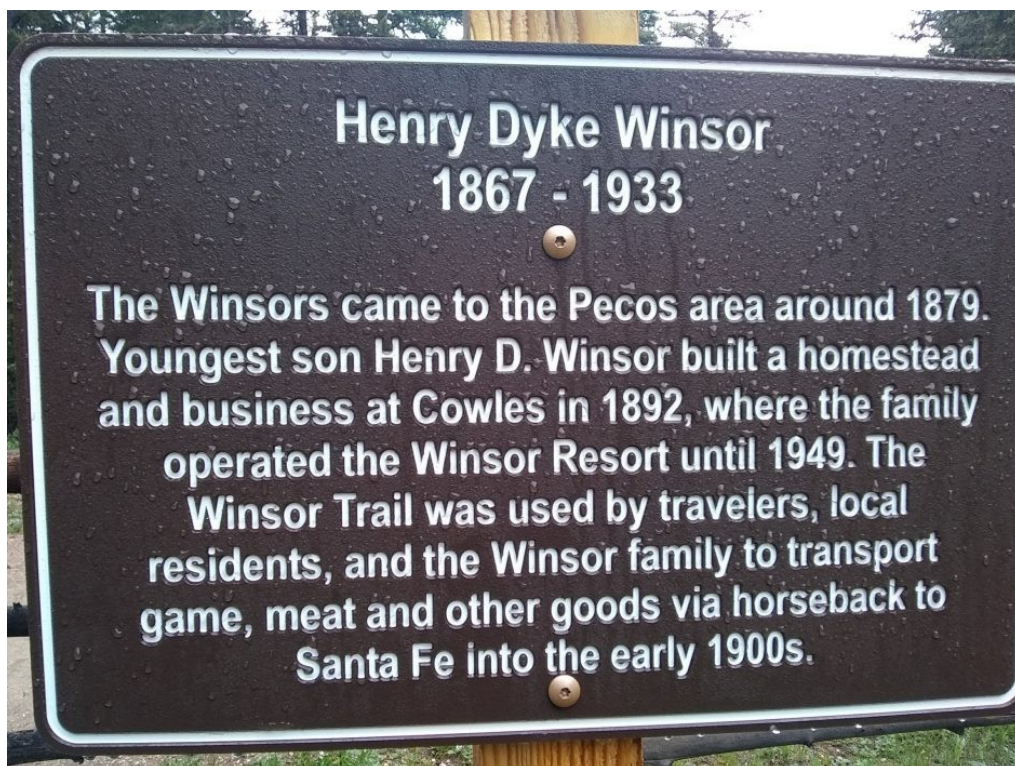
More snow remains on the Wall, then down to Pecos Baldy Lake.



Down Jacks Creek Trail, Cave Creek Trail, to rejoin Skyline Trail at lower altitude and much rain, Stewart Lake



The route joins Winsor Trail. Let me skip ahead to a plaque about this name, placed outside the wilderness boundary, since signs are minimized within wilderness.



Spirit Lake shows itself late in the evening, with raindrops.



My tent goes up in the rain, very late evening, when two hikers pass the other way with headlamps, heading for Spirit Lake.

I have hiked the Pecos several times in the past, alone and with brother and son, but before this trip had not gone further north than Truchas Lakes. Many places today are old friends with treasured memories— Pecos Baldy, Truchas, Jacks Creek, and especially Trailriders Wall.

Trails End Santa Fe

- NNML 2019 Day 28, July 7, Sunday
- Start just past Spirit Lake, mile (sec9mile44)
- End Santa Fe plaza, (sec9mile66)
- Miles walked: 22

Tent moth were attacking aspens on a section of this trail, with the trees not leafing out at all in July. Whole mountainsides of trees were bare.



Out of the Pecos Wilderness, the Winsor Trail continues for many more miles. This next section is maintained by a mountain bike club, and today I saw dozens of bikes on the trail.

The USFS has a new restriction for trails I had not seen before.



The trail here also had a type of cattle guard I had not seen before, easy for bikes to roll over.



Can dogs walk over this thing easily? I did not see any to try.

The trail here was getting that V-groove characteristic of heavy mountain bike use, uncomfortable for hikers and tricky for trail maintainers to fix.



The route diverts off Winsor before it ends, onto Saddleback Trail along ridge lines, where one can first see Santa Fe from the heights.



The route passes into the Little Tesuque Open Space trail system owned by the county, with lots of short steep switchbacks that could be fun for bikes.



This trail system merges into the Dale Ball trails, not so steep, more fun for hikers.



Both trail systems were heavily used this Fourth of July weekend. Although close to trails end, I stopped to chat a good long time with Terry and Mark, who had found a pleasant shady spot for a rest break.



Gonzalez Road has adobe architecture details and landscaping I need to go back and study more. The River Park along Alameda is longer than I remember– must have not gone all the way on them before.



The best way to celebrate a northern New Mexico trip is an enchilada plate with red and green chile, and sopapilla, from a little place just off the plaza, with outdoor seating.



Santa Fe has a tradition of trail's end, from the El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro that went from Mexico City to Santa Fe (or earlier, San Juan Pueblo). At one point in time, the *conduta*, or wagon trains departed north every three years, the journey lasting six months. Later the Santa Fe Trail went from Franklin, Missouri to this city, starting in 1821 until the coming of the railroad. Today is my own trail end, and I take the Railrunner train to Albuquerque, and further points south.