

White Rock Canyon Trailheads



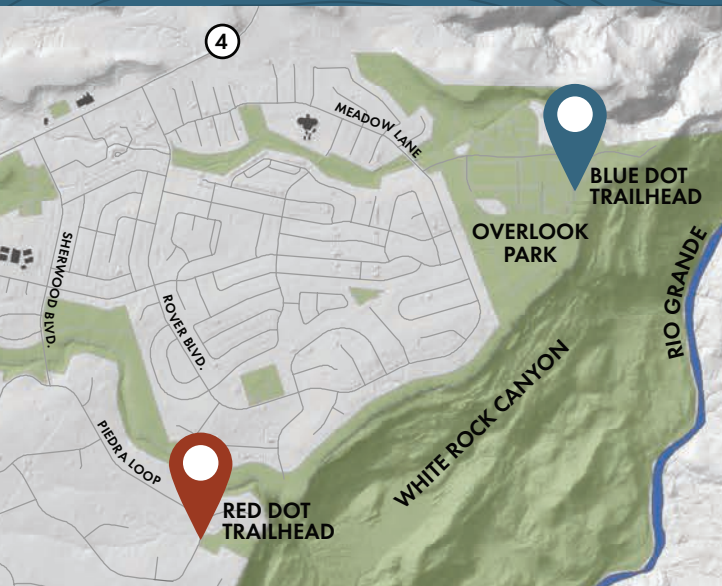
PETROGLYPHS CAN BE FOUND SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE CANYON

White Rock Canyon offers some of the best hiking opportunities in Los Alamos. The canyon is 900 feet deep from the rim to the Rio Grande. The river, natural springs, distinctive geology—basalt lavas from the volcanoes of the Caja del Rio Plateau—and the hundreds of petroglyphs that adorn the rocks make this a unique hike. Two steep, rugged trails lead to the river—the Red and Blue Dot trails. On the edge of White Rock Canyon, a rim trail offers easy access to views into the canyon.

FINDING THE WHITE ROCK CANYON TRAILHEADS

To reach the Blue Dot Trailhead from the intersection of State Road 4 and Rover Boulevard in White Rock, head east on Rover. In 0.1 miles, turn left onto Meadow Lane. In 0.7 miles, turn left into Overlook Park. Pass by ball fields and turn right onto a paved road marked for the trailhead.

For the Red Dot Trail, continue south on State Road 4 from the intersection with Rover. In 0.2 mile, turn left onto Sherwood. Follow Sherwood 0.5 mile to a t-intersection with Piedra Loop. Turn left onto Piedra and find the trailhead on the left in 0.6 mile. There is parallel parking for about six vehicles at the trailhead.



SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

A 58-mile network of trails links the foothills, canyons, and mesas in and around Los Alamos. 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 town; a route to commute to work, an easy stroll or a physical challenge, the chance to observe wildlife, or simply soaking in the impressive views. The County Trail Network connects over 100 miles of trails on the surrounding Santa Fe National Forest and the adjacent Valles Caldera National Preserve.



PAJARITO SPRINGS ALONG THE RED DOT TRAIL



PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS BLOOM



MALE FENCE LIZARD



THE RIO GRANDE MEANDERS SOUTH TOWARD COCHITI RESERVOIR



LOOKING EAST TOWARD THE SANGRE DE CRISTOS FROM OVERLOOK POINT

USING LOS ALAMOS 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 shards, 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, please stay on marked trails. Always carry water, sunscreen, a hat, extra clothing, a flashlight, and a navigational aid.

Trailhead guides are available at major trailheads, the Los Alamos County Customer Care Center in the Municipal Building, the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce, and online.

For more information, visit www.losalamosnm.us, then follow the links to Open Space and Trails.



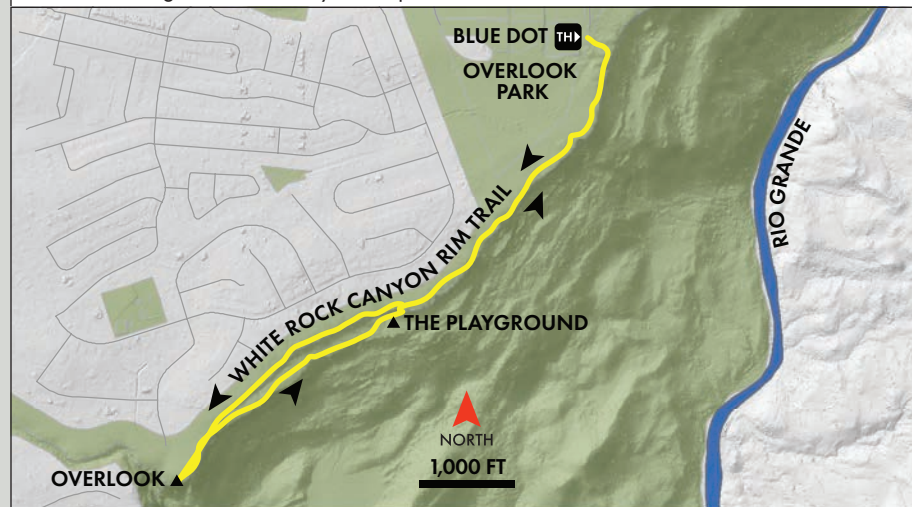
WHITE ROCK CANYON RIM TRAIL ● ●

LENGTH: 3.6 MILES OUT-AND-BACK	ELEVATION GAIN: 150 FEET
FITNESS LEVEL: EASY BUT ROCKY	FEATURES: VIEWS
TRAIL SURFACE: PACKED DIRT	MOUNTAIN BIKE SKILL LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE

Those who would like to enjoy views of White Rock Canyon without dropping to the river can choose to travel along the rim on the White Rock Canyon Rim Trail. The trail begins at the Blue Dot Trailhead and heads south for almost two miles to the viewpoint above Pajarito Canyon. Any part of this out-and-back trip leads to spectacular views into the canyon.

From the trailhead, head east toward the canyon edge. At the rim of the canyon, turn right onto the rim trail. Near the edge of an open field, travel the path along the rim. Many alternate trails lead to the right, and a few to the left, but if you parallel the rim you can't go wrong. The trail makes many brief ups and downs, and in 1.8 miles reaches the edge of Pajarito Canyon, which enters the main gorge from the west. This viewpoint makes a good turnaround spot.

On the way back, hikers can take a challenging alternate route that begins about 0.2 miles from the overlook. This side trail descends below the canyon rim and stays on an attractive bench as it heads north. In about 0.3 mile, angle left toward the cliffs called The Playground by the climbing community. At the Playground, continue on the trail by scrambling over large boulders and through a narrow chute. The route quickly re-gains the rim. Turn right and retrace your steps back to the trailhead.



BUCKMAN MESA FROM OVERLOOK POINT

DOT to DOT LOOP, BLUE DOT ENTRANCE ◆ ●

LENGTH: 7.8 MILES ROUND TRIP	ELEVATION GAIN: 1,000 FEET
FITNESS LEVEL: DIFFICULT	FEATURES: VIEWS, HISTORIC SITES, SPRINGS, RIO GRANDE
TRAIL SURFACE: PACKED DIRT, ASPHALT	FIELD NOTES: FOOT TRAFFIC ONLY

One of New Mexico's premier hikes is the Dot-to-Dot Loop in White Rock Canyon. The canyon is a spectacular gorge carved by the Rio Grande through lava flows from the Caja del Rio Plateau on the east side of the river.

This isn't a trip for novice hikers or folks in slick-soled cowboy boots. The canyon is rough, the rocks sharp-edged, the trip fairly long, and the climb out is steep. The journey is about 7.8 miles requires an elevation loss and gain of 1,000 feet from the canyon rim to the Rio Grande. The trip normally takes a long half-day, but hikers should take time to enjoy the Rio Grande, and to watch for petroglyphs that adorn many of the rocks in the canyon. Take along plenty of water, food, sunscreen, and energy. The canyon is hot at mid-day in summer, but spring and fall are ideal times to explore the gorge.

The name Dot-to-Dot Loop is derived from the two trails that provide access to this section of White Rock Canyon. The trails are uncreatively named for the color of spray-painted circles that mark the trails. The ancient Red Dot Trail, more formally the Pajarito Springs Trail, drops quickly to the small stream born from the springs of Pajarito Canyon and follows the stream to the river. The Blue Dot Trail, developed as a livestock passage in the 1930s, descends steep switchbacks to reach the river. Along the Rio Grande, the River Trail connects the dot trails, and on the rim, the White Rock Canyon Rim Trail parallels the gorge for two miles.

If you start at the Blue Dot Trailhead, head to the canyon rim from the trailhead and pass through an old fence to begin the descent. A half-dozen switchbacks bring you to a level bench, but the steep drop soon continues. After a mile, the trail enters a spring-fed thicket and meets the River Trail. Turn right and follow that trail for two miles, heading south. The Red Dot Trail is a few yards after crossing the strong outflow from Pajarito Springs. Turn right and follow the trail as it parallels the stream, crossing it once, for a few hundred feet, then begins the stair-like ascent of the canyon slope. It's only a mile to the rim, but it's a slow mile.

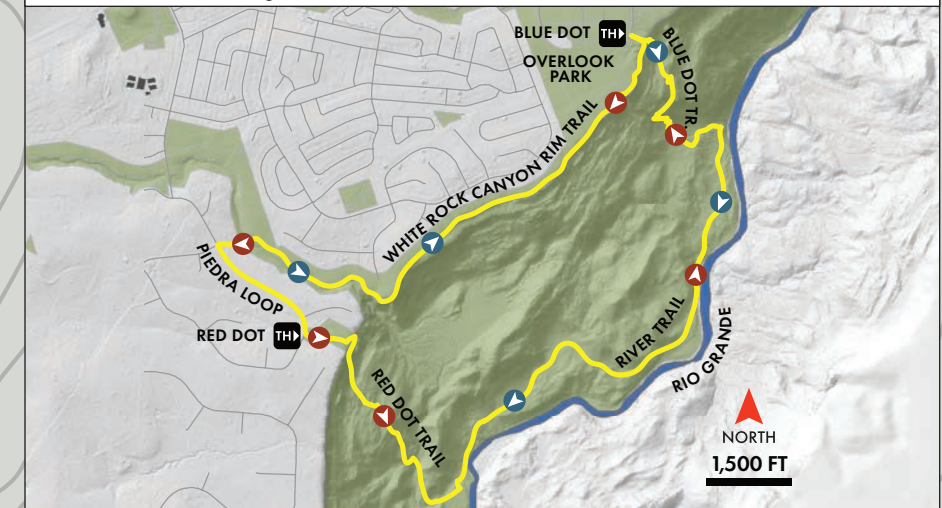
Meet Piedra Loop at the Red Dot Trailhead. Turn right and walk along the road for 0.4 mile. On the right, find a signed trail just before a guardrail opposite of La Senda Drive. The trail heads downhill on an easement between two houses. Cross Pajarito Canyon, and then pick up one of several trails that parallel the canyon rim, heading generally east. The White Rock Canyon Rim Trail is more defined at the edge of White Rock Canyon: turn left and walk the trail for 1.8 miles along the rim. After crossing an open field, take the trail to the right and it soon meets the Blue Dot Trail. Turn left and walk back to the trailhead.

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If you choose to start at the Red Dot Trailhead, walk the trail across an open field. Soon after entering the woodlands, the trail begins its steep drop on rough basalt boulders. Two level benches break up the descent, which otherwise is relentless. About 0.7 mile from the start, the trail enters a thicket and emerges along the small stream flowing from the springs above. The trail parallels the stream for 0.3 miles. About 200 feet from the river, cairns mark several branches of the River Trail, which heads off up canyon to the left. Take any branch, cross the stream, and pick up the main River Trail.

Travel up the canyon on the River Trail as it ascends to a bench about 50 feet above the Rio Grande. The trail crosses open fields, woodlands, and traverses on narrow, rocky benches. About two miles from the Red Dot Trail, cross several wet areas and watch for rock cairns that mark the lower end of the Blue Dot Trail. Turn left onto that trail, which leads to the rim in about a mile. At the rim, pass through a fence and turn left onto the White Rock Canyon Rim Trail. Head south where many intersecting side trails come and go. Stay on the main trail, which never strays far from the rim. In about two miles, the trail comes to the edge of Pajarito Canyon, which enters the main canyon from the west. Bear right onto the trail that parallels the rim of Pajarito Canyon. In about 0.4 miles, watch for a sign post that points to a trail that crosses Pajarito Canyon and emerges onto Piedra Loop. Turn left and walk along the road to the trailhead.



THINK SAFETY: Keep your high desert hike safe & enjoyable! Stay on marked trails, know your limitations and your route. Avoid hiking in the heat of the day, drink plenty of water, use sunscreen, bring snacks, wear a hat and appropriate footwear. Remember that cell phone coverage may not be available for navigation or summoning help—consider other options and carry a map.