Contact us at:
Bureau of Land Management
Socorro Field Office
901 South Highway 85
Socorro, New Mexico 87801
505/835-0412
or
www.nm.blm.gov

Leave No Trace: Plan ahead and prepare - Travel and camp on durable surfaces - Dispose of waste properly - Leave what you find - Minimize campfire impacts - Respect wildlife - Be considerate of other visitors.

BLM/NM/GI-06-06-1210

Quebradas
Back Country Byway

Off the beaten path...

New Mexico • Socorro Field Office

BLM

Pioneers crossing the great expanse of the Old West experienced early the vast scenic wonders of this country. The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) National Back Country Byways program offers you an opportunity to rediscover the splendor of the West's public lands. The National Back Country Byways program is the BLM's unique contribution to the larger National Scenic Byways program. Both are the result of a study by the President's Commission on American Outdoors that found 43 percent of American adults drive for pleasure. In fact, next to walking, driving for pleasure is America's most popular form of recreation. Back Country Byways usually traverse scenic corridors and offer a wide variety of outdoor experiences.

Photo by M Lee Beazley

Early morning or evening light best reflects some of the beautiful and vast colors of the Quebradas.

QUEBRADAS BACK COUNTRY BYWAY

The Quebradas (kay-brah'das) Back Country Byway traverses approximately 24 miles of rugged land east of Socorro, New Mexico (see map). Two National Wildlife Refuges are only a few miles from this byway, Sevilleta to the north and Bosque del Apache to the south. Most of the land you will cross is public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The Quebradas, which means "breaks," road is an annually maintained dirt road. A high-clearance type vehicle, such as a truck, or 4-wheel drive is recommended. However, the road can be negotiated in a passenger car, unless the road is wet (clay soils become very slippery) or eroded from rains. The road crosses several small arroyos (drainages) which carry water during intense thunderstorms. The crossings can contain deep pockets of sand. Use is discouraged during or immediately following heavy rain. Vehicle speeds should not exceed 25 mph on straight stretches of road and 10 mph on hills and curves.

Photo submitted by Socorro BLM

Dirt roads are well maintained making the Byway a great place to bike ride.

ACCESS

The Quebradas Back Country Byway can be accessed from either Interstate 25 or State Highway 380 (see map).

From I-25, take the Escondida exit, head east and then north about one mile. Turn right and pass Escondida Lake. Cross the Rio Grande and proceed east through the settlement of Pueblitos. Turn right (south) on Bosquecito road following the east side of the Rio Grande (watch out for sand). After 6/10 of a mile there will be a dirt road to the left (east). Stay on this road and follow the Back Country Byway signs and markers.

From State Highway 380, proceed approximately 11 miles east of San Antonio, New Mexico, then turn left on County Road A-129, and travel about 3 miles north. Turn left (west) before the cattle guard and follow the Back Country Byway signs.

Photo by Brenda Wilkinson

A collared lizard basks in the warm sunshine.

WHAT YOU WILL SEE

The Quebradas Back Country Byway meanders through approximately 24 miles of BLM land with interesting geologic and scenic regions.

When accessing the road from I-25, you immediately cross the scenic Rio Grande. The River and its associated vegetation provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife,such as mule deer, coyote, bobcat, gray fox, raccoon, porcupine, opossum, ground squirrel, cottontail, and jack rabbit. Typical bird species you may see are the snow goose, sand-hill crane, quail, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, roadrunner, horned lark, raven, and numerous songbirds. Common reptiles include the collared lizard, eastern fence lizard, bull snake, king snake, whip snake, and western diamondback rattlesnake.

Much of the area along the Byway is characterized by rolling bench lands which rise above the Rio Grande floodplain to the west and rugged north-south running ridges of alternating bands of red and yellow sandstone, red purple shale, and white to gray limestone.

Photo by Brenda Wilkinson

Ocotillos are "indicator" plants for the Chihuahuan Desert and are not found much further north of Socorro County.

The region contains upper Chihuahuan desert mountain ranges with sparse vegetation. The Quebradas Road crosses several arroyos which drain into the Rio Grande. Over time erosion created scenic geological settings such as the Arroyo de la Presilla, Arroyo del Tajo, and the Loma de las Cañas ridgeline (see map). Many areas along the road contain near vertical, multi-colored cliffs, twisted and convoluted badlands, narrow box canyons, and other topographic landforms. Colorful soils and banding of rock formations can be viewed midway through the drive.

A variety of recreation opportunities exist along the route, some of which include back country vehicle touring, rock hounding, photography, hiking, wildlife observation, hunting, and historical/cultural sightseeing. The Arroyo del Tajo, Arroyo de Tio Bartolo, and Arroyo de la Presilla Boxes are areas of outstanding visual quality characterized by various erosional features, including water-sculpted limestone and granite walls. These areas provide excellent back country opportunities.

MULTIPLE-USE MANAGEMENT

A variety of land uses occur along the byway – primarily recreation, mineral exploration, and livestock grazing. Many livestock developments along the road and surrounding area are private property. Please respect these uses and developments while driving the byway. Your cooperation is sincerely appreciated.

The BLM is currently managing some of the area along the byway as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) because of their natural character and primitive recreation opportunities. The byway actually separates the Presilla and Sierra de las Cañas WSA about midway through the drive. Congress will ultimately make a final determination as to their wilderness suitability.

PLEASE BE PREPARED

Always check ahead when planning an outing on a back country byway. Carry plenty of water with you and make sure you have enough gasoline to make the entire trip. This Byway has no services and takes about 2 or 3 hours to drive at a leisurely pace. Keep a spare tire, jack, tool kit, shovel, and blankets in your vehicle. Please obey all signs and respect private property. Please be alert, take your time, stay on existing roads, always let someone know of your plans and have a good time when you visit a back country byway.

Full services and medical help are available in Socorro, New Mexico.

Photo by Brenda Wilkinson

Springs, such as Ojo de Amado, provide valuable water for wildlife. They are rare along the Byway.

Cover photo by M Lee Beazley