

El Malpaís

National Conservation Area
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management



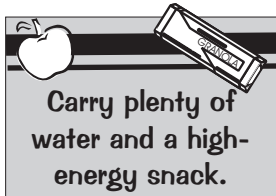
Ranger Station Nature Trail



Help to protect our natural resources by staying on the designated trail

THE RANGER STATION NATURE TRAIL is located on the east end of the Ranger Station parking area. The trail loops approximately 1¼ miles along the rim.

From the trailhead, the trail gains about 100 feet in elevation to the top of the mesa, with another 25 feet of elevation gain between the north part of the mesa and the south view point. The south view point provides an amazing birds-eye view of the Malpais lava flow, the surrounding countryside, several cinder cones to the southwest, Gallo Peak in the distance to the west, Haystack Mesa to the north and, to the northeast, Mount Taylor. Be sure to bring your binoculars and camera!



The natural resources here are fragile and irreplaceable. Please help us protect our resources by staying on the designated trail. Do not deface the rocks, collect artifacts or remove plants.

GEOLOGY: Before you venture on the nature hike, take time to observe the rock formations. Here, wind, water and ice have shaped the soft sandstone. Starting at the base of

the formations you will see the Zuni Sandstone (Jurassic period – 160 million years ago) with variable colors of yellowish-gray to tan. The very top layer is the Dakota Sandstone (Cretaceous period – 80 million years ago), consisting of basal sandstone and a conglomerate unit, usually dark to light gray in color. The conglomerate consists of medium- to coarse-grained, poorly sorted, cross-bedded layers cemented together with silica (colorless crystals). Between the Zuni and Dakota sandstones is a geologic unconformity known as the “White Zone.” Most of the rock layers once laid down here are missing.

PLANTS: At this elevation of 6,668 feet, the dominant trees are one-seed juniper (*Juniperus monosperma*), piñon pine (*Pinus edulis*) and Gambel oak (*Quercus gambelii*). A few ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) occur on the north-facing slopes. Several different species of shrubs, grasses, wildflowers and lichens of various colors can be observed on the sandstone face along the trail.

WILDLIFE: A wide variety of wildlife inhabits and utilizes the area around the Ranger Station and trail. Lucky visitors may have an opportunity to see squirrels, rabbits, coyotes, snakes and lizards. The truly observant may see tracks and other signs of mule deer, bear, elk, mountain lion, bobcat and badger.

Birding can be very productive in the area depending on the season.

SAFETY TIPS:

1. Wear proper clothing – a good hat, walking or hiking shoes - and sunscreen.
2. Take plenty of water and a high-energy snack.
3. Children should remain with adults.
4. If you who are not used to the elevation, know your limits. Take plenty of time to rest.
5. Keep your pet on a leash to protect wildlife and other hikers.
6. Lightning storms can occur throughout the summer monsoon seasons. Hikers are encouraged to move to a lower elevation as soon as a storm starts moving in. Do not attempt to wait out storms under trees or rock shelters.
7. The winter months bring snow, so be aware of ice and snow on the trail.
8. Please be responsible and carry out your trash – pack it in, pack it out.



For More Information Contact:

El Malpais National Conservation Area
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 846
Grants, New Mexico 87020
(505) 287-7911
www.nm.blm.gov

Northwest New Mexico Visitor Center
1900 East Santa Fe Avenue
Grants, New Mexico 87020
(505) 876-2783
www.nps.gov/elma/