



# Cabezon Peak



Bureau of Land Management  
 Albuquerque District, Rio Puerco Field Office  
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 505/761-8700  
 or  
[www.blm.gov/new-mexico](http://www.blm.gov/new-mexico)

In case of emergency:  
 BLM Rio Puerco Law Enforcement – 505/761-8700  
 Immediate Emergency – 911  
 BLM 24-hour Santa Fe Law Enforcement – 505/827-9377



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-06-05-1220

**B**reathe in all the mystic lore and outdoor adventure New Mexico has to offer, at this well-known landmark in the Rio Puerco Valley—Cabezon Peak. Rising nearly 8,000 feet above sea level, Cabezon is the most prominent of about 50 volcanic necks in the lava fields of Mount Taylor.

### Legend

The name “Cabezon” is derived from the Spanish noun “cabeza,” meaning “head.” Cabezon translates as “big head.” The peak is believed to have religious significance for the Pueblo and Navajo Indians, and remnants of their visits still exist. The Navajos have various lore associated with Cabezon, one of which explains that the peak and local lava flows came from a giant who was slain upon Mount Taylor. The giant’s head became Cabezon Peak and his blood congealed to form the Malpais, or “bad land” volcanic flow to the south.



climbing and scrambling. A visitor’s register, located at the parking area, indicates that hikers come from as far away as Europe to experience a climb that is considered appropriate for both beginning and intermediate-level skills. The climb is not recommended for either children or pets.

A dirt road located on the west side of Cabezon, which connects with BLM Road 1114, leads to the trailhead. A primitive trail along the south side of the peak, which leads to the summit (refer to the map), takes between 4 and 6 hours to climb. The round trip hike is approximately 2 ½ miles. The ascent of the chimney near the south-east portion is marked by cairns. A hand line (special rope used by climbers) may be needed to ascend the rocky ledges to the top. The trail is accessible year round, however, the upper trail and chimney can be treacherous when there is ice and snow.

### Geology

The region’s volcanic necks formed when molten lava worked its way to the earth’s surface through sedimentary rock layers deposited by an ancient inland sea that covered the area. Millions of years of erosion have removed much of the softer sedimentary rock, exposing the basalt columns or “necks.”

### Climbing

Cabezon, rising nearly 2,000 feet above the valley floor, is a popular area for rock



Because of loose rock, we recommend that you wear a hard hat and sturdy footwear for safety; also, take along plenty of water. A successful climb to the summit will reward you with an expansive view of the Rio Puerco Valley. You may want to bring a compass and map to locate and identify surrounding land formations.

### Plants and Wildlife

Piñon and juniper trees are dispersed among the rock-strewn foothills of the peak. The desert floor offers numerous grasses, cacti, and shrubs. Summer showers encourage the blooms of sunflower, cactus flowers, evening primroses and asters.

Bird life at Cabezon includes meadow larks, jays, quail, doves, red-tailed hawks and sharp-shinned hawks. Area mammals include rabbits, prairie dogs, badgers, and rodents such as kangaroo rats, rock mice and pack rats. The elusive coyote is always present and serves to help keep the numbers of small mammals in balance.

Hikers should be aware that rattlesnakes are active during warmer months.

### Management

Approximately 8,000 acres around Cabezon Peak have been designated a Wilderness Study Area (WSA).

The BLM is directed to preserve the wilderness values of the Cabezon WSA for the long term. This involves protecting the area’s special features and natural qualities, including outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Preserving wilderness values is a difficult task that requires a commitment from you as well as the BLM. The challenge for land managers is ensuring the use of other resources and activities within the WSA is compatible with its Wilderness resource. The challenge for you is to use the area in harmony with the Wilderness environment.

Use of this area is regulated to protect the resources and ensure your safety. You do not need a permit to climb Cabezon Peak. However, permits are required for most uses other than

primitive recreation, including grazing, outfitting/guiding, commercial filming, group activities, educational group activities and scientific research.

### Vehicles

Vehicle travel off existing roads is prohibited. Restrictions apply to all off-highway vehicles (OHV’s), all-terrain vehicles (ATV’s) motorcycles, and bicycles.

### Camping

Unless authorized, camping, or occupying any site on public lands, for a period longer than 14 days within any period of 28 consecutive days is prohibited.

### Fires

Obey posted fire orders. No fires shall be left unattended. Fireworks are never allowed on public land.

### Access

Entry into the area is best gained by turning westward from US 550 onto County Road 279 approximately 20 miles northwest of San Ysidro. A green highway sign (labeled “San Luis, Cabezon”) marks the turnoff. Continue 12 miles (south-west past the village of San Luis) to the Cabezon turn-off onto BLM Road 1114. The pavement ends just beyond San Luis.

At the intersection of CR 279 and BLM Road 1114, you will pass by the ghost town of Cabezon. Follow BLM Road 1114 for 2.9 miles to the dirt route that leads east to the trailhead.

Travel on CR 279 and BLM Road 1114 is good during dry conditions. During the rainy season, normally in spring and late summer, the roads can get slippery and rutted. During winter, the area can be unreachable. Check with the BLM about road conditions before your visit. Use of this area is regulated only to the extent needed to protect the resources and ensure your safety.



*This well-known landmark, in the Rio Puerco Valley, is the most prominent of some 50 volcanic necks found in the region and can be seen for miles.*