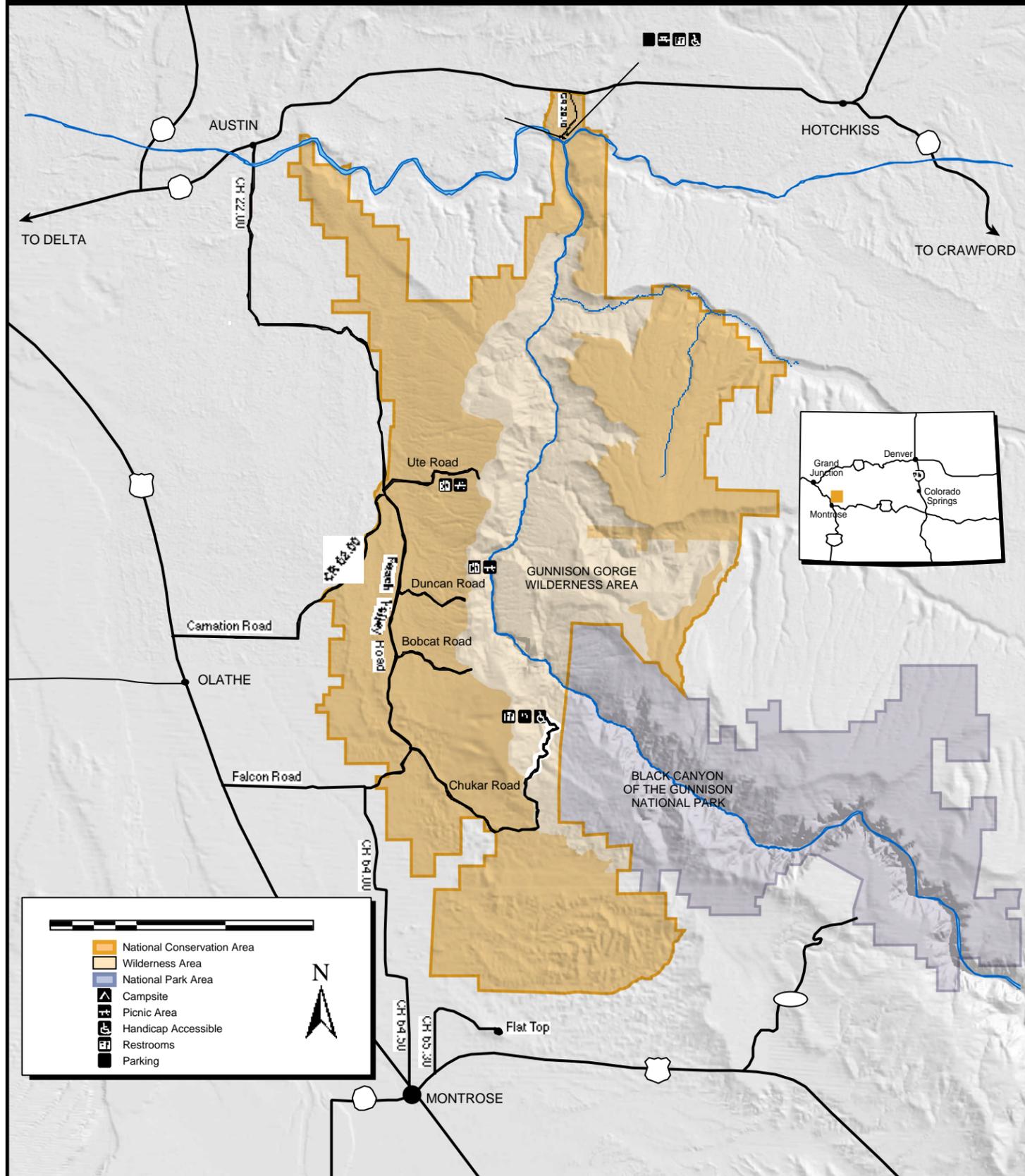


GUNNISON GORGE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

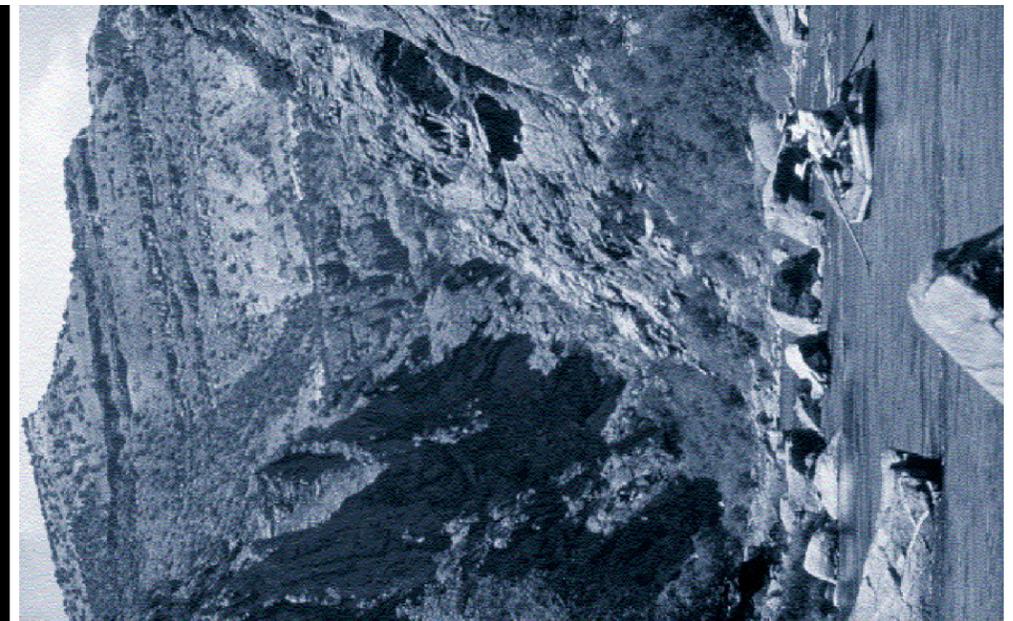


BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT • MONTROSE, COLORADO

GUNNISON GORGE
National Conservation Area
& Wilderness

VISITOR GUIDE

BLM



Welcome to the Gunnison Gorge!

Where is the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area and Wilderness?

The Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area (NCA) is located about seven miles northeast of Montrose in west-central Colorado, just downstream from the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. It encompasses approximately 57,725 acres of public lands in Montrose and Delta counties.

The Gunnison Gorge Wilderness is located in the heart of the NCA within the extremely scenic double canyon system of the Gunnison River. It encompasses approximately 17,700 acres of public lands, including 14 miles of the Gunnison River, extending from the northwestern boundary of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park north to a point approximately 2 miles downstream from the confluence of the Smith Fork and the main stem of the Gunnison River.

What is a National Conservation Area?

NCA is the designation given by the U.S. Congress to special lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). There are 14 NCAs in the Nation, and each is managed in accordance with the special provisions provided by the legislation that designated the area. Specifically, Congress designates an NCA to permanently protect and conserve identified resource values of national interest.

How do I access the Gunnison Gorge NCA?

The Gunnison Gorge NCA is located approximately 50 miles south of Grand Junction. Falcon Road, east off U.S. Highway 50, about 10 miles north of Montrose and just south of Olathe, provides access to the NCA from the southwest. Follow this paved road to its end where it turns north onto the unpaved Peach Valley Road. The Peach Valley, Ute, Duncan, Bobcat, Chukar, and all other NCA access roads on both the east and west side of the Gunnison River Canyon are rough, four wheel drive roads that are impassable when wet. High clearance, 4WD vehicles are recommended.

Delta County Road 2200, located approximately 10 miles east of Delta on Colorado Highway 92 near Austin, provides access to the NCA from the north. Follow the signs south to Peach Valley Road.

The northern end of the NCA can also be accessed from the BLM Gunnison Forks Day Use Area located approximately 13 miles east of Delta. Look for the Gunnison Forks/Pleasure Park sign and paved County Road 28.10 south of Colorado Highway 92.

How do I access the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness Area?

The four main trails into the Gunnison Gorge are accessed via the Chukar, Bobcat, Duncan, and Ute access roads located off the main Peach Valley Road on the western side of the NCA. See Gunnison Gorge Wilderness Area map and "Wilderness Access Roads and Trails" section on reverse side for more information on these trails.

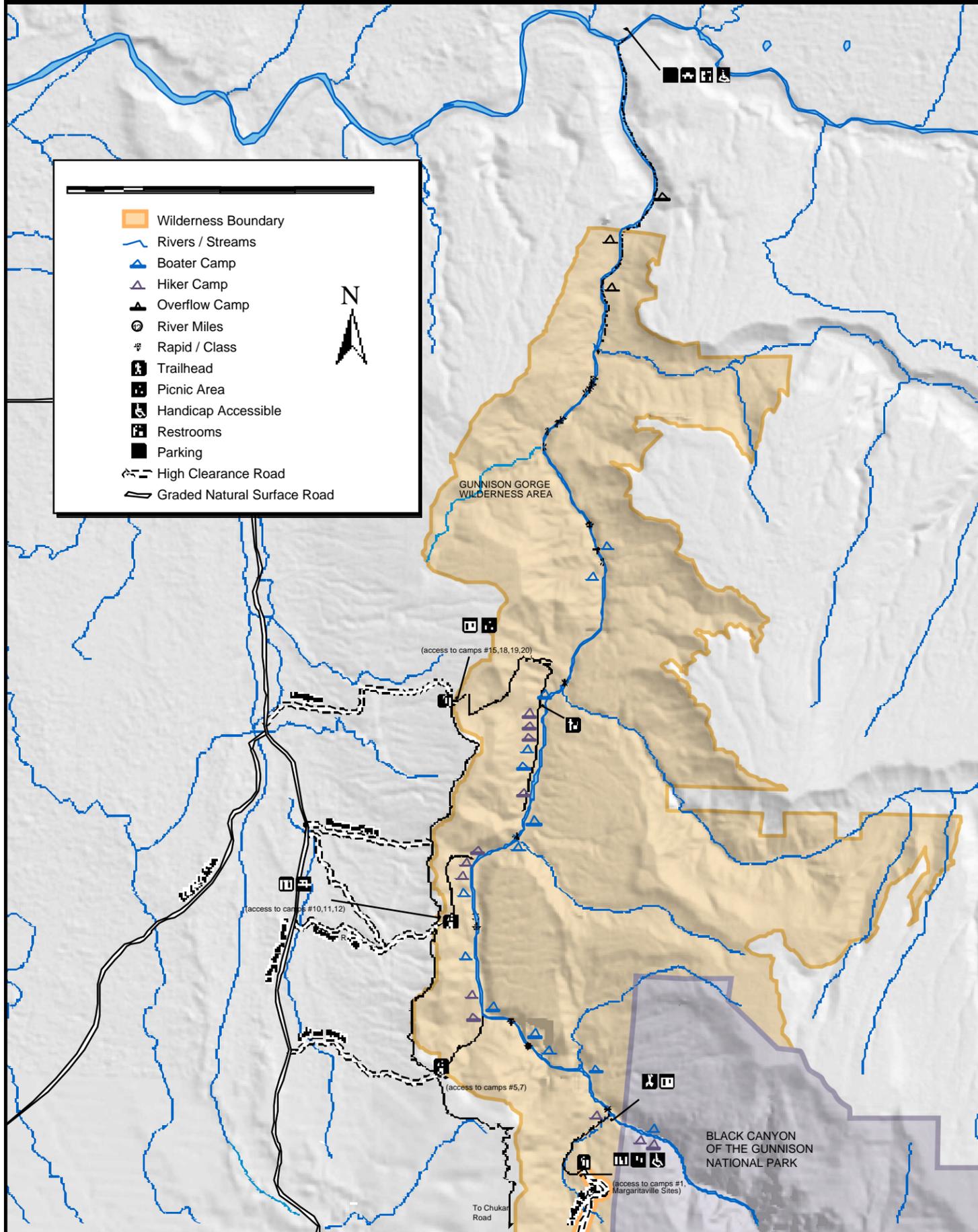
The Chukar Road and Trail provide the main access for boaters. Boaters must either carry their gear down the one-mile Chukar Trail to the put-in or arrange for a pack-in by the BLM permitted horsepacker. Contact Larry Franks (970) 323-0115 to book a pack-in.

What services are provided in the NCA?

Restrooms and picnic areas are provided at the Chukar, Duncan, and Ute trailheads. There is no charge for the use of these trailhead facilities or camping in the non-wilderness portions of the NCA. Camping in the Wilderness is restricted to designated primitive campsites (no facilities). Backcountry toilets are at the bottom of the Chukar, Duncan, and Ute trails. User fees are charged in the Wilderness area. See trail head information on how to pay fees, register, and reserve a Wilderness campsite.

The Gunnison Forks Day Use Site at the northern end of the NCA provides easy walk-in river access, a natural surface (river rock) boat ramp, picnic tables with shelters, restroom, and a sanitation dump station. Camping is not allowed at the site, however, camping is provided at the private Gunnison River Pleasure Park located adjacent to the BLM area. The Pleasure Park also provides parking, boat ramp, restrooms, showers, and eating facilities in addition to river shuttles, raft rental, and other commercial services. Call the Park (970) 872-2525 to book a river shuttle or for more information.

GUNNISON GORGE WILDERNESS AREA



WILDERNESS REGULATIONS

These regulations apply to all users in the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness and River Canyon from the downstream boundary of the Black Canyon National Park (just upstream of the Chukar boater put-in) to the North Fork Confluence. Visitors traveling into the Park from the Chukar are required to pay BLM user fees. Boaters traveling downstream from the Park are not required to pay BLM user fees but must have a backcountry Park permit and sign the Chukar put-in register.

- **ALL WILDERNESS VISITORS ARE REQUIRED TO PAY USER FEES AND REGISTER.** One person from each group, or the head guide of commercial trips, must sign a register at the Bobcat, Duncan, or Ute trailhead, the Chukar boater put-in (located at the river), or Gunnison Forks take-out. Pay all user fees (see Fee Section for details) at the trailhead you select.
- **CAMPING WITHIN THE RIVER CORRIDOR IS ALLOWED IN DESIGNATED SITES ONLY.** Overnight groups must sign-in for campsites at time of registration. Campsites are marked by blue or green-topped wooden posts with a white number. Blue sites are for boaters only (water access); green sites are for hikers only (land access). Follow trailhead instructions.
- **MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE FOR ALL DAY AND OVERNIGHT WALKIN AND BOATER GROUPS IS 12 PERSONS.** Groups with stock animals are limited to 12 animals.
- **MAXIMUM STAY LENGTH FOR ALL USERS IS TWO NIGHTS.** Boaters may only stay one night at any boater camp-site. Hikers may spend the two nights at the same hiker campsite.
- **WOOD FIRES ARE PROHIBITED** in the Wilderness and the entire river corridor down to the North Fork confluence. Firepans with charcoal or stoves are required for all overnight visitors. Ashes must be packed out. National Park regulations in effect upstream of the Chukar put-in prohibit open fires of any kind.
- **WASHABLE, REUSABLE TOILET SYSTEMS ARE REQUIRED FOR ALL OVERNIGHT BOATING** (including kayakers and canoeists) **AND HORSEBACK GROUPS.** A sanitation dump station is provided at the Gunnison Forks.
- **ALL TRASH MUST BE PACKED OUT.** Pack out cigarette butts. Strain all dishwater before returning it to the river.
- **MOTORIZED RIVER CRAFT ARE PROHIBITED** in the wilderness.
- **MOTORIZED VEHICLES AND MOUNTAIN BIKES ARE PROHIBITED** within the Canyon rim.
- **COMMERCIAL OPERATORS MUST BE PERMITTED BY THE BLM.** Outfitters are required to carry a copy of their BLM permit while operating in the Gorge.

WILDERNESS ACCESS ROADS & TRAILS

Four main access roads to the Gorge trails are located off the Peach Valley Road. Access road length to trailheads: Chukar 7 mi., Bobcat 1.5 mi., Duncan 2.5 mi., and Ute 2.5 mi. Roads are rough and impassable when wet. A 4-wheel drive vehicle is strongly recommended for travel on all roads in the NCA area. Lower sections of the Duncan and Bobcat trails are not recommended for horses.

TRAIL	Mi.	ELEVATION	TRAIL DESCRIPTION
Chukar	1.1	560' drop (5960'-5400')	Moderate. Adobe clay w/ sand/rock out-crops. Very heavy foot, horse & boater use. Limited hiker camps & river access.
Bobcat	1.5	800' drop (6100'-5300')	Difficult. Undeveloped, hard to follow w/steep descent in last 1/2 mi. down rock face. Good river access. 2 hiker camps.
Duncan	1.5	840' drop (6160'-5300')	Difficult. Much use. Last 1/2 mi. very steep w/ loose scree; stay on north side. Good river access. 3 hiker camps.
Ute	4.5	1,200' drop (6500'-5300')	Moderate but long. Well-developed. Gradual slope w/ one steep switch back section. Great views, good river access. 4 hiker camps.
North Fk. to Smith Fk.	4.0	200' climb (5100'-5300')	Fairly easy river trail w/ some uphill. Good fishing access. 4 hiker/boater camps.

GUNNISON GORGE WILDERNESS AREA DAY USE AND CAMPING FEES

Day Use Only (in and out the same day) = \$3 per person
 Camping Use: 1 night = \$10 per person
 2 nights = \$15 (maximum allowable stay)
 Annual Pass for Day Use = \$15 per /year

Fees apply to all users, 16 years of age and older, within the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness. There is no charge for private walk-in fishing or camping below the Smith Fork. Visitors traveling from the Chukar trail upstream into the National Park are required to pay BLM user fees. Instructions and envelopes for paying fees are provided at the Chukar, Duncan, Bobcat, and Ute Trailheads. Cash or check only; exact change is required. Gold Eagle, Access, or other state or federal entrance or camping passes cannot be applied to user fees.

The user fees being charged by the BLM are in addition to any commercial company's advertised client charges for rafting and fishing in the Gorge. Fees for commercial clients are collected by the company prior to the trip. Fees also apply to visitors that use the jet boat, raft rental and/or guide services of the Gunnison River Pleasure Park in the four-mile river section between the North Fork and Smith Fork confluences.

Annual Day Use Pass: To purchase an annual "Day Use Pass," fill out the back of the fee envelope and deposit \$15 in fee tube. Use fee receipt for that day. BLM will mail you your pass. On each return trip, fill out fee envelope information including your pass number in space provided. Put envelope in fee tube and receipt in plain view on your vehicle. Carry your pass with you while in the Gorge. You must also sign the trail register at the Duncan, Bobcat, or Ute trailheads or the Chukar river put-in site.

Passes are good for day use only (in and out the same calendar day) and cannot be applied toward camping fees. If you camp, you must pay the regular camping fees. Passes are valid for one year from purchase date and are not transferable.

GOLD MEDAL FISHING REGULATIONS

These regulations apply from the upstream Black Canyon National Park boundary, to the North Fork confluence.

- Fishing by artificial flies and lures only.
- Return all brown trout 12 -16 inches in length to the water immediately.
- Brown trout bag and possession limit is 4 fish, 12 inches or less, **OR** 3 fish less than 12 inches and 1 fish 16 inches or longer.
- All rainbow trout caught must be returned to the water immediately.

BOATER INFORMATION & REQUIREMENTS

The Gunnison Gorge offers a technical and remote experience for rafters, kayakers and whitewater canoeists. Flows are dam controlled and very dependent on winter snowpack. Spring releases (late May-June) vary from 2,000 to 6,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). Summer flows vary from 300 cfs to 2,000+ cfs. At flows below 800 cfs the Gorge is very technical and not recommended for rafts over 12 feet in length. Flows over 5,000 cfs make the Gorge very dangerous for boating. Currents become very swift and swirly, eddies disappear, and swims are very long. Rescue is very difficult in the Gorge. If in doubt, SCOUT! See river map for locations and class of rapids.

Private boater permits are not required, however, boater groups must pay fees at the Chukar Trailhead and sign the register at the put-in. Groups may not exceed 12 people. Overnight boaters must also register for designated boater campsites and may only spend one night at each camp. Porta-poties & stoves (or fire pans w/ charcoal) are required for camping. Maximum wilderness stay is two nights. Boaters travelling downstream through the Gorge from the National Park must have a Park backcountry permit and sign the register at the Chukar put-in.

Each raft must carry an extra oar or paddle, adequate first aid kit, repair kit and an extra personal flotation device (PFD). All boaters should wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved Type III/IV life jacket.

Flow Information: Uncompahgre Field Office River Hotline: (970) 240-5388
 US Geological Survey's Water Resources of Colorado current flow information: http://nwis-colo.cr.usgs.gov/rt/cgi/gen_tbl_pg

Emergency Phone Numbers:
 Delta County Sheriff - Dial 911 (non-emergency, 970-874-2000)
 Montrose County Sheriff - Dial 911 (non-emergency, 970-240-6606)

For more information, contact:
 Bureau of Land Management
 2505 South Townsend Avenue
 Montrose, Colorado 81401
 (970) 240-5300

Visit our website:
www.co.blm.gov/ubra/gorgeca.htm

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