HIKING - FOREST SERVICE - ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NATIONAL FOREST – San Juan RANGER DISTRICT - Columbine
Updated: May 2003

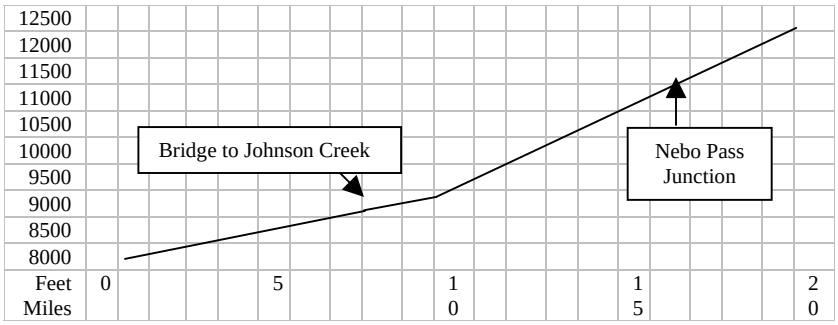
Vallecito Creek Trail to Hunchback Pass #529

Length: 19.5 mi / 31.3 km

Use: Moderate to Heavy
Difficulty: Easy, Moderate

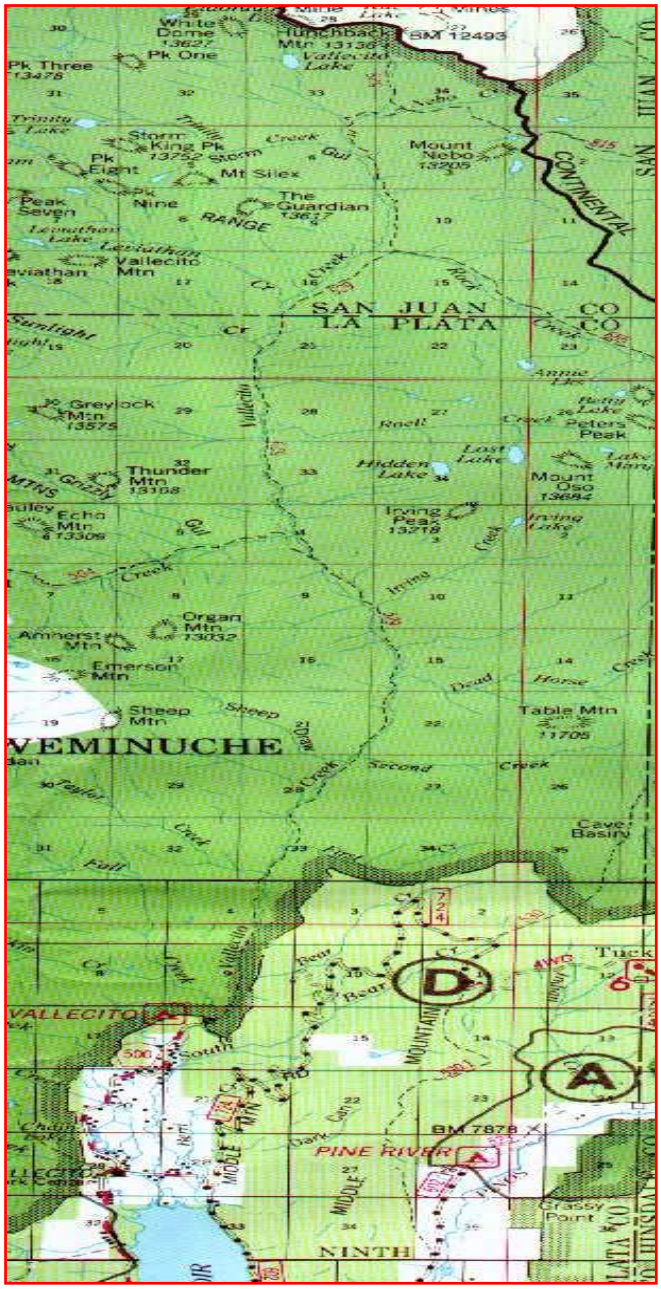
Recommended Season
Spring Summer Fall Winter

USGS Map (s): Vallecito Reservoir, Columbine Pass, Storm King Peak
Starting Elevation: 8,000'
Trailhead at Vallecito Lake Campground
Ending Elevation: 12,500'
Hunchback Pass



Access # 1:
From Bayfield, head north on County Road (CR) #501, also called the Vallecito Road, for 13 miles until you reach Vallecito Reservoir and continue north on the west side of the reservoir for an additional 11 miles to the Vallecito Campground, where the trailhead is located.

Access # 2:
From Durango, head north on Florida Road (CR #240) for 14 miles until you reach CR #501 and continue north on #501 to Vallecito Reservoir. Continue on the west side of the reservoir for an additional 11 miles to the Vallecito Campground, where the trailhead is located.



Attractions & Considerations:

The Vallecito Creek Trail begins in the Vallecito campground. The hike starts in a steep canyon with ponderosa pine forest, aspens, and conifers. After .6 miles you enter the Weminuche Wilderness. The trail climbs gradually as you follow Vallecito Creek north. You will cross Taylor Creek, Vallecito Creek, and Second Creek as you continue on through meadows and aspen groves. After 11 miles you will cross Roell Creek. Look for waterfalls, cascades, and pools; the trail steepens as you reach the Continental Divide Trail. The steepest part of the hike is the ascent to Hunchback Pass at 19.4 miles.

The alpine meadows are full of blooming wildflowers in late July and in August. This area has excellent views and photographic possibilities. Water can be found off the trail in most of the tributaries, but due to Giardia it should be filtered. As with all high-altitude areas, storms can move in rapidly, bringing severe wind, lightning, rain, snow, or hail at any time of year. Plan accordingly.

Fishing Considerations:
Wild rainbow, cutthroat, and brook trout are found in Vallecito Creek. The fish are appropriate for the size of the stream, generally 8 to 12 inches. Deeper water may have trout of 16 inches, but they are not found often. The river offers some of the finest fly-fishing found anywhere. The entire Vallecito drainage within the Weminuche Wilderness is managed as fly-and-lure-only water, with a bag and possession limit of 2. Please check the fishing regulations regarding limits, allowable lures, and restrictions on certain lakes, rivers, etc.

Weminuche Wilderness Regulations:
- Group size is limited to 15 people.
- Camping is not allowed within 100 feet of any water source.
- Outfitter-guides who receive any form of compensation must obtain a special-use permit to operate on public land.
- Possession of motorized equipment and mechanized means of transport are not permitted.
- Recreational livestock are prohibited from being restrained within 100 feet of lakeshores and streams or within riparian areas.

Scan of the San Juan National Forest Map
Forest Service maps and other publications are available at the Public Lands Center, in the Durango Tech Center, ½ mile west of Durango off Highway 160; or by calling (970) 247-4874.
www.sjma.org