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

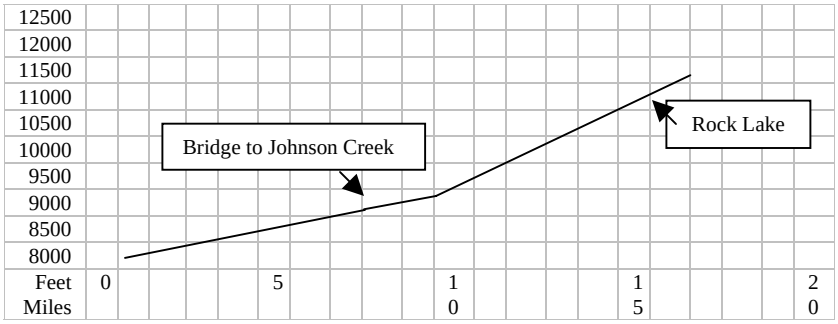
NATIONAL FOREST – San Juan RANGER DISTRICT - Columbine
Updated: May 2003

Vallecito Creek Trail to Rock Lake #529

Length: 15.5 mi / 24.9 km

Use: Medium
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: 11,840'
Rock Lake

Access # 1:
From Bayfield, head north on County Road 240, also called the Vallecito Road, for 7 miles until you reach County Road 501. Take that road north 3 miles to Vallecito Reservoir and continue on the west side of the reservoir for an additional 7 miles to the Vallecito Campground, where the trailhead is located.

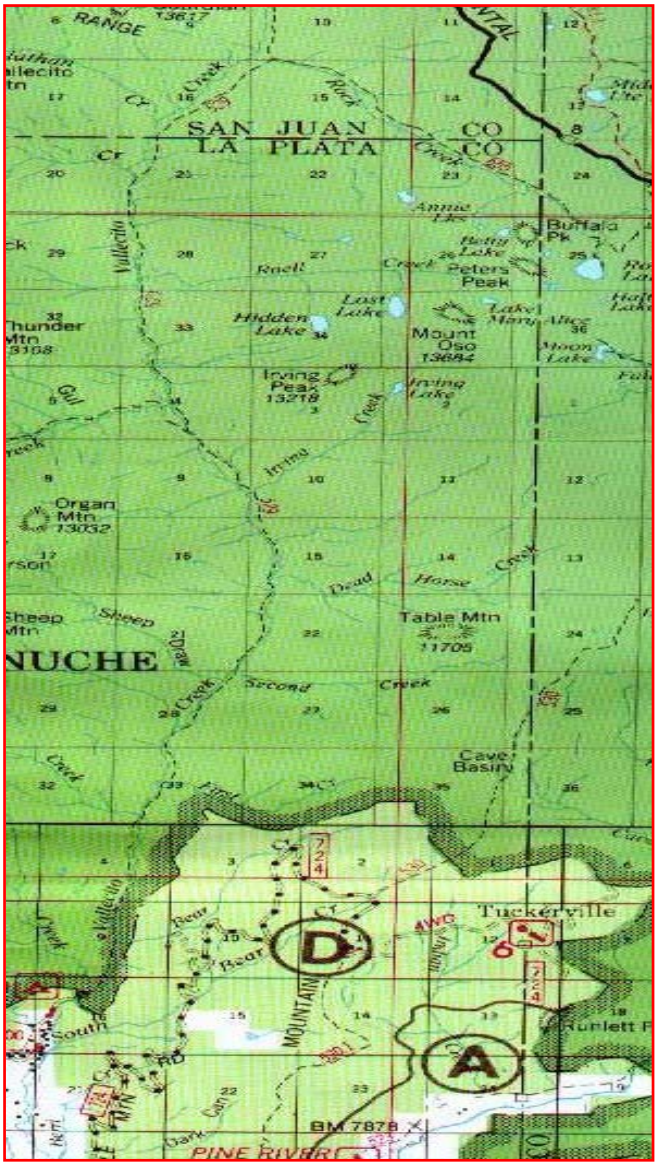
Access # 2:
From Durango, head north on Florida Road for 9 miles until you reach County Road 240. Take that road to the east 2 miles to County Road 501 and continue north on 501 to Vallecito Reservoir. Continue on the west side of the reservoir for an additional 7 miles to the Vallecito Campground, where the trailhead is located.

Attractions & Considerations:
The Vallecito Creek Trail begins in the Vallecito cCampground. The hike begins in a steep canyon with ponderosa pine forest, aspens, and conifers. After 0.6 mile 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 as you reach the Rock Lake Trail turnoff at 13 miles and continue on FS #655 to Rock Lake.

The alpine meadows are full of blooming wildflowers in late July and in August. There are 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 the 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-inch range. 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 Creek drainage in 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