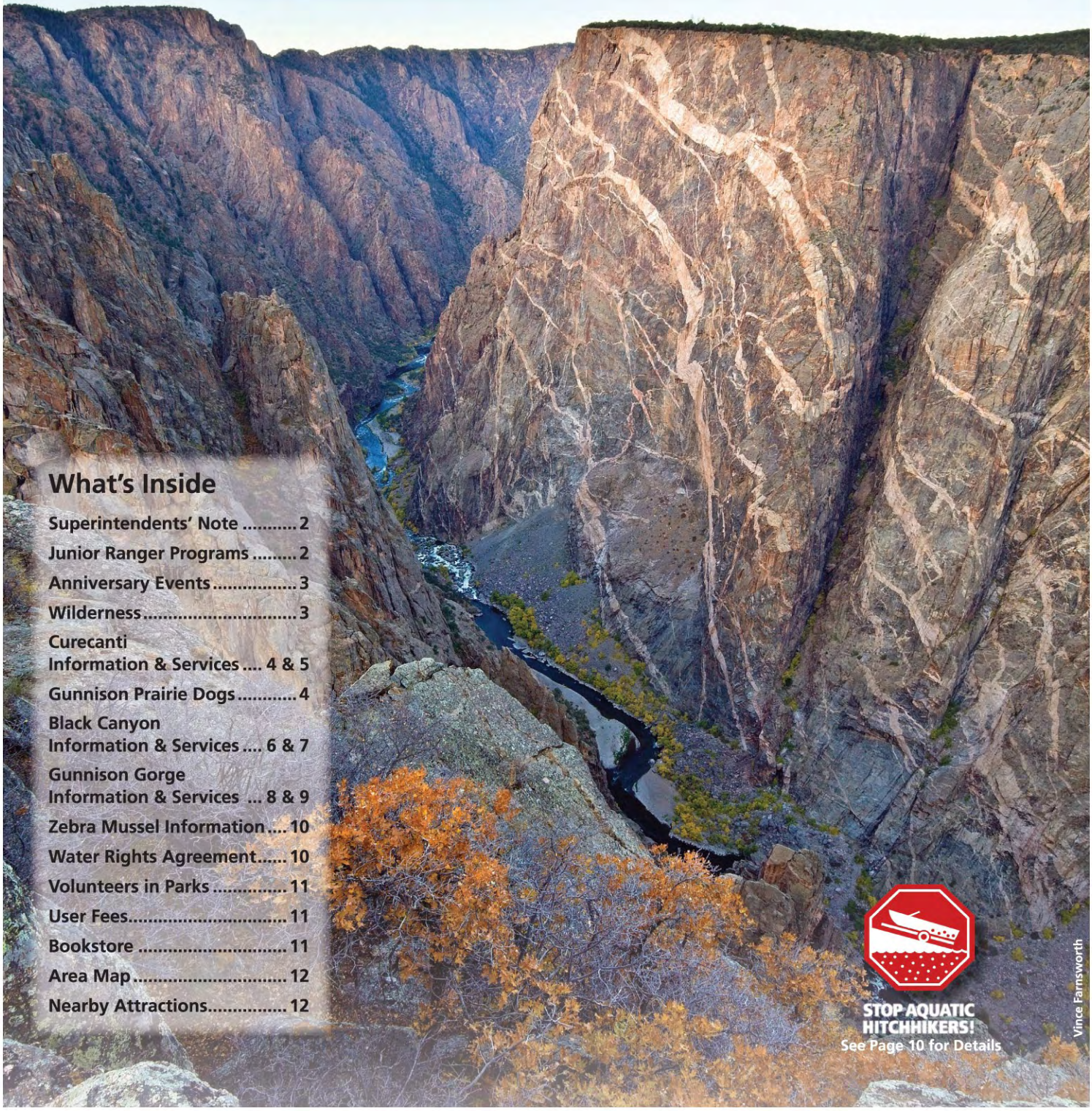
The Portal

Park & Recreation Planner

National Park Service
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Official Park Planner of Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
Curecanti National Recreation Area
Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area
2009



Vince Farnsworth

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STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!
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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park & Curecanti National Recreation Area
Together, Black Canyon and Curecanti offer nearly 75,000 acres of canyons, knife-edged cliffs, water sports, and beauty.

Mailing Address
Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP
Curecanti NRA
102 Elk Creek
Gunnison CO 81230

Phone and E-mail
970-641-2337
cure_info@nps.gov

Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior

Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area
Gunnison Gorge provides 63,000 acres of beautiful landscapes. High clearance vehicles recommended. There are few services, be self-sufficient.

Mailing Address
Gunnison Gorge NCA
2465 South Townsend Avenue
Montrose CO 81401

Phone and E-mail
970-240-5300
co_info@blm.gov

We're on the Web

Visit the parks all year from the comfort of your home computer.

Black Canyon:
http://www.nps.gov/blca

Curecanti:
http://www.nps.gov/cure

Gunnison Gorge:
http://www.co.blm.gov/ggnca

View from the Inside

The staff working for the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service are dedicated to protecting our public lands and sharing them with our visitors. THE PORTAL sat down with the managers of these three parks – Karen Tucker, Area Manager for Gunnison Gorge NCA, and Connie Rudd, Superintendent of Black Canyon NP and Curecanti NRA – to gain their inside view of the parks they care for.

What is the national significance of your respective parks?

KAREN – Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area is part of BLM's National Landscape Conservation System which is comprised of some of the West's most spectacular, wild and diverse landscapes. The Gorge was designated by Congress in recognition of its outstanding geologic, scenic, wilderness, and recreational resources. The Gunnison Gorge Wilderness is famous for its spectacular geology, world class trout fishing, and challenging whitewater boating adventures. The NCA also offers a range of hiking, biking, equestrian, and motorized riding adventures on primitive roads and trails that wind their way through imposing adobe badland formations, scenic sandstone canyons, and diverse native plant communities.

CONNIE – Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park is renowned for its steep and deep canyon, carved over millennia by the Gunnison River. Running water has the power to move boulders and move emotions. Stand at the rim of the canyon and speculate about the whispered passage of time chronicled in the gorge below.

Curecanti National Recreation Area cradles the still waters of the Gunnison River in a series of three reservoirs within and upstream of the Black Canyon. The soaring mesas and snow capped peaks of the West Elk Mountains serve as a rich biological transition zone in the high country. Curecanti is best known for Blue Mesa Reservoir with its infinite recreational opportunities and state record lake trout.

Portions of the Gunnison Gorge and Black Canyon have been set aside as Wilderness areas. What value does wilderness add to the visitor experience at the parks?

KAREN – Wilderness areas are rare, wild places where you can escape civilization and reconnect with nature. The Black Canyon and Gunnison Gorge Wildernesses offer visitors and area residents alike spectacular places where they can tune out the noises and distractions of their busy lives and tune into the sights and sounds of cascading waters, the screech of a hawk, the splash of a jumping fish, or the laughter of their friends and family. While some folks fear being "lost in the wilderness," sometimes they are the perfect places to find something special in ourselves.

The federal government recently settled its claim for a water right protecting the Black Canyon. What can you tell our visitors regarding why water is so vital here?

CONNIE – Water carved the Black Canyon and water continues to sustain its physical and biological processes. While the Gunnison River can no longer be considered a "wild river" as it flows through the canyon, its work is not done. Today its flows are controlled by releases from the dams of the Aspinall Unit above. The recent decreed water right for the park should assure annual flows that will avoid impairment of the primary resources of the canyon, and sustain visitor enjoyment. [see page 10 for more information on water rights]

Is there any thing else you want to tell our visitors?

CONNIE – Visiting almost any national park has the potential to challenge you physically, mentally and spiritually. Find time to slow down for your own personal journey.

Junior Ranger Programs

Help take care of your national treasures! Anyone age 6 and up can become a Junior Park Ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park or Curecanti National Recreation Area. There are fun and educational activities in the Junior Ranger books that you can do while visiting either park. If you are age 5 and under, you can become a Ranger Buddy. Learn more about the stuff that makes these places so amazing and unique. Stop by the Elk Creek, Cimarron, or South Rim Visitor Centers for more information.

In addition, when you're strolling through Black Canyon or Curecanti this summer, you might come upon a group of eager children leading each other around with a compass or searching for camouflaged insects. These children are taking part in Ranger-led kids programs. They participate in hands-on science activities that more closely explore the Parks.

The children become immersed in nature during their activity, which results in a feeling of appreciation for our National Parks. One 10 year old participant said, "I wish I could be in the National Park every day. It's so peaceful here and I'm always learning about cool things."

Junior Ranger Programs will be held every Thursday and Saturday at Black Canyon and every Friday at Curecanti.

If you, or a child you know, may be interested in these kids programs, contact our Education Specialist at 970-641-2337 ext 203 or check at any visitor center for more information on times and locations.

A Year for Anniversaries

We at Black Canyon National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area, and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area are marking three anniversaries this year by celebrating the birth of significant events and stories that relate to these public lands and their resources.

It was 100 years ago this September that President Taft came to Montrose and dedicated the Gunnison Tunnel; 10 years ago that President Clinton signed legislation creating Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area; and 400 years ago that Galileo Galilei first pointed a telescope into the cosmos and began recording his discoveries of the night sky. These anniversaries offer a chance to reflect on how far we've come, examine our relationship to the wild lands of Colorado, and enlighten our view of the future. We eagerly anticipate sharing more of these stories and the resources they recognize throughout 2009.

These events will be brought to life in partnerships with local community and national organizations. Throughout 2009 the park service will host two traveling exhibits that will be on display in the local communities. The first exhibit will highlight East Portal – the town at the bottom of Black Canyon that sustained the construction of the Gunnison Tunnel. The second exhibit chronicles the efforts to preserve Black Canyon and Gunnison Gorge that ultimately culminated in the establishment of Black Canyon as a national park and the Gunnison Gorge as a Conservation Area in 1999.

To honor the contributions of Galileo to humanity; we commemorate 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy. While Galileo never set foot in Colorado, we celebrate his spirit of discovery and our connection with the cosmos; for these three parks protect some of the darkest night skies in Colorado. You can participate in stargazing programs at Black Canyon and Curecanti, or simply look up at the starry sky on your next camping trip. In doing so, you can connect to one of history's most influential vistas, appreciate the rarity of dark skies, and draw your own interpretation through patterns in the sky.

The history of these national treasures is woven of contributions of federal agencies, community groups, and individuals. We honor those who have given us a new perspective on Western Colorado, our relationship with the land, and have enriched the lives of visitors near and far.

In addition to the traveling exhibits the NPS and BLM will host a series of special events to celebrate these three anniversaries. For a listing of other anniversary events see the sidebar on this page.

Anniversary Events

For more information on the NPS events call 970-641-2337 ext 205 and for the Gunnison Gorge events call 970-240-5300.

- East Portal Walks
- Astronomy Programs Thursday nights at Black Canyon and Saturday nights at Curecanti
- National River Awareness Week event in May
- National Fishing and Boating Awareness Week event in June
- Commemoration event of the 100th anniversary of the Gunnison Tunnel will be held in September
- Commemoration event of the 10th anniversary of the National Park and the National Conservation Area will be held in October
- National Public Lands Day event in September and October

Working Together

The Bureau of Land Management, which oversees Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area, and the National Park Service, which manages Black Canyon National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area, coordinate the stewardship of these lands bound by the Gunnison River. Here are a few things we do in collaboration:

- Rangers team up on backcountry patrols, search and rescue, trespass problems, resource protection, and campsite management.
- Public contact staff cross-train and coordinate education efforts and visitor services.
- Resource challenges like invasive plant removal, environmental compliance, recreation planning, habitat restoration, rangeland conservation, and scientific research are addressed as a team.
- Agencies work together to complete the Wilderness cadastral survey, Backcountry Management Plan, and maintain water rights.
- Agencies collaborate on Land and Water Conservation Fund requests to acquire new lands and conserve resources through voluntary easements.

One River, Two Wilderness Areas

The Gunnison River, flowing from the upper reaches of its channel in Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park down into the Bureau of Land Management's Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area, is the dynamic link that binds two adjacent wilderness areas. The canyon carved by this life-sustaining river is managed by two sister agencies as Wilderness.

Black Canyon of the Gunnison Wilderness (15,600 acres) combined with Gunnison Gorge Wilderness (17,700 acres) forms 33,300 contiguous acres of designated Wilderness, preserving the spectacular and inspiring canyon system of the Gunnison River. The agencies differ in some aspects of management and regulation, but the overarching management goal for both agencies is to:

"... leave them unimpaired for future use as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, and the preservation of their wilderness character ..."

— The Wilderness Act (1964)

People value wilderness for a variety of reasons. For some it's the challenge of adventure and self-reliance, whether backpacking, rock climbing or whitewater boating. Others may value the experience of solitude, surrounded by natural beauty and natural sounds. A night sleeping under the stars, away from city lights can be an inspiring wilderness experience. Some enjoy the opportunity for primitive travel (hiking or horseback) and recreation (fly-fishing, bird-watching, photography or drawing) in lands off-limits to mechanized vehicles. Still others find value and meaning in the idea and reality of a wilderness where nature has dominion, even if they never physically visit a wilderness area.

In the Black Canyon and Gunnison Gorge, the wilderness landscape is a gift of the river. Its preservation under the care of the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management is a gift for the American people. What natural forces have created over untold millions of years, we as a people have acted to preserve undiminished and substantially unaltered for the benefit of this piece of the natural world, for ourselves and for future generations.

Please help protect these special areas by following the wilderness regulations for Black Canyon (page 7) and Gunnison Gorge (page9).

Curecanti National Recreation Area

FEES AND PASSES
Curecanti does not charge an entrance fee except at East Portal (which is included in the Black Canyon entrance fee). However, if you plan to launch a boat into Blue Mesa Reservoir, you must purchase a boat permit. Senior and Access pass discounts apply to all boating fees at Curecanti.

$4 per two days
$10 per two weeks
$30 per year

For visitors interested in visiting multiple public lands, the America the Beautiful - National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass is available for $80.00. For US citizens 62 and older, Senior passes are $10.00, and for those with disabilities, Access passes are free.

VISITOR CENTERS
Elk Creek Visitor Center is open year round. From Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend it is open 7-days a week from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. Winter hours are Monday-Friday 8:30 am to 4:00 pm.

Lake Fork Visitor Center will be open intermittently during the summer.

Cimarron Visitor Center will be open mid-May to Labor Day, 6 days a week from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

CAMPING
There are several campgrounds around Blue Mesa Reservoir. Camping is available first-come, first-served in all campgrounds and reservations are accepted for Elk Creek, Lake Fork, and Stevens Creek through www.recreation.gov (877-444-6777). Camping fees are $12.00 per night in most sites. Loop D at Elk Creek Campground has electric hookups; fees are $18.00 per night. Group camping is available at Red Creek and East Elk by reservation only.

Senior and Access pass discounts apply to all camping fees at Curecanti.

SHOWERS
Showers are available at the Elk Creek and Lake Fork Marinas starting Memorial Day Weekend.

FOOD SERVICES
Pappy's Restaurant at Elk Creek Marina is open May-September. Full food services are available in Montrose and Gunnison.

BOAT RENTALS
Boat rentals are available at Elk Creek Marina. See www.camprrm.com/Colorado_Marinas.htm.

PETS
Pets are allowed in all areas at Curecanti, but must be leashed at all times.

ACCESSIBILITY
Visitor centers, overlooks, and most campgrounds and restrooms are accessible. For visitors with disabilities; Lake Fork is most suitable.

Boat Tours into Black Canyon of the Gunnison

Join a Park Ranger for a leisurely boat tour on Morrow Point Reservoir, traveling seven miles into the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, where canyon walls will tower above you. Hear the stories of the geologic history, wildlife, rugged early inhabitants, the narrow gauge railroad, and the dams and reservoirs.

LOGISTICS
The National Park Service tour boat is a 40-foot, 42-passenger pontoon boat. Tours are offered twice daily at 10:00 am and 12:30 pm, Memorial Day through Labor Day, every day of the week except Tuesdays (this is subject to change). Tours begin at the Pine Creek Boat Dock, located 35 miles east of Montrose, 25 miles west of Gunnison, at US Highway 50 mile marker 130. From the Pine Creek parking lot, walk down 232 steps, (remember, you'll have to walk back up too!) then enjoy an easy ½ mile walk along the old narrow gauge rail bed to the boat dock. We suggest starting down one hour before your scheduled tour, allowing more time if you need a slower pace. Meet the Park Ranger at the boat dock at least 15 minutes before your scheduled departure.

WHAT TO BRING
Dress for the Colorado mountains, where a sunny day can quickly become stormy. Bring drinking water, snacks, sun and rain protection, and your camera. For security reasons, carry-on bags and packs are subject to search. Pets, smoking, and alcoholic beverages are not allowed on the tour. Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) are available and must be worn by youth age 12 and under.

RESERVATIONS
Prepaid reservations are required and are occasionally still available early on the day of the tour. Call 970-641-2337, ext 205, or visit the Elk Creek Visitor Center. Persons arriving at the boat dock without a reservation will not be permitted on the tour.

COST
$16.00 for adults
$8.00 for adults who possess a Senior or Access Pass
$8.00 for children ages 12 and under

The Scoop on the Gunnison Prairie Dog

If you spend some time in the Elk Creek Campground you may notice scattered dirt mounds. These mounds were once burrow openings for Gunnison's Prairie Dogs who are considered "ecosystem engineers" since their extensive burrow systems provide habitat for many other species of insects, rodents and amphibians.

The population and range of this unique species has significantly declined due to poisoning, urbanization and introduced disease. Conservation of this species is a high priority for the National Park Service. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that the Gunnison's Prairie Dogs in south-central Colorado and north-central New Mexico are warranted for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The Elk Creek area was inhabited by a large prairie dog colony which died off in 2005 due to a plague outbreak. Prairie dogs are highly susceptible to this disease and can quickly spread plague infections within their colony through social behaviors such as grooming and greeting. Although cases of plague in humans are uncommon, humans can be infected with the plague-causing bacteria by coming in direct contact with infected wildlife or plague-carrying fleas. Pets can also be affected by bringing home infected animals or fleas from prairie dog colonies. Protecting visitor health and safety is important to the staff of Curecanti and we plan to permanently exclude prairie dogs from the Elk Creek Campground to reduce direct interactions between visitors and prairie dogs.

In order to balance visitor health and safety with the need to conserve prairie dog populations, we have developed a project to non-lethally exclude prairie dogs from the campground. We will plant and water robust native shrubs and grasses throughout the campground area. Once mature, this vegetation will serve as a visual and physical barrier to prairie dogs. Prairie dogs require relatively sparse, open vegetation to remain vigilant for predators and will not colonize areas with dense, heavy vegetation.

For more information, please pick up a prairie dog brochure from the Elk Creek visitor center.

Boating

Blue Mesa Reservoir is the largest water body in Colorado, and combined with Morrow Point and Crystal Reservoirs, offers great recreational opportunities for motor and sail boating, windsurfing, and jet skiing in the summer to snowshoeing and ice fishing in the winter.

Marinas and boat put-ins are located throughout Blue Mesa with easy access to the reservoir. Morrow Point and Crystal Reservoirs are more difficult to access, but many people enjoy kayaking and fishing using small hand-carried crafts.

Check boating and fishing regulations before heading out on the water.

Requirements for Blue Mesa, Morrow Point and Crystal Reservoirs:

- All boats launching at Curecanti must be certified as mussel free. See page 10 for details.
- USCG approved personal flotation devices are required for all on board.
- One Type IV throwable flotation device for boats 16 feet and greater.
- Sound-producing device.
- Lights for dusk to dawn operation.
- A NPS boat permit is required for motorized vessels on Blue Mesa.
- Motorized vessels must be registered in their home state.
- Fire extinguisher (unless boat is of open construction and less than 26 feet long).

Curecanti Fishing Limits

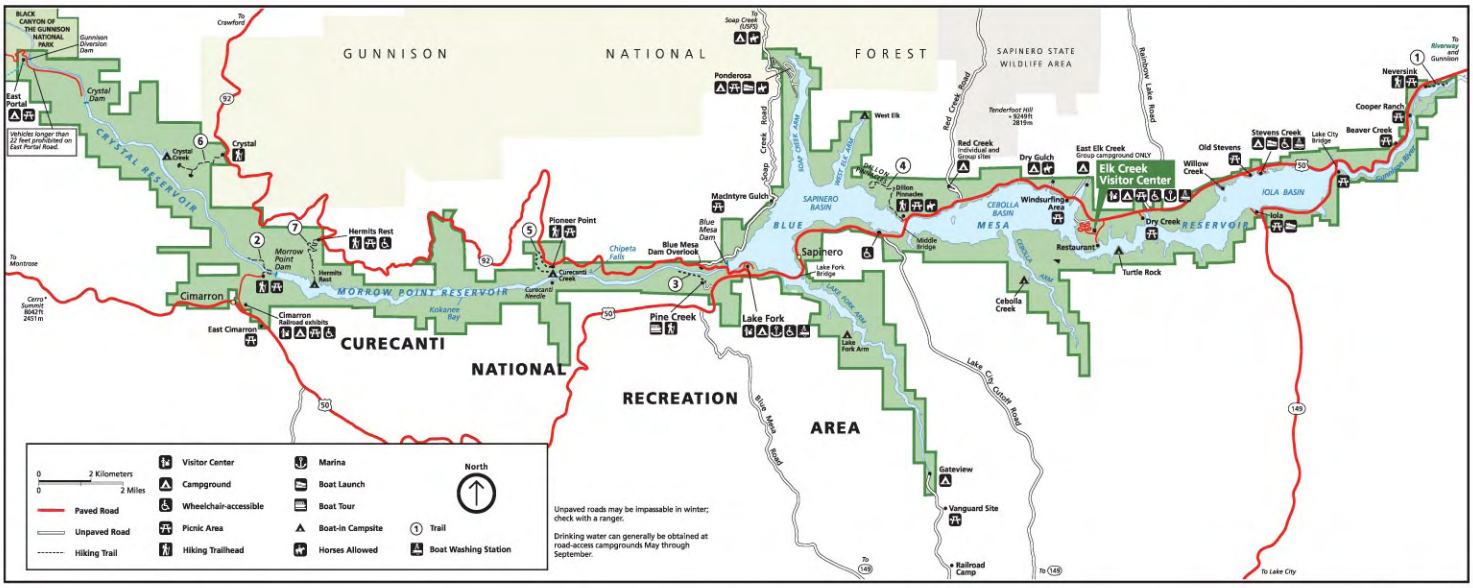
(For a full list of fishing regulations, visit our website at www.nps.gov/cure)

SPECIES	DAILY BAG	POSSESSION
Trout (In aggregate)	4	8
Brook Trout < 8"	10	10
Lake Trout (Blue Mesa)	8	8
Lake Trout (Morrow Point, Crystal)	4	8
Kokanee salmon	10	10
Yellow Perch, White Suckers, Crayfish	Unlimited	Unlimited

Hiking

Curecanti offers a variety of hiking opportunities for all skill levels. Vistas vary from serene walks along the Gunnison River, to volcanic pinnacles, to steeper paths into the canyon. Remember that you are hiking at high elevation and be prepared for the changing summer weather. Wear good hiking boots, carry a hat, sunscreen, rain jacket and extra water. Dogs are allowed on all Curecanti trails but must be on a leash at all times. Pets are not allowed on the boat tour.

TRAIL & TRAILHEAD	ROUNDTRIP (mi / km)	DESCRIPTION	MAP LOCATION
Highway 50			
Neversink Trail Neversink	1.5mi / 2.5km	**Easy** A nice stroll along the Gunnison River, this is a good location for watching wildlife and is in the shade.	1
Mesa Creek Trail Cimarron Canyon	1.5mi / 2.5km	**Easy** Follows a foot bridge over the Gunnison River providing access for fishing and views of the sheer canyon walls.	2
Pine Creek Trail Pine Creek	2mi / 3km	**Moderate** This hike descends 232 stairs along Pine Creek to the old railroad bed and Morrow Point Reservoir. This is the access trail for the boat tour.	3
Dillon Pinnacles Trail Dillon Pinnacles	4mi / 6.5km	**Moderate** Ascending through sagebrush and conifers this trail offers spectacular views of the weather-sculpted Dillon Pinnacles.	4
Highway 92			
Curecanti Creek Trail Pioneer Point	4mi / 6.5km	**Strenuous** Descending 900 feet from the rim of Black Canyon to Morrow Point Reservoir, the trail follows the banks of Curecanti Creek.	5
Crystal Creek Trail Crystal Creek	5mi / 9km	**Strenuous** Winding through oak brush and aspen with sweeping views of Cimarron Valley and the West Elk and San Juan Mountains. The trail ends at an overlook, 1800 feet above Crystal Reservoir.	6
Hermits Rest Trail Hermits Rest	6mi / 10km	**Strenuous** Zigzagging through forest and rock, descend 1800 feet to the camp and picnic sites on the shore of Morrow Point Reservoir.	7



Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park

FEES AND PASSES

Black Canyon entrance fees are $15.00 per vehicle. For pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorcycles, the fee is $7.00 per person. A Black Canyon Annual Pass is available for $30.00 and is valid for 12 months from the date of purchase.

For visitors interested in visiting multiple public lands, the America the Beautiful - National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass is available for $80.00. For US citizens 62 and older, Senior passes are $10.00, and for those with disabilities, Access passes are free.

VISITOR CENTERS

The South Rim Visitor Center is open every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Summer hours are 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. Winter hours are 8:30 am to 4:00 pm.

The North Rim Ranger Station will be open intermittently during the summer. A self registration board is also available to pay your entrance fee or obatin a wilderness permit.

Cimarron Visitor Center will be open mid-May to Labor Day, 6 days a week from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

CAMPING

The South Rim Campground is open all year, only Loop A in winter. There are no water hookups or dump stations. Loop B has electrical hookups (only available in the summer). Sites can be reserved through www.recreation.gov (877-444-6777). Loops A and C are $12.00 per night. Loop B is $18.00 per night. Interagency Senior and Access Pass discounts apply to all camping areas.

The East Portal Campground has 15 tent sites, first-come, first-served. Sites are $12.00 per night.

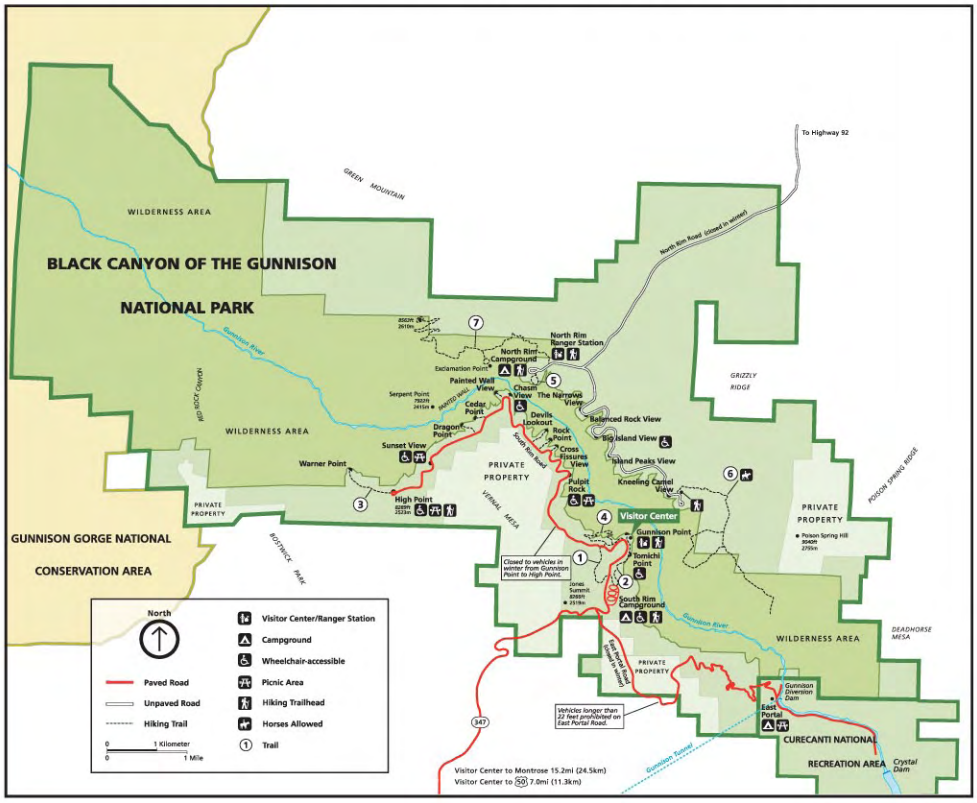
The North Rim Campground has 13 sites and fills on a first-come, first-served basis and are $12.00 per night. There are no hookups on the North Rim.

PETS

Pets on a six-foot leash may be walked on roads, in campgrounds, to the overlooks, and are allowed on the Rim Rock and Chasm View trails. Pets are not allowed on any other trails, inner canyon routes, or in the Wilderness. Clean up after your pet. Do not leave your pet unattended; boarding services are available in the local area.

ACCESSIBILITY

The South Rim Visitor Center is accessible and the South Rim Campground has accessible campsites. All restrooms on the north and south rim, and some restrooms at East Portal are accessible. A number of overlooks on the South Rim and North Rim drive are also accessible. These overlooks are labeled on the map above.



Ranger Programs

We invite you to learn more about Black Canyon by joining us for a Ranger-led activity. This is a great way to learn about the park, make lasting connections, or just have that nagging question answered. All programs are free. Check with a ranger or at any visitor center for start times and locations. Programs are available on the south rim only, there are no programs at the north rim.

CHASM VIEW TALKS

For the curious who are wondering how this magnificent canyon was formed. Learn about the geology of Black Canyon and the surrounding area.

OVERLOOK TALKS

Topics vary widely on these popular afternoon talks from birds of prey, to plant life, to early explorations of the canyon. Join us daily to learn more about the big and the small within the park.

EAST PORTAL WALKS

Life in the Uncompahgre Valley was changed forever by the construction of the Gunnison Tunnel in the early 1900s. Follow in the footsteps of the people who built the tunnel on a historic walk around East Portal.

NATURE WALKS

Join a park ranger for a walk along one of the nature trails in the park to explore the diversity of the plant and animal life that find a home here.

EVENING PROGRAMS

Black Canyon's diversity will come to life during evening slide programs at the campground outdoor theater or the South Rim Visitor Center auditorium.

ASTRONOMY PROGRAMS

We encourage you to get out and enjoy the night. Astronomy and Stargazing programs will be held at Black Canyon and Curecanti throughout the summer. We will also be out during the day with our solar scope designed to look at the sun. Look for us at the South Rim Visitor Center for this program. Stargazing is weather permitting and can be very cold. Bring warm clothes.

BOAT TOURS THROUGH BLACK CANYON

See page 4 or ask at the visitor center for details on how to make a reservation for the boat tour through Black Canyon on Morrow Point Reservoir.

Adventures in Black Canyon

AUTO TOUR
The South Rim Drive offers beautiful views of Black Canyon. Some of the 12 viewpoints are close to the road and others involve short strolls on well maintained trails.

Traveling east on US Highway 50 from Black Canyon you will find a short detour to Cimarron Canyon and Visitor Center. This will take you to railroad exhibits and to a view of Morrow Point Dam. Continuing on Highway 50 offers views of unique geologic formations and panoramas of surrounding mountains.

The North Rim Drive is a road less traveled. Many prefer the relative solitude that this drive offers. It is a gravel road open generally from late March through mid-November, depending on the weather. The North Rim Drive offers 6 uniquely stunning overlooks of the canyon.

CLIMBING
There are a number of technical climbing routes in the Black Canyon. Most climbs are long, multipitch routes and are not for novice climbers. Access is difficult, but with the right amount of skill and preparation, climbing in the canyon can be a rewarding adventure. Free backcountry permits are required.

For those interested in something that stays a little closer to the ground, there are a number of bouldering options in the park. Check with rangers for more information.

KAYAKING
The Gunnison River through the national park is extremely dangerous due to difficult rapids and portages. Even well prepared kayakers will find the canyon challenging. The river is classified as Class V to Unnavigable.

- All boaters must have a U.S. Coast Guard approved whitewater PFD.
- Obtain a backcountry permit at the South Rim Visitor Center or the East Portal bulletin board at the put-in.
- It is wise to go with an experienced kayaker who has been down this stretch of the river before.
- Wood fires are prohibited.
- Pack out everything, including trash, used toilet paper, and cigarette butts.

Hiking

Trails in Black Canyon offer diverse habitats, sweeping vistas of the sheer canyon walls, and a variety of wildlife and wildflowers. Interpretive signs and nature guides help visitors understand the rich natural and cultural history.

Backcountry hiking and camping are available and require a free permit. For more information pick up a backcountry brochure at the South Rim Visitor Center or North Rim Ranger Station. Remember that routes into the canyon are rugged and unforgiving for the unprepared.

TRAIL & TRAILHEAD	ROUNDTRIP (mi / km)	DESCRIPTION	MAP LOCATION
South Rim			
Uplands Trail South Rim Visitor Center	2mi / 3km	**Easy** A nice stroll through the oakbrush, look for mule deer and other wildlife.	1
Rim Rock Trail South Rim Visitor Center	2mi / 3km	**Moderate** A self-guiding nature trail that takes you along the rim of the canyon. Guide books are available.	2
Warner Point Trail High Point	1.5mi / 2.5km	**Moderate** Beautiful mountain vistas and canyon views. Guide books are available.	3
Oak Flat Loop South Rim Visitor Center	2mi / 3km	**Strenuous** Short but steep, dropping 400 feet through aspen and Douglas-fir, with great views of the canyon.	4
North Rim			
Chasm View Nature Trail North Rim Campground	0.3mi / 0.5km	**Easy** Provides excellent views of the narrowest part of the canyon. Guide books are available.	5
Deadhorse Trail Kneeling Camel View	5mi / 9km	**Moderate** Offers views of Deadhorse Gulch and East Portal. It is open to horses, weed-free forage only.	6
North Vista Trail North Rim Ranger Station	3mi / 4.5km	**Moderate** The first section of the North Vista Trail ends at Exclamation Point with a breathtaking view.	7
	7mi / 11km	**Strenuous** After Exclamation Point, climb 840 feet to the summit of Green Mountain.	7

Playing it Safe

Safety may not be on your mind while visiting parks, but it is a very important part of any trip.

- Check with rangers for current information on conditions and potential safety hazards.
- Check weather conditions before starting any activity and be aware that they can change quickly.
- Be informed of hiking and boating regulations and be cautious around all wildlife, water, and steep cliffs.
- Keep young ones close.
- Be bear aware by properly storing all food and items that have come in contact with food.
- Always drink plenty of water.

Black Canyon Wilderness Regulations

Backcountry travel is a rewarding and unique experience, but only for the prepared. Remember that the inner canyon within Black Canyon National Park is rugged and remote.

- Permits (at no charge) are required for ALL inner canyon use.
- Reservations are required for Red Rock Canyon. Reservations for 2009 are full.
- Pets are prohibited in the Wilderness area and on all inner canyon routes.
- Hunting and possession of firearms are prohibited.
- A valid Colorado fishing license is required for fishing in the canyon. Gold Medal Fishing regulations apply.
- Collecting anything within the national park is prohibited, including wood, flowers, plants, animals, antlers, historical artifacts, and rocks.
- Follow "Leave No Trace" ethics. These are listed on the back of the permit.
- Use pit toilets if available. If not, bury human waste 6 inches deep and 200 feet away from the river.
- Wood fires are prohibited. Use only camp stoves for cooking.
- Carry extra food, clothing, and a water filter.

Gold Medal Fishing Regulations

These special regulations apply from 200 yards downstream of Crystal Dam to the North Fork Confluence.

- Fish with artificial lures and flies only.
- The daily bag limit for brown trout is 4.
- The possession limit for brown trout is 8.
- All rainbow trout caught must be returned to the water immediately.
- A state fishing license is required.
- Fishing is prohibited within 200 yards downstream of Crystal Dam.

Gunnison Gorge National Consevation Area

ENTRANCE FEES AND PASSES

Permits and fees are required for anyone 16 years of age and over entering the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness, whether entering briefly or for the maximum 2 night/3 day stay:

$3 per person for Day Use
$10 per person for One Night
$15 per person for Two Nights (maximum stay)
$15 per person/year for Annual Day Use Pass

Self-register fee stations are located at all wilderness trailheads.

Passes (America the Beautiful, Golden Eagle, State Parks, etc.) are not valid for Gunnison Gorge Wilderness permits. Annual day use passes cannot be applied toward camping permit fees.

If accessing Black Canyon National Park from the Chukar Trail you still must register and purchase a Gunnison Gorge Wilderness permit. Persons traveling upstream of the Margaritaville camping area must also obtain a backcountry permit for the national park.

CAMPING

Camping within the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness and Gunnison River corridor is allowed in designated sites or camping areas only. Visitors must obtain camping permits, register, and reserve river campsites at the Wilderness trailheads. Sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Wilderness camping permit fees are $10.00 per person for 1 night, $15 per person for 2 nights (maximum stay). Interagency passes are not valid for Wilderness permit fees.

Campsites, restrooms, picnic tables and fire grills are available at the Chukar, Duncan, and Ute trailheads, Peach Valley Recreation Area and Cottonwood Grove at no charge. Campsites, showers, and other services are available at the private Gunnison River Pleasure Park located at the Gunnison Forks.

Dispersed vehicle camping in the remainder of the NCA is permitted up to 7 consecutive days, unless posted otherwise. Check BLM signs and maps for additional camping regulations and designated campsite locations.

PETS

All animals brought into the NCA must be under your visual, audible, or physical control at all times and are not permitted to run at large or chase, harass or disturb wildlife or other users. Keep pets leashed in developed recreation sites and always carry a leash with you while hiking.

ACCESSIBILITY

Recreation sites have rough dirt and/or gravel surfaces; trails are steep, rocky, and difficult to traverse without assistance. There are accessible toilet facilities at the Chukar, Duncan, and Ute trailheads, and at the Gunnison Forks. The Cottonwood Grove camping area has an accessible campsite, toilet and fishing pier.

Biking and Horseback Information

Saddle up your horse or mountain bike and head to the Gunnison Gorge NCA for miles of scenic riding through adobe badlands, sandstone canyons, and pinyon juniper woodlands. Take in views of surrounding mountains, valleys, and the colorful cliffs and canyons of Gunnison Gorge Wilderness. Equestrians might want to grab their fishing poles and head 4.5 miles down the Ute Trail to the Gunnison River for some fishing in the Gold Medal Waters. The Bobcat and Duncan trails are not horse-friendly due to very steep drop offs and rocky sections. Mountain bikes are not permitted within the Wilderness but there are plenty of other great riding areas from which to choose.

Adventures by Car

Looking for an off-road adventure? Driving in the Gunnison Gorge NCA can be a great adventure. Take a drive through scenic adobe badland formations along Peach Valley Road or enjoy beautiful river views while looking for that fishing spot along the South River Road. Check out spectacular views of the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness from the Smith Mountain jeep road. All NCA roads are natural surface and most have rocky outcrops. Four wheel drive and/or high clearance vehicles are recommended. Frequent and localized summer rainstorms may render roads and trails impassible even for four-wheel-drive vehicles. Do not attempt to drive on saturated roads. Motorized and non-motorized vehicles must stay on signed, designated roads and trails.

OHV RIDING AREAS

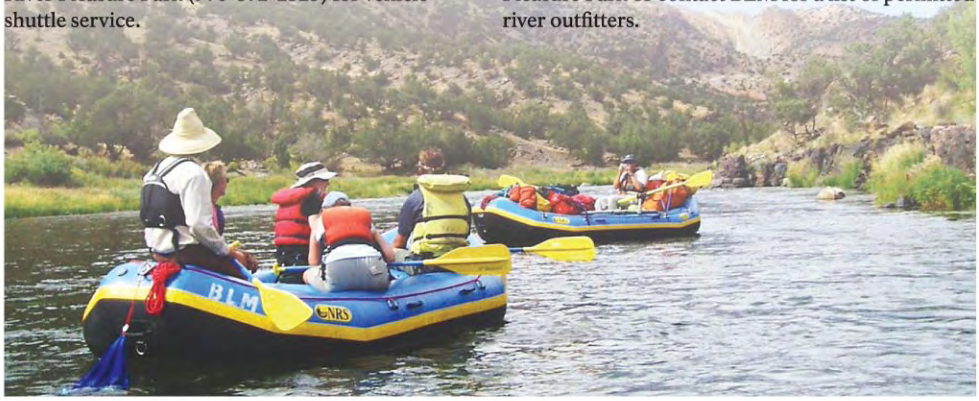
Unload your OHV (off highway vehicle) at the Gunnison Gorge NCA Peach Valley Recreation Area. From here you can take off riding on over 75 miles of designated motorcycle single track and all terrain vehicle (ATV) trails within the 9,800 acre Flat Top-Peach Valley OHV Recreation Area . The Area also offers two designated OHV play areas, at Peach Valley and Flat Top, where off trail cross country riding is permitted for motorcycles, ATVs, universal terrain vehicles (UTV) 50 inches in width or less, and mountain bikes. The Peach Valley site also offers a beginner's loop.

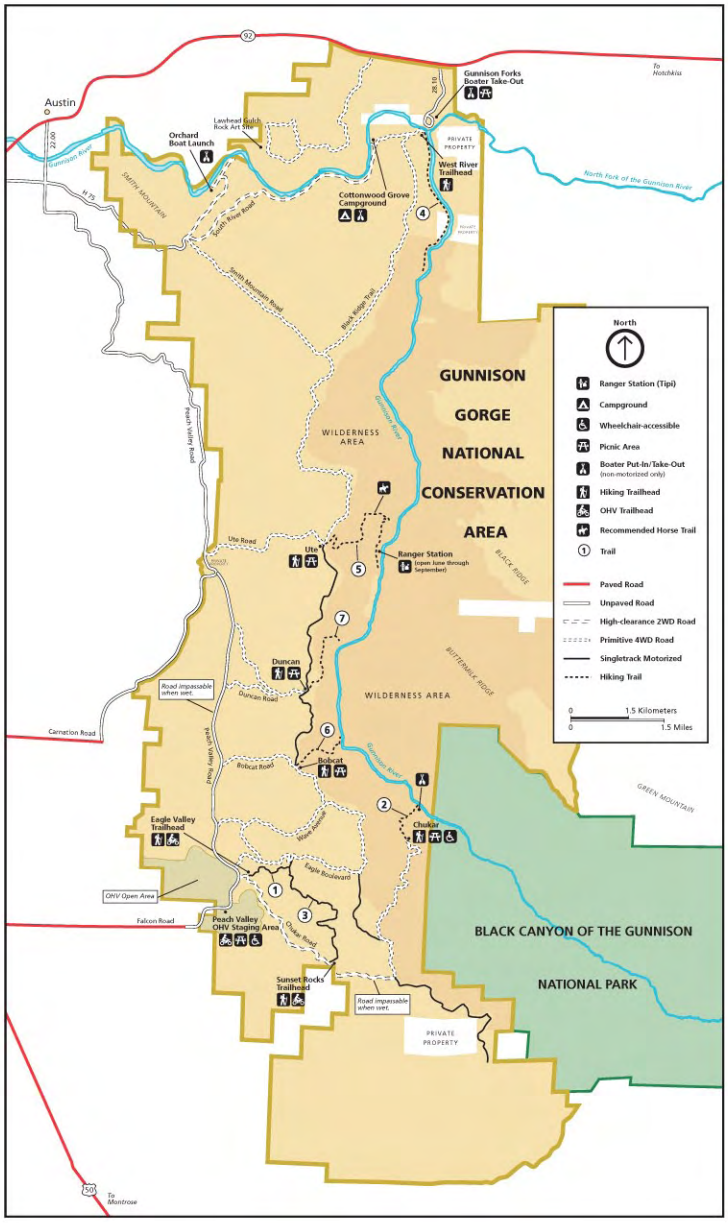
All vehicles over 50 inches must stay on designated access roads. Check trailhead kiosks for trail locations and riding regulations. Your OHV must be registered with the Colorado State OHV program and your registration decals must be properly affixed to your vehicle. Wear your safety gear and come prepared for adventure! Want to learn to ride? Contact the BLM about motorcycle and ATV classes.

Boating Information

The Gunnison Gorge NCA provides a number of river access sites for non-motorized boating and fishing. Whitewater enthusiasts will find outstanding scenery and technical (Class II-IV) rapids within the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness which is accessed via the 1 mile Chukar Trail. You can pack in your own gear or arrange for a horse pack-in (970-323-0115). Contact the Gunnison River Pleasure Park (970-872-2525) for vehicle shuttle service.

Looking for calmer waters for your canoe or raft? Launch at Cottonwood Grove, Orchard River, or Gunnison Forks river access sites to float the lower Gunnison River downstream of the Gunnison Forks. You can also make arrangements with the Pleasure Park to jet boat you and your gear upstream to the Smith Fork and enjoy a scenic, leisure float back. Don't have a raft? Rent one at the Pleasure Park or contact BLM for a list of permitted river outfitters.





Hiking

The Gunnison Gorge NCA provides an assortment of easy to technical trails that wind through a variety of scenic backdrops including adobe "moonscapes," colorful sandstone canyons, and the towering black walls of the Gunnison Gorge river canyon. Dogs are allowed on NCA trails but be sure to bring along extra water for them!

TRAIL & TRAILHEAD	ROUNDTRIP (mi / km)	DESCRIPTION	MAP LOCATION
Gunnison Gorge NCA			
Eagle Valley Trail Peach Valley Road	2mi / 3km	**Easy** Fun family hike through adobe badlands and sandstone canyons.	1
Chukar Trail Chukar Road	2.2mi / 3.5km	**Moderate** Very scenic, steep, winding trail descending down to Chukar Wash. Provides access for floating the gorge and hiking upstream into the national park.	2
Sunset Rocks Trail Chukar Road	6mi / 10km	**Moderate** Colorful geologic formations and pinyon-juniper woodlands with great views of the Uncompahgre Valley.	3
West River Trail Gunnison Forks	7mi / 11km	**Moderate** Provides 3 miles of Gold Medal fishing access on the west side of the Gunnison River.	4
Ute Trail Peach Valley Road	11mi / 17.5km	**Moderate** Descends gradually to the river and offers impressive views of the towering cliffs and the Gorge's "double canyon."	5
Bobcat Trail Peach Valley Road	3mi / 4.5km	**Strenuous** Stunning wilderness views. The last 1/2 mile is extremely steep requiring a scramble down a rocky draw. Not recommended for horse use.	6
Duncan Trail Peach Valley Road	3mi / 4.5km	**Strenuous** Colorful sandstone formations. The last 1/2 mile is extremely steep on loose rocks. Not recommended for horse use.	7

Gunnison Gorge NCA Regulations

- Motorized and non-motorized vehicles must stay on signed, designated roads and trails.
- Off-trail use by motorcycles, ATVs, UTVs (up to 50 inches in width) and mountain bikes is allowed only in designated open areas within the Flat Top-Peach Valley Recreation Area.
- Motorized river craft are prohibited on rivers and streams in the NCA and Wilderness.
- Pets and pack stock must be under visual, audible, or physical control at all times. Keep pets leashed in developed recreation sites.
- Target shooting is prohibited.
- Hunting is permitted in accordance with Colorado Division of Wildlife regulations.
- Camping along the river corridor is allowed in designated sites only.
- Cutting of live or dead vegetation is prohibited.
- Fires must be contained either in stoves, grills, or metal fire pans.

Check BLM website, signs and maps for additional regulations regarding camping, group size, length of stay, human waste disposal, and campfire use in your proposed travel area.

Wilderness Regulations

- Visitors (16 yrs and older) must register and purchase self-issuing day use or camping permits.
- Camping is allowed in designated sites only; reserve campsites when purchasing permits at trailheads.
- Maximum length of stay is 2 nights.
- Maximum group size is 12.
- Wood fires are prohibited. Use camp stoves and/or fire pans with charcoal.
- Portable toilet systems required for all overnight users.
- Motorized and mechanical vehicles and equipment use is prohibited.

Don't Move a Mussel!

The National Park Service (NPS) and State of Colorado are determined to prevent the introduction of invasive mussels into Blue Mesa and other reservoirs of the Gunnison River basin. There is no environmentally sound or inexpensive way to eliminate these species once they are established. If they get established, they could significantly impact recreational fishing in Blue Mesa. We are powerless to stop this invasion without the diligent support of all fisherman and boaters.

Stopping Aquatic Hitchhikers

Follow these general procedures every time you come in contact with any body of water:

- Remove all visible mud, plants, fish, and animals. Before leaving any body of water, it is important to examine all your equipment (boats, trailers, clothing, boots, buckets, etc).
- Eliminate water from all equipment before transporting anywhere. Most water recreational equipment contains areas where water can collect and harbor aquatic hitchhikers.
- Clean and dry anything that came in contact with the water (equipment, clothing, even dogs!).
- Never release or put plants, fish or animals into water unless they came out of that body of water.

Zebra and quagga mussels entered the United States in the late 1980s by sea-going ships that sailed into the Great Lakes. In January of 2008, zebra mussels were discovered for the first time in Colorado at Pueblo Reservoir. The following October, quagga mussels were discovered in Colorado at Grand Lake, Granby, and Shadow Mountain.

Zebra and quagga mussels are freshwater, bivalve mollusks that have a dark and white zebra-like pattern on their shells. The adults are about the size of a nickel. In their earliest life stages they are microscopic, making them impossible to detect by visual inspection. They attach themselves to a hard surface during the settler stage. The settlers are the size of a grain of sand and are detectable on boats because the surface feels gritty. They are filter feeders that disrupt the food chain by filtering virtually 100 percent of plankton (microscopic plants and animals) from the water they inhabit. When unchecked, they explode in population and then die off in mass, resulting in shorelines littered with sharp shells. They also cripple the biological viability of a fishery. In the Great Lakes, salmon fishes have not fared well in water invaded by mussels.

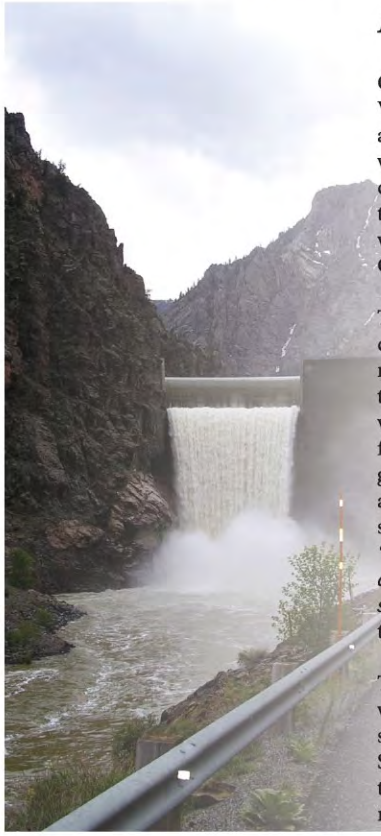
The NPS and Colorado have adopted boat inspection, and when necessary, boat decontamination (better known as boat washing) as the method of preventing species spread. Preventing spread of invasive mussels requires 1) either a long passage of time between boat launching, or 2) on-site washing with very hot water (>140^0 F), of boats, trailers, and towing vehicles.

All boats intending to launch at Curecanti must be inspected for mussels. There are no exceptions to this requirement. Note: Powerboats, sailboats, and smaller boats including canoes, kayaks and personal watercraft are all considered watercraft and are subject to mussel inspection. Your boat may require decontamination after inspection.

Curecanti has three approved inspection and boat washing stations: Elk Creek, Lake Fork, and Stevens Creek. Detailed information on location is available: 1) from the map in this newspaper (pg. 5); 2) from any visitor center; or 3) from the Internet at www.nps.gov/cure. When approved for launch, the boat inspector will issue a mussel free certificate. Once obtained, your certificate should be placed in the dashboard of your automobile. Mussel free certificates are issued only by the boat inspector and can only be obtained at the three Curecanti inspection stations.

For more information on what you can do to help prevent the spread of invasive mussels or other species, ask a ranger or visitor center staff or visit one of these websites:

www.100thmeridian.org
www.protectyourwaters.net



Agreement Gives New Life to the Gunnison River

On the final day of 2008, the Colorado Water Court approved a historic agreement that ended a decades old water dispute. The court approved the claim for water in the Gunnison River that supports a 1933 Federal Reserved water right for Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

The new decree formalizes a compromise hammered out between nearly 400 interested parties including the National Park Service and its visitors, upstream and downstream farmers, ranchers, conservation groups, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the State of Colorado. The decree secures the water necessary for the *"preservation of the spectacular gorges and additional features of scenic, scientific, and educational interest"* of the Black Canyon.

The amount of water claimed was determined through studies sponsored by the National Park Service and driven by guidelines that call for the NPS to manage the resources entrusted to it "unimpaired for future generations". With that in mind, the decree secures the water necessary to first, prevent the Gunnison River from drying up completely by maintaining a 300 cubic feet per second (cfs) base flow. Second is enough water to create an annual one-day spring-season high peak flow. And lastly, an 85-day shoulder flow to re-create a natural flow which supports the riparian environment that occurs in a band along the river. The extent of the peak and shoulder flows are adjusted annually depending on how much water is forecasted to flow into Blue Mesa Reservoir.

The decree also recognizes historical uses of water in the upper Gunnison River basin with water rights prior to 1933. In doing so it gives up the right to call upper basin water users with rights prior to November 1956. Claim provisions are limited by high water concerns downstream of the Park and by drought concerns in the Gunnison Basin. The Secretary of the Interior is entrusted with the authority to operate for the claim.

When the gates closed on Blue Mesa Dam in 1966, the riparian habitat of the Black Canyon began to change. The spring flows that cleaned the river system and renewed its dynamic streamside environment were replaced by constant moderate flows. Over time, desert vegetation began to encroach on the river, pinching riparian vegetation into a narrower strip. The deposition of boulders into the river from natural landslides and rock falls began to accumulate, instead of being flushed out under natural flow. Natural habitat and the appearance of the river changed.

Water is the lifeblood of the West and has many uses. Following this decree, sustaining the cherished landscape of Black Canyon, is now recognized as one of them. This water right protects the natural processes of the Gunnison River, and provides the flexibility necessary to meet human needs. Perhaps you will be fortunate enough to see the river regain its might, hear its roar, and witness the Gunnison carving deeper into the Black Canyon.

Support Your Parks

Volunteer Your Time

If you are looking for a hands-on way to help your parks or public lands, we may have just the job for you as a volunteer. Volunteers for Black Canyon, Curecanti and the Gunnison Gorge tirelessly put in thousands of hours each year helping to keep our public lands afloat.

There are many ways you can share your enthusiasm and expertise with us. Full and part time positions are available throughout the year. The parks provide training, orientation, a uniform and modest reimbursements for expenses. We need:

CAMPGROUND HOSTS
Hosts provide on-site support in the various campgrounds. The park provides a campsite with full hook-ups.

V.I.P.s
Volunteer-in-Parks provide a wide variety of services from operating the information desk at the visitor center, to resource management projects, astronomy programs, and janitorial services. RV sites with full hook-ups or small shared housing may be available.

VOLUNTEER CLIMBING RANGERS
These volunteers work within a talented team of climbers to provide the park assistance with high angle search and rescue. They are not only skilled climbers but are also paramedics, EMTs and first responders.

SCAs
The Student Conservation Association places volunteers (not necessarily students) in various resource agencies across the country. They provide uniforms, a weekly stipend, and transportation costs. Black Canyon and Curecanti use SCAs for park internships. They provide orientation to visitors and present interpretive programs.

VOLUNTEER RIVER RANGERS
These volunteers work with BLM rangers within the Gunnison Gorge assisting with river patrols and resource management projects. Volunteers have assisted with tamarisk removal, building trails, planting trees, cleaning campsites, and monitoring wildlife. Volunteers must be physically fit to participate. The work is strenuous, but rewarding.

Last year more than 400 volunteers donated over 25,000 hours to our parks and public lands. We are grateful to all of the volunteers who generously donated their time and skills in 2008.

If you are interested in volunteering please give us a call. For Black Canyon or Curecanti, contact Brant Porter at 970-641-2337 ext 206.

For Volunteer Climbing Rangers contact Brent Mims at 970-249-1914 ext 436.

For Gunnison Gorge contact Edd Franz or Kevin Cohenour at 970-240-5300.

For SCA contact them directly at www.theSCA.org.

Your User Fees at Work

Black Canyon, Curecanti and Gunnison Gorge are being carefully managed for you, and for future generations, by the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management. This vital work comes at a price. Protecting our natural and cultural heritage while ensuring that visitors have a safe, enjoyable, and educational experience is expensive.

As the number of visitors to our public lands continues to climb due to the popularity of these national treasures, government funding available for necessities such as road and building repairs, campground maintenance, visitor protection, resource protection and other services has not kept pace with demand. In 2004, congress initiated a program that would direct the entrance fees collected from visitors back to the maintenance of the facilities they use.

Managing public lands requires a major financial investment. While most of that investment comes from general tax revenues, those who directly use public lands for recreation derive a greater benefit from, and place a greater burden on, resources and facilities than the public at large. Applying use fees to projects at the area where they were collected assures that actual users pay an increased share of operational costs. These funds have been, and will continue to be, used for maintenance, repair projects, public service programs, signs, and natural and historical resource preservation.

COMPLETED PROJECTS:

- Fish Cleaning and Boat Washing Stations
- Control of Invasive Weed Species
- Bear Resistant Food Containers in Campgrounds
- Riparian, Wildlife, and Fishery Protection Projects
- Staining of Log Work on Public Buildings
- Heated Staircase at South Rim Visitor Center (reduces icing hazards)
- Rehabiliation of Lake Fork Campground
- Entrance Station Building

Many more projects are in the planning stages at this time. Look for the results of other fee projects on your next visit!

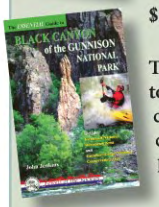
Shop in the Bookstore

WESTERN NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (WNPA) sells many items about Black Canyon, Curecanti and the Gunnison Gorge. Visit their stores at the South Rim, Cimarron, and Elk Creek Visitor Centers. Your purchase supports these parks by funding a variety of projects like the publication of *The Portal* newspaper.

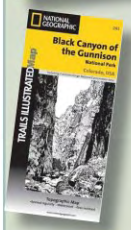
SUGGESTED READING:

Black Canyon and Curecanti: The Story Behind the Scenery: A great introduction to these parks with many beautiful images. $9.95

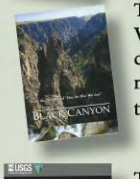
South Rim Driving Tour: Consult this guide as you drive the rim road for a deeper understanding of the sites along the way. $1.00



The Essential Guide to Black Canyon: A complete guide to the canyon from geology to history. $19.95



National Geographic Trails Illustrated Map: This topographic map includes Black Canyon, Curecanti and Gunnison Gorge. $11.95

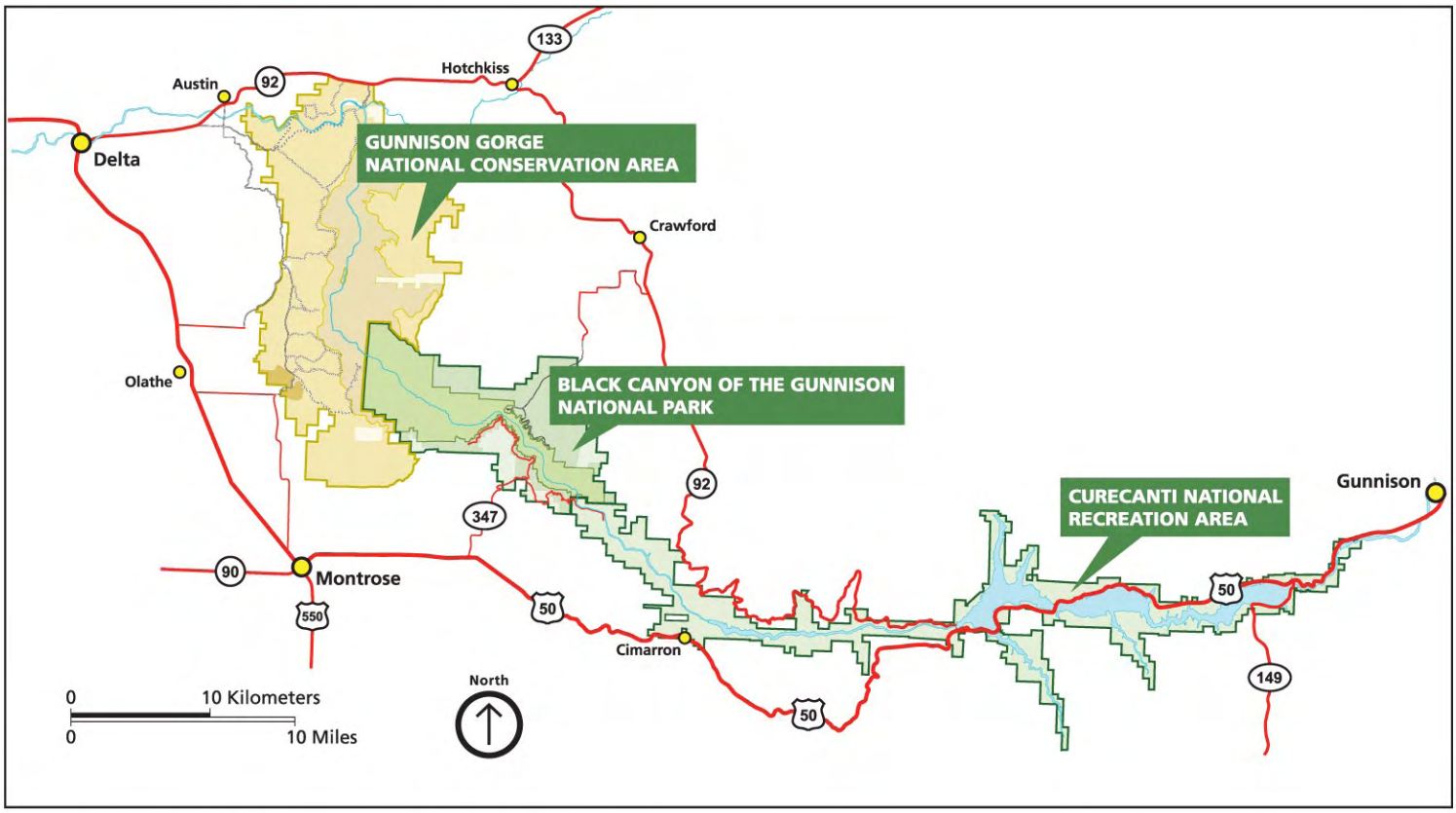


The Black Canyon Video (DVD): A chronicle of one of the most stunning gorges in the world. $21.95

The Geologic Story of the Gunnison Gorge: An overview of the Gunnison Gorge developed by the USGS. $10.00, accompanying map $7.00

WNPA
10346 Hwy 347
Montrose, CO 81401
970-249-1914 ext 423
www.wnpa.org
www.nps.gov/blca
www.nps.gov/cure

Area Map



Additional Nearby Attractions

CIMARRON
via US Highway 50 east of Montrose

The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad used to roar through the Black Canyon and exit through Cimarron Canyon. Cimarron was once a bustling town that catered to the passengers on the train. Today there is a visitor center devoted to the train's history. Some of the original rail cars and Engine 278 are displayed on the narrow-gauge track. There is river access along the short Mesa Creek hiking trail.

EAST PORTAL
via the East Portal Road, accessed from Black Canyon (this road has a 16% grade and hairpin turns, vehicles longer than 22 feet are prohibited)

This road takes you to the bottom of Black Canyon. Once at the valley floor there are exhibits that tell of the historic townsite once thriving here. The Gunnison Diversion Dam which provides water to the Uncompahgre Valley is visible. This is also a popular spot for anglers who are frequently seen fishing the Gunnison River.

BLACK CANYON NORTH RIM
via CO Highway 92 and North Rim Road (the last 5 miles are unpaved)

Visit the less traveled North Rim of the Black Canyon. The views from here are spectacular as the 2,000 foot walls drop almost vertically to the Gunnison River below. This is the starting point for many experienced rock climbers and this activity is frequently observed during the spring and fall. There is a small contact station, restrooms, hiking trails and a scenic drive.

GUNNISON GORGE PEACH VALLEY
via US Highway 50 west of Montrose to the paved Falcon Road which ends at the Peach Valley dirt road

The Peach Valley area has 75 miles of multi-use trails and is a very convenient stop when planning your time at the gorge. There is a parking area, information boards, and easy access to hiking, horse riding, mountain biking, and OHV trails.

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