

Station # 15

Cane Cholla Cactus

The cane cholla is a bushy cactus with spiny, cylindrical, fleshy stems which, when dead, show a latticed, woody skeleton. The spines are very finely barbed and difficult to remove from flesh.



Cylindropuntia fulgida
cholla

Cane Cholla blooms between May and June and produces bright flowers up to 3 inches wide in a range of colors including white, yellow, red and purple. After flowering, the plants produce yellow, egg-shaped fruit up to 1.75 inches in length and one inch in diameter. The fruit remains on the cactus throughout the winter. Cane Cholla fruit was a food source for Indians of the Southwest who ate it raw or cooked.

Station # 16

Gamble's Oak

Gamble's oak is the most common deciduous oak in much of the Rocky Mountains. It extends from Utah and Wyoming south into northern New Mexico.



Quercus gambelii

This is a slow-growing tree that flowers in spring with the acorns maturing in the autumn of the same year. As with other oaks, acorn production is cyclic. Deer, wild turkeys, bears, squirrels and jays eat the sweet acorn. Cattle, horses, deer and porcupines browse the leaves.

Note: Leaves of this species vary considerably in size and shape. Shrubs which are similar but have more definitely-lobed leaves are also Gamble's oak.



Trinidad Lake State Park

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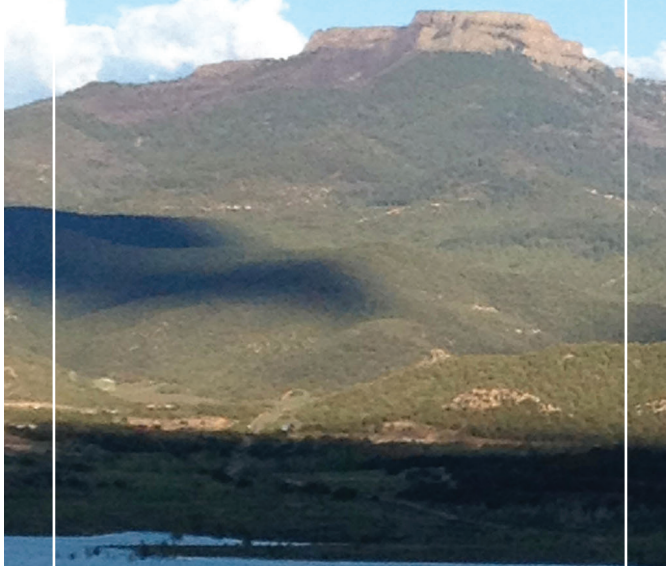
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COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

Park View Self-guided Trail

AT TRINIDAD LAKE STATE PARK



One of Trinidad Lake State Park's Cultural & Natural History Highlights



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Trail Background

The Park View Self-Guided Trail was designed with the intention of providing accessibility for all users. This trail highlights some of the area's cultural and natural history at 16 viewing stations, each listed in this guide. The trail forms a loop approximately 0.6 miles in length (slightly less than a kilometer). All surfaces are paved and a minimum of five feet wide with no grades exceeding 5%. There are two wheel-chair accessible picnic tables as well as water and restrooms along the trail.

Introduction to the Piñon-Juniper Forest

Most of the trees you will encounter along the Park View Trail belong to the piñon-juniper forest, one of Colorado's most dynamic ecosystems. Often called the Pigmy forest, this ecosystem is marked by short, drought-tolerant trees such as the piñon pine and one-seed juniper. Other defining characteristics include: coarse, well-drained soils; only 10-20 inches of precipitation per year; and wildlife specially adapted for the dry, and sometimes harsh, conditions. Among the ecosystems of Colorado, the piñon-juniper forest is second only to the grasslands in terms of wildlife species such as the piñon jay, roadrunner, piñon mouse, and collared lizard, along with providing a crucial wintering area for elk, deer, and mountain lions.

Regulations

The Park View Self-Guided Trail was built and is maintained for your benefit. In order to preserve your trail and keep it enjoyable for other visitors, we ask that you please not pick the plants, keep all pets leashed and clean up after your pets.

Station # 1

Lichen

The hairy green moss-like substance that is found on these trees and rocks is known as lichen. Lichen is actually a multi-species organism comprised of a fungus, which forms the body of the growth, and one or more kinds of algae that supply its nutrient source. Both the water and the minerals required for growth are absorbed from the air. The partnership between the fungi and algae in lichen is an example of an ecological relationship known as "symbiosis." Native Americans used lichens to make dyes.

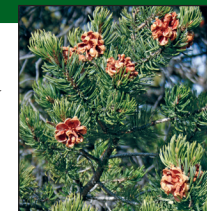


Lichen growing on a tree

Station # 2

Piñon Pine

The piñon is a common, widely distributed tree in the south-western United States, primarily in Utah, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado.



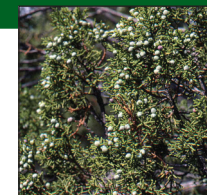
Pinus edulis

A slow-growing and long-living tree, the piñon produces large seed crops every three to four years. When this occurs, the trees become laden with woody pinecones that are filled with the prized piñon nuts. These seeds—very important to wildlife—are pleasant tasting and fairly nutritious and at one time were highly prized by Southwestern Indian tribes. With their shells and coats removed, the piñon nuts were ground into a meal and used to make cakes or to thicken soups.

Station # 3

Juniper

The Juniper is a common tree of the plateaus, foothills and plains of the western United States, especially on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.



Juniperus spp.

Juniper trees are very slow-growing and may live for 500 to 600 years or more under good conditions. Although some fruit is produced each year, fruit and seed production tends to be cyclic, with large crops every two to three years. The Indians once gathered and ate juniper fruit which now serves as a food source for deer, quail, fox, chipmunks and squirrels. The wood of the juniper was used by native Indians for prayer sticks, war bows, and other instruments and the bark was used to obtain a green dye to color their wool.

Station #4

Horno

On your right, next to the amphitheater is an horno (pronounced OR-no)—an outdoor oven originally brought to this area by Spanish settlers. Today, the horno plays an important role in the traditions and culture of the Southwest. One fire built in the morning allows the horno to be used for cooking all day long. In the heat of summer, cooking outdoors helps keep the house cool.



Baking bread in the horno

Station # 5

Prickly Pear Cactus

Prickly pear fruit and seeds have been an important food source for humans in the Southwest for centuries. Today, Mexicans use not only the fruit—which they call tuna—but also the young pads or nopalitos for salad and as cooked green vegetables. While not frequently employed as medicine, one detailed record on the Blackfoot tribe stated that they treated warts by lacerating them and applying the fuzz from this cactus to the laceration.



Opuntia polyacantha

Station # 6

Mystery of the Rings

Step back in time and become part of a mystery. These rings of stones have puzzled historians and archeologists since their discovery. They were once thought to be tipi rings—stones used to hold down the hide of a tipi. Archeologists now believe they may be the foundations of stone and brush structures dating back more than 1,000 years.



Ancient stone ring

Station # 7

Fisher's Peak (Elevation 9,655 ft.)

There are many legends attributed to the naming of this peak. The one most accepted is that on August 6, 1846, Captain Waldemar Fisher (an officer in command of Company B, Major Clark's Battery of Artillery) climbed the peak. The Captain's alleged venture was part of the invasion of the West by Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny's army. Kearny's troops marched from Bent's Fort into the Republic of Mexico.



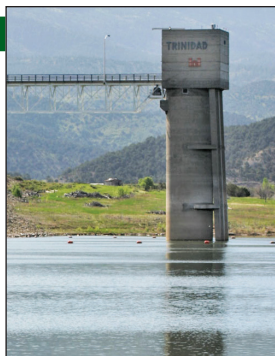
Fisher's peak from the North Shore of Trinidad Lake

Directly west of Fisher's Peak is Raton Pass which once served as a crossing point for the Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail. From a camping and resting area in the vicinity of Trinidad, this trail left the Purgatoire River to begin the steep and arduous ascent up Raton Pass. It continued down into New Mexico and its destination, Santa Fe.

Station # 8

Trinidad Dam

Completed by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1979, at a cost of \$44 million, the dam serves as a multipurpose project for flood control, irrigation storage and recreation—in that order. The earthen-fill dam is 6,860 feet long and 200 feet high. The lake is approximately three miles long and one mile across at its widest point.



Control Tower for the dam

Station # 9

Spanish Peaks

The Spanish Peaks are of geologic as well as historic significance. They are prime examples of "stocks" – large masses of igneous rock which thrust into layers of sedimentary rock and are later exposed by erosion. Among the most unusual features of these peaks are the great rock dikes that radiate out from the mountains like spokes of a wheel. Many of them are spectacular in height and length.



Spanish Peaks at sunset

For hundreds of years, the Spanish Peaks served as a guide to the Indians, Spanish explorers, Canadian trappers and traders. The Plains Indians originally named the peaks *Huajatolla*, which means "breasts of the Earth." Ancient people attributed divine powers to the mountains and believed all things received sustenance from them.

Station # 10

Commemorative Plaque

Before the Trinidad Lake dam was built, vibrant communities such as Sopris and Viola existed along the river. This plaque was placed here in commemoration of those residents and in honor of the many people who made this dam a reality.



Plaque honoring former residents

Station # 11

Spectacular Convoy

From 1821 to 1880, the Santa Fe Trail was a two-way international route of commerce and cultural exchange between New Mexico and Missouri. The Mountain Route of the Trail crossed the mouth of the Purgatoire Valley in front of you and continued over Raton Pass.



Wagon train on the Sante Fe Trail

Station # 12

Ponderosa Pine

The pitch of the ponderosa was chewed as gum, used as glue, burned in torches, and applied to woven containers to make them waterproof. The resin, alone or in salves, served as a topical treatment for boils, carbuncles, abscesses, rheumatic joints and aching backs. For dandruff, the pointed ends of the needles were jabbed into the scalp to kill the germs. Tea made from the needles is rich in vitamins A and C.

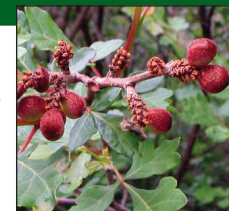


Pinus ponderosa

Station # 13

Three-leaved Sumac

Common names: Skunkbush, polecat bush, stinking sumac, ill-scented sumac, quailbush, squawbush, squawberry, basketbush, lemonade sumac, three-lobed sumac, three-leaved sumac, lemita. Uses (Ethnobotanic): Skunkbush fruits were used by Native Americans in food, beverages, and medicine. Pliable young stems were woven with grass stems into durable baskets that would hold water. The leaves are said to have been smoked by the Comanches.



Rhus trilobata Nutt

Station # 14

Indian Banana Yucca

These plants were extremely useful to the Indians of the Southwest. The fruit was split open, the seeds removed, and the flesh dried in the sun. This dried fruit, along with grass seeds and venison, was the chief food of the early Navajo warriors when they journeyed over great distances.



Yucca baccata

In addition to being a food source, some yucca plants were used for their leaf fibers. The leaves were soaked in water until soft, then the fibers were separated out and woven into mats, cords and baskets. Sometimes the roots were crushed and used for soap. This natural cleanser was highly prized by the Indians, especially the Hopi.