

Chapter 1 : Hiking Information for Sangre De Cristo, Colorado

The Sangre de Cristo Mountains in south central Colorado are a narrow, steep range geologically different from the surrounding Rockies. Several of the country's most challenging peaks, including the jagged Crestone Needle, lie within the range.

Sangre de Cristo Wilderness Inescapably rugged, the Sangre de Cristo wilderness preserves a significant portion of an iconic rocky mountain range. Sharply uplifted blocks, jagged ridges, and soaring pinnacles characterize the Sangre de Cristo mountains and create one of the most stunning landscapes of the southern Rocky Mountains. The Sangre de Cristo wilderness area is long and narrow and bisected by two mountain pass roads: Medano Pass, and Hayden Pass roads. Surrounded on either side by broad valleys, the Sangre de Cristo range forms the eastern perimeter of the San Luis valley and the western edge of the Wet Mountain valley. Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve abuts the wilderness on the west and provides much of the tourism and visitors to this area. Hermit Pass view looking north-east in the Sangre de Cristo mountains Due to the fault block geology, the Sangre de Cristo wilderness is crisscrossed east to west by short and narrow drainages that are terminated by impassable ridges and cliffs. Many, if not all of the hiking trails in the wilderness follow these drainages to high altitude lakes or the several fourteen thousand foot high peaks. Crestone Needle, Crestone Peak, and Humboldt Peak are three of the ten peaks that exceed fourteen thousand feet in elevation. The most visited parts of the Sangre de Cristo wilderness are found around the Crestone Group, an area where two fourteen thousand foot peaks, Crestone Needle, and Crestone Peak are found. When to Visit During winter the area receives heavy snowfall, albeit less than its neighboring ranges to the west. For this reason, some of the high elevation hikes may not be snow free in early July while trails elsewhere may still be snow bound. The Sangre de Cristo range is known for frequent, intense summer thunderstorms. The city of Alamosa to the southwest, Salida to the north, and the towns of Westcliffe and Silver Cliff are the nearest towns with accommodations. Hermit Pass Rd is steep and rocky and requires a 4WD vehicle with high clearance. Access is from the east Westcliffe side of the wilderness. From Westcliffe, head south on CO Right on Schoolfield Rd. Rd and head west toward the mountains. Begin the hike from Alvarado Campground. Click for a Google map: Follow the Rainbow Trail north to the turnoff. The hike follows Venable creek to the alpine lakes. Sangre de Cristo Wilderness Map If you are planning a trip, I highly recommend this tear-resistant, waterproof map by National Geographic. All of the surrounding backcountry access roads, forest service trails, ski trails as well as the local wilderness information is shown, all in this one neat map.

Chapter 2 : Colorado's Sangre de Cristo Mountains, by Tom Wolf " Colorado Central Magazine

The Sangre de Cristo Mountains (Spanish for "Blood of Christ") are the southernmost subrange of the Rocky Mountain range. They are located in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico in the United States.

Some of the best rock climbing, snow skiing and whitewater rafting on Earth are found here. The Teton elk herd is one of the largest in the world. Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep are found all through the range. In places, there are also fault lines cutting right through the mountain chain. The mountains were pushed up about 27 million years ago, pretty much as one big chunk of rock. On the southeast side is the Raton Basin with a quiet but still active volcano field. On the northeast side are the Wet Mountains and the Front Range, areas of pre-Cambrian rock raised up during the Colorado Orogeny some 1. The Blanca Massif is also pre-Cambrian rock while the main body of the Sangres themselves is composed of Permian-Pennsylvanian rock and a mix of igneous intrusions, conglomerates and shale that is only about million years old. They are located in southern Colorado. The name of the mountains may refer to the occasional reddish hues observed during sunrise and sunset, and when alpenglow occurs, especially when the mountains are covered with snow. Although the particular origin of the name is unclear, it has been in use since the early 19th century. Most people know that Denver is the Mile High City, that much of the city lies at or near an elevation of 5,000 feet. During the Miocene period between 5 and 23 million years ago, the Rio Grande Rift must have subsided. The formation of the Rio Grande Rift was key in the creation of several mountain ranges. At the head of the Arkansas, the Sawatch and the Mosquito ranges, formerly a single range, were sundered. This flat, expansive intermontane valley is the size of Connecticut, its elevation at ground level, its true base is many thousands of feet below. The major fault on the east side of the valley is the Sangre de Cristo fault. Geologists have determined that rocks found in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains are displaced by nearly four vertical miles from the same type of rocks in the valley. Millions of years of erosion and volcanic activity have filled the valley to its present height with sediments and pyroclastic flows. This uplift was anticlinal in nature, the most common method of mountain building in Colorado. The southern section of the Front Range today we call them the Wet Mountains was rising concurrently and counteracted the proto-Sangre anticline on its east side, which resulted in the development of thrust faults. This occurred at least eight times over, with sedimentary rock squeezed between each layer of basement rock like some octuple-decker sandwich. Locales on the east side of the range near Comanche Peak are ideal for viewing evidence of this early history of the range. Milwaukee Peak The creation of the Rio Grande Rift ushered in a period of earthquakes and volcanics. Geologists believe that the faults along the Sangre de Cristos are still active due to the shape of its ridges. Whereas the end of ridge will typically erode to a point, many of the ridges on the west side of the Sangres end with a triangular facet, which provides evidence of active faulting. Additionally, fault scarps at the northern end of the range tell us that range continues to rise at an average of an inch every one-hundred years. Whether this uplift is currently outpacing erosion is another question, however!

Chapter 3 : Colorado 14ers South [San Juan, Elk, and Sangre de Cristo Mountains]

The Sangre de Cristo Mountains are one of the longest mountain chains on Earth. They stretch from Poncha Pass, Colorado, in the north to Glorieta Pass, New Mexico, in the south. There are ten peaks over 14,000' high in the range, more than two dozen over 13,000'.

This topographical barrier had important impacts on the settling of the Southwest by "Anglos" arriving from the eastern United States, as it forced pioneers southward and thus into contact -- and sometimes conflict -- with both American Indian communities along the Rio Grande and Spanish colonial settlements at Santa Fe, Albuquerque and other places. The mixing, and sometimes clash, of the three cultures continues to exert an influence on the region long after the settlers passed. When planning a trip to the Sangres and deciding in what season to visit, keep the changing seasons in mind. Towns on the eastern slopes of the Sangres tend to have cultural ties to the Great Plains, while the ones on the west side are more closely tied to the Hispanic and Native American settlements along the Rio Grande. The latter being important tourist destinations in their own right, the west-side towns usually have somewhat more well-developed resources for tourism than the ones on the east. However, a unifying feature of the high mountain towns is that, apart from the ones intentionally developed for tourism, they tend to be relatively poor, whether on the east or the west. This results from the difficulty in extracting a living from the mountains: The rugged terrain does produce spotty coverage for cellular phones. Talk[edit] English really is the usual language in this area, despite rumors to the contrary. Many residents speak Spanish not just at home but in public, in a dialect that has significant ties to the variety spoken in seventeenth-century central Mexico, which is still evident in a number of distinctive regional characteristics. The Spanish-speaking visitor may find it interesting to listen and learn, but no knowledge of Spanish is required to get around. Get in[edit] For access information covering the west side of the range, see the entries for Taos and Santa Fe. Road access to towns and locations on the eastern slopes is via highways leading from Interstate 25 south of Raton. US highway 64 provides the most direct access to the small towns of Eagle Nest, Red River and Angel Fire on the northeast side; Sapello and nearby areas are reached from Las Vegas on New Mexico state road ; and Pecos, Cowles and many southeast-side trailheads are reached via state road 63 between Las Vegas and Santa Fe. The east-side roads can be difficult or impassable during winter storms. Get around[edit] Most numbered state and US highways in and near the mountains are on good paved road, although a few on the east side are gravel. Few passes cross the range that support highways. All of these can be closed for periods during the winter following snowstorms. There are a number of roadless areas in the mountains that are accessible to hikers, mountain bikers, etc. In addition to the wilderness areas that are parts of the national forests, Taos Pueblo occupies considerable territory between the town of Taos and the ridge line. In contrast to most roadless areas in the range, the Taos Pueblo lands are closed to visitors without a permit from the tribe which can be difficult to get. There are other private in-holdings at the northern end of the range that may also be closed; check locally. Most areas that are suitable for hiking in the summer are also suitable for cross-country skiing in the winter, but be careful: See[edit][add listing] Blood on the Mountains There are several possible explanations for the name of this range, which translates as "Blood of Christ," but the most commonly heard one although possibly apocryphal pertains to a Spanish priest who was thought to have been martyred during the Pueblo Revolt of the 17th century. The dying priest saw alpenglow on the high peaks above timberline at sunset, and exclaimed "Sangre de Cristo! Las Vegas , a town on Interstate 25 on the east side of the mountains and definitely not to be confused with the rip-roaring city of the same name in Nevada , has a downtown district with a large number of historic buildings dating to the days when it was a significant stop on the Santa Fe Railway. Several of these can be visited on a walking tour. Do[edit][add listing] Mission ruin at Pecos National Historical Park Most hiking, skiing, and other outdoor opportunities are in the national forests and are covered in their own articles, but one highly distinctive "hike" takes place on the highways, rather than the trails, right before Easter. It contains not only ruins of ancient Native American settlements but also more recent ruins of churches from the Spanish mission era. A short loop trail accesses several of the ruins. Most lakes and streams in the mountains are too small and cold to

support many fish, but fishing along the Pecos River, which has its headwaters in the range, can be OK. Try various locations between Pecos and Cowles, but please respect private property. Buy[edit][add listing] Like the rest of northern New Mexico, the Sangres are a good place to look for folk art. The arts and crafts of this region generally have a character more Hispanic in nature than the American Indian work done at the pueblos in the valley. Exception for Picuris Pueblo, which produces micaceous pottery similar to that from the better-known potters at Taos Pueblo. Three of the characteristic forms, most of which can be found in regional shops, are: Weavers of the Cordova family are considered particularly proficient, and their work can be a little more expensive, but you get what you pay for. Metalwork, particularly tinwork Wood carvings. Notable among the latter are the uniquely New Mexican figurines known as santos -- representations of saints of the Catholic church, which dominates religious practice in the small towns of the area. There are several other styles of woodwork, with "Ortega" and "Lopez" carvings having a good reputation. A few of the small towns also have galleries with "Anglo" art of various types, while Taos and Santa Fe are world-famous for their shopping opportunities in this genre. First, open campfires are frequently restricted during spring and sometimes summer in the national forests due to forest-fire hazard. New Mexico Offer guided flyfishing and meals for those who lodge with them. Meals cooked upon request. Two river front cabins. Altitude sickness is common among visitors from sea level who have not taken the time for some acclimatization in the valley. Two or three days spent in Santa Fe or Taos or even the lower Albuquerque before heading into the mountains will reduce your chances of troublesome or even serious illness. The primary weather-related issues are hypothermia and lightning. Freezing rain or snow can fall on the summits at any time of year; backpackers in the high country should have down or synthetic sleeping bags good for temperatures of 20 F -7 C in the summer. Good rainwear is a must, particularly in July and August. Thunderstorms at these times make the high summits decidedly unhealthy places to be after about 1 p. Some care should be taken when visiting the small towns around the mountains. Several of the villages on the west side e. There have also been ethnic tensions between the predominantly Hispanic residents of these towns and Anglo visitors. These often are manifested in trouble in bars, for which reason there is no "Drink" entry in this article; small-town bars are simply best avoided in this region. Vandalism of cars at campgrounds and trailheads has also been a problem. Drive suspiciously, and if you must park along a roadside at night, get as far off the road as possible, as fatal encounters between intoxicated drivers and pedestrians are all too common. Get out[edit] If the mountains fascinate you, the Sangre de Cristos continue northward into Colorado and become considerably higher and more rugged. Much of the range immediately north of the state line is on private property and not open to the public. This is a usable article. It has information for getting in as well as some complete entries for restaurants and hotels. An adventurous person could use this article, but please plunge forward and help it grow!

Chapter 4 : Sangre de Cristo Mountains – Travel guide at Wikivoyage

Legal Disclaimer - Information provided on this site is based upon our own observations, always double check information with the appropriate land management agency before heading into the backcountry.

Your personal information will be used only to fulfill your request. You must agree to the condition above for us to process your request. Thank you! We also have the following visitor guides in Colorado. Click on any additional guides you would like to receive. Request these additional visitor guides selected below.

Chaffee County Central Colorado Chaffee County Central Colorado More than miles of the Arkansas River and her tributaries flow through the heart of Chaffee County, gracing both Salida and Buena Vista with her beauty and world-renowned whitewater, fly-fishing, scenery and river festivals. Request this Free Visitor Guide. Request a few more Visitor Guides, or complete the form below to receive your guides by mail. We have five historic trains to transport you back to the days of cowboys and gold mining. Endless trails allow you to enjoy the abundant sunshine and spectacular scenery. A family vacation in Colorado Springs is the smart choice – great lodging values, a long list of low-cost or no-cost activities, and adventure around every corner. Order your free guide today.

Fed by high mountain runoff, the lake is clear and pristine. In the summer, you can rent a boat, bring your own or simply enjoy the gentle lapping of the waves from the sandy shore. Grand Lake connects with Shadow Mountain Lake via a canal, and just down the road is Lake Granby, the second largest body of water in Colorado.

Ouray Southwest Ouray has been a special destination of world travelers for more than years. This small intimate community is nestled in some of the most rugged and towering peaks of the Rockies. Set at the narrow head of a valley at 7, feet and surrounded on three sides with 13, foot snowcapped peaks - Ouray has been eloquently nicknamed the "Switzerland of America.

Pagosa Springs Southwestern Colorado Pagosa Springs Southwestern Colorado Our small town atmosphere and endless beauty allows you to feel the true meaning of a vacation. Refresh your spirit in a place away from the crowds. Restore your sense of fun while exploring over three million acres of wilderness and national forest. Reconnect with family and friends. Come to Pagosa Springs and enjoy simplicity on a grand scale. A place where fresh powder winters meet refreshing summer days.

Red River is the place that awakens us each day by the soothing sound of a rushing river and then again each evening as the sun sets over main street. Four Corners and the local Aztec Ruins are considered sacred ground for some and are fascinating to visit.

Delta County features playgrounds from 4, ft to 11, ft. Small country farms, orchards burgeoning with fruit, winemakers busy at their craft and chefs stirring it up. Order your free Visitors Guide today.

Trinidad Southern Colorado Trinidad Southern Colorado Known as a heritage town with grand nineteenth-century architecture and brick streets that date to the early s, Trinidad is set in a green valley halfway between Denver and Santa Fe. The town is surrounded by vast state and national recreation areas, including two state parks. Trinidad is the gateway to the Scenic Highway of Legends, where travelers find lakes and stunning dikes that radiate out from the ancient Spanish Peaks. Historic and prehistoric sites abound in every direction. Then look no further South Fork is your destination. A world class golf course, gold medal fishing in the Rio Grande, and thousands of acres of National Forest to hike, bike, ATV, ski and snowmobile through.

Ridgway Southwest Ridgway Southwest Ridgway is nestled in the picturesque Uncompaghre Valley and surrounded by the majestic snow capped peaks of the Cimarrons and San Juans, some of the most photographed mountains in the world. We also have visitor guides available in states highlighted in blue below.

Chapter 5 : Colorado Sangre de Cristo Mountains: Geology and Wildflowers

Review by Ed Quillen. Mountains - January - Colorado Central Magazine. Colorado's Sangre de Cristo Mountains by Tom Wolf Photographs by Barbara Sparks.

Some of the best rock climbing, snow skiing and whitewater rafting on Earth are also right here. The Trinchera elk herd is one of the largest in the world. Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep are found all through the range. The Sangre de Cristos are fault block mountains with major fault lines running along both the east and west sides of the mountains. In places, there are also fault lines cutting right through the mountain chain. The mountains were pushed up about 27 million years ago, pretty much as one big chunk of rock. On the southeast side is the Raton Basin with a quiet but still active volcano field. On the northeast side are the Wet Mountains and the Front Range, areas of pre-Cambrian rock raised up during the Colorado Orogeny some 1. The Blanca Massif is also pre-Cambrian rock while the main body of the Sangres themselves is composed of Permian-Pennsylvanian rock and a mix of igneous intrusions, conglomerates and shale that is only about million years old. On the satellite image to the right, between the Spanish Peaks and Angel Fire you can see the fault lines in the ground: So when you look at the ages put on these events by the geologists, what we are seeing now is the results of 25, 27, 65 million years of erosion, glaciation, volcanic activity, and continuing uplift, in contrast to million and more years ago when this whole region was serving as the bottom of a shallow sea. When the Spanish Peaks were first formed, about 25 million years ago, the top of the West Spanish Peak which is now at 13, feet above sea level was about 2 miles below the surface of the Earth. The San Luis Valley itself is a huge gravel pit full of eroded materials from the Sangre de Cristos on the east and the San Juan Mountains on the west. There is a lot of water stored in all that gravel and, below a certain depth, that water is hot. There are hot springs bubbling to the surface through the center of the San Luis Valley and in spots along the sides of the Rio Grande down almost to Santa Fe. Red Mountain on the left, Culebra Peak in the center, Miranda Peak on the right I see what the mapmakers call the "Sangre de Cristo Mountains" as four different mountain ranges: This is primarily one big block of eroded Permian-Pennsylvanian rock that runs between two north-south trending fault lines. Prospectors worked these mountains over pretty heavily but only found calcite and related minerals near what is now Howard, iron on the west side of the range near Orient and gold in small quantities near Crestone. Lindsey just to the east. This stretch of rock is mostly pre-Cambrian granite that was solidified in place much longer ago than the rest of the Sangre de Cristo chain. It may have been the overlying presence of all this ancient granite that stopped the uplift of the rest of the Sangre de Cristos in this area. The mountain-causing fault lines are to the east of the pre-cambrian granite but in this area, nothing was pushed up. It may have been the extreme build-up of magma pressure deep in the ground that caused the intrusions that we see today at Mt. Mestas, Rough Mountain and Silver Mountain with its radial dikes. The same goes for the creation of the Spanish Peaks and that set of radial dikes to the east of the northern end of the Culebras. This is another long fault block uplift of Permian-Pennsylvanian rock. Some areas around Culebra Peak itself, to the west and south, are pre-Cambrian rock, raised up during the Laramide Orogeny, about 65 million years ago. There are two branches of the north-south trending mountain chain here. To the east are the Cimarrons, to the west are the Sangres and in the middle is the Moreno Valley. Gold and silver have been found in the Cimarrons. Some gold and silver were found in different parts of these Sangres but the biggest mine workings in the whole length of the mountain chain are between Questa and Red River at Molycorp, a huge molybdenum mine.

Chapter 6 : Sangre de Cristo Mountains

Cuchara, Colorado is situated on the eastern slopes of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in the heart of the Cucharas River Valley. La Veta. La Veta, Colorado is situated on the eastern side of La Veta Pass through the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and at the northern opening of the Cuchara River Valley.

I boldly pointed out I could do just fine weeping about my adulthood years! Derrick, the leader of our group, said we would have none of that. The three adjacent photos were taken as I sat in the passenger seat. We drove some more on Black Canyon Road, a bumpy dirt road that lead to one of many canyons in the mountains. This was the very first photo I twittered on Monday afternoon. We stayed in a cabin that has no electricity, no running water thanks to broken and frozen pipes and no indoor plumbing. This outhouse would be my facility of choice for uhhhh All I will say is we stayed in the general vicinity of Valley View Hot Springs, a hot springs getaway with lodging. I captured this nice shot of the cabin with snow in the foreground. Plenty of snow remains on the north slopes of mountains. The altitude was approximately is approximately 9, feet here. This reminds me of a gathering in when friends rented a cabin in Maysville, CO. Another Hike Look at that! We had some nice views of the San Luis Valley! I made Derrick and Alan pose with the view to the north behind them. The view of the canyon and the San Luis Valley from where we began our climb. The views became grander and grander! Then we made it We estimated the altitude to be approximately 10, feet at this spot. Apparently this tree grew for many years with a large trunk growing horizontally.

Chapter 7 : Sangre de Cristo Mountains - Wikipedia

Searchable listings of Sangre De Cristo hotels, motels, resorts, bed & breakfast, and more. Searchable listings of Sangre De Cristo RV parks and campgrounds. Searchable listings of Sangre De Cristo restaurants, bars, diners, and more.

This juxtaposed nomenclature – a Protestant peak in a Catholic range – may be the least of the paradoxes and enigmas associated with the Sangres. As Tom Wolf points out frequently in his book about the Sangre miles in Colorado, everything you assume about the Sangres is probably wrong. But the Sangres lie in the rain shadow of the San Juans for Pacific moisture, and so their east side gets more precipitation. Environmentalists often equate public ownership with protection of watersheds, habitat, and wildlife. But the richest diversity and healthiest populations in the Sangres are on big chunks of private land like the Forbes Trinchera estate. Ranchers generally oppose the re-introduction of wolves since the canines might eat their calves. But meanwhile, the Sangre elk herds are growing faster than hunters can reduce them, which means less forage for cattle and a consequent reduction in range capacity. Stockmen might be better off if there were wolves for year-round pruning of the elk herds. Recreation creates its own set of demands on the range, though: With formal wilderness designation in , back-country use is expected to increase, while the ability of the Forest Service to accommodate crowds is diminished . Those are just a few of the paradoxes of the Sangres that Wolf explores in thorough detail, stretching back through time to the shallow seas before Laramide Orogeny and bringing the tale to current issues of wilderness use and abuse. Instead, the book approaches the mountains from varied vantages: Riggs cracked down, to the considerable displeasure of locals. It would run out from all over me. Sometimes these rather technical sections seem too detailed, but Wolf often rescues the reader with memorable and pithy phrases: The Spanish, and after , the Mexicans, saw the Sangres as a buffer and barrier to discourage Yankee and French intrusion into their domain, and to that end, forged alliances with the Utes and then issued land grants – the reason so much of the Sangres are in private hands – to encourage settlement. Americans first saw the range as a quick source of timber to produce charcoal, and as a free place to graze cattle. With the arrival of federal control and the Forest Service during the Progressive Era at the turn of the century, the Sangres were operated to serve national ends. Need more wool to clothe the soldiers fighting the Huns? Then run more sheep in the Sangres, to the extent that the entire range was severely overgrazed during WWI, and took years to recover. Need more timber to satisfy various national demands? Pull it out of the Sangres, whether it pays or not. Need to create a recreation constituency for the Forest Service? Eliminate the big carnivores from the Sangres, but still present the area as pristine wilderness. Thus does Wolf connect the saga of the Sangres, an obscure and remote mountain range surrounded by valleys whose poverty rates have rivalled any in the nation, to the broad sweep of American history. Toward that end, Wolf has been organizing community meetings about future management of the Sangres. As for problems with the book, its organization took me aback at first. So I found the shifting vantages, from personal to ethnic group to historic figure, rather confusing at first. I got used to it, though. Some of the forest-related both trees and administration material seemed needlessly technical and overdetailed, and there were a few lapses on dates. For instance, the original Homestead Act was passed in , not The Ludlow Massacre was in , not Wolf has the railroad crossing Poncha Pass in , when it actually crossed Poncha in to reach the Orient Mine. The construction was from Villa Grove to Alamosa. But he does catch the important thing – the connection of the Sangres to an industrial complex at Pueblo. The photos Barbara Sparks offers some explanation and tips and maps augment the text well though the map on page 22 should be bigger, as the legends strain my bifocals. Once I got into it, the book moved right along, telling me much that I have always wanted to know about those mountains that rise at the south end of Teller Street. Not that it was always easy reading. But few trails in the Sangres offer easy hiking, either, and they still provide ample rewards for the effort.

Chapter 8 : Sangre de Cristo™s | Rocky Mountain Offroad Tours

Southern Colorado's Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range is one of the last pristine landscapes in the state. Campers sleep under the stars in one of the quietest places on the planet while.

This guide covers features of the Sangre de Cristos in New Mexico that are of interest but are too dispersed to be covered in the guides for individual towns in the region. Two national forests, the Santa Fe National Forest and the Carson National Forest , mostly cover the southern and northern halves of the Sangre de Cristos, respectively. Sangre de Cristo scenery above Taos Ski Valley Understand[edit] The Sangre de Cristos are generally considered the southernmost range of the Rocky Mountains , although some authorities consider the Rockies to include some of the lesser ranges of New Mexico Sandias, Capitans, etc. This topographical barrier had important impacts on the settling of the Southwest by "Anglos" arriving from the eastern United States, as it forced pioneers southward and thus into contact -- and sometimes conflict -- with both American Indian communities along the Rio Grande and Spanish colonial settlements at Santa Fe, Albuquerque and other places. The mixing, and sometimes clash, of the three cultures continues to exert an influence on the region long after the settlers passed. When planning a trip to the Sangres and deciding in what season to visit, keep the changing seasons in mind. Towns on the eastern slopes of the Sangres tend to have cultural ties to the Great Plains, while the ones on the west side are more closely tied to the Hispanic and Native American settlements along the Rio Grande. The latter being important tourist destinations in their own right, the west-side towns usually have somewhat more well-developed resources for tourism than the ones on the east. However, a unifying feature of the high mountain towns is that, apart from the ones intentionally developed for tourism, they tend to be relatively poor, whether on the east or the west. This results from the difficulty in extracting a living from the mountains: The rugged terrain does produce spotty coverage for cellular phones. Many of the higher peaks are veritable gardens of alpine wildflowers once the snow has melted. Black bear and deer are common throughout the mountains. The Sangres also contain bighorn sheep, some of which have become so used to human presence as to constitute a camp pest. Mountain lions live in the forest but are rarely encountered. Birds are plentiful and diverse, including eagles, wild turkeys, and several species of hummingbirds. Watercourses tend to be small and seasonal, so there are few large fish, although some lakes and streams are able to sustain a population of trout. Climate[edit] The large elevation variations in the forest preclude universal, concise statements about climate. Snow and freezing temperatures at least at night are possible year-round on the high summits; shirtsleeve weather is common in the winter at the lower elevations. About the only common denominator is that springtime is windy and relatively dry. Broadly, the higher elevations say above feet, or meters have conditions typical of continental mountain ranges, generally somewhat warmer and drier than the similar ranges of Colorado. Snowfall during winter is wildly variable, but normally covers the high peaks above timberline and persists through spring, commonly closing many campgrounds until May or so. Many hiking trails in the high country still have snow on them in June. Spring is warm and dry, with a gradual onset of thunderstorms starting in June and building to a "monsoon" condition in August. Fall is clear, crisp and delightful, with the first significant snow usually in October and the first snow that "sticks" frequently occurring around Thanksgiving. The lower elevations are semi-arid, and winter snowfall is even more variable than at higher elevations. Some winters have seen individual storms that deposit over 40 inches 1 meter of snow, while in other years, winter passes without this much snow falling in the entire season. Low temperatures can drop below zero Fahrenheit. The monsoonal thunderstorms begin to drift off the mountains in July to cool and soak the lower elevations, until the warm, dry fall conditions begin soon after Labor Day. Talk[edit] English really is the usual language in this area, despite rumors to the contrary. Many residents speak Spanish not just at home but in public, in a dialect that has significant ties to seventeenth-century Spain as well as a number of distinctive regional quirks. The Spanish-speaking visitor may find it interesting to listen and learn, but no knowledge of Spanish is required to get around. Get in[edit] For access information covering the west side of the range, see the guides on Taos and Santa Fe. Road access to towns and locations on the eastern slopes is via highways leading from Interstate 25 south of Raton. The

east-side roads can be difficult or impassable during winter storms. Get around[edit] Most numbered state and US highways in and near the mountains are on good paved road, although a few on the east side are gravel. Few passes cross the range that support highways. All of these can be closed for periods during the winter following snowstorms. There are a number of roadless areas in the mountains that are accessible to hikers, mountain bikers, etc, particularly the Pecos Wilderness north of Cowles. The many trails in the forest are generally accessible to hikers, horses, and mountain bikes. Motorized travel is forbidden in the Pecos Wilderness, but there are a number of abandoned logging roads outside the wildernesses that are suitable for ORVs and dirt bikes. Please operate responsibly; damage in this terrain and climate takes a long time to heal. Trails and, to a lesser extent, logging roads in the high country tend to be soggy until June or even July due to snowmelt. In addition to the wilderness areas that are parts of the national forests, Taos Pueblo occupies considerable territory between the town of Taos and the ridge line. In contrast to most roadless areas in the range, the Taos Pueblo lands are closed to visitors without a permit from the tribe which can be difficult to get. There are other private in-holdings at the northern end of the range that may also be closed; check locally. Most areas that are suitable for hiking in the summer are also suitable for cross-country skiing in the winter, but be careful: In much of the area, snowshoes are more satisfactory for winter travel than skis or snowmobiles, because of the steepness and narrowness of the trails. See[edit] Blood on the Mountains There are several possible explanations for the name of this range, which translates as "Blood of Christ," but the most commonly heard one although possibly apocryphal pertains to a Spanish priest who was thought to have been martyred during the Pueblo Revolt of the 17th century. The dying priest saw alpenglow on the high peaks above timberline at sunset, and exclaimed "Sangre de Cristo! The Sangres are more of a "Do" place than a "See" place. More details on this route can be found on the North Central New Mexico page. Autumn color in the forest mainly takes the form of a band of gold at elevations above about feet meters , where the leaves in the aspen groves turn en masse. Peak period varies from year to year and locale to locale, but is commonly during the last week in September. Do[edit] Hiking and backpacking[edit] The Pecos Wilderness offers excellent hiking once the snow has melted. Both can be crowded during mid-summer. Trailheads near the town of Truchas on the northwest side are somewhat less crowded, but there have been problems with vandalism of vehicles parked there. Trails lead not only to good campsites but also to most of the high peaks, which are generally hands-in-the-pockets walk-ups under good conditions. Lake Peak, just outside the wilderness, requires a little scrambling near the summit, with some exposure. Fishing[edit] Most lakes and streams in the mountains are too small and cold to support many fish, but fishing along the Pecos River, which has its headwaters in the range, can be OK. Try various locations between Pecos and Cowles, but be careful of private property restrictions. Some of the lakes have been stocked with trout. Winter sports[edit] Skiing and snowboarding are popular activities in the winter months, with several developed ski resorts in the region. Ski conditions can vary considerably year-to-year, but the ski areas in the vicinity of Taos are at generally high enough elevations to ensure decent ski conditions. From north to south, the ski resorts are as follows: Red River is perched on the side of a narrow canyon above the town of the same name, and has fairly extensive offerings. This can be a challenging hill for beginners, but the expert skier can have a fantastic time here. Angel Fire has a large resort and is arguably the most "commercialized" of the resorts, with extensive offerings and facilities catering to families, including terrain parks and a sledding and tubing hill. At the end of NM above Santa Fe, is a major resort at a comfortably high elevation for good snow conditions. Away from the developed resorts, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling is also a possibility in the mountains after a decent snowfall. Good trails can be found throughout the mountains, with Red River having some excellent groomed trails. Some cross-country trails can be found near the downhill slopes of Taos Ski Valley, but be wary of avalanche dangers in this area. Buy[edit] Like the rest of northern New Mexico , the Sangres are a good place to look for folk art. The arts and crafts of this region generally have a character more Hispanic in nature than the American Indian work done at the pueblos in the valley. Exception for Picuris Pueblo, which produces micaceous pottery similar to that from the better-known potters at Taos Pueblo. Three of the characteristic forms, most of which can be found in regional shops, are: Weavers of the Cordova family are considered particularly proficient, and their work can be a little more expensive, but you get what you pay for.

Metalwork, particularly tinwork Wood carvings. Notable among the latter are the uniquely New Mexican figurines known as santos -- representations of saints of the Catholic church, which dominates religious practice in the small towns of the area. There are several other styles of woodwork, with "Ortega" and "Lopez" carvings having a good reputation. A few of the small towns also have galleries with "Anglo" art of various types, while Taos and Santa Fe are world-famous for their shopping opportunities in this genre. Eat[edit] Most of the communities around the mountains have restaurants, notably Santa Fe with many prime dining opportunities. First, open campfires are frequently restricted during spring and sometimes summer in the national forests due to forest-fire hazard. Few of the smaller towns in the area have much in the way of lodging; Angel Fire and Red River have some options catering to those spending time at the local ski resorts. Camping[edit] There are numerous campgrounds in the Sangre administered by one of the two national forests. Several are free and available on a first-come-first-served basis no reservations. Most of the busier campgrounds do have a fee; see the forest website for details. A few have the capability to accommodate large groups at sites that can be reserved. Historically, there have been intermittent problems with theft from and vandalism of vehicles left at a few campgrounds, particularly around Truchas. Some anecdotal evidence suggests that this problem may have diminished in the last few years. Inquire locally and take sensible precautions. Backcountry[edit] The Pecos Wilderness is a superb backpacking destination. No permits are required. Seasonal restrictions on campfires are common; pack a stove. Most campsites are close to streams, so there is no need to pack in excessive quantities of water, but stream water should be purified as Giardia parasites are present in both wildernesses. An unusual problem for backpackers in the high country of the Sangre de Cristos is the presence of bighorn sheep. Their diet is salt-poor, they are not shy, and they have been known to pass through campsites simply licking anything handy that has salt on it. Wash and secure dishes after meals, not just the foodstuffs. Most other recreational use of the forest is free.

Chapter 9 : About Southern Colorado: Sangre de Cristo Mountains

Hiking map of Sangre de Cristo Mountains (Colorado) published by National Geographic. This map is the most comprehensive and complete recreational map for this popular wilderness area in south central Colorado.