

City in the clouds

Cloudcroft, New Mexico, is a little slice of heaven—gorgeous hiking, plus a big dollop of Old West charm

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HIKING TIP

Stop by the Sacramento Ranger District to grab a map of all these hiking trails (\$10; 4 Lost Lodge Rd.; www.fs.fed.us/r3/lincoln).

FIVE MINUTES INTO the drive up the Sacramento Mountains, you can see why locals like to say that Cloudcroft is 9,000 feet above stress level. The tiny town of one main drag, zero stoplights, and 768 people is like an alpine El Dorado, unknown even to many New Mexicans (it's five hours south of Santa Fe and about 2,000 feet higher). In June, the wildflowers start blooming and the forests and meadows around Cloudcroft turn into a hiker's paradise: In a single day, you can picnic by a waterfall, see cactus in bloom, or trek through ponderosa pines. And it's all minutes from the comforts of a classic Western timber town. Read on for our top five hikes, plus what to do when you're off the trail.

HIKE #1

A cooling summer waterfall

WHERE Willie White Spur Trail

LENGTH 0.6 miles one way



Runoff from the Sacramento Mountains keeps the Bluff

Springs waterfall going all summer long. It's an easy stroll to get to picnic benches overlooking the falls. Head west on U.S. 82, then south on State 130; turn left on Forest Rd. 164 and follow signs for Bluff Springs.

HIKE #2

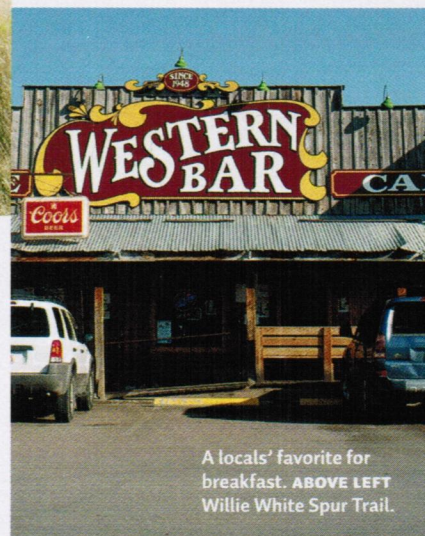
Lush forests

WHERE Osha Trail

LENGTH 2 miles round-trip



This quick yet challenging climb starts off with a steep incline and keeps winding upward through Douglas firs and white pines. Keep an eye out for elk and mule deer and be sure to bring a jacket—even in June, there can be patches of snow. Take U.S. 82 for 1 mile; parking and a sign for Osha will be on the right.



A locals' favorite for breakfast. ABOVE LEFT Willie White Spur Trail.