

Outdoor Recreation

OUR NATURAL TREASURE IS YOUR VAST PLAYGROUND FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURE. EXPLORE ON YOUR OWN TERMS, AT YOUR OWN PACE. THE POSSIBILITIES ARE AS LIMITLESS AS YOUR SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE.

AGUIRRE SPRING CAMPGROUND

One of the most scenic areas in southern New Mexico features hiking, mountain biking, picnicking and camping. Two trails are listed as part of the National Recreation Trail System: 6-mile mountainside **Baylor Pass** for hikers and horseback riders that ascends approximately 5,500 feet, and the 4-mile **Pine Tree Trail**. Located 21 miles east of Las Cruces on Hwy. 70. 575-525-4300. blm.gov/nm

DRIPPING SPRINGS

Hike along four miles of trails leading to the ruins of the old **Dripping Springs Resort**, a former hotel and sanctuary for tuberculosis patients, or to La Cueva, a mountain cave believed to have been a shelter for prehistoric Mogollon Indians. Located seven miles east of Las Cruces along University Ave. 575-525-4300. blm.gov/nm

MULTI-USE TRAILS

The new 4-mile **Las Cruces Outfall Channel Trail** connects the **Triviz Multi-Purpose Path** with the **La Lloroña Trail** that follows the Rio Grande, and to trails that link to the north end of the New Mexico State University campus, creating a giant loop around the city. The 4.6-mile paved walking and biking trail running along Triviz Dr. has parking facilities at the water tower at Griggs Ave. The La Lloroña Trail is accessible from Picacho Blvd.

LEASBURG DAM STATE PARK

Camping, picnicking and bird watching can be enjoyed year-round, with fishing, canoeing and kayaking on the Rio Grande offered from around mid-March through mid-October. Leasburg is located 15 miles north of Las Cruces on either Interstate 95 or Hwy. 185. 575-524-4068. stateparks.com

MESILLA VALLEY BOSQUE STATE PARK

Located along the western bank of the Rio Grande southwest of the town of Mesilla, the heart of the park is

52 acres of floodplain known as the "Old Refuge." With 945 acres of wetlands and Chihuahuan Desert, the park presents many opportunities to enjoy and learn about wildlife through ranger-led nature walks, bird-watching tours and children's activities. The park's goals are conservation, education, restoration and protection of natural and cultural resources. 5000 Calle del Norte, Mesilla. 575-523-4398. emnrd.state.nm.us/PRD/mesillavalley.htm

HORSEBACK RIDING

The **Corralitos Ranch**, a working ranch west of Las Cruces, is ideal for riding, photographing and exploring, with more than 1,000 square miles of hills and canyons, serene terrain, amazing sunsets, historical landmarks and old ranching ruins. Rising above the Rio Grande, the riding area ranges 25 miles north into the rugged Sierra de las Uvas. 575-640-8184. corralitotrailrides.com

BIRD WATCHING

Spotting and identifying the various bird species in their unique mix of habitats in and around Las Cruces is a fascinating and popular pastime for serious birding enthusiasts and curious novices alike.

There are three official New Mexico Birding Trail locations in the Las Cruces area – **Leasburg Dam State Park**, **Dripping Springs Natural Area** and **Aguirre Spring** – and neighboring **Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park** is home to more than 250 different species. The seemingly endless possibilities for bird-watchers include roadrunners, woodpeckers, burrowing owls, golden eagles, hawks, quails, bluebirds, wrens, warblers, orioles, juncos, tanagers, siskins, killdeers, ibises, herons and many, many more.

The impressive diversity of bird-watching opportunities in the Las Cruces area is sure to make all nature lovers' curiosity take flight amid a thrilling symphony of sounds that are distinctive to each species.