



**HIKING - FOREST SERVICE - ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

NATIONAL FOREST – San Juan RANGER DISTRICT - Columbine
Updated: April, 2003

Cave Basin Trail #530

Length: 4.5 mi / 7.2 km

Recommended Season

Spring Summer Fall Winter



12500				
12000				
11500				
11000				
10500				
10000				
9500				
9000				
8500				
8000				
Feet	0			5
Miles				

Use: Medium

Difficulty: Moderate

USGS Map (s): Vallecito Reservoir, Granite Peak, Columbine Pass, Emerald Lake

Starting Elevation: 10,800'

Trail Head at Middle Mountain Road – FS #724 at Vallecito Lake

Ending Elevation: 12,360'

Overlook of Emerald Lake

Access # 1:

From Bayfield head north on County Road (CR) #501, also called the Vallecito Road. Take that road north 20 miles around Vallecito Lake. Turn left on Middle Mountain Road (FS #724). Take the road about 8 miles to the Cave Basin Trailhead.

Access # 2:

From Durango head north on Florida Road (CR #240) for 14 miles. Continue on CR #240 for 2 miles past the turnoff for Lemon Reservoir. Turn North onto CR #501. Take that road north 10 miles around Vallecito Lake. Turn left on Middle Mountain Road (FS #724). Take the road roughly 8 miles to the Cave Basin Trailhead.

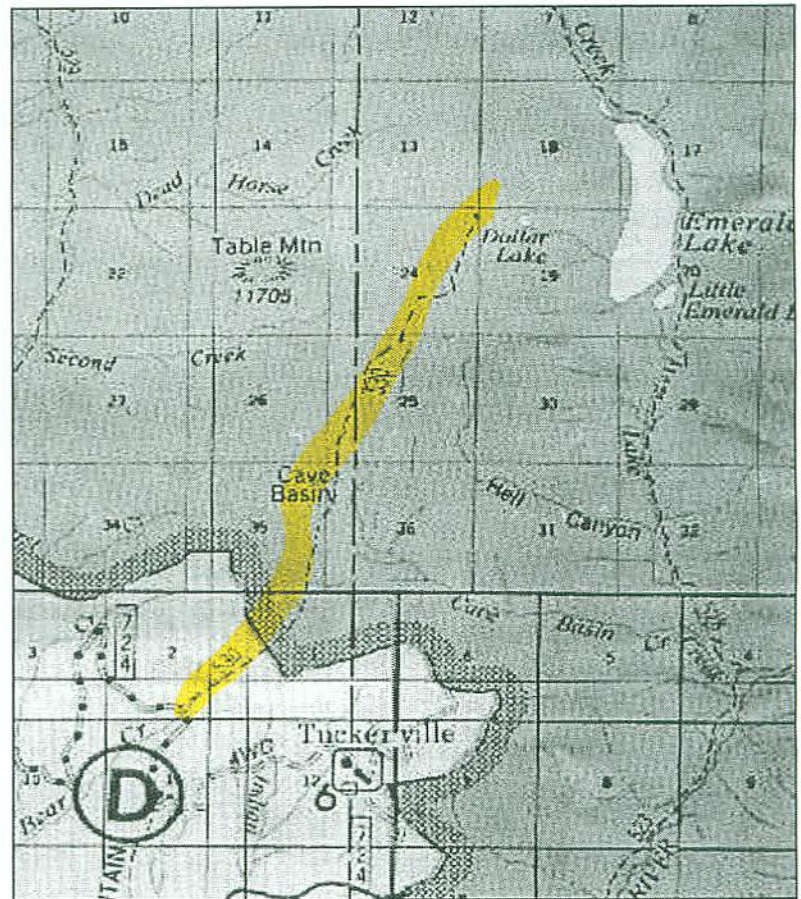
Attractions & Considerations:

Begin the hike at the trailhead located on Middle Mountain Road. The trail starts off wide and well defined but soon disappears and the majority of the hike is bushwhacking. The trail is distinctive from a distance, but once you are on the trail it is hard to follow due to the gray limestone which forms benches. Use your map and compass skills to progress across gray limestone benches, past meadows and sink holes.

There are no trees on the trail, but meadows and sink holes that fill with water due to the caving in of the limestone.

The view from the end of the trail at the overlook looks down onto Dollar Lake, and far below to Emerald Lake at 10,000' elevation

The alpine meadows are full of blooming wildflowers in late July and in August. This area provides excellent views and photographic possibilities. As with all high altitude areas, storms can move in rapidly, bringing severe wind, lightning, rain, snow, or hail any time of the year. Plan accordingly.



Scan of the San Juan National Forest Map
Forest Service Maps and other publications available at the Public Lands Center in the Durango Tech Center, ½ mile west of Durango off of Highway 160 or by calling 970-247-4874.
www.sjma.org

Weminuche Wilderness Regulations:

- Group size is limited to 15 people.
- Combination of people and stock 25.
- Dogs under control.
- No unattended campfires.
- Camping is not allowed within 100 feet of any water source.
- Outfitter-guides who receive any form of compensation must obtain a special-use permit to operate on public land.
- Possession of motorized equipment and mechanized means of transport are not permitted.
- Please check trailhead signs or Forest Service Offices for site-specific camping, campfire, and livestock regulations.