



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

NATIONAL FOREST - San Juan RANGER DISTRICT - Columbine

Updated: April, 2003

**Pine River Trail to Emerald Lake #523 to #528**

Length: 10 mi / 16.1 km

**Recommended Season**

Spring Summer Fall Winter



**Use:** Heavy

**Difficulty:** Moderate

**USGS Map (s):**

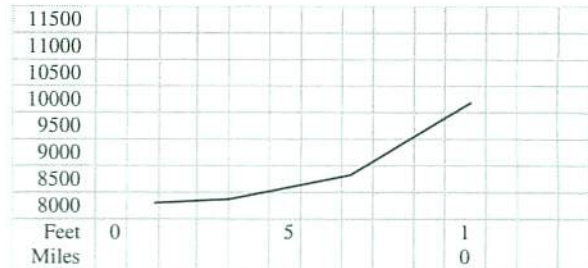
Granite Peak, Emerald Lake

**Starting Elevation:** 8,000'

Trailhead at Pine River Campground

**Ending Elevation:** 10,033'

Emerald Lake



**Access # 1:**

From Bayfield head north on County Road (CR) #501, also called the Vallecito Road. Take that road north 22 miles around Vallecito Lake. Turn left on the Pine River (Los Pinos) turnoff - FS #602. Take the road 3.8 miles to the Pine River (Los Pinos) campground.

**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 12 miles around Vallecito Lake. Turn left on the Pine River (Los Pinos) turnoff - FS #602. Take the road 3.8 miles to the Pine River (Los Pinos) campground.

**Attractions & Considerations:**

The Pine River Trail begins through a private gate adjacent to Granite Peaks Ranch. Please stay on the trail, and camping is prohibited until you reach the wilderness boundary. Aspens, ponderosa pine and conifers are in abundance along the trail as you follow Pine River east. The boundary of the Weminuche Wilderness is 2.7 miles up the trail. At mile 6.3 the Lake Fork Trail turns off to the north. A moderate climb interspersed with flat meadows takes you to Emerald Lakes at 10 miles. *Within 1/4 mile south of the lakes to 1/2 mile north of the lakes camping, campfires, grazing or tethering stock is not allowed except in designated sites. There are only 8 sites.*

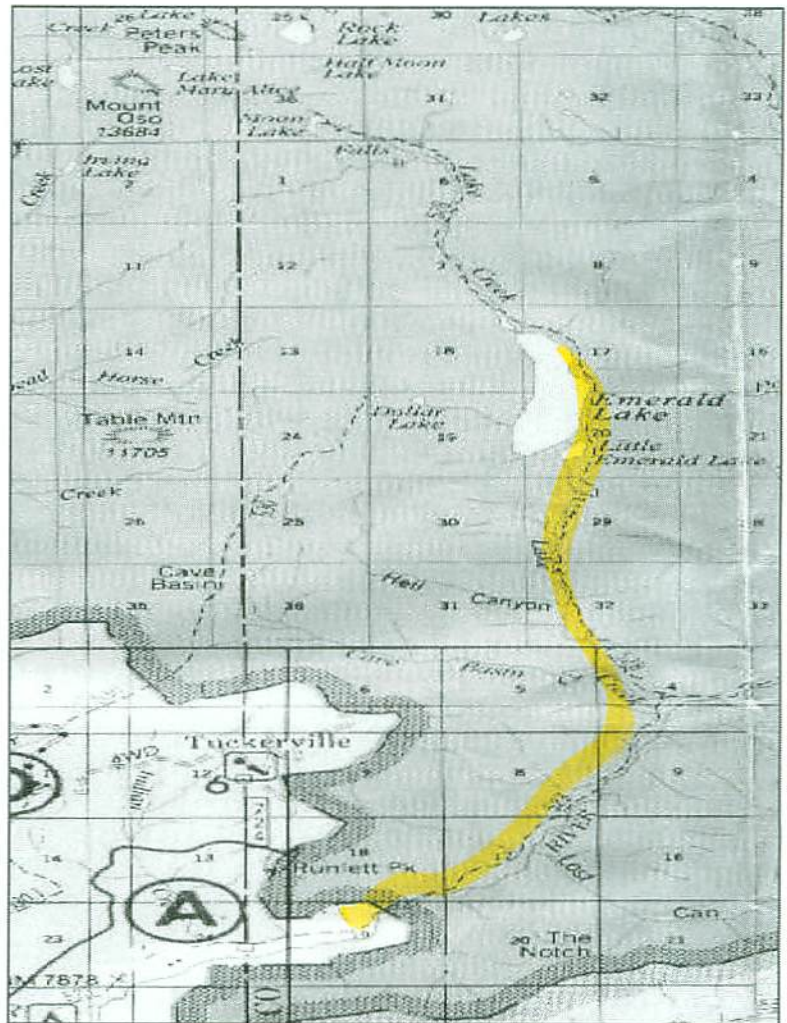
The alpine meadows are full of blooming wildflowers in late July and in August. This area provides excellent views and photographic possibilities. Water can be found off the trail in most of the tributaries, but due to Giardia it should be filtered. As with all high altitude areas, storms can move in rapidly, bringing severe wind, lightning, rain, snow, or hail at any time of year. Plan accordingly.

**Fishing Considerations:**

The Pine River is not accessible for the first 2.5 miles of trail, but fishing for trout above the Wilderness boundary is excellent. The Pine River is restricted to artificial flies and lures only. Please check the fishing regulations regarding limits, allowable lures, and restrictions on certain lakes, rivers, etc.

**Weminuche Wilderness Regulations:**

- Group size is limited to 15 people.
- In the area surrounding Emerald Lake and Little Emerald Lake, camping, campfires, grazing and restraining stock is not allowed except in designated sites.
- Camping is not allowed within 100 feet of any water source (approximately 35 adult steps).
- 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.
- Recreational livestock are prohibited from being restrained within 100 feet of lakeshores and streams or within riparian areas.



**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, 1/2 mile west of Durango off of Highway 160 or by calling 970-247-4874. [www.sjma.org](http://www.sjma.org)