

May 28 - 31, 2010

New Mexico's Gila Wilderness is an enormous tract of land encompassing high mountains, big trees, babbling streams, wildlife, and more. For several years, I've gone with a group of friends to the Gila Wilderness for a Memorial Day backpacking trip. This is your chance to see that wilderness for yourself.

We'll drive to New Mexico early on Friday morning, May 28th. Along the way, we'll stop at the Ranger Station to check the weather, road, and water situation. We may also stop in lovely little Mogollon for a quick lunch before we get to the trailhead. We have a five mile hike to do, but we have plenty of time. We also have to set up an 11-mile car shuttle. Leaving our vehicles at the trailhead, we'll hike up to Hummingbird Saddle and set up camp. That evening, we can make the short trek up to the summit of Whitewater Baldy.

On Saturday, we'll pack our stuff and head off to Spruce Creek Saddle. It's just a bit over six miles, and that includes a side trip to the summit of Center Baldy. We can definitely take our time today.

Sunday will dawn with our longest hike in front of us. Fortunately, it's mostly downhill. We'll hike a few miles to Grouse Peak, where we'll drop our packs and go up to the summit for a little break. After that, we will hike down, *down*, **down** Winn Canyon along a very easy, pine-needle-covered trail to our third camp, and our second on Whitewater Creek.

After a relaxing evening in camp, we'll arise early for the short but steep hike to our car shuttle trailhead and the short drive to Mogollon. We should be back in Tucson by mid-afternoon on Memorial Day.

This trip is planned for up to eight people. There is plenty of room available at each campsite, and it's all free!*

Water and Weather



There should be water at each of our campsites in the Gila. There is definitely water in Whitewater Creek. In 2007, there was plenty of water in Spruce Creek Spring.

The weather in the Gila Wilderness is ever-changing. We've had very sunny weekends, and we've had very wet weekends. Place your bets and take your chances. Your best bet is to plan for anything. At best, daytime highs will be in the 70s with lows in the upper 40s. Remember, however, that one of our campsites is at 9,600 feet. That particular campsite can be cold. The other campsites are as low as 6,500 feet so will be much warmer. Plan accordingly.

The Hike

day	miles	elev gain	destination
Friday	1.9 / 1.9	900 ft / 900 ft	Bead Spring turnoff
Friday	3.1 / 5.0	500 ft / 1400 ft	Hummingbird Saddle
Saturday	3.4 / 8.4	400 ft / 1800 ft	Center Baldy
Saturday	2.0 / 10.4	- 200 ft / 1800 ft	Black Mountain Spring
Saturday	0.7 / 11.1	- 400 ft / 1800 ft	Spruce Creek Saddle
Sunday	3.6 / 14.7	600 ft / 2400 ft	Grouse Mtn
Sunday	1.2 / 15.9	- 800 ft / 2400 ft	Spider Saddle
Sunday	3.9 / 19.8	- 2600 ft / 2400 ft	Whitewater Creek
Monday	3.5 / 23.3	1500 ft / 3900 ft	Deloche Trailhead

** There are no fees for camping in the National Forest. Participants are expected to pay their share of gas and all other group expenses.*