

# T226

## Last Chance Canyon Trail

### Guadalupe Ranger District



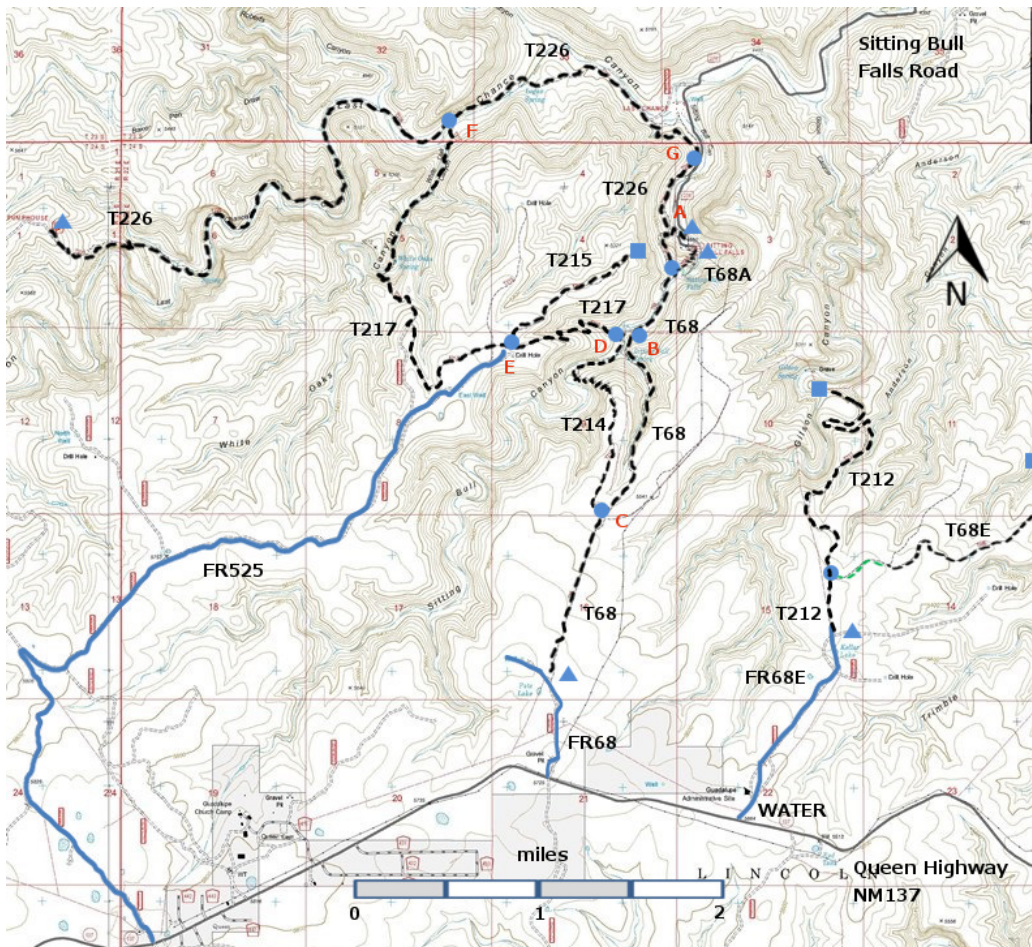
#### T226

GPS Track (as .GPX)

Left click to open in your browser; then save from browser.

LENGTH	ELEVATION	DIFFICULTY	SCENERY
6.3 miles	4700 - 5620 ft 920 ft difference	Difficult	5

Allowed Usage				



[Link to map color/symbol codes](#)

T68, T68A, T68E, T212, T214, T215, T217, and T226 are shown as black dashed lines on the map. The trail junctions in the Sitting Bull Falls Area are identified with a letter (A-G), red letters on the map. **CAUTION:** The Sitting Bull Falls area was badly burned in a fire in 2011. In 2012 I hiked up to Junction F, where T217 branches off. Forest Service personnel have told me that the 2011 fire did not touch the Last Chance Canyon bottom. Hopefully, the trail will soon be as lovely as John Stockert found it in 2001. His description follows (amended to include the Junctions and minor adjustments to the trails,).

**DESCRIPTION:** Last Chance Canyon is an unbelievable natural gem that is as exceptional, rare and unusual, as nearby Sitting Bull Falls. Resembling the famous McKittrick Canyon in Guadalupe Mountains National Park to the south, the canyon has sheer limestone cliffs several hundred feet high with two impressive overhangs, and a deep canyon with distinctive riparian areas. A small portion of the canyon floor includes clear pools and wide areas of flat, often step-like, slickrock up to 70 feet in width, with meandering streams and occasional small waterfalls. As a result of the canyon's environmental diversity, an incredible variety of vegetative species and wildlife make their homes here. Plan to spend a full day exploring this magnificent hideaway of nature.

From its lower trailhead, T226 begins as a well planned, easy-to-follow path with gradients averaging 10% or less (except at the very beginning) along its first 3.0 miles. Then, after crossing the canyon's rock-strewn, dry stream bed, the trail becomes steep for a short distance, but is maintained. Beyond mile 3.2 from the trailhead, and for the next 0.5 mile, splendid canyon views open up as the path threads, with little elevation change, across a steep slope just above a high, vertical inner canyon wall and boulder-filled, deep canyon bottom. The path becomes faint for the next 0.6 mile as it follows along the right edge of the slickrock canyon bottom, or just above it. At one location, a very narrow trail climbs and descends in 0.1 mile, with up to 55% gradient.

Unexpectedly, several pumping systems appear. It is like an outdoor "museum," depicting improvements in water-pumping technology spanning many decades. From here, and for its last 1.2 miles, the trail is in reasonably good shape and angles up the relatively steep canyon slope, 25% maximum gradient, to the upper trailhead.

For additional information about Last Chance Canyon, see an excellent article in the June, 1996 issue of New Mexico Magazine.

A loop route of 7.3 miles connects T226 to Sitting Bull Falls Trail, T68. Take T 226 for 2.2 miles from Junction G, to junction F. Follow T217 to its end in 3.9 miles at 68, Junction B; go 1.2 miles down canyon to Junction G. For an additional 2.0 miles round trip, turn left on T 215 at Junction E, and follow T215 to its uncertain end, a scenic vista with distant views above the picnic area at Sitting Bull Falls Recreation Site.

**ACCESS:** To reach the lower trailhead, take US285 northwest from Carlsbad (about 12 miles) to 0.6 mile beyond milepost 45 marking the junction with NM137, Queen Highway. Turn left and follow the paved road 22 miles to milepost 32, the junction with FR276, Sitting Bull Falls Highway (Also signed as County 409). Turn right and follow FR276 for 7 miles to the paved parking area, just prior to entering the gated parking area at Sitting Bull Falls Recreation Site (Junction G). The actual trailhead for T226 is 0.6 miles south, toward the Sitting Bull Falls Recreation Site; however, if one wants to hike up Last Chance Canyon, Junction G is a better starting point.

Accessing the upper T226 trailhead is long and somewhat difficult; a high clearance vehicle is required. Using the intersection of NM137 and FR276 as the starting point, follow NM137 21 miles southwest to

milepost 12; proceed another 0.4 mile to a junction, the beginning of FR67, Guadalupe Rim Road, also signed as National Livestock Road. Turn right and follow graveled FR 67 for 5.4 miles to the junction of FR277, National Ranch Road. Turn right and follow graveled FR277 for 4.8 miles to an intersection, just after crossing a cattle guard. Turn right on FR277C and follow the primitive, often rough, and sometimes hard to follow road for 3.2 slow miles. The last 0.1 mile, just before reaching the trailhead at a small building, may be difficult if 4-wheel drive is not available. Parking within sight of the building rather than descending a steep grade just before the end of the "road," is recommended.

#### GPS Coordinates for Key Points

NAD83	Lat/Lon hddd mm ss.s	UTM (13 S)
Junction A (T68 and T226)	N32 14 48.8 W104 41 55.0	528392 3567841
Junction B (T68 and T214, north end)	N32 14 20.1 W104 42 06.2	528100 3566958
Junction C (T68 and T214, south end)	N32 13 28.6 W104 42 16.9	527825 3565371
Junction D (T214 and T217)	N32 14 18.6 W104 42 10.8	527981 3566911
Junction E (T215 and T217)	N32 14 15.2 W104 42 47.6	527019 3566802
Junction F (T217 and T226)	N32 15 16.9 W104 43 07.1	526421 3568668
Junction G (T226, parking for SBF trails)	N32 15 10.8 W104 41 45.4	528641 3568521

#### Links to Other Resources

[Guadalupe Ranger District Trails](#)

[Sitting Bull Falls Trail Junctions](#) [T68 trailhead has been moved 0.3 miles north.]

[Area Topo Map \(36 MB\)](#)

[Six Topo Maps](#)

Last hiked: 2009

1/13/2016