

T68

Sitting Bull Falls Trail

Guadalupe Ranger District



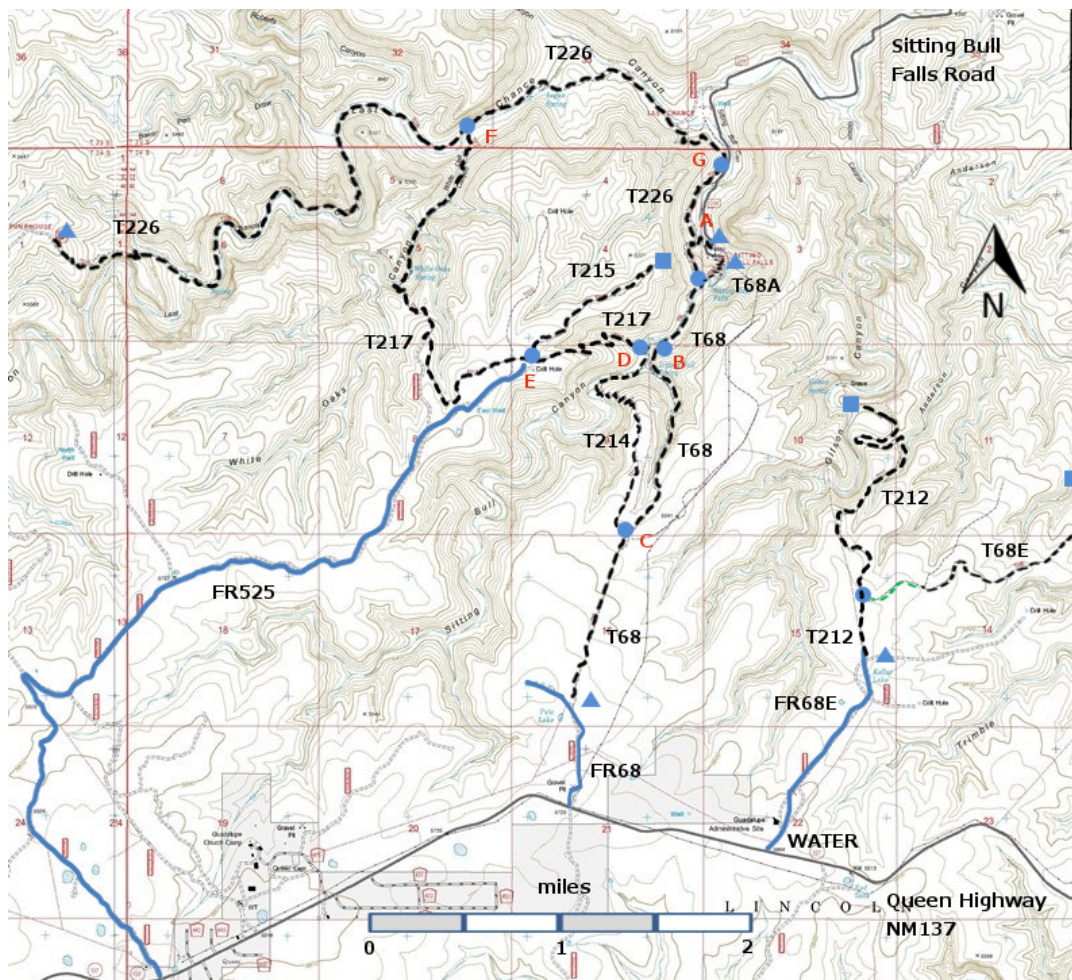
T68

GPS Track (as .GPX)

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

LENGTH	ELEVATION	DIFFICULTY	SCENERY
2.7 miles	4680 - 5680 ft 1000ft difference	Moderate	4

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.

DESCRIPTION:

CAUTION: The Sitting Bull Falls area was badly burned in a fire in 2011. Many of the trees in the canyons were burned. The area is recovering, but it may not be as lovely as John Stockert found it in 2001. His description follows (amended to include the Junctions and minor adjustments to the trails).

Some hikers will want begin the trail from the parking area outside Sitting Bull Falls Recreation Site. A 0.6 mile hike from Junction G along T226 brings one to Junction A and T68. Others will begin at the T68 trailhead near the host's trailer in the picnic area. The signed trail is somewhat rough and a little steep at the beginning as it makes its way via several switchbacks to the canyon floor above the waterfalls. At mile 0.4 from the trailhead is the turnoff to a short, signed route leading to the top of Sitting Bull Falls. From mile 0.4 T68 continues up canyon threading through picturesque semi-desert terrain and vegetation including prickly pear, cholla, juniper, algerita and cottonwood. The path is occasionally vague and generally stays away from the thick vegetation paralleling Sitting Bull Creek. Be prepared to do some wading and/or rock hopping since the trail fords the creek three times, and some wet areas spread to 30 feet wide.

There are two significant points of interest. At mile 0.9, take the signed horse trail to a barbed wire gate (possibly open). Turn right and follow the fence for a short distance into perhaps the loveliest riparian spot along T 68! An abundance of water greets the eye, including small ponds and waterfalls, and a unique grotto. *BE CAREFUL* since no obvious trail connects this spot with T68 and the exquisite area is rough to hike around. The second point of interest is Sitting Bull Spring at mile 1.1, the source for Sitting Bull Falls.

Consider hiking a loop of 4.6 miles round trip from the picnic area by including T214. From the picnic area, T214 joins T68 at mile 0.9 (Junction B) and mile 2.1 (Junction C). Return to the picnic area from Junction C. For a longer loop (about 7.3 miles), hike counterclockwise from Junction G along T226 for 2.2 miles to Junction F, T217 for 2.8 miles to Junction E, T217 for 1.0 miles to Junction D, T214 for 0.1 miles to Junction B, T68 for 0.6 miles to Junction A, and T226 for 0.6 miles back to Junction G. Add 2.0 miles round trip if, at Junction E, T215 is followed to its dead end for a scenic view above the picnic area.

To come from the upper end of T68, at the hiker kiosk, Hike north from here, paralleling a fence for 0.7 miles to the trailhead for T214 (Junction B), T214 goes to the left, through the fence, and T68 angles downhill to the right. Look for a cairn. Up to this point, the route has passed over dry terrain on a broad, open tableland of the Guadalupe Mountains.

After another 0.3 mile, the path turns left and heads down into a scenic canyon along a trail constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the late 1930s. For the next 0.5 mile, gradients range up to 35%. Canyon wrens can be heard in season. Shortly after passing through a pedestrian gate, Sitting Bull Spring is on the left, 2.5 miles from the upper trailhead. The stream here marks the beginning of a fabulous riparian area! Remember to stay on the upper portion of T68; hikers must not enter the (now closed) Sitting Bull Falls Recreation Area.

ACCESS: To reach the lower trailhead, take US285 northwest from Carlsbad (about 12 miles) to 0.6 mile beyond milepost 45 at its junction with NM137, Queen Highway. Turn left and follow the paved road 22 miles to milepost 33, marking the junction with paved Forest Road FR276, Sitting Bull Falls Highway (also signed as County Road 409). Turn right and follow FR276 for 7 miles to the paved parking area just before the gate to the Sitting Bull Falls Recreation Site.

To reach the upper trailhead, begin at the junction of US285 and NM137; follow NM137 for 32 miles to milepost 22. Then look for a turnoff on the north side of the road to Guadalupe Ranger District Administrative Site and the public water hydrant. Continue on NM137 another 1.0 mile (or 0.7 miles beyond milepost 21) to the junction with a primitive road leading to the right (north). At the unlocked gated road is a sign for T68. One can hike from here, or take the (rough) road 0.6 mile to an abandoned corral and cattle watering facility, angle past the east side of the coral and drive an additional 0.2 miles to the hiker kiosk at the upper trailhead for T68.

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	526503 3568702
Junction G (T226, parking outside picnic area)	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](#)

[My Life Outdoors – Sitting Bull Falls](#)

Last Hiked: 2009

1/13/2016