

T106

Dog Canyon Trail

Sacramento Ranger District



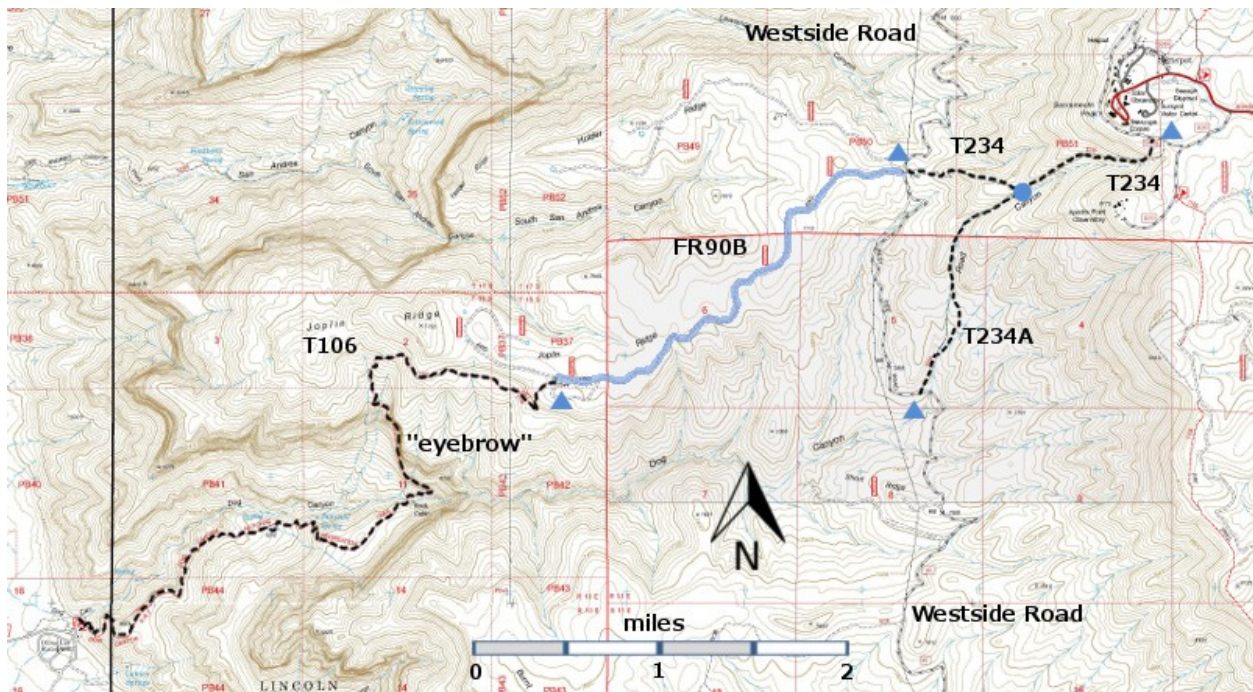
T106

GPS Track (as .GPX)

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

LENGTH	ELEVATION	DIFFICULTY	SCENERY
5.5 miles	4420 - 7540 3120 ft difference	Difficult	5

Allowed Usage				



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

T106, T234, and T234A are shown as black dashed lines on the map. The road connecting T234 and T106, FR90B, is shown as a solid blue line.

NOTE: Oliver Lee State Memorial Park is administered by the New Mexico Park and Recreation Division, and is not a part of Lincoln National Forest. One must go through the park in order to access the lower T106 trailhead. A fee is charged. The state park gate closes late in the evening. If hikers plan to

return late or are intending to camp overnight along the trail, special arrangements must be made with a park ranger. If more information is needed about entrance charge, park gate closing/opening times, parking a car overnight, or using the campground, call (575) 437-8284.

DESCRIPTION: T106 threads through the most scenic canyon in Sacramento Ranger District. The path is often steep and rugged, particularly along its upper 2.6 miles. However, the most commonly visited portion is the lower trail from the state park to the ruins of a stone cabin, 2.9 miles up canyon. This area is interesting and worthwhile, yet even this hike is very demanding. Distances along the trail are marked with a carsonite sign every quarter mile to the stone cabin, and every 0.5 mile beyond there.

From the lower trailhead, the path is rocky, uneven, and steep from the beginning, with gradients up to 25%. Distant views become an immediate reality. The lower trail has summer temperatures of 90° to 100° F or higher. Therefore, fall, winter, and spring are better suited for hiking here. At mile 0.7 from the visitor center the route levels out for 1.4 miles and passes through abundant ocotillos and agaves, and around the heads of several incised and scenic side canyons.

At mile 2.0, a sign reads, "Dog Canyon Trail, No. 106; Line Cabin, 1 mile." Here, the trail turns right at a switchback. However, if one continues straight and leaves T106 on the switchback turn, an unsigned trail becomes apparent. Follow the narrow path 600 feet to Fairchild Spring and abundant shade. Lush vegetation clings to a steep hillside, and water and green moss fill a concrete trough. This side trail is narrow and almost non-existent in places so BE CAREFUL.

Beyond the Dog Canyon Trail sign, the grade along T106 reaches 30% and becomes quite tiring for the next 0.4 mile. Don't quit but rest often, because at mile 2.4, a unique, relatively level bench is suddenly reached - a worthwhile objective in itself. It provides an uplifting rest stop with many acres of welcome respite. The bench, 0.4 mile long and several hundred feet wide, sustains a vast array of grasses and wildflowers in season, in addition to widely scattered junipers, shrubs, and cacti. A few very large boulders dot the landscape, obviously "born" from the nearby 800 foot high cliffs.

Finally, after leaving the bench, the crumbling rock walls of a small one-room cabin is reached at mile 2.9, just beyond the crossing of an intermittent stream amid trees. This home was built by the Fairchild family many years ago. Please do not camp in the immediate area around the ruins.

If there has been sustained, adequate moisture, high waterfalls at the head of the deep portion of Dog Canyon are visible from the bench and from the cabin ruins, but chances of seeing them running are slim. Several waterfalls, in large "steps," one above the other, cascade from the incised head of the deep, box-like canyon. Together the falls drop about 400 feet! Although not well known, these falls, when taken together, are the highest and most spectacular known in Lincoln National Forest.

The real grandeur of Dog Canyon, including two expansive ledges and the deep recesses of the upper and lower canyons, cannot be fully appreciated until the complete route is hiked, ideally beginning at its upper trailhead. Yet for many, trying to make a round trip in this canyon can be physically overwhelming! It is best to be dropped off at the upper trailhead and have another vehicle waiting below near the state park visitor center.

Note that from the upper trailhead, mileage is shown every 0.5 mile on carsonite signs, beginning with 5.5 and counting down.

If you hike from the upper end, great views become the rule by mile 0.2. Shortly, the path crosses a unique, broad bench for 0.7 miles at 7,400 foot elevation. This bench is smaller in size, and different in appearance from the more majestic bench mentioned above. It includes two normally dry earthen dams, considerable vegetation and meadows. By mile 1.0, from the upper terminus, the route gently ascends to

the western edge of this fascinating feature and heads down a side canyon into upper Dog Canyon along one long switchback. Beyond here, Barberry sheep with curls have occasionally been observed, about where the trail begins its descent into the inner canyon.

Steep gradients along the entire route average 20% to 35%, with a 50% maximum. The steepest intermittent grades, including at least 12 switchbacks, are evident for 0.9 mile between where the trail from the upper canyon crosses the rim into the inner canyon and the cabin ruins. Along this rugged and narrow section, the path passes the base of a towering cliff known as the Eyebrow.

Archeological research indicates the canyon has been in use for at least 4,000 years. Its permanent water sources made it a favorite camping place for Mescalero Apaches. The United States Cavalry fought at least three battles with these Native Americans in the steep Eyebrow area just above the cabin ruins; the last such encounter was in 1880. In one encounter, the Native American rolled rocks from the cliffs above the Eyebrow.

You can hike from Sunspot Visitor Center parking to Oliver Lee State Park at the mouth of Dog Canyon using official trails and a connecting road. The total is 10.1 miles, which includes 0.2 mile from the visitor center to T234 trailhead, 1.6 miles along T234, 2.8 miles along FR 90B, and 5.5 miles along T106, ending at the state park. Elevation change is 4,800 feet. This route saves 18 miles of driving the rough Westside Road to access FR90B. See write-up for T234.

ACCESS: To reach the lower trailhead, begin in the southern part of Alamogordo at the US70 and US54 intersection just west of the overpass. Drive US54 south 8.7 miles to the signed junction for Oliver Lee Memorial State Park. Turn left and follow paved County Road A016 east 4.0 miles to the park. Pay the self service fee at the entrance and park near the visitor center. The signed trail starts at the northeast corner of the building.

To reach the upper trailhead, a high clearance vehicle is mandatory. In High Rolls, begin at the junction of US82 and Westside Road (same as FR90 and County A061. Drive 18.0 miles south on Westside Road, a sometimes rutty and muddy dirt road, to the signed FR90B junction. Turn right and follow FR90B south 2.8 miles to the signed upper trailhead at a dry earthen tank, both on the left. Because FR90B is so very rough in places, you may wish to walk this road instead of subjecting your vehicle to the torture!

During periods of wet weather, parts of FR90 can become very muddy and slippery, and may require 4-wheel drive.

GPS Coordinates for Key Points

NAD83	Lat/Lon hddd mm ss.s	UTM (13 S)
Upper Trailhead	N32 46 00.9 W105 52 15.7	418418 3625784
Lower Trailhead	N32 44 54.6 W105 54 50.5	414372 3623776

Links to Other Resources

[Area Map](#)

[Deadmans Canyon Topo Map](#)

[Alamogordo South Topo Map](#)

[Sacramento Peak Topo Map](#)

Last Hiked: 2021

2/5/2022