











## Sacramento Ranger District

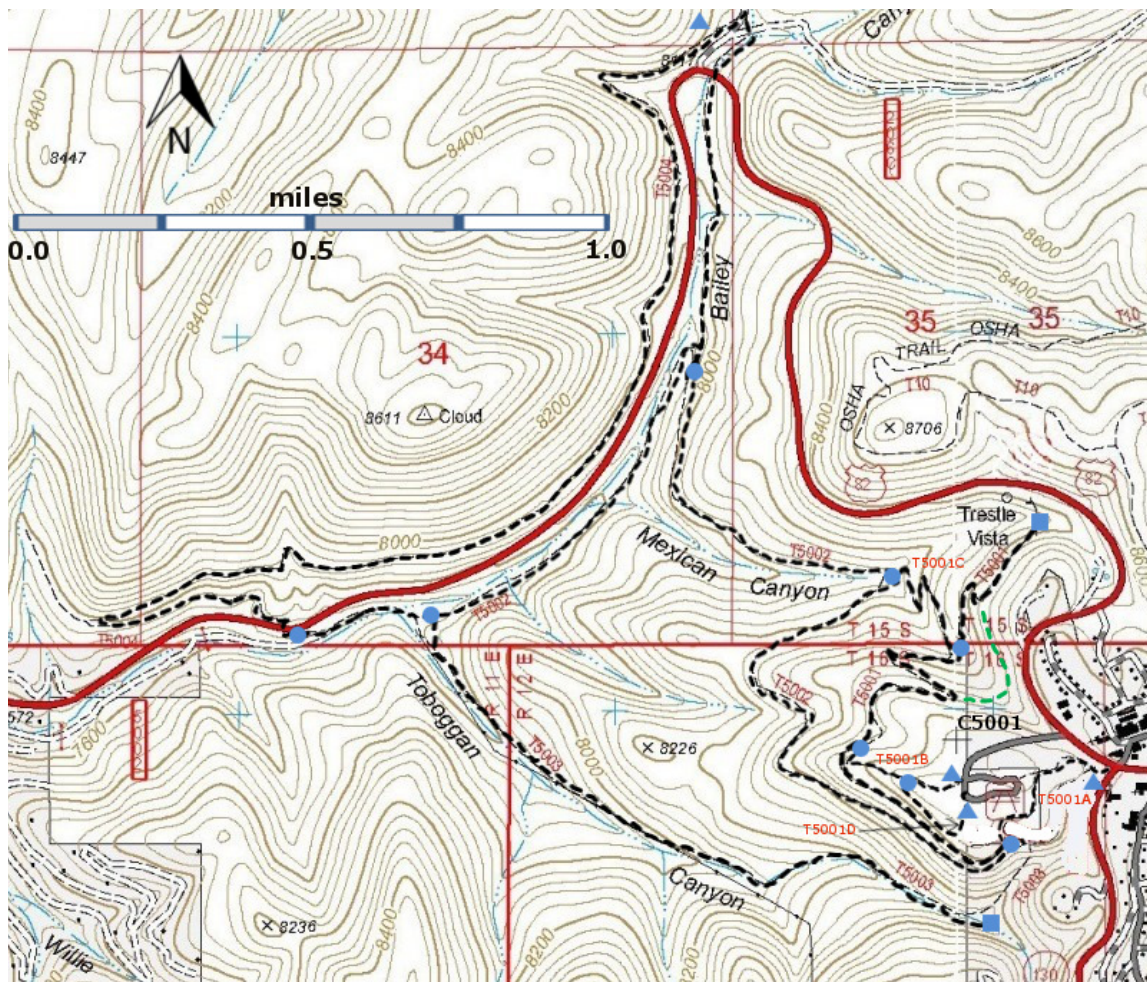


GPS Track(as .GPX)

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

LENGTH	ELEVATION	DIFFICULTY	SCENERY
3.2 miles	7700 - 8200 ft 500 ft difference	Moderate	4

Allowed Usage				
				
				



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

5001, T5001A, T5001B, T5001C, T5001D, T5002, T5003, and T5004 are shown as black dashed lines on the map.

**NOTE:** Local members of the New Mexico Rails-to-Trails Association have volunteered many hours of labor to help open these trails. T5001 follows part of the original Alamogordo and Sacramento Mountains railroad that connected Alamogordo and Cloudcroft.

**CAUTION:** Segment 1 of T5004 includes a 175 foot long concrete walkway tunnel under US 82 at Bailey Canyon. *BE CAREFUL: In winter months the walkway can be very icy and dangerous; in warmer times do not enter if water is flowing.*

**DESCRIPTION:** T5004 follows a portion of the original Alamogordo and Sacramento Mountain Railway that connected Alamogordo and Cloudcroft. Construction started in 1898 and was completed in 1900. Trains were in operation periodically until September 1947 after which the rails were removed.

The early railroad builders, to resolve the problem of a steep grade in this immediate area, built a switchback that reduced railroad gradient. . Whether going up or down the mountain, when a train arrived at the switchback, it would pull into a dead end railroad spur ("tail"). Then after the railroad switch was thrown, it would back up or down, as the case might , along the switchback. At the other end, the switching operation was repeated; the train backed into the tail, the switch was thrown and the train proceeded forward toward its destination.

T5004 can be seen as having four segments. **Segment 1** (0.7 miles) begins at T5002 and ends at FR206 (Bailey Canyon Road), which leads off US82 at Bailey Canyon. Brown "point of interest" signs direct drivers to turn at this intersection to access the Switchback Trail (T5004). **Segment 2** (0.6 miles) begins at FR206 and ends at the start of the upper portion of old railbed. It was constructed to provide access from the parking area along FR206 to the railbed portion of T5004. **Segment 3** (1.7 miles) begins where the old railbed starts and ends at the north end of the Harkey pedestrian bridge, which was constructed to provide a safe crossing of the curving US82. It consists of the upper portion of railbed, the upper switch area, and about two-thirds of the central "switchback" portion. The remaining portion of the switchback, the lower switch area and the track toward Alamogordo were destroyed or buried by the construction of US82. Prior to the building of US82 the "switchback" portion of the railbed extended at a constant grade past the location of the Harkey pedestrian bridge to a point about 60 yards east of the corner power pole in the at Toboggan Canyon. **Segment 4** (0.2 miles) begins at the north end of the Harkey pedestrian bridge and ends at the junction with the lower trailhead of T5002.

The upper "tail" is not part of the official T5004, but it is an easy 0.2 mile hike. The wide path is scenic and ends in a wash. Called a "tail" by old railroad buffs, the spur contained a length of track sufficient to accommodate 20 log cars plus an engine and a tender. After the whole train entered this section, a rail switch was thrown (about where a lone Ponderosa pine now stands at the beginning of the spur) placing the engine and rail cars on the proper track alignment. The train would then move forward and leave the tail.

In Segment 3, the upper and lower track portions have a gradient of about 3%, the design standard for the railroad. The switchback segment has a gradient just over 4%. In Segment 4, safe passage across US82 is provided by the Harkey pedestrian bridge, which has a two-story flight of stairs at its south end. Other portions of the trail, particularly around old trestle sites, may have gradients up to 35%.

Segment 1 of T5004 begins off T5002, and, follows an 1898 logging spur north.. It then drops down toward the canyon bottom and proceeds through wooded areas and near meadows with wildflowers in

season. After passing through the tunnel under US82, it crosses FR 206C and reaches FR206. Segment 2 threads through forest to join the former railroad just a few feet prior to crossing an original, small, square, wooden culvert under the railbed. There is a small hikers hut near the midpoint of Segment 2.

**SCENIC RATING:** 4, due to the uniqueness of hiking an old railroad grade, especially the railway spur and switchback.

**ACCESS:** To reach the junction of Segment 1 and Segment 2, the most commonly used access point for T5004 (and the point that is easiest to reach by car), begin in Cloudcroft at the NM130 and US82 intersection. Drive 1.9 miles west along US 82 to an obvious road junction on the right, at a curve going left, marking the beginning of Bailey Canyon Road (FR206). A brown "point of interest" sign directs drivers to turn here for the Switchback Trail. Turn right, cross a cattle guard, and look for a T5004 sign near the Forest Service billboard. Segment 1 proceeds to the right, downhill toward US82 and its large culvert. Segment 2, a bit harder to find, starts uphill from the west side of FR206, a few feet beyond the Forest Service billboard.

This is a good place to park for a loop hike of 4.0 miles on all of T5004 and part of T5002; see the map. T5002 can be reached from here by following Segment 1 of T5004 down canyon 0.7 mile via the walkway tunnel under US 82. At the signed junction, follow T5002 for 0.8 miles to its western end, the junction with Segment 4 of T5004. Hike Segment 3 to cross US82, Segment 2 (railbed), and Segment 1 (back to FR206).

The portion of FR206 between US82 and the billboard is also old railbed, and if you look a few feet beyond the billboard you can find the abutments for a railroad trestle. Beyond the far abutment, the flat old railbed curves through a cut in the hill.

**DISTANCES AND ALTITUDES:** Segment 1: 0.7 miles, 7920 ft at junction with T5002, 8120 ft at FR206, ascends 200 feet. Segment 2: 0.6 miles, 8120 ft at FR206, 8060 ft at east end of old railbed, descends 60 feet, but ascends 80 feet before descending 140 feet. Segment 3: 1.7 miles, 8060 ft at east end of old railbed, 7720 ft at Harkey pedestrian bridge, descends 340 feet. Segment 4: 0.2 miles, 7720 ft at Harkey pedestrian bridge, 7700 ft, at junction with T5002, descends 20 feet.

#### GPS Coordinates for Key Points

NAD83	Lat/Lon hddd mm ss.s	UTM (13 S)
Bailey Canyon-FR206 (Junction of Segment 1 and Segment 2)	N32 58 32.3 W105 45 21.5	13 S 429353 3648863
Junction of Segment 1 with T5002	N32 58 01.4 W105 45 27.5	13 S 429200 3647905
Junction of Segment 4 with T5002	N32 57 41.1 W105 46 00.8	13 S 428328 364727

**Links to Other Resources**

[Link to map of Cloudcroft Area](#)

[High Rolls Topo Map](#)

[Cloudcroft Topo Map](#)

[Forest Service Resource](#)

Last Hiked: August 30, 2009

Updated 1/17/2016