

T33 Bluefront Trail

Smokey Bear Ranger District



T33

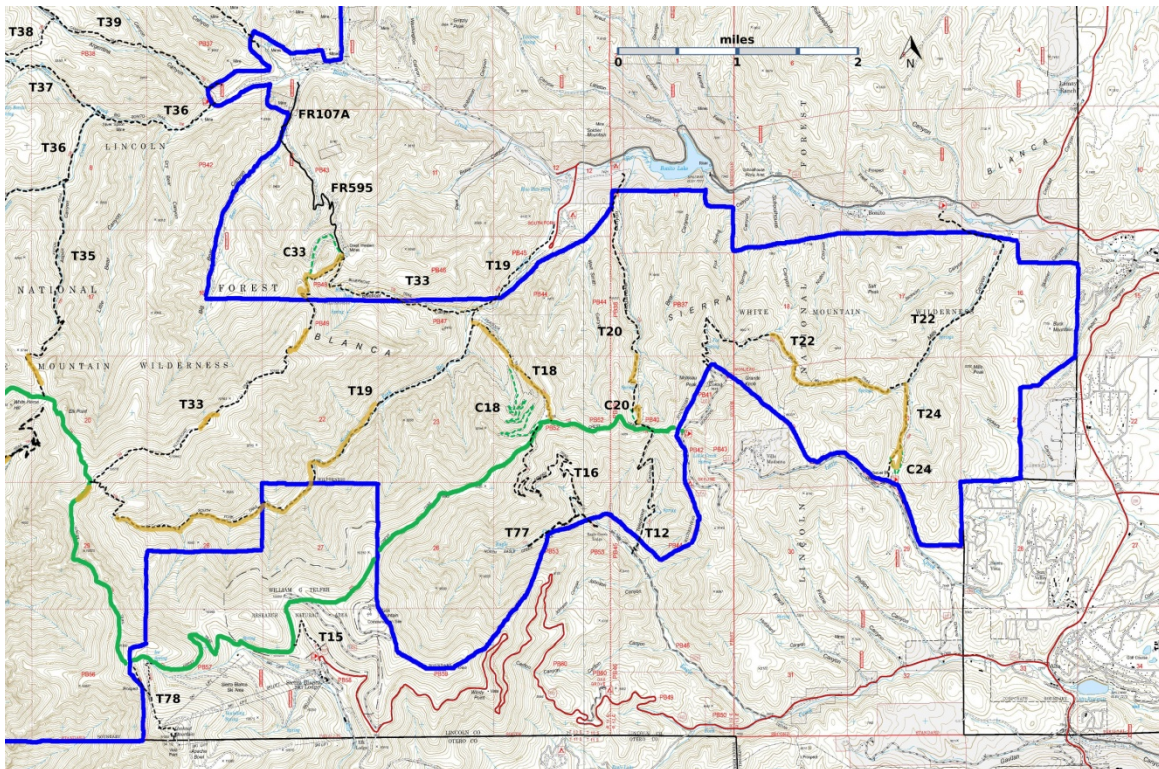
GPS Track (as .GPX)

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

T33 is now open.

LENGTH	ELEVATION	DIFFICULTY	SCENERY
5.3 miles	7780 - 10460 ft 2680 ft difference	Difficult	4

Allowed Usage				



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

T12, T15, T16, T18, T19, T20, T22, T24, T33, T35, T36 (partial), T37 (partial), T38, T39 (partial), T77, and T78 are shown as black dashed lines on the map. The solid blue line is the border of the White Mountain Wilderness. The solid green line is T25 Crest Trail. Yellow over

a trail indicates that that portion of the trail is intermittent or hard to follow. The map image may be downloaded through the White Mountain Wilderness link below. The image can then be expanded and/or manipulated at high resolution.

WARNING: The lower portion of this trail was badly damaged by the Little Bear Fire and subsequent heavy rains. It was closed to the public by Forest Service order, but is now open, with warnings about erosion, fallen and about-to-fall trees, and other hazards.

It is strongly suggested that one download the GPS track from the website and use it as a guide.

DESCRIPTION: This is a tough trail, but you should do it. The views from the ridge are spectacular, perhaps the best in the White Mountain Wilderness.

When John Stockert hiked T33 in 1994, it ran along the ridge and then turned directly down Bluefront Canyon. Later the portion of the trail near the upper end of the canyon was rerouted to follow an old mining road into Bluefront Canyon.. Finally, the 2012 Little Bear Fire burned in Bluefront Canyon but left the ridge relatively unscathed.

From the junction of T25 and T19 hike 125 feet to a T33 sign. Look to the northeast and locate a cairn on the ridge. Hike toward this cairn. Once you reach it, you will have intermittent tread and enough cairns to guide you along the ridge. At about mile 1.0, there is a knob with no obvious decent path – you can choose to go left, right, or straight over. On the other side there is a cairn. At about mile 2.3, in a meadow, there are three (deceptive) cairns close together. Do not hike to the cairns, but rather angle down along the side of the meadow and look for the trail tread that runs below the ridge. Stay on the ridge or below it on the right side. There is a switchback to te right at about mile 2.9. At about mile 3.4 a saddle is reached. T33 – with little visible tread ---goes downhill to the right and turns east to reach the next saddle. The better route is to take the old mining road that leads to the left out of the saddle (route C33-LM.gpx, shown as a green dashed line on the map). It is slightly longer, but is much easier to find and to hike.

The old Great Western mine is near the second saddle. Avoid the dangers associated with old mine pits and shafts. This is the end of the great distant views.

You now have another choice. You can follow the remainder of T33 1.4 miles to its junction with T19. From the second saddle, at an old fallen sign, there is a road that leads down into Bluefront Canyon. This is T33 and it eventually intersects T19. This trail is easy to follow (fallen trees have been severed) but there are some stretches with steep cross slopes. The dam that held Bluefront pond has been breached, and there are very few signs that the pond was ever there. As an alternative, you can descend from the second saddle 2.6 miles along FR595/FR107A (route C33-down.gpx) to Runnels' Stables on FR107, which can be reached by good roads. If you choose this old road route, the roads are easy to follow, with some fallen trees and small gullies to cross. Near the lower end of FR595, it crosses a steep-walled gully. You may wish to avoid this gully crossing by bushwhacking 100 yards along the left side to a much easier crossing.

To reach the lower trailhead of T33, hike 1.1 miles along T19. The T33 trailhead is not marked, but just before the junction of T19 and T19, on the left (south) side there is a wooden sign shown T19 in two directions. T33 angles of the to right side.

John Stockert’s Description (2002): “T33 branches off T19 about 0.9 miles up trail from Southfork Campground. The upper end of T33 is also signed from T19, just 125 feet from where T19 ties in with T 25. *Parts of T 33 are some of the least discernible and most difficult to follow of any found in this publication.* To hike T33, it is strongly recommended to start from its upper trailhead, after hiking up T19 from the campground. *Caution: allow two days for the loop trip.* From its upper end, the path follows a long ridge for 2.4 miles with incredible panoramic views. Along the first 1.1 miles, rock cairns generally provide adequate reference points for the path that may be hard to discern. Beyond that, the ridge includes several steep grades where the stony trail attains gradients up to 40%.

The most difficult section begins at mile 2.4 from the upper trailhead and is marked by three large cairns in close proximity. Beyond here, for the next 0.6 mile, the official route can be confused with elk trails as it passes through small openings and forest. Chances are good that those unfamiliar with the path will lose it several times. The key for finding the official route is to stay on the ridge, or just to the right (south) of it as one descends. Never go to the left side (out of sight) of the ridge, or you may end up hiking wildlife trails all the way down Bear Canyon, coming out at the horse stables along FR107, as I did!

At mile 3.0, the elusive trail section ends just to the right of the descending ridge, at the edge of a nice meadow. This is the largest open area along T 33 between the upper subalpine meadows and the lower trailhead. Soon the trail becomes obvious, as a constructed path with just one switchback, and passes through a meadow for several hundred feet.

At mile 3.5, the trail joins a narrow old mining road, one of three. If you explore any side roads or trails, observe "No Trespassing" signs for active operations, and privately owned land. *BE CAREFUL when looking around old diggings.* Small but quaint Bluefront Pond is at mile 4.0.”

ACCESS: To reach the lower trailhead from Smokey Bear Ranger District Office in Ruidoso, drive NM48 north 8.3 miles to the junction of NM37. Turn left and follow the paved road 1.3 miles to FR107, Rio Bonito Road. Turn left (signed Bonito Lake) and follow the narrow pavement 4.8 miles (past Bonito Lake) to a main road junction at a sign indicating Southfork Campground. Turn left and drive 0.5 mile through Southfork Campground to a dead end at the T19 trailhead. Hike T19 0.9 miles to the signed T33 trailhead.

GPS Coordinates for Key Points

NAD83	Lat/Lon hddd mm ss.s	UTM (13 S)
Junction of T19 and T33 (upper)	N33 25 10.8 W105 49 24.8	423431 3698116
Junction of T19 and T33 (lower)	N33 26 22.9 W105 45 54.4	428883 3700295

Links to Other Resources

[C33-LM.gpx](#)

[C33-down-LM.gpx](#)

[White Mountain Wilderness Trails-p1 \(11.3 MB\)](#)

[Burned Trails Map \(34 MB\)](#)

[WMW Forest Service Resource](#)

[Southfork Rio Bonito Trailhead \[1996 Information\]](#)

Last Hiked: 10/12/2020

2/7/2021