

Clear Creek Falls Trail

Cimarron Canyon State Park

Distance from Casa del Gavilan to trail head:

23 miles – 30 minute drive time

Trail length: 1¼ miles each way Total 3½ miles

Elevation gain: 700 feet

Difficulty: Easy to moderate. Good trail, but a steady climb.

Points of interest: Most of trail along Clear Creek. Several smaller waterfalls and scenic points along trail.

This is one of the best trails in the area for an enjoyable half-day hike. All other Cimarron State Park trails are closed during deer and elk calving season--May 15 through July 31. However, the Clear Creek Falls trail remains open during this time. The Clear Creek Falls trail may be closed during hunting season in the fall. Please call the Park ahead of time if you plan to hike the trail in the fall or early winter.

Cimarron Canyon State Park is very narrow, extending just a short distance along the Cimarron River and Highway 64. The trail quickly exits the park and enters the Colin Neblett Wildlife Area though you won't see any signs marking the transition. Some older trail guidebooks state that a GAIN pass is required to hike into the Colin Neblett Wildlife Area. This program is no longer valid so this permit is no longer required.

You'll need a \$5/vehicle Cimarron Canyon State Park Day Pass to access this trail. Stop at any of the several parking areas with pay stations along the Highway to obtain a Day Pass before arriving at the trail head. There is no pay station at the trail head. **Day Use Pass Entrance Permits must be placed on your vehicle dashboard so it is visible to Park Rangers at all times. Failure to display the permit could result in a citation.** If you purchase your permit online (see link below) and are unable to print your permit, please proceed first to a self-pay station in the park and follow the instructions found there for filling out a Self Pay Permit.

The climb is 700 feet (equivalent to a 70-story building) over 1¼ miles. The elevation starts at 7,850 feet so you'll probably want to stop often to enjoy the scenery--and catch your breath. It's less than two miles to the falls but with the climb, it seems longer. You'll want to allow at least 60-90 minutes for the hike to the falls, and a bit less for the return trip. Toilets are available at several areas along Cimarron Canyon State Park but not at the Clear Creek Falls trail head.

This trail is very popular and well-traveled, especially on weekends and during the summer months. If you want extra solitude, start as early in the morning as you can to get started before other hikers. Considering the heavy use of this trail, it is remarkably free of litter and other debris sometimes left by careless hikers.

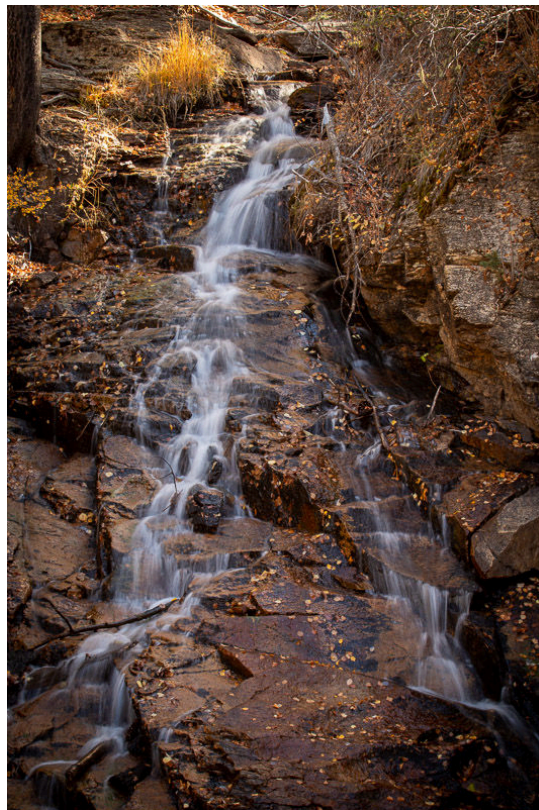
From Cimarron, follow Highway 64 for 22 miles west to mile marker 292. The parking area is right at the mile marker on the left (east) side of the highway if driving from Cimarron. Don't start the trails on either side of the large sign at the parking area. These are short trails to the Cimarron River and other nearby areas. Instead, walk north (back toward Cimarron) along the highway 250 feet to the far end of the guard rail, past the hollowed out log on the right. A trail sign clearly marks the start of the trail on the right at the end of the guard rail.

The trail is well-maintained and in good condition. Most of it is an easy walk though it does climb steadily up the canyon. There are a few areas where the trail crosses slanted rock surfaces that can be slippery and prove difficult for those with mobility issues. A few smaller waterfalls can be found below Clear Creek Falls so don't be fooled into stopping short of the main falls. In October of 2020, there were two trees down across the trail between the lower falls and the upper falls. From the look of things, the trees have been down across the trail for some time so they will probably still be there during your hike. The upper falls are not far beyond the two downed trees.

Once you reach the falls, small paths lead down to Clear Creek below the falls if you're a bit more adventurous. You can also cross Clear Creek above the falls and follow the path to an overlook on the southwest side of Clear Creek. Watch your step on any of these smaller paths as a slip could easily prove dangerous.

To purchase a day pass online: <https://newmexicostateparks.reserveamerica.com/unifSearch.do>

See also: <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SPD/cimarroncanyonstatepark.html>



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