

Goose Creek Trail

Carson National Forest – Red River, New Mexico

Distance from Casa del Gavilan to trail head:

46 miles – 60 minutes

Trail length: 11.7 miles round trip

Elevation change: 3,261 feet

Difficulty: Moderate - Difficult

Points of interest: Beautiful trail along

No passes or fees are required in Carson National Forest



This is a difficult hike along a very good trail, but worth it when you finally reach Goose Lake--a high alpine lake at timber line. There is also a 4-wheel drive road to the lake if you're not up to the hike. The trail follows Goose Creek and passes a ruined cabin and mine along the route.

Directions to the Trail Head:

Take Hwy 38 thru Bobcat Pass into Red River.

At Red River Stables turn left (south) onto Highway 578

About ½ mile on the right is Goose Lake Road. This is the bottom of the jeep road up to Goose Lake

Proceed PAST Goose Lake Road another 1 ½ miles (2 miles total from Red River Stables) to the gravel parking area for the Goose Lake Trail Head on the right. Park in the large gravel parking area at the trail head.

The Trail (trail notes from June 2018):

Cross the bridge and the trail turns left along the river (avoid the private property straight ahead and to the right). The trail will follow Red River a short distance before turning right--up the canyon to follow Goose Creek. As the trail starts up the canyon, you'll come to a gate with a pass-thru on the right side. You'll come across what little is left of the Golden Goose gold mine (1922) at 10,322 feet on the left ¾ miles up the trail.

The trail is very easy to follow for the first 3 miles or so - until you come to an area where a large tree is blown down along the trail. Bear left around the tree and pick up the trail on the far side of the tree just before it crosses to the left side of the trail. If you go around the right side of the downed tree, you may overshoot the river crossing and lose the trail. Further up the trail, you'll come to a larger blow-down area that blocks the trail for quite a distance. Again, keep to the left between the blow-down and the creek. Once past the blow-down, angle to the right--away from Goose Creek--to again pick up the trail which remains on the right (northwest) side of Goose Creek. NOTE: Posts from other hikers in 2020 indicate these blow-down areas have been cleared from the trail, which will be a huge help in staying on the proper trail.

As the trail gets within a half mile of Goose Lake, it splinters in many directions and becomes difficult to follow. You'll come to a large meadow with Goose Creek running through the center. Bear to the right (northwest) of the meadow for the most direct route to Goose Lake. If you plan to return on the trail, note your route or follow your GPS on the return to reestablish your route on the trail for the return. The jeep road comes in from the northwest so you can't get lost since, if you go too far northwest, you'll come to the jeep road, if this is the case, follow the road left--(or uphill) to the Goose Lake parking area.

The jeep road (Goose Lake Road--or Road #486) down is about 7¼ miles and passes several old mining cabins and at least one mine carved into rock on the side of the road. The road is hot, steep, dusty, and extremely rocky in areas which results in a great deal of slipping and sliding down the road. Hiking the road is not recommended. If you do want to hike the road to see the cabin ruins, it would be much safer to hike up the road and return back down the trail. The distance from the Goose Lake Road to the Goose Lake Trail Head is 1½ miles along Hwy 578. This can be a long, hot walk after an already long day. A round trip up the road and back down the trail would be about 15 miles.

It could be a bit difficult to find the trail at Goose Lake to hike back down. There is a sign post on the east side of the lake, south of the parking area, that marks the location of the trail. However the trail is splintered near the lake and may be difficult to follow until northeast of the meadow and/or further down the canyon.

The trail follows (more or less) Goose Creek all the way to the lake. I hiked the trail after a prolonged drought and there was still plenty of water flowing in Goose Creek to use for drinking water, if necessary. The trail is a bit muddy in areas even after a long drought. It might be considerably muddier in some areas during rainy weather. There is some brush along the trail at the lower altitudes but shorts would be ok to wear as the trail is fairly clear along most of the route. A porta-john is available at the parking area near Goose Lake. Allow 3-4 hours to hike the trail each way. The trail is a little steeper than ideal at 9.9% but the grade is remarkably consistent over the entire route as you can see on the profile.

<http://www.trailsoffroad.com/trails/1588-goose-lake#waypoint-3>

<https://www.summitpost.org/goose-lake-trail-66/158218>

Goose Creek Trail #65

Red River, NM ★★★★★

