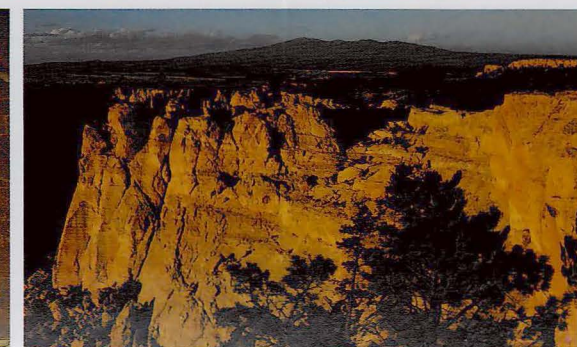
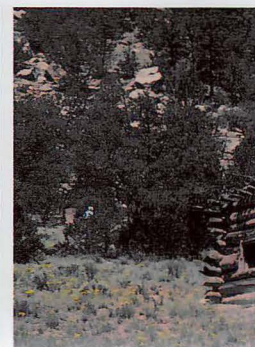
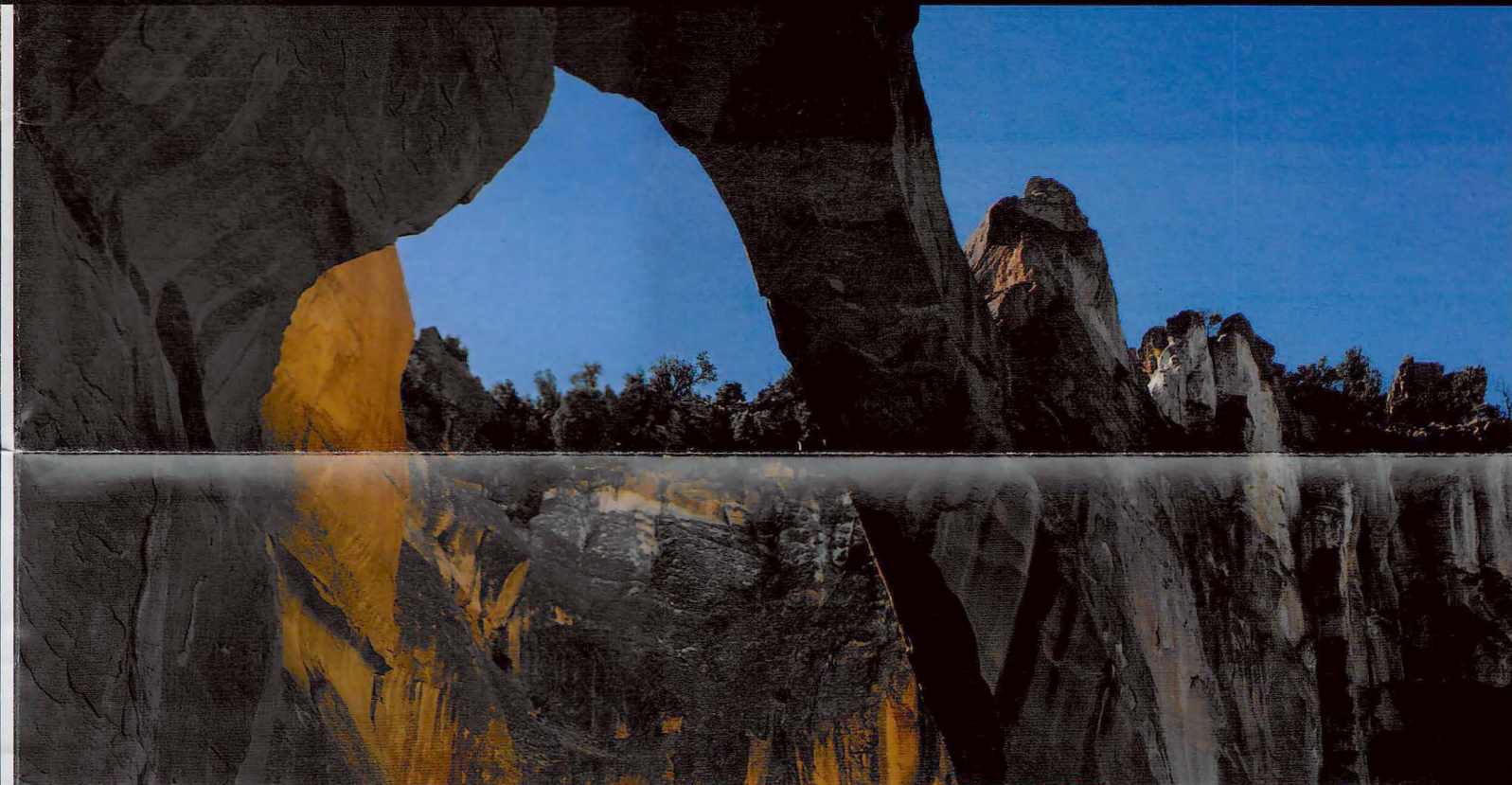


El Malpais

Official Map and Guide

El Malpais National Monument
El Malpais National Conservation Area
New Mexico

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Bureau of Land Management



As flowing masses of hot lava cooled, large lava tube caves were formed. One lava tube system extends 17 miles at El Malpais.

George H.H. Huey

Despite seasonal heat, some lava tubes contain ice all year round.

Despite its badlands character, the landscape knows its share of flowers in season and after periods of rain.

Laurence Parent

Homesteading increased as a result of the Great Depression. Newcomers attempted to wrest a living from a challenging environment.

In the Cebolla Wilderness and other areas, petroglyphs tell of ancient human presence.

Laurence Parent

Sandstone bluffs afford excellent viewpoints, even for motorists, high above El Malpais lava flows.

Laurence Parent

Where Sharp Lava Meets Smooth Sandstone

In satellite photo images of New Mexico, lava flows blanketing much of El Malpais National Monument and National Conservation Area look like a huge lake southwest of Grants. The imagery betrays only dominant landscape features—lava flows, mountain ranges, mesas—that in reality mask a myriad of mysteries and wonders. El Malpais means “the badlands” in the Spanish language and is most commonly pronounced *ell-mal-pie-ees*. Its volcanic features include jagged spatter cones, a lava tube cave system extending at least 17 miles, and fragile ice caves. There is much good in these badlands; the area offers diverse natural environments and tantalizing evidence of American Indian and European history. More than mere artifacts, these cultural resources are kept alive by the spiritual and physical presence of contemporary Indian groups, including the Puebloan peoples of Acoma, Laguna, and Zuni, and the Ramah Navajo. These American Indians made their homes here and continue their traditional uses.

Paradoxically, the malpais landscape is at once primal, pristine, ancient, and surprisingly modern. Here is a living remnant of the Old Southwest approaching the 21st century as virtual *terra incognita* or unknown lands. With continuing research, new knowledge is revealed. Lava that poured out of McCarty’s Cone established a new land surface 2,000 to 3,000 years ago. Elsewhere, ancient Douglas-fir trees thrive in the midst of rugged lava terrain. The diversity of life tells a story of unique adaptation to a challenging environment. Past and present, myth and reality mix here and will continue to mix for centuries to come.

Many landscape features in El Malpais bear Hawaiian names because early scientific knowledge of volcanoes was developed in the Hawaiian islands. Kipukas are undisturbed areas that lava flows encircled but did not cover. These ecological islands of vegetation are living remnants of native plant and animal com-

munities. Study of these kipukas will provide benchmark information for restoring disturbed portions of El Malpais. Lava types bear Hawaiian names, too. Smoother, ropy-textured lavas are pahoehoe, pronounced *pah-hoy-hoy*. Sharp, jagged lavas that rip up all but the sturdiest hiking boots are aa, pronounced *ah-ah*. By studying active volcanoes, geologists can determine how similar features formed at El Malpais.

For more than 10,000 years people have interacted with the El Malpais landscape. While truly ancient Indian artifacts have been found, peak human occupation occurred between 950 and 1350. During this time, El Malpais was at the fringe of a political and economic system centered in Chaco Canyon, 80 miles to the north. As participants in this system, the ancestors of modern Puebloans, called “Anasazi” by archeologists, established outlier communities along the edges of the lava flows. When the Chacoan

system collapsed in the late 1100s, these outlying communities continued to thrive. Although the Anasazi left El Malpais by the mid-1300s, they did not disappear. From here they moved to the Acoma area and established a new homeland. In 1540 Coronado’s expedition encountered 2 major Indian pueblos—Zuni and Acoma—flanking El Malpais. When New Mexico became a U.S. territory in 1848, Anglo explorers saw El Malpais as little more than a hindrance to travel. Anglos did not move into El Malpais in significant numbers until the 1920s, before the Great Depression. Many were homesteaders or sheepherders escaping the flood of immigration to other parts of the West.

Throughout time El Malpais has been an unrelenting challenge for Indian, Spanish, and Anglo travelers. Today, ancient trails serve as reminders of the perseverance of those who crossed this rugged landscape.

Cover photos of jagged lava flow (left) and La Ventana Natural Arch by Laurence Parent.

Visitor Services

El Malpais, N. Mex., lies in the high desert lands south of Interstate 40 midway between Albuquerque and Gallup. To the east are reservation lands of the Laguna and Acoma Indians; to the west are those of the Zuni and Ramah Navajo.

The National Park Service (NPS) administers El Malpais National Monument, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers El Malpais National Conservation Area. These agencies operate a visitor center in Grants. The BLM also has a visitor center 9 miles south of Interstate 40 on State Road 117.

For more information write to National Park Service, P.O. Box 939, Grants, NM 87020, or Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 846, Grants, NM 87020.

Road access to the national monument and national conservation area is via State Roads 53 and 117 and County Road 42, which links the state roads on the west and south of the area. Use high-clearance vehicles off the state routes; 4-wheel-drive vehicles are not generally required. Dirt roads may be impassable when wet.

Note: all vehicles are restricted to existing, designated roads. In wilderness areas both vehicles and mechanized equipment are prohibited. Some 85 percent of the national monument has been found suitable for ultimate designation as wilderness.

In the NPS-managed national monument, cattle grazing continues through 1997, from which time the land will be kept as near its natural condition as possible. In the BLM-managed conservation area, hunting and trapping are allowed and cattle grazing will continue.

Motels, camping, food, and other travel services and facilities are available in and near Grants, N. Mex. Make your first stop at the visitor center in Grants to obtain maps, books, and other publications about the area. Rangers can answer questions about your visit, including road conditions and points of interest.

Cultural Traditions

Southwestern American Indians have deep ties to El Malpais. The lands have figured in Acoma, Laguna, Zuni, and Ramah Navajo cultures for thousands of years. Their ancestral uses—gathering herbs and medicines, paying respect, and renewing ties—continue today. Protection of these lands ensures the continuation of traditions that are an integral element of this region’s cultural diversity.

Exploring El Malpais

Many points of interest can be reached by or from area roads. Ask at visitor centers about maps and brochures describing these areas. Always check on local road and trail conditions.

Sandstone Bluffs Overlook An easy drive leads to a ridge of sandstone offering excellent vistas of El Malpais lava flows and surrounding countryside.

La Ventana Natural Arch Largest of New Mexico’s readily accessible natural arches. La Ventana was eroded from sandstone dating back to the age of dinosaurs. See large photo, above right.

Cebolla Wilderness East of State Road 117 lie some 62,000 acres of forested rimrock country, the Cebolla Wilderness. This area is rich in prehistoric petroglyphs and historic homesteads.

The Narrows Where lava flowed near the base of 500-foot-high sandstone cliffs, State Road 117 threads a narrow corridor. Intriguing lava formations reward exploration of the McCarty’s Lava Flow in this area.

Zuni-Acoma Trail Formerly an ancient Anasazi trail, this trail follows a trade route between Zuni and Acoma Pueblos. A trail guide leaflet

is available for this hike (7.5 miles one way) that crosses 4 of the area’s 5 major lava flows.

El Calderon Area Forested and offering year-round opportunities for exploration, El Calderon includes Junction Cave, Twin Craters Lava Flow, Double Sinks, El Calderon cinder cone, sandstone formations, and a bat cave. **Do not enter the bat cave or otherwise disturb the bats.**

Big Tubes Area Lava tubes can be huge. If you include its collapsed sections, this tube system is 17 miles long. A trail

marked by cairns leads to two caves, Big Skylight and Four Windows. High-clearance vehicles are required to reach the Big Tubes area.

Chain of Craters Hot lava below the surface found a weak area here and created a rift lined by 30 cinder cones.

West Malpais Wilderness Lava surrounds a large ponderosa pine parkland here known as Hole-in-the-Wall. Mechanized access is prohibited.

Hiking & Camping

Hiking trails exist in several areas of El Malpais. Most are marked with rock cairns; some are dirt trails. Extreme caution should be taken at the edge of collapses. Falls on lava can cause nasty cuts and abrasions. Hikers must have sturdy boots on the rugged, often sharp lavas. Leather work gloves are helpful on lava and in caves. Carry one gallon of water per person per day in summer; do not drink surface water.

All overnight use requires a free backcountry use permit available at the visitor centers.

Safety & Other Considerations

Travel Conditions and Courtesy When roads are wet, travel is discouraged on dirt roads that normally require high-clearance vehicles. Check at the visitor center for current conditions.

Cave Safety Never go caving alone. Hard hats, boots, protective clothing, gloves, water, and 3 sources of light are necessary when entering lava tubes. Please be careful.

Plants and Animals El Malpais is home to seldom seen poisonous scorpions and rattlesnakes. Nonpoisonous bullsnakes sometimes act like rattle-

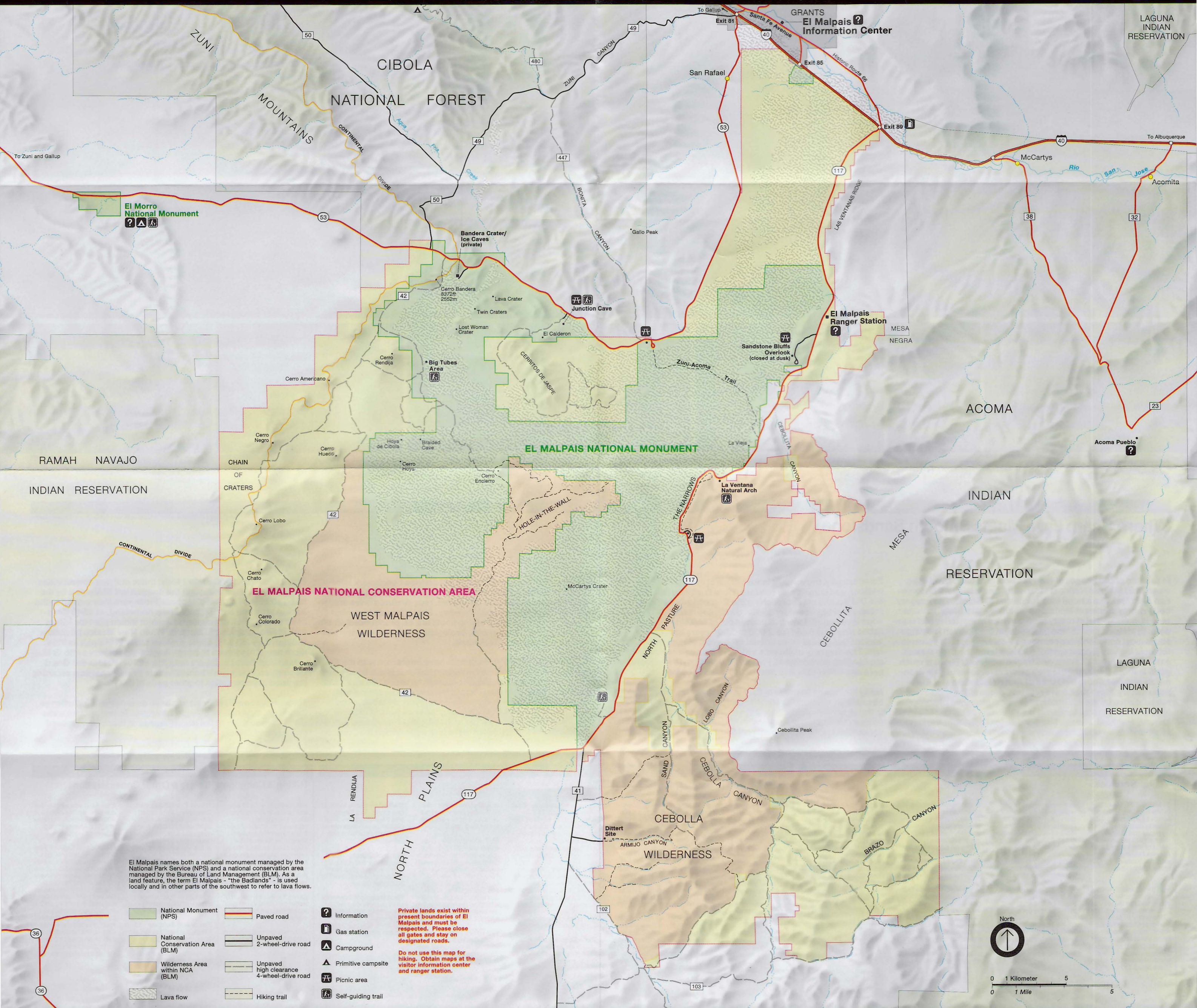
snakes. If you encounter a snake, do not disturb it. Also avoid cactus spines and the sharp-edged leaves of yucca.

Natural and Cultural Features All natural and cultural features are protected by law. Do not disturb them. Leave archaeological and other artifacts in place; they provide important information about the past. All plants and animals are protected by law in the national monument. Hunting and trapping in the national conservation area require state licenses, and all state regulations apply.

El Malpais

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El Malpais names both a national monument managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and a national conservation area managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). As a land feature, the term El Malpais - "the Badlands" - is used locally and in other parts of the southwest to refer to lava flows.

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|----------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| National Monument (NPS) | Paved road | Information |
| National Conservation Area (BLM) | Unpaved 2-wheel-drive road | Gas station |
| Wilderness Area within NCA (BLM) | Unpaved high clearance 4-wheel-drive road | Campground |
| Lava flow | Hiking trail | Primitive campsite |
| | | Picnic area |
| | | Self-guiding trail |

Private lands exist within present boundaries of El Malpais and must be respected. Please close all gates and stay on designated roads.
 Do not use this map for hiking. Obtain maps at the visitor information center and ranger station.

