

Curecanti Creek Trail

by Dave Cooper



At the water's edge

Located in the Curecanti National Recreation Area, the Curecanti Creek Trail offers a pleasant outing with excellent views of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison River.

Starting on the north rim at Pioneer Lookout Point, the well-maintained trail descends steeply for 900 feet to the river, a tranquil spot to enjoy lunch. This time of year is perhaps the best to enjoy this trail, as during the summer the strenuous climb back to the rim can be very hot. Even in this season, remember to carry plenty of drinking water.

A view of the Curecanti Needle from Pioneer Point.jpg

Getting to the Trailhead: From the junction of Highway 50 and Highway 92, 40 miles east of Montrose and 27 miles west of Gunnison, take Highway 92 across the Blue Mesa Dam and continue for 5.7 miles to the Pioneer Point parking area. No entrance fee is charged at this location. Pets are allowed, on a leash.

By the way, Highway 50 has a reputation for being a dangerous road to drive, due to the large deer population. It is especially bad at this time of year and requires extra care when driving between dusk and dawn.

Hike Statistics: From Pioneer Lookout Point to the river, the trail drops almost 900 feet in approximately 1.7 miles one way.

Difficulty: The National Park Service describes this hike as strenuous.

USGS Quad: A Park map is probably sufficient for this well-signed trail. Maps can be printed from the web at <http://www.nps.gov/cure/index.htm>.



Hike Description

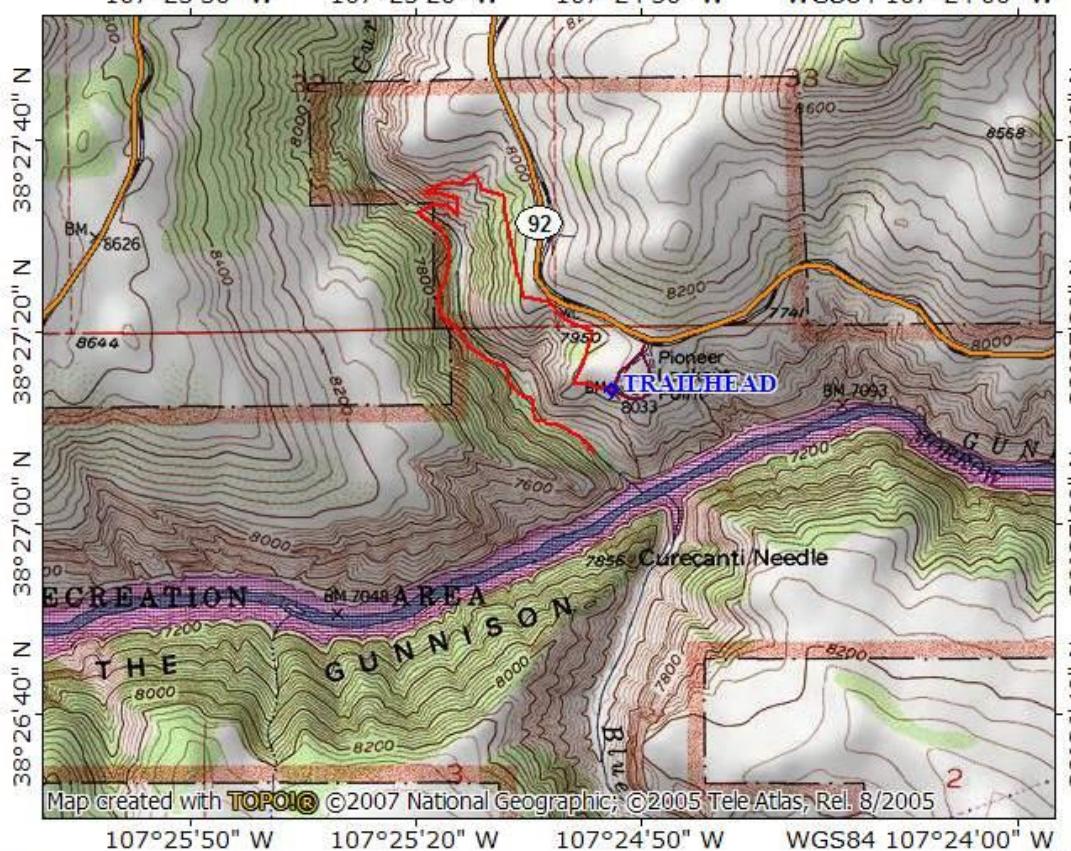
From the parking area take a few minutes to visit the lookout points, which provide good views into the canyon. The rock pinnacle across the river is a feature known as the Curecanti Needle. Information signs at the overlooks provide information on the geology and history of the area. The trail to Curecanti Creek is well marked as it heads generally northwest across the flats before starting its steep, switchbacking descent towards the creek.

Once the trail reaches the creek it follows the drainage southeast towards the main canyon. As you drop into the depths of the canyon, the steep walls towering above are quite dramatic. You can see why the walls of the Black Canyon are favored by rock climbers, since they offer many options for difficult ascents.

There are picnic tables, toilets and even a couple of backcountry campsites near the bottom of the canyon.

TOPO! map printed on 10/10/07 from "Untitled1.tpo"

107°25'50" W 107°25'20" W 107°24'50" W WGS84 107°24'00" W



107°25'50" W 107°25'20" W 107°24'50" W WGS84 107°24'00" W



0.0 0.5 1.0 miles
0.0 0.5 1.0 km

TN MN
10½
10/10/07

GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)

TRAILHEAD: 38,27,14N / 107,24,54W, 8038 feet

