

**RV TRIPGEN**

The Complete Guide to  
RV Travel in  
**New Mexico**

Speed limits, towing rules, NPS reservations, monsoon windows, tribal access,  
and everything else you need to know before you cross the state line.

2026 Edition | Last verified: 25 April 2026

**[rvtripgen.com](https://rvtripgen.com)**

# RV travel in New Mexico

New Mexico is one of the most under-rated RV states in the West. Carlsbad Caverns, White Sands, Bandelier, Chaco Canyon, the Sangre de Cristos, and the Gila are all within a comfortable two-week loop. Distances are real -- US-285 between Carlsbad and Santa Rosa is 200 miles of essentially nothing -- but the state is well-paved, fuel is reasonable, and dispersed camping on the Gila, Santa Fe, and Lincoln National Forests is excellent. The two real planning constraints are summer monsoon thunderstorms (Jul-Sep) that flood low arroyos within minutes, and the high-altitude winter window when most of the northern half is snowy and the southern half is fine. Plan around both and New Mexico is excellent value.

## New Mexico by the numbers

<b>Boondocking + dispersed sites</b>	1,034
<b>Established campgrounds</b>	329
<b>Dump stations</b>	58
<b>Propane refills</b>	61
<b>Potable water fill-ups</b>	172
<b>Laundromats</b>	66
<b>RV showers</b>	43
<b>Verified-bad spots (overnight prohibited)</b>	30

Source: iOverlander community database (73% of New Mexico spots verified in the last 24 months).

## Driving rules

<b>Interstate (cars)</b>	75 mph
<b>Interstate (trucks + towing)</b>	75 mph (no separate truck/towing reduction)
<b>US/State highway (cars)</b>	65-70 mph (posted)
<b>US/State highway (towing)</b>	65 mph
<b>Built-up areas</b>	25-35 mph (posted)
<b>Drive on</b>	Right
<b>RV passenger seatbelts</b>	Required for all front-seat occupants; under-18s in all seats
<b>Cell phone use while driving</b>	Hand-held banned for all drivers since 2024; text-ban since 2014

## Highways

### RV-friendly corridors

Highway	Note
I-25	Albuquerque north to Santa Fe, Las Vegas (NM), Raton and on to Colorado. Big-rig friendly; Raton Pass (7,834 ft) at the CO line is the only sustained grade.
I-40	Old Route 66 corridor across the state through Albuquerque and Gallup. Heavy truck traffic; wind exposure between Tucumcari and Albuquerque.
I-10	Southwestern corner via Las Cruces and Deming. Easy.
US-285	Carlsbad north through Roswell and Santa Fe. Long fuel gaps; monsoon flood-risk in the Pecos Valley.
US-54	Tucumcari southwest through Alamogordo to El Paso. Empty, fast.
US-64 / US-84 / NM-68	Northern arts loop through Taos, Chama, Tierra Amarilla. Beautiful, busy in summer. NM-68 Espanola-Taos has heavy traffic and one tight stretch through the Rio Grande Gorge approach.

### RV-restricted segments

Segment	Restriction
NM-475 (Hyde Park Rd, Santa Fe to ski area)	Steep narrow climb to 10,000+ ft. Trailers over 25 ft strongly discouraged.
US-82 La Luz Canyon (Cloudcroft descent)	6% grades and a length-restricted tunnel near Alamogordo. Check current bridge/tunnel restrictions.
High Road to Taos (NM-76/NM-503)	Scenic but narrow and tight through villages; not recommended for rigs over 35 ft. Use NM-68 instead.
NM-15 to Gila Cliff Dwellings	44 miles of switchbacks; RVs over 24 ft and trailers prohibited. Park in Silver City, day-trip in.

## Mountain passes

Pass	Elevation	Note
Raton Pass (I-25)	7834 ft	NM-CO border; interstate-standard. Chains/M+S may be required Oct-Apr.
Glorieta Pass (I-25)	7500 ft	East of Santa Fe; gentle interstate grades.
La Bajada Hill (I-25)	6373 ft	Steep descent from Santa Fe toward Albuquerque; brake-check signs.
Cumbres Pass (NM-17)	10022 ft	Closed in winter.

Bobcat Pass (US-64)	9820 ft	Between Eagle Nest and Red River; chains Oct-Apr.
Capulin Pass (US-64)	7448 ft	Between Cimarron and Eagle Nest.
Cloudcroft (US-82)	8676 ft	Long 6% climb from Alamogordo; descent is the harder direction. Tunnel restriction near top.

## National parks + monuments

National Park / Monument	Entry fee	Reservation note
Carlsbad Caverns NP	\$15/person (3 days), \$80 America the Beautiful annual	No camping in the park. Carlsbad RV Park in town; White's City closer. Cavern tours: self-guided free with entry, ranger-guided book ahead at recreation.gov.
White Sands NP	\$25/vehicle (7 days)	No developed camping; backcountry permit only (\$3/person). Stay in Alamogordo or Oliver Lee State Park nearby. Note: military missile-range closures can shut the park with little notice -- check whitesandsmissilerange.com schedule.
Bandelier NM	\$25/vehicle (7 days)	Juniper Campground first-come; RVs to 40 ft but tight. Shuttle required from White Rock visitor center mid-May through mid-Oct -- you can't drive to Frijoles Canyon in summer.
Chaco Culture NHP	\$25/vehicle (7 days)	Access road is 13 miles of rough washboard -- punishing on trailers, sometimes impassable in mud. Gallo Campground reservable via recreation.gov, RVs to 35 ft (tight maneuvering; some sites won't fit big rigs).
Aztec Ruins NM	Free entry	No camping. Aztec or Farmington for RV options.
El Malpais NM	Free entry	Joe Skeen Campground (BLM, free) primitive; no hookups, RVs to 30 ft.
El Morro NM	Free entry	Small first-come campground; RVs to 27 ft.
Fort Union NM	Free entry	Day-use only; nearest RV in Las Vegas (NM).
Gila Cliff Dwellings NM	Free entry	No RV camping on-site (see NM-15 access restriction). Lower Scorpion / Upper Scorpion USFS campgrounds nearby.
Capulin Volcano NM	Free entry	Day-use only.
Pecos NHP	Free entry	Day-use only.
Salinas Pueblo Missions NM	Free entry	Day-use only across 3 separate units.
Valles Caldera NPRES	\$25/vehicle (7 days)	No camping; day-use only at this point.

## State parks

New Mexico operates 35+ state parks. Many have RV sites with electric, several with full hookups: Elephant Butte (largest), Caballo Lake, Brantley Lake, Oliver Lee, City of Rocks, Heron Lake, Eagle Nest. Reservable up to 6 months ahead via [nmparks.com](http://nmparks.com). Non-resident camping \$14-25/night with electric, \$4-8/night primitive -- among the cheapest state parks in the country. Annual day-use pass \$40 non-resident.

## Boondocking + dispersed camping

**BLM:** New Mexico BLM concentrates in the southern and western parts of the state -- around Las Cruces, the Bootheel, the Gila foothills, and the Farmington/Bisti badlands area. Free 14-day dispersed camping is the default. Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness is hike-in only but the parking-area boondock is popular. Most BLM access roads are rough -- high-clearance recommended.

**National Forest:** Gila, Lincoln, Cibola, Santa Fe, and Carson National Forests cover most of the mountains. Free dispersed camping along forest roads; 14-day limits, generally 2-week-rest in between. Popular FR areas around Cloudcroft (Lincoln NF), Jemez Springs (Santa Fe NF), and the Gila Wilderness fringes (Gila NF). Fire restrictions Mar-Jul most years; sometimes year-round in drought.

**Stay limit:** 14 days at any one location (federal rule, applies to BLM and NF dispersed).

## Tribal lands

New Mexico has 23 sovereign Native nations: 19 Pueblos (including Acoma, Taos, Zuni, Santa Clara), the Mescalero Apache, Jicarilla Apache, and chunks of the Navajo Nation. Many Pueblos restrict access for ceremonies on specific feast days and prohibit photography year-round. Dispersed camping on tribal land is generally not permitted without explicit permission. Several Pueblos and the Mescalero operate well-run RV parks with hookups (Ohkay Owingeh, Sky City Casino). Check each Pueblo's current visitor rules -- they change.

## Propane, dump stations, fuel

**Propane:** Reliable in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Las Cruces, Roswell, Farmington, Carlsbad, and along I-25/I-40. Sparse along US-285 between Carlsbad and Santa Rosa, US-54 north of Alamogordo, NM-68 between Espanola and Taos in winter (some seasonal closures), and the Gila access via NM-152 and NM-15. U-Haul reliable; many small-town hardware stores do refills if you ask.

**Dump stations:** State parks all have free dumps for paid guests; New Mexico state parks are unusually generous on overnight camping and dump-station access. Flying J / Pilot stops along I-25 and I-40 charge \$10-15. Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces all have multiple commercial options. Most KOAs and Good Sam parks dump for guests.

**Fuel:** Diesel widely available along interstates and most US highways. Long gaps to watch: US-285 between Carlsbad and Roswell (90 miles, station hours unreliable), US-285 Vaughn to Encino (40 miles, sometimes no diesel at Vaughn), US-380 White Sands missile-range stretch (60+ miles), and the Bisti/Farmington back roads. Carry an extra 5 gallons off-interstate. New Mexico fuel taxes mid-range; Texas slightly cheaper if you're crossing east.

## Weather windows

**Best months:** April-May and September-November for the whole state. Daytime highs 65-85 F in the shoulder seasons; nights cool in the mountains.

**Avoid:** July through early September in the south (Carlsbad, Las Cruces, White Sands): daytime 100+ F and afternoon thunderstorms. December-February in the north (Santa Fe, Taos, Chama): snow on I-25 north of Santa Fe and US-64 closes regularly. Spring (Mar-Apr) windy and dust-stormy across the eastern plains.

### Climate caution

New Mexico monsoon afternoons (mid-Jul through early Sep) drop walls of water on dry arroyos and slot canyons in minutes. Never park overnight in a wash, never cross a flowing arroyo, and avoid Chaco Canyon's access road during or after rain -- the washboard turns to soup.

## Emergency + road conditions

### State patrol

Dial #SP (#77) from a cell phone for New Mexico State Police non-emergency; 911 for emergencies

### Road conditions

<https://nmroads.com>

## How RV TripGen helps

### Monsoon arroyo flag

RV Tripgen flags any New Mexico overnight stop in or near an arroyo or wash between mid-July and mid-September and proposes higher-ground alternates.

### Tribal-feast-day route check

RV Tripgen checks Pueblo feast-day closures (San Geronimo, Santiago, Christmas dances) against your route and proposes alternate days for ceremonies that close roads or restrict photography.