

Paseo del Bosque Tour

Parking: at Rio Bravo Blvd and Poco Loco, near underpass under Rio Bravo
Hispanic Cultural Center

Parking lot off Tingley Drive one block west of 8th St. at Marquez St.

Parking lots around Tingley Beach Lakes

Parking lot off Central just southwest of Biopark Botanical Garden

Parking lot at west end of Gabaldon Place

At Rio Grande Nature Center (fee lot) and along Candelaria Rd.

Parking lot across Montañño Bridge next to tree sculpture garden

Parking lot across Paseo del Norte Bridge's bicycle/pedestrian lane (at Frontage Road and Alamo Farm Road)

Large parking lot just east of Alameda Bridge (for both Alameda Open Space and Bachechi Park Open Space)



The Paseo del Bosque is one of Albuquerque's jewels, paralleling for most of its course our primeval gem, the Rio Grande. "Bosque" is the Spanish word for "woods," in this case the specific woods accompanying the river, said to be the largest concentration of cottonwoods anywhere. And "paseo" means "passage".

The trail is heavily used by cyclists, but also by walkers,

runners, skaters, and dog-walkers. Including the loop at the south end of the Paseo del Bosque, the trail is 19.1 miles long; without it, 13.7 miles.

Although many cyclists forget about the loop at the south end of this trail, the loop provides impressive views of an industrial portion of Albuquerque, as well as the massive concrete-lined ditches of the Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority – the South Diversion Channel, which runs into the Tijeras Channel and then into the Rio Grande. If you'd like to see a good map of the complex ditch system, here and in the rest of the metro area, go to

<http://www.amafca.org/images/maintmap.pdf>.

You can travel in either direction around the loop; we'll take you counterclockwise from Rio Bravo Blvd. at the river to Mountain View School to near Broadway and Rio Bravo Blvd. and then back along Rio Bravo to the north-heading trail at the river. This loop is unshaded for its entire extent (except under Second St.), so it is lightly used on hot days, except by bicycle racers. Part of the loop could also be used as a route south to continue on Second St., or, begun in a clockwise direction, as a route from Rio Bravo at the river to the I-25 interchange up the hill and on to Mesa del Sol. The loop is sometimes called the Tour de Junque, for all the auto junkyards along the way, and also as the Breaking Bad Loop, for many surrounding sites used during the making of the television series of that name. There's some of the industrial and some of the rural about the loop; the sandhill cranes seen along the west part of the loop seem to enjoy it as well.

A Historic Route Through Historic Communities

Much of the Paseo del Bosque passes through or alongside communities that have existed for hundreds of years. Before the extensive water "mining" that began when Albuquerque spread east and west beyond the flood plain of the Rio Grande, it was necessary to live near the river to obtain drinking water and water for agricultural crops. Native American settlers and later Hispanic settlers built extensive networks of drainage ditches and *acequias* on both sides of the Rio Grande, but these ditches had no way of ascending the mesas on either side of the river.

The Spanish settlers of the 18th century were not the first humans to inhabit what has become the Albuquerque South Valley and North Valley. It is estimated that there were 12 to 14 Pueblo Indian villages in this area when Coronado and his men came through in 1540. That in itself underplays the long history of pre-Hispanic human settlement here; the village of Los Ranchos in the North Valley is said to alone contain between 30 and 40 paleo-Indian sites, and Valley residents not infrequently find artifacts when tilling their yards or digging swimming pools. But most of these Native American villages were abandoned by their inhabitants before the Spanish arrived or displaced by the Spanish when they occupied the valley; they migrated north or south or west to join other Indian Pueblos.

The string of villages from Los Padillas in the south (south and west of where we have chosen to start this narrative) to Alameda in the north have become more and more integrated into a single metropolitan area, but many remain as vibrant, cohesive communities in their own right, with traditional community customs and celebrations that have persisted from Spanish and Mexican times.

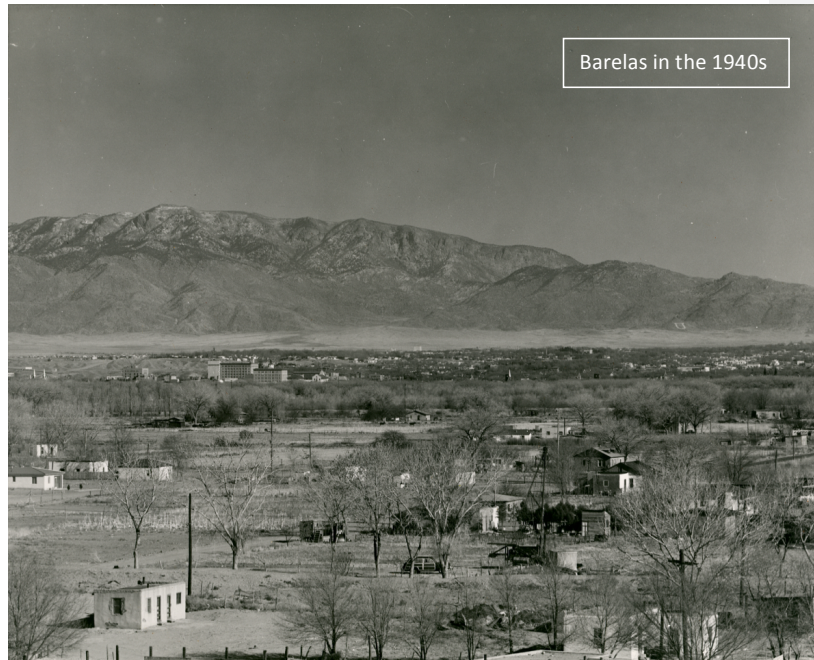
The southern end of the Paseo del Bosque passes through an area that was not heavily inhabited until recent years – at the southern end of the valley near Albuquerque, most of the settlements, such as Los Padillas, Los Pajaritos and Atrisco, lay on the west side of the Rio Grande. Like the villages that grew up along the river north of the small plaza of Albuquerque, these were farming communities, raising some livestock along with subsistence crops. Although many of the fields that provided fodder for animals and rows for crops have been filled with houses and businesses, some truck gardening and sheep- and cattle-raising persists both north and south of the city.

Just to the south of the downtown area lies Barelás, a large community that grew up astride an important river crossing. For centuries, the river here was forded by Native Americans and Hispanic travelers north and south along El Camino Real, running from Durango, Mexico to Santa Fe. The ford was succeeded after the Civil War by a human-powered ferry (ferry workers waded the river, pulling the flat-bottomed ferry from side to side) and finally by the first of several bridges in 1876. Not long after that first bridge, the railroad came to Albuquerque, bisecting the Barelás fields before it crossed the river south of town. The railroad brought both disadvantages and advantages: it caused the loss of agricultural lands, but it also brought jobs; at its peak during World War II, some 1500 Barelás residents worked in the railroad shops on the east side of the community.

Automobiles came next, making Barelás a thoroughfare for both north-south traffic along what became US-85 and for east-west travel along US-66. Both routes eventually bypassed the area, but not before a commercial area grew up along Fourth Street south of Albuquerque (or Alburquerque when it was first founded in 1706) – antique diners,

gas stations, churches, and motels can be found not far from the bike trail along Fourth Street. When the main travel routes left Barelás and the railroad shops closed by the 1950s, south Fourth Street began to decline, but it is enjoying a revival, in part brought on by the National Hispanic Cultural Center, built near Fourth and Bridge Streets and opened in the year 2000 (see below).

The West Mesa of Albuquerque rises steeply above the river north of the city, whereas the land east of the Rio Grande and north of Downtown are, is flat for several miles before beginning to rise. This flat valley bottom brought both benefits and dangers to its inhabitants: the river was close, and irrigation using river water was relatively easily obtained. Building materials such as adobe mud for bricks, *terrones* made from riverside peat blocks, and bosque trees for lumber and fuel were readily available.



On the other hand, flooding, often during the spring run-off from snow melting in Colorado, was common.

Within this valley north of Albuquerque lie a series of six (originally seven) villages that together are now known as the North Valley. They were named, from south to north, the Plaza de Señor San José de los Duranes, the Plaza San Antonio de los Candelarias, the Plaza de Nuestra Señora del Guadalupe de los Griegos, the Plaza de Señor San José de los Gallegos, the Plaza de San Antonio de los Poblanos, and Plaza de Señor San José de los Ranchos. Slightly further north and considered separate for many years after its founding in about 1710, was the Plaza de San Carlos de la Alameda. All of these except the Plaza de los Gallegos still exist in the North Valley, though they are known familiarly as Los Duranes, Los Candelarias, Los Griegos, Los Poblanos, Los Ranchos (an independent town), and Alameda.

Each of these communities had its own fields, its village center with church (served by a priest riding north from Albuquerque) and its own traditions. Each had its floods: until the river was finally fully corralled into its present beds by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1957, the river not infrequently chose to hew to its previous beds, which braided through what is now the North Valley. Alameda, for example, was subject to major flooding that caused its removal on two occasions to what seemed like safer ground; the last move, to its current location, occurred after a massive flood in 1903.

The valley villages were largely agricultural and largely poor. Dairying, grape growing, truck farming, and fruit orchards were the primary occupations, but residents increasingly sought employment in Albuquerque's sawmills and railroad yard. To some extent gentrified beginning in the middle of the 20th century, the North Valley and its residents still raise some livestock, some fruit and vegetables, though much of the remaining agricultural land is devoted to alfalfa.

The beginning of the gentrification of the North Valley may have come with the purchase of large pieces of the Elena Gallegos Grant by Congressman Albert Simms in the 1930s. Elena Gallegos had purchased her huge swath of land, reaching from the Rio Grande to the top of the Sandia Mountains, from heirs of Diego Montoya, who in turn had been granted the land by Don Diego de Vargas in 1694. Gallegos and then Simms consolidated the holdings, which then seemed worthless, but now are the sites of much of Albuquerque's new homes built in the late 20th century. That may have been Simms' vision when he and his wife, the former congresswoman and heiress Ruth Hanna McCormick, built near the present bike trail in the North Valley. Their palatial (for Albuquerque) home, Los Poblanos, astride an acequia north of what is now Griegos Boulevard, was and remains a showpiece of New Mexico Territorial style, designed by well-known New Mexico architect John Gaw Meem. Los Poblanos, and a graceful accompanying building designed to be a gallery and exhibition space, La Quinta, stand regally now in their large surrounding fields, with other large homes of more recent vintage along Rio Grande Boulevard, parallel to the river and its wonderful Paseo del Bosque bike trail.

Head south from the underpass under Rio Bravo Blvd., through the bollard-guarded car-catcher on the south side of the bridge, continuing along the Albuquerque Riverside Drain just to the west. Continue



past the sewer treatment plant and the solar array and plenty of tall utility poles to the complex of ditches where the San José Drain coming from the east, the Albuquerque Riverside Drain, and the Tijeras Channel all come together. There are great views of the Sandia Mountains from here, as well as further north.

The first bridge, at 0.3 miles, crosses the San José Drain, unpaved as it comes from the east. Cross another bridge (1.2 miles) as the bike trail sweeps to the southeast and then to

nearly due east along the South Diversion Channel. Across the deep channel, you'll see Mountain View Elementary School (2.1 miles from Rio Bravo Blvd.), just before descending into the cut in the concrete-lined channel under Second Street (exit to 2nd available) and the train tracks. The Mountain View Community has had to cope with contaminated effluent from the Sandia Labs and Kirtland Air Force Base down Tijeras Arroyo and other environmental challenges in addition to the sewer plant. Second Street heads south past much housing and many fields before reaching the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge near the dead end at 2nd Street's south end before it would reach the Interstate-25 Bridge. Valle de Oro is an urban jewel; reclaimed from former agricultural land at the edge of a large city, it stretches out for almost a square mile, offering a beautiful site for mammals, migratory and other birds, and visitors. (https://www.fws.gov/refuge/valle_de_oro/)

The trail comes back up from the cut, then crosses a bridge (2.3 miles) over the South Diversion Channel to its east side just after the SDC and the Tijeras Arroyo join. SDC is paved from about the bridge on west, but just north of the bridge, it is dirt, lined with rocks.

Continue along the South Diversion Channel, crossing Murray Rd. (2.7 mi.) and Prosperity Rd. (3.4 miles) where a bright red-painted Bernalillo County fire department training tower stands amidst construction equipment and automobile junk yards between the bike trail and nearby Broadway on your way north to Rio Bravo Blvd., which is reached at 4.2 miles. There are three grade crossings on the loop, but none anywhere else in the entire remainder of the Paseo del Bosque. Don't be startled by low-flying planes overhead; along here, you're in the flight pattern for planes landing on Albuquerque Sunport's SW-NE runway.

At this corner of the SDC and Rio Bravo, a family has placed a triangular memorial kiosk offering shade



Two views of the shelter near Rio Bravo and Broadway

and benches, complete with a brass bas relief, by sculptor J.D. Adcox, of a racing bicyclist. The memorialized rider, Christopher Jerome Chavez, an Albuquerque fireman, was killed early one morning in 1999 bicycling to work.

To the east, a short spur trail takes you to the corner of Rio Bravo and Broadway and beyond to University Blvd., where, at There is a bike lane east here, taking you up the hill to the I-25 interchange and a T, where you can choose between heading south to Mesa del Sol and the Journal Pavilion amphitheater or north past the airport's runways and the UNM South Golf Course to the entrance to the airport and to Yale Blvd.

But turning west here, travel across the SDC on a bicycle bridge and alongside Rio Bravo Blvd. (Rio Bravo was the name given by the Spanish to the Rio Grande north of El Paso), over the tracks and past 2nd Street. (4.8 miles) The bike trail merges with a little-used road that heads downhill to the underpass under Rio Bravo Blvd., reached at 5.4 miles. Parking and a picnic area are available here at the John A. Aragón Park, used by bicyclists, fishermen, picnickers, and even boaters on the Rio Grande, just to the west.



Views from the picnic area at Rio Bravo Blvd. close to the Rio Grande



0.0 miles from Rio Bravo Blvd. at the Rio Grande;
13.7 miles from Alameda Blvd. at the Rio Grande

Starting, then at the south end of the main part of the Paseo del Bosque, and passing between the posts for keeping motor vehicles from the trail, you head north with the Albuquerque Riverside Drain to your west and a long fence along a residential area to your east, off a street peculiarly named Poco Loco (a little bit crazy) Drive. This portion of the trail is shaded by elms and cottonwoods arching above. The trees have, however, sent roots across under the trail, causing frequent small bumps that impede speed.

North of the fence are fields used for farming; in recent years, alfalfa and chile have been the main crops. Waterfowl cruising above the Rio Grande will often stop here – in the winter, the stately sandhill crane is a regular attendee.



At 1.8 miles, the bike trail comes very close to 2nd St., and the fields end, giving way to junk yards, steel and concrete fabricating plants, a park with several softball fields, even a portable toilet storage facility.

Even so close to the downtown area, you're likely to see wildlife – lizards, birds, toads, and mammals – along this stretch. The small photo to the right shows a hawk we saw in one of the cottonwoods along this part of the Paseo del Bosque.



2.1/11.6 miles

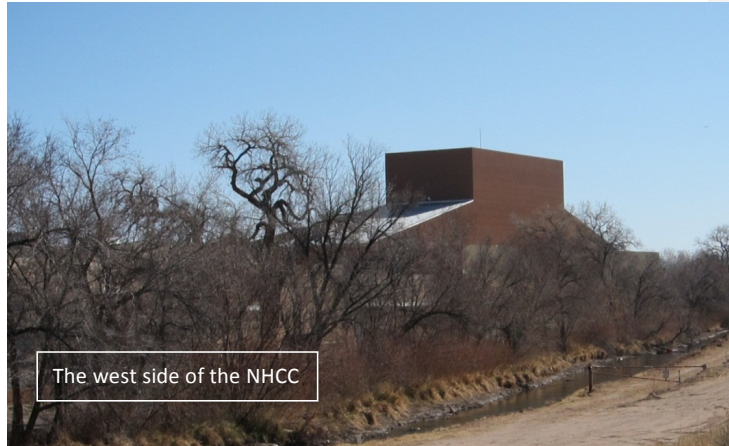
Not long after coming alongside Second Street, the bike trail crosses the small ditch to the east, with access to Second St., just ½ block away, and then passes the softball fields of Barelás Railroad Park. At 2.9 miles, you'll see the back of the Bueno Foods factory; if traveling the trail during chile season from July to about November, you'll smell the fine odor of the roasting chile first – Bueno Foods is a long-lived local company processing green chile and making many other components of New Mexican cuisine.

The National Hispanic Cultural Center's southwest corner is next along the east side of the trail, at 3.0 miles. Opened in the year 2000 on a site that had held a school, some fields, and some residences that were part of the old Hispanic community of Barelvas, the center aims to honor the traditions and culture of Spanish-speaking peoples throughout the world.

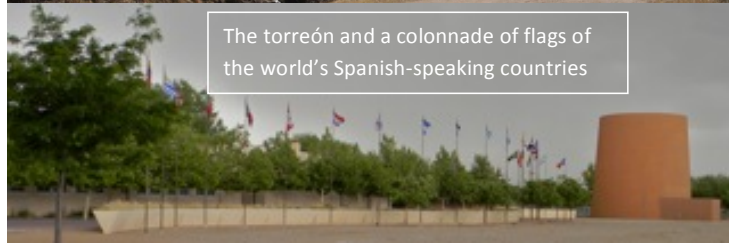
The largest building at the NHCC occupies the south edge of the property, stretching nearly from Fourth Street to the bike trail. The building contains a large art

gallery, part of the Intel Center for the Visual Arts, which is usually filled with impressive traveling exhibits of two- or three-dimensional art by Hispanic artists. There are three large theaters that make up the western part of

the building, called the Roy E. Disney Center for Performing Arts. The largest, the Albuquerque Journal Theater, has housed large productions such as symphony concerts, big band performances, and zarzuela, Hispanic opera-like works, as well as operas put on by Albuquerque's fine opera company, Opera Southwest. The WPA-era River View Elementary School has been transformed into the History and Literary Arts Center, and the Instituto Cervantes, a well-regarded provider of Spanish-language classes, occupies a large, modern building. In the northeast corner of the campus, the *torreón* (tower) provides a modern take on a traditional structure. When it is open (usually on Sundays), you can marvel at the magnificent fresco depicting 3000 years of Hispanic life completed by Federico Vigil in 2010 after ten years' work.



The west side of the NHCC



The torreón and a colonnade of flags of the world's Spanish-speaking countries

3.2/10.5 miles The bike trail reaches Bridge Blvd. after crossing back to the west side of the Albuquerque Riverside Drain – Just to the east of this little bridge is the entrance to the Hispanic Cultural Center; downhill to the west, the trail goes under the roadway and then up the other side. The right-of-way for the bridge here also offers access to the river for walkers or boaters.

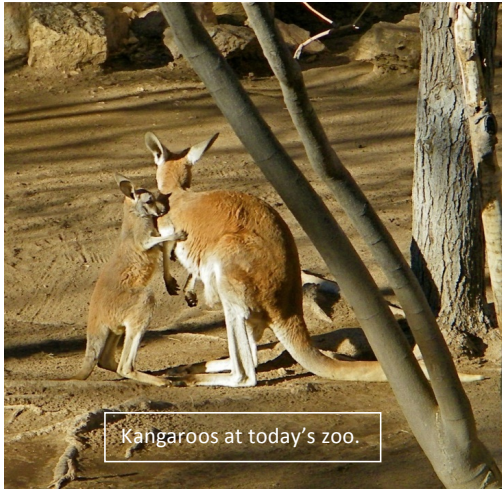


Mural on the west side of the zoo

Lance Chilton 4/27/2020 11:03 AM

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At 3.5 mi., you reach the south end of the Tingley Beach area and a parking lot at a bend in Tingley Drive, which is just beyond the fence to the east of the trail.



Kangaroos at today's zoo.

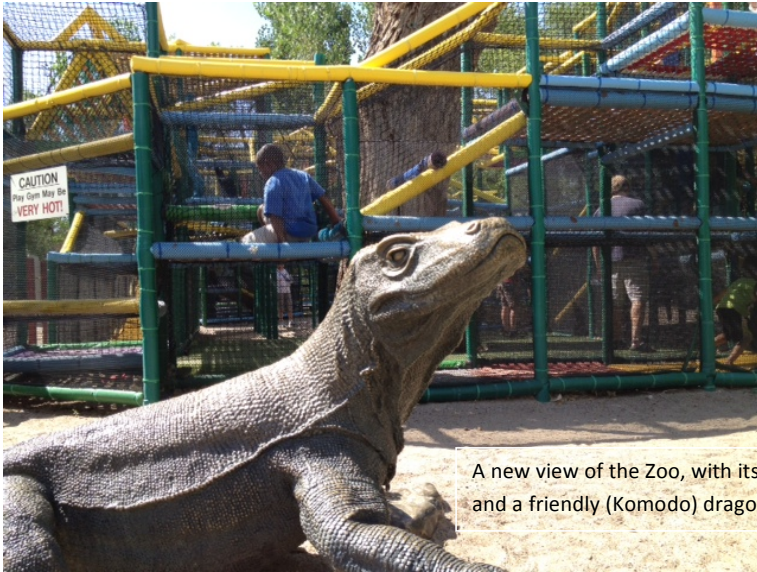
You'll pass the back of the ABQ Biopark Zoo at 3.8 miles. Formerly called the Rio Grande Zoo, the ABQ BioPark Zoo has emerged from humble beginnings in 1927 to become a major attraction, luring thousands of children and parents, grandparents and other visitors throughout the year. Once a rather tawdry collection of miserable-looking animals in wire cages arrayed along a path, the zoo now consists of numerous "exhibits," from the local and amusing prairie dog town to the exotic and majestic elephants, koalas, giraffes and polar bears. Feeding times, a large climbing structure, a programmed water squirt field, a tiny train, and camel rides all compete for children's attention with the large and small animals that fill the lushly-landscaped 64-acre park. The zoo continues to expand and improve; it recently completed a penguin exhibit so that New Mexicans and visitors can experience both polar bears and penguins in the desert.

Albuquerque voters are good at approving bond issues, especially for the zoo, so that the quality of this "world-class attraction" can continue to get better and better.

ABQ BioPark Zoo occupies the south end of the Biopark, which is arrayed along the Paseo del Bosque – the BioPark also includes the Botanic Garden and Aquarium to the north, ABQ BioPark Tingley Beach in the middle, and the small train, the ABQ BioPark train or Rio Line that connects them. There's lots of information about the Biopark and all of its components at www.cabq.gov/biopark. The BioPark actually hosts three trains, the Rio Line, the Thunderbird Express that loops around the BioPark Zoo, and the large, landscaped model train layout that is part of the Abq BioPark Botanic Garden.



Bison at the Rio Grande Zoo in the mid 20th century.



A new view of the Zoo, with its climbing structure and a friendly (Komodo) dragon statue.

Narrow train tracks emerge from under Tingley Drive and the zoo to parallel the bike trail just to its east; the tracks continue north alongside the bike trail to the north end of the Biopark.

At 4.3 miles the trail passes Alcalde Place and its access to long, narrow, shady Kit Carson Park and one of Albuquerque's 13 dog parks, just to the east of Tingley Drive. Two of Albuquerque's television stations have large headquarters near here, and the entrance to the Zoo is a few blocks farther east. The Fire Department's former training tower at the corner of Alcalde and Tingley still stands, but its function has been replaced by the similar structure along the east reach of the loop at the south end of the Paseo del Bosque.



The Rio Line makes its way from the Botanic Garden to the Zoo

At 4.5 miles, you'll pass the south end of the lakes that make up Tingley Beach now, several times reengineered from Clyde and Carrie Tingley's days and the heyday of this municipal beach. Many people come here now to fish – trout in winter before it gets too hot for them, carp in summer--, no one to swim. Swimming here was popular before polio epidemics in the 1940s and 1950s scared Albuquerqueans away. There are picnic tables, a large parking lot, and many items of the public art that graces so much of Albuquerque; all parts of the Biopark are especially occupied on weekends by many Albuquerque families and by visitors.



Clyde and Carrie Tingley memorialized in bronze at Tingley Beach

Clyde and Carrie Tingley came to Albuquerque, like so many other soon-to-be-prominent New Mexicans, due to tuberculosis. Carrie Wooster and her suitor, Clyde Tingley, were on their way to Arizona by train from their native Ohio in hopes of a cure from TB when Carrie had a severe coughing attack that took them off the train at the nearest stop, Albuquerque. Clyde married Carrie in Albuquerque later that year, 1911, and soon became politically active as his wife recovered. Tingley was elected to the small city's governing body for the first time in 1916. (Albuquerque's population in 1920 was 15,157; ninety years later, it had grown

3615% to 545,842.) By 1922, Tingley was chair of the city's commission and thus the unofficial mayor of the city. He went on to be governor of the state of New Mexico from 1935 to 1939 before returning to the City Commission.

According to the website of the New Mexico State Historian, "Tingley managed to accomplish much for the city of Albuquerque. One of his first acts as alderman was to lead a drive to purchase the city's privately held water works. After months of tense negotiations, the city succeeded in acquiring the utility. Only then was the city able to expand water lines into new subdivisions and encourage municipal growth. He paved streets, added street lamps, and extended city services to new areas. He also worked hard to beautify the city by developing a city parks system. Where an old city dump had been located on the east bank of the Rio Grande, Tingley created an artificial lake called Tingley Beach. Thousands of Albuquerque residents enjoyed bathing at the beach. Later, after being stocked with fish, it became a popular fishing hole. He also promoted building Tingley Field, the baseball park that provided the Albuquerque Dukes a home for many years. Today it is the [ABQ Biopark] Zoo area. He also purchased 2,000 Siberian elms for twenty dollars and gave them away to anyone who would plant them."

(<http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails.php?fileID=498>).



Tingley, a working class man from Ohio, curiously became a great friend of the patrician president from New York, Franklin D. Roosevelt; the relationship proved gratifying for Tingley and highly beneficial for the city and state as New Deal benefits were doled out. Today, the Tingley name is beloved and widely

seen in Albuquerque – here at Tingley Drive along Tingley Beach, at the Carrie Tingley Hospital for

children’s orthopedics (now part of the University of New Mexico Hospital), and in the nickname for those green and brown seeds that fall from the Chinese or Siberian (experts differ) elms every spring to grow up all over town – Tingley flakes. The Albuquerque Dukes (baseball team) played at Tingley Field; now the Albuquerque ducks play at Tingley Beach. Tingley was controversial during his time; for those of us who pluck countless tiny elms out of our gardens every year but enjoy the shade provided by their parent trees, Tingley flakes and Tingley’s elms are likewise controversial. The city has published informative and somewhat humorous “biography” of the Siberian elm at <https://www.cabq.gov/council/find-your-councilor/district-2/news/the-magnificent-elm-tree>.



The River Trail

*The river high from late drought-year snow
carves banks speckled still with Canada geese*

*A bird Chorus buoyed by last Autumn's leaf chatter
sings dizzy frescos under the bosque cathedral
high above the must of rotting wood*

*Feet fly and legs ache at breath's limit
to feel beneath: the earth, the flora.
The chance of communion*

*I slow for two roan riders: a pheasant bolts
screaming crimson from undergrowth;
we five transfixed*

*I pass romping dogs and wild children
running crazily through beavered trees,
delirious in their duplicity*

*I pass a Pueblo man, gray-braided, roller-bladed,
inching slowly, smiling remotely, walkman buzzing*

*I pass fenced llamas, ostriches, camels, parrots,
as tiny kids on tiny bikes skitter wind-up-toy-like
ahead of sweating abuelas and strollers*

*I pass short women, old men, tall girls, plump boys,
the young and running, the frail and pale,
all colors, pushing wheelchairs and pulling wagons*

*I pass families, tribes, seed carriers of generations
in the endless dance and eddies that flow with me
along the banks of the Rio Grande*

*I pass a thousand stories and dramas unsaid
as the tree-masked sun lights us and shadows us
at the dusky pace of our return*

*I pass all who move along the river trail
under the vaulting of the cottonwood canopy*

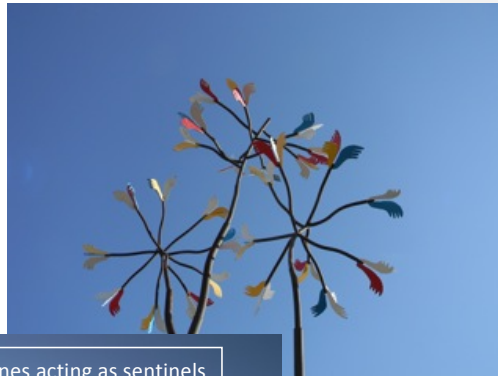
*Rolling still in the current, home nets me suddenly,
hours pass, memories fade as the river subsides
and my four walls hold the tide yet another day.*

Harry Ives
1949-2003

At 4.8 miles, you'll reach the Rio Line's main station and fishing supply and refreshment store at trackside, next to the lakes. These lie just a few feet east of the bike trail; to the west is a bicycle rest area, complete with sculpture and with an elegant pierced-steel poem, reproduced here.

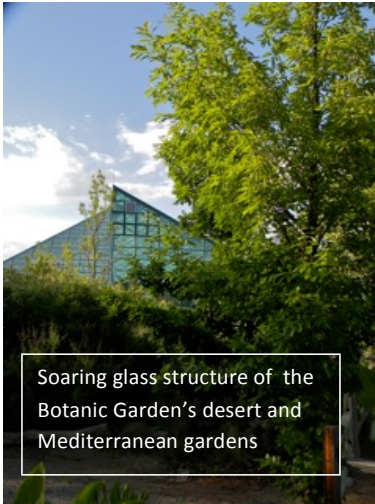
Approaching Central Ave., the train and the bike trail run alongside one another on the edge of a large packed-earth parking lot, which sports several large steel sculptures and a memorial oak grove of 25 trees. The bike trail and the train tracks each occupy their own tunnels under the former US-66 ("The Mother Road" – Central Avenue) at 5.3 miles.

5.3/8.4 miles



Cranes acting as sentinels
at Rotary Riverside Park.





Soaring glass structure of the Botanic Garden's desert and Mediterranean gardens

Just south of Central, a trail heads perpendicularly off a couple of hundreds of yards to the left to a pleasant landing right on the river. Passing under Central, you'll reach Rotary Riverside Park, with its picnic tables and river access, another good place to launch or take out your canoe or kayak. During times of very high water, as in early summer 2019, the paved trail under Central has been flooded, as has the graveled trail just west of the Paseo del Bosque.

East of here along Central you'll find a number of landmarks, including the stylish Beach Apartments, designed by well-known Albuquerque architect Antoine Predock, and the El Vado Motel, a redesigned and redeveloped historic "auto court" dating to 1937 but re-imagined in 2016. The Esperanza Bicycle Education Center, 1.5 miles west of here and just off Central at 5600 Esperanza Dr. NW, is an innovative city-operated facility offering helpful, knowledgeable mechanics and use of tools to those who would like to work on their own bikes.

From this little park, the walker or mountain biker will find pretty, shady trails through the Bosque and along the river to the north. The city in 2016 completed a packed fine-gravel trail (excellent for all but the most narrow-tired bikes, but requiring care not to travel too fast) from here four miles to the north to Montañito Road, through the trees and parallel to the straighter but less scenic paved trail. That trail, however, heads up to the level of the berm west of the Albuquerque Riverside Drain, then down again to head along a fence separating one of the Botanic Garden/Aquarium parking lots and a small train station from the bike trail. The Rio Line itself makes a loop at the north end of the Botanical Gardens.

The first part of the Botanic Garden that you see to your east is the bright colors of its butterfly pavilion, followed by a large pond, with surrounding grass (concerts are presented in summer in the band shell here), then the glass structure of Botanical Garden's desert and Mediterranean gardens. In winter, trail travelers can see a great deal of the Botanic Garden through the fence to the east of the trail; in summer, it is largely hidden by the luxuriant growth of orange-flowered trumpet vines (Trumpet flower or Tecomeria "Orange Jubilee", according to the extensive list of species on the Botanic Garden's section of the ABQ BioPark website.) This portion of the Botanic Garden is the



December home of the River of Lights each year, a fanciful collection of lights outlining bird and plant and structural shapes "planted" throughout the garden. Among the many and varied exhibits within the Botanic Garden are the Children's Fantasy Garden, where children and adults can marvel at much-magnified pumpkins and carrots and insects; a Curandera Garden where an Hispanic healer might find her herbs; a Japanese garden named after Albuquerque sister city Sasebo, Japan; the Ro Grande

heritage farm, preserving the life style of Albuquerque farmers of the early twentieth century; a “Bugarium” and a dragonfly sanctuary pond; and an Old World walled garden, a favorite location for weddings of plant lovers. The biopark sports a pretty pavilion, used for summer music concerts, as is the zoo’s pavilion.

The Aquarium is a little more difficult to see from the bike trail, though it’s readily accessible from the parking lots to the east and west of the Garden and the Aquarium. Creatures from both fresh and salt water make their home here, even though the sea left this area a great many years ago and it’s some 650 miles to the closest seacoast beach. . A huge tank filled with sharks, fish, sea anemones, and shellfish is especially mesmerizing. An exhibit of various beautiful species of jellyfish is popular. . Kids enjoy seeing divers in the 265,000 gallon tank maintaining the space and feeding its residents. Bicyclists and other aquarium visitors are fed separately at a seafood restaurant, the Shark Reef Café just outside the tank. The fish served there are not former aquarium residents.

After passing the length of the ABQ BioPark Botanic Garden, the bike trail continues along the fence separating the trail and the Albuquerque Riverside Drain from the BioPark and what was once San Gabriel Park. At 6.3 miles, the trail meets the west end of a connecting bike trail, leading to the west end of Mountain Road. This is also the west end of Bike Boulevard, marked by purple signs and 18-mile-per-hour auto speed limits, heading as far east as Silver and San Mateo.



At 6.5 miles, the Paseo del Bosque turns sharply to the west, while the east-bound I-40 Trail heads along the south side of the Interstate highway. The trail then passes under I-40, meets the west-bound portion of the I-40 Trail coming off the Gail Ryba Bridge at a 4-way stop. The bridge is named after a remarkable Albuquerque bicycling advocate, Gail Ryba founder of BikeABQ.



El Regocijo

Just east from here, a short trail heads to a small parking lot at the west end of Gabaldon Place and on into the Duranes neighborhood. A huge adobe mansion, only partly crumbling, called El Regocijo (the delight) squats along the south side of Gabaldon Pl. half a block to the east.

Duranes can also be entered shortly ahead (6.7 miles) as a small bridge crosses the Overlap Drain to the east of the bike trail to reach the west end of Duranes Rd. To the west of the bike trail here, vegetation is returning slowly after a disastrous series of fires that consumed most of the cottonwoods and most other trees and plants in a long stretch of the Bosque in 2004.



Firefighter battles 2004 Bosque blaze



Chainsaw art:
firefighter made
from a
cottonwood tree
remnant across
Montaño Bridge
from Paseo del
Bosque

Continue between Albuquerque Riverside Drain and Overlap Drain. At 7.0 miles, you'll reach another bridge across the Overlap Drain to the neighborhood known as Thomas Village. There are a number of interesting houses along this stretch, with animals ranging from horses and donkeys to llamas, and, in the past, ostriches. At 7.5 miles, you reach Campbell Road on the east, where the main bike trail crosses the Albuquerque Riverside Drain to continue north for most of the rest of the way along the high

berm between the Drain and the river, although a trail continues here between the two ditches to just beyond Candelaria Rd., and offers access to Candelaria Rd. and the Rio Grande Nature Center.



At 8.2 miles (using the right hand trail between the two ditches rather than the high levee trail), you'll

reach the trail exit for Candelaria Rd. just before the Nature Center Pump Station. The west end of Candelaria is reached via a several hundred yard paved trail between fences, which comes out at the west end of Candelaria Rd. right at the entrance to the Rio Grande Nature Center. You can enter the Rio Grande Nature Center at Candelaria Rd. or at the bridge over the Albuquerque Riverside Drain, but bike racks at either side remind you not to bring the bikes any further into the pedestrian-friendly facility.

If you're riding along the levee trail, look to the west just before the bridge at 8.4 miles leading down and southeast to the Rio Grande Nature Center. There you'll see a large collection of the jetty jacks that

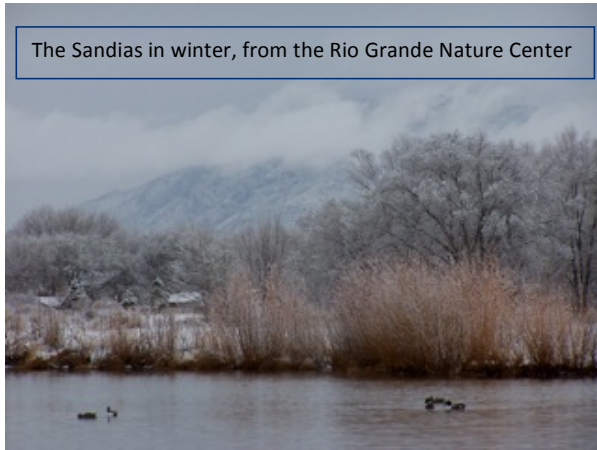


A wintry view of the jetty jacks

are visible all along the course of the Paseo del Bosque. Looking like giant versions of the jacks children played with on the playgrounds of our youth, the jacks were "planted" by the US Army Corps of Engineers all along the Middle Rio Grande in the 1950s. The idea was to stabilize the newly-created banks/levees by encouraging sedimentation and the growth of plants, as well as to slow flood waters to prevent damage to the levees. In some parts of the metro area, the jetty jacks are being removed as unnatural and no longer needed, but it does not appear that

that will happen anytime soon near here.

Also at the trail junction leading to the Nature Center but to the west of the main trail is the 1.3 mile paved River Loop Trail and two other connecting trails that come very close to the river and afford access to several other trails through the Bosque, and connect with the packed gravel trail north and south from here.



The Sandias in winter, from the Rio Grande Nature Center

The Rio Grande Nature Center was opened in 1982 after more than a decade of planning. The partially subterranean, well-camouflaged building within the Nature Center, designed by Albuquerque architect Antoine Predock, features exhibits on the ecology of the river and a large room overlooking the center's 3-acre main pond and the Sandia Mountains behind it. The center is manned by state park rangers and volunteers (see www.rgnc.org) who willingly answer

questions about the natural setting and its usual inhabitants – hundreds of species of birds, many painted turtles living right in front of you in the pond, and the somewhat more elusive mammals – the porcupines, beavers, raccoons, coyotes, rabbits, and skunks that are surprise sights from time to time. Coyote sightings are especially exciting; give them a wide berth, and they will do the same for you.

A major focus of the Nature Center is education – education of both adults and children with regard to the natural wonders on display all along this bike trail, and particularly in this central section. The Nature Center conducts guided walks and in-center lectures and demonstrations throughout the year and throughout the park, including in the more recent education center on the other side of the road into the parking area east of the Predock building, coming off Candelaria Road.

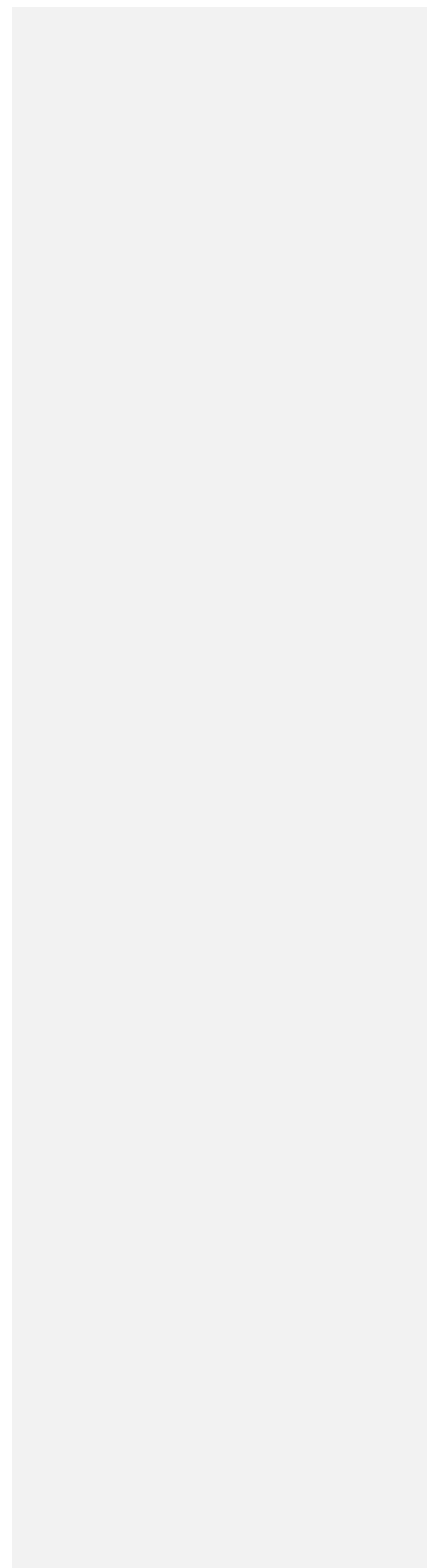
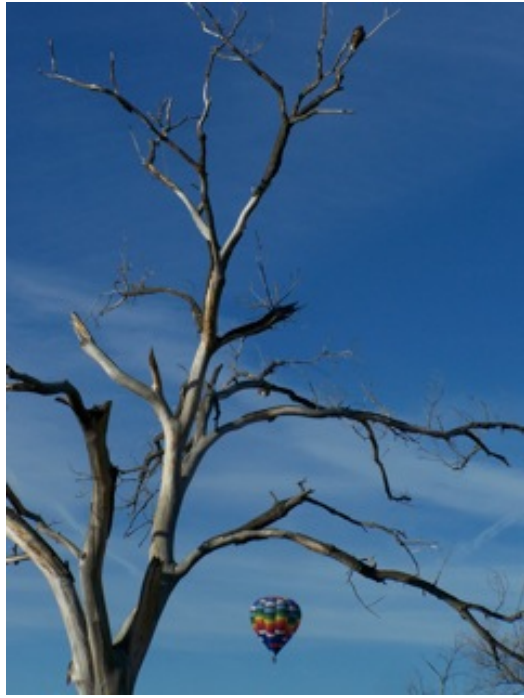
The park rangers will tell you of their concerns for the future of the Bosque; the stately cottonwoods growing along the river last enjoyed a nourishing flood in 1941. Many of the natural species – the cottonwood and a couple of types of willow among them – evolved to require floods for germination. With control of the river, especially the building of Cochiti Dam in the early 1970s, the opportunity for new trees to replace these aging trees is markedly reduced. The next several decades will tell the story: will it be the end of the cottonwood, the wholesale planting of new trees to artificially replace dying oldsters, or replacement with the invasive outsiders, like the Russian olive, the Siberian elm, and the salt cedar (also known as the tamarisk) that are populating stream- and riverbeds throughout the Southwest.



This section of the trail guide was written sitting at a table in the observation room at the RGNC. It took much longer than it might have otherwise because of multiple delightful distractions: hummingbirds swarming at the feeder outside the window, ducks and geese patrolling the pond, turtles basking on partially-submerged logs outside the window, glimpses at the magnificent Sandia Mountains behind the pond, and amplified sounds from a microphone at pond-side including on that afternoon a vigorous and much-needed thunderstorm. It's a great

place to spend a few minutes or a few hours.

At 8.6 miles, the bike trail reaches a bridge over the Albuquerque Riverside Drain to the trail along the east side of the Drain, fine for walking or running or even a mountain bike. There are actually five parallel trails along this stretch: this one, the horse trail next to the Drain and below the berm, the graveled road along the bike path for Open Space patrol and maintenance vehicles, the bike trail itself, and at the packed gravel trail through the Bosque. This part of the Paseo del Bosque is the most heavily used part of what is probably the most heavily used bike or multi-use trail in Albuquerque.



9.5/4.2 miles

The bike trail reaches the underpass under Montañero Road and the bridge across to the west side of the river. There is also a small bridge to the east across the Albuquerque Riverside Drain – both allow side-trips, as noted in the inset below. The trail affords great views east across the Riverside Drain to large homes, and beyond them to the Sandia Mountains, as well as views of the Bosque and the river to the west. The predominant tree on both sides of the trail is the Rio Grande cottonwood, which makes its home along the river from about 80 miles north to 30 miles south of here (Española to Belen).

Montañero Bike Trail Side-Trip

At Montañero, a side trail extends to the east to Rio Grande Blvd. and beyond along busy Montañero Road. The trail continues east beyond Rio Grande Blvd. past the Unser Racing Museum. Beyond there, however, the trail or sidewalk is slow-going, due to the eruption of many roots through the pavement.

To the west, the trail crosses the bridge, ending at a small park containing a dozen chainsaw sculptures made in place from fire-damaged cottonwood trunks. From this little park, you can see the futuristic Bosque School to the south, and a shopping center across Montañero Road to the north.

Not just bicyclists use the Paseo del Bosque



12.6/1.1 miles

Like the Montañío Road Bridge a few years later, the bridge over the Rio Grande at Paseo del Norte raised fierce storms of protest before it was built and opened in 1987. These two bridges, and a much older one a mile north of here are undeniably busy today, each carrying thousands of commuters, mostly from the recently settled West Side to jobs across the river in older sections of Albuquerque. Actually had our neighbors to the east had their way, this river crossing would also be a state line crossing. The Texas Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 left Austin in the Republic of Texas, expecting to be welcomed to the claimed territory east of the Rio Grande. It was not welcomed by Mexico's appointed New Mexico Governor Manuel Armijo. The Texas troops were captured and marched south to Mexico City, from which they were ransomed by the United States government, and the areas both west and east of the Rio Grande remained part of New Mexico.

Paseo del Norte Trail Side Trip

Paseo del Norte itself is a high-speed automobile monopoly, but along its southern edge, there's an excellent bike trail, which goes from west of the Rio Grande to the North Diversion Channel on Trail above the North Valley. To the west of the Paseo del Bosque, the trail occupies its own lane on the bridge over the Rio Grande, well-protected from the fast-moving cars by a heavy concrete barrier. This lane, shared with pedestrians, has several pleasant turnouts to look over the river and the large number of waterfowl living along it. At the west end of the bridge, the lane veers away from the traffic lanes into a quiet neighborhood, where there is a small parking lot and access to Coors Road.

East of the Paseo del Bosque, the Paseo del Norte bike trail passes a ghost bike, a reminder of a very unfortunate accident when a car driven by an inattentive driver veered across several lanes of traffic, through a gap in the protective barrier separating the highway from the bike trail, and struck and killed a bicyclist. The gap in the barrier has now been filled. Shortly after that memorial, the trail crosses Rio Grande Blvd. and then continues beyond it in a nicely-landscaped swale alongside the busy road. About one mile east of Rio Grande, the trail veers to the north to make contact with a bridge across the highway, leading to a dirt trail alongside a ditch. Another mile later, the trail passes under 4th St., and then rises to pass over 2nd Street on a bicycle and pedestrian bridge. Both streets can be accessed from the trail, but both are busy and not highly friendly to bicycles. After the bridge over 2nd Street, the trail soon rises again for a bridge over the railroad tracks. Just south of this bridge is the Los Ranchos/Journal Center station for the New Mexico Railrunner, used by many commuters into Albuquerque and Santa Fe, as the busy surrounding parking lots will attest. The Railrunner will carry your bike in either direction; train schedules are posted at the station and online at www.nmrailrunner.com. Bikes access the station from the east on a paved sidewalk alongside two of the parking lots; if not going there, bikers can cross Edith Blvd. at a light at Edith and El Pueblo Rd., and then head up the mesa to the east. The bike trail crosses El Pueblo about one half mile further, and then meets the North Diversion Channel Trail just beyond.



The Paseo del Bosque passes under the Paseo del Norte highway and then continues north, but curving to the east along the levee between the Rio Grande and the Albuquerque Riverside Ditch. The Bosque is narrow here, and views of the river are easily attained. About ¼ mile north of Paseo del Norte, you'll see along the river a tall, adobe-colored building next to the river. This building

houses a pumping facility that removes river water for use in the city. The water that is removed is part of an unusual project, the San Juan Chama Diversion, that resulted in river water from several tributaries of the Colorado River being directed through tunnels through the Continental Divide into the Chama River and from there into the Rio Grande. Authorized by Congress in 1962, water began flowing in 1970, though it is only in recent years that Albuquerque has begun to use its allotment-- the water treatment facility was completed in 2008.

Albuquerque is entitled to about 48,000 acre-feet of water per year from the San Juan Chama Diversion. For reference, that's the equivalent of roughly 15,706,018,200 gallons per year, or about 90 per cent of Albuquerque's current needs.

Details of the interesting project are to be found on the San Juan-Chama Watershed Partnership's website at

<https://www.sanjuanchama.org/san-juan-chama-project-19511976>

and at the Albuquerque Water Authority's site at



http://www.abcwua.org/San_Juan_Chama_Project.aspx .

Shortly after the mile marker “8 miles” along the levee, indicating that you are now eight miles north of Central Ave. on the Paseo del Bosque, the trail slopes down to the Albuquerque Riverside Drain. It

13.7/0.0 miles

crosses the drain and curves around to the large parking lot at the end of the Paseo del Bosque and just south of the Alameda Bridge over the Rio Grande. The parking lot is heavily used by bikers, skaters, walkers, runners, dog runners, boaters, visitors to the Bachechi Fields Open Space County Park to the east of the water pumping station (water treatment plant), with river diversion adjacent to it, just east of the Albuquerque Riverside Drain.



The Bachechi Open Space shares a large expanse of flat land with the Alameda- Rio Grande Open Space south of Alameda Boulevard and between the Albuquerque Riverside Drain and Rio Grande Boulevard. To the north is the Alameda-Rio Grande Open Space, a city park with river access and the large parking lot used by bicyclists, boaters, walkers, and those who enjoy the trails and gardens in the Bachechi Open Space, a Bernalillo County park. In the middle lies a large wetlands, surrounded by cattails and containing numerous waterfowl. The Bachechi Open Space south of the wetlands contains 27 acres of walking trails, and a pecan orchard, irrigation system, and rose garden established by Carlo and Mary Bachechi when they came to Albuquerque and built here in 1938. The park includes a sunny and solar energy-using Environmental Education Building and outdoor classroom made available to

environmentally-minded community organizations for meetings and educational efforts. The site is home to the County Open Space program’s Master Naturalist program, which educates a select group of individuals in methods of assuring the Bosque’s future as an ecologic system. Information and applications for the program can be found at <https://www.bernco.gov/community-services/master-naturalist.aspx> .

The Alameda Bike Trail heads east from here; if you pass along the west edge of the big parking lot, the trail crosses under the current Alameda Bridge, slopes steeply up to the levee and then crosses the old Alameda Bridge toward Corrales and Rio Rancho. Corrales boasts an especially pleasant mountain bike trail within the Bosque north of the bridge. Information on that trail and Corrales’ Bosque in general is available at <https://www.corrales-nm.org/parksrec/page/corrales-bosque-preserve> , including a comprehensive guide to its flora and fauna written by biologist James Findley. This guide will give users of the remarkable Paseo del Bosque and the lands along it a better sense of the unique and wonderful environment through which they pass on this rather wild route.



Bruce Papitto, sculptor of “The Bell Keepers”, which stands at the corner of Rio Grande and Alameda near the north end of the Paseo del Bosque, writes of his sculpture: “The Bell Keepers’ was created for the Alameda Open Space Park in Alameda, New Mexico (just north of Albuquerque). The park is situated on the Rio Grande River. In former times the river would flood the area seasonally, often severely. A number of adobe churches were lost over the generations. I imagined the scene of one such loss during Spanish colonial times and depicted that, dramatically, here in my sculpture. We see a padre and a citizen of Alameda. Having just rescued the bell from their flooded church, they have tied it to a tree bough and carry it through the flood waters... to safety.” The river no longer floods here; the adobe churches of the North Valley seem safe.

Revised April 27, 2020.

Alameda Bike Trail Side Trip

Although the Paseo del Bosque ends as it arrives at the parking lot at Alameda Blvd., a paved trail heading east just south of the parking lot marks the beginning of the Alameda Bike Trail. Before 2012, it would have been imprudent to route you east here, as there was a perilous crossing above Edith Blvd, but the trail has been completed east across Edith and on to just a few blocks beyond the intersection of this bike trail with the North Diversion Channel Trail. Because there are still grade crossings at a number of busy streets, the rider must be careful to watch for cars turning into the residential streets and driveways that cross the bike path, which lies just south of the boulevard. There are grade crossings at 4th and 2nd Street as well, which are also busy, especially at rush hour. Arriving at the NDC Trail, you’re less than a mile from Balloon Fiesta Park to the north, and some eight miles from the University of New Mexico, south along the NDC Trail. The newly completed Alameda Trail forms a pleasant part of a near-traffic free loop enjoyed by bicyclists.