

Capulin Volcano

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Monument
New Mexico





Ladybugs swarm on the park's plants in summer.



Rime ice is deposited on vegetation by supercooled fog.



Chokecherry (capulin in Spanish) gave the volcano its name.



Mule deer
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURENCE PARENT

The Mountain Tells Its Story

Capulin volcano erupted into existence sometime between 56,000 and 62,000 years ago. Firework-like "rooster tails" of glowing, superheated lava spewed high into the sky, solidified, and dropped back to earth. The falling debris accumulated around the vent, forming a cinder cone, a type of volcano.

The birth of Capulin occurred toward the end of a period of volcanism in the region that began about 9 million years ago. Hills, peaks, and other formations dating from this period can be seen throughout the 8,000-square-mile Raton-Clayton volcanic field. The largest of these is Sierra Grande, an extinct volcano rising some 2,200 feet above the surrounding plain, about 10 miles to the southeast of Capulin. To the northwest a number of mesas are capped with lava, the three largest being Barilla, Raton, and Johnson Mesas.

Capulin's conical form rises more than 1,300 feet above the plains—8,182 feet above sea level. The cone consists chiefly of loose cinders, ash, and other rock debris formed by gaseous lava that cooled quickly. The volcano's symmetry was preserved because the subsequent lava flows did not come from the main crater but from the boca (Spanish for mouth), located at the western base of the cone.

After the eruptions ceased, vegetation gained a foothold on the steep and unstable slopes. In time the cinder cone stabilized as plants took root and the forces of nature slowly changed the volcanic rock into soil. Today the variety and abundance of vegetation on Capulin adds to its beauty. The volcano straddles two habitats: the grassland of the plains and the forest of the mountains. Plantlife includes prairie grasses and wildflowers, pinyon pine, ponderosa

pine, and juniper. Legend has it that the volcano was named capulin (cah-poo-LEEN) after the Spanish word for chokecherry. That shrub grows throughout the park, along with mountain mahogany, scrub oak, and three-leaf sumac. By walking Capulin's trails, you can observe some of the plant and animal life. On a clear day you can see four states—New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, and Oklahoma—from Crater Rim Trail's highest point.

Capulin volcano is extinct. Cinder cones are monogenetic—they typically have only one period of activity. Although Capulin volcano will never erupt again, it's possible that a new cinder cone could form elsewhere in the Raton-Clayton volcanic field. An eruption near Capulin in our lifetime is unlikely, but it could happen.



Planning Your Visit

Visitor Center To make the most of your visit, stop first at the visitor center, 0.6 mile beyond the park entrance. Here you will pay the entrance fee and find information, a bookstore, and exhibits.

A 10-minute film introduces you to Capulin volcano and illustrates the immense power of volcanoes.

The visitor center is open every day except Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1.

Activities Picnicking, hiking, and birdwatching are some of the activities you can enjoy here. A picnic area at

the base of the volcano has water and restrooms. During late spring and early summer, depending on rainfall, wildflowers create a colorful mosaic among the cinders.

Prominent wildflowers are sunflower (*left*), lupine, golden pea, paintbrush, penstemon, and verben. In spring you can spot bluebirds, warblers, black-headed grosbeaks, chipping sparrows, and goldfinches.

Accessibility The visitor center, restrooms, picnic area, nature trail, and crater rim parking area are wheelchair-accessible.

Services and Camping There is no food service, lodging, or camping within the park. These services are available in nearby towns.

Safety To help protect yourself and the park, please observe these regulations. • Do not remove, disturb, or destroy any animals, plants, or geologic specimens; all are protected by federal law. • Firearms and alcohol are prohibited. • Fire is a potential danger—smoking is not allowed on trails. • Wear sturdy shoes with nonslip soles when hiking. The trails are maintained, but loose cinders or ice can make them dan-

gerous. • Visitors with heart or respiratory conditions should use caution at this high elevation. • If you see a rattlesnake, remain calm, walk away slowly, and report it to a park ranger. • Pets are not allowed on park trails and must be restrained on a leash when outside your vehicle. • Pedestrians, bicycles, and trailers are prohibited on the volcano road.

Help protect the park by hiking only on maintained trail surfaces.

Emergencies: call 911.

Exploring Capulin Volcano

Walk on a Volcano

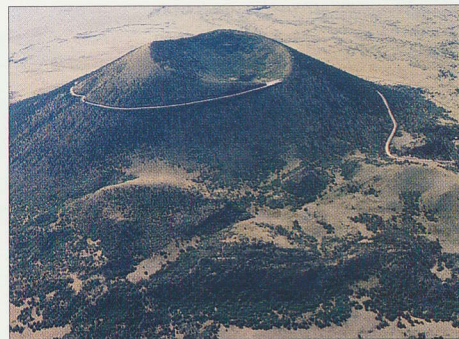
Did you ever wish you could walk on a volcano, perhaps even venture down inside the crater? Capulin Volcano National Monument offers four trails that vary in difficulty and length:

You can reach two of these trails from the parking lot at the top of the volcano. Crater Rim Trail, a paved one-mile trail, goes around the rim of the volcano, offering spectacular views of the surrounding landscape. The trail skirts the rim in a series of moderate to steep ascents to the peak's highest point—8,182 feet—and ends with a steep descent to the parking lot.

The short Crater Vent Trail steeply descends 105 feet to the bottom of the crater, which is the plugged vent of Capulin volcano.

A 10-minute nature trail begins at the visitor center. This paved trail is wheelchair-accessible and offers a close-up view of the prairie landscape and lava formations called squeeze-ups.

A one-mile loop, the Lava Flow Trail, begins at the far end of the visitor center parking lot. There are some steep sections and rugged lava exposed on the otherwise easy, unpaved trail.



Getting to the Park

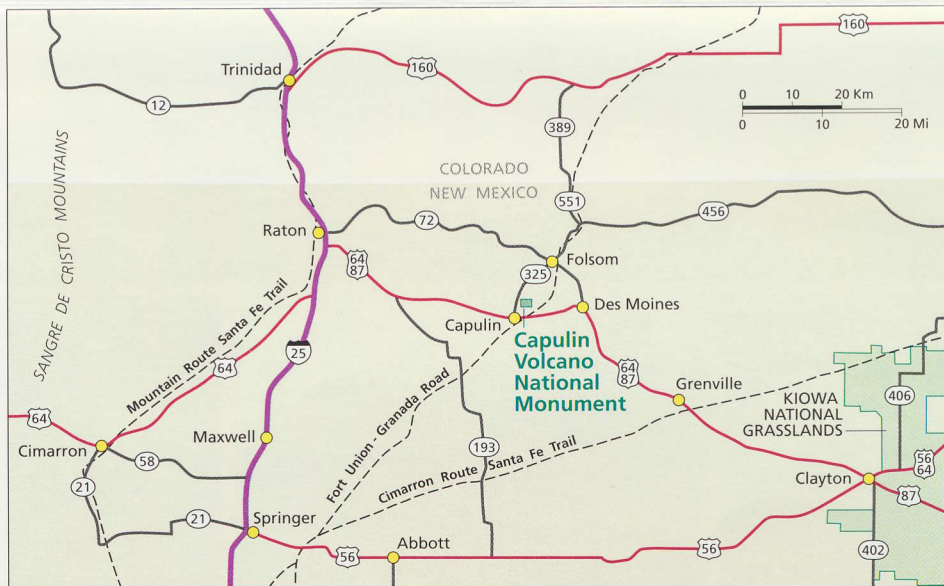
Capulin Volcano National Monument is in the northeastern corner of New Mexico. The park's entrance is from N.Mex. 325, three miles north of the town of Capulin. Capulin is 58 miles west of Clayton on U.S. 64 and 87, and 30 miles east of Raton and I-25.

The road to the summit may be closed by snow for a few days each winter.

More Information
Capulin Volcano National Monument was established on August 9, 1916, as part of the National Park System. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov

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Printed on recycled paper.



0 0.5 1 Kilometer
0 0.5 1 Mile

North



Four Lava Flows

Capulin volcano's eruption produced two types of volcanic products: cinders or scoria (frothy chunks of volcanic rock) and lava flows. The eruption began with a northeast oriented fissure but eventually focused at a single, central vent. This focused eruption sent cinders high into the air; they then piled up around the vent to produce the Capulin cinder cone.

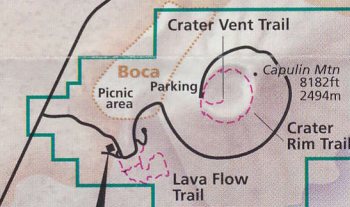
Early in the eruption, the first of four different lava flows spread eastward from the base of the cinder cone. Late in the eruption, lava emerged from several vents on the west side of the cone (now called the boca, or mouth). These flows spread south (second flow), southwest (third flow), and finally to the north (fourth flow). Some of the flows traveled

through lava tubes that have long since collapsed. Ripple-like marks—called pressure ridges—on the surface of the lava are perpendicular to the flow direction. These formed as the crust cooled while lava continued to flow underneath. Lava mounds called tumuli (squeeze-ups), formed where the lava crust broke and lava oozed out under pressure. The lava flows extend far beyond the park boundary, which only includes the cinder cone and boca. The lava flows cover 15.7 square miles and are best viewed from the crater rim.

Robinson Peak
8040ft
2451m

Fourth Lava Flow

Capulin Volcano National Monument



Visitor Center

Third Lava Flow

Second Lava Flow

First Lava Flow

Mud Hill
7195ft
2194m

Baby Capulin
6890ft
2100m

Folsom

325

325

64
87

CAPULIN

To
Raton

To
Des Moines