

Capulin Volcano

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Monument
New Mexico





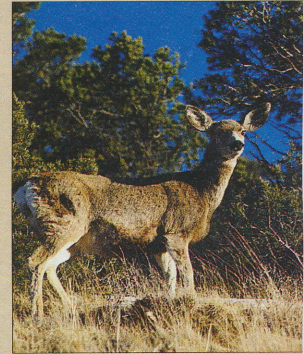
Ladybugs swarm on park plants in summer.



Supercooled fog deposits delicate rime ice on vegetation.



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



Mule deer.

The Mountain Tells Its Story

Capulin Volcano erupted into existence 60,000 years ago. Firework-like rooster tails of glowing, superheated lava spewed high in the sky, solidified, and dropped back to Earth. The falling debris accumulated around the vent, forming a cinder cone volcano.

Capulin's birth occurred toward the end of a period of regional volcanism that began 9 million years ago. You can see hills, peaks, and other formations from this period throughout the 8,000-square-mile Raton-Clayton volcanic field. The largest is Sierra Grande, an extinct volcano rising 2,200 feet above the plain, about 10 miles southeast of Capulin. To the northwest Barilla, Raton, and Johnson are the largest lava-capped mesas.

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

After the eruptions ceased, vegetation gained a foothold on the steep, unstable slopes. In time the cinder cone stabilized as plants took root and natural forces slowly changed the volcanic rock into soil. The volcano straddles two habitats: the grassland of the plains and the forest of the mountains.

Plants include 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. Along Capulin's trails you can see a variety of plants and animals. On a clear day you can see New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, and Oklahoma from the Crater Rim Trail's highest point.

Capulin Volcano is extinct and cinder cones 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.



Wildflowers flourish in the volcanic soil.

Planning Your Visit

Visitor Center Start here for information, exhibits, a film, and a bookstore. It is open daily except Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1. There is an entrance fee.

Activities Picnicking, hiking, and birdwatching are popular. A picnic area at the volcano's base has water and restrooms. In late spring and early summer, depending on rainfall, wildflowers create a colorful mosaic among the cinders. Prominent are sunflower (*left*), lupine, golden pea, paintbrush, penstemon, and verbena. In spring watch for bluebirds, warblers, black-headed grosbeaks, and goldfinches.

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

Services and Camping The park has no food service, lodging, or camping; find these in nearby towns.

Safety/Regulations To have a safe visit and protect the park, observe these regulations.

- Hike only on designated trails. Wear sturdy shoes with nonslip soles when hiking. The trails are maintained, but loose cinders or ice can make them dangerous.
- Fire is a potential danger; don't smoke on trails.
- Visitors with heart or respiratory conditions should use caution at this elevation.
- If you see a rattlesnake, stay calm, walk away slowly, and report it to a ranger.
- Pets must be leashed and attended; they are not allowed on park trails.

- Trailers, regardless of length, are prohibited on Volcano Road. Pedestrians and bicycles are not allowed on Volcano Road during park operating hours.
- Alcohol is prohibited.
- For firearms and other regulations, check the park website.
- Do not remove, disturb, or destroy any animals, plants, or geologic specimens; all are protected by federal law.

Emergencies: call 911

Walk on a Volcano

Did you ever wish you could walk on a volcano, perhaps even venture down into its crater? Capulin Volcano National Monument offers five trails that vary in difficulty and length.



Crater Rim Trail *Moderate: one-mile loop, paved.* Enjoy spectacular 360-degree views. 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.

Crater Vent Trail *Moderate: 0.2 mile one way, paved.* Trail descends 105 feet to the bottom of the crater, the plugged vent of Capulin Volcano.

Nature Walk *Easy: (about 10 minutes), paved.* Start at the visitor center for close-up views of prairie landscape and lava formations called squeeze-ups. Trail is wheelchair-accessible.

Lava Flow Trail *Moderate to easy: one-mile loop, unpaved.* There are some steep sections and rugged lava exposed on this otherwise easy trail.

Boca Trail *Strenuous: two-mile loop, unpaved.* Trail goes across lava flows, with lava lakes, lava tubes, and a spatter hill along the way.

Getting to the Park

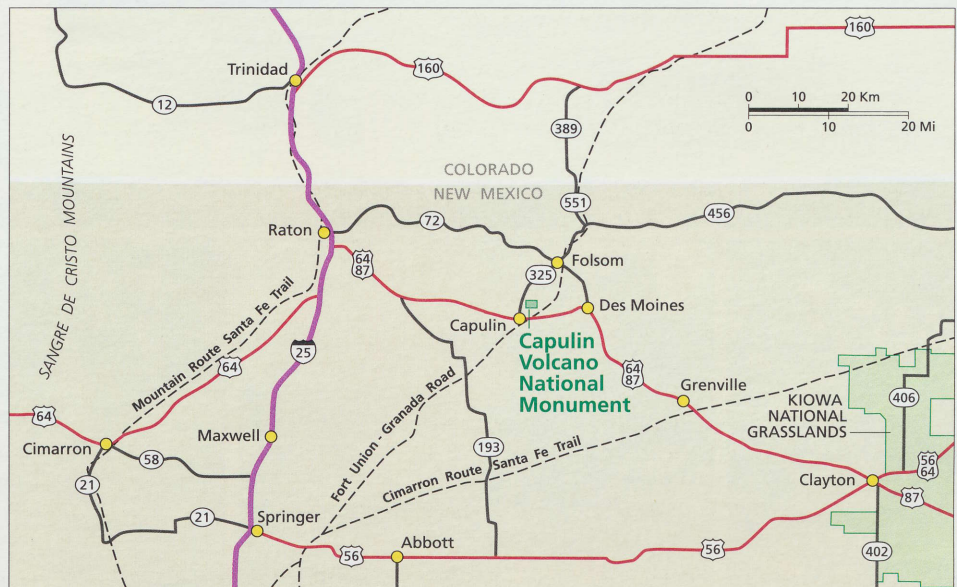
Capulin Volcano National Monument is in New Mexico's northeastern corner. Enter the park from N.Mex. 325, three miles north of the town of Capulin. Capulin lies 58 miles west of Clayton on U.S. 64 and 87, and 30 miles east of Raton and I-25.

Volcano Road may be closed by snow for a few days each winter.

More Information

Capulin Volcano National Monument
P.O. Box 40
Des Moines, NM 88418
575-278-2201
www.nps.gov/cavo

Capulin Volcano National Monument is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.



0 0.5 1 Kilometer
0 0.5 1 Mile



Robinson Peak
8040ft
2451m

Four Lava Flows

Capulin Volcano's eruption produced two kinds 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 eruption sent cinders high into the air that fell and piled up around the vent, producing the cinder cone.

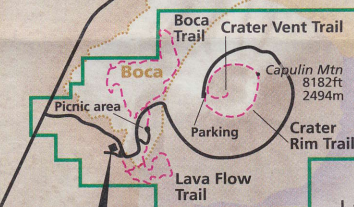
Early in the eruption, the first of four lava flows spread eastward from the cinder cone's base (first flow). Late in the eruption lava emerged from vents on the west side of the cone, now called the boca or mouth (see map).

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 since collapsed. Ripple-like marks on the lava surface, called pressure ridges, 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 crust broke, and lava oozed out under pressure.

The lava flows extend far beyond the park boundary, which includes only the cinder cone and boca. Lava flows cover 15.7 square miles; you can see them best from the crater rim.

Fourth
Lava Flow

Capulin Volcano National Monument



Visitor Center

Third
Lava Flow

First
Lava Flow

Second
Lava Flow

325

To
Folsom

Baby Capulin
6890ft
2100m

Mud Hill
7195ft
2194m

325

64
87

CAPULIN

To
Raton

To
Des Moines