White Rock Canyon offers some of the best hiking opportunities in Los Alamos. The canyon is 900 feet deep from the rim to the Rio Grande. The river, natural springs, distinctive geology—basalt lavas from the volcanoes of the Caja del Rio Plateau—and the hundreds of petroglyphs that adorn the rocks make this a unique hike. Two steep, rugged trails lead to the river—the Red and Blue Dot trails. On the edge of White Rock Canyon, a rim trail offers easy access to views into the canyon.

FINDING THE WHITE ROCK CANYON TRAILHEADS
To reach the Blue Dot Trailhead from the intersection of State Road 4 and Rover Boulevard in White Rock, head east on Rover. In 0.1 miles, turn left onto Meadow Lane. In 0.7 miles, turn left into Overlook Park. Pass by ball fields and turn right onto a paved road marked for the trailhead.

For the Red Dot Trail, continue south on State Road 4 from the intersection with Rover. In 0.2 mile, turn left onto Sherwood. Follow Sherwood 0.5 mile to a t-intersection with Piedra Loop. Turn left onto Piedra and find the trailhead on the left in 0.6 mile. There is parallel parking for about six vehicles at the trailhead.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE
A 58-mile network of trails links the foothills, canyons, and mesas in and around Los Alamos. Hikers, runners, horseback riders, mountain bikers, and other trail users delight in the variety of trails from which to choose. The trails offer a quick escape from the hectic pace in town; a route to commute to work, an easy stroll or a physical challenge, the chance to observe wildlife, or simply soaking in the impressive views. The County Trail Network connects over 100 miles of trails on the surrounding Santa Fe National Forest and the adjacent Valles Caldera National Preserve.

LOOKING EAST TOWARD THE SANGRE DE CRISTOS FROM OVERLOOK POINT

PAJARITO SPRINGS ALONG THE RED DOT TRAIL

PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS BLOOM

MALE FENCE LIZARD

THE RIO GRANDE MEANDERS SOUTH TOWARD COCHITI RESERVOIR

PETROGLYPHS CAN BE FOUND SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE CANYON

USING LOS ALAMOS COUNTY OPEN SPACE
The Los Alamos County Trail Network is open to non-motorized use only.

RESOURCE PROTECTION
All cultural resources such as Ancestral Pueblo room blocks, pot shards, petroglyphs, and historical artifacts are protected by Federal and State law. Let all cultural resources lie undisturbed.

SHARE THE TRAIL
These are multi-use trails for pedestrians, equestrians, and bicyclists. Bicyclists should yield to all other users.

DOGS IN LOS ALAMOS COUNTY OPEN SPACE
All dogs must be on a leash when within 100 yards of a trailhead. Dogs must be under voice and sight control at all times.

SAFETY
When exploring, please stay on marked trails. Always carry water, sunscreen, a hat, extra clothing, a flashlight, and a navigational aid.

Trailhead guides are available at major trailheads, the Los Alamos County Customer Care Center in the Municipal Building, the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce, and online.

For more information, visit www.losalamosnm.us, then follow the links to Open Space and Trails.
WHITE ROCK CANYON RIM TRAIL

LENGTH: 3.6 MILES OUT-AND-BACK
ELEVATION GAIN: 150 FEET
FITNESS LEVEL: EASY BUT ROCKY
FEATURES: MOUNTAIN BIKE SKILL LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE
TRAIL SURFACE: PACKED DIRT

This hike is a great introduction to the White Rock Canyon Rim Trail. The trail begins at the Blue Dot Trailhead and heads south for about two miles to the overlook above Pajarito Canyon. Any part of this out-and-back trip leads to spectacular views into the canyon.

From the trailhead, head east toward the canyon edge. At the rim of the canyon, turn right onto the rim trail. Near the edge of an open field, travel the path along the rim. Many alternate trails lead to the right, and a few to the left, but if you parallel the rim you can't go wrong. The trail makes many brief ups and downs, and in 1.8 miles reaches an attractive bench as it heads north. In about 0.3 mile, angle left toward the cliffs called The Playground by the climbing community. At the Playground, continue on the trail by scrambling over large boulders and through a narrow chute. The route quickly re-gains the edge of Pajarito Canyon, which enters the main gorge from the west. This viewpoint makes a good turnaround spot.

On the way back, hikers can take a challenging alternate route that begins about 0.2 miles from the overlook. This side trail descends below the canyon rim and stays on an attractive bench as it heads north. In about 0.3 mile, angle left toward the cliffs called The Playground by the climbing community. At the Playground, continue on the trail by scrambling over large boulders and through a narrow chute. The route quickly re-gains the rim. Turn right and retrace your steps back to the trailhead.

Dot to Dot Loop, Blue Dot Entrance

LENGTH: 7.8 MILES ROUND TRIP
ELEVATION GAIN: 1,000 FEET
FITNESS LEVEL: DIFFICULT
FEATURES: VIEWS, HISTORIC SITES, SPRINGS, Rio Grande
TRAIL SURFACE: PACKED DIRT, ASHALT
FIELD NOTES: FOOT TRAFFIC ONLY

The Dot to Dot Loop is a challenging 7.8 mile trail that provides access to the White Rock Canyon Rim Trail. The trail is uncreatively named for the color of spray-painted circles that mark the trails. The ancient Red Dot Trail, more formally the Pajarito Springs Trail, drops quickly to the small stream born from the springs of Pajarito Canyon and follows the stream to the river. The Blue Dot Trail, developed as a livestock passage in the 1930s, descends steep switchbacks to reach the river. Along the Rio Grande, the River Trail connects the dot trails, and on the rim, the White Rock Canyon Rim Trail parallels the gorge for two miles.

If you start at the Blue Dot Trailhead, head to the canyon rim from the trailhead and pass through an old fence to begin the descent. A half-dozen switchbacks bring you to a level bench, but the steep drop soon continues. After a mile, the trail enters a spring-fed thicket and meets the River Trail. Turn right and follow the trail for two miles, heading south. The Red Dot Trail is a few yards after crossing the strong outflow from Pajarito Springs. Turn right and follow the trail as it parallels the stream, crossing it once, for a few hundred feet, then begins the stair-like ascent of the canyon slope. It's only a mile to the rim, but it's a slow mile.

Meet Piedra Loop at the Red Dot Trailhead. Turn right and walk along the road for 0.4 mile. On the right, find a signed trail just before a guardrail opposite of La Senda Drive. The trail heads downhill on an easement between two houses. Cross Pajarito Canyon, and then pick up one of several trails that parallel the canyon rim, heading generally east. The White Rock Canyon Rim Trail is more defined at the edge of White Rock Canyon; turn left and walk the trail for 1.8 miles along the rim. After crossing an open field, take the trail to the right and it soon meets the Blue Dot Trail. Turn left and walk back to the trailhead.

Dot to Dot Loop, Red Dot Entrance

LENGTH: 7.8 MILES ROUND TRIP
ELEVATION GAIN: 1,000 FEET
FITNESS LEVEL: DIFFICULT
FEATURES: VIEWS, HISTORIC SITES, SPRINGS, Rio Grande
TRAIL SURFACE: PACKED DIRT, ASHALT
FIELD NOTES: FOOT TRAFFIC ONLY

If you choose to start at the Red Dot Trailhead, walk the trail across an open field. Soon after entering the woodlands, the trail begins its steep drop on rough basalt boulders. Two level benches break up the descent, which otherwise is relentless. About 0.7 miles from the start, the trail enters a thicket and emerges along the small stream flowing from the springs above. The trail parallels the stream for 0.3 miles. About 200 feet from the river, cairns mark several branches of the River Trail, which heads off up canyon to the left. Take any branch, cross the stream, and pick up the main River Trail.

Travel up the canyon on the River Trail as it ascends to a bench about 50 feet above the Rio Grande. The trail crosses open fields, woodlands, and traverses on narrow, rocky benches. About two miles from the Red Dot Trail, cross several wet areas and watch for rock cairns that mark the lower end of the Blue Dot Trail. Turn left onto that trail, which leads to the rim in about a mile. At the rim, pass through a fence and turn left onto the White Rock Canyon Rim Trail. Head south where many intersecting side trails come and go. Stay on the main trail, which never strays far from the rim. In about two miles, the trail comes to the edge of Pajarito Canyon, which enters the main canyon from the west. Bear right onto the trail that parallels the rim of Pajarito Canyon. In about 0.4 miles, watch for a sign post that points to a trail that crosses Pajarito Canyon and emerges onto Piedra Loop. Turn left and walk along the road to the trailhead.

THINK SAFETY: Keep your high desert hike safe & enjoyable! Stay on marked trails, know your limitations and your route. Avoid hiking in the heat of the day, drink plenty of water, use sunscreen, bring snacks, wear a hat and appropriate footwear. Remember that cell phone coverage may not be available for navigation or summoning help—consider other options and carry a map.