



## Scenic Highlights & Natural Features

The drive across the Black Range from Kingston to San Lorenzo contains some of the most beautiful scenery in New Mexico. The road curves around the mountains between the tall pines and tops out at more than 8200 feet at Emory Pass. The view from Emory Pass Vista is unparalleled for its breathtaking expanse of scenery towards the east. Visibility is usually very good, and one can see the panorama of the road below, Kingston nestled in the valley, Hillsboro further in the distance and the Caballo Mountains towering over Caballo Lake 35 miles away.

Another beautiful view towards the west is the Kneeling Nun Vista at mile marker 22.5. Rising in the middle of the tableau of mountains is the landmark Kneeling Nun, so named because of its resemblance to a nun kneeling before the cathedral in atonement. This formation was a major landmark for Native American tribes, early explorers and settlers.

Other highlights of the drive include the massive rock walls of the Hillsboro box canyon west of Hillsboro. The visitor should take time to drive out to the parking area and walk on the old suspension bridge which was used for so many years to span the gorge. Looking down into the canyon, the visitor can imagine riding in a stagecoach at the bottom. One will again feel dwarfed looking up at the towering cliffs in the Devil's Backbone area, a short distance west of Iron Creek Campground. (Letters A – H correspond to the map on page 30).

The many and varied scenic and natural attractions to be enjoyed by the visitor include the following:

- ❖ **Emory Pass Vista (A)**  
Magnificent view of mountains to the east for more than 40 miles.
- ❖ **Kneeling Nun Vista (B)**  
Spectacular view of mountains to the west for several miles
- ❖ **Gila National Forest (C)**  
The tree-covered peaks, including Hillsboro Peak and Sawyer's Peak, also encompass the Aldo Leopold Wilderness, the Gila Wilderness and numerous camping and hiking trails.
- ❖ **Hillsboro Box (D)**  
Massive canyon walls with cacti and desert plants growing out of vertical cliffs.

## Scenic Highlights and Natural Features (continued)

❖ **Turtleback Mountain (E)**

A peak resembling a turtle on top of the mountain overlooking the City of Truth or Consequences and the Rio Grande. This landmark was used to mark the location of the hot mineral springs. The peak is a favorite hiking destination.

❖ **Rio Grande (F)**

The fourth longest river in the U.S., the Rio Grande meanders around the town built on its banks as it moves from Elephant Butte Dam to the Caballo Reservoir.

❖ **Elephant Butte Lake (G)**

A man-made irrigation reservoir created as a result of the construction of Elephant Butte Dam. The lake is approximately 40 miles long. Summer brings a vision of boats dotting the water and campers along the shoreline. Winter features visits from migrating birds stopping for a drink on their way to their winter feeding grounds.

❖ **Caballo Lake and Mountains (H)**

Man-made reservoir created by Caballo Dam to hold water released from Elephant Butte Lake for use in generating electricity and for irrigation purposes. Barren rocky desert mountains arise on the east side of the lake. Legends speak about treasures hidden in these mountains by outlaws of bygone days.



*The Rio Grande looking east*

**Historic Highlights & Archeological Sites of  
The Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway**

Geronimo Trail encompasses centuries of history in the Southwest, from Prehistoric Native American cultures through Spanish rule to the “wild

west". The Black Range Mountains of the Gila National Forest were home to many prehistoric settlements of the Mimbres-Mogollon. When the Spaniards first explored the area, it was inhabited by several tribes of Apache, including Chiricahua and Ojo Caliente. One of the most well-known early Apache leaders were Mangas Coloradas, Victorio, Cochise, Mangas and Geronimo.

The first new settlements in the area were small farming communities settled by Hispanics as early as 1850. These included Cuchillo, Monticello, Las Palomas and Chiz. These early farming settlements traded with the Apache and lived in near-harmony with them as neighbors.

Miners were the next wave of immigration into the area after gold and silver was discovered in the Black Range in the 1880's. The communities of Hillsboro, Kingston, Lake Valley, Chloride and Winston sprang up along with several smaller towns that flourished for a few years then were abandoned when the silver market died. The population grew and a new county was formed in 1884, named Sierra. Hillsboro had the honor of being chosen as the county seat. This beautiful little town still boasts some stately old homes along the tree-lined main street, and other historic buildings. The ruins of the original county courthouse sits on the hill above the town.



***Ruins of old Sierra County Courthouse***

### **Historic Highlights and Archeological Sites (continued)**

Because so much of the land was good grazing, cattle were brought in and ranches started. Ranching communities sprang up. Engle became a railroad stop and shipping point for cattle. Truth or Consequences began as a town called Hot Springs in the early 1900's as people began to come to the area to bathe in the hot mineral springs. It grew in size and population, and became the county seat in 1937, over the vehement protests of the residents of Hillsboro. (Numbers 1 – 9 correspond to the map on page 30).

Some places to visit to learn more about the early history of the area include:

- ❖ **Geronimo Springs Museum & (1)  
Geronimo Trail Visitor & Interpretive Center**  
Displays of early Mimbres-Mogollon pottery, Apache artifacts and culture. Hispanic heritage, ranching, mining, military, history of town and county. Fossils, rocks, geology of area, log cabin, art displays, Ralph Edwards room and memorabilia. Informational displays and brochures about the communities along the Geronimo Trail.
- ❖ **Las Palomas Plaza at Geronimo Springs (2)**  
Site of original spring used by Apaches. Referred to as Sacred Healing Waters. Also used by soldiers from Ft. McRae and by early settlers to the area.
- ❖ **Black Range Museum (3)**  
Displays of early mining days in Sierra County, especially early days of Hillsboro and Kingston area. History of many early, famous mines of the area. Open by appointment only.
- ❖ **Hillsboro Historic District (4)**  
Self-guided walking tour of Hillsboro with map of old town, including ruins of courthouse and jail, businesses located in historic buildings and cemetery on nearby hill.
- ❖ **Kingston Historic District (5)**  
Interesting old buildings from 1880s to 1890s heyday, plus town bell cast from the ore of local mines. The old cemetery in the forested area is still in use today.
- ❖ **Percha Bank Museum (6)**  
Old bank building in Kingston. Open by appointment only.
- ❖ **Winston Historic District (7)**  
Old mining town from boom days with buildings dating to 1880s. Originally a mining town, it became a ranching community as well.

### **Historic Highlights and Archeological Sites (continued)**

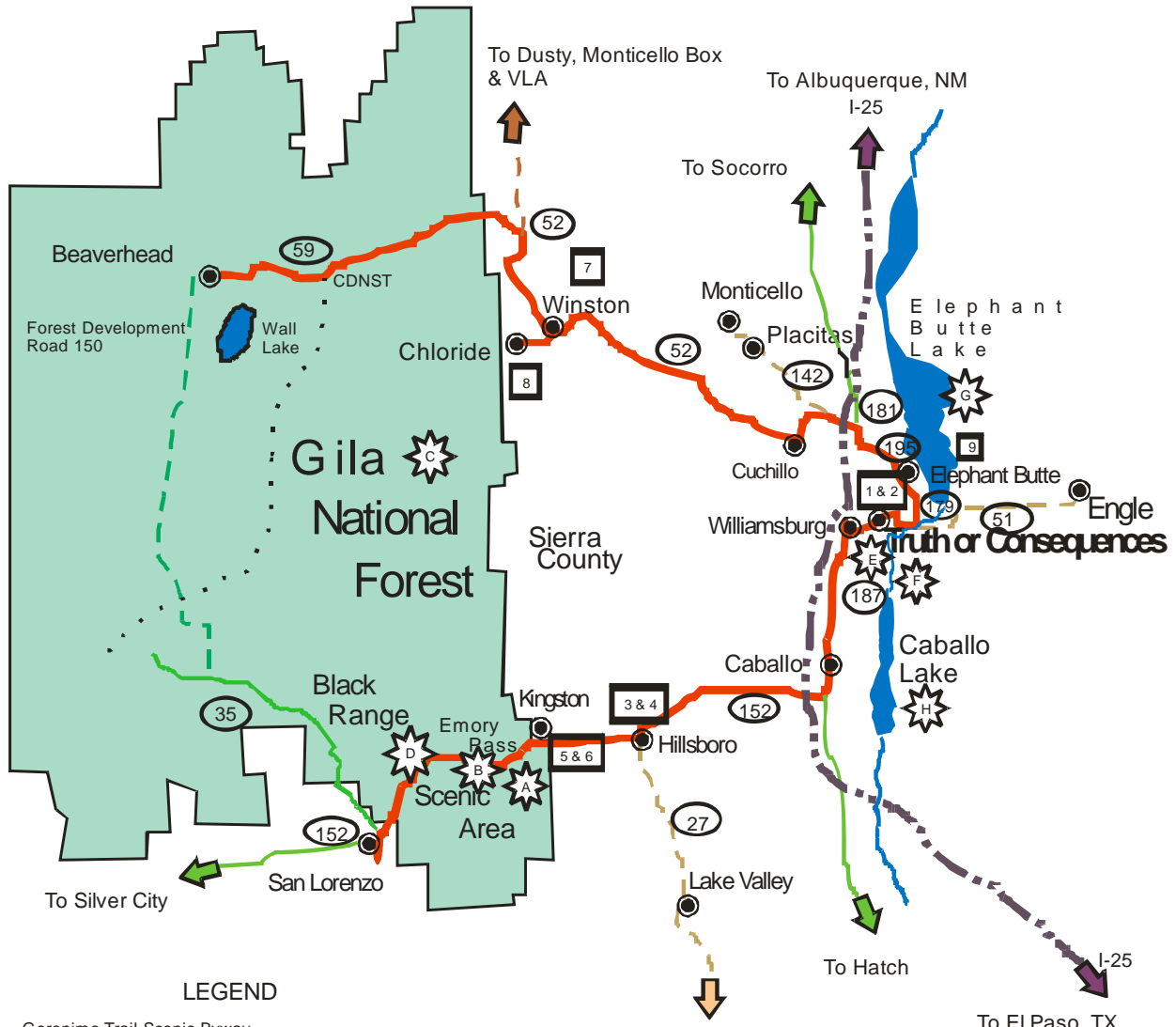
- ❖ **Pioneer Store Museum (8)**  
Old ghost town of Chloride and history of days when it was a booming mining town. The "Hanging Tree" is in center of main street of town. Museum displays early mining artifacts and memorabilia.
- ❖ **Elephant Butte Lake State Park Visitor Center (9)**  
Museum displays fossils and geology of area as well as history of the area covered by the lake.



**Monticello Box Canyon**

# Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway

## Scenic & Historic Features



### LEGEND

- Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway ———
- Side Trips - - - - -
- Secondary Roads ———
- Gravel Roads - · - · -
- Interstate - · - · -
- 4-wheel Drive / High Clearance - - - - -

### SCENIC

- Emory Pass
- Kneeling Nun Vista
- Gila National Forest
- Hillsboro Box
- Turtle Back Mt
- Rio Grande
- Elephant Butte Lake
- Caballo Lk & Mts

### Legend

#### HISTORIC

- |   |                                 |   |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| A | Geronimo Springs Museum         | 1 |
| B | Las Palomos Hot Springs         | 2 |
| C | Kingston Museum                 | 3 |
| D | Hillsboro Historic District     | 4 |
| E | Kingston Historic District      | 5 |
| F | Percha Bank Museum              | 6 |
| G | Winston Historic District       | 7 |
| H | Pioneer Store Museum            | 8 |
|   | EB Lake State Park Visitor Cntr | 9 |