Penitente Canyon, while quite secluded, has emerged as one of Colorado’s premier rock climbing areas. The area includes Penitente, Rock Garden, Sidewinder, and Witches Canyons with a high concentration of world class routes.

Along with unparalleled rock climbing, the newly reworked trail systems offers 17 miles of trails for hiking and mountain biking to enjoy among twisty rock canyons and towering boulders. Penitente offers so much to explore!
While in the area, you’ll ride through some of the country’s most fascinating history and geology. Twenty-seven million years ago, the largest volcanic eruption ever recorded blew the country apart and formed the La Garita Caldera. This void is 22mi wide and 47mi long. The outline of this giant caldera can be challenging to find, but evidence of its existence is all around you. Fish Canyon tuff, the rock blown out by the explosion forms the canyon walls.

Humans have visited this area for over 1000 years. From prehistoric groups to Utes and Jicarilla Apaches, people have added to the area’s rich history. Hispanic settlers used oxcarts to haul wood from the mountains - you can still see the wagon runs carved into the rock along the Penitente Canyon Loop Trail. The area was named after the religious brotherhood, Los Hermanos Penitentes, who worshipped in the area years ago.

From U.S. 285, turn west onto Saguache County Road G. After 6 miles, you will pass the La Garita Trading Post. Go another 1/2 mile to a Y intersection; take the left fork (Cty Rd 38A). The entrance to the recreation area is another 1/2 mile on your right.

Penitente Canyon Trail System

- Blue Sky Loop
- Capulin Loop
- Dollhand Ravine
- Iglesia de San Juan
- Jicarilla
- La Garita
- Lookout
- Lunch Gut
- Penitente Canyon Loop
- Penitente Canyon/Blue Sky
- Piñon
- Prospect
- Rock Drops
- Rock Garden Connector
- Rock Garden
- Ute Loop
- Wagon Tracks
- West Rock Garden
- Wild Horse Loop
- Witches Canyon
- Unpaved Road
- County Road

- Drinking Water
- Parking
- Campground
- Hiking Trail
- Horse Trail
- Mt. Biking Trail
- Restroom
- Four Wheel Drive Trail
- Dirt Bike Trail
- All Terrain Vehicle Trail

Map not to scale

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