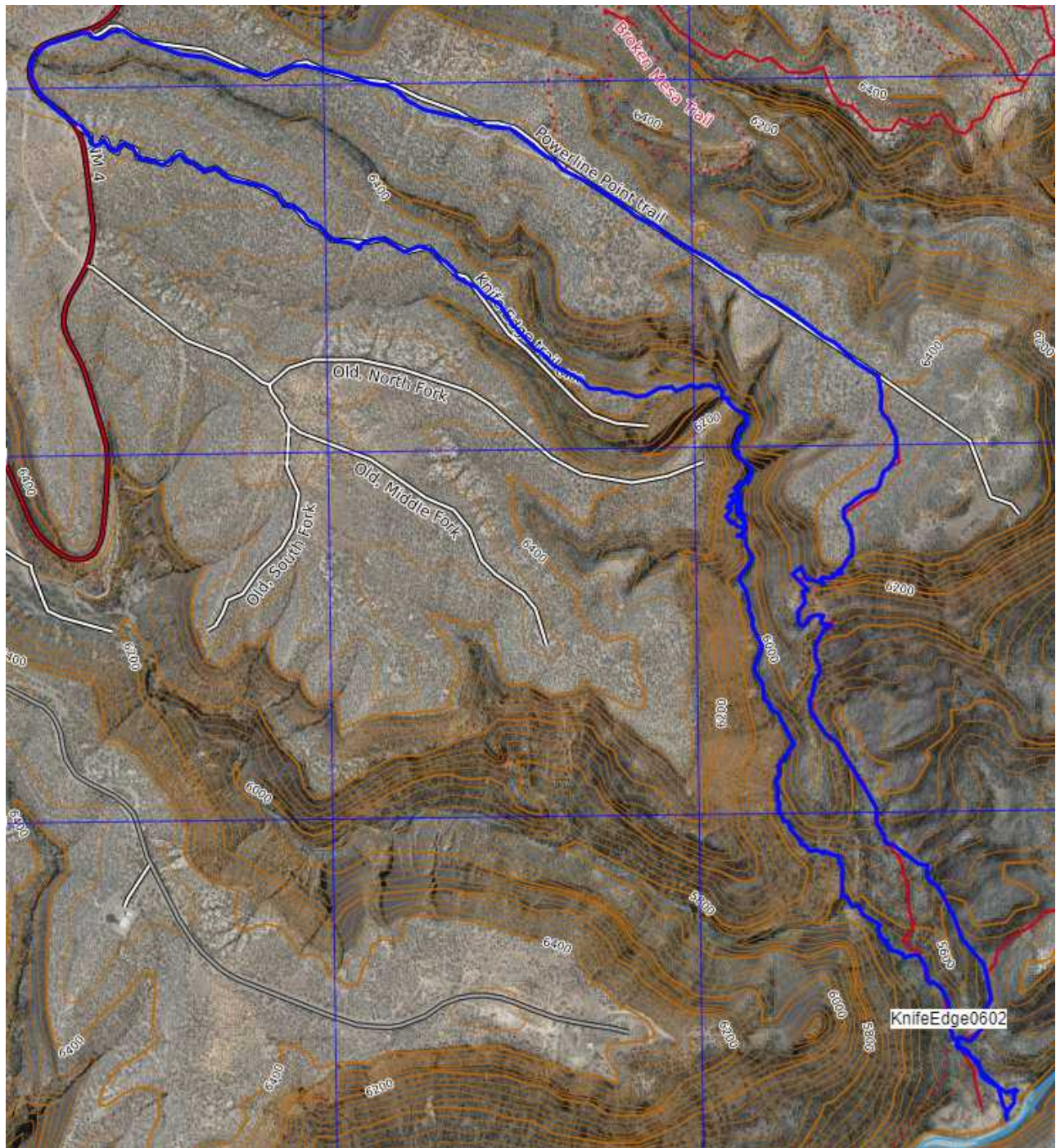


For this hike, I drove west of White Rock NM on NM4 to a gate marked #3, the Knife Edge Trail gate. The return leg brought me to gate #4, the Powerline Trail gate. Both gates have display maps that show the standard routes. The two gates are a short hike apart, so no shuttle is needed. This hike is seven miles, with a considerable section on the outward leg requiring off-trail travel. I used no ropes on this hike.

NOTE: If you are uncomfortable with exposure (high risk of injury caused by a fall in steep terrain), then this hike is definitely not for you.



My route is shown in blue and established trails in red. [CalTopo Hybrid Satellite with GPX]

Arriving at the end of the established Knife Edge Trail, I descended into the canyon. This is a steep descent on a mixture of stable and loose rock and soil. There is no established route, but some game trails exist. I had descended into the canyon once before, so I knew that the descent could be completed without becoming “cliffed out.”

Arriving at the canyon bottom, I proceeded downstream. I had walked upstream on a previous hike and found that route blocked by some high dry falls. Proceeding downstream, I encountered other dry falls.

One dry fall requires a detour for a person without ropes. It appears that one can walk either left or right to encounter places where the canyon wall breaks down and one can gain the canyon bottom again. I hiked right. This route involved first ascending the steep canyon wall before descending again. It was more challenging than the descent from Knife Edge Trail.

The walk through the canyon involves boulder hopping and some minor downclimbing in the early going. After Ancho Spring is encountered, there is brush and a stream with muddy margins, punctuated with cow pies. There is poison ivy on this route.

The last several hundred yards of this route consist of barren sandy soil until the Rio Grande is reached. There are small dead trees in this area with live trees closer to the river. There are some nice views across the river and welcome shade under the live trees.

On my route back, I walked a short section of the River Trail, heading upstream. After leaving the River Trail, my route involved some overland travel on a faint trail that was marked with some cairns. This route avoided hiking back through thick brush along the stream.

In the area close to the Rio Grande, there are prominent cairns to mark the trails, but there are no signs identifying the trails by name. Joining the Ancho Rapids Trail, I left a faint trail for a heavily traveled one.

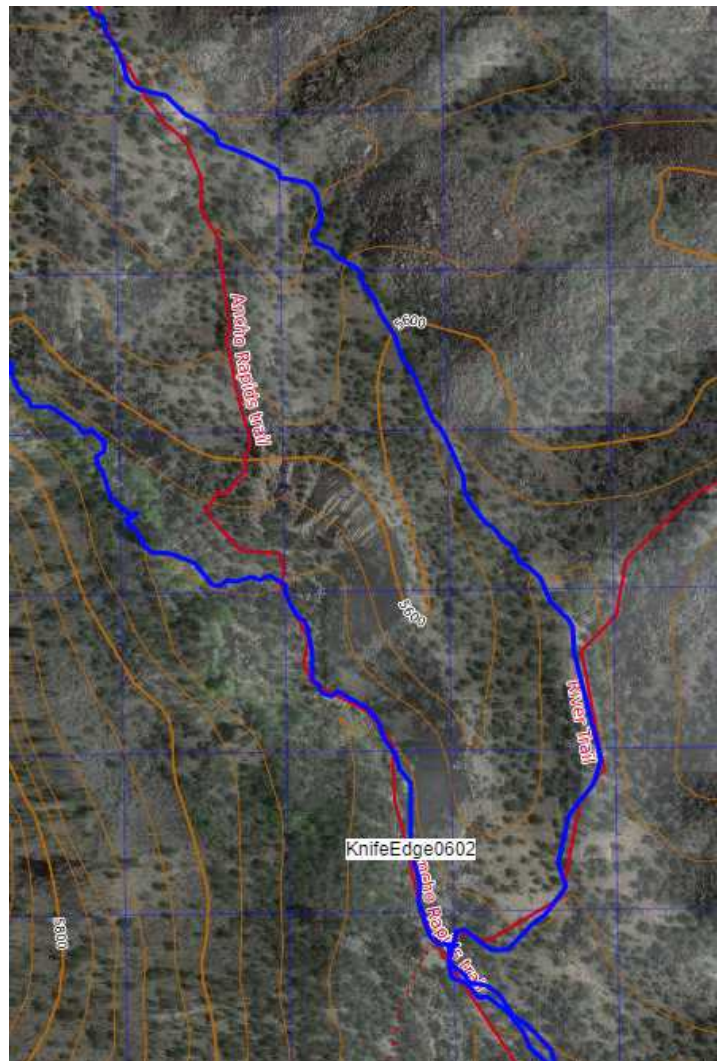
The ascent out of the canyon and onto the mesa is scenic and steep. There are good views all around and some interesting rock formations.



The hike back on Powerline Trail involves a gradual ascent on a road. There are some views, but I liked the views from the ascending trail much better. I made good time on this leg of the hike.

I spent 6:30 hours on the hike. I drank two liters of water on this warm day. Cloud cover in the final two hours reduced afternoon temperatures.

I enjoyed this hike, especially the canyon section upstream of Ancho Springs. For an easy visit to that canyon section, I recommend hiking Powerline Trail to Ancho Rapids Trail and then turning upstream. Return the way that you came. By traveling this alternate route, you will also avoid the more difficult sections – the descent from Knife Edge Trail and the detour around the high dry fall.



## Photo Gallery



Little holes dot the trail. I watched a bee fly into one hole, and here it is emerging again.



Cactus flowers were in bloom.



Approaching the canyon bottom from the end of Knife Edge Trail. This is the view looking upcanyon.



Hiking in the bottom of the canyon. Some boulder hopping is required.



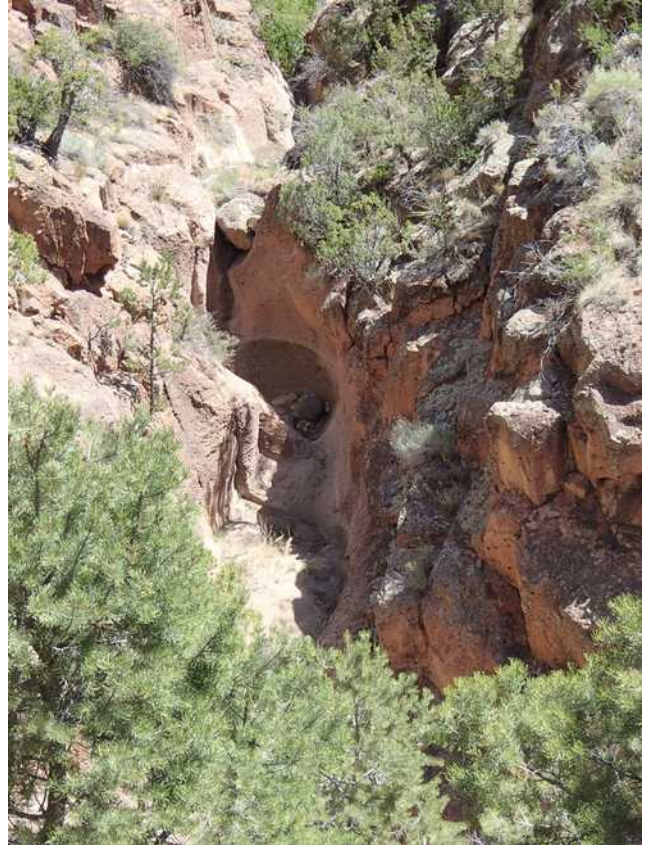


Little downclimbs are encountered, followed by a dry fall that requires a rope or a detour.





Looking back upcanyon from my detour.



Detail photo of the dry fall that I avoided.



This dry fall was well above my level of downclimbing ability. I hiked to the right and made a detour. The detour required a bit of climbing higher, traversing, and climbing down once the grade was shallow enough.

Others have solved this problem with canyoneering gear. That could be fun and would save the effort of slow progress on steep and tedious terrain.

The photo to the left shows the lower portion of the dry fall with its unusual fluted formation in volcanic tuff. I walked upcanyon after my descent to the canyon floor to get this view.



More boulder hopping awaits.





Here are some interesting rock formations.  
This section of the hike was my favorite.



Of all the rock formations, I found this the most intriguing. There are combinations of rocks embedded in a matrix. The layer was fairly narrow, and often the rocks were aligned in a row.

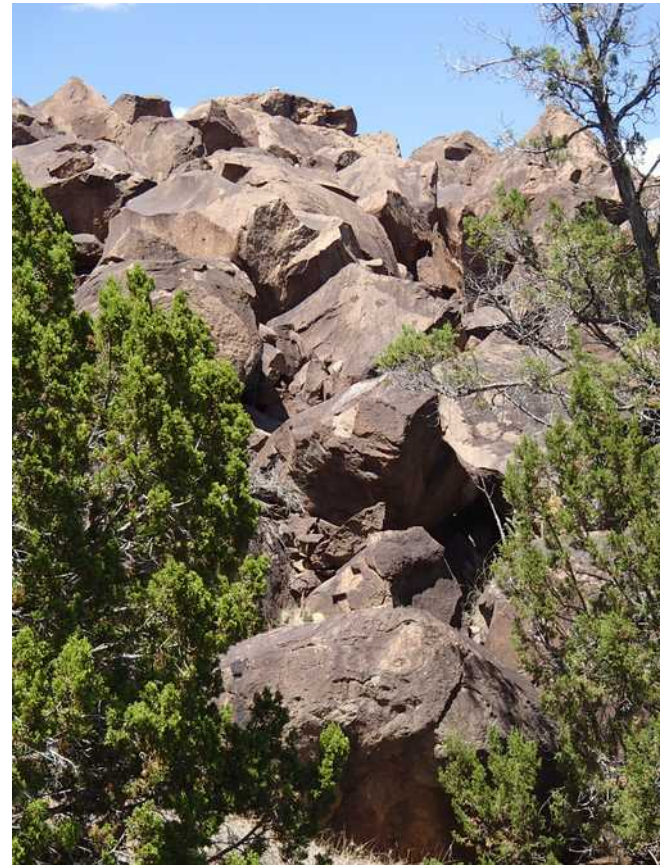








Continuing down the canyon, past Ancho Springs, with its flowing spring. Then proceeding through some heavy brush, soggy ground, cow pats, and onto the sandy stretch by the Rio Grande.



After visiting the area along the river, I started my return hike along the River Trail, then cross-country to meet up with the Ancho Rapids Trail.



Views on the return route.

The top two photos are look back toward the Rio Grande.

The next photo highlights an interesting rock formation.

The photo in the lower right shows the section of the canyon with the dry fall that I detoured around. In the lower left of the photo is the sloping ground that leads back into the canyon.

The final interesting rock formations for this hike are at the top of the Ancho Rapids Trail.



The end of another day well spent in the canyons of New Mexico.