

# Mountain Biking Across the Border IN NEW MEXICO

By Gigi Ragland

**C**olorado is host to some of the best mountain biking in the country. But just across the border in northern New Mexico is even more single-track splendor, from the sandy, high-desert rollercoaster hills of the southwest corner's Farmington area to the pine and piñon-scented Sangre de Cristo mountain climbs of Santa Fe. Focusing on the trail can be a challenge when beauty surrounds you at every twisted turn, and you'll have to use some big lungs and leg power to pedal through many of the 7,000+ altitude trails. And it's all worth it.

## Here are some favorite trails from local riders.

### SANTA FE: Dale Ball Foothill Trail System

**TIP** Ride to the trails from the Plaza. What makes the trails here so unique is their proximity to a large urban area; they are literally within blocks of the Plaza, making them easy to access for visitors and locals alike. The 20-plus-mile system, a favorite with locals, was created by a joint effort of the city of Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, the Foothills Trails Trust and other private landowners. Local mountain biker Roy Hughes rides the Dale Ball trails almost daily for a quick lunch loop. "It took great vision from the collaborators who put together this trail system," says Hughes. "It lies on city land, government land and crosses private property. I really appreciate that people worked hard to give others access to this wonderful trail system."

Hughes explains that the terrain varies to fit any skill level or mood. And he adds, "Visitors also get a chance to see not only great trails, but the neighborhoods that make Santa Fe so unique."

The system consists of a zig-zag maze of trails along the foothills and offers some good steep single-track trails and switchbacks that will test your turning skills. Trails are well-marked, and each intersection offers a numbered marker and map. There are three sections from which you can take other connector trails: Dale Ball Central, Dale Ball North and Dale Ball South.

Most technical section: According to Hughes, the most technical portion is the entire South Dale Ball area (including connector trails Audubon and Atalaya Peak), which offers super steep, loose and ledgy terrain. He confides, "It's a blast but you have to be in the mood for lung-killing climbing and steep off-the-back-of-the-bike descents."

Where to start: From the intersection of Bishop's Lodge Road and Artist Road, proceed up Artist approximately 2.5 miles. Turn left on Sierra del Norte. Turn right into parking lot of Dale Ball Trail System.

### FARMINGTON: Road Apple Rally Course

**TIP** Off-the-beaten-track gem-of-a-trail system near the town of Farmington.

Head to Farmington and try out the Road Apple Rally course. You'll get a taste of first-rate southwestern outdoor hospitality with Road Apple Rally's spider web network of trails.

The course offers 28 miles of fast-track mountain biking on a top-notch course cared for and envisioned by the local community in partnership with BLM managed public lands and the Glade Run Recreation Area. As all trails are located on BLM land, riders might encounter active gas wells and are requested to ride only where allowed. The Farmington community takes great pride in its local gem; the trails are maintained by local volunteers and the Velo de Animas Bicycle Club.

Shawn Lyle, program specialist for the City of Farmington Parks and Recreation Department, has been mountain biking in the area since 1988. He suggests the course is best for intermediate riders or above. On his favorite ride, Lyle encounters some sandy sections, a little slick rock and some good roller whoop-de-dos, but he doesn't think that the Glade Recreation area is extremely technical. "I ride to relax first and get my fitness second," says Lyle. "Kinsey's Ridge offers a little of everything. I can escape and enjoy riding and being away."

This year's Road Apple Rally Mountain Bike Race is on October 3 and offers a beginner's 15-mile loop course, plus the 30-mile Road Apple Loop. There will also be a Road Apple Rally (free) Kids Race and a non-competitive Citizen's Bank Tour. The Road Apple Rally claims the title of longest running mountain bike race event. The original race started in 1981, and 2009 will mark the 29th anniversary. Register online until October 1 at [active.com](http://active.com). ■

### SANTA FE

Download a Santa Fe Dale Ball Trails Guide at [santafe.org/images/pdfs/486-DaleBall-Trails\\_Guide.pdf](http://santafe.org/images/pdfs/486-DaleBall-Trails_Guide.pdf).

#### Santa Fe post-ride fuel-up:

head to Maria's New Mexican Kitchen for traditional blue corn enchiladas and yummios margaritas.  
555 West Cordova Road.  
505-983-7929,  
[marias-santafe.com](http://marias-santafe.com).



On the Dale Ball Foothill trail system.

### FARMINGTON

Check out the Road Apple Rally Course at [fmtn.org/city\\_government/parks\\_recreation\\_and\\_cultural\\_affairs/road\\_apple\\_rally.html](http://fmtn.org/city_government/parks_recreation_and_cultural_affairs/road_apple_rally.html).

#### Farmington post-ride fuel-up:

head to old town Farmington for award-winning local brews and pub grub such as Three Rivers Eatery & Brewery, 101 E. Main.  
505-324-2187,  
[threeriversbrewery.com](http://threeriversbrewery.com).



Racers at the 2008 Road Apple Rally.