

PLAN AHEAD:
BIKE TAOS'
ENCHANTED
FOREST

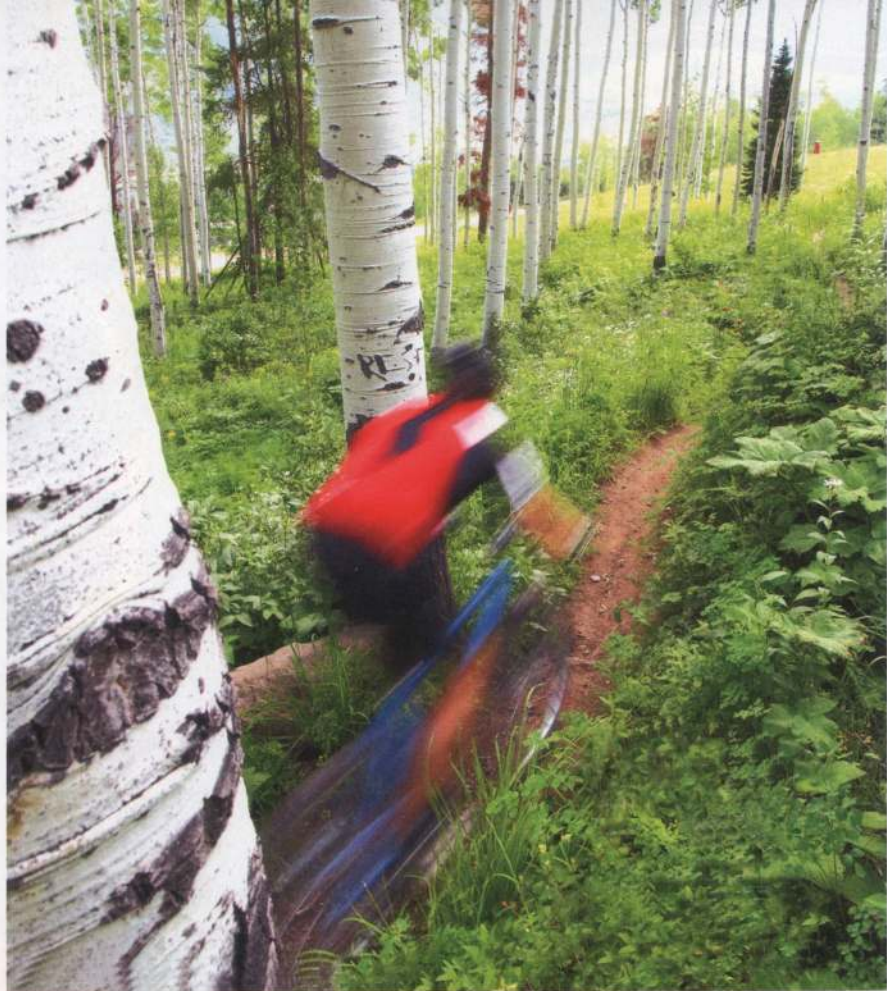
New Mexico's best bike trek starts at a brewpub.

The initial climb to the 10,770-foot summit of northern New Mexico's South Boundary Trail is a lung-buster, but the payoff is huge: a 2,022-mile amusement park of mountain-hugging singletrack dropping 3,500 feet through pine forests and aspen groves.

Linking the towns of Angel Fire and Taos, the South Boundary offers a variety of starting points and gives riders the choice of anything from a short, at times leisurely loop through the grassy meadows of Garcia Park, to a grueling 45-mile out-and-back slog from Taos. While it is possible to skip the uphill by driving to the park, if you take the thrill ride down to town, the only way to avoid the rocky and technical final three miles is to turn around and grind back up. Perfection does have a cost.

It takes a couple of months for the 200 or more inches of snowfall to dry up, so riding the South Boundary too early in the year can be a muddy and exasperating adventure. It's best not to hit it before June—or later. Cool temperatures and kaleidoscopic foliage make September and October prime season; the views make eyes pop year-round.

The forest is a labyrinth of fire roads and trails, and there are a few spots where the South Boundary forks, so getting some local knowledge before you ride is smart. A stop at either of Taos' two bike shops can prevent enervating detours



and dead ends.

Taos is known for its artist community, 1,000-year-old Taos Pueblo and world-class skiing, but it's also a good home base for some of the state's best biking, hiking and rafting. Eske's Brew Pub, the oldest brewpub in New Mexico, sits in the middle of it all. The pub's central location and proximity to Taos' bike shops—one of them across the parking lot—make it a popular starting point for the South

Boundary. Riders can leave one car at the pub and shuttle to the trail in another.

After hours of slurping energy gels and sucking on a hydration bag, an Eske's Millennium IPA or Artist Ale in the beer garden makes a great end to a long day in the saddle. Pair your beer with a bowl of green chile stew, bratwurst or southern fried chicken and you'll be ready to do the South Boundary again in the morning. —Ross Burns



TAOS' BEST SIPPING SPOTS

Eske's Brew Pub

This laid-back spot pours its famous house-brewed chili beer (plus the rest of its lineup, as well as guest taps) in a century-old adobe house; the kitchen cranks out cuisine from every culture imaginable. eskesbrewpub.com

Taos Ale House

Understated and indie cool, Taos Ale House serves up live music and its own always-rotating brews (the brewery cranks out everything from black IPAs to ciders to strong ales) in minimalistic, Southwestern-modern digs attached to a sunny patio. taosalehouse.com

← Taos Mesa Brewing

This gorgeously modern brewery near the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge is still under construction, but the beer industry's largest solar greenhouse collector is complete. Look for the taphouse/dancehall to open this summer. taosmesabrewing.com

Wanna Ride?

Get a tune-up at Taos Cyclery (114 Dona Luz St., taoscyclery.com), then book a shuttle to the trail at Gearing Up Bike Shop (129 Paso del Pueblo Sur, gearingupbikes.com), which also rents bikes.