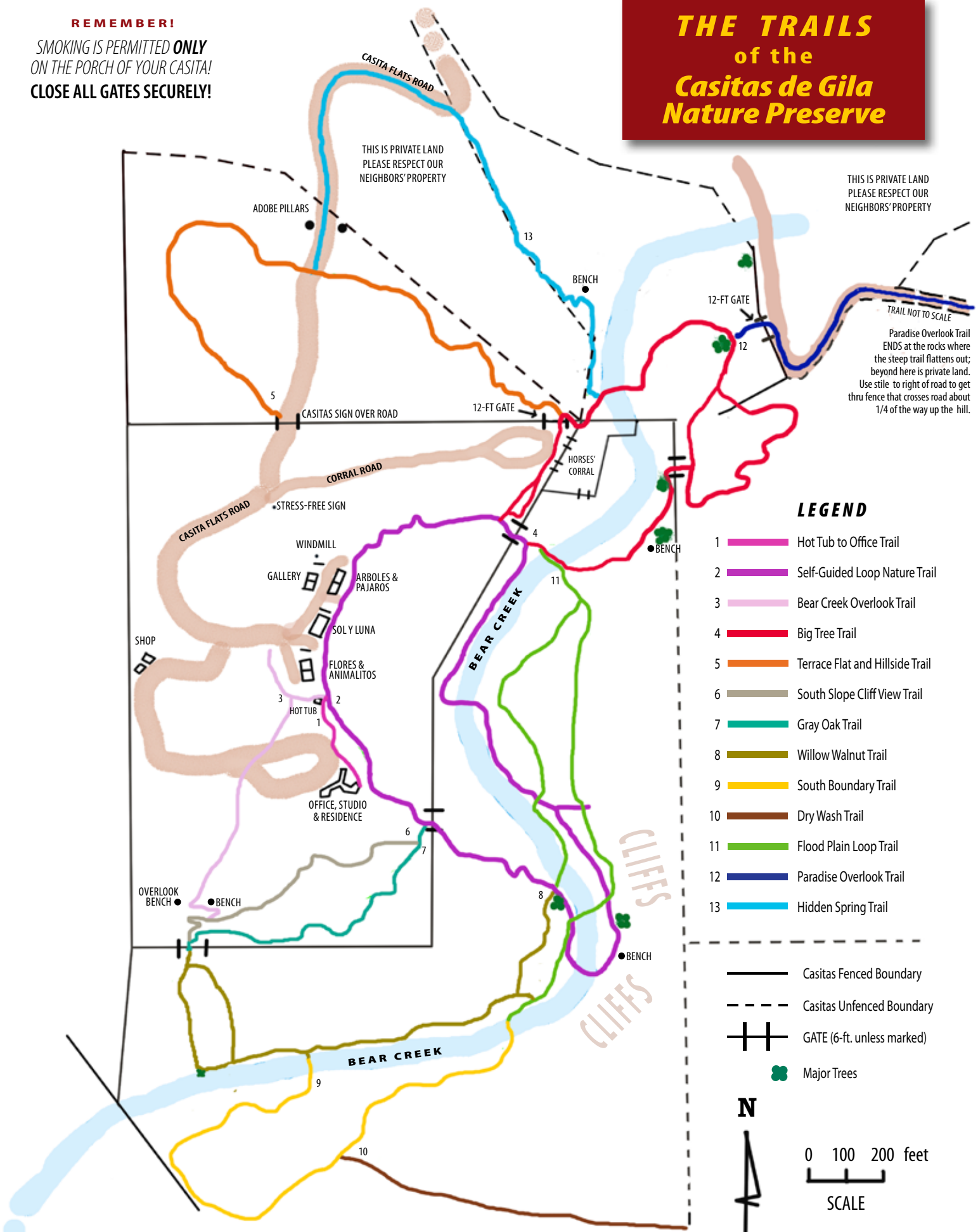


REMEMBER!

SMOKING IS PERMITTED **ONLY**
ON THE PORCH OF YOUR CASITA!
CLOSE ALL GATES SECURELY!

THE TRAILS of the Casitas de Gila Nature Preserve



TRAIL GUIDE

Casitas de Gila Nature Preserve

SELF-GUIDED LOOP NATURE TRAIL ... 0.6 mile

This trail and the printed guide in your Casita will introduce you to the plants, geology, wildlife, natural history, and cultural history of the Casitas de Gila Nature Preserve. The trail begins and ends at the post near the hot tub.

BEAR CREEK OVERLOOK TRAIL ... 0.17 mile

Leads from the hot tub area through the orchard and over to the south side of Casita Flat, where a bench provides a bird's-eye view of Bear Creek and the cliffs above. In the evening this spot provides an inspiring viewpoint for watching mule deer, javelina, and birds in the canyon, and the Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep that frequent the cliffs and North and South Peaks across the creek.

BIG TREE TRAIL ... 0.56 mile

Leads you along a shaded, winding path past ancient 300- to 500-year-old cottonwoods and sycamores and through groves of mature gray oak, alder, ash and walnut. Usually, this is the best trail for observing birds and other wildlife, especially in early morning. Mule deer, wild turkey, and javelina are common visitors to this part of the Preserve.

TERRACE FLAT & HILLSIDE TRAIL ... 0.44 mile

Leads from the Bear Creek floodplain onto an ancient river terrace (or "flat" in local parlance), and then continues onto the hillside comprising our western border. This trail presents a nice transition from the creek floodplain habitat to the plants and animals of the upland juniper and piñon habitat. It provides excellent bird's-eye views of the Casitas, North and South Peak, Turtle Rock, and the Piñon Altos Mountains and Gila Wilderness.

SOUTH SLOPE CLIFF VIEW TRAIL ... 0.19 mile

Runs along a rocky slope of mesquite-, catclaw- and cactus-covered outcrops of Gila Conglomerate just above the Gray Oak Trail. Provides excellent views of the cliffs across the creek and the twin peaks of North and South Peak above them. It's an excellent vantage point for observing and photographing the Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep that frequent the cliffs.

GRAY OAK TRAIL ... 0.18 mile

Developed and maintained by our two horses, Yaqi and Saino, to get to their favorite afternoon siesta spot under the gray oaks. It intersects the Self-Guided Nature Trail at the gate at L4 and winds down across exposed outcrops of mesquite- and catclaw-covered Gila Conglomerate to a shady grove of old and gnarled gray oak trees. You will most likely find the horses there on a hot day. It then continues over to a gate leading to the Willow Walnut Trail.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- No smoking or fires anywhere on Casita lands. Smoking is permitted only on the porch at your Casita. Wildfire is a danger year-round throughout New Mexico.
- Guests are requested to **stay on trails** to avoid disturbing wildlife, except along the creek where exploring and play is encouraged. Avoid loud talk and other noise.
- Do not collect or disturb plants or animals. This includes snakes, scorpions, tarantulas, etc., as they are an integral part of the ecological balance.
- Rock and mineral collecting is encouraged.
- During the Summer Rainy Season (late June to mid September) be alert for flash floods. The creek can rise within minutes. Retreat to the **Casita side** of the creek!

- If the Rocky Mountain Sheep are on the cliffs or you come across them in the floodplain, please retreat immediately to the Casita side of the creek so they will not feel threatened. We do not want them to stop visiting us. They can be observed best from the Willow Walnut Trail, the Gray Oak Trail and the South Slope Cliff View Trail.
- Use the walking sticks provided at your Casita. Stout hiking shoes or boots are recommended, as are long pants and shirts. Be sure to take sunscreen and enough water.
- If you are hiking alone, notify Becky or Michael on both your departure and return, and **take a walkie-talkie**.
- If you plan to hike the Paradise Overlook Trail, notify Becky or Michael on both your departure and return.

WILLOW WALNUT TRAIL ... 0.24 mile

Begins at L6 on the Self-Guided Nature Trail and winds through a dense thicket of willow, walnut and juniper before opening out onto an old sand- and gravel-covered river terrace with mesquite, catclaw, walnut and cholla. Leaving the terrace, the trail then drops down a few feet onto the active floodplain, where it runs along a sandy natural levee bordering the creek, beneath a dense growth of willow, walnut, and cottonwood.

SOUTH BOUNDARY TRAIL ... 0.46 mile

Runs along the southern boundary of Casita property on the other side of Bear Creek from the Willow Walnut Trail. The trail is sparsely vegetated since the soil is mostly sand and gravel river terrace and outwash from Dry Wash Canyon. A common plant along the trail next to the creek is the Seep Willow, which forms dense clumps of reed-like growth.

DRY WASH CANYON TRAIL ... 0.7 mile (roundtrip)

NOTE: Do not attempt to climb the cliffs of Gila Conglomerate lining the canyon; they are unstable.

This round-trip trail forks off the South Boundary Trail and runs up Dry Wash Canyon. This small dry wash canyon is typical of all canyons in the desert and has been formed over the millennia by the periodic flash floods coming down from North and South Peaks to the east. The "trail" is the dry wash itself in the bottom of the canyon and displays excellent outcrops of Gila Conglomerate. It is a good place to look for rocks and minerals, since they are replaced after every heavy rain.

A quarter-mile up the trail, you will come to a five-foot high ledge of Gila Conglomerate which you can either climb over or by-pass on the left side. Continue for another 500 feet until you reach the spot where the dry wash forks. This is the end of the trail and is easily recognized by a small grove of three large and gnarled old juniper trees clustered at the beginning of the right-hand fork. These junipers make a nice shady spot for lunch and refreshment. Upon reaching this spot, do not attempt to climb out, but retrace your steps to the beginning of the trail.

FLOODPLAIN LOOP TRAIL ... 0.55 mile

When combined with segments of the Self-Guided Nature Trail, this trail provides a nice loop trail through magnificent stands of young cottonwood, willow and sycamore covering the floodplain on

the other side of the creek across from the Casitas. These trails are an excellent place for observing the many birds and animals that frequent the floodplain, and also provide a connection between the trails on the north and south sides of the property.

PARADISE OVERLOOK TRAIL ... 2 miles (roundtrip)

NOTE: 1) This trail cannot be used during the summer rainy season because of the danger of flash floods on Bear Creek; 2) You must notify Michael or Becky on your departure and return; 3) Hiking off the road is not permitted; 4) The trail ends at the rocks at the top of the hill; do not continue farther as it is private land.

This round-trip trail follows the road and rises steeply from the Bear Creek floodplain to Paradise Overlook at the top of the mountain on the north side of North Peak. The trail begins at the 12-foot gate at the northeast corner of the Big Tree Trail and rises some 800 feet in about a mile. Because of its steepness, the trail is extremely demanding physically and should not be attempted by anyone not in good physical health. Going up the mountain, the road begins in Gila Conglomerate before crossing a major fault and passing into a variety of volcanic rocks including rhyolite and andesite containing zeolite filled gas bubbles, and welded volcanic ash. The view from the top is magnificent, offering up to 30+ mile distant views of the Mogollon Mountains, the Gila Wilderness, the Blue Mountains Wilderness, the Burro Mountains into Arizona, Turtle Rock, First Valley and all of the Gila Valley. There is a nice place at the top to have lunch.

Allow 1 to 2 hours going up and about the same coming down. Take plenty of water. Use the stile below the road to get through the fence that crosses the road.

HIDDEN SPRING TRAIL ... 0.33 mile

This short trail offers an exceptionally interesting transition in natural habitat from the densely vegetated Bear Creek floodplain up onto the more sparsely covered high desert vegetation of the adjacent hills. The higher elevations of the trail offer excellent views of Turtle Rock and the Gila Wilderness to the east and north. Just where the trail leaves the floodplain, you will find the special spot from which the trail takes its name. The full effect of the abrupt change in habitat on this trail can be best experienced by starting in the floodplain at the east end of the trail.