

Trails in the Parks

Trails in the Navajo Nation Tribal Park System

The six parks in the Navajo Nation Parks System are home to some of the finest trails on the Nation, providing recreation and wellness opportunities for local families and visitors, alike, in some of the most stunning settings of the American Southwest.

The trails of the ***Four Corners Monument*** are home to one of the biggest running events on the Nation: the four-day Four Corners Quad Keyah held each winter. The park trails include the Dancing Horse Trail and the Stateline Trail, established in 2018, with a new river trail in the plans. All trails include signage, benches, trailheads and ramadas. Local schools also host elementary and junior high cross country meets on the park trails.



High school runners (left) preparing to take on the Wildcat Trail in Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park; NavajoYES trail crew pauses at Rainbow Bridge after a week of trail restoration on the remote trail in southern Utah

The oldest trail in the park system is the ***Rainbow Trail***, a rugged route which traverses the canyons and ridges surrounding Navajo Mountain en route to Rainbow Bridge. The North Rainbow Trail offers a remote and rigorous trek and, while maintained by various groups, is extremely challenging for backpackers, hikers and trail runners. The Rainbow Lodge Trail is less travelled and much more rugged, while offering a slightly shorter route to the Bridge. Both trails are part of the Lake Powell Navajo Tribal Park.

Camp Asaayi near Crystal, New Mexico is home to two short forest trails that include rigorous climbs and stunning views. These two historic trails have been revived by the efforts of local youth and a tribal nonprofit, commencing in 2017. These trails host the 12 Hours of Asaayi and the Asaayi Mountain Run events each summer.

The ***Little Colorado River Gorge Navajo Tribal Park*** includes rim trails and some epic canyon trails. The LCR Half Marathon & 10K traverses the rim trail between the two park overlooks, skirting the dramatic ledge along the way. The Salt Trail travel from the rim of the park to the LCR, about ten miles above the confluence with the Colorado River, while the Horse Route enters the Canyon five miles upstream of the iconic Blue Springs. While the rim trails are modestly maintained and accessible, the canyon routes are extremely remote, minimally-travelled and are considered suitable – and very rewarding – for experienced hikers.



A runner pauses along the LCR Rim Trail during the LCR Half Marathon, held each February in the park

The most iconic of all tribal parks, **Monument Valley** is home to the most-traveled park in the tribal park system: Wildcat Trail. The four-mile trail loops around West Mitten on a well-marked and signed route. The surface is extremely sandy in spots and the climb out is challenging, though the sweeping views are breathtaking. The park hosts the MV Ultra each spring, the Monument Valley Veterans Marathon in November and local school xc meets throughout the fall.



From left to right: Youth trail crew member from Chinle on the Camp Asaayi Trail; Horse Flats on the Rainbow Trail near Naatsisaan; Trail crew leader Rygie Bekay is a ket part of the Navajo Trails Team

Window Rock is home to the ***Museum Trail*** in the ***WR Veterans Tribal Park***. The four-mile route is very popular with local residents throughout the year, and the trail is utilized as a part of the Navajo Code Talker 29K course and many other running and hiking events throughout the year. With its trailhead at the Navajo Nation Museum, the trail is also popular with visitors to the capital. The dreams came to reality and trail work commenced on the first phase of the Beclabito Community Trail Network.



Runners entering the Museum Trail in Window Rock during the Code Talker 29K event during the Navajo Nation Fair in September

All tribal parks offer free entry for Native Americans. There is a fee for non-Natives at Monument Valley, Four Corners Monument and Antelope Canyon in Lake Powell Tribal Park. Camp Asaayi is a fee area for day use, camping and fishing, while LCR entry is on a donation basis. An overnight use permit is required for backcountry use on the Rainbow Trail in Lake Powell Tribal Park and for all trails beneath the rim at LCR.

For more information about the trails within the Navajo Tribal Parks System, you may reach Navajo Parks and Recreation at (928) 871-6647, or contact Tom Riggerbach with the Navajo Trails Task Force at (928) 429-0345 or at chuskaman@yahoo.com



Wintry paradise on Dancing Horse Trail at Four Corners Monument