Texas’ Gift to the Nation

WELCOME TO BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK AND THE RIO GRANDE WILD & SCENIC RIVER! Big Bend is one of the largest and least visited of America’s national parks. Over 800,000 acres await your exploration and enjoyment. From an elevation of less than 2,000 feet along the Rio Grande to nearly 8,000 feet in the Chisos Mountains, Big Bend includes massive canyons, vast desert expanses, and the entire Chisos Mountain range. Here, you can explore one of the last remaining wild corners of the United States, and experience unmatched sights, sounds, and solitude.

Established in 1944, Big Bend National Park was the first national park service area in the state of Texas. Following a nine year process of land acquisition during the Depression, President Roosevelt received the deed to the Big Bend property on D-Day, June 6, 1944. One week later the transfer became official, and in July 1944 the park opened to visitors.

The new park was the culmination of efforts by many people throughout the state of Texas. Texas had helped to promote the park idea, raise funds to purchase privately owned lands, and in the CCC camp in the future park, young Texans built roads and facilities. The donation of the lands to create the park, and the many efforts made to ensure that Big Bend National Park came into being, led the park to be known as “Texas’ Gift to the Nation.”

In this issue of the Big Bend Paisano, we explore the past, present and future of Big Bend National Park.

Visiting Big Bend - Then and Now

When Big Bend opened to visitors at the beginning of July 1944, available facilities for the potential visitor were primitive in the extreme. In fact, the first park brochure advised that, “those who wish to visit the park... should be prepared to camp, bringing their own food, bedding, and tents.” While over 100 miles of roads allowed access to various points in the park, none of it would be paved until the 1950s. One writer even cautioned that “with meager accommodations... as well as there being the necessity to bring in one’s rations, the prospective visitor to Big Bend will wisely bide his time.”

In the past sixty years Big Bend has balanced developments for visitors with protecting park resources. While a visit to the park today includes amenities such as electricity and paved roads, in many ways, Big Bend is still as remote and magnificent a place today as it was in the 1940s.
Welcome to YOUR Park
Welcome to Big Bend National Park and the Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River, two premier units of our nation’s National Park System. We hope you have a wonderful time as you explore and experience these great parks.

Your visit comes at a special time in the history of Big Bend National Park. We’re celebrating the 60th anniversary of this special place during 2004. Congress established Big Bend as the nation’s 27th national park on June 12, 1944. It was then, and is now, one of the most beautiful and ecologically diverse parks in the country.

Big Bend NP is often referred to as being “three parks in one” because of the three very distinct environments found here—the Chihuahuan Desert, the Chisos Mountains, and the Rio Grande corridor. These different areas of the park provide tremendous diversity in terms of elevation, climate, scenery, wildlife, vegetative communities, and recreational experiences and opportunities. Be sure to sample some of each during your time with us.

National parks like Big Bend belong to us all, and as such we have a shared stewardship of these special places. Please be mindful of that as you spend time in YOUR national park. Leave only footprints and take only memories.

Experience Your America!

Volunteer Honor Roll
Each year, volunteers contribute thousands of hours to the National Park Service. A vital supplement to paid staff, volunteers bring special skills, dedication, and fresh approaches to our work in interpretation, visitor protection, maintenance, administration, and resource management.

Join us in thanking the following individuals and organizations who have recently donated 100 or more hours in volunteer service to Big Bend:

Madeleine Averett
Barbara and Bill Baldwin
Judy Brinkerhoff
Norma and Lloyd Burg
Denise and John Curd
Nancy Daniel
John Davies
Nancy Dickerson
Ken Fields
Kay and Rich Gordon
Steve Harper
Tim Hanks
Bob Herendeen
Whil Hibbard
Sue and Bob Hostetter
Don Janes
Sally and Bob Jones
Gail and John Kamaras
Mark Kidley
Joan and Jack Lamkin
Greg Levandoski
Jack Norton
Dana and Les Over
Terry Punis
Dori and Tom Ramsay
Ingrid and Bernie Sampo
Samantha Schroeder
Bob Shuler
Sierra Club
Allison Taylor
Rod Wetmore
Kay White
Steve Wick
Clara and George Willis
Priscilla Wiggins
Scarlett and Bob Wirt
Reine Wonite

BIENVENIDOS
Bienvenidos al Parque Nacional Big Bend y al Natural y Escénico Río Grande, dos unidades memorables del sistema de parques nacionales estadounidense. Esperamos que tenga una visita maravillosa mientras que usted aproveche la oportunidad de explorar y gozar de estos asombrosos parques.

Nos visita durante un tiempo importante en la historia del parque nacional Big Bend. En 2004 celebramos el 60º aniversario de este lugar especial. El congreso estadounidense designó Big Bend como el 27º parque nacional en el 12 de junio, 1944. Fue, y todavía es, uno de los parques más hermosos y diversos ecológicamente en el país.

Muchas veces se refiere al parque nacional Big Bend con el nombre de “tres parques en uno” porque contiene tres medios ambientales distintos—el desierto Chihuahuense, las montañas Chisos, y el Río Grande. Estas diferentes áreas del parque proveen una diversidad tremenda en términos de elevación, clima, paisajes, vida silvestre, comunidades botánicas, y oportunidades para el recreo. Asegúrese de explorar cada área durante su visita.

Los parques nacionales pertenecen a todos nosotros y en sí mismos contienen el espíritu de esos lugares especiales. Sea atento a eso durante su paseo en SU parque. Deje solamente rastros, tome solamente memorias.

¡Explore su América!

Did You Know:
Park animals are wild. Do not feed or approach any animal on the park’s wildlife. Enjoy animals at a safe distance and allow them to find their own natural foods.

Do not remove any natural objects from the park, including rocks, cactus, reptiles, and fossils. Collecting specimens of any kind or defacing park features deprives other visitors. Leave everything as you found it for others to enjoy. If you must collect, pick up litter!

All bicycles, including mountain bikes, must remain on paved or unpaved roads. They are not allowed on hiking trails or off-road.

Motor vehicles must be licensed and street-legal. All motor vehicles must stay on established roads open to public travel.

It’s Up to You...
National parks have been described as the crown jewels of the United States. While enjoying the beauty of Big Bend National Park, please remember that few other nations have parks that can compare to those of the United States. They are something to be proud of. They are something to preserve.

The protection of Big Bend National Park is ultimately in the hands of the people who visit it. Your cooperation with park rules is one way to help ensure the park’s survival.

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Rod Wetmore
Kay White
Steve Wick
Clara and George Willis
Priscilla Wiggins
Scarlett and Bob Wirt
Reine Wonite

Spring Volunteers at the annual awards banquet.

Please, treat your park with care.
The Big Bend Natural History Association is a non-profit organization established to support the park’s educational and scientific programs. BBNHA also publishes and distributes books, maps, guides, newspapers and other materials designed to enhance visitors’ enjoyment and understanding of Big Bend National Park.

You’ve heard of the perfect storm, a coincidental combination of climatic conditions than results in a rare and dangerous large-scale storm, but we seem to make much less of a more common phenomenon, perfect weather. While we have our share of perfect weather in Big Bend National Park, we’re also currently experiencing another delightful phenomenon: perfect cooperation.

Under Superintendent John King, the man who brought the rain back to Big Bend, we’ve made great progress toward a coherent strategy to secure much-needed assistance for the park we love. In the past, we’ve formed a partnership council that meets quarterly to discuss ways in which the park’s partners can combine and enhance their efforts to help the park. Members of the council are Big Bend National History Association, Forever Resorts, Friends of Big Bend National Park, the San Vicente Independent School District, and the National Park Service. Our meetings are already showing positive results, and recently BBNHA and FBBNP met with Superintendent King to discuss a fundraising strategy for the park. With their new executive director onboard, FBBNP will take the lead in fundraising and fund-raising and BBNHA will provide administrative support for those efforts. The NPS is also working on phase two of the Business Plan Initiative, with talented graduate students Alex McIntosh of Yale and Jennifer Bollen of Emory working hard to help the park focus their efforts, increase efficiency, and make the most of tightening federal budgets.

Speaking for all the members of the partnership council, I’d like to thank you for your support of Big Bend National Park and encourage you to support the partners that support your park.

Spend some quality time with an expert on Big Bend birds, tracks, black bears, dinosaurs, geology, and much more with our Natural History Seminars Program. Now in its sixth year, the immensely popular program sponsored by BBNHA continues to grow and improve.

There are still slots available for the fall sessions. Sign up today!

Seminars

Fall 2004 Seminar Schedule

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Seminar Name</th>
<th>Speaker(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>August 12-15</td>
<td>First Annual Big Bend Nature Festival</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 25-26</td>
<td>Birding in Big Bend</td>
<td>Mark Adams</td>
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<td>October 10</td>
<td>Lodge and Learn: Big Bend History</td>
<td>Sam Richardson</td>
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<td>October 16</td>
<td>Big Bend Star Party</td>
<td>Carl Frisch</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 30</td>
<td>Landscaping with Native Plants</td>
<td>Patricia Manning</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 31</td>
<td>When Dinosaurs Ruled</td>
<td>Don Corrick</td>
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<td>November 14</td>
<td>Tracking in the Desert</td>
<td>Robert Haynes</td>
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<td>November 20</td>
<td>Geology Jeep Tour</td>
<td>Bill Bourbon</td>
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<td>November 21</td>
<td>Black Bear Recovery</td>
<td>Raymond Skiles</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 5</td>
<td>Rock Art in Big Bend</td>
<td>Bob Hest</td>
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Average cost for a seminar is $50 per day with most seminars running 1-2 days. Class size is limited to 15 participants to ensure individualized instruction. Seminar participants may also take advantage of free camping in one of Big Bend’s group campgrounds.

To register for a seminar or to receive a complete catalog, contact us at PO Box 196, Big Bend National Park, TX, 79834 or call 432-477-2236. You may also e-mail us at bibe_bbnha@nps.gov

Featured Publications

Have a hunger for the desert? Take a bite out of our great selection of books and publications. Our bookstores offer a wealth of books, maps, checklists, and field guides carefully selected to help you enjoy your visit to Big Bend National Park.

Stop by any visitor center, or order these online at bigbendbookstore.org

The Story of Big Bend National Park

A comprehensive, highly readable history of the park from before its founding in 1944 up to the present. Topics range from a fascinating look at the mighty efforts involved in persuading Washington officials and local landowners that such a park was needed to how the park was publicized and developed for visitors. Current issues such as natural resource management, predator protection in the park, and challenges to land, water, and air. 196 pages. $13.95

For All Seasons

A Big Bend Journal

Ro Wauer worked as Chief Park Naturalist from 1966 to 1972 and has visited the park frequently ever since. His journal entries span these thirty years, providing not only a composite portrait of a typical year but also a clear sense of how the park’s natural history has changed over three decades. He spices his account with anecdotes, ranging from stumbling across a herd of javelinas to being trailed by a mountain lion in the dark to discovering new species of plants and animals. 208 pages. $19.95

Big Bend Adventure Guide

Children who have completed the Junior Ranger program will find the Big Bend Adventure Guide of interest! An educational tool and a hedge against boredom, this 29-page black-and-white book is crammed with puzzles, games, and information about Big Bend. $2.00.

National Park Ranger

An American Icon

In this celebration of one of America’s most enduring symbols, former ranger Butch Farabee briefly reviews the evolution of this national symbol. Packed with entertaining anecdotes and illustrated with over 100 archival photographs, this book not only provides fascinating insight into the diversity of roles a park ranger must play, but also honors the unique people dedicated to guarding and maintaining this country’s irreplaceable treasures. 180 pages. $18.95

The Big Bend Paisano
Big Bend and the Border
Viewing the sun set against the Sierra del Carmen mountains is a sublime Big Bend experience, underlined by the irony that the mountains aren’t a part of the National Park; in fact, they aren’t even located in the United States. In addition to defining the curve that forms the Big Bend, the Rio Grande also serves as the International boundary between the United States and Mexico.

Throughout much of its history the border along the Rio Grande has often been fluid, allowing people of both countries to come and go as needed. However, the border is an artificial boundary imposed on the natural environment, and as such is subject to political and social pressures.

Increased border restrictions following the 2001 terrorist attacks have led to a number of important changes that affect the international boundary in Big Bend. The information below provides a summary of current conditions.

Border Merchants
Mexican Nationals may approach you from across the river to purchase souvenir items (walking sticks, bracelets, crafts, etc.). If you agree to look at/purchase their items and the Mexicans cross the river, you may be arrested for being in the U.S. illegally. They will be held until deported back to Mexico through Presidio (100 miles away). Mexican merchants will be arrested for illegal commercial operations which may result in a fine and/or additional incarceration while awaiting adjudication prior to deportation. Items purchased will be considered contraband and seized by officers when encountered. Rocks, minerals, archeological items etc. cannot be purchased, imported, or possessed in the national park.

In addition, illegal trade impacts the resources of the park in a number of negative ways, including the creation of social trails, the cutting of cane along the river, erosion of riverbanks and an increased amount of garbage and contaminants along the Rio Grande watershed. Supporting this illegal activity contributes to continued damage of the natural resources along the Rio Grande, and jeopardizes the possibility of reopening these crossings in the future.

While Visiting A Border Park
Big Bend National Park shares the border with Mexico for 110 miles. This is a remote region; however, each year hundreds of people travel north through the area seeking to enter the United States. Please keep the following in mind while visiting Big Bend:

If you see any activity which seems to be suspicious, illegal, or out of place please do not intervene. Report it to a ranger as quickly as possible.

It is possible you could encounter an individual or small group trying to walk through the park with little or no water. Please do not stop, but instead, immediately report such occurrences to a ranger. Lack of water is a life-threatening emergency in the desert.

A visit to Big Bend is a wonderful experience to learn about the park’s history and to experience a wide variety of natural history and recreation options. The park’s shared border with Mexico is part of our shared landscape and a chance to experience and learn about our neighbors. A few simple steps can help keep the park safe for everyone who is here.

Crossings Remain Closed
As a result of a 2002 US Customs and Border Protection decision, there are NO authorized crossings in Big Bend NP. Crossing at Boquillas, Santa Elena, or other locations along the Rio Grande is prohibited. The closest legal ports of entry are at Del Rio and Presidio, Texas.

The U.S. Attorney’s Office has indicated that it will prosecute any criminal violations regarding these illegal crossings. If you re-enter the United States at any point within Big Bend National Park, you may be liable for a fine of not more than $5,000 or imprisonment for up to one year, or both.

Please consult Park Rangers for the latest updates on this situation.
The founding of Big Bend National Park, it also marks the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Civilian Conservation Corps. While this year marks the 60th anniversary of the CCC in what was then called Big Bend State Park. The first CCC crew arrived in the Chisos Basin in May 1934. Local communities welcomed their arrival, as they anticipated that the improvements made in the park by these young men would bring tourist dollars to the area.

To see what the CCC accomplished here, you only have to drive into the Chisos Basin. In 1934, a primitive road led partway up to the Chisos Mountains, roughly to where mile marker 4 is today. From there, a livestock trail led the rest of the way into the Basin. Work crews moved 40,000 cubic yards of earth and 5,000 yards of solid rock, and built 17 monsoon culverts, using only hand tools and a dump truck, to construct a passable road into the Basin. They built the stone cabins, now available for visitors through the park concessionaire, and laid out the Window Trail, the Lost Mine Trail, and the trails leading to the South Rim.

Who were these men who worked so hard to build our parks? Officially, they were required to be able-bodied men between the ages of 17 and 24, from families that were below a certain income level (although several younger men later admitted to lying about their age in order to get in). They took up President Franklin Roosevelt’s cause to work in the state and national parks and forests across the nation, developing roads, trails, campgrounds, lodges, and other improvements to make them more accessible to the public. For this work they received $30 per month, with $25 of it going to their families.

Wake up at 5 am. Roll call and calisthenics at 5:30 am, followed by breakfast at 6:30 am. Work all day to the sounds of picks and shovels. Lights out at 9 pm.

Most men gained more than monetary compensation, as well. Some learned valuable job skills, such as masonry and vehicle maintenance, which helped them get jobs in other places after leaving the Corps. Many camps employed teachers to work with interested young men in the evenings, helping them catch up on the education they may have missed while trying to support their families during the Depression. Several who worked in Big Bend also mentioned the good food available in camp, something they didn’t have at home during those lean times. Enrollee Roscoe Bowers recalls, “They had surprisingly good food. I weighed 145 pounds when I arrived, and 175 pounds when I left!”

While they worked hard during the week, the young men also found time to enjoy their surroundings on their days off. Enrollee Roosevelt Weaver remembers, “I think I climbed every mountain out there. Exploring all of them...Sometimes we went swimming at the mouth of Santa Elena Canyon. There was a big deep hole, right in the mouth of the canyon.”

The camp kept some horses, and some of the men bought their own horses and kept them there. Weaver recalls, “We rode every chance we got.” The camp also had a recreation hall with pool tables, ping pong tables, and card tables, and they sometimes showed movies. These “Men Who Built the Parks” left an indelible mark on parks and forests across the country, and millions of people still enjoy their work today, seventy years later. The time and effort that these young men spent in these areas certainly shaped them as well. Roosevelt Weaver probably echoes the sentiments of many CCC workers when he said, “I grew up in there. I went from a kid to a man, where I could hold down a job and really make it on my own...The CCC kept a lot of boys from leading criminal lives, stealing and things like that. Because it was so hard to make it (during the Depression), I think a lot of them would have done that if they hadn’t gotten in the CCC...That was, I think, the best program they ever had in this country.”

The Civilian Conservation Corps in Big Bend

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Was this the schedule for military troops stationed at Glenn Springs or Castolon? A prison work crew? Not quite. This was the daily routine followed by “The Men Who Built the Parks,” or the Civilian Conservation Corps. While this year marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of Big Bend National Park, it also marks the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the CCC in what was then called Big Bend State Park. The first CCC crew arrived in the Chisos Basin in May 1934. Local communities welcomed their arrival, as they anticipated that the improvements made in the park by these young men would bring tourist dollars to the area.

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Sixty Years of Resource Protection

Sixty Years of Botanical Exploration in Big Bend

Park Botanist Joe Sirotnak

The Chisos Mountains, with their high diversity and sky-island habitat, have historically attracted many amateur and professional naturalists. Despite the remote location and difficult access of this rugged mountain range, the majority of the plant species in the Chisos were well-documented by the founding of the National Park sixty years ago. As far back as 1885, pioneering botanist V. Havard recognized the unique character of the Big Bend flora and described many species previously unknown and endemic to the region. In fact, the efforts of these early naturalists, including Omer Sperry, C.H. Mueller, and E.G. Marsh, helped clarify the importance of protecting the diversity of the region by creating Big Bend National Park.

In the past sixty years, the park staff and cooperating scientists have built upon this knowledge base. In the 1950s and 60s, Barton Warnock, the longtime botanist at Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas, was instrumental in documenting plant species occurrence and habitat requirements and establishing long-term ecological monitoring plots in the park. Park staff use these data to design and implement restoration and conservation projects to maintain the fantastic diversity of life in the Big Bend. Current projects include grassland restoration in the Harte Ranch area, fostering riparian recovery at upland springs, weed control and re-establishment of native plant communities in disturbed areas, and the cautious re-introduction of fire as an ecosystem process in grasslands and woodlands.

Big Bend Botanists are currently mapping rare, endemic, and threatened plants parkwide. We use these data to protect existing known populations and to define habitat conditions of rare plants. In 2004, we are focusing on orchids. At least nine species of orchid occur in the park, with seven species being considered rare or very rare. Several species of saprophytic corals occur only in a few mountain ranges in Trans-Pecos Texas and adjacent Mexico. Big Bend National Park is one of the only protected areas in the Chihuahuan Desert that supports such orchid diversity. Recently, the rare plant mapping project uncovered a rare gem that had not been seen in the U.S. since 1931 – the Hidalgo ladies-tresses. Knowledge of the location and habitat of this and other rare plants allows us to prevent accidental disturbance of populations and to make decisions about the appropriate use of wildland fire in these systems.

Knowledge is power. Big Bend National Park is committed to using the ecological knowledge, and associated decision-making power, accumulated by dedicated staff and scientists, to protect these fragile ecosystems for the next sixty years and onward.

The demand for improvements in our national parks increased as visitation in the 1940-50’s reached record levels. An NPS funding strategy to complete these maintenance projects by 1966 was called “Mission 66.” In Big Bend National Park, this program included improving and building roads, trails, bridges, campites, a lodge, a restaurant and cabins. These improvements finally produced the influx of visitors that had been promised to the West Texas communities since the park’s establishment. However, the NPS was concerned about the impact of these visitors, especially the concentration of impact in the Chisos Basin. As a result, the NPS drafted a master plan in 1971 to limit the use of the Basin, and recommended that 79% of Big Bend National Park, or 559,600 acres, of the Park’s 801,163 acres be designated as wilderness.

While receiving healthy revenue from increased tourism, some members of the communities surrounding the park opposed these new plans, fearing they would limit tourist opportunities. This view was voiced to local representatives. Therefore, although Big Bend’s Wilderness Proposal had been forwarded to Congress in 1978, it was withdrawn because of larger public debate about the designation. However, the NPS is mandated to manage land that is “proposed wilderness” as if it is wilderness, since there is a possibility that the designation may change in the future. For example, the NPS manages Big Bend’s proposed wilderness areas by setting carrying capacities limiting overnight use in a given area, and by re-fraining from building campgrounds or other facilities in wilderness.

Ironically, for many visitors, Big Bend has a stronger “sense of wilderness” than many other public lands, which are officially designated wilderness. Here a person can walk for hours, or days, without seeing another soul. Every roadside pullout offers a panoramic vista with apparently no sign of man as far as the eye can see. Indeed, Big Bend seems to fit the description of a wilderness as defined in the Wilderness Act: “A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”

Since the 1970’s, most of Big Bend has been managed as if it were wilderness, and this does not seem to have hindered the local tourist economy. Actually, this “sense of wilderness” ends up being one of Big Bend’s major attractions.

In Big Bend, people will find large areas of the park where a diversity of plants and animals, living naturally, are undisturbed by the developed areas. They will find the opportunity to let go of the modern technology of our world, and seek silence and solitude. They will find that history seems to be frozen in time. But these special areas cannot maintain these qualities without the support of concerned, activated citizenry who value wilderness. In the words of President Lyndon B. Johnson, as he signed the Wilderness Act in 1964, “If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them something more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning...” As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, and the 60th birthday of Big Bend National Park, why not honor your wilderness experience by helping to ensure that these tracts of preserved wilderness are a part of our legacy to the future too.
Mountain Lion Country

IF BIG BEND HAD A SYMBOL, IT MIGHT WELL BE THE MOUNTAIN LION—the embodiment of freedom and wildness. Solitary and secretive, this mighty creature is the unquestioned lord of its natural world. As one of Big Bend’s top predators, Felis concolor—“cat all of one color”—is vital in maintaining the park’s biological diversity. Within the delicate habitats of the Chihuahuan Desert, mountain lions help balance herbivores (animals that eat plants) and vegetation. Research shows that cats keep deer and javelina within the limits of their food resources. Without lions, the complex network of life in Big Bend would certainly be changed.

Encountering a mountain lion, however, can lead to conflicts in maintaining the balance between natural processes and visitor enjoyment and safety. Since the 1950s, there have been more than 800 sightings of mountain lions by visitors. While over 90 percent of these sightings were along park roadways, encounters along trails have also occurred. Since 1984, four lion and human encounters have resulted in attacks on people. In all cases, those attacked recovered from their injuries and the aggressive lions were killed, preventing them from playing out their important natural roles. The more we know about lions, and the less we seek an encounter, the better able we will be to make life easier for them and for us.

How much do you really know about this powerful and wild cat? Mountain lions live throughout the park, including the Chisos Mountains where they prefer to use trails. To learn more about lions, and the less we seek an encounter, the better able we will be to make life easier for them and for us.

Black Bears

THE RETURN OF BLACK BEARS TO BIG BEND National Park is a success story for both the bears and the park. Native to the Chisos Mountains, bears disappeared from this area during the pre-park settlement era. After an absence of several decades, bears began returning to the park from Mexico in the early 1990s.

Today, wildlife biologists estimate that up to 12 black bears may live in the park. Though they prefer the wooded Chisos Mountains, bears also range along the Rio Grande and throughout the desert, particularly when drought dries up their regular water sources in the mountains.

Black bears are omnivorous. They eat large amounts of nuts, fruits, sotol and yucca hearts, insects, and smaller quantities of eggs, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, honey, and carrion. Their strong sense of smell also leads them to human foods, and they can quickly open coolers, backpacks, and trash cans when enticed by food odors.

Bears normally avoid humans, but bears that learn to get food from human sources often become aggressive in their attempts to get more “people” food. When humans disobey the rules of both the park and nature by feeding bears, it is the bears that end up paying the ultimate price. Rangers may have to kill bears that lose their fear of people and endanger humans in their attempts to get our food. Fortunately, Big Bend has not had to kill any bears, but some national parks destroy several bears each season; we hope that through educating visitors about proper behavior in bear country, we can avoid this tragic outcome.

Big Bend has made it easy to keep edible items away from bears. Campers at the Chisos Basin Campground, at High Chisos backpacking sites, and at some primitive roadside campsites will find bearproof storage lockers for storing all edibles. Hard-sided vehicles are also suitable for storing edible items. All dumpsters in the Chisos Mountains developed areas are bearproof, as well.

There really are no problem bears—only problem people. Carelessness can kill. Don’t be responsible for the death of a bear. Follow the guidelines below. Pay close attention to the food storage rules posted in the Basin campground and on your backpacking permit. Your actions affect both Big Bend’s wildlife and future park visitors.

Don’t Call Me Pig!

FOR MANY VISITORS TO BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK, SEEING A JAVELINA (hav-uh-LEE-nuh) is a new experience. These curious creatures, also known as collared peccaries, are only found in the United States in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. They are covered with black, bristly hairs and generally weigh between 40 and 60 pounds. They usually travel in groups called bands that consist of 10-25 individuals. Peccaries have a highly developed sense of smell, but very poor vision.

Physically, javelinas resemble pigs, but in reality, they are not closely related to pigs at all and have been genetically distinct from them for millions of years. A closer look reveals several major differences between the two animals. Javelinas have 38 teeth; domestic pigs and wild boars have 44. The canine teeth of the javelina are short and straight, while those of pigs are longer and curved. Javelinas have a scent gland that they use to mark their territory that pigs do not have. Pigs sweat to keep themselves cool, but javelinas must instead cool themselves in available water sources or by staying in the shade.

A javelina’s diet includes prickly pear cactus, grasses, mesquite beans, piney pine nuts, fruits, berries, and seeds. Unfortunately however, many javelinas now include human food as part of their diet. Every year we are seeing more and more campsites in the park raided by javelina. Although normally not aggressive, they can be when food is involved. Protect yourselves and our javelinas by properly storing all your food inside a vehicle or in the food storage lockers provided in the campgrounds. Do not leave coolers or food boxes unattended on picnic tables or in a tent. Flatten tents when you are away from your campsite. It is important that we keep javelinas and all park animals eating their natural food sources to stay healthy and safe. With your help, these unique animals can continue to thrive and thrill park visitors for years to come.

Keep ALL Wildlife WILD

In the Basin Campground

• Store food, beverages, trash, toiletries, pet food, and dishes in the bearproof storage locker provided at your site.
• Keep your campsite clean. Take trash and food scraps to a dumpster.
• Dump liquids in restroom utility sinks, not on the ground.
• Ice chests and coolers are not bear-proof; store them in your vehicle.

Cyclists

• Use food storage lockers where provided.

At the lodge

• Leave nothing outside your room, on the balcony, or on the porch.

When hiking

• Never leave packs or food unattended.
• Avoid carrying odorous food and toiletries.
• Leave excess food and beverages in your trunk or food storage box.
• Carry out all trash, including orange peels, cigarette butts, and left-over food.
Seeing The Park

Now That You’re Here, What Can You Do?

You’ve driven many miles to get here, and have finally arrived at your destination: Big Bend National Park. But now what? Now that you’re here, how do you spend your time? Where should you go? What should you explore? The park is big, and often visitors have a limited amount of time to explore.

One Day

If time allows, drive to the Chisos Mountains to take in the spectacular mountain views. Walk the 0.3-mile self-guiding Window View Trail to get a feel for the mountain scenery.

A trip along the Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive will give you a taste of the Chihuahuan Desert and will lead you to the Rio Grande. There are scenic overlooks and exhibits along the way. Sotol Vista, Mule Ears Overlook and Tuff Canyon are all worthwhile stops. The short walks to the Sam Nail (Old) Ranch and Homer Wilson (Blue Creek) Ranch and a visit to the Castolon Historic District will give you a glimpse into Big Bend’s past.

A highlight is the short (1.6-mile round trip) walk into Santa Elena Canyon—one of Big Bend’s most scenic spots. Drive to the end of the Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive to access the trailhead. You may return to the main road by returning on the Ross Maxwell Drive or on the Maverick Road, a 13-mile gravel road linking the Ross Maxwell Drive to the Maverick (west) Entrance. Always check on road conditions first.

Three Days

With three days to spend in the park, you can explore the major roads more thoroughly and still have time for hiking. In the Basin area, consider hiking the Window Trail (5 miles round trip) or the Lost Mine Trail (4.8 miles round trip); consult the Hiker’s Guide to Trails of Big Bend National Park, for sale in park visitor centers, for trail descriptions.

In addition to the Basin and Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive (see suggestions for “one day”) you can drive to Rio Grande Village, perhaps stopping at Dugout Wells along the way to walk the short Chihuahuan Desert Nature Trail. The Rio Grande Village Visitor Center offers a brief introductory slide program. Walk the Rio Grande Village Nature Trail which begins near site #68 in the campground. The bluff overlooking the Rio Grande at the end of the nature trail is a particularly beautiful spot at sunset.

Boquillas Canyon road will take you to several overlooks of the Rio Grande and the small village of Boquillas, Mexico. At the end of the road is the Boquillas Canyon Trail, which takes you to the entrance of this spectacular canyon.

One Week

With a week or more to spend in Big Bend, endless possibilities are open to you. You’ll have plenty of time to explore the roads mentioned in the previous sections, and will also have time to hike or to drive some of the “unimproved” dirt roads. For these, you’ll need a high clearance or four-wheel drive vehicle; don’t forget to check at visitor centers for current road conditions. The River Road, Glenn Springs Road and Old Ore Road are some of the more popular backcountry routes. A visit to Ernst Tinaja near the south end of the Old Ore Road is a Big Bend highlight.

If you don’t have high clearance or four-wheel drive, gravel roads such as Dagger Flat, Grapevine Hills and Maverick will get you “off the beaten path.” Hike the Chimneys Trail, Mule Ears Trail, or Grapevine Hills Trail for a closer look at the desert environment. If you’d like to explore the Chisos Mountains, trails to Boot Canyon, Emory Peak and the South Rim offer good views of the park and take you into another world which seems far removed from the desert. There are plenty of opportunities for overnight backpacking along these trails. A free backcountry use permit is required and can be obtained at park visitor centers.

Enjoying Your Visit

No matter how limited your time in Big Bend, remember that you will enjoy the park more if you stop your car and explore on foot. That doesn’t mean that you have to hike miles on steep grades; there are many short, easy walks and roadside exhibits where you can stretch your legs and enjoy the sights, smells and sounds of the Chihuahuan Desert.

Hiker’s guides and road guides are available at book sales areas throughout the park, and they offer more detailed information about Big Bend’s trails and roads. Attending ranger-led activities and evening programs are also good ways to learn more about Big Bend; check at the visitor centers and park bulletin boards for current activities.

Remember, you will NOT be able to see everything on this trip. You will probably enjoy the park more if you choose a few spots and explore them thoroughly to get a taste of what Big Bend has to offer.

Then, come back again sometime to see the rest!
Panther Junction - Rio Grande Village Area

Between Panther Junction and Rio Grande Village lies a vast sweep of scrub desert, rocky ridges, and river floodplain. Sprinkled through this massive area are trails that highlight the fascinating natural and human history of Big Bend. Discover Indian mortar holes in Boquillas Canyon and the early pioneer settlements of Dugout Wells and Hot Springs. Enjoy the diverse birdlife along the Rio Grande and the rich geology at Grapevine Hills.

Below are descriptions of many of the most popular easy and moderate hiking trails. Most of these trails are perfect for shorter day hikes of up to several hours. For information on longer, more difficult routes, or to plan an extended backpacking trip, stop by any park visitor center. A large selection of maps and trail guides are available and park rangers can assist you in trip preparations and backcountry permits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Roundtrip Length</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Trailhead Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grapehuan Hills</td>
<td>2.2 miles</td>
<td>Follows a sandy wash through boulder field. A short climb at the end takes you to a large balanced rock archway.</td>
<td>Grapehuan Hills Road mile 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chihuahuan Desert Nature Trail</td>
<td>0.5 miles</td>
<td>A flat desert path near a cottonwood oasis. Signs interpret Chihuahuan Desert plant life.</td>
<td>Dugout Wells Picnic Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Springs</td>
<td>0.75 miles</td>
<td>Walk past historic buildings to the riverside hot springs. 105°F water. Take a bathing suit and avoid a white.</td>
<td>End of Hot Springs Road (unpaved)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Village Nature Trail</td>
<td>0.75 miles</td>
<td>Cross a boardwalk and climb 125 feet to a great panoramic view of the river floodplain and distant mountains. Good birding and sunrise/sunset views.</td>
<td>Rio Grande Village Campground (site 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boquillas Canyon</td>
<td>1.4 miles</td>
<td>Begins with a short climb, then descends via a sandy path to the river. Ends near a huge sand “slide.”</td>
<td>End of Boquillas Canyon Road</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chisos Mountains & Basin Area

The Chisos Mountains form the rugged heart of Big Bend National Park. High ridges and summits coax moisture from passing clouds. The result is a forested mountain “island” surrounded by a desert sea.

When the lower desert trails become uncomfortably hot, enjoy the shady, pine-scented trails of the Chisos Mountains. All Chisos trails begin from the Basin area which is located in the center of the park.

For a good introduction to the scenery and wildlife of the Chisos, hike the Window Trail. From the Basin Campground, this trail winds two miles through colorful Oak Creek Canyon to the top of the Window pouroff. Wildlife is abundant along this trail. Look and listen for javelina, white-tailed deer, and Mexican jays.

**The Window Trail**
- **Roundtrip Length**: 0.3 miles
- **Comments**: Level, paved, handicapped accessible. Great sunsets and mountain views.
- **Trailhead Location**: Chisos Basin Trailhead (near the Basin Store) or Basin Road mile 5 (at Panther Pass)

**Basin Loop**
- **Roundtrip Length**: 1.6 miles
- **Trailhead Location**: Chisos Basin Trailhead (near the Basin Store) or Basin Road mile 5 (at Panther Pass)

**The Window**
- **Roundtrip Length**: 5.6 miles
- **Comments**: Descends to the top of the Window pouroff. Great scenery and wildlife viewing. Climbs 800 feet on return.
- **Trailhead Location**: Chisos Basin Trailhead or Basin Campground

**Lost Mine**
- **Roundtrip Length**: 4.8 miles
- **Comments**: This magnificent hike climbs 1,100 feet to excellent mountain and desert views.
- **Trailhead Location**: Basin Road mile 5 (at Panther Pass)

Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive

The Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive skirts the rocky rumparts of the Chisos Mountains and descends through the spectacular west side of Big Bend National Park. Many of the park’s best views and desert hikes are found here.

The Ross Maxwell Drive ends at the trailhead to Santa Elena Canyon. There is no better trail to experience the sights and sounds of the Rio Grande. From the parking area, the giant chasm is in full view before you. Hike to the river’s edge and follow it upstream into a world of superlative cliffs and dense thickets of riverside vegetation. Enjoy the sounds of moving water and the descending song of the canyon wren.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Roundtrip Length</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Trailhead Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burro Mesa Pouroff</td>
<td>1.0 mile</td>
<td>A flat, sandy trail up a canyon to the base of a dry pouroff. Interesting geology and desert plants.</td>
<td>Ross Maxwell Dr. mile 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chimneys</td>
<td>4.8 miles</td>
<td>Flat desert trail to prominent rock formations. Look for rock art. No shade.</td>
<td>Ross Maxwell Dr. mile 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mule Ears Spring</td>
<td>3.8 miles</td>
<td>A beautiful desert hike to a small spring. Spectacular geology and mountain/desert views.</td>
<td>Ross Maxwell Dr. mile 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuff Canyon</td>
<td>0.75 miles</td>
<td>Balconies overlook this scenic canyon. A short trail leads into and through the narrow gorge carved out of soft volcanic tuff.</td>
<td>Ross Maxwell Dr. mile 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Elena Canyon</td>
<td>1.6 miles</td>
<td>Crosses creekbed, climbs stairs, then follows the river upstream into the mouth of a magnificent 1,500 foot deep limestone canyon.</td>
<td>8 miles west of Castolon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Big Bend Paisano
Birth of a National Park
By Freeman Tilden

The article excerpted here was first published in the April-June 1945 issue of National Parks Magazine. Freeman Tilden (1883-1980) was a novelist and playwright. In the early 1940s, Tilden “tired” of writing fiction, and with the encouragement of Director Newton B. Drury, began to write about the national parks. The National Parks: What They Mean to You and Me was first published in 1951. Other works include The State Parks, Following the Frontier, and Interpreting Our Heritage. The article below provides a glimpse of Big Bend at a time when it had been a national park for only a year, and one man’s view of its future.

In a statutory sense, Big Bend, in southern Texas, is the newest of our national parks. But in a very real sense, it is a national park just coming slowly into existence.

To representatives of a national periodical with whom I spent some days recently in Big Bend, I casually mentioned my thought that we were enjoying a grand adventure, never to be repeated. To my delight, they caught the idea, and gaily enlarged upon it. Both said, “We see what you mean. It will never again be quite what it is at this moment. We are pioneering backwards.”

The problem, as every conservationist realizes, is not so much what to develop, as how and where to prevent development; not rashly to introduce any kind of animal or plant life, but to try to restore the conditions under which the delicate biotic balance may again assert itself.

Consequently, in this article, I shall venture to say some things about Big Bend National Park that have to do with the attainment of those objectives that are associated with all such areas.

Where’s All The Wildlife?

“Hey Ranger, we’ve been driving all day and haven’t seen any animals. Does anything live here?” These questions may have crossed your mind too. You may be surprised to learn that over 3,000 different kinds of animals inhabit Big Bend National Park. While the vast majority of these are invertebrates, over 600 species of vertebrates are also known here.

Common invertebrates include tarantulas, wolf spiders, centipedes, millipedes, scorpions, sun spiders, grasshoppers, walking sticks, velvet ants, harvester ants, and mites. Many are active only after summer rains, while others like the grasshoppers and cicadas may be heard singing throughout the heart of the day.

Vertebrates are most popular with park visitors since they include deer, javelina, black bears, and America’s favorite watchable wildlife - the birds. Checklists of the park’s birds, mammals, reptiles, and invertebrates are available at park visitor centers. Researchers have identified over 39 species of fish, 75 species of mammals, 11 amphibians, and 46 reptiles. Big Bend’s bird checklist contains 450 species, the largest diversity of birds to be found in any U.S. national park.

The desert landscape may seem completely uninhabited, but the desert is full of surprises. Those who take the time to get out of their car and investigate, will discover abundant evidence of the desert’s denizens. Holes, tracks, nests, and droppings are everywhere. Lizards dart by at amazing speed. Listen for the tinkling notes of the black throated sparrow, or the raspy song of the cactus wren. Keep in mind that in desert areas like Big Bend, low rainfall and high temperatures force many creatures to live extremely cautious lifestyles. Many leave their burrows only under cover of night. Others are active only during the cooler hours of early morning. Follow their example and start your day early, check near springs and along the Rio Grande, take a siesta during the heat of the day, and adjust your schedule to that of the wildlife you want to see. If you do so, your wildlife viewing rewards will be many.

“Desert Tracks”

Desert dramas are revealed in sand and soft soil. To see an animal, both you and it must be in the same place at the same time; but tracks may last for days. Below are some commonly seen Big Bend tracks.

Roadrunner

Coyote

Javelina

Lizard

Hike a Trail!

Many park trails are suitable for families. Consult the "Easy and Moderate Hikes" chart on page 9. For children in strollers, consider the Window View Trail, a paved ½-mile loop trail that begins at the Chisos Basin trailhead.

Big Bend is a special place! We hope you enjoy Big Bend National Park and that you learn to value its resources. If you have any questions, ask a park ranger for help.

What Can Kids Do Here?

Big Bend is a great place for kids!

Become a Junior Ranger!

Learn desert secrets, identify the parts of a cactus, and discover what javelina eat!

The Big Bend Junior Ranger program is designed for kids of all ages. Through activities, games, and puzzles, kids can have fun as they learn about the park. They can also earn stickers, badges, patches, and certificates.

The Junior Ranger Activity Book costs $2.00 and is available at all park visitor centers.

Roadrunner

Coyote

Javelina

Lizard

The gray fox prowls at night.
The creation of Big Bend National Park in 1944 culminated a period of land acquisition that began almost ten years earlier. In 1935, the United States Congress passed legislation authorizing the park’s creation, with the understanding that the state of Texas would purchase all of the private land required and then donate it, along with additional state land, to the National Park Service.

Landowners throughout the region had mixed feelings. Some were pleased to know that their property would benefit millions of future park visitors, while others were bitterly disappointed that their life’s work was being taken from them. Once the acquisition began, some owners also felt that they were not offered adequate compensation for their land. Others, however, felt that they had been treated fairly and equitably. The state of Texas eventually allocated $1,500,000 for the acquisition program.

Gradually, the families who lived within the proposed park boundaries began to relinquish their land and move away. Some went to nearby communities, such as Alpine and Presidio, where they began life anew, while others left the Big Bend region. With time, the park began to take shape, and on June 12, 1944, it became a part of the National Park System.

The last person to sell his Big Bend property was Wayne Cartledge of Castolon. Feeling that the government’s appraisal of his holdings was too low, he refused to give up his title until 1957, thirteen years after Big Bend National Park had been formally established. By 1961, he had relocated from Castolon to Presidio County.

Since then, the federal government has on occasion acquired private holdings for the park. The Harte Ranch (North Rosillos) became part of the park in 1989. The Fay Ranch, a 10,000-acre inholding near Persimmon Gap, was purchased in 1994. These acquisitions have increased the park’s size to 801,163 acres. Today, Big Bend National Park is a magnificent tribute, not just to those who championed its creation, but to those who gave their land to make it a reality.
General Information

Ranger Programs
Join a park ranger for a guided hike, evening slide show, talk, or workshop on Big Bend's natural and cultural history. These free programs are offered daily. Consult the Interpretive Activities Schedule posted on visitor center and campground bulletin boards for more information.

Lodging
The Chisos Mountains Lodge, operated by Forever Resorts Inc., is located in the Chisos Basin at 5,400 feet elevation. The lodge offers a variety of rooms and cottages, plus a gift shop and dining room. For reservations, please call (432) 477-2291 or 2292.

Banking
There are NO banking facilities in Big Bend National Park. The nearest banking/ATM services are located in Study Butte, 26 miles west of park headquarters. Most stores accept major credit cards; however, some local services accept only cash. It is advisable to have small bills ($1, $5, $10, $20) since larger bills are often difficult to change.

Camping
Join a park ranger for a guided hike, evening slide show, talk, or workshop on Big Bend's natural and cultural history. These free programs are offered daily. Consult the Interpretive Activities Schedule posted on visitor center and campground bulletin boards for more information.

Tent Camping
The National Park Service operates campgrounds at Rio Grande Village, the Chisos Basin, and Castolon. The cost is $8.00 per night for a site. Campsite fees can be paid in U.S. currency, personal checks, or credit cards.

Camping is also available at primitive backcountry campsites in the Chisos Mountains and along backcountry roads. High-clearance 4-wheel drive vehicles are necessary to reach most road sites. Backcountry permits are required and can be obtained in person at park visitor centers up to 24 hours in advance.

Camping areas are often full during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, as well as during spring break in March or April.

Trails & RV's
All park campgrounds can accommodate trailers and RVs, but vehicle lengths have a great deal to do with safely reaching the campground and finding a suitable space.

The only hookups available in Big Bend National Park are at Rio Grande Village in the 25-site Rio Grande Village RV Park operated by Big Bend Resorts, Inc. Although there is no size restriction, your vehicle must be equipped with water and electrical hookups as well as a three-inch sewer connection. Register at the store. No advance reservations.

Near the RV park is the 100-site Rio Grande Village Campground operated by the National Park Service. Although there are no hookups, water, flush toilets, and a dump station are available. Set in a large grove of cottonwoods, the campground is adjacent to the Rio Grande. Many of the sites are pull-throughs. Generator use is limited: from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm daily. A no-generator use area is also designated.

The 63-site Chisos Basin Campground is rugged and hilly. The sites are small and most are not suited to recreational vehicles or trailers. The road to the Basin is steep and curvy, especially at Panther Pass—the road's highest point. The road into the campground is a 15 percent grade. Trailers longer than 20 feet and RVs longer than 24 feet are not recommended.

Cottonwood Campground, near Castolon, offers pit toilets and potable water, but no hookups or dump station. Cottonwood is a NO-generator campground.

Big Bend's unpaved roads are generally unsuitable for RV's and trailers. Overnight camping in any primitive site requires a backcountry permit, obtained in person at park visitor centers up to 24 hours in advance.

Campsite Reservations
Forty-three (43) sites at Rio Grande Village campground and twenty-six (26) sites at the Chisos Basin campground are reservable from November 15th to April 15th each year. Visitors may contact ReserveUSA year round to make reservations for the period of November 15th through April 15th of each year. All remaining campsites in these two campgrounds and the entire Cottonwood campground remain on the first-come-first-serve basis.

Campsite reservations may be made through the Internet: www.reserveusa.com, or by calling 1-877-444-6777. Big Bend National Park cannot make reservations.

Banking
There are NO banking facilities in Big Bend National Park. The nearest banking/ATM services are located in Study Butte, 26 miles west of park headquarters. Most stores accept major credit cards; however, some local services accept only cash. It is advisable to have small bills ($1, $5, $10, $20) since larger bills are often difficult to change.

Park Campgrounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elevation</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Nightly Fees:</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Registration</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chisos Basin</td>
<td>5,401 ft</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>$10.00*</td>
<td>Flush Toilets, Dust Pan Station</td>
<td>Self-pay station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottonwood</td>
<td>2,169 ft</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>$10.00*</td>
<td>Pit Toilets, No Generators</td>
<td>Self-pay station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Village</td>
<td>1,850 ft</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$10.00*</td>
<td>Flush Toilets, Dust Pan Station</td>
<td>Self-pay station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Village RV</td>
<td>1,850 ft</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Starts at $18.00</td>
<td>Full Hookups</td>
<td>Inquire at RGV Camper's Store</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $5.00 with Golden Age or Golden Access Passport

Birdwatching
While it is true that the incredible diversity of the spring migration will not be equaled during the late summer and fall, the months from July through November in Big Bend National Park still have much to offer to the birder. Consider that many “specialty” species wander away from their normal nesting range after breeding (July & August). This phenomenon, called post-breeding dispersal, may produce rarities including white-eared hummingbirds, sulphur-bellied flycatchers, and red-faced warblers, all review species in Texas. If the possibility of rarities like these doesn’t excite you, keep in mind that on the heels of the post-breeding dispersal comes the beginning of the fall migration.

Moving at a more leisurely pace and lasting longer, generally from mid-August to early December, the fall migration is not as spectacular as that of the spring, but the potential still exists for surprises. Last year, a well-documented mountain chickadee seen in September moved that species from the ranks of the hypotetical to the main park list. Fall can also be the season of the second chance. Warblers missed in the spring sometimes show up again in the fall, including hermit, black-throated green and Townsend’s warblers. Hummingbird diversity is at its peak during the early fall with up to twelve species possible, ranging from the tiny calliope to the “bomber” blue-throated. The challenge of this season is identifying birds in faded adult or confusing juvenile plumage.

Patience, a good field guide, and knowledge of where to look are the keys to locating the birds of Big Bend. A checklist of birds is available for purchase at any visitor center and is a great aid in determining which species are likely and the habitats where they are found. A visit to all the key habitats will provide the best opportunities to see birds and to build a “Big Bend List.”

While “listing” is a legitimate and fun activity, keep in mind that many of the species that are the source of your enjoyment are members of populations in decline. Habitat destruction and degradation on both the wintering and breeding grounds are bringing many of these birds to the brink. You can help in several ways: tread softly in fragile habitat areas, taking care not to damage water sources. Don’t disturb birds with excessive noise or intrusive attempts at photography. Please share your observations with us, particularly of rare and accidental species. Your detailed reports become part of the record and can be an aid to researchers. Enjoy the birds of fall, and do all that you can to ensure their return.

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**Backcountry Planning**

**Horses**

Visitors are welcome to bring and use their horses in the park. A free stock-use permit is required and may be obtained in person at any of the park’s visitor centers up to 24 hours in advance of the trip.

While horses are not permitted on paved roads or road shoulders, all gravel roads are open to horses. Cross-country travel is permitted in the park, except in the Chisos Mountains where horse use is limited to the Laguna Meadow, Southwest Rim, and Blue Creek trails. Horses are not permitted in picnic areas, on nature trails, the Santa Elena and Boquillas Canyon Trails, or the Pine Canyon Trail.

Grazing within the park is not permitted, so you must bring your own feed. Stock may be watered in the Rio Grande and at springs that are not used for domestic water supply. Be prepared to haul water for your stock as springs are unreliable, especially during winter months. Check current spring conditions at a visitor center when you arrive. All horse manure must be removed from the park, or deposited at a designated location near the NPS horse corral at Panther Junction (ask a ranger for directions).

You may camp with your horses at many of the park’s primitive road campsites. These are available on a first-come, first-served basis through a free backcountry use permit available at park visitor centers. These campsites are especially difficult to obtain during holiday periods, especially spring break. The Government Springs campsite, located 3 1/2 miles from Panther Junction, is a primitive campsite with a corral large enough for 4-8 horses. If you plan to bring horses to the park, you may reserve this campsite up to 10 weeks in advance by calling (432) 477-2236 or visit their online internet bookstore at www.bigbendbookstore.org.

**Floating the Rio Grande**

The Rio Grande follows the southern boundary of Big Bend National Park for 118 miles. In this distance it has carved three major canyons, Santa Elena, Mariscal, and Boquillas, which have rapids varying in difficulty from Class I to Class IV. Between the canyons, the river is generally slower-paced. The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River extends downstream beyond the park boundary for an additional 127 miles.

If you plan to take a river trip in Big Bend National Park, you may bring your own equipment, or you can hire a guide service. Four local companies (see page 14 for telephone listings) provide guide service in the park—you may reserve a trip by contacting them directly.

Pets are not allowed on trails or in backcountry areas. Please leave pets at home if you plan to hike.

The Southeast Rim of the Chisos Mountains, Mariscal Rim, and Casa Grande are closed during the peregrine falcon nesting season (February 1 - July 15).

**Weather**

Elevational differences in Big Bend mean that temperatures can be vastly different in different areas of the park. The lower areas along the Rio Grande are very hot during the summer months, while the Chisos Mountains are considerably cooler. Winter weather generally occurs between November and February, with temperatures dropping dramatically as cold fronts move through the area. Between June and October thunderstorms and flash floods may occur. Bring clothing for both warm and cool weather, as well as rain gear, when visiting Big Bend any time of the year. See “how hot?” on page 15.

Keep Big Bend Beautiful

For your convenience, barrels for recycling cans, glass, and plastic bottles are located at the entrances of park campgrounds.
Let Safety Be Your Constant Companion

Big Bend is unfamiliar country to most visitors yet it need not be dangerous. Whether hiking the highcountry, rafting the Rio Grande, observing wildlife, or simply driving the scenic roads of this wilderness park, let safety be your constant companion. Spend a moment reviewing these common safety concerns so that you may have an enjoyable visit.

Driving

Many accidental deaths in Big Bend result from car accidents. While driving is a great way to see the park, it can also be dangerous, particularly if you are tired or are going too fast. Drive within the speed limit, 45 mph maximum in the park, and watch for javelina, deer, and rabbits grazing along road shoulders, especially at night. Seat belts are required at all times. Remember, too, that you share the road with bicyclists and pedestrians. Some park roads, such as the road into the Chisos Mountains Basin, are steep and winding and require extra caution. The Basin Road is not recommended for RVs over 24 feet or trailers over 20 feet. Finally, always select a designated driver before drinking alcoholic beverages.

Heat

Desert heat can kill you. Carry plenty of water (at least one gallon per person, per day) and wear a hat, long pants, long-sleeved shirt, and sun screen when hiking. Springs are unreliable and often dry up for a portion of the year, despite what maps indicate. Avoid hiking during mid-day in summer; travel as wild animals do, in the early morning or late evening hours rather than during the heat of the day.

Mountain Lions

Big Bend is mountain lion country, especially the Chisos Mountains. While lion attacks are rare, three have occurred in the last 10 years. Should you encounter an aggressive mountain lion, hold your ground, wave your arms, throw stones, and shout. Never run. Keep groups together and consider hiking elsewhere with young children if you come across a special mountain lion warning sign posted at a trailhead.

Desert Wildlife

Black bears, javelinas, skunks, coyotes, and raccoons frequent Big Bend's campgrounds. Although they sometimes appear tame, all of the animals in the park are wild, and could pose a threat to your health and safety if you attempt to approach or feed them. Never feed any of Big Bend's wildlife. To prevent these creatures from becoming habituated to people, store all food, coolers, cooking utensils, and toiletries in a hard-sided vehicle, preferably in the trunk of your car. Food storage lockers are available for hikers and campers in the Chisos Mountains. Dispose of garbage properly. At the Chisos Basin Campground, throw away garbage in the special bear-proof dumpsters and trash cans provided. Remember to report all bear or lion sightings to a ranger.

Hiking

Exploring this desert and mountain country on foot requires both mental and physical preparation. Trails vary from well maintained in the Chisos to primitive and barely visible in the desert. Plan hikes within your ability. Take along a map and compass and know how to use them. Flash floods may occur following thunderstorms so avoid narrow canyons or dry washes. Stay low and avoid ridges during thunderstorms. Carry a flashlight and a first aid kit. Let someone know where you're going and when you expect to return. If you get hurt or lost, stay in one place to conserve water and energy. Signal for help; three blasts on a whistle is a well-recognized distress call. In remote areas, a large "X" marked on the ground by any means visible from the air will signify that help is needed. Carry a signal mirror. Remember to obtain a free backcountry use permit before heading out overnight.

Fire

Fire danger is always an important safety consideration in Big Bend. Wood or ground fires are not permitted in the park, and you must exercise caution in the use of gas stoves, charcoal grills, and cigarettes. Big Bend has experienced drought conditions in the past several years and some restrictions may apply to the use of these heat sources. Check with a ranger for the latest information about fire safety in the park.

Swimming

Big Bend truly is wild country. In fact, many people visit precisely because it is so remote and rugged. But remember, as you enjoy the splendor of this great wilderness area, to make safety a priority. By giving forethought to your actions you can have a safe, exciting, and rewarding vacation in Big Bend National Park.

Poisonous Animals

Venomous snakes, scorpions, spiders, and centipedes are all active during the warmer months. Inspect shoes and sleeping bags or bedding before use and always carry a flashlight at night. Venomous snakes, scorpions, spiders, and centipedes are all active during the warmer months. Inspect shoes and sleeping bags or bedding before use and always carry a flashlight at night.

Pets in the Park

Keep your pet on a leash (or in a cage) at all times. Pets are not allowed on park trails, or anywhere off established roadways. Pets may not be left unattended in the park.

A National Park is a refuge for the animals and plants living within it. Even if your pet doesn’t chase animals, dogs present the image and scent of a historical predator. The result is stress on native wildlife.

Predators such as owls, coyotes, javelina, and lions CAN and DO kill pets here. Even large dogs cannot defend themselves against such predators. Remember, desert heat is deadly. Do NOT leave your pet alone in a vehicle. Pets are not allowed on trails, off roads, or on the river. The nearest kennel service is in Terlingua, 30 miles away.
EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Join Our Family

Please accept our invitation to join the Big Bend Natural History Association

The Association’s goal is to educate the public and increase their understanding and appreciation of the Big Bend Area and what it represents in terms of our historical and natural heritage. You can be an important part of this effort when you become a member.

BBNHA was founded in 1956 to aid educational, historical, and scientific programs for the benefit of Big Bend and its visitors.

Your Benefits as a Member
- A 15% discount on items sold by BBNHA
- A 10% discount on most seminars
- A subscription to The Big Bend Paisano
- Current Big Bend calendar
- Discounts at many other association bookstores in visitor centers at other national park sites
- Opportunity to support scientific, educational, and historical programs in Big Bend

Past and present projects include:
- Operate book sales outlets in Big Bend National Park and Amistad National Recreation Area
- Publish trail guides and brochures and assist with the publication of The Big Bend Paisano
- Sponsor an on-going Seminar program
- Provide annual grants for research projects and administer grants and gifts received for the park
- Support the park’s volunteer, Junior Ranger, and educational outreach.

Yes!

Please enroll me as a member of BBNHA

ANNUAL DUES
- Individual ($25)   Associate ($50)
- Corporate ($100)

LIFE MEMBERSHIP
- Individual or Family ($250)
- Corporate ($500)
- Benefactor ($1,000)

New Member   Renewal

Mr./Mrs./Ms._________________________
Address_____________________________
City_______________State/ZIP__________

Make check payable to BBNHA or charge to:
- Visa   - Mastercard   - Discover
Card No._________________Exp. Date____
Signature_____________________________

DETACH AND MAIL TO:
BBNHA, P.O. Box 196
Big Bend National Park, Texas 79834
Telephone: (432) 477-2236
e-mail: bibe_bbnha@nps.gov

Get In On The $30-Per-Plate Fund Raiser

Buy this custom plate from the state of Texas and most of the cost will be used to help preserve and protect Big Bend National Park, one of the world’s last great wildernesses. It may be the most fulfilling contribution you’ll ever make.