Welcome to Big Bend National Park!

Welcome to Big Bend National Park and the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River! Over 800,000 acres await your exploration and enjoyment.

From an elevation of less than 1,800 feet along the Rio Grande to nearly 8,000 feet in the Chisos Mountains, Big Bend includes massive canyons, vast desert expanses, forested mountains, and an ever-changing river. Here you can explore one of the last remaining wild corners of the United States.

In fact, early explorers found the Big Bend Region to be so remote, so wild, that they called this area El Despoblado—the uninhabited land. At first glance, the desert appears to be desolate and barren. One might feel alone in the wilderness of Big Bend, but even here you are surrounded by life.

From the forests of the Chisos down to the floor of the desert, over 1,200 types of plants thrive in the park and support ecosystems full of pollinators, herbivores, and other wildlife.

Take a drive along one of Big Bend’s roads, or hike a scenic trail, and discover just how much diversity and life there is in the desert!

Central Texas Whipsnake (Masticophis Taeniatus Girardi)

Superintendent’s Message

It is my honor to welcome you to Big Bend, a magnificent corner of this country that we have the privilege to preserve and share. Fulfilling these two missions is an ongoing balance we work to achieve, and we’ve made some exciting advancements.

In April 2013, we celebrated the opening of the Boquillas Port of Entry. Now visitors can enjoy cross-cultural experiences and build relationships like we previously appreciated in this border region.

Another exciting project is the Fossil Discovery Trail Exhibit. Friends of Big Bend National Park have raised a half million dollars for this project, and continue to partner with us as we create the educational display that will bring our world-class specimens to light. Visit bigbendfriends.org to become a part of this project.

Superintendent Cindy Ott-Jones

To:

Welcome to Big Bend National Park!

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Find out how to make the most of your time in the park. Includes detailed maps of the Chisos Basin and Rio Grande Village.

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11 Backcountry
Learn more about opportunities to enjoy Big Bend’s wilderness including: primitive camping, backpacking, river trips, and horseback riding.

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More Inside...
Mountain Lion Research in Big Bend

Park Ranger Ali Paul

With every hike in a national park, every family trip to a historical site, we fulfill one half of the National Park Service’s dual mission—to provide for the enjoyment of the resource. What we often don’t see is the fulfillment of the other half—the conservation and preservation of precious resources. National parks are not just places for recreation, they are living museums, as well as unique scientific laboratories. They are places for discovery because, in order to protect our resources, we must know them. Currently underway is a new study focused on our large predator, the mountain lion.

The purpose of the new study is to gain valuable insight about human and mountain lion interaction in Big Bend National Park. The study will examine the lion population and collect data on its size, density in certain areas, denning locations, and hunting habits. The study will also attempt to learn more about mountain lion interactions with humans by tackling important questions: Do cats use hiking trails? Are they more or less active in human-use areas like the Chisos Basin? Do human behaviors attract mountain lions to an area? A primary goal of the research is to help park managers reduce human/mountain lion conflicts in the park.

The research team consists of experienced scientists from the Borderland Research Institute of Sul Ross State University in cooperation with the National Park Service. The research is being funded by grants, and scientists will work under a special permit. Scientists will use NPS-approved methods, including the use of radio and GPS collars, to collect data. Backcountry wildlife tracking cameras will be installed in the park in areas determined to be good lion habitat. Cameras may also capture black bear images, and scientists hope to collect data on how mountain lion and bear populations affect each other. Raymond Skiles, Big Bend’s Wildlife Biologist, will be the liaison for the project and will help guide the research.

One exciting aspect of the study is that visitors can assist scientists with their work. Visitor reports and photos of lions or signs of their scat and tracks could prove beneficial to the study. So, what should you do if you spot a mountain lion? First, enjoy the experience—you’ve just had a rare sighting! Remember the behavior you witnessed, note your exact location, time of day, and weather conditions. Then, report your sighting in detail as soon as possible. Wildlife sighting cards are available at park visitor centers.

You have an excellent opportunity to experience the dual mission of the National Park Service in action as we learn more about Big Bend’s most famous resident—the mountain lion.
The Fluid Border
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 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 that continue to evolve. Increased border restrictions have led to a number of important changes that affect the international boundary in Big Bend.

Border Safety
• Know where you are at all times, and use common sense. Cell phone service may be limited in areas of the park.
• Keep valuables, including spare change, out of sight and lock your vehicle.
• Avoid travel on well-used but unofficial “social trails.”
• Do not pick up hitchhikers.
• People in distress may ask for food, water, or other assistance. Report the location of the individuals to park staff or Border Patrol as soon as possible. Lack of water is a life-threatening emergency in the desert.

Collecting
It is the mission of the National Park Service to preserve all natural and cultural resources unimpaired for future generations. Taking crystals or arrowheads, or collecting plants or animals robs everyone of this heritage—once something is stolen, it cannot be replaced.

Please do not destroy, deface, injure, dig, collect, or otherwise disturb park resources including plants or animals (dead or alive), fossils, rocks, or artifacts. It is a violation to possess park resources. Please, take only pictures, and leave only footprints.

Hiking
Most serious injuries and deaths in the park result from car accidents. Drive within the speed limit (maximum of 45mph in most areas), and watch for wildlife grazing along the roadsides, especially at night. Park roads have limited shoulders and some are steep and winding and require extra caution.

Remember, too, you share the road with bicyclists and pedestrians. Pull off the road to take pictures—do not stop or pause in roadways. Please, slow down...and enjoy!

Heat
The dry desert heat quickly uses up the body’s water reserves. Carry and drink water—at least 1 gallon per person per day. As you exercise, you lose salt and water (over a quart and a half per hour during arduous exercise). You need both to survive in this extreme environment. Reduce alcohol and caffeine intake—the diuretic effects can result in accelerated loss of body water.

Protect your body—sensitive skin burns easily. Find shade, wear sunscreen, sunglasses, and a brimmed hat. Wear long-sleeves, trousers, and proper shoes.

Water Conservation
Big Bend is a desert, with water being a precious resource. Water in the Chisos Basin is limited to Oak Spring, which is recharged by scant rainfall. Other areas rely on a precious few aquifers.

Please voluntarily limit your water consumption within desert areas. Drinking water is necessary, but lengthy showers are an extreme luxury—instead, soak in the Hot Springs if you’d like to relax in some hot water. Wash only what clothing items you need. Consider topping off RV water tanks at your next destination.

Visiting Boquillas
• Everyone needs a passport, Mexico requires it for entry, and you must show your passport on return to the U.S.
• Citizens of countries other than the U.S., Mexico, Canada, and Bermuda need additional documentation (Check with Port of Entry staff).
• The Port of Entry is closed two days per week. Hours and days of operation are limited and subject to change. Check at park visitor centers for the current Port of Entry operations schedule.
• There are fees in Mexico for the ferry and transportation into the village.
• There are specific regulations regarding what you may take with you, and what you may bring back.
• All persons are subject to search both in- and outbound from the Port of Entry.
• Pets are not allowed on the Port of Entry road or in its parking lot.

Hiking Trails vary from easy and well maintained to strenuous primitive routes. Plan hikes within your ability. Avoid ridges during thunderstorms, and canyons or creek beds when flash flooding is possible. Carry a flashlight and first aid kit, and let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return. If you get hurt or lost, stay in one place to conserve water and energy.

Please keep your children close; don’t let them run ahead on trails.

Protecting Yourself and the Park
Big Bend may be wild and unfamiliar country, yet it need not be dangerous. Whether hiking the high country, floating the Rio Grande, observing wildlife, or driving the scenic roads, let safety be your constant companion. By giving thought to your actions you can have a safe, exciting, and rewarding experience in Big Bend National Park. Spend a moment reviewing these common safety considerations and resource protection guidelines.

Pets in the Park
Having a pet with you may limit some of your activities and explorations in the park. Abiding by these pet regulations will ensure a safer, more enjoyable visit for yourselves, other park visitors, your pet, and the park’s wildlife.

• Pets are not allowed on trails, off roads, or on the river. Your pet can only go where your car can go.
• Pets need to be on a leash no longer than six feet in length (or in a cage) at all times.
• You may not leave your pet unattended in vehicles if it creates a danger to the animal, or if the animal becomes a public nuisance.
• If you plan to hike, someone must stay behind with the pet, or you will need to make arrangements with a kennel service. There is no kennel service in the park.
• Pet etiquette and park regulations require that you always clean up after your pet and dispose of waste in trash receptacles.

W. HARDING

A Member of the Boquillas Trail Fleet
4 The Paisano

No Wood or Ground Fires: Hidden Costs of Campfires

Park Ranger Bob Hamilton

When entering Big Bend National Park, visitors quickly learn wood fires and ground fires are strictly prohibited everywhere and at all times, except on overnight river trips. Not infrequently a disappointed visitor will ask why this regulation exists.

The most obvious answer is directly related to the lack of annual precipitation in the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem. Most of every year, moisture in any form is limited; when even a small amount of precipitation occurs, low desert vegetation responds quickly, producing an abundance of lighter fuels that rapidly become bone dry and highly susceptible to wildfire.

The Chisos Mountains receive more precipitation than other areas in the park, and this factor yields an even greater concentration of fuels. The threat of catastrophic wildfire to the resource and to visitors is very real in Big Bend. In March, 1989, action by a careless visitor resulted in a wildfire that burned 334 acres of the western Chisos Mountains and threatened structures in the Basin. No human life was lost, but the environmental change is still evident today; resource recovery from a desert fire is a very long process. But there is another less obvious reason to prohibit fires in Big Bend National Park.

Sparse vegetation throughout the park fails to provide any substantial fuel supply for visitor campfires. Early settlers said one had to “dig for wood” because the only fuels for cooking and heating were contained in the underground root systems of small trees.

The obvious solution is to bring in one’s own wood. However, visitors transport firewood from their homes to the national park without realizing the result is potentially devastating to the desert ecosystem. Firewood brought in from other areas can carry non-native organisms into the park. While many exotic species have a minimal negative impact, the presence of others can be devastating.

In 2001, a nest of red imported fire ants (Solenopsis invicta) was confirmed in the Chisos Basin Campground. No one is certain why this regulation exists. Hopefully, Big Bend’s effort to restrict ground fires and wood fires will, in multiple ways, result in the preservation of a healthy Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem for all to enjoy.

Desert Skies

An Enlightening Experience

Park Ranger Jennifer Goucher

Weather in Big Bend can be as volatile as the landscape is diverse. A calm, clear day can quickly turn windy and abrasive in a matter of minutes. Summer offers temperatures greater than 100° Fahrenheit. Ground temperatures have been recorded at 180° Fahrenheit. Winter forecasts often dish out mild, sunny days with temperatures in the seventies, eighties, or nineties, or, you might find yourself building a snowman.

Late spring storms can whip themselves into a frenzy when the weather report did not predict a drop of rain. Washes can transport torrents of water from these rains at high rates of speed uprooting plants, animals, and even cars in their wake. And then there is lightning.

Lightning, one of the most deadly weather phenomena in the United States. Lightning can be especially dangerous in the desert as shelter is scarce or nonexistent. Washes, as mentioned above, can flash unexpectedly and high points, such as peaks and open mesas, become conduits for these terrestrial, plasma strikes. Being swallowed up in a sudden storm happens easier than one would think.

I had the misfortune (or fortune?) of being caught, (and entrapped) in one such storm in December…

While cycling through the park one evening from Panther Junction toward the Maverick entrance station, I noticed dark clouds hastily erasing the beginning of a gorgeous sunset. An evening shower was a welcoming thought though, considering the severity of recent drought conditions. I continued pedaling, thinking about the future possibility of a delightful spring bloom. My pleasant thoughts came crashing—literally—to a halt when the first intense bolt of lightning struck the earth. My heart leaped to my throat as I registered what I was seeing, and what metal and electronics I had on me! It also occurred to me that my shuttle ride was an hour out, though the storm was rapidly approaching. I had two choices: keep pedaling, or assume the lightning position. At the fiercest point in the storm I was pelted by sideways rain, enormous gusts of wind blew me across the road, and thunder bellowed with lightning flashes simultaneously. But then, the sun gloriously peaked through the clouds in front of me, and splashed bright-orange color across Santa Elena Canyon. It was beautiful! Checking the clouds above me, I was astonished by a breathtaking, double rainbow. And, lucky for me, my ride arrived, as my friends were also alarmed by the sudden arrival of the storm.

While my adventure ended without incident, (shy of a few rattled nerves), being caught in lightning is not just scary, but dangerous. Few can claim to be as blessed as Roy Cleveland Sullivan, a park ranger at Shenandoah National Park, who was hit seven different times by lightning between 1942 and 1977; he survived every strike.

A short hike, bike ride, backpacking excursion, or other outdoor activity can quickly turn into a precarious situation should there be an abrupt change in the weather. Enjoy the best Big Bend has to offer, but stay safe by keeping an eye on the sky, and check and recheck the weather report throughout your visit in Big Bend National Park.
In Times Past

Soaking It All In
Park Ranger Mary Collins

Throughout Big Bend National Park one can catch a glimpse of days gone by. Whether it is the early Native American tribes who called this land home or the settlers and ranchers who dared to scratch out a living, they have all left their mark. The Hot Springs near Rio Grande Village is one such place, easily accessed by car or foot. Following is the story of one man and his family who were determined to call the Hot Springs home.

In 1909, when J.O. Langford purchased the land containing the springs he was searching for a miracle. He suffered frequent bouts of pain and discomfort from malaria—the mosquito-borne infectious disease he contracted as a young boy. Traveling with his pregnant wife Bessie and young daughter Lovie, he set out from Alpine, Texas, for his unknown land by the Rio Grande. They arrived ten days later only to find part of the land already settled and being worked by a Mexican family, the Natividades. Deciding quickly that a land deed was just a piece of paper, the families became close friends.

Langford had tried nearly everything to cure himself of malaria, and now, he put all his faith in his newly acquired spring, and began 21 days of treatment. He both drank and soaked in the water several times throughout those days. By the end of the three-week period, he felt so much better that he decided to build a bathhouse over the spring and charge a small fee for these “healing hot springs.” He wondered why the area hadn’t been developed like Hot Springs, Arkansas. Likely, rugged terrain and lack of easy transportation contributed to the absence of visitors. The land’s nickname, “the Uninhabited Land,” didn’t help either. But now, word-of-mouth of the developed bathhouse began luring people to Langford’s Hot Springs for health treatments and relaxation.

A short three years later though, the Mexican Revolution was threatening to reach their territory, and the possibility of attack by Pancho Villa and his men caused J.O. Langford to abandon his holdings and flee with his family to El Paso.

During their 14 years in El Paso, the Langfords celebrated the birth of two sons and mourned the loss of their second daughter, Lucille, the child Bessie was pregnant with and gave birth to at the Hot Springs settlement. After the end of the revolution south of the border, things finally settled down. In 1927 J.O., Bessie, and their sons LeRoy and Joe made the long trip back to their beloved Hot Springs. Lovie remained in El Paso, as a teacher at a local high school. By the time they made it back, their family wasn’t the only thing that had changed. The once green, grass-covered land had been grazed down to dirt. And the Natividad family had been driven out along with most of their neighbors.

Not to be defeated, Langford built a store and post office near the springs. Better roads and automobiles made it easier to get to the springs, so he also built a motor court.

The Langfords remained until 1942, when J.O. sold the land and springs to the state of Texas. Two years later, Big Bend National Park was established.

Today, you can visit the ruins of the post office, general store, and the motor court. Just a quarter mile down river, you can relax and soak in J.O. Langford’s “healing waters.”

This Wild Place

In the Spirit of Wilderness
Park Ranger Ali Paul

Wilderness is not only a haven for native plants and animals but it is also a refuge from society. It is a place to go to hear the wind and little else, see the stars and the galaxies, smell the pine trees, feel the cold water, touch the sky and the ground at the same time, listen to coyotes, eat the fresh snow, walk across the desert sands, and realize why it is good to go outside. — John Muir

What is it that lured you to Big Bend National Park? Was it the story of a friend who fell in love with the Chisos Mountains? Was it Big Bend’s intriguing history, or striking photos of the canyons on the Rio Grande that stoked your imagination? Maybe it was the assurance of pristine night skies, the craving for solitude or the allure of endless recreation. This vast place is special for many reasons, and one of the best is its wilderness.

In the 1950’s and 60’s the U.S. government developed a response to the outcry that wild places were quickly disappearing. Places where one could escape the confines of civilization were becoming harder to find. By 1964, a solution was enacted into law—the Wilderness Act. This act created a legal definition of wilderness, and determined how it should be managed. The Wilderness Act now protects 109 million acres. It entrusts public lands to the American people, under the management of a few federal agencies, including the National Park Service.

In 1978, the National Park Service and the Carter Administration found 333,000 acres of Big Bend National Park meet requirements for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Under the Act, the finding established Big Bend National Parklands would be managed as wilderness and protected in such manner by staff and visitors alike. The 1978 administration also recommended that Congress designate the area as wilderness. While Congress has yet to act on the proposal, wilderness advocates continue to hope for that highest of recognition for the park’s wilderness.

Big Bend is a place where nature is unrestrained, where monsoon waters, rattlesnakes, and javelinas move freely down desolate arroyos. As we soak in its majestic vistas we see an expanse colored by sunsets and native plants, not by human hands. We experience a land that is generally unaffected by the forces of man, where our works are few and do not dominate the landscape. It is a place where true solitude still exists, and primitive recreation can still be enjoyed. Big Bend allows us to experience a world where the earth marches to its own internal rhythm, to the beat of wings not the patterns of human progress.

As we honor the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, take time to listen to the beat of wings not the patterns of human progress.

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For more information about the Langford family and their hot springs, read A Homesteader’s Story by J. O. Langford, available in the Big Bend Natural History Association Bookstore.
What to See and Do

Chisos Basin
A drive to the Chisos Basin is an excellent way to experience the transition between arid desert and cooler mountain habitats. As this scenic, winding road rises over two thousand feet above the desert floor, it offers vistas of the mountain peaks and the erosion-formed basin area.

Within the Chisos Basin area is a visitor center, campground, lodge, restaurant, gift shop, camp store, and miles of hiking trails.

With limited time, walk the Window View Trail for easy access to mountain vistas, and a classic sunset view. If time permits, consider hiking (or backpacking) into the High Chisos to witness the towering forests of Boot Canyon or the unparalleled vistas of the South Rim.

Note: the road into the Basin is not suitable for RVs longer than 24’ or trailers longer than 20’.

Rio Grande Village
The drive to Rio Grande Village traverses ancient limestone and has marvelous vistas of the magnificent Sierra del Carmens. Along the way is the oasis at Dugout Wells and a spur road leads to the popular Hot Springs.

Continue the drive to Boquillas Canyon, where a short hike offers excellent views of the Rio Grande as it enters the canyon.

Rio Grande Village has a visitor center, campground, RV hook-ups, camp store, gas station, and picnic area.

Take a stroll (or a short drive) from the store to Daniels Ranch; this is a great area for birding. Picnic tables are near the historic ruins.

The Rio Grande Village Nature Trail crosses a wildlife viewing boardwalk, then gradually climbs the hillside, offering panoramic views of the river, Sierra del Carmens, and Crown Mountain. This is an excellent sunset vista.

Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive
A trip along the Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive highlights the geologic splendor Big Bend is famous for, and offers many scenic overlooks and exhibits along the way. Sotol Vista, Mule Ears Overlook, and Tuff Canyon are all worthwhile stops.

History is highlighted at Sam Nail Ranch, Homer Wilson (Blue Creek) Ranch, and the Castolon Historic Compound. Castolon has a visitor center, camp store, and nearby is the Cottonwood Campground.

Continue the drive to the magnificent Santa Elena Canyon, where limestone cliffs rise 1,500’ above the Rio Grande. A short trail leads into the canyon.

Return by the same route, or take the gravel Old Maverick Road to the western entrance of the park. This road is usually passable for most vehicles, but may be impassable after heavy rains. Check at a visitor center for current conditions.
## Popular Day Hikes

### The Chisos Mountains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Trailhead Location</th>
<th>Round Trip (mi/km)</th>
<th>Avg Time</th>
<th>Elevation (ft/m)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basin Loop</td>
<td>Chisos Basin Trailhead (near the Basin Store)</td>
<td>1.82/2.6</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>350/107</td>
<td>Moderate: Connects the Laguna Meadow and Pinnacles Trails. Nice views of the Basin area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emory Peak</td>
<td>Chisos Basin Trailhead (near the Basin Store)</td>
<td>10.5/17</td>
<td>7 hours</td>
<td>2400/789</td>
<td>Strenuous: Trail leads to the highest peak in the park, with excellent views. The end of the trail involves some moderate rock climbing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost Mine</td>
<td>Basin Road, mile 5 (at the pass)</td>
<td>4.8/7.7</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>1100/335</td>
<td>Moderate: Excellent mountain and desert views. For a shorter hike, 1 mile up is a great view to the southeast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Rim</td>
<td>Chisos Basin Trailhead (near the Basin Store)</td>
<td>12/19.4 15/24</td>
<td>8 hours</td>
<td>2000/656</td>
<td>Strenuous: Trail leads to the 2000’ cliff with incredible views of the desert below. Hike either the southwest rim, or add the northeast and southeast rim trails when open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window View</td>
<td>Chisos Basin Trailhead or Basin Campground</td>
<td>5.69/0.8</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>980/309</td>
<td>Moderate: Descends to the top of the Window pour-off. Great scenery and wildlife viewing. For a shorter hike, start from the Basin Campground (near campsite 5A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window View</td>
<td>Chisos Basin Trailhead (near the Basin Store)</td>
<td>0.3/0.5</td>
<td>1/4 hour</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>Easy: Level, paved, accessible. Great mountain views. Best place in the Basin to catch a sunset through the Window.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Eastside — Panther Junction and Rio Grande Village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
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<th>Elevation (ft/m)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grapevine Hills</td>
<td>6.4 miles down the Grapevine Hills Road</td>
<td>2.3/3.5</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>240/73</td>
<td>Easy: Follows a sandy wash through a boulder field. A short but steep climb near the end takes you to a large balanced rock. No shade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chihuahuan Desert</td>
<td>Dugout Wells</td>
<td>0.5/0.8</td>
<td>1/2 hour</td>
<td>10/3</td>
<td>Easy: Loop trail with interpretive signs on desert ecology. Look for javelina tracks and resident birds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Springs</td>
<td>End of Hot Springs Road (unpaved narrow road)</td>
<td>0.75/1.2</td>
<td>1/2 hour</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>Easy: Walk past historic buildings to the riverside hot spring. Enjoy a soak in 105°F water. Hot Spring is subject to flooding during rising river levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boquillas Canyon</td>
<td>End of Boquillas Canyon Road</td>
<td>1.4/2.3</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>40/12</td>
<td>Easy: Begins with a short climb, then descends via a sandy path to the river. Ends near a huge sand dune “slide.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniels Ranch to Hot Springs</td>
<td>Daniels Ranch parking area, west of Rio Grande Village</td>
<td>6/10</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>100/31</td>
<td>Moderate: Trail from Daniels Ranch to the Hot Springs. Cliff drop-offs prevent access to the river along most of the route. No shade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Village</td>
<td>Rio Grande Village, across from campsite 18</td>
<td>0.75/1.2</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>130/40</td>
<td>Easy: First 300’ leads to a wildlife viewing platform on a pond. Trail then climbs the hillside with views of the river and mountains. Great for birding and sunsets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Westside — Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Trailhead Location</th>
<th>Round Trip (mi/km)</th>
<th>Avg Time</th>
<th>Elevation (ft/m)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam Nail Ranch</td>
<td>Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive, mile 3</td>
<td>0.5/0.8</td>
<td>1/2 hour</td>
<td>10/3</td>
<td>Easy: Well-maintained trail leads through the old ranch location. The combination of water and shade makes this an excellent birding location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Burro Mesa</td>
<td>Burro Mesa Spur Road</td>
<td>1.0/1.6</td>
<td>1/2 hour</td>
<td>60/18</td>
<td>Easy: Trail enters a dry wash and ends at the bottom of the dramatic Burro Mesa pour-off. A great walk for viewing geological features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimneys</td>
<td>Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive, mile 13</td>
<td>4.8/7.7</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>400/122</td>
<td>Moderate: Flat and scenic desert trail to rock formations of an eroded dike. Look for Native American rock art and shelters. No shade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mule Ears Spring</td>
<td>Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive, mile 15</td>
<td>3.8/6.1</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>20/6</td>
<td>Moderate: Beautful desert hike to a small spring. Spectacular geology with mountain and desert views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuff Canyon</td>
<td>Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive, mile 17</td>
<td>0.75/1.2</td>
<td>1/2 hour</td>
<td>100/31</td>
<td>Moderate: Two trails from the parking lot both provide outstanding balcony overlooks; one of the trails descends to the floor of the canyon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Elena Canyon</td>
<td>Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive, 8 miles west of Castolon</td>
<td>1.62/6</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>80/26</td>
<td>Easy: Sandy path crosses Terlingua Creek. Trail switchbacks up to overlook the river before gradually dropping to the river in the canyon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Smoking is prohibited on all trails in the Chisos Mountains.
People from all over the world come to see Big Bend’s birds. But as many birders know, it can be difficult to find birds, or at least the birds you’re looking for, without thinking about bird habitats. This is especially important in Big Bend, with distinct climatic zones and migration corridors. From the sky island of the Chisos Mountains to the desert’s river corridor, the varied terrain attracts a staggering 450+ species of birds, the largest concentration of bird species of any national park. To find a specific species, however, takes a bit of thought.

Geographically, Big Bend lies in a unique location, making it possible for migrating birds from a variety of habitats to make a stop-over here. You could call Big Bend the middle ground for most species of North American birds. The park's centralized location catches western species as they move north for the summer and again as they fly south for the winter. Big Bend also catches eastern birds following the same seasonal migration patterns.

The Chisos Mountains provides a secluded woodland paradise along the route many migratory birds take on their way to summertime grounds. The desert scrub and grassland are preferable for those who favor wide open space, and the Rio Grande is a haven for bird species that love a lush riparian habitat.

Big Bend’s terrain is unique in the West Texas landscape, which means birds taking up residence here can be rare in the region, and even in the nation as a whole. The Colima Warbler is one such species. It nests in the higher elevations of the Chisos Mountains, making Big Bend its only summer home in the United States. Other unique species include the Common Black-Hawk seen perching in the enormous cottonwoods of Daniels Ranch, the Lucifer Hummingbird buzzing among agave stalks along the Blue Creek Trail, and the Black-Capped Vireo calling out on the Window Trail.

Because Big Bend encompasses three unique habitats, spotting the greatest variety of species requires a bit of leg work. A working knowledge of bird species and their habitats will lead you to every corner of the park. Birds, like all animals, seek out a habitat that makes life easiest for them, one that puts their specific physical and behavioral adaptations to best use. Check out the river corridor to spot a Neotropic Cormorant or a flotilla of Mexican Mallards, or head to the higher mountain elevations for a surprise glimpse of a Red-Faced Warbler or Blue-Throated Hummingbird. The small desert oases—Dugout Wells and Sam Nail Ranch—can be reliable locations to catch the lowland species more inclined to take up residence in the desert, such as the Varied Bunting and the Green-Tailed Towhee.

People that come to Big Bend rarely do so by accident, and the same can be said for the birds that frequent the area for prime nesting habitat or a quick stop-over. However, there are always one or two species that can catch everyone off guard. Weather patterns can be inconsistent, and sometimes they push a bird far off of its normal course. Out-of-range tropical and coastal birds are spotted occasionally, confused, but grateful for the chance to rest in refuge habitats Big Bend offers. Keep your eyes open out there; you never know what you might see.

Night Skies

Night Navigators

Park Ranger Jennifer Fangman

As technology makes everyday life easier, cleaner, and more efficient, we sometimes lose the incentive to protect certain aspects of our environment, especially if the resulting environmental degradation is not readily apparent.

Unlike ancient travelers and mariners, we no longer rely on the stars for navigation. These days, when we need to convey ourselves from point A to point B we have various means to help us navigate. We can go to an internet mapping website and download the directions. A GPS will tell us exactly where and when to turn as we drive down the road. The technology that once seemed like science fiction is now an everyday fact-of-life. Since the impact of light pollution might not be as noticeable as air or water pollution, our inability to see the full splendor of the night sky might seem like primarily an aesthetic concern. So how much does light pollution really matter?

In January, 2013, scientists from South Africa and Sweden were able to prove that dung beetles navigated using the light from the Milky Way, the only creature in the animal kingdom known to do so. The dung beetle’s goal in life is to collect his cache, find his mate, and roll his prize away from the dung pile in a straight line before burying it underground. Otherwise, if he circles back to the dung pile, he risks having his hard work stolen out from under him by a competitor. His ability to orient himself to the Milky Way allows him to follow a straight line.

Dark skies are also important for nocturnal migratory birds, many of which live here in Big Bend National Park. There are several reasons why some birds migrate at night. One reason is to avoid predators. A second reason is energy conservation. As the sun goes down, the wind decreases, making the atmosphere less turbulent and creating cooler temperatures. Additionally, research discovered that birds orient themselves using star patterns within about 35° of Polaris. Draco, Cepheus, Cassiopeia, and the Big and Little Dippers are all constellations used by nocturnal migratory birds. Not only does light pollution obscure the constellations and send the birds off course, it can disorient whole flocks and cause them to fly into lighted structures.

Natural darkness is not just critical for the dung beetles and birds, it is important for all life in the biosphere, even humans. Periods of natural darkness are needed for the production of melatonin, the hormone that regulates our natural circadian rhythms. It affects predator and prey relationships and reproductive habits.

Big Bend National Park has been certified by the International Dark-Sky Association as a Gold Tier International Dark Sky Park. We have the darkest skies and lowest levels of light pollution in the lower 48 states, and infradegrees could cover all low humidity make for excellent nighttime star gazing.

2014 Celestial Events

- March 20—Spring Equinox
- April 22–23—Lyrids Meteor Shower
- May 5–6—Eta Aquarids Meteor Shower
- June 21—Summer Solstice
- July 28–29—Delta Aquarids Meteor Shower
- August 12–13—Perseids Meteor Shower
- September 23—Fall Equinox
- October 8—Total Lunar Eclipse
- October 8–9—Orionids Meteor Shower
- October 22–23—Orionids Meteor Shower
- October 23—Partial Solar Eclipse
- November 5–6—Taurids Meteor Shower
- November 17–18—Leonids Meteor Shower
- December 13–14—Geminids Meteor Shower
- December 21—Winter Solstice
- December 22–23—Urants Meteor Shower
Black Bears
The return of black bears to Big Bend is a success story for both bears and the park. Native to the Chisos Mountains, they disappeared from this area by the 1940s. Nearly fifty years later, they began returning from Mexico. Today, wildlife biologists estimate a black bear population of around 15–20 black bears.

A black bear’s normal diet consists largely of nuts, fruits, sotol and yucca hearts, but also includes small mammals, reptiles, and carrion. Bears normally avoid humans, but can become aggressive if they learn to take food from human sources.

Mountain Lions
Solitary and secretive, the mountain lion is Big Bend’s top predator, and is vital in maintaining the park’s biological diversity. Mountain lions live throughout the park from mountain to desert, and biologists estimate a stable population of about two dozen lions.

Everywhere in Big Bend, you are in the territory of at least one lion. Within their territories, lions help balance herbivores and vegetation. Research shows these large predators help keep both deer and javelina within the limits of their food resources.

Javelinas
For many visitors, seeing a javelina (pronounced hav-uh-LEE-nuh) is a new experience. Also known as collared peccaries, these animals are only found in the U.S. in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.

They are covered with black, bristly hairs and weigh between 40–60 lbs. They usually travel in groups called bands that consist of 10–25 individuals. Peccaries have a highly developed sense of smell, but poor vision.

Coyotes
Nothing in Big Bend speaks of wilderness more than the song of a coyote. Their various vocalizations from yips to howls let you know you are in the presence of an iconic figure. Their narrow-set, yellow eyes and long snout may seem intimidating, but in general, coyotes do not bother human beings.

Coyotes range over the entire United States. These highly adapted members of the canine family are omnivores, dining on small mammals, reptiles, and insects. Coyotes will also eat berries and other vegetation when meat is unavailable. Carrion is an important food source in winter.

Rattlesnakes
Four species of rattlesnake live in Big Bend National Park—the Western Diamondback, Black-tailed, Mojave, and Rock rattlesnakes.

This often-feared reptile is beneficial to the environment, eating mice, rats, and other small animals—many of which are pests or spread disease.

Perhaps surprising, rattlesnakes are not a top predator, sometimes becoming the meal of roadrunners, skunks, coyotes, and even other snakes, such as the western coachwhip.

The buzz of a rattlesnake is an unmistakable sound that will stop you in your tracks. And this is a good thing, as rattlesnakes use this sound as a warning when they perceive a threat; continue toward them, and you risk provoking a self-defensive bite. A few bites have occurred in Big Bend. If bitten, contact a ranger promptly, as permanent damage can occur within 12 hours of a bite.

For many people, the chance to see a bear or mountain lion in the natural environment is an amazing opportunity. However, one must always remember that we are entering their home, their territory. As such, we need to respect wildlife, and know what to do if we encounter a wild predator:

- Do not run, but back away to get out of range of the perceived threat.
- If you feel threatened, try to look large, wave your arms, throw rocks or sticks.
- If attacked, fight back.
- Watch children closely and never let them run ahead or lag behind.
- Report bear or mountain lion sightings or encounters to a park ranger as soon as possible.

To help preserve healthy environments for both visitors and predators, please remember:

- Never leave food or trash unattended, at bears and other wildlife readily habituate.
- Never feed. wildlife, as no park animal is tame, and feeding leads to aggressive future behavior.
- Keep a healthy distance between you and park animals (at least 50 yards).
Dagger Flat Auto Trail
This seven-mile road (14 miles round-trip) winds eastward to a small valley where there is a forest of giant dagger yuccas.

A self-guiding brochure is available, and provides a useful key to the plants and geology along this road.

Typically open to all vehicles, and excellent for bicycling. However, road may require high clearance as sandy areas or muddy conditions may seasonally exist. Check with a ranger for current road conditions.

Allow two hours for the drive. The speed limit on this narrow, winding road is 25 mph.

Chisos Basin
The Chisos Basin Campground is surrounded by tall, rocky cliffs and conveniently located near some of the park’s most spectacular and popular trails.

Elevation: 5,400 ft.
Open: Year-round
Details: 60 campsites (no hook-ups). $14 per night ($7 per night with applicable pass). Flush toilets, running water, grills, picnic tables, and dump station. Trailers over 20’ and RV’s over 24’ are not recommended due to narrow, winding road to the Basin and small campsites in this campground.

Cottonwood
Cottonwood Campground is a quiet, shady desert oasis located between the Castelón Historic District and the scenic Santa Elena Canyon.

Elevation: 2,169 ft.
Open: Year-round
Details: 24 campsites (no hook-ups). $14 per night ($7 per night with applicable pass). Pit toilets, running water, grills, picnic tables, no dump station, no generators allowed. A small picnic area is available across from campsite #23.

Reservable Campsites: There are no reservable campsites in the Cottonwood Campground. All individual campsites are on a first come, first-served basis.

Group Camping: One group campsite is available by advance reservation only. Group campsite is walk-in tent camping only. To reserve the group campsite, contact www.recreation.gov or call 1-877-444-6777.

Rio Grande Village
Set in a large grove of cottonwoods, the campground is adjacent to the Rio Grande. The RGV camp store and showers are within walking distance.

Elevation: 1,850 ft.
Open: Year-round
Details: 100 campsites (no hook-ups). $14 per night ($7 per night with applicable pass). Flush toilets, running water, picnic tables, grills, and some overhead shelters. Dump station nearby.

Reservable Campsites: 43 sites are reservable November 15–April 15. Contact www.recreation.gov or call 1-877-444-6777. Group Camping: 4 group campsites are available by advance reservation only. Group campsites are walk-in tent camping only. Vehicle parking is restricted to an adjacent parking area. To reserve a group campsite, contact www.recreation.gov or call 1-877-444-6777.

Rio Grande Village RV
Open, paved lot with grassy, tree-lined edges. Adjacent to the camp store. This campground, operated by Forever Resorts, LLC, has the only full hook-ups in the park.

Elevation: 1,850 ft.
Open: Year-round
Details: 25 campsites. Concession-operated RV park with full hook-ups—water, electrical, and 3-inch sewer connection. $33, double occupancy, with a $3 additional per person charge. Periodically, a few sites may not be available for a 40’ or longer RVs due to the size of the parking lot and orientation of the spaces.

Reservable Campsites: 20 sites are available by reservation, 5 are held for first come, first-served campers. Register at the Rio Grande Village store/service station, or call 1-877-386-4383, or 432-477-2293.

Dirt Road Adventures

Old Ore Road
This backcountry road follows the historic route used in the early 1900s to transport ore from Mexican mines to the railroad station at Marathon.

This road has excellent vistas of the Chisos Mountains and Tornillo Creek. It passes through the footprints of the Deadhorse Mountains, including the cliffs of Alto Relex.

Ernst Tinaja, five miles from the southern end of the road, is a popular hiking destination.

Allow at least 3 hours to drive this 26 mile-long road. A high clearance vehicle and good tires are necessary.

River Road
The River Road traverses the southern portion of Big Bend, providing a great opportunity to see the remote backcountry of this park.

Midway are the ruins of Marmalce Mine. This former mercury mine is a marvel to explore, as numerous structures are still standing.

Allow a full day (5–7 hours) to explore this 51 mile-long road. Backcountry campsites along the drive (permit required for camping) allow for extended exploration.

This road is for high clearance vehicles only, and may become impassable following rain.

Developed Campgrounds at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campground</th>
<th>Elevation (ft/meters)</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Nightly Fee</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Registration</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chisos Basin</td>
<td>5,400 ft./1,646</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>$14.00*</td>
<td>Flush toilets, dump station</td>
<td>Self-pay station</td>
<td>Surrounded by rocky cliffs, many hiking trails nearby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottonwood</td>
<td>2,169 ft./660</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>$14.00*</td>
<td>Pit toilets, no generator use allowed</td>
<td>Self-pay station</td>
<td>In a cottonwood grove along the river. Grassy sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Village</td>
<td>1,850 ft./564</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$14.00*</td>
<td>Flush toilets, dump station</td>
<td>Self-pay station</td>
<td>Largest campground, shady sites. Laundry and showers nearby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Village RV</td>
<td>1,850 ft./564</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$33.00 and up</td>
<td>Full hook-ups</td>
<td>RGV Camp Store</td>
<td>Concession-operated, register at the RGV store.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dagger Flat Suggested high clearance path Old Ore Road Junction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenn Springs Narrow road, no RVs, trailers, or wide vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Rosillos Deep ruts and sand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniper Canyon High clearance vehicles only; rough, rocky, and slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Maverick Wash boarded sections; impassable after rains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Ore High clearance vehicles only, 4WD recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Canyon High clearance vehicles only; rough, rocky, and slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Road East High clearance vehicles only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Road West High clearance vehicles only; 4WD recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Gap 4WD required, infrequently maintained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Backcountry Roads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Backcountry Roads</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>River Road East</td>
<td>High clearance vehicles only, rough, rocky, and slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Road West</td>
<td>High clearance vehicles only, 4WD recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Gap</td>
<td>4WD required, infrequently maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Ore</td>
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<td>High clearance vehicles only, 4WD recommended</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Rio Grande Village| Open, paved lot with grassy, tree-lined edges. Adjacent to the camp store. This campground, operated by Forever Resorts, LLC, has the only full hook-ups in the park. Elevation: 1,850 ft. Open: Year-round Details: 25 campsites. Concession-operated RV park with full hook-ups—water, electrical, and 3-inch sewer connection. $33, double occupancy, with a $3 additional per person charge. Periodically, a few sites may not be available for a 40’ or longer RVs due to the size of the parking lot and orientation of the spaces. Reservable Campsites: 20 sites are available by reservation, 5 are held for first come, first-served campers. Register at the Rio Grande Village store/service station, or call 1-877-386-4383, or 432-477-2293.

Historic Buildings at Marmalce Mine

View Along Dagger Flat Auto Trail

Limestone Layers at Ernest Tinaja

Historic District and the scenic Santa Elena Canyon.
Backcountry

Primitive Roadside Campsites
For those who wish to camp in the backcountry without having to backpack, Big Bend offers a number of primitive campsites along roads, both in the desert and along the Rio Grande. A permit is required.

All roadside sites are along unpaved roads. While some centrally-located sites are accessible to most vehicles, a high clearance and/or 4-wheel drive vehicle is necessary to reach those along the primitive dirt roads.

Sites offer excellent views, privacy, an opportunity for solitude, and a cleared gravel location to park your vehicle and set up a tent.

There are no amenities at any backcountry campsite, please plan to bring everything you need, including water, shade, chairs, and a trowel to bury human waste.

Please remember, campfires (all wood fires or ground fires) are strictly prohibited. Use cook stoves with caution.

Generators are not allowed in backcountry areas, and pets must be kept on a leash within the boundaries of the camp site.

Backpacking
Big Bend National Park has over 200 miles of trails in the Chisos Mountains and desert terrain, with options for backpacking within these beautiful habitats.

Chisos Mountains
There are 41 campstes along Chisos Mountains trails, ranging from one to eight miles from the trailhead. These sites are designated to help reduce impact and damage to this delicate environment.

Sites include a cleared area for a tent as well as a bear-proof storage box, which must be used to store all scented items. A permit for a specific site must be obtained prior to camping.

Zone Camping
Open zone camping permits are available for backpackers who wish to camp outside of the Chisos Mountains. The park is divided into a number of zones ranging from areas along popular trails to extremely isolated areas.

Camp must be set up at least 0.5 mile from roads, out of sight of roads, and at least 100 yards away from trails, historic structures, archaeological sites, dry creek beds, springs, or cliff edge.

Local outfitters (see page 12 for phone numbers) provide guide service, equipment rental, and up-to-date river information and conditions.

The deepest channel of the Rio Grande is the international border between the United States and Mexico. Passports are not currently required for river trips, but stepping onto the Mexican bank of the river, then returning to the U.S., constitutes an illegal border crossing. U.S. Border Patrol allows for exceptions to be made under emergency situations only, i.e.; scouting, portaging, or lining.

Backcountry Use Permit
A backcountry use permit is required for all backcountry camping, river use, and horse use:

- Permit must be obtained in person at a park visitor center during normal business hours.
- A permit may be obtained up to 24 hours in advance of the trip.
- Permit may be written for up to 14 consecutive nights in the backcountry.
- The permit fee is $10 ($5 with applicable pass) for overnight-use, free for day-use.

Backcountry Water
Every gallon removed from backcountry water sources is one less for the wildlife which depends on them.

- Each hiker should carry and drink a minimum of one gallon of water per person per day. Spigots for drinking water are available at all visitor centers.
- Springs and tinajas (rock depressions where water collects) are rare and unreliable—don’t risk your life by depending on desert springs. Water should be filtered if used. Caching water is recommended for extended hiking trips in the desert.

Leave No Trace
Following the seven basic leave no trace principles helps protect our fragile desert environment:

- Plan ahead and prepare—a well-planned hike is more likely to be a safe hike, and without the need to rely on precious desert water.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces—avoid walking on small plants or biological crusts.
- Dispose of waste properly—bury solid human waste at least six inches deep and 0.25 mile from springs. Pack out all waste paper and trash.
- Leave what you find—natural and cultural resources are protected within National Parks. Collecting or disturbing features is prohibited.
- Minimize fire impacts—fires are only allowed on overnight river trips. A fire pan is required. Keep all heat sources away from combustible vegetation.
- Respect wildlife—all animals are wild, even if they appear to be tame. Never feed wildlife or leave scented items unattended.
- Be considerate of other visitors—keep noise levels to a minimum, as sounds can carry for long distances across the desert.
### Services Inside the Park

**Emergency Call 911**
- National Park Service: 432-477-2251
- Big Bend Natural History Association: 432-477-2236

**Visitor Centers**
- Panther Junction (Highway 180): 432-477-1158
- Chisos Basin: 432-477-2264
- Castolon: 432-477-2266
- Persimmon Gap: 432-477-2393
- Rio Grande Village: 432-477-2271

**U.S. Post Office**
- Panther Junction: 432-477-2238

** Lodging/Restaurant**
- Chisos Mountains Lodge: 432-477-2291
- Reservations: 877-386-4838

**Gas Stations**
- Panther Junction: 432-477-2294
- Rio Grande Village: 432-477-2293

**Camper Stores**
- Rio Grande Village: 432-477-2293
- Chisos Basin: 432-477-2291
- Castolon: 432-477-2222

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### Information and Services

#### Accessibility
All visitor centers are accessible, as are the Chisos Mountain Lodge restaurant and some motel rooms and campsites. The Window View Trail is paved and fairly level.

#### ATMs
The Chisos Mountains Basin Store, Rio Grande Village Store, and Panther Junction Service Station have ATMs. The nearest banking facility is located in Study Butte, 26 miles west of park headquarters.

#### Camp Stores
Forever Resorts, LLC, operates stores at Castolon, Chisos Basin, and Rio Grande Village. Each has groceries, camping supplies, and souvenirs.

#### Campground Limits
Visitors can stay in the park up to 14 consecutive nights, whether in a front or backcountry site, with a limit of 28 total nights in the park in a calendar year. Campers can occupy a specific site up to 14 total nights in a year. Between February 1 and April 15, visitors are limited to 14 total nights in the park.

#### Entrance Fees
- Single private non-commercial vehicle $20—valid for 7 days
- Single person entry on foot, bicycle, motorcycle, commercial vehicle, etc. $10 per person—valid for 7 days
- Big Bend Annual Pass $40—valid for one year from month of purchase
- Interagency Annual Pass $80—valid for one year from month of purchase

All other valid passes will be accepted until expired including: Senior Pass, Access Pass, Golden Age Passport, and Golden Access Passport. For commercial rates, please consult our website: www.nps.gov/bibe. Additional permits may be required.

#### Fires
Ground fires and wood fires are strictly prohibited throughout the park. Only gas stoves and charcoal contained in a grill may be used. Use caution with any heat source.

#### Food Storage
Do not store food or scented items in tents, and never leave coolers, cook stoves, dishes, trash, or food/water unattended.

#### Gas Stations

#### Junior Ranger
Through activities, games, and puzzles, kids can have fun learning about the park and earn a badge or patch, bookmark, and certificate. A $2 booklet is sold at visitor centers.

#### Kennels
- Alpine Veterinary Clinic: 432-837-3888
- Alpine Small Animal Clinic: 432-837-5416

#### Lodging
The Chisos Mountains Lodge, located in the Chisos Basin, includes 72 rooms, gift shop, dining room and camp store. For more information call 432-477-2291 or 877-386-4838.

#### Phones
Public pay phones are located outside the Chisos Mountains Lodge and Rio Grande Village Store.

#### Elevations
Elevation differences in the park mean temperatures can vary considerably between mountain, desert, and river. Air temperature changes about five degrees for every 1,000 feet of elevation gain or loss; temperatures in the high Chisos Mountains can be 20+ degrees cooler than temperatures along the Rio Grande.

#### Dress for the Weather
A wide-brimmed hat, comfortable clothing, and sturdy walking shoes or boots are necessary for anyone planning to hike. Sunscreen is a must. Hikers must always carry plenty of water. One gallon per person per day is required. Bring clothing for both warm and cool weather, as well as rain gear, when visiting Big Bend any time of the year.

### Weather and Climate

#### Weather and Climate Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panther Junction Averages</th>
<th>(mountains temps 5-10° lower, low desert temps 5-10° warmer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Temp (°F)</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min Temp (°F)</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precip (inches)</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Elevation Differences
Elevation differences in the park mean temperatures can vary considerably between mountain, desert, and river. Air temperature changes about five degrees for every 1,000 feet of elevation gain or loss; temperatures in the high Chisos Mountains can be 20+ degrees cooler than temperatures along the Rio Grande.

#### Swimming
Big Bend is a desert park. Wading in the Rio Grande is not recommended. Soaking in the 105° Hot Springs is an option. Do not enter or contaminate backcountry springs.

#### Other swimming opportunities include Balmorea State Park, the world’s largest spring-fed pool (a three-hour drive north).

### Visitor Centers
Panther Junction, Chisos Basin, and Persimmon Gap Visitor Centers are open year-round. Rio Grande Village and Castolon Visitor Centers are open November–April.

### WiFi/Internet
Free wireless internet is available at the Chisos Mountains Lodge and Rio Grande Village Store/RV hook-ups. There are no public computer terminals.

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**Additional Information**

- **Services Outside the Park**
- **Convenience Stores/Gasoline**
- **Medical Services**
- **Banks**
- **Local Outfitters**
- **Horsetack Riding**

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**Chisos Mountains Lodge**
- 432-477-2291
- Reservations: 877-386-4838

**Ranger Programs**
Join a ranger for a guided hike or evening presentation. These free programs are offered most days of the year. Schedules are posted at visitor centers and campgrounds.

**Recycling**
Recycling cans are provided in campgrounds and near stores and visitor centers. Every bit of material recycled means one less piece buried in the park landfill. Please recycle!

**Showers and Laundry**
Pay showers and laundry facilities are available at the Rio Grande Village Store, and have 24-hour access. Out-of-park facilities are available in Study Butte.

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**Frosted Sotolos in the Chisos Mountains**