Welcome to Big Bend

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. From the forests of the Chisos down to the floor of the desert, over 1,500 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 this amazing desert!

What can I see if I only have...

One Day:
Big Bend is too big to see in a single day, but a great one-day trip to the park might include a trip down the Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive and a visit to the Chisos Mountains. The Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive will give you fantastic views of the Chihuahuan Desert landscape and lead you to the Rio Grande. There are scenic overlooks and exhibits along the way, and the short walks to Sam Nail Ranch and Homer Wilson Ranch and a visit to the Castolon Historic District will give you a glimpse into Big Bend’s past.

A highlight of the trip is the short walk into Santa Elena Canyon—one of Big Bend’s most scenic spots. Drive 8 miles west from Castolon to the end of the road. You may return to the main road by returning on the Ross Maxwell Drive or on the Old Maverick Road, a 13-mile gravel road linking the Ross Maxwell Drive to the Maverick Entrance. Be sure to check on road conditions first.

In the Chisos Mountains, walk the 0.3-mile Window View Trail to get a feel for the mountain scenery. If time allows you might consider hiking the Window Trail or Lost Mine Trail for a closer look at Big Bend’s mountain landscapes. The Fossil Discovery Exhibit located 8 miles north of Panther Junction is another park highlight that could easily fit into a one-day visit.

Three Days:
With three days to spend in the park, you can explore the major roads more thoroughly and still have time for hiking. You will also have plenty of time to stop at visitor centers and the Fossil Discovery Exhibit to learn more about the park.

In the Chisos Basin area, consider hiking the Window Trail (6 miles round trip) or the Lost Mine Trail (5 miles round trip). Consult page 5 of this paper for trail descriptions of these and other popular trails in the park that you might fit into your trip. Try to experience Big Bend’s wilderness as much as possible.

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 exhibits and a small theater. Walk the Rio Grande Village Nature Trail, which begins near site #36 in the campground. The bluff overlooking the Rio Grande and take in the nature trail is a particularly beautiful spot at sunset.

The Boquillas Canyon road will take you to Boquillas Canyon. At the end of the road is the Boquillas Canyon Trail, which takes you to the entrance of this spectacular canyon.

A Week:
With a week or more to spend in Big Bend, endless possibilities are open to you. You will 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 the visitor centers for current road conditions.

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, improved dirt roads such as Dagger Flat and Grapevine Hills 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 you into another world which seems far removed from the desert. There are plenty of opportunities for overnight backpacking along these trails. A backcountry use permit is required and can be obtained at any park visitor center during normal business hours. See page 6 for more information.
Activities and Scenic Drives

The Fossil Discovery Exhibit located 8 miles north of Panther Junction.

Getting Outdoors

With diverse habitats to explore, hundreds of miles of trails to hike and the Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River to float, outdoor recreation is truly the best way to experience Big Bend.

River Trips

With three unique river canyons and miles of remote desert scenery to explore floating the Rio Grande River can be an unforgettable experience. Canoes, kayaks, and rafts are allowed on the river. You may bring your own equipment, or you can hire a guide service. Local outfitters provide guide service, equipment rental, and up-to-date river information and conditions.

Hiking and Backpacking

Big Bend has over 200 miles of trails in the Chisos Mountains and desert terrain, with permits available for backpacking overnight within these beautiful habitats. Many trails are easy to moderate in difficulty but visitors should always be prepared for the dangers of high temperatures and high exposure to the elements. Carry lots of water (at least 1 gallon per day is recommended) and wear a hat, sunscreen, and proper clothing.

Scenic Drives and Backcountry Roads

If you have a high-clearance or four wheel drive vehicle, Big Bend’s backcountry roads call for further exploration. There are over 200 miles of dirt roads in the park. Improved dirt roads like the Dagger Flat and Grapevine Hills roads are usually in good condition and accessible to normal passenger vehicles, except following rainstorms. Unimproved dirt roads, such as the Old Maverick Road, Old Ore Road, or the River Road, generally require high-clearance vehicles and/or four wheel drive.

Border Information

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.

Camping Overnight

Permits are required for overnight camping in the backcountry. There are 41 campsites along the 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. Campsites have bear-proof boxes for storing food and other items. Backcountry opportunities outside of the Chisos Mountains may be available with proper equipment and well-researched plans.

Always inspect your vehicle and check current road conditions at a visitor center before traveling any of the park’s primitive roads.

Big Bend’s backcountry roads also offer opportunities for primitive camping in roadside campsets. Primitive sites offer excellent views, solitude, and a flat gravel space to camp next to your vehicle. Permits are required. See the backcountry camping section located on Page 6 for information on obtaining a backcountry permit.

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Birding in Big Bend

The park is designated as a Globally Important Bird Area.

Big Bend National Park is known as a geologist’s paradise, and visitors now have the opportunity to learn more about the area’s rich geologic history and fascinating fossil discoveries at the Fossil Discovery Exhibit.

The Fossil Discovery Exhibit is a self-guided interpretive museum that illustrates the changes to Big Bend’s plants and animals, and the world they lived in, through 130 million years of geologic time. Specimens from the park’s remarkable fossil record and full-color artwork help to illustrate the fascinating story of Big Bend’s ancient life.

The exhibit is located 8 miles north of Panther Junction on the Persimmon Gap Entrance Road (Highway 385), and is open from dawn to dusk. There is a short geology-themed trail nearby and a shaded picnic area with an assortment of fossil-themed climbing structures for children. A vault toilet is available at the site (no water is available). Cell phones can generally get reception at the site.

The riparian corridor at Rio Grande Village offers some of the best year-round birding in the park. Consider walking the Rio Grande Village Nature Trail or visiting the Daniel’s Ranch picnic area west of the campground. A similar habitat is accessible between Cottonwood Campground and Santa Elena Canyon on the park’s west side.

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Visiting Mexico

The Boquillas Port of Entry is open Wednesday to Sunday, 9:00am-6:00pm (summer), 8:00am-5:00pm (winter).

Passport Requirement
Visiting Mexico through the park’s Boquillas Crossing Port of Entry is an option for visitors possessing a valid passport. U.S. and Canadian citizens can also present a valid: U.S. Passport; Passport Card; Enhanced Canadian passport; U.S. Merchant Mariner Document; or U.S. and Canadian citizens can also present a valid: Canadian passport; U.S. or Canadian driver’s license; U.S. or Canadian birth certificate; or Canadian Permanent Resident Card. If you are traveling with a child, you need to bring the child’s original birth certificate even if the child is traveling with you. U.S. citizens need to present a U.S. passport to cross into Mexico. Children need to present a legible copy of their birth certificate to be admitted into Mexico. Mexican citizens need to present a Mexican identification card or Mexican passport to cross into the United States.

How do I get there?
Park at the Boquillas Crossing parking lot near Boquillas Canyon. After passing through the Port of Entry visitors are ferried across the Rio Grande on a small rowboat for a modest fee ($5 round-trip as of 12/16). While walking across the river is permitted only at the Boquillas Crossing, but is not recommended if the river level is high.

Once across the river visitors have the option of walking to the village (1/4 mile) or paying an additional fee to ride on a burro, horse, or in a vehicle. Local guides are available. Visitors are required to check in with Mexican immigration officials upon arrival in Boquillas. Visitors planning to stay overnight in Boquillas need to get camping permits or adjoining locations.

U.S. currency is accepted in Boquillas though visitors are advised to bring smaller bills or rely on Boquillas vendors to provide change for their purchases. The Rio Grande Village Store and the Rio Grande Visitor Center cannot make change for visitors travelling to Boquillas.

Drones/Unmanned Aircraft
Launching, landing, or operating an unmanned aircraft is prohibited in Big Bend National Park.

Visiting Mexico

Visiting Mexico may be wild and unfamiliar country, yet it need not be dangerous. Please spend a moment reviewing these common safety considerations and resource protection guidelines.

No Collecting
It is the mission of the National Park Service to preserve all natural and cultural resources unimpaired for future generations. Taking things like geodes 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.

Driving
Drive within the speed limit (maximum of 45 mph 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!

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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.

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. Rest in shade if you can.

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

Water Conservation
• Visitors are limited to 5 gallons of water per day and are encouraged to conserve further; please consider bringing some of your water from home.
• Be water-wise when using the restroom; don't let faucets run unnecessarily.
• Wash only what clothing items you need.
• Fill water jugs and bottles at Rio Grande Village whenever it is convenient.
• Consider topping off RV water tanks at your next destination.
• Take brief showers.
• Please report noticeable faucet or water leaks.
• Use backcountry water sources sparingly; leave backcountry springs for wildlife.

Protecting Yourself and the Park

Big Bend may be wild and unfamiliar country, yet it need not be dangerous. Please spend a moment reviewing these common safety considerations and resource protection guidelines.

Visiting Mexico

Visiting Mexico through the park’s Boquillas Crossing Port of Entry is an option for visitors possessing a valid passport. U.S. and Canadian citizens can also present a valid: Enhanced Driver’s License; Trusted Traveler Program card (NEXUS, SENTRI or FAST); U.S. Military identification card when traveling with official orders; U.S. Merchant Mariner document when traveling in conjunction with official maritime business; or Form I-872 American Indian Card, or (when available) Enhanced Tribal Card. For complete information on travel documents visit the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative webpage.

U.S. and Canadian citizen children under the age of 16 (or under 19, if traveling with a school, religious group, or other youth group) need only present a birth certificate or other proof of citizenship. The birth certificate can be original, photocopy, or certified copy.

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Once across the river visitors have the option of walking to the village (1/4 mile) or paying an additional fee to ride on a burro, horse, or in a vehicle. Local guides are available. Visitors planning to stay overnight in Mexico will need to apply for a temporary visa. Secure overnight parking at the Boquillas Crossing Port of Entry may be available.

U.S. currency is accepted in Boquillas though visitors are advised to bring smaller bills or rely on Boquillas vendors to provide change for their purchases. The Rio Grande Village Store and the Rio Grande Visitor Center cannot make change for visitors travelling to Boquillas.

Borders Merchants
Near the border, you may encounter small “souvenir stands,” and Mexican Nationals may attempt to sell you their crafts. It is illegal to purchase these items. Items purchased illegally will be considered contraband and seized by officers when encountered. Port of Entry staff can answer questions about items that can be legally purchased and imported through the Port. By purchasing souvenirs legally, you support the citizens of Boquillas, make the river corridor safer for all visitors, and help protect the resources of this ecosystem.

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 you and your pets, 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.
• Park regulations require that you always clean up after your pet and dispose of waste in trash receptacles.

Safety at the Border

Big Bend has a low incidence of crime reported. However in any remote or seldom-traveled location, it is important to consider personal safety and to secure valuables while away from your vehicle.

• 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.
• Report suspicious behavior to park staff or the Border Patrol. Do not contact suspicious persons.
• Ask at the visitor center about areas where you may have concerns about traveling.
Places to Visit

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 Trails

#### The Chisos Mountains

*Smoking is prohibited on all trails in 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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basin Loop</td>
<td>Chisos Basin Trailhead (near the Basin Store)</td>
<td>1.8/2.6</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>350/107</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<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</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</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Rim</td>
<td>Chisos Basin Trailhead (near the Basin Store)</td>
<td>12/19.4</td>
<td>8 hours</td>
<td>20100/656</td>
<td>Strenuous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Window</td>
<td>Chisos Basin Trailhead or Basin Campground</td>
<td>5.6/9.0</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>980/299</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<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</td>
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#### Eastside — Panther Junction and Rio Grande Village

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Trailhead Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grapevine Hills Balanced Rock</td>
<td>6.4 miles down the Grapevine Hills Road</td>
<td>2.2/3.5</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>240/73</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chihuahuan Desert Nature Trail</td>
<td>Dugout Wells</td>
<td>0.5/0.8</td>
<td>1/2 hour</td>
<td>10/9</td>
<td>Easy</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</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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniels Ranch to Hot Springs Trail</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</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Village Nature Trail</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</td>
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#### Westside — Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive

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<th>Trail</th>
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<th>Round Trip (mi/km)</th>
<th>Avg Time</th>
<th>Elevation (ft/m)</th>
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<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>
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<td>Easy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Burro Mesa Pour-off</td>
<td>Burro Mesa Spur Road</td>
<td>1.0/1.6</td>
<td>1/2 hour</td>
<td>60/18</td>
<td>Easy</td>
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<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</td>
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<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</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dorgan-Sublett Trail</td>
<td>Castolon to Santa Elena Canyon Road, near mile 5</td>
<td>1.0/1.6</td>
<td>1/2 hour</td>
<td>56/17</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Elena Canyon</td>
<td>Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive, 8 miles west of Castolon</td>
<td>1.6/2.6</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>80/26</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**A view from the Santa Elena Canyon Trail.**

**A viewpoint on the paved Window View Trail.**

**A view on the Window View Trail.**

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**The Paisano 5**
Developed Campgrounds

**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.

- **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.
- **Reservable Campsites:** 26 sites are reservable from November 15–May 31. Contact www.recreation.gov, or call 1-877-444-6777.
- **Group Camping:** 7 group campsites are available by advance reservation only. To reserve a group campsite, contact www.recreation.gov or call 1-877-444-6777.
- **Generator Hours:** 8:00AM to 8:00PM.

**Cottonwood Campground**
Cottonwood Campground is a quiet, shaded desert oasis located between the Castolon Historic District and the scenic Santa Elena Canyon.

- **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.
- **Generator Hours:** No generators allowed.

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

- **Open:** Year-round
- **Details:** 108 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 campsite 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.
- **Generator Hours:** 8:00AM to 8:00PM.

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**Backcountry Camping and River Use**

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

Sites offer a cleared gravel location to park your vehicle and set up a tent. There are no amenities at any backcountry campsite aside from a large animal-proof box to store food and other items. 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 overnight backpacking within these beautiful habitats.

**Chisos Mountains**
There are 41 campsites 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.

**Wilderness Camping**
Wilderness camping permits are available to experienced hikers intending to camp within the park’s open desert areas.

**River Use & Stock Permits**
River Use Permits
River permits are required for visitors intending to use canoes, kayaks or rafts on the Rio Grande. Day-use permits are also available for parties that do not intend to overnight camp on the river, and can be written for multiple consecutive days from the date of issue. USCG approved wearable PFDs are required for each person, and an extra PFD is required. Each vessel must carry an extra paddle or oar; kayaks must have an extra paddle per person. In addition to the items listed above each overnight river camping party must carry a firepan with a 2 inch minimum rim and a system for removing solid human waste.

**Horse/Stock Permits**
Stock permits are available for visitors who wish to ride horses in the park. All gravel roads are open to horse riders. Horses are not permitted on paved roads or the shoulders of the paved roads. Cross-country horse travel (not on some trails) is permitted throughout the park except the Chisos Mountains area. Horse use in the Chisos Mountains is limited to the Laguna Meadow, Southwest Rim to the Boot Canyon Trail Junction, and Blue Creek trails.

Backcountry riders must provide controlled overnight maintenance of their animals, including provisions of commercial feed. Grazing within the park is not allowed. Check at a visitor center for additional information about stock use in the park.

**How to Obtain a Permit:**
Permits are required for any overnight backcountry camping, river use, and stock use, and can be obtained at any visitor center during normal business hours. Please bring the license plate number of any vehicles involved in the permit.

**Backcountry permits are issued on a first-come, first-served basis and can be written up to one day in advance of the intended use.**

**Permissions can be written for up to fourteen consecutive nights from the first day of backcountry use, and can be modified but not extended.**

**Backcountry use is subject to rules and regulations regarding sanitation and minimal impact practices that must be agreed to in order to obtain a permit.**

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**Developed Campgrounds at a Glance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campground</th>
<th>Elevation (ft/m)</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>5,401/1,664</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>2,169/661</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>1,850/564</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$14.00*</td>
<td>Flush toilets, dump station</td>
<td>Self-pay station</td>
<td>Along the river’s most shady sites. Laundry and showers nearby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Village RV</td>
<td>1,850/564</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$36.00 and up full hook-ups</td>
<td>RGV Camp Store</td>
<td>Concession-operated, register at the RGV store.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *$7.00 with a lifetime interagency pass.

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Panthers in the Park

By Jeannette Woerner, Park Ranger

Prowling through the tall grasses and rocky peaks, the mountain lion moves silently through the shadows. Seldom seen but often discussed, this elusive animal has lived in the Big Bend country for thousands of years. They’ve watched as prehistoric nomads set up camps, they’ve witnessed the boom and bust of 20th century ranching, and they’ve seen the creation of a national park. Their presence here is a mark of the wilderness where this species is protected.

Unfortunately, mountain lion range has been reduced severely as a result of predator control and habitat loss caused by humans. While they once roamed from coast to coast throughout the Americas, they have now been exterminated out of the eastern half of the U.S. Urban expansion is one of the top threats to mountain lions, but hunting is also a major danger. Today, mountain lion hunting is legal in most states, and Texas has no regulations or limits regarding the hunting of mountain lions. National parks such as Big Bend are the only areas in the state of Texas where this species is protected.

Of course, mountain lions have long been feared by humans—not only are they large, secretive ambush predators, they have also historically competed with humans for food sources like deer or cattle. Despite our fear, mountain lion attacks on humans are very rare. You are more likely to be struck by lightning, killed by bees, deer, or domestic dogs than to be attacked by this large cat. Here in the park, visitors come into close contact with mountain lions frequently without incident—often without even being aware of it, because lions, masters of camouflage, prefer to avoid people.

Big Bend Fast Facts

Size: 801,163 acres (1,252 square miles)
15th largest unit in the National Park System

Elevation:
Highest point: Emory Peak, 7,832 feet (2,387 m)
Lowest point: Rio Grande Village, 1,850 feet (564 m)

River Canyons:
Santa Elena Canyon 20 miles (32 km)
Matalis Canyon 10 miles (16 km)
Boquillas Canyon 33 miles (53 km)

US/Mexico Border:
Shared International Border—118 miles (190 km)

Mexico States bordering the Park—2 states:
Chihuahua & Coahuila

Landmarks and Elevations:
Emory Peak 7,832 feet (2,387 m)
South Rim 7,375 feet (2,248 m)
Casa Grande Peak 7,325 feet (2,233 m)
Chisos Basin 5,401 feet (1,664 m)
Panther Junction 3,750 feet (1,143 m)
Castolon 2,169 feet (661 m)
Rio Grande Village 1,850 feet (564 m)

Flora and Fauna:
1,295 species of flora
75 species mammals
450+ species birds
56 species reptiles
11 species amphibians
38 species fish

Major Resource Issues:
Air Quality/Visibility
Rio Grande Water Quality & Quantity
Exotic Species
Theft of Park Resources

By David A. Potney, Park Ranger

Have you ever looked at a vista and wondered “does it have a name” or “why is it called that?” Mountain ranges, peaks and hills have all been given titles but rarely do we ever hear the story behind the name. The same is true here in Big Bend, in particular Ward Mountain. Those experiences shaped him and continued to serve him well throughout his life.

Johnnie Ward was only 15 he proved his worth as a cowboy and earned the respect of the ranch manager. He was offered a permanent ranch hand position that he kept for the next seven years. The other cowboys took a quick liking to him and willingly passed on their skills and knowledge. They taught Johnnie things like how to live off the land, how to repair equipment, and how to control his temper. In the winter of 1887 there were several blizzards that blanketed the land. Although this affected the year’s calf drop, it also replenished the area’s water sources. After the snow cleared, Johnnie discovered a new spring at the base of one of the peaks in the Chisos Mountains. The ranch manager named it Ward Spring in his honor. They began keeping cattle in the area of the newly discovered spring. After several attacks on the herd by a bear, Johnnie took off in pursuit of the culprit. He chased it up the peak behind Ward Spring and eventually roped and hog tied the bear. After hauling the bear back down the mountain for all to see, Johnnie sold the bear to a gentleman who had made camp with the group for the night. The man was a gypsy who sold “snake oil,” and he planned to use the bear as an attraction for his show. These events caused quite an impression on the men, and the peak where Johnnie captured the bear became known as Ward Mountain.

In the early 1890’s cattle theft became a big problem as well as overgrazing and contamination of water sources. Land owners began to put up barbed wire fences to protect their cattle and acreage and slowly the once open range began to vanish. Witnessing these changes took its toll on Johnnie, and he decided it was time to go home. During Johnnie’s seven years working for the G-4 Ranch, he had grown from a young teenager into a smart dependable man. He reconnected with a childhood friend by the name of Virginia who he married in 1893. They would go on to have eight children, five boys and three girls. Johnnie began ranching in the central Texas area and became a well-known breeder of Angora goats. He continued to live the life he loved until his death on January 6, 1929. Johnnie Ward never did forget the life lessons he learned while working on the G-4 Ranch in Big Bend. Those experiences shaped him into the man that he was and continued to serve him well throughout his life.
### Information and Services

#### National Park Service
General Information 432-477-2251

#### Big Bend Natural History Association
Books & Seminars 432-477-2236

#### Visitor Centers
Panther Junction (HP) 432-477-1158
Chisos Basin 432-477-2564
Castolon 432-477-2566
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 877-386-4883

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

#### Camper Store
Rio Grande Village 432-477-2293
Chisos Basin 432-477-2291
Castolon 432-477-2222

#### Services Outside the Park

This listing of local services is a courtesy to our visitors and implies no endorsement by the National Park Service.

### Lodging
- **Lajitas**
  - Lajitas Resort 877-525-4827
- **Marathon**
  - Gage Hotel 432-386-4205
  - Marathon Motel 432-386-4241
  - Eve’s Garden 432-386-4165
- **Study Butte/Terlingua area**
  - Big Bend Castas 800-839-7238
  - Big Bend Resorts 800-848-2363
  - Easter Egg Valley Motel 432-371-2254
  - El Dorado Motel 432-371-2111
  - Longhorn Ranch Hotel 432-371-2541
  - Ten Bits Ranch 866-371-3110
  - Terlingua House 325-473-4400

### Gas Stations
- **Marathon**
  - Gage Hotel 432-386-4205
  - Marathon Motel 432-386-4241
  - Eve’s Garden 432-386-4165

### Convenience Stores/Gasoline
- **Big Bend Castas**
  - 800-839-7238
- **Big Bend Resorts**
  - 800-848-2363
- **Cottonwood General Store**
  - 432-371-3835
- **Stilwell Store & Station**
  - 432-376-2244

### Medical Services
- **Terlingua Fire and EMS**
  - 866-371-3110
- **Big Bend Medical Center**
  - 432-837-3447

### Banks
- **Quicksilver Bank/ATM**
  - 432-371-2211

### Local Outfitters
- **Angel Expeditions**
  - 432-229-3713
- **Big Bend Outfitters**
  - 800-848-2363
- **Big Bend River Tours**
  - 800-545-4240
- **Desert Sports**
  - 888-989-6900
- **Far Flung Outdoor Center**
  - 800-839-7238
- **Rio Aviation**
  - 432-557-9477

### Horseback Riding
- **Big Bend Stables**
  - 800-887-4331
- **Lajitas Livery**
  - 432-424-2328

![The Paisano](www.nps.gov/volunteer)

## Park Partners

### Big Bend Natural History Association
The Big Bend Natural History Association (BBNHA) was established in 1956 as a private, non-profit organization. Its mission is to interpret the natural and historical heritage of the Chisos Mountains area. BBNHA conducts seminars, and publishes, prints, or otherwise provides books, maps, and interpretive materials on the Big Bend region. Proceeds fund exhibits, films, interpretive programs, seminars, museum activities, and research.

### Big Bend Conservancy
The Big Bend Conservancy (BBC) is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to support, promote, and raise funds for Big Bend National Park’s partnership with the National Park Service.

The BBC has funded a range of critical projects, including Rio Grande Village wetlands restoration, the purchase of video camera and editing equipment, retrofit of night sky lighting, support for construction of the Boquillas crossing station, and the Park orientation film. The BBC’s latest accomplishment is the addition of the Park’s $1.14 million Fossil Discovery Exhibit completed during the BBC’s 20th anniversary year.

Visit www.bigbendconservancy.org to learn how you can support Big Bend, including how to get your own Big Bend National Park license plate.

### Post Office
A full-service post office is located at the Panther Junction Headquarters, open M-F, 8am–11:30am and 12:30pm–3:00pm. A mail drop is also available at the Chisos Basin Store.

### Recycling
Recycling receptacles 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.

### 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 Panther Junction and Chisos Basin Visitor Centers, the Chisos Mountains Lodge, and the Rio Grande Village Camp Store. There are no public computer terminals.

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

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

### Camp Stores & ATMs

### Camping 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 $25—valid for 7 days
- Single motorcycle $20—valid for 7 days
- Single person entry on foot or bicycle $12 per person—valid for 7 days
- Big Bend Annual Pass $50—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 (Senior Pass, Access Pass, etc.). For commercial rates, please consult our website: www.nps.gov/bibe. Additional permits may be required.

### Fires Prohibited
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.

### Gas Stations

### Junior Ranger
Kids earn a badge and have fun learning about the park by becoming a Junior Ranger. Booklets are available online and at park visitor centers.

### 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 877-386-4383.

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

### Volunteering in the Park
Approximately 260 volunteers contribute 50,000 hours of work every year in Big Bend National Park! Whether staffing visitor centers and campgrounds or patrolling backcountry trails, volunteers protect valuable resources and help visitors learn about, and more safely enjoy, Big Bend National Park.

While you might not notice volunteer contributions at first, look around and you’ll be surprised how many volunteers you see. It is primarily volunteers who provide visitor information at campgrounds, and at four of the five visitor centers in the park. They keep the campsites, backcountry roads, and trails in pristine condition, assist with maintenance projects, and are considered the eyes and ears of the park. Please thank them for their services if you have the opportunity. For more information, contact the volunteer coordinator at 432-477-1106.