

TEXAS MOUNTAIN TRAIL

R E G I O N

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EXPLORING THE HERITAGE OF FAR WEST TEXAS

Breathtaking mountains and high-country hikes. Sheer river canyons and winding back roads. Exotic desert panoramas and star-studded nights. These sights and more delight visitors at every turn in the six Far West Texas counties of the Texas Mountain Trail Region.

Stretched across two time zones, Central and Mountain, this far-flung region is a geological wonder. During the Permian period more than 250 million years ago, the land lay near the equator in the supercontinent of Pangea. Continental shifting and volcanic action eventually thrust the land upward; millennia of wind and water eroded it, sculpting majestic mountains and mesas. Dinosaurs roamed for millions of years when the land bordered a shallow sea.

The Rio Grande gradually carved a deep notch in the mountains, creating a natural river crossing that Spanish explorers named *El Paso del Norte*. The river also created glorious canyons in today's Big Bend National Park. Throughout the centuries, the climate grew hotter and the land drier. To survive, wildlife and prehistoric hunter-gatherers adapted to desert conditions. Later, diverse groups — Native Americans and Spanish missionaries, soldiers and miners, ranchers and railroaders — passed this way in search of wealth, glory and new beginnings.

A century before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, Spanish explorer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca traveled with the first European expedition here in the 1530s. He encountered agricultural communities and scattered nomadic tribes. Later Spanish expeditions introduced horses, cattle, sheep and wheeled vehicles to natives.

*The Land ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
of Endless Vistas*



*Enjoy nature's solitude
in the Chisos Mountains
of Big Bend National Park.*

In 1598, colonizer Juan de Oñate crossed the Rio Grande near present-day El Paso, claiming for Spain all land drained by the river. He set up a provincial capital in San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico, connected to Mexico City by an 1,800-mile road, El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (Royal Road of the Interior). The trade and supply trail, one of the oldest European roads in North America, passed through El Paso, where a permanent mission was founded in 1659. In 1680 New Mexican Pueblo tribes revolted, sending Spanish settlers fleeing with Tigua and other Pueblo Indians to establish the El Paso settlements of Ysleta and Socorro, Texas' oldest permanent communities.

During the early-to mid-1880s, Apaches and Comanches raided settlements and wagon trains across the U.S. Southwest and northern Mexico. Native American resistance continued after the U.S.-Mexico War of 1846–48 when much of northern Mexico was transferred to the U.S., setting the Rio Grande as the Texas boundary. To thwart raids and facilitate westward travel, the U.S. Army established military outposts across the region.

Far West Texas became a central destination for trade and travel. A north-south route prevailed along the Camino Real and the Chihuahua Trail. Traffic shifted to an east-west route as El Paso became an international boundary. Prospectors passed through en route to California gold mines, and stagecoaches brought mail and new residents along the San Antonio-El Paso and Butterfield Overland Mail routes.

Mining operations tapped veins of silver, copper, mercury and other minerals found in the region's rugged mountains. The arrival in the early 1880s of four railroads — Southern Pacific, Santa Fe, Texas and Pacific, and Mexican Central — sealed El Paso's future as a commercial and cultural crossroads.

*Let the spirit
of adventure take you
away to this
outdoor playground*

Foreign conflicts — including the Mexican Revolution and the Punitive Expedition — heightened military presence. After 1900, visitors began retreating to the region's high country and hot springs, spawning an active tourism industry. Today, the allure of the Texas Mountain Trail Region is reflected in its captivating history and in vistas found nowhere else in the state.

Enjoy nature's solitude in the Chisos Mountains of Big Bend National Park, one of America's largest, most remote parks. Sample Hispanic culture in El Paso, the largest metropolitan area on America's southern border. Scale the 8,749-foot Guadalupe Peak in Guadalupe Mountains National Park, the highest point in Texas, or survey the universe at McDonald Observatory in the Davis Mountains, one of the best spots in the nation for stargazing.

Let the spirit of adventure take you away to this outdoor playground, where the southern Rocky Mountains meet the Chihuahuan Desert and history reigns throughout.



Railroads also attracted ranchers to the vast rangelands of the Davis Mountains and Big Bend. Large ranches, some of which still operate today, provided the primary economic base for the region well into the 20th century. Area ranches were noted for their own breed of cattle, the Highland Hereford.



The following cities are described in this guide and the number refers to the city's location on the map.

ALPINE 5	KENT 3	SHAFTER 11
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www.texasmountaintrail.com

ALPINE

Alpine formed when the Southern Pacific Railroad located a watering stop here for travelers and freight in 1882 to tank up steam locomotives. In 1887, Alpine became the seat of Brewster County and a red-brick Second Empire-style courthouse was built that still graces downtown. Popular eateries, gift and art shops and entertainment venues line the town's main thoroughfare. Every year, Alpine celebrates its heritage at the Texas Cowboy Poetry Gathering. The Museum of the Big Bend is located at Sul Ross State University in a restored rock building, one of 10 museums built during the 1930s to celebrate the Texas Centennial. The museum recounts the natural and cultural heritage of the Big Bend region. Exhibits include several realistic replicas, including a 36-foot wingspan Texas Pterosaur, a Native American rock shelter, an 1880s railcar and a ranch chuck wagon. The museum also hosts Trappings of Texas, an annual show of contemporary Western arts and crafts.



Brewster County Courthouse



The Museum of the Big Bend

EL CAMINO REAL DE TIERRA ADENTRO



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Emerging from prehistoric Native American routes, El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (The Royal Road of the Interior) spurred development of the American Southwest and the central corridor of Mexico. Europeans, Native Americans, Mexicans and Americans traveled the path exchanging cultural traditions, while transporting chiles,

apples and mules throughout the area. The route influenced settlement patterns and eventually evolved into a network of modern roads and railroads.

In October 2000, a portion of the route was designated a national historic trail by the National Park Service. Stretching 404 miles from El Paso to San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico, the designation celebrates the common history and colorful culture shared throughout the borderlands.



For more information, visit www.texasmountaintrail.com/elcamino.



BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

Named for the huge sweeping curve of the Rio Grande, this remote natural treasure covers 800,000 acres accessed by 200 miles of primitive trails, 112 miles of paved roads and more than 150 miles of dirt roads (some requiring high clearance vehicles). The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River flows through and beyond the park, where river runners float through famous canyons Santa Elena, Boquillas and Mariscal and the rugged, remote Lower Canyons. The park lies within the Chihuahuan Desert, where nature lovers discover an amazing diversity of flora and fauna. Black bears and mountain lions roam the Chisos Mountains, where hikers explore wooded highlands above 7,000 feet.

Exhibits at the park's five visitors centers — Persimmon Gap, Panther Junction, Rio Grande Village, Chisos Basin and Castolon — interpret Big Bend's geology and archeology, in addition to its natural and human history. Historical exhibits range from the Comanche Trail to the U.S. Army's 1859–60 camel expeditions. Paleontological displays portray when dinosaurs ruled the area, and nature exhibits describe plant and animal adaptation in this harsh desert setting. Geology displays explain the uplifting and erosion that shaped the land. Drive-by exhibits along park roads further explore a variety of topics.



Dagger yucca and Casa Grande Peak

The park also boasts six National Register sites or districts including the Mariscal Mining Historic District, Hot Springs Historic District, Castolon Historic District and the Alvino House.



Rafting on the Rio Grande

Homer Wilson was a pioneer Big Bend sheep and goat rancher. One of his line camps — including foreman's house, storage room and circular corral — preserves a glimpse of remote ranch life of the early 1900s.

Located outside the park's northern entrance, Hallie's Hall of Fame Museum houses mementos and historic photos commemorating Hallie Stillwell, one of Big Bend's most colorful characters. As a pioneer ranch woman, justice of the peace and author, Stillwell epitomized the region's rugged individualism.



"Tough. You had to be tough to survive."

— Hallie Stillwell



Homer Wilson Ranch line camp



TXDOT

In an area known for ranching and dominated by cowboys, one woman in particular left her mark in the mountains of West Texas. Born Hallie Crawford in 1897, she traversed West Texas and New Mexico with her family, eventually settling in Alpine. In 1918 she married Roy Stillwell and moved to his Big Bend ranch where she rode with the cowboys, worked as a ranch hand and reared three children. Following her husband's sudden death, Stillwell fought to preserve the ranching life she loved and embraced. To help make ends meet, she lectured on life as a Texas woman rancher, managed a coffee shop, clerked for the city, worked in a flower shop, handled public relations for the local chamber of commerce and served as justice of the peace. Her literary success also helped the ranch survive through a drought when she started writing a column for the *Alpine Avalanche* in 1955. Inducted into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame in 1992, Stillwell died two months and two days shy of her 100th birthday in 1997.

For more information, visit www.texasmountaintrail.com/ranching.

Insets from top: Hallie's Hall of Fame Museum chronicles the rancher's life; Hallie Stillwell.

One Tough Rancher

EL PASO

El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico straddle the Rio Grande at the far western tip of Texas, intersecting with New Mexico and Mexico. Spaniards founded a mission on the river's south bank at *El Paso del Norte* in 1659. After Texas statehood in 1845, settlements developed on the north bank, and a surveyor named the settlement El Paso. The name confusion was settled in the 1880s when *El Paso del Norte* became Juárez to honor Benito Juárez, one of Mexico's greatest and most beloved leaders.

With a population of 700,000, El Paso is Texas' only metropolitan area set in mountains. Natural attractions such as Franklin Mountains State Park, plus an abundance of heritage attractions, make El Paso a year-round destination.

The El Paso Museum of Archaeology unveils Native American history of the American Southwest and northern Mexico. Dioramas depict early cultures like the Casas Grandes and Jornada Mogollon. Artifacts focus on prehistoric pottery but also include contemporary pieces. A 15-acre garden hosts 200 plant species that typify biodiversity in the Chihuahuan Desert.



El Paso's Fort Bliss offers a historic driving tour that passes the Gen. John J. Pershing home.

Native American history awaits at the University of Texas at El Paso's Centennial Museum. Built during the 1936 Texas Centennial, the museum replicates the Asian architecture of Bhutan. Exhibits range from Ice Age fossils and desert mammals to Native American handicrafts.

FORT BLISS

1848



El Paso's upper valley features a Chihuahuan Desert ecotourism center called Keystone Heritage Park. A botanical garden, natural wetland and amphitheater sit beside a rare archeological site of unexcavated Native American brush huts dating from 2500 B.C.

After the U.S.-Mexico War, the Army established Fort Bliss in 1848 across the river from *El Paso del Norte* to secure territory gained from Mexico. The Fort Bliss Museum chronicles the post's growth during the Mexican Revolution and troop training during World Wars I and II. Fort Bliss' Air Defense Artillery Museum displays both historic and modern artillery equipment. Old Fort Bliss Museum, a historic reproduction of the Magoffinsville Post (1854–68), highlights mid-19th-century life through military artifacts and living history programs. Nearby Biggs Army Airfield houses the U.S. Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO), where exhibits of uniforms and artifacts trace the role of the NCO from the Revolutionary War to the present.



Los Paisanos Gallery features rotating art exhibits, El Paso's Chamizal National Monument

The 1875 Territorial-style home of civic leader Joseph Magoffin is now the Magoffin Home State Historic Site. The home was built after Magoffinsville, an early Anglo-American settlement, was destroyed by floods. The 20-room home contains original Eastlake furnishings that reflect the refined life of a prominent pioneer family.

El Paso was a remote frontier town until railroads arrived in 1881. The Railroad and Transportation Museum of El Paso recalls those glory days in historic photo displays. Its main attraction is the restored 1857 El Paso and Southwestern Railroad's Locomotive #1, a rare example of a pre-Civil War steam engine.

As El Paso prospered, downtown blossomed. Many fine buildings were designed by famed regional architect Henry C. Trost, including the Paso del Norte Hotel, now the Camino Real. Opened in 1912, the nine-story hotel retains its original 25-foot-diameter Tiffany stained-glass dome. Another architectural wonder is the restored Plaza Theatre, a Spanish Colonial Revival structure that was the largest theater between Dallas and Los Angeles when built in 1930. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, it now operates as a performing arts center.



*Above: Reenactors at the Magoffin Home State Historic Site
Below: Camino Real Hotel's Tiffany stained-glass dome*

In 1964, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson and Mexican President Adolfo López Mateos met in El Paso to celebrate the Chamizal Convention, a treaty which ended a century-long boundary dispute. Commemorating that peaceful diplomatic success, the Chamizal National Memorial offers exhibits and bicultural art shows and performances to celebrate Mexican and American cooperation.

Period reenactors pay homage to historical figures during the annual Walk Through History in historic Concordia Cemetery. More than 60,000 graves contain the markers of African American Buffalo Soldiers and Chinese rail workers, as well as Texas Rangers, priests and gunfighters, including the notorious John Wesley Hardin.

El Paso's 400-year history unfolds at two other venues -- the El Paso Museum of History and the musical drama "VIVA! El Paso," held each summer in the open-air McKelligon Canyon Amphitheater. Various local museums also highlight Jewish life before, during and after the Nazi era at the El Paso

Holocaust Museum; vehicles and memorabilia used in border defense at the National Border Patrol Museum; interactive exhibits on science and technology at the Insights El Paso Science Museum; classical and contemporary Mexican and Southwestern works at the El Paso Museum of Art; and African, pre-Columbian and Southwestern art at the International Museum of Art, housed in a Trost-designed 1910 mansion.





Tigua Indian Cultural Center

El Paso's lower valley is home to the state's oldest mission trail, which comprises two missions and a presidio chapel and traces historic *El Camino Real*. A year after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, Tigua Indians established the pueblo community of **Ysleta**, the state's oldest permanent settlement. Mission Ysleta (Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church) resembles the 1744 mission church that burned and was rebuilt in 1907. The Tigua Indian Cultural Center offers

heritage displays, handicrafts and traditional dances. In 1680 Piro and other Native Americans founded **Socorro**, and the mission was established. In 1840 they completed the third and current Mission Socorro church, a restored adobe structure that remains one of America's oldest active parish churches.

In 1598 near **San Elizario**, Don Juan de Oñate's expedition arrived at the Rio Grande and celebrated a Mass that's reenacted annually as America's first Thanksgiving. Oñate's *La Toma* (the taking) proclamation claimed for Spain all land drained by the river. The Spanish relocated San Elizario Presidio here in 1789. A flood destroyed the fort's chapel, and the current Spanish Colonial Revival-style chapel was built in 1882 overlooking the town plaza. Also facing the quaint plaza is *Los Portales*, the 1850s home of Texas Ranger and county judge Gregorio N. García. Now a visitors center and museum, the traditional adobe structure offers exhibits on historical topics, including the divisive Salt War of 1877. San Elizario was once the county seat, and its historic district now features adobe commercial buildings, an *acequia* (irrigation canal), and a refurbished jail from which, according to legend, famous outlaw Billy the Kid once freed a compadre.

Thirty miles east of El Paso lies a natural and archeological wonder, Hueco Tanks State Historic Site. Hollows (*huecos*) formed millions of years ago in igneous rock and trapped rainwater in the desert. Native Americans camped here for 10,000 years, leaving behind more than 2,000 rock paintings, most notably the masks of the Jornada Mogollon culture. Butterfield Overland Mail stagecoaches stopped here in the 1850s, and in 1898 the Silverio Escontrias family built an adobe home that's now an interpretive center. Unique outcroppings attract rock climbers from around the world.



Hueco Tanks State Historic Site

PRESIDIO CHAPEL

★ ★ 1882 ★ ★



San Elizario Presidio Chapel

For more than 100 years a continuous debate over the land known as the Chamizal — 600 acres between the bed of the Rio Grande in 1852 and the present channel of the river — haunted the territory surrounding El Paso, straining relations between the United States and Mexico. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Treaty of 1884 set the Mexico/United States border down the middle of the Rio Grande along its deepest channel. However, controversy arose because of continual channel shifting caused by repetitive flooding. According to the initial treaties, the Chamizal belonged to the United States, but after several rounds of arbitration spanning more than 50 years, President John F. Kennedy agreed to divide the territory. The conclusion was officially marked in 1964 with a ceremonial meeting between Mexican President Adolfo López Mateos and U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Today, the Chamizal National Memorial in El Paso reminds visitors of the cooperative spirit of two countries sharing one border.

For more information, visit www.texasmountaintrail.com/border.

Background: Franklin Mountains, El Paso

Insets from top: Chamizal National Memorial, El Paso;

Ballet folklorico dancer; Chamizal National Memorial, El Paso.



Cultural Connection

FORT DAVIS

Known as the highest town in Texas (elevation 5,050 feet), Fort Davis grew up around its namesake, the U.S. Army garrison established in 1854 to protect travelers on the San Antonio-El Paso Road. In 1859 the Butterfield Overland Mail route relocated here for better protection against Native American attack.

The wild west endures at Fort Davis National Historic Site, one of the nation's best preserved frontier forts. Period furnishings and replica artifacts give several restored stone structures the look and feel of the 1880s. During this time, Buffalo Soldiers served here, including Henry O. Flipper, the first African American West Point graduate. The commanding officer's quarters reflect the refined life of post commander Col. Benjamin Grierson, a frontier military leader. A visitors center chronicles Native American resistance and soldier life at the fort, which was deactivated in 1891. Period reenactment events offer a glimpse of frontier life.



FORT DAVIS
★ ★ 1854 ★ ★

A stretch of the original San Antonio-El Paso Road still runs through Fort Davis. The dirt lane passes the Overland Trail Museum, housed in the 1883 home and office of eccentric justice of the peace and photographer Nick Mersfelder. The museum displays memorabilia of frontier times donated by pioneer descendants.



Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center

By 1900 this mountain town was a popular retreat from hot Texas summers. In 1913 Hotel Limpia opened to accommodate guests, as it still does today, near the 1910 Jeff Davis County Courthouse, a Classical Revival edifice with a unique octagonal clock tower.

The Chihuahuan Desert boasts hundreds of plant species adapted to arid conditions including creosote bush, sotol, yucca, agave and lechuguilla, the desert's signature plant. Learn about these and other species at the 507-acre Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center and Botanical Gardens, located just south of Fort Davis. Historic artifacts and ore displays highlight 19th-century mining, and a demonstration greenhouse grows 200 species of cacti and succulents. Hiking trails lead to overlooks and a canyon.

West of town, a popular 74-mile scenic loop (State Highways 118 and 166) winds through grassland basins, canyons and woodlands dotted with pine, juniper and oak in the Davis Mountains. The loop passes the 2,700-acre Davis Mountains State Park, which offers camping, backpacking, picnicking, hiking trails and a scenic mile-high drive. An interpretive center highlights local flora and fauna. The park's pueblo-style Indian Lodge hotel, built between 1933 and 1935 by the Civilian Conservation Corps, offers 15 original rooms with fireplaces (plus more rooms added later) and a restored lobby with original wood beams and furniture.

Thirteen miles west of the park, visitors look to the stars at the University of Texas' McDonald Observatory. The research and educational facility is named for W.J. McDonald, the Texas banker who provided funding for the original 82-inch telescope built in 1933. A state-of-the-art visitors center demonstrates how astronomers use spectroscopy to chart the heavens and offers solar viewings and star parties. It also hosts guided tours of one of the observatory's several telescopes, the Hobby-Eberly, the world's third-largest optical telescope.

Authentic Architecture

Typically associated with New Mexico and Arizona, adobe structures reside in pockets around Texas, most notably in the Texas Mountain Trail Region. Providing a rare and valuable legacy of settlement patterns and community development in Texas, adobe vernacular architecture reflects the culture and characteristics of this region. Originally introduced by Pueblo and Apache Indians, adobe was brought to Texas by Mexican Americans. Utilizing readily available materials — a mixture of earth, grass and water — adobe bricks are formed and sun-dried. The material provides excellent insulation against the extreme temperatures of Far West Texas. Some historic adobe structures remain throughout the region, but are slowly eroding away, heightening the urgency to save them. The following sites are prime examples of historic adobe architecture.

- Cibolo Creek Ranch forts, Big Bend
- Fort Leaton State Historic Site, Presidio
- Hudspeth County Courthouse, Sierra Blanca
- Los Portales Tourism Museum, San Elizario
- Magoffin Home State Historic Site, El Paso
- Nuestra Señora de la Limpia Concepción del Socorro
- Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church, Ruidosa
- San Elizario Presidio Chapel, San Elizario
- Saucedo Ranch, Big Bend Ranch State Park, Presidio

For more information, visit www.texasmountaintrail.com/adobe.

*Background: Fort Leaton State Historic Site, Presidio
Insets from top: Hudspeth County Courthouse, Sierra Blanca;
Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church, Ruidosa.*





TxDOT

Fall colors in McKittrick Canyon



Guadalupe Mountains Range

GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Stand at the top of Texas on 8,749-foot Guadalupe Peak. Guadalupe Mountains National Park is home to seven of Texas' eight highest peaks, including the dramatic sheer cliffs of El Capitan (8,085 feet). Opened in 1972, the 86,000-acre park offers camping, backpacking and 85 miles of hiking and equestrian trails.

Hidden within the mountains' outer desert slopes lie fragile natural springs and a conifer forest of pine and fir in the high elevations. Elk, bear and mountain lions roam the high country. Fall foliage spills brilliant colors across McKittrick Canyon, the site of the 1930s wood-and-stone Pratt cabin, which boasts a rare flagstone roof.

Movement in the earth's crust helped form the Guadalupe Mountains and also exposed sections of Capitan Reef, the world's largest Permian limestone fossil reef. Remnants of the 400-mile, horseshoe-shaped reef surface here and in the Apache and Glass mountains.

Bands of Mescalero Apaches used the Guadalupe Mountains for refuge and to gather food for survival in the harsh environment. Mid-19th-century stagecoaches stopped at the Pinery, the highest layover on the Butterfield Overland Mail route, the nation's first transcontinental mail route. The 1880s Frijole Ranch features a stone ranch house with interpretive exhibits and a springhouse supplied by the still-flowing Frijole Spring. Accessible via four-wheel-drive vehicles, the 1908 Williams Ranch offers panoramic views where ranchers once herded goats and longhorns. Dioramas and exhibits in the park's visitors center illustrate the park's geological history and various ecosystems.



Russ Finley



Historic photo of Smith family at the ranch house, Frijole Ranch History Museum



A mining exhibit at the Barton Warnock Environmental Center

LAJITAS

Lajitas in Spanish means “little flat rocks,” referring to the area’s Boquillas flagstone. During the 1890s, rocky hillsides in Mexico and Texas produced quicksilver (mercury) and other valuable minerals, turning the sleepy village of Lajitas into a substation port of entry across the Rio Grande from San Carlos, Mexico.



*Yellow bird of paradise flower,
Barton Warnock Environmental
Education Center*

Today Lajitas is a desert resort town on one of the state’s most spectacular drives, the River Road (Ranch Road 170). The twisting rollercoaster-like drive shadows the Rio Grande almost 100 miles from Lajitas. East of town is the Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, the eastern gateway to Big Bend Ranch State Park. The center’s Una Tierra/ One Land exhibit offers an excellent profile of the Big Bend’s geography, people and wildlife. Displays demonstrate

that people on both sides of the river have been culturally intertwined throughout history. It also details how human activity, such as ranching and mining, has affected a surprisingly fragile desert environment. A 2.5-acre botanical garden identifies common desert and riverside plants.

HISTORIC HOTELS

The Hotel Paisano, Marfa



Railroads reached Far West Texas in the early 1880s, and visitors in need of lodging soon followed. Lavish hotels sprang up throughout the region, many designed by renowned El Paso architect Henry C. Trost. For nearly a century these hotels served as hubs for cattlemen, ranchers and miners, while welcoming cross-country travelers. The following sample of restored historic hotels is quintessential to the area, providing high-end accommodations and services amid the rustic setting of the Texas Mountain Trail Region.

- Camino Real, El Paso
- Cibolo Creek Ranch, Big Bend
- The Gage Hotel, Marathon
- Holland Hotel, Alpine
- Hotel Limpia, Fort Davis
- Indian Lodge, Fort Davis
- The Hotel Paisano, Marfa



Gage Hotel, Marathon

For more information, visit www.texasmountaintrail.com/historichotels.

MARATHON

Named by an early rancher who thought the area resembled Marathon, Greece, this railroad community attracted ranchers and prospered as a cattle and mining shipment center. Vermont native Alfred S. Gage, who arrived in 1882 with only a \$20 gold piece in his pocket, went on to establish a ranching empire. Gage moved to San Antonio after 1900, but built a hotel in Marathon in part to have comfortable lodging when in town. The restored 1927 Gage Hotel still offers fine accommodations and dining.

Five miles south of town lies a public park built in the 1930s on Peña Colorado Creek. During the 19th century, Comanches camped here on raids to Mexico. To deter raids — and to protect supply wagons en route to Fort Davis — the U.S. Army established Camp Peña Colorado at the watering hole in 1880. Famous Buffalo Soldier Lt. Henry O. Flipper served here before the post closed in 1893.

CAMP PEÑA COLORADO

★ ★ 1880 ★ ★



Fort Peña Park near site of Camp Peña Colorado, Marathon



Texas State Library & Archives Commission

Alfred S. Gage

MARFA

Marfa was established in 1881 as a water stop for steam locomotives on the Southern Pacific rail line. In 1885 the railroad town was named county seat and two years later erected a majestic Second Empire stone-and-brick courthouse designed by noted architect Alfred Giles. Nearby stands the renovated Hotel Paisano, a historic landmark opened in 1930. Art galleries and eateries also draw visitors downtown.

An 1880s home near downtown houses the Marfa and Presidio County Museum. Exhibits range from geology, ranching and pioneer life to photos by early-20th-century Presidio County photographer Frank Duncan.

For more than 100 years, mysterious lights have appeared on the outskirts of town. Dubbed the Marfa Lights, the unexplained phenomenon draws thousands of travelers annually. The lights appear over the former site of Marfa Army Air Field, a World War II flight training base, although only the airfield's front gate is evident near the Marfa Lights viewing station. Marfa Army Air Field had another installation, the former horse cavalry outpost Fort D.A. Russell, where U.S. troops trained and German prisoners were confined. Inside the fort's Building 98, two POWs painted elaborate murals of movie-like scenes of the old west. Thirty years after Fort D.A. Russell closed in 1946, New York sculptor Donald Judd turned many structures into a world-class modern art museum, the Chinati Foundation.

South of Marfa, Ranch Road 2810 rides high grassy ridges, then narrows into picturesque Pinto Canyon Road (high clearance vehicle recommended). The gravel lane winds through ancient rock formations traversed in the 1890s by tough ranchers and silver miners.

Thirty miles outside Marfa lies the legacy of prosperous trader and farmer Milton Faver who built a cattle and sheep empire beginning in the 1850s. His livestock and farm produce fed travelers on the Chihuahua Trail and troops at Fort Davis. The Favere lived in a high-walled adobe compound that served as a safe haven for their workers, area residents and U.S. Cavalry patrols from Native American attacks. Now one of the region's most significant landmarks, the restored site houses historic lodging and a restaurant at Cibolo Creek Ranch, an exclusive resort that hosts a free annual open house.



Quilt from Marfa and Presidio County Museum, Marfa

Transcontinental Travel

By 1869, the first transcontinental railroad was completed, creating a new means of travel across the country. Far West Texas was still remote, with limited modes of transportation and few settlers. It would soon change. From the west, the Southern Pacific Railroad began building track eastward in 1869. Meanwhile, the Texas and Pacific Railway was heading west from Central Texas in 1872. By November 25, 1881, the two crews were 10 miles apart and neither intended to yield their route to the other. Eventually compromising, a silver spike joined the two railroads outside Sierra Blanca on December 15. Service began the next day creating another transcontinental railroad in the U.S.

For more information, visit www.texasmountainrail.com/railroad.

Background and inset: Railroad and Transportation Museum of El Paso



PRESIDIO

Presidio and its cross-river neighbor, Ojinaga, Mexico, form the only official border crossing between El Paso and Del Rio. They also share history as part of the ancient farm and trade area, *La Junta de los Ríos* (Junction of the Rivers — Mexico's Rio Conchos and the Rio Grande). In the 1700s Spaniards built a fort, *Presidio del Norte*, on the south bank to protect area missions. By 1830 a north-bank settlement known as Presidio became a crossing for traders on the lucrative Chihuahua-San Antonio Trail.

In 1848, after the U.S.-Mexico War, Chihuahuan Trail freighter Ben Leaton built his own adobe fort on a bluff overlooking the Rio Grande. Before U.S. Army forts came to the frontier, Fort Leaton was the only bastion north of the Rio Grande offering protection from Native American raids. Today, exhibits in the partially restored Fort Leaton State Historic Site trace four cultures that have existed in *La Junta* and the area's unusual place in history.

Texas' largest state park, Big Bend Ranch State Park, covers 450 square miles of Rio Grande riverfront, Chihuahuan Desert and rugged Bofecillos Mountains. Just southeast of Presidio, 30 miles of gravel road and 36 miles of trails access the park's rugged canyons and hidden *tinajas* (natural water pools used for centuries by wildlife and

people). Hikes and periodic tours take visitors to sites such as Solitario (an igneous dome, the park's oldest volcano), Madrid Falls (the state's second-highest waterfall) and the "Contrabando" movie set.

At the turn of the 20th century, the park was a sprawling sheep and cattle ranch called La Saucedá. Visitors can now overnight in La Saucedá's 1905 adobe ranch house and a 1960s hunting lodge. Guided horseback rides lead down *arroyos* to *tinajas* and rock art sites. Visitors even ride with ranch hands during an annual roundup of the park's longhorn herd.



Big Bend bluebonnets line the scenic River Road.



Longhorns roam Big Bend Ranch State Park.

The scenic River Road heads north from Presidio to isolated communities where farmers once grew cotton and soldiers defended the border during the Mexican Revolution. Ruidosa has a 1940s grocery and a century-old store-turned-cantina, plus the 1914 Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church, one of the state's most historic adobe churches. Nearby lies the Chinati Mountains and Chinati Hot Springs, where guests stay in refurbished 1930s stone cabins and bathe in hot spring water. The River Road ends at **Candelaria**, population approximately 30. A former cotton gin, small Catholic church and several adobe houses mark a once-thriving border town. North of Presidio, another ghost town, **Shafter**, straddles Cibolo Creek in the shadow of the Chinati Mountains. Shafter's historic district includes the Concordia and Brooks cemeteries.



La Saucedá, Big Bend Ranch State Park



SIERRA BLANCA

Sierra Blanca formed in 1881 when the Southern Pacific and Texas and Pacific railroads met here, completing another U.S. transcontinental rail line. The town quickly grew into the most important commercial center in the area, providing stockyards and a railhead for local ranchers and serving as a shipping center for salt and other minerals. Today, the town's gem is the restored Hudspeth County Courthouse, the state's only adobe courthouse.

TERLINGUA

Wealthy businessman Howard Perry built a mansion overlooking the company town he established for his Chisos Mining Company, one of the nation's most productive early-20th-century mercury mining operations. Named for a nearby creek, Terlingua once boasted 2,000 Anglo and Hispanic miners and families. It became a ghost town after quicksilver markets dried up and the mines closed in the 1940s. Two decades later, "chili-heads" began making an annual pilgrimage each fall for the Terlingua International Chili Championship. Today the Terlingua Quicksilver Mining District features tourist shops and eateries mixed with a historic store, school, church, theater and Perry's 1906 mansion, plus numerous adobe and stone ruins. The eye-catching Terlingua Cemetery is filled with wooden crosses marking stone-covered graves of people killed in mining accidents and the worldwide 1918 influenza epidemic. Jeep tours offered by area outfitters take visitors to rugged mountain vistas and the historic Lone Star Mine.



Terlingua Cemetery

VAN HORN

Twelve miles south of town, a natural watering hole now known as Van Horn Wells attracted Native Americans for centuries, as indicated by petroglyphs carved in rock outcroppings. The town of Van Horn grew up on the Texas and Pacific Railway in the 1880s.

This Texas Main Street city's oldest building is an adobe saloon and post office built in 1901. Later enlarged, it served as the county courthouse when Culberson County was organized in 1911. In 1920, local resident Fred Clark converted the building to a hotel, which also became the town hub, hosting theatrical programs and school graduations. Today, the Clark Hotel Museum features a massive antique bar, plus early farm and ranch implements, a century-old kitchen and an ore car from the Hazel Silver Mine, once the second-largest producing mine in the state.

North of town visitors tour a geological marvel known as Red Rock Ranch. Guided driving and hiking tours wind through dark red Precambrian outcroppings contrasted with purple and pink Cambrian formations. High mesas offer breathtaking vistas, and canyons lead to Native American pictographs. Historic relics include an 1880 ranch house and a western movie set.

Drive-by heritage sites include the Van Horn Cemetery (an example of Hispanic funeral traditions) and El Capitan Hotel (an example of noted designer Henry Trost's Pueblo Revival-style architecture).

Located 36 miles east of Van Horn, **Kent**, a small ranching community, offers dramatic school ruins and serves as the northern gateway to the Davis Mountains.



Red Rock Ranch

Take a journey in the enchanting Texas Mountain Trail Region, where diverse cultures reign and the spirit of the old west prevails.

REGIONAL STATE PARKS AND HISTORIC SITES

Travelers to the Texas Mountain Trail Region can visit the area's beautiful parks and historic sites owned and operated by Texas Parks and Wildlife. For more information on the following sites, please call 800/792-1112 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

- Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center, Lajitas
- Big Bend Ranch State Park, Presidio
- Davis Mountains State Park, Fort Davis
- Fort Leaton State Historic Site, Presidio
- Franklin Mountains State Park, El Paso
- Hueco Tanks State Historic Site, El Paso
- Indian Lodge, Fort Davis
- Magoffin Home State Historic Site, El Paso
- Wyler Aerial Tramway, El Paso



Franklin Mountains State Park, El Paso



Davis Mountains State Park, Fort Davis



Hueco Tanks State Historic Site, El Paso

NATIONAL PARKS AND HISTORIC SITES

The Texas Mountain Trail Region boasts five national parks and historic sites — more than any other region in the state. Take the scenic route through these natural wonders or stop by for hiking, rafting and history lessons. For more information, visit www.nps.gov.

- Big Bend National Park, Southwest Texas
- Chamizal National Memorial, El Paso
- Fort Davis National Historic Site, Fort Davis
- Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Southwest Texas
- Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River, Southwest Texas



Fort Davis National Historic Site offers living history programs, including artillery demonstrations.

TEXAS HERITAGE TRAIL REGIONS



FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Texas Historical Commission offers free travel guides on the people and places that shaped Texas history. To request copies, visit www.thc.state.tx.us/travel or call 866/276-6219.



www.thc.state.tx.us

COMMUNITIES IN THE TEXAS MOUNTAIN TRAIL REGION

For more information on the sites in this brochure, refer to the *Texas State Travel Guide* or contact the sources listed below for site locations and hours, as well as details about events and other local attractions. Many information centers are closed weekends; please contact in advance. To obtain a free *Texas State Travel Guide*, call 800/8888-TEX or visit www.TravelTex.com.



■ ALPINE

Chamber of Commerce
800/561-3735
www.alpinetexas.com

■ BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

Brewster County Tourism Council
877/BIG BEND
www.visitbigbend.com

■ EL PASO

Convention and Visitors Bureau
800/351-6024
www.elpasocvb.com

■ FORT DAVIS

Chamber of Commerce
800/524-3015
www.fortdavis.com

■ GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Visitors Center
915/828-3251
www.nps.gov/gumo

■ LAJITAS

Lajitas – The Ultimate Hideout
432/424-5000
www.lajitas.com

■ MARATHON

Chamber of Commerce
432/386-4516
www.marthontexas.com



Blooming ocotillo cactus at a tee-pee rest area on the River Road



Far West Texas pronghorn



Nuestra Señora de la Limpia Concepción del Socorro



■ **MARFA**

Chamber of Commerce
800/650-9696
www.marfacc.com

■ **PRESIDIO**

Chamber of Commerce
432/229-3199
www.presidiotx.org/visitors

■ **SAN ELIZARIO**

Convention and Visitors Bureau
800/351-6024
www.elpasocvb.com



Presidio County Courthouse, Marfa



■ **SOCORRO**

Convention and Visitors Bureau
800/351-6024
www.elpasocvb.com

■ **TERLINGUA**

Big Bend Chamber of Commerce
432/371-2427
www.bigbendchamber.com

■ **VAN HORN**

Van Horn Convention Center and Visitors Bureau
866/4 A HOWDY
www.vanhorntexas.org



Cibolo Creek Ranch

El Fortin del Cibolo, Cibolo Creek Ranch, Big Bend



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
TEXAS HERITAGE TRAILS PROGRAM

www.thc.state.tx.us/travel
www.texasmountaintrail.com

The Texas Historical Commission promotes the highest national standards for historic preservation and does not endorse the relocation of historic structures without thorough documentation of the building on its original site. The professional processes required for such action are intended to record and preserve historic properties for the full enjoyment and education of present and future generations.

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