

The Mesquite Trail Self-guided Walking Tour



1 Cowboys

You are hiking on what used to be the LX Ranch, owned by Bates and Beals in 1877. Allen Bates, or “Allie” Bates, for whom this monument is named, probably wore leather chaps, a broad-brimmed Stetson hat, high-heeled boots, and shiny spurs made of Mexican silver.

To this day, no one knows what happened to this mysterious LX Ranch line foreman and cowboy, “Allie” Bates, whose name has become famous in this part of the Texas Panhandle.



2 Along the Trail

Look around at the plants, trees, and grasses near you. You may see sage, prickly pear, yucca, buffalo grass, and many hearty mesquite trees. Cattle eat many of these plants and can go for days without water by eating prickly pear and yucca stalks. Along the trail you will also find plants poisonous to cattle such as silver leaf nightshade and purple loco weed. Their cumulative effects cause the cattle to stagger and act crazy, often to the point of death. Cattle in the Texas Panhandle feast on bear grass, or yucca, because of the tender blossoms and green stalks.



Prickly Pear.

3 Barbed Wire

The barbed wire fence along the trail was a new and modern invention of 1874. Barbed wire was the first wire technology capable of restraining cattle. These bristling wire fences began to partition the wide open spaces of the Texas Plains during this era. Wire fences were cheaper to build and maintain.



The barbed wire you will pass along the trail is Baker 2-Point barb, patented in 1883 by George Baker of Des Moines, Iowa.

4 Goodnight

Charles Goodnight was one of the first ranchers of the Texas Panhandle and was also a naturalist. Goodnight was responsible for preserving the buffalo, or bison. His herd still roams the prairies near Caprock Canyons State Park. Legend says Goodnight often had his cowboys place wild plum seeds in their saddle bags and instructed them to spread these wild seeds on their journeys. If you look around, you will find a wild plum thicket, which could very well be some Charles Goodnight's "Cowboy Plums." Wild plums can be gathered and then canned, frozen, dried, or preserved. Plum jelly is a favorite among locals.



Wild Plums

5 End of the Trail

Take a break at the picnic table under the large Mesquite Tree. On the ground, there may be mesquite beans, which drop from the tree in August or September.

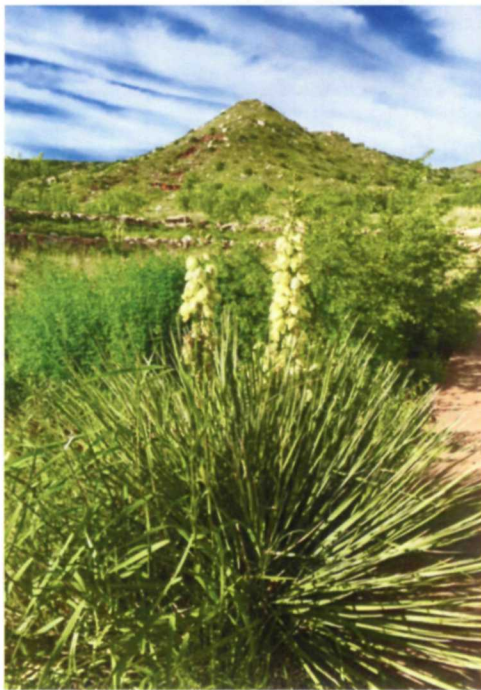
The mesquite tree has been growing here since the Ice Age, which lasted from about 1.8 million to 10,000 years ago. Many megafauna mammals feasted on the leaves and beans. The mesquite bean can be ground into flour for breads, cakes, and any food containing flour.



Mesquite Trees

Things to Notice as You Hike

1. Ice Age Mesquite trees
2. Ranchland Grasses
3. Cattle Forage Plants
4. Wildlife Scat
5. Permian Red Beds
6. Ogallala Formation
7. Native Plants
8. Barbed Wire
9. Insects
10. Birds
11. Reptiles
12. “Cowboy Plums”
13. Alibates Flint
14. Mesquite Trees
15. Yucca Plants



Fun Facts

Honey Mesquite is an extremely hardy, drought-tolerant plant because it can draw water from the water table through its long taproot (recorded at up to 190 ft. {58 m} depth). It is native to the Texas Panhandle dating back to the Ice Age. Mesquite can live two centuries in the Texas Panhandle.

Leave No Trace: If you don't want this pamphlet, please place it in the box
Thank you!

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Lake Meredith National Recreation Area
Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument
Texas

Hike Smart and Have Fun! Just Remember:

- Bring plenty of water
- Hat
- Pack - to carry essentials
- Hiking stick
- Snacks
- Appropriate footwear



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