

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

### *Protecting the Park and You*

**SPEED LIMITS** are posted. Do not pass or park on curves; take the numerous road dips slowly. Drive carefully at night to avoid striking the animals.

**CAMPING** is limited to free public campgrounds in The Basin, at Santa Elena, and at Rio Grande Village. Space cannot be reserved. Water and comfort stations are provided; fuel and electricity are not available.

**FIRES.** Fire permits are required for all fires outside the established campgrounds. Never leave a fire unattended; extinguish it completely. Smoking on trails is forbidden.

**TRAILS.** Stay on the trails. Do not take shortcuts. A shortcut, even by one person, can mar the appearance of that area and cause a destructive rockslide.

**NATURAL FEATURES.** Disturbing or carrying away trees, flowers, cactuses, or other plants, and collecting or digging rocks, are strictly forbidden.

**BOATING AND SWIMMING.** Boating permits are required; no motors are allowed. Permits must be obtained from a park ranger. The river is unsafe for swimming.

**FISHING.** No license is required, but waters of Santa Elena, Mariscal, and Boquillas Canyons are closed to fishing. Use of boats or nets is forbidden. Limit: 20 pounds plus 1 fish.

**PETS** must be kept on leash at all times; they are not permitted on trails or in public buildings.

## ADMINISTRATION

Big Bend National Park is administered by the National Park Service of the U. S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Big Bend National Park, Tex., is in immediate charge. All comments and inquiries regarding the management and protection of this area should be addressed to him.



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fred A. Seaton, *Secretary*  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Conrad L. Wirth, *Director*



Cover: Santa Elena Canyon. *Courtesy, W. Ray Scott.*

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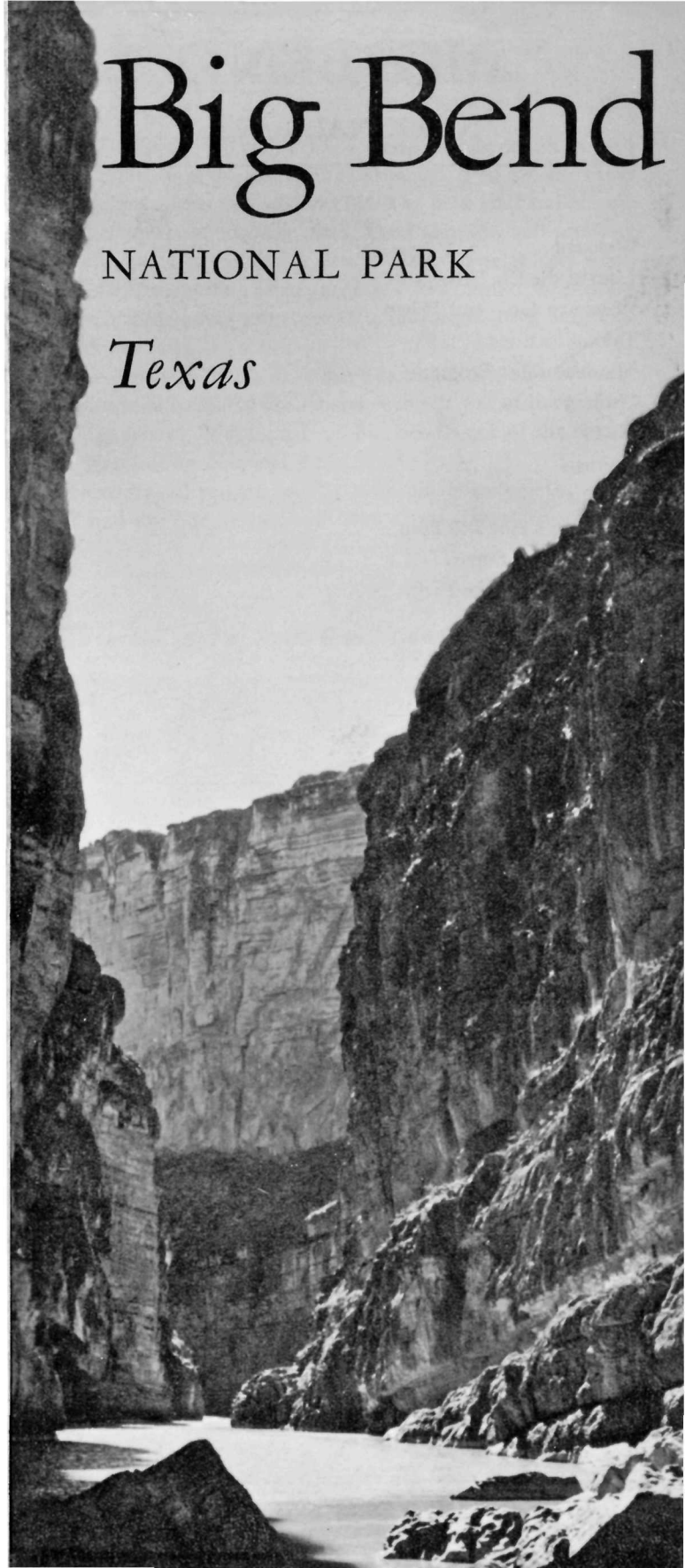
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# Big Bend

NATIONAL PARK

*Texas*



# BIG BEND

## NATIONAL PARK

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### WELCOME

As an American you are part owner of the more than 1,000 square miles of this beautiful area of Texas that is Big Bend National Park. We ask you to keep the park clean of litter and to leave the flowers and other plants, the animals, and the many natural beauties as you find them. In this way you will enjoy the park more, and so will other people who come to see it after you have left. The superintendent and his staff are here to help you enjoy your stay so that it will be a productive experience and become a happy memory.

### LAND OF THE BIG BEND

Part desert and part mountain country, Big Bend National Park lies along the border of the United States and Mexico. It takes its name from the course of the Rio Grande, which

*The National Park System, of which this park is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.*

describes a great bend between the town of Van Horn, Tex., on the west, and Langtry, Tex., on the east.

During its 107-mile journey along the boundary of the park, the river passes mainly through sandy lowlands and between banks overgrown with dense jungles of reeds. But 3 times in its course it cuts through 1,500-foot-deep canyons that were carved by its waters over a period of hundreds of thousands of years.

Within the park itself is a wild kind of scenery that is more like that of Mexico, across the river, than that of the rest of the United States.

The desert is gouged by deep arroyos, or gullies, that expose colored layers of clay and rock. On this flatland, where many varieties of cactuses and other desert plants grow, birds and mammals native to both countries make their homes.

Rugged mountain ranges, near and far, give assurance that the desert is not endless. In the very center of the strange scene soar the most spectacular mountains in this part of the country—the Chisos. Their eroded peaks look like distant forts and castles as they rise some 4,000 feet above the desert floor. To the east the magnificent, stratified Sierra del Carmen guards that border of the park, and to the south the little-known mountains of the Fronteriza disappear into the vastness of Mexico.

The name "Chisos" expresses the mood of the country. This name, which has been interpreted as meaning "ghost," or "spirit," was said to have been given the mountains by the Indians. More recently, it has been suggested that the word "Chisos" was derived from the Castilian word "hechizos," meaning "enchantment."

The impact of Big Bend on those who visit it was well told in 1895 by William Ferguson, a U. S. Treasury agent who came to establish a port of entry at Boquillas. He wrote, in part:

"Nowhere else have I found such a wildly weird country. . . . A man grows watchful—awe-struck by Nature in her lofty moods. Emotions are stirred by the grandeur of the scenery and the ever-changing play of light [and] shadow.

"Never have I beheld such a display of glory as falls at sunset on the bald head of the Chisos Mountains at 25 miles. First orange, then pink, then crimson and, last of all, purple tints on the mountains' dark background . . ."

Certain qualities inherent in this park are not common to every desert mountain region. They are characteristically its own. Some can be smelled and seen and touched—others are so mysterious they can scarcely be described. As you travel the trails and park roads, or quietly enjoy the stillness, you may become aware of these singular qualities.

You may experience the sensation of utter immensity of sky and land at the South Rim of the Chisos Mountains. Here, when you look way into Mexico, it is said that "you can see the day after tomorrow."

You may hear the wind roar through the trees in The Basin and through the arches and windows of the Chisos at night.

You may recognize the finger-painting look of the desert, with the gold and red and white tones of the hills and canyons swirled together like a giant mural.

You may watch shafts of moonlight creep like fingers into The Basin; and you may see the sunlight work its way deliberately down the west face of the Casa Grande mountain.

You may observe the unusual "cardboard mountain" effect of the foothills on the horizon as you drive westward in the afternoon.

### WHERE TO GO—AND WHEN

You can get a fair idea of the wonders of Big Bend during a 3-day weekend, but this will be only an introduction. Beware of planning your time too closely, for there is a magic worked by this country, and, like so many other visitors, you may postpone your departure longer than you had intended.

For a minimum of exploring, your plans should include (1) a full day or more in the *Chisos Mountains*, with a horseback ride to the South Rim and a hike on Lost Mine Trail; (2) a morning trip to *Santa Elena Canyon*, and a hike and a picnic at the mouth of the canyon; or (3) a sunset visit to *Boquillas Canyon*.

Of Big Bend's famous canyons, Santa Elena, at the west boundary of the park, and Boquillas, at the east, can be reached by automobile. Mariscal Canyon, at the very bottom of the bend, is presently inaccessible.

Take half a day to enter the park and another half a day to leave it by the alternate route.

Suppose you choose to come by way of Alpine, 80 miles from the Maverick Mountain (west) entrance to the park. Half the journey is through ranch country. About midway the mountains appear, and rock formations rise from the sandy flatlands in fantastic array.

Before long you reach Study Butte, a ghost mining town named after a pioneer physician, Dr. Bill Study. The park entrance is just down the way, and Basin Junction, at the north foot of the Chisos, is 20 miles beyond the entrance on a good road that winds steadily upward.

From this junction, in the 7 miles up to The Basin, you pass from a desert landscape to a mountain landscape, through a zone in which the cactus of the desert gradually gives way to the pinyon, oak, and juniper of the mountains. Driving up Green Gulch, you see the craggy faces of Pulliam Peak, Casa Grande, and Lost Mine Peak come ever closer.

Panther Pass, at an altitude of 5,800 feet, marks the point of your descent into The Basin. From there, you drive in low gear for the last mile or so because the descending road twists and turns and there is much to see. Suddenly you are in a huge

natural bowl at the foot of the Casa Grande mountain. This is The Basin, the very heart of the Chisos Mountains.

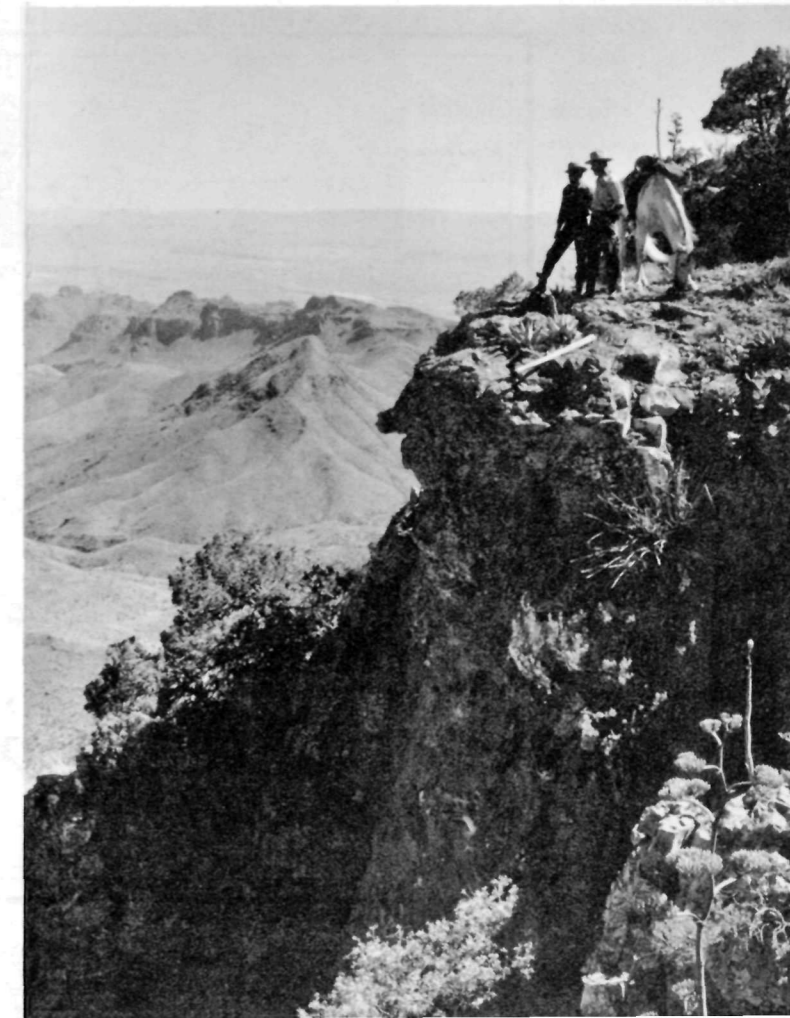
### The Chisos

In The Basin, you can stay in a frame cottage or in a de luxe stone cabin, or at the nearby campground. You can also camp at specified places outside The Basin or park your trailer near Panther Junction. In any event, The Basin area will probably be your headquarters in Big Bend. Telephone, grocery store, post office, and dining room are here. After sunset, an evening campfire program is presented by a uniformed park ranger or a park naturalist.

The park naturalist's or ranger's informal talk each evening, accompanied by slides and movies, will tell you of the history, geology, plants, and animals of Big Bend—one of the newest and least-known National Parks.

Next day—if you are equal to a 12-mile horseback trip—you will find the ride to the South Rim a real adventure. Sturdy

*On the edge of South Rim. Courtesy, W. Ray Scott.*





mountain horses will carry you along forest trails, sometimes in and out of the rocky bed of a trickling stream, sometimes across a stretch of mountain meadow. Just as you think you are never going to get to the top, the sky appears all around you, and suddenly you are looking down into and across an incredible sweep of space. Spread out before you are a large part of Texas and an even larger slice of Mexico, with the great river marking the boundary line between the two. You will probably want to have your lunch at the South Rim.

The trail to the South Rim can be hiked, too, but it is tiring, and it is not for novices.

Much better save your footwork for the Lost Mine Trail, a round trip of about 4 miles, or 3 hours, from The Basin. (Be sure to carry water.) This self-guiding trail has interpretive signs along the way that name the trees and plants you pass and identify the lookout points.

From the lookout at the head of Juniper Canyon, you will be able to see many miles into Mexico, and in another direction you will be able to see The Basin, far below. But the most breathtaking sight along the trail awaits you at the top of Lost Mine Ridge; from there, you can see the park spread out around you in every direction.

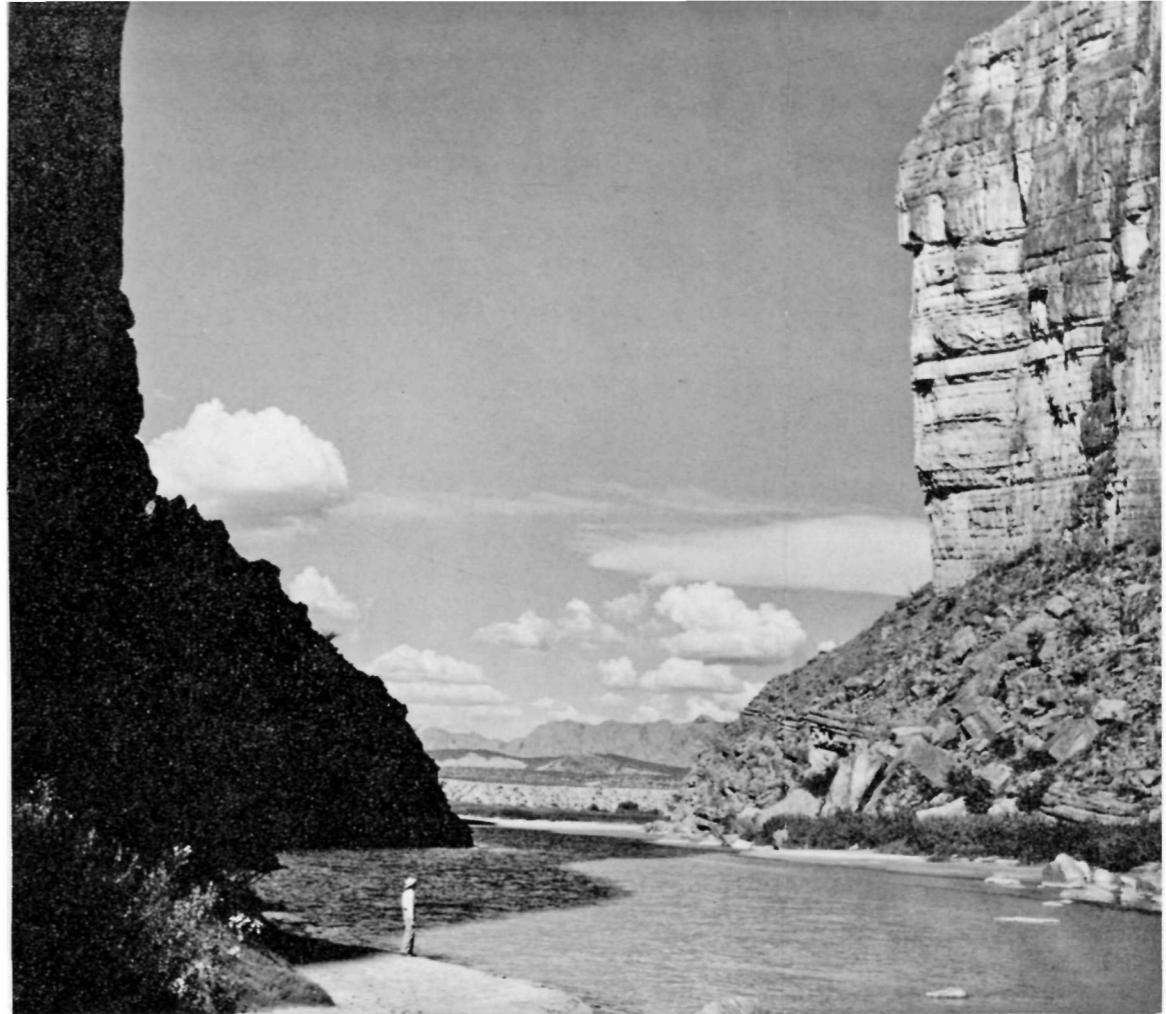
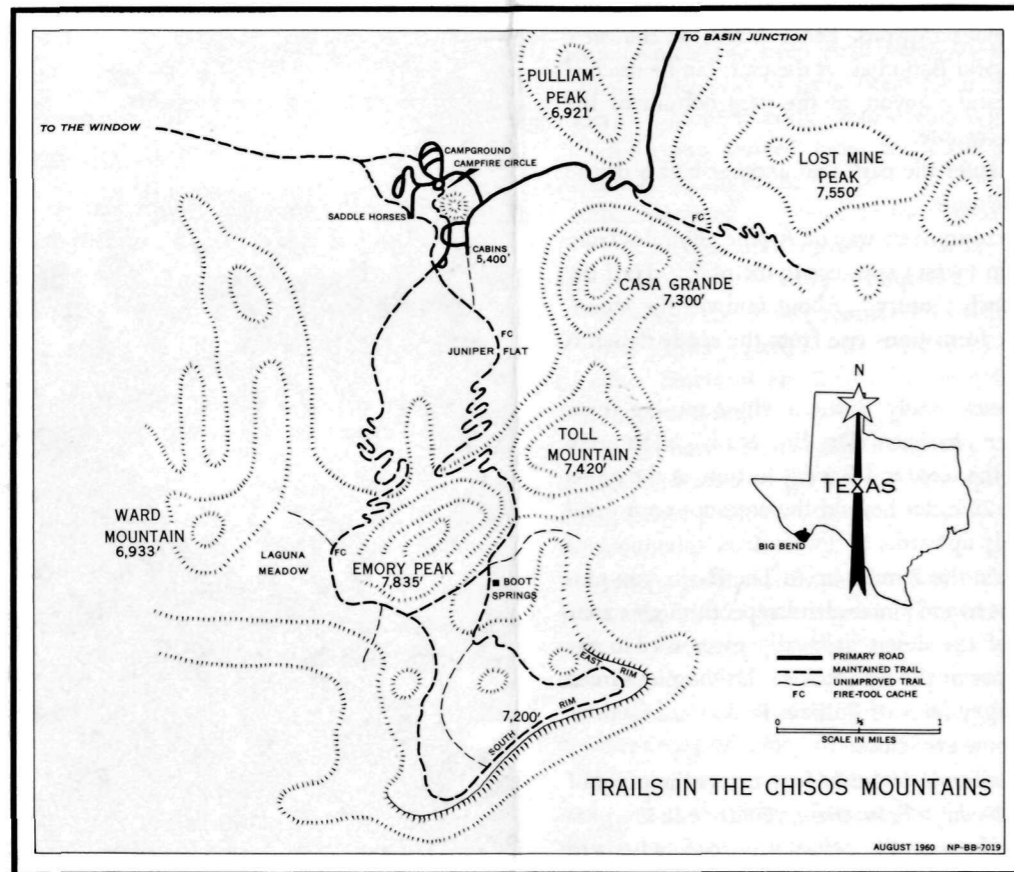
There are also many pleasant shorter hikes out of The Basin. (See trail map below.)

### Santa Elena Canyon

This is a morning trip (35 miles). Start early because the sun strikes the canyon walls for an hour or two after it rises, supplying just the right light for picture-taking; soon thereafter the walls are in shadow. Also, except in winter, it is likely to be hot on the river later in the day.

Santa Elena Canyon has been cut by the Rio Grande through an uplifted block of hard limestone—Mesa de Anguila. Over many centuries the river, heavily burdened with sand and mud, cut and scoured and rasped away at this rock. From Lajitas southeastward for 10 miles it produced walls of impressive sheerness. But it is in the next 7 miles, before the river is joined by Terlingua Creek at the mouth of the canyon, that the river carved the spectacular boxlike gorge.

Here, the walls are so high and sheer they seem to overhang, and the canyon is made up of many sharp bends. About 4 miles from the canyon mouth, upriver, an enormous pile of boulders blocks the river channel. In floodtime, water dashes over these boulders; in time of drought, it finds its way through the openings between them.



Looking out of Santa Elena Canyon. Courtesy, W. Ray Scott.

Fortunately, it is possible to see the inside of the canyon and glimpse its awful immensity and solitude without taking risks. You may have to do a bit of wading to cross Terlingua Creek to the foot of the cliff on the United States side, where the trail (about a third of a mile long) leads upward to a panoramic overlook. From there it goes down gradually to the water's edge, where the sound of a pebble falling into the water echoes in the canyon.

It is a thrill to realize that although you are standing in the United States all that separates you from Mexico is a slender river. As you gaze at the other side, the tilted layers of the rock wall give the impression that the river is flowing steeply downhill.

The picnic area at Santa Elena Canyon, with shade and water available, provides an ideal place for a picnic lunch.

On the way back to The Basin, you want to detour to the park's west entrance and make a side trip to Terlingua, a ghost

town whose period of quicksilver-mining prosperity lasted from 1900 to 1946. Today the ruins of a store, a church, a school, and many adobe houses stand empty. Only a few families continue to live in Terlingua.

### Boquillas Canyon

Boquillas Canyon, cut through the Sierra del Carmen by the Rio Grande, is the longest (25 miles) of Big Bend's famous gorges. It is 35 miles from The Basin, over a paved road.

In the evening the sun seems to set fire to the face of the Sierra del Carmen, and across the river the west walls of the houses in the little Mexican village of Boquillas glisten with golden light.

The path into the canyon is steeply uphill at first, and then it descends gently; part of the way it is shaded by the walls. This canyon is wider than Santa Elena and gives you a sense of grandeur. Notice the sand slide near the mouth of the canyon.

You can get to the top of the slide in less than half an hour, and the view there, from a little cave hollowed by the wind, is worth the struggle.

Be sure to be well out of the canyon before the sun sets, for you must stand away from the mountains to get the full blazing effect. And have your camera ready!

### *Other Points of Interest*

If you leave the park by way of the road to Marathon, 80 miles from The Basin, be sure to stop at the fossil-bone exhibit, where you will learn more of Big Bend's ancient past. It is just north of the Tornillo Creek bridge. You cannot fail to notice the Rosillos Mountains, which appear rosy or brown according to the hour and the position of the sun. They are on your left as you drive north. The side drive into Dagger Flat is interesting at any season, but it is particularly attractive in the spring when the giant daggers, other yuccas, and cactuses are in bloom. Some of the desert plants are labeled along the route.

A few miles beyond the intersection with the road to Dagger Flat, you will leave the park at Persimmon Gap. And you will have traveled the Comanche Trail, a trail that few white men dared to follow a hundred years ago.

### TAKING PICTURES

You will find morning and late afternoon the best times of the day to photograph distant scenes. During the middle of the day the color in the mountains and desert flattens out. But the long shadows earlier and later make up in full measure for this absence of good lighting at midday.

Early morning often provides wisps of clouds floating out of The Basin. And at that time there is a rosy glow on the mountains to the west and striking silhouettes in the east. Almost every evening the sunset through The Window—a gap in the mountains surrounding The Basin—makes a vividly colorful photographic subject from many prominent points.

For black and white pictures, the shadows on the desert give almost a third dimension to your photographs. Try sidelighting, and use a yellow filter for clouds or a haze filter if there is dust in the air.

Early morning is a good time to photograph Santa Elena Canyon, but by noontime there is little or no sunlight on its walls. Afternoon is best for Boquillas Canyon, for it is in shadow until noon.

The many kinds of plants offer charming and colorful photographic subjects all during the year, whatever the season. Mammals are difficult to photograph because they are seldom seen in the daytime. If you are patient enough to stalk the deer in late afternoon with a telephoto lens and fast film in your camera, you may get some striking studies in the long shadows. If there is any sunlight left at all, it is worth trying. As for the

birds, they are cooperative from sunup to sundown, and those in Big Bend are famous for their numbers and their spectacular plumage.

Do not overlook photographing road signs, trail indicators, and interpretative signs as captions for your pictures.

### THE NATURALIST PROGRAM

The park naturalist and his assistants, aided by park rangers, provide certain interpretive services to help you understand and appreciate the geology, plants, animals, and history of Big Bend National Park. These free services and the times they are given are described below. Publications on natural history are also available for purchase.

**EVENING CAMPFIRE TALKS.** Illustrated talks are given by a park naturalist or park ranger in The Basin each evening, except Sunday, throughout the year when visitation demands. They are held in the campfire circle at 8 p. m. during the summer and in the ranger station at 7:30 p. m. during the rest of the year. Consult bulletin boards for the schedule.

**SELF-GUIDED TRAILS.** The Lost Mine Trail follows a 2-mile course from Panther Pass to Lost Mine Ridge. The first three-quarter-mile section is a self-guided trail, and guide leaflets are available. Other trails are planned.

**ROADSIDE EXHIBITS,** markers, and the self-guided auto road to Dagger Flat, with desert shrubs labeled along the way, are additional features to aid you in enjoying this park.

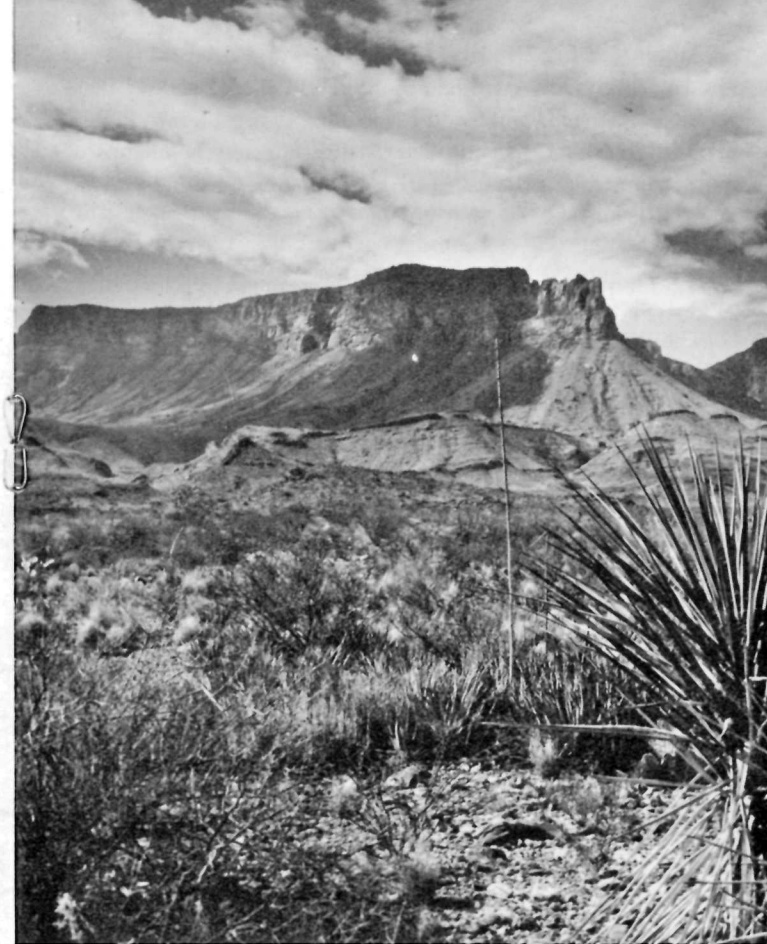
### GEOLOGY

The geology of Big Bend is complex, and for half a century geologists have traveled the canyons and mountains trying to unravel the mysteries of the region.

Insofar as they have been able to reconstruct the formation of this weird landscape, the geologists offer this explanation:

Millions of years ago, a sea covered this area. Sand and other sediments were deposited at the bottom of the sea. The deposits grew thicker and heavier and were compressed into rock layers. Then gigantic forces within the earth slowly thrust the layers upward, tilting them and bending them in a folding process that was mighty enough to create mountains. Remnants of these early mountain ranges, much reduced by erosion, can be seen in the ridges through which the highway passes south of Marathon.

Movements within the earth's crust lowered the area, and the sea returned. This invasion by the sea brought many kinds of marine animals, whose shells settled to the ocean floor among the sediments. The shells, together with the fossil remains of other forms of sea life, are found in great numbers in Big Bend. You can see them very distinctly in the walls at the heads of Santa Elena and Boquillas Canyons.



*South Rim. Courtesy, Glenn Burgess.*

When the ocean receded again, it left great marshes and tropical forests, where dinosaurs lived and died. Several species of dinosaurs, a type of giant crocodile possibly 50 feet long, and several early mammals are known to have lived here. Some of their bones have been uncovered in the park.

Then came another period of mountain-building, accompanied by volcanic activity. Some of the lava, pressing upward, was unable to reach the surface, and hardened to form the pluglike masses that we see in many peaks of the Chisos. Other molten masses reached the surface explosively, tossing cinders and rocks in every direction and covering the other deposits.

Finally, water and weathering carved the castlelike formations of many of the mountaintops, the flat-topped mesas, and the deep canyons.

### PLANTS

Who said that the desert is barren? More than 1,000 different plants have been identified within the park. Some species

are native only to Big Bend. A flower guide will greatly increase your enjoyment of the plants, for you will be making a new discovery with every plant you learn to call by name. Helpful books are listed under "Other Publications."

The desert plants bloom all summer, on through autumn, and well into winter. In March and April, you will see the luxuriant white bell-like blossoms of the giant daggers and other yuccas; in June, the blossoms of the majestic agave, or century plant.

The spindly ocotillo, or coach whip, puts out bright-red flowers and tiny new leaves along its slender stems in the spring, and occasionally it blooms again in the autumn. The creosote-bush, an evergreen shrub with waxy leaves, has small yellow blossoms. The guayacan, with dense, small leaves, puts forth violet-colored flowers, and in the autumn its heart-shaped seed pods burst to expose shiny orange and red seeds.

The strawberry cactus displays pink and red blossoms. The pricklypear, whose flowers are golden yellow, bears fruit in the summer that is deep purple and maroon.

A nonblooming plant is the allthorn, or crown-of-thorns, whose name aptly describes it, for the long green spines on its leafless branches are beautiful but dangerous at close quarters. The catclaw, too, has many thorns which are short and curved. Blossoms of the catclaw resemble pale-yellow fuzzy caterpillars.

The lechuguilla is a smaller species of agave; it is tall and is crowned with a spike of pod-like fruits. The sotol, with its single-flowering stems and its leaves like stiff ribbons, also is a familiar silhouette on the desert landscape.

The few trees in the lowlands are principally the cottonwood and the mesquite. Branches of the mesquite are loaded with white or yellowish blossoms in the spring. Where these trees grow, water is usually found.

In the mountains, we find evergreens native to southern Canada and northern United States, such as Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine. Growing among them are trees that are typical of the Southwest—Arizona cypress, pinyon pine, oaks, and alligator juniper. The drooping juniper, which is a common resident of Mexico and Central America, has chosen its extreme northern range in Big Bend.

### ANIMALS

You will be most likely to see the wildlife of Big Bend at the beginning and the end of the day.

In late afternoon the white-tailed deer come out of hiding and pick their way down into The Basin. And the desert mule deer begin to graze and browse along the park roads in the lowlands. After dark the deer sometimes wander onto the roads, where, blinded by automobile lights, they are helpless in doing their part to avoid a collision with a careless motorist.



The coyote, the ringtail, and the kit fox show themselves at dusk and early morning, and, around park headquarters, a few pronghorns appear at these hours. If you are in the Grapevine Hills area in the afternoon, watch for mule deer and collared peccary (javelina).

Everywhere—on rocks along the roadside and on the trail—you will see the pert little rock squirrel and the antelope (ground) squirrel. While hiking, you should be on the lookout for tarantulas, stalking across your path and with no intent to harm; the lizards, scuttling to get out of your way; and an occasional snake, also most determined to get away from you.

It is at night, though, that the desert comes alive with the creatures who make their homes there. Then the hunters—the mountain lion and fox—appear, and, if you are watchful, you may see the ringtail, looking very much like a house cat except for its pointed face and long bushy tail.

More than 200 species of birds have been identified in the park, including some of the most beautifully colored ones. Watch for the Mexican jay, Scott's oriole, painted bunting, scaled quail, sparrow, dove, blackbird, cliff swallow, hummingbird, cactus wren, and the ubiquitous roadrunner. You will see this swift racer along the park roads, streaking over the ground with powerful strides. The rare Colima warbler has its only known nesting place north of the Rio Grande at Big Bend.

The orange eyes that glow in the darkness at the sides of the road and suddenly find bodies and wings to take flight to safety are the poor-wills.

## SEASONS

Winter is the time when the air is most sparkingly clear. It is nippy in the mountains and comfortably warm during the day in the lowlands. This is the kind of weather that invites you to seek out a sheltered hillside or a sandy bank on the river and soak up the sunshine.

Once or twice a year it snows in the mountains, and then The Basin and Green Gulch are softened and rounded by their mantle of shimmering white. Trees and shrubs and desert plants look strange in their unexpected disguise.

Spring arrives early, and lingers. There is a slow succession of bloom beginning in late February and reaching the mountain heights in May. The season of the flowers also is the season of the Texas "norther," a storm that may bring chill winds and dust. But these short cold periods are the exception and warm, sunny days are the rule.

Summer is the best time to go to the mountains, for in the desert and river valley the temperature is likely to hover above 100° during the day. However, in this, the rainy season (which too seldom deserves the name), desert plants bloom anew after every shower. In The Basin, daytime temperature readings average a comfortable 85°, and nights are cool.

Autumn in Big Bend is like autumn everywhere, except that the coloring is less vivid and more delicate. For yellow, there is amber; for red, pink; and for flaming orange, a tawny gold. The brightest spots in the desert landscape are the clumps of purple-tinged pricklypear. In autumn, the sunshine and air are gentle and warm.

## BIG BEND'S PAST AND FUTURE

The Big Bend country is a rugged, stunningly beautiful land. But its physical grandeur has been a deterrent to exploration and settlement. As a result, history has largely bypassed Big Bend.

The earliest known inhabitants of this canyon-mountain-desert complex were cave-dwelling Indians. Their culture was probably an offshoot of the prehistoric Basketmaker culture of New Mexico and Arizona. We know of their presence here in earlier times by the pictographs, projectile points, and textile and cordage fragments found in their abandoned cave homes.

Probably the first white men to venture near Big Bend were Cabeza de Vaca and his companions. Members of a Spanish exploring expedition, they had been shipwrecked off the Texas coast and captured by Indians. Years later, in the spring of 1535, they escaped and made their way to Mexico. En route they probably crossed the angle of Big Bend north of the Chisos Mountains.

Later, Spanish settlements were established in New Mexico and in central and east Texas. But Big Bend was avoided by Spanish settlers, soldiers, and priests. From the Presidio, at the confluence of the Conchos River and the Rio Grande, travelers en route to El Paso could look southeast and see the tumbled mountain ranges that hide the deep canyons of Big Bend. It was an uninviting sight, and as far as can be ascertained none of them took up the challenge of this brooding land and made the passage through its canyons.

By the mid-1700's, Spanish settlements in the Rio Grande valley and northern Mexico had begun to attract nomadic Indian raiders. The Comanches, who early adopted the Spanish-introduced horse, became the scourge of New Spain's northern frontier. In sweeping forays from their home territory in the area of the Texas-Oklahoma panhandles, they spread terror and devastation as far south as Durango, Mexico. One of their trails passed through the present park area from Persimmon Gap to the Rio Grande. You will drive over part of it on your way to Panther Junction, whence it leads south across the desert above Mariscal Canyon and then across the river into Mexico. In 1780 the Presidio of San Vicente was established just across the river in Mexico to guard the ford there. Twenty years later, however, the post was abandoned.

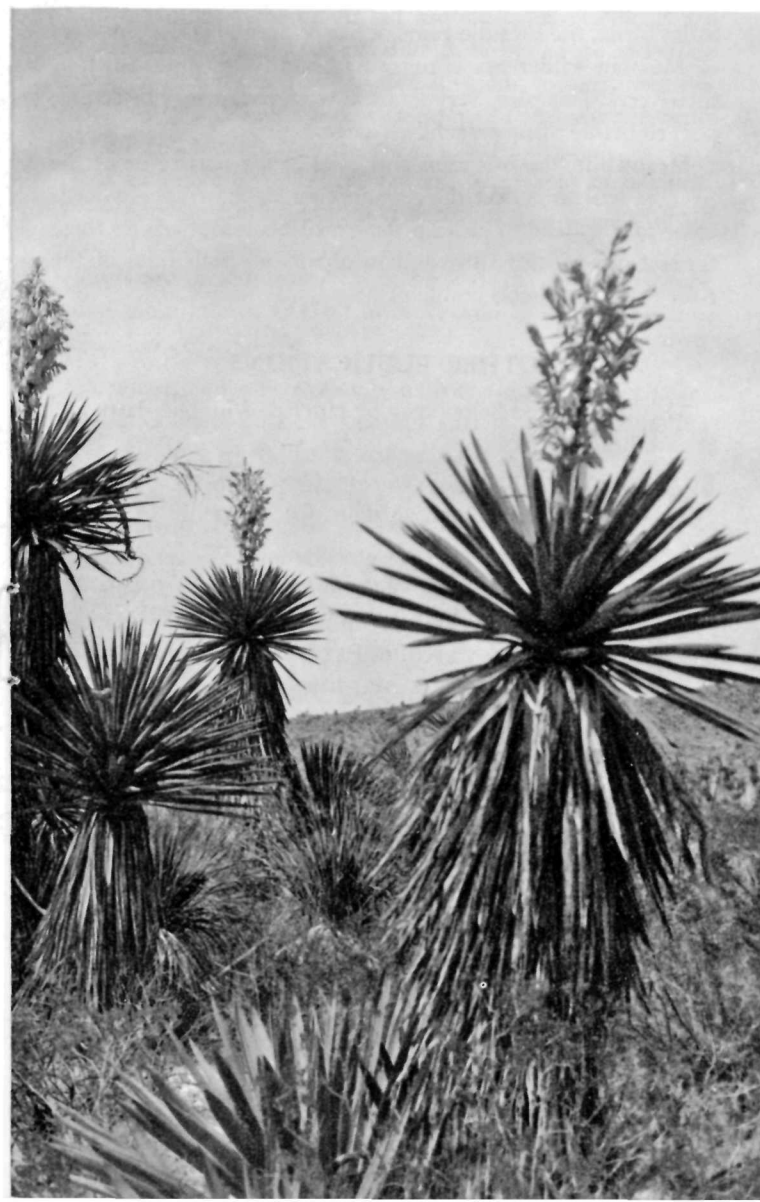
Apache Indians were also familiar with the Big Bend country. They found an ideal stronghold in the Chisos Mountains and

other rugged areas within the present park boundaries. The many evidences of their occupation include pits in which they roasted desert plants, such as agrave and sotol.

Except for Apaches and wandering bands of Comanches, Big Bend remained an untracked wilderness during the Spanish colonial period. Years passed and Mexico became a republic. Stephen F. Austin and other empresarios, or colonists, began the influx into Texas from the United States that led to the Texas revolution and establishment of the Lone Star Republic.

Finally, in 1845, Texas was annexed by the United States and admitted to the Union. Soon railroads and Texas Rangers helped to open the vast stretches of west Texas. Hardy pioneer cattlemen entered the Big Bend country and faced the terror of

### *The giant dagger (Yucca carnerosana) in bloom, Dagger Flat.*



repeated Indian raids. They stuck, but lonely graves throughout the park, marked by rock cairns and crude crosses, bear testimony to their ordeals.

After the Civil War, a concerted drive was made against the Indians. Many battles later, Alsate, the great Apache chief, died in his Chisos stronghold in 1882. With his death, the Indian troubles of the Big Bend region came to an end.

Although as early as 1850 an Army Quartermaster party may have ascended the Rio Grande to the canyons of Big Bend, it was not until 1899 that a fully qualified scientific expedition penetrated the full length of the Rio Grande's Big Bend passage. In October of that year, Robert T. Hill of the U. S. Geological Survey, with five companions, put out from Presidio in specially designed boats. For more than a month they lost themselves in narrow canyons that never know sunlight because of their towering height above the silently flowing river that carved them. Thus the "impassable" Big Bend stretch of the Rio Grande was finally navigated.

One last flurry of Wild West history occurred in 1916, when forces of the Mexican rebel leader, Pancho Villa, raided Glenn Springs and Boquillas. In an effort to capture Villa and end his forays across the border, Gen. John J. Pershing pursued the bandits into Mexico. The incident was forgotten, and since then the Mexican-American border has been peaceful.

### *The Park Is Established*

Part of the park we enjoy today is the former Texas Canyons State Park, established by the Texas Legislature in 1933. Even then the idea of creating a National Park here was taking form, and in 1935 Congress authorized Big Bend National Park. But nearly a decade was to pass before the park was finally established.

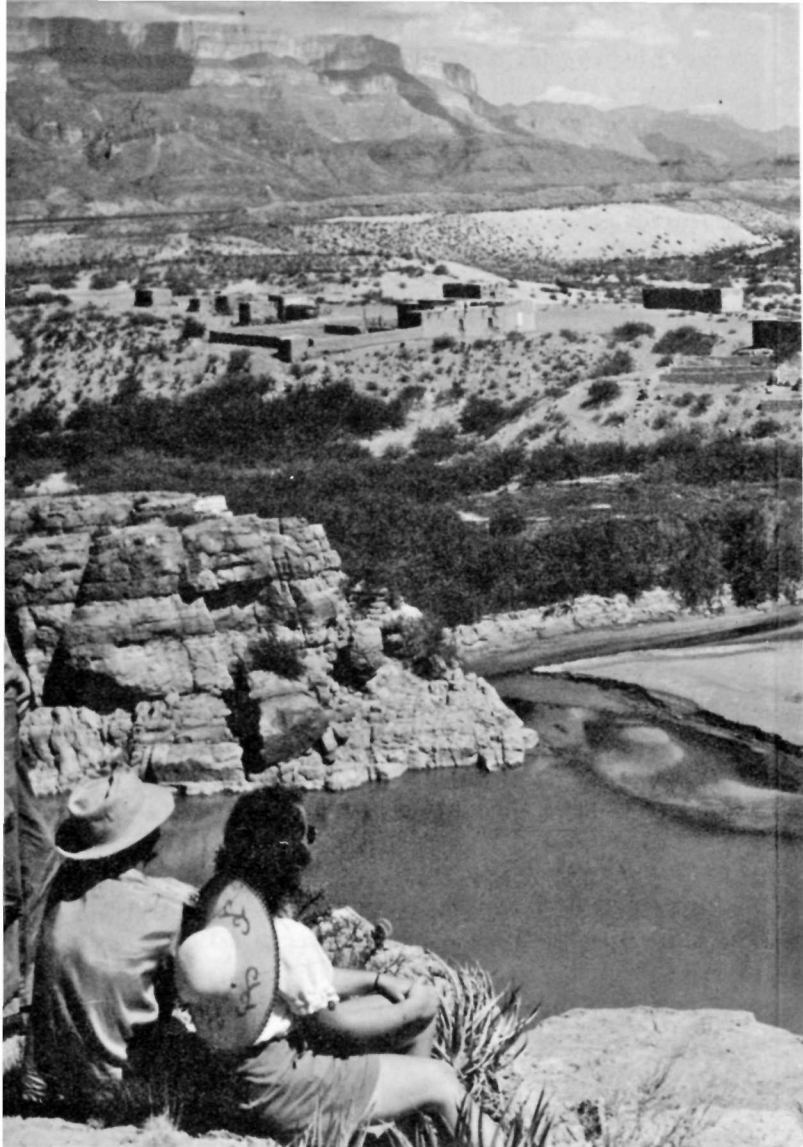
By 1937 a bill was introduced to purchase lands for the proposed park. In 1941 a bill providing 1½ million dollars for this purpose was approved, and within little more than a year all but 25 sections of land had been acquired.

In 1944 the people of Texas turned their State Park over to the people of the United States, and on June 12 of that year Big Bend National Park was established. Since that time, the attractions of this wild land have lured more and more people. Now the number is approaching 100,000 a year.

### *Mission 66*

It is estimated that half a million people will visit Big Bend in 1966, the target date for completion of the National Park Service 10-year development plan, Mission 66. By that time many improvements will have been made at Big Bend for your convenience. However, the scenic and scientific values of the park will not be impaired, because the added facilities will be designed to fit smoothly into the natural setting.





*Boquillas, Mexico, across the Rio Grande from the park.  
Courtesy, W. Ray Scott.*

Roads and bridges are now being built. Along the Rio Grande, just west of Boquillas, 400 acres are being developed as a cabin and campground area. The Basin cabin development will be enlarged. There will be a gradual increase in visitor accommodations as the number of visitors continues to increase. And the program for telling the park's story is being expanded and improved.

Even more important, efforts to preserve the park's natural features are being accelerated. Before the park was established, the area was subject to severe overgrazing. This was followed by a 10-year drought that killed many trees and retarded recovery of the grasses. Elimination of grazing and

increased precipitation in recent seasons have produced an encouraging recovery of grasses and other plants. Every rain brings such a spontaneous green to the landscape that there is reason to believe the whole region will "come back" in verdure; however, this probably will take a very long time.

### *Borders Without Bayonets*

Everywhere in the park, you will be aware of the closeness of our neighbor, Mexico. Early it was conceived that Big Bend might grow to be an International Park, with Gran Comba (Spanish for "Big Bend") occupying a comparable area in Mexico, just across the river. One of the main purposes would be to permit free movement of visitors between the two parts of the park and thus promote international understanding.

The International Park would make easily accessible the magnificent Fronteriza Mountains to the east, the Mexican section of the Sierra del Carmen, the villages of Boquillas and Santa Elena, the Presidio ruins of San Vincente, and many acres of Mexican wilderness as ruggedly beautiful as those north of the river. This plan, very much at work today, may be accomplished before many years have passed.

Meanwhile, the Mexicans still cross to the north side of the river at will to collect their wandering stock; village officials come to Big Bend to pick up their mail because it arrives there faster from Mexico City; and neighbors on both sides of the river discuss common problems.

### OTHER PUBLICATIONS

The books listed below may be purchased in The Basin and at park headquarters.

BUTCHER, DEVEREUX. *Exploring Our National Parks and Monuments*. Houghton Mifflin Co., Cambridge, Mass. \$3.50, paper cover.

DODGE, NATT N. *Flowers of the Southwest Deserts*. Southwestern Monuments Association, Globe, Ariz. \$1.

MAXWELL, HELEN, AND KOCH, PETER. *A Guide for the Big Bend*. Maxwell & Koch, Marathon, Tex. \$1.

MCDUGALL, W. B., AND SPERRY, OMER E. *Plants of Big Bend National Park*. Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. \$1.

MADISON, VIRGINIA. *The Big Bend Country*. University of New Mexico Press. \$4.50.

TILDEN, FREEMAN. *The National Parks: What They Mean to You and Me*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. \$1, paper cover.

### HOW TO REACH THE PARK

BY AUTOMOBILE. From San Antonio it is 410 miles to park headquarters at Panther Junction via U. S. 90 to Marathon and then via U. S. 385.

From El Paso it is 323 miles to park headquarters at Panther Junction via U. S. 80, 90, and 67 to Alpine and then via State Route 118.

BY TRAIN. Southern Pacific Railway trains stop at Alpine and Marathon.

BY AIR. Marfa-Alpine Airport is a stop on the Trans-Texas Airways route between El Paso, Tex., and Memphis, Tenn.

BY BUS. Alpine and Marathon are served from the east and west by Continental Trailways and from the north by Trans-Pecos buses.

There is now no regular public transportation available from neighboring towns to or through the park.

### WHERE TO STAY

COTTAGES. The Basin is the only place inside the park where overnight accommodations are available. Cottages are of three types: 2-unit frame buildings, larger adobe and stone cottages with terraces and private baths, and modern multiple units. All the cottages have electricity. There are restrooms and facilities for hot showers in the cottage area.

It is advisable to make reservations, which may be obtained by writing to National Park Concessions, Inc., Big Bend National Park, Tex.

Meals are served from 7 a. m. to 8 p. m. in a family-type dining room known as the Chuck Wagon. Box lunches and sandwiches are available.

CAMPGROUNDS. Free campgrounds are located at The Basin and Rio Grande Village. Natural fuel is not available, but charcoal is sold by the concessioner.

TRAILER PARKS. There is a small trailer site with utility connections at the Panther Junction service station near park headquarters. Visitors wishing to take trailers into The Basin campground should first consult with a park ranger. The mountain grades are too steep for some large trailers.

OUTSIDE THE PARK. Motels, hotels, restaurants, and grocery stores are located at Alpine and Marathon.

### SERVICES

STORES. The Basin store has a small grocery shop, a film and gift shop, and a newsstand. However, campers should purchase supplies and fresh groceries before entering the park.

The general store at Study Butte, near the Maverick Mountain entrance, has a small supply of groceries and cold drinks.

SERVICE STATIONS. Minor automobile repairs can be made at The Basin and at Panther Junction, and gasoline may be obtained at those places. Gasoline may also be purchased at Terlingua. Motorists should check gasoline and water before leaving U. S. 90.

COMMUNICATIONS. Public telephones are located in The Basin and at the Panther Junction service station. The post office is located in The Basin. Mail should be addressed in care of General Delivery, Big Bend National Park, Tex. There is incoming and outgoing mail service 5 times a week.

SADDLE HORSES. Inquire at The Basin store or at the corral for rates. Arrangements may be made for saddle horses, pack animals, and guides at these places.

### PRECAUTIONS

Through the rugged character of its mountain and desert areas, Big Bend gives a sense of adventure. Hazards do exist, but most of them can be anticipated and avoided.

High water, for example, is a threat during the rainy season (July through September). Dips in the roadways are numerous. If you drive slowly and do not go splashing through the puddles at high speed, you are not likely to stall your motor. Be watchful for washouts during and after storms.

When driving at night, be alert for wildlife on the roads. Deer in particular may be blinded by your headlights, and a collision with one may cause considerable damage to your car and injury to you and your passengers—and death to the deer.

Do not swim in the river. Hidden holes and dangerous currents make this an extremely foolhardy venture. Sunning on the sandy beaches and wading in the shallows are good fun, and they are safer.

Beware the cactus! These plants, and many of the other thorny trees and shrubs, have been well armed in order to survive in this desert country, and their spines can inflict painful injury. Wear your stoutest shoes and jeans while hiking, and do not go far abroad at night. If you must go out at night, walk carefully and carry a flashlight.

On the trail and in the desert, *carry drinking water*. While hiking, climb slowly and enjoy the views and the things around you; remember there is a considerable change in altitude from the desert (1,800 feet) to The Basin (5,400 feet), and your endurance is likely to be less at higher elevations.

Snakes are not the menace some people think they are. The rattlesnake is the only local poisonous snake. Four species of rattlesnakes are found in Big Bend, but they are seldom out during the day. Stay on the trails after dark, and away from bushes and damp areas.

Tarantulas and lizards will never bother you first. Their bite, if you invite it, may be painful, but not fatal. The occasional scorpion also is not a deadly species, but a sting should receive prompt attention.

There are no doctors or nurses in the park. Carry your own first-aid supplies (including tweezers for extracting cactus spines), and *in the event of accident or emergency, notify the nearest park ranger or park headquarters immediately*.