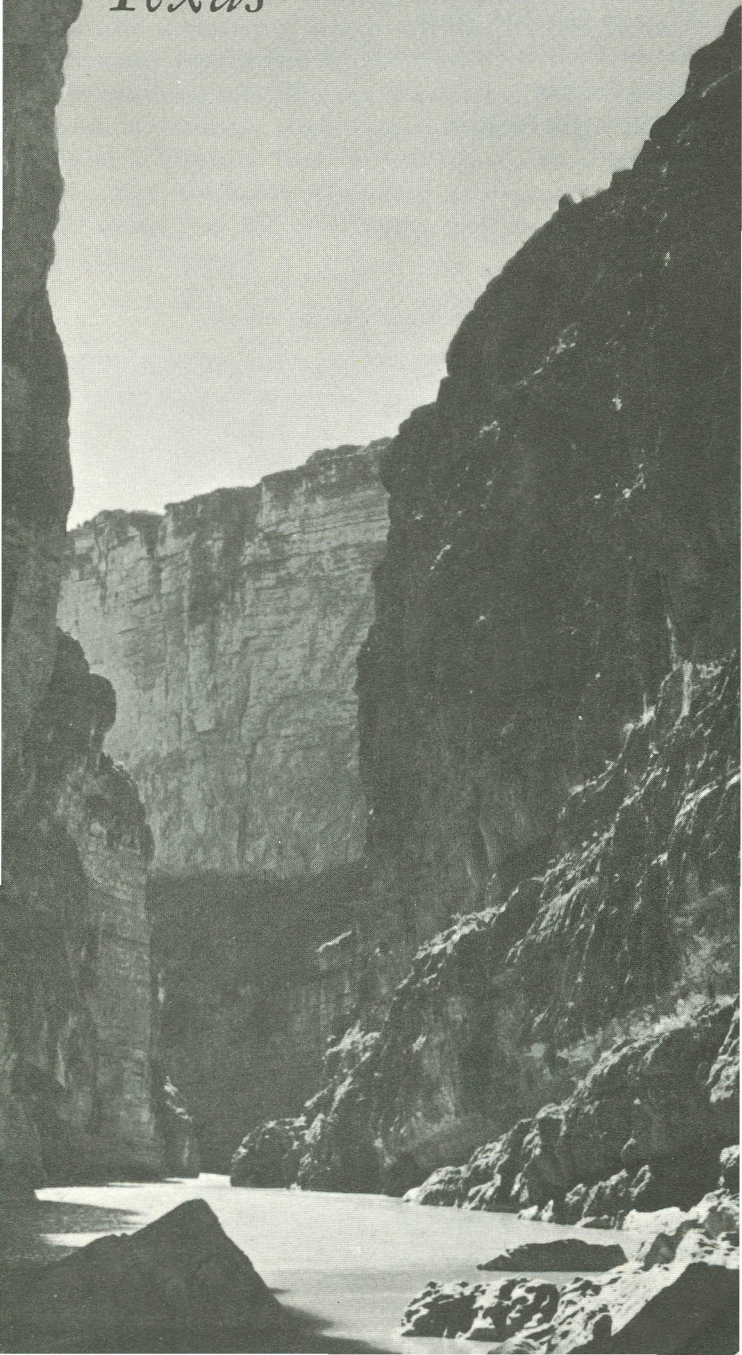


# Big Bend

NATIONAL PARK

*Texas*





# BIG BEND

## NATIONAL PARK

### CONTENTS

	Page
Land of the Big Bend . . . . .	2
Where to Go—and When . . . . .	4
Map of Trails in the Chisos Mountains . . . . .	6-7
Taking Pictures . . . . .	10
The Naturalist Program . . . . .	10
Geology . . . . .	11
Plants . . . . .	12
Animals . . . . .	13
Seasons . . . . .	14
Big Bend's Past and Future . . . . .	14
Other Publications . . . . .	19
How to Reach the Park . . . . .	19
Accommodations and Services . . . . .	19
Precautions . . . . .	20
Protecting the Park and You . . . . .	21
Administration . . . . .	21
Map of Park . . . . .	22-23

We hope you will enjoy this beautiful area of Texas that is Big Bend National Park. Please be considerate of those who will visit later, by keeping the park clean and leaving the wildflowers, trees, animals, rocks, and other natural features as you found them. The park superintendent and his staff are here to protect you and the park, and to help you get the most from your stay at Big Bend.

### 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 describes a great bend between the towns 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 three times

in this distance 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 this mountain range disappears 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 trip, 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 want to postpone your departure.

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 difficult to reach.

Take a half day to enter the park and another half 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. This journey is through ranch country. About midway the mountains appear, and rock formations rise from the sandy flatlands in fantastic array.

Near the park is 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 Basin Junction, it is 7 miles up Green Gulch 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. From 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 campground. The Basin area makes an

ideal headquarters for your stay at Big Bend. Telephone, grocery store, and dining room are here. At a campfire program, after sunset, a park ranger or naturalist presents an illustrated talk on history, geology, plants, or animals of Big Bend.

Next day—if you are equal to a 14-mile horseback trip—you will find the ride to the South Rim a real adventure. Sturdy 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.

The trail to the South Rim can be hiked, too; but it is tiring, and not for novices. Much better save your energy for the self-guiding Lost Mine Trail—a round trip of about 4 miles, or 3 hours, from The Basin. (Be sure to carry water!) A guide leaflet names trees and other plants, and identifies lookout points along the way.

### *On the edge of South Rim.*





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

There are also many pleasant shorter hikes out of The Basin.

### Santa Elena Canyon

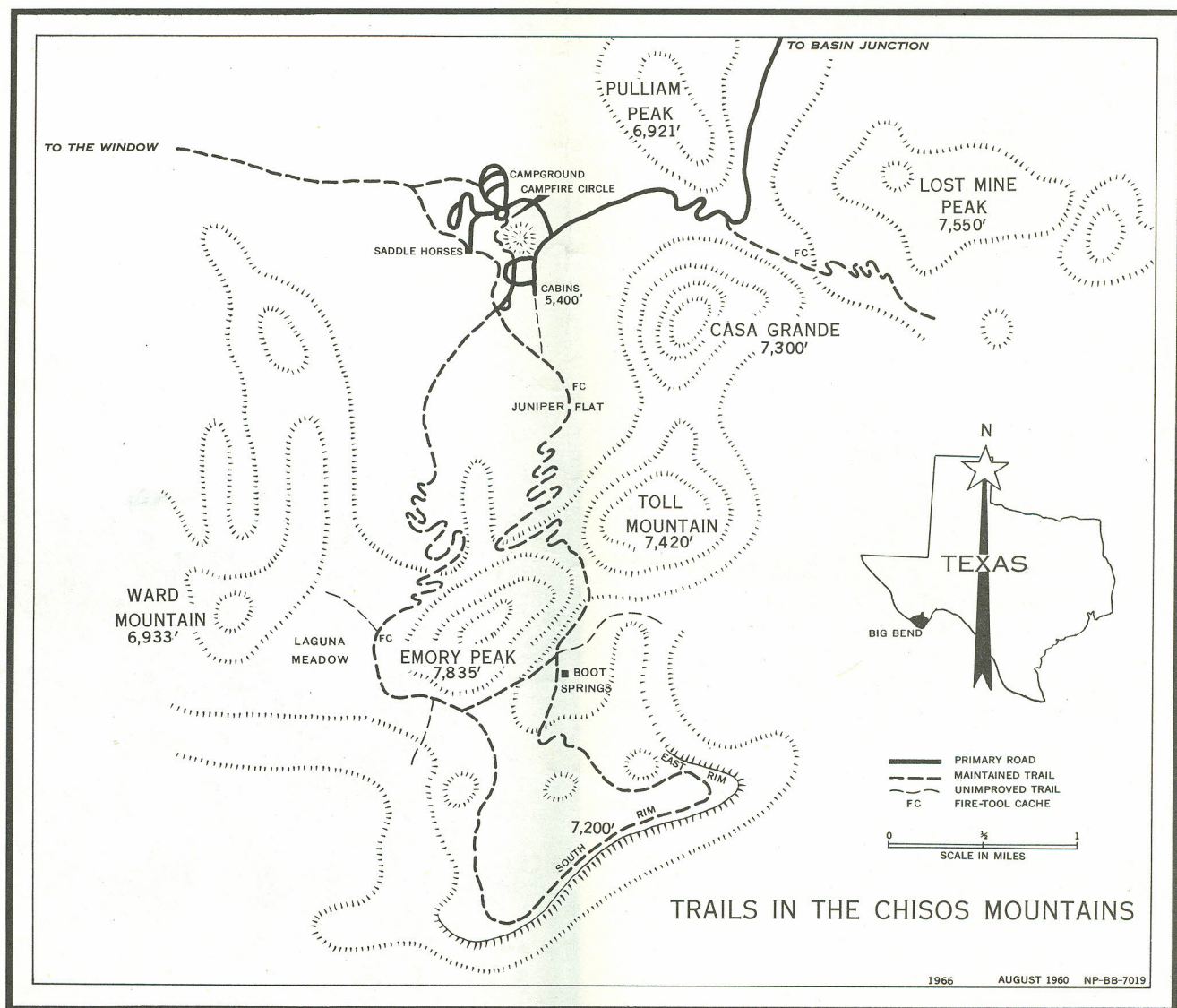
This is a morning trip (39 miles from The Basin). Start early—the sun strikes the canyon walls for an hour or two after it rises, supplying just the right light for picture-taking; soon thereafter the walls are in shadow. Also, except in winter, it is likely to be hot on the river later in the day.

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.

The high, sheer walls seem to overhang the winding river. About 4 miles upriver from the canyon mouth, an enormous pile of boulders blocks the channel. In floodtime, water dashes over these boulders; in time of drought, it finds its way through the openings between them.

Fortunately, it is possible to go into Santa Elena Canyon on foot, to sense its awesome immensity, and to feel its solitude—without taking risks. You may have to wade across Terlingua Creek to the foot of the cliff on the United States side, where



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*Looking out of  
Santa Elena Canyon.*

the trail (about one-third mile) leads upward to a panoramic overlook. From there the trail goes down gradually to the river, where the sound of a pebble falling into the water will echo through 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 narrow 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, providing shade and water, is an ideal place to eat lunch. On the way back to The Basin, you may want to visit historic Castolon or make a side trip to Terlingua, a ghost town whose period of quicksilver-mining prosperity lasted from 1900 to 1946. Today only a few families live in Terlingua, near the ruins of a store, a church, a school, and many adobe houses.

### *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 imparts a sense of grandeur. Near the mouth of the canyon is a large sand slide; you can reach its top in less than a half hour. The view, from a little wind-hollowed cave, 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—the Sierra del Carmen of Mexico is spectacular!



## 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 (just north of the Tornillo Creek bridge) to learn more of Big Bend's ancient past. On your left as you drive north you will notice the Rosillos Mountains, which appear rosy or brown according to the position of the sun. The drive into Dagger Flat (a side trip), interesting at any season, is particularly rewarding in spring, when 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. You will have traveled a part of 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 dust 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. With a telephoto lens and fast film, you may get some striking studies of deer in the long afternoon shadows—if you have the patience to stalk them. It is worth trying if there is any sunlight left at all. As for birds—famous here for their numbers and their spectacular plumage—they are cooperative from sunup to sundown.

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

## THE NATURALIST PROGRAM

The park naturalists, aided by park rangers, provide interpretive services to help you understand and appreciate the

geology, plants, animals, and history of Big Bend National Park. Natural-history publications are on sale in the park.

**EVENING CAMPFIRE TALKS.** Illustrated talks are given by park naturalists or park rangers in The Basin, throughout the year. They are held at 8 p.m. in the campfire circle in summer, and in the ranger station the rest of the year. Consult bulletin boards for the schedule and for special programs at other locations in the park.

**SELF-GUIDING TRAILS.** The Lost Mine Trail follows a 2-mile course from Panther Pass to Lost Mine Ridge. Guide leaflets are available at the trail. Other trails are planned.

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

## GEOLOGY

For a half century, geologists have traveled the canyons and mountains of Big Bend, trying to unravel the fascinating mysteries of its geology.

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.

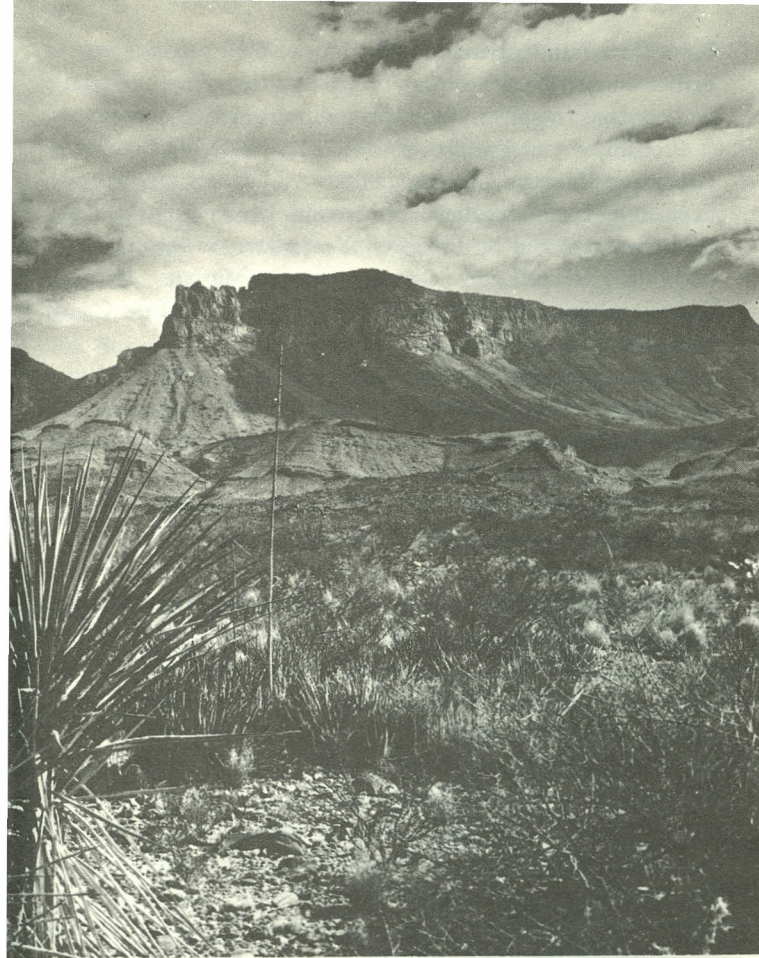
Movements within the earth's crust lowered the area, and the sea returned. This invasion by the sea brought many kinds of marine animals, whose shells settled to the ocean floor among the sediments. The shells, together with the fossil remains of other forms of sea life, are found in great numbers in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

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 plug-like 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.

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





*South Rim.*

## 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.

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 giant daggers and other yuccas; in June, the blossoms of the majestic centuryplant agave.

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.

Strawberry cactus displays pink and red blossoms. Prickly-

pears (flat-jointed species of *Opuntia*) bear golden-yellow flowers, followed in summer by deep-purple and maroon fruits.

The aptly named spiny allthorn, sometimes called "crown-of-thorns," is beautiful, but dangerous at close quarters; its leafless branches bear numerous long, green spines. Another armored plant, the catclaw, has short, curved thorns. Its blossoms resemble pale-yellow, fuzzy caterpillars.

Lechuguilla is a smaller species of agave; it is tall and is crowned with a spike of podlike fruits. Sotol, with a basal cluster of ribbonlike but stiff leaves and an unbranched flower stalk bearing small white blossoms, is another familiar silhouette on the desert landscape.

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

In the mountains, we find conifers, such as Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine, that are native to southern Canada and northern United States. Growing among them are trees that are typical of the Southwest—Arizona cypress, pinyon pine, oaks, and alligator juniper. Drooping juniper, a common resident of Mexico and Central America, is at the extreme northern limits of its 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 to avoid a collision with a careless motorist.

The coyote, ringtail, and kit fox show themselves at dusk and early morning, and pronghorns are occasionally seen in the Tornillo Flats. Watch for mule deer and collared peccary ("javelina") in the Grapevine Hills area in the afternoon.

Everywhere—on rocks along the roadside and on the trail—you will see the pert little rock squirrel and the inquisitive whitetail antelope squirrel. While hiking, be on the lookout for tarantulas—giant spiders that, despite their reputation and their fearsome appearance, are not unfriendly. You should observe them with interest, rather than avoiding or harming them. You will also encounter lizards, scuttling to get out of your way; and an occasional snake, equally determined to escape from you.

At night the desert comes alive with animals whose presence is unnoticed by day. The cougar and gray fox are hunting the animals upon which they prey; and, if you are lucky, you may see the ringtail—which looks very much like a housecat, except for its pointed face and long, bushy tail.



More than 200 species of birds, including many of the most beautifully colored ones, have been identified in the park. Watch particularly for the Mexican jay, Scott's oriole, cliff swallow, and cactus wren. You will see the roadrunner, a weak-flying but fast-running member of the cuckoo family, streaking over the ground on its strong legs. The only known nesting place of the rare Colima warbler north of the Rio Grande is at Big Bend.

The orange eyes glowing in the dark at the roadside that suddenly find bodies and wings to take flight to safety are the poorwills—cousins of nighthawks and whippoorwills.

## 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; warm, sunny days are the rule.

*Summer* temperatures in desert and river valley are likely to hover above 100° during the day. This is the best time of year to go to the mountains. This is the "rainy" season—which too seldom deserves the name—and desert plants bloom freshly after every shower. In The Basin (altitude 5,400 feet) daytime temperatures 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 from 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 agave 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.

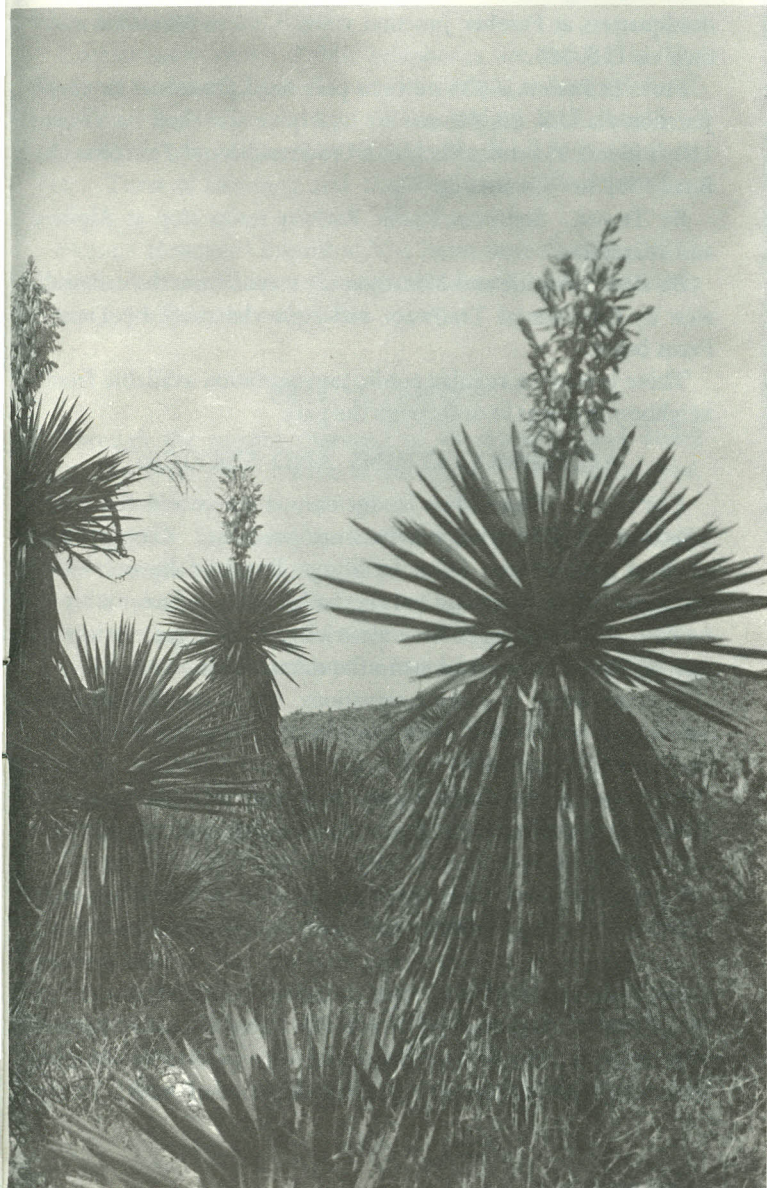
Finally, in 1845, Texas was annexed by the United States and admitted to the Union. Soon railroads and Texas Rangers helped to open the vast stretches of west Texas. Hardy pioneer cattlemen entered the Big Bend country and faced the terror of repeated Indian raids. They stuck, but lonely graves throughout 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, Alcate, 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 Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior, 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 direct sunlight because of the height of the

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



cliffs that tower above the silently flowing river. Thus was the "impassable" Big Bend stretch of the Rio Grande finally navigated.

One last flurry of wild West history occurred in 1916, when a force of Mexican rebels raided Glenn Springs and Boquillas. 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. In 1935 Congress authorized Big Bend National Park; but nearly a decade passed before the park was finally established.

By 1937 a bill was introduced in the Texas Legislature to purchase lands for the proposed park. A 1941 bill provided \$1½ million for this purpose; 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 200,000 a year.

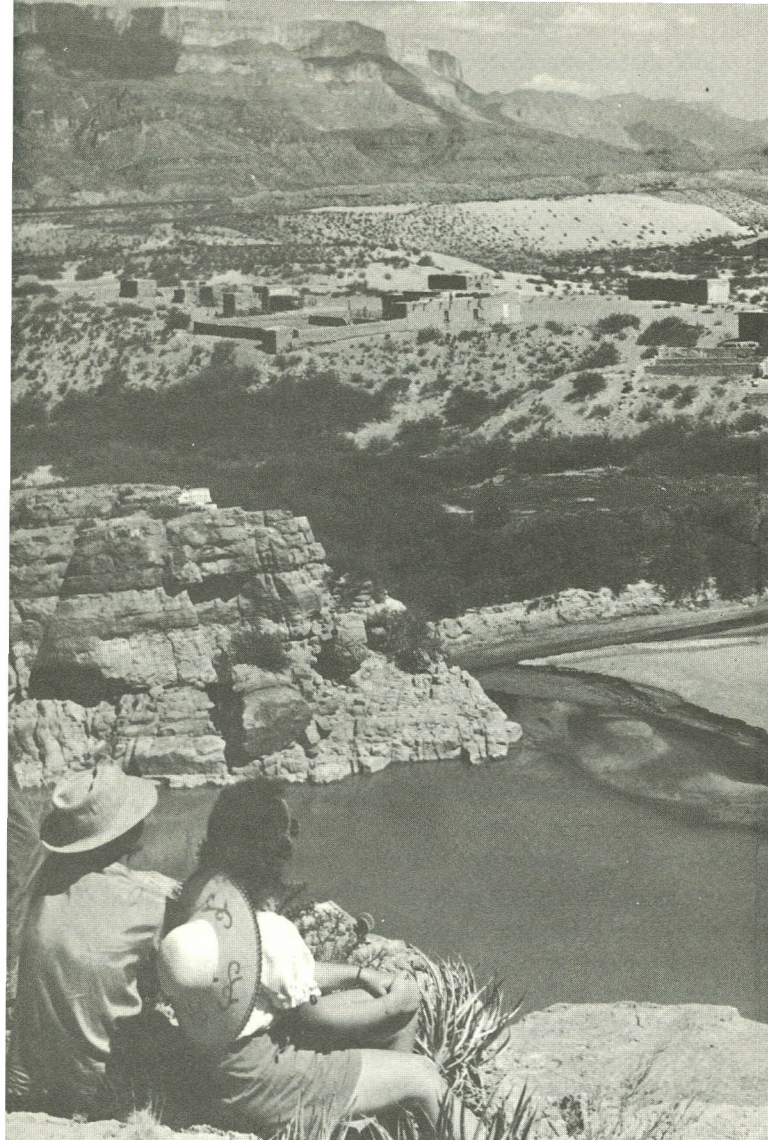
### *—And Developments Continue*

During the last 10 years, the National Park Service has conducted an intensive program of research, conservation, and development at units of the National Park System. Many improvements have been made at Big Bend.

Park roads have been improved. New bridges and a road tunnel have been completed. Rio Grande Village, just west of Boquillas, is being developed for year-round overnight accommodations. The campground is already in use. A new administration building at Panther Junction has been completed. Facilities in The Basin will soon be increased by the addition of a new lodge, to be constructed by the park concessioner. The interpretive program for telling the park's story is being expanded and improved. Scenic and scientific values of the park will not be impaired, for the new facilities are designed to fit smoothly into the natural setting.

Active measures for preserving 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, it will be a long time before complete restoration is achieved.





*Boquillas, Mexico, across the Rio Grande from the park.*

### *Borders Without Bayonets*

Everywhere in Big Bend National Park, you will be aware of the closeness of our good neighbor, Mexico. Many people on both sides of the border have encouraged the establishment of a Mexican national park, occupying a comparable area just across the river. One of the many advantages would be the free movement of visitors between the two parks, thus promoting international good will and understanding.

The Gran Comba (Spanish for "Big Bend") National Park would preserve and make accessible the Mexican section of the Sierra del Carmen, the villages of Boquillas and Santa Elena, the Presidio of San Vicente, and many acres of Mexican wilderness as ruggedly beautiful as those north of the Rio Grande.

This plan may be accomplished before many years have passed.

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

### OTHER PUBLICATIONS

For more detailed information on this area, you can purchase other publications in The Basin and at park headquarters from the Big Bend Natural History Association, a nonprofit organization. You can also order publications from the association, whose address is Big Bend National Park, Tex.; they will send you a price list on request.

### 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 Texas 118; and it is 353 miles via U.S. 67 to Presidio and Texas Ranch Road 170, the "Camino del Rio."

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

**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.

### ACCOMMODATIONS AND SERVICES

**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 can be obtained by writing to National Park Concessions, Inc., Big Bend National Park, Tex., 79834.

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

**CAMPGROUNDS.** There are campgrounds at The Basin and Rio Grande Village. Water and comfort stations are provided; electricity and fuel (other than charcoal sold by the concessioner) are not available. Spaces cannot be reserved. A fee is collected. The Federal Recreation Area Entrance Permit will admit the driver and passengers of a private automobile and individual purchasers regardless of mode of travel.



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

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

**STORES.** The Basin store has a small grocery shop, a film and gift shop, and a newsstand; however, campers should purchase principal supplies and fresh groceries before entering the park. Grocery stores are located at Alpine and Marathon. The general store at Castolon has a small supply of groceries, cold drinks, and gasoline.

**SERVICE STATIONS.** Minor automobile repairs can be made at The Basin and Panther Junction; gasoline can be obtained there and at Castolon. Motorists should check gasoline and water before leaving U.S. 90.

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

**SADDLE HORSES.** Inquire at The Basin store or at the Chisos Remuda for rental rates. Arrangements can be made for saddle horses, pack animals, and guides.

## 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. Avoid fast-running water, and 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 much safer.

Beware the cactus! These plants, and many of the other thorny trees and shrubs, are well armed—part of their adaptation to desert conditions—and their spines can inflict painful injury. Wear your stoutest shoes and jeans while hiking. If

you must go out at night, walk carefully, carry a flashlight, and do not go far abroad.

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 park's only common poisonous reptiles are rattlesnakes; four species are found in Big Bend, but they are seldom about during the day. Stay on the trails after dark, and keep away from bushes and damp areas.

The bites of tarantulas and lizards may be painful (not fatal), but these animals will not bother you unless you annoy them. Nor should the occasional scorpion alarm you—it is not a deadly species—though 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.*

## 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 campgrounds.

**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 not required. Information on boating may be obtained from a park ranger. The river is unsafe for swimming.

**FISHING.** No license is required. Complete fishing regulations are available from any park ranger.

**FIREARMS.** The use or display of firearms is prohibited.

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

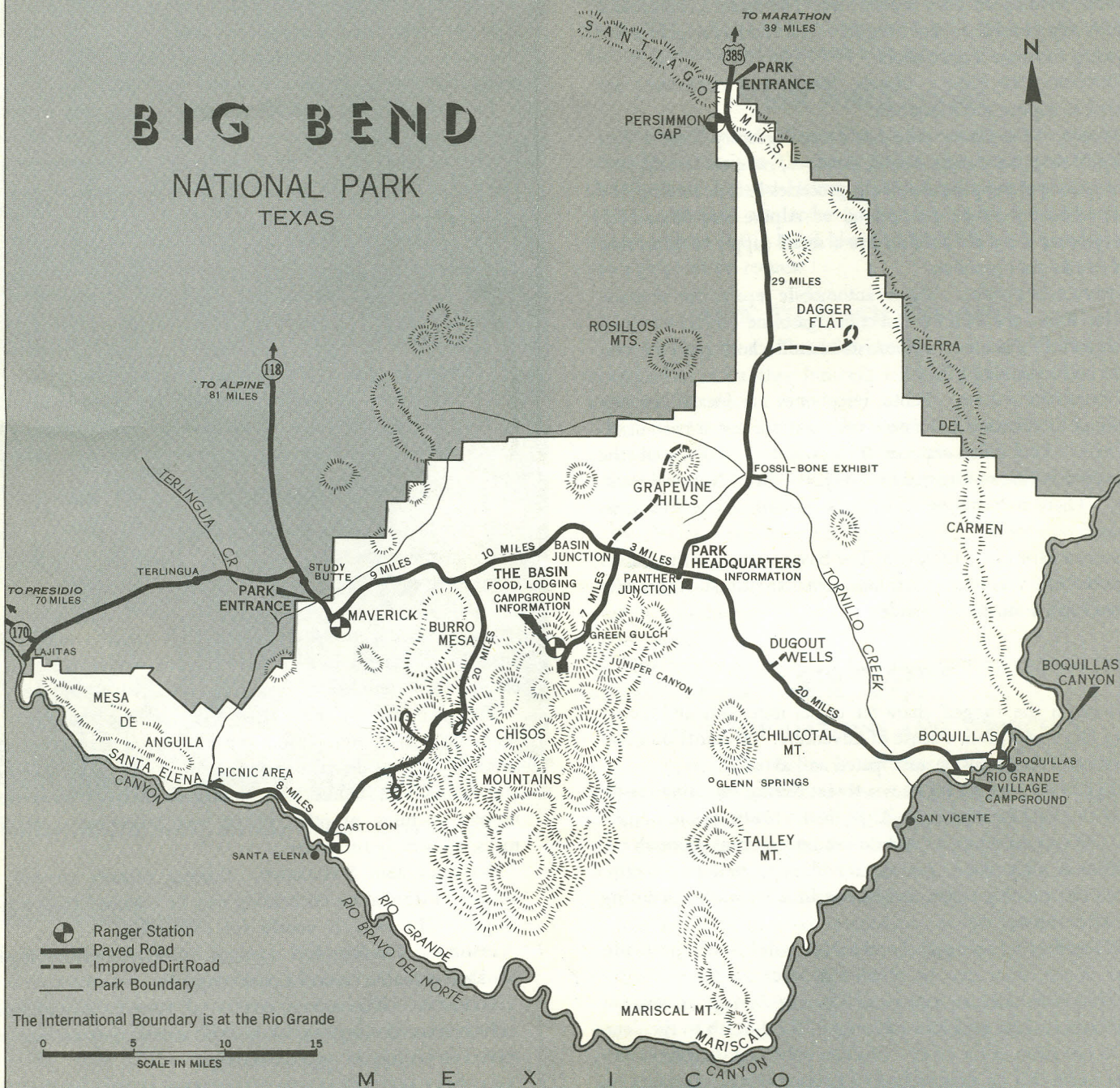
## ADMINISTRATION

Big Bend National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Big Bend National Park, Tex., 79834, is in immediate charge. Address all comments and inquiries regarding the management and protection of this area to him.

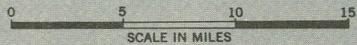


# BIG BEND

NATIONAL PARK  
TEXAS



The International Boundary is at the Rio Grande





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 inspiration of its people.

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THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—bears a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

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



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



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