

HOW TO SEE THE PARK

A *Park Road Guide*, a *Guide to the Backcountry Roads and The River*, and a *Hiker's Guide*, available at the administration building at Panther Junction, contain descriptions of points of interest along all automobile routes and the major trails within the park.

In summer, your trip to *Santa Elena Canyon* (47 miles from The Basin) should be made in early morning, for sunlight strikes the canyon walls for only 1 or 2 hours after sunrise, supplying just the right light for picture-taking; soon thereafter the walls are in shadow. The canyon is likely to be hot in summer at midday. In winter, sunshine enters the canyon only at sunset.

The high, sheer walls seem to overhang the winding river. To sense its awesome immensity and to feel its solitude you should walk into Santa Elena Canyon. A foot trail crosses Terlingua Creek to the base of the cliff on the United States side and leads upward to a panoramic overlook. From there the trail goes about three-quarters of a mile along the river.

The picnic area at Santa Elena Canyon, providing shade and water, is a pleasant 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 quick-silver-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, cut through the Sierra del Carmen by the Rio Grande, is the longest (25 miles) of Big Bend's famous gorges. It is 34 miles by paved road from The Basin.

In the evening the sun seems to set fire to the face of the Sierra del Carmen; across the river the Mexican village of Boquillas glistens 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, wider than Santa Elena, imparts a sense of grandeur. Near the mouth of the canyon is a large sand slide; you can

reach its top in less than one-half hour. The view, from a little wind-hollowed cave, is worth the struggle.

Lost Mine Trail, a round trip of about 4 miles, begins in The Basin. Be sure to carry water. A self-guiding leaflet, available at the trailhead, names plants and identifies lookout points along the way. From the overlook at the head of Juniper Canyon, you will be able to see many miles into Mexico. But the most breathtaking sight along the trail awaits you atop Lost Mine Ridge; from there, you can see the park spread out all around you.

The 14-mile horseback trip to the *South Rim* is 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 suddenly appears all around you and you are looking at an incredible panorama. Spread out before you are a large part of Texas and an even larger slice of Mexico, with the Rio Grande marking the boundary.

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

Other shorter trails lead out of The Basin.

Primitive Roads. After you have visited Big Bend's major attractions you may want to further explore this desert country. Motor tours over primitive roads offer a variety of scenery, history, and fascinating plants and animals. Plan your trip in advance, register at park headquarters, and obtain current road information from a park ranger. Since these roads are patrolled only at infrequent intervals, you will be on your own, and you must take necessary precautions.

Other points of interest. If you leave the park by way of the road to Marathon, 80 miles from The Basin, be sure to see the fossil 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 angle 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 along the route are labeled.

A few miles beyond the intersection with the road to Dagger Flat, you will leave the park at Persimmon Gap, having traveled a part of the Comanche Trail, which few men dared follow 100 years ago.

HOW TO REACH THE PARK

From San Antonio, it is 410 miles to park headquarters at Panther Junction via U.S. 90 to Marathon and south via U.S. 385. From El Paso, it is 323 miles to Panther Junction via Int. 10 to Van Horn, U.S. 80 to Alpine, and south via Tex. 118; and it is 353 miles via U.S. 67 to Presidio and Texas Ranch Road 170—the "Camino del Rio."

Trains and transcontinental buses stop at Alpine and Marathon, but there is now no regular public transportation from these towns to or through the park. Automobiles can be rented at Alpine.



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 REVISED 1972

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, TX 79834, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

This huge park that lies within the great curve of the Rio Grande is more suggestive of northern Mexico than the United States: Expanses of desert sweep away to remote horizons; mountain ranges rise abruptly above arid flatlands; steep-walled canyons and green, ribbonlike stretches of plants define the river course.

Here you can see well-preserved remains of animals that lived many millions of years ago, smell the aroma of creosotebushes, hear the calls of unusual birds, and sense the lingering echo of a Comanche war whoop. But the real character of this country is not immediately apparent until you have stayed awhile; then you may begin to feel its mood.

SEASONS

Winter is nippy in the mountains and comfortably warm during the day in the lowlands. Once or twice a year snow falls in the mountains.

Spring weather arrives early with a slow succession of bloom beginning in late February and reaching the mountain heights in May. Some desert plants bloom throughout the year.

Midsummer 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. In The Basin (5,400-foot elevation) daytime temperatures average a comfortable 85°, and nights are cool.

Autumn sunshine and air are usually gentle and warm.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND SERVICES

Chisos Mountains Lodge in The Basin is the only place inside the park where overnight lodging is available. There are accommodations for more than 150 guests. Motel-type units and cottages (with electricity) are of three types: stone-and-adobe cottages with terraces and private baths, modern multiple units, and two-unit frame cottages near central restroom and shower facilities.

Reservations should be made; write to National Park Concessions, Inc., Big Bend National Park, TX 79834.

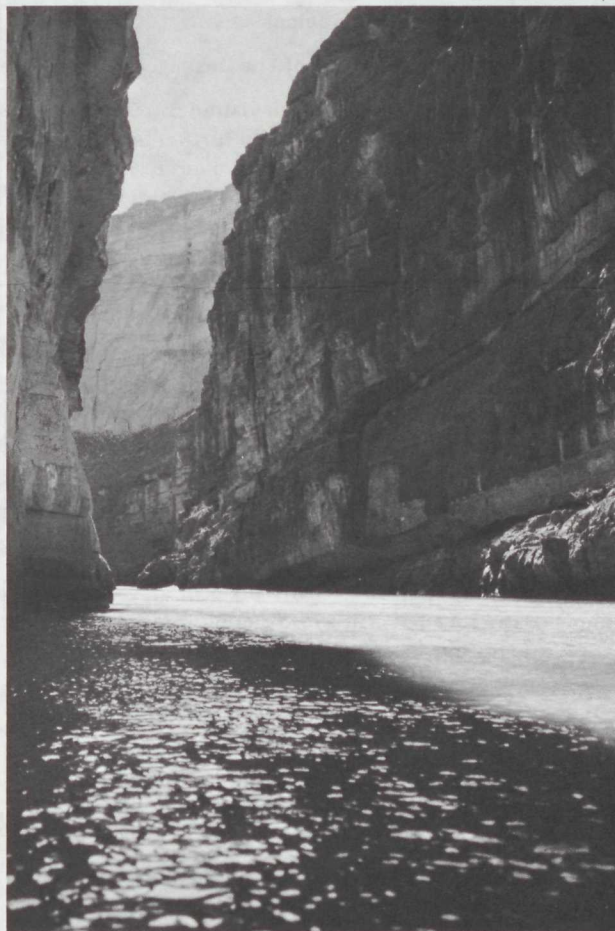
Food service in the lodge coffeeshop is from 7 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. The main dining room is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; hours vary with the season. Box lunches and sandwiches are available.

Campgrounds, at The Basin and Rio Grande Village, include water and comfort stations. Electricity and fuel (other than charcoal sold by the concessioner) are not available. Pay showers for campers are at the lodge only. Individual family camping spaces cannot be reserved, but sites for large groups are subject to advance reservations.

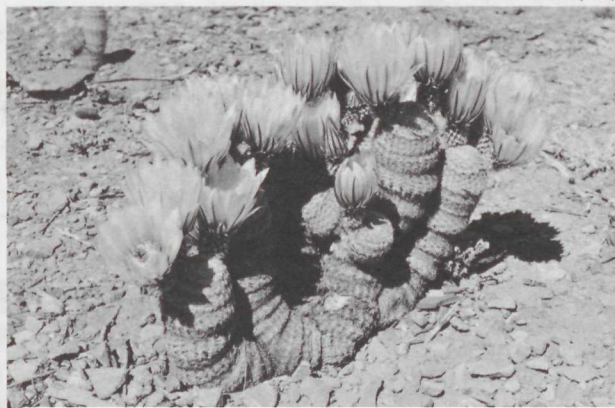
Picnic tables are available at Rio Grande Village, Boquillas Canyon Overlook, Dugout Wells, Santa Elena Canyon, The Basin, and Persimmon Gap.



Santa Elena Canyon



The rainbow pitaya



The rainbow pitaya



The peccary, our only native pig



Bristling giant dagger yuccas

Trailer parks. There are small trailer parks with utility connections at Rio Grande Village and at the Panther Junction service station near park headquarters. Visitors wishing to take trailers into The Basin campground should first consult a park ranger, because the mountain grades are too steep for some large trailers.

Stores. Groceries, cold drinks, camping supplies, and film are available at The Basin, Rio Grande Village, Castolon, and Panther Junction. The Chisos Mountains Lodge has a gift shop.

Service stations. Minor automobile repair service and gasoline are available at The Basin and Panther Junction; gasoline is also available at Castolon (regular only) and Rio Grande Village. Check your gasoline and water supply before leaving U.S. 90.

Communications. The Basin and Panther Junction service stations, park headquarters, and Persimmon Gap ranger station have public telephones. Post office services are available, with mail service five times a week. Mail should be addressed in care of General Delivery, Big Bend National Park, TX 79834.

Saddle horses. Arrangements can be made for saddle horses, pack animals, and guides at the Chisos remuda.

THE NATURALIST PROGRAM

Park naturalists, aided by park rangers, provide interpretive services to help you understand the geology, plants, animals, and history of Big Bend National Park. Natural history publications are sold at park headquarters.

Evening illustrated talks are given at dusk at the amphitheater in The Basin in summer and at Rio Grande Village and park headquarters the rest of the year. Consult bulletin boards for the schedule and for special programs at other locations.

Self-guided Nature Trails are at Rio Grande Village, Santa Elena Canyon, and the Lost Mine Trail. Roadside exhibits and markers are other aids that will help you understand and enjoy the park.

PRECAUTIONS

The rugged character of Big Bend's mountain and desert areas creates a sense of adventure. Hazards do exist, but most of them can be anticipated and avoided.

Check with a park ranger before traveling any of the primitive roads.

High water is a threat during the rainy season (July through September). Dips in the roadways are numerous. Drive slowly and, to avoid stalling your motor, do not splash through them at high speed. Avoid fast-running water, and be watchful for washouts during and after a storm.

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 damage to your car, injury to you and your passengers, and death to the deer.

Do not swim in the river; hidden holes and dangerous currents make it extremely treacherous.

Beware the cactus! These plants and many of the other trees and shrubs are well armed with spines that can inflict painful injury. Wear stout shoes and tough clothing while you are hiking. If you go out at night, walk carefully, carry a flashlight, and do not venture far.

Carry drinking water on the trail and in the desert. 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 reduced at higher elevations.

The park's poisonous reptiles—four species of rattlesnakes and the copperhead—are seldom about during the day. But stay on the trails after dark and keep away from bushes and damp areas.

Tarantulas will not bite 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 poisonous lizards in Big Bend, but lizards may bite when molested.

There are no doctors or nurses in the park. Carry your own first-aid supplies, including tweezers to extract cactus spines. In the event of accident or emergency, notify the nearest park ranger or park headquarters immediately.

REGULATIONS

Driving. Park roads are not high-speed highways—they are designed for enjoyment of the scenery. Maximum speed is 45 m.p.h.; observe posted speed limits. Do not pass or park on curves; take the numerous road dips slowly. Motorized vehicles are restricted to park roadways; they are prohibited on all trails.

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. Smoking is not allowed while traveling on the trails.

Camping is limited to campgrounds, except for back-country camping which is by permit only. Never leave a fire unattended; extinguish it completely.

Natural features. Disturbing wildlife, rocks, trees, cactuses, or other plants is not allowed.

Boating permits are required.

Fishing licenses are not required. Information can be obtained from a park ranger.

Firearms. The use or display of firearms is not allowed.

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