



Bicycling in Big Bend



Lightly traveled roads and varied terrain make Big Bend a premier bicycling location. Over 100 miles of paved roads and 160 miles of backcountry dirt roads provide challenges for riders of all types and abilities. Bicyclists must be extremely cautious and well-prepared, but bicycling allows outstanding panoramic views, unobstructed by a windshield. It also allows the bicyclist to see and hear some of the smaller wonders of Big Bend from a more intimate viewpoint.

Bike safe

Bicyclists must share the roads with vehicles and obey all traffic laws. Traffic is sparse in summer and highest during March and early April and on holiday weekends during the winter. Use extreme caution, especially on paved roads, during busy times.

In order to protect the fragile desert environment, off-road cycling is *not allowed* in the park. All bicycles must remain on paved and dirt roads.

Weather is often pleasant year-round and rewarding trips are possible most days of the year. Cycling from May to September is more of a challenge due to high temperatures; plan to take it easy when temperatures soar. Always carry and drink plenty of water.

All Big Bend roads are open to cyclists. A good map is essential. The [Road Guide to Backcountry Dirt Roads of Big Bend National Park](#) and the [Road Guide to Paved and Improved Dirt Roads](#) of Big Bend National Park have good descriptions of the roads and points of interest. Many of the rides in Big Bend National Park are easier with a shuttle. If you have the luxury of having someone shuttle your vehicle or pick you up after a long day of cycling, opportunities are endless. Check with a ranger for more information.

Maps and road guides are available at visitor centers in the park, or through Big Bend Natural History Association (432 477-2236).

Off-road biking in the Big Bend Area

In order to protect the fragile desert environment, off-road cycling is not allowed inside the boundaries of Big Bend National Park. All bicycles must remain on paved and dirt roads. At present, there are no dedicated mountain bike or single track trails in the park; all hiking trails are closed to wheeled vehicle use.

However, many singletrack or primitive off-road bike trails can be found in the area immediately west of Big Bend National Park. The area has almost 1,000 miles of dirt and Jeep roads to explore and excellent singletrack, especially in Lajitas and on the east side of Big Bend Ranch State Park. These two areas are contiguous and riding in them both can be combined.

Lajitas has the best singletrack in the area, with nearly fifty miles of marked trails. Maps of the Lajitas Trail system are available at Desert Sports in Terlingua or at the Lajitas Resort.

Big Bend Ranch State Park, just to the west of Big Bend National Park, covers almost 300,000 acres of some of the roughest, most spectacular country in Texas. There are two main areas to ride in the state park; the interior of the park near the Ranch Headquarters at Saucedo, and the east side of the park accessible from the Barton Warnock Center, near Lajitas.

For More Information

Big Bend Ranch State Park
Barton Warnock Center: 432 424-3327

Desert Sports
888 989-6900

Lajitas Resort
877 525-4827

Suggested Routes

If you have a shuttle available:

Panther Junction to Rio Grande Village

- 20 miles (all paved). Easy.
- Time: 1.5-2.5 hours.

Although there are some hills, the ride is mostly downhill as the elevation drops 1900 feet. Be wary of large motorhomes and trailers traveling this road, especially in late winter and spring. For a variation, ride to Hot Springs on the 2-mile unpaved spur road 16 miles from Panther Junction. Your shuttle can meet you at either Rio Grande Village or Hot Springs. The ride allows outstanding views of the Sierra del Carmen and the Rio Grande in the distance.

Panther Junction to Rio Grande Village

- 35 miles (10 miles paved, 25 miles unpaved). Moderate.
- Time: 4-6 hours.

Ride six miles toward Rio Grande Village on the paved road, then turn right onto the Glenn Spring Road. Follow the Glenn Spring Road for 15 miles as it skirts the Chisos Mountains and leads to a flowing spring before joining the River Road. Turn left and follow the river road for 9.6 miles to its junction with the paved road. Turn right and ride on the paved road for four miles to Rio Grande Village.

Panther Junction to Castolon

- 35 miles (all paved). Strenuous.
- Time: 3-6 hours.

This ride traverses some of the most scenic terrain in the park. It skirts the Chisos Mountains and passes interesting geologic features and historic sites via the Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive. Although the elevation loss between Panther Junction and Castolon is 1580 feet, the terrain is challenging with many steep hills.

Old Ore Road

- 26 miles (all unpaved). Strenuous.
- Time: 4-6 hours.

This premier ride is best taken from north to south for an easier ride and great views of the Chisos Mountains. The road is rough and rocky and the terrain is challenging. Park on the edge of the Dagger Flat Auto Trail at the north end of the Old Ore Road.

Old Maverick Road

- 13 miles (all unpaved). Easy.
- Time: 1.5-2 hours (one way).

Start from the parking lot near the Maverick Entrance Station. This route is easiest from north to south. There are many good views along the route, which ends at Santa Elena Canyon. Seasoned riders can return to Maverick for a strenuous 26-mile trip.

If you do not have a shuttle available:

Panther Junction to the Chisos Basin

- 20 miles (all paved). Strenuous.
- Time: 2-4 hours (roundtrip).
- Potentially dangerous road due to blind curves

Ride three miles west of Panther Junction to the Basin Junction, three miles of gradual uphill. At the Basin Junction, turn left and ride seven miles to the Chisos Basin. This road is very steep, with 15% grades. The elevation gain is 1,650 feet. Watch for traffic and be ready to pull off the road if necessary. This ride is an aerobic challenge even for those in excellent physical condition. The ride down is exhilarating. Watch for animals and obstacles on the road and make sure you don't break the 45 mile per hour speed limit!

Grapevine Hills Road

- 15 miles (all unpaved). Moderate.
- Time: 2-3 hours (roundtrip).

Park at the junction of the paved road and the Grapevine Hills Road for this ride past interesting rock formations. For variety, hike the two-mile round-trip Grapevine Hills Trail en route. Return the same way.

Paint Gap Road

- 5 miles (all unpaved). Moderate.
- Time: 1.5-2 hours (roundtrip).

Park at the junction of the paved road and the Paint Gap Road. The road has a variety of substrates including sand and rocks, and is especially rough near the end. Return the same way.

Dagger Flat Auto Trail

- 18 miles (all unpaved). Easy.
- Time: 2-3 hours (roundtrip).

Park near the junction of the paved road and the Dagger Flat Auto Trail. This route is fairly flat, with a gentle uphill on the way out. Watch for sand along the way—you can get bogged down. There are many interesting plants, and bicyclists can take advantage of the auto tour guide booklet. Return the same way.