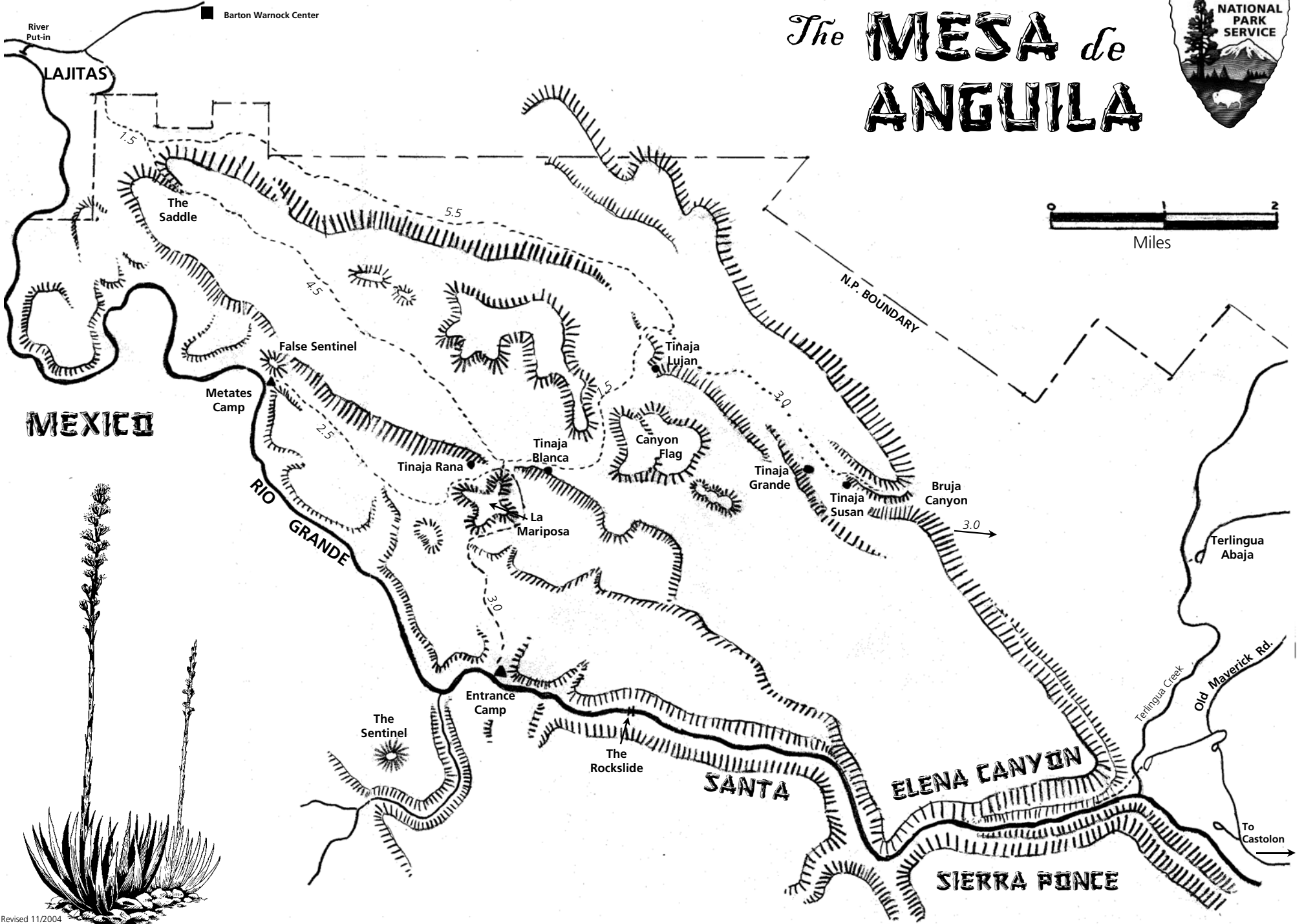


Big Bend



The MESA de ANGUILA

■ Barton Warnock Center





THE MESA DE ANGUILA

Remote and isolated from the rest of Big Bend National Park, the Mesa de Anguila offers well-prepared backpackers opportunities for solitude and tremendous views. The trails are not obvious and may be overgrown with grass and shrubs after rainy summers.

DO NOT rely only on these notes: always take topographic maps and know how to use them!

TINAJAS:

The tinajas of the Mesa de Anguila should never be relied upon as the sole source of water for backpackers, but may be helpful as a possible supplement to water brought with them. The water should always be boiled or treated before use, due to the chance of the tinajas being polluted by livestock. Camping is not allowed within 500 feet of any tinaja.

TINAJA BLANCA: Often dry, but centrally located on the west side of the Mesa. A popular goal with backpackers. Several small tinajas in the top part of a canyon draining from the edge of the plateau. Access is from above, down the wash from the trail.

TINAJA LUJAN: Also often dry, and also in a central location, but on the east side of the Mesa. Access is by scrambling down a nice canyon that drains north from Canyon Flag and cuts through a long ridge.

TINAJA RANA: A good source but difficult to get to. It's at the base of a dramatic pour-off northwest of La Mariposa, in a slot carved by the water about 25 feet above the very bottom. Access is from below and involves some exposed rock-climbing (ropes may be necessary) to reach the water. There may be water in the gorge above the pour-off, near where the trail crosses.

TINAJA GRANDE: A large pool at the base of a pour-off. The best water is about 20 feet up in the slick-rock. Access is up from the route between Tinaja Lujan and Tinaja Susan.

TINAJA SUSAN: Several small pools in creekbed at the head of Bruja Canyon. Access is from where the path angles up from the wash bed toward the Notch.

LANDMARKS:

BRUJA CANYON: Also called "the Notch". This is a very difficult access onto the Mesa from the east, and is not recommended. It involves rock-climbing up an exposed cliff and is potentially dangerous for those without previous experience. Ropes may be necessary for safety. Extremely difficult with a backpack. From the top, a path leads across the slope to Tinaja Susan.

CANYON FLAG: The top of the Mesa is actually several "mesitas" and this is the highest point. A prominent pass between Canyon Flag and its neighbor to the west is the major route from T. Blanca to T. Lujan. Elevation: 3883'.

ENTRANCE CAMP: The most popular river camp on the Santa Elena Canyon run. A trail starting near T. Blanca descends along the east and south sides of La Mariposa, past an impressive box canyon called Joel's Canyon and down to the river and camp at the entrance of Santa Elena Canyon.

THE FALSE SENTINEL: A sharp peak that thrusts up above Metates Camp, it's often mistaken by over-eager rafters for the Sentinel, which marks the approach of Santa Elena Canyon and is in Mexico. After you've hiked to the top of the Saddle, the False Sentinel can be seen just sticking up over the edge of the Mesa to the southeast. Elevation: 2950'.

LA MARIPOSA: A prominent and irregular peak south-west of Canyon Flag, near Tinaja Blanca. So named because it resembles a butterfly on the topo map. Elevation: 3745'.

METATES CAMP: A popular river camp at the base of the False Sentinel. A trail from near Tinaja Blanca descends along the northwest side of La Mariposa, past Tinaja Rana, and down several paths and routes to the river and camp. The camp is named for Indian grinding holes in the rock near the river.

THE SADDLE: This is the main access onto the Mesa from the west, via Lajitas. There is a faint, cairned trail across the flats from the trailhead, which becomes clearer as it leads up the right side to the top and beyond. A good goal for a day hike for the unbelievable views.

TRAILS & DISTANCES

Lajitas to The Saddle: 1.5 miles. First part is faint, but cairned, the second part is a rocky trail to fabulous views.

The Saddle to Tinaja Blanca: 4.5 miles. Good trail but occasionally vague.

Tinaja Blanca junction to Metates Camp: 2.5 miles. Vague with many alternate routes.

Tinaja Blanca junction to Entrance Camp: 3 miles. A faint trail.

Tinaja Blanca to Tinaja Lujan: 1.5 miles. Vague but not too difficult, harder to follow past the Tinaja Lujan junction.

Tinaja Lujan to Lajitas: 5.5 miles. More an overgrown route than a trail. Mostly hiking in washes.

Terlingua Abaja to Bruja Canyon: 3 miles. Mainly cross country hiking. For most hikers, the trip ends at the large pool in beautiful Bruja Canyon; the climb up through the notch is extremely difficult and not recommended.

Tinaja Lujan to Tinaja Susan: 3 miles. A route down the wash between the two tinajas. To bypass the pour-off below Lujan, hike around the junction to the north side and descend the slope.