

FORT DAVIS

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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HISTORY

After gold was discovered in California in 1848, westward overland travel routes became important. In west Texas, the San Antonio- El Paso Road, a segment of the most southern of these routes, crossed hundreds of square miles of Apache, Comanche, and Kiowa country. To protect travelers, freighters, and the mail, the U. S. Army constructed a chain of forts including Fort Davis. Located in what were then called the Apache Mountains, near Limpia Creek, the new post was named Fort Davis after Secretary of War Jefferson Davis.

Fort Davis was active from 1854 to 1891, except for a 5- year period during and immediately following the Civil War. Troops from the fort scouted and mapped the surrounding region, escorted the mail, protected stagecoaches and wagon trains, built roads, constructed telegraph lines, guarded railroad surveyors, and fought against raiding Indian warriors. "Buffalo Soldiers", African Americans who served in the army after the Civil War, were stationed at the post from 1867 to 1885. Henry O. Flipper, the first black graduate of West Point, served at Fort Davis as a second lieutenant in 1880- 1881.

FORT DAVIS TODAY

The National Park Service acquired the historic ruins of Fort Davis in the early 1960s. Through an on- going program of preservation and restoration, many of the original buildings were saved. Today, Fort Davis is regarded as one of the best surviving 19th- century southwestern frontier military posts.

VISITOR SERVICES

The site is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The fort is closed on the following Federal Holidays: Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and the Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. Entrance fee is \$3.00 per person age 17 and over. Individuals under 17 are free. The National Parks Pass, Golden Age, Golden Eagle, and Golden Access Passports are honored and available. Educational groups may request a fee waiver and inquire about on- site education programs prior to their visit.

The Visitor Center provides information about current activities and has a museum and bookstore. A 15- minute video shows regularly in the auditorium. Bugle calls play throughout the day. The sounds of an 1875 Dress Retreat Parade echo across the parade ground at 11 a.m., 2:05 p.m., and 4 p.m. daily. A "Junior Ranger" activity is available for kids. Five refurbished buildings as well as many restored structures, foundations, and ruins provide a glimpse of life at a frontier post in the 1870s and 1880s. During the summer and other periods of high visitation, staff members and volunteers dressed in living history attire interpret some of the refurbished buildings.

The site covers 474 acres and has several miles of hiking trails. The park's picnic area offers shade but no running water. Allow at least one to two hours for your visit.

HOW TO GET THERE

Fort Davis National Historic Site is on the northern edge of the town of Fort Davis, Texas. It can be reached from the north or south via Texas highways 17 and 118, and from the west via Texas highways 505, 166, and 17.

AREA INFORMATION

There are no overnight accommodations in the park. Camping is available at the Davis Mountains State Park and at nearby private campgrounds. Lodging, gasoline, groceries, gift shops, and restaurants are available in the town of Fort Davis. Nearby attractions include the University of Texas McDonald Observatory, Davis Mountains State Park, Overland Trail Museum, and the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute. The nearby towns of Alpine and Marfa also have attractions for visitors to the Big Bend Country.

The elevation of Fort Davis is 4,900 feet (1,630 m). Summers can be hot with occasional showers, falls are generally mild, and winters are cool. Strong winds are common throughout the year.

