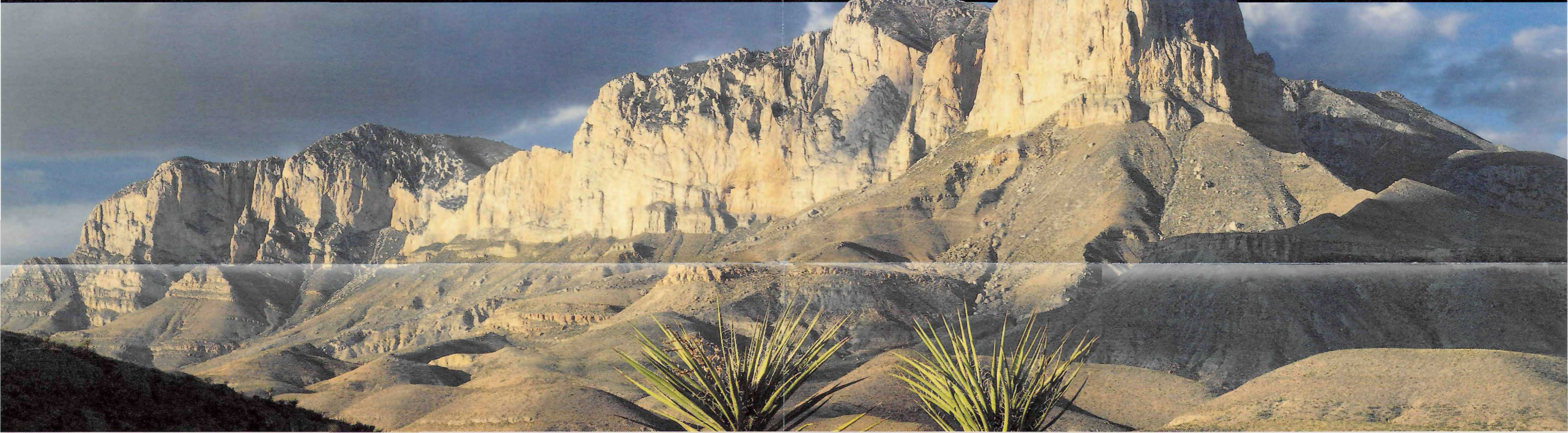


Guadalupe Mountains

Guadalupe Mountains National Park
Texas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

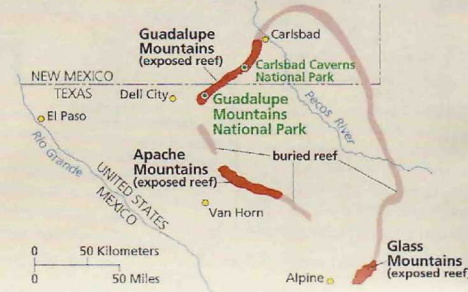


© LAURENCE PARENT

Magnificent desolation: A view of El Capitan (right) and Guadalupe peaks.

Guadalupe Mountains National Park preserves the rugged spirit and remote wilderness of the American West. Here in the ancient Guadalupe Mountains, which tower majestically into the Texas sky, you can delight in the grand views, diverse landscapes, and small pleasures.

Capitan Reef Today



The Guadalupe Mountains are among the best examples of a marine fossil reef. Geologists come from around the world to marvel at this extraordinary phenomenon that formed 260–270 million years ago.

During that time a tropical ocean covered portions of what is now Texas and New Mexico. Over millions of years calcareous sponges, algae, and other lime-secreting marine organisms precipitated from the

seawater. Along with lime, they built up to form the 400-mile-long, horseshoe-shaped Capitan Reef.

Eventually the sea evaporated. As the reef subsided, it was buried in a thick blan-

ket of sediments and mineral salts. The reef was entombed for millions of years until a mountain-building uplift exposed part of it. Today this ancient reef complex towers above the Texas desert in the Guadalupe

Mountains. Other parts of the reef are exposed in the Apache Mountains and the Glass Mountains (see map at left).



Brachiopod fossil from the Guadalupe Mountains
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Guadalupe People



Nde (Mescalero Apache)
MUSEUM OF NEW MEXICO

Nde (Mescalero Apache), pioneers, explorers, stagecoach drivers, US Army troops, ranchers, and conservationists are part of Guadalupe Mountains' colorful history. Until the mid-1800s these remote highlands were the exclusive domain of the Nde, who hunted and camped here.

from the soldiers and a staging ground for their attacks. By 1880 the Nde had been driven from the mountains.

Amidst this conflict, Butterfield stage-coaches began carrying mail through the mountains on the nation's first transcontinental mail route.

Later, ranches developed around the Guadalupe Mountains. In the 1920s geologist Wallace Pratt bought land in McKittrick Canyon, and in 1959 donated his land to the National Park Service. More land was acquired from J.C. Hunter. In 1972 Congress created Guadalupe Mountains National Park.

Butterfield Stage, detail from Overland Mail Company, Britton and Rey, 1860.

DEFOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY, WESTERN HISTORY DEPARTMENT



The Desert

The bloom of a cactus flower . . . the thunder-and-light show of a summer storm . . . the howl of a coyote at dusk . . . a lizard basking in the warm morning sun. . .

Surrounding the Guadalupe Mountains are the sparsely populated plains of the Chihuahuan Desert. This vast arid realm extends south for hundreds of miles into Mexico. The Chihuahuan Desert receives between 10 and



Claret-cup cactus
© J. GRACE

20 inches of rain a year; in summer, temperatures rise to 90°F and above. Although it may look barren at first glance, the desert is full of life. Many of the Chihuahuan Desert's most common plants and animals are found in the park. Agaves, prickly pear cacti, walking-stick chollas, yuccas, and sotol are abundant, and lizards, snakes, coyotes, and mule deer are seen frequently. Adapting to this demanding environment is the key to survival.

Like many reptiles the collared lizard escapes the midday heat by concentrating most of its daily activities in the cooler morning and evening hours. Snakes and many mammals move about more frequently at night.

© BRENT WATERS



The Canyons

Fall colors brighten McKittrick Canyon. Maple, walnut, ash, oak, and chokecherry trees grow here and in shaded canyons where moisture is plentiful.



You can see the change from desert to forest when hiking through McKittrick Canyon's twisting gorge.

NPS



© J. C. WILKIN

The reflection of tall trees in a sparkling pool . . . rugged walls of rock sheltering a streamside woodland . . . a mule deer browsing quietly at the edge of a patch of woods . . . brightly colored autumn leaves rustling in the wind. . .

The deep, sheer-sided canyons of the Guadalupe Mountains shelter an impressive diversity of plants and animals. This variety is displayed in its greatest splendor in McKittrick Canyon. Lying between the desert and the highlands, McKittrick, like other canyons here, has a mix of life that is part desert, part canyon woodland, and part highland forest. Prickly pear cacti, willows, Texas madrones, Texas walnuts, alligator junipers, and ponderosa pines grow here. Wildlife includes jackrabbits, coyotes, porcupines, gray foxes, mule deer, mountain lions, and elk.

Mild temperatures and protection from the sun and wind provided by the cliffs nurture this canyon community. McKittrick Canyon's spring-fed stream is bordered by gray oak, velvet ash, and bigtooth maple. In fall the colorful foliage creates a scene reminiscent of northern woods. McKittrick Canyon exudes a rare lushness in this part of Texas.

Among the trees found in the canyons is the rare and picturesque Texas madrone (below). You can identify it by its smooth reddish bark and evergreen leaves. Clusters of white flowers appear in early spring. In autumn, its brilliant red berry-like fruit ripens, providing food for birds.



© M. MAYER

The Highlands

The solitude of a mountaintop pine-fir forest . . . the bugle of a bull elk in autumn . . . sweeping views from rocky 8,000-foot-high peaks . . . tracks that tell of a mountain lion's passing. . .

In the mountain highcountry thrives a dense forest of ponderosa pine, southwestern white pine, Douglas fir, and aspen. This forest began here about 15,000 years ago when the prevailing climate throughout Texas was cooler and moister. As the climate warmed, fragments of this forest survived in the higher elevations of mountains like the Guadalupe Mountains. The forest is especially lush in the Bowl, a two-mile-wide depression atop the Guadalupe Mountains. Elk, mule deer, wild turkeys, vultures, mountain lions, black bears, golden eagles, and peregrine falcons roam this highland wilderness.



© L. P. RUE JR.

The original elk population, which was never large, was hunted to extinction in the early 1900s. Today's herd grew from a group of animals brought here from Wyoming and South Dakota in the 1920s. These elk range throughout the high-country and into the canyons and lower slopes of the Guadalupe Mountains. An estimated 30 to 40 elk live the park.

El Capitan
© J. C. WILKIN



Mountain Lion
© FRANCIS GOHER

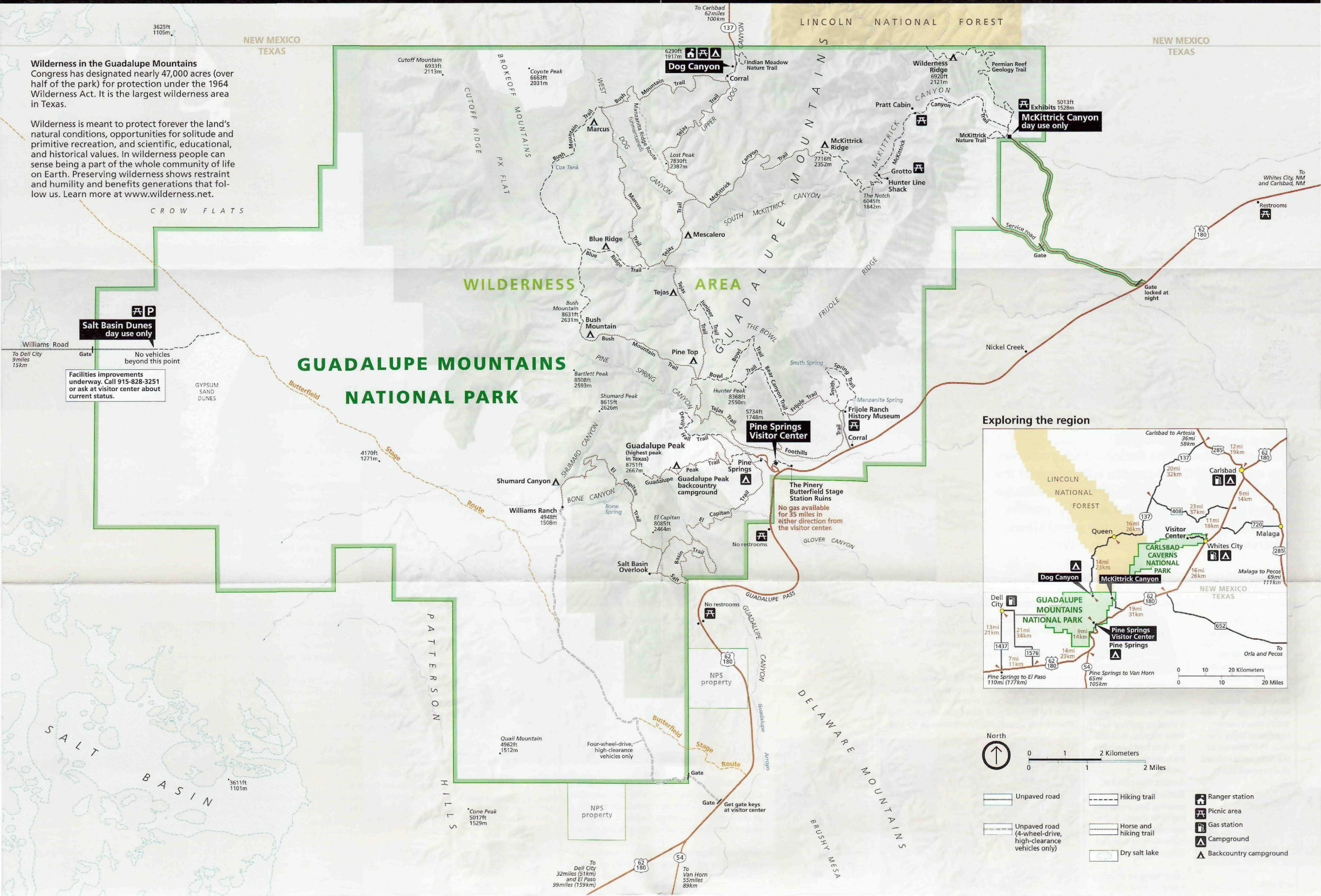


Mule deer
© HEARST L. PARENT

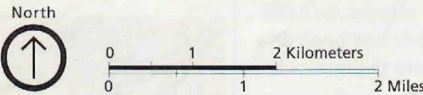
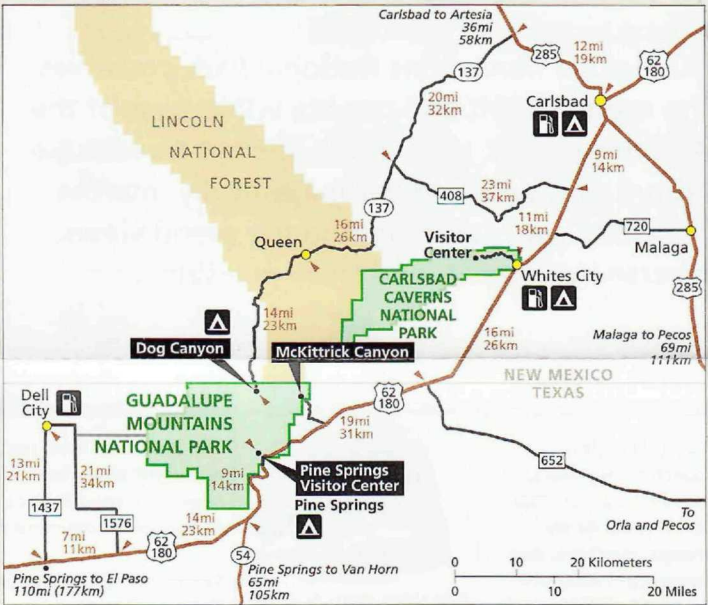
Exploring Guadalupe Mountains

Wilderness in the Guadalupe Mountains
Congress has designated nearly 47,000 acres (over half of the park) for protection under the 1964 Wilderness Act. It is the largest wilderness area in Texas.

Wilderness is meant to protect forever the land's natural conditions, opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and scientific, educational, and historical values. In wilderness people can sense being a part of the whole community of life on Earth. Preserving wilderness shows restraint and humility and benefits generations that follow us. Learn more at www.wilderness.net.



Exploring the region



- | | | |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|
| Unpaved road | Hiking trail | Ranger station |
| Unpaved road (4-wheel-drive, high-clearance vehicles only) | Horse and hiking trail | Picnic area |
| | Dry salt lake | Gas station |
| | | Campground |
| | | Backcountry campground |

Planning Your Visit

The Basics The park is in west Texas on US 62/180, 110 miles east of El Paso and 55 miles southwest of Carlsbad, NM. The nearest food, lodging, gasoline, and services are 35 miles northeast on US 62/180 at Whites City.

Information Pine Springs Visitor Center, open daily except December 25, offers restrooms, drinking water, publications, exhibits, and activity schedules. Information, restrooms, and water are also available at Dog Canyon and McKittrick Canyon. Visit www.nps.gov/gumo for details.

Activities
Backpacking There are 10 backcountry campgrounds; a free permit is required, available at Pine Springs Visitor Center or Dog Canyon. No water is available in the backcountry. Pets are not allowed. Cook only on campstoves.

Camping Camping is available year-round, first-come, first-served, at Pine Springs and Dog Canyon. Both offer water, accessible restrooms, tables, and sites for tents and RVs (no dump station or hook-up). Fee.

Frijole Ranch History Museum Learn about the people who have lived in and around the Guadalupe Mountains. The site includes a springhouse, schoolhouse, bunkhouse, barn, and picnic area. Free; open intermittently.

The Pinery See the ruins of a mid-1800s Butterfield stagecoach station. Reach them directly off US 62/180 or by paved trail from Pine Springs Visitor Center; the 0.7-mile roundtrip trail is wheelchair-accessible.

Williams Ranch The road to Williams Ranch is open only to four-wheel-drive vehicles. The road partially follows the historic Butterfield stage route and leads to a ranch site in the

shadow of the mountains' western escarpment. To visit, check out a key to the entrance gates at Pine Springs Visitor Center.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information visit www.nps.gov/gumo, go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, or call the park.

Highlights of Some Park Trails
The park has over 80 miles of trails for you to explore. Hikers and horseback riders are welcome; 60 percent of the park trails are open to horse use (no horse rentals in park). Trails vary in length and difficulty. Trails to the highcountry are steep and rough; the ascent may be as much as 3,000 feet. Desert and canyon trails are less strenuous. Pets and bikes are not allowed on trails or in the backcountry. Visit www.nps.gov/gumo or contact the park for information.

Manzanita Spring *Easy: 0.4 mile roundtrip.* This trail is wheelchair-accessible.

Smith Spring *Moderate: 2.3 miles roundtrip.* Watch for birds, mule deer, and elk on your way to this shady oasis.

McKittrick Canyon *Moderate: 4.8 miles roundtrip to Pratt Cabin; 6.8 miles roundtrip to the Grotto; day use only.* Enjoy a surprising variety of plants and animals along this canyon trail. Please stay on the trail and out of the fragile stream.

Guadalupe Peak *Strenuous: 8.4 miles roundtrip; 3,000-foot elevation gain.* Spectacular views reward those who reach the summit of 8,749-foot Guadalupe Peak, the highest in Texas.

The Bowl *Strenuous: 9.3 miles roundtrip.* Take this trail to see a highcountry forest of pine and Douglas fir 2,500 feet above the desert.



Geologists use marine fossils like this cephalopod to piece together the history of Capitan Reef.

Safety First • Be prepared for sudden weather changes. High winds are common in winter and spring; thunderstorms with lightning are frequent in summer. Avoid open areas during storms. Check the forecast before setting out. • Hikers should carry plenty of water, at least one gallon of water per person per day. Stay on trails. Trekking poles are recommended for strenuous hikes. • Climbing cliffs is very dangerous—the rock is unstable. Technical climbing requires a permit.

• Watch for cacti, rattlesnakes, scorpions, and centipedes; be careful where you put your hands and feet. • Wood and charcoal fires are prohibited; use campstoves. • Pets must be leashed at all times; they are not allowed on trails or in the backcountry.

• Do not disturb wildlife or plants or remove or deface natural or cultural features; all are protected by federal law. • For firearms regulations ask a ranger or check the park website.

More Information
Guadalupe Mountains National Park
400 Pine Canyon Drive
Salt Flat, TX 79847
915-828-3251
www.nps.gov/gumo

Emergency call 911

Guadalupe Mountains National Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities.