

The Fresno Divide Trail is located at the West Contrabando Trailhead—6.5 miles west of the Barton Warnock Visitor Center and approximately 42 miles east of Fort Leaton State Historic Site. Named for its geographical location on the divide between Fresno and Contrabando creeks, this 3.2-mile-long segment is part of the larger Contrabando Multi-use Trail System. It can be accessed from the West Contrabando Trailhead at the south end or the Dome Trail at the north end. The trail is comprised of well-defined single-track with exposed rock surfaces and segments of old road. Exploration of this trail will expose you to some of the most spectacular natural and historical landscapes in Big Bend Ranch State Park.

The Fresno Divide Trail is open to hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. As a hike, this trail offers few challenges and can be easily traveled from either direction. For mountain bikers this trail is considered moderate-to-difficult and offers climbs, fast descents and technical drainage crossings. For equestrians this trail is easy-to-moderate with areas of exposed rock which can be difficult for horses unaccustomed to the footing. This trail is popular among all user groups so please be courteous of others and yield the right-of-way as indicated.

This trail is a 6.5-mile round-trip hike to an overlook starting from the West Contrabando Trailhead parking area.

Be mindful of all wildlife and always bring water! Look for signs of wildlife such as scat and tracks. If you encounter a mountain lion do not run, slowly back away and try to look as big as possible. Pick up small children. If you are attacked, fight back. Please report any lion sightings or signs of lions to park rangers immediately.



This guide is made possible by the Compadres del Rancho Grande (Friends of Big Bend Ranch). Please recycle your brochures at any of the BBRSP Visitor Centers, Trailheads, or Ranger Stations.

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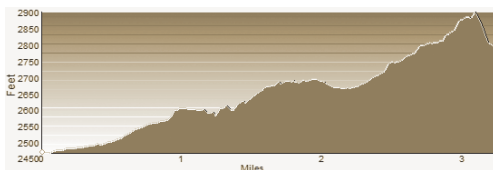
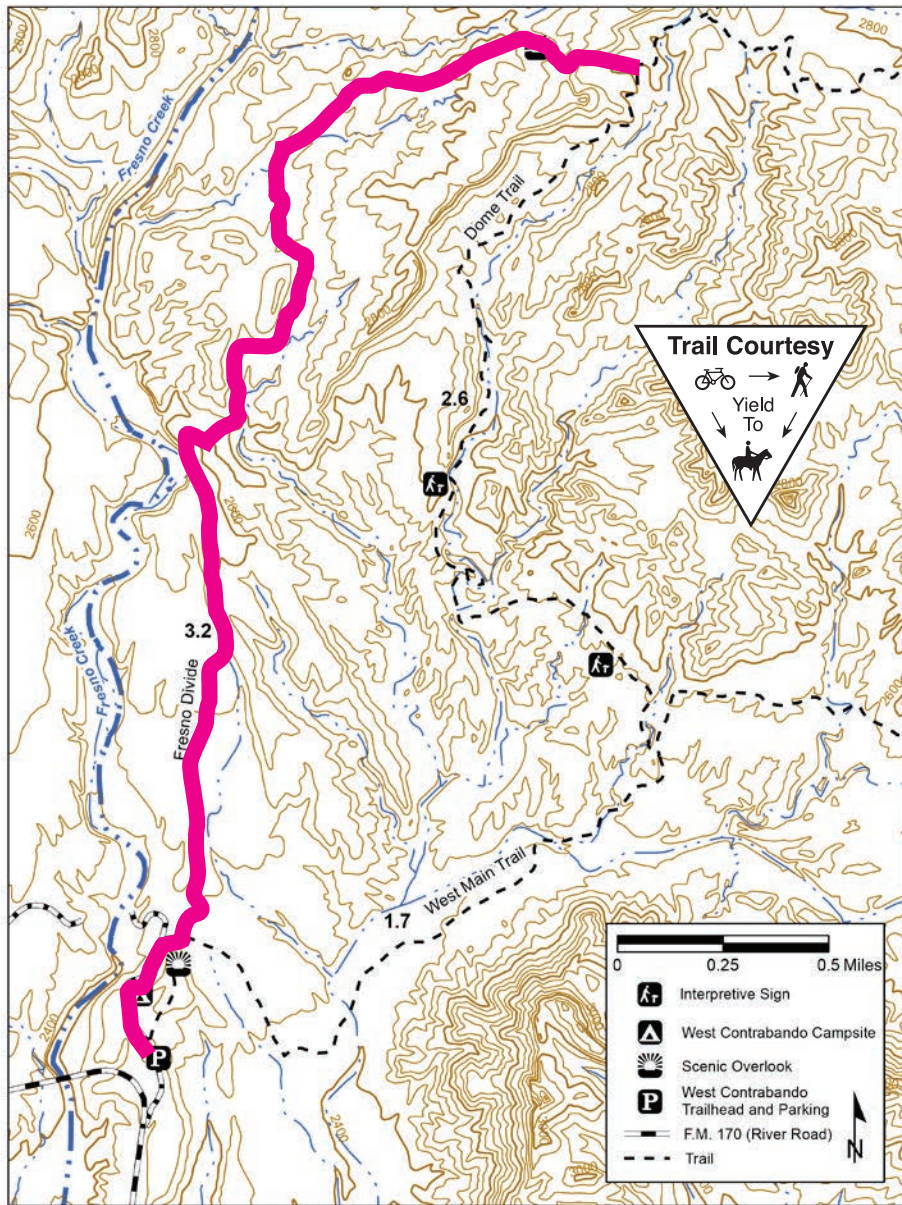
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BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK

Fresno Divide Trail



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Pets are not allowed on the Fresno Divide Trail.

For added adventure you can incorporate other trails of the Contrabando System. Consult with a park ranger about routes and obtain maps before heading out. Always inquire about trail and weather conditions before taking any trail in the park.

To get to the Fresno Divide Trailhead, park at the semi-circular parking area on your left (west) at the West Contrabando Trailhead and follow the road (roughly 0.3 mile) past the campsite, through the wooden bollard and down to the wooden bollard on your right (east). Follow the trail to the left (north) at the metal sign that says Fresno Divide Trail. From that point it is 3 miles with a gradual increase in elevation up to the overlook. Look for rock cairns (stacked rocks) and rock alignments if the trail becomes hard to follow.

The trail will lead you through relatively flat desert scrub lands and up onto a low terrace. Travel north along the terrace a short distance then descend into a braided drainage then back up onto an exposed layer of red volcanic rock and on to the overlook. Along the way you will see stunning views of the Bofecillos Mountains, Fresno Creek, the Contrabando Dome, and the Flatirons of the Solitario.

From the overlook the trail descends steeply another 0.2 mile to the junction with the Dome Trail. Proceed downhill if you wish to continue on a longer adventure or turn back and follow the same route to return to the trailhead for a 6.5-mile round-trip hike.

The vibrant colors and textures of the landscape are the result of complex geological processes associated with the development of volcanoes in the Bofecillos Mountains and exposure of marine limestones uplifted by the formation of the Wax Factory Laccolith millions of years ago. Subsequent erosion caused by wind and rain has resulted in the formation of the landforms, arroyos, canyons and drainages that make the terrain so unique and difficult to navigate.

Vegetation along the trail is typical of the Chihuahuan Desert, dominated by creosote bush, sotol, lechuguilla, prickly pear, ocotillo and several species of grasses and cacti. This trail is most colorful from March to May when many of the cacti and flowers are in bloom. Multiple blooms may occur if rain is plentiful. Water in Fresno Creek and nearby locales such as the Contrabando Waterhole attracts wildlife. Mountain lions, deer, jack rabbits, javelina and a variety of lizard and snake species including the Western Diamondback rattlesnake may be encountered.

Before this was a recreational trail, it was used by settlers, ranchers and miners to move pack animals between homesteads and equipment to and from mining and candelilla wax processing operations. Ruins such as the Rancho de los Rios homestead along Fresno Creek, the Buena Suerte Flotation Mill (candelilla processing) and the Whit-Roy mine (cinnabar mine) are tangible reminders of the rich history of the Big Bend. Prehistorically, Native American peoples traveled through and camped in the vicinity as evidenced by occasional scatters of chipped stone debris. The absence of more permanent structures and burned rock middens for processing food suggests that prehistoric peoples were on the move and did not stay long in this particular area. Please respect all cultural resources and help to preserve them by refraining from collecting artifacts or disturbing structures.