

Big Bend Complex – Outdoor Adventure Spring Break

Introduction: This guide is to help families decide if the Big Bend Adventure is right for them. It will also help them to pack accordingly for the activities and travel associated with the trip.

Dates: There will be 3 separate, 4 day/3 night workshops scheduled for the week of March 9th – 17th. The workshops will be identical except for the dates of attendance.

- (BRR I) 1st workshop: Saturday March 9th through Tuesday March 12th
- (BBR II) 2nd workshop: Monday March 11th through Thursday March 14th
- (BBR III) 3rd workshop: Thursday March 14th through Sunday March 17th

Attendees: Each workshop will have room for 8 family units. A family consists of 6 participants. The limit of 6 is established by the size of our tents. Generally speaking 3 adults and 3 children will fit inside of a tent comfortably. Bringing an extra tent or extra participants will not be allowed due to size limitations of our campsites. If you want to bring more than 6 participants, please make a 2nd reservation.

Outdoor Comfort: Texas Outdoor Family Staff will be with the attendees every step of the way for guidance and comfort. It should be recognized that we will be in a wilderness location where the creature comforts of home will not be readily accessible. It will be a safe and wonderful experience, but for the benefit of our campers we strongly encourage families to have some camping experience or at least a feeling of comfort in outdoor spaces.

Ages: It is strongly recommended that children should be no younger than 5 years old

Rough Agenda for the trip (subject to change):

All Activities are optional but encouraged!

- Day 1:
 - 4pm - Arrive at Barton Warnock Center in Terlingua TX
 - 4:15pm – Welcome and Orientation at the Barton Warnock Center
 - 4:50pm – Travel to Grassy Banks Campsites
 - 5pm – Adults: Setting up camp demonstration/Leave No Trace conversation
 - Kids: Junior Ranger Hike with a Park Staff
 - 5:45pm – Building Base Camp, getting settled, and dinner
 - 7:30pm – Evening Presentation that will include Desert Wildlife and Ranch History
 - 10pm – Lights Out
- Day 2:
 - 8am – Breakfast
 - 9am – Breaking Down Camp
 - 10am – Kayaking the Rio Grande
 - Noon – Picnic lunch on the banks of the River
 - 2:15pm – Traveling to the Interior of Big Bend Ranch
 - 3:45pm – Meet TOF staff at Ft. Leaton, directions will be provided on the day of
 - 5pm – Meal prepared for TOF participants by park staff (additional charge, see FAQs)

- 6pm – Building Camp
- 7:15pm – Dutch Oven Cooking Demonstration (Burn ban permitting)
 - Dutch Ovens will be made available for families to use for meals on Day 3.
- 10pm – Lights Out
- Day 3:
 - 8am – Breakfast
 - 9:30am – Nature Hike to rock paintings created generations ago
 - 11:30am – Lunch during our hike
 - 1pm – Geocaching: High tech scavenger hunt
 - 3:30pm – Nature Photography Workshop or Junior Ranger Crafts
 - 6pm – Dinner, Dutch Ovens available for us. Suggested recipes provided
 - 7:30pm – Wrap up and reflect on the trip together
- Day 4:
 - 10am – Gear broken down and collected & Travel home

Gear: The Texas Outdoor Family (TOF) program will provide all of the necessary camping gear, including a tent, stove, pots, pans, cooking utensils, wash basins, air mattresses and hand pump (for adults), foam sleeping pads (for kids), coffee presses, sponge, and lanterns.

Gear NOT provided: sleeping bags, bedding, personal hygienic items, and food (except for dinner on Day 2)

Temperatures and Apparel: The desert temperatures change dramatically from Day to Night. It can be very warm during the day (85 degrees +) and cool off at night (40 degrees). Packing layers and breathable clothing will make your stay comfortable. Wool garments tend to breathe very well and provide heat even when wet. Vented or thin shirts and light colors are recommended for day activities. Shorts are discouraged due to the number of thorny or needled plants.

Footwear: Traveling in gravel and sand can be difficult. We encourage a good pair of hiking boots with good ankle support and a good sole for hiking. For our kayak trip, water shoes or Velcro/buckling sandals are encouraged. Please no thong sandals. Depending on water levels we may need to briefly drag our boats.

Other Items: Sunscreen, sun glasses, and a wide brimmed hat are a must. Also encouraged are reusable water bottles. This will save you room in your vehicle. Clean water will be provided at each campsite. TOF staff is trained in wilderness first aid and will have an extensive First Aid Kit. We encourage you to bring a small first Aid Kit consisting of bandages, tweezers, allergy medicines, and antibiotic ointments. You might find binoculars and nature journals to be a fun addition to your packing list.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. Can anyone attend?

A. The program will guide you through the basics of camping and some specifics to desert camping. We suggest that participants have some basic camping knowledge or are at least comfortable in an outdoor setting due to the remote nature of this special weekend. Sorry, we are not accepting group reservations (such as scout

groups, etc). Participants will only be allowed to register for the number of sites necessary to accommodate their family. The recommended age for children is 5 years old and above.

Q. How far is it to the Barton Warnock Center?

A. It depends on where you are leaving from. It is approximately 8 hours from Austin, 7.5 hours from San Antonio, 11 Hours from Houston, and 10 Hours from Dallas. These times only account for stopping for gas, fast food, and restroom breaks.

Q. Is there a suggested place to stay along the way if we want to split the travel into multiple days?

A. Alpine, TX is approximately 2 hours North of the Barton Warnock Center with hotel accommodations and small town amenities. Fort Stockton, TX is on I-10, 3 Hours north of the Center with large grocery stores and a Wal-mart for any last minute items.

Q. How many people can attend?

A. Our tents are designed to be 6 person tents. Ideally for comfort we suggest 2 adults and 4 children. The campsites we will be using are surrounded by vegetation and room for a 2nd tent is not available. If you want to bring more than 6 participants, please make a second reservation.

Q. Can we bring our pet?

A. **No.** Our programming does not leave room for pets. Additionally the desert is not a friendly place for animals that are not native to the area and it is for their own safety that they do not attend. Families who bring a pet will be asked to leave with no refund given.

Q. Will you need specifics about the ages of participants?

A. Yes. We will need to know how many people are coming and their ages so we can ensure that we have enough seats in kayaks for our adventure on Day 2.

Q. Will an adult with limited experience kayaking be able to navigate the Rio Grande?

A. Yes, contrary to its name, the Rio Grande is actually a slow moving and quite shallow river. In most years we are hoping for rain prior to our arrival to ensure that there is enough water in the river to make for an enjoyable paddling trip.

Q. Will my young child be able to participate in kayaking?

A. We will have single and double kayaks. The single kayaks are often reserved for parents or young adults needing to paddle alone due to odd family numbers. Double kayaks are often reserved for parents with young children. Depending on the size and weight of the paddlers, a double kayak can often accommodate 2 adults and 1 child.

Q. If rainfall or drought is excessive; will there be an alternative to kayaking?

A. In the event of severe drought kayaking will still be available in an abbreviated form. In the event that severe flooding occurs on the river, alternative activities will be available. River conditions will be known in the weeks leading up to the event, allowing for ample time to prepare.

Q. Do I need a special vehicle to travel the desert roads?

A. We will be traveling on a 26 mile, maintained dirt road. It is passable by all vehicles with normal ground clearance. Trucks and SUVs are best, but sedans did fine on a previous trip. A spare tire is a **must have** as well as a jack and components to change a tire. Do not wait until you need the jack to ensure it is operational.

Q. Will ice be available?

A. Ice will be available on days 2 and 3 of the trip at no charge. Please arrive with your cooler iced down.

Q. Will firewood be available?

A. Firewood will be available on days 2 and 3 of the trip for a small charge. All fires will be in accordance with the status of the burn ban at the time of the trip.

Q. What are the restroom and shower facilities like?

A. The restrooms at our campsites will be clean and well kept composting toilets. Flushing toilets will be within a short drive of camp on each night. Showers and hot water will be available on days 2, 3, and 4.

Q. What amenities will we have at our campsite?

A. All campsites will have a picnic table, tent area, fire ring, and parking space. Water will be provided by TOF staff. Electricity will be available on a very limited basis.

Q. How many meals should we plan for?

A. Dinners on night 1 and 3, Picnic lunch on days 2 and 3, and Breakfast on day 2, 3, and 4. Dinner on night 2 can be provided by the park for a fee. It is suggested that TOF campers take advantage of the meal to save time on what will be a busy day. Make a reservation by calling 432.358.4444 at least 10 days prior to the event. Please specify that you are with the TOF program and how many people will be eating and on which date, either Sunday March 10th (BBRI), Tuesday March 12th(BBR II) or Friday March 15th(BBR III). Buffet style dinner will cost \$12 per person.

Q. What if there is a burn ban?

A. Gas stoves will be provided for cooking regardless of the burn ban. If the burn ban is in place, open and charcoal fires will not be allowed. The status of the burn ban will be known closer to the event.

Q. Do the fire pits have grills?

A. Yes. They will only be available for use if the burn ban is not in effect.

Q. Is potable water available to us at camp?

A. TOF staff will provide drinking water in large 5 gallon jugs. We suggest bringing a reusable water bottle to reduce on waste and saving you packing room.

Q. Is the border area of Texas safe?

A. Yes. The land immediately on the other side of the Rio Grande is very remote and extremely difficult to travel. For this reason there is very little border traffic in the area. U.S. Border Patrol agents will be visible and have the border under 24 hour surveillance for any activity.

Q. Do we need a passport?

A. No. You will be traveling through a Border Patrol checkpoint on your way home and you will be requested to identify your citizenship, but a passport is not required.

Q. Is there cell phone or wifi service available?

A. Cell phone service is very limited and hard to find. Do not rely on it to make calls. TOF staff will have a satellite phone for emergency use only. Wifi will be available on nights 2 and 3 at the Saucedo Bunkhouse.

Q. If we want to do something other than what is on the agenda, is that okay?

A. Yes. Horses and mountain bikes will be available for rent on Day 3. Check with the park for details: 432.358.4444. Additionally there are miles and miles of hiking trails and 4x4 roads to be explored.

Q. Is gasoline readily available?

A. We **strongly encourage** you to top off your gas tank in the town of Study Butte, TX before arriving in Lajitas at the Barton Warnock Center. Having a full tank of gas will save you time on Day 2.

Q. Will we have an opportunity to get supplies that we may have forgotten at home?

A. On day 2 we will be near a small town of Presidio, TX that does have a grocery store and gas stations. Ideally we want to avoid stopping to save time for dinner and setting up camp. Your last Wal-mart will be in Fort Stockton, TX.

Q. How many staff will be at the event?

A. There will be at least 2 rangers with the group at all times. Additionally there will be trained volunteers along for the weekend to help with whatever needs there may be.

Q. What should I pack?

A. Check the above information. Additionally we will be sending a packing list, some suggested meal ideas, and Dutch Oven recipes.

Q. Will we be camping at the same sites all 3 nights?

A. No. In order to get the most out of the experience, we will be camping near the Barton Warnock Center along the Rio Grande on night 1, then driving to our camp at Saucedo for the next 2 nights (Map: <http://goo.gl/maps/b0LdE> Point A is the Barton Warnock Center, Point B is Saucedo) . The drive can take 2.5 hours, but is only 70 miles. This drive includes the 26 miles of dirt road and is the most scenic and beautiful drive in Texas. Rangers will be along to guide all participants to the next camp.

Q. Do we have to leave at the end of the program?

A. The TOF staff will need to collect all gear from the families at the end of the program. There are accommodations at Saucedo that do not require camping. There is a “bunkhouse” and a “Big House” for rent that both have comfortable accommodations with beds and linens. Call the park for specific details and meal availability.

Q. Are there suggested places to see on the way home?

A. It will likely be faster for you to travel home via the town of Presidio and Hwy 67 North. Along this route you will pass Ft. Leaton, a historic trading post, and through Marfa, TX. Marfa is an eccentric town, famous for the Marfa Lights at night. Consider visiting both to add to the experience of your trip through West Texas.

Any additional questions, please contact the following:

Texas Outdoor Family staff: tofsp@tpwd.state.tx.us or 512.389.8903

Barton Warnock Specific Questions: 432.424.3327

Link for mapping: <http://goo.gl/maps/nOq78> (mapquest and google maps are not accurate for this location)

Saucedo Specific Questions: 432.358.4444

Link for mapping: <http://goo.gl/maps/Vvi5T> (mapquest and google maps are not accurate for this location))