

Make the most of your visit

Some people have limited time to explore and sample the wonders of Big Bend Ranch State Park. The following is offered as a brief guide. Remember that orientation requirements and park entrance fees apply.



Photo: © E. Dan Kispert

See exhibits at Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center in Lajitas.

ONE DAY

1. From Presidio headed eastward, stop at Fort Leaton State Historic Site for orientation and to visit the exhibits. Enter the park at the Botella Junction entry station. Continue on, stopping frequently to take in the scenery and read the interpretive waysides along the 20+ mile route. Stop at Cuevas Amarillas to check out the prehistoric rock art and bedrock mortars (grinding holes). Once at Saucedá Ranger Station, peruse the interpretive exhibits on the park's ranching heritage. Enjoy a picnic lunch under a shade tree outside the bunkhouse, then drive to the Solitario Overlook a few miles further. There you can actually see the exterior of the park's signature geologic formation.

2. If a short hike appeals to you, take either the Cinco Tinajas or Ojito Adentro trail as you are exiting the park. Both trailheads are immediately adjacent to the Saucedá road. The Ojito Adentro Trail traverses desert scrub into moist riparian woodland. This oasis-like patch of green is a particularly good spot to bird-watch. The Cinco Tinajas Trail near Saucedá is well marked; elevation change is only 200 feet and the vistas of the inner reaches of the park are breathtaking. Tinajas are naturally formed "bowls" that hold water when many other sources are dry.

3. If you are coming from Study Butte/Terlingua, stop at Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center in Lajitas for orientation and to peruse the interpretive exhibit on the region's natural and cultural history as well as the desert gardens. Stop in the park store for a wide range of informative books, maps and pamphlets. Then, continue westward on the River Road, stopping at the many pull-outs to enjoy a picnic lunch, revel in the view and check out the wayside exhibits. Near the east end of the drive, turn northward to Saucedá Ranger Station as described above, or continue on to Fort Leaton.

THREE DAYS

1. The Rancherías Loop Trail is a two-night, three-day camping and hiking experience. Be sure to receive orientation at Barton Warnock Center or Fort Leaton and secure a permit. The elevation changes are dramatic, but for hearty souls the hike is well worth it.

2. Receive orientation, secure your permit and choose a campsite that suits your interests and your vehicle type. Many campsites such as Los Ojitos and Fresno Vista are accessible by two-wheel drive vehicles. Others, such as Las Burras and Yedra 1 & 2, require a 4x4 vehicle with high clearance. Always check with a ranger on road conditions. Take

all your food, water and other supplies and truly get away from it all for three days of hiking and bird-watching, or simply kick back and enjoy the solitude.

3. Combine a campout with hiking and biking on the Horsetrap Hike and Bike Trail with short excursions to the interior of the Solitario in your 4x4. Parts of Horsetrap offer dramatic views of the interior of the park including the Cienega Mountains and Fresno Peak. And, of course, the Solitario is unforgettable. Many park trails are mountain-bike accessible. Check with a ranger for options.

ONE WEEK

With an entire week, we suggest you develop your own customized itinerary from the numerous options available. Many people spend several days camping, hiking, biking and/or horseback riding, then go to the River Road for a relaxed day excursion that might include a raft, canoe or kayak trip on the Rio Grande. You have many choices. The world is yours at Big Bend Ranch State Park!

CERTIFIED COMMERCIAL GUIDES AND OUTFITTERS

Big Bend River Tours
432-371-3033 or
800-545-4240

Desert Sports
432-371-2727 or
888-989-6900

Angell Expeditions
432-229-3713

Far Flung Outdoor Center
432-371-2489
800-839-7238

Lajitas Stables
432-371-2212
800-887-4331



Know before you go

Multi-Use Trails

Some of the park's trails are suitable for hiking only. Other trails are available for mountain bikers and equestrians also. Speak with a park ranger for details and use options. Remember to take plenty of water, regardless of your activity!

Biking

When biking, always wear a helmet and protective clothing. Know your ability and limits.

Horseback Riding

All pack-and-saddle stock users must obtain a backcountry use permit, whether for day use or overnight. Equestrians must bring their own weed-free horse feed. All horses must have documentation of a current Coggins test.

River Access

The Rio Grande provides opportunities for rafting, kayaking, canoeing and free bank fishing. Several river access points are found along F.M. 170. Colorado Canyon includes Class II and Class III rapids — not considered dangerous under normal flow conditions.

Outfitters

Local outfitters can provide guides and assist you with equipment needs. Potential services may include nature/birding hikes, mountain biking tours, horseback rides, river trips and campouts.