



Scan this with your Smartphone's QR Reader for more information along the trail. Download a free QR reader App using the Market feature on your android phone.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE

- Ice Age mesquite trees*
- Ranchland grasses*
- Dugout materials*
- Cattle and animal forage plants*
- Wildlife scat and tracks*
- Permian red beds*
- Ogallala formation*
- Native plants, trees, and shrubs*
- Barbed wire from the LX Ranch*
- Insects*
- Birds*
- Reptiles*
- "Cowboy Plums"*
- Alibates flint*



Fun Facts:

The Honey Mesquite is an extremely hardy, drought-tolerant plant because it can draw water from the water table through its long taproot (recorded at up to 190 ft. {58 m} depth).

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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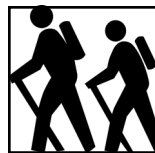
Regulations:

All natural features, plants, animals, archeological sites, and historical objects are protected by federal law.

Hiking Essentials

1. Water
2. Hat
3. Pack—to carry essentials
4. Appropriate footwear

Hike Smart and Have Fun



Leave No Trace

If you don't want this brochure, please place in the box

The Mesquite Trail



Journey back in time to the early ranching days of the Texas Panhandle

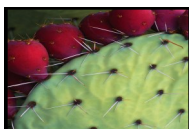
0.3 mile hike

Self-guided Tour



First Stop Cowboys

You are hiking on what used to be the LX ranch, owned by Bates and Beals in 1877. Allen Bates was the son of W.H. Bates and had a dolomite and mud dugout, not far from this location. Allen Bates, or “Allie” Bates, for whom this monument is named, probably wore Levis, leather chaps, a broad-brimmed Stetson hat, high-heeled boots, bandana, and shiny spurs made of Mexican silver. To this day, no one knows what happened to this mysterious LX ranch line foreman and cowboy, “Allie” Bates, whose name has become famous in this part of the Texas Panhandle.



Along the Trail

Look around at the plants, trees, and grasses near you. You may see sage, prickly pear, yucca, buffalo grass, and many hearty mesquite trees. Cattle also eat many of these plants and can go for days without water by eating prickly pear and yucca stalks. Along the trail you will also find plants poisonous to cattle such as silver-leaf nightshade and purple loco weed. Their cumulative effects cause the cattle to stagger and act crazy, often to the point of death. Cattle in the Texas Panhandle feast on bear grass, or yucca, because of the tender blossoms and green stalks. Since the late 1990s, a number of Texas ranchers have stopped sending their cattle to feedlots and are keeping them home on the range where they can forage on pastures, their native diet. This type of beef can be found in food stores and may be called organic or free range beef. You may see Texas cattle grazing near the Alibates National Monument along Cas Johnson road.



Second Stop Barbed Wire

The barbed wire fence along the trail was a new and modern invention in 1874. Barbed wire was the first wire technology capable of restraining cattle. These bristling wire fences began to partition the wide open spaces of the Texas Plains during this era. Wire fences were cheaper to build than their alternatives. One alternative was Osage Orange, a thorny bush, which was time-consuming to transplant and grow. Open and free land passed into history with this new invention. With enclosed ranges, each rancher had exclusive use of fine bulls placed with the cows, which upgraded the quality of the native herds. Today, around 95 percent of Texas land is private and fenced with barbed wire. The barbed wire you will pass along the trail is A. Baker two point barb, patented in 1883 by George Baker of Des Moines, Iowa.



Third Stop Goodnight

Charles Goodnight was one of the first ranchers of the Texas Panhandle and was also a naturalist. Goodnight was responsible for preserving the buffalo, or bison. His herd still roams the prairies near Caprock Canyons State Park. Legend says Goodnight often had his cowboys place wild plum seeds in their saddle bags and instructed them to spread these wild seeds on their journeys. If you look around, you will find a wild plum thicket, which could very well be some Charles Goodnight “Cowboy Plums.” The wild plum is native to the Texas Panhandle and grows in sandy and rocky soil. Native Americans dried the small plums on hot rocks and stored them for future use. Wild plum blossoms appear sometimes in the early spring and fill the air with a sweet, pleasant fragrance. Wild plums can be gathered and canned, frozen, dried, or preserved. Wild plum jelly is a favorite of local residents of the Texas Panhandle.



End of the Trail Last Stop

Finish and take a break at the picnic table under the large mesquite tree. On the ground, there may be mesquite beans, which dropped from the tree in August or September. In summer, the beans will usually be hanging from the tree. The mesquite tree has been growing here since the Ice Age, which lasted from about 1.8 million to 10,000 years ago. Many megafauna mammals feasted on the leaves and beans. These large herbivores ate the pods and then dispersed them widely in their feces. Mesquite was again spread by cattle, who were brought here by the Spanish in the 1500s. Coronado may have passed right where you are standing with cattle, looking for the seven cities of gold in 1540. The French also passed through this area to trade with Plains Indians in 1682. The mesquite bean can be ground into flour for breads, cakes, and any food containing flour. Today, we often find mesquite jelly at various farmers’ markets and retail stores. The mesquite bean contains 30 percent sugar and is mineral-rich with calcium, iron, sulfur, and potassium. Mesquite is known to live two centuries in the Texas Panhandle and is hearty during drought periods.

