

# Guadalupe Mountains

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Guadalupe Mountains National Park



## Senior Ranger Program



photo by Doug Buehler

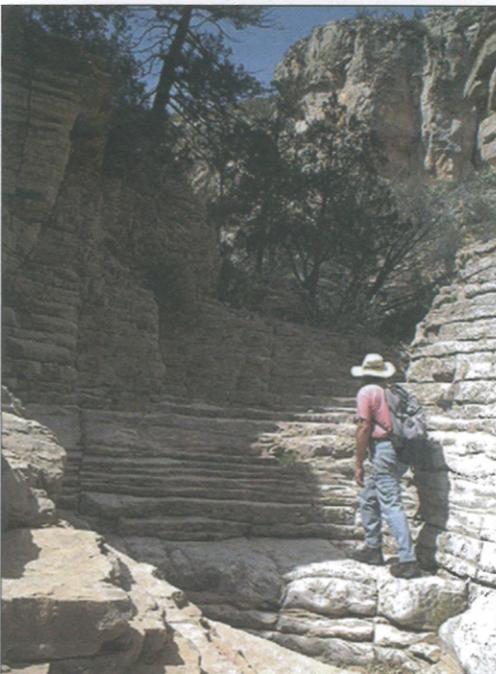


photo by Maureen Bigelow



photo by John Cwiklik

# Beginnings

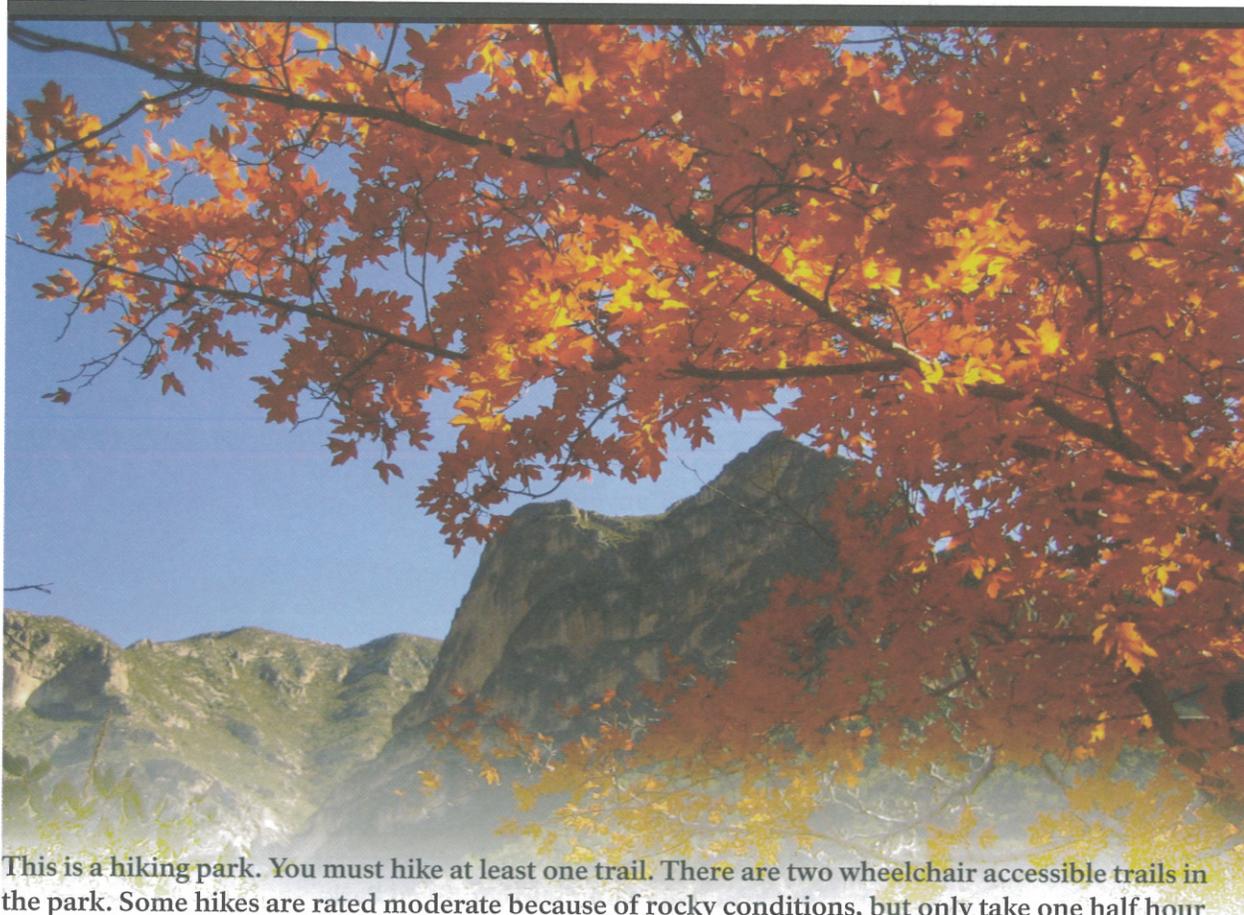


## Safety Always Comes First

- Drink plenty of water when exploring in the Chihuahuan Desert, for it is very dry. You need to replenish your water reserves often, even if you don't feel thirsty. Carry water when driving and walking. (A gallon a day while hiking)
- Wear sunscreen, a hat, and sunglasses. The desert sun can burn you very quickly.
- Carry out your litter. It can be very dangerous for the animals in the park. Deer have been found with plastic bags in their digestive tracts causing starvation. Toilet paper and cigarette butts must be carried out.
- Rattlesnakes may be encountered anywhere. If you see one, don't try to move it. Walk around it. Leave it alone. The snake is part of the park resources.
- Watch where you put your hands and feet. Dark places under rocks crevices and holes are often homes for spiders, snakes and scorpions.
- Try not to travel alone. Mountain lions have been encountered in the park and there is better safety in numbers.
- Be careful of cacti and thorny bushes. Spines and thorns are very painful and difficult to remove.
- Don't feed the wildlife. This is dangerous for the animals as well as the people. Animals are wild in our park and may bite. (The horses and mules included.)

Senior Ranger Program created by Volunteer-In-Park Maureen Bigelow

## What's Involved



This is a hiking park. You must hike at least one trail. There are two wheelchair accessible trails in the park. Some hikes are rated moderate because of rocky conditions, but only take one half hour to one hour to complete. If you have more time, many other trails will also be an option for you (see back page for a full listing of day hikes). Upon completion of the Senior Ranger Program, you will earn a patch and certificate. The requirements are listed below, divided into two categories, one for those making a shorter visit and one for those who plan to stay longer.

### Shorter Visits

- 1) Hike at least one trail.
- 2) Watch the 12 minute slide show at the Pine Springs Visitor Center.
- 3) Complete three of the following activities:
  - Where Am I?
  - What is that Plant?
  - Slide Show Sleuth
  - Just Outside the Doors
  - Map Work
  - Critters

### Longer Visits

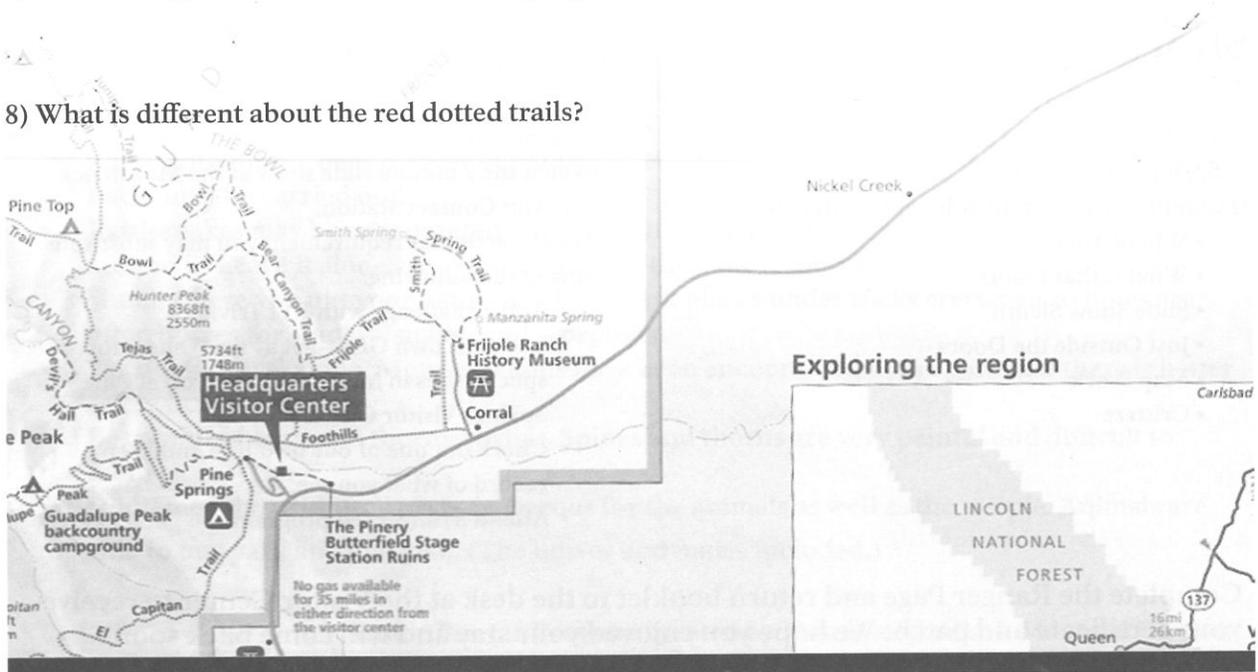
- 1) All of the requirements listed in the Shorter Visits column plus:
- 2) Watch the 7 minute slide show at the McKittrick Canyon Contact Station.
- 3) For the activities requirement you may substitute any of the following:
  - Add a challenge with FYI Trivia
  - Use your own GPS—get a “find” sheet for special sites in McKittrick Canyon at Pine Springs Visitor Center.
  - Check out one of our bird lists and keep a record of what you see.
  - Attend a ranger led program.

Complete the Ranger Page and return booklet to the desk at the Visitor Center to receive your certificate and patch. We hope you enjoyed your stay and will come back soon!

# Map Work

Before starting this activity, get a map of the park and its trails from the Visitor Center. All you need is on that map.

- 1) Which mountain is the highest in Texas and what is its elevation?
- 2) Where would you access the Permian Reef Trail?
- 3) What is the name of the cabin in McKittrick Canyon?
- 4) From what state do you enter Dog Canyon in Guadalupe Mountains National Park?
- 5) The Butterfield Stage Route crosses an unpaved road in the park. Where does the road lead?
- 6) Name the National Forest north of Guadalupe Mountains National Park.
- 7) What does green-shaded area of the map represent?
- 8) What is different about the red dotted trails?



# Where Am I?

Match the letter with the name of the place in the picture.

Williams Ranch \_\_\_\_\_

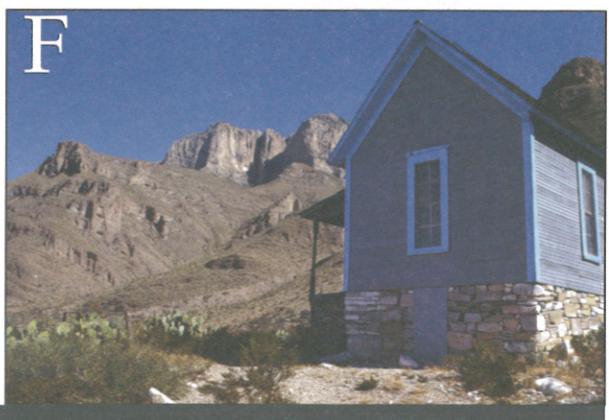
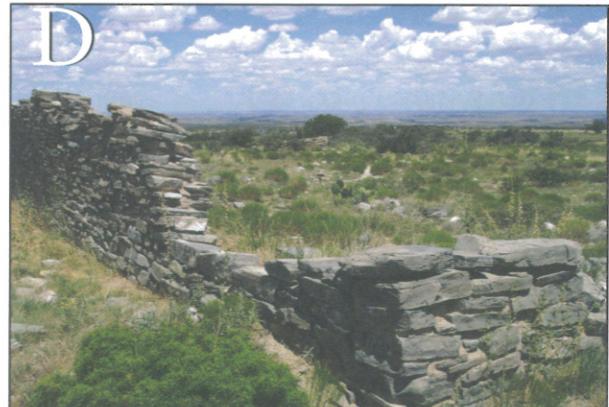
The Grotto \_\_\_\_\_

Frijole Ranch \_\_\_\_\_

The Pinery \_\_\_\_\_

Pratt Cabin \_\_\_\_\_

Dog Canyon Ranger Station \_\_\_\_\_



## Just Outside the Visitor Center Doors

Step outside and up to the viewing area in the shade. Enjoy the mountains and read the information there for these answers.

- 1) Who was the man who was the foundation of the National Park Service, defining and establishing the policies under which it began its mission of conserving the parks unimpaired for future generations?
- 2) How many millions of years ago did the Capitan Reef form?
- 3) How many miles of hiking trails are in the park?
- 4) When was the Pinery built?
- 5) Which trail will take you to the relict conifer forest found at the Bowl?
- 6) Name one of the two wheelchair-accessible trails in the park.
- 7) What is the elevation of Guadalupe Peak, the highest point in Texas?
- 8) What type of vegetation do you see on the ridge?
- 9) Name two types of trees found in the park.
- 10) In broad terms, how many life zones are there in the park. These life zones are distinguished by elevation, temperature, moisture, wind, soils, and exposure to the sun.
- 11) Which life zone is found at the base of the mountains?
- 12) What is the most famous feature of Guadalupe Mountains National Park?
- 13) What is another name for the canyon zone?
- 14) Approximately how many bird species are present in the park?

# Critters



There are many “critters” in Guadalupe Mountains National Park. Using the resources available at the Visitors Center—electronic ranger, exhibits, brochures and ranger information—name 10 from these hints.

- 1) A night hunter with raccoon-like tail, it is often called a miner’s cat, but it is not a cat at all.
- 2) The largest hairiest spiders in the U.S. are found in the fall walking across the parking lot at Guadalupe Mountains NP looking for mates an hour or two after sunrise.
- 3) This bird rarely flies, but zigzags swiftly across the desert in search of insects, lizards, small snakes including rattlers, small birds and eggs, rodents, spiders, and scorpions. It pursues its prey on the ground at speeds of 15 mph.
- 4) This hooved mammal’s ears are  $\frac{2}{3}$  the size of its head, thus giving it its name. Always on the lookout for predators, they move about the park in groups.
- 5) Called the collared peccary, it has another name. They are pig-like, dark gray, and active in the morning or late afternoon.
- 6) This mammal is not a rabbit at all, but a hare (its babies are born with hair and sight). It uses its large ears for cooling in the desert heat.
- 7) Active during the day, this reptile can be seen on many of the park’s trails. Part of its common name is due to the whip-like appearance of its tail.
- 8) The largest canine predator in the park, this mammal can attain speeds of 40 mph in pursuit of prey.
- 9) Effortlessly flying on updrafts, this bird is glorious to watch. It can locate carrion from 2.5 miles away.
- 10) This secretive, rarely seen mammal will travel with its young up to two years. Its chief food is deer. (Make yourself big when you see one).

## What is that Plant?

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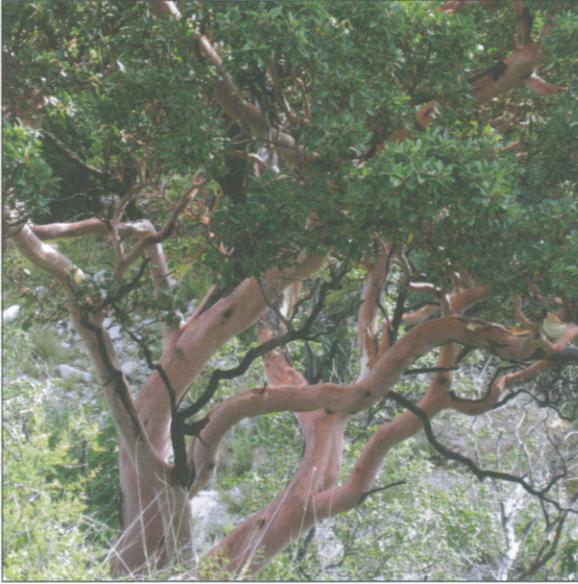
An indicator plant of the Chihuahuan Desert, this plant grows in colonies in McKittrick Canyon at the 5000' level and in the lower elevations found on the west side of the park. The leaves are longer than wide and have sharp, downward-curved spines. The leaves form a rosette of yellow to gray-green, spine-tipped daggers, hazardous to walk through.

What is this? \_\_\_\_\_



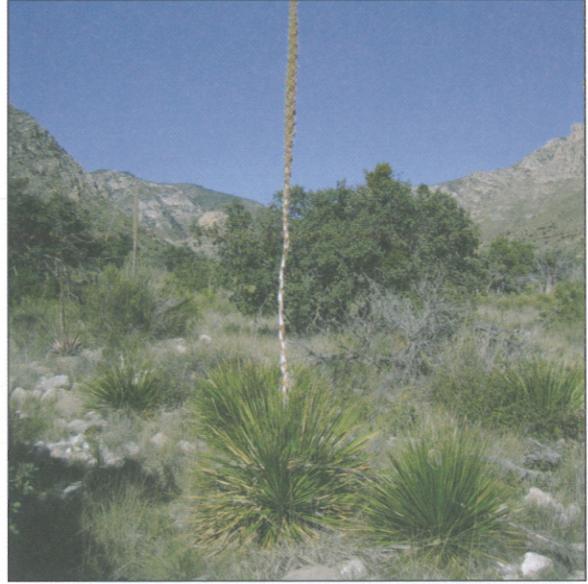
A widespread cactus of the Southwest, the greenish flattened pads of this plant hold long spines and tiny barbed hairs. The oval fruits, called tunas, are red to purple and juicy when eaten. They are picked with great caution and used in "jelly". The young pads of this plant are edible.

What is this? \_\_\_\_\_



Not a cactus, this tree with the reddish bark that peels with age revealing a younger white or pink bark is often mistakenly referred to as “manzanita”, a similar-looking shrub common in other parts of the Southwest.

What is this? \_\_\_\_\_



Producing a tall (up to 13 feet) flowering stalk May to August each year, this plant is found only in the Chihuahuan Desert. It has numerous flexible leaves at its base lined with curved spines.

What is this? \_\_\_\_\_

## For Your Information



Using brochures available at the desk, please answer these more in depth questions concerning the geology and history.

- 1) Where does the water in Smith Spring come from?
  
- 2) In which building did J.C. Hunter stay at Frijole Ranch, when he regularly came to hunt in the area?
  
- 3) In Permian geologic times, this cliff, then part of an underwater reef, was eroded by wave action on the seaward-facing side of the mountains. The most striking feature of the Guadalupe Mountains National Park, this 8000-foot high bluff was used by settlers as a landmark on the route through Guadalupe Pass. What is its name?
  
- 4) What type of coach was used by the Butterfield Overland Mail through through Texas and the Southwest?
  
- 5) The El Paso Salt Wars occurred below the mountain range in the Salt Basin. Many people were robbed, assaulted and murdered for the need of salt, which once was communal property there. This short-lived war very nearly led to an armed confrontation between what two countries in 1877?



6) Who proclaimed McKittrick Canyon to be the “most beautiful spot in Texas?” He donated over 5000 acres including the Stone Cabin in McKittrick and Ship on the Desert to the Park Service in the 1960’s.

7) Listen to the recorded voice of the oil geologist at McKittrick Canyon. The descriptions include waterfalls formed over deposits of this in the watercourse. Name this precipitate of the limestone and water.

8) Drive 7.3 miles one-way for an hour, over a bone rattling landscape to view this house that sits at the base of a 3,000’ rock cliff in Bone Canyon beneath Shumard Peak and Guadalupe Peak. Name this site.

9) Around 1917 Uncle Dolph owned the ranch just mentioned, living there until 1941. He managed between 500 and 3000 animals with help. What Judge purchased the ranch?

10) Who painted the watercolors found in the Visitor Center Theater?

# Slideshow Sleuth

Attend the 12 minute slideshow at the Visitor Center. Answer the following questions after viewing the show.

- 1) What is the name of the rock formation that appears at the beginning of the show?
- 2) How many acres are there in Guadalupe Mountains National Park?
- 3) What is the name of the desert that surrounds the Guadalupe Mountains?
- 4) When did Congress establish the park?
- 5) Can you drive to the "Top of Texas"?
- 6) Name two types of conifers that make up the forest found in "The Bowl".
- 7) What tribe of Native Americans used the Guadalupe for water, food, and shelter?
- 8) Which canyon has permanent water?
- 9) What was the name of the stageline that included the Pinery?
- 10) What is the name now used by one of the first homesteads built in the Guadalupe?
- 11) Name another mountain range that displays portions of the Capitan Reef?
- 12) How are the Guadalupe Mountains like "an island in the desert"?

## Chihuahuan Desert Fun Facts

During dry conditions an ocotillo plant will drop all of its leaves in order to survive. It will grow new leaves after an adequate rainfall. It has a beautiful red flower.

A mesquite tree's roots can go 80-100 feet underground in order to reach water.

The roadrunner has a special feature to help warm it. Fluffing up in the sun on cold days it exposes black skin beneath its feathers which absorb the sun's rays on cold days.

Deer have antlers (not horns) that are shed each year. The antlers take about six months to grow to their full size.

An agave's flowering stalk can grow nearly a foot in just a single day.

When diving for prey, peregrine falcons can reach speeds of up to 200 miles per hour. This makes the peregrine falcon one of the fastest animals on earth.

Mountain lions are North America's second largest cat. Only the jaguar of Mexico and Central America is larger.

If threatened, a horned lizard can shoot blood out of the corner of its eyes.

Scorpions are covered with several layers of wax so they lose water much more slowly than other desert animals.

A jackrabbit uses its large ears to radiate heat away from its body to keep cool.

The Mescalero Apaches were named for their reliance on the mescal, or agave, which formed one of the major staples in their diet and culture. Fiber for ropes, blankets, and sandals, and the roasted heart to be eaten or made into cakes for long travel brought them to the Guadalupe Mountains.

# Completion

This section must be completed to receive your patch and certificate.

Why do you think this is a National Park? What is the single most significant resource in this park?

What do Park Rangers Do?

The park rangers at Guadalupe Mountains National Park have different duties. Protection rangers enforce park regulations and assist in protecting visitors and the park environment. Interpretive rangers educate visitors through talks, walks, and other interpretive programs. They develop programs and brochures to better help the visitor understand this “jewel in the desert.” All the rangers along with volunteers and park staff work together to help protect and preserve Guadalupe Mountains National Park resources for both present and future generations. What can you do to help these rangers protect and preserve Guadalupe Mountains National Park?

Please read and sign the Senior Ranger Pledge:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, promise to help in the best way that I can to preserve America's National Parks. I will help others to enjoy learning about nature, history, and safety in our national parks. I will do my part to see that our national parks and everything in them are kept as they are for everyone to enjoy both now and in the future.



# Guadalupe Mountains Senior Ranger



\_\_\_\_\_

*is hereby awarded this certificate  
in recognition of the successful completion  
of the Senior Ranger Program*

*on the \_\_\_\_ day of the month of \_\_\_\_ in the year of \_\_\_\_.*

\_\_\_\_\_

witnessed by Park Ranger

*Dennis A. Vasquez*

\_\_\_\_\_

authorized by Superintendent Dennis Vásquez

# Dayhikes

Bring food and water...Wear a hat and sunscreen...Carry a trail map... Pack all weather gear.  
All mileages listed are roundtrip distances.

## THE SHORTER HIKES

### 0.75 The Pinery Butterfield Stage Station behind Headquarters Visitor Center

Discover the desert on a walk to the ruins of The Pinery Station; wheel-chair accessible

### 0.4 Frijole Ranch Historic Museum to Manzanita Springs

At the Ranch learn about the rich history of the area and people here; Good birding area; Hike to Manzanita Springs, completing a great history lesson; (wheelchair accessible)

### 0.6 Indian Meadow Nature Loop at Dog Canyon

Visit the other side of our park and Dog Canyon (camping available). Hike the loop to explore a meadow environment.

### 0.9 McKittrick Canyon Center to the Nature Loop\*

Listen to the audio show by Wallace Pratt at the center. Hike the Nature Loop to learn about the Permian reef; plants of the Chihuahuan Desert from trailside exhibits. (classified as a moderate hike with a climb and downhill grade beside a ravine)

## THESE ARE MODERATE HIKES

### 2.3 Smith Spring Loop at Frijole Ranch

Look for birds, elk, and deer after Manzanita Springs on the rocky incline to a shady oasis, Smith Spring.

### 4.2 Devil's Hall from Campground

Slightly uphill, but rocky—when constructed trail ends at wash; follow wash to the left along the canyon floor to Hikers Staircase and the Devil's Hall to end of trail sign.

### 4.8 Pratt Cabin in McKittrick Canyon\*

Follow an intermittent stream through the desert into canyon woodlands to Pratt Cabin amid the canyon walls. Sit on porch!

### 6.8 Grotto Picnic area/ Hunter Line Cabin in McKittrick Canyon\*

See the seeping limestone; visit a rancher line shack; great for fall colors or shade in summer.

### 5.5 The Frijole/Foothills Trail

Make a loop connecting Pine Springs Campground and Frijole Ranch from either end. Look up Bear Canyon incline.

### 4.5 Marcus Overlook from Dog Canyon

Follow Bush Mountain Trail for 2.3 miles to a mountain ridge for view of West Dog Canyon.  
800 ft. elevation gain

### 11.3 El Capitan Trail from Campground

Recommended route El Capitan Trail, Salt Basin Overlook Trail, and El Capitan Trail. Beyond Salt Basin Overlook, the trail continues to Williams Ranch, an additional 4.7 miles one way!

## THE STRENUOUS CATEGORY

### 8.4 Campground to Guadalupe Peak

Clear day has great views; highest point in Texas (8,749'); 3,000 ft elevation gain; Avoid peak in high winds or thunderstorms; read the register at the monument on top.

### 8.4 Campground to the Bowl

2,500 ft. elevation gain; Hike the high country through a conifer forest; Recommended route a loop—Tejas Trail, Bowl Trail, Hunter Peak (side trip), Bear Canyon Trail, Frijole Trail back to campground.

### 8.4 The Permian Reef Trail from McKittrick Center\*

2,000 ft. elevation gain; view McKittrick Canyon from the top of this ancient reef structure; walk to the boundary of Lincoln National Forest; for serious geology buffs—bring geology guide book. Gates open at 8:00 a.m. and close at highway at 4:30 p.m. (hours extended to 6:00 p.m. during daylight savings time).

\* If you hike in McKittrick, gates open at 8:00 a.m. and close at 4:30 p.m.(extended to 6:00 p.m during daylight savings time). You are in the Mountain Time Zone.