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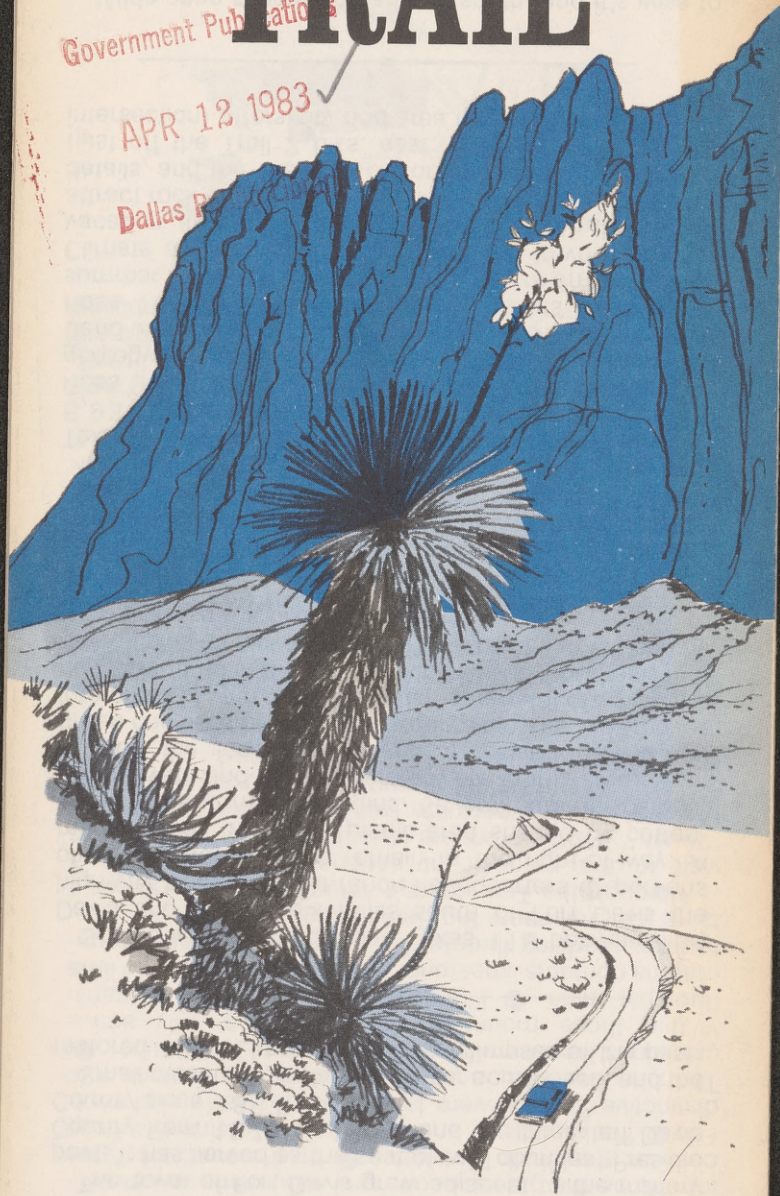
Ride the Texas

MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Government Publications

APR 12 1983

Dallas



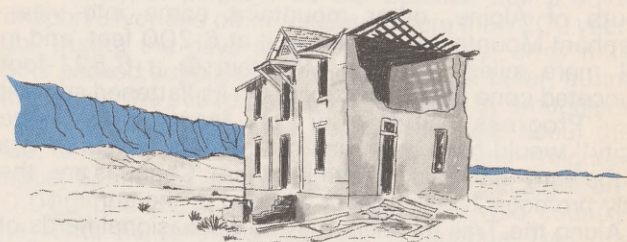
State Department of Highways
and Public Transportation
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TEXAS MOUNTAIN TRAIL

The Texas Mountain Trail is an adventure route through the tallest region of Texas. Along the Trail the rising land thrusts 90 peaks more than a mile high. This remote region of stark majesty awaited discovery for countless centuries before it became a home for nomadic Indian tribes who drew from it a meager life. To Spanish adventurers it was a formidable barrier that tested their stamina. Prospectors discovered the land, and from its hidden recesses some gouged great wealth, but not without effort, for mountains yield their treasures grudgingly. The same dramatic vistas on today's Mountain Trail unfolded for laboring wagon trains, and the ghosts of those sturdy pioneers often intrude into modern man's consciousness, demanding recognition for taming the primitive land.

The Texas Mountain Trail visits secluded canyons, unspoiled parks and weathered sites of living history. It leads travelers through "wide open spaces" where the only boundary is the horizon. But West Texas distances needn't trouble you. True, the fuel tank should be full before starting long segments of the Trail because facilities seem far apart when the gauge is nudging "E." But the highways are excellent, the routes well-traveled, and the scenery magnificent.

A well-stocked picnic basket can be a welcome traveling companion as many opportunities are provided for roadside picnicking in especially scenic spots.

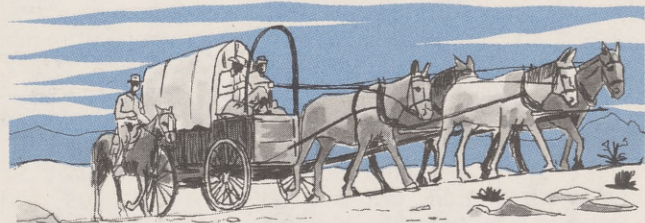
The starting point is El Paso, major metropolitan area on the Trail. The route description is presented in a clockwise direction. However, the Trail may be started at any point along the way and driven in either direction by carefully consulting the accompanying map and descriptive copy. See map legend for information about special Trail signs and arrows.

For the Mountain Trail experience to be complete and rewarding, a copy of *Texas! Live the Legend* should be used in conjunction with this folder. Cities visited by the Trail are described in the book, along with their attractions. The travel guide is available free from any Texas Tourist Bureau (there's one in El Paso) or by mail from the address at the end of this folder.

EL PASO
Pop. 425,122

El Paso County
Alt. 3,762

It is fitting that the Texas Mountain Trail begins in El Paso, a city whose location was determined by the mountains themselves. The Spanish named it El Paso del Norte, "The Pass of the North." And through it moved Indians, conquistadores, plainsmen and traders, railroad builders and desperados, missionaries and ranchers. Today, commercial traffic and pleasure-bound tourists still keep the pass busy.



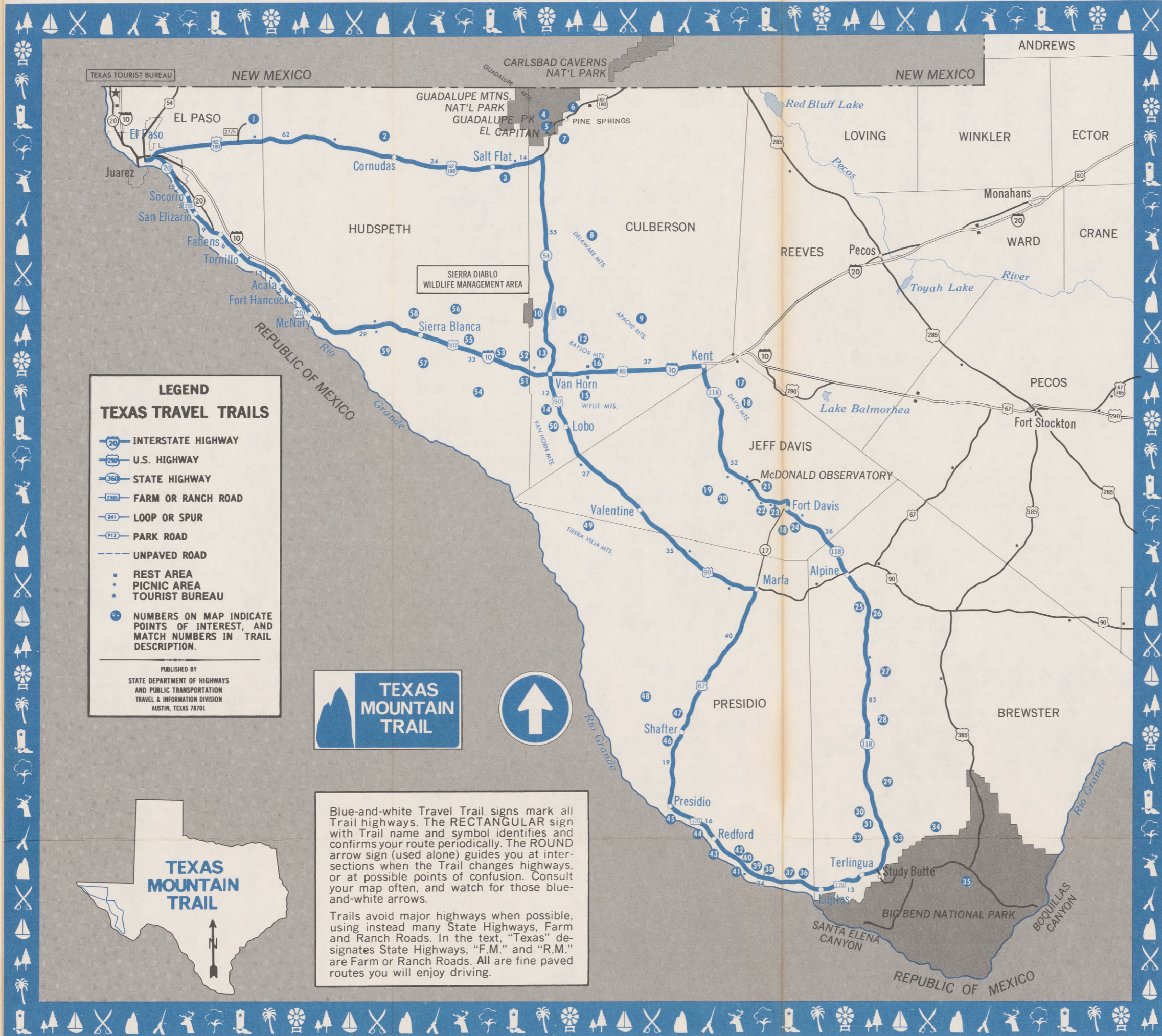
It's appropriate, too, that the Trail starts with El Paso's Franklin Mountains, the beginning of the Rocky Mountains range that extends northward 3,000 miles to Alaska. Geologists say the granite and volcanic rocks of the Franklins are about a billion years old. For those who want a truly close-up mountain experience, hiking trails from McKelligon Canyon climb into these, some of the oldest mountains on the Trail.

For information about the hiking trails, and all of El Paso's offerings, stop at the city Visitors Bureau at 5 Civic Center Plaza (off Santa Fe St. south). Be sure to allow at least a full day for sightseeing in cosmopolitan, bilingual El Paso, and in Juarez, Mexico's largest border city. Obtain details about walking and driving tours, seasonal events, a dozen museums (including the Wilderness Park Museum that's a great foundation for Trail travelers), the Tigua Indian Reservation, horse and dog racing, an aerial tram, Mexico, and especially, three historic El Paso missions.



The missions, Ysleta, Socorro and San Elizario, a century older than California's famous group, may be visited on sightseeing excursions in the El Paso area, or may be saved as a quiet finale of the trip, because the Texas Mountain Trail's final leg leads by the mission sites.

Leaving El Paso on the Trail, desert scenery soon replaces the city's irrigated greenness. Open land to the north is the southern edge of Fort Bliss Military Reservation that spreads over more than a million acres, an area larger than Rhode Island. Small sand hills dot the land, each caused by strong root-anchors of greasewood and mesquite bushes that hold the sand.



TEXAS MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Blue-and-white Travel Trail signs mark all Trail highways. The RECTANGULAR sign with Trail name and symbol identifies and confirms your route periodically. The ROUND arrow sign (used alone) guides you at intersections when the Trail changes highways, or at possible points of confusion. Consult your map often, and watch for those blue-and-white arrows.

Trails avoid major highways when possible, using instead many State Highways, Farm and Ranch Roads. In the text, "Texas" designates State Highways, "F.M." and "R.M." are Farm or Ranch Roads. All are fine paved routes you will enjoy driving.

a river; rather it forms shallow lakes that soon evaporate. Glimpses of some of those salt lakes can be seen to the west, and a large shallow lake to the east may be visible after a period of rainfall. Even when it contains water, nothing grows along its banks, and no animal will be seen drinking the briny water.

West of the highway are the Sierra Diablo Mountains. Many are above a mile high; Victorio Peak reaches 6,350 feet. Scars in red sandstone formations on the mountains' flanks are sites of man's effort to extract silver and copper ore. Much of the Sierra Diablos is a state wildlife management area.

Hidden in the Sierra Diablos is Victorio Canyon, site of one of the last great Indian battles in Texas. Indian burial sites and pictographs are found there, but the area is not accessible to the public.

A variety of mountain types can be seen in a short segment here. The Sierra Diablos are volcanic Precambrian, some 950 million years old; soon on the east, the rounded contours of the Baylor Mountains are much younger Permian limestone, and then the route swings close by the Beach Mountains on the west, and these are Paleozoic (Ordovician) about 450 million years old. Such are the contrasts on the Mountain Trail — peaks born of fiery, volcanic violence, and others formed quietly beneath long-gone seas.

Mountains that come into view to the south of Van Horn are the Van Horn Mountains which will be seen from different vantage points later.

VAN HORN
Pop. 2,791

Culberson County
Alt. 4,010

In the mid-1800s Van Horn grew as a wayfaring stop on the Old Spanish Trail. Today the small city still caters to travelers. Accommodations, services and the chamber of commerce are on U.S. 80 Business Route paralleling I-10. Information about the city and area are cheerfully provided at the chamber, north side of the highway, downtown.

On the Trail highway between Van Horn and Kent watch for a shady oasis preserved as a picnic area. Of considerable interest to geologists are the Wylie Mountains to the south. Within them is exposed a layer of limestone 1,400 feet thick, rich with marine fossils of the Permian period, 250 million years ago.

Talc, marble and barite (used in the production of oil well drilling mud) have been mined in the mountains to the north, and a barite mill is near the trail.

Two miles east of the mill is an exceptional sightseeing treat. To the northwest are the Baylor Mountains, then almost due north are the Delaware Mountains. On the horizon between them the Guadalupe Mountains are again in view. There is El Capitan's sheer face and just to the right of it, Guadalupe Peak, the highest point in Texas. In the usually transparent air, they're seen across more than 60 miles of space.



On this drive between Van Horn and Kent, the Apache Mountains are to the north... barren, dune-like hills rolling up to mesa features. Higher than they look, the Apaches reach 5,696 feet.

Watch ahead and slightly to the south of the highway for a prominent peak that becomes visible about 26 miles east of Van Horn. It is Gomez Peak that rises 6,323 feet, near the north edge of the Davis Mountains another treat soon in store on the Trail.

Some 30 miles east of Van Horn, one wonders what frontier tribulation established the name of a small, usually dry watercourse — Hard Luck Creek.

At Kent, the Trail turns south on Texas 118, which traces some of the state's most scenic landscapes between here and Big Bend. Founded as a water stop on the Texas and Pacific Railroad in the 1880s, Kent remains a remote wayside town.

South of Kent the Trail aims toward the Davis Mountains. Thrusting from the desert floor, the peaks loom higher as the highway begins to thread among them. These horizontal layers of reddish brown rock flowed molten from the bowels of the earth. Yet today's mountains, like Gomez Peak directly to the east, are but remnants of an enormous magma flow that geologists call the Davis Mountain Volcanic Field; most has weathered away. Note a sudden change of desert flora; large yuccas called giant daggers are prominent.

The highway is safe, but should be driven at moderate speed to savor the unfolding beauty of the region. If the day is clear, as most days are in high-sky country, another long-range view is in store approximately 23 miles south of Kent. There a sign points west toward the Van Horn Mountains on the horizon, 60 miles away.

At the intersection of Texas 166 (not part of the Trail) is a good view of Sawtooth Mountain. Its jagged pinnacles are typical of weathered volcanic cores. A few miles further, deep in the heart of the Davis Mountains, is a spacious picnic area in Madera Canyon. Wagon trains paused here during pioneer days, and modern travelers may catch glimpses of wildlife. A sign in the roadside park points to Mount Livermore, fifth highest peak in Texas at 8,382 feet.

From Madera Canyon the highway climbs to the rim of Elbow Canyon where a fine stand of mountain juniper is seen. Shortly McDonald Observatory can be seen at the summit of Mount Locke.

A tour of McDonald Observatory should start at the Visitors Information Center. Displays and audiovisual aids colorfully interpret the observatory's mission.

A printed walking tour leads to major activity sites and describes the function of each. The larger dome is the size of a 10-story building. A 72-step staircase leads to a

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FORT DAVIS
Pop. 900

Jeff Davis County
Alt. 5,050

The town of Fort Davis grew adjacent to the military post. It has served as the seat of two counties: Presidio County from 1875 to 1885, and the later Jeff Davis County since 1887.

Small museums, a classic frontier courthouse, and the restored 1912 Limpia Hotel offer glimpses of the past.

Scenic vistas unfold along Texas 118 between Fort Davis and Alpine. Six miles south of Fort Davis the highway bisects an old ranch headquarters portions of whose adobe walls remain in the right-of-way. A marker gives details. A picnic area shaded by cottonwood trees is near the ruins. Several summer camps, both private and group-operated, are in this area.

Soon the landscape changes, leaving behind the green coolness of the Davis Mountains. The Trail moves into areas of vast ranch operations, several of which are headquartered in the town of Alpine. The mountains that gave Alpine its nickname of "The Alps of Texas" can be seen rising in the distance.

ALPINE
Pop. 5,455

Brewster County
Alt. 4,481

Alpine is the seat of huge Brewster County, largest of Texas' 254 counties. Natives comment that their county's 5,935 square-mile area is larger than Connecticut. Sul Ross State University is here, noted for its outstanding geology department. On campus, the Museum of the Big Bend offers excellent exhibits. In July and August the Sul Ross Theatre of the Big Bend presents a series of summer stock productions in an open air amphitheater. Climate and scenic location make the town a popular vacation area, and mineral specimens of the region attract rock collectors. Refer to the state travel guide for details, and the chamber of commerce at 106 N. Third (just off the Trail 2 blks. east of Texas 118/U.S. 90 intersection) offers city and area information.

Wide open spaces spread due south, and it's wise to fill your fuel tank in Alpine. This drive crosses generally flat desert terrain punctuated by volcanic intrusions. Highway signs point to major peaks and elevations including 6,700-foot Mt. Ord. Consider the effort to mount the microwave tower up there!

A prime rock-hunting area is available 16 miles south of Alpine — the Woodward Ranch — that offers opportunities to hunt and collect the famed red plume agate of the region, plus other prized mineral specimens. A modest charge per pound is made for rocks collected. There is also a rock and lapidary shop.



A few miles south of the Woodward Ranch is one of the area's few shady spots. It is easy to visualize earlier travelers who welcomed this rare shade — Indians (pursued or pursuing), Spaniards in their unsuitable suits of armor, trail-worn cowboys, and cavalry troopers on long, sun-baked patrols.

In this open land, where rainfall may be less than 10 inches a year, only the hardiest plants can survive — mesquite, cactus, catclaw, sage and the ever-present greasewood. To early inhabitants, greasewood was both medicine and building material. Its twigs and leaves, steeped in boiling water, made a healing poultice for man and animal; parasitic deposits from leaf undersides, mixed with pulverized rock, made cement.

As the Trail approaches a picnic area about 26 miles south of Alpine, other mountains come into view: Elephant Mountain on the east at 6,200 feet, and in 14 more miles, Santiago Mountain at a 6,521-foot truncated cone of volcanic rock. On its flattened summit is "Progress City" — or at least where the "city" would have been had out-of-state buyers of lots in the early 1900s actually built there. Chances are, the wily promoter himself never climbed to the summit.

Along the Trail travelers may see occasional herds of beautiful, swift, fawn-and-white animals locally called "antelope." The correct name is pronghorn, and they are natives of treeless parts of the United States and Mexico. Once roaming in uncounted thousands, they were reduced by slaughter until less than 2,000 remained in 1920. Now protected, the herds have increased substantially, and regulated hunting is permitted during the specified season. If a herd is seen, note that at least one is always standing with head erect and watchful...the herd lookout. When running at full speed, pronghorns may equal the speed of a car.



This is hawk country too, and the chances are good to see the raptors on telephone poles patiently waiting for a careless rodent or reptile to provide a meal.

Along with a welcome absence of traffic congestion is a pleasantly informal habit of local drivers. As they pass, drivers will often raise their hands in a small salute of camaraderie to a fellow traveler. It's an amiable gesture

seldom seen on today's crowded highways, and deserves a response. Wave back.

As more typical desert species of yucca and ocotillo intrude on the greasewood, new mountains rise in succession: the Chalk Mountains on the east; the Agua Frio Packsaddle and Hen Egg Mountains whose distinctive shapes were landmarks for early explorers. Then, to the east, a series of volcanic intrusions into cretaceous limestone form the Christmas Mountains. Within those mountains is the state's only active fluor spar mine. Fluorite occurs when hot, volcanic magma contacts limestone. Fluorine combines with lime to form sparkling fluorite. Beyond the Christmas Mountains the Trail nears Big Bend National Park.

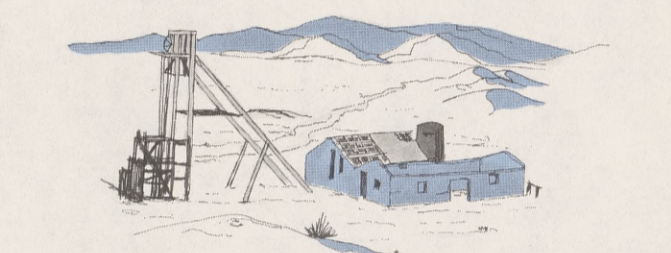
Although the Trail doesn't actually enter Big Bend, a visit to the magnificent national park should be a "must." It's the premiere attraction on the entire Texas Mountain Trail. Where the Trail turns at the intersection of Texas 118/F.M. 170, continue on Texas 118 to the town of Study Butte, and on into Big Bend.

STUDY BUTTE
Pop. 120

Brewster County
Alt. 2,500

For years Study Butte (Stew-dy Beaut) was a genuine ghost town, named for an early prospector and mine manager. Recent land and tourism developments have brought newcomers to Study Butte, and today's visitors will find small cafes, rock and souvenir shops. A trailer park on the bank of Terlingua ("Three Tongues") Creek has a grove of cottonwoods that demonstrate what a little water and care can produce in this arid land.

The accompanying sketch pictures an old mine head that stood abandoned for years beside the Trail. Struck by lightning in July 1982, the head frame was destroyed and a fire that started in low-grade petroleum deposits underground may still be burning.

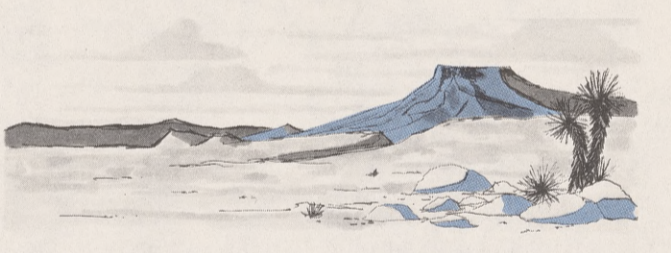


BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK
Pop. 105

Brewster County
Alt. 1,850-7,835

On the Texas-Mexico border in a giant loop of the Rio Grande called the Big Bend, this huge national park spans 1,100 square miles of thorny, sun-baked desert — awesome, shadowy canyons — cool, forested highlands — and stony mountain towers looming nearly a mile-and-a-half high. Refer to the state travel guide for a summary of Big Bend's abundant points of interest, its astonishing variety of wildlife, its visitor facilities and services.

But best of all, drive in to the National Park Visitor Center at Panther Junction (signs point the way) for a personal introduction to Big Bend.



Visiting Big Bend isn't just sightseeing. It's an experience of Nature in awesome dimensions. Allow plenty of time here. Your entire Mountain Trail adventure will be enriched!

The Mountain Trail between Big Bend and Presidio follows one of the nation's most spectacular highways, F.M. 170. Locally known as El Camino del Rio (The River Road), it parallels an old Spanish trail used to transport silver and other treasures more than 200 years ago. During the days of Mexican banditry, army mule trains packed supplies over the same trail. Later, during prohibition, the still-remote trail was used by smugglers.

Many legends of buried treasure are told about this road, and it's true that in 1876 a pioneer freighter, August Santleben, transported \$350,000 in silver and 40,000 pounds of copper through this wild country. The route he followed was the Chihuahua Trail that stretched from Chihuahua, Mexico, into Texas at Presidio, then through Fort Davis and San Antonio to the Gulf Coast port of Indianola.

Four miles west of Big Bend on El Camino del Rio is the ghost town of Terlingua — once a boisterous mining town of 2,000. Abandoned for decades, a small trading post has reopened in the old company store.

The largest ruin still visible is not, as it may appear, a hotel with arched porch. Rather, it was the winter home of the mine owner. Legend says the owner's Eastern bride spent but one night in the house that was built for her, and then departed for a more civilized locality.

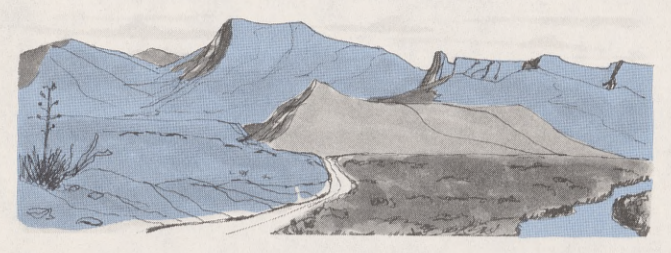
About 1906 the mine's owner found his new Columbia automobile was unsuited to the primitive roads here, and he had it sealed in a double-wall adobe garage. Discovered in the 1940s, it is now on display at the Museum of Transportation in San Antonio.

In 1967 Terlingua was site of the first in a series of zany "World Championship" chili cookoffs. Held on the first Saturday of November, the contest has been relocated to Villa de la Mina, a motel-type facility at the site of an old cinnabar (mercury ore) mine some three miles west of Terlingua. Year round, visitors are welcome to search the old mine's tailing heaps for specimens of cinnabar, agate and other minerals.

Continuing on the Trail, the next community is Lajitas which took on the aspects of a village in 1915 when

U.S. Army troops were stationed here to protect the area from the elusive Mexican bandit, Pancho Villa.

In recent years Lajitas has seen development unparalleled in its history. Lajitas On The Rio Grande is a complex of homes, condominiums, restaurant, motels (one built on the foundations of an old army post), tennis courts and swimming pool. Float trips through the Rio Grande's canyons are available here; reservations necessary. Under development is the Lajitas Museum and Desert Garden. Again, a Mountain Trail experience will be enhanced for the visitor who takes time to explore the museum and learn more about the history and romance of the Chihuahuan Desert that covers thousands of square miles in Mexico and the U.S.



The early days of this road are recalled by the name of the first creek west of Lajitas, Contrabando Creek which the Trail highway crosses about three and a half miles west of the village.

Two miles farther is Fresno Creek. The small spring-fed stream flows year round, a feature that made it of precious interest in early days. In this area the ancient Mexican village of Flores can be seen across the river. The community's cemetery is at the very top of a steep hill — making a strenuous climb for funeral processions.

A couple of miles west of Flores, erosion has formed fantastic shapes in the limestone and volcanic ash deposits of this area. Locally these formations are known as Penguin Rocks. Within a mile is a roadside picnic area overlooking the Rio Grande. Across that international boundary, old Mexico appears virtually unchanged since the Spanish conquistadores traveled this way centuries ago. The picnic area features colorful shelters built in the Indian tepee style.

Here the Rio Grande threads its way between two separate lava flows that met at the current river site. In Texas, they are the Bofecillos Mountains.

The next five miles of The River Road evoke admiration for engineers for its design ingenuity, and praise from all travelers for its scenic grandeur. Here is "the big hill" which was a real challenge to highway builders. The grade here — 15 percent — is the maximum found on any regularly traveled Texas highway. (A short portion of Spur 78 to McDonald Observatory is steeper.)



About one and a half miles west of the summit of the big hill, the Trail crosses Panther Creek bridge. Some interesting plants and rocks can be seen here by those adventurous enough to hike up (north) the canyon.

Eagle Crack — an almost hidden canyon leading to the Rio Grande — is accessible from the Trail highway in this area. Photographers make striking canyon photos here. The next canyon west is Tapado Canyon where evidence of early Indian habitation is found in paintings on ledges and in small caves.

Watch the mountains to the north for a couple of miles. Traces of a trail can be seen on the barren flanks. For years it was a smugglers' route, but today is used as a ranch trail for feeding and salting livestock.

Another unusual rock formation is called Anvil Rocks and is often used for picnicking.

Along this section of The River Road the Trail passes through the town of Redford, a retail center for surrounding farms and ranches. It is an old town, having evolved from a much earlier settlement called Polvo, an early-day fort and customs station on the Rio Grande. The salt cedar that lines the banks of the river is of fairly recent origin, and is considered by many as a pest.

Nine miles west of Redford, a cable stretches across the river. It is used by the International Boundary and Water Commission to take flow measurements in the center of the stream. Based on the findings, water is allocated to the United States and Mexico for irrigation.

Just east of Presidio, 25 rooms of the original 45-room Fort Leaton have been restored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The State Historic Site is open daily. Originally established as a frontier Spanish mission in 1759, portions of the present structure were raised on the abandoned mission site in 1846. Ben Leaton, first Anglo-American colonist in the area, made it a private fort and trading post in 1848. A colorful legend tells of his first efforts to establish friendly relations with area Indians. He invited a large group to a banquet. All went well, but Leaton awoke the next morning to discover both his guests and his livestock gone. He made no complaint, but later invited the same Indians for another feast. At the meal's climax he unveiled a small hidden cannon and touched it off, killing the entire group in the banquet hall. Whether fact or legend, those were indeed violent times on the frontier.

The War between the States drained manpower from throughout the Southwest and weakened the defenses of all settlements. Indians, still resentful of white men's intrusion, seized the opportunity to mount strong counterattacks. Many frontier settlements were abandoned, including Fort Leaton.

PRESIDIO
Pop. 1,000

Presidio County
Alt. 2,594

When Mexico won its independence from Spain, a village on the Rio Grande, though still deep in Mexican

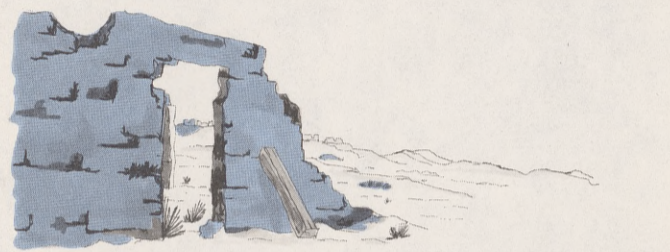
territory, developed as a stop on the Chihuahua Trail that led from Mexico to the United States. The community fort, known as Presidio del Norte, was north of the river. After the Texas War for Independence and subsequent U.S. — Mexican War, the Rio Grande became the international boundary, and the presidio site became the nucleus of a new Texas community. The Mexican town south of the river is Ojinaga.

North of Presidio the straight highway traverses typical desert scenery, but the horizon is broken by a great mass of volcanic mountains. Ascending the foothills near Shafter, note the Lincoln profile to the west; it is pointed out by a highway sign.

The old mining town of Shafter has had its ups and downs. It is said that soldiers from Fort Davis camped here and accidentally discovered silver being melted from rocks on which they built their campfires. That was possible, since silver deposits appeared on the surface, but it's also true there was evidence of mining in the area long before the soldiers built their fires.

The area, once called "the richest acre in Texas," produced some \$18 million in silver. In early mining days, steam engines were fueled with wood from forests in the Chinati Mountains. When the wood was gone, oil was hauled by mule wagons from Marfa.

Mining activity ended in 1952, but interest was renewed during the late 1970s silver boom; many test holes were drilled. When silver's value dropped in 1982, all exploration ended again, but the potential remains. Shafter's church was used in the film "The Andromeda Strain," and is of interest; historical markers are here, and a cemetery is said to contain 2,000 graves, mostly unmarked, in this city where the boom-time population was only about 3,000.



Seven miles north of Shafter the impressive Elephant Rock is indicated by a highway sign, and two miles farther is a good view of Chinati Peak to the west, whose summit reaches 7,730 feet. Geologists say this region is the biggest volcanic center in Texas and estimate the age of Chinati's rock at 32 million years.

The land here is unchanged from days when countless buffalo made it their home. It is now devoted to vast, sparsely vegetated ranches. A cowboy from the previous century would find it perfectly familiar, except for this thin ribbon of highway and airplanes now used by large ranches to supplement sure-footed cow ponies.

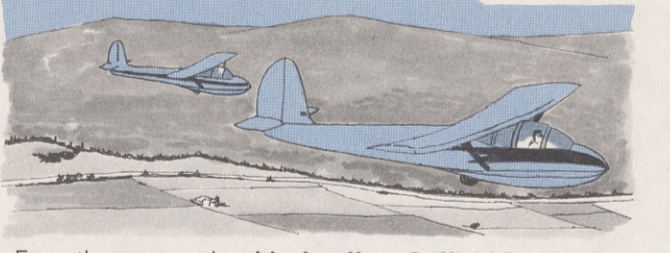
About 25 miles north of Shafter, highway cuts reveal more evidence of volcanic phenomena. Easily recognizable black lava flows contrast vividly with nearly-white volcanic ash that appears in the cuts.

MARFA
Pop. 2,464

Presidio County
Alt. 4,688

Marfa, a clean, neat town, had its genesis as a railroad stop, but has become a ranching center. Surrounding ranches are huge, spreading over multiple thousands of acres. The grass in the fields, though apparently sparse, is a species of highly nutritious native grama grass on which livestock thrive.

The Marfa combination of weather and topography also attracts soaring enthusiasts. Massive updrafts and mountain waves have allowed many sailplane pilots to qualify for their soaring badges here. Fortunate travelers may occasionally spot one or more graceful sailcraft soaring over the mesas and peaks.



For other recreation Marfa offers Coffield Park, tennis courts, a swimming pool, San Esteban Lake (9 miles south of town), rockhounding, and a mile-high golf course. The chamber of commerce at 105 El Paso St. (S. of U.S. 67 off Highland Ave.) offers details.

The quaint courthouse at the downtown highway intersection recalls a time when early residents sought to have their public buildings reflect an elegance which, in most cases, they were unable to achieve in their personal structures. Although now converted to condominiums, the nearby Paisano Hotel reflects a pleasant nostalgia of the past. Completed in 1930, the Paisano recalls those days when hotels were the center of social activities. Tours are available.

The flatlands between Marfa and Van Horn aren't technically plains, but are basins composed of material eroded from the adjacent mountains. Such processes have left the igneous intrusions visible today. Chances again are good to see pronghorn herds grazing in fields along the highway.

It may be noted from a highway map that few side roads branch from the highway along this stretch of the Mountain Trail. The highway, and the paralleling Southern Pacific Railroad, are thin ribbons of civilization crossing a land that is largely uninhabited and essentially unchanged from its primitive state. Mirages on the road, and dust devils in the fields, are not unusual sights.

Along here the Trail highway generally follows the old

Overland stagecoach trail — a route used even earlier by 49ers in the gold rush days. These are the ranch landscapes featured in the 1950s motion picture "Giant" that starred Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson.

Near the intersection of F.M. 505 (not part of the Trail) and U.S. 90, Trail travelers can see to the northeast the other sides of two mountains seen before: Sawtooth and Mount Livermore. These were viewed on the drive through the Davis Mountains and Madera Canyon. Here on the southwest side of the range, it is some 15 miles to Livermore's peak, a bit farther to Sawtooth. East of Livermore there is no higher mountain in the United States.



The town of Valentine was named by railroad builders who first reached the site on Feb. 14, 1882. A good water well was drilled, always an important factor in this arid land, and the town grew as a switch point on the Texas & New Orleans Railroad. Since it retains its "Valentine" postmark, the post office is a busy spot in February when thousands of cards are mailed here.

To the southwest lie the volcanic Tierra Vieja (Old Land) Mountains. This highway parallels the range for about 32 miles, with Valentine about mid way. A fault scarp, where pressure broke the earth's surface, can be seen along the flat lands between the highway and mountains. Faulting is still occurring in this young geologic region; the strongest earthquake recorded in Texas (6.4) was in 1931 near Valentine.

Renegade Indians, smugglers and bandits once found refuge among the remote peaks of the "Old Land" Mountains whose maximum altitude reaches 6,467 feet. An old coal mine once operated there, and a railroad skirted the northern end of the range in the previous century. Today it's a vast, almost uninhabited ranching area. Beyond the mountains the land falls sharply to the Rio Grande.

Straight ahead, seeming to block the highway, are the Van Horn Mountains the only Trail landscape seen on three occasions from different vantage points. Those traveling the Trail in a clockwise direction saw them first when in Van Horn originally, then from a scenic overlook 60 miles away, and soon a close-up view when the Trail nears Van Horn again.

With irrigation, and a two-crop growing season, the desert produces vast yields of alfalfa, row crops, grain, and there's a north crop under way in the young pecan grove to the north side of the highway.

Near Lobo an historical marker at the roadside cites Van Horn Wells, a rare water hole once used by Indians, wagon trains, and stagecoaches on the famous Butterfield Overland Mail Route.

Approaching Van Horn, the Wylie Mountains are to the east.

VAN HORN
Pop. 2,791

Culberson County
Alt. 4,010

The Trail passes through Van Horn twice; refer to the previous city entry here and in the state travel guide.

For those Trail drivers who started in El Paso and followed the route of this folder, the last leg of the Texas Mountain Trail lies generally west between Van Horn and the starting point. Two miles west of Van Horn the highway slices into a minor range called the Carrizo Mountains. Here a hillside picnic area with rustic arbors contains an interesting historical marker about the San Antonio-California Trail that once used this pass, and provides yet another different view of the Van Horn Mountains.

The Carrizos, along with the Franklin Mountains in El Paso, are the oldest mountains in Texas: Precambrian formations that date back 1,200 million years. The peaks reach more than a mile high.

Seven miles farther is an industry whose products have paved hundreds of miles of Texas highways. It is the Gifford Hill Quarry and rock crusher. Blocks of very hard, raw stone are split from the hillsides, and in huge machines are crushed, graded and screened into precise size groups to meet the various specifications of highway engineers and building contractors.

The Trail now leaves the Carrizo Mountains and enters a broad desert flat. In that flat is another mining-crushing mill that works with a far different material, talc. The soft, fine-grained mineral is ground to a smooth powder, graded by color, and shipped out for use in cosmetics, paint, ceramics, and other industrial applications.

Far to the south another majestic range is now in sight. These volcanic Eagle Mountains were once a favorite haunt of Apache Indians. The highest peak, near the center of the range, rises to 7,496 feet.



As the route crosses Eagle Flat, a typical Western feature, Eagle Flat Mesa rises just north of the highway. Of Permian limestone, formed in an ancient sea, its long, flat top is at an elevation of 5,000 feet.

This is also devil's country, according to topographic names. Far to the north, just visible on the horizon, are the Sierra Diablos (Devil Mountains). On the other

side of the highway (to the south and ahead) is the long escarpment of Devil Ridge. The landscape does have an eerie quality, especially about dusk. One can easily imagine the mood of early travelers here, making lonely camp at nightfall amid this immense isolation.

For today's traveler the vast landscapes flow by with effortless ease, and soon Sierra Blanca appears, county-seat of Hudspeth County. The town takes its name from the intrusive Sierra Blanca (White Mountains) Peak whose classic summit towers 6,950 feet and is prominently visible to the northwest. Directly south, younger Cretaceous mountains present a folded and faulted appearance.

SIERRA BLANCA
Pop. 758

Hudspeth County
Alt. 4,512

The small city is named for the 7,000-ft. volcanic intrusion peak to the northwest.

After years of confusion when the county and railroad used Central Time, the city Mountain Time and the schools halfway between, Sierra Blanca has settled on Mountain Time and no longer are both times given, as on invitations.

Your Texas! Live the Legend travel guide describes the stuccoed, Spanish-style adobe courthouse, and the Dogie Wright collection of frontier law memorabilia (housed in the Abstract Bldg. just north of U.S. 80 Business Rt., midtown).

West of Sierra Blanca the Quitman Mountains lie to the south, with peaks rising to 6,500 feet. In these ancient mountains are abandoned lead, silver and zinc mines. The range is cut by the Rio Grande, and the continuing mountains in Mexico are easily seen.

The highway skirts a granite intrusion on the south, while to the north the mountains are Jurassic — young at only 150 million years old.

South of the Trail, roughly paralleling it, is F.M. 192 that follows the former route of El Camino Real — a road used first by Spaniards and later by military authorities of Mexico, Texas and the United States. Fort Quitman, circa 1858 - 1877, was on F.M. 192, but all remains of the frontier outpost have disappeared. However, a disintegrating, abandoned replica can be seen at the intersection of I-10/F.M. 34. A marker gives details.

Nine miles west of F.M. 34, the Trail leaves I-10 and joins Texas 20. This older highway affords better views of the Upper Rio Grande Valley's lush, irrigated farming.

The Trail highway passes through the historic town of Fort Hancock that grew around another vanished frontier fort, which an historical marker cites.

An immense cotton producing region is headquartered in the town of Fabens. Numerous cotton gins process high-quality, long-staple cotton grown by irrigation mainly from the Rio Grande. Other irrigated crops include alfalfa, vegetables, peppers, corn and pecans.



Watch for another change of Trail highway numbers a half mile northwest of Fabens (Texas 20/F.M. 258). About nine miles farther (where F.M. 1110 intersects the Trail) is the village of San Elizario with its historic San Elizario Presidio Chapel and Los Portales (The Arcade). Except for its historical markers, this tiny plaza with its whitewashed tree trunks, well-worn benches and gazebo could have been lifted bodily from interior Mexico. Refer to the state travel guide for summaries of three mission/chapel sites here in southeastern El Paso, and the fascinating Tigua Indian Reservation near Ysleta Mission. F.M. 258 continues by these sites, then rejoins Texas 20 (Socorro Rd.) toward downtown El Paso. On the south are Ascarate Park and Cordova Island, site of Chamaizal National Memorial that commemorates U.S.-Mexico friendship; open daily.

Here in El Paso the Mountain Trail ends. Trail travelers have gazed on immense mountain and desert landscapes, have seen the efforts of men — puny but persistent — in this dominion of primitive Nature. Even in modern vehicles, Trail drivers who've spanned these miles have gained some personal insights into the mystique of the Great American Frontier.

Those who've completed the entire Trail can speak with authority about much of Texas' mountain region. But a word of caution, please: The vastness of Texas dwarfs even these mountains, and there are other regions to discover before the whole can be measured. Against these barren peaks and arid desert basins, compare tall, green forests rolling from horizon to horizon, shining rivers and lakes, moss-hung bayous, and hundreds of miles of golden sand along the sea. That too is Texas, and there are other Trails, listed below, to guide you efficiently through every part. Such is the purpose of the Texas Trails, planned pleasure driving to make the most of every mile. When travel efficiency is in everyone's best interest, Texas Trails are the way to go!

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TEXAS FOREST TRAIL
TEXAS FORTS TRAIL
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