



# big bend

Story | HOLLY BERETTO

A world away from the Lone Star state's ever-sprawling cities, the Big Bend region stretches out across West Texas desert and mountains in an endless tapestry of scrub and sky. It's the kind of place where you can see the stars and discover places still untouched by anything but nature. Embracing a national and state park, as well as several small towns, the area offers a uniquely Texas blend of dusty outdoors and desert style.

Hike your way through more

than 150 miles of trails in Big Bend National Park—venture out on one of the park's marked trails or soak up some area history on a guided hike. If hiking's not your speed, hop onto one of Big Bend Expeditions' 4x4s ([bigbendexpeditions.com](http://bigbendexpeditions.com)) for an off-road adventure—or enjoy a smoother drive along the Rio Grande on the River Road (FM 170), 65 paved miles between Terlingua and Presidio, speckled with opportunities to stop and take in the scenery. Be sure you visit historic Terlingua Ghost Town and plan to have dinner at the Starlight Theatre Restaurant and Saloon ([thestarlighttheatre.com](http://thestarlighttheatre.com)), where comfort food and live entertainment abound.

Over in town of Alpine, take up lodging at the historic Holland Hotel ([thehollandhotel.texas.com](http://thehollandhotel.texas.com)), where you'll find charming courtyards and great eats at The Century Grill. Down the street, have a drink at The Saddle Club ([saddleclubalpine.com](http://saddleclubalpine.com))

and explore the shops—Ivey's Emporium is a hodgepodge of gifts, wine and accessories. Coffee lovers will particularly want to stop at Plaine for a cup of joe.

Don't miss the jewel of Marathon, the Gage Hotel ([gagehotel.com](http://gagehotel.com)), an oasis of elegance in the west Texas desert. Lodging includes private casitas, rooms in the historic Trost-designed building, and accommodations in the Captain Shephard House. Dining at 12 Gage, the hotel's restaurant, features extraordinary south-west fare. Explore the hotel's stunning gardens or treat yourself to some down time at the luxurious spa.

In a region full of surprises, perhaps what city slickers find most surprising is how easy it is to imagine oneself there. Maybe it's the vast sky and the gallant mountains or the fresh air and vibrant stars, but you'll feel a pull to this wild, rugged country, where undisturbed nature sits comfortably alongside delightful civilization. ♡

## SEE & DO

Take in a star party at the **McDonald Observatory**, located near Fort Davis.

The two-hour evening events offer discussions about constellations and views of celestial bodies through several of the observatory's telescopes. Reservations required.

[mcdonaldobservatory.org](http://mcdonaldobservatory.org)

Explore the terrain from above with **Rio Aviation**, an air-tour company owned and operated by a retired Big Bend park ranger. Flights run year-round and include a bird's eye view of the Rio Grande's canyons, the Solitario, and the Dahlquist research site—known as the Devil's Playground.

[rioaviation.com](http://rioaviation.com)

Alpine's **Museum of the Big Bend** on the campus of Sul Ross State University provides a dynamic overview of the region, from its primitive past through its starring role in Hollywood Westerns, offering visitors permanent and changing exhibits that showcase life in West Texas.

[ww2.sulross.edu/museum](http://ww2.sulross.edu/museum)

