

# NPCATRAVEL



The Travel Program of the National Parks Conservation Association

NOV. 8-14, 2021

## *The Backroads of* **Big Bend**

Learn about NPCA's role in protecting Big Bend and preserving Mexican history

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### EXPLORE

THE RUGGED AND STRIKING LANDSCAPE OF WEST TEXAS

### EXPERIENCE

BREATHTAKING SANTA ELENA CANYON AS YOU PADDLE ALONG THE RIO GRANDE

SANTA ELENA  
CANYON  
*Big Bend  
National Park*



## The Backroads of Big Bend

 **Activity level: Moderate**

**AVAILABLE DATES:** November 8–14, 2021 | Min/Max: 10/13

**7 days/6 nights | NPCA Member Price:** \$4,545 per person double occupancy; \$675 single supplement

**Deposit:** \$980 per person due at registration

**Arrive/Depart:** El Paso, Texas

**Reservations:** Please contact Jared Dial, NPCA's Travel Program Manager, at 1.800.628.7275 or email the Travel Program at [travel@npca.org](mailto:travel@npca.org).

**Inclusions:** Accommodations as noted in the itinerary, meals as noted (B-breakfast, L-lunch, D-dinner), all gratuities, ground transportation, sightseeing and excursions as listed, carbon credits for each traveler's on-trip footprint, and guest speakers.

**Exclusions:** Airfare to/from El Paso, luggage charges, travel insurance, alcohol, and personal expenses.

*Welcome to West Texas and Big Bend National Park. From the town of Marfa to the rugged and rocky canyons of the Rio Grande to the Chisos Mountains, we will explore this diverse landscape and take a dive deep into the region's cultural history. Big Bend is one of the nation's least visited national parks and has been designated a Dark Sky Park. It is also deeply vulnerable to the effects of climate change and air pollution. Your guide and accompanying NPCA host will show you a lesser-known side of the park as we explore by foot and on water, often with key local partners by our side. We'll also explore the complex legacy of racial tension and social justice movements in the borderland's region, including debates over immigration and the border wall. Leave with a deeper understanding of this landscape, its cultural history and the ongoing challenges that make Big Bend an important priority for NPCA. Experience one of the wildest corners of America—and its unforgettable sights and solitude—with all the comfort of an NPCA small-group tour.*

### ITINERARY

#### DAY El Paso to Marfa

**1** Arrive mid-afternoon at El Paso International Airport (ELP), the gateway to West Texas. On arrival, meet your trip leader and NPCA host. Transfer in private shuttle to the town of **Marfa, Texas**, approximately a three-hour drive. Settle into your room at our historic downtown hotel before we gather as a group for brief introductions and an orientation to the days ahead. In the evening, enjoy a group **welcome reception and dinner** at a local restaurant. *The Hotel Paisano, Marfa (D)*

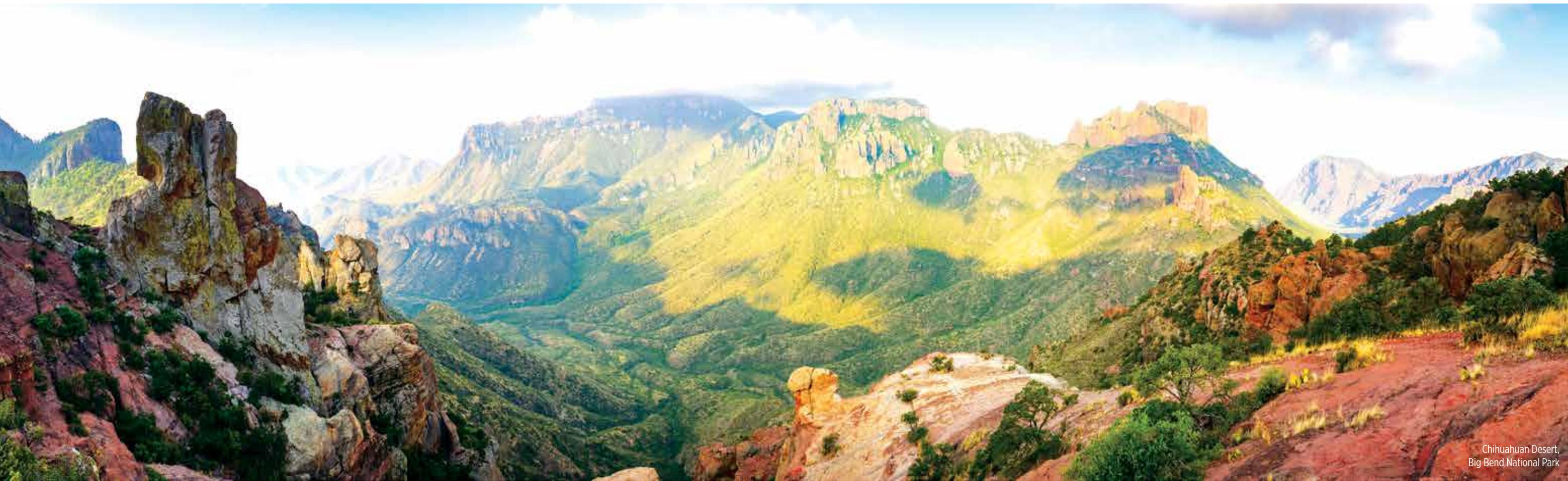
#### DAY The Blackwell School to Big Bend National Park

**2** This morning we will meet with NPCA partners at **The Blackwell School Alliance** for a private tour of **The Blackwell School**, a historic three-room schoolhouse in **Marfa** that tells the story of segregated education in the state. On our tour, we will learn how NPCA is working hand-in-hand with the alliance to preserve the original schoolhouse and grounds and establish a new park site, the **Blackwell School National Historic Site**. This partnership represents an authentic opportunity to preserve and share the complicated history and significant role of the Latinx community in our nation's history. After a lunch with our partners from The Blackwell School Alliance, we'll head south through **Persimmon Gap** into the beautiful **Big Bend National Park** to **Chisos Mountain Lodge**, the only lodge located within the park and our home for the next four nights (a two-and-a-half-hour drive). This evening, enjoy dinner as a group at the lodge. *Chisos Mountain Lodge (B, L, D)*

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Take a private tour of a historic site that tells the story of segregated education in Texas
- Learn about the complex nature of the border region at the Boquillas border crossing
- Gaze at the brightest stars at this International Dark Sky Park during a night sky program
- Explore Fort Davis National Historic Site, a frontier military post, with National Park Service staff





Chihuahuan Desert,  
Big Bend National Park

**DAY 3 Paddling the Rio Grande**

After an early breakfast, we'll start today's adventure on the **Rio Grande**, an approximately 1.5-hour drive from the lodge. Water conditions permitting, we'll gear up for a full day out on the water as we jump into our canoes and paddle\* through **Santa Elena Canyon**, with its striking 1,500-foot sheer canyon walls rising up from the water's edge. Our float through this natural wonder is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Enjoy lunch on a sandy riverbank while admiring the jaw-dropping views of this North American river that creates the divide between the United States and Mexico. On this evening, relax at the lodge before eating dinner as a group. Tonight, you have the option to head outside for a magnificent **dark sky program**. **Chisos Mountain Lodge (B, L, D)**

*\*Exact details of river float, including length, location, and day, will vary depending on weather and water levels.*

**DAY 4 Big Bend National Park**

After breakfast at your leisure in the lodge, meet the group and head out for the day. During our first stop at the **Big Bend landfill**, we will have the opportunity to learn how NPCA is partnering with the park to significantly reduce waste and improve waste management throughout the park. Big Bend is the only national park with a landfill within its boundaries. After a brief tour, we continue to head south on a 45-minute scenic drive through the park to the **Boquillas border crossing**. Explore **Boquillas Canyon** and enjoy a picnic lunch before we sit down with our local NPCA experts to learn about the economic, environmental and humanitarian aspects of this border region. From here, we'll head 15 minutes down the road to the **Boquillas Hot Springs** where we can soak our tired muscles before heading back to Chisos Mountain Lodge for dinner. **Chisos Mountain Lodge (B, L, D)**

**DAY 5 Big Bend Hiking and the Town of Terlingua**

After breakfast at the lodge, join the group for a five-minute shuttle ride to the **Lost Mine Trailhead**. This morning, we will hike alongside our NPCA host on this beautiful, moderately difficult 4.2-mile out-and-back trail through the Chisos Mountains. After enjoying stunning views of Casa Grande and Juniper Canyon, we'll climb up through juniper, oak and pine forest to rewarding views of Pine Canyon and the Sierra del Carmen in Mexico. Enjoy a picnic lunch as you take in this spectacular landscape. This afternoon, relax with some down time at the lodge or head out on another short hike before we drive the 45 minutes into **Terlingua**. A ghost town today, Terlingua was a mining town around the turn of the century. The views from this small town are some of the best in Big Bend—on a clear day you can see over 80 miles



***More than 450 species of birds and 1,200 plant species can be found in Big Bend. When you're on the trails, keep an eye out for this remarkable diversity of life.***

JARED DIAL, NPCA TRAVEL PROGRAM MANAGER

to the Santa Fe de Los Pinos mountain range in Mexico. On this evening, explore Terlingua on your own before dinner and live music at an important local landmark, the **Starlight Theatre**. for dinner. **Chisos Mountain Lodge (B, L, D)**

**DAY 6 Big Bend to Fort Davis**

**6** This morning, enjoy your last breakfast at Chisos Mountain Lodge and an optional morning nature walk with our NPCA host before we load up and begin our two-and-a-half-hour scenic drive to Fort Davis. On arrival, enjoy lunch and settle into our historic inn. This afternoon, we will explore **Fort Davis National Historic Site**, one of the best surviving examples of an Indian Wars frontier military post in the Southwest. On this evening, visit the **McDonald Observatory** for a dark sky program with NPCA and observatory staff. **Hotel Limpia (B, L, D)**

**DAY 7 Fort Davis to El Paso and Home**

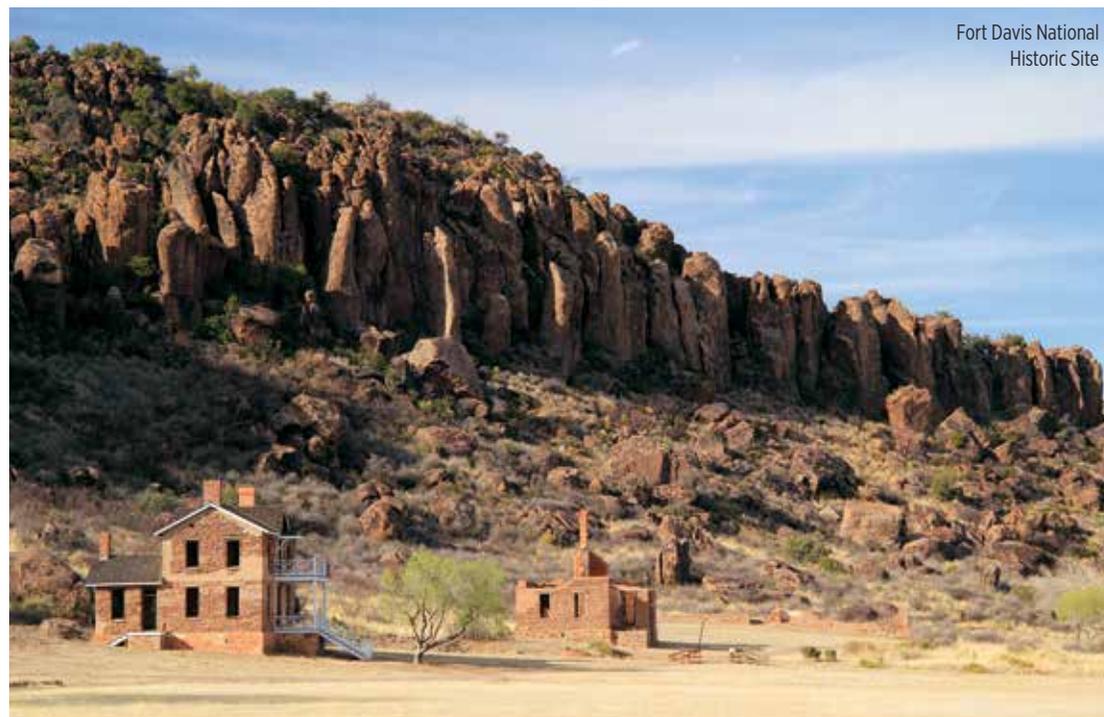
**7** After breakfast, take the scenic drive to El Paso for departures home. **(B)**

**Travel Insurance:** To protect yourself from the loss of deposit and cancellation fees, you are encouraged to purchase travel insurance. If you need assistance, NPCA recommends contacting Travel Insurance Services; confirmation packets will include details.

**Traveler Responsibility:** Travelers are responsible for choosing an NPCA trip consistent with their ability, fitness, and overall health. All travelers are required to complete and return their **registration form, personal information form, flight form, and waiver** before being allowed to participate in a trip. Travelers also are responsible for reading and understanding all pre-departure materials and bringing the appropriate clothing and gear as suggested.

**Trip Cancellation Policy:** Cancellation notice must be submitted in writing and is effective upon date of receipt.

Until 120 days prior to trip start	119-61 days prior	60 days prior
Deposit is 100% refundable	Deposit is 100% transferrable to another Iconic-operated NPCA trip, or 50% refundable	No refund



Fort Davis National Historic Site

**LODGING**

Find comfort and relaxation in each of the hotel properties we carefully selected for your NPCA trip.



**The Hotel Paisano:** The Hotel Paisano is a historic hotel featuring charming rooms, each of which is distinct. The hotel is one of five of the Gateway hotels designed by famed architect Henry Trost in 1929 and is situated in downtown Marfa, Texas.



**Chisos Mountain Lodge:** Located in the heart of Big Bend National Park, Chisos Mountain Lodge is the only lodge in the park and is nestled in the basin of the Chisos Mountains. Accommodations are rustic, providing basic comforts surrounded by stunning scenery.



**The Hotel Limpia, Fort Davis:** A historic hotel built in 1912, Hotel Limpia is located in mile-high Fort Davis, situated in the scenic Davis Mountains of southwest Texas. Accommodations are fully restored with private baths and period furnishings. The hotel setting provides a peaceful and comfortable hideaway from the busy outside world.

**COVID19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

NPCA is always committed to providing high quality tours that ensure the well-being and safety of our members and supporters. Each of our travel partners have developed robust safety protocols to protect the health of our guests, staff, and the communities we visit. As conditions and guidelines continue to evolve, our travel partners are committed to easing concerns and creating flexible options for those interested in rescheduling or booking new travel. NPCA advises all individuals to follow the guidance of public health experts at the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization in protecting themselves and their communities from the coronavirus. Specific guidelines such as health screenings and social distancing will be determined based on the trip's date of departure and group size. Please contact us for details.



# Why Travel with NPCA?

## **SAFETY AND FLEXIBILITY**

Your health and safety is our top priority. NPCA has worked with each of our travel partners to develop safety measures for our 2021 trips in response to the global pandemic.

## **EXPERT TRIP LEADERS**

Every trip will be led by an NPCA staff expert and naturalist guide. We are teaming up with experienced tour operators to give you exclusive insights into your national parks.

## **SMALL-SIZED GROUPS**

Group size on each of our land trips is limited to no more than 16 people to maximize your interactions with experts, enhance wildlife viewing and boost educational opportunities throughout your experience.

## **CONVENIENT TRAVEL**

Everything is included in your tour, including meals, accommodations, snacks, interpretive guides, special speakers, transportation within the destination and all activities (unless otherwise stated).

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS**

NPCA partners with tour operators that support cultural and natural heritage, maximize the economic benefits in the destinations we operate in and establish guidelines for managing environmental impacts.

## **EXCELLENT VALUE**

Our tours offer members the opportunity to explore the parks without the hassle of planning or the frustrations of crowds. We handle the logistics, so you don't have to.

## **NPCA EXCLUSIVE COLLECTION**

Starting in 2021, we will offer a handful of unique tours designed to give you exclusive experiences within the parks and special behind-the-scenes access to National Park Service staff, NPCA partners, and other local specialists. Our goal is to offer NPCA members the best itineraries in adventure and educational travel in the places we know best: America's national parks. Our custom-designed itineraries highlight NPCA's important contributions to park protection while delivering outstanding interpretive hikes and sight-seeing in national parks around the country.

*NPCA is the only independent, nonpartisan organization dedicated to advocacy on behalf of the National Park System. We are 100% privately funded and we rely on donations from individuals like you. One traveler per group must be an active NPCA member to participate in an NPCA trip. An annual membership starts at \$15 per person. Please make dues payable to NPCA by check or credit card at [npca.org](http://npca.org).*