

# NPCATRAVEL



The Travel Program of the National Parks Conservation Association

NOV. 9-15, 2022

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

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

**RIO GRANDE RIVER**  
*Big Bend National Park*

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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

CALL FOR INQUIRIES OR TO BOOK: 800.628.7275



HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy a private tour of the Blackwell School and learn about their essential partnership with NPCA to safeguard this deeply significant story of segregated education in Texas
- Learn about the complex nature of the border region at the Boquillas border crossing from a local NPCA expert
- Gaze at the brightest stars at this International Dark Sky Park during a night sky program
- Join National Park Service staff for a behind-the-scenes look at Native American and African American history within Fort Davis National Historic Site



# The Backroads of Big Bend

AVAILABLE DATES: November 9-15, 2022 | Min/Max: 14/16

**Length of Tour:** 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 NPCA's Associate Director, Educational Travel Program, Jared Dial, at **1.800.628.7275** or email the Travel Program at **travel@npca.org**.

**Activity Level:** Travelers should be prepared for full-day adventures of walking, standing and sitting. This tour includes river paddling and hikes. Hikes during our journey are typically 1-2 miles in length, with our longest hike being 4.6 miles with about 1,000 feet elevation gain. We recommend travelers bring hiking poles. All hikes are optional and, whenever possible, your guides will provide alternative options for either a shorter or less demanding route. Hikes, walks and vehicle transportation may be on rough terrain and take multiple hours.

**Inclusions:** Lodging, meals as noted in the itinerary (B-breakfast, L-lunch, D-dinner), all activities, tips, entry fees and carbon offsets for each trip day.

**Exclusions:** Airfare to trip start and back from trip end, luggage charges, alcoholic drinks, travel insurance, items of a purely personal nature and any items not listed in Inclusions.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

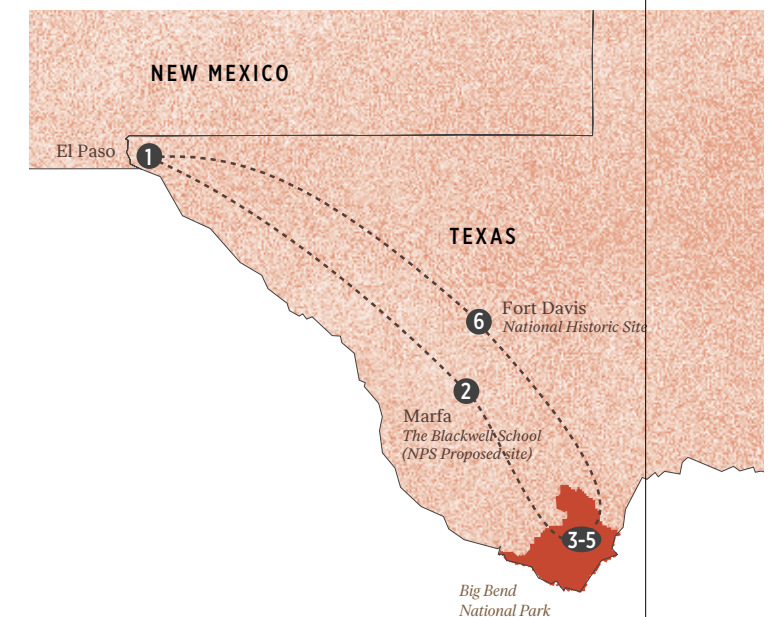
Moderate



**Welcome to West Texas and Big Bend National Park.** From the town of Marfa to the rugged and rocky canyons of the Rio Grande and the Chihuahuan Desert to the Chisos Mountains, we will explore this diverse landscape and dive deep into the region's cultural history. Big Bend is one of the nation's least visited parks and has been designated an International Dark Sky Park. It is also deeply vulnerable to the effects of climate change and air pollution.

Your guide and accompanying NPCA expert 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 race relations in this area, as well as their present-day manifestations, in the form of social justice movements, border wall debates and

memorialization. Leave with a deeper understanding of this landscape, its cultural history and the ongoing challenges that make Big Bend an important priority of 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.



Kayaking at Big Bend National Park, TX

**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, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,  
EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL PROGRAM



Chihuahuan Desert,  
Big Bend National Park

## ITINERARY

### DAY NOV 9: El Paso to Marfa

1 Arrive mid-afternoon into El Paso International Airport, the gateway to West Texas. Upon arrival, meet your NPCA host and Iconic Trip Leader. Drive 3 hours to the town of **Marfa**. 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. This evening, enjoy a group welcome reception and dinner at a local restaurant. ***The Hotel Paisano (D)***

### DAY NOV 10: The Blackwell School to Big Bend National Park

2 This morning, we will meet with NPCA partners for our tour of the **Blackwell School**, an historic three-room schoolhouse in **Marfa** that tells the story of segregated education in the state. On our private

tour we learn how NPCA is working hand-in-hand with the **Blackwell School** to preserve the original schoolhouse and grounds and establish a new national park site, the **Blackwell School National Historic Site**. This partnership, and **The Blackwell School**, represent an authentic opportunity to preserve and share the complicated history and significant role of the LatinX community in our nation's history. After lunch with our partners from the **Blackwell School**, we head 2.5 hours south through **Persimmon Gap** into the beautiful **Big Bend National Park** to **Chisos Mountain Lodge**, the only lodge located within the National Park and our home for the next four nights. This evening, enjoy dinner as a group at the lodge. ***Chisos Mountain Lodge (B, L, D)***

### DAY NOV 11: Big Bend National Park

3 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. After a brief tour, we continue to head south on a scenic drive through the park to the **Boquillas** border crossing. Explore the **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 head 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 NOV 12: Paddling the Rio Grande

4 After an early breakfast, we head out on a 1.5-hour drive to the start of today's adventure paddling on the **Rio Grande**.\* Our route will depend on water conditions, but don't fear as all of our options offer incredible geography and deep canyon walls. Enjoy lunch on a sandy riverbank with stellar views. This evening, enjoy dinner at the lodge with 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.



(Left) Roadrunner at the Rio Grande river, (Center) Cactus Wren on a Cholla in the Chisos Mountains, (Right) Purple Tinged Prickly Pear Cactus

**DAY 5 NOV 13: Big Bend hiking and the town of Terlingua**

After breakfast at the lodge, join the group for a short ride to the **Lost Mine Trailhead**. This morning, we will hike alongside our NPCA expert on this beautiful, moderately difficult 4.2-mile out-and-back trail through the **Chisos Mountains**. After stunning views of **Casa Grande** and **Juniper Canyon** we climb up through juniper, oak and pine forest to views of **Pine Canyon** and the **Sierra del Carmen** in **Mexico**. Enjoy a picnic lunch as you take in this spectacular landscape. This afternoon, enjoy some downtime at the lodge, or head out on another short hike, before we drive 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 to the **Santa Fe de Los Pinos Mountain range** in **Mexico**. This evening, explore Terlingua on your own before dinner and live music as a group at the famous **Starlight Theatre**. **Chisos Mountain Lodge (B, L, D)**

**DAY 6 NOV 14: Big Bend to Fort Davis & Marfa**

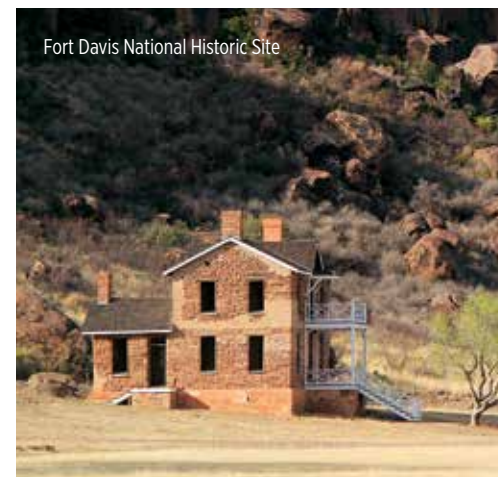
This morning, enjoy your last breakfast at **Chisos Mountain Lodge** and an optional morning nature walk with our NPCA expert before we load up and begin our 2.5-hour scenic drive to **Fort Davis**. Upon arrival, we'll enjoy lunch and spend the afternoon

exploring the **Fort Davis National Historic Site**, one of the best surviving examples of an Indian Wars' frontier military post in the Southwest. Later this afternoon, we'll head to **Marfa** where we'll settle in at **Hotel Paisano** for our last evening. We'll toast a great week in West Texas over dinner at a local restaurant in downtown Marfa. **Hotel Paisano (B, L, D)**

**DAY 7 NOV 15: Marfa to El Paso and home**

After breakfast at **Hotel Paisano**, transfer to **El Paso** for departures home. **(B)**

*Please note: This itinerary is subject to change based on weather conditions and park closures related to COVID-19.*



**LODGING**

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



**Hotel Paisano (Marfa, TX):** Located in the heart of Marfa, Hotel Paisano is a historic hotel featuring charming rooms, each of which is unique. The hotel is one of five of the Gateway hotels designed by famed architect Henry Trost in 1929.



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

**Trip Cancellation Policy:** Written cancellations must be received in Iconic's sales office in order for a cancellation to be valid. Iconic strongly recommends the purchase of travel insurance.

**Cancellation charges will be as follows:**

August 11, 2022	121+ days prior to departure	120-91 days prior	90-61 days prior	60-0 days prior
<i>Final payment is due</i>	<i>Deposit is refundable</i>	<i>Deposit is 100% transferable to another Iconic-operated NPCA trip OR 50% refundable</i>	<i>75% of trip cost is refunded</i>	<i>No refund</i>

**COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

Each of our travel partners have developed robust safety protocols to protect the health of our guests, staff and the communities we visit. **At this time, proof of vaccination is required to participate in this trip.** All tour staff and partners associated with the trip, including drivers, guides, NPCA staff and speakers will be fully vaccinated. 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. Please contact us for details.

**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 through USI Affinity at 1-800-937-1387 or at <http://my.travelinsure.com/npc>; email confirmation packets will include additional details.

**Activity Level:** Our trips are appropriate for people in good health with overall good mobility. Travelers should be comfortable participating in at least three hours of physical activity per day, which include walking or standing for extended periods (sometimes on uneven terrain) and climbing stairs. Any physical conditions requiring special attention, diet, or treatment should be reported when booking to determine what accommodations can be made.

**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 NPCA waiver of liability, personal information form, flight form, and accept Iconic Adventure's Terms and Conditions before being allowed to participate in a trip. Travelers also are responsible for reading and understanding all pre-departure materials and bringing appropriate clothing and gear.



# Why Travel with NPCA?

## EXCELLENT VALUE

Our tours offer NPCA members the opportunity for behind-the-scenes access and unique insights because of our intimate relationship with the national parks. A small portion of your trip cost supports NPCA's mission to protect the parks for present and future generations.

## EXPERT TRIP LEADERS

Every trip will be led by at least one NPCA expert, as well as tour operators who provide professionally managed tours in and around our national parks. Your trip leaders, guest lecturers and savvy NPCA staff will give you insights into the flora, fauna and history of each destination, leading lively discussions, and answering your questions.

## ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS TOURS

NPCA partners with tour operators that support cultural and natural heritage, maximizing the economic benefits in the trip destinations and establishing guidelines for managing environmental impacts. Our goal is to ensure your travel will have a positive impact on the parks so that your children and their children can enjoy them in perpetuity.

## CONVENIENT TRAVEL

Everything is included in your tour, such as meals, accommodations, snacks, expert speakers, transportation at the destination and all activities (unless otherwise stated). With NPCA, you can explore the parks without the hassle of planning or the frustration of crowds.

## SMALL-SIZED GROUPS

Group size on each of our trips is limited to no more than 18 people to maximize your interactions with the experts, enhance wildlife viewing and boost educational opportunities throughout your experience. Enjoy stimulating conversations with other like-minded NPCA members and supporters from around the country.

## SAFETY AND FLEXIBILITY

Your health and safety is our top priority. We have worked with each of our travel partners to develop safety measures for our trips in response to the global pandemic. As conditions and guidelines continue to evolve, our travel partners are committed to easing concerns and creating flexible options for rescheduling travel.

## NPCA EXCLUSIVE COLLECTION

Our custom-designed itineraries are designed to give NPCA members exclusive experiences that highlight NPCA's important contributions to park protection and provide special behind-the-scenes access to National Park Service staff, NPCA partners and other local specialists. Our goal is to offer the best itineraries in adventure and educational travel in the places we know best: America's national parks.

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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. NPCA trips are an exclusive NPCA member benefit. 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).