

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

# BIKE

# T E X A S

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE BEST TRAILS OF TEXAS STATE PARKS



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WELCOME TO

# BIKE TEXAS!

**T**he Texas State Parks offer an unparalleled world of fun for bicyclists of all stripes. From the massive Franklin Mountains in El Paso to the wildlife-rich Copper Breaks, the scenery and terrain in Texas' State Parks offer something for everyone – whether you're a self-proclaimed "mountain bike maniac" or simply looking for a way to enjoy the great outdoors alongside your family. With so many opportunities to choose from – including road rides near some parks, rails - to - trails conversions where you can travel for miles along former railroad beds near others, and off-road experiences all around – we'll tell you about some of the best rides anywhere in Texas so you can choose your next biking destination wisely while discovering some new trails you've yet to ride.

PHOTO: RUSTY YATES





# MOUNTAIN BIKING

## RAY ROBERTS LAKE STATE PARK

PHOTO: DAVID J. SAMS



### MILEAGE & TREAD



The Johnson Branch Unit has 12+ miles of mixed single-track, jeep roads and some paved areas; Isle du Bois unit has a 10-mile Greenway.

### DIFFICULTY & CHALLENGE

**Level 1-2+**

New intermediate singletrack sections climb some hills; the fire roads are also challenging.

PHOTO: DAVID J. SAMS



Volunteers with a local biking association have transformed Johnson Branch at Ray Roberts Lake into a Mecca for cyclists from the DFW Metroplex and across the state. A combination of jeep roads and recently constructed singletrack looping through the hills on the west side of the lake makes for exciting outings for riders of all levels. Advanced riders can also devise good training routes; some enjoy climbing the singletrack and dropping down jeep track, but the choice is yours. Primitive campgrounds dot the area, and trail work is continuing in Dogwood Canyon. A nearby swimming area and several miles of paved bike trails add to the growing appeal of this facility. New trails are well-flagged.

Excellent family cycling opportunities can be had at the Isle du Bois unit, where a compacted limestone Greenway open to hikers and bikers follows a portion of the Trinity River to Lake Lewisville. Additional multi-use trails in this section of the park provide some intermediate mountain biking opportunities. Each Memorial Day weekend, MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) sponsors rides of various lengths on the roads surrounding Ray Roberts Lake State Park.

### GETTING THERE:

Located 50 miles north of Dallas, the Johnson Branch Unit of Ray Roberts Lake SP is on the north side of the lake, south of FM 3002, 7 miles east of Interstate 35. ☎ (940) 637-2294

The Isle du Bois unit is located on the south side of the lake off FM 455, 10 miles east of I-35. ☎ (940) 686-2148.



## BIG BEND STATE PARK

The scenery at Big Bend State Park (not to be confused with the nearby National Park, which also has plenty of backcountry jeep track available for pedal-based exploration) make this remote 280,281-acre ranch worth visiting. The River Road that parallels the Rio Grande is open to cars, but is also popular with cyclists; portions of FM 170 draw road riders as well as mountain bikers. The trail network and jeep tracks can make for tough riding, but the views of the Chihuahuan Desert with its extinct volcanoes, steep arroyos and rare Hinckley oaks are ample reward. More trails are planned in addition to 15 miles already open. Camping is available, and lodges can be rented. Each spring a party erupts at the Desert Challenge bicycle race in the small town of Lajitas northeast of the park.

MILEAGE & TREAD



More than 14 miles of jeep roads and some singletrack; a well maintained 35-mile gravel park road.

DIFFICULTY & CHALLENGE

Level 1-3

The Llano Loop is appropriate for families. The hilly Oso Loop and mesa-top Horse Trap Trail are varied, more difficult and not as well-maintained.



PHOTO: LAURENCE PARENT

### GETTING THERE:

The park is nearly 250 miles southeast of El Paso, more than 50 miles south of Marfa. Entrances can be reached on FM 170 (the River Road) from Lajitas to the south or at Fort Leaton coming from Presidio, which is 4 miles to the north (Trans-Mountain Road) west. ☎ (432) 229-3416



## COPPER BREAKS STATE PARK

MILEAGE &amp; TREAD



9.5 miles of hike-and-bike trail  
4 – 8 feet wide  
(.5 miles is pedestrian only).

DIFFICULTY &amp; CHALLENGE

### Level 2

Terrain varies, with some rough ground, creek crossings and very tough climbs.

Historically, Copper Breaks in north Texas was Comanche and Kiowa territory. Today, the Big Loop Trail cuts through rugged badlands that will take your breath away. Cyclists have an opportunity to cut through scenic breaks and climb steep canyon walls as they explore paths tracing the perimeter of this nearly 2,000-acre park, alternating between old ranch roads and narrower, rocky sections – and exhilarating descents – provide more experienced riders a challenge. Each fall, the North American Off-Road Bicycling Association sponsors the Copper Breaks Breakaway. Camping available.



PHOTO: WYMAN MEINZER

### GETTING THERE:

Located in Hardeman County, some 50 miles west of Wichita Falls. Take Highway 6 south from U.S. 287 in Quanah or north from I-70 in Crowell. ☎ (940) 839-4331



## TYLER STATE PARK

**T** Tyler is one of the top mountain biking destinations in the state, offering challenges for the beginner and expert alike, and drawing riders from across the country each year. With hills aplenty, trails cutting through the Pineywoods, and a variety of loops accessible at various points, this 985.5-acre park provides fat-tire mavens with plenty of places to get away from other trail users and explore habitat shared by deer, myriad small mammals and a variety of birds. Tyler also has full range of camping facilities (including group shelters) and a swimming area to cool off after your ride. Extreme heat and humidity keeps most people off the trails during summer.

### GETTING THERE:

Tyler SP is in Smith County, about 80 miles east of Dallas, and 20 miles north of the town of Tyler. From I-20, take FM 14 north two miles, then take a left on Park Road 16. ☎ (903) 597-5338



MILEAGE & TREAD



13 miles of singletrack.

DIFFICULTY & CHALLENGE

Level 1-3

Fairly hilly with full range of loops from family appropriate to expert trails that allow you to choose your challenge.



AURENCE PARENT

## SAN ANGELO STATE PARK

**S**an Angelo has more than 60 miles of trails winding through various stream beds nearby the Concho River, over hills, along cliff faces and down tasty downhill runs. At the junction of several ecological zones, the park remains undeveloped, with pecan trees growing along the river bottoms and impressive wildflower blooms in the spring. Riders will want to make sure of their own limitations before availing themselves of the tremendous mileage. For periods during hunting season in November and December, the park closes to non-hunters; when it rains, the trails need time to dry out.

### GETTING THERE:

Located on the shores of Fisher Reservoir, adjacent to the city of San Angelo. Take either I-67 south to FM 2288 and the south shore entrance, or take I-87 north to FM 2288 and the north shore entrance. ☎ (325) 949-4757



MILEAGE & TREAD



60+ miles, mostly singletrack.

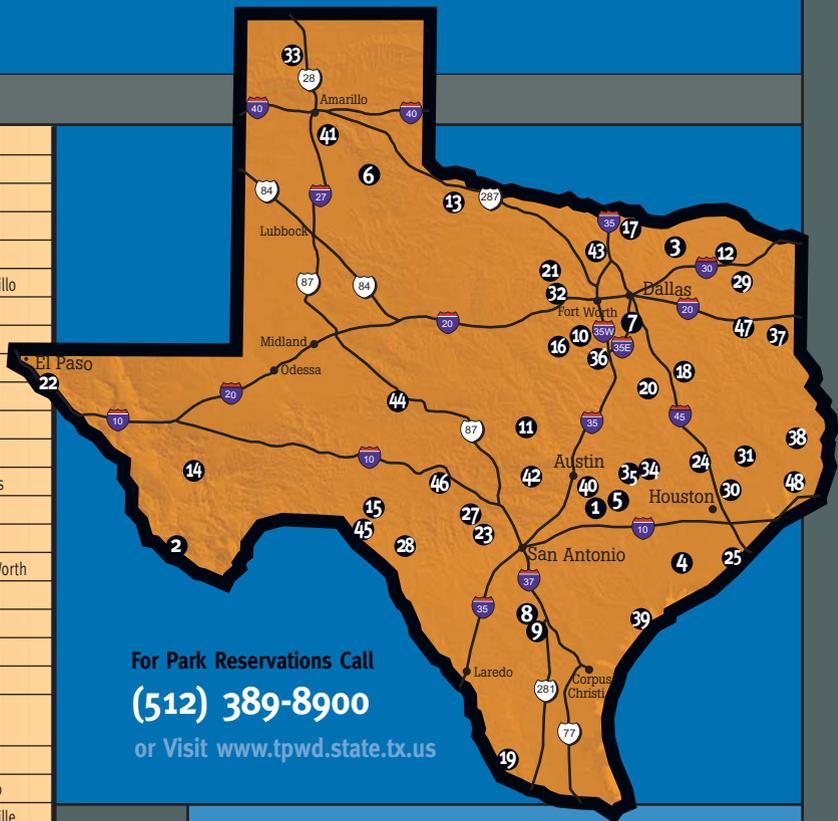
DIFFICULTY & CHALLENGE

Level 1-3

Some rocky uphill and downhill, creek crossings, and a range of flat dirt trails as well.

# GREAT BIKE RIDES

| STATE PARK                                     | RATING | MILES | LOCATION                         |
|--|--------|-------|----------------------------------|
| 1. <b>Bastrop</b>                              | n/a    | 12.5  | 30 miles east of Austin          |
| 2. <b>Big Bend</b>                             | 1-3    | 49    | Big Bend Region                  |
| 3. Bonham                                      | 1-3    | 11    | 65 miles from Dallas             |
| 4. Brazos Bend                                 | 1-2    | 21    | 28 miles from Houston            |
| 5. <b>Buescher</b>                             | n/a    | 12.5  | 45 miles east of Austin          |
| 6. <b>Caprock Canyons</b>                      | n/a    | 65    | 100 miles southeast of Amarillo  |
| 7. <b>Cedar Hill</b>                           | 2-4    | 12.5  | 10 miles southwest of Dallas     |
| 8. Choke Canyon – Calliham                     | 1      | 1     | 65 miles from San Antonio        |
| 9. Choke Canyon –South Shore                   | 1      | 5     | 75 miles from San Antonio        |
| 10. Cleburne                                   | 1-3    | 7     | 40 miles from Dallas             |
| 11. Colorado Bend                              | 2      | 9     | 95 miles from Austin             |
| 12. Cooper Lake SP (South Sulphur)             | 2      | 5     | 80 miles from Dallas             |
| 13. <b>Copper Breaks</b>                       | 2      | 9-5   | 50 miles west of Wichita Falls   |
| 14. <b>Davis Mountains</b>                     | n/a    | 75    | North of Fort Davis              |
| 15. Devils River SNA*                          | 2      | 12    | Big Bend Region                  |
| 16. <b>Dinosaur Valley</b>                     | 2      | 12    | 65 miles southwest of Fort Worth |
| 17. Eisenhower                                 | 1-3    | 4     | 80 miles from Dallas             |
| 18. Fairfield Lake                             | 2-3    | 20    | 90 miles from Dallas             |
| 19. Falcon                                     | 1      | 3     | 65 miles from McAllen            |
| 20. Fort Parker                                | 1-2    | 4     | 40 miles from Waco               |
| 21. Fort Richardson SHP & Lost Creek Reservoir | 1-2    | 9     | 60 miles from Fort Worth         |
| 22. <b>Franklin Mountains</b>                  | 2-3+   | 16    | 4 miles east of El Paso          |
| 23. <b>Hill Country SNA</b>                    | 2-4    | 40    | 45 miles west of San Antonio     |
| 24. <b>Huntsville</b>                          | 2-3    | 7.7   | 6 miles southwest of Huntsville  |
| 25. Galveston Island                           | 1-2    | 4     | 50 miles from Houston            |
| 26. Guadalupe River                            | 2-3    | 10    | 30 miles from San Antonio        |
| 27. Kerrville-Schreiner                        | 1-3    | 7     | 62 miles from San Antonio        |
| 28. Kickapoo Cavern*                           | 3      | 14    | 70 miles from Uvalde             |
| 29. Lake Bob Sandlin                           | 2-3    | 5     | 70 miles from Tyler              |
| 30. Lake Houston                               | 1      | 12    | 30 miles from Houston            |
| 31. Lake Livingston                            | 1      | 5     | 70 miles from Houston            |
| 32. <b>Lake Mineral Wells</b>                  | n/a    | 20    | 50 miles west of Fort Worth      |
| 33. Lake Rita Blanca                           | 1-2    | 9     | 85 miles from Amarillo           |
| 34. Lake Somerville (Birch Creek)              | 1      | 19    | 90 miles from Houston            |
| 35. Lake Somerville (Nails)                    | 1      | 13    | 90 miles from Houston            |
| 36. Lake Whitney                               | 1      | 1     | 65 miles from Fort Worth         |
| 37. Martin Creek Lake                          | 2-3    | 8     | 55 miles from Tyler              |
| 38. Martin Dies, Jr.                           | 1-2    | 5     | 80 miles from Beaumont           |
| 39. Matagorda Island                           | 1      | 10    | 50 miles from Victoria           |
| 40. McKinney Falls                             | 1-2    | 4     | Austin                           |
| 41. Palo Duro Canyon                           | 1-3    | 10    | 20 miles from Amarillo           |
| 42. Pedernales Falls                           | 1-3    | 20    | 30 miles from Austin             |
| 43. <b>Ray Roberts Lake</b>                    | 1-2+   | 22    | 50 miles north of Dallas         |
| 44. <b>San Angelo</b>                          | 1-3    | 60    | 50 miles from Wichita Falls      |
| 45. Seminole Canyon                            | 2      | 4     | Big Bend Region                  |
| 46. South Llano River                          | 1      | 3     | 100 miles from San Antonio       |
| 47. <b>Tyler State Park</b>                    | 1-3    | 13    | 80 miles east of Dallas          |
| 48. Village Creek                              | 1-2    | 10    | 10 miles from Beaumont           |



For Park Reservations Call  
**(512) 389-8900**  
 or Visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)

## THE RIDER'S CODE

### Ride Safe

Bicycling is a sport that involves a degree of risk. We strongly recommend that you always wear a helmet, never ride alone and let a responsible party know where you are going and when you intend to return. Likewise, it's important to carry appropriate tools and learn how to use them, including a spare tire and patch kit and bring plenty of water and a snack just in case you get stuck or have to walk out at the end of a long day.

### Ride Friendly

User conflicts remain the number one reason that bicyclists lose trail access, in fact, so try and abide by the basic guidelines laid out by the International Mountain Biking Association: 1) Yield to horseback riders, calmly alerting them to your presence and slow down when passing pedestrians; 2) Avoid excessive speeds and approach blind corners as though someone is around the bend; 3) Respect all closures; and 4) Make your interactions pleasant no matter how short they are.

### Ride Wise

Beyond etiquette, especially when it comes to mountain biking, there's a question of riding responsibly with regard to the resource. To this end, avoid riding on muddy trails (carry your bike over wet spots to minimize erosion), do not harass wildlife and make sure not to litter or leave bike parts, such as discarded tires, on the trail. In other words, leave no trace.

\*Call ahead for availability. | Parks in bold type are featured in this booklet.

## FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS STATE PARK

### MILEAGE & TREAD



16 miles of singletrack and some jeep roads, with more than 100 additional miles planned.

### DIFFICULTY & CHALLENGE

**Level 2-3+**

The Tom Mays loop features plenty of technical spots, rough terrain and steep hills.

Located within El Paso's city limits, the scenic Franklin Mountains offer a taste of the Chihuahuan Desert and a dose of bona fide mountain biking through some of West Texas' highest peaks. You may see golden eagles and the occasional cougar, but you'll want to keep an eye on the trail and make sure to avoid the various cacti and spiny plants and be prepared for obstacles that promise to challenge even the most experienced riders. The country is exposed, with little shade and no water; you'll definitely want to bring shades, a helmet with a visor and plenty of water. Construction is ongoing, and when all is said and done, the park will offer nearly 120 miles of multi-use trails – 73 of which will be open to bikes. With its unique scenery, flora and fauna, this diamond in the rough will draw two-wheeled visitors for a long time coming.

PHOTO: LAURENCE PARENT



### GETTING THERE:

Franklin Mountains SP is located 3.8 miles east of I-10 in El Paso. Take either the Canutillo/Trans-Mountain exit from I-10, or take Loop 375.

☎ (915) 566-6441



## HUNTSVILLE STATE PARK

Located within the classic East Texas Pineywoods region, Huntsville has a lakefront trail that affords riders a swell chance to explore the region's pine forests. The intermediate trail circles Lake Raven, where occasional alligators can be seen, crossing sandy streambeds and swampy areas among indigenous loblolly and shortleaf pines. A variety of trails in the National Forest provide additional opportunities for off-road biking, camping, fishing and exploring. The routes can get a little confusing, though, so check in with a ranger before hitting the trail.

### GETTING THERE:

Huntsville SP is about 70 miles north of Houston and 6 miles southwest of the town of Huntsville off I-45. Take Park Road 40 to the entrance. ☎ (936) 295-5644



MILEAGE & TREAD



7.7 miles of hike-and-bike trail; nearly 2 miles of improved park road.

DIFFICULTY & CHALLENGE

**Level 2-3**

The up-and-down main loop follows the shore of Lake Raven, with opportunities for some hard climbs.



LAURENCE PARENT

## DINOSAUR VALLEY STATE PARK

The 1,523-acre Dinosaur Valley has trails where you can lay tire tracks not far from some of the best preserved dinosaur prints in the world. The terrain dips in and out of small valleys, with most hills no more than 200 feet, over some exposed limestone, making for fast ascents and even faster descents – although you'll want to be careful during the busy season from March through November, especially keeping an eye out for birders. After it rains, the trails are closed. Roadies enjoy spinning their wheels along nearby FM 205. Trail construction is ongoing.

### GETTING THERE:

About 65 miles southwest of Fort Worth, the park is located in Somervell County 4 miles west of Glen Rose. Take U.S. 67 to FM 205, and after four miles turn onto Park Road 59. ☎ (254) 897-4588



MILEAGE & TREAD

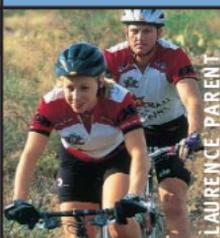


12 miles of hike-and-bike trail.

DIFFICULTY & CHALLENGE

**Level 2**

Some ups-and-downs get the pulse pounding.



LAURENCE PARENT

## HILL COUNTRY STATE NATURAL AREA

PHOTO: LAURENCE PARENT



MILEAGE &amp; TREAD



DIFFICULTY &amp; CHALLENGE

Level 2-4

Beginner trails are extremely limited, most of the routes are intermediate in nature, with some very steep hills, and plenty of technical terrain.

PHOTO: L. PARENT



About 40 miles of mixed singletrack, doubletrack and jeep roads.

Bandera is known as the Cowboy Capital of Texas, but the nearby Hill Country area is a truly awesome resource for mountain bikers as well. The park's undeveloped 5,370-acres offer an array of challenges and trails, including some hilltop gains of up to 1,900 feet in elevation. The alternating wide, flat creek bottoms and rocky hills make for rough going, lung-busting climbs and multiple loops allow riders to experience a diversity of plant and animal communities. (Remember, this is horse country, be courteous to fellow trail users.) Rain can be a problem for cyclists, not just closing trails, but making rocks and roots slick. There's no potable water on site, so bring your own. Primitive camping is available. During the fall deer-hunting season, the park is open to the general public on weekends from Friday noon until sundown Sunday.

## GETTING THERE:

Located 45 miles west of San Antonio. Follow Highway 173 south from the town of Bandera to County Road 1077, turn right and go 10 miles to end of the black top. Follow signs to the park headquarters. ☎ (830) 796-4413



## CEDAR HILL STATE PARK

In Dallas, the word on the street is that you can't be considered a true mountain biker, if you haven't tackled the challenging course on the shores of Joe Pool Reservoir. Cedar Hill's short loop requires technical handling skills for creek crossings (aim for the cinderblocks – if you see them – or risk being thrown from your bike), the main loop shares beginning and end sections with the short loop (strong riders will want to combine two out of three routes). Winding forested ridgelines are amongst the rewards – but watch out for Heartbreak Ridge! The expert loop is for experts only. A swimming beach and picnic area provide a place to rest up and refuel. Cedar Hill is closed after rain. With their work at Cedar Hill, local biking groups and associations set the standard for urban access.

MILEAGE & TREAD



Three singletrack trails: The short loop 2.5 miles; the main loop 7.5; the expert loop 2.5 miles.

DIFFICULTY & CHALLENGE

Level 2-4

The short loop is intermediate, the expert loop has tight turns, and long, steep climbs and the varied main loop has plenty of uphills and fast downhills.



LAURENCE PARENT

### GETTING THERE:

Cedar Hill SP is located 10 miles southwest of Dallas, 3 miles west of Cedar Hill and can be reached from FM 1382. From I-20 exit FM 1382, 4 miles south on the right.

☎ (972) 291-3900



# ROAD RIDING

POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR ROAD CYCLISTS

## DAVIS MOUNTAINS STATE PARK



PHOTO: LAURENCE PARENT

### GETTING THERE:

The park is located in Jeff Davis County. Travel north from Fort Davis on Highway 17 for 1 mile to Highway 118, then west 3 miles on 118 to Park Road 3.

☎ (432) 426-3337



The 75-mile journey starting at the park entrance high in the Davis Mountains has earned a reputation as being just as difficult, and just as rewarding, as any ride in the state. Climbing to the McDonald Observatory at 6,791 feet, this ride should only be attempted by experienced cyclists. With nearly half the ride at about 5,000 feet, be prepared to face the elements and fix mechanical problems on the fly. Each fall, a local bicycle association sponsors the Fort Davis Cyclefest, a well-supported group ride. Davis Mountains SP also has 3.5-miles of new, challenging trail for mountain bikes.



PHOTO: L. PARENT

## BASTROP-TO-BUESCHER STATE PARKS

### GETTING THERE:

Buescher SP is 2 miles northwest of Smithville. Take Highway 71 to FM 153, then north on FM 153.

☎ (512) 237-2241

Bastrop SP is about 30 miles southeast of Austin, and 1 mile east of Bastrop on Texas 21.

☎ (512) 321-2101



Bicycling the Hill Country is a Lone Star treat. This challenging-yet-scenic ride through the shady Lost Pines of central Texas is featured as part of the MS 150 benefit, a fundraising ride sponsored by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society that runs from Houston to Austin. The 12.5-mile stretch of Park Road 1C between these two state parks offers a taste of what road riding has to offer, and for serious roadies can be combined with other area rides for longer routes. The road is open to vehicle traffic.

# RAILS-TO-TRAILS

CONVERTING ABANDONED RAILWAYS INTO MULTI-USE TRAIL SYSTEMS

## CAPROCK CANYONS TRAILWAY

### GETTING THERE:

The park is 3.5 miles north of Quitaque about 100 miles southeast of Amarillo. Highway 86 runs through Quitaque – as does the trailway – head north to Caprock Canyons on FM 1065 for 3.5 miles.

 (806) 455-1492



In 1992, a railroad magnate donated a 64.25-mile section of railway to the state of Texas. The recreational trailway stretches from the top of the Caprock escarpment to the Red River Valley. No motorized vehicles are allowed on the old rail bed, which has a mild three percent grade; some sections can be difficult to bike because the crushed rock ballast has not been packed sufficiently. Caprock Canyons SP also has more than 20 miles of mountain biking opportunities.

## LAKE MINERAL WELLS TRAILWAY

### GETTING THERE:

About 50 miles west of Fort Worth, Lake Mineral Wells is off U.S. 180, 4 miles east of Mineral Wells on U.S. 180 or 14 miles west of Weatherford. The trailway runs between the two towns.

 (940) 328-1171



The picturesque 20-mile Mineral Wells Trailway has an improved surface suitable to both fat mountain bike and skinny road tires. The route cuts through farm and ranchland, connecting the town of Weatherford to the downtown district of Mineral Wells. Other access points are in Garner and at the park itself. Mineral Wells SP also has 12 miles of mountain biking on a multi-use jeep trail that has flat sections and some rolling hills. Both the trailway and jeep track are closed after it rains.



Austin-based writer Dan Oko is an avid mountain biker. His work has appeared in *Texas Parks and Wildlife* magazine, the *Austin Chronicle*, and national outdoor publications such as *Sports Afield*, *Men's Journal*, *Outside* and *Audubon*.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

You can receive a free Park Information Guide that provides comprehensive information on the locations, phone numbers, facilities, campsites and activities available at Texas State Parks by calling (800) 792-1112 or submit a request on our Web site @ [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us).

You can also find updates on trail conditions and more information on the Web site. Most parks have detailed trail maps at their headquarters, so ask for one when you arrive. Then get out there and have some fun!



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