



TEXAS STATE PARKS

BIG BEND RANCH BIKING GUIDE

THE OTHER SIDE OF NOWHERE





**A TREK THROUGH THE BACK-
COUNTRY OF BIG BEND RANCH
STATE PARK IS GUARANTEED TO
TAKE YOU OUT OF THE ORDI-
NARY AND INTO "THE ZONE."**

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Maps by Chris Beckcom

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INTRODUCTION

Whether you're an advanced biker or a physically fit novice, awesome backcountry adventures await you at Big Bend Ranch State Park (BBRSP), Texas' largest state park. From the dramatic mountain climbs and vistas of upper Fresno Canyon, to the swooping desert stretches of the Contrabando Loop Trail, to the rugged Solitario Outer and Inner Loop Trails, there is challenge, risk, and adventure for every level of biker.

With over 300,000 acres and more than 200 miles of old jeep roads and trails, BBRSP offers a range of options, from short loop rides to multi-day, SAG-supported, camping rides and adventures. For multi-day trips, the remote and beautiful Fresno Canyon serves as a natural north-south corridor that enables bikers to connect with the park's numerous loop trails. There are many options for side hikes and exploring throughout the park.

It's easy to plan multi-day trips because the park's reservation system allows you to reserve specific campsites, lodging and meal service in advance. There are numerous backcountry

campsites throughout the park, as well as lodging at the Saucedo Ranger Station (SRS).

To add to the experience, the park is full of cultural reminders of the prehistoric people, Native Americans, Spanish explorers, ranchers and cinnabar miners who came before, including old mines, ranch-house ruins, ancient stone shelters, and more. The land here showcases 600 million years of the Earth's natural history. The park's terrain was shaped by ancient seas, the shifting of tectonic plates and volcanic activity that left behind bizarre rock formations, caves, canyons, mountains, waterfalls, springs, arroyos, and a wide diversity of plant and animal life. The Solitario, a 10-mile-diameter collapsed dome with a bike loop around the inside, is a signature feature of the park.

Many ride possibilities exist in addition to those described in this booklet. Some rides can be combined or improvised upon; or combined with hikes and other side-trip adventures. Once you feel comfortable navigating your way around the park, feel free to create your own adventures!

Visit the Big Bend Ranch Web site for more information:
www.tpwd.state.tx.us/bigbendbranch

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This trail guide provides directional information for 28 specific rides. Interpretive information about the park's natural and cultural treasures is described in separate publications, so be sure to ask for these at the visitor's center. Taken together, these guides and materials are intended to help you fully experience the park.

Because the trails at Big Bend Ranch State Park are a "work in progress" and water sources are scarce, please pay careful attention to signage and think about where you are going at all times. In some areas signage may be incomplete, and rock cairns (stacked rocks) serve as the trail markers. A good sense of direction is helpful, as well as a bike odometer and GPS unit. A compass and map are essential. **The mileages provided in this guide are approximate.** Most of the trails and old roads are rugged and are not maintained to "city park" bike trail standards. Trail conditions can change due to weather or seasonal vegetation growth. Trails are not always perfectly cleared of rocks and cactus. Check with park staff to determine the latest information about trail conditions.

The guide provides "ride rating" and "ride time" information to help you gauge the length of your

trip and how much water you may need. **These ratings are subjective and will vary from person to person.**

Ride rating: Is determined based on how hard you will physically work on the ride, depending on your fitness level, length of ride, trail roughness and/or biking skills required. If you exercise rarely, you may find a ride rated "easy" to be "moderate." Weather and temperature are also key factors; a ride that is "moderate" in difficulty in cool weather may be "difficult" in hot weather or heavy rain. **While there are some very rough sections, there are no "technical" rated trail routes in BBRSP.** However, beginner-level riders should stick to the routes rated "Easy" or "Easy/Moderate."

Ride time: Assumes a moderate level of physical fitness. Actual ride times will vary from person to person. These times do not include time spent changing tires, eating, resting, hiking or exploring.

Please keep bikes on designated trails and roads. Remember that all natural, historical and cultural features are protected within the park.

TRIP PLANNING

Plan ahead of time: Because BBRSP is extremely remote and rugged, advance planning is crucial. Obtain maps and study them before going. If you are going on a multi-day trip, determine whether you need guide services and/or SAG support. Take containers large enough to carry 200-220 ounces of water per day, depending on the ride and time of year. There are non-potable water sources on some of the rides, so consider bringing a small water purifier or purification tablets. Hard-soled shoes are recommended for walking in rocky arroyos and creekbeds. An odometer and a GPS unit are always helpful, and a MAP and COMPASS are a must. **ALWAYS CARRY AT LEAST TWO SPARE TUBES!!**

Access: There are two access points: Saucedo Ranger Station, 30 miles east of Presidio in the center of the park, and the East and West Contrabando trailheads on the southeast border of the park near Lajitas. Obtain a park permit from the Barton Warnock Visitor's Center in Lajitas (432-424-3327); Fort Leaton State Historic Site in Presidio (432-229-3613); or Saucedo Ranger Station inside the park (432-358-4444). Office hours are 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. every day.

Maps and trail guides: Visit the TPWD Web site (www.tpwd.state.tx.us/bigbend) before going. Maps may be available at the park. Other online map sources include Google Earth, USGS (www.usgs.gov) and TNRRIS maps (www.tnrris.state.tx.us).

Lodging: Park campsites are available by advance reservation; find descriptions, photos and GPS coordinates at www.tpwd.state.tx.us. The Big House and bunkhouse at Saucedo offer lodging and meals by advance reservation (432-358-4444). Outside the park, Lajitas Resort and Spa (www.lajitas.com) offers 103 rooms, a restaurant, spa and pool. The nearby towns of Terlingua/Study Butte, Alpine, Presidio and Marfa have lodging and restaurants. Chinati Hot Springs (www.chinati-hot-springs.com) offers cabins and spring-fed thermal pools.

Commercial outfitters and bike rentals: Terlingua-based Desert Sports (888-989-6900 or www.desertsportstx.com) is the nearest outfitter and guide service, and offers bike rentals. Marfa-based Angell Expeditions (432-229-3713 or www.angellexpeditions.com) also offers guide service and bike rentals. Quality, hardtail front-suspension bikes are available for rent at Saucedo Ranger Station.

Park and "special ride" information:

For park information, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/bigbendbranch. For bike trip planning assistance, e-mail ridebigbendbranch@tpwd.state.tx.us.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Cell phone and landline phone service is almost nonexistent in the park. In case of serious emergencies, riding or hiking out for help may be the only choice. For extra safety, carry a satellite phone or S.P.O.T. personal tracker.

For park emergencies during business hours, call Saucedo Ranger Station at (432) 358-4444. For parks emergencies after business hours, call (432) 229-4913 or (432) 358-4451 and/or dial 911.

911 is the emergency number where cell coverage is available.

REMEMBER: Emergency response is usually hours away,

if not a day or more. Be sure to carry sufficient water, food, spare tubes/tires, a map/compass, and a first-aid kit at all times.

TPWD staff will do their best to assist park visitors, but if you drive a motorized vehicle in to a remote site to begin or assist your bike trip, it is possible that the services of a professional tow truck or mechanic may be required. The only local extraction and mechanic service is in Presidio:

Rio Grande Wrecker Service:
(432) 229-3312 (during business hours), or (432) 229-3740 (after business hours).

Weather in the park:

Weather conditions in the park can be extreme. Check the weather forecast prior to your visit, and again once you reach the park. Temperatures vary from 100 degrees in early April through early October OR well below 32 degrees in winter. Many arroyos and other low-lying areas of the park are susceptible to flash-flooding, so seek higher ground in the event of heavy rains. **Lightning storms can be severe.**

RIDE DESCRIPTIONS

1

Sauceda – Horsetrap Trail Loop Ride

Distance: 5 miles round-trip

Ride time: 1 hour (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda - 4,160'; high point - 4,350'

Ride rating: **Easy/Moderate**

Route surface: About half singletrack and half doubletrack

Terrain: Some rocky, loose conditions and a few short sandy areas; one hill, approximately one quarter-mile long

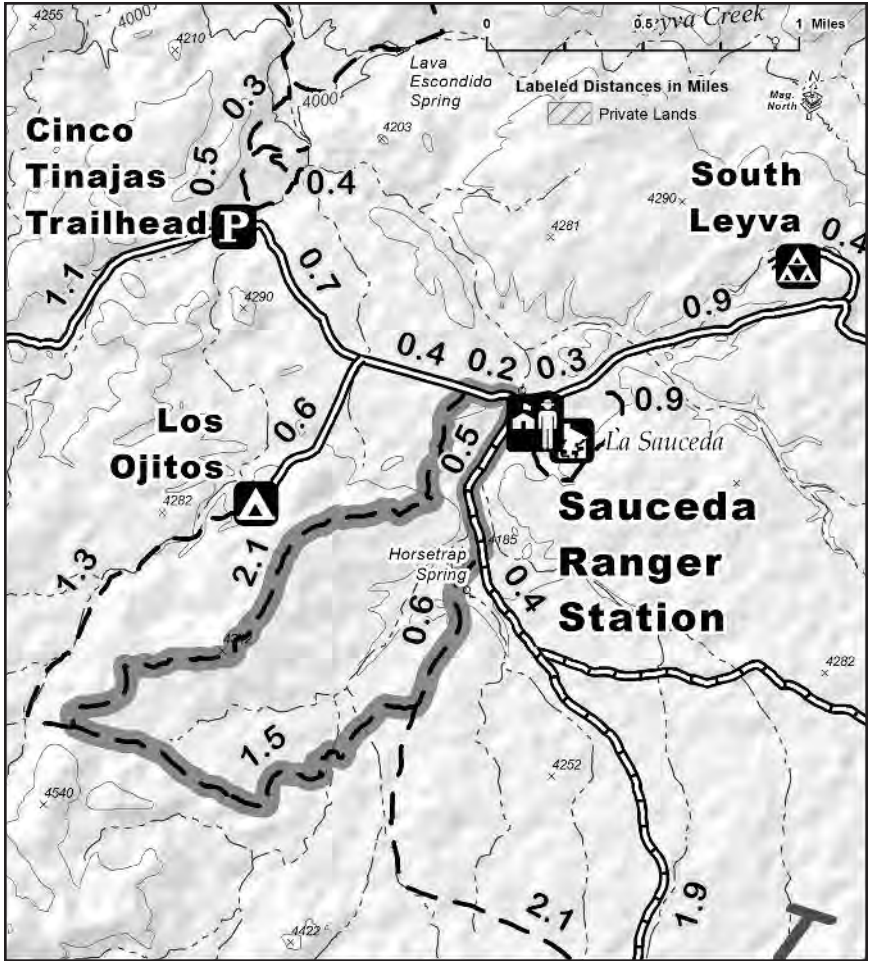
Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).

Trail Notes

This is a good beginner/intermediate ride. Beginners will need to 'hike-a-bike' up the hill in the singletrack section. There are some nice general all-around views along this route. Don't preoccupy your mind with distant views for too long, because the lurking white thorn, cat claw and lechuguilla will reach out and get you. This route is described below for counter-clockwise travel, but can be traveled either direction. Clockwise allows for a gradual uphill for a longer distance, while counter-clockwise lets you get the up hill out of the way early, with easy riding after that.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Head west on the Main Park Road.
Horsetrap Trail - Presidio Road Jct.	0.3	Turn left (south) from the Main Park Road onto the Horsetrap Trail (follow rock cairns). Shortly thereafter, you'll begin to climb the hill.
Top of the hill	1.1	It's easy going for the rest of the ride.
Horsetrap "mini-maze"	2.3	The "mini-maze" provides access for bikers through a fence.
Trail joins doubletrack road	2.4	Turn left (east) onto the doubletrack road.
North singletrack Jct.	3.0	Turn left (north) onto the singletrack trail.
Tascate Trail Jct.	3.9	Turn left (north) at this junction, where the Horsetrap Trail and the north end of the Tascate Trail meet.
Horsetrap Springs	4.3	Cottonwood trees generally indicate springs and seasonal surface water.
Madrid Falls Road Jct.	4.4	Turn left (north) onto Madrid Falls Road and head to Sauceda. There is a couple of hundred yards of traveling though some sand on this section.
Sauceda (SRS)	5.0	You're back at Sauceda Ranger Station.



2

Sauceda – Tascate – Sauceda Loop Ride

Distance: 6.7 miles round-trip

Ride time: About 2 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; high point – 4,355'

Ride rating: **Easy**

Route surface: Doubletrack & non-motorized doubletrack/jeep road; dirt road

Terrain: Mostly flat with slight inclines, some sandy areas

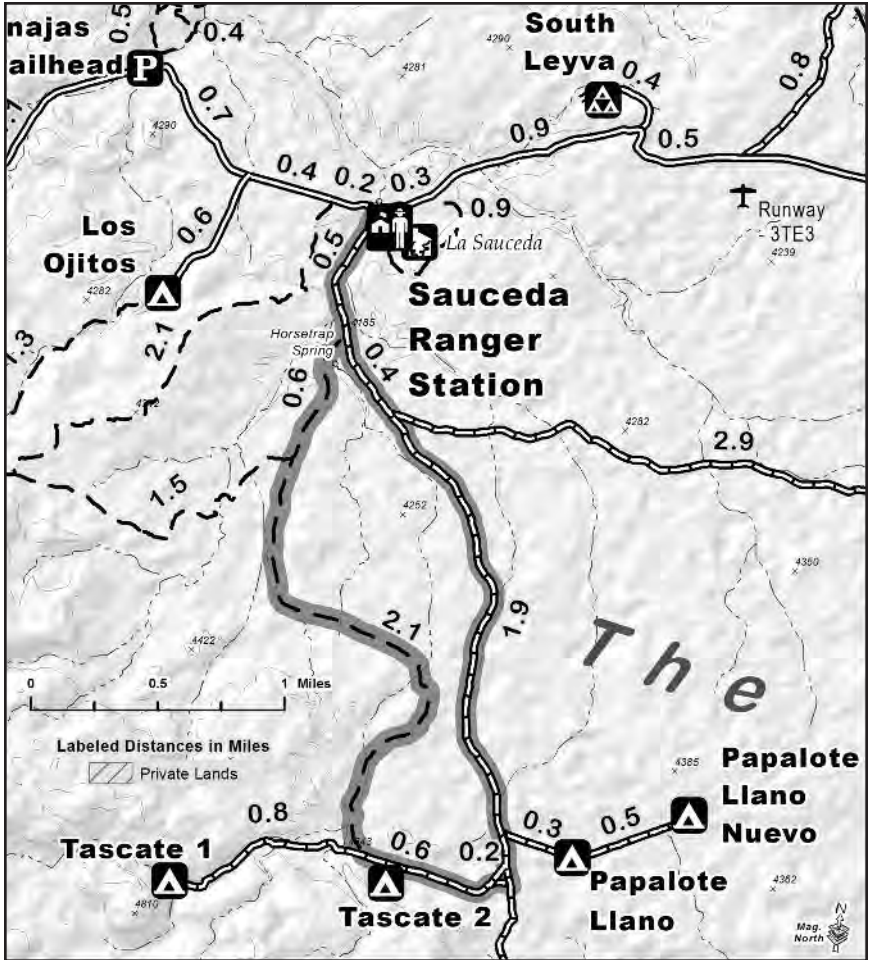
Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).

Trail Notes

This is an excellent beginner ride for someone who is in reasonably good condition and who is developing mountain-biking skills. Riding is pleasant and relatively easy, with a few sandy areas to travel through. There are no steep hills or serious rocky or rough spots. There are some nice rock outcrops and small arroyos along the route to explore by hiking.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel west on the Main Park Road.
Madrid Falls/West Llano Road Jct.	0.1	Turn left (south) onto Madrid Falls Road.
Llano Loop Jct.	1.0	Keep straight (south).
Papalote Llano campsite Jct.	2.8	Pass the campsite junction.
Tascate campsite road	2.9	Turn right (west) onto the Tascate campsite road.
Tascate #2 campsite	3.4	Pass by this campsite on the left (south) side of the road
Tascate Trail Jct.	3.5	Just past the Tascate #2 campsite, turn right (northward) onto the doubletrack/trail, which is closed to motor vehicles. <i>(If you continued west on the well-traveled road, you would come to Tascate #1 campsite.)</i>
Horsetrap Bike Trail Jct.	5.6	Continue northward past the junction where Tascate Trail joins Horsetrap Trail.
Madrid Falls Road Jct.	6.1	Turn left (north) onto Madrid Falls Road to return to Sauceda
Sauceda (SRS)	6.7	You're back where you started.



3

Sauceda – Llano Loop – Sauceda Loop Ride

Distance: 8.0 miles round-trip

Ride time: 2.5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; high point – 4,308'

Ride rating: **Easy**

Route surface: 2WD doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Relatively flat; some sand and loose rock

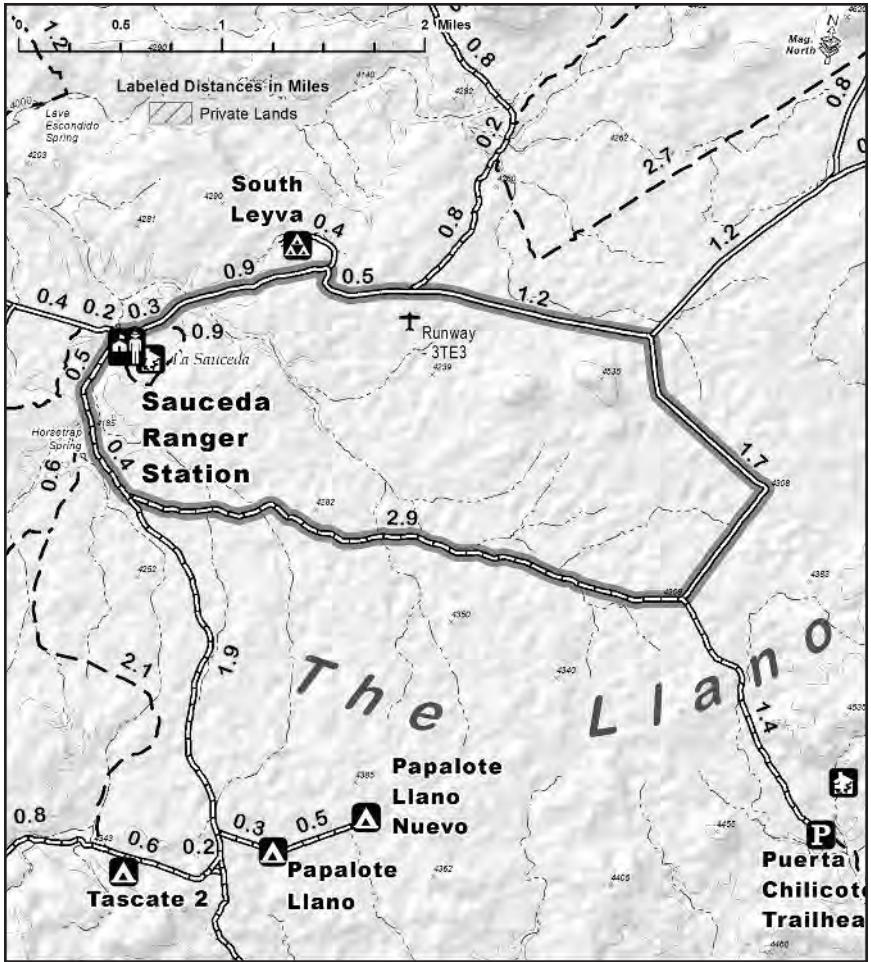
Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).

Trail Notes

This is a good beginner, training, and/or orientation ride. There are also other bike rides that branch off of this route.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel west a short distance on the Main Park Road.
Madrid Falls Road/ West Llano Loop Jct.	0.1	Turn left (south) here. There will be a couple of hundred yards of sandy surface to begin with.
Madrid Falls/ Llano Loop Jct.	1	Turn left (northeast) to continue on the Llano Loop.
Chilicote Jct.	3.7	Stay left (east) on the main doubletrack. You'll pass the turnoff to Chilicote Springs on the right (south).
Main Park Road/ East Llano Loop Jct.	5.5	Curve to the left (west) to get on the Main Park Road.
Main Park Road/ La Mota Road Jct.	6.5	Continue west past La Mota Road.
Sauceda Airstrip	7.1	You'll pass the Sauceda International Airstrip on your left.
Sauceda (SRS)	8.0	Congratulations! You made it back.



Sauceda – Chilicote Springs – Sauceda Loop Ride

Distance: 12.0 miles round-trip

Ride time: 3.5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; high point – 4,318'; low point – 4,130'

Ride rating: **Easy/Moderate**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Short rolling hills; some short sandy areas

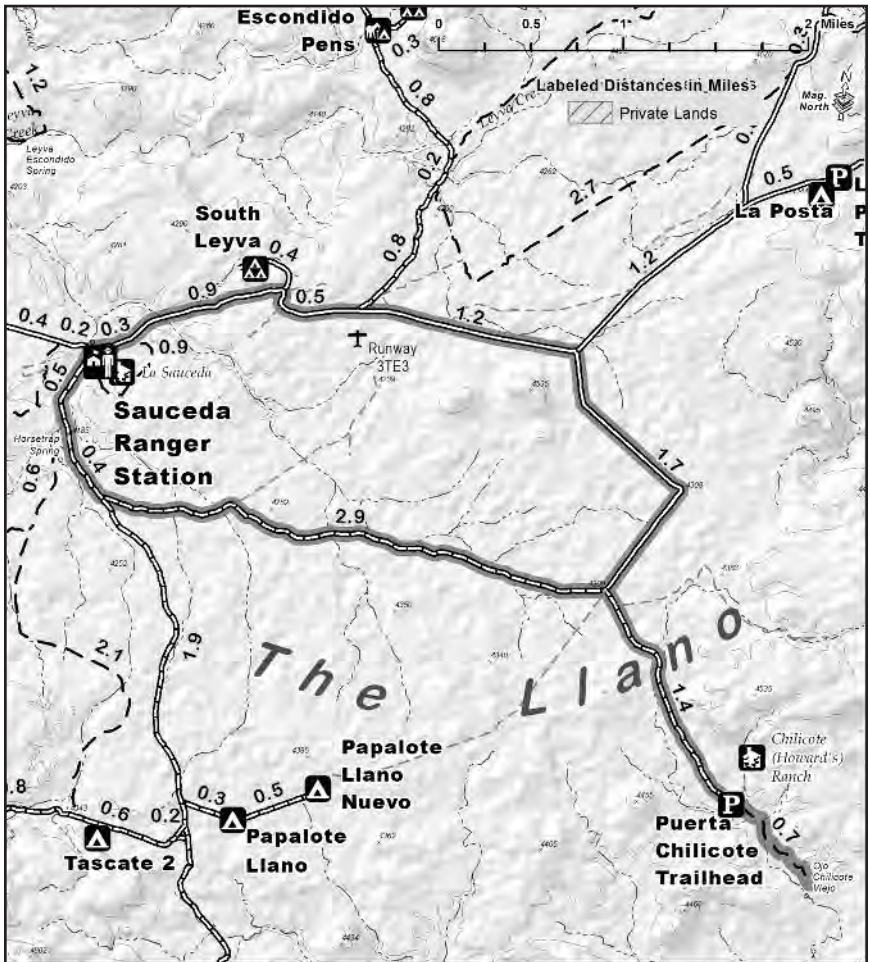
Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS) or Chilicote junction. This route description is from SRS.

Trail Notes

This is a great and relatively easy ride for getting into some wild and exciting BBRSP backcountry. The bike travel ends at Chilicote Springs, which is located about 2 miles down (south) the doubletrack road that leads southward from Chilicote junction. The country around Chilicote Springs is awesomely rugged and beautiful, begging for hiking and exploring.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel west on the Main Park Road a short distance.
Madrid Falls Road/ West Llano Loop Jct.	0.1	Turn left (south) here. There will be a couple of hundred yards of sandy surface to begin with.
Madrid Falls Road/ Llano Loop Jct.	1.0	Turn left (east) to continue on the Llano Loop to Chilicote junction
Chilicote Jct.	3.7	Turn right (south) through the gate. Continue south 2 miles on the doubletrack trail until you get to Chilicote Springs.
Puerta Chilicote TH	5.5	There are many hiking and exploring opportunities in any direction from the TH.
End of road	5.7	The road ends 0.2 miles beyond the TH. Hike east for 2.5 miles to enjoy a 700-foot vertical view into Fresno Canyon. When you've had your fill of the scenery, return the way you came.
Chilicote Jct.	7.7	Turn right or left to Sauceda. The route described is to the right (east).
Main Sauceda Road/ East Llano Loop Jct.	9.5	Stay to the left (west) to get on the Main Park Road to Sauceda.
Main Park Road/ La Mota Road Jct.	10.5	Continue past La Mota Road.
Sauceda (SRS)	12.0	Congratulations! You made it back.



5

Sauceda – Encino Bike Trail – Sauceda Loop Ride

Distance: 11.8 miles round-trip

Ride time: 3 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; high point – 4,432'

Ride rating: **Moderate**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; singletrack; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Some rocky, loose conditions; some short sand sections

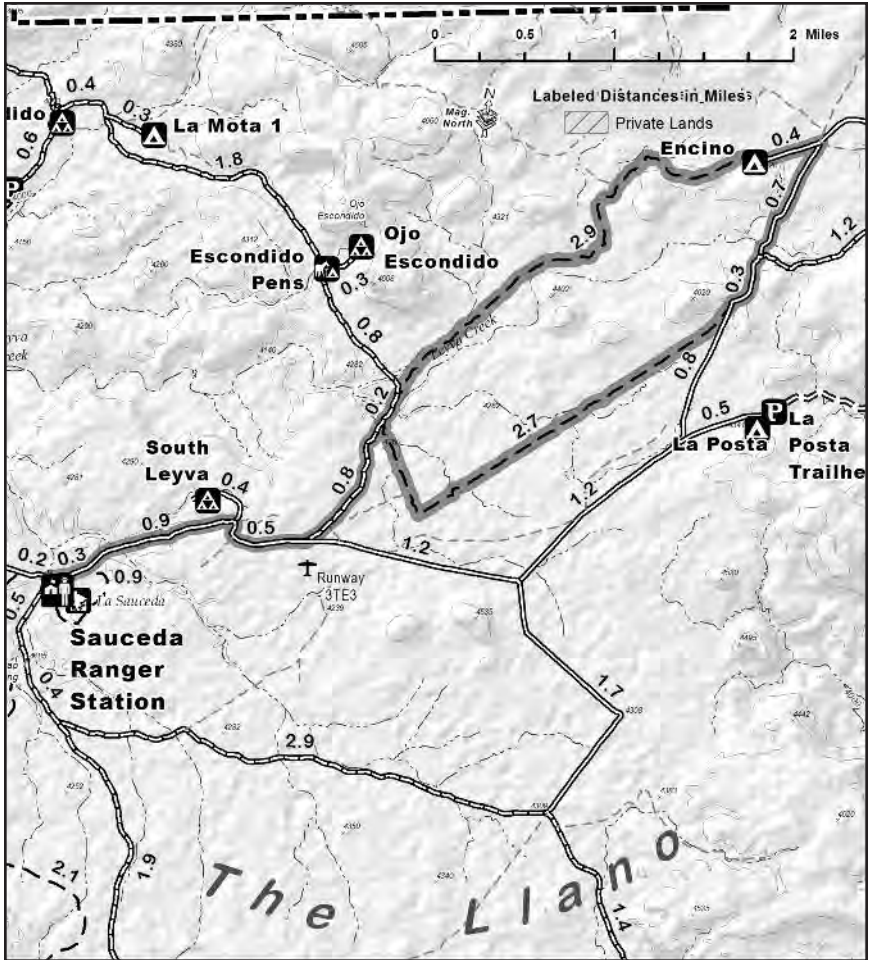
Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).

Trail Notes

This area of the park is generally more flat, with some nice distant views. Approximately half of the ride follows the Los Alamos power line feeder route. Ridden as described (counter-clockwise) the ascent is a bit more gradual, but is still over up-and-down small drainages. This is not considered one of the prettier bike routes in the park, though it is a good “exercise” ride.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel east on the Main Park Road.
Cattleguard/La Mota Road Jct.	1.5	Turn left (north) at this junction onto La Mota Road.
Encino Bike Trail Jct.	2.3	You are under the power line; turn right (south) here, or continue 1/4 mile to other end of Encino Bike Trail. This description is written for turning right (south) here. The trail is non-motorized at this point.
Encino Bike Trail (bends northeast here)	2.9	The power line splits here, and you will follow the eastern feeder.
Main Park Road	5	Please obey the traffic signal ☉. Turn left (northeast) to continue on Encino Bike Trail (coincides with the Main Park Road for 1.1 miles).
Papalote Encino campsite turnoff	6.1	Turn left (west) to continue on Encino Bike Trail.
Papalote Encino campsite	6.4	Continue past the campsite on the Encino Bike Trail.
La Mota Road	9.3	For the direction-challenged, turn left here. (A right turn will take you farther out La Mota.)
Encino Bike Trail cutoff	9.5	Continue past the cutoff where you turned earlier.
Main Park Road	10.3	Turn right to return to Sauceda.
Sauceda (SRS)	11.8	You're back where you started.



6

Sauceda – Portal del Norte – Sauceda “There-and-Back” Ride

Distance: 22.2 miles round-trip

Ride time: 4 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Saucedá – 4,160'; high point – 4,520'

Ride rating: **Moderate** (*because of long distance*)

Route surface: Dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Some rocky, loose conditions; some sand and washboard sections; short, rolling hills; some very good “beginner” riding conditions.

Access: Begin and end ride at Saucedá Ranger Station (SRS).

Trail Notes

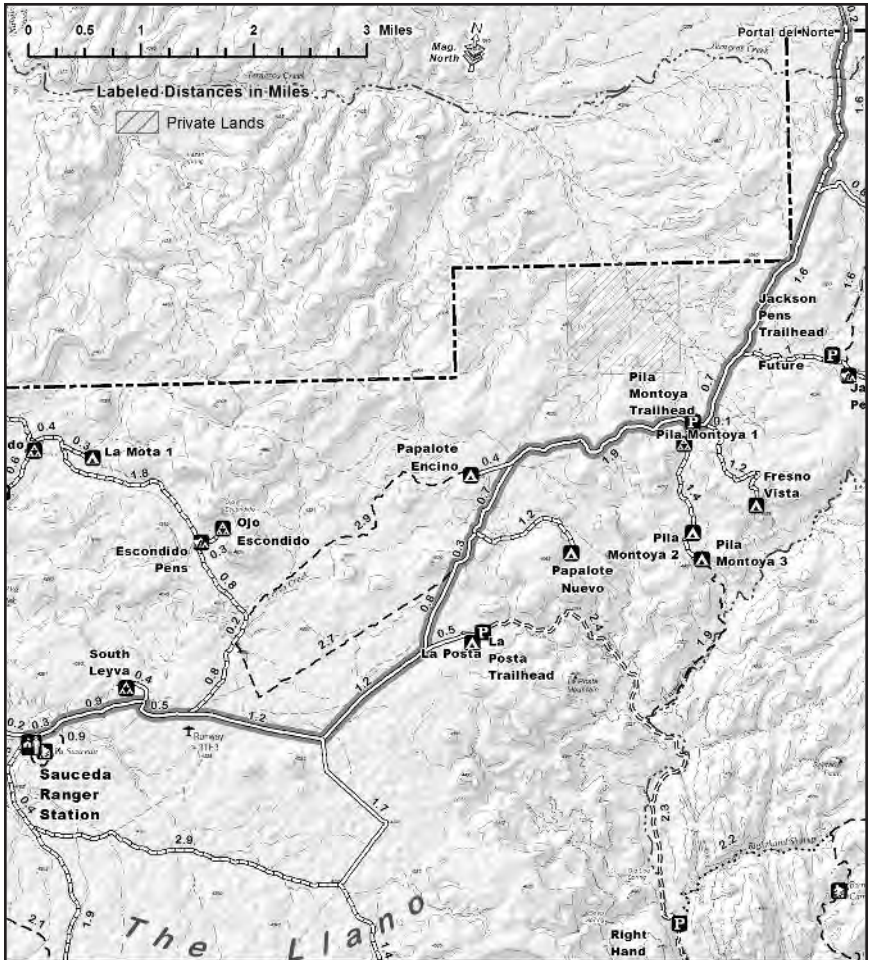
This is a great introductory ride, with broad views in all directions. The ride travels along the Main Park Road to Portal del Norte (North Entrance) and back. Along the way, you will pass many side trips (roads and trails) varying in length from short to quite long and involved. The ride undulates for a little under 11.4 miles to the park boundary at Portal del Norte. Some of the hills on this ride are moderately steep, but not very long. To lengthen the ride by a mile, you could include the north section of the Encino Bike Trail loop on your return.

NOTE: At this writing, motorized travel beyond the locked gate at Portal del Norte is not open to the public. There are no services at Portal del Norte. If you choose, you could ride beyond this trail description and follow the county road 23 miles to meet Highway 67 just south of the Marfa U.S. Border Patrol Checkpoint. However, please be aware that once out of BBRSP, the land along the road is private.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel east on the Main Park Road.
Cattleguard/La Mota Road Jct.	1.5	Continue east on the Main Park Road.
E Llano Loop Jct.	2.5	Continue on the Main Park Road.
Fresno Canyon cutoff	3.5	Continue on the Main Park Road.
Papalote Encino Jct.	5.3	Stay on the Main Park Road.
The Solitario wayside exhibit	6.3	A nice high point from which to view the Solitario and Fresno Canyon to the south.
Pila Montoya Jct.	7.2	Stay on the Main Park Road.
The Solitario Jct.	8.0	Continue on the Main Park Road. Keep left.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Portal del Norte	11.1	The north entrance to Big Bend Ranch SP is at the locked gate.
Return trip options: Main Park Road and/or Encino Bike Trail (optional)	22.2 or 23.2	Follow the Main Park Road back; or, when you reach the Papalote Encino cutoff, you could ride a leg of the Encino Bike Trail loop. (See Ride #5.)



7

Sauceda - La Posta - Fresno Canyon Stage Road - Pila Montoya - North Encino Trail - Sauceda Loop Ride

Distance: 17.4 miles round-trip

Ride time: 4.5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda - 4,160'; high point - 4,520'; low point - 3,898'

Ride rating: **Moderate/Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Some rocky, loose conditions; some sand and washboard sections; Rolling hills with some steep sections

Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).
This trail description is for a counter-clockwise loop ride,
but it could also be ridden clockwise.

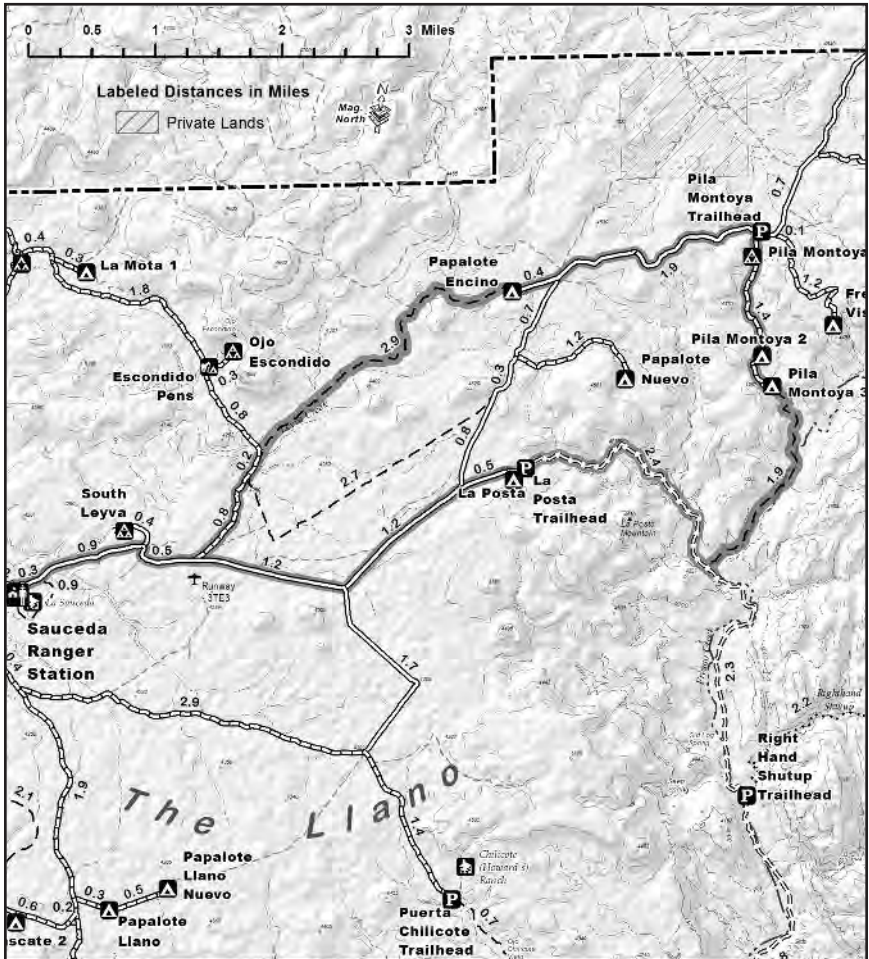
Trail Notes

This loop ride is great for intermediate-level riders seeking varied terrain. It ranges from easy riding on the Main Park Road portions to steep, rocky ascents and descents on Fresno Hill and below Pila Montoya, as well as a section of the non-motorized Encino Bike Trail. The ride covers a short leg of the historic Old Stage Road, once used for stage and freight wagons traveling between Marfa and Terlingua. Whether you do the ride clockwise or counter-clockwise, there is a steep uphill and downhill descent in the Fresno Canyon/Pila Montoya area of the ride.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Head east on the Main Park Road.
Cattleguard/ La Mota Jct.	1.5	Continue east on the Main Park Road.
East Llano Loop Jct.	2.5	Continue on Main Park Road.
Fresno Canyon Rd. Jct.	3.5	Turn right (east) toward Fresno Canyon.
La Posta TH & Fresno Hill	4.4	Just past La Posta TH, begin the steep descent of Fresno Hill.
Old Stage Rd. & Pila Montoya Jct.	6.7	Turn left (north) onto the old stage road to Pila Montoya. The last 1/4 mile of this section is steep and rough.
Pila Montoya 3	8.3	Travel past the campsite.
Pila Montoya/ Main Park Road Jct.	9.8	Turn left (west) onto the Main Park Road.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Papalote Encino campsite/trail Jct.	11.7	Turn right (west) and travel past Papalote Encino campsite to ride the northwest stretch of the Encino Bike Trail; or stay left on the Main Park Road to Sauceda.
La Mota Jct.	14.9	If on Encino Road, turn left onto La Mota Road.
Main Park Road/ La Mota Road/Jct.	15.9	If coming from the Encino Bike Trail, turn right (west) onto the Main Park Road to return to Sauceda. If already on the Main Park Road, keep going.
Sauceda (SRS)	17.4	You are back.



Sauceda – Arroyo Primero – Fresno Canyon – Sauceda Loop Ride

Distance: 29.1 miles round-trip

Ride time: 8.5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; Madrid Hill summit – 4,350';
Fresno Canyon bottom – 3,106'

Ride rating: **Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Some steep hills and rocky conditions; great views;
some sandy stretches and “hike-a-bike” sections

Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).

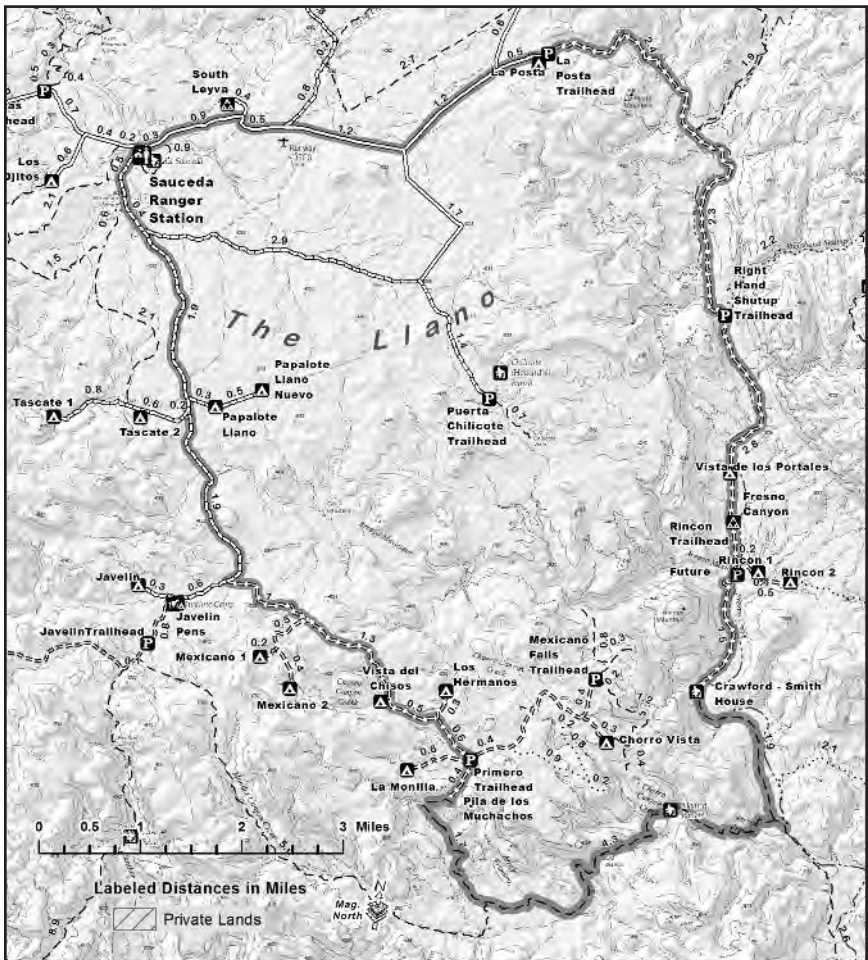
Trail Notes

This epic ride has it all—rugged terrain, solitude, historical sites, and great views. The ride is relatively easy for the first 5 or so miles along Madrid Falls Road. A steep climb up Madrid Hill (Cuesta de los Mexicanos) is followed by a longer downhill stretch. Then you move into the upper reaches of Arroyo Primero, a non-motorized-vehicle section that goes all the way down into Fresno Canyon. The ride continues north through upper Fresno Canyon along the 1890s-era stage/freight road. A climb takes you up Fresno Hill (Cuesta de la Avispa), and then it's an easy 5 miles back to Sauceda.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel south on Madrid Falls Road.
Javalin Pens Jct.	4.8	Turn left (east) at the Jct.
Madrid Hill	5.4	The first of several steep climbs, with great views.
Pila de los Muchachos Jct.	8.2	Turn right (south), go past the La Monilla campsite (0.1 miles) and up the hill to Pila de los Muchachos pass, then down the steep hill, continuing to Arroyo Primero.
Madrid House	13.2	Stop to visit this historical adobe house with a nearby spring (some seasonal restrictions may apply).
Madrid/Fresno Canyon Road Jct.	14.5	Turn left (north) to travel up Fresno Canyon.
Fresno Creek Cascades	14.6	Hike 0.1 miles to the right (east) to the creek to explore cascades and rock shelter.
Crawford-Smith House	16.1	View the historical ranch-house ruins. Then continue across Fresno Creek and north on the Old Stage Road. There is usually water in Fresno Creek west of the house. Treat before drinking.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Upper Fresno Canyon	17.9	From here on, the trail crosses Fresno Creek numerous times and stays in the creek bed on occasion. Follow rock cairns (stacked rocks) and signs closely.
“Manos Arriba”	20.7	View the rock art site in the small cave to the right.
Pila Montoya Jct.	22.4	Continue left (west) past the Jct.
Fresno Hill	23.1	Begin the steep climb up Fresno Hill.
Main Park Road	25.6	At the “Y” in the road, stay left (west).
Sauceda (SRS)	29.1	Congratulations!! You just survived one of the great epic one-day rides on the planet.



Sauceda – Chorro Vista/Mexicano Falls Trailhead – Sauceda “There and Back” Ride

Distance: 22.4 miles round-trip

Ride time: 4 to 5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; Madrid Hill – 4,464'; Chorro Vista – 4,030'

Ride rating: **Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Some steep hills and rocky conditions; great views; and a few short, sandy stretches

Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).

Trail Notes

This is a fun ride, with rugged terrain, solitude, wildlife, and great views. The riding is relatively easy for the first 5 or so miles from SRS along Madrid Falls Road. A steep climb up Madrid Hill (Cuesta de los Mexicanos) is followed by a longer downhill stretch, with great views into the Sierra Madre range in Mexico. For the rest of the ride, conditions vary from nice to rocky, but overall not too bad.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel west on the Main Park Road.
Madrid Falls Road Jct.	0.1	Take the left (southwest) fork onto Madrid Falls Road, past the corrals.
Llano Loop Jct.	1.0	Continue straight (south) on the Madrid Falls Road.
Javalin Pens Jct.	4.8	Turn left (east) on Madrid Falls Road.
Madrid Hill	5.4	This is the steepest climb on the route, with great views along the way; descent begins at 5.9 miles.
Pila de los Muchachos Jct.	8.2	Continue straight (east) on the Main Park Road.
Chorro Vista/Mexicano Falls Trailhead Jct.	9.6	Turn left (north) at the 'T' to go to Mexicano Falls Trailhead; OR turn right (south) and go 0.5 miles to Chorro Vista TH. From here, hike 0.5 miles south to Madrid Falls overlook.
Mexicano Falls Overlook/Fresno Canyon Scenic Overlook	11.2	Once at Mexicano Falls Trailhead (approx. 0.5 mile), continue straight and then left another 0.5 mile to Mexicano Falls Overlook; OR, go straight .3 mile to a scenic overlook over Fresno Canyon.
Sauceda (SRS)	22.4	Reverse route to return to Sauceda.



Sauceda – La Mota Road – Sauceda “There and Back” Ride

Distance: 14.8 miles there and back

Ride time: About 3.5 hours round-trip (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; high point on ride – 4,270'

Ride rating: **Moderate**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt and gravel with some sandy areas

Terrain: Rolling hills; nothing too steep

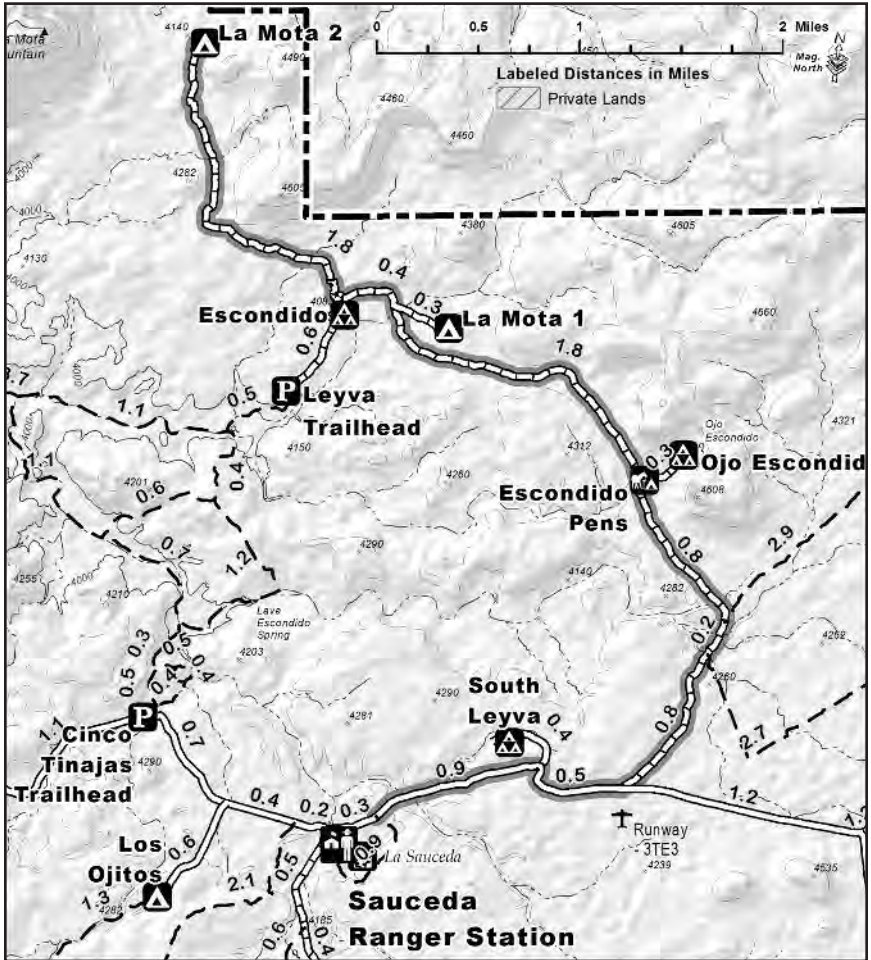
Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).

Trail Notes

This is a pretty straightforward ride into the northern section of the park. You will enjoy many scenic views along the way. This road also provides access for climbing La Mota Mountain (5,044 feet). This route travels over some loose rock and a little sand (one sand trap), but much of the riding surface is quite good. There is a dry-evaporative toilet (Eloo) and, usually, water at Escondido Pens campsite. Treat water prior to drinking.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel east on the Main Park Road.
Cattleguard/ La Mota Road Jct.	1.5	Turn left (north) onto La Mota Road. This road is rated 2WD HC (two-wheel drive, high-clearance).
Escondido Pens/ Eloo toilet	3.3	Water faucet is on east side of small pens (non-potable). This water is pipe-fed from a spring farther up the drainage.
Cairned cow trail/old sheep-rancher rock shelters	4.7	La Mota 1 campsite is just to east over the near rocks. The cairned cow trail leads down to some beautiful rocks.
La Mota Mountain climb	7	At the top of the hill in the pass, you can park to climb La Mota Mountain - up broken rocks along east broad shoulder (approx. 1 hour).
Park boundary with La Mota Ranch	7.4	“No Trespassing” to the north. (Private ranch.)
Sauceda (SRS)	14.8	Reverse route to Sauceda.



Sauceda – Oso Loop – Sauceda Loop Ride

Distance: 14.5 miles round-trip

Ride time: 4 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; high point – 4,500'; low point – 4,084'

Ride rating: **Moderate**

Route surface: Dirt/gravel road; doubletrack/jeep road

Terrain: Some rocky, loose conditions ; short, steep hills; great views

Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS). This write-up describes the Oso Loop ride in a counter-clockwise direction.

Trail Notes

Regardless of whether you do the ride clockwise or counter-clockwise, there will be some short, steep hills either way. The road travels along the north side of Oso Peak, the highest point in the park at 5,135 feet. There are several stock watering troughs along this route. None of the water is potable, so make sure you treat or filter before drinking. It's great for soaking your head or splashing off your face to cool off. There are great views all along the way. If you choose, you could shorten the ride by driving out and parking at Agua Adentro Pens or East Oso turnout. This would save 4.6 miles.

SIDE HIKE: If time allows, you can hike up the northeast side of Oso Peak by leaving your bike just south of the Guale/Oso junction and hiking straight up the mountainside. The hike is brushy and rocky, but not technical, and has great views.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel west on the Main Park Road.
Cinco Tinajas Trailhead	1.3	Continue past the trailhead and stay on the Main Park Road.
East Oso Loop/ Guale Mesa Jct.	2.3	Continue west on the Main Park Road. Your return trip will bring you out to this junction.
Agua Adentro cattle pens	6.3	Turn left (south) here, off the Main Park Road, to begin the Oso Loop. There is an Eloo (toilet) here.
Oso Loop/Las Burras Road Jct.	7.9	At the junction take the left (east) road.
Oso Loop/ Guale Road Jct.	10.1	Turn left (north) at this junction onto the eastern stretch of Oso Loop/Guale Mesa Road.
East Oso Loop/Main Park Road Jct.	12.2	Turn right (east) to return to Sauceda.
Sauceda (SRS)	14.5	Congratulations; you made it back!



Sauceda – Yedra Trailhead – Sauceda “There and Back” Ride

Distance: 13.6 miles round-trip (or 4.2 miles if shortened; see below)

Ride time: About 4 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; high point – 4,250'

Ride rating: **Moderate**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Some steep hills and loose, rocky conditions beyond Yedra 1 campsite; stretches of advanced riding

Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).

Trail Notes

This ride could be shortened by about 9 miles by driving to Yedra turnoff and riding from near there. It is 2.1 miles to Yedra Trailhead (YTH) from the junction with the Main Park Road. At Yedra Trailhead there are numerous hiking options. Near the YTH, just down the ‘troad’ to the arroyo (Cañon de la Cueva Larga), the drainage, and the trail that heads west up a short drainage toward Papalote Alto, there’s a beautiful narrow canyon section on that drainage. Cueva Larga is visible from YTH and is a short hike down canyon. It is possible to bike (or better yet, hike) down Yedra Canyon on the official trail, but the wash is very sandy, so it could turn into a bike push rather than a bike ride. The word “yedra” is Spanish for “ivy,” likely poison ivy that is found growing in much of the riparian areas below YTH.

The Ride

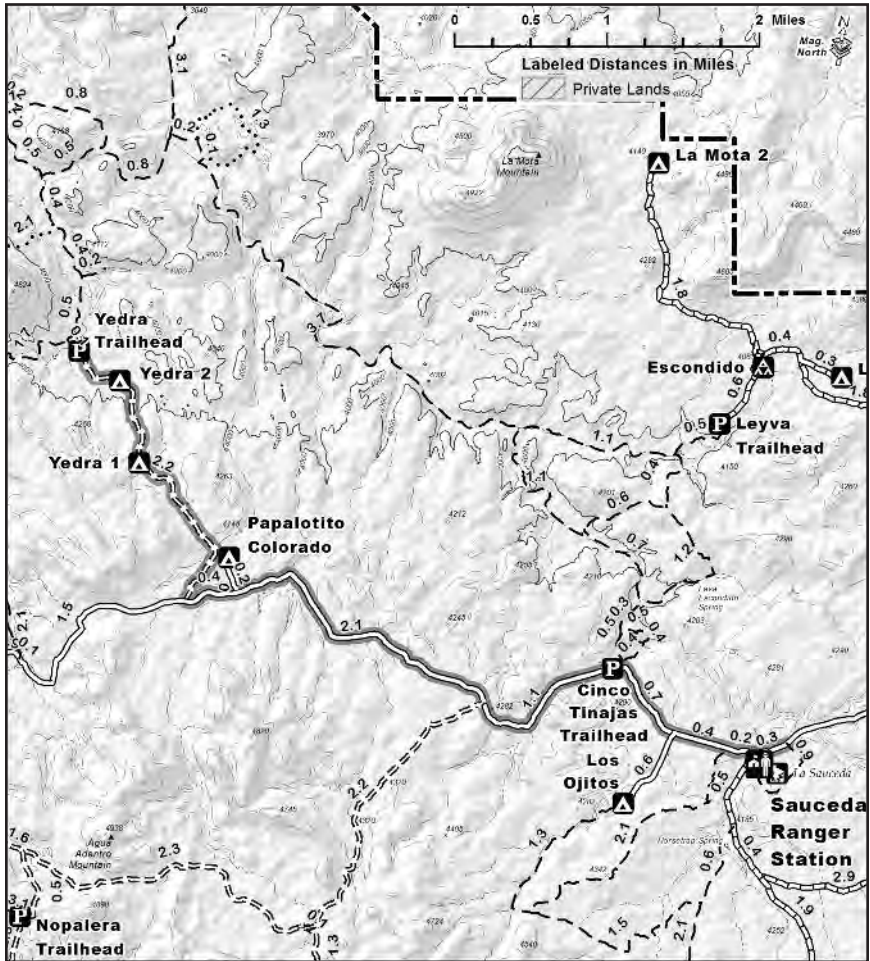
LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel west on Main Park Road.
Yedra Road/Main Park Road Jct.	4.7	Turn right (north) onto Yedra Road at the cattle guard.
Mileage below starts at Yedra turnoff.		Add 4.7 miles to mileage below if biking from SRS.
Arroyo crossing	.4 or 5.1	Visible just down this wash is Papalotito Colorado, the only old wooden papalote (windmill) still in operation at BBRSP.
Yedra 1 primitive campsite	1.1 or 5.8	Below this site the road gets considerably rougher. Walk if you have to; it is worth it.
Yedra 2 campsite	1.7 or 6.4	Nice campsite tucked in among boulders.
Yedra Trailhead	2.1 or 6.8	The large mountain that you have been heading toward and is now in front of you is Pico de la Cueva Larga. There are some excellent hikes from this trailhead. Reverse route to return to Sauceda.

LOCATION

miles from start
DISTANCE

NOTES

BRRSP Road/Yedra Jct.	4.2 or 8.9	Turn left (east) to return to Saucedá.
Saucedá (SRS)	13.6	You are back where you started.



Distance: 19.0 miles round-trip

Ride time: About 5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; high point – 4,550' (east of Oso Peak); low point – 3,984' (Rancherías arroyo)

Ride rating: **Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Some rough, rocky conditions; hilly; numerous short hills

Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).

Trail Notes

This is a remote and rugged ride, providing the rider with some spectacular vistas in the deep backcountry of BBRSP. While approximately half of this ride is considered difficult, almost half of it is more moderate. Although the route is open to 4WD motor vehicles, it is unlikely that you will see many, if any, vehicles. There are some interesting hikes along this route. And aside from a steep, brushy hike, a climb of Oso Peak—the highest peak on BBRSP—is not technical and provides a spectacular vista of BBRSP and other areas of the Big Bend.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel west on the Main Park Road.
Guale/East Oso Loop Jct.	2.4	Turn left here and head south; it's doubletrack for the rest of the trip.
Old Road Jct.	4.0	Continue straight (south).
Oso Loop Jct.	4.4	Take a left (south) turn. There should be water in the pila to the right at the top of the hill. Treat before drinking.
Upper Los Cuates Campsite Jct.	5.7	Continue south.
Lower Los Cuates Campsite Jct.	6.1	Continue south.
Guale Mesa /Rancherías Road Jct.	6.2	Turn left (east) on to the “unmaintained” road.
Rancherías Trail Jct.	9.0	Stay on the doubletrack road, which travels left (eastward).
Old Road Jct.	11.0	Continue right (east) up the hill.
Javelin Pens/ Javelin/Rancherías Cutoff	13.4	Stay on the main doubletrack and head northeasterly.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Madrid Falls Road Jct.	14.2	Turn left (north) at the "Y." (A right turn would take you toward Madrid Falls.)
Llano Loop Jct.	18.0	Continue north on the main doubletrack.
Sauceda (SRS)	19.0	Congratulations; you made it back!



Sauceda – Las Burras Trailhead – Sauceda Loop Ride

Distance: 25.6 miles round-trip

Ride time: About 6 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; high point – 4,500';
low point – 3,924' (Las Burras Trailhead)

Ride rating: **Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Some rocky sections; some rolling and short, steep hills

Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).

Trail Notes

This is a rugged and challenging ride through some remote and beautiful volcanic mountains in the western part of the park. The ancient volcanoes have left dikes, volcanic sills, and great places to explore, hike, and/or photograph. The last five miles is “out and back,” though the views are different going each way. The trip can be shortened by driving out and beginning and ending at Agua Adentro Pens, making it 12.6 miles shorter (see description of this ride). The Las Burras route is a mix of nice riding, to stretches of very rough and rocky endurance riding. At the end of the road you’ll find Las Burras Trailhead, which is the beginning of a very rough, rocky and unmarked trail route.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel west on the Main Park Road.
East Oso Loop Jct.	2.3	Stay on the Main Park Road (west).
Agua Adentro/ West Oso Loop Jct.	6.3	Turn left (south) here, off the Main Park Road. There is an Eloo (toilet) here.
Round water trough	7.8	There is good water here, especially during hot times of year (filter/treat).
Oso Loop/Las Burras road Jct.	7.9	Lean right (south) here and continue the adventure.
Nopalera Trailhead (NTH)/Las Burras Jct.	8.4	Pass NTH off to immediate right.
Cottonwoods and dam	8.7	This location is off to the east and could be a nice little side hike/exploration.
Las Burras 1 campsite	10.2	Continue past this nice campsite with great rocks.
Cut-Over to Oso Canyon	10.5	On the Las Burras road, where the road “dog-legs” to a westerly direction, a rugged (but non-technical) hiking route begins down into the beautiful middle/upper Oso Canyon.
Las Burras 3 campsite	11.9	Pass this nice campsite with great views down to Rio Grande/Presidio valley.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Wash	12.7	Cross this wash and proceed for about 1 more mile to LBTH.
Las Burras Trailhead (LBTH)	13.4	You could hike on the "unmarked" Las Burras trail route beyond this point; otherwise, backtrack on Las Burras Road to the Oso Loop junction.
Oso Loop/Las Burras Road Jct.	18.9	Turn right (east), head up the hill, and continue east on the Oso Loop.
Guale Mesa Road/ Oso Loop Jct.	21.1	Turn left (north), heading home.
East Oso Loop/Main Park Road Jct.	23.3	From here, turn right (east) to return to Sauceda.
Sauceda (SRS)	25.6	Congratulations; you made it back!



Sauceda – Guale Mesa Trailhead – Sauceda “There and Back” Ride

Distance: 22.4 miles round-trip

Ride time: About 5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Sauceda – 4,160'; high point – 4,550' (east of Oso Peak);
low point – 4,084'

Ride rating: **Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Rough, rocky conditions; numerous short hills

Access: Begin and end ride at Sauceda Ranger Station (SRS).

Trail Notes

This is a remote and rugged ride, providing the rider some stunning vistas in the deep backcountry of BBRSP. Guale Mesa is one of the most beautiful locations in the park. While about half of the ride is considered difficult, almost half of it is more moderate. Although the route is open to 4WD HC motor vehicles, it is unlikely that you will see many, if any, vehicles. The road south of the Rancherías junction has some very rough sections. Short hikes at the end of the road allow for spectacular views of Oso Canyon, Guale Mesa, and into Mexico.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0	Travel west on the Main Park Road.
Guale/East Oso Loop Jct.	2.4	Turn left (south).
“Old Road” Jct.	4.0	Continue straight (south).
Oso Loop Jct.	4.4	Turn left (south). There should be water in the pila (water tank) to the right at the top of the hill. Treat before drinking.
Los Cuates Campsite Jct.	5.7	Continue south.
Guale Mesa Road/ Rancherías Road Jct.	6.2	Stay on the doubletrack road to the right (south).
Guale 2 Campsite Road Jct.	10.2	Travel straight (south) to Guale TH and views of Oso Canyon. (A left turn here would take you .9 miles to Guale 2 campsite and the Rancherías Trail spur, which is also the old wagon road to the Rio Grande.
Guale Trailhead	11.2	End of the road. Hike a quarter of a mile to the west for spectacular views of Oso Canyon, or east under the rim for some rock art. Backtrack to return the way you came.
Rancherías Road Jct.	16.2	Stay left (north).
Oso Loop Jct.	18.0	There should be water in the pila 0.1 miles to the west. Treat before drinking.
Guale Mesa Road/ Main Park Road Jct.	20.0	Turn right (east) onto the Main Park Road.
Sauceda (SRS)	22.4	You made it!



Agua Adentro Pens – Las Burras Trailhead – Agua Adentro Pens “There and Back” Ride

Distance: 14.2 miles round-trip

Ride time: About 3.5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Agua Adentro Pens – 4,213'; high point – 4,433';
low point – Las Burras Trailhead – 3,924'

Ride rating: **Moderate/Difficult**

Route surface: Dirt/gravel road; doubletrack/4WD ranch road

Terrain: Some serious rocky and loose rock conditions; rolling, short, steep hills

Access: Begin and end ride at Agua Adentro Pens on the BBRSP/
Presidio road

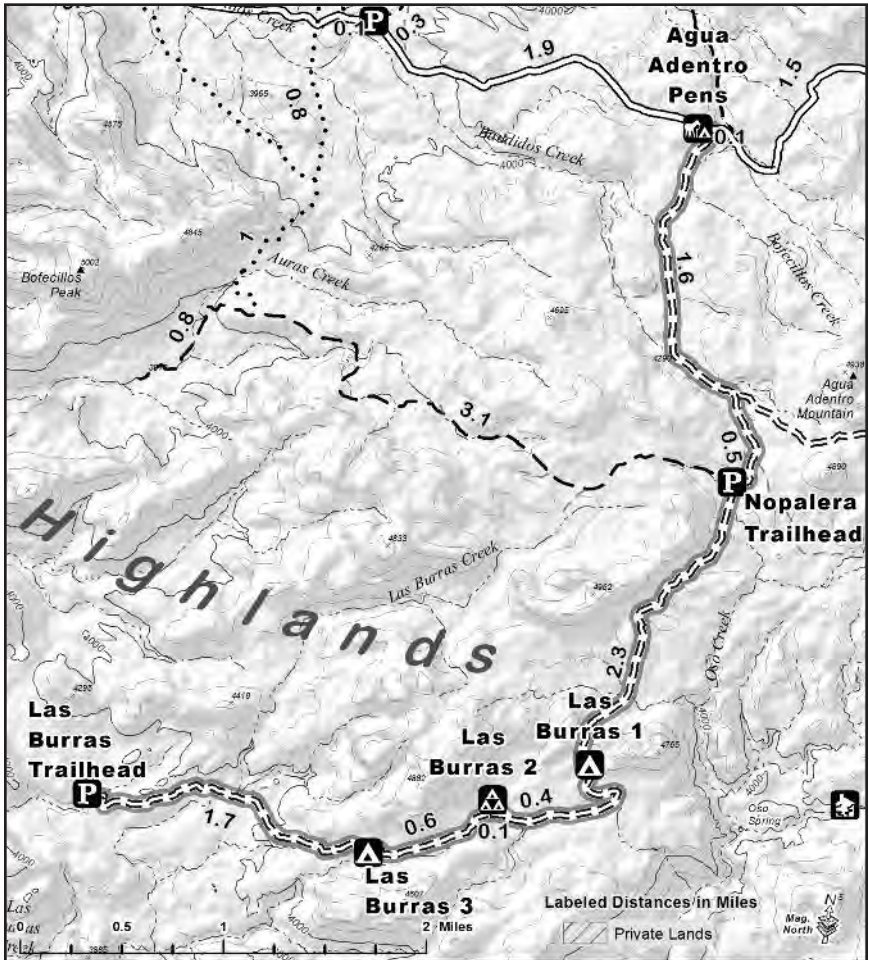
Trail Notes

This is a rugged and challenging ride out through some remote and beautiful volcanic mountains. The ancient volcanoes have left dikes, volcanic sills, and great places to explore, hike, and/or photograph. From Agua Adentro, this is an “out and back” route, though the views are different going each way. The Las Burras route is a mix of nice riding and stretches of very rough and rocky endurance riding. At the end of the road is Las Burras Trailhead, which leads to a very rough, rocky and unmarked trail.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Agua Adentro cattle pens/West Oso Loop/Rancherias Road Jct.	0	There is an Eloo (toilet) here. Head south on Oso Road.
Round water trough	1.5	There is good water here (filter/treat before drinking).
Oso Loop/Las Burras Road Jct.	1.6	Lean right (south) here and continue the adventure.
Nopalera Trailhead (NTH)/Las Burras Jct.	2.1	Pass NTH off to immediate right.
Cottonwoods and dam	2.4	This location is off to the east and could be a nice little side hike/exploration.
Las Burras 1 campsite	3.9	Continue past this nice campsite with great rocks.
Oso Canyon hike access	4.2	A rugged (but non-technical) hiking route begins down into beautiful Oso Canyon about .3 mile south of Las Burras 1 campsite, where the road “dog-legs” to a westerly direction.
Las Burras 3 campsite	5.6	Pass this nice campsite with great views down to Rio Grande/Presidio valley.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Wash	6.4	Cross the wash and proceed for about 1 more mile to LBTH.
Las Burras Trailhead (LBTH)	7.1	The Las Burras trail route is rough, rocky and not marked beyond this point; backtrack to Oso Loop Jct.
Oso Loop/Las Burras Road Jct.	12.6	Stay left (north).
Aqua Adentro	14.2	Congratulations; you made it back!



Rancho Viejo Trailhead – Old Entrance Road – Agua Adentro – Rancho Viejo Trailhead Loop Ride

Distance: 14.4 miles round-trip

Ride time: About 3.5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Rancho Viejo TH – 3,514'; high point – 4,211'

Ride rating: **Moderate/Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Short, steep hills; rocky and some loose conditions

Access: Begin and end ride at Rancho Viejo Trailhead. It is 2WD LC (two-wheel-drive, low-clearance) accessible.

Trail Notes

This is an excellent ride that circumnavigates Agua Adentro Mountain, a high, rugged peak that you pass in the shadows of when driving into the heart of the park's Main Park Road from Presidio. You pass between Agua Adentro and Bofecillos Mountains as if it were a secret passage. This route description starts at Rancho Viejo Trailhead (RVTH), travels clockwise to Agua Adentro Pens then back to RVTH by way of the Main Park Road. There are many places along this route where a science-fiction fairy tale could be filmed. Through much of this ride you pass through nice ocotillo forests, even if they are not leafed out or blooming.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Rancho Viejo Trailhead	0	From the trailhead, start up the hill.
High Point	3.3	Check out the views of Fresno Peak off to the southeast.
"Yedra Cut-across" Trail Jct.	4.7	Continue past this cairned hiking trail; stay right. (This trail goes to the Yedra TH.)
Old Ranch Road Jct.	4.9	Take the left branch.
Main Park Road	7.0	Turn right (west) onto Main Park Road.
Agua Adentro Pens	7.2	Water (filter/treat) and an Eloo (toilet) are here.
Bofecillos Trailhead (BT)	12.2	North across the Main Park Road from the BT, the trail route continues to the northwest. There are rocks across the road indicating it is closed to motor vehicles, and a "trail" sign.
Stone Corral Road	13.4	After hitting the bottom of the trail, follow the wash down to find the dirt road up to the large stone corral. The corral walls are over 6 feet thick and made of neatly stacked rock. Continue down the wash/road.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Main Park Road/ Rancho Viejo Jct.	13.7	Turn right (east) up the trailhead access road.
Rancho Viejo Trailhead	14.5	You are back where you started.



La Posta – Fresno Canyon Stage Road – Pila Montoya – La Posta Loop Ride

Distance: 10.4 miles round-trip

Ride time: 3 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: La Posta Trailhead – 4,346'; high point – 4,520';
low point – 3,898'

Ride rating: **Moderate/Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Some rocky, loose conditions; some sand and washboard sections; hilly

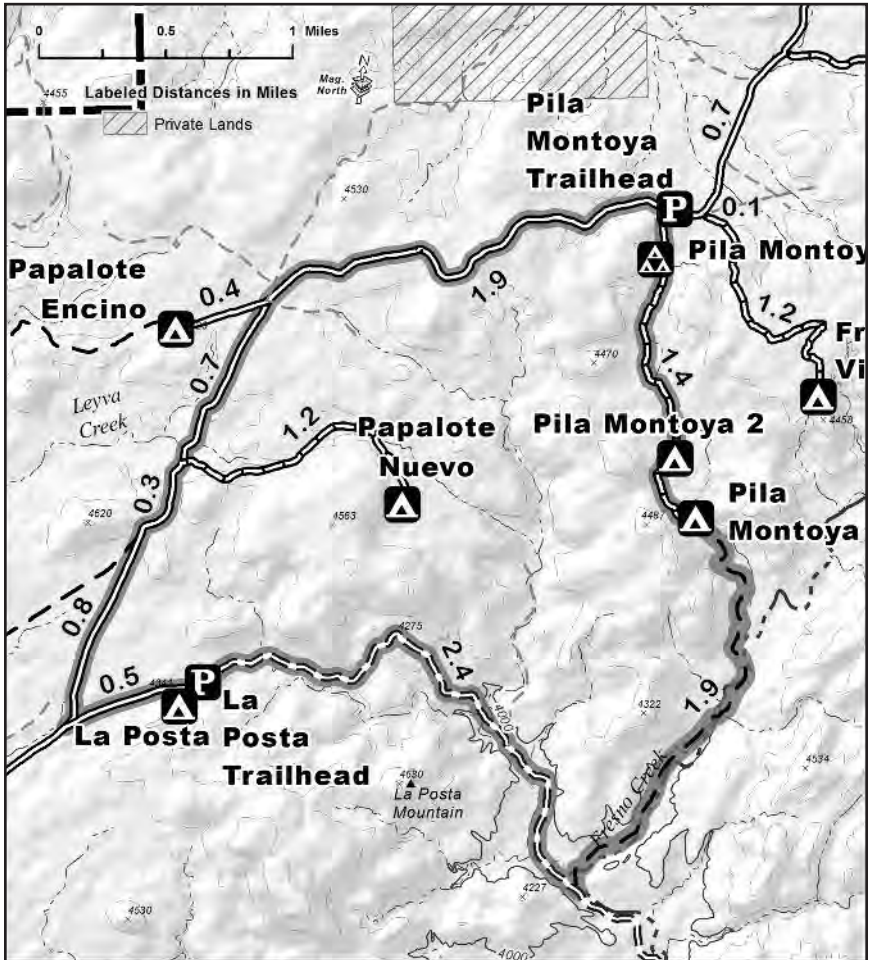
Access: Begin and end ride at La Posta TH. This ride is counter-clockwise; you could also do it clockwise; or you could begin and end at one of the Pila Montoya campsites. There's a killer hill either way.

Trail Notes

This loop ride is great for intermediate-level riders seeking varied terrain. It ranges from easy riding on the Main Park Road portions to steep, rocky ascents and descents on Fresno Hill and at Pila Montoya. The ride covers a short leg of the historic Old Stage Road, once used for stage and freight wagons traveling between Marfa and Terlingua. Whether you do the ride clockwise or counter-clockwise, there is a steep uphill and downhill descent in the Fresno Hill/Pila Montoya area of the ride. The hilly sections afford great views in all directions.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
La Posta Trailhead	0	Begin the ride by heading east, and making the steep descent of Fresno Hill.
Old Stage Road & Pila Montoya cutoff	2.2	Turn left (northeast) onto the road to the Pila Montoya campsites. You're now traveling on the Marfa-Terlingua Old Stage Road, which runs through Fresno Canyon.
Pila Montoya campsites	4.2	The first 1-1/2 miles is gradually uphill with some rough arroyo crossings. Continue on the doubletrack road past the campsites. The last 1/4 mile is very steep.
Pila Montoya/ Main Park Road Jct.	5.7	Turn left (west) onto the Main Park Road.
Papalote Encino campsite	7.6	Turn left (south) here and follow the Main Park Road back toward La Posta Trailhead. You'll pass Papalote Nuevo campsite on the left.
Fresno Canyon cutoff	9.6	Turn left (east) here to return to La Posta Trailhead.
La Posta Trailhead	10.4	Congratulations; you're back where you started.



Pila Montoya – Solitario Outer Loop – Pila Montoya Loop Ride

Distance: 26.1 miles round-trip

Ride time: 6 to 7 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: High point on ride – 4,600'; low point – 4,216'

Ride rating: **Difficult** (*Most of this ride is “Moderate,” but due to the Outer Loop section and overall distance, the rating is “Difficult.”*)

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; technical singletrack

Terrain: 20 miles of well-maintained 2WD doubletrack; some very steep, rocky, and arroyo-bottom hike-a-bike sections; some rolling hills

Access: Begin and end ride at Pila Montoya Trailhead, which is **accessible by 2WD LC (two-wheel drive, low-clearance) vehicles; or from other locations depending on vehicle clearance.**

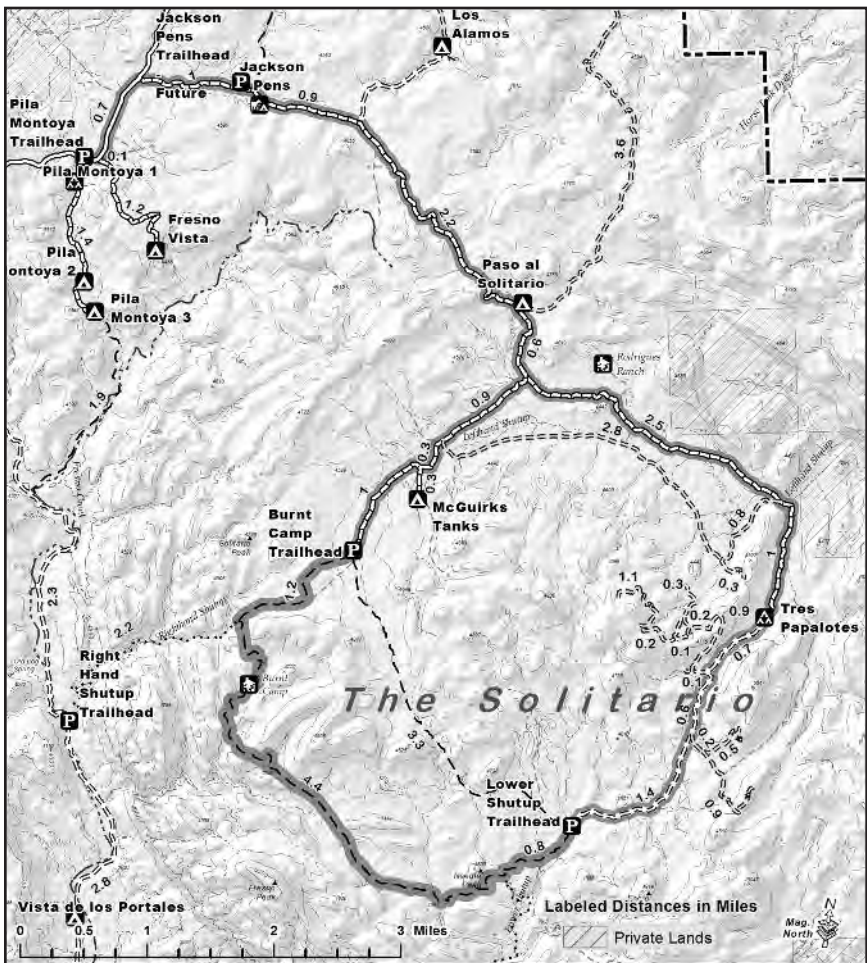
Trail Notes

The Solitario, a 10-mile-wide collapsed dome and signature feature of the park, is unique in the world. Inside the Solitario the landscape is not all that spectacular, and at first glance one might think it's just a bunch of low hills. However, geologically speaking it is one of the many small wonders of the world. The process that created the Solitario is a phenomenal story. ... And just to be inside the Solitario is a special experience.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Pila Montoya Trailhead	0	Park at the pila (water tank) and head northeast on the Main Park Road.
Main Park Rd./ Solitario Jct.	0.8	Turn right (east) onto the Solitario Rd.
Jackson Pens	1.8	Continue right, past the pens, where you will find the last water (treat/filter) on this trip until other wells are repaired.
McGuirk's Tanks Jct.	5.6	Turn right (west); Solitario Peak is visible to the west.
McGuirk's Tanks	6.7	Stay on the doubletrack road and continue past this old, dry stock tank.
McGuirk's Tanks campsite road Jct.	6.9	Stay right (west).
Burnt Camp Trailhead	7.9	Take the trail on the right (west) side of the trailhead parking lot and you're now heading west on the Outer Loop Trail.
Right Hand Shutup route Jct.	8.7	Turn left (south) out of the creek bed and up the hill onto the Outer Loop Trail.
Papalote Ramon	9.9	Continue past the old broken-down windmill in a pretty canyon.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Outer Loop Trail		There are some short sections of creek bed and steep hills that may require some hike-a-bike.
Lower Shutup Trailhead (LSTH)	14.3	Continue to the northeast on the main doubletrack road to Tres Papalotes.
Tres Papalotes campsite	17.1	Continue past the campsite. There is an Eloo (toilet) here.
McGuirk's Tanks Road/ Solitario Road Jct.	20.5	Continue straight ahead (north). You are now back at the road you came in on.
Solitario Road/Main Park Road Jct.	25.3	Turn left (west) on the Main Park Road to return to Pila Montoya.
Pila Montoya	26.1	Congratulations; you made it!



Burnt Camp – Outer/Inner Solitario Loop – Burnt Camp Loop Ride

Distance: 9.6 miles round-trip

Ride time: 3 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Burnt Camp Trailhead – 4,480'; high point – 4,587';
low point – 4,216'

Ride rating: **Moderate/Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road

Terrain: Rolling hills; a few steep, rocky hills and arroyo-bottom hike-a-bike sections

Access: Begin and end ride at Burnt Camp Trailhead. This location is accessible by 2WD HC (two-wheel drive, high-clearance) vehicles. It is recommended that the ride be taken counter-clockwise, as described below.

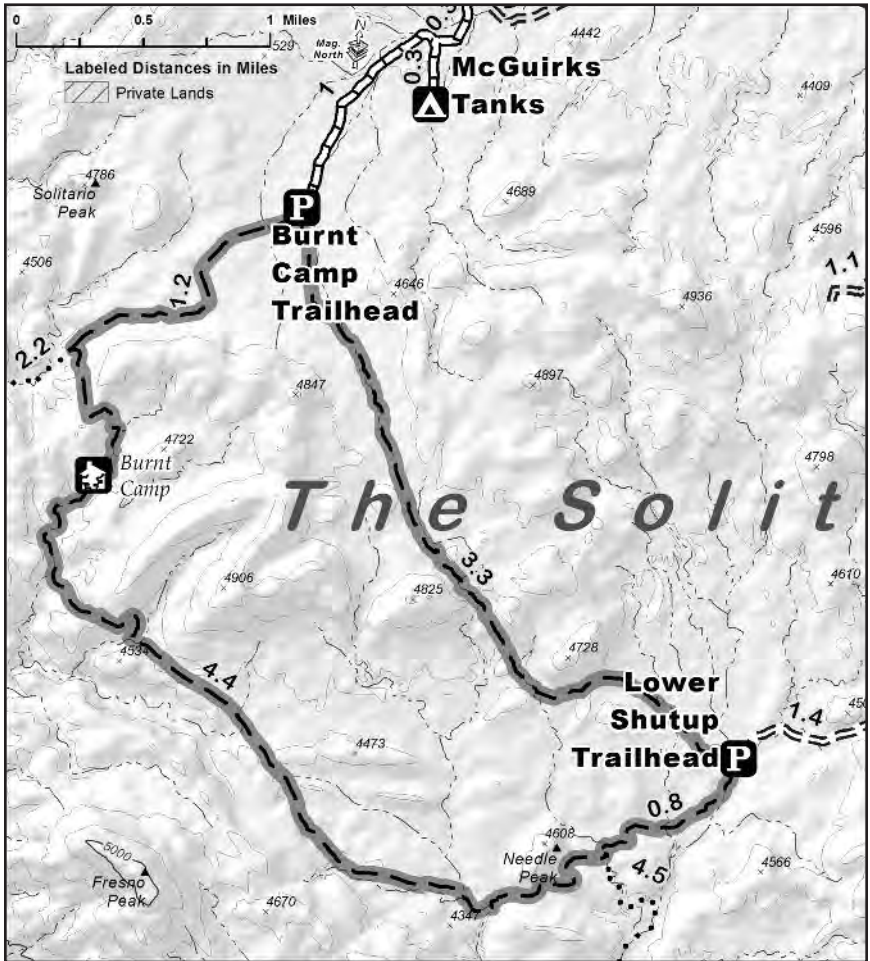
Trail Notes

The Solitario, a 10-mile-wide collapsed dome and signature feature of the park, is unique in the world. Inside the Solitario the landscape is not all that spectacular, and at first glance one might think it's just a bunch of low hills. However, geologically speaking it is one of the many small wonders of the world. The process that created the Solitario is a phenomenal story. ... And just to be inside the Solitario is a special experience. This is a great bike ride through the western interior of the Solitario.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Burnt Camp Trailhead	0	Follow the trail on the right (west) side of the trailhead parking lot and you're now heading west on the Outer Loop Trail, which also leads to the Right Hand Shutup route to Fresno Canyon.
Right Hand Shutup route Jct.	1.2	Follow the Outer Loop Trail left (south) out of the creek bed and up the hill. (The Right Hand Shutup route continues down the creek bed.)
Papalote Ramon	1.9	Continue past the old broken-down windmill in a pretty canyon.
Outer Loop Trail		There are some short sections of creek bed and steep hills that may require some hike-a-bike.
Lower Shutup Trailhead	6.4	Take the trail to the left (northwest) out of the parking lot and across the creek bed, and you are now on the Inner Loop Trail. (The doubletrack to the northeast goes to Tres Papalotes.)

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Inner Loop Trail		Keep going and cross a rough, rocky arroyo (hike-a-bike) for about 150 yards.
Burnt Camp Trailhead	9.6	You are back where you started.



Tres Papalotes – Burnt Camp – Solitario Outer Loop – Tres Papalotes Loop Ride

Distance: 14.9 miles round-trip

Ride time: 3.5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Tres Papalotes – 4,255'; high point on ride – 4,547';
low point – 4,145' (Left Hand Shutup)

Ride rating: **Moderate/Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; some technical singletrack

Terrain: Rolling hills; a few steep, rocky hills and arroyo-bottom hike-a-bike sections

Access: Begin and end ride at Tres Papalotes campsite. This location is accessible by 2WD HC (two-wheel drive, high-clearance) vehicles. This description is for a counter-clockwise ride.

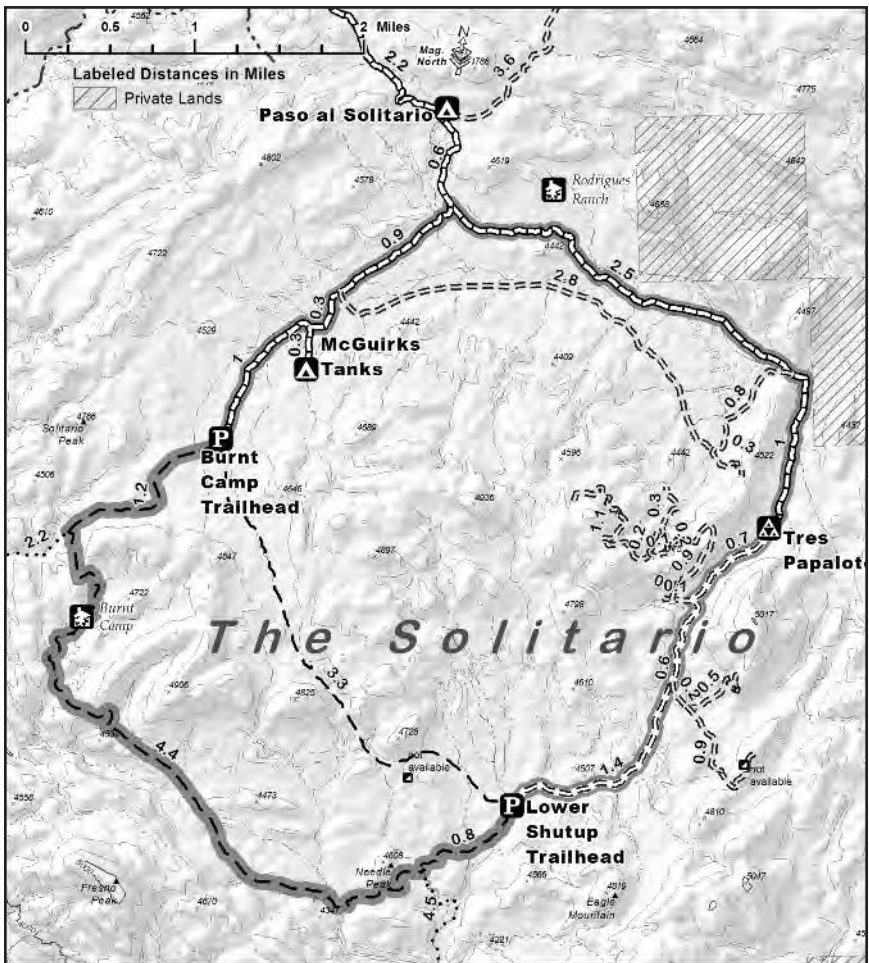
Trail Notes

The Solitario, a 10-mile-wide collapsed dome and signature feature of the park, is unique in the world. Inside the Solitario the landscape is not all that spectacular, and at first glance one might think it's just a bunch of low hills. However, geologically speaking it is one of the many small wonders of the world. The process that created the Solitario is a phenomenal story. ... And just to be inside the Solitario is a special experience.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Tres Papalotes campsite	0	Travel north on the Solitario Road. There is an Eloo (toilet) at this site.
McGuirk's Tanks Jct.	3.4	Turn left (west); Solitario Peak is visible to the west.
McGuirk's Tanks	4.5	Stay on the doubletrack road and continue past this old, dry stock tank.
McGuirk's tanks campsite road Jct.	4.7	Stay right (west).
Burnt Camp Trailhead	5.7	Follow the trail on the right (west) side of the trailhead parking lot and you're now on the Outer Loop Trail, which also leads to the Right Hand Shutup hiking route to Fresno Canyon. The trail to the south from the parking lot is the Inner Loop Trail. Taking this route would save 3.2 miles from this trip's total distance.
Right Hand Shutup route Jct.	6.9	Follow the Outer Loop Trail left (south) out of the creek bed and up the hill. (The Right Hand Shutup route continues down the creek bed.)
Papalote Ramon	7.6	Continue past the old broken-down windmill in a pretty canyon.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Outer Loop Trail		There are some short sections of creek bed and steep hills that may require some hike-a-bike.
Lower Shutup Trailhead (LSTH)	12.1	Continue to the northeast on the main doubletrack road to Tres Papalotes. The trail to the left (west) is where the Inner Loop Trail comes into the LSTH.
Side road up to some mines	13.6	
Tres Papalotes campsite	14.9	You are back where you started.



Tres Papalotes – Solitario “Road to Nowhere” – Tres Papalotes “There and Back” Ride

Distance: 6.0 miles round-trip

Ride time: 2.5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Tres Papalotes/low point – 4,255'; high point on ride – 4,620'

Ride rating: **Moderate**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel road

Terrain: Rolling hills with one long .8-mile hill

Access: Begin and end ride at Tres Papalotes campsite. This location is accessible by 2WD HC (two-wheel drive, high-clearance) vehicles.

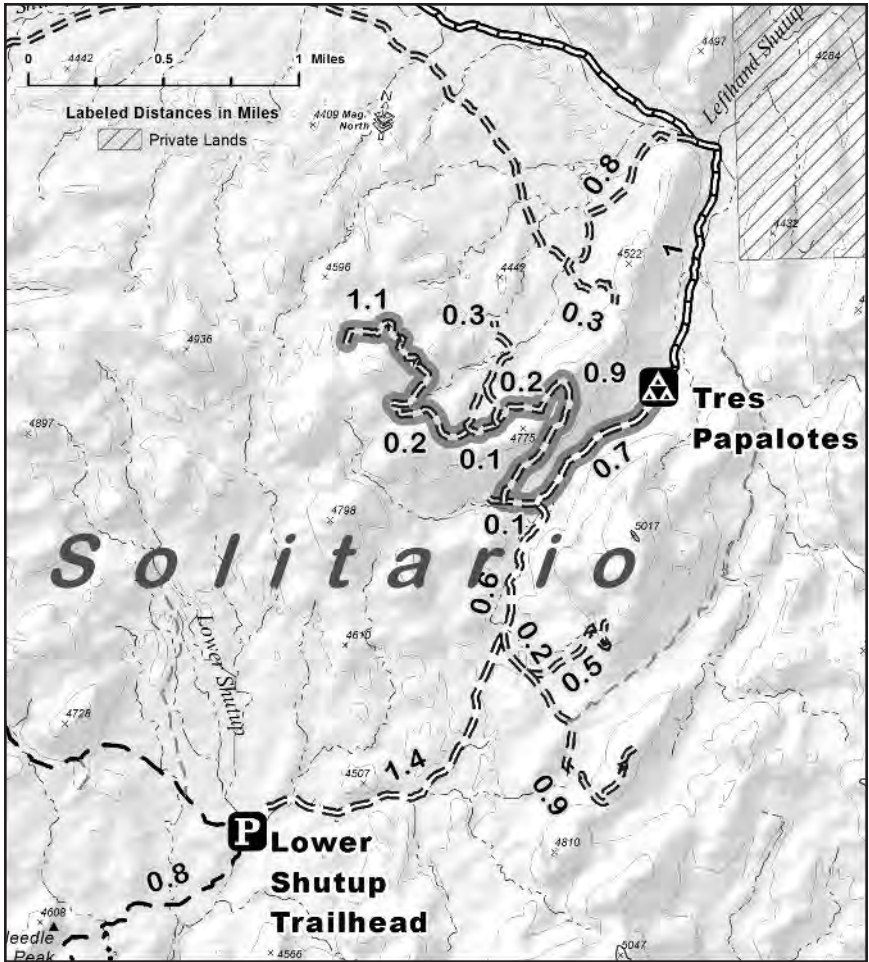
Trail Notes

Experience a narrow, unmaintained dead-end prospect road that leads into the heart of the Solitario. This old 4WD jeep road climbs the flank of the ridge north of Tres Papalotes campsite and angles toward a scenic pass. Here (the pass), on an isolated outcrop of tuff, is a series of bedrock mortars used by ancient people thousands of years ago. “Nowhere” offers good day-hike access to interior ridges of the Solitario. Follow the route northward of the pass for another 1.5 miles on relatively level ground to the end of the road. Return is the same route in reverse.

NOTE: The “Road to Nowhere” is open to 4WD HC vehicles, though it is unlikely you will encounter them.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Tres Papalotes campsite	0	There is an Eloo toilet at this site. Begin here and head southwest on the Solitario Road.
“Road to Nowhere” Jct.	0.7	At the first road junction, turn right on the unmarked “Road to Nowhere,” and head up the long hill (0.7 miles) to the pass.
“Road to Nowhere” pass	1.4	Check out the bedrock mortars on the north side of the pass.
“Road to Nowhere” end	3.0	Road ends. Return to Tres Papalotes by the same route.
Tres Papalotes campsite	6.0	You are back where you began.



Lajitas – Fresno Canyon – Saucedá – Arroyo Primero – Fresno Canyon – Lajitas Loop Ride

Distance: 52.2 miles round-trip

Ride time: 2 days (moderate pace) or 1 long day (expert pace)

Elevation: Lajitas – 2,350'; Madrid Hill summit – 4,350'

Ride rating: **Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel

Terrain: Some long, steep hills; some rocky and sandy conditions

Access: Begin and end at the East Contrabando Trailhead, located 1.7 miles east of Lajitas. At the end of the first day's ride, spend the night at Saucedá. This description is written for a counter-clockwise ride.

Trail Notes

This is an epic ride at BBRSP—both as a stand-alone two-day ride, and as the “core” of other multiday rides. You will experience rugged and varied terrain, amazing vistas, cultural history, and incredible natural beauty. The riding is relatively easy for the first 8 miles. In Fresno Canyon the trail becomes more rugged, with stretches of sand, creek crossings, and steep hills. There is an overall elevation gain of about 1,800 feet from Lajitas to Saucedá. **Pay close attention to trail markings (rock cairns) in Fresno Canyon. There should be non-potable water in Fresno Creek, west of Crawford-Smith House (treat before drinking).**

The Ride – DAY 1

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Lajitas/East Contrabando Trailhead	0	Check in at the Barton Warnock Visitor's Center, find the TH across the road, and ride the East Contrabando Trail into the park.
Old Stage Rd. Jct.	4.0	Turn left (west) at this junction.
Whit-Roy mine	7.5	Turn left (west) at the “T” Jct. The now-defunct Whit-Roy cinnabar mine is on the right.
Lower Fresno creek crossings	8.3	Travel in and out of sand; continue north in the main creek bed for 0.5 miles.
Fresno Creek Cascades	11.2	Park your bike and walk upstream for 0.3 miles to explore cascades/rock shelters.
Madrid/Fresno Jct.	11.4	Turn right (north) at the “Y.”
Crawford-Smith House	13.3	Old ranch-house ruins. Continue across Fresno Creek and north on the old road. There is usually water in Fresno Creek, west of the house (treat before drinking).
“Manos Arriba”	17.9	Rock art site in cave on your right.
Pila Montoya Jct.	19.6	Continue left (west) past the Jct.
Fresno Hill	20.3	Begin the steep climb up Fresno Hill.
Main Park Road	22.8	At the “Y” in the road, continue west.
Saucedá (SRS)	26.3	You are halfway through the trip.

The Ride – DAY 2

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Sauceda (SRS)	0 / 26.3	Travel south on Madrid Falls Road.
Javelin Jct.	4.8 / 32.1	Turn left (east) at the Jct.
Pila de los Muchachos Jct.	8.2 / 34.5	Turn right (south) and head up the hill.
Madrid House	13.2 / 39.5	A historical location with a good spring.
Fresno Canyon Road Jct.	14.5 / 40.8	Turn right (southeast) at the "Y" onto Fresno Canyon Road. Retrace route back to East Contrabando TH.
East Contrabando Trailhead	25.9 / 52.2	Congratulations!! You are back.



Lajitas – Fresno Canyon – Crawford-Smith House – Lajitas “There and Back” Ride

Distance: 26.6 miles round-trip

Ride time: 5.5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Lajitas – 2,350'; Crawford-Smith House – 3,106'

Ride rating: **Moderate**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel; smooth singletrack

Terrain: Some rolling hills; rocky/sandy sections; great views

Access: Begin and end ride at the East Contrabando Trailhead, located 1.7 miles east of Lajitas across the road from the Barton Warnock Visitor's Center.

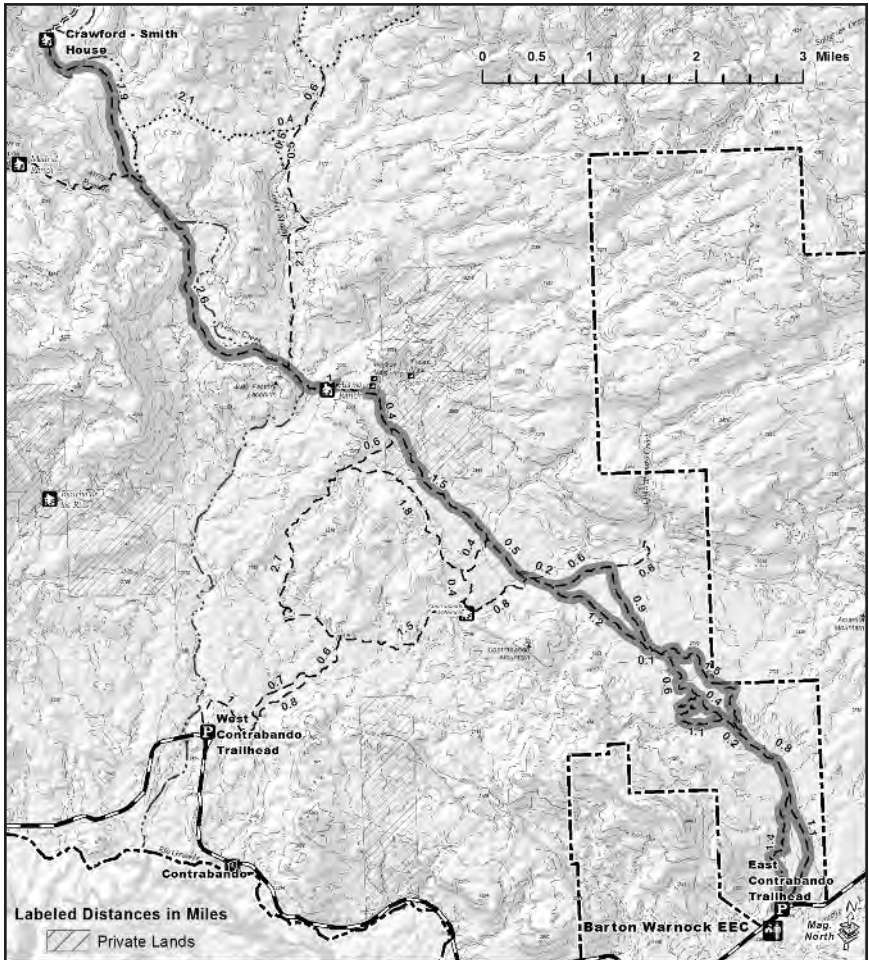
Trail Notes

On this ride you will experience rugged and varied terrain, cultural treasures from the prehistoric era and the more recent cinnabar mining period, beautiful vistas, solitude, and incredible natural beauty. The riding is relatively easy for the first 8 miles. In Fresno Canyon the trail becomes more rugged, with occasional stretches of sand. **Pay close attention to trail markings (rock cairns) in Fresno Canyon. There should be non-potable water in Fresno Creek, west of Crawford-Smith House (treat before drinking).**

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
East Contrabando Trailhead/Barton Warnock Visitor's Center	0	Check in at the Barton Warnock Visitor's Center, find the TH across the road, and ride the East Contrabando Trail into the park. If time allows, you can ride numerous marked singletrack spurs along the way: Dog Cholla, Crystal Trail, and/or Camino Viejo.
Camino Viejo Jct.	3.7	At the sign for this junction, keep to the right on the East Contrabando Trail for the easier ride or go left to the singletrack version.
Old Stage Road Jct.	4.0	Turn left (west) at this junction and stay on the main trail.
Whit-Roy mine	7.5	Turn left (west) at the Jct. You'll pass the Whit-Roy cinnabar mine on your right.
Lower Fresno creek crossings	8.3	Travel in and out of sand as you negotiate the creek crossings. Travel north in the main creek bed 0.5 miles.
Fresno Creek Cascades	11.2	Park your bike and walk upstream for 0.3 miles to explore cascades/rock shelters.
Madrid /Fresno Canyon Rd. Jct.	11.4	Turn right (north) at the "Y."

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Crawford-Smith House	13.3	Old historical ranch-house ruins. Return to Lajitas by the same route you came on. There is usually water in Fresno Creek, west of the house (treat before drinking).
East Main Trailhead/ Barton Warnock Visitor's Center	26.6	You're back where you started.



West Contrabando Trailhead – Dome Trail – West Contrabando Trailhead Loop Ride

Distance: Approx. 11.0 miles round-trip

Ride time: 2.5 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: West Contrabando Trailhead – 2,484'; Dome Trail – up to 2,870'

Ride rating: **Moderate**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; smooth singletrack;
some technical singletrack

Terrain: Great desert riding; some very good beginner sections combined
with more advanced hills and arroyo crossings

Access: Begin and end at the West Contrabando Trailhead, about
7 miles west of Lajitas.

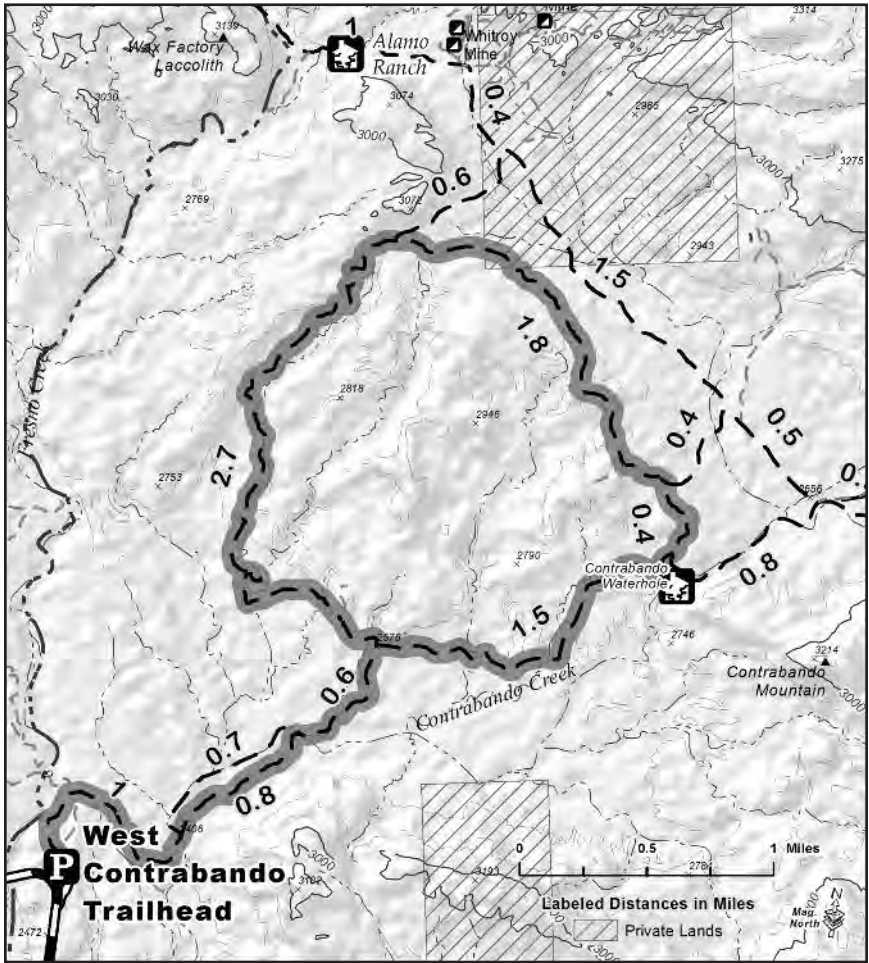
Trail Notes

This desert ride meanders through great landscapes—up and down hills, across flat stretches, through historic cinnabar mining territory. You'll see cultural markers, ruins. The ride ranges from easy to moderately advanced. Because of the low elevation and lack of shade, the biggest challenge in warmer months is the heat, which can climb over 100 degrees even in April. Be prepared by carrying more water than you think you may need. Many of the trail cutoffs are unnamed, and trail signage consists of rock cairns and arrow markers. On the Dome Trail you'll see some interpretive signs about historic cinnabar mines.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
West Contrabando Trailhead (WCT)	0	Check in at the Barton Warnock Visitor's Center near Lajitas. Then drive approximately 6 miles west to begin ride at WCT and head northward on the West Contrabando Trail, along the Contrabando Trail System.
West Contrabando Trail/West Dome Trail junction	2.3	Stay right (northeast) up the hill, to stay on the West Contrabando Trail. This junction will be marked by a rock cairn and/or arrow sign.
Contrabando Waterhole interpretive sign	3.8	Read the interpretive sign about the historic Contrabando Water Hole, and view the nearby rock-house ruin, or hike over to the house via the arroyo to the east.
West Contrabando Trail/East Dome Trail junction	4.2	Stay left (northwest) where the West Contrabando Trail turns to the right (east). You are now riding the Dome Trail in a counter-clockwise direction. Enjoy the ups and downs of this idyllic stretch of desert singletrack for the next 4 miles.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Dome Trail/West Contrabando Trail junction	8.7	Turn right (south) onto the West Contrabando Trail and enjoy a mostly-downhill return to the trailhead.
WCT	11.0	You're back where you started.



East Contrabando – Whit-Roy Mine – Dome Trail – West Contrabando Loop Ride

Distance: 22.6 miles round-trip

Ride time: 4 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Low point – East Contrabando Trailhead – 2,350';
high point – 2,800' at Dome Trail

Ride rating: **Moderate**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; smooth singletrack; some technical singletrack

Terrain: Great desert riding; some very good beginner sections combined with more advanced hills and arroyo crossings

Access: Begin and end at the East Contrabando Trailhead, across from the Barton Warnock Visitor's Center, 1.7 miles east of Lajitas. This description is for a counter-clockwise ride, but it could be done clockwise. Alternatively, to avoid riding the 7-mile stretch of FM 170 at the end, you could do a "there-and-back" variation or leave a second vehicle parked at the West Contrabando Trailhead.

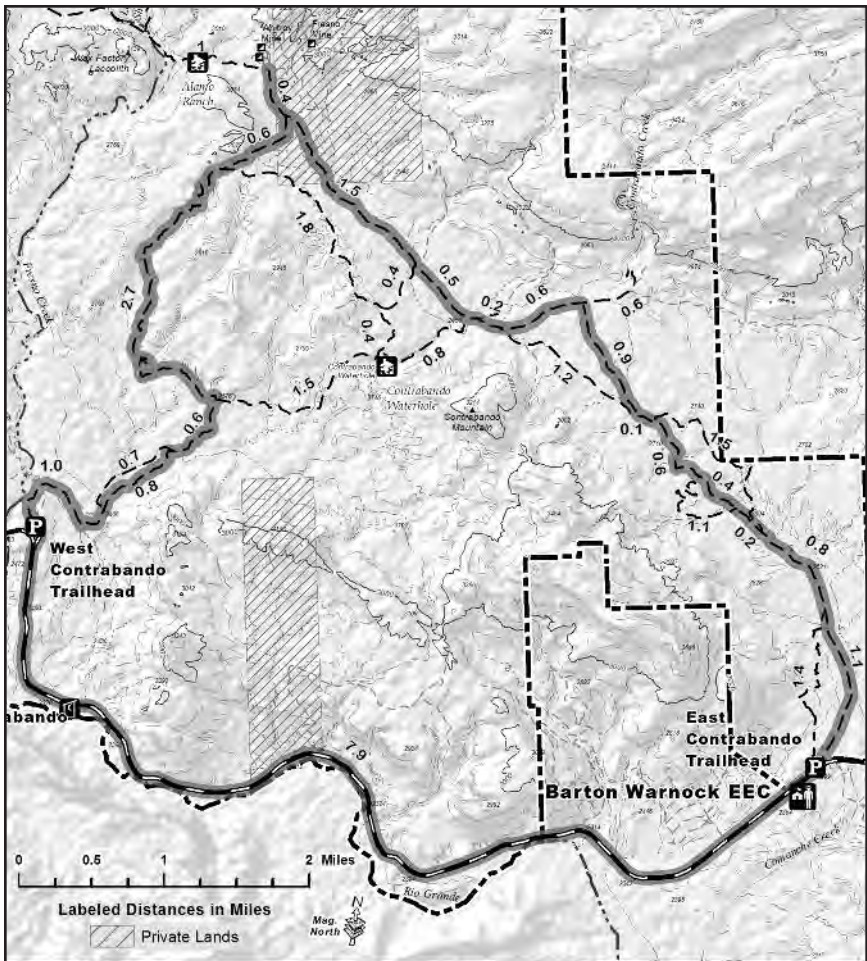
Trail Notes

This beautiful desert ride along the Contrabando Multi-Use Trail System meanders through dramatic landscapes—up and down rolling hills, across flat winding stretches, through historic cinnabar mining territory. It includes a stop at the old Whit-Roy mine, where you can stop to look at the abandoned structures and peer down the old mine shaft. You'll see other cultural sites along this ride as well. The ride ranges from easy to moderately advanced. Because of the low elevation and lack of shade, the biggest challenge in warmer months is the heat, which can climb over 100 degrees even in April. Be prepared by carrying more water than you think you need. Many of the trail cutoffs are unnamed, and trail signage consists of rock cairns and arrow markers.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
East Contrabando Trail (ECT)/Barton Warnock Visitor's Center	0	Check in at the Barton Warnock Visitor's Center. Then follow the doubletrack East Contrabando Trail (ECT) north into the park. You can ride numerous marked singletrack spurs along the way: Dog Cholla, Crystal Trail, and/or Camino Viejo.
Old Stage Road Jct.	4.0	Turn left (west) at the "T" onto the main road.
Whit-Roy mine	7.5	Check out the now-defunct Whit-Roy cinnabar mine on your right (north).
Turn around	7.5	Head back south on the main trail.
Main Road/Dome Trail spur junction	8.0	Once south of the gate, start looking for the Dome trail cutoff on the right—marked by a rock cairn and/or small arrow sign. When you find it, ride over the berm to the right (southwest) and start riding the trail that leads to the Dome Trail junction.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Dome Trail spur/ Dome Trail junction	Approx. 8.6	When you reach the Dome Trail, you can turn left (southeast) to ride the singletrack northeast side of the loop. Or, you can continue straight (west) to ride the west side (1 mile shorter).
Dome Trail/West Contrabando Trail junction	11.3	When you reach the West Main Trail, turn right (south).
West Contrabando Trailhead	13.6	When you reach the trailhead, continue biking out to the Main Park Road, FM 170, and turn left (south). Bike along the road for about 7 miles to Lajitas.
East Contrabando Trailhead	22.6	You're back where you started, across the road from the Barton Warnock Center.



East Contrabando Trailhead – Dome Loop – Contrabando Waterhole – East Contrabando Trailhead

Distance: 17.8 miles round-trip

Ride time: 4 hours (moderate pace)

Elevation: Low point – East Contrabando Trailhead – 2,350';
high point – 2,800' at Dome Trail

Ride rating: **Moderate**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; smooth singletrack;
some technical singletrack

Terrain: Great desert riding; some very good beginner sections
combined with more advanced hills and arroyo crossings

Access: Begin and end at the East Contrabando Trailhead, across the
road from the Barton Warnock Visitor's Center, 1.7 miles east of
Lajitas. This description is for a counter-clockwise ride.

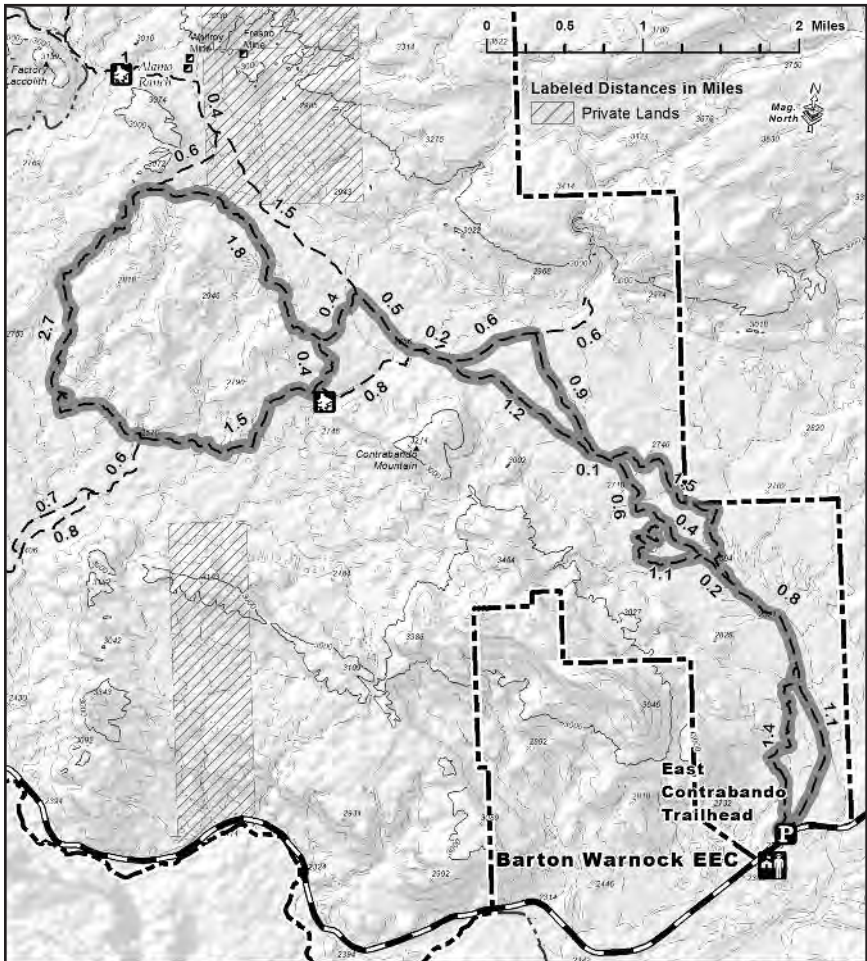
Trail Notes

This beautiful desert ride along the Contrabando Multi-Use Trail System and the Dome Trail Loop meanders through dramatic landscapes—up and down rolling hills, across flat winding stretches, through historic cinnabar mining territory. You'll see numerous cultural sites along this ride. The ride ranges from easy to moderately advanced. Because of the low elevation and lack of shade, the biggest challenge in warmer months is the heat, which can climb over 100 degrees even in April. Be prepared by carrying more water than you think you need. Many of the trail cutoffs are unnamed, and trail signage consists of cairns and arrow markers. For singletrack enthusiasts, try the Dog Cholla, Crystal and/or Camino Viejo trails on the way out and the Rock Quarry on the return.

The Ride

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
East Contrabando Trail (ECT) and Barton Warnock Visitor's Center	0	Check in at the Barton Warnock Visitor's Center. Then follow the doubletrack East Contrabando Trail (ECT) north. You can ride numerous marked singletrack spurs along the way: Dog Cholla, Crystal Trail, and/or Camino Viejo.
Old Stage Rd. Jct.	4.0	Turn left (west) at the "T" junction and stay on the main road.
East Contrabando/West Contrabando Trail Jct.	5.3	Turn left (west) onto the West Contrabando Trail, marked by a sign.
Dome/West Contrabando Jct.	5.7	At about .04 miles west of the previous jct., turn right (northwest) onto the Dome singletrack trail.

LOCATION	miles from start DISTANCE	NOTES
Dome/West Contra- bando Trail Jct.	10.2	Turn left (northeast) up the hill on to the main trail.
Contrabando Waterhole interpretive sign	11.7	Interpretive sign about the historic Contrabando Water Hole, and nearby rock-house ruin. Hike over to the house via the arroyo to the east.
Dome Tr. Jct.	12.1	Stay right (east).
West/East Jct.	12.5	Turn right (southeast) onto the East Contrabando Trail. Retrace your path back to the trailhead/or try the Rock Quarry singletrack.
East Contrabando TH	17.8	You're back!



“The Other Side of Nowhere” EPIC RIDE: Lajitas – Fresno Canyon – Solitario – Sauceda – Rancherías – Arroyo Primero – Lajitas 4-DAY Loop Ride

Distance: 107.0 miles round-trip

Ride time: 4 days (moderate pace) or less (expert pace)

Elevation: Lajitas – 2,350'; “Nowhere Road” summit – 4,620'

Ride rating: **Difficult**

Route surface: Doubletrack/jeep road; dirt/gravel; smooth singletrack

Terrain: Some long, steep hills; some rocky and sandy conditions

Access: Begin and end at the East Contrabando Trailhead, located 1.7 miles east of Lajitas. Description is written for a counter-clockwise ride.

Trail Notes

This is **THE Epic Ride at BBRSP**. “The Other Side of Nowhere” bike route is an arduous trek through rugged and varied terrain, with amazing vistas, cultural history and incredible natural beauty. If you like being in the desert, this trip will be a life-enhancing experience. Many of the miles are relatively easy doubletrack jeep roads, but the cumulative efforts of the trip result in an epic journey through the Chihuahuan Desert mountains.

SAG support and good planning is required for successful navigation of this route. A 4WD/high-clearance vehicle allows more options, though a 2WD/high-clearance vehicle can support a good trip also. The trip described here is a 107-mile route. Various designated campsites along the route allow for individual trip planning, depending on your time and abilities, including shorter-mileage days, time of year (weather) considerations, time of day start, etc. **The trip requires excellent physical conditioning and at least intermediate bike skills.** Bring multiple spares of everything, though one of the authors has made the trip without a flat (tubeless).

This ride is made up of numerous other rides described in this guide book.

For more detailed assistance with planning the trip, e-mail State Parks staff at ridebigbendbranch@tpwd.state.tx.us.

The Ride – DAY 1: 22 miles Fresno Canyon

Begin the ride at the East Contrabando Trailhead (1.7 miles east of Lajitas). If time allows, ride numerous marked singletrack spurs along the way. Travel up Fresno Canyon on the old 1890s-era stage road, all the way to Pila Montoya 3 campsite. **Pay close attention to trail markings (rock cairns) in Fresno Canyon because of numerous creek crossings.**

The Ride – Day 2: 39.5 miles Solitario – “The Road to Nowhere”

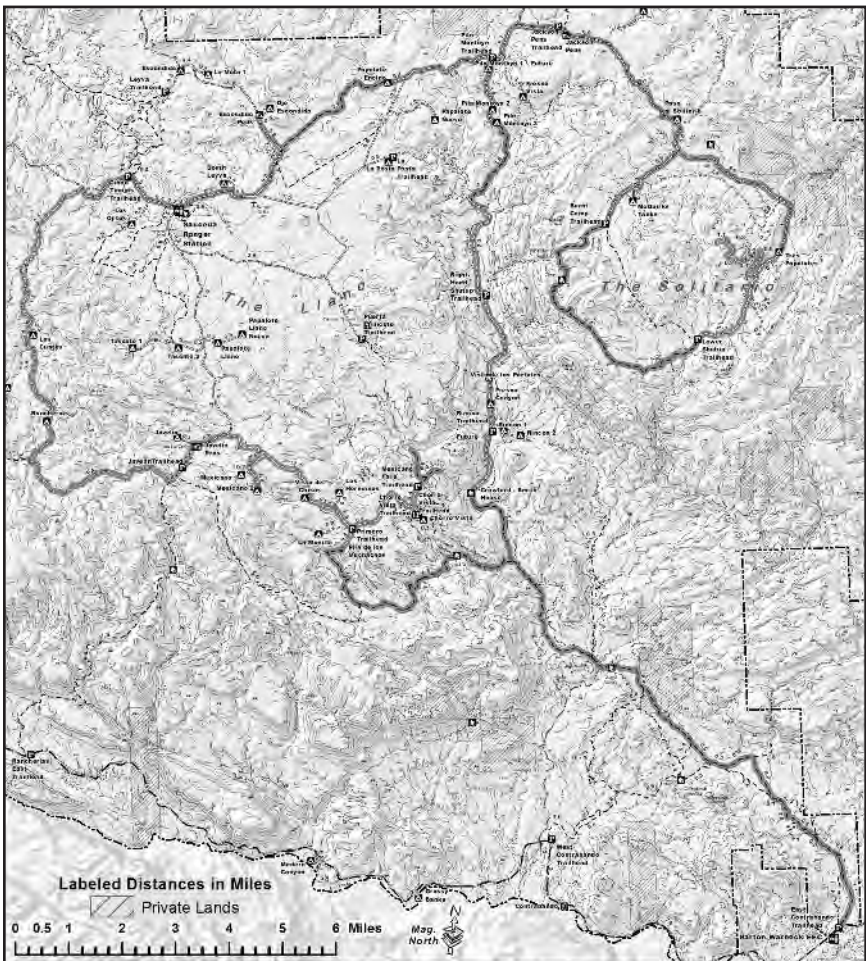
This day takes you into and around the inside of the Solitario. Most of this day is on good jeep trails or roads. About 12 miles has some more serious hills, including 0.7 miles up to “Nowhere Pass” on the “Road to Nowhere.” From Tres Papalotes, it’s mostly a cruise (OK, a few hills) to the campsite at Escondido Pens.

The Ride - Day 3: 19 miles Rancherías

The day begins with a short ride to Saucedá Ranger Station and a hot shower if desired. The ride continues to the west-central part of the park and into spectacular scenery, looking into the mountains of Mexico. There are a few miles of rough jeep doubletrack, but it's mostly a great day of riding, ending at Mexicano 2 campsite.

The Ride - Day 4: 27 miles Madrid Falls - Lajitas

This day is nothing but great riding and big vistas. Fresno Peak and the Chisos are almost ever-present to the east. A 6-mile side trip to Mexicano Falls and/or Madrid Falls overlooks (requires a 0.5-mile hike) is well worth the effort. Whatever you do, you will end up at Pila de los Muchahos Pass with about 18 miles left in the trip, much of which is somewhat downhill. You will end up back at the East Contrabando Trailhead/Lajitas. There is a great place to get pizza just west of Terlingua.





Bundy Phillips biking the Horsetrap Trail

BUNDY PHILLIPS' LAS BURRAS BICYCLE ADVENTURE

The following is excerpted from Bundy Phillips' notes of his near-disaster in a Big Bend Ranch torrential rain and lightning storm. Bundy would say, "It's only an adventure if you survive it" — and fortunately he did. Phillips is a seasoned National Park Service ranger, now retired, with decades of backcountry biking, hiking and camping experience. His story details what can happen to even the most experienced mountain bikers in a wild place like Big Bend Ranch.

"This morning, May 22, weather pretty nice and not threatening, puffy clouds, little thunderhead buildup. Biked down toward the Las Burras Trailhead. West of Las Burras saw big, black and down funnel of rain over Presidio. The puffy clouds rapidly became black clouds, accompanied by approaching thunder and lightning. By then I was down by Las Burras Trailhead. I turned tail and headed back. Lightning and thunder popping all around the nearby peaks, very close by and over Bofecillos Mountain. Rain began ... drip, drip, drip, drip. Then I was suddenly surrounded by dozens of lightning strikes, very close.

Lightning, then immediate thunder. This storm was right on top of me. I hunkered down behind the Nopalera Trailhead concrete water trough. I left my bike in the middle of the road; no need to lie down next to a metal bike frame turned lightning rod. At first it did not seem too dangerous. Began thinking: please stop, give me a break. Very hard rain and wind, luckily no hail. I'm lying face down behind the concrete trough; water is rushing into my mouth and I'm lying in several inches of a fast-moving runoff. I'm drifting off thinking that maybe they'll find my dead carcass

tomorrow, or maybe the next day. I always carry my driver's license for identification ... maybe this time it will be put to good use.

Had to get up and move; I'm getting cold. There is absolutely no place to get out of the weather, except maybe behind a creosote bush. Ha, I laugh to myself. The Nopalera Road had a foot of water, almost covering my bike. Impossible to ride in a foot of water; began pushing bike in moderate rain back up the road toward the truck. Rain is moderate. Finally, I can ride a bit. Stumble through mud, sand and rocks, mostly covered with runoff. Feels good to get back on; riding helps the circulation and I feel warmer ... but not much. All washes that cross the road are filled, most with a foot of water, some with more.

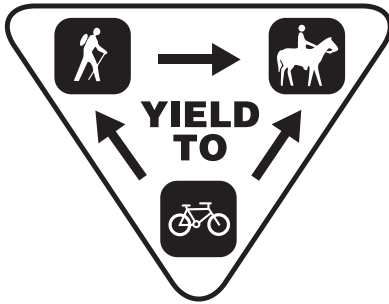
I can't believe the amount of water — it is unbelievable — and I think about the campers that checked in today, whether the roads they drove over are now flooding. I am closer to getting out ... maybe. I really don't believe that, either — crossed several washes flowing knee-deep that nearly snatched my bike out of my hands. The last few washes are flooding, so I take to the Longhorn cattle trails.

The truck! Wow, I made it back. Can't feel my fingers ... get out of wet clothes and into something dry. The storm is passing; it is beautiful now. Head back to Saucedá in 4WD through major rocks — sand and mud over the road — some flowing water up to the running boards. Crossed Levya close to the Big House at Saucedá; looks like water was 5 to 6 feet deep. But I've made it. Lived to see another glorious day at Big Bend Ranch.”



BUNDY'S TAKE - HOME MESSAGES:

1. Learn about Big Bend weather, particularly rain storms and flash floods. Ask for and follow the advice of locals;
2. Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back;
3. Maintain your bike and take proper repair supplies;
4. Have a backup plan if the weather turns bad;
5. Try not to do anything dangerous like wading or driving across flooding washes and creekbeds.



We would love to hear about your experiences riding Big Bend Ranch!

Please send any feedback, comments, photos, or stories you would like to share, to ridebigbendranch@tpwd.state.tx.us

Front cover photo: Earl Nottingham
Inside cover photo: Karen Hoffman Blizzard



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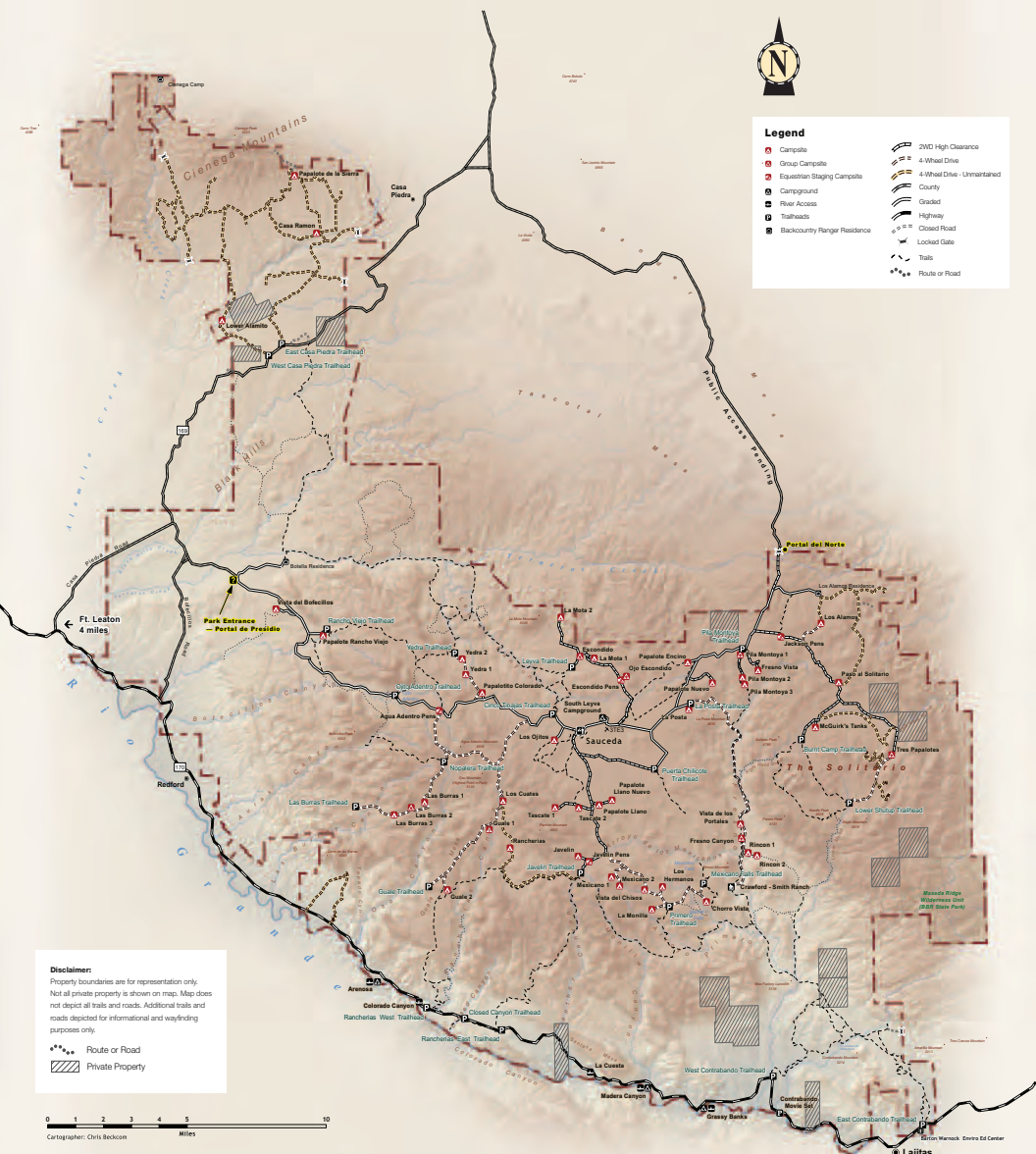


BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK



Legend

- Campsite
- Group Campsite
- Equestrian Staging Campsite
- Campground
- River Access
- Trailheads
- Backcountry Ranger Residence
- 2WD High Clearance
- 4 Wheel Drive - Unmaintained
- County
- Graded
- Highway
- Closed Road
- Locked Gate
- Trails
- Route or Road



Disclaimer:
 Property boundaries are for representation only. Not all private property is shown on map. Map does not depict all trails and roads. Additional trails and roads depicted for informational and wayfinding purposes only.

Route or Road
 Private Property



Cartographer: Chris Beckom