

The Closed Canyon Trail is a short hike through a narrow slot canyon. The trailhead is located approximately 22 miles west of the Barton Warnock Visitor Center and 26 miles east of Fort Leaton State Historic Site on River Road, FM 170. The trail is approximately 1.4 miles long, round-trip. There is a parking area, a self-pay station and a shaded picnic table at the trailhead.

This trail is only for hikers and is one of only two pet-accessible trails at Big Bend Ranch State Park; the other is the Hoodoos Trail. Pets are permitted on leashes no longer than 6 feet. Please pick up after and properly dispose of pet waste. Never leave your pet unattended. Make sure to bring water for your pet too!

Be mindful of wildlife and always bring water! Look for signs of animals such as scat and tracks as you are hiking. If you encounter a mountain lion do not run, slowly back away and try to look as big as possible. Pick up small children. If you are attacked, fight back. Please report any lion sightings or signs of lions in the canyon to park rangers immediately.

Do not enter the canyon if there is a chance for rain. Canyons and creeks can flash quickly and without notice, especially during the summer rainy season (roughly June-August). Always check in with a park ranger about trail and weather conditions before hiking any trail in the park.



This guide is made possible by the Compadres del Rancho Grande (Friends of Big Bend Ranch). Please recycle your brochures at any of the BBRSP Visitor Centers, Trailheads, or Ranger Stations.

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Closed Canyon Trail

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Closed Canyon is a narrow slot canyon that divides Colorado Mesa in two. Colorado Mesa was created around 28 million years ago from the deposition of welded tuff (pyroclastic rock) from the Santana and San Carlos calderas – volcanic features to the south of the river. A small stream was established in the tuff that was subsequently eroded away to create the canyon. Millions of years of carving through the Santana Tuff of Colorado Mesa divided it into two – Mesa de la Cuchilla to the east and Mesa de Nueve to the west. The canyon entrance is visible from the parking area and access is gained by taking a short walk down a low hill, into an arroyo to the opening of the canyon. The canyon leads you toward the Rio Grande River, but river access is not possible without vertical climbing gear.



Unlike most trails there is no defined path; rather, the extremely high and narrow walls guide you along the way, progressively becoming narrower as the canyon trends towards the river. The canyon bottom is characterized by bars of sand and gravel deposited during heavy rains. The exposed rock along the floor and lower portions of the walls has been polished smooth from the friction of swiftly moving sand and gravel during flooding events. Exercise caution in areas of slick and smooth rock.

There are many circular depressions in the exposed rock that serve as water catchments and are referred to as *tinajas*. Tinajas can be small and very shallow or large and very deep. They offer a natural source of water for many species of plants and animals. Tinajas are sensitive habitats, so please respect our wildlife by leaving them alone.

Because the canyon walls are so tall and narrow, little sunlight reaches the floor and the temperature in the canyon is substantially cooler than out in the exposed desert for most of the day. The canyon is home to a variety of plants and animals. Owls, turkey vultures and other bird species, as well as bats roost in the nooks and crannies of the high walls. Yellow trumpet flowers, rock nettle, bicolored mustard and a variety of cacti and other plants grow along the margins of the canyon floor, in cracks and high up on the walls. Mountain lion, javelina, rock squirrels and a variety of lizard and snake species including the greater earless lizard, desert spiny lizards and the western diamondback rattlesnake may be seen in or near the canyon.