

This site is named for its unique geological features called “hoodoos.” The Hoodoos Trail is located approximately 26 miles west of the Barton Warnock Visitor Center and 22 miles east of Fort Leaton State Historic Site on FM 170. The word *hoodoo* originated in Africa and referred to rock structures with strange animal shapes and embodied evil spirits. Hoodoos are also referred to as “fairy towers” because of their fanciful shapes. In other parts of the southwest they are called “goblins.”

At the trailhead there is a parking area, a map of the trail, a self-pay station and shaded picnic table. The hoodoos, Rio Grande River and Mexico are all visible from the parking area. Bring your camera as this easy hike will afford you a walk down an old historic road, close-up views of the Rio Grande, Mexico, remarkable geology and stunning views of Big Bend’s landscape.

A typical hoodoo exhibits a prominent capstone of hardened material with a column of softer, more erodible material such as mudstone or tuff. The irregularly-shaped column is formed from millions of years of erosion by rain and wind. What does each hoodoo look like to you?

Be mindful of all wildlife and always bring water! Look for signs of wildlife 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 to park rangers immediately.

Always check in with a park ranger about trail and weather conditions before taking any trail in the park.



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Hoodoos Trail



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There is a short 1.1-mile loop trail that spurs off to an overlook. Traveling counter-clockwise from the trailhead, the trail takes you down past the hoodoos, along the bank of the Rio Grande, up an old historic road to an overlook and back to the trailhead. The Hoodoos Trail is one of only two trails where pets are permitted at Big Bend Ranch State Park; the other is the Closed Canyon Trail. Leashed pets are allowed and leashes must be no longer than 6 feet. Always pick up and properly dispose of pet waste. Never leave your pet unattended. Make sure to bring water for your pet too!

The trail is easy to follow and is marked with rock cairns (stacked rocks), rock baskets and rock alignments. Be aware that the trail segment along the river bank can become very muddy and difficult to navigate due to fluctuating river levels. The hoodoos can be seen up close without taking the loop trail – just follow the rock cairns and rock alignments for easy access.

Long before the modern “River Road” (FM 170) was completed in 1961, this was part of an old road that was used by the Border Riders who were looking for stray Mexican livestock during a major outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease between 1946 and 1952. The portion of the trail that takes you to the overlook and up to the trailhead is a remnant of that road. Before the road was established it was a pack trail locally referred to as *Muerte del Burro*, meaning “the death of the donkey.” The trail once connected the communities of Lajitas and Redford and was very difficult and dangerous to navigate due to the rugged terrain of the area. You can see remnants of the historic trail and road in various locations along the River Road such as near Closed Canyon, a short distance to the east of Hoodoos Trail.

Although they may appear rock-hard and stable, hoodoos are actually comprised of relatively soft material that erodes easily if disturbed. For your safety and to help preserve these features, please do not climb on or otherwise disturb them or the surrounding rocks.

