

**New Mexico Native Plant Society
Annual Conference September 2023
Self-Guided Field Trips and Area Attractions**

This is a collection of interesting stops and field trips you can take on your own while traveling to and from the conference, during down time or if you are wanting something less strenuous than the scheduled field trips.

No registration is required but please check the link for any site of interest to plan your visit with regard to directions, hours, tickets and registrations, accessibility, and possible changes due to weather, fire risk, road closures, or maintenance.

Alpine

Alpine Historic Walking Tour

<https://historicalpine.org/historic-walking-tour/>

Alpine Mural Walking Tour

<https://visitalpinetx.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Alpine-Mural-Walking-Tour.Pdf>

https://visitalpinetx.com/places_taxonomy/alpine-murals/

Museum of the Big Bend, Sul Ross University, 400 N Harrison St C-101, Alpine, TX 79832

<https://www.museumofthebigbend.com/>

The new Emmett and Miriam McCoy Building is opening June 23-24, expanding on their ability to tell the story of the Big Bend.

Twin Sisters Natives (Patio/Garden)

605 S Cactus St, Alpine, TX 79830-6909

Twin Sisters Natives grows and sells plants which are native to the Trans-Pecos/Northern Mexico region. Cash and Checks only for plant sale, no debit or credit cards. Email twinsistersplants@gmail.com for plant lists, appointments and information. (432) 940-1124

West of Alpine

Paisano Pass & Paisano Pass Volcano, US 90 Between Alpine and Marfa

<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/paisano-pass>

<https://youtu.be/JSmVHcnoakM>

Paisano Pass Rest Stop with Roadside Interpretive Exhibit, US 90

~ 15 min west of Alpine

<https://qoo.gl/maps/bzoFjfnV8G71MDWH9>

<https://visitbigbend.com/paisano-pass-volcano/>

The pass, at an elevation of 5,074 feet above sea level, rises 228 feet above the nearby prairie. The surrounding terrain is desert mountain canyonland of volcanic deposits and alluvial washes of sands and gravels. The local soils are light reddish-brown to brown sands and clay loams; vegetation includes sparse grasses, cacti, and desert shrubs.

Marfa Lights Viewing Area, US 90

~ 20 min west of Alpine

<https://qoo.gl/maps/e8R63HyG7hSKJGmy7>

<https://texasmountaintrail.com/plan-your-adventure/historic-sites-and-cities/sites/marfa-lights-viewing-site>

Just east of Marfa lies another engaging attraction for visitors to the Davis Mountains area. The Marfa Lights confound thousands of people each year who flock to the site for a chance to see the elusive ethereal orbs suspended in the air with no apparent source. There are many theories about the unexplained phenomenon, from Apache Indian folklore to UFO sightings; however, a scientific explanation has yet to emerge. First documented in 1883, the lights' explanations range from static electricity to swamp gas to St. Elmo's fire or even flying saucers. Although it is elusive, many believe the truth is out there.

Chinati Foundation (Art Museum)

1 Cavalry Row, Marfa, TX 789843

~ 30 min west of Alpine

[The Chinati Foundation](#)

The Chinati Foundation/La Fundación Chinati is an art museum in Marfa, Texas based upon the ideas of its founder, Donald Judd. The emphasis is on works in which art and the surrounding land are inextricably linked.

North of Alpine

Fort Davis National Historic Site, 101 Lt. Flipper Dr. #1379, Fort Davis, TX 79734

~ 30 min north of Alpine

<https://www.nps.gov/foda/index.htm>

Fort Davis is one of the best surviving examples of an Indian Wars' frontier military post in the Southwest. From 1854 to 1891, Fort Davis was strategically located to protect emigrants, mail coaches, and freight wagons on the Trans-Pecos portion of the San Antonio-El Paso Road and on the Chihuahua Trail.

Davis Mountains State Park, TX-118 N., Park Rd 3, Fort Davis, TX 79734

~ 30 min north of Alpine

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/davis-mountains>

Davis Mountains State Park offers a unique and remote destination for all sorts of adventures. Here you can hike, backpack, mountain bike or ride your own horse, take a scenic drive through the mountains, go camping, stargaze, geocache and study nature.

McDonald Observatory, 3640 Dark Sky Dr, Fort Davis, TX 79734

~ 45 min north of Alpine

<https://mcdonaldobservatory.org/visitors>

Observatory facilities are located atop Mount Locke and Mount Fowlkes in the Davis Mountains of West Texas, which offer some of the darkest night skies in the continental United States. Star parties sell out early. As of publishing the dates have not been opened to make reservations, but should be 9/22 and 9/23. Learn more at

<https://mcdonaldobservatory.org/visitors/programs/evening-programs>

The Nature Conservancy's Madera Canyon Trail, Fort Davis, TX 79734, SH 118

~1 hr north of Alpine

NOTE: Adjacent to the Davis Mountains Preserve; Davis Mountains Preserve will not be open during the conference

https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/TX-DMP-Madera_Canyon_Visitor_Map.pdf

https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/davis-mountains-preserve/?tab_q=tab_container-tab_element

The Madera Canyon Trail offers a glimpse into The Nature Conservancy's Davis Mountains Preserve, a unique sky island with plants and animals found nowhere else in the

world. The trail offers a moderate hike. Most of the trail is on sloping terrain. After crossing Madera Creek, the trail winds through pinyon-oak-juniper woodlands to a scenic view of 8,378 foot Mount Livermore. The cliff tops in front of you offer a beautiful overlook of Madera Canyon

Balmorhea State Park, 9207 TX-17, Toyahvale, TX 79786

~ 1 hr north of Alpine

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/balmorhea>

The Civilian Conservation Corps built Balmorhea State Park in the 1930s. Nearly 80 years later, people are still cooling off at the park. Swim, scuba or skin dive, camp, geocache, study nature and bird watch. Explore the restored cienegas (desert wetlands), home to endangered fish and other wildlife.

South and East of Alpine

Gage Gardens, 106 1st St, Marathon, TX 79842

~ 30 min east of Alpine

<https://www.marthontexas.com/post/gage-gardens>

Gage Gardens is a 27-acre garden in the heart of downtown Marathon. Native landscaping, a rose garden, a pond, a mini putting green, and a dedicated dog park are just a few of the perks of this beautiful outdoor park.

Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

~1.25-1.5 hr south of Alpine

<https://www.nps.gov/bibe/index.htm>

Big Bend National Park is a geological marvel evidenced in sea fossils and dinosaur bones to volcanic dikes that mar the desert landscape. It's a world of species diversity from the meandering river corridor that sidles across the desert floor to the sky island ridge tops that reach for the stars. It's a place where you can still hear the whispers of pioneers, ranchers, miners, and Native Americans. And it's a land of borders—a place where countries and cultures meet.

Terlingua “Ghost Town”, TX 79852

~1.5 hr south of Alpine

<https://visitbigbend.com/terlingua/>

<https://visitbigbend.com/chisos-mine-terlingua/>

Perhaps the best-kept secret about the Big Bend is the view from the porch in Terlingua Ghost Town. Most afternoons you can see the Santa Fe de Los Pinos mountain range over 80 miles south in Mexico, and of course such local landmarks as the Chisos Mountains and Mule Ears peaks. Visitors will also find a trading company/gift shop, art galleries, unique lodging options, restaurants, and bars.

Barton Warnock Visitor’s Center/Big Bend Ranch State Park, 70 hc, Terlingua, TX 79852;

~1.5 hr south of Alpine

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/barton-warnock>

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/big-bend-ranch>

Big Bend Ranch State Park offers outdoor recreation for the truly adventurous. This remote park features rugged mountains, steep canyons, amazing views, unparalleled night skies, and solitude in a high desert setting. The park stretches along the Rio Grande in far west Texas, on the U.S.-Mexico border.

The Ten Far West Texas Wildlife Trails

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wildlife/wildlife-trails/fwtx>

Encompassing an area from El Paso to Midland-Odessa and down to the Rio Grande’s border with Mexico, this map helps visitors discover a blend of natural and cultural resources such as historic structures, forts and ancient pictographs as well as a chance to trek through the rugged outdoors. Watch for Montezuma Quail, black-tailed jackrabbit and Cactus Wren to name a few.

Trails of interest include:

- **Marathon-Alpine Loop**, along SH 285, US 90, and SH 118, nearby east and southeast of Alpine
<https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wildlife/wildlife-trails/fwtx/marathon-alpine-loop>
 - Elephant Mountain Wildlife Management Area
 - Gage Gardens
 - Post Pena Colorado Park
 - Black Gap Wildlife Management Area

- **Davis Mountains Loop**, *along US 20 & US 90, west & northwest of Alpine*
<https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wildlife/wildlife-trails/fwtx/davis-mountains-loop>
 - Balmorhea State Park
 - Balmorhea Lake
 - Sandia Springs Wetlands
 - Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center
 - Mountain Trails Lodge & Outdoor Learning Center
 - Davis Mountains State Park and Indian Lodge