



West Texas & Big Bend

DATES

October 13th – October 19th, 2024

PRICE

Double Occupancy: \$5,550

Single Occupancy: \$6,350

Your journey begins in El Paso, Texas where you will be met by your Iconic Trip Leader before departing on a three-hour scenic drive to Marfa. On arrival, explore this eclectic town filled with art, history, and the Marfa lights (you'll have to wait until nighttime to see these!). Your home for the next two nights is the historic Hotel Paisano.

Explore the Davis Mountains Preserve, where The Nature Conservancy is actively working to protect 33,075 acres of awe-inspiring natural landscape. As the population continues to grow, Texas land is fragmenting faster than any other state, making the conservation of this wild and remote sky island more important than ever.

Next, head south to Big Bend National Park. The largest protected area of the Chihuahuan Desert in the United States, it features foreboding canyons, desert expanses, lush mountains, and the Wild and Scenic Rio Grande. We'll spend three nights at Lajitas Golf Resort.

With your TNC hosts, hike through Big Bend and explore its staggering vistas, desert floor, and alpine environment—a unique landscape you can experience all at once. Spend the early evening exploring Terlingua, an old mining turned ghost town. Sitting just outside the park, Terlingua dates back to the early 1900s and boasts decaying buildings, mine shafts, and a boot hill cemetery. Finally, experience a half day horseback ride through the Chihuahuan Desert. Our journey will take us through the last working quicksilver mine in the Big Bend area as we learn about the earlier native presence that settled this land—there's no better place to see this wondrous landscape!

After additional time for hiking and a dark sky program, return to Marfa for one evening before heading back to El Paso.

With exclusive insight from TNC experts, visits to local preserves, and local highlights, you'll experience unique places throughout West Texas that most visitors never see.



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HIKE AMONGST THE DESERT LANDSCAPE

The Chihuahuan Desert covers approximately 80% of Big Bend National Park; beyond the bare, rocky, and sparse vegetation are bird life, yucca, and cacti—and in the springtime, blossoms galore.

HORSEBACK RIDE IN THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT

Explore the Ocotillo Mesa trails as we wind our way through an old mine, Rough Run Creek, and Maverick Mountain. Halfway through, we will stop for a scenic lunch amongst the landscape

VISIT BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

TNC's relationship to Big Bend dates back to the 1980s as conservationists worked to add the 67,000-acre North Rosillos Mountain Ranch to the national park to protect the property in perpetuity. In all, it took support of Texas lawmakers and a three-year congressional process to do so. This expansion is just one example of the commitment TNC has to expanding public lands across the world.

Your trip supports the local communities you're traveling in and The Nature Conservancy's efforts locally and globally. This trip has been planned specifically by The Nature Conservancy's team of scientific experts and travel liaisons to immerse you in the work the Conservancy is doing on the ground that has global consequences.

TNC TRAVEL VALUES

KEY ACCESS:

Travel with renowned Conservancy experts and local partners for an exclusive, behind-the-scenes experience. You won't just see amazing places, you'll witness how you are helping save them.

IMPACT:

See how your commitment to our planet and your passion for conservation are making a difference. You will see the wild places and the communities you are impacting.

KNOWLEDGE:

Learn how we are applying the latest cutting-edge science to affect global change and drive conservation.

INSPIRATION:

Immerse yourself in local cultures and awe-inspiring landscapes to foster your own connection to our world.

GLOBALLY MINDED:

Elevate your understanding of our work by seeing first-hand how TNC and our partners act locally and how we turn local results in to global impact by scaling solutions that work.

TRAVELER EXPECTATIONS & CODE OF CONDUCT:

Please read [TNC's Traveler Expectations](#), our guide for ensuring that we treat each other with respect, fairness and integrity beyond reproach during travel in accordance with [TNC's Code of Conduct](#). Following the Code is an expectation and responsibility for everyone in the larger TNC community, including our staff, partners, vendors, and supporters. To that end, when registering for a TNC trip, you are agreeing to uphold the Code.



THE CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE

LAND FRAGMENTATION

Formed by volcanoes and sculpted by wind and water, the Davis Mountains rise more than 8,300 feet above sea level out of the expansive Chihuahuan Desert. They form one of only three of the state's unique sky islands—a cooler, wetter landscape surrounded by arid lowland desert. As Texas continues to grow and develop, natural resources are being stretched to their limits, impacting biodiversity, habitat preservation, and freshwater supplies. In addition to the 33,075 acres of the preserve, TNC has protected more than 110,000 additional acres in the region through partnerships and easements, maintaining important wildlife corridors that allow plants and animals to thrive and promoting dark skies critical to ongoing astronomical research.

CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS

Ponderosa Pines are prevalent in the Davis Mountains; a keystone species, Ponderosa Pines link the plants, soil, and wildlife in this landscape, allowing the ecosystem to thrive. Through drought and wildfire, much of the population has not survived, and those that have are being exposed to infestations such as the Western Pine Beetle. A large portion of the existing Ponderosa Pines are within TNC's Davis Mountain Preserve—and, in 2014, TNC began working with the Texas A&M Forest Service to assess the health of the forest. Since then, they have worked in partnership to build healthy, sustainable forests, and through research, they formed a strategy to reintroduce Ponderosa Pines to areas where the species had been lost. Through thinning activities, foresters have been successful in allowing the existing trees to become more resilient, proven by lower fire behavior in subsequent fires in the years since.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 — Sunday, October 13th | Arrive in El Paso by 11am. Upon arrival at the airport, you will be welcomed by your Iconic Trip Leader and TNC hosts. Making our way south, we'll get our first look at the Chihuahuan desert ecology. Despite extremes – hard, blistering daytime temperatures and below-freezing temperatures at night – the desert is teeming with an extraordinary amount of life. Continue towards Marfa where you'll have time to settle into your room at the historic Hotel Paisano before enjoying a cocktail reception followed by dinner in town.

OVERNIGHT AT HOTEL PAISANO

DAY 2 — Monday, October 14th | After breakfast at the hotel, we will transfer 1 hour and 15 minutes to the Davis Mountains Preserve. Here, TNC hosts will give you an overview of the landscape; wild and remote, it is among Texas' most awe-inspiring areas, forming a unique sky island consisting of a cool, wet landscape surrounded by arid lowland deserts. Hear how TNC, amongst increasing population and development, is working to protect areas such as Davis Mountains Preserve from land fragmentation to maintain large, intact landscapes that are vital wildlife corridors, promote dark skies, and support water sources needed to maintain diverse flora and fauna. With conservation staff, take a driving tour up Madera Canyon where we'll enjoy a scenic picnic lunch.

In the afternoon, we will have the opportunity to hike within the landscape, winding through pinyon-oak juniper woodlands before experiencing the impressive views of Madera Canyon. In the evening, return to Hotel Paisano and freshen up before dinner.

OVERNIGHT AT THE HOTEL PAISANO

DAY 3 — Tuesday, October 15th | Today we will make our way to The Blackwell School, a segregated school for children of Mexican descent until 1965. An important piece of Marfa history, it is a crucial element in understanding the American experience throughout this landscape. We'll have a picnic lunch in town before departing towards Big Bend National Park.

Mid-afternoon, we'll arrive at Lajitas Golf Resort, our home for the next three nights. Nestled on the western edge of Big Bend National Park, it is the perfect place to base ourselves for explorations. Before dinner, take time to learn about the relationship between TNC and the National Park Service; TNC's commitment to helping expand public lands is on display both here at Big Bend and across the country. Dinner will take place at the resort.

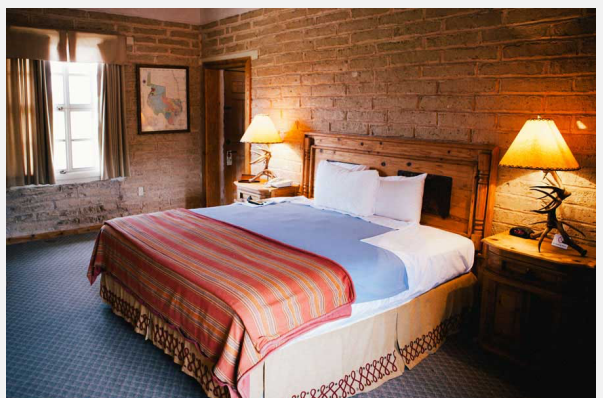
OVERNIGHT AT LAJITAS GOLF RESORT

LODGING



Hotel Paisano

Located in the heart of Marfa, Hotel Paisano is a historic hotel featuring charming rooms, each of which is unique. The hotel is one of five of the Gateway hotels designed by famed architect Henry Trost in 1929. Photo credit: Hotel Paisano



Lajitas Golf Resort

Tucked away in Texas' historic Big Bend between Big Bend National Park and Big Bend State Park lies Lajitas Resort. The 27,000-acre Texas resort is famous for its solitude, natural beauty and rugged desert environment, and rich in Old West history. Photo credit: Lajitas Golf Resort

ITINERARY, CONT.

DAY 4 — Wednesday, October 16th | After breakfast, we'll transfer as a group to the Lost Mine Trailhead. A moderately difficult 4.2 mile out-and-back trail, take in stunning views of Casa Grande and Juniper Canyon as we hike through juniper, oak, and pine forests. Enjoy a picnic lunch at the top as we look out over Pine Canyon and the Sierra del Carmen in Mexico.

After a picnic lunch, we will return to the resort to relax at your leisure. In the later afternoon, our group will gather for a 20-minute drive to Terlingua. A ghost town today, Terlingua was a mining town around the turn of the century. This evening, explore the town on your own before dinner and live music at the infamous Starlight Theatre.

OVERNIGHT AT LAJITAS GOLF RESORT

DAY 5 — Thursday, October 17th | After a leisurely breakfast, we'll depart to the start of today's adventure: horseback riding in the Chihuahuan Desert. Please note that this is a half day trip, with a picnic lunch stop in between—we will be in the saddle for about three hours total. All guests are welcome to join; no prior experience is required.

This evening, enjoy an early dinner at the resort before driving back towards Big Bend National Park; joined by a local star viewing guide, we will experience the magnificent night skies above.

OVERNIGHT AT LAJITAS GOLF RESORT

DAY 6 — Friday, October 18th | This morning, enjoy breakfast at the resort and an optional morning nature walk with your TNC hosts. Options will be available to those who wish to do a more challenging hike this day. We'll have lunch in Big Bend before loading up to begin our 2-hour and 30-minute drive to Marfa.

Upon arrival in Marfa, the afternoon is yours to spend at your leisure before enjoying a final farewell dinner in town.

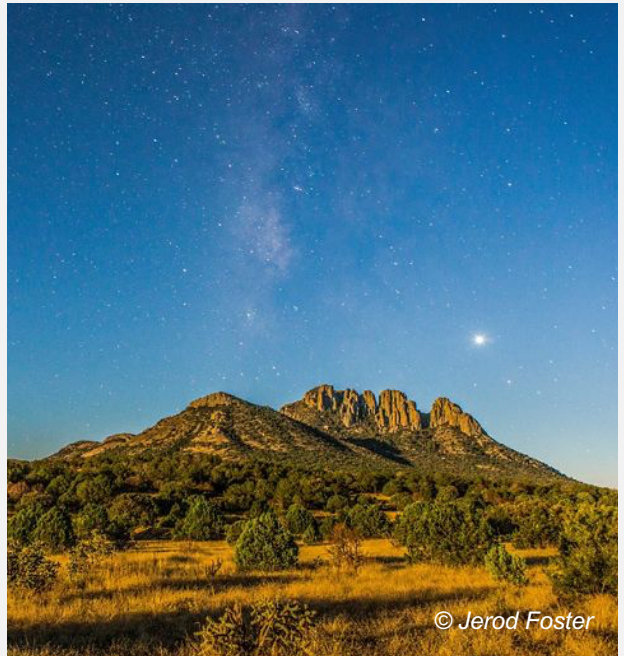
OVERNIGHT AT THE HOTEL PAISANO

DAY 7— Saturday, October 19th | Transfers back to El Paso will begin at 10am; it is a 3-hour drive, so plan to book flights that depart after 2pm.



Davis Mountains Preserve

Formed by volcanoes and sculpted by wind and water, the Davis Mountains rise more than 8,300 feet above sea level out of the expansive Chihuahuan Desert.



PRICE DETAIL

Double Occupancy: \$5,550
Single Occupancy: \$6,350

Price is based on a minimum of 13. Trip size not to exceed 14 travelers.

Price **includes** all lodging, domestic transportation, activities, tips, meals, TNC expert staff and local guides. Price does **not include** your roundtrip flight to El Paso, Texas.

PLEASE NOTE: This itinerary is representative of your trip, and like all natural history excursions, activities are subject to modification based on weather and unforeseen events. We will do our best to keep you informed on any necessary changes.