

THANK YOU FOR VISITING!

The parks of Davis Mountains Complex boast exceptional birdwatching, nature study and stargazing. McDonald Observatory and Fort Davis National Historic Site are nearby. Visitors may also enjoy hiking, mountain biking and day use equestrian trails, camping, swimming, special interpretive programs and other amenities. For additional information, please contact:

BALMORHEA STATE PARK

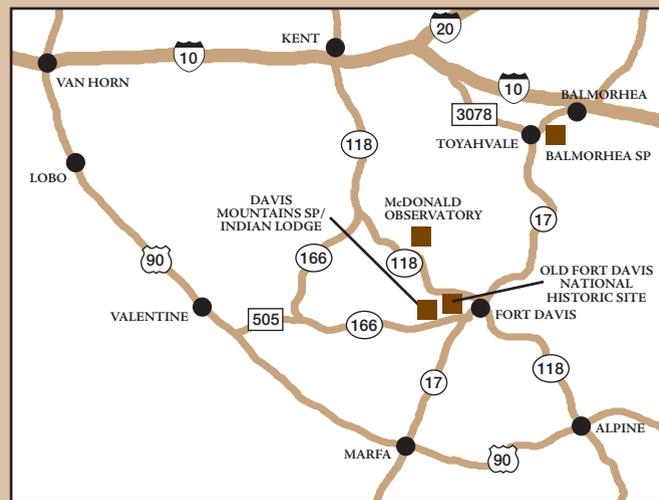
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DAVIS MOUNTAINS STATE PARK

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INDIAN LODGE

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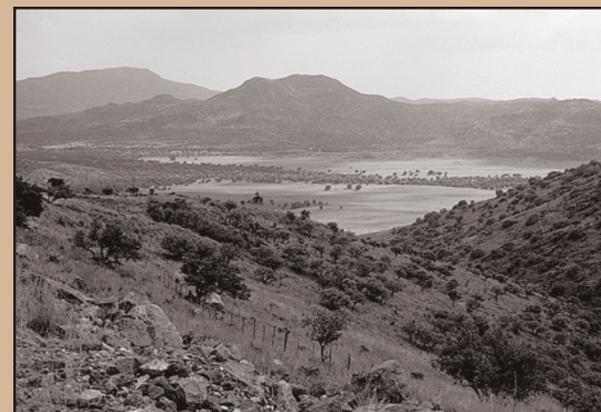


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Interpretive Guide to:

STATE PARKS of the DAVIS MOUNTAINS



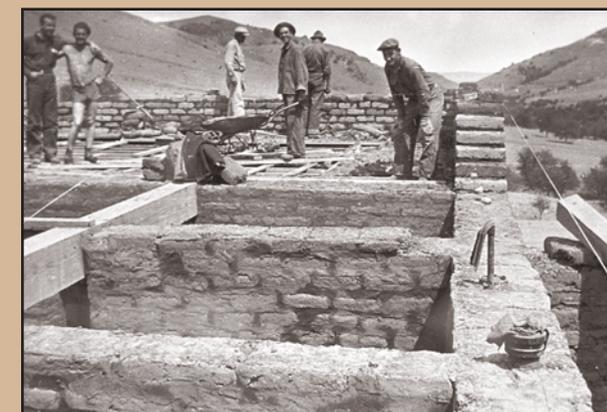
THE DAVIS MOUNTAINS HAVE LONG ISSUED THEIR CALL – LOFTY VISTAS OF DAVIS MOUNTAINS STATE PARK AND INDIAN LODGE, TO THE NORTHERN OUTWASH PLAINS WHERE SAN SOLOMON SPRING GUSHES LIFE-GIVING WATER AT BALMORHEA STATE PARK. FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS ABUNDANT FOOD AND WATER DREW NATIVE AMERICANS TO THE MOUNTAINS IN THE OTHERWISE ARID CHIHUAHUAN DESERT GRASSLANDS.



During a 1583 *entrada*, Spanish explorer Antonio de Espejo stumbled upon the oasis of San Solomon Spring and ultimately made his way through Wild Rose Pass and along Limpia Creek to Keesey Canyon within present-day Davis Mountains State Park. Anglo settlers and military personnel from nearby Fort Davis used the same route in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a north-south lifeline into and out of the mountains. During the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps toiled to establish Davis Mountains and Balmorhea State Parks at either end of this well-trodden road. The CCC legacy endures in the architectural examples of Indian Lodge and San Solomon Courts and the bathhouse at Balmorhea. Present day visitors continue to answer the call of the mountains, enjoying crystal clear water, cool mountain air and stunning views as they experience the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Davis Mountains.



Companies of skilled CCC workers built Indian Lodge and the roads, picnic areas and campgrounds at Davis Mountains State Park.



BALMORHEA STATE PARK



San Solomon Spring, the cornerstone of Balmorhea State Park, is the largest in a series of artesian and gravity springs formed by subsurface geologic faults in the Balmorhea area. Nearly 20 million gallons of crystalline water flows from the spring each day – enough to provide 10 minute showers for over 500,000 people! In a desert environment, this water is far more than utilitarian: it sustains a diversity of unique life forms that would not otherwise exist. When CCC Company 1856 built the overnight accommodations of San Solomon Courts and the two-acre swimming pool in 1935, they destroyed the remaining desert wetland or *ciénega* that originally surrounded the spring's headwaters. Recently a restoration partnership between the park and numerous partners has recreated a *ciénega* ecosystem. After leaving the pool, spring waters now ebb slowly through the cattails, rushes and reeds of San Solomon Ciénega. This desert wetland serves as a home for abundant aquatic life including two small, endangered desert fishes: the Pecos Gambusia and the Comanche Springs Pupfish. Occurring at no other place in the world, the sole remaining population of the pupfish relies upon the springs and canals of the Balmorhea area for survival. Other animals, including resident and migrant birds, depend upon this water and lush vegetation for food, water and shelter. Local farmers rely upon San Solomon water to irrigate crops that would otherwise not survive the blistering desert summers.

Comanche Springs Pupfish



Montezuma Quail

DAVIS MOUNTAINS STATE PARK

Developed between 1933 and 1935, Davis Mountains State Park was one of the earliest CCC projects in Texas. The CCC legacy includes portions of scenic Skyline Drive, which provides spectacular mountain vistas of the park and beyond to the Big Bend country and the Chisos Mountains. At a mile above sea level, the terrain, flora and fauna of this park contrast sharply with that of the surrounding Chihuahuan Desert. The increased rainfall and cooler temperatures of the higher elevation encourage the growth of oaks, junipers and abundant grasses that cover the rugged terrain. The exposed igneous rock of canyon walls reminds the visitor of the volcano activity that formed the mountains over 25 million years ago.



Cottonwoods and willows border Limpia Creek as it bisects the park from west to east. Large Emory oaks and gray oaks line its tributary, Keesey Creek. Limpia and Keesey canyons provide habitat for abundant and varied wildlife. The canyon treefrog, black-tailed rattlesnake, Montezuma quail, mule deer and an occasional mountain lion are only a few of the animals that depend upon the park's natural resources. Humans have long found sanctuary in these mountains. Archeological evidence indicates that Native Americans first inhabited these canyons over 3000 years ago. Today, campers and picnickers enjoy the same shaded groves that humans have used for centuries.

INDIAN LODGE

Indian Lodge represents the pinnacle of CCC construction at Davis Mountains State Park. The original 16-room structure was considered an architectural masterpiece when completed in 1935 and has nobly withstood the test of time. After carefully studying southwestern building design, architect Bill Caldwell settled on an organic style reminiscent of the sprawling pueblos of New

Mexico, including a plaza-like exterior courtyard. Nestled snugly on a Davis Mountains hillside, Indian Lodge looks part of the landscape itself, and for good reason. Utilizing centuries old adobe construction techniques, the men of CCC companies 879 and 881 molded earthen bricks from a mixture of water, straw and soil excavated on site. They muscled tens of thousands of these 40-pound blocks into place to form 18-inch thick walls rising as high as three stories. The lodge was finished with locally harvested, hand hewn pine *vigas* and river cane *latilla* ceilings that still add rustic charm to the historic lobby. Some of the cedar furniture, hand carved with southwestern motifs by CCC Company 1811 of Bastrop State Park in central Texas, remains in use decades later. Living conditions for the workers were basic. The men lived in tents rather than the wooden barracks standard in most camps. But they were no longer unemployed; received three meals a day; were paid \$30 per month and had an opportunity to learn a useful work skill. Although most were unskilled initially, they created an architectural jewel. Now expanded to a 39-room full service hotel and restaurant, Indian Lodge retains its original flavor; ongoing restoration efforts ensure that its rich legacy will remain intact.

