

# VISIT BIG BEND



## "VISIT BIG BEND" Visitor Survey 2022

*An investigation of visitors to the Big Bend area*

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Prepared for the  
Brewster County Tourism Council

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# Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	iii
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Part I. On-site Survey Results.....	7
Part II. Follow-up Survey Results.....	25
Part III. Economic Impact.....	51
References.....	56
Photo Credits.....	57
Appendices.....	58

# Executive Summary

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The purpose of this report and the research it conveys was to follow up on research conducted in 2003-2004 and 2012-2013 that was designed to better understand visitors to the Big Bend region.

## Objectives of the 2022 Study:

- Travel patterns;
- where visitors are coming from and how long they stay in the Big Bend area;
- why visitors come and what they do in the Big Bend area;
- if there are constraints that visitors (or potential visitors) identify related to their travel to/in the area;
- travel patterns related to highways and gateway communities in the Big Bend area;
- what information sources visitors use to plan their trips;
- how visitors feel about services in the area;
- what benefits visitors receive from their experience in the Big Bend area;
- how visitors' behavior differs depending on time of year;
- visitors' perceptions of the area as they relate to safety/security;
- visitor feelings towards residents of the area;
- how visitors spend money while in the Big Bend area.

Two questionnaires were used to gather data; one for on-site interviews and one as a follow-up which respondents completed online. The on-site form was used to collect information on travel patterns, activity participation, perceptions about seasonal visitation, and initial economic information. On-site respondents who agreed to the follow-up survey were emailed a survey link that asked about activities, services, perceived safety, local interactions, spending patterns, and demographic characteristics. A total of 852 onsite interviews were conducted and 291 follow-up surveys were completed resulting in a 59.4% response rate for the follow up survey, when adjusting for undelivered surveys.



# OVERVIEW OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## ***Travel Patterns***

As with previous investigations, the majority of visitors to the Big Bend area are from Texas, and from major metropolitan areas in Texas. These remain the primary target markets. The primary entryways into Brewster County were Highway 385 from Fort Stockton and Highway 118 from Fort Davis and Alpine. There was an increase in entries from the direction of Fort Davis, Alpine and decrease in entries from Fort Stockton, relative to previous studies. Entries to Brewster County using Highway 90, either from Marfa or Sanderson, were also used slightly more in 2022 than in previous investigations. A similar distribution of routes was used to exit Brewster County, and a large portion enter and exit the county using the same route.

Over half of those contacted during on-site interviews had not been to the Big Bend area before. Relative to previous investigations, the proportion of first-time visitors continues to increase. In this most recent study a majority of visitors were coming for the first-time. Therefore, it can be an important focus to create an experience for first-time visitors that will bring them back to the Big Bend area. Ensuring local providers and communities recognize that most visitors are likely first-time visitors can be critical in developing long-term returning visitors, and therefore returning customers for their businesses. Most first-time visitors indicate they are likely to return to the Big Bend area, so efforts to create a connection with visitors seems to be working. Results suggest that returning visitors are likely specialized recreationists and attached individuals. Therefore, supporting these visitors in their recreational endeavors could be important as changes occur in the environment and communities. Additionally, almost three-quarters of respondents noted that their travel group was between two and four individuals. Therefore, group experiences remain an important aspect of tourism in the Big Bend area.

Web-based information, including the Visit Big Bend website, appears to be the most used source of information for planning trips to the Big Bend area. A growing number of visitors are using information from websites such as YouTube and YouTube reviews and influencers to determine where they stay and what they do in the Big Bend area. Furthermore, with the growth of mobile applications since 2011-2012, there appears to be a growth in the use of applications, such as AllTrails and the National Park Passport app, in the planning of trips. This growth in web- and mobile-based information should be a focus of marketing for providers.

## ***Activity Engagement***

Visitors primarily engaged in hiking, driving for pleasure, and photography while in the Big Bend area. Growth of star gazing as an activity over the past decade and the focus of the national and state agencies to create dark sky parks suggest these efforts have been effective in creating visitation to the Big Bend area. Wildlife watching also continues to be an activity visitors enjoy engaging in with almost half of visitors engaging in wildlife watching. Providing visitors with recommendations for stargazing, driving for pleasure, and wildlife watching and supporting materials for these recommendations could disburse growing crowds across the region while also supporting visitation.

Lack of time was a consistent barrier to participation in activities, similar to 2011-2012 and 2003-2004. River-related activities were the most reported activities that visitors wanted to engage in but were not able to during their trip. Beyond time constraints, the water levels of the Rio Grande continue to be a barrier to participation. More information, including real-time water-level data, on both websites and at visitor centers could likely help visitors in their activity decision making.

## ***Services***

Visitors scored service importance and performance similarly to 2011-2012 and 2003-2004. Security and safety decreased slightly in importance, but information access, accommodations, and recreational opportunities continue to perform well, as they did in previous surveys. Despite these rankings, accommodations and lack of services namely food, including quantity, quality, and location, was consistently noted as a general dislike. Improving accommodation quality and food services availability could be important areas to focus on regarding the visitor experience. However, it should be noted that the naturalness and scenic beauty of the Big Bend area is by far the biggest draw reported by visitors, so maintaining this balance with services is critical to success of efforts.

## ***COVID-19***

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, outdoor experiences and travel has changed significantly. Importantly, the tourism sector continues to rebound from the impacts of initial responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. On a positive note, visitors reported minimal concern about COVID-19 during the planning of their trip to the Big Bend area. Furthermore, COVID-19 had minimal impacts on various aspects of their visits to the Big Bend area. This suggests that COVID-19 precautions and efforts are working to reduce concern and are not significantly impacting the quality of experiences visitors have in the area.

## ***Law Enforcement***

As with previous investigations, almost all visitors saw law enforcement or Border Patrol personnel. Almost half of visitors had some type of interaction with law enforcement during their visit. Importantly, three out of four interactions were overall positive and less than five percent were negative.

## ***Spending***

Visitors to Big Bend National Park spent an average of \$369.79 on their trip in 2022. Extrapolating expenditure patterns across the region's 518,254 annual visitors in 2022, spending in Brewster County, Texas by all visitors totaled \$191.6 million in 2022. Tourism in the Big Bend area directly led to a total county-level economic output of \$264.7 million and approximately 2,580 full- and part-time jobs annually. This total contribution includes a \$130.9 million contribution to gross regional product and a \$81.7 million contribution to labor income across the region.

# List of Tables

Table 1. Summary of response rates for both on-site and follow up survey.....	3
Table 2. On-site interview counts by location.....	5
Table 3. Gender distribution between on-site and follow-up surveys in 2022.....	6
Table 4. Combinations of entry and exit roads used by visitors in 2022 to the Big Bend area.....	12
Table 5. Home states of domestic visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	13
Table 6. Country of origin from international visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	14
Table 7. Number of times visitors in 2022 had been to the Big Bend area in the past.....	17
Table 8. Average and mean number of days and nights in the Big Bend area and in Big Bend National Park.....	19
Table 9. Number of nights visitors spent in the Big Bend area in 2022.....	20
Table 10. Average and median number of nights visitors spent in the Big Bend area in 2022.....	20
Table 11. Activities visitors to the Big Bend area pursued in 2022.....	24
Table 12. Age of visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.....	27
Table 13. Race/ethnicity of visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.....	27
Table 14. Education level of visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.....	28
Table 15. Household income of visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	28
Table 16. Employment status of visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, 2003-2004.....	29
Table 17. Activities visitors participated in during their trip to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	31
Table 18. Primary activities for visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	32
Table 19. Activities visitors to the Big Bend area wanted to do but did not on their trip.....	33
Table 20. Constraints to activity participation during visitors' trip to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	33
Table 21. Average reported usefulness of information sources visitors used while planning their trip to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	34
Table 22. Percentage of visitors who used the "Visit Big Bend" website to help plan their trip and average reported usefulness in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.....	35
Table 23. Other information sources visitors used in planning their trip to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	35
Table 24. Themes from what visitors liked most about their visit to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	37
Table 25. What visitors liked least about their visit to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	37
Table 26. Visitors' ratings of importance and performance of basic services in the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.....	38
Table 27. Benefits from visiting the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.....	41
Table 28. Likelihood of respondents to return to the Big Bend area between repeat visitors and first-time visitors.....	43
Table 29. Impact of COVID-19 on aspects of the Big Bend area in 2022.....	46
Table 30. Percentage of visitors that saw and interacted with law enforcement or Border Patrol during their visit to the Big Bend area in 2022, and 2011-2012.....	47
Table 31. Number of people in immediate travel groups while visiting the Big Bend area in 2022 and 2011-2012.....	48
Table 32. Number of days visitors stayed during their trip to the Big Bend area in 2022 and 2011-2012.....	49
Table 33. Number of days visitors vacationed or planned to vacation in the Big Bend area in 2022 and 2011-2012. ....	50
Table 34. Spending by visitors in 2022 broken down by average per person-day, average per person total and total by all visitors combined.....	53
Table 35. Economic impact of tourism in the Big Bend National Park on Brewster County, Texas....	55

# List of Figures

Figure 1. Distribution of on-site interviews conducted in 2022 by month.....	4
Figure 2. Roads used by visitors to enter the Big Bend area in 2022.....	9
Figure 3. Roads used by visitors to enter the Big Bend area in 2022 by season.....	9
Figure 4. Roads used by visitors to exit the Big Bend area in 2022.....	10
Figure 5. Roads used by visitors to exit the Big Bend area in 2022 by season.....	11
Figure 6. Entry and exit roads used by visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	11
Figure 7. Numbers of visitors to the Big Bend area by state in 2022.....	14
Figure 8. Zip codes of origin of U.S. visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	15
Figure 9. Zip codes of Texas residents who visited the Big Bend area in 2022.....	15
Figure 10. Percentage of first-time visitors versus repeat visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	18
Figure 11. Respondents' interest in visiting the Big Bend area in different seasons of 2022.....	18
Figure 12. Respondents' interest in visiting the Big Bend area in different seasons by when they visited (2022).....	19
Figure 13. Percentage of visitors who spent at least one night in different areas of the Big Bend area in 2022.....	22
Figure 14. Percentage of visitors who spent at least one night in different areas of the Big Bend area by season in 2022.....	22
Figure 15. Importance-Performance analysis for services in the Big Bend area in 2022.....	39
Figure 16. Percentage of visitors that are first-time visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	42
Figure 17. Likelihood visitors in 2022 will take another trip to the Big Bend area in the future.....	43
Figure 18. Number of times repeat visitors have traveled to the Big Bend area.....	44
Figure 19. Visitors' concern about COVID-19 while planning their trip to the Big Bend area in 2022..	45
Figure 20. Visitors' ratings of interactions with law enforcement or Border Patrol officer during their visit to the Big Bend area in 2022.....	47
Figure 21. Length visitors stayed in the Big Bend area during their trip in 2022.....	49
Figure 22. Number of days visitors have vacationed or planned to vacation in the Big Bend area during 2022.....	50



# INTRODUCTION





## BACKGROUND

This report, and the research upon which it is based, was developed in collaboration by the Department of Rangeland, Wildlife, and Fisheries Management, the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, and the Department of Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University. The work was sponsored by the Brewster County Tourism Council. The purpose was to follow up on research conducted in 2004 and 2011 that was designed to better understand visitors to the Big Bend region of Texas.

This report is organized by introduction and results in three parts: on-site survey results, follow-up survey results, and the economic impact results. The introduction provides a brief background of the study, describes the methods used to gather data, analyze data, and sample characteristics for the study. The results of the on-site survey are presented first, followed by the results of the follow-up survey, and concluding with an economic impact analysis of tourism in Brewster County. The results section provides summary information for each question in the questionnaire. Lastly, the report concludes with references and appendices of relevant items including copies of both questionnaires along with additional tables and figures.

## Study Objectives:

- Where visitors are coming from and how long are they staying in the Big Bend area;
- why visitors come and what they do the Big Bend area;
- if there are constraints that visitors (or potential visitors) identify related to their travel to/in the area;
- what benefits visitors receive from their experience in the Big Bend area;
- how visitors' behavior differs depending on the time of year;
- what information sources visitors use to plan their trips;
- visitors' perceptions of the area as they relate to safety/security;
- visitor feelings towards Big Bend area residents;
- how visitors feel about Big Bend area services;
- travel patterns related to highways and gateway communities in the Big Bend area;
- how visitors spend money while in the Big Bend area.



## METHODS

### *Questionnaire Design and Administration*

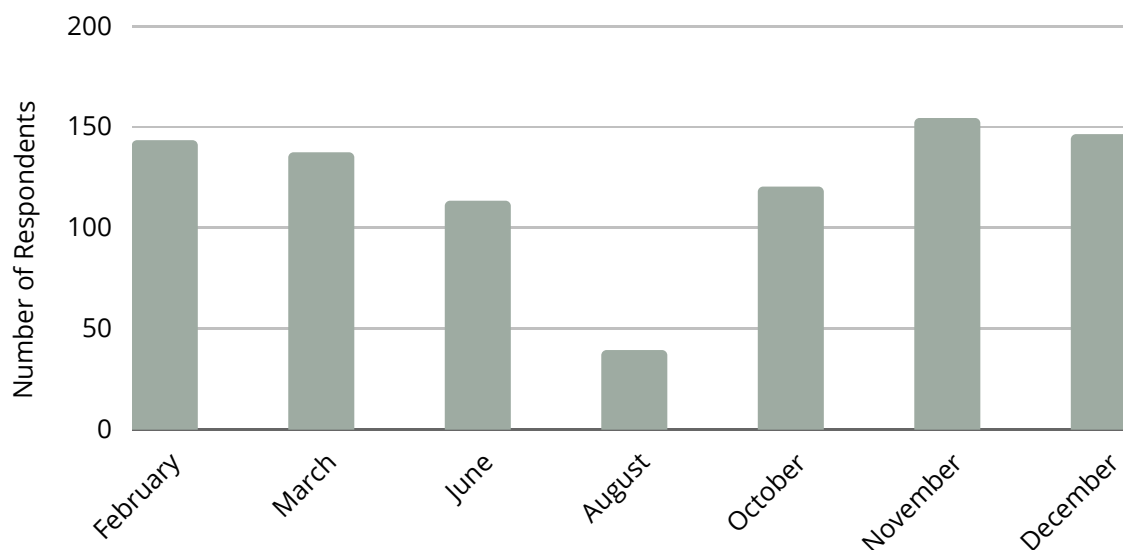
The questionnaires (on-site and follow-up) for this research were designed using the format administrated in the 2004 and 2011-2012 studies. Copies of the surveys can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. Many questions were identical to questions in previous questionnaires so comparisons could be made across the studies to understand changes over time for the study objectives. Additional questions were added to understand the impact of COVID-19 on travel decisions and experiences, as well as an array of economic questions to develop a broader understanding of the economic impact of tourism in Brewster County. Two questionnaires were used to gather data; one for on-site interviews and one for follow-up data collection. The on-site form was used to collect information on travel patterns, seasonal visitation preferences, and activity participation. On-site participants who agreed were emailed a follow-up survey link through the Qualtrics online survey platform. The follow-up survey included more detailed questions about activity participation and spending, as well as about perceptions of services, COVID-19, law enforcement, and demographic characteristics. Table 1 provides information about on-site survey response and response rate for the follow-up survey.

**Table 1.** Summary of response rates for both on-site and follow up survey.

Survey Participation Characteristics	Total
# of people who agreed to participate in the on-site survey	852
# of people who agreed to participate in the follow-up survey	630
# of bounced email addresses	140
Actual # of emails delivered	490
# of people who completed the follow-up survey	291
Response rate for follow-up survey	59.4%

## Sampling Process

A total of seven sampling periods were used to capture possible differences in visitation and preferences by seasons of the year. Visitors were intercepted in February, March, June, August, November, and December of 2022. Majority of responses were collected during the shoulder months of summer (Figure 1). Time periods were selected to represent seasons used in past studies of the Big Bend area. Sampling periods were combined to represent seasons examined within this study: Spring (March), Summer (June, August), Fall (October, November), and Winter (December, February).



**Figure 1.** Distribution of on-site interviews conducted in 2022 by month.

On-site interviews took place in Big Bend National Park and in its gateway communities of Marathon, Alpine, Lajitas, and Terlingua. Specific contact points around Brewster County were selected based on the 2003-2004 and 2011-2012 investigations. Personnel from Texas A&M University were stationed at two locations in Big Bend National Park, at the Panther Junction visitor center and Santa Elena Canyon trailhead. Two locations in Lajitas, at the Barton Warnock visitor center at Big Bend State Park and the general store in Lajitas directly off of main street. The one location in Terlingua was situated at the Terlingua Ghost Town. Personnel were stationed in one general area in Alpine near the visitor center on Highway 67 and one in Marathon near the Gage Hotel along Highway 90. Table 2 summarizes the distribution of on-site interviews; majority of the sample was collected within Big Bend National Park.



**Table 2.** On-site interview counts by location.

Location	Count (%)
Alpine	8 (4.3)
Marathon	37 (0.9)
Terlingua	35 (4.1)
Big Bend National Park	695 (81.6)
Lajitas	77 (9.1)
Total	852 (100.0)

A total of 852 surveys were collected on-site. Visitors were greeted, briefly introduced to the purpose of the study, and asked to participate in the survey. The survey was conducted through an interview with Texas A&M personnel and lasted approximately three minutes. The survey concluded with a request to participate in the email follow-up survey.

Of the 852 interviews on-site, 630 indicated a willingness to participate in the follow-up survey by email. Those who agreed were asked to provide their name and email address to receive the survey. The follow-up survey invitation was sent within one month of on-site contact with instructions on how to access the survey and a survey link. Three reminder emails were sent following the initial survey invitation at approximately one, two, and three weeks following initial survey delivery. Of the 630 emails collected, 490 emails were effectively delivered with 140 email addressing being invalid or undeliverable. A total of 291 completed surveys were collected resulting in a 59.4% response rate (Table 1). Relative to 2003-2004 and 2011-2012, the response rate for 2022 was slightly lower which aligns with a decline in response rates observed across survey research, broadly.

### ***Data Organization and Analysis***

On-site interview data were collected using pencil and paper surveys during coordinated visits to the Big Bend area. These data were input by a research assistant into Qualtrics online data platforms. Follow-up surveys were directly responded online in Qualtrics survey platforms by respondents. Data for both the on-site and follow-up surveys were then separately exported and analyzed in IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Additional data analysis was conducted in Microsoft Excel and ArcMap software. ArcMap, a geographic information system mapping software, was used to develop all maps within this report.

### ***Missing Data and Reporting Items***

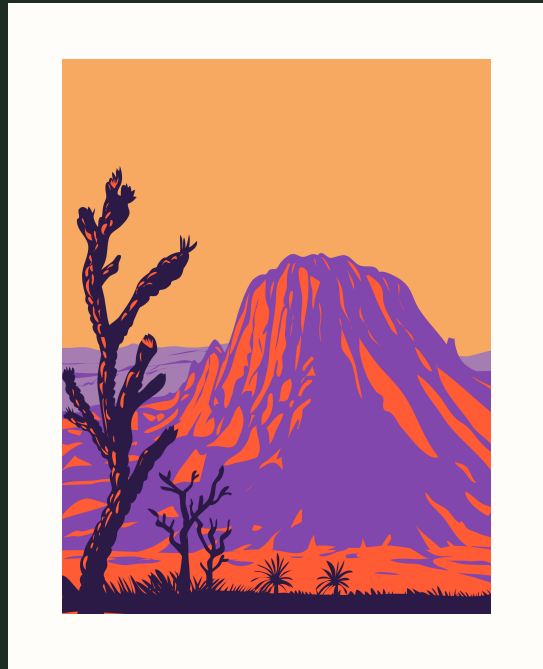
Occasionally, a respondent may not have answered all of the questions within the questionnaire. Unanswered questions resulted in missing data that caused the number of responses (i.e., sample) to vary marginally across items. This variability creates small inconsistencies in the number of responses across questions.

### ***Non-Response Bias Between Surveys***

Gender was recorded by interviewers on-site and was also reported in the follow-up portion. Table 3 indicates that the percentages of males and females in each portion of the survey were slightly different. More males were interviewed during the on-site survey whereas more females responded to the follow-up survey. Despite this variability, margin of error is estimated to be less than five percent.

**Table 3.** Gender distribution between on-site and follow-up surveys in 2022.

Survey	Count	Female (%)	Male (%)
On-Site	848	43.5	56.5
Follow Up	255	51.4	48.6



# PART 1.

## On-site Survey Results

- Travel Information
- Where Visitors are From
- Past Visitation and This Stay
- Activities Visitors Pursued

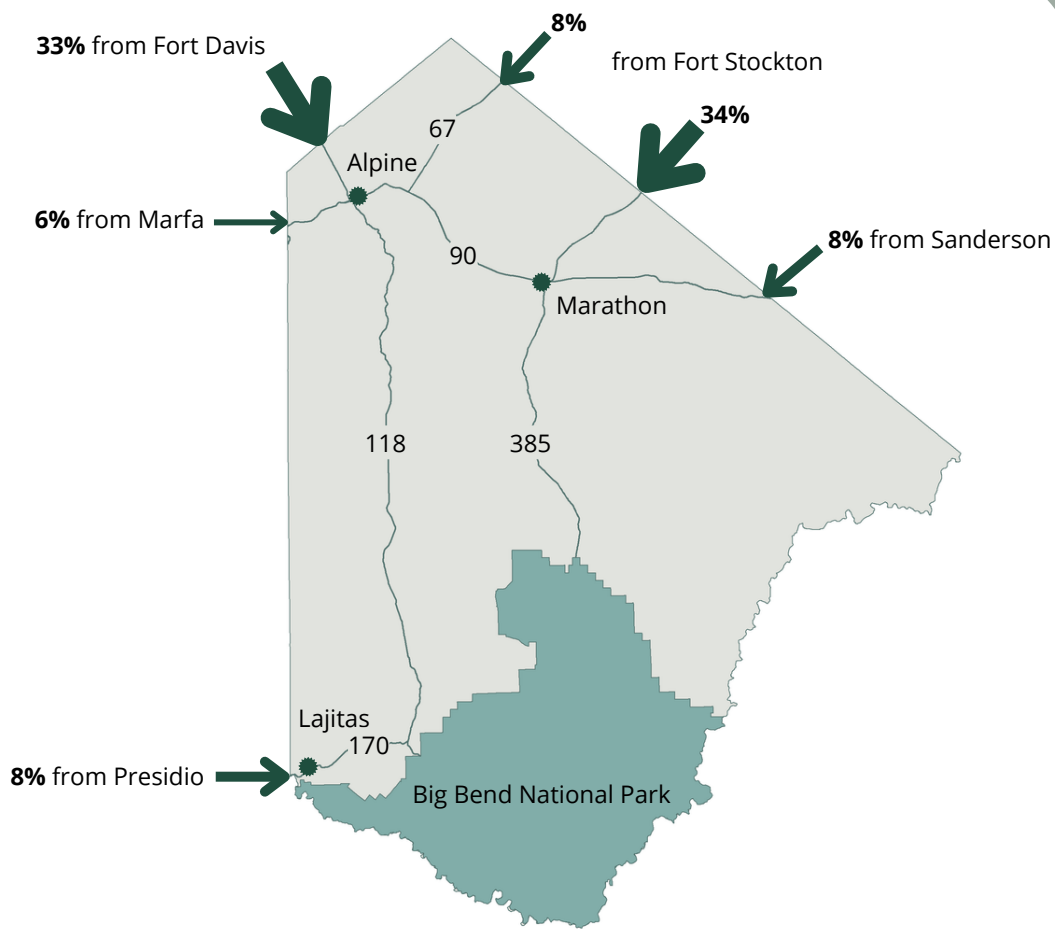
In this section of the report, we present findings from data collected from our onsite interview intercepts conducted throughout Brewster County. Respondents were asked about their travel to the Big Bend area, past visitation, point of origin, the duration of their stay on the current visit, and activities in which they had participated.

## TRAVEL INFORMATION

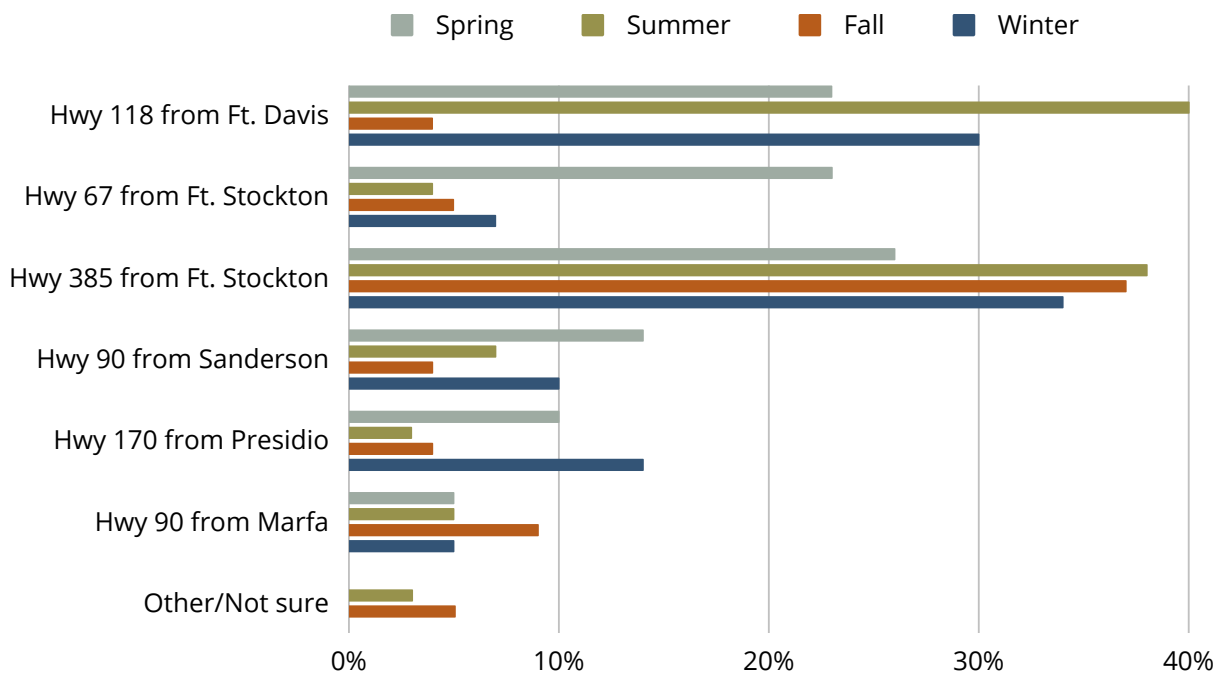
Respondents were asked about their methods of travel, primary destinations, traveling party, and which road they took to enter and exit the Big Bend area. Almost 90% of respondents reported that they “drove all the way from home” during their trip, and 12.5% reported a combination of flying and driving. 80.1% of respondents noted the Big Bend area as their primary destination for their current trip and 86.4% were traveling with family or friends. Figure 2 suggests that Highway 385 from Ft. Stockton (34%) and Highway 118 from Ft. Davis (33%) were the most frequently reported entry ways followed by 67 from Ft. Stockton, Highway 90 from Sanderson, and Highway 170 from Presidio, with approximately 8% of total entries, respectively. Highway 90 from Marfa (6%) was the least reported entryway. Regarding the seasonality of entryways, data suggests that Highway 385 from Ft. Stockton is most frequently used across all seasons, except summer. In summer, Highway 118 from Ft. Davis is the most reported entryway with 40.4% of summer entries and represents a frequent second entryway in spring (23.4%), winter (30.4%), and fall (36.4%; Figure 3). In the spring, almost three-quarters of entries are split relatively evenly across Highway 118 from Ft. Davis, Highway 67 from Ft. Stockton, and Highway 385 from Ft. Stockton. Highway 90 from Sanderson has its highest usage during the spring, Highway 170 from Presidio has its highest usage in the winter, and Highway 90 from Marfa has its highest usage in the fall. In total, these findings suggest that Highway 385 from Ft. Stockton and Highway 118 from Ft. Davis are primary entryways to the Big Bend area with variation across seasons. Relative to data collected in 2011-2012, Highway 118 from Ft. Davis is a growing entryway for visitors to the Big Bend area.





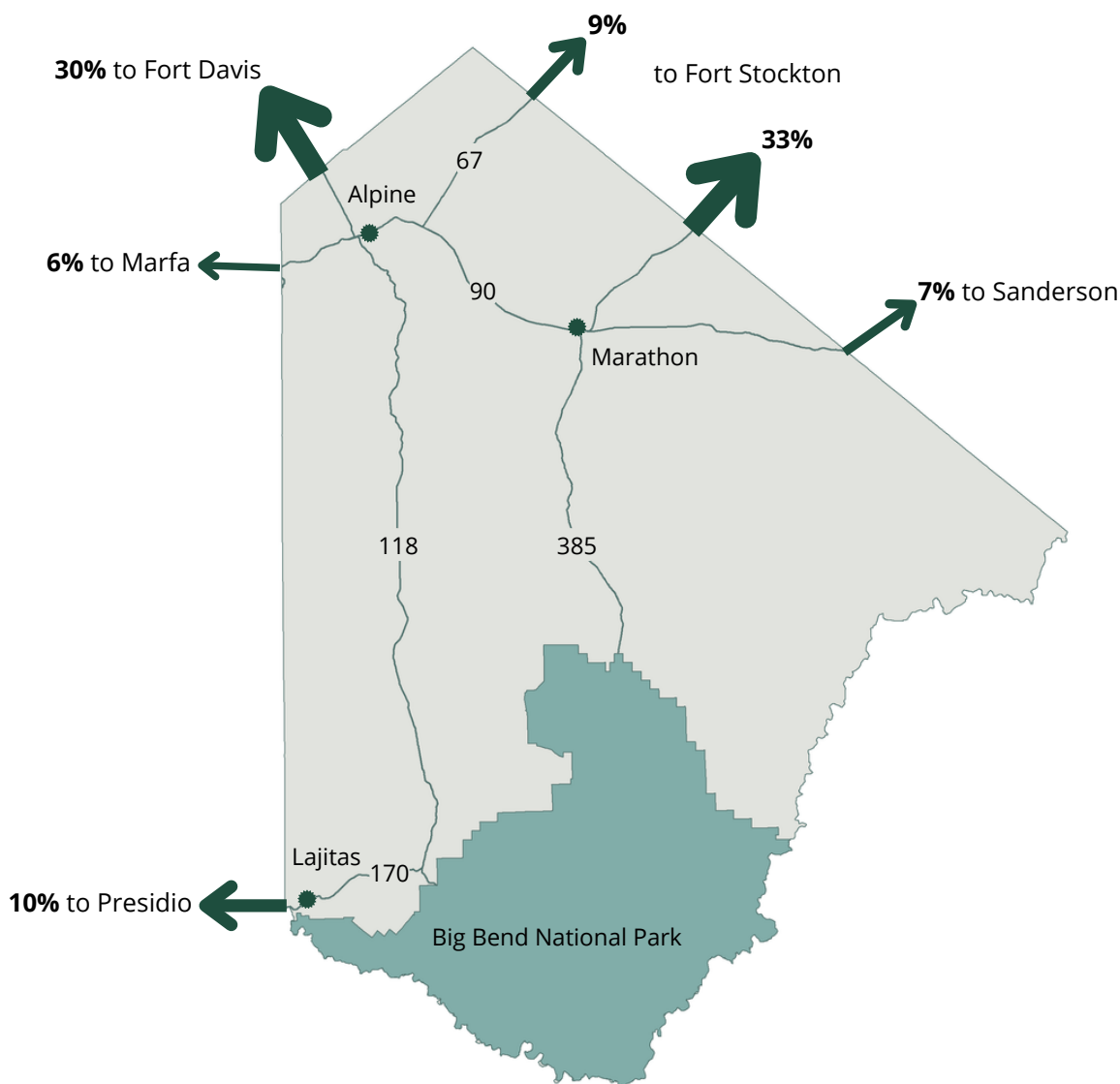


**Figure 2.** Roads used by visitors to enter the Big Bend area in 2022.



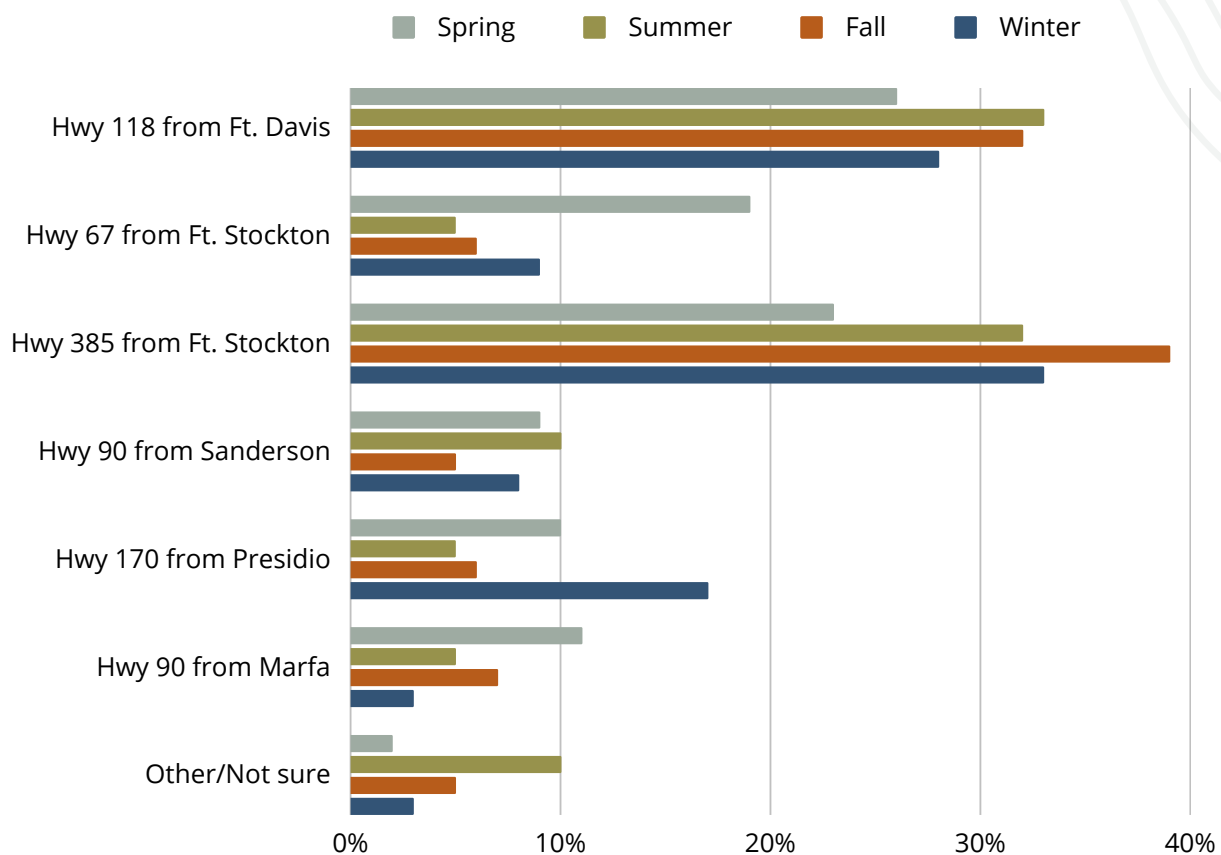
**Figure 3.** Roads used by visitors to enter the Big Bend area in 2022 by season.

Similar to entry, Highway 385 to Ft. Stockton (33%) and Highway 118 to Ft. Davis (30%) were the most reported exit routes from the Big Bend area, followed by 170 to Presidio (10%), 67 to Ft. Stockton (9%). Highway 90 to Sanderson (7%) and 90 to Marfa (6%) were the least reported exit ways from the area (Figure 4).

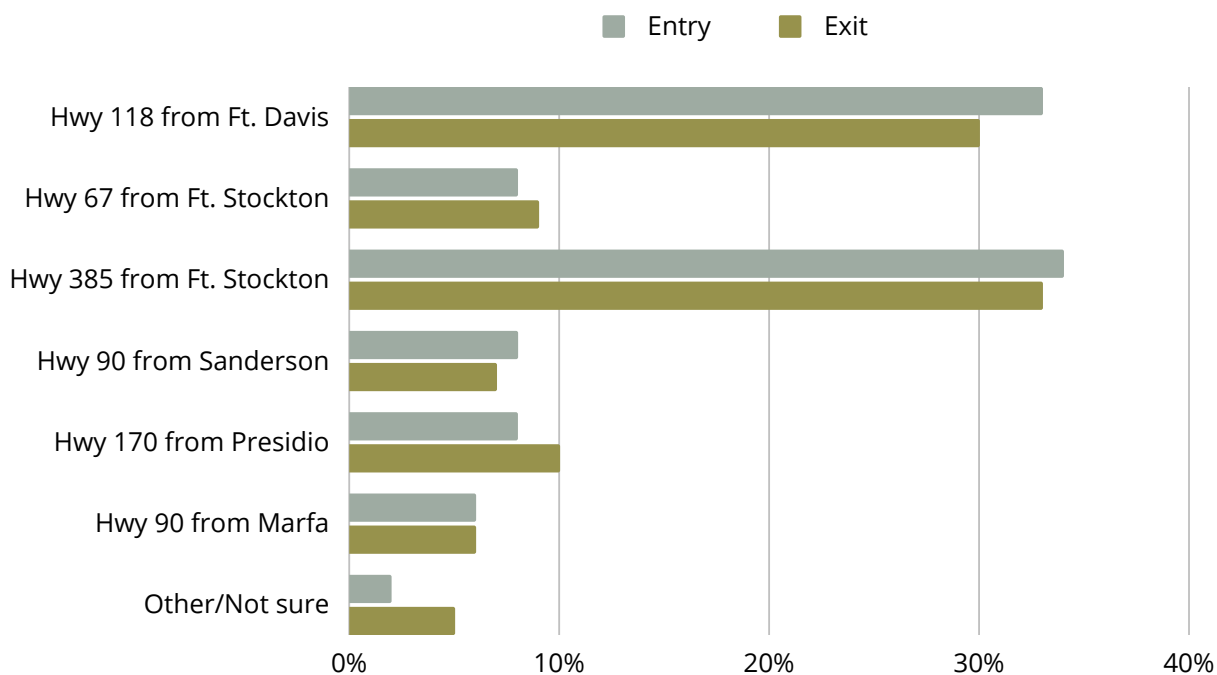


**Figure 4.** Roads used by visitors to exit the Big Bend area in 2022.

Seasonality of exit ways also varied, but overall data reiterates Highway 118 to Ft. Davis and Highway 385 to Ft. Stockton as consistent exit ways (Figure 5). Moreover, Highway 118 to Ft. Davis is most used to exit the area during spring and summer, while Highway 385 to Ft. Stockton is most used during the fall and winter. Over two-thirds (68.6%) of respondents used the same road to enter and exit the Big Bend Area, and just under half (47.8%) of respondents both entered and exited the area on either Highway 118 to Ft. Davis or Highway 385 to Ft. Stockton (Table 4). Highway 90 to Presidio and Highway 67 to Ft. Stockton were the only roads that were more likely to be used as exit routes than entry routes (Figure 6). When comparing the current findings to findings from 2011-2012, visitors are increasingly using the same roads to enter and exit the Big Bend area. For visitors not entering and exiting the area on the same road, the combination of Highway 118 to Ft. Davis and Highway 385 to Ft. Stockton was most used to enter and exit.



**Figure 5.** Roads used by visitors to exit the Big Bend area in 2022 by season.



**Figure 6.** Entry and exit roads used by visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.

**Table 4.** Combinations of entry and exit roads used by visitors in 2022 to the Big Bend area.

Exit	Entry							Total
	Hwy 118 to Ft. Davis	Hwy to 67 to Ft. Stockton	Hwy 385 to Ft. Stockton	Hwy 90 to Sanderson	Hwy 170 to Presidio	Hwy 170 to Presidio	Hwy 90 to Marfa	
Hwy 118 to Ft. Davis	186	2	43	7	5	2	2	245
Hwy to 67 to Ft. Stockton	7	50	12	4	0	3	3	76
Hwy 385 to Ft. Stockton	56	5	189	6	6	8	8	270
Hwy 90 to Sanderson	7	1	7	40	0	5	5	60
Hwy 170 to Presidio	7	4	13	5	52	3	3	84
Hwy 90 to Marfa	6	3	12	5	2	21	21	49
<b>Total</b>	269	65	276	67	65	42	42	784
<b>Percent who used same entry and exit road</b>	23.7	6.4	24.1	5.1	6.6	2.7	2.7	68.6

## WHERE VISITORS ARE FROM

Respondents were asked for a home zip code or their country of origin. Tables 5 and 6, as well as figures 7 and 8 provide information related to visitors' home areas. From outside of Texas, the most prominent state of origin for visitors are Florida, California, New Mexico, New York, Washington, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia, Louisiana, and Ohio, each with 10 or more respondents per state. Approximately 1.6% of respondents were international visitors, with Australia, France, and Mexico being the most represented nations with 2 respondents per country. Almost 65% of respondents were from Texas. Figure 9 provides an overview of the distribution of respondents by zip code and indicates that the majority were from the metropolitan areas of Houston, Dallas-Ft. Worth, San Antonio, and Austin. This is similar to zip code results in 2011-2012. Comparing these overall findings to the findings in 2011-2012, the Big Bend area drew approximately 10% more visitors from outside of Texas, while drawing fewer international visitors overall in 2022. The drop in international visitation is speculated to be related to decreases in international travel from the COVID-19 pandemic, although international travel is beginning to rebound and will likely continue to do so in the coming years.

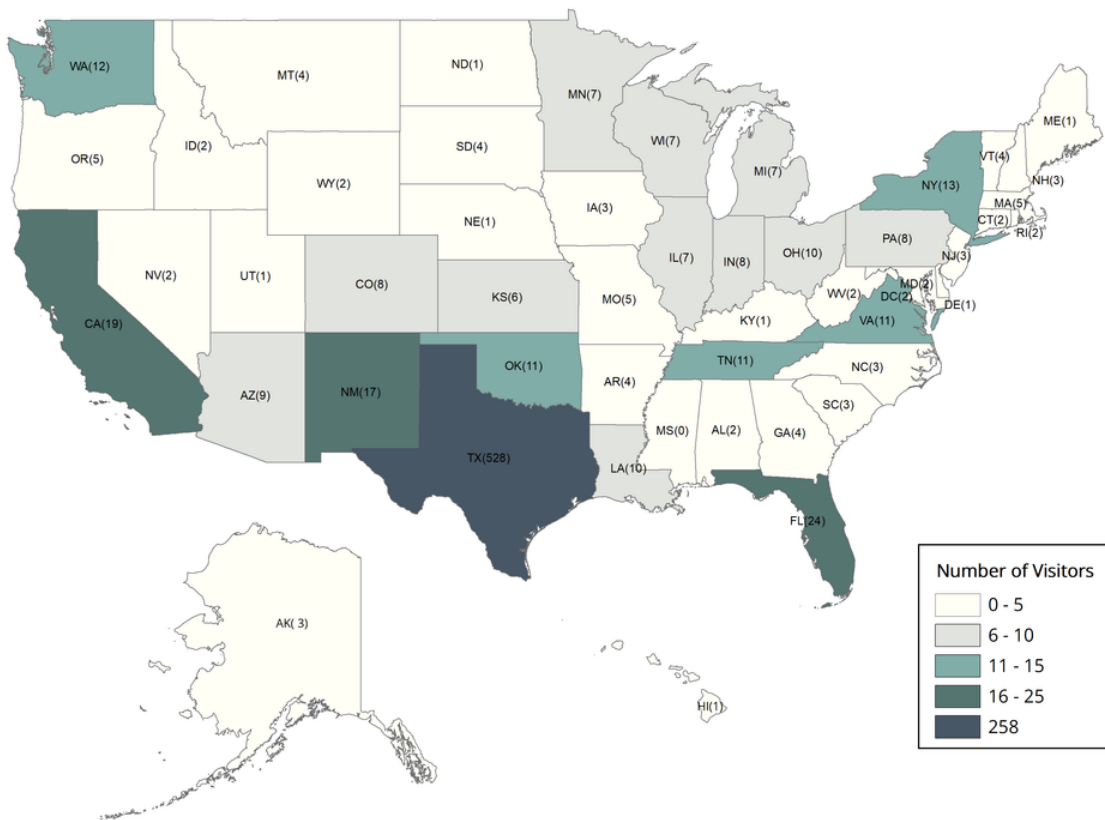


**Table 5.** Home states of domestic visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.

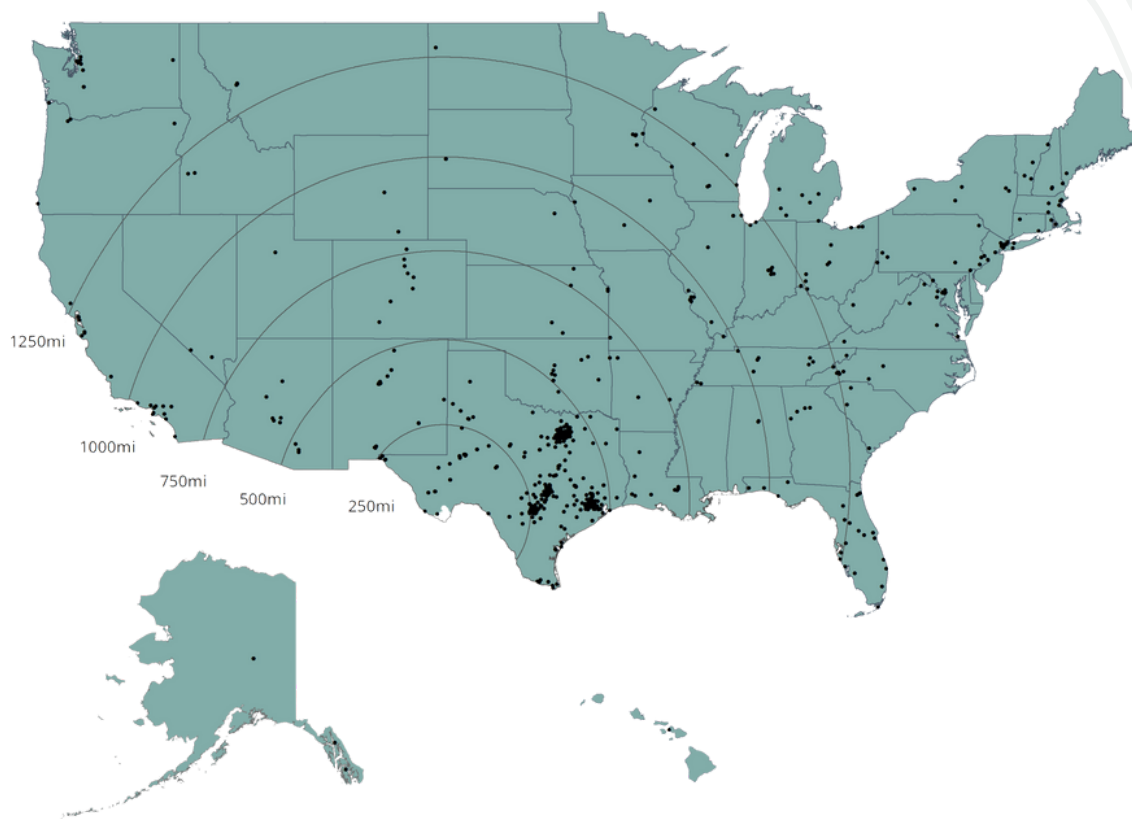
State	Count (%)	State	Count (%)
Texas	528 (64.7)	Arkansas	4 (0.5)
Florida	24 (2.9)	Georgia	4 (0.5)
California	19 (2.3)	Montana	4 (0.5)
New Mexico	17 (2.1)	South Dakota	4 (0.5)
New York	13 (1.6)	Vermont	4 (0.5)
Washington	12 (1.5)	Iowa	3 (0.4)
Oklahoma	11 (1.4)	New Hampshire	3 (0.4)
Tennessee	11 (1.4)	New Jersey	3 (0.4)
Virginia	11 (1.4)	South Carolina	3 (0.4)
Louisiana	10 (1.2)	Alabama	2 (0.3)
Ohio	10 (1.2)	Connecticut	2 (0.3)
Arizona	9 (1.1)	District of Columbia	2 (0.3)
Colorado	8 (1.0)	Idaho	2 (0.3)
Indiana	8 (1.0)	Maryland	2 (0.3)
Pennsylvania	8 (1.0)	Neveda	2 (0.3)
Illinois	7 (0.9)	Rhode Island	2 (0.3)
Michigan	7 (0.9)	West Virginia	2 (0.3)
North Carolina	7 (0.9)	Wyoming	2 (0.3)
Minnesota	7 (0.9)	Delaware	1 (0.1)
Wisconsin	7 (0.9)	Hawaii	1 (0.1)
Kansas	6 (0.7)	Kentucky	1 (0.1)
Massachusetts	5 (0.6)	Maine	1 (0.1)
Missouri	5 (0.6)	Nebraska	1 (0.1)
Oregon	5 (0.6)	North Dakota	1 (0.1)
Alaska	4 (0.5)	Utah	1 (0.1)

**Table 6.** Country of origin from international visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.

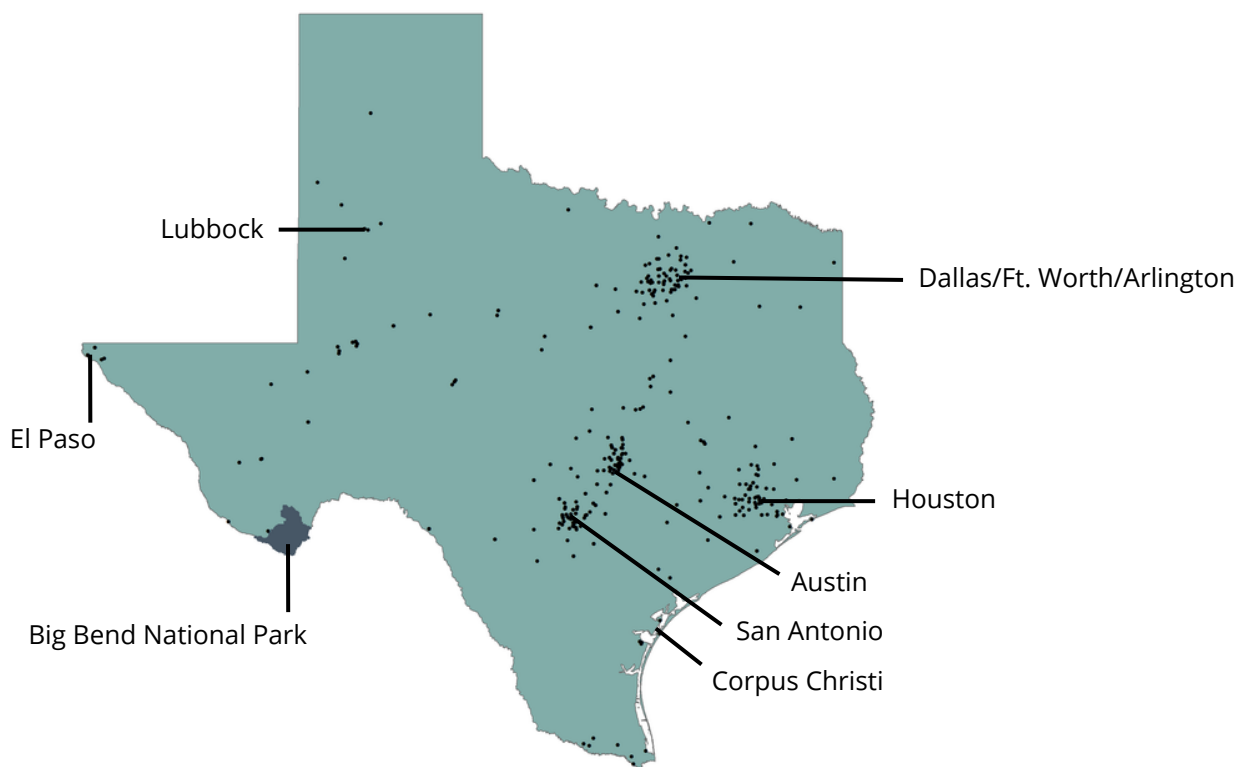
County	Count
Australia	2
France	2
Mexico	2
Austria	1
Brazil	1
Germany	1
Israel	1
Norway	1
Saudi Arabia	1
Sweden	1
Total	13 (1.6%)



**Figure 7.** Numbers of visitors to the Big Bend area by state in 2022.



**Figure 8.** Zip codes of origin of U.S. visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.



**Figure 9.** Zip codes of Texas residents who visited the Big Bend area in 2022.



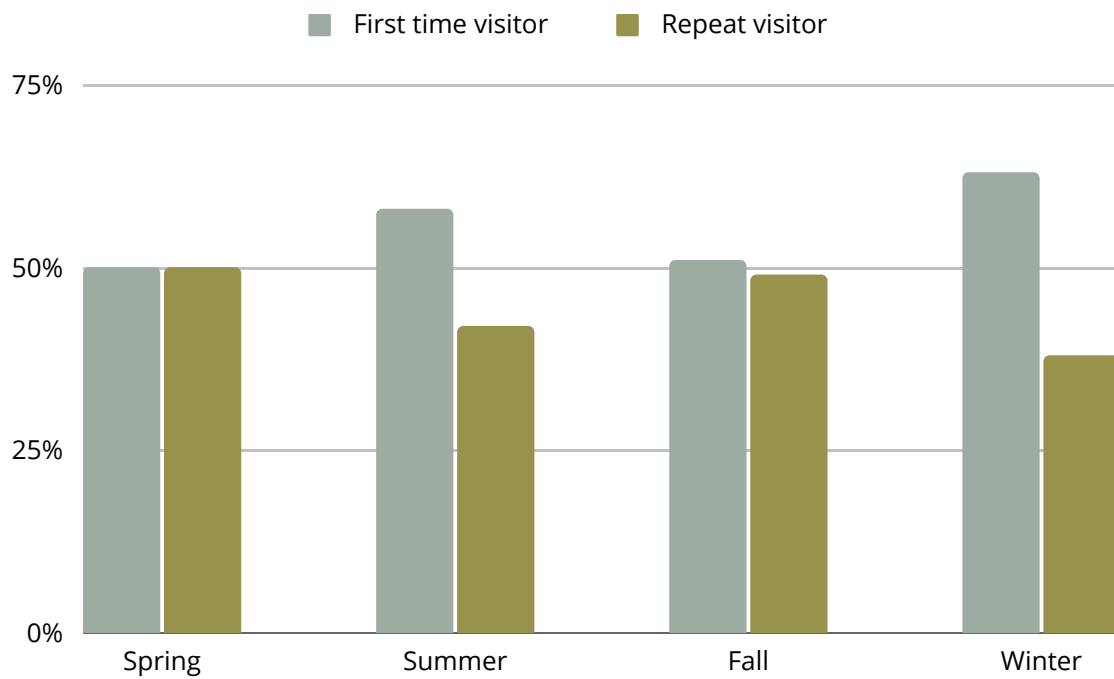
## PAST VISITATION AND THIS STAY

Visitors were asked about the number of times they have visited the Big Bend area before. This was the first trip for over half of the respondents (56.1%) and a tenth (10.1%) reported that they had visited the Big Bend area 10 or more times (Table 7). Examining the make-up of visitors by season, visitors in the spring and fall were approximately half first-time visitors and half repeat visitors. Whereas in the summer and winter, majority of visitors intercepted were first-time visitors (Figure 10). When asked to speculate about their interest in visiting the Big Bend area during another season, respondents overwhelmingly exhibited interest in spring, fall, and winter and reported lack of interest in returning during the summer (Figure 11). Almost 90% of respondents reported willingness to visit the Big Bend area in spring (89%), fall (88%), and slightly lesser in the winter (84%). Only 34% of respondents indicated willingness to visit the Big Bend area during summer. Summer visitors perceived all four seasons as times they would visit the Big Bend area, whereas spring, fall, and winter visitors specifically noted summer as a time they would not be interested in visiting the Big Bend area (Figure 11). These findings align with the findings from 2011-2012 in that the majority of respondents indicated avoiding summer and preferring to visit in spring. Further, there is a growing interest in visiting the Big Bend area in fall and winter, relative to the 2011-2012 study.

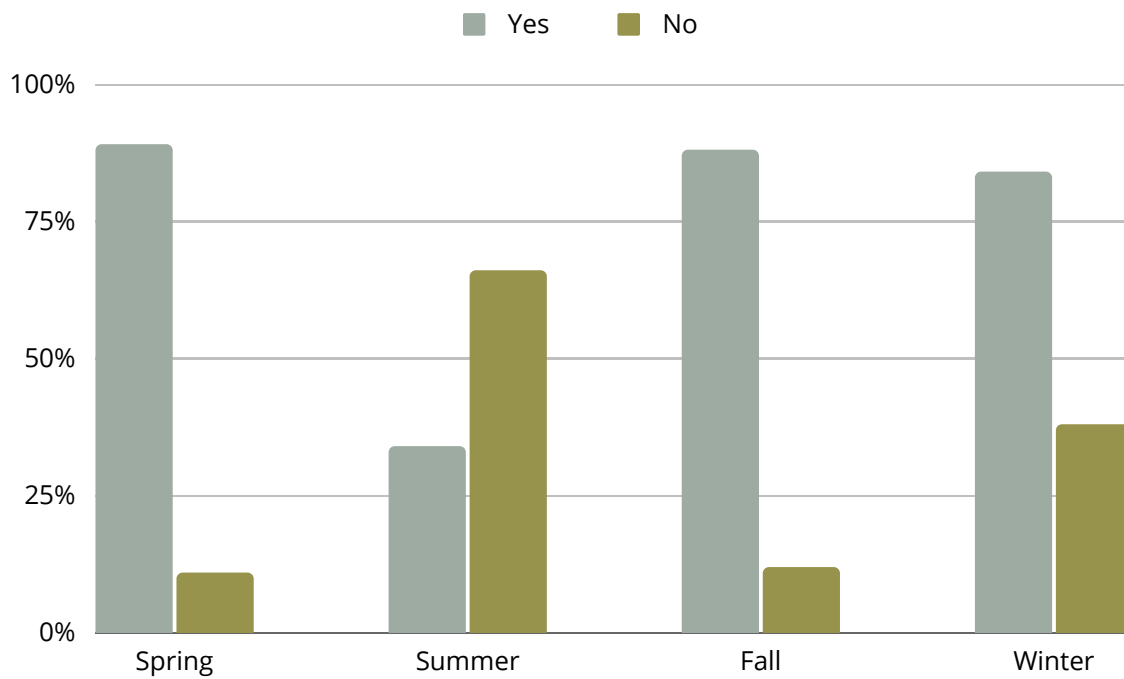


**Table 7.** Number of times visitors in 2022 had been to the Big Bend area in the past.

# of times visited before this trip	Count (%)
0	470 (56.1)
1	124 (14.8)
2	57 (6.8)
3	35 (4.2)
4	24 (2.9)
5	23 (2.7)
6	5 (0.6)
7	11 (1.3)
8	3 (0.4)
9	1 (0.1)
10-19	38 (4.5)
20-29	30 (3.6)
30-39	9 (1.1)
40-49	1 (0.1)
50-59	3 (0.4)
60-69	1 (0.1)
70-79	1 (0.1)
80+	2 (0.2)
Total	838 (100.0)
Mean	3.04
S.D.	8.358

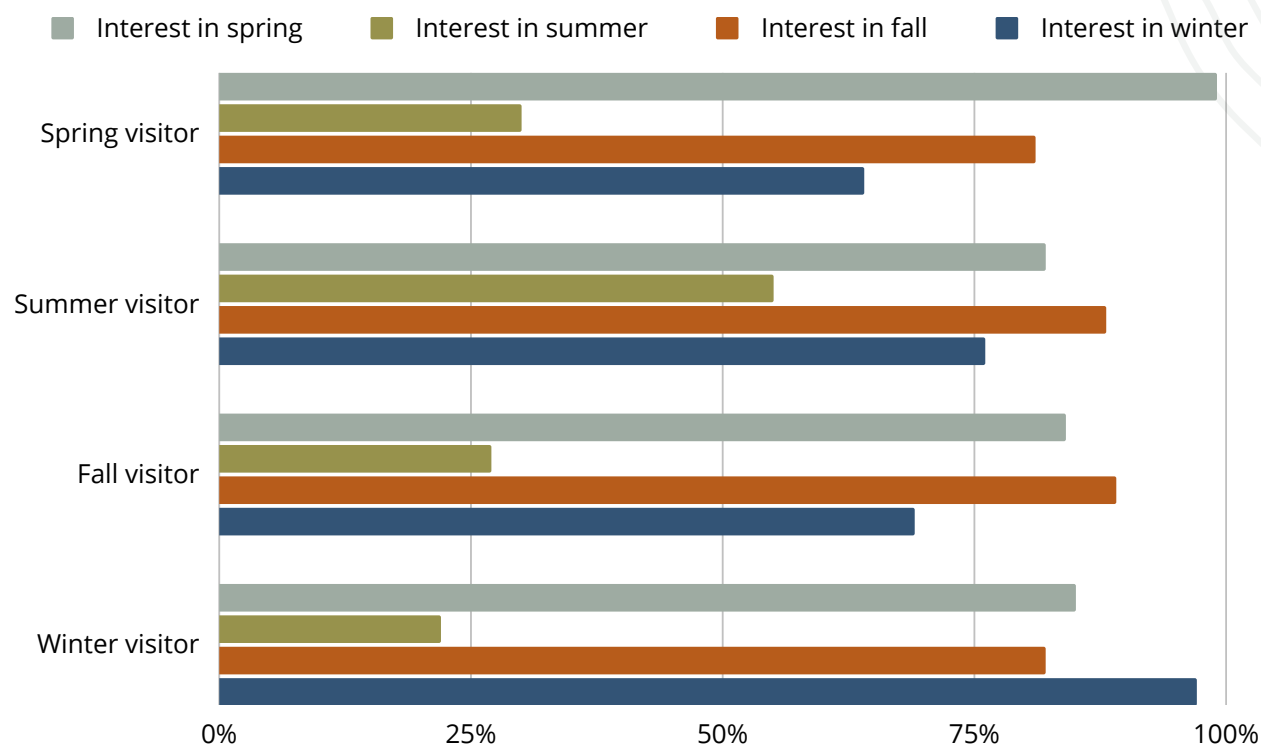


**Figure 10.** Percentage of first-time visitors versus repeat visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022 by season.



**Figure 11.** Respondents' interest in visiting the Big Bend area in different seasons of 2022.





**Figure 12.** Respondents' interest in visiting the Big Bend area in different seasons by when they visited (2022).

On average, respondents reported spending approximately 4 days and 3.5 nights in the Big Bend area, 2.78 days of which they planned to spend in Big Bend National Park (Table 8). Almost all (96.5%) of the on-site interviewees had spent or were planning to spend at least one night in Big Bend National Park or one or more of the gateway communities in Brewster County (Table 9). The average number of nights stayed in Brewster County varied slightly by season (Table 10). Respondents stayed 4.22 nights on average during the winter while only 2.59 on average during the summer. Respondents stayed on average about 3.5 nights in both spring and fall.

**Table 8.** Average and mean number of days and nights in the Big Bend area and in Big Bend National Park.

Question	Mean (s.d.)	Median
How many days will you spend in the Big Bend area?	4.01 (3.508)	3.00
How many nights will you spend in the Big Bend area?	3.55 (3.483)	3.00
How many days will you spend in Big Bend National Park?	2.78 (2.217)	2.00

**Table 9.** Number of nights visitors spent in the Big Bend area in 2022.

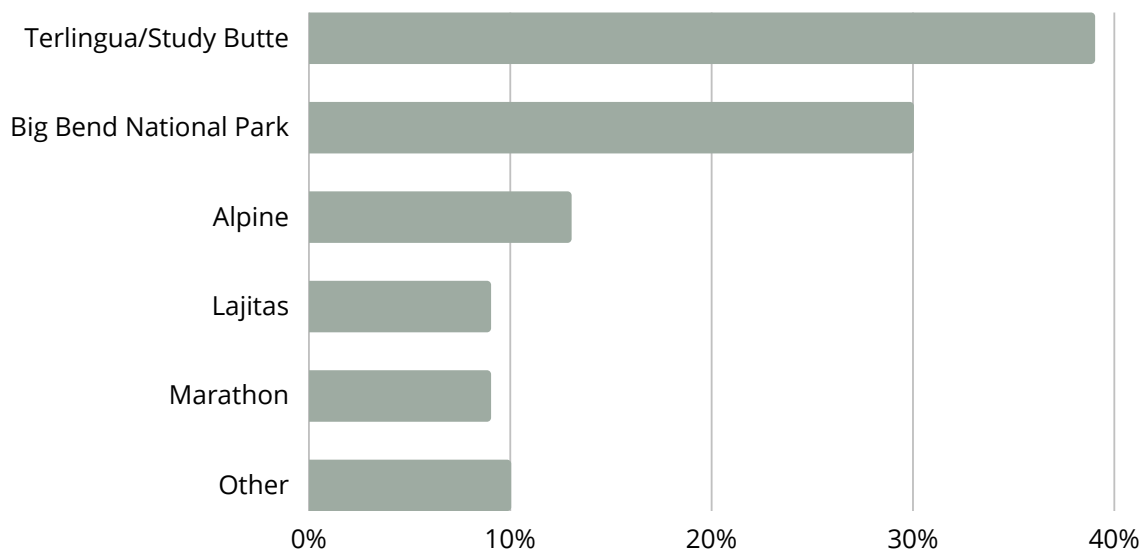
# of nights in Brewster County	Count (%)
0	30 (3.5)
1	109 (12.8)
2	194 (22.7)
3	199 (23.3)
4	136 (15.9)
5	69 (8.1)
6	44 (5.2)
7	22 (2.6)
8	4 (0.5)
9	10 (1.2)
10-19	21 (2.5)
20-29	4 (0.5)
30-39	2 (0.2)
40+	1 (0.1)
Total	845 (100.0)
Mean	3.55
S.D.	3.483

**Table 10.** Average and median number of nights visitors spent in the Big Bend area in 2022.

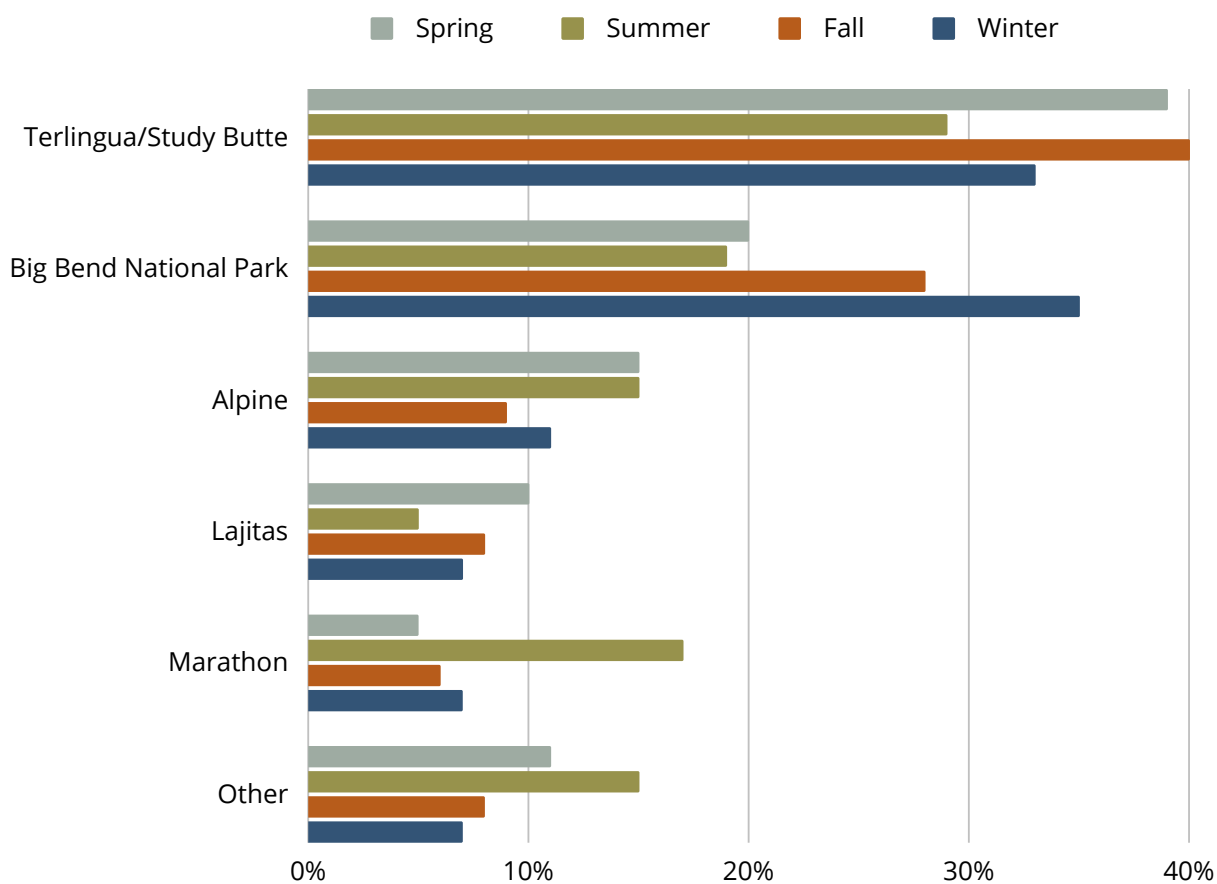
Central Tendency	Season			
	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Mean (s.d.)	3.66 (2.934)	2.59 (1.941)	3.33 (2.587)	4.22 (4.739)
Median	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0

The gateway community of Terlingua/Study Butte was the most common place for visitors to stay overnight, with over one-third (39%) of respondents indicating spending at least one night. Less than one-third (30%) of on-site respondents indicated they planned to stay at least one night in the national park. In a shift from previous studies, most (70%) respondents indicated staying in gateway communities during their visit to Brewster County. After Terlingua, Alpine (13%) was the most often reported gateway community (Figure 13). Importantly, the distribution of areas in which individuals stayed varied per season (Figure 14). Across all seasons, visitors were most likely to stay within the gateway communities in Brewster County, with Terlingua/Study Butte being the most common gateway community. For visitors staying in Big Bend National Park, visitors were more frequently staying in the park in fall and winter than in spring and summer.





**Figure 13.** Percentage of visitors who spent at least one night in different areas of the Big Bend area in 2022.



**Figure 14.** Percentage of visitors who spent at least one night in different areas of the Big Bend area by season in 2022.



## ACTIVITIES VISITORS PURSUED

Visitors to the Big Bend area engaged in a number of activities both on their own and with a guide service (Table 11). Self-led experiences more prevalent than guided experience. The most reported activities were day hiking (87.4%), star gazing (67.5%), and driving for pleasure (66.0%). Nature observation activities were commonly reported, with the most common being wildlife (44.2%) and bird watching (32.3%). About half of respondents indicated they engaged in photography (56.2%) and visiting historic and cultural attractions (48.4%). Day hiking, driving for pleasure and star gazing each increased participation by more than 10% compared to 2011-2012. For visitors that engaged in boating/river running and horseback riding, over 50% of them do so with a guide.

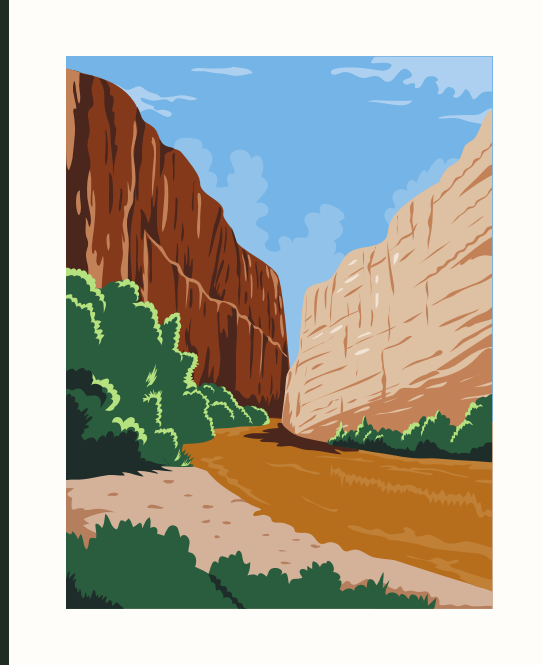




**Table 11.** Activities visitors to the Big Bend area pursued in 2022.

Activity	On Their Own (%)	With a Guide (%)
Day hiking	87.4	0.7
Star gazing	67.5	1.1
Driving for pleasure	66.0	0.2
Photography	56.2	0.7
Visiting historic/Cultural attractions	48.4	0.7
Wildlife watching	44.2	1.4
Bird watching	32.3	0.6
Plant identification	24.9	1.2
Car camping	24.4	0.1
Butterfly watching	19.5	0.6
Backroad driving/Jeep touring	19.0	1.9
Backpacking	14.8	0.2
Other	8.9	0.9
Boating/River running	8.3	4.1
Mountain biking	8.0	0.5
Horseback riding	6.8	3.3
Motorcycle/ATV off road	3.5	0.9
Motorcycle tour on road	2.3	0.4
Hunting	2.0	0.7

n=852



# PART II.

## Follow-up Survey Results

- Characteristics of Respondents
- Activities Results
- Information Used During Trip Planning
- General Likes and Dislikes
- Visitor Satisfaction with Area Services
- Visitor Benefits
- Past and Future Visitation
- COVID-19 and the Visitor Experience
- Perceptions of Law Enforcement Personnel
- General Travel Behavior



This portion of the report provides an overview of the information gathered from the follow-up survey. Data on the demographics of respondents, activity engagement, travel planning and behavior, perceptions of services, the Big Bend area in general, and COVID-19 impacts are presented. As a point of comparison, data from the 2003-2004 and the 2011-2012 reports are provided where possible.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDERS

The tables in this section summarize information about the demographic characteristics of respondents to the follow up survey in 2022. Table 12 displays that almost half (48.7%) of respondents were over the age of 50, slightly lower than 2011-2012 and about the same as 2003-2004. Furthermore, a third of respondents in 2022 were over the age of 60, an increase from 2011-2012 and 2003-2004. Almost a third (32.5%) of respondents in 2022 were between 31 and 50, and 18.8% were 30 or younger. The median age was 49 years old.

**Table 12.** Age of visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.

Age	2003-2004 (%)	2011-2012 (%)	2022 (%)
20 or younger	2.0	0.9	0.5
21-30	11.0	16.8	18.3
31-40	12.0	7.5	15.2
41-50	26.0	17.9	17.3
51-60	27.0	25.0	15.7
61-70	20.0	31.9	33.0

Table 13 shows that respondents were overwhelmingly white (81.4%), but less so than in 2011-2012 and 2003-2004. Respondents who identified as Hispanic or Latino were slightly less represented in 2022 than in 2011-2012, but slightly more represented than in 2003-2004. Visitors identifying as Asian, Black or African American, and American Indian or Alaskan Native were slightly more represented in 2022 than in previous surveys, while those that identify as Pacific Islanders were less represented.

**Table 13.** Race/ethnicity of visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.

Racy/Ethnicity	2003-2004 (%)	2011-2012 (%)*	2022 (%)*
White	91.3	97.4	81.4
Hispanic or Latino	4.3	7.1	5.2
Asian	1.3	1.5	2.1
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1.3	0.2	0.3
Black or African American	0.7	0.2	1.0
American Indian or Alaskan Native	-	-	1.4
Other	1.1	1.1	-

\*Percentages do not total to 100% because respondents could select all that apply or opted not to respond.

Respondents were generally well educated with 84.5% of visitors being at least a college graduate, and 40.3% having a post-baccalaureate degree (Table 14). Visitors were overall more educated in 2022 compared to 2011-2012 and 2003-2004.

**Table 14.** Education level of visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.

Education Level	2003-2004 (%)	2011-2012 (%)	2022 (%)
Grade school	1.4	0.4	0.0
Some high school	0.9	0.8	0.0
High school graduate	6.1	4.0	2.8
Some college	20.5	18.9	12.6
College graduate	30.2	30.6	38.7
Some graduate school	9.2	11.3	5.5
Completed graduate school	30.4	30.1	40.3
Other	1.3	3.8	0.0

Similar to 2003-2004 and 2011-2012, respondents reported relatively high levels of income (Table 15). More than half (58.8%) indicated their household income was greater than \$100,000 and 18.5% reported household incomes greater than \$200,000. An increase from 2003-2004 and 2011-2012 for households over \$100,000 by 30 and 20 percentage points, respectively.

**Table 15.** Household income of visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.

Household Income	Percent
Under \$25,000	2.5
\$25,000 - \$49,999	10.3
\$50,000 - \$74,999	12.3
\$75,000 - \$99,999	16.0
\$100,000 - \$149,999	28.0
\$150,000 - \$199,999	12.3
\$200,000 or more	18.5



Table 16 shows that just under half (48.5%) of all respondents said they were employed full-time. Almost one in four respondents reported they were retired. Collectively, the Big Bend area has seen a steady decline in full-time employed visitors and a steady growth of retired visitors from 2003 to 2022.

**Table 16.** Employment status of visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, 2003-2004.

Employment Status	2003-2004 (%)	2011-2012 (%)	2022 (%)
Working full-time	57.3	50.9	48.5
Retired	19.4	21.5	23.0
Semi-retired	5.9	4.5	4.1
Student	5.4	9.1	3.1
Working part-time	4.4	6.4	4.1
Not-working	4.1	1.9	1.7
Homemaker	-	2.3	2.4
Other	3.5	3.4	2.7



## ACTIVITIES RESULTS

This section provides information about the types of activities respondents pursued on their trip to the Big Bend area and activities in which they would have liked to have participated. Respondents were presented a list of activities and asked whether or not they had participated in them during their visit to the Big Bend area. The list of activities is similar to that presented in the 2011-2012 study. Results are summarized in order of participation in Table 17.

Similar to 2003-2004 and 2011-2012, general sightseeing and day hiking, which continues to increase in popularity, were the most popular activities that visitors engaged in during their trip to the Big Bend area. Star gazing, visiting historic or cultural attractions, driving for pleasure, and photography were also reported by over half of the respondents. Photography engagement declined from 2011-2012 to 2022, while star gazing, historical or cultural attractions, and driving for pleasure remained about the same. Between 20%-35% of respondents reported wildlife watching, bird watching, car camping, plant identification, and backroad driving or Jeep touring, all of which decreased from 2011-2012 to 2022. Less than 10% of visitors indicated they engaged in backpacking, mountain biking, butterfly watching, or rafting and canoeing during the time in the Big Bend area. The least reported activities were horseback riding and motorcycling and off-road driving with less than 4% and 3%, respectively. No visitors reported engaging in hunting while visiting the Big Bend area.



**Table 17.** Activities visitors participated in during their trip to the Big Bend area in 2022.

Activity	2003-2004 (%)*	2011-2012 (%)*	2022 (%)*
General sightseeing	87.0	86.6	86.3
Day hiking	67.1	78.9	84.5
Star gazing	-	65.1	67.4
Visiting historic/Cultural attractions	65.0	64.1	65.6
Driving for pleasure	-	56.6	59.5
Photography	-	65.6	53.3
Other wildlife watching	49.5	43.4	34.7
Bird watching	-	36.3	30.2
Car camping	25.5	31.5	27.8
Plant identification	-	28.0	23.7
Backroad driving/Jeep touring	34.4	37.4	21.0
Backpacking	10.0	18.4	9.6
Mountain biking	4.0	6.3	8.9
Butterfly watching	-	10.4	8.9
Rafting/Canoeing	10.0	10.6	7.9
Other	9.2	0.8	7.9
Horseback riding	6.2	5.6	3.8
Motorcycle tour on road	8.3	5.6	2.7
Motorcycle/ATV off road	-	5.8	2.4
Hunting	0.4	0.6	0.0

\*Percentages do not total to 100% because respondents could select all that apply or opted not to respond.



Respondents were then asked to identify their primary activity during their visit to the Big Bend area (Table 18). More than half (51.4%) indicated day hiking as their primary activity during their trip. An additional 19.4% reported general sightseeing as their primary activity in the Big Bend area.

**Table 18.** Primary activities for visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.

Activity	Percent	Activity	Percent
General sightseeing	51.2	Bird watching	1.0
Day hiking	19.4	Backpacking	1.0
Car camping	5.2	Motorcycle tour on road	1.0
Visiting historic/Cultural attractions	4.2	Other wildlife watching	0.7
Backroad driving/Jeep touring	3.5	Plant identification	0.3
Star gazing	2.4	Rafting/Canoeing	0.3
Other	2.4	Mountain biking	0.0
Photography	2.1	Butterfly watching	0.0
Driving for pleasure	1.4	Horseback riding	0.0
Motorcycle/ATV off road	1.4	Hunting	0.0

Respondents were asked whether there were other activities they would have liked to have participated in on their trip. Less than half (41.5%) of visitors indicated there were activities they wanted to engage in but did not during their trip. Respondents were also asked why they were unable to participate in these activities. Tables 19 and 20 display the most reported activities and subsequent barriers to activity engagement. Similar to 2011-2012, boating and hiking were the most frequently reported activities that respondents said they would have liked to have engaged in on their trip. Lack of time was by far the most frequently cited reason why respondents did not pursue these activities. Two respondents noted that a barrier to their participation was accessibility due to a disability and/or disability equipment. A full list of responses is presented in Appendix C.

**Table 19.** Activities visitors to the Big Bend area wanted to do but did not on their trip.

Activities*	Count (%)
Boating (e.g., kayaking, floating, canoeing)	41 (37.3)
Hiking (e.g., specific locations, more hiking)	24 (21.8)
Backpacking (e.g., backcountry, extended hikes)	11 (10.0)
River crossing (e.g., visiting Mexico, wading in river)	8 (7.3)
Camping (e.g., tent camping, RV camping)	7 (6.4)
Nature watching (e.g., wildlife and plant identification)	3 (2.7)
Horseback riding	2 (1.8)
Visiting historical or cultural sites	1 (0.9)
Aviation	1 (0.9)

n=108; \*Activities are not mutually exclusive

**Table 20.** Constraints to activity participation during visitors' trip to the Big Bend area in 2022.

Constraint of Participation*	Count (%)
Time (e.g., not enough time to go)	40 (41.2)
Flooding (e.g., closures due to flooding)	15 (15.5)
River characteristics (e.g., too low)	13 (34.4)
Weather (e.g., too hot, too cold, rain)	13 (34.4)
Interpersonal (e.g., group members/dogs)	11 (11.3)
Crowding (e.g., too many people, no parking)	7 (7.2)
Registration (e.g., reservation systems, booking, finances)	7 (7.2)
Lack of knowledge (e.g., didn't know how)	5 (5.2)
Accessibility (e.g., inaccessible areas)	2 (2.1)

n=97; \*Constraints are not mutually exclusive



## INFORMATION USED DURING TRIP PLANNING

This section summarizes results on the types of information visitors used when planning their trips to the Big Bend area. Respondents were presented with a list of information sources about the Big Bend area and asked to indicate how useful each information source was in the planning of their trip. Usefulness was measured on a scale from 1 “not at all useful” to 5 “very useful”. Respondents were also given the option to select “not applicable” for the information source. Table 21 summarizes the findings related to usefulness of information sources during trip planning.

Usefulness of information sources varied significantly (Table 21). The internet/websites were the most useful information sources for respondents followed by national or state park visitor centers. Conversely, the state fair, travel shows, radio and TV, signs and billboards, and chamber of commerce visitor centers averaged less than 2 out of 5 on usefulness. Personal knowledge and experience and word of mouth were both reported as somewhat useful in preparing for their trips.

**Table 21.** Average reported usefulness of information sources visitors used while planning their trip to the Big Bend area in 2022.

Information Source	Mean (s.d.)
Internet/website	4.14 (1.100)
Personal knowledge/previous experience	3.56 (1.558)
National or state park visitor center	4.02 (1.188)
Family or friends/word of mouth	3.29 (1.464)
Brochures found at local businesses	2.28 (1.412)
Texas Travel Guidebook	2.21 (1.532)
Newspaper/magazine article/ads	2.08 (1.321)
Chamber of Commerce visitor center	1.98 (1.292)
Signs/billboards	1.79 (1.214)
Travel shows	1.39 (0.918)
Radio/TV	1.34 (0.885)
State fair	1.12 (0.502)

1-not at all useful to 5-very useful

Respondents were also asked whether they used the “Visit Big Bend” website as they planned their trip. The majority of the sample (63.5%) indicated that they did use the “Visit Big Bend” website as part of their planning for their trip. Additionally, the “Visit Big Bend” website was rated as useful in planning their trip (4.10 out of 5). This represents a steady increase in usage of the “Visit Big Bend” website during trip planning since 2003-2004, and it continues to be viewed as useful in the planning process (Table 22)

**Table 22.** Percentage of visitors who used the "Visit Big Bend" website to help plan their trip and average reported usefulness in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.

Did you use the “Visit Big Bend” website while planning your trip?	2003-2004	2011-2012	2022
Yes	49.7	53.0	63.5
No	50.3	47.0	36.5
How useful was the “Visit Big Bend” website while planning your trip?			
Average usefulness score	4.09	-	4.1

1-not at all useful to 5-very useful

Respondents were asked to report other sources of information they used while planning their trips. Table 23 summarizes themes from these sources. A full list of other sources can be found in Appendix D.

**Table 23.** Other information sources visitors used in planning their trip to the Big Bend area in 2022.

Source	Count
Books (i.e., Hiking Guide by Falcon)	14
Specific websites/Internet (i.e., YouTube)	10
Friends/Family	6
Applications (e.g., AllTrails)	5
Social media (e.g., Facebook groups)	4
Maps	3
Park	2

44 visitors provided “other” information sources



## GENERAL LIKES AND DISLIKES

This section summarizes information about what visitors liked and disliked about the Big Bend area. Questions were open-ended so responses varied; 84.5% of respondents reported on what they like most about the Big Bend area and 80.1% reported on what they liked least. Table 24 summarizes the general themes about what visitors liked most and Table 25 summarizes the general themes about what visitors liked least.

Similar to previous studies, the beauty of the natural scenery was the most commonly reported aspect respondents liked during their visit to the Big Bend area in 2022. About one in four respondents noted that they liked the uniqueness of the landscape, the opportunities for outdoor recreation, and the naturalness of the Big Bend area. Star gazing and the darkness of the sky at Big Bend was a novel theme that was present in 2022 that had not appeared in previous investigations. A full list of what respondents liked can be found in Appendix E.

The biggest complaint that respondents reported about their visit to the Big Bend area in 2022 had to do with the distance to Big Bend National Park and to points of interest in and around Brewster County. Additionally, lack of services such as lodging, food, and specific recreation, crowding, weather, and the quantity, quality, and access to accommodations was reported by more than 10% of respondents. Parking appears to be a growing issue within the Big Bend area, as it was reported as a barrier to activity engagement and what visitors liked least about their trip in 2022. A full list of what visitors liked least about their visit to the Big Bend area in 2022 can be found in Appendix F.



**Table 24.** Themes from what visitors liked most about their visit to the Big Bend area in 2022.

Theme*	Count (%)	Theme*	Count (%)
Beauty of the area, scenery	90 (37.3)	Habitats, wildlife, plants	17 (7.1)
Unique landscape	68 (28.2)	Undeveloped	12 (5.0)
Outdoor recreation opportunities	64 (26.6)	Remoteness	11 (4.6)
Naturalness, primitive	60 (24.9)	Not crowded, less people	10 (4.1)
Vastness, large, scale	35 (14.5)	Education	6 (2.5)
Quiet, escape, peace	35 (14.5)	Weather	4 (1.7)
Solitude, isolation	25 (10.4)	Accessibility of nature	3 (1.2)
Dark sky, stars	19 (7.9)		

n=240; \*Theme are not mutually exclusive

**Table 25.** What visitors liked least about their visit to the Big Bend area in 2022.

Theme*	Count (%)	Theme*	Count (%)
Distance	59 (28.8)	Law enforcement (border patrol, rangers)	4 (2.0)
Lack of services (lodging, food, recreation)	37 (18.0)	River (lack of flow, water quality)	4 (2.0)
Crowding (crowds, interpersonal conflict)	30 (14.6)	Local interactions	4 (2.0)
Weather	27 (13.2)	Lack of knowledge of opportunities	3 (1.5)
Accommodations (quantity, quality, access)	23 (11.2)	Development	2 (1.0)
Environment (quality, degradation)	12 (5.9)	Rules	2 (1.0)
Parking (not enough)	8 (3.9)	Border proximity	1 (0.5)
Costs (gas, food)	4 (2.0)	Road closure	1 (0.5)

n=207; \*Themes are not mutually exclusive

## VISITOR SATISFACTION WITH AREA SERVICES

This section of the report summarizes responses to an evaluation tool; Importance-Performance (I-P) Appraisal. Respondents were asked to rate how important seven different services in the Big Bend area were to their trip. A five-point scale was provided and ranged from not at all important (1), to somewhat important (3), to very important (5). Next, respondents were asked to rate how well the Big Bend area was performing in delivering those same services. Again, a 5-point scale was provided and ranged from poor (1), to average (3), to excellent (5). A summary of the service attributes and comparison across 2003-2004, 2011-2012, and 2022 is provided in Table 26.

Regarding importance, results suggest that accommodation and recreational opportunity services were increasingly more important than in previous studies. Conversely, food services, helpfulness of the locals, information availability, and security/safety were less important than in previous studies. Regarding performance, food service, recreational opportunities, information availability, helpfulness of the locals, safety/security, and recreation providers have decreased since 2003-2004. Performance of food services and helpfulness of the locals have decreased the most, while recreational opportunities, information availability, and safety/security have decreased but are still performing “above average”. Accommodation performance has remained about the same since 2003-2004.

**Table 26.** Visitors' ratings of importance and performance of basic services in the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.

Service	2003-2004 (mean)		2011-2012 (mean)		2022 (mean)	
	Avg. Importance*	Avg. Performance*	Avg. Importance*	Avg. Performance*	Avg. Importance*	Avg. Performance*
Accommodation	4.05	4.20	3.82	4.22	4.16	4.25
Food service	3.26	4.00	2.84	3.86	2.64	3.54
Recreational Opportunities	3.92	4.50	3.89	4.48	4.06	4.40
Helpfulness of the locals	3.50	4.36	3.04	4.16	2.65	3.84
Information availability	3.99	4.36	3.83	4.25	3.77	4.14
Security/safety	3.66	4.39	3.41	4.31	3.22	4.28
Recreation Providers	-	-	2.32	3.88	2.33	3.79

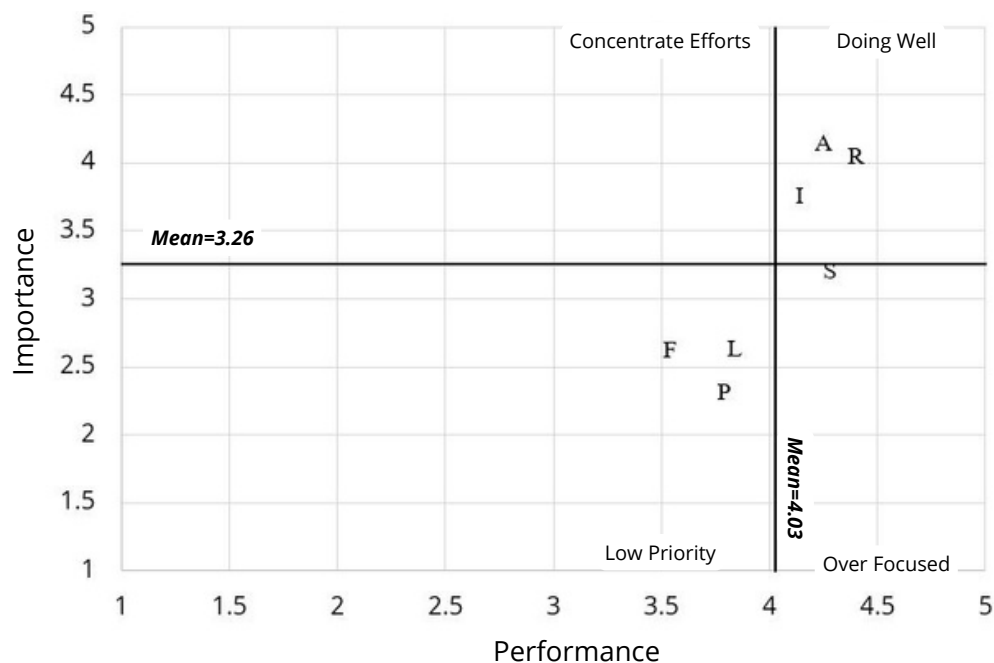
\*1 – not at all important to 5 – very important; ^1 – poor performance to 5 – excellent performance



Pairs of I-P scores were then plotted on a grid (Figure 15 on the next page). A comparison of scores provides information about the relative importance and performance of different Big Bend area services. Using the average scores for importance and performance as cutoff scores, four quadrants are created that reflect management recommendations. The top right quadrant, “Doing Well”, includes services that are above average importance as well as performing above average. The top left quadrant, “Concentrate Efforts”, includes services that are above average importance but are performing below average. The bottom right quadrant, “Over Focused”, includes services that are performing above average but are below average on importance. Lastly, the bottom left quadrant, “Low Priority”, includes services that are below average in both importance and performance.

Six of the seven services were categorized under the same management recommendation as in 2011-2012. Accommodations, recreational opportunities, and access to information about the area all fell within the “Doing Well” category. Although food services and helpfulness of the locals fell in performance and recreation providers scored about the same relative to 2011-2012, they still occupy the “Low Priority” category, as they did in 2011-2012. The one shift in management recommendation category was the security/safety services. This moved from “Doing Well” in 2011-2012 to slightly within “Over Focused” in 2022. This shift comes primarily from a slight decrease of perceived importance between 2011-2012 and 2022. No services fell within the “concentrate efforts” recommendation category, indicating that services that are above average importance are not performing below average.

A – Accommodation    F - Food services    R – Recreational opportunities    L – Helpfulness of locals  
I – Information availability    S – Security/Safety    P – Recreation providers



**Figure 15.** Importance-Performance analysis for services in the Big Bend area in 2022.



## VISITOR BENEFITS

This section focused on the benefits individuals received from visiting the Big Bend area. Respondents were given a series of items related to common benefits of outdoor recreation and tourism experiences. Respondents were then asked to rate how important each item was to their trip. Scores ranged from not at all important (1), to somewhat important (3), to very important (5). Half of the items rated between important (4) and very important (5). Similar to 2011-2012 and 2003-2004, *experiencing the beauty of nature* was the highest-rated benefit from travel to the Big Bend area (Table 27). *Being in a natural place* and *visiting Big Bend National Park* were also top-rated benefits from travel to the Big Bend area. Other benefits were less important. *Escaping the COVID-19 pandemic*, *meeting new people*, *being physically active*, *developing skills*, and *being close to friends or family* were the least important benefits, with scores below 3 out of 5. *Escaping the COVID-19 pandemic* was the least important benefit.

**Table 27.** Benefits from visiting the Big Bend area in 2022, 2011-2012, and 2003-2004.

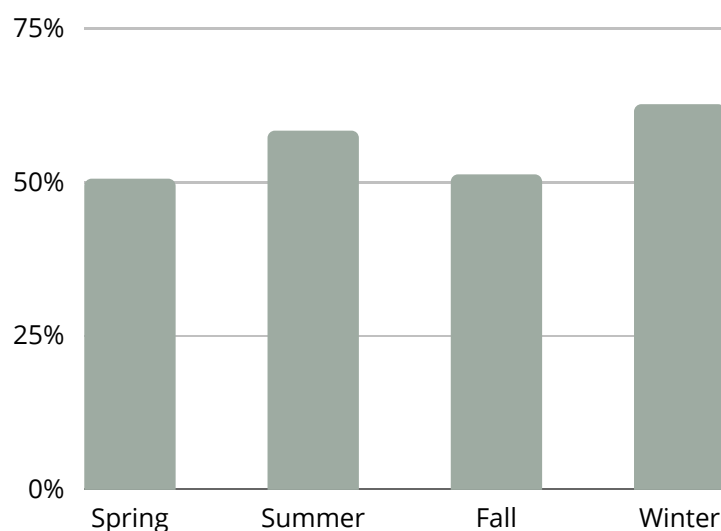
This trip allowed me to...	2003-2004 (mean)	2011-2012 (mean)	2022 (mean)
Be close to friends or family	3.79	3.79	2.47
Get some exercise	3.95	4.35	3.63
Experience the beauty of nature	4.81	4.91	4.89
Meet new people	3.03	3.34	2.00
Have some excitement	3.77	4.13	3.81
Experience an undeveloped environment	4.40	4.59	4.36
Rest and relaxation	4.24	4.30	4.17
Learn more about nature	3.89	4.13	4.16
Experience some solitude	3.98	4.25	4.19
Be with others who enjoy things that I enjoy	3.89	4.16	3.72
Develop skills	2.48	2.89	2.59
Be in a natural place	4.50	4.69	4.73
Escape the COVID-19 pandemic	-	-	1.84
Experience something new and different	4.09	4.21	4.17
Learn about the desert environment	4.02	4.07	3.96
Be physically active	3.94	4.33	4.30
Do a river trip	-	1.65	2.34
Visit Big Bend National Park	-	4.71	4.65

1 – not at all important to 5 – very important



## PAST AND FUTURE VISITATION

This section reports findings pertaining to respondents' prior visits to the Big Bend area in the past and their expectations about visiting in the future. Visitors were asked if their visit to the Big Bend area was their first. Over half of visitors in every season were first-time visitors in 2022 (Figure 16). These findings are similar to the findings in 2011-2012. Almost 2 of every 3 respondents that visited in winter were first-time visitors in 2022.



**Figure 16.** Percentage of visitors that are first-time visitors to the Big Bend area in 2022.

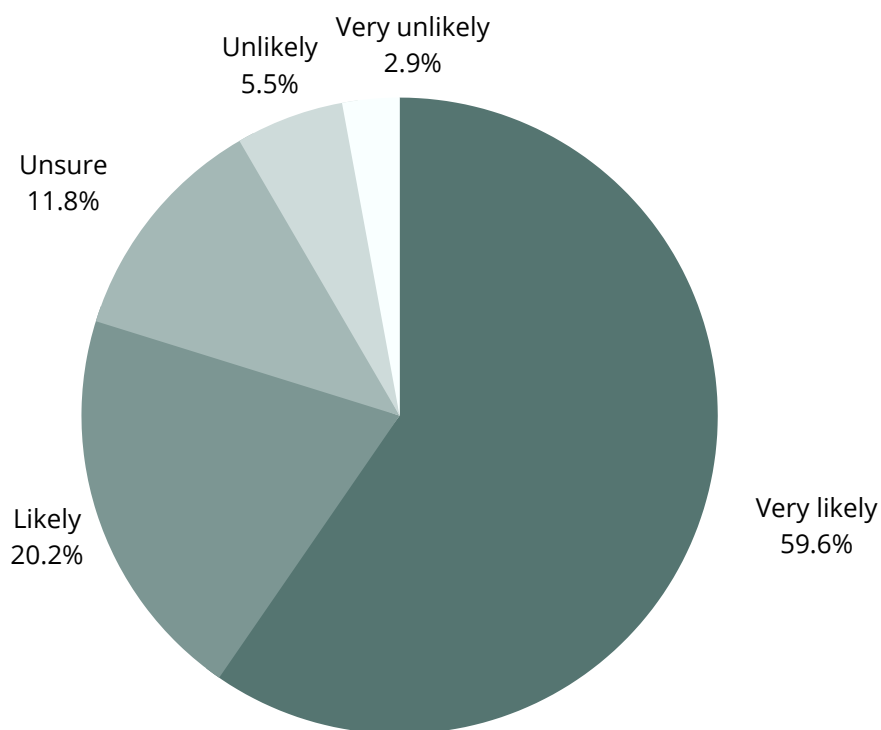
Similar to 2011-2012, over 80% of all respondents indicated that they were either likely or very likely to return to the Big Bend area in the future (Figure 17). Previous studies have suggested that this may be a function of return-visitors continuing to visit. To further explore this, likelihood of returning to the Big Bend area in the future was analyzed for both first-time visitors and repeat visitors (Table 28). Results suggest that while repeat visitors are more likely to return in the future, more than two-thirds of first-time visitors were at least "likely" to return to the Big Bend area in the future (Figure 17).





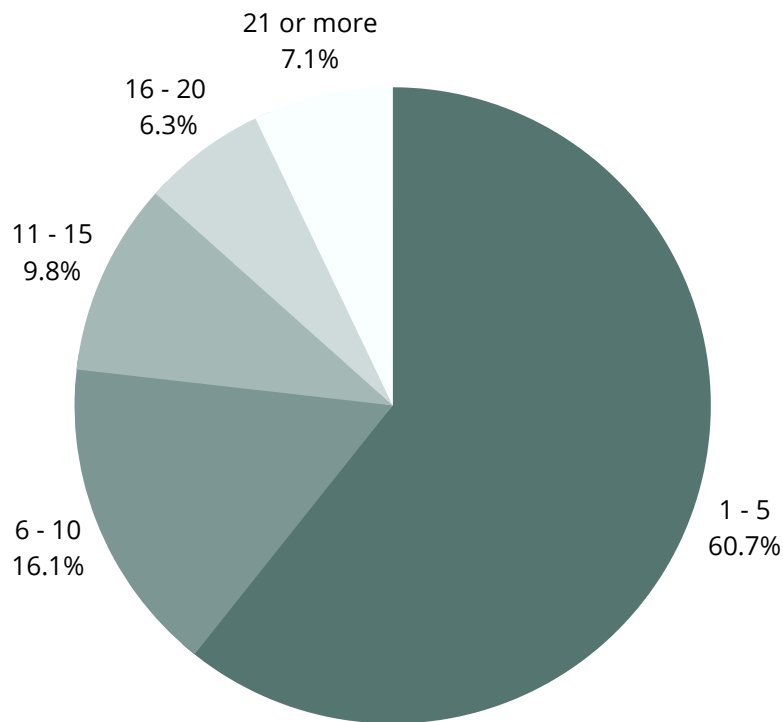
**Table 28.** Likelihood of respondents to return to the Big Bend area between repeat visitors and first-time visitors.

Likelihood of Returning	Count (%)	
	Repeat Visitor	First-time Visitor
Very unlikely	1 (0.9)	6 (4.1)
Unlikely	1 (0.9)	14 (9.5)
Unsure	4 (3.5)	27 (18.2)
Likely	10 (8.8)	41 (27.7)
Very Likely	98 (86.0)	60 (40.5)
Total	114 (100.0)	148 (100.0)



**Figure 17.** Likelihood visitors in 2022 will take another trip to the Big Bend area in the future.

Similar to 2011-2012, of those who had visited the Big Bend area previously, most had visited five times or less (Figure 18). Almost a quarter of repeat visitors (23.2%) had visited the area more than 10 times, and 7.1% indicated they have visited more than 20 times. As with the findings in 2011-2012, this indicates that a relatively high percentage of visitors are either specialized travelers, seeking places for their specific activities, or have a unique connection to the Big Bend area.



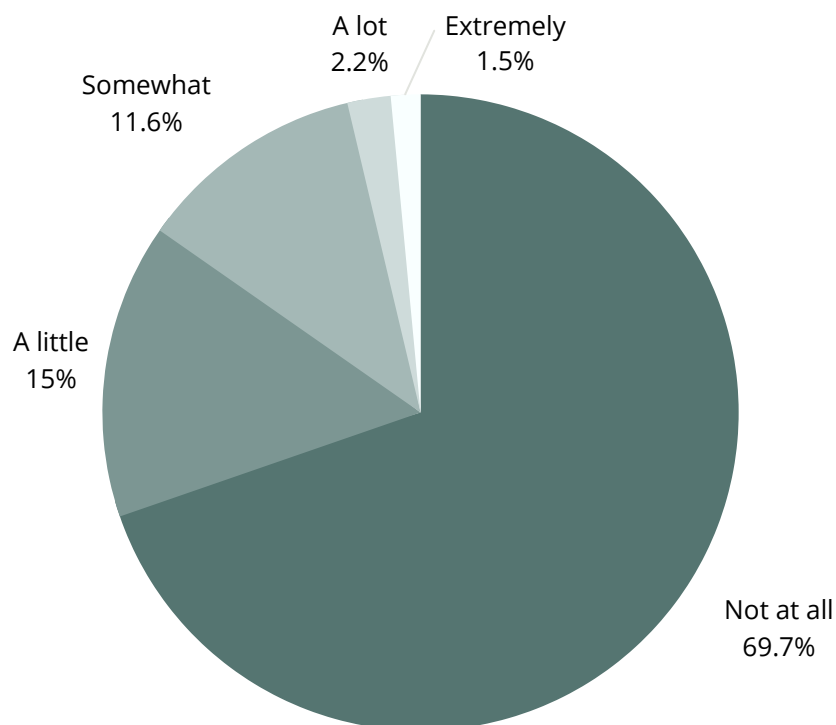
**Figure 18.** Number of times repeat visitors have traveled to the Big Bend area.



## COVID-19 AND THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Many national parks and gateway communities have experienced significant changes in visitation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This section of the report examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on visitors' experiences traveling to the Big Bend area. Respondents were asked to score how concerned they were about COVID-19 while planning their trip on a scale of *not at all* (1) to *somewhat* (3) to *extremely* (5).

Over two-thirds (69.7%) of visitors reported that COVID-19 concerns had no impact at all on their planning (Figure 19). Of those that were concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic during their trip planning, they were only slightly impacted.



**Figure 19.** Visitors' concern about COVID-19 while planning their trip to the Big Bend area in 2022.

Respondents were also asked about the impact of COVID-19 on specific aspects of their trip to the Big Bend area (Table 29). Specifically, they were asked to score the impact of COVID-19 on six aspects on a scale of *not at all impacted* (1) to *somewhat impacted* (3) to *extremely impacted* (5). Aspects included *route to the Big Bend area*, *stops along the way to and from the Big Bend area*, *accommodations*, *activities*, *duration of visit*, and *likelihood of returning to the Big Bend area*. The average impact across all aspects of their trip were minimal between not at all and a little. Stops along the way to and from the Big Bend area were the most impacted aspects of visitors' Big Bend trip, although the impact was minimal.

**Table 29.** Impact of COVID-19 on aspects of the Big Bend area in 2022.

Aspect	Mean (s.d.)
Route to the Big Bend area	1.37 (0.732)
Stops along the way to and from the Big Bend area	1.96 (1.054)
Accommodations within the Big Bend area	1.78 (1.140)
Activities within the Big Bend area	1.65 (0.989)
Duration of your visit to the Big Bend area	1.35 (0.744)
Likelihood of returning to the Big Bend area	1.41 (1.015)
Overall	1.59 (0.923)

1 – not at all impacted to 5 – extremely impacted





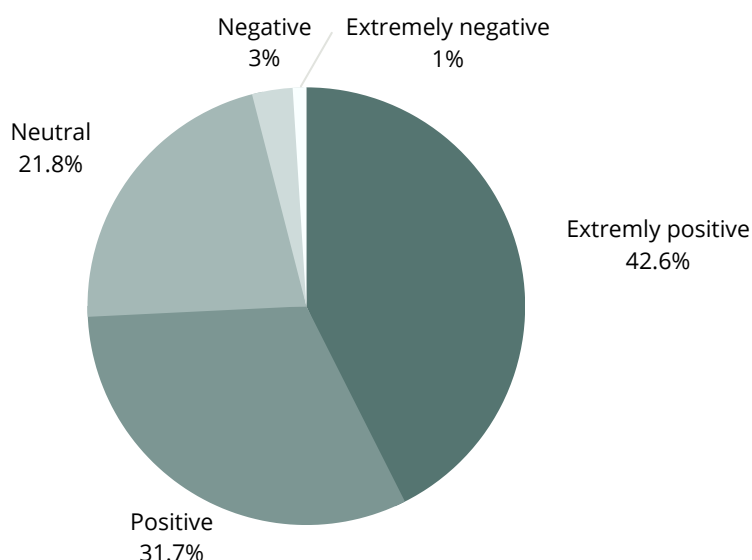
## PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

Visitors were asked a series of questions concerning the presence of law enforcement and Border Patrol officers and interactions with them during their trip to the Big Bend area. More than four out of five respondents (84.6%) indicated they had seen law enforcement personnel during their trip to the Big Bend area (Table 30). This is slightly lower than was reported in 2011-2012. Slightly less than half of respondents (45.5%) indicated they had an interaction with law enforcement personnel during their trip (Table 30). Relative to 2011-2012, interactions with law enforcement personnel were lower in 2022.

**Table 30.** Percentage of visitors that saw and interacted with law enforcement or Border Patrol during their visit to the Big Bend area in 2022, and 2011-2012.

Did you <i>see</i> law enforcement during your visit to the Big Bend area?	2011-2012	2022
Yes	92.6	84.6
No	7.4	15.4
Did you <i>interact</i> with any law enforcement during your visit to the Big Bend area?		
Yes	67.3	45.5
No	32.7	54.5

For those that did interact with law enforcement personnel, respondents were asked to rate their interaction on a 5-point scale from *extremely negative* (1) to *extremely positive* (5). Interactions overall were positive, similarly to the investigation in 2011-2012 (Figure 20). Almost three-quarters of respondents (74.3%) reported a positive experience with law enforcement. Almost half (42.6%) reported an *extremely positive* interaction with law enforcement.



**Figure 20.** Visitors' ratings of interactions with law enforcement or Border Patrol officer during their visit to the Big Bend area in 2022.

## GENERAL TRAVEL BEHAVIOR

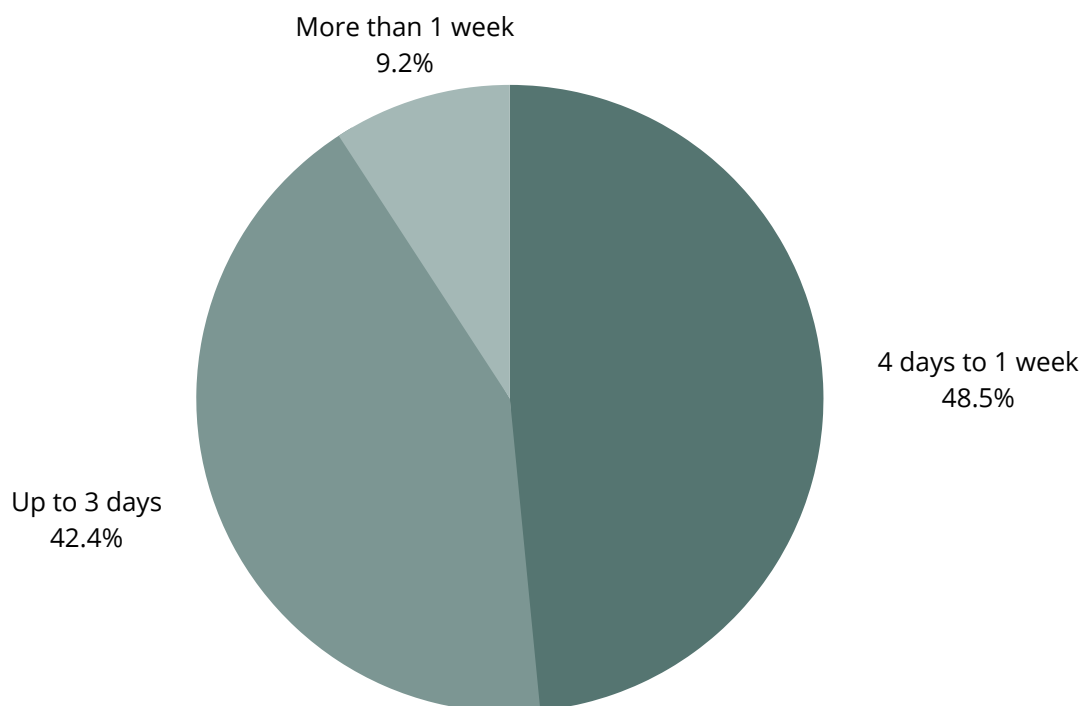
To better understand visitor travel behavior, respondents were asked a battery of questions about their trip to the Big Bend area. For the majority of respondents, traveling to the Big Bend area was not a solitary activity (Table 31). The average travel group size was just over three people (3.31). Almost half of respondents (45.6%) indicated they traveled with one other person during their trip. Almost three-quarters of respondents (73.1%) reported their travel group was between two and four individuals including themselves.

**Table 31.** Number of people in immediate travel groups while visiting the Big Bend area in 2022 and 2011-2012.

Number of People	2011-2012 (%)	2022 (%)
1	10.8	9.5
2	47.8	45.6
3 or 4	23.6	28.1
5 or 6	8.5	9.9
7 or more	9.3	6.8
Average		3.31



Figure 21 summarizes findings about the length of stay during respondent's trip to the Big Bend area. Almost all (90.4%) visitors reported staying in the Big Bend area less than a week. On average, visitors reported staying 4.83 days (Table 32). The distribution of length of stay is similar between 2011-2012 and 2022.

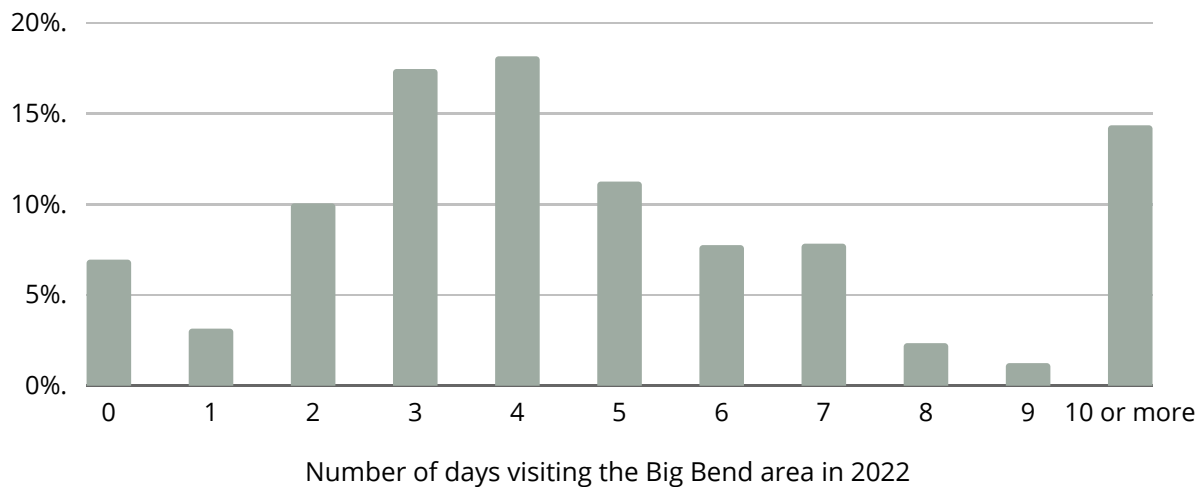


**Figure 21.** Length visitors stayed in the Big Bend area during their trip in 2022.

**Table 32.** Number of days visitors stayed during their trip to the Big Bend area in 2022 and 2011-2012.

Number of Days	2011-2012 (%)	2022 (%)
1	8.4	6.1
2 or 3	33.6	36.3
4 or 5	30.8	35.1
6 or 7	14.8	13.4
8 or more	12.4	9.2
Average		4.83

Beyond the specific trip when respondents were contacted on-site, they were also asked to report the number of days they planned to vacation in the Big Bend area throughout the entire year. One in three visitors (35.5%) reported they have vacations or planned to vacation in the Big Bend area for three or four days (Figure 22). Relative to 2011-2012, the distribution of days vacationed or planned vacation in the Big Bend area is about the same with slightly more single day trips and less extended trips (Table 33).



**Figure 22.** Number of days visitors have vacationed or planned to vacation in the Big Bend area during 2022.

**Table 33.** Number of days visitors stayed during their trip to the Big Bend area in 2022 and 2011-2012.

Number of Days	2011-2012 (%)	2022 (%)
1	8.0	10.0
2 or 3	21.4	27.4
4 or 5	29.0	29.3
6 or 7	15.4	15.4
8 or more	26.2	17.8
Average		5.70





# PART III.

## Economic Impact

- Tourist Expenditure and Impact Methodology
- Economic Impact of Tourism in the Big Bend National Park

In the section of the report, we report findings of our economic impact analyses. Respondents we requested to estimate their expenditures on this trip across a range of categories. These expenditures were then used to calculate the economic impact of tourism to Brewster County.

## TOURIST EXPENDITURE AND IMPACT METHODOLOGY

Survey respondents were asked to report the country and zip code of their residence. They were then asked to report both the number of days they planned to stay in the region to engage in nature tourism on their current trip and the number of days they planned to engage in nature tourism in the Big Bend National Park over the year, as well as the number of people for whom they were paying expenses on the trip. Next, they were asked to estimate their expenditures (lodging, groceries, gas, etc.) for their current trip.

To calculate spending by visitors, the research team first sorted the survey data by Zip codes to identify respondents residing in Brewster County, Texas. Spending by locals is excluded from the economic impact analysis because they would likely spend their income on other local activities if the park were available. Respondents who did not report the number of people in their group, the number of days spent on the trip, or values for any of the expense categories were then excluded from the analysis because they did not provide information needed to complete the analysis. Any remaining respondents who did not provide a zip code were also excluded from the analysis because they could not be identified as a visitor or local. Finally, with the remaining survey data, extreme outliers in terms of exceptionally high spending were also excluded from the analysis at this stage. Such outliers can result from data entry error, deliberate sabotage of data, or unique one-off purchases only partially or not at all related to the visit. For example, a party of 2 that stayed 5 days reported spending \$3,500 on park admission and parking fees and would have skewed the results upward. It is possible that the entry should have been \$350, but the research team has no way to know what the respondent intended.

Expenditures per person (Table 34) were then calculated from the remaining total travel party expenditures and travel party size. Visitors to Big Bend National Park spent an average of \$369.79 on their trip in 2022. Expenditures per person-day (Table 34) were then calculated from the remaining total travel party expenditures, days spent on the trip, and travel party size. Visitors to Big Bend National Park spent an average of \$76.77 on their trip in 2022. Extrapolating expenditure patterns across the region's 518,254 annual visitors in 2022, spending in Brewster County, Texas by all visitors totaled \$191.6 million in 2022 (Table 34).

**Table 34.** Spending by visitors in 2022 broken down by average per person-day, average per person total and total by all visitors combined.

Spending Category	2022		
	Spending Per Person-day	Spending Per Person Total	Spending by All Visitors
Hotel and motel	\$12.05	\$58.04	\$30,076,900
Other lodging	\$19.34	\$93.13	\$48,266,800
Camping fees	\$3.85	\$18.56	\$9,620,500
Restaurants and bars	\$12.43	\$59.85	\$31,019,100
Groceries	\$5.19	\$25.00	\$12,957,700
Gas and oil	\$10.42	\$50.19	\$26,013,300
Other transportation expenses	\$5.20	\$25.04	\$12,978,000
Park admissions and parking fees	\$1.37	\$6.61	\$3,423,800
Other tourism, entertainment	\$2.57	\$12.37	\$6,412,500
Retail purchases	\$4.07	\$19.61	\$10,162,200
Miscellaneous expenses	\$0.29	\$1.38	\$715,200
Total	\$76.77	\$369.79	\$191,646,000

# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM IN THE BIG BEND AREA

Impact analysis is based on the idea that a dollar spent in a region stimulates additional economic activity or multiplies as it circulates through the economy. This multiplier effect recognizes that the total effect on output, employment, personal income, and government revenue in the region is greater than the initial dollar spent. A tourist's expenditure at a souvenir shop contributes not only to that business, but to its suppliers, its suppliers' suppliers, each of their employees' incomes, and tax revenues. Of course, some of the original expenditure leaks out of the regional economy, for example as inventory is imported from other regions, employees commute from other regions, and businesses and households pay state and federal taxes. The portion of the money that remains in the local economy throughout these transactions constitutes the net economic gain. Larger regions contain more economic linkages, which is why large cities and multi-county regions generally have larger multipliers than do small towns or single counties. Multipliers are calculated based on the purchasing patterns of industries and institutions in the regional economy.

Multipliers include three components: The *direct effect* on the economy is the initial non-local expenditure. The direct effect results in two types of secondary effects. The *indirect effect* results from the purchase of inputs among local industries. The *induced effect* results from the expenditure of institutions such as households and governments benefitting from increased activity among local businesses. The total effects are the sum of direct, indirect, and induced for each of the outcomes: employment, labor income, total value added (contribution to gross regional product) and output (gross sales).

Four types of multiplier effects are generally reported in impact analyses. Output or sales multipliers measure the effect of direct spending on overall economic activity in the region. The output multiplier provides the largest economic impact value and therefore is reported in many studies; however, the output multiplier says nothing about how the event affects the welfare of households or the profitability of businesses. Direct output values can be less than total spending because the cost of goods sold (e.g., the original cost of a souvenir t-shirt) immediately leaks from the local economy. Value-added multiplier is a more appropriate measure of regional welfare. The value-added multiplier measures the event's contribution to regional gross domestic product (GDP). It is the value added to the regional economy. Labor income or personal income multiplier measures the effect of the event on the incomes of households in the region and is appropriate for discerning the benefit of an event to a region's residents. Employment multiplier measures the effect of the event on regional employment. Calculation of the employment multiplier assumes that existing employees are fully occupied and does not distinguish between full-time and part-time workers.



Categorized total expenditures from Table 37 (direct effects) were entered into IMPLAN (2019) to estimate the economic impact of intentional nature tourists to the region (Table 4). The original \$188.2 million direct economic contribution from Big Bend tourism led to a total county-level economic output of \$264.7 million and approximately 2,580 full- and part-time jobs annually. This total contribution includes a \$130.9 million contribution to gross regional product and a \$81.7 million contribution to labor income across the region. Labor income is a component of value added, which is a component of output, so the figures in Table cannot be summed. Because the figures are estimates, they are reported as rounded to the nearest hundred. These figures are also associated with an estimated \$1.6 million in hotel occupancy tax in Brewster County.

**Table 35.** Economic impact of tourism in the Big Bend National Park on Brewster County, Texas.

Impact Type	Output	Value Added	Labor Income	Employment
Direct effect	\$188,222,200	\$94,880,900	\$61,845,600	2,040
Indirect effect	\$39,393,800	\$16,197,400	\$10,156,900	270
Induced effect	\$37,101,900	\$19,789,500	\$9,729,900	270
Total effect	\$264,717,900	\$130,867,800	\$81,732,400	2,580

\*Note: Park Admissions and Parking Fees were not included in the direct output because park admissions are not really a local expense as they are remitted to the state, accounting for a direct effect lower than total spending.



- Dudensing, R., and Hanselka, D. (2018). *Economic Contribution Analysis: A Brief Introduction*, EAG-055, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System, College Station, Texas, May.
- Shafer, S., Scott, D., Woosnam, K., & An, S. (2013). *Visit Big Bend visitor survey 2011-2012: An investigation of visitors to the Big Bend area*. Project report for Brewster County Tourism Council. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University, Department of Recreation, Park & Tourism Sciences.
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- Woosnam, K. M., Dudensing, R. M., Hanselka, D., & Aleshinloye, K. (2012). *Economic impact of nature tourism in the Rio Grande Valley: Considering peak and off-peak visitation for 2011*, 20 pp. Project report for South Texas Nature Marketing Coop (McAllen, Texas). College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University, Departments of Recreation, Park & Tourism Sciences and Agricultural Economics.

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Page 16	Photo of Cave at night	Andrew Fisher
Page 21	<i>no caption provided</i>	Andrew Fisher
Page 23	Person looking out at the park approximately 1/2 a mile from Emory Peak	Andrew Fisher
Page 26	Couple enjoying sunset at Summit Big Bend	Andrew Fisher
Page 29	Santa Elena in Big Bend National Park late afternoon hike	Kanokwalee
Page 30	Senior woman walking on trail through cactus, yucca plant and rocks in Big Bend National Park	pchoui
Page 36	Early morning light on the Chisos mountains in Big Bend National Park located in the U.S. of America	Denis Tangney Jr.
Page 40	Photo along Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive	Andrew Fisher
Page 42	A windmill in Big Bend National Park	Matthew H. Irvin
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Page 55	Santa Elena in Big Bend National Park late afternoon hike	Kanokwalee

# Appendices

APPENDIX A. On-site Survey.....	59
APPENDIX B. Follow-up Survey.....	62
APPENDIX C Activities and Barriers.....	69
APPENDIX D. Other Information Sources.....	74
APPENDIX E. General Likes.....	75
APPENDIX F. General Dislikes.....	84



# Appendix A. On-Site Survey

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_am/pm; Survey #\_ Your name:

Location MR AP PJSE TGS TGTLVC LGS VCS

Hello, I am (name and affiliation, i.e. TAMU student, etc.). We are conducting interviews with visitors to Big Bend area to better understand visitor travel patterns and their economic impact to the region. The information we collect will help Brewster County and business serving the visiting public better plan and improve service delivery.

Would you mind if I asked you several questions about your trip to the Big Bend Area? The interview will take less than five minutes. If you choose to participate, everything you tell us will be kept strictly confidential. Although we would greatly appreciate your help, you are free to decline this interview with no penalty to yourself or your party. You can decline to respond to any question or terminate the interview at any time.

Would you like to participate? Yes/No

Are you 18 years of age or older? Yes/No

1.What is your home zip code?

2. What highway did you use to enter the area, and on which do you plan to leave? (Refer to laminated map)

ENTER LEAVE

- 118 from Ft. Davis
- 67 from Ft. Stockton
- 385 from Ft. Stockton
- 90 from Sanderson
- 170 from Presidio
- 90 from Marfa
- Other\_
- Not sure

3. About how many times have you visited the Big Bend area before this trip? \_\_\_\_\_ TIMES

4. Would you consider visiting the Big Bend area at other times of the year?

- SPRING (MARCH-MAY) Yes/No
- SUMMER (JUNE-AUGUST) Yes/No
- FALL (SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER) Yes/No
- WINTER (DECEMBER-FEBRUARY) Yes/No

5.Is the Big Bend area your primary destination? Yes/No

6.How many days will you spend in the Big Bend area?

7.How many days will you spend in Big Bend National Park?

8. Did you: (Circle one)

- Drive all the way from home
- Combine flying and driving
- Combine train and driving
- Other

9. How many nights will you spend in the Big Bend, Brewster Co. area? (Refer to the map region if needed) \_\_\_\_\_NIGHTS (Skip next question if you did not stay any nights)

10. Please tell us where you stayed or plan to stay overnight while you were/are in the Big Bend area. (Circle all that apply)

- Alpine
- Big Bend National Park
- Lajitas
- Marathon
- Study Butte
- Terlingua
- Other\_\_\_\_\_

11. How much money do you plan to spend on this trip? \$\_\_\_\_\_

12. What activities have you (or do you plan to) participate(d) in while here?

	On Your Own	With a Guide
Car Camping	_____	_____
Backpacking	_____	_____
Day Hiking	_____	_____
Horseback Riding	_____	_____
Driving for Pleasure	_____	_____
Hunting	_____	_____
Back Road Driving/Jeep Touring	_____	_____
Mountain Biking	_____	_____
Motorcycle /ATV Off Road	_____	_____
Motorcycle Tour on Road	_____	_____
Boating/River Running	_____	_____
Visiting Historic/Cultural Attractions	_____	_____
Bird Watching	_____	_____
Butterfly Watching	_____	_____
Wildlife Watching (Other)	_____	_____
Plant Identification	_____	_____
Photography	_____	_____
Star Gazing	_____	_____
Other (Please Specify)	_____	_____

13. Are you traveling:

- Alone
- Family/Friends
- Business Associates
- Club or Organization (educational institutions, tour groups, etc.)
- Other (Please specify)

14. Gender: Male    Female

15. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up survey whereby you would be entered to win a \$500 gift certificate from a local outfitter? Yes/No

If yes, collect email or physical address.

Name:

Email Address:

Postal Address:

## Appendix B. Follow-Up Survey

# The Big Bend of Texas Visitor Survey



This survey is being conducted to obtain visitors' opinions about visitor management in the Big Bend area. Your assistance in completing this survey is very much appreciated. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey.

In cooperation with and sponsored by  
Big Bend Tourism Council and  
Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, Texas A&M University



2022  
**Big Bend Visitor Survey**



## SECTION 1: Activities and Visit Information

1. We asked you on-site about activities you had or would participate in while in the Big Bend area. Please tell us here all activities in which you did participate. *(Please check all that apply)*

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Car camping                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Backroad driving/jeep touring          | <input type="checkbox"/> Backpacking            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain biking             | <input type="checkbox"/> Day hiking                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Rafting/canoeing       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horseback riding            | <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting historic/cultural attractions | <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General sightseeing         | <input type="checkbox"/> Star gazing                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycling (on road) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycling/ATV (off road) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bird watching                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly watching     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other wildlife watching     | <input type="checkbox"/> Driving for pleasure                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Plant identification   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photography                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>(Please specify)</i> _____    |   |

2. Of these activities, which would you consider your primary activity? *(Please check ONE)*

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Car camping                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Backroad driving/jeep touring          | <input type="checkbox"/> Backpacking            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain biking             | <input type="checkbox"/> Day hiking                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Rafting/canoeing       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horseback riding            | <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting historic/cultural attractions | <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General sightseeing         | <input type="checkbox"/> Star gazing                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycling (on road) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycling/ATV (off road) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bird watching                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly watching     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other wildlife watching     | <input type="checkbox"/> Driving for pleasure                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Plant identification   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photography                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>(Please specify)</i> _____    |   |

3. Were there activities you wanted to participate in but did not?

☐ No

☐ Yes → If "yes," which activity and why \_\_\_\_\_

4. The following is a list of items you may have used to plan your trip in the Big Bend area. Please indicate how useful each was (on a scale of 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very useful*). If you did not use a particular item, please check N/A (not applicable) to the far right. *(Please circle one number per item)*

	Not at all		Somewh at		Very useful	N/A
<i>Information used to plan trip to Big Bend area...</i>						
Personal knowledge/previous experience	1	2	3	4	5	A
Family or friends/word of mouth	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Internet/website	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Chamber of commerce visitor center	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
National or State Park visitor center	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Brochures found at local businesses	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Newspaper/magazine article/ads	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Signs/billboards	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Radio/TV	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Texas Travel Guide book	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
State Fair	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Travel shows	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Other source (please specify _____)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

5. Did you go to the *Visit Big Bend* website as a part of planning this trip? *(Please check ONE)*

☐ No

☐ Yes → If "yes," how useful was it in planning this trip? (1 = *not at all*; 3 = *somewhat*; 5 = *very useful*)

1    2    3    4    5

6. How likely are you to take another trip to the Big Bend area in the future? (1 = *very unlikely*; 3 = *unsure*; 5 = *very likely*)

1    2    3    4    5

7. Below are some reasons underlying visitors' decision to visit the Big Bend area. Please rate the importance of each item (on a scale of 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *yes, a lot*). (Please circle one number per statement)

<i>This trip allowed me to...</i>	Not at all important		Somewhat important		Very important
Be close to friends and family.	1	2	3	4	5
Get some exercise.	1	2	3	4	5
Experience the beauty of nature.	1	2	3	4	5
Meet new people.	1	2	3	4	5
Have some excitement.	1	2	3	4	5
Experience an undeveloped environment.	1	2	3	4	5
Rest and relax.	1	2	3	4	5
Learn more about nature.	1	2	3	4	5
Experience some solitude.	1	2	3	4	5
Be with others who enjoy things that I enjoy.	1	2	3	4	5
Develop skills.	1	2	3	4	5
Be in a natural place.	1	2	3	4	5
Escape the COVID-19 pandemic	1	2	3	4	5
Experience something new and different.	1	2	3	4	5
Learn about the desert environment.	1	2	3	4	5
Be physically active.	1	2	3	4	5
Do a river trip.	1	2	3	4	5
Visit Big Bend National Park.	1	2	3	4	5

8. Below are statements that reflect an array of reasons the Big Bend area is important to people. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement (on a scale of 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). (Please circle one number per statement)

	Strongly disagree		Neither disagree or agree		Strongly agree
The Big Bend area is the best place for the activities I enjoy most.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a strong emotional bond to the Big Bend area.	1	2	3	4	5
The Big Bend area means a lot to me.	1	2	3	4	5
The Big Bend area is a special place.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a lot of fond memories of past experiences with family and friends visiting the Big Bend area.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a strong sense of belonging to the Big Bend area.	1	2	3	4	5
I really enjoy the Big Bend area.	1	2	3	4	5
I associate special people in my life with the Big Bend area	1	2	3	4	5
Visiting the Big Bend area allows me to spend time with close family and friends	1	2	3	4	5
I identify with the Big Bend area more than any other place	1	2	3	4	5
The Big Bend area says a lot about who I am	1	2	3	4	5

9. Of the reasons for visiting the Big Bend area, which do you consider to be the most important? (*Please check ONE*)

- ☐ Be close to friends and family.
- ☐ Get some exercise.
- ☐ Experience the beauty of nature.
- ☐ Meet new people.
- ☐ Have some excitement.
- ☐ Experience an undeveloped environment.
- ☐ Rest and relax.
- ☐ Learn more about nature.
- ☐ Experience some solitude.
- ☐ Be with others who enjoy things that I enjoy.
- ☐ Develop skills.
- ☐ Be in a natural place.
- ☐ Escape the COVID-19 pandemic
- ☐ Experience something new and different.
- ☐ Learn about the desert environment.
- ☐ Be physically active.
- ☐ Do a river trip.
- ☐ Visit Big Bend National Park.

10. When planning your visit to the Big Bend area, how concerned were you about COVID-19 when deciding to visit the Big Bend area? (*1 = not at all; 3 = somewhat; 5 = extremely*)

11. If you indicated 2 or more above then...

Did COVID-19 impact any of the following aspects of your visit to the Big Bend area (*1 = not at all; 3 = somewhat; 5 = very much so*)

	Not at all		Somewhat		Very much so
Route to the Big Bend area	1	2	3	4	5
Stops along the way to and from the Big Bend area	1	2	3	4	5
Accommodations within the Big Bend area	1	2	3	4	5
Activities and destinations within the Big Bend area	1	2	3	4	5
Duration of your visit to the Big Bend area	1	2	3	4	5
Likelihood of returning to the Big Bend area	1	2	3	4	5

## SECTION 2: Your Travel Experience

12. Is this your first time visiting the Big Bend area? (*Please check ONE*)

☐ No → How many times have you visited in the past? \_\_\_\_\_ times

☐ Yes

13. Below are items that might influence your travel experiences. Please rate how important (on a scale of *1 = not at all important* to *5 = very important*) each item was **when you planned** your visit to the Big Bend area. (*Please circle one number per statement*)

	Not at all		Somewhat		Very Important
<i>How important were these items in planning visit to Big Bend area?</i>					
Accommodations (hotel, campground, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Food services (restaurants)	1	2	3	4	5
Recreational opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Helpfulness of locals	1	2	3	4	5
Information available about the area	1	2	3	4	5
Security/safety	1	2	3	4	5
Recreation providers/outfitters	1	2	3	4	5

14. Below are the same items that you rated in terms of importance. Now, please rate how you feel each performed (on a scale of 1 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent*) during your visit to the Big Bend area. Mark N/A if the item did not apply to this trip. (*Please circle one number per statement*)

<i>How did these items perform on your trip to the Big Bend area?</i>	Poor	Average			Excellent	N/A
Accommodations (hotel, campground, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Food services (restaurants)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Recreational opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Helpfulness of locals	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Information available about the area	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Security/safety	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Recreation providers/outfitters	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

15. What type of accommodation did you use when visiting the Big Bend area? (*check all that apply*)

- ☐ Hotel/motel
- ☐ Air BnB/VRBO or something similar
- ☐ Recreational vehicle or camper
- ☐ Vehicle camping
- ☐ Primitive camping
- ☐ Family or friend's home

16. Did you see any law enforcement/Border Patrol officers during your visit to the Big Bend area?

☐ No

☐ Yes

**SKIP TO QUESTION 21 IF YOU INDICATED "NO"**

17. Did you interact with any law enforcement/Border Patrol officers during your visit to the Big Bend area?

☐ No

☐ Yes

**SKIP TO QUESTION 21 IF YOU INDICATED "NO"**

18. How would you rate your interaction(s) with law enforcement/Border Patrol officers during your visit to the Big Bend area? (*Please circle one*)

EXTREMELY  
NEGATIVE

NEGATIVE

NEUTRAL

POSITIVE

EXTREMELY  
POSITIVE

19. What do you like **MOST** about the Big Bend area?

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19. What do you like **LEAST** about the Big Bend area?

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### SECTION 3: Your Travel Behavior

21. How many people (including yourself) were in your immediate group on the trip to the Big Bend area when we contacted you on-site? (This is often the number of people for whom you paid the bills on the trip.)

\_\_\_\_\_ people (*please write in number*)

22. How many total days did you stay in the Big Bend area during the trip when we contacted you on-site?

\_\_\_\_\_ days (*please write in number*)

23. How many total days have you vacationed in/plan to vacation in the Big Bend area this year?

\_\_\_\_\_ days (*please write in number*)



24. Please list the estimated total expenditures that your immediate travel group made for items listed below in the Big Bend area during the trip when we contacted you on-site. We understand this is a difficult question, but your responses are very important to estimate the economic impact to the region.

TYPE OF EXPENDITURE	Amount spent in the Big Bend area
A. Hotel, motels, cabins, B&B, etc.	\$ _____
B. Camping fees and charges	\$ _____
C. Restaurants and bars	\$ _____
D. Groceries	\$ _____
E. Gas and oil (auto, RV, etc.)	\$ _____
F. Other transportation expenses (excluding airfare, e.g., rentals)	\$ _____
G. Park admissions and parking fees	\$ _____
H. Other tourism, recreation, guides, and entertainment	\$ _____
I. All other retail purchases (souvenirs, film, books, etc.)	\$ _____
K. Any other miscellaneous expenses (please describe below)	\$ _____

\*The Big Bend area includes Big Bend National Park and the communities of Alpine, Marathon, Study Butte, Terlingua, Lajitas, and their associated businesses.

#### SECTION 4: Information About You

25. What is your gender? (Please check ONE)

- ☐ Female  
☐ Male  
☐ Non binary  
☐ Prefer not to answer

26. In what year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_ (please write in year)

27. What is your home country? \_\_\_\_\_ (please write in country)

→ If you are from the U.S., what is your home zip code? \_\_\_\_\_ (please write in zip)

28. Which best describes your current employment status? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Working full-time      ☐ Working part-time      ☐ Semi-retired  
☐ Retired      ☐ Not working      ☐ Student  
☐ Homemaker  
☐ Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

29. Would you consider yourself Hispanic or Latino? (Please check ONE)

- ☐ No  
☐ Yes

30. Which of the following do you consider yourself? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native  
☐ Asian  
☐ Black or African American  
☐ Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander  
☐ White

31. What is the primary language spoken within your household? (Please check ONE)

- ☐ English      ☐ Vietnamese  
☐ Spanish      ☐ Mandarin/Cantonese  
☐ German      ☐ Korean  
☐ French      ☐ Japanese  
☐ Portuguese      ☐ Other

32. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Please check ONE)

- ☐ Grade school
  - ☐ Some high school
  - ☐ High school graduate
  - ☐ Some college
  - ☐ College graduate
  - ☐ Some graduate school
  - ☐ Completed graduate school
  - ☐ Other (please specify)
- 

33. What category best describes your annual household income? (Please check ONE)

- ☐ Less than \$25,000
- ☐ \$25,000-49,999
- ☐ \$50,000-74,999
- ☐ \$75,000-99,999
- ☐ \$100,000-149,999
- ☐ \$150,000-199,999
- ☐ \$200,000 and over

34. Please use the space below to provide any additional comments you may have.

**Thank you for completing the questionnaire!**

## Appendix C. Activities and Barriers

Flying and seeing big bend from a plane. Couldn't do it due to time constraint.

Had planned on backpacking but a couple people in my group weren't prepared for that.

A longer hike (15+ miles). Started a little later than wanted, slower pace than expected (more inclines), and sunset was earlier in the day.

Backcountry camping- did not have time on this trip.

Backpacking Lack of time

Backpacking - we had limited time in the park.

Backpacking, backcountry camping. There was not enough time.

Backpacking, time constraints

Many activities including backpacking and paddling but we did not have enough time.

We had hoped to do a river trip during our visit but water levels were too low.

Kayaking

Rafting, didn't have time

River rafting...not the right season (too cold for me)

We wanted to river raft/canoe but all of the outfitters were booked up.

We would have liked to raft/canoe, but we only had so much time and money.

RAFTING - River was too low

Rafting. Had a dog so couldn't go

River touring - the river was too low.

We had planned a river trip but the water was too low. The mega drought, you know.

Floating, water was apparently really low and we left our kayaks at home

Canoeing the River. I didn't understand where and how I could rent a canoe inside the park. I didn't have a big car, so I couldn't rent it in Terlingua and take it to the park. At the park, I don't know if there were canoes to rent for the day.

Canoeing/rafting because we had young kids and not enough time

Kayaking the rio grande

Kayaking. Not enough time or planning

Paddle boarding on the river. Because it was summer and the water level was so low

Canoeing down the river

Canoe/kayak rafting of the Rio Grande. Time was limited and we preferred backpacking the South Rim over the Rio Grande.

Canoeing/rafting due to lack of time.

canoeing The water level was too low. Also, we would have stayed in the park longer if we could have secured another camping reservation or campsite.

Canoeing== just didn't have enough time

Kayaking in the río grande - the water levels were too low

kayak/canoe. the weather report was not favorable due to "high winds" prediction that didn't seem to materialize. Also, since we were going mid week in early april when demand was low the price seemed to inch up as we inquired at the same outfit on 2 consecutive days.

Kayaking/canoeing, water level in river too low.

Rafting. Water too low

Rafting

Rio grande float trip

Wanted to participate in canoeing or kayaking in rio grande but did not have time

We did not have the required additional paddle and PFD required for a permit to use our kayak. And it got cold!

Canoeing/kayaking- didn't have time this visit but will be back

Would like to go river rafting. Did not have the time.

Kayaking/canoeing and backpacking - not enough time during my visit

Canoeing, and camping in the park. We have a 40ft converted school bus and I couldn't figure out how to reserve a spot if any were available. I struggle with recreations.gov site. The canoeing was out of the budget and lacked the time.

canoeing - old parents; night camping - too cold and older parents; plant and butterfly watching - lack of awareness;

Rafting, offroading

It would have been nice to do more activities but we did not have enough time to do them all. Rafting or off roading were things we considered

Rafting down the Rio Grande and stargazing. Our stay was too short and one of our two nights was cloudy. We will consider a longer stay for future visits.

We wanted to cross over at the spot that you can at the border of Mexico but had to cut our trip short due to a family emergency

Going over to Ojinaga. Timing of the boats to take you over.

Wanted to cross over to Mexico. But was not able to because my passport was expired.

Crossing the border to Mexico. For whatever reason, it was closed on the one day that we were at the park.

Crossing the creek-river too high

Crossing the river at Santa Elena, the river was high. We ended up taking another route toward the trail, which was difficult.

Our group did not cross over the border or kayak/canoe the river. We did not have time for the kayaking and forgot passports for the crossover

Camping, because of the length of our rig which is 40 ft there is limited camping in national parks there should be more with the amount of space national parks have.



We had reservations for tent camping not too far outside the park but instead chose to drive back to Marfa. The scarcity of places to stay outside the park for the "non-camping" crowd is a challenge. So we skipped our last planned BBNP day.

Camping due to time constraints.

camping, don't have the skills yet

Camping. We hadn't been able to get a reservation, but we'll try again another time.

Would have liked better access to local knowledge through ranger or local volunteer interfaces.

We could not attend all available demonstrations by the Rangers due to time constraints. We loved the ones we could attend, and wanted to see more!

We wanted to watch the movie at the visitors center but there wasn't one available though it was expected to arrive soon. It didn't in the 2 weeks we were visiting the park. It's always one of our favorite things to do when we visit National Parks.

I wanted to hike trails, but it was too hot. I will come back when it is cooler.

We had to limit our hiking to morning only due to high temperatures.

Hiking because trail was underwater

Hiking - we had our dog

too hot to do much hiking, need to come back in the winter.

Hiking the trails. Not enough time

I planned on more than I could do. Some trails were crowded and no parking.

More hiking; got some food poisoning. Pretty sick for a few days.

We had A dog with us That That limited our hiking

Did not have time to hike Chisos.

Hiking more of the trails the park had to offer, I wasn't able to because of the presence of my dog (which is totally understandable).

More trails. However have handicapped daughter so the terrain was not suitable for her. I knew that there would be limited things she could do before going so wasn't disappointed. However would have like some a little more accessible.

most of the hiking was too hard on my knees.

We couldn't hike as much of the Santa Elena canyon due to lots of rain and it being hard to cross with little kids.

We only had time to pursue part of the Big Bend National Park- we missed stuff on the eastern side. My wife and I wanted to hike further, but limitations with our son in a wheelchair prevented that on this trip.

Crossing the river at Santa Elena, the river was high. We ended up taking another route toward the trail, which was difficult.

Our group did not cross over the border or kayak/canoe the river. We did not have time for the kayaking and forgot passports for the crossover

Camping, because of the length of our rig which is 40 ft there is limited camping in national parks there should be more with the amount of space national parks have.

We were wondering about some hikes longer than the 1- 2 mile hikes done; but we both in our 70s, with some aches in legs & hips and not well equipped with good hiking boots and hiking sticks/ etc. which seemed recommended. The driving distances we did to most edges & sites of this large park, then 50 minutes to/from our Air BnB to the north-west plus the hot glaring sunshine pushed most walking around times between 11AM and 2PM.

We would have like to see more of the park and more hiking, but we did not have enough time scheduled.

We would've loved to hike with our dog, but Big Bend, like many National Parks, doesn't allow you to hike with your dog. It is what it is, so we did some sightseeing and photography instead. Also I'm sure the environment \*is\* changing due to climate change, but we just didn't have any frame of reference because it was our first time visiting. Climate change is most definitely real, and I hope this helps boost whatever research results you folks have that can help save our planet.

Hike Santa Elena canyon trail. Couldn't get to trailhead due to flooding.

More hiking, ran out of time

Not enough hiking due to previous injury

visiting in the main canyon. There was an 1.5 hour wait.

We were time limited on this trip and had not previously experienced wait times at some attractions. We will visit again and plan for more activities (back country hiking/climbing, camping etc.)

We did not do certain hikes due to their distance and the temperature during most of the day. Rafting on the river was also not available because of the low water level and drought.

Hiking and wildlife watching because of personal schedule.

Historical site visiting - not enough time on trip

Horseback riding. The group I was with did not want to use the time away from other activities. On a side note, it would be a great project to get Amtrak to stop in Marathon. Or, to convince someone of the merits for a grant to move the old train station back in place to refurbish and help the local economy.

Horseback riding and kayaking. All outfitters were fully booked

The hot springs trail was closed due to heavy flooding

Hot springs were closed due to flooding as well as some trails.

The Hot Springs was closed. And Santa Elena Canyon was difficult due to all the recent rain. And ran out of time for a few other hikes

The hot springs were inaccessible due to seasonal flooding

Hot Water springs due to recent monsoons

Hunting, I enjoy the flavor of game meat.

mountain biking

Wanted to drive the River Road but much of it was closed due to water damage. Wanted to drive the Old Ore Road but it is in terrible condition.

More Jeep off-roading.

More jeeping off road

Off roading due to road closures

Mariscal Canyon; did not have the right car, driving skills or time

I would have enjoyed off-road driving, crossing the border, and longer hikes. My car wasn't suited for off-road driving, the border crossing was closed while I visited, and the duration of my visit made it hard to schedule longer hikes.

Stargazing - it was cloudy.

Star gazing, because it was too cloudy!

Stargazing. Sky became overcast.

Star gazing - already booked up/difficult bc of full moon. Kayaking - also full up and water level was low

Start gazing, the weather did not permit

More in depth identification of plants and insects, mostly because I forgot my ID books.

The vastness of Big Bend makes it challenging to do as much as I would have liked with limited time. This is my shortcoming! Not the fault of the park in any way.

Limited - short trip - we plan to return for an extended stay to enjoy additional activities

We went to the museum on campus, it was free and was right next to the cafeteria.

Most of the others listed - We just did not have time during our limited trip to do everything.

I'm a little confused if these questions are asking all my previous visits to the area or just the last visit, but every time I visit I try to figure out how to do something on the river like river raft/kayak, but have yet to make it happen. Hiking is always enjoyable and relatively free so we just do that over and over.

There are many of them, simply didn't have time

## Appendix D. Other Information Sources

AllTrails app	Social media
Death in Big Bend (book)	son-in-law
facebook group	Story about the Barbeque in Marathon
Falcon hiking guide	Travel books
Family that lived in the area.	Travel books for national parks
Guide books	Travel brochure given when entering the park
Hiking Apps	Travelers of the National Parks facebook group
Hiking Big Bend National Park	trip advisor
Hiking guide by Falcon	Your Guide to the National Parks (book)
Instagram and Alltrails	Youtube
internet	YouTube influencers
Internet	Youtube/Internet
Internet and youtube	
Internet research	
Jeepers	
Marathon Motel and RV Park	
Motorcycle Grand Tour of Texas	
National Geo Map	
National Hiking Book	
national park app	
National park book	
National park information	
National park passport book	
National Parks books	
Ntnl Geographic Map of Park	
Nudge	
Our Airbnb host	
our Guide Book (2010)	
Rand McNally map :)	



# Appendix E. General Likes

The vast spaces, darkness, and quietness in the National Park. The drive in Big Bend Ranch State Park was also spectacular.

Accessibility.

Amazing natural landscape

Beautiful

Beautiful and stunning

Beautiful rugged scenery, clear and dry weather, solitude, primitive back-country roads, numerous hiking opportunities.

Beautiful views and amazing star gazing

Beauty of nature

beauty of scenery, feeling of adventure and solitude, great hikes

Beauty of the area

Beauty of the area.

Beauty of the land.

Beauty, Wide open spaces,

Being away from the hustle and bustle of city life and enjoying nature

Being near nature, day hiking, stars

Big and beautiful

Big Bend is my favorite place on earth! I have created so many memories in this beautiful, magical place with people I love. The solitude, the beauty, the magic here is nothing like I have experience at any other national park. I will continue to visit Big Bend each year until I can't walk any longer!

Big Bend National Park

Big bend National park.

Big Bend NP

Birding, desert habitat, park amenities

Canoeing was nice.

Chiso's Basin and the hot springs

Crossing the border at Boquillas and hiking in big bend.

Dark skies, solitude

Dark sky at night desert landscape River was up & really running

Desert landscape and learning of various sites

Diverse ecosystems

Diverse habitats

Diverse natural area. Hiking opportunities. Warmer temperatures in February.

Ease of use to get to trails and the beauty that was astounding

Even before I entered the park, the grandiose solemnity of the landscape, its majesty completely overwhelmed me. It is not something you can easily describe with words. I am riding a motorbike, road motorbike, and I felt touched by everything the park had to offer. Because I was on a motorbike, I was "closer" to everything, the beauty, the loneliness. The solitude and magic of the desert and wildlife. The fact that there was nobody on the road. I thought I was in my own paradise, not disturbed by anybody else.

Exceptional beauty and solitude

Few people. No many of those places left.

Geology, scenery

great place to visit and experience nature and quiet

hiking

hiking and backpacking memories with my brother

Hiking in a beautiful desert environment.

Hiking in the mountains

Hiking the mountains. THE VIEWS! THE STARS! The solitude. The heat.

Hiking the trails was amazing! Lost Mine was awesome but seeing the waterfall and the tie down oak was incredible too!

hiking to window point

Hiking trails and bird life

Hiking trails, campgrounds, ranger programs

Hiking, bubble tents

How BIG and DIFFERENT it is from my homeland in Virginia. I love how far out into the wild you are - so many animals. It's a magical place.

How undeveloped the area is

How well preserved and beautiful the area is while still being accessible to those who may not be able to hike. Also the dark skies.

I have lived in Big Bend National Park and Terlingua for the past 30 years. I love the park and our home here. Working in the park was a dream job. Having national park protection is very important.

I like being in this area with family and friends. It provides an opportunity to leave daily life and real world problems behind for awhile and focus on being together. It helps me clear my mind. When you hike you have to focus on what you are doing in the moment.

I like living in an area that has less people than others.

I like the beauty of the area.

I love the beautiful scenery and finding quiet spaces away from crowds.

I love the beauty in the hiking views & the sense of peace you feel in Big Bend.

I love the serene beauty of such a desolate landscape. Feeling so small in the gorgeous landscape. It is so peaceful and beautiful!

I love the vast desert scene.

I love the vastness of the area. The ability to climb up features and into canyons makes the entire experience a little surreal.

I loved the beauties of nature. The park is breathtaking.

I'm a desert lover, so getting the opportunity to hike to some incredible views was well worth the trip.

Incredible ecology/geology and scenery.

Interpretive information, especially about old status as a wetland and dinosaur displays.

Is a beautiful place

it is beautiful

It is breathtakingly beautiful, and all the viewpoints and roads are thoughtfully planned to witness it.

It is very beautiful and family friendly.

It was a breathtaking experience. We hiked over 20 miles on a variety of trails.

It was beautiful! God is good.

It's the closest National Park and it's in Texas. West Texas is under-rated compared to other natural preserves.

It's untouched beauty

It's truly a wonder. The untouched land. The history. Beautiful!

It's vastness, easy-going culture, solitude

Jeep offroading

Large area to explore and lots of hiking trails

Little to no light pollution.

Location

Lots of choices for hikes. Like Terlingua.

Lots of hiking trails, most weren't too busy

Love the combo of desert, river and mountain environments. Love the hiking, camping and solitude.

Loved the beautiful nature, sunsets, animals, hikes, and camping at Stillwell

Many very large & unique (to us) peaks, mountains and landscape (versus our green, rolling hills & farmlands of central Virginia).

MTB trails

National Park

Natural area free of motorized vehicles on hiking trails

Natural beauty

natural beauty - ecology and geology

natural beauty of the area

Natural beauty, including the stars

Natural environment.

Natural setting

Natural wonders

Nature

Nature and hikes

Nature and hiking.

Nature, animals and plants

Nature, not crowded, beautiful

nature's awesome splendor

Nice hiking trails with beautiful scenery.

Opportunities for wildlife tracking and study of animal behavior

quiet desolation

Quiet.

remote. beautiful. clean. stars at night. surrounding areas to add to visit.

Remoteness

Rio Grande and canyons

rugged beauty of the land

Rugged remote scenery

Santa Elena Canyon

Saw quite a bit of wildlife what did you like least about

scenery

Scenery

Scenery and exploration

Scenery and natural beauty

scenery, remoteness

sky at night

Solitude @ black gap wma

Solitude and beauty of the place.

Solitude and darkness

Solitude and vistas

Solitude, diverse natural ecosystems

Solitude. It is one of the few places in Texas where you can travel overland and not see many people...and the people you do see are fellow travelers who worked hard to get there. This is why I normally avoid the national park. It has become too developed and too easy to get stuck behind an RV.

star gazing

Stars at night

stunning topography

Terrain

That it was not overcrowded.

The ability to see the stars.

The ability to stargaze.

The area and sunsets, wildlife, friends.

The atmosphere

The backpacking was excellent!

The beautiful and's unique plants, the quiet

The beautiful desert nature and ability to camp in the more isolated "back country"

The beautiful enormity of Big Bend and all the environments within it. The fact that it is being protected.

The beautiful landscape and slow pace.

The beautiful scenery.

The beauty

The beauty and feeling of remoteness, but with neat towns to stay in nearby.

The beauty and solitude.

The beauty of it

The beauty of it all! I'm from Virginia, and it felt like I was on another planet.

The beauty of it and the off road experience

The beauty of nature and how much of it is still in its normal state unchanged by humans

The beauty of nature and the large size of the park with the campsites. Rio grande and Chisos basin campground were amazing



The beauty of the area and the amazing opportunities for being with nature. We camped 4 nights in s tent and then spent 5 nights at the Basin Lodge. Your website would not allow me to choose both of those.

The beauty of the Big Bend and being able to explore within worries.

the beauty of the desert. As a lifelong Texan, it is such a lovely surprise to discover more of the varied landscape that is our beautiful state.

The beauty of the land

The beauty of the mountains

The beauty of the sights and sounds

the beauty, desert and mountains. I might have liked the river if it had water.

The big sky, hot springs and hiking

The desert birding opportunities

The desert environment and beauty of the landscape. Sunrise and sun set. Getting to the remote areas of the park.

The desolation.

The diversity of the landscape.

The diversity of the National Park experience

The diversity of the natural environment.

The environment is so different from where I've spent a lot of my years - learned a lot and experienced new things!

The giant structures. I'm really into photography so this area is great! It also doesn't feel like Texas at all (not that Texas is bad, but it is so different than Dallas), great little road trip out west.

The gorgeous scenery and the really fun hikes that were just right for my ability

The headquarters plus gas station, and access to roam freely or stop whenever/wherever to experience the park.

The hike by the Rio grande

The Hiking , specifically St Helena , the Window and Balanced rock.

The hiking.

The huge size and beauty

The incredible conjunction of ecosystems that occurs there, and the sheer vastness/ruggedness/openness/beauty of the landscape.

The incredible landscape.

The land, nature!

The landscape and the remoteness

The many different ways to interact and enjoy visiting the area

The National Park. We went every day of our 2 week stay!

The natural beauty

The natural beauty and solitude.

The natural beauty is a amazing.

The natural beauty of the park.

The natural beauty.

The natural environment.

The natural landscape

the openness

The other worldliness of it. Beauty in a different way. Also a draw that brings my group together to ride

The park is amazing!

The peaceful solitude and ability to see for extreme distances across vast and everchanging landscapes.

The primitive geological rawness

The remoteness and the stars at night.

The remoteness- made for a calm, not busy visit. No traffic

The remoteness. It forces you to ignore your phone and interact with nature and with the people around you. I loved experiencing nature that has been mostly untouched by humans.

the river

the river hikes and cross into Mexico

The rugged natural beauty of the area and sunsets.

The scenery

The scenery and the sheer openness of the area. I had NO IDEA just how big Big Bend is just driving-wise.

The scenery of the desert

The seclusion, rugged beauty and lack of development.

The size of undeveloped area.

The size, the ruggedness, the changes one experiences going from the desert floor to the higher mountains. The experience of realizing how immensely small one is compared to Nature. The endless options of hiking, driving around, always seeing something new. Learning about the history of this place.

The skies

The landscape and the remoteness

The many different ways to interact and enjoy visiting the area

The National Park. We went every day of our 2 week stay!

The natural beauty

The solitude

The solitude and dramatic beauty of the land.

The space, the national and state parks, camping, being in the landscape.

The star gazing

The stargazing was amazing.

The stunning nature and being able to visit Mexico

The tranquility of it and its uniqueness

The underdeveloped beauty of the area, including the landscape, wildlife, plant life, and sky.

The varied landscapes: I can hike in the desert, mountains, or along the River all in one day.

The variety of terrain and the desert flora.

The vast and changing landscapes/hikes.

the vastness , geology plant and animal life , the desert

The vastness and access to areas of interest. Good information on what the park holds and how to make best use of the area

The vastness and wildness of the area and Chisos Mts.

The vastness of nature, 360 views, the people and communities

the vastness of the area

the vastness, beauty and isolation

The vastness.

The views. The vastness. The remote location. The feeling and experience when you get there lets you know you are in a different place.

The wide open spaces and solitude and the amazing landscapes and formations

The wide open spaces that allow you to feel small. The desert is a powerful place.

The wild environment and being away from everything.

To be in a natural place that is mostly untouched by human development

Too many to name

Trails!!!!

Undisturbed mountains and wildlife

Unique environment and dark skies

Unique natural beauty.

Untouched by the public

Variety of landscape, abundance of hiking of varying degrees of difficulty

Vast beauty of undeveloped area

Vast expanse of desert, incredible beauty, quiet, huge vistas, night sky, juxtaposition of mountains and desert, ability to get away from city life.

Vast, raw desert wilderness and freedom to explore off trail.

Vastness of park that allows you to experience desert and mountains at the same time.

Vastness, few people, various terrain

We loved the day hikes and the natural beauty and variety. We also loved the art shops, restaurants, etc. in Terlingua.

We really enjoyed being able to cross the Rio Grande through the port of entry and going to Boquillas. And next would be the Jeep trails

wide open spaces

Wild country

Wildlife and natural landscapes

Wonderful weather, great trail systems, great 1 day float trip with raft company, fabulous scenery and plants, great park visitor centers. We also enjoyed the friendly sharing qualities of all the people we interacted with.

Wow life nature

# Appendix E. General Dislikes

Accommodations

Accommodations

Availability of backcountry camping permits in bbnp

camping accommodations. You need to decide if you want to be a Wilderness area with very primitive camping or be able to accommodate Recreational Vehicles in Big Bend State Park. Also had experience of a tire splitting after going through a construction zone. State Park Center persons were extremely helpful during this experience. Had to order a tire in Terlingua from Ft Worth, 2 day shipping to Ft, Stockton by FedEx, private ship to Terilingua arriving on Friday afternoon after shop closed at noon. Had to wait until Monday to fix. State Park Center allowed recharging camper battery x 2 during 20 degree night time temperature. By the way, the Museum is WAY UNDER visited and needs more promotion. One of the best museums I've visited including the Smithsonian. It was good to visit AFTER seeing some of the landscape to further explain what I saw. I can not say enough good about the people at the Center!

Camping opportunities are limited.

hard to plan with such limited developed campgrounds if going with a family. Family trips aren't really amenable to "first come first served" type of arrangements

I wish there were More car camping areas

Irrigation of the campground for days on end. Our picnic table was underwater the entire time.

It has become difficult to book camp sites.

Lack of campgrounds

Lack of RV camping in the state and national park.

Limited accommodations

Limited campground/RV parks and not the best accommodations.

Lodge is nearly impossible to reserve, and alternative lodging is a long way from everything.

Motel we stayed in was not the best

Not being able to camp there with our motorhome

Not enough primitive camping

Not enough primitive camping opportunities in the area

RV parks were just dirt with minimal views.

The campground in the park we did stay at were not maintained the best.

We booked too late to stay in the park and the hotel we stayed in was terrible.

We were unable to camp due to limited space. We look forward to our next trip, but understanding when and how to book accommodations is complicated and very limited.

It is so very hard to get to with limited lodging and dining options and it was unbelievably crowded at the park. I was literally in traffic unable to find parking at a hike I wanted to do hours from the nearest miniscule city. I couldn't believe it.

A wall if they build one.



road closures sometimes

Gas Prices. Thanks Brandon

How much it cost us to get there.

Crowds

Fellow hikers listening to music on their devices without the use of headphones.

Getting more and more crowded

Getting too crowded

Having to share the place with others... Seriously, I feel so good when I am here, that absolutely nothing can curb my sense of immensity.

Increasing numbers of people who are using the Park (the same way I feel about my hometown of Dripping Springs! There are too many people here now!)

Increasing traffic, large RVs, people searching for wi-fi and cell services

Insufficient parking at the trail head w/o an obvious way to get there other than driving to the trailhead

It was pretty crowded - spring break meant parking at trailheads was difficult.

It was really crowded while we were there.

It's a lot more popular than when I was a kid. For the first 4 decades I went out there, I never had a problem getting a campsite.

It's becoming busy.

It's getting crowded at times when it wasn't before, parking is a problem at some trailheads, lots of people are t coming prepared for the conditions, rangers weren't so helpful or friendly this visit which is unusual.

Limited parking for popular hikes

people not respecting others and nature

Rule breakers

Sometimes it can get very crowded & people can be genuinely terrible: rude, self-important, etc.

Speeders! People drive too fast. Three times I had people come at me around turns in my lane because they were too fast to take the turns to stay in their own lane! If I had been one the very big and beautiful big horn sheep that ran across the road in front of me would have been hit! That would have been tragic!

That it is becoming more crowded. Not overly juts busier.

The busyness of the Chisos Basin area.

The Campground was pretty cramped.

The crowds of people at chisos basin making the hike unenjoyable

The exceptionally long line entering the National Park from the west.

The increased availability of cell phone service. The increased number of people who visit!!!!

The natural hot spring was overcrowded and people were being dangerous by hopping into the actual river.

The popularity of the area has grown so much in the last few years. I've almost exclusively gone to the state park to avoid the crowds.

There's nothing I don't like about the area, but I will say that this trip was the most crowded I've seen the park, and that took away some from our enjoyment of parts of the trip.

When it feels crowded? The challenge of finding a place to stay.

Terlingua is starting to look like a Disney resort. Not pretty. Also, outside of the park, on the west side, there are too many small structures popping up that do not fit into the landscape. Some guidelines are needed to better manage future development, so it preserves the natural beauty and night skies. I also have a fear that Big Bend will be targeted by more organized touring companies stressing the natural environment and the infrastructure.

The noise from the train.

... also the VASTness :)... would love to snap my fingers and quickly drive/get to destinations. A bullet train through the park would help. KIDDING! My least favorite part is the hours of driving between destinations and key areas of the Park. And I know this isn't something that can change - the distance between communities and areas of the Park IS what ensures the solitude and feeling of being a part of nature. Second least favorite part - lack of outfitter shops, convenience stores in Study Butte/Terlingua

Amount of driving from our hotel to park, but the drive is by part of the whole experience.

Difficulty in getting there

distance

Distance from Austin

Distance from major airport

Distance from my home near San Antonio

distance from where we live

Distance to travel there.

Drive time to get to different areas of the park (inevitable)

Except for Terlingua, the closest towns were too far away.

far

Getting to the desolation. It's worth it.

hard to access

How far away from home it is.

How far it is from our home.

How far of a drive it is to Big Bend

How long it takes to drive everywhere due to speed limit. Also the ranger station/visitor centers closed very early and the only potable water I'm aware of was at panther junction.

I wish it was closer to where we live so I could visit more often! We had such a great experience; it's hard to find anything we didn't like about it.

It is 2700 miles from my home.

It is all wonderful, just wish it wasn't such a long drive!

it is very far from my home in Montréal,Qc. Canada

It take us 9.5 hours to get there! ;)

It takes a long time to drive into the park

It takes a while to get to it, but that's also the best part about it.

It was a bit hard to get to our back country campsite in our particular vehicle but we still enjoyed the journey which wouldn't have been as spectacular without that long road to the site

It's a long way to get there

It's so far.

It's so isolated, but I understand why. It is my least favorite thing, but a natural and understandable thing.

It's a bit isolated and hard to get to

It's a long drive from my home in Colorado

Long distance between activities and locations

Long drive in

long drive to and from a hotel

Long drive to get to it.

Long drives to get anywhere

Lots of driving from place to place, lack of open restaurants, restaurants often have outdated hours online

Not living closer and being able to visit more frequently.

Nothing comes to mind. I like the remoteness but that obviously limits some of the convenience but it is well worth the trade off..

Our accommodations were too far from the national park, but that's only due to our lack of experience. It was our first time visiting the area and we lacked knowledge and experience of knowing where the best places to stay were.

Out of the way from other cities so took a few hours to drive there. But also like the remoteness it brings

Park very spread out and hard to do more than one hike or activity in a day

so far from home (ohio)

Take a long drive to get there.

That it took FOREVER to get there!

That it's such a long drive from Chicago!

The amount of time it took to drive from one part to the other.

The distance to Big Bend is very far from where I live and it takes a considerable amount of planning in order to make the trip accessible due to the long drive to the park.

The far distance. I am Swedish.

The long car drive to get there from Houston!

The long drive from Houston. Wish it was closer!

The long drive from Houston. Wish it was closer!

the long drive to get there...

The problem with visiting the middle of nowhere is that it's awfully hard to reach the middle of nowhere.

The remoteness

The remoteness: but that's also kind of a blessing because it lets you have some solitude.

This is hard but I guess it is the distance to get to certain places. That being said, it is part of going to this area.  
way too far from home!

So remote- everything was so spread out and very expensive to get to as a result.

Lots of driving- not many places to stay near park

Seeing cattle in the park! Made me mad!

Smog that inhibited the view at times.

The damage that dams have done to the river corridor.

The dust

The dust. Didn't realize how much dustier the Chihuahua desert is compared to that in Arizona where we are from. Also sad that the river was so low that we could not canoe down the canyon we were supposed to canoe down. Our trip was moved farther down river due to water level. I think the upper canyon would have been more beautiful/enjoyable.

the fact that some of the trails have washed away

The loose, rocky nature of many of the trails.

The roads in the park made seeing all of the features difficult. Gravel roads and no closed loop roads meant slow driving and backtracking in order to get to new hikes or other parts of the park.

The terrain was too rough for me

There are a lot of unused/abandoned dirt roads that could be used for mountain biking.

The trails are too long, especially the trail to the highest peak Emory, 11 miles for round trip.

Availability of restaurants

Being there "off season" with less restaurants / opportunities available

Feeding ourselves was challenging, not many places to eat and some not very good. From our information we were expecting this and came somewhat prepared to feed ourselves and do some cooking with our jet oil, although it was a challenge to find cooking fuel since the airline would not let us bring fuel.. we also brought a cooler for food storage and it was essential. We were in a rented home for half of our visit and that worked very well. The only other thing we regretted was the huge distances, but that comes with the country. We tried to keep our car mileage as low as possible.

Food options

How undeveloped the area is (poor or no cell coverage)

I did not like the limit on food options.

I would have liked better grocery store options.

Lack of food

Lack of food options (restaurants and good stores)

Lack of food options in the park

Lack of quality motels/hotels.

Lack of restaurant operations

Lack of restaurants.

limited cell service

Limited food options

Limited handicap accessible things to do even with a stroller with 12" tires.

Little opportunity for off-roading with Jeep

No Catholic Sunday Mass available. It was a real drawback for me. I always attend Mass on Sunday no matter where I travel in the US and Canada. This was the first time I couldn't locate one that wasn't over 50 miles away.

No cell reception ( we had a car emergency- dead battery- when it was very dark outside, and could not make any phone call, therefore had to walk several miles and try to hitchhike)

no place to get breakfast

No showers at Chisos Basin campground but its not that big of a deal

Not a lot of options for food

Not enough restaurants , cafes outside if park. Not enough parking at trails

Patchy phone service

Phone reception

Restaurants

Terlingua is very barren

the limited number of mountain bike trails

Too few animals!

We enjoyed our first trip, but wished that the park had more merchandise available, such as a better selection of t-shirts (there was only one color/style that we found in the park), which is free advertising for the park!

We were not able to get our RV propane bottles refilled in the N.P. or Terlingua.

With all of the development outside the park and the Chamber of Commerce advertising Big Bend and surrounding area, the Big Bend is outgrowing its infrastructure. There is not enough water and not enough facilities like bathrooms, restaurants and trash pickup for all the visitors coming to the area. The vacation rentals in Terlingua have boomed and the restaurants have gotten crowded and I worry that the water will become harder and harder to get. Climate change is affecting the area and with more people using more water there will definitely be problems in the future.

Would have liked to see more wildlife



With all of the development outside the park and the Chamber of Commerce advertising Big Bend and surrounding area, the Big Bend is outgrowing its infrastructure. There is not enough water and not enough facilities like bathrooms, restaurants and trash pickup for all the visitors coming to the area. The vacation rentals in Terlingua have boomed and the restaurants have gotten crowded and I worry that the water will become harder and harder to get. Climate change is affecting the area and with more people using more water there will definitely be problems in the future.

Would have liked to see more wildlife

The lack of amenities like hotels and tourist spots outside the park. Also we were disappointed to not see more wayfinding signage along the paved roads & more readily available info about the eco system, conservation efforts etc. happening inside the park. For example, our favorite spot was Santa Elena Canyon. If there had been ONE park greeter/volunteer/expert at the bottom of the trail up to hit visitors w key points about the water levels, rock erosion, whatever, it would have added so much.

Did not enjoy the border police presence

I do not like the park rangers harassing decent citizens at Hot Springs. They should be on Black gap Road where we cannot even park a car anymore without it getting robbed.

I was 15 weeks pregnant when I came and I was very nervous about traveling to Texas and having something happen with my pregnancy that would endanger my life given the current legal environment in Texas. I almost didn't come because of that.

Park ranger was kind of snooty.

Locals aren't very friendly to outsiders especially anglos. Hispanic business owners are fabulous.

Some of the Terlingua locals.

The small, deserted towns around the area. And people weren't very friendly. It was interesting to experience but I wouldn't go back to those towns.

Tourists, chili cook-offs, chi trash, people who think they are locals who don't live there. People who "perform" being local characters. Snobby folks from Austin who wear black to the desert.

I never know exactly where to go. If there are activities in the area, I don't hear about them and often when I do it's after the fact. I don't live far away (Midland) so I feel like I could plan more trips. I saw one story about the barbeque in Marathon on the local television station (KWES) but I don't hear much else about the area. I also subscribe to the Texas Parks and Wildlife newsletter but there doesn't seem to be much information in it about Big Bend. There is more information about the areas with water and green vegetation.

I wish the Panther Junction visitor center garden was a little more well kept and visitor center more educational about the area. The audio travel guide we saw advertised in Terlingua made up for it a little.

We wanted to fossil hunt and there is very limited information about the precise location of fossil hunting spots. Also limited accommodations at peak season means one of our airbnbs was not nice and dumpy. We left a day early because of it.

Sometimes hard to park at trailheads

Trailhead parking availability

difficulty in arranging an affordable float trip. River low

disappointed on water flow of river

Water level of the Rio Grande river, too crowded during spring break

We would've loved to take our dog out on the trails, if it was under the premise that we'd recreate responsibly like we do in State Parks and National Monuments.

After many hours of driving, the types of browns & \*dryness of the land gets tiring and sorta rude reminder that living at most locations would have been VERY difficult and often dangerous. Seeing the lonely sites where there still is a visible cemetery or a lonesome cross (some with a small sign) gives important context to the frontier and settler life- and short lifespans.

Cold winy nights!

Difficult weather for family trips with kids

During summer it gets too hot

HEAT!!!!

Heavy wind blowing my tent

Hot

Hot temperatures

Hot weather

Just a bad year of time to visit. Too hot and dry

Pollution obscuring views

Summer heat

Summer heat limits visit

summer weather.

The Heat

The heat in the summer!

The hot summers, but that's part of the experience sometimes

The ongoing drought. Pretty bad compared to every other time I visited.

The Spring winds

The summer heat is pretty intense.

Unpredictable weather

very hot

Wind and cold at night

HEAT! FOOD at lodge overpriced and you had to eat outside.

It is heart breaking to see how this area is drying up: cottonwoods are dying, springs are disappearing. Fast drivers. Litter. Lack of respect for the environment exhibited by some visitors. I miss the fact that years ago one would be able to just buy souvenirs on the side of the river banks and cross the river unencumbered.

The heat and lack of cellphone service in the park. I got nervous if my tire popped I'd be stranded.

Hot and water level low

Cactus

can't think of anything

Clay Henry wouldn't drink the beer I bought for him.

Enjoyed all of it.

I can't complain about anything I encountered in the Big Bend area.

I couldn't stay longer

I didn't really dislike anything, but as someone who spends 99.9% of the time in the city, it was a different experience in regards to how close you are to wildlife (bugs/spiders/rattlesnakes). It caught me off guard, but it didn't ruin my experience by any means.

I have zero complaints about Big Bend!

I liked everything

N/A

None.

nothing

Nothing

Nothing I can think of

Nothing really, had a great trip

Nothing to dislike. We prefer less travelled areas - especially with what's happened to places like Grand Canyon, Zion and other like National Parks.

Nothing. It was a great trip.

Nothing. It's one of my favorite places on the planet

The 4-wheel drive required signs to go on gravel roads. Although I understand it was for safety purposes.

We thoroughly enjoyed the whole park, nothing comes to mind that we didn't like.



Prepared for the  
Brewster County Tourism Council

By

