



Big Bend Open Desert Backpack

Description: Hike the northern reaches of the Chihuahua Desert in Big Bend National Park. Enjoy desert scenery few ever lay eyes on, with remote springs for campsites and the enormous desert sky over your head at night.

Dates: Saturday, December 26, 2009 - Saturday, January 2, 2010.

Leader: Les Imboden - 204 N Old Highway 51 Stillwater OK 74075
lesnpat@yahoo.com 405-533-1532

Number of Participants: The group will be limited to 10 total.

Rating: Nominally we will be on the Smokey Creek Trail, though no real trail exists in this area. We will hike the desert floor, moving from spring to spring, always carrying one day's-worth of water. The hike will take us generally between the landmarks of Mule Ears Peak and Dominguez Mountain. Temperatures will be warm and packs will be heavy. This trip is for experienced backpackers who know their limitations and their equipment. All participants will be required to sign a waiver of liability as a condition of joining the outing.

Science Emphasis: The dessert floor is littered with the detritus of the ages. That includes many mineral specimens of interest. Participants are encouraged to bring mineral guidebooks for identifying what we find.

Itinerary: The group will make the drive down and back in two days each way. On the way down we will camp in or near Monahans Sandhills State Park. The backpack trip will begin early on Monday, December 28. We will spend four nights in the desert, returning to our vehicles on Thursday. Depending on the group's preference, we will remain in the area that night, or will begin our return home with exact overnight arrangements dependent upon time and weather.

Transportation: The Sierra Club does not provide transportation, but carpooling is encouraged to conserve energy and to promote camaraderie. Costs can be shared among occupants of vehicles in a manner agreed upon among them. The leader will assist in coordinating rideshare arrangements.

Early Departures: Anyone wishing to leave early should make arrangements with the leader to meet the group at Big Bend on Sunday night.

Food: We will eat out on the road. Meals on the trail will be a joint effort. The leader will coordinate menus and sharing of cooking duties. Participants will bring their own lunch and trail snacks.

Equipment:

- Hiking boots and boot socks (not optional)
- Internal or external frame backpack
- Tent & bedroll
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Broad-brimmed hat
- Warm clothing for the evening
- Water container
- Water purification filter will be provided
- Two one-burner stoves and cooking pots and utensils provided

Fees and Costs: No fee is required, but a \$10 donation to the Sierra Club newsletter would be appreciated. Costs will be limited to shared transportation expense, meals on the road, some groceries for the trail, camp fees for parks on the road and entry and trail fees at Big Bend.