

THE San Antonio RIVER BASIN GUIDE

Parks & Paddling Trails Supported by the San Antonio River Authority

The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) firmly supports nature-based recreation's health and quality-of-life benefits. The River Authority's goal is to increase the availability of this type of recreation throughout the San Antonio River Watershed by 1) working with citizens to develop park resources along creeks and rivers in the basin and 2) collaborating with other government entities to promote the use of and connections between recreational facilities. This will help encourage citizens to enjoy the natural resources in their communities.



In addition to the benefits associated with nature-based park recreation, the River Authority believes that more nature-based park and river recreation access will allow individuals to develop a greater appreciation for and a willingness to protect the natural resources provided by the San Antonio River and its tributaries.



The River Authority has worked to increase the availability of nature-based parks and river recreation throughout the San Antonio River Watershed. The park properties that the River Authority currently operates and maintains include 14 parks along the San Antonio River, parks along the Medina River, Cibolo Creek, and Escondido Creek, and the development of five paddling trails totaling nearly 58.8 miles. It is anticipated that the River Authority will offer nearly 70 miles of paddling trails within the San Antonio River Watershed within a few years.

Additionally, the River Authority has collaborated with municipalities and other organizations to develop parks and recreational opportunities at eight River Authority-operated dams in northern Bexar County. The River Authority also promotes the cultural-based recreation opportunities found throughout the watershed, including the San Antonio Missions World Heritage Site, San Pedro Creek Culture Park, and numerous other points of cultural interest throughout the basin. Many of these occur along the historic routes connecting San Antonio to La Bahia and Goliad that were part of the Camino Real.

For more information about the parks and paddling trails operated by the River Authority, please visit sariverauthority.org.



Graytown Park

The San Antonio River Watershed

The San Antonio River is formed by the conjoined spring waters of the area around the Blue Hole and Olmos Creek and fed by 4,186 square miles of watershed, including the Medina River and creeks with lyrical Spanish names such as Alazán, Leon, Salado, San Pedro, Conquista, Cibolo, Ecletto, and Escondido. The entire course of the San Antonio River flows 240 miles through Bexar, Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad counties. The river then becomes the county line separating Refugio and Victoria counties before converging with the Guadalupe River and finally spilling into San Antonio Bay at the Texas Gulf Coast.

The San Antonio River Watershed is full of rich riparian environments that provide a menagerie of South Texas wildlife with water and cover. Daylight may expose deer, turkeys, quail, and doves to human sight, but nighttime conceals the activities of raccoons, opossums, bobcats, owls, coyotes, and, rarely, mountain lions. Birders from around the world visit, eager to add a Crested Caracara or vibrant Painted Bunting to their life lists.

Most of the San Antonio River Watershed is a hardscrabble land of deep soil, light rain, and short, harsh, brushy vegetation. Balcones Canyonlands associated with the Edwards Plateau reach into Bexar County with limestone hills, live oaks, and ash juniper. A little farther south, a swath of prosperous Blackland Prairie provides a gently rolling, exuberantly fertile area for farming. Post Oak Woodlands make a slender inroad into Wilson County and account for the hickory trees and gray squirrels found there. As the San Antonio River makes its way through Karnes and Goliad counties and towards the Texas Gulf Coast, it meanders through flat coastal prairies and marshes, where the air is laden with moisture and the growing season is long.

Ecotourism in the watershed is widespread, with birders, hikers, and river paddlers traveling to communities surrounding the San Antonio River to pursue their interests — even more reason to protect, preserve and promote the ecosystems of the San Antonio River Watershed.

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Bexar County

The headwaters of the San Antonio River are located in Bexar County. Archaeological excavations prove that the first human habitation along the San Antonio River occurred almost 12,000 years ago. The first documented arrival of Spanish explorers occurred on June 13, 1691, when members of a Spanish expedition named the river in honor of Saint Anthony. Throughout the 1700s, the development of what is now the City of San Antonio occurred alongside five Spanish colonial Missions established near the river. In 2015, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) inscribed the San Antonio Missions as a World Heritage Site.



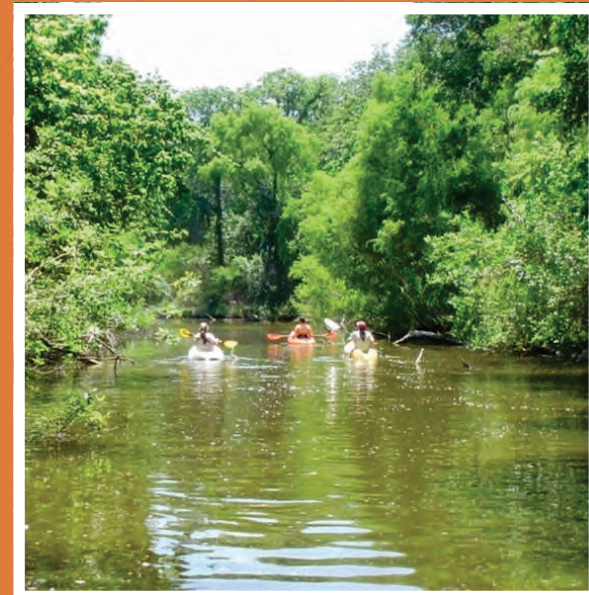
SAN ANTONIO MISSIONS
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Helpful links:
Bexar County: www.bexar.org
Visit San Antonio: www.visitsanantonio.com
San Antonio: www.sanantonio.gov
Paseo del Rio Association: www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com
San Antonio Missions World Heritage Sites: www.worldheritagesa.com

Wilson County

When the Spanish missionaries established the chain of missions along the San Antonio River, they also established ranchos (ranches) to supply cattle, goats, sheep, mules, and horses to the Missions. Many of those ranches were in the area now known as Wilson County, where ranching is still a significant part of the economy. Anglo-American, German, and Polish settlers began arriving in the 1850s, and an act of the Texas legislature established Wilson County in 1860. Today, Wilson County's rich farming and ranching heritage, including the cattle industry, continues to contribute to the county's economy.



Confluence Park



Helpful links:
Wilson County: www.co.wilson.tx.us
Floresville: www.floresvilletx.gov
La Vernia: www.lavernia-tx.gov
Poth: www.cityofpoth.org
Stockdale: www.stockdaletx.org



Helton Nature Park

Outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy many opportunities to get outside at River Authority-maintained parks and paddling trails. The towering pecan trees, flowing river, and welcoming pavilion at the 98-acre John William Helton – San Antonio River Nature Park create an ideal destination for outdoor recreation enthusiasts, nature-lovers, and athletes. Whether you bring your family to the park for a reunion under the 5,000-square-foot pavilion, tackle the trails on your mountain bike, camp with a club or organization, or meet up with friends for a day of soccer and basketball, you'll find Helton Nature Park to be a true natural treasure.

Flowing past Helton Nature Park, the SASPAMCO Paddling Trail provides a prime paddling adventure just south of San Antonio. This trail features intriguing geologic features, tall shady trees, and peacefully flowing waters that give it a wild feel as it courses a little over 29 miles through parts of Bexar and Wilson counties. Just upstream are the rolling landscapes of the 22-acre Graytown Park—the site of a tournament caliber Par 57-level disc golf course designed by one of the world's premier Disc Golf Course designers. This course brings beginners, amateurs, and experienced disc golfers from Texas and beyond.

Karnes County

In the late 1700s, rich land and the San Antonio River's reliable water source led to the establishment of large ranchos in this area. Despite the presence of Fuerte de Santa Cruz del Cibolo, a fort located at Carvajal Crossing on Cibolo Creek, continuing conflict with Indigenous peoples forced the abandonment of many ranches.



Escondido Creek Parkway

By the 1850s, Anglo-Americans began settling in the area, and Polish immigrants founded Panna Maria, the oldest Polish settlement in the United States. Karnes County's economy is still based on ranching and agriculture, in addition to uranium mining and oil and gas production.

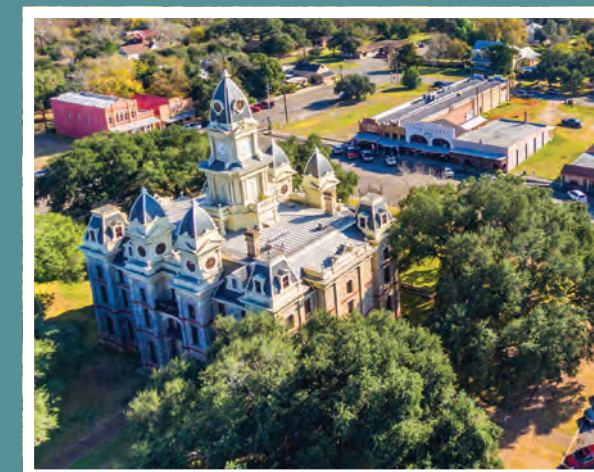


Helpful links:
Karnes County: www.co.karnes.tx.us
Kenedy: www.kenedytx.gov
City of Karnes: www.cityofkarnes.com
Escondido Creek Parkway: www.escondidocreekparkway.org
Panna Maria: www.pannamariatexas.com



Goliad County

Evidence of Spanish settlement in the Goliad County area is preserved in the beautifully restored Mission Espíritu Santo and Presidio La Bahía. The Presidio protected the Mission and La Bahía Road, a vital trade route. During the Texas Revolution, Goliad was the site of significant historical events, including the drafting of the Goliad Declaration of Independence in 1835, the surrender of James Fannin's forces at the Battle of Coleto, and the subsequent infamous execution of Texan prisoners by the Mexican Army. Goliad County is one of the 23 original counties established by the Republic of Texas in 1836. Today, farming, ranching, and oil and gas production are essential to the county's economy.



Helpful Links:
Goliad County: www.co.goliad.tx.us
City of Goliad: www.goliadtx.net
Canoe Trail Goliad: www.canoe trailgoliad.com
Goliad State Park: www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/goliad

Many natural attractions bring visitors to Goliad. Branch River Nature Park links the historical and the wild with a good dose of fun! Grab a snack from Goliad's historic courthouse square and have a quick picnic under the heritage oak trees or test your skills on the 9-hole disc golf course.



Branch River Nature Park

The park is close to the Angel of Goliad hike and bike trail, connecting you to Goliad State Park and General Zaragoza's Birthplace. Want to explore Goliad by water? Officially designated as a Texas Inland Paddling Trail, the Goliad Paddling Trail takes you down the nearby San Antonio River. Be sure to bring your binoculars because this region is renowned for its unique wildlife. You might catch a glimpse of the rare migratory birds that use this part of the river as a corridor to the nearby coast. Once you finish your paddling journey, enjoy exploring the Goliad State Park's Espíritu Santo Mission.

NATURE PARKS & CULTURAL OR HISTORICAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1

Cibolo Nature Center
- 2

Medina Lake Park
- 3

Government Canyon State Natural Area
- 4

Brackenridge Park
- 5

San Antonio Zoo
- 6

Witte Museum
- 7

San Antonio Museum of Art
- 8

San Fernando Cathedral
- 9

San Antonio River Walk – Downtown Loop
- 10

Mission San Antonio de Valero (The Alamo) – World Heritage Site
- 11

Henry B. González Convention Center, Yanaguana Garden at Hemisfair Plaza, Tower of the Americas, UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures
- 12

Roosevelt Park
- 13

Concepción Park
- 14

Mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña (Mission Concepción) – World Heritage Site
- 15

Mission Park Pavilions
- 16

Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo (Mission San José) and the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park Visitors Center – World Heritage Site
- 17

Mission County Park 2
- 18

Padre Park
- 19

Espada Park
- 20

Acequia Park
- 21

Espada Aqueduct – World Heritage Site
- 22

Mission San Juan Capistrano (Mission San Juan) – World Heritage Site
- 23

Mission San Francisco de la Espada (Mission Espada) – World Heritage Site
- 24

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center
- 25

Medina River Natural Area
- 26

Land Heritage Institute
- 27

Braunig Lake Park
- 28

Calaveras Lake Park
- 29

La Vernia Heritage Museum
- 30

White Hall (Joseph Polley Mansion)
- 31

Sutherland Springs Historical Museum
- 32

Wilson County Jailhouse Museum
- 33

Floresville City River Park
- 34

Rancho de Las Cabras – World Heritage Site
- 35

Cestohowa Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 36

Panna Maria Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church
- 37

Old Helena, including the 1873 Courthouse, Old Post Office, John Ruckman Home, Sickenius Farmhouse and Jail
- 38

Karnes City Park
- 39

Joe Gulley Park
- 40

Berclair Mansion
- 41

Goliad Courthouse Square and starting point of the Angel of Goliad Trail
- 42

Mission of Nuestra Señora del Espíritu Santo de Zúñiga and Goliad State Park & Historic Site
- 43

Presidio La Bahía & Zaragoza Birthplace State Historic Site
- 44

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site
- 45

Coletto Creek Park & Reservoir
- 46

Guadalupe Delta Wildlife Management Area
- 47

Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

NATURE PARKS OPERATED OR SUPPORTED BY THE SAN ANTONIO RIVER AUTHORITY

- 1

San Antonio River Walk – Museum Reach
- 2

San Antonio River Walk – Mission Reach
- 3

Confluence Park – Collaboration with the San Antonio River Foundation
- 4

San Pedro Creek Culture Park
- 5

Mann's Crossing Park on the Medina River (future development)
- 6

Hendrick Arnold Nature Park on the Medina River
- 7

Espada Tract (future development)– Collaboration with Texas A&M San Antonio
- 8

Trueheart Ranch Nature Park on the San Antonio River
- 9

River Crossing Park on the San Antonio River & Saspamco Paddling Trail
- 10

Graytown Park on the San Antonio River & Saspamco Paddling Trail
- 11

John William Helton-San Antonio River Nature Park & Saspamco Paddling Trail
- 12

Saspamco Paddling Trail, County Road 117 Access Site
- 13

Jackson Nature Park
- 14

Saspamco Paddling Trail, Floresville River Park Access Site
- 15

Escondido Creek Parkway
- 16

Goliad Paddling Trail, Highway 59 Access Site
- 17

Branch River Nature Park
- 18

Goliad Paddling Trail, Ferry Street Access Site
- 19

Goliad Paddling Trail, Goliad State Park Access Site
- 20

Goliad Paddling Trail, Riverdale Paddling Access Point



A more detailed map of the San Antonio River Walk may be picked up at the main office of the San Antonio River Authority, located at 100 E. Guenther. The San Antonio River Walk map is also available online at the River Recreation page of sariverauthority.org or scan the code below.



For more information about flooding and the River Authority operated dams please visit us online at sariverauthority.org or scan the code below.

