

For more information regarding the award and camping:

**Buffalo Trail Council, BSA**

1101 W. Texas Ave.  
Midland, TX 79701  
432-570-7601

[www.buffalotrailbsa.org](http://www.buffalotrailbsa.org)



**Davis Mountains State Park**

P.O. Box 1707  
Fort Davis, TX 79734  
432-426-3337

[http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/davis\\_mountains/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/davis_mountains/)

**Fort Davis National Historic Site**

PO Box 1379  
101 Lt. Henry Flipper Dr.  
Fort Davis, TX 79734  
423-426-3224

<http://www.nps.gov/foda/>

# Guidebook



## Fort Davis Historical Trail

Sponsored by  
**Buffalo Trail Council**  
**Boy Scouts of America**

## Those Eligible To Hike The Trail

Any registered youth with the Boy Scouts of America or Girl Scouts USA, adult Scouters and other adults may hike this trail. Those groups hiking by units must have at least two adults (one of whom must be over 21 years of age) present with the group at all times and on a ratio of not less than one leader per ten youth. Individual families may also hike this trail. You will need to allow at least two and a half hours to hike the trail and see the exhibits.

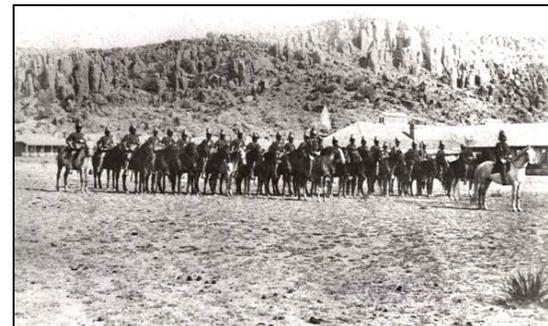
## Camping

Overnight camping is available at Buffalo Trail Scout Ranch, located 40 miles north of Fort Davis, and at Camp Mitre Peak Girl Scout Camp located 25 miles east of Fort Davis. Advance reservations for any of the camping sites must be made in advance. Special permission must be granted to a group in order to stay at the state park overnight.

## Requirements For Fort Davis Historical Trail Award

1. Hike the historical trail consisting of about one mile on the course described in this booklet and fill in the blanks found in the booklet.
2. Youth shall take part in one of the Fort's educational games (Mystery of the Talking Walls, Junior Ranger, etc.) and adults shall supervise the youth in completing them.
3. Do a service project either at Fort Davis or one of the Scout camps. Approval of any project must be obtained in advance of any work done.
4. Make application to the Buffalo Trail Council Service Center using the form on the next page of this booklet.

**24.) Parade Ground** - The bugles sounding reveille in the morning was the signal for soldiers to begin their day. Reporting for roll call, assemblies, drills, target practice, and other duties filled the day from sunup to sundown. The parade ground was the natural meeting place for these activities and more. A typical day at the fort might have looked something like this:



**A Typical Daily Schedule In Garrison**

5:15 Assembly of Trumpeters  
5:30 Reveille  
6:00 Stable & Watering Call  
7:00 Mess Call  
8:00 Assembly, Roll Call  
8:10 Sick Call  
8:20 Assembly of Guard Details  
8:30 Fatigue Call  
9:00 Drill Call (dismounted)  
11:30 Recall - End of Morning Drill  
11:45 1st Sergeants Call  
12:00 Mess Call  
1:00 Drill Call (mounted)  
4:00 Recall - End of Evening Drill  
4:30 Stable Call  
5:00 Mess Call  
6:00 Assembly for Evening Parade  
5 minutes prior to sunset: Assembly of Trumpeters  
Sunset Retreat, Evening Gun, Roll Call, To The Colors  
8:55 Assembly of Trumpeters  
9:00 Tattoo and Final Roll Call  
9:30 Extinguish Lights

**22.) Lieutenant's Quarters** - This structure was built for a captain in May 1882, but because of a shortage of housing, it was soon designated a shared quarters. It is refurnished as if a bachelor lieutenant was living on the north side and a married lieutenant occupied the south half.



**23.) Commanding Officer Quarters**  
 Constructed by 1869, this building served as the residence for post commanders until 1891. Because of the extensive documentation available on Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson, Tenth Cavalry, and his family, the building is furnished to the period 1882-1885 when Grierson served as post commander.



## Application For Fort Davis Historical Trail Award

**To:** Buffalo Trail Council, 1101 W. Texas Ave.  
 Midland, TX 79701

\_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
(Unit Type) (#) (City) (State)  
 makes application for the Fort Davis Historical Trail Award.

We had \_\_\_\_\_ youth and \_\_\_\_\_ adults hike the trail on this date:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

On the bottom of this application is the signed certification by one unit leader as well as one of the Fort Davis National Historical Site personnel.

Send Awards to: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Make all checks payable to: **“Boy Scouts of America”**  
 Please send:

\_\_\_\_\_ Patches @ **2.00** each for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Medals @ **7.00** each for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Grand total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Unit Leader Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Fort Davis Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Trail Rules

1. Your group must have at least two adults with it at all times, one of whom must be at least 21 years of age. There should be one adult for every ten youth hiking the trail.
2. Your group must stay together while on the trail. Large groups may be divided into several groups, but each group must have at least two adults with them.
3. An official BSA Tour Permit is required to all Boy Scout groups. Local Scouts traveling from home who live within 500 miles of the park will need only a Local Tour Permit, those over 500 miles will need a National Tour Permit. Girl Scout units will need an Out of Town Trip Application and parent's permission slips.
4. Those hiking this trail should be mindful that they are a representative of the Boy Scouts of America or the Girl Scouts U.S.A. They should always be courteous, dignified and follow the principles of the respective Oath and Law. It is the responsibility of the leaders to keep the group under control.
5. Obey all Fort Davis National Historical Site regulations. Do not climb on the walls of the ruins or buildings. Do not pick up any artifacts or other historical objects from the ground. The fort is closed for general use at night.
6. Please do not work on any service project without first obtaining permission from the Park Superintendent or BTSR Camp Ranger. All work done at any of these sites must be done with adequate adult supervision. Any service project will qualify that will help the facility, whether it be picking up trash, building a structure or cleaning rocks at the fort.

**19.) Hospital** - Built in 1876, this was the permanent hospital of the second Fort Davis. With the addition of a second ward in 1884, the post hospital could accommodate up to twenty-four patients. It was normally staffed by a post surgeon, hospital steward, soldier-nurses, a cook or cooks, and a matron. The post surgeon rarely performed surgery. Soldiers suffered mainly from diseases and accidental injuries, not battle wounds. The building has a central walkway with interpretive signs at each of the rooms.



**20.) Hospital Storehouse** - The Hospital Storehouse contained all of the reserve medical supplies. On one occasion, Hospital Steward F. W. Wearick was court-martialed when he could not explain the disappearance of a number of bottles of medicinal alcohol. The trial revealed that he had drunk them!

**21.) Magazine** - Ammunition for small arms and artillery was stored here, well away from the main fort area in case of accidental explosion.



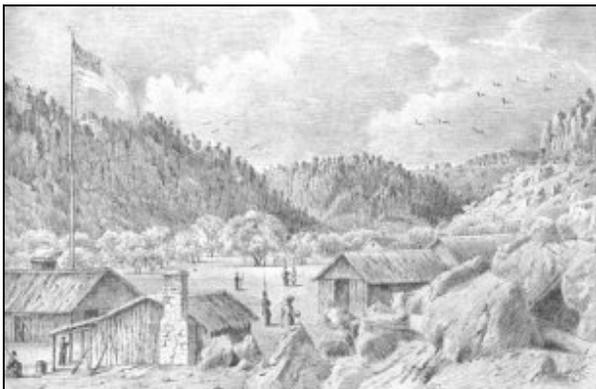


**16.) Officer's Row** - These adobe and stone houses, known as Officer's Row made life on the harsh Texas frontier relatively comfortable for officers and their families. The thick walls were good insulation against summer's

heat and helped maintain comfortable temperatures during the brief winter. Officer's row was constructed over a number of years and often, junior officers had to share quarters due to lack of housing.

**17.) Officer's Quarters Kitchen** – This two-room refurnished structure was the kitchen and servant's quarters for Officer's Quarters No. 12. The building was separate from the main house primarily because of the danger of fire. Extreme summer heat and unpleasant cooking odors were contributing factors.

**18.) First Fort Davis** - The foundations of several structures of the first Fort Davis (1854-1862) are located behind Officers' Row and west of the Post Hospital. Many of these buildings were constructed of pine slabs with thatched roofs. Wooden signs identify them.



7. Upon arrival at Fort Davis, check in with the Park personnel at the park headquarters located in the restored barracks building

8. Patches and medals are optional. Upon completion of the requirements of the trail they may be ordered from the Buffalo Trail Council, BSA, using the enclosed order form.

9. Scouts may also qualify for the Boy Scouts of America "Historical Trails Award" if they meet those requirements. Requirements and award application, Number 4408 may be obtained from your local Council Service Center.

10. Emergency medical services are available by calling 911. The nearest hospital is located in Alpine, TX.

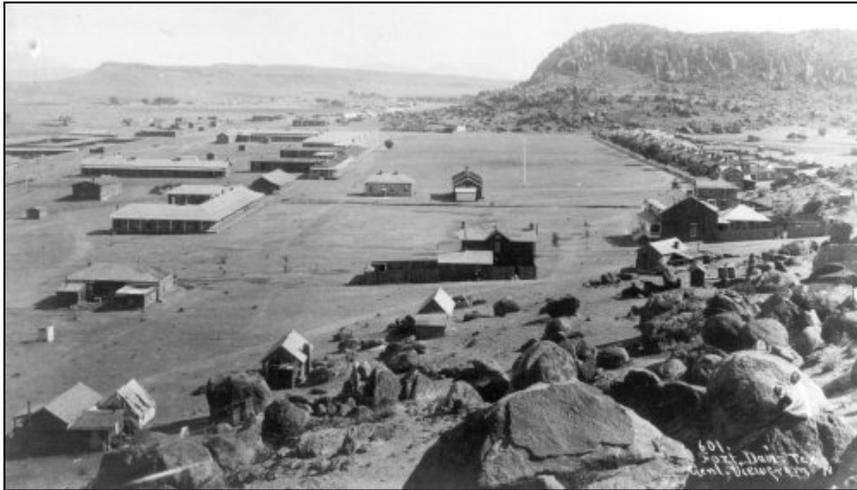
11. You may want to take a picnic lunch with you to the Fort as there are no eating establishments at the fort. Or, there are several restaurants in the town of Fort Davis that your group may dine at.

### **Hours of Operation**

The park is open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. You will not want to start a tour after 3:00 p.m. as you won't have adequate time to complete the trail and look at the exhibits.

### **Park Fees**

Adults - \$3.00  
Visitors Age 16+ - \$3.00  
Children under 16 — Free



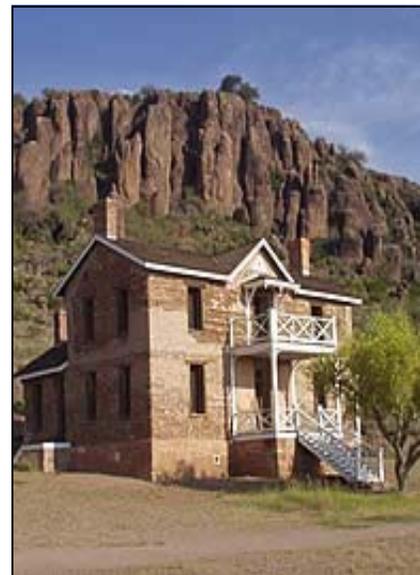
## FORT DAVIS 1854-1891

The history of Fort Davis is a co-mingling of frontier military and frontier ranching - a John Wayne movie brought to life. Much of that heritage is preserved, not only in buildings, but in atmosphere - in a way of life, in the friendly caring of neighbors, and in the unselfconscious friendliness of its people to all who visit the town.

The history of the town of Fort Davis and the Fort Davis military post were intertwined until the closing of the fort in 1891. The town had its beginnings as various enterprising individuals set up shop around the military site to serve the needs or wants of the soldiers. The fort itself was established the first time in 1854. It lasted until the Civil War broke out in 1861, calling soldiers back east to serve. Though briefly occupied by the Confederacy it lay abandoned for most of the war, prey to vandalism by the elements as well as Apaches and Comanche. Not being well built in the first place, it was easily rendered uninhabitable.

**13.) Post Headquarters (Ruins)** – Post Headquarters, containing offices for the commanding officer, adjutant, and sergeant major, was the hub of military bureaucracy at Fort Davis. The staff processed countless letters, orders, and reports – all without electricity or typewriters. The soldier clerk wrote them all in duplicate, by hand!

**14.) Chapel (Ruins)** – The Post Chapel was the fort’s social center. Here the garrison and local citizens attended church, dances, and theatricals. On weekdays, the chaplain, or assigned enlisted man, taught school for army children. Classes for soldiers were held in the evenings. The chapel also housed the post library.



**15.) Two Story Officer’s Quarters** – Spacious two-story homes were built during the mid 1880s, each to accommodate junior officers, many of whom were bachelors. Designed to be shared quarters, they were sometimes occupied by non-commissioned staff officers when space permitted. Commissary Sergeant Thomas Forsyth, and his large family, known as “The Tribe,” lived in No. 15 in the late 1880’s and early 1890s.

**11.) Bakery (Ruins)** – Fresh bread was an important staple in the army ration. Each soldier was entitled to one 18-oz loaf daily. Because of the isolated location, the only feasible way to supply bread was to make it here at the bakery. Soldiers assigned as bakers often possessed little knowledge of the job and disliked such “unsoldierly” duty. Bad bread was often the result!



**12.) Guardhouse or Jail (Ruins)** – The Guardhouse, or “mill” in soldier slang, was the epitome of the army’s strict discipline and harsh punishment for errant soldiers. Built of adobe with a shingle roof, the guardhouse contained eight cells, a prison room, guardroom, room of the officer of the guard, and a storeroom.

The remote frontier environment produced boredom among the men for which drunkenness, fighting, and insubordination were common outlets. Average sentences were 10 to 30 days hard labor, solitary confinement for up to eight days, or in extreme cases, dishonorable discharge with a federal prison sentence.

Although the guardhouse is usually thought of as a jail, it also served as the fort’s fire station. In an age of wood-burning stoves

Following the war, increased hostility by the Indians hampered U. S. expansion westward, and it was felt expedient to rebuild the fort. In 1867, units of the newly formed 9th Cavalry were sent to accomplish this task. Being a black troop, the Indians labeled them Buffalo Soldiers. Eventually, all four of the black military units formed after the Civil War would serve at Fort Davis. As the second fort grew, so did the town. After 1880 with the death of Mescalero Apache leader, Victorio, the Indian hostilities were, for the most part, over in West Texas.

The cattle industry was going strong, and the town of Fort Davis prospered. However, there were those who realized that unless the town was served by a railroad, larger businesses would move elsewhere. This in fact did happen and when the fort closed in 1891, the town was hit hard economically, though it remained a ranching center. People also came here for the healthy benefits of clean mountain air, pure spring water, and the unique desert climate.

The old fort is now a part of the National Park system, and is considered the best preserved Indian Wars fort in the Southwest. It is the only preserved site commemorating the unique military origins of the buffalo soldiers.

We hope those who follow in the footsteps of the soldiers of the 1880’s will come to better understand how Fort Davis and the other forts of West Texas were a vital part of the rich history of Texas!

As you tour the museum and hike the trail, we encourage you to learn as much as possible about the lives of the soldiers who were stationed here far from their homes in a very remote part of Texas

**1.) Visitor Center** – Housed in what was originally an enlisted men's barracks, the visitor center contains a bookstore and gift shop, and a museum with historical artifacts. Entry permits are obtained here, along with information on the fort, programs, activities, as well as Park Rangers that will help answer any questions you may have. Be sure to visit the auditorium that offers a short orientation video of the fort also!

**2.) Mess Hall** – Now used as the auditorium, this wing of the barracks originally housed a mess hall. The troops ate their meals in here, which housed a kitchen and messroom, which adjoined each set of barracks.

In 1877 the meat ration consisted of three-tenths bacon and seven-tenths fresh beef. Beans and flour were purchased locally, and bread came daily from the post bakery. Scurvy swept the garrison in the spring of 1868, and the surgeon, Dr. Daniel Weisel, stressed the necessity of including plenty of fresh vegetables in the diet. In 1869 he persuaded Colonel Merritt to start a post garden. Two were planted, one of 4 acres on Limpia Creek for the post and one of 3 acres at the spring southeast of the corrals for the hospital. These gardens flourished year after year until abandonment of the fort in 1891.

Some of the officers' wives kept chickens, but Major Bliss thought that they made the post look unmilitary, and he decreed that "On and after Feb. 1, 1874, no fowls will be kept within the limits of this garrison."



**9.) Quartermaster Storage & Granary (Ruins)** – The Quartermaster Storehouse bustled with activity each day. It bulged with all kinds of material including uniforms, hardware, office supplies, furniture, dishes, harness, paint, and lumber. The Granary was also under the jurisdiction of the quartermaster and held tons of corn and oats for the hundreds of horses and mules at the post.

The quartermaster was also responsible for construction projects, maintenance, and general supply. He also oversaw the employees, laborers, teamsters, blacksmiths, carpenters, and even a plumber!

**10.) Commissary** - Located on the San Antonio-El Paso Road, this large structure contained food supplies for the garrison. While enlisted men received rations, officers and civilian employees could purchase food products at cost plus transportation. The commissary sergeant's office and the issue room are refurbished. The office occupied by the Acting Commissary of Subsistence (the officer in charge of the commissary office) contains interpretive exhibits.

**5.) Sinks / Latrines (Ruins)** – With no indoor running water or toilets available in 1884, these simple structures were built a short distance away from living quarters. These buildings were extremely filthy and unsanitary and a constant source of disease. It was just during the 1870's and 1880's that doctors began to connect certain illnesses with unsanitary conditions found here.

**6.) San Antonio – El Paso Rd** – The road you are now crossing is the once well-traveled San Antonio – El Paso road. The necessity for Fort Davis, located some 400 miles from San Antonio and 200 miles from Franklin (present-day El Paso), stemmed from demands for protection on the San Antonio-El Paso Road. A major link along the most southern route to California, the road experienced an upsurge of travel in the early 1850s following the discovery of gold in California. As travel along the road increased, so did Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache raids into Mexico. Emigrants, mail carriers and merchants journeyed in constant fear of the raiding warriors who traveled between Mexico and their homelands to the north.

**7.) Calvary Stables (Ruins)** – The Cavalry Corrals stabled the horses of up to eight troops (approximately 475 animals). Hard working farriers would shoe the horses and keep them ready for field service at all times. Saddlers, working in small shops around the perimeter, repaired equipment damaged on patrols and campaigns.

**8.) Corrals and Wagon Storage (Ruins)** – The Quartermaster Corral was the largest complex at the Fort. It was the industrial center of the post and a beehive of activity. Transportation was vital to Fort Davis and until the railroad came to west Texas in the early 1880s, most supplies came by wagon from San Antonio. (This is why the corrals are situated on the old San Antonio – El Paso road!) At the corral, wagons were housed, maintained and repaired. Scores of hardy mules and mountains of hay were protected within its adobe walls.

**3.) Enlisted Men's Barracks** – The barracks were homes for the enlisted men. Little time was spent in the barracks during daylight hours, however. Reveille sounded at 6 am, signaling the men to be out of their bunks for morning roll call. The men were kept busy all day with work details, drill practice, target shooting, and guard duty. Such a life quickly grew boring, so it was challenging for officers to keep their men from deserting from their soldierly duties.

The South end of this restored barracks houses cavalry, infantry, artillery, and transportation exhibits. The north end contains a squad room and an orderly room. It offers just a small glimpse of what it was like to live there back in 1884, when it was occupied by Buffalo Soldiers of Troop H, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Authentic iron bunks, footlockers, carbine racks, clothing, and other daily necessities are scattered throughout the room and help tell the story of how the men lived here. The orderly room served as the office for the troop's first sergeant.

**4.) Enlisted Men's Barracks (Ruins)** – Only the foundations remain from the other enlisted men's barracks. They would have been similar in size, shape, and accommodations as the restored structure you just visited. Please remember not to step on or climb on any of the foundations or ruins!



	First Fort 1854 • 1862
	Second Fort 1867 • 1891
	Paved road
	Trail

