

Lower Valley

Cont'd from Page 21

Many area residents and travelers have left recommendations encouraging people to visit the shop.

"You can spend a whole day going thru all the unique stuff they have," one local guide, Wando Lugo, wrote. "Love this store!"

El Paso County SportsPark

The sports park on North Zaragoza, is home to several competitive baseball programs, and was first built in 1986 on the city's Far East side.

According to the park's history, "the complex was originally designated to accommodate men's softball and soccer, and was "the first park in the area to host over 100 baseball teams."

The county purchased the park in 2002. In 2012, El Paso County Commissioners had hopes of El Paso County SportsPark on Zaragoza becoming the "premier sports facility of its kind for far west Texas and surrounding areas." Renovations begun in 2012 were delayed for years due to contractor disputes, and the park finally reopened in 2016.

Today, it is still home to several competitive baseball programs, for youth and adults, as well as softball and T-Ball. There are 10 ballfields hosting thousands of athletes and spectators each season, and the county is still making plans to improve facilities and its programs.

More upgrades are planned, according to the park's master plan, include improvements to the entrance, new clubhouse and t-ball concession, batting cages, family restrooms, administrative offices and handicapped accessible pathways.

Williams said only two of the site's buildings have been lost over time; most of the others remain intact for visitors to see. It was declared one of the state's most endangered places by Preservation Texas in 2015, and by 2016 the National Trust declared it a National Treasure.

Rio Vista Farm is at 800 N. Rio Vista Road in Socorro, about a half-mile east of North Loop.

"It is still surrounded by 200 acres of farm land and the original brick 1915 building and the Mission Style adobe buildings across the street make for an impressive sight and harken to another era in the Mission Valley," Williams said.

The farm is currently used as a community center to serve Socorro, and plans are underway to restore additional buildings for re-use as a library and for additional community programs.

"You can truly understand its importance as a place where people were cared for and its importance as a Bracero processing center add to the local and national significance," Williams said. On the one hand, it is a living testament to people caring for others less fortunate and in the case of the farm workers, a reminder of the hard work and challenges faced by farm workers and their families. Today, it continues to serve a positive purpose as a community center for the City of Socorro."



Rio Bosque (courtesy of John Sproul)

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

One of the best sites for nature lovers in the valley is Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, managed by UTEP's Center for Environmental Resource Management. The address is 10716 Socorro Rd, but access is from Pan American Drive, 1½ miles from Americas.

The 372-acre city park has three trails ranging from 0.6 miles to a 2.4-mile loop, all starting at the visitor center.

Each month the site offers free, guided walking tours of the park, highlighting the birds and other plants and animals on site. Brochures are also available for self-guided tours. Visitors can also give back to the park by taking part in regularly scheduled volunteer workdays and faunal monitoring.

"Rio Bosque Wetlands Park offers visitors a chance to take a walk back in time and get a sense of what our river valley might have looked like several hundred years ago," said Rio Bosque Wetlands Park manager John Sproul. "With its developing wetlands and riverside forests and its abundant wildlife, Rio Bosque is a site totally unique in El Paso."

Another nearby natural area, Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary at 9500 North Loop, has been closed in recent years due to lack of water.

Please see Page 23



Rio Vista Farm in Socorro, Texas (courtesy of Texas Mountain Trail)

Rio Vista Farm

Rio Vista Farm has been part of the Lower Valley since 1915, and was first built as the city's second county "poor farm," intended for the care of elderly and indigent children. By the 1930s, it expanded to also accommodate families during the Great Depression.

Helen O'Shea Keleher and her mother Agnes O'Shea administered the farm for 50 years, and left a "wonderful legacy of a caring, familial-type institution," said Gary Williams, El Paso Community Foundation senior program officer.

From 1951 to 1964, the farm was a significant processing site for the Bracero Program (which provided for temporary migrant farm workers from Mexico).

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