

**FRIEDRICH PARK 'ON YOUR OWN'**  
**San Antonio Parks and Recreation Natural Areas**  
[www.sanaturalareas.org](http://www.sanaturalareas.org) 210-372-9124

Much of the enjoyment of the Natural Areas comes from quietly wandering along the trails and enjoying the sights, smells, and sounds of nature. Natural systems are always changing so there is something different every day and each season brings its own special features. Sometimes we would like a few hints about how to enjoy or get more from our walk. This interactive guide has been prepared to enhance your visit to Friedrich Wilderness Park. It is particularly useful for leaders of groups of children. Each of the following **lettered** points is identified on an accompanying map on the website and is indicated on the trail with a wooden marker. (There are also numbered plant markers along the trails. A guide for these can be found near the entrance to the park or can also be downloaded from [www.sanaturalareas.org](http://www.sanaturalareas.org).) Your exploration of Friedrich Park is unique and this guide is merely a starting point for your adventure.

**Begin at the trail head near the restrooms and look for markers with letters.**

After passing the education kiosk, continue on the paved trail to the intersection of the Main Loop Trail and Forest Range Trails. Look from the intersection to the right for the 'A' marker.

- A.** This large uprooted juniper is a great place to view the root system of this type of tree. Notice the large roots and their extensive branching. These provide support for the tree to anchor it in the ground firmly. Tiny feeder roots, even smaller than the smallest ones you can see here allow nutrients and water to enter a tree's water transport system. Notice that this tree can still live even though a large part of its root system has been disrupted. And look at all the rocks embedded in the roots. Plants have a tough time in this shallow, limestone based soil. What do you think happened to this tree? Why did it fall over? How long do you think it will live?

Living Scavenger Hunt: Introduce your group to the concept of the living scavenger hunt. Here in the Natural Areas we do not want to remove natural materials – we only take away memories. So, as you have various experiences along the trail and see points of interest, assign one group member to be responsible for remembering each item or experience. At the end of the hike or another appropriate time, ask members to be a part of the living scavenger hunt as each person takes turns sharing about what they were assigned to remember.

Return to the intersection. Turn left onto the Forest Range Trail. Just after the turn to the left will be the 'B' marker.

- B.** Here is another example of a tree that is still alive but looks dead in many places. Actually the living part of the trunk and branches of any tree is a narrow band of tissue just underneath the bark and the interior of the tree is not alive and can even be hollow. This tree has lots of hollow places, especially where the branches are dying, decomposing and falling off. Trees like this are very important in a natural area because they provide much cover and food for small animals, particularly invertebrates. Their holes provide shelter for larger animals; many birds like woodpeckers are adapted to chisel out cavities in dead wood for their nesting sites. Who do you think is living in this tree? Can you see any evidence of their presence?

Continue along the paved trail to the intersection where Forest Range Trail loop begins. Turn right. Proceed to the first spur (short dead end trail) trail on the right and cross the bridge.

- C.** Although leaves have the function of food production for most plants, they come in lots of shapes and sizes. This is a good place to ask your group to look around and see how many different types of leaves they can find (examples: jagged edges – hackberry; shiny leaves – fragrant sumac; tiny awl-like leaves – juniper; large jagged fingers – oak; very small rounded leaves – Texas persimmon; tiny compound leaves – kidneywood; many more). Besides looking at leaves, can anyone find a tree with bark that looks like brown pebbles? (Rusty blackhaw) Also, take a look at the great rock ledge created by erosion of the Glen Rose Limestone.

Continue along the trail to the second spur trail:

- D.** Have your group look behind the bench at large oak roots running on the top of the ground. Look how far they go! This gives you a good view of how extensive the root system of one tree can be. And this is a great place to look at tree bark. There are so many textures and colors here. See how many your group can find (cherry – white and gray stripes; oaks – ridges and pebbly; juniper – long, flaky strips; persimmon – smooth and more).

Continue on the trail past the intersection of Scrub Jay Pass and Forest Range Trail to letter 'E' at a handrail:

- E.** Look for a tree that has horizontal rows of tiny holes across its trunk. We have yellow-bellied sapsuckers, a type of woodpecker, that live at Friedrich Park. They get food by drilling a series of holes in the trunk of a tree (looks a little like a line of machine gun bullet holes). The sapsuckers drink some of the tree sap that oozes from the holes but mostly they are interested in eating the insects that are attracted to the sweet sap. What a tasty lunch! How many rows of holes can you count in the large trunk of this tree?

Continue to Gray Fox Pass. Turn left and go to the bench along the pass.

- F.** Savanna restoration. Although junipers (commonly called cedars or mountain cedars) are native to the rocky areas of this part of the country, they are very invasive and are claiming much formerly savanna lands. Historically, junipers were kept in control by natural fires; the suppression of fires and overgrazing has contributed to their current aggressive expansion. Look across the trail from the bench. This pocket savanna was created by removing the junipers from the plot in successive stages. You can see that many native grasses such as the tall slender little bluestem are naturally increasing here. To get an idea of what the area looked like before restoration took place, just look behind you. Quite a change! There are other management sites in the park; a large area can be seen from the entrance trail not far past the entrance kiosk.

Return to Forest Range Trail loop and continue left around the loop to the next spur. It has a bench:

- G.** The sotol plant at the end of this spur was one of the most useful species for early Native Americans. Four thousands of years they relied on the roasted

hearts and 'meat' at the base of the leaves as a major food source. They would chew the soft fibrous pulp to extract the sweet juices and spit out the fibrous part. Long fibers from the leaves were very useful for making sandals, mats, and rope as well as thatching for roofs. The dried fruiting stalks were used as building materials and fuel. Whole sotol leaves could be used for basket making and more processed leaf fibers could be used for making paper and in finer textiles. This plant is just one of many native plants that had extensive uses among Native Americans and pioneers. It's good to remind your group that there was a time when Wal-mart did not exist!!

Continue around Forest Range Loop to the intersection with the Water Trail.

**H.** Plants can protect themselves in many ways. Take a look at the thorns on the vines on the tree at this intersection! This is smilax, sometimes called greenbriar or catbriar or sometimes just called BRIAR! You would certainly know whether or not you had walked through an area with thorny smilax! However, the thorns are modified leaves and are not always as fierce as they seem here. See if you can find a young, tender growth shoot. These shoots were one of the favorite early greens of the pioneers. Before the thorns harden, the shoots are very tender and have a pleasant nutty taste.

Stay on Forest Range Loop and proceed on the long bridge. Look for letter 'I'.

**I.** Along this bridge, there are many interesting things to point out to your group. Have them notice the different sizes of rocks and particles that have accumulated in the streambed. Think about where the sizes are located and what action from water was required to move them there. On the opposite side of the bridge is an excellent vertical exposure of Glen Rose limestone. The park land was covered by seas many times and the layers of limestone were not all deposited at the same time. Ask your group if they can see the separate layers here. The limestone layers are interspersed with layers of clay marl that erode more easily and create this effect. Notice the plants and roots of plants growing on the rocky patches. Little pockets of soil accumulate in soil crevasses that are big enough for ferns and poison ivy and several other plants.

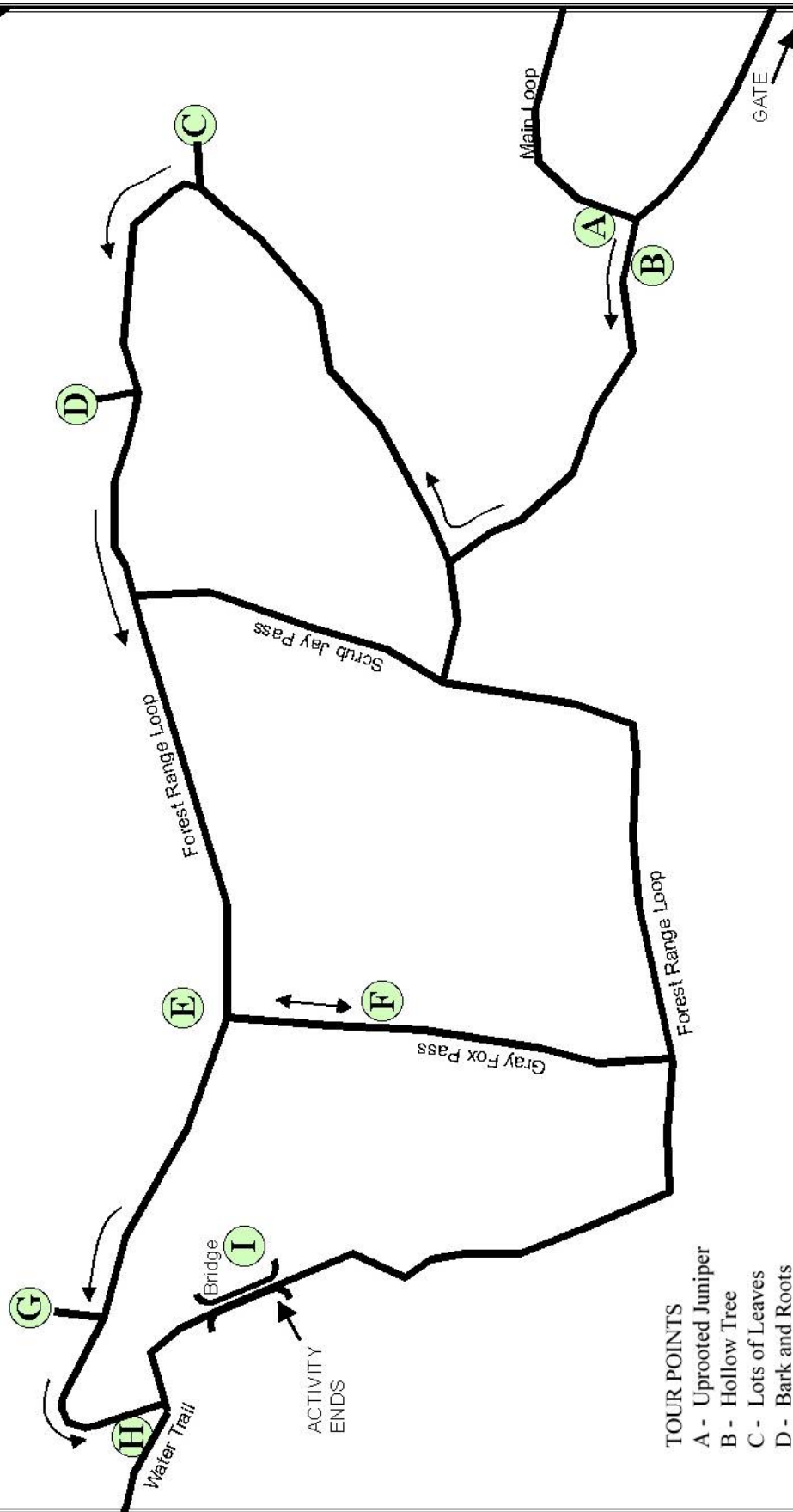
At this point, continue along Forest Range Loop to the Main Loop and exit the park or go back to the Water Trail and continue your exploration of the park.

Don't forget the report from the 'Living Scavenger Hunt'.

Thanks for visiting Friedrich Wilderness Park. We hope you will come again.

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## Forest Range Trails



- TOUR POINTS**
- A - Uprooted Juniper
  - B - Hollow Tree
  - C - Lots of Leaves
  - D - Bark and Roots
  - E - Sapsucker holes
  - F - Juniper management
  - G - Sotol
  - H - Greenbriar
  - I - Limestone