

# TEXAS CONNECTION

Activity #54

I'd Like to Visit a Place Where



## Extra Resources

Texas Parks and Wildlife  
Enchanted Rock State Natural  
Area  
[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/  
findadest/parks/  
enchanted\\_rock/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/enchanted_rock/)

E-Rock  
A Virtual Field Trip  
[http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rmr/E-  
rock/index.html](http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rmr/E-rock/index.html)

## Texas Overview

Texas is a huge state with many different places to visit. One particular spot — Enchanted Rock — is believed to be both enchanted and a geologically rarity.

Enchanted Rock State Natural Area is located 18 miles north of Fredericksburg on Ranch Road 967. You can plot the location at:

Latitude: N: 30° 29' 45.45"  
Longitude: W: 98° 49' 11.53"



<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/enchanted-rock>

## Why would you want to visit?

Enchanted Rock is a National Natural Landmark (1970) and is on the National Register of Historic Places as an Archeological District. Main attractions include hiking, rock climbing, stargazing, picnicking and bird watching. Others go to enjoy nature or for geologic study.

Wildlife watching also is popular. At Enchanted Rock, you can see white-tailed deer, foxes, squirrels, ringtails, birds and bats. A variety of reptiles can be found there as well.

However, the primary challenge that often brings people to the Enchanted Rock State Natural Area is hiking to the top of the rock.

## Geology

How would you like to step back one billion years in time? That's how far you'd have to go back to see Enchanted Rock formed. The Enchanted Rock area has some of oldest exposed rock in North America dating back to the Precambrian Time (geology time) — 1.1 billion years ago.

Enchanted Rock is a granite batholith. A batholith is an underground magma chamber that has cooled. The magma cools slowly allowing the crystals to grow larger, which results in granite. The batholith is made of the famous Texas Pink

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

Granite called Town Mountain Granite. This granite is found through the area and is used in many buildings in Austin.

Enchanted Rock towers 425 feet above the ground, 1,825 feet above sea level. It covers 640 acres making it one of the largest batholiths in the United States. The surrounding rock material was much softer allowing it to be eroded away. The hard granite was left behind leaving a large dome. The expansion and contraction of the rock as it heats and cools slowly is weathering the granite. That process is called exfoliation.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enchanted\\_Rock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enchanted_Rock)

### **Plant Life**

Plant communities found at Enchanted Rock include mesquite grassland, floodplain and open oak woodland. The oak woodland contains post oak, blackjack oak and live oak. Floodplain plants include hickory, hackberry, elm, pecan and soapberry. Many native shrubs and grasses also are found there.

### **Why is it called Enchanted?**

The local Tonkawa Indians started the legend of Enchanted Rock after seeing mysterious fires they thought were started by ghosts and hearing weird moaning and groaning.

Geologists say the large crystals in the granite reflect light from the setting sun, thus creating the “magic” fire. The moaning and groaning is caused by the contraction of the heated rock as it cools each evening.

The Indians also used the lower levels of Enchanted Rock to hide from their enemies, believing the rock made them invisible.

Put all these things together and you have a great legend and an even better place to visit. If you visit during peak times, be sure to get there early as the park often reaches its capacity and then closes.