

PHOTOS: ARCHIVE

Go off-road on two wheels through Wildcat Canyon Trail at Government Canyon.

Take a hike close to home

Got plans for the weekend? Sure, you could spend more quality time with your Playstation 3, but why not get off your butt and get some exercise? Try hiking — it can provide a good cardio workout, and San Antonio has a number of parks ready to be explored. Most are suitable for beginners as long as you stay on the trails. Just make sure your gear includes water, good shoes, insect repellent, sunscreen and clothing appropriate for the weather. Now get going.

GOVERNMENT CANYON

State Natural Area
12861 Galm Road
(210) 688-9055
tpwd.state.tx.us



» **Hours:** Front gate open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fridays-Mondays. Access to backcountry trail (rough, rocky terrain) ends at 4 p.m. Access to frontcountry (level terrain) ends at 5 p.m.

» **Admission:** \$6 per day; younger than 13, free. \$60 for the whole year to all state parks

» **Why it's cool:** The 8,622-acre natural area has more than 40 miles of unpaved trails. Guided hikes held every Saturday; pets allowed in the frontcountry.

LEON CREEK GREENWAY

12160 Babcock Road
(210) 207-7275



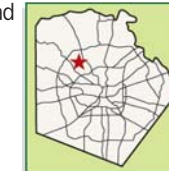
» **Hours:** 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily

» **Admission:** Free

» **Why it's cool:** The greenway has more than 3.75 miles of hiking trails along Leon Creek, plus a pond stocked with fish.

BAMBERGER NATURE PARK

12401 Babcock Road
(210) 207-7275



» **Hours:** Dawn to dusk daily

» **Admission:** Free

» **Why it's cool:** Bamberger offers 2.5 miles of easy trails and good bird-watching to boot.

FRIEDRICH WILDERNESS PARK

21395 Milsa Drive
(210) 564-6400



» **Hours:** 7:30 a.m. to sunset daily; entrance gate is locked one hour before close

» **Admission:** Free

» **Why it's cool:** No pets allowed, but you might spot a golden-cheeked warbler or black-capped vireo, both federally listed endangered species of birds. The 5.5 miles of hiking trails range from paved and ADA-approved paths to rugged trails for hardcore hikers.

MCALLISTER PARK

13102 Jones Maltzberger
(210) 207-7275



» **Hours:** 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily

» **Admission:** Free

» **Why it's cool:** Watch dirt-bikers zoom past on miles of paved and unpaved trails in the nearly 1,000-acre park.

MEDINA RIVER NATURAL AREA

15890 Highway 16 South
(210) 624-2575



» **Hours:** 7:30 a.m. to sunset

» **Admission:** Free

» **Why it's cool:** Not only is it the only natural area on the South Side, it's also the only one with a naturally flowing river running through it. Camping is allowed; call 311 for reservations.

EISENHOWER PARK

19399 NW Military Highway
(210) 564-6400



» **Hours:** 6 a.m. to sunset daily

» **Admission:** Free

» **Why it's cool:** Its 320 acres includes ravines, rocky canyons, dense vegetation and, oh yeah, five miles of trails of varying difficulties. Leashed pets are allowed. Camping is allowed; call 311.

O.P. SCHNABEL PARK

9606 Bandera Road
(210) 207-7275



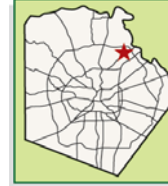
» **Hours:** 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily

» **Admission:** Free

» **Why it's cool:** Hikers, cyclists, ballplayers and picnickers make this one of the city's most popular parks. The 202-acre area includes 4.5 miles of nature trails. Dogs are allowed.

COMANCHE LOOKOUT PARK

15551 Nacogdoches
(210) 207-7275

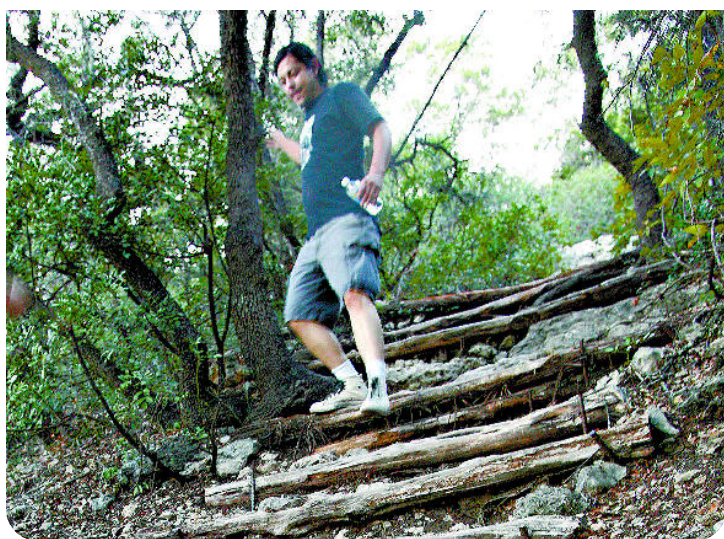


» **Hours:** 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily

» **Admission:** Free

» **Why it's cool:** American Indians once used the area, one of the highest in Bexar County at an elevation of 1,340 feet, to keep an eye out for enemy tribes.

» JESSICA BELASCO | CONTRIBUTOR



TOP: If this beautiful creek at Government Canyon isn't enough to lure you outdoors, how about wireless Internet service? It's free to park users. You need to get away. Seriously.

ABOVE: Step, step, step. Do your step class outside at Friedrich Wilderness Park. Just don't trip and fall.