Off the Beaten Track: Texas

**MCDONALD OBSERVATORY**
It's a star party! Tuesday and weekend evenings the observatory hosts nighttime outdoor viewings that use at least one of the amazing telescopes on-site. During the day you can tour the facility.

**PRADA**
Marfa is known for its avant-garde art at places like the Chinati foundation and the Ballroom gallery, but the Prada installation (an entire fake store) outside of Valentine may be the oddest.

**FORT DAVIS**
Up at 5000ft in the Davis Mountains you have gorgeous, scenic drives, trails and overlooks. Check out this one-horse town's historic fort, then sleep at the state park's Native American-styled adobe lodge.

**MARFA**
What a fun little town. Visit the old hotel where Giant was filmed, eat at foodie-fave restaurants, watch for alien lights and stay in an old Airstream trailer or other boutique motel.

**RIVER ROAD**
FM 170 winds up, down and around geological formations as it follows the sinuous Rio Grande between Lajitas and Presidio.

**TERLINGUA**
Terlingua’s ghost town is a must-do. Have a beer on the General Store’s porch before you dine at Starlight Theater (or below ground in a kiva-like bar); then sleep in luxuriously converted adobe ruins.

**BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK**
Chisos Mountains, Chihuahuan Desert, Rio Grande Valley: this amazing, 1252-sq-mile park has three separate ecosystems. All are covered by 200 miles of trails and 150 miles of back roads. So get going!

**BALSOMHEA STATE PARK**
Take a dip in the largest spring-fed swimming pool in the state.

**MARATHON**
A sleepy little outpost, Marathon has one claim to fame – the old Gage Hotel. Choose between Western rooms or adobe casitas (little bungalows); be sure to stop at the White Buffalo Bar.

**BOQUILLAS CANYON**
Outfitter-arranged rafting in the national park ranges from turbulent white water to gentle floats, depending on season and launch point. Boquillas Canyon offers the longest, most tranquil and most scenic ride.