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Writing - Travel Blog

McKinney Falls State Park

We're doing a small series on state parks in Texas. This first entry is about McKinney Falls State Park in Austin, TX.

Overview

McKinney Falls is the only state park we know of that's actually within the city limits of a big city - Austin, in this case.

Located on the south side of Austin, the park is 13 miles from the state capitol. It's located on the banks of Onion Creek and has:

- 81 Campsites
- Hiking & biking trails
- Upper and lower waterfalls
- Nature center
- Wifi at the Entrance Station
- Good AT&T and Verizon Coverage

What We Like

McKinney Falls is all about location. You can visit Austin to see the bats, the Cathedral of Junk, the State Capital, the food trucks and more.

Then after a busy day in the big city you can come home to a state park experience - lots of trees, hiking, and swimming under a waterfall.

We haven't found many places that offer this combination of city life/country life without a hour-long drive in between.

What We Didn't Like

Ranger Interactions

Our first stay a couple of years ago at McKinney Falls we had some interactions with the rangers that soured the experience. Seems we had one tire of our truck on the grass and that grass was precious.

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We also had visitors come see us, get confused about the after-hours payment system, and then be accosted by a ranger who quickly jumped to talking about penalties and jail time for not paying.

On our recent visit we didn't experience anything like this, so it's possible the management has changed.

Sections Closed

The park recently had some flooding damage so the upper falls, nature center, and portions of the hiking trails were still closed.

Traffic

This isn't the park's fault - but just be forewarned that if you are going to stay at McKinney Falls and then visit something on the north side of Austin you'll be sitting in traffic. The area has grown like crazy over the last few years. We even found traffic backups on Sunday afternoons.

Overall

The positives way overcome the negatives at McKinney falls and we don't hesitate to recommend it to anyone who wants to visit the Austin area.
