

Visitor Use

Importance

Use by visitors is both a primary reason for the establishment of national parks and a factor in the condition of many of the resources that the parks are intended to protect. The opportunity for visitors to enjoy our natural and cultural treasures remains a primary purpose of our parks; however, careful management of visitor activities and potential impacts is also necessary if we are to preserve these treasures for future generations. While some visitor impacts have immediate consequences (e.g., vehicle collisions with wildlife), most impacts are less obvious. Visitor activities and associated infrastructure may affect many park resources, including air and water quality, the natural soundscape, wildlife and their habitat, and archeological sites and other cultural artifacts.

Status and Trends

Fort Davis played a significant role in the history of the American Southwest as a vital part of the defense system of western Texas. Military troops stationed at the post, from 1854 to 1891, protected mail coaches, emigrants, freighters, and travelers on the San Antonio-El Paso Road. Today, visitors can spend time at Fort Davis National Historic Site (NHS) in several buildings that are restored to the 1880s period, as well as explore the other buildings and approximately 100 ruins. Park employees and volunteers present programs in period dress during the summer and major holidays, and visitors can hike the trails, which provide views of the 474-acre park.

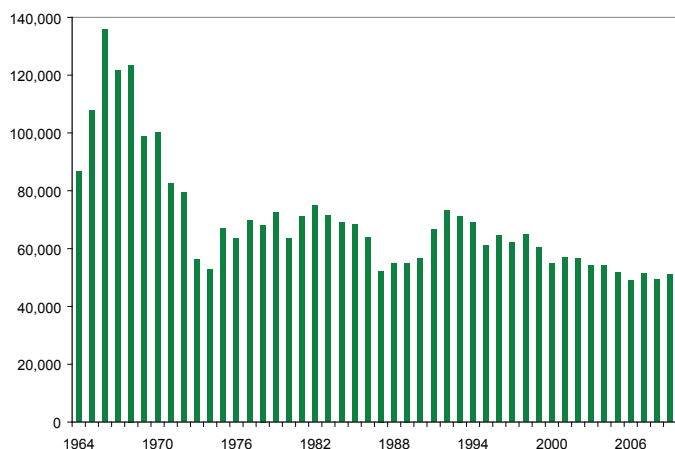


Figure 1. Annual number of visits at Fort Davis NHS, 1964-2009.

RESOURCE BRIEF



NPS PHOTO

Enlisted men's barracks at Fort Davis NHS

The park was established in 1963, and visitation data are available from 1964. The highest level of visitation occurred in the decade after establishment, with a peak of nearly 136,000 visits in 1966 (Figure 1). From 1973-2009, annual visits have been between about 49,000 and 75,000. Through July of 2010, 39,935 visits have been recorded. Based on visitation data for the last eleven years (1999-2009), March was the busiest month with 17% of the annual visits (followed by April with 11%).

Information Source

NPS Stats, National Park Service Public Use Statistics Office, URL: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/stats/index.cfm>.



NPS PHOTO

Artillery demonstration