

**If you go****Fossil Rim Wildlife Center****Glen Rose, Texas  
(254) 897-2960****www.fossilrim.org****Getting there:**

Take U.S. 281 north to Hico, then a short jog on Texas 6 to Texas 220 to reach U.S. 67 East. Glen Rose is also worth a visit; look for antiques stores around the square and try local favorites such as Loco Coyote and the Ranch House for lunch or dinner. Dinosaur Tracks State Park is off U.S. 67, for those who want to hike and enjoy the great outdoors.

# THE GIRAFFES ARE WAITING FOR YOU

Fossil Rim Wildlife Center has majestic wild animals, but otherwise it's very, very civilized



COURTESY NANCY YOHE



**ABOVE:** Smile for my phone! It's easy to get close to the animals when you drive through Fossil Rim Wildlife Center.

**CENTER RIGHT:** The swimming hole offers overnight guests a respite from the heat.

**TOP:** 'Tents' in the Safari Tent Camp are sturdy structures with doors, windows, bathrooms and air conditioning.

ABOVE AND CENTER RIGHT BY RONA DISTENFELD/SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

STORY BY RONA DISTENFELD/  
SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

As evening comes, the animals gather along the watering hole. Arabian oryx come first, their long, straight horns blending in profile into a single horn that explains the origins of the unicorn myth.

Soon they are joined by sandhill cranes, axis and fallow deer, and the mighty gemsbok, whose beautiful faces were the inspiration for many African tribal masks. You watch them all from the safety of the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center's Safari Tent Camp compound, comfortably seated on the deck with your glass of wine.

You're only a few hours from San Antonio, just southwest of Fort Worth, but you feel like you've been transported to someplace foreign and exotic — Africa, perhaps, or some little-visited island. Later, as you relax in your "tent," the sense of "roughing it" in the wild is reinforced by the heavy canvas walls.

The "tents" at the camp are permanent structures; heavy canvas stretched over a wood frame with



COURTESY NANCY YOHE

The shy and beautiful kudus usually keep their distance, but if you're lucky, you may make a friend.

concrete floors and a solid roof. The feel of a large tent is maintained with flaps that fold back to reveal a wood and glass door. Two single beds, each with its own nightstand, reading lamp and drawers for storage make for a cozy home-away-from-home.

Air conditioning and a nicely appointed bathroom remind you that the Safari Tent Camp is a very civilized place — at least on the inside of the fence. Even those who consider camping a dirty word will be comfortable here. And while single beds



RONA DISTENFELD/SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

The beautiful cheetahs, wolves, rhinos and ocelot (above and lower right) are the only animals separated from visitors out of more than three dozen species at Fossil Rim.

may not be everyone's idea of a romantic getaway, it's hard to beat sitting on your own private patio, glass of wine in hand, watching the moon rise over the grazing herds.

Wine, beer and soft drinks are available anytime at the honor bar in the Glass Pavilion. This is also where breakfast is served, so you can start your animal-watching with your coffee and eggs.

The 1,800-acre, nonprofit Fossil Rim Wildlife Center is dedicated to saving threatened and endangered species. Every year, thousands of visitors come to do the two-hour drive through the preserve in

their own vehicles, or with one of the guided tours. Spending the night makes the experience much richer.

As you drive through the park, various species of antelope and deer; the llama-like guanaco and oryx calmly wander over to be fed (the park supplies the food), and may even stick their heads inside your car. Wildebeest, bongo and kudu tend to keep their distance, but the zebras may surround you hoping for a handout. The gentle giraffes love it when visitors emerge from a sunroof, and having one eat from your hand is an experience to treasure.

Lunch at the Overlook offers a view of the safari drive, good food and reasonable prices. Try the burger; it's a half pound of Angus beef with waffle fries for \$7.95.

Whether you come for the day or stay at one of the most unusual B&Bs in Texas, Fossil Rim is a short drive to another world.



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