

Exploring the Big Bend Country



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Photographer-naturalist Peter Koch first visited the new Big Bend National Park in February, 1945, on assignment to take promotional pictures for the National Park Service. He planned to spend a couple of weeks - and ended up staying for the rest of his life. Koch's magnificent photographs and documentary film-lectures "Big Bend", "Life in a Desert Wilderness" and "Desert Gold" introduced the park to people across the United States, drawing thousands of visitors to the Big Bend. His photographs and films of the region remain among the best ever produced, and are an invaluable visual record of the first four decades of Big Bend National Park. In this highly readable book, Koch's daughter June Cooper Price draws on the newspaper columns her father wrote for the *Alpine Avalanche*, supplemented by his photographs, journal entries, and short pieces by other family members, to present Peter Koch's vision of the Big Bend. This book opens with his first 'big adventure', a six-day photographic trip through Santa Elena Canyon on a raft made from agave flower stalks. From there, Koch takes readers hiking on mountain trails and driving the scenic loop around Fort Davis. He also describes 'wax smuggling' and other ways of making a living on the Mexican border; ranching in the Big Bend; the prehistory and Native Americans of the region; collaborating with botanist Barton Warnock on books of Trans-Pecos wildflowers; and, the history and beauty of Presidio County, the Rio Grande, and the Chihuahuan Desert.

This fascinating blend of firsthand adventures, natural history, and personal musings on anthropology and history creates an unforgettable portrait of both Peter Koch and the Big Bend region he so loved.

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