

Mission Reach Self-Guided Tour *Roosevelt Park Loop*

Welcome to the Mission Reach!

The Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Project is transforming an eight mile stretch of the San Antonio River into a quality riparian woodland ecosystem. The Mission Reach is a \$245.7 million project that has been made possible through the collaboration of Bexar County, the US Army Corps of Engineers, the City of San Antonio, the San Antonio River Foundation and the San Antonio River Authority. Design of the Mission Reach Project was directed by a stakeholder group consisting of businesses and neighborhood associations called the San Antonio River Oversight Committee to ensure that the project incorporated the needs of the local community.

The Mission Reach Project has four primary objectives. First, the project seeks to maintain or improve flood protection for residents and businesses surrounding the river. Second, the project intends to improve ecosystem function on the San Antonio River by restoring riverine features and riparian woodlands, reintroducing native plants, and enhancing aquatic habitat. Third, the project aims to provide additional recreational opportunities for the San Antonio community to enjoy their river. Finally, the project hopes to restore former historical and cultural connections that tied the San Antonio Missions with the river that brought them here.

This self-guided tour will introduce you to part of Phase I of the Mission Reach, which was open to the public in December 2010. This tour will start and end at Roosevelt Park, where you can find parking, restrooms and a water fountain. Enjoy!

Distance: 0.84 miles

Length: 45 mins – 1 hour





1. Hike and Bike Trails - Once completed in 2013, the Mission Reach will have over 15 miles of ADA accessible trails for pedestrian and bicycle use. The Mission Reach trails form part of a larger trail network that will ultimately stretch from the headwaters of the San Antonio River at Brackenridge Park to Mission Espada. Other recreational amenities of the project include street connections, benches, picnic tables, shade structures and pavilions. Look for some of these features as you tour Phase I of the Mission Reach today.



2. Embayment - An embayment is a water body that mimics natural river features that are created when one bend of the river becomes disconnected from the rest of the channel and forms a pond-like structure. These features were once part of the San Antonio River ecosystem, but they were armored or filled when the river was altered for flood control in the 1950's. The still water of the embayments provides a different aquatic habitat than the fast flowing water of the river, thus supporting a greater diversity of plants and wildlife.



3. Yturri-Edmunds Historic Site - The sidewalk where you are standing now would have at one time been on the opposite bank, as a large curve in the river once stretched around to Mission Road behind you. In fact, if you turn away from the river and look towards Mission Road, you will notice a historic building called the Yturri-Edmunds Historic Site, whose side wall houses a waterwheel. The water wheel may seem bizarre now given the current distance between the house and the river, but it does serve as evidence to the river's former path.



4. Channelization - In the 1950's, Congress authorized a project called the San Antonio Channel Improvements Project to reduce flooding on the San Antonio River and its tributaries. The project channelized the river, thus making it wider and deeper to hold more water and straighter to move floodwaters out of the area more quickly. As a result of the project, the river had little habitat, aesthetic, recreational, cultural, economic or historical value. While maintaining or improving the current level of flood control, the Mission Reach project intends to bring back some of these former values to the river.



5. CPS Power Plant - This CPS power plant was first operated in 1909 using an oil-based fuel source, and by 1923 was providing more than half of the city's electricity needs. After the plant was decommissioned in 2003, a voluntary clean-up process removed oily soil from the site and hazardous materials from the building's interior at a cost of \$5 million. Although it is not currently in use, there are plans for its redevelopment, including the addition of new structures to the property and revitalizing the historic brick structures.



6. Water Edge Landing - The new trails help people get closer to the San Antonio River than they could in the past, but in many places, vegetation still separates the sidewalk from the water. Water edge landings give people a way to approach the river, observe wildlife and listen to the water's movements. While you are encouraged to use these landings to experience the river more fully, you should not attempt to go swimming or enter the water from them. Currently, the City of San Antonio has an ordinance prohibiting contact with the river within the city limits.



7. Pedestrian Bridge – The bridge that you are about to cross is one of six pedestrian bridges along the Mission Reach that connect trails on either side of the San Antonio River. The artistic features on this bridge were funded by the San Antonio River Foundation and designed by a local artist named Mark Schlesinger. The bridge's bright colors are inspired by hues found in our local ecosystem, especially native wildflowers and birds. The look of the bridge is meant to symbolize the meeting of the urban and the natural that occurs on this part of the Mission Reach. In the evening, some of the painted blocks glow in the dark.



8. Weirs - The wall-like structures containing a slanted chute are called weirs, and they are designed to help water lose energy quickly as it flows from a higher elevation to a lower one.



9. Native Vegetation – Planting over 60 species of native grasses and wildflowers is an important part of restoring the native ecosystem on the Mission Reach. Native plants are not only beautiful, but they also play a crucial role in ecosystem health and function. Native plants provide food and habitat for native animals; planting them should increase wildlife in the area. Native plants also have long roots that hold soil in place, thus reducing erosion. Last but not least, native plants aid in improving water quality by filtering polluted stormwater runoff before it enters the river.



10. View of Mission Concepción – When the San Antonio River was straightened for flood control, sometimes the proximity of the Missions to the River was altered and connections between them lost. Restoring these connections is a primary goal of this project. During the construction of Phase I, it was discovered that from this vantage point you can see the top of Mission Concepción over the I-10 bridge. Even though it is almost a mile away, this viewpoint serves as a reminder of the relevance of the San Antonio River to the historic Spanish Missions.



11. Large Trees – Trees are important habitat components and provide shade to people recreating here. Therefore, as many mature trees were left during construction as possible, and more will be planted in the coming years. Ultimately, more than 23,000 trees and shrubs of 39 different species will be planted on the Mission Reach. Young, small trees will be planted because they will be more likely to survive flooding than larger trees. As young trees grow up in the floodplain, they develop deep roots to stabilize themselves during periodic flood events.



12. Street Connection - While pathways are critical for getting people close to the river, they are not useful to the community if people do not have a means to get to these paths. To address issues of access, eight street connections are being constructed along the Mission Reach to connect neighborhoods with the trail system along the river. You are standing at the Lone Star Blvd Street connection, which welcomes people to Phase I of the Mission Reach. Phase I has one other street connection, located at Mitchell Street.



13. Flood Control Tunnel Outlet - The City of San Antonio has had to cope with flooding conditions since the first permanent building was established along the San Antonio River. To reduce flood damages in San Antonio, the San Antonio River Flood Control Tunnel was constructed 1997. The tunnel allows floodwaters to bypass downtown San Antonio by flowing into a 24 ft diameter, 3 mile long tunnel that runs 150 ft under the City of San Antonio. The structure you see here is where the floodwaters exit the tunnel and rejoin the San Antonio River.



14. Signage – From here, you can continue on the trail south towards Mission Concepción. You could also head north past Roosevelt Park and beyond through the original River Walk to the Museum Reach. Regardless of which direction you choose to travel, you will find cohesive signage along every developed part of the river. A committee worked for several years to develop consistent and unified themes, symbols and messaging for all current and future informational and directional signage along the San Antonio River



15. Lone Star Brewery – As you walk back to your car, look across the river at the white building on the opposite bank, the second site of the Lone Star Brewery. The original location was north of here (where the San Antonio Museum of Art is today), but was closed in 1920 due to Prohibition. The building you see here on the Mission Reach opened after the end of Prohibition. It was first called the Sabinas Brewery, but its name was later changed back to the Lone Star Brewery. Before it closed in 1996, this area had expanded to include a park, swimming pool and beer garden, in addition to beer manufacturing.