



Photo by Joyce Space #61818.

Touring Boquillas only takes a couple of hours, and visitors can make the most of it with guided trips led by residents anxious to practice their English and show off their community. Guides greet you when you arrive on shore and work strictly for tips. Although your participation is optional, doing so will add a personal touch, provide safety and positively impact Boquillas' economy.

Boquillas is accessed by traveling to the east side of Big Bend National Park, near the Rio Grande Village campground. The crossing station is open Wednesday through Sunday between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., and official passports are required. You can cross over on foot or by paying \$5 for a round-trip rowboat ride. Transportation into town for nonwalkers costs anywhere from \$5 to \$8.

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St. Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery

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One of our most pleasurable experiences in the Southwest last winter was visiting St. Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery in Florence, Arizona. In 1995 six monks from Greece came to Arizona and bought desert land on which to start a monastery. They were from the historical Mt. Athos in Greece, which is the Holy Mountain for these monks. They began building the most beautiful churches and chapels with icons brought from Greece. They planted vegetable gardens, fruit trees, vineyards and olive tree groves. Today they press and sell olive oil and baked goods in their book store.

Visitors are welcome from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. every day, but you need to be dressed appropriately. Men must wear long-sleeve shirts and pants and no open-toed shoes unless you are wearing socks. Women must wear long,

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loose skirts; long-sleeved loose blouses; scarves on their heads and socks (no sheer stockings). When you arrive, you are greeted by women who are there to help provide necessary clothing. There is no thought to coordinating colors or patterns, but I was well covered over my shorts and tee shirt.

They then offered everyone cake and ice water. A monk gave a short introduction to the grounds and where we may and may not walk. We were given a beautiful map with an explanation of the buildings we would see.

Our first stop was St. Anthony's Church, the largest of the churches on the grounds. There are no pews because traditionally Greek Orthodox people stand for services. Almost everything in the church was brought from Greece. There are no electric lights except for one each over the two chanters' stands. There were five other churches or chapels on the grounds for the 52 monks there today.

As we continued the self-guided tour, we were in awe of the beauty all around us—luscious plant life, fountains, gazebos, flowers and orchards. Each church and chapel had ornate interiors with intricate carvings, tile floors and wood designed ceilings.

There is no charge to visit. Unless there is an event that fills the parking lot, there should be ample parking and maneuvering room, even for large RVs. Florence is northeast of Tucson and southeast of Phoenix. For directions and further information, call or visit their Website.

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