

# SIERRA *la* RANA

ALPINE, TEXAS

THE  
Best *∞* KEPT  
Secret  
IN THE  
Big Bend

IN THE RUGGED COWBOY COUNTRY WEST OF THE PECOS, LANDOWNERS IN TEXAS HAVE WITNESSED DOUBLE-DIGIT RETURNS, THANKS IN PART TO ENDLESS VISTAS, AN INVITING CLIMATE, AND, OF ALL THINGS, NIGHTTIME SKIES.

**A**t Sierra la Rana you are at one with nature. Relax on your front porch as you watch the wildlife, stargaze in some of the darkest skies in the continental U.S., hike or ride a horse on our many trails -- we have it all for you. Sierra la Rana has the ideal four-season climate with dry, pleasant summers, mild winters, clear skies and spectacular sunsets. Sierra la Rana is located on a 11,600-acre gated ranch in the mile-high Davis Mountains north of Big Bend National Park.

Sierra la Rana is wild, pristine, abundant with wildlife and incredibly beautiful. We offer wide-open spaces, gracefully rolling hills, steep canyons, lush meadows and beautiful valleys. Our home sites have been planned to minimize impact on the natural beauty of the property. On this magnificent ranch you will experience tranquility and nature like never before. More species of wildlife and plants are found in Big Bend Country than anywhere else in the Southwestern U.S. The variety of scenic landscapes, wilderness and beautiful southwestern-style homes provides unparalleled beauty.

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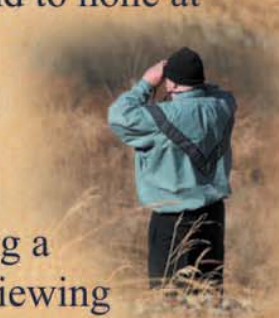
# Explore Sierra la Rana



**T**hink of Sierra la Rana as your own private park. This pioneering cattle ranch encompasses almost 20 square miles and is crisscrossed by more than 10 miles of adventure-filled roads and trails. Truly a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts of all ages and energy levels.

Sierra la Rana is situated on one of the country's best known flyways, making the birding here a world-class experience all year round. More than 450 species of birds have been identified in Brewster County alone, and birdwatchers from around the world are continually traveling to the Big Bend to look for more. Roadrunners, bluebirds, quail -- it's not uncommon to see numerous species feeding right on your property.

Mountain biking, horseback riding, and hiking are second to none at Sierra la Rana. More than 10 miles of old cattle trails and improved roads stretch across the landscape. They combine to offer numerous vistas and challenging terrain that ranges from wide-open flats to steep canyon country. Nature lovers can spend days on end exploring Sierra la Rana while enjoying a complete range of activities from rock collecting to wildlife viewing and plain old relaxing.



## Retiring in the Big Bend

**M**ore than half the buyers at Sierra la Rana purchase their land with one reason in mind -- retirement.

Brenda Wallace finds the strong appeal to retirees and those planning ahead for retirement any thing but surprising. As executive Director of the Alpine Convention and Visitors Bureau and Chamber of Commerce, Wallace has worked closely with scores of individuals considering retir-



ing to the Big Bend. Climate, culture, cost of living -- She lists the many attributes that draws people to the Alpine area.

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**W**ilke had Googled the Big Bend, the huge swath of Texas formed by the enormous elbow in the Rio Grande River as it makes its way south from El Paso and then swings north around the national park that bears the same name. One of the first things that stood out about the area was the presence of the world renowned University of Texas McDonald Observatory. For decades, cutting-edge astronomical research has taken place at this outpost in sparsely populated Jeff Davis County. That confirmed the quality of the stargazing. But what really sealed the deal wasn't the land or the sky, "The biggest thing this area has going for it is the cross-section of people who live here," Wilke said as he nods his head at the other patrons of the Bread and Breakfast.



Since he and his wife purchased their 20 acres, he's added considerable value to his land by contracting with a local well service company to drill a water well. Walter Skinner witched the Wilkes' land and ended up hitting a steady stream of cool clean water at 220 feet. The well came in at 25 gallons a minute. The Wilkes plan to start building in two or three years. Back in Iowa, they have no worries about their investment. "I've never considered buying in a gated community before. The term gated sounds snooty but at Sierra la Rana it means functional. There are a lot of people like us who have bought that haven't moved out here. They're not going to build for a few years. It's good to know our land is secure," he says.

Yet Wilke cautions others about looking at a piece of property strictly as an investment. "If you're buying land to make money, then you're buying it for the wrong reason. Land is a lot like art. You should buy it for your own reasons, not someone else's. Nobody else may like the land that you buy, but if you do, that's what matters."



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**“W**e looked at several other places in different parts of the country. We also checked out different pieces of property that were listed here in the Davis Mountains. But this place has it all— daytime views, nighttime skies, and proximity to this great little town,” he says.

Alpine reminds Wilke of Cicely, Alaska, the quirky setting for the popular 1990's TV show Northern Exposure. “It's a college town, which means you're assured a certain level of cultural activity,” he says. “You can take a class or go to a great festival. It's a stimulating environment, and I need that. It's got a decent little newspaper and a really good hardware store.”

The Wilkes had already bought acreage in Gunnison County, Colorado. They love the bright sunny summers there, but the idea of enduring the long drawn out winters in western Colorado didn't appeal to them. So they decided to start looking for land in a better year round climate. As they began their search, they used two sets of filters to narrow down their list of choices.



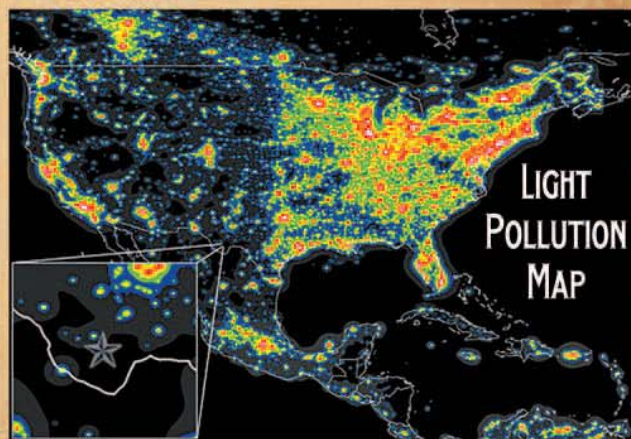
The first list revolved around Wilke's passion for astronomy. High elevation and low humidity were two important factors. Thin air and a dry climate mean less atmospheric interference to hinder the viewing. The closer one gets to the equator, the better because over the course of a year a greater number of constellations are visible. There was one

other factor. Wilke hems and haws a little before sharing a subtle point about stargazing: it has to be dark.

“I know that sounds stupid,” he says, “So let me explain. What an astronomer really means by dark is that you're far from light pollution, far from white light. That means being nowhere near any population centers.” OK, that makes sense. So did Wilkes' List B, which focused on living and quality of life, not the land itself.

Things like proximity to churches, medical facilities, restaurants, and community activities.

**“It's a stimulating environment, and I need that.”**



**LIGHT  
POLLUTION  
MAP**

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**"I** love astronomy. And the Davis Mountains have got some of the finest night sky anywhere in the country. That's why we bought our 20 acres at Sierra la Rana," Wilke explains the following morning over a stack of pancakes and some bacon and eggs at Bread and Breakfast, a bakery and cafe in Alpine, the historic town of 6,000 that is home to Sul Ross State University. Although the university and the town itself are clearly visible from many parts of Sierra la Rana, that's definitely not the case from Wilke's 20 acres, which is exactly the way he wants things. He and his wife, Evonna, spent days roaming the rugged cattle ranch looking for the parcel that combined spectacular daytime view with zero light pollution at night. The 20 acres they bought features Texas-sized vistas: to the south, 6,700-foot Mt. Ord, and on the western horizon, McIntyre Peak lording over a high desert valley.



The Wilkes got a lot more for their investment than just raw land. At the one-of-a-kind ranch community, much of the heavy lifting has already been done for them. Roads have already been put in place. So have all utilities, which are buried underground. Wireless DSL offers convenient Internet access. Many of the most desirable attributes of Sierra la Rana stem from its long history as a working cattle ranch, including more than 10 miles of horse trails, endless hiking opportunities, and an all-important agricultural exemption. A morning tour with



Wilke of his property and Sierra la Rana revealed an abundance of wildlife: mule deer, pronghorn antelope, javelina, and countless birds. As every birdwatcher knows, the Big Bend is a natural flyway for hundreds of different species. More types have been identified at Big Bend National Park than at any other component of the national park system.



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## Testimonial

**I**t's pitch black outside, which is precisely why John Wilke is cautiously placing one foot after the next on the rocky ground that spreads out around him in every direction. The man is on the prowl.



He's looking for something, an unenviable task made even more daunting by the fact that he is doing so at midnight on a moonless night. It's brisk out – the temperature has dropped into the mid forties – and the 47-year-old isn't exactly sure where to go next as he crisscrosses 20 acres on a rugged 11,600-acre ranch high in the Davis Mountains of West Texas right about a mile above sea level. Wilke is a curious man. Not curious in his behavior but curious in his nature. He enjoys rocketry, is an avid fly-fisherman, and wants to set aside some time to learn more about geology and birding. His curiosity is what's got him out and about tonight. The good side to his many interests is that he's got plenty of gear, including the parka he's wearing to ward off the cool mountain breeze that is spiriting over the rolling hills. Slowly but



### THE MILKY WAY



surely he makes his way across the high country pasture. As he scans the endless horizons that encircle him, he skirts several rock outcroppings and a couple varieties of cactus. It's a miracle he hasn't fallen flat on his face, because for the most part his gaze is up to the heavens, not down at his feet.

You would expect someone on this sort of hunt to be using a flashlight, but that's the last thing that Wilke wants in his hands. This search of his involves no man made devices, especially one that emits a white light. Instead, like the mariners of old, he guides himself by the blanket of stars that brighten the night. This is, in fact, the key to his quest, for as it turns out incandescent light is exactly what Wilke does not want to find. It's darkness that he's looking for, coal black skies whose only illumination is the thousands of stars that sparkle diamond-like in the night.

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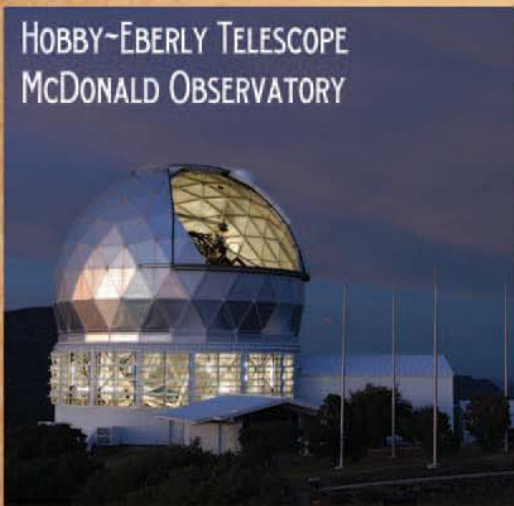


emergency room or for when you're sick. They're dedicated to a healthy community as a whole," says Wallace.

## Sierra la Rana Astronomy Village

**T**he Sierra la Rana Astronomy Village is a designated area of the property with astronomy specific deed restrictions and light pollution controls to maintain the observational quality of the night sky. Our mission is to preserve the Dark Skies designation for our residents, the nearby McDonald Observatory, for the Big Bend Region today and for future generations. We are adopting lighting restrictions to preserve, protect, and enhance the nighttime use and enjoyment of any and all property at Sierra la Rana; reduce problems created by improperly designed and installed outdoor lighting; and minimize adverse effects on

HOBBY-EBERLY TELESCOPE  
MCDONALD OBSERVATORY



The number-one reason for retiring to Alpine is the Big Bend Regional Medical Center. "Big Bend Regional has a fantastic senior care program where they cater to the wellness and social needs of seniors. They have a Senior Circle where residents can sign up for different educational health classes. It's not just an

emergency room or for when you're sick. They're dedicated to a healthy community as a whole," says Wallace.

residents, vehicle operators and pedestrians, the natural environment, and astronomical observations; to encourage "good neighbor" lighting practices and systems that attempt to minimize light trespass and glare from shining onto abutting properties or into street traffic.

### ASTRONOMY VILLAGE PHASE I



- 10-21 ACRE PARCELS
- COMMON VIEWING AREA
- STAGING AREA FOR TELESCOPES
- ELECTRICITY TO STAGING AREA
- PICNIC TABLES
- FUTURE ASTRONOMY CLUBHOUSE WITH WIRELESS DSL, LOUNGE, KITCHENETTE & BATHROOM
- COMMON VIEWING AREA FOR WILDLIFE & BIRDING VIEWING DURING DAYTIME HOURS

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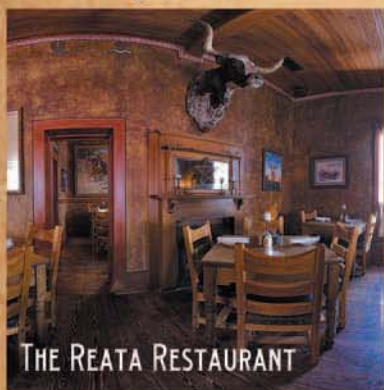


# Come to the Mountains!



**T**ake a trip to West Texas and be our guest on our 11,600-acre ranch where you'll enjoy an unbelievable array of activities. Birding, hiking, mountain biking, stargazing -- our gated ranch community offers all this and so much more. We'll put you up at the renowned CF Ranch (a \$300 value), and we'll even treat you to lunch at the world-famous Reata Restaurant in Alpine.

During your visit, we're sure you'll see why so many



THE REATA RESTAURANT

second home owners and retirees have already staked their claim at Sierra la Rana. Every aspect of this one-of-a-kind community has been carefully planned. Best of all, you're only minutes from historic Alpine, home to Sul Ross State University, a thriving arts community, and complete medical facilities.



Give us a call or drop by our website and let us treat you to West Texas hospitality at its finest!

## SIERRA *la* RANA

ALPINE, TEXAS

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"The first time I  
set eyes on  
this country, I couldn't  
believe I was still in  
Texas."

~JOAQUIN JACKSON,  
RETIRED TEXAS RANGER



# SIERRA *la* RANA

ALPINE, TEXAS

## AMENITIES & IMPROVEMENTS

WORLD-CLASS BIRDING

SUPERB STARGAZING IN SOME OF THE DARKEST  
NIGHTTIME SKIES IN THE LOWER 48

MORE THAN 10 MILES OF TRAILS FOR HIKING,  
HORSEBACK RIDING, AND MOUNTAIN BIKING

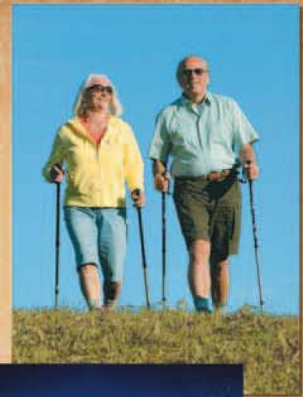
GATED ACCESS

WIRELESS DSL

UNDERGROUND ELECTRIC AND TELEPHONE

AGRICULTURAL EXEMPTION

NO STATE INCOME TAX



### SITE PLAN

**SIERRA  
*la*  
RANA**

ELEVATION  
8,500-9,700 FT.

CITY OF  
ALPINE

BACK  
GATE

QUAIL RIDGE

ANTELOPE HEIGHTS

FRONT  
GATE

DEER RUN

FRANKLIN RIDGE

ASTRONOMY VILLAGE

HIGH SIERRA

SIERRA  
LA RANA

★ -SOLD LOT

■ -EXISTING HOME SITE

**A DARK SKY FRIENDLY COMMUNITY**