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MYTOWNE SILICON VALLEY

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LOS ALTOS, LOS ALTOS HILL  
& MOUNTAIN VIEW

**HOLIDAY BAKING**  
COOKIES FOR GIFTING

**Two Days  
in El Paso**

**M GIFT GUIDE**  
GIFTS & STUFFING STUFFERS

**Raising Smart  
Spenders**

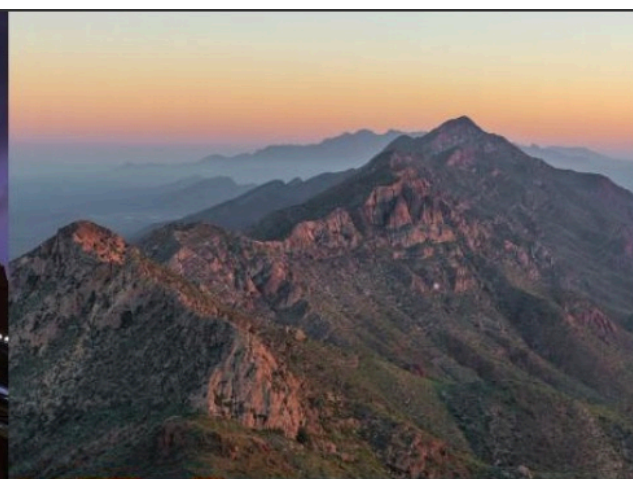
**HOW TO  
OVERCOME  
BURNOUT**

**Less is More**  
DECLUTTERING YOUR HOLIDAYS

**HELP FOR OUR  
FOUR-LEGGED  
FRIENDS**

how to have a  
**happy holiday  
mindset**





The Plaza Hotel Pioneer Park  
Photographed by James Baigrie

## TWO DAYS IN EL PASO

**E**L PASO, A TEXAS BORDER TOWN SET ALONG THE RIO GRANDE, IS WHERE I WENT LOOKING FOR PEACE. It's been a tough year and I needed to get away.

Somewhere under the radar – no tourist traps. I called my youngest sister in Austin and the plan for a Sister Weekend in Texas came together. El Paso, here we come.

### DAY 1

I met my sister at **The Plaza Hotel Pioneer Park**. This boutique hotel has quite a history; it was once the property of the Hilton family, and Elizabeth Taylor and husband numero uno – Conrad 'Nicky' Hilton – once lived in the top floor penthouse which is now **La Perla**, a lovely rooftop bar where guests can sip cocktails and feast on seafood-inspired snacks while watching the spectacular sunset. And that's just what we did – sipped Rooftop Lemonades – as the sun disappeared behind the hills beyond. The perfect way to start a Sister Weekend.

After drinks, we headed downstairs for dinner at the hotel's restaurant, **Ambar** where we feasted on duck in rich, dark mole sauce and succulent braised short ribs.

Sated from our hearty meal, we returned to our room where two big comfy queen

beds dressed in the finest linens awaited our sleepy heads. We had plans to hike at Franklin Mountain State Park early the next day, so a good night's sleep was in order.

### DAY 2

El Paso is a paradise for outdoor activity. Today, we would be hiking through **Franklin State Park** which has over 100 miles of hiking trails. We took an easy hike, admiring varieties of cacti and yucca along the way, and ending atop a grassy knoll where dozens and dozens of butterflies flickered and flitted from flower to flower. Witnessing this glorious affair on a beautiful sunny morning was everything. The 6AM wake-up time was well worth it.

Besides Franklin State Park, **Hueco Tanks State Park** is another must-see if you have the time. The park is a sacred site where Native American ceremonies are still held. Hueco Tanks is best known for bouldering (rock climbing stripped down to the bare essentials – shoes and chalk), and each year the Hueco Rock Rodeo is held at the park.

We spent the rest of the afternoon driving along the border, catching glimpses of adjacent Juarez behind

the newly constructed border walls, hunting for a crystal shop (it was closed), and stopping at the pawn shop where it was rumored that we might get a glimpse of Pancho Villa's trigger finger. Along the way, we met and talked to the people of El Paso and discovered how passionate they were about their town – everyone we talked to was warm and open. We heard the good (El Paso is one of the safest cities in the U.S. thanks to border patrol and high military occupation at Fort Bliss) and the bad (the infamous Walmart shooting) about El Paso. They also told us about Marfa, a small artist's colony a few hours away, Juarez, Mexico where you can cross the border for the tastiest Mexican meal, and New Mexico which is just a few hours away. El Paso is the hub for all of these places.

We ended the day with dinner at **Anson 11**, a cozy bistro where we dined on tasty mussels and fries and savory meatloaf. After dinner we set off to watch the Sun City Crit, an exciting high speed bike race that El Paso was hosting that evening.

Two days went by quickly and we truly enjoyed our stay. And from what we've learned from the lovely people we'd met, it just might be a place to come back to. ✨