

Tin Mines Hike

Distance: 6.5 miles round trip
Elevation Gain: 935 ft
Hike Time: 3.5 hours
Difficulty: Easy
Trail Condition: Well maintained trail
HikeType: Out and Back

Summary: From the trailhead, climb to the top of the concrete dam. Turn south (left) on the dam and follow the trail right to the bottom of the dam. Turn north and follow the trail 0.15 miles north until you see a gate directly to your left. Turn west (left), proceed past the gate, pick up the jeep road curving north-west, and follow this road all the way to the junction at 2.75 miles. From the junction, turn south (left) for the south mine and smelter. (Follow the narrow trail west past the mine for the entrance.) Proceed straight ahead and curve north to the north mine. (Follow stairs down below the mine for the lower entrance.) Bring a flashlight.

Directions: From the Junction of Loop 375 (Trans Mountain Road) and U.S. Hwy 54 (Patriot Freeway) go north 1.65 miles to the junction of Farm Road 3255 (War Hwy). Turn left on 3255 and go north 0.5 miles to Jon Cunningham. Turn left on Jon Cunningham and go to Chuck Heinrich Park (11055 Loma Del Norte Dr.) at the end of the road. Park in the lot. The hike starts at the posts. (Lat:31.93252 Lon:-106.44922)

(From: http://www.localhikes.com/Hikes/FMSPTinMines_2320.asp)



The El Paso Tin Mining and Smelting Company operated a tin mine on the northeast slope of North Franklin from 1909–1915. While the mine had the distinction of being the only tin mine ever located in the U.S., the venture was an economic failure. Today, a trail leading to the ruins of the mine forks off the North Franklin Peak Trail, just east of Mundy's Gap. (Wikipedia)



The [El Paso Tin Mining and Smelting Company](#) operated in the northeast Franklins from 1909 until 1915 when it was shut down for lack of productive ore. The principal mineral was [cassiterite](#). The University of Texas-El Paso's Art Harris wrote: "What most of us don't know is that cassiterite, the major ore of tin, is rare in the United States and Mexico, and we are reliant on sources in Malaya, Bolivia, Indonesia, Zaire, Thailand, and Nigeria. One of the few sources in the United States was located in the northern Chihuahuan Desert, on the eastern side of the Franklin Mountains. These tin mines were founded in 1909 and worked until 1915. However, during this time span, only 160 100-pound pigs of tin were recovered [a 'pig' is a smelted block of the crude metal], and the mines were abandoned as uneconomical. At least 27 shafts and trenches were dug. Today, these lie within the Franklin Mountains State Park, presented to visitors as part of our regional history."

If you are really interested in the history and geology of the Tin Mines, there is a very informative 1901 publication by the U.S. Geological Survey that you can [read online](http://pubs.usgs.gov/bul/0178/report.pdf) (<http://pubs.usgs.gov/bul/0178/report.pdf>).

<http://alpinedailyplanet.typepad.com/alpine-daily-planet/2012/09/hike-the-nations-only-tin-mine-in-el-pasos-franklin-mountains-on-saturday.html>