



SOUTH TEXAS ECOTOURISM CENTER

Laguna Vista, Texas

THIS 10-ACRE ECOTOURISM HUB SERVES as a focal point for visitors to enjoy and learn about the beauty and cultural heritage of the 428-mile Caracara Trail in the coastal Rio Grande Valley. Funded through a half-penny hotel tax, the center was designed to catalyze local economic development. It educates the public about how the site's modified natural river cutoff captures and recycles stormwater and teaches about the valley's four ecosystems through interactive exhibits, signage, on-site educators, sculptures depicting native wildlife, and more than 48,000 native plantings. Popular with hikers and birdwatchers, the center is a starting place for traversing loma hills and lagoons, gazing upon migratory birds and viewing the wildlife of the adjacent Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge.

A two-story-high boardwalk allows visitors to take in sweeping views and learn more about the wetlands, coastal prairies, and animal species native to South Texas. (Got a climate win-win that makes your Community Green? Tell us about it: email mstromberg@planning.org.)