

Rocket reaches for the stars.

The next stop was one Texas-sized observatory. The domes of the McDonald Observatory are on top of Mount Locke and Mount Fowlkes near Fort Davis. They were built here because the isolation and elevation of this land made it an ideal location for viewing outer space.



McDonald Observatory has three primary telescopes:

1. The Struve (82" in diameter)
2. The Smith (107" in diameter)
3. The Hobby-Eberly Telescope (HET) (433" in diameter)



William Johnson McDonald, an amateur astronomer, gave a large portion of his estate to the University of Texas in 1926, so that the universe could be studied.



Stars aren't the only things that can be seen in the skies above the Big Bend area. About 40 miles from the McDonald Observatory lies the town of Marfa, Texas. For over 100 years, people here have reported seeing strange lights in the night sky. These lights, known as the Marfa Mystery Lights, have baffled people for decades.

Martians or Marfans...
Who knows?

