

# Pecos River Bridge

The landscape in this part of West Texas may look fairly stark and barren, and water is not always visible. But it is here, where the train crosses one of the most impressive sights along its route, bringing the desolate landscape and water into one memorable view. The Pecos River lies hidden in the background until the moment the train crosses the river at a height of nearly 260 feet (79.2 meters). For many years the Pecos River Bridge was recognized as the highest railroad bridge in North America and the third highest in the world. The waters of the Pecos River back up from Lake Amistad near Del Rio and as a result, the water levels do fluctuate and the bridge can be as high as 355 feet (108 meters) above the river or as low as 260 feet (79.2 meters). The bridge itself is 1,390 feet (424 meters) long and offers panoramic views from the train.

The bridge that Amtrak currently uses to cross the Pecos River was built in 1944 and is actually the third bridge to be built in this area to allow rail travel across the river. The first bridge was built in 1883 at the mouth of the Pecos where it joins the Rio Grande River. It required a lot of twisting grades and two tunnels and was prone to rockslides and flooding. In 1892 a second bridge was completed to the north of the current railroad bridge - built in only 87 working days. With the completion of the 1892 Pecos High Bridge, the rail route was shortened by 11 miles (18 kilometers). This bridge went through various modifications and strengthening so that ever increasing weights of trains could be accommodated. Remnants of the 1892 bridge and the old railroad bed can still be seen about 440 feet (134 meters) north of the present day bridge. As passenger trains passed over the bridge, they would slow down, allowing passengers to view the beauty of the Pecos River Canyon.

With heavier trains and increasing rail traffic, a new Pecos River High Bridge was constructed and opened in 1944 and this is the current bridge we cross.

## Source(s):

[http://www.texasescapes.com/TOWNS/Texas\\_ghost\\_towns/Langtry\\_Texas/Langtry\\_scenic\\_overlook.htm](http://www.texasescapes.com/TOWNS/Texas_ghost_towns/Langtry_Texas/Langtry_scenic_overlook.htm)

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/PP/erp2.html>

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