

## Day Trips from Houston in the Texas Forest Trail Region

Randy, we developed this for Houston Travelers. My comments and updates are in red. I am also sending a list of our more Northern Sites. -- Chay

Encompassing 35 counties, the Texas Forest Trail Region has a lot to offer the day tripper. Historic sites, house museums and art museums abound in the region. The cultural and natural landscape of the piney woods also offers visitor from the city a refreshing get-a-way from the city. Four National Forests and numerous State Forests are located in the aptly named Texas Forest Trail Region. These forests hold a wealth of interesting sites not only for the tourist interested in nature, but the heritage traveler interested in the development of East Texas.

**Beaumont:** This Main Street City located in the Golden Crescent offers visitors many museums and historic sites to visit. Visit the McFaddin-Ward House, a restored beaux-arts mansion built 1906-1908. The French Historic House and Museum gives visitors a chance to see a pioneer settlement house, built in 1845. The Art Museum of Southeast Texas has a permanent collection of paintings and sculpture and also features travelling exhibits. Other galleries in the area include the Brown-Scurlock Galleries and the Dishman Art Gallery on the campus of Lamar University. Visitors to Beaumont can also see Spindletop, where the Texas Oil Boom started, then continue on the Texas Energy Museum, which spotlights oil discoveries in Texas. Nature lovers won't want to miss Tyrrell Park with its 500 acres of virgin woodland and botanical gardens. Nearby: the Big Thicket National Preserve in Kountze and Woodville.

**Orange:** Also located in the Golden Crescent, Orange boasts numerous shops and museums. The W. H. Stark House, a 1894 Victorian mansion, and the Heritage House museum, built in 1902 will keep heritage travelers to Orange busy. Also of note are the Stark Museum of Art and the Farmer's Mercantile. Visit the new Texas Travel Information Center located on the Blue Elbow Swamp, with its 650 boardwalk stretching into the swampland. Visitors can also take the Super Gator Airboat Tour and see the beauty of the swampland.

**Port Arthur:** The Museum of the Gulf Coast features exhibits of Port Arthur's rich history from its birth in 1840 to its most famous daughter, Janis Joplin. Visitors interested in the Civil War will want to visit the Sabine Pass Battleground State Historical Park, the site of the Sept. 8, 1863 battle between the Union fleet and the Confederate army. Other important stops in Port Arthur include White Haven, a Greek Revival Mansion and the Pompeiian Villa built in 1900 for Isaac Ellwood, the "barbed-wire king." Nearby: The National Wildlife Refuge gives visitors a glimpse at Southeast Texas wildlife including alligators, and tremendous concentrations of waterfowl. I don't know if you have been here in a

while, but the museum of the gulf coast is a really wonderful museum. Contact Shannon Hansen at [shannon.hansen@lamarpa.edu](mailto:shannon.hansen@lamarpa.edu) or 409-984-6444

**Huntsville:** Visitors to Huntsville will be greeted by the 66-foot statue of Sam Houston, who made his home in the city. The Sam Houston Memorial Museum Complex features two of Houston's homes and six additional building on 15 acres originally belonging to Houston. The Gibbs Powell House Museum, a Greek Revival home is also open for visitors. One of the state's most unusual museums, The Texas Prison Museum is located in Huntsville and features exhibits on the state prison system. Huntsville is also a Main Street city and its historic downtown features murals by renowned artist Richard Haas. Travelers can also enjoy nature in the Huntsville State Park and in the nearby Sam Houston National Forest.

**Crockett:** Located in the heart of the Davy Crockett National Forest, Crockett features a diverse selection of historic homes, antique stores as well as breathtaking scenery. The Monroe-Crook House, a 1854 historic Greek Revival home is open for tours, as is the Visitor Center-Museum located in the restored 1909 railroad depot. Nearby: Mission Tejas State Historic Park, reconstructed structure commemorating the Mission San Francisco De Los Tejas Spanish Mission built in 1690 and the Mt. Blanco Fossil Museum featuring a display of prehistoric artifacts.

**Nacogdoches:** Rich in history, nine flags have flown over Nacogdoches, which began as the site of an Indian Settlement of the Nacogdoche Indians. Today the town boasts many antique stores and bed and breakfasts as well as historic sites and museums. Of note is Millard's Crossing, a reconstructed historic village on 37 acres. Other historic sites include the Old Stone Fort Museum on the campus of Stephen F. Austin State University, the Sterne-Hoya House museum, and the Old Nacogdoches University built in 1858. In the springtime, Nacogdoches comes alive with colorful blooms of dogwoods, pear trees and azaleas. The Stephen F. Austin Mast Arboretum & Native Plant Center, the Ruby Mize Azalea Trail, and the Lanana Creek offer nature lovers miles of paths through the woods. Another great site is the Interpretive Forest, between Nacogdoches and Lufkin. It offers a fully accessible hiking trail. (Contact: Ron Thill, Project Leader SRS-4251 U.S. Forest Service, Southern Research Station Wildlife Habitat & Silviculture Lab 506 Hayter St. Nacogdoches, TX 75965-3556 Phone: 936-569-7981 Fax: 936-569-9681 E-mail: [rthill@fs.fed.us](mailto:rthill@fs.fed.us) ) Another incredible attraction, and brand new is the Camp Tonkawa Springs Park in Nacogdoches County. Think Barton Springs in Austin without the huge crowd! It was developed as a boy scout camp by the CCC, then used by Ozarka as a water filling station. Now it's a park with RV hookups and picnic spaces. I HIGHLY recommend this spot!! (936) 564-8888.

**Lufkin:** Located near two National Forests, the Angelina National Forest and the Davy Crockett National Forest, Lufkin is a haven for bird watchers and heritage

travelers. The Museum of East Texas, housed in a restored 1905 Episcopal Church features exhibits in art, science and history. The Texas Forestry Museum gives insight to early logging operations that were instrumental in the development of East Texas. Nearby: Lake Sam Rayburn and the Aldridge Sawmill site (with the remains of an early logging town), located in the Angelina National Forest.

**San Augustine:** Located on the Camino Real, San Augustine is known as the "cradle of Texas liberty." The town features many historic homes and sites including the Ezekiel Cullen home and the Mission Senora del los Dolores de los Ais, first established in 1716. Nearby: the Sabine National Forest and Lake Sam Rayburn. (Contact Liz Ware, San Augustine Chamber of Commerce: 936-275-0054 or [sacc@qzip.net](mailto:sacc@qzip.net))

### **Other quick trips:**

**Jasper:** Visitors to Jasper can tour the Beaty-Orton House and take in the beautiful natural scenery of the Angelina National Forest and the Siecke State Forest. Nearby: Martin Dies Jr. State Park. This park offers monthly "floating the forks tours" and guided birding tours. Also, in the Angelina National Forest there is the Aldridge Saw Mill site. Which is in desperate need of preservation, but is an incredible site. (Contact: Catherine Albers, National Forests in Texas, (936) 468-1359 or email: [calbers@sfasu.edu](mailto:calbers@sfasu.edu))

**Newton:** In the spring, Newton boasts the wild azalea canyon trail featuring native azaleas and other plant life. Visitors to Newton can also tour the Sylvan Nature Trail and visit the Newton County History Center and Museum. This azalea canyon is really a fantastic hidden jewel!!

**Woodville/Livingston:** Home of the Alabama –Coushatta Indian Reservation, this part of East Texas features the dense wooded area known as the Big Thicket. The Reservation is open for visitors as is the nearby Kirby State Forest. The Heritage Village Museum is a open-air historic village created by Clyde Gray. Travelers can also visit the Shivers Library and Museum given to the people of Woodville by Governor and Mrs. Allan Shivers.

**Center:** The restored Shelby County Courthouse is the centerpiece of downtown Center that features many shops and historic homes. Located in the Sabine National Forest, Center is also home to the Shelby County Museum, which features displays on Shelby County, one of the original counties of the Republic of Texas.