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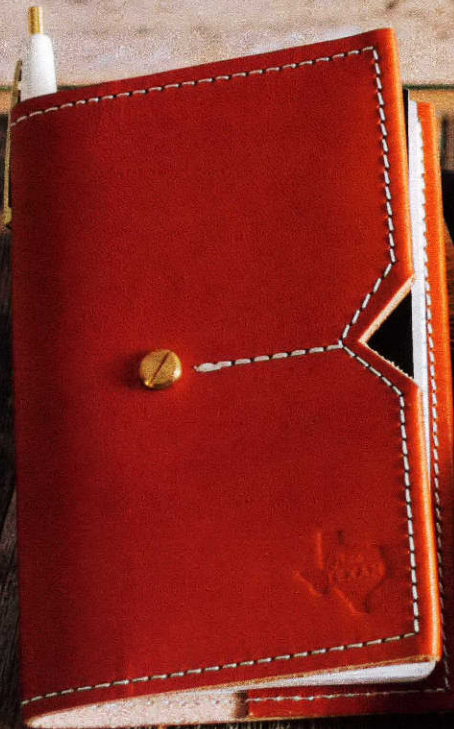


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EDITOR'S NOTE



Endless Summer Possibilities

IN A STATE AS BIG AND DIVERSE as Texas, the options for travel and must-see destinations can seem endless, in a good way. Our features this month aptly reflect the myriad choices as our writers pursue disparate activities from fishing and paddle boarding at restorative lakeside retreats, to bronc riding and chuckwagon cooking at the original ranch rodeo, to running the field and touring hallowed halls at football stadiums across the state. And because these pages can't contain all of the must-do activities in August, we invite you to visit our website, texashighways.com, to view our End of Summer Bucket List, full of ideas for making the most of the final month of summer. Also exclusively online this month, we offer refreshing watermelon recipes for enjoying summer's quintessential fruit, a definitive guide to viewing bat flights across Texas, and a look at New Braunfels' Whitewater Amphitheater for music to float by.

If you haven't visited our website recently, now's a perfect time to check back in as we offer a number of ways to stay

updated on all things Texas travel. Our weekly Monday Mailbox hits highlights of new attractions and travel news while our Wednesday events roundup presents our curated list of things to do each weekend. You can also plan your next trip with our events calendar, the most comprehensive resource for happenings across the state.

Beyond connecting with our content online, it's a great place to provide your feedback and opinions. Periodically, we poll our Facebook audience for their thoughts on stories in progress. A few months back we asked our Facebook followers for their picks for the 7 Wonders of Texas, which you can look for in next month's issue. Be sure to follow our social media accounts to offer your opinion on future stories, engage with fellow True Texans, and stay up-to-date on the latest options for traveling our great state.

Emily R Stone

EMILY ROBERTS STONE, *Editor*

Catch our End of Summer Bucket List, including recommended activities at coastal destinations like Port Aransas, at texashighways.com.



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AUGUST

36

Ranch Roundup

Working cowboys and cowgirls from Texas' most historic ranches compete for the title at Wichita Falls' original ranch rodeo—the “granddaddy of ‘em all.”

Story by **KATHRYN JONES**
Photographs by
DAVE SHAFER

44

Summer Hideaways

Looking for ways to beat the heat? We present three serene lakeside retreats, perfect for cooling off and letting out your inner child.

Story by **DAN OKO**
Photographs by
JENNY SATHNGAM

54

Pigskin Palaces

Cowboys' coach Tom Landry said, “Football is to Texas what religion is to a priest.” Get ready for football season with a tour of the state's most dazzling stadiums.


Story by **JOHN LUMPKIN**
Photographs by
ERICH SCHLEGEL



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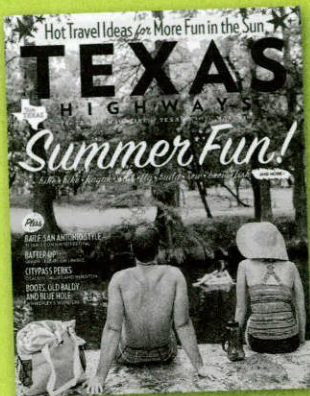
The Texas State Aquarium has doubled in size with the new Caribbean Journey, including a 400,000 gallon shark habitat, a Yucatan-style bird atrium, and a sloth named Xena. There's so much to do—chillax at the beach, explore the massive USS Lexington

aircraft carrier, float the Torrent Tidal Wave River at Schlitterbahn Riverpark and Resort and indulge in fresh seafood galore.

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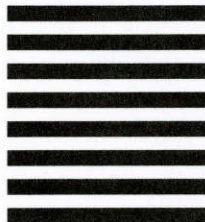
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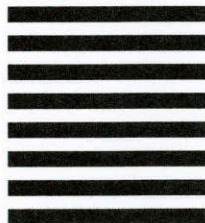
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AUGUST



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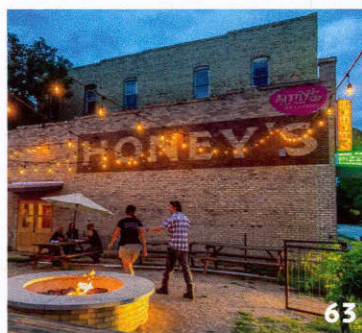
ZZ Top's sharp-dressed frontman

81 SIGHTSEER

The stars at night are big and bright



80



COVER

The Retreat at Artesian Lakes
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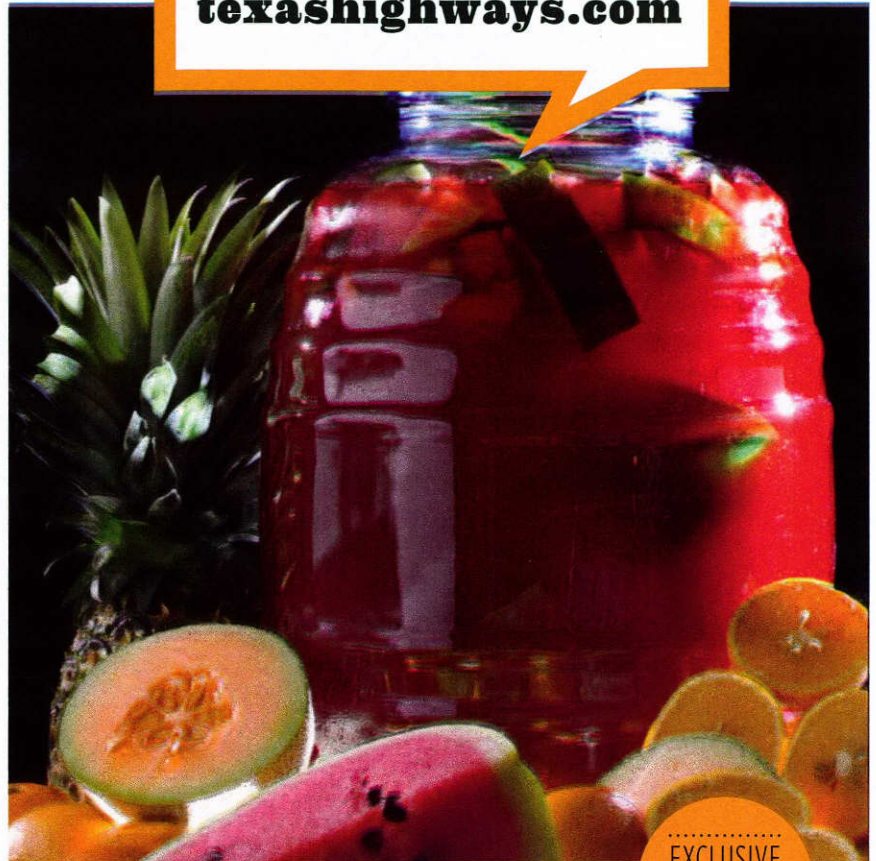
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CONTENT

AUGUST

Juicy Fruit

The quintessential summer fruit's sweet, juicy flesh is the antidote to sweltering heat. Simply enjoy a fresh, cold slice of watermelon, or make it the base for the refreshing recipes we share.

THE MUSIC'S FLOWIN'

New Braunfels' natural Whitewater Amphitheater setting makes way for music amidst ancient cypress trees; tubing, rafting, and canoeing; and a homecoming for noted singer-songwriter Ryan Bingham.

GONE BATTY

International Bat Nights are set for Aug. 24-27, but we'll help you experience Texas' spectacular nightly bat flights all summer long with this definitive list, along with Austin's upcoming BatFest celebration.



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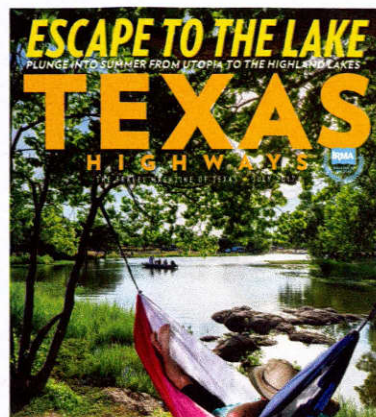
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MERGE

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

I'm moving back to Texas after a few years of being gone. My heart is happy!

DONNA LENZ, FALCON, COLORADO



OUR FAVORITE SOCIAL MEDIA OF THE MONTH



Sylvia Mae's in Jacksonville [June] is the best food ever! I told Shirley, "I'm full, but no way am I stopping yet!" JUNE STOCKS FERGUSON, DALLAS

The TEXAS play at Palo Duro Canyon is well worth it. Even my techno-run teens enjoyed it. JULLEE GREEN, ALVIN



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All Aboard!

When I was 12 years old my mother would put me on a train at Union Station in downtown Dallas and send me to Hollis, Oklahoma, to visit her sister. This was the '60s, and a girl always wore a dress on the train. There was no air conditioning, so we had to keep the windows open. The porter, who was dressed in a white coat with black bow tie, would come around with a bottled Coke, ham sandwich with mayonnaise and a slice of American cheese, and a bag of Fritos. I never had a more delicious sandwich. It took five hours to get to Vernon, where my aunt would pick me up, and we would drive to Hollis. It was always in the summer, so you know that red dirt was flying across the plains! I'm 64 now, and those train trips feel like yesterday.

Pam Richmond, McKinney

La Grange Roots

"Bohemian Rhapsody" in the June issue took me back to my roots. The Migl House at the Texas Czech Heritage and Cultural Center was the girlhood home of my grandmother, Terezia Migl. The

paintings on the walls of St. Mary's Church of the Assumption in Praha were done by my father's uncle, Msgr. Louis Netardus, the pastor.

John Netardus, Slidell, Louisiana

Out to Lunch

"Out to lunch" is an idiom roughly meaning "too strange or confused to understand what is happening." Well, that pretty well describes the four of us old geezers who mounted our metal steeds for a ride from Austin to Jacksonville for lunch at Sylvia Mae's [June], a soul food restaurant. Chicken and dumplings was the special for Tuesday, so Tuesday it was. Of course there was also chicken-fried chicken, greens, mashed potatoes, fried

cornbread, and other health-food suggestions handpicked to give your cardiologist a heart attack.

After riding 240 miles for lunch, we did not hold back. I think between the four of us we ordered everything on her extensive menu. Sylvia was amazing. She only had two young helpers, yet was doing the cooking, taking orders, and socializing with her customers as if it was a day off for her. Unpretentious, unassuming, and humble, Sylvia was just delightful.

We might have found lunch closer to home, but the charm of the little town, wonderful food, and Sylvia Mae made the trip worthwhile.

Nathan Gibson, Austin



Home of the Red Taco

The best puffy tacos are the Red Tacos at The Original Casa Mañana in Wichita Falls. The puffy taco has that light, airy feel to it, and then they have a wine sauce they add—kind of like a really elegant and smooth, red-wine infused French dressing. It complements the spice of the meat and the crisp of the lettuce and the cheese. They also make their own chips, a real thick corn chip, and they fry them up daily, and their hot sauce and queso are just mouthwatering. It's a must try even if it's not on your route. It's worth the detour!

VANESSA BEENE, Archer City

The Original Casa Mañana, 609 8th St. in Wichita Falls, opens Mon-Sat 11 a.m.-7:30 p.m. Call 940-723-5661 or find them on Facebook.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! Send feedback and recommendations to: Texas Highways, P.O. Box 141009, Austin, TX, 78714-1009. Email: letters@texashighways.com.



SCENIC ROUTE

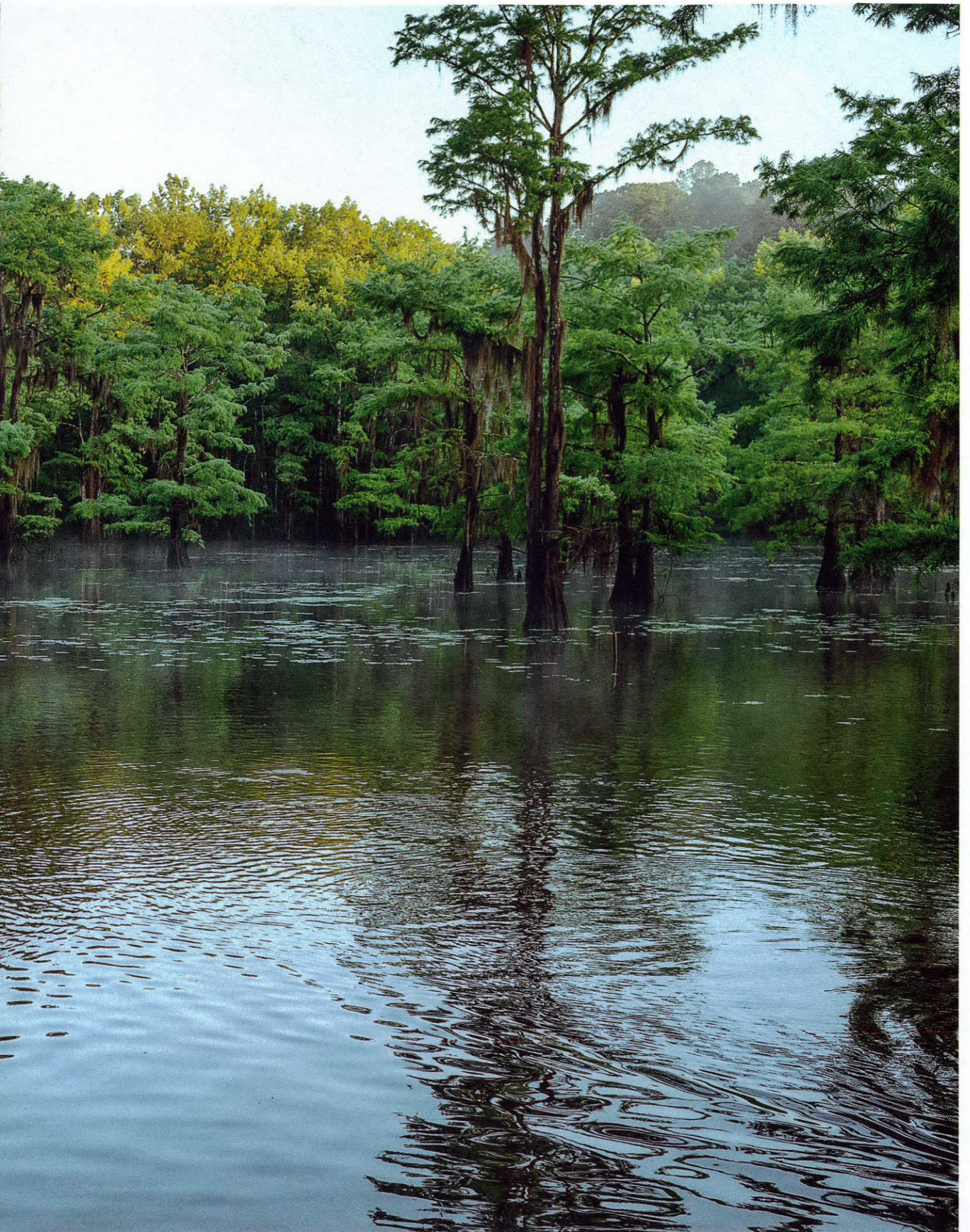
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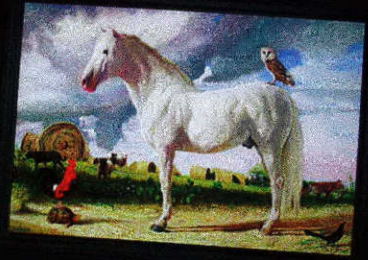




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A Creek Runs Through It

Adventure and comfort
at Chandler Ranch
on Independence Creek

story by **Matt Joyce**

Set among the low-desert mesas of the Pecos River watershed, Chandler Ranch sparkles with the spring-fed waters of Independence Creek and a spring-fed swimming pool.

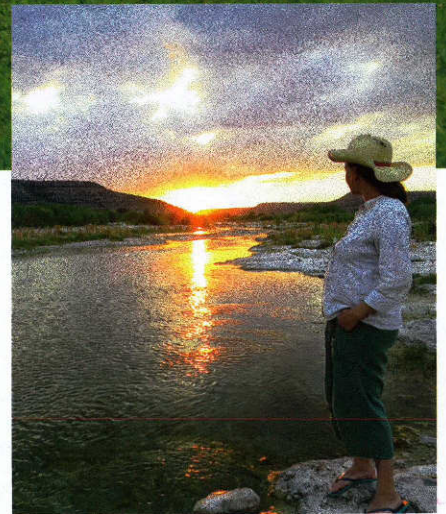


WE WERE JUST A MINUTE OR TWO FROM PULLING into Chandler Ranch when a roadrunner popped out of the roadside scrub and ran alongside the car for a few seconds. I tapped the brakes, and the kids strained their necks from the backseat to watch as the spindly bird overtook us and darted across the dirt road before disappearing into a thicket of mesquite. It felt like a good omen.

“Oh, you saw a roadrunner?” asked the Chandler Ranch cook, Richard Jasso, later that evening as he welcomed us with a dinner of hearty chicken enchiladas. “There are a lot of them out here. The Indians used to say it’s good luck when a roadrunner crosses your path.”

I imagine people have felt lucky for thousands of years when arriving at this spot on Independence Creek, a ribbon of pristine spring water running through the rough and rocky West Texas desert. Back in the late 1800s, a young cowboy named Charlie Chandler fell in love with this valley and started buying land to build his own ranch along the creek and its confluence with the Pecos River. Today, Charlie’s descendants welcome guests

“My generation has a lot to be thankful for that previous generations had that grit and left us something that we as stewards of the land must take care of for future generations. It would be a shame to lose the heritage that we have here today.”



to explore the ranch’s countryside with a home base of comfortable cabins and satisfying ranch cooking.

“The Chandlers have been here over 100 years on this very piece of land where you’re sitting today,” said Joe Chandler, Charlie’s great-grandson, who reopened the ranch to the public in 2014 after it had been closed for three decades. “Whatever you decide

Children (and adults) are sure to sleep well after a day of playing, swimming, and exploring along Independence Creek at Chandler Ranch.

you want this ranch to be for you, it can be. Some people just want to sit right here and be peaceful. There are a lot of people who love the beauty and the wildlife of it. And some want to be a real part of it—the swimming, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, exploring.”

It's the water that sets this place apart. Over a weekend stay, we kayaked the Pecos River for a two-hour trip, marveling at towering orange limestone bluffs and stopping at the confluence with Independence Creek to dip in the cool, fresh water. We cast fishing lines in the creek and in ponds stocked with bass, perch, and catfish. We swam for hours in the spring-fed swimming pool at the ranch headquarters, with a peaceful view of the gurgling creek and surrounding hills. And we lounged beneath the shade of an oak grove, sipping sweet iced tea and spotting birds like painted buntings, scissortailed flycatchers,

and black-chinned hummingbirds.

Set in a transition zone between the Edwards Plateau, Tamaulipan Thornscrub, and Chihuahuan Desert, this sparsely populated region consists of low-desert grassland mesas bisected by the rocky canyons and bluffs of the Pecos River watershed. Chandler Ranch's all-inclusive stay includes the use of a mule (a four-wheel drive, gas-powered golf cart) to explore the live-oak forests along the creek—shady wildlife sanctuaries where the temperature feels 10 degrees cooler—and the rugged backcountry. We noted an array of exciting wildlife sightings, including a rattlesnake, a Western coach-whip snake, white-tailed deer, jackrabbits and cottontails, and two hog-nosed skunks. From a distance, the surrounding hills may look like monotone swaths of brown and muted green, but our hikes revealed thick, colorful, and prickly vegetation—ocotillo, sotol, all

manner of cactus, acacia, mountain laurel, sideoats grama.

Independence Creek runs with water for only about 8 miles and gets a quarter of its flow from Caroline Springs, just upstream from Chandler Ranch at The Nature Conservancy's Independence Creek Preserve. To protect Independence Creek, the conservancy has acquired 20,000 acres in the area over the past 25 years. Its efforts started in 1991 with the purchase of a conservation easement from Chandler Ranch stipulating that the ranch wouldn't develop or subdivide its creek-side property, which covers about two-and-a-half miles up from the Pecos confluence.

Chandler Ranch made the easement deal during a lull in its 60-year history as a guest ranch, Joe said. Joe's grandparents, Joe and Mildred Chandler, first opened the ranch to the public as a fishing camp during the infamous



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CHANDLER RANCH

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drought of the 1950s, when raising sheep, goats, and cattle became untenable. Over the years, the Chandlers added amenities—including a popular golf course in 1964, which was later returned to nature as part of the conservation easement—and the Chandlers' place became a well-known getaway among West Texans. Joe and Mildred eventually got too old to run the guest ranch and it fell into disrepair, including damage from a 2004 flood that destroyed many of the structures.

The younger Joe Chandler, who grew up on the ranch and in nearby Iraan, spearheaded the guest ranch's recent revival with his wife, Nan. They rebuilt three of the cabins—one sleeps six and two sleep four—with plush but sensible furnishings that reflect the West Texas setting. "I was looking for rustic, natural, and extremely comfortable," Nan said. "I want the wives to be comfortable and have every amenity they wish they could have when they come out here." (There are no TVs in the rooms, but Wi-Fi is available at the dining hall.)

Meanwhile, Richard came on board to develop the kitchen. Joe said he interviewed a few chefs who brought plans for fancy cuisine, but he found his man in Richard, a journeyman chef and jack-of-all-trades who landed his first cooking job nearly 40 years ago at Luigi's, a popular spot in downtown Midland. During our visit, Richard spoiled us with downhome meals like pork ribs, cheeseburgers, crispy tacos stuffed with *picadillo*, French toast, pancakes, and sumptuous desserts including *tres leches* cake.

"I finally got my dream job," Richard said. "My motto is that no one is ever going to leave out of here hungry."

Word about Chandler Ranch is

getting out, both among families that vacationed here in the 1960s and new customers. Joe said the ranch hosted more people in the spring of 2017 than in all of 2016. Plans for the next two years include refurbishing a fourth cabin and building a headquarters house with a new kitchen/restaurant and three hotel rooms.

Joe, who lives and works in Houston, said rebuilding the guest ranch has been a labor of love, a calling to restore pride in the Chandler Ranch and his family's heritage.



RANCH READ

Charlena Chandler chronicles the history of the Chandler Ranch in her book *On Independence Creek, The Story of a Texas Ranch* (Texas Tech University Press, 2004).

"My generation has a lot to be thankful for that previous generations had that grit and left us something that we as stewards of the land must take care of for future generations," he said. "It would be a shame to lose the heritage that we have here today."

Yes it would. The Chandlers occupy a remarkable spot in the rough-and-tumble West Texas landscape, and we're lucky that it's open to guests. I was contemplating the extraordinary setting one morning as I hiked along Independence Creek's gravel bank with my 7-year-old daughter. We spotted bass and minnows in the clear riffles and watched the sunrise illuminate the rugged hillsides. After several minutes of natural silence, trickling water, and birdsong, my daughter spoke up: "What's that Richard said he's gonna make tonight, banana pudding cheesecake pie?"

Did I mention the food is good? 🍴



Ranch-Style Dreams

Dude ranching, family-style, in Bandera

story by **Cynthia J. Drake**

EVEN THE QUALITY OF LIGHT LOOKS DIFFERENT here, I think, watching as my boys amble down from a rusty wagon, whooping and hollering among the horses, donkeys, and a lone pot-bellied pig at Rancho Cortez in Bandera.

At sunset, the ranch is washed in golden light, sparkling on the green pastures and hay bales. Our ranch hand, Dakota Mayhall, has lit a campfire for us in a giant pit, and the task of s'mores-making is well under way.

We have spent the day pretending to be cowboys, and soon it will be time to round up the kiddos and hunker down for the night.

Rancho Cortez is a 250-acre guest ranch situated next to the 5,500-acre Hill Country State Natural Area. After spending time in Louisiana, East Texas, and California, Larry Cortez and his wife, Mary, moved to Bandera—known as the Cowboy Capital of the World—with their children, Katherine (K.D.) and Anthony, opening the ranch in 2002.

Visitors can come for a few hours or spend the full day here, and the ranch has room for about 90 people to stay overnight in bunkhouse-style accommodations or Western-themed cabins, so it's perfect for retreats, children's camps, and family reunions. Our cabin has one main bedroom for us, plus an alcove with two sets of bunk beds for our boys.

But the experience really begins upon arrival: After making the journey down Hay Hollar Road, past rolling hills and Longhorn cattle, you arrive at the gate and your cell phone promptly loses its signal. That's part of the draw, employees say.

"Many of our guests are living in cities, and the kids don't have the chance to get out and run around and be kids," Cortez says. "We want people to come out and see a little bit of what Texas is about, outside the traffic."

Because of the relaxed pace, there

At sunset, the ranch is washed in golden light, sparkling on the green pastures and hay bales.

Put down your cell phone: Activities at Rancho Cortez include horseback riding, swimming, hiking, and unwinding.

isn't really a set itinerary at Rancho Cortez. Upon check-in, office manager Cheryl Belcher gives us safety waivers to sign if we want to ride horses, and she lets us know about trail rides and meal times. But everything apart from that is up to us.

There are hiking trails, a game room, outdoor and indoor pools, hot tub, playground with swings and a slide, and, of course, animals aplenty. Our boys immediately size up the playground before moving on to an area stocked with lassos, which they use to pretend to rope cattle.

Two-year-old Crosby is intrigued by the horses in the riding ring, but when it comes time to climb into the saddle, he defers to his 6-year-old brother, August. I walk August on horseback in the ring as he gains confidence, and soon we are told it's time for our trail ride.

Mayhall puts August on a chestnut-



FITNESS CAMP

Rancho Cortez also offers a Fitness Camp, with stays ranging from one day to two weeks. The focus is on healthy eating and exercise, and available activities include nutrition classes, water aerobics, hiking, and horseback riding.

colored horse named Ace, while I'm on a blond-maned brown horse named Pancho. August rides up front with Mayhall while I watch, slightly nervously, from the back of the pack.

The leisurely one-hour trail ride proceeds relatively peacefully, punctuated occasionally by a few jokes from Mayhall about getting lost. The horses know the way, anyway. Another rider points out a fox darting across our path. Well-mannered and docile, the horses all fall in line and negotiate the terrain with ease, moving up and down rocky limestone inclines.

August smiles back at me, and I take

a moment to exhale, appreciating the landscape: green hills and sun-washed white earth against blue sky. It feels like we're light years away from Austin.

After a quick post-ride swim, we hear the dinner bell ringing (yes, an actual dinner bell), so we head to the dining room for our meal, for which we're more than ready.

Gregarious cook Denise Strange, one of several ranch cooks in charge of daily meals, has prepared an irresistible feast of comfort foods, including smoked brisket, macaroni and cheese, roasted chicken, cornbread, ranch-style pinto beans, and apple cobbler.

Strange says fresh, high-quality ingredients are important to her, and you can sense that she puts special care into her cooking, from the mint-orange infused water to the chocolate chip cookies she packages up and sneaks to me after dinner for the boys. They have eaten more than I have ever seen them eat. "Must be the fresh air," I say to my husband.

We go on a sunset hike, catching stunning Hill Country views before we wind down with s'mores and bedtime stories. August takes great pleasure in stoking the campfire. He seems to have settled into ranch life just fine.

Cortez often regales groups with cowboy yarns around the fire. "I have numerous stories, but the ones I like to tell are about the Texas cowboy and

Hayrides and lasso lessons appeal

to young and old alike. And if that's not your cup of tea, you can hang out by the pool.



how he originated, how most of the young men worked on ranches from daylight to dark seven days a week,” Cortez says. “Everybody will be talking around the campfire, and I’ll jump up and say, ‘The cowboy isn’t dead, he’s still alive today. And it begins in your DNA and in your heart.’ I’ll pick a young man out of the audience, and I’ll say that a cowboy is a man who takes care of his family. Riding for your brand means taking care of your family, taking out the garbage, studying in school. It’s a fella who takes care of his land, tips his hat to the ladies.”

Cortez says he, too, considers himself a cowboy, and he takes a lot of pride in his ranch and the employees who work so hard to make it run smoothly.

On our last full day at the ranch, we have another trail ride and one more thing that excites my little cowboys: a chance to feed the Longhorns.

Mayhall drives us all out to a pasture on an off-road vehicle, opens a gate, and a dozen or so cattle come running over, some of their horns stretching 5 feet across. “This is like Jurassic Park!” August says, giddy at the chance to see the iconic creatures up close.

Yet when it’s time to head home the next day, August breaks down crying. “I miss Ace,” he tells me. “Please can we go back right now?”

Cortez says that experience is common. “When kids have to leave and they start crying, how much bigger of a compliment can a person receive?” he says.

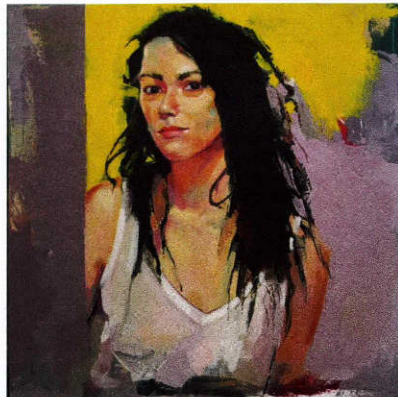
Predictably, away from the gates of Rancho Cortez, our cell phones come back to life, and our schedule starts filling up again. But for two cowboys and their parents, life won’t be quite the same until we’re back in the saddle again. **L**



RANCHO CORTEZ

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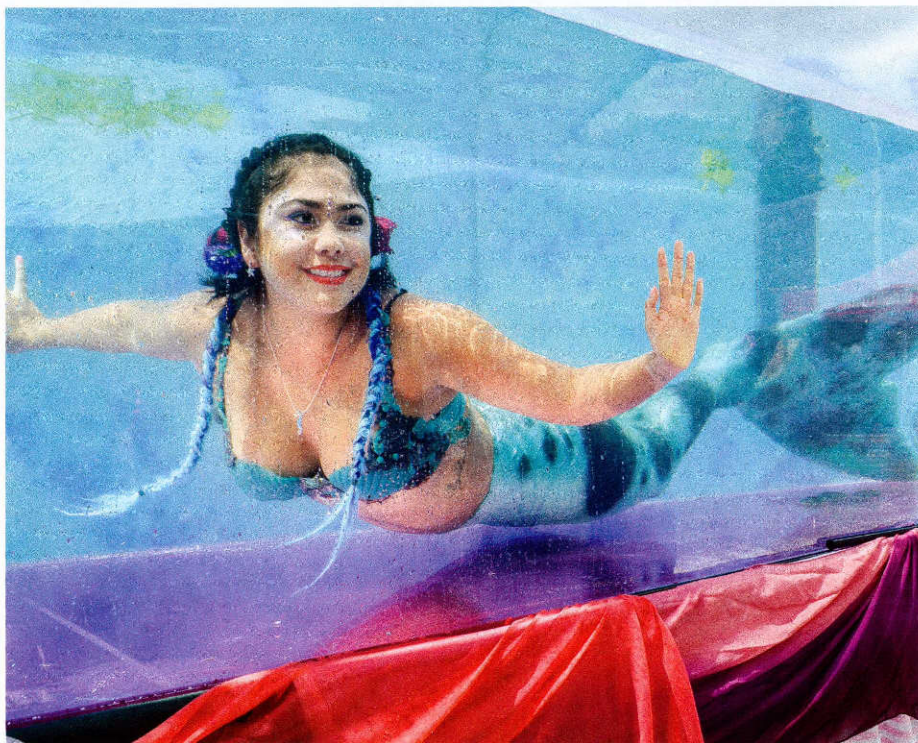
#AmarillosOnMyMind

Palo Duro Canyon State Park

The Mermaid Movement

Mermaid SPLASH festival celebrates San Marcos

story by Anthony Head



IT'S NOT EVERY COMMUNITY THAT CAN FONDLY RECALL the good ol' days when mermaids would swim and play in the local waters, but San Marcos can. And lately, the city has been doing more than just remembering its quirky history with these aquatic maidens. There is, once again, a thriving mermaid culture throughout San Marcos because, after a bit of an absence, the mermaids have returned.

In September, San Marcos celebrates both the fairy tale history of mermaids and their modern resurgence as symbols of the city with the Mermaid SPLASH festival. With a series of family activities, social events, and educational forums on a variety of San Marcos topics, this second annual fete is as much a party for the beautiful San Marcos River as it is an affirmation of the local community and the mermaids who work to protect it.

"Mermaids are river guardians, concerned about conservation," says July Moreno, who in January 2016 founded Mermaid Society SMTX, an organization committed to river guardianship, the arts, and local entrepreneurial spirit. "The mermaid is

The San Marcos River and the aquamaids of the now-closed Aquarena Springs set the stage for the city's interest in mermaids.

meant to inspire. She's the mascot of all things San Marcos." SPLASH stands for stewardship, preservation, local, arts, sustainability, and heritage—and the events throughout the SPLASH festival reflect those principles.

On Sept. 7, for example, Down South Word of Mouth—a storytelling group—will host a mermaid-themed family story time at Good Stuff Community Store; while on Sept. 9, local mixologists put their bar skills to the test for the Mer-Tini Shakedown, a competition to find the city's best mermaid-inspired cocktail. Other activities include an Arts Advocate Social on Sept. 11 at Aquabrew Brewery and Beer Garden; and on Sept. 12, the River Guardianship Symposium, held at the San Marcos Activity Center.

Whether mermaid or not, San Marcos residents are immensely

Mermaids are the stars of the Mermaid Parade, which is scheduled for Sept. 16 in downtown San Marcos.

proud of their river, which originates in town at the spring-fed Spring Lake. The crystal-clear, 72-degree water flows gently through the city before joining the Guadalupe River en route to the Gulf Coast. During Mermaid SPLASH, local restaurant and community center Price Center and Tea Room will screen a pair of documentaries about the river's ecology—1983's *River of Innocence* (Sept. 7) and 2014's *Yakona* (Sept. 14). While both films detail the river's long history, their gorgeous underwater footage also reflects how the river has changed and stayed the same over these last three decades.

So how did mermaids get to San Marcos in the first place? Some attribute their enduring presence to the mythology of the native river-dwelling inhabitants, dating to prehistorical times. But the real reason is much more recent. From the 1950s to the 1990s, San Marcos was home to Aquarena Springs, one of Texas' most popular theme parks. Located in Spring Lake at the headwaters of the river, Aquarena Springs' attractions included a submerged theater where the "aquamaids" (mermaids, some with tails, some without) performed graceful underwater dances and other playful antics. Though the theme park is long gone and Texas State University now operates Spring Lake as a research and educational center, memories of the park and its mermaids live on.

"I really wanted to be one of those mermaids," admits Moreno, who learned how to swim in the San Marcos River. However, over time, Moreno says she's come to see mermaids as more than just beach babes—she's much more interested in tapping their empowering aspects to inspire. "She is a goddess," Moreno says. "And so I had this idea—and it was crazy—that somehow we're going to bring the mermaid back. And I believe this Mermaid Society could anchor our community in a beautiful way."

Mermaid SPLASH wraps up with its three biggest events—the Mermaid



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Society Ball on Sept. 15 and the Mermaid Parade and Aqua Faire on Sept. 16. At last year's inaugural Mermaid Society Ball, several hundred guests enjoyed live music, specialty drinks and hors d'oeuvres, all in the company of a mermaid swimming around in an enormous fish tank.

The Mermaid Parade drew about 3,000 spectators last year for its winding path through downtown. An armada of floats carried the mermaids, including some former aquamaids. With long flowing hair the color of Easter eggs and bikini tops and tails fashioned with a rainbow of sparkling stones and twinkling sequins, the mermaids waved to squealing children on the sidewalks. Marching bands, a fire truck, and, for some reason, more than a few pirates and zombies rounded out the procession. After the parade, many of the parade-goers made their




MERMAID SOCIETY SMTX'S ANNUAL MERMAID SPLASH FESTIVAL

takes place Sept. 2-17, including the Mermaid Society Ball on Sept. 15 and the Mermaid Parade and Aqua Faire on Sept. 16. Call 512-825-2819; mermaidsocietysmtx.com.

way to Aqua Faire, the society's art and music festival held near the riverbank the same day.

Local artists and merchants have long had an affinity for featuring mermaids in their galleries and shops. And last year a new Keep San Marcos Beautiful mural was painted downtown that prominently features a swimming mermaid. For any visitor who still needs convincing that there is a very active mermaid movement in San Marcos, the city also features 10 mermaid sculptures placed around town. (At press time, the sculptures were scheduled to be installed in

July.) Commissioned by the San Marcos Arts Commission, each 7-foot, 150-pound fiberglass form was cast from the same mold before 10 local artists decorated each statue with original designs.

Moreno believes these permanent mermaid sculptures will add offbeat appeal to the festivities. And she's happy for the sculptures to serve as reminders of the importance of the Mermaid Society's mission. "We see magic in the river," she says. "We have this river in our backyard, and we see a need to protect it and educate more people about how special it is." 



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Follow the River

Discovering the swimming holes of Texas

story by **Julie Wernersbach**

WHEN PHOTOGRAPHER CAROLYN TRACY and I sign on to curate a guide to 100 of the best places to swim in the state, we know we are taking on a mighty task. Five months and 20,000 miles on the odometer later, we have hard proof. Starting out, we grapple with two questions: How do you organize the geography of a state as diverse as Texas? And how could two shy city-folk manage to cover so much ground in a single summer? We sit at Hard Luck Lounge in Austin, open maps and drop pins on the places we know we want to visit. For the rest, we use our common sense. We get on the road and follow the rivers.

Being on the road every weekend for four months straight compresses time. The whole summer sits in the front seat of my

We find tiny parks on unnamed roads; patches of riverbank famous to locals and invisible to Google.

car, empty coffee cups at our feet, a cooler packed with hummus and tortillas in the back. One hundred and twenty days become one long river running north and south and east and west across Texas. We plan to explore the Piney Woods and desert; red rocks and rolling hills; Big Bend and the Buddy Holly Center; Lowbrows Beer and Wine Garden in Pilot Point and the Ol' Watering Hole pub in Kerrville, where locals add dozens of spots to our list.

Mostly, researching *The Swimming Holes of Texas* looks like this:

The 9-acre Boykin Springs Lake in Angelina National Forest offers swimming and non-motorized boating.

Saturday mornings, armed with iced coffee and breakfast tacos, we hit the road with our list. We are Thelma and Louise meets Lewis and Clark. We visit Louise Hays Park in Kerrville, named for the wife of a man who decided to build an entire park in a single day. Three hundred miles later, we find Balmorhea, where desert rabbits at dusk watch me pitch a tent for the first time in my life, and San Solomon Springs is a sacred salve for our tired souls.

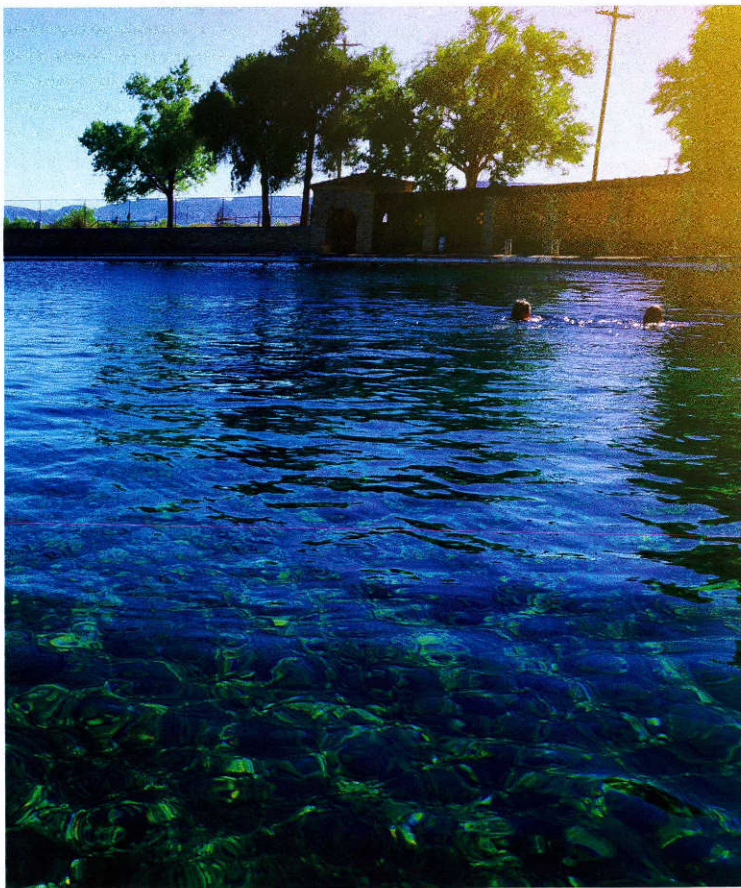
We find tiny parks on unnamed roads; patches of riverbank famous to locals and invisible to Google. These are the spots we are seeking in the vast Texas forever; the brilliant, unspoiled patches of quiet. Yes, we cover the big guns, too, the tubing spots in

San Marcos and the Blue Holes in Georgetown and Wimberley; Barton Springs in Austin and Huntsville State Park near Houston. We thread our way through throngs of children and sunbathers and weekend swimmers and document it all, water temperature and river bottom and history and whether or not there is a snack bar. We revel in those places where life is slower and calmer.

We find Moffett Park in the tiny town of Medina, a crystal-clear spot off the beaten path that our GPS doesn't pick up. We are in the middle of nowhere here, even though there are houses in view and a truck parked close to the banks. A rusted barbecue grill indicates the intent of this place, but otherwise the spot is undeveloped

and unbothered. Carolyn ambles along the bank with her camera. I wade into the cold water with my notebook. We breathe in the blue sky, wish we could stay, and keep going.

Some of the spots we find don't have names, so we make them up. On the steps of the Old Jail Museum in Gonzales, the town known as the famous site of the Come and Take It stand-off, a tour guide named Leroy gives us a rundown of every restaurant and historic house within a mile. We ask him how to get to the part of the Guadalupe where we'd heard there was a rope swing and river access. He gives us the turn-offs, and we find the river just past the stone monuments that mark the spot in the field where those famous words were thrown down.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:

Balmorhea State Park in far West Texas, Lake Bob Sandlin State Park in East Texas, and the "Come and Take It Historic Swimming Hole" in Gonzales.



THE SWIMMING HOLES OF TEXAS

(UT Press) is in bookstores now. Signed copies are available at BookPeople in Austin; bookpeople.com.

We declare the spot the, "Come and Take It Historic Swimming Hole." It is a name we make up for Leroy, more than anyone else.

By July we're in the Texas Panhandle. The clock is ticking on our August deadline. We find Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway, with its herd of bison and red rock opening up before us to prove that Texas is only getting bigger. The next weekend we head west to Del Rio, where children exult in the ice-cold spring water that runs through the center of the city on a 103-degree day. We find Amistad Reservoir stretching like an ocean to the shores of Mexico. The next day, fat flying black bugs chase us down the sun-bleached, mile-long desert path to Devils River.

In East Texas in early August we celebrate the shade of the Piney Woods and national forests. We pitch our tents along the Lake Bob Sandlin State Park waterfront, waking up to find the tub of vegan cream left on the picnic table licked clean by creatures in the middle of the night. In South Texas we stand in the burnt gold scrubland beneath the wide cumulus clouds of Choke Canyon State Park and heed warning signs about alligators we never see, though we wait and look.

By the end of the summer, I can pitch a tent in the dark. We have grown tired of all of our favorite CDs and scan the radio for classic country songs. We've counted dozens of East Texas donut shops. We have come home every time to our Austin skyline, our crystal clear Barton Springs and Deep Eddy pools. We have followed every river right back to where we'd begun, sun-kissed and tired, dropping a new set of pins and counting down until the next weekend, when we do it all again. 🐾

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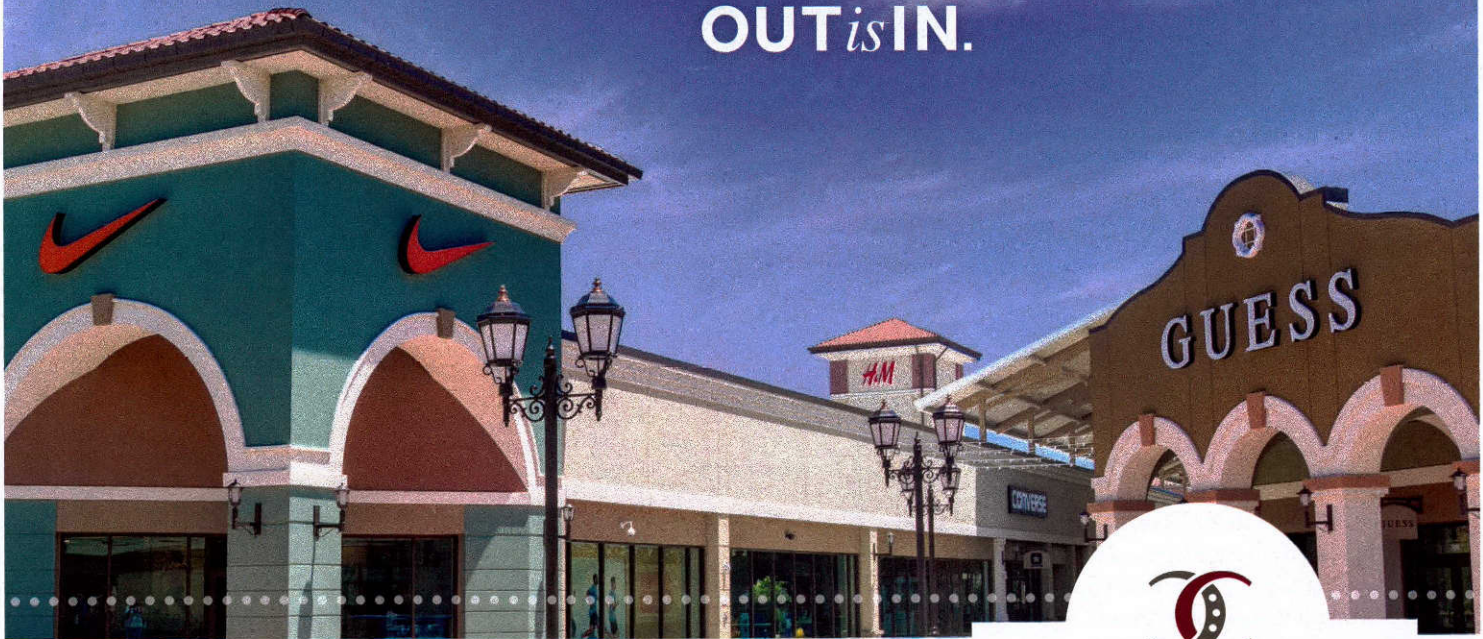
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PLATES

DRINK + EAT + COOK

Back in The Saddle

Wet your whistle
at The Saddle Club
in Alpine

story by **Melissa Gaskill**



Bartenders and chefs brainstorm regularly to come up with new drinks and dishes.

This refresher—made with tequila, velvet falernum, citrus juices, and a habanero shrub—is called the Texas Hellfire.

NO TELEVISION SCREENS HANG ON THE walls of The Saddle Club in Alpine. No loud music interrupts long and interesting conversations over classic cocktails and satisfying food. Alpine native Stephen Wood intentionally set out to create this calming, focused atmosphere when he opened the eclectic bar and restaurant in 2010.

Wood was about six hours from earning a degree in engineering before completely changing gears to work in hospitality. He trained at a culinary school in San Francisco and worked at restaurants in that city, Las Vegas, and New Orleans before eventually returning to Alpine. He had put himself through school bartending and knew the ropes, so at first he worked behind the bar at the Gage Hotel in nearby Marathon then moved to the kitchen as chef.

One day, Wood's mother, who runs a dance and fitness studio in Alpine, asked him to fill in as her partner for a class. One of the students, Karen Travland, had recently remodeled Alpine's 1929 Granada Theater as an event space and wanted to open a bar. After hammering out details, Wood and Travland became business partners, creating The Saddle Club restaurant and bar in a former saddle shop next to the theater.

A shaded patio out back takes advantage of the fact that Alpine is usually cooler than the rest of Texas.

The partners restored the front of the old shop to resemble its original look, with bay windows once used for displaying saddles now perfect nooks for people-watching. They hired local workers and reused as much material as they could, including weathered pine on the wide stairway that leads to the upstairs event space and on the handcrafted bar, old pipe for the bar footrest, and tin ceiling tiles salvaged from the Granada.

"Karen wrapped it in pretty," Wood says. "Nothing matches, but it all goes together. She has an eye." The bar stools aren't old, but they look it, with wooden seats and backs and metal legs. Local artists hand-painted the Saddle Club's wooden tables and chairs, and various styles of trim around the bar sport different paint colors. The rainbow of



The sign over the bar reads, "Social Irrigation." Light dinner options include the Fiesta Salmon Salad (preceded perhaps by the signature Epic Fries).



colors wasn't the original plan, but when Wood and Travland were trying to decide which trim to use, they asked workers to show them every style available. The hodgepodge of trim styles suited Travland, so the duo decided to keep them all.

A shaded patio out back takes advantage of the fact that Alpine is usually cooler than the rest of Texas. "During the day it's pleasant out here, and it cools off at night," Wood says.

The bar serves a selection of classic cocktails; Wood calls his style "old-school, pre-Prohibition" and says that visitors will find "no little umbrellas." Both food and drink menus change about five times a year, a process that starts with the establishment's four chefs sitting down to brainstorm new dishes, and the bar staff creating cocktails to pair with them.

I order a Peachy Keen, a slightly tart cocktail of Deep Eddy Peach Vodka, lime juice, and simple syrup. Lime zest sprinkled like confetti over the ice gives the drink a festive look. Wood says the bar uses a lot of tequila and mezcal, but he also favors Texas spirits, including Garrison Brothers whiskey and Deep Eddy vodkas.

"By allowing the bartenders to be creative and be more involved, they feel more invested in it," he adds. "Conceptually, the menu is created by everyone, so we have to work well together. My biggest challenge may be getting people to be willing to learn from everybody else."

And because he frequently changes the menu, he also hears from customers who miss their favorite dishes. "When we decided we would regularly change things up, a lot of people got mad," Wood admits. "We always have a burger of the week, though, and Epic Fries. I would be tarred and feathered if I took Epic Fries off the menu."

After tasting them, I can see why. The signature dish arrives piled high on the plate, a mountain of lightly beer-battered fries topped with house-made queso, tender brisket, bacon, roasted



THE SADDLE CLUB

is at 211 E. Holland Ave in Alpine.
Call **432-837-9770**;
saddleclubalpine.com.

red pepper aioli, and green chile sauce. I struggle to keep from polishing it all off in order to leave room for my quail mole, which expertly balances the chocolate and chile flavors.

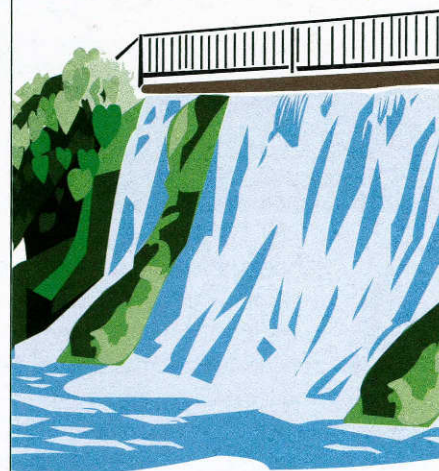
The food menu also features special tacos on Tuesdays and a daily tapas selection. The bar serves an impressive selection of American, French, and Italian wines, plus a number of beers on tap, including those from Big Bend Brewery just down the road.

Folks in these parts have always appreciated the value of liquid refreshment; railroad workers pitched camp along a creek here in 1882, calling their settlement Osborne after the railroad section. The town's name was unstable in those early days; in a move designed to provide the railroad company access to natural springs owned by the Murphy family, Osborne became Murphyville for a short period. But residents petitioned to change the name to Alpine, which became official in 1888.

Appreciation for a good saddle runs deep here as well. After rancher J.G. Crawford opened the town's first saddle shop on East Holland in 1905, the business had a series of owners before moving to the building now occupied by The Saddle Club. Wood can't say for sure if any of those early local craftsmen made the saddle that holds a place of honor in his bar. The faded and weathered piece of horse hardware purportedly disappeared from a local ranch decades ago on the back of a stolen mount, and it turned up stashed in a canyon some 40 years later. It eventually wound up in the hands of a local rancher, who donated it to the bar. Naturally, The Saddle Club needed an actual saddle. It's a fitting conversation piece in a place designed for conversation. **L**



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Sausage (and kolaches!) are in the House

At Green's Sausage House near Temple, time stands still

story by **Michael Barr**



A S A LIGHT RAIN FALLS, A CROWD IS GATHERING at Green's Sausage House, a country café, meat market, and bakery in the tiny Czech community of Zabcikville, 10 miles east of Temple. Breakfast is over at Green's, and it's time for lunch.

Green's dates to 1946, when longtime Zabcikville residents Jerome and Della Green opened a grocery and mercantile to serve the farming communities in their part of the Blackland Prairie. The store soon became known for its delicious sausage, which Jerome made from a Czech recipe handed down from his family. In 1960, with business going strong, Green's moved across the highway to its present location—a simple building with a long porch that today houses a café, bakery, meat market, and deer processing facility. Sons Charles and Marvin took over in 1984.

There's something bigger than food going on here. People come to Green's for the social and cultural experience.

"We inherited a good reputation from our parents," Charles says. "And when it comes to the business, we have a simple philosophy. We listen to people and offer the best product we can."

"When you focus on quality," Marvin adds, "everything else takes care of itself."

Green's Sausage House, surrounded by grain silos, cows, and cornfields, sits just yards from the highway. And by the time I arrive just past 11 a.m. for an early lunch, the front parking lot is full. I find a place in the side lot, make my way past the L-shaped counter at the

Green's Sausage House not only features a popular restaurant, but also a meat market and bakery offering everything from bacon to kolaches.

cash register, and take a seat at a small table near the window.

The place reminds me of an old roadside diner. It's simply furnished with about 10 rectangular tables with vinyl-covered booths along the periphery. Vintage neon signs and metal beer advertisements adorn the walls, but there's not much else to speak of in the name of décor.

The menu offers mostly stick-to-your-ribs fare, including hamburgers, chicken-fried steak, and fried catfish. The spicy boudin balls, beer-battered onion rings, and rib-eye sandwiches are customer favorites. One of the house specialties is something called a kraut sausage burger (\$4.79); it's a grilled sausage patty on a bun with mustard, pickles, onions, and a helping of juicy sauerkraut. That sounds delicious, so I order one with a Shiner Bock and try to be patient.

But all decorum vanishes as soon as my burger arrives and I take a bite. The fermented tang of the sauerkraut perfectly complements the sweet and salty flavor of the pork, and the bitter notes of the dark beer play well with the strong personality of the sandwich. In other words, the kraut sausage burger and Shiner Bock are made for each other.

By noon the place is packed. A motorcycle club roars into the parking lot, displaying lots of red, white, and blue. Inside, locals socialize at the front tables, under the big Lite Beer sign. A crew of hardhats from the electric company is seated at the counter. My eyes are drawn to a table of elderly farmers who appear to be longtime friends. They are wearing baseball caps and overalls, working their iPhones like millennials as they show off pictures of their great-grandkids.

As I watch people come and go, I begin to understand why customers drive miles out of their way to eat at Green's. There's something bigger than food going on here. People come to Green's for the social and cultural experience. And so I start a conversation with a couple seated in the



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Green's still makes its own sausage, and in a long display case there are more than 20 varieties on display, as well as six kinds of bacon and six kinds of cheese.

booth next to me, David and Melva Anderson from Lake Belton. "We've been coming here a long time," Melva tells me. "I like the family atmosphere. The food is good. And I don't have to do the dishes."

David's appreciation for Green's is harder to define. It's about authenticity.

"This place is special," he says as he glances around the room. "Not many places like this are left. The food is real. The people are real. There are no phonies here. That's why I keep coming back."

After lunch, I wander over to the meat market and bakery on the west end of the building. Green's still makes

its own sausage, and in a long display case there are more than 20 varieties on display, as well as six kinds of bacon and six kinds of cheese. Jellies, jams, salsas, and specialty items like habanero pickles and pickled quail eggs crowd the shelves at the front, and loaves of homemade bread—some still warm—beckon from another aisle. Green's bakes a half-dozen kinds of bread on-site, including white (\$2.89 per loaf), whole wheat, rye, Italian, jalapeño cheese, and cinnamon nut raisin. The bread sells fast.

A customer catches me giving one of the remaining loaves a squeeze. "Once you've tasted Green's bread," she tells me, "you'll avoid the regular kind."

Moments later I spot the kolache case. With 14 flavors it's hard to choose, but I select a simple cream cheese variety. I plan to take it with me but yield to temptation before the cashier can make my change. The texture is

moist and delicate, and the taste is buttery sweet.

It is only when the sun breaks through the clouds and Zabcikville has disappeared from my rearview mirror that I realize the secret to Green's Sausage House's success. The food isn't fast, the building isn't fancy, and the location isn't convenient for most people, but Green's Sausage House offers a snapshot of traditional rural America—and plenty of good food to boot. **L**



GREEN'S SAUSAGE HOUSE

is at 16483 State Highway 53 in Zabcikville, 10 miles east of Temple. Market hours: Mon-Fri 7 a.m.-7 p.m., Sat 7 a.m.-6 p.m. The restaurant closes a half hour before the market does.

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Let's Noodle

Houston's first Henan-style hand-pulled noodle restaurant

story by **Mai Pham**

ON A SLEEPY THURSDAY AFTERNOON JUST after the lunch rush, Let's Noodle, a hand-pulled noodle shop in Houston's Chinatown area, is quiet except for the slurping noises coming from the restaurant's communal table. A man sits there hunched over a bowl of noodles, his concentration fully focused on the food in front of him.

He takes a sip of broth with a soup spoon, then uses his chopsticks to pull the noodles high and long—at least a foot up into

He then repeats the process—sip, pull, tuck, slurp—until his bowl is empty.

the air from the rim of his bowl. When the long strands reach a point near the top of his head, he stops lifting them, and then proceeds to tuck them in his mouth, noisily slurping the entire length of the noodle. He then repeats the process—sip, pull, tuck, slurp—until his bowl is empty.

In Houston, hand-pulled noodle joints began sprouting up in 2015. Prior to that, people hankering for this Chinese specialty in the states would have had to visit places like New York City, San Francisco, or Los Angeles. The trend has since spread to other Texas cities, but Houston has the most options, including Let's Noodle, Kuen Noodle House, Strings Noodle, and most recently, Niu Yi Zui Laman (the first outpost of a chain from mainland China), which opened last month.

Let's Noodle, which debuted last fall, stands out among the rest because it's the first to serve a type of wheat noodle from the Henan province called *hui mian*. (Most restaurants serve noodles called *la mian*, which come from the Lanzhou province.) Hui mian noodles are about $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch wide, like Italian pappardelle, but are thicker and denser than their European relatives, with good elasticity and chew. The texture of the noodle is important because its traditional preparation is in the form of a noodle soup; the noodle has to be able to stand up to the broth without getting soggy. I'm happy to report that the Let's Noodle versions succeed with flying colors.

The restaurant itself has a fresh Scandinavian feel, with white walls, pale wood tabletops and built-in booths, white metal chairs, and a white marble-topped community table situated just in front of the entrance. Diners order at the counter, then find a seat for the short wait.

Designed by Cori Xiong of Mala Sichuan Bistro, who owns and operates Let's Noodle with her husband, Heng Chen, and their partner Zhiguo Cui,

Forget most things you've learned about table manners, and embrace the slurp in Houston's Chinatown.



MAKE IT!

Egg and tomato noodle recipe at texashighways.com/recipes.

the restaurant has another major draw: a viewing window into the kitchen. The window frames the kitchen, where customers can get a direct view of the cooks doing the highly entertaining noodle-pulling.

The process is mesmerizing: Taking a piece of pre-proportioned dough, the cook pulls it horizontally, stretching it into a wide band spanning the length of his arms before tossing it up and down rapidly to form an arc that gets wider, longer, and thinner with each

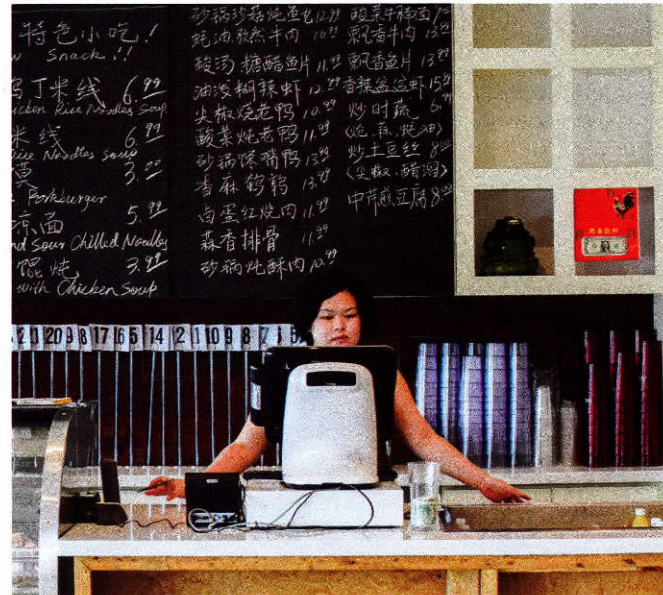
toss. In just 20 seconds, this yields two long continuous strands of hand-pulled noodle. It's amazing to see, like a magic trick where your eyes never quite catch what's happening.

There are six hand-pulled noodle dishes on the menu, but the most famous is a lamb noodle soup (\$9). "We make our broth from scratch; we don't use a powder base," Chen says.

Taking a piece of dough, the cook pulls it horizontally, stretching it into a wide band spanning the length of his arms before tossing it up and down rapidly to form an arc.

The broth is milky and hearty, with an earthy lamb essence. Wood-ear mushrooms, sweet potato vermicelli, shredded tofu, and sesame oil give each spoonful added flavor. The other five noodle dishes (two noodle soups, one chilled noodle, and one stir-fry noodle) also cost roughly \$8-\$10 and can serve as excellent one-bowl meals any time of day.

Xiong sources the lamb from local Halal butchers, explaining that lamb is popular in Henan cuisine because the largest ethnic group in that region doesn't eat pork. She admits, however, that she overestimated how many customers would order lamb, so the



It takes skill and practice to make hand-pulled noodles. At Let's Noodle in Houston, the chalkboard menu is written in both Chinese and English. Green beans and eggplant make a savory combo.

RECIPE

STIR-FRIED CHINESE EGGPLANT AND GREEN BEANS

- ◆ Cooking oil, for frying
- ◆ 1 large Chinese eggplant (about 10 ounces total), cut into one-inch pieces
- ◆ 5 ounces green beans, sliced in half
- ◆ 3 garlic cloves, sliced
- ◆ 1/2 tablespoon chu hou paste sauce (available at Asian groceries or online)
- ◆ 1/2 tablespoon sweet flour sauce (available at Asian groceries or online)
- ◆ 1/2 tablespoon oyster sauce (available at Asian groceries or online)
- ◆ 1/2 tablespoon soy sauce
- ◆ 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- ◆ 1/4 cup water
- ◆ starch slurry made by mixing 1/2 tablespoon cold water with 1/2 teaspoon potato starch or cornstarch

1. Deep-fry eggplant until golden. Remove from fryer, place in a mesh colander to drain for at least 5 minutes. Next, deep-fry green beans until most of them have puckered skins. Set the vegetables aside.

2. Using a wok on high heat, add 1

teaspoon of cooking oil. When oil is hot, add sliced garlic and stir-fry briefly until garlic is yellowish and you can smell the fragrance of the garlic. Add chu hou paste, sweet flour sauce, oyster sauce, and water, constantly stirring. Cook for 30 seconds, until the sauces

are boiling and fragrant. Add sugar, soy sauce, eggplant, and green beans. Stir for about a minute, then slowly add the starch slurry, stirring constantly. Cook for 1-2 minutes until the sauce appears shiny and viscous. Remove from heat and serve.

menu features other options, too.

There's also a chalkboard hanging behind her cash register, written in Chinese and English, that explains daily specials. "We run specials to figure out what people like, and sometimes we add them to the regular menu," she says.

Customers love the flatbread sandwich filled with shredded pork and cilantro, which Xiong calls a Chinese Porkburger (\$3). It's a savory handheld snack that can be ordered as an appetizer or as an on-the-run light lunch. The flatbread is crispy and toasted, and the meat is braised in Chinese spices to a consistency similar to that of a sloppy joe.

Spicy-food enthusiasts will love the Mala Big Plate Chicken or Rabbit. Braised in a blend of spices that include cumin and Sichuan peppercorns—the latter imparting a tongue-tingling, lip-numbing steady heat—both varieties are served on a round platter with two portions of

noodles, to be shared family-style.


In fact, more than half of the menu is meant to be eaten family-style. Stir-fried vegetarian dishes like the wonderfully textured Chinese-eggplant-and-green-bean dish (see recipe above) demonstrate how simple ingredients and good technique can combine to create something special. I'm also fond of a comforting stew made with braised pork belly and boiled eggs.

Still, the biggest "pull" at Let's Noodle are the noodles. The best time to experience them is during lunchtime on the weekends. That's when the restaurant is busiest, and also when you'll see the noodles in action—not just in the kitchen, but also in the dining room as happy customers fall into rhythm: Sip, pull, tuck, slurp. 🍜




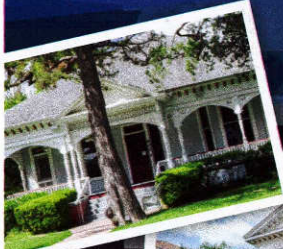
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**WICHITA FALLS'
ORIGINAL RANCH RODEO**

STORY BY
KATHRYN JONES
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
DAVE SHAFER

B

ed sand flies across the arena as ranch cowboys show off the skills of their horses, which have colorful names like Loretta Lynn, Snake, Purr Cat, and Brandin' Crew.

Each cowboy rides his horse hard, then pulls back the reins to stop abruptly. Next, each rider backs up his horse, rides in one direction and then another, making the shape of a figure eight. In a final display of agility and versatility, each horse chases down a calf so the cowboy, still in the saddle, can rope it. Applause and shouts echo in the stands from the fans at Wichita Falls' Multi-Purpose Event Center, many of whom are wearing cowboy hats themselves.

This "top horse" competition tests American Quarter Horses and their riders on skills they'd need if they were working on a ranch, especially smoothness of movement and quickness of response. It's just one of the events at the Texas Ranch Roundup, held each August in Wichita Falls to simulate events at the cattle roundups of the late 1800s and early 1900s. This year's roundup runs Aug. 18-19.

I had never seen the Texas Ranch Roundup, billed as the "granddaddy of 'em all," the original ranch rodeo. So my husband and I drove to Wichita Falls from our home near Glen Rose last August to watch working cowboys and cowgirls from some of Texas' most historic ranches compete for the all-around title.

Events at the Texas Ranch Roundup represent skills found on a working ranch, such as calf doctoring, bronc riding, team penning, branding, and roping. Watching the action ringside makes the experience come alive.





The roundup began in 1981, when the North Texas Rehabilitation Center and Falls Distributing Company, which distributes Anheuser-Busch products along the Texas-Oklahoma border, created an event to honor Texas working cowboys and ranch traditions and raise money for charities. Proceeds benefit the nonprofits North Texas Rehabilitation Center, West Texas Rehabilitation Center, and West Texas Boys Ranch. Altogether, the roundup has contributed \$3.2 million to charities over the years.

A RICH HISTORY

David Welch, who serves on North Texas Rehab's board of directors, attended the first roundup events more than 30 years ago. "I love these ranches and the history behind them," Welch says. After all, the Texas Ranch Roundup isn't just about sport. It reflects the day-to-day lives of working cowboys at 10 Texas ranches selected to participate because of their rich, long histories.

Don't expect to see rodeo events such as bull riding or steer wrestling at this roundup,

DON'T EXPECT TO SEE RODEO EVENTS SUCH AS BULL RIDING OR STEER WRESTLING AT THIS ROUNDUP BECAUSE THOSE SKILLS DIDN'T ORIGINATE ON WORKING RANCHES.



however, because those skills didn't originate on working ranches. Instead, the roundup's competitive events reflect activities that routinely take place at ranches, such as calf doctoring, bronc riding, wild cow milking, team penning, and branding. As last year's program notes, "Precision and care take years to learn on the range."

Mark Voss, team captain of the Swenson Land & Cattle Co., which this year is defending its title as the overall winning team in 2016, said the ranch was proud to win the title. "We're not really bragging," he adds. "We're happy to be lucky enough to win."

The team represents one of Texas' oldest ranches. Swenson Land & Cattle dates to 1854, when S.M. Swenson—the first Swedish immigrant to Texas, according to the Texas State Historical Association—began buying land in West Texas and around Austin. Swenson eventually became one of the largest landowners in Texas with several ranches spread around West Texas. The town of Stamford became the ranch headquarters, and in 1930 Swenson helped found the



Riding for their brand: Ranch hands wait their turn in the ring; a modern-day cowboy takes a moment of silence for the competition; spectators and participants alike enjoy the authentic scene.

first Texas Cowboy Reunion, which is now an annual tradition in Stamford. Today, the family ranch is owned by Swenson's great-grandsons.

Voss said he particularly likes calf doctoring, team penning, and calf branding because they represent authentic ranch work and show the cowboys' and cowgirls' roping skills. "The roundup is a place where people can see ranch traditions and the day-to-day operations," Voss says. "They get a sense of how family-oriented these ranches are. The wives at the ranches all participate. The children get involved."

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Missy Bonds, daughter of Pete and Jo Bonds of the Bonds Ranch in Saginaw, which dates to 1933, says the roundup shows "how much these ranches focus on family. These ranch employees may not be family by blood, but they are all family just because they are part of the ranch."

The roundup certainly is a family affair at the Bonds Ranch, the 2016 second-place overall winner. The ranch has adapted to changes in the ranching industry but still does some chores the traditional way. Ranch hands still build a fire for branding cattle, but the ranch also uses electronic ID tags and computers to keep track of its herds.

Bonds family members also still manage the ranch, and Pete and Jo and their three daughters all participate in the roundup. Missy competed in the team penning and team branding events last year, while her sisters Bonnie and April headed up the chuckwagon cooking competition.

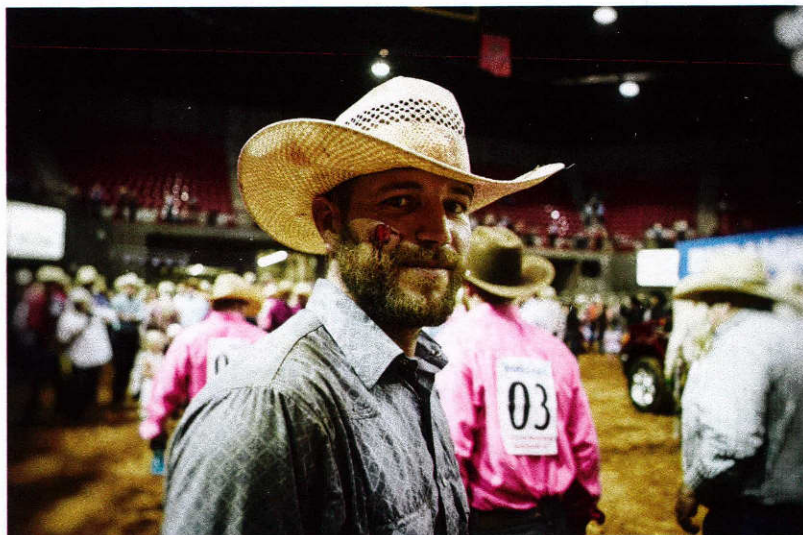
RANCH FAMILIES USED TO GET TOGETHER AT THE END OF THE SPRING ROUNDUP TO RELAX, SING AROUND THE CAMPFIRE, AND TELL STORIES.



"Daddy likes to cook the beans," Missy adds.

On the Chisholm Trail in the late 1800s, a good chuckwagon cook became a necessity, even "a matter of life and death," the roundup program notes. "On a long trail with hardworkin' hungry 'brush poppers' (cowboys), a chuckwagon cook's very life depended on his fixin' a meal that would satisfy the men of his cattle drive outfit."

Cooking a good chuckwagon meal may no longer be a life-or-death skill, but it's still much appreciated during roundups and other times when lots of hands are working hard and needing fuel. At the roundup, the chuckwagon competition's theme changes each year, but it always involves rustling up hearty ranch fare





TEXAS RANCH ROUNDUP

The 37th

Annual Texas Ranch Roundup takes place

Aug. 18-19 at the Multi-Purpose Event Center at 1000 5th St. in Wichita Falls. See

texasranchroundup.com for ticket information, maps, and a detailed schedule.



using old-fashioned equipment and methods such as Dutch ovens, cast-iron pans, and open-flame fires. In 2015, the cooks squared off to prepare beef tips, scalloped potatoes, biscuits, and bread pudding. In 2016, the cooking focused on stew, beans, cornbread, and cobbler. The chuckwagon cooking takes place outside on the arena grounds, where each participating ranch sets up tents or tarps.

It's fun to stroll through the steam and smoke and watch the cooks stoking fires and stirring beans in black cauldrons while cobbler bubbles in big pans. Smelling all that can work up an appetite, but the judges are the only ones besides the ranch families who get to taste the entries. But Daddy Bob's Smokewagon, a traveling smokewagon that serves barbecue in Graham and Wichita Falls, sets up outside the exhibit hall and offers brisket sandwiches and fixings.

ALL-STAR TALENT

Non-ranchers might not expect to find a talent contest at this event, but singing around the

campfire and arts and crafts have been a part of ranch life since the late 1800s. Ranch families used to get together at the end of the spring roundup to relax, play music around the campfire, and tell stories.

Nowadays in the roundup's talent competition, ranch teams also receive points for music and skits, painting and drawing, photography, furniture and home décor, crafts and jewelry, and Western handwork. The arts and crafts contest is held in a room inside the exhibit hall. I was impressed with the quality of the paintings and drawings, handmade rustic furniture, and especially the photography of scenes from ranch life.

The music and skit portion of the talent competition takes place on a livestock trailer that serves as a makeshift stage. Last year, cowboys from some of the ranches played guitar and sang original tunes. But opera? I didn't expect to hear that at a ranch roundup, yet April Bonds from the Bonds Ranch expertly sang several operatic pieces from the opera "Carmen" and from Puccini's "La Bohème" to win the musical competition.

Participants in the Texas Ranch Roundup hail from full-time, historic cattle ranches: since the event's founding in 1981, it has donated more than \$3 million to charities. The chuckwagon competition features cooking the old-fashioned way—with open fire, Dutch ovens, and cast-iron pans.





Jo, her mother, performed a graceful interpretative dance to accompany her daughter.

"That was amazing," Missy says of the rousing ovation from the audience. "It gave me chills."

Ranch youngsters get in on the action, too. Children ranging from age 5 to 12 compete in teams to rope and mark goats within two minutes. The three fastest teams win prizes and bragging rights.

"You're seeing generations of employees coming up in these ranches and competing," Missy says. "It's very family-oriented. Even with the chuckwagons, you're seeing wives and sisters and fathers and daughters."

The top Texas Roundup team qualifies to compete for an international prize, the Working Ranch Cowboy Association World Championship held every November in Amarillo.

After watching the ranch events and looking at the arts and crafts, we headed over to the Multi-Purpose Center's exhibit hall, which houses the Bit, Spur & Western Collectible Tradeshaw. We spent several hours exploring

NON-RANCHERS MIGHT NOT EXPECT TO FIND A TALENT CONTEST AT THIS EVENT, BUT SINGING AROUND THE CAMPFIRE HAS BEEN A PART OF RANCH LIFE SINCE THE LATE 1800S.



the aisles of booths, which sold hand-tooled boots, belts, and other leather goods, Western clothing and jewelry, handmade saddles and tack, and even giant brush cutters.

I left the ranch roundup feeling like I'd witnessed pieces of Texas' past, present, and future in one weekend. Certainly, Texas ranching is changing and adopting more technology and modern ways to survive as a business, but it's comforting that so many traditions continue. While the ranches compete at the roundup, they also root for each other. They win just by being there and coming together every year to celebrate their rich heritage.

As Missy says, "You come to think of your competitors as your family where you cheer everybody on. When you see these ranches, you see what a close-knit family we all are." 🐾

Writer Kathryn Jones enjoys delving into topics relating to Western heritage. Photographer Dave Shafer documents the lives of cowboys and other modern-day heroes.



Summer Hideaways

UNLEASH YOUR INNER CHILD
AT THESE 3 LAKESIDE RETREATS

By DAN OKO

Photographs by JENNY SATHNGAM



When I was growing up

in New York City, my father had a small farmhouse a couple of hours upstate from the Big Apple, where there was a rowboat and a pond rife with largemouth bass, yellow perch and pickerel, snapping turtles, bullfrogs, and the occasional muskrat. Until adolescence arrived and brought the twin distractions of girls and rock 'n' roll music, that modest family waterfront—long since sold—struck me as a little slice of heaven.

Decades later, finding myself a father now living in another gigantic city, Houston, with opportunities to own a waterfront weekend cabin of my own out of reach, summer still brings a nostalgia for the panacea and sense of discovery I enjoyed in my youth. And with my 10-year-old daughter edging into the treacherous middle-school territory, with romantic confusion and hormonal rebellion to follow, time is running out to build the sort of rustic memories that should be every child's birthright. So this spring, we set off on a tour of lakefront cabins spanning East Texas from Cleveland just north of Houston to Possum Kingdom Lake, a popular recreation area on the Brazos River, about a 90-minute drive west of Fort Worth.

The criteria for our selections, inspired by conversations with friends across town and colleagues across the state, my own travels through the years across Texas, and a bit of social-media sleuthing, were pretty simple: These cabin getaways needed to offer a slew of activities, including either swimming or boating; reasonable access to hiking trails or fishing; and enough fresh air, bright scenery, and potential solitude to counter the mental malaise that comes from stifling city heat and too much traffic. Hence in addition to Cleveland and PK, we appointed Caddo Lake to our list.

Opening spread: Bald cypress trees tower over the bayous, sloughs, and ponds of Caddo Lake. Below: John Winn's swamp tour begins. Caddo Lake State Park cabins don't include cooking supplies or charcoal, so remember to bring your own. Right: The swamp tour provides water access to the backwoods areas of the lake.



CADDO LAKE STATE PARK

FOR 16 YEARS, John Winn has been leading his patented private swamp tours across Texas' only naturally formed lake, Caddo Lake, which he describes as "really, a maze of lakes within lakes." In his brand new broad-bottomed aluminum johnboat, Winn



Between stands of tall trees strewn with Spanish moss, great white egrets and blue herons soar pterodactyl-like across the water's surface.

takes us past the boggy, cypress-strewn bayous of Hell's Half Acre, down the Government Ditch, and through backwaters adjoining the Alligator Bayou and approaching the Devil's Elbow, where the great lake starts its drift into Louisiana.

Our crew—including my wife, Christina; our daughter, Ursula; and Austin-based photographer Jenny Sathngam and a few of her friends—marvels at the scenery beneath the nearly cloudless sky. Between stands of tall trees strewn with Spanish moss, great white egrets and blue herons soar pterodactyl-like across the water's surface. Winn explains that the area is home to 250 species of birds, and the lake forms

the most diverse freshwater habitat for fish in Texas with 71 species. The water shimmers as a bass boat cruises by, and we pause next to a beaver lodge to see if anybody is home. Next our guide plunges us deeper into the primordial landscape.

"In a way, Caddo Lake raised me," says Winn, a colorful storyteller who describes how a childhood of virtual neglect was reorganized once he was old enough to explore Caddo by himself, picking up secrets from old-timers who made their living off the lake.

Having spent his life on these waters, Winn shares history about the area as well, noting that Henry Ford used hanging moss from Louisiana

and East Texas as stuffing for the seats on his early Model T, before customers complained that the cushioning contained too many hitchhikers—in the form of pesky insects. Caddo was also the site of one of the first offshore drilling rigs in the South, when in 1911 the predecessor of Gulf Oil—now part of Chevron—drilled into the Ferry Lake area on the Louisiana side. Our guide touches on the challenges of maintaining the natural splendor of the lake in this day and age. Exotic plant species have begun to choke out the natives, disrupting the natural habitat that benefits all the feathered and finned denizens that also make Caddo a destination for outdoor enthusiasts.



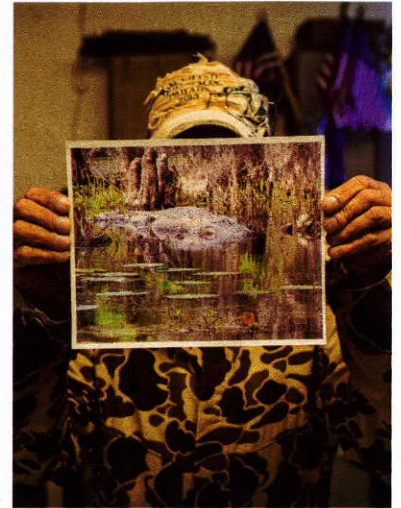
Both Uncertain and nearby Karnack retain an authentic regional character hard to find in the city.

After the boat ride, we head to Caddo Lake State Park, where we have booked one of the historic cabins built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. The CCC was responsible for the construction of the entire 480-acre park, part of President Franklin Roosevelt's efforts to reverse the impact of the Great Depression by offering jobs and training to unemployed young men across

the state and nation. Constructed of thick cypress logs and locally sourced stones, the buildings have a timeless quality appropriate to the setting, with modest but comfortable décor that does not distract from the charms of the waterway. Visitors can choose small two-person cabins, four-person cabins, or larger, six-person cabins (as well as campsites). Ursula and

I had enjoyed a previous stay at Caddo Lake, but this is Christina's first trip.

Happily, the surroundings charm my wife as much as they had my daughter and I during our previous visit. As afternoon turns to evening, the three of us station ourselves on the porch to read and watch a house wren that had built its nest in a cranny beneath the roof. The cabin provides sturdy shelter as



Left: Morning paddle boarding in Mill Pond in Caddo Lake State Park. Above, clockwise from left: Characters of Uncertain—for a \$1 fee, you can fish off the dock of Johnson's Ranch Marina; a resident blue heeler; a local at Caddo Grocery shows off a print of a 14-foot gator.

a storm blows through. Once the rain clears, we spark up the charcoal grill. Our marshmallow program soon draws the Austinites from their cabin across the way.

In the morning, we head for the fishing dock and try our luck with worms under bobbers. Ursula pulls in a long-eared sunfish, and Christina lands a whopper of a green sunfish, weighing nearly a pound, while I am left empty handed—until I remember that I have achieved my goal of memory making. For lunch, we stop off in the town of Uncertain at the Shady Glade Café, and after seeing the trophy largemouth-bass taxidermy decorating the walls, I am certain we will be back.

Beyond many miles of lake to explore, Uncertain warrants further consideration. Just 5 miles from the Louisiana border, tucked among the bald-cypress cathedrals of Northeast Texas, the village began as a steamboat landing. Today, fewer than 100 full-time residents call Uncertain home, though enviable second-home owners

and weekend tourists temper the sense of isolation. Despite hard times, including major floods in 2015 and 2016 that forced evacuations, both Uncertain and nearby Karnack retain an authentic regional character hard to find in the city. I anticipate our next visit will furnish an opportunity for shopping at the Uncertain Flea Market, scheduled the first and third weekend of the month, as well as more fishing.

THE RETREAT AT ARTESIAN LAKES

THOUGH WE DON'T ENJOY a single gator sighting on Caddo Lake, where Winn admitted the big reptiles could be more easily seen at night, the wildlife on the outskirts of Cleveland—where the Smith family has run the Retreat at Artesian Lakes for 47 years—makes up for their absence. Formerly known

as the Chain-O-Lakes, the Retreat comprises over 300 acres of linked lakes originally carved by sand and gravel extraction—some used for construction in Houston—not far from the Trinity River. Owner Jimmy Smith, a former dentist, has reshaped the spoil banks to create a decidedly low-key Disneyland-meets-Big Thicket-National-Preserve experience. “I’ve always been a bridge builder,” says Smith, making a dentistry pun. “The only difference is, since I quit my practice, the bridges have gotten a lot bigger.”

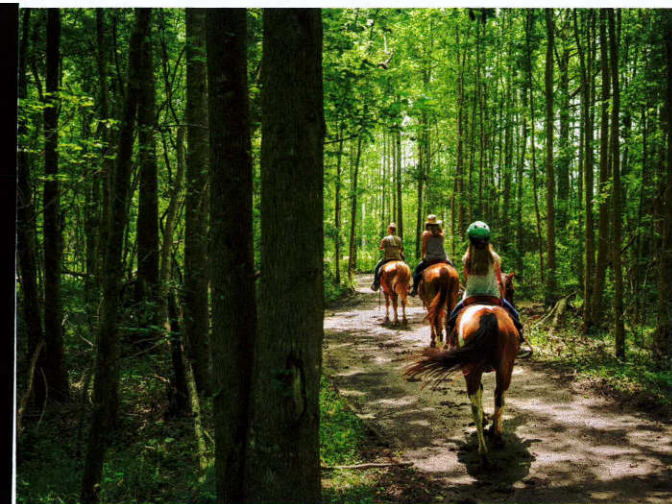
The Retreat boasts a variety of cabins suitable for romantic escapes as well as family reunions. Thanks to Smith’s ongoing landscaping efforts stringing together small islands and peninsulas, each one has a water view. The largest cabins have four bedrooms, and the resort also hosts guests at a few select private homes that are part of the Artesian Lakes development and available for rent.

Currently, corporations and professional groups dominate weekday

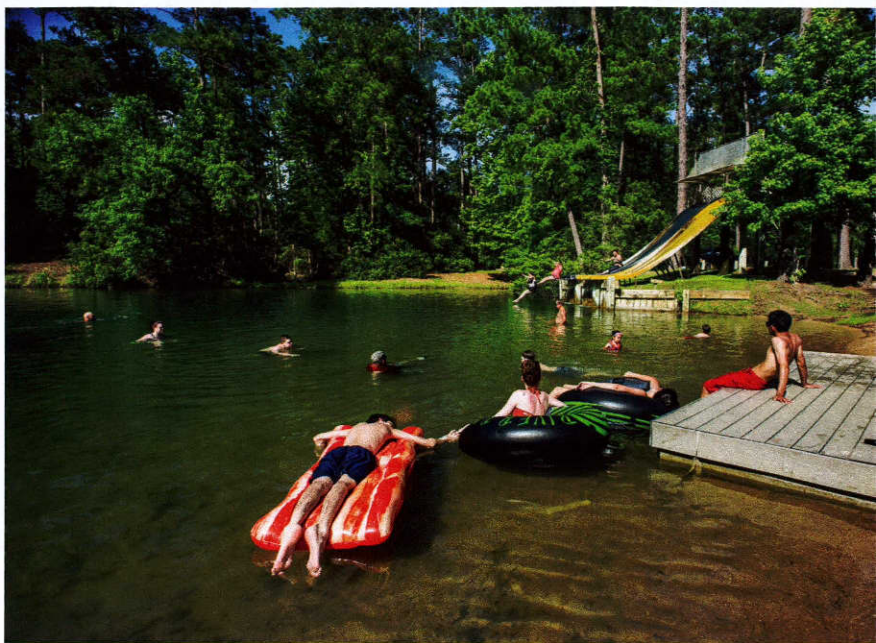


The next day, exploring a portion of the trails lined by pines and cypress, I halfway expected to run into Davy Crockett.





Left: Some of the cabin rentals at the Retreat at Artesian Lakes come with canoes, porch swings, and balconies. Above: A guide leads a horseback trail ride through the wooded areas at the Retreat. The giant slides at the spring-fed Swim Lake can launch as many as six sliders at once.



business, while on the weekends the facility provides more traditional family fun with water slides, miles of hiking trails, and seasonal horseback rides.

The alligators fortunately don't share the swimming facilities but rather reside in the main lake, which is fed by a series of natural artesian springs across the property that pump thousands of gallons of water into the lagoons each day. So we do not think twice about splashing in the spring-fed swimming hole, with me channeling my inner 12-year-old on the water slide. Despite my acrobatics, Ursula refuses to follow this daring lead. We shift focus to the scenic saltwater pool, which backs up to a manufactured boulder grotto that features a 12-person hot tub.

Meanwhile, spotting alligators and alligator snapping turtles, along with a few humongous grass carp, draws groups of diners to the deck of the Hilltop Restaurant. Part of the resort, the restaurant has an on-site herb garden and serves a fish buffet on Fridays, a Saturday breakfast buffet, and a popular Sunday brunch as well as weekend dinners and some holiday meals. Prominent signs remind people that across Texas it is illegal to harass, harm, or feed alligators (with the exception of hunting season, obviously), but diners

can buy handfuls of fish food to toss to the turtles and fish from the restaurant patio. The largest of the local alligator snapping turtles reportedly weighs over 200 pounds and is likely a hundred years old.

Complementing this menagerie, as we travel back and forth to the cabin, we see several juvenile gators sunning themselves and also a few curious birds, including a green heron hunting the reeds for frogs or minnows. The next day, exploring a portion of the trails lined by pines and cypress with Smith, I halfway expected to run into Davy Crockett or one of his descendants. Certainly, with Smith's son Wyatt now managing the resort while Jimmy focuses on building bridges, the Smith family legacy in East Texas will live on.

THE HIDE-AWAY AT POSSUM KINGDOM

ON A CABIN CRUISER he once captained through the Caribbean, Bo Bennett happily steers us on a sunset tour of the Possum Kingdom Lake's 100-foot-tall Hell's Gate formation, where the

Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series this year returns with international daredevils competing over Labor Day weekend. As one of Bennett's friends appears unexpectedly on the rocks of nearby Devil's Island, we expect we might enjoy a preview, but the man remains intent on letting his feet rather than gravity return him to the surface of the lake, where a boat waits for him. With gentle waves lapping our hull, we drift away from the sunset that illuminates the cliffs, casting them in copper. We reach the dock as the first stars appear in the night sky.

"Really, we always say the best way to see Possum Kingdom is from the water," grins Bennett, who owns Lush Resort with his wife, Gelasia. The scenery leaves zero room for debate. I had been directed to Lush for recreation by my hosts at the nearby Hide-Away Cabins and Inn, a popular downhome lodge overlooking the lake.

The Hide-Away has 20 basic cabins, all of which have been built and remodeled by the current ownership, but you need to have the wherewithal to make your own fun or hire a friendly local. Our cabin sits high on the crest of a hill with a partial view of the aquamarine depths of the lake below. A quarter-mile away, we can access the 16-mile



ESSENTIALS

LAKESIDE LODGING & LEISURE

Caddo Lake State Park is at 245 Park Road 2, in Karnack. Entry fee is \$4/day per person, kids 12 and younger free. Beyond cabins, screen shelters, RV pads, and campsites are available. Call 903-679-3351; tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/caddo-lake. For reservations, call 512-389-8900; texas.reserveworld.com.

The Retreat at Artesian Lakes is at 235 Chain-O-Lakes Resort, in Cleveland. Recreational opportunities include swimming, canoe rentals, and fishing. Call 832-397-4000; artesianlakes.com.

The Hide-Away Cabins and Inn is at 1782 FM 2951, in Graford. In addition to cabins, the property has a 16-room motel. Call 940-779-2333; pkhideaway.com.

Caddo Outback Backwater Tours is at 1869 Pine Island Road, in Karnack. Call 903-789-3384; caddolaketours.com.

WaterRush Rentals is at 3201 Redbird Road, in Graford. Based inside Lush Resorts, this recreational concessionaire can arrange cruises and water taxis, and rents stand-up paddleboards, Jetovator flying devices, pontoon boats, tubes, and kayaks. Call 940-463-5477; pkwaterrush.com.





Clockwise from bottom left: Hikers can enjoy a scenic look-out on the Riverbend Corner trail in Possum Kingdom State Park. The best way to access Hell's Gate on Possum Kingdom Lake is by boat. The cabins at Possum Kingdom feature back porches perfect for reading, grilling, or admiring the view.

Our cabin sits high on the crest of a hill with a partial view of the aquamarine depths of the lake below.

hike-and-bike trail network that basically parallels Farm-to-Market 2951.

During Texas' frontier days, the landscape hidden below the majestic lake's surface was known for its fur-trapping industry (especially for its possum pelts, offering one explanation for the name). Surrounded by dusky, salmon-dusted limestone bluffs, the 17,000-acre lake did not exist before 1941. That year the Morris Sheppard Dam captured the running waters of the upper Brazos River, the first of three flood-control projects that aimed to tame the stream.

A half dozen years since the wildfires of 2011 devastated the area, summertime fun seekers have returned to PK—as it's called—in full force. We quickly grasp why generations of Texans consider the crystalline blue-green waters of the reservoir—with more than 215 miles of shoreline—a perfect getaway. Wet and wild activities range from wake surfing and cliff diving to SCUBA diving and stand-up paddleboarding, while public parks and boat ramps run by Texas Parks and Wildlife,

as well as the Brazos River Authority, offer recreational access.

In the morning at Sandy Beach off FM 2951—one of the public picnic and camping areas at the west end of the PK peninsula—Lush Retreats' "ambassador of fun" Jesse Swanson, who runs the resort-affiliated WaterRush Watercraft Rentals and Jetovator, brings us a pair of stand-up paddleboards. Ursula finds her sea legs in no time and cruises the shoreline by herself. Although when a big wind comes up and blows her into deeper water, she needs me by her side to show her how to turn in the choppy waves. Back on dry land, we watch the scissortailed flycatchers do their mating dance until Ursula is ready to pick up her paddle and get back on the board again.

Though we also could have gone back and used the cabin kitchen, with my wife staying behind to work, the tween and I opt for a meal of fresh fried fish at Boondocks, a watering hole that on a quiet weeknight does not object to a 10-year-old patron.

Even though each of these Lone Star

destinations bear little resemblance to the hills of Duchess County where I played as a kid, the cabins offered my family the same simple, restorative experience I recall from those weekends at the pond. In turn, I make a mental note to add paddle boarding to my list of aquatic activities despite minor reservations about trying it in gator country. Nonetheless, Texas has dozens of large lakes I have yet to visit, and we only sampled a handful of cabins. At last, it occurs to me that a cabin by the lake can be more than housing; it can also be a state of mind. **L**

Since arriving in Houston a decade ago, freelance writer Dan Oko has made frequent forays across Texas to discover the best outdoor recreation options. The chance to bring his family along on these latest cabin adventures doubled his fun. Photographer Jenny Sathngam enjoys both work and play in the great outdoors and can often be found underwater shooting photos for her project on Texas swimming holes (@txopenswim).



PIGSKIN PALACES

**FIVE TEXAS STADIUM
TOURS FOR YOUR YEAR-
ROUND FOOTBALL FIX**

**STORY BY JOHN LUMPKIN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL**



Lewis Pate "Bud" McFadin's mid-1960s Houston Oilers helmet at the Texas Sports Hall of Fame in Waco.

TRUE TEXAS FOOTBALL FANS WE ARE.

We stand in lines, endure the swelter of early-season day games, and pay top dollar in donations and seat licenses to cheer our college and pro teams. We turn out to watch the local boys play under Friday-night lights, whether on six-man squads with bleachers set up next to pastures or suburban dynasties in multimillion-dollar stadiums.

Texas' two most storied teams—The University of Texas Longhorns and Texas A&M Aggies—draw 100,000-plus spectators to big home games. And the state's two NFL teams, the Dallas Cowboys and Houston Texans, take the field in precedent-setting stadiums that push the boundaries of technology and fan experience.

But the Longhorns, Aggies, Cowboys, and Texans each play only a relative handful of home games a year. Fortunately for super-fans—and the merely curious—their stadiums open year-round for tours that provide close-up looks at the facilities, chronicle the teams' legacies with historical artifacts and displays, and engage our imaginations with interactive exhibits. At AT&T Stadium in Arlington, dads can throw wobbly passes to their kids over the familiar Dallas Cowboys' Star emblem; and at Texas A&M's Hall of Champions, fans can try on virtual uniforms in the spirit of the "12th Man."

In anticipation of football season, give the couch a break and join us for a tour of Texas' most exciting palaces of pigskin.



1 AT&T STADIUM ARLINGTON

Leave it to the Joneses to have a Stadium and Art Ambassador, Phil Whitfield, who leads AT&T Stadium tours that focus on major artworks commissioned or purchased under the direction of Gene Jones, Cowboys' co-owner and wife of Jerry Jones. Whitfield's narrative weaves together the art, architecture, and athletics of the audacious building, which is big enough to house the Statue of Liberty.

A separate VIP guided tour covers the football essentials and fan amenities, including access to the field, the player and cheerleader locker rooms, million-dollar luxury suites, and the outsized 60-yard-long video board

jokingly referred to as the "Jerrytron."

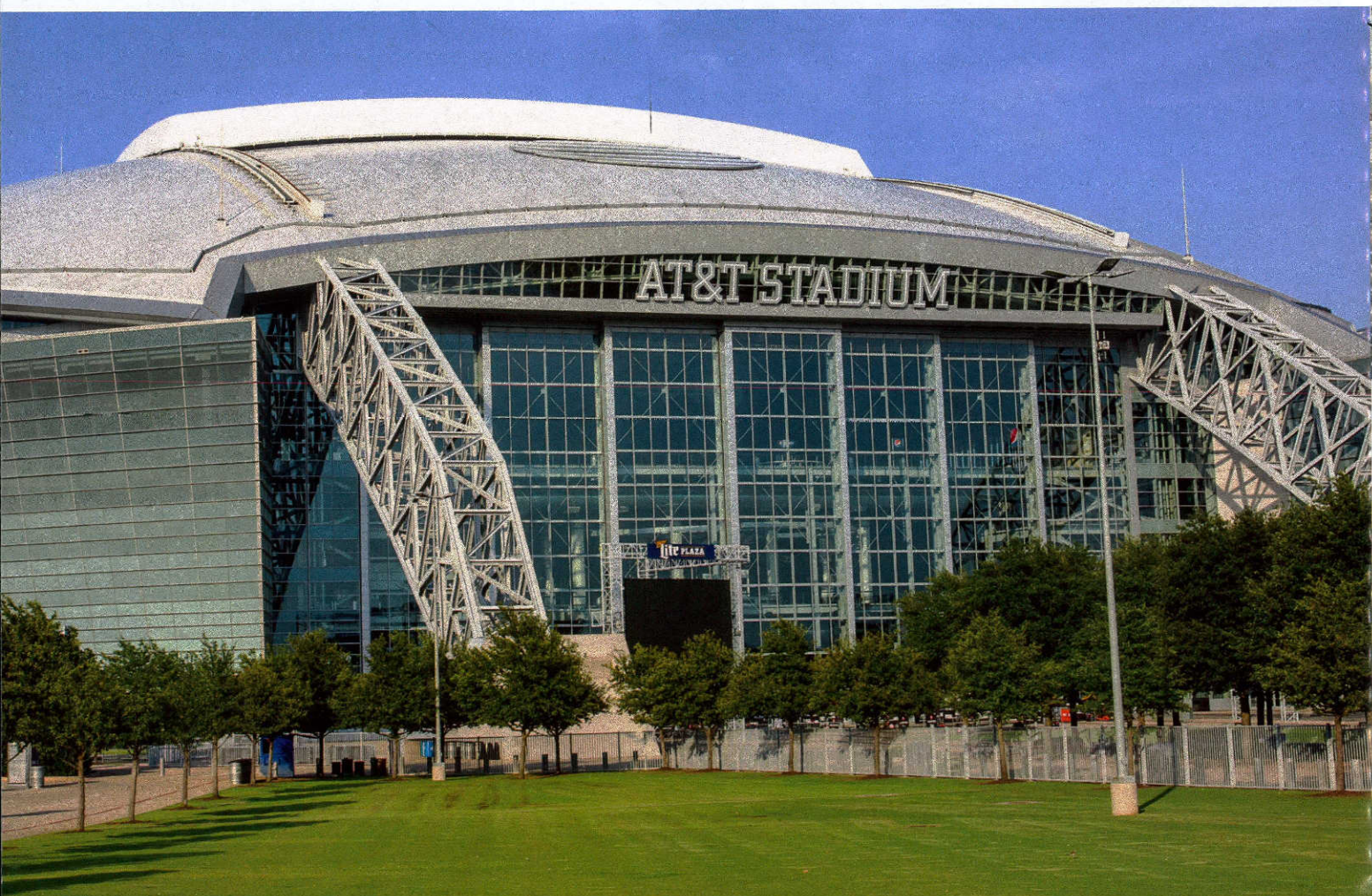
"When I came here, I thought art was in a picture frame," said Whitfield, who shepherded artists decorating the building during its construction. Some artworks are football-related, like *Line of Play*, an abstraction of coaches' play drawings on two walls and a ceiling at AT&T's northwest entrance for premium seats.

The creations, which represent styles like minimalism, kinetic art, and surrealism, adorn stadium entrances, suite-owners' private areas, and concession stands. "Art people want to see the art," noted Whitfield, who's also part of the Dallas Cowboy



From a Legend to a Choir, Trenton Doyle Hancock.

Cheerleader selection process. "They may not care whether the Cowboys are winning or losing."





2 THE STAR FRISCO

Northeast of Arlington in Frisco, The Star—the new Dallas Cowboys headquarters and training facility—g greets visitors with a jaw-dropping five-story glass atrium decorated with 19,200 flickering LED lights hung from the ceiling on 160 mirrored rods. Artist Lee Villareal, creator of *The Bay Lights* display on the San Francisco Bay Bridge, fashioned the installation.

VIP Guided Tours lead fans downstairs to the Taj Mahal of locker rooms, where players have faux leather seats with built-in compartments for street clothes and ventilated storage for sweaty shoes and shoulder pads.

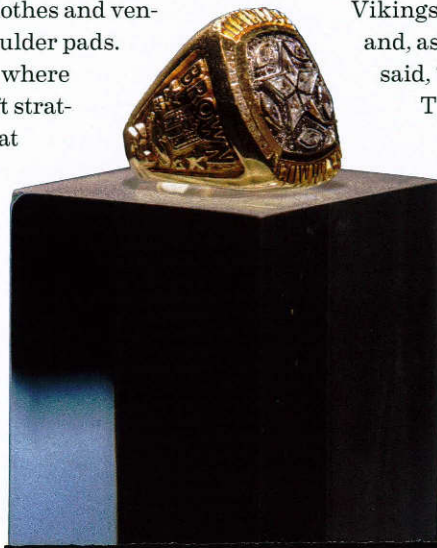
The tour also stops at the War Room, where Cowboys officials plot their annual draft strategy with an interactive video wall; and at the practice fields of natural grass or artificial turf (the team switches from one field to another depending on the turf for the upcoming game).

The Star exhibits Cowboys artifacts throughout the facility. In a hall near the entrance, the team's five Super Bowl trophies shine on a display stand—with room for more. In

another hallway display, a scouting report on then-UCLA star Troy Aikman is open to a page reading, "He very clearly fits the character requirement for the important position of quarterback in an 'almost perfect' fashion." Of course, the Cowboys drafted Aikman No. 1 in 1989, and he went on to lead Dallas to three Super Bowl titles. The scout who wrote that early assessment: Jim Garrett, the father of Jason Garrett, the Cowboys' current head coach.

Don't miss *Hail Mary*, a staircase of freeze-frames of the Roger Staubach-Drew Pearson TD connection that provided a last-ditch 1975 playoff victory against the Minnesota Vikings. It was a defining moment for both players and, as Cowboy fans recall, quarterback Staubach said, "I closed my eyes and said a Hail Mary."

The nucleus of a \$1.5-billion mixed-use development, The Star includes the 10,000-seat Ford Center, which serves as the Cowboys' indoor practice field and home to Frisco's high school football teams. Tour participants can try out the practice field (except on practice and event days) and run around on the 50-yard turf field replica on the outdoor plaza, complete with a large video board.





3 **DARRELL K ROYAL-TEXAS MEMORIAL STADIUM** AUSTIN ○

Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium still gets plenty of use when it isn't hosting one of the Texas Longhorns' home football games.

The Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports, housed in DKR's north end zone, comprises an academic research center and 10 separate museum galleries celebrating athletic interests from bodybuilding to golf. Exhibits rotate, such as *1914: A Perfect Season*, which honors the Longhorn football squad whose national record for points-per-game stood for 91 years.



Tours begin in the cavernous Red McCombs Red Zone food court, where UT students and visitors relax and refuel near the Texas Longhorn Band's 8-foot-diameter bass drum—the 90-year-old “Big Bertha.” Outside, Veterans Memorial Plaza honors all U.S. war veterans—hence the stadium's name before Royal's was added.

Tour guests also visit the press box and hospitality areas, where boosters hang out on game day. Beyond the south end zone is the Moncrief-Neuhaus Athletic Center, home to football offices, locker and equipment rooms, a display of UT's national championship trophies, the Heisman trophies of running backs Earl Campbell and Ricky Williams, and plaques naming every team captain back to James Morrison in 1893.

Underneath the south end zone, there's a moving memorial to safety Freddie Steinmark, who was diagnosed with bone cancer after Texas' 15-14 win over Arkansas in 1969, the game that decided the national championship. His leg amputated, Steinmark stood on the sidelines during the Longhorns' 1970 Cotton Bowl win over Notre Dame. Just like Longhorn players, fans can touch the Steinmark memorial before they enter the tunnel and run to the field.



4 KYLE FIELD

COLLEGE STATION ○

What has 1.6 million bricks, 29 million pounds of structural steel, 109 flights of stairs, and a sprawling sign declaring “Welcome to Aggieland”? The new Kyle Field, which Texas A&M University unveiled in September 2015 after a \$485 million renovation of its 1927 stadium.

Led by student guides, Kyle Field tours ascend via elevator to the East Side’s Level 7 for an expansive view of stands that seat 102,733 spectators, more than any other Texas football stadium. Nearby, a concession stand sells signature chicken-fried hot dogs, and one of the stadium’s four air-conditioned 60-degree Cool Zones thwarts heat-related ailments on late-summer game days.

Larger-than-life tributes characterize the new Kyle Field, including a two-story club space with design details inspired by the Aggie Ring and soaring portraits of A&M’s two Heisman Trophy winners, the late John David Crow (1957) and Johnny Manziel (2012).

Tours also explore the Hall of Champions, a 30,000-foot indoor exhibition hall that showcases all Aggie sports. Visitors can watch videos of modern-day football action, access a virtual trophy room of 360-degree images of the hardware commemorating Aggie championships, and view Kyle Field’s transformation in photos and time-lapse video. From there, the tour continues to the track surrounding the field. No strolling on the turf itself—it is natural grass.

Outside, statues ring the stadium’s exterior, including the 40-foot-long War Hymn Monument of Aggie students arm-in-arm and the 12-foot-tall bronze rendering of E. King Gill, the Aggies’ historic 12th Man. The Hall of Champions is open most days even if you aren’t on a tour.

Aggie officials note that many artifacts from the now-closed A&M Sports Museum are in storage with future plans to display them in the Hall of Champions.

WEB EXTRA

Football history is on display throughout Texas in places like the African American Museum’s Texas Black Sports Hall of Fame at Fair Park in Dallas and at the “Tomato Bowl” stadium in Jacksonville. Read about more notable sites at texashighways.com.



ESSENTIALS

AT&T STADIUM,

1 AT&T Way in Arlington, offers tours on days without conflicting events. Prices range from \$17.50 for the self-guided tour with a mobile app, to \$27.50 for the VIP Guided Tour. The Art Tour is \$22. Call 817-892-8687; attstadium.com/tours.

THE STAR,

1 Cowboys Way in Frisco, offers a VIP Tour most days. Prices are \$27.50 for children and seniors and \$32.50 for adults. Call 800-745-3000; thestarinfrisco.com/tours.

NRG STADIUM,

1 NRG Park in Houston, offers guided tours Tuesdays and Thursdays. Tickets cost \$5 to \$6 and are available at the stadium's south ticket window. Call 832-667-1842 for blackout days; nrgpark.com/stadium-tour.

KYLE FIELD,

756 Houston St. in College Station, offers tours Mondays through Thursdays for \$12. Call 979-847-8113; 12thman.com/kylefieldtours.

DARRELL K ROYAL-MEMORIAL STADIUM,

405 E. 23rd St. in Austin, offers tours throughout the year with dates announced two weeks in advance. Tickets (\$10) available online only. texassports.com/sports/2013/7/24/facilities_0724132616.aspx?path=general.

THE TEXAS SPORTS HALL OF FAME

is at 1108 S. University Parks Drive in Waco. Admission costs \$3-\$7. Call 800-567-9561; tshof.org.

5 NRG STADIUM

HOUSTON

Located next door to the historic Astrodome, NRG Stadium holds its own with a facility that in 15 short years has hosted not only the Houston Texans but also two NCAA Men's Final Four Championships, the annual Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, numerous international soccer matches, and two Super Bowls.

Tours, which cost \$6 and last about an hour, cover the visiting team locker room, the stadium press box, the club level, and party suites. The tour also includes the field sideline, where visitors can get a look at the field turf (when it's installed) and gaze up at the stadium's massive retractable roof, the first in the NFL. The roof took center stage earlier this year when Lady Gaga rappelled from the top of the stadium during her Super Bowl LI halftime show.

For now, NRG has fewer historical exhibits than Kyle, DKR, and AT&T; after all, the Texans debuted in 2002. Displays where the tour starts in the south lobby illustrate NRG Stadium's versatility with memorabilia from the Houston Rodeo, the 2011 and 2016 Final Four tournaments, monster truck events, and the Texans. A vintage Houston Astros baseball uniform and a Houston Oilers helmet serve as tributes to the teams that played in the Astrodome, and historical photographs chronicle the construction of both the Astrodome and NRG Stadium.





G TEXAS SPORTS HALL OF FAME WACO

The Houston Oilers left the state before NRG Stadium was built, but memories of the Oilers are celebrated in Waco, where the Texas Sports Hall of Fame displays “Luv Ya Blue” memorabilia like Coach Bum Phillips’ boots and cowboy hat and a battered Oilers helmet.

The Hall also tells the history of the Southwest Conference, the athletic association made up of Texas’ biggest universities before it disbanded in 1996. Artifacts aren’t limited to football. The University of Houston section has signed jerseys of Clyde Drexler and Hakeem Olajuwon, anchors of the Cougars’ Phi Slama Jama basketball team of the early 1980s.

Long before ESPN, football fans in Texas spent Saturday afternoons by the radio listening to Kern Tips, “Voice of the Southwest Conference.” Tips narrated countless dramas on the collegiate gridiron, many of which Hall visitors can hear in an on-demand audio exhibit of Tips and other broadcasters.

The Hall also focuses on the history of 300-plus members of the Texas High School Football Hall of Fame. Exhibits include

quarterback Bobby Layne’s No. 86 gold-and-black Highland Park High jersey, which he wore before he started as a freshmen at UT in 1944 and led the Detroit Lions to NFL championships in 1952 and 1953.

And, of course, the Hall honors Tom Landry, the scrappy athlete from Mission who went on to coach the Dallas Cowboys for 29 years. In the Tom Landry Theater, visitors can select videos of memorable Cowboys’ moments and their famous coach.

There’s a saying in Texas that football season lasts year-round. With visits to Arlington, Frisco, College Station, Austin, Houston, and Waco, fans can get their football fix whether or not it’s game day. **L**

Richardson-based writer and retired AP journalist John Lumpkin attended his first Dallas Cowboys game in the late 1960s, sitting in a \$7 seat in the upper deck of the Cotton Bowl. Austin-based photographer Erich Schlegel shot each of the Dallas Cowboys’ Super Bowl wins in the 1990s for The Dallas Morning News, where he worked for 20 years.



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➤ DESTINATION: SMITHVILLE ◀

The Next Marfa?

New eats and historic treats in Smithville

story by Michael Corcoran

STEVE SIMMONS AND HIS WIFE, AMY, THE Austin ice cream queen, bought a ranch in the Smithville area 10 years ago to get away from the hustle. But a Saturday in early 2014 inspired Steve to get to work instead. He and his family had dinner that night at the Back Door Café, Smithville's fine dining establishment, then walked onto the Main Street of a ghost town. "We'd just had a great meal, and the downtown buildings looked beautiful against the sky," Simmons recalls. "Where are all the people?" his 10-year-old son asked. It did seem strange to Simmons that there wasn't anyone else on the streets that once bustled



- **Houston**
2 hours
- **Austin**
1 hour
- **San Antonio**
1.75 hours
- **Dallas**
3.5 hours

when the town was a railroad hub. "Dad, you could fix this," were the words that sent the father into action.

Simmons bought a couple of buildings downtown and recruited friends and associates to also invest in this quaint burg 45 miles east of Austin and 120 miles west of Houston. Then he sold his vision of Smithville's downtown revival to city leaders with a talk at the library.

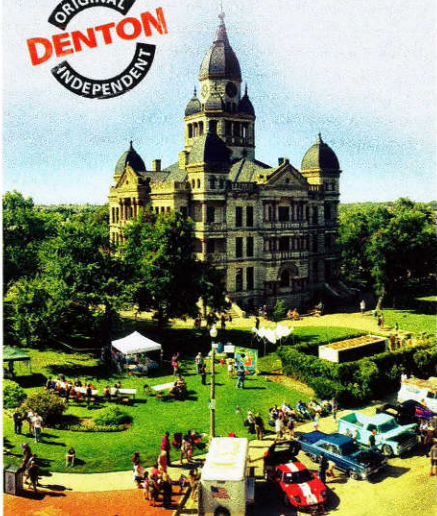
Three years later, Smithville (population 4,218) struts with a vibrancy it hasn't seen since the late 1980s, when the road between Austin and Houston went right through the center of town. Once

ARTS & AUTOS EXTRAVAGANZA

SEPTEMBER 9, 2017 — HISTORIC DOWNTOWN DENTON

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Denton Convention & Visitors Bureau



deathly quiet after dark, save for the blaring horns of passing locomotives, downtown now has an upscale pizzeria, a sports bar, a community theater, an eclectic boutique, a wine bar, and occasional concerts on the second floor of the Mosaic Art & Home shop.

Smithville is fast becoming Austin's Marfa, a daytrip destination that doesn't take all day to get there.

CULINARY COMEBACK

At the storefront at 303 Main St. that once housed the *Smithville Times* weekly newspaper, you'll find Coach Q's Social Club. Simmons bought the 1930s building and teamed with former Smithville High track coach Tony Quitta—recently retired after 29 years helping the Tigers—to open a sports bar for the whole family. The club, decorated with Smithville sports memorabilia, received a vintage transplant when Simmons and Quitta bought the contents of a St. Louis bar called the Mahogany Room, which had been

in storage for 55 years. Included in the sale was a gold cash register that gets almost as many oohs and aahs as the sports action unfolding on eight TV screens.

Coach Q's has the best cheeseburgers in town, though fans of Pocket's Grille (205 Fawcett St.), whose varied menu includes such burger concoctions as the El Hefe (grilled onions and jalapeños, topped with a fried egg) and the Alpine (mushrooms and Swiss cheese), might disagree.

In 2016, Steve and Amy opened both Honey's Pizza and Amy's Ice Cream on Northeast Second Street. The joint location instantly became the town's fifth-largest employer. Friends from Austin, meanwhile, bought and renovated downtown's two bed-and-breakfast inns—the Katy House and the Smithville Inn—fun and relaxing places to stay overnight.

The top food necessity for any small Texas town that wants to put itself on the map is a good barbecue joint, and



Smithville has one of the best in Zimmermanhanel's BBQ. But when you add a great pizza restaurant like Honey's, plus the consistently good Olde World Bakery and Café on Main Street, and soul food trailer Auzell's Kitchen on the North Third Thoroughfare, you're state champs in 1A culinary options.

And joining the culinary crowd this fall is Micklethwaite Craft Meats, the Austin-trailer sensation moving into the former Vasek Automotive building. Also across the street from Honey's/Amy's is the fabulous Midnight Monkey Merchantile & Services, bringing a taste of Austin's SoCo shopping district to Southeast Second Street. With the Pine Hotel Lofts coming next door to Honey's in 2018, that block is the hippest in Bastrop County.

"Smithville is a little treasure," says Robin Kelley, who opened Midnight Monkey with cousin Beth Neely in the fall of 2016. "This town inspires you to create."

If you're working hard to add something special to the community, you're "smithing," a term Kelley invented, which is starting to catch on.

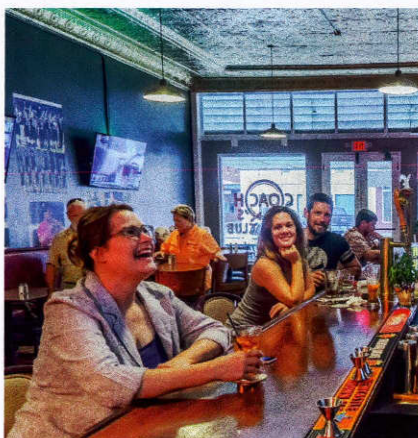
SMALL-TOWN REVIVAL

Both progressive and traditional, Smithville has had a recycling center since the 1980s. But the Smitty City is still without a movie theater, public swimming pool, greengrocer, regular live music venue, or an ethnic restaurant besides Mexican. All that can be found less than an hour away in Austin.

What the capital city doesn't have is a nourishment experience like the Comfort Café, a pay-what-you-can restaurant staffed by the SerenityStar Recovery group, which serves omelets of a higher taste. That everything on the menu is fantastic and being served by good folks trying to put their lives



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
Stefanie Distefano's outdoor mosaic mural *Journey of the Soul*, Honey's Pizza, Coach Q's Social Club, and The Front Room wine bar.



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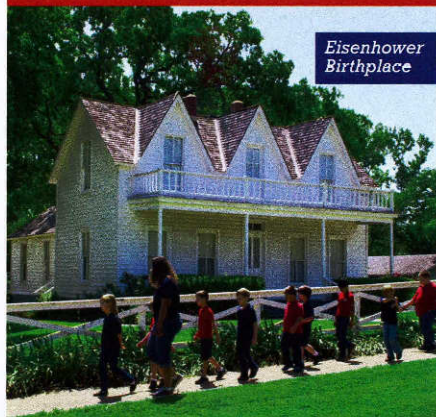
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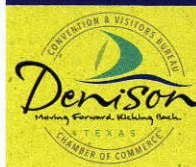


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back together will make you pay \$20 when no one would look down on you if you left the minimum of \$10.

Though the café is open only Friday through Sunday until 3 p.m., folks often stop by early in the week to admire Stefanie Distefano's outdoor mosaic mural *Journey of the Soul*, with inscriptions and inspiration coming from those in treatment who shared their stories.

"You know those days when the sky is pure blue and the birds are singing and the sun feels so right on your face?" Distefano asks. "That's how every day feels since we moved to Smithville [two years ago]." Her favorite thing to do is ride her horse downtown or over to West End Park, a former "Chitlin' Circuit" nightclub of the '40s and '50s that is seeing a slow revival under the spiritual leadership of Smithville's resident jazz composer Hannibal Lokumbe.

There are outdoor activities in the area for those who don't have a horse, including those at Buescher State Park, only 3 miles from the center of town. It's great for hiking, fishing, camping, birdwatching, and just getting away, as you can have the park almost all to yourself on weekdays.

For biking, there's no better place than Rocky Hill Ranch, just down FM 153 from Buescher (pronounced "Bisher"), which offers 25 miles of challenging mountain bike trails.

Smithville also has a Tony Hawk-subsidized skateboard park downtown, plus disc golf, pier-fishing on the Colorado River, and 100-year-old oak trees in Riverbend Park, the site of the annual Jamboree each April. But perhaps the best exercise of all is walking through the historic district of old, beautifully kept houses, including the one at 235 NE Eighth St., where the Sandra Bullock character lived with her mother in *Hope Floats*. The titular *Tree of Life*, which filmmaker Terrence Malick had moved and replanted at great expense, is just a few blocks away at 709 Burleson St.

Filmmakers have long seen

Smithville as a lovely location for both period pieces and slices of small-town life, with its Victorian houses, antiques stores, art deco post office, and only two chain restaurants in town: Dairy Queen and Subway. But, aside from Friday night football games at Barry Field, there wasn't much human electricity. Until recently, Huebel's beer joint, which plays big in *Hope Floats*, and Charlie's, a friendly, smoke-filled biker/karaoke bar, were the only places to wet your whistle after dark. But now Smithville's even got a distillery and tasting room, Bone Spirits on Northeast First Street. And Coach Q's keeps it lively on Main Street.



SMITHVILLE

For Smithville visitor information, call the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce at **512-237-2313**; smithvilletx.org/tourism

Midnight Monkey, which has an innovative concept for a store in the boonies, could not have opened in Smithville five years ago. You enter the shop—whose items range from a \$1.50 pack of candy cigarettes to a pair of \$3,000 chairs designed by the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier—through a "storyfront," not a storefront. And once every four months or so, the store changes inventory completely, introducing the goods with a midnight "new story" party.

Store owners cover its windows in brown paper as they store the old merchandise and put new items in place. "We didn't know what we'd see when we took down the paper at midnight," Kelley says of the November 2016 unveiling. "We thought maybe no one would be outside. But when we tore it down, there must've been 100 people. It turned into a huge block party!"

Folks dancing in the downtown streets of Smithville at midnight! The overall pace is still small-town, but now it pulses with fresh blood and new ideas. **L**

TRUE TX

REAL TEXAS STORIES BORN AND BRED

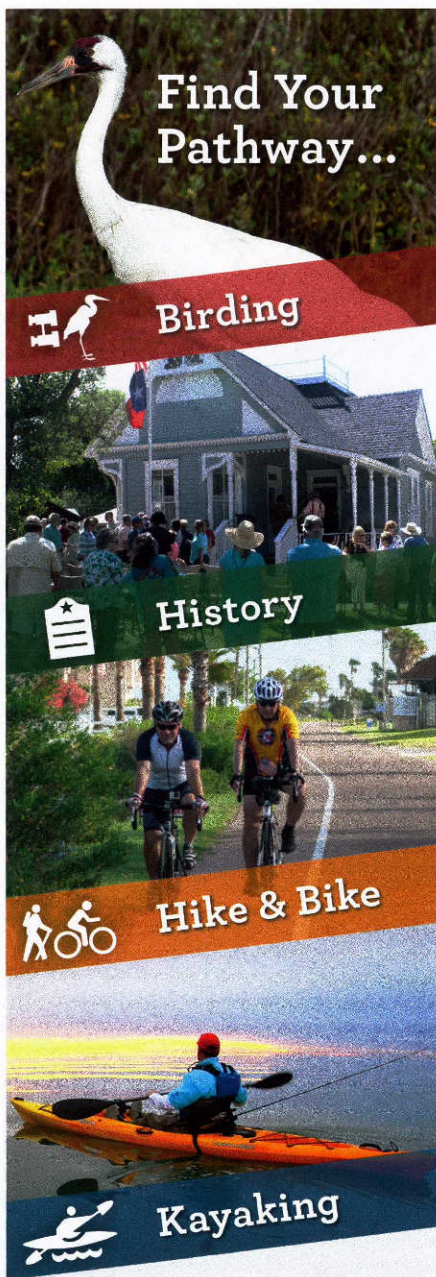
A Legacy of Diplomacy

Chamizal National Memorial
in El Paso

story by Clayton Maxwell



Chamizal National Memorial's jogging paths offer views of the Bridge of the Americas crossing into Juárez.



Head on out to
 Aransas County,
 visit Rockport and
 Fulton to discover
 your own pathway.



Start your adventure now:
AransasPathways.com

TRUE TX



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A RIVER CHANGES course and the border between two countries hangs in the balance?

When standing on the southern edge of El Paso's Chamizal National Memorial, with a close-up view of the Bridge of the Americas, the answer to this question is tangible. The flow of people and activity crossing the border here is steady—a lively contrast to the Rio Grande below, which is a long puddle of stagnant water in a 167-foot-wide concrete canal.

Chamizal National Memorial, completed in 1974, explains how this unusual stretch of U.S.-Mexico border came about. It's not your typical national park. There are no big hikes or waterfalls on this 55 acres of land. But with its small exhibition space, art gallery, theater, and amphitheater—along with a sprawling grass lawn with walking trails and views of Mexico—Chamizal National Memorial explores how the two countries were able to resolve a fierce 100-yearlong border brawl that arose when the Rio Grande did what rivers are prone to do—change course.

A bright mural near the Chamizal National Memorial Cultural Center greets visitors with vivid renderings of historical figures like Aztec gods, U.S. Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, and Mexican President Adolfo

Chamizal National Memorial hosts a busy schedule of events, including Folklorico Summer Fiesta Aug. 26; the exhibit *Diego and Frida: A Smile Along the Way* Sept. 7-Dec. 22; and the Chamizal Festival Oct. 14.

At Chamizal, see the historic boundary marker and the *Nuestra Herencia/Our Heritage* mural.



López Mateos—artistic foreshadowing of the culture and history revealed here. What’s known as the Chamizal Dispute took shape in the decades after the Mexican-American War ended and the United States and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The treaty identified the center, deepest channel of the Rio Grande as the border between Texas and Mexico.

Provisions had been established for gradual, subtle shifts in the Rio Grande’s course, but no one knew what to do when severe flooding in 1864 pushed the river significantly south. By the turn of the century, about 700 acres of what had been Mexico now lay north of the river in the United States; Mexican farmers had to cross the Rio Grande to farm their own land. Named the Chamizal for the scrubby *chamizo* bush that grew there, this territory eventually became home to many of El Paso’s poorer families and businesses.

Mexican citizens who lost their land weren’t happy and filed lawsuits. In 1909, Presidents William Howard Taft and Porfirio Díaz met to find a solution, and an independent tribunal with a Canadian jurist took the case. But the American government rejected the tribunal’s 1911 decision that it should return the land to Mexico. The resolution entered a stalemate and stayed that way until Kennedy came along.

In 1962, to cement a friendship

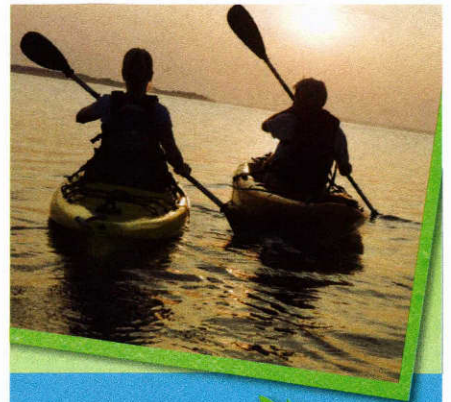
with Mexico during the Cold War and deter Soviet and Cuban collusion with Mexico, Kennedy visited President López Mateos in Mexico City.

“Just imagine what a different history we would have if this dispute hadn’t been resolved when it was and Mexico had shifted its alliance amidst the threat of the Cuban missile crisis,” said Anne Doherty-Stephan, the park’s chief of interpretation and education.

Kennedy’s visit led to the Chamizal Convention of 1963, which called for the United States to return 437 acres of the Chamizal back to Mexico. Also, the two countries would share the cost of building the bridge—which would be maintained as a free crossing—and the 4.4-mile concrete canal that would block the Rio Grande from ever causing blurry boundaries again.

Not everyone was happy with this solution, particularly the approximately 5,600 Americans who by then called the Chamizal home. They would have to find a new place to live. Thanks to the University of Texas at El Paso’s Chamizal Oral History Project, there is a treasure chest of personal stories on the UTEP website—interviews with everyone from El Pasoans who helped implement the Chamizal Convention to families who were displaced.

One of the best reasons to visit Chamizal National Memorial is the people who work here, like Saul



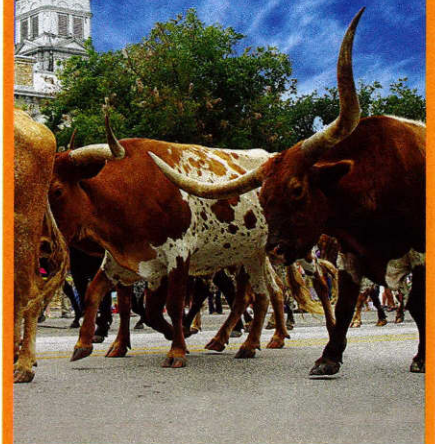
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Sustaita, a Student Conservation Association intern, and custodian Enrique Romero. They both lived in El Paso in the 1960s and remember when the Rio Grande was still a river, not a trickle in a concrete canal. "When we were kids, we would go down to the river and swim all the time; we made a tire swing," Sustaita said. "But now you can't walk close to the canal or you'll get stopped and questioned."

Standing by the front desk of the cultural center, they show me a laminated copy of the Sept. 25, 1964, *El Paso Herald-Post* with the front-page photo of Johnson and López Mateos extending their hands for the "handshake of the century" in front of the chrome boundary marker.

When I asked Sustaita and Romero if it was worth it to give the land back to Mexico, they both paused. "Yes, and no," Sustaita said. "It's really sad that people lost their homes, but it was good for our relationship with Mexico."

This is a widely held viewpoint. "Well, there are pros and cons," said local historian Fred Morales, who lived in the Chamizal and remembers his family's eviction. "It wasn't a big deal for me, I was just a little kid. We were renting in the Chamizal. We were one of the lucky families because we found a new place to live very close by."

But many residents were crushed to leave their homes and community, and the Chamizal National Memorial doesn't gloss over the losses. Placards on one wall of the exhibition room display photos and quotes from those who were displaced. And thanks to a recent grant, Doherty-Stephan said, the memorial is planning updates to the exhibition that will delve further into the local impact of the resolution, offering oral histories from affected people in El Paso and Juárez.

Park Ranger Rodney Sauter, volunteer coordinator for the park, said Chamizal is an important historical reminder. "Though the settlement may not have been completely harmonious, I think it is important for us to

remember a time when our two nations worked together to resolve a disagreement through respect and communication," he said.

Indeed, this national memorial does that rare and important thing—it makes you open your eyes to something that you may have never questioned, like how a border is made, or just how much El Paso and Juárez are interwoven despite the fences and canals that separate them.

Such considerations are front and center here, as reflected in the history timeline of the El Paso-Juárez border that covers one wall of the exhibition space and in the maps that indicate the border's many permutations. And you can feel El Paso's blending of cultures when sitting in the capacious theater (which hosts performances most weekends), watching a children's dance show honoring the Aztec and Toltec groups of Mexico. The woman who introduced the dancers switched seamlessly from Spanish to English and spoke with pride about our shared ancestry with Mexico.

On another day, a friend and I walked across the bridge into Mexico to see what the Chamizal looks like on the Juárez side. Parque Público Federal el Chamizal, which is a short walk from the bridge, was abuzz with picnicking Mexican families, kids riding horses and go-carts, nappers in hammocks strung in the shade, and carts selling popsicles and *aguas frescas*.

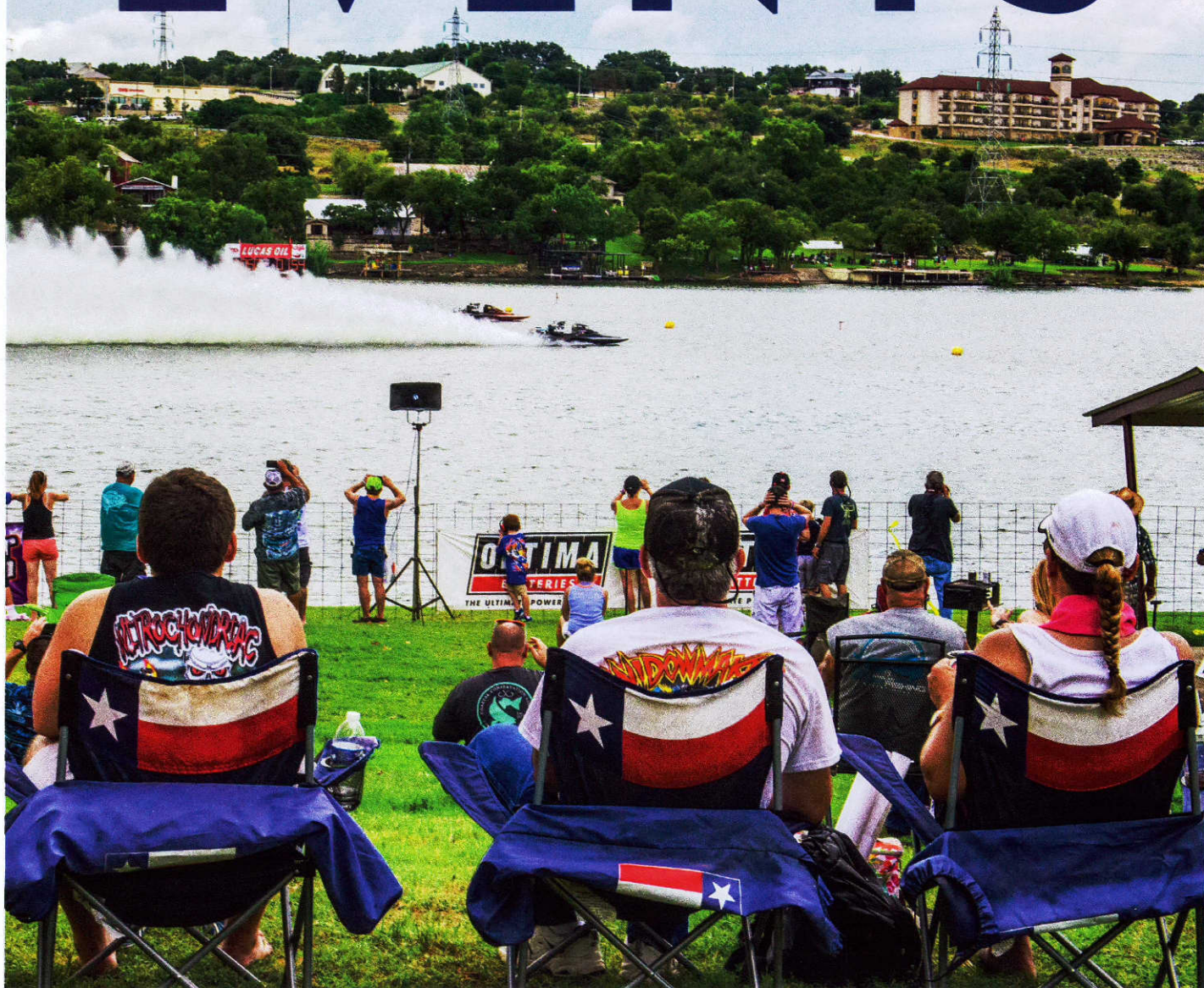
I was grateful to know, thanks to Chamizal National Memorial, that beneath this hum of activity, there is a story of a diplomatic and peaceful—if not perfect—answer to that question: What do you do when a river changes course? **L**



**CHAMIZAL
NATIONAL MEMORIAL**

is at 800 S. San Marcial St. in El Paso. The grounds open daily (except some holidays) 7 a.m.-10 p.m. The Cultural Center opens 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Call **915-532-7273**; nps.gov/cham.

EVENTS



AUGUST'S TRAVEL SPOTLIGHT:

HILL COUNTRY > Marble Falls

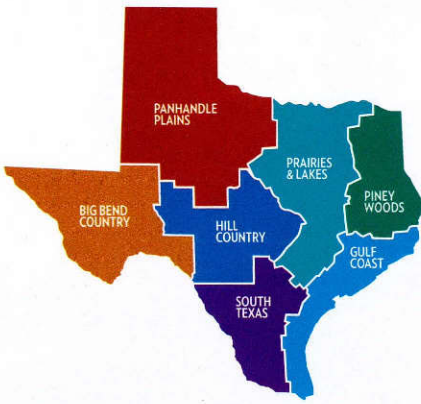
LakeFest Drag Boat Races

START YOUR ENGINES and head to Lake Marble Falls, whose calm, warm waters will once again transform into a veritable racetrack for the LakeFest Drag Boat Races, Aug. 11-13. More than a hundred boats will reach speeds of more than 260 mph as they race across this reservoir on

a bend in the Colorado River for the 26th consecutive year. Meanwhile, the banks of the lake turn into a party, with a special treat for spectators beginning after dusk: a free concert at the Johnson Park Amphitheater. On Sunday, the winners drive away with more than \$100,000 in prizes. marblefalls.org

Want more? Go to the Events Calendar at texashighways.com.

EVENTS



BIG BEND COUNTRY

FORT DAVIS: Davis Mountains Hummingbird Celebration Aug. 24-26. fortdavis.com 432-426-3015

MARATHON: Grilling at the Gage Summer Series Aug. 19. gagehotel.com 432-386-4205

MIDLAND: Rock the Desert Aug. 3-5. rockthedesert.com 432-563-3434

VAN HORN: Mountain View Golf Tournament Aug. 18-20. vanhorn-texas.us 432-283-2628

GULF COAST

BEAUMONT: FRESH: Recent Acquisitions Through Sept. 10. amset.org 409-832-3432

BEAUMONT: Cafe Arts: Mary Pat Nelson Gross Aug. 17-Oct. 8. amset.org 409-832-3432

CORPUS CHRISTI: Backyard Butterfly Habitats Aug. 26. stxbot.org 361-852-2100

FREEPORT: Jazz and Jambalaya on the River Aug. 24. bcfas.org 979-665-2341

FREEPORT: Rotary Shrimp Boil Aug. 26. 979-482-2810

GALVESTON: Sandcastle Days Aug. 5. galvestonbeachinfo.com 888-425-4753

GALVESTON: Dixie's Tupperware Party Aug. 26. thegrand.com 800-821-1894

HOUSTON: Coin and Collectible Show Aug. 5-6. bellairecoinclub.com 281-910-0741

HOUSTON: John Mayer in Concert Aug. 6. woodlandscenter.org 281-363-3300

HOUSTON: *The Bodyguard* Aug. 15-20. thebodycenter.org 713-315-2525

HOUSTON: Foreigner and Cheap Trick in Concert Aug. 19. woodlandscenter.org 281-363-3300

HOUSTON: Coldplay in Concert Aug. 25. nrgpark.com 832-667-1400

LAKE JACKSON: Dive-In Movie: *Finding Dory* Aug. 4. lakejackson-tx.gov 979-297-4533

LAKE JACKSON: Bird Banding Aug. 19. gcbo.org 979-480-0999

ORANGE: Up Close with Nature Aug. 26. starkulturalvenues.org/shangrilagardens 409-670-9113

PALACIOS: St. Anthony's Golf Tournament and Shrimptree Aug. 5-6. stanthonypalacios.org 361-972-2446

PALACIOS: Cannonball Run-Youth Sailing Aug. 12-13. palaciosyachtclub.org 832-444-2042

PALACIOS: Fish Fest Family Tournament Aug. 12. palacioschamber.com 361-972-2615

PORT ARANSAS: Texas Legends Billfish Tournament Aug. 9-13. txlegends.com 361-749-4870

PORT ARANSAS: Texas Women Anglers Tournament Aug. 25-27. gofishtx.com 361-779-8025

PORT ARTHUR: Exotic Bird Fair Aug. 19-20. trianglebirdclub.org 409-626-1081

RICHMOND: Hands-On Summer History Through Aug. 26. georgeranch.org 281-343-0218

RICHMOND: Summer History Fridays Aug. 4, 11, 18. fortbendmuseum.org 281-342-6478

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: Texas International Fishing Tournament Aug. 2-6. sopadre.com 800-657-2373

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: Ladies Kingfish Tournament Aug. 11-13. sopadre.com 800-657-2373

SUGAR LAND: *Sweet: A Tasty Journey* May 12-Aug. 6. hmns.org/hmns-at-sugar-land 281-313-2277

SUGAR LAND: Earth Science under the Microscope Aug. 10. hmns.org/hmns-at-sugar-land 281-313-2277

SUGAR LAND: Dancing under the Stars Aug. 11. sugarlandtownsquare.com 281-276-6000

SUGAR LAND: Rod Stewart and Cyndi Lauper in Concert

Aug. 12. smartfinancialcentre.net 281-207-6278

SUGAR LAND: NOLA Nights Aug. 18. sugarlandtownsquare.com 281-276-6000

SUGAR LAND: Sugar Land Superstar Finale Aug. 19. sugarlandtownsquare.com 281-276-6000

TEXAS CITY: Movie at the Dike: Concert, Fireworks, and More Aug. 19. facebook.com/cityoftexascity 409-643-5919

TOMBALL: Tomball Night Aug. 4. tomballchamber.org 281-351-7222

TOMBALL: Texas Music Festival Aug. 26. tomballtx.gov 281-351-5484

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: *Bring It!* Live Aug. 8. bringitlivetour.com 310-837-8884

AUSTIN: Ice Cream Festival Aug. 12. austinicreamfestival.com

AUSTIN: Bat Fest Aug. 19. roadwayevents.com 512-441-9015

AUSTIN: Quesoff Aug. 20. mohawkustin.com 512-666-0877

AUSTIN: Capital City Black Film Festival Aug. 25-28. capcitybfff.com

AUSTIN: Pride Festival and Parade Aug. 26. austinpride.org/parade

AUSTIN: Out of Bounds Comedy Festival Aug. 29-Sept. 4. outofboundscomedys.com

BANDERA: Cowboy Capital Opry Aug. 1. sagecorral.org 830-796-4969

BANDERA: Flying L Chuckwagon Dinner Aug. 5, 12, 19, 26. flyingl.com 830-460-3001

BANDERA: Second Sunday Music Fest Aug. 13.

frontiertimesmuseum.org 830-796-3864

BOERNE: Abendkonzerte Aug. 1. visitboerne.org 830-249-9511 Opt 5

BOERNE: Hot Rod Night Aug. 5, 19. visitboerne.org 830-331-8799

BOERNE: Moondance Concert Series Aug. 5. visitboerne.org 830-249-4616

BOERNE: A Thirst for Nature Aug. 24. visitboerne.org 830-249-4616

BULVERDE: Tejas Rodeo Aug. 5, 12, 19, 26. visitboerne.org 830-980-2226

FREDERICKSBURG: Pacific Combat Living History Reenactment Aug. 5-6. pacificwarmuseum.org 830-997-8600

FREDERICKSBURG: *The Marvelous Wonderettes* Aug. 11-20. fredericksburgtheater.org 830-997-3588

FREDERICKSBURG: Grape Stomp at Armadillo's Leap Winery Aug. 12-13. armadillosleap.com 830-644-2037

FREDERICKSBURG: PCAA Concert in the Park Aug. 13. fredericksburgfestivals.com 830-997-8515

FREDERICKSBURG: Gillespie County Fair and Parade Aug. 24-27. gillespiefair.com 830-997-2359

GRUENE: Come and Taste It Aug. 17. grapevineingruene.com 830-606-0093

INGRAM: *Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery* Aug. 11-26. hcaf.com 830-367-5121

INGRAM: *Color, Value, and Hue* Aug. 18-Sept. 15. hcaf.com 830-367-5121

JOHNSON CITY: Blanco County Fair and Rodeo Aug. 17-20. lbcountry.com 830-868-7684

JUNCTION: HCFA Rodeo and Dance Aug. 11-12. junctiontexas.com 219-289-2982

JUNCTION: Car Show Aug. 12. junctiontexas.com 219-289-2982

KERRVILLE: *Images* July 27-Aug. 20. kackcerville.com 830-895-2911

KERRVILLE: *Making God Laugh* Aug. 18-Sept. 3. playhouse2000.com 830-896-9393

KERRVILLE: Kids Off-Road Triathlon Aug. 19. kerrville.org 830-893-6864

KERRVILLE: *Photoquest* Aug. 24-Sept. 24.

kackcerville.com 830-895-2911

NEW BRAUNFELS: Miranda Lambert in Concert Aug. 4-5. whitewaterrocks.com 830-964-3800

NEW BRAUNFELS: Lone Star Gourd Festival Aug. 18-20. texasgourdsociety.org 337-376-9690

STONEWALL: Grape Stomp at Pedernales Cellars Aug. 11-13, 18-20, 25-27. pedernalescellars.com 830-644-2037

STONEWALL: Grape Stomp at Becker Vineyards Aug. 26-27. beckervineyards.com 830-644-2681

STONEWALL: Grape Stomp at Chisholm Trail Winery Aug. 26. chisholmtrailwinery.com 830-990-2675

STONEWALL: Movies Under the Stars: *All the Way* Aug. 26. nps.gov/lyjo 830-868-7128 ext. 244

STONEWALL: 109th Anniversary of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Birthday Aug. 27. nps.gov/lyjo 830-868-7128 ext. 244

STONEWALL: President Lyndon B. Johnson's 109th Birthday Aug. 27. tpwd.state.tx.us 830-644-2252

TAYLOR: Kid Fish Aug. 26. taylormadetexas.com 512-352-5818

WIMBERLEY: *Macbeth* Aug. 3-5, 7-12. emilyann.org 512-847-6969

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: Rough Youth Bull Riders World Finals Through Aug. 5. facebook.com/YBRWF 817-822-1108

ALBANY: *Cell Series: Joel Sampson* Through Aug. 26. theojac.org 325-762-2269

ALBANY: *Andy Warhol: Prints and Polaroids* Through Aug. 26. theojac.org 325-762-2269

ALBANY: *Watt Casey Jr.* Through Aug. 26. theojac.org 325-762-2269

AMARILLO: High Noon on the Square Aug. 2, 9. centercity.org 806-372-6744

AMARILLO: Koben Puckett Professional Bull Riding Invitational Aug. 5. kobepuckettinvitational.com 806-290-4046

AMARILLO: AQHA World Championship Show Aug. 25-Sept. 2. aqha.com 806-376-4811

CANYON: *You are Here: Maps from the PPHM*

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Collection Through Aug. 26.
panhandleplains.org
806-651-2244

CANYON: TEXAS Outdoor Musical Through Aug. 19.
texas-show.com
806-655-2181

DALHART: XIT Rodeo and Reunion Aug. 3-5. dalhart.org
806-244-5646

DENVER CITY: DC Hotshot Sporting Clay Shoot Aug. 5.
denvercitychamber.com
806-592-5424

LUBBOCK: Seven Brides for Seven Brothers Aug. 4-5, 11-12, 18-19, 25-26. lubbockmoonlightmusicals.org
806-638-5706

PERRYTON: Wheatheart of the Nation Celebration Aug. 1-31. perryton.org
806-435-6575

SAN ANGELO: Downtown and Cultural District Stroll Aug. 17. samfa.org
325-653-3333

SAN ANGELO: Salmon Sculpture Competition Through Aug. 7. samfa.org
325-653-3333

VEGA: Oldham County Roundup and 5K Aug. 11-12.
806-267-2828

WICHITA FALLS: Texas Ranch Roundup Aug. 18-19.
texasranchroundup.com

WICHITA FALLS: Hotter 'N Hell Hundred Aug. 24-27.
hh100.org

PINEY WOODS

GLADEWATER: Main Street Art Stroll Aug. 12.
gladewatermainstreet.com
903-845-5753

HENDERSON: Sacred Harp Singing National Convention Aug. 12-13. visithenderson.tx.com
903-863-5379

HUNTSVILLE: Wynne Home Luau Aug. 5.
thewynnehome.com
936-291-5424

LONGVIEW: Ink Life Tattoo and Music Festival Aug. 11-13.
visitlongviewtexas.com
903-753-3281

TYLER: Hit the Bricks Aug. 12.
visittyler.com 903-592-1661

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ADDISON: Summer Series Aug. 5, 12, 19, 26. addison.texas.net 800-233-4766

ADDISON: Vitruvian Salsa Festival Aug. 5, 12, 19, 26.
vitruvianpark.com
800-233-4766

BASTROP: El Camino Real de SUP Aug. 12. bastrop.supcup.com 512-303-0558

BRENHAM: Crush for Fun Aug. 5-6, 12-13. pleasanthillwinery.com 979-830-8463

BRENHAM: Harvest Grape Stomp Aug. 5-6, 12-13.
windywinery.com
979-836-3252

BRENHAM: Chappell Hill Lavender and Wine Fest Aug. 12. chappellhilllavender.com 979-251-8114

BRYAN: XYZ Atlas Through Aug. 30. xyzatlas.org

DALLAS: Roni Horn Through Aug. 20.
nashersculpturecenter.org

DALLAS: Bring It! Live Aug. 9. bringitlivetour.com
310-837-8884

DALLAS: Reunion Lawn Party Aug. 26. reunionlawnparty.com 214-719-7063

DALLAS: Tall Tales Aug. 31. reuniontower.com
214-712-7040

DE LEON: Peach and Melon Festival and Tractor Pulls Aug. 8-12. peachandmelonfestival.net 254-893-2610

DECATUR: Chisholm Trail Days Rodeo, Festival, and Parade Aug. 24-26.
940-255-9375

DENTON: North Texas Fair and Rodeo Aug. 18-26.
ntfair.com 940-387-2632

ENNIS: Moon Over Buffalo Aug. 25-Sept. 9. ennispublictheatre.com 972-878-7529

FORT WORTH: The Bodyguard Aug. 1-6.
bashhall.com 817-212-4280

FORT WORTH: Rockin' The River: Live on the Trinity Aug. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31.
pantherislandpavilion.com/
rockintheriver 817-698-0700

FRISCO: Major League Lacrosse Championship Aug. 19. visitfrisco.com
972-497-4800

GLEN ROSE: Glen Rose Summer Classic Barrel Race Aug. 3-6. 254-897-4509

GLEN ROSE: Discovery After Dark Aug. 11.
fossilrim.org 254-897-2960

GLEN ROSE: Photo Tour Aug. 12, 26. fossilrim.org
254-897-2960

GLEN ROSE: Girls' Night Out Aug. 19. 307-631-4106

GRAND PRAIRIE: Rod Stewart in Concert Aug. 11.
verizontheatre.com
972-854-5111

GRAND PRAIRIE: Persuasions in Concert Aug. 14. uptowntheatergp.com
972-237-8786

GRAND PRAIRIE: Tejano Summer Festival Aug. 20.

tradersvillage.com/
grand-prairie 972-647-2331

GRAND PRAIRIE: Lost '80s Live Aug. 24.
verizontheatre.com
972-854-5111

GRAPEVINE: First Friday Fun and Games Aug. 4.
nashfarm.org 817-410-3185

GRAPEVINE: Metroplex Antique Glass and Collectibles Show Aug. 26-27. meyershows.com
972-672-6213

GRAPEVINE: Nash Farm Workshop—Soap Making Aug. 26. nashfarm.org
817-410-3185

LA GRANGE: Fayette County Fair Aug. 31-Sept. 3. fayettecountyfair.org
979-968-3911

MCKINNEY: Caught in the Villain's Web Aug. 4-6, 11-12. mckinneyrep.org
972-547-2660

MESQUITE: Painting with a Twist Artists Exhibition Aug. 1-31. mesquiteartscenter.org 972-216-6444

MESQUITE: Once Upon a Mattress Aug. 4-6, 11-13, 18-20. mesquitecommunitytheatre.com 972-216-8126

MESQUITE: Mesquite Championship Rodeo Aug. 5, 12, 19, 26. mesquiterodeo.com
972-285-8777

MESQUITE: Doggie Splash Day Aug. 12. cityofmesquite.com/pard 972-216-6260

MESQUITE: Halloween and HautFest Show Aug. 26-27. halloweenandhaunt.com
949-427-0255

NOCONA: Chisholm Trail Western Art Show Through Aug. 15. talesntrails.org
940-825-5330

WANT MORE?

GO TO THE EVENTS CALENDAR AT texashighways.com.

FOR A FREE PRINTED COPY of an even more detailed, quarterly schedule of events, go to texashighways.com/freepubs, write to *Texas Highways Events Calendar*, P.O. Box 149249, Austin, TX 78714-9249, or call 800-452-9292 from anywhere in the U.S. or Canada, between 8-6 Central.

FOR TEXAS TRAVEL QUESTIONS, call 800-452-9292 to reach a TxDOT Travel Information Center, where a professional travel counselor will provide routing assistance, advise you of road conditions, and send brochures (including the official *Texas State Travel Guide*, *Texas Official Travel Map*, and quarterly *Texas Highways Events Calendar*).

TO SUBMIT EVENT INFORMATION: texashighways.com and go to Events, Event Submission form; email: texasevents@txdot.gov; or mail: *Texas Highways Events Calendar*, Box 141009, Austin, TX 78714-1009. Listing deadlines: Spring (Mar., Apr., May) Dec. 1; Summer (June, July, Aug.) Mar. 1; Fall (Sept., Oct., Nov.) June 1; Winter (Dec., Jan., Feb.) Sept. 1.

PLANO: *Dear Delinquent* Aug. 10-Sept. 2.
roverdramawerks.com
972-849-0358

PLANO: Quilt Plano Aug. 11-12. qqplano.org

RICHARDSON: *Menopause: The Musical* Aug. 2-6. eisemanncenter.com
972-744-4650

SALADO: *Salado Legends* Aug. 5. tablerock.org
254-947-9205

STEPHENVILLE: *Celebrate Doolies!* Through Aug. 24.
ctfac.com 254-965-6190

WACO: XTERRA Games Aug. 12-13. racerevolutions.com/events 254-750-5980

WACO: Margarita and Salsa Festival Aug. 26. extracoeventscenter.com
254-776-1660

WEATHERFORD: Summer Concerts at the Texas Opry Theater Aug. 5, 26.
texasoprytheater.com
817-341-1000

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

FLORESVILLE: Opry Aug. 3. facebook.com/floresvilleopry 830-391-4344

GOLIAD: The Extremadura Regiment in Texas 1813-1821 Aug. 12. presidiodlabahia.org
361-645-3752

SAN ANTONIO: *Natural Beauty: Fiesta of Land, Water, and Sky* Through Aug. 13.
wittemuseum.org
210-357-1900

SAN ANTONIO: Ford Canoe Challenge Aug. 5. thesanantonioriverwalk.com
210-227-4262

BIG BEND RANCH RODEO
ALPINE, TEXAS

Sanctioned by WRCA Ranch Rodeo

FRIDAY, AUGUST 11TH
8:00 AM CUTTING COMPETITION
AT THE O6 FLATS ARENA
7:00 PM WRCA RODEO PERFORMANCE
AT THE SUL ROSS S.A.L.E ARENA

SATURDAY, AUGUST 12TH
9:00 AM RHAA COMPETITION
AT THE SUL ROSS S.A.L.E ARENA
2:00 PM YOUTH COW HORSE COMPETITION
AT THE SUL ROSS S.A.L.E ARENA
7:00 PM WRCA RODEO PERFORMANCE
AT THE SUL ROSS S.A.L.E ARENA
AWARDS CEREMONY FOLLOWING PERFORMANCE
9:00 DANCE • LOBO BAR

SUNDAY, AUGUST 13TH
10:30 AM BIG BEND COWBOY CHURCH SERVICES

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getaway, yet it's a constant groove.

Q: *And you had a TV acting stint...*

A: Our extended stay onboard the Fox television series *Bones* went from a simple one-time appearance into a 12-year run. Quite a hilarious bonding with some truly fascinating characters. Quite the enjoyable outing to say the least.

Q: *Favorite Texas venues to play?*

A: Wherever we may be in the Great State, we always say, "When in Texas, it's the bestest!" Not to mention that each and every stop presents the allure of Tex-Mex cuisine to enhance the sonic experience from border to border. Always a treat.

Q: *Favorite places to eat?*

A: Make no mistake, Tex-Mex cuisine remains at the top of our always-growing list of fave-rave destinations. In Austin, for instance, there's La Condesa Modern Mexican and a couple of other favorites, Matt's El Rancho, and you can't beat Cisco's for a casual Tex-Mex Sunday brunch. Let's not forget San Antonio with Acenar's south-of-the-border specialties and, of course, for 24-hour convenience, Mi Tierra remains a city cornerstone. Houston boasts the delights at Cyclone Anaya's. Tila's real Mexican dishes are splendid, as are the recipes prepared at Molina's and Armandos. The Velvet Taco in Dallas is a definite late-night destination. And when passing through El Paso, be sure to stop at the H&H Car Wash for a clean machine and a handful of their fine handmade tacos. Cafe Central next to El Paso's famed Pioneer Plaza has the best *toreados* anywhere.

The Texas Barbecue Trail runs side-by-side, too. Franklin's in Austin requires an early-bird arrival. Black's and Smitty's in Lockhart are epic. From the southernmost border tip of the "T" to all other locales, there's something for everyone.

Q: *Favorite Texas vacation spots?*

A: The desert Southwest portion

of the state rides high on our list. Big Bend is a fascinating zone that continually presents a changing visual experience each and every visit. Liz Lambert's El Cosmico resort in Marfa is another bonus. San Antonio's Hotel Valencia at the River Walk provides tantalizing treats for tourists. Don't leave out the lengthy stretches of beachfront beauty. Surf's up!



ALL POINTS IN-BETWEEN

ZZ Top plays El Paso Sept. 6, San Antonio Sept. 8, and Sugar Land Sept. 10. Keep up with Billy Gibbons and the band at zztop.com and billygibbons.com.

Q: *What makes Texas music special?*

A: Texas music is lively and likable with a range of sonic expressions that know no bounds. Play them blues and play 'em L-O-U-D...!

Q: *Important musical influences?*

A: Well, it's more than fair to say my partners Dusty Hill and Frank Beard top the list. We, as a band, seem to fall toward delivering interpretations of that great American art form "The Blues." And without question, the wave of originators of those expressions is many. Jimmy Reed, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, and the endless list of that exquisite long line of expressionists from the '50s and '60s.

We hold in high esteem another gangly group of greats such as T-Bone Walker, Roky Erickson, Albert Collins, Doug Sahm, Augie Meyers, and, of course, Lightnin' Hopkins. And that long list of artists appearing on the great recording label from Houston, Duke Records, remains a highlight of entertainment as well.

Q: *Favorite Texas musicians still playing?*

A: [Austin-based] Sun Radio sends out a barrage of great sounds spotlighting a special preference to honor Texas players of all sorts. I've remained pals

with so many players I have come to admire—Jimmie Vaughan, Mike Flanigan, Cindy Cashdollar, Van Wilks, Ruby Jane, Redd Volkaert, Eric Johnson, Sue Foley, Chris Layton, Lucinda Williams, honorary Texan Austin Hanks, Joe Ely, Gary Clark Jr., Ray Wylie Hubbard, Willie Nelson and band, Billy Pittman, Fran Christina, George Rains, Denny Freeman, Derek O'Brien, Ray Benson, Rosie Flores, Steve Barber, Alejandro Escovedo, Johnny Nicholas, Doyle Bramhall II, Lou Ann Barton, and Flaco Jimenez just to name a few.

Q: *How do you explain ZZ Top's enduring appeal?*

A: We always express our enjoyment of getting to do what we get to do. We keep on keepin' on...

Q: *What's your take on the current popularity of beards?*

A: Well, it's one of those unexpected fashion statements that comes around every now and again. Take along the styling gel!

Q: *Biggest changes you've seen in Texas during your time?*

A: The skylines continue to abound in ways that say bigger and better in the Lone Star State. Then again, the sheer enormity of the boundaries defies attempts to take it all in at once. As soon as one avenue is covered, a completely different vista appears around the next turn. That's BIG!

Q: *What projects do you have coming up?*

A: Another ZZ Top release is in the works as we make way toward celebrating a 50-year anniversary. And "playin' them blues" remains a fixture of unchanging admiration. Rock on! 🎸

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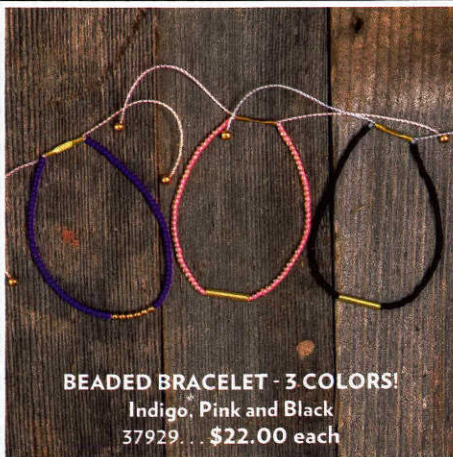
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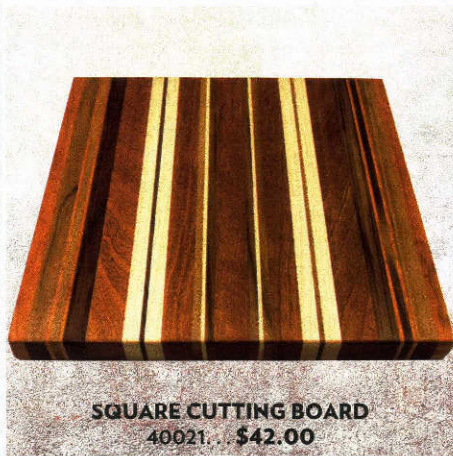
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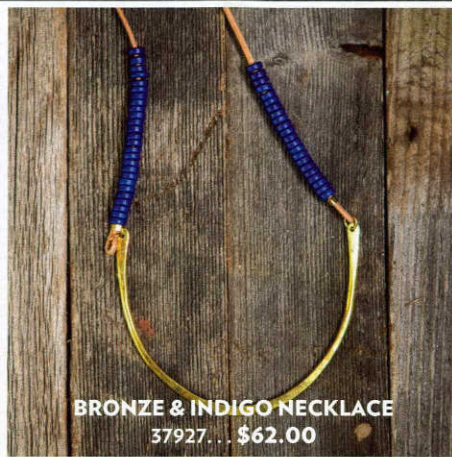
The Piggy Story



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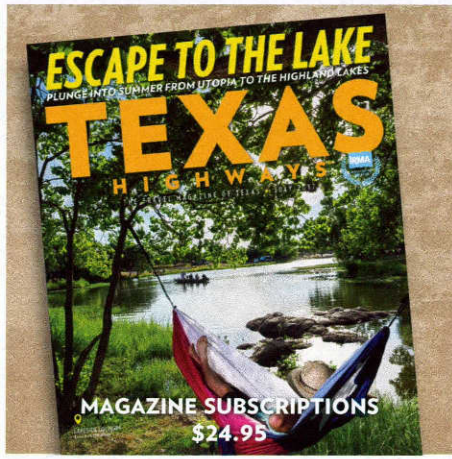
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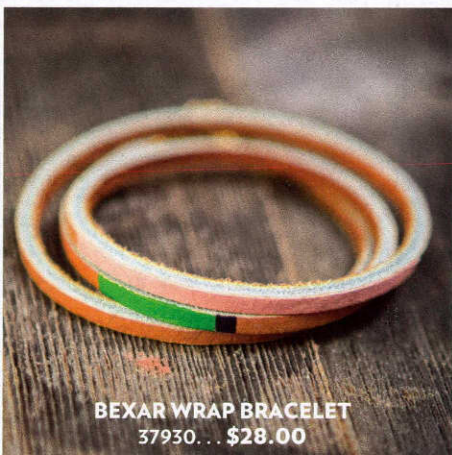
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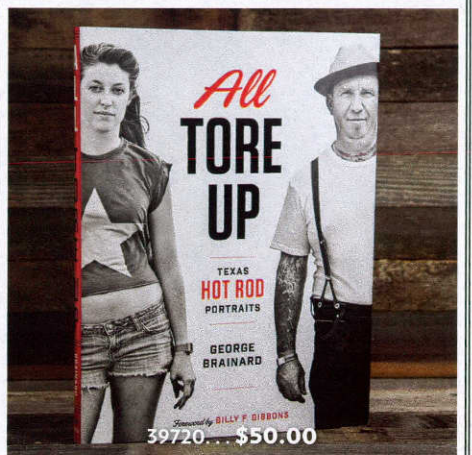
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WEST TEXAS ROAD TRIP



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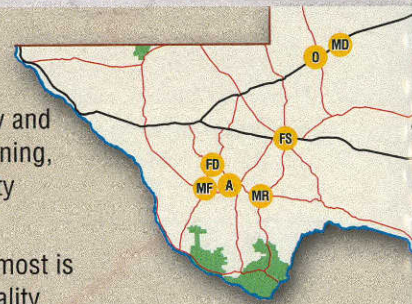
MD

MIDLAND—Midland is a great place to eat, play, shop & stay as you explore West Texas! Midland International Air & Space Port is the closest airport to Big Bend National Park. visitmidland.com

Aug 3-5 - Rock the Desert (photo: Rafael Aguilera)
Aug 12 - Sibley Nature Center Odonata Celebration

As you explore, you'll find an amazing range of relaxation and adventure, natural beauty and urban culture, fine art, fine dining, small-town charm and big-city amenities...

but what you will remember most is the warm, West Texas hospitality.



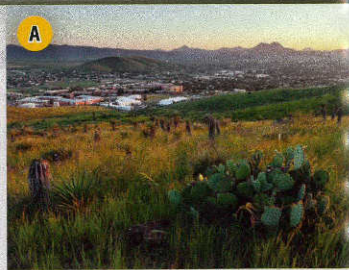
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ODESSA—Known for breathtaking sunsets, wide-open spaces and warm West Texas hospitality; you'll enjoy shopping, dining, unique cultural attractions and events. Odessa: your gateway to the Big Bend. odessacvb.com

Aug 4 - Hot Summer Nights: Tribute to Soul with Mark Lyon & the L.A. All-Stars
Sep 8-16 - Permian Basin Fair & Exposition

ALPINE—Natural beauty, unique nightlife and shopping, and a grand array of hotels and guest lodging make this the perfect staging grounds for your West Texas adventure. visitalpinetx.com

Aug 11-12 - Big Bend Ranch Rodeo
Oct 7-8 - Wings Over Alpine: Birds of Prey



A



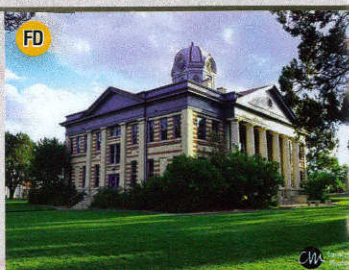
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FORT STOCKTON—Lodging, Dining, Entertainment and History. Experience our Visitor Center, Historic Sites, Museum, Fort Grounds, Golf Course, and Unique Shopping, West Texas style. historicfortstocktontx.com

June - Summer Off the Patio Concerts
June - Blue Moon Park Concerts

FORT DAVIS—Experience the mile-high climate in the Texas mountains! Award-winning State and National Parks offer excellent nature activities and star gazing under the "Darkest Skies in North America"! fortdavis.com

Aug 11-13 - Davis Mtns Preserve Open Wknd
Aug 24-27 - Davis Mtns Hummingbird Celebration



FD



MR

MARATHON—Small town friendliness under one the of the darkest and starriest skies in the country, with Big Bend National Park just 40 miles down the road. marathontexas.com visitbigbend.com

Sep 15 - West Fest Cabrito Cook-Off & Dance benefiting Marathon Vol. Fire Dept.
Sep 16 - Crafty Ladies' Quilt & Craft Show

MARFA—It defies easy explanation, yet any google search yields thousands of opinions. Marfa is tough to get to—tougher still to explain. But once you arrive, you get it. visitmarfa.com

Sep 1-3 - Marfa Lights Festival
Sep 21-Oct 1 - Trans-Pecos Festival of Music + Love @ El Cosmico



MF

THE DAYTRIPPER

WITH CHET GARNER



King of the Hillsboro

WHEN BURNING UP THE HIGHWAY between Dallas and Austin, it's easy to pass through Hillsboro and see nothing more than modern gas stations and frontage-road shopping. But those looking for a blast back in time should grab the nearest exit and get ready for a true small-town-Texas experience that feels like a trip to the "good ol' days."

9:30 A.M. I left the ruckus of I-35 in my rearview mirror and could feel time slow down as I approached the **Hill County Square**, with the **Hill County Courthouse** standing boldly in the center. While it may look 100 years old, it surprisingly only dates to 1999 when it was rebuilt after a fire with the help of local boy Willie Nelson. Dozens of buildings that look untouched by time surround the courthouse.

10 A.M. To get some history, I headed to the **Hill County Cell Block Museum**, located inside the city's old jail. I found room after room (and cell after cell) recounting the stories of Hillsboro. Most fascinating were the tales of famous inmates, including Clyde Barrow, who was busted out by fellow gang member Bonnie Parker. Elvis Presley supposedly spent the night here after being arrested on suspicions of drunk driving. Turns out being the king of rock 'n' roll doesn't make you king of Hillsboro. The museum also held a surprising collection of gold records,

donated by Willie Nelson himself.

NOON With "Jailhouse Rock" stuck in my head, I walked back to the square and found **A Tisket A Taskit**, half antiques store and half 1950s diner and soda fountain. My old-fashioned burger hit the spot, and once I found out they made their own ice cream, I had no choice but to order a handspun milkshake. Just like the good old days, it came served in a tall glass with the half-full metal cup on the side.

1 P.M. In need of some post-burger Tums, I crossed the street to **T.B. Bond Pharmacy**, which opened in 1881 and is now the oldest operating pharmacy in Texas. Inside, all the benefits of a modern drugstore coexist with antique pharmacy tools and equipment. Immediately outside the store I discovered the infamous **Bond's Alley**, once a seedy part of town known for its late-night fistfights and unmentionable

Chet Garner is the host of *The Daytripper*[®] travel show on PBS. To view the Hillsboro episode visit thedaytripper.com

activities. It looked pretty harmless in the broad daylight, but I left before I could get into too much trouble.

2 P.M. Continuing my throwback of a day trip, I stepped into **Roadside America**, a memorabilia museum occupying an old car dealership (appointment only). Inside, a cluttered collection of vintage marketing signs, classic cars, old-timey toys, and "Grapette" soda filled the displays. It truly felt like my road trip had landed me in the glory days of highway travel and *Mad Men*-era advertising.

4 P.M. Needing more time in the air conditioning, I stumbled into the **Texas Heritage Museum** and was blown away by the artifacts and stories within. This museum on the campus of **Hill College** features various exhibits about Texans at war, which cover everything from the Texas Revolution forward. I learned the story of Milton Holland—the first Texan to receive the Medal of Honor—and stood in reverence before the uniform of Audie Murphy—one of the most decorated soldiers of World War II. I left amazed at the breadth of the museum but more importantly thankful for the sacrifice of Texans throughout the centuries.

6 P.M. As soon as my stomach started growling, I saw the smoke rising from **Taylor's Smokehouse** and couldn't steer away. I walked through the door of this renovated auto shop as the aroma of smoked meats hit me like a wrench to the face. I

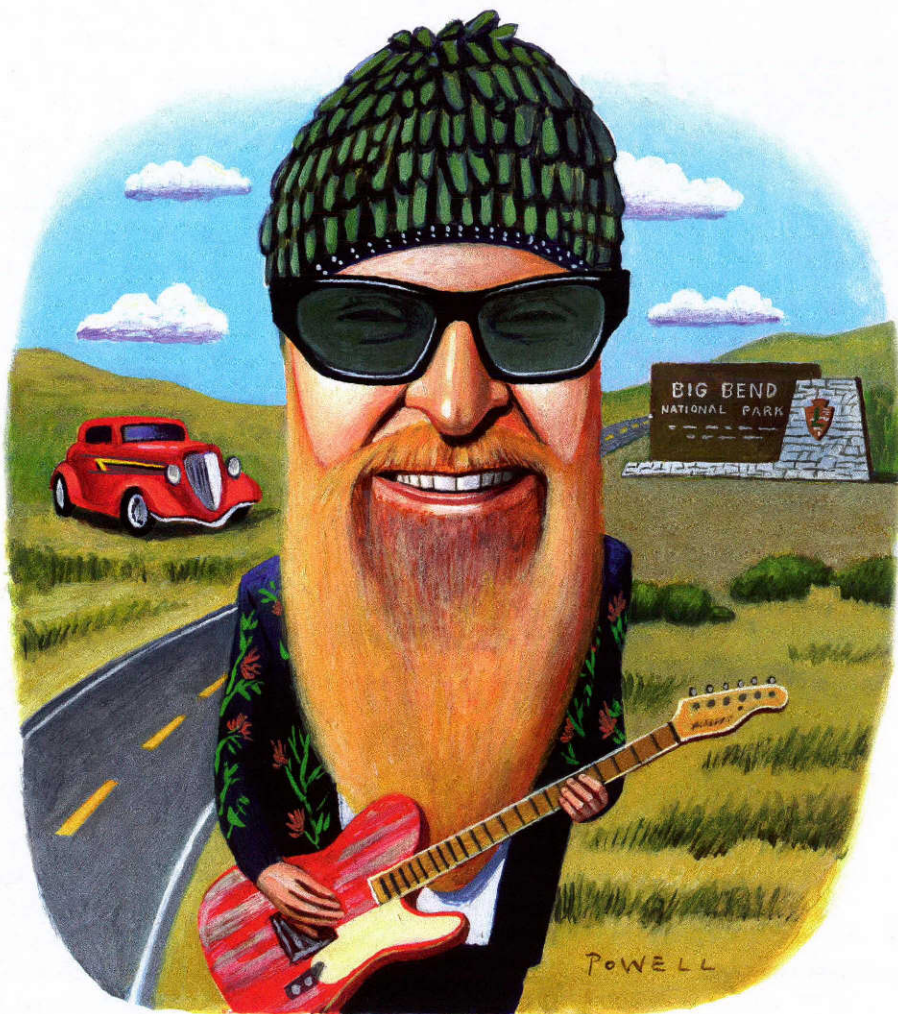
couldn't decide between sausage, brisket, or pork, so I decided to get all three piled onto the "Smoking Gun" sandwich. It might have been my best decision all day as the smoky flavors and spicy jalapeños mixed perfectly.

From old-timey diners and classic cars, to legendary gangsters and rock stars, Hillsboro has a story all its own that's definitely worth the trip! So whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path, I hope to see you on the road. 🚗

Contact the Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce at 254-582-2481; hillsborochamber.org.

TRAVEL MATTERS

TRAVEL TALK WITH TRUE TEXANS



When in Texas, it's the Bestest

ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons on the blues, Tex-Mex, and BBQ

story by **Matt Joyce**

YOU'D BE HARD-PRESSED TO NAME A BAND THAT DEFINES Texas rock 'n' roll any better than ZZ Top. Over nearly 50 years, the Houston-born trio has cultivated a mythical swagger marked by versatility, irreverence, and a relentless pursuit of larger-than-life guitar riffs and good times.

Guitarist and singer Billy Gibbons propels the "little ol' band from Texas" with his distinctive boogie-blues style and tone. When the radio dial lands on a ZZ Top song, everybody knows it. The sound is part Rio Grande mud, part prickly pear cactus. Part smoked brisket, part grilled jalapeños.

Born and raised in a musical family in Houston, Gibbons got an early introduction to rhythm and blues from a babysitter who took him along to clubs in the Fourth Ward. He started playing guitar at 14 and cut his teeth in garage bands and the psychedelic Moving Sidewalks before recruiting drummer Frank Beard and bassist Dusty Hill—both

"Make no mistake, Tex-Mex cuisine remains at the top of our always-growing list of fave-rave destinations."

from the Dallas area—in pursuit of a blues-based power trio.

ZZ Top played its first gig at the Beaumont Knights of Columbus Hall on Feb. 10, 1970—and never looked back. Millions of album sales and thousands of worldwide concerts later, the Rock and Roll Hall of Famers still tour Texas nearly every year. Earlier this summer, Gibbons took time for a tour-bus email exchange en route to a concert in Amarillo.

Q: *What are your family's Texas roots?*

A: Irish mom and English dad engaged with the presence of mind to make Texas a deep-seated home.

Q: *Where do you live now?*

A: We are asked often and prefer to humorously offer our collective ZZ Top reply, "We reside on the tour bus—it just keeps changing towns!" Anywhere from Texas to California to Las Vegas and all-points-in-between.

Q: *How much of the year do you spend touring?*

A: The recent touring seasons have allowed us to travel for about 300 days a year. Texas appearances are always a seasonal priority.

Q: *How does your work break down between ZZ Top and other projects?*

A: The interesting escapades outside ZZ Top have enjoyed a variety of settings. Everything from participating with many admired fellow recording artists from Queens of the Stone Age to Willie Nelson, Keith Richards, and the great Chris Stapleton, as well as working with our exotic aggregation known as The Jungle Show. It's a demanding > *continued on page 74*

SIGHTSEER

GO. SEE. DO.—TAKING IN TEXAS



WHAT: THE MILKY WAY WHERE: MCDONALD OBSERVATORY WHEN: YEAR-ROUND, BUT TYPICALLY MORE VISIBLE IN LATE JULY THROUGH SEPTEMBER

The Stars at Night

West Texas' wide-open skies are at their biggest and brightest on clear summer nights.

In one of the darkest corners of the country—and one of the most unpopulated parts of Texas—astronomers are focused in one direction: up. There's plenty to look at, thanks to the world's third-largest telescope and state legislation prohibiting light pollution in the area. The 10-meter Hobby-Eberly Telescope at the McDonald Observatory completed a multiyear \$40 million upgrade in April. "We increased its field of view, the amount of the sky it can see at once," explains Dr. Taft Armandroff, the observatory's director. The brighter parts of the Milky Way are most visible this time of year, and the observatory hosts Star Parties for crowds to gather and learn more about our place in the galaxy. "It shows this huge swath of light is made up of hundreds of billions of stars," Armandroff says. "That really puts our place in the universe in perspective." mcdonaldobservatory.org.



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