

UNPLUG & RECHARGE

# TEXAS

HIGHWAYS™

THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS ★ NOVEMBER 2017



# THE BIG EMPTY



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## Off the Grid

Swaths of rolling plains cover much of the Big Empty region, including this prairie west of Guthrie in King County.

**A**S WE ALL GEAR UP FOR THE start of the hectic holiday season, and with cool (OK, cooler) weather ahead, now is a great time to unwind before the mad dash of end-of-the-year engagements. We know from your feedback over the years that small towns and natural attractions top your list of favorite Texas travel topics. Our “Unplug” issue is chock-full of options for enjoying scenic gems and off-the-beaten-path destinations. In Terlingua, we dig into the Big Bend region’s mining past. In Weatherford, we cycle the Lake Mineral Wells State Trailway. And in the Dallas area, we follow the twists and turns of Comanche marker trees. We camp out in East Texas, take flight with the Ezekiel Airship in Pittsburg, and pet donkeys at a rescue facility in San Angelo.

What we hope becomes clear as you read these pages is how much there is to discover across our great state, even for lifelong Texans. When writer and Kilgore native Wes Ferguson set out to explore the Big Empty, he was largely unfamiliar with the region, which is also referred

to as the Rolling Plains. But he quickly became enamored with the area and its wide-open spaces and self-reliant residents. “Since most of us live in cities and suburbs, Texans have an idea of ourselves that doesn’t always match up with reality. But the folks out there in the Big Empty are the living and breathing embodiment of Texas’ rural ideal,” he says.

Finally, our hearts remain with the communities affected by Hurricane Harvey as they continue on the hard road of recovery and rebuilding. For the latest information on reopening dates of attractions in the affected areas, visit [texashighways.com/harvey-updates](http://texashighways.com/harvey-updates).

**EMILY ROBERTS STONE**, *Executive Editor*





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# NOVEMBER

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## Quicksilver Days

In the early 1900s, prospectors defied the Big Bend's forbidding geography to make the region a top producer of mercury. Join our exploration of mining history and the era's legacy of adventure, culture, and dramatic scenery.

*Story by* MATT JOYCE  
*Photographs by*  
BRANDON JAKOBEIT

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## The Big Empty

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*Story by* WES FERGUSON

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## Get Campy

Whether you enjoy fishing, hiking, swimming, or just plain peace and quiet—aside from chirping crickets and babbling brooks, of course—these eight camping sites in East Texas deliver in full.

*Story and photographs by*  
LAURENCE PARENT



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FIND MORE ONLINE. Be sure to visit us at [texashighways.com](http://texashighways.com) for more content and events.



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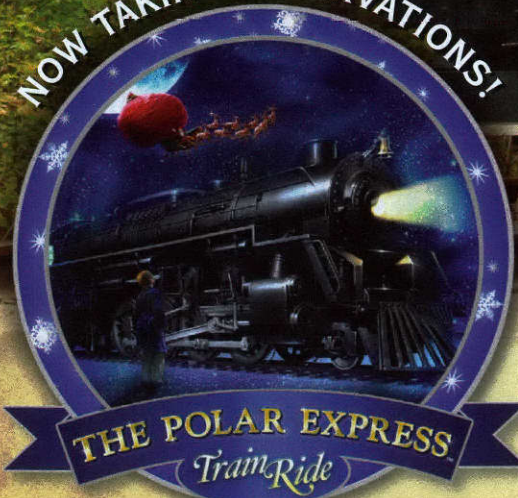


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# NOVEMBER



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**COVER**  
The Big Empty  
© Jerod Foster





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For scenes and dispatches from travel destinations across the great state of Texas, including outtakes from this month's issue, follow us on Instagram at **@texashighways**.

Tag your own photos with **#shareyourtexas** for a chance to be featured on our account.  
Happy snapping!



### HARVEY UPDATES

Our staff has compiled a digital resource guide on the reopenings of major attractions, restaurants, and hotels in the coastal cities affected by Hurricane Harvey. Visit [texashighways.com/harvey-updates](http://texashighways.com/harvey-updates).



### ONLINE EVENTS CALENDAR

Need to get out of the house this weekend? Check out our online events calendar—the most comprehensive listing of goings-on in Texas. [texashighways.com/events](http://texashighways.com/events).



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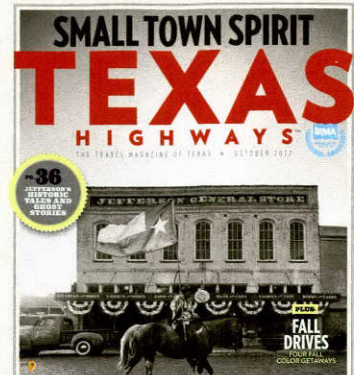




GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

*Visiting and spending some time in a small Texas town is better than a visit to your therapist!*

NORMA WILTON, KERRVILLE



OUR FAVORITE SOCIAL MEDIA OF THE MONTH



I was born and raised in the small Texas town of Haskell. Would not change it for the world. Love my hometown.  
RITA MOORE NOLAN, TULSA, OKLAHOMA

Monahans Sandhills is not far from where I grew up. I can't tell you how many pairs of shoes I lost there as a kid. I miss West Texas.  
JAMES WHITE, MINNESOTA



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### Backyard Blessings

I know many people here in Central Texas who travel abroad on vacation and have never been to most of the places in the State of Wonder story [September] even though they are practically in their own backyard. My suggestion to my Texas friends is to put these places on your bucket list.

**Mike Dunlap, Clifton**

### Football and Friends

As a Vietnam veteran, I was fascinated by Dat Nguyen's story [September] and loved watching him play football. Good job, Dat!

**Chet Ragsdale, Georgetown**

*After Hurricane Harvey, several readers inquired about the status of Hu-Dat, the restaurant owned by Nguyen's family in Rockport-Fulton. Dat's sister Lyly Nguyen Le, who runs a second family restaurant in Corpus Christi—Hu-Dat Noodle House, 6418 S. Staples St.—says the storm caused significant damage to the original Hu-Dat. The family tentatively plans to demolish the old restaurant and construct a new one in its place, a project that would take at least six months. At press time, the*

*family's Benchwarmers Restaurant, next door to Hu-Dat in Fulton, was scheduled to reopen in early October. "The best way to help us rebuild the city is to support the small businesses," Lyly says. "Come down and eat; come down and shop."*

### Granbury Ghosts

The article on Granbury Ghosts [October] brought back many memories. My grandpa and grandma were married in September 1912 while sitting in a buggy in front of the Hood County Courthouse. She told me about an incident that involved my grandpa. He knew of a man who shot a horse thief but refused to give the name to the sheriff.

They jailed him in the old Hood County jail for several weeks trying to get him to tell the name, but he refused. She remembered carrying him food in a basket so he could survive!

**Jimmie Vaughan, Justin**

### Free Popcorn

It is great to see the Texan Theater in Greenville restored, repurposed, and brought back to life after being dark so many years [September]. As a high school student back in 1966, it was my job to change the neon-lit marquee twice a week. My pay was \$7 a week, free admission, and free popcorn and soft drinks.

**Phillip Herbst, Rockwall**



### Best Burgers

*Our recent coverage of Jucy's Hamburgers in East Texas and National Cheeseburger Day prompted an extra-large helping of hamburger tips from readers on Facebook.*

**Hondo Cafe in Hondo has great burgers!**  
RUTH BLANTON

**Butcher Boys in Nacogdoches!**  
STEVE AND LISA THOMAS

**Pop's Burger Stand in Waxahachie.**  
SHARON FRANCES SHAWN

**Herd's in Jacksboro is the best.**  
LONNIE KING

**Holly's Drive-In in Post!**  
PATSY PIPPIN SEGEDY

**JAX Burgers in Pinehurst.**  
TAMMY ALSTON-LACY

**Frank's Cafe just outside of Marlin.**  
JEFF WELLMAN

**Willie's in San Antonio.**  
STEVE HEYE

**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

### Fall In

33° 17' 45.43" N

95° 39' 10.82" W

#### LAKESIDE STATE PARKS

make great fall destinations as the temperatures remain warm enough to get out on the water yet cool enough to enjoy hiking, fishing, camping, and making s'mores by the campfire. Cooper Lake State Park has an added benefit of being one of the few places in Texas that sport fall foliage, offering the possibility of spotting trees displaying autumn's vivid red, gold, and orange hues. This shoreline is located in the park's South Sulphur Unit, which can be reached by Farm-to-Market Road 3505. For more information, visit [texasstateparks.org](http://texasstateparks.org).









# Boldest Colors in



Some of the most spectacular fall foliage in the country is just a short drive away. Not only is Nacogdoches home to the Mast Arboretum and sprawling Mize gardens, it's nestled between two national forests and some of the state's most scenic lakes. If it's color you're looking for, look to the Garden Capital of Texas. Wow yourself this weekend! For updates on peak color call 888.564.7351.



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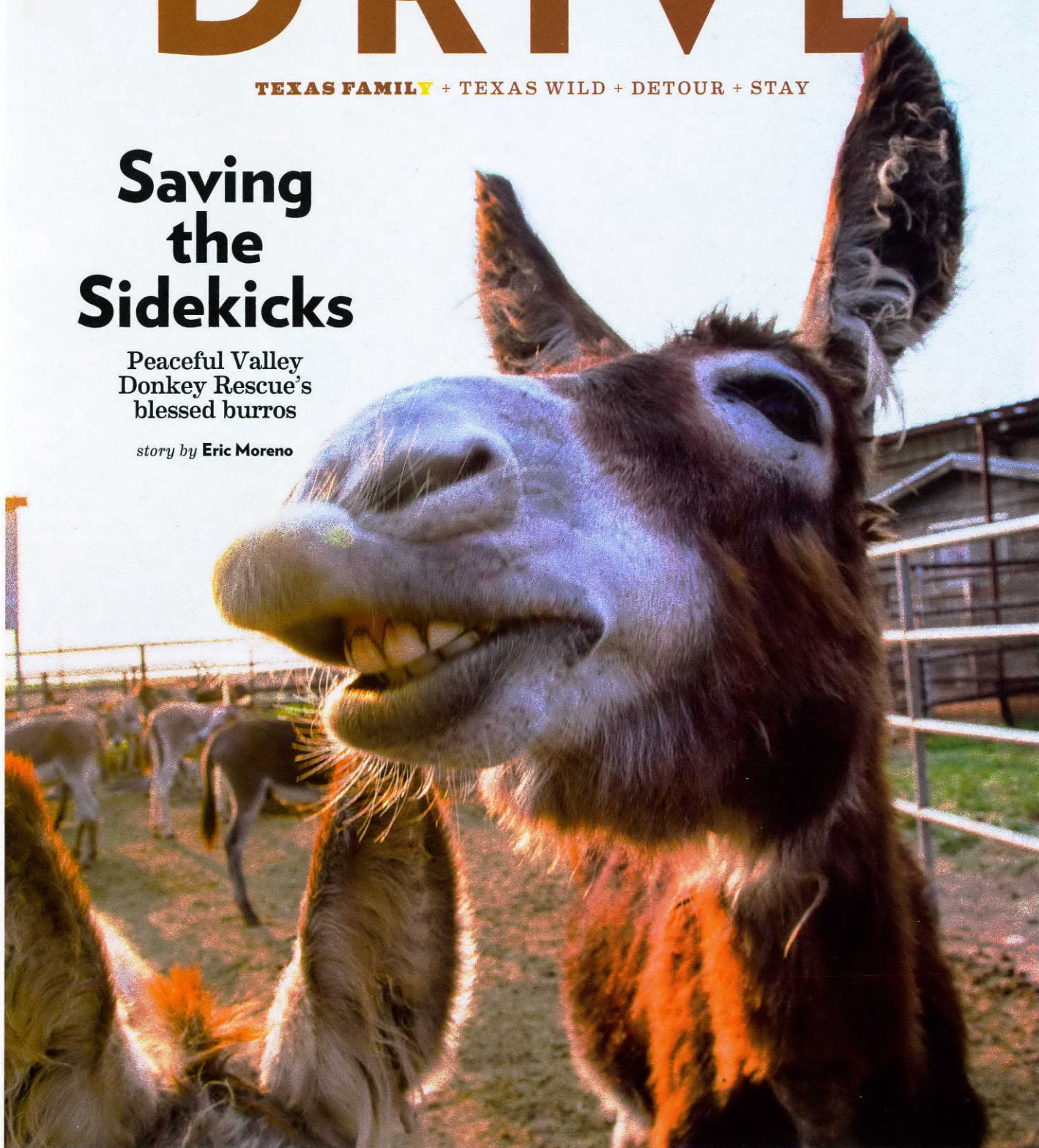
# DRIVE

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## Saving the Sidekicks

Peaceful Valley  
Donkey Rescue's  
blessed burros

*story by* Eric Moreno



At any given time, Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue cares for more than 1,000 donkeys at its 172-acre ranch outside of San Angelo.





**M**ARK AND AMY MEYERS, THE FOUNDERS OF Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue near San Angelo, have made it their mission to change perceptions about donkeys one person at a time.

“People have this misconception about donkeys, that they’re stupid, dumb, stubborn,” said Mark Meyers, dubbed “The Burro Man” by fellow animal conservationists. “We started this place to rescue donkeys, and there will always be a need for that. But, I also want to change people’s perceptions of these animals.”

The Meyerses and their team have a passion for these oft-misunderstood animals, which they see as loyal, intelligent, and beautiful.

“In a lot of cultures, donkeys are revered,” he said. “In England, donkeys are respectable. In America, the home of the cowboy, only the sidekick rode a donkey. I want to change everyone’s opinion of donkeys. That’s my real calling.”

Some people collect baseball cards; others collect stamps and coins. The Meyerses started their rescue ranch by collecting donkeys. They were running a ranch in California when Amy noticed a donkey, Izzy, at a local feed store.

**“In England, donkeys are respectable. In America, only the sidekick rode a donkey.”**

“He had a reputation of being really mean. He would try and lunge through the fence and bite people. She felt something for him and bought him,” Mark said. “He had really had a rough life, so I felt something for him too. I would go out and talk to him every night after I got home from work.”

After a while, Mark noticed a change in Izzy. It wasn’t long before the Meyerses began to add to their fledgling menagerie. One donkey turned to 10; 10 turned to 25.

“To me, it’s kind of like owning a new truck,” Mark explained. “I bought a new truck recently, and now I see this truck everywhere. It was the same with donkeys. We got the first one, and we started seeing donkeys all over the place.”

Visitors can stop by for a free tour any day of the week and spend time petting and feeding the rescue ranch’s donkeys.



Soon, the hobby turned into a calling. “We started bringing in all of these donkeys, and I didn’t have any clue about how to treat them or take care of them,” Mark said. “It started with Izzy, and it seemed to work with him. What I did was just go out and talk with him every chance I got. I would pet him and scratch him and really just show him some love.”

After seeing how well the donkeys responded to this type of attention, Mark realized the need for a full-fledged rescue facility, and Peaceful Valley was born.

The largest animal rescue facility of its kind in the United States, Peaceful Valley started out on a property in north Los Angeles County in 2000. After a few relocations, the Meyerses settled on a 172-acre former dairy ranch outside of San Angelo, where they take care of more than 1,000 donkeys at any given time.

“Our goal with each of these animals



**PEACEFUL VALLEY DONKEY RESCUE,**

at 8317 Duckworth Road in San Angelo, is open 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily. Call **866-366-5731**; [donkeyrescue.org](http://donkeyrescue.org).

is to hopefully find them a permanent home,” Mark said. “Ideally, we would find a family or someone who wants to adopt them as pets.”

The couple travels all across the lower 48 states, to Hawaii, and the Caribbean and works with law enforcement and the federal government on rescuing donkeys, many of which have experienced abuse or neglect.

During my visit to the ranch, Mark and I strolled dirt tractor paths lined by donkey pens. The friendly animals stood eagerly at the front of their enclosures, seemingly hoping for a pat on the head, a scratch behind the ears, or a carrot to munch on.

“If you give donkeys the respect and yes, the love, that they really want, they will be the most loyal animals in the world to you,” Mark said.

The highlight of my tour was the pen with the young donkeys. They playfully nibbled at my hands and legs, looking for attention. Mark warned, “If you’re not careful, they will kiss you full on the mouth.”

Peaceful Valley is open for free tours all year long. Individuals or groups of visitors can walk the ranch with multiple opportunities to interact with the donkeys, including petting, feeding, or cleaning up after them.

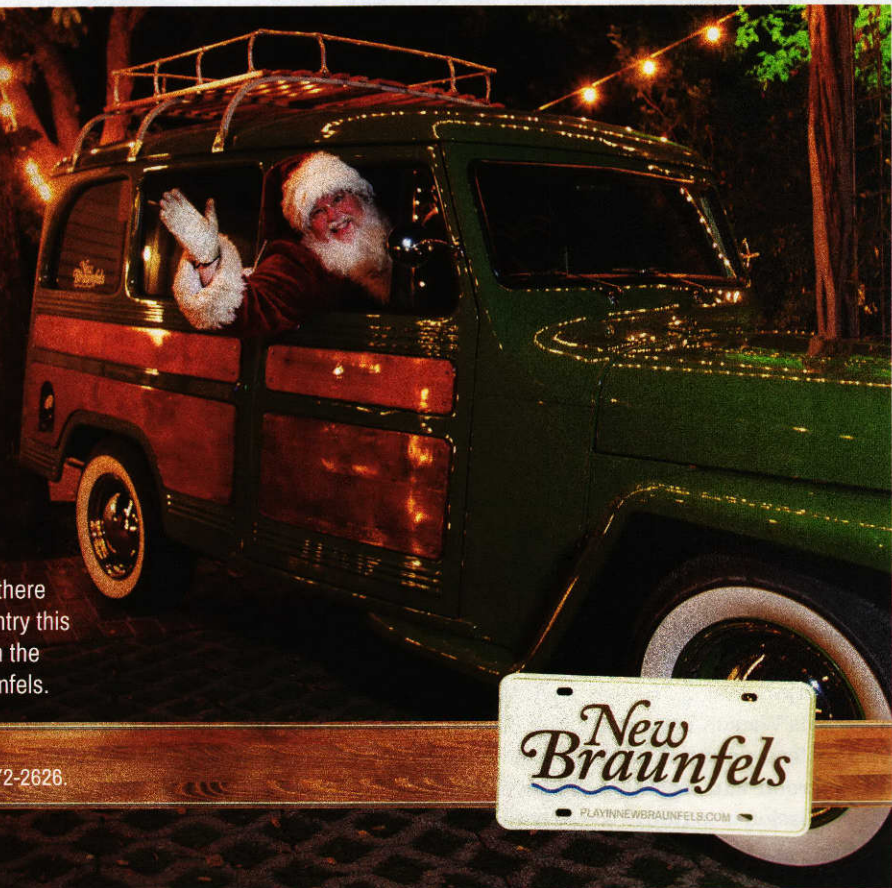
“We have groups come through here to visit all of the time,” Mark said. “People who come here are allowed to do as much as they’re comfortable with. What we really like to do is have people come in here and interact with the donkeys. I guarantee you after a visit, you will see what I see.”

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# Chugging Along

Rail-to-trail cycling on the Lake Mineral Wells State Trailway

story by **Robyn Ross**



**A** FLASH OF BRIGHT GREEN CATCHES MY EYE, AND I slam on the brakes, my bicycle kicking up gravel as I skid to a stop. A grass snake nearly 3 feet long slithers out of my path and into the underbrush, leaving a faint wavy line in its wake. My eyes return to the trail ahead, its crushed-limestone surface pale against the grapevine-covered thickets on either side. Sunlight filters through the canopy of leaves overhead, dappling the ground.

My journey on the Lake Mineral Wells State Trailway has barely begun, and I am cruising with fresh legs until the snake reminds me to slow down and take notice of the natural surroundings. My riding companion adds another word of caution: “I can tell you that on the way back, it’s going to be harder,” says Chris Watson, manager of the Flying Tire Bicycles shop in Weatherford, noting that even the gentle grades of this former railroad route can be challenging over time.

Our mission is to ride this trailway in North Texas from

**In the late 19th century, the railroad on this route carried passengers from Weatherford to the smaller resort town of Mineral Wells.**

Weatherford to Mineral Wells and back—a 40-mile round trip that travels over several eras of regional history. In the late 19th century, the railroad on this route carried passengers from Weatherford to the smaller resort town of Mineral Wells, where visitors could drink or bathe in the mineral waters that gave the town its name. During World War II, the trains carried supplies to Camp Wolters, an infantry-training base in Mineral Wells. A freight line later used the track until it ceased operations in 1992. That’s when the city of Mineral Wells and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department began collaborating on the

The Lake Mineral Wells State Trailway travels 20 miles between Weatherford and Mineral Wells, including 16 bridges.



conversion of the railroad into a multi-use trail. Construction began in 1996, and the crushed-limestone trailway opened in June 1998 for pedestrians, cyclists, and, save for a paved section in Mineral Wells, equestrians.

Watson and I set out from the Weatherford trailhead in the morning with the crickets still chirping in the grass. We passed two bicyclists and a walker, but otherwise our only company has been the cottontail rabbits and cardinals that scatter as we approach. Watson tells me that other riders have encountered bobcats, coyotes, deer, and foxes. He's also seen young feral hogs.

The portion of the trail near



**FLYING TIRE BICYCLES,**

220 Fort Worth Highway Suite 300 in Weatherford, rents trail-appropriate bikes starting at \$50 per day. Call **682-804-5055**; [flyingbicyclepicnics.com](http://flyingbicyclepicnics.com).



**THE LAKE MINERAL WELLS STATE TRAILWAYS**

four trailheads are at Cartwright Park in Weatherford; in Garner at FM 113; at Lake Mineral Wells State Park; and off US Highway 281 in Mineral Wells. Day-use permits cost \$7 per person; free for children 12 and younger. Call **940-328-1171**; [tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lake-mineral-wells](http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lake-mineral-wells).

Weatherford is rural and quiet, weaving through farmland where curious cows watch us pedal past. Wooden bridges carry us over muddy creeks, where I see rocks studded with basking turtles. After almost 11 miles, we reach the community of Garner, where the Garner Store and Café beckons with air conditioning and cold drinks. Watson replenishes his water while I note the freezer full of ice cream and *paletas*.

A few miles later we arrive at the Lake Mineral Wells State Park spur trail, with its quad-burning switchbacks. From the park trailhead we follow a paved road to the rock-climbing area at Penitentiary Hollow, where

an overlook at the top of a bluff reveals a postcard-perfect view of Lake Mineral Wells. We lock up the bikes and descend a Civilian Conservation Corps-built staircase that twists around fern-draped boulders and deposits us at the base of the cliff, where climbers are plotting their ascent up its 30-foot face. In addition to rock climbing and rappelling, the state park offers 11 miles of trails, camping, and a 640-acre lake for fishing and paddling.

The state park occupies part of the old Camp Wolters, later named Fort Wolters, a training base for helicopter pilots during the Vietnam War. Just west of the park, we stop at the National Vietnam War Museum, located

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less than a mile from the old base and right on the trail. Watson and I check out the exhibits inside the temporary building—a permanent structure is planned—then spend a quiet moment tracing our fingers along the names inscribed on the half-scale replica of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Back on our bikes, we follow the trail

through industrial and residential sections of Mineral Wells to the western trailhead just south of downtown. Watson and I high-five before detouring a few blocks north to the charming Brazos Market & Bistro. We peruse the tempting menu of dishes like roasted vegetable pizza and stuffed avocados but opt instead for a light snack of chips and lemonade in preparation



**THE NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR MUSEUM**

is at 12685 Mineral Wells Hwy near Mineral Wells. The grounds open daily; visitor center hours are 9 a.m.-1 p.m. with extended hours until 5 p.m. Tue and Sat. Call **940-325-4003**; [nationalvnwarmuseum.org](http://nationalvnwarmuseum.org).

for 20 more miles of riding. After refilling our hydration packs and making a quick circle around the old Baker Hotel building—a shuttered relic of the town’s health-resort heyday—we head back east.

On the return trip we’re treated to a new perspective on the countryside: horses switching their tails in improbably green fields and country cottages flanked by flowerbeds. While this former railroad bed lacks steep inclines, I can tell we’re working harder as we pedal past Garner, pushing against the grade that Watson had mentioned earlier. Chugging along, I pretend for a moment that I’m the old resort train, loaded down with tourists recently refreshed by the waters of Mineral Wells. The thought lasts only a moment before a cottontail darts across the path, grounding me firmly in the present.

“This is my favorite part of the path,” Watson says as we arrive at a shaded section of the trail where the trees are so dense they form a green tunnel. “Even though I’m riding a bike, it makes me feel like I’m a knight riding a horse on his way to battle. It’s cool and calm and refreshes my mind.”

That relative cool helps us power back to the highest point on the trail, where a small sign notes the elevation: 1,235 feet above sea level. From there, we’re practically coasting the 4 miles back to the parking lot until a thorn punctures Watson’s back tire. We walk the bikes the last quarter-mile, but we feel accomplished: Including our detour into the state park, we’ve ridden 42 miles. And the best part is that we never had to deal with traffic—unless you count four bunnies, four lizards, and one bright green snake. 🐍



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# Out in Ozona

Stop off and slow down at this West Texas outpost

story by Michael Barr

**Y**OU GET THE IDEA OF JUST HOW EMPTY AND remote the country around Ozona is when you learn that local officials installed a red light on top of the 1902 Crockett County Courthouse not only to summon the sheriff's deputy but to guide travelers to town after dark.

Known these days primarily as a convenience stop between San Antonio and destinations out west, modern Ozona is often overlooked by visitors barreling through town on Interstate 10.

But don't sell Ozona short. Just moments from the interstate, Ozona offers travelers a taste of West Texas past and present with an engaging history museum, downhome restaurants, and friendly locals who appreciate the town's slower pace of life.

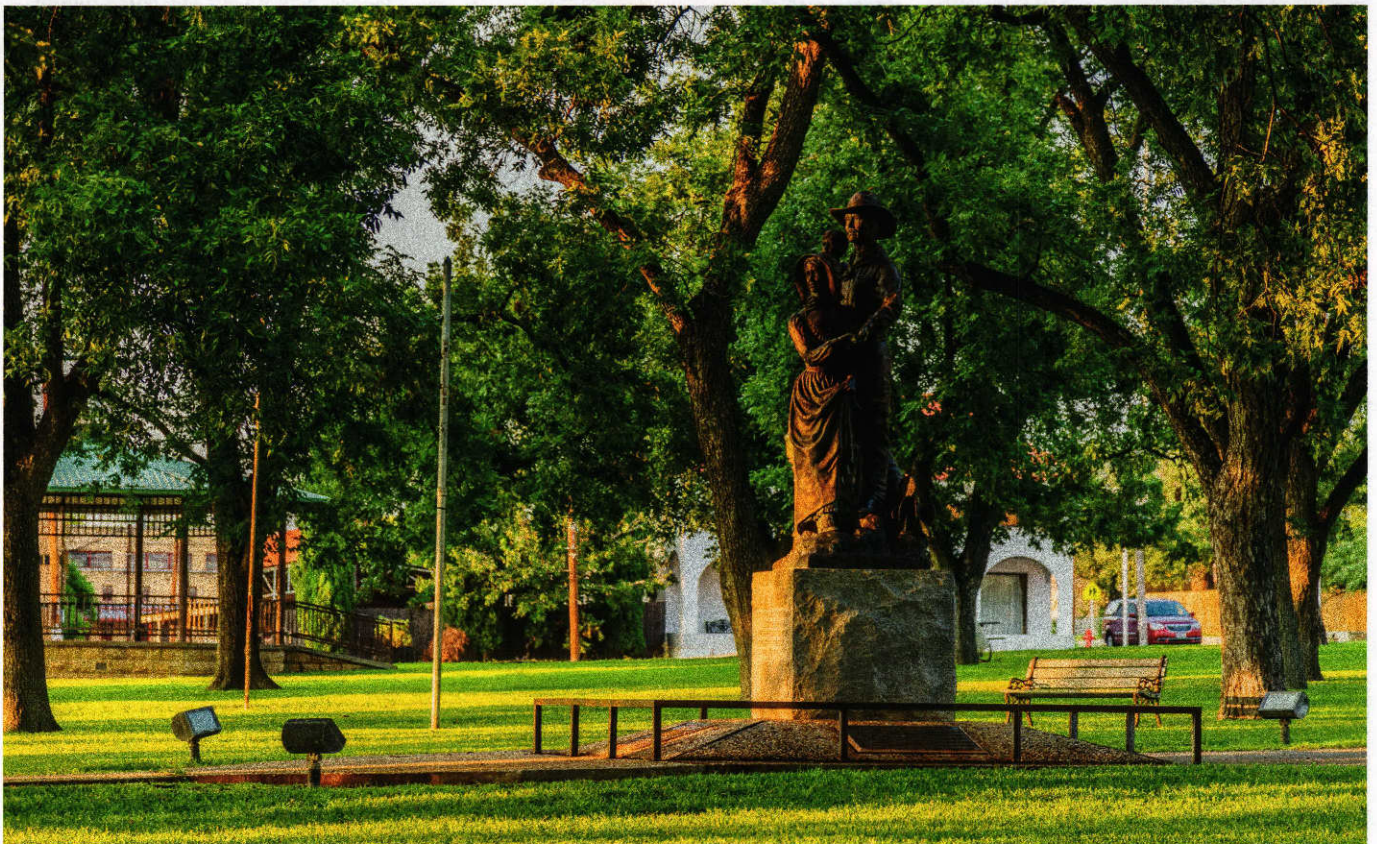
Since 1938, visitors from all over the world have stopped at the Crockett County Courthouse square to take pictures with county namesake and Alamo hero David Crockett. Artist

**“The best thing about Ozona is the quiet. And at night you can see the stars—every one of them.”**

William M. McVey's pink granite statue bears an inscription reflecting Crockett's daring worldview: "Be sure you are right, then go ahead."

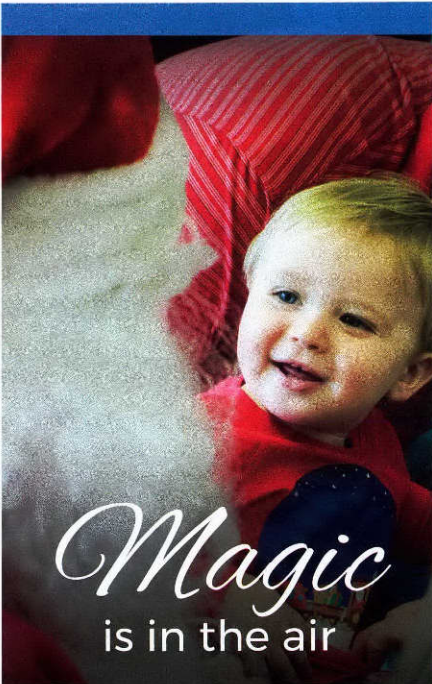
Just behind Crockett in the middle of the square, a bronze statue dubbed *The Tie That Binds* depicts a young pioneer family looking west—the woman in a bonnet, the man in full-brimmed hat and holding a boy. Created by Crockett County native Judy Black, the sculpture represents the hardships and community spirit of the pioneers who settled this isolated part of the world.

Ozona's story continues across the street at the Crockett County Museum,



Located in the Crockett County Courthouse square, Judy Black's statue, *The Tie That Binds*, depicts a young pioneer family.





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**Above: Pepe's Café, in Ozona is a popular eatery. Left: The 1902 Crockett County Courthouse anchors a region rich in energy production and ranching.**

where three stories of exhibits span from the Stone Age through the 1950s. Outdoors near the entrance, an early 20th-century wagon and water pump illustrate the challenges faced by settlers who spent most of their time and energy getting from place to place and finding water. With almost no surface water, Crockett County was uninhabitable until the late 19th century, when the development of windmills and pumps allowed irrigation from the aquifer. The early settlers raised sheep and cattle, and the discovery of oil and gas in the 1920s made some of them millionaires.

The museum's exhibits cover prehistoric fossils, Native American artifacts, and ranching tools, along with a few surprises. Among its exhibits chronicling the area's ranching history, the museum highlights items that tell the story of female settlers, including elegant tea sets and delicate pieces of fine china from the early ranching days.

"The strong women of West Texas have a story that is often forgotten," Museum Coordinator Emily Guerra says. "Our museum tells their story through the tea sets and china, along with a display of women's hats and dresses from the early 20th century. It's my favorite part of the museum."

Next door to the museum is the stately 1902 Crockett County Courthouse. West Texas architect Oscar Ruffini designed the structure in the Second Empire style. Builders used locally quarried stone for the courthouse and also for the 1892 jail, parts of which are still in use. The jail resembles a church,



although the belfry is really a hanging tower (the county never had to use it).

To experience more of Crockett County's natural and cultural history, drive 30 miles west to the county's edge, where a grand panoramic view of the Pecos River valley unfolds from the Lancaster Hill scenic loop (State Highway 290). From the overlook, the road descends about 2 miles to the Texas Historical Commission's Fort Lancaster State Historic Site.

The U.S. Army established Fort Lancaster in 1855 on the San Antonio-El Paso road to protect a crossing on the Pecos River. Once home to 160 troops, including a company of Buffalo Soldiers, Fort Lancaster was abandoned in the 1870s and never garrisoned again. Visitors can tour its stone ruins (golf carts available) and view the recently renovated visitor center's exhibits. A life-size camel replica interprets the Army's 19th-century

experiment to use camels as pack animals on the southwestern frontier.

But don't venture west from Ozona—



#### OZONA

The Ozona Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is at the intersection of I-10 and SH 163 South. Call **325-392-3737**; [ozona.com](http://ozona.com).

the only town in Crockett County—before getting something to eat. On the north side of the square, the family-run Pizza Mia serves satisfying pie made from fresh ingredients. Another reliable stop is The Cafe Next Door, featuring a menu of burgers, chicken-fried steak, and Mexican food, including a crisp and fresh fajita salad.

The friendly and relaxed service at the restaurants reflects the small-town atmosphere that Ozona residents appreciate in their home. There are no

crowds and no traffic jams. No one is in a hurry. It is easy to strike up a conversation.

"Crockett County has the friendliest people in the world," says Shanon Biggerstaff, president of the Ozona Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center. "They love to visit over coffee at the Wool Growers Feed Store. And going to the post office in Ozona is a social event. You don't just go. You have to plan for it."

Nighttime is another local treasure. When darkness falls, the boundless West Texas sky could be the backdrop to a *Star Wars* movie. Local officials must have had nights like these in mind when they installed the light on top of the courthouse some 100 years ago.

"The best thing about Ozona is the quiet," says one of their successors, County Judge Fred Deaton, a lifelong resident. "And at night you can see the stars—every one of them." 🌌



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## Primitive Luxury

Sundancer on the Brazos offers safari-style lodging

story by June Naylor

**T**HE IDEAL GETAWAY EXPERIENCE DOESN'T ALWAYS involve traveling long distances to an elaborate resort, as I rediscover on a recent trip less than an hour from home. Hearing about a prime "glamping" retreat outside of Weatherford, my husband and I are intrigued to see what sort of escape awaits so close to our usual stomping grounds in Fort Worth.

Our destination is Sundancer on the Brazos, a luxury safari tent that promises a simple and comfortable haven surrounded by thickets of hardwoods and rolling ranchland. Now just a year old, it's the creation of Fort Worth investment advisor Bill Fuller,

**The ranch's riverside setting includes a beautiful picnic site beneath huge, aged pecan and oak trees.**

whose family has been in the ranching business since the late 1930s. On the 350-acre Double F River Ranch, which Fuller's dad bought about 50 years ago, Fuller offers a place where visitors find solitude and remember what it means to relax.

"I think people are happiest when they discover their purpose and pursue it. Mine is to create experiences where people discover their best selves. I think that being in nature—the Japanese call it 'forest bathing'—is healing," Fuller says. "People arrive at Sundancer after driving on highways and talking on phones and listening to the radio, and step out of their cars into the palpable silence, surrounded by wind and trees."

And it's true: I hear only a breeze through the woods when we arrive. Climbing the wooden stairs to the tent's wraparound pine deck, I note a large buffalo skull decorating the porch; Fuller says it turned up in the Brazos River last summer and is thought to be about 150 years old. I open a door inset with glass to find myself within a little house. Though Sundancer is a sturdy canvas tent on the exterior, it's all lovely cabin on the inside, with wooden walls and floors and indulgences that include central heat and air conditioning.

"The collision of luxurious and primitive worlds always seems full of romantic possibilities to me, and I wanted to bring that here," says Fuller, who admits a long-held fascination with safaris and imported his tent from Africa.

To outfit the interior, Fuller and a decorator chose furniture from Southwestern home stores and antiques shops to fill the cozy bedroom, living and dining space, and spacious bathroom. I'm taken with the elegant wooden four-poster bed, covered in sumptuous linens, as well as the heavy wooden armoire and bedside tables with thoughtfully placed reading lights.

The overall comfort level can't be

About 7 miles south of Weatherford, you can go "glamping" in a safari-style cabin within a mile's hike of the Brazos River.



overstated, either. I could easily spend hours lazing on the couch (it opens into a bed) or one of the overstuffed chairs, reading a novel or one of the cabin's myriad coffee-table books covering art and local history. Beautiful Native American and cowhide rugs scatter across the pine floors. A heavy wooden trunk sitting in front of the couch opens to reveal backgammon and Scrabble games, jigsaw puzzles, grown-up coloring books, Frisbees, and a remote-controlled toy boat to use on the creek just outside. Note: We have cell-phone service, but there is no TV or Wi-Fi, and we don't regret that for even a moment.

The kitchenette consists of a tall antique cabinet retrofitted to accommodate a small sink, microwave oven, minifridge, single-serve coffee maker, and plenty of dishes. The cabin has all the tools we need to make our meals—we've brought pork chops and fresh vegetables to cook on the gas grill on the deck, as well as breakfast goods.

During our stay, we move around on the deck from one seating area to another. We sit in rockers while grilling our dinner. In the afternoon, we catnap on chaise lounges fitted with thick cushions while listening to the waterfall spilling into the creek just below the deck. There's even a wood-fired hot tub at the deck's far end, with a stack of logs nearby for both the tub and the fire pit at ground level. We sit beside the fire one evening, listening to nothing but the occasional owl's hoot and distant coyote's cry.

In the morning we hike roughly a mile to the ranch's Brazos River frontage, watching for a glimpse of resident turkey or deer. The path follows alongside a designated "fairy forest," past an old red farmhouse that Fuller also rents to visitors, and over meadows strewn with blooming cactus and wildflowers. Our goal is to play on the sparkling water in inner tubes and kayaks that Fuller provides for guests.



## SUNDANCER ON THE BRAZOS

is on the Double F River Ranch, on Old Dennis Road about 7 miles south of Weatherford. The luxury tent accommodates four guests and is pet-friendly. Rates are \$275 on weeknights, \$295 on weekends. Call **817-233-2825**; [doublefriverranch.com](http://doublefriverranch.com).

(Fuller will also shuttle guests upriver to float down to the ranch for a couple of hours.) The ranch's riverside setting includes a beautiful picnic site beneath huge, aged pecan and oak trees, as well as grounds for hunting flint and arrowheads left by the Comanche, who ruled this area long ago.

Mostly, we just sit, bathing in the silence and wealth of nature that envelops us. We've driven not quite 40 minutes to reach this spot, but the sense of pure, simple escapism adds up to a much greater journey. **L**

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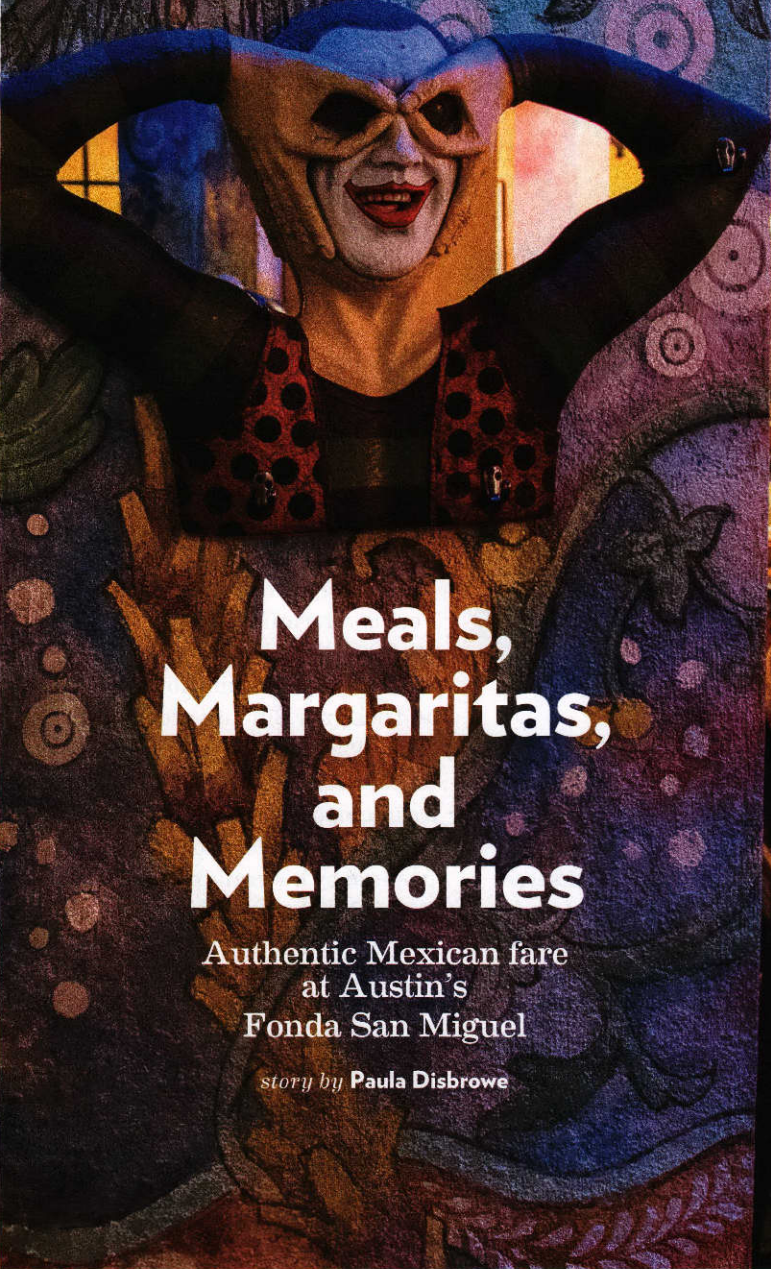
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# PLATES

COOK + DRINK + TRAVEL



## Meals, Margaritas, and Memories

Authentic Mexican fare  
at Austin's  
Fonda San Miguel

story by **Paula Disbrowe**



Since 1975, Fonda San Miguel in Austin has served authentic Mexican interior fare, including a lavish Sunday brunch.





**E**VEN BEFORE YOU STEP THROUGH THE restaurant's massive, hand-carved wooden doors, you've been transported to a place that usually requires a passport. A light breeze rustles palms and other exotic tropical foliage while young chefs clip fragrant sprigs of cilantro, mint, and epazote from the culinary garden. Inside, gleaming Saltillo tiles, the exhilarating aroma of freshly squeezed limes, and squawked greetings from Paco, the resident parrot, ensure you've reached full-on vacation mode. Welcome to Fonda San Miguel in Austin.

If you've been lucky enough to dine here, you probably have cherished memories of the experience. In addition to tequila libations, smoky duck enchiladas, and *crepas de cajeta*, there's a good chance those reminiscences include a warm exchange with Miguel Ravago, the restaurant's impossibly gracious chef and co-founder, who died in June.

"A meal at Fonda San Miguel is like crossing the border without leaving Austin," says longtime patron Lucinda

**With its tropical atrium, handpainted walls, and abundance of prominent Mexican art, the restaurant doubles as an exotic refuge.**

Hutson, author of *Viva Tequila!* "Sipping watermelon margaritas from hand-blown glasses while sampling cuisine from all regions of Mexico, in a lovely hacienda surrounded by exquisite art, makes life a holiday!"

Miguel charmed adults and children alike. "He was always so kind and patient when we'd ask him about every single dish on the Sunday buffet," local artist Nancy Mims remembers. "Last time we were there, my son ate so much he had to excuse himself to undo the top button of his britches."

With its tropical atrium, hand-painted walls, and abundance of prominent Mexican art curated by co-founder Tom Gilliland, the restaurant doubles as an exotic refuge.

This year Fonda San Miguel celebrates its 42nd anniversary, as well as a revised edition of the restaurant's cookbook, *Fonda San Miguel: Forty Years of Food and Art* by Tom Gilliland and Miguel Ravago (with new recipes and photos, plus a section on tequilas and *mezcales*). Although Miguel's loss will be deeply felt by all who knew him (a *Día de los Muertos* altar honors his memory throughout November), Tom is determined to maintain their traditions of excellence and to keep the restaurant moving forward. He and designer Bill Luft are in the midst of a renovation that will blend the restaurant's signature Colonial style with a contemporary influence.

Miguel's love for cooking was first inspired by his grandmother, Guadalupe Velasquez, a tireless home cook who often prepared three meals a day for her large family. By the time he was 6, Miguel was at her elbow, experiencing the flavors of Veracruz and her native Sonora. When Miguel and Tom met as adults in Arizona, Tom had just spent a summer as a law student in Mexico City, where he learned to appreciate the country's regional dishes. The two bonded over their passion for Mexican cuisine and culture,

**Meals at Fonda San Miguel have introduced generations of Texans to regional Mexican ingredients ranging from *huitlacoche* to the vast world of chiles.**



and soon became friends. When he and Tom found themselves in Austin in 1968, they both landed jobs at the Texas Capitol. Through their love of entertaining, they developed an appreciative following for Miguel's cooking and natural flair for hospitality.

Ultimately, their passion for the culinary world trumped legislative work. Four years later, they combined their talents to open San Angel Restaurant in Houston. Miguel enticed his grandmother to help oversee the restaurant, and their menu of Sonoran cuisine quickly attracted fans—including Diana Kennedy, who'd just published her first book, *The Cuisines of Mexico*. The three became good friends, and with Diana's encouragement and mentoring, their next venture took flight.

Serendipity led them to a leafy neighborhood in North Austin and the site of a recently closed restaurant.

## RECIPE

### EGGS POACHED IN CHILE TOMATO BROTH

Serves 6

- ◆ 3 poblano chiles  
(plus another for garnish, if desired)
- ◆ 1/3 cup cooking oil
- ◆ 1/2 white onion, finely chopped
- ◆ 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ◆ 7 red, ripe tomatoes, roasted, peeled, and chopped
- ◆ 2 cups chicken broth
- ◆ Salt
- ◆ 12 whole eggs
- ◆ 1/2 cup crumbled *queso fresco*, for garnish
- ◆ Corn tortillas

1. Toast the chiles directly over an open flame, on the broiler, or on a griddle to char the skins. When well-blistered and charred, put the chiles in a plastic bag for about 10 minutes. Then remove the loosened skin with paper towels. Split the chiles open, remove seeds and veins, and cut into 1/4-inch wide strips.

2. In a saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat and fry the onion, garlic, and tomatoes, stirring constantly until the mixture forms a thick paste. Add the chicken broth, 3 of the chiles, and salt to taste. Cook over low heat until the mixture comes to a simmer.

3. Drop raw eggs into the hot sauce, one by one, poaching them about 4 minutes (or to your desired degree of doneness). To serve, place two poached eggs per serving in a bowl, then top with tomato sauce and chile strips. Garnish with the crumbled *queso fresco* and serve with hot corn tortillas.

Excerpted from *Fonda San Miguel: Forty Years of Food and Art* by Tom Gilliland and Miguel Ravago

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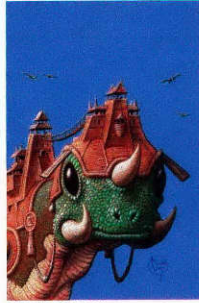
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Miki Falls- Winter © 2008 by Mark Crilley



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Miki Falls- Autumn © 2007 by Mark Crilley

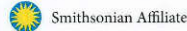
This exhibition features today's leading graphic novelists of the illustration world: Mark Crilley, Matthew Holm, Jarrett J. Krosoczka, Lincoln Pierce and Raina Telgemeier. On display is artwork from iconic books such as *Baby Mouse*, *Big Nate*, *Lunch Lady*, *Brody's Ghost and Smile*. Highlighting the varied style and media used, this exhibition celebrates the art and literature in graphic novels.

This exhibition was organized by the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, Abilene, Texas.

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**The lavish spreads on Sundays taught Texans to love huevos motuleños (eggs stacked with tortillas and black beans) and chilaquiles with chile pasilla sauce.**

Soon enough, customers caught on. "The UT faculty saved us. They were well-traveled and appreciative of authentic interior Mexican flavors," Tom says. Critics also caught wind and praised Miguel's subtle, refined dishes. Before long, regular customers included families of U.S. Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and George W. Bush, visiting celebrities, and thousands of happy locals and tourists. The lavish spreads on Sundays (\$38.95) taught Texans to love *huevos motuleños* (eggs stacked with tortillas and black beans) and chilaquiles with *chile pasilla* sauce, and the tropical courtyard bar provided many guests with their first taste of a fresh lime-juice margarita.

Today the restaurant's intimate setting and location—a world away from the sea of construction cranes in downtown Austin—make it even more of a treasured oasis. Long live Fonda San Miguel. 🍴

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## The Elephant in the Room

Fort Worth's White Elephant Saloon

story by **June Naylor**

**W**HEN FRIENDS AND FAMILY VISIT ME IN FORT Worth, they ask to see the real Cowtown. Piece of cake, I say, and we head out for the north side of town to explore the Stockyards National Historic District. After what seems like hundreds of trips through the beloved old neighborhood, I still get a kick out of seeing our mounted city police force in their cowboy hats with their beautiful horses. Just as much fun is catching the re-enactments of an 1880s Longhorn cattle drive, which take place twice daily on

**There's  
live music  
here every  
night and  
on weekend  
afternoons.**

the weathered bricks that cover North Main Street and Exchange Avenue, the crossroads at the Stockyards' heart.

And when said pals and relatives also want a true taste of Texas history, it's all right here on Exchange Avenue, as well: The White Elephant Saloon is a treasure straight from Fort Worth's gun-slinging days, with roots in the 1890s—though the present bar opened in the 1970s. It's easily the most iconic bar in town, offering a mix of personal-ity and good food and drinks.

The saloon's doorway sits almost directly beneath the famous Fort Worth Stockyards sign, which soars overhead

**This iconic bar in the Fort Worth Stockyards boasts hundreds of cowboy hats nailed to the ceiling and walls, plus live music every night.**



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across, Exchange. I enjoy watching locals and tourists alike snap photographs under the sign and then wander into the White Elephant for a cold one.

To step inside the saloon is to land in a friendly, ongoing celebration. Sometimes, it's a relatively tame get-together of a few friends hanging out at the aged brass rail along the wooden bar, listening to a crooner on the adjacent stage singing about the rodeo, love, and loss. Other times, the place is packed with a combination of regulars, tourists from Australia and Germany, and people like me, bringing friends in for a long-neck and a game of shuffleboard. And if we're lucky, we happen upon a local character in period costume known as Wild Bill, posing for photos and sharing jokes with the regulars.

Famed local chef Tim Love bought the saloon a few years ago, but the place remains blessedly unchanged in looks and spirit. Behind the bar and

**A chili parlor** inside the saloon serves a mean bowl of red, and while you wait for it you can play pool or admire the collection of elephant figurines.

in glass-front cases along one wall, there's a collection of thousands of white elephant figurines, gifts to the saloon owners from friends. Nailed to the ceiling, hundreds of worn cowboy hats are noted with names of the donors on plaques.

The bartenders working behind the L-shaped bar (under a painting of a cartoonish white elephant reclined on a chaise longue) hustle to keep up with requests. More often than not, customers want a cold beer, asking for Lone Star or local products from Rahr & Sons, but good choices also include a specialty cocktail such as a Paloma, a cousin to the margarita that incorporates grapefruit soda. The saloon also keeps Chef Love's favorite liqueur, a





vanilla-citrus brandy from Italy called Tuaca, chilled on tap. Spirits lovers can always ask for a dram of aged whiskeys. And always, the bartenders engage in amusing repartee with guests.

There's live music here every night and on weekend afternoons, and musicians encourage patrons to get up and dance. Among a hefty roster of local country musicians, fiddler Rachel Stacy usually headlines Monday nights, while Steve Carrasco is the

**The saloon's doorway sits almost directly beneath the famous Fort Worth Stockyards sign, which soars overhead across Exchange Avenue.**

singer on Friday afternoons. On Tuesday nights, the Texas Music Showcase gives aspiring talents a chance to step up and take the spotlight, with house musicians helping win over the crowd.

After a few spins on the well-worn dance floor, my gang and I are usually ready to eat. The White Elephant obliges in two ways: There's the

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[whiteelephantsaloon.com](http://whiteelephantsaloon.com).

owner-chef's Love Shack right outside the saloon doors in the beer garden immediately adjacent; and there's a new chili parlor operating inside the saloon.

My Love Shack favorite is the Dirty Love Burger (\$6.39), a towering construction of bacon, lettuce, tomato, and fried quail egg atop the meat patty, framed by halves of a toasty bun; an accompanying order of addictive, crispy fries is a must. Equally satisfying, the chili offering is a traditional Texas bowl of red that comes with a wide variety of topping options, including shredded cheeses, sour cream, tortilla chips, Fritos, cilantro, jalapeños, and pico de gallo.

When the weather's nice, it's best to enjoy the food and drinks outside in the beer garden, where plenty of picnic tables provide seating. There's also live music in the garden, Thursday through Sunday. Of course, you can eat inside but here's a caveat: Because the White Elephant is a bar, smoking is permitted by city ordinance.

While the scene is rarely dull at the White Elephant, we count on finding big crowds descending on the saloon on Feb. 8. The date commemorates a notorious gunfight that took place outside the original 1884 White Elephant about 3 miles away. Known for gambling, drinking, and good food, this edition of the Elephant stood downtown in the 300 block of Main Street. A long-brewing feud between saloon owner Luke Short and former city marshal Longhair Jim Courtright came to a head in 1887, with the two engaging in a shootout in front of the bar, leaving Courtright dead. Each year, re-enactors bring the duel to life on Exchange Avenue.

Afterwards, of course, everyone heads back into the saloon—and the bartenders pour another round of Fort Worth flavor. 🍷

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# High-Five Dining on I-45

Three mom-and-pop eateries on I-45

story by John Lumpkin

**D**RIVING THE 240 MILES OF INTERSTATE 45 between Dallas and Houston reveals gentle changes in elevation, pastures in the north, pine forests farther south, and a relief from big-city traffic. If you are hungry and looking for an alternative to fast food, a few minutes' diversion from the highway allows for some satisfying small-town Texas dining. Such options provide a respite from construction zones and 18-wheelers, with no charge for the smiles of hometown servers.

Before the internet, word-of-mouth was the reliable way to locate small-town eateries. Social media now connects potential customers and eliminates guesswork about operating hours. With help from your GPS, try these three local gems that combine hospitality, home cooking, and history for your I-45 journey.

**With help from your GPS, try these three local gems that combine hospitality, home cooking, and history.**

## WALKER'S CAFE, MADISONVILLE

The Walker's Dip sandwich, perhaps the best-known item at this popular downtown Madisonville diner, features savory beef, Swiss cheese, and sautéed bell peppers and onion in a jalapeño-cheese sourdough bun. To really accentuate the sandwich's beefy flavor, dunk it bite-by-bite into the accompanying cup of aromatic brown broth. A side of house-made potato chips comes with ranch dressing for dipping.

"Enter as strangers. Leave as friends," proclaims a sign on the wall. Co-owners Angela Culbreth and Noella Smith personify that motto, greeting customers as they work the cash register or serve ice cream from the original marble 1920s soda fountain. Antique roof panels dress up the cash-register stand, remnants of a remodel a few years ago that also revealed the building's construction in 1886. "We had no idea when we bought it in 2008 that the building was so old," Angela says.

The two brought in reproductions of classic midcentury soda-fountain stools, and they honor the café's past with 25-cent coffee, with free refills. Another perk is a complimentary scoop of ice cream with an entrée order. Waiter Kathryn Ziebell might take your order wearing 1940s garb—open-collar blouse, pencil skirt, and seamed hosiery, which she buys from a World War II-era supplier in England. She also has outfits from the '50s and '60s.

No parking along Main Street? No problem. Circle around back and pull up next to the horse trailers and pick-up trucks, then enter through the back door. Located just inside is Angela's "Cowboy Table." True to its name, ranch hands sit in a circle in worn jeans, dusty boots, and maybe a set of spurs.

## ROY'S CAFE, CORSICANA

If you're the type who prefers



Roy's Cafe in Corsicana serves breakfast all day, including a belt-busting option that combines scrambled eggs, hash browns, and chicken-fried steak.



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Famous for its smoked brisket, ribs, and sausage, Sam's in Fairfield also offers a 44-foot buffet option. Servers at Walker's Cafe in Madisonville sometimes sport vintage attire.

breakfast at lunchtime, Roy's Cafe, which dates to the 1920s, can oblige. There is even a breakfast-lunch crossover option—the Chicken Fried Steak Breakfast Platter, which features two crunchy CFS cutlets paired with scrambled eggs and hash browns. Roy's biscuits, the handiwork of longtime cook Nadia Chavez, have enough heft to support cream gravy, as opposed to being flaky.

"She cooks her biscuits with love," says Cynthia Eslick, the café's hostess and manager. Of popular menu standouts like the café's succulent pork chops, Cynthia explains, "We choose our items by thinking about our history and what everyone has grown up eating for many years."



The specials, with sides such as squash casserole, okra and tomatoes, or butter beans, cost \$8.95, with dessert included. Another best bet: Roy's crunchy, hand-cut, and hand-battered onion rings, served in a neat stack on a side plate.

On any given Saturday, Beaton Street, where Roy's is a mainstay, hums with townfolk and visitors shopping, dining, and sightseeing. A collection of painted pianos adorns



the downtown area's sidewalks, as do bronze statues of local legends like Coach Jim Acree, who led Corsicana High's football team to a state championship in 1963. Still, the handwritten sign on one shop's door is a reminder this is a close-knit community: "Gone to a funeral. Be back at 12:00."

### SAM'S ORIGINAL, FAIRFIELD

Sam's is not a secret, serving up to 7,000 meals a week at its longtime location at I-45's Fairfield exit. Brisket, sausage, and ribs—smoked on-site nightly—remain a staple, the legacy of the late Samuel and Doris Daniel, who in 1953 opened a modest barbecue stand with a sawdust floor, eventually expanding to the current location. The family operation is now in its third generation.

"I have six kids and know how important it is to have a good meal while traveling," says Gilbert "Sonny" Daniel,



### DINE LIKE A LOCAL ON I-45

Walker's Cafe is at 112 W Main St. in Madisonville. Hours: Mon-Sat 6:30 a.m.-2 p.m., with extended hours until 8 p.m. on Fri. Call **936-348-2672**.

Roy's Cafe is at 306 N Beaton St. in Corsicana. Hours: Mon-Sat 6 a.m.-2 p.m. Call **903-874-6791**.

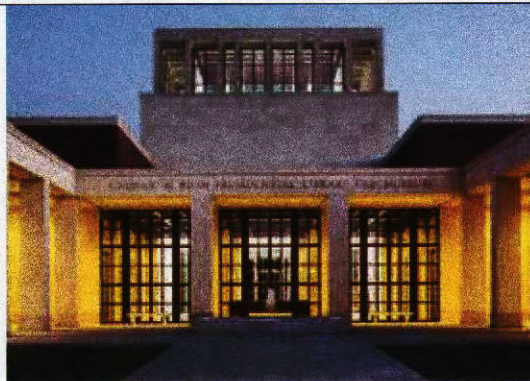
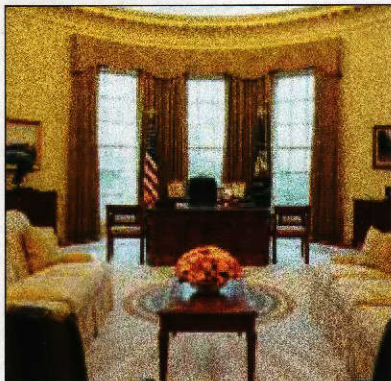
Sam's Original Restaurant is at 390 I-45 Frontage Road in Fairfield. Hours: 6 a.m.-10 p.m. daily. Call **903-389-7267**; [samsoriginal.com](http://samsoriginal.com).

Sam's grandson, who helps run the restaurant with his father, also named Gilbert. "It's great to be able to stop, have a hearty or healthy meal, stretch your legs, and be back on the road quickly." The menu has dozens of non-barbecue choices for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, though many patrons choose instead to graze the 44-foot buffet and nearby dessert cart.

Burgers are great here, and the proprietary beef-and-pork sausage blend comes from a local meat processor, operated for decades by another Fairfield family. Sonny's late grand-

mother provided the pie recipes, and she helped bake them until retiring in 2001.

Though Sam's seats 325 customers, table service remains personal. Near a collection of joined-together tables with multiple family members taking turns at the buffet, two waitresses abided a couple who simply wanted a sandwich to-go during the crowded lunch hour. The wait time for placing and receiving the order was short, then they were back on the road. According to Sonny Daniel, customers have been doing that for 50 years. **L**



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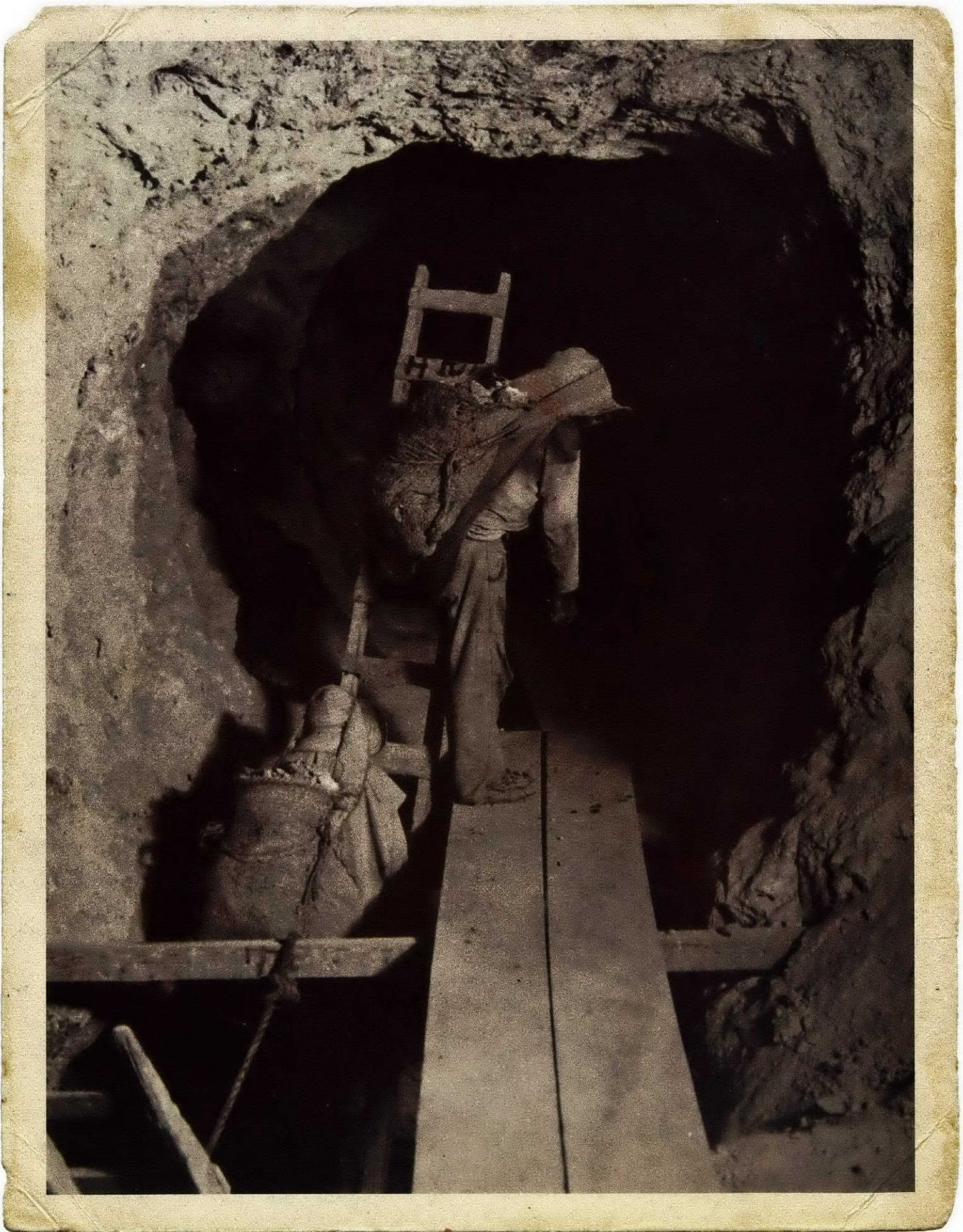
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# QUICKSILVER DAYS

**The PAST and PRESENT of the  
BIG BEND'S MERCURY MINING BOOM**

*Story by*  
**MATT JOYCE**

*Photographs by*  
**BRANDON JAKOBEIT**





# THE BIG BEND'S



desert mountains are like magnets for modern nomads seeking isolation and adventure. But the region's wide-open wilderness hasn't always been valued as a haven for escape and personal renewal.

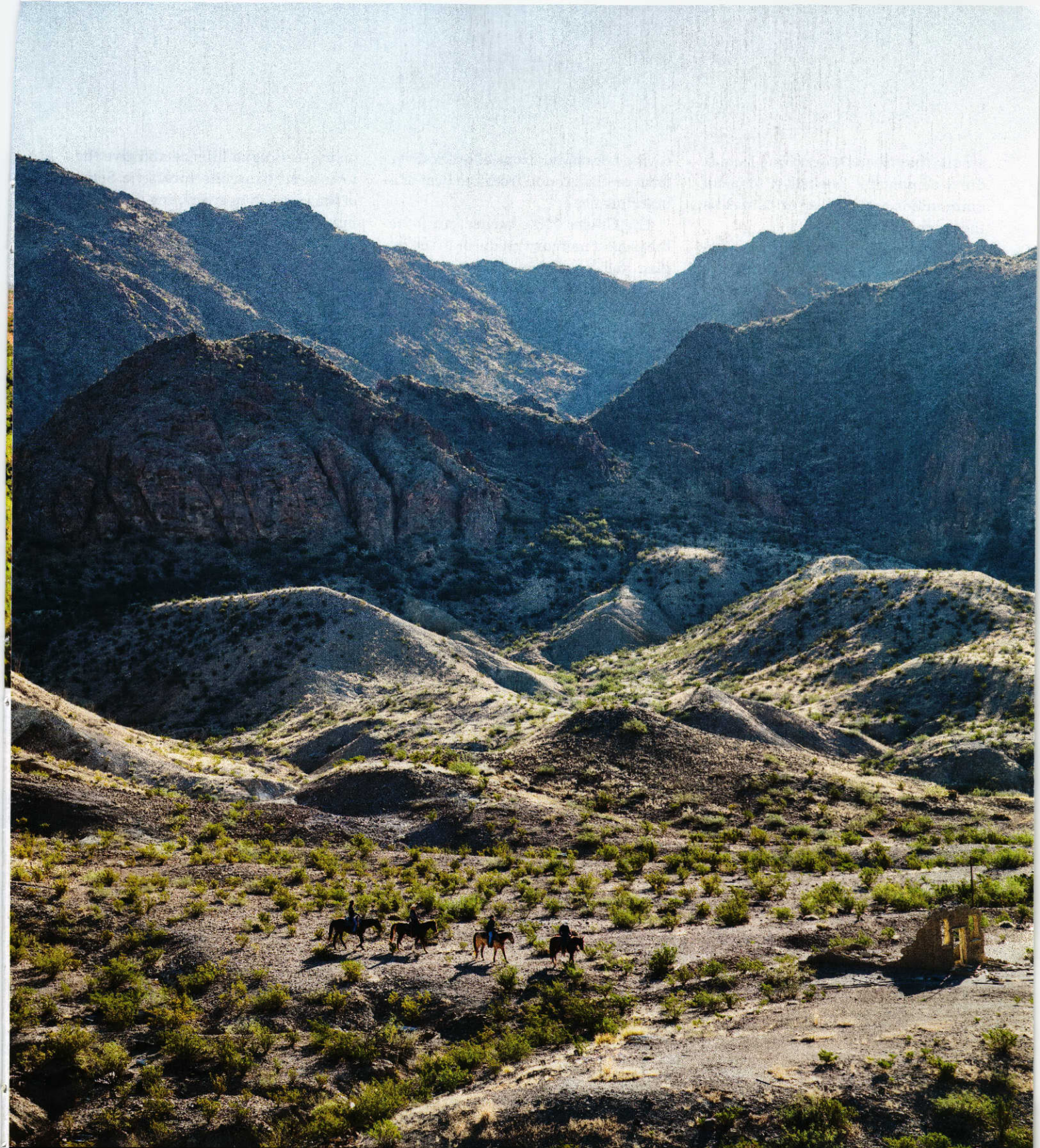
The promise of mineral riches beneath the rocky remoteness pulled prospectors of the past. These opportunists weren't looking to get away from it all—they wanted to fill their pockets.

From about 1900 to 1950, the Big Bend region was one of America's top producers of mercury, also known as quicksilver, an element extracted from cinnabar ore that was once a key ingredient in detonators. About a dozen mines operated in the Terlingua Quicksilver District, which covered parts of Presidio and Brewster counties. Mining companies dug shafts hundreds of feet deep and lugged out cinnabar by hand, cart, and burro. Furnaces heated the scarlet-red rock to release mercury vapor, which was condensed into liquid metal and bottled in cast-iron flasks. Railroads shipped the flasks

**Opening spread:** Miners carry ore out of the Waldron Mine in the Terlingua area, 1916; the Chisos Mine in Terlingua, 1922. **This spread:** Mine workers built homes of stacked rocks and adobe bricks like this one in El Polvo (now Redford), 1916; a chunk of cinnabar ore; Big Bend Stables' horseback tour in Study Butte.







**"That someone was enterprising enough to begin a fairly major industrial development in the area borders on the miraculous," Kenneth Ragsdale in *Quicksilver*.**



around the globe as World Wars I and II drove demand for quicksilver to make ammunition and explosives, as well as thermometers.

These days, remnants of the quicksilver era crop up across the Big Bend's arid expanses in the form of abandoned towns, mine ruins scattered with defunct equipment, rocky freight-wagon trails, and interpretive exhibits that explore the bygone era. An exploration of Big Bend mining history not only traverses some of Texas' most scenic terrain, it also illuminates how the quicksilver era helped shape the region as we know it, from infrastructure to local culture and tourism.

### Terlingua

Mining heritage is nowhere more tangible than in Terlingua, an outpost about 8 miles from the border of Big Bend National Park. Terlingua Ghost Town, as it's now known, inhabits the skeleton of the 1903 Chisos Mining Company. Chicago industrialist Howard Perry opened the mine after discovering that land he received as payment for a debt happened to sit atop rich cinnabar deposits. (According to one legend, the ore was so prevalent that a

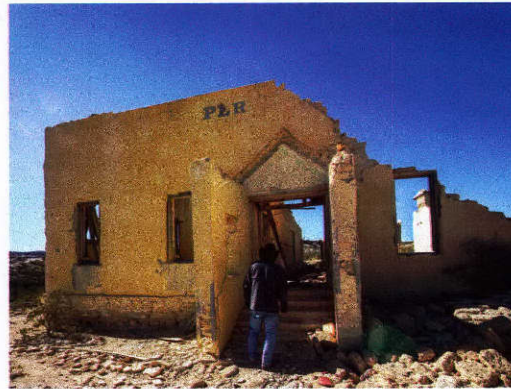
cowboy observed drops of quicksilver form on the ground from the heat of a branding fire.)

The Chisos Mine turned out to be the biggest mercury producer in the region, and at times, in the nation. In the town's heyday of the 1910s and '20s, as many as 2,000 people lived in Terlingua, which had a post office, company store, hotel, school, and dance pavilion. Most of the residents were Mexicans who had moved north to escape the violence of the Mexican Revolution and oppressive working conditions in Mexican mines. Finding work in Terlingua, they built simple homes of stacked limestone rocks and adobe mortar.

The ruins of these structures squat among the creosote and cactus bushes

on the Terlingua hillside and give the town its rustic architectural style. Some of the ruins sit in crumbling disrepair, but in recent decades, locals have restored and expanded many of the old homes. The surviving stone masonry serves as the foundation for residences, vacation lodgings, galleries, and the go-to spot for breakfast burritos and coffee—Espresso y Poco Mas.

Ninety-three-year-old Maria Bermudez was born and raised in Terlingua, the daughter of Mexican immigrants who married in the mining town. Now a resident of Alpine, about 80 miles north, Maria remembers her Terlingua childhood as a happy and safe time, though demanding. She helped carry buckets of water from the town's central storage tank to her family's home. And after her father died, she balanced school with daily



This page: A 1929 Chisos Store receipt on display at the Terlingua Trading Co.; the ruins of the 1930 Perry School in Terlingua; a 1938 photo of the Terlingua Post Office. Opposite page: Terlingua Cemetery and Saint Agnus Church in Terlingua.

CHARGE SALE  
**THE CHISOS MINING CO.**  
 TERLINGUA, TEXAS  
 B 4188  
 Date 5/17 1929  
 To C. Williams

Quantity	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	AMOUNT
	sausage		25
	bread		15
	Simons		20
	chili		30
	Lutterce		20
	squash		20
	Yonatan		40
	cheese		20
	Ice cream frozen		414
			6.04



Photo: W.D. Smithers, Courtesy Museum of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University





**Last February, vandals knocked down the walls of one of Terlingua's historic stacked-rock structures dating to the quicksilver-mining days. The Brewster County Sheriff's Office says the case is still open, and tips are welcome.**





work as a housekeeper at the Chisos Hotel, which has since burned down. Maria smiles at the memories of Saturday-night dances and the comfort of sleeping outside on temperate desert nights—a custom still common among Terlingua residents today.

“Everybody was real happy there,” says Maria, thumbing through a folder of black-and-white photos of her family and old Terlingua. “I hear so many say, ‘If they didn’t close the mines, I would still live in Terlingua.’ And it’s true. If they didn’t close those mines, we’d still live there.”

Nowadays Terlingua is most famous for its two chili cookoffs held each November and for the live-and-let-live ethos of the independent spirits who call the area home—a mix of outdoorsmen, artists, mystics, and end-of-the-liners. It’s also a popular overnight stop for travelers visiting Big Bend National Park.

“In Terlingua, *mañana* doesn’t mean tomorrow—it just means not today,” jokes lifelong Big Bend resident Bill Ivey, who bought the old mining town in 1982 and

has worked to preserve its history and develop tourism. Ivey grew up in nearby Lajitas working at his family’s trading post. In Terlingua, he has restored some of the old adobe-brick residences of Chisos Mining Company officials as accommodations, including the foreman’s house, the mechanic’s house, and Perry’s 1906 home, known as the Perry Mansion, which is currently under renovation. Perry built the two-story home

view of the Chisos Mountains, an outcropping on the eastern horizon that transforms in the sunrises of dusk from desert camouflage into a ridge of glowing orange and pink. Locals and tourists gather to watch the spectacle from the Terlingua Trading Company’s front porch, a meeting place for guitar-picking and beer-drinking.

The Trading Company, a gift shop with a trove of regional souvenirs,

### WEB EXTRA

Mercury isn’t the only geological treasure that has enticed prospectors to the area. Read more about mining in the Big Bend—from fabled Spanish gold mines to contemporary bentonite production—at [texashighways.com](http://texashighways.com).

like a fortress, including an underground escape tunnel because of his unrealized fear that bandits or revolutionary insurgents from Mexico would raid the town.

“Terlingua is the only place in the world I know of where people sit and watch the sun go down in the east,” Ivey adds, referring to Terlingua’s uninhibited

books, and artwork, occupies the old Chisos Store, a mercantile from the mining days. Next door, the Starlight Theatre, a restaurant, bar, and live-music venue, has taken over the building that once housed a cinema for mine employees. Despite Terlingua’s isolation, crowds show up most any given

Clockwise: The Starlight Theatre eatery occupies the Chisos Mining Company’s 1939 cinema house; Maria Bermudez, a child of Terlingua’s mining days, in her Alpine home; at Whit-Roy Mine, gaseous mercury was liquefied in these cooling stacks; a portable air compressor at the Whit-Roy Mine.





night for the Starlight's draft beer and entrées like chicken-fried wild boar.

For an introduction to Terlingua's mining history, the Trading Company sells walking-tour maps (\$1) that cover numerous sites around the ghost town. Stops include the Terlingua Cemetery, a picturesque burial ground that's a popular spot for Day of the Dead memorials in the fall; and the abandoned mineshafts, which are the only industrial remnant of the mining era. Structures such as furnace buildings and head frames were salvaged for scrap after the mine closed.

Visitors can step onto the iron grates covering the mine shafts, peer into the dark abyss, and feel the rising draft of warm, moist air. By the time the Chisos Mine closed in 1945, there were some 23 miles of subsurface workings stretching out from several shafts. The dark and humid tunnels were always dangerous places. Most injuries and deaths at the Chisos Mine resulted from accidents related to falls and equipment, the late historian Kenneth Ragsdale recounted in his book, *Quicksilver: Terlingua and the Chisos Mining Company*. There were no documented cases of mercury poisoning, although Ragsdale reported that some employees who inhaled the toxic fumes of the quicksilver furnace suffered from salivation, a condition in which the



salivary glands produced excessive spit—to the point that the afflicted's teeth fell out.

### Far Afield

Considering the distance separating the cinnabar mines from medical services in Alpine, an otherwise treatable injury could be fatal during the mining days. Even now, you'd be in trouble if you suffered a serious injury at the abandoned Mariscal Mine. Located about 30 miles southeast of Terlingua in Big Bend National Park, the mine seems to have been dropped from the sky onto the slope of Mariscal Mountain. Branching off from Route 12, the



## ESSENTIALS

For Big Bend travel information, visit the Brewster County Tourism Council's Visit Big Bend website, [visitbigbend.com](http://visitbigbend.com).

**Terlingua** is 5 miles west of Study Butte on FM 170. For Ghost Town travel and lodging information, call Big Bend Holiday Hotel at 432-203-6929; [bigbendholidayhotel.com](http://bigbendholidayhotel.com).

**Big Bend Stables** is just south of the junction of Texas 118 and FM 170 in Study Butte. Call 800-887-4331; [lajitasstables.com](http://lajitasstables.com).

**Big Bend Texas Travel Company** leads customized tours throughout the region, including trips focused on mining history. Call 432-386-5635; [gogbigbend.com](http://gogbigbend.com).

**The Mariscal Mine** is in Big Bend National Park, 20 miles off the main park road on River Road East. River Road is gravel; high-clearance vehicles are required. It's a short hike from the parking lot to the mine ruins. Call 432-477-2251; [nps.gov/bibe](http://nps.gov/bibe).

**The Whit-Roy Mine** and Buena Suerte village are in Big Bend Ranch State Park, an 8-mile hike from East Contrabando Trailhead, located on FM 170 near the Barton Warnock Visitor Center. Call 432-424-3327; [tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/big-bend-ranch](http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/big-bend-ranch).



**This page:** A mining shaft at Whit-Roy Mine in Big Bend Ranch State Park. **Opposite page:** Ruins of the Mariscal Mine in Big Bend National Park.

20-mile drive on River Road East to the Mariscal Mine is slow but scenic as the road traverses dry arroyos, flats of sun-baked bentonite clay, and sandstone bluffs streaked with calcite veins.

A sign at the Mariscal Mine's parking lot trailhead provides a brief history of the operation, which lasted from 1906 to 1944. Lined by lechuguilla and cholla cactus, the gravel trail up to the mine first passes the crumbling, roofless remnants of the miners' homes, similar to the ruins at Terlingua.

from the processing of the cinnabar ore), the trail summits Mariscal Mountain. Shimmering views stretch out like quicksilver pools butting up against distant ranges such as Coahuila's Sierra del Carmen, a sheer ridge of pink with stripes of gray rock and green pine forest.

From that Mexican range, the Puerto Rico Mine extracted lead, zinc, and silver starting in the 1890s (and still operates today). In 1910, the mine built a 6-mile tramway across the Rio Grande to pres-

## WEB EXTRA

The Museum of the Big Bend in Alpine and the Chihuahuan Desert Research Center in Fort Davis feature exhibits about Big Bend mining.

**Read more at [texashighways.com](http://texashighways.com).**

"It's an interesting contrast," notes Mike Davidson, who leads customized tours through his guiding company, Big Bend Texas Travel Company. "You go to Terlingua, and it's populated and everything has been repurposed. And then here there's nothing—it's completely untouched."

Above the mine ruins, which include a crumbling brick furnace, condensers, a processing building, and tailings piles (rock shards left over

ent-day Big Bend National Park, where the ore was unloaded and freighted by mule-drawn cart to the railroad in Marathon, says Tom Alex, a retired national park archeologist and co-author of the local history book *Around Terlingua*. Today, boaters on the Rio Grande can see the ruins of the tramway towers' concrete footings on the riverbank, and the popular Old Ore Road through the Big Bend backcountry follows part of the historic freight route up to Marathon.







Prior to the arrival of automobiles in the 1930s, freighters driving large wagons pulled by teams of eight to 12 mules connected the cinnabar mines to trading posts and rail yards in Marfa, Alpine, and Marathon. It took at least two days to make the dusty, bone-rattling trip to the railroad towns.

“The freight wagons would haul the processed mercury up, and then they would load up with goods to bring back to the community,” Alex says. “Even today people down here have a different attitude and idea about driving distances. And it’s common to ask around and pick up odds and ends for several different people when you do your town trips.”

You can get an idea of what it was like to travel around the Big Bend at the turn of the 20th century in Study Butte (about 5 miles east of Terlingua), where Big Bend Stables offers horseback tours that crisscross a cinnabar mine that operated intermittently from about 1903 to 1972. As the trail climbs a mesa and then crosses gravelly Rough Run Creek, guides point out remnants like the roofless assay office, where the mercury was weighed and valued, pink tailings piles,

rusty iron cables, and an earthen mound where the mine stored its dynamite.

West of Terlingua in Big Bend Ranch State Park, hikers and mountain bikers on the Buena Suerte Trail follow part of the historic Marfa-Terlingua Road—the original lifeline from the mines to civilization—through boulder-strewn mesas and hard-packed hills sprouting ocotillo, whitethorn acacia, and Torrey yucca. From the East Contrabando Trailhead, it’s an 8-mile hike to Fresno Canyon and the ruins of the Whit-Roy and Fresno quicksilver mines, as well as the old Buena Suerte town site.

At the Whit-Roy Mine, the steel, concrete, and rubber of an old rock crusher, hopper, furnace, and conveyor belt convey the mine’s industrial nature, minus the constant noise that would have accompanied such an operation. Steps away, the ghost town of Buena Suerte retains the abandoned buildings of a 1940s mercantile and school as well as a striking collection of row houses. Meticulously crafted with stacked limestone rocks and adobe mortar, the now-roofless rows squat on inclines of gravel and brush, decomposing congru-

ously with their desert surroundings.

Mercury mining cycled through booms and busts in the first half of the 20th century until the market dried up. After World War II, few mining companies mustered the optimism to keep digging in the face of low prices, competition from foreign mines, and the challenges of operating in the Big Bend. Backers of last-ditch efforts in the late 1960s at Fresno and Study Butte had walked away by 1973.

Memories of the quicksilver era live on, however, in Big Bend natives like Maria Bermudez and in newcomers looking to test themselves in the region’s spectacular yet demanding environment—just as their mining forebears before them. “Everybody is always looking for the last best place,” Ivey says. “And really and truly, this is part of the last frontier. It’s where you can do what you want to do, be what you want to be.”

*Senior Editor Matt Joyce and Photo Editor Brandon Jakobeit’s January 2017 research trip for this story coincided with a blue northern that brought blustery winds and 13-degree temperatures.*







# THE BIG EMPTY

SOLITARY ADVENTURES ON THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED



BY WES FERGUSON





---

SOME KNOW IT AS THE ROLLING PLAINS.

OTHERS CALL IT COWBOY ALLEY.

A LAND OF OPEN ROAD AND ENORMOUS SKY,

THE BIG EMPTY LIES MORE OR LESS

NORTH OF ABILENE AND EAST OF LUBBOCK.

LARGER THAN SOME STATES,

WITH A POPULATION SMALLER THAN

MANY URBAN ZIP CODES,

THE SELDOM-TRAVELED CHUNK

OF PRAIRIE IS HOME TO RED-DIRT FARMS

AND HUGE RANCHES, FROM THE PITCHFORK

AND MATADOR TO THE FOUR SIXES.

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It's a kind of place you drive through to get somewhere else," says Reed Underwood, a native son who recommends slowing down to have a look around.

Rick Perry is from there. So was Bob Wills, the king of Western Swing. The region stretches between the Western Cross Timbers in the east, to the Caprock Escarpment in the west, and the Red River valley in the north. The Big Empty's southern boundary is harder to define, but it's somewhere north of the similarly named "Big Country" region around Abilene. Though definitive population counts don't exist for the unofficial region, local sources say it's somewhere around 20,000.

To get there from most urban centers in Texas, drive practically to the Panhandle. When you don't see anything, stop.

I hit the highway in late July, heading west by northwest out of Fort Worth. When the scrub forests of the Cross Timbers fell into my rearview, I ventured like some modern-day pioneer onto the boundless prairie—except that I was burning asphalt at 75 miles per hour where Comanche and bison once roamed.

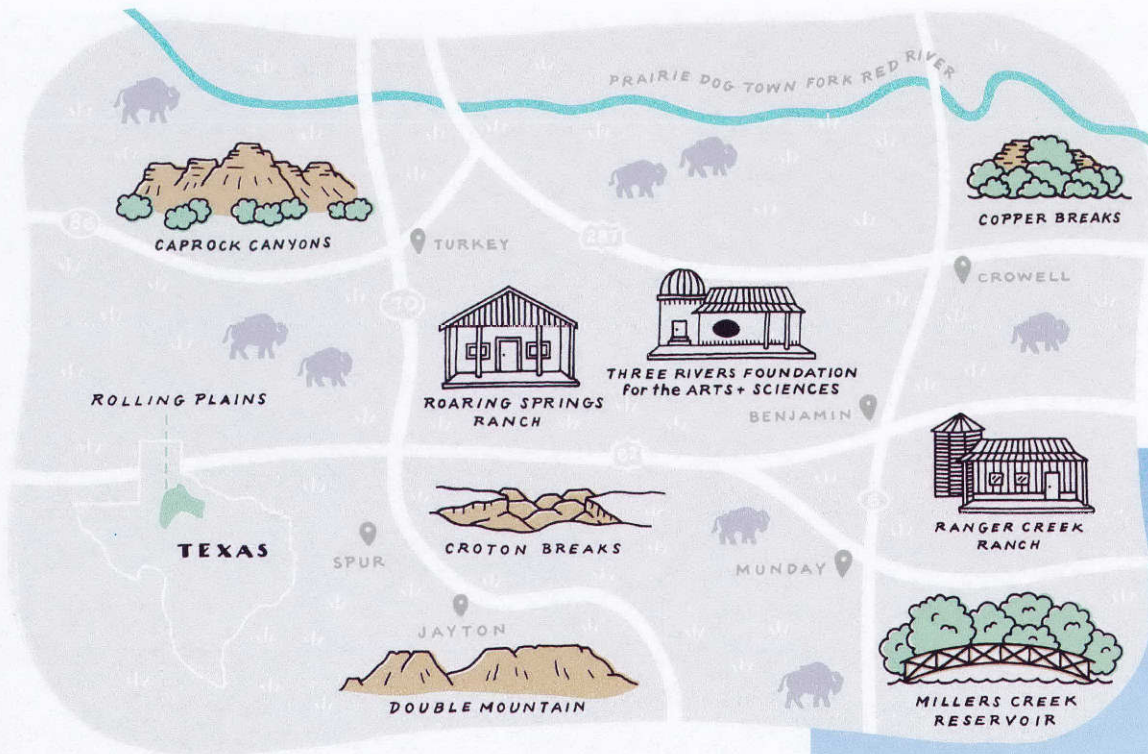
This was the Big Empty. And, boy, was it empty. I sped past red dirt and green fields, rows of cotton and other crops, nary another car on the road. For a person who grew up in the shade of the Piney Woods, I find few sights quite as thrilling as the immense views of the West. Overhead, the sun shone brightly, but the highway led into the path of a silvery storm cloud that billowed above the horizon. From the solitary cloud, four or

IT FELT ALMOST LUXURIOUS  
TO ROLL THE WINDOWS DOWN,  
SMELL THE SWEET GRASS,  
AND LISTEN TO NOTHING  
BUT THE CRUNCH OF GRAVEL,  
THE HUM OF CICADAS, AND  
THE OCCASIONAL RUMBLE  
OVER CATTLE GUARDS.



**Opening spread: Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway lies along the western edge of the Llano Estacado; This spread: A cowboy rides across the open prairie 3 miles west of Benjamin; founders of the town of Matador named it after the Matador Ranch.**

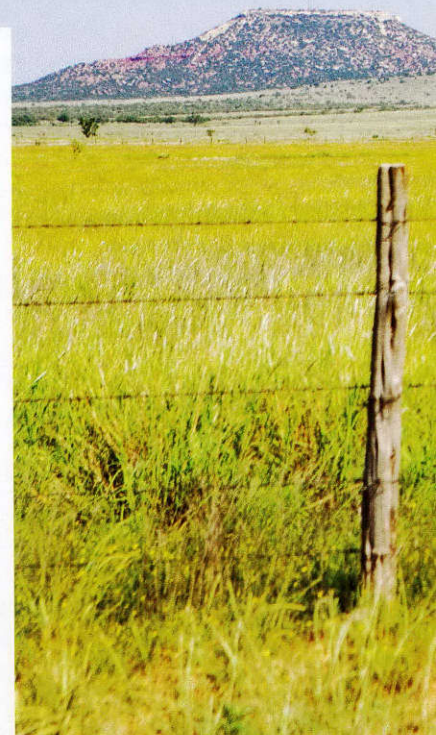




five sheets of rain fell on the grassland. The first drops hit my windshield a half-hour later. Within minutes, I'd passed right through.

Long-abandoned barns and farmhouses dotted the prairie, as did the remains of tiny ghost towns where farmers once congregated to do business, attend church, and send their children to school. They reminded me of a conversation with Underwood before my trip. I had reached out to him because he recently completed a master's thesis at the University of North Texas on the Big Empty. A native of O'Brien, population 102, where his father was the six-man football coach, Underwood says the region's population has fallen every decade since 1930. Elsewhere, Texas is growing fast, but the populations of some of the Big Empty's 10 or so counties have shriveled to one quarter the size of their numbers in the heyday of the early- to mid-20th century.

This largely "featureless" region has no buildings taller than two or three stories, according to Underwood. "Rather, its landscapes are by and large testaments to abandonment," he writes in his thesis, going on to describe the "empty storefronts on quiet town squares, overgrown schoolyards made redundant through successive consolidations, tumbledown empty farmhouses melting into the red clay." When the area's high school seniors receive their diplomas, he adds, "most of them keep marching out of town to look for opportunity elsewhere."





**Double Mountain, elevation approximately 2,500 feet, lies 13 miles southwest of Aspermont in Stonewall County; Bob Wills' tour bus at his namesake museum in Turkey.**

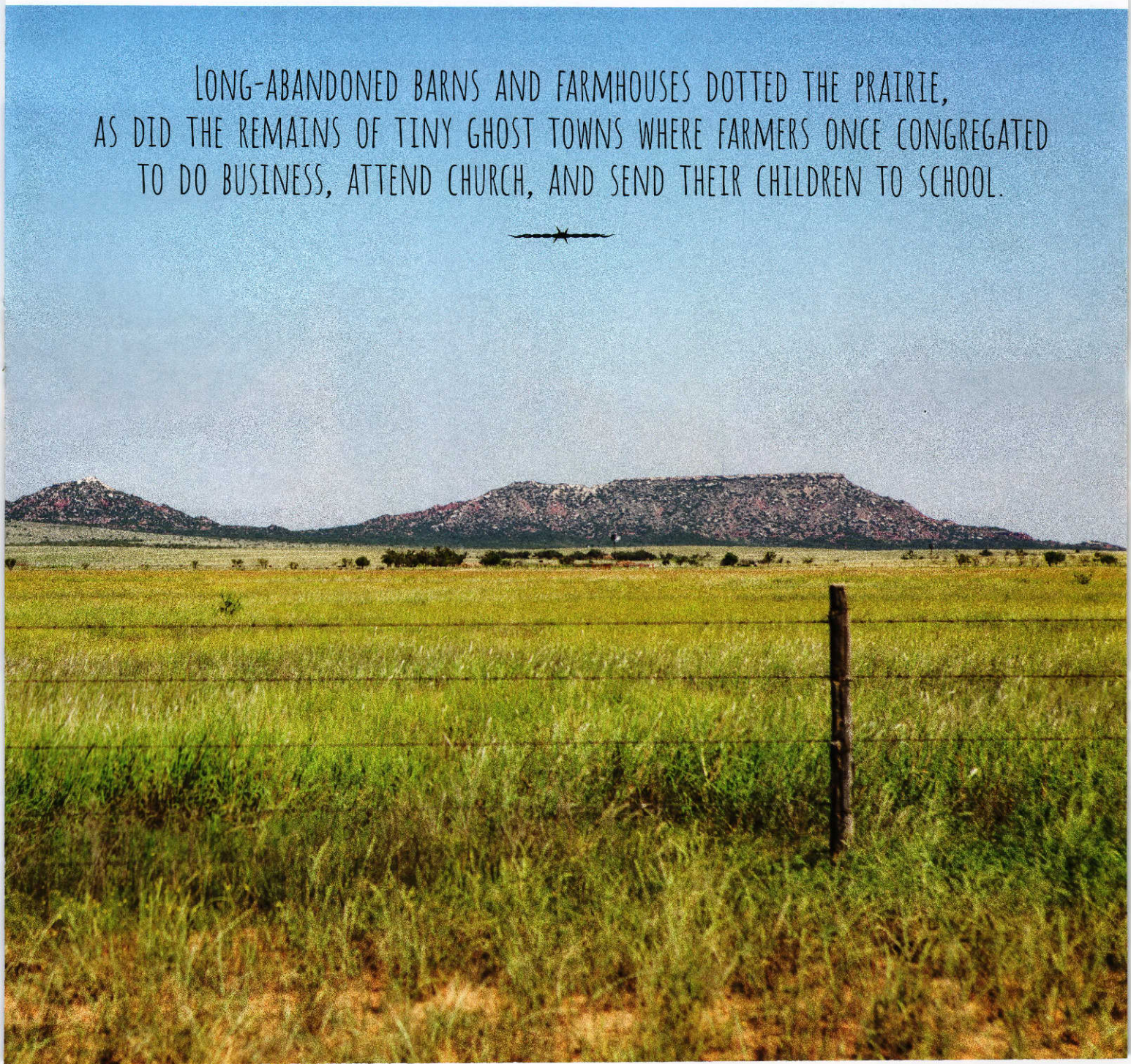
Underwood has moved away from the Big Empty as well, but he is still sorting through the odd feeling of being from a place he believes to be dying.

My first afternoon in the Big Empty, I drove down the quiet highway toward the town of Goree—formerly 640 people, now 208—when a stately brick church caught my eye. Its steeple sprouted out from behind hugely overgrown shrubs. St. John Catholic Church, I later learned, was established in 1908

and served the once-bustling Bomarton community. From 598 residents shortly before World War II, the population plummeted to 15 at the turn of the millennium. In 2010, the U.S. Census didn't even register Bomarton as a place.

Overgrown shrubbery all but obscured the front doors of the church. A handwritten sign nailed to the door read: "This was a house of God and still is." Another note posted to a support beam just

LONG-ABANDONED BARNs AND FARMHOUSES DOTTED THE PRAIRIE,  
AS DID THE REMAINS OF TINY GHOST TOWNS WHERE FARMERS ONCE CONGREGATED  
TO DO BUSINESS, ATTEND CHURCH, AND SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL.





inside the empty cathedral seconded the point: "Not Abandoned."

Moving on to Munday, which at 1,324 people is one of the area's more sizeable towns, I checked into the American Star Inn, managed by Cindy Patchett. Her husband previously lived in Munday, and the two moved back while their children attended school. "At first the kids hated it," she said. "Now they won't leave. They're raising their own children here."

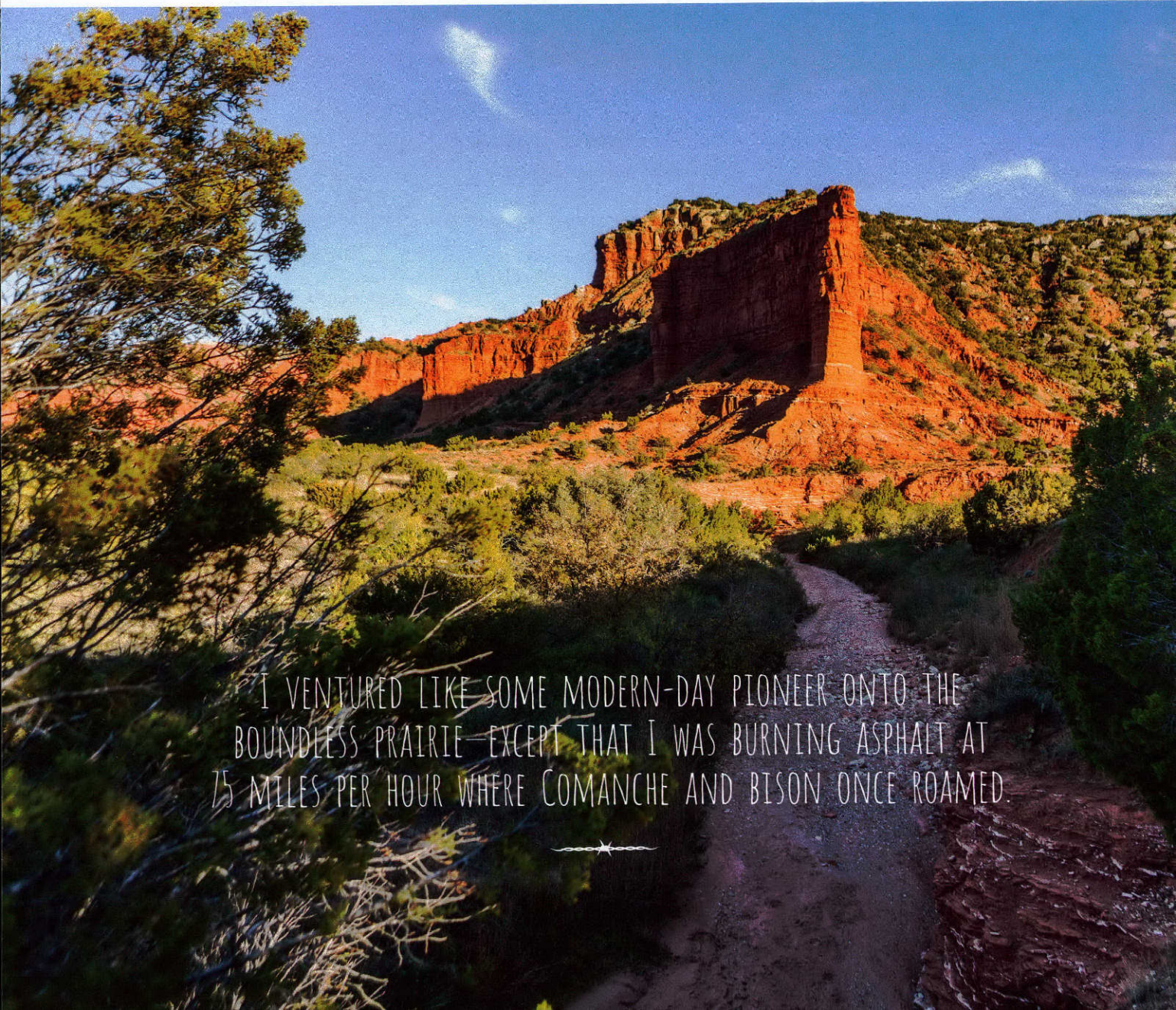
And what is there to see and do around here? "The lake," she answered. "And... the lake."

That weekend, some of her guests had caught a mess of catfish from nearby Millers Creek

Reservoir. I hadn't brought my fishing pole, but I did have a pair of swim trunks. About 16 miles east of town, past white rows of enormous wind turbines, the 2,212-acre lake is accessible by a maze of dirt roads through mesquite thickets that lead to free campsites along the bank.

Nobody seemed to be at the reservoir, except for two brothers-in-law named Daniel and Simon who tended a grill while their wives and a son played in the water. They offered me a sausage wrap and a grilled pork chop. Between their broken English and my broken Spanish, I learned Daniel works in the oilfield and Simon is a cotton farmer.

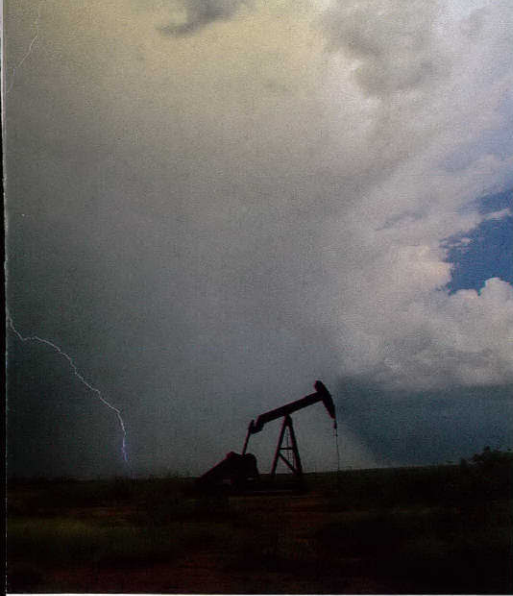
**Right: A lightning storm in King County, off US 82; Below: Visitors to Caprock Canyons may spy members of the Official Texas State Bison Herd.**



I VENTURED LIKE SOME MODERN-DAY PIONEER ONTO THE BOUNDLESS PRAIRIE—EXCEPT THAT I WAS BURNING ASPHALT AT 75 MILES PER HOUR WHERE COMANCHE AND BISON ONCE ROAMED.







A breeze rippled across the blue lake. Overhead, armadas of stratocumulus marched past swirls of cirrus. The reservoir had only recently filled to capacity after the most recent drought. “Two years ago, the lake was dry,” Simon said. “The water was just 1 foot deep.”

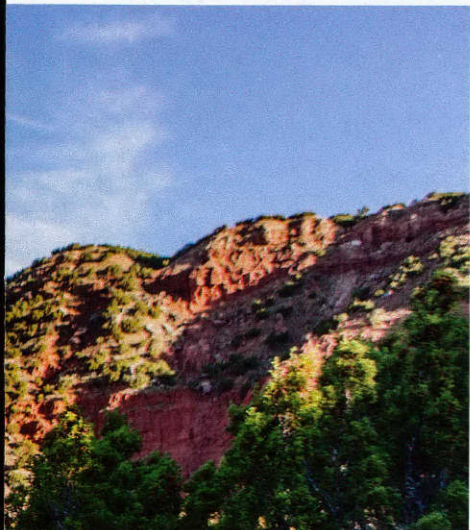
Sleek, black cows lowed from a safe distance as I eased into the bracingly cool water. Floating on my back, I couldn’t tell which drifted faster: the clouds or me. Later, as the sun set, strobos of lightning burst far beyond the lake’s eastern shore.

In the morning, I would begin my search for a dead man.



THE LATE AUTHOR AND TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY professor Jim Corder came up with the name for the Big Empty. A genre-defying scholar of postmodern rhetoric, Corder first used the term in print in his memoir *Lost in West Texas*, published in 1988 when he was 59. Corder grew up in Jayton, an hour’s drive west of Munday and 90 miles east of Lubbock. “The territory I love out there is not much chronicled,” he writes in *Lost in West Texas*, going on to lovingly describe geographic features of the Big Empty like Double Mountain, “blue above the broken plains surrounding them,” and the Croton Breaks, a “great empty space” of rugged badlands eroded into sharp washes. “The earth opens itself up in layers there,” he writes, “and each rock that falls after an age’s pushing from the side of a gully reveals another surprise.”

As I drove past Double Mountain, its humps seemed less blue than red and green, blotched white by gypsum, a salty mineral common to the region. To my frustration, I couldn’t catch a glimpse of the Croton Breaks from the flat prairie highway connecting Jayton and Spur. However, my map revealed







“THE EARTH OPENS  
ITSELF UP IN LAYERS  
THERE,” HE WRITES,  
“AND EACH ROCK  
THAT FALLS AFTER AN  
AGE’S PUSHING FROM  
THE SIDE OF A GULLY  
REVEALS ANOTHER  
SURPRISE.”



evidence of the breaks via a network of riotously squiggly roads immediately to the east.

The map’s little county roads seemed to pass a series of canyons with evocative names like Dark and Getaway. I had a full tank of gas, and nobody was waiting for me. Why not turn off the main highway and get lost for a while? Life is normally so busy. It felt almost luxurious to roll the windows down, smell the sweet grass, and listen to nothing but the crunch of gravel, the hum of cicadas, and the occasional rumble over cattle guards. A particularly high overlook revealed miles of rugged landscape where red canyons gashed the low green hills. The road dropped dramatically into country so eroded that it rivaled the desert floors of the Big Bend, practically halfway across Texas, for its rough beauty.

The path rose and fell as it looped around sharp turns through gullies and washes. I could have spent the day exploring these backroads, but they eventually became too rough for my crossover SUV, and so I turned around. Once when Corder was asked where he hoped to end up when he died, he responded that he would just as soon go to the Croton Breaks. As I drove out of the badlands, Corder’s wish seemed to make sense.

For those who prefer travel on pavement, you can also glimpse the Croton Breaks from the freeway just east of Dickens. The town is a half-hour’s drive north of Jayton and 20 miles south of the Roaring Springs Ranch Club, once a favorite camping spot of the Comanche. Now a private, member-owned club, Roaring Springs allows members to camp, fish, ride ATVs, and cool off where a spring-fed waterfall supplies a gloriously chilly, 3-acre swimming pool.

Continuing north through quiet country from Roaring Springs, I came to the town of Matador, named for the legendary ranch. Here, three sisters have reopened a 1914-era hotel called the Hotel Matador. “When we got it, the place was junked,” says



**Clockwise from left: Croton Breaks' badlands topography encompasses 250 square miles below the escarpment of the Llano Estacado; the Dairy Bar in Crowell serves up old-fashioned burgers; Copper Breaks State Park covers nearly 1,900 acres in Hardeman County, 9 miles north of Crowell.**



Linda Roy, the sibling on duty the week I stopped by. "There wasn't even a roof." Roy and her sisters beautifully restored and elegantly furnished the brick building. The Texas lawmen-themed guest room tempted me but sunset was still a few hours away, so I drove 45 miles to Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway.

That night, the Caprock's dramatic bluffs glowed red as the sun fell behind them. In the morning, the park's herd of shaggy American bison frolicked, snorted, and head-butted one another in the cool air as it blew across the badlands.

I had come to the western edge of the Big Empty, at the Caprock Escarpment. Instead of continuing up the scarp and onto the High Plains, I turned back. The road led to the town of Turkey, which is home to not only the historic Hotel Turkey but also an annual festival in April celebrating hometown legend Bob Wills, complete with live Western Swing music and lawnmower races.



FARTHER EAST, DURING A STOP AT COPPER BREAKS STATE PARK the next morning, longtime interpretive ranger Carl Hopper encouraged me to keep an eye out for the park's name-sake mineral. "The park is plumb full of copper," he says. Sure







“WEST TEXAS SUNSETS ARE GORGEOUS,” SCOTT SAYS.  
“NOTHING LIKE ’EM. AND YOU CAN ACTUALLY SEE THEM!  
WE DON’T HAVE ALL THE BIG TREES IN THE WAY.”



enough, the greenish patina of oxidized copper seemed to paint many of the loose rocks on a trail overlooking the park lake.

Copper Breaks was the first state park in Texas to earn an international dark sky rating, Hopper says, claiming that his night skies are darker than those found at the McDonald Observatory in the Davis Mountains. Taking advantage of the absence of light pollution, the nearby Three Rivers Foundation for the Arts and Sciences offers star parties once a month at its Comanche Springs Astronomy Campus west of Crowell.

After hiking the Copper Breaks trail, I had worked up an appetite. Because so few people live in the Big Empty, restaurant options are limited. Luckily, I came across the Dairy Bar in Crowell. Jeff Christopher and his wife, Karen Christopher, have

owned the unassuming roadside joint for 17 years. While they have no idea how old it is, they do know it was moved to its current location in the early 1960s. The Dairy Bar’s burger hit the spot. “They aren’t healthy,” Jeff says. “A good, old-fashioned greasy burger is what I do.”

The following morning, in the Vera community 40 miles southeast of Crowell, Ranell Scott and I loaded into her white pickup truck and drove across land that has been in her family for more than 100 years. Scott runs Ranger Creek Ranch, a cattle operation and hunting lodge with several guest houses.

When Scott stopped to open a metal gate, two jackrabbits fell in with a muster of turkeys and bounded across an open field. A family of wild hogs rooted nearby. Quail waddled in front of Scott’s truck, and roadrunners sprinted among the

**Clockwise from left: Mammatus clouds reflect the setting sun after a storm passes over Knox County; a wild boar crosses the highway west of Benjamin; the Roaring Springs Ranch Club offers members a place to camp and swim.**





mesquite. The ranch is also on the migration path of Monarch butterflies, she says.

As Scott drove, it became apparent that we had reached the edge of a small plateau. Rolling ranchland spread for miles and miles. Scott pointed out the property line she shares with the approximately 535,000-acre Waggoner Ranch, the largest ranch under one fence in Texas. The view would have been majestic right before twilight.

“West Texas sunsets are gorgeous,” Scott says. “Nothing like ‘em. And you can actually see them! We don’t have all the big trees in the way as in other parts of Texas.”

The Big Empty seemed anything but empty. So why do so few people know about it?

Wyman Meinzer has an idea. Raised a cowboy on a Big Empty ranch, he spent a few years trapping furs in the area and is now the official photographer of the state of Texas. He has taken photographs throughout the state, but his primary subject—his life’s work—is documenting the Big Empty. He captures images of cowboys and critters, scalded river breaks, and endless sunrises.

“This is a land that you have to become a participant in,” he says. “It’s not going to jump up and hit you in the face. You have to become part of it. You have to stop, look and see, and imagine.”

Fifty miles southwest of Meinzer’s home in Benjamin, Double Mountain rises from the broken prairie.

On cold and still mornings, Meinzer says he can see the Doubles in the distance. Side by side, they seem to float in the sky. And there’s a road, little traveled, leading toward them.

*For visitor information, call Caprock Canyons State Park at 806-455-1492; and Copper Breaks State Park at 940-839-4331. For reservations, call American Star Inn at 940-422-5542; Roaring Springs Ranch Club at 806-348-7292; and Hotel Matador at 806-347-2939. 🐾*



**Kilgore native Wes Ferguson is author of *The Blanco River* and *Running the River: Secrets of the Sabine*.**





A wooded trail at Fort Boggy State Park



# Get Campy

*Find fall bliss at these East Texas state parks*

*Story and photographs by* LAURENCE PARENT



D

espite my job as a Texas photographer and writer, I hadn't visited many of East Texas' state parks in years. Last year, when University of Texas Press asked me to revise my 2008 guidebook, *Official Guide to Texas State Parks and Historic Sites*, I seized my opportunity and hit the road. The experience was a bit like renewing old friendships; I not only saw things I remembered from previous visits, but I also found new surprises. Here are some highlights from my East Texas favorites.



The Civilian Conservation Corps built this stone-and-timber pavilion at Caddo Lake State Park during the Great Depression.





## Caddo Lake

STATE PARK

For good reason, scenic Caddo Lake is one of the state's most popular parks. The shallow waters of the only significant natural lake in Texas foster the growth of a primeval thicket of bald cypress trees. Narrow channels wind through groves of the trees. Spanish moss dripping from the branches lends a spooky air to the lake. The large lake was originally formed by a massive log jam on the Red River in Louisiana; its water level was first stabilized with a manmade dam in 1914. The Army Corps of Engineers completed the lake's current dam in 1971. The habitat contains more than 70 species of fish, with largemouth bass, crappie, catfish, white bass, and chain pickerel being the most popular with anglers.

The park faces Saw Mill Pond, a mysterious-looking arm of Big Cypress Bayou at the upper end of the lake. In the 1800s steamboats once followed the bayou upstream from the lake to the bustling port of Jefferson. Canoe rentals at Saw Mill Pond allow anyone to paddle the lake's shallow waters. If you paddle out onto the bayou and into the main part of the lake, watch your way carefully with maps and GPS units. It's not hard to get lost in the many winding channels. If you are inexperienced and want to venture far out onto the lake, consider hiring a guide.

The lake is the park's most popular feature, but after you claim one of the three lakefront campsites or many woodland campsites and paddle around, be sure to hike the park's network of hilly woodland trails. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built the park's rental cabins during the Great Depression and also constructed a stone-and-timber pavilion hidden away in the forest. But if you want to see it, you're going to have to hike a bit and look for it. Afterward, relax at your campsite and listen to the crickets and owls as night falls.

## Cooper Lake

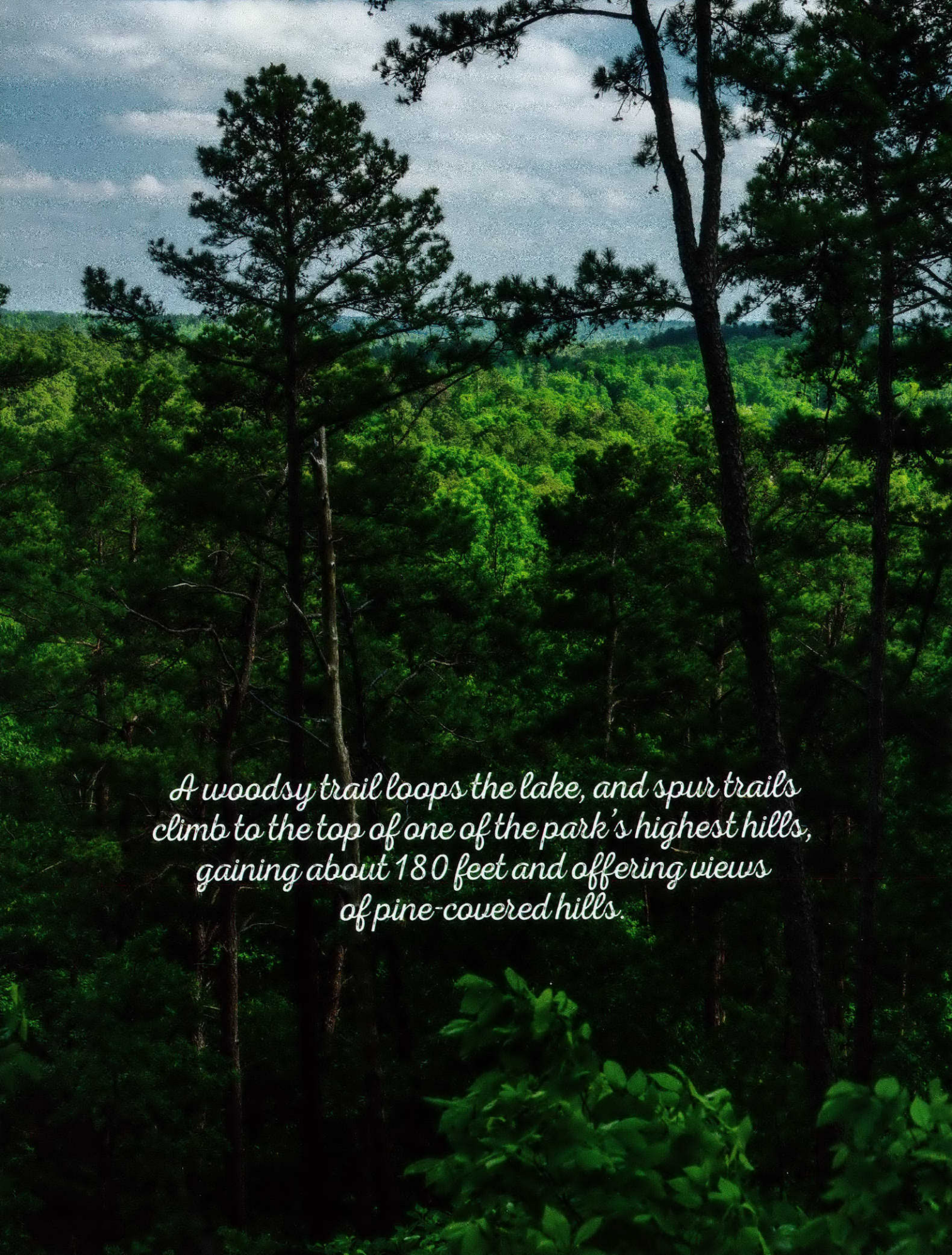
STATE PARK

Like I do in all of Texas' lake parks, I expected good fishing piers, picnic areas, swimming, camping, and boating at Cooper Lake. However, on my recent visit I found even more at the hilly South Sulphur Unit, on the south side of the lake. The south unit offers more than 100 campsites with walk-in tent sites, screened shelters, equestrian sites, and standard RV sites with water and electric hookups. All have shady, widely spaced areas in lush woodland. For those who don't want to rough it, the south unit offers 14 wooden, metal-roofed rental cabins perched on a bluff above the lake. Decks jut out over the water, offering perfect sunrise or sunset views.

After claiming my campsite, I walked the well-maintained Coyote Run hike-and-bike trail through lush bottomland and over low hills. I wandered the shoreline and photographed some distinctive rock formations. The smoothly rounded rocks looked like the backs of hippos buried in mud.

Anglers at Cooper Lake State Park—just 90 minutes northeast of Dallas—might catch catfish, crappie, and striped or largemouth bass.





*A woodsy trail loops the lake, and spur trails climb to the top of one of the park's highest hills, gaining about 180 feet and offering views of pine-covered hills.*





## Daingerfield STATE PARK

The CCC built Daingerfield during the Great Depression. The park is centered around an 80-acre lake tucked into a hilly area of northeast Texas. The forest hasn't been logged for at least 80 years, so some of the loblolly pines, oaks, and other trees shading the park's four campgrounds reach as high as 100 feet. A woody trail loops the lake, and spur trails climb to the top of one of the park's highest peaks, gaining about 180 feet and offering views of pine-covered hills. If boating is your thing, rent a canoe, kayak, paddleboat, or paddleboard by the CCC pavilion.

The park is known as one of the best areas in Texas to view fall color in November. People come every year to see

sweetgums, maples, and other trees in their autumn finery.

## Fort Boggy STATE PARK

Even though it lies close to Interstate 45, Fort Boggy's 1,800 acres comprises one of the state park system's hidden gems. A quiet 15-acre lake fringed with oaks and other trees offers fishing, swimming, and no-wake boating. Hikers and mountain bikers can explore the park's 3.5-mile network of trails. Although Fort Boggy doesn't have a formal drive-in campground for tents and RVs, it does offer five very secluded hike-in tent sites for visitors willing to carry gear a short distance. If you want quiet camping, Fort Boggy delivers.

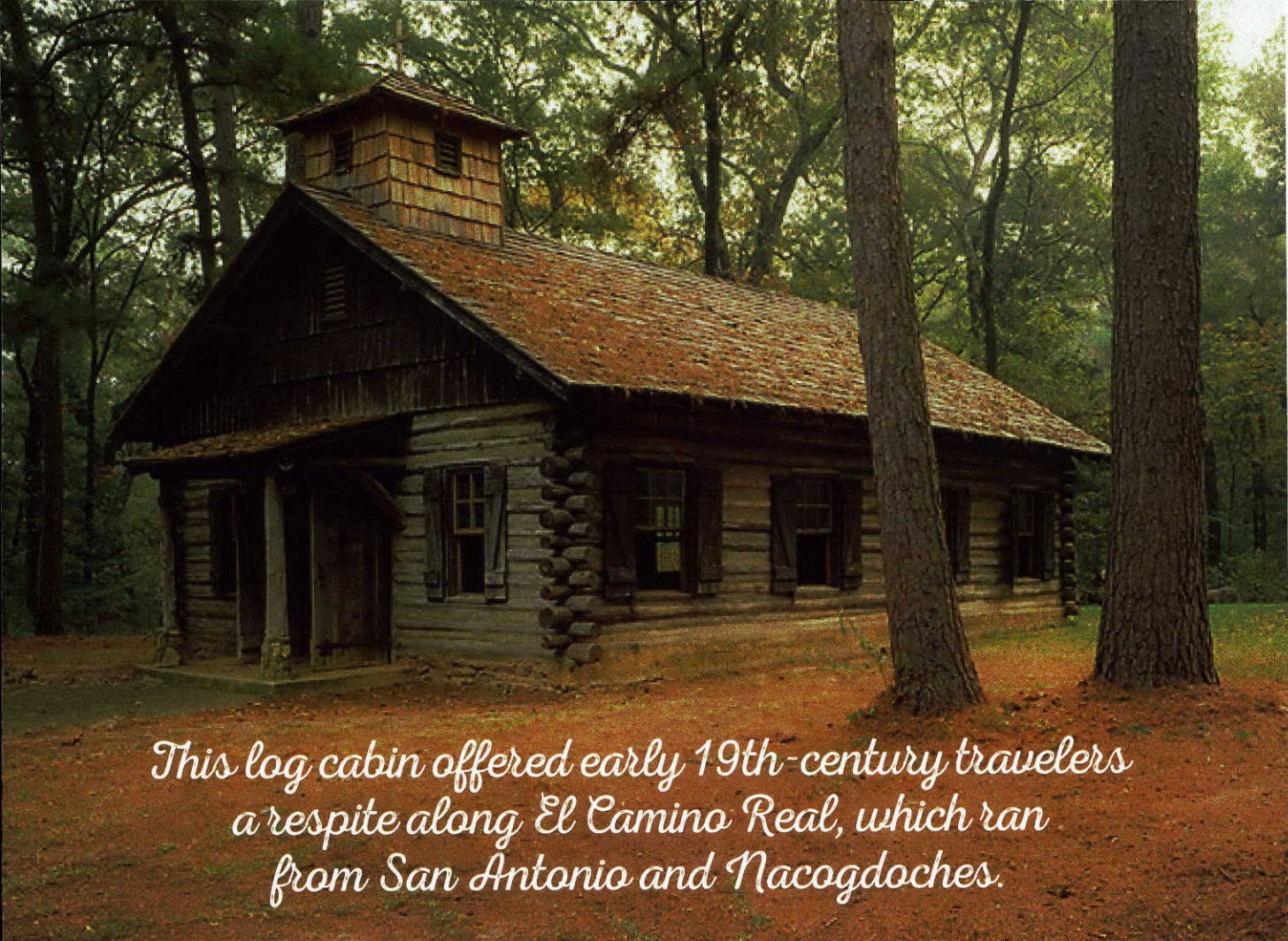
For visitors who want to enjoy the park overnight but aren't prepared to hike to a campsite, three new wooden cabins are available for rent. They have air conditioning, a minifridge, and a microwave (but you'll need to bring your own linens and share a nearby bathroom). Each one has a large, partly screened porch with plenty of comfortable deck furniture. After hiking, boating, or fishing, you can put your feet up in your own private cabin tucked away in the woods.

## Martin Dies, Jr. STATE PARK

Martin Dies, Jr. State Park occupies low-lying peninsulas and islands on the shore of B.A. Steinhagen Lake,

Daingerfield State Park (left) and Tyler State Park (above) both offer a combination of wooded trails and watersports, plus fall color that's usually spectacular in November.





*This log cabin offered early 19th-century travelers a respite along El Camino Real, which ran from San Antonio and Nacogdoches.*

which is fed by the Neches and Angelina rivers. The lake was created by a dam completed in 1953 by the Army Corps of Engineers. The park offers kayak and canoe rentals, and paddlers have numerous route options, from cypress-fringed shady sloughs tucked between campgrounds to open shoreline. Boaters equipped with a map and GPS unit can paddle into a maze of channels where the Neches River empties into the lake. For those who want to keep their feet dry, about 8 miles of hiking trails traverse the deep woodland and lakeshore. And for people who just want to take in the scenery, the park offers more than 200 campsites and screened shelters shaded by towering loblolly pines, magnolias, oaks, and other trees on the lakeshore or backwater sloughs. Most offer water and electrical hookups, and many have a great sunset view.

## Mission Tejas

STATE PARK

Mission Tejas, a sleepy spot tucked away deep in the Piney Woods, honors a nearby site where Spain attempted to maintain its territorial claims in East Texas. In 1690, in an effort to limit French incursions and to convert native tribes to Christianity, Captain Alonso de León led an expedition to establish the first mission in the province of Texas near the Neches River. Smallpox, drought, and cultural clashes led to the mission's abandonment only four years later. The mission was re-established and abandoned two more times in the following years. By 1730, the Spanish had abandoned the mission for good.

In 1934, the CCC built the park, including a chapel to commemorate the Spaniards' missionary efforts. The park's 1828 Rice Family Log Home is one of the oldest buildings in the area. The log cabin—originally built 16 miles away—offered early 19th-century travelers food and lodging on El Camino Real, which ran from San Antonio to Nacogdoches. In 1973, the log cabin was donated to the park and moved to its current site. Visitors can tour the two historic structures, camp in the small campground tucked away in a shady hollow, and walk several miles of trails. Highlights of the trails include a pond and the hilltop site of an old fire lookout tower.

Mission Tejas State Park (above) commemorates Spain's 17th-century attempt to maintain its territory in East Texas; Village Creek (right) is best-known for its paddling trails.



## Tyler

STATE PARK

Unlike quiet Mission Tejas, Tyler State Park—a retreat also created by the CCC—bustles year-round, especially in the fall when the park's sweetgums and maples change color. Heavily wooded hills encircle a 64-acre lake, and multiple campgrounds are tucked away in the park's deep forest.

The park rents kayaks, canoes, and other boats; and swimmers can enjoy the water when the weather is warm. More than 13 miles of hiking and mountain-biking trails wind through the woods and along the lakeshore. Don't miss the Lakeshore Trail with its fishing piers and water views. At the upper end of the lake on the southeast side, beavers have been hard at work building dams that sometimes flood the trail. The three-quarter-mile Whispering

Pines Nature Trail features a children's wading pool and a 4-foot waterfall both fed by a spring.

## Village Creek

STATE PARK

Lush Village Creek State Park lies on the southeastern edge of the Big Thicket, a once-vast wild area of East Texas known for its multitude of habitats. The terrain ranges from sandy hills with prickly pear cactus and pine trees to swampy cypress-tupelo sloughs. The park offers 25 RV campsites with partial hookups and 16 walk-in tent sites, plus a rental cabin.

The intrepid can rent a canoe from nearby outfitters, paddle down Village Creek on the 21-mile canoe trail, and primitive-camp on sandbars with the clear, tea-colored creek waters lulling weary travelers to sleep. The canoe trail offers multiple access points allowing trips of a few hours to two or three days. The lowland creek doesn't have rapids, but its tannin-stained, flat water moves steadily, making travel easy. Although the park is best known for its paddling opportunities, it also has 8 miles of hiking and mountain-biking trails that wind through dry sandylands and along swampy sloughs. There's also a nice sandy swimming beach on the banks of Village Creek downstream from the main part of the park.

Much of the park was damaged by flooding from Hurricane Harvey, so it may be several months before the park's facilities are fully restored. 🐼

*Wimberley-based writer and photographer Laurence Parent lives to hit the open road in search of Texas' natural wonders. He specializes in landscape, travel, and nature photography.*

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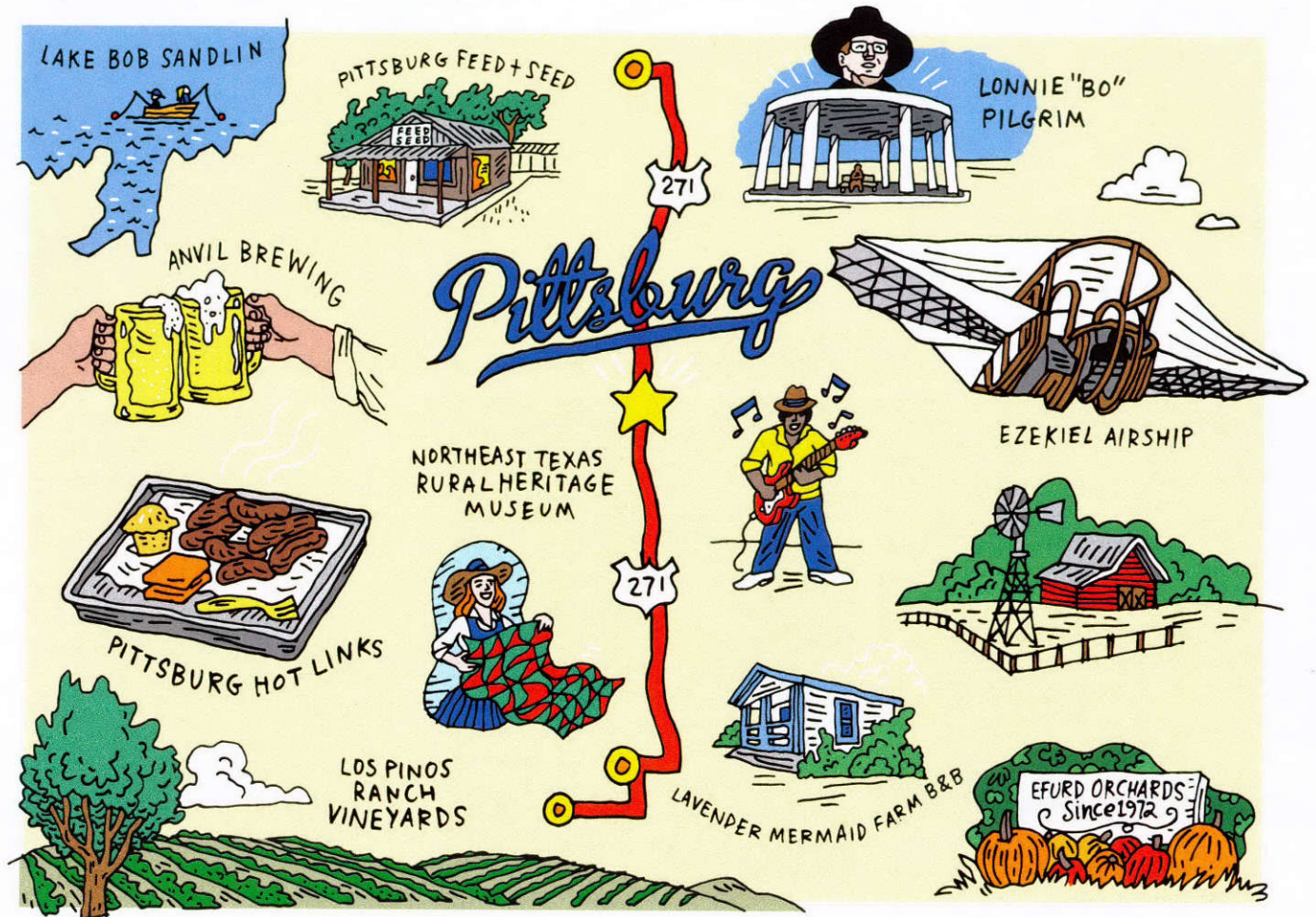
Convention & Visitors Bureau

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# HIT THE ROAD

CAN'T-MISS GETAWAYS



→ DESTINATION: PITTSBURG ←

## Flights of Fancy

Award-winning wines and historic yarns in Pittsburg

story by **Wes Ferguson**

**I**N PITTSBURG, THE HOT LINKS ARE PLUMP, mermaids abound far from the sea, and a Baptist preacher invented a flying contraption that got off the ground a full year before the Wright Brothers made their famous first flight.

Surrounded by lush green forests and calm blue lakes, the town of 4,700 about two hours east of Dallas is probably best known as the hometown of poultry mogul Lonnie "Bo" Pilgrim, who died in July at the age of 89. But visitors to Pittsburg find much more than chicken when they venture into The Depot at the Northeast Texas Rural Heritage Museum, where a replica of a historic winged machine



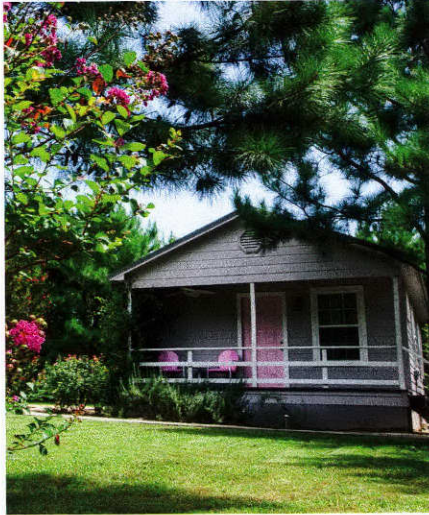
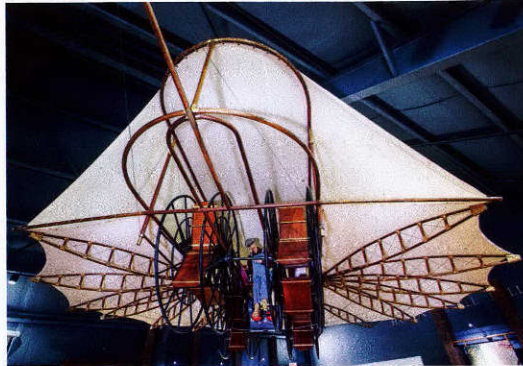
- ▷ **Tyler**  
1 hour
- ▷ **Dallas**  
2 hours
- ▷ **Houston**  
4.5 hours
- ▷ **Austin**  
5 hours

is suspended from the ceiling as if frozen in midair.

The anachronistic aircraft is called the Ezekiel Airship. Did it ever fly? Folks in Pittsburg say it did.

The Rev. Burrell Cannon hatched the idea for the airship around the turn of the 20th century while reading the biblical book of Ezekiel, which describes the prophet's journey on a flying machine that utilized a "wheel within a wheel." An inventor, sawmill operator, and Baptist minister, Cannon interpreted this as wheels of different sizes. As his imagination whirred, Cannon conceived of an internal motor that would turn a crankshaft, controlling fans to propel the aircraft.





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:**  
Bo Pilgrim statue, Ezekiel Airship,  
Los Pinos Ranch Vineyards,  
downtown Pittsburg, Pittsburg Hot Link  
Restaurant, Lavender Mermaid Farm  
Bed and Breakfast, Efurd Orchards.

In August 1901, a reporter from *The Dallas Morning News* found Cannon and a “corps of expert mechanics busily working on this wonderful invention” in Pittsburg. On a Sunday morning in late summer or fall 1902, Cannon’s employees finally rolled the airship to a field near the railroad tracks downtown to try it out. “Rev. Cannon wasn’t even there,” said Vernon Holcomb, a Depot museum volunteer. “He was apparently in church preaching.”

Witnesses claimed the airship soared 12 to 15 feet high before it malfunctioned. Children watched from a nearby fence as the machine careened toward them. “When it got in the air it started shaking, vibrating, and the kids had to scramble,” Holcomb said. The airship is believed to have traveled a distance of about 160 feet. “We don’t think it was a controlled flight, but it was definitely airborne,” he said. “It got off the ground one way or another.”

In 1904 Cannon loaded the airship

onto a railroad flatcar to transport it to the St. Louis World’s Fair, the site of the first “Airship Contest.” The contest winner would be awarded a \$100,000 grand prize for “aeronautical achievement considerably beyond anything yet attained!”

Cannon never made it to St. Louis. Near Texarkana, a storm blew the Ezekiel Airship off the train, destroying the flying machine.

Today, a historical marker identifies the field where the airship is said to have briefly taken flight. The site is practically next door to the home of Pittsburg’s other historic invention, the East Texas-style hot link. The stubby little “grease bombs” were first sold here in 1897. The last time I was in town, in June, a couple of buddies and I pulled up bench seats around a wooden, horseshoe-shaped table in the Pittsburg Hot Link Restaurant and wolfed ours down with crackers

and Pittsburg Hot Sauce, which is also made in the restaurant and is known to friends and family as “Mean Gene” sauce after previous owner Gene Warrick.

“They’re old-world and hand-tied,” said co-owner Sabin Warrick, Mean Gene’s son. “You see the links, you know they’re unique to us.”

Some folks even call them “East Texas Caviar.” The restaurant also serves classic breakfast items like pancakes and omelets, in addition to burgers, sandwiches, and plate lunches.

After lunch, the Paccard bells from Pittsburg’s 75-foot-tall Prayer Tower chimed a pretty song as we walked past the biggest Coca-Cola mural in Texas, just around the corner from Anvil Brewing. The brand-new brewpub and dancehall revived the historic Pittsburg Feed & Seed, where Pilgrim launched his business in 1946. The feed store had been vacant since 1961, but new owners Byron and Kristin Aldredge rehabilitated the aluminum building and reopened it for business on Fridays and Saturdays, offering craft beer, live music, and pizza.

Walking Pittsburg’s downtown streets, we then made our way to The Farmstead, also part of the Northeast Texas Rural Heritage Museum. The





fully restored farm features a general store and farmhouse containing many original furnishings, as well as an old well, outhouse, smokehouse, and barn, revealing how the region's rural ancestors lived during the time Cannon constructed his airship. Shortly before our arrival, an unwanted guest had also made an appearance. "We had a nest full of eggs, and a chicken snake got 'em—all but one," volunteer guide Joanne Bates informed us.

That afternoon we drove south down a narrow country road that tunneled through tall pines and hardwoods, suddenly opening into a beautiful clearing where grapes grow in the East Texas sun. When Los Pinos Ranch Vineyards opened about 15 years ago, the winery and vineyard raised a few eyebrows in the traditional community, says Gerald Jones, a managing partner. "People would come hide and say, 'Don't tell anybody I was here!'" he chuckled.

Inside the winery, which produces upwards of 10,000 cases a year,

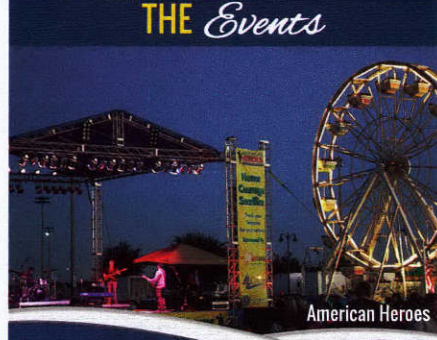
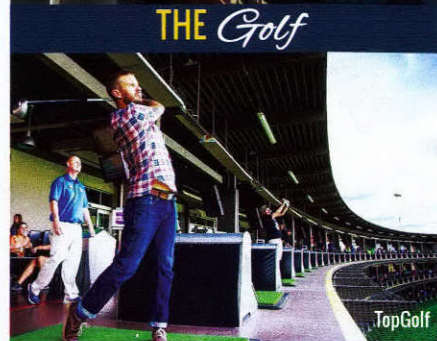
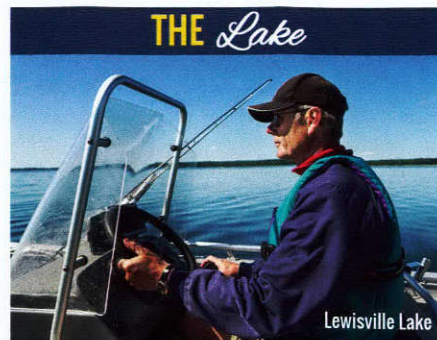
winemaker Arnulfo Perez led us past the wooden cask-lined walls of the barrel room and into a production room where wine was fermenting in huge metal tanks. On a windowsill of Perez's laboratory office, where he samples and blends Los Pinos' varieties of sweet and dry wines, I noticed a pile of trophy buckles. Each was more shiny and ornate than the last.

**The anachronistic aircraft is called the Ezekiel Airship. Did it ever fly? Folks in Pittsburg say it did.**

"You guys are going to think I'm crazy, but look at this," Perez said. He grabbed a couple of cardboard boxes and showed us dozens of ribbons and medals garnered for his award-winning wines. We raised our glasses to toast his achievements. The winery offers private tastings by appointment, which includes a tour of the production facilities and ends with a pairing of wines and light hors d'oeuvres in Los Pinos' Barrel Room.

That evening we sat on Los Pinos' wooden deck overlooking the vineyard rows, feasting and passing around bottles of floral whites and bold reds. Eventually a bright, full moon illuminated our path toward the cozy cottages we had rented at the Lavender Mermaid Farm Bed and Breakfast around the corner.

The next morning, B&B owner Michelle Smith had left a metal pail



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### PITTSBURG

For Pittsburg visitor information, call the Pittsburg-Camp County Chamber of Commerce at

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pittsburgchamber.com.

larded with tasty breakfast treats just outside my cottage door. I sat in the cool shade, facing a lovely stand of young pine trees, and listened to birdsong that was disturbed only once by the distant horn of a passing train. Curious about the cottages' mermaid-and-flower theme, I asked Smith about it when she stopped by to chat. She explained that she and her partner, Tanya Byrd, had previously owned a lake house filled with mermaid tchotchkes and decor, providing a convenient and catchy theme for their five landlocked cottages.

Before long, we made our way down the road to Efurd Orchards, a bustling produce stand and market surrounded by rows of bushy trees bearing locally famous Pittsburg peaches. Greg Efurd, who owns the orchard with his wife, Amy Efurd, said his parents opened the stand in 1972. "It was this little-bitty dirt-floor shed," he said. "It kept growing, and we kept planting peach trees."

Peaches grown in the sandy soil around Pittsburg just taste a little sweeter, he added. "I don't know how many we sell. It's a bunch though."

Over the years, the Efurds have expanded their offerings to include jams and jellies, gifts and—a crowd favorite—soft-serve ice cream in a range of flavors such as fresh peach and blackberry. Tourists come for a peck of peaches and end up lingering in the rocking chairs or beside the duck pond, or they marvel at the antique farm equipment suspended from the rafters.

"We've got all this junk hanging from the ceilings," Greg said. "A lot of people reminisce and say, 'Man, I used to have that when I was a kid.' It's just good for parents bringing their kids out here to have a feel for an old farmers market, the way it used to be a long time ago." 🐾



# TRUE TV

REAL TEXAS STORIES BORN AND BRED

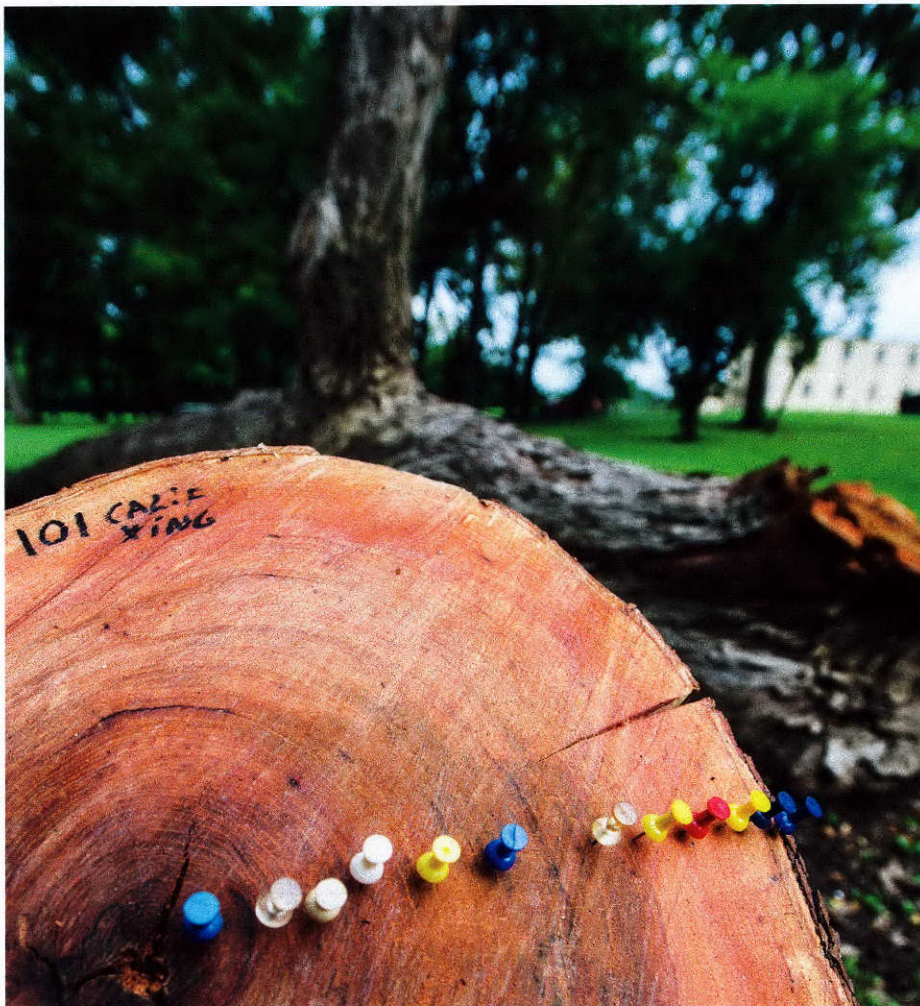
## If These Trees Could Talk

Studying the Comanche  
marker trees of Texas

story by **Laura Samuel Meyn**

Arborist Steve Houser examines the California Crossing tree, a pecan with a bent trunk that points to a low-water crossing in Dallas.





**N**O HISTORICAL MARKER INDICATES THAT this particular pecan tree near the grounds of the Texas National Guard Armory in northwest Dallas is special—just the fact that its trunk grows along the ground for about 25 feet before turning upward. Sometimes natural forces, such as ice storms, can bend trees into strange shapes like this. But for this pecan, its shape is no accident.

Steve Houser, a local arborist and founding member of the Texas Historic Tree Coalition, traces his fingers over scars on the tree's trunk, signs indicating humans may have lashed down the trunk with yucca rope some 150 years ago, when it was a flexible sapling. The bent tree, known as the California Crossing marker tree, points to a low-water crossing on the Elm Fork of the Trinity River, offering valuable information to those who would have recognized it as a marker tree.

"The typical settler would go right by," says Houser, chairman of the coalition's Indian Marker Tree Committee. "A Comanche would see it and follow it. Trees told them where to go to."

**Some historians believe Comanches would shape trees to signal directions, leaving scars where they were altered and tied down.**

While the concept of Comanche marker trees is sometimes dismissed as ranch lore, Houser isn't just blowing smoke. He has been studying marker trees for more than 20 years and last year released a book on the topic, *Comanche Marker Trees of Texas*, co-authored with Jimmy W. Arterberry, the Comanche Nation tribal administrator, and Linda Pelon, a Waco anthropologist. The book profiles six Dallas-area trees identified as marker trees, explores their history, and explains the Indian Marker Tree Committee's process of researching and evaluating potential marker trees.

With increased attention, Houser has received tips about hundreds of possible marker trees around Texas. He currently has files on 176 potential marker tree sites, nearly half of which have been ruled out. It's not an easy test to pass.

"A lady sent me a tree with a 90-degree angle. It was only about 12 inches in diameter; I told her it probably was not old enough to be a marker tree," Houser recalls. "She says, 'Okay, I want a second opinion.' So I say, 'Okay. It's pretty ugly, too.' She laughed, but there's no other opinion you can get."

Comanche marker trees in Texas, typically native, long-lived species such as bur oaks or pecans, must be at least 150 years old, dating to the 19th century when Comanches lived and hunted here. Some historians believe Comanches would shape trees to signal directions, leaving scars where they were altered and tied down. Such trees, known as "turning" trees, often have sharp bends in their trunks.

Artifacts like arrowheads found nearby can bolster the case that a tree was a purposeful marker. But it's even more important that the tree marks something that would have been important to Comanches traveling through the area, whether a natural spring, a high signaling point, or a low-water crossing. Trees that aren't bent can also be marker trees for other

Tacks mark the growth rings of a tree limb that broke off the California Crossing tree during a storm. Each tack marks 10 years.





**THE TEXAS HISTORIC TREE COALITION  
INDIAN MARKER TREE COMMITTEE**

accepts tips on possible marker trees. Email photos/inquiries to Steve Houser at [steve.houser@txhtc.org](mailto:steve.houser@txhtc.org), or visit the coalition at [txhtc.org](http://txhtc.org).

purposes, such as a designated meeting place like Austin's Treaty Oak.

Houser helped to form the Texas Historic Tree Coalition after a Dallas hospital offered him a job removing historic oak trees on its grounds. He opted instead to fight to save the trees, and his research led him to the topic of Indian marker trees. Houser says it can be tricky to figure out the purpose of potential marker trees more than a century after westward expansion displaced the Comanches from their former territory. "I start with early trail maps, spring maps, topographical maps," he says.

When a tree meets all criteria, he forwards it to the Comanche Nation Tribal Council in Lawton, Oklahoma, for approval. So far, nine Texas trees have emerged from the lengthy process to be officially identified as Comanche marker trees, some on public land and others on private property. On several occasions, tribal elders have traveled from Oklahoma to confirm the trees' historical significance. It's been a joyful reunion, Arterberry says, although he was initially skeptical when he first encountered Houser and Pelon.

"People try to tell you about your culture from what they've read or studied; I'm not quick to agree about things," Arterberry says. "When you see they're serious about their quest, you give them a little more guidance. At some point they have a better understanding. At the end of the day because they're not Comanches they'll never fully get it, but they can get close."

Houser understands the tribe's reticence to share information with him. "You don't blame them a bit if you know their history," he says. "When they realized I'm a volunteer arborist and my only goal is to help them reconnect with their trees, they started to accept me."

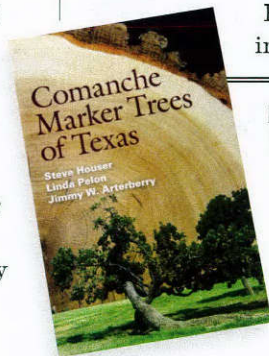
The most recent tree acknowledged by the Comanche tribe is in the town of Holliday, about 15 miles southwest of Wichita Falls. The 60-foot tall pecan tree grows parallel to the ground for a dozen feet near a creek at Stonewall Jackson Camp No. 249, also home to a United Confederate Veterans monument. The tree marks a nearby water source.

"I think the importance of it has to do with identifying the connection of Comanche culture to these different locations," says Arterberry, who previously served as the tribal historic preservation officer. "It's not only the history of Comanches, but also the history of Texas, of America."

For his part, Houser is delving into additional research on bent trees and experimenting with lashing down saplings to see how they grow. "I'm trying to redo their methodology using yucca rope," he says. In the office of his Wylie-based tree-care company, Arborilogical Services, he keeps batches of tree "cookies," or slices of branches used to determine a tree's age.

Other marker-tree clues are less tangible. "To a certain extent, I can sense the personality, the health of the tree, its condition," Houser says. "Can I sense what's a marker tree? Probably not. Some I thought were marker trees, the Comanches didn't recognize. I think they have a better feel for the spiritual side of things. But sometimes there is a gut feeling that there's something more to it."

Houser continues to investigate reports of



**MORE ON  
MARKER TREES**

Dallas arborist Steve Houser is co-author of *Comanche Marker Trees of Texas*, published by Texas A&M University Press in 2016.



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potential marker trees while also keeping an eye on the health of recognized trees. Time is an issue. While oak and pecan trees can live for hundreds of years, they also face manmade threats from development and vandalism and the natural threats of storms and drought. A pecan at Gateway Park in East Dallas—identified 20 years ago as a marker tree for a Comanche campground—fell victim to a storm in the late 1990s. A post oak known as the Irving Escarpment Ridge tree—which marked a paint-rock quarry in Comanche times—died in a drought in 2011. This past summer, the California Crossing tree lost one of its two upright limbs in a storm.

Just across the Dallas border in Irving, the Bird's Fort Trail marker tree picks up the ancient trail signaled by the California Crossing tree on the other side of the Elm Fork. Located in Bird's Fort Trail Park, not far from a tidy suburban picnic shelter, the bur oak grows along the ground for 15 feet before reaching up. But the tree appears to be failing, Houser says. He points out nearby road and building construction that may have damaged or covered the tree's roots.

Even recognized marker trees aren't afforded any special protection. "This is what underscores the need to find them before they're gone," Houser says. 🐾



### COMANCHE MARKER TREES

The Texas Historic Tree Coalition Indian Marker Tree Committee has identified nine

historic Comanche marker trees that have been officially recognized by the Comanche Nation. Some of the trees available for public view are:

1. The **California Crossing tree** is in a park next to the Texas National Guard Armory in **Dallas**, 1775 California Crossing Road.
2. The **Bird's Fort Trail tree** is in Bird's Fort Trail Park in **Irving**, 5756 Riverside Drive.
3. The **Holiday tree** is at Stonewall Jackson Camp No. 249, 2.5 miles south of **Holiday** on Farm-to-Market Road 368.



# EVENTS



## NOVEMBER'S TRAVEL SPOTLIGHT:

GULF COAST > Houston

### Via Colori

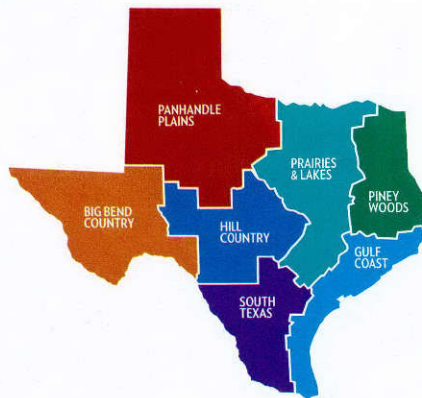
**H**UES OF EVERY COLOR on the spectrum will cover the pavement surrounding Houston's Hermann Square at City Hall on Nov. 18-19 as the city hosts its annual street painting festival. Some 25,000 attendees will head to the 12th annual event to witness more than 200 Texan and international artists colorize the streets using pastel chalks to create

ephemeral artwork that will only remain for two days. Proceeds benefit The Center for Hearing and Speech, a local organization that helps children with hearing loss learn to listen, speak, and read. The festival's theme, "70 Years in Color," will celebrate the center's 70 years of service.

[centerhearingandspeech.org/via-colori](http://centerhearingandspeech.org/via-colori)

Want more? Go to the Events Calendar at [texashighways.com](http://texashighways.com).





**Editor's note:** *Our hearts are with our neighbors who are recovering and rebuilding following Hurricane Harvey. Please call ahead before traveling to any events that may have been impacted by the storm or check [texashighways.com/events](http://texashighways.com/events) for updates.*

## BIG BEND COUNTRY

**ALPINE:** Center For Big Bend Studies Conference Nov. 10-11. [cbbs.sulross.edu](http://cbbs.sulross.edu) 432-837-8179

**EL PASO:** Las Artistas Art and Fine Crafts Show Nov. 18-19. [lasartistas.org](http://lasartistas.org) 915-319-4541

**ODESSA:** Merry Marketplace Nov. 2-5. [jlodessa.org](http://jlodessa.org) 432-332-0095

**ODESSA:** Tejano Super Car Show Nov. 18-19. [tejanosupercaershow.com](http://tejanosupercaershow.com) 432-337-2189

**VAN HORN:** Trans Pecos Big Buck Tournament Nov. 24-Dec. 11. [vanhorn-texas.us](http://vanhorn-texas.us) 432-283-2682

## GULF COAST

**ALVIN:** Rotary Novemberfest Nov. 11. [alvinrotary.org](http://alvinrotary.org) 713-828-9477

**ARANSAS PASS:** Christmas By The Bay Nov. 11-12. [texasmarketguide.com](http://texasmarketguide.com) 888-225-3427

**BEAUMONT:** Paw Patrol Live! Nov. 14-15. [fordpark.com](http://fordpark.com) 409-951-5400

**BRAZORIA:** Henry Smith Day Nov. 14. [brazoriahf.org](http://brazoriahf.org) 979-236-0241

**CLEAR LAKE AREA:** Nutcracker Market Nov. 11. [southernstyleevents.net](http://southernstyleevents.net) 281-467-3577

**CLUTE:** Planetarium Show Nov. 7, 14, 21, 28. [bcfas.org](http://bcfas.org) 979-265-3376

**CLUTE:** Rumors: A Comedy by Neil Simon Nov. 23-26, Dec. 1-3. [bcfas.org](http://bcfas.org) 979-265-7661

**EDNA:** Texana Chili Spill Nov. 9-11. [texanachilispill.com](http://texanachilispill.com) 361-782-5229

**FREEPORT:** Thanksgiving SuperFeast Nov. 23. [freeport.tx.us](http://freeport.tx.us) 979-233-3526

**FREEPORT:** Schuster Home Open House Nov. 25. 979-297-0868

**GALVESTON:** Lone Star Motorcycle Rally Nov. 2-5. [lonestarrally.com](http://lonestarrally.com)

**GALVESTON:** Brushes by the Beach Plein Air Painting Competition and Workshop Nov. 11-19. [gleegallery.net](http://gleegallery.net) 409-370-7350

**GALVESTON:** Ice Land at Moody Gardens Nov. 11-Jan. 7. [moodygardens.org](http://moodygardens.org)

**GALVESTON:** An Evening with Sophia Loren Nov. 12. [thegrand.com](http://thegrand.com) 409-765-1894

**GALVESTON:** A Very Electric Christmas Nov. 14. [thegrand.com](http://thegrand.com) 409-765-1894

**GALVESTON:** Stomp Nov. 18-19. [thegrand.com](http://thegrand.com) 409-765-1894

**GALVESTON:** A Christmas Wonderland Nov. 24-25. [thegrand.com](http://thegrand.com) 409-765-1894

**GALVESTON:** Holiday Lighting Celebration Nov. 24. [hotelgalvez.com](http://hotelgalvez.com) 409-765-7721

**GALVESTON:** Brewmasters Craft Beer Festival Nov. 24-26. [brewmastersbeerfest.com](http://brewmastersbeerfest.com)

**HARLINGEN:** Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival Nov. 8-12. [rgvbf.org](http://rgvbf.org) 956-423-5565

**HOUSTON:** Storyline: The Contemporary Quilt Through Jan. 7. [crafthouston.org](http://crafthouston.org) 713-529-4848

**HOUSTON:** ROCO Connections: Musical and Literary Ofrenda Nov. 2. [rocohouston.org](http://rocohouston.org) 713-665-2700

**HOUSTON:** A Midnight Clear: A Musical Tale of Christmas Nov. 8-Dec. 24. [stageshouston.com](http://stageshouston.com) 713-527-0123

**HOUSTON:** Art on the Avenue Nov. 9, 11. [avenuecdc.org/art-on-the-avenue](http://avenuecdc.org/art-on-the-avenue) 713-864-8099

**HOUSTON:** Broadway Today Nov. 10-12. [houston-symphony.org](http://houston-symphony.org) 713-224-7575

**HOUSTON:** Da Camera Presents: Tiempo Libre Nov. 10. [dacamera.com](http://dacamera.com) 713-524-5050

**HOUSTON:** American Indian Pow Wow Nov. 11-12. [tradersvillage.com](http://tradersvillage.com) 281-890-5500

**HOUSTON:** ROCO in Concert: Courageous Catalyst Nov. 11. [rocohouston.org](http://rocohouston.org) 713-665-2700

**HOUSTON:** Nora's Home Golf Classic Nov. 17. [norashome.org](http://norashome.org) 832-831-3720

**HOUSTON:** Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody Nov. 17-19. [houston-symphony.org](http://houston-symphony.org) 713-224-7575

**HOUSTON:** ROCO Unchambered: Musical Parfait Nov. 19. [rocohouston.org](http://rocohouston.org) 713-665-2700

**HOUSTON:** A Scheherazade Thanksgiving Nov. 24-26. [houston-symphony.org](http://houston-symphony.org) 713-224-7575

**HOUSTON:** Body by Broadway Nov. 28. [marketsquarepark.com](http://marketsquarepark.com) 713-650-3022

**HOUSTON:** Panto Cinderella Nov. 29-Dec. 31. [stageshouston.com](http://stageshouston.com) 713-527-0123

**HOUSTON:** ROCO Connections: Season of Thanks for the Masterasons Nov. 30. [rocohouston.org](http://rocohouston.org) 713-665-2700

**KINGSVILLE:** South Texas Show Series Nov. 4-5. 361-296-4667

**KINGSVILLE:** Big House Burger Bash Nov. 13-14. [mybighouseonline.com](http://mybighouseonline.com) 800-333-5032

**KINGSVILLE:** Ranch Hand Festival Nov. 17-18. [ranchhandfestival.com](http://ranchhandfestival.com) 800-333-5032

**KINGWOOD:** Greater Lake Woodson Healthy for Good Heart Walk Nov. 4. [greaterlakehoustonheartwalk.org](http://greaterlakehoustonheartwalk.org) 832-918-4014

**LAKE JACKSON:** Abner Jackson Plantation Site Tour Nov. 4. [lakejacksonmuseum.org](http://lakejacksonmuseum.org) 979-297-1570

**LAKE JACKSON:** Festival of Lights Nov. 16-18. [lakejackson-tx.gov](http://lakejackson-tx.gov) 979-415-2600

**LAKE JACKSON:** Bird Banding Nov. 18. [gcbo.org](http://gcbo.org) 979-480-0999

**PORT ARTHUR:** Pleasure Island Bridge 1/2 Marathon, 10K, and 2 Miler Nov. 4. [sportsocietyforamericanhealth.org](http://sportsocietyforamericanhealth.org) 409-781-2932

**ROCKPORT:** Rockport Film Festival Nov. 2-4. [rockportcenter.com](http://rockportcenter.com) 361-729-5519

**SEABROOK:** Celebration Seabrook Nov. 11. [celebrationseabrook.com](http://celebrationseabrook.com) 281-291-5777

**SOUTH PADRE ISLAND:** Open Water Festival Nov. 4-5. [openwaterplanet.com](http://openwaterplanet.com) 956-767-2373

**SOUTH PADRE ISLAND:** Raul Alcala Challenge South Padre Island Nov. 4-5. [raulalcala.com](http://raulalcala.com) 956-761-3024

**SPRING:** Big Top Vintage Market Nov. 4-5. [bigtopvintage.com](http://bigtopvintage.com) 281-770-1888

**SPRING:** Home for the Holidays Nov. 11-12, 18-19, 25-26, Dec. 2-3, 9-10, 16-17, 23-24. [oldtownspringshopping.com](http://oldtownspringshopping.com) 281-288-2355

**SUGAR LAND:** Sugar Land Holiday Lights Oct. 24-Jan. 7. [sugarland.com](http://sugarland.com)

**SUGAR LAND:** Ringo Starr and His All Starr Band in Concert Nov. 2. [smartfinancialcentre.net](http://smartfinancialcentre.net) 281-207-6278

**SUGAR LAND:** PJ Masks Live: Time to Be a Hero Nov. 5. [smartfinancialcentre.net](http://smartfinancialcentre.net) 281-207-6278

**SUGAR LAND:** Vino and Vintage Vocals Nov. 3. [sugarland.com](http://sugarland.com)

**SUGAR LAND:** Jingle Tree: Kickoff Coffee and Tree Lighting Nov. 10. [hms-at-sugar-land.com](http://hms-at-sugar-land.com) 281-313-2277

**SUGAR LAND:** Opry on the Square Nov. 10. [sugarland.com](http://sugarland.com)

**SUGAR LAND:** Trevor Noah Nov. 10. [smartfinancialcentre.net](http://smartfinancialcentre.net) 281-207-6278

**SUGAR LAND:** Serious Wheels: Corvette Owners Club of Houston Open Car Show Nov. 11. [sugarland.com](http://sugarland.com)

**SUGAR LAND:** Jingle Tree: Bring on the Bling! Nov. 14. [hms-at-sugar-land.com](http://hms-at-sugar-land.com) 281-313-2277

**SUGAR LAND:** Jingle Tree: Drink and Be Merry Happy Hour Nov. 16. [hms-at-sugar-land.com](http://hms-at-sugar-land.com) 281-313-2277

**SUGAR LAND:** Block Party, Too! Nov. 20-Feb. 25. [hms-at-sugar-land.com](http://hms-at-sugar-land.com) 281-313-2277

**SUGAR LAND:** Photos with Santa Nov. 26. [sugarland.com](http://sugarland.com)

**TEXAS CITY-LA MARQUE:** Texas City Model Train Festival Nov. 4. [texas-city-tx.org](http://texas-city-tx.org) 409-229-1660

**TEXAS CITY-LA MARQUE:** Touch-A-Truck and Model Train Festival Nov. 4. [facebook.com/touchatrucktc](http://facebook.com/touchatrucktc) 409-643-5919

**TOMBALL:** Downtown Holiday Lamp Post Stroll Nov. 17-Dec. 31. [tomballtx.gov](http://tomballtx.gov) 281-351-5484

**TOMBALL:** Holiday Parade Nov. 18. [tomballchamber.org](http://tomballchamber.org) 281-351-7222

**VICTORIA:** Dia de los Muertos Exhibit Oct. 5-Nov. 5. [navemuseum.com](http://navemuseum.com) 361-575-8227

**VICTORIA:** Victoria Symphony Fall Fundraiser with 38 Special Nov. 1. [victoriasymphony.com](http://victoriasymphony.com) 361-576-4500

**VICTORIA:** Dia de los Muertos Festival Nov. 4. [navemuseum.com](http://navemuseum.com) 361-575-8227

**VICTORIA:** The Wedding Singer Nov. 16-19. [theatre-victoria.org](http://theatre-victoria.org) 361-570-8587

**VICTORIA:** Christmas Faire Nov. 18-19. [texasmarketguide.com](http://texasmarketguide.com) 888-225-3427

**VICTORIA:** Main Street Market Days Nov. 18. [victoriamainstreet.com](http://victoriamainstreet.com) 361-578-0060

**WHARTON:** Christmas Parade Nov. 21. [wharton-texas.com](http://wharton-texas.com) 979-532-1862

## HILL COUNTRY

**AUSTIN:** American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition Through Jan. 7. [thestoryoftexas.com](http://thestoryoftexas.com) 512-963-8746

**AUSTIN:** Mexico Modern: Art, Commerce, and Cultural Exchange, 1920-1945 Through Jan. 1. [hrc.utexas.edu/mexicomodern](http://hrc.utexas.edu/mexicomodern) 512-471-8944

**AUSTIN:** Read My Pins: The Madeleine Albright Collection Oct. 18-Jan. 21. [ljlbrary.org](http://ljlbrary.org) 512-721-0216

**AUSTIN:** Blu Oct. 26-Nov. 11. [salvagevanguard.org](http://salvagevanguard.org) 512-474-7886

**AUSTIN:** Austin Film Festival Oct. 26-Nov. 2. [austinfilmfestival.com](http://austinfilmfestival.com)

**AUSTIN:** James Beard Taste America Austin Nov. 2-4. [jamesbeard.org/tasteamerica](http://jamesbeard.org/tasteamerica) 512-689-7668

**AUSTIN:** 2CELLOS in Concert Nov. 3. [uterwincenter.com](http://uterwincenter.com) 512-477-6060

**AUSTIN:** The Settlement Home's Garage and Estate Sale Nov. 3-5. [settlementhome.org/garage-sale](http://settlementhome.org/garage-sale) 512-836-2150

**AUSTIN:** Celtic Fest Nov. 4-5. [austincelticfestival.com](http://austincelticfestival.com)

**AUSTIN:** Fossil Fest Nov. 4-5. [austinpaleo.org/fest.html](http://austinpaleo.org/fest.html) 512-673-6620

**AUSTIN:** Powwow Nov. 4. [austinpowwow.net](http://austinpowwow.net)

**AUSTIN:** Texas Book Festival Nov. 4-5. [texasbookfestival.org](http://texasbookfestival.org) 512-477-4055

**AUSTIN:** Texas Monthly barbecue Festival Nov. 5. [tmbbq.com](http://tmbbq.com)

**AUSTIN:** An Evening of Storytelling with Garrison Keillor Nov. 8. [austintheatre.org](http://austintheatre.org) 512-474-1221

**AUSTIN:** Austin International Drag Festival Nov. 9-12. [austindragfest.org](http://austindragfest.org) 512-850-6707

**AUSTIN:** Demetri Martin: Let's Get Awkward Nov. 9. [austintheatre.org](http://austintheatre.org) 512-474-1221

**AUSTIN:** POP Austin International Art Show Nov. 9-12. [popaustin.com](http://popaustin.com)

**AUSTIN:** Reading Between the Wines Nov. 10. [willread.org](http://willread.org) 512-326-8655

**AUSTIN:** East Austin Studio Tour Nov. 11-12, 18-19. [east.bigmedium.org](http://east.bigmedium.org)

**AUSTIN:** United Foundation: The War As We Remember Nov. 11. [theunitedfoundation.org](http://theunitedfoundation.org) 801-664-1760

**AUSTIN:** Jack Hanna: Into the Wild Live! Nov. 12. [austintheatre.org](http://austintheatre.org) 512-474-1221

**AUSTIN:** Ray Wylie Hubbard's Birthday Bash Nov. 17. [austintheatre.org](http://austintheatre.org) 512-474-1221

**AUSTIN:** Chuy's Christmas Parade Nov. 18. [chuyssparade.com](http://chuyssparade.com)



**AUSTIN:** John Hodgman: Vacationland Nov. 18. austintheatre.org 512-474-1221

**AUSTIN:** Gladys Knight in Concert Nov. 19. austintheatre.org 512-474-1221

**AUSTIN:** Wine and Swine Nov. 19. austinfoodwinealliance.org 512-348-6847

**AUSTIN:** A Christmas Carol Nov. 22-Dec. 31. zachtheatre.org 512-476-0541

**AUSTIN:** Blue Genie Art Bazaar Nov. 24-Dec. 24. bluegenieartbazaar.com

**BANDERA:** Bandera Cattle Company Gunfighters Nov. 4, 11, 18, 25. banderacattlecompany.com 830-796-3045

**BANDERA:** Cowboys on Main Nov. 4, 11, 18, 25. banderacowboycapital.com 830-796-4447

**BANDERA:** Market Days Nov. 4. banderatexasbusiness.com 830-796-4447

**BANDERA:** Cowboy Capital Opry Nov. 7. silversagecorral.org 830-796-4969

**BANDERA:** Bandera Honors Veterans Nov. 11. 830-460-0394

**BANDERA:** Frontier Times Museum Cowboy Camp Nov. 12. frontiertimesmuseum.org 830-796-3864

**BOERNE:** Hot Rod Night Nov. 4. visitboerne.org 830-331-8799

**BOERNE:** Diva Night Nov. 9. visitboerne.org 210-861-7333

**BOERNE:** Kid N' Ewe and Lamas Too Nov. 10-12. visitboerne.org 832-584-4695

**BOERNE:** Market Days Nov. 11-12. visitboerne.org 210-844-8193

**BOERNE:** Dickens on Main Nov. 24-25. visitboerne.org 830-248-1617

**BOERNE:** Sounds of the Season Nov. 25. cavewithoutaname.com 830-537-4212

**BRADY:** Heart of Texas Outdoor Expo Nov. 17-18. bradytx.com 325-597-3491

**BULVERDE:** Tejas Rodeo Nov. 4. visitboerne.org 830-980-2226

**BULVERDE:** Christmas Lighting Nov. 24. bulverdebranchchamber.com 830-438-4285

**BURNET:** Fall Area-Wide Garage Sale Nov. 4. burnetchamber.org 830-798-5738

**BURNET:** Hill Country Christmas Nov. 4. ymcagwc.org/burnet 512-756-6180

**COMFORT:** Christmas In Comfort Nov. 25. comfort-texas.com 830-995-3131

**CONCAN:** Neal's Dining Room Thanksgiving Feast Nov. 23. visitvaldecounty.com/events 830-232-4310

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Fall Farmers Market Nov. 2, 9, 16. fbqfarmersmarket.com 830-997-6523

**FREDERICKSBURG:** First Friday Art Walk Nov. 3. ffawf.com 830-997-6523

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Harvestfest German Chorale Fall Concert Nov. 4. 830-456-1713

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Texas All Star Big Band Bash Nov. 9-11. hilltopcafe.com 830-997-8922

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Die Kunstler Fine Art Show and Sale Nov. 10-12. diekunstler.com 830-990-4641

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Pacific Combat Living History Reenactment Nov. 11-12. pacificwarmuseum.org 830-997-8600

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Veterans Day Observance Nov. 11. pacificwarmuseum.org 830-997-8600

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Trade Days Nov. 17-19, 24-26. fbqtradedays.com 830-990-4900

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Annual Lighting of the Community Christmas Tree and German Pyramid Nov. 24. visitfredericksburgtx.com 830-997-6523

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Eisbahn Outdoor Ice Skating Nov. 24-Jan. 2. skateinfred.com 830-997-6597

**FREDERICKSBURG:** The Peddler Holiday Show Nov. 24-26. peddlershow.com 800-775-2774

**GRUENE:** Friday Afternoon Club Nov. 3, 10, 17, 24. gruenehall.com

**GRUENE:** Gospel Brunch with a Texas Twist Nov. 12. gruenehall.com 830-629-5077

**GRUENE:** Come and Taste It Nov. 16. grapevineingruene.com 830-606-0093

**GRUENE:** Holidays in Gruene—Photos with Cowboy Kringle Nov. 18-19, 24-26. holidayingruene.com

**GRUENE:** Old Gruene Market Days Nov. 18-19. gruene marketdays.com 830-832-1721

**GRUENE:** Holidays in Gruene—Gruene Turkey Trot Nov. 23. holidayingruene.com

**INGRAM:** Farmers and Artisans Market Nov. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30. 830-367-2800

**INGRAM:** A Dickens Christmas Carol: A Traveling Travesty in Two Acts Nov. 17-Dec. 2. hcacf.com 830-367-5121

**INGRAM:** ArtMart Christmas Gift Showcase Nov. 17-Dec. 16. hcacf.com 830-367-5121

**JOHNSON CITY:** Market Days Nov. 24-26. lbjcountry.com 830-868-7684

**JOHNSON CITY:** Art Walk Nov. 25. lbjcountry.com 830-868-7684

**KERRVILLE:** Nonsense Oct. 20-Nov. 5. playhouse2000.com 830-896-9393

**KERRVILLE:** Texas Furniture Makers Show Oct. 26-Dec. 1. kackkerrville.com 830-895-2911

**KERRVILLE:** Kerr County Farmers Market Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29. theexit505farmersmarket.com 830-456-5942

**KERRVILLE:** Hill Country Swap Meet Nov. 4. kerrmarketdays.org 830-459-6198

**KERRVILLE:** Kerr County Market Days Nov. 4. kerrmarketdays.org 830-895-7524

**KERRVILLE:** Holiday Lighted Parade and Courthouse Lighting Ceremony Nov. 18. kerrvilletx.gov 830-258-1151

**KERRVILLE:** Taylor, Chapin, and Eva in Concert Nov. 18. cailloutheater.com 830-896-9393

**LAMPASAS:** Lampasas Trade Days Nov. 25. lampasastradedays.com 512-734-1294

**LEAKEY:** Christmas on the Square Nov. 25. friocanyonchamber.com 830-232-5222

**MEDINA:** The Old Timers Trading Post Nov. 4. 830-796-3045

**NEW BRAUNFELS:** Wurstfest Nov. 3-12. wurstfest.com 830-625-9167

**NEW BRAUNFELS:** Weihnachtsmarkt Nov. 17-19. sophienburg.com 830-629-1572

**OZONA:** Remembering Crockett County Veterans Nov. 1-Dec. 7. ozonamuseum.com 325-392-2837

**ROUND ROCK:** A Miracle on 34th Street Classic Radiocast Nov. 30-Dec. 23. penfoldtheatre.org 512-850-4849

**SAN MARCOS:** Keep Texas Beautiful Fall Sweep Kickoff Oct. 7-Nov. 5. ktb.org/programs/fall-sweep 512-478-8813

**SAN SABA:** Christmas Extravaganza Grand Opening Nov. 23-Jan. 4. visitsansabatexas.com 325-372-8291

**SPICEWOOD:** Collin Hauser and Stevie Jo Rosenbalm in Concert Nov. 17. spicewoodarts.org 512-264-2820

**STONEWALL:** Holiday Cookie Decorating and German Traditions Nov. 25. tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lyndon-b-johnson 830-644-2252

**UTOPIA:** Fall Arts and Crafts Fair Nov. 4. 830-966-4159

**UVALDE:** Four Square Friday Nov. 10. visituvalde.com 830-278-4115

**WIMBERLEY:** *The Diary of Anne Frank* Oct. 27-Nov. 19. emilyann.org 512-847-6969

**WIMBERLEY:** Market Day Nov. 4. shopmarketdays.com 512-847-2201

**WIMBERLEY:** *I Hate Hamlet* Nov. 10-Dec. 3. wimberleyplayers.org 512-847-0575

**WIMBERLEY:** Winter Wonderland Nov. 17-18. wimberley.org 512-847-2201

**WIMBERLEY:** Trail of Lights Nov. 25-Dec. 28. emilyann.org 512-847-6969

## PANHANDLE PLAINS

**ABILENE:** Thanksgiving Throwdown Nov. 24-26. bigcountryraceway.com 325-673-4233

**ALBANY:** *Ron Watson: Order Among Chaos* Through Feb. 3. theoac.org 325-762-2269

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**ALBANY:** *Texas Moderns: Bill Bomar* Through Feb. 5. theojac.org 325-762-2269

**ALBANY:** *Kelly O'Connor: Oz/Odessa* Through Feb. 3. theojac.org 325-762-2269

**AMARILLO:** American Quarter Horse Photography Show Oct. 27-Nov. 25. aqha.com/museum 806-376-5181

**CHILDRESS:** *Eat Wild* Nov. 11. 940-957-2567

**CHILDRESS:** *Treasure Hunt* Nov. 24. 940-957-2525

**COLORADO CITY:** Railroad Trade Days Nov. 18-19. coloradocitychamberofcommerce.com 325-728-3403

**DALHART:** Veterans Day Parade Nov. 11. dalhart.org 806-244-5646

**DALHART:** Elks Hoop Shoot Competition Nov. 13. 806-679-8087

**ELECTRA:** *Holiday of Lights Parade* Nov. 25. electratexas.org 940-495-3577

**LUBBOCK:** First Friday Art Trail Nov. 3. visitlubbock.org

**LUBBOCK:** National Bison Day Nov. 4. visitlubbock.org 806-742-1116

**LUBBOCK:** LSO's Masterworks: *The Pictures* Nov. 10-11. visitlubbock.org 806-762-1688

**LUBBOCK:** *Museum by Night: The Wonder of Women* Nov. 16. visitlubbock.org 806-742-2490

**LUBBOCK:** *Origin Stories: Exploring Ancestry through Dance* Nov. 30, Dec. 2. flatlandsdance.org 806-777-5753

**SAN ANGELO:** *The Ehrlich Collection of American and British Ceramics* Oct. 5-Dec. 3. samfa.org 325-653-3333

**SAN ANGELO:** *The Garden of Earthly Delights: Exhibitions Featuring the Work of Julie Heffernan and Kathleen Elliot* Oct. 5-Dec. 3. samfa.org 325-653-3333

**SAN ANGELO:** *Family Day for the Dogs!* Nov. 11. samfa.org 325-653-3333

**SAN ANGELO:** *Downtown Stroll* Nov. 16. samfa.org 325-653-3333

**SAN ANGELO:** *The Wall That Heals* Nov. 17-19. thewallsanangelo.com 325-651-4236

**SAN ANGELO:** *Museum Day* Nov. 18. fortconcho.com 325-657-4444

**SAN ANGELO:** *Play It Again Concert* Nov. 19. samfa.org 325-653-3333

**SAN ANGELO:** *Chicken Farm Art Center Annual Open House* Nov. 24-26. chickenfarmartcenter.com 325-653-4936

**WICHITA FALLS:** *Christmas Magic* Nov. 2-5. jlwf.org/christmas-magic 940-692-9797

**WICHITA FALLS:** *Hangar Holiday* Nov. 11-12. sheppardosc.webs.com/hangar-holiday 940-782-8427

**WICHITA FALLS:** *City Lights* Nov. 18. downtownproud.com 940-322-4525

**WICHITA FALLS:** *MSU-Burns Fantasy of Lights* Nov. 20-Dec. 25. mwsu.edu/fantasy

## PINEY WOODS

**CENTER:** *Pinecone and Mistletoe Christmas Market* Nov. 3-4. shelbycounty-chamber.com 936-598-3682

**CENTER:** *Taste of the Holidays* Nov. 3. shelbycounty-chamber.com 936-598-3682

**GLADEWATER:** *Holiday Open House* Nov. 11. 903-845-5501

**HENDERSON:** *Christmas Parade* Nov. 30. visithenderson.com 866-650-5529 ext. 268

**JEFFERSON:** *Texas Sounds International Country Music Awards* Nov. 2-5. texasounds.org 925-497-3915

**JEFFERSON:** *Jefferson Flea Market* Nov. 3-4, 17-18. jeffersonfleamarket.net 903-431-0043

**KILGORE:** *East Texas Pipe Organ Festival* Nov. 6. easttexaspipeorganfestival.com

**KILGORE:** *Derrick Lighting* Nov. 16. kilgorechamber.com

**KILGORE:** *Reel East Texas Film Festival* Nov. 16-18. reeleasttexas.com

**LIBERTY:** *Liberty Opry* Nov. 4, 11, 18. libertyopry.com 936-336-5830

**LUFKIN:** *Pineywoods Veterans Celebration* Nov. 4. visitlufkin.com 936-633-0359

**LUFKIN:** *Jason Crabb in Concert* Nov. 16. thepineslufkin.com 936-633-0359

**MARSHALL:** *Wonderland of Lights* Nov. 22-Dec. 31. marshalltexas.com/wonderland-of-lights 703-702-7777

**MINEOLA:** *Pedal for Paws* Nov. 4. mineolapedalforpaws.com 903-638-6902

**MOUNT PLEASANT:** *Deck the Halls Holiday Bazaar* Nov. 10-11. mtpleasanttx.com 903-572-8567

**PALESTINE:** *Polar Express Train Ride* Nov. 24-Dec. 30. texasstaterailroad.net 855-632-7729

**TEXARKANA:** *Dinosaurs: Fossils Exposed* Oct. 14-Dec. 31. texarkanamuseums.org 903-793-4831

**TEXARKANA:** *Victorian Christmas Card Creations* Nov. 18. texarkana-museums.org 903-793-4831

**TYLER:** *Rose City Christmas* Nov. 1-Dec. 31. visittyler.com 903-592-1661

**TYLER:** *America in Concert* Nov. 2. cowancenter.org 903-566-7424

**TYLER:** *Mistletoe and Magic* Nov. 9-11. juniorleagueof Tyler.org/mistletoe-magic 903-593-1080

**WINNSBORO:** *Art and Wine Festival* Nov. 10-11. facebook.com/winnsbor artwine 903-426-8207

## PRAIRIES AND LAKES

**ADDISON:** *Howlfest* Nov. 4. addisontexas.net 800-233-4766

**ADDISON:** *Addison Circle Tree Lighting* Nov. 17. addisontexas.net 800-233-4766

**ADDISON:** *Vitruvian Lights* Nov. 24-25, Dec. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30. addisontexas.net 800-233-4766

**ARLINGTON:** *Salvador Dali* Oct. 19-Jan. 14. arlington-museum.org 817-275-4600

**ARLINGTON:** *Holiday in the Park* Nov. 18-Dec. 31. sixflags.com/overtexas 817-640-8900

**ARLINGTON:** *Enchant: The World's Largest Christmas Maze and Market* Nov. 24-Dec. 31. enchantchristmas.com

**ARLINGTON:** *Texas Christkindl Market* Nov. 24-Dec. 23. txchristkindlmarket.com

**BASTROP:** *Veteran's Day Car Show Weekend* Nov. 10-11. bastropareacruisers.com 512-303-0558

**BASTROP:** *Lost Pines Christmas* Nov. 24-Dec. 17. lostpineschristmas.com 512-332-8996

**BASTROP:** *River of Lights* Nov. 24-Dec. 31. lostpineschristmas.com 512-303-0558

**BONHAM:** *Christmas Parade* Nov. 18. visitbonham.com 903-583-9830

**BRENNHAM:** *Christmas at the Mansion* Nov. 4-5. giddingsstonemansion.com 888-836-7237

**CALDWELL:** *Second Saturday Slavnost (Celebration!)* Nov. 11. caldwelldx.gov 979-567-3901

**CAMERON:** *Lilies of the Field* Nov. 4-5, 11-12. milamcommunitytheater.com 254-493-5539

**CAT SPRING:** *The Bonfire Texas* Nov. 4. thebonfiretexas.com 713-294-9888

**CLEBURNE:** *Zorro the Musical* Oct. 13-28, Nov. 2-11. plaza-theatre.com 817-202-0600

**CLEBURNE:** *Celebrate the Arts Festival* Nov. 4. cleburneculturalarts.com 817-641-4908

**CLEBURNE:** *Annie* Nov. 17-25. plaza-theatre.com 817-202-0600

**CLEBURNE:** *Pioneer Days* Nov. 17-18. jchisholmtrail.com

**CLEBURNE:** *Breggett Rideau in Concert* Nov. 18. songbirdlive.com 817-489-4840

**CLEBURNE:** *Whistle-Stop Christmas* Nov. 20-Dec. 31. 817-645-2455

**COLLEGE STATION:** *The Legacy of Ranching: Preserving the Past, Embracing the Future* Through Jan. 8. bush41.org 979-691-4000

**CUERO:** *Christmas in the Park* Nov. 20-Jan. 1. cuerochristmasinthepark.org 361-275-2112

**DALLAS:** *Shaken, Stirred, Styled: The Art of the Cocktail* Through Nov. 12. dma.org 214/922-1200

**DALLAS:** *Sopheap Pich* Through Jan. 7. crowscollection.org 214-979-6430

**DALLAS:** *Neighborhoods We Called Home* Through Dec. 31. dallasheritagevillage.org



**DALLAS:** *Cowboys, Cowgirls, and Some Indians [sic]* Through Nov. 11. pdnbgallery.com 214-969-1852

**DALLAS:** *Tom Sachs: Tea Ceremony* Through Jan. 7. nashersculpturecenter.org

**DALLAS:** *Night Fever: Fashions from Funk to Disco* Through Nov. 1. galleriadallas.com

**DALLAS:** *Autumn at the Arboretum* Through Nov. 23. dallasarboretum.org 214-515-6500

**DALLAS:** *Paper into Sculpture* Oct. 14-Feb. 4. nashersculpturecenter.org

**DALLAS:** *Sammons Jazz* Nov. 1. sammonsjazz.com 214-520-7788

**DALLAS:** *The Hidden Dallas Tour* Nov. 4, 12, 18. dallasbychocolate.com 972-814-5997

**DALLAS:** *Bishop Arts District Tours* Nov. 5, 12, 19, 26. dallasbychocolate.com 972-814-5997

**DALLAS:** *Holiday at the Arboretum* Nov. 8-Jan. 7. dallasarboretum.org 214-515-6500

**DALLAS:** *DIFFA Holiday Wreath* Nov. 16. diffadallas.org 214-748-8580

**DALLAS:** *A Charlie Brown Christmas* Nov. 17-Dec. 23. facebook.com/dallaschildrenstheater

**DALLAS:** *Frosty and Friends* Nov. 17-Dec. 23. facebook.com/dallaschildrenstheater

**DALLAS:** *Christmas Lights, Chocolate, and Sips Tour* Nov. 24-Dec. 30. dallasbychocolate.com 972-814-5997

**DALLAS:** *Visits and Portraits with Santa Claus* Nov. 26-Dec. 17. northparkcenter.com

**DALLAS:** *Tall Tales* Nov. 30. reuniontower.com 214-712-7040

**DECATUR:** *Decatur Swirl* Nov. 4. decaturswirl.com 940-399-9558

**DECATUR:** *A Touch of Rust Holiday Market* Nov. 18. atouchofrust.com 405-255-6519

**DENISON:** *Dia de los Muertos Festival* Nov. 4. smalltownbigart.com 903-465-1551

**DENISON:** *Denison on Ice* Nov. 24-Jan. 2. denisonlive.com 903-463-5611

**DENISON:** *Holiday Lights at Loy Lake* Nov. 24-Dec. 31. denisonlive.com 903-463-5611

**DENTON:** *North Texas Horse Country Tour* Nov. 4. discoverdenton.com 940-382-7895

**DENTON:** *Beajolais and More Wine and Food Tasting* Nov. 16. dentoncommunitytheatre.com 940-382-1915

**DENTON:** *Turkey Roll Bicycle Rally* Nov. 18. dentonturkeyroll.com 940-206-5177

**DUNCANVILLE:** *Fourth Saturday Cultural Event* Nov. 25. internationalmuseumofcultures.org 972-572-0462

**EDGEWOOD:** *Heritage Festival* Nov. 11. edgewoodheritagefestival.com 903-896-1940

**ELGIN:** *Veterans' Appreciation Parade* Nov. 4. elgintx.com

**ELGIN:** *Sip, Shop, and Stroll* Nov. 9. elgintx.com

**ELGIN:** *Holiday Lighting* Nov. 17. elgintx.com

**ENNIS:** *Lights of Ennis Parade and Block Party* Nov. 30. visitennis.org 972-878-4748

**FAIRFIELD:** *A Square Affair* Nov. 25. fairfieldtexaschamber.com 903-389-5792

**FARMERSVILLE:** *Farmers and Fleas Market* Nov. 4. farmersvillex.com 972/784-6846

**FORT WORTH:** *Misty Keasler: Haunt* Through Nov. 26. themodern.org 817-738-9215

**FORT WORTH:** *Lone Star Film Festival* Nov. 8-12. lonestarfilmfestival.com 817-924-6000

**FORT WORTH:** *Sundance Square Christmas Tree Lighting* Nov. 18. sundancesquare.com 817-255-5700

**FORT WORTH:** *XTO Energy Parade of Lights* Nov. 19. fortworthparadeofflights.org 817-336-2787

**FRISCO:** *Christmas in the Square* Nov. 24-Dec. 31. visitfrisco.com 972-292-5250

**GARLAND:** *Urban Flea* Nov. 11. intrinsicbrewing.com

**GLEN ROSE:** *The Promise* Through Nov. 4. thepromiseglenrose.com 254-897-3926

**GLEN ROSE:** *Citywide Scavenger Hunt* Nov. 4. 254-897-3081

**GLEN ROSE:** *Cheetah!* Nov. 13. fossilrim.org 254-897-2960

**GLEN ROSE:** *Girl's Night Out on the Square* Nov. 18. 307-631-4106

**GLEN ROSE:** *Third Weekend Bluegrass* Nov. 18. 254-897-2321

**GLEN ROSE:** *Learning from The Lorax* Nov. 21. fossilrim.org 254-897-2960

**GLEN ROSE:** *Dino Friday* Nov. 24. 254-897-3081

**GLEN ROSE:** *Lighted Christmas Parade* Nov. 25. 254-897-2286

**GRANBURY:** *Visit Santa House* Nov. 24-Dec. 23. facebook.com/granbury.santa.house 817-964-7220

**GRAND PRAIRIE:** *Quarter Horse Racing* Nov. 2-4, 9-11. lonestarpark.com 972-263-7223

**GRAND PRAIRIE:** *Crab Fest* Nov. 4-5. tradersvillage.com/grand-prairie 972-647-2331

**GRAND PRAIRIE:** *Paw Patrol Live!* Nov. 17-19. verizontheatre.com 972-854-5050

**GRAND PRAIRIE:** *Mountain Man Gathering* Nov. 18-19. tradersvillage.com/grand-prairie 972-647-2331

**GRAND PRAIRIE:** *Peppa Pig Live!* Nov. 22. verizontheatre.com 972-854-5050

**GRAPEVINE:** *Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown* Nov. 1-Jan. 31. grapevinetexasusa.com 817-410-3185

**GRAPEVINE:** *ICE! and Lone Star Christmas* Nov. 10-Jan. 1. grapevinetexasusa.com 817-410-3185

**GRAPEVINE:** *Texas Coin Show* Nov. 17-19. grapevinetexasusa.com 817-410-3185

**GRAPEVINE:** *Carol of Lights* Nov. 20. grapevinetexasusa.com 817-410-3185

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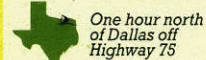
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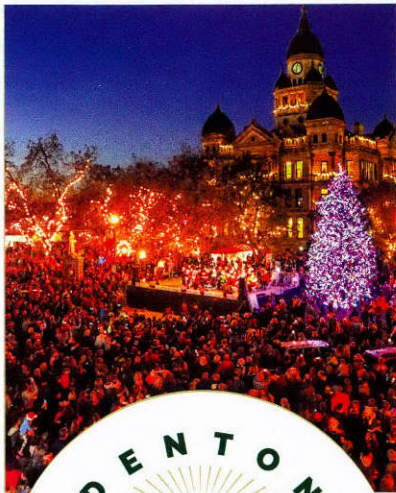


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**HAMILTON:** Holiday Market Nov. 1. 254-372-3120

**LEWISVILLE:** *The Nutcracker* Nov. 25–26. lakecitiesballet.org 972-317-7987

**MCDADE:** Sound on Sound Festival Nov. 10–12. soundonsoundfest.com 512-581-4074

**MCKINNEY:** *Dinosaurs Live!* Through Feb. 18. heardmuseum.org 972-562-5566

**MCKINNEY:** Third Monday Trade Days Nov. 17–19. 972-562-5466

**MCKINNEY:** Vintage Market Days Nov. 17–19. vintagemarketcdays.com 918-688-0142

**MCKINNEY:** Annual Home for the Holidays Nov. 24–26. downtownmckinney.com 972-547-2660

**MESQUITE:** Mesquite Creative Artists Association Exhibit Nov. 1–26. mesquiteartscenter.org 972-216-6444

**MESQUITE:** Mesquite Symphony Orchestra Concert Nov. 4. mesquitesymphony.org 972-216-8127

**MESQUITE:** Florence Ranch Homestead Tours Nov. 11. historicmesquite.org 972-216-6468

**MESQUITE:** Harvest Festival Barn Dance Nov. 11. mesquiteartscenter.org 972-216-6444

**MESQUITE:** Hella Shrine Circus Nov. 16–19. mesquitearena.com 972-285-8777

**MESQUITE:** Black Box Series: Al Fike, Comedian Nov. 17. mesquiteartscenter.org 972-216-6444

**MESQUITE:** Just for Kids: Canvas Creations Nov. 18. mesquiteartscenter.org 972-216-6444

**MEXIA:** Mistletoe, Music, and Magic Christmas Festival Nov. 30–Dec. 2. mexiachamber.com 254-562-5569

**MIDLOTHIAN:** Fall Wine and Arts Festival Nov. 4. midlothianchamber.org 972-723-8600

**PLANO:** Courtyard Texas Music Series Nov. 2. plano.gov 972-941-5600

**PLANO:** Downtown Plano Art and Wine Walk Nov. 9. planomagazine.com/wine 972-468-1588

**PLANO:** Neath the Wreath Holiday Gift Market Nov. 9–11. jllcollincounty.org 972-769-0557

**PLANO:** Plano Christmas Market Nov. 19. plano.gov 972-941-7250

**PLANO:** Plano Community Band Fall Concert Nov. 19. visitplano.com 972-814-8882

**PLANO:** *The Three Musketeers* Nov. 25–Dec. 30. theatre-britain.com 972-490-4202

**PLANO:** *Sherlock Holmes and the West End Horror* Oct. 26–Nov. 18. roverdramawerks.com

**RICHARDSON:** Chase Padgett in Concert Nov. 4. eisemanncenter.com 972-744-4650

**RICHARDSON:** *Pinkalicious* Nov. 12. eisemanncenter.com 972-744-4650

**RICHARDSON:** Plano Symphony: Hector Guzman Celebrates 35 Years Nov. 18. planosymphony.org 972-473-7262

**SALADO:** Scottish Gathering and Highland Games Nov. 10–12. saladoscottishfestival.com 512-947-5232

**SAN FELIPE:** Father of Texas Celebration Nov. 4. visitsanfelipeaustin.com 979-885-2181

**SMITHVILLE:** Scream Hollow Wicked Halloween Park Through Nov. 4. screamhollow.com 512-710-8267

**SMITHVILLE:** Airing of the Quilts and Garden Club Home Tour Nov. 11. smithvilletx.org 512-237-2313

**SULPHUR SPRINGS:** Christmas in the Park Nov. 25, Dec. 2. hopkinscountymuseum.org 903-885-2387

**TEMPLE:** First Friday Nov. 3. ci.temple.tx.us 254-298-5378

**TEMPLE:** Holiday Bowtique Nov. 7–8. cacarts.org 254-913-5666

**TEMPLE:** Coffee Time Nov. 15. downtowntemple.com 254-298-5378

**TEMPLE:** Dead Poet Night Nov. 22. downtowntemple.com 254-298-5378

**TEMPLE:** Food Truck Frenzy and Main Street Market Nov. 25. downtowntemple.com 254-298-5378

**VAN:** Holly Berry Holiday Bazaar Nov. 11. vantx.com 903-368-4015

**WAXAHACHIE:** Veterans Weekend and WWII Reenactment Nov. 10–12. waxahachiecvb.com 469-309-4040

**WHITNEY:** Classic Car Show Nov. 4. lakewhitneychamber.com 254-694-2540

**SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS**

**ALICE:** Christmas Parade Nov. 28. alicetxchamber.org 361-664-3454

**ALICE:** Twelve Days of Christmas Nov. 28–Dec. 9. alicetxchamber.org 361-664-3454

**BEEVILLE:** *Fleeting Light: First and Last Light Over the Texas Landscape* Through Dec. 15. bamtexas.org 361-358-8615

**CRYSTAL CITY:** Spinach Festival Nov. 9–12. spinachfestival.org 830-374-3161

**EAGLE PASS:** Veterans Day Parade Nov. 4. 830-773-2528

**FLORESVILLE:** Opry Nov. 2. facebook.com/floresvilleopry 830-391-1062

**GEORGE WEST:** George West Storyfest Nov. 4–5. georgeweststoryfest.org 361-449-2481

**MALLEN:** A Vibrant Heritage—Mexican Artisan Expo Nov. 10–12. facebook.com/mexicanartisanexpo 956-682-2871

**OAKVILLE:** Dobie Dichos: Campfires, Chili con Carne,

and the Words of J. Frank Dobie Nov. 3. georgeweststoryfest.org 361-449-2481

**SAN ANTONIO:** Fall Hudson Showroom and Main Space Through Dec. 31. artpace.org 210-212-4900

**SAN ANTONIO:** Weston Wright Lighting the Way 5K/10K Run/Walk Nov. 4. salighthouse.org/events 210-531-1533

**SAN ANTONIO:** Fall International Artists-In-Residence Nov. 9–Dec. 31. artpace.org 210-212-4900

**SAN ANTONIO:** Zoo Lights—Holiday Nights Nov. 17–Dec. 31. sazoo-aq.org

**SAN ANTONIO:** SeaWorld's Christmas Celebration Nov. 18–Dec. 31. seaworldparks.com

**SAN ANTONIO:** Six Flags Fiesta Texas Holiday in the Park Nov. 18–Jan. 18. sixflags.com/fiestatexas

**SAN ANTONIO:** A Wonderland Christmas Nov. 25–Dec. 23. morganswonderland.com

**SAN ANTONIO:** Ford Holiday River Parade Nov. 24. thesanantonio riverwalk.com 210-737-9040

**SAN ANTONIO:** Holidays in Bloom Nov. 24–Dec. 31. sabot.org

**SAN ANTONIO:** Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza Nov. 26–Dec. 2. mariachimusic.com 210-225-3353

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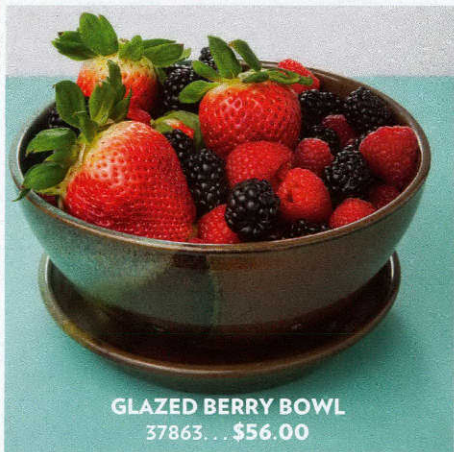
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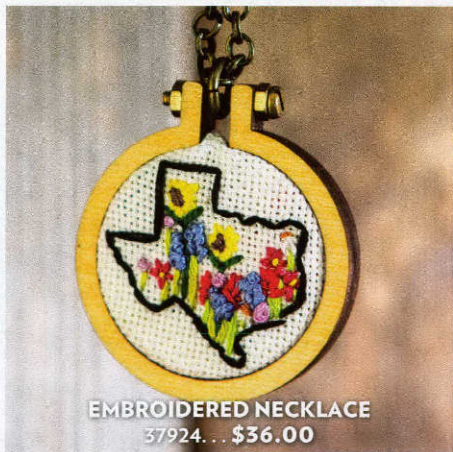
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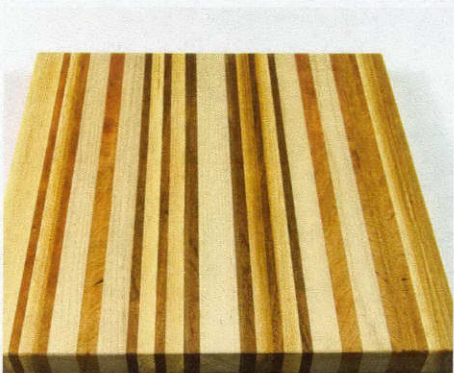
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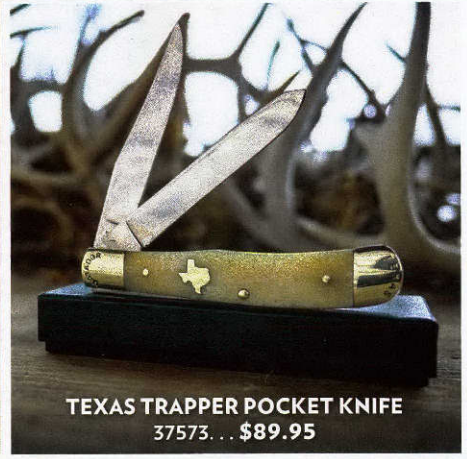




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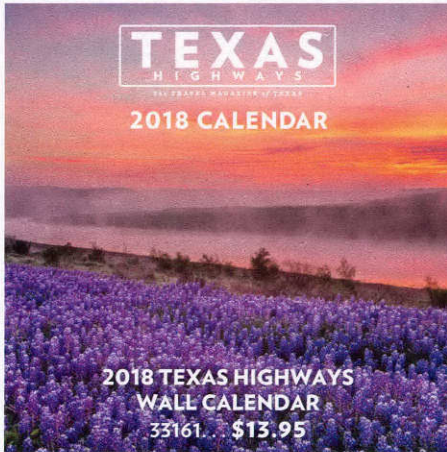
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were orbiting the moon, I could see Earth in the sky. It was a half-Earth, so it seemed to be getting smaller and smaller. It was more white than anything—polar ice caps and clouds. You could see some blue, which was the water, and just a little bit of brown. You don't see national borders from the moon. You can hold out your hand, and Earth fits in it. I remember just the wonder of it all, seeing this different perspective of where we live.

**Q:** *Does anything compare to the feeling of being on the moon?*

**A:** Not in a physical way. The landing on the moon was the most dramatic moment of my flight career. It was a challenge to land—there were rocks all over the surface. Once we got out, I found it to be just a lot of fun. After we got used to the bulky space-suits, we had a good time bouncing around and driving around on the moon. Nothing on Earth can compare to that experience.

**Q:** *What do you miss about the Apollo program?*

**A:** It was such a dynamic program. Changes were always being made to the spacecraft and in the schedule. You never sat in your office and twiddled your thumbs. After Apollo was over, I went to work on the space shuttle program from 1973 to 1975, but it was just meetings, nothing as dynamic as Apollo. But maybe I left the program too soon. I miss the excitement of Mission Control and the friendships that we established.

**Q:** *Why did you move to New Braunfels after NASA?*

**A:** I wanted to finish up my military career in the reserves at Randolph Air Force Base, and I also had business opportunities in San Antonio; it was close enough to commute. We had come to New Braunfels during my time off at NASA and had camped at Canyon Lake and floated on the Comal River. We loved the community. It reminded



## CHARLIE DUKE

chronicles his experiences during and after NASA in the book *Moonwalker*. Keep up with Duke and his upcoming speaking engagements at [charlieduke.com](http://charlieduke.com).

us of El Lago, where we had raised our boys and where a lot of astronauts, engineers, and technicians lived.

**Q:** *Where do you like to take visitors?*

**A:** We like to go to the San Antonio River Walk and drive into the Hill Country, to Fredericksburg and Enchanted Rock. If the weather is decent, we'll float in the Comal River, and we'll take them to Gruene Hall to enjoy some country music. For real good food, there's Pat's Place in New Braunfels. It's just a country diner but with great enchiladas, hamburgers, and chicken-fried steak. We love the outdoors. We've floated the Rio Grande a few times and have paddled canoes down the Sabine River to see a rookery. Once, we stayed up at Indian Lodge in Fort Davis for a couple of days and went to a star party at the McDonald Observatory.

**Q:** *Why are people still drawn to the Apollo story?*

**A:** Probably half of the world's population was not even born when we did it, so we have a whole new audience. Grandparents are telling their grandchildren about that time, how exciting it was, and getting them interested. Plus, it was one of the greatest undertakings of mankind ever. Sure, it must have been something to work on the pyramids in ancient Egypt, but in modern times, it was a great achievement. A thousand years from now, the 20th century is going to be remembered for the Apollo program. **L**

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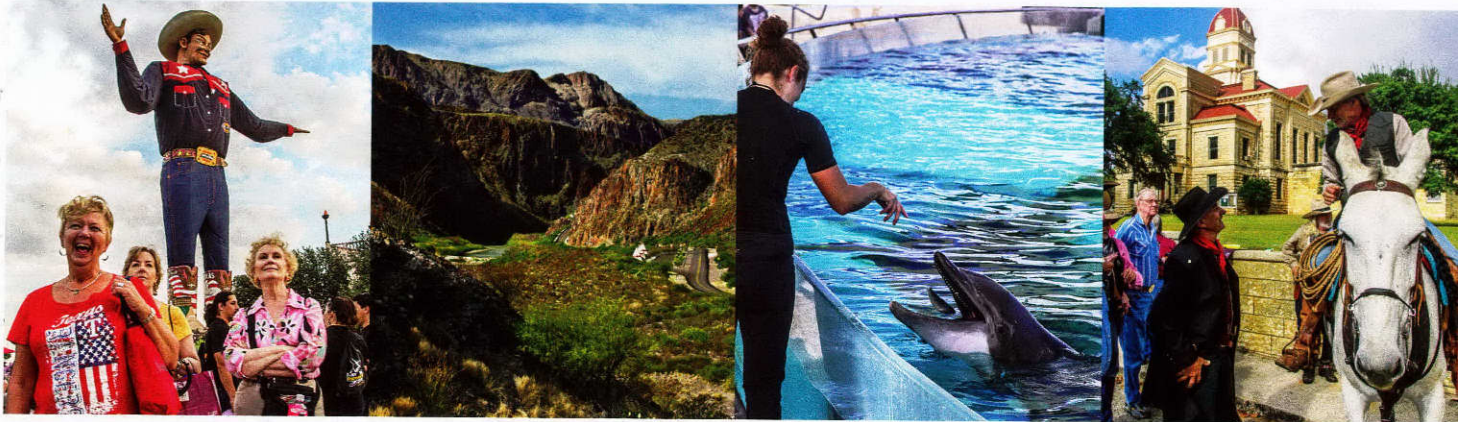
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# TEXAS HIGHWAYS travel resource guide



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# THE DAYTRIPPER

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## Sweet Escape

**T**HIS LITTLE TOWN southwest of the Metroplex may be small but it's not lacking when it comes to Texas-size tripping. Hico's history is mysterious, its desserts are mouthwatering, and its silo-climbing is intense.

**9 A.M.** To start my day, I moseyed on down to **The Chop House**, a restaurant set in a former meat locker in the **Midland Hotel**, which has been housing travelers since 1896. The heavenly aroma of fresh-baked cinnamon rolls wafted over me, and I knew what I would sample first. I followed the warm, gooey cinnamon rolls with some eggs and bacon, and I was ready to roll.

**10 A.M.** I wandered along the downtown streets and felt like I'd stepped onto the set of a Western as I passed the historic buildings, many of which still show the remnants of colorful old murals. I shopped at the fashionable **Blue Star Trading** boutique and then "popped" into **Hico Popcorn Works**. Corny jokes aside, this little store exploded with a handful of sweet and savory flavors. The spicy jalapeño topped my list,

with cinnamon toast coming in a close second.

**11:30 A.M.** As I continued down the street, I found the **Billy the Kid Museum**, retelling Hico's claim to fame as the final home of the famous outlaw. I learned the controversial story of how Billy may not have died in New Mexico in 1881 but instead lived to old age in Hico under the

name William "Brushy Bill" Roberts. I left the museum as convinced as some Hico locals, who would seemingly bet the family farm on Brushy Bill's story.

**1 P.M.** What couldn't be disputed was the rumbling in my tummy, so I quickly made my way to the **Upstairs Inn** to grab lunch downstairs at **Eis**. Named for the German word for "ice cream," this place offers a selection of

scoops, but the real star was the jalapeño pimento cheese sandwich made with wild tomato jam. The German word that came to mind was *gut* because it hit the spot real good.

**2 P.M.** After lunch I headed straight to **Wiseman House Chocolates**. Inside this small historic home, I found a selection of chocolates that would make Willy Wonka jealous. Handmade sweets, including more than a dozen kinds of chocolate truffles, filled the shelves. I started to chew a sample and was told to simply let it melt in my mouth. It took me to chocolate heaven, reminding me that we all need to slow down and taste the chocolate.

**3:30 P.M.** Full of energy (and probably too much chocolate), I found **Siloville**, the perfect place to burn off the sugar. The unconventional climbing facility features grips on the inside and outside of two 66-foot grain silos. The climb was challenging, but the killer view of Hico from the top made it all worth it. Next, I was on to Siloville's Ninja Warrior Course, where I learned that I'm not exactly a ninja, or even a TV ninja. Regardless, I had a blast hopping, leaping, and swinging over the exacting wooden obstacles.

**6 P.M.** For dinner, I selected the iconic **Koffee Kup Family Restaurant**, a Hico diner that's been serving up clas-

sic country fare in its current location since 1965. I scarfed down its signature chicken-fried steak as I chatted with the locals sitting next to me. And to polish it all off, I grabbed a slice of

Doctor's Office pie, with sweet cream cheese and vanilla custard atop a graham-cracker crust.

What a sweet trip! Any day that involves handmade chocolate truffles, outlaws, ninjas, and homemade pie is always a good one. And you'll find all this and more in the little town of Hico. So whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path, I hope to see you on the road. 🌮

**Chet Garner** is the host of *The Daytripper*® travel show on PBS. To view the Hico episode visit [thedaytripper.com](http://thedaytripper.com)

Contact the Hico Visitor Center at 254-796-2523; [hicovisitorcenter.com](http://hicovisitorcenter.com).



# TRAVEL MATTERS

TRAVEL TALK WITH TRUE TEXANS



## Ground Control to Charlie Duke

New Braunfels astronaut remembers the Apollo space program

story by Heather Brand

**O**NLY 12 PEOPLE HAVE WALKED ON THE MOON, AND NEW Braunfels resident Charlie Duke is one of them. Duke became the 10th astronaut to walk on the moon as part of the Apollo 16 mission in 1972. It was a life-changing experience for Duke, who was the first person to collect moon rocks from the lunar highlands. And the 82-year-old still shares his observations frequently as a guest speaker at events across the globe.

Raised in South Carolina, Duke joined NASA in 1966 after studying at the Naval Academy, enlisting as a pilot in the Air Force, and earning a master's degree in astronautics and aeronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Duke's career coincided with NASA's Apollo program, the gargantuan effort to send a man to the moon as President John F. Kennedy called for in his famous 1961 moonshot speech. As a result, Duke had a front-row seat to many of the American space program's signature achievements.

**"A thousand years from now, the 20th century is going to be remembered for the Apollo program."**

During the Apollo 11 mission—NASA's first moonwalk, immortalized by Neil Armstrong's "one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind" remark—Duke served as CAPCOM (capsule communicator), speaking directly with the astronauts from his Mission Control desk at Houston's Manned Spacecraft Center (now the Johnson Space Center). During Apollo 13—a 1970 mission that served as the basis for the 1995 movie starring Tom Hanks—Duke was part of the backup crew and witnessed the harrowing events unfold from Mission Control.

Whereas Duke went on to fame as the lunar module pilot for the Apollo 16 mission, many of those serving in a support capacity back at the space center remained largely unknown. A documentary released earlier this year, *Mission Control: The Unsung Heroes*, sheds light on those remarkable individuals, including Duke.

For Duke, who retired from NASA in 1975 to settle in New Braunfels with his family and pursue business interests, the documentary brings back vivid memories.

**Q:** What do you think of the new documentary?

**A:** I thought it was about time that Mission

Control got recognized. They saved the day on so many flights. Apollo 12 got struck by lightning twice at liftoff. Then there was Apollo 13. We had planned to support two guys for three days, but instead we had three guys and four days. And they saved our landing on Apollo 16.

**Q:** How did the Apollo 16 experience change your perspective?

**A:** When we > continued on page 84



# SIGHTSEER

GO. SEE. DO—TAKING IN TEXAS



WHAT: FRESNO RANCH WHERE: BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK WHEN: YEAR-ROUND

## Remote Retreat

After spending seven years on an abandoned ranch in Big Bend Ranch State Park, E. Dan Klepper has compiled a visual journal of life off the grid.

Between 2006 and 2013, writer, photographer, and artist E. Dan Klepper—a contributing editor for *Texas Highways*—lived on and off at the Fresno Ranch, a deserted tract of land in the Chihuahuan Desert. The 7,000-acre ranch—which was purchased by the state in 2008 and added to Big Bend Ranch State Park—contains a human history spanning centuries, including prehistoric camps, and Mexican and Anglo settler sites from the 19th- and early 20th-centuries. In *Why the Raven Calls the Canyon*, Klepper explores his fascination with this remote corner of the country and its sharp contrast to the urban routine. As a photographer, he was initially allured by the landscape's rough, raw edges, but soon Klepper began to embrace the simpler, less complicated way of life. "I started this project with an insider's vision of a particular place and time in the Big Bend, and ended up with a much deeper appreciation for the state's wildest place," he says. "I hope readers will too." Klepper will be signing copies of his books at the Texas Book Festival on Nov. 4-5 in Austin, in the Texas A&M University Press tent 1:30-4:30 p.m. [texasbookfestival.org](http://texasbookfestival.org)



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Texas Rising by Joe O'Connell & Blessing Hancock  
Texas Tech University Public Art Collection