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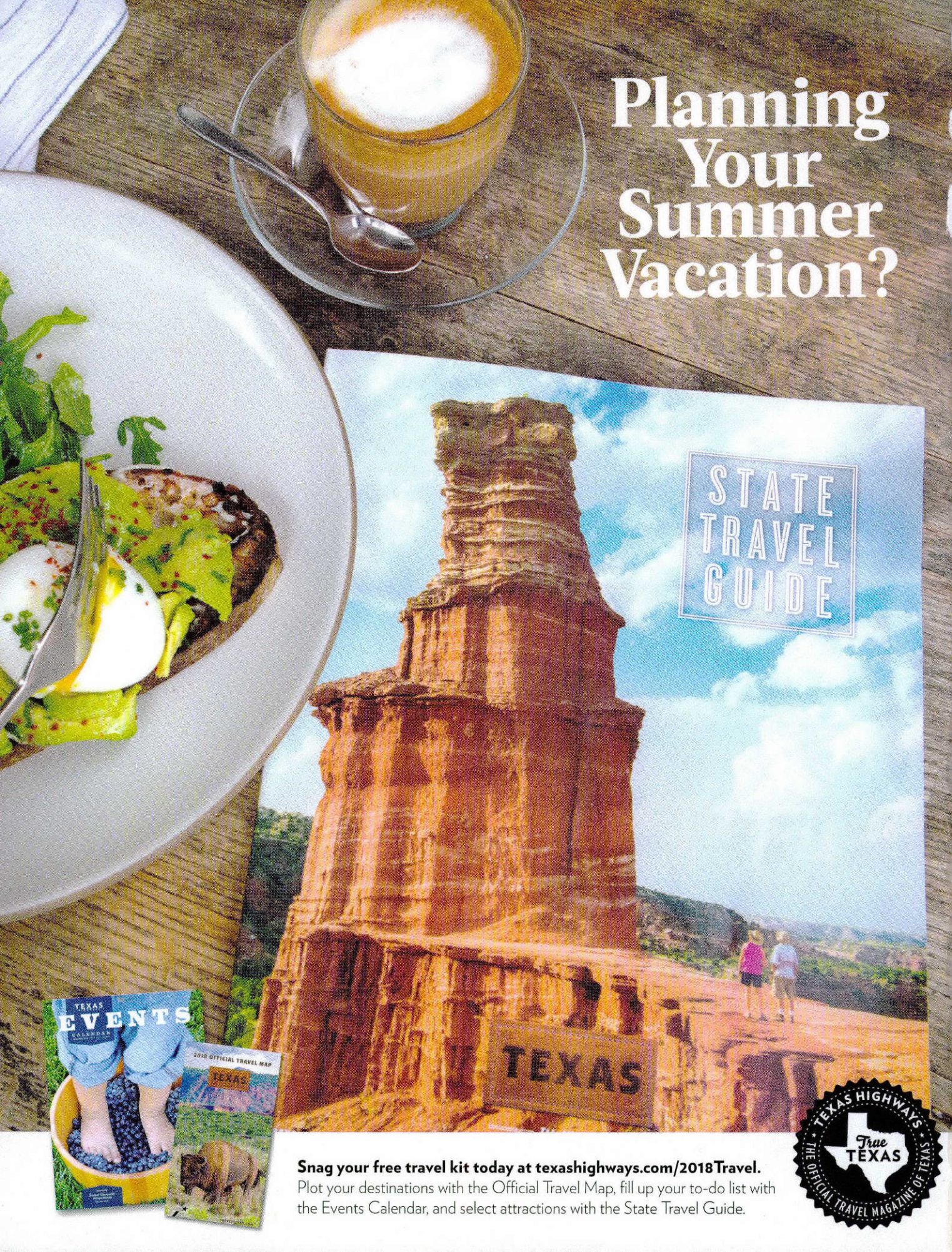
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EDITOR'S NOTE



The Call of the River

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT a river that evokes feelings of nostalgia. Perhaps it's the tie to something ancient—the current that ripples over our feet carries the same water that sustained native tribes and beckoned early settlers to its shore. Maybe it's that rivers remind us of the carefree way we played outdoors as children, before responsibilities and schedules stole the freedom and sense of wonder that marked our summer days. Beloved author John Graves considered time spent on a Texas river as an opportunity to reconnect with nature and ourselves. His journey down the Brazos, documented in 1960's

The Sabine River flows through the Piney Woods on the eastern edge of Texas.

Goodbye to a River, continues to inspire many adventures, including one chronicled in this issue.

Our new Managing Editor Wes Ferguson, who has authored two books on Texas rivers, puts it this way: "Texas is a pretty urban state, but our rivers are still these ribbons of wilderness running through our own backyards, where anyone can take a break from city or town life and go in search of solitude, beauty, and the promise of adventure—what Robert Earl Keen calls 'that dream around the bend.'"

And rivers offer many entry points. Not everyone can tackle a solitary, three-week canoe trip like Graves did; my husband and I enjoy taking our young kids to the nearby Pedernales River for an afternoon where they can hike and splash until their boundless energy is exhausted, at least for the day. Wes likes to run trotlines for catfish on his hometown river, the Sabine, but is more often found paddling the swift and shallow Blanco, his adopted stream. "For most Texans, it doesn't really matter where you live," he points out. "When you feel the call of the wild, a river is probably your nearest option."

Emily R Stone

EMILY ROBERTS STONE, *Executive Editor*



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JULY

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Falling for the Pedernales

The Pedernales River runs through a section of the Hill Country steeped in history and full of fun family diversions, from a science museum to an olive farm.

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Photographs by TOM MCCARTHY JR.

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Swing into Summer

Dog days of summer have you at the end of your rope? Launch yourself into your nearest swimming hole.

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A Return to the River

Inspired by John Graves' 1960 book *Goodbye to a River*, a writer takes a three-day paddling trip on the Guadalupe, the river of her childhood.

Story by CLAYTON MAXWELL

Photographs by KENNY BRAUN

Taking flight at
Tonkawa Springs

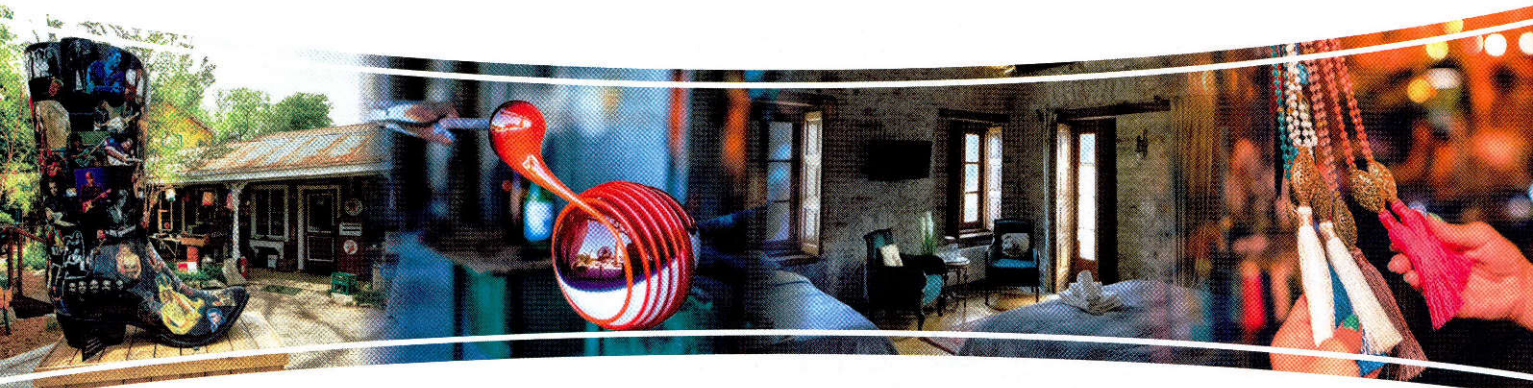
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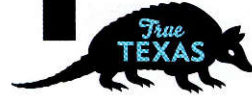
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JULY



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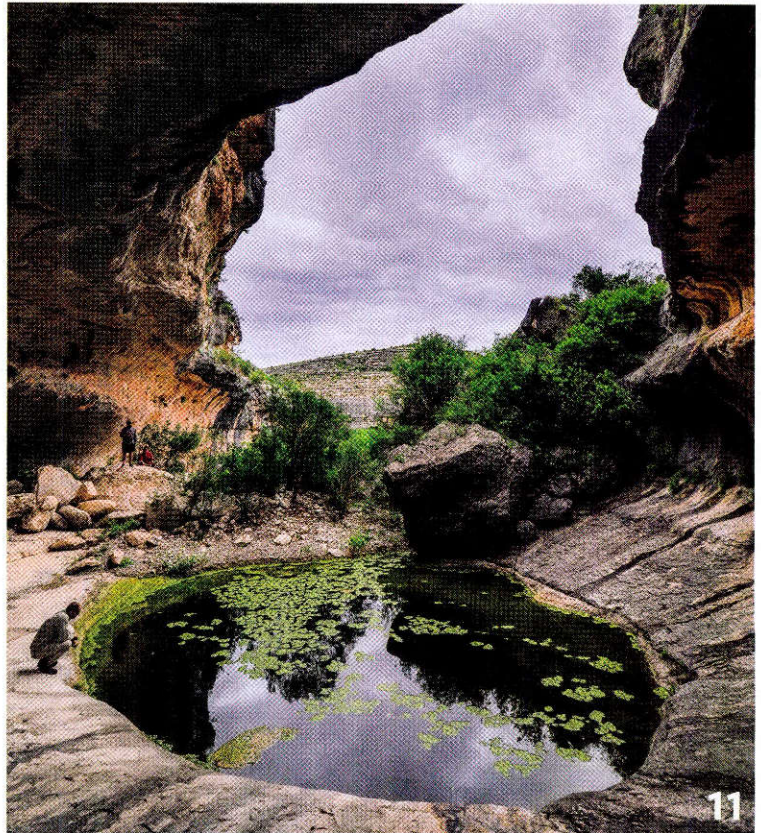
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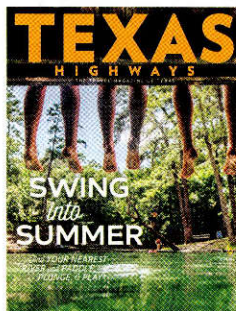
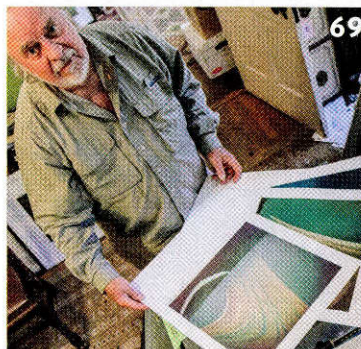
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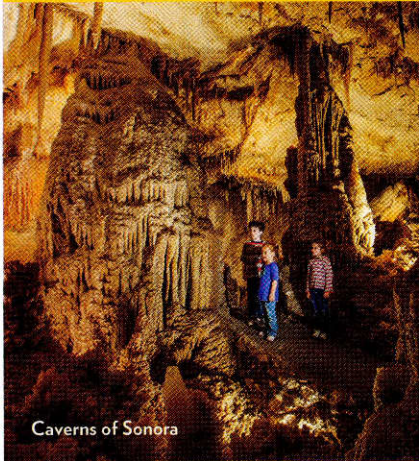


COVER

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in Garrison
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Caverns of Sonora

#TRUETXSUMMER CONTEST

Inspired by our "93 Days of Summer" feature? Share photos of your summertime adventures by posting them to our Facebook page to win True Texas swag. See the full checklist and contest rules online.



PAGE TURNERS

Want to read more this summer? We have some ideas for you. Head to our website for new book-related posts, including Q&As with authors W.F. Strong, Joe Lansdale, and Kenny Braun, and a story about the Katherine Ann Porter Literary Center in Kyle, which hosts readings by famed writers.



TOP TEXAS TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHERS ON INSTAGRAM

We can't get enough of the breathtaking shots of the Lone Star State on Instagram—that's why we curated a list on our site of 25 photographers' accounts you need to follow immediately.

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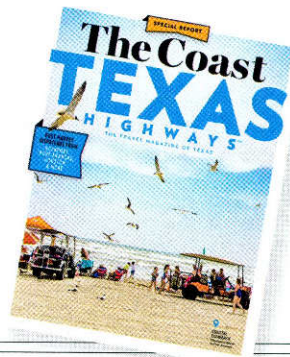
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GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

We were on the Texas coast last week. Spent five days on the beach—various spots between Port Aransas and Mustang Island. The water was beautiful!

CHAR WOODYARD, AUSTIN



OUR FAVORITE SOCIAL MEDIA OF THE MONTH



There are hotel rooms available in Port Aransas if you book early. Don't wait until the last minute!

MARY HONECK, PORT ARANSAS

I've been to Rockport many times. It's a wonderful place, and I'm glad to see it's coming back.

ROBERT SCHMITT SR., NEVIS, MINNESOTA

You have got to love Texas and understand it—every part of it. Texas does my heart good!

DONNA RAINS, DALLAS

And to think I grew up eating farm-to-table every day ... before it was cool!

JANICE EPP, CANADA



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BBQ Crabs

I just got my June issue and opened it to see a photo of the BBQ crabs and thought, "Well, now I'm going to have to call in sick tomorrow so I can drive to Nederland and eat at Sartin's!" Hey, it's only three and a half hours. I can do that in a day!

Betty Cole, Jacksonville

TH: Sartin's recently moved to Port Arthur, where they still serve BBQ crabs worthy of a road trip.

Aransas Pass

Your coverage of Gulf Coast recovery efforts not once mentioned Aransas Pass. Our city was beat up as bad as Port Aransas and Rockport and has struggled to rebuild with very little help and no publicity. Even your writer who obviously drove through downtown Aransas Pass to drive onto the Port Aransas ferry would have been impressed by the effort it took to clean up our downtown so he could do that.

Rick Rogers, Aransas Pass

To Cruise or Not?

Vehicles on beaches do more harm than good [June]. They drop fluids, crush clams, and block the view for beachgoers. Yes, local towns get parking fees, but in my opinion the

harm outweighs the good.

Phil Smith, San Antonio

Cherished Christoval

My brothers and I loved going to Christoval [May] in the early '60s. The rope swing over the river was our favorite. Dad always brought new rope in case the one there was worn. At night the concession stand on the river supplied yummy treats and a big jukebox. It was a great place on a hot night to hear your favorite tunes floating down the river.

Pamela Thornton Campbell, Katy

Mealy Sage

I always enjoy your issues with beautiful wildflowers; however, I would like you to consider one species that is usually forgotten. After the bluebonnets have begun to fade, the mealy sage, or *Salvia farinacea*, comes out aplenty and stays for longer. Unfortunately, our

small crop of bluebonnets did not appear this year, but the mealy sage is covering our few acres outside of Kerrville and more than making up for it.

B. Dennis Finuf, Kerrville

RIP James Avery

I was so sorry to hear of James Avery's passing. I visited his little shop in the '70s when at Mo-Ranch and have collected many special pieces over the years. They're my favorite graduation gifts. He was so talented. Rest in peace Mr. Avery. Thank you for sharing your gift with us all.

Lisa Ross Harmet, Clarendon Hills, Illinois

TH: We too were saddened to learn of James Avery's death at the age of 96 this spring. His legacy will live on through his countless creations of jewelry treasured around the world. Find our 2015 story about Avery at texashighways.com.

READER'S FAVORITE

Old-Time Education

Come spend a day in 1898 at the West Bay Common School Children's Museum in old League City. Older adults come and share their school-days history. High school students planning to become teachers come to see how education has changed. Younger students learn about school in 1898. The museum is the national headquarters for the Country School Association of America.

LINDA MICHAEL, League City

The West Bay Common School Children's Museum, 210 N. Kansas St. in League City, is open Mon-Thu 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Fri 9 a.m.-1 p.m., and otherwise by appointment. Call 281-554-2994; oneroomschoolhouse.org.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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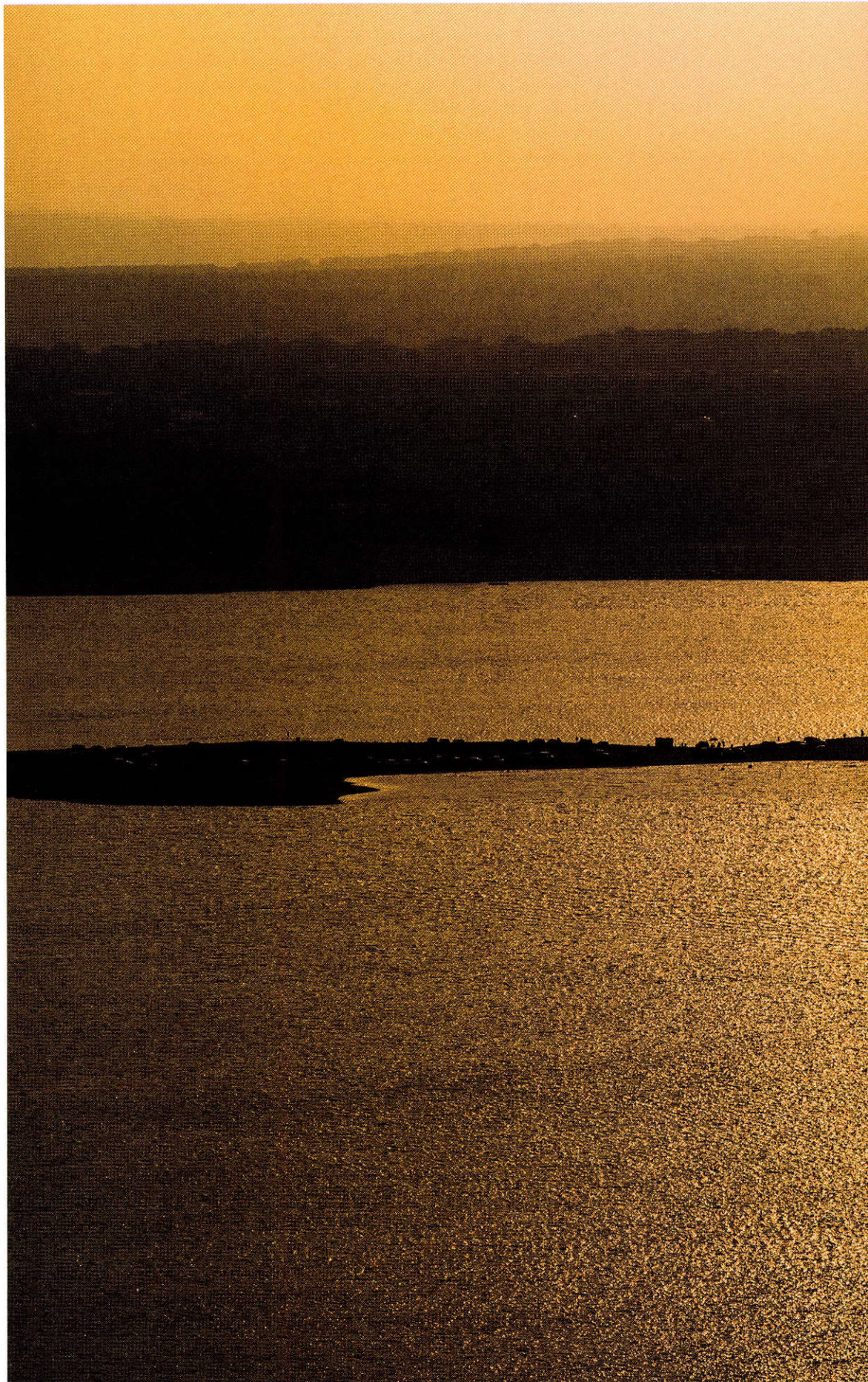


SCENIC ROUTE

Sunset Sail

*30° 24' 21.20" N
97° 52' 27.58" W*

TEXAS HAS MORE than 180 major reservoirs that provide a break from the summer heat and memorable experiences like this solitary sunset sail on Lake Travis. An 18,000-acre impoundment on the Colorado River, Lake Travis winds more than 60 miles from Marble Falls to just northwest of Austin. Its shores are home to boat rental companies as well as Lower Colorado River Authority and Travis County parks that offer boat ramps, camping, beaches, picnic areas, and fishing. For more information, visit laketravis.com.





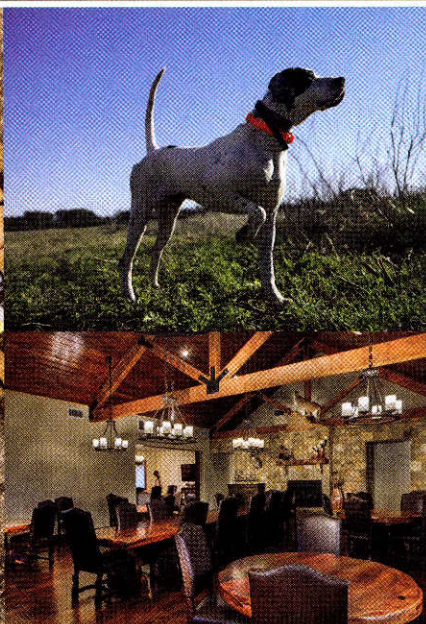
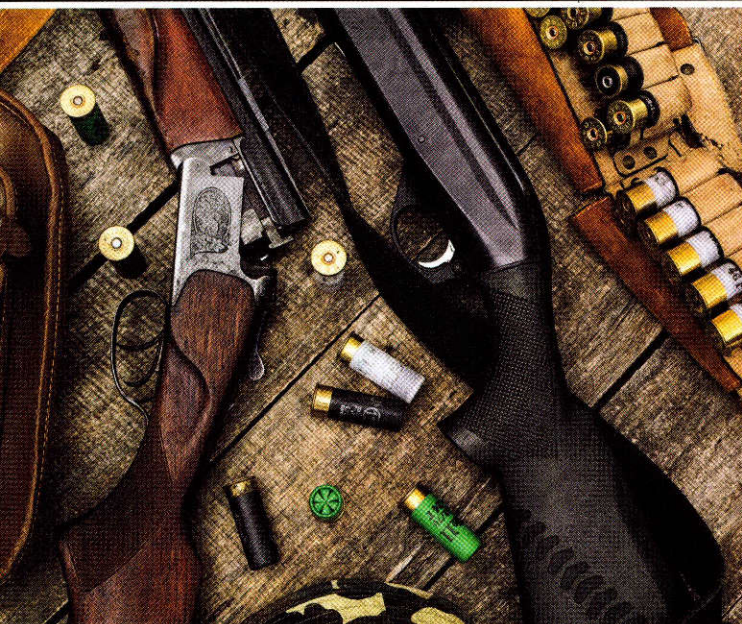


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DRIVE

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Padding the Wild Pecos

On a remote river, wrapped up in the arms of Mother Nature

story by Pam LeBlanc



WHEN YOU LAUNCH a kayak on the lower Pecos River, you've made a five-day date with Mother Nature.

For nearly a week, an unspooling ribbon of greenish-blue will carry you down frothy rapids, alongside towering escarpments, and into deep,

fish-filled pools. You'll tangle with tall reeds that line the banks, drag boats through a section of bony limestone channels called The Flutes, and camp on rocky riverbanks.

And every day, those looming canyon walls will tighten their grip.

When you finally take out—because, eventually, you must—you'll

miss the unpolished beauty and rough-and-tumble attitude of the river, which starts in the mountains of New Mexico and cuts across western Texas on the way to its confluence with the Rio Grande at Amistad Reservoir.

A canoe camping trip on the Devils River last spring sparked the hidden paddler inside my soul. I wanted to dip a paddle in as many rivers as possible, especially the Pecos. Logistics are tricky, though. Because public access is limited, paddlers must commit to covering 59 miles between Pandale and the US 90 High Bridge near Comstock. That takes most people at least five days.

Outfitters don't serve the area, although you can call Comstock resident Emilio Hinojosa to deliver your vehicle (and you) to the put-in. He'll drive it back to Comstock while you're paddling, and then pick you up at the end.

I rounded up some friends and planned a trip for April. As I prepared, experienced locals reminded me this is not a trip for novices. The rugged canyons are prone to flash flooding, so it's important to stay on top of weather forecasts. They advised me to pack light and take a satellite communications device, patch kit, and spare paddle.

Because the water in the Pecos is very alkaline, paddlers should also carry fresh water. I stowed 3 gallons in my kayak, which I would supplement with water I gathered and filtered from springs. I also tucked a copy of Louis F. Aulbach's excellent guidebook *The Lower Pecos River* into a waterproof bag.

We'd have to choose our campsites carefully. The land along the river is privately owned. Under Texas law, paddlers can camp on islands or below the "gradient boundary," which often doesn't allow for much higher than flat rocks on the bank.

We got lucky. Houston Dobbins, one of the paddlers in our

Along the Pecos River and its tributaries, water has carved the limestone bedrock into dramatic cliffs and canyons.

five-person group and a native of Comstock, knows landowners in the area. He secured permission to visit special sites along the way and arranged take-out upstream of the High Bridge so we could avoid the last 13 miles, notorious for slow-moving water and headwinds.

On a cloudy spring morning, we headed to Pandale, tugged our gear across the limestone bedrock, steadied our boats in the slowly swirling water, and left the real world behind.

"You're starting this trip and there's only one way out—you have to finish," said Colton Moore, one of our paddlers.

The river's flow was low, hovering around 130 cubic feet per second. That meant we were up and out of our boats frequently. We covered a leisurely 10 miles a day and camped on rocky banks, where rushing flood waters have carved cliff sides that look like giant, barrel-shaped ocean waves.

We maneuvered our kayaks around boulders and through shallow stretches, and navigated rapids that occasionally tossed us from our boats. We watched one morning as a herd of aoudad scaled a gunmetal gray cliff. We followed a group of white-tail deer swimming downstream. We showered under a mossy spring and dove into pools of turquoise. Owls hooted us to sleep.

"You're starting this trip and there's only one way out—you have to finish."

This stretch of river is known for the rock art created by ancient people. Paintings adorn rocky shelters, and petroglyphs cover an area at least the size of a football field at Lewis Canyon on a private ranch that borders the Pecos. (Resist the urge to

explore, unless you have permission to enter private property.)

What we didn't see is other humans—not a single one, unless you count the proprietors of J&P Bar and Grill in Comstock, who delivered chicken tacos and cold beer the last night.

All that solitude makes one think. "A lot of what's on my mind is how people survived prior to it becoming America, how people managed to make a living and raise a family down on that river," Dobbins said. "They made it work."

Dobbins, who has paddled the Devils and Pecos rivers multiple times, spent his nights on a \$20 air mattress, no tent to spoil his view of the stars. His trusty river dog, Oso, came along too, perching on the bow of Dobbins' kayak.

The last morning, we awoke to skies the color of dryer lint. A front had

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blown in, and winds whipped. The cliff walls closed in like curtains, and by the time we reached Painted Canyon, where the biggest rapids awaited, I couldn't stop shivering. We stopped to dry out and scout what lay ahead.

Then, one by one, the other paddlers made their way through the rapid. One boat flipped, dumping its occupant into the roiling river. That sealed the deal. Still cold and wet, I decided to let one of the more experienced paddlers take my boat through while I hiked around.

From there, we paddled a few more miles through clear, deep water. We glided along silently, reluctant to call an end to the trip.

"It puts me back into what a lot of people refer to as your '3-foot world'—everything that's going on in front of you, right in this minute," Moore reflected. "A lot of people get lost in what's happening on Instagram or

Facebook. None of that is relevant out here. The only thing that's relevant is what's happening with me and the water and the next rock."

I'd trashed my straw cowboy hat, ripped apart one of my river sandals, and busted my sunglasses. We were tired and sunburned but couldn't wipe away our smiles as we pulled our boats out of the water.

Mother Nature had delivered the perfect adventure. 🐾



A trip on the Pecos River requires careful planning; services are very limited. The river runs through private property; camping options are limited to the lower banks; and

there's no cell phone service. Public access points are at FM 2083 in Pandale and the US 90 bridge at Amistad Reservoir. Comstock resident Emilio Hinojosa offers shuttle services for paddlers; costs vary. Call Hinojosa at 830-317-0760.



Paddlers relax on the bank of the Pecos River in Southwest Texas at sunset.



Around the Bend

The Bend General Store on the Colorado River

story by **Wes Ferguson**

BOB FULLERTON, KNOWN TO MOST AS “BAD BOB,” was hunting wasps the first time I visited the general store he owned in the rural village of Bend, just upriver from Colorado Bend State Park. Fullerton didn’t use bug spray or a tennis racket. Instead, he took a BB gun in hand as he stalked the winged insects colonizing the eaves of Bad Bob’s Bend Store. Past the front screen door and the cedar posts that hold up the building’s rusted metal roof, he pumped his gun and took aim in the vicinity of firewood being sold by the bundle.

Pop!

A wasp fell. Fullerton turned to the customers who’d gathered to watch, and he nodded with obvious pride. “Confirmed kill,” he said.

In the decade he operated Bad Bob’s, Fullerton nurtured a reputation for eccentricity and eclectic tastes. With steady

I left with a dusty pack of 1991-era Donruss baseball cards and two postcards of flathead catfish laid across the tailgate of a Ford pickup truck.

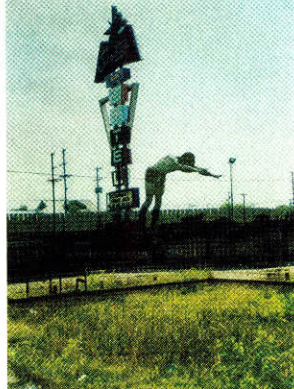
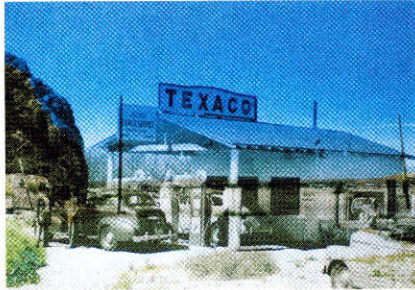
business from anglers and Hill Country campers, he avoided the fate of so many of Texas’ old-time general stores that fell victim to declining rural populations and competition from chain stores. Plenty of mom-and-pop shops have cleared their shelves of quotidian wares like canned vegetables and rolls of toilet paper to make room for antiques and tchotchkes meant to tempt tourists. But Fullerton got by selling a little bit of everything from his modest cinder-block store: minnows and worms, groceries, coffee, hamburgers, children’s toys, fishing tackle, camping

Bret Cali, left, has big plans for the Bend General Store. Previous owner Bob “Bad Bob” Fullerton, right, has not gone far.

IN THE GALLERIES @ IAC



MOTHER ROAD:
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gear, and other stuff he'd accrued over time.

I was looking for a can of Dr Pepper when I stopped by in March 2017. I left with a dusty pack of 1991-era Donruss baseball cards and two post-cards of flathead catfish laid across the tailgate of a Ford pickup truck. A covered patio next to the store offers a meeting place for the area's farmers and ranchers to sip their coffee in the morning. On the other side of the building, an open-air stage hosts live music on the weekends. As I was leaving, a long-bearded blues guitarist was setting up for a show next to a couple of worn-out couches and a pin-ball machine.

Fullerton also sings the blues and plays guitar. He acquired the "Bad Bob" nickname while performing with an Austin band called the Rhythm Rats. "We had two guitar players named Bob, and they called me 'Bad Bob' because the other guy was quite a bit better than I was," he explained.

"It's not close enough to be a commuter city, but it's next to a beautiful river and some of the best terrain in the state."

But it's the end of an era in Bend: The store has a new owner and a new name. Bret Cali, who previously operated general stores in Sisterdale, Llano, and Alaska, purchased Bad Bob's from Fullerton in January and rechristened it the Bend General Store.

Rather than shooting wasps outside the storefront, Cali was taking a load off in a hammock strung between two cedar posts next to a well-used community bulletin board when I pulled up on a sunny afternoon in February. Cali had already applied a new coat of bright red paint and moved in four one-room vacation rental cabins a short walk from the stage, where blues and country music concerts and a Saturday pickers' circle are still being held.

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The general store in Bend has a new name, but it hasn't lost the eclectic charm of its previous incarnation as **Bad Bob's Bend Store**.

"There are not too many classic general stores like this," Cali said. "It's a real score."

For at least eight decades, the general store has served the community of Bend, settled in 1854 on a horse-shoe bend of the Colorado River. Flowing just downstream, the river passes a couple of resorts called Sulphur Springs Camp and the Barefoot Camp and R.V. Park, which offer 6 miles of riverfront access between them, then arrives at Colorado Bend State Park. Beyond the opposite bank, Fiesta Vineyard & Winery offers wine tastings paired with small pizzas and meat-and-cheese boards.

Anglers are especially drawn to Bend when the sand bass travel up-river from Lake Buchanan to spawn in the early spring. When the weather warms up, Colorado Bend State Park visitors swim, float, and paddle in the river; others hike the mile-and-a-half trail to the state park's nearly 70-foot Gorman Falls. Although there's a

lot to do in Bend, the village is more than 20 miles west of Lampasas and 90 miles northwest of Austin—far enough from any metro area that Cali isn't worried about the community losing its rural character anytime soon. "This place is still small," he said. "It's not close enough to be a commuter city, but it's next to a beautiful river and some of the best terrain in the state."

As Cali manned the cash register, a silver-haired customer stopped in for two bags of popcorn. She held up her phone to show off a photo she'd snapped in the state park earlier that day of a rock shaped like a doughnut, with a hole inexplicably going all the way through it. A couple of fishermen came and went, picking up lures and snacks.

As for "Bad Bob" Fullerton, he has already opened a low-key swap shop at his home across the gravel road from his former general store. A sign in front of the house encouraged

visitors to honk, so I did. Fullerton, who is 66 years old, came outside wearing a "Bad Bob" baseball cap and his "The Bobfather" T-shirt. His plan is to buy and sell cheap items like used furniture, which might be an easier way to make a living than running the general store. He's also playing in a few bands, including a blues outfit called the Bend Cats and a Baptist praise band on Sunday mornings.

"It's been an adjustment for me because I went from working seven days a week, and now I'm kind of retired," he said, adding that he is proud to have kept Bad Bob's open for a decade and found a successor in Cali.

There's one other thing Bob is proud of: "I dropped quite a few wasps." 🐝



BEND GENERAL STORE,
at 112 County Road 438 in Bend,
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bendgeneralstore](https://facebook.com/bendgeneralstore).



Peace in the Pines

On the banks of the Angelina, La Paz is a serene forest retreat

Story by **Kimya Kavehkar**

PAUL SMITH, CO-OWNER of La Paz Bed and Breakfast in Jasper, turns his pontoon boat off the main stretch of the Angelina River, where his inn is stationed, into an offshoot called Ward's Branch. For the past hour and a half, he's been leading a tour of the Angelina while describing the various wildlife seen here, bald eagles in particular, and how hurricanes Ike and Rita have affected the waterway. But when we reach Ward's Branch, just a half-mile from La Paz, he cuts off the motor, and we sit in complete stillness for a few minutes.

Aside from a few distant bird calls, there is no noise: no low hum of insects; no footsteps, human or otherwise; no revelers in other boats; barely the sound of our own breathing. It's both jarring and moving. It's hard to find such silence in day-to-day life. Perhaps even harder to find is a corner of the world that feels like your own.

That's why Paul and his wife, Anne Allison-Smith, built La Paz, meaning "peace" in Spanish, after spending nearly 40 years living in Houston. The Jasper natives returned for the river where they played as kids, water skiing and swimming. The couple, who've known each other since they

La Paz Bed and Breakfast offers kayaks for making a 4-mile trip down a stretch of the **Angelina River**.

were 4-year-olds, bought the 8-acre property in 2001. At the time, it only had a log cabin on it, and the retreat became a personal getaway when city life became too crowded, too overwhelming, or too polluted with noise. "I found myself waiting for it to be Friday so we could come here," says Paul, formerly a marketing and sales manager for an advertising firm.

In 2009, they built the house that Anne had been sketching since she was a child: an elegant white, three-story, Victorian-style farmhouse with a wide wrap-around porch inspired by the work of Jasper architect W.P. Cook, who designed many of the upscale homes in town in the early 1900s. To perfect her skills, Anne even went to design school for a couple of years in her 40s. "It is my favorite material possession," she says. "Except for a four-day trip to New Orleans, I saw every nail and stud put into this place."

Aside from a few distant bird calls, there is no noise: no hum of insects; no footsteps, human or otherwise; no revelers in other boats; barely the sound of our own breathing. It's both jarring and moving.

They opened La Paz as a bed and breakfast in 2010. The main house serves as the residence for Anne and Paul but is mostly open to guests, including the high-ceiling living room with a fireplace, dining room decorated with dainty antique cups and saucers, and a third-floor reading observatory that overlooks the river. There are also two guest rooms inside the main house. On the first floor is "Mama's Room," inspired by Anne's mother, who Anne refers to as a "really cool chick." Decorated with furniture from Anne's childhood home, the room features a queen-size iron-and-brass bed and en-suite bathroom



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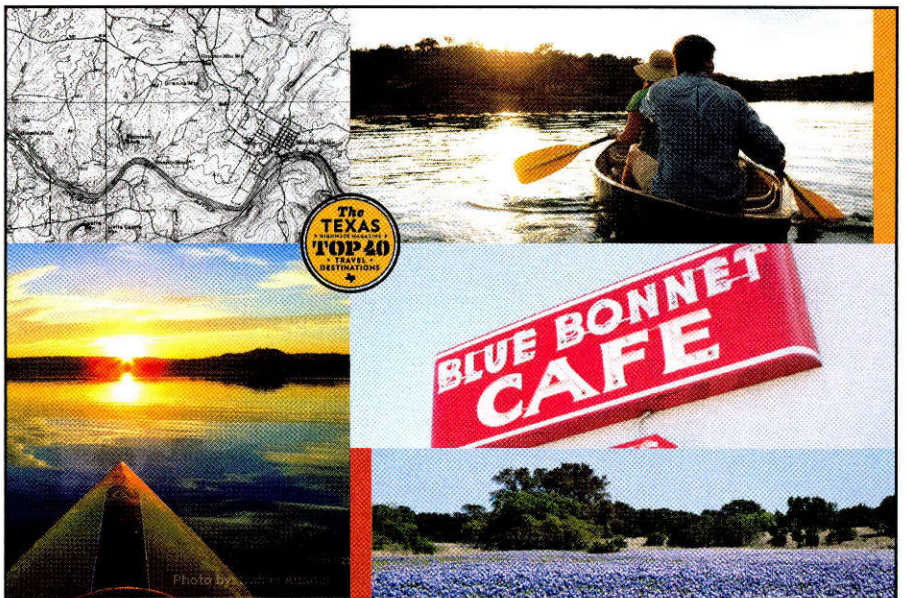
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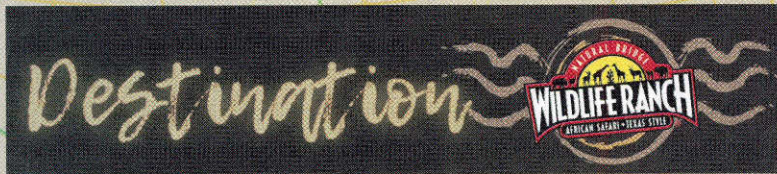
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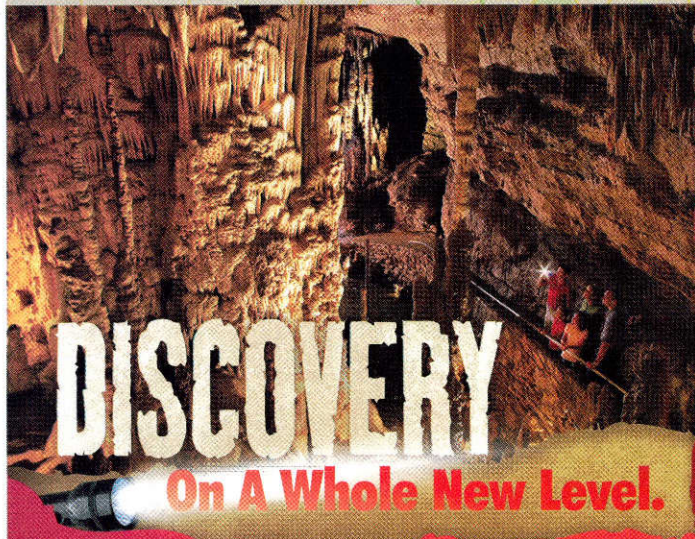


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La Paz is a destination within itself—it almost isn't necessary to leave the grounds at all.

Outside of the main house is a path that leads to the floating dock where visitors can read, fish, or just gaze out onto the tranquil, secluded river. For the more adventurous type, La Paz has one canoe and seven kayaks, which you can take on a 4-mile trip downriver, where Paul and Anne will pick you up with their truck at a boat dock and shuttle you back to home base. Paul offers rides on the pontoon boat for \$50 a room—on a steamy East Texas summer day, the wind created by cruising feels mighty good. While on the river, keep an eye out for alligators, great blue herons, river otters, and the bald eagles that sit imposingly atop the bald cypress trees.

Most people visit Jasper to fish. Next door to La Paz is Sam Rayburn Reservoir, the largest lake wholly within Texas and a huge attraction for people hoping to catch



The main house at La Paz was designed by co-owner Anne Allison-Smith and was inspired by turn-of-the-century Jasper architect W.P. Cook.

largemouth bass and crappie for sport and for recreation. If you want a more in-depth look at how the state stocks its lakes with fish, the John D. Parker East Texas State Fish Hatchery, a 20-minute drive from La Paz, offers tours Tuesdays and Fridays led by knowledgeable manager Reese Sparrow.

With the slow pace of Jasper, it can be hard to find lots to do, but Paul and Anne are full of suggestions and happy to arrange a guided fishing trip or museum tour, point you to the nearest hiking trail—like the fascinating 3-mile Sawmill Trail in the Angelina National Forest—or suggest a place in town to grab a bite

(the duo raves about Tia Juanita’s Fish Camp, a new-ish Cajun/Tex-Mex joint).

But La Paz is a destination within itself—it almost isn’t necessary to leave the grounds at all. After enjoying a home-cooked breakfast like granola with vanilla yogurt and an egg boat with ham, cheese, and green onions, or creme-brulee French toast, wander around the yards—create a scavenger hunt by finding all the interesting, whimsical art pieces placed around the grounds, from rusted piano keys to a statue of a roadrunner, or gather up a group to play a game of croquet or backgammon on the 2,200-square-foot porch.

A few hundred yards to the right of the main house is “The Perch,” an enclosed, raised wooden structure in the middle of the forest. “I love being in the trees, so Paul built this for me,” Anne says. “It’s my zen spot where I go to get away from everything. My phone doesn’t even work down there.” It’s a prime location to achieve inner peace through outer peace. 🌲



LA PAZ BED AND BREAKFAST

is at 850 County Road 051 in Jasper. Rooms range from \$149 to \$225. Call 409-383-1301; lapazbnb.com.



Natural Muse

When visiting Wimberley, take home a piece of local art inspired by the Blanco River

Story by **Rose L. Thayer**

HERB SMITH, ONE OF the many artists who call Wimberley home, fell in love with the village during an encounter with the Blanco River in 1974.

He'd been working in Houston as an illustrator for medical educational materials when a bout of pink eye forced his daughter to miss her bus to a Hill Country summer camp, and Smith ended up driving her to

Wimberley after she recovered. At the camp director's recommendation, he pulled the family pop-up tent trailer into a now-defunct campsite at a picturesque area of the Blanco called the Little Arkansas, downstream from Wimberley.

"The river was just beautiful," he says of that first visit. "After driving in through the cypress trees for just a few seconds, I was hooked." In 2002, Smith began building a house. Now

retired, he lives in Wimberley full-time and has turned his hobby of photography into a business. His beloved river is a frequent muse, and his photos teem with intricate lines and captivating use of light and color.

As nature-loving artists like Smith have flocked to Wimberley, 40 miles southwest of Austin, the town has cultivated a culture of creative spirit and artistic pursuit. A dozen downtown galleries featuring works from nearly 300 artists in various mediums and 50 colorful, oversized boot sculptures around town (a project established by the Wimberley Valley Arts and Cultural Alliance in 2014) add to the vibe. This dedication led the Texas Commission on the Arts to recognize Wimberley in 2015 as one of the 36 cultural districts in Texas.

Above: Art of 12 is one of the dozens of art galleries in Wimberley. Right: Photographer Herb Smith at Blue Hole.



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is at 13909 Ranch Road 12, open Mon-Sat 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Sun noon-4 p.m. Call 512-722-6032; pitzersart.com.

"Artists attract artists," says Stan Allen, artist and owner of Bent Tree Gallery. "The artists, of course, have been inspired by the river. The artist's eye brings so much more enjoyment."

Bent Tree Gallery, established by Allen and his daughter nearly a decade ago, is one place in the town square where visitors can purchase a piece of locally made and inspired art. Allen's photo-based digital art creations include a piece titled *Cypress Creek in the fall*, in which he captures a beautiful Texas fall day with golden leaves against a clear blue sky.

Over at Pitzer's Fine Arts, located near the square, owner Rob Pitzer curates a mix of local and national artists. On the wall behind Pitzer's desk hangs the work of Wimberley

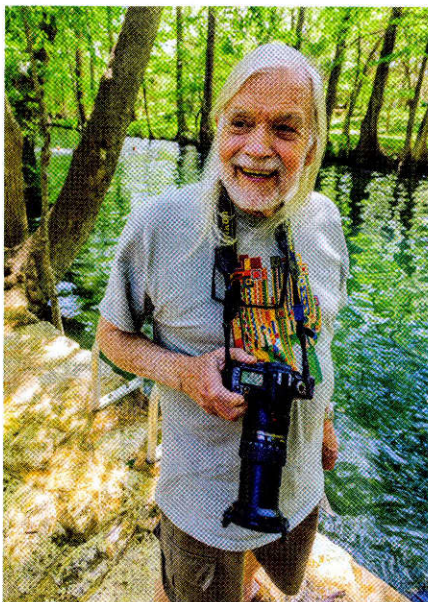


Photo: Will van Overbeek

artist Lilli Pell, whose paintings have a strong Texana theme, featuring cattle, fences, and valley landscapes. Last year, she sold more paintings than any of the gallery's other artists. While Pitzer says many tourists come in for local art like Pell's, he also has visitors looking to purchase work from nationally known artists in his collection.

"When you're buying art, what I tell people is, you buy what you like. Don't buy something because of who did it. Buy it because you enjoy looking at it," Pitzer says. "That's by far the most important reason to buy art."

Despite the Blanco's contribution to Wimberley in beauty, tourism, and commerce, most of the banks are on private property, so public access is limited—and the river also carries the potential for danger. In 2015, horrific flooding overtook the area, destroying property, taking lives, and bringing down many well-established trees. Smith, the photographer, said his own home received 8 feet of water. As difficult as his personal recovery process was, seeing the changes along the river was equally devastating. He and many other Wimberley residents agree that a degree of its beauty was lost in the flood.

"I still love the river," Smith says. "But the river is not as good to photograph now. It won't be back to what it was in my lifetime."

But the destruction has inspired other artists. To honor the downed bald cypress trees, as well as lost oak, pecan, and walnut trees, local artist and handyman John Hollaway began collecting the massive wooden remains and turning them into one-of-a-kind pieces of art and furniture. Three years later, Hollaway is still filling custom orders with the salvaged trees.

"Cypress trees are part of Wimberley," he says. "I just thought, I have to do something to save some of this wood. I'm giving it life after death." 🐾

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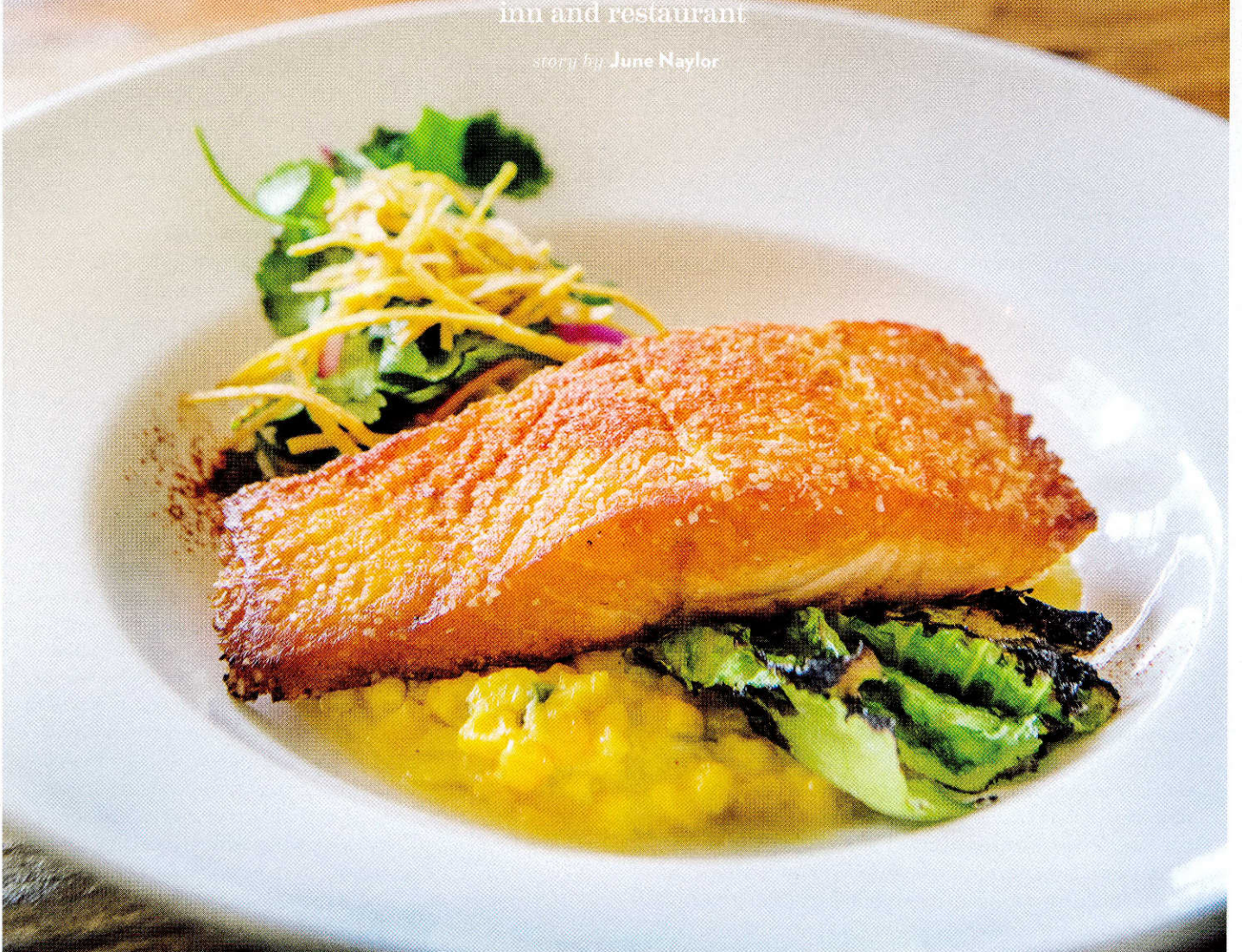
PLATES

TRAVEL + DRINK + EAT

The Stagecoach Rides Again

A new chapter for Salado's storied
inn and restaurant

story by June Naylor



The reborn Stagecoach Inn in Salado offers classic dishes with new twists, like seared salmon with grilled escarole and jalapeño creamed corn.



SALADO'S STAGECOACH INN, FOUNDED IN 1861, was one of the state's oldest continually operating hotels until it closed for restoration in 2015, although it may be known best for the hushpuppies served at the inn's restaurant. Generations of Texas travelers made the Stagecoach a go-to dining spot on the drive between Dallas and Austin, but that ritual came to a lurching halt a few years ago as the aging inn lost its footing and fell into foreclosure—only to be purchased by a high-profile consortium of developers, preservation architects, and Austin's La Corsha Hospitality Group. After two years of planning and restoration, the restaurant reopened last June, and the inn's hotel rooms are set to open later this summer.

Though coats of white paint now cover the old wooden boardwalk that stretches over a creek bed, the exterior of wood and stone is virtually unchanged from the restaurant's debut in 1943. Walking on the polished pine floors during a recent weekday lunch, I gazed through familiar plate-glass windows at the enormous live oak tree—thought to be 275 years old—around which the building was structured. The tree was surely appreciated by the thousands of travelers who made this one of the nation's more famous roadside dining stops in the 1950s and '60s, when it was featured in both *Life* and *Time* magazines.

Claiming a table next to a window, I glimpsed what's now a beautiful bar area taking up part of a former dining room. Adjoining dining areas still have low ceilings and old fireplaces,

and the very same Sam Houston portrait hangs over one mantle. Turning to the menu, I was gratified to find dishes featured once upon a time, albeit with some new twists. Helming the Stagecoach dining room's revival is La Corsha's David Bull, a chef who came to fame at The Driskill Hotel in Austin and has continued his food finesse at Second Bar + Kitchen in Austin. But like everyone who fosters tender memories of Stagecoach meals, I had to wonder: Can Bull really get those hushpuppies right?

I chose the beloved hushpuppies as my starter, naturally. The stubby sticks arrived looking just right, evenly golden-brown and firm to the touch. I bit inside with cautious, nervous expectation, and tasted ... perfection. A little lighter than a typical cornbread hushpuppy, which has a thick exterior and dense interior, this is more like hot-water cornbread, with a feathery inside that's a tiny bit sweet at the front and a smidge salty at the finish.

It hadn't been easy to get them right, Bull confessed: Although he and his kitchen team followed recipes originating from past Stagecoach cooks, old-timers complained the hushpuppies were wrong. He and his team worked and worked some more until they declared success.

The feast continued with tomato aspic, another tradition. The gelled salad may sound strange today, as it's fallen far out of fashion, but even our server—a handsome young man reminding me nothing of the elderly waitresses of yore—said that though he'd been wary when first hearing of tomato aspic, he became a fan at first bite. Its taste reminds me a little of a bloody mary, sans hot spice and vodka; cut into a solid if slightly jiggly rectangle almost the size of two dominoes stacked side by side, it was dusted in a hint of black pepper and rested next to a hillock of arugula-spinach salad, dressed with sliced green olives, pickled carrots, and onion-and-chickpea vinaigrette.

Generations of Texas travelers made the Stagecoach a go-to dining spot on the drive between Dallas and Austin

This page: Salado's Stagecoach Inn reopened in 2017. Opposite page: A Texas butterscotch brownie.



The chicken salad is another example of Bull's way of delivering classics with a twist. Tossed with bits of bacon and served with greens, avocado, tomato, and toasted grainy bread, this was a light and satisfying entree. My husband's chicken-fried steak, placed atop skinny, crisp green beans and a sizable pillow of buttery mashed potatoes, bore a beautifully textured, crunchy exterior. The signature strawberry kiss dessert gives a swirled circle of vanilla meringue a top-per of vanilla ice cream, a drizzle of tart strawberry syrup, and an arrangement of fresh strawberries with pink meringue around the base.

After lunch, we wandered the property admiring the old live oaks that include one spreading across a side yard, pointing the way to a cave entrance once known, the story goes, to bandits like Sam Bass who hid stolen treasures down there. Back when the inn was founded during the first year of the Civil War as the Shady Villa Hotel, it was a popular lodging for everyone from Sam Houston and George Custer to the infamous likes of Jesse James. Restoration work now underway will deliver a total of 72 comfortable, contemporary hotel rooms. Once they reopen, we'll be back to indulge in specialty cocktails and make our way to a poolside room for the night, a new ritual for a new Stagecoach. 🐾



THE STAGECOACH INN,
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Shoot, Rattle, and Sip

The Buckhorn Saloon and Museum in San Antonio

story by **Gene Fowler**

THE “BUCKARITA” AT SAN ANTONIO’S BUCKHORN SALOON SERVES UP the kick you’d expect from a mix of Cuervo 1800 Tequila, Grand Gala, and prickly pear juice. Looking around at all the horns, antlers, and stuffed critters on the saloon walls, however, an imbibers might fear their drink so potent that they’re seeing things. Not to worry, pilgrim. That beast mounted near the antique back bar that looks like a cross between a buffalo and a Longhorn? It actually *is* a crossbred buffalo-Longhorn.

Housed since 1998 in a former department store just two blocks from the

Alamo, the 137-year-old Buckhorn is a whistle-wetting, vittles-wolfing stop steeped in history and lore. Two on-site museums chronicle the storied Texas Rangers and display the mounts of 500 wildlife species from around the globe. The atmosphere extends to the café menu, which includes the Texas Ranger Burger—a beef patty topped with pulled pork, barbecue sauce, onions, and Swiss cheese—and the Cowboy Plate piled with sausage and barbecue pork. Even the leaner fare gets into the act, like the Wild West Chicken Fajita Salad. And the firewater department really lives up to the legend.

Along with the Buckarita, the saloon’s most popular drink is the Buckhorn Bloody Mary. “We build it ourselves with Campbell’s tomato soup, Tabasco, horse radish, Worcestershire sauce, and lime juice,” long-time bartender Javier Martinez says. The dozen Texas-brewed beers on tap range from the local Alamo Beer Company’s Alamo Golden Ale to Goliad Brewing’s Presidio La Bahia Black Hefeweizen.

One item on the menu, the Happy Burger—double meat with cheddar, Swiss, and American cheeses—is a tribute to owner Wallace “Happy” Rogers III, the great-grandson of founder Albert Friedrich. In 1881, 17-year-old Albert, a bellhop and bartender at the Southern Hotel on Main Plaza, opened a saloon on Dolorosa Street. Finding that cowboys and other patrons were sometimes short on silver for their suds and rye, Albert initiated a barter system, accepting antlers and horns as payment for libations. An avid hunter himself, he began adding taxidermy specimens to the collection, the roots of the Buckhorn Museum.

After Albert married in 1891, his wife, Emilie Friedrich, got into the act by trading whiskey shots for jars of rattlesnake rattles. She

At the **Buckhorn Saloon and Museum**, burgers and Buckaritas offer fortification for a tour of galleries that display 500 mounted beasts.

eventually collected some 32,000 diamondback tailpieces, applying them to signs and artwork displayed in the Buckhorn. The saloon moved several times, surviving Prohibition by temporarily becoming a curio shop and soda fountain. The Friedrichs' son and daughter ran the saloon until 1956 when the collection was sold and moved to the grounds of Lone Star Brewery, where the Buckhorn served as a hospitality

Finding that patrons were sometimes broke, Albert initiated a barter system, accepting antlers and horns as payment for drinks.

and sampling room. When Stroh Brewery Co. bought Lone Star in 1998 and moved its production to Longview, Albert and Emilie's granddaughter Mary Friedrich Rogers and her husband, Wallace Rogers Jr., bought the collection and moved it to its present location at Houston and Presa streets, where today their son Rogers III continues the family tradition.

A tour of the Buckhorn Museum, which is both adjacent to and



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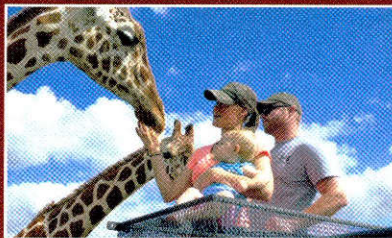
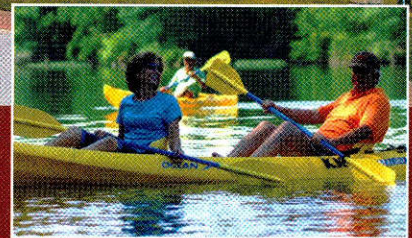


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upstairs from the saloon, takes visitors through several halls devoted to the saloon's history and wildlife from Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, and North America. The Texas Hall features horn furniture made by Albert's father, Wenzel Friedrich, a notable craftsman in his own right. "They may not look like it," says Bevin Henges, the Buckhorn's director of sales and marketing, "but the chairs are very comfortable." A mannequin of Teddy Roosevelt stands beside a chair made from buffalo hide and horns, a Wenzel original similar to one he presented to Lt. Col. Roosevelt. Teddy had come to San Antonio in 1898 to recruit galoots for his Rough Riders force. He knew the most hell-for-leather Texans would likely be found in watering holes, so he

Emilie traded whiskey shots for jars of rattlesnake rattles, collecting some 32,000 tailpieces and applying them to signs and artwork displayed in the Buckhorn.

acquainted himself with the Alamo City's finest. Teddy stands beneath a portrait of a deer Emilie created with 637 diamondback rattles as a tribute to Roosevelt.

An extensive display documents the career of San Antonio big-game hunter Bill Negley, a businessman who donated part of his collection to the Buckhorn before his death in 2006 at age 92. Three of Negley's record-breaking catches from the 1950s and '60s are preserved in the Hall of Fins. The outdoorsman's bluefin tuna weighed in at 614 pounds, and his black marlin broke the era's record at 1,056 pounds.

The Alaskan Hall is home to the fossilized head and antlers of the Buckhorn's rarest specimen—an extinct, prehistoric Irish elk. These ancient beasts could grow to 7 feet tall at the shoulders, making them the

largest known deer species.

Whitetail deer oddities include antlers intertwined in a "death lock," the tragic result of two fighting deer unable to disentangle their horns. There are also the mounts of two does that grew antlers, and the antlers of the famous 78-point "Brady Buck," hunted in McCulloch County in the 1890s and mounted in the saloon above the mirrored back bar from the original Buckhorn of 1881.

Back downstairs, the 8,000-square-foot Ranger Town re-creates 1900 San Antonio with scaled-down storefronts that include a replica of the Buckhorn. The adjacent Texas Ranger Museum honors the storied lawmen with displays of boots and saddles, firearms, badges, and other artifacts from the careers of John "Border Boss" Hughes, Frank Hamer, and many more. The display about Ramiro "Ray" Martinez, one of two officers who took down The University of Texas Tower shooter Charles Whitman in 1966, includes a copy of *Life* magazine with "The Texas Sniper" on the cover.

Signage encourages visitors to "exit through the gift shop," where you can pick up a gen-u-wine Texas Jackalope. Visitors from around the globe have carried home quite a few of the cryptozoological critters. "I've met people here from India, Iceland, New Zealand, all over," bartender Martinez says. "We have a group from Scotland that comes once a year. They have their own 'Texas bar,' and they come to the Buckhorn to see how it's done." 🍷



THE BUCKHORN SALOON & MUSEUM AND TEXAS RANGER MUSEUM are at 318

E. Houston St. in San Antonio. Admission is free to the saloon and café; museum tickets, which cover both museums, cost \$20 for adults and \$15 for children ages 3-11. Call **210-247-4000**; buckhornmuseum.com



Peace, Love, and the Frio

'Come as you are' restaurant serves up good vibes

story by Paula Disbrowe

WHEN TERRI ARCHER AND RAYANN Shudde purchased one and a half acres near Garner State Park in 2015, they intended to open a business renting out tubes for lazy floats on the Frio River in Concan. One day, their landscaper commented on the lack of good food in the area, Archer recalls: "He said he put himself through college flipping burgers out here and suggested we do the same."

And like that, Hippie Chic's River Shack was born. An existing carport on the property was crowned with the sign "River Shack," and the laid-back style of their burger concept took shape. The flourish of "Hippie Chic's" nodded to their spirit and style. "My mom didn't like it," Shudde laughs. "She said, 'You're not hippies and not chics.'" But the name stuck. "It suits our personalities," she adds. "We

Hippie Chic's River Shack in Concan is part restaurant, part groovy hangout in a rustic setting framed by the Frio Canyon.

wanted to create a place with a vibe that's different."

What they lacked in experience—Archer is a former barrel horse trainer with a background in orthodontic care, while Shudde spent years working as a middle school teacher and coach—they had in faith and fearlessness. One day during the renovation process, they abandoned construction chaos to swing out their frustrations on a golf course. When their dog, Freedom, jumped into the cart of a complete stranger, it proved to be a fortuitous encounter. The cart was driven by Paul

Rayann Shudde, left, and Terri Archer opened Hippie Chic's River Shack near Garner State Park three years ago.



With an inventive menu that makes room for comfort food like **fried pickles**, Hippie Chic's also serves mini-burgers to the **pets** of well-behaved owners.

Moler, a longtime restaurateur.

"We told him we were going to open a restaurant, and he asked if we had ever done it before," Shudde says. Moler quickly surmised they were in over their heads and offered to donate his time to help shape their vision. "He has totally paid it forward," Archer says. "We've taken all his advice and run with it."

With Moler's help, Shudde and Archer streamlined their plan to rent tubes and serve what they call "ridiculously large portions of unique, fresh,

excellent food in a fun environment," a perfect fit for the sun-seeking visitors who come to create summer memories in this picturesque corner of the Hill Country, about 80 miles west of San Antonio. As a result, their Hippie Chic's style is conveyed through menu items like the "Hip Hugger Burger" with jalapeño-cheese sausage, a "Joni Mitchell Wrap" packed with chipotle cream corn and jalapeño poppers, and a "Pancho and Lefty Burger" topped with two cheese enchiladas (yep, you read that correctly). In other words,

it's food in perfect sync with the scene. "Up in Smoke," nachos piled with smoked brisket and cheese, are exactly what you want to eat while playing corn hole or horseshoes and listening to the groovy soundtrack of classic rock and country.

The rustic setting—a scattering of picnic tables shaded by massive oak trees, an open-air barn constructed from corrugated metal, and grassy spaces for kids to frolic—all framed by the soft slope of the rolling hills of the Frio Canyon—make it easy to feel at home. "People love the vibe here," Archer says. "They come to eat and don't leave; they stay for two or three hours." Guests seated at the cluster of tables under a "Peace Be With You"

The "Pancho and Lefty Burger" is topped with two cheese enchiladas—yep, you read that correctly.

sign tend to chat and get to know each other or take selfies in front of the shack's growing collection of whimsical signs. The restaurant takes the phrase "dog friendly" to the next level. Pooches not only get a water bowl; they get mini-burgers, too. Shudde and Archer credit their cook, Juan "Emmitt" Ortiz, who prepares made-from-scratch specials like "Juan it Pronto Dos," a chicken enchilada plate with refried beans and Spanish rice, for the food that has amassed a loyal fan base.

Over the last few years, Hippie Chic's has evolved organically. Their dog, Freedom, was informally named the CEO, and last summer, the owners expanded the kitchen and converted a grain silo into a bar with a patio deck and shaded spot for extra seating. (Located in a dry county, the restaurant is BYOB, so you'll want to tote your own cold beer and wine.)

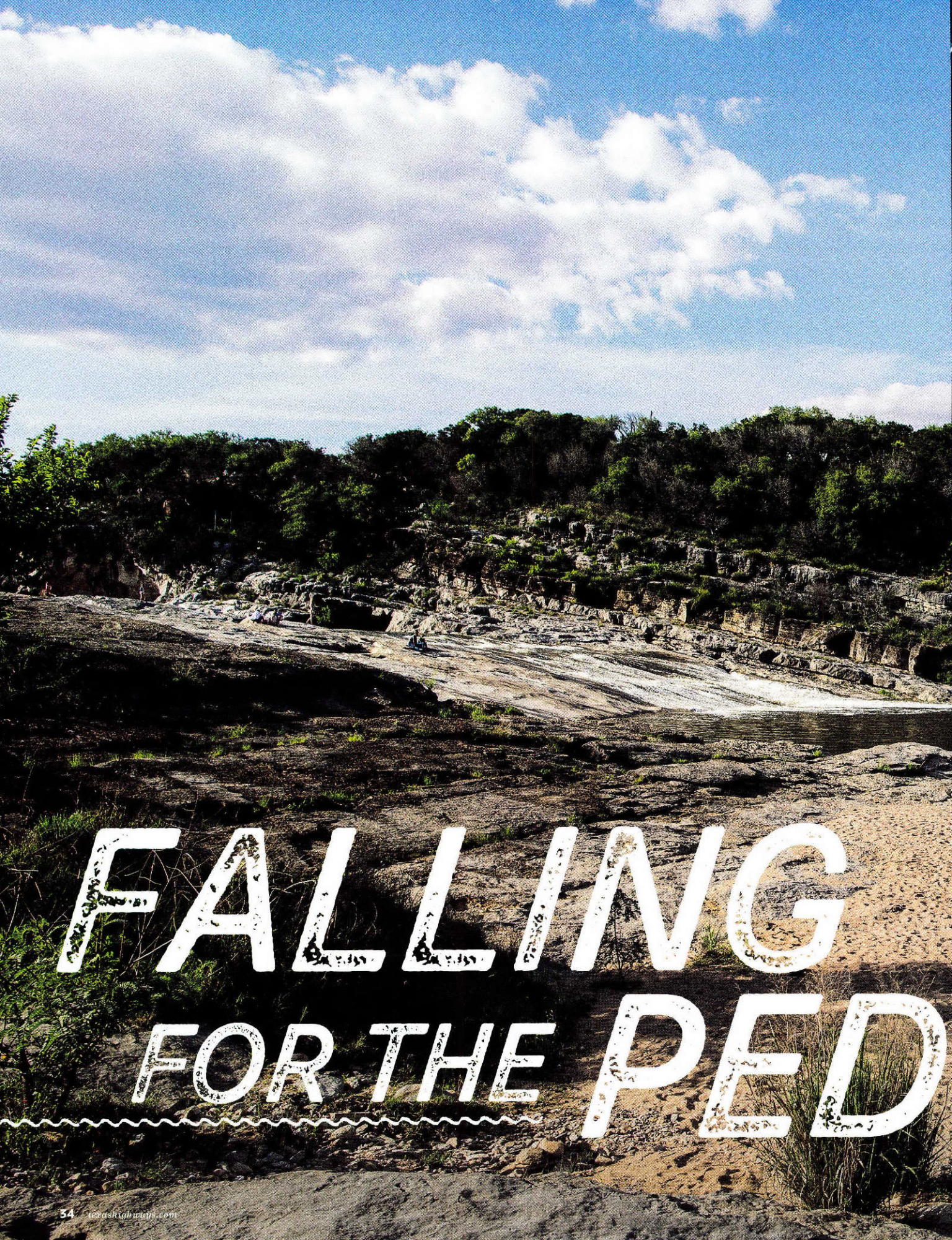
Closed in fall and winter, with a peak season between Memorial Day and Labor Day, Hippie Chic's is packed with bikers and tourists in

flip flops, swimsuit cover-ups, and sunburns. The locals prefer the off season, when it's not so crowded. Archer and Shudde don't mind when the weather cools and the pace slows down, when they can get creative with new menu items like a "Freddy Fender" burger filled with refried beans and chorizo. "Being seasonal is a blessing," Archer admits. "We have a lot of fun interacting with our guests, but we wouldn't want to do this 12 months a year."

Seasonal visitors who want to take the good feelings back home year-round can look for souvenir T-shirts portraying a vintage Volkswagen and the restaurant's motto: "Don't Worry Be Hippie." 🐾



HIPPIE CHIC'S RIVER SHACK, at 721 River Road in Concan, is open spring break through Labor Day weekend. Call **830-232-5459**; [facebook.com/hippiechicsconcan](https://www.facebook.com/hippiechicsconcan).



FALLING FOR THE PED



*THE PEDERNALES BECKONS PIONEERS
OF THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE*

Story by DANIEL BLUE TYX

Photographs by TOM MCCARTHY JR.

ERNALES

RISING FROM CRYSTALLINE SPRINGS

west of Fredericksburg, the Pedernales River meanders just 106 miles through the Hill Country before emptying into Lake Travis. Yet within its short course, the river crosses a multitude of landscapes, from rolling ranchland to steep limestone canyons. Each topography in turn has its own story to tell, from 10,000-year-old artifacts to hardscrabble German settlements and the birthplace of the nation's 36th president.

"Here is where I would always return, to the Pedernales River, the course of my childhood," reminisced Lyndon B. Johnson in a quote inscribed at his namesake state park and historic site. Another LBJ quote on a nearby plaque reinforces the Pedernales' influence, not just on the former president, but on its inhabitants throughout time: "It is impossible to live on this land without being a part of it, and without being shaped by its qualities."

My family of four had briefly visited the Pedernales area once before and was immediately taken by the beauty of the river's aquamarine path through hills of limestone and juniper. This time around, we planned a longer visit that would allow more time to explore Pedernales Falls State Park's 5,212 acres and the historical and cultural attractions that line the river valley. Along the way, we hoped to follow in the footsteps of LBJ (the only modern president who was born and died within a mile of the same place) and his wife, Lady Bird Johnson, learning about the elemental pull this land held for the first couple and maybe experiencing that magnetism for ourselves.

Our home base for the long weekend was Flat Creek Crossing Ranch, located next to the state park, which offers eight rustic cabins along with its own network of trails and a beach on Flat Creek, a tributary of the Pedernales. We'd booked the Cactus Cabin, which was decorated with succulents planted in rusted iron wagons on either side of the front steps. Upon arrival, though, we found the cabin's real feature attraction was a rooftop deck affording a spectacular view of the surrounding hills and the distant outline of the Pedernales itself.

Feeling the call of the river, we hopped back into the car and headed for the state park and a place marked "beach" on the map the ranger handed us. After a walk on the gravel path leading down from the parking lot, we jettisoned our shoes and let the river's spring-fed chilliness wash away any remaining irritation from our car trip. The clear water's swift current was fast enough to excite our son and daughter (ages 7 and 5) but not enough to make their parents worry.

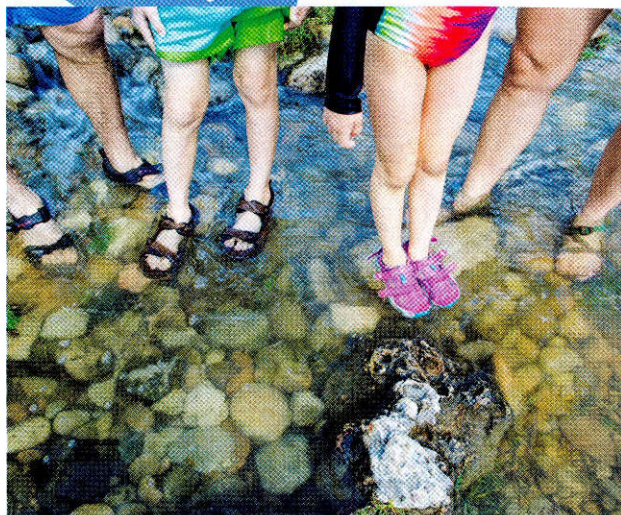
Feeling cool and refreshed, we headed in the direction of Dripping Springs, about 15 miles away, in search of dinner. Our quest was interrupted, though, by the intriguing sight of a Tuscan-style villa bounded by rows of olive trees. We'd happened upon the Texas Hill Country Olive Company, where a resident olive oil sommelier provided an impromptu lesson on proper sampling technique: swirl, sip, slurp, swallow.

The company's owners, father-and-daughter team John and Cara Gambini, are native Texans of Sicilian ancestry. "The Dripping Springs area reminds us so much of what Sicily and Tuscany look like, and there's a certain romance to the Hill Country just like with those places," John said. "Even though our climate isn't Mediterranean, we have plenty of sunshine and enough cool nights. The trees just love it here."

Loaded down with gift-wrapped jars of olive oil, we continued along our way, the sun setting over the Hill Country in a blaze of colors. Night had fallen by the time

we arrived at Treaty Oak Distilling Co. Following a quick tour of the grounds—which include the distillery itself, a tasting room, playground, and music stage—we settled beneath the branches of an enormous oak, feasting on family-style helpings of barbecue and fixings from the on-site Ghost Hill Restaurant. The children rushed to finish so they could get back to the playground fun, while we basked in the moonlight and the tranquil, low-key vibe of a giant outdoor picnic.

The next morning, we arrived at the LBJ State Park & Historic Site in Stonewall just as the ranger was opening the gates.

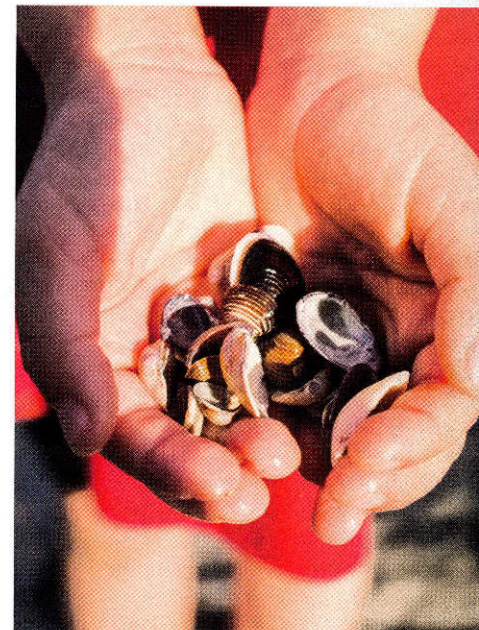


Writer Daniel Blue Tyx and his wife, Laura, explore Pedernales River State Park with their two children.



*"It is impossible to live
on this land without
being a part of it, and
without being shaped
by its qualities."*

*—Lyndon Baines
Johnson*





Stepping inside, she handed the kids a junior ranger book with a scavenger hunt and a map, which would prove useful in navigating the numerous LBJ sites, both at the state park and the adjacent national park on the Pedernales' opposite bank.

Our first stop was the state park visitor center, where a museum explores the history of the river valley's Native American, Spanish, and German settlements through a rich collection of maps, artifacts, historical documents, photos, and even a kid-friendly exhibit about each culture's cuisine. The first part of the display traced the arrival of Native American hunter-gatherers to the Hill Country more than 10,000 years ago. The arrowheads and other tools they fashioned from the riverbed's deposits of flint rock eventually inspired the river's name; Spanish missionaries, arriving from Mexico in the mid-1700s, christened it the "Pedernales" after the Spanish word for flint. The museum also chronicles the arrival of German immigrants in the mid- to late 1800s, some fleeing religious persecution and others seeking economic opportunities—especially the chance to own their own land, since many were farmers. That was around the same time that LBJ's grandfather and uncle, who were struggling farmers from the Deep South, founded Johnson City as well as the ranch that's now a park.

The history we learned about in the museum came alive on a visit to the nearby Sauer-Beckmann Farm, a working farm at the state park where visitors can observe the daily activities of a typical late-19th century Texas-German family. The farm preserves the original rock-and-wood cabin where German immigrants Johann and Christine Sauer lived with their 10 children—one of whom was LBJ's midwife—as well as the

Victorian homestead constructed by Emil and Emma Beckmann, who bought the property in 1900.

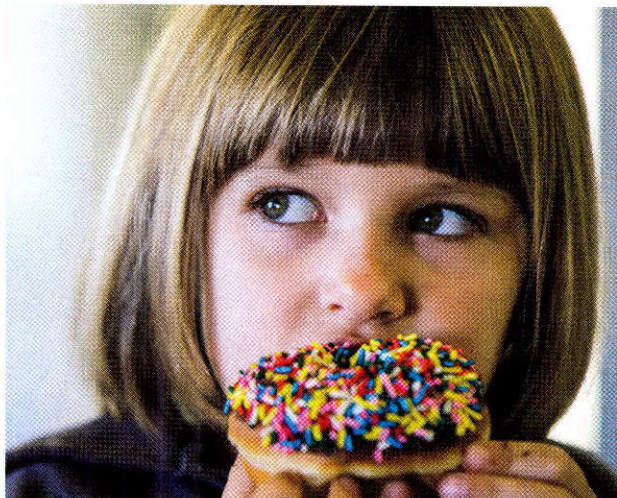
Miss Berne, a grandmotherly matron dressed in period costume, met us at the gate, along with a sociable calf named Belle. To the children's delight, Miss Berne—park volunteer Berne Mitton in real life—invited them to help with the chores, starting with collecting eggs from the henhouse. The kids carried the eggs to the kitchen and watched Miss Berne crack them into a bowlful of cookie batter next to a cast-iron stove.

Pulling ourselves from the cozy warmth of the kitchen, we piled back in the car and followed the map's self-guided tour of both the state and national parks. Among the national park's many points of interest are LBJ's modest birthplace, the one-room schoolhouse he attended, the cemetery where LBJ and Lady Bird are buried, LBJ's ranch—still in operation today—and the airplane hangar that houses Air Force One Half, the pint-size version of the president's official aircraft specially built to land on the ranch's short runway.

The tour culminated in a ranger-led visit to the Texas White House, the stately riverside home LBJ retreated to as often as possible during his presidency, sometimes receiving visiting dignitaries

there. The Johnsons bought the 1894 home in 1951 and completely remodeled it. After Lady Bird passed away in 2007, the National Park Service preserved the home with many of the furnishings the Johnsons had personally selected. "It's a typical 1960s ranch home with 1960s furniture and 1960s colors—lots of tangerine and avocado green," Park Ranger David Graveline said, although he also pointed out that every room, including the bathrooms, had a telephone in case the president needed to be reached in an emergency.

The tour was over, but my daughter insisted we couldn't leave without a return trip to the Sauer-Beckmann Farm to sample Miss Berne's delicious chocolate-chunk cookies. Next was lunch in Johnson City at Lady Bird Lane Cafe, which honors the first lady's conservation-minded legacy with an assortment of healthy menu items including sandwiches and



My family had visited the Pedernales area once before and was immediately taken by the beauty of the river's aquamarine path through hills of limestone and juniper.

The writer's son, Byrdie, at LBJ State Park & Historic Site, and daughter, Ana, at Home Town Donuts in Johnson City.

Essentials

IN AND AROUND JOHNSON CITY:

Pedernales Falls State Park is at 2585 Park Road 6026. Call 830-868-7304; tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/pedernales-falls.

Flat Creek Crossing Ranch is at 339 Ulrich Road. Reservations can be made for cabins or day use; the grounds include a 10-mile mountain bike trail and a swimming beach. Cabins run about \$100 per night. All proceeds support Child Inc., an Austin nonprofit that provides low-income families with comprehensive early childhood education. Call 512-451-7361; flatcreekcrossingranch.com.

Lady Bird Lane Cafe and the **Science Mill** are at 101 S. Lady Bird Lane. For the café, call 830-832-7884; ladybirdlanecafe.com; for the Science Mill, call 844-263-6405; sciencemill.org.

Pecan Street Brewing is at 106 E. Pecan Drive. Call 830-868-2500; pecanstreetbrewing.com.

The **LBJ National Historical Park's Johnson City wing** is at 100 Lady Bird Lane. Tours of LBJ's boyhood home are offered every 30 minutes starting at the front porch from 9-11:30 a.m. and 1-4:30 p.m. Call 830-868-7128; nps.gov/lyjo.

DRIPPING SPRINGS:

Texas Hill Country Olive Company is at 2530 W. Fitzhugh Road. Call 512-607-6512; texashillcountryoliveco.com.

Treaty Oak Distillery is at 16604 Fitzhugh Road. Call 512-599-0335; treatyoakdistilling.com.

STONEWALL:

The **Lyndon B. Johnson State Park & Historic Site** is at 199 Park Road 52. The Visitor Center offers free driving permits and self-guided tour maps for both the state and national parks.

The **Sauer-Beckmann Farm** is within walking distance of the Visitor Center. Call 830-644-2252; tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lyndon-b-johnson.

The **LBJ National Historical Park's Stonewall wing**, which includes LBJ's birthplace, the one-room Junction Schoolhouse, LBJ's ranch, and the Texas White House, is on the north bank of the Pedernales adjacent to the state park. Tickets for the half-hour Texas White House Tour, which run from 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m., can be purchased at the Airplane Hangar. Adults are \$3; 17 and younger are free. Call 830-868-7128; nps.gov/lyjo.





Clockwise from top left: Mark Itz of Sauer-Beckmann Farm; the Science Mill in Johnson City; Texas Hill Country Olive Company; Sauer-Beckmann Farm.

organic mac 'n' cheese.

The café adjoins the Science Mill, a state-of-the-art science center housed in an 1880 steam grist mill and cotton gin. As the kids dashed from one hands-on exhibit to another, learning about topics such as genetics and computer coding, I admired the way the museum designers had turned the structure's silos into awe-inspiring exhibit spaces, seamlessly connecting the cutting-edge technologies of two different eras.

We spent the rest of the afternoon in Johnson City, stopping by LBJ's boyhood home—he moved from the ranch to town when he was 5—as well as a National Park Service museum that focuses on the accomplishments of his presidency, with in-depth looks at major pieces of legislation such as the Voting Rights Act. At dinnertime, we walked down the street to Pecan Street Brewing. The kids enjoyed wood-fired pizzas while my wife savored the blackened catfish in jalapeño cream sauce. I had to try the signature pecan sweet fried chicken, complimented by tasting-size samples of house-crafted brews.

For our last morning, we still had one more very important stop left to make: the actual Pedernales Falls. Since we'd only made it to the beach during our previous outing to Pedernales Falls State Park, we didn't know quite what to expect as we reached the trailhead. We'd seen pictures online, but photos didn't even begin to capture the scope and grandeur of the scene unfolding in front of us as we descended the trail: a giant staircase of 300-million-year-old limestone slabs, some the size of football fields, each miraculously tilted as though a cascade of falling dominoes was suspended mid-tumble. At the bottom of each "stair," water filled cobalt-blue pools before ultimately rushing into a fiercely churning channel.

The kids played hide-and-go-seek in the moon-like craters the water had worn in the rock, some as big as bathtubs. Meanwhile, hundreds of visitors took in the scenic vista alongside us—and yet in the vast space, it didn't feel crowded at all.

As we watched the kids frolic, I thought about the significance of LBJ's words on being shaped by the qualities of the Pedernales. What exactly had he meant? I wasn't certain, but perhaps it had something to do with the way this landscape reminds us that we're part of something much bigger than ourselves, travelers in a place that existed long before us and will continue to exist long after we pass through.

At last, it was time to climb the path back to our car and begin the long trip home. But before we left, we turned to catch one last glimpse of the river. "When can we come back?" my daughter asked, another reminder of the Pedernales' enduring pull. 🐾

McAllen-based writer Daniel Blue Tyr has always felt drawn to rivers, from the burbling creek near his Ohio childhood home to the mighty Rio Grande. Austin-based photographer Tom McCarthy Jr. loves small towns, sunrises, sunsets, and thunderstorms.



SWIM INTO



NOTHING BEATS THE HEAT LIKE A PLUNGE INTO YOUR NEAREST SWIMMING HOLE

When Mother Nature doles up a summer afternoon so hot you need oven mitts to handle the steering wheel of your car, smart Texans head to the nearest swimming hole.

There, beneath the lacy umbrella of a towering cypress or oak, you kick off your shoes, scramble up a tree trunk, reach for a rope as thick as your arm, and launch yourself high over a spring-fed lake or river. For a second or two you hover in mid-air, anticipating a moment you've been craving since the sun rose that morning. And then you feel it—the shock of hot to cold and dry to wet.

We love the free-as-a-breeze feeling that comes when you take a flying leap off a rope swing. That's why we've scouted the state to find some of the best, the ones hung from gnarled old branches over cool green water, where you can while away an afternoon swinging and splashing, watching your friends channel their inner monkeys, and lounging on a towel as the water dries from your skin.

That's Texas, and that's why we love summers here.

Before you don your swim trunks, though, take note. Rope swings appear and disappear like smoke from a backyard barbecue pit, and what's there now may be gone tomorrow, or possibly relocated just down the river.

Our advice? Respect private property rights. Make sure any swing is safe before you take the plunge. Hold on tight—then make it a flight to remember!

STORY BY PAM LEBLANC

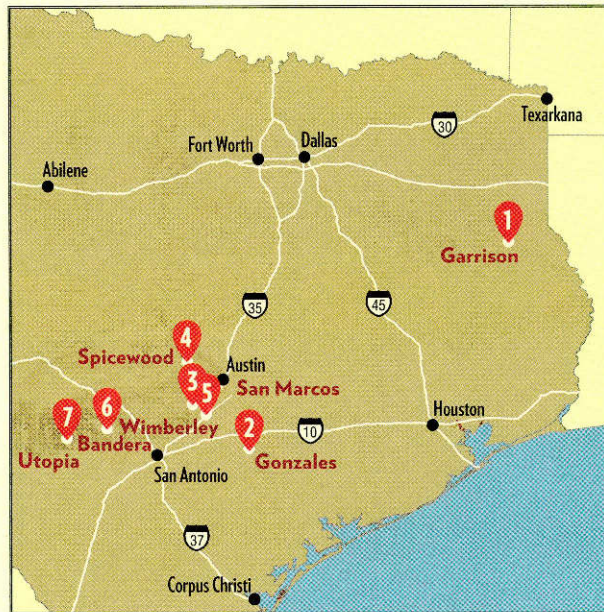
SUMMER

1

CAMP TONKAWA SPRINGS

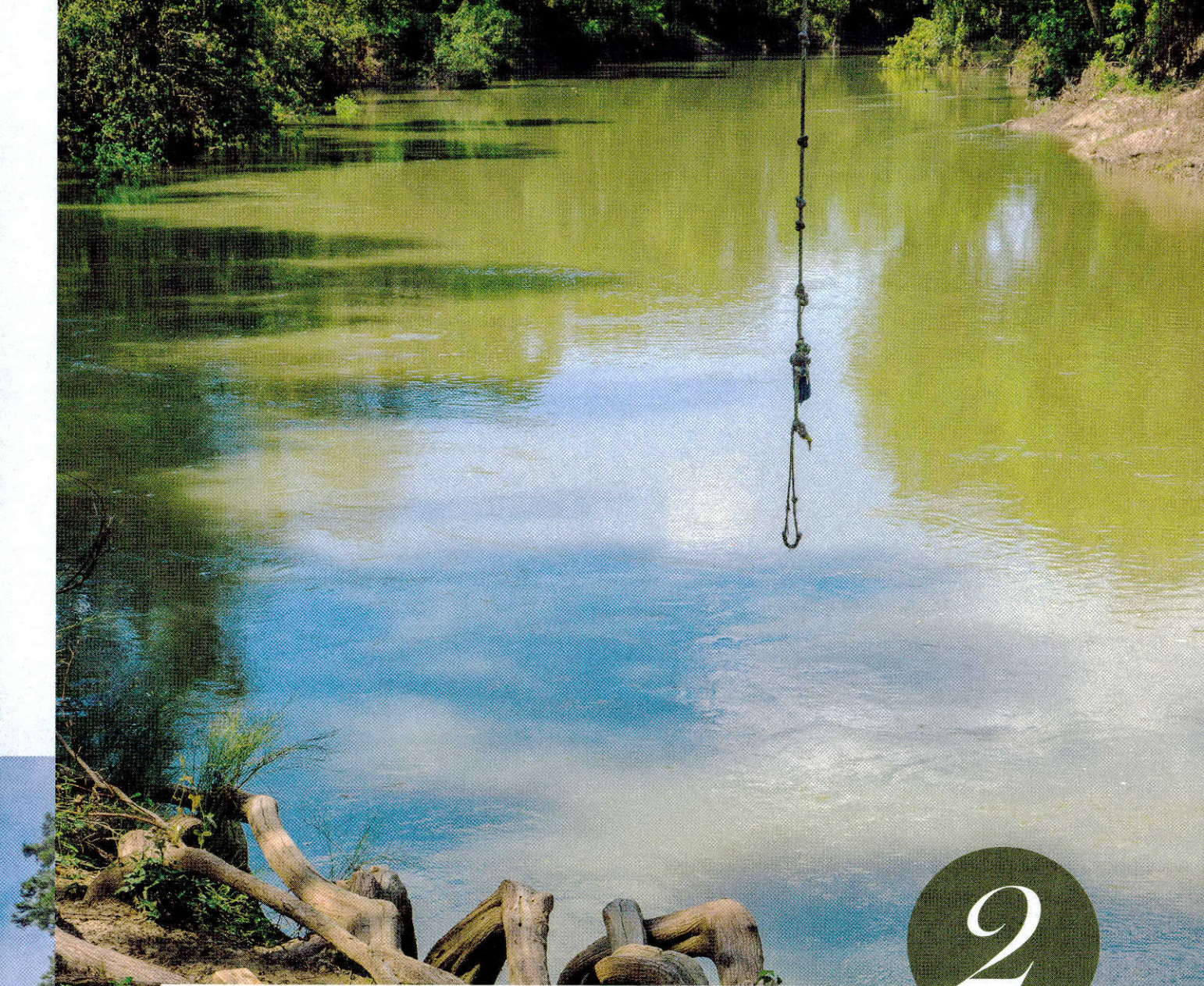
On the hottest of hot days, a plunge into the aquamarine spring-fed pool here feels a lot like jumping into an alpine lake—or a melted iceberg. And the rope swings? The best one beckons from a tree that leans way out over the pool, like a debutante bowing low. Rope swingers used to climb boards nailed to the tree trunk. The boards are gone now, but well-worn notches serve the same purpose. Not up to jumping yourself? Lounge on a float and watch brave souls do backflips off the ropes. The park, tucked among the pines and oaks in a sandy corner of East Texas, once operated as a Boy Scout camp; a bottled water company used to draw its water from the same spring. Today, the pool, about two-thirds of the size of a football field, lures families and college students alike. Families tend to congregate on one side, while the rowdier college crowd hangs out at the other. A DJ spins music most weekends, and peacocks, guinea hens, and fallow deer roam the grounds.

\$10 per person; free ages 5 and younger. Alcohol is banned on designated family days, when admission is \$5 per person. Open year-round. 4675 County Road 153, Garrison. Call 936-564-8888; camptonkawa.com.



- 1 Camp Tonkawa Springs
- 2 "Come and Take It" rope swing
- 3 Blue Hole
- 4 Krause Springs
- 5 San Marcos River
- 6 Bandera Park
- 7 Utopia Park





2

“Come and Take It” rope swing

We’re pretty sure more than a few folks have hollered “Come and take it!” as they soared off this rope swing, located near the spot where the first shot in the battle for Texas independence was fired. The rope hangs from a thick branch of an old cypress tree on the southern bank of the Guadalupe River, on the west side of the bridge. If you’re already in the water, scramble up the bank to get to the tree, climb a few steps up the trunk, and fling yourself over the usually deep pool below. And remember, while you’re airborne, that Gonzales was the only community to send men to help defend the Alamo. Check currents, which sometimes move

swiftly, and consider life vests for those who aren’t strong swimmers. To get there, drive south on US 183 a few miles south of Gonzales. When you cross the river bridge, take the turn back on the right toward a pair of monuments marking the site of a confrontation between Mexican soldiers and Texas settlers who refused to turn over a cannon to them. The natural, undeveloped area isn’t part of a park, but paddlers accessing the Independence Paddling Trail launch their canoes and kayaks here, and it’s become a favorite swimming hole for locals.

Free. US 183 at the Guadalupe River Bridge outside of Gonzales.



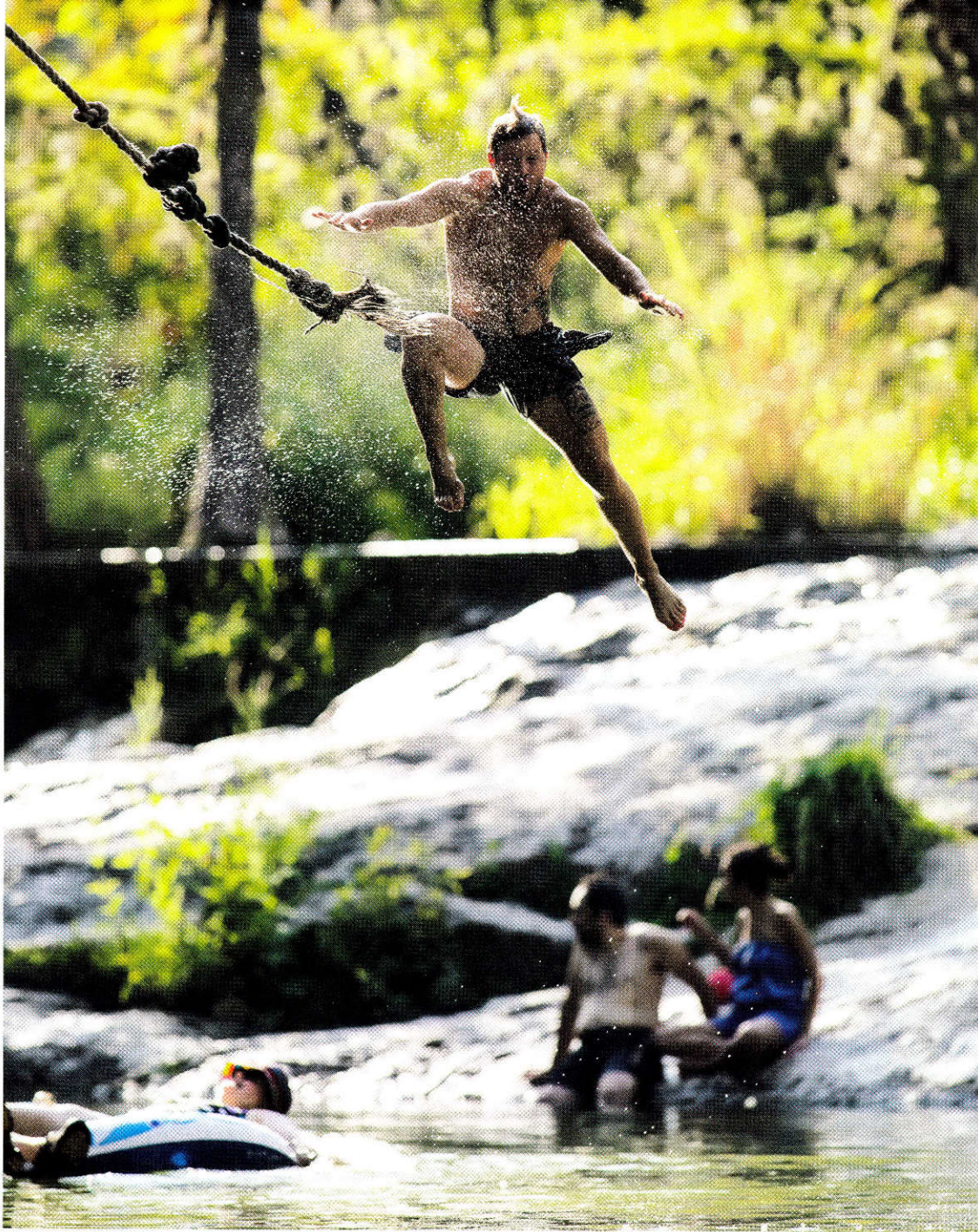
3

Blue Hole

Pick from two rope swings to launch yourself into the shady emerald pools of Cypress Creek—one for the big kids and adults over deep water; a smaller one for those just wetting their toes. Onlookers take pictures as one by one the jumpers peel into the water. Think shady, refreshing, and old school, with a big grassy lawn where you can throw down a blanket and nap when you've had enough. Then head to town for pie.

\$10 adults, \$6 youth, seniors, military, and local residents. To ensure entry, book ahead. 100 Blue Hole Lane, Wimberley. Call 512-660-9111; cityofwimberley.com. The Wimberley Pie Co. is at 13619 Ranch Road 12. Call 512-847-9462; wimberleypie.com





KRAUSE SPRINGS

Wear your river sandals to scale the big tilted slab of rock at this old-timey swimming hole 36 miles west of Austin. From there you can reach the knotted rope swing that will deliver you beneath a fern-covered cliff into a glinting pool at a privately owned park that Elton Krause opened more than half a century ago. Today his three sons—David, Hugh, and Terry—maintain the beloved oasis. You can bask on rocks beneath the sun, or pitch a tent if you can't bear the thought of leaving at the end of the day. And did we mention the water-filled grotto? Heavenly.

\$8 adults, \$5 children, free ages 3 and younger. Cash only. 424 County Road 404, Spicewood. Call 830-693-4181; krausesprings.net.



5

San Marcos River

You'll feel like Tarzan when you swing on a rope over the chilly, non-crocodile-infested waters of this cool-as-a-cucumber Central Texas river. Start at CabanaSMTX, formerly the Olympic Outdoor Center, where you can spread out a picnic or rent a cabana with easy access to several family-friendly rope swings—as well as a flexible floating dock, a slide, and a sand badminton court on a jungle-like piece of the San Marcos River. First-timers can learn the ropes in this family-friendly environment.

Want something a little more daring? Grab a kayak or standup paddleboard and glide two to five minutes downstream of Interstate 35, where the biggest oak you've ever seen spreads its arms over the river. And then glance up. The highest branches of what locals call the Stokes Oak hold everything from high-slung hammocks and chairs to (occasionally) a barbecue pit. (City rules prohibit grills within 25 feet of the river.) When we visited, rope swingers could choose from two ropes tethered to the beloved tree—a big one that requires a scramble up boards tacked to the trunk and a smaller and lower one with a round plastic seat. Both are epic.

Free. Cabanas: \$95-\$190. CabanaSMTX, 602 N. Interstate 35, San Marcos. Call 512-203-0093; kayakinstruction.org.



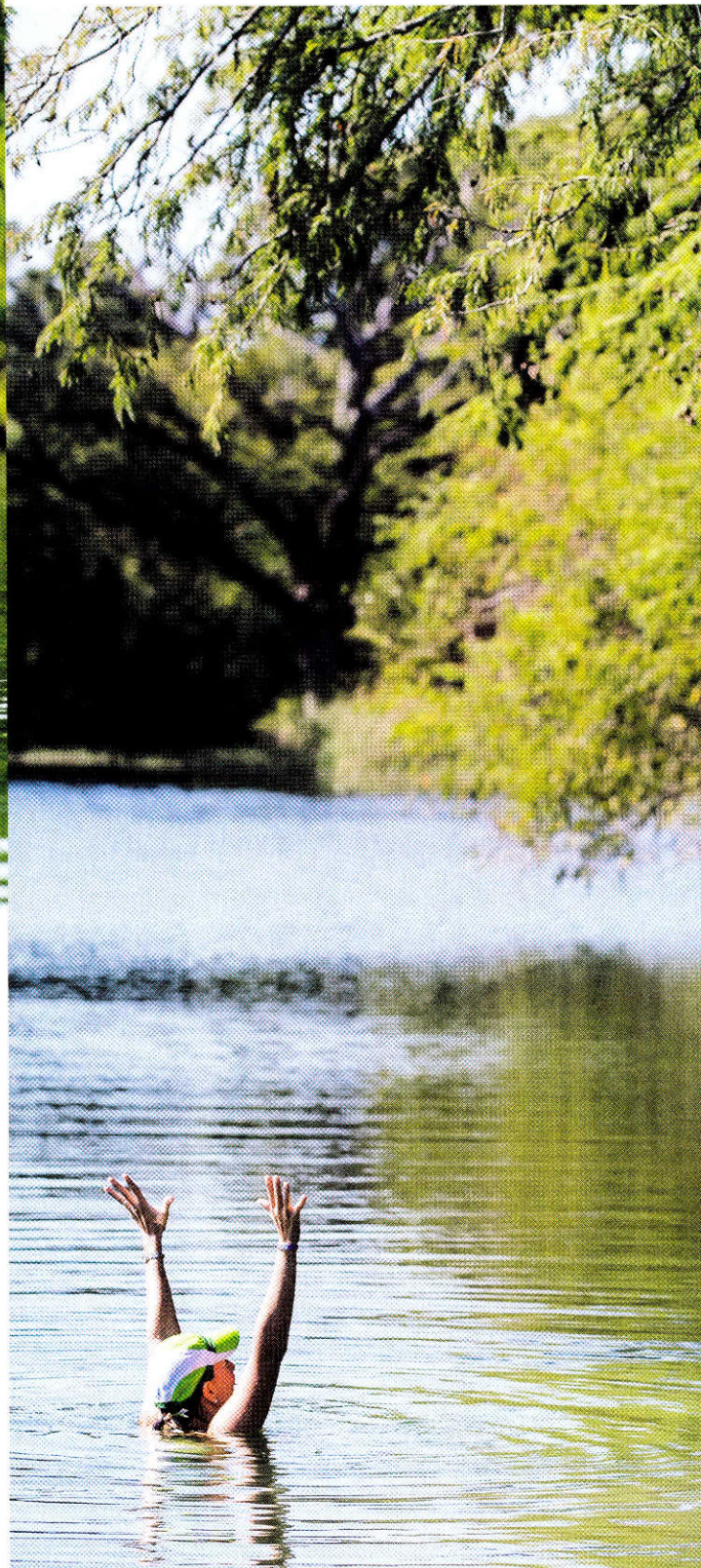


6

BANDERA CITY PARK

A short trot from the town known as the Cowboy Capital of the World, where chances are better than good you'll see a horse tied to a hitching post or someone riding a Longhorn down the street, flows a stretch of the Medina River so tempting you might jump in wearing shorts and a T-shirt if you don't have a swimsuit handy. One of the highlights? Scaling the boards nailed to the trunk of a huge bald cypress tree on the opposite bank (technically outside of the park's boundaries), then pausing on the platform high in its branches before swooping down like a dive-bombing seagull and raising a spray of water when you land. The park's cypress trees have more knobby knees than a schoolyard playground packed with kids. Bring a picnic or fire up the charcoal on one of the 77-acre park's barbecue grills.

No entry fee Mon-Fri; \$5 per adult weekends and holidays March-Oct. (free ages 3 and younger). No life-guard on duty. Call to check conditions during drought. 1102 Maple St., Bandera. Call 830-796-3765; cityofbandera.org/2161/bandera-city-park.



Pam LeBlanc is a staff writer at the Austin American-Statesman. When she's not at the office, you'll likely find her leaping into a lake at Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve, where she's working on a book about conservationist J. David Bamberger.

UTOPIA PARK

7

You'll have to steel your nerves to get to the highest launch point of the rope swing at this leafy small-town park, established in 1929 on a dammed stretch of the Sabinal River, about 16 miles downstream from Lost Maples State Natural Area. But shimmy your way up and take the plunge, and you'll find yourself in one of the finest swimming holes in the Texas Hill Country. When you pop back up, lean back and enjoy a good float—and keep your eyes open for birds, including the painted bunting, so colorful it looks like someone melted a box of crayons over it. The park is adjacent to an old baseball field, and huge bald cypress trees shade the river's edge. Well-worn screened shelters and picnic tables can be rented for \$50 and \$25, and there are showers in the restroom. No lifeguard.

\$10 per person day-use fee. 241 Utopia Park Road, Utopia. Call 830-966-3643; utopiapark.org.



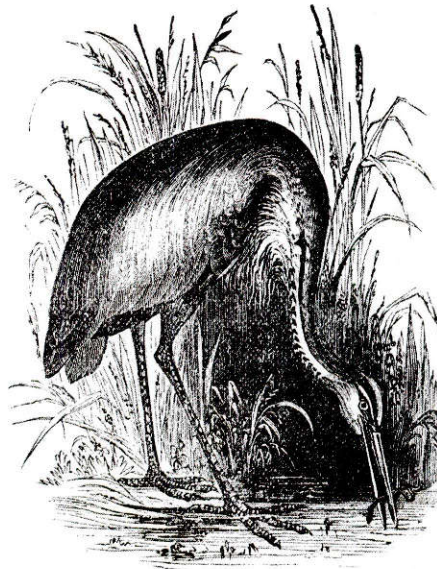
Before You Plunge

Soaring high off a rope swing into an ice-cold Texas river feels great. But stay safe when you do it by heeding these tips:

1. Check to ensure the branch—or whatever the rope is affixed to—can hold the weight of a happily swinging human being and won't snap when you're mid-air.
2. Make sure the rope is tied securely in place and is not frayed or rotted.
3. Test the water. You don't want to land on a rock, branch, or other obstacle. Water depth changes, and tree branches and rocks move with the current, so what was clear last summer may not be clear now.
4. Avoid getting tangled in the rope, and never loop it around your wrist.
5. Check to make sure any boards you climb to reach a swing are securely attached and show no signs of rot.
6. Don't release too soon—or too late. You want to land in the water and not on the bank or anything else. And it's no fun to slam into a tree trunk.
7. Don't drink and swing—and don't swing if you can't swim. 🐼



A Return to the River



INSPIRED BY JOHN GRAVES' *GOODBYE TO A RIVER*, A
WRITER RETURNS TO HER ROOTS ON THE GUADALUPE

Story by CLAYTON MAXWELL

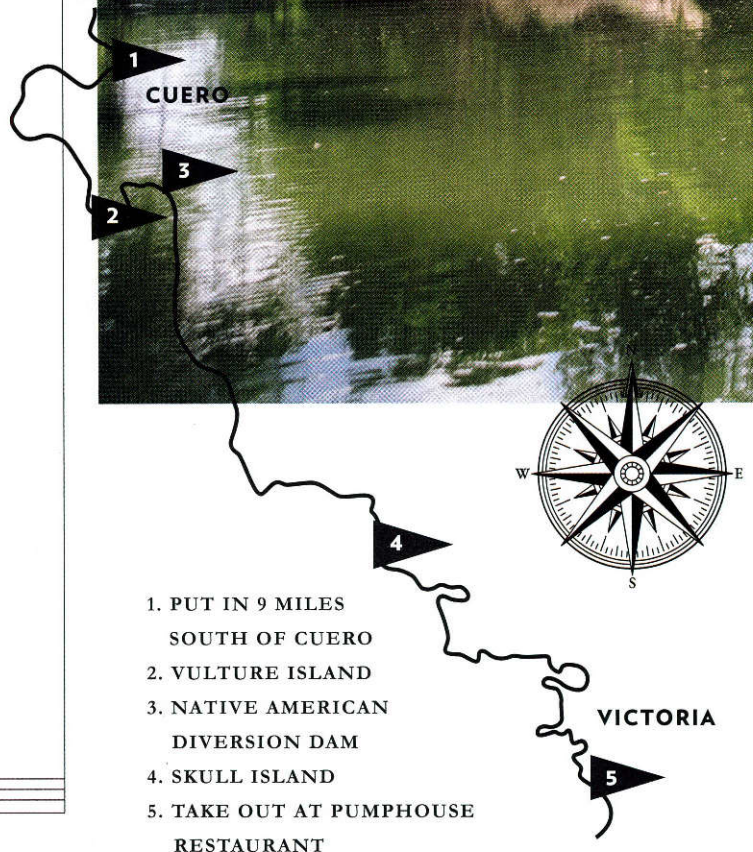
Photographs by KENNY BRAUN



For three days, the blue heron leads us downriver. In the mornings we push off in canoes through the olive green water of the lower Guadalupe, made murkier by Hurricane Harvey's visit just over a month before. We'd forget about the heron while focusing on more urgent matters: sunscreen, keeping the boat upright, alligators, spicy peanuts, cold beer. But then, with an audible swoosh, its blue wings unfurl, and the bird glides downstream to yet another cypress branch, showing off his mighty wingspan, his graceful flight. Hurricane Harvey's landfall in late August caused the Guadalupe to flow over its banks in Victoria and Cuero. And while many trees are down and furniture hangs high in the branches of others during our October trip, the flood certainly hasn't washed away everything beautiful.

At least I think it's the same blue heron surprising us each morning, but maybe that's because I'm a romantic and a rookie on overnight river trips. Out on this water, a current flowing close to civilization and yet a world away from it, magical things feel possible. A river makes its own country: the past loops into the present, new confluences are made, a heron is leading us.

I am canoeing this rarely traveled stretch of the Guadalupe with two seasoned river runners and their young sons because of John Graves' *Goodbye to a River: A Narrative*, a classic of Texas literature. I'd read it over the summer, and Graves' voice, honest and wry, carried me with him on his 1957 three-week canoe trip down the Brazos starting in Palo Pinto County and ending in Somervell County. Graves—Texas' roll-your-own-smokes fireside thinker and naturalist—passed away five years ago this July, but with lines like "We will be nearly finished, I think, when we stop understanding the old pull toward green things and living things," his writing is as vital as ever.





It's good to "take account" of where you come from. That's one of the messages Graves whispered in my ear. But what does that mean? For Graves, it meant really knowing the river and the land he grew up on, the fish and fowl, the people's stories, including the story of "The People," the Comanche term for their tribe. It meant returning to the Brazos, the river of his youth. So I was going to return to mine.

I grew up in Victoria, and the stretch of the Guadalupe that flows through the town's Riverside Park was a frequent playground for my sisters and me; our parents would hold our hands as we stood in the current, toddlers dazzled by sun-lit water rushing against our legs. This muddy river named in

1689 for the patron saint of Mexico—*Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*—was my childhood taste of Graves' "old pull" toward the green and living things, the raw and the wild. I left Victoria when I was 16, but now I am back, this time in a boat, John Graves-style.

"What you are doing, going to be on the river, that is what brought people here, why any of this is here," Gary Dunnam, the former head of the Victoria County Heritage Department, told me when I visited him just before our trip. The Guadalupe is the area's history, Dunnam explained. It's why the Karankawas, Aranamas, Tamiques, and Tonkawas were here, followed by the Spaniards who tried with mixed results

RIVER GUIDE

For your own Cuero and Victoria-based Guadalupe River day trip, see:

Gerry's Kayaks, a rental and shuttling company located in Riverside Park. Call 361-935-3779; gerryskayaks.com

San Antonio Bay Partnership, a nonprofit conservation group that leads guided day-paddling trips. Call 713-829-2852; sabaypartnership.org

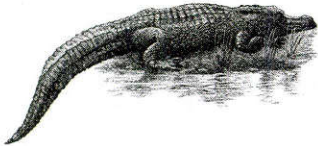
Texas Parks and Wildlife's Guadalupe Valley and Victoria paddling trails:
tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/boat/paddlingtrails/inland/

Unguided overnight trips on this stretch of the Guadalupe require river experience and Google Earth for planning camping spots, which often change with the river.



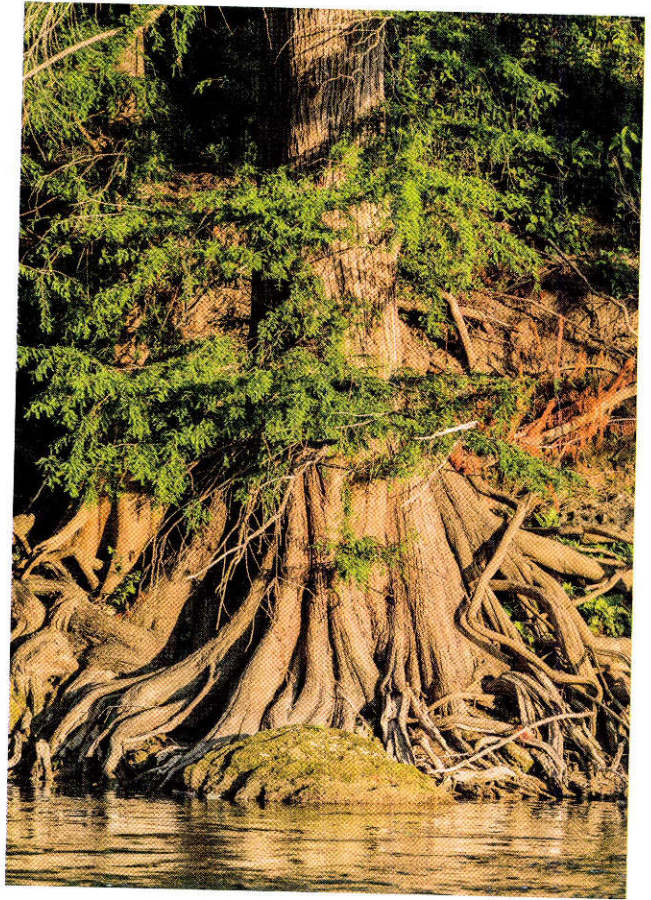
to Christianize the tribes in the early 1700s. Then, in 1824, after Mexico won independence from Spain, the wealthy Mexican *empresario* Martín De León came to the river after receiving a colonization grant from Mexico. He brought 41 families with him and named the settlement *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Jesús Victoria* in honor of the first president of Mexico. De León, 6 feet tall with a dashing mustache, was the sole Mexican *empresario* in the region until he died in a cholera epidemic in 1833. His wife, Doña Patricia de la Garza, and their large extended family continued to preside over life in Victoria until they were forced into exile in 1836 after the Mexican defeat at San Jacinto, even though they had supported the Texas Revolution.

Would I find traces of this tangled history on the river? Or would I find alligators and snakes dangling from trees, as my mom had warned? The unknown loomed. I did know, however, that it would be foolish for me—all eagerness and no experience—to do it alone. So I asked Chris Carson and John Hewlett, two friends and ardent canoeists, to join me. Chris is a photographer who seems to spend more time on water than on land. John is a school principal and outdoor adventurer who founded the Austin-based gear company, Gusto Outfitters—its cooling neck wraps, called “bandos,” would become our second skins on the river.



On a hot Saturday mid-morning, we unload at an RV park 9 miles south of Cuero. After multiple trips from van to boat, the canoes are teetering with the weight of two coolers, waterproof boxes with iPhones and GPS devices, tents and sleeping bags, yellow dry sacks stuffed with clothes and first-aid supplies, fishing gear, a camping stove, provisions ranging from breakfast taco fixings to Chris’ favorite jalapeño sausages, mezcals and whiskey, and a very important tube of WaterWeld epoxy that would save our trip when one canoe sprang a leak.

Chris has even brought pillows. “I get a lot of hell for it,” he says, “But what can I say? I’m a pillow guy.” Graves might have cringed, although his own canoe weighed 200 pounds thanks to what he called “unnecessaries,” including a gun, an ax, and a lantern. Graves laments that he, too, falls short of Henry David Thoreau’s call for simplicity. Just hauling and strapping down all of our own “unnecessaries” makes us sweat before we’ve even begun paddling. Sticky in the late morning sun, we take our baptismal swim in the Guadalupe, eyes alert for Harvey-displaced gators. Hallelujah, the river is far cooler and fresher than we’d thought; it’s an elixir, a fatigue-conquering mood-lifter. This river is going to be good to us.



“WE WILL BE NEARLY FINISHED, I THINK, WHEN WE STOP UNDERSTANDING THE OLD PULL TOWARD GREEN THINGS AND LIVING THINGS.”

Now we paddle. Up in the bow, I have it easy. John’s son Harlon, whose nickname is Huckle for Huckleberry Finn, rests in the middle on a pile of tents and sleeping bags. John is our captain in the back. Devoted fishermen Chris and his 9-year-old son, Max, linger behind, poles in the water. There is no other soul on this quiet stretch of river, and we are in the flow of it, gliding downstream with “the waxen slim strength of a paddle’s shaft,” as Graves’s writes, on “a drifting, sparkling, sunlit afternoon.”

I am surprised by many things: the swiftness of the current, a bald eagle flashing across the sky—my first eagle sighting in South Texas—but mostly by the beauty. The section of river that I knew in Riverside Park, as I’d remembered it,

was not particularly pretty. But before the trip, I chatted over chalupas with Gerry Wyant, owner of Gerry's Kayaks in Riverside Park. Gerry rents kayaks for river trips and runs a hot dog stand (currently under renovation due to damage from Harvey) near the Texas Zoo in the park. Gerry shared many tips about canoeing that section of the Guadalupe—most notably that he'd never heard of any skirmishes with alligators. He also said the section of river we'd be on is the prettiest stretch of the Guadalupe there is. I see now he's right. It's the cypresses. They line the river here, faintly mystical with their knobby roots, which Harlon calls "dragon's teeth."

So we paddle on. With a lift of the shoulders and a twist of the spine, our paddles cut liquid and we glide. As Graves writes, "I had the feel of the river now, and the boat, and the country, and all of it was long-ago familiar." With the elaborate map-studying, weather-prognosticating, and other preparations over, we sink into the state of observation that a river invites. Eyes on the water, the banks, the sky—there is much to notice. A kingfisher skims the river. An alligator gar, at least 5 feet long, jumps out of the water and twists its toothy maw right in my face. I startle, and the boat wobbles, my first rookie move so far. Wobbling can mean tipping the boat. All of Chris' camera gear, everything we need, is in these canoes. Tipping, Chris repeats often, is not an option.

When the heat threatens, we dip our bandos in the river to keep cool and shield our necks from the sun. When possible, we make a landing and jump in. Six-year-old Harlon, whose spirit animal must be an otter, is happiest in the water. So when we first find a clean sandbar with a riffle flowing past, he and John demo for me how to do "a float." We make ourselves straight as logs skimming over rocks until we get to a safe landing spot and trudge up to shore—all smiles—to do it again.



Before the sun dips low, we find our camp spot, a sandy island we soon discover is black with vultures in the trees and sky. Chris slaps his paddle on the water, and the piercing shotgun sound scares them away. "Vulture Island" is now our home for the night. The boys gather firewood, Max catches spiky little hellgrammites—the larvae of a dobsonfly—that he will later use to catch catfish, while Chris, or "Cooky," gets busy with dinner, which tonight is canned bean chili.

"The day's wind and bright light and paddling had washed me with clean fatigue, and my muscles felt good, in tone ... one felt damned good," Graves wrote. Now, after today's 10 miles of paddling, I get it. We've hit that sweet spot where effort turns

**"I HAD THE FEEL OF
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to ease, and we can settle into our island. These ever-shifting sand and mud teardrops are often the only good place to camp on many stretches of Texas rivers without trespassing, and it feels like a sweet victory to have found ours—surrounded by private ranches—and make it home for the night.

“We are tapping into something that is crazy beautiful,” says Chris, sitting by the fire that night as the moon rises over the river, a bottle of mezcal making the rounds. All the effort these two river-mad friends of mine go to—the hoisting and hauling and planning—it delivers keys to a rare universe, one removed from park rangers, people, private property. Their reward is cicada song layered over the murmur of water and a pocket of freedom in the middle of a river. We stay up late with John’s river music playlist, fireside tales, a little Walt Whitman.

“[We] hung over the fire,” Graves wrote, “with sharp animal relish until we knew we had to leave.”



“**On down**”—that’s a refrain Graves repeats throughout *Goodbye to a River*, and I see why: the thrill of discovering what’s around the bend. We lament leaving our campsite, but a river is only good if it’s flowing. Unhurried and with muscles only pleasantly sore, we set out, easing into another 10- to 12-mile day. And with a gasp we see the blue flash of the heron, waiting for us, leading us downriver.

Today we are on the lookout for an almost 300-year-old remnant of the Spanish effort to missionize along the Guadalupe: a stone dam built in 1733 by “converts” at La Bahía, located here before it moved to Goliad. We find the weathered but still intact wall of rocks easily, land our canoes, jump off the dam, and do a float. The kids investigate the smooth river rocks and purple-tinged mother-of-pearl clamshells on the beach. Did Aranama or Tamique children jump from this dam under the watchful eye of Franciscan friars centuries ago? “The way it was, like the way so many things were, is a fog,” Graves, a practitioner of thoughtful uncertainty, writes about the history around the Brazos. It’s foggy here, too.

After hours of rigorous paddling, including several of what Chris and John call “the power 20” (20 power strokes followed by a pause), Harlon is restless and shouts for a swim break, *now*, but we are not in a safe landing spot. I hear John say behind me, calmly, “Harlon, look at me, I want you to understand something. We don’t make the river; we don’t have any control over where the islands and banks are going to be. We have to take what the river gives us.”

So far, this river has been generous. We bivouac our last night on “Skull Island,” named for an unidentifiable skull we find perched in the middle of it. We pitch camp near the river to hear its rippling as we sleep. After dinner, we return to the fire. Here, away from the strip malls and highways, there is space to consider our predecessors: the Native Americans, who couldn’t have imagined the arrival of the Spanish; the De León clan, upended by the Revolution. “Think about that—this island has been camped on, this whole stretch of river, for thousands of years,” Chris says, thumbing the smooth cuts in the Native American spear point he’d found among the river rocks earlier in the day. This quiet moment—this whole river trip, in fact—is required in order to step out of time and reflect on the flow of history. Here by the moonlit river, it hits you in a way that placards and dioramas in museums can’t touch.

Our last day is a haul as we push through 14 miles to reach our take-out. The cypresses on this stretch were cut down long ago, and the ensuing erosion, extreme after Harvey, gives this part of the river a post-apocalyptic feel. After 35 miles of river, Chris and John are ready for the cold micheladas I will buy them at La Tejanita Restaurant as soon as we find our exit,

which proves difficult. Riverside Park is closed still from the hurricane, and the dock that should be waiting for us is not there. Weary, we find a long metal staircase leading out of slippery mud to the PumpHouse Riverside Restaurant and Bar 25 feet above us. The unload is a haze of back-aching effort, carrying our “unnecessaries” up the stairs. Kayak Gerry awaits and helps retrieve Chris’ van. We find La Tejanita, and the micheladas, served in generous goblets, are glorious.

Graves’ trip was about solitude, mostly. Mine has been about companionship. Had I been solo, I would have missed the chance to see my childhood through the eyes of my friends’ sons—Max’s face upon catching his catfish or Harlon’s laughter floating downstream: flashes of beauty that thread back to my earliest days on the Guadalupe and live on, on down the river. 🐟

Clayton Maxwell is a native Texan and river-canoeing rookie who is happy that her dog-eared, margin-scribbled copy of Goodbye to a River is now christened with water and mud from the Guadalupe. Austin-based photographer Kenny Braun’s new book, As Far As You Can See: Picturing Texas, was just released by UT Press.



JOHN GRAVES

John Graves (1920-2013), a Texas writer and naturalist, won national acclaim for *Goodbye to a River*, published in 1960. His ecology and history-rich memoir of a three-week canoe trip down the Brazos River was nominated for a National Book Award. Graves grew up in Fort Worth and on his grandfather’s ranch near Cuero, was a Marine captain in World War II, graduated from both Rice and Columbia universities, taught at Texas Christian University, and traveled the globe.





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Lasting Laredo

History and nature in the capital of the Republic of the Rio Grande

story by **Daniel Blue Tyx**

A STROLL ACROSS THE SAN AGUSTÍN Plaza, just a few hundred feet from the Rio Grande in downtown Laredo, feels like a passage across both space and time. Sit on a bench in the shade of the ornate stone gazebo, next to sago palms and neatly trimmed hedges, and you could be in the town square of any classical Mexican city. Survey the 19th-century gothic revival cathedral and even older colonial homes around the plaza's perimeter, and you can't help but be transported back hundreds of years.

When the Spanish army captain Tomás Sánchez founded Laredo in 1755, he chose the site



- **San Antonio**
2.5 hours
- **Houston**
5.5 hours
- **Dallas**
7 hours
- **El Paso**
9.5 hours

because it was the location of an ancient Native American ford across the Rio Grande. Since then, Laredo has transformed from a riverside village into a thrumming hub of 21st-century global commerce, but one thing has remained the same: the importance of the Rio Grande to the community's identity. Whether it's walking narrow cobblestone streets little changed for 200 years, shopping for artisan wares along San Bernardo Avenue, enjoying authentic Mexican cuisine, or bird-watching along the riverbank, a visit to today's Laredo offers the chance to experience this border heritage firsthand.



Above: San Agustín Plaza walking tours include a stop at the Villa Antigua Border Heritage Museum, which hosts rotating exhibits about Laredo history. Below: A painted ceramic boot at Basket & Pottery Alley. Right: The Paso del Indio nature trail at Laredo Community College.

“The history of Laredo centers around the river and the city’s role as a bridge between two countries,” says Eduardo Garcia, museum services manager for the Webb County Heritage Foundation.

Every Friday and Saturday, or by appointment, Garcia leads guided walking tours of the San Agustín Plaza area that depart from the Republic of the Rio Grande Museum. There, visitors learn why Laredo proudly claims to be the only city in Texas to live under seven—not six—flags. When several northern Mexican states declared independence from Mexico in 1840, frustrated by

a lack of protection and resources, rancher Bartolomé García offered his modest home to serve as the capitol. While the Republic of the Rio Grande lasted less than a year before it was quashed by the Mexican government, its legacy continues at the museum. A front room—added on after the fall of the republic—holds exhibits detailing Laredo’s history, while the back rooms that made up the original 1830s house are decorated with period furniture, much as they would have appeared at the time of the revolt.

The García home is a classic example of



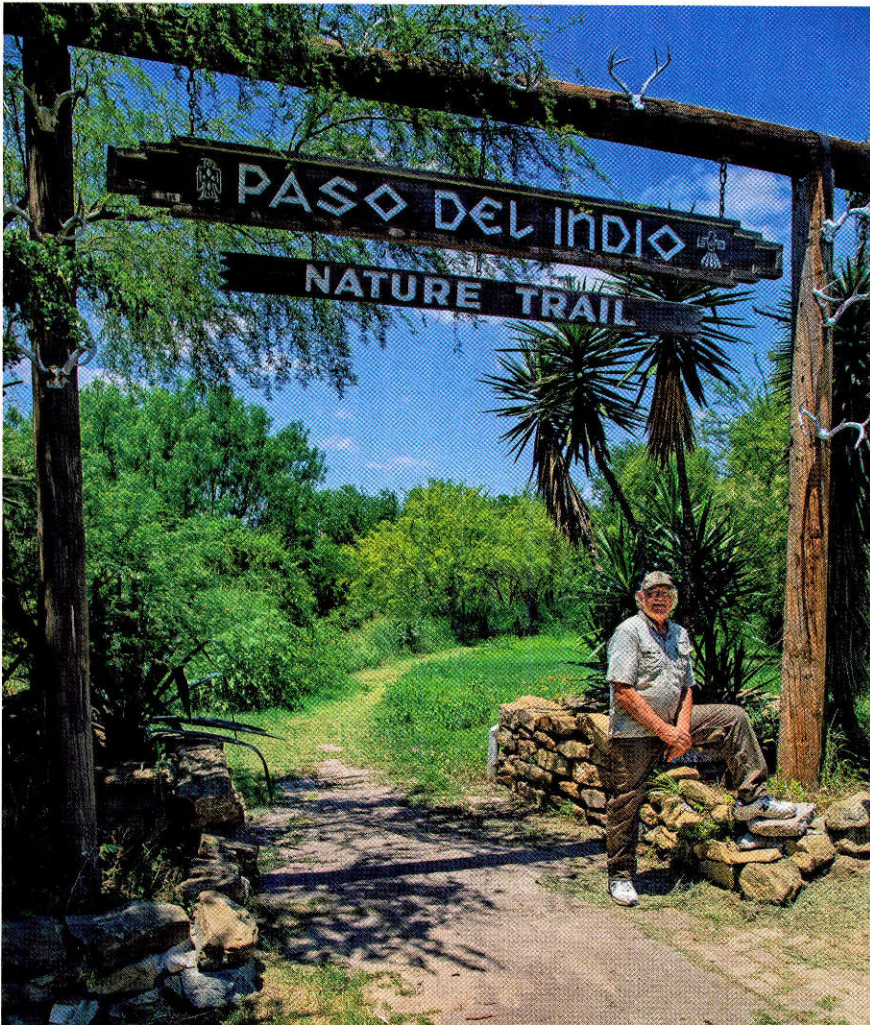
Photos: © Larry Ditto



Mexican vernacular architecture. Built for sturdiness with the materials available at hand, it has a flat roof, thick sandstone walls, and no windows in spite of the South Texas heat. One of the next stops on the tour exemplifies the more opulent colonial style that arrived as royal land grants attracted wealthier settlers. Like many buildings in the San Agustín de Laredo Historic District, the home of 19th-century architect José Reyes Ortiz is surrounded by a wall that extends to the sidewalk. Built in stages from the late 1700s to the early 1870s, it is now managed by Texas A&M

Spanish army captain Tomás Sánchez founded Laredo in 1755 at the site an ancient Native American ford across the Rio Grande. The Paso del Indio trail traverses the same ground.


International University as a historic site and event space. Inside, a shaded courtyard looks out over the Rio Grande, while a tiled outdoor kitchen conjures images of a 17th-century *carne asada*, or barbecue. “We don’t know exactly how old the kitchen is,” Edwardo Garcia says, “but some think it dates to just a few years after the founding.”

The tour continues with visits to sites including the San Agustín Cathedral (the present church was completed in 1872) with its five-story bell tower and Gothic revival windows; the Villa Antigua Border Heritage Museum, which hosts exhibits and events on Laredo history in a restored early 20th-century Italianate-style home; and the Washington’s Birthday Celebration Museum, which commemorates a civic festival held each February for the past 122 years.



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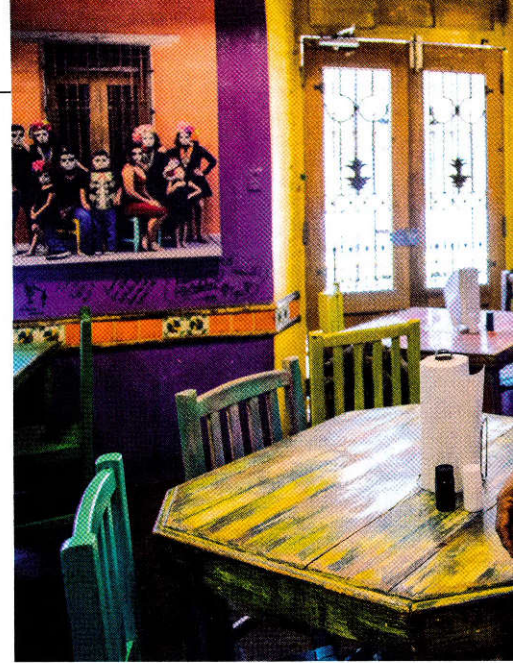
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Above: Weathered wooden doors and bougainvillea blossoms enhance the classic Mexican border atmosphere of Laredo's San Agustín Plaza. Right: Jesus Bernal owns El Mesón de San Agustín.



to the cathedral. There's no sign to mark its location, but that doesn't dissuade hungry patrons who fill its 12 wooden tables from the time it opens at 11 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. "Everyone complains that they can't find it the first time," says Jesus Bernal, who co-owns the restaurant with his wife, Maria de la Luz. "But then they come a second time, and they don't have trouble anymore."

Finding a souvenir for your trip is no trouble at all on San Bernardo Avenue. Along a stretch of about 20 blocks, about two dozen shops display Mexican imports ranging from colorful dresses and wooden toys to playful painted metal statuary. One popular destination is Basket & Pottery Alley, set up in the style of a Mexican *mercado*, or market. Wholesalers drive from as far away as New York and Florida to buy goods by the truckload, but "you can come here and find a little bit of everything without the markup," owner Raymond Camina says. Another shopping opportunity is the Laredo Sister Cities Festival. This July marks the festival's 16th year with artisans from across Mexico converging at the Laredo Energy Arena for a weekend of food, entertainment, and cultural exchange.

The Laredo Birding Festival, held each February, also brings in visitors from around the world, this time for kayak tours of the Rio Grande, visits

If all that walking works up an appetite, not to worry: The historic district offers up a buffet of dining options, many housed in notable structures themselves. Taking its name from the seven flags over Laredo and housed in a restored colonial building, upscale Siete Banderas serves up innovative takes on famous Tex-Mex dishes—like a chile relleno stuffed with ground beef, cranberries, and pecans—and boasts a leafy

outdoor patio with live music. The elegant La Posada Hotel, located on the central plaza, offers both the Zaragoza Grill and the Tack Room, the latter a steakhouse in an 1883 building that housed the first telephone exchange connecting Laredo with Nuevo Laredo across the border.

Tucked away on a narrow street, El Mesón de San Agustín serves home-cooked traditional Mexican meals in a clay-colored colonial home next



The same enterprising spirit that led to the city's founding and flirtation with independence is still evident today in grassroots efforts to conserve nature and history for future generations.

to local ranches, and the chance to see rare "specialty birds" found nowhere else in the United States like the white-collared seedeater, red-billed pigeon, and Audubon's oriole. But you don't have to wait for February to get out and bird: Daniel Perales, president of Monte Mucho Audubon Society, says local members are available year-round to guide both new and experienced birders. River front hotspots include Las Palmas Trail and Slaughter Park.

Nature enthusiasts and history buffs alike can also head to the Lamar Bruni Vergara Environmental Science Center, located a mile upriver from downtown at Laredo Community College's Fort McIntosh campus. The college established the center in 1994 as a result of a community-wide effort to raise public awareness of contamination in the Rio Grande. Today, the river's health in the Laredo area—while still threatened—has vastly improved. The center features multiple exhibits on the ecology of the Rio Grande watershed and the chance to get up close and personal with more than 100 native animals, including American

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For **Laredo tourism information**, call the Laredo Convention and Visitors Bureau Visitor Center, 501 San Agustín Ave., at **800-361-3360**; visitlaredo.com.

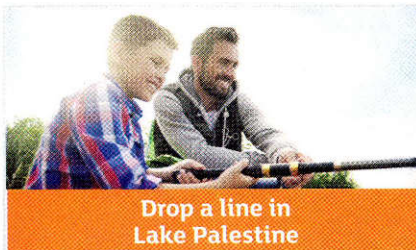
The Laredo Sister Cities Festival, held July 13-15, 2018, features 200 exhibitors from 60 Mexican cities vending their native wares. Call **800-361-3360**; visitlaredo.com.

Webb County Heritage Foundation guided walking tours of the San Agustín Plaza area begin at 10 a.m. on Friday and Saturday at The Republic of the Rio Grande Museum (or by appointment). Call **956-727-3480**; webbheritage.org.

The Monte Mucho Audubon Society can connect visitors interested in birding with an experienced guide. Call **956-764-0531**.

alligators, a Texas indigo snake, and the threatened Rio Grande lesser siren—a primordial eel-like salamander. Visitors can also stroll past the original 19th-century U.S. Army fort buildings still in use on the Laredo Community College campus and hike down the *Paso del Indio* nature trail to the original river crossing that inspired Tomás Sánchez to establish the city here. “We’re on some of the most historic land in all of Laredo,” says Tom Miller, the center’s director. “It all ties together here: nature, the environment, and history.”

At the Webb County Heritage Foundation’s downtown office—housed in the old Mercado building—Executive Director Margarita Araiza says the same enterprising spirit that led to the city’s founding and brief flirtation with independence is still evident today in grassroots efforts to conserve nature and history for future generations. “What other community can claim to be the capital of its own republic?” she says. “I think that’s a reflection of the character of the people who have always been here, starting with Tomás Sánchez, who were very stubborn, very independent, and very intrepid. Against all odds, they staked their claim here, and they stayed.”



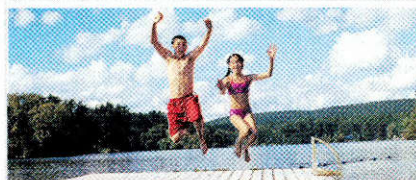
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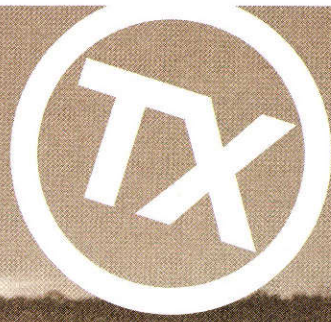


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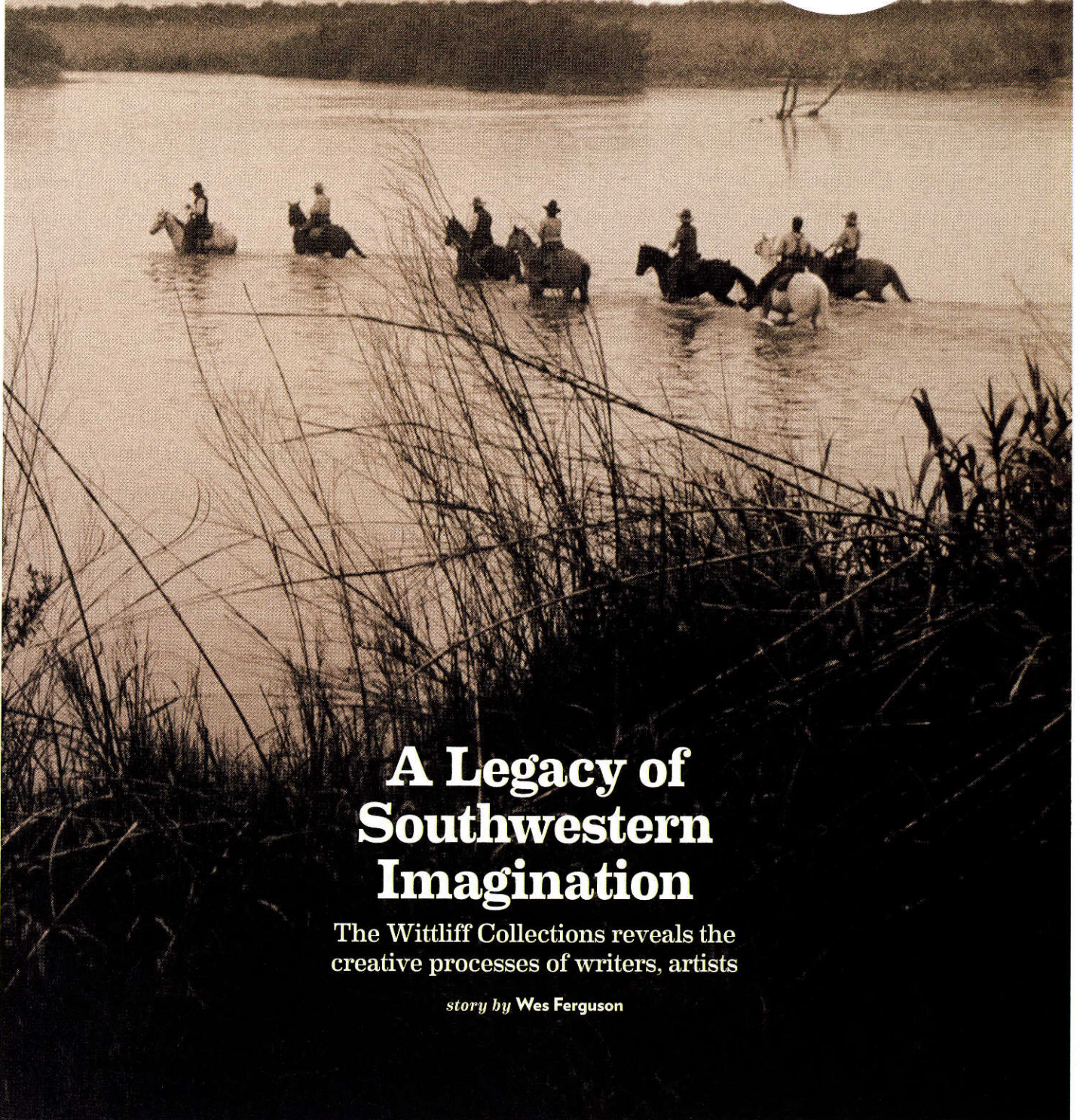
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story by **Wes Ferguson**

Riders cross the Rio Grande during the 1988 filming of the *Lonesome Dove* miniseries.



IN 1985, BILL WITTLIFF WAS FOUR YEARS AWAY from mega-success as screenwriter and executive producer of the beloved miniseries *Lonesome Dove* when he got a phone call from the former assistant of J. Frank Dobie, the pioneering folklorist who'd died two decades earlier. "Would you be interested in buying Dr. D's desk?" his assistant asked.

Wittliff didn't hesitate. "I would love to," he replied.

Now 78, with a predilection for Hawaiian shirts and white tennis shoes, Wittliff can look back at a career that rivals and maybe even surpasses Dobie's: He's written blockbuster screenplays and well-regarded novels, owned and operated a book-publishing imprint with his wife, Sally, and made photographs exhibited throughout the United States and Mexico. You could argue he's the state's greatest living Renaissance man. But a lifelong habit of collecting treasures, beginning with arrowheads and overheard stories when he was a boy in rural Texas, may ultimately lead to Wittliff's most enduring legacy. And Dobie's old desk set it all in motion.

"I was a big collector of J. Frank Dobie stuff," Wittliff recalls. "He was a friend and mentor, just hugely important to me. I went over to the Dobie house"—across the street from the University of Texas campus in Austin—"where I had sat many times

talking to Dobie, and I was writing her a check for the desk when I looked over in the corner and there were somewhere between 30 and 40 boxes, just stacked up."

"What's that?" Wittliff asked.

The boxes, it turned out, contained the remainder of Dobie's archives, soon to be auctioned via estate sale. Wittliff feared they'd be scattered and lost. "I went over and dipped my hand in the top box, and it was letters and manuscripts and notes and correspondence," he says. "It was an amazing assortment

"I can still feel that excitement. It's like somebody said, 'Here's a door if you want to go through it.'"

of things, but I just saw little scraps."

Wittliff bought the boxes. It was raining, so he put each one in a black trash bag, loaded them in the bed of his pickup truck, and drove to his office, a two-story house where O. Henry once lived on the west side of downtown Austin. As he sorted through the materials, his astonishment grew. An idea, a "knock at the door," came to him. "I loved having that stuff," Wittliff says, "but I knew it was too

One of Bill Wittliff's most recent projects is a series of long-exposure photos of the sun. Each solargraph can take months to make.

much for one person to have and that it could serve as the hub around which to build a really good collection of Southwestern literature.”

Within a year, Bill and Sally Wittliff had partnered with Texas State University in San Marcos to found the Southwestern Writers Collection, now known as The Wittliff Collections. The couple knew lots of writers from the two decades they ran their well-regarded publishing house, Encino Press, and quickly acquired archives and artifacts from a cast of Texas’ leading storytellers, from John Graves and Stephen Harrigan to Willie Nelson, eventually adding the papers of authors like Cormac McCarthy, Sandra Cisneros, and Sam Shepard as well as memorabilia from the making of *Lonesome Dove*, which is on permanent display.

The mission? To collect, preserve, and share the artistic process that springs from the Southwestern imagination and to foster a spirit that would “give the world a chance to know us better than we know ourselves,” as Gov. Ann Richards put it when the collection was formally dedicated in 1991. “What we sense in all this work is that we in the Southwest are bound to what the Spanish language calls *querencia*,” she said, “a place of such deep meaning and strong fealty that neither time nor distance can separate us from it. These artists remind us that who we are and where we come from is a source of

pride and limitless imagination.”

Texas’ creative and cultural legacy goes beyond literature, of course. In 1996, The Wittliff expanded to found the Southwestern & Mexican Photography Collection. With more than 19,000 documentary and fine-art images, it’s become an “ever-evolving, wonderfully miraculous and human thing,” says Keith Carter, the internationally celebrated photographer from Beaumont. Last year, The Wittliff branched out again, creating the Texas Music Collection with materials from songwriters and music journalists, along with artifacts like one of Bob Wills’ fiddles and Nelson’s childhood song lyrics.

Events and exhibitions—including the recent *Las Tesoros de San Antonio*, a display on four ranchera singers who found acclaim as early as the 1940s, then teamed up more than half a century later to record an album—are free and open to the public. With soft lighting, Saltillo tile, and wooden trim, the Southwestern-style galleries are an elegant oasis from the busy world. Devotees of Texas literature are also known to pilgrimage to the reading room, where a paddle Graves used for his canoe trip on the Brazos, the subject of his classic book *Goodbye to a River*, is framed and mounted to a wall.

A sombrero worn by Bolivar, a character in *Lonesome Dove*, on display at The Wittliff Collections.



The archives contain book proofs and photographs taken by Graves on his famous river trip, too. But The Wittliff is more than a repository of literary relics. By revealing the humanity and creative processes of Texas and the Southwest’s best artists, it is meant to inspire people “who have the itch but not yet the courage” to try their hand at writing and creating, Wittliff says.

“It’s astonishing to me to see somebody like John Graves trying to find just the right word and just the right sentence to express his intention, whereas before I saw things like that, I would have thought, well, they just lick their pencil and away it goes.” Pulling back the curtain on the writers he reveres has both electrified and encouraged Wittliff to pursue his own craft. “I can still feel that excitement,” he says. “It’s like somebody said, ‘Here’s a door if you want to try to go through it.’”

That commitment to inspire and encourage future storytellers distinguishes The Wittliff from other literary archives, says Director David Coleman. “We have a unique mission and a unique voice. The fact that we were founded by an artist really sets our tone and character and is the great magic of this place. I think Bill really does see it as his greatest legacy.”

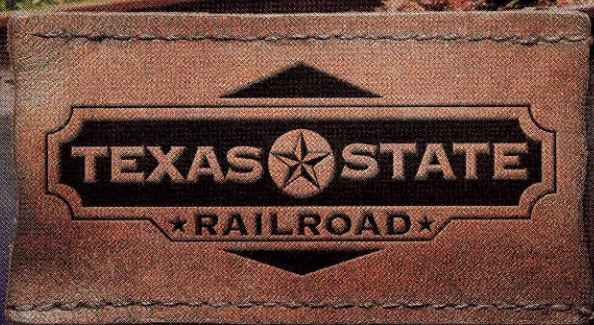
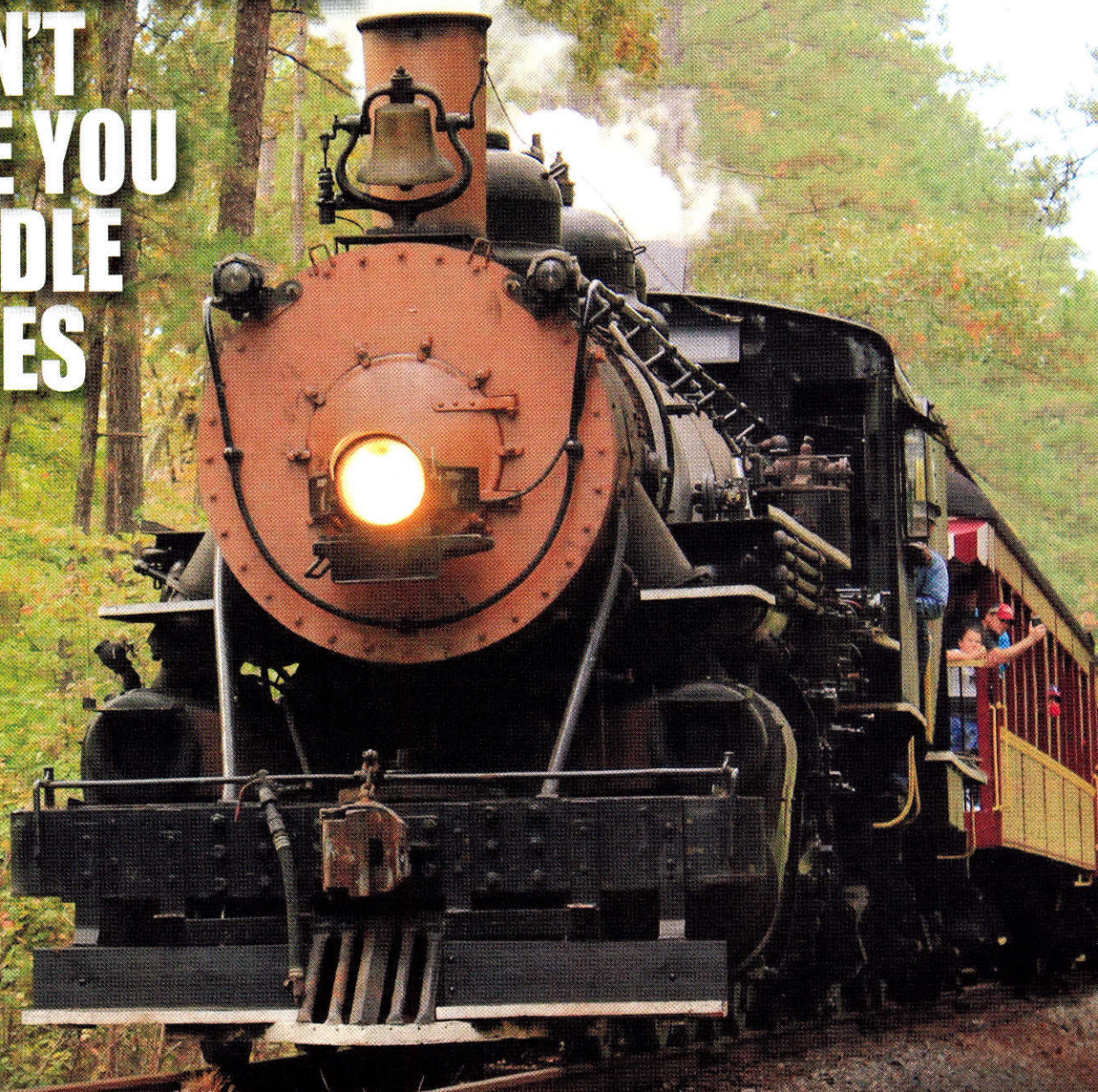
For his part, Wittliff declines much of the credit for the collections that bear his name. “It seems like it wasn’t so much me telling it where to go, but it telling me where it wanted to go,” he says. “If I’ve been right anywhere, it’s been in listening to that.”



THE WITTLIFF COLLECTIONS’

current exhibitions include *iViva Jerry Jeff! The Origins and Wild Times of a Texas Icon*, from the archives of singer-songwriter Jerry Jeff Walker, through July 8; and *Sunrise Sunset: Solargraphs by Bill Wittliff*, abstract photography of Texas landscapes, through July 30 on the seventh floor of the Albert B. Alkek Library at Texas State University in San Marcos. Call 512-245-2313; thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu.

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EVENTS



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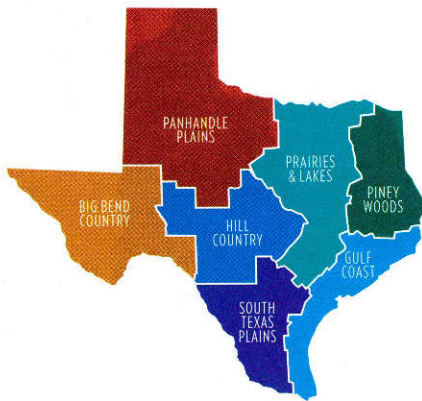
Rockin' the River

story by Mimi Faucett

BIKINIS AND SWIM TRUNKS MAY NOT BE TYPICAL concert-wear, but at Fort Worth's summer music series Rockin' the River, they're pretty much mandatory. Every Saturday from July 7 to Aug. 11, Panther Island Pavilion is packed to the gills with swimsuit-clad music lovers listening to Texas tunes from the relative comfort and coolness of an inner tube on the Trinity River. Each night, five different bands serenade tubers from a stage facing the water. This summer's lineup

includes Cody Canada and The Departed, The Dirty River Boys, Jackie Venson, The Peterson Brothers, and Fort Worth-based favorites Grady Spencer & The Work. Tubes are available for rent—and there are plenty of food and beverage options for purchase. Just as in years past, each fest ends with a fireworks show; don't worry about summer showers—the party goes on rain or shine. The first band kicks off around 2:15 p.m., and the event closes out a little after 9 p.m. rockintheriverfw.com

Want more? View the *Texas Highways Events Calendar* at texashighways.com/events.



BIG BEND COUNTRY

ALPINE: Alpine Cowboys Baseball Through July 18. Kokernot Field. alpine.pecosleague.com 432-386-3402

ALPINE: Alpine's Fourth of July Celebration June 29-July 4. Various locations. visitalpinetx.com

ALPINE: *Smokey Joe's Café* July 6-8, 13-15, 20-22, 27-29. Kokernot Outdoor Theatre. sulross.edu 432-837-8218

ALPINE: Viva Big Bend July 26-29. Various locations. vivabigbend.com

MONAHANS: Freedom Fest July 4. Hill Park. monahans.org 432-943-2187

MONAHANS: Butterfield Festival July 28. Ward County Coliseum. monahans.org

GULF COAST

ARANSAS PASS: Sandollar Summer Market June 30-July 1. Aransas Pass Civic Center. texasmarketguide.com

BEAUMONT: *Experimenting with Wind* Through Sept. 9. Texas Energy Museum. texasenergymuseum.org 409-833-5100

BEAUMONT: *Selections from the Permanent Collection* Through Sept. 2. Art Museum of Southeast Texas. amset.org

BEAUMONT: Bubble Day July 11. Texas Energy Museum. texasenergymuseum.org 409-833-5100

BEAUMONT: National Dance Day July 28. Edison Plaza. octx.info

BRAZORIA: Santa Ana Ball July 21. Lloyd Thomas Gymnasium. brazoriah.org

BROWNSVILLE: Salute to Freedom 4th of July Festival July 4. Brownsville Sports Park. cob.us/308/parks-recreation 956-542-2064

BROWNSVILLE: Keep Brownsville Beautiful Beach Clean Up July 7. Boca Chica Beach. cob.us/308/parks-recreation 956-542-2064

BROWNSVILLE: La Lunada Artisan Market Festival July 21. Linear Park. cob.us/308/parks-recreation 956-542-2064

CLUTE: *The Music Man* July 13-15, 20-22. Center for the Arts & Sciences. brazosportcenter.org

CLUTE: Planetarium Show July 17. Center for the Arts & Sciences. brazosportcenter.org 979-265-3376

CLUTE: Great Texas Mosquito Festival July 26-28. Clute Municipal Park. mosquitofestival.com 979-265-8392

CORPUS CHRISTI: Orchid-ology July 5. South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center. stxbot.org 361-290-7429

CORPUS CHRISTI: Plumeria Passion Growers July 14. South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center. stxbot.org

CORPUS CHRISTI: Plumeria Sale July 21. Garden Senior Center. stxbot.org

FREEPORT: Fishin' Fiesta July 4-8. Freeport Municipal Park. fishinfiesta.com 979-233-5137

FREEPORT: Schuster Home Open House July 28. Schuster Home. 979-297-0868

GALVESTON: An Evening with Bill Engvall July 7. The Grand 1894 Opera House. thegrand.com 800-821-1894 or 409-765-1894

GALVESTON: *Dixie's Tupperware Party* July 21. The Grand 1894 Opera House. thegrand.com 800-821-1894 or 409-765-1894

HOUSTON: *Big Bugs* Through Sept. 3. Houston Zoo. houstonzoo.org 713-533-6500

HOUSTON: *Love Never Dies, The Phantom Returns* July 17-22. The Hobby Center. houston.broadway.com 800-952-6560

HOUSTON: Zoo After Dark July 19. Houston Zoo. houstonzoo.org

LAKE JACKSON: Cole Degges in Concert July 4. Lake Jackson Civic Center Plaza. lakejackson-tx.gov 979-415-2600

LAKE JACKSON: Fireworks Display July 4. Dunbar Park. lakejackson-tx.gov 979-297-4533

LAKE JACKSON: Rubber Duck Regatta July 4. Dunbar Park. lakejackson-tx.gov 979-297-4533

LAKE JACKSON: Abner Jackson Plantation Site Tour July 7. Abner Jackson Plantation Site. lakejacksonmuseum.org 979-297-1570

LAKE JACKSON: Bird Baking July 21. Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. gcbo.org 979-480-0999

NEDERLAND: Fourth of July July 4. Doornbos Park. ci.nederland.tx.us

ORANGE: *The World War I Homefront: Orange Goes Over the Top* Through July 14. The W.H. Stark House. starkculturalvenues.org/whstarkhouse 409-883-0871

ORANGE: Fourth of July Concert and Fireworks July 4. Riverfront Pavilion. orangetexas.org

PALACIOS: Palacios Lion's Club 4th of July Celebration July 3-4. East Bay Park. facebook.com/palacios.lionsclub 361-655-9135

PALACIOS: Poker in Palacios and Seafood

Dinner July 14. Palacios Recreation Center. palacioschamber.com

PEARLAND: Celebration of Freedom July 4. Pearland High School Football Stadium. pearlandtx.gov

PORT ARTHUR: Fourth of July July 4. Lamar State College. lamarpa.edu

PORT ARTHUR: Crabbing 101 at Sea Rim State Park July 21. Sea Rim State Park. tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/sea-rim 409-971-2559

ROCKPORT: Boat Parade July 4. Little Bay. rockport-fulton.org 361-729-6445

ROCKPORT: July 4th Fireworks July 4. Rockport Beach and Little Bay. rockport-fulton.org 361-729-6445

ROCKPORT: Rockport Art Festival July 7-8. Rockport. rockportartcenter.com 361-729-5519

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: Fourth of July Fireworks July 4. Louie's Backyard. sopadre.com 800-657-2373

SUGAR LAND: Dan & Phil: Interactive Introverts World Tour July 3. Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land. smartfinancialcentre.net 281-207-6278

SUGAR LAND: Red, White, Blues, & Brews featuring Tribute to George Strait Band July 7. Sugar Land Town Square. sugarlandtownsquare.com 281-242-2000

SUGAR LAND: Opry on the Square July 13. Sugar Land Town Square. sugarlandtownsquare.com 281-242-2000

SUGAR LAND: Sugar Land Superstar Round 2 July 21. Sugar Land Town Square. sugarlandtownsquare.com 281-242-2000

SUGAR LAND: Sugarland in Concert with Special Guests Frankie Ballard and Lindsay Ell July 21. Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land. smartfinancialcentre.net 281-207-6278

SUGAR LAND: Jeff Beck & Paul Rodgers in Concert with Ann Wilson of Heart July 24. Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land. smartfinancialcentre.net 281-207-6278

SUGAR LAND: NOLA Nights July 28. Sugar Land Town Square. sugarlandtownsquare.com 281-242-2000

SUGAR LAND: Steve Miller Band and Peter Frampton in Concert July 28. Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land. smartfinancialcentre.net 281-207-6278

THE WOODLANDS: Red, Hot, & Blue Festival and Fireworks Extravaganza July 4. Various locations. 281-210-3800

THE WOODLANDS: Rock the Row July 12, 19, 26. Hughes Landing. 281-210-3800

THE WOODLANDS: Niall Horan in Concert with Maren Morris July 18. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. 281-210-3800

THE WOODLANDS: Foreigner in Concert with Whitesnake & Jason Bonham's Led Zeppelin Evening July 20. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. 281-210-3800

TOMBALL: July 4th Celebration & Street Fest July 4. Business Highway 249 at FM 2920 (Main Street). tomballtx.gov 281-351-5484

VICTORIA: *Grease* July 20-22, 26-28. Leo J. Welder Center for the Performing Arts. theatre victoria.org 361-570-8587

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: *Rodeo! The Exhibition* Through Jan. 27, 2019. Bullock Texas State History Museum. thestoryoftexas.com 512-463-6485

AUSTIN: *Heisenberg* June 20-July 22. ZACH Theatre, Kleberg Stage. zachtheatre.org 512-476-0541

AUSTIN: H-E-B Austin Symphony July 4th Concert & Fireworks July 4. Vic Mathias Shores. austinsymphony.org 512-476-6064

AUSTIN: Hill Country Galleria Independence Day Celebration July 4. Hill Country Galleria. hillcountrygalleria.com 512-263-0001

AUSTIN: Willie Nelson's 4th of July Picnic July 4. Circuit of The Americas. thecircuit.com 512-655-6255

AUSTIN: Bullock Museum's *Music Under the Star* series July 6, 13, 20, 27. Bullock Texas State History Museum. thestoryoftexas.com 512-936-4632

AUSTIN: Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* July 11-Sept. 2. ZACH Theatre. zachtheatre.org 512-476-0541

AUSTIN: Body Mind Spirit Expo July 21-22. Palmer Events Center. bmse.net/bmseweb 541-482-3722

BANDERA: Cowboy Capital Opry July 3. Silver Sage Community Center. banderacowboycapital.com 830-796-3045

BANDERA: Lakehills 4th of July Parade July 4. St. Victor Chapel. banderacowboycapital.com 830-796-3045

BANDERA: Bandera Summer Rodeo July 6, 13, 20. Mansfield Park Rodeo Arena. banderacowboycapital.com

BANDERA: Bandera Cattle Company Gunfighters July 7, 14, 21, 28. Bandera Visitors Center. banderacowboycapital.com 830-796-3045

BANDERA: The Old Timers Trading Post July 7. The Old Timer. banderacowboycapital.com 830-796-3045

BANDERA: Third Thursday Cowboy Camp July 19. Bandera Beverage Barn RV Park. banderacowboycapital.com 830-796-3045

BANDERA: Texas Heroes Hall of Honor July 27. Frontier Times Museum. banderacowboycapital.com 830-796-3045

BLANCO: Blanco's Arts in the Park Independence Day Celebration July 1. Bindseil Park. visitblancotexas.com 830-833-5101

BOERNE: Abendkonzerte July 3, 17, 31. Boerne Main Plaza. visitboerne.org

BOERNE: Fourth of July Fireworks July 4. Boerne City Park. visitboerne.org

BOERNE: Boerne Market Days July 14-15. Boerne Main Plaza. visitboerne.org/calendar/boerne-market-days-132

BOERNE: Hot Rod Night July 14, 28. Soda Pops. visitboerne.org

BOERNE: Kuhlmann-King Museum Tour July 14. Historic Kuhlmann-King House. visitboerne.org

BOERNE: Star Party July 20. Boerne City Lake Park. visitboerne.org

BROWNWOOD: Riverfest June 29-July 1. Riverside Park. brownwoodjcs.com

BROWNWOOD: *Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* July 13-15, 20-22. Brownwood Lyric Theatre. brownwoodlyrictheatre.com

COMFORT: Celebration of American Independence July 4. Historic Downtown & Comfort Park. comfort-texas.com 830-995-3131

COMFORT: Music in the Park July 10. Comfort Park. comfort-texas.com 830-995-3131

DRIPPING SPRINGS: Dripping Springs Fair and Rodeo July 27-29. Dripping Springs Ranch Park. drippingspringsfairandrodeo.com

FREDERICKSBURG: *The Music Man* Through July 1. Steve W. Shepherd Theater. fredericksburgtheater.org 830-997-3588

FREDERICKSBURG: Fourth of July Celebrations July 4. Fredericksburg, Stonewall, and Luckenbach.

visitfredericksburgtx.com 830-997-6523

FREDERICKSBURG: First Friday Art Walk Fredericksburg July 6. Various locations. ffawf.com 830-997-6523

FREDERICKSBURG: Live Pari-Mutuel Horse Racing July 7-8, 21-22. Gillespie County Fairgrounds. gillespiefair.com 830-997-2359

FREDERICKSBURG: WWII Pacific Combat Zone July 14-15. National Museum of the Pacific War. pacificwarmuseum.org

FREDERICKSBURG: Fredericksburg Trade Days July 20-22. fbgradedays.com 830-990-4900

FREDERICKSBURG: Night in Old Fredericksburg July 21. Gillespie County Fairgrounds. gillespiefair.com 830-997-2359

FREDERICKSBURG: PCAA Concert in the Park July 22. Marktplatz. fredericksburgfestivals.com 830-997-8515

FREDERICKSBURG: *Seussical Jr.* July 26-29.

Steve W. Shepherd Theater. fredericksburgtheater.org 830-997-3588

FREDERICKSBURG: Hill Country Auto Swap Meet July 27-29. Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park. earhartproductions.com 254-751-7958

FREDERICKSBURG: Gillespie County Bundes Schuetzenfest July 28-29. Grapetown Shooting Range. 830-992-5654

GEORGETOWN: Sertoma's 4th of July in the Park July 4. San Gabriel Park. georgetownsertoma.org/4thofjuly.htm 800-436-8696

GEORGETOWN: Music on the Square July 13, 20, 27. Downtown Square. visit.georgetown.org 800-436-8696

HUNT: Criders Rodeo & Dance Hall July 7, 14, 21, 28. cridersrodeoanddance.com 830-238-4441

JOHNSON CITY: Art Walk July 28. Nugent Avenue and Main Street. lbjcountry.com

JOHNSON CITY: Market Days July 28-29. City Park.

lbjcountry.com 830-868-7684

KERRVILLE: *Impossible Marriage* Through July 1. Playhouse 2000 VK Garage Theater. playhouse2000.com 830-896-9393

KERRVILLE: Robert Earl Keen's 4th on the River July 4. Louise Hays Park. kerrvilles4th.org 830-257-8233

KERRVILLE: *Back to the '80s: an "Awesome" Musical* July 13-28. Hill Country Arts Foundation. hcacf.com 830-367-2151

KERRVILLE: Kerrville Summer Market July 14-15. Inn of the Hills Hotel & Conference Series. texasmarketguide.com 888-225-3427

KERRVILLE: Heart of the Hills Golf Tournament July 24-27. Scott Schreiner Municipal Golf Course. hohkerr.com 830-895-1027

KERRVILLE: *Seussical the Musical* July 27-29. Cailoux Theater. playhouse2000.com 830-896-9393

KERRVILLE: UGRA River Clean Up July 28-29.

Flat Rock Lake Park. ugra.org/annualrivercleanup.html 830-896-5445

KYLE: Independence Day Fireworks Show July 4. Plum Creek Golf Course. cityofkyle.com/recreation 512-262-3939

KYLE: Kyle Market Days July 14. City Square Park. cityofkyle.com/recreation 512-262-3939

LAMPASAS: Lampasas Trade Days July 7-8. Marigold's Antiques & More. marigoldsantiques.com 512-734-1294

LAMPASAS: Spring Ho Hot as Hell Barbecue Cookoff July 13-14. Cooper Spring Nature Park. lampasaschamber.org

LAMPASAS: Toughest 10K in Texas July 14. Hancock Park Pavilion. lampasaschamber.org

LLANO: Llano Rock'N Riverfest July 7. Badu Park. llanorocknriverfest.com 325-247-5354

OZONA: *Vintage Hat Happenings* Through Sept. 30. Crockett County Museum.

ozonamuseum.com 325-392-2837

OZONA: 4th of July Celebrations July 4. Ozona's Historic Town Square. ozona.com/eventscalendar 325-392-2827

SAN MARCOS: Summerfest July 4. San Marcos Plaza Park. summerfestsmx.com 512-393-5930

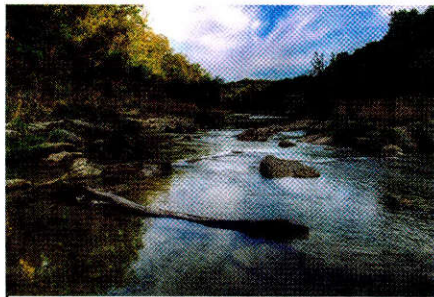
SAN MARCOS: Don't Tread on My Trif! July 22. Meadows Center. toursanmarcos.com

UVALDE: Four Square Friday July 13. Historic Downtown Uvalde. visituvalde.com


WIMBERLEY: *Little Shop of Horrors* June 29-30, July 1, 6-8, 12-15, 19-22. The Wimberley Playhouse. wimberleyplayers.org

WIMBERLEY: Independence Day Parade July 4. wimberley.org 512-847-2201

WIMBERLEY: Patriotic Concerts July 4. Wimberley First Baptist Church. wimberleycommunitychorus.org 512-517-3111





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EVENTS

WIMBERLEY: VFW Rodeo July 5-7. Wimberley Valley Veterans Park. texasvfw.net 512-847-6441

WIMBERLEY: Big Scoop Ice Cream Festival July 7. Wimberley Community Center. facebook.com/campgoodsamwimberley 512-847-9956

WIMBERLEY: Market Days July 7. Lions Field. shopmarketdays.com 512-847-2201

WIMBERLEY: *Robin Hood* July 14-29. EmilyAnn Theatre and Gardens. emilyann.org

WIMBERLEY: Second Saturday Gallery Trail July 14. Various locations. gallerytrail.com 512-722-6032

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ALBANY: *Cross Collection* Through Aug. 25. Old Jail Art Center. theojac.org 325-762-2269

ALBANY: *Helen Altman: Jailbird* Through Aug. 25. Old Jail Art Center. theojac.org 325-762-2269

ALBANY: *Two Worlds* Through Aug. 25. Old Jail Art Center. theojac.org 325-762-2269

BIG SPRING: Pops in the Park July 3. Comanche Trail Amphitheater. facebook.com/popsinthepark 432-263-7641

BIG SPRING: Stargazing at the Big Spring State Park July 21. Big Spring State Park. tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/big-spring 432-263-4931

CANADIAN: Fourth of July Rodeos & Celebration July 4-7. Canadian Chamber of Commerce. canadiantx.com 806-323-6234

CANADIAN: Screen on the Green July 12, 19, 26. Chamber of Commerce. canadiantx.com 806-323-6234

DALHART: Rank Lil Buckers June 30-July 1. XIT Rodeo Arena. dalhart.org

DALHART: 4th of July Fireworks July 4. Rita Blanca Lake. dalhart.org

DALHART: The Purpose Market July 14, 28. Purpose Coffee Co. purposecoffee.com

DALHART: XIT Junior Rodeo July 28-29. XIT Rodeo Arena. xit-rodeo.com

DENVER CITY: July 4th Celebration July 4. Stuffy Moorhead Park. denvercitychamber.com 806-592-5424

DUMAS: 4th of July World Championship Mud Volleyball Tournament July 4. McDade Park. dumaschamber.com 806-935-2123

EDEN: Micky and the Motorcars in Concert July 14. Green Apple Art Center. greenapplemusic.com

FRIONA: Cheeseburger Festival July 21. Friona City Park. frionachamber.com

LEVELLAND: Early Settlers' Day July 14. Levelland Chamber of Commerce. levelland.com

LUBBOCK: *Crafts—Repurposed* Through July 22. Buddy Holly Center. buddyyhollycenter.org 806-775-3560

LUBBOCK: Buddy Holly Center Summer Showcase Concert Series Through Aug. 23. Buddy Holly Center. buddyyhollycenter.org

LUBBOCK: *The Music Man* June 15-16, 22-23, 29-30; July 6-7. Moonlight Musicals Amphitheatre. lubbockmoonlightmusicals.org

POST: Old Mill Trade Days July 13-15. oldmilltradedays.com

SAN ANGELO: American Plains Artists Show June 28-Aug. 5. Fort Concho National Historic Landmark. fortconcho.com

SAN ANGELO: Pops Concert July 3. Bill Aylor Sr. Memorial RiverStage. sanangelosymphony.org/event/julypops 325-658-5877

SAN ANGELO: Holiday Artillery Salutes July 4. Fort Concho National Historic Landmark. fortconcho.com 325-234-0316

SAN ANGELO: Angelo State University Art Faculty Biennial Exhibition July 13-Sept. 9. San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts. samfa.org 325-653-3333

SAN ANGELO: *Made in Texas! 25 Contemporary Quilts* July 13-Sept. 9. San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts. samfa.org 325-653-3333

SAN ANGELO: Family Day—Patchwork July 14. San Angelo Museum of

Fine Arts. samfa.org 325-653-3333

SAN ANGELO: Downtown & Cultural District Stroll July 19. San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts. samfa.org 325-653-3333

SAN ANGELO: National Cowboy Day at Fort Concho July 28. Fort Concho. fortconcho.com 325-481-2646

SHAMROCK: Route 66 Festival—Texas Welcomes the World June 12-15. Various locations. texaswelcomes.theworld.com

SNYDER: Fourth of July Celebration July 3-4. Towle Park. snyderchamber.org

SNYDER: Scurry County Rodeo July 19-21. Old Rodeo Grounds.

SWEETWATER: Sparks in the Park July 4. Newman Park. sweetwatertexas.org

VEGA: Comancheros Citywide Garage Sales Through Aug. 23. Various locations. oldhamcofc.org

PINEY WOODS

HUNTSVILLE: 4th of July Celebration July 4. Kate Barr Ross Memorial Park. huntsvilletexas.com 936-291-9726

HUNTSVILLE: East Texas Thimble Trail July 13-14. Walker County Fairgrounds. easttexas.thimbletrail.com

JEFFERSON: Jefferson Flea Market July 6-7, 20-21. Jefferson Flea Market. jeffersonfleamarket.net 903-431-0043

KILGORE: Texas Shakespeare Festival June 28-July 29. Anne Dean Turk Fine Arts Center. texasshakespeare.com

KILGORE: 4th of July Extravaganza July 4. Kilgore City Park. cityofkilgore.com 903-988-4117

KILGORE: Patriotic Street Party July 21. Historic Downtown Kilgore. kilgoremainstreet.com

LIBERTY: Liberty Opry July 7, 14, 28. Liberty Opry. libertyopry.com 936-336-5830

LUFKIN: Main Street Market Days July 21. Downtown Lufkin. visitlufkin.com

TYLER: Hit the Bricks: Second Saturday Downtown July 13.

visitt Tyler.com/
secondsaturday
903-592-1661

TYLER: DHJSC/TRHP Hunter Jumper Horse Show July 14-15. Texas Rose Horse Park. texasrosehorsepark.com 903-882-8696

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ADDISON: *The Last Five Years* Through July 1. Water Tower Theatre. watertow theatre.org

ADDISON: Addison Kaboom Town! July 3. Addison Circle Park. addisonkaboomtown.com 800-233-4766

ADDISON: Vitruvian Nights Live July 12, 26. Vitruvian Park Amphitheater. vitruvianpark.com

ADDISON: Summer Series July 13, 20, 27. Beckert Park. visitaddison.com 800-233-4766

ARLINGTON: *CUT! Costume and the Cinema* Through Aug. 12. Arlington Museum of Art. arlingtonmuseum.org

ARLINGTON: Yellow Rose Classic Car Show July 7-8. Arlington Convention Center. arlington-tx.gov/conventioncenter

BASTROP: Homecoming & Rodeo July 31-Aug. 5. Mayfest Park. explorebastropcounty.com

BELLVILLE: Austin County Fair Shrimp Boil July 14. Austin County Fair Convention & Expo Center. austincountyfair.com

BELTON: 4th of July Celebration & PRCA Rodeo June 29-July 7. Downtown Belton. rodeobelton.com

BELTON: Sami Show Marketplace July 7-8. Bell County Expo Center. samishow.com

BONHAM: Wine Down on Willow July 20. Creative Arts Center. creativeartscenterbonham.com

BONHAM: Kueckelhan Rodeo July 26-28. kueckelhanrodeo.com

BONHAM: Quilt Hop July 27-28. Historic downtown. visitbonham.com

CAMERON: July Fourth Fireworks Celebration July 4. Wilson-Ledbetter Park. cameron-tx.com 254-697-4979

CAMERON: *Shrek: The Musical* July 27-29; Aug. 2-5. Cameron ISD

Performing Art Center. milamcommunitytheater.com

COLUMBUS: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Columbus Municipal Golf Course. columbus-texas.org 979-732-8385

CUERO: 4th of July Fireworks Show July 4. Cuero City Park. cuero.org 361-275-2112

CUERO: Lester Meier Rodeo July 20-21. Cuero Rodeo Arena. cuero.org

DALLAS: *How I Became A Pirate* Through July 8. Dallas Children's Theater. dct.org

DALLAS: *The Power of Gold: Asante Royal Regalia from Ghana* Through Aug. 12. Dallas Museum of Art. dma.org

DALLAS: *Sterling Ruby: Sculpture* Through Aug. 19. Nasher Sculpture Center. nashersculpturecenter.org

DALLAS: *Ultimate Dinosaurs* June 23-Jan. 6, 2019. Perot Museum. perotmuseum.org

DALLAS: *Babel* July 5. AT&T Performing Arts Center Hamon Hall, Winspear Opera House. attpac.org 214-880-0202

DALLAS: Safari Nights July 7, 14. Dallas Zoo. dallaszoo.com/safarinights 469-554-7500

DALLAS: Fascinating World of Butterflies July 21. Texas Discovery Gardens. txdq.org

DALLAS: Seven Things I Have Learned: An Evening with Ira Glass July 21. AT&T Performing Arts Center Winspear Opera House. attpac.org 214-880-0202

DENISON: *The Birth of NASA* Through Aug. 13. Eisenhower Birthplace. visiteisenhowerbirthplace.com 903-465-8908

DENTON: Fourth of July Jubilee July 4. Quakertown Park. dentonparks.com 940-349-7275

DENTON: Kiwanis Fireworks Show July 4. University of North Texas Apogee Stadium. dentonkiwanisclub.org 940-387-6323

ELGIN: 4th of July People's Parade & Celebration July 4. Downtown Elgin. explorebastropcounty.com 512-581-4074

ELGIN: Elgin Rodeo July 13-14. Julius Marek Arena. explorebastropcounty.com

ELGIN: Fourth of July—Push, Pedal, and Pull People's Patriotic Parade and Celebration July 4. elgintx.com

FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Symphony Concerts in the Garden Through July 4. Fort Worth Botanical Garden. fwsymphony.org

FORT WORTH: *Takashi Murakami: The Octopus Eats Its Own Leg* Through Sept. 16. Modern Art Museum. themodern.org/exhibitions 817-738-9215

FORT WORTH: Mimir Chamber Music Festival July 2-8. PepsiCo Recital Hall, TCU. mimirfestival.com 817-798-1395

FORT WORTH: Fort Worth's Fourth at Panther Island Pavilion July 4. pantherislandpavilion.com 817-698-0700

FRISCO: Frisco Freedom Fest July 3-4. Frisco Square. visitfrisco.com 972-292-5250

GARLAND: *Kiss Me Kate* July 20-29. Granville Arts Center, Brownlee Auditorium. garlandartsboxoffice.com

GIDDINGS: July 4th Fireman's Celebration July 4. Firemans Park. giddings-tx.com/event-1703375

GRANBURY: Old Fashioned 4th of July Celebration July 3-4. Downtown Granbury. granburychamber.com 817-573-1622

GRAND PRAIRIE: Thoroughbred Racing Through July 22. Lone Star Park. lonestarpark.com 972-263-7223

GRAND PRAIRIE: Lone Stars & Stripes Firework Celebration July 3-4. Lone Star Park. lonestarpark.com 972-263-7223

GRAND PRAIRIE: Charity Ice Cream Challenge July 7. Farmers Market at Market Square. gptx.org/farmers-market 972-237-4559

GRAND PRAIRIE: Festival de Mariachi July 7. Traders Village. tradersvillage.com/grand-prairie 972-647-2331

GRAND PRAIRIE: Ed Asner: A Man and His Prostate July 21. Uptown Theater. uptowntheatergpc.com

GRAPEVINE: Cotton Belt Route Train Ride to The Historic Fort Worth Stockyards Through Aug. 26. Grapevine Vintage Railroad. gvrr.com 817-410-3185

GRAPEVINE: Summer Blast Through Sept. 3. Various locations. grapevinetexasusa.com 817-410-3185

GRAPEVINE: *Grapevine Rails: Rolling Through Time* Through Sept. 16. grapevinetexasusa.com 817-410-3185

GRAPEVINE: July 4th Fireworks Extravaganza July 4. Lake Grapevine. grapevinetexasusa.com 817-410-3185

GRAPEVINE: First Fridays at The Farm July 6. Nash Farm. nashfarm.org 817-410-3185

GRAPEVINE: Ice Cream Social July 14. Nash Farm. nashfarm.org 817-410-3185

HALLETTSVILLE: *Texas in World War I* Through Nov. 30. Frenich Simpson Memorial Library. hallettsvillelibrary.org 361-798-3243 ext. 208

HICO: Old Settler's Reunion July 17-21. Hico City Park. facebook.com/hicocivicclub

MADISONVILLE: 4th of July Celebration July 4. Lake Madison Park. visitmadisonville.org 936-348-9333

MANSFIELD: Rockin' 4th of July July 3. Big League Dreams. mansfieldtexas.gov 817-804-5795

MANSFIELD: Red, White & Rockin' Kids' Triathlon July 15. Hawaiian Falls Water Park. mansfieldtexas.gov

MANSFIELD: Texas Firefighter Games July 15-20. Big League Dreams Mansfield. texasfirefightergames.com

MCDADE: McDade Watermelon Festival July 14. Downtown McDade. explorebastropcounty.com

MCKINNEY: Native Texas Butterfly House & Garden Through Sept. 30. Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary. heardmuseum.org/butterflies 972-562-5566

MESQUITE: Mesquite Championship Rodeo July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30. Mesquite Arena. mesquiterodeo.com 972-285-8777

MESQUITE: Marketplace Mesquite: Farmers' and Artisan's Market July 14, 28. Heritage Square in Downtown Mesquite. themarketplacedfw.com 469-275-9617

MESQUITE: Christmas Expo Holiday Lighting & Decorating Conference July 19-21. Mesquite Championship Rodeo at Mesquite Arena. christmasexpo.com

MESQUITE: Topless TX Winged Modifieds July 21. Devil's Bowl Speedway. devilsbowl.com 972-222-2420

MESQUITE: Nibbles & Sips July 26-29. Opal Lawrence Historical Park. historicmesquite.org 972-216-6468

MESQUITE: Opal Lawrence Historical Park Tours July 28. historicmesquite.org 972-216-6468

PALESTINE: Texas State Railroad Summer Excursions Through Sept. 29. Palestine Depot. texasstaterailroad.net 855-632-7729

PALESTINE: Bob Gill in Concert July 14. Palestine High School. barctx.org 903-729-8074

PALESTINE: Market Days at the Palestine Farmers Market July 20-21. Farmers Market Pavilion. visitpalestine.com 903-731-8437

PARIS: Cruisin' on the Plaza July 6. Downtown Paris Fountain Plaza. paristexas.com 903-784-2501

PARIS: Paris Balloon and Music Festival July 20-22. Red River Valley Fairgrounds. parisballoonandmusicfestival.com

PLANO: Summer Concerts in the Park July 3, 16, 30. Haggard Park. planoband.com

PLANO: Plano All-American Fourth July 4. Oak Point Park Amphitheater. plano.gov 972-941-7250

PLANO: Bare Bones Shakespeare Presents *Hamlette* July 5-14. Rover Dramawerks. barebonesshakespeare.com 469-701-3228

PLANO: Courtyard Texas Music Series July 5. Courtyard Theater. plano.gov 972-941-5600

PLANO: Downtown Plano Art & Wine Walk July 12.

Historic Downtown Plano. visitdowntownplano.com/winewalk 972-468-1588

PLANO: *The Belle of West Texas* July 19-21. Rover Dramawerks. roverdramawerks.com 972-849-0358

PLANO: *The Awesome '80s Prom* July 26-Aug. 11. Rover Dramawerks. roverdramawerks.com 972-849-0358

RICHARDSON: Plano Symphony Patriotic Pops July 4. Eisemann Center. planosymphony.org 972-473-7262

ROUND TOP: Round Top Music Festival Through July 15. Round Top Festival Institute. festivalhill.org

SALADO: *Salado Legends* July 21, 28; Aug. 4. Tablerock Amphitheater. tablerock.org

SCHERTZ: *Jaws* July 21. Schertz Acquatic Center. slabcinema.com 210-212-9373

SEALY: Sealy Bration July 13-14. BP&W Park. sealycommunityfoundation.org

SEGUIN: Biggest Small-Town Fourth of July Parade July 4. visitsegin.com

SHINER: Half-Moon Holidays Celebration and Barbecue Cookoff July 6-7. Green Dickson Park. shinertx.com 361-594-4180

SMITHVILLE: Casino Night July 28. Smithville Recreation Center. explorebastropcounty.com

TEMPLE: July 4th Family Fun Fest July 4. Miller Park. templeparks.com 254-298-5440

TEMPLE: First Friday July 6. Downtown Temple.

discovertemple.com 254-298-5378

TEMPLE: Beat the Heat! Family Day July 7. Temple Railroad and Heritage Museum. templeerrhm.org 254-298-5175

TEMPLE: Main Street Market July 28. Downtown Temple. discovertemple.com

THE COLONY: Liberty 5K, 10K, & 1-Mile Fun Run July 4. Stewart Creek Park. libertybythelake.com 972-625-1106

THE COLONY: Liberty by the Lake Independence Day Parade July 4. Five Star Complex. libertybythelake.com 972-625-1106

WACO: *Titanic: The Artifact Exhibit* Through Jan. 6. Mayborn Museum Complex. baylor.edu/mayborn

WACO: 4th on the Brazos July 4. Touchdown Alley at McLane Stadium. brazosnightswaco.com/fourth-on-the-brazos 254-750-5627

WACO: Stars over Texas Jamboree July 5. Lee Lockwood Library & Museum. 254-755-7257

WALLIS: Arts and Crafts Show July 14-15. 281-743-3678

WALLIS: FunFest July 28. Wallis American Legion Hall. wallischamber.com

WAXAHACHIE: Grape Myrtle Festival July 3-4. Waxahachie Sports Complex. waxahachiecvb.com 469-309-4040

WEATHERFORD: Parker County Peach Festival July 14. Historic Downtown Weatherford. parkercountypeachfestival.org

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

ALICE: Fourth of July Celebration July 4, 6-7. Veterans Plaza Park. alicetxchamber.org 361-668-7260

ALICE: Twin Cam Jam July 13-15. Jim Wells County Fairgrounds. alicetxchamber.org

EDINBURG: Texas Cook'Em: High Steaks in Edinburg July 6-7. H-E-B Park. edinburg.com 956-383-4974

EDINBURG: FridaFest July 7. Edinburg City Hall Courtyard. edinburgarts.com 956-383-6246

LAREDO: International Sister Cities Festival July 13-15. Laredo Energy Arena. visitlaredo.com

SAN ANTONIO: *Andy Warhol: Cowboys and Indians* Through Sept. 3. Briscoe Western Art Museum. briscoemuseum.org 210-299-4499

SAN ANTONIO: *Billy Schenck and the Roots of Western Pop Art* Through Sept. 3. Briscoe Western Art Museum. briscoemuseum.org 210-299-4499

SAN ANTONIO: Bud Light Stars, Stripes, & Lights June 29-July 4. San Antonio River Walk. thesanantonioriverwalk.com/events

SAN ANTONIO: Fourth of July Artisan Show June 29-July 2. River Walk Extension (close to Shops at Rivercenter). thesanantonioriverwalk.com/events

SAN ANTONIO: *Portraits of Courage: A Commander in Chief's Tribute to America's Warriors* July 21-Sept. 30. The Witte Museum. wittemuseum.org

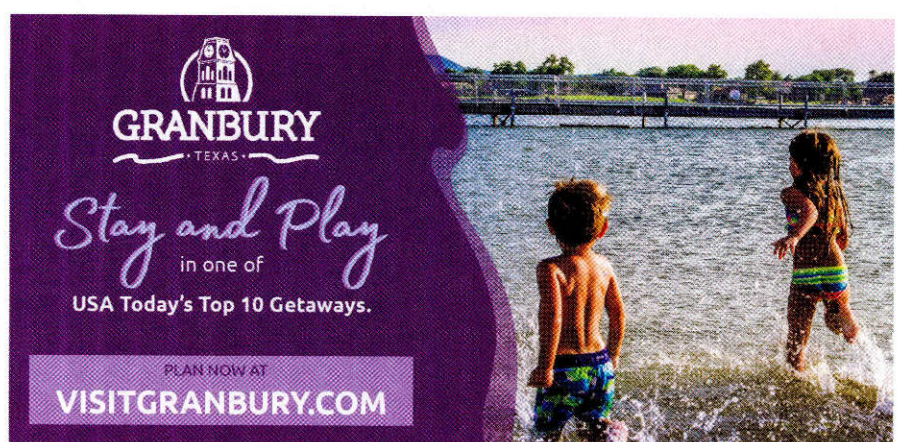
SAN ANTONIO: Summer Artisan Show July 27-29. River Walk Extension (close to Shops at Rivercenter). thesanantonioriverwalk.com/events

WANT MORE? VIEW THE TEXAS HIGHWAYS EVENTS CALENDAR AT texashighways.com/events.

For a free printed copy of an even more detailed, quarterly schedule of events, go to texashighways.com/freepubs; write to *Texas Highways Events Calendar*, P.O. Box 149249, Austin, TX 78714-9249; or call 800-452-9292 from anywhere in the U.S. or Canada, between 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Central.

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

To submit event information, visit texashighways.com and go to Events, Event Submission form; email: texasevents@txdot.gov; or mail: *Texas Highways Events Calendar*, Box 141009, Austin, TX 78714-1009. Listing deadlines: Spring (March, April, May) Dec. 1; Summer (June, July, Aug.) March 1; Fall (Sept., Oct., Nov.) June 1; Winter (Dec., Jan., Feb.) Sept. 1.



GRANBURY
TEXAS

Stay and Play
in one of
USA Today's Top 10 Getaways.

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Q: *So many of your main characters, especially in Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club, are grappling with loss. But they keep moving forward. What keeps them afloat?*

A: Well, they want to live. Something inside of them knows that life is a gift, and even if they don't like themselves enough, or very much, they still know that a gift has been given to them. And they just want to live. They're like me. And they don't want to be cheated out of that.

Q: *Could you tell me about your recently released poetry collection, The Last Cigarette on Earth?*

A: I threw so many poems out and wrote some new ones, and it evolved. I had to distill it into the poems that I thought mattered most. You know, it's too long as it is, but the poems that I felt were essential to the journey that I was talking about stayed, because it's also about Juárez. It's about me, Juárez, love. I'd never been in love with a man until I was 55. I thought it was incredible. I also thought it was a disaster. It wasn't anything I'd ever known, and I somehow felt compelled to write something about it, and that's what this is.

Q: *How does it feel to write about such intimate subjects?*

A: You know, I don't have a car anymore. I was in a terrible accident about three months ago in which I almost died. It's changed me in some good ways. Not that I took life for granted, but now I think, "I'm alive and I'm going to make it count." I was at a writing conference and this woman said, "I'm afraid of alienating people with my work." And I said, "Oh, hell no. I want to make friends, I do, but I also want to earn my enemies. If they don't like me for what I write, then I want them for enemies." I'm sorry, but if everybody loves you, then Houston, we have a problem.

Q: *I've heard from many locals that El Paso and Juárez are one big community. What's your take on that?*

A: You cannot imagine one without the other. There is no El Paso without Juárez. There is no Juárez without El Paso. We want to be our own thing—and we are our own thing—but we're not. If Juárez shrivels up and dies, so do we; and the other way around. We need each other for survival. Because most people don't even know us. I wish people understood that the people of the border love their country, except for their country is two countries. We're a cultural ecotone.

Q: *What do you mean?*

A: In nature, an ecotone is where one geographic reality is turning into another. For example, in the high deserts of New Mexico, you have elements of the desert and elements of the forest, so a cactus is growing next to a ponderosa pine. It's not the desert anymore, and it's not the mountains yet, but it has elements of both.

Q: *Would you ever live anywhere else?*

A: This town, this city, this border, Juárez—it is my great passion. I'm not going to let anyone break that love affair up. If you don't get that about me, you don't get me. Some people paint those of us who live on the border as being poor, lazy, shifty, uneducated. We are not lazy, that's for sure. We are very innovative, we have a great sense of humor, we don't hold grudges, we take what is there and we make something out of it. But we are always going to be outliers to the rest of the world. In one review of a book of mine, they liked the book and they wrote, "Despite the fact that the characters are Hispanic, and that the setting is El Paso-Juárez, the story is universal." Despite the fact. That means that, generally speaking, this reviewer doesn't think the story can be universal if the characters are Hispanic and if it's set in a particular place. Now, if it's set in New York or Paris, it can be universal.



BEN ALIRE SÁENZ

Follow along with Ben Alire Saenz's travels on his Twitter account, @BenjaminAlireSa

But, if it's set on the border, you have to mention that despite that, it's still universal. So many people don't know anything about us, but they have decided who we are.

Q: *Do you think the drug violence and instability in Juárez is getting better?*

A: It really is. I have a lot of friends who work there and are teachers there. They are incredible people. They're always so grateful when I go over and read to their kids. I just go over for a day, but those teachers are there every day. If we only had any idea of the sacrifices people make to educate their children in Juárez, maybe we'd rethink our assumptions. That's why I'm staying here. I'm going to change someone's mind, even if it's just one person.

Q: *What is one thing you love to do in El Paso?*

A: On Sundays I walk to the border, to the bridge and back. I walk through *Segundo Barrio*. I stop off at The National, it's a great bakery, and talk to people I know. They have the best *bolillos*, so good. It's white bread that's crusty and soft inside. They also have these pastries called *libros*. It's a square that's really flaky, and the layers are like the pages of a book.

Q: *How does success feel?*

A: I'm a working-class guy. I know how to work, and I like working. I'm not afraid of being poor again. To have once had nothing, to know that you did this on your own, that's amazing, and no one can take it away from you. 🐾

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THE DAYTRIPPER

WITH CHET GARNER



Peek into the Past

SITTING IN THE middle of the Coastal Bend is a town that's been around since before Texas was Texas. Visitors to Victoria, established in 1824, can explore the rich history of the town's past mixed with new experiences that make it well worth the trip.

9 a.m. Before exploring the region's days of yore, I headed to **House of Bread** for breakfast. As soon as I entered, the heavenly aroma of cinnamon and freshly baked bread hit like a freight train to the nostrils. I followed my nose (and stomach) and ordered a homemade cinnamon roll, which looked more like a giant volcano with vanilla glaze lava.

10 a.m. Next, I visited the **Museum of the Coastal Bend**. The exhibits spanned centuries, from the Clovis natives to French settlers to Texas revolutionaries. The centerpiece of the museum is seven cannons recovered from the failed French settlement of Fort St. Louis. My favorite part was the atlatl exhibit, where visitors learn how to throw the prehistoric hunting weapon. After numerous failed attempts at taking down a mammoth, I'm pretty sure I would have been deemed a "gatherer" instead of a "hunter."

NOON After spending hours roaming the museum, I continued on my trip back through time with lunch at

Texas' oldest deli, **Fossati's Delicatessen**. Established in 1882 by Italian immigrants, this Texas institution still serves tasty sandwiches and soups based on original recipes. I grabbed a stool at the counter and settled in for a *Kites Kalteraufschnitt* (aka "Dutch Lunch"), which is basically

a build-your-own sandwich experience with a large platter of meat, cheese, and bread. I stacked it high and slathered on an extra-thick layer of homemade hot beer mustard that made my nostrils sting and my taste buds sing.

1 p.m. To walk off lunch, I set out on the **Trail Through Time**, a path that doubles as an outdoor history museum. Signs guided me on a walking tour of the city and covered major events in Victoria's past and the amazing people who have lived here, such as Margaret Wright, the "Mother of Texas,"

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

and Jose Carvajal, who laid out the city streets while it was under Mexican rule. It made for a great way to stretch my legs and my mind.

3 P.M. My journey concluded at **Riverside Park**, Victoria's outdoor playground. My first stop within the park was **The Texas Zoo**, where I observed alligators, birds, and bears. In the petting zoo, I grabbed a bag of feed and threw an afternoon snack to the emus. From lemurs to peacocks, this zoo far exceeded my expectations.

5 p.m. Soon the summer sun was bearing down, and I needed to cool off fast. Luckily, true to its name, Riverside Park hugs the banks of the Guadalupe River. I joined the locals on the sandy beach of **Grover's Bend** and felt instant relief as I dove into the water. I spent an hour working on my backstroke and studying the insides of my eyelids—the perfect reprieve.

6:30 p.m. It was time for dinner at **Mumphord's Place BBQ**. I instantly felt as if I'd walked into a family reunion, which is appropriate considering the restaurant's barbecue style started more than 100 years ago at family gatherings. Today, the owners serve passed-down recipes by the plateful. I could taste the history and passion in my massive helping of

brisket, sausage, and ribs covered in sweet sauce.

8 p.m. It seemed like a sip at **Moonshine Drinkery** was the best way to cap off the day. This bar provides a list of cocktails made with one of

America's oldest liquors—clear, unaged whiskey. I couldn't pass up the "American Dream," made with apple pie moonshine and ginger ale.

With a head full of history and a glass full of moonshine, my day wound down. Turns out one of Texas' oldest towns is a great place to make new memories. So whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path, I hope to see you on the road. 🍷

Contact the Victoria Convention and Visitors Bureau at 361-485-3116; explorevictoriatexas.com



A Bard of the Border

El Paso writer Benjamin Alire Sáenz explores the outliers

story by **Clayton Maxwell**

DON'T BE SURPRISED IF YOU FALL IN LOVE with the characters in Benjamin Alire Sáenz's fiction. Be it with two high school friends taking on the world in his celebrated young-adult novels, or with people stumbling through loss in his short stories, or with the shining voice of his poetry, the El Paso-based writer expands your perspective and opens your heart.

Since the global success of Sáenz's 2012 book *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*—a tale of two teenage boys in El Paso sorting through questions of identity, family, and love—he has become a star in the world of young adult fiction. At literary engagements from Seattle to San Antonio to Bogotá, the 63-year-old is called on to discuss topics like writing, coming of age, and sexuality. He's now at work on the sequel to *Aristotle and Dante* as well as a screenplay for a movie version, scheduled to be filmed in 2019.

“This town, this city, this border, Juárez—it is my great passion. If you don't get that about me, you don't get me.”

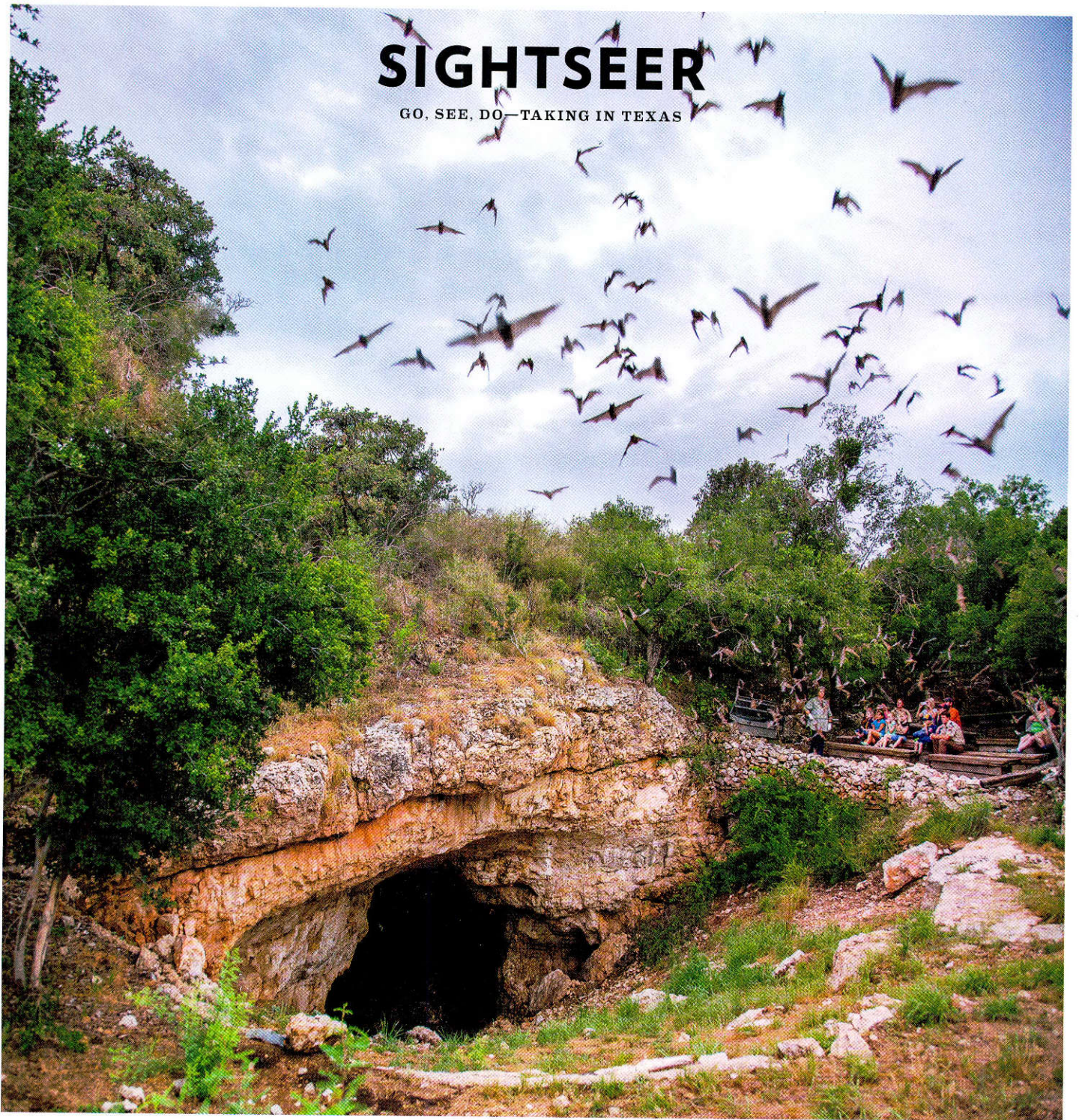
El Paso and its neighboring border city Ciudad Juárez are in Sáenz's blood. The arid landscape and its people live inside him and fuel his stories. Sáenz helped found the University of Texas at El Paso's bilingual MFA creative writing program, the only one in the nation, and taught there until his recent retirement. In 2013, he won a PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction for *Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club*, a collection of short stories that follows characters through heart-rending loss and redemption, all weaving in and out of the famous Kentucky Club bar in Juárez.

Sáenz's apartment on the edge of downtown El Paso is a light-filled paean to art and life on the border, every inch covered in his vibrant paintings, poetry, and books. As he kicks back on the couch to talk, fresh ideas and moments of epiphany bubble to the surface like a river that can't help but flow.

> continued on page 78

SIGHTSEER

GO, SEE, DO—TAKING IN TEXAS



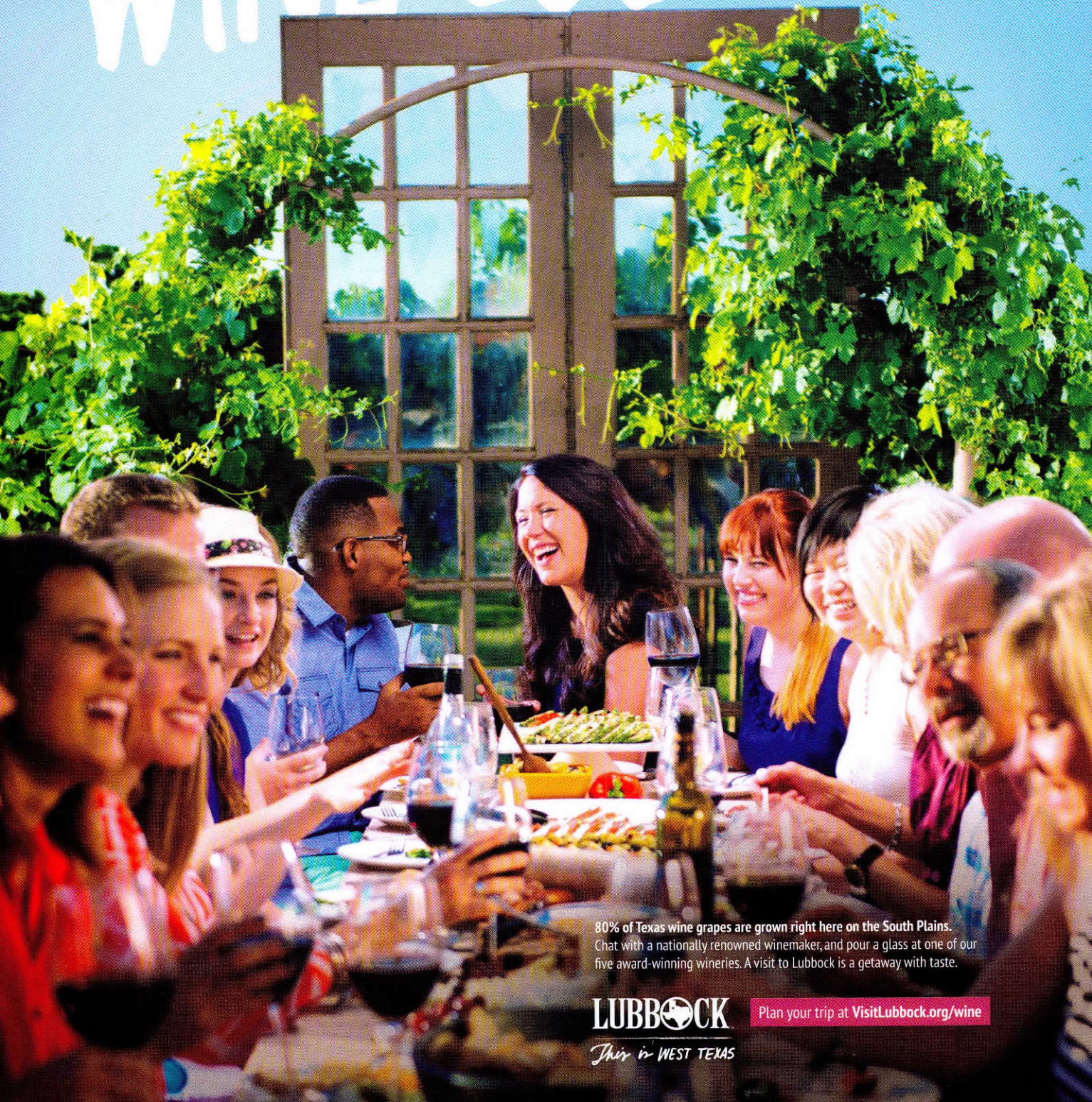
WHAT: MEXICAN FREE-TAILED BATS **WHERE:** ECKERT JAMES RIVER BAT CAVE PRESERVE **WHEN:** MID-MAY THROUGH EARLY OCTOBER

Summer Visitors

One of the largest bat nurseries in the nation makes a seasonal home in a cave near Mason

The flutters and chirps start an hour or two before sunset: the first stirrings of a nightly ritual for one of the largest colonies of warm-blooded animals in the world. Within moments, a “bat tornado” funnels from the mouth of the Eckert James River Bat Cave as millions of female Mexican free-tailed bats, most of them pregnant or nursing pups, set off to hunt for mosquitoes and other insects near the James River in the Hill Country southwest of Mason. The Nature Conservancy also welcomes human visitors to the cave preserve; tours are held Thursday through Sunday until the weather cools, and the bats, having nurtured their young to maturity, head south to Mexico. Come next May, they’ll be flying back for another Texas summer. nature.org/texas

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