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# 15

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## EDITOR'S NOTE



# The Natural Effect

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The Brazos Woods Preserve, located 60 miles southwest of Houston, was acquired by The Nature Conservancy in 2016.

**A**MERICANS ARE SPENDING less and less time outdoors. According to recent studies, we spend an average of 93 percent of our lives indoors, and children today spend half as much time playing outside as their parents did. Intuitively, we know we need to spend more time in nature, and science backs this up with research revealing innumerable benefits to venturing out. Outdoor experiences decrease depression and anxiety, and improve sleep and academic performance, to name a few. Thankfully, the Texas landscape is vast and diverse—a beautiful territory primed for exploration.

Our Outdoor Adventures issue highlights 15 opportunities to escape into nature. For the ambitious adventurer, Senior Editor Matt Joyce braves the Devils River (Page 52), a paddling expedition offering both risks and rewards. For the altruistic traveler, Contributing Editor Melissa Gaskill delves into voluntourism and ideas for making the most of your travel with fulfilling opportunities to give back (Page 64). Bridging that gap, our feature on local Nature Conservancy sites, “Naturally

Texas” (Page 42), presents 10 of the environmental organization’s Texas preserves with ideas on how best to enjoy them either as a visitor or a volunteer.

Underpinning all of these stories is the responsibility we share to protect and conserve our natural resources for future generations. “Texans love great big landscapes,” says Laura Huffman, Texas state director of The Nature Conservancy. “Not only are they a part of our culture, but Texans completely understand that economic success depends on our natural resources; ... [they] see those two things as fully integrated.” Along with “saving the last great open spaces,” Huffman says, The Nature Conservancy exists because “connecting people to beautiful, magnificent landscapes is valuable.”

The bottom line is that being in nature makes us happier and healthier. Read on and reap the rewards.

*Emily Roberts Stone*

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



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# APRIL

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## Naturally Texas

Ever since establishing its Texas chapter in 1964, national nonprofit organization The Nature Conservancy has worked to manage and protect 38 preserves, from West Texas mountains to Gulf Coast marshes.

Here, we highlight 10 of these highly protected habitats and how their respective flora and fauna contribute to the state's amazing biodiversity.

*Story by* PAM LEBLANC

*Photographs by* KENNY BRAUN

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## The Devil Made Me Do It

The Devils River beckons visitors with its pristine water and rugged Southwest Texas surroundings. But as adventurers over the ages have discovered, the river's exhilarating rewards don't come without meeting its diabolical demands. Come along for a kayak expedition of one of Texas' most scenic natural treasures.

*Story by* MATT JOYCE

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## Travel With Purpose

Traveling just for the heck of it provides fun and a respite from daily life. But there's also value in a sojourn with purpose. Charitable groups connect not-so-idle wanderers with volunteer opportunities around Texas—so whether you want to help build houses for Hurricane Harvey survivors or get your hands dirty on a rural farm, there's a helping hand to be lent nearly everywhere.

*Story by* MELISSA GASKILL

Davis Mountains



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



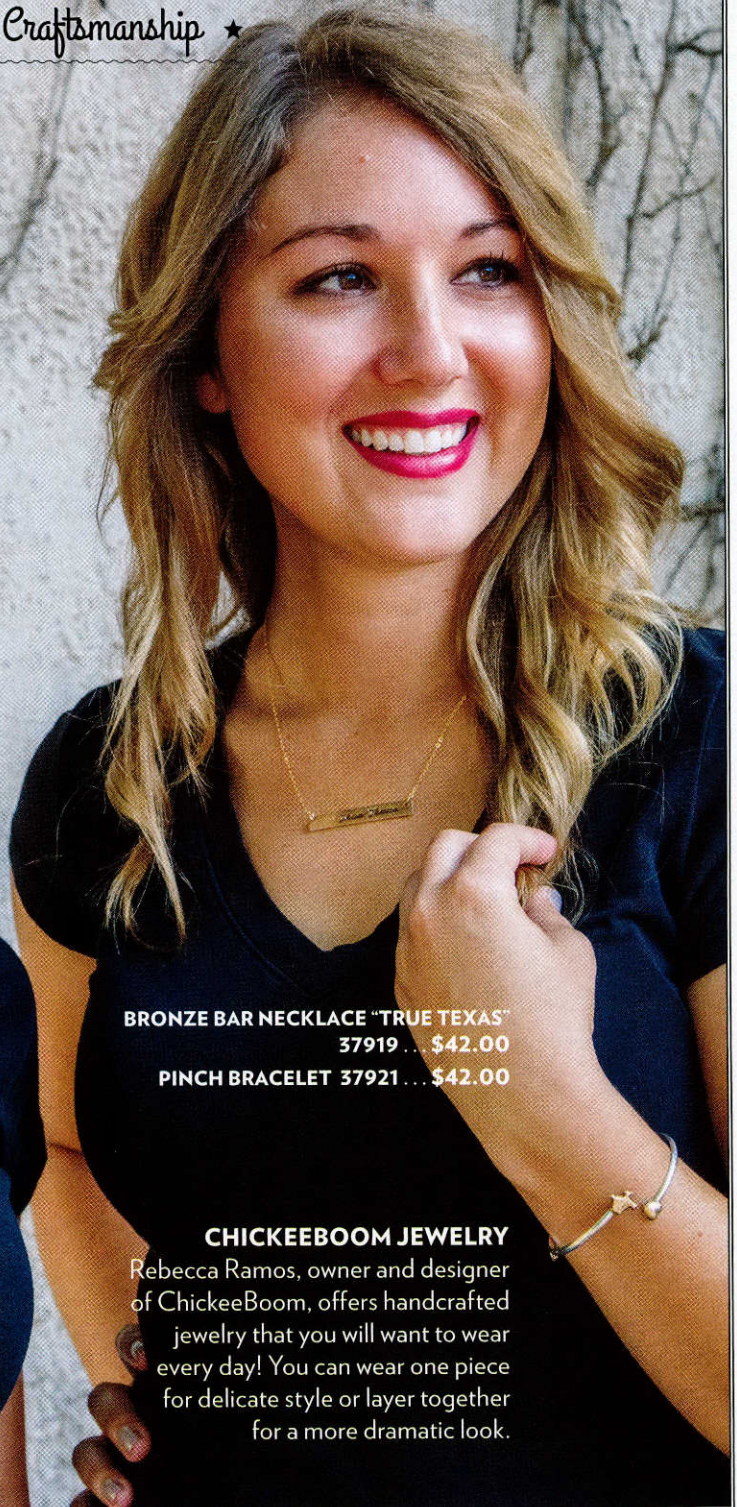
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# APRIL



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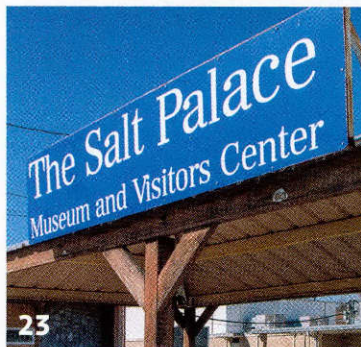
Actor, writer, and humanitarian Turk Pipkin

## 97 SIGHTSEER

A sticky art installation in Austin



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## COVER

The Devils River

© Matthew Johnson



Barton Creek Habitat Preserve, Austin

## HIKE WITH TEXAS HIGHWAYS

In celebration of our feature on The Nature Conservancy (Page 42) and Earth Day, *Texas Highways* is partnering with the organization for a special event at Barton Creek Habitat Preserve in Austin. The preserve, which is normally closed to the public, will open its doors April 21 for guided hikes and a picnic lunch.

For more information and to RSVP, head to [nature.org/BartonCreekHabitatPreserve](http://nature.org/BartonCreekHabitatPreserve). If you can't join us, be sure to follow *Texas Highways* on Facebook and Instagram for live videos.



### WEEKEND EVENTS BLOG

Every Monday, visit [texashighways.com](http://texashighways.com) for a roundup of events. From festivals and fairs to shows and exhibits, it's hard to be bored in the Lone Star State.



### SAN MARCOS MURALS

Venture to our website for a story about San Marcos' arts scene, which includes a variety of public installations, from downtown murals to mermaid sculptures.



### #TRUETEXAS

When you post awesome photos of Texas sights and scenes, don't forget to use the hashtag #TrueTexas. We might share your shot on *Texas Highways'* social media channels.

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Division Director Joan Henderson  
Publisher Andrea Lin

Creative Director Mark Mahorsky  
Executive Editor Emily Roberts Stone  
Senior Editors Lori Moffatt, Matt Joyce  
Events Editor Jane Kellogg Murray  
Associate Editor Kimya Kavehkar

#### Contributing Editors

Heather Brand, Wes Ferguson,  
Melissa Gaskill, E. Dan Klepper,  
Clayton Maxwell, June Naylor,  
Daniel Blue Tyx

Contributing Writer Pam LeBlanc  
Editorial Coordinator Cindy Newsom  
Photography Editor Brandon Jakobeit

#### Contributing Photographers

Michael Amador, Kevin Stillman,  
Will van Overbeek

Art Directors Jane Wu, Ashley Horsley  
Digital Strategies Manager Peter Obering

Business Manager Karen Garza  
Strategic Partnerships and Events Manager  
Lois M. Rodriguez

Marketing/Ancillary Manager Katy Venable  
Special Projects Coordinator Julie Stratton  
Production Coordinator Raquel V. Sanchez

Accounts Payable LaKena Cooks  
Accounts Receivable Ana Alvarez  
Warehouse Manager Oz Lopez

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# MERGE

GOT  
SOMETHING  
TO SAY?

*One of these days I want to take my son on a Texas spring road trip. Sakura season is absolutely beautiful in Japan, but Texas wildflowers are a whole rainbow of gorgeousness that you just need to experience in your life.*

HANA SUZUKI, SHIOGAMA, JAPAN



OUR  
FAVORITE  
SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
OF THE  
MONTH



I loved my road trip to see the bluebonnets last spring. Hope to get to go again this spring.

PEGGY MITCHELL FORBES, COLORADO CITY

Many fond boyhood memories of fishing at Caddo Lake with my dad and uncles in the early '60s. Except for the mosquitoes, that is.

BILL GOULD, HOUSTON

## Steak Support

For my 80th birthday I decided to cook a Murphy's Tuscan Rib-Eye using the recipe contained in the article about Murphy's Steakhouse in Winchester [February]. At one point, I phoned the restaurant for some advice. When I asked the receptionist my questions, she said, "Wait, I will get the cook." Chris Criner came to the phone a few minutes later and answered all my questions. Before finishing the conversation, she invited me to call back and tell her how it came out. The steak recipe was exceptional, but all I could think about during the cooking and eating of the steak was the friendliness of Chris and the time she spent with me. She could have told the receptionist she was too busy getting ready for the day's business, but she did not. On the call back she invited me to come to Winchester someday and she would cook the steak for me. That's Texas friendly.

**Gary James. Plano**

## Weatherford Arts

Just to add to the list of wonderful things to do in

Weatherford [March]: Weatherford College offers a variety of free and low-cost fine arts events each semester (jazz concerts, choir concerts, art show, plays, and a musical). We are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Alkek Fine Arts Center this April so our calendar is double its normal size this semester.

**Crystal Brown Woerly, Weatherford College public relations coordinator**

TH: Visit Weatherford College's website for information on upcoming performances: [wc.edu/alkek20](http://wc.edu/alkek20).

## Cinematic Memories

I see that you have been back to my hometown of El Paso

[March]. While there I hope you visited the Plaza Theatre, a Texas star that deserves its own article. If you visited and took a tour, you know that it has long been the heart of El Paso. Those of us who grew up in El Paso went to the Plaza almost every weekend. It was our best source of entertainment. Instead of tearing it down when it grew old, El Pasoans joined together to refurbish it. It now has returned to its former glory, complete with the stars in the ceiling and the original Wurlitzer organ.

**Mary McGarr. Katy**

TH: Check out Hit the Road on Page 73 for more on El Paso and the Plaza Theatre.

READER'S  
FAVORITE

## Prude Ranch Summer Camp

*My daughter spent many summers at Prude Ranch Summer Camp and loved it! Probably more than anything, she enjoyed working with the horses. She never was homesick, never called home, so I knew she was having a good time.*

LINDA MULLENS, Hedley

The Prude Ranch Summer Camp in Fort Davis offers one- and two-week sessions throughout June and July for children ages 7 to 16. Set on a working ranch, the camp focuses on horsemanship, along with activities ranging from archery to swimming. Call 432-426-3201; [prude-ranch.com](http://prude-ranch.com).



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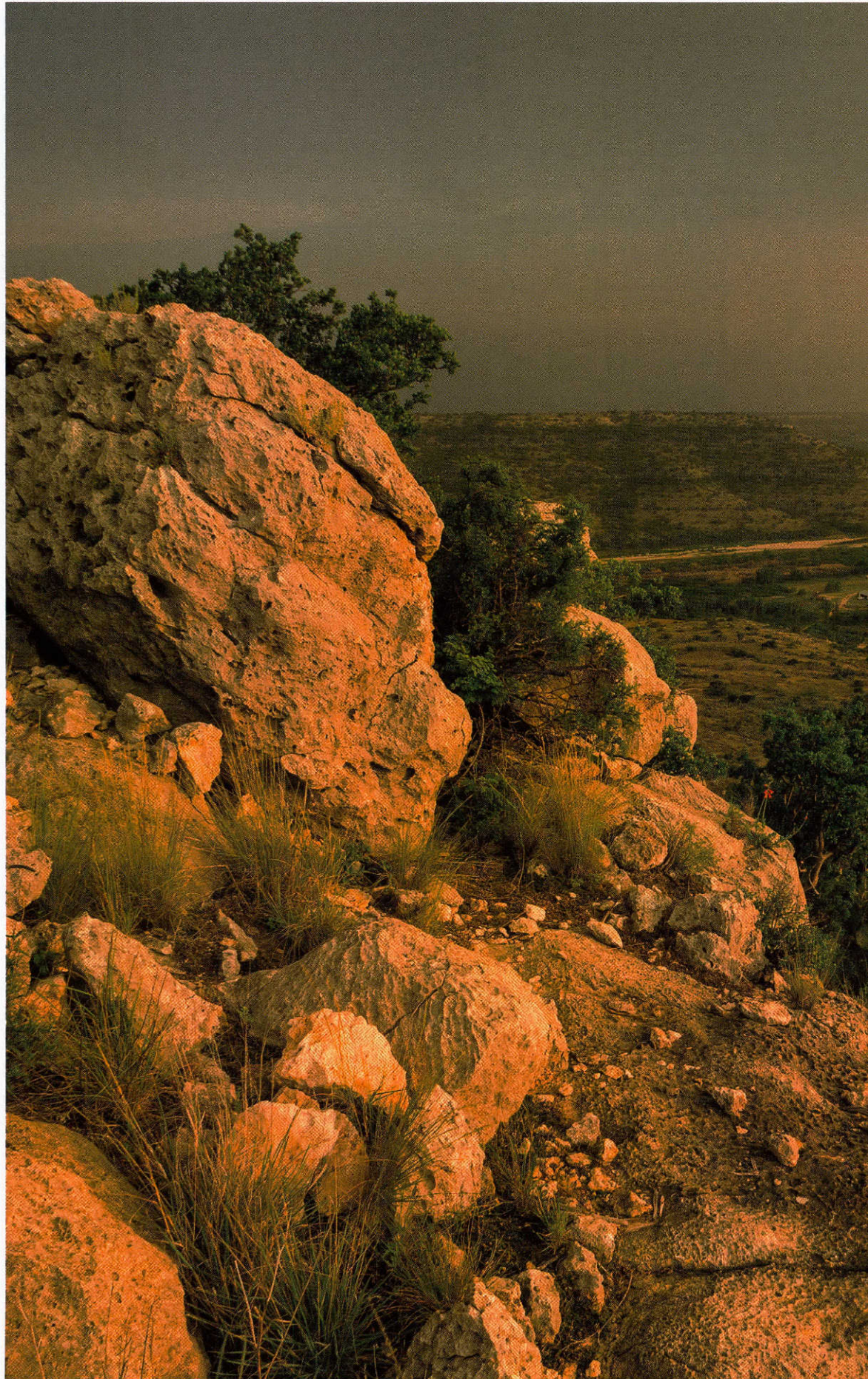


## SCENIC ROUTE

### Vantage Point

30° 28' 28.89" N  
101° 47' 37.30" W

An overlook at The Nature Conservancy's Independence Creek Preserve in Terrell County reveals an awe-inspiring view of the spring-fed creek and surrounding terrain—a convergence of arid desert mesas, woodlands, and prairie grasses. The preserve opens to the public for several days during the year, including April 20-22, for camping, swimming, hiking, and fishing. From Interstate 10, take State Highway 349 south nearly 27 miles to the preserve entrance. For more information, visit [nature.org](http://nature.org).



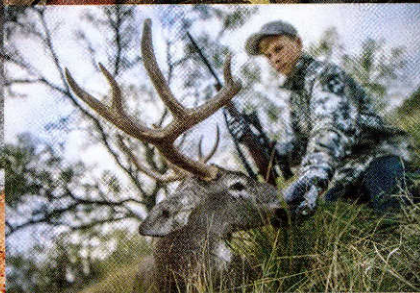




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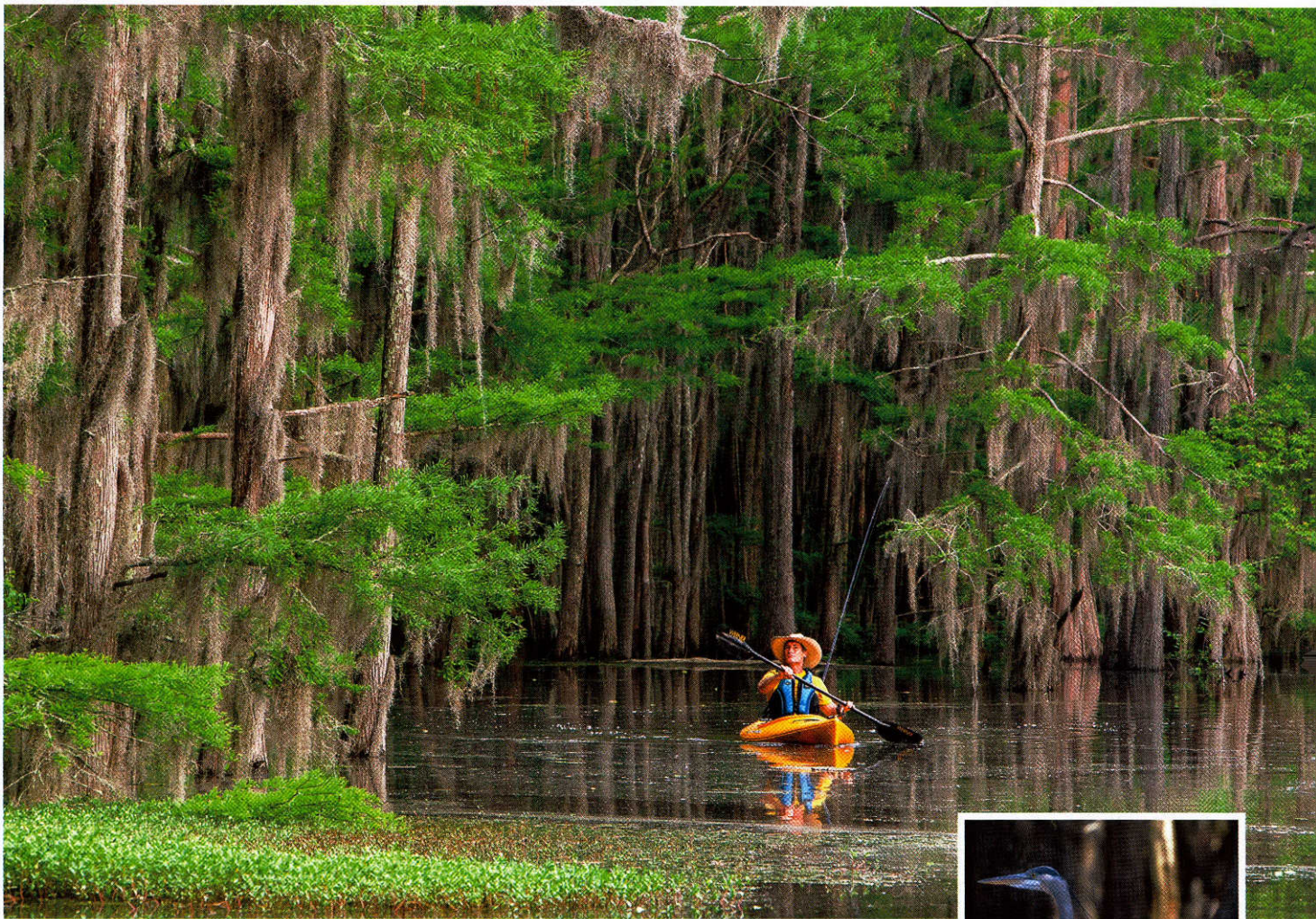
# DRIVE

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## Bayou Adventure

A canoe exploration of  
Caddo Lake's creatures and history

*story by* **Sara Ramey**



**T**WO HOURS INTO MY CANOEING adventure on Caddo Lake, I saw an osprey swoop down into the water and emerge with a fish clutched in its beak.

I was debating whether the raptor would stick around long enough for me to pull out my binoculars when an enterprising bald eagle suddenly appeared and struck the osprey in mid-air. The osprey tumbled but managed to keep the fish, and then flew higher. My group watched in wonder as the two magnificent birds circled one another over the lake's cypress forest for several minutes.

Located on the border of northeast Texas and Louisiana, Caddo Lake's 26,000-acre network of bayous, sloughs, and wetland cypress forests make up one of the state's wildest natural treasures. I had driven from San Antonio to explore the lake with guides Kelsey Johnson and Chelsey Rankin, rangers at Caddo Lake State Park.

"Caddo Lake has one of the largest cypress groves in the world," Johnson explained as we launched

**The Caddo called the lake *Tso'to*, which translates as "water thrown up into the drift along the shore by the wind."**

our canoes on the state park's Sawmill Pond. Visitors can rent canoes from the state park to explore the pond, or for a longer and more strenuous outing, paddle out into the main tributary of Big Cypress Bayou and explore a variety of paddling trails.

Caddo Lake is part of Big Cypress Bayou—a tributary of the Red River—and our route followed the Hell's Half Acre Paddling Trail along the bayou for about 2.5 miles east to RiverBend Restaurant, which overlooks the bayou near its juncture with Pine Island Pond. Located on the outskirts of Karnack, RiverBend is a popular stop for East Texas favorites like fried and blackened catfish, rib-eyes, frog legs, and alligator. (We met our shuttle at the restaurant's boat ramp, but paddlers looking for a moderate day trip could make RiverBend a midway

Several marked paddling trails navigate the swamplands of Caddo Lake and Big Cypress Bayou.



## CADDO LAKE STATE PARK

is at 245 Park Road 2 in Karnack.  
Call **903-679-3351**; [tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/caddo-lake](http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/caddo-lake).

For information on guide services, lodging, and dining, visit the Caddo Lake Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism at [caddolake.org](http://caddolake.org).

stopping point before paddling back to the park.)

Caddo Lake, the only naturally occurring lake in Texas, formed in the early 1800s when a massive logjam on the Red River—called the Great Raft—grew so dense that it dammed the river and caused floodwater to back up all the way into the Big Cypress watershed. The lake is home to more than 70 fish species and 250 bird species, as well as rare plants, according to Johnson.

“Caddo Lake is more of a wetland or swamp environment than a lake, and these are disappearing in the world,” she said. “They are some of the most valuable ecosystems found on the planet.”


In recognition of Caddo Lake’s ecological significance, in 1993 the U.S. government designated it Texas’ only Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, an international network of preserves aimed at protecting biological diversity and bird habitat.

During our tour, we learned that Caddo Lake’s cultural richness matches its ecological diversity. The area has drawn people for at least 12,000 years, including the 25 or so bands of Native Americans known collectively as the Caddo. The Caddo called the lake *Tso’to*, which translates as “water thrown up into the drift along the shore by the wind,” according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

European and American settlers began arriving in significant numbers in the area around the 1830s, many


# FIELD GUIDE to BASTROP COUNTY

ISSUE No 51



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\*Please don't wear your boots to bed.

traveling by steamboat from New Orleans. By 1844 nearby Jefferson was the second-busiest commercial port in Texas, after Galveston, fueled by the timber and cotton industries.

The lake remains pivotal to the local economy, particularly as a draw for anglers. Bass, catfish, gar, and crappie are all popular sport fish. (The state park offers loaner tackle for fishing

within the park.) “Most of the restaurants pull fish from the lake,” Johnson said. “Residents run boat tours on the lake or have campgrounds. They’re all tied into the lake. We need to take care of it.”

Unlike fishing, other industries have come and gone. In 1873, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dynamited the last of the Great Raft, lowering the bayou’s

water level and cutting off steamboat access to Jefferson. As the water dropped, pearl hunters began to scour the lake bottom for freshwater mussels.

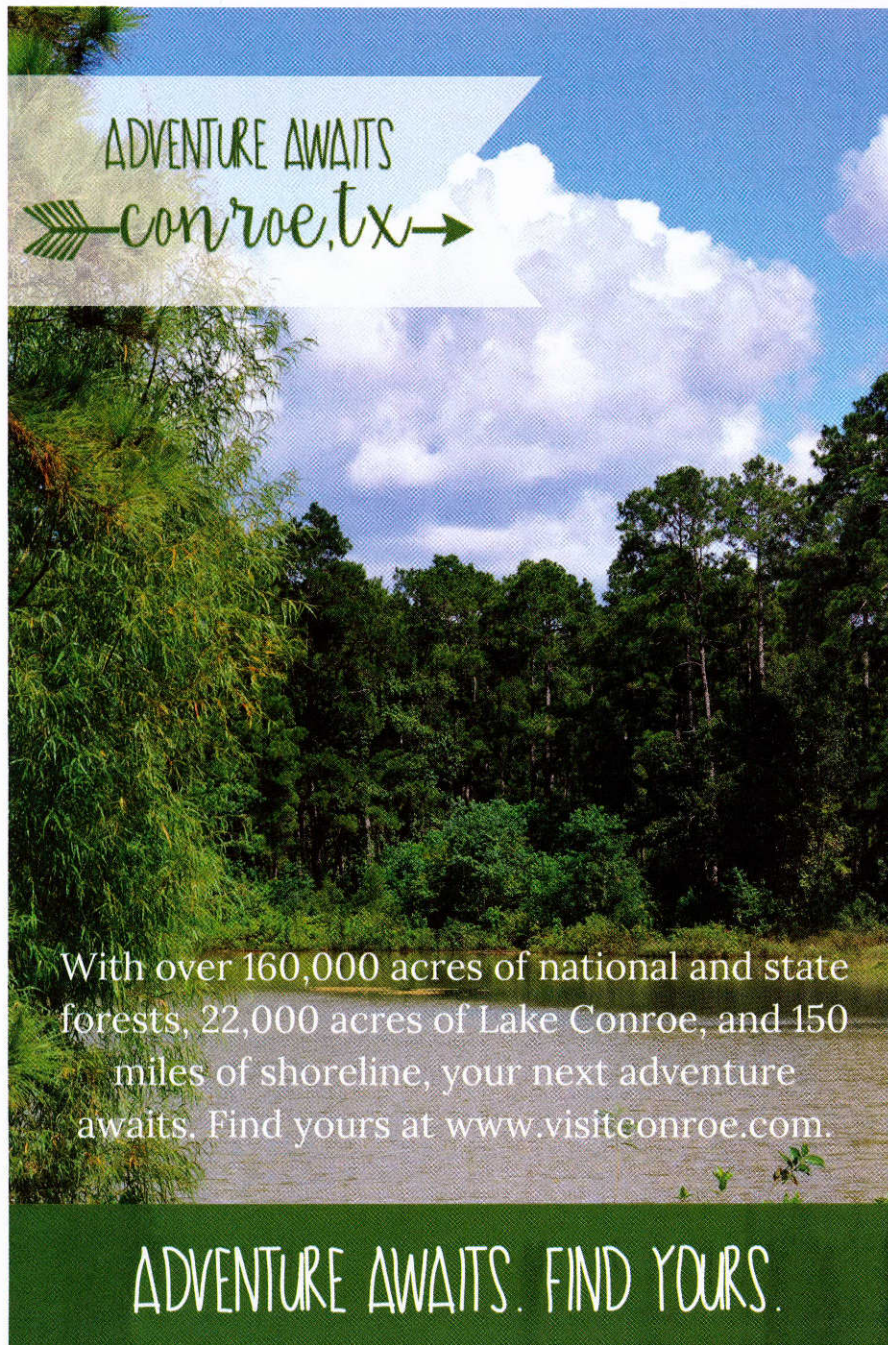
I had learned about the pearl hunters during a stop at the Caddo Lake State Park visitor center, which has a small museum with displays about regional history. One of the exhibits covers the development of the oil industry, including how Caddo Lake hosted the world’s first over-water drilling rig in 1914.

Also that year, Gulf Refining Corporation built a permanent dam to restore the lake’s water level, effectively ending the era of pearl hunting.

We hadn’t noticed any signs of industry—only a few homes built on stilts—as we paddled up Big Cypress Bayou and into the cypress maze of Pine Island Pond. What we noticed was the profound peace and quiet. As we wove our boat among the cypress trees of Pine Island Pond, sunlight glinted through the branches draped with Spanish moss.

“What is so magical about being out on the boat is that you feel like you are in a different era, like you can see the Caddo coming down the river,” Johnson mused.

I, too, felt a sense of timelessness during our expedition, and it wasn’t just wistful thinking. In the waters below us swam paddlefish, a threatened species that has been around for 200 to 300 million years, making it the oldest surviving animal species in North America. The toothless fish grow as long as 7 feet, including their long, flat snouts, and eat by scooping up plankton as they swim with their mouths open. Though we didn’t see a paddlefish, the very thought that such an ancient species swam below us ensured that I’d always remember Caddo Lake with a sense of wonder. 🐟



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# The Reel Deal

The Hill Country Film Festival in Fredericksburg

story by Clayton Maxwell

**“REMEMBER: YOU DO IT BECAUSE YOU LOVE IT,”** said Tom Provost, sitting on a stage flanked by three other screenwriters, all surprisingly chipper for 9:30 on a Saturday morning during Fredericksburg’s Hill Country Film Festival. These four writers from Los Angeles and New York—all with Texas roots—had the audience on the edge of their seats as they shared trade tips during a screenwriting panel discussion. “I was trying to be an actor,” added Provost, “but you have to have hair to do that.”

It’s hard to say if these guys are always so amusing or if they’re just in an extra good mood because they are on the roster at the Hill Country Film Festival, an indie film-lover’s nirvana plopped down in the Texas hills. Held in the capacious

**The festival’s popularity is rooted in its careful attention to both indie filmmakers and the audience. Word is getting out.**

four-screen Fritztown Cinema, a half-mile from Fredericksburg’s lively Main Street, the festival screens documentaries, shorts, and feature films for three days straight. In between, smart panels and entertaining after-parties at locales throughout town combine to make the Hill Country Film Festival a welcome find for filmmakers and movie fans. At press time, this year’s movie selections and panel lineup were not yet available; on March 20, the festival will post announcements on its website and Facebook page.

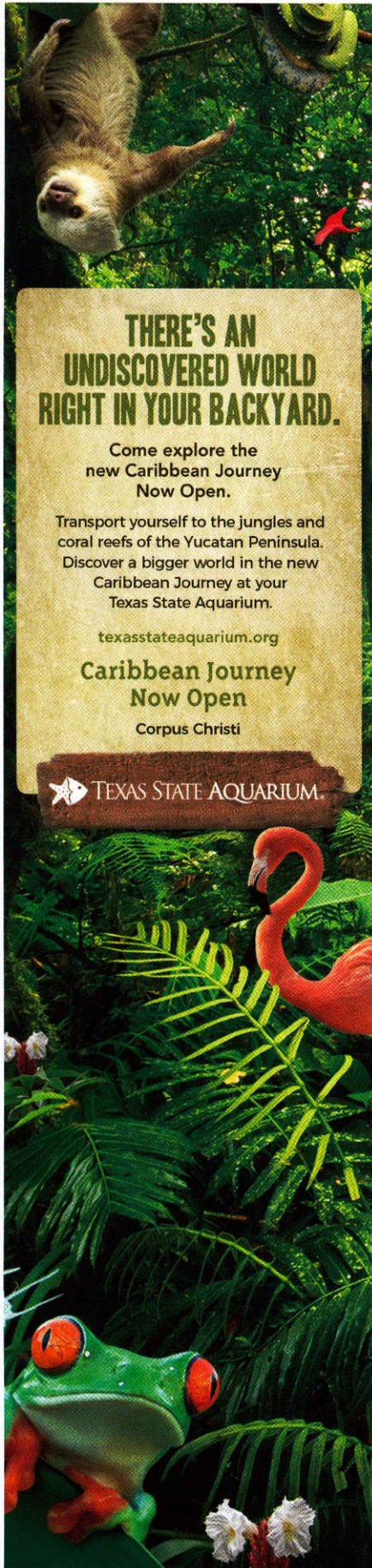
“I just feel like this is a really fun, not-as-stressful festival,” said Bradley Jackson, whose 2015 feature film, *Balls Out*, starred *Saturday Night Live*’s Kate McKinnon. Several years ago at this festival, Jackson hit it off with fellow filmmaker Andrew Disney, leading to their collaboration on *Balls Out*. Jackson has also attended the festival with Luke Korem, with whom he wrote the documentary *Dealt*—about a charismatic blind card magician from San Antonio—which was a headliner at last year’s festival. “*Dealt* just played SXSW in Austin, which was fun but manic,” Jackson said before last year’s screening in Fredericksburg.

Chad Mathews founded the Hill Country Film Festival in 2010 after graduating from Texas Christian University and working in the LA film industry for 15 years. His family’s roots are in Fredericksburg, and he wanted to start a film event here. “I’d been to film festivals all over the U.S.,” said Mathews, who lives in Fort Worth, “and when I was at a really cool, smaller festival, I’d think, ‘I know enough filmmakers to do this.’ So in 2010, I launched my first film festival here, thinking it might be a one-off, just a fun experience. That first year was a small gathering, but the folks who did attend were really into it. So after that, it’s just snowballed—it’s growing in a way that I really like.”

The festival’s popularity is rooted in



Fredericksburg’s Fritztown Cinema hosts the Hill Country Film Festival, which has tripled in attendance since 2010.



its careful attention to both indie filmmakers and the audience, which has tripled since its first year. In 2010, the HCFF screened 46 films to about 300 attendees; in 2017, it screened 102 films and recorded over 900 in attendance. The word is getting out. “Any filmmaker accepted into HCFF can know without a doubt their films will look and sound great, and given HCFF is growing rapidly every year, they will have an audience for their movie,” said Provost, who graduated from the University of Texas at Austin. Now based in LA, Provost wrote and directed *The Presence* (2010) and teaches at Pepperdine University. “The indie film world can be such a struggle. HCFF is both a respite for a filmmaker and it’s also very energizing.”

The audience, too, taps into the energizing quality that pervades the

**The festival plans to announce its 2018 selection of movies and panels—like this one at Pedernales Cellars—on March 20.**

festival. Fans and aspiring filmmakers can visit with the pros at the many easy-access panels, post-screening discussions, and happy hours. The excitement is palpable when sitting in a packed house; appreciative film fans are quick to laugh and ask questions at the Q&A sessions afterwards. There may be wait times to get into the higher-profile films, but the lines are never too long, and the staff opens up second theaters when they can.

Plus, it’s fun to make pals in the queue. At last year’s festival, a friend and I were in line for a Friday night showing of *Camino*, a raucous film about two likable pranksters who accidentally steal a cooler of human

# reDiscover BEAUTY ON THE BEACH

Visit Corpus Christi and the Texas Coastal Bend where sandcastles rise to a whole new level (*literally*), with sculpting masters from around the globe creating epic sculptures this April at Texas SandFest. Want more? We've got a smorgasbord of spring festivals including Fiesta de la Flor, Oysterfest, The Birdiest Festival in America and Buc Days. Come down for a combo of beach, festival and fun—and loop in a trip to the massive USS Lexington and the newly expanded Texas State Aquarium for a can't-miss experience this spring!

VisitCorpusChristiTX.org

*Texas SandFest  
sculpture by  
Jeff Strong*



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organs only to be chased around the East Texas woods in their El Camino. Standing next to us in line was a silver-haired, chisel-faced man named Rey Washam who, we soon found out from his wife, plays the murderer in the movie. "I'm one of the bad guys," he revealed as our line inched forward into the theater. "It's an easy part for me." Indeed, with his deadpan delivery,

Washam stole the show.

While the Hill Country Film Festival screens national and international films, Mathews said about 25 to 30 percent of the movies are Texas-made. Texas screenwriter Paden Fallis' poignant *As Far As The Eye Can See*, a Texas small-town tale of a former piano prodigy reckoning with his past, was screened at the fest in 2017. It has

since been picked up for distribution and in March 2018 was released for on-demand and DVD. This emphasis on Texas happened naturally. "Word of mouth between filmmakers in Texas is good and positive," Mathews said. "They are often looking at smaller market festivals, plus we are only 70 miles away from Austin."

Not only do you get a big dose of the

**While the Hill Country Film Festival screens national and international films, about 25 to 30 percent of the movies are Texas-made.**

film world at the Hill Country Film Festival, you also get a different look at the artistic side of Fredericksburg. With after-parties at charming locales like West End Pizza Co. and Pedernales Cellars, and a closing awards reception at the Admiral Nimitz Museum's ballroom, the festival provides a taste of the town that goes beyond bratwurst.

And everywhere, there is the buzz of film enthusiasts. You can eavesdrop on filmmakers seated at picnic tables praising the perfect plotline of *Silence of the Lambs* or exclaiming over the improbability that Spielberg made both *Jurassic Park* and *Schindler's List* in a single year (1993). This is one film festival where, with a glass of Hill Country wine in hand and a Texas breeze as the only distraction, both filmmakers and fans alike can revel in their shared zeal for cinema. **L**

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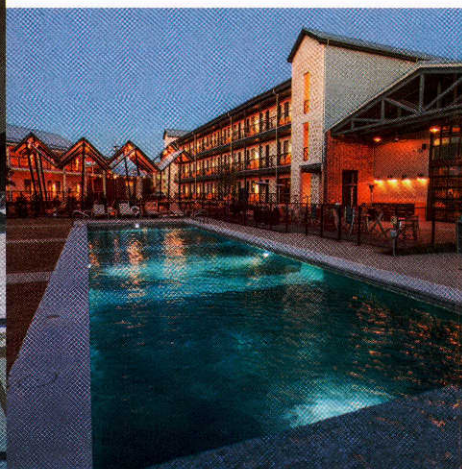
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## Boutique Digs in Aggieland

A trio of new hotels introduces laid-back luxury to Bryan-College Station

story by June Naylor

**S**ITTING DOWN TO A LATE-AFTERNOON DRINK at The Stella Hotel's airy lobby bar in Bryan, awash in natural light spilling through floor-to-ceiling windows, my overriding thought is, *Ahh. At last.* The twin towns of Bryan-College Station, with Texas A&M University and a booming biotech research industry, can finally host visitors in the kind of sophisticated boutique hotels found in big cities. Fortunately, the hotels have made no sacrifices in small-town friendliness, immersing guests in elegance while also making the experience warm and personable—just the way we expect to find things in the heart of Texas.

**Weekend concerts, complete with food trucks, attract both area residents and out-of-towners.**

As Texas A&M has blossomed into one of the nation's largest universities, visitors longing for special lodgings get their reward in triplicate—in Bryan, The Stella Hotel, and some 4 miles to the east in College Station, Cavalry Court and The George. Each bears its own distinct and appealing personality, making them markedly different from one another. I'd happily return for a stay at any of them again.

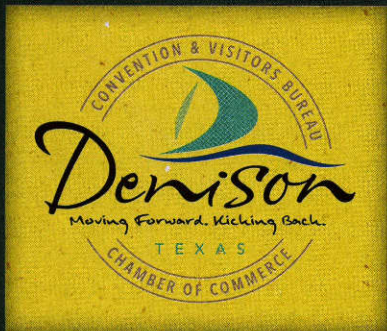
**Clockwise from left:** Canteen restaurant at Cavalry Court, the pool at Cavalry Court, and the lobby at The Stella.

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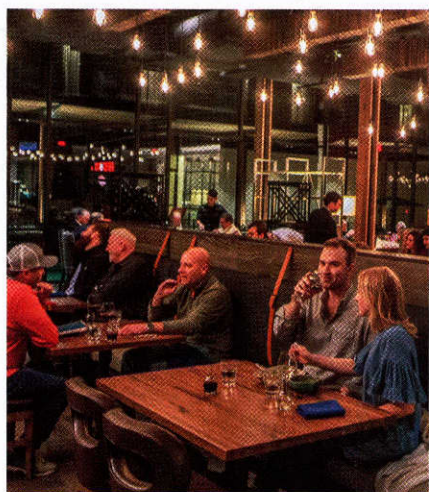
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**Above:** Artwork at The George inspires conversation. **Left:** The hotel's restaurant, Poppy, features exotic fare like blackbuck tartare.



At The Stella, I'm enjoying a Sammy cocktail while indulging in lobby people-watching and taking in the nearby patio scene, where guests visit next to a fire pit or work on laptops. Refreshing and tart, the Sammy features grapefruit-infused vodka, freshly squeezed grapefruit juice, and a dash of bitters. The staff conjures up beverage recipes throughout the year, just as the culinary team at Campfire, the casual restaurant just beyond the

bar, produces a menu of dishes crafted from seasonal vegetables, cheeses, meats, and fish.

My leisurely dinner at Campfire includes grazing on blistered shishito peppers sprinkled with Cotija cheese and brightened with squeezes of lime. I'm especially taken with my plate of Gulf snapper, pan-roasted until crisp at its edges but silken and juicy inside, with accompaniments of grilled okra, tomato, and Japanese eggplant. I give high marks also to the beef filet, served in satiny slices with roasted purple potatoes and tiny, sweet onions. After-dinner sipping takes place in Hershel's, a pretty saloon decorated with sumptuous couches, overstuffed chairs, and

a hodgepodge of vintage A&M student photos, antique books, and found antlers. It reminds me of a comfy den at a family lodge.

Because the 176-room Stella anchors a new development called Lake Walk, guests have convenient options for working off these indulgences: You can climb the 75-foot-tall observation

**As Texas A&M has blossomed into one of the nation's largest universities, visitors longing for special lodgings get their reward in triplicate.**

tower overlooking 5-acre Lake Atlas, just outside the hotel's front door, or hit the walking trail that circles the lake. Just beyond the lake is Traditions Club, with a Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course. A midweek farmers market called The Local brings activity to



**TRIPLE STAYS IN BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION**

**The Stella Hotel**, 4100 Lake Atlas Drive, Bryan. 979-421-4000; thestellahotel.com

**Cavalry Court**, 200 Century Court, College Station. 979-485-5586; cavalrycourt.com

**The George**, 180 Century Court, College Station. 979-485-5638; thegeorgetexas.com

Lake Walk, as do a growing number of boutiques. Weekend concerts, complete with food trucks, attract both area residents and out-of-towners.

After a night in my comfortable room with a sensational view of the countryside, I enjoy a custom pour-over coffee downstairs in P.O.V., the coffee-and-pastry shop off The Stella patio. Then it's time to explore the new hotels over in College Station.

My first stop is Cavalry Court, where a beautifully restored Army Jeep marks the entrance to a modern 141-room lodging. Paying homage to the university's revered Corps of Cadets, the Cavalry Court's inspiration

borrows from elements of the 1950s American military, both in guestrooms and common areas. A red-brick courtyard, brightened with a lily-petal-strewn pond, leads to both the lobby and the Canteen Bar and Grill, a restaurant and bar whose appetizer selection includes an indulgence called "Canteen Fries," which are french fries topped with apple-smoked bacon and chives, served with duck fat hollandaise. Dinner options for later include pork belly sliders and petite filets with fingerling potatoes and smoked chile butter. Live music is always on tap on weekends, too.

Throughout the Cavalry Court property, retro design elements bring



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a smile. In the Canteen restrooms, for instance, the vintage black and white tile floors bear a message before the wash basin: At Ease. The guest rooms feature closets fashioned like barracks lockers, couches covered in Army green fabric, and snack boxes resembling military MRE shipping crates. Artwork includes pen-and-ink A&M Corps illustrations.

Facing the Cavalry Court's entrance, The George is the second new hotel in College Station proper. The two share a driveway and valet parking, and guests from both hotels can borrow bicycles parked to the left of The George's front door. Named "for notable Georges in history," including 41st U.S. President George H.W. Bush, whose library and museum are just

a short distance away, The George manages that artful balance of providing luxurious elements without seeming fussy.

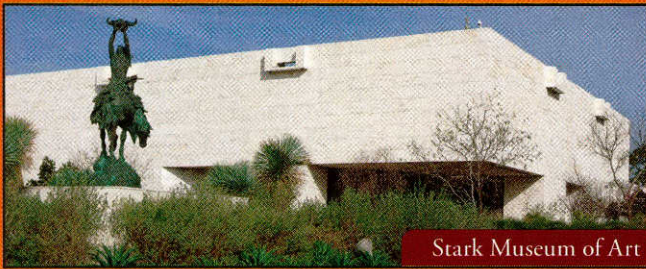
I like the lobby's contemporary art touches, including a wall of thousands of red, white, and blue book spines fashioned into the image of the Texas flag. Whimsical as can be, a flock of white sheep statuary emblazoned by neon graffiti stands in groupings throughout the lobby and adjacent common areas. A broad light fixture in the coffee and cocktail bar area features a base made of pretty liquor bottles. A wall of worn leather boots brings into focus notions of the Corps and Cavalry—and even the Wild West. Design details around the elevators and on guest floors evoke train schedules and platform notations, as College Station was once an important rail stop.

**It's a new day in Bryan-College Station for the wanderer in search of a luxurious hotel experience.**

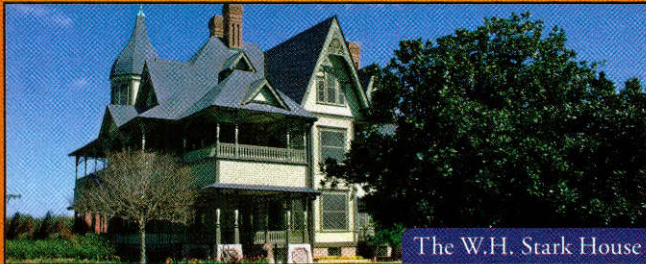
Outside the lobby, red rocking chairs surround a long swimming pool with simple, sleek lines. Beyond the pool, a dinner-only restaurant called Poppy—a reference to the elder President Bush's family nickname—describes its concept "farm to fire." Each dish bears intricate composition; think of every plate as a small artwork in its own right, with an arrangement of meat, fowl, fish, or vegetable decorated with tiny and precise bits of spices and herbs. Exotic offerings include blackbuck tartare, boar, skate wing, and pork cheek, items that set the restaurant apart from the usual fare in these parts.

Which, of course, is just the point. It's a new day in Bryan-College Station for the wanderer in search of a luxurious hotel experience, and one bringing an urban interlude to a place that still feels happily downhome. **L**

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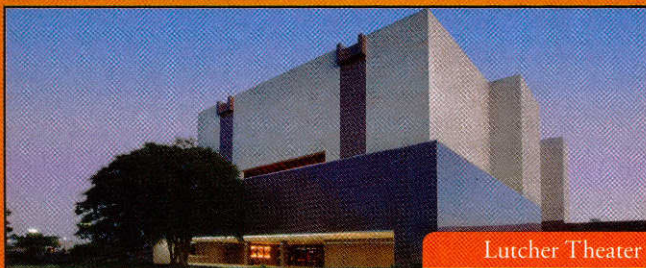
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# Taste of Grand Saline

A shrine to salt stands in East Texas. Go ahead and taste it.

story by **Wes Ferguson**



**S**TANDING OUTSIDE THE SALT PALACE MUSEUM IN Grand Saline, my wife leaned in close and stuck out her tongue. Then she licked the building. “What’s it taste like?” asked Tomasa King, a museum docent. “Wow,” my wife replied. “That’s salty!”

True to its name, the façade of the Salt Palace is made of translucent blocks of sodium chloride, the mineral compound we use for everything from seasoning french fries to de-icing roads on wintry days. “Salt kills all germs, and you can’t grow germs on salt,” King says. “So you can lick the building. You can

lick the big ton of salt out front. We don’t care, you can lick anything you want. We are fine with it.”

The salt found on, around, and inside the Salt Palace came from the ground beneath Grand Saline, a town of 3,150 people situated among the wooded hills northeast of Canton, about an hour east of Dallas. Grand Saline sits at the pinnacle of the largest and purest salt dome in the United States, which Chicago-based Morton Salt has been mining since 1931. It is hard to comprehend the vastness of this underground pyramid of white mineral, but seismic tests have shown the dome descends to a depth of 20,000 feet, and its lower base extends all the way to Louisiana, nearly a hundred miles to the east.

“To put it in perspective for you, 20,000 feet is [nearly] the same size as Mount Everest,” says King, who notes that Morton has only mined the first 750 feet of the dome. “We could close down every other mine in the United States and produce salt for everybody for 20,000 years.”

Grand Saline’s salt is thought to have been deposited eons ago, when the waters of the Gulf of Mexico submerged East Texas. As the sea receded, it left behind a bed of salt that was later covered by other layers of sediment. Intense heat, perhaps from a volcano, melted and purified the mineral, and over time, pressure from the heat and other shifts in the earth’s subterranean layers forced the salt upward, reaching the surface in a marsh on the southern edge of town. The Caddo tribe first harvested this salt as early as 800 AD by boiling water in the marsh. The area’s first commercial

**“We don’t care, you can lick anything you want,” says docent Tomasa King. “We are fine with it.”**

According to Salt Palace Museum docent Tomasa King, licking the façade of the building, which is made of salt blocks, is encouraged.

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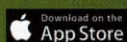
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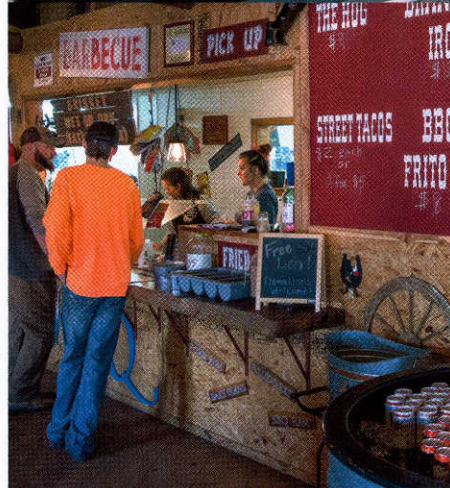


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saltmaker opened for business in 1850.

While the Salt Palace is mostly dedicated to providing educational displays and videos on Grand Saline's history of sodium chloride extraction, the museum also celebrates the town's other contributions, showcasing mementos from hometown favorite Chris Tomlin, one of the world's most influential Christian singer-songwriters; and fellow native Wiley Post, the first pilot to fly solo around the world. The city is also developing a more expansive salt museum, which will feature a simulated tour of Morton's mine.

King expects the new museum to open in the next two years, just a couple of blocks down Main Street from the Salt Palace and next door to Anklebee's, a new restaurant whose Old West-style exterior of rough-hewn, repurposed lumber—complete with hitching posts—beckoned on a rainy afternoon last December.

Anklebee's serves comfort food and baked treats at farmhouse tables beneath chandeliers cleverly fashioned from old, yellow hay rakes. We shared a made-from-scratch chicken-fried steak, which was lightly breaded and tender. After we had cleaned our plates, owner Angela Lee set down

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Dine on boiled crawfish at Salt Lickers; a Morton Salt display at the Salt Palace Museum; exterior of the museum; a meal and country décor at The Feed Hut.



**Anklebee's owner Angela Lee set down two slices of cheesecake drizzled with delicious fruit jams that she prepares fresh each morning.**

two slices of cheesecake drizzled with delicious fruit jams that she prepares fresh each morning.

Lee said she picked up the nickname Anklebee when she was a child. "My uncles were cowboys, and they had names for everything, and I was a little squirt, so they called me an 'ankle bee' because I was buzzing around their feet all the time."

Dining options abound within a mile of the Salt Palace. They include The Feed Hut, a popular bar-becue joint; Don's Dairy Bar, an

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old-fashioned café in operation since 1960; Peralta's Mexican Restaurant; and Salt Lickers, which serves up boiled crawfish and shrimp, fried gator tail, and pub fare like hamburgers and fried pickles. The newly renovated Grand Saline Hall and Historic Inn, also downtown in a two-story, painted-brick building, provides lodging one block south of the Salt Palace

and a 15-minute drive from the flea market bonanza that is First Monday Trade Days in Canton.

While shopping is fun, salt is essential. Until the 20th century, the mineral was one of civilization's most valuable trading commodities, both highly sought after and fought over. Different varieties are prized for properties like color and taste. Himalayan



**SALT PALACE MUSEUM**  
is at 100 W. Garland St. in Grand Saline. Open Mon-Sat, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Call **903-962-5631**;  
[grandsalinesaltpalace.com](http://grandsalinesaltpalace.com).

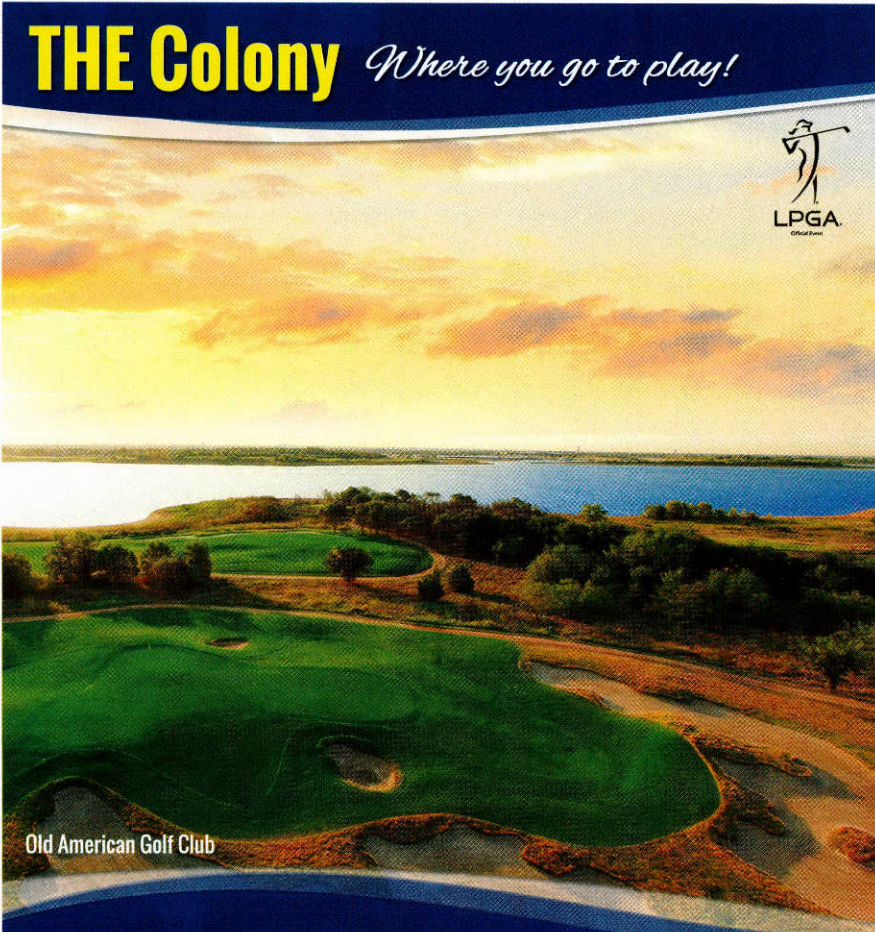
salt is pink because it is rich in iron ore. Hawaiian black salt is infused with lava ash. The salt in Grand Saline, 98.5 percent sodium chloride, is odorless and colorless.

"We have some of the purest salt in the world. Our salt is so pure that we are the only salt on pretzels in the United States," King claims. "This is true. If you eat a pretzel anywhere in the United States, it'll have Grand Saline salt on it because we're the only people who make pretzel salt in the whole United States."

**Seismic tests have shown the dome descends to a depth of 20,000 feet, and its lower base extends all the way to Louisiana, nearly 100 miles to the east.**

Grand Saline built the Salt Palace in 1936 to celebrate Texas' centennial. Salt dissolves in water, of course, so rainfall eroded the building, and the city has rebuilt the palace three times. The modern incarnation was constructed in 1993.

When my wife licked the Salt Palace, I didn't share her urge to partake, having already tasted the building during a previous trip. I did pocket a free lump of pure, local salt as a keepsake, however. Upon leaving the museum, we took a quick detour on FM 857 to view the white prairie marsh where the salt dome reaches the surface near the first bridge southeast of town. Continuing on our way, I realized I had been absentmindedly licking my souvenir as the East Texas scenery swept by. I popped the rock from my mouth and held it to the light, discovering that Grand Saline salt, when polished, shines as clear as crystal. 





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## Wall-to-Wall Wonders

Treasure hunting at Galveston's Hendley Market

story by **Heather Brand**

**A**T THE EASTERN END OF THE STRAND, A historic boulevard in Galveston lined with busy restaurants and souvenir shops, an unusual sign in the shape of bespectacled eyes attracts attention. Upon closer inspection, the sign marks the entry to Hendley Market—an eclectic emporium that doubles as a virtual cabinet of curiosities. Inside, the shelves and tables are carefully curated with fair-trade goods from all corners of the globe, with clever toys and gift items mixed in with 19th-century antiques, medical implements from days gone by, and stacks of intriguing books both old and new.

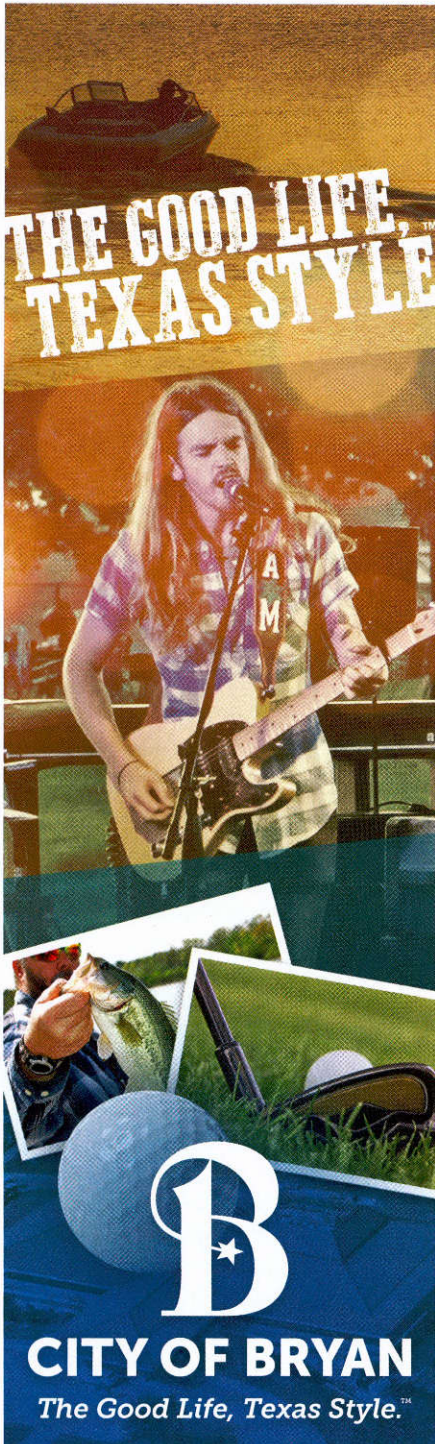
Cheryl Jenkines, co-manager of Hendley Market, often serves as a kind of tour guide for shoppers overwhelmed by

**Hendley Market still stands as the oldest commercial building on the Strand, once dubbed the “Wall Street of the South.”**

the marvels on display. “Once they step inside, they realize they are not in an ordinary store,” she observes. “They try to figure out what is going on here.” She is quick to point out some of the more uncommon objects for sale, such as vintage glass eyes from France, a leech jar once used for medicinal purposes, and a preserved two-headed duckling (the stuffed nutria sporting a fez is apparently not for sale). Among its varied inventory, the store specializes in Victorian antiques—particularly daguerreotype and tintype photographs, mourning jewelry carved in jet (a lignite that’s a precursor to coal), and hard-to-find silver pieces like ornate anchovy forks, tiny-pronged oyster forks, and tea scoops.

The building itself also dates from the Victorian era. Fashioned in the Greek Revival style, with a first floor ringed by numerous pilasters, the three-story brick edifice contains four conjoined structures and was the tallest in Texas when it was completed in 1858. Its name, “Hendley Row,” came from the maritime shipping firm of William Hendley & Co. Today, it still stands as the oldest commercial building on this busy thoroughfare, once dubbed the “Wall Street of the South.” Hendley Market occupies the first floor of one of the complex’s four structures—an open room illuminated by

**Hendley Market’s shop dog, Cooper, greets customers with a tail wag. In a few months, six upstairs apartments will be available for rent.**



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Along with vintage books, Victorian antiques, and oddities galore, Hendley Market specializes in unusual Nativities.

a central sky-lit atrium and originally used for grading cotton. The offices of the upper stories have been converted into six vacation-rental apartments that should be available by May.

Hendley Market has been a fixture on the Strand since 1979, and it hasn't changed much in all that time. Jenkinnes began working there in 1990, and she says the original owners sold the property to her in-laws shortly thereafter. Over the years, Jenkinnes—along with her trusty red hound, Cooper, who often greets customers—has continued to helm the shop with the help of her co-manager, Tulisha Dampier. Together, they have maintained the tradition of stocking the shelves with fascinating novelties and one-of-a-kind finds. Jenkinnes estimates that the shop's inventory numbers in the thousands, although she is really not certain: "There's no way to measure. It's

like a black hole. It's an ever-changing inventory of items. There's new stuff every week, and sometimes daily."

Jenkinnes and Dampier particularly pride themselves on their selection of international fair-trade wares, such as beaded bracelets from Thailand and Nepal, Peruvian good-luck packets and amulet vials, Indian kantha-cloth dish towels with decorative stitching, blue-glass "evil eyes" from Turkey, and pouches made from brightly colored Mexican oilcloth—all priced under \$20, and often much less. Jenkinnes procures these items from trade shows across the country and sometimes directly from artisans abroad. "We were doing fair-trade way before it was fashionable," she asserts. European gift items are also available. Petite hand soaps from France offer a bouquet of scents, including freesia, starflower, and laurel. British tea towels and Italian paper are printed with taxonomic depictions of flora and fauna, showing different kinds of crustaceans, cacti, butterflies, octopi, and birds.

However, the shop is perhaps best known for its astounding array of Nativity scenes, more than 300 in all, which draws shoppers year-round—even in the heat of summer. “The smallest one is from Ecuador; it fits in a pistachio shell. The largest is from Haiti, made from a recycled oil drum,” says Jenkins, gesturing toward some packed display cases at the back. These figurines come in a range of shapes and sizes, and from as far away as Bangladesh, France, Ghana, India, Kenya, Poland, Thailand, and Vietnam. One Nativity scene made in Mexico from old car parts goes for \$420; others, such as a Peruvian one nestled inside a ceramic chili pepper, cost as little as \$8.

Hendley Market also carries the work of artists and artisans closer to home. Galveston local Ben Thomas is responsible for the wacky taxidermy on display (\$75–125). Houston resident (and part-time store employee)

Amanda Hannie produces the colorful Day of the Dead altars and skulls, as well as the long strands of lights embellished with vividly painted flowers made from the ends of recycled plastic water bottles (\$165). Texas Pioneer Creations, a family-owned business near Houston, supplies the shop with handmade bars of soap, including an exclusive “Galveston Sea Salt” variety. One of the more popular items, also unique to the store, is the “Cider Beetle”: half of a dried orange peel packed with brown sugar, with a cinnamon stick, cloves, a nutmeg seed, and all-spice seeds arranged to look like a bug in the center. This fragrant concoction, produced by and for Hendley Market, can be dropped into a steaming pot of apple cider or red wine on festive occasions to make wassail or mulled wine. A seasonal “Cider Reindeer” (with Red Hots candy for a nose) is available around the winter holidays.



**HENDLEY MARKET**  
is at 2010 Strand St. in Galveston.  
Call for hours (extended in spring  
and summer); **409-762-2610**;  
[hendleymarket.com](http://hendleymarket.com).

According to a sign posted near the entrance, dogs and bare feet are welcome in the shop. Children are likewise encouraged to enter and explore. Here, they will find classic toys like kazoos, mood rings, and rubber roaches, but they will also find objects to spark their curiosity: coins and paper currency from around the world, old postcards from far-off places, antiquated medical tomes, samples of petrified wood, and geodes waiting to be cracked open. Even adults can regain a sense of childlike wonder when browsing through Hendley Market’s captivating inventory. There is always some new oddity or delightful trinket to discover. Curiosities abound. **L**

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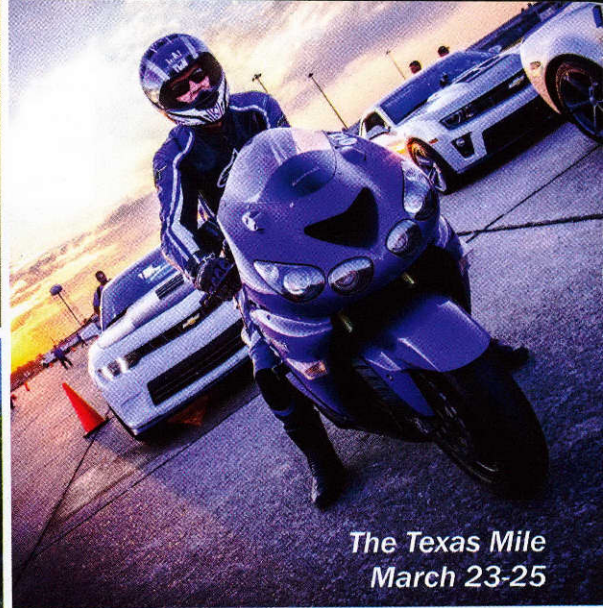
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Photo by: Danny Vivian Photography

*JAM Fest Victoria*  
April 21

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# PLATES

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## Welcome to Mattie's

Austin's venerable Green Pastures  
gets an update

story by **Melissa Gaskill**

With more than a century of history in the heart of Austin, Mattie's at Green Pastures provides a fine spot for dining with loved ones.

**T**HE FIRST TIME I VISITED GREEN PASTURES RESTAURANT, as a new Austin resident in the early 1980s, it felt like going to dinner with relatives—if mine had been well-to-do. That feeling came from the restaurant’s setting in a grand 1890s home on spacious, oak-shaded grounds as well as the warm atmosphere and general good mood of everyone there.

A recent visit proved that the welcoming ambiance survives despite decades of change in Austin and new ownership of the restaurant, now called Mattie’s at Green Pastures.

After all, the name gives a nod to the home’s previous owners, Henry and Martha “Mattie” Faulk. The freethinking Faulks eschewed racism and narrow-mindedness and entertained an eclectic assortment of people—and their five children followed suit. (Their son John Henry, a radio humorist and author, fought back when black-listed under McCarthyism in the 1950s, and a jury awarded him \$3.5 million in 1962, at the time the largest libel judgment in history.)

In 1946, Henry and Mattie gave the house to their daughter Mary Faulk Koock, who soon turned it into a restaurant, calling it Green Pastures. Frequent customers in the early days included local luminaries J. Frank Dobie, Walter Prescott Webb, and Roy Bedichek, as well as other writers, poets, musicians, and thinkers. In Mary’s *The Texas Cookbook* (1965), she reported that famous pianist Van Cliburn once ate 17 biscuits along with a “substantial four-course dinner.” Years before Austin was desegregated, Koock welcomed people of all

racess and backgrounds.

The Green Pastures menu pulled from a vast accumulation of recipes from Koock’s mother and cousins, as well as ones she picked up on her own travels. Ownership eventually passed to Koock’s son Ken, who later sold it to Bob Buslett, a former Green Pastures bartender. Austin developer Greg Porter and La Corsha Hospitality Group’s Jeff Trigger bought the property in 2015.

“I started thinking about how to incorporate the history and spirit of the family and what Green Pastures meant to Austin,” says Porter, who communicated extensively with family members as he made his plans. “It’s all predicated on that history, these very real people’s lives and the way they lived.

**Festive lights strung among the trees over an outdoor seating area provide a perfect setting for happy hour.**

**A petite filet from Niman Ranch comes with grilled Napa cabbage, roasted beets, and spicy honey mustard.**



## RECIPE

I wanted Mattie's to be about true hospitality, not exclusivity but inclusivity. I tried to deduce what the property was all about, and I think it is a single word: 'welcome.'"

Festive lights strung among the trees over an outdoor seating area provide a perfect setting for happy hour. Inside, gleaming wood floors, large windows, rich colors, simple wooden tables, and comfortable seats contribute to the welcoming atmosphere.

So, too, does the menu. Anchored by American dishes, it arose from collaborative efforts between Porter, Trigger, and chef Joshua Thomas, who trained at the Culinary Institute of America in New York before moving to Austin. Thomas worked for the Hyatt Regency Lost Pines and Spa in Bastrop before eventually opening a food truck, Chaat Shop. When the Mattie's project began, he came on board.

"We're continuing old Green

### MATTIE'S AT GREEN PASTURES PIMENTO CHEESE

Mary Faulk Kooek, the third of five children of Mattie and Henry Faulk and the original proprietor of Green Pastures Restaurant, wrote *The Texas Cookbook: From barbecue to banquet—an informal view of dining and entertaining the Texas way*, published in 1965. This is an updated version of Kooek's recipe for "cheese filling," which contains pimentos and hard-boiled eggs.

The update doesn't include jarred pimentos. "The red bell peppers we use provide the same pepper flavor and color without the cloying sweetness," says Chef Joshua Thomas. "We grill the peppers over mesquite to provide a subtle smoky flavor."

### MATTIE'S PIMENTO CHEESE

Yields 3.5 cups

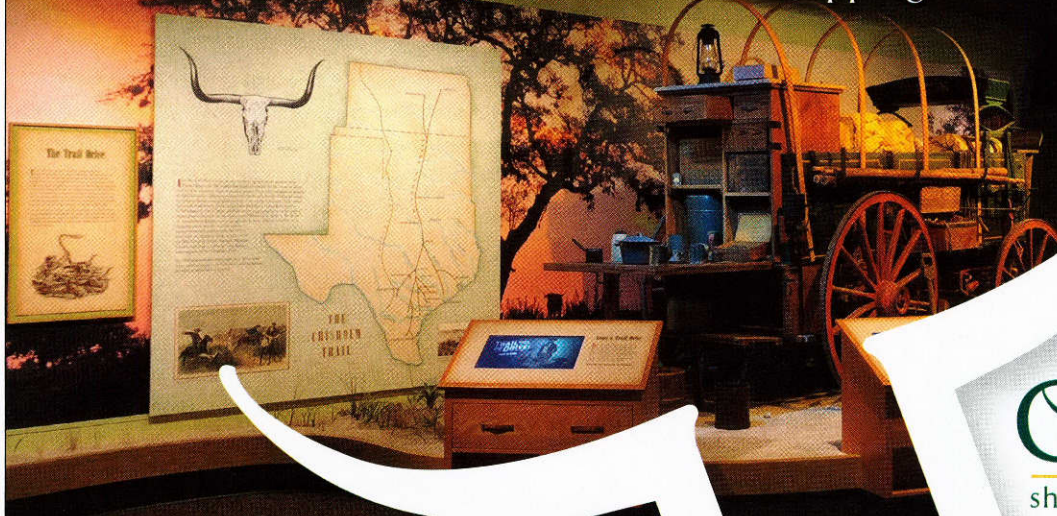
- ✦ 1 lb. Irish cheddar, grated
- ✦ 3 garlic cloves, unpeeled

- ✦ 1 red bell pepper
- ✦ 8 oz. mayonnaise
- ✦ 2 T. fresh thyme, finely chopped
- ✦ 1 tsp. ground black pepper
- ✦ 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ✦ A dash of nutmeg

1. Roast bell pepper over open flame or in a 450° oven until skin becomes charred all the way around.
2. Place roasted pepper in bowl and cover with plastic wrap to steam for 15 minutes.
3. Once steamed, peel pepper, remove seeds and stem, and finely chop.
4. Toss whole garlic cloves in canola oil and roast at 350° for 8-10 minutes or until garlic browns and softens. Cool, peel, and set aside.
5. Combine the bell pepper, garlic, grated cheese, and remaining ingredients in a medium bowl.
6. Refrigerate and allow flavors to meld for up to 4-6 hours. Serve with slices of grilled ciabatta and cornichons.

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Pastures traditions but also figuring things out for the new Green Pastures,” Thomas says. “The old menu hadn’t been updated in a while in terms of food and trends. We stripped down the fine dining-ness of the place. The heritage was about bringing people over and hosting parties, and I wanted to keep that feel, return to its roots, yet make it more approachable and comfortable.”

The two most popular items on the menu, fried chicken (\$24) and butter-milk biscuits (\$8), accomplish both goals; this is Southern comfort food at its most basic, yet made even more delicious by top-quality ingredients and attention to detail. For the chicken, for example, a yogurt-and-butter-milk brine and south Indian spices add subtle flavor notes. My tender Mattie’s Fried Chicken arrived with a light, crispy crust and was served with creamy mashed potatoes, spinach, pickled onions, and a chipotle-yogurt dressing. The flaky, rich biscuits, served with seasonal fruit butter (mine

was strawberry), would make a fine dessert as well as a starter to the meal.

My companion’s dish, Pan Seared Idaho Trout (\$30), came with crispy potatoes, green beans, and a perfect homemade caper remoulade. We shared a side of crispy cauliflower (\$8), a generous portion of florets tastily caramelized in a subtle combination of Thai bird chile, tamarind barbecue sauce, and scallions. Desserts change seasonally, but we shared a rich chocolate ice box cake; current offerings include lemon bars with poached pears, monkey bread with fried bananas and milk chocolate sauce, and *tres leches* cake with rum-braised pineapple.

Longtime Green Pastures fans will be happy to find the famous peacocks still patrolling among the oak trees and the popular milk punch on the menu, albeit with an upgrade. La Corsha’s beverage director, Jason Stevens, returned to Kooock’s original recipe, researching spirits true to that time and using an in-house vanilla cream. The final version blends sweet vanilla

The restaurant’s spacious grounds feature mature oak trees and a resident peacock flock.





cream with Kentucky bourbon, VSOP cognac, aged rum, and freshly grated nutmeg to create a smooth, slightly sweet concoction evocative of eggnog.

“The recipe had changed throughout the years, and we reverted as closely as we possibly could to the original,” Stevens says. “With beverage programming at Mattie’s, it is important to stay true to the history.”

Thomas adds, “We make an effort to work with a lot of local farmers and vendors. We have to be cognizant of where the products come from, how they are grown.” He sources vegetables and produce from nearby farms, grass-fed beef from south of San Antonio, trout from Idaho, sustainable salmon from New Zealand, and chicken from Smart Chicken, the first U.S. poultry company to be certified humane and organic.

“I look at Mattie’s as if we are stewarding it for future generations,” he adds. “There is nothing else like it in Austin in terms of history.”



**MATTIE'S AT GREEN PASTURES**

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## Moving Those Mudbugs

In Texas City, Boyd's One Stop goes bonkers for crawfish

story by **Susan L. Ebert**

**A** S I PULL ONTO DIKE ROAD FROM TEXAS CITY'S BAY STREET in the pastel dawn, bright pops of neon signage and illuminated billboards lead the way to Boyd's One Stop and Cajun Grill Express. As most of the awakening city's residents stumble toward the coffeepot, Boyd's is already an anthill of activity. Anglers—some towing sleek bay boats, others with roof-racks stacked with kayaks—vie for parking slots. Parents with bright-eyed youngsters and bait buckets stream through the bait shop's door.

Others, like me, line up along the front sidewalk on this Wednesday morning thanks to the text we received yesterday, which promoted live Louisiana "swamp red" crawfish on sale by the 30-pound sack for just 83 cents per pound. Or, after Boyd's Cajun Grill Express opens at 11 a.m., we can order 'em fresh-boiled and ready to eat for just 84 cents per pound more. Boil-at-home crawfish prices during

**When shrimp quantities plummeted, Boyd's owner Jason Cogburn switched to crawfish.**

the season, which runs from January to August, can vary from a high of \$4.49 per pound when they're scarce to as low as 49 cents per pound during late spring when they are the most plentiful. I pounce when the price drops below a buck a pound.

The shop swarms with customers. A half-dozen teenagers huddle by the counter as the clerk processes their fishing licenses. Behind them, several gentlemen playfully argue about the efficacy of various lures while a father and son wait for bait shrimp, a bucket in hand. To the left of the cashier, atop billowy mounds of crushed ice, are several sizes of table shrimp, sacks of crawfish, and live blue crabs, along with fresh flounder, sheepshead, and drum.

True to its name, Boyd's One Stop sells just about anything you might need for a day of fishing and relaxing on the Texas City Dike, a roughly

5-mile-long dike built in the early 1900s to protect the Texas City Channel from silting in and crosscurrents. You'll find drinks, snacks, caps, sunscreen, sunglasses, flashlights, rain slickers, fishing rods, fillet knives, and spice blends.

Behind a glass door in the miniscule kitchen of Boyd's Cajun Grill Express,

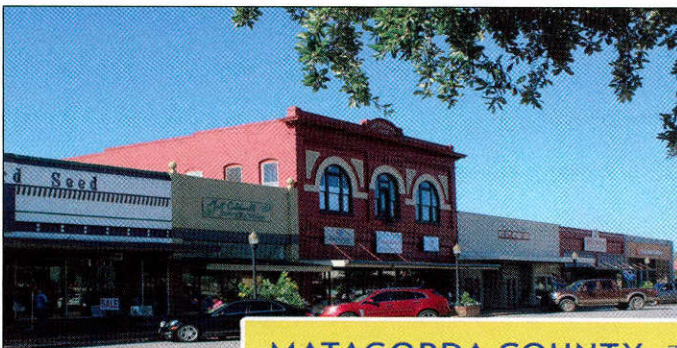
**To the left of the cashier, atop billowy mounds of crushed ice, are several sizes of table shrimp, sacks of crawfish, and live blue crabs, along with fresh flounder, sheepshead, and drum.**

several cooks prepare to boil a vat of crawfish. On busy days, they often cook 4,500-6,000 pounds of mudbugs. In addition to boiled crawfish, the grill serves sandwiches and seafood dishes

ranging from fish tacos to gumbo. My current favorite is the Buffalo Shrimp Po' Boyd (\$8), which features a hoagie roll stuffed with fried Gulf shrimp, hot Buffalo sauce, ranch dressing, lettuce, tomato, and onion. The grill offers counter service only, so diners take their food to an outdoor alcove of bar stools and wooden counters, palapa-shaded picnic tables, or spots beneath a large white party tent.

The twin businesses date to 1968, when local angler Gene Boyd opened a shrimp business and bait camp here. In the late '80s, current owner Jason Cogburn worked here as a teenager. Back then, Boyd's One Stop and several other bait shops lined Dike Road. When Boyd retired around this time, Boyd's One Stop remained relatively unchanged under new owners until Cogburn bought it in 1999.

Cogburn, who had experience in the shrimp business, intended to stay the



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course with shrimp and bait. But on Sept. 13, 2008, Hurricane Ike scoured away all the businesses and structures on the dike—and even most of Dike Road itself. Boyd's, which occupies a sheltered spot behind the levee protecting Texas City, lost power and sustained some wind damage, but Cogburn had a bigger problem: No dike meant no dike fishermen needing bait. He needed to come up with a new business plan, fast. And a sustainable one, as it would be nearly two years before the dike would reopen.

Cogburn maintained Boyd's by focusing on the seafood market side of his business—mostly shrimp. But as costs rose and supplies shrank over the next decade, the shrimp's freshwater cousin, the humble crawfish, skyrocketed in popularity throughout the Houston area, fueled by an insatiable demand for both Cajun and Vietnamese preparations.

"Fun is the common denominator," says Cogburn, who today sports a full, reddish-blond beard and tousled golden locks that spill halfway down his "We Brake for Boyd's Crawfish" long-sleeved T-shirt. "Crawfish—in any culture—means party.

"In Houston, the crawfish boil has replaced the backyard barbecue," he continues. "We sold upward of 5 million pounds of crawfish in 2017, up from 1.2 million in 2014."

Boyd's One Stop now supplies about 80 H-E-B stores, along with numerous other restaurants and markets, deploying its own truck fleet to bring the 'bugs from crawfish farms in Louisiana to Texas City, and from there, to its customers throughout Texas. Cogburn is currently building a 30,000-square-foot warehouse adjacent to his current business, and once it's completed, he'll begin work on a restaurant that will replace the current Boyd's Cajun Grill



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Express, along with an expanded seafood market and bait-and-tackle store.

"Dealing with a live product has its challenges," says Cogburn with a smile and a shrug. "The No. 1 factor is availability: If I have 'em, I can move 'em. You have to be aware of moon cycles, temperature changes, any triggers that might cause them to molt, or worse, die."

But Cogburn—who has arguably bought and sold more live shrimp than anyone on the Texas coast, earning him the moniker of "The Shrimp King of Texas"—remains undaunted.

He's seen the future, and it's mudbugs. **L**

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## The Good Stuff

Tours of two distilleries are proof: Texas bourbon is coming of age

story by **June Naylor**

**B**LAME IT ON TITO'S. THE CRAFT VODKA FROM Austin, which grew from obscurity 20 years ago into one of Texas' most popular spirits brands, has inspired a widespread passion for Texas-made firewater. That includes bourbon, which contrary to popular belief, doesn't have to come from Kentucky—but does have to be made in the United States.

Its all-American appeal notwithstanding, not everyone immediately gets what's so special about bourbon, which often tastes intense but pleasantly so, giving off the notion of oak and the idea of sweetness, like caramel, with lots of implied spice.

**Contrary to popular belief, bourbon doesn't have to come from Kentucky, but it does have to be made in the United States.**

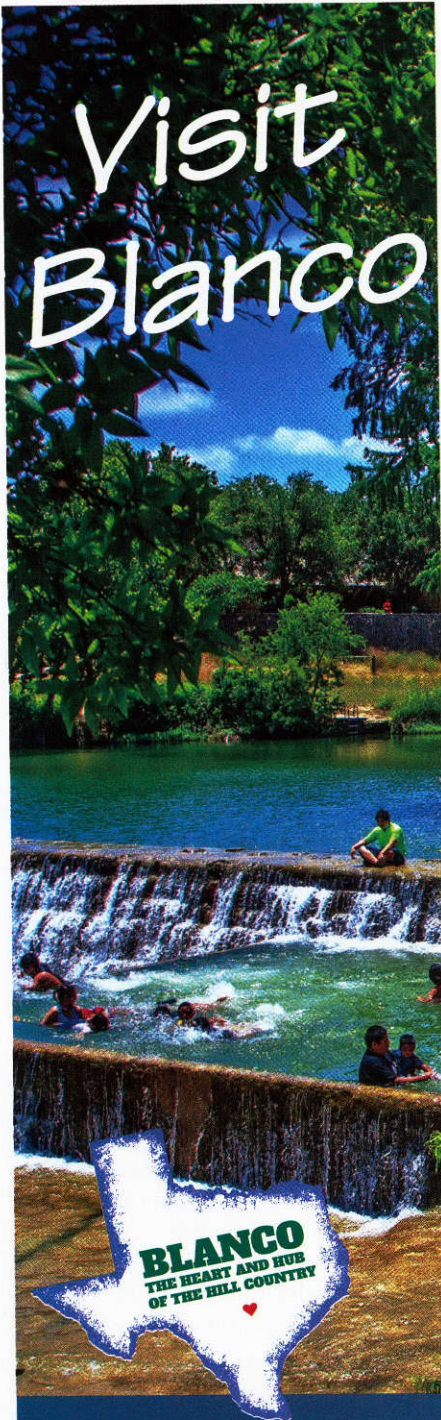
Bourbon presents a fun journey of discovery, and it turns out that some of the best brown elixir around is made right here in Texas. Garrison Brothers in the Hill Country hamlet of Hye, and Firestone & Robertson Distilling Co.'s Whiskey Ranch in Fort Worth both warrant road trips for touring and tasting experiences.

### Garrison Brothers

In 2005, Austinite Dan Garrison opened his eponymous distillery in the ranching community of Hye, about a 20-minute drive east of Fredericksburg. On a tour, the folks at Garrison Brothers deliver education with a folksy, laid-back attitude. My tour group gathers around the rustic visitor's headquarters, and we help ourselves to a Texas beer or a glass of wine before climbing on the back of a hay wagon for a short ride up a hill. Soon, we arrive at a cluster of buildings housing the distilling, barrel, and bottling operations. Master distiller Donnis Todd is on hand to talk about the process, and right away, he establishes bourbon's identity for us: A whiskey is bourbon only if it's made in the United States with at least 51 percent corn and is aged in new, charred-oak barrels. (By law, "straight" bourbon must be aged at least two years.) Todd's distilling team uses organic corn from the Texas Panhandle, organic Texas wheat, and barley from the Pacific Northwest, Canada, or the Upper Midwest.

Walking into the humid fermentation room, we inhale a pungent whiff of CO<sub>2</sub> created by the liquid bubbling in giant vats. Then we take a gander at the two copper stills where a single batch of bourbon is made at once. The stills produce a high-proof, clear spirit colloquially known as white dog, which is eventually diluted and aged in charred-oak barrels. Garrison Brothers produces varied bourbons in barrels given different treatments; Todd tells us about a recent release called

Firestone & Robertson's new 112-acre TX Whiskey Ranch occupies the former Glen Garden Country Club in Fort Worth.



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Estacado, which receives additional aging and nuanced flavor from time spent in port barrels from Llano Estacado Winery near Lubbock. Later, back at the log cabin where the tour first gathered, it's time to taste flagship pours, as well as specialties like the Estacado. That's also where we buy Garrison Brothers T-shirts and Texas cookbooks, as well as bourbon by the bottle.

#### F&R's TX Whiskey Ranch

Up in Fort Worth, another visitor experience awaits at the new Firestone & Robertson's Whiskey Ranch, a 112-acre spread occupying the former Glen Garden Country Club. In 2010, owners and bourbon connoisseurs Leonard Firestone and Troy Robertson opened their distillery in a Prohibition-era railroad warehouse in downtown Fort Worth. Demand for their blended whiskey, first produced in 2012, and their bourbon, which debuted in late

2016, exploded in ways they never imagined. Wanting to dramatically expand their production capabilities, they bought the historic Glen Garden Country Club—where icons Byron Nelson and Ben Hogan learned to play golf as young caddies—for the new F&R home. The grounds sit atop four deep

#### **At Garrison Brothers, a recent release called Estacado receives additional aging in port barrels from Llano Estacado Winery near Lubbock.**

wells, pulling water from the Trinity and Paluxy river aquifers to mix with Lone Star corn and wheat, as well as pecan yeast from a friend's Central Texas ranch.

I pull through the property gates and head up a winding drive to a collection of buildings clad in reclaimed woods, Texas limestone, and corrugated metal.

**Tours of Garrison Brothers in Hye include tastings of several different bourbons.**

Tours begin at the Ranch House, where visitors can buy souvenirs and bottles of whiskey and bourbon in the retail shop. That's also where guests can make their own copies of the F&R signature bottle top, which uses leather scraps from Leddy's, Justin, and other famous Texas bootmakers. The majority of tour time takes place in the Still House, a few feet away from the Ranch House, where we walk through 20-foot-tall sliding barn doors and gape at the massive, 45-foot-tall copper still. Two glass portholes allow a glimpse of the cooking process inside, and two staircases wrap around the soaring still, leading us upstairs for a bird's-eye view of the sprawling production facilities. Though the nearby Barrel House isn't part of the tour, it's impressive to learn that storage in that building accommodates 20,000 barrels and that five barrel barns will eventually house 100,000 barrels of aging whiskey and



## KINDRED SPIRITS

**Garrison Brothers**, at 1827 Hye-Albert Road in Hye, offers tours four times daily, Wed-Sun, \$10 per person and \$20 on Saturday. See [garrisonbros.com](http://garrisonbros.com).

**Firestone & Robertson's TX Whiskey Ranch**, at 4200 Mitchell Blvd. in Fort Worth, opens Tue-Fri; private tours are available by appointment and public tours begin in April, \$10-\$15 per person. Saturday tours are available at the downtown location, 901 Vickery Blvd. See [frdistilling.com](http://frdistilling.com).

bourbon. That, Firestone and Robertson say, will make this the largest distillery west of the Mississippi. For now, F&R can turn out 40 barrels daily, a big jump from the three barrels still made daily at their operation downtown. Because the distillery's TX Straight Bourbon is aged for about four and a half years, its production is just about 15 percent of F&R's total.

Back at the Ranch House, guests hang out on a wrap-around deck with a pair of oversize limestone fireplaces, taking in the lake views. Adjacent to the deck, The Tavern features trophy

cases full of old Glen Garden golf memorabilia, plus awards the distillery has won. Bellying up to the bar, where bartenders whip up Manhattans, old-fashioneds, and other cocktails, I order a glass of TX Straight Bourbon, neat. Wandering out to the long courtyard, I take in the sweeping westward view of downtown Fort Worth skyline across a ledge of treetops. Yet another oversize fire pit, surrounded by burr oaks and Chinese pistache trees, provides just the place to toast the sunset with a glass of my favorite Texas spirit. **L**

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STORY BY PAM LEBLANC  
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KENNY BRAUN

# TEXAS

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and you'll find coastal marshes where alligators lurk, spring-fed pools in the middle of the desert, and green-blue creeks sandwiched between cypress-lined banks.

We're a great big diverse state, but most of us live in bustling cities, drive crowded free-ways, and spend our days inside air-conditioned buildings. We need nature but local, state, and federal governments can't manage and protect all of our sacred places. Luckily, organizations like The Nature Conservancy help fill in the gaps. In Texas, The Nature Conservancy manages 38 preserves, and many of them open periodically for exploration by the public.

"Because we're such an urbanized state, these places are important ecologically, spiritually, and culturally," says Laura Huffman, Texas state director for The Nature Conservancy.

One of the largest conservation organizations in the world, The Nature Conservancy first became active in the Lone Star State in the 1950s and established its Texas chapter in 1964. Early on, it spearheaded an effort to save Enchanted Rock—that glowing dome of granite where rock climbers, hikers, and campers flock—from mining development. Since then, it has helped protect nearly a million acres in Texas. "It's about protecting iconic places so future generations can have access," Huffman says.

We've rounded up 10 of our favorite Nature Conservancy properties that allow occasional public access.

Swimmers enjoy  
the water at  
Independence  
Creek Preserve



1

## DAVIS MOUNTAINS PRESERVE

30.70723, -104.09968

**A hike to the top of Mount Livermore** always reveals some new natural wonder. "Every time I've been up, there's been a different weather pattern—it snows, it sleets, or it's windy as heck when you're standing up there, holding on with white knuckles and elated," says Jane Schweppe, who along with her sister contributed \$2 million for the 1992 purchase of the original parcel.

The peak, the highest in the Davis Mountains and fifth highest in Texas, caps a biologically diverse "sky island" that rises above the Chihuahuan Desert in West Texas like Mother Nature's penthouse suite.

The Nature Conservancy protects more than 100,000 acres of canyons, cliffs, and mountainsides. It's not just land that's protected, either. The preserve tucks away a piece of West Texas' ranching culture for safe-keeping and stops the bright lights of development from detracting from the skies around nearby University of Texas McDonald Observatory.

The preserve's entrance gate is about 25 miles northwest of Fort Davis.

**2018 open days:** March 16-18, April 14, May 19, July 13-15, Aug. 10-12, Oct. 13, Dec. 7-9.



2

INDEPENDENCE CREEK PRESERVE

30.45274, -101.79735

**Turns out West Texas** isn't all prickly cactus, deep-cut canyons, and scrub-covered mesas after all. In a remote corner of the state, you'll find water tumbling through rocky creekbeds, an almost mystical grove of gnarled old oaks, and two spring-fed pools filled with gin-clear water. This distinct and critical preserve covers close to 20,000 acres a stone's throw from the headwaters of Independence Creek, just above its confluence with the Pecos River.

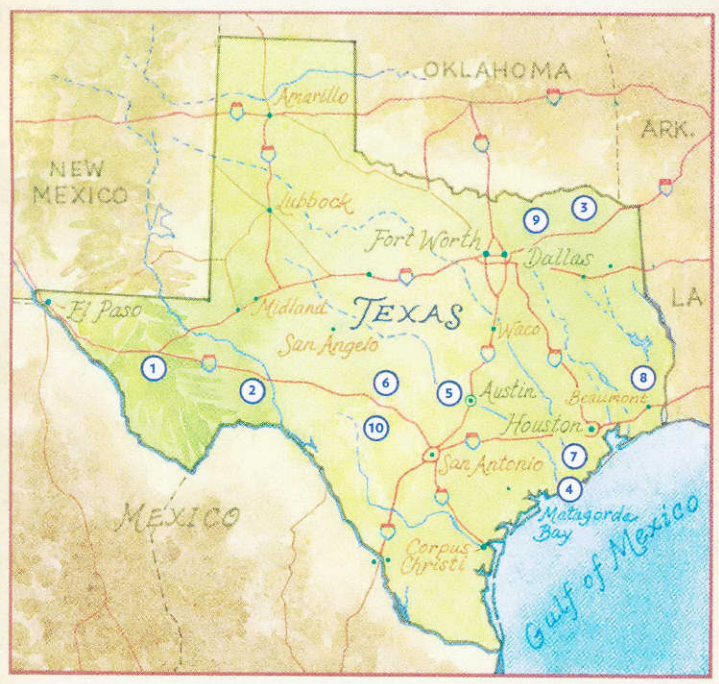
Swimming across one of the two lakes formed by a small dam or dangling your toes off the edge of a wooden dock, you might think you've been mysteriously transported to someplace tropical—until you hear the barking from a nearby village of fat prairie dogs, just out of eyesight.

"Independence Creek Preserve safeguards one of the most important of the few remaining freshwater tributaries of the lower Pecos River and protects more than 19,000 acres of the Chihuahuan Desert, including vital habitat for a number of rare bird and fish species," Huffman says. "It's an ecological powerhouse and part of the fabric of West Texas' natural heritage."

Independence Creek Preserve is located 22 miles south of Sheffield.

2018 open days: March 24, April 20-22, May 26, June 22-24, July 28, Aug. 24-26.

FEATURED NATURE CONSERVANCY SITES



- 1. DAVIS MOUNTAINS PRESERVE
- 2. INDEPENDENCE CREEK PRESERVE
- 3. LENNOX WOODS PRESERVE
- 4. CLIVE RUNNELLS FAMILY MAD ISLAND MARSH PRESERVE
- 5. BARTON CREEK HABITAT PRESERVE
- 6. ECKERT JAMES RIVER BAT CAVE PRESERVE
- 7. BRAZOS WOODS PRESERVE
- 8. ROY E. LARSEN SANDYLAND SANCTUARY
- 9. CLYMER MEADOW PRESERVE
- 10. LOVE CREEK PRESERVE



3

## LENNOX WOODS PRESERVE

29.79104, -99.4279

**A looping trail on an** old wagon road used from the 1840s to the 1930s takes hikers through hardwood forests to a tributary of Pecan Bayou at this preserve in northeast Texas. The old growth forest blazes to life in the fall,

when the leaves turn. In spring, wildflowers pop up underfoot.

The highlight? Trees 100-plus years old create woods protected by landowners for four generations. The preserve includes a 350-acre tract accessible to the public and a separate, larger tract where restoration work is taking place.

Shortleaf pines, loblolly pines, hickories, and red maples dot the upland areas; the bottomlands are shady and dense with oaks and sweetgums and a threatened plant called the Arkansas Meadow Rue. An endangered beetle, the American Burrowing Beetle, makes its home here, too.

Lennox Woods Preserve is located along State Highway 37 in Red River County, about 10 miles north of Clarksville.

**2018 open days: sunrise to sunset daily.**



4

## CLIVE RUNNELLS FAMILY MAD ISLAND MARSH PRESERVE

30.57026, -99.3328

**Researchers from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center** set up a temporary research station here every spring, netting (and quickly freeing) Neotropical birds as they fly on the Texas leg of their long-distance commutes across the Gulf of Mexico. The data they gather provides clues to bird populations and migratory patterns.

Since the Audubon Society started its Christmas Bird Count in 1993, the annual survey that incorporates the preserve has often ranked No. 1 in the country for bird diversity. Among the stars is the hooded warbler, a yellow-and-black masterpiece of a bird that winters in Central America.

A rare remaining chunk of a fragile system of prairies and wetlands that 100 years ago stretched nearly unbroken along the Texas coast, the 7,063-acre preserve features marshes that protect water quality and provide habitat for white-tailed deer, alligators (lots of them!), bobcats, rattlesnakes, and coyotes.

The preserve is located off FM 1095 in Matagorda County, southeast of Collegeport.

**2018 open days:** The preserve hosts monthly bird-watching events called Feathered Fridays (reservations required); otherwise on volunteer workdays or by appointment only.





5

## BARTON CREEK HABITAT PRESERVE

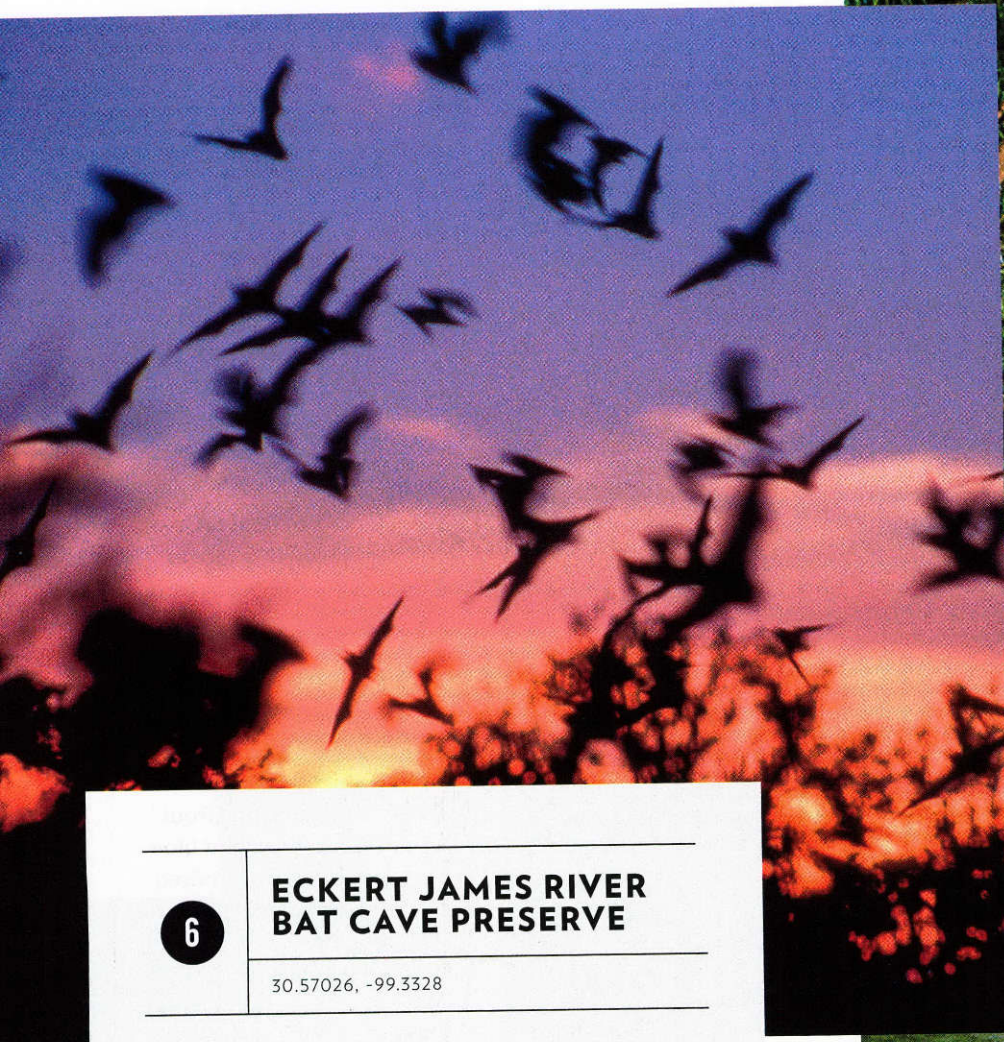
30.27999, -97.90931

**This section of Barton Creek** bears little resemblance to its high-profile downstream neighbor, Barton Springs Pool in Austin. Here, midway between the headwaters of the roughly 50-mile creek and Lady Bird Lake in Austin, you're more likely to hear a screech owl hooting from a treetop or spot a great blue heron than several hundred bathers frolicking in the chilly waters.

Plans once called for a subdivision with as many as 7,000 homes here. The preserve is a rare undeveloped swath of land close to an urban core, and scientists say it's critical to protecting Austin's water resources. The 4,083-acre tract is managed primarily as a habitat for two endangered songbird species. Besides the creek, visitors can explore several short trails that lead to a smaller tributary tucked in the woods.

The preserve is located along 4 miles of Barton Creek in Austin.

**2018 open days:** *Texas Highways special event April 21 (see Page 6); otherwise limited to scheduled volunteer workdays and arranged visits.*



6

## ECKERT JAMES RIVER BAT CAVE PRESERVE

30.57026, -99.3328

**The bat emergence** at this slice of Hill Country property southwest of Mason won't sneak up on you. Just before sunset, a rumpus begins near the mouth of a cave. First, a few tiny mammals streak out. A stream soon follows, like a whirlwind of X-wing Starfighters from a *Star Wars* flick, tightening into a ribbon that disappears over the horizon.

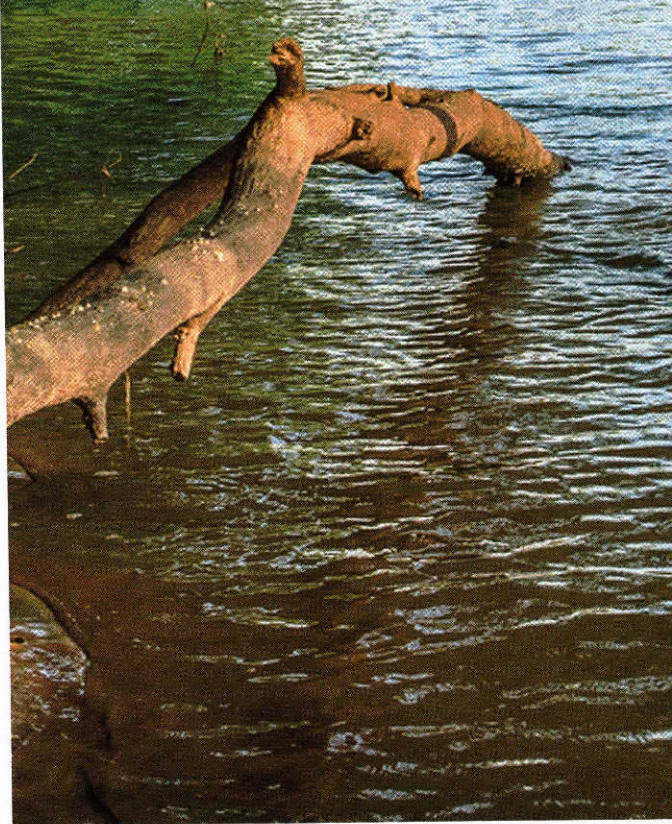
During the summer, these Mexican free-tailed bats depart nightly from their home in a 65-foot hole in the ground, creating a performance better than anything you'll see at a movie theater.

"They eat between 400 and 600 bite-sized bugs per hour," says bat cave steward Vicki Ritter, who provides live commentary as the vortex forms each clear summer evening.

An estimated 1.6 million female bats set up camp here every May to give birth and raise families. More adults move in, and at the population's peak in late summer, some 4 million bats call Eckert James River Bat Cave home. If you're lucky, you'll also spot Otis and Olivia, the resident great horned owls, or one of the white racer snakes, Miss Hiss or Sir Hiss, who hang out in hopes of a quick snack.

The preserve is located 16 miles southwest of Mason.

**2018 open days:** Thursday through Sunday evenings from mid-May to early October. (A donation of \$5 per person age 6 and up is requested.)



7

## BRAZOS WOODS PRESERVE

30.45274, -101.79735

### **Herds of bison once stomped**

through these bottomlands, located along the convergence of two migratory bird flyways. The bison are long gone and so are the cattle that grazed here before The Nature Conservancy acquired this 176-acre parcel in 2016.

These days the focus is on education. Hurricane Harvey delayed construction of a new pavilion, now scheduled to open in late 2018. When it's finished, visitors will gather there to learn about the bottomland forest's natural resources

as well as water and habitat protection. They'll hike through wetlands, brushing against native palmettos, gaze up at oaks dripping with Spanish moss, or peer into the muddy reddish water of the Brazos River that borders the property. Lucky visitors might spot a bald eagle, too. Conservationists are working to restore deforested land and bring back native habitat.

The Brazos Woods Preserve entrance is at 1080 County Road 645, West Columbia.

**2018 open days: several times a year.**



**ROY E. LARSEN  
SANDYLAND  
SANCTUARY**

30.45274, -101.79735

**Young longleaf pines** sprout like a crowd of foot-tall, long-haired hippies in the forest at the Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary.

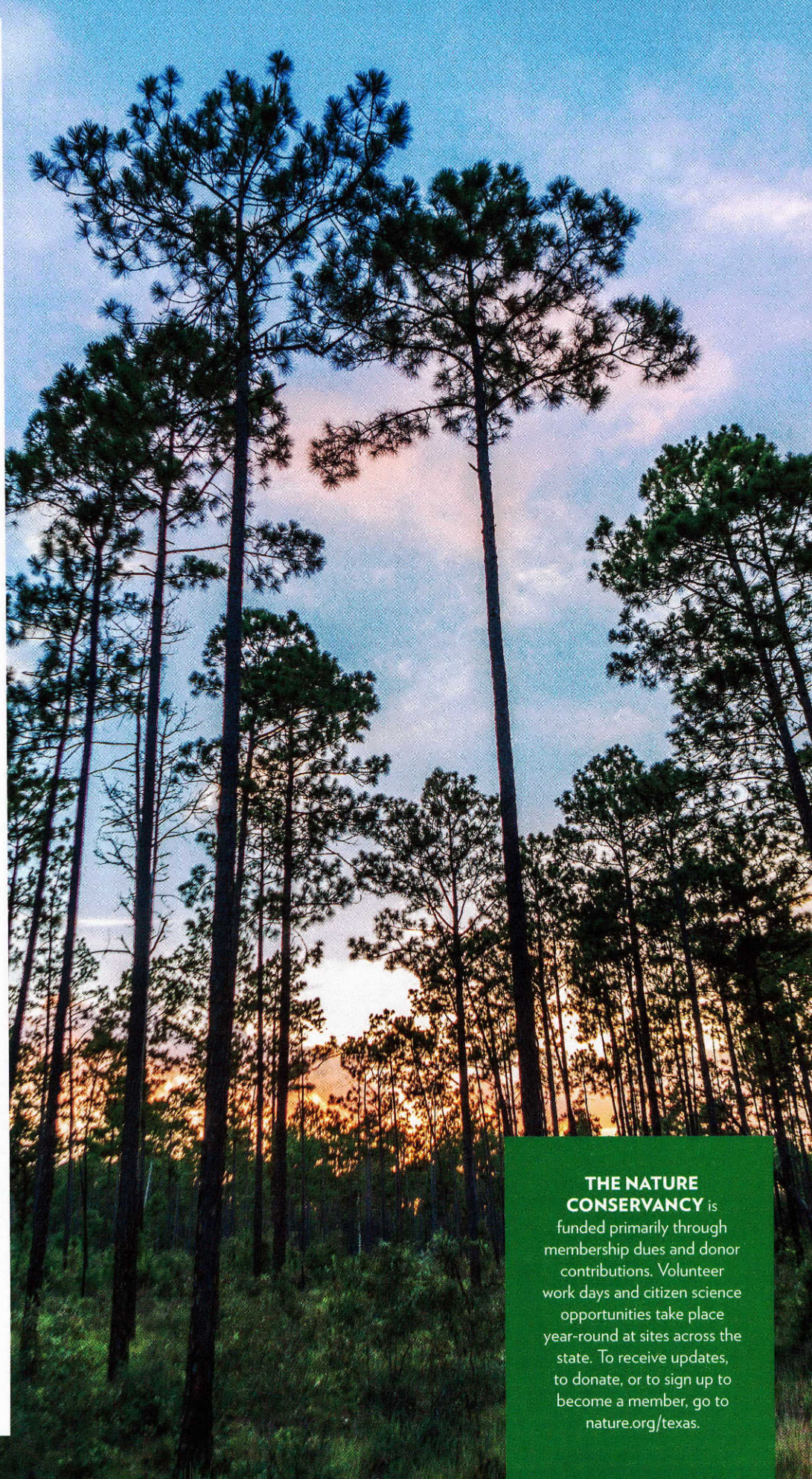
Chainsaws and urban sprawl leveled nearly all the mature longleaf pines that once grew in a 90-million-acre swath from Florida to Texas. Today, less than 3 percent of the original forest remains. This preserve was set aside in 1977 to help the species regenerate.

Part of the marvel of this 5,654 acres (including adjoining conservation easements) lies in its diversity. Hike or canoe through the preserve and you'll find yourself in squishy bogs or swamps one moment, pinelands, sandy uplands, or magnolia forests the next.

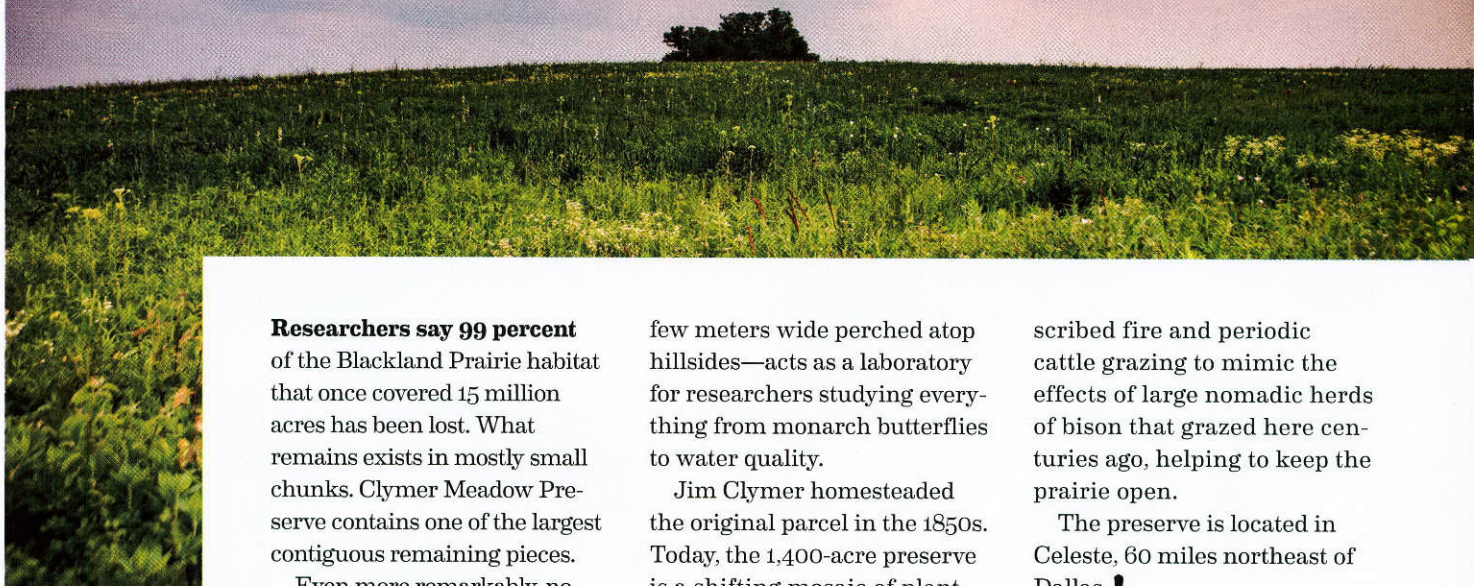
Visitors can access an easy 6-mile trail from dawn to dusk daily, or paddle Village Creek, which cuts through the preserve for 8 miles and continues into the Big Thicket National Preserve (check with local vendors for canoe and kayak rentals).

Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary is located about 20 miles north of Beaumont in Silsbee.

**2018 open days:** from sunrise to sunset daily.

**THE NATURE  
CONSERVANCY** is

funded primarily through membership dues and donor contributions. Volunteer work days and citizen science opportunities take place year-round at sites across the state. To receive updates, to donate, or to sign up to become a member, go to [nature.org/texas](http://nature.org/texas).



**Researchers say 99 percent** of the Blackland Prairie habitat that once covered 15 million acres has been lost. What remains exists in mostly small chunks. Clymer Meadow Preserve contains one of the largest contiguous remaining pieces.

Even more remarkably, no plow blade has ever cut through the soil on some sections of the property. Its gently rolling land, pockmarked by microtopography—wetlands just a

few meters wide perched atop hillsides—acts as a laboratory for researchers studying everything from monarch butterflies to water quality.

Jim Clymer homesteaded the original parcel in the 1850s. Today, the 1,400-acre preserve is a shifting mosaic of plant life. In late summer, native grasses grow chest high; spring lifts the lid on a treasure box of wildflowers.

Land managers use pre-

scribed fire and periodic cattle grazing to mimic the effects of large nomadic herds of bison that grazed here centuries ago, helping to keep the prairie open.

The preserve is located in Celeste, 60 miles northeast of Dallas. 📍

**2018 open days: annual spring and fall wildflower and grassland tours as well as volunteer work days; otherwise by appointment only.**

## LOVE CREEK PRESERVE

29.79104, -99.4279

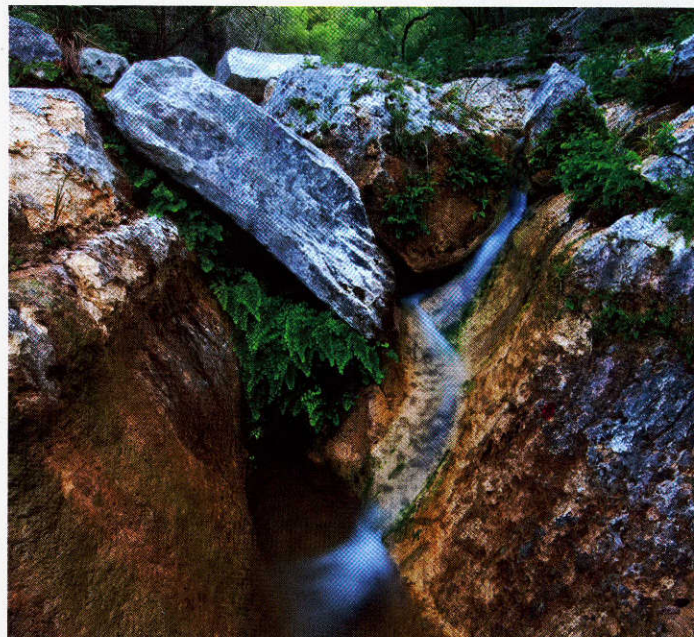
**A hike down to Love Creek** could turn up anything from a Medina roundnose minnow—known to occur only within the upper Medina River watershed—to a coveted golden-cheeked warbler, whose buzzy chirp you'll probably hear before you see the endangered bird.

You might spot a rare Tobusch Fishhook Cactus, too, or you could wander into a cluster of bigtooth maples—called “lost maples” because they're few and far between in Texas.

Baxter and Carol Adams sold and donated part of their Love Creek Ranch to protect this mashup of hills and canyons on the western edge of the Hill Country. It's expanded to more than 2,500 acres today and includes a nearly 5-mile stretch of creek, which flows through the property before merging with the Medina River.

The preserve is located on FM 337, west of Medina.

**2018 open days: Christmas bird count in December, date TBD (sign up in advance).**



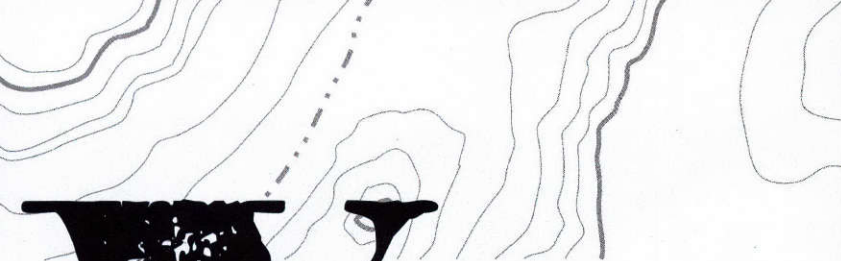
► Pam LeBlanc grew up in Austin and writes about fitness and adventure travel at the *Austin American-Statesman* and *Austin360.com*, where she pens the Fit City column. Kenny Braun is a photographer based in Austin. His new book, *As Far As You Can See: Picturing Texas* will be published by the University of Texas Press in April. His book *Surf Texas* was published in 2014.





**THE**  
A PADDLING  
**DEVIL**  
TRIP DOWN THE  
**MADE**  
DEVILS RIVER  
**ME**  
STORY BY MATT JOYCE  
**DO IT**





**YOU FIND TWO KINDS OF PADDLERS**

on the Devils River: those who come out here whenever possible and those who will never do it again. Or so the saying goes.

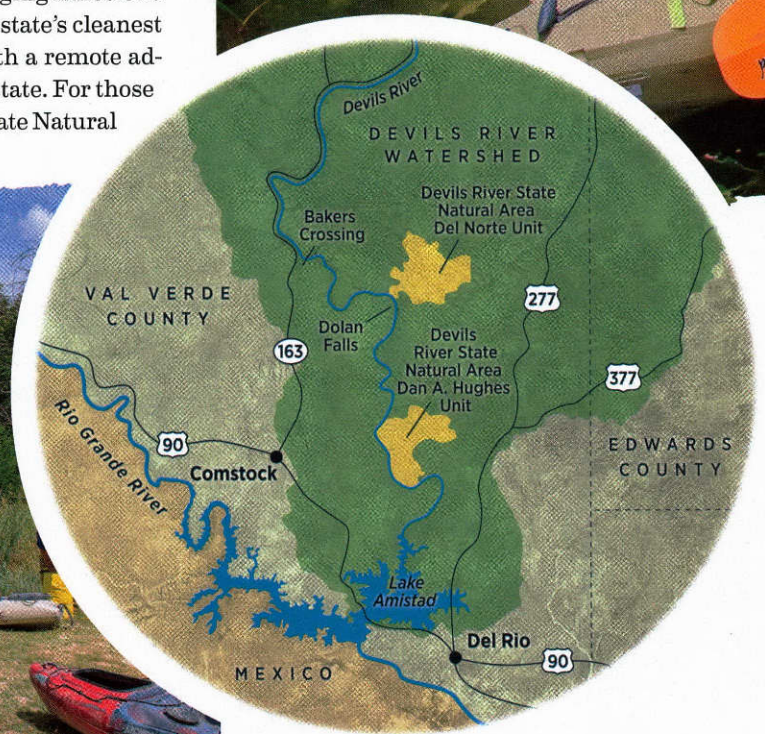
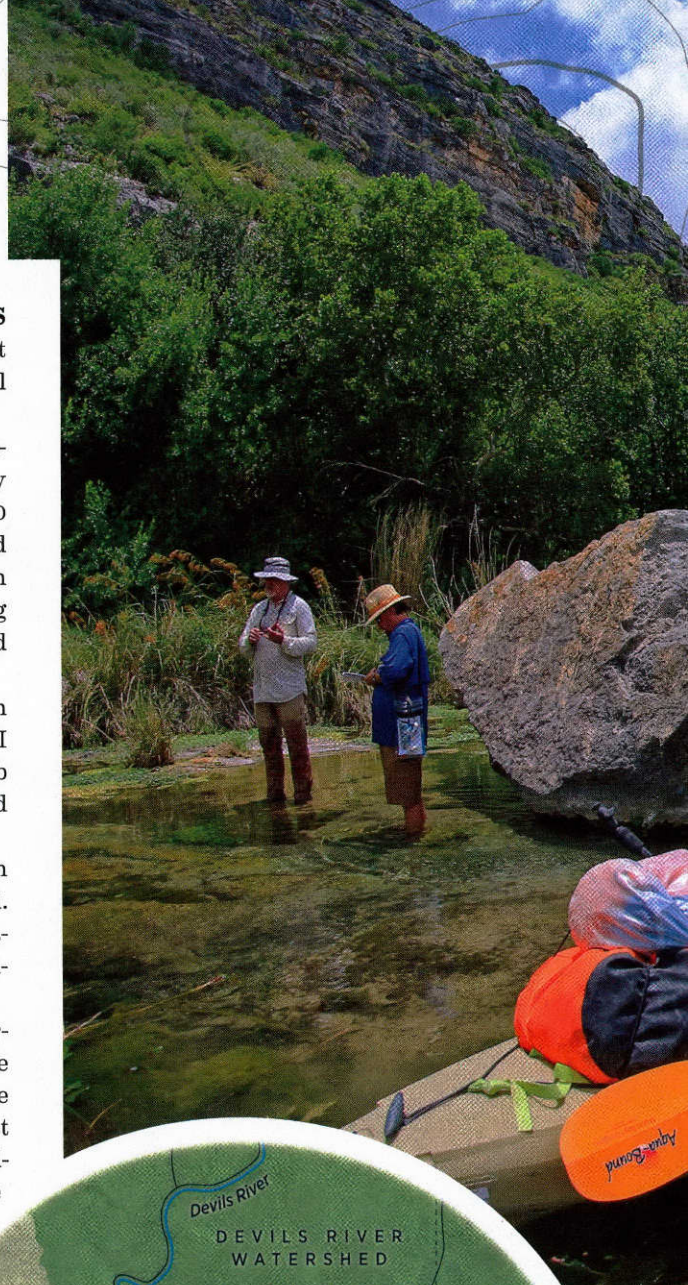
I was pondering this thought one morning on the river as I clambered out of my kayak to perch on a boulder and peer 100 yards downstream at a serene pool flanked by sloping slabs of limestone. In between lay Dandridge Falls, a series of cascading

rapids that coursed and swirled through chutes, over small ledges, and around protruding boulders and brush.

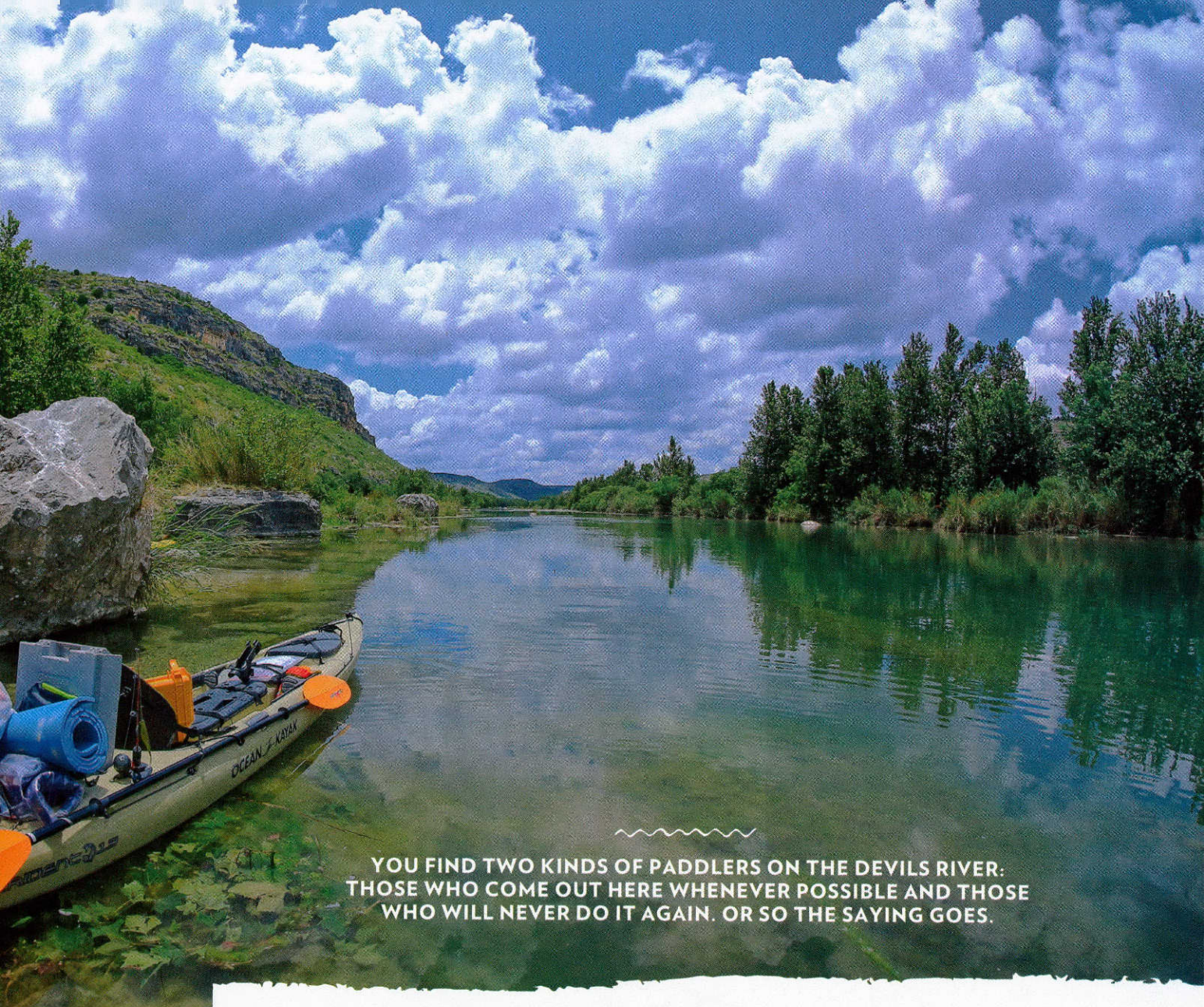
Dandridge wasn't the most menacing rapid I had encountered on my maiden voyage down the Devils River in Southwest Texas. But I was leery because another member of my group had broken a thumb here on a previous expedition, his knuckle crushed between his tipped canoe and a rock.

Hoping to avoid such an accident, I considered my route, hopped in the boat, and headed downriver as cautiously as my skills allowed. About two minutes later, the current spat me safely into the calm waters below, and I hoisted my paddle into the air with a feeling of accomplishment and relief.

I tested my luck more than a few times on my three-day, 15-mile journey down the Devils River, a spring-fed tributary of the Rio Grande that snakes a sparkling turquoise path through the bulging limestone bluffs and rugged hills of Val Verde County. One of the state's cleanest and clearest rivers, the Devils challenges paddlers with a remote adventure through scenery unlike anywhere else in the state. For those who prefer dry land, the 30-square-mile Devils River State Natural







YOU FIND TWO KINDS OF PADDLERS ON THE DEVILS RIVER: THOSE WHO COME OUT HERE WHENEVER POSSIBLE AND THOSE WHO WILL NEVER DO IT AGAIN. OR SO THE SAYING GOES.

Left: For overnight paddling trips, it can be a challenge to bring everything you need without overloading the boat. On the Devils, all trash, including human waste, must be packed out. Above: At the Devils River State Natural Area, Finnegan Springs releases clear, cool water from the base of a limestone cliff.

Area offers equally isolated hiking, camping, wildlife viewing, and stargazing.

But as I experienced on the Dandridge Falls rapids, the exhilarating rewards of the Devils River don't come without meeting its diabolical demands.

"The name alone is intimidating," noted Joe Joplin, superintendent of Devils River State Natural Area. "The river and the area in general has a bit of a lore about it, that you're not welcome here either by the people who live here or by some spiritual thing. And then there's the remoteness and the fact that everything out here attacks, be it pokes, stings, or rattles. All of those things together build the sense that it's wilder than everywhere else."

The physical challenge, combined with the river's isolation and state permitting requirements to access it, make a Devils River paddling trip an exercise in both endurance and logistics. To make the most of my expedition, I recruited three experts to

join me: John Karges, associate director of field sciences for The Nature Conservancy of Texas; Jack Johnson, a seasoned paddler and the park archeologist for Amistad National Recreation Area; and freelance photographer Matt Johnson (no relation), a former professional fishing guide who knows his way around a river.

On a Monday morning last June, the four of us congregated about 20 miles north of Del Rio at Amistad Expeditions, which provides shuttle services and kayak rentals. The shuttle driver dropped us off at the state natural area's Del Norte Unit (river mile 15) with plans to meet us three days later at the Dan A. Hughes Unit (river mile 30). We strapped our camping gear and supplies onto the boats and launched under the midday swelter of a pale-blue sky.

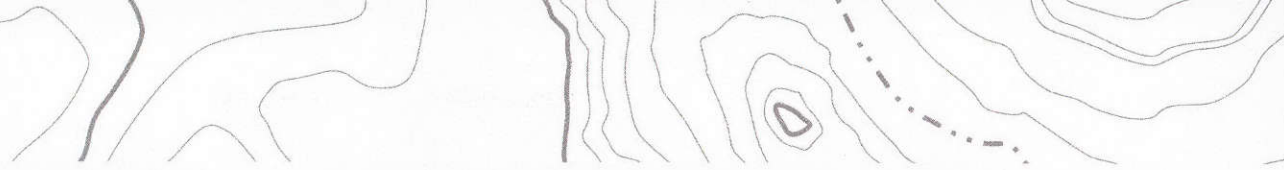
The Devils River flows about 45 miles from its headwaters at Pecan Springs, located on a private

ranch, to its confluence with the Rio Grande in an area that's part of Lake Amistad. With each bend in the river, we encountered another breathtaking view (marred slightly by a stretch of ranchettes called the Blue Sage subdivision). We floated over spring-fed pools that looked like aquariums of plants and fish and paddled past lush riverside forests where birds flitted and chirped. At times, our route cut directly through limestone banks, the rock ascending from the river bottom up to 500-foot bluffs overhead. Evenings brought fast-moving cumulus clouds, winds that roughed wide-open plates of calm water into rippled expanses, and sunsets like fired molten glass turning slowly across the navy sky.

## ANCIENT INGENUITY

**HUMANS HAVE INHABITED THIS REGION** for at least 13,000 years, drawn by water, game, and the safe harbor of rock shelters in the limestone cliffs. "They came for the same reasons we're here," said Jack Johnson, who's known for his facility with an atlatl, an ancient spear-throwing tool



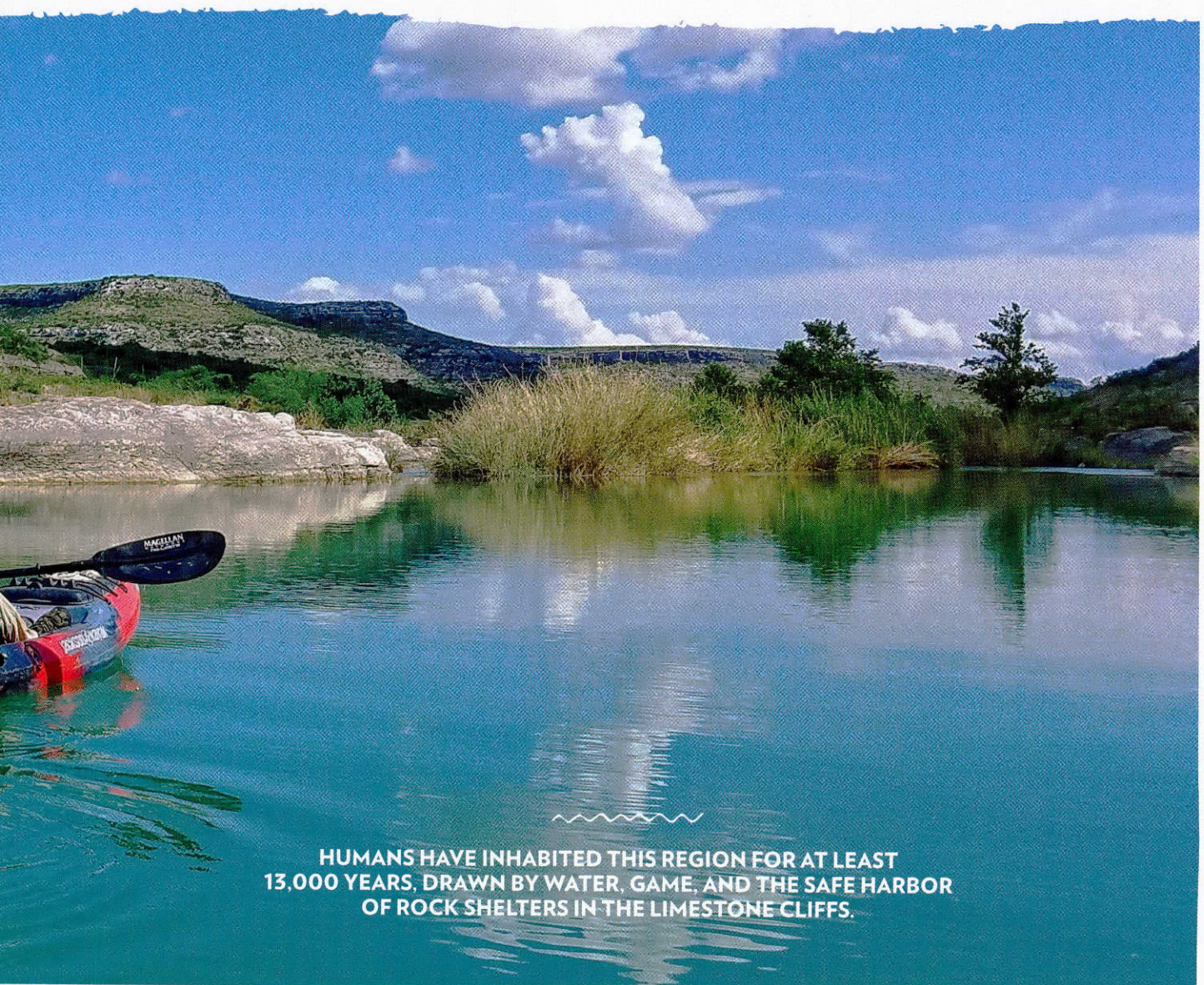


that natives used for hunting. “There are fish in the river and good clean water to drink and lots of food resources—pecans, walnuts, game. It’s a good place to live.”

Remarkably, these early Native Americans left behind colorful paintings on the walls of rock shelters across this region—known in archeological terms as the Lower Pecos Canyonlands—chronicling their lifeways and spiritual tales. From the river, we saw one such pictograph at Turkey Bluff (on a high terrace on private property). These paintings depict a blackish turkey and a burnt-orange animal that could be a dog or a deer. Johnson said the Turkey Bluff pictograph is in the red monochrome style, meaning it was probably painted within the last 1,300 years.

We budgeted time in our itinerary to explore the river’s pools and to fish for bass, sunfish, and catfish.

Like the ancients before us, we were drawn to the Devils River in part because of its bounty of fish, including smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, sunfish, catfish, and freshwater drum. (For bass, catch-and-release rules apply above Lake Amistad.) While we had modern fishing rods, the natives relied on simple yet effective implements to catch their meals. Johnson said archeologists have found lures made from the curved spines of fishhook cacti, tied together like treble hooks and adorned



HUMANS HAVE INHABITED THIS REGION FOR AT LEAST 13,000 YEARS, DRAWN BY WATER, GAME, AND THE SAFE HARBOR OF ROCK SHELTERS IN THE LIMESTONE CLIFFS.



with fluff similar to artificial flies. The natives also used nets to catch fish and likely used weirs made of rocks and sticks to funnel fish into baskets. Evidence in nearby Mexico suggests natives in the region may also have used lechuguilla juice to poison fish pools, Johnson said.

“If you put us out here with nothing but the shirts on our backs, it would be a survival situation,” Johnson said. “But for those guys, this was everyday life for them. They did it successfully for countless generations over thousands of years. They were tough and smart, and this was their home, grocery store, and pharmacy.”

The first Westerners to encounter the Devils River were Spaniards in the 16th century who ventured up from modern-day Mexico, then part of New Spain. The Spanish called the Devils the *Rio San Pedro*, historian Patrick Dearen recounted in his book *Devils River: Treacherous Twin to the Pecos, 1535-1900*. Starting around 1700, raiding Apaches, and later Comanches, bedeviled Spanish settlements on both sides of the Rio Grande. In the 19th century, the first American trailblazers encountered the same dangers when they started building trade routes and military roads across these treacherous canyons.

The exact origin of the “Devils River” appellation is uncertain, Dearen wrote, but one account credits Texas Ranger John C. Hays, who in 1848 scouted a trail between San Antonio and El Paso. “Saint Peter, hell! It looks more like the Devil’s River to me,” Hays exclaimed (presumably referencing the pearly gates). Later, in his expedition report, Hays wrote, “Owing to the difficulties we had in extricating ourselves from the deep ravines and mountains which encompass it for many miles from its mouth, we named it Devil’s River.”



## WEB EXTRA

### Prefer dry ground?

For more on land-based adventures at Devils River State Natural Area, visit [texashighways.com](http://texashighways.com).

## **THE NEXT BEND**

**THE SAME JAGGED ISOLATION** that tormented explorers is what makes the Devils River a natural wonder for outdoors adventurers today. Three eco-regions converge around the river—the Edwards Plateau Hill Country, Chihuahuan Desert, and Tamaulipan Thornscrub—resulting in a rich mix of plant and animal life. Imagine riverside forests of live oak and sycamore typical of the Hill Country butting up against steep escarpments where desert ocotillo plants and brushland huisache trees cling to the limestone cliff.

“The biodiversity is incredible,” remarked Karges, the Nature Conservancy biologist. “You never know what’s around the next bend. You never know what you’ll detect. It changes throughout the day; it changes throughout the seasons.”

Karges, who formerly managed The Nature

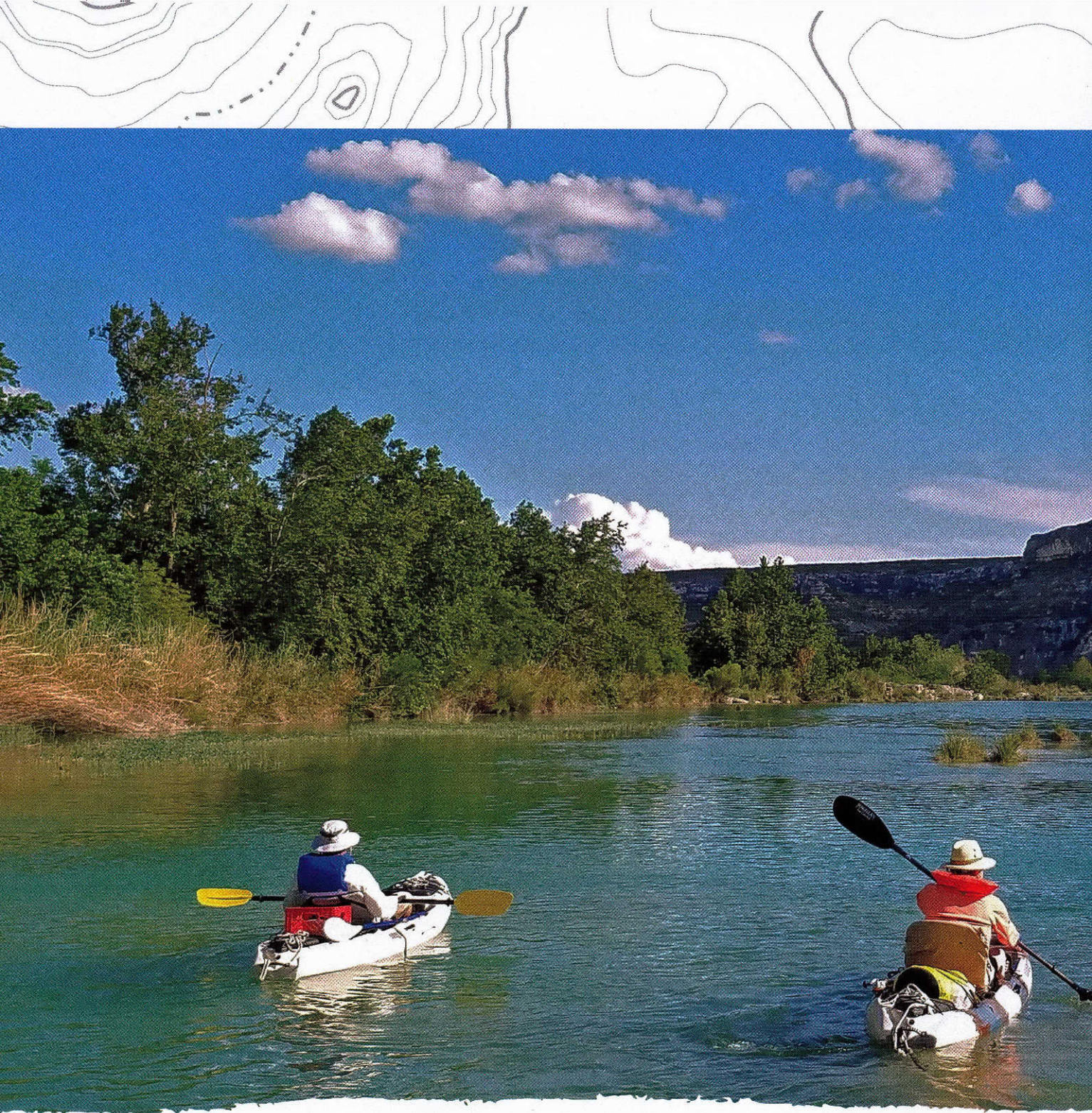
Conservancy’s Dolan Falls Preserve on the Devils River, served our party as a floating search engine of biological facts. His bird list for the trip counted 51 species, including all three types of kingfisher—ringed, belted, and green; the white-tipped dove, with a coo that sounds like someone blowing over the top of a Coke bottle; canyon wrens, with their comforting refrain of descending whistles; and a zone-tailed hawk, a majestic black raptor with white bands across its tail.

Karges also showed us delicate mountain pink flowers growing improbably from limestone boulders, and he explained how the sycamore trees along the Devils are the westernmost naturally occurring sycamores in Texas. He told the story of discovering Mexican white oak trees at Dolan Falls Preserve, the only natural stand of the species in the United States. Some autumns, Karges said, monarch butterflies migrate south down the Devils corridor, lighting on live oaks like millions of delicate chandeliers. And he pointed out water creatures that rely on the Devils’ pristine spring water,

Opposite: Paddling the Devils reveals rare sights like the Turkey Bluff pictograph. Below: Dolan Falls is the highest-volume waterfall in Texas.



**WE STOPPED FOR A MOMENT TO MARVEL AT THE POWER OF THE WATER THUNDERING OFF THE 15-FOOT CLIFFS, LIKE WHITEWATER POURING THROUGH HUGE LIMESTONE FINGERS.**



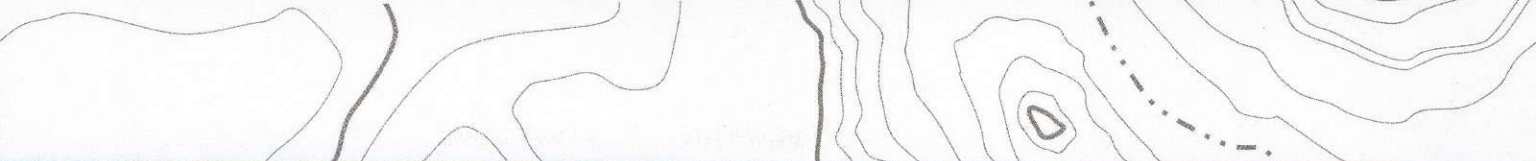
such as the threatened Devils River Minnow (found only here and in nearby Rio Grande tributaries), the headwaters catfish, and the Rio Grande cooter, a slider turtle.

“All of these things in concert lend to the biological importance of the Devils River in Val Verde County—three ecoregions and a clean, spring-fed source of river water,” Karges summated.

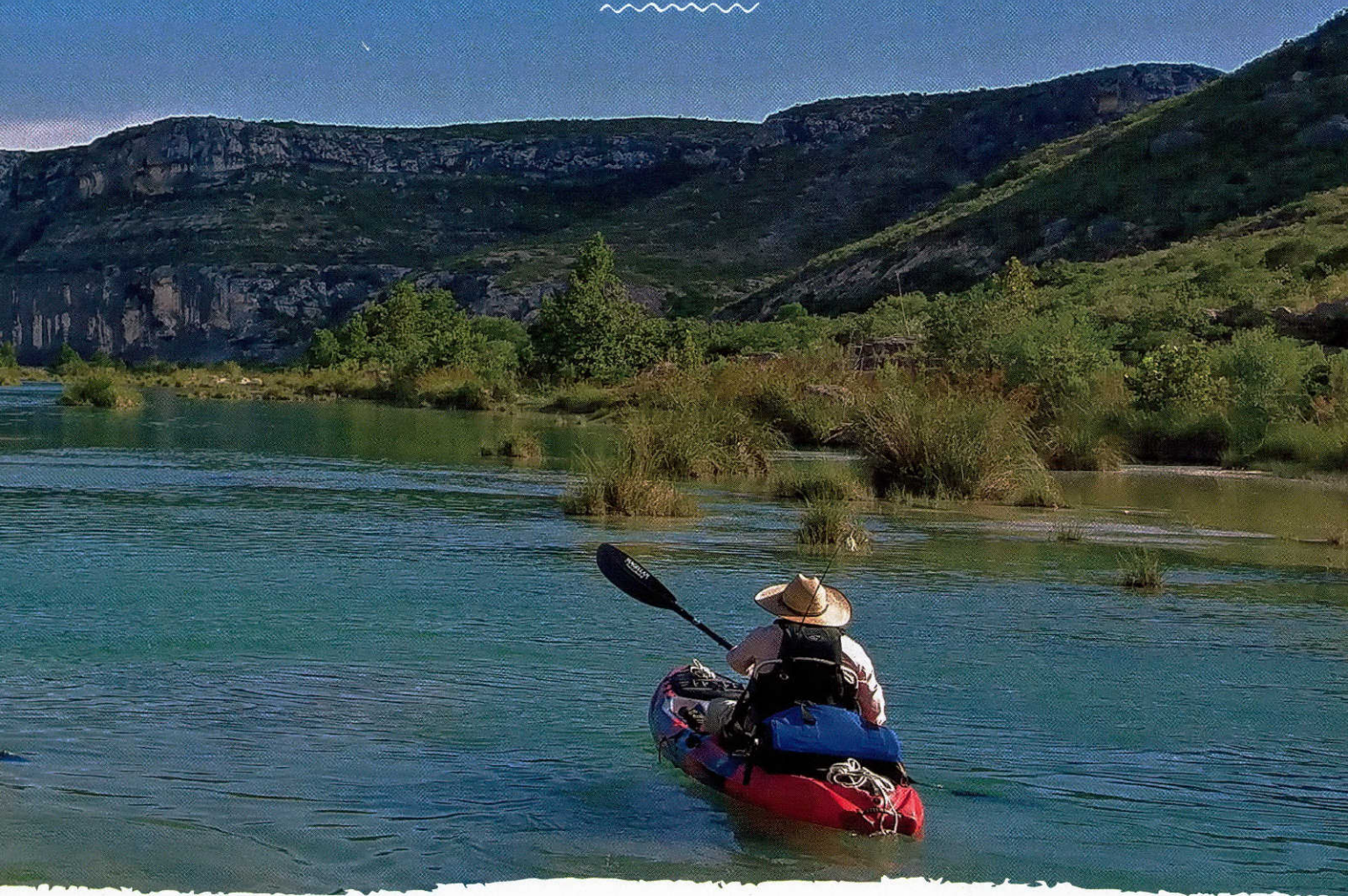

The Edwards/Trinity Aquifer feeds the springs that create the Devils River, including Dolan Falls, the largest-volume waterfall in the state of Texas. In 1991, The Nature Conservancy

The Devils ranges from shallow flats to rapids and deep pools. It's always nice to have the wind at your back.

acquired Dolan Falls Preserve (closed to the public) and over time has secured conservation protections for 163,000 acres of land within the Devils' watershed to help shield it from human industry and development. At any given time, numerous scientists are studying the water, plants, and animals at Dolan Falls to monitor the health of the river in the face of potential disturbances




"THE NAME ALONE IS INTIMIDATING. AND THEN THERE'S THE REMOTENESS AND THE FACT THAT EVERYTHING OUT HERE ATTACKS, BE IT POKES, STINGS, OR RATTLES. ALL OF THOSE THINGS TOGETHER BUILD THE SENSE THAT IT'S WILDER THAN EVERYWHERE ELSE."



from water pumping and oil-and-gas drilling.

Dolan Falls proved to be the most significant hazard on the river. Taking our cue from warning signs painted on bankside boulders, we portaged around the falls, getting out of our boats and carrying them down the rocky shelves where shallower water flowed around the main cascades. Then we stopped for a moment to marvel at the power of the water thundering off the 15-foot cliffs, like whitewater pouring through huge limestone fingers.



## **RISK AND REWARD**



**HAZARDS LIKE DOLAN FALLS** give the Devils River its edge. Wherever we were on the river, we kept an ear down-stream listening for the approach of cascades. The serenity of slow-flowing pools inevitably gave way to the growing roar of whitewater where the river narrowed and the current accelerated into class 1, 2, or 3 rapids.

## DARING THE DEVILS

The Devils River State Natural Area Del Norte Unit is at the end of Dolan Creek Road in Val Verde County. From Del Rio, drive 45 miles north on US 277 and then 22 miles west on gravel Dolan Creek Road. No fee for day use. Fifteen river miles south, the **Dan A. Hughes Unit**, which the state acquired in 2011, is not yet open to the public except for guided tours, public hunts, and through the river access permit program.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department requires a Devils River Access Permit to put-in or take-out at the **Devils River State Natural Area**, or to camp at the state sites along the river. The department issues a maximum of 24 Devils River Access Permits per day—12 for overnight trips and 12 for day trips. Permits cost \$10; camping is \$5 per night. The state natural area website contains extensive information about overnight paddling trips. **Call 512-389-8901; [tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/devils-river](http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/devils-river).**

**Amistad Expeditions** offers shuttle services and kayak rentals for Devils River paddling trips. Shuttles for overnight trips start at \$480; kayak rentals cost \$65 per day. **Call 830-703-0127; [amistadexpeditions.com](http://amistadexpeditions.com).**

Public access points that allow for self-shuttling are at Bakers Crossing on State Highway 163 and Rough Canyon Marina on Lake Amistad, which are 47 river miles apart.

Below: The Dandridge Falls rapid. Right: A view of the river from the Devils River State Natural Area's southern unit.



The rapids bucked me off my kayak several times as I tried my best to steer around boulders and navigate drop-offs and channels. (I avoided injury but I broke a fishing rod and soaked some of my gear.) I chose to “line” my boat through a couple of rapids, meaning walk my boat down the river while holding the stern rope. Lining may have been safer than running rapids, but it was less fun too, considering the challenge of keeping balance in a swift, knee-deep current while picking my steps across irregular boulders shaped like basketballs and hay bales.

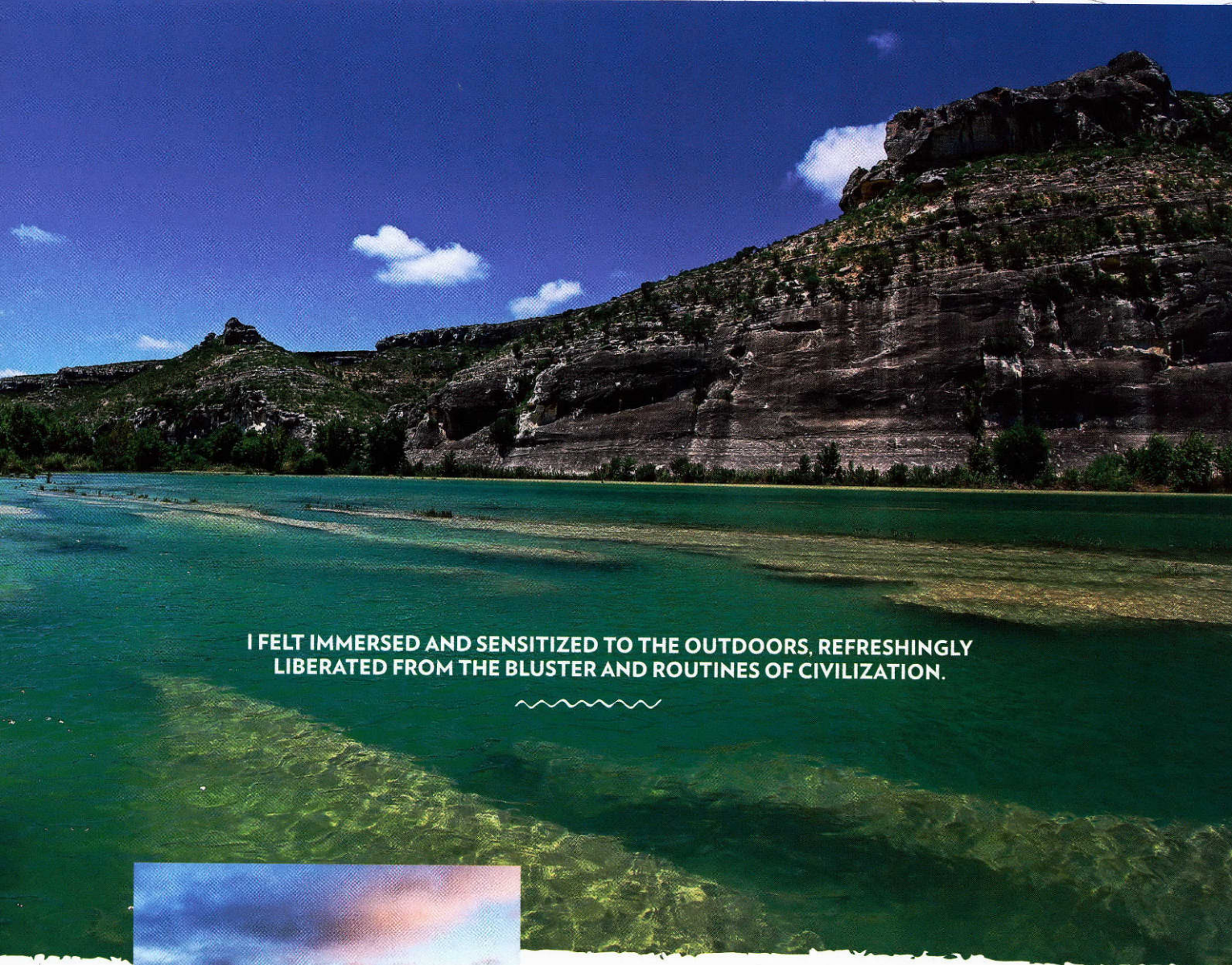
We didn't see any other paddlers on the trip until we arrived at our take-out point at the state natural area's Dan A. Hughes Unit, also known as Devils Back. Pulling our kayaks ashore, we encountered a group of three white-haired gentlemen—Paul Shukis, 73, of Junction, and Kerrville residents Cliff Marlar, 81, and Bill Matthews, 74. This was

a gritty bunch, willing to spend three days stuffed into kayaks, tumbling down rapids, battling headwinds, and sleeping on the ground. Their adventurous spirit and the spectacular scenery guided them down the Devils no worse for the wear.

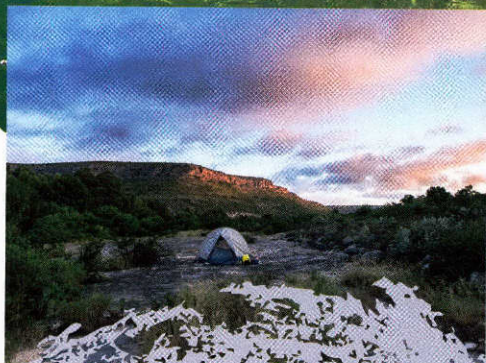
“I have a sign on my wall that says, ‘If you're not out of your comfort zone, you're not enjoying life,’” Shukis said as his group packed up their gear for the return shuttle. “You go through a lot of hell down that river, and you keep thinking ‘Why am I doing this?’ But then you realize you can't see this place any other way. This area is just gorgeous—the rocks, the cliffs, the crystal-clear blue water. My sensitivities to the natural beauty are aroused here.”

It's true. Being on the Devils River for a few days, I felt immersed and sensitized to the outdoors, refreshingly liberated from the bluster and routines of civilization.





I FELT IMMERSSED AND SENSITIZED TO THE OUTDOORS, REFRESHINGLY LIBERATED FROM THE BLUSTER AND ROUTINES OF CIVILIZATION.



**WEB EXTRA**

**Finding a camping spot on the Devils River can be a conundrum.** Texas Parks and Wildlife last year leased two public riverside campsites to try to alleviate conflicts with private property owners. Read more about camping options on a Devils River paddling trip at [texashighways.com](http://texashighways.com).

As we waited for the shuttle to pick us up and deliver us back to our daily lives, I walked down to the riverbank to take one last dip in the water. Shiner minnows and baby sunfish swam around my ankles and darted through limestone flutes out to the rippling turquoise channel. Across the river, a snowy egret took flight, streaking white like a painter's brushstroke across a massive gray limestone bluff. Ravens and wrens danced about the bluff's overhangs, their songs echoing across the canyon breeze.

I reflected back on the notion of the two kinds of Devils River paddlers—those who visit whenever possible and those who will never do it again. I was already thinking about my next trip. 🐾

*"The Devils is as pristine as Texas rivers get," says Texas Highways Senior Editor Matt Joyce. "If you're moved to visit, treat it with the care and respect it deserves."*



TRAVEL *with*  
PURPOSE

*With voluntourism,  
make your next trip count*

*Story by Melissa Gaskill*

At a Houston  
Salvation Army  
warehouse, Melinda  
Ferrias packs food  
boxes for Hurricane  
Harvey victims.





## HEALING FROM HARVEY

**PEOPLE WHO HELP COMMUNITIES** affected by natural disasters attest that this kind of volunteering offers special returns. It can take you to parts of the state you might not otherwise visit and acquaint you with the local residents who know their communities best. Who better to share tips on gems like hidden parks or under-the-radar diners?

An array of organizations has responded since Hurricane Harvey and its ensuing floods pummeled communities along the Texas coast last August, from Corpus Christi to Beaumont. Three such aid groups are Samaritan's Purse, The Salvation Army, and Convoy of Hope.

The website of Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster makes it possible to sign up to donate time for whichever organization needs volunteers, or to browse a list of organizations and choose one yourself. Some groups have specific requirements: Team Rubicon, for example, takes veterans, first responders, and those with special skills. Through its Operation Hard Hustle, more than 2,000 volunteers have worked to remove debris and repair homes in hurricane-damaged areas.

In Harvey's immediate aftermath, The Salvation Army deployed more than 90 mobile units to affected areas. Clay Steelman, volunteer and training coordinator for the Texas Division, says the organization then shifted into recovery and continues to evaluate needs. Ongoing volunteer

**R**esearch shows that giving time to others can make you feel as if you actually have more time for yourself. Volunteering also reduces stress, improves health, and fosters personal satisfaction. Such benefits match up with many of the reasons that people travel. What if you could combine the two—volunteering and traveling?

It turns out Texas is full of “voluntourism” opportunities: getaways that offer the satisfying benefits of a vacation with the added virtue of helping out your fellow Texans—not to mention the occasional free entry pass and access to unusual places. Here we've picked four ideas if you're considering a foray into voluntourism. Go, and do good.

opportunities include sorting and distributing donated supplies at warehouses along the Gulf Coast.

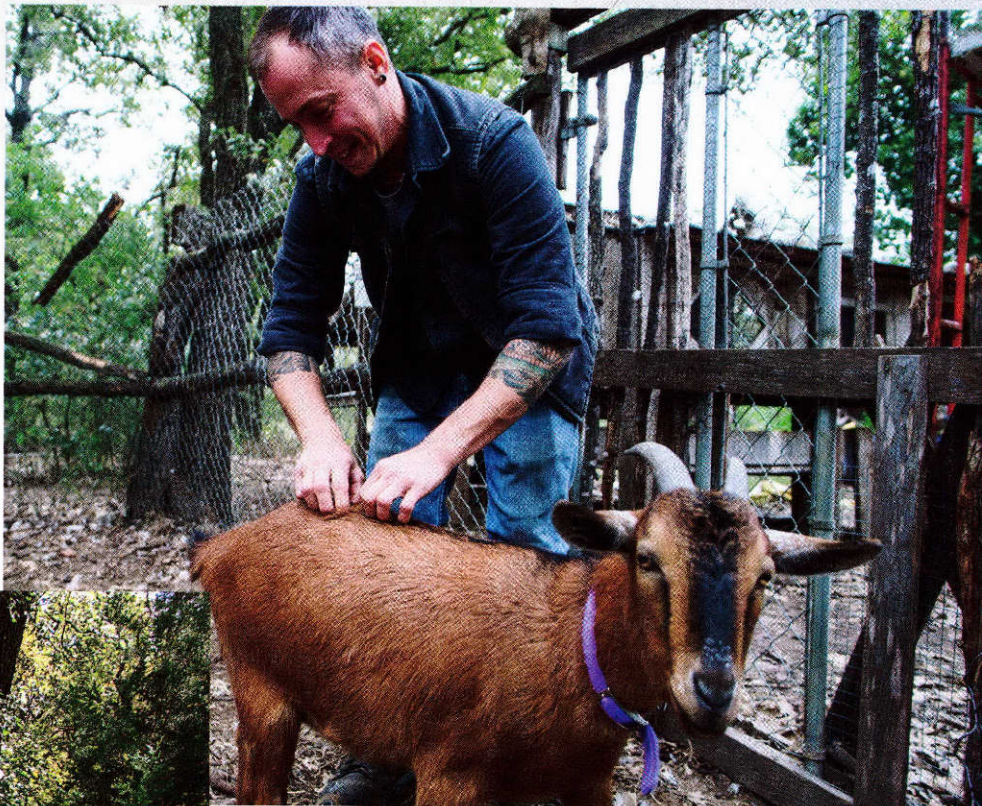
Convoy of Hope, a faith-based humanitarian organization headquartered in Missouri, responds to disasters all over the globe. Spokesman Jeff Nene says the group deployed immediately when Harvey hit and has since moved into Phase 3 of its assistance, with specific activities depending on need.

“We may help rebuild a local park destroyed by flood or continue debris removal, focusing on things that affect the community rather than a specific business or family,” Nene says. “We put together community events, like

big neighborhood block parties, free, fun days for those affected where we bring in agencies to help acquaint people who maybe never needed to reach out for help before with places they can get help. We always need volunteers for those.”

Samaritan’s Purse, another

Opposite page: Downtime at Habitable Spaces, a farm near Seguin. This page: goat care at Habitable Spaces; gutting a flooded home in Pearland; trail-building at Old Tunnel State Park





international faith-based humanitarian aid group, deployed more than 10,000 volunteers in the months following Harvey. The organization then moved into a two- to three-year rebuilding phase, committing to rebuild 1,000 homes in the Houston area, Santa Fe, and Rockport, says Bruce Poss, who served as the group's program manager in Victoria during the disaster-response phase.

"We provide housing for out-of-town volunteers, typically in local churches where they have showers and provide meals," he says. The work usually involves a mix of skilled and unskilled tasks under the direction of a Samaritan's Purse staff member onsite.

Samaritan's Purse asks overnight volunteers to stay a minimum of five days; both teams and individuals are welcome.

## BLAZE A TRAIL

**BUILDING AND MAINTAINING TRAILS** provides lovers of the outdoors a meaningful way to get dirty. Many Texas state parks need volunteers to help with trail work, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department lists opportunities on the volunteer page of its website, says Kris Shipman, volunteer manager. Would-be do-gooders can search by park or type of work, including trail maintenance.

"There is a wide range of opportunities, something for everybody," Shipman says. "A number of parks affected by Hurricane Harvey definitely need help recovering."

Volunteers recently helped build trails at Palmetto, Lake Colorado City,

**At Habitable Spaces, a nonprofit farm and artists' residency near Seguin, volunteers can learn about permaculture practices of farming and raising animals.**



## WORLD WIDE OPPORTUNITIES ON ORGANIC FARMS (WWOOF) LINKS VOLUNTEER WORKERS WITH PLACES TO SPEND A DAY, WEEK, MONTH, OR LONGER LIVING A FARMER'S LIFE.

and Kickapoo Cavern state parks, as well as Government Canyon State Natural Area. "If you have a favorite park, contact them directly, even if you don't see anything online," Shipman suggests.

AmeriCorps places young adults into service positions nationwide with the goal of preparing them for the workforce. Volunteers in Service to America member Brandi Heasley currently organizes volunteers at McKinney Falls State Park in Austin. Individuals can attend regular service days or organize a group and schedule a workday. Park rangers provide the necessary tools and a safety briefing.

"A lot of people just want to work outside or do something new," Heasley says.

The Nature Conservancy of Texas, part of a global organization dedicated to land and water conservation, holds

volunteer workdays on some of its preserves, which often are the only ways for the public to visit these protected lands. That's the case at Love Creek Preserve, a rugged landscape deep in the Hill Country near Medina. Rebecca Neill, the conservancy's Southern Hill Country project manager, puts volunteers to work on a variety of jobs, including maintaining trails that traverse the slopes, canyons, and creek beds. (For more on The Nature Conservancy, see Page 43.)

Volunteers can also pitch in at The Nature Conservancy's Texas City Prairie Preserve, roughly 2,300 acres of coastal prairie along Galveston Bay. On the second Friday of each month, the preserve invites volunteers to help with tasks like removing invasive species, harvesting native seeds, planting marsh grasses, and cleaning up beaches.

# HELP NEEDED

For information on volunteering opportunities related to organizations mentioned in the story, explore the following:

**Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster:** Visit [txvoad.communtyos.org/cms/home](http://txvoad.communtyos.org/cms/home).

**The Salvation Army:** Visit [salvationarmytx.org](http://salvationarmytx.org) or contact Clay.Steelman@uss.salvationarmy.org.

**Samaritan's Purse:** Visit [spvolunteernetwork.samaritanaspurse.org/hurricane-harvey-rebuild](http://spvolunteernetwork.samaritanaspurse.org/hurricane-harvey-rebuild).

**Convoy of Hope:** Visit [convoyofhope.org](http://convoyofhope.org) or email [volunteer@convoyofhope.org](mailto:volunteer@convoyofhope.org).

**Texas Parks and Wildlife Department:** Visit [tpwd.texas.gov/volunteer](http://tpwd.texas.gov/volunteer).

Find **Nature Conservancy of Texas** preserves and contact information at [nature.org/texas](http://nature.org/texas).

**World Wide Opportunities On Organic Farms** requires a \$40 membership fee to search for participating farms; [wwofusa.org](http://wwofusa.org).

**Habitable Spaces** lists information about artist residencies and farm work on its website, [habitablespaces.org](http://habitablespaces.org).

The **Texas Book Festival** is Oct. 27-28 in Austin; [texasbookfestival.org/volunteer](http://texasbookfestival.org/volunteer).

**Viva Big Bend** music festival is July 26-29 in Alpine, Marfa, Fort Davis, and Marathon; [vivabigbend.com](http://vivabigbend.com).

The **Austin City Limits Music Festival** take place is Oct. 5-7 and Oct. 12-14. For information on volunteering, visit [aclfestival.com/information](http://aclfestival.com/information).

## DIG IN THE DIRT

**SUNSHINE, FRESH AIR, WIDE-OPEN** spaces, baby chicks, and funny goats. Ah, life on a farm! World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) links volunteer workers with places to spend a day, week, month, or longer living a farmer's life. Typically, these farms provide room and board for volunteers. About 75 farms in Texas participate, and the work ranges from building chicken coops to weeding crop fields.

Habitable Spaces, a nonprofit sustainable farm and artists' residency near Seguin, accepts WWOOF volunteers. The property looks more like a park than a farm, with a collection of chicken coops, a rabbit hutch, duck pond, and several seasonal vegetable gardens occupying just a few of its 80-plus wooded acres. Housing for volunteers consists of several small cabins and a yurt scattered among the trees, along with a room over the common house, which has indoor and outdoor kitchens, a dining room, and an enormous outdoor fire pit.

The farm practices permaculture, a philosophy of gardening and animal husbandry that's designed to reflect patterns found in nature with practices such as rainwater collection, using rabbit droppings as fertilizer, and composting. The farm also offers workshops on permaculture, and it sells produce, dairy products, chickens, and rabbits to visitors. "Just email us first," co-founder Alison Heinemeier requests.

"We built everything on the space ourselves, so volunteers can get involved with building projects, too," says Heinemeier, who prefers that WWOOF volunteers come for at least a week.

Christina Shane stumbled upon the farm while housesitting in the area and re-evaluating her corporate job in Dallas. "I fell in love with it, being

in touch with how my food is grown, being around artists, the sense of community. I subleased my apartment, took the cat to my sister, and lived at Habitable Spaces for six months." Shane helped build one of the chicken coops and a guest cabin, and she did daily chores such as watering and feeding chickens, guinea fowls, and turkeys.

"It's also learning to be part of a community," Shane says. "Most people don't realize how much work goes into farming or building a structure."

## GET YOUR FEST ON

**WHATEVER YOUR FAVORITE HOBBY** is, you can probably find a festival celebrating it in Texas. We have festivals that focus on everything from music to food, booze, dance, sports, books, films, seasons, and wild creatures. Attending a festival provides a great excuse to travel; even better, festival volunteers get perks such as free admission and the chance to rub elbows with celebrities.

The Texas Book Festival, held annually at the Texas Capitol and other downtown Austin venues each fall, mobilizes more than 1,000 volunteers, says Volunteer and Logistics Coordinator Charley Rejsek. Volunteer opportunities range widely, from shepherding authors to their speaking engagements to managing the book signing area or working in the tents for music and children's activities.

The Texas Book Festival website allows volunteers to note their specific interests and whether they want to be assigned to work with their friends. The entire festival is free, but volunteers get a more involved experience and have the opportunity to meet authors, Rejsek points out. The deadline to volunteer is a week before the event.

Austin resident Laramie R. Stroud has volunteered as a Texas Book





The Love Strength Hope Foundation and Austin Parks Foundation both mobilize volunteers at the Austin City Limits Music Festival.

## ATTENDING A FESTIVAL PROVIDES A GREAT EXCUSE TO TRAVEL; EVEN BETTER, FESTIVAL VOLUNTEERS GET PERKS SUCH AS FREE ADMISSION.

Festival monitor inside the Capitol for seven years, starting when he was in college. “You get to be in the Capitol, which is an awesome building, and see sessions without waiting in line,” he says. “I’ve met Robert Caro, Margaret Atwood, and Richard Linklater.”

Stroud advises planning out your schedule in advance. “People underestimate how big the festival is. You go through security in the Capitol every single time, so allow for that.”

Volunteer Andrea Carrera oversees the crew of volunteers who serve as guides for authors. “If you come from out of town, schedule your shifts so you can take advantage of the rest of the festival—the parties and things like that,” she suggests.

Another festival that relies on volunteers is Viva Big Bend Music Festival, an annual showcase of bands

in Alpine, Marathon, Fort Davis, and Marfa. Along with free admission to the shows, volunteers who visit from Texas’ big cities get a break from the late-July heat, producer Stewart Ramser says. “It is pleasant here, on average upper 80s in the day and in the 60s at night, and most venues are indoors.”

Most Viva Big Bend volunteer duties involve checking wristbands and selling single-show tickets. While area hotel rooms fill up, Ramser says last-minute options always exist, including camping. Viva Big Bend will announce its 2018 band line-up in May, but past acts include The Peterson Brothers, Shinyribs, Butch Hancock, Ruben Ramos, and Joe Ely.

Back in Austin, about 1,000 volunteers contribute to various charitable causes during the two weekends of the gargantuan Austin City Limits Music

Festival at Zilker Park, says Farid Mosher of C3 Presents. Most volunteers get involved through either the Love Hope Strength Foundation, a cancer foundation, or the Austin Parks Foundation. For the past three years, the Love Hope Strength Foundation has organized volunteers to promote its mission of signing up potential bone marrow donors while assisting festival services like greeting fans at the entrance and helping fill water bottles. Meanwhile, Austin Parks Foundation volunteers promote recycling at the festival with information and activities. Typically, volunteers receive free entry to the festival on the day they volunteer, a T-shirt, and refreshments—and, of course, plenty of live music. **L**

*Austin writer Melissa Gaskill has combined her interests in travel and volunteering on numerous occasions—from monitoring sea turtle nests on beaches in Mexico and Guatemala, to cleaning up trails in Texas state parks, and removing hurricane debris in post-Harvey Port Aransas and post-Katrina Mississippi.*

# WEST TEXAS ROAD TRIP



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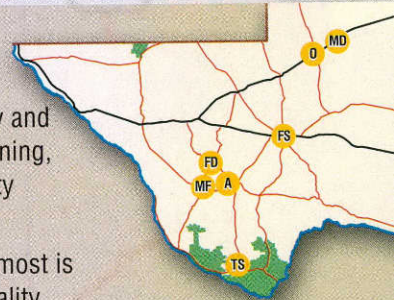
MD

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

**Apr 28** - Sibley Nature Festival  
**June 6-8** - Hispanic Cultural Center of Midland Mariachi Workshop

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

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



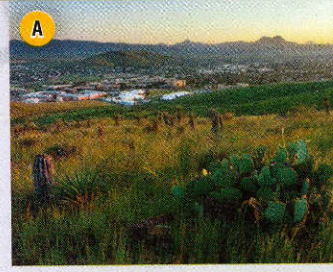
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**ODESSA**—Known for breathtaking sunsets, wide-open spaces and warm West Texas hospitality, you'll enjoy shopping, dining, unique cultural attractions and events. Odessa: your gateway to the Big Bend. [odessacvb.com](http://odessacvb.com)

**Apr 3** - *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* @ Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center  
**Apr 6-8** - Inaugural Artisan Art Walk

**ALPINE**—Natural beauty, unique nightlife and shopping, and a grand array of hotels and guest lodging make this the perfect staging grounds for your West Texas adventure. [visitalpinetx.com](http://visitalpinetx.com)

**Apr 12-14** - Trappings of Texas: Western Art & Gear @ Museum of the Big Bend  
**Apr 13-29** - *Man of La Mancha* (weekends)



A



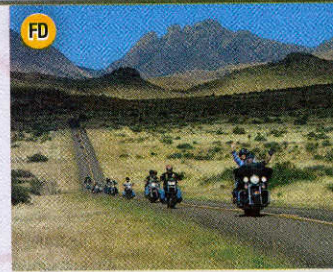
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**FORT STOCKTON**—Lodging, Dining, Entertainment and History. Experience our Visitor Center, Historic Sites, Museum, Fort Grounds, Golf Course, and Unique Shopping, West Texas style. [historicfortstocktontx.com](http://historicfortstocktontx.com)

**Apr 25-28** - Big Bend Open Road Race  
**June** - Summer Off the Patio & Blue Moon Park Concerts

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

**Apr 21** - Mile High Chili Cook-off @ Davis Mountains State Park  
**Apr 28-29** - Hammerfest Cycling Race



FD



TS

**TERLINGUA/STUDY BUTTE**—"Between the Parks" Big Bend & Big Bend Ranch. Accommodations, dining, golf, horse-back riding & shopping make it a Big Bend Destination.

For events see:  
[bigbendchamberofcommerce.org](http://bigbendchamberofcommerce.org)  
 or [visitbigbend.com](http://visitbigbend.com)

**MARFA**—It defies easy explanation, yet any google search yields thousands of opinions. Marfa is tough to get to—tougher still to explain. But once you arrive, you get it. [visitmarfa.com](http://visitmarfa.com)

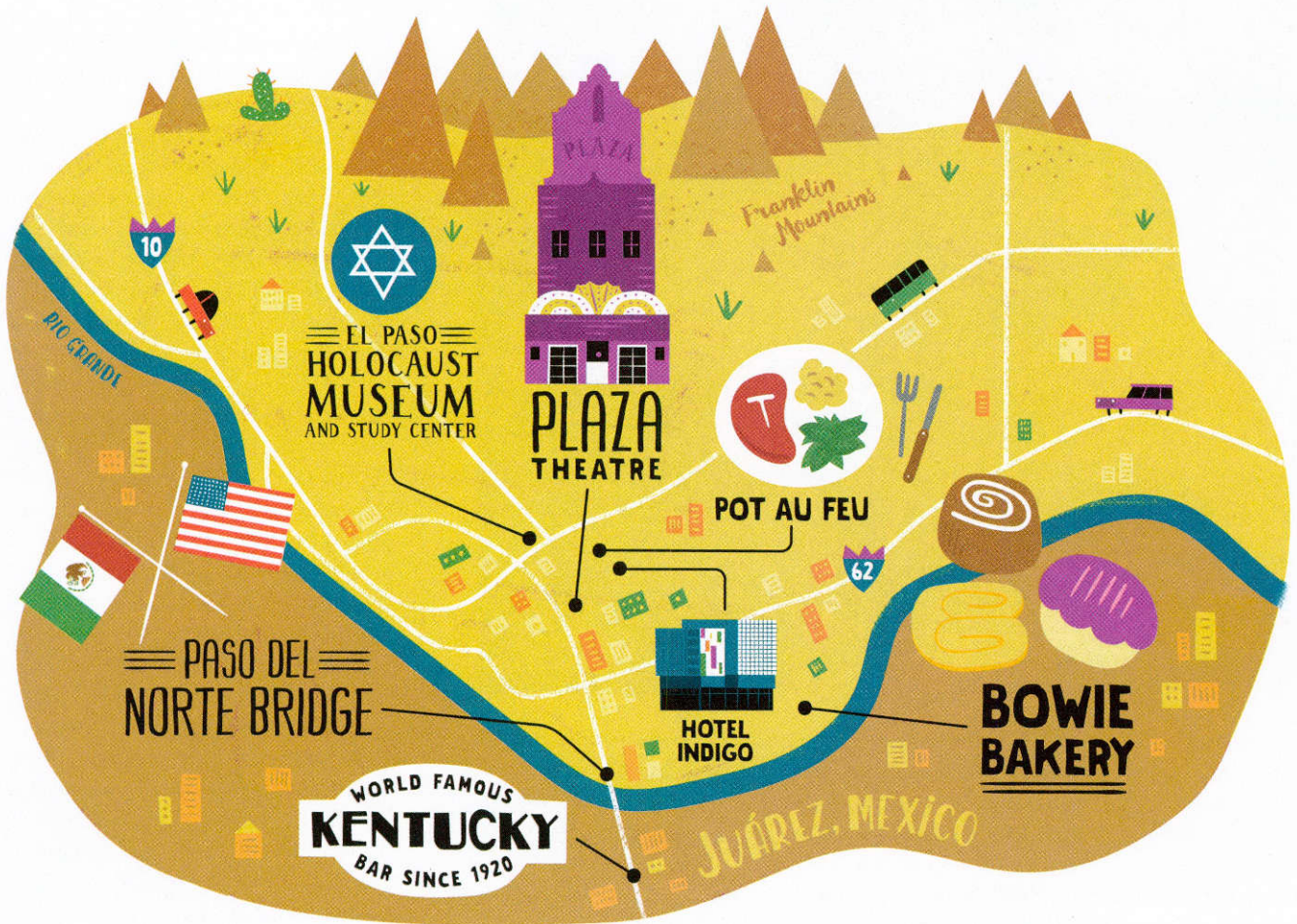
**Apr 1-May 31** - Avram Dumitrescu Prints @ Greasewood Gallery  
**Apr 12-13** - *Marfa Myths* @ Ballroom Marfa



MF

# HIT THE ROAD

CAN'T-MISS GETAWAYS



DESTINATION: EL PASO

## Only in El Paso

An urban fusion of culture and history in Texas' western corner

story by Clayton Maxwell

**W**AY OUT AT THE WESTERN TIP OF Texas—more than 500 miles from any other major Texas city—percolates El Paso, the northern side of one of the world's biggest border communities. Originally named El Paso del Norte for its location at a break in the Franklin Mountains, the area was a rest stop for explorers—passing through on their quests for riches—as far back as the 1500s.

But don't let the name fool you; present-day El Paso is much more than a pass-through. This city of almost 700,000 people has a deeply established culture that, thanks to the twin forces of



- **Midland**  
4.5 hours
- **Amarillo**  
7 hours
- **San Antonio**  
8 hours
- **Dallas**  
9 hours

geographic isolation and proximity to Mexico, is distinctly its own. Walking the streets of its history-steeped downtown, the words “only in El Paso” may cross your mind more than once.

Perhaps no building typifies the fertile layers of El Paso's history better than the Plaza Theatre, a Spanish colonial treasure built in 1930 that once again anchors the arts in the city. In the heart of downtown, the narrow façade and marquee belie the grandeur and spaciousness within. Occupying the land of El Paso founder Juan Maria Ponce de León's 1832 *ranchito*, the 2,049-seat theater was the most popular movie house in El Paso for decades.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** The Plaza Theatre stages major Broadway musicals and one of the largest classic film series in the world; El Segundo Barrio is home to dozens of illustrated murals that embrace the neighborhood's rich Chicano cultural ties; Bowie Bakery has been serving top-notch *pan dulce* since 1951.

Sinking back in its red velvet chairs, you can imagine Mae West and John Wayne on-screen and the theater's original 1930 Wurlitzer organ humming away.

The theater's devotees—spearheaded by the El Paso Community Foundation—managed to save it from the wrecking ball when it was slated for demolition in the 1980s. After years of meticulous renovation and technological upgrades, the theater opened again in 2006, and now its contribution to the life of El Paso is immeasurable. The Plaza stages Broadway musicals, symphony and opera performances, major national acts like Tom Waits and Morrissey, and what may be—with more than 40,000 attendees—the largest classic film series in the world (founded in 2008, the annual Plaza Classic Film Festival will show nearly

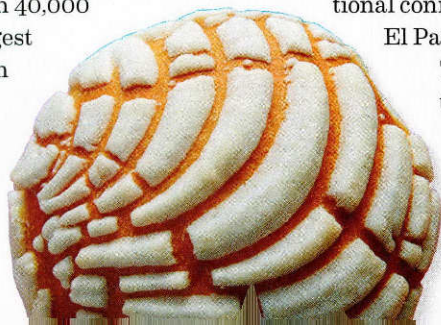
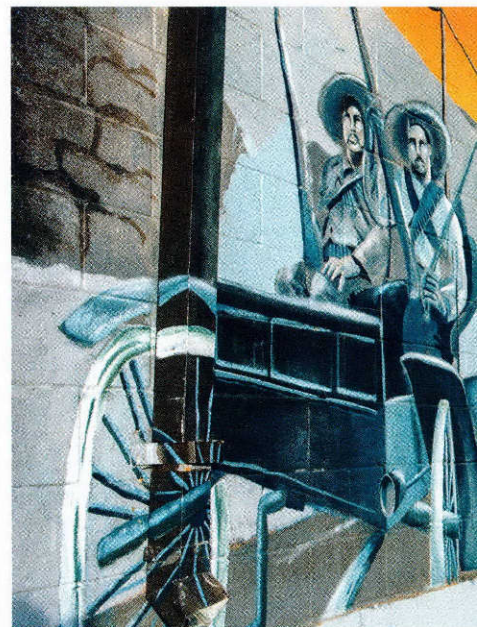
100 films over the course of 11 days this August). In a 2014 article, *Rolling Stone* named the Plaza the most important music stop for bands to make in Texas, and its success has inspired additional renovation projects downtown.

“The re-opening of this theater was a spark for the whole downtown,” says Gary Williams of the El Paso Community Foundation. “People saw what could be done, and now more downtown revitalization is happening. The beauty, too, is that this theater connects generations—people whose parents and great-grandparents came here and fell in love and have these memories. Now their children get to experience it, too. That’s rare, but this generational connectedness is vital in El Paso.”

The value of generational connection is particularly alive in El Segundo Barrio and Chihuahuita,

two of the city’s historic Hispanic neighborhoods just a short walk south of the Plaza Theatre. Nestled in a curve of the Rio Grande, they serve as repositories of El Paso culture and its storied history with Juárez across the border. If not for the plaque out front, for example, you might miss the handsome yellow-brick El Paso Laundry and Cleaners Co. building. Here since 1897, the building marks the spot where, in 1909, Mexican President Porfirio Díaz received a 21-gun salute on his way to meet with U.S. President William Howard Taft at the former chamber of commerce building. Two years later, during the Mexican Revolution, El Pasoans reportedly flocked to the roof of the Laundry to watch the Battle of Ciudad Juárez on May 10, 1911.

Only in El Paso. This is a place where gunslingers and rebels like John Wesley Hardin and Pancho Villa walked the streets; where presidents from both sides of the borders (JFK, LBJ, Porfirio Díaz) came to enhance relations between the United States and Mexico; where colorful murals of beloved local heroes like the bicycling priest Father Harold Rahm brighten the walls of vibrant Hispanic neighborhoods.



It is also an ideal place to find some top-notch *pan dulce*. Even before you arrive at the steps of the Bowie Bakery, a baked-goods institution since 1951, you can smell the sweetness. There's almost always a short line, but that gives you time to make your selection from the bounty of colorful pastries and check out the laminated newspaper article about President George W. Bush's empanada-eating excursion here in 2001. After a long walk through colorful streets of flat-roofed homes in

**“The beauty is that this theater connects generations—people whose parents and great-grandparents came here. Now their children get to experience it, too.”**

this quiet neighborhood, I'm eager to sink my teeth into a *concha*, a powdery sugar-dusted semicircle of bread.

Fueled with a *pan dulce* sugar boost, I head off for a different taste of the culture and contrast of this city: the Holocaust Museum and Study Center. This small center on the edge of downtown is the only Holocaust museum within a 700-mile radius and the sole Spanish-English Holocaust museum in the world. El Paso



From antiques to boutiques or one-of-a-kind creations, treasures are found at every turn in downtown Waxahachie. Every street has a café, and your every step will be carefree.

Almost every weekend, there's something going on like Scarborough Renaissance Festival, Crossroads of Texas Film & Music Festival, Cinco de Mayo Celebration and much more.

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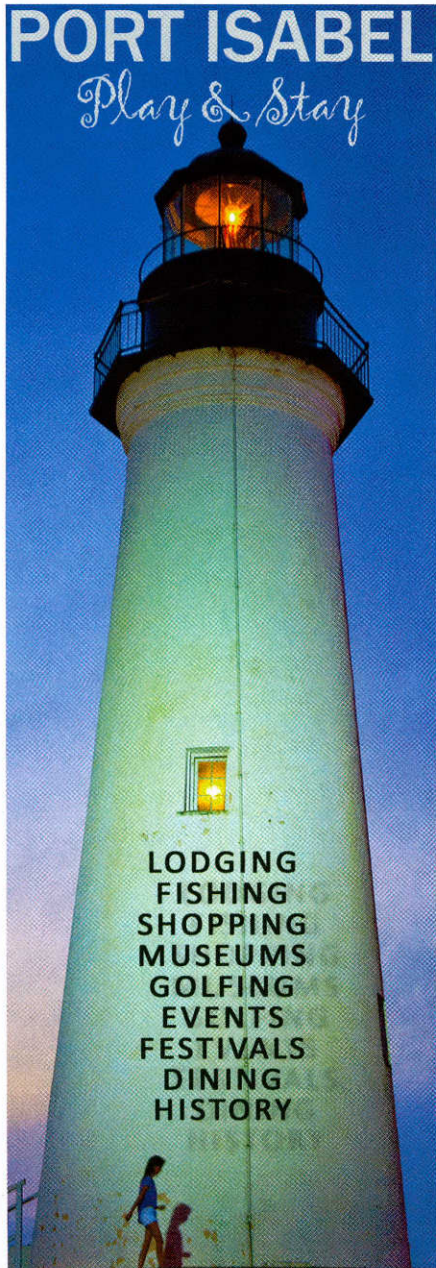
An oasis in West Texas—off the beaten path

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Regional Cavalry Competition at Fort Concho National Historic Landmark  
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discover **VISUAL ART**  
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FROM TOP: The Holocaust Museum and Study Center is the only Spanish-English Holocaust museum in the world; during the Mexican Revolution, locals reportedly watched the Battle of Ciudad Juárez from atop El Paso Laundry and Cleaners Co.

businessman Henry Kellen, a leader in the small but influential Jewish community here, founded this museum in 1984; he aspired to transform his family's painful Holocaust experience into a tool for educating others. Kellen, who went into hiding at a Lithuanian farm with his wife and nephew to evade the Nazis, lost his parents and siblings during the occupation. Standing in the museum's dark rooms with a close-up view of gas chamber showerheads that Kellen collected during return trips to Europe, the brutality of the Third Reich hits you in the gut. The exhibitions create a



powerful thread between this intimate educational space in the Texas desert to the tragedies of Europe in the 1940s.

Standing in front of a display on the rise of Nazism, one visitor, a little boy about 7 years old, points to a swastika and asks his mother, “*Mamá, que es éste?*” (Mom, what is this?) The mother explains, using the museum’s bilingual placards for help. I imagine that Kellen, who passed away in 2014, would appreciate how the vision for his museum is playing out in these exchanges every day.

After this moving visit, it’s a strange feeling to step back out of the museum into a bright spring afternoon in the Chihuahuan Desert. Again, El Paso surprises—cultures and histories mingle and inform each other in a manner unlike any other city in Texas.

Perhaps nothing communicates the cultural commingling of El Paso like a visit to the main drag in Juárez, a busy



section of the Mexican city that the El Paso tourism office once again promotes. From El Paso’s hip and colorful Hotel Indigo—the snazziest place to stay downtown—it’s an easy walk down bustling South El Paso Street to the pedestrian path on the west side of the Paso del Norte Bridge, approximately where Porfirio Díaz and Pancho Villa crossed over more than 100 years ago. “Despite all the negative perception, Juárez is a city worth exploring,” says Maegan Hruby, tourism marketing manager for Destination El Paso. “Walking across the bridge really

makes the experience that much better.” I put two quarters in the rotating gate, walk over the Rio Grande, and in a few minutes set foot on boisterous Avenida Benito Juárez, where vendors with fruit, crafts, and other goodies hawk their wares. Don’t forget your passport.

In Juárez, I make a beeline for the Kentucky Club, the Prohibition-era saloon where Western stars like Steve McQueen and John Wayne knocked one back between film shoots. The Kentucky Club claims to have invented the margarita—one of many contenders for that honor, the veracity of which is not for me to contest. But nonetheless I was eager to taste one. The security guard out front gives me the once-over to make sure I’m not bringing anything suspicious in, which is comforting, and voilà, I am now sitting at the legendary Encino oak bar, ordering one of these famous margaritas.

Sergio, the current owner, who lives

## Sculpture On Main

MARBLE FALLS, TEXAS

Every Day of The Year

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**Thursday, May 3** - Lakeside Pavilion Art Sales Gallery Open

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Quick Draw competition, art sales, demonstrations, food, beverage, live music and much more!



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for more details  
[www.hlarts.com](http://www.hlarts.com)

For lodging and information about the area: [www.marblefalls.org](http://www.marblefalls.org)

## HIT THE ROAD



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Destination El Paso at  
915-534-0600; [visitelpaso.com](http://visitelpaso.com).

in El Paso, checks in on me just as my margarita arrives. "Make sure your first sip is from the rim, not the straw, so you get the full taste of the salt," he urges. As I savor the balance of salt, fresh lime, tequila, and Controy (a Mexican orange liqueur), Sergio points to my feet, which are resting on a tile trough on the floor. "See where your shoes are? That's a floor urinal, so men didn't have to leave the bar. Al Capone once peed there. Don't worry, no one's used it for years."

Back in downtown El Paso by dark, I stop off at Pot au Feu, an understated French bistro with large murals of Paris on the wall. It's an ideal spot to linger at the bar and talk to the chef and owner, the Le Cordon Bleu-trained Roberto Espinoza. Espinoza knows a lot of historical trivia about downtown El Paso. He points out the newly laid streetcar tracks just outside on Franklin Avenue; by the end of the year, El Paso's vintage streetcars should be chugging again after a 34-year hiatus. Dating to 1882 when they were pulled by mules, the streetcars used to ferry El Pasoans over to Juárez and back for lunch or to see family.

Suddenly, a group of about eight people, from grandparents to toddlers, are gathering at the restaurant door, hugging and speaking a mix of Spanish and English as they make their way to a big corner table. Espinoza tells me they're regulars, a family in which some live here and some in Juárez. "For many El Pasoans, there's really no separation; it's one big community," he tells me as he makes his way to greet them.

Only in El Paso, I think, as I consider just how much one day in downtown El Paso del Norte can offer. No matter where you live, this urban fusion of culture and history is well worth the drive. 



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# TRUE

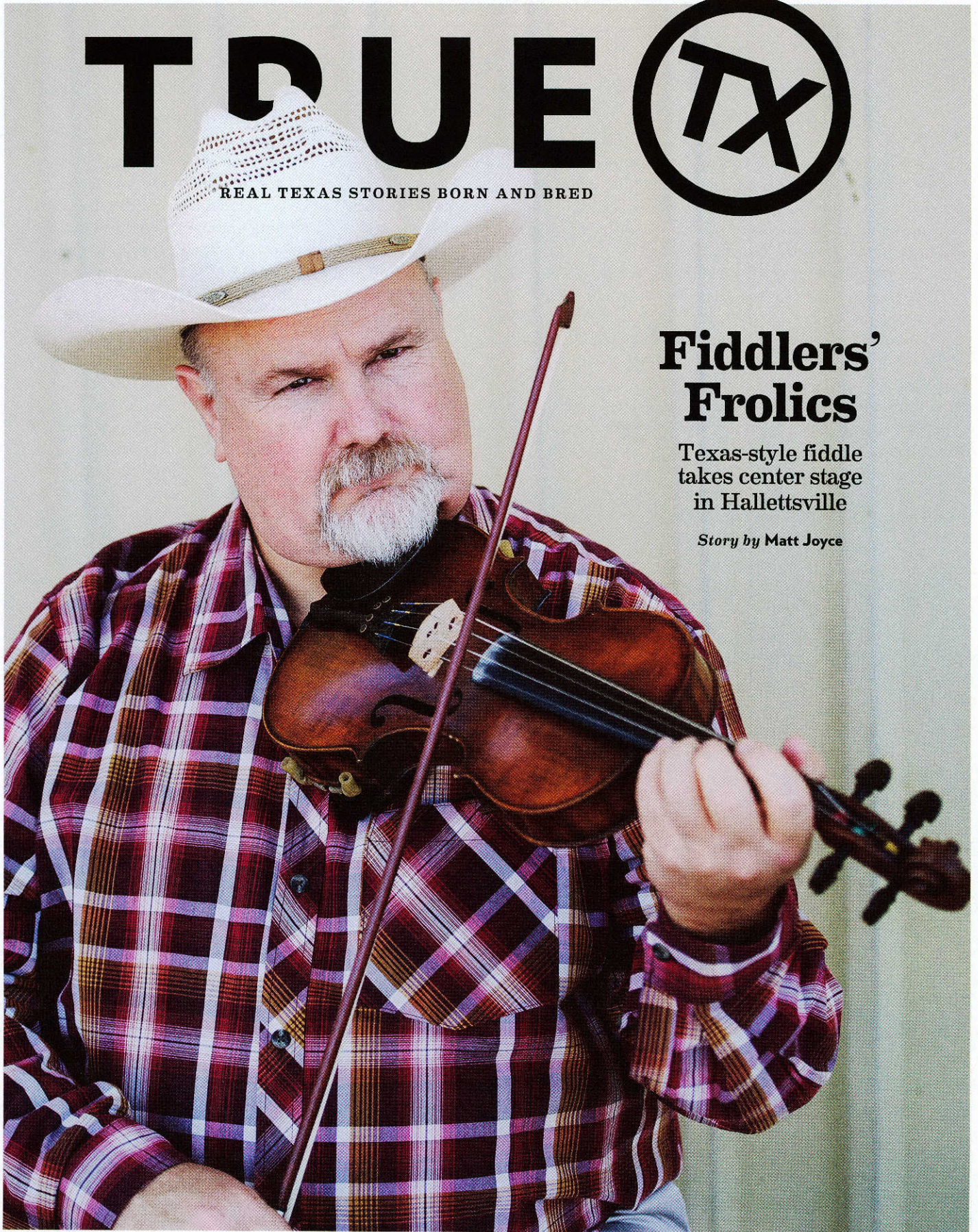


REAL TEXAS STORIES BORN AND BRED

## Fiddlers' Frolics

Texas-style fiddle takes center stage in Hallettsville

*Story by Matt Joyce*



**Wes Westmoreland**, a nine-time winner of Hallettsville's fiddle contest, learned to play as a kid at family gatherings in Comanche County.

**A**NYBODY WHO'S PICKED UP A VIOLIN can feel its delicacy. A full-size instrument weighs less than a pound, with a slender body fashioned of elegant hand-pared wood. Four metallic strings run tightly down a neck that's skinnier than a matchbox. The sound reverberates from two narrow holes in the body, each shaped like a feather.

But Texans have a way of aggrandizing things, and the violin is no exception. In the hands of a Texas fiddler, the graceful instrument roars to life with driving melody, swagger, and swing. (The difference between a violin and a fiddle? Violins have strings while fiddles have *strangs*; violins sing and fiddles dance.) Here we're talking about "Texas-style" fiddling, and on the fourth full weekend of April every year, you'll find many of the state's best Texas-style players in Hallettsville, home of the Fiddlers' Frolics Texas State Championship.

Held at the Knights of Columbus Hall, Fiddlers' Frolics draws nearly 100 fiddle players, ranging from kindergartners to nonagenarians, for three days of fiddle contests, live

**The difference between a violin and a fiddle? Violins have strings while fiddles have *strangs*; violins sing and fiddles dance.**

country and Cajun bands, plenty of down-home food—including a popular barbecue cookoff—and Shiner beer. A handful of fiddle contests across Texas play a role in keeping the state's fiddling traditions alive, but when it comes to bragging rights among fiddlers, the Hallettsville championship is one of the most coveted.

"For Texas fiddle players, Hallettsville is always the crown jewel," says Wes Westmoreland of Temple, who has won the Fiddlers' Frolics title nine times, including in 2017. "We're competing with each other, but we've all been friends for years. A fiddle contest is just a good excuse for us to get together and play."

On an indoor stage decorated with a string of white lights and golden hand-painted letters spelling "HALLETTSVILLE," five contests give the musicians a chance to showcase their chops. Over the weekend separate divisions highlight children, seniors, out-of-state players, guitar accompanists, and an "anything goes" category for different styles and tricks. The contests culminate on Sunday afternoon with the Texas State Championship, open only to state residents.

For the championship, about 25 contestants each perform a tune of their choice within categories specified by the judges—a breakdown, reel, hornpipe, rag, polka, swing, or waltz.



Fiddler Jessica Sell performs at the Hallettsville Fiddlers' Frolics Texas State Championship; at right, Hall of Fame member Daniel Jasek.



### FIDDLERS' FROLICS TEXAS STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

is April 26-29 at the Hallettsville Knights of Columbus Hall. Fiddle contests and the barbecue cook-off take place throughout the weekend. Jason Boland and the Stragglers headline the Saturday-night dance. Call **361-798-2311**; [fiddlersfrolics.com](http://fiddlersfrolics.com).

A table of five judges then winnows the field to about 10 fiddlers, who return to play two tunes. From those 10, the judges select three finalists, who each play five tunes in a round-robin playoff to determine a winner. The champion takes home \$1,500 and a plaque.

If that sounds like a lot of fiddle music, it most certainly is. The weekend offers plenty of chances to take a break, either by stepping outside to taste the sausage, chicken, and brisket from the dozens of smokers competing in the cookoff or browse the tents of vendors selling crafts such as cutting boards and polished rocks. Inside the hall, the Knights of Columbus kitchen serves plate lunches of fried chicken and roast beef. If you don't want to miss a moment of the fiddle action, you can take your meal at one of the hall's dining tables.

The weekend provides an opportunity to see multiple players interpret the canon of Texas-style fiddle music. With a little guidance from one of the fiddlers or educated fans, the nuances that distinguish the style take shape. Texas-style fiddle is not quite square-dance music, nor bluegrass, Irish, Western swing, or Appalachian. It blends all of those influences—along with elements of German, Czech, blues, and jazz—in a technique characterized by varied bowing and heavy syncopation on the fret board. Texas-style contest players have been perfecting their versions of traditional tunes for decades—songs like “Sally Goodin,” “Grey Eagle,” and “Durang’s Hornpipe.”

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**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:**

Kimber Ludiker (right) plays the Hallettsville stage; dozens of teams vie for barbecue honors; fiddling is often passed down through families; cookoff accolades.

“What makes the Texas style really stand apart from a lot of other styles is the controlled improvisation,” says Kimber Ludiker, an Austin-based fiddler who plays with the bluegrass band Della Mae. “You’re taking a melody and you’re manipulating it in different ways but not really ever leaving it. I think growing up playing Texas-style has helped me in bluegrass and different genres because you learn how to keep true to a melody and to a



song while weaving in different ideas.”

Texas-style fiddle traces its roots to the folk music that English, Irish, and Scottish immigrants brought across the Atlantic and carried westward into the American frontier. In the pioneer days, practically every hollow had its own fiddle style. (Legend has it that



## FIDDLING ACROSS TEXAS

A handful of events across Texas hark back to the days when there was a fiddle contest nearly every weekend somewhere in the state. For more events, check out the Texas Old Time Fiddlers Association website, [totfa.org](http://totfa.org):

**Llano Fiddle Fest**, April 6-8

**Athens Old Fiddlers Reunion**, May 25-26

**World Championship Fiddlers Festival**, Crockett, Sept. 22

**Bob Wills Fiddle Festival and Contest**, Greenville, Nov. 2-4



Crockett played a fiddle during the siege of the Alamo to buoy the spirits of his fellow Texian defenders. In San Antonio, The Witte Museum displays a fiddle reportedly owned by Crockett when he was still a resident of his home state of Tennessee.) The early Texas players learned tunes by ear from family members—a tradition that continues today—and string bands led by fiddlers were the go-to entertainment for dances and parties.

“When you’re familiar with fiddling, you can travel around the United States, and it’s almost like hearing people speak with different accents,” says Joey McKenzie, a fiddle teacher and coproducer of the annual fall Bob Wills Fiddle Festival and Contest in Greenville. “Texas fiddle is a melting pot of all of these, and Texas fiddlers have long been recognized for being

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really clever players. I think it's created one of the most interesting fiddle styles in the world, because everywhere else in the U.S. they're all wanting to play Texas fiddle."

In the 1920s and '30s hometown fiddle bands gave way to Western swing, radio, and other commercial forces. Exposure to new styles led Texas fiddlers to innovate their playing and incorporate new influences. In 1922, Texas Panhandle fiddle player Eck Robertson recorded several tunes in New York for Victor Recording Studios. The session produced the first-ever country music record, which has been a fundamental influence on Texas-style playing.

Fiddle music's evolution from barn-dance entertainment into more complicated melodies and rhythms coincided with the popularity of fiddle contests. In towns across Texas, contests with prize money popped up at county fairs,



### GET DOWN WITH THE DEVIL'S BOX

For more on Texas fiddling, check out the 2012 documentary *The Devil's Box*, or find recordings such as the 1966 County Records release *Texas Fiddle Favorites*, Larry Franklin's *The Texas Fiddle Album*, and Benny Thomasson's *Legendary Texas Fiddler*. You can also find video clips of the Hallettsville contest on YouTube.

harvest festivals, and the like. Though many have died off with their audiences, several contests still take place across the state. The Athens Old Fiddlers Reunion (May 25-26), which started in 1932, is the oldest contest in the state.

Hallettsville got into the game in 1971 when the Knights of Columbus organized its first Fiddlers' Frolics as a fundraiser. With clever marketing, the group elevated its festival as the "state championship" and launched a Hall of Fame, which is housed in the KC Hall in Hallettsville. The Hall of Fame features the photos and biographies of a who's who of Texas-style fiddlers and influential supporters.

During Fiddlers' Frolics, many of the surviving Hall-of-Famers attend the contest to compete and cheer on their friends and descendants. You'll catch them milling about the contest and gathering for jam sessions in the parking lot and RV campground, passing along tips and tunes to younger players. With the percussive strum of guitarists keeping the rhythm, the fiddlers take turns playing for hours as ever-evolving sounds and tunes dance from the strings of their graceful wooden instruments.

"When it gets in your blood," says Tom Fonville, a two-time Senior Division champion from Flint, "you just can't stay away from it." **L**



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# EVENTS



## APRIL'S TRAVEL SPOTLIGHT:

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### Wiener Dog Races

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annual running of the dachshunds: the Buda Wiener Dog Races. The brilliant, somewhat slow-paced event occurs at a makeshift racetrack in Buda City Park and also offers a best-dressed dog contest, a bake-off, barbecue and chili cookoffs, and live music and entertainment. And while the weekend of races culminates in a trophy presentation, every wiener's a winner—or they are in our book, at least. [budalions.com](http://budalions.com)

Want more? View the *Texas Highways Events Calendar* at [texashighways.com/events](http://texashighways.com/events).

# DISCOVER Clifton



## SPRING 2018 EVENTS

April 6  
Grady Gaines & The Texas Upsetters—  
Bosque Arts Center

April 7  
Big Event – Bosque Arts Center

May 19  
Bosque Tour de Norway  
Bike Rally

June 2  
Glow Run

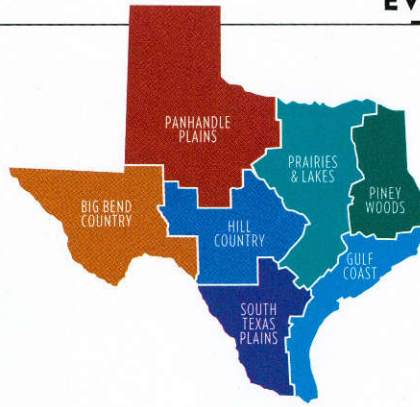
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### BIG BEND COUNTRY

**ALPINE:** The Alpine Gem & Mineral Show, March 30-April 1. Alpine Civic Center. 432-244-9503

**EL PASO:** Thanksgiving 1598, April 22. Socorro Mission. visitelpasomission.trail.com 915-851-9997

**LANGTRY:** West of the Pecos Historical/Travel Fair, April 7. Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center. 432-291-3340

**MARFA:** Marfa Myths, April 12-15. Ballroom Marfa. marfamylths.com

**MONAHANS:** Spring Fling, April 3. Ward County Event Center. monahans.org 432-943-2187

**MONAHANS:** Taste of Monahans, April 9. Ward County Event Center. monahans.org 432-943-2187

**VAN HORN:** Building Bridges Art Show, April 18-20. Van Horn Convention Center. vanhorn.texas.org 432-283-2682

### GULF COAST

**BEAUMONT:** South Texas State Fair, March 22-April 1. Ford Park Event Center. ymbl.org 409-832-9991

**BEAUMONT:** Discover Engineering, April 7. Spindletop Gladys City Boomtown Museum. spindletop.org 409-880-1750

**BRAZORIA:** Migration Celebration, April 21-22. San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. migrationcelebration.com 844-842-4737

**CLUTE:** Planetarium Show, April 3, 10, 17, 24. Center for the Arts & Sciences. brazosportcenter.org 979-265-3376

**CLUTE:** CenterFest, April 6-8. Center for the Arts &

Sciences. brazosportcenter.org 979-265-7661

**CLUTE:** The Little Theater's Production of Hamlet, April 27-29, May 4-6. Center for the Arts & Sciences. brazosportcenter.org 979-265-7661

**CORPUS CHRISTI:** Big Bloom Plant Sale & Dollar Day, April 7. South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center. stxbot.org 361-852-2100

**CORPUS CHRISTI:** Buc Days, April 19-May 5. Corpus Christi Bayfront and other locations. buccdays.com

**CORPUS CHRISTI:** Corpus Christi Chamber Music Society: Emerson Quartet, April 28. Wolfe Recital Hall, Del Mar College. corpuschristi-chambermusic.org 361-877-8393

**CORPUS CHRISTI:** Birdiest Festival in America, April 19-22. South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center. stxbot.org 361-852-2100

**FREEPORT:** Riverfest and Flapjack 5K, April 27-29. Freeport Municipal Park. freeportriverfest.com 979-233-0651

**GALVESTON:** Aesop's Fables—The Dinosaur and The Ant, April 5. The Grand 1894 Opera House. thegrand.com 800-821-1894 or 409-765-1894

**GALVESTON:** Tall Ships Galveston, April 5-8. Galveston Pier 21. tallshipsgalveston.com

**GALVESTON:** Grand Kids Festival, April 7. Postoffice Street. thegrand.com 800-821-1894 or 409-765-1894

**GALVESTON:** An Evening with Sophia Loren, April 8. The Grand 1894 Opera House. thegrand.com

800-821-1894 or 409-765-1894

**GALVESTON:** Amazing Grace, April 14. The Grand 1894 Opera House. thegrand.com 800-821-1894 or 409-765-1894

**GALVESTON:** Go, Dog, Gol, April 17. The Grand 1894 Opera House. thegrand.com 800-821-1894 or 409-765-1894

**GALVESTON:** FeatherFest & Nature Photo Festival, April 19-22. galvestonfeatherfest.com

**GALVESTON:** A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder, April 21. The Grand 1894 Opera House. thegrand.com 800-821-1894 or 409-765-1894

**GALVESTON:** Galveston Symphony Orchestra, April 22. The Grand 1894 Opera House. thegrand.com 800-821-1894 or 409-765-1894

**GALVESTON:** Third Coast Music Festival, April 26-29. thirdcoastmusicfestival.com

**HOUSTON:** International Watermedia Exhibition, through April 5. Watercolor Art Society—Houston. watercolorhouston.org 713-942-9966

**HOUSTON:** Da Camera Presents: Cy Twombly and Music, April 2-3. Cy Twombly Gallery, The Menil Collection. dacamera.com 713-524-5050

**HOUSTON:** Da Camera Presents: Juilliard String Quartet, April 6. Zilkha Hall, Hobby Center for the Performing Arts. dacamera.com 713-524-5050

**HOUSTON:** Da Camera Presents: Brad Mehldau Trio, April 13. Cullen Performance Hall, University of Houston. dacamera.com 713-524-5050

**HOUSTON:** Houston Wing CAF—Annual Open House and Fly-In, April 14-15. West Houston Airport. houstonwing.org 281-579-2131

**HOUSTON:** Da Camera Presents: Reich and Messiaen, April 21. Zilkha Hall, Hobby Center for the Performing Arts. dacamera.com 713-524-5050

**HOUSTON:** Hamilton, April 24-May 20. The Hobby Center. houston.broadway.com 800-952-6560

**HOUSTON:** Da Camera Presents: Poetry and

Music: Exile and Return, April 30-May 1. Matchbox 2, Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston. dacamera.com 713-524-5050

**HUMBLE:** Good Oil Days, April 7. Main Street. goodoildays.com 281-446-4140

**LA PORTE:** Main Street Trade Days, April 7. Historic Downtown La Porte. visitlaportetx.com 281-470-7275

**LA PORTE:** San Jacinto Day Festival and Battle Re-enactment, April 21. San Jacinto Museum. sanjacinto-museum.org 210-824-9474

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

**LAKE JACKSON:** Kids Reel Big Fish Event, April 7. Sea Center Texas. tpwd.texas.gov/seacenter 979-292-0100

**LAKE JACKSON:** The Five Browns in Concert, April 13. The Clarion. brazosport.edu/clarion 979-230-3156

**LAKE JACKSON:** Bird Banding, April 21. Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. gcbo.org 979-480-0999

**LAKE JACKSON:** Taste of the Town, April 29. Brazos Mall. brazosport.org 979-285-2501

**LEAGUE CITY:** Southwest International Boat Show, April 12-15. South Shore Harbour Marina. southwestinter-nationalboatshow.com 561-842-8808

**ORANGE:** Art in the Park, April 7. Stark Park. orange.texas.org 409-883-1010

**PALACIOS:** Palacios Trail Riders Association Trail Ride, April 7-8. County Barn. 361-972-2719

**PORT ARANSAS:** Wooden Boat Festival, April 6-8. Farley Boat Works. portaransas-museum.org 210-218-9961

**PORT ARANSAS:** Adopt-A-Beach, April 21. Port Aransas Beach. glo.texas.gov/adopt-a-beach 361-215-2763

**PORT ARANSAS:** Texas SandFest, April 27-29. Port Aransas Beach. texassandfest.org 361-749-2066

**PORT ARTHUR:** Elite Redfish Series, April 5-7. Carl A. Parker



Multipurpose Center.  
info@htseries.com  
409-985-7822

**PORT ARTHUR:** Cajun Heritage Festival, April 7. Carl A. Parker Multipurpose Center. setxac.org 409-835-2787

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

**QUINTANA:** Spring Fling, April 1-30. Quintana Neotropic Bird Sanctuary. gcbo.org 979-480-0999

**QUINTANA:** Spring Fling, April 7-May 5. Neotropical Bird Sanctuary. gcbo.org 979-480-0999

**QUINTANA:** Adopt-A-Beach Clean-Up, April 21. Quintana Beach County Park. brazoria-county.com/parks 979-864-1541

**SOUTH PADRE ISLAND:** Open Water Festival, April 14-15. Pier 19. openwaterplanet.com 919-421-1893

**SOUTH PADRE ISLAND:** Splash South Padre, April 26-28. splashsouthpadre.com 800-657-2373

**SUGAR LAND:** *Rain: A Tribute to the Beatles*, April 4. Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land. smartfinancialcentre.net 281-207-6278

**SUGAR LAND:** Sugar Land Wine & Food Affair, April 5-8. sugarlandwineandfoodaffair.com

**SUGAR LAND:** Ron White, April 14. Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land. smartfinancialcentre.net 281-207-6278

**SUGAR LAND:** Texas Kung Fu Festival, April 14. Brazos River Park. texaskungufestival.com

**SUGAR LAND:** Maluma in Concert, April 19. Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land. smartfinancialcentre.net 281-207-6278

**SUGAR LAND:** Jim Gaffigan: The Fixer Upper Tour, April 20. Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land. smartfinancialcentre.net 281-207-6278

**SUGAR LAND:** H-Town '90s Block Party, April 21. Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land. smartfinancialcentre.net 281-207-6278

**SUGAR LAND:** Judas Priest in Concert with Saxon and Black Star

Riders, April 29. Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land. smartfinancialcentre.net 281-207-6278

**SURFSIDE BEACH:** Adopt-A-Beach Clean-Up, April 21. Stahlman Park. brazoria-county.com/parks 979-864-1541

**TEXAS CITY:** TC 1947 Disaster Memorial Service, April 16. Memorial Park. tescacitycommunitycalendar.com 409-229-1660

**THE WOODLANDS:** Muddy Trails Bash, April 7. Rob Fleming Park. thewoodlandstowship-tx.gov/races 281-210-3800

**THE WOODLANDS:** The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival, April 7-8, 14-15, 21-22, 28-29. Town Green Park. thewoodlandsartsandscouncil.org/festival 713-299-1184

**THE WOODLANDS:** Foo Fighters in Concert, April 19. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. woodlandscenter.org 281-364-3010

**THE WOODLANDS:** Jack Johnson in Concert, April 26. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. woodlandscenter.org 281-364-3010

**THE WOODLANDS:** Eric Church in Concert, April 27. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. woodlandscenter.org 281-364-3010

**THE WOODLANDS:** Memorial Hermann Ironman Texas North American Championship, April 28. ironman.com

**VICTORIA:** Victoria TX Independent Film Festival, April 5-8. Leo J. Welder Center for the Performing Arts. vtxiff.com 361-935-8843

**VICTORIA:** Polo at McFaddin, April 7. McFaddin Ranch. navemuseum.com 361-575-8227

**VICTORIA:** *Leading Ladies*, April 19-22. Leo J. Welder Center for the Performing Arts. theatre.victoria.org 361-570-8587

**VICTORIA:** Art Car Parade, April 21. Downtown Victoria. fivepointsmuseum.com 361-572-0016

**VICTORIA:** JAM Fest, April 21. Downtown. jamfestvictoria.com

**VICTORIA:** Downtown Rhythms, April 26.

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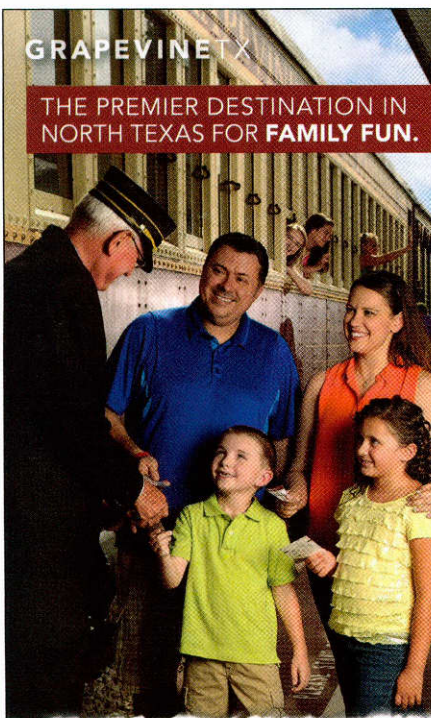
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[victoriasymphony.com](http://victoriasymphony.com)  
361-576-4500

**VICTORIA:** Victoria Symphony Master Series, April 28. Victoria Fine Arts Center. [victoriasymphony.com](http://victoriasymphony.com) 361-576-4500

**WEST COLUMBIA:** San Jacinto Day Celebration April 21. Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site. visit [varnerhoggplantation.com](http://varnerhoggplantation.com) 979-345-4656

### HILL COUNTRY

**AUSTIN:** *Beyond Bollywood: Indian Americans Shape the Nation*, through April 8. Asian American Resource Center. [austintexas.gov/aarc](http://austintexas.gov/aarc)

**AUSTIN:** *Form into Spirit: Ellsworth Kelly's Austin*, through April 29. The Blanton Museum of Art. [blantonmuseum.org](http://blantonmuseum.org) 512-471-5482

**AUSTIN:** An Evening with Noah & The MegaFauna, April 11. The Long Center for the Performing Arts. [thelongcenter.org](http://thelongcenter.org) 512-474-5664

**AUSTIN:** Brad Mehldau Trio in Concert, April 12. Paramount Theatre. [austintheatre.org](http://austintheatre.org) 512-472-5470

**AUSTIN:** Mack, Jack, & McConaughy Fundraiser, April 12-13. ACL Live at the Moody Theater. [mackjackandmcconaughy.com](http://mackjackandmcconaughy.com) 512-997-8279

**AUSTIN:** Spring Native Plant Sale, April 13-14. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. [wildflower.org](http://wildflower.org) 512-232-0100

**AUSTIN:** *The Book of Mormon*, April 17-22. Bass Concert Hall. [austin.broadway.com](http://austin.broadway.com) 800-731-7469

**AUSTIN:** Moontower Comedy Festival, April 18-21. Paramount Theatre. [moontowercomedyfest.com](http://moontowercomedyfest.com) 512-474-1221

**AUSTIN:** MotoGP Red Bull Grand Prix of The Americas, April 20-22. Circuit of The Americas. [circuitoftheamericas.com/motogp](http://circuitoftheamericas.com/motogp) 512-382-9017

**AUSTIN:** Texas Independence Tours, April 21. Oakwood Cemetery. [sachome.org](http://sachome.org) 512-917-1666

**AUSTIN:** Austin Classical Guitar International Series: Dimitri Ilarionov & Boris Andrianov, April 28. AISD Performing Arts Center.

[austinclassicalguitar.org](http://austinclassicalguitar.org)  
512-300-2247

**BANDERA:** Cowboy Capital Opry, April 5. Silver Sage Community Center. [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com) 830-796-3045

**BANDERA:** Bandera Cattle Company Gunfighters, April 7, 14, 21, 28. Bandera Visitors Center. [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com) 830-796-3045

**BANDERA:** Bandera Market Days, April 7. Bandera County Courthouse Lawn. [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com) 830-796-3045

**BANDERA:** Chuckwagon Dinner & Show, April 7, 14, 21, 28. Flying L Hill Country Resort. [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com) 830-796-3045

**BANDERA:** Cowboys on Main, April 7, 14, 21, 28. [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com) 830-796-3045

**BANDERA:** The Old Timers Trading Post, April 7. The Old Timer. [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com) 830-796-3045

**BANDERA:** Second Sunday Music Fest Spring Showcase, April 8. 11th Street Cowboy Bar. [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com) 830-796-3045

**BANDERA:** Third Thursday Cowboy Camp, April 19. Bandera Beverage Barn RV Park. [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com) 830-796-3045

**BLANCO:** Arts in the Park, April 13, 20. Bindseil Park. [blancochamber.com](http://blancochamber.com) 410-463-4076

**BOERNE:** Harpeth Rising in Concert, April 14. Cave Without A Name. [cavewithoutaname.com](http://cavewithoutaname.com) 830-537-4212

**BOERNE:** Texas ChuteOut, April 14-15. Kendall County Fairgrounds. [texaschuteout.com](http://texaschuteout.com)

**BRADY:** McCulloch County Early Days, April 13-14. Richards Park. [mchc1.com](http://mchc1.com) 325-597-4123

**BURNET:** Bluebonnet Festival, April 13-15. Burnet's Historic Square. [bluebonnetfestival.org](http://bluebonnetfestival.org) 512-756-4297

**BURNET:** CamelBak Pursuit Series, April 27-29. Reveille Peak Ranch.

[pursuit.theoutbound.com](http://pursuit.theoutbound.com)  
415-565-9530

**CANYON LAKE:** Barbecue Cookoff, April 21. Jacob's Creek Park. 830-964-2223

**CONCAN:** Uvalde Classical Academy Spring Scramble, April 21. The Golf Club of Texas—Concan. [uvaldeclassical.org](http://uvaldeclassical.org) 830-591-2242

**DRIPPING SPRINGS:** Redbud Artisan Market, April 21-22. Dripping Springs Ranch Park. 512-858-7892

**DRIPPING SPRINGS:** Founders Day Festival, April 27-29. Downtown Dripping Springs. [cityofdrippingsprings.com](http://cityofdrippingsprings.com) 512-858-4725

**FREDERICKSBURG:** American Chuckwagon Association National Championship Cookoff, April 6-7. Gillespie County Fairgrounds. [americanchuckwagon.org](http://americanchuckwagon.org) 512-970-6464

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Texas Hill Country Wine and Wildflower Journey, April 6-22. [texaswinetrail.com](http://texaswinetrail.com) 872-216-9463

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Waltstock & Barrel Wine and Music Festival, April 6-7. Texas Wine Country Jellystone Park Camp-Resort. [waltstockandbarrel.com](http://waltstockandbarrel.com) 830-456-6059

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Wildflower Celebration at Wildseed Farms, April 7-21. [wildseedfarms.com](http://wildseedfarms.com) 830-990-8080

**FREDERICKSBURG:** *Barefoot in the Park*, April 13-29. Steve W. Shepherd Theater. [fredericksburgtheater.org](http://fredericksburgtheater.org) 830-997-3588

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Bluebonnet Tractor Ride, April 14. [rustyiron.org](http://rustyiron.org)

**FREDERICKSBURG:** WWII Pacific Combat Program at the National Museum of the Pacific War, April 14-15. [pacificwarmuseum.org](http://pacificwarmuseum.org) 830-997-8600

**FREDERICKSBURG:** The Marksmen in Concert, April 15. Fredericksburg United Methodist Church. [fredericksburgmusicclub.com](http://fredericksburgmusicclub.com)

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Trade Days, April 20-22. Sunday Farms. [fbgtrade.com](http://fbgtrade.com) 210-846-4094

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Hill Country Film Festival, April 26-29. Fritztown

[cinema.hillcountryff.com](http://cinema.hillcountryff.com)  
866-224-7714

**FREDERICKSBURG:** Fort Martin Scott Days, April 27-28. Fort Martin Scott. [ftmartinsscott.org](http://ftmartinsscott.org) 830-217-3200

**GEORGETOWN:** Quilt and Stitchery Show, April 13-14. Community Center in San Gabriel Park. [handcraftsunlimited.com](http://handcraftsunlimited.com) 512-658-6973

**GEORGETOWN:** Preservation Georgetown's Spring Home Tour, April 14-15. Grace Heritage Center. [preservationgeorgetown.org](http://preservationgeorgetown.org) 512-869-8597

**GEORGETOWN:** Poppy Festival, April 27-29. Georgetown's Town Square. visit [georgetown.org/red-poppy-festival](http://georgetown.org/red-poppy-festival) 512-930-3545

**GEORGETOWN:** *A Marvelous Party*, April 29. Kindred Oaks. [penfoldtheatre.org](http://penfoldtheatre.org) 512-850-4849

**GRUENE:** Friday Afternoon Club, April 6, 13, 20, 27. Gruene Hall. [gruenehall.com](http://gruenehall.com) 830-606-1281

**GRUENE:** Gospel Brunch with a Texas Twist, April 8. Gruene Hall. [gruenehall.com](http://gruenehall.com) 830-629-5077

**GRUENE:** Come and Taste It: Meet Texas' Best Winemakers, April 19. The Grapevine. [grapevinegruene.com](http://grapevinegruene.com) 830-629-5077 or 830-606-0093

**GRUENE:** Old Gruene Market Days, April 21-22. Gruene Historic District. [gruene marketdays.com](http://gruene marketdays.com) 830-629-5077 or 830-832-1721

**INGRAM:** Texas Watercolor Society Annual National Exhibit, April 17-June 28. Hill Country Arts Foundation. [hcaf.com](http://hcaf.com) 830-367-5120

**JOHNSON CITY:** Art Walk, April 28. [lbcountry.com](http://lbcountry.com) 830-868-7684

**JOHNSON CITY:** Market Days, April 28-29. City Park. [lbcountry.com](http://lbcountry.com) 830-868-7684

**KERRVILLE:** Easter Hill Country Bike Tour, March 30-April 1. Schreiner University. [ehct.com](http://ehct.com) 281-782-8743

**KERRVILLE:** *Crazy for You*, April 6-24. Cailloux Theater. [caillouxtheater.com](http://caillouxtheater.com) 830-896-9393

**KERRVILLE:** Hill Country Swap Meet, April 7. Kerr County Hill Country

Youth Event Center.  
kerrmarketdays.org  
830-459-6198

**KERRVILLE:** Kerr County Market Days, April 7. Kerr County Hill Country Youth Event Center. kerrmarketdays.org 830-895-7524

**KERRVILLE:** Spring Native Plant Sale and Festival, April 21. Riverside Nature Center. riversidenaturecenter.org 830-257-4837

**KERRVILLE:** Camerata San Antonio String Quartet-Lasting Legacy-Coolidge Composers, April 28. First Presbyterian Church. camerata.org 210-492-9519

**KERRVILLE:** Hill Country Youth Orchestra Spring Concert, April 29. Cailloux Theater. hcyo.org 830-285-9781

**KYLE:** Market Days, April 14. City Square Park. cityofkyle.com/recreation 512-262-3939

**LAMPASAS:** Bloomin' Fest, April 7. Downtown on the Square. lampasaschamber.org 512-556-5172

**LAMPASAS:** Trade Days, April 7-8. Marigold's Antiques & More. marigoldsantiques.com 512-734-1294

**LAMPASAS:** Riata Roundup Festival, April 27-28. 580 Sports Complex. lampasaschamber.org 512-556-5172

**LLANO:** Llano Fiddle Fest Weekend, April 6-8. Lantex Theater. llanofiddlefest.com 325-247-3979

**LLANO:** Llano Crawfish Open, April 20-21. Robinson Park. llanocrawfishopen.com 325-247-5354

**MASON:** Mason Chamber Music Festival, April 5-8. Various locations. masonchambermusicfestival.org 325-218-2353

**NEW BRAUNFELS:** Folkfest, April 14-15. Museum of Texas Handmade Furniture. texashandmade.com 830-629-6504

**NEW BRAUNFELS:** Train Show, April 14-15. New Braunfels Civic/Convention Center. newbraunfelsrailroadmuseum.org 830-627-2447

**NEW BRAUNFELS:** Lee Ann Womack in Concert, April 20. Gruene

Hall. gruenehall.com  
830-629-5077

**NEW BRAUNFELS:** New Braunfels Swap & Car Show, April 20-22. Comal County Fairgrounds. newbraunfelsareacarclub.com/swap-meet.php 830-625-1505

**NEW BRAUNFELS:** CrawFest, April 28. Comal County Fairgrounds. crawfishfestivalnewbraunfels.com 210-827-2222

**UVALDE:** Four Square Friday, April 13. Historic Downtown Uvalde. visituvalde.com 830-278-4115

**UVALDE:** Historic Fort Inge Days, April 13-14. Historic Fort Inge. visituvalde.com 830-591-6804

**UVALDE:** Dia de Los Ninos, April 27. Uvalde County Fairplex. uvaldecountyfairplex.com 830-591-9040

**WIMBERLEY:** Market Days, April 7. Lions Field. shopmarketdays.com 512-847-2201

**WIMBERLEY:** The Sunshine Boys, April 13-May 6. Wimberley Playhouse. wimberleyplayers.org 512-847-0575

**WIMBERLEY:** Butterfly Festival, April 21. EmilyAnn Theatre and Gardens. emilyann.org 512-847-6969

**WIMBERLEY:** Wimberley Arts Fest, April 28-29. The Waters Point. wimberleyartsfest.com 512-952-0098

#### PANHANDLE PLAINS

**ABILENE:** Big Country Home & Garden Expo, April 7. Abilene Convention Center. abilenescene.com/abilenes-home-and-garden-expo 325-767-6211

**ABILENE:** AEF Cajun Fest, April 14. Taylor County Expo Center. aaefff.org 325-677-1444

**ABILENE:** Gem, Mineral, and Jewelry Show, April 14-15. Abilene Convention Center. new.calichetimes.com 325-668-8558

**ABILENE:** Key City Rhythm & Blues Festival, April 28-29. Nelson Park Festival Gardens. keycityblues.com 325-677-1841

**AMARILLO:** Man of La Mancha, April 5-7. Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts.

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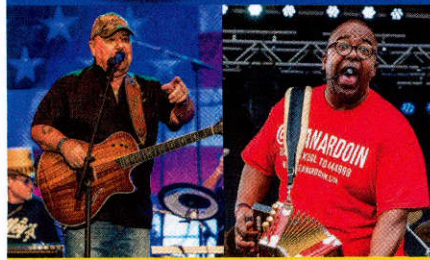
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amarilloopera.org  
806-372-7464

**AMARILLO:** *An American in Paris*, April 20-21. Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts. lonestarballet.org 806-372-2463

**AMARILLO:** Amarillo Symphony in Concert, April 27-28. Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts. amarillosymphony.org 806-376-8782

**AMARILLO:** *Chicago*, April 30-May 1. Amarillo Civic Center Complex. panhandticket.com 806-378-3096

**BIG SPRING:** Music of the Beatles, April 14. Municipal Auditorium. visitbigspring.com 432-263-8235

**BIG SPRING:** A Joyful Season Spring Shopping Expo, April 28-29. Dorothy Garrett Coliseum. ajoyfulseason.org 432-263-8235

**BUFFALO GAP:** Buffalo Gap Food and Wine Summit, April 13-15. Perini Ranch Steakhouse. buffalogapsummit.com 800-367-1721

**GRAHAM:** Rotary Duck Durby, April 7. Fireman's Park.

**GRAHAM:** Cars and Stars, April 14. Graham Downtown Square. grahamcarsandstars.com 940-549-0401

**HENRIETTA:** Turkey Fest, April 4-7. Henrietta Texas. hccchamber.org/turkey-fest 940-538-5261

**LUBBOCK:** *Portals: The Art of Yvonne Armitage Greene*, March 30-May 13. Buddy Holly Center. buddyhollycenter.org 806-775-3560

**LUBBOCK:** Ranch Day, April 28. National Ranching Heritage Center. nrhc.ttu.edu 806-742-0498

**POST:** Old Mill Trade Days, April 6-8. Old Mill Trade Days. 432-934-1479

**POST:** Trash to Treasure, April 21. Old Mill Trade Days. 432-934-1479

**SAN ANGELO:** Spring Baseball Symposium, April 7. Fort Concho National Historic Landmark. fortconcho.com 325-234-0316

**SAN ANGELO:** Chamber Music Series Concert, April 8. San Angelo

Museum of Fine Arts. samfa.org 325-653-3333

**SAN ANGELO:** *Lend Me a Tenor*, April 13-22. Angelo Civic Theater. sanangelo.org 325-949-4400

**SAN ANGELO:** Regional Cavalry Competition, April 19-21. Fort Concho National Historic Landmark. fortconcho.com 325-481-2730

**SAN ANGELO:** San Angelo National Ceramic Competition, April 20-June 24. San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts. samfa.org 325-653-3333

**SAN ANGELO:** The Urban Cowboy Reunion, April 20. First Community Federal Credit Union Spur Arena. sonrisasriding.org 325-234-5835

**SAN ANGELO:** Frontier Day at Fort Concho, April 21. Fort Concho National Historic Landmark. fortconcho.com 325-657-4444

**SAN ANGELO:** Play It Again Concert, April 22. San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts. samfa.org 325-653-3333

**SAN ANGELO:** David Sedaris, April 28. Murphey Performance Hall. sanangelopac.org 325-284-3825

**STANTON:** Old Sorehead Trade Days, April 14-15. Historic Downtown Streets & Community Center Complex. stanton.texas.com 432-756-2006

**WICHITA FALLS:** Texoma's Hellenicous Obstacle Run, April 7. Lucy Park. wfthor.com

**WICHITA FALLS:** *Rain: A Tribute to The Beatles*, April 8. Memorial Auditorium. wfmpcc.com 940-716-5555

**WICHITA FALLS:** Cowboy True: Celebrating The Cowboy Life, April 13-14. JS Bridwell Ag Center. artscouncilwf.org 940-766-3347

**WICHITA FALLS:** Fallstow Dancing Through History, April 21. Downtown Wichita Falls. thekitchenwf.org 940-322-6232

#### PINEY MOUNDS

**ALTO:** Foraging with Merriwether, April 7. Caddo Mounds State Historic Site. visitcaddomounds.com 936-858-3218

**ALTO:** Caddo Culture Day, April 14. Caddo Mounds State Historic

Site. visitcaddomounds.com 936-858-3218

**ARP:** High Hill Farm Jazz Festival, April 15. High Hill Farm. highhillfarm.com 903-730-5055

**CROCKETT:** Ernie Haase & Signature Sound in Concert, April 8. Crockett Civic Center. pwfaa.org 936-544-4276

**CROCKETT:** Wynonna and The Big Noise in Concert, April 28. Crockett Civic Center. pwfaa.org 936-544-4276

**GLADEWATER:** East Texas Gusher Days, April 21. Downtown Gladewater. gusher-days.com 903-845-5501

**GLADEWATER:** Big Bass Classic, April 28. gusher-days.com 903-845-5501

**HENDERSON:** East Texas Wildflower Trails, April 15-May 31. Various locations. visithendersontx.com 866-650-5529

**HENDERSON:** Antique Tractor and Engine Show, April 20-21. Rusk County Expo Center. visithendersontx.com 903-889-2671

**HUNTSVILLE:** Walker County Fair & Rodeo, April 6-14. Walker County Fairgrounds. walkercountyfair.com 936-291-9726

**KILGORE:** Avalon Faire, March 31-April 29. Avalon Faire. avalonfaire.com 903-985-0165

**KILGORE:** Kilgore College Rangerette Revels, April 11-14. Kilgore College. rangerette.com 903-983-8179

**LINDEN:** Wildflower Trails of Texas Festival, April 27-28. lindenvildflowertrails.net 903-756-7502 or 903-562-1000

**LUFKIN:** The Five Browns in Concert, April 12. Temple Theater, Angelina Arts Alliance. angelinaarts.org 936-633-5454

**MAGNOLIA:** Depot Day & Airing of the Quilts, April 21. Magnolia Depot. magnoliathistorical.society.com 936-788-3059

**TATUM:** Pecan Pie Festival, April 28. Tatum High School. tatumtexas.com 903-947-6403

**TYLER:** Azalea & Spring Flower Trail, March 16-April 1. visittyler.com/azaleatrail 903-592-1661

**TYLER:** Kimberly Guilfoyle, April 3. University of Texas

at Tyler R. Don Cowan Fine & Performing Arts Center. cowancenter.org 903-566-7424

**TYLER:** *The Wizard of Oz*, April 21. University of Texas at Tyler R. Don Cowan Fine & Performing Arts Center. cowancenter.org 903-566-7424

**UNCERTAIN:** Earth Day Flotilla, April 21. Shady Glade Resort. txmn.org/cypress/2018-earth-day-flotilla 903-736-3063 or 903-672-5524

**WOODVILLE:** Dogwood Festival, April 7. Downtown Tylercounty dogwoodfestival.org 409-283-2632

#### PRAIRIES AND LAKES

**ADDISON:** *Bread*, April 13-May 6. WaterTower Theatre. watertow theatre.org

**BONHAM:** Red River Art, Wine, and Music Festival, April 14. Creative Arts Center. creativeartscenterbonham.com 903-640-2196

**BOWIE:** Chisholm Trail Heritage Festival, Cattle Drive, and Wagon Train, April 13-15. Bowie Chamber of Commerce. bowietxchamber.org 940-872-1173

**BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION:** The Ultimate Barbecue Weekend at The Stella, April 20-22. thestellahotel.com 979-421-4000

**BURTON:** LaBahia Antiques, March 30-April 7. LaBahia Hall. labahiaantiques.com 979-289-2684

**BURTON:** Burton Cotton Gin Festival, April 21. Texas Cotton Gin Museum. cottonginmuseum.org 979-289-3378

**CELINA:** Celina Cajun Fest, April 14. Celina Cajun Fest. celina-tx.gov

**CHAPPELL HILL:** Official Texas Bluebonnet Festival, April 14-15. Downtown. visitbrenham.texas.com 979-203-1242

**CLEBURNE:** *The Music Man*, April 5-21. Plaza Theatre Company. plaza-theatre.com 817-202-0600

**CLEBURNE:** SpringFest, April 14. Hulén Park. downtowncleburneassociation.com 214-202-5550

**CLEBURNE:** Antique Alley and Yard Sale, April 20-21. FM 4 South.

antiquealleytexas.com  
940-232-8983

**CLEBURNE:** Brazos Chamber Orchestra Spring Concert, April 24. First Baptist Church of Cleburne. brazoschamberorchestra.org 817-645-8067

**CLEBURNE:** *To Kill a Mockingbird*, April 27-28, May 3-19. Plaza Theatre Company, plaza-theatre.com 817-202-0600

**COLLEGE STATION:** Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company, April 10. Rudder Auditorium. academyarts.tamu.edu 979-847-2787

**COLLEGE STATION:** *California Dreamin'*, April 28. Hildebrand Equine Center. bvchorale.org 979-476-8199

**CORSICANA:** Derrick Days Festival and Navarro County Pro Rodeo, April 27-28. Corsicana Historic Downtown. derrickdays.com 903-654-4850 or 877-648-2688

**DALE:** Old Settler's Music Festival, April 19-22. oldsettlersmusicfest.org 512-478-0578

**DALLAS:** *Yana Wana's Legend of the Bluebonnet*, March 23-April 8. Dallas Children's Theater. dct.org

**DALLAS:** Down for #TheCount One-Act Play Festival: A Celebration of Female Voices, April 5-18. Bishop Arts Theatre Center. bishopartstheatre.org

**DALLAS:** Deep Ellum Arts Festival, April 6-8. Deep Ellum. deepellumartsfestival.com 214-855-1881

**DALLAS:** Fan Expo Dallas, April 6-8. Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center. fanexpodallas.com 972-247-1369

**DALLAS:** *The Power of Gold: Asante Royal Regalia from Ghana*, April 15-Aug. 12. Dallas Museum of Art. dma.org

**DALLAS:** *Blue*, April 21-May 6. Dallas Children's Theater. dct.org

**DALLAS:** The Hidden Dallas Tour, April 21. Krispy Kreme. dallasbychocolate.com 972-814-5997

**DALLAS:** Tony Bennett in Concert, April 26. Winspear Opera House. attpac.org 214-880-0202

**DALLAS:** Sammons Center 30th Anniversary Concert, April 27. Moody

Performance Hall. sammonsartcenter.org 214-871-5000

**DALLAS:** Dallas Arboretum's Artscape Fine Art and Craft Fair, April 28-29. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden. dallasarboretum.org 214-515-6615

**DECATUR:** Glitzy Girls Trailer Park, April 14. Decatur Square. glitzygirlstrailerpark.com 281-686-1803

**DENISON:** Doc Holliday Festival, April 28. cityofdenison.com 903-465-2720

**DENTON:** North Texas Horse Country Tour, April 7. City of Denton Development Services Parking Lot. horsecountrytours.com 940-382-7895

**DENTON:** Thin Line Fest, April 18-22. Campus Theatre. thinline.us 940-382-7895

**DENTON:** Denton Redbud Festival, April 21. Denton Civic Center. kdb.org 940-349-8711

**DENTON:** Denton Arts & Jazz Festival, April 27-29. Quakertown Park. dentonjazzfest.com 940-565-0931

**DESOTO:** DeSoto Living! Festival, April 7. DeSoto East Middle School. desotochamber.org 972-224-3565

**EAGLE LAKE:** Attwater's Prairie Chicken Festival, April 14-15. Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge. fws.gov/refuge/attwater\_prairie\_chicken 979-234-3021

**ENNIS:** Bluebonnet Trails, April 1-30. bluebonnettrail.org 972-878-4748

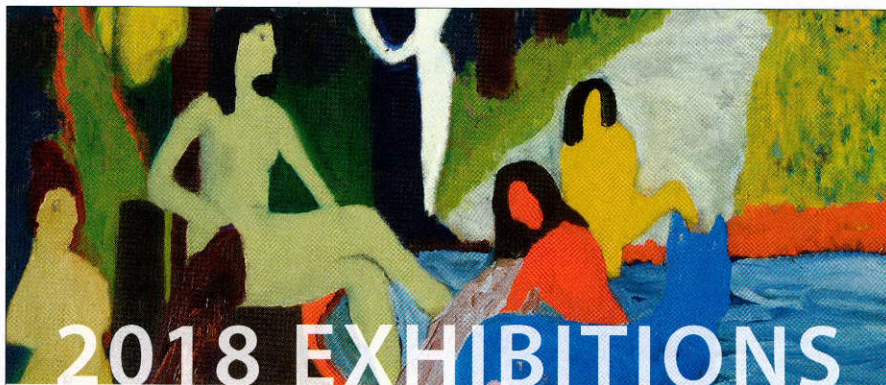
**ENNIS:** Main Street Midway, April 11-14. Downtown Ennis. visitennis.org 972-878-4748

**ENNIS:** Bluebonnet Trails Festival, April 20-22. Downtown Ennis. bluebonnettrail.org 972-878-4748

**ENNIS:** *Sleeping Beauty*, April 27-May 12. Theatre Rocks! theatrerocks.com 972-878-5126

**FARMERSVILLE:** Farmersville Farmers & Fleas Market, April 7. The Onion Shed. farmersvilletx.com 972-784-6846

**FORT WORTH:** Race Week at Texas Motor Speedway, April 6-8. Texas Motor Speedway.



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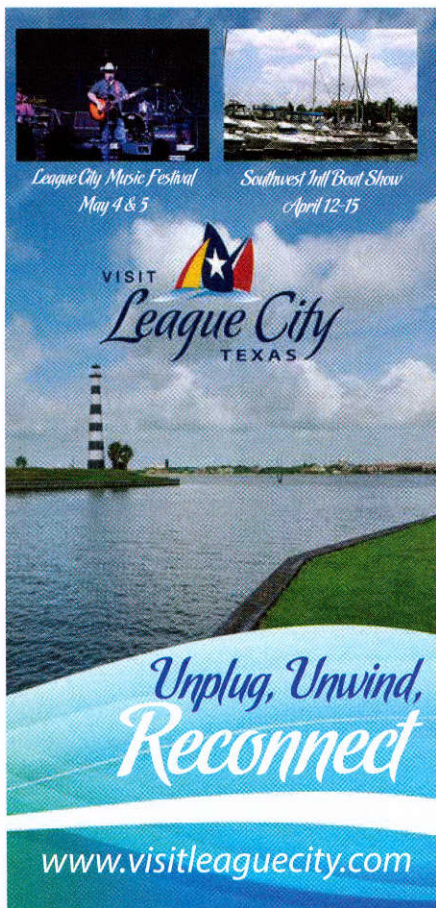
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817-215-8600

**FORT WORTH:** Main Street Arts Festival, April 19-22. Sundance Square. mainstreetartsfest.org 817-870-1692

**FORT WORTH:** Fort Worth Opera Festival, April 27-May 13. Bass Performance Hall. fwopera.org 817-731-0726

**FORT WORTH:** Fortress Festival, April 28-29. Modern Art Museum. fortressfestival.com 512-382-9017

**FORT WORTH:** Hops and Props Craft Beer Fest and Fly-In, April 28. Fort Worth Aviation Museum. fortworthaviationmuseum.com 855-733-8627

**FRISCO:** Frisco StrEATS Food & Music Festival, April 14. Historic Downtown Frisco. 972-292-5266

**GARLAND:** Garland Symphony Orchestra Concert: Mahler's Symphony No. 1, April 20. Granville Arts Center. garlandsymphony.org 972-926-0611

**GIDDINGS:** Rodeo Giddings, April 12-14. Lee County Sheriff's Posse Arena. lcsppgiddings.com 979-542-3455

**GLEN ROSE:** Glen Rose Bluegrass Jamboree Festival, April 5-7. Oakdale Park. 254-897-3081

**GLEN ROSE:** Photo Tour, April 14, 28. Fossil Rim Wildlife Center. fossilrim.org 254-897-2960

**GLEN ROSE:** Spring Wingding, April 14. Dinosaur Valley State Park. 254-897-3129

**GLEN ROSE:** Discovery After Dark, April 27. Fossil Rim Wildlife Center. fossilrim.org 254-897-2960

**GRANBURY:** Granbury Wine Walk, April 27-28. Granbury Wine Walk Festival. granburywinewalk.com 682-498-3089

**GRAND PRAIRIE:** Thoroughbred Racing, April 19-July 22. Lone Star Park. lonestarpark.com 972-263-7223

**GRAND PRAIRIE:** Main Street Fest, April 20-22. Downtown Grand Prairie. mainstreetfest.com 972-237-8100

**GRAND PRAIRIE:** Big Mamou Cajun Festival, April 21-22. Traders

Village. tradersvillage.com  
972-647-2331

**GRANDVIEW:** Antique Alley Texas and 30+ Miles of Shopping, April 20-22. antiquealleytexas.com 817-666-5024 or 817-240-4948

**GRAPEVINE:** Day Out with Thomas, April 13-15, 20-22. Cotton Belt Depot. gvrr.com 817-410-3185

**GRAPEVINE:** Symphony in the Park, April 13. Liberty Park. messinahof.com 817-442-8463

**GRAPEVINE:** New Vintage Wine & Gallery Trail and Blessing of the Vines, April 14. Historic Downtown Grapevine. grapevintexasusa.com 817-410-3185

**GRAPEVINE:** Spring into Nash, April 21. Nash Farm. grapevintexasusa.com 817-410-3185

**GRAPEVINE:** Farm to Supper, a Farm to Fork Experience, April 27. Nash Farm. nashfarm.org 817-410-3185

**GRAPEVINE:** Truffle-Making Class with Dr. Sue's Chocolates, April 29. Messina Hof Grapevine Winery. messinahof.com 817-442-8463

**GREENVILLE:** Hunt County Fair and Livestock Show, April 20-29. Hunt County Fair Grounds. huntcountyfair.net 903-454-1503

**GREENVILLE:** The Four Freshmen in Concert, April 27. Greenville Municipal Auditorium. greenvilleentertainmentseries.com 903-513-0445

**HILLSBORO:** Hill County Master Gardeners Plant Sale, April 21. Hill County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office. 254-582-4022

**IRVING:** Las Colinas Symphony Orchestra Presents Mahler Symphony No. 1, April 21. Irving Arts Center, Carpenter Hall. lascolinasymphony.org 972-252-4800

**LEWISVILLE:** ColorPalooza: A Celebration of Spring, April 14. Wayne Ferguson Plaza. lewisvillecolorpalooza.com 972-219-3401

**LOCKHART:** Cowtown Sip & Stroll, April 7. Lockhart Town Square. facebook.com/cowtownstroll 512-398-2818

**MADISONVILLE:** Tour de Madisonville Bicycle Ride

& Festival, April 14. Downtown Madisonville. visitmadisonville.org 936-348-9333

**MCKINNEY:** Arts in Bloom, April 13-15. Downtown McKinney. downtownmckinney.com 972-547-2660

**MCKINNEY:** Spring Plant Sale, April 14-15. Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary. heardmuseum.org/plantsale 972-562-5566

**MESQUITE:** Texas Visual Arts Association Exhibit, April 1-30. Mesquite Arts Center Main Gallery. mesquiteartscenter.org 972-216-6444

**MESQUITE:** Rockin' Rhapsody Concert Series, April 6, 13, 20, 27. Mesquite Arts Center North Lawn. mesquiteartscenter.org 972-216-6444

**MESQUITE:** Mesquite Rodeo Parade, April 7. Downtown Mesquite. realtexasflavor.com 972-204-4925

**MESQUITE:** Becky's New Car, April 13-28. Mesquite Arts Center Black Box Theatre. mesquitecommunitytheatre.com 972-216-8126

**MESQUITE:** Marketplace Mesquite: Farmers' and Artisan's Market, April 14, 28. Heritage Square in Downtown Mesquite. themarketplacedfw.com 214-793-6121

**MESQUITE:** Kidfish, April 28. City Lake Park. cityofmesquite.com/parade 972-216-6260

**NECHES:** The 1836 Chuckwagon Race, April 13-22. Diamond B Ranch. 1836cwr.com 903-721-9111

**PARIS:** ASA Southwest Shootout Archery Tournament, April 5-8. Love Civic Center. asaarchery.com 770-795-0232 or 903-784-2501

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

**PLANO:** One Day Only 29, April 7. Rover Dramawerks. roverdramawerks.com 972-849-0358

**PLANO:** Beatles Night, April 21. Oak Point Park Amphitheater. visitplano.com 972-941-5600

**PLANO:** Artfest, April 27-28. Downtown Plano Arts

District. planoartfest.com  
972-468-1588

**PLANO:** Plano Symphony 35th Anniversary Finale: Van Cliburn Gold, April 28. St. Andrew United Methodist Church. planosymphony.org 972-473-7262

**PLANTERSVILLE:** St. Mary's Quilt Show, April 26-28. St. Mary Catholic Church. stmarysquiltshow.com 713-882-5850

**RICHARDSON:** Mutts Gone Nuts, April 8. Eisemann Center. eisemanncenter.com 972-744-4650

**RICHARDSON:** Driving Miss Daisy, April 12-15. Eisemann Center. eisemanncenter.com 972-744-4650

**RICHARDSON:** Keyboard Conversations: A Bernstein Birthday Bash!, April 16. Eisemann Center for the Performing Arts. eisemanncenter.com 972-744-4650

**RICHARDSON:** Amazing Grace: The Musical, April 19-20. Eisemann Center. eisemanncenter.com 972-744-4650

**RICHARDSON:** Go, Dog, Go!, April 22. Eisemann Center. eisemanncenter.com 972-744-4650

**ROUND TOP:** Pianist James Dick in Concert, April 14. Festival Concert Hall. festivalhill.org 979-249-3129

**ROUND TOP:** Poetry at Round Top, April 20-22. Festival Hill. festivalhill.org 979-249-3129

**SALADO:** 5K Troll Trot, April 14. Salado Museum and College Hill. keepsaladobeautiful.com 254-760-1150

**SCHULENBURG:** Schulenburg Sausagefest, April 14. Main Street. schulenburgsausagesfest.com 979-743-4514

**SEGUIN:** Moonlight and Roses, April 6. Walnut Springs Park. seguintexas.gov 830-401-0810

**SEGUIN:** Earth Day Festival and Trade Days, April 28. Central Park. seguintexas.gov 830-401-0810

**SHERMAN:** Texoma Earth Day Festival, April 21. Sherman Municipal Grounds. earthdaytexoma.org 903-821-8198

**TEMPLE:** Bloomin Temple Festival, April 27-28.

Downtown Temple.  
bloomintemple.com  
254-298-5900

**TERRELL:** Terrell Heritage Jubilee, April 21-22. Ben Gill & Lions Club Park. terrelltexas.com 972-563-5703

**WACO:** Heart of Texas Air Show, April 7-8. TSTC Waco Campus Airport. heartoftexasairshow.com 303-862-2869

**WACO:** Rootstock: A Texas Wine Festival, April 14. Indian Spring Park. facebook.com/rootstock winefest 254-848-4343

**WACO:** Design Den: Sewing, April 28. Mayborn Museum Complex. baylor.edu/mayborn 254-710-1110

**WACO:** Waco Texas Steak Cookoff & Wine Festival, April 28. Indian Spring Park. wacotexassteakcookoff.com 254-836-0734

**WAXAHACHIE:** Scarborough Renaissance Festival, April 7-8, 14-15, 21-22, 28-29. srfestival.com 972-938-3247

**WAXAHACHIE:** Crossroads of Texas Film & Music Festival, April 19-22. Chautauqua Auditorium. crossroads oftxff.com 469-309-4012

**WAXAHACHIE:** W3-Wonderful Women of Waxahachie Vintage Trailer Tour, April 21. Getzender Park. waxahachiecvb.com 469-309-4040

**WEATHERFORD:** Spring Fling at Chandor

Gardens, April 7. chandor gardens.com 817-613-1700

### **SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS**

**BEEVILLE:** *The Rockport Way*, through April 26. Beeville Art Museum. bamtexas.org 361-358-8615

**POTEET:** Strawberry Festival, April 13-15. strawberryfestival.com 830-742-8144

**SAN ANTONIO:** 210|West Gallery Talk: Santa Anna: The Napoleon of the West, April 10. Briscoe Western Art Museum. briscoemuseum.org 210-299-4499

**SAN ANTONIO:** Fiesta Fiesta at Hemisfair, April 19. fiesta-sa.org 210-227-5191

**SAN ANTONIO:** Fiesta San Antonio, April 19-29. fiesta-sa.org 210-227-5191

**SAN ANTONIO:** Fiesta River Parade Party, April 23. Briscoe Western Art Museum. briscoemuseum.org 210-507-4849

**SAN ANTONIO:** Battle of Flowers Parade, April 27. Downtown San Antonio. battleofflowers.org/events 210-422-1546

**SAN ANTONIO:** Ford Mariachi Festival, April 24-26. Downtown River Walk. thesanantonioriverwalk.com 210-227-4262

**SAN ANTONIO:** Fiesta Artisan Show, April 27-29. Downtown River Walk Extension. thesanantonioriverwalk.com 210-227-4262

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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](http://texashighways.com) and go to Events, Event Submission form; email: [texasevents@txdot.gov](mailto: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.

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# Maypole Festival

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continued from page 96

from Texas. I'm from San Angelo, which is flat and open, kind of the beginning of West Texas. When I go to San Angelo I always think of Butch Hancock saying, "I'm from Lubbock, where you can see for 50 miles in all directions, but if you stand on a tuna-fish can you can see 100 miles." You have to have stories. Texas is really big, and it takes stories to fill it all up.

**Q:** *You knew Elmer Kelton in San Angelo. What did you learn from him?*

He was a ranch reporter-writer when I was young, and then he also wrote potboiler Western fiction. Somewhere along the way, he wrote *The Time it Never Rained*, one of the four or five best books ever written about Texas. He wrote a lot of other good books. But I think the overall lesson is: Writing is writing. It doesn't matter if you're writing about wool and mohair prices or about a guy with a six-gun

in a Texas Ranger story, or whether you're writing something true and real out of the drought of the 1950s. Writing is writing, and his was always good.

**Q:** *You travel a lot. Why make your home in Austin?*

**A:** There's something magical about Austin. Since the day it was founded, there was an open, creative frontier spirit to this place that has sustained, and it has been the heart of ideas, and music, and books, and film, and politics in Texas. It doesn't really matter how many tech companies you bring in. Some bad things come as it gets too big, but more and more good things happen too. It's harder if you're an artist and you need to have a gallery space or studio space, and rents are off the charts. It's really tough, and that may drive you to be in some little town that used to be thriving and isn't thriving anymore.

A hundred artists should go to Menard on the San Saba River and look at all the empty warehouse buildings downtown and go, "Oh my goodness, I could paint here for the rest of my life." It's an absolutely gorgeous place, one of the oldest settlements in Texas, and the town's just waiting to be discovered again. But for me, I'm here. Austin's my home. I will never live anywhere else. I don't care how much they screw it up. I'm sticking around.

**Q:** *What are some of your favorite places to visit in Texas?*

**A:** Devils River State Natural Area is high on the list. It's the hardest place to get to in Texas. It's absolutely incredible to have this huge, free-flowing river and Dolan Falls in the desert. It's amazing. I love Big Bend. I love Marfa. The road between Marfa and Balmorhea that goes over the mountains there—to drive that road in the summer when there are thunderstorms with lightning bouncing off the mountains all around... and then you end up at Balmorhea and this incredible oasis of water. And I'm still connected to



**TURK PIPKIN**

For more on the Book of the Every Other Month Club and The Nobility Project, visit [turkpipkin.com](http://turkpipkin.com).

the Llano. I spent eight years building a house on the Llano River by Castell. The Castell General Store is one of the great destination spots in Texas—barbecue on Saturdays.

**Q:** *How do you make the most of your time while traveling?*

**A:** Well, I don't do jet lag when I travel overseas or when we go to Kenya. You just got to go. Wherever you are right now is what time it is, and that applies to time zones and to anything else you do in your life. It's only right now.

**Q:** *What changes have you noticed over the years in Texas?*

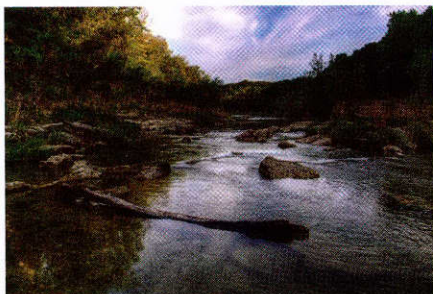
**A:** I think the pace of life. We don't notice over short periods of time the changes in land or the changes in the water flow, but you also don't notice the changes in your own life. Twenty years ago, I had a *Backroads of Texas* map and if I were driving to San Antonio or San Angelo or Odessa, I could look and go, "Oh, here's a way I could go and never be on pavement." And I'd get lost every once in a while. But these days, you turn on Google Maps, and it's like, "OK I'll be there in two hours and 21 minutes." Is that better than when it used to take me seven hours off-road? I'm not really sure.

**Q:** *What's your hope for the Book of the Every Other Month Club project?*

**A:** I want people to love these books the way I do. And I'm trying to sell enough books to get these libraries completely stocked so I don't just have to write the check myself. But if I have to, I will. **L**

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# THE DAYTRIPPER

WITH CHET GARNER



## Boerne Love

**T**HE GERMAN HERITAGE of the Hill Country is well-known when it comes to towns like Fredericksburg and New Braunfels. But sprinkled throughout the rolling hills are a number of smaller burgs that carry a similar and just-as-interesting cultural history. Take Boerne, northwest of San Antonio, for example, which makes for an excellent day trip destination. Just don't pronounce it "Bo-Urn."

**9 A.M.** Even though I was in search of German attractions, I couldn't pass up a little Tex-Mex, so I joined the crowded line at **Mary's Tacos**. Upon recommendation, I ordered the "Macho Sean's," a monster of a taco too big to fit in one hand. After just one bite, I found nirvana in the form of eggs, beans, cheese, and bacon all wrapped in a homemade tortilla.

**10 A.M.** Next up, I headed to *Hauptstrasse*, which is German for "Main Street." Among the blocks of historic buildings, I found dozens of local shops, selling everything from Native American jewelry at **Sun of a Brave** to holiday decorations at **The Christmas Shoppe**. I perused **Carousel Antiques** while munching on some locally made **Fickle Pickles**, which shares the storefront. Their pickles were so addicting that I bought three jars for the road. Needing something to balance out the brine,

I visited **Soda Pops and Sugar Shack**, a retro diner filled with vintage arcade games. It's also the best place in town for a peanut butter-banana milkshake. The wall of vintage candies was the cherry on top of my Main Street visit.

**NOON** I walked a few blocks and found myself strolling along **Cibolo Creek**, which first attracted Germans to the area. **River Road Park** was full of folks enjoying the sunshine, fishing, and feeding the 5,678 turtles in the water. OK, maybe it wasn't exactly that many, but it looked close. The park's hungry ducks looked longingly at me—but I didn't have any food.

**1 P.M.** Running for my life from the persistent quacks, I ducked into the **The Dodging Duck Brewhaus** and

found myself in a laid-back brew pub with a menu full of burgers and German sausages. I ordered a bratwurst and venison sausage plate, which hit the spot, especially with my house-brewed Mosaic Mallard IPA.

**2:30 P.M.** Next, I headed to the **Cibolo Nature Center**, which is 2 miles from downtown but feels far from civilization. Inside this 100-acre preserve are flowing streams, rolling grasslands, wooded forests, and a marshy swamp. I kicked off my boots and waded into the crystal-clear waters of the creek, wishing that I'd brought my hammock for an afternoon nap. Then I explored the connected **Herff Farm** homestead, one of the first and most significant houses built in the area, and imagined myself as a frontiersman living on the land.

**4 P.M.** Some of Boerne's best adventures are actually underground, so I visited **Cascade Caverns** and trekked deep into the heart of Texas. We followed the guide through tight corridors and explored room after room of amazing formations; some even had 70-foot ceilings. I can only imagine how the first explorers felt seeing the bones of saber-toothed cats and prehistoric bison that were discovered here.

**6 P.M.** After a day full of dodging ducks, eating pickles, and exploring caves, I needed a dinner just as diverse. I found the perfect mix at **Random**, an ever-evolving food truck park located in a beer garden with 80-plus taps. Instead of choosing just

one truck, I opted for a smorgasbord of dishes, including a lobster roll, picadillo tacos, and red beans and rice.

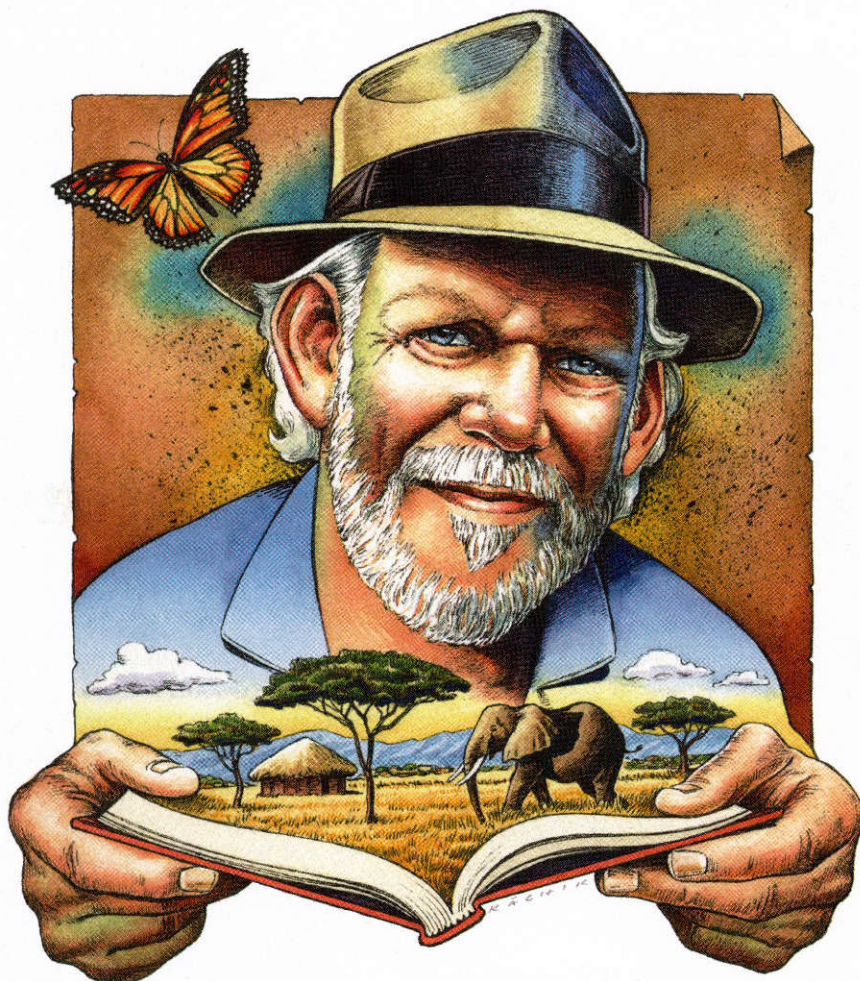
As the sun set over Boerne Lake, I grabbed a set of washers and challenged a local kid to a duel. While I had come in search of German culture, I discovered so much more in this fascinating town. So whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path, I hope to see you on the road. 🐼

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

Contact the Boerne Visitor's Center at 830-249-7277; [visitboerne.org](http://visitboerne.org)

# TRAVEL MATTERS

TRAVEL TALK WITH TRUE TEXANS



## One Story at a Time

Austin showman Turk Pipkin's big Texas heart

story by **Matt Joyce**

**S** TURK PIPKIN A HUMANITARIAN CREATOR OR A CREATIVE humanitarian? Both, it's fair to say. The Austin showman and writer has made a career of mixing his artistic impulses with philanthropic causes in ways that entertain and build support for altruistic projects around the globe.

A West Texas native, Pipkin grew up in San Angelo and on his family's ranch at the headwaters of the South Llano River. His tendencies as a class clown led to a career as a juggling comedian, Hollywood screenwriter and actor, and film director. He's shared stages with Robin Williams and Harry Anderson; held recurring roles on HBO's *The Sopranos* and *The Leftovers*; and even written a *New York Times* best-selling book with a famous country musician/golfing buddy—*The Tao of Willie: A Guide to Happiness in Your Heart*.

In the early 2000s, Pipkin set out to make a documentary exploring the world's challenges through interviews with Nobel laureates. *Nobelity* premiered in 2006, the same year Pipkin co-founded The Nobelity Project, a nonprofit dedicated to education and the environment.

**"I don't know what I would write if I wasn't from Texas. Texas is really big, and it takes a lot of stories to fill it up."**

Nobelity's work has ranged from building schools in Kenya to protecting monarch butterflies in Mexico and planting trees in Bastrop.

Late last year, Pipkin launched his "Book of the Every Other Month Club," a subscription delivering six new Pipkin works over the year—three novels, a poetry collection, a children's book, and a collection of screenplays. Each \$200 subscription helps pay for the construction of new school libraries in Kenya, including the purchase of six new library books.

**Q:** *How did The Nobelity Project start?*

**A:** The nonprofit grew out of the *Nobelity* movie.

There were broader issues we were looking at, the most pressing issues we face in the world—energy, water, terrorism, global conflict, hunger, and education. But the longer we've been at the work the more we've focused on education because all the others are dependent on education.

**Q:** *Why focus the book-club fundraising on Kenyan school libraries?*

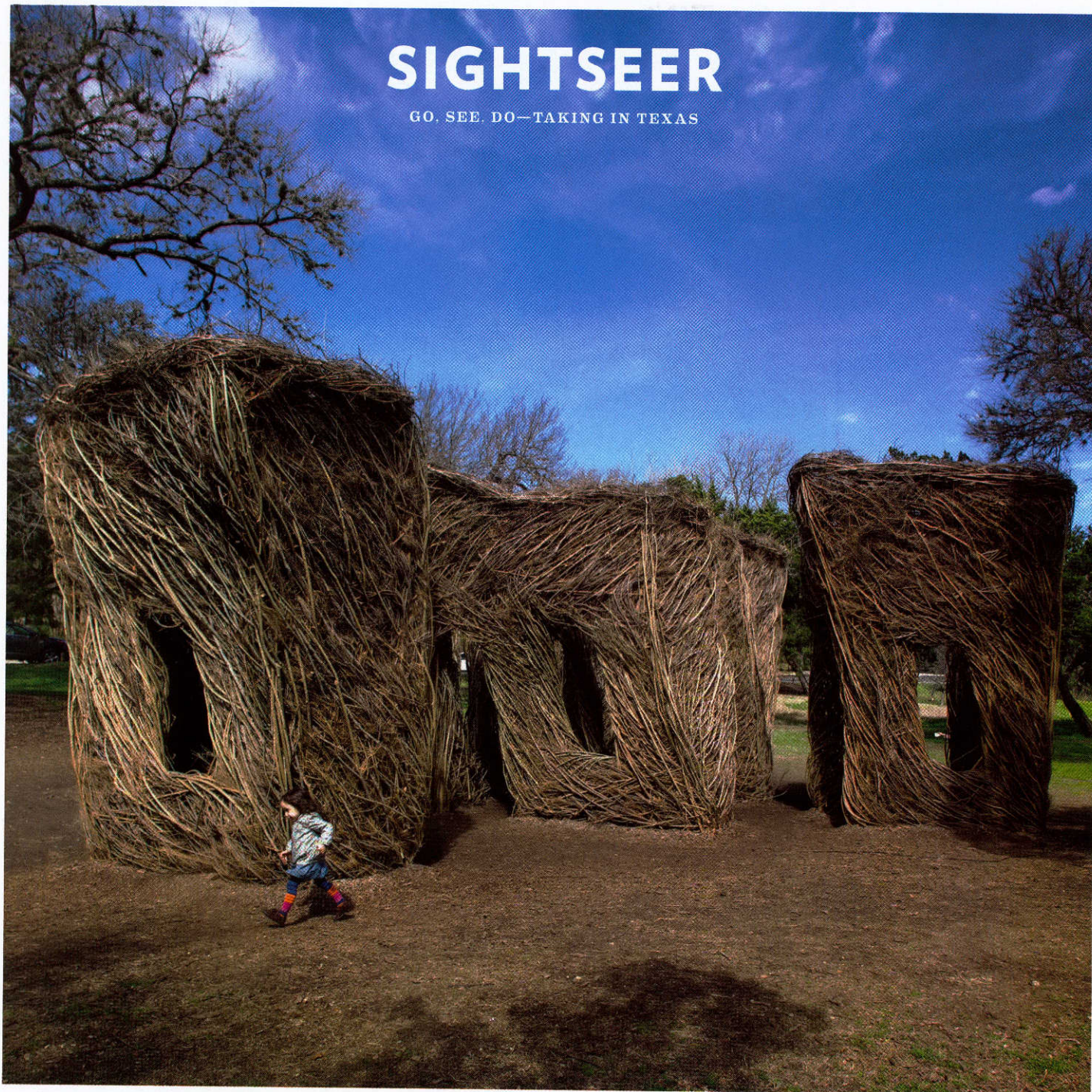
**A:** Almost no rural public school I've ever been to in Kenya had a library or any books. They have textbooks; the curriculum is very rigorous. But they don't have books to read, and it's reading other books that helps you understand what's in the textbooks. Plus it's fun. You develop a love of learning. And so we started building more and more libraries, and we're trying to build three or four per year.

**Q:** *How has being from Texas influenced your writing?*

**A:** I don't know what I would write if I wasn't > *continued on page 94*

# SIGHTSEER

GO. SEE. DO—TAKING IN TEXAS



WHAT: *STICKWORK: YIPPEE KI YAY* WHERE: PEASE PARK, 1100 KINGSBURY ST., AUSTIN WHEN: YEAR-ROUND

## Stick Figures

Step inside artist Patrick Dougherty's whimsical wooden wonder

Nestled among the trees in a beloved Austin green space along Shoal Creek, a playful contemporary art installation has infused new life into one of Texas' oldest public parks. With the help of local volunteers, world-renowned artist Patrick Dougherty built five larger-than-life wood sculptures over a period of three weeks in Pease Park this past January. The work comprises 10 tons of ligustrum, Roosevelt willow, and ash, stripped of leaves and woven together to create a magical village that evokes a dark fairy tale. Commissioned by the Pease Park Conservancy, the structures will stay in place for only a few years, until nature takes its course. Since 1975, Dougherty has created nearly 300 site-specific sculptures on four continents—roughly one per month—but only a handful are still standing (he constructed a similar art installation at Houston's Hermann Park in 2014, which lasted 20 months). Once *Yippee Ki Yay* reaches its eventual demise, its remains will be chipped and reused as mulch in the park. [peasepark.org](http://peasepark.org)

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