

★ TEXAS

TRAVEL LOG

INSIDE:

- ★ Texas hotels and town make Gold, Reader's Choice lists
- ★ Houston museum showcases wonder of the ancient world: Chinese Terra Cotta Warriors
- ★ Actors Tommy Lee Jones and Barry Corbin inducted into Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame

TEXAS FESTIVALS MAKE THE CUT

FROM hundreds of celebrations, festivals, fairs, commemorative events and more that have been nominated by state tourism offices, and local and regional CVBs across the United States and Canada, the **American Bus Association**, each spring, picks the **Top 100 Events in North America**, among them were **three popular Texas events**.

For 2009, Tyler's Azalea and Spring Flower Trail in March netted a mention, as did San Antonio's Fiesta San Antonio in April and Grapevine's GrapeFest in September.

Of Fiesta San Antonio, ABA says it is a "real Texas-sized festival" that honors the memory of the heroes of the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto, and it celebrates San Antonio's rich and diverse cultures. This year — April 17-26 — marks the 118th anniversary of the festival, and about 3.5 million people are expected to attend. ABA makes note of nearby attractions including The River Walk, San Antonio Missions, Institute of Texan Cultures, The Alamo and the River-barge Cruise. GrapeFest, slated for Sept. 17-20,



Fiesta San Antonio in April is a "real Texas-sized festival," according to the American Bus Association.

is listed as the largest wine festival in the Southwest. The celebration includes grape stomping, grape crushing and wine tasting. GrapeFest's People's Choice Wine Tasting Classic is the largest consumer-judged wine competition in the nation

featuring some of Texas' finest wines.

ABA says visitors from as far away as Europe and Asia make their way to the Azalea and Spring Flower Trail in Tyler to participate in home tours, history exhibits and garden displays. As the event marks its

50th anniversary this year, it also will showcase the newly designed Chamblee Commemorative Garden at the Goodmand LaGrand Home.

For more information, visit www.fiesta-sa.org, www.GrapevineTexasUSA.com or www.tylerazaleatrail.com.

NEWS

TEXAS Department of Transportation's Travel Information Division has announced that **Corpus Christi** and **Arlington** have been selected as host cities for the **Texas Travel Counselors Conference in 2010 and 2011**, respectively.

The Arlington conference will also commemorate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Texas Department of Transportation's Travel Information Centers, which were created especially for the celebration of the Texas Centennial and State Fair in 1936.

This April, travel counselors will have a chance to experience, firsthand, attractions in and around San Angelo for this year's TTCC conference.

THE BAD news is that **airline passenger traffic was down in 2008**, but the good news is that **Texas-based Southwest Airlines Co. and American Airlines fared better than all the other major carriers in terms of passenger traffic**.

Dallas-based Southwest Airlines carried the most passengers domestically and overall during the first 10 months of 2008 with 86.5 million passengers, according to the Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics.

During that same period, Fort Worth-based American Airlines Inc., subsidiary of AMR Corp., carried the most international passengers, with 17.9 million international travelers boarding American flights, despite noting that their passenger traffic fell 5.5 percent overall in 2008.

SPENDING on travel and tourism dropped sharply in the third quarter of 2008, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis. The 8.1 percent annual rate decrease is the largest decline since the fourth quarter of 2001, the report states.

Passenger air transportation led the downturn — decreasing 20.4 percent in the third quarter of 2008, which came on the heels of an 18.7 percent second quarter decrease.

After a strong 19.5 percent increase in spending on accommodations was noted in the second quarter of 2008, hotel occupancy fell by 3 percent, and room rates rose as hotels eliminated discounts intended to boost demand.

The analysis also notes that retail shopping by travelers dropped for only the second time in the past 3.5

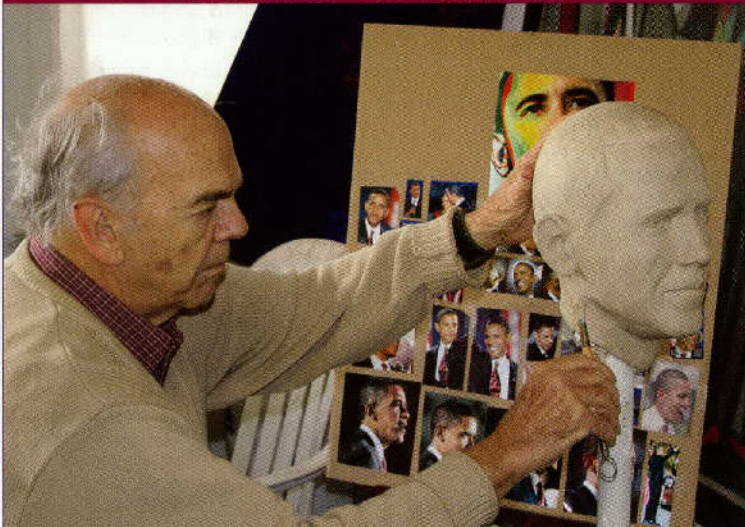
years, decreasing 6.9 percent in third quarter of 2008, after a 4.7 percent increase in the second quarter.

Travel, tourism and transportation prices went up, overall, and employment supported directly by tourist spending fell 1.2 percent in the second quarter of 2008.

MEMBERS of the **U.S. military and their families** will **continue** to have **free access** to **SeaWorld San Antonio** and other parks as Anheuser-Busch InBev extends its military tribute program for another year.

The "Here's to the Heroes" program was launched in February 2005 and has been extended every year since. To date, the program has provided free admission to 3.2 million members of U.S. and coalition

THE ART OF THE PRESIDENT



David Adickes works on his newest entry to the Presidential Park.

SCULPTOR David Adickes has spent six years creating giant statues of all 44 presidents for the **Presidential Park and Gardens at WaterLights in Pearland**. Though not officially open until September 2009, visitors may already see Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Kennedy and Houston-native George H.W. Bush. On **President's Day, Feb. 16**, Adickes will unveil

his newest entry, **President Barack Obama**.

Adickes, who sculpts the 18- to 20-foot busts, helps achieve what he said Mount Rushmore could not — allow people a closer look.

The park includes interactive features on American history and has room to accommodate each successive president through the next century.

For more information, visit www.presidentialpark.com.

IN THE PRESS

CONDÉ NAST *Traveler* released its **15th annual Gold List** — a guide to the world's best places to stay — and has included **many Texas locations**, with Dallas and San Antonio River Walk properties leading the way.

Dallas' Ritz-Carlton — where guests “find marble tubs and Bulgari bath amenities in perfect-scoring rooms, which also have city views” — received a 92.1 overall score.

Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek received high marks for its food for an overall 88.9, and Rosewood Crescent Hotel, with its 88 score, gets points for its uptown location and mixed-used development.

San Antonio's Hotel Contessa — with its marble lobby, palm trees and waterfalls — and Watermark Hotel & Spa — with its “warm creams and soft auburns” — each made the list with matching overall scores of 92.7.

The Alamo City's Emily Morgan Hotel, noted for making it “easy to walk everywhere,” scored 91.4.

Lake Austin Spa Resort in Austin,

a former rodeo training camp on Lake Austin, was the Capital City's best offering on the list with a 92.1 score.

Austin's Four Seasons Hotel Austin, where “oaks, gardens and lawns extend to Lady Bird Lake,” scored 89.2.

The rankings are based on more than 32,000 readers' evaluations of a property's food and dining, location, design, rooms and services.

MOST FAVORED

SOUTHERN *Living* magazine asks: “Is Texas Hill Country: the next Napa?” It's possible. The results of its **2008 Readers' Choice Awards** ranks **Fredericksburg** as 3rd on the list of the **10 Best Small Towns**, and its growing wine culture gets some of the credit.

“Texans consider seeing the bluebonnets bloom in the Hill Country a true rite of passage. For those of us merely passing through at this time of year, the experience borders on pure joy,” the article reads. But, it points out that, aside from blooms, there are many reasons to embrace Fredericksburg.

The article states that, along with the quintessentially Texas things like barbecue joints, dance halls and quirky, small-town characters, there also are restaurants that take Texas cuisine to new heights, artists generating great interest, and vintners planting new wineries every year.

“Because the Hill Country is one of the fastest growing wine-producing regions in the country, some believe the area is on track to become the next Napa Valley.”

“Even on this sleepy Monday, a steady stream of visitors drops by the tasting room to sample the dozen wines made here. It's a testament to the popularity of the Hill Country Wine Trail that features area wineries.”

In April, the Wine and Wildflower Trail celebration brings Fredericksburg's highlights together for this days-long celebration.

For information on the Texas Wine Trail, visit www.texaswinetrail.com for a map and directions to the wineries.

HATS OFF

FORT WORTH's **Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame**, which honors

Texans who have “shown excellence in competition, business, and support of rodeo and the western lifestyle in Texas,” recently inducted six

new members, including actors **Tommy Lee Jones** and **Barry Corbin**.

Oscar-winning Jones, best known for his roles in “The Fugitive,” “JFK” and “Men in Black,” also is an author, producer and eighth generation Texan. He received the honor for his accomplishments as a rancher and champion polo player.

Actor Corbin, who has appeared on television and in films like “Urban Cowboy,” also was honored at the ceremony with the 2009 Rick Smith Spirit of Texas Award. The Lamesa native and Texas Tech graduate donated the steer that is currently the lead animal for the Fort Worth Herd in the Stockyards.

Other inductees include the late Jim Bob Atlizer, a former Rodeo Cowboy Association calf-roping champion and Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame and National Cowboy Hall of Fame member; Tyler Magnus, nine-time National Finals Rodeo qualifier and team-roping winner who stars in his own TV show, “The Roping Show with Tyler Magnus” on RFD Television; Rope Myers, a former Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association world champion steer wrestler; and Ken Welsh, former PRCA Champion saddle bronc rider.

For more information, visit www.texascowboyhalloffame.com or call (817) 626-7131.

GALS GETAWAY

TAKING NOTE of an increasing trend for women to take trips with their best girlfriends, the **Comfort Chamber of Commerce** is setting its sights on this market.

“More women are making time for each other by getting together for all-girl trips,” says Regina Alexander, manager of the Comfort Chamber of Commerce. “It's a great way to strengthen the bonds of friendship and for women to let their girlfriends know how much they value and appreciate them.”

“Comfort is an ideal location for a girlfriend getaway,” says Alexander. “We're located within easy driving distance of San Antonio, Austin and Houston, and there's a lot to do within walking distance of the downtown historic district.”

Alexander touts Comfort's “best antique shopping anywhere,” a selection of bed & breakfasts that range from Victorian-era mansions to country cabins; local vineyards with their

armed forces and their families.

“This is a difficult time for our men and women in uniform — and their families — and we are honored to give them something back,” says Jim Atchison, president of Busch Entertainment Corp.

“Here's to the Heroes” provides a single day's free admission for the service member and as many as three of his or her direct dependents.

Any active duty, active reserve, ready reserve service member or National Guardsman is entitled to free admission under the program. They need only register online at www.herosalute.com or in the entrance plaza of the park and show a Department of Defense photo ID.

“This is one small way we can acknowledge and thank the soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen and Coast Guardsmen whose service helps to preserve the freedom and safety of every American,” noted Atchison. “It's important to all of us at Anheuser-Busch InBev that we show our gratitude to the men and women of our armed forces and their families for the sacrifices they make on our behalf.”



This sculpture of a kneeling archer from the Qin Dynasty will be on display at the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

wine tastings; a Baby Boomer music venue; and a spa.

For more information on Comfort, call (830) 995-3131 or visit www.comfortchamberofcommerce.com.

MUSEUMS

ON THE HEELS of being named one of *Time* magazine's top 10 museum exhibitions of 2008, **Terra Cotta Warriors: Guardians of China's First Emperor** makes its way to the **Houston Museum of Natural Science** beginning May 22.

Deemed the Eighth Wonder of the Ancient World, the Terra Cotta Warriors were created as protectors of the tomb of China's First Emperor - Qin Shi Huang. They portray how actual Chinese armies looked around the time of the emperor's death in 210 BCE. Before Huang's death, he arranged for the giant mausoleum to be built to house his remains, where the Terra Cotta Army was to be included to guard him in the afterlife.

"Since their discovery, the Terra Cotta Warriors have captured the world's imagination because they give us a fascinating glimpse into the life of China's first emperor, a man who created multiple historical marvels that

endure to the present day," says Joel A. Bartsch, president of The Houston Museum of Natural Science. "We're eager to present the magnificent achievements of this ancient Chinese culture when this unprecedented exhibition comes to Houston."

The excavation of burial pits discovered by a farmer in 1974 revealed the more than 8,000 clay warriors and artifacts, which were contained in an area encompassing thousands of square meters around the present day city of Lishan, China.

The exhibit will include a selection of 14 of these warriors, including generals, infantrymen, officers and servants, as well as a cavalry horse and chariot driver. Visitors will learn about the Emperor and see artifacts from

his vast necropolis, including a suit of armor, exquisite pendants, ritual objects and even models of facilities of the Qin Dynasty.

The exhibit set attendance records when it was shown at the British Museum in London in 2007-08, and it has already stopped at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, Calif. After its stint at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, the exhibit will make its final stop at the National Geographic Society Museum in Washington, D.C. It is currently on display at the High Museum in Atlanta.

For more information, log on to www.terracottaexhibit.com or call (713) 639-4629.

THROUGH March 29, the **El Paso Museum of Art** is showcasing prize pieces of work in **Blake to Kahlo to Warhol: Masterworks** from Austin's Harry Ransom Center.

The exhibition brings together American, Mexican and European masterworks from the Ransom Center's collection of more than 65,000 works of art from the 15th through the 20th centuries.

In addition to masterpieces by some of the world's most famous artists of the 19th and 20th centuries such as Frida Kahlo, Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol and Diego Rivera, exceptional works of art by internationally known artist/author/poets such as William Blake, E. E. Cummings, Jean

Cocteau and Tom Lea are also included. Other works span subjects as diverse as an ill-fated train wreck in El Paso by Guadalupe Posada, a theater production featuring French actress Sarah Bernhardt by Alphonse Mucha and a visual response to Spanish poet Rafael Alberti's verses celebrating painting by Abstract Expressionist Robert Motherwell.

WEB WORLD

THE GREATER Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau is using its visitor information manager's skills to add a bonus feature to its Web site — a **new online portal** to "Ask Veronica."

Veronica Nielson, a former concierge manager for Enron Corp., now helps with GHCVB inquiries online as well as by phone.

According to the GHCVB, nearly 300 people from Houston to Moscow logged on to ask questions in its first week the "Ask Veronica" feature was launched.

Visitors to "Ask Veronica" may also search for previous topics and answers.

For more information, visit www.visithoustontexas.com.

THE ARLINGTON Convention and Visitors Bureau has added **Real Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds** on its Web site, making it one of the first convention bureaus in the state to do so. The RSS feed allows Arlington.org to deliver content in real time, so that readers get timely updates. Readers can subscribe to the site's RSS and receive updates as they are available. This is especially useful as Arlington is undergoing various improvements to its tourism product, such as the opening of the new \$1.1 billion Cowboys stadium, improved access along I-30, new developments in downtown Arlington such the new Levitt Pavilion, and the addition of the United States Bowling Congress and the Bowling Museum Hall of Fame.

Arlington will also host sporting events such as the Big 12 Championships, AT&T Cotton Bowl Classic and the 2011 Super Bowl.

INDUSTRY INSIDERS

MICHELLE D. HORINE, a former news reporter and ongoing nature tourism advocate, has been named

the **new communications director** for the **Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau**.

CCCVB CEO/President, Keith Arnold says, "Michelle is an established communications professional with great networks throughout Corpus Christi and our region. She brings an outstanding track record in public relations, nature tourism, fund-raising and events management."

Horine was recently awarded the Conservation & Environmental Stewardship Award for Environmental Education. She has been recognized for her volunteerism and community support by being named one of Corpus Christi's 40 under 40, an honor given to individuals who strive to make Corpus Christi a better place to live. She was recently featured in the Corpus Christi Business Journal "Under 30" section for her work with nature tourism and nonprofits.

RONNIE PRICE joins the **San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau** as its **new assistant director of sales and marketing**.

CVB Executive Director Scott White notes, "We are very excited and fortunate to have Ronnie join our team. His strong sales experience and leadership style aligns perfectly with our mission and brand of Deep. In the Heart."

In his new role at the CVB, Price will oversee the Communications, Mexico/Latin America, Sales, Services and Tourism divisions.

AMARILLO Convention and Visitors Council has made a few **sales staff adjustments**, including the promotion of **Jason Harrison** as the **new senior sales manager**.

Harrison has been at the Amarillo CVC since July 2007. In addition to directing the three-person sales team, he covers the association markets. He will continue to make monthly sales calls on groups in Austin.

Tiffany Redinger, a 2007 graduate of West Texas A&M University, joins the sales staff to **cover small markets and corporate sales** for the Amarillo CVC.

Tina Teague remains on the staff as a **convention sales manager**. Her duties have been expanded to include the SMERF and the Agriculture/Ranching markets.

TEXAS TRIVIA

Which annual event began in 1987 as a way to preserve the tradition of the American West in words and music?

The Texas Cowboy Poetry Gathering is chockfull of real cowboys (and cowgirls) sharing a way of life through poetry, music and storytelling. The festivities give a real feel for the range with its chuck-wagon breakfasts, a dance and cowboy church. Cowboy poets come from as far away as Australia. This year's event is slated for Feb. 27-March 1 at Sul Ross University campus in Alpine. For more information, visit www.cowboy-poetry.org.

TEXAS TRIVIA

TEXAS TRAVELOG is published monthly by the Texas Department of Transportation, Travel Information Division. Please send news items of interest to the Texas travel industry to Texas Travelog, P.O. Box 141009, Austin, TX 78714-1009. (512) 486-5874, fax (512) 486-5879. E-mail: trv-log@dot.state.tx.us. Deadline for each newsletter is the 15th of the month preceding the issue date. To receive this publication electronically, please e-mail trv-log@dot.state.tx.us.

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DESIGN/LAYOUT: Kirsti Harms

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TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

VISITOR NUMBERS as of December 31, 2008

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	5,018	+1.68	89,391	-13.56
ANTHONY	6,552	-40.12	115,690	-24.00
CAPITOL	4,866	-8.74	78,700	-16.12
DENISON	23,899	-35.20	439,948	-11.63
GAINESVILLE	26,194	-46.84	437,731	-21.44
LANGTRY	4,020	-3.25	62,733	-7.07
LAREDO	17,027	+0.59	137,700	-6.98
ORANGE	36,906	-18.96	499,849	-10.72
TEXARKANA	22,890	+0.51	305,100	-33.34
VALLEY	10,079	-7.07	148,226	-22.50
WASKOM	28,500	-33.22	390,152	-29.01
WICHITA FALLS	11,391	+3.90	193,827	+3.70
CENTER TOTALS	193,342	-24.85	2,899,047	-18.69

*Compared to last year

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www.txdot.gov • www.dontmesswithtexas.org

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