

★ TEXAS

TRAVEL LOG

INSIDE:

- ★ Texas State Railroad on track for Thomas, Polar Express
- ★ Sculptor's realistic, extraordinary works of art fascinate visitors at Fort Worth's Modern Art Museum
- ★ Caprock Canyons State Park set to celebrate 25th anniversary and its new visitor center

CVB NEWS

THE BROWNSVILLE Convention and Visitors Bureau begins a new chapter with the appointment of Mariano "Bean" Ayala as its new director.

"I am so excited that I will have the opportunity to be the spokesperson and representative for the citizens of Brownsville," Ayala told *The Brownsville Herald*.

Ayala has been a colorful part of Brownsville for years. The University of Texas Pan American – Brownsville graduate has served as Cameron County's personnel/safety risk director; Rio Grande State Center and Valley Regional Medical Center human resources director; and executive director of the Boys and Girls Club. Most recently, he was the administrative director of business development for the Brownsville Surgical Hospital.

Ayala said that his work with non-profit organizations has taught him accountability, and the need to spend monies wisely and efficiently.

But even more so, Ayala is known for his work in the community at various events. For 14 years, Ayala — who has referred to himself as the Mexican Don Rickles — was the colorful emcee for the Sombrero Fest grito ceremonies and during Charro Days, he was known to go around town in his Mexican hat and charro attire.

"Mr. Ayala's passion for Brownsville and his desire to make Brownsville one of the best spots in Texas made him the clear choice," says Mike Rodriguez, BCVB board chairman.

Ayala replaces Mike C. Gonzalez, who resigned in May soon after executive assistant and office manager Margarita Lopez's resignation. Both Gonzalez and Lopez were arrested by Brownsville police on charges of theft of funds from the BCVB and are awaiting trial.

STATE FAIR SET TO SOAR

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT! is the theme for the 2007 State Fair of Texas, Sept. 28–Oct. 21, and there will be many reminders with the introduction of the new \$5 million Texas SkyWay. The high-performance aerial ride gives visitors a bird's eye view of the Midway and historic Fair Park.

Each of its 34 Art Deco-inspired, enclosed gondolas holds eight passengers. Riders cruise up and over the colorful Midway on a system supported by eight towers, covering more than 1,800 feet from one station to the next. Occupants soar 65 feet above the ground at the ride's highest point.

Also flying high is a human cannonball who will be catapulted at least twice a day over the Gateway Plaza.

As always, the state's annual fair is chock full of attractions to keep the massive crowds entertained. Livestock shows, a dancing dogs revue, cooking contests, music stages and college football add up to a premium entertainment package for the 24-day exposition.

Architectural whiz Bryan Berg, aka the Cardstacker, will again "wow" fairgoers in the African American Museum with his unusual skill ... and he's going for his third Guinness record.

The Museum of Nature and Science will host a special exhibit, "Base-

ball As America," which gives visitors a rare glimpse of photographs and artifacts from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y.

For stage and musical entertainment, Disney's Broadway hit *The Lion King* will be presented daily (except Mondays) at the Music Hall. Also, there will be a bevy of musical headliners, like Miranda Lambert, Third Day, Billy Ray Cyrus, Grupo Fantasma, Boyz II Men and The

Jonas Brothers at the Chevrolet Main Stage.

Auto enthusiasts won't be left out, either.

The State Fair of Texas Auto Show, which had its humble beginnings in 1904, will be sprawled across two buildings, and it will include an outdoor truck area and 300,000 square feet of cars, activities and entertainment.

For more information, call (214) 565-9931 or visit www.bigtex.com.



AT THE TEXAS Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau's Annual Conference recently, various CVBs were noted for their efforts in advertising, tourism promotion and more. The CVBs named **Idea Fair winners** are McKinney, advertising; Fredericksburg, convention promotion; El Paso, cooperative marketing; Abilene, local awareness; Round

Rock, sports marketing; Bryan College Station, tourism promotion; Amarillo, video/dvd; and South Padre Island, Web site.

The Idea Fair also netted Peoples' Choice winners based on budgets of under \$350,000, from \$350,000 to \$999,999, and \$1 million-plus. Abilene won Best Overall Entry.

In ascending order (based on

budgets), the People's Choice first place winners were:

- ◆ **Advertising:** Brenham/Washington County, McKinney and El Paso
- ◆ **Cooperative Marketing:** Brenham Washington County, San Angelo and Grapevine
- ◆ **Convention Promotion:** Denton and El Paso (no entries for under \$350,000)

- ◆ **Local Awareness:** Temple, Killeen and Abilene
 - ◆ **Sports Marketing:** Brownwood, Round Rock (no entries for \$1 million-plus)
 - ◆ **Tourism Promotion:** Temple, McKinney and Rockport-Fulton (tied), Bryan College Station
 - ◆ **Video/DVD:** McKinney and Bryan College Station (no entries for under \$350,000)
 - ◆ **Web Site:** Brownwood, San Angelo and South Padre Island
- For a complete list of Idea Fair Peoples' Choice winners, visit www.tacvb.com.

HEART OF ART

THE HYPER-realistic works of art by renowned contemporary sculptor **Ron Mueck** are on view for a **special exhibit** at the **Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth** through Oct. 21.

Mueck's *Untitled (Seated Woman)*, which became part of the Modern's permanent collection when the new building opened in 2002, drew many raves, which became the impetus behind bringing this exhibit of 13 more of his works.

Over the past decade, the artist has created a personal, distinctive body of works — intensely realistic sculptures of friends and relatives — often larger or smaller than life-size. They evoke a range of human conditions, such as vulnerability, and emotional responses, such as pity. Of his decision to manipulate scale — some subjects are miniaturized, while others are magnified into monumental portraits — the artist says:

"I change the scale intuitively, really—avoiding life-size because it's ordinary. There's no math involved; I usually do a sketch on paper and if it looks good to me, then I use that scale for the actual piece. The shift in scale draws you in and in some ways engages you at a different level."

The Modern's curator Andrea Karnes says, "Mueck's art offers us a glimpse of something 'real,' but not life-size, and because his subjects are isolated, we focus in on them in a new way. Through his creative process, the artist makes a poignant and psychologically charged portrait. His work is powerful; its strange believability compels us to look closely."

Mueck has earned international recognition, with previous major exhibitions in London, Venice,



The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth showcases sculptor Ron Mueck's remarkably life like — smaller or larger than life — sculptures.

Washington, D.C., and Berlin. He began his career making puppets for children's television programs, including *Sesame Street* and *The Muppet Show*.

The special exhibition is included in general Museum admission: \$8 for adults; \$4 for seniors (60+) and students with identification; free for children 12 and under; free for Modern members.

For more information, call (817) 738-9215 or toll-free at (866) 824-5566. You may also visit www.themodern.org.

BEGINNING Sept. 9, the **El Paso Museum of Art** will feature the art of **legendary American artist, Peter Max**. The exhibition covers Max's entire artistic oeuvre including his early figurative paintings, his explosive and psychedelic art from the '60s and '70s, his graphic design and fine art from the '80s and '90s, and his current work.

Max has achieved his place in history by having painted for various heads of state, including six U.S. presidents and for being designated Official Artist for five Super Bowls, the Grammy Awards and the Olympics, to name just a few.

Max's art, which has been shown in more than 100 museums and galleries throughout the world, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., has become a part of the fabric of contemporary culture. He has been called a pop icon, neo fauvist, abstract expressionist and the United State's "Painter Laureate."

From art that appeared on the first U.S. 10-cent stamp bearing the title "Preserve the Environment," to 235 U.S. border murals greeting millions of people entering America each year, Peter Max seeks to capture themes of America at its finest in his art.

For more information, call (915) 532-1707 or visit www.clpasoartmuseum.org.

THE **BLANTON Museum of Art** at the University of Texas at **Austin has changed its general admission prices**, effective Sept. 1, for adults and senior citizens. Adult admission increased to \$7 and senior admission increased to \$5.

Members, current University of Texas at Austin students, staff, faculty and children ages 12 years and younger will continue to receive free admission. There is no change in admission fees for college students with a valid ID (\$3) and youth ages 13–21 (\$3).

The museum, with a permanent collection of more than 17,000 works, is recognized for its European paintings, an encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings, and modern and contemporary American and Latin American art.

For more information, call (512) 471-7324 or visit www.blantonmuseum.org.

TRAVEL NEWS

TEXAS Travel Industry Association's annual **Texas Travel Summit** — a collection of industry veterans sharing their expertise with state travel professionals —

launches on **Sept. 23 in Houston**.

Guest speakers include Continental Airlines Chairman of the board and CEO Larry Kellner, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines Senior Vice President Lisa Bauer, Busch Entertainment Corporation Chairman and President Keith M. Kasen, and Chairman and CEO of the nation's leading ad/public relations agency serving the travel, leisure and lifestyle industry, Peter Yesawich.

Topics include rural tourism, marketing on a shoestring budget, the Latin American tourism market, measuring the value of travel and tourism, history as a facet of tourism, women as travel purchase decision makers, and emerging lifestyles and trends.

Aside from a series of sessions, the Texas Nature Tourism Council and the Texas Cultural and Heritage Tourism Council will host an outing to the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center trails, as well as, a tour of three Heritage Society homes.

There also will be a fund-raiser for the Texas Tourism Foundation and a golf tournament.

For more information, call (512) 476-4472 or visit www.ttia.org.

FORECASTS for an **expected active hurricane season** have had **little effect on the travel intentions** of Americans, according to a new national survey released by the **Travel Industry Association and Ypartnership**. The July travelhorizons™ survey of 1,927 active travelers was conducted during the week of June 8.

Even though hurricane forecasts are predicting a total of 13 to 17 named storms this year (7 to 10 of which are expected to reach hurricane status and 3 to 5 of which are expected to be Category III or above), this expectation appears to be of little concern to leisure travelers.

Because of concerns about the hurricane forecast, only 1 percent postponed a leisure trip, 1 percent changed their vacation destination, and 1 percent cancelled a trip.

Although short-term travel behavior is always subject to change because of weather emergencies, these data suggest the overwhelming majority of leisure travelers make their plans without much consideration given to the vagaries of the weather, particularly longer-term forecasts.

"These insights obviously come

as good news to both destinations and travel service suppliers located in the areas usually affected by periodic weather emergencies,” says Roger Dow, president and chief executive officer of the Travel Industry Association.

RIGHT ON TRACK

AMERICAN Heritage Railways is kicking off **Texas State Railroad** operations at Palestine and Rusk — able to bypass a rain-damaged portion of the tracks — to bring an active season on the tracks. That includes highly popular children’s favorite, Thomas the Tank Engine and a Polar Express Train Ride.

“Passengers love the train ride from Palestine and Rusk stations, and many who have ridden the train as children bring their children or grandchildren to enjoy the experience. Trains seem to occupy a special place in people’s hearts, and many train aficionados enjoy the ride as much as (or more) than the children,” says Palestine Director of Tourism & Conventions Susan Cottle-Leonard.

Thomas the Tank Engine pulls out of the Texas State Railroad Rusk Depot on Oct. 19, whether recent track wash outs are repaired or not. The attraction simply does not cross the section of the track undergoing repairs, so operations will continue.

Cottle-Leonard says, like the “Little Train that Could,” it takes more than difficult circumstances to shut them down.

In addition to the ride, the Thomas visit also will include various children’s activities, and on Oct. 27, there will be the bonus activities of Palestine’s annual Fall Oktoberfest.

Also planned is The Polar Express Train Ride, which will be a holiday experience beginning on Nov. 23 out of the Palestine Station. It will have a lot of atmosphere and a feel for the season.

The Texas State Railroad continues to attract visitors who discover that “a trip on the train isn’t a ride, it’s an experience,” Cottle-Leonard adds.

“The ride through the Piney Woods offers a unique experience and the scenery is beautiful. With all the rain, the forest is still spring-like in August. In the fall, this is one of the few ar-

eas in Texas to offer colorful autumn leaves. Diesel and steam engines will be in use, allowing the public to enjoy a piece of living history.”

For more information, call (800) 659-3484 or visit www.visitpalestine.com or www.texasstaterr.com.

GREAT OUTDOORS

IN AN EFFORT to continue spreading the word that “Life is Better Outside,” the award-winning **Texas Parks & Wildlife television show** is now available on streaming video through **MyOutdoorTV.com**, the world’s largest Internet video network for outdoor television shows, radio, video and conservation information.

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department is one of the nation’s first state wildlife agencies to offer its weekly television series to a broader audience as part of this powerful new forum.

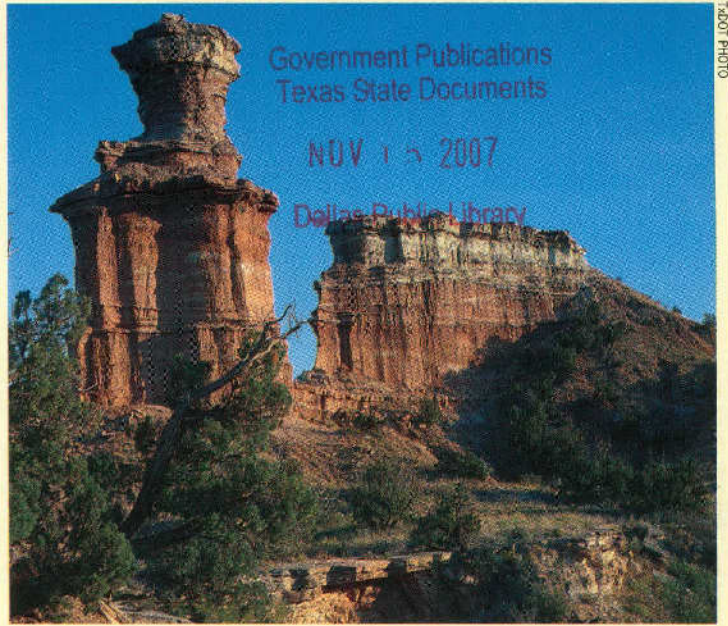
Passport to Texas, TPWD’s daily 90-second radio series produced and hosted by Cecilia Nasti also can be heard on MyOutdoorTV.com. The shows, available on-demand, cover hiking to hunting, conservation to camping, and everything in between. In addition, videos produced by the Texas agency, including two narrated by Walter Cronkite that examine the state’s water resources, will be accessible through MyOutdoorTV.com.

“We’re very impressed with the outstanding quality of *Texas Parks & Wildlife*, and we’re excited that a program of its caliber is one of the first state-sponsored shows to be aired on MyOutdoorTV.com,” says Chris Moise, CEO. “Texas truly has a bounty of resources to share with the world, and we are honored to be able to extend their reach to our audience.”

“We’re proud of our state’s resources and excited to showcase Texas through this partnership with MyOutdoorTV.com,” says Richard Roberts, executive producer of *Texas Parks & Wildlife*. “With more and more people accessing news and entertainment through the Internet, this is the ideal vehicle for expanding our audience worldwide.”

TPWD shows and materials will be available on the site’s special section “State Explorer” and also will be available for search from topical sections such as deer and turkey

PANHANDLE EXPLORATION



Palo Duro Canyon is among the many places TxDOT and AAA-travel counselors will explore during a study tour of the Panhandle region.

TEXAS Department of Transportation and AAA travel counselors will be exploring the **Texas Panhandle** as they embark on the **Oct. 14–19 Texas Travel Industry Association-sponsored study tour**.

The regional study tours have served as effective tools for promoting travel within the state by offering travel counselors first-hand accounts of Texas towns and attractions. The more acquainted the travel counselors are with a region, the more capa-

ble they are to convey that information to the traveling public.

Granbury Convention and Visitors Bureau Director Charlie McIlvain, along with a host of local guides, will lead the tour, which begins in Amarillo and ends in Lubbock.

Planned stops included Tascosa, Dalhart, Dumas, Fritch, Groom, McLean, Shamrock, Wheeler, Canadian, Pampa, Panhandle, Canyon, Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Caprock Canyons State Park and Plainview.

ble they are to convey that information to the traveling public. The park’s friends group is hosting a reception and live auction that Friday beginning at 7 p.m. On that Saturday, the public is invited to tour the new 4,400-square-foot Visitors Center facilities and the 15,000-acre park, as well as absorb the view from the new platform overlooking the Texas State Bison Herd pasture.

Future exhibits at the visitor center will include information on the Southern Plains bison herd, the park’s geology, the Clarity Tunnel and 64-mile Caprock Canyon Trailway.

For more information, call Deanna Oberheu at (806) 455-1492 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/caprock_canyons.

TRAVEL PHOTO

TEXAS TRIVIA

In what Texas city would you find the longest single-span suspension bridge west of the Mississippi?

In 1870, Waco Bridge was erected, and it is still in use today as a pedestrian bridge crossing the Brazos River and features parks on both sides — Indian Spring Park on the west side and Martin Luther King Jr. on the east side. At the onset, the bridge was crucial to traders and travelers. Today, it serves as the site of many community festivals and events. It is said to have been the prototype for the Brooklyn Bridge, built 13 years later.

TEXAS TRIVIA

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TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

VISITOR NUMBERS as of July 31, 2007

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	12,533	-1.57	65,533	-3.37
ANTHONY	11,428	-37.11	88,180	-31.58
CAPITOL	8,310	-7.74	61,320	+4.17
DENISON	57,895	+2.80	311,293	+2.91
GAINESVILLE	54,391	+2.33	311,229	+0.48
LANGTRY	5,111	-21.87	44,656	-0.55
LAREDO	17,031	+13.20	88,765	+9.10
ORANGE	53,246	-13.20	349,728	-0.38
TEXARKANA	54,871	-18.29	285,481	-6.37
VALLEY	9,516	-16.43	146,520	+7.99
WASKOM	52,190	-6.55	343,468	+4.90
WICHITA FALLS	21,121	-6.20	118,897	+3.75
CENTER TOTALS	357,643	-8.11	2,215,070	-0.57

*Compared to last year

Dial toll-free (800) 452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m.–6 p.m. daily, Central Time)

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