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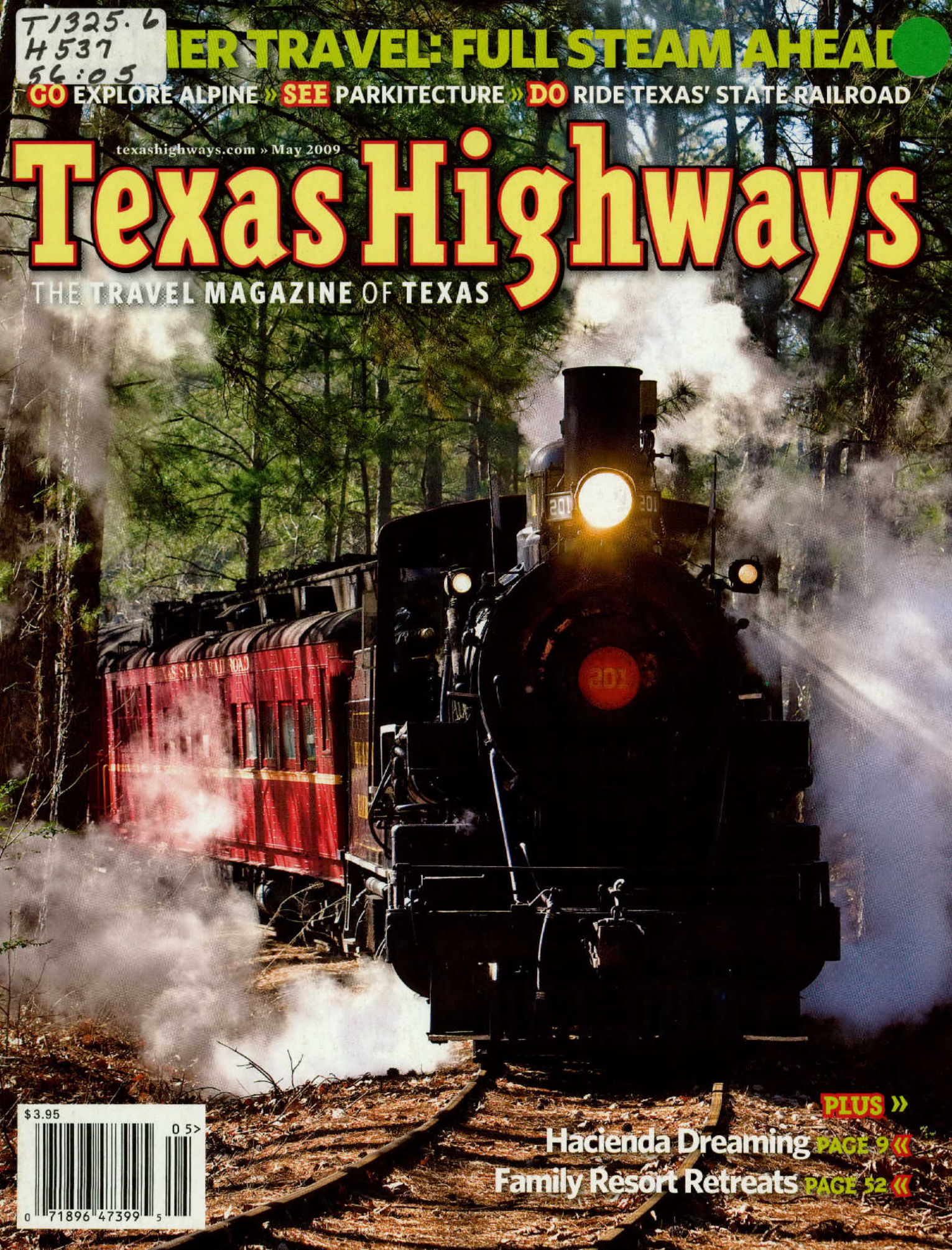
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Hacienda Dreaming **PAGE 9 <<**
Family Resort Retreats **PAGE 52 <<**



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Shangri La Botanical Garden & Nature Center in Orange is an earth-friendly project that preserves 250 acres of wetlands as it enables visitors to learn more about the native ecosystem of Southeast Texas.

Parkitecture

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As our feature, Lay of the Landscape (page 44), explains, parks buildings can be designed to grow out of the landscape and interact with the environment in a non-invasive way. The San Antonio architectural firm of Lake/Flato takes a vital interest in designing buildings that offer a statement on sustainability while fulfilling their



utilitarian role. Architects at Lake/Flato have taken on projects across the state, from the steamy wetlands of Orange in Southeast Texas to the repurposed agricultural land of the Rio Grande Valley and the reclaimed ranchland in the Hill Country. So please turn to page 44 to see how well we can fit into the landscape, once we understand the lay of it.

➤ Wildflower Close-Up

Wildflowers are beautiful in the field, and truly brilliant close up. *Extremely close up* in the wildflower portraits by Rick Tolar. *Texas Highways* has joined the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to present an exhibit of Tolar's photographs to commemorate National Wildflower Week, May 5-10. www.wildflower.org

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor

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Published monthly by the
Travel Information Division

Division Director Doris Howdeshell
Publisher Kathy Murphy
Editor Charles J. Lohrmann
Managing Editor Jill Lawless

Senior Editors:

Nola McKey, Lori Moffatt
Associate Editor Marty Lange
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For advertising information: AJR & Associates, 25132 Oakhurst Dr., Ste. 201, Spring, TX 77386; 800/383-7677; fax 713/942-0277.

Subscriptions to Texas Highways are \$19.95¹ annually (\$29.95 foreign). Call **800/839-4997**. (Call 386/597-4297 outside the U.S.) Copies of current and back issues are available. Call 512/486-5823. For subscription services, call 800/839-4997.

Texas Highways (ISSN 0040-4349) is published monthly by the Texas Department of Transportation, 150 East Riverside Drive, Austin, Texas 78704. The official travel magazine of Texas encourages travel within the state and tells the Texas story to readers around the world. www.texashighways.com

Periodicals Postage paid at Austin, Texas, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Texas Highways Circulation, Box 51564, Boulder, CO 80322-1564.

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COVER
STORY

24

Full Steam Ahead

Glide through the pines on steel rails, enjoying the East Texas countryside and the feeling of traveling back in time.

Text by **RANDY MALLORY**
Photographs by **ERICH SCHLEGEL**



Check out www.texashighways.com for more travel information

features

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A gateway to Big Bend and the Trans-Pecos, Alpine offers diversions all its own, including a topnotch museum, a quirky trading post, and premier rock-hunting sites.

Text by **BARBARA RODRIGUEZ**
Photographs by **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**

44 | Lay of the Landscape
Architects at the San Antonio firm of Lake/Flato combine a love of the landscape with sustainable designs to help manage resources in two Texas parks near San Antonio and Mission.

Text by **MELISSA GASKILL**

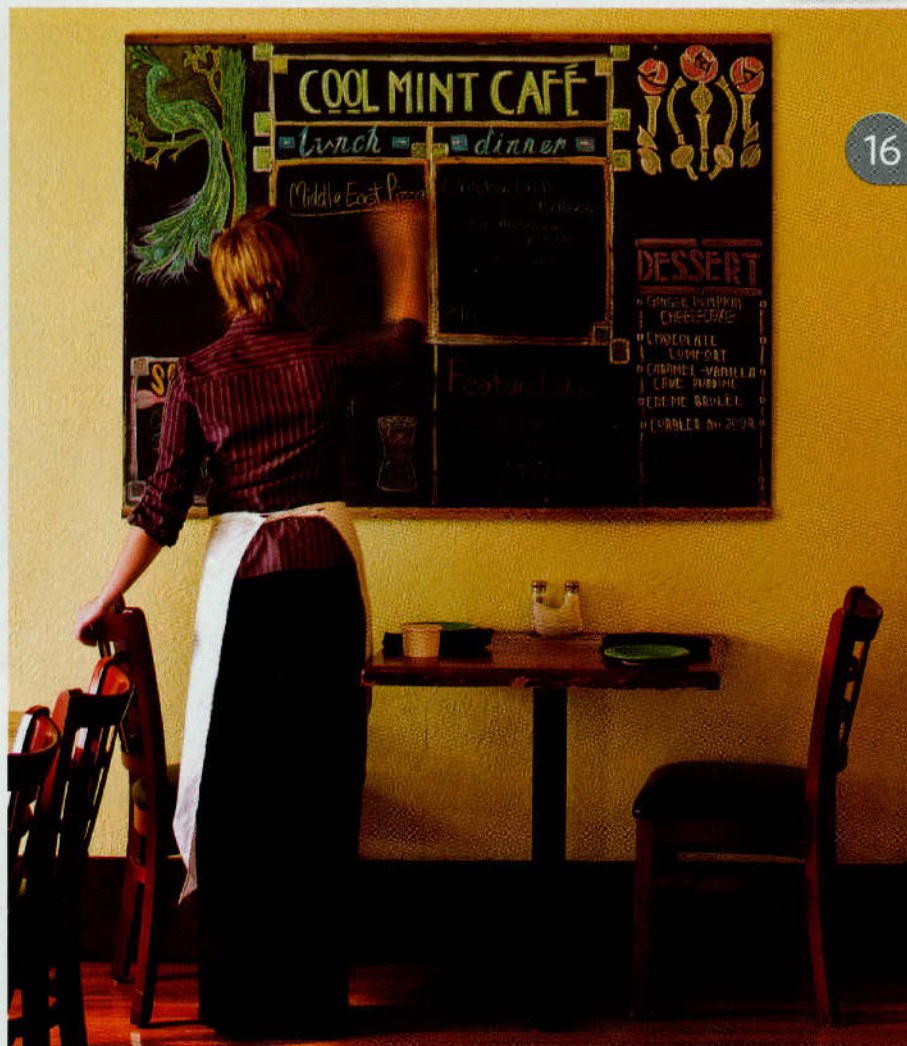
52 | Texas Resorts: Endless Summer
What are you doing for your summer vacation? Five winning resorts from the Hill Country to the Piney Woods offer the whole package. Play. Relax. Dine. Reconnect.

Text by **TH STAFF**

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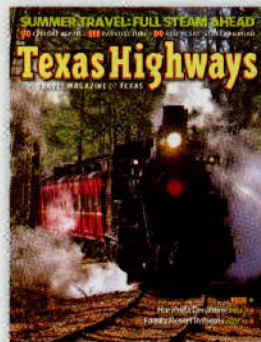
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About Our Covers

FRONT: As the Texas State Railroad chugs along between Rusk and Palestine, passengers have time to enjoy the Piney Woods scenery.
Photo © Erich Schlegel

BACK: Longhorns still range on the Woodward Ranch, a 125-year-old spread 15 miles south of Alpine.
Photo by J. Griffis Smith

Photographic Prints Available

Some images in this issue are available as prints in two distinctive formats. For more information, call toll-free 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.



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Watch for new travel guides for Texas Pecos Trail Region (www.texaspecostrail.com) and Texas Hill Country Trail Region (www.txhillcountrytrail.com).



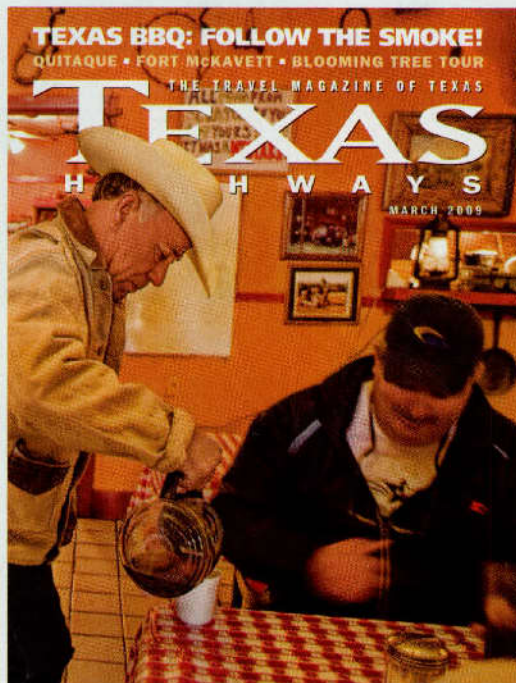
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Photo courtesy Texas State Library & Archives Commission



"On the day that *TH* arrives, everything comes to a halt until every word has been read."

—FLORENCE BOX,
Dallas



Here, Quitaque

Thank you for a bang-up good job on the March issue and the Quitaque story [by Joel Salcido]. Quitaque is a small town with people who have big hearts and smiles. I lived there until World War II, and have attended every homecoming since.

HAROLD BOGAN
Nacogdoches

I'm a new subscriber to *TH* and especially liked the story on Quitaque. As a result, my wife and I are planning on making a trip there this year with our fifth-wheel travel trailer. Coincidentally, we have a beautiful, 24x30 oil of Caprock Canyons by Mark Haworth hanging over our fireplace.

RON HARRIS
Duncanville

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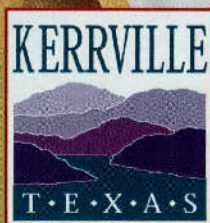
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Talk

Meat You There

I enjoyed reading “Follow the Smoke” [March]. Some of the best barbecue that I’ve ever eaten was from Carter’s Bar-B-Que in Longview. Owner Curtis Carter has been cooking barbecue for more than 25 years, and his ribs are heavenly.

BECKY KUBIN
Garrison

Not a single Fort Worth joint made the cut. You could have mentioned the world-famous Angelo’s, or the venerable Robinson’s, or Cousin’s. These are among the best barbecue joints in the world.

STEVE VAUGHAN
Rockford, Illinois

EDITOR’S NOTE: We hear you, Mr. Vaughan! Fort Worth has multiple fine barbecue joints. Our list was merely an excerpt from John DeMers’ new book, and by no means inclusive. We also heard from readers recommending *The Railhead Smokehouse BBQ* (in Fort Worth), *The Salt Lick* (Driftwood and Round Rock), and *Dyer’s BBQ* (Pampa and Amarillo). Thanks to all of you ‘cue-lovers who wrote in! [continued on page 72]

➔ TH READER RECOMMENDATION

Ranger Oil Boom

THERE IS a great little museum in the old brick train station in **Ranger**. The **Roaring Ranger Oil Boom Museum** features photographs, tools, and other artifacts (like a monster walking beam drill rig) that cover the town’s history, including the railroad and the oil boom of the early 1900s. Docent Thomas Merritt is very knowledgeable.

TOM MARTIN
Livingston

The Roaring Ranger Oil Boom Museum is at 121 S. Commerce St.; 254/647-3091.



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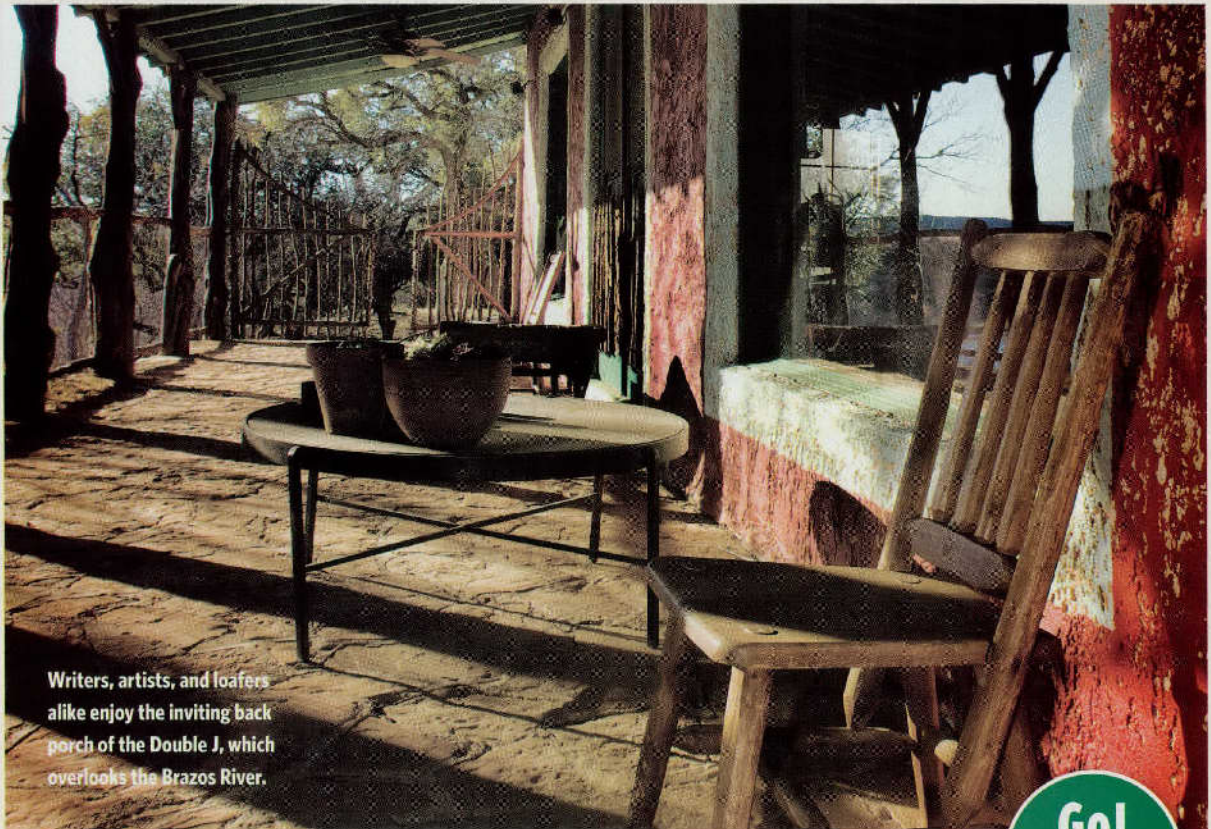


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05
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Postcards

INSIDE: GLOBAL CUISINE IN SAN MARCOS...16 A RANCH RESPITE ON THE HIGH PLAINS...20



Writers, artists, and loafers alike enjoy the inviting back porch of the Double J, which overlooks the Brazos River.

Go!

Celebrity stories
in Web Extra.
texashighways.com

Hacienda Dreaming

Near Mineral Wells, the *Double J Hacienda and Art Ranch* nourishes the soul By JUNE NAYLOR

NEEDED AN ESCAPE FROM city stress, I packed a bag and drove 45 minutes west of my hometown of Fort Worth for a stay at the new Double J Hacienda, a 12-acre retreat just outside Mineral Wells. Almost as soon as I arrived, I realized I had found a favorite getaway destination.

My first clue was the tail-wagging, canine welcome I received from Pequeño, 2 Jakes, Chigger, Bravo, and Nigel, the

ranch's unofficial welcoming committee. The dogs' enthusiastic greeting mirrored that of Jane Baldwin, an anthropologist and yoga therapist who opened the inn two years ago with her husband, Jimmy Baldwin, an advertising executive and singer-songwriter. The enterprising pair instilled new life in the former Seybold Guest Ranch, a 1940s retreat that was popular mid-century with such celebrities as Bette Davis and John Wayne.

As we admired the breathtaking view of a bend in the Brazos River from the hacienda's back porch, Jane told me how they stumbled upon the ranch five years ago and wound up creating a place that proves irresistible to artists, writers, musicians, yoga enthusiasts – and anyone who craves restoration and refuge.

Inspired by the architecture and lifestyle she experienced during multiple college summers in Mexico, Jane longed for

Postcards



a hacienda of her own in Texas. At first, the couple searched for property in the Hill Country. But while scouting locations for a music video, Jimmy found the Mineral Wells ranch, and the two were moved by the rocky, rolling landscape and the

A Mexican-inspired palette inspires creativity and ...

The serenity and beauty here inspires guests to put up an easel, pull out a guitar, or put pen to paper.

area's spirit. They soon learned that the region was rich with heritage forged by Comanches like Quanah Parker; cattle drovers like Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving; and celebrities like Judy Garland, Clark Gable, and Lucille Ball, all of whom vacationed at the legendary Baker Hotel in nearby Mineral Wells.

"The hacienda was built like a bunker, with a solid foundation. It just needed restoration," Jane said. From rooms at the front entrance, they created a yoga studio

PHOTO: MICHAEL AMADOR



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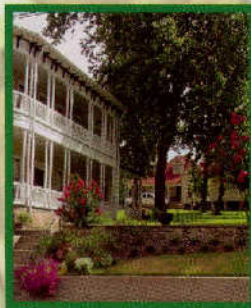
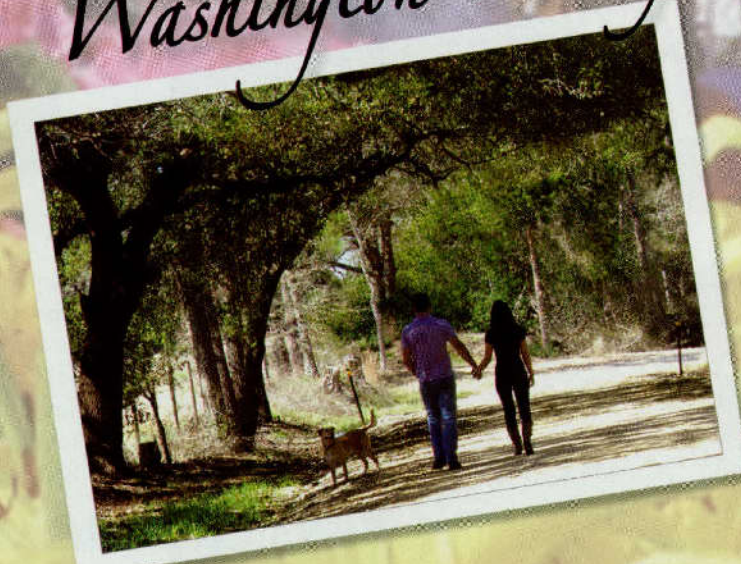
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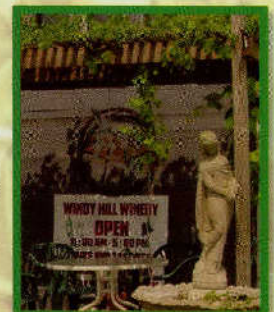


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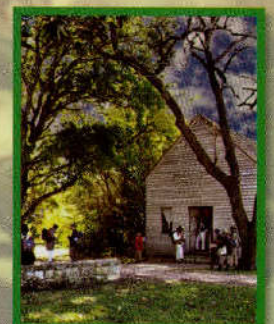
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and an art gallery for exhibiting work by Texas artists. Soon, Jimmy was dreaming of hosting live music at the ranch, and Jane imagined holding myriad mind-body retreats. "Through our musings, a creative outpost was born," she says.

Before dinner, I explored the property.

Around Mineral Wells



See!

Admire (but don't enter!) the Baker Hotel.



A small rock labyrinth facilitates meditation.

Mexican serape curtains, original artwork, Western knick-knacks, and handcrafts from south of the Rio Grande.

A boulder-strewn hiking trail leads down a cliff to the river, but the view from atop was enough for me.

Over dinner that evening in the Great Room, the hacienda's central meeting

place, a fire blazed in one of two enormous rock fireplaces. The Baldwins told me how they made the leap to sell their home in Dallas and live at the ranch, full-time. They knew they had made the right decision when they held their first retreat, over Easter weekend in 2006, and 40 guests showed up from across the country and abroad. "We loved having people here from different cultures and

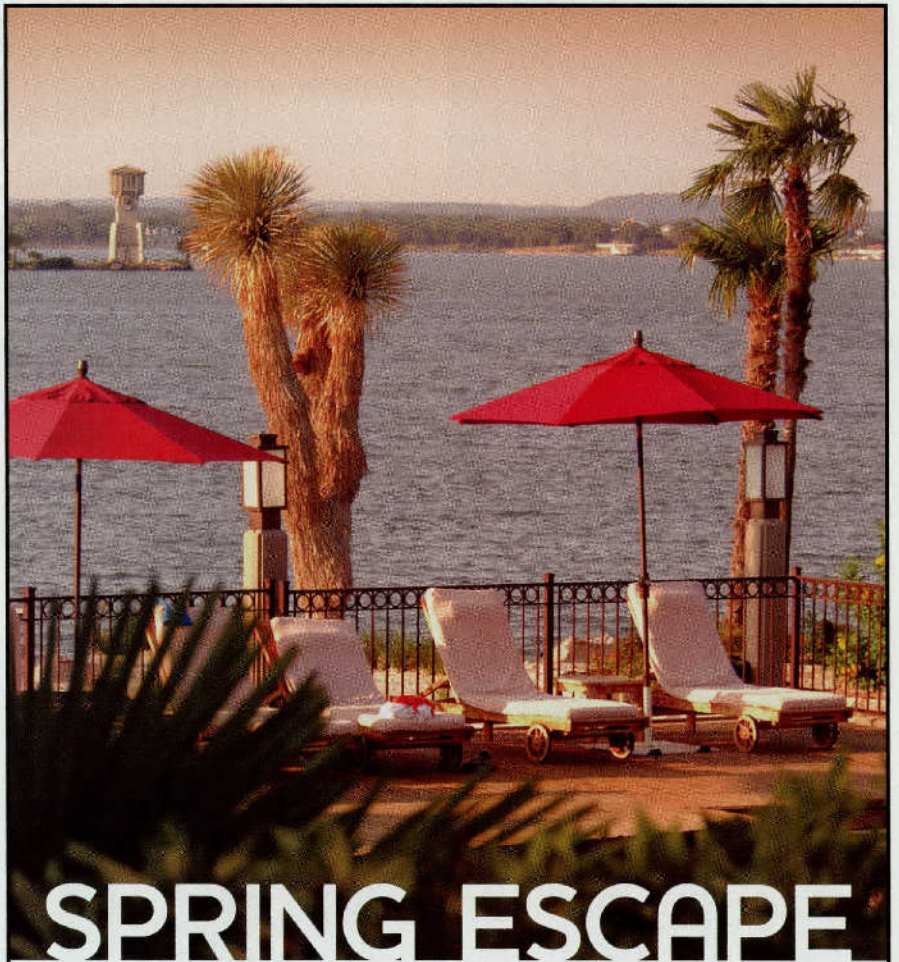
The hacienda's Main House features a barrel-tile roof, original wooden floors, and—in the four bedrooms—family antiques. Encircling a sunny courtyard, 15 more rooms offer a somewhat more modern style, with tile floors, platform beds covered in bright bedspreads,

MICHAEL AMADOR

ROCHELLE'S CANOE LIVERY (940/659-3341) lies just upstream from the Double J; horseback riding is available in **Graham** at **Wildcatter Ranch Resort (888/462-9277)**; and exceptional rock-climbing awaits at nearby **Lake Mineral Wells State Park (940/328-1171)**. Also in Mineral Wells, be sure to pay your respects to the historic **Baker Hotel** (and if you have several million dollars to spare, think about restoring it). Also visit Mineral Wells' **Famous Mineral Wells Water Co. (940/325-8870)**; the 1904 shop sells mineral water bottled at the source.

—June Naylor

PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH



SPRING ESCAPE

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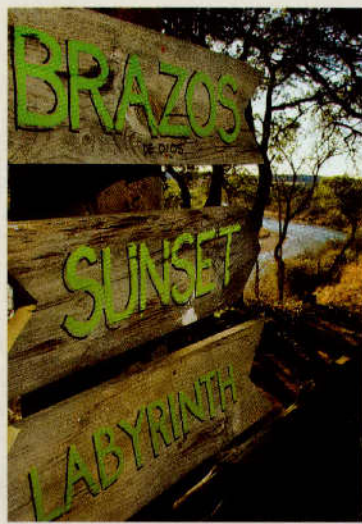


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Postcards



A glittering ribbon of the Brazos River creates the framework for relaxation and rejuvenation.

backgrounds together sharing humanity and creativity," Jane says. "We knew that's how we wanted to grow."

For the next two years, the couple offered the hacienda for workshops focusing on wellness and artistic pursuits. Guests at such gatherings still continue to meet in the Great Room, on the shady porch with the cliff-top river view, or in the cactus-studded courtyard. The serenity and beauty here often inspire guests to put up an easel, pull out a guitar, or put pen to paper.

This year, the Double J's doors opened to individual travelers, too, wanderers like me who crave a place to unwind. The most special pleasure I found was in a private yoga class with Jane on her studio balcony. When we took our final deep breath, right at sunset, I understood the healing that could happen here.

Some weekends feature the Baldwins' special events; such as yoga-therapy certification courses or Jimmy's "music evenings," when Jimmy plays with visiting performers. For meals, the vegetarian-leaning yoga groups tend to take

advantage of the hacienda's full kitchen; on "music evenings," a nearby barbecue joint called the Hashknife often caters a meat-lover's feast. Bed and breakfast guests usually bring in take-out from the Hashknife or other area restaurants, and enjoy dinner on the porch overlooking the Brazos. Trust me: Meals are particularly inspiring when conversation turns to the art of fulfilling dreams. **TM**



Double J Hacienda

welcomes guests March 1 through Thanksgiving weekend. Overnight stays include a continental buffet breakfast with pastries or muffins, cereal or granola, milk, yogurt, fruit, and fresh eggs from the ranch chickens. Groups renting the hacienda, Great Room, yoga studio, or art gallery can also arrange to use the kitchen. **Call 940/325-1813; www.djartranch.com.**

PHOTO: MICHAEL AMADOR

Chill Out: Penguin Style



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In the Grotto

San Antonio's River Walk gets a creative extension

BEGINNING MAY 30, TOURISTS EXPLORING San Antonio's famous underground River Walk can see more of the city without navigating street-level traffic. A 1.2-mile extension of the River Walk now connects such popular destinations as El Mercado and the Southtown arts district, and—for the first time—allows River Walk pedestrian access to the San Antonio Museum of Art. Also new: Water taxis will ferry passengers from numerous stations along the waterway.

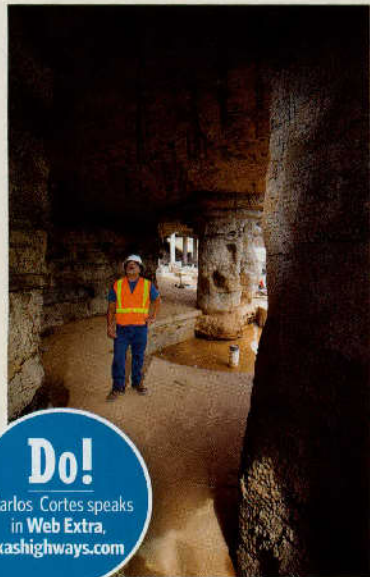
At press time, eight national and local artists are putting the finishing touches on 12 public-art projects that range from sculptures and light installations to a 180-foot concrete grotto decorated with symbols of nature. See www.sariverfoundation.org. —Lori Moffatt



No Zoning in Houston

Art thrives in unlikely places

THE ART GUYS (ABOVE) MARRY a tree as part of *No Zoning: Artists Engage Houston*, curated by the Contemporary Art Museum. Free from land-use ordinances, Houston's residential and commercial areas coexist. From chaos comes art! See www.camh.org.



Do!

Carlos Cortes speaks in **Web Extra**, texashighways.com

J. GRIFFIS SMITH

Concrete artist Carlos Cortes will embellish this River Walk grotto with symbols of nature.

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Cool Mint Café

Setting the scene for sophisticated dining in San Marcos

By ANTHONY HEAD



The food at Cool Mint Café tastes like contemporary, big-city fare . . . but the ambiance is firmly rooted in its small-town heritage.

“WHEN I STARTED CULINARY SCHOOL, I KNEW I didn’t want to own a restaurant,” says Suzanne Perkins. “I knew I didn’t want to be an executive chef. I knew I didn’t want to have a staff working for me for as long as I lived. I *knew* these things.”

I guess we all know where this is going: Perkins is owner and executive chef of Cool Mint Café in San Marcos, and the restaurant is certainly not a one-person operation. It is, however, something original in this small town, which lies halfway between San Antonio and Austin and is home to Texas State University (TSU). The food at Cool Mint tastes like contemporary, big-city fare, with fresh, wholesomely prepared offerings, but the ambiance is firmly rooted in its small-town heritage.

Full disclosure: I live in San Marcos. I eat in San Marcos. I have many favorites here, so I can confidently state that there is nothing else like Cool Mint in San Marcos. But it is my hope that it becomes the foundation of a more vibrant dining culture.

Waiter Katelynn Butler lists daily specials for the café, which is housed in a 1923 bungalow.



Chiles en Nogada features a stuffed poblano on polenta with a bleu cheese-walnut sauce and pomegranate seeds.

Go!
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Perkins and I sit on a sofa just off the café's foyer as she explains her focus on using in-season, organic ingredients from local farmers and ranchers for her "South X Southwestern" menu. The star of the chicken cordon bleu is Buddy's Natural Chicken out of Gonzales; the natural beef for a Bobcat Burger, which comes layered with green chiles and Jack cheese, hails from Michaelis Ranch near Kyle; and fresh beets—which might show up in any number of dishes—are grown in nearby Lockhart. Such shopping is grounded in the common-sense practices of the past—kind of like Cool Mint itself.

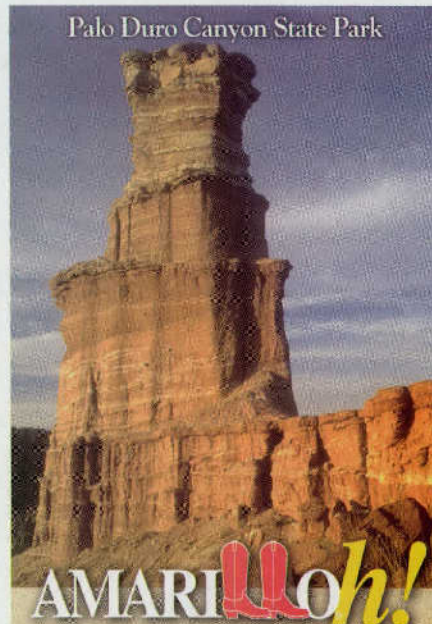
Originally constructed as a duplex in 1923 by sisters Jenny and Mae Garth, the Arts and Crafts bungalow that houses the café came straight from a Sears & Roebuck catalog. The structure has a solid feel; it's substantial but not imposing. "Basically, each room is built like a wooden box with cut-out doorways," says Perkins, as we walk across hardwood floors from one dining room to the next. "Most of the original woodwork was intact, and we discovered the original glass-paned double doors stored in the attic."

The building still has a homey feeling, encouraging some diners to remember its earlier days, when "Miss Jenny" and "Miss Mae" lived in one side of the house and rented out the other. Jenny Garth was an elementary schoolteacher, and her sister Mae did the housework and cooking.

The well-loved pair lived here some five decades, until their respective deaths in the 1970s. Other diners recall the building from its time as the Master's School of San Marcos, a private elementary school now at another location.

Today, the walls in each of the three dining rooms sport unusual hues like mint green and baby-chick beige, which contrast with the original dark-stained woodwork and offer a distinctive backdrop for the restaurant's Arts and Crafts-style decor. (Guests also eat on a spacious, enclosed veranda that was once the front porch entrance.) During the day, the large, wavy glass-paned windows around the perimeter of the restaurant let in sunlight, and at night, hammered-metal wall sconces original to the period illuminate the tables. Framed sheet music from the 1920s and '30s hangs on the walls, along with a slate chalkboard that lists the soups, beers, wines, and other daily specials. The music of Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and other jazz greats plays softly throughout.

The specials tend to outsell other dishes, but my favorite is right there on the menu; it's a portobello sandwich with red peppers and a pesto mayonnaise. Perkins says I should thank her sous chef, Bennett Hallenbeck, who she says is a "culinary artist" with peppers. The enchiladas are always a solid choice, too. They come stuffed with smoked chicken and topped with white cheddar, verde sauce, and a dollop of cilantro- and lime-flavored sour cream—or—you can order them stacked with shiitake mushrooms, roasted green chiles, and diced sweet potatoes, topped



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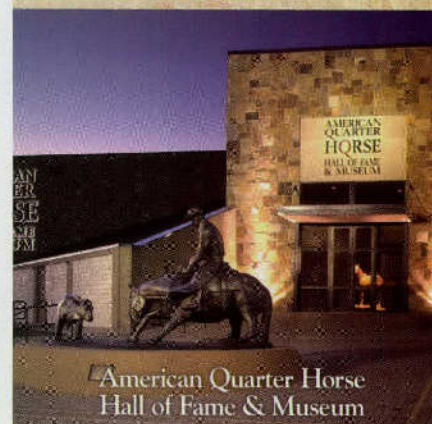
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Lewis Wickes Hine, *Men at Work*, 1916. Photograph. Courtesy of the artist and Getty Images.



Robert Longo, *Gretchen*, 1983. Photograph. Courtesy of the artist and Getty Images.

with goat cheese and red chile sauce. Both variations come drizzled with a mango-habanero sauce.

Perkins understands Texan tastes, so it's no wonder that Cool Mint's pork tenderloin with ginger-mango salsa and the rack of lamb with roasted-tomato Espanole sauce are hot-sellers, but she wishes more people would try the seared yellowfin tuna topped with Thai barbecue sauce. "Thai-style barbecue sauce has about 20 different ingredients in it, including ses-

At Cool Mint Café, Bobcat Burgers share the menu with tomato-basil bisque, portobello sandwiches, and chicken cordon bleu.

ame oil, sesame seeds, hoisin sauce, and cilantro, and it makes a flavorful blend that caramelizes the outside of the tuna steak," says Perkins. "If you haven't tried it, you don't know what you're missing."

In addition to featuring beers brewed locally, the café's beverage list includes Becker, Messina Hof, and other Texas wines among the California, Oregon, and Washington State selections. On a warm spring afternoon, McPherson Cellars Rosé of Syrah-Grenache—with its subtle hint of smokiness and long berry finish—would pair especially nicely with many of the Mediterranean salads, pastas, and sandwiches available.

Even though Perkins is a native Texan, there are subtle hints of California/Pacific Northwest cuisine at work here. For a time she lived on the Monterey Peninsula and met a lot of hungry Texans like herself. She opened a café, and within two weeks, there was a line around the block for the biscuits and gravy, chicken-fried steak, and cornbread. Years later, living in Oregon, she enrolled at a culinary school in Portland. "I just wanted to be in the food business," she

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A Foodie's Hill Country

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ONE PART COOKBOOK, ONE part tour guide, *The Texas Hill Country: A Food and Wine Lover's Paradise* by Terry Thompson-

Anderson is a must-read for people who travel to eat, and eat to travel. Along with recipes, dining recommendations, and scenes of rolling hills and spring-fed rivers, it's packed with inspiration for dozens of foodie road trips in Central Texas.

The Texas Hill Country features more than 100 food-related venues from family farms to fabulous, upscale restaurants. The mix includes businesses such as Berry Street Bakery (above)—an inviting bakery/lunch spot in Llano—as well as barbecue joints, bistros, and brewing companies. Recipes gathered from the proprietors or developed by the author to highlight local food products accompany most of the stories. For example, the description of Berry Street Bakery includes the recipe for its house granola.

Many of the sites covered in the book represent examples of "agricultural tourism," which the author explains as "visitors . . . coming to the Hill Country to follow the lavender trails, pick peaches and apples, buy fresh-pressed olive oil, and visit the wineries." After you read about Lavender Hill in Blanco, Marburger Orchard in Fredericksburg, Bella Vista Ranch in Wimberley, and Sister Creek Vineyards in Sisterdale, you'll understand why Central Texas is a top agricultural-tourism destination. For information, call 800/458-3808; www.shearerpub.com.

—Nola McKey



This Llano bakery offers several lunch options.

says, noting that, at this point, she completely ruled out owning a restaurant again.

Perkins graduated, she catered, and then she created a popular food product—"Suzanne's Ritzy Roll-up"—that was so popular that Costco and Sam's Club both regularly sold out of it. After returning to Texas in 1998, she bought a farmhouse in Blanco and worked as a private chef and caterer throughout the Hill Country until the day in 2006 when she saw the 1923 bungalow for sale in San Marcos and fell in love with it.

Originally, Perkins envisioned Cool Mint as a neighborhood spot, and since TSU's campus is just a short stroll away, you're likely to see professors enjoying

bowls of tomato-basil bisque and grilled cheese sandwiches. But the reality is that the café's reputation has spread, making it a more of a destination restaurant for those who live near San Marcos and are in search of seasonal cuisine with real flair. And for selfish reasons, I hope it's just the first of many similar establishments. **TX**

Cool Mint Café

is at 415 Burseson St. in San Marcos. Hours: Tue-Sat 11 a.m.-9 p.m., Sun-Mon 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Call 512/396-2665; www.coolmintcafe.com. Reservations recommended.



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Ranger Creek Ranch

A rustic retreat rejuvenates mind, body, and soul

By HENRY CHAPPELL

TEXAS' ROLLING PLAINS HOLD SECRETS. THE VASTNESS DRAWS the eye to the horizon. The dominating sky smooths and conceals features, giving an impression of sameness, even emptiness. What lies between here and that distant mesa? More gently rolling prairie and mesquite flats, probably. Is the distance five miles or 15?

In 1854, during his trip through badlands near present-day Seymour, U.S. Army Captain Randolph Marcy wrote, "It is a land I doubt will be inhabited into the next century."

Unbeknownst to Marcy, perhaps, the Texas plains had already been inhabited for thousands of years—first by stone-age hunters, followed by Neolithic farming peoples, and then, during Marcy's time, by the mighty Comanche, who often baffled pursuing Texas Rangers, bounty hunters, and the U.S. Army by vanishing in the seemingly bare, featureless prairie.

Seemingly bare and featureless.

"I want to show you something," says Randy Walker, co-owner of Ranger Creek Ranch, as he downshifts his Land Cruiser into second gear. "This always amazes visitors."

We leave the ranch headquarters, about 18 miles west of Seymour, and drive north-west through cropland and mesquite flats toward the South Fork of the Wichita River. Though it's early February, the air smells of juniper and sun-warmed soil. As we start up a slight rise, a wild hog crosses the road in front of us.

We top the rise, and the plains fall away into red, gypsum-striped buttes, scenic mesas, cedar-studded draws, and clear springs flowing over Permian clay. Northward, near the horizon, on the legendary Waggoner Ranch, ochre cliffs, lit by the early afternoon sun, rise above the Wichita River.

The meals here
far exceed standard
ranch grub.

Little wonder the Comanche could quietly vanish. Looking out over these badlands, I want to strap on a backpack and vanish for awhile too.

Ranger Creek is a working cattle ranch, primarily a cow-calf operation. The horses, cattle, cowdogs, pens, and tack aren't for show. However, in the 1980s, like many Texas ranchers, Randy and Ranell Walker and Ranell's parents, Gaylon and Joyce Scott, began looking for ways to diversify operations. In 1988, they hosted their first dove hunters.

They soon realized that people would enjoy coming to the ranch just to escape urban bustle for a few days. So the "adventure" side of the Ranger Creek was born. Nowadays, in addition to hunters, the extensive spread hosts hikers, mountain bikers, birders, equestrians, and urban dwellers looking for a few days of prairie wind and birdsong.

In 1998, Ranell, Randy, Joyce, and Gaylon converted an old barn into a 3,500-square-foot lodge with several bunk rooms (25 beds total), a kitchen, dining area, huge stone fireplace, and two

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After more than a century, Ranger Creek Ranch maintains classic Western traditions.

spacious sitting areas. I'm bunking in the "Boars" room near the main dining area. Simple, rustic, and comfortable; just what

you'd expect at a well-run ranch.

Visitors who prefer more privacy can stay in one of four nearby ranch houses.

Meals at Ranger Creek far exceed standard ranch grub. The ranch's kitchen staff specializes in steak and barbecue—smoked pork tenderloin and brisket—and home-style dishes like chicken-fried steak. Occasionally, the menu features seafood from the Texas coast, typically shrimp, oysters, scallops, or red snapper—cowboy cuisine, with a little kick.

After hors d'oeuvres—bacon-wrapped shrimp and jalapeños—I enjoy a supper of mesquite-grilled steak, steakhouse potatoes (sliced and baked with a cream sauce, onions, bacon, and cheese), and a spring-mix salad with feta cheese, sautéed tomatoes, and homemade balsamic vinaigrette dressing.

Don't expect structured dude ranch activities. "If you just want to hike, we'll give you a map and turn you loose," Randy says. "If you want to drive around the place, we'll rent you our Jeep or ATV, or you can use your own truck."

Some visitors want to watch and even participate in daily ranch work. "I get a

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lot of folks who just want to ride around and help feed the livestock," Gaylon says.

Randy trains and works some of the best cowdogs in the country, and when schedules and circumstances allow, guests can ride horses into the pastures to watch cowhands and cowdogs at work. Some of the

Nowadays, in addition to hunters, the extensive spread hosts hikers, mountain bikers, birders, and equestrians.

most exciting action takes place during branding in April and weaning in October and November.

My first morning at the ranch, I watch as Randy's dogs, Buster and Bubba, a pair of Catahoula-border collie mixes, and Leo, a Catahoula cur, tear across a pasture toward a dozen or so wild, scattered yearlings. Within a couple of minutes, the dogs have the steers bunched and heading to a designated corner. Woe be to any hardhead that tries to go his own way. Sharp barks and bared teeth send him high-kicking and bawling back to the herd.

Fancy yourself good with horses? Feel free to choose and saddle your own. If, on the other hand, you've never ridden, you'll get all the help you need.

"I ask folks to be completely honest about their horsemanship," Randy says. "That way, I can match the horse to the person's experience and ability."

Careful wildlife management here accounts for big whitetail bucks, flocks of wild turkeys, and tens of thousands of wintering waterfowl, and also benefits countless non-game species.

Depending on the season, birders can expect several raptor species and scores of grassland birds. An informal list kept by the ranch staff boasts 68 species. The guess is that there are many more.

After watching the dogs, I hike down into the river breaks and spring-fed creeks. Mockingbirds, cardinals, golden-fronted woodpeckers, lark buntings, tufted titmice, and several kinds of sparrows and warblers forage in the cedar and mesquite. Hawks and turkey vultures hunt overhead. Roadrunners ... well ... run the road. I list the species in my notebook and imagine western kingbirds, scissor-tailed flycatchers, Swainson's hawks, and other spring migrants arriving in a few weeks.

On the small lakes and ponds, wary late-season waterfowl flush before I can get a good look with binoculars. When I return, I'll bring a spotting scope.

Numerous hunting blinds also serve as prime spots for general wildlife viewing. In the damp, red sand along one creek, I find tracks of coyote, bobcat, turkey, deer, wild hogs, and raccoon. In big, wild country, I'm always torn between covering ground to see what's over the next rise and picking a spot like this one and watching quietly, from downwind.

Now, the sun is overhead. Except for sparrows and juncos flitting in the brush, most wild things seem to be keeping to cover. There's more country here than I can explore in a year, so I'll keep walking. With luck, I'll find a perfect place to sit and watch when furtive rustling begins just before dark. **TH**



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THE GREAT SMOKE
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TRAILS OF RAILS

TRACKING HISTORY ALONG THE TEXAS STATE RAILROAD

Text by RANDY MALLORY *Photographs by* ERICH SCHLEGEL



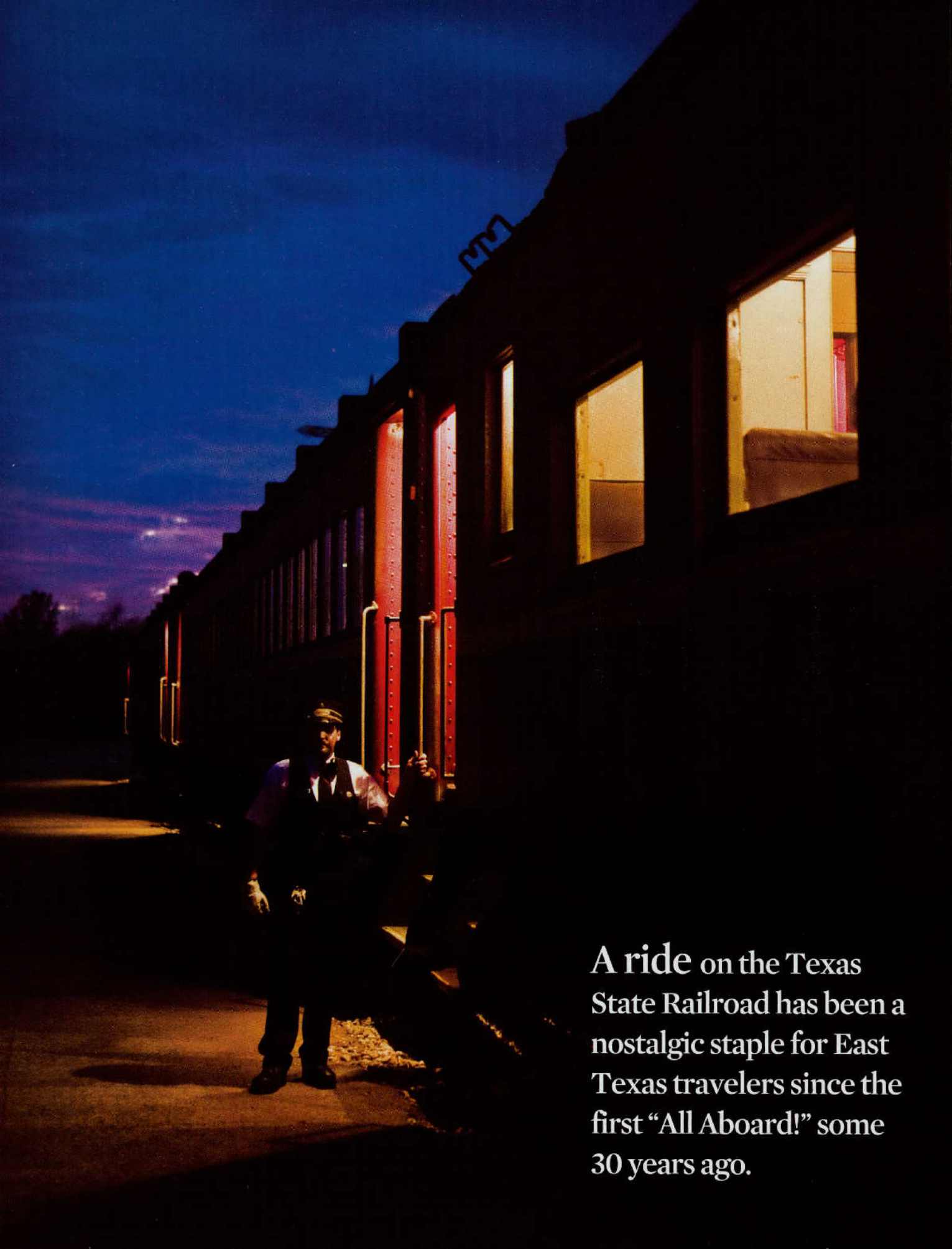
TRAILS OF RAILS



The hands of the depot clock tick toward train time. Restless, ready-to-roll passengers lean into the black wrought-iron fence that separates them from the tracks. At the first “Who-Who” of the steam whistle, all heads turn down-track to where the rails disappear into the woods. Shouts of “There’s the train!” echo across the crowd. The Texas State Railroad’s century-old steam engine #201 chugs into view. Its shiny black boiler and six driving wheels glisten in the sun. As the engine glides slowly into the station, a white cloud of steam swirls across parents and saucer-eyed kids eager for their first train ride. Old-timers smile knowingly as if to say, “Yes, I remember the thrill of my first train ride!”

Longtime rail enthusiast Larry Grant and his four-year-old grandson, Ethan Grant, both of Dallas, hold hands as the train shudders to

PREVIOUS SPREAD: The oldest locomotive on the Texas State Railroad line, engine #201 (built in 1901) chugs through the pines near the Rusk Depot. **ABOVE:** Passengers depart from the Palestine (shown here) or Rusk depot for the 4 1/2-hour trip, which includes a 1 1/2-hour lunch layover. **RIGHT:** Conductor Josh Nagle concludes another day of riding the rails.



A ride on the Texas State Railroad has been a nostalgic staple for East Texas travelers since the first “All Aboard!” some 30 years ago.



Conductor Clay Cleaver, who has been with the TSRR about a year, enjoys pointing out landmarks to passengers on the 25-mile ride.

a stop. Grant has passed to the next generation his lifelong love of railroading. One of Ethan's first words, in fact, was "train."

In the 1940s and 1950s, a young Larry Grant rode steam trains each summer from his Missouri home to New Orleans to visit his grandmother. Hopping aboard a historic train today—grandson in tow—rekindles fond memories. "Hearing the steam whistle and the clackety-clack down the track takes me back to my childhood," says Grant. "Sharing this experience with the grandkids means the world to me."

A ride on the Texas State Railroad has been a nostalgic staple for East Texas travelers since the first "All Aboard!" some 30 years ago. Recently, that 25-mile ramble between Rusk and Palestine almost ran out of steam.

Texas' only state railroad began in the late 1800s as a short-haul line serving state prison foundries in Rusk. In 1909 the line extended to Palestine to profit from freight and passenger service. The prison closed in 1917, and profits proved elusive. Twice, the state considered abandoning its little railroad. Instead, the Legislature fixed up the tracks in the mid-1970s, acquired vintage rolling stock, and inaugurated a tourist train operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Two years ago, Parks and Wildlife announced that, without new funding, the official railroad of Texas would come to a screeching halt. A save-the-train campaign highballed into action, stoked by tourism promoters in Rusk and Palestine. The Legislature created the Texas [continued on page 30] ❧

After a picnic at the depot campgrounds (tip: order a brown-bag lunch in advance), return trips for some riders include napping to the train's soothing clickety-clack.



Main Train Events

TO CREATE THE "WOW" FACTOR, the rail operator has added a slew of special events to a busy new schedule that boosted ridership by 20,000 last year.

Special adult-themed events include **dinner trains**—from a Rockin' '50's party (May 9, 2009) to a Wild West event (Aug. 1, 2009). Biannual **photo excursions** give shutterbugs a rare chance to shoot the train at scenic stops. The adults-only **Governor's Car** offers first-class service on a spiffy passenger car that has been ridden by every Texas governor since 1976 (for inaugural events).

Families enjoy barbecue and live music on **Sunday rides** (April through November) and flock to festivals—such as **Armed Forces Memorial Day Weekend** (May 22-24, 2009) and **Railfest** (Sep. 5, 2009)—that highlight patriotic and rail history themes.

The heyday of American railroading (1930s to 1950s) coincides with the zenith of the radio and TV show *The Lone Ranger*. The two come together on **special runs** (April and June) when the **Lone Ranger** and his sidekick, Tonto, save the train from mock robbers. Grandparents and grandkids cheer to the sounds of the *William Tell Overture* as the Lone Ranger rides his white horse, Silver, alongside the train. Riders take home a silver bullet necklace as a memento.

"Hi-yo, Silver, away!" punctuates the Lone Ranger run. But riders chant "I think I can, I think I can" when railcars ride behind a little blue engine with a smiling

smokestack face (May 16-17, 2009). A life-sized replica of **The Little Engine That Could** leads the train (with the diesel engine pushing in back). Kids read along in the book as the little engine steams to the activity-filled depot, where a costumed bear and elephant from the classic book wait for hugs and photos.

Another smiling blue steam engine, a 15-ton replica of **Thomas the Tank Engine**, leads the train in October. Youthful fans sing along with music from the show as the train winds through the woods. Back at the depot they meet with "Sir Topham Hatt," the fictional train's controller, and peruse an array of Thomas-themed merchandise.

Children and parents rub elbows with the *Peanuts* comic strip beagle, **Snoopy**, during special trains at **Halloween, Valentine's**, and **Easter**. Kids follow along with stories of Snoopy and Charlie Brown read onboard. Then they meet the costumed Snoopy from the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. Each young rider on the *Peanuts* trains also decorates a take-home memento—a Great Pumpkin, a Valentine card, or an Easter egg.

The memento for the Texas State Railroad's most popular special event is a shiny bell like the one Santa gives the

boy in *The Polar Express* (the book and movie), after a magical train ride to the North Pole. On the **Polar Express ride** (mid-November through December), the movie's soundtrack plays overhead as chefs in poufed white hats serve hot chocolate to passengers, many dressed in pajamas and robes. The conductor punches the oversized tickets with a flurry of clicks and flying chads, as in the movie. Midway, the colorfully-lit locomotive stops at the North Pole (actually a rail wye on the line). There, Santa and his elves wait by their toy shops. On the return ride, Santa ho-ho-ho's through the train hugging kids and handing out bells.

Last year, Joyce and James Hiser of Tool, Texas, gave their grandson, Connor Bazhaw of Canton, an early Christmas gift—a ride on the Polar Express.

"When the steam train pulled into the station, Connor's eyes were as big as saucers," says Joyce Hiser. "When Connor got his souvenir bell, he could hear its ring just like the boy in the movie, making him a true believer."

With true believers like Connor onboard, the historic Texas State Railroad may be running at full steam for generations to come. **For more information on events, call 888/987-2461; www.texasstaterr.com.**

—Randy Mallory

For more train tales, see our Q&A with Chief Mechanical Officer Roger Graham at Web Extra, www.texashighways.com.



A diesel locomotive, engine #8 was built in 1953 and used by the military to haul ammunition. The engine is currently undergoing restoration.

☞ continued from page 28 | State Railroad Authority, which picked a new operator, American Heritage Railways, to keep the train on track. The company (which runs historic trains in Colorado and North Carolina) took the throttle on September 1, 2007, and, if successful, will own the railroad (excluding tracks and right-of-way) by 2015.

The backbone of the *new* Texas State Railroad remains the traditional ride from Victorian-style depots in Rusk and Palestine. The Piney Woods excursion makes roundtrip and shorter runs

pulled by steam engine #201, a restored 1901 Texas & Pacific locomotive, and by two diesel engines from the 1940s and 1950s. Once restored, the railroad's three other steamers will return to service, including the popular Engine #300, which will ride the rails again this fall.

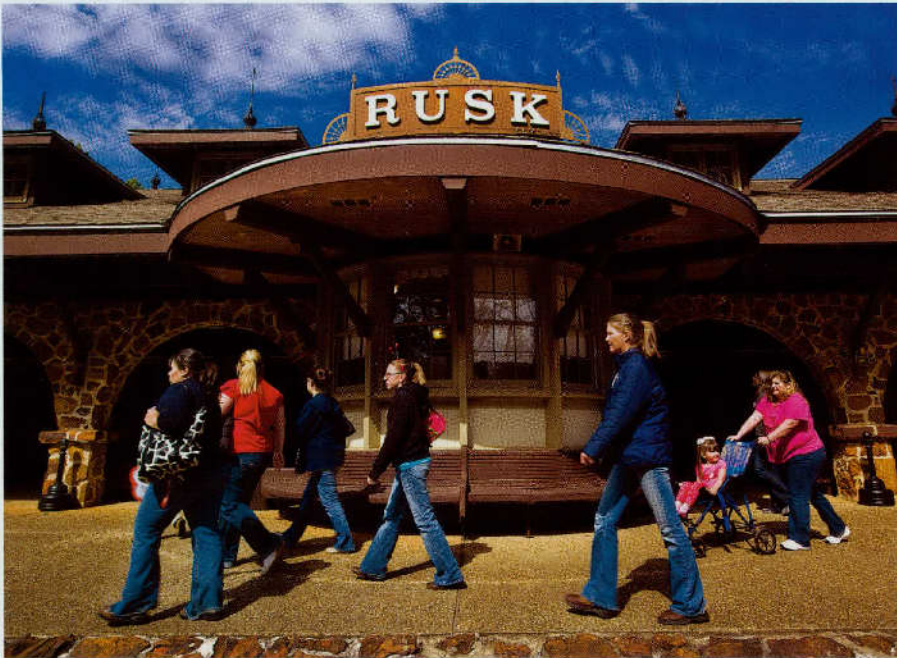
Riders board red-and-black passenger cars from the 1920s—open-air and climate-controlled—then settle into padded bench seats for a 20-mile-per-hour scenic excursion past brambly bottomlands, piney uplands, and



verdant pastures. In spring, nature's colors awaken across the landscape, especially in white blossoms of dogwoods and purple-pink flowers of redbuds. When summer arrives, myriad shades of green hug close to the line, sometimes in a canopy of pines rising above several dozen species of deciduous trees. In autumn, a Technicolor world unfolds before your eyes, as the rich purple-reds of sweetgums and maples compete with the blazing yellow-golds of oaks and elms. And winter transforms the sleeping scenery with

Riders board red-and-black passenger cars from the 1920s—open-air and climate-controlled—for a 20-mile-per-hour scenic excursion past brambly bottomlands, piney uplands, and verdant pastures.





LEFT: In addition to train stops, both depots offer camp and picnic sites and hiking trails (Rusk also has a fishing lake). FAR LEFT: Brandy and Justin Solomon of Natchitoches, Louisiana, take in the Piney Woods panorama from an open-air car.

bare-branched trees silhouetted against a clear blue sky.

The line spans 24 bridges, the longest being the 1,042-foot-long Neches River bridge. The concrete structure rises 35 feet over the site of an early ferry crossing. The only community on the line is Maydelle, named for the daughter of Texas Governor Thomas Mitchell Campbell, who extended the line to Palestine. Some excursions stop at Maydelle, where an 1890s turntable rotates the engine for the return trip.

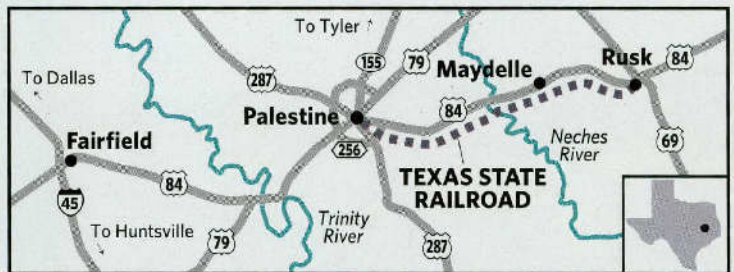
Maydelle also boasts a rail station (housing the train's "maintenance of way" office), originally built for the 1982 TV movie *The Long Summer of George Adams*. The movie is one of more than two dozen Hollywood films, documentaries, and commercials that have used the train.

These days, the train borrows from Hollywood by putting the magic of TV and cinema onboard in imaginative new ways, including special excursions with themes from the Lone Ranger to *The Polar Express* (see "Main Train Events," page 29).

"We're in business to preserve history," explains American Heritage Railways owner Al Harper. "But to build a new generation of riders, we have to make the experience so entertaining and educational that youngsters and parents say, 'Wow, that was fun. Let's do it again!'" **TH**

Tyler-based writer RANDY MALLORY's maternal grandfather worked on a steam locomotive before he moved to Texas. So Randy is gratified that the Texas State Railroad seems to have gained a new lease on life. In addition to the scenery, photographer ERICH SCHLEGEL also enjoyed the sound experience on the ride, "from the train whistle, to the clickety-clack of the wheels on the rails, to the sound of the steam from the locomotive."

TH ESSENTIALS



Texas State Railroad

BOTH THE RUSK AND PALESTINE DEPOTS lie on US 84. Trip options follow. For more details and to make reservations, contact the **Texas State Railroad** at 888/987-2461; www.texasstater.com.

On Sat (Mar-Nov), a steam engine makes the 4 1/2-hour, 50-mile **roundtrip** (includes a 90-min. layover; lunches available for a fee) from the Rusk or Palestine depots on alternating months. Extra steam trips are added in March during dogwood season. **On Fri (May-Nov), a diesel engine pulls the roundtrip.** Roundtrip tickets: \$36.50 to \$43.50 age 12 and older; \$19 to \$25 ages 3-11. Free age two and younger.

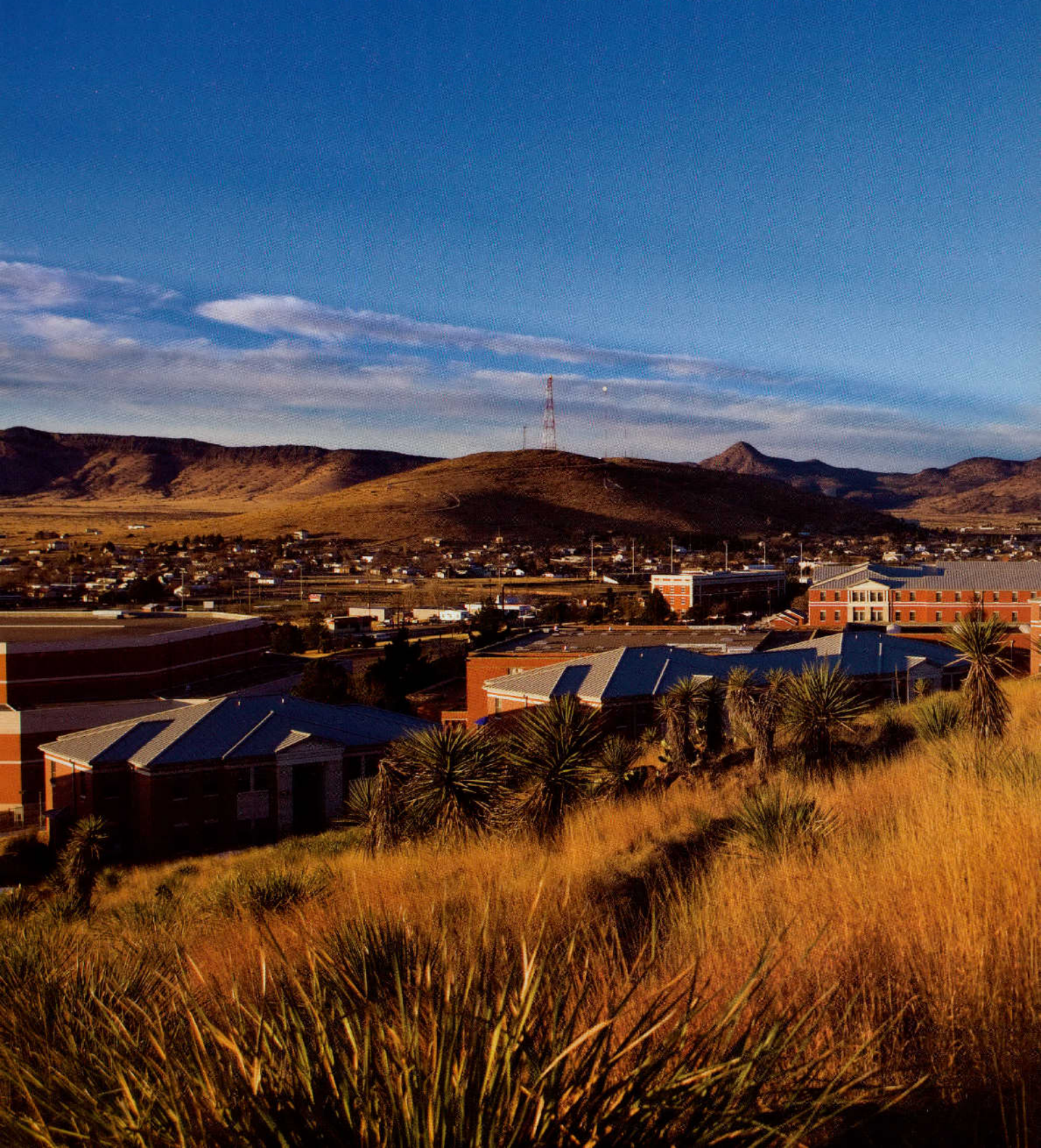
A diesel-powered excursion runs roundtrip (Sat only, Jan-Feb) at regular rates, plus special \$10 tickets for area residents. The first-class **Governor's Car** (age 21 and older) is \$67. A **locomotive cab ride** (18 and older) is \$225 one-way, with return via passenger car. **Caboose charters** (up to 8 riders) are \$350 roundtrip.

On Thu (Apr-Nov), a 1 1/2-hour diesel excursion departs both depots on alternating months featuring the Maydelle turntable or Jarvis Wye. Tickets: same as above, with lunch included.

During special events and most Saturdays, the **1927 Texas & Pacific steam engine #610** is on static **display** at the Palestine depot. Both depot parks also feature camping, picnicking, and hiking. The Rusk park also has a 15-acre fishing lake.

Alpine's EDGE

ADVENTURES AWAIT IN THIS PORTAL TO TEXAS' HIGH DESERT





Text by **BARBARA RODRIGUEZ** *Photographs by* **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**

After driving the many miles required to reach Alpine from just about anywhere, a lot of folks see this town as if it's the last stop on the roaring open road to Big Bend National Park. But here's my best advice any time you get close enough to feel Alpine's gravitational pull: Just give in. Failing to stop and explore the biggest little town in the Texas Outback is like trying to huff up Mount Everest without spending any time acclimating at base camp.

In other words, it's not a good idea for anyone to travel straight into the big-sky country of Far West Texas without slowing down, taking a few deep breaths, and coming to an understanding of all you

Perched on the perimeter of the high desert, Alpine serves as a gateway to Big Bend. However, with a topnotch museum, intriguing shopping, and premier rock-hunting sites nearby, this town is a getaway in itself.



Quetzal Imports, across the street from the Historic Holland Hotel, sells a wide range of international folk art, including majolica pottery from Santa Rosa Guanajuato, Mexico.

are about to see and do as you drive farther into the high Chihuahuan Desert. So, when the mountains start to buck up and your cell service goes all hinky, recognize the signs that it's time to slow down, pluck the tumbleweeds out of your grille, and unplug—you're in Alpine.

The city boasts many attractions that enhance the West Texas experience, but I suggest these must-dos to help you immerse yourself in the geology and culture of the region: a visit to the Museum of the Big Bend, a day of rock hounding, and a one-two punch of serious browsing at the CatchLight Art Gallery and the Apache Trading Post.

First things first. For the most authentic Alpine stay, check into the Historic Holland Hotel. The Holland isn't the only hotel in town, but as the oldest and most eccentric of lodgings here, I hold it dear. Recent renovations brought in new furnishings to enliven the Spanish-style architecture of the 1928 main structure. (Be sure to note the original ceiling beams in the lobby, meticulously restored by muralist Stylee Reed in 2005.) From that building's cozy crow's-nest—little more than a bed and a 360-degree view—to the adjacent New York-style lofts, the hotel has something for everyone.

I love the Holland because it's funky good fun. However, if your taste runs to Egyptian-cotton sheets, The Maverick Inn, a newly renovated roadhouse adjacent to Sul Ross State University that boasts wireless internet, flat-screen TVs, and a swimming pool, may be more to your liking. And in the spirit of full disclosure, I also have to tell you that the Holland's proximity to the depot promises a stream of night trains whistling through your dreams if you don't take advantage of the earplugs provided. (The hotel's loft accommodations don't have this problem.) My 10-year-old son rates these little silencers as "professional-quality." With this savvy insight, we sleep soundly until morning, but I awaken to a startling question.

"Just what sort of palm trees will we be seeing in the desert?" Elliott asks, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. I realize my companion is poorly briefed for this trip. For his sake and mine, we begin our day with a tour of the splendid Museum of the Big Bend on the Sul Ross campus.

All museums are not equal, especially when it comes to engaging children, but Goldilocks would have pronounced this one "just right!" A lively balance of

The Woodward Ranch, 15 miles south of Alpine, has attracted rock hounds for decades. It's famous for red plume agate, but prospectors may also find opal, amethyst, and labradorite.





One-stop shopping on the West Texas frontier: A reconstructed general store at the Museum of the Big Bend displays wares from herbal remedies to cornhusks.

tiny light at each point of interest. We don't leave until we have pushed all of the dozens of buttons (and in every combination, to highlight the distance between points) and for the first time, I feel my son has some orientation as to where we are, where we're going, and what miles and miles of Texas really means.

After lunch, we head out to the Woodward Ranch. Many area ranches are open to visitors who want to do some rock hunting, but we were drawn to the hills undulating beneath the bow of Cathedral Mountain—as appealing for the vistas as for treasures on the ground. Bumping off the highway onto the ranch road, we pass several antelope lounging in the noonday sun.

I barely manage to park the car before Elliott bolts into a canted, old gift shop chockablock with rocks, fossils,

At the Museum of the Big Bend, a lively balance of videos and interactive exhibits creates a three-dimensional understanding of the high desert's natural and social history.

videos and interactive exhibits creates a three-dimensional understanding of the high desert's natural and social history. A *Quetzalcoatlus northropi* soars overhead, its 34-foot wingspan in delightful competition with the 19-foot-tall anthropomorphic figures on a reproduction of the Tall Rockshelter pictograph wall. The model of the Texas pterosaur captivates, and so does the up-close view of the multihued rock art that is tucked away so high in the Davis Mountains that few will ever see the actual site. It inspires musings on the Indiana Jones-worthy mystery of its 500-1500 A.D. origins.

There are atlats (I spied Elliott studying the throwing sticks a little too carefully) and arrowheads, conquistador armor, and Hadrosaur vertebrae, but we are both taken with a sprawling relief map featuring the geology, landmarks, and settlements of the Big Bend. The bird's-eye-view topography features a

A painted metal silhouette by former Alpine artist Alan Gerson stands outside the Apache Trading Post and pays tribute to Judy Magers, a free spirit who rode a burro around town and often camped by Jack-assic Park (shown here).



For more information about photographic prints, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.



Judy "The Burro Lady"

1941 ~ 2007

GIBSON 07



Alpine has been known as a classic enchiladas-steak-burger town. There will always be steak, but at the Reata, it's gorgeously marbled and sometimes served with bacon-wrapped asparagus.

minerals, and curiosities, most of them found locally. Established in 1884, the Woodward Ranch has long been known as a rock hound's paradise. In 1951, *National Geographic* featured the ranch and its owners, John F. Woodward Sr. and his wife, Mary Frances, in an article about rock hunting, which led to the Woodwards donating a 25-pound specimen of something known as a "pseudomorph after aragonite" to the Smithsonian. (A pseudomorph is a mineral that looks like another mineral that it has displaced by chemical action.) Two sizable chunks of the rare rocks—which look like melted lumps of cheese—remain in the ranch collection.

Fourth-generation rancher Trey Woodward and his wife, Jan, offer visitors the chance to ramble and root among tables heaped high with rough and sometimes polished stones or—beyond the gates—get down and dirty rock hounding. As Jan, a former teacher, walks us through a Geology 101 lesson, her enthusiasm holds the attention of a boy twitching to begin his quest. Fully briefed, we test our newfound ability to identify the number one attraction: red plume agate. Resembling a flat-bottomed biscuit with a furry bloom

in its rough state, the famed agate earns its acclaim when sliced and polished to reveal fern-like, red veins suspended in

For fine dining in a quintessential Texas setting, make reservations at the Reata as soon as you hit town.

MORE ALPINE DISCOVERIES

You're cleared to leave base camp once you've got dirt under your nails and a big-picture notion of where you are and why, but what's the hurry? Here are more reasons to stop and settle a while.

Great Eats

Alpine has been known as a classic enchiladas-steak-burger town. There will always be steak, but at the **Reata**, it's gorgeously marbled and sometimes served with bacon-wrapped asparagus.

La Trattoria serves up a noodlelicious pasta with a wild mushroom pesto to howl about—and an accommodating chef will allow you to sample a sauce before you order. For a Texas classic with a tornado of a twist, try the fiery table salsa on the half-pound burgers at **Texas Fusion**. The popular restaurant "specializes in spicy," offering both Mexican food and barbecue, as well as burgers and CFS.

The **Antelope Lodge** was built in 1949 as one of the first motor courts in West Texas. Renovated with an eye toward retaining the rustic appeal, some of the little cabins have the original cowboy oak furnishings. We love the lobby rock shop/



Great Shopping

Ivey's Emporium on West Holland Avenue offers multigenerational shopping for everything from chocolate rocks and old-fashioned candy to good cigars and regional wines. My son assures me that candy, unlike gasoline, is much cheaper in Alpine than in other places. Don't miss the adjoining **Mi Tesoro** gallery and jewelry store.

Quetzal Imports has a great selection of international folk art, including some beguiling Oaxacan *alebrijes* (carved wooden figures) and clay *chanchitos* ("lucky pigs") from Chile that beg to go home with you.

Great Surprises

At **Ocotillo Enterprises**, owner Judith Brueske will arrange a wire-wrapping class if you and your party are interested (collect enough pretty stones and you will be). Her shop sells books on geology, lapidary skills, Mexican and Native American heritage, and sustainable living; rocks and finished stones; and beads.

Stylle Read's mural on the exterior of the **Kiowa Gallery** (432/837-3067) welcomes visitors.

museum, which offers turquoise jewelry and a spectacular, backlit display of plume agate. This is also the

place to find info on all the area ranches that offer rock hunting. (You can also contact co-owner Teri Smith at agatehunter@sbcglobal.net.)

Closed for more than 40 years, Alpine's 1929 **Granada Theatre** reopened in October after extensive remodeling and now serves as a live-music venue and site for weddings and other special occasions. Check the theater's Web site for upcoming events, including a music show during Alpine's Fiesta del Sol on June 20. Owner Karen Travland says the building is open most days (Big Bend Yoga occupies the second floor), but she'll also arrange tours for theater buffs.

Great eats, great shopping, great surprises, all in a high desert setting—who could ask for more?

—Barbara Rodriguez



Recently reopened after being closed for more than four decades, the 1929 Granada Theatre hosts live music and special events.

a milky, opalescent background. The sharp-eyed and determined may also find labradorite, amethyst, opal, geodes, and more than 60 types of other agates on the hillsides.

Issued a bucket and water spritzer (it's easier to identify wet rocks), we set to the hunt, limited only by vehicle clearance and the sturdiness of our legs. The hours pass in a sort of sacred quiet as we crab-scramble about, getting up close and personal to everything from scat to tiny cacti—not to mention a covey of quail that startles us into a fit of giggles. We haul pounds of agates and more back for sorting and identification. Just one caveat: Take extra water for your spritzers; kids who deplete their spray may resort to licking the rocks.

Before leaving town, we are split on whether to visit the CatchLight Gallery or Apache Trading Post. We compromise by visiting both. And really, what would a trip into West Texas be without a trading-post visit? For 30 years, the Apache has set the standard, recently raising the bar with the Spirit of the West Gallery inside and a free, continuous Marfa Lights video. Great jewelry and other geegaws prove almost as compelling as the adjacent Jack-assic Park, home to furry little burros braying to be scratched behind the ears and a photo-op that begs to become next year's Christmas card. (You gotta admit having your kid stick his head into a prop that provides him with the body of a jackass is a stellar opportunity to outdo the neighbors.)

Monthly special exhibits and a surprising inventory make the CatchLight Art Gallery another not-to-be-missed window into the west. The 14-artist cooperative opened in October 2007 to feature a kaleidoscope of talent and media. On our visit, the gallery featured Marjie Erkkila's royally proportioned silver jewelry, made with large rocks that she cut and polished herself; Terry Biegler's stained glass and wire-wrapped jewelry; Nancy Whitlock's bright pastels of cactus; and Merrian Sohl's richly textured oils. The paintings, pottery, weavings, and lapidary are the works of artists who fuel their visions with the all's-right-with-the-world West Texas light. There's a deep breath of possibility captured in everything the CatchLight showcases; taking it all in somehow allows you to see more when you move on. As with everything in Alpine... just take your time. **TH**

BABS RODRIGUEZ's favorite trip to Alpine included her German mother-in-law, who was overwhelmed by the big-sky country and the slabs of steak at area restaurants. Photo Editor **GRIFF SMITH**, who loves Alpine's laid-back vibe, jumped at the chance to shoot this story.

The Historic Holland Hotel offers loft accommodations in a building behind the hotel proper. These digs are less picturesque, but you won't need earplugs to drown out the train noise here.



→ TH ESSENTIALS

Alpine

ALPINE is about 400 miles west of Austin, at the intersection of US 67/90 and Texas 118. For visitor information, call 432/837-2326 or 800/561-3712; <http://visitorcenter.alpinetexas.com>. Contact information for sites mentioned in the story follows.

Restaurants

Reata, 203 N. 5th St., 432/837-9232; www.reata.net. Reservations recommended.

Texas Fusion, 200 W. Murphy St., 432/837-1215.

La Trattoria, 901 E. Holland Ave., 432/837-2200; www.latrattoriacafe.com.

Lodging

Historic Holland Hotel, 209 W. Holland Ave., 432/837-2800 or 800/535-8040; www.hollandhotel.net. (At press time, the Holland was changing hands, but all signs point to the local landmark remaining open.)

The Maverick Inn, 1200 E. Holland Ave., 432/837-0628; www.themaverickinn.com.

Antelope Lodge & Last Frontier Museum, 2310 W. US 90, 800/880-8106 or 432/837-2451; www.antelopelodge.com.

Shopping

CatchLight Art Gallery, 117 W. Holland Ave., 432/837-9422; www.catchlightartgallery.com.



Apache Trading Post, 2701 W. US 90, 432/837-5506; www.apachetradingpost.com.

Ivey's Emporium, 109 W. Holland Ave., 432/837-7474; www.ghosttowntexas.com.

Mi Tesoro (inside Ivey's), 432/837-1882; www.mitesorojewels.com.

Quetzal Imports, 302 West Holland Ave., 432/837-1051.

Ocotillo Enterprises, 205 N. 5th St., 432-837-5353.

Attractions

Museum of the Big Bend, on the Sul Ross State University campus (400 N. Harrison), 432/837-8730; www.sulross.edu/~museum.

Woodward Ranch, 15 miles south of Alpine, 432/364-2271; www.woodwardranch.com.

Granada Theatre, 303 E. Holland Ave., 432/837-9960; www.alpinegranada.com.

lay of the landscape

BUILDING A SENSE OF PLACE WITH



The San Antonio firm Lake/Flato designed landscape-friendly and sustainable buildings for Government Canyon State Natural Area.

SUSTAINABLE PARK ARCHITECTURE *Text by* MELISSA GASKILL



We make sure that a building addresses overarching sustainable values, and that it creates the least possible impact on its environment. —David Lake



For more information about photographic prints, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

Three low, wood-and-metal buildings at

Government Canyon State Natural Area west of San Antonio seem to float on a sea of grasses that waves in the ever-present breeze. More than three-fourths of this 8,622-acre preserve sits atop—and protects—the fragile Edwards Aquifer recharge zone. Because the aquifer recharge zone is so sensitive, all development within Government Canyon must be carefully planned to minimize impact. That's why San Antonio-based Lake/Flato architects, an internationally recognized firm that specializes in sustainable projects, was selected to design the structures specifically for this location.

The firm of Lake/Flato has built a loyal following based on the fundamental belief that architecture should be a natural partner with the environment, and founders Ted Flato and David Lake take a hands-on interest in the firm's recent projects in the state's parks.

"Our philosophy is to try to fit buildings to their place," says Lake. "Design is highly contextual, driven

"Good architecture ought to be reflective of place and climate. Certainly in state parks, it should be about celebrating the climate and place, because that is why people go there."

—Ted Flato



At Government Canyon, deep porches and wide overhanging eaves capture and use prevailing breezes. Reflective roofing keeps heat out of the buildings.



BUILDING PHOTO © CHRIS COOPER, NATURAL AREA PHOTO © LAURENCE PARENT

The more closely *connected with the environment, the better the building.*



A wildlife-viewing platform allows visitors the opportunity to see more of the park space.

by the climate and the concept. We create an appropriate building and use environmentally appropriate construction. We make sure that a building also

addresses overarching sustainable values, and that it creates the least possible impact on its environment.”

Before the widespread use of air conditioning, buildings by necessity reflected their location, explains Ted Flato. “Buildings in Texas had deep porches, oriented to catch prevailing breezes and hide from the sun. People built with materials from the area. We use the same basic techniques today to make buildings specific to their place and naturally environmentally thoughtful.”

Sustainable building is less about expensive technology than design, according to Flato. “It’s all very low-tech. In our opinion, the more closely connected to the environment, the better the building. Good architecture ought to be reflective of place and climate. Certainly in state parks, it should be about celebrating the climate and place, because that is why people go there.”

Carter Smith, executive director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, points out that the origins of sustainability and green architecture in the state parks system date back to park facilities built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. “Those early builders made every effort to utilize

native materials for construction and to site buildings in places where they could capitalize on the predominant breezes to ensure visitors stayed cool during the summer months,” he says. “Visitors to our state parks today expect a high degree of environmental stewardship, not only in the management of our lands and waters, but also in the construction and management of our park infrastructure.” Green building practices associated with energy efficiency, water conservation, recycling, xeriscaping, and use of native building materials, Smith explains, are an important element of park development plans.

At Government Canyon, deep porches and wide, overhanging eaves capture and use prevailing breezes. Reflective roofing keeps heat out of the buildings. Breezes naturally cool open-air classrooms and exhibits. The elevated roof of a nearby open-air picnic pavilion takes advantage of those breezes, as well.

Park Interpreter John Koepke, who has worked at Government Canyon for seven years, explains that the buildings also minimize the use of water. Metal roofs collect rainwater, solar power pumps that water into two tanks perched on a tower, and gravity sends it from there to low-flow toilets and a drip-irrigation system. Native landscaping requires minimal water, and attracts wildlife as well.

To conserve energy and reduce costs, the architects used limestone quarried nearby, reclaimed oil-field pipe, and red cedar from nearby land that was being cleared for development. The buildings were actually planned around use of that cedar, says Bob Harris, a partner in the firm. “Using a local material appropriate to the time, culture, and context, and that requires less maintenance over time, accomplishes many things. On every level, the buildings reveal things about the natural, cultural, and architectural heritage of settlers in the area.”

Koepke considers the park a demonstration site. “People can see there are ways to build green that look nice, save money, and still conserve natural resources. We have a fancy roof line and towers to capture rainwater, but anyone can do the same thing at home with something as simple as pots and pans on the roof drip line.” While some

At World Birding Center sites, Lake/Flato buildings reference regional buildings and invite appreciation of the landscape.



a natural fit

CREATING A SENSE OF
LANDSCAPE IN TEXAS' URBAN ENVIRONMENTS



Philanthropist H.J. Lutch Stark created **Shangri La**, a 250-acre private garden in his home city of Orange, in 1937 and opened it to the public in 1946. After a freak snowstorm destroyed much of the garden in 1958, it remained closed until a restoration in 2005. The site now features botanical gardens, a nature center, outdoor classrooms, an orientation center, a café, and a store. The facility's design is particular to its East Texas environment, according to Ted Flato. Building orientation, overhangs, and window placement reduced facility energy costs by 70 percent. Reclaimed brick salvaged from a 1910 warehouse makes up the bulk of the orientation center; cypress lumber salvaged from sunken logs forms siding, slat walls, fencing, doors, and gates. Half of the building materials were manufactured within 500 miles of the site. Construction also incorporated timber felled by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. A series of ponds and gardens circulate and clean water from a lake, originally created by Stark amid the wetlands, that became a heronry for thousands of nesting birds.

In San Antonio, the Lake/Flato architects used stone walls, tile roofs, and arches to connect the **HEB Science Treehouse at the Witte Museum** to the facility's venerable main building. And they added cupolas, crenelations, loggias, balconies, and gangplanks to appeal to the imaginations of the children who frequent the structure.

For another San Antonio project, Lake/Flato designed **Portal San Fernando**, a riverfront park, formerly a parking lot, to connect San Antonio's Main Plaza to the San Antonio River. Broad plaza steps reference the nearby cathedral and a meandering ramp recalls the winding River Walk, all framed by cypress trees. Fountains, pools, embedded images, and inscriptions complete an inviting picture.

At the **Dallas Arboretum**, a series of pavilions among limestone garden walls appear both man-made and natural. The walls create a transition zone between the urban environment of Dallas and that of the gardens. Buildings of glass, copper, and cedar were designed to be taken over by the plants, gradually blurring the lines between the built environment and nature.

Bird-viewing blinds at Shangri La give visitors a better view of the preserve's wild residents.

—Melissa Gaskill

people come to the park specifically to see the buildings, he says, others don't notice and pay no attention to the buildings until Koepke engages them on the topic of sustainability. "Those are the people I like talking to the most. I can see the lightbulb go on" when they recognize the importance of the building's design features.

Three hundred miles south of Government Canyon, along the Rio Grande, farms, rather than ranches, feature prominently in the region's history. Lake/Flato drew from that aspect of the area's agricultural history in designing buildings for the World Birding Center headquarters. Located at the entrance to Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, a nationally renowned birding spot, the WBC headquarters anchors nine birding sites situated at individual parks along a stretch of the border that reaches from Roma to South Padre Island.

At WBC headquarters, butterfly gardens and bird feeders surround a cluster of buildings that includes an exhibit hall, offices, a gift shop, a café, and restrooms. Along its six miles of trails, visitors can walk, bike, or take a shuttle to the park's bird blinds, and a hawk observation tower. Serious birders and casual naturalists travel from far and wide to see clouds of migrating hawks in fall and spring.

The park sits on fertile alluvial land that was formerly an onion field adjacent to the Rio Grande. Lake/Flato drew inspiration not only from local agricultural structures such as Quonset huts, but also from the masonry and vaulted buildings of neighboring Mexico. "Sheltered spaces between the buildings recall haciendas and gardens, all attracting the true clients, which are birds," Lake says. The buildings orient east-west to capture prevailing breezes and ample daylight. Thirty-two-foot spans on the arched roofs create end porches and cover office and visitor facilities. The buildings also incorporate features made of salvaged cypress wood.

Once again, the firm's work attracts admirers. "What has always so impressed me about Lake/Flato is their ability to merge landscape and building in intimate and provocative ways," says Lawrence Speck, former dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin. Speck, now a partner with the international firm PageSoutherlandPage, adds "The park and the building become integral so that the landscape and the building become one statement."

The World Birding Center design succeeds so well in meshing with the landscape, says Joshua Rose, park natural resources specialist, that people often drive right past. "There's a beautiful synthesis of outside habitat with the buildings. I often sit in my office and get distracted by birds outside," he says. "People can sit in our café and watch hummingbirds at the feeders."

The architects reduced the amount of air-conditioned square footage by 33 percent, which reduced the initial cost, the amount of raw materials used, and operation and maintenance expenses over time.



Sheltered spaces between the buildings recall haciendas and gardens, all attracting the true clients, which are birds.

The shaped steel roofs not only recall the region's agricultural buildings and are highly energy efficient, but also they serve as conduits for collecting water in

metal cisterns. The water supports the courtyard gardens. "The courtyards really make the buildings," Lake says. "The spaces between the buildings are its most unique aspect." The cisterns can be filled with tap water, well water, or collected rain water as needed, Rose adds.

This kind of architecture offers an additional benefit: a better environment for humans. "With more access to daylight, more natural and less toxic materials, you get a completely different feeling emotionally and physically," Lake says. "There is a great deal of discussion about how we ought to be doing green architecture, but not enough about it being better architecture, building better buildings, ones that make you happier and healthier." New construction and replacement or remodeling of existing buildings, he points out, will account for 75 percent of the built environment by the year 2030.

"We have an enormous responsibility," the architect says, "for doing that right." **TH**

TH contributor MELISSA GASKILL is not only a regular visitor to Texas state parks, she also has, literally, written the book on hiking with dogs (Best Hikes with Dogs: Texas Hill Country and Gulf Coast; The Mountaineers Books, 2006).

TH ESSENTIALS

Sustainable Park Architecture

FOLLOWING ARE SITES mentioned in the story. Call for hours and details on admission/parking fees. For more information on **Lake/Flato Architects**, go to www.lakeflato.com.



Government Canyon State Natural Area.

12861 Galm Rd. (west of **San Antonio**). 210/688-9055; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/governmentcanyon.

World Birding Center/Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, 2800 S. Bentsen Palm Dr., **Mission**. 956/584-9156; www.worldbirdingcenter.org.

Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, 2111 W. Park Ave., **Orange**. 409/670-9113; www.shangrilagardens.org.

Witte Museum, 3801 Broadway, **San Antonio**. 210/357-1900; www.witemuseum.org.

Portal San Fernando, Main Plaza, **San Antonio**. www.lakeflato.com/projects/portal/01.asp.

Dallas Arboretum, 8525 Garland Rd., **Dallas**. 214/515-6500; www.dallasarboretum.org.



You are here.



TEXAS RESORTS endless summer

» **SUMMER IS THE TIME** to take yourself (and those you love) out of your day-to-day existence, even if your destination lies just a few miles down the road. A couple of days' escape can help smooth life's rough edges and restore energy. If you decide to plan a resort visit, expect to be pleasantly surprised by the range of choices that await. Whether you prefer an urban setting or a remote hideout, creative folks are conjuring delightful ways to help you enjoy stellar dining, explore Texas' outdoors, or splash away your stress. Resorts compete on delivering value, and try to outdo each other with nerve-settling spa treatments, entertaining music performances, and special getaway packages. Ask a few questions about customized experiences, and you might find yourself with a personalized wine selection and a dinner for two by the water, a sunset cruise, or rock climbing combined with kayaking.

Here comes the sun:
A new day at Lost
Pines Resort and
Spa near Bastrop.

But you won't know if you don't make the call. Turn the page and choose your vacation.



Unwind in The Woodlands

The pine-lined drive that leads into **The Woodlands Resort** foreshadows the forested escape ahead. Some 30 minutes northwest of downtown Houston, the resort exudes a warm sophistication—a comfortable poshness, you might say—that holds appeal for families and solace seekers alike; for both big spenders and the budget-minded.



eat >> The resort's dining opportunities run the gastronomic and economic gamut. The Forest Oasis' poolside Coolwater Café

serves casual fare, including juicy cheeseburgers and a variety of wraps, and a crunchy and creamy Oreo milkshake. With soothing views of Lake Harrison, The Woodlands Dining Room spreads a big breakfast buffet (made-to-order omelets, sausages, fresh breads and pastries, and waffles), along with lunch and dinner options that range from smoked-chicken salad to tender filet mignon.

play >> Explore the resort's 350 acres of natural forest and beyond on hundreds of miles of trails (bicycle rentals available). Bird-counters have tallied more than 200 species in these trees, including warblers and the red-cockaded woodpecker.

Ahhh moments await at the spa, where pampering (massages, nail service, facials) and a eucalyptus steam room refresh and relax. There are fairways to remember on two championship golf courses, and 21 indoor and outdoor tennis courts, with both hard and clay surfaces. Or simply splash the day away in the pools at the Forest Oasis Waterscape, an aquatic extravaganza with a three-story water-slide, pop fountains, and a 3-D underwater mural with music (a great way to get that reluctant little swimmer to submerge his head). Poolside on summer evenings, snack on s'mores and watch "dive-in" movies under the stars.

Several days' worth of entertainment



The slides at The Woodlands Resort's Forest Oasis Waterscape appeal to adults and kids alike. At the fitness center at the Lost Pines Resort and Spa, guests can take yoga, Pilates, or Nia dance in the Movement Center. One of four pools at Horseshoe Bay, the Cap Rock Pool offers a view of Lake LBJ.

lies just two miles from the resort in The Woodlands' Town Center and Market Street areas: shops, restaurants, parks, water-taxi rides, and outdoor concerts at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion.

stay » Choose the location of your

www.texashighways.com



lushly appointed lodging: secluded quarters in the woods, an executive suite with fairway views, or a cozy room beside the Forest Oasis. Special online packages include "Family of Four," "Tame Your Game [golf]," "Shoppin' & Stylin'," and "Enchanted Romance." Call 866/963-2174; www.woodlandsresort.com.

Fun in All Four Seasons

Of the three **Four Seasons** properties in Texas (Austin, Houston, and Irving), the latter—the 400-acre Four Seasons Las Colinas Resort—has earned



an especially lofty honor: It's the only AAA Five-Diamond Resort in Texas. What does that mean for guests? Service, amenities, and sophistication. And this summer especially, value, too.

eat » Master Sommelier James Tidwell, one of only four Texans to hold that title, wields his influence at the resort's new sports bar, 19. Here, an extensive wine list and cocktail menu tempt guests, as do shared dishes like short-rib sliders. During the summer, an outdoor grill by the main pool provides burgers, sandwiches, and other mainstays; over by the family pool and



Horseshoe Bay Resort
encompasses 7,000 acres
in an ultra-scenic pocket of
the Texas Hill Country.

tennis courts, similar fare (plus smoothies, salads, and soups) comes from the kitchen at Racquets. And for elegant dining, you can't beat the resort's Café on the Green, where chef Katie Natale and her staff work culinary magic with seafood, poultry, meats, seasonal vegetables, and desserts.

play» Lounging beneath tropical foliage at the main hotel pool, fresh-squeezed OJ or mai tai in hand, it's easy to imagine yourself vacationing on Kauai. But more active pursuits await, too. Play

tennis on indoor and outdoor hard courts; swim in an Olympic-size, indoor, salt-water lap pool; whack a volleyball back and forth at the new family pool; or work out at the fitness center, where helpful attendants will bring you cool towels, fresh magazines, and ice water while you tone up. New offerings for children and teenagers include access to Wii games, foosball, and other activities. And this is a golfer's paradise: Test your skills on the resort's gorgeous 18-hole, par-70 course, which was recently redesigned by PGA



Can't get away?
No problem.
Find resort
recipes in Web
Extra, [texas
highways.com](http://texas
highways.com).

Tour champion D.A. Weibring and architect Steve Wolfard. The PGA tour's annual HP Byron Nelson Championship, the largest professional golf event in Texas, takes place here in May.

At the spa, estheticians and therapists offer all manner of facials, massages, and other treatments. Guests can partake of



When Horseshoe Bay Resort's 147-acre, par-72 Apple Rock course opened in 1986, *Golf Digest* magazine named it the "Best New Resort Course." It's still one of the state's most scenic. Computer-controlled fountains create watery fun at The Woodlands.

the spa's amenities (keyhole-shaped hot tub, cold dip, steam room and sauna, spa pool, and relaxing ambiance) independent of a spa service.



stay» Newly refreshed guest rooms in the main hotel tower offer proximity to the main pool, Café on the Green, and the spa; while villas spread throughout the property offer privacy and views of the golf course or resort grounds. The "Summer Escape" package offers deep discounts on golf, spa, tennis, and dining. Call 972/717-0700; www.fourseasons.com.

Tarry in the Quarry

Most resorts, by definition, have this standard six-pack of amenities: sumptuous lodging, restaurants, pools, spa, golf course, tennis. But in the southwest quadrant of San Antonio, a region long known for its limestone quarries, the **Westin La Cantera Resort** offers extra value, especially for families with teenagers. After all, most resorts don't have world-class rollercoasters—courtesy of Six Flags Fiesta Texas—in their backyards.



eat» Seven restaurants and bars on the expansive resort satisfy all manner of

dining and drinking options. The resort's flagship restaurant, Francesca's at Sunset, features a menu influenced by the cuisine of Mark Miller—think antelope chili, prawns with habanero dip, guajillo-rubbed filets of beef, and desserts like Kahlúa-chocolate cake. Brannon's, the resort's casual (and health-focused) eatery, overlooks the pool area and offers selections like egg-white omelets, chicken tortilla soup, and Thai-inspired tenderloin-lettuce wraps. A wine list chosen by sommelier Steven Krueger features hundreds of international selections, but Krueger appreciates Texas wines, too—in particular Alamosa Wine Cellar's Grenache, which he often includes in tastings and wine-themed dinners.

play» Purchase half-price tickets to Fiesta Texas at the gift shop; take a free, five-minute shuttle ride to the nearby Shops at La Cantera, where retailers such as Nordstrom and Neiman Marcus await; or stay onsite and, dare we say it, chillax. There's a lot to do (or not do): seven swimming pools, including a pool with a water slide and a secluded pool reserved for

TEXAS RESORTS
endless summer



adults; tennis courts; a health club and spa; and two 18-hole golf courses. The PGA Tour's Valero Texas Open, one of only four PGA tour sites in Texas, takes place here in May. During the summer, the resort hosts poolside movies, along with games and other activities for kids. And if you're a parent but want to escape the little rascals while you shop or play through the Back 9, drop 'em off at the Kids' Club, where they'll keep busy with scavenger hunts, arts and crafts activities, and games.

stay >> More than 500 guest rooms include 63 secluded villas and suites. Package deals abound. Call 210/558-6500; www.westinlacantera.com.

Head for the Hill Country

Just an hour's drive west of Austin, **Horseshoe Bay**

Resort encompasses 7,000 acres along the shores of Lake LBJ in an ultra-scenic pocket of the Texas Hill Country. You'll find both condominium and hotel accommodations here, plus topnotch golf, tennis, and spa facilities, but don't overlook the chance to simply while away a couple of relaxing hours by renting a boat and touring the resort by water. Or even spending the entire day on the water.

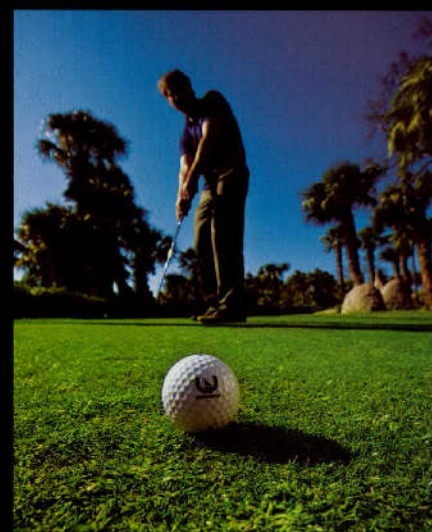
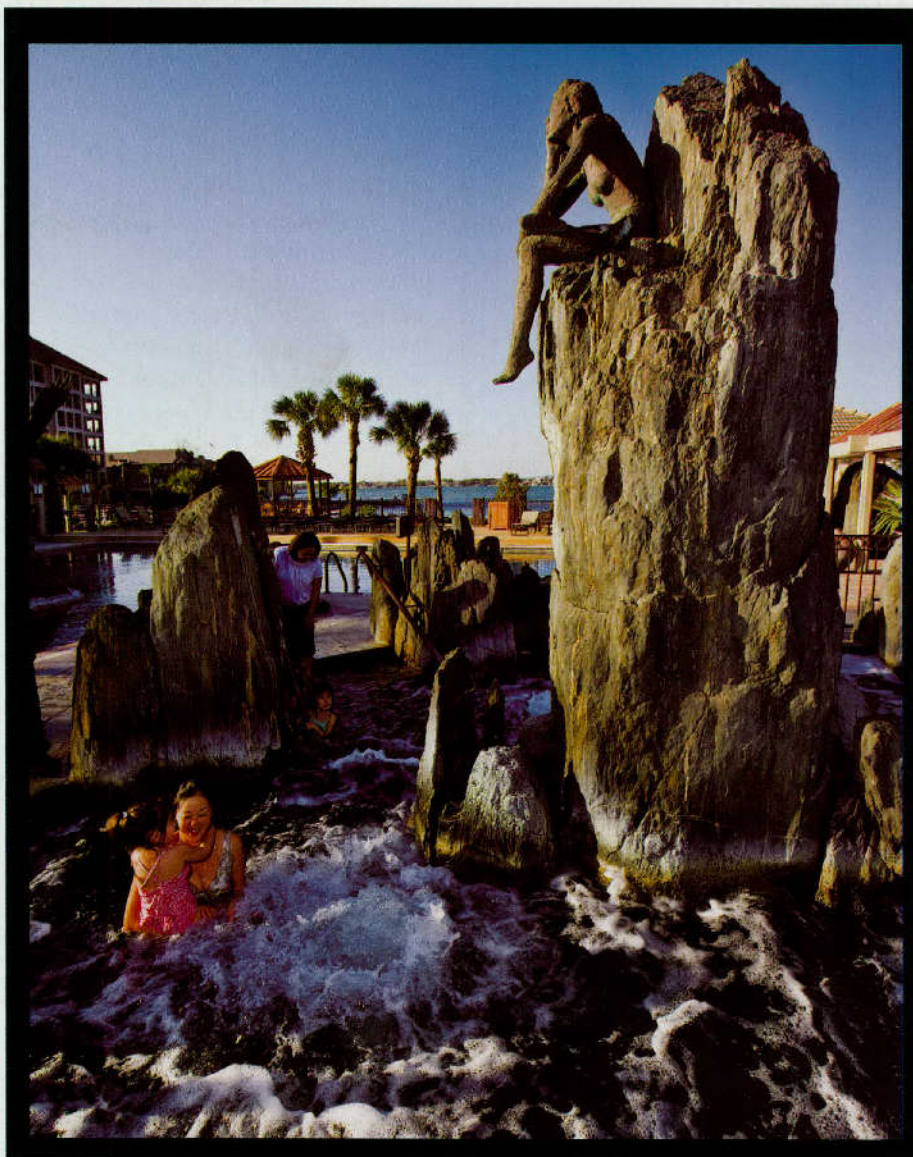


eat >> Horseshoe Bay Resort offers seven dining facilities; if you're staying at the Marriott hotel, you'll be a regular at The Lantana Bar and Grill, in the hotel lobby. The Lantana starts the day with a breakfast buffet and offers a full Southwestern-influenced menu, including a wine list with extensive international and Texas selections.

You'll find two pub-style restaurants, each overlooking the 18th green of a different golf course. For upscale, fine dining, try the Resort Yacht Club, which offers a sophisticated continental menu in a relaxed, yet refined, atmosphere.

play >> Golfers can hit the links on three championship Robert Trent Jones, Sr. golf courses, but everyone can try a made-to-scale, 18-hole par-72 Bermuda grass putting course called Whitewater. Rejuvenate in the full-service spa offering a wide variety of body treatments, massage

www.texashighways.com



Guests at the secluded casitas at the Westin La Cantera Resort have their own shimmering pool. At Horseshoe Bay Resort, watersports (and water relaxation) appeal to all ages. The Bermuda-grass, 18-hole putting course here challenges duffers and pro golfers alike. The Lost Pines spa offers a full menu of massages and other treatments.

PHOTOS THIS PAGE: J. GRIFFIS SMITH



therapies, facials, and nail and salon services. Make a splash in one of four swimming pools, or

play in the water on constant-level Lake LBJ (rent personal watercrafts and boats at the marina). In addition to pools, you'll find 16 adult tennis courts, three USTA-sponsored Andy Roddick Kids Tennis Courts, and two fitness facilities.

Kids dive for treasure at The Woodlands Resort's elaborate Forest Oasis Waterscape.

stay» Accommodations include The Horseshoe Bay Resort Marriott Hotel, which offers nearly 400 rooms, including more than 100 suites and nearby one-, two-, and three-bedroom villas. The resort also manages 50 lakefront condominiums, available in one-, two-, and three-bedroom floor plans, all completely furnished in a comfortable, even luxurious, style. Expect flat-screen televisions, iPod docking stations, spacious balconies, and fully equipped kitchens with granite countertops. Packages include an unlimited golf package, a spa package, and seasonal family deals. Call 800/531-5105; www.horseshoebaytexas.com.

Moonlight in the Pines

We've heard many times that, as you make the winding drive into the **Hyatt**

Regency Lost Pines Resort and Spa, you'll feel like you're entering a national park. The resort itself takes in 405 acres along the Colorado River, and right next door is the 1,100-acre McKinney Roughs Nature Park, operated by the Lower Colorado River Authority and open for the use of resort guests.

This expansive Texas hotel resort welcomes you with approachable luxury in the midst of rugged wilderness.



eat» Lost Pines offers delectable dining in more than half a dozen locations, ranging from the Firewheel Café, named for the colorful, orange-and-red wildflower, to Stories fine dining, the preferred spot to celebrate special occasions. When you are in a more casual mode, you can stop by the poolside grill, relax in one of the bars, or indulge your sweet tooth in McDade's ice cream emporium.

play» Activities abound: From spa treatments to horseback riding, the range of options starts with birding, hiking, and kayaking, and continues with golf and swimming. Or take a short trip into nearby Bastrop and shop in its historic district. The resort's river recreation programs let you enjoy the Colorado River, either by raft or kayak, regardless of your skill level. Youngsters will want to take advantage of Camp Hyatt programs, which are designed to help kids make friends while enjoying a range of outdoor and craft activities.

stay» The ranch-style hotel houses nearly 500 guest rooms, all designed to recall the rustic setting in a true resort style. You'll find Texas-style furnishings, like comfy leather armchairs and, if you can't get entirely away from the office, a true work-sized desk and the technology to keep you connected. Many rooms adjoin patios or balconies with views of the resort and the area's natural beauty. Ask about this summer's "Family Stay More Play More" package, which offers discounts and resort credits. Call 512/308-1234; [ww.lostpineshyatt.com](http://www.lostpineshyatt.com).

[for more Texas resorts, see page 72]

Texas Highways

THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

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JUST RIGHT FOR

Mom



Wildflower T-Shirt

The beauty of a Texas spring bursts forth on this missy T-shirt for Mom. Our wildflower and butterfly design are brightly printed on 100% cotton for easy care. **Color: Yellow Haze.** Available in S, M, L, XL, XXL

38251 \$17.95

Ladies Embroidered Cap

Mom can shade her face or just look great in our ladies cap embroidered with Texas and the iconic bluebonnet. Adjustable buckle in back. **Color: Light Denim**

38721 \$16.95



Texas Bluebonnet Tote

This deluxe carry-all tote bag will help mom keep everything close at hand. Carefree poly-cotton blend exterior featuring our Texas bluebonnets design. Fully lined. 14" strap makes it easy to hang on her shoulder. 17" x 17"

37415 \$22.95



Charmed by Texas Sterling Bracelet

Exclusive!

Charm mom with this high quality .925 sterling silver link bracelet. Our exclusive State of Texas silver charm makes it extra special. **Bracelet: 8"**, toggle closure, charm 3/4" diameter

37901 \$68.00

Texas Seal Charm

The State of Texas seal is beautifully replicated in our .925 sterling silver charm. Great addition to mom's charm bracelet or as a simple drop on a necklace chain. **Diameter: 2.0 mm**

37903 \$22.95

State of Texas Earrings

These French loop earrings, in the shape of Texas, sport the Lone Star flag design. A perfect complement to mom's Texas charm bracelet in beautiful .925 sterling silver. **Height: 2.5 mm**

37902 \$29.95/pair

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APR09

JUST RIGHT FOR *Everyone*



Llano County Wildflowers

A mixture of Indian paintbrush, bluebonnets and yucca against a fiery Texas sky, photographed by Joe Lowery. A beautiful statement for your home or office. 24" x 20"

32173 \$13.95

Texas Size Mug

Get several of these unique embossed destination mugs! Raised TEXAS with a backdrop of boots, the Alamo, a longhorn and cowboys riding horses through the bluebonnets. Texas Size: 18 oz.

37332 \$9.95

Weird Texas

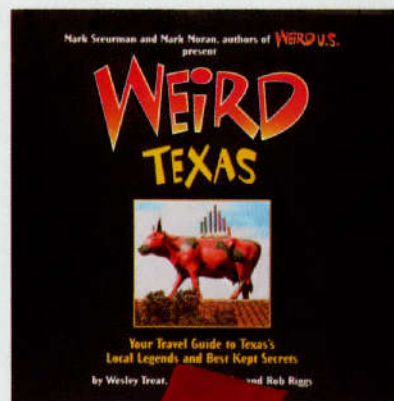
Three expert chroniclers of the weird traveled the state in search of the odd, offbeat, and the hard-to-believe. So, gear up, get ready, and discover all the good stuff your history teacher never taught you . . . from the haunted, to the hokey, to the downright hysterical. Houston's Beer Can House, Marfa's Mystery Lights, and Amarillo's Cadillac Ranch are just some of Texas' weird icons featured in this unusual book. **2005, 288 pages, 9 1/4" x 9 1/4", full-color, hardcover**

36701 \$19.95

Rhinestone Texas Tee

Our red ladies tee features rhinestones and nail-head embellishments. **100% cotton, machine-washable, inside-out. Sizes: S, M, L, XL, XXL**

38249 \$24.95



Texas Original Polo in Red

Softness and comfort are matched with attention to detail in this high-quality 100% combed cotton polo. A Lone Star applique on the left shoulder, with contrasting yoke, shows your Lone Star pride and style. **Sizes: S, M, L, XL, XXL**

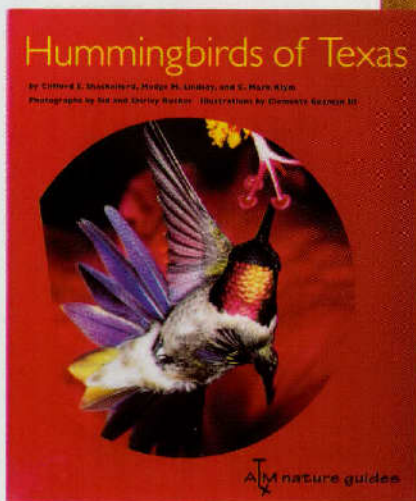
38252 \$36.95

The Best of Texas puzzle

It's more than a fun challenge; it's also a great way to learn the geography of the state. Reacquaint yourself with the glorious things that define Texas. Bordered with historical facts and images of assorted attractions, this puzzle can double as one giant postcard. Buy one to keep and send some off! **1,000 Pieces. 24" height x 30" width**

37523 \$17.95

View our entire product line at
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Old World Texas Map T-Shirt **NEW!**

Our classic t-shirt puts a trendy spin on Old World style with a two-tone historic map of Texas tastefully imprinted on the front. A Texas flag icon and state seal add a splash of color. **100% cotton. Color: Caramel.** Sizes: S, M, L, XL, XXL

38253 \$17.95

Old World Cap **NEW!**

This rustic design features our Old World Texas map on the front panels and visor of this cap. A Texas flag icon and state seal add a tasteful splash of color. **Adjustable buckle in back. Color: Caramel**

38724 \$16.95

Hummingbirds of Texas

Hummingbird enthusiasts, rejoice! Written for birders and nature lovers of every level, this book explores the enormous appeal of the tiniest and shiniest of birds. Nineteen different hummingbirds are magnificently covered through full-color photographs, original artwork, abundance graphs, and range maps. Plus, you'll find tips on hummingbird-related events, tours, photography, and attracting these flying jewels to your own backyard. **2005, 110 pages, 8" x 11 3/4", hardcover**

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APR09

The King of Cowtown

Amon Carter made an art of playing cowboy—lock, stock, and barrel

By GENE FOWLER

Go!
Visit Fort Worth;
learn why Carter
was such a fan.

"Fort Worth is not 'Where the West Begins.' The West begins wherever Amon Carter is."

— J.C. Penney



"NO OTHER CITY IN AMERICA," DECLARED Hollywood cowboy humorist Will Rogers in 1931, "has anything approaching such a public citizen as [Fort Worth has in] Amon Carter."

You could argue that no son or daughter of the Lone Star State ever enjoyed being a Texan more than Amon G. Carter. Newspaper publisher, radio and television station owner, wild-catter, philanthropist, and host of statesmen and stars, he elevated the state's primary 20th-Century pastime—playing cowboy—to a fine and wild breed of performance art. As biographer Jerry Flemmons penned in the subtitle to his 1998 book, *Amon*, the Cowtown legend starred in life as "the Texan who played cowboy for America."

Works at the Amon Carter Museum represent a range of American art styles. Consider Stuart Davis' modern *Blips and Ifs* (1963-64).



Amon Carter's collection of Remingtons and Russells was the genesis of his namesake museum.

Cowboy Carter donned ceremonial purple-and-white cowboy boots embellished with TCU horned frogs, fired blanks from pearl-

handled pistols to summon guests to dinner at his Shady Oak Farm, and handed out special Shady Oak cowboy hats to visitors by the hundreds. Taking the show on the road, Carter once drove a stagecoach down New York's Wall Street.

"He was born in a log cabin [in Wise County, in 1879]," says his daughter Ruth Carter Stevenson, "and only made it through the eighth grade. But he could do my math problems in his head. He'd have the answer just like a mockingbird on a June bug. It made me so mad." Carter left his hometown of Crafton in his early teens, working odd jobs around Bowie before hitting the road as a traveling portrait salesman. In 1905, he settled in Fort Worth, where he soon became advertising manager of the *Star*. Three years later, Carter bought the paper with the help of an investor; he soon merged it with the local *Telegram*. By 1919, the *Star-Telegram* had the largest circulation in Texas. Hailing the Trinity River outpost as the spot "Where the West Begins" on its masthead, the paper retained that distinction into the 1950s.

A Legacy of Art

In his will, philanthropist Amon Carter (1879-1955) provided for the establishment of **Fort Worth's Amon Carter Museum**, which he stipulated would be free to the public and dedicated to American art. "As a youth, I was denied the advantages which go with the possession of money," Amon Carter wrote. "I am endeavoring to give those who have not had such advantages, but who aspire to the higher and finer attributes of life, those opportunities which were denied to me."



The building, designed by architect Philip Johnson, opened in 1961 in Fort Worth's nascent cultural district. Johnson's modern design used steel, glass, Texas shellstone, and bronze to provide grand, serene settings for the art. While the genesis of the museum's holdings were Carter's numerous works by Western masters Remington and Russell, the museum now houses thousands of sculptures, paintings, works on paper, photographs,

and books by hundreds of American artists. It has also been expanded three times, most recently in 2001, with a design by the original architect. Today, some 700 works in the permanent collection are on view at any one time, and several galleries showcase traveling exhibits.

American photography and works on paper dominate the exhibition halls this summer. *New Look: Masterworks of American Photography* (through June 7) presents dozens of representative works from the Amon Carter's permanent collection, and *High Modernism: Alfred Stieglitz and His Legacy* (through June 28) illustrates how Stieglitz, his contemporaries, and his successors have used the camera to interpret American society and culture.

The Amon Carter Museum, in the Fort Worth Cultural District at 3501 Camp Bowie Blvd., opens Tue-Sat 10-5 (10-8 Thu), Sun noon-5. Call 817/738-1933; www.cartermuseum.org.

—Lori Moffatt

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PHOTO: COURTESY AMON CARTER MUSEUM

Speaking of Texas

Politicians, movie stars, columnists, and celebrities galore partied at Carter's Shady Oak. "It wasn't unusual to look up and see Charles Lindbergh coming in the kitchen door," remembers Ruth Carter Stevenson. Her father used his influence

Carter fired blanks from pearl-handled pistols to summon guests to dinner.

with a fishing buddy, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, to help create what would become Big Bend National Park.

But most of Carter's concerns lay closer to home. A whiskey-sipping amigo, Vice President John Nance "Cactus Jack" Garner, quipped, "Amon wants the government of the United States to run for the exclusive benefit of



Fort Worth and, if possible, to the detriment of Dallas."

Carter's rivalry with the city he called "Big d" inspired him to stage the Texas Frontier Centennial in Fort Worth in 1936, after Dallas won the nod to host the official Texas Centennial Exposition. The Fort Worth festival's centerpiece, *Casa Mañana*, a large-scale outdoor musical, created such a showbiz buzz that in 1939, the famed columnist Damon Runyon panned the New York World's Fair as "No hits, no runs, no Carters."

Remington's dramatic *A Dash for the Timber* (1889) was Amon Carter's favorite painting.

After her father's death in 1955, Stevenson guided to fruition her father's dream of establishing a museum to exhibit his Western art, including works by Remington, Russell, and others. The Amon Carter Museum, designed by architect Philip Johnson, opened in 1961 and now showcases American sculpture, paintings, and photography in many genres. Museum visitors today understand why entrepreneur J.C. Penney said, "Fort Worth is not 'Where the West Begins.' The West begins wherever Amon Carter is." TH

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Power of the Flower

CELEBRATE National Wildflower Week, May 3-10, at the **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** in Austin. The center's Visitors' Gallery will feature an exhibit of Rick Tolar's wildflower photography (one of the 25 images is shown at right), May 5-10. Other activities scheduled during the week include children's programming at the center's Little House, specials at the gift shop, 40 outdoor sculpture works in the gardens, and a watercolor, paper wildflower sculpture show by artist Shou Ping in the McDermott Learning Center. Visit www.wildflower.org/nww, or call 512/232-0100.



See!

Rick Tolar's pix
in April Texas
Highways

May Events

BIG BEND COUNTRY

DEL RIO: George Paul Memorial Bull Riding May 3-4. Val Verde County Fairgrounds. www.drchamber.com 830/775-9595

MARFA: Marfa Film Festival May 1-3. Camping, lodging, and outdoor screenings at the new El Cosmico featuring the Alamo Drafthouse Rolling Roadshow. www.marfafilmfestival.org 432/729-1948

MIDLAND: Symphonic Pops, American Salute May 2. Commemorative Air Force Hangar, Midland International Airport. 432/563-0921

MIDLAND: To Honor Those Who Served May 25. CAF Doolittle Memorial Garden at Midland International Airport, 9600 Wright Drive. 432/563-1000

ODESSA: Memorial Day Celebration May 25. The Presidential Museum, 4919 E. University Blvd. 432/363-7737

PECOS: Memorial Day Veterans Concert in the Park May 23. Pecos Park and Zoo. 432/445-2421

VAN HORN: Cinco de Mayo Celebration May 2. City Park. www.vanhorn.texas.org 866/4-A-HOWDY

GULF COAST

BAYTOWN: The Producers May 1-2, 8-10, 15-16. Baytown Little Theater. <http://baytown.littletheater.org> 281/424-7617

BEAUMONT: Bubble Day May 2. Texas Energy Museum. www.texasenergymuseum.org 409/833-5100

BEAUMONT: Cinco de Mayo Celebration May 5. Riverfront Park 409/728-0625

BEAUMONT: 64th Annual YMBL Championship Chute Out Rodeo May 7-9. www.ymbbl.org/rodeo 409/832-9991

CORPUS CHRISTI: U.S. Kiteboarding National Championships May 5-9. Corpus Christi Yacht Club. 361/883-6518 www.uskiteboardingchampionships.com

CORPUS CHRISTI: Southland Conference Baseball Tournament May 20-23. Corpus Christi Hooks' Whataburger Field. www.southland.org 361/825-BALL or 361/561-HOOK

CRYSTAL BEACH: Texas Crab Festival May 8-10. Features some of the tastiest crab and seafood dishes on the Texas Gulf Coast. Gregory Park. 409/684-3345 www.bolivarchamber.org/crabfestival.aspx

GALVESTON: Historic Homes Tour May 2-3, 9-10. Magnificent architecture, creative home decor, and intriguing history await in 10 of Galveston Island's oldest homes. www.galvestonhistory.org 409/765-7834

GALVESTON: Galveston Symphony Orchestra May 3. The Grand 1894 Opera House. www.thegrand.com 800/821-1894

HOUSTON: Fleetwood Mac May 2. Toyota Center. www.houstontoyotacenter.com 866/446-8849

HOUSTON: Aspen Santa Fe Ballet May 8. Wortham Center's Cullen Theater. www.spahouston.org 713/227-45PA


HOUSTON: Happy Days—A Musical May 12-24. Theatre Under the Stars. www.tuts.com 713/558-TUTS or 888/558-3882

HOUSTON: 38th Annual Houston Scottish Highland Games & Celtic Festival May 16-17. Houston Farm & Ranch Club at Bear Creek Park. www.houstonhighlandgames.com 713/871-0061

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TH SPOTLIGHT

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LEAGUE CITY: Lions Club Texas Music Festival & Village Fair May 1-3. Walter Hall County Park. www.lcvillagefair.com 281/332-5005

NASSAU BAY: Clear Lake Symphony May 2. Program includes Beethoven's Fidelio Overture, Dvorak's New World

Symphony, and Bruch's Concerto for Clarinet & Viola. Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 18220 Upper Bay Road. www.clearlakesymphony.org 281/488-0066

PALACIOS: Cinco de Mayo May 2-3. Railroad Park. 361/972-5556

PASADENA: Strawberry Festival May 15-17. Features carnival, Guitar Hero contest, helicopter rides, alligator show, pig races, and more. Pasadena Fairgrounds, 7902 Fairmont Parkway. www.strawberryfest.org 281/991-9500

PORT ARTHUR: S.A.L.T. Fishing Rodeo May 23-24. Pleasure Island. 409/963-0433

PORT NECHES: RiverFest "Thunder on the Neches" May 1-3. Includes boat races, entertainment, arts & crafts, food, fishing tournament, carnival, fireworks, car and motorcycle shows, and more. Riverfront Park. 409/722-9154

ROCKPORT: Hidden Gardens Tour May 9. Explore beautiful gardens in Aransas and San Patricio counties. Green Acres, 611 E. Mimosa. www.aransas-tx.tamu.edu 361/790-0103

ROCKPORT: Festival of Wines May 23-24. Texas Maritime Museum/ACND Festival Grounds at Rockport Harbor. www.texasmaritimuseum.org 361/729-1271

SANTA FE: Cinco de Mayo Festival May 3. Haak Vineyards & Winery. www.haakwine.com 409/925-1401

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: Pedal to Padre May 2. Bicycle tour. Ride with the River Rockets Adventure Club to South Padre Island and Schlitterbahn Beach Waterpark. www.riverrockets.com 956/541-9712

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: SPI Windsurf Blowout May 2-3. 956/761-5061

WHARTON: Greater Tuna May 1-3. The Plaza Theatre. www.whartonplazatheatre.org 979/282-2970

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: Old Pecan Street Spring Arts Festival May 2-3. Downtown Sixth Street, originally named Pecan Street, hosts a lively street fair. www.oldpecanstreetfestival.com 512/443-6179

AUSTIN: Sonny Rollins May 3. The legendary jazz saxophone colossus performs at the UT Performing Arts Center's Bass Concert Hall. www.utpac.org 512/471-4454

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BANDERA: St. Stanislaus Parish Festival May 3. Mansfield Park. www.stanislausfest.com 830/460-4712

BANDERA: Cowboy Capital Rodeo Association Pro Rodeo May 22-24. Mansfield Park Rodeo Arena. www.banderarodeo.com 830/796-7207

BOERNE: Historic Homes Tour May 9. A self-guided tour of six beautifully restored historic homes in and around Boerne. www.visitboerne.org 830/249-7277

BURNET: Barbecue Cookoff & Fiddler Festival May 15-16. Burnet Fairgrounds. www.burnetcookoff.com 512/756-4297

FREDERICKSBURG: Founders Day May 9. Vereins Kirche, Marktplatz, and Pioneer Museum, 325 W. Main. www.pioneermuseum.com 830/997-2835

FREDERICKSBURG: Crawfish Festival May 22-23. Downtown—Market Square. www.tex-fest.com/crawfish 866/839-3378

GEORGETOWN: Festival of the Arts May 30–Jun. 7. www.georgetowntexasymphony.org 512/868-6397

GRUENE: KNBT Americana Music Jam May 17. Gruene Hall. www.gruenehall.com 830/629-5077 or 830/606-1601

JOHNSON CITY: Wildflower Spring Festival May 2. Downtown Square. www.johnsoncitytexaschamber.com 830/868-7684

KERRVILLE: Kerrville Folk Festival May 21–Jun. 7. Quiet Valley Ranch. www.kerrvillefolkfestival.com 830/257-3600 or 800/435-8429

KERRVILLE: Texas State Arts & Crafts Fair May 23–25. River Star Arts & Events Park, 4000 Riverside Drive. www.theartoftexas.com 830/896-5711

LUCKENBACH: Hill Country Run May 1–3. Motorcycle rally. www.hillcountryrun.com 830/997-8515 or 866/839-3378

LUCKENBACH: 160th Birthday Celebration May 23. www.luckenbachtexas.com 830/997-3224

MARBLE FALLS: Howdy-Roo Chili Cookoff May 2. Johnson Park. 830/693-5502 or 830/693-3492

MARBLE FALLS: MayFest May 7–10. Johnson Park. www.marblefalls.org 800/759-8178

SAN MARCOS: Cinco de Mayo May 1–3. Hays County Civic Center, 755 Civic Center Loop. www.vivacincodemayo.org 512/353-8482 or 877/847-4926

SAN MARCOS: Texas Natural & Western Swing Festival May 16. San Marcos Plaza. www.tourisanmarcos.com 888/200-5620

SONORA: Viva Sonora—Cinco de Mayo May 2 Sutton County Park. www.sonoratx-chamber.com 325/387-2880

STONEWALL: Barbecue on the LBJ Ranch May 2. Visit the Web site for reservations. LBJ Ranch, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park. www.friendsoflobjnationalpark.org 830/868-7128, ext. 244

STONEWALL: Texas Bison Festival May 2–3. LBJ State Park and Historic Site. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/lbj 830/644-2252

STONEWALL: Lavender Fest May 16–17. Becker Vineyards. www.beckervineyards.com 830/644-2681

TAYLOR: Bloomin' Festival May 2. Main Street. 512/352-5448

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: 27th Annual Cinco de Mayo Festival May 1–3. St. Vincent Pallotti Catholic Church, 2525 Westview Drive. 325/672-1794

ABILENE: Western Heritage Classic May 7–10. Preserves the heritage of the ranch cowboy. Features a parade, ranch rodeo, nightly dances and much more. Taylor County Expo Center. www.westernheritageclassic.com 325/677-4376

AMARILLO: George Lopez May 2. Popular stand-up comedian and TV star brings his wildly successful "Tall, Dark, and Chicano" Tour to the Civic Center Auditorium. www.panhandletickets.com 806/378-3096

BRONTE: Fort Chadbourne Living History May 2. Historic Fort Chadbourne. www.fortchadbourne.org 325/743-2555

CANYON: 24 Hours in the Canyon Bike Race May 30–Jun. 1. Palo Duro Canyon State Park. www.24hoursthecanyon.org 806/488-2227

COLORADO CITY: Colorado City Lake Bike Tour May 2. Includes 8-, 22- and 44-mile runs. Railhead Building, First and Elm. www.coloradocitychamberofcommerce.com 325/728-3404

LUBBOCK: 31st Annual Lubbock Arts Festival May 1–3. The festival also includes a special exhibit of ArtCars from ArtCar World Museum. Lubbock Memorial Civic Center. www.lubbockarts.org 806/744-2787

LUBBOCK: Alan Jackson May 14. Country music superstar plays Texas Tech University's United Spirit Arena. www.depts.ttu.edu/unitedspiritarena 806/770-2000 or 800/735-1288

LUBBOCK: Big 12 Outdoor Track & Field Championships May 15–17. R.P. Fuller Stadium, Texas Tech University. <http://texastech.cstv.com> 806/742-TECH

SAN ANGELO: Festival on the Concho May 15–16. Neff's Park. 325/655-9866

SAN ANGELO: Armed Forces Day May 16. Fort Concho National Historic Landmark. www.fortconcho.com 325/481-2646

SANTA ANNA: Funtier Days May 15–16. Santa Anna Armory. 325/348-3535

TUSCOLA: Abilene State Park's 75th Anniversary Celebration May 16. Abilene State Park. 325/572-3204

VERNON: Santa Rosa Roundup PRCA Rodeo May 13–16. Santa Rosa Rodeo Grounds. 940/552-7236

PINEY WOODS

CONROE: City of Conroe Free Concert in the Park May 7. Heritage Place, 500 Collins St. www.cityofconroe.org 936/522-3014

CROCKETT: Lions Club PRCA Rodeo May 7–9. Porth Ag Arena. 936/544-0999

HUNTSVILLE: General Sam Houston Folk Festival May 1–3. Celebrates the life and times of Gen. Sam Houston with life-skill demonstrations, authentic 19th-century dress, entertainment and more. Sam Houston Memorial Museum. www.samhoustonfolkfestival.org 936/294-1832

HUNTSVILLE: Airing of the Quilts May 2. Downtown square. www.talpinsequiltguild.com 936/295-8322

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TH SPOTLIGHT

King George

QUINTESSENTIAL country music star of stars **George Strait** opens his 2009 tour at the Rio Grande Valley's Dodge Arena in **Hidalgo** on May 9 (956/668-7740; www.dodgearena.com). He'll also christen the Dallas Cowboys' new stadium in **Arlington** with a concert on June 6. With an amazing career that now spans more than a quarter century and includes 67 million records sold and counting, Strait trails only The Beatles and Elvis. For more information, go to www.georgestrait.com or <http://stadium.dallascowboys.com>.



JASPER: Jasper Lions PRCA Rodeo May 6-9. The week starts with a trail-riders parade through downtown Jasper. Lions Rodeo Arena. www.jasperlionsrodeo.com 409/384-2234

JEFFERSON: Diamond Bessie Murder Trial May 1-3. Jefferson Playhouse. www.theexcelsiorhouse.com 903/665-6075

JEFFERSON: Historic Homes Tour & Spring Festival May 1-3. www.jefferson-texas.com 903/665-2513

MARSHALL: Stagecoach Day Festival May 16. This historic transportation festival is filled with arts & crafts, live entertainment, domino tournaments, a horseshoe-throwing contest, and a classic car show. Washington Square District. 903/935-7868

TEXARKANA: Four States Triathlon May 17. www.christusstmichaelfitness.org 903/614-4441

THE WOODLANDS: Dave Matthews Band May 1. Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. www.woodlandscenter.org 281/363-3300

WINNSBORO: Texas Woodstock Festival May 2-3. Historic Downtown Winnsboro. www.winnsboro.com 903/342-5267 or 903/342-3666

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ADDISON: Taste Addison May 8-10. Features more than 50 Addison restaurants. Includes musical entertainment, celebrity chef demonstrations, carnival rides, arts and crafts, wine tasting and seminars, and more. Addison Circle Park. www.addisontexas.net 800/233-4766

ATHENS: Old Fiddlers Reunion & Contest May 29. Downtown Courthouse lawn. www.athenstx.org 888/294-2847

BRENHAM: Brenham Country Flavors Festival May 2. Enjoy everything from local favorites to sweet treats, entertainment, shopping, crafts, and more. Downtown Brenham. www.downtownbrenham.com 888/273-6426

BRENHAM: Maifest May 8-9. German heritage festival at Fireman's Park. www.maifest.org 979/830-5393

BRIDGEPORT: Butterfield Stage Days Festival & PRCA Rodeo May 8-9. Harwood Park. www.bridgeportchamber.org 940/683-2076

BURLESON: Cinco de Mayo May 1-2. Old Town Burleson. 817/447-5312

DALLAS: Dallas Symphony Orchestra May 1-2, 7-9, 14-16, 21-23. Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center. www.dallassymphony.com 214/692-0203

DALLAS: Frost/Nixon May 1-3. Majestic Theatre, 1925 Elm St. www.dallassummermusicals.org 214/421-5678

DALLAS: Africa Day May 2. Celebration is part of the DFW International Community Alliance's African Unity Festival. J. Erik Jonsson Central Library, 1515 Young. www.dfwinternational.org/AfricanUnity 972/661-2764

DALLAS: Art Fest May 22-24. Fair Park. www.artfest500.com 214/565-0200

DENTON: Cinco de Mayo May 2. Quakertown Park. www.dentonparks.com 940/349-8285

ENNIS: Cinco de Mayo Festival May 2. www.visitennis.org 972/878-4748

ENNIS: National Polka Festival May 22-24. KJT, Sokol, & Knights of Columbus halls, and downtown. www.nationalpolkafestival.com 972/878-4748 or 888/366-4748

FAYETTEVILLE: Fayetteville Chamber Music Festival May 8-10, 15-16. Country Place Hotel. www.fayettevillemusic.org 979/249-5035

FORT WORTH: First Fridays at The Modern May 1. Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. www.themodern.org 817/738-9215 or 866/824-5566

FORT WORTH: Mayfest May 1-3. Trinity Park. www.fortworthgov.org 817/332-1055

FORT WORTH: Frontier Forts Days May 8-9. Stockyards National Historic District. www.stockyardsstation.com 817/625-9715

FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra May 15-17. Bass Performance Hall. www.fwsymphony.org 817/665-6000

FORT WORTH: Mountain West Conference Baseball Tournament May 19-23. TCU's Lupton Stadium &



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Williams-Reilly Field. <http://gofrogs.cstv.com> 817/257-FROG or 877/828-3764

FORT WORTH: Van Cliburn International Piano Competition May 22-Jun. 7. Thirty of today's most promising pianists at Bass Performance Hall. www.cliburn.org 800/462-7979

FORT WORTH: Crowne Plaza Invitational at Colonial May 25-31. Prestigious annual PGA Tour event hosts the world's best golfers at Colonial Country Club. www.crowneplazainvitation.com 817/927-4280

FRISCO: Bike MS: Sam's Club Frisco to Fort Worth Ride May 2-3. www.bikemstexas.org 214/373-1400 or 800/344-4867

GAINESVILLE: Chamber Rodeo May 7-9. Gainesville Riding Club. www.gogainesville.net 940/665-2831

GIDDINGS: Lee County Fair & Rodeo May 8-9, 14-16. Lee County Sheriffs Posse Arena. www.giddingsstx.com 979/542-3455 or 979/542-2067

GRAND PRAIRIE: George Lopez May 8. Famous stand-up comedian and TV star George Lopez brings his "Tall, Dark, and Chicano" Tour to NOKIA Theatre. www.nokia.livedfw.com 214/373-8000 or 972/647-5700

GRAND PRAIRIE: Alan Jackson May 15. Country music superstar brings his 2009 "Havin' a Good Time" Tour to NOKIA Theatre. www.nokiathreatdfw.com 214/373-8000 or 972/647-5700

GRAND PRAIRIE: Gary Allan May 22. Country music star performs at Lone Star Park. www.LoneStarPark.com 972/263-RACE

GRAPEVINE: Main Street Days May 15-17. www.grapevintexasusa.com 817/410-3185

HONEY GROVE: Memorial Day Celebration May 25. Civic Center. www.honeygrovechamber.com 903/378-7211

IRVING: HP Byron Nelson Golf Championship May 18-24. The PGA Tour's finest tee it up at the Four Seasons Resort & Club Dallas at Las Colinas. www.hpbnc.org 214/373-8000 or 214/742-3896

LEWISVILLE: Cinco de Mayo Festival May 2. Main Street, Old Town Lewisville. 972/436-4333

LOCKHART: Cinco de Mayo May 2-3. Downtown Courthouse Square. www.lockhartchamber.com 512/398-2818

LULING: 82nd Annual Field Day May 21. Luling Foundation Farm, 523 Mulberry St. www.lulingfoundation.org 830/875-2438

NOCONA: Fun Fest May 16. www.nocona.org 940/825-3526

RICHARDSON: Cottonwood Art Festival May 2-3. Cottonwood Park, 1400 W. Beltline Road. www.cottonwoodartfestival.com 972/744-4580

RICHARDSON: Wildflower! May 15-17. Eclectic arts and music festival at Galatyn Park, 2351 Performance Drive. www.wildflowerfestival.com 972/744-4580

SEGUIN: MayFest May 16. Sebastopol House State Historic Site. 830/379-4833

TEMPLE: Central Texas Airshow May 1-3. Temple Airport. www.centraltexasairshow.com 800/479-0338

WEIMAR: Gedenke German Festival May 8-9. Downtown. www.weimartx.org 979/725-9511

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

EAGLE PASS: Memorial Day Ceremony May 30. Maverick County Lake. 830/773-4528

LA VERNIA: Bluebonnet Fest May 16. City Park. www.lavernialions.org 830/779-1703

SAN ANTONIO: San Antonio Symphony May 1-2, 8-9, 29-30. Majestic Theatre. www.sasymphony.org 210/224-9600

SAN ANTONIO: Savor the Arts May 7. Russell Hill Rogers Galleries and Lecture Hall, Southwest School of Art & Craft. www.swschool.org 210/224-1848, ext. 306

SAN ANTONIO: Valero Texas Open May 11-17. One of the most historic tournaments on the PGA Tour. Resort

Course at the Westin La Cantera. www.golfsanantonio.org 210/558-6500 or 210/345-3818

SAN ANTONIO: Bonnie Raitt May 12. Distinctive slide guitarist/vocalist, Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, and winner of nine Grammys, performs at the Majestic Theatre. www.majesticempire.com 210/224-9600

SAN ANTONIO: Shakespeare in the Park May 28-31. Shakespeare's characters and stories come to life with a beautiful botanical garden background. San Antonio Botanical Garden. www.sabot.org 210/829-5100

WESLACO: Dragonfly Days May 21-24. Includes speakers, field trips to different nature destinations, seminars, and more. Valley Nature Center, 301 S. Border. www.valley.naturecenter.org 956/969-2475

Want more? Go to the Events Calendar at www.texashighways.com.

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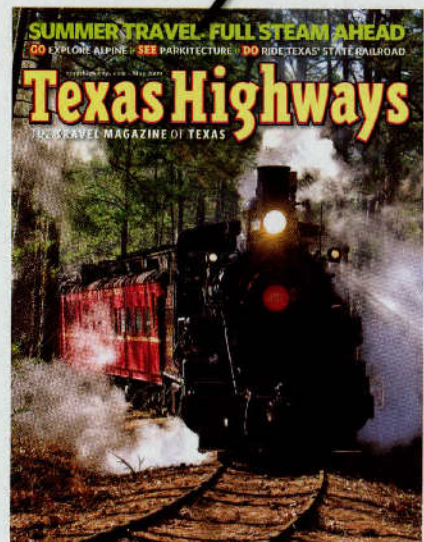
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TEXAS RESORTS: ENDLESS SUMMER

continued from page 60

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The Houstonian, Houston » Enjoy the activities of the nation's 4th most populous city, then retreat to this wooded 18-acre urban resort to relax. The Houstonian offers four restaurants, three pools, and access to the Houstonian's exclusive fitness club and spa, plus two of the city's finest golf courses. Call 800/231-2759; www.houstonian.com.

Gaylord Texan Resort Hotel, Grapevine » The sprawling Gaylord resort campus, which lies just six minutes from DFW International Airport and overlooks Lake Grapevine, encompasses six restaurants, seven lounges, eight shops, and a day spa and fitness center (complete with indoor and outdoor pools). Call 866/782-7897; www.gaylordtexan.com.

Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa, San Antonio » Family getaways couldn't get much simpler—the resort offers golf, tennis, biking, a four-

acre water park, numerous restaurants and lounges, a fitness center and spa, and easy access to theme-park fun and shopping, thanks to neighbors Six Flags Fiesta Texas and the Shops at La Cantera. Call 800/233-1234; www.hillcountryhyatt.com.

Lajitas Resort & Spa, Lajitas » This remote getaway in the heart of the Chihuahuan Desert offers luxuries you might not expect in the heart of the Big Bend—three restaurants, a spa, pools, and an 18-hole golf course (currently under renovation), plus a ranch-style décor with lots of leather and wood. Easy access to canoeing, rafting, hiking, and other activities in Big Bend National Park, 22 miles east. Call 877/525-4827; www.lajitas.com.

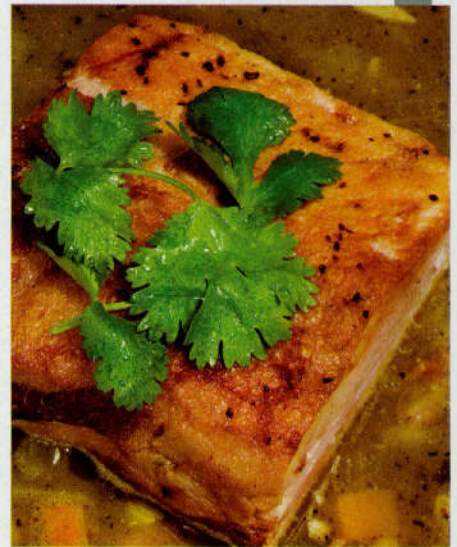
Wildcatter Ranch Resort, Graham » Guests at this 1,500-acre ranch resort can play cowboy, but other amenities include an infinity-edge pool overlooking the Brazos River Valley, a spa, a well-regarded restaurant and saloon, and activities such as archery, canoeing, and skeet-shooting. Call 888/462-9277; www.wildcatterranch.com.

—TH Staff

Talk

continued from page 61

TH READER RECOMMENDATION



Wowed in Weatherford

THE FIRE OAK GRILL in Weatherford is the best. The service, setting, and food provide a true dining experience you will long remember and return for. The lamb chops and beef tenderloin are outstanding, but be sure to ask what the chef has prepared for the day [Pork Belly with Ancho Chile Posole shown above]. Finish your meal with the bourbon-pecan pie.

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Fire Oak Grill is at 114 Austin Ave.; 817/598-0400; www.fireoakgrill.com.

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Window on Texas

Photograph by **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**

EYE ON THE BALL Another round and another attention-grabbing obstacle on one of two 18-hole courses at Peter Pan Mini Golf in Austin, a family favorite since it opened in 1948. Several of the courses' colorful characters were sculpted and painted by owner Mike Dismukes' father, including a pig wearing a tuxedo and, of course, a giant Peter Pan.



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