


# TRAVEL LOG

SEPTEMBER 2005

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## TxDOT

**T**RAVEL counselors from the Texas Department of Transportation's Travel Information Centers and AAA will embark on an Oct. 15–21 **adventure in West Texas** that will give them **first-hand knowledge** of the region's offerings that they can, in turn, share with the traveling public.

The Texas Travel Industry Association sponsors the Texas study tours, continuing a tradition that began 30 years ago.

Communities in the region, known for its wide open spaces and diverse terrain, will showcase the area's tourism highlights, including viewing the mysterious Marfa lights and rafting down the Rio Grande.

The cross-regional tour will be led by Tex-Tours owner Javier Rodriguez, a TTIA study tour veteran.

"This year's host communities and their tourism partners have organized exciting itineraries that showcase the very best of their tourism experience. They realize the importance of having these professional travel counselors in the communities," says Rodriguez.



Travel counselors to explore West Texas region

The educational tour kicks off in Midland/Odessa and heads south to Fort Stockton, Marathon, Big Bend National Park including the

Chisos Mountain Basin, then west to Lajitas, Cibolo Creek Ranch, Marfa, Fort Davis and concludes in El Paso.

## JOINT VENTURES

**A**PUBLIC-private initiative to protect the environmentally sensitive Edwards Aquifer recharge zone has netted a new public place to experience **another beautiful facet of Texas — Government Canyon State Natural Area, which opens its gates to the public on Saturday, Oct. 15.** Before this, the 8,622-acre area had only been accessible on a limited basis for special events and volunteer opportunities.

In order to protect the watershed — San Antonio's primary source of drinking water — state, federal and local agencies, along with citizens and conservation groups, worked together to fund acquisition of the scenic Texas Hill Country acreage that straddles the Balcones Fault in far northwest San Antonio.

Once open, the public will be able to enjoy the space for hiking, mountain biking, picnicking and bird watching with access to an

open-air group picnic pavilion, 20 picnic sites and about 32 miles of trails. There will also be a Visitor Center that includes offices, a park store, classrooms and an exhibit hall interpreting Government Canyon's rich natural and cultural resources. Overnight primitive tent camping facilities should be available by mid-2006.

The public-private cooperative — Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, The Trust for Public Land, Edwards Aquifer Authority, San Antonio

## THE NEW LOOK

**L**AST September, TxDOT's Travel Division launched a **redesigned** version of *Texas Travelog* to make the newsletter more appealing and more reader-friendly, allowing us better opportunities to showcase the news we cover. This issue takes another step in that same direction.

The introduction of color images is not only a boost to *Texas Travelog's* overall look, but it also serves as a way to give more personalized attention to some of the industry news that we spotlight.

*Texas Travelog* is published as a service to our partners in the Texas travel industry, and we welcome your tips to help keep us abreast of the goings on in the industry.

Send your travel-related news to Lois M. Rodriguez, *Texas Travelog*, P.O. Box 141009, Austin, TX 78714-1009, or call (512) 486-5874, fax (512) 486-5879 or e-mail [trv-log@dot.state.tx.us](mailto:trv-log@dot.state.tx.us).

Water System, Bexar County and Government Canyon Natural History Association — also notes that Government Canyon is important because its diverse habitat supports a number of federally listed endangered species, including the Madra's cave spider and the golden-checked warbler.

Regional State Parks Director Brent Leisure told the *San Antonio Express-News*, "It's going to be a wonderful site that people do not forget once they see it. It's a wonderful example of a really unique system that is so close to a major population center."

For more information, call (210) 688-9055 or visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/government\\_canyon](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/government_canyon).

**W**ITH their tourism thinking caps on, **Fort Worth, Abilene, Dallas, Lubbock, Odessa and Oklahoma City** have found a new angle in promoting their **shared Western heritage** to tourists — "**Frontier West**," a venture that gives travelers information on museums, his-

torical sites, architecture, food, entertainment and other attractions in their areas via a free magazine, Web site and historical audio CD.

The magazine is an easy-to-manage guide featuring information on Western art, ranching, cattle trails, Indian wars, and more modern western industries like oil and winemaking. It also offers a choice of places to go and things to do.

Fort Worth Convention and Visitor Bureau Director Doug Harman says, "It's critical for us to continually improve and upgrade our tourism product. You can do that in two ways — build new attractions, or partner with new people to increase the catalog of things that you offer."

Lubbock Convention and Visitor Bureau Director Marcy Jarrett agrees. "Getting people excited about our considerable Western heritage attractions is made easier by partnering with cities like Oklahoma City and Fort Worth."

Harman says, "If we want to remain a leader in marketing Western heritage and culture, we have to give people more. It makes sense to partner with other cities in the region —

it gets our name out, and it gives us a chance to reach people who might otherwise pass us by.”

“Fort Worth went from being the savage frontier to being a safe haven well behind the line of Indian raiding. To tell that story, we need partners — both the communities that followed us and became the frontier, and those that preceded us.”

For more information on the Frontier West project, visit [www.frontierwestonline.com](http://www.frontierwestonline.com).

TRAVEL NEWS

**T**HE NEW Braunfels Museum of Art and Music — though achieving Smithsonian affiliation and producing more than 75 programs and exhibitions — has **closed its doors**. With financial problems fueled by arts funding cuts and a lack of public support, the museum had not been able to break even for the last two years.

The museum closed on Aug. 8, the day after the *Austin City Limits* exhibit run ended.

Museum Board President Chuck Teeter told New Braunfels’ *Herald-Zeitung*, “We’re all terribly disappointed. We worked terribly hard

for this. The whole problem is we were not meeting our operating costs. There’s just not enough floor traffic.”

The museum dedicated itself to “inspiring, educating and enriching the life of the public” through the collection, preservation and exhibition of diverse cultural traditions in folk art, visual arts, craft, music and the decorative arts of the South and West,” its mission statement says. It did so with exhibits focusing on Texas icons, dance halls and the rock art of the Lower Pecos River.

Executive director Chuck Gallagher told the *San Antonio Express-News*, “Everybody who saw it, loved it. But there were just not enough people coming through.”

**W**ITH bus tours, amphibious tours, walking tours and such, the **latest sightseeing trend** seems like the perfect segue for **touring the town** — or rather, the perfect **Segway®** as companies are offering excursions on the two-wheeled “human transporters.”

Austin, Galveston and San Antonio are the only Texas cities currently offering this 21st-century mode of visiting hot spots like The Alamo, River Walk, State Capitol,



Segway® Human Transporter tours catch on at the State Capitol.

Governor’s Mansion and Galveston’s Strand Historic District.

Tours often begin with a quick training session to familiarize riders with the Segway Human Transporter, a device operated in the standing position where users glide forward or in reverse simply by leaning forward or backward on it. Tours range from an hour to three hours, depending on the company, and prices begin at about \$50 per person.

*Newsweek* magazine noted that the Segway was supposed to revolutionize personal travel, and while that hasn’t happened, the sight of tourists gliding along on them as part of a tour is becoming more common.

“Guided Segway tours have become big business for both Segway distributors and traditional tour companies,” *Newsweek* reported.

Some cite the resurgence in eco-travel, which makes the environmentally friendly Segway an alternative to the tour bus.

For more information, contact:

- Segway HT Tours (Austin) — (512) 332-1222 or [www.SegwayHTTours.com](http://www.SegwayHTTours.com).
- SegCity (Austin, San Antonio) — (512) 402-9299, (210) 224-0773 or visit [www.SegCity.com](http://www.SegCity.com).
- Cajun 2 Wheels (Galveston): (281) 684-8875 or visit [www.cajun2wheels.com](http://www.cajun2wheels.com).
- Gliding Revolution (Austin): (512) 296-2666 or visit [www.GlidingRevolution.com](http://www.GlidingRevolution.com).

**H**ISTORIC U.S. Highway 80 will become like a 200-mile bargain aisle packed with tourists and vendor booths from Grand Prairie to Bossier City, La., as the East Texas Tourism Associa-

tion presents the second annual **Hi-Way Historic U.S. 80 Sale — Oct. 7-9 and 14-16** — to continue its efforts to draw attention to the region’s byways. U.S. 80 was the nation’s first transcontinental highway in the Southern states, but traffic has long been diverted since the interstate system was created.

“It really is a national treasure that has been overlooked and gradually forgotten,” says ETTA Executive Director Howard Rosser. ETTA is trying to change that.

Rosser says, “We want people to cruise it, and write stories and songs about our own ‘mother road.’ What we’re trying to do is push forward the preservation of this highway — its roadside architecture, the old ‘mom and pop’ motels and service stations and all the things that relate to the ‘30s, ‘40s and ‘50s, as well as the little remaining section of the original road. We’re trying to jog people’s memories.”

Rosser expects an influx of antique car owners, motorcyclists, RV clubs and flea market enthusiasts to flock to the region’s sale. And, there is hope, that as visitors shop and spend time along the route that they will also take advantage of bed and breakfasts, motels, restaurants and historical sites.

For more information, visit [www.us80.com](http://www.us80.com).

**T**OURISTS have definitely taken heed of the cry “remember the Alamo” because according to a recently **released study** by D.K. Shifflet and Associates, Ltd. of Falls Church, Va., **the Alamo** was the **No. 1 attraction in Texas** in 2004 — just as it was in 2003. From 2000 to 2003, the River Walk was the No. 1 attraction, but it has remained a close second to the Alamo these past two years.

In the Travelers’ Top Attractions in Texas report, released by the Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism, Six Flags Over Texas in Arlington took the third spot from long-standing San Marcos Outlet Malls, which fell slightly to the No. 4 slot.

South Padre Island, SeaWorld San Antonio, the State Capitol, Six Flags Fiesta Texas, the San Antonio Zoo, and Padre Island National Seashore rounded out the Top 10 state attractions.

Other sites completing the list of top 30 attractions are: Fort Worth

A FAMILY AFFAIR

**I**F YOU think it’s high time your family learned how to **camp, backpack, fish, mountain bike and more**, **Texas Parks and Wildlife** has set aside **Sept. 16-18** for its pilot program

**Becoming an Outdoors Family** at Parrie Haynes Ranch near Killeen.

The program is an offshoot of its 13-year program **Becoming An Outdoors Woman** workshop series.

“Everyone in today’s mostly urban world, not just women, is getting further from the outdoors,” says Ashley Mathews, who coordinates **Becoming An Outdoors-Woman** for TPWD. “Those traditional skills that were fundamental for Texans 100 years ago are being lost.”

Mathews says TPWD has for years been considering ways to offer a family-based outdoor learning program. She adds that the weekend, which costs \$175 for a family of four (children ages 5 to 12), plus \$15 for each additional person, is a real bargain. “Prices may change later, but we want to make this attractive and easy for families to get involved,” Mathews says.

The workshop is for the family (any combination of familial connection) that has never tried outdoor activities but would like an opportunity to learn.

For more information and an application form, e-mail [ashley.mathews@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:ashley.mathews@tpwd.state.tx.us).

Zoo, Six Flags Astroworld (Houston), Space Center Houston, Texas State Aquarium (Corpus Christi), Schlitterbahn (New Braunfels), Fort Worth Stockyards National Historic District, Moody Gardens (Galveston), Texas Motor Speedway (Fort Worth area), Minute Maid Park (Houston), USS Lexington (Corpus Christi), Texas Stadium (Irving), Ameriquest Field (Arlington), Enchanted Rock State Park (Fredericksburg), Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum (Austin), George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (College Station), Big Bend National Park, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum (Austin), The Strand Historic District (Galveston), Dealey Plaza/site of President John F. Kennedy's assassination (Dallas) and Grapevine Mills mall.

**GALVESTON's Moody Gardens** will soon add a fourth dimension to its guests' experience with its state-of-the-art **4D Special FX Theater** set to **open on Nov. 19**. With this venue, viewers will be immersed in the film as they share sensory experiences with the characters on screen. The seats are equipped with gadgets that will send out well-timed blasts of air, squirts of water, and activate leg ticklers and seat buzzers — all to add tactile effects that are coordinated with the action in the film.

The theater's 4D Special FX system also enhances the visitors' experiences with bubbles, smoke, special effects lighting and digital surround sound. For example, in "SpongeBob Squarepants 4D," the first film to be featured, visitors will find themselves surrounded by bubbles in coordination with an on-screen underwater adventure, and they will see and smell smoke when SpongeBob burns one of his famous Krabby patties.

"We are always looking for new attractions and exhibits that will enhance the experience for our guests," said Moody Gardens General Manager John Zendt.

The theater also features 3D- and 4D-simulated ride films and IMAX.

For more information, call (800) 582-4673 or [www.moodygardens.org](http://www.moodygardens.org).

**KUDOS**

**T**HE SUCCESS of **Laredo's Sister Cities Festival** recently earned city representatives an

invitation to share their programming secrets **with more than 800 delegates** at the Sister Cities International Program's **annual conference in Spokane, Wash.**, recently.

The Laredo Sister Cities Festival received the 2004 Best Overall Program Award from SCI generating international recognition for the event.

This year City Council Member Juan Ramirez, City Secretary Gustavo Guevara Jr. and CVB Interim Director Patricia Taylor participated in the conference's Best Practices Showcase session entitled "Creative Ways to Connect Our Global Villages." Others asked to share their knowledge included Denver; Dushanbe, Tajikistan; Nishinomiya, Japan; Chicago; San Diego; Uzhgorod, Ukraine; and Louisville, Ky.

For more information, visit [www.cityoflaredo.com](http://www.cityoflaredo.com) or [www.sister-cities.org](http://www.sister-cities.org).

**IN THE PRESS**

**KEMAH'S boardwalk** was first on a list generated by *Coastal Living* magazine senior editor Steve Millburg who recently shared some of his **favorite boardwalks** with *USA Today* magazine.

"People love boardwalks for the same reason they wax nostalgic about the small-town Main Street of yesteryear," Millburg says. "It's a community gathering place where you can meet friends and make new ones. Boardwalks literally elevate you out of the ordinary."

Kemah Boardwalk, which draws 4 million visitors a year to this once sleepy shrimping village, features tourist-oriented restaurants, amusement rides, shops and a boutique hotel.

For more information, call (877) 285-3624 or visit [www.kemahboardwalk.com](http://www.kemahboardwalk.com).

**I**N A TIME when the movie industry is feeling queasy over its box office slump, *Entertainment Weekly* turns the spotlight on movie theaters that are "doing it right," and Austin's **Alamo Drafthouse is No. 1 in the nation** for its unique way of engaging audiences and packing its theater (or wherever the screening may be held).

*EW* notes that Alamo is "one of America's most fanatically unique movie going experiences" by offering oddball screening events like *Lord of the Rings* trilogy with Hobbit Feast (you eat when they eat)

**FRISCO'S GOT GAME**

**F**RISCO'S winning streak continues with the Aug. 6 **grand opening of Pizza Hut Park**, a 117-acre sports complex that has already snagged a major sporting event — the **MLS Cup 2005 soccer championship** game on Nov. 13. It's the first time the MLS Cup has ever been played in Texas, but Frisco made it happen with a facility that will serve as the United States'

Youth Soccer Association headquarters and can host international soccer games, major concerts and high school football.

MLS Commissioner Don Garber says, "The benefits of this development will reverberate throughout the world. North Texas is a bastion for youth soccer, and this Frisco project provides international exposure for soccer at all levels in the United States."

This new home to major league soccer's FC Dallas (formerly Dallas Burn) further catapults the city's growing reputation as Sports Central. It joins the Dr Pepper StarCenter (practice home to Dallas Stars hockey team and Olympian Kurt Thomas' Gymnastics Training Center) and Dr Pepper/Seven Up

Ballpark (home of Texas League champs the Frisco RoughRiders), among other first-rate facilities.

The city's proliferation of sports venues was the impetus for the Texas Amateur Athlete Federation to create a counterpart to the Summer Games of Texas. Frisco will host 10 different sports in the city for the inaugural Winter Games of Texas from Jan. 13-15.



"It's a 102-year-old city, but it's just grown so much in the last five years," says Marla Roe, executive director of the Frisco Convention and Visitors Bureau. "The sports complexes were built for the community, and while it's satisfied the needs of the community, they've also functioned as world-class venues. You can see events that have moved from other areas to our city."

Other upcoming events include the Kurt Thomas Invitational Gymnastics Competition in February, the Global Games in July and the Dallas Cup XXVII in April.

and a traveling road show that includes screening films at its back-drop like *The Last Picture Show* screening in Archer City, Tx.

Alamo Drafthouse movie adventures have long been a local favorite, but have also developed a solid fan base among tourists who are just as happy to take in screening like a showing of "Goonies" in Longhorn Caverns (with actor Corey Feldman on hand) or watching "Jaws" while floating on an inner tube on Lake Travis.

For more information, call (512) 476-1320 or visit [www.alamodrafthouse.com](http://www.alamodrafthouse.com).

**INDUSTRY INSIDERS**

★ **Margo Richards** has been named Public Relations Coordinator for Texas Tourism, a section of the Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism. She

previously served as Tourism Marketing Specialist.

★ **Louri O'Leary**, who has spent two years as the research specialist, is the new Tourism Marketing Specialist.

★ **LaRue Roth**, formerly executive director of the Texas Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus, is the new director of the McKinney Visitors Services.

★ **Erma Beeson** is the new Marketing Coordinator for McKinney Visitors Services.

★ **Arlington**, aka **Fun Central**, has added new staff members. Robert Sanchez is the new National Sales Manager, Lisa Farrimond is the tourism sales manager, and Leigh Lyons returns to the Bureau as a communications assistant.

★ **Christy Kale-Williams** joined the TxDOT Travel Division staff on Aug. 1 as the new administrative assistant, filling the position left vacant by Mary Lynn Mathews.

**TEXAS TRIVIA**

What do the names Barrington and Sauer-Beckman have in common?

Both are the sites of living history farms that welcome visitors year-round with a dose of life in the past. The Barrington Living History Farm interpreters take visitors 150 years back, using daybook notes from farm owner Anson Jones, last president of the Republic of Texas, as their guide. Guests are also encouraged to participate by learning to drive oxen, plant and harvest crops, spin or make soap. Sauer-Beckman farm takes visitors back to 1918, complete with the scent of foods cooking on the wood-burning stove. For more information, visit [www.lpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.lpwd.state.tx.us).

**TEXAS TRIVIA**

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**TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS**

**VISITOR NUMBERS as of July 31, 2005**

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	12,238	-17.21	60,437	-18.77
ANTHONY	12,703	+19.29	97,660	+5.34
CAPITOL	9,601	-7.90	56,632	-2.36
DENISON	50,431	-2.88	273,567	+3.78
GAINESVILLE	42,506	+35.27	224,240	+39.04
LANGTRY	5,168	-13.01	45,644	-5.03
LAREDO	15,195	-16.35	80,639	-13.54
ORANGE	66,281	+0.59	383,835	+6.00
TEXARKANA	72,103	+7.43	318,277	+2.19
VALLEY	12,091	-13.03	144,687	+4.42
WASKOM	60,551	-8.57	313,630	-8.28
WICHITA FALLS	25,030	+13.57	114,207	+1.38
<b>CENTER TOTALS</b>	<b>383,898</b>	<b>+1.43</b>	<b>2,113,455</b>	<b>+2.69</b>

\*Compared to last year

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

[www.traveltex.com](http://www.traveltex.com) • [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)  
• [www.dontmesswithtexas.org](http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org)

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