

TEXAS
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TRAVEL LOG

INSIDE:

- ★ Brochure showcases expanded North Texas Horse Country self-guided tour in Denton Co.
- ★ New world-class Museum of Science and History added to Fort Worth Cultural District
- ★ Houston Zoo visitors can now plug in to iPhone application

TRAVEL NEWS

A RESTORED historic Union Pacific Freight & Passenger Depot in **Giddings' Landmark Square** is now home to a **new Rural Texas Tourism Center** geared to showcase the wonders of rural communities in the state.

The center, which opened mid-October, is the Giddings Economic Development Corporation's tourism initiative that will highlight targeted communities and their events, sites and venues, as well as their character, history and culture.

Rural Texas communities are invited to participate in this initiative at no cost. For more information, visit www.ruraltexas tourism.org.

S OCCER teams from across the nation will converge on **Round Rock Dec. 5-6** to participate in the **United States Specialty Sports Association's National Soccer Tournament at Old Settlers Park**.

The 2009 National Championships were relocated from Las Vegas, Nev., to Round Rock after USSSA decided that the Sports Capital's centralized location and excellent soccer facilities made it the prime location for the tournament. The group is optimistic that the city's location will allow for the involvement of more teams from across the nation.

"It's very exciting to have such a large-scale soccer tournament coming to Round Rock. This is a great opportunity to welcome more visitors to Round Rock and to build on our success hosting nationally recognized tournaments," says Mayor Alan McGraw.

Every year, Round Rock hosts a number of soccer events, from organizations such as 3v3 Live and Kick It! 3v3 Soccer. Each of these organizations has hosted multiple tournaments in Round Rock, bringing in hundreds of visitors.

CHRISTMAS MAGIC IN TEXAS



KEVIN STILLMAN/TXDOT

CHRISTMAS time in Texas is magical, with cities — big and small — donning holiday lights along main streets, hosting festive gatherings, and warming up to hot chocolate and each other. That Christmas spirit is brought to life with annual events like Galveston's Dickens on the Strand, Dallas' Neiman-Marcus/Adolphus Children's Parade, Cleburne's Whistle Stop Christmas or the bevy of events in San Antonio, including a river parade. To find holiday events in your area or across the state, visit the Texas Events Calendar at www.texashighways.com or www.traveltex.com.

Houston's 14-acre Bayou Bend estate, decked out for the season, is a popular holiday destination.

MOOODY Gardens Rainforest Pyramid in Galveston will be closed until the 2010 summer season to make way for the first phase of a \$25 million enhancement project.

"The Rainforest Pyramid has always been a very unique exhibit. It helps to convey a very important conservation message," says Moody Gardens General Manager John Zendt. "These improvements will enable Moody Gardens to communicate this message even more effectively while providing a very special guest experience."

Done in multiple phases, modifications to the pyramid will include a new entrance, a walkway that will lead guests through the canopy level, new vantage points, new plants, birds,

animals, fish and butterflies. As in the past, there also will be access to the lower levels of the exhibit.

Some of the upper canopy work will be visible when it reopens in the summer, and the attraction will remain as a botanical exhibit with some birds and fish as in its current state. In fall 2010, the Rainforest Pyramid will close again to complete the transition with the anticipated official grand opening scheduled for spring of 2011.

"Although it would be easier, to keep the Rainforest Pyramid closed and keep working through the summer of 2010, we felt we would be serving our guests better to have the exhibit open when the majority of our visitors are on vacation," says Zendt.

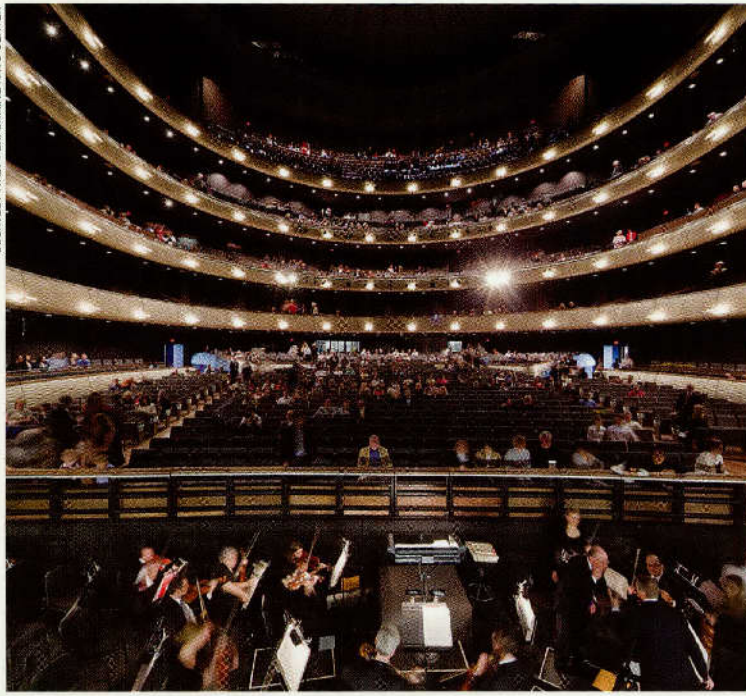
NEW ON THE SCENE

MARKED as the "cultural cornerstone" of the **Dallas Arts District**, the new \$354 million multipurpose **AT&T Performing Arts Center** opened with weeklong fanfare and events.

These facilities will provide state-of-the-art performance spaces for The Dallas Opera, Dallas Theater Center, Texas Ballet Theater, Dallas Black Dance Theatre and Anita N. Martinez Ballet Folklorico. In addition, the Center will present Broadway productions, films, touring concerts, dance companies and many other programs.

"Nearly a decade in the making, the AT&T Performing Arts Center will complete the vision of a down-

COURTESY AT&T PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



View from the stage of the Margaret McDermott Performance Hall in the Margo and Bill Winspear Opera House of the AT&T Performing Arts Center in Dallas.

town arts district that will act as a cultural cornerstone for the region and drive creative vitality,” says John Eagle, Center Board of Director member.

Mark Nerenhausen, president and CEO of the Center, says it will be one of the most technologically advanced performing arts venues in the country. It also will be equipped with Wi-Fi service, free Internet access to patrons and unique mobile applications to AT&T wireless subscribers.

Along with the Winspear Opera House, the Dee and Charles Wylie Theatre, Annette Strauss Artist Square and the City Performance Hall is the Elaine D. and Charles A. Sammons Park, a 10-acre park that ties all the venues together.

“The creation of a world-class Arts District in the heart of downtown Dallas has been a project in the making for three decades, and the grand opening of the AT&T Performing Arts Center completes the vision for the cultural facilities in the District,” says Veletta Forsythe Lill, executive director of the Dallas Arts District.

For more information on the AT&T Performing Arts Center, please visit www.attpac.org.

THE NEW Fort Worth Museum of Science & History has been unveiled, and the world-class facility is not only adding bright new dimension to the city’s Cultural District, it is creating a home for the

Fort Worth Children’s Museum and the Cattle Raisers’ Museum.

The facility, designed by internationally renowned architects, Legorreta+Legorreta, will feature a collection of new exhibits and programs, including a new focus on local history in the Fort Worth History Gallery. That gallery includes exhibits like “Let’s Take the Streetcar: Journeying Through Fort Worth’s Past,” which follows the history of local rail travel.

Other amenities include state-of-the-art technological updates to the Noble Planetarium, a newly renovated and upgraded Omni Theater IMAX Dome, an exhibit telling the story of the energy industry in North Texas, an expanded dinosaur exhibit and DinoLab, an on-site restaurant and special events space.

For more information, visit www.fwmuseum.org.

CULTURAL TOURISM

AS AN OUTPOST for cultural tourism opportunities, the Texas Commission on the Arts launched its new Art on Art blog that will focus on travel directed toward experiencing the arts, culture and special character of our state.

The Art on Art blog will include information for arts and cultural organizations and arts-based festivals and events, as well as for travelers interested in exploring the arts in

Texas. According to TCA, numerous studies have shown that cultural tourists tend to stay longer and spend more, resulting in a significant economic impact in communities both large and small. For more information, visit the site at www.artonart.com.

THE DALLAS Symphony Orchestra is launching The Masters of Film Music, a new, multi-year initiative that will bring the music of some of today’s top film composers to the next two Dallas Symphony Pop Series seasons. The Masters of Film Music will feature a Dallas Symphony Orchestra-commissioned world premiere work written by each composer, combined with a multimedia career retrospective via images on a larger-than-life screen.

The top composers whose world premiere commissions and career retrospectives will be featured include James Newton Howard, George Fenton, Theodore Shapiro, Michael Giacchino and Harry Gregson-Williams. There also will be an evening of the “All Time Great Music of Film,” which will include a new work by Sir Anthony Hopkins, conducted by DSO Music Director Jaap van Zweden.

“This project is revolutionary in the sense that we are combining the works of the top living film composers, whose music is heard by millions of people around the world, with the artistic power of the Dallas Symphony,” says Dallas Symphony Orchestra Chief Marketing and Entertainment Officer Stephen Cook.

For more information, visit www.dallassymphony.com.

TOURISM 2.0

TECHNOLOGY now makes a visit to the Houston Zoo even more interactive with the attraction’s new iPhone application that guides visitors through the grounds and offers supporting media to accompany the exhibits.

The free application maps the user’s location within the park and includes videos and photos of some of the exhibits. It also offers access to daily “Meet the Keeper” presentations.

“We designed this application with the guest experience foremost in our minds,” says Houston Zoo Director of Interactive Marketing Kelly Russo. “We wanted the application to be a

personalized guide for our guests, giving our visitors instant information about all the Zoo has to offer so they can make the most of their visit.”

The application is available at the iTunes App Store.

WHILE Corpus Christi’s USS Lexington has long been a favored attraction, the addition of Virtual Battle Stations is making the visit decidedly more interactive.

The virtual battle stations are like video games that emulate the USS Lexington’s days as an operating aircraft carrier during its World War II heyday. Visitors try their hand at landing planes on the deck and shooting planes from the sky through the “Air to Air Combat,” “Carrier Landing” and “Ship’s Gunners” kiosks. Each unit contains four computer stations, three of which host modern video interactions that engage the audience in a specific action that relates to its area. The fourth station at each unit offers interesting information related to Lexington history.

VEE Corporation of Minncapolis designed, built and installed these one-of-a-kind stations. Local community leader and philanthropist Gloria Hicks spearheaded funding for the project.

“We are proud to see Mrs. Hicks’ vision become a reality that is certain to bring joy to many thousands of visitors over the years to come,” says Lexington Executive Director Rocco Montesano.

INDUSTRY INSIDERS

AFTER a nationwide search, Clayton Wolf has been selected as the Wildlife Division Director at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Wolf brings 20 years experience as a wildlife biologist in Texas, the last six as the agency’s big game program director.

As TPWD’s Big Game Program Director since 2003, Wolf has overseen management of Texas’ internationally acclaimed white-tailed deer herd.

TPWD Deputy Executive Director for Natural Resource Ross Melinchuk says Wolf’s “record of accomplishment in the big game program, coupled with his ‘can-do’ attitude, and the trust and respect he has earned from private landowners, various constituent groups, and his professional colleagues, has well-

equipped him to serve as Wildlife Division Director.”

Wolf says, “With the continued increase in the state’s human population and urban sprawl, we have quite a challenge ahead of us. It is my goal as wildlife division director to help ensure our resources are focused on the things we do best — working with private landowners and land managers to help them manage and conserve wildlife habitat. If we can do this successfully, and I know we can, we will be able to ensure that Texans continue to have places where they can enjoy Texas wildlife, whether hunting or wildlife viewing.”

HAROLD Hutcheson, most recently manager of Huntsville’s Main Street Program, has been named **director of the Conroe CVB**. Hutcheson spent 20 years with the internationally known Ogilvy & Mather advertising firm in New York City. He also ran his own agency for seven years, and he served as global accounts marketing manager for Compaq/HP.

“I’ve known Conroe all my life, and I think so much can be marketed,” he says. “I hadn’t been downtown in a long time, and I’m very pleased with the direction the city has taken. It has come a long, long way.”

Hutcheson sees the city’s greatest tourism strengths as the Lone Star Convention Center, the growth out toward Lake Conroe and the “wonderful” golf courses.

DON Freeman Jr., chairman of Freeman, a provider of services for events and expositions, will serve as the **new chairman of the Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau** for the 2009–2010 fiscal year. Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert appointed Freeman, and outgoing Chairman Laura V. Estrada made the announcement.

Freeman’s award-winning company, based in Dallas with 41 offices in North America, produces more than 4,300 expositions and 11,000 additional events worldwide.

“He’s the perfect person for this role as we move toward the opening of our Omni Dallas Convention Center Hotel in early 2012 with an ambitious goal for room night bookings and citywide,” says bureau President and CEO Phillip Jones.

In addition to his induction into the Convention Industry Council’s Hall of Leaders, Freeman has received several distinguished service awards, including Distinguished Life Member Award from the Texas Society of Association Executives.

He serves on the board of the Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce, is a member of the Chief Executives Roundtable, and supports the Dallas Museum of Arts and the National Center for Policy Analysis.

VANESSA Kager joins the **Corpus Christi Convention & Visitors Bureau** as its new **Director of Sales for the State of Texas** and will lead the newly opened satellite office in Austin.

CVB CEO Keith Arnold says, “Not only does she have significant hotel experience dealing with association meeting planners, but for the last nine years, she has worked in convention hotels in Austin. During the search, we talked to meeting planners, hotel sales personnel and even competitors to try to gain recommendations for the best person for the Corpus Christi CVB position. Nine out of 10 of the people we talked to gave us her name first and multiple reasons why she would work best to sell conventions for Corpus Christi in the Austin area.”

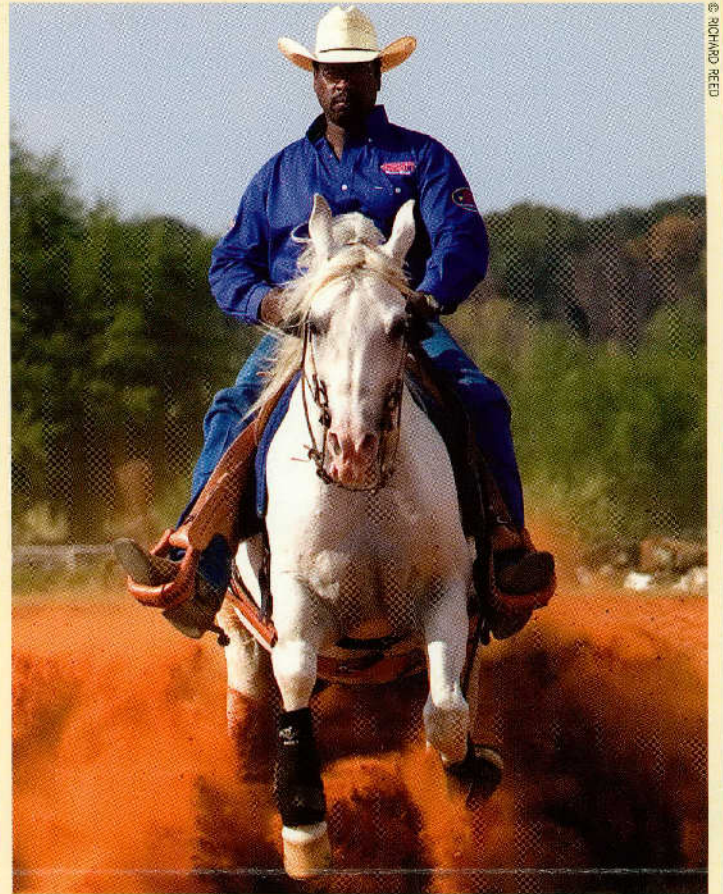
THOM Connors has been named **general manager of the new, \$133 million Irving Convention Center at Las Colinas**, which is slated for a late 2010 opening.

Connors, who continues to serve as regional vice president for Pennsylvania-based facility management company SMG, will manage operations with sales and marketing responsibilities for the facility shared with the CVB staff.

“Thom has been part of the vision for this project from its first phases, nearly 10 years ago,” says Maura Gast, executive director of the Irving Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Designed as a multi-functional building with high-end touches, the 275,000 square-foot Irving Convention Center at Las Colinas will include a 50,000 square-foot, column-free exhibit hall; a 20,000 square-foot ballroom; 20 meeting rooms of approximately 1,000 square feet each; and a grand ballroom on the top floor offering panoramic views of the area’s skylines.

EXPLORE HORSE COUNTRY



© RICHARD REED

Denton County is internationally known as horse country. Here, Anthony Champion rides reining horse Kordelas, the No. 1 stallion at Toskhara Arabians ranch.

THE DENTON Convention and Visitors Bureau, in partnership with **nine North Texas Horse Country communities**, has created a **new brochure that expands the self-guided driving tour** that takes visitors on treks through winding back roads of Denton County and beyond for some up-close views of working horse farms and ranches — home to many world-champion horses and riders. The route now stretches more than 100 miles from north to south and 50 miles from east to west.

“The horse country now encompasses more than 450 farms all the way from the famous Carol Rose Ranch located in Gainesville to the famous cutting horse ranches in Weatherford to the heavy concentration in the Aubrey-Pilot Point area,” says Dana Lodge, sales manager for the Denton Convention & Visitor Bureau.

Attracted to the area’s mild winters, horse farms and professional horsemen began moving into Denton County in the 1970s, settling

primarily in the north and east part of the county where the sandy loam soil is perfect for working horses year-round. This area is now a national equine trading center.

The updated brochures are available at the Denton Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center at 414 W. Parkway in Denton, or visitor centers in each partnering town.

In addition to expanding the driving tour brochure, the Denton Convention & Visitor Bureau recently enhanced its quarterly guided Horse Country Tour, for those who would rather leave the driving to someone else. That tour is now more than two hours long and includes visits to the premier working horse ranches, a guide, up-close-and-personal visits to at least two ranches plus the chuck wagon barbecue lunch, cowboy music, and an exclusive equine presentation. The next quarterly public tour is Dec. 5.

For more information, call (940) 382-7895 or visit www.discoverdenton.com.

TEXAS TRIVIA

What popular destination, touted as "on the border, by the sea," is popular with Winter Texans for its tropical climate, natural setting and cultural offerings?

You'll find the best climate in Texas in Brownsville. The tropical climate allows Winter Texans plenty of time to visit the beaches, take in nature or participate in leisurely outdoor activities like golfing.

Popular attractions include the Gladys Porter Zoo, with more than 1,500 species in a natural setting. Museums and galleries highlight the cultural richness of the area, as do the many festivals and events. Visitors can also get a glimpse of the scenic landscape of citrus orchards, including grapefruit, lemons, limes, oranges and tangerines. The grapefruit is a particular favorite, reportedly sweeter and juicier than in any other part of the country.

TEXAS TRIVIA

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TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

VISITOR NUMBERS as of October 31, 2009

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	8,646	+24.65	84,124	+6.71
ANTHONY	6,802	+2.41	72,930	-28.95
CAPITOL	6,296	+4.36	71,182	+4.28
DENISON	36,114	+13.88	309,602	-20.17
GAINESVILLE	22,140	-32.43	258,783	-32.57
LANGTRY	5,906	-6.71	52,276	-3.44
LAREDO	8,423	-4.43	95,477	-18.09
ORANGE	36,903	+3.20	406,294	-4.48
TEXARKANA	28,224	-6.66	261,765	-0.29
VALLEY	7,638	+35.26	140,932	+15.74
WASKOM	26,708	-10.49	322,624	-2.59
WICHITA FALLS	12,250	-16.24	145,508	-14.24
CENTER TOTALS	206,050	-4.31	2,221,497	-11.23

*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 • www.texashighways.com
www.txdot.gov • www.dontmesswithtexas.org

AUSTIN, TX 78714-9249
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