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TEXAS TRAVEL LOG

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

JULY 2005

TxDOT

YOU'RE ALREADY a winner if you subscribe to *Texas Highways* magazine, but the editors have paired up with the folks in Amarillo to make a winner out of a lucky reader with its "Where In Texas Are You?" contest in the September issue.

The winner and a guest will receive, among other perks, three nights accommodations at one of Amarillo's premier hotels, meals at local restaurants, as well as the famous Cowboy Morning Breakfast at Elkins Ranch, free entry to top museums and tickets to "Texas Legacies" outdoor musical with barbecue and a Palo Duro Canyon tour.

"We selected Amarillo as our winning destination because it's a great place to visit," says magazine editor Jack Lowry. "Jutta Matalka, Eric Miller, Jerry Holt and the other fine folks at the Amarillo Convention and Visitor Council have been so helpful."

Lowry also noted that Amarillo is an especially "hot" destination this year, particularly in the U.K., where interest in the city has been boosted by a remake of the song "Amarillo," the longest-running No. 1 single of the millennium there.

Southwest Airlines is providing transportation to Amarillo. A winner will be selected on Sept. 26.

For more information, visit www.texashighways.com.

TxDOT'S Travel Division is taking proposals from cities interested in hosting the **Texas Travel Counselors Conference in 2008 or 2009**.

Proposals will be accepted July 1 through Oct. 1, 2005.

For host city requirements, contact Martha Martin at mmarti4@dot.state.tx.us or Theresa

NEW IN GAINESVILLE

ON JUNE 8, the Texas Department of Transportation celebrated the opening of the newly renovated Texas Travel Information Center in Gainesville. This dedication also marks the completion of a project, which began in 1990, to improve 11 of the centers across the state.

Gainesville's new 8,953-square-foot ranch-style facility includes a state-of-the-art video viewing room featuring a sampling of state and area attractions. Its large lobby, complete with a fireplace, is a cozy spot for visitors to relax and read the travel literature and maps available at the center.

Aside from getting information on Texas from professional travel counselors, visitors can also count on restrooms that are open 24 hours a day, eight covered picnic arbors and an expanded parking lot that accommodates 23 tractor-trailers, 14 buses and RVs, and 46 passenger cars.

Gainesville's original center — a single room "Old Texas Colonial" bungalow — opened in 1936. In order to keep up with the growing number of visitors, the building was replaced in 1961, then again in 1988. In 2004, the center served more than 283,000 visitors.

Olson at tolson@dot.state.tx.us, or call (512) 486-5800.

The 2006 TTCC will be held in Abilene from April 17-20. Grapevine will host the 2007 TTCC event from April 16-19.

TRAVEL NEWS

TEXAS TOURISM, a section of the Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism, has seen a noticeable return after the launch of its most recent ad campaign that integrates traditional and Internet advertising more than ever before.

"The new advertising campaign is generating a great response

after the launch of magazine ads in January followed by the premiere of the new television commercials in February," says Wendy Worth, Texas Tourism advertising coordinator.

Worth adds that the number of unique visitors to www.TravelTex.com increased by almost 70 percent more than the same two months last year.

For the entire year, visits to the Web site are more than 45 percent higher than in 2004. To top that off, travel information leads have already reached 1.24 million for fiscal year 2005, which is 104.47 percent of the annual goal.

"The television ads have received an unprecedented amount of positive feedback from consumers. The music, in particular, has generated numerous requests for information about the Texas artists who perform in the commercials," Worth reports.

"Our ad campaigns drive consumers to the Web site and 1-800 number to order the *Texas State Travel Guide*. The increase in activity on TravelTex.com is believed to be a result of consumers' increased use of the Internet for travel planning, and the increased emphasis of Texas Tourism on Internet marketing and advertising," Worth says.

TEXAS TRAVEL Industry Association is hosting the **2005 Texas Travel Summit in Corpus Christi from Sept. 25-28**.

The summit, which will include educational sessions, a business expo trade show, awards luncheon, scholarship golf tournament and a Southern Living Pickin' Party, will be held at the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel Bayfront and Marina Towers at 900 North Shoreline Blvd.

For more information, visit www.ttia.org.

THE MAJORITY of potential summer travelers expect travel prices for transportation, lodging, food and entertain-

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- ★ Texas' wine and cruise industries keep on growing
- ★ Clute aims for better name recognition
- ★ Attraction anniversaries: Still amusing after all these years

ment to be higher this season, with at least one-third (34 percent) expecting prices to be significantly higher compared to last summer, according to a **Travel Industry Association of America** travel poll based on a survey of 1,000 U.S. adults who traveled in the past year.

"Higher travel prices will keep some Americans at home or force them to reduce their travel this summer," says Dr. Suzanne Cook, senior vice president of research for the Travel Industry Association of America. "But most travelers, as

they have done in the past, are prepared to make the best of it and to once again modify their behavior."

Of those planning leisure trips this summer, 40 percent say higher prices will affect their plans, 27 percent say they are resigned to spending more while 17 percent plan to reduce spending, especially on lodging, shopping and dining out.

Another 17 percent say they plan to combat the increased prices by shortening the duration of the trip, 14 percent will travel closer to home and 13 percent will take fewer trips this summer. Only 3 percent say the

increased prices might force them to cancel their trips.

THE CITY of Clute is geared up to celebrate the **25th anniversary** of its biggest event — the **Mosquito Festival from July 28–30** — but it's also buzzing with **heightened name recognition**.

There's been a concerted effort to draw more attention to the Clute name and to the city as a vacation spot. Toward that plan, in October 2004, the Southern Brazoria County Convention and

Visitors Bureau became the Clute Visitors Bureau.

"Since we have made the name change, Clute gets a lot more recognition while exhibiting at travel shows. If someone does not know where Clute is, they stop and ask," says Jan Scott, the bureau's executive director.

A new 1-800 number (800-GOCLUTE) was introduced in January, followed by the new www.goclute.com in April.

"People are now more inquisitive about the city and what all there is to do in the area," says Scott.

Clute — five miles from Surfside and Quintana beaches, deep sea and bay fishing — is surrounded by 80,000 acres of wildlife refuge areas and features attractions like the Center for the Arts & Sciences.

The Center is a 45,000-square-foot cultural and educational complex where you will find the South's largest shell collection, planetarium shows, live theater productions, art exhibits and classes, nature trail, symphony concerts and more.

MY, HOW YOU'VE GROWN

AS CRUISING activity at the **Port of Galveston** continues its **steady growth**, there's already talk of **expanding cruise Terminals One and Two** to accommodate the increasing numbers of passengers and successful three-ship configurations.

With the help of three homeport ships — *Celebrity Cruises' Galaxy*, *Carnival Cruise Line's Ecstasy* and *Princess Cruises' Grand Princess* — the Port of Galveston set a new record of disembarking from and embarking on three ships with 13,906 passengers in an eight-hour turnaround in March.

"End to end, the three ships occupied more than half a mile of contiguous cruise ship berth space. It was indeed an impressive sight," Port Director Steve Cernak says.

The following day, two more homeport cruise ships — *Carnival Cruise Line's Elation* and *Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's Rhapsody of the Seas* — arrived for turnaround.

That weekend, 12,273 visitors arrived by vehicle and airline flights to board ships while 10,780 returned from their time abroad; totaling 23,053 passengers.

"The demonstrated capability to efficiently handle three ships on one day, and the above planned berth layout, means that the Port of Galveston now has the ability to provide first-class facilities for three cruise ships on any given day," Cernak says. Expanded terminal

"Head to Fredericksburg, one of the Lone Star State's most charming towns and the Hill Country's unofficial capital of food and wine."

— *Wine Spectator Magazine*, June 15, 2005

space would include passenger screening, ticketing and waiting areas, as well as additional berths and a passenger walkway/bridge.

TEXAS' ever-growing **wine industry** has received an extra shot in the arm lately in moves that can only further **raise its national exposure** — perhaps eventually creating a tourism draw in the caliber of California's Napa Valley.

In May, Gov. Rick Perry signed into law legislation that allows Texas households to receive wine by mail, including dry counties. Previously, Texas wineries could only ship to states that allowed out-of-state shipments. Furthermore, laws in the states (as many at 24) that allowed only in-state wine shipments have been deemed discriminatory by the U.S. Supreme Court, opening up additional nationwide markets for Texas wineries.

Texas' wine industry — the fifth largest wine producing state with more than 85 wineries — has an impact of more than \$170 million a year on the economy, according to the Texas Department of Agriculture.

Bobby Champion Jr., Texas Department of Agriculture's wine marketing director says the bill "provides a wonderful opportunity for Texas consumers and Texas wineries to come together. People that enjoy visiting these great wineries — which promote Agri-tourism and economic growth — can now have some of their favorite wines delivered to their front door.

"The smaller Texas wineries, which make up a majority of the industry, project that their sales could increase 20 to 50 percent over the next year or two."

Bill sponsor Frank Madla, D-San Antonio says, "The wine industry has proven to be a stellar economic generator for California, Washington, Oregon and New York. The passage of S.B. 877 will allow our Texas wineries to expand their markets throughout the nation; compete on a level playing field with these major U.S. wine states, and increase tourism to rural Texas."

For information on Texas' wine industry, including events, tours and tasting rooms, visit www.agr.state.tx.us/wine.

THE SHENANDOAH **Convention and Visitors Bureau** plans to open a **museum** in its **new municipal complex** to chronicle the area's history and contributions to the growth and lifestyles in South Montgomery County. The Shenandoah Museum will be a 700-square-foot facility just off Interstate 45. Admission is free. Planned exhibits include a tribute to "David, the Bubble Boy," Shenandoah's most famous resident (who's life was portrayed by John Travolta in the movie "The Boy in the Plastic Bubble"), as well as an exhibit about Tamina, the oldest black settlement in Texas.

SAN ANTONIO'S **Watermark Hotel and Spa** and **Houston's Trellis Spa at the Houstonian** were the only two Texas spas among 46 nationwide to receive the esteemed **2005 Mobil Four-Star Award** in *Mobil Travel Guides 2005 America's Best Hotels and Resort Spas*.

The Watermark spa, in downtown San Antonio, features private treatment rooms, private sanctuary lounges, treatment suites, a

hydrotherapy tub, and an outdoor spa poolside café with rooftop views of the city.

Trellis Spa houses body treatment, facial and couples' rooms, as well as VIP, Vichy shower and hydrotherapy rooms; hair styling stations; manicure and pedicure stations; locker rooms with Jacuzzi and steam room; an indoor float pool and a lounge with a fireplace.

Spa ratings were determined after rigorous inspections were conducted anonymously.

The Spa at The Crescent, Hotel Crescent Court in Dallas received a Mobil Three-Star Award.

According to the International Spa Association's 2004 report, the spa industry is hotter than ever. In 2003, 36 million people visited a hotel and resort spa, and hotel and resort spa revenue represented 41 percent of the \$11 billion industry revenue.

For more information and a complete listing, visit www.mobiletravelguide.com.

"THE PRIMARY AIM of the organization is to promote Zimbabwean art and culture throughout the world."

— Tawanda Sarireni, exhibit director and artist.

STONE CARVERS from Zimbabwe will be spending the next few months at the **East Texas Arboretum in Athens** to share knowledge about their craft while also exhibiting and selling their works. "Mystery in Stone," which has also been shown in New York, Chicago and St. Louis, will feature about 50 installed pieces ranging from 2 pounds to 2 tons, as well as unfinished pieces that the African stone carving artists will work on. They will also teach workshops.

For more information, call (903) 675-5630 or visit www.mysteryinstone.com.

ON JUNE 11, after several months of planning and construction, **Beeville's new 2,100-seat Bee County Coliseum** was welcomed to the community with free grand opening festivities.

The two-day program included a Shriner's horse show; a variety of entertainment by local churches, schools and community groups; and four dance bands.

For more information on Bee County, call (361) 358-3267 or visit www.beeville.net/tourism.

THE Texas Country Music Hall of Fame, in Carthage, will induct a new round of country music legends at an **Aug. 20 ceremony** emceed by Ralph Emery.

Inductees Glenn Sutton, Johnny Gimble and Jimmy Dean will perform at the Hall of Fame Theatre ceremony. The late Roger Miller, another inductee, will be represented with a performance by his son Dean Miller.

Lynn Anderson and her band will also perform. Special guests include former inductees Charlie Walker and Cindy Walker.

For more information, call (903) 693-6634 or visit www.carthagetexas.com.

DEAL ON WHEELS

TEXAS STATE Railroad in East Texas disproves the adage that there's no such thing as a free ride, because through Sept. 30, up to five **children** ages 12 years and younger, can **ride for free** when accompanied by a paying adult passenger.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's 124-year old railroad runs between Rusk and Palestine – the heart of the Pineywoods – with each stop offering its own extra attraction.

The Rusk depot currently has an exhibit on the Space Shuttle Columbia, which broke up over the skies of East Texas in 2003. The Palestine depot features regular weekend Western re-enactments.

State Park camping and picnicking facilities are adjacent to both depots.

For more information, call (800) 442-8951 or visit www.texasstaterailroad.com.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

FORT WORTH Museum of Science and History's Noble Planetarium celebrated its **50th anniversary** on June 18 with a series of events, including visits by famed astronomer Dr. Carolyn Shoemaker and astronaut Capt. Alan Bean.

The event also featured screenings of *50 Stellar Years*, and The Smithsonian traveling exhibit, *Hubble Space Telescope: New Views of the Universe*. www.fortworthmuseum.org.

There were a handful of other mile markers among industry attractions.

- **Sam Rayburn House Museum** in Bonham celebrated its 30th anniversary on June 11. www.samrayburnhouse.com.
- **Sauer-Beckmann Farm** in Stonewall celebrated its 30th anniversary the weekend of June 17-18. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/lbj.

IN THE PRESS

SPRING blooms in **Avinger, Linden and Hughes Springs** garnered the attention of *Southern Living* magazine editors who featured the towns in the March edition. Although the key focus was on the wildflowers of a season now passed, the article touted some dining and shopping hot spots like Avinger's Five D Cattle and Co. and Harris Mercantile & Trading Co., as well as Linden's popular live music venue – the Music City Texas Theater.

FOR THOSE craving **unpretentious, soul-satisfying fare**, *USA Today* suggests hitting the **open road** to find what few gems are left, and **Texas makes a strong showing** for salt-of-the-earth eateries.

New Zion Missionary Baptist Church's barbecue in Huntsville took top billing among the selections in Texas.

"If your faith has been shaken by botched baby-back entrees at chain eateries, then come to this humble yet heroic shrine for renewal," writer Jerry Shriver reports.

Also worth a detour are the chicken-fried steaks and meringue pies at the Blue Bonnet Café in

Marble Falls; barbecue with the rhythm of small town, communal dining at City Market in Luling; the elegant yet fading dining room of in-house treats at Earl Abel's in San Antonio; some of the state's great cooking traditions at Hoover's Cooking in Austin; and a mother lode of Lone Star classic breakfasts at the Paris Coffee Shop in Fort Worth.

The barbecue at Southside Market in Elgin, Kreutz's in Lockhart, Novosad's in Hallettsville, and Taylor Café and Louie Mueller's in Taylor also received mention.

NAMES

Erin Kerley: Leaves post as director of community and public relations with Texas Travel Industry Association for her new position as coordinator for special events and marketing promotions with the Texas Department of Agriculture.

Kelly Roche: Joins Irving Convention and Visitors Bureau as its national sales manager.

Seong "Bee" Lee: Becomes sports marketing manager for the Irving CVB.

Jill Campbell: Selected as regional coordinator for Texas Historical Commission's Texas Lakes Region Trail.

TEXAS TRIVIA

What is the state's official gem and where can the public go to "get a piece of the rock?"

The Texas blue topaz, which was designated as the official state gem in 1969, is found in the Llano uplift area, especially west to northwest of Mason. Two ranches in Mason County — Garner Seagrist Ranch (325) 347-5713 and Lindsay Ranch (325) 347-5733 — offer public topaz hunting. They charge by the day, but you get to keep what you find. For a driving map of Mason County, call (325) 347-5758 or visit www.comason.tx.us.

TEXAS TRIVIA

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TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	8,523	-27.58	38,832	-15.23
ANTHONY	12,675	+3.68	73,037	+3.03
CAPITOL	8,679	-1.77	38,434	-1.65
DENISON	39,892	+9.20	178,275	+5.45
GAINESVILLE	34,595	+30.90	144,041	+43.22
LANGTRY	5,243	-7.96	35,501	-3.45
LAREDO	9,736	-16.34	54,830	-9.41
ORANGE	54,751	+2.42	249,428	+2.93
TEXARKANA	49,055	+2.27	183,927	-1.69
VALLEY	11,497	+9.99	120,371	+6.30
WASKOM	48,924	-15.27	198,651	-8.23
WICHITA FALLS	13,940	-12.04	68,033	-3.13
CENTER TOTALS	297,510	-1.12	1,383,360	+2.31

*Compared to last year

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

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