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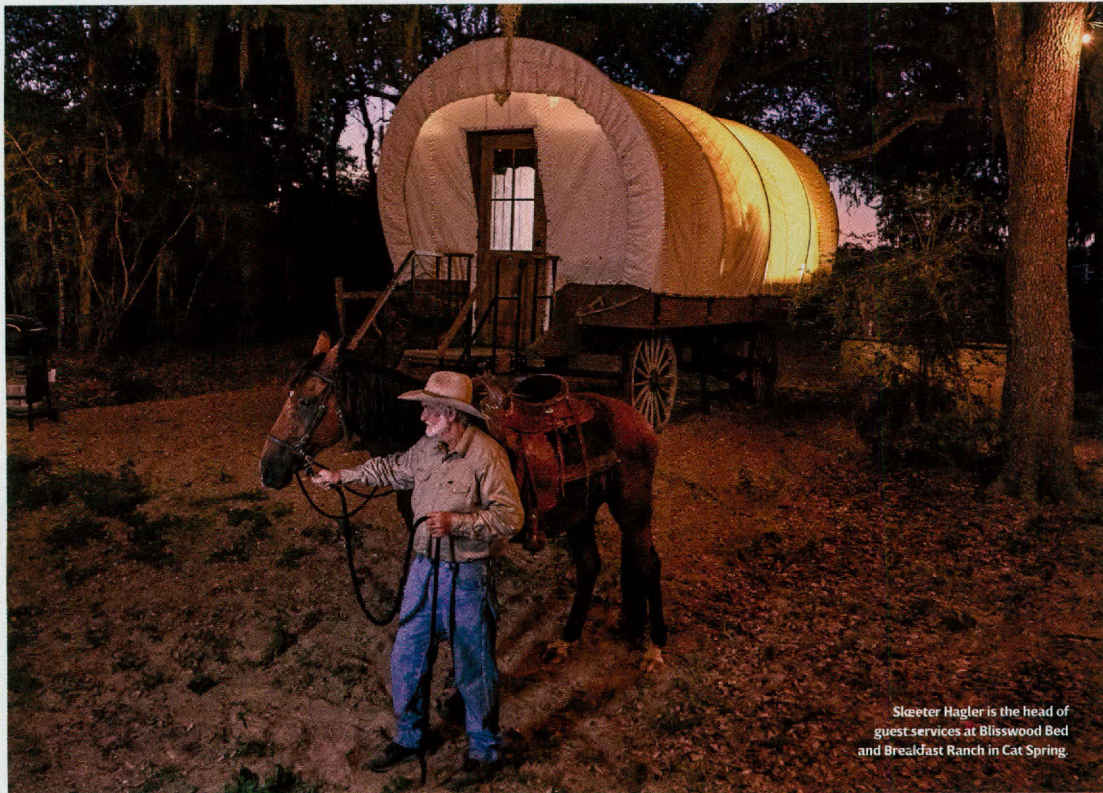
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EDITOR'S  
**NOTE**



Skeeter Hagler is the head of guest services at Blisswood Bed and Breakfast Ranch in Cat Spring.

## Ranch Style

**E**rwin “Skeeter” Hagler may not be a cowboy in real life, but his career has been intrinsically tied to the cowboy lifestyle. Pictured on this month’s cover at Blisswood Bed and Breakfast Ranch, where he serves as head of guest services, Skeeter jokes that he ended up in the photo by default because he was the only one at the ranch dressed in jeans and a cowboy hat that day. It’s a full circle moment for the renowned photographer, who ended up at Blisswood—located about 65 miles west of Houston—because of a photography assignment for *Texas Highways* 17 years ago. He became fast friends with owner Carol Davis over the three-day shoot and moved down to the ranch in Cat Spring soon thereafter. Newly single and with his five kids grown and out of the house, Skeeter was no longer tied to his native Fort Worth. He decided to give ranch life a try.

Skeeter is best known for a photo series on the Western cowboy, which garnered a Pulitzer Prize—the industry’s top honor—in 1980. Shot on the Pitchfork, 6666, and JA ranches in the Texas Panhandle, the series ran over two Sundays in the now-defunct *Dallas Times Herald*. Skeeter worked for the *Herald* for 16 years and then traveled the world speaking

about his photography. All these years later, he still sells prints from the series at galleries and other venues. “I think what’s made it so popular is that cowboys have always been the same—they were the same 50 years ago, and they’ll be the same 50 years from now,” he says.

While he never expected his spontaneous move to Blisswood to turn into a long-term gig, the 75-year-old relishes his role on the ranch and says it keeps him young. He spends most of his days outside, teaching guests how to shoot, leading safaris in the ranch’s exotic animal area, or fixing whatever needs fixing. He’s interacted with thousands of guests over the years, many of them international travelers lured by the opportunity to live out their mythic Texas dreams. “They think we’re all cowboys,” Skeeter says. “There’s a certain mystique about Texas and about cowboys, and that’s why most of our foreign guests come here. They want a little touch of that ranch life.”

*Emily R Stone*

**EMILY ROBERTS STONE**  
EDITOR IN CHIEF



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Howdy Holly-Days at Northgate

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Photographs by Kenny Braun*

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*By Lauren Hough  
Photographs by Christ Chávez*

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## The Long Run

Texas runners of all skill levels find community at road and trail races.

*By Jennifer Stewart*



**GARRETT CONNELL**, a wrangler at the Dixie Dude Ranch, teaches a patron more than just the basics of ranch life.



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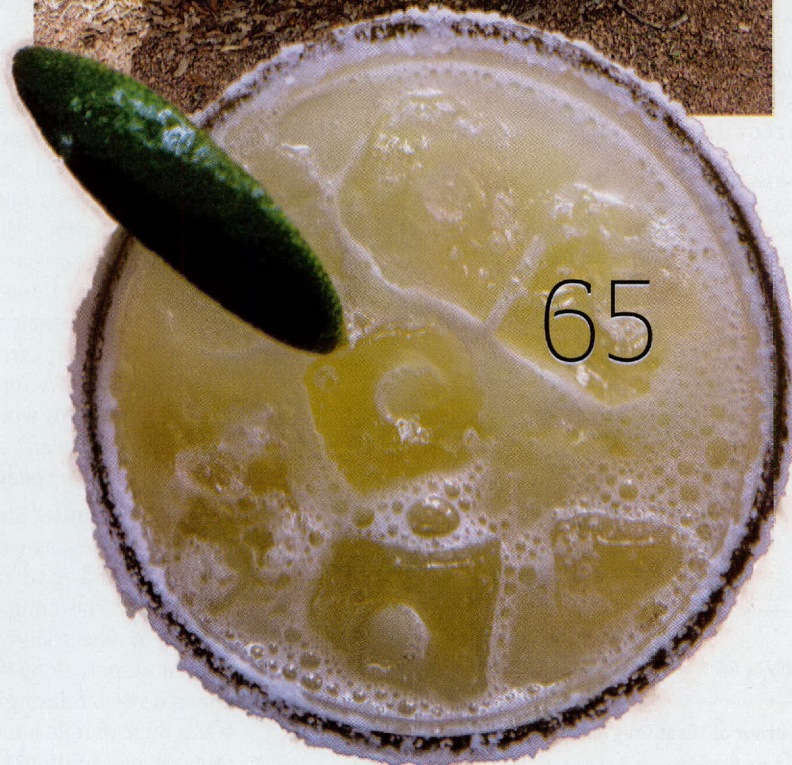
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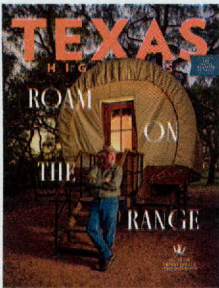
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**ON THE COVER**

Photograph by Scott Slusher  
Shot of Skeeter Hagler at  
Blisswood Bed and Breakfast  
Ranch in Cat Spring

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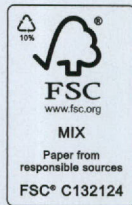
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## Behind the Story



With 102,000 Twitter followers, Lauren Hough is no stranger to spending excessive amounts of time online. She wrote “The Social Experiment” (Page 44) about trying to give up her online addiction on a road trip to Marfa. “It was like carrying around a pack of cigarettes in my hand, swearing I wouldn’t smoke any,” the Austin-based writer says. “The second I wasn’t paying attention, I already had one in my mouth.” Navigation was a major concern for Hough, but she found it unexpectedly simple. “It turns out if you’re not looking at your phone, there’s a big ol’ sign that says ‘Marfa’ with an arrow pointing that way.” The quiet of life in remote West Texas helped her value silence: “I don’t think any of us are meant to hear from so many people all at once.”

## Featured Contributors



### Gordy Sauer

Having frequently traveled to Marshall as a kid, Sauer wrote about his grandparents aging in the East Texas town for “Echoes All Around” (Page 14). “I think about my late grandparents often,” the Denver-based writer says, “but I don’t think I’ve ever thought so much about how their story and the town they built their lives around carries such weight in my life.” Sauer holds an MFA from Columbia University and is a speechwriter. His work has appeared in *Narrative Magazine*, *Boulevard*, and *Literary Hub*. His debut novel, *Child in the Valley*, was published August 2021.

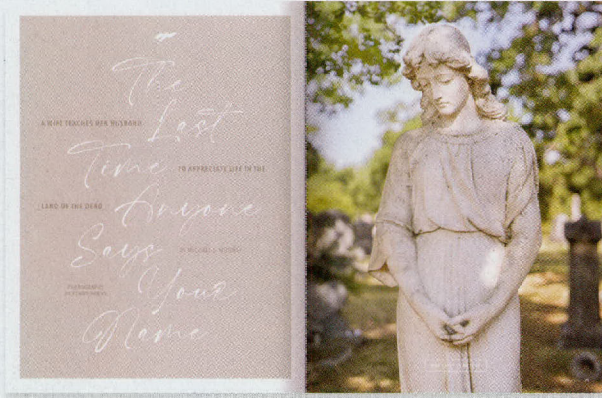


### Jennifer Stewart

The native Houstonian ran distance trail and road races across Texas to write “The Long Run” (Page 52). Photographers Sandy Carson and Madison Walker offered support along the way. “Sandy and Madison cheered me on during the races,” Stewart says. “It was a huge morale boost to see them in the crowd.” Stewart has written for *DAME*, *Runner’s World*, and other publications. She is an MFA candidate at Columbia University and splits her time between Houston and New York.

READERS RESPOND

# MERGE




Add to the list of must-see cemeteries the Seminole Indian Scouts Cemetery located just southwest of Brackettville on State Highway 131. Over 100 Indian Scouts, several of whom were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, are interred.

*Thomas Siegel, Dallas*


## Painting the Town

Odessa Helm just completed a beautiful Texas mural in downtown Jacksonville ["My Hometown: Rusk," September]. It's the city's second one by her. She's very talented!

 Betty Cole


## Far East

My grandmother was named Texarkana ["The State Line Two-Step," September]. Have always wanted to visit there.

 Barbara Carnahan  
Yost Wadkins

## Lydia Mendoza

I love her voice ["The Lark of the Border," September] but am enthralled by her masterful guitar playing skills.

 @monopic44

## Popular Pepper

Love the magazine, but must point out that the chiles in the October issue are not chile pequin, but chile tepin ["Some Like It Hot"]. There is a difference, and I was educated regarding said difference a few years back. I suspect you will be hearing from some chile experts. I had been wrong for 50 years.

*Mike Schweitzer, San Antonio*

*TH: We consulted Joe Marcus of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, who responded: "Our native pepper is referred to by at least a dozen vernacular names." Texas' native pepper brings the heat, no matter what you call it.*

I grew up eating chile pequin in McAllen. My dad was a hot pepper enthusiast.

He grew the pequins as well as bouquet peppers and Thai peppers. One day he decided to blend all three into one pepper he called the "Jaime Hot" (his name was Jimmie, hence Jaime). And does it live up to its name! My friends and family are growing them from Lufkin to Austin to Denver, Colorado, to Durham, North Carolina, to Kerrville. They make superb pepper sauce.

*Debbie Mercer, Kerrville*

Back in the mid 1960s, I attended community revival services in Corpus Christi featuring Angel Martinez. One night he told this story. After a service in East Texas, the head deacon invited him over for a home-cooked supper. As the family began to eat, Angel reached in his pocket and extracted five or six pequins.

The man inquired as to why, and Angel replied that because of his background, food just didn't taste quite right without pequin. The old man responded, "I'll have you know that my wife is the best cook in town. But since you think they are so good, give me some." Angel handed the man a half dozen. He put them all in his mouth and began to chew, then stopped, eyes watering, face glowing bright red, gasping for air. He ran outside to the pump by the well and laid down and pumped the handle for all he was worth. Angel asked if he was going to be all right. The old man replied, "I've always heard about you hellfire and brimstone preachers, but you're the first one I ever saw that carried samples around in his pockets!"

*Jerry DeHay, Brownwood*

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## Lagoon Life

McAllen-based photographer Jason Garza used a drone to capture this aerial photograph of a string of islands in Laguna Madre, the hypersaline lagoon separating North Padre Island from mainland Texas. After pulling off the John F. Kennedy Memorial Causeway—the bridge that links Padre with Corpus Christi—Garza parked at a boat ramp and used his phone to monitor the coastal scenes revealed by his drone's camera. "When I turned the camera down, I saw birds flying by and a lot of movement in the water from sea life," Garza said. "As I would lower the drone to get closer, I could see schools of fish and the movement of the water and the plants moving with the tide. There were ecosystems growing around these flats of sand and mud."



# Abilene

On his tricycle and in his wood shop, Ross Blasingame spreads love and cheer

By Regina L. Burns



**ROSS BLASINGAME**, 95, has lived in Abilene since the 1950s. When his tricycle was stolen in 2018 and then recovered, it made the local news.

**A**t the Frontier Texas museum in Abilene, visitors are greeted by eight life-size buffalo sculptures that graze across the sky on 30-foot posts. Inside, the museum explores the 19th-century history of the region, in part with holograms and mannequins of Native Americans, buffalo hunters, and Buffalo Soldiers describing their lives during a tumultuous time in West Texas. The museum sets the stage for the birth of Abilene, which the Texas and Pacific Railway Company founded in 1881. Abilene was primarily an agricultural town before the establishment of an Army post during World War II, followed by Dyess Air Force Base in 1952. Abilene is also an education hub as the home of Abilene Christian University, Hardin-Simmons University, and McMurry University. Education brought Ross Blasingame to town in 1955. He studied the Bible and Greek at Abilene Christian before spending 12 years preaching in Texas and New Mexico. Blasingame returned to Abilene in 1970 with his wife, Ruth, to raise their five kids, and he worked for 23 years for the ACU maintenance department before retiring in 1993. Since then, the 95-year-old has been known for riding his tricycle around town and handmaking wooden boxes as gifts.

### Tricycle Trials

"When my eyesight started going bad, my three-wheel Schwinn bicycle became my only source of transportation. It was stolen from my porch five years ago. When the police found the bike, it was in 32 pieces. The Abilene police paid to have the bike put back together and brought it to me. One of my favorite stops is visiting Abilene Christian School. Everybody there loves me."

### On the Frontier

"When Frontier Texas first opened [in 2004], I took some visiting family members. The museum has a great movie about the Old West that includes Abilene. I like the holograms of the people from the Old West. It's like you're talking to them yourself. To me, when a person is telling the history, it's a lot better than reading it out of a book."

### Outdoor Art

"My favorite outdoor Abilene sculpture is the buffalo skull between North and South First streets. You can't keep but from noticing it along the right of way of the railroad tracks. I think of the old days when I look at those sculptures."

### Mr. Fix It

"I grew up on a farm in Grassland [40 miles south of Lubbock]. We couldn't take things to town to be fixed—we had to fix things the best we could. I was the supervisor of general maintenance at ACU in 1989 when we installed the World Missions Globe [a 1,000-pound rotating sphere] on campus. The globe arrived on a train, and I was

told that there was no way to get the globe on the pedestal. I told them, 'We need to assemble our scaffold and lower the globe with a chain hoist.' It worked. Simple!"


### Home Base

"I go to church with airmen who came to Abilene because of Dyess Air Force Base. When they retire, they get jobs and stay. One of them is [retired Master Sgt.] Larry Prince, who calls me 'Pops.' He and his wife, Nancy, had a deaf son named Andrew [now deceased]. I learned sign language, and I used to preach in sign language. The airmen see something that they like here in Abilene. It's a good place to raise children."

### Heff's Burgers

"When I walk in the door at Heff's Burgers, they holler, 'Hi, Granddaddy.' One time I brought my granddaughter, Kimberly Lewis, to treat her to lunch. The cashier asked for a name, and before I could say it, Kimberly said, 'Granddaddy.' The cashier smiled and wrote it down. When I came back for my next lunch and they asked me my name, I said, 'Granddaddy.'"

### From the Heart

"In 1976, I started making wooden heart boxes using my band saw and a drill press. I gave the first one to my wife, Ruth [who died in 2012], and soon I started getting requests to make more. The boxes are the shape of Texas with a cross on top. We made the last four heart boxes in 2021 for the people who took us in during the ice storm. These boxes are a gift of love." 



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# Echoes All Around

A grandson grapples with his family's deep roots in Marshall

By Gordy Sauer

**T**

The wet Marshall heat slobbered my skin like an unwelcome dog's tongue. I sat with my grandfather in the bare-walled living room of my grandparents' senior living community, Oakwood House. My significant other, who's now my wife, was outside making a phone call. Meanwhile, my grandmother slept away the afternoon in the bedroom. Her breathing was deep and loud for such a small woman—she was barely 5 feet tall in tennis shoes. I wondered if she still dreamed.

Dementia brings with it a darkness and terror so personal that the afflicted becomes a kind of prisoner

in a cave—a faint, muddled echo of their former self. My grandmother was already an echo by then. Whenever I tried to start a conversation and she responded, “You sound like yourself,” I knew how gone she was because she no longer said my name. “Gordy,” which sounded like “Gawdy” in her southern Louisiana accent, had slipped from her mind. And Marshall, an East Texas home I idealized even if it wasn't my own, was slipping from my life, too.

If people can become ghosts, so can places. I was trying to hold onto both as I sat in the living room while my grandfather made staccato conversation—“You doing good in Missouri? Teaching all right?” I wanted to preserve the moments and the spaces before all that forgetfulness and loss, and outside of the conflicts that families inevitably carry. It would take me years to understand how letting go was the only way forward, but for now I refused.

When my future wife returned from her phone call, my grandfather stood up. The stretched-out neck of his white T-shirt exposed his weight loss, and his nylon workout pants were two sizes too big. “Let's you and I go to the house,” he said.

This was the summer of 2015. The house, which they still owned at the time, was off Arlington Road. Growing up near Dallas two-and-a-half hours away, I always thought the street sounded lofty, in a quasi-political way. As a kid, I associated it with Arlington National Cemetery, as if my maternal grandparents lived near the White House. Of course, they didn't. But you learn family details as a child, and you craft associ-

ations from those details that fit the context of your relationships. Throughout my childhood, my grandparents were emotional, physical, and psychological icons. Official, regal, presidential. Naturally, their house had to carry the same weight.

My grandfather and I drove the 3.5 miles from Oakwood House. My grandparents had only recently moved into the senior living community, but heading up the long driveway and knowing the house was vacant, I already felt like a visitor.

The living room still looked the same: the plush furniture, the dark wood built-ins, the dustless order of books and framed photographs, the large wood-burning fireplace that would crackle daily during the semblance of winter Marshall offered. Loud voices and laughter had always floated through the living

room during decades of extended family holidays, breathing flannel East Texas air. But it was quiet when my grandfather and I entered. Stiff and artificial, as if its intimate contents had been embalmed.

My grandfather and I took our seats in the adjoining recliners, a dim lamp turned on between us. The air conditioner whirred over our shared silence, and through the glass door leading to the covered concrete patio, the cicadas whined. When my grandfather finally spoke, his words fell heavy with anger and resentment.

Ever since they married in 1950, my grandmother had let my grandfather build a full half-life. He didn't know how to cook, and he didn't do laundry. His social calendar was a credit to her gregariousness and planning. When he retired in his 60s and consumed his days

with golf, she learned to play so she could accompany him. Once he had a heart attack at age 55, my grandfather never expected to outlive my grandmother. Now here he was living a life that he too didn't recognize.

My wife and I had been dating only a year, but we were already talking about marriage. I was thinking about how our notion of a shared partnership juxtaposed with my grandparents'. But as I sat in the living room hearing and feeling my grandfather's anger, I didn't judge. I was hurting—for both my grandparents and the loss of the life they had built together.

"I'm ready, Gordy," my grandfather said. "I'm ready to go and for this to be over. It's not fair."

"I'm sorry," I said.

Outside, the big, green backyard was



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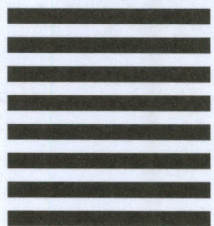
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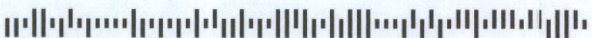


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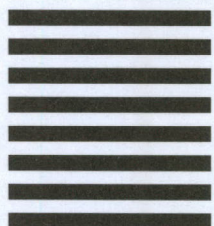
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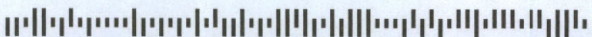


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commencing its own echo. Rust covered the metal shed in the far corner, the plywood floor rotting and the ceiling caving in. English ivy overtook the flower bed, and the once-bursting bird feeders held not a single seed. I thought of the many visits across four decades. My parents had made it a point to truck my brother, sister, and me to Marshall as often as possible, where the close relationships I had built with my cousins and the steady routines of a smaller town translated to an intimate ease of living I never felt in Dallas. No matter what direction my life later took in adulthood—the stress of earning two graduate degrees in two states over five years and embarking on a family of my own—I could retreat to Marshall, regain my footing. In that moment, looking out at the wasting backyard, I wanted to believe this would be the case forever.

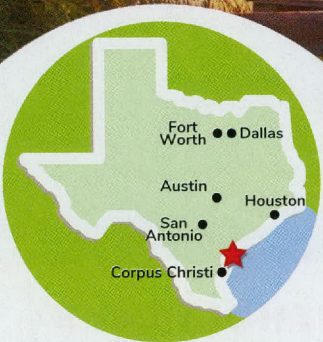
**Marshall was always in my life**, though not always in my grandparents'. My grandfather grew up in rural Mississippi and my grandmother in southern Louisiana. They relocated their family to Marshall from Baton Rouge in 1964, the summer before my mother entered eighth grade, so my grandfather could go into business with his brothers-in-law at the Timberland Saw Co.

Once they arrived in Marshall, they quickly put down roots. Roots deep enough that my grandmother was featured in a 1966 "Come Into My Kitchen" column in the *Marshall News Messenger*: "Vivacious Mrs. O.D. Smith confesses there are many things she enjoys more than cooking, but with a husband and four children who are all fond of eating, she dutifully does her best to please their palates."

Roots so deep that as my own childhood experiences began to catalyze, Marshall became a part of my being.

My earliest memories, fragmented as they are, bear the scent of cinnamon and spaghetti sauce from the Christmases we spent there. During one Christmas Eve, my siblings and I crammed onto twin air mattresses in my grandparents' formal living room alongside my seven cousins. Porcelain Precious Moments figurines smiled around us from walnut display cases while my grandfather told a story about Santa Claus flying over Texas. Then, with remarkable choreography, there was a thump on the roof, followed by footsteps scrambling toward the chimney. We children shouted with joy; my heart pounded. I didn't sleep that night.

Much later, I learned that one of my uncles had climbed up on the roof to



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visit [PortlandTx.gov](http://PortlandTx.gov)

play Santa. How proud our parents were of that ruse.

Earlier that evening, we'd driven downtown to see the more than 1 million lights of the Wonderland of Lights Festival. We listened to the carolers and automated carol bells. We viewed the nativity scene, which I discovered during a Christmas trip two decades later was missing its baby Jesus. And we strolled past the brilliantly illuminated Harrison County Historical Courthouse with its Confederate soldier statue standing proudly in front of the east entrance.

That's the paradox of my Marshall: The older I got, and the more I saw and understood of the world, the idyllic associations I harbored for it were slowly punctured. I began to realize the uncanny vacancies, the reality of loss, and the deeply conflicted history that saw a town

leading racial or social progress in some ways while reasserting its entrenched Southern pride and prejudice in others.

**Marshall sits comfortably** as a nexus for the interlocking network of states that shares the dense shadows and deep faith of pine-logged country—Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. The city was a leading supplier of munitions during the Civil War, a base for the Texas and Pacific Railway, and the home of the first Black college—Wiley College—west of the Mississippi River.

My grandfather told me these details, and my research confirms them. That's how it would work. A history buff, he would mention a fact off-hand. I would ask a lot of questions, he would answer them, and I would leave Marshall and keep digging, seeing the city differently the next time I returned. Sometimes,

those details added an admirable dimension, like when I learned about Wiley College. Other times, those details let the air out of the bucolic, small town bubble in which I'd forced Marshall.

About three years before my grandparents moved into Oakwood House, and soon after I had finished graduate school and taken a teaching job at the University of Missouri, my grandfather mentioned one such detail. In November 1863, Marshall became the seat of the Confederate government of the state of Missouri. Three years earlier, Claiborne Fox Jackson had been elected Missouri's governor, while Thomas C. Reynolds, a secessionist, was lieutenant governor. Jackson's mobilizing of a Confederate militia, in combination with a particularly bloody incident in St. Louis following the Union's seizure of Camp Jackson,

INTERSTATE 35

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led to the occupation of Jefferson City by the Union army. Jackson and many state officials fled the capitol. A new state election was called, and Missouri's Confederate government was born.

Exiled, the floating capitol of the Confederate government of the state of Missouri became something like a riverboat. It landed first in Arkansas. Then, 19 days before Christmas in 1862, Jackson died of cancer. Reynolds succeeded him as governor and, forced by the Confederate evacuation of Little Rock after the fall of Vicksburg, he set out for a new location.

Reynolds wound up sitting comfortably in a Victorian house, then a one-story, on Marshall's East Crockett Street, with a wraparound front porch for him to stretch his morning legs. He designated the East Crockett Street house

the new Missouri governor's mansion. It stood across the street from 402 S. Bolivar St., the homely, unsuspecting capitol of the Confederate government of the state of Missouri—in Texas.

The stay didn't last two years. But time gifted the historical oddity its own lore. A kind of siren song had sounded in Marshall, grown louder as the years passed and reverberated deeper as nostalgia—the potent anesthesia to progress—took hold. By the time the Bolivar Street capitol and the Crockett Street mansion were set to be demolished in 1950, a contingent of Marshall citizens weren't having it.

"A famous East Texas Landmark, the Missouri Governor's mansion of Civil War days, is slated for destruction," wrote Robert M. Hayes in the Feb. 19, 1950, edition of the *Dallas Morning News*. "The

picturesque 2-story frame structure ... will be torn down within the next few weeks to make room for a lumberyard. ... Early last year when reports were first circulated that the old mansion probably would be razed, Millard Cope, publisher of the *Marshall News Messenger*, launched a campaign to preserve the structure as a historic shrine."

That happens with spaces and places. They become avatars for our identities. Both houses have long been demolished, but you can still feel the struggle over the city's Confederate legacy.

**The summer of 2017**, 14 days after my wife and I married in her home state of California, I stood in the interrogating sunshine of Marshall's St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery. Surrounded by shrines, I watched my

continued on Page 72

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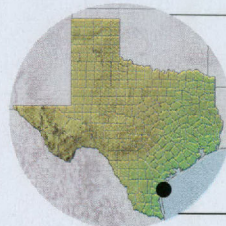
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# Uncharted Waters

Despite setbacks, a family makes the most of a fall beach vacation to remote Padre Island National Seashore

By Katie Gutierrez



**PADRE ISLAND  
NATIONAL SEASHORE**  
20420 Park Road 22, Corpus Christi,  
361-949-8068; nps.gov/pais

**M**y husband and I trace some of our happiest childhood memories to beach vacations—skin slathered in coconut-scented sunblock, that first dive beneath a cool wave, falling asleep at night exhausted and dazzled. After 18 months at home with our 3-year-old daughter, Jo, and 14-month-old son, Jack, we all needed some of that magic. It was October of 2021, and like countless other families at that point in the pandemic, we were quietly losing our minds. We didn't care that it was fall; we were taking a family trip to the beach.

We wanted someplace remote but accessible, and Padre Island National Seashore—one of only 10 seashores managed by the National Park Service—fit the bill. PINS, as it's known, protects the world's longest stretch of undeveloped barrier island, encompassing 66 miles of secluded, undeveloped beaches—most of which can be explored by four-wheel drive. The coastal wilderness is home to around 380 bird species, endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtles, white-tailed deer, black-tailed jackrabbits, Western diamondback rattlesnakes, and coyotes.

While the park receives 600,000 visitors a year, according to Kelly Taylor of the National Park Service, the only way to stay overnight is to camp. Malaquite Campground is 100 yards from the Gulf of Mexico and includes 48 sites for tents and RVs, flush toilets, and cold-water showers. But visitors with four-wheel drive can camp "down island" for a more rugged natural experience.

"We do have people who camp within the first mile of the visitors center because they want to use the restrooms or wash their hands," Taylor said, "but the majority who go camping down island take their trash bags and buckets. You have to be self-sufficient—catch what you eat and eat what you catch."

My husband, Adrian, and I could feel our adventurous pre-parenthood selves stirring. Then a more realistic image intruded—the four of us crammed beside one another in a tiny space, Jack refusing to sleep while he could still see the rest



The coastal wilderness is abundant and diverse, from white egrets to crabs.

**We parked directly on the densely packed sand—a convenience of this 1.5-mile stretch. It was red-flag windy as Adrian and I chased the kids, their squeals and shrieks relaxing my body.**

of us. We resigned ourselves to renting a town house at The Pathway to the Sea—a small, newly constructed development on North Padre Island, less than a block from Whitecap Beach and 10 miles from PINS. The best of both worlds, we reasoned.

It rained on our two-and-a-half-hour drive from San Antonio along Interstate 37, storm clouds like big-belly whales floating above us. "At least we won't be in a tent," I

joked, as Jack screamed from his car seat. The sky cleared by 4:30 p.m. when we crossed the JFK Memorial Causeway above the Laguna Madre, a long, shallow, hypersaline lagoon along the western coast of the Gulf of Mexico. "Look!" Jo said, pointing out the scarlet sail of a windsurfer as the board cut through frothy white waves.

On North Padre Island, there was little traffic as we drove past gift stores and strip centers straight to Whitecap Beach. We parked directly on the densely packed sand—a convenience of this 1.5-mile stretch. It was red-flag windy as Adrian and I chased the kids, their squeals and shrieks relaxing my body. We picked up fish and chips from the Boathouse Bar & Grill that night. No one had a problem falling asleep. This felt like the exact right place to be, at the exact right time.

**In the morning**, wind thrashed the palm trees outside. The ocean appeared white-tipped, violent. We figured the sand was whipping around like pellets, so we had a slow, tired morning inside followed by lunch at Costa Sur, a Peruvian wok and ceviche bar. We ordered chips

The Packery Channel is a man-made waterway separating Padre Island and Mustang Island.



and guacamole and serrano sashimi to start, followed by *hoale* poke and a steak sandwich. I could have sat there for hours, sampling dish after dish.

Afterward, we headed to the Texas Sea-life Center, a nonprofit that rescues, rehabilitates, and releases coastal and aquatic wildlife. A dry-erase board inside listed all 2021 releases, including 360 sea turtles and 128 birds among 42 species. We held the kids up to see camouflaged lizards and coiled boa constrictors. Then volunteer Esmie Marquez took us through a back door to see the other rescue animals.

One was a green sea turtle, maybe 18 inches long, swimming in a round tank. The turtle was about 5 years old, Marquez told us, and wouldn't be fully grown until around 30 years old, at which point it would be 5 feet long and weigh up to 300 pounds.

"Most of our turtles come in here because

## Time was expansive and generous, minutes swelling to feel, somehow, like lazy hours.

of human-induced causes," Marquez said. "Some have gotten smacked by boats, some have ingested fishing line, some have gotten fishhooks stuck in their eyes."

Since the 1980s, PINS has worked with multiple agencies in the U.S. and Mexico to bring the Kemp's ridley sea turtle back from near extinction. The three turtles in the Texas Sealife tanks had been here several weeks, but one, which died recently, was here for years. If an animal can't be released, Texas Sealife will give it a home for life.

After the kids' naps, we returned to Whitecap Beach. We swung them, laughing, high over the waves. I couldn't help remembering my own childhood beach trips to Port Aransas—my mom in her high-waisted bikini and baseball cap, her only makeup a glamorous swipe of coral lipstick. She was always calling to us, "Stay where I can see you!" My dad would lead us into the water and lift us into jumps, a weightless swoon.

Our last full day was washed out by storms, but it wasn't uneventful: We spent the morning with "Baby Shark" on repeat, and Jo woke from her nap with an ear infection, requiring a visit to urgent care in Corpus Christi. When Jo and I returned to the town house in the early evening, Adrian had spaghetti waiting for us on the stove—he knew my childhood beach trips always included vats of my dad's spaghetti. I smiled at him. Somehow, making

it to PINS before we checked out the next day felt less important than it did a few hours ago.

The kids woke us, as usual, before sunrise. "How are you feeling?" I asked Jo, brushing tangled hair from her eyes.

"Better," she said, smiling.

The storms had passed. On Texas Park Road 22, we soon left behind the condo complexes and strip malls. The landscape became Rothko-esque: all blue sky and flat, yellow coastal grasslands. We were the only car on this two-lane road bisecting the endless yellow. It felt as if we were about to drive off the edge of the world.

The 5.5-mile paved entrance to PINS passes the Grasslands Nature Trail, a 0.75-mile loop through grasslands and dune habitats; and Bird Island Basin, a campground on a half-mile stretch of beach in front of the Laguna Madre that's ranked one of the best spots in the continental U.S. for windsurfing.

"We are quite reliable for good wind conditions," said Olivier Jallais, a Canadian National Windsurfing Champion and longtime instructor at Worldwinds Windsurfing—a licensed concessionaire of PINS. "The body of water is about chest-to-shoulder height for the most part, so it's a very good place to learn and improve, and it's a beautiful location."

As the grasslands gave way to dunes created by sand, wind, and stabilizing plants like railroad vine—a salt-tolerant ground cover blooming bright pink flowers—I yearned for the trip I'd envisioned. I had wanted days spent driving miles of undeveloped coast, a cooler in the back, Jack napping in the baby carrier on my chest during long hikes. But this morning was all we had.

There was a sense of expectation as we parked at Malaquite Visitor Center—the only car—and treaded across the boardwalk. Malaquite Beach emerged as an endless, pristine shoreline, waves silver in the sunlight, stretching like an unwrapped gift before us. I had to catch my breath. We were the only people in sight. Adrian and I exchanged slightly stunned smiles before the stillness broke and we careened toward the water,

## Beach Retreat

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15113 S. Padre Island Drive,  
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costasurtx.com

### Texas Sealife Center

Experience the diversity of coastal and aquatic wildlife.

14220 S. Padre Island Drive,  
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361-589-4023;  
texassealifecenter.org

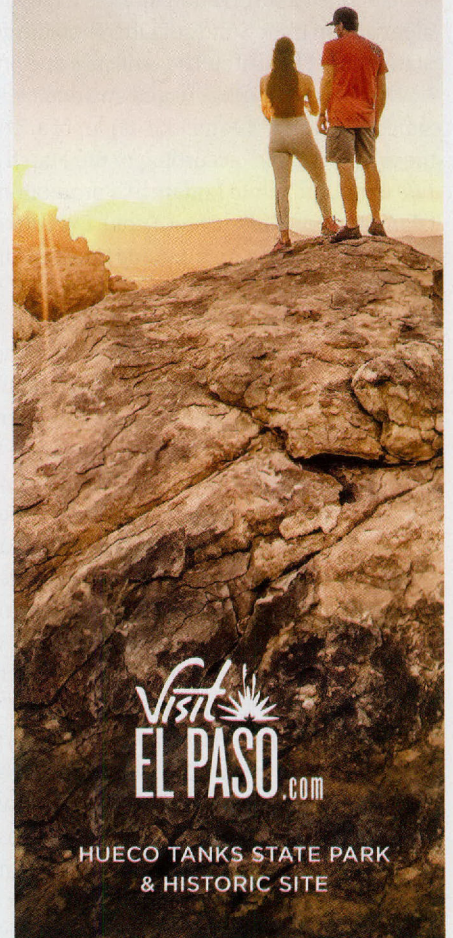
where waves lapped warm and gentle against our legs. We laughed at side-scuttling ghost crabs and helped Jo write her name in the sand. She buried my legs and built lumpy sandcastles that Jack instantly destroyed. Time was expansive and generous, minutes swelling to feel, somehow, like lazy hours. In the distance, a lone pelican balanced on the skin of the ocean. As we basked in our children's joy, I was aware of the memory crystallizing: a double exposure of the present moment and its future reminiscence.

With children, there is no such thing as a perfect vacation. There might not even be such a thing as a *vacation*. But there are lovely moments. And this one—at the edge of the world—was one of them. 🐬

Dear  
NATURE  
LOVERS,

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Love, El Paso



# Peacekeepers

Statue of Liberty replicas bear torches across Texas

By Michael Hoinski

**B**est French contribution to American culture? That's a toughie: french fries or the Statue of Liberty? The trouble with the latter is it's all the way in New York City. Those who seek to pay homage to this beacon of freedom must wait in a long line before embarking on a crowded ferry ride and then wait in another long line—and that's only for those smart enough to have booked a reservation months in advance. A more convenient option is the Statue of Liberty on the grounds of the Texas State Capitol in Austin. The replica is one of more than 200 the Boy Scouts of America created and deployed across the United States between 1949 and 1951 as part of a "crusade to strengthen the arm of liberty," according to the March 1949 issue of *Boys' Life* magazine. Amid fanfare at a promotional event on Liberty Island in New York, Chief Scout Executive Arthur A. Schuck boomed through a microphone that the initiative allowed the Boy Scouts "more fully to serve the nation in its endeavors for a free post-war world."

The Boy Scouts donated the 8-foot, 4-inch bronze miniature to the state of Texas in 1951. Originally located on the Capitol's southwest grounds, the monument was moved in 1997 to the northwest grounds to preserve the 1888-1915 appearance of the south grounds, according to Ali James, curator of the Capitol. In the process, workers discovered a Boy Scouts time capsule and relocated it to the Bastrop chapter, to be opened in 2076. The Austin statue was made by the Friedley-Voshardt Foundry in Chicago, which also produced the 1888 Goddess of Liberty statue for the Texas Capitol dome. There are four other statues of liberty across the state—in Big Spring, Dallas, Midland, and Port Arthur—but the Austin version is perfectly situated. Park near Colorado and 13th streets and walk a short distance among the historic Trail of Trees to the Supreme Court of Texas building, where Lady Liberty stands on a native Texas limestone base upon sunset red granite. "It seems appropriate that the torch is illuminating the path toward liberty and justice for all Texans," James says. *For more information, visit [tspb.texas.gov](http://tspb.texas.gov).* 📍





# Mile Zero

Everything you need to know to hit the trail

By Amelia Nonemacher



Possum Kingdom State Park

**Hiking has grown in popularity in recent years due to the pandemic**, driving an increasing number of people to explore the stunning natural landscapes Texas has to offer. But for the unexperienced, hiking may seem intimidating. It's hard to know where to start, what to bring, what length of hike you can handle, and whether fancy gear is necessary.

But there's no wrong way to hike, says Lisa Henderson, outdoor education supervisor for Texas State Parks. "A hike can be anything," she says. "When we're hiking, we're really just walking through the woods. Yes, the terrain may be a little more challenging, but it doesn't have to be." Whether you're on a 12-mile trek across jagged cliffs or a casual stroll through a neighborhood park, Texas' outdoor spaces are open for exploration.

## A Walking Start

Not sure how to begin? Try joining a beginner's hiking group in your area. After feeling left in the dust by her fellow hikers on a group hike, Maricruz Zarate started the San Antonio Plus Sized Women's Hiking Group. Now with over 500 members, the group hosts hikes in the San Antonio area and welcomes women of all sizes, backgrounds, and experience levels. [facebook.com/satxhikinggals](https://facebook.com/satxhikinggals)

### ***Do you have any tips for people who want to go hiking but are hesitant to get started?***

Try to get over that initial fear or intimidation that you feel of getting out there. The hardest part is just starting. That's why we try to make our group as welcoming as possible—our motto is "no woman left behind."

### ***Do you have a favorite area in Texas to hike in?***

Here in San Antonio, one of our favorite places to hike for our group is Friedrich Wilderness Park because they have a lot of good trails. You really feel like you're immersed in the outdoors, in the wilderness.

### ***What led you to open the group to all women?***

The outdoors and nature are for everybody, and nature is very accepting of anyone who wants to take part in it. So, I just decided to open it up to all women, not just plus-size women.



# 8,751 ft.

Elevation of Guadalupe Peak, the tallest mountain in Texas

# 96 miles

Length of Lone Star Hiking Trail, the state's longest hiking trail

# 300-600

Number of calories burned per hour during a leisurely hike



Lake Somerville State Park

## Happy Trails

For these beginner hikes, book a pass in advance to secure a spot.

**San Angelo State Park:** Families and beginners can get started on the 1-mile Strawberry Trail or go for a longer stroll on the 3.3-mile Roadrunner Trail.

**Lake Somerville State Park—Nails Creek Unit:** Explore the shores of Lake Somerville and

the shaded forest areas on the 0.7-mile Nails Creek Loop.

**Fairfield Lake State Park:** Bring binoculars along for a walk on the 0.7-mile Bird-watching Trail to find blue herons, osprey, and red-winged blackbirds.

**Big Bend National Park:** The 0.3-mile, wheelchair-accessible Window View Trail offers mountain views.

**Possum Kingdom State Park:** The 1.4-mile Lakeview Trail takes you along the edge of Possum Kingdom Lake.



## Packing List

Make sure to always bring these essentials:

### SUN PROTECTION

**WATER BOTTLE (ONE LITER OF WATER PER 2 HOURS OF HIKING, MINIMUM)**

**FULLY CHARGED PHONE**

**SNACKS**

**TRAIL GUIDEBOOK/MAP**

**FIRST AID KIT**

**WEATHER-APPROPRIATE CLOTHING**

**GOOD WALKING SHOES**

**FLASHLIGHT**

**INSECT REPELLENT**

## Safety First



Stick to the trail: Staying on track keeps you from getting lost and protects the local flora and fauna.



Come prepared: Pack plenty of supplies, check the trail conditions, and familiarize yourself with the route before you arrive.



Be aware: Keep an eye out for objects in your path, unsure footholds, and dangers like poison ivy or snakes.



Make contact: Let a friend, family member, or park ranger know where you're going and when you'll be back.



Know your limits: Don't be afraid to slow down, take a break, or turn back if you're not feeling well.



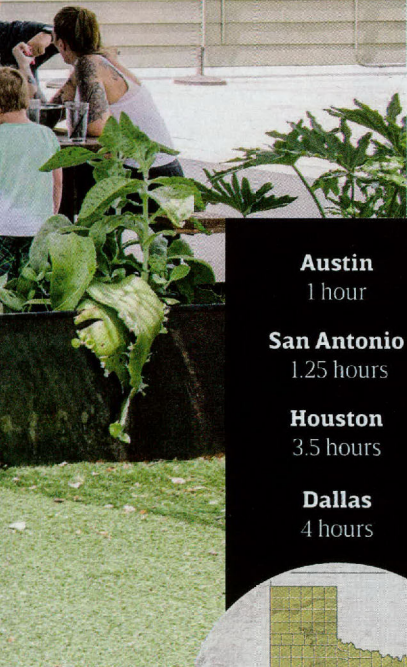
Community Pizza  
& Beer Garden

# Art Springs Eternal

Find a confluence of scenery and creativity in Wimberley, the creek-dipping capital of the Hill Country

By Matt Joyce

**I**t's a heart-pumping hike up 218 limestone steps to the knobby summit of Mount Baldy in Wimberley. But the work pays off with 360-degree views of the Wimberley Valley's rolling hills and basins, a landscape that harbors some of the Hill Country's finest natural and cultural treasures. On cool mornings, rising mist traces the course of the Blanco River and Cypress Creek, and sun rays illuminate the limestone ridge known as the Devil's Backbone. Settled around 1850 as a trading post and gristmill, Wimberley today is a bustling riverside village of about 3,000 residents that's known for its swimming holes, arts scene, summer holiday rodeos, and a monthly sprawling outdoor market called Wimberley Market Days. "I would make the case that we have more talent in the visual arts, literary arts, performing arts, and culinary arts than any other town our size," says Don Minnick, a Wimberley Valley Arts and Cultural Alliance board member. "I think artists are drawn here by the natural beauty and the ability to connect with like-minded people."

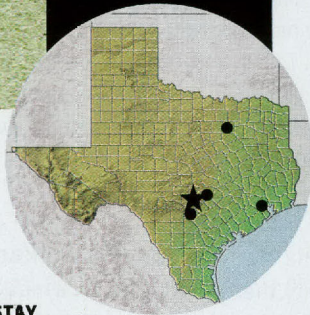


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**Dallas**  
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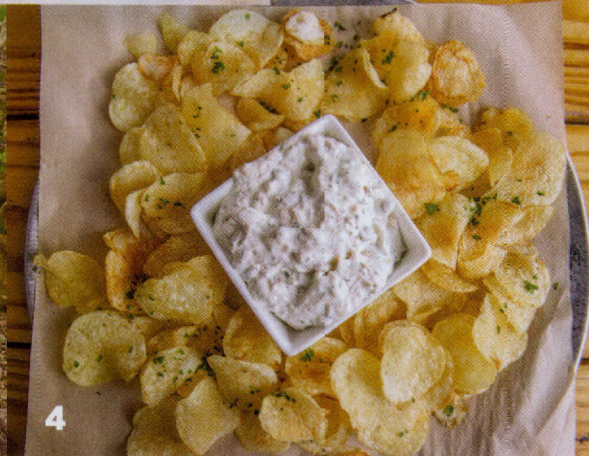


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7



8



4



2

6



**1 / CREEKHAVEN INN & SPA** The cypress and pecan trees along Cypress Creek impart a sense of serenity at this B&B. The rooms (starting at \$229/night) feature a comfy mix of antique and contemporary furnishings. Breakfasts of homemade frittatas and baked goods provide fuel for yoga, spa treatments, kayaking, and bicycling—or just relaxing by the creek.



**2 / WIMBERLEY SQUARE** Home to roughly 70 businesses, Wimberley's downtown core is full of shops stuffed to the rafters with home décor, jewelry, clothing, gifts, artwork, and unexpected finds. Grab a coffee at Sip on the Square and then check out the succulents at Ceremony Botanical Studio, the kitchen gadgets at Kiss the Cook, and the folk art at Rancho Deluxe.



**3 / WIMBERLEY ZIPLINE ADVENTURES** Set on 30 acres of steep terrain, this network of 10 zip lines soars above limestone hillsides and through oak, juniper, and elm trees. The longest line measures 900 feet, and the highest is 100 feet in the air. The adventure starts with a ride to the first platform on an Austrian Pinzgauer troop carrier.



**4 / COMMUNITY PIZZA & BEER GARDEN** It's hard to go wrong with pizza and beer, and this place excels at both with wood-fired Neapolitan pizzas and 32 craft-brew taps. Creative offerings include The Illuminati pizza with garlic, Gorgonzola, serrano, sausage, and honey toppings. Next to the patio seating, a webbed playscape occupies the kids.



**5 / 7A RANCH** Opened in 1946 on the Blanco River, 7A offers hotel rooms (starting at \$200/night), family cabins, and group lodges. Since the damaging Memorial Day flood of 2015 and an ownership change, 7A has renovated its cabins, improved its riverbank, and rebuilt the Pioneer Express railway. 7A is also home to Pioneer Town, an Old West crossroads with a vintage ice cream parlor and an arcade.



**6 / SWIMMING HOLES** Running 5.5 miles from its headwaters at Jacob's Well to the Blanco, Cypress Creek is home to three publicly accessible swimming holes. The holes at Jacob's Well Natural Area and Blue Hole Regional Park require reservations and only open during summer. At Cypress Falls, you can also order beer and burgers. The pools close when the creek runs low in severe droughts, like this past summer.



**7 / ART ON 12** A hub of the Wimberley art community, the gallery features the work of 50 artists, mostly local. Its rooms are filled with a variety of creations, such as photographer Rodney Bursiel's images of African wildlife and Maxine Price's contemporary abstract paintings. Art on 12 also puts on guest artist shows, and hosts music and poetry readings on its courtyard stage.



**8 / DEVIL'S BACKBONE TAVERN** Local musicians Robyn and John Ludwick bought this 1937 dive bar in 2018 and have refreshed the property while preserving the familiar spirit that draws a loyal crowd for cold beer, shuffleboard, and jukebox classics. Of particular note, the Ludwicks restored and reopened the 1940s dance hall, which hosts country and roots bands. **L**



## Wimberley Market Days

Wimberley's sleepy week-ends are jolted awake on the first Saturday of the month—March through December—when thousands of people converge on the shopping bonanza known as Wimberley Market Days. Billed as the Hill Country's largest outdoor market, the event features about 400 vendors selling antiques, artwork, home décor, jewelry, handcrafted furniture, plants, clothing, and more. Roughly 200 volunteers put on the event, which started on the Wimberley Square in 1969 and moved to its current 19-acre location 50 years ago.

Musicians perform at the various concessions areas, where you can purchase lunch and drinks. With funds raised through the event, the Wimberley Lions Club has donated \$4 million to local charities and scholarships over the years.

[wimberleymarketday.com](http://wimberleymarketday.com)

**Black Canyon Wimberley** is home to seven RV campsites (starting at \$40/night) with hookups, Wi-Fi, picnic tables, and fire pits. The property, which is located five minutes from the Wimberley Square, also offers two cottages and three cabins. No bathrooms or laundry facilities are available to RV campers.

630 Wayside Drive, 512-757-7083,  
[blackcanyonwimberley.com](http://blackcanyonwimberley.com)

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WHERE THE



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**EXPERIENCE LIFE ON THE WESTERN RANGE AT A TEXAS DUDE RANCH**



# IT'S THE End OF THE Last TRAIL RIDE

on a blazing summer day and time to put the horses away. Tami Martin, one of the wranglers at the Dixie Dude Ranch in Bandera, hoists weathered saddles off the trail-weary horses, her arms tan and strong from the job. In faded Wranglers and cowboy boots that read “Just A Good Old Girl” in capital letters on the back, she makes the work look cool and easy. So I ask Garrett Connell, a wrangler who’d been charming me with tall tales on the trail, if I can help “untack” my horse, Sancho.

“We aren’t equestrians here; we’re cowboys,” he says. “We unsaddle.” Then he shows me how to ease off Sancho’s bridle and latigo. I’m no Tami, but it feels good to haul Sancho’s gear to the barn and whiff the heady aroma of well-worn leather. Such a moment, I would later discover, is a microcosm of what dude ranches are all about.

What, exactly, is a dude? To many, the term evokes a vision of shaggy surfer types—someone trying to be cool. Or it’s a way to address them, as in “What’s up, dude?” Though this may sound incongruous to people familiar with Texas dude ranches—where paying guests participate in Western activities from trail rides to chuckwagon dinners to skeet shooting—the contemporary connotations of “dude” are actually closer to the origins of the dude ranch than I realized.

“I do not believe there ever was any life more attractive to a vigorous young fellow than life on a cattle ranch in those days,” Theodore Roosevelt wrote in his eponymous

autobiography published in 1913, a couple of decades after his first trip out West. Roosevelt, famous for his love of outdoor adventure, was one of America’s first dudes. For in the 1880s, a dude—in addition to meaning a snazzy dresser—was an urban dweller, often from the East Coast, who goes to a ranch to embrace the work and wide-open spaces of the Western life. In a 2013 study, slang etymologists Barry Popik and Gerald Cohen linked the word back to the nonsense word “doodle,” as in “Yankee Doodle Dandy.”

“Back in Roosevelt’s time, a dude was a specific thing,” says Clay Conoly, owner of the Dixie Dude. “There were no ‘guest ranches,’ but there were dude ranches, and everyone who helped out in the corral from out of town was called a dude wrangler.”

As families play card games at nearby tables, Conoly and I sit by the jukebox in the Roundup Room of the Dixie Dude. The 725-acre working ranch has been in Conoly’s family since 1901, and it’s where he lives with his wife, Diane, and sons, Alec and Sharp. He explains his own take on the term: “A dude is a person traveling into an area they’re unfamiliar with, but with an open mind, learning new things and appreciating the work that’s done on a ranch. It’s a good thing.”

In an effort to better understand the quality of dudeness, over the course of a week this July I visited the Dixie Dude Ranch in Bandera—a town billed as the Cowboy Capital of the World—and two other Texas ranches: Blisswood Bed and Breakfast Ranch, 350 acres in Cat Spring in the rolling prairie an hour’s drive west of Houston; and JL Bar Ranch, Resort & Spa, 13,000 acres just off of Interstate 10 in the arid scrublands between Sonora and Junction.

These are but a fraction of what’s out there. From the historic Prude Ranch in Fort Davis to the Wildcatter Ranch in Graham to the Beaumont Ranch in Grandview, there are about a dozen dude ranches across Texas. The dude experience is a top vacation choice of visitors to our state, and when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, demand for dude ranch getaways grew from out-of-state visitors and Texans alike. In my own pursuit of dude life, I would do things I’d never done, such as unsaddle horses, feed buffalo, and hot tub with an armadillo. I’d learn the hard way that one should never wear shorts on a hayride. I’d befriend other dudes from across the world. And most importantly, I’d get a feel for what makes a good dude.

**OPENING SPREAD:** The Dixie Dude Ranch in Bandera. **THIS SPREAD:** Blisswood Bed and Breakfast Ranch in Cat Spring.





## BLISSWOOD BED AND BREAKFAST RANCH

**As I pull off Interstate 10 onto the country roads** of Austin County, my relief from the anxiety-inducing traffic and urban grind is immediate. The feeling morphs into full-on glee as I drive beneath arches of moss-draped oaks and approach Blisswood's barn, where white Paso Fino trail horses are grazing in a meadow. Sometimes you have to immerse yourself in nature to remember how much you need it.

I feel even better once I meet Skeeter, head of guest services, who right away takes me to feed bananas to some lemurs. His real name is Erwin Harrison Hagler Jr., but when he was just born, someone said he was so cute he looked like a little mosquito. He was forever after Skeeter—even now that he's 75. After the banana-crazy lemurs have their fill, Skeeter shows me how to throw hatchets.

"You don't want to overthink it," he says. "It's not baseball. Pull up by your ear almost like you're cuttin' your ear off." I emulate Skeeter's form and grunt as I hurl the shiny silver ax at a target of splintered wood. Then we load up in the Polaris, a four-wheeled ranch buggy, to visit bison in the





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The Blisswood's Grand Safari Tent features a king-size bed, heat, and AC; a horseback ride at Blisswood.

wildlife pasture. As we approach, black buck antelope leap like ballerinas into the woods. Upon seeing Skeeter's Polaris, the bison rumble over and stick their wide wet noses into our seats as other guests and I try to shovel scoops of feed into their open mouths. It's a fur-filled mess of kibble, buffalo slobber, and peals of laughter all around.

The next morning, I wake early for a sunrise soak in my cabin's hot tub. It's still dark, and when I shine my flashlight at a rustling in the brush, I see a fat armadillo, his bands shimmering in the beam. Usually, I see armadillos dead on the road, so the chance to study this scaly critter as he seeks breakfast is a treat.

This is one of the reasons dude ranches are such a welcome vacation. Rather than developing land for tourism, dude ranches preserve the land and allow animals to keep their wild spaces. The Blisswood and the Dixie Dude participate in wildlife rehabilitation and land conservation programs. The entertainment is the kind of low-tech delight a dude appreciates: an armadillo rooting at sunrise, an antelope leaping into the woods, a buffalo slobbering on your fingers.

Carol Davis, Blisswood's owner, grew up on a farm in Fayette County. "I once was crawned to the lights of the big city, but after a while those lights dimmed for me," she says. "Being here, close to the horses and wildlife, makes my spirit sing. And I see it in my guests. One family from the UK actually cried when it was time to leave, they felt so happy here."

I know my spirits are up, too. I see why those Yankee Doodle Dandies needed to come out West.



## THE DIXIE DUDE RANCH

**Connell, the Dixie Dude wrangler,** holds my phone as he helps me mount Rooster, a one-eyed horse and cancer survivor. “Rooster’s what you call an Overa paint,” he tells me. “Is there anything else I need to know about Rooster?” I ask. “No,” he says, “I’m gonna let you figure that out on your own. You signed a waiver.”

Rooster may just have one eye, but he’s sure-footed on the trail. The dozen of us on this morning ride wind our way through a limestone valley flanked by hills covered in oak and cedar trees. Our meditative pace makes it easy for me to pester Connell with questions, like where’d he get his big shiny belt buckle? It’s a reward, he says, for one of the bull riding competitions he won on the pro rodeo circuit. After 17 broken bones and four surgeries, he retired from the sport in his late 20s. But he misses it. “When you’re climbing down the chute onto the back of a 2,000-pound bull, there’s nothing like it,” he says.



A flowering Texas sage adorns a cabin at Dixie Dude Ranch.

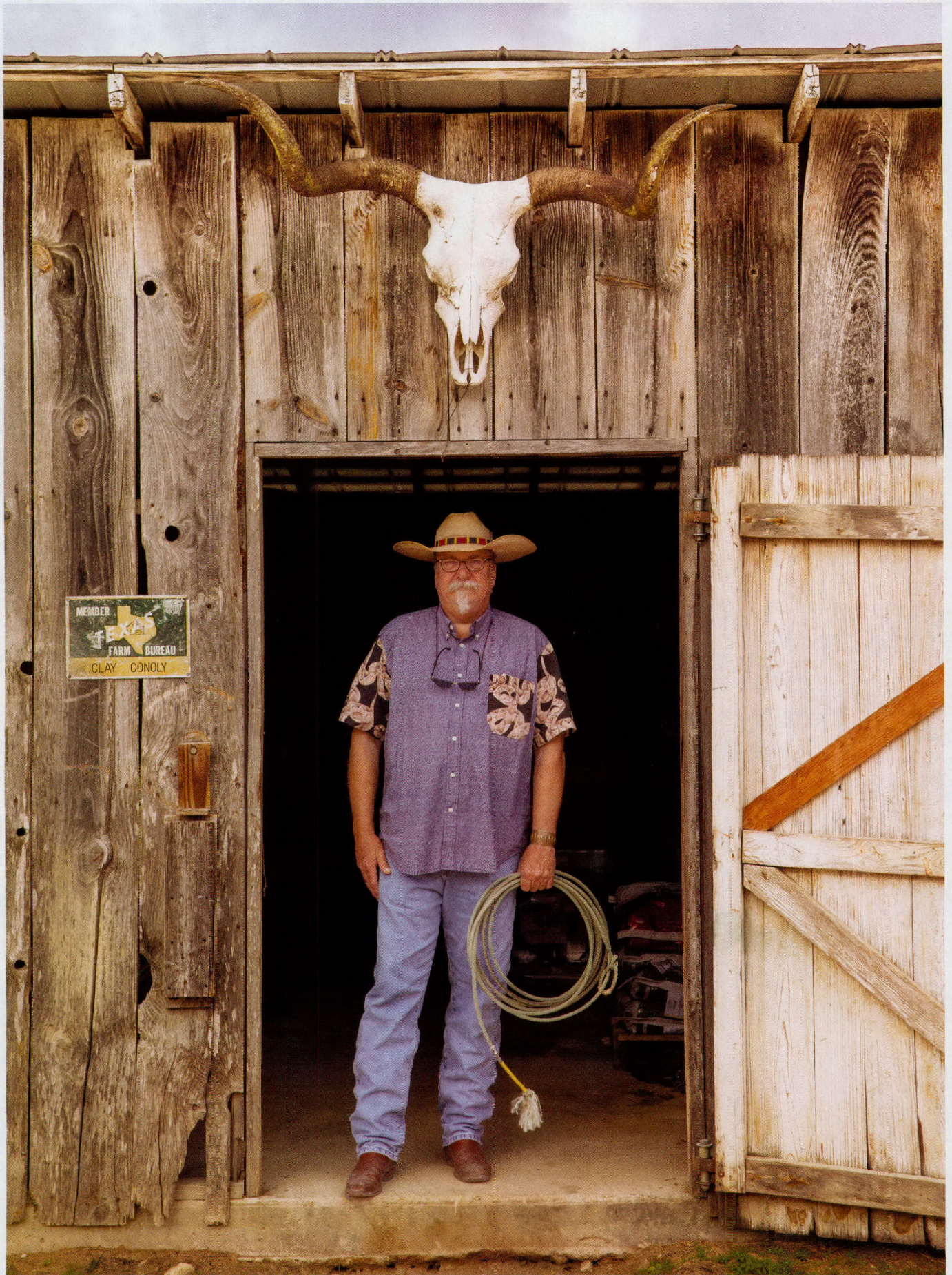
That night, Alec Conoly takes a group of 45 guests on a hayride, pulling us behind his truck on a trailer lined with hay. Alec is the fifth generation of his family to live and work on the Dixie Dude, and it's clear he loves it. He takes pleasure in educating us about the Longhorns that approach and doesn't miss a beat when one named Nacho poops during his talk and a kid yells out, "Look, Nacho sauce!" Our group, including families from London and Turkey, is full of questions: Why are the steers' horns longer than the bulls'? Why don't we eat Longhorns? Mama, can we please get a bull?

The hearty meals served at the Dixie Dude are communal affairs. I was impressed by Tracie Porter, a grandmother from Idalou, who brings each of her grandchildren to a dude ranch when they turn 10. Her granddaughter, Alessa, proudly describes to the table how she'd learned to unhook the perch she caught in the fishing pond. Also at the table, the three-generation Melline family of 13 dudes from Washington, D.C., stole the show with their matching T-shirts that say "Straight Trippin'" in sparkly letters. Although we are from many places and live different lives, the story swapping and bonhomie over home-cooked meals build a sense of connection that feels extra sweet these days.

Driving the Hill Country roads leading away from the Dixie Dude, buoyed by the good vibes of the ranch and the people I met there, I think about Clay Conoly, who says he has no regrets about leaving a career in oil to run the family ranch. "Spend time out here and it just works on you," he says. "You might call it spiritual."

**FROM LEFT:** A trail ride at the Dixie Dude Ranch; Dixie owner Clay Conoly.







## JL BAR RANCH, RESORT & SPA

From Bandera, it's a 150-mile drive to the rugged scrublands between Junction and Sonora. At 13,000 acres, the JL Bar is just a tad smaller than Manhattan. Within a minute of pulling off I-10, I arrive at a security gate that opens to a paved road through drought-baked earth and prickly pear. I turn right at the flag as instructed by the security guard and approach the Main Lodge, a stone behemoth surrounded by verdant grass, golf carts, and large vases filled with faux burgundy hibiscus flowers. I exit my car to the crooning of country music played over outdoor speakers. This landscape may be spartan, but the JL Bar, named for owners James and Lois Archer, is all country cush.

The JL Bar is a marksman's playground. You can shoot skeet, fire pistols, and hunt exotic game, including black buck, axis deer, and red stag. You can also shoot rifles on the ranch's long-range course. With a target that's 1,500 yards away, it's touted as one of the longest courses in Texas.





# The Spa at JL BAR



Scenes from the JL Bar near Sonora

Visitors can also sample reining, a riding style popularized by the *Yellowstone* TV series where the horse performs exact patterns of spins, circles, and steps. Joe Joseph, the trainer who oversees the JL Bar's horse program, describes reining as "figure skating" on a horse. "Reining horses are the best trained horses in the world," he says. "Riders of any level can rein. The horse does most of the work, and the rider just kind of hangs on and enjoys it."

The prices here are what you might expect for a place where guests fly in regularly on the ranch's private airstrip. According to an activity list at the front desk, an hour of reining costs \$180, and an hour of skeet shooting costs \$75, not including gun rental and ammo fees. Given my budget, my primary activity is hanging out by the infinity pool with a glass of sauvignon blanc and noshing on a butter-dabbed rib-eye at the ranch restaurant. The peace of this immense desert is soothing, particularly as the July sun departs and the air begins to cool. But my boots stay clean.

"I wouldn't call this a dude ranch," Joseph says. "It's a resort." Certainly, those who fly to the JL Bar from across the globe get a hefty dose of Texas ranch glamour within these gates. And those who try their hand at activities—like reining or target shooting with a super-powered scope—are learning, dude-like, about horses and hunting.

Although the word "dude" has evolved over time, the classic version evoked by Roosevelt and his ilk back in the 1880s abides in Texas. As Tracye Porter, the grandmother from *Madou*, told me when her granddaughter ran off to admire the Dixie Dude's peacocks: "We just watched the farrier shoe some horses—that was cool—and now she's off again. Alessa's free here; she can explore, try new things. She's being a good little dude." 🐎

## THE DUDE ABIDES

Dude ranch lodging and activities vary widely across Texas. Patricia Moore, director of the Convention and Visitors Bureau in Bandera County, which is home to five dude ranches, recommends contacting the ranch to see if it's a good fit for your vacation. "I tell people all the time: There is no best dude ranch," she says. "They all vary. Call them up and chat with the ranch staff. Tell them what you are looking for."

**Blisswood Bed and Breakfast Ranch** offers lodging in farmhouses, a wagon, a log cabin, a safari tent, and RVs. Activities include trapshooting, ax throwing, and trail rides. Lodging rates start at \$129 per night, not including activity prices. Trail rides start at \$99 per person for one hour. 13597 Frantz Road, Cat Spring. 713-301-3235; blisswood.net

**Dixie Dude Ranch** offers lodging in cottages, cabins, and bunkhouse rooms. Activities include trail rides, fishing, hayrides, and campfires. Advanced horse-riding options are available upon request for more experienced riders. All-inclusive rates start at \$180 per day for adults, and \$70 per day for young children, with lodging, meals, two daily rides, and most activities included. For weekends and large groups, book about six months in advance. 833 Dixie Dude Ranch Road, Bandera. 830-796-7771; dixieduderanch.com

**JL Bar Ranch, Resort & Spa** offers hotel rooms and cabins. Activities include trapshooting, reining horseback riding, pistol shooting, long range rifle shooting, and hunting. Lodging rates start at \$399 per night. Activities cost extra. Reining costs \$180 per person for one hour. 3500 Private Road 2254, Sonora. 855-414-3337; jlbar.com

# THE SOCIAL EXPERIMENT



A TWITTER ADDICT LOGS OFF AND EXPERIENCES MARFA THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY

BY LAUREN HOUGH | PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIST CHAVEZ







It doesn't take long after you move to Austin—right about the time you've chosen your favorite taco truck, figured out where to mount the Longhorns on the wall of your living room, and gotten your fill of barbecue and swear you won't eat it again until someone comes to visit—for people to start telling you to go to Marfa. *Have you been to Marfa yet? It's amazing. Let me know when you're going; I'll send you my list. You have to go to Marfa.*

I've been in Austin five years. And before y'all start—I'm from Amarillo. If you survived high school in Amarillo, you're entitled to move to Austin whenever you please. It's right there in the bylaws next to, "What happens at a pasture party, stays at a pasture party." Anyway, I'd never made it out to Marfa. I couldn't figure out what was so appealing about driving seven hours to a tiny town where, from what I could figure looking at Instagram posts, the only thing to see was a fake Prada store. It seemed like the main reason to go to Marfa was to post pictures on social media. This spring, I decided to hit the road with my dog, Woody Guthrie, and put this theory to the test by doing the opposite—going offline.

Here's the thing: I'm an unrepentant Twitter addict. I don't fancy spending a few days off social media. I complain about my problem often to my 100,000



**Opening spread:** Marfa exemplifies the centralized layout of West Texas towns.  
**This page:** Hikers in Davis Mountains State Park look to the west just before sunset.



followers. It started innocently, or at least there was a point to being on Twitter. I wanted to be a writer, and since I don't live in New York, Twitter was the place I could make friends with real writers, the kind who have their names on books. They tell you that unless you're a celebrity or politician, you need a platform to sell a book. So, I built a platform. It worked. I've sold stories on Twitter, gotten the attention of agents and editors, and even sold a book, *Leaving Isn't the Hardest Thing*, a *New York Times* bestselling collection of coming-of-age essays. I've made real friends and developed more than a few crushes. These justifications sound a lot like the lies I used to tell myself about smoking: *It's a great way to meet people!* You're standing outside the bar, you ask to borrow a lighter, and a two-hour conversation later, you're in love.

The ugly side of the addiction is I must feed the beast, provide content, weigh in on subjects. The next thing I know, hundreds of people are calling me names, encouraged by professional bullies, and Woody Guthrie's wondering why I keep looking at the stupid glowing thing that makes me sad when I could be on a walk. I tell myself it doesn't matter. Only Twitter pays any attention to Twitter. But those pile-ons, even the silly controversies, leave a mark. I mean, am I really a domestic terrorist for feeding cheese to my dog?

I'll tell anyone who'll listen that we should all spend less time on social media. It's bad for us. It's rewiring our brains. It's causing us to be more isolated. We've forgotten how to talk to one another. Because I was having a hard time telling myself that, I figured I needed this trip to Marfa and the challenge it presented.

**It was nearly dark by the time** I pulled into the Riata Inn on the edge of town and got a room. Then I drove around looking everywhere for something to eat, but the place looked deserted. Marfa is laid out like any town out West—a highway crossroads, a railroad track, a main street, and in the center a courthouse and a few businesses and hotels with flat facades and awnings over the sidewalk.

I cut back to US 90 running through town. The requisite Dairy Queen was closed. One of the two gas stations I saw was open. I resigned myself to a dinner of beef jerky and pretzels and headed back to the inn at the edge of town. The



tour of Marfa took five, maybe seven minutes, including the dinner run. I was kind of bored without my phone, but I managed to fall asleep without scrolling through a stream of bad news and insults.

In the morning, I found a small café called Do Your Thing, where the thing I did was purchase a coffee and an avocado toast. The coffee came topped with a painstakingly created flower in the foam. I almost felt bad for ruining the barista's art

by putting a lid on it. But since I couldn't post a picture of the exquisite foam, I didn't need to preserve it.

I was sitting outside sipping coffee and wondering what other West Texas cafés serve avocado toast. I could have pulled out my phone and Googled something like "Things to do in Marfa." But I'd made it this far without using the internet. The thing is, I couldn't remember anyone telling me what to do in Marfa. Of all those people who told me to go to Marfa, not one of them mentioned why.

While I was considering what to do next, a guy in paint-splattered boots stopped to pet Woody Guthrie. It helps, when you're the type of person who can't send back a well-done steak, to have the friendly sort of dog who people stop to pet. It's easier to talk to someone who's already petting your dog. I'm not saying I use him as bait, but I'm not *not* saying it. I asked the painter if there were any parks around where I could walk a dog. He said there was a dog park, but he'd never seen anyone use it. He asked if I'd checked out the Chinati Foundation. The question must've shown on my face. He explained that it's an outdoor art installation. "Are you into postmodernism, buddy?" he asked Woody Guthrie.

A couple minutes later, I pulled into the parking lot of Chinati, which was founded by Donald Judd, the artist who put Marfa on the map. I opened the hatch door to let Woody Guthrie out and while he peed on a fence, I read the sign: "Pets are not allowed anywhere on the grounds." I thought it would be a cool trick to teach Woody Guthrie to pee on "No Pets" signs. I could make a whole photo series on Instagram, maybe get the series displayed in an art gallery. But I've barely managed to convince him he's not allowed to pee on indoor plants. I wondered how Chinati's doing convincing coyotes to not pee on Judd's concrete boxes. I told Woody Guthrie I was sorry. We'd never know how he feels about postmodernism.

I put him back in the car and headed to the one place I knew there'd be a nice green lawn—the Presidio County Courthouse. The beautiful pink stucco building was designed in 1886 by Alfred Giles, the same architect who designed the El Paso County Courthouse. The road leading up to the courthouse is lined with hotels—the Saint George and the Lincoln and the Paisano, where the crew stayed while filming *Giant*. I wondered what James Dean thought of Marfa. That kid would've been a natural at Instagram.

Just as I hoped, the courthouse is surrounded by a lush green lawn. After circling a few times—Woody Guthrie making sure every tree was checked thoroughly for squirrels—we regrouped at the car. While Woody Guthrie considered



**From left:** The Milky Way appears at the Marfa Lights Viewing Area; Coffee is a canvas for art at Do Your Thing.

whether he'd drink water or die of thirst as revenge for my not allowing him to sniff roadkill, Joe Kocks approached. He wanted to know if he could introduce his dogs to mine.

Joe said he comes to Marfa every year. He likes the weather; unlike Austin, standing in the shade here is nearly pleasant in May. "I haven't even run my air conditioner yet," he said. Joe's retired now. He brings his dogs—Belvin, Buttercup, and Bella—and stays for a month or two. He's been thinking about buying a place out here, but the prices are as bad as Austin. Marathon, the next town over from Alpine, is too small—only 400 people. And while Alpine's larger, at 6,000, it's a little... Joe didn't finish the sentence, just waved his hand. I asked if he's on social media. "Sure, but I don't use it much," he said. I felt some air go out of my theory that people only visit Marfa to brag about it.

If you ask Joe, and I did, the best thing about Marfa isn't the art; it's the food. That's if you can find any. He said Marfa's restaurant schedules take some getting used to. Some cays places are open 9 a.m. to noon, some days 1 to 5, some cays not at all. At Joe's insistence, I stopped at Marfa Burrito. I'd seen pictures of the burritos on Instagram. I wanted to make a joke about the size of one and the weight limits of paper plates. As I reached for my phone, dropping my burrito in the process, I remembered that no-posting-on-Twitter rule. No one would call me a terrorist for sharing the fallen burrito

with Woody Guthrie. Besides, you can't smell a picture. You don't get to walk in the door and inhale the spices, chiles, and fresh sausage.

Fortified, I decided it was time to visit what I assume is the crown jewel of Marfa. That meant leaving Marfa because, of course, it's not in Marfa at all. Back in the car and about 6 miles west on US 90, I passed a cluster of larger-than-life cutouts depicting the film *Giant*—Reata Ranch, a Cadillac, Elizabeth Taylor, and James Dean again. The cutouts were erected by John Cerney, an artist who creates giant murals of Americana. A giant cutout of *Giant* was inevitable.

Thirty miles later, I pulled off the road in Valentine to look at what's possibly the strangest art installation in Texas: Frada Marfa. Like I mentioned, it's not an actual Prada store. It's a permanent art installation by Elmgreen and Dragset, a duo whose witty work is cultural commentary on art and architecture. The building's stocked with a few Prada products—purses and shoes from what I could see through the glass storefront. But the door's not made for allowing customers to come in and browse. There's nothing around the store but a fence with hundreds of padlocks—"love locks"—left by visitors.

If I felt ridiculous standing out there on the highway in the middle of nowhere outside a closed Prada store that would never open, Woody Guthrie thought I was a fool. I tried to get him to pose for a couple pictures. I told him all the cool people do it. Beyoncé took a picture right here, posted it on Instagram. Do you want to be an influencer or not? But I was out of beef jerky, and he knew it. He scanned the windows for anything interesting. Seeing nothing, he made it clear the Italian haute couture was beneath him and headed back to the car.

**That night around sunset**, Woody Guthrie met his new best friends, my motel neighbors, a mother-daughter duo who assured him he was a very good boy. "Are you headed out to see the lights?" they asked us. I thought I might join them and see what all the fuss was about.

I vaguely remember people mentioning the lights. No one could tell me what they were about. I figured it was the usual folk tale—aliens or spirits. There's a viewing area near what was once an air base, about 10 miles east of Marfa. Beyond the viewing area are the grasslands of the Chihuahuan Desert.

All I know about the Marfa Lights is what I read on the historical marker. In 1883 a cowboy named Robert Ellison reported mysterious lights on the horizon. He thought the lights were Apache campfires. According to a marker, the Apache believed the lights were stars falling from the sky. Other theories: UFOs, St. Elmo's fire, ghosts, and headlights from US 67.

I found my motel neighbors, Jean Smith and her daughter Kelley Simon, already settled in on a bench. They invited me to join them. Having sniffed around plenty while I read historical markers, Woody Guthrie was happy to settle in for a nap. As we waited for the sun to set, Jean and Kelley said this was their second time trying to see the lights. They'd come out to Marfa on their last mother-daughter road trip, a yearly event, and got stuck in an ice storm. So, they were trying again. I asked them, why Marfa?

"Back in Mansfield, we're doing good to count six stars," Jean said.

"Because we haven't seen the lights yet," Kelley added.

Somehow, I think I'd forgotten how fun it is to converse with the folks right beside me. These are the situations where I'll usually pull out my phone and scroll mindlessly while I wait. Instead, we talked and traded road trip stories while we waited for the lights. Occasionally, we'd debate whether that light over by that fence post was there a minute ago. And did it move? Two lights appeared, turned into one, then turned into two again. It was weird. I couldn't explain the lights we saw, and I wasn't going to spout off ideas about headlights.

Since neither mother nor daughter pulled out a phone to so much as take a selfie, my theory that people only come to Marfa to post about Marfa was now fully deflated. I wasn't going to risk damage to another.

After a while, I realized it had been hours since I even



## MARFA, UNPLUGGED

Visit Marfa without posting about it.

### Riata Inn

This is the closest hotel to the Marfa Lights Viewing Area.

1500 E. US 90.

432-729-3800; riatainmarfa.com

### Do Your Thing Coffee

Enjoy a horchata latte from "baristas-in-residence."

201 E. Dallas St.

432-701-0501; doyourthing.us

### The Chinati Foundation

Experience Marfa pioneer Donald

Judd's artwork.

1 Cavalry Row.

432-729-4362; chinati.org

### Marfa Burrito

Anthony Bourdain was here.

515 S. Highland Ave.

325-514-8675

### Marfa Lights Viewing Area

Seeing is believing.

US 90, 9 miles east of town.

432-729-4772





**Clockwise from left:** The tortillas at Marfa Burrito are epic. Ballroom Marfa is a beacon of contemporary art. Gas station food is sometimes the only option.

thought to look at my phone. I didn't know what anyone on Twitter was arguing about. I didn't care what names I was being called by people who'd never met me. Were they as real as the Marfa Lights—only real if you stare long enough? I realized if I didn't check Twitter, I'd never know. Maybe it matters what happens online. But for a moment, it didn't matter, not to me, not to my new friends on the bench next to me, not to the coyotes singing out in the grasslands beyond the fence.

The sky was full of stars, but none of us were dressed for the cold weather. If anyone asked, we agreed, we'd say we'd seen something. And we had. Maybe. There were definitely lights. It's hard to say what ghosts or aliens are meant to look like. But if anyone asks, we saw them.

**The next morning**, I took Woody Guthrie for a hike so he'd forgive me the seven-hour drive back to Austin. Davis Mountains State Park is 25 miles outside of Marfa. The park ranger who checked my veteran card said, "Keep the dog on a leash and watch out for javelinas." I'm pretty sure she meant I should avoid javelinas. I've never seen a javelina, so every time someone tells me to watch out for them, I half wonder if they're just making stuff up. Little snuffling pig-like creatures? Sure. I'll keep an eye out.

She asked if I'd been to the park before. Nope. I said we'd come because Woody Guthrie wasn't impressed with Marfa. She said a lot of folks find their way here from there. Once you've seen the Prada store, which isn't even in Marfa, what else is there to do, especially

with a dog? She asked if I'd seen the lights, and true to my word, I said I had.

I spent the morning hiking the trails with Woody Guthrie. We didn't see any javelinas. We did see a black-tail rattlesnake and a couple scorpions, though. If you spend any time hiking in Texas, you spend most of that time looking at the ground, making sure the next step won't snap your ankle or something won't snap at your ankle. Once we reached the first crest, I looked to the sky.

It was a perfect day, just cool enough to wear jeans and a T-shirt. The wind had calmed to a breeze. And right there above me was the answer to at least one question.

I may have been wrong about the social media thing. I thought I'd miss it. I thought it would drive me crazy not knowing what was happening in the world, not having anyone to talk to, not engaging some unhinged response to *Hey, look at this picture of my dog refusing to pose in front of the Prada store*. Instead, I wondered how much I'd missed during all that time I spent looking at my phone. Maybe you can't choose happiness. But sometimes you can choose what to look at.

I bet those people who insist you go to Marfa hope you'll figure it out on your own, that sometimes you have to look up at the stars or out at the lights and talk with the folks right next to you. 🐾



MAKE A MOVE AT TEXAS' TRAIL AND ROAD RACES

BY JENNIFER STEWART

# THE LONG RUN



## I LIVE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF MY FAVORITE

trail in Houston, where I'd once spent hours running personal bests. But by summer 2021, the only time I saw that trail was if I drove past it. Running had previously accompanied me on all my adult life's ups and downs, but the pandemic proved to be the ultimate low, bringing my weekly mileage to zero. My Asics sat untouched while I tried—and failed—to wrap my mind around the world's many new normals. I'd never ingested so much central air conditioning. Every day that I opted to watch TV from the couch or hit the snooze button made me feel as if my vitality was slipping away like sand through my chunky fingers. As the world began to open back up, my doctor had a health talk with me for the first time in my life. My cholesterol, blood pressure, and weight were all elevated. I needed something to hold on to, to get me moving again.

"It's not always about running a lot of miles," my mom said while visiting me later that summer. At the time I was exceptionally listless, lamenting my pre-pandemic running life, throwing myself a sedentary pity party. "Sometimes you just have to get up and go for a walk." Though my mom is physically active, she is not a runner. Still, she could see I was hung up on the runner I thought I should be instead of seeing the beauty in simply moving my body outdoors.

"Put your shoes on," she said. "Let's go."

That walk became the first of many. Though I'd run around my Houston trail a thousand times, it wasn't until I walked it that I noticed the purple agapanthus, the clouds growing higher and higher before a summer storm, the line of Southwest Airlines jets making their final descents into Hobby Airport. And to my surprise, it was only when I started regularly walking that running eased back into my life. I wondered what else running could offer me.

Thousands of races take place every year across the state. From scenic marathons in El Paso to community 5Ks in Orange, there's a race for every skill level in just about every region. This leisure sport is inherently socially distanced and mostly outdoors, so it's no surprise the pandemic ushered in a bevy of new runners. Of the almost 4,000 runners surveyed by RunRepeat, a running shoe website, 29% started running during the pandemic.

Since running has always been my primary way of staying healthy, I have decades of experience being one of the few Black runners at road races. Only 3% of American runners are Black, according to the 2020 National Runner Survey conducted by Running USA, a nonprofit that promotes the running industry. It seemed like there was no better time to head off to the races, both to improve my health and to be the change

in running diversity I wish to see. So, I set out to take on the Tyler Azalea Run, a road run in Tyler, and the Wild Canyon Ultra, a trail run in Quitaque, to experience the variety in Texas' competitive running world.

## IN MARCH, I JOIN THE HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE

making their way to the starting line of the Tyler Azalea Run, which has been held since 1984. The famous Japanese maples, redbuds, and dogwoods are not yet in bloom—visitors flock to the trail from late March through April to view the vibrant flowers—but the rolling hills and majestic pine trees provide abundant natural beauty for this 10-kilometer race. Bergfeld Park is flanked by booths with coffee, water, bananas, and finisher medals. Runners hug their partners and soak in their family members' final well wishes.

The race day chaplain asks us to bow our heads for a moment of prayer, and I oblige, as I'll need all the spiritual interventions available to finish. It's been almost 20 years since I lined up for my first road race as a college student in Lubbock, over 10 years since I logged daily miles on the Katy Trail while working in Dallas, and exactly 10 years since my brief stint as an Austinite trying to adjust to the crowded hike-and-bike trail around Lady Bird Lake. This is my first road race since the pandemic. I am nervous.

The familiar smell of race day bananas swirls through the air as I fidget with my playlist to make sure my favorite Foo Fighters album, *There Is Nothing Left to Lose*, is selected. The announcer yells "Go!" into the microphone, and we're off. Before Dave Grohl's extra layer of guitars comes in on "Stacked Actors," I'm faced with a sight foreign to Houstonian eyes: a hill. Why did I think this was a good idea?

During the first half of the Tyler race, my pace is inconsistent and my breath belabored, but I'm out here, and I'm certain I could not have run Tyler's tree-lined streets and red brick roads if I hadn't rebuilt with walking. After a satisfying eye roll, I dig into my physical, mental, and emotional reserves, and before I know it, I cross the finish line. Victorious and looking down at my fuchsia-and-yellow azalea-adorned finisher's medal, I know what I need to conquer next.

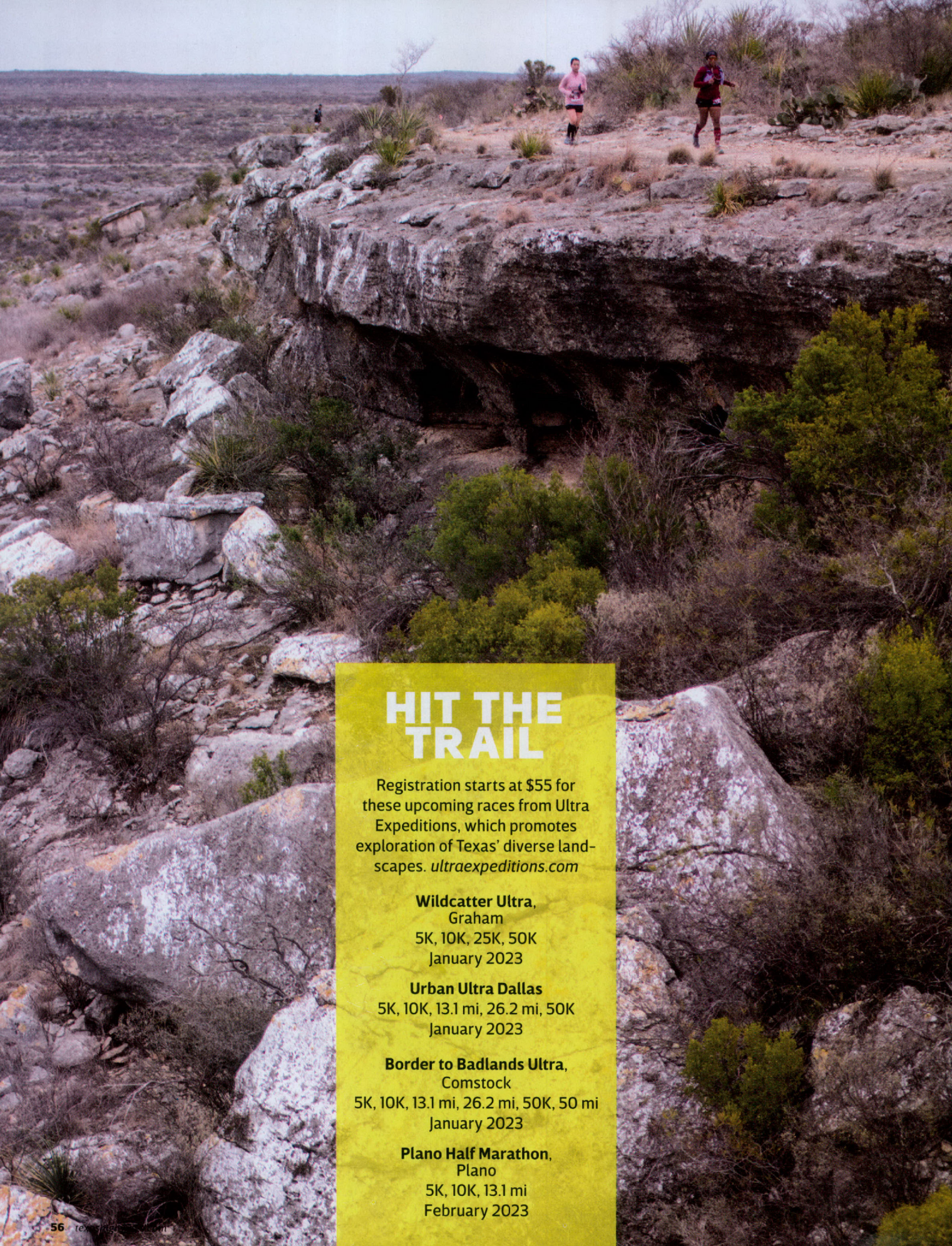
### OPENING SPREAD:

Runners take on the Wild Canyon Ultra at Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway.

### CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Dogs are welcome at the Tyler Azalea Run; All ages participate; The trail features bountiful blooms; Groups, families, and individual runners take on the trail; writer Jennifer Stewart





# HIT THE TRAIL

Registration starts at \$55 for these upcoming races from Ultra Expeditions, which promotes exploration of Texas' diverse landscapes. [ultraexpeditions.com](http://ultraexpeditions.com)

**Wildcatter Ultra,**  
Graham

5K, 10K, 25K, 50K  
January 2023

**Urban Ultra Dallas**

5K, 10K, 13.1 mi, 26.2 mi, 50K  
January 2023

**Border to Badlands Ultra,**  
Comstock

5K, 10K, 13.1 mi, 26.2 mi, 50K, 50 mi  
January 2023

**Plano Half Marathon,**  
Plano

5K, 10K, 13.1 mi  
February 2023

## ROAD RUNNING HAS BEEN THE DOMINANT FORM

of running in the U.S. since the mid-20th century. But most of the runners were men. The path hasn't been nearly as smooth for women, according to *Let's Get Physical: How Women Discovered Exercise and Reshaped the World* by Danielle Friedman. Overt sexism made it nearly impossible for women to run and compete in road races. Until the 1960s, women were largely excluded from long-distance running competitions because of the belief by some that women were weaker than men. They were also catcalled, followed, and attacked. In 1967, Kathrine Switzer became the first woman to officially finish the Boston Marathon, only after the race director, who was enraged that a woman was competing, clawed at her in an attempt to remove her race number. Friedman writes: "Every woman who dared to run in public before the 1970s deserves credit for opening doors for women to move freely and fully; to experience the profound sense of physical autonomy that comes from propelling yourself forward using only your muscle and will."

Trail running shares road running's dismal gender history and has increased in popularity—and accessibility—at a slower pace. Instead of running on paved pathways and participating in races that require traffic closures, trail runs follow paths through forests, canyons, and other rugged natural environments. The terrain is different, and so is the culture. America's history of racism means Black and brown people today experience wilderness differently and less often than white people. Segregation prevented Black Americans from visiting some national park sites until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and today, 77 percent of national park visitors are white. Black people and people of color have to consider our own safety and agency in outdoor spaces, where our skin color, for generations, has precluded us from enjoying the outdoors.

Road racing's history isn't any better. While Black men in the 1870s competed in pedestrianism, a multiday running and walking competition that served as an origin point for modern-day racing, it would take another 100 years before

## TRAIL RUNS HAPPEN OFF THE BEATEN PATH IN FORESTS, CANYONS, AND OTHER RUGGED NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS. THE TERRAIN IS DIFFERENT, AND SO IS THE CULTURE.

women of any race were allowed to compete in long-distance running events. I was one of only a few Black runners at the Tyler Azalea Run, as I am at most races. Perhaps these uncomfortable realities, coupled with my fear of snakes, were at the root of my apprehension when Jason Gates, co-founder of the trail-running organization Ultra Expeditions, suggested I try trail running.

"Why don't you come out to our Wild Canyon race?" Jason asked over the phone after my Azalea Run. "You get to see some amazing canyons and run with the Texas State Bison Herd." I looked around for whom Jason might be talking to because surely he wasn't talking to me, a born-and-bred city girl. I thought of Diana Patterson, a runner in the Tyler race who balked at the idea that trail running is the ultimate running experience. "Even if you're running on a road in the neighborhood, you're still outside and enjoying it," she told me. I had grounded myself in this reality, but Jason offered a different perspective.

"The beauty of trail running is it's different from road running," Jason said. "With road running, there's a lot more ego involved. It's about time; everybody's looking at their watch." He may have a point. Despite the unexpected rolling hills in Tyler, I was still trying to achieve every road runner's holy grail—the negative split. For the uninitiated, that means running the first half of a race slower than the second half for optimal energy use. Jason continued extolling trail running's comparative virtues: "I'll look over there and [a friend] will be camped out in his chair in between loops, eating pizza because it's so laid-back."

The thought of eating pizza during a race scandalized me just as much as finding out some kids had cable TV back in elementary school. So, you just ... stop? During the race? Yes, according to Marisa LaRue Rogers, senior race director for Ultra Expeditions. "Just stop and take the photo," she frequently tells trail runners. "What will it matter if you take an extra three to five minutes versus having that memory forever? Take your time."

After subsequent, and maybe excessive, "my first trail run" Google searches, I ordered the prettiest trail running shoes I

### OPPOSITE PAGE:

The rugged landscape is an added challenge at the Border to Badlands Ultra held at Seminole Canyon State Park & Historic Site.

could find in my size. Taking a long deep breath, I signed up for the Wild Canyon Ultra, held in April at Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway.

**“WHEN THE SUN COMES UP, THE ROCKS GLOW.”**

I hear a parking attendant announce as he directs cars of energized runners into their red dirt parking spots before dawn on race day. Everyone is enthusiastic, which seems rather inappropriate given that many of these runners will take on the 100K, which is 95K more than what I've signed up for. The canyons line the horizon like the most splendid Bob Ross oil painting come to life. The arresting West Texas sky hosts a few meandering clouds, and the infamous South Plains winds are mercifully light. The race director yells, “Go!” and we're off.

Less than a quarter of a mile into the race, before I can mockingly think to myself, *Just take the photo*, a dozen runners stop at a picturesque point to snap a picture. The race clock ticks on, but I get swept up in the excitement. I'm taking people's photos, and they're taking photos of me. We also join each other's photos—smiling Texans as souvenirs.

I run on, shocked that my body instinctively navigates the desert hills and dips and nooks and crannies. I'm settling into the sound of my own breath against the whistling wind when my thoughts are broken by talking.

“This is my first race, y'all!” announces one runner.

“Oh, my God, mine too!” says another.

Much like the photo-op, I was dubious when Marisa had warned me about this part of trail running culture. “Every time people run one of our races, they say they've never been cheered on by other people they're competing against,” she told me. Runners who had already reached the turnaround point encouraged me to keep going. I'd never witnessed this in a road race. Elite runners in Quitaque were kind in the same manner as the spectators in Tyler, where, toward the end of my run, I was contemplating a dreaded DNF (did not finish). That's when an older man wearing a straw hat yelled out from his porch, “You can do it, girl!” He helped me push through.

He was right. Jason was right. And, as usual, my mom was right. Whether zig-zagging up a rugged hill against the calming sounds of a quiet desert or heel-toeing it on East Texas pavement to the sounds of Dave Grohl shredding on guitar, I had such a good time. And I could only have a good time because I finally accepted that running at the top of my fitness is just as great as jogging, which is also just as meaningful as walking. By letting go of rigid definitions of fitness for a pre-pandemic version of myself that isn't coming back, I experienced the joy in moving on. 🐾



**CLOCKWISE  
FROM TOP LEFT:**  
The Wild Canyon Ultra;  
Stewart learns to “just take  
the picture;” All ages are  
eligible to run; Seminole  
Canyon is the backdrop of  
the Border to Badlands Ultra;  
lacing up for a trail run.



## ON THE ROAD

Run the streets at these upcoming road races.

### **Buffalo Wallow Races,** Lubbock

13.1 mi, 6.6 mi, 2 mi  
November 2022

Registration starts at \$20  
[wtrunning.com](http://wtrunning.com)

### **Conroe 10-Miler,** Conroe

10 mi, 5 mi, 5K  
December 2022  
Registration starts at \$60  
[texas10series.com](http://texas10series.com)

### **Rockin' Resolution Race,** Austin

13.1 mi, 5K  
January 2023  
Registration starts at \$40  
[usafitrrrace.com](http://usafitrrrace.com)



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**#EndTheStreakTX**

End the streak of daily deaths on Texas roadways.



# PLATES



**AT THE  
NICOLETT** in  
Lubbock, the  
local bread and  
butter pickles.

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# High Plains Haute

A foodie oasis emerges in Lubbock

By Rebecca Deurlein

Clockwise from left: The Nicolett courtyard; Chef Finn Walter; patrons at the bar; the beef tongue.

**W**hile Lubbock is known for being flat and dry, The Nicolett has risen out of the High Plains and is staking a claim to destination dining.

Co-owner Finn Walter, a 2022 James Beard semi-finalist for Best Chef: Texas, hopes to bring visitors back to a rejuvenated arts-centric area that is transforming downtown Lubbock. The Nicolett is his opportunity to show everyone that his hometown is no longer stuck in the past. “I think Lubbock is embracing a lot of things it used to chase away,” Walter says. “There’s a new appreciation for elevated food and servings that are more French-size than heaping American dishes.”

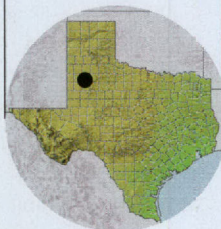
Traditionally, Lubbock has been known for just that—large portions of standard, down-home comfort food. It was a risky move to turn the tables on these

expectations, but Walter feels he understands his clientele.

Everything about The Nicolett, from its design to its food, is a blend of old-school Texas hospitality and contemporary, inventive cuisine. The red-brick restaurant, a former single-family home, is named after the city’s first hotel. Step through the heavy wood-and-iron doors and you’re greeted by an open-concept space interrupted only by a massive stone fireplace that reaches up to an exposed-ductwork ceiling. Light peeks in from clerestory windows up high, and outside a greenhouse resembling a chapel glows in the night.

“I wanted to create a place that feels like it’s always been here and at the same time, makes people feel that is something they’re

**THE NICOLETT**  
511 Broadway St.,  
Lubbock,  
Tue-Fri 4 p.m.-9 p.m.,  
Sat 5 p.m.-9 p.m.,  
Sun 10 a.m.-2 p.m.,  
806-993-0144;  
thenicolett.com



**“Lubbock is embracing what it used to chase away. There’s a new appreciation for elevated food that is more French-size than heaping American dishes.”**

discovering for the first time,” Walter says.

Walter’s mission is to stay true to the Lubbock terroir and his favorite childhood flavor memories, while introducing adventurous foods prepared with techniques he honed while coming up in the restaurant world. That includes gigs at L’Epi Dupin and Le Bistral in Paris, The Restaurant at Meadowood in Napa Valley, and The Driskill in Austin. Once he established himself as a chef, Walter earned his MBA from Texas Tech in 2018. With the help of his wife and business partner, Arden Ward, he then opened The Nicolett in the fall of 2020.

The restaurant’s most popular dish is beef cheek brisket with a truffle jus, topped with shaved Australian winter truffle. It is served with creamy potatoes that require no gravy and Japanese pickles that imitate an earthy root vegetable, crunchy with just a hint of salt. “That dish embodies what I’m trying to do here—marry West Texas cooking with French cuisine,” Walter says.

The elk tartare bursts with intense aroma and flavor and is enhanced by local shallot, sprinkles of chive, and a hint of peanut. The oxtail ravioli—The Nicolett’s creation—is presented in a shallow bowl and looks like a sunny-side-up egg yolk nestled in butter sauce. The oxtail is sourced locally from Midland Meat Company, then braised in rosé with lime zest and lavender.



The Nicolett’s menu has continued to evolve since the restaurant’s opening. Though the dining scene is only now beginning to return to pre-pandemic normalcy, Walter used The Nicolett’s first few months as an extended soft opening, experimenting with dishes and soliciting feedback from diners. In summer 2022, he continued to experiment by hosting a pop-up in the restaurant’s courtyard introducing new non-alcoholic cocktails to guests.

In what has traditionally been a hard-drinking town, some 80 people showed up to sample drinks and appetizers. “We didn’t know how Lubbock would respond, but our pop-up was so successful,” says head bartender Caitlinn Mier. “We created a full menu of non-alcoholic cocktails to complement our already popular traditional cocktails. Younger people in their 20s and 30s are especially interested.” Mier believes an increased emphasis on health and a desire to drink whatever you want without feeling excluded are behind the sober-curious trend.



The alcohol-free cocktails at The Nicolett are their own works of art. The I Love Yuzu, made with Ghia, which is a non-alcoholic aperitif, is at once tangy, sour, and fizzy. The Garden Gimlet is floral and fragrant, with distinct notes of sage. And the 74 Sour is a smoother substitute to bourbon, tart-sweet with

DASH TO

# SAN ANGELO

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

DEC. 2ND - 31  
CONCHO CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

DECEMBER 2 - 4  
CHRISTMAS AT OLD FORT CONCHO

DECEMBER 10  
SANTA'S SANTA FE CHRISTMAS

f i t p in v @DISCOVERSANANGELO

DISCOVER SAN ANGELO



Two of The Nicolett's non-alcoholic cocktails, the I Love Yuzu and an old-fashioned.

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# STATE FAIR

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARTHUR GRACE

Through Nov. 26, 2022

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egg white foam and garnished with a lemon slice and Luxardo cherry.

As another testament to what Walter has created, he received an award recognizing his excellence in entrepreneurship from Texas Tech in September. Dean Margaret L. Williams showed up personally to deliver the news with tears in her eyes. “One of the reasons this meant so much to me is because I could see that it meant so much to him,” she says. “His ability to transport his vision for a fine dining experience—which has been honed at some of the finest restaurants in the world—to Lubbock is, I’m sure, a daily challenge, and I felt that this recognition came at an important time in that journey.”

Indeed, Walter is transforming the way Lubbock sees food. His favorite dish on the menu is beef tongue, and he’s put a lot of thought into it. He’s turned Parker House rolls into Russian-style mead, which he uses to brine the tongue. He then confits it in duck fat for 48 hours and gives it a light sear on the outside. “It has the texture of a fillet, but the mead adds a nice nuance,” he explains. “The whole dish encompasses High Plains cuisine. Let’s face it, beef tongue wouldn’t be a hit in Austin or Dallas, but here, it works.”

# Top Chef

The first James Beard Award winner for best chef in Texas brings flavors of home to Austin

By Marisa Charpentier

**A**t El Naranjo—a bright and lively space at the bottom of an apartment complex in South Austin—diners sip on margaritas with fresh-squeezed lime juice on the rim. Tacos and queso grace the menu, and tortilla chips make their way to tables before the main course. But as owner and head chef Iliana de la Vega will tell you: This isn't just another Tex-Mex establishment.

Ask any of the servers, each of whom is extensively trained on the origins of the dishes, and you'll quickly learn the dinner restaurant exclusively serves traditional Mexican cuisine. Since 2012, El Naranjo has been offering dishes inspired by foods from de la Vega's childhood and her professional career. "Mexico City is kind of the mecca for all things in Mexico," she says. "Everything converges there."

Her dedication to tradition has not gone unnoticed. In June, de la Vega earned a James Beard Award for the first-ever Best Chef: Texas category. In the food world, that's like winning a Grammy or an Oscar, though de la Vega says accolades have never been her motivation. The restaurant is known for its homemade corn tortillas and traditional moles—sauces which are served with meat or vegetables. The most popular is the mole negro. It's made with more than 30 ingredients, including chile chilhuacle negro, almonds, peanuts, and Oaxacan-style chocolate, and served with seared duck breast or grilled seasonal vegetables. "We're interior-style Mexican," restaurant manager Dustin Blamey says.



Mexico-born chef Iliana de la Vega at El Naranjo in Austin.

**EL NARANJO**  
2717 S. Lamar Blvd., Suite 1085, Austin.  
Open Tue–Thu 5–9 p.m.,  
Fri–Sat 5–10 p.m.,  
Sun 11 a.m.–2 p.m.,  
512-520-5750;  
elnaranjorestaurant.com



Other popular dishes are the empanadas—a fried turnover filled with queso and *huitlacoçcine*, a mushroom-like substance that grows on corn—and the *Pastel Azteca*, layered corn tortillas filled with spinach, almonds, raisins, and goat cheese and covered with a tomato chipotle sauce. Diners can try something new each time they visit, as de la Vega is always changing up the menu and adding new items.

Growing up in Mexico City, de la Vega loved spending time cooking with her Oaxacan mother. While her mother cooked, her father loved to eat. He enjoyed traveling Mexico, trying different foods, and de la Vega and her family often accompanied him. "From a hole in the wall to the most fancy restaurants, we went all around," she says. All the while, she wondered what was going on in the kitchens. "There is something magical behind the



From left: The ceviche de la semana, or the selection of weekly ceviche; La Llorona cocktail, made with mezcal and hibiscus tea.

scenes, and I wanted to be a part of that.”

De la Vega eventually started her own business out of her home in Mexico City, selling food and teaching people how to cook. Then, she and her husband, Ernesto Torrealba, moved to Oaxaca and opened a restaurant in 1997. The couple found a colonial house in Oaxaca and converted it into a restaurant. Inside there was a courtyard with an orange tree growing in the middle. They decided to call the place El Naranjo—The Orange Tree.

She and Torrealba put all their money and efforts into El Naranjo, which served traditional Mexican food. The restaurant was a success, even gracing the cover of *Bon Appétit* magazine in 2003. “We thought we had the perfect life,” she says.

But then, in 2006, Oaxaca became embroiled in social turmoil. The local economy collapsed. Customers stopped showing up. “It went from being very successful to nothing,” de la Vega says. A few months later, they had to close the restaurant.

By 2007, de la Vega and her husband were living in the U.S. when she got an offer to teach at the Culinary Institute of America in San Antonio. There she was asked to create the school’s Latin cuisine program and serve as its Mexican cuisine specialist.

It took several years for the couple to save enough to start another restaurant. But by 2012, they were ready. Along with a partner, they opened a new El Naranjo

**“There is something magical behind the scenes, and I wanted to be a part of that.”**

on Austin’s historic Rainey Street. At the time, the street was mostly populated with small houses, some of which had been transformed into bars. “It was beautiful, and it was very exciting to own a restaurant again,” de la Vega says. “Our dreams came true.”

Over time, though, the area continued to develop. High-rises went up, parking disappeared, more bars moved in, and fewer locals came by. When a restaurant space on South Lamar became available in 2019, de la Vega and Torrealba decided to leave the Rainey Street partner and open El Naranjo on their own. But not long after opening, COVID-19 forced them to close for a few months, and they had to adapt to operating a restaurant amid a pandemic.

Despite these hurdles, El Naranjo is going strong and has continued to garner acclaim. Blamey, the manager, says what’s made the restaurant so successful is that de la Vega stays true to the type of food she wants to offer. “She didn’t cut corners,” he says. “She waited until the market was ready for what she had, and it really has paid off.”

El Naranjo has long been ahead of the game, especially when it comes to making its own corn tortillas. When de la Vega moved to the U.S., she wasn’t impressed by the tortillas available. They had preservatives, and she found them too sweet. She started researching nixtamalization—a traditional process of cooking, drying, and grinding corn into a dough called masa used to make tortillas, or other corn-based items like tamales. De la Vega learned the complex technique during her time in Mexico, eventually implementing it at El Naranjo.

Nixtamalization has become more popular at Mexican restaurants in Texas in recent years. But that wasn’t the case

when El Naranjo began in Austin. “Basically [no chefs or restaurants] were making it this way,” de la Vega says. “They’d say, ‘We’re making our own tortillas, but, you know, from a bag.’ We were doing the whole process. Now, everybody’s doing it.”

When she’s not managing the restaurant, de la Vega is busy as a culinary consultant for universities such as Stanford and the University of Massachusetts. She also leads culinary tours in Mexico with her daughter through their business, Mexican Culinary Traditions. All of this helps de la Vega further her goal of bringing Mexican cuisine and culture to people around the world.

On any given day, that’s what takes place in El Naranjo. Locals and visitors come in and try something new, or connect with a dish that reminds them of home, hundreds of miles away. Over the last few months, new customers have flocked to the restaurant following news of the James Beard award. If you plan on going, it would be prudent to make a reservation.

The recognition and increased traffic have been nice, de la Vega says, especially after so many stops and starts over the last two decades. At the end of the day, she says, it’s more than a title. “It means I’m in a community that loves what I do.” 🍷



## Best of the Best

This year, an impressive 38 restaurants and chefs from around Texas made it to the James Beard Awards semifinals, though only three were recognized as award honorees. Along with El Naranjo, visit these other 2022 Texas finalists.

### Emerging Chef, Edgar Rico

Tucked away in East Austin, Nixta Taqueria has made a name for itself with its homemade blue corn tortillas. Since opening in 2019, chef and founder Edgar Rico has used nixtamalization—a traditional way to prepare maize—to make his tortillas.

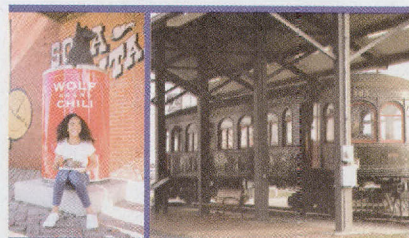
Items on the menu range from tuna tostadas and duck carnitas to green bean tacos.

*Nixta Taqueria, Austin*  
[nixtataqueria.com](http://nixtataqueria.com)

### Outstanding Bar Program, Julep

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# TEXANA

## The Emancipation Trail

Advocates remember the post-Civil War migration of freed slaves with a proposed historic trail

By Brooke A. Lewis



**NAOMI CARRIER**

founded the Emancipation Historic Trail Association to study the trail's route and advocate for its designation.

**T**he Benson cabin is showing its age. Thought to be one of Galveston County's oldest existing structures at over 170 years old, the dogtrot cabin's wood is peeling off in places, and unruly green shrubbery is overtaking its base. Inside, a decrepit stovetop lies on the floor near a brick fireplace.

The cabin was built in 1844 by Herman Benson, a German immigrant who bought 484 acres along Dickinson Bayou, according to the *Bay Area Genealogical Society Journal*. Though the cabin, still on private land, has fallen into disrepair, members of the Emancipation Historic Trail Association hope to preserve the site as part of their effort to create the Emancipation National Historic Trail. The proposed 51-mile trail would honor the migration of freed slaves and other African Americans from Galveston to Houston after the Civil War.

Studying 19th-century maps to piece together a possible route, volunteers Brady Mora and Naomi Carrier noted places where the travelers may have stopped for water, including Benson's well or cistern. "They were ordinary people doing extraordinary things," Mora says. "They are unheard of, these Americans. The creation of the national historic trail is a just cause. It's not for us; it's for the generations that come after us. They need to know the truth."

The proposed trail starts in Galveston at the Osterman Building and Reedy Chapel, where Major General Gordon Granger announced the federal order freeing slaves on June 19, 1865—a date now celebrated as Juneteenth. From Galveston, the trail extends to Houston's Fourth Ward, where emancipated slaves settled during Reconstruction and built an enclave known as Freedmen's Town. Advocates say the trail will bring to life the stories of enslaved people in Texas, many of whom didn't learn of their freedom until Granger's announcement, two years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

It was a daunting trek for former slaves with few resources to make their

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## Trail Markers

The National Park Service provides information about its Emancipation National Historic Trail feasibility study and opportunities for public comment on its website, [parkplanning.nps.gov](http://parkplanning.nps.gov). Some sites on the proposed trail are open to the public and have exhibits exploring African American history.

**Reedy Chapel**, Galveston: Established in 1848 for slaves, this was the first African Methodist Episcopal Church in Texas. [reedychapel.com](http://reedychapel.com)

**The Bell Home**, Texas City: The dogtrot-style house is part of the 1867 Settlement Historic District, the only Reconstruction-era Black settlement in Galveston County. [texascitytx.gov/459](http://texascitytx.gov/459)

**Rutherford B.H. Yates Museum**, Houston: Located within Freedmen's Town National Historic District in the Fourth Ward, this house museum preserves the history of a Houston community formed by freed slaves starting in 1866. [facebook.com/yatesmuseums](http://facebook.com/yatesmuseums)

**Emancipation Park**, Houston: Founded in 1872 by Houston's Black community to celebrate Juneteenth, the park now covers 10 acres in the Third Ward. [epconservancy.org](http://epconservancy.org)

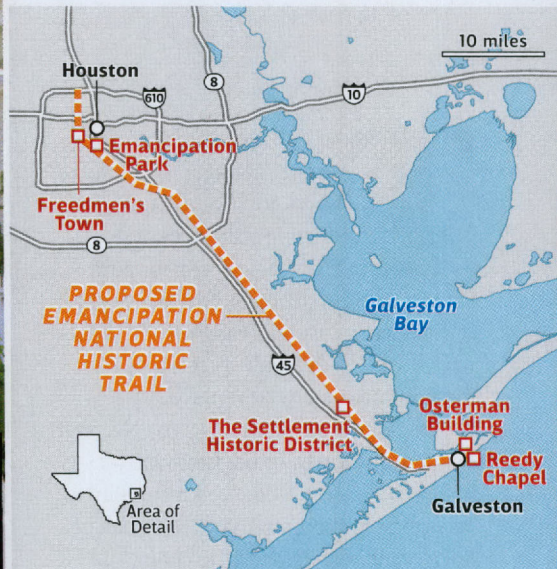
Lue A. Williams, a docent for Freedmen's Town Museums, and Debra Blacklock-Sloan, director of historical research for Freedmen's Town Museums, at the Rutherford B.H. Yates Museum in Houston

way across Texas, which had been part of the Confederacy, in search of safety and opportunity after the Civil War. As the war ended, political, social, and economic turmoil roiled the state. Carrier, the founder and CEO of Texas Center for African American Living History, has studied Black history for decades, including slavery in Texas, which led her to look into the Emancipation Trail.

"My images are the faces of a Black family in a cotton field and the faces of a Black family today outside their two-story home," she says. "A lot of activism had to take place. A lot of people died in order for the faces of African Americans to look like they look today."

If the Emancipation Trail meets federal eligibility and is approved by Congress, it would be only the second national historic trail honoring African Americans. The Selma to Montgomery trail marks the route of the 1965 Voting Rights March that Martin Luther King Jr. led to the steps of the Alabama Capitol. The National Park Service's 18 other historic trails cover such topics as the Lewis and Clark expedition and the Trail of Tears.

Texas is currently home to two national historic trails. The El Camino Real de los Tejas trail runs from the southwestern border to Natchitoches, Louisiana, and



recalls Spanish colonization of Texas and northwest Louisiana. The El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro trail starts on the border in the El Paso area and runs to Santa Fe, New Mexico. It also covers the legacy of Spanish exploration, trade, and colonization.

In 2019, U.S. Sen. John Cornyn and U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, both of Texas, introduced the Emancipation National Historic Trail Study Act, which started a Park Service feasibility study of the proposed trail and its historical significance. The study's findings, expected by the end of 2023, will be shared with Congress, which could then designate it a national historic trail. That would allow for a management plan and marking historical sites as permitted by private landowners.

In the last year, Carrier and Mora have worked to create a layout of the route freed slaves may have taken after leaving Galveston, which was a major seaport in the 1860s. They linked historical sites, creeks and bayous, and old settlements. In Galveston, the Osterman Building is gone, but a historical marker on Strand Street notes the site's significance. The adjacent *Absolute Equality* mural on the Old Galveston Square building commemorates Juneteenth. Nearby, Reedy Chapel, the first African Methodist Episcopal Church in Texas, traces its congregation's founding to 1848.

From Galveston, the trail travels across Dickinson Bayou at Benson's cabin and

then to Friendswood across Chigger Creek and Cowart Creek among others. In Texas City, the trail includes the Bell Home, a dogtrot cabin built by Frank and Flavilla Bell in 1887. Now a museum, the home is part of the 1867 Settlement Historic District, which was the only Reconstruction-era Black community in Galveston County.

As it winds its way into Houston, the trail includes stops at Freedmen's Town, where starting in 1866, freed slaves formed their own community, building shanties as houses; and Independence Heights, in northwest Houston, which became the first African American municipality in Texas upon its 1915 incorporation. In Houston's Third Ward, Emancipation Park dates to 1872, when Black community leaders raised \$1,000 to buy 10 acres for a place to celebrate Juneteenth.

Carrier first got involved with the Emancipation Trail's creation when she began to do research for Jackson Lee's office. Carrier flew to Alabama, drove the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, and met with people who worked on the trail. She said she was impressed by the museums along the route commemorating King's march. She'd like to see something similar developed along the Emancipation Trail.

Jill Jensen, the National Park Service's project manager for the Emancipation Trail feasibility study, says the study is looking for oral histories, written accounts, photographs, and other resources to try to verify when people traveled across the trail and how their movement impacted the nation—two key requirements of a national historic trail designation.

Jensen sites the California Trail as a good example. "You had people physically moving along this path, going to the West, which completely changed the politics and dynamics of the entire country," she says. "Selma to Montgomery is another really great example. It was the actual movement of their bodies along that path that triggered amazing nationwide change."

Carrier, Mora, and others have been combing through slave narratives, as well as estate, church, land, cemetery, and military records to help paint a historical picture of the Emancipation Trail. But the lives of many freed slaves who made the journey remain a mystery. "That's the problem with the freed men," Mora says. "They had names, but we don't know [their stories]. Some made it to Houston. Some didn't make it."

Public input is also key to the creation of a national historic trail. The Park Service hosted three virtual meetings earlier this year to gather information from people who live in the area of the trail or have stories of people migrating from Galveston to Houston. The Emancipation National Historic Trail Association also conducted an online survey about the feasibility study, yielding 115 comments and 25 letters of support.

"Most people said they had never heard of it," Carrier says. "Most people also said they thought that it was needed because of the stories that it would tell. They thought it was relevant because it would stimulate the economy in areas where tourism is needed."

Within the Freedmen's Town National Historic District, the Rutherford B.H. Yates Museum preserves a three-bedroom 1912 home. The museum's historical research director, Debra Blacklock-Sloan, has been studying historical records to identify African Americans who migrated to Houston from Galveston after emancipation. She's also calling on others to bring their family stories forward to deepen the history of the Emancipation Trail.

"Sometimes we're reluctant to talk about the past because it's shameful, but it's a healing process," Blacklock-Sloan says. "Our ancestors were enslaved for so many centuries, and then they're able to just say, 'OK, I'm going to go ahead and make a life for myself and for my family, and I want to be part of the American way.' They did this against all odds, against the outrages of white Southerners who didn't want to see Black folks better themselves. It is important to have this trail, to educate, and to remember." 🐾



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continued from Page 19

grandmother's ashes being put into the earth. My grandparents couldn't attend the wedding, but now here we all were. Afterward, our entire extended family got into our cars, drove past the congregation of pines tormenting the skyline and the 18-wheelers lumbering through town with piles of denuded tree trunks, and returned to the house with my grandfather to help and heal.

It was June 24.

My cousins and I tossed a football around in the backyard, sweating away the heat and humidity. My sister held her infant daughter, just weeks old. Then she handed her to my grandfather while she and my mother stood beside him on the back porch, all three adults smiling. I have the photo of this moment in my phone. Four months later I returned to Marshall to bury my grandfather, and when I look at that photo now, of four generations, I see the place that has been lost fading behind the people who must keep going.

My grandparents' death has always been hard for me because of the outsized role they played in my life. But for a long time, I also mourned the collateral losses. Regardless of where different members of my extended family lived as years passed, we always came back to the house in Marshall, our North Star. One after the other, crossing like ships during our separate visits and mooring together when the timing aligned. No more.

I could hold on to Marshall's echoes; I could capture those echoes to retell its stories. But Marshall's echoes could only ever be echoes. The tighter I held onto them, the more they strangled my future.

I lost Marshall in the summer of 2017, but I had yet to let it go.

**When I returned** to Marshall this summer, five years to the day after my grandmother's funeral, I was a father.

Holding my 13-month-old daughter, I stood at the edge of my grandparents' plot in the perennial shade of a water oak tree. It was 94 degrees with 41% humidity, and we could hear the bells

from St. Joseph Catholic Church almost a mile away. I held our daughter with my left arm, her sharp fingernails imprinting tiny moons on my triceps.

"That's St. Francis," I said, pointing to the concrete statue at the head of my grandparents' granite marker.

My grandparents chose St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, for their love of birds. St. Francis stood with his arms out, a bowl in each arm. In one of the bowls was a rock left by one of my uncles. The other was empty.

## We always came back to the house in Marshall, our North Star. One after the other, crossing like ships during our separate visits and mooring together when the timing aligned.

I asked my wife if we had anything to leave. She went back to our car and fished a seashell out of the glove compartment that she'd collected years ago at a California beach. She then sifted through the dash compartment.

"Oh look," she said, then laughed. "And we have her umbilical cord."

After our daughter was born and the nurse clamped her umbilical cord, we noticed one day it had fallen off in her car seat. I put it in the cup holder, then forgot about it. Seven months passed, and we decided to leave our decade-long life behind in Missouri and move to Denver. While packing up our house, I remembered the umbilical cord and had this idea to bury it behind the dogwood tree in our backyard as a token of our daughter's first home. I searched in and around the cup holder and even under the floor mats but couldn't find it. I thought it was lost.

"Seriously?" my wife said when I took both the seashell and umbilical cord and

told her my plan.

"Of course," I said.

The seashell I put in the empty cup of the St. Francis statue. The umbilical cord I buried at the edge of my grandparents' marker.


After a bit, the three of us returned to the car and the air conditioning. I had finished buckling our daughter into her car seat when my wife held up her phone.

It dawned on us: It was the day of my grandmother's funeral, the day we gave a piece of our daughter to Marshall, and the day the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

Of a different century and devoutly Catholic, my grandparents and I stood far apart on that issue, on many issues, regardless of how deep our love ran. And then there was our daughter, forced to now cross over into a world different from the one she was born into.

I traveled back to Marshall last summer expecting to experience longing and grief. Instead, listening to our daughter begin to fuss, I experienced something apart from that city and aside from that burden. Something like hope.

There's this pervasive sense of looking back that I feel in Marshall. The unnamed Confederate soldier statue still standing outside the courthouse as cities from Richmond to Indianapolis to Houston remove or relocate their own similar symbols. The billboard at the intersection of US 80 and US 43/59 proclaims Marshall's city slogan: "The Past Is Present."

They're all just echoes. As I listened to our daughter cry while we drove away from my grandparents' grave, I realized I could let go. Let go of a past that isn't a present. Let go of a place that's no longer mine. My grandparents shared their lives and their home, showing me the many temperatures of love and the intention it takes to see love through. Now I can let go and carry that intention forward while I hold onto my future: my daughter learning to walk, her wobbly legs still gaining purchase, and inhabit the silence that allows her to speak. 

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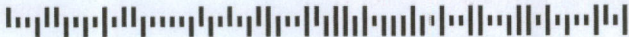
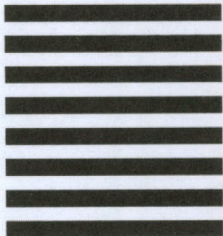
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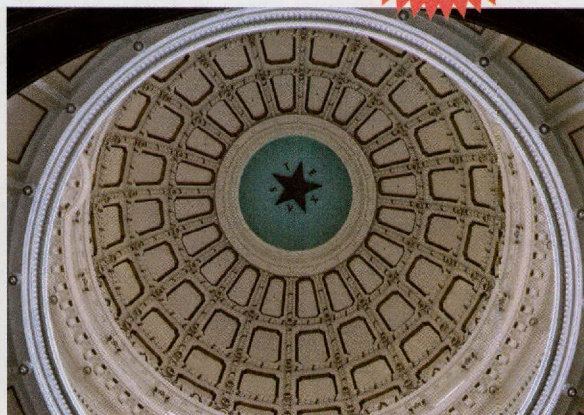
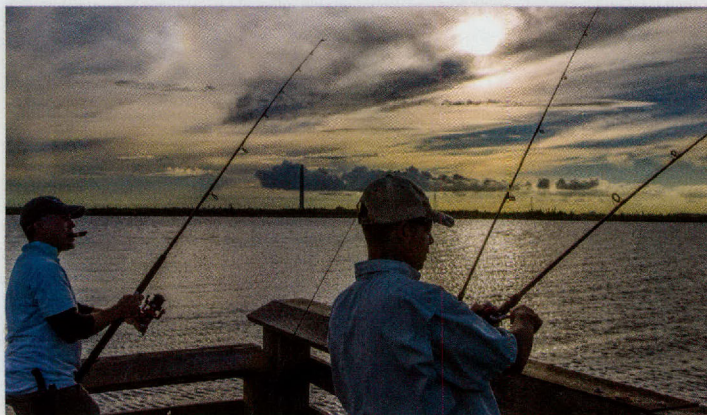
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| <b>13</b> City of Huntsville                             | <b>31</b> Greenville Convention & Visitors Bureau        | <b>47</b> Texas Seafood                                 | <b>62</b> Visit Plano                             |
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# EVENTS



## Sweet Tooth

The Heritage Syrup Festival honors Henderson's sugar cane industry

**O**n the second Saturday of November, the East Texas town of Henderson will celebrate the 33rd annual Heritage Syrup Festival in Henderson. Sprawling six blocks from the Depot Museum to Heritage Square, the festival features 150 arts and crafts booths, food vendors, and old-fashioned syrup.

The highlight is the syrup-making demonstration at the Depot Museum, where volunteers use vintage, mule-operated equipment to make ribbon cane syrup. "Sugar cane was the prime crop of Henderson at one time, so we still do the syrup making the old-fashioned way to honor that heritage," says Kaitlin Smith, Henderson's tourism and Main Street coordinator. Throughout the day, visitors can see the mules walking across the sugar-cane press, squeezing the cane to release the juice that is the base of cane syrup. Then, the cane juice is boiled to complete the syrup-making process. Visitors can purchase the ribbon cane syrup from various vendors.

Folk artists also demonstrate lace making, basket making, blacksmithing, quilting, wood carving, and rope making. Live entertainment takes place on three stages and includes cloggers, square dancers, and folk bands. Antique cars and tractors line the streets, a petting zoo entertains kids, and hayrides transport festivalgoers between the Depot Museum and Heritage Square. —Amanda Ogle

**Heritage Syrup Festival, Nov. 12**  
Historic Downtown Henderson  
and Depot Museum, 514 N. High St.  
[depotmuseum.com/syrupfest\\_val.html](http://depotmuseum.com/syrupfest_val.html)

### BIG BEND COUNTRY

#### ALPINE

##### **Big Bend Arts Council Membership Show**

Nov. 3-Dec. 6

View a range of artwork at the members' exhibit of the Big Bend region's premier arts organization, with an opening reception on Nov. 3. *Gallery on the Square*, 115 W. Holland Ave. 432-837-7203; [bigbendartscouncil.org](http://bigbendartscouncil.org)

#### ALPINE

##### **Center for Big Bend Studies Annual Conference**

Nov. 11-12

The 28th annual conference brings together historians, archeologists, folklorists, and other researchers studying the past and present of the Big Bend region and northern Mexico. *Espino Conference Center*, 400 N. Harrison St. 432-837-8179; [cbs.sulross.edu/conference](http://cbs.sulross.edu/conference)

#### ALPINE

##### **ArtWalk**

Nov. 18-19

The 29th annual ArtWalk, Alpine's biggest arts festival, spans two days in November and showcases a variety of art exhibitions in many local businesses along with festivities and live music. *Downtown*, 204 E. Holland Ave. 432-294-1071; [artwalkalpine.com](http://artwalkalpine.com)

#### MIDLAND

##### **Artist Community Market**

Nov. 5

Local artists and creatives showcase their wares. Patrons enjoy live performances, food trucks, and art activities. *Arts Council of Midland*, 1506 W. Illinois. 432-687-1149; [acmidland.org/artist-community-market](http://acmidland.org/artist-community-market)

### GULF COAST

#### ALVIN

##### **Novemberfest**

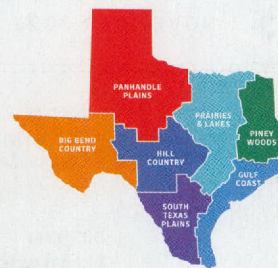
Nov. 12

The 18th annual Novemberfest includes arts and crafts, collectibles, a car and bike show, antique tractor and farm equipment displays, a pancake breakfast, a raffle,

Photo: Courtesy City of Henderson

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a veterans' tribute, a food court, and kids' games. *National Oak Park*, 118 S. Magnolia St. 713-828-9477; [alvinrotary.org](http://alvinrotary.org)

### BRAZORIA

#### Henry Smith Day

Nov. 14

Henry Smith, an early educator during the Republic of Texas, is honored at his statue on the grounds of the Brazoria Civic Center. Elementary school students sing Texas songs, and refreshments are served. *Brazoria Heritage Civic Center*, 202 W. Smith St. 979-824-0455; [brazoriahf.org](http://brazoriahf.org)

### BROWNSVILLE

#### A Salute to Our Troops Appreciation Days

Nov. 11-13

Gladys Porter Zoo honors veterans and active-duty military personnel this weekend. The Zoo is home to over 500 species of plants and animals. *Gladys Porter Zoo*, 500 Ringgold St. 956-546-7187; [gpz.org](http://gpz.org)

### CORPUS CHRISTI

#### Wine Festival

Nov. 19

The fifth annual festival features food, live music, art, activities, and plenty of wine. *Heritage Park*, 1581 N. Chaparral St. 830-335-7614; [corpuschristiwinefestival.com](http://corpuschristiwinefestival.com)

### GALVESTON

#### A Charlie Brown Christmas

Nov. 19

This live stage adaptation is filled with the sounds of the classic Vince Guaraldi musical score. Witness the timeless classic with Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Lucy, Linus, and the rest of the Peanuts' characters in their journey to uncover the true meaning of Christmas. *The Grand 1894 Opera House*, 2020 Postoffice St. 800-821-1894; [thegrand.com](http://thegrand.com)

### HARLINGEN

#### Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival

Nov. 9-13

Experience field trips, seminars, a raptor show, kids' activities, and free family fun. The Rio Grande Valley sees more than 20 specialty birds, including Altamira orioles, aplomado falcons, green jays,

and great kiskadees. *Harlingen Convention Center*, 701 Harlingen Heights Drive. 209-227-4823; [rgvbf.org](http://rgvbf.org)

### HOUSTON

#### Lightscape

Nov. 18-Jan. 1, 2023

The illuminated trail winds through the garden and features the towering Winter Cathedral tunnel and many new-to-Houston works including a field of glowing Texas bluebonnets. With dynamic installations—including a fire garden with hundreds of flaming candles—Lightscape celebrates artistic creativity within the natural beauty of a living museum. *Houston Botanic Garden*, One Botanic Lane. 713-715-9675; [hbg.org/lightscape](http://hbg.org/lightscape)

### KATY

#### Wild West Brewfest

Nov. 3-5

This festival features more than 100 brewers from across the country and 500-plus beers available for tasting. *Typhoon Texas*, 555 Katy Fort Bend Road. 832-426-7071; [wildwestbrewfest.com](http://wildwestbrewfest.com)

### KATY

#### Big Top Christmas Gift Market

Nov. 12-13

A wide selection of exhibitors sell boutique clothing, accessories, shoes, home décor, furniture, gourmet food, dips, sauces, art, yard decorations, and holiday items. *Katy ISD Agricultural Sciences Center*, 5801 Katy Hockley Cut Off Road. 936-900-1900; [bigtop.show/katytx](http://bigtop.show/katytx)

### MUSTANG ISLAND

#### Bassmaster Redfish Cup

Nov. 4-6

Ten teams compete for their share of a \$100,000 purse. Teams can weigh two fish in the 20- to 28-inch slot per day. The contest features a mix of professional redfish teams and five all-star teams featuring Bassmaster pro anglers paired with redfish pros. *Port Aransas Fisherman's Wharf*, 900 Tarpon St. 361-806-7678; [portaransas.org/event/bassmaster-redfish-cup/2462](http://portaransas.org/event/bassmaster-redfish-cup/2462)

### PEARLAND

#### Country Music Showcase

Nov. 13

Attend a free country music concert under the Pearland Town Center pavilion. *Pearland Town Center*, 11200 Broadway St. 281-997-5970; [visitpearland.com/countrymusicshowcase](http://visitpearland.com/countrymusicshowcase)

### PORT ARANSAS

#### Barrier Island Ultra

Nov. 5

The course is run entirely on sand along the Gulf of Mexico. Choose your challenge—hard-packed sand near the water or softer sand near the road. Distances include 5K, 10K, half-marathon, marathon, 50K, and 50 miles. *Beach Lodge*, 2016 On the Beach Drive. 210-749-1118; [ultraexpeditions.com/barrier-island-ultra](http://ultraexpeditions.com/barrier-island-ultra)

### PORT ARANSAS

#### Holiday Market

Nov. 26-27

The Port Aransas Art Center presents its annual holiday market featuring fine art photography, ceramics, jewelry, gift items, and local vendors. Meet the artists, and enjoy warm holiday comfort food. *Port Aransas Art Center*, 104 N. Alister St. 361-749-7334; [portaransasartcenter.org](http://portaransasartcenter.org)

### PORT LAVACA

#### Nativity Exhibit

Nov. 25-Dec. 4

This free three-day event showcases hundreds of nativities from around the world. *Red Barn*, 3187 SH 35. 361-935-8032

### ROCKPORT

#### Film Festival

Nov. 10-13

Showcasing shorts, features, documentaries, animations, and student films, the festival is a three-day event that highlights talent from Texas and beyond. *Various locations*. 361-729-5519; [rockportartcenter.com](http://rockportartcenter.com)

### SUGAR LAND

#### Opry on the Square

Nov. 4

Catch Country Now and Then, a live music program featuring favorites that appeal to all generations of country music

fans. *Sugar Land Town Square*, 2711 Plaza Drive. 281-276-6000; [sugarlandtownsquare.com](http://sugarlandtownsquare.com)

### WHARTON

#### Christmas Holiday Parade

Nov. 22

Kick off the holiday season with a parade, vendors, and a lighting ceremony of the decorated historic courthouse. *Historic Monterey Square*, 100 S. Fulton St. 979-532-1862; [whartonchamber.com](http://whartonchamber.com)

### HILL COUNTRY

### AUSTIN

#### Garage and Estate Sale

Nov. 4-6

Shop from jewelry, tools, vintage collectibles, children's clothing, and more. All proceeds go to support The Settlement Home for Children, which serves individuals who have experienced severe emotional trauma, abuse, and neglect. *Palmer Events Center*, 900 Barton Springs Road. 512-836-2150; [settlementhome.org/garage-sale](http://settlementhome.org/garage-sale)

### AUSTIN

#### Austin Celtic Festival

Nov. 5-6

Celebrating the authentic music honed by the Celtic people, the Austin Celtic Festival highlights traditions and achievements to remind audiences of the craftsmanship and study that made Ireland and Scotland leaders in folk music and dance. *Pioneer Farms*, Pioneer Farms Drive. 512-478-0098; [austincelticfestival.com](http://austincelticfestival.com)

### AUSTIN

#### Texas Book Festival

Nov. 5-6

The festival hosts about 250 authors. Attend readings, panel discussions, signings, cooking demonstrations, and live music shows. There are children's activities and literary-related adult events like the annual Lit Crawl. *Various locations*. 512-477-4055; [texasbookfestival.org](http://texasbookfestival.org)

### AUSTIN

#### Powwow

Nov. 12

For more than 25 years, the Austin Powwow has been the largest of

its kind in Texas, featuring American Indian dancing, singing, arts and crafts, a Native Market, and food. *Travis County Expo Center, 7311 Decker Lane. 512-371-0628; austinpowwow.net*

**AUSTIN**

**A Christmas Affair**

Nov. 16-20  
More than 200 retail merchants are on-site for holiday shopping. Over the five-day period, more than 25,000 people come through to shop for everyone on their lists. *Palmer Events Center, 900 Barton Springs Road. 512-478-0098; jlaustin.org/a-christmas-affair*

**BANDERA**

**BuckFest Gala**

Nov. 4  
Bandera County Chamber of Commerce's annual BuckFest Gala features a social hour, dinner and dance, live and silent auctions, and a raffle. *Mansfield Park Show Barn, 2886 SH 16 North. 830-796-3280; banderatex.com*

**BANDERA**

**Veterans Parade and Honors**

Nov. 12  
The American Legion 157 Post organizes this 20th annual celebration that includes displays, information booths, a special program honoring Vietnam War-era veterans, a parade on Main Street, and a veterans and spouses barbecue. *Various locations. 830-796-7528; all157tx.org*

**BOERNE**

**Master Artwork Show**

Nov. 4-6  
This event features artists and interior designers who are available for discussions and consultations. Artists display 2-D art, sculptures, wearable art, glass, and more. *The Bevy Hotel, 101 Herff Road. 210-367-6275; ci.boerne.tx.us*

**BOERNE**

**Night Hikes for Adults**

Nov. 4  
Join naturalist Jasmine Torrez and explore the Cibolo Center for Conservation to discover the living organisms that call the Cibolo home. *Cibolo Center for Conservation, 140 City Park Road. 830-249-4616; cibolo.org/calendar*

**BOERNE**

**Fall Diva Night**

Nov. 10  
Diva Night features late shopping hours, cocktails, food, and music.

Support local businesses with a night of shopping. *Hill Country Mile, Main Street. ci.boerne.tx.us*

**BOERNE**

**Dickens on Main**

Nov. 25-26  
Boerne's Hill Country Mile transforms into a vintage Christmas experience with entertainment in holiday villages set up throughout the venue. Main attractions include live music and performances, visits from Santa Claus, ice sculpting, children's take-home crafts, snow along Main Street, musicians, and carolers. *Hill Country Mile, 100 N. Main St. 830-248-1617; adickenscelebration.com*

**BOERNE**

**Music in the Cave: Sounds of the Season**

Nov. 26  
Enjoy Tinsel, an a cappella quartet, for sounds of the Christmas season with contemporary classics and traditional carols. Tinsel has a roster of professional singers who are Grammy winners and classically trained vocalists. *Cave Without a Name Throne Room, 325 Kreuzberg Road. 830-537-4212; cavewithoutaname.com*

**BROWNWOOD**

**Photography Exhibit**

Nov. 3-24  
The Brownwood Art Association features its photography group and showcases their impressive work. *Brownwood Art Center, 215 Fisk Ave. 325-641-2916; brownwoodart.org*

**BULVERDE**

**Saturday Night Rodeo**

Nov. 5, 12, 19, 26  
The family-friendly rodeo and live music series takes place each Saturday. After the rodeo, guests can enjoy live music and dancing. Beer, wine, cocktails, and soft drinks are served throughout the rodeo grounds, as well as delicious Texas barbecue, tacos, steak, and burgers. *Tejas Rodeo Company, 401 Obst Road. 830-980-2226; tejasrodeo.com*

**FREDERICKSBURG**

**Eisbahn Outdoor Ice Skating**

Nov. 25-Jan. 1, 2023  
This annual seasonal outdoor ice skating rink benefits the Heritage School, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and the Boys and Girls Club of Fredericksburg. *Marktplatz, 100 block of West Main Street. heritageschool.org/eisbahn*

**FREDERICKSBURG**

**The Peddler Holiday Show**

Nov. 25-27  
For over 40 years, the show has arrived just in time for holiday shopping. *Gillespie County Fairgrounds and Exhibition Hall, 530 Fair Drive. 800-775-2774; peddlershow.com*

**FREDERICKSBURG**

**Trade Days Holiday Encore**

Nov. 25-27  
Trade Days features over 350 vendors in seven barns, acres of antiques, a biergarten, and live music. *Fredericksburg Trade Days, 355 Sunday Farms Lane. 210-846-4094; fbgradedays.com*

**INGRAM**

**ArtMart Christmas Gift Showcase**

Nov. 11-Dec. 17  
This annual holiday shopping showcase features handmade crafts by area artists. *Hill Country Arts Foundation, 120 Point Theatre Road. 830-367-5121; hcacf.com*

**INGRAM**

**A Christmas Carol**

Nov. 18-20, 25-27  
The show recounts the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, an elderly miser who is visited by the ghost of his former business partner and the spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come. *Hill Country Arts Foundation, 120 Point Theatre Road. 830-367-5121; hcacf.com*

**KERRVILLE**

**Holiday Magic Handmade Crafts Sale**

Nov. 5  
Decorations, handmade crafts, gifts, boutique items, jewelry, and a light lunch are available at this event, with proceeds supporting local charities. *Elk's Lodge, 1907 Junction Highway. 830-896-1935; facebook.com/craftingforgood*

**KERRVILLE**

**Open Car Show and Parade**

Nov. 12  
The open car show and parade includes live entertainment and food, and benefits the patients at the Kerrville VA Hospital. *Kerrville VA Hospital, 3600 Memorial Blvd. 830-792-2580*

**KERRVILLE**

**Holiday Lighted Parade and Lighting Ceremonies**

Nov. 19  
Welcome the holiday season—and Santa Claus, riding in on his signature fire truck—at this holiday event. *Kerr County Courthouse, 700 Main St. 830-257-7300; kerrvilletx.gov*

**LLANO**

**Starry Starry Nights Lighted Christmas Park**

Nov. 25-Dec. 31  
Sip hot chocolate and stroll along the Llano River to see displays light up Badu Park. *Badu Park, 300 W. Legion Drive. 325-247-5354; llanostarrystarrynights.com*

**MARBLE FALLS**

**Walkway of Lights**

Nov. 18-Jan. 1, 2023  
Two million lights on more than 130 sculptures illuminate Lakeside Park. On weekends and holidays, including Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve, children can visit with Santa and his elves. There is no charge, but donations are accepted. *Lakeside Park, 305 Buena Vista Drive. 830-693-4449; visitmarblefalls.org/christmas-season*

**NEW BRAUNFELS**

**Wurstfest**

Nov. 4-13  
During the 10-day festival, celebrate German culture with entertainment and food. Enjoy carnival rides, games, German and Texan beers, special events, and Bavarian-style entertainment. *Wurstfest, 120 Landa St. 830-625-9167; wurstfest.com*

**NEW BRAUNFELS**

**Sip-N-Shop**

Nov. 15  
Stroll through Gruene Historic District enjoying complimentary beverages and special offers from participating shops. *Gruene Historic District. 830-629-5077; holidaysingruene.com*

**NEW BRAUNFELS**

**Weihnachtsmarkt**

Nov. 18-20  
Weihnachtsmarkt is a German-style Christmas Market with a Texas twist. The weekend before Thanksgiving, enjoy *gemutlichkeit* (good cheer) and three days of shopping for authentic German ornaments, Christmas decorations, apparel, and gifts. *New Braunfels Convention and Visitors Bureau, 375 S. Castell Ave. 830-629-1572; newbraunfelsweihnachtsmarkt.com*

**NEW BRAUNFELS**

**Turkey Trot and Turkey Chase**

Nov. 24  
Start your Thanksgiving at the 14th annual 5K run/walk through Gruene Historic District. Kids under 12 can chase a turkey mascot for a quarter mile. Races begin and end in front of Gruene Hall and benefit local charities. *Gruene Historic District. 830-629-5077; holidaysingruene.com*

**DON'T SEE YOUR EVENT?**  
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## ROUND ROCK

### Fossil Fest

Nov. 5-6

At Fossil Fest, meet scientists, dig for fossils, check out specimens from around the world, and participate in workshops. *Old Settler's Heritage Association, 3300 E. Palm Valley Blvd. 512-478-0098; austinpaleo.org/fest.html*

## SONORA

### Downtown Christmas

Nov. 30

A twinkling, lighted parade strolls down Main Street with a live nativity scene. *Main Street. 325-387-2880; sonorataxas.org*

## PANHANDLE PLAINS

## SAN ANGELO

### Faculty Biennial Exhibition

Through Nov. 27

View works by faculty members of Angelo State University's Art Department. *San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love St. 325-653-3333; samfa.org*

## SAN ANGELO

### True Texas II: Folk and Traditional Arts From the Concho Valley to the Rio Grande

Through Nov. 27

In this exhibit, 22 craftsmen are featured from 9 counties in the Concho Valley Region. *San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love St. 325-653-3333; samfa.org*

## SAN ANGELO

### Murder Mystery at Fort Concho

Nov. 4-5

Modeled after the board game *Clue*, a murder at Fort Concho gives you the opportunity to play detective for a night. Listen to the suspects' alibis, search for clues, and help Miss Terri Salva solve the "whodunit." *Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, 630 S. Oakes St. 325-657-4444; fortconcho.com*

## SAN ANGELO

### Santa's Santa Fe Christmas

Nov. 26

Santa Claus is coming to town by train. Stick around for free photo opportunities with Santa, and shop from a variety of vendors for food and gifts. *Railway Museum of San Angelo, 703 S. Chadbourne St. 325-486-2140; sanangelorailway.org*

## WICHITA FALLS

### Clue, the Musical

Through Nov. 3-5, 11-12

The internationally popular game is performed as a musical and

invites the audience to help solve the mystery of who killed Mr. Boddy, in what room, and with what weapon. This dinner theater event features an opportunity for audience engagement. *The Wichita Theatre, 919 Indiana Ave. 940-723-9037; wichitatheatre.com*

## WICHITA FALLS

### Christmas Magic

Nov. 3-6

This fundraising event features vendors from around the country and includes clothing boutiques, gifts, collectibles, Christmas décor, repurposed items, and food. *Ray Clymer Exhibit Hall, 1000 Fifth St. 940-716-5500; wjmpec.com*

## WICHITA FALLS

### A Christmas Story: the Musical

Nov. 18-Dec. 18

The story takes place in the 1940s in Indiana and focuses on a child named Ralphie, who wants a Red Ryder BB Gun for Christmas. *The Wichita Theatre, 919 Indiana Ave. 940-723-9037; wichitatheatre.com or ci.ovationtix.com/36327*

## WICHITA FALLS

### The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Nov. 18-19, 25-26

The Herdman kids crash Sunday school and demand parts in the Christmas pageant. *Backdoor Theatre, 501 Indiana Ave. 940-322-5000; backdoortheatre.org*

## WICHITA FALLS

### Fantasy of Lights

Nov. 21-Dec. 26

This is one of the largest holiday displays in the region, providing a holiday atmosphere on campus and a focal point for holiday activities. *Midwestern State University, 3410 Taft Blvd. fol.msutexas.edu*

## WICHITA FALLS

### Carriage Rides

Nov. 25-Dec. 24

Take a tour of the Christmas light displays through a beautiful country club neighborhood while riding in a magically decorated carriage. *The Forum, 3501 Taft Blvd. 940-636-4404; ptlcarriages.com*

## WICHITA FALLS

### ElectriCrittters: A Lighted Christmas Display

Nov. 25-Dec. 23

More than 60,000 lights on more than 200 lighted displays bring sights and sounds of the season. *River Bend Nature Center, 2200 Third St. 940-767-0843; riverbendnaturecenter.org*

## WICHITA FALLS

### Santa House

Nov. 30-Dec. 9

Santa and company open their Texas home for the holidays. Santa's elves guide visitors through a Christmas wonderland, including a performance of the original play *The Magical Rocking Horse, Part I*, a visit with Santa, a stop in the kitchen for a cookie, and into Santa's workshop to make an ornament to take home. *Kell House Museum, 900 Bluff St. 940-723-2712; kellhouseheritagecenter.org*

## PINEY WOODS

## CONROE

### Big Top Shopping Festival

Nov. 19-20

A wide selection of exhibitors bring boutique clothing, accessories, shoes, home décor, furniture, gourmet food, art, yard decorations, and holiday items. *Heritage Place Park, 500 Metcalf St. 936-900-1900; bigtop.show/conroetx*

## GLADEWATER

### Christmas Tyme in Gusherville

Nov. 12

The Gladewater antiques district begins the holiday season with an open house. Stores stay open late and there's seasonal entertainment along with the lighting of the 20-foot-tall Christmas tree. Children can write their letters to Santa. *Downtown Gladewater, 100 E. Commerce Ave. 903-845-5501; gladewaterchamber.org*

## JEFFERSON

### History, Haunts, and Legends

Nov. 5

This event has guest speakers, vendors, tours, and nighttime investigations at some of Jefferson's historic and allegedly haunted locations. *Jefferson Convention and Visitor Center, 305 E. Austin St. 903-601-3375; visitjeffersontexas.com*

## JEFFERSON

### Christmas Express Train

Nov. 25-26

The antique narrow-gauge gas locomotive has three departures each day. Enjoy Christmas stories along the Cypress Bayou River. Night vignettes are lighted. *Historic Jefferson Railway, 400 E. Austin St. 903-742-2041; jeffersonrailway.com*

**Texas Renaissance Festival**  
Weekends and Thanksgiving Friday  
October 8th to November 27th  
**TexRenFest.com**

**JEFFERSON**

**Christmas Parade and Enchanted Forest Tree Lighting**

Nov. 26  
After the parade, which travels through Jefferson and ends at Lions Park, stick around for the Enchanted Forest tree lighting ceremony. More than 100 Christmas trees light up, carolers sing Christmas classics, and Santa pays a visit. *Downtown and Lions Park.* 903-665-3733; [visitjeffersontexas.com](http://visitjeffersontexas.com)

**NACOGDOCHES**

**Día de los Muertos**

Nov. 5  
Head to the square for a cultural event with music, dance, food, drinks, and vendors all over downtown. *Downtown Nacogdoches,* 200 E. Main St. 936-559-2970; [visitnacogdoches.org](http://visitnacogdoches.org)

**NACOGDOCHES**

**Wassail Fest**

Nov. 26  
Downtown merchants compete to win best holiday brew during Wassail Fest. Wassail, made from hot mulled cider and spices, is served at various locations downtown, and patrons vote on their favorites to determine the winner. *Downtown Nacogdoches,* 200 E. Main St. 936-560-4441; [facebook.com/downtownnac](http://facebook.com/downtownnac)

**PALESTINE**

**The Polar Express**

Nov. 18-Dec. 27  
The Palestine depot offers a festive holiday setting that features lights, tinsel, garland, and costumed characters. *Texas State Railroad, Palestine Depot,* 789 Park Road 70. 855-632-7729; [texasstaterailroad.net](http://texasstaterailroad.net)

**PRAIRIES AND LAKES**

**BELTON**

**Sami Arts and Crafts 47th Anniversary Show**

Nov. 12-13  
Since two of the most popular holidays of the year are approaching, more arts and crafts vendors than usual are selling various handicrafts. *Bell County Expo Center,* 301 W. Loop 121. 512-441-7133; [samishow.com](http://samishow.com)

**BOWIE**

**Blue Saturday Shop Small**

Nov. 26  
Mark off your holiday shopping list and buy from local merchants. Shoppers receive tote bags, balloons, and other Shop Small

merchandise. *Bowie Community Development,* 101 E. Pecan St. 940-872-6246; [cityofbowietx.com](http://cityofbowietx.com)

**BRYAN**

**Friends of the Library Book Sale**

Nov. 12-13  
Choose from thousands of books at this more-than-50-year-old book sale. Shop hardcovers and paperbacks in good condition and at low prices. *Clara B. Mounce Public Library,* 201 E. 26th St. 979-209-5600; [friendsbcs.org](http://friendsbcs.org)

**BRYAN**

**Lights On!**

Nov. 18  
Join in the countdown to turn on thousands of lights along Main Street and Bryan Avenue. The free event includes holiday photo backdrop stations, live music, and an appearance by Santa Claus. *Downtown Bryan,* 100 and 200 blocks of South Main Street. 979-721-9506; [destinationbryan.com/events/lights-on-2](http://destinationbryan.com/events/lights-on-2)

**CORSICANA**

**Artist and Writer Residency Artist Presentations**

Nov. 10  
Storefront Bookstore, the public space of the Corsicana Artist and Writer Residency, presents returning resident Alana Masad, author of *All My Mother's Lovers*; and Sonya Schonberger discussing oral histories and documentary writing. *Storefront Bookstore,* 203 N. Commerce St. 480-824-3015; [corsicanaresidency.org](http://corsicanaresidency.org)

**CORSICANA**

**Navarro County Pro Rodeo**

Nov. 11-12  
The Navarro County Pro Rodeo attracts top personnel and stock, including stock contractors, saddle bronc riders, bull fighters, and pick-up men. There is mutton bustin' for children. *Navarro County Expo Center,* 4021 SH 22. 903-872-7600; [navarrocountyprorodeo.com](http://navarrocountyprorodeo.com)

**CORSICANA**

**175th Anniversary Kickoff and Tree Lighting Festival**

Nov. 17  
Corsicana begins its yearlong 175th anniversary celebration with the annual holiday tree lighting. A three-story tree is lit with more than 10,000 lights and decorated with over 750 ornaments. Also find live entertainment, fireworks, and Santa. *Downtown Corsicana,* 301 S. Beaton St. 903-654-4850; [visitcorsicana.com](http://visitcorsicana.com)

**DALLAS**

**Holiday at the Arboretum**

Nov. 9-Dec. 31  
The Christmas Village houses dozens of charming shops fashioned after a European Christmas village. There's also the 50-foot-tall Dazzling Musical Tree animated with more than 42,000 lights, 12 gazebos that represent each of the 12 days of Christmas, and the stunningly decorated historic DeGolyer house. *Dallas Arboretum,* 8525 Garland Road. 214-515-6615; [dallasarboretum.org](http://dallasarboretum.org)

**DALLAS**

**The Happy Elf**

Nov. 27-Dec. 23  
Dallas Children's Theater presents a holiday jazz musical about an elf with endless energy looking to earn a spot on Santa's coveted sleigh team. *Rosewood Center,* 5938 Skillman St. 214-978-0110; [dct.org](http://dct.org)

**ELGIN**

**Día de los Muertos**

Nov. 1  
Gather together to remember and pray for loved ones who have died with traditional altars, sugar skulls, children's activities, and music. *Historic Downtown Elgin,* 109 Depot St. 512-229-3227; [elgintx.com](http://elgintx.com)

**ELGIN**

**Veterans Appreciation Parade**

Nov. 12  
Recognize the community's veterans with a parade at 10 a.m., followed by lunch at the Elgin Volunteer Fire Department. *SPJST Lodge 18,* 702 SH 95 North. 512-229-3227; [elgintx.com](http://elgintx.com)

**FORT WORTH**

**Tarrant County Veterans Day Parade**

Nov. 11  
"Saluting Buffalo Soldiers" is the theme of this year's Tarrant County Veterans Day Parade. In 1887, Congress created the first professional Black Army units. They were stationed in Texas from 1867 to 1886 before moving farther west. Eventually, they became known as Buffalo Soldiers. *Panther Island Pavilion,* 395 Purcey St. 254-338-0333; [fw2022parade.org](http://fw2022parade.org)

**FORT WORTH**

**Lightscape**

Nov. 18-Jan. 8, 2023  
Taking place within the 120-acre Fort Worth Botanic Garden and set along an illuminated walking trail, Lightscape features artistic installations that come to life after dark. Walk a 1-mile-long path with

suspended strands and tunnels of light, a fire garden, waves of blue-bonnets, singing trees, and treetop sculptures. Toast marshmallows over a fire and drink hot chocolate at stations along the trail. *Fort Worth Botanic Garden,* 1700 University Drive. 817-332-4441; [fwbg.org/lightscapes](http://fwbg.org/lightscapes)

**FORT WORTH**

**Parade of Lights**

Nov. 20  
The parade illuminates the streets of downtown for the 40th year. Each float is adorned with holiday décor and over half a million sparkling lights. *Downtown Fort Worth,* 777 Taylor St. 817-336-2787; [fortworthparadeoflights.org](http://fortworthparadeoflights.org)

**GIDDINGS**

**Texas Word Wrangler Book Festival**

Nov. 18-19  
Celebrate Texas authors at this two-day book festival. Visit with authors and purchase autographed copies of their work in a wide range of book genres including murder mystery, fantasy, science fiction, cookbooks, self-help, junior fiction, and picture books. *Giddings Public Library and Cultural Center,* 276 N. Orange St. 979-542-2716; [sites.google.com/site/txwordwrangler/home-texas-word-wrangler-book-festival](http://sites.google.com/site/txwordwrangler/home-texas-word-wrangler-book-festival)

**GIDDINGS**

**Sip and Shop Christmas Market**

Nov. 20  
Purchase arts and crafts in time for Christmas, and enjoy a cold beverage while you browse an array of colorful wares and listen to holiday music. Santa also makes an appearance. *The Silos on Highway 77,* 1031 CR 223. 979-542-3455; [giddingstx.com/page-1676245](http://giddingstx.com/page-1676245)

**GRANBURY**

**Winter Wine Walk**

Nov. 18-20  
Fifteen wineries are featured at the walk, which celebrates Texas agriculture and winemakers. Taste wines and watch the awards presentation for wineries. Some local Granbury wineries are participating. *Granbury Square,* 201 E. Pearl St. 817-573-5548; [crosstimberswinetrail.com/granbury-winter-wine-walk](http://crosstimberswinetrail.com/granbury-winter-wine-walk)

**GREENVILLE**

**Bob Wills Fiddle Festival and Contest**

Nov. 4-5  
This event pays tribute to the life and music of Bob Wills, the "king of Western swing." Featur-

**DON'T SEE YOUR EVENT?**  
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ing fiddling competitions and performances, the eighth annual event offers a lineup of artists who bring talent, legacy, variety, and spontaneity. *Downtown, Lee Street. 903-455-1510; bobwillfest.com*

#### LULING

##### **Grinchmas Arts and Craft Show**

Nov. 19

Kick off the Christmas season by shopping for items handcrafted by area artisans. Kids can take pictures with Santa, and a DJ plays music all day. *Watermelon Thump Pavilion, 319 E. Davis St. 830-875-0123; lulingcc.org*

#### MCKINNEY

##### **Trolley Tour**

Nov. 12

Tour the historic district in downtown McKinney on a trolley with a trained docent. While viewing the architecture, you'll hear about some of the significant people who made their mark in McKinney. *Chestnut Square Heritage Village, 315 S. Chestnut St. 972-562-8790; chestnutsquare.org/tours*

#### MCKINNEY

##### **Home for the Holidays: A McKinney Christmas**

Nov. 25-27

Stroll the 14-block area of McKinney's 166-year-old historic downtown for family activities, food, and entertainment. Enjoy live holiday music, seasonal food and drink, vendors for holiday shopping, and a Christmas tree lighting. Admission is free. *Downtown McKinney, 111 N. Tennessee St. 972-547-2660; mckinneytexas.org/677/home-for-the-holidays*

#### MESQUITE

##### **Veterans Day Celebration**

Nov. 5

Honor veterans at this annual celebration, with speakers ranging from community leaders to military veterans. *Mesquite Veterans Memorial, 425 S. Galloway Ave. 972-216-6260; visitmesquitetx.com*

#### MESQUITE

##### **The Amazing Santacolor 5K Run and Walk**

Nov. 12

Each participant is a blank canvas at the starting line and is transformed into a colorful collage during the race. *Town East Mall, 2063 Town East Mall. 972-270-4431; facebook.com/amazingsantacolor5k*

#### MESQUITE

##### **Wreath Making Class**

Nov. 12, 17

Make a fresh evergreen holiday wreath over dinner and drinks at Opal Lawrence Historical Park. *Opal Lawrence Historical Park, 701 E. Kearney St. 972-216-6468; visitmesquitetx.com*

#### PLANO

##### **Underground Movement Festival**

Nov. 12

The Secret Society Club and Plano Stages present volume 7 of the Underground Movement Festival, an event that brings the culture of the hip-hop movement from underground. This is an all-ages, family-friendly event. *McCall Plaza, 998 E. 15th St. visitplano.com/event/underground-movement-festival-vol-7*

#### RICHARDSON

##### **The Nutcracker**

Nov. 25-27

Chamberlain Ballet began staging this production of the classic performance in 1989. *Eisemann Center, 2351 Performance Drive. chamberlainballet.org*

#### SALADO

##### **Scottish Gathering and Highland Games**

Nov. 11-13

This three-day event is filled with the skirl of the bagpipes and the wearing of the tartan, with a parade, bagpipes, and Highland dancers. Shop at the many vendor tables, enjoy delicious food, and watch the Highland games. You can also find the largest gathering of Scottish Clan tents in Texas, where members share information about Scottish history and genealogy. *Thomas Arnold Elementary School Grounds, 575 Salado School Road. 254-947-5232; saladoscottishfestival.com*

#### TEMPLE

##### **St. Nicholas Market**

Nov. 4-5

Shop from over 35 vendors at the St. Nicholas Market. Proceeds from the annual event support local ministries in the Temple area. *Christ Episcopal Church, 300 N. Main St. 254-773-1657; stnicholasmarket.org*

#### THE COLONY

##### **American Heroes**

Nov. 11-12

Corresponding with Veterans Day, American Heroes is a two-day festival and concert series. Enjoy live music, view vintage cars, and help honor veterans with

multiple ceremonies. There is also a carnival and a firework display. *The Colony Five Star Complex, 4100 Blair Oaks Drive. 972-625-1106; saluteamericanheroes.com*

#### SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

#### SAN ANTONIO

##### **Georgia O'Keeffe and American Modernism**

Through Dec. 11

This exhibition features works by Georgia O'Keeffe alongside American modernist artists from throughout the 20th century. Known as the "mother of American modernism," O'Keeffe figures prominently in this early 20th century artistic movement. *McNay Art Museum, 6000 N. New Braunfels Ave. 210-824-5368; mcnayart.org*

#### SAN ANTONIO

##### **Tangible/Nothing**

Through July 30, 2023

The exhibition features 40 works by artists with Texas roots, many of which represent apparent voids, vestiges of what's missing, or subjects not pictured—a pair of arms bereft of a body, a woman represented only by her purse, or Miss America seen only as a crown. Admission is free. *Ruby City, 150 Camp St. 210-227-8400; rubycity.org*

#### SAN ANTONIO

##### **Lightscape**

Nov. 11-Jan. 8

In its second year, the outdoor illuminated trail includes new installations and favorites like the Winter Cathedral, set to seasonal music along a 1-mile path that winds through the garden. More than 80% of this year's trail features installations new to San Antonio. Also enjoy festive food and drinks, including s'mores. *San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place. 210-536-1400; sabot.org/lightscape*

#### SAN ANTONIO

##### **The Velveteen Rabbit**

Nov. 19-Dec. 24

The Magikal Theatre presents this retelling of the classic children's story about a boy who receives a stuffed rabbit sewn from velveteen as a present on Christmas Day. *Magik Theatre, 420 S. Alamo St. 210-227-2751; magiktheatre.org*

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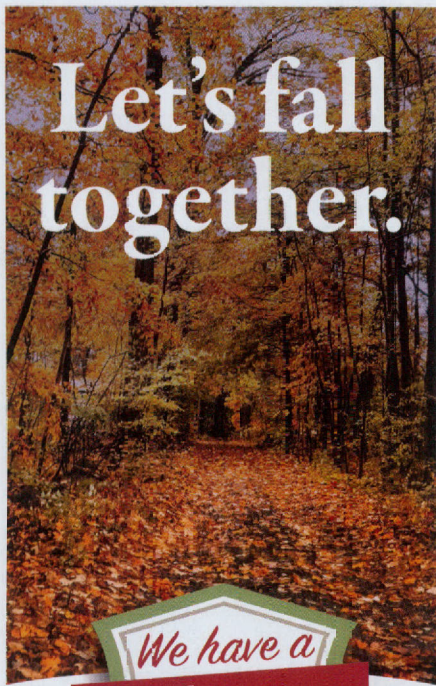
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## THE DAYTRIPPER'S TOP 5



# Paint Rock

*Hidden pictographs on the Concho*

BY CHET GARNER

Not every Texas town is full of obvious tourist destinations. Sometimes, you've got to flip a couple rocks to find the good spots hidden out of sight. With around 300 residents, Paint Rock, 30 miles east of San Angelo, is one of the least-populated county seats in all of Texas. But that doesn't mean there aren't plenty of fascinating stops just beneath the surface.

### Campbell Ranch

This ranch on the north bank of the Concho River houses the painted rocks from which the town got its name. Schedule a private tour to see 1,500 prehistoric pictographs painted on the cliffs by native tribes such as the Comanche and Jumano. Some may date back 1,500 years. Many of the drawings interact with the shadows of the sun on cross-quarter days, the midpoints between each solstice and equinox.

### Paint Rock Grocery

Enjoy a classic, greasy cheeseburger and a slice of homemade pie at this grocer and the town's best eatery. The business is a one-stop shop for everything you need, from clothing to pantry staples. If you're in town for breakfast, load up on a massive breakfast burrito that will easily keep you full until dinner.

### 3 Nail Ironware

Follow the smoke rising across the street from the courthouse and you'll end up in the workshop of blacksmith Randy Kiser and his family. They hand-forge carbon steel skillets that are so pretty you could hang them on your wall as artwork, but they're even better at cooking food. You'll want to take one home, but it may take a while: The waitlist is monthslong.

### Concho River

This mighty river runs all the way from just south of Big Spring to O.H. Ivie Lake where it joins the Colorado River. Just northeast of the square along Jones Street is a small dam that creates a little swimming hole ideal for a hot summer day. The river is home to the Concho pearl—a freshwater variety found in Tampico pearlymussels.

### Farm Ale Brewing Company

I'd never had a beer in school until I visited this venue in nearby Eola. The brewery and restaurant occupies a historic school where the former classrooms are now dining rooms. They brew all their beers in the old auditorium and even open the gym for games and fellowship. Come on a weekend and you'll find locals filling up the schoolyard for a live concert.

*So whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path,  
I hope to see you on the road.*

*Chet Garner is the host of The Daytripper® travel show on PBS.  
To view the Paint Rock episode, visit [thedaytripper.com](http://thedaytripper.com).  
Follow along on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @chetripper.*



# It's Goal Time

With soccer's World Cup kicking off, Dan Hunt shares his vision for the 2026 tournament in Texas

By Matt Joyce

**T**he eyes of the world turn to Qatar this November as the planet's best soccer players converge on the Middle Eastern nation for the monthlong sporting spectacle known as the World Cup. The U.S. Men's National Team will be among 32 teams in the tournament, with matches in the opening round against Wales, England, and Iran. Over 1 million fans are expected for the World Cup, and one of them will be Dan Hunt, the president of Dallas' professional soccer team, FC Dallas.

While the quadrennial tournament is arguably the globe's biggest entertainment event, Hunt's trip isn't just for fun: As chairman of the committee bringing the World Cup to Dallas in 2026, Hunt is a central player in his hometown's preparations. FIFA, the governing body for international soccer, announced in June that AT&T Stadium in Arlington will be one of 16 host stadiums for World Cup 2026, which will be held jointly by the

**"The enthusiasm that these fans have and the effort they've made to travel and support their teams, it means so much to them. And you're seeing the greatest soccer talent in the entire world."**

U.S., Mexico, and Canada. Houston is also one of 11 host cities in the U.S., with games at NRG Stadium.

Business and sports run deep in Hunt's family. His grandfather, H.L. Hunt, developed the East Texas oil field. His father, Lamar Hunt, was a founder of the American Football League, the Kansas City Chiefs, the Chicago Bulls, the now-defunct North American Soccer League, Major League Soccer, and FC Dallas. In 2001, Dan Hunt joined the family business Hunt Sports Group, and in 2012 he took over FC Dallas' business operations as team president.

Hunt and the Dallas committee started working in 2017 to land the World Cup, and now their focus is on attracting national teams to set up their 2026 headquarters in the DFW area. They also hope to host semifinal and final matches, along with FIFA's international broadcast center. He envisions fans traveling between Dallas, Houston, and Kansas City, also a host city, for games. "The scale of this is enormous," he says. "It's like the Super Bowl on steroids."



**TH:** Why did your father get involved in soccer, then a fringe sport in the U.S.?

**DH:** His football endeavor started in 1959, and then he went and saw a Shamrock Rovers match in Ireland sometime around 1964 and just loved the game. And then he watched the '66 World Cup final and fell in love with it. He also loved that families could play: Moms and dads and brothers and sisters could all kick a soccer ball around. He decided the United States, and more specifically Dallas, was ready for professional soccer in 1967 and founded the Dallas Tornado. He was about 40 years early on that strategy. It took some ups and downs, but it's really paid off dividends now.

**TH:** Why did you decide to get involved in the business of soccer?

**DH:** I came to it through our family business, and I grew up playing soccer. From the time I was 10, I was playing club soccer. That's one of the things that makes Dallas and Texas so unique is how rich the club programs are. It dates back to when my father started the Tornado. A lot of those players stayed. They were internationals, but they stayed and started families, and they built these youth clubs because soccer was the sport they knew. Dallas has this legacy of great club soccer and great high school soccer.

**TH:** What were the key elements of Dallas' host city bid for World Cup 2026?

**DH:** The rich soccer history, dating back to the Dallas Tornado, indoor soccer with the Dallas Sidekicks, and now FC Dallas, formerly the Dallas Burn. You have that base here, but Dallas is also one of the most dynamic business cities in the world, and Texas has one of the most vibrant economies in the world. And we hosted in 1994 [at the Cotton Bowl]. Now we have a unique situation because AT&T Stadium where the Cowboys play is one of the greatest economic drivers in all of sports. It's globally known. And you also have the two baseball stadiums adjacent to it, so three major sports stadiums adjacent to one another. You start to factor all those things together, and it makes for an incredible bid for the World Cup.

**TH:** How many World Cups have you attended?

**DH:** I've been to every one since 1986. I started in Mexico when I was 10. My favorite was probably 1990 in Italy. The reason is I was 13 years old at the time, and I got 35 days of my mom and dad's time without cell phones. We got to go see 22 matches and travel the country. We drove to 21 of the 22 matches, and you just don't get that time with your parents uninterrupted. It was really special in a country they knew so well.

**TH:** How would you describe the atmosphere of the World Cup?

**DH:** It's like the passion of college football on steroids. College football is unique because of the attachment and association, all the alumni at those games. But it's on steroids when you see a World Cup match—the enthusiasm that these fans have and the effort they've made to travel and support their teams, it means so much to them. And you're seeing the greatest soccer talent in the entire world.

**TH:** The National Soccer Hall of Fame opened at FC Dallas' Toyota Stadium in 2018. How did that come about?

**DH:** It didn't sit right with us that the Hall of Fame had been closed since 2010 in upstate New York. We wanted to bring it back to life to honor those who have given so much to the game. There were other markets that wanted to do it, but we presented a viable plan of building it into an active stadium and soccer complex. We have over 2 million visitors a year at Toyota Stadium and Toyota Soccer Center. You have people who are already showing up, so they can come and experience it. It's also created a side opportunity for convention business. It's not often that you get to sit and dine in the same room as four Women's World Cup trophies.

**TH:** Describe soccer's vitality in Texas compared to 20 years ago.


**DH:** It's not even in the same universe. We got the keys to FC Dallas in 2002. Houston [Dynamo] wasn't there yet, and Austin [FC] is only in year two now. You look at

today, and FC Dallas is having the largest attendance it's ever had. You've seen tremendous success in Austin, and Houston is doing well and has new ownership. It's a great thing for Major League Soccer, building this three-team rivalry within the state. We represent such diverse communities between the three teams, and Texas has an incredibly talent-rich market, producing players for the national team.

**TH:** Are there plans to bring the Women's World Cup to the U.S. since last hosting it in 2003?

**DH:** It's a goal of mine to push U.S. Soccer to bid. The 2023 cup is in Australia and New Zealand, and 2027 hasn't been awarded yet. I don't think we'll be ready to bid on that as a country, coming off the heels of 2026. But I believe the leadership would be supportive of a 2031 bid. I have two little girls who are 7 and 4, and I would love for the U.S. to have the 2031 Women's World Cup, and I would love for Dallas to be hosting.

**TH:** How do you assess the chances of the U.S. men's team in Qatar?

**DH:** We had a shortage of players in their prime in 2018 [when the U.S. did not qualify for the tournament], and now that we go into the 2022 World Cup, we're still super young, but there's some good veteran leadership. My assessment is it's a group that should qualify for the elimination round. But in 2026, I truly believe that we can compete for a semi-final because that core group of players will all be in their prime. And I think we'll have a chance—it's on our home soil. 

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The National Soccer Hall of Fame at Toyota Stadium in Frisco opens Wed-Sun and on FC Dallas game days. [nationalsoccerhof.com](http://nationalsoccerhof.com)

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# VINTAGE

BY JAC DARSNEK, TRACES OF TEXAS

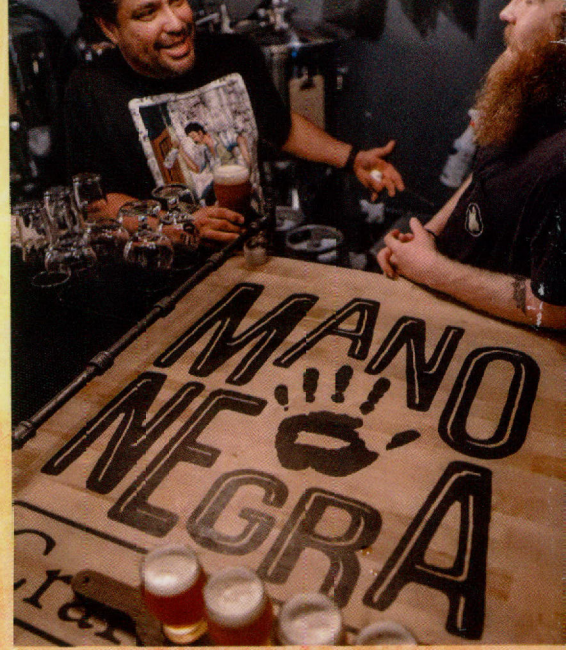


## Wide-Open Spaces

PINTO CANYON, CIRCA 1925

**E**ven today, Pinto Canyon Road in the Chinati Mountains of far West Texas is a lonely place. So we can only imagine how remote it felt in the mid-1920s when Francis King Duncan took this photograph of a woman dressed in flapper attire, identified in his notes as Daisy Burke, overlooking the canyon. Rancher James Edward Wilson, who raised cattle and goats in Pinto Canyon, had constructed the road a few years earlier to access his family's adobe house. Today, the road is an unpaved extension of Ranch Road 2810, linking Marfa and Ruidosa. This photo is one of many that Duncan took in the area. Born in Missouri in 1878, he traveled the U.S., Canada, and Mexico as a photographer and prospector before setting up a commercial photography business in Marfa in 1916. He died in 1970 and was buried in Big Spring. The Marfa and Presidio County Museum houses 2,200 of Duncan's glass and film negatives, a gift from his daughter in 1969. 

*Know of any fascinating vintage Texas photographs? Send copies or ideas to [tracesoftxphotos@gmail.com](mailto:tracesoftxphotos@gmail.com).*



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