

{ SUMMER CITY ESCAPES }

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Texas Highways

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Lone Star Spirit

So much fun to choose from on the Fourth. We celebrate our nation's birthday in myriad ways, whether it's cheering on colorful parades down Main Street, watching elaborate fireworks burst over a local lake, or simply slurping watermelon at a backyard barbecue. And we can always count on Texas towns and cities to add pizzazz to their patriotic parties.

Look for a skydiving display at Lockhart's July Fourth Extravaganza, a hot-air balloon glow at the I Love America Celebration at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station, and hourly artillery salutes (from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.) at Fort Concho National Historic

Landmark in San Angelo. There will be fishing and fireworks at Athens' Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, food trucks at The Chamber's Stars & Stripes Over San Antonio, and a salsa shoot-out and Elvis contest among The Colony's Liberty by the Lake festivities.

One of our favorite Fourth celebrations takes place in the North Texas town of Granbury. As the community and region continue to rebuild from May's tornado devastation, town officials report that the annual Old Fashioned Fourth will go on as scheduled, on July 4-7. The lineup includes a hometown parade, a ranch rodeo, a decorated bike contest, the D&D Rockin' Rods Car Show, the 1776 musical in the Hood County courthouse, and fireworks over sparkling Lake Granbury—all infused with plenty of true Texas resilience. Find updates at www.granburychamber.com.

Until next time, find us online, and have a safe and fun Fourth of July.

Jill Lawless, Editor

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PHOTO COURTESY RICHARD CARSON

Fourth Fests

For a statewide listing of Independence Day events from the *Texas Highways Events Calendar*—from Round Top's small-town celebration (first held in the 1850s) to Houston's Freedom Over Texas extravaganza (above)—go to www.texashighways.com/webextra.

TRIP TIP:

Tower Power

Senior Editor Lori Moffatt just returned from a whirlwind trip to Dallas, where she visited several new attractions, including the Perot Museum of Art and Science and the brand-new George W. Bush Presidential Library. A literal highlight: A sneak-peek tour of the observation deck of the 560-foot-tall Reunion Tower, which has been closed since 2007 and will reopen this fall after a major renovation. Part of the refurbished Hyatt Regency Dallas, Reunion Tower is home to Chef Wolfgang Puck's Asian-inspired, revolving restaurant Five Sixty, where diners can enjoy panoramic views of the city. "When the observation deck reopens, it'll have high-powered telescopes, a 50-foot-long digital panel presenting Dallas history and geography, and a new bar and café," says Lori. "The view from up there is terrific, and it's a great place to gain perspective on all the new things going on in Dallas."

SNEAK PEEK:

Let's Eat!

Next month, we embark on an East Texas barbecue odyssey, explore appetizing surprises in Fort Worth, and find new meaning for "comfort food" in the Hill Country town of Comfort. Plus we'll delve into the rich cultural traditions of our historic dance halls and celebrate the rebirth of Big Spring's Hotel Settles.

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features

COVER STORY

44

The Austin Experience

With a diversity of attractions, Austin is a place where tourists can easily satisfy their recreational whims. Join our editors' exploration of favorite music, museum, dining, and outdoor destinations—and then let Austin's vibrant energy take you where you want to go.

Text by **JILL LAWLESS, MATT JOYCE, AND LORI MOFFATT**



Destinations

- San Antonio **9, 17**
- Hye **17**
- Vanderpool **23**
- Medina **23**
- Houston **28**
- Big Bend region **34**
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➔ Check out www.texashighways.com for more travel information

28 | **Houston's Urban Nature**
 Houston's cultural diversions are well known, but for those interested in parking their cars and venturing outside, the Bayou City also offers unexpected natural amenities like Buffalo Bayou and Discovery Green.

Text by **MARGARET SHAKESPEARE**
 Photographs by **WILL VAN OVERBEEK**

34 | **Transformative Skies**
 The weather of the Big Berd region can be wily and awe-inspiring at once. We turn our eyes to the skies and marvel at the dramatic thunderstorms that visit this rugged landscape during spring and summer.

Text by **E. DAN KLEPPER**

52 | **The Trip to Bountiful**
 A visit to Bosque County demonstrates that this scenic area of north-central Texas serves up some of the best of what our state has to offer, from wineries to barbecue, along with cowboy art and enriching frontier heritage.

Text by **JUNE NAYLOR**
 Photographs by **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**



6 | Talk to TH
Readers sound off

Boston terriers, summer fun, and San Angelo's Mathis Field Cafe

9 | Postcards
Texas Star Trail

The Texas Star Trail walking tour provides insight into San Antonio history—and a chance to stretch your legs. *Plus:* Viva Big Bend showcases music in West Texas; and Fair Park launches Summer Adventures.

17 | TH Taste
Let the Spirit Move You

Texas bourbon is on the rise as more Lone Star breweries and distilleries branch into a spirit most commonly associated with Kentucky. *Plus:* Bartenders play

with shrubs (fruit-infused drinking vinegars).

23 | Weekender
FoxFire's Cozy Retreat

FoxFire Cabins provides a family-friendly Hill Country retreat on the banks of the Sabinal River.

58 | Speaking of Texas
Fun and Games on the Boardwalk

The new Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier opens the next chapter in the city's history as a recreation and leisure magnet for tourists

63 | TH Traveler
A roundup of July events

The Great Texas Mosquito Festival celebrates summer in Clute; Canyon's Panhandle Plains Historical

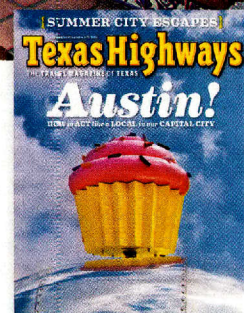
Museum chronicles the region's wacky weather; and Lampasas' Hancock Springs pool stays open late. Plus 201 other fun activities in July.

68 | TH Daytripper
A Drippin' Great Day

Chet Garner soaks up the Hill Country with a trip to Dripping Springs—from natural swimming holes to homemade pastries and limestone rock climbing.

69 | Window on Texas
Magic Dusk

Fading daylight, combined with interesting lighting, can produce magical tableaux at dusk. Photo Editor Griff Smith discusses his strategy for capturing dusk's pictorial potential using Graceland's façade as an example.



About Our Covers

FRONT: A pink treat adorns the Hey Cupcake! food trailer on South Congress in Austin.

BACK: A scene from the Horny Toad Bar and Grill in Cranfills Gap.

Both photos by J. Griffis Smith

Photographic Prints Available

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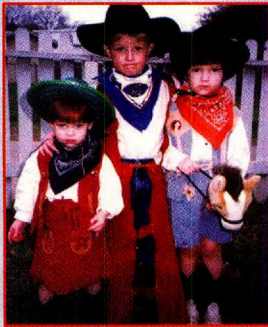
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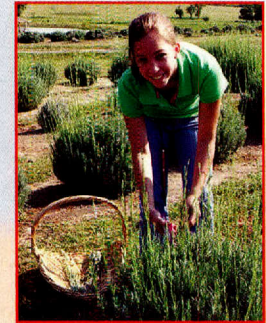
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 Harvest Grape Stomp
 7/20-21, 27-28; 8/3-4, 10-11



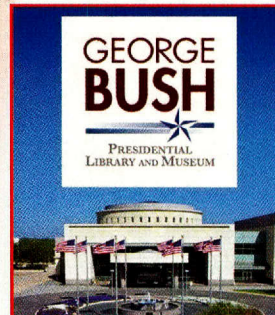
July 4th Summer Cowboy Roundup
 Chappell Hill
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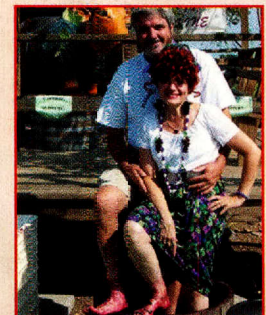
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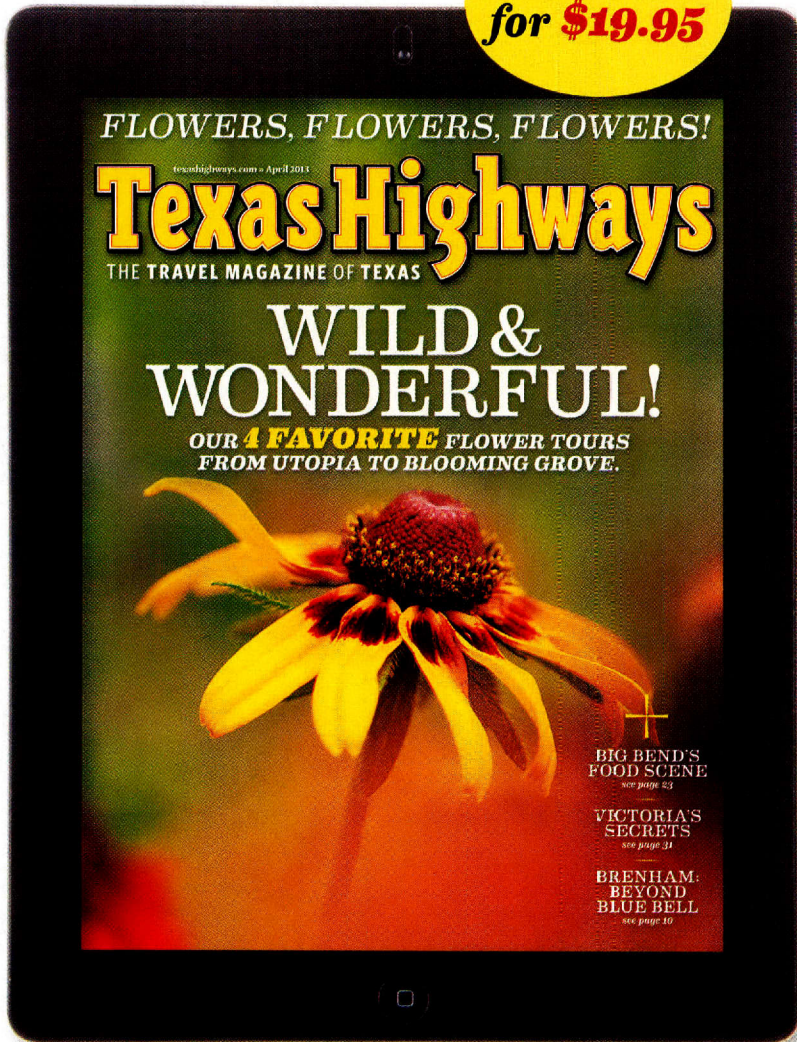
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 7/20-21, 27-28; 8/3-4, 10-11

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**Published monthly by the
 Travel Information Division**

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Publisher Charles J. Lohrmann
Creative Director Mark Mahorsky

Editor Jill Lawless
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For advertising information: AJR Media Group,
 25132 Oakhurst Dr., Ste. 201, Spring, TX
 77386; 800/383-7677; fax 713/942-0277.

Subscriptions to Texas Highways are \$19.95
 annually (\$29.95 foreign). Call **800/839-4997**.
 (Call 903/636-1123 outside the U.S.) Copies
 of current and back issues are available. Call 512/
 486-5811. For subscription services, call 800/
 839-4997. To be removed from mailing list sales,
 write to Texas Highways Marketing, Mailing
 Lists, Box 141009, Austin, TX 78714-1009.

Texas Highways (ISSN 0040-4349) is published monthly by
 the Texas Department of Transportation, 150 East Riverside
 Drive, Austin, Texas 78704; phone 512/486-5858, fax 512/
 486-5879. The official travel magazine of Texas encourages
 travel within the state and tells the Texas story to readers
 around the world. www.texashighways.com

Periodicals Postage paid at Austin, Texas, and additional mail-
 ing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Texas
 Highways Circulation, P.O. Box 8559, Big Sandy, TX 75755-8559.

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Memories Unleashed

I almost fell over when I opened my mailbox and saw the most beautiful Boston terrier ever on the May cover. Almost the exact image of my late terrier, Sir Leo Winston. It brought tears to my eyes.

I always enjoy the many places you show and write about and have been to most all of them. You can point your camera any which way in Texas and always get a beautiful shot of God's Country. Keep up the beautiful issues.

JACK ESTES,
Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Fair Representation

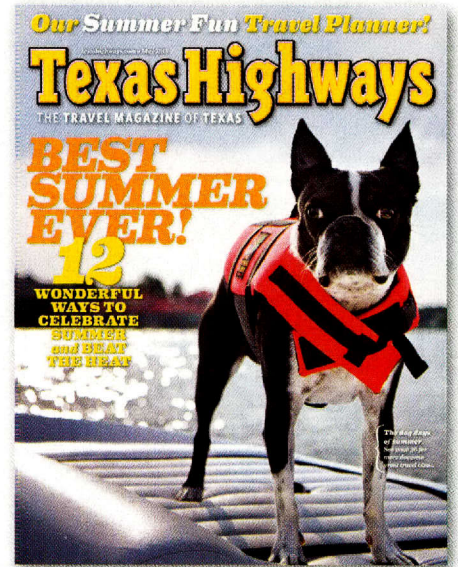
A big thank you for publishing the photo of the State Fair mural located in uptown Dallas, in May's *TH Taste*. The talented artist happens to be my son,

Michael Longhofer. His website is www.longhofer.name.

PATRICIA CAPPS

Landing in San Angelo

Regarding Anthony Head's story on airport dining [*TH Taste*, June]: The list of great airport cafés is not complete until you add Mathis Field Cafe in San Angelo (325/942-1172). All of their food is good, but their specialty is Chinese. Wonderful! We often have to stand in line to get a seat. When on



commuter flights from Dallas to San Angelo, we often hear the crew talk about how they can't wait to get to San Angelo so they can eat at Mathis Field Cafe.

PATSY SHERO

Summer Fun

TH Facebook fans' summer plans:

Fort Davis and Davis Mountains State Park, with a side of the McDonald Observatory! Also, a stop in Marfa and dinner at the Late Night Grilled Cheese Parlour.

—**CARLA COOPER-HICKS**

Camping and paddling at Caddo Lake.

—**JUDITH LEARNED**

Heading to San Marcos, then to New Braunfels to tube the Comal River.

—**RENEA HO-GLAND TAYLOR**

In June, camping at Galveston Island State Park; Balmorhea and Davis Mountains state parks in July.

—**ELAINE PLUMB**

CONTACT TH

We want to hear from you! Send feedback and recommendations to: *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. Email: letters05@texashighways.com.

Please pass this magazine along!

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PHOTO BY KEVIN STILLMAN



TH READER RECOMMENDATION

Tchaikovsky and Mini-Golf

A MUST-SEE at the annual "Concerts in the Garden" at **Fort Worth Botanic Garden** [weekends, June 7-July 6]: At one of the final summer performances (June 23 this year), the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, led by conductor Andrés Franco, plays Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* complete with fireworks.

KAY WARD DAVIS, TH Facebook Fan

Fort Worth Botanic Garden is at 3220 Botanic

Garden Blvd., 817/871-7686; www.fwb.org. For Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra concert dates, go to www.fwsymphony.org.

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MELISSA GREEN, TH Facebook Fan

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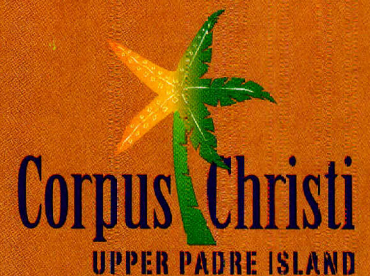
MARCH
TO THE
BEAT
OF A
DIFFERENT
DRUM



While everyone else is having another ho-hum day, why not go your own way? Head for Corpus Christi/Upper Padre Island. Trade deadlines, hassles and heavy traffic for cool breezes, hungry game fish and wide open beaches. And speaking of a different drum, don't forget to take in some live music in an open air venue. Or order up some fresh Gulf Coast seafood. Whatever floats your boat, you'll find it here. History, shopping, art or just walking barefoot down a sandy beach. What happens here doesn't stay here, it becomes a lifelong memory. So grab the kids, a tackle box, your favorite shades and beat a path to the beach.



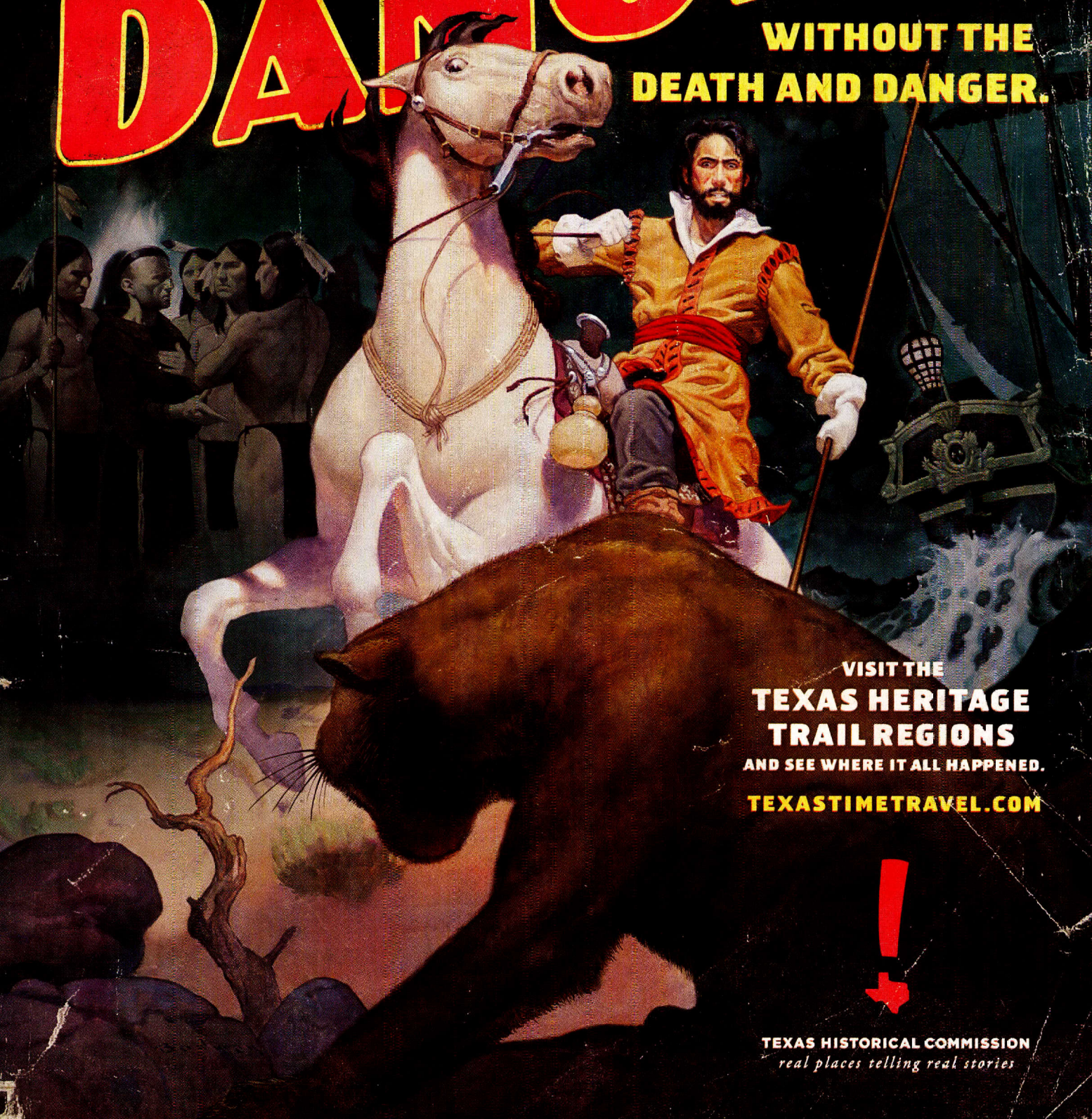
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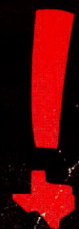
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Postcards

INSIDE: BOURBON IN TEXAS?...17 CONNECT WITH NATURE AT FOXFIRE CABINS...23



Texas Star Trail

Walk through the centuries in historic Old San Antonio Text by GENE FOWLER

The 1929 Alamo National Bank Building on the San Antonio River Walk is now occupied by the Drury Plaza Hotel.

PHOTO: WILL VAN OVERBEEK

Postcards



THE STREETS OF OLD SAN ANTONIO HAVE LONG been noted for their winding and crooked courses. And if you travel the way I sometimes do—the mule-headed “guy way” in which we set out exploring without maps or directions—you’ve no doubt gotten happily lost in the Alamo City’s avenues.

While the “stumble-upon” method of discovery can prove fun and rewarding, there is definitely something to be said for knowing where you’re going. So when I heard about the Texas Star Trail, a self-guided walking tour of historic downtown created by the San Antonio Conservation Society, I hit the streets with the brochure in hand.

The tour is a twofer. Not only do you learn about San Antonio history, you also get a nice cardio workout on the 2.6-mile route. You can start the tour at any point,

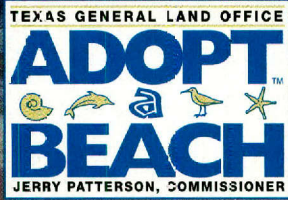
of course, and walk as little or as much of it as you wish, but the annotated list of 79 sites begins at Alamo Plaza. It then sweeps west for several blocks to Main Plaza and Military Plaza before ambling back toward La Villita and HemisFair Park.

At the Alamo, the Star Trail brochure notes the often-overlooked fact that the post’s 1836 fortifications extended across Alamo Plaza, which today separates the

The Texas Star Trail traverses downtown San Antonio, including stops at sites along the River Walk.

The **tour** is a **twofer**. Not only do you learn about **San Antonio** history, you also get a nice **cardio workout** on the 2.6-mile **route**.

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historic structure from modern shops and restaurants. The brochure also points out the partial re-creation of the site's western wall in an area now called Paseo

The Arbor House Suites bed and breakfast is set in historic structures built by Swiss cabinetmaker Carl Frey in 1903 and 1904.

del Alamo. The Paseo features a glass-top enclosure that reveals a section of the original adobe

bricks that formed part of the Native American quarters built along the Alamo's western wall.

On Losoya Street, just west of Alamo Plaza, there stands a statue of the street's namesake, the lesser-known Alamo defender Toriçio Losoya. At 231 Losoya, fans of Tex-Mex flavor may wish to pay homage at the former site of Original Mexican Restaurant, purported to have

While it's **always intriguing to revisit** the Texas Star Trail's "**stars,**" like the **Alamo,** I especially liked learning about **lesser-known sites** on the **route.**

been San Antonio's first fixed-location Mexican restaurant, operated by the Farnsworth family from 1899 to 1959. The building has since hosted various establishments, such as an art gallery and a five-and-dime store.

Continuing the tour, trekkers turn west on Commerce Street at the 1883 red-brick Dullnig Building and cross the 1914 Commerce Street Bridge, one of many places along the trail where a staircase leads down to the famed San Antonio River Walk. But I stayed at street level, where I passed Schilo's Delicatessen—a reasonably priced, historic German deli with a warm, wood-and-stone interior—and continued west on Commerce past a stretch of offices and retail shops. Along the way, the trail brochure provides details on historic buildings that contained hardware stores, confectioners, carriage dealerships, clothiers, and banks. Two structures housed saddlery shops that outfitted Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders for the Spanish-American War's famous charge up San Juan Hill in 1898.

At the corner of Commerce and St. Mary's, the 1926 Aztec Theatre recalls the heyday of grand movie palaces, with "elaborate Mayan and Mesoamerican influenced motifs," according to the Texas Star Trail brochure. Currently open only for special [continued on page 14]

Big Bend Bop

Viva Big Bend showcases music in West Texas venues

AN ABUNDANCE OF LIVE MUSIC WILL FILL VENUES across the Big Bend region July 25-28 as more than 50 bands converge on Alpine, Marfa, Marathon, and Fort Davis for the Viva Big Bend music festival.

Texas artists including the Joe Ely Band, Texas Tornados, Randy Rogers Band, Jonathan Tyler and The Northern Lights, El Tule, and Terri Hendrix will perform as part of the event, representing the state's diverse culture and musical genres.

Event producer Stewart Ramser said about 1,500 people turned out for last year's festival, exceeding expectations and laying the groundwork for a bigger event this summer.

"I spend a lot of time in West Texas and realized there are a lot of great venues out here, and there are a lot of musicians who love to play out here," said Ramser, who also publishes *Texas Music* magazine. "We have a wide variety of genres represented—local bands, as well as bands from across the state, and even a few from outside of the state."

Venues in Alpine—among them the Granada Theatre and



Soul Track Mind, an Austin band that performed at last year's Viva Big Bend, is also scheduled to play this year.

Railroad Blues—and in Marfa—including the Lost Horse Saloon and Padre's—will host nighttime shows. Daytime performances will be held at the Gage Hotel in Marathon on

July 26 and in Fort Davis on July 27 (venue pending as of press time). Viva Big Bend will provide shuttles to transport attendees between Alpine and Marfa during the night performances.

Viva Big Bend is also organizing events for music industry professionals during the festival, including a luncheon put on by the Texas Chapter of the Recording Academy and a songwriting workshop led by Hendrix and Lloyd Maines.

—Stephen Ray, Texas Music Office



FIREWORKS, FISHING, & FUN

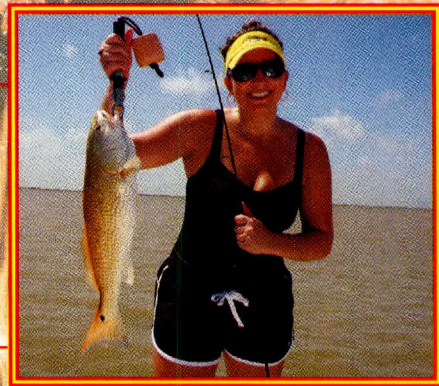
EVENTS

JULY

La Salle Landing & Reenactment- 4th, Palacios TX
Red, White & Blue Gecko BBQ Cook-off -6th, Sargent TX
Market Day on the Square- 20th, Bay City TX

AUGUST

Shrimp-o-Ree Festival- 4th, Palacios TX
Sammy Kershaw Concert- 24th, Bay City TX
Caney Creek Marina Labor Day Fishing Tournament- 31st and Sept. 1st, Sargent TX



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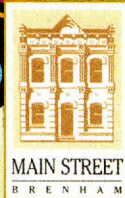
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- July 20 - Matchmaker Band
- July 27 - Suede

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Cruise-In
by Stray Katz Car Club



continued from page 12] events, the Aztec sits catty-corner from the 1929 Alamo National Bank Building. The bank building, which is now home to the Drury Plaza Hotel, embodies another architectural trend of the era, Art Deco. The hotel's ceiling moldings, marble and bronze finishes, and other artistic flourishes in the lobby exemplify Art Deco's bold modernism.

In the next block farther west, the cityscape opens up on Main Plaza, or Plaza de Islas, established in 1731 when Canary

Islanders settled around the plaza. Throughout San Antonio's history, the plaza has served as the center of public life, and that tradition continues today. The 1890s Bexar County Courthouse, built in Romanesque Revival style of Texas granite and red sandstone, stands on the southern side of the plaza. On the western side, you'll see San Fernando Cathedral, where Santa Anna raised a flag of

Revelers gather at the San Fernando Cathedral during Fiesta San Antonio. The cathedral was renovated in 2003.

“No Quarter” to the Texian rebels in 1836.

Beyond the Plaza de Islas, the trail arrives at Plaza de Armas, or Military Plaza, where Spanish Colonial soldiers were once garrisoned to protect the settlers against raids by Apaches and other Native Americans. Though the keystone above the entryway to the plaza’s Spanish Governor’s Palace shows a date of 1749, palace historians say construction may have begun in the early 1720s when the governor and captain general of the provinces of Coahuila and Texas wrote to the king of Spain about needing 25,000 adobe bricks for the structure. Today, only the north wall still contains adobe bricks.

Near the plazas, on South Flores Street, the trail visits one of my favorite lesser-known San Antonio icons—a statue of a lanky cowboy holding his saddle, atop the Kallison’s Western Wear store, which opened in 1899 and closed in 2000.

Back across the river, the trail loops through La Villita. Another of the city’s earliest settlement areas, the historic limestone and adobe structures of the “Little Village” now house art galleries and craft shops. Here, I rested my barking dogs and wolfed down a delicious plate of chicken with Oaxacan mole at the Guadalajara Grill.

While it’s always intriguing to revisit the Texas Star Trail’s “stars,” like the Alamo, I especially liked learning about lesser-known sites on the route, such as a row of homes just south of La Villita on South Presa Street. A surgeon-barber named Richter lived in one of the homes, located strategically by a Spanish *acequia* that provided leeches for his medical practice. Four frame structures built in 1903 and 1904 by Swiss carpenter Carl

Frey now comprise the Arbor House Suites bed and breakfast.

Owner Ron Stinson points out that guests enjoy the spirit of Old San Antonio preserved at his lodge because it’s different than staying at a chain hotel. But even the chain hotels on the Texas Star Trail preserve and re-use historic structures. The Holiday Inn Express Riverwalk, on Camaron Street just north

of Military Plaza, is housed in the 1878 Bexar County Jail.

The Texas Star Trail offers a historical and cardiovascular treat, but be careful to watch where you’re going while gawking skyward at corbels, lintels, cornices, and parapets. Your humble reporter was so intrigued by all he saw that he nearly cashed in his chips by stepping into the busy San Antonio traffic. **TH**

Texas Star Trail

For details about the Texas Star Trail, contact the San Antonio Conservation Society at **210/224-6163**; www.saconservation.org. Copies of the trail brochure are available on the website and at sites along the tour.



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Postcards

State Fair Summer

Summer Adventures kicks off in Dallas

WHEN BIG TEX CAUGHT FIRE DURING THE FINAL week of last year's State Fair of Texas, rumors started circulating immediately regarding Tex's replacement in 2013: Would his wardrobe be updated? Would his signature "Howdy folks" morph into something more cosmopolitan? And could he somehow look, well, friendlier?

While fair officials have remained tantalizingly vague about Tex's new look, we understand: They've been busy orchestrating the first Summer Adventures, which transforms 20 of Fair Park's 277 acres into a tropical theme park complete with rides, games, entertainment, and a new, 500-foot-tall attraction called the Top o' Texas tower, which affords panoramic views of Dallas and beyond.

Tickets (priced \$24.95-\$29.95, depending on height) give visitors access to Fair Park attractions such as the Children's Aquarium and Texas Discovery Gardens, as well as rides on the Swan Boats at the Fair Park Lagoon, and entrance to trained-animal shows at The Island of Dogs and Cats. The State Fair's

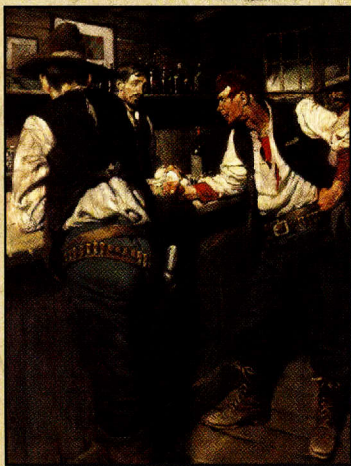


famous midway and ride lineup is up and running, too, including the 90-year-old Denzel carousel, the Windstorm roller-coaster (scarier than it looks!), the Texas Skyway gondola ride, bumper cars, and the 212-foot-tall Texas Star Ferris wheel. There are also play pools, pop-up geysers, and a practice putting green. Many of the fair's concessionaires are open, too—so you can get your cotton candy and corny dog fix before the State Fair officially opens on September 27.

Summer Adventures continues through August 18. See www.fairparkfun.com.
—Lori Moffatt

The Texas Star Ferris wheel is the tallest Ferris wheel in North America.

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◀ N.C. Wyeth (1882-1945) "Look Here!" He Yells. "Listen to What I'm Tellin' Yel!" (detail), 1906, oil on canvas, for *Arizona Nights*, 38.125 x 26 in., Stark Museum of Art in Orange, Texas. 31.2.2.

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NOTEWORTHY CULINARY JOURNEYS



Let the Spirit Move You

Texas bourbon comes of age

Text by KRISTY ALPERT

Garrison Brothers Distillery in Hye rolled out its first barrels of straight bourbon in 2008. To be called "straight" bourbon, it must be aged for at least two years in new, charred-oak barrels.



AS I SWERVED TO MISS THE POTHOLES ALONG A stretch of warehouses in northeast San Antonio, I finally caught sight of the headquarters for Ranger Creek Brewing & Distilling. Even with a towering windmill out front, if it weren't for the rustic metal sign on the building, I might have imagined that the crowds were waiting for access to a warehouse sample sale. Discounted furniture or couture? Not today: Lucky for us, we were in for an entirely different sort of sampling experience—a Saturday “brewstillery” tour.

Tours of Garrison Brothers Distillery include a look at the distillation process. Most of bourbon's flavor and color comes from the barrels it ages in.

We walked through an inconspicuous door, and before our eyes could adjust from the sunny skies to the warehouse fluorescents, a man who introduced himself as “the Colonel” welcomed us with a friendly smile. The Colonel—actually Allen McDavid, a retired U.S. Army Colonel and the father of one of Ranger Creek’s founders—handed us souvenir pint glasses and a stack of three blue tickets, which we could exchange for pints of handcrafted beers and a taste of the strong stuff. I could smell the deliciously

Although many people believe that bourbon can only come from Bourbon County, Kentucky, that's not accurate.

sweet aroma of bourbon as I made my way to a picnic table in the tasting room.

Ranger Creek makes four year-round beers, several seasonal and specialty brews, and two different whiskeys. We were eager to learn more, and after the Colonel and his wife, Reta, made a toast, we sipped our first beer and settled in to learn about the brewing and distilling process. “Making whiskey—remember, bourbon is a type of whiskey—is similar to making beer,” he told us. “To make bourbon, we start with a mixture of corn, rye, and malted barley, then transfer it to a fermentation tank, where we add yeast. The yeast eats the sugar, and in a few days, we have something called distiller’s beer. Then we put the distiller’s beer into a 300-gallon, copper still, where we distill it twice. After the second distillation, it’s called ‘white dog.’ It’s as clear as water at that point. We then put it in new, charred-oak barrels—that’s required by law if



we're to call it bourbon—and age it. The barrel gives bourbon most of its flavor and color. And if we age it two years, we get to call it 'straight bourbon.'”

Colonel Allen McDavid holds court during a tour of Ranger Creek Brewing and Distilling in San Antonio.

We refilled our pint glasses before heading to the manufacturing warehouse (where the grains are ground and mixed), the tank room (where we saw the brew kettles and copper still), and finally, to the aging room (where thousands of gallons of “white dog” aged in rows of oak barrels). The Colonel fielded questions about everything from dry hopping (a beer-making technique that enhances aroma) to Texas’ changing brewing and distilling legislation—a hot topic that dominated the floor on our second visit to the tasting room, where we ended our tour with a sample of Ranger Creek’s newest small batch of bourbon.

The Buzz About Bourbon

Opened by friends and business partners TJ Miller, Mark McDavid, and Dennis Rylander in 2010, Ranger Creek was the first beer producer to venture into spirits production. (When Blanco’s Real Ale Brewery solidifies its spirits plans, it’s expected to be number two.) But distilling in Texas dates to 1997, when Austin entrepreneur Tito Beveridge launched

PHOTO: WILL VAN OVERBEEK



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Taste

Mark McDavid, who co-founded Ranger Creek in 2010, says he was a "Scotch snob" before discovering the complexities of bourbon.

Tito's Vodka and kicked off a craft-distilling movement. Today, according to the Texas Distilled Spirits Association, at least 16 Texas distillers offer products for sale in stores. And at press time, the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission reveals 46 current and active distillery permits. But despite all the vodka, rum, whiskey, and liqueurs made in Texas, bourbon had remained relatively unrepresented until recently.

"Texas bourbon is a new and growing category with a lot of new brands entering it," says Mark McDavid, who credits sipping premium bourbons like Kentucky's Buffalo Trace for his refined palate. "I found bourbon from scotch.



Before I did, I was a scotch snob. Then I started drinking whiskey with our head distiller, and I came to really appreciate the flavors of vanilla, oak, brown sugar, and maple syrup in bourbon."

Wait. Bourbon? In Texas?

Although many people believe that bourbon can only come from Bourbon County, Kentucky—much as true Scotch can only come from Scotland—that's not

The Perfect Sip

TEXANS HAVE ALWAYS FOUND a way to break the mold and handle things with their own flair. The same is true for Texas bourbon; despite an unspoken rule to sip it neat, even Leonard Firestone of the Firestone & Robertson Distilling Company in Fort Worth recommends drinking it your way.

"We think people should drink our whiskey however they like it," Firestone says. "Whether neat, on the rocks, or in a cocktail, find what is most pleasing to you. That said, we think it's worth trying it neat first, because you will quickly taste the quality, complexity, and handcrafted care we put into the product."

—Kristy Alpert



If a cocktail is how you roll, here's a bourbon blend as bold as Texan pride:

Texas Old-Fashioned

In a large old-fashioned glass, muddle a small orange wedge with ¾ ounce simple syrup (a mixture of half water, half sugar). Add 1 ½ ounces Texas bourbon, ¾ ounce Paula's Texas Orange liqueur, 2 dashes orange bitters, and ice. Stir.

accurate. Legally, bourbon must be made in America, but it can be made in any state, including Texas.

“Distilleries in Kentucky invented and perfected bourbon, and we respect that heritage,” says Mark McDavid. “However, the law allows any state in the union to make bourbon, as long as we follow certain guidelines. There are small distilleries like us in many other states making Colorado bourbon, California bourbon,

I could **smell** the deliciously **sweet aroma** of **bourbon** as I made my way to a **picnic table** in the **tasting** room.

New York bourbon, Arkansas bourbon, and so forth. If everyone making bourbon shares our philosophy, we'll have delicious and unique products with the flavor of each state.”

Ranger Creek is currently in the process of aging its bourbon for two years to earn the coveted title of “straight” bourbon. In the meantime, Ranger Creek has released a small-barrel version of the bourbon, called Ranger Creek .36, which takes less time to mature, thanks to the barrel size and Texas’ temperatures. Other Texas distilleries making straight bourbon include Firestone & Robertson Distilling Co. in Fort Worth (which plans to release its first ever straight bourbon in the fall of 2014) and Garrison Brothers Distillery in Hye, west of Johnson City.

Dan Garrison, founder and chief whiskey peddler of Garrison Brothers, was the first Texan to legally distill whiskey in the state. He has been making straight bourbon with strictly Lone Star ingredients since he rolled out his first barrels in 2008. “We make our bourbon with



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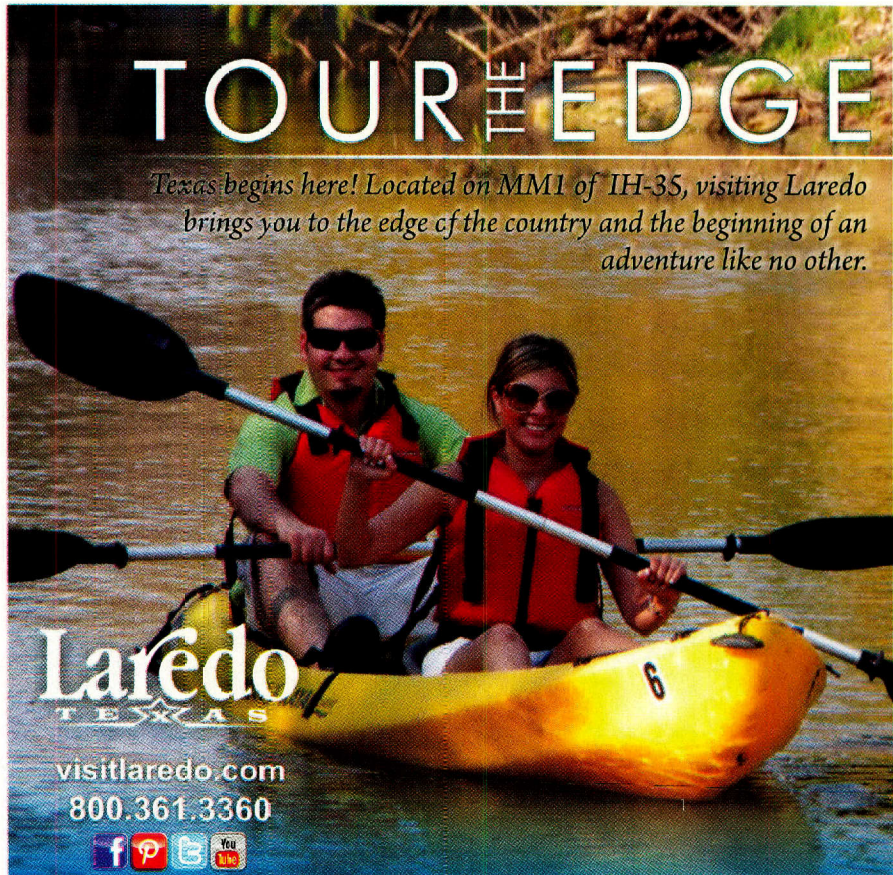
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Shrubs—With a Twist

A sweet and sour cocktail trend

IMAGINE THAT IT'S 1780, AND THERE'S NO ELECTRICITY, NO railroads, and you're a locavore because you have to be," began Austin craft-cocktail guru Bill Norris at the recent Austin FOOD & WINE Festival. "You've got to figure out a way to preserve your fruit and vegetable crop. You would have canned most of it, but you might also have fermented some into wine or made something called a shrub—a fruit-infused drinking vinegar that you could use to flavor water, kind of like a precursor to soft drinks."

Most cocktails, Bill explains, are comprised of a liquor plus sweet and sour elements. "Lime and lemon are delicious, but they can get old," he says. That's where vinegars come in. "Hugely popular in southeast Asia, drinking vinegars add a complex element to cocktails."

To make a peach shrub, combine 1 cup chopped peaches with 1 cup sugar. The sugar will immediately begin pulling the water from the fruit, making syrup. After two days, strain the solids from the syrup and add ½ cup to 1 cup champagne vinegar. "You want the vinegar to linger like a ghost," says Bill.

To make a delicious cocktail, mix 1½ ounces bourbon, 1 ounce ginger liqueur, ½ ounce peach shrub, and three dashes Angostura bitters. —Lori Moffatt



organic corn from the Texas Panhandle, organic soft red winter wheat that we grow ourselves on my farm, and rainwater that we harvest from the rooftops of our buildings and purify ourselves," explains Garrison.

Tour-goers at Ranger Creek taste several types of beer and whiskey—including small-batch bourbon.

From Wednesday through Sunday, Garrison and his team offer tours of the Central Texas distillery, which typically start out with an array of local wines, beers, and s'mores around a roaring, midday campfire. After the group has been primed for the down-on-the-farm tour—where grazing roosters are as common as the shots of white dog passed around by eager tour guides—Garrison and his team guide the masses around the grounds to explain the distilling process before winding up in the tasting barn for a sample of the final product. "What I love about bourbon is the history, the people, the culture, the taste, and the authenticity," he says as he toasts the group. "Whiskey can be made a thousand different ways, but straight bourbon is totally authentic. Drink up." **TH**

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For details about tours of **Garrison Brothers Distillery** in Hye, call 830/392-0246; www.garrisonbros.com.

FoxFire's Cozy Retreat

*Simple, spacious cabins
provide a quiet getaway
on the Sabinal River*

Text by **MELISSA GASKILL**

FoxFire Cabins, located one mile south of Lost Maples State Natural Area, offer a comfortable base for exploring the surrounding Hill Country.

PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH



FoxFire's cabins overlook the Sabinal River, which originates from springs a few miles upstream near Lost Maples State Natural Area.

enough apart for private conversation, or listening to birdsong during the day and the chorus of frogs in the river below in the evening.

Set on the Sabinal River, FoxFire's five-acre property sports a wide, clear swimming hole surrounding a smooth rock large enough to hold several sunning youngsters. The spring-fed headwaters of the Sabinal are just a few miles upstream, and they keep the swimming hole full even in recent dry summers. I waded in the brisk water, spying tiny fish and several turtles, then warmed up on the spacious grassy slope above the pool's thumbnail of gravel beach. I spotted a hummingbird and a dragonfly almost as large as the bird, while yellow butterflies the size of butter pats swirled over the water. I'd found my happy place.

In addition to the cabins and swimming hole, the property houses a playground under some towering oaks, a basketball rim, picnic tables in a grassy circle, and little gems here and there, such as a rope swing hanging from a tree. Around every corner, bird feeders beckon visitors like wrens and hummers. The office has a supply of games, puzzles, and fishing poles, and there's a free laundry room on site. There are also campfire pits and grills outside. Perhaps best of all, my cell phone didn't work, but just in case, there's a phone in the office. The place, it seems, is custom-designed for quality family time.

"We've always been a place to get out of the city and away from all the hustle and bustle," says Burt Herrmann, who owns FoxFire with his wife, Lacy. Lacy grew up on this land in a three-bedroom log home now available for rent. When Lost Maples State Natural Area opened just down the road in 1979, Lacy's parents, Lanell and Bill Kellner, noticed more cars on the road. Knowing there was little lodging in the area, the Kellners decided to build some cabins on their property. In partnership with Lanell's brother and sister-in-law, Wayne and Betty Boyce, they took out a bank loan,

A CHORUS OF BIRDS AND SUNLIGHT THROUGH THE curtains woke me up. I started the coffee pot, pushed open the screen door, and settled into a chair on the deck. Through the tops of the trees, I caught glimpses of clear, flowing water and white limestone cliffs. A few white clouds punctuated the wide blue sky overhead.

I could have spent the entire day in this spot at FoxFire Cabins in the western Hill Country. Four miles north of Vanderpool, and about 45 miles southwest of Kerrville, this collection of seven two-bedroom cabins offers a quiet retreat for the weekend. It makes a great spot to gather the entire family, too, without

distractions from anything but nature and one another. The cabins are simple and comfortable, with queen beds in each bedroom, a comfy couch and wood-burning fireplace in the common area, and a small but complete kitchen. The cabins cluster close enough together to share social time with neighbors, but far

I spotted a **hummingbird** and a **dragonfly** almost as **large** as the **bird**, while **yellow butterflies** the size of butter pats **swirled** over the water. I'd **found** my **happy** place.

bought kits from Canyon Log Homes in Leakey, and put up seven of them, doing most of the work themselves. FoxFire opened in 1984, with the Kellner family kitchen table doubling as a registration desk. The Herrmanns, who are raising their own family nearby, bought the property 10 years ago when the Kellners decided to retire.

The seven cabins at FoxFire each have two bedrooms, one bathroom, and a living room. The area's dining and sightseeing activities. I started with the drive



PHOTOS: J. GRIFFIS SMITH

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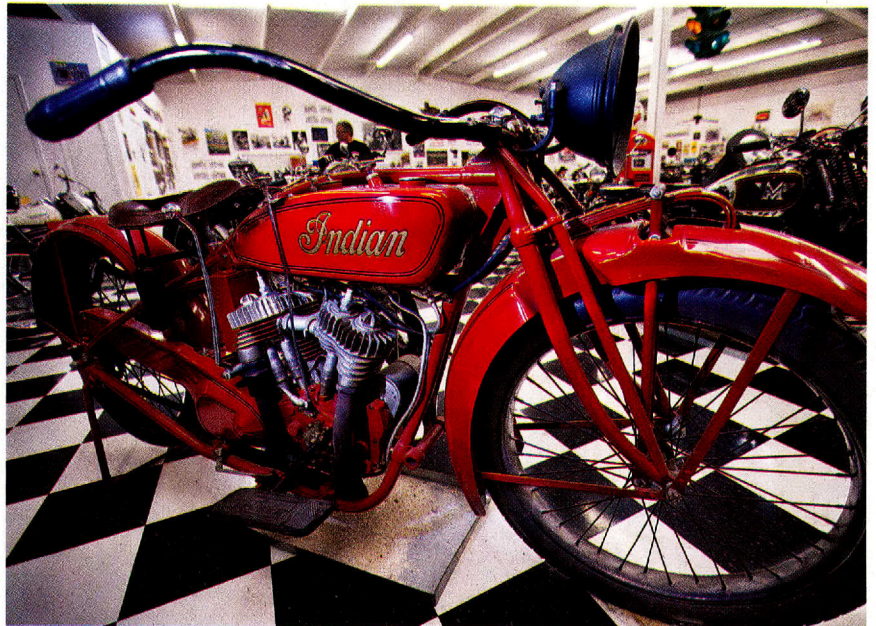


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Weekender



Nearby,
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Museum sports a
collection of **racers**
and **vintage bikes**
dating to **1910**.

between Vanderpool and Medina on Ranch-to-Market Road 337. The road ranks as one of the most scenic in the state, winding up and over a ridge with sweeping Hill Country views, which are especially beautiful in golden, late-afternoon light.

In Medina, I followed my nose to Keese's Cafe & Fresh Pit Bar-B-Que, open for 13 years across from the post office, in the middle of the few blocks that make up the town. Diners have a choice of covered picnic-table seating outdoors or tables inside. Hearty breakfasts—everything from chili to oatmeal,

biscuits and gravy, omelets, and pancakes—are served daily, and lunch specials offered Monday through Friday include Frito pie and a six-ounce rib eye. The barbecue aroma left me no choice, though: I ordered a brisket sandwich, which arrived piled high with thick slabs of meat—none of those thin “tourist slices,” owner Keith Keese assured me. The desserts include buttermilk, pecan, and cedar bark pie (walnuts and coconut in a pecan-pie filling, resembling cedar bark); cobbler; and German chocolate upside down cake, which is as rich as it sounds.

A few blocks away, The Apple Store sells all things apple, from the trees themselves to apple-flavored coffee, pie, and ice cream—all made with tree-ripened fruit from nearby Love Creek Orchards, where 11 varieties grow. The orchards open for pick-your-own harvesting when the apples are ripe in mid-summer. Take advantage of the orchard picnic area, or, at the Patio Café behind The Apple Store, choose from a menu of hamburgers and sandwiches, topped off with a slice of apple pie, turnover, or some other apple-y treat.

One mile north of FoxFire lies Lost Maples State Natural Area, with about



Do!
Pick apples, peaches, and other fruit at Love Creek Orchards

The collection at the Lone Star Motorcycle Museum includes vintage Indian motorcycles. And how can you skip the apple pie at The Apple Store?

12 miles of hiking trails through rugged limestone canyons, across windswept plateaus, and along the Sabinal River. There, I saw more birds and butterflies, springs, and a glimpse of a pair of elusive wild sheep.

Between the park and cabins, the Lone Star Motorcycle Museum sports a collection of racers and vintage bikes dating to 1910, all shiny enough to reflect your smiling face. Lost Maples Country Store, three miles in the other direction, in Vanderpool, carries most of the essentials in case you forgot something. You can also put together a complete picnic from the store's selection of fresh sandwiches, gourmet chips, and bottled drinks.

Of course, you could just skip all the side trips and spend the entire weekend relaxing at FoxFire. I sure wouldn't blame you. **TH**

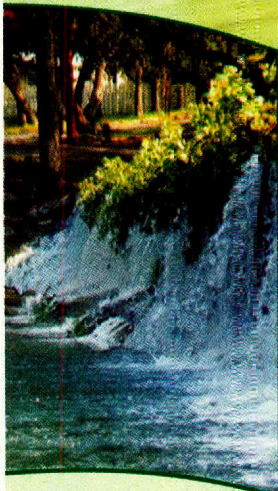
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is at 117 Olsen Ranch Rd. near Vanderpool. For information on FoxFire and other property rentals in the area, call 830/966-2200; www.foxfirecabins.com.



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Houston's Urban



Water, greenery, and wildlife along Buffalo Bayou and in downtown

TEXT BY Margaret Shakespeare
PHOTOGRAPHS BY Will van Overbeek

THE HOUSTON ASTROS GOT things on the right track back at the turn of this century, when the ball club abandoned the Astro-dome's unnatural indoor confinement for the refreshing outdoor playing field at Minute Maid Park. Swapping synthetic turf that can make balls bounce funny and players' knees balk for real grass was maybe the smartest trade the baseball club has ever made.

Yes, the stadium's retractable roof is closed for most of the season, but the move reflects a new attitude in Houston—to find, protect, and enjoy its great outdoors.

From my 17th-floor hotel room at the downtown Embassy Suites, I have an inviting view of Discovery Green park, a network of tidy pathways, multi-textured greenery of lawns, shrubs, and trees, and dashes of primary colors in groomed flowerbeds. Except for an isolated strip of century-old oak trees, this now-blissful 12-acre patch used to be an unsightly parking lot. Five years

ago, by fortuitous convergence of public and

Kayaking on Buffalo Bayou offers a natural respite from the city bustle of Houston.

Nature



private entities and a clever design team, it emerged as a new and wide-open heart of the city. With tickets for a game at Minute Maid Park, I descend to ground level for a walk that takes me directly through Discovery Green and gives a close-up view of the park's attractions for the crowds of children and grown-ups I have been watching come and go.

Indeed, at one time or another, there is something for just about everyone at Discovery Green. Its planners created 25 programmed spaces—from playgrounds to performance areas to a model-boat basin and putting green—that can be humming with activity all at once. Festivals happen here, as do family picnics, flea markets, and fitness classes. As I skip along past children frolicking in the

Gateway Fountain, mourning doves coo their throaty plaintive solos.

On my return that evening, after watching the Atlanta Braves beat the Astros, a percussion ensemble of crickets and other night critters has turned up the volume in the wetlands grass around Kinder Lake. I catch a breeze along the allée of those live oaks that have hung on for a century. Through evening darkness, lights twinkle from within The Grove, a restaurant located in the park. It all conspires to entice me to pause for a minty-fresh Grove Mojito on the terrace.

I'm in Houston? A city symbolic of rapid urbanization, border-to-border pavement, and über-development?

Less than 200 years ago, the Allen brothers—land speculators originally

from New York—found this navigable spot along Buffalo Bayou where shipping commerce could thrive. They established the city, laying out an urban grid oriented to the bayou, and set its destiny to become a large and diverse population center. Railroads arrived, then booms of the oil and gas industries, and the sky seemed to be the limit for growth. Or maybe beyond the sky, because in the 1960s NASA gobble up more than 1,500 acres of coastal prairie for its Johnson Space Center, triggering more waves of development for housing, roads, and shopping. NASA, as part of its mission

A statue of President George H.W. Bush keeps watch over Sesquicentennial Park on the banks of Buffalo Bayou. There are several places to start and finish kayaking journeys along the bayou.



to be a good steward of Earth, did reserve an untouched swath of the prairie for wildlife—deer, small mammals, songbirds, waders, birds of prey—and a captive breeding colony of the highly endangered Attwater’s prairie chickens, which once thrived here by the millions.

But what about other natural remnants? Importantly, what about Buffalo Bayou, which flows more than 50 miles from Katy to the Gulf of Mexico? Does it provide habitat for wild creatures?

The next morning I meet up with Larry Mason of North Lake Conroe Paddling Company to find out. He’s got a kayak ready for me to put in near the Shepherd Drive bridge west of downtown, one of multiple launch points along the bayou in Houston. There has hardly been a glimpse of the water on the drive over. I scramble down a bank, and slog through some mud before a view of the bayou opens up. As soon as I shove off and wave good-bye to Larry for a few hours, I feel a part of the environment of this languid opaque copper-colored stream, totally removed from the city.

OK, not totally removed, but remarkably at a distance. Traffic noises sometimes hum somewhere, unseen and insignificant. I attune my ears to birdsong and watch for turtles, plopped on rocks in the midday sun, and water snakes, slithering on their yellow bellies along gnarly tree limbs that swoop down over the water. It takes but a minute or two to synchronize my mental rhythm as well as my paddling to the steady flow of the bayou. Looks can deceive, and beneath the placid surface the muddy waters move with strength.

By the time my kayak drifts under the Waugh Drive bridge, I have forgotten that this span was built to carry cars and trucks over the bayou. To me, the bridge is the home of Houston’s Mexican free-tailed bat colony. I can smell them, or their guano, rather—earthy, faintly gamey—and hear



Less than 200 years ago, the Allen brothers found this navigable spot along Buffalo Bayou where shipping commerce could thrive. They established the city, laying out an urban grid oriented to the bayou.

Houston Toads

THE HOUSTON ZOO participates in dozens of partnerships to save wildlife species worldwide, but not to the neglect of its own backyard. Or rather, the little amphibious critter that, literally, used to inhabit nearly every backyard across its namesake city—the Houston toad. Their nighttime trill, a mating call, was once a common city sound. As the city’s girth expanded, the toads lost the shallow freshwater ponds where they reproduce and sandy soils where they burrow for protection and survival. The few left in the wild barely hang onto existence at the westernmost edge of their range in Bastrop County.

The mottled gray toads may not be handsome fellows but, with great instinct for insect control, they can play an important ecological role. At the zoo, a few thousand Houston toads are held in captivity for a breeding program aimed at boosting their number.



“Our big news is that recently we’ve gotten natural reproduction from some of these captive toads,” says Michael Forstner, a Texas State University biology professor and one of the partners in the conservation effort. “This was a toad first.”

The team also has a head-start protocol, taking egg strands from the wild, nurturing them at the zoo, and then releasing them to the wild. The reproduction numbers and the variation measured in known genetic makeup of the toads are encouraging. “Now, active stewardship is critical,” he says. That includes private owners who allow toad releases on their land.

Forstner doesn’t rule out wild Houston toads returning home someday—if not to Houston proper, at least to Harris County.

—Margaret Shakespeare

For more on the Houston Zoo’s effort to save the Houston toad, see texashighways.com/webextra.

TOAD PHOTO: COURTESY DR. ROBERT THOMAS, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



Buffalo Bayou Park offers jogging trails and other recreational opportunities along the banks of Buffalo Bayou near downtown.

them chirping at each other and shuffling inside the bridge's expansion joints and crevices. At sunset, the bats will emerge en masse (about a quarter million of them flying at 60 miles an hour) to feed on insects. Spectators can perch on a viewing platform or take a bat tour on a pontoon boat. Unlike most other Mexican free-tailed bat colonies in Texas, these bats don't migrate and make their home year-round under the Waugh bridge.

For most of my route, the bayou flows along the bottom of a ravine, and leafy banks climb up to parkland or hike-and-bike trails. In some areas, debris has collected on rocks and branches, likely not directly from littering but washed down here by natural forces—

the watershed process in action. It's stunning to know that several decades ago a proposal to remove vegetation and line the bayou with concrete nearly wrecked all this. Local activist Terry Hershey, along with then-Congressman George H.W. Bush, thwarted that plan. And 25 years ago, the nonprofit Buffalo Bayou Partnership started enhancing, protecting, and promoting this natural and culturally significant resource. They clean up debris, replace invasive plants with natives, and acquire and restore abused land for green spaces, mustering armies of volunteers. They also sponsor the annual Buffalo Bayou Regatta, a canoe and kayak race.

I contemplate all those paddlers chal-

lenging one another on this waterway, which I have had all to myself, while at the same time wondering when wood ducks will occupy their boxes placed close to water's edge. Then, looking straight up at the clear blue sky, I am amused to suddenly see above the trees bold lettering—Service Corporation International—appearing across the top of what seems to be a misplaced, isolated building. Before I am quite ready—no egrets or

Spanish artist Jaume Plensa created the *Tolerance* art installation with seven aluminum human sculptures in Buffalo Bayou Park. Nearby, Houstonians and their pets meet at the dog park to socialize.



red-shoulder hawks have been in residence today—more cityscape swings into view, and I am approaching Allen’s Landing, where Larry and dry land are waiting.

With several launch sites only a quick walk from downtown, paddlers short on time can still spend a worthwhile hour or two exploring the wilds of this urban bayou. Like I do, they’ll disembark with a whole new perspective on the Bayou City, a nickname inspired by Houston’s more than three dozen bayous.

And Buffalo Bayou provides more than just paddling opportunities for outdoor recreation. There’s also the new Buffalo Bend Nature Park project, which was recently resurrected from piles of industrial rubble and restored to health with native plants like pickerelweed and bulltongue arrowhead. Families of black-bellied whistling ducks have already made the park home, and little blue herons, white ibis, and other migrating species have come to layover or nest. Houston lies on the Central Flyway, used by birds migrating as far away as Alaska and Patagonia.

Heading back west, I see how 700 trees and 300,000 native plants have transformed Sabine Promenade (above the bayou ravine) from a dumping ground of blight, neglect, and erosion to a waterside park with footbridges, running paths, and outdoor art. Still farther west on Buffalo Bayou, I pay a quick visit to Bayou Bend Gardens, which the legendary Houston philanthropist Ima Hogg bequeathed to The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The Hogg family chose the bayou environment, amid the tangled thicket of dogwood, redbud, pines, elms, and oaks, for their estate.

I conclude my exploration of Houston’s wild side with a visit to the zoo. The Houston Zoo aims to conserve one of Earth’s most imperiled ecosystems—the coastal prairie. Only a fraction of a percent of that ecosystem, which once covered the Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Corpus Christi, remains untouched. Even grasslands and wildflowers that once covered Hermann Park, home of the zoo, have given way to cleared areas and non-native plant species. While working on some park-habitat restoration projects, the zoo also has vigorous programs to save endangered Texas animal species, including sea turtles, East Texas black bears, Attwater’s prairie chickens, and Houston toads.

Returning to my hotel, I wait on the MetroRail platform in the midst of Fannin Street traffic, and persistent bird chatter rises above all the urban clatter. I take it as an invitation to come again and find more surprises in the wilds of Houston. **TH**



MARGARET SHAKESPEARE lives in New York City and the farmlands of Long Island and often writes about wildlife and wild places—from the Arctic to Africa. **WILL VAN OVERBEEK** has grown to love Houston in his 33 years visiting the city as a magazine photographer. “I’ve seen a lot of Houston over the years, but had never paddled Buffalo Bayou. There’s a nice current, and in places, you would never know you’re in the city.”

Houston Outdoors

HOUSTON may be one of the nation’s largest urban areas, but many of its outdoor attractions are accessible by foot or public transportation from downtown. For tourist information, visit the **Greater Houston Convention & Visitors Bureau** at www.visithoustontexas.com. For information on paddling Buffalo Bayou, call the **Buffalo Bayou Partnership** at 713/752-0314; www.buffalobayou.org/canoekayak.html; or the **Texas Parks & Wildlife Department**, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/boat/paddlingtrails/coastal/buffalobayou/index.phtml.

Contact information for other sites mentioned in the story follows.

Minute Maid Park, home of the Houston Astros, 501 Crawford St., 713/259-8500; <http://houston.astros.mlb.com>.

Embassy Suites Downtown, 1515 Dallas St., 713/739-9100; <http://embassysuites3.hilton.com/en/hotels/texas/embassy-suites-houston-downtown-HOUDNES/index.html>.

Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney St., 713/400-7336; www.discoverygreen.com.

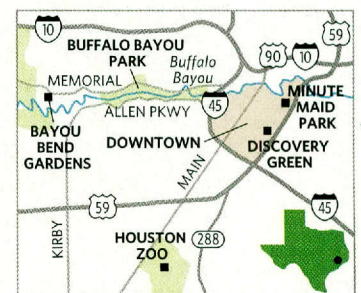
The Grove, 1611 Lamar St., 713/337-7321; www.thegrovehouston.com.

North Lake Conroe Paddling Co., www.northlakeconroepaddlingco.com, 936/203-2697.

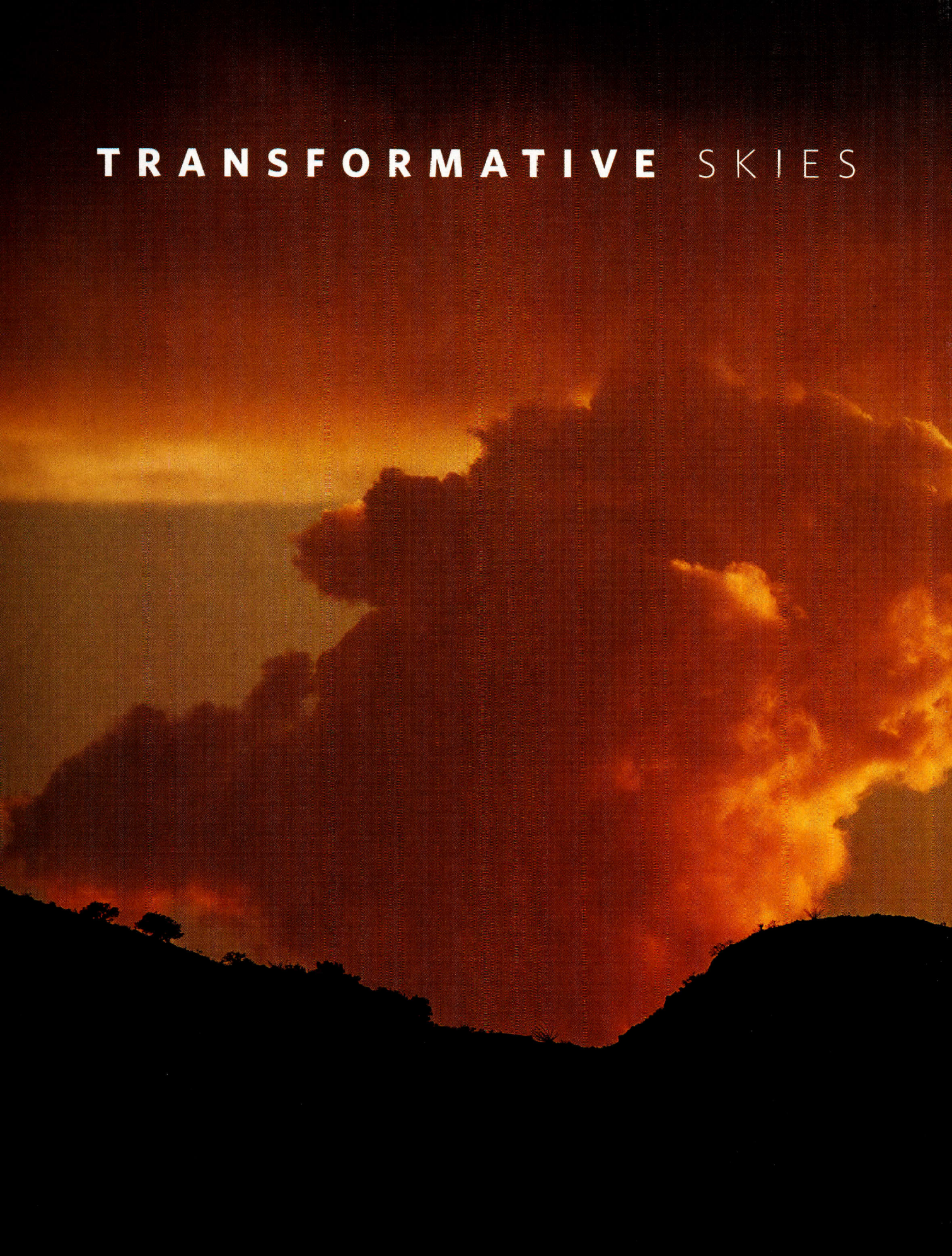
Waugh Drive Bat Colony, www.houstontx.gov/parks/bats.html.

Bayou Bend Gardens, 6003 Memorial Dr., 713/639-7750; www.mfah.org/visit/bayoubend-collection-and-gardens.

Houston Zoo, 6200 Hermann Park Dr., 713/533-6500; www.houstonzoo.org.



TRANSFORMATIVE SKIES





THE BEAUTY OF STORMY WEATHER IN THE WEST TEXAS DESERT

TEXT BY E. DAN KLEPPER



IN THE BIG BEND COUNTRY OF WEST TEXAS, A REGION COMPOSED

of mountains, ocotillo flats, and grassy rangelands of the northern Chihuahuan Desert, weather is often a wily beast. A storm can rise above the arid plains in surprise puffs, turn wicked green in the blue of a Sunday afternoon, and then suddenly dissipate as if collapsing in the effort. Air currents, moisture, and temperature serve as the storm's co-conspirators, revising its characteristics in seemingly predictable yet uncanny ways. Ice, wind, and fire are its progenies, delivering a glass-shattering torrent of hailstones on a balmy spring day, kicking around a whirlwind of dust and flying debris, or, more devastating, striking up a wildfire with 100 million volts of electricity.



A STORM SCATTERS OVER BEAKELEY HILL, EAST OF US 385
BETWEEN FORT STOCKTON AND MARATHON.

To order a print of this photograph, call 856/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

Wild weather here can also be a thing of beauty. Anticipating an oncoming West Texas storm inspires both wonder and trepidation—even within the safe confines of shelter. Unlike routine events in day-to-day life, storms are outside of our control, rendering us mere spectators in a performance of immense power. Yet no matter how severe the action, storms leave calm in their wake, delivering the seasons to our doorstep and perpetuating the remarkable cycle of life in the desert.

Watching the evolution of a storm as it develops above a West Texas desert, where the wide-open country allows an unobstructed view of weather's temperament, provides an eye-witness account of nature's constructs and a lesson in atmospheric. No two storms are exactly alike, but once you're aware of the similar forces at work in all of them, they can be

as decipherable as antlers interlaced in a thicket's branches.

Each spring, just beyond my own backyard in West Texas, when the remains of wild chaff blanket the ground and an expanse of dried stubble hides any new green growth, warming air masses move over the high desert range called the Glass Mountains, gaining heat energy from the bowl-shaped plain below. It's a standard characteristic of this basin-and-range geography, where broad shallow valleys provide a source of convection, causing warm air to rise and transferring heat from the earth's surface to the atmosphere. As the warm air rises, moisture in the air condenses and forms a cumulus cloud, resulting in the birth of a potential thunderstorm. Should the warm air continue to rise, creating an updraft, the towering cumulus will expand, providing ideal conditions for lightning. Once precipitation—in the form of



More on dirt
devils at [texas
highways.com/
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PHOTO © E. DAN KLEPPER

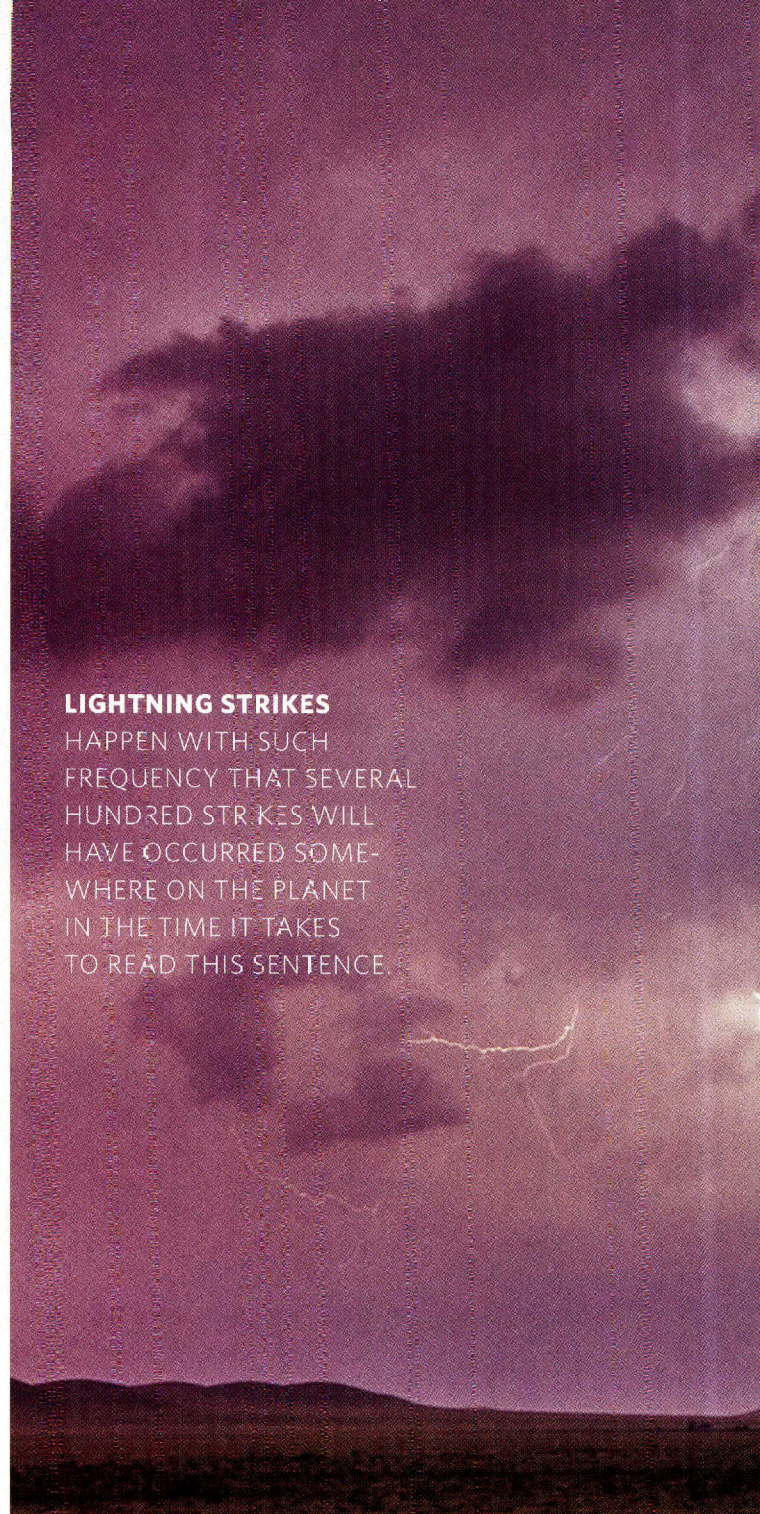


rain—begins to fall from the cloud (also causing a downdraft), the thunderstorm is in full force, increasing the likelihood of lightning across a significant degree of the storm's path.

LIGHTNING STRIKES ARE ROUTINE IN THE Big Bend, often wielding enough transformative energy to cause fuel such as dried vegetation to spontaneously combust. In fact, lightning is hardly rare here or anywhere else. It happens with such frequency that several hundred strikes will have occurred somewhere on the planet in the time it takes to read this sentence. When circumstances are just so in the onset of a West Texas storm, you'll see a lightning strike make ground contact in a burst of flames, followed by a fat puff of smoke, as if a magician has made someone disappear.

Hail is to the thunderstorm as the pearl is to the oyster, the result of hard labor made manifest in a stone both iridescent and unique. As moisture continues to rise in the cumulus cloud column, it reaches extreme heights where it freezes, often collecting around bits of dust or ice crystals, and forms hailstones. As long as the updraft keeps the stones aloft they will continue to grow, moving up and down the cloud tower and acquiring layers of ice that give them irregular shapes. Ultimately, the hailstones' weight overpowers the updraft and they fall. Collateral damage can range from trees stripped of their spring leaves to busted windows and windshields. Even the West Texas cacti suffer a routine thrashing of hail. I have hiked the desert after hail storms and discovered a wilderness covered in the beaten remains of prickly pear and cholla, as if a truncheon-wielding battalion had just passed through.

At the height of its evolution, a thunderstorm will often collapse as a result of the overwhelming power of its own



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energy. As precipitation falls, creating a downdraft of cooler air, it drives a wall of gusting winds forward, eliminating the source of surface heat and moisture that would feed the storm's updraft. Deprived of essentials, the storm will dissipate. The entire cycle, in fact, is often quite brief.

One night, camped alongside a back-country canyon in the Bofecillos Mountains west of Big Bend National Park, I watched a storm unleash a fury of rain and lightning in a matter of minutes, then begin to evaporate just as quickly in the August heat. In this final stage of a storm's cycle, rain may cease but lightning continues to strike. As lightning filled the receding cloud, a



To order a print of either photograph on this spread, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

torrent of runoff inundated the canyon, covering the small canyon floor like quicksilver in the flashing light. As it drained away, hundreds of fireflies emerged from the wet sand, their soft yellow glow filling the canyon pathway and spilling over its edges, their pulses syncopating with the bright white of lightning.

“The cruel rainstorm may produce a fine harvest,” the femme fatale Lucrezia Borgia is suggested to have said. Seasonal storms are more often a blessing than a curse and bring much-needed rain to this high desert country, where the selection of native forbs and grasses—the humble drivers of a vast arid ecosystem—depend upon moisture to germinate, grow, and reseed.

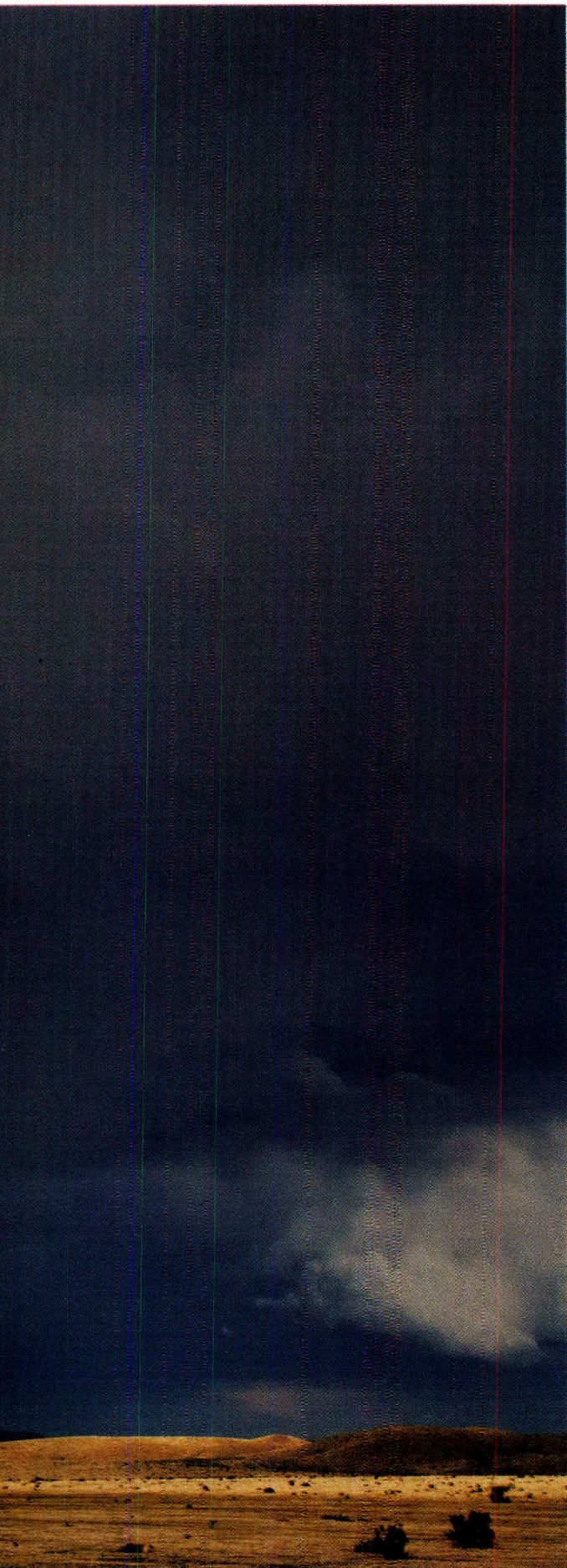
Storms also inundate the canyons and arroyos along remote mountainsides with a welcomed runoff that churns a mixture of soil, detritus, and coffee-colored water, filling wildlife watering holes and raising groundwater levels so that intermittent seeps and springs may flow.

Flooding also submerges the many low-water crossings and culverts that mark this ragged desert territory, creating a sudden surge across roadways with enough force to carry off a vehicle. In fact, as little as six inches of water can render some vehicles buoyant. As is true elsewhere in the state, drivers should wait until waters recede rather than attempt to drive

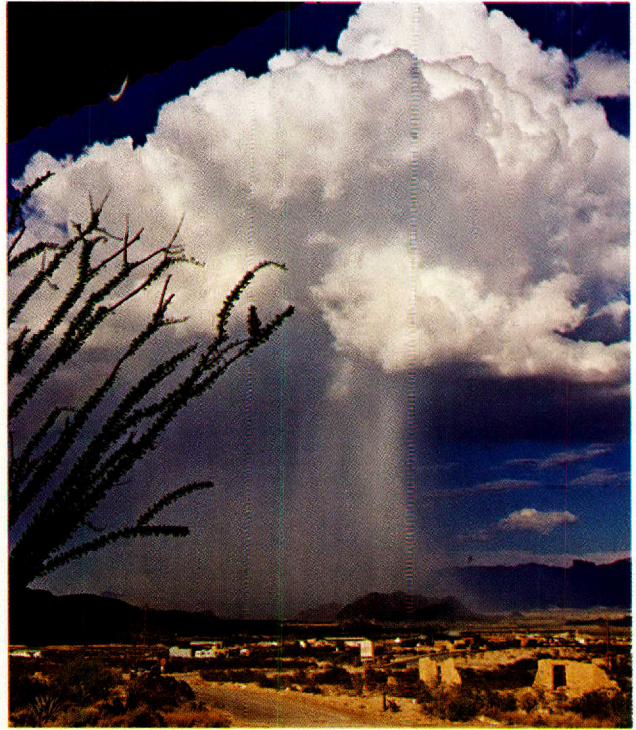
DESPITE THEIR EXTENSIVE MYTHOLOGY, **RAINBOWS ARE PURE ILLUSION** PRODUCED SIMPLY BY THE REFRACTION AND REFLECTION OF LIGHT WITHIN DROPLETS OF MOISTURE.



To order a print of either photograph on this spread, call 866.962.891, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.



RAINBOW PHOTO © E. DAN KLEPPER; CLOUD PHOTO BY J. GRIF-FIS SMITH



through flooded zones. Out here, a low-water crossing is hardly ever inundated for long, so a small bit of patience reaps big benefits, especially in saved lives.

UNLIKE THE WEEKLONG DELUGES EXPERIENCED in other parts of the country, a West Texas storm is often short-lived, and the results can green up the landscape quickly and drop high temperatures by introducing cool breezes. And they almost always come with the added bonus of rainbows that develop along the receding edge of passing rainfall, particularly when storms arise late in the afternoon and are trailed by a clear sky. A prismatic rainbow glowing against a darkened horizon has always been a good omen. But despite their extensive mythology, rainbows are pure illusion, produced simply by the refraction and reflection of light within droplets of moisture. Not only is their detection directly affected by the position of the observer in relationship to the light source (the sun), the bands of color they exhibit are an artifact of human perception. It seems a rainbow's pot of gold is nothing more than its own beauty observed, surely a satisfying enough reward for doing nothing more than looking up at the sky.

Unlike much of the rest of the state, in West Texas the vast horizon provides an unimpeded view of sky and ground where weather's theatrics perform above natural landscapes that have yet to feel the compromise of a human-made world. Weather events here appear timeless, almost as old as the world itself, and never fail to inspire awe in the lucky spectator willing to take the time to watch. **TH**

» Turn to page 43 for weather-viewing spots in West Texas.

"I consider the natural world to be our organic counterpart," says writer and artist E. DAN KLEPPER, "and, much like our own pulse, you'll find weather at its heart."



A FLASH FLOOD SPILLS OVER FARM-TO-MARKET ROAD 170 AT THE COMANCHE CREEK CROSSING EAST OF LAJITAS.



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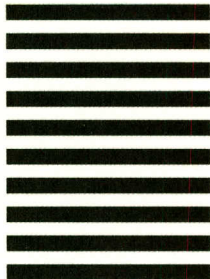
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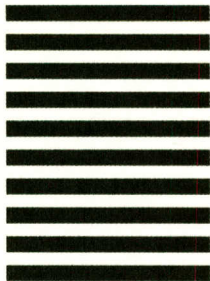
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spectacular (and safe) WEATHER DRIVES

SCENIC ROADS CRISSCROSS THE BIG BEND region, giving travelers many opportunities to watch changing weather. While the views are spectacular, it's important to remain vigilant and make safety a priority.

For one, don't try to negotiate a flooded low-water crossing. Wait it out. Your tires, like balloons, are filled with air. They'll float! If the skies are looking particularly green, you might want to pull under the nearest shelter. Hail may be imminent. If you must pull onto the shoulder, don't forget to switch on your hazard lights. If lightning is striking nearby, stay inside your car. Your tires will ground you. Your hiking boots won't.

Here are several roadways ideal for viewing Big Bend weather. Find area information at www.visitbigbend.com.

US 385 between Fort Stockton and Marathon. Ten miles north of Marathon, there's a paved pullout that provides unobstructed views of grasslands on one side, and the east-facing ridge of the Glass Mountains on the other side influences seasonal weather events from thunderstorms to snow. You'll also be located within the southernmost recognized prairie dog town in the continental United States.

US 67 between Fort Davis and Marfa. This mile-high desert territory creates especially towering cumulus clouds. Watch out for hail. It's frequent enough that local hydroponic greenhouse operators dread the rising rain clouds.

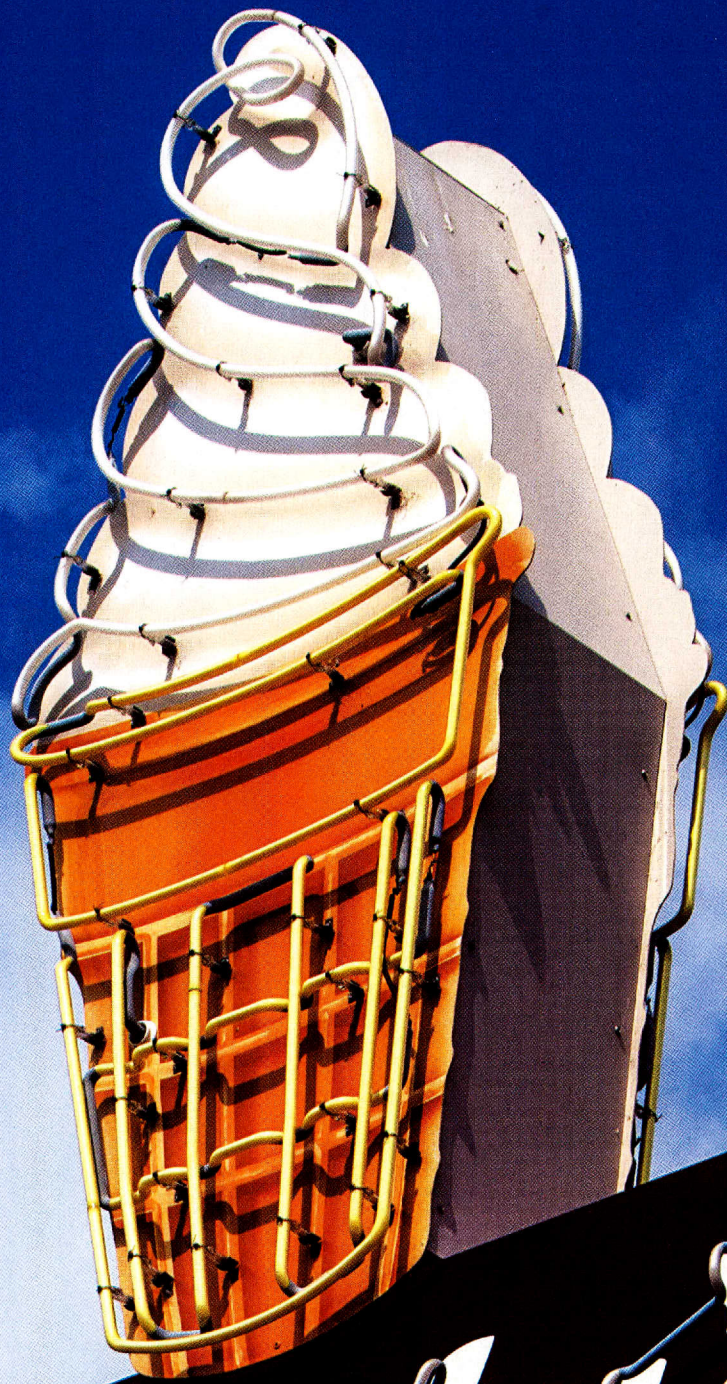
US 90 between Alpine and Marfa. This desert grassland/cholla country produces dozens of dust devils on warm, sunny afternoons. Pull into the Marfa Mystery Lights viewing area and watch 'em rip.

Casa Piedra Road between Presidio and Big Bend Ranch State Park. This caliche road begins just east of Presidio along FM 170 and travels north before splitting, directing most traffic to the interior of Big Bend Ranch State Park. The first few miles offer some of the most expansive views of the mountain ranges westward from Mexico to Marfa. Some of the most dramatic weather in the region arrives here first, striking the ocotillo flats with an astounding force.

FM 170 between Terlingua and Lajitas. Surprising views south of the roadway encompass the Chisos Mountains, miles of low Chihuahuan desert, and the mouth of Santa Elena Canyon along the giant Mesa de Anguila.

US 118 between Alpine and Study Butte. Descending rain clouds often surround the crown of Santiago Peak like puffs from a volcano, alluding to the peak's geologic origins.

—E. Dan Klepper



SANDOLIN'S
CUSTARD



The **AUSTIN** *Experience*

(HOW TO VISIT AUSTIN LIKE A LOCAL)

TEXT BY
JILL LAWLESS,
MATT JOYCE, &
LORI MOFFATT

***It's a challenge to write about the place you call home,** especially when that city is as multifaceted as Austin, a bustling burg flavored by music, art, and the outdoors. In the end, our Austin story is a staff collaboration: **JILL LAWLESS** explores *Austin's kid-friendly enticements*, **MATT JOYCE** re-discovers *Congress Avenue after returning to town from a nine-year hiatus*, and **LORI MOFFATT** embarks on the perfect grownup "staycation" *day*. We had to leave dozens of worthy experiences on the cutting-room floor, so see those online at texashighways.com/webextra. Check the Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau website (www.austintexas.org) for details on hotels and tours, as well as maps and other information.*



Go KIDDO

Jill Lawless' grade-schooler runs a tight ship. Here's her kid's dream day downtown.

8:30 a.m. Fueled on muffins and juice from the bakery at Whole Foods Market at the corner of 6th and Lamar, we hop on our bikes and join other early birds on the 10-mile hike-and-bike trail skirting Lady Bird Lake. Bring your own bikes, or rent from shops like Barton Springs Bike Rental, which will shuttle you to and from the trail. On this ride, we venture only a few miles, stopping at the dog park to watch the pups romp, and at the Texas Rowing Center, where stand-up paddleboarders and kayakers glide along the lake's glassy surface.

10 a.m. Everyone can feel 10 again at Peter Pan Mini Golf, a beloved landmark since 1948. The course (actually

two 18-hole courses) recently received a facelift, with fresh landscaping and refurbished figures (the iconic Peter, Captain Hook, and T-Rex look fabulous), along with new large likenesses, including a Texas horned toad. On this trip, we play the west course, with enough tricky slopes, curves, corners, and loop-de-loops (look out for Tinker Bell!) to keep things competitive—and comical.

11:15 a.m. We make the short drive to Shady Grove for an early shot at the prime patio seating under a canopy of pecan trees. Menu options range from the Bad Chili Dog to the vegetarian Hippie Sandwich. On this late-spring Saturday, my family stays true to our favorites: Thai grilled chicken salad,

Truckstop Meatloaf, and the bacon burger with chili-cheese fries.

1 p.m. The University of Texas at Austin campus offers several fun family diversions. We're regulars at the Texas Memorial Museum, part of UT's Texas Natural Science Center, where we often stop in and view the Texas Pterosaur specimen—with its 40-foot wingspan—suspended from the ceiling of the Great Hall, or to browse the books, geodes, fossils, and toys at the museum store. The exhibits here include mounted specimens in the Hall of Texas Wildlife, interactive displays on biological evolution in the Hall of Biodiversity, and hundreds of fossils and dinosaur specimens (see the 30-foot Onion Creek Mosasaur!) in the Hall of Geology and Paleontology.

2 p.m. We scurry several blocks to the UT Tower for an hourlong tour that takes us to the observation deck of the 307-foot-tall landmark, added to campus in 1937. Tip: Reserve tickets in advance (\$6) and read the guidelines at www.utexas.edu/tower. After passing through metal detectors, our group takes an elevator to the 27th floor, then climbs three flights to the



Nature-lovers of all stripes frequent the 10-mile hike-and-bike trail skirting Lady Bird Lake; a land-and-lake tour with Austin Duck Adventures shows off the sights; Peter Pan Mini Golf opened in 1948.



observation deck (there's an auxiliary elevator, too). A wire cage safely encloses the deck, and the eye-popping views inspire us with a new perspective of our home city and admiration for its hilly surrounds. Our student tour guides provide tower trivia: The gold leaf on the clock faces is original, and the same carillonneur (Tom Anderson) has played the tower bells for decades (including the death march during finals!).

4 p.m. Back downtown at the Austin Visitor Center, we enjoy the souvenir shop (magnets, shirts, home décor—all things Capital City) and sip on Austin-based Sweet Leaf Tea as we wait to join an Austin Duck Adventures land and lake tour. As we board the U.S. Coast Guard-inspected Hydra Terra vehicle, our guide hands us plastic duck-bill-shaped kazoos and we join our fellow tour-goers in the quacking cacophony. Soon, we're off on a 75-minute journey up Congress Avenue, by the 1886 Driskill Hotel, to the Capitol and the Governor's Mansion, and past other landmarks, like one of the city's moonlight towers and the historic Treaty Oak. And just as the little quackers in our group start to glaze over from Austin TMI, the guide announces our impending plunge into Lake Austin. Down the boat ramp we go, and—swoosh!—our amphibious vessel becomes waterborne. We motor by marinas, waterfront homes, and Tom Miller Dam, and before long we're back on land again. We pass within sight

of the Stevie Ray Vaughan statue on the hike-and-bike trail, and wrap up the tour quacking to a rousing rendition of the Chicken Dance.

5:45 p.m. We opt for a simple dinner, and join the line at the walk-up window at Sandy's—a 67-year-old burger and frozen custard hotspot on Barton Springs Road—for the twice-a-week special (\$4.09 for a burger, fries, and drink). We dine at the picnic tables out back, then order a chocolate-and-vanilla custard cone and milkshakes to savor on our way down the street to Butler Park, where kids dart about in the pop fountains and couples picnic by the pond. We climb the observation hill to finish our treats and soak in the city skyline view.

7:30 p.m. Our day ends where it began, along the hike-and-bike trail—this time in the shadow of the Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge, home to up to 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats from March to October. We join fellow bat-watchers on a grassy berm near the *Austin-American Statesman* building (which offers free parking for the spectacle), while other observers line the bridge above, watch from tour boats, water bikes, and kayaks, or congregate on patios at nearby waterside restaurants. As the sun starts to set, we anticipate the mass bat exodus. Then, as if prompted by a special signal squeak, the bats stream from their crevices, forming dark swarms as they fly skyward for their nightly feed on pesky insects—up to 20,000 pounds! They'll return to their downtown Austin home by morning. We'll be back soon, too. »





What to do? CONGRESS AVENUE

*Matt Joyce explores life on Austin's aorta,
where history meets quirky.*

Texas Capitol and Visitor Center

The Capitol—the historic cornerstone of Congress Avenue—offers 30-minute tours throughout the day, starting in the south foyer. Meet a guide or take one of the self-guided tour brochures and strike out on your own.

The guided tours are worth the time, because the guides know their stuff. As you pass through the 1888 building marveling at the architecture, paintings, and exhibits, you'll discover many interesting stories. It's a Texas history buff's dream.

For example, did you know that the building's "Sunset Red" granite was quarried near Marble Falls and transported on a specially built railroad to Austin, and that Scottish stonemasons were brought in after the local stonecutters union boycotted the project over the use of convict labor?

Just east of the Capitol, the Capitol Visitor Center—located in the 1858 General Land Office building—provides more insight



Between March and October, the nightly exodus of Mexican free-tailed bats from the Congress Avenue bridge thrills sight-seers; the terrazzo floor of the Capitol presents symbols from Texas history; Home Slice adds to the dining mix on Congress Avenue.

into the Capitol's history and major restoration project of the 1990s. Also, check out the exhibit about author William Sidney Porter, aka O. Henry, an interesting character who worked as a GLO draftsman while developing his writing career on the side.

Museums Congress is home to several museums beyond the Capitol grounds. North of the Capitol, the Bullock Texas State History Museum serves up a sweeping view of the Lone Star story, with exhibits built around the themes of land, identity, and opportunity. There's also a terrific gift shop.

South of the Capitol, the AMOA-Arthouse challenges visitors with contemporary art inside its boxy white building in the thick of downtown. You never know what you'll see. During a recent visit, a darkened theater room screened a short video of trash and debris being thrown

onto a city street. Was it playful or severe? I don't know.

Two blocks south of the Arthouse, the Mexic-Arte Museum highlights Mexican art and culture, as well as exhibits related to the local Mexican-American community.

Lady Bird Lake The lake that divides north and south Austin—actually part of the Colorado River—has been an epicenter of recreational activity for generations and is perhaps the biggest reason for Austin's reputation as an outdoorsy city. These days, the Congress Avenue bridge over Lady Bird Lake is most famous as the home of the largest urban colony of Mexican free-tailed bats in North America.

Music You'll find a handful of live music clubs along Congress Avenue, including two of Austin's most enduring venues—the Continental Club, which opened in 1957, and the Elephant Room, which dates to 1991.

The Continental Club, on South Congress, features a rockabilly vibe, although its two stages—including the upstairs "gallery"—present a variety of sounds, from swing to country and garage rock. Of note to day-trippers, the Continental has bands starting at 6:30 or 7 p.m. on weeknights, and 3:30 p.m. on weekends. The club is a reliable place to catch some of Austin's best musicians and experience the spirit of the music scene.

The Elephant Room, a basement club

north of the river, is Austin's version of a big-city jazz club. It's the place to go to hear soloists and ensembles that may provide a breath of fresh air amid all the country-jangle and college rock.

Strolling down SoCo, you might get lucky and stumble upon an impromptu jam session of surprisingly talented buskers, or an outdoor show at the garden stage of Güero's Taco Bar. It's mighty satisfying to happen upon a free concert by a smokin' band under the shade of Güero's oak trees—cold drinks and tacos *al pastor* within easy reach.

Eats As if there weren't enough restaurants on Congress Avenue before, the number of establishments has spiked in recent years with the onset of the food-truck trend. There are dozens of good eateries between the Capitol and South Congress, including a few of the food trucks that have been shoehorned into parking lots and undeveloped corners.

Many of the restaurant highlights can be found on South Congress, where you can easily walk to another place if you encounter daunting wait times at your first choice. One of the realities of the new Austin is that almost everything worth doing is often crowded, and dining on SoCo is a prime example.

If you're in the mood for pub grub, Doc's Motorworks offers a fun patio and an extensive menu of burgers, salads, sandwiches, and other platters. The aforementioned Güero's is a Tex-Mex stalwart with a fine lineup of plates that sometimes attracts celebrity diners: President Bill Clinton's 1995 visit inspired the "El Presidente" entrée. Among the food trucks, one of my favorites is Ms. P's Electric Cock, which serves gently spiced and crunchy fried chicken from a converted Airstream trailer.

Also on SoCo, Enoteca Vespaio is a terrific Italian café. During a recent visit with the family, the crisp-crust cheese pizza thrilled our two-year-old, while the spaghetti carbonara—with a subtle and delicious cream sauce—and the mufaletta—flavored by a tasty tapenade—satisfied the adults. The weather was favorable for patio seating, which provided an ideal opportunity for people-watching—one of the best pastimes on any portion of this historic and funky strip. »



FOOTLOOSE and Fancy-Free

*Lori Moffatt plays hooky—
and tourist—for the day.* ✨

Morning A whooping-and-hollering plunge into the deep end of Barton Springs pool—the three-acre, spring-fed swimming hole that has welcomed swimmers for hundreds of years—delivers an instant jolt of gratitude, perspective, and refreshment. In the winter, steam rises from the 68-degree water and creates a serene, painterly scene. But I love the pool most in the summer, when the water and pecan-shaded hillsides come alive with teenagers walking hand-in-hand, sinewy yoga devotees practicing poses near the deep end, doughy-kneed toddlers in rainbow-hued floaties hesitating

poolside, and devoted swimmers slicing rhythmically through the water. Four laps makes a mile's swim, and after a hot solar shower and a change of clothes, I'm in full vacation mode.

Midday The nationwide food-truck trend is alive and well in Austin, and some trailers have graduated to brick-and-mortar status, launching chefs such as Bryce Gilmore (whose Odd Duck trailer birthed a dining hotpot called Barley Swine in 2010) to celebrity-chef status. Food trucks are by nature ephemeral; they go where the crowds—and real estate—are, so it's a good idea to have a Plan B. (Websites about the city's food trucks include www.austinfoodcarts.com and www.bestaustinfoodtrucks.com.)

And so, flexibility came in handy as I dreamed of a spicy Vietnamese *banh mi*—grilled lemon-grass pork on a baguette with shredded cucumber and carrot—from the popular Lulu B's food truck, currently parked at the southeast intersection of Oltorf and South Lamar. Discovering the trailer closed for the day, I pointed my car a few blocks north and headed to Lick, a tiny ice-cream shop serving flavors such as caramelized carrots-and-tarragon, goat cheese-thyme-honey, and cilantro-lime ice creams. Lick uses ingredients from such Texas spots as Austin's Boggy Creek Farm, Garrison Brothers Distillery in Hye, Texas Olive Ranch in Carrizo Springs, and Mill-King Creamery in McGregor.

Lick's neighbors include the aforementioned Barley Swine and a cheese-and-charcuterie shop called Henri's, where I stopped for a goat cheese-and-arugula sandwich before indulging in dessert next door. Two petite scoops (lemon-poppo-seed and beet-mint) set a sweet tone for the rest of my day.

Afternoon The building boom that sputtered in 2008 has rebounded, with construction cranes jutting into the skies throughout the city and retail and restaurants opening at a lively clip. In the downtown area, perhaps no area has been transformed as much as the 2nd Street District, a bustling cross-hatch of streets anchored by the Austin Music Hall per-

Barton Springs Pool delivers refreshment year-round; City Hall turns public art on its ear; Chef Paul Qui's food-truck empire, East Side King, offers sophisticated fare like roasted pork-belly buns and five-spice chicken.



formance space; dozens of boutiques, nightclubs, and restaurants; the swanky W Hotel and Austin City Limits theater; and Austin's gleaming, copper-and-limestone City Hall. I found easy

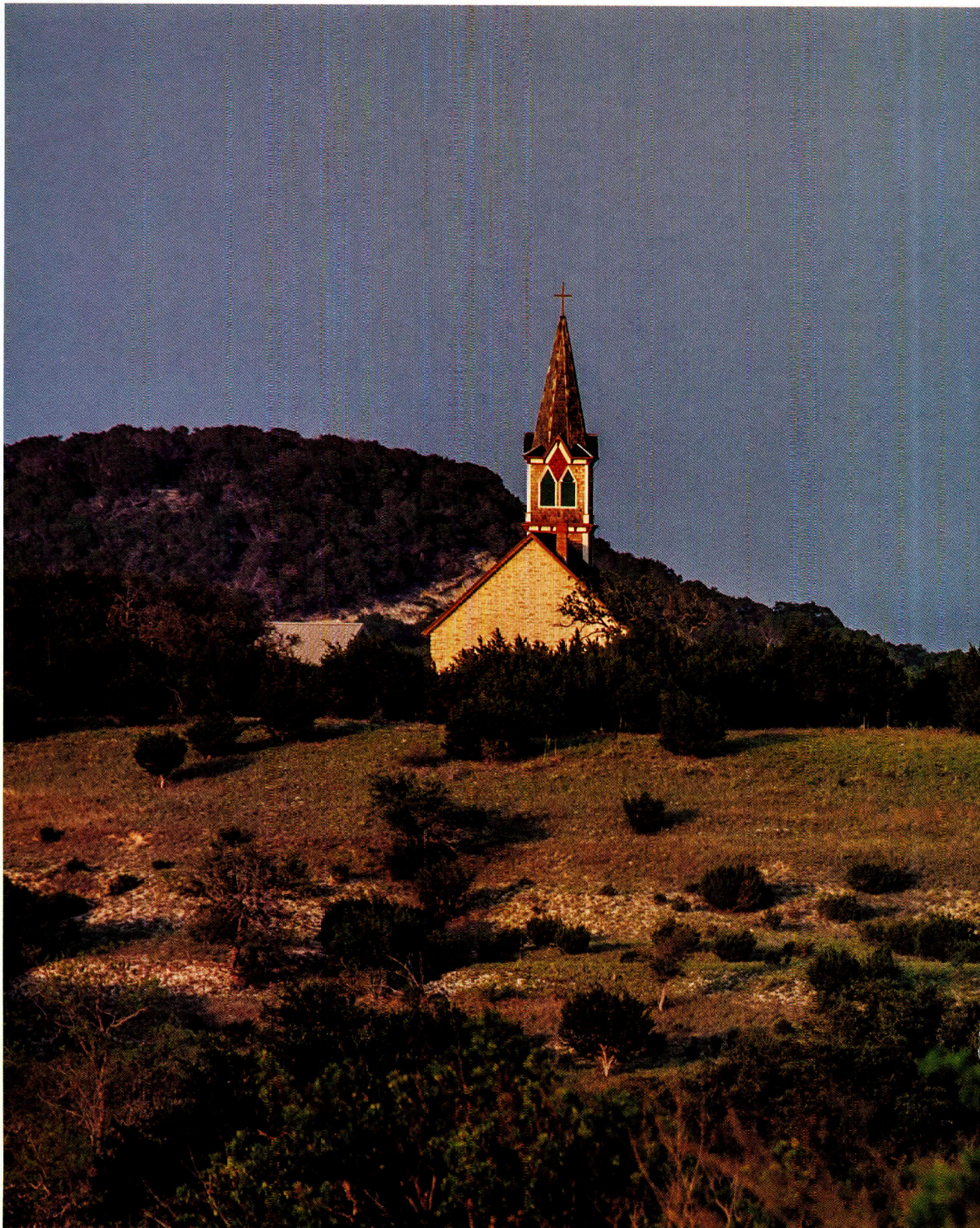
street parking (\$3 for 3 hours) near the Music Hall and set off on foot to explore.

The bronze Willie Nelson statue in front of the W Hotel may be the 2nd Street District's most famous piece of public art, but artwork also abounds inside City Hall, which for nine years has hosted an annual exhibit of more than 150 paintings, sculptures, photographs, and mixed-media pieces from regional artists. Found in the hallways, lobbies, and conference spaces of City Hall's first three floors, the People's Gallery works for 2013 include sculptures made of paint rollers and handmade pom-poms, blown-glass lungs, and recycled newspaper pulp. My favorite this year: a 1950s-style dress sewn from cotton printed with artist Bethany Cobb's collection of rejection letters. Pick up a guide to the exhibit on the second floor; admission is free.

Depending on your mood and pocket-book, other fun 2nd Street activities include a meal and an art-house movie at the Violet Crown Cinema (free three-hour parking at the garage on 2nd and San Antonio); Spanish tapas and sangria

at Malaga (happy hour starts at 4; I love the fried artichoke hearts with lemon aioli); and shopping for Austin souvenirs like T-shirts and locally made jewelry at Austin Rocks. (Also, don't overlook the teen emporium that is Urban Outfitters; amid the frayed denim short-shorts and crocheted vests is an old-fashioned photo booth: The resulting photo-strip is a kitschy, fridge-worthy souvenir.)

Evening After Austin's central-city Robert Mueller Airport closed in 1999, the runways, hangars, control tower, and vast acreage lay fallow for nearly a decade before new development began to slowly take root. Today, amid homes, condos, retail, and the soon-to-open Dell Children's Museum (relocating here from 2nd Street), a Saturday Farmer's Market and hike-and-bike trails draw visitors from elsewhere in the city. Nearby is Contigo, an open-air restaurant that has brought a new culinary sensibility to a part of town previously untouched by the farm-to-table trend. Here, Chef Andrew Wiseheart oversees a changing menu of dishes like smoked shiitake mushrooms and ox tongue sliders, house-made pickles and rabbit pâté, and my favorite Contigo snack of all time—green beans fried in a light rice-flour batter and served with chili-spiked mayo. The Contigo mixologists are just as creative with their craft cocktails. As I wrapped up my day over a concoction called a Vinegaroon (tequila, sage, pineapple, and the licorice-flavored liqueur Herbsaint), I toasted to Austin's inventive spirit. Cheers! Here's to a great city. **TH**





the trip to
Bountiful

Venture beyond the scenic vistas around Bosque County to find art and history museums, a winery, an historic theater, and tasty barbecue.

TEXT BY *June Naylor* PHOTOGRAPHS BY *J. Griffis Smith*

St. Olaf Lutheran Church, called "The Rock Church," in Cranfills Gap is the second of two beautiful, historic churches built by the congregation of the Lutheran Church in Norse to serve Norwegian settlers.

To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.



A series of limestone ledges partially surrounding the small lake inside Meridian State Park has long been my go-to place when I need to disconnect with the hectic world and enjoy a quiet interlude with nature. Just over an hour's drive from my home in Fort Worth, the park's cedar thickets, rocky hills, and serene water, tucked away in the landscape that gives way to the Hill Country, restore me when city life wears thin.

On my most recent trip south to Bosque County for a hike, however, I budgeted time to indulge my growing curiosity over the buzz surrounding an art center, barbecue joint, and winery down that way. It turns out, more than pretty scenery awaits in Clifton and Meridian, the pair of towns sitting about halfway between Stephenville and Waco.

Though my journey lasted just one very full day, I quickly saw that a return visit with an overnight stay—providing more time to investigate the historic attractions, poke around in creaky antiques shops, taste a little more wine, and study the night sky over the Bosque and Brazos rivers—makes a lot of sense. Here's how my future adventure might unfold.

Stopping first at the Bosque Arts Center in Clifton, I'm reminded that the legendary cattle-drive path known as the Chisholm Trail cut through this terrain nearly 150 years ago. As part of the center's focus on representational art, the gallery draws plenty of attention to its Western artworks, paintings, and sculpture. Together, they reflect the cowboy heritage of the region and represent a growing colony of artists calling Bosque County home. An annual art competition and exhibition in September attracts an admirable collection of work portraying realistic subjects. The arts center is home, as well, to a regional artisans' guild, whose jewelry, pottery, metal art, furniture, gourds, and quilts are displayed at various times.

From the arts center, it's a two-block walk to the Bosque Museum, home to the Horn Shelter Exhibit, an archeology display depicting life here from the Paleo-American culture some 11,000 years ago. My personal favorite at the museum, however, remains the Norwegian Collection, which traces the Norse community settlement in Bosque County. I'm fascinated anew each time I look at the beautiful hand-painted furniture and study the history of Cleng



I'M FASCINATED ANEW each time I look at the beautiful hand-painted furniture and study the history of **Cleng Peerson**, considered the **Norwegian** immigration leader, who established this area for his people.

Peerson, considered the Norwegian immigration leader, who established this area for his people, forging a deep cultural home that remains strong today—especially at the nearby Norse settlement I'll visit later.

Buzzing a few blocks away to downtown Clifton, I look to see what movie will show that evening at the CLIFTEX Theatre, billed as the state's oldest movie house in continuous operation. Opened in 1916 as the Queen Theater, it moved a few doors down in 1927 to show talkies. The theater features a 1930s look (including Art Deco side lights and wooden seats in the auditorium) and was refurbished in 2008.

Around the small downtown, I find a handful of antiques shops in which to dawdle. Temptations include delicate, handstitched tea towels, vintage water pitchers, a well-worn cast-iron Dutch oven, and old cookbooks that make me miss my grandmothers.

Lunchtime means a short drive to Bunkhouse BBQ, a Clifton restaurant that friends in Fort Worth claim is worth a daytrip in itself. The serving line takes me aback, as the selections can overwhelm: Smoked-meat choices include beef brisket that's

FACING PAGE: At Bunkhouse BBQ, Rickey Countryman slices sausages for lunchtime diners. **ABOVE:** The Bosque Museum showcases furniture used by Norwegian settlers.



IN NEARBY CRANFILLS GAP, *the Horny Toad Bar and Grill* guarantees a good time.

Dance and eat at the Horny Toad Bar and Grill. Check the bar's website for live music information.

sliced or chopped, sausage, pork ribs, pulled pork, ham, turkey and chicken wings, with all the usual sides. Bunkhouse goes the extra mile by offering baked potatoes stuffed with any choice of barbecue, as well as wrap sandwiches filled with barbecue, cheese, grilled onion, and a salad mix. I'm happy with a chopped-beef sandwich and a side of potato salad, leaving room for liquid treats next door.

Just a few steps away, Red Caboose Winery offers a tasting room where folks can sample libations produced right here in Bosque County. I've been mightily impressed with the wines Red Caboose has made available at Texas wine events in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, and it's been interesting to watch as various high-end restaurants around the state have added Red Caboose to their wine lists. Here, at the Clifton tasting room, I try the tempranillo and then the syrah-cabernet blend and decide a trip to

the winery, a few miles away in Meridian, is a must.

But first, I make a stop at one of my favorite places in Bosque County. Our Savior's Lutheran Church, known as the center of the Norse Community, sits just outside of Clifton on County Road 4145, and its peaceful setting instills in me the quiet I seek on these escapes. Updates over the years to the 1875 wooden church have included adding red brick to the exterior in 1907, but it's the humble wooden interior and carefully tended cemetery, found outside the church's front door (and containing the grave of Cleng Pearson), that bring me solace.

When I'm ready to toast the very essence of this indulgent escapism, I point my car north about 15 miles to Red Caboose Winery, just outside of Meridian. Winemaker Gary McKibben, a train buff who honors the local railroad heritage with his winery name, first planted grapes here in 2003. He opened



The Screen Door Inn's Marquee Room, with its movie-related theme, overlooks the CLIFTEX Theatre.

➔ TH ESSENTIALS

Bosque County

BOSQUE COUNTY is approximately 60 miles south of Fort Worth. For information on Clifton or the churches, contact the **Clifton Chamber of Commerce**, 800/344-3720; www.cliftontexas.org or www.visitclifton.org. Contact the **Meridian Chamber of Commerce** at 254/435-2966; www.meridian-chamber.com. Following is contact information for sites in the story.

Bosque Arts Center, 215 S. College Hill Dr., Clifton, 254/675-3724; www.bosqueartscenter.org.

Bosque Museum, 301 S. Avenue Q, Clifton, 254/675-3845; www.bosquemuseum.org.

CLIFTEX Theatre, 306 W. 5th St., Clifton, 254/675-1229; www.clifftextheatre.com.

Bunkhouse BBQ, 1003 S. Avenue G, Clifton, 254/675-8409; www.bunkhousebarbeque.com.

Red Caboose Winery Tasting Room, 903 S. Avenue G, Clifton, 254/675-0099, and **Red Caboose Winery**, 1147 County Road 1110, Meridian, 254/435-9911; www.redcaboosewinery.com.

Screen Door Inn, 110 N. Avenue D, Clifton, 254/675-7829; www.screendoorinn.com.

Meridian State Park, 173 Park Road 7, Meridian, 254/435-2536; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/meridian.

Horny Toad Bar and Grill, 319 N. 3rd St., Cranfills Gap, 254/597-1100; www.hornytoadbar.com.

tests in San Francisco and New York. I ask the host about some of these winners, only to get dizzy at the list of awards Red Caboose has brought home. In the end, I purchase a bottle of La Reina Tempranillo, partly because I love the rich ruby color and tart finish, but also because the label artwork—depicting a San Antonio cathedral by local artist George Hallmark—steals my heart.

Before I head back into Clifton for a comfy night's stay at the Screen Door Inn, a seven-room B&B in an historic downtown building, I head just west of Meridian to revel in some of that nature I find myself craving time and again.

Just as I love the lake at Meridian State Park in the early morning light, I also enjoy it in late-day sun. I make my way past pecan-filled river bottoms and through the brush and trees to the limestone ledges forming a semicircle around one side of the water. I watch a fisherman trying for a last catch, and I listen to cicadas sing a summer song. And I think how glad I am that Bosque County's quiet restoration awaits just a little more than an hour from home. **TH**

Fort Worth writer JUNE NAYLOR is trying to find the perfect Red Caboose wine to pair with Bunkhouse BBQ ribs and has decided another return trip or two to Bosque County is required. TH Photography Editor GRIFF SMITH has always admired the scenic beauty of Bosque County and jumped at the opportunity to shoot a story there.

the winery at Meridian in 2007 and the Clifton tasting room three years later.

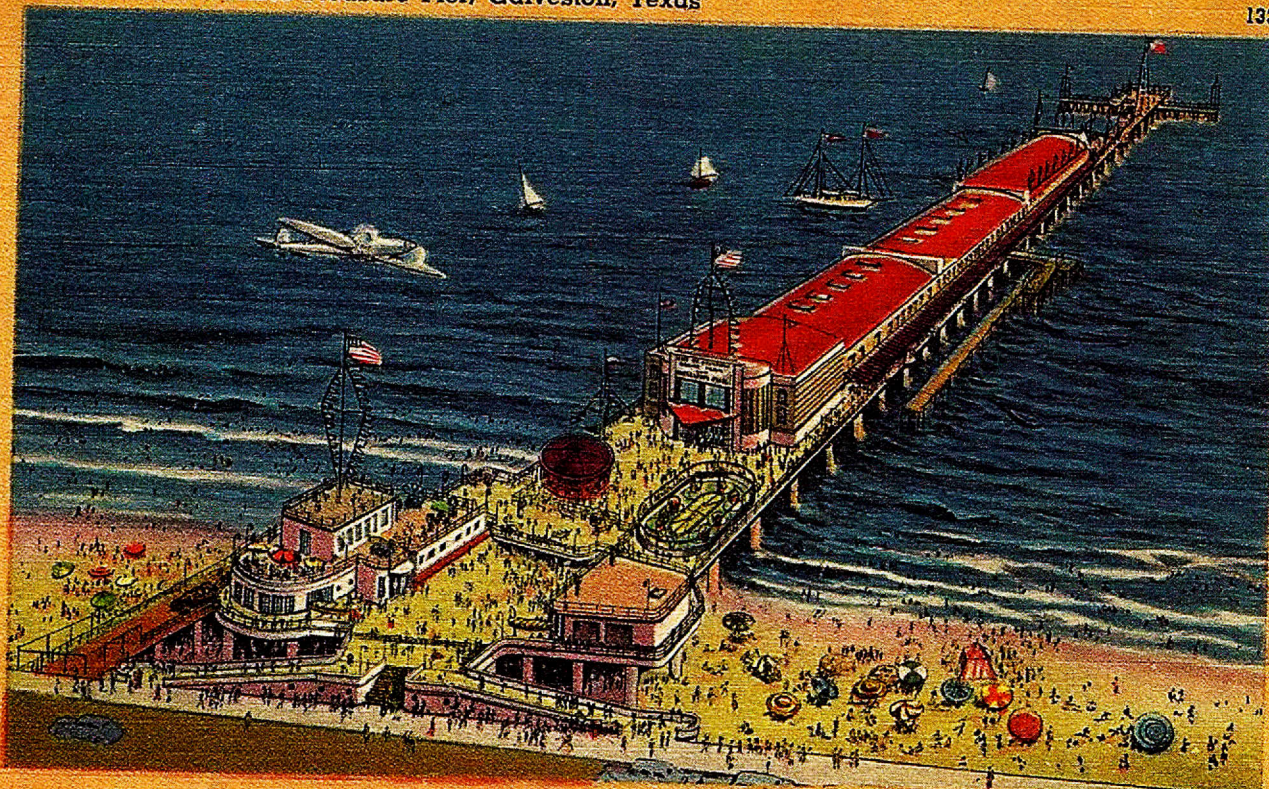
The beautiful limestone winery building—resembling a small resort, with a magnificent view and tree-filled setting—brings in between 200 to 400 visitors each month. From February through October, there's a monthly Cork and Fork event, with dinner and wine pairings, and there's a music event on the last Friday evening of each month.

But on a quiet afternoon like the one I've chosen, I'm content to sit on the stone patio and try short tastes of the Range Rider Tempranillo blend, which recently took home several medals at competitions in Houston and New York, and the merlot, winner at recent con-



Galveston's \$1.500.000 Pleasure Pier, Galveston, Texas

133



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Fun and Games on the Boardwalk

Galveston's Historic Pleasure Pier

Text by **RAMONA FLUME**

THE NEWEST ADDITION TO GALVESTON'S SHORELINE, THE \$60 million Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier is futuristic by boardwalk standards, with 16 rides, various carnival games, and dazzling LED light displays. But the history of the island's seaside amusement park dates to the 19th Century.

Galveston had already secured a national reputation as "the Playground of the South" by the late 1890s, vying with New Orleans to be the epicenter of Southern leisure. But on September 8, 1900, the popular island getaway was devastated by one of the worst hurricanes in recorded history, which claimed approximately 8,000 lives and razed 500 entire city blocks. Over the next decade, Galvestonians worked tirelessly to recover from the natural disaster and restore the beauty of the island—and to rebuild the tourist trade.

Amusement parks and bathhouses began to spring up along stretches of the new Seawall, a 17-foot-high barrier built to protect the island from future storms. In 1906 and 1907, Electric Park and Chutes Park brought laughter—and tourists—back to the island, with vaudeville shows, trapeze acts, and theme-park rides such as the island's first set of aerial swings. All along the Seawall, visitors found attractions designed for entertainment: a large motion-picture theater, ice-cream parlors,

Galveston's Pleasure Pier opened in 1944, solidifying the city's reputation as "the Playground of the South."

The pier's attractions included a water circus featuring Acapulco cliff divers, Tarzan-themed aerial shows, and an exhibit hall showcasing giant crabs from the Bering Sea.

and roller-skating rinks. In 1908, the July 13 edition of the Galveston *Daily News* reported that "8,500 strangers passed through the gates at the Union Station and started out for a day of pleasure in Galveston. They stand at the water's edge and gaze far out to sea. They wonder what is beyond."

Meanwhile, in cities such as Chicago, New York, Atlantic City, and Santa Monica, destinations known as "pleasure piers" began to attract tourists with amusements ranging from roller coasters to famous entertainers. In 1917, with the debut of a 750-foot-long amusement pier on the Seawall, the trend reached Galveston Island.

The high tide of Galveston tourism kept rising throughout the ensuing decades as amusement parks such as Joyland Park and Stewart Beach Amusement Park drew enthusiastic crowds. Beginning in 1925, Galveston resident Alba Collins and her family lived in a house beneath a wooden roller coaster on the Seawall called the Mountain Speedway, which was billed in the Galveston *Daily News* as the "lightning ride that thrills from start to finish."

"There were always a million things going on and strange faces to see," recalls Alba, whose father operated the coaster. "We'd try and sneak off to play past our bedtimes, maybe spy on the fancy cars that pulled up to the Balinese Room every night, but someone would always call out to us and make sure we headed home."

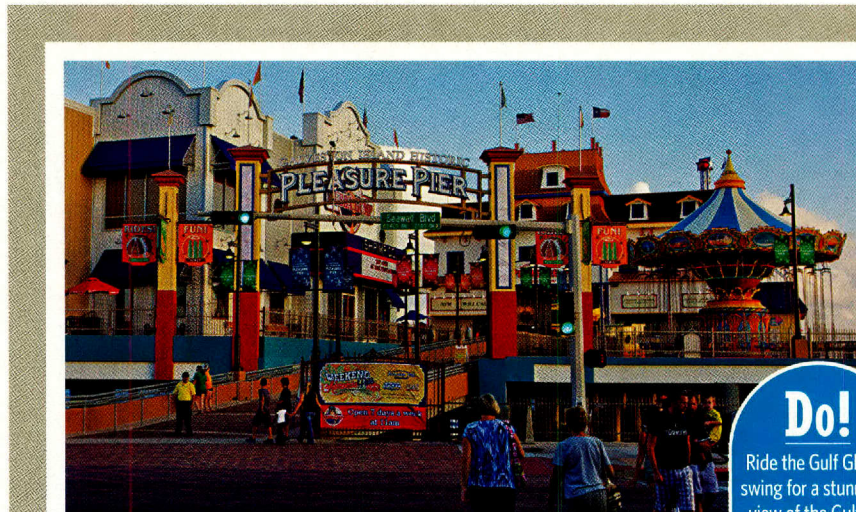
Galveston's first official Pleasure Pier, originally intended as a recreational facility for the military, opened on Flag Day, June 14, 1944, featuring speeches

from dignitaries, aerial performances, and dancing in the Marine Ballroom. "This evening we celebrate a memorable event in the history of our city," Galveston Mayor George Fraser said at the grand opening, which attracted hundreds of attendees. "This \$1.5-million steel and concrete pier built into the Gulf of Mexico is the result of many dreams, much planning, and an unbelievably great amount of hard work on the part of those who sponsored it. It should make Galveston worthy in every respect of the title conferred upon it many years ago—the Playground of the South."

By the late 1940s, Galveston's Pleasure Pier had become one of the nation's largest. In the years to follow, the pier gained even more attractions, including a water circus featuring Acapulco cliff divers, Tarzan-themed aerial shows, an exhibit hall showcasing such oddities as giant crabs from the Bering Sea, and an outdoor movie theater that appeared to hover above the water.

A \$50,000 initiative brought air conditioning and other modern renovations to the Marine Ballroom in the 1950s, when it played host to such nationally known celebrities as Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra. One of the highlights of the Pier's star-studded history was the 1949 visit of General Dwight D. Eisenhower—rumored as a potential presidential candidate—when he delivered a speech in the Marine Ballroom as the special guest of the city's civic clubs.

Back then, the hotels and gambling halls of Las Vegas were just getting start-



The Pleasure Pier

GALVESTON ISLAND HISTORIC PLEASURE PIER IS AT 2501 SEAWALL Blvd. Attractions include restaurants, shops, an "antique" photo booth, a midway featuring such games as Whac-a-Mole and a ring toss, plus 16 rides that include the Iron Shark Rollercoaster, the Pirate's Plunge flume ride, and the Galaxy Ferris Wheel, which is illuminated with thousands of multicolored LED lights. The Pleasure Pier opens daily in June, July, and most of August. Ticket prices are based on height: All-Day Ride Passes cost \$26.99 for those 48 inches and taller, \$19.99 for visitors shorter than 48 inches. Pier Passes (\$7-\$10) are available for those who don't want to experience the rides. Call 855/789-7437; www.pleasurepier.com.

Speaking of Texas

Galveston's first official Pleasure Pier, originally intended as a recreational facility for the military, opened in June 1944.

ed. "There was no Las Vegas back then. *This* was Las Vegas," says Bobby Lee Hilton, a guest ambassador at the Hotel Galvez. Hilton started working at the hotel as a teenager in the 1940s, a period in Galveston's history characterized by unrestricted gambling and liquor sales. "Atlantic City was there, but Galveston was easy for people to get to from the port, trains, or by car. There was gambling, live music, great food and clubs, all facing a natural harbor. A night on the bay was something special."

But nothing lasts forever. In September 1961, after witnessing the tail end of World War II and a mid-'50s crackdown on the island's illegal gambling, the 1944 Pleasure Pier fell victim to Hurricane

Carla, a Category Four hurricane that also ravaged the infamous Balinese Room gambling hall.

Now, thanks to a multimillion-dollar construction project by Galveston native Tilman Fertitta and Landry's, Inc., a new Pleasure Pier has arisen on the same spot. The new 1,130-foot boardwalk—complete with restaurants, carnival games, thrill rides, an "antique" photo booth, and the 100-foot-tall Galaxy Ferris Wheel—recaptures the pier's golden age while catapulting it into the modern era.

"The Ferris wheel just towers over everything and shines its lights all across the water," says Alba Collins. "It's like seeing a bit of an old dream." **TH**

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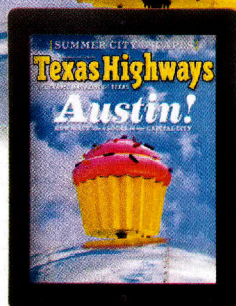
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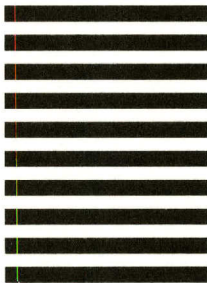
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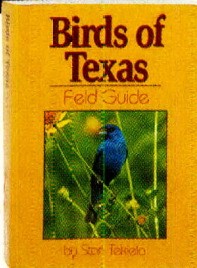
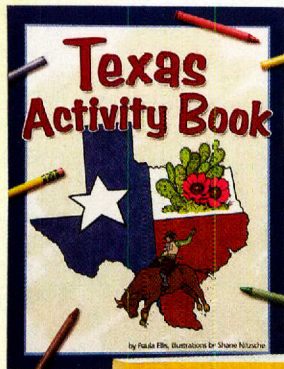
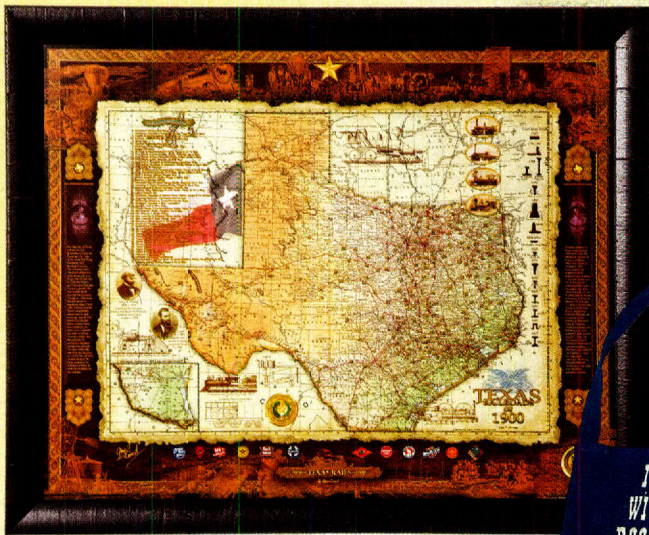
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Texas Activity Book

By Paula Ellis and Shama Nitzsche
How do you make the perfect family getaway even better? Supply your kids with a state-themed activity book for hours of fun! From mazes and word finds to maps and pictures to color—not to mention fascinating information about the region—the Texas Activity Book is ideal for car rides and quiet time.

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By Stan Tekiela
Identify and learn about Texas birds using Stan Tekiela's easy-to-use format. With this color guide, you will be able to locate 170 species of birds found in Texas. The full-page, color photos include insets of winter plumage. Each fact-filled page includes maps, distinctive characteristics and nesting habits.
4½ x 6 inches, 414 pages, paperback.
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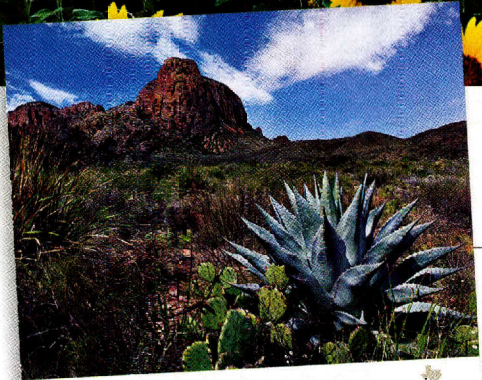
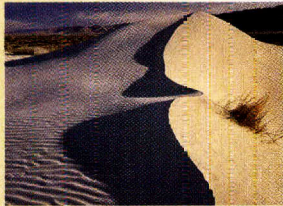
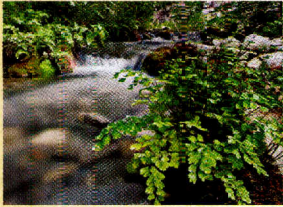
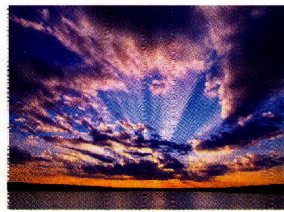
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Embrace the Mosquito

TH tip

Musical acts include Billy Joe Shaver and Cory Morrow.

WHEN FOUNDERS OF CLUTE'S SUMMERTIME festival set out to name their new event in 1980, someone jokingly suggested that the town was best known for its blood-sucking skeeters. Well, the name stuck, and 33 years later, **The Great Texas Mosquito Festival** is a thriving summer tradition.

About 15,000 people turn out each year for the event, which takes place July 25-27 this year at Clute Municipal Park. The festival offers summer favorites like a barbecue and fajita cook-off, horseshoe- and washer-pitching contests, concerts, and a carnival.

But it's the wacky mosquito-themed events that generate the most buzz. The "Mosquito Calling Contest" challenges contestants on their creative calls. And then there's the "Mosquito Legs Contest."

"You have some people with the skinniest legs possible," explains Angel Cowley, executive director of the Clute Visitors Bureau, "and some with not-so-skinny legs. But they think their legs look like mosquitos', so they enter the contest too." www.mosquitofestival.com.



July Events

BIG BEND COUNTRY

ALPINE/MARFA: Viva Big Bend Music Festival and Conference July 25-28. www.vivabigbend.com

MIDLAND: Tall City Blues Fest July 26-27. Centennial Park Plaza. www.tallcitybluesfest.com 432/262-0034

MONAHANS: Freedom Fest July 4. Hill Park. www.monahans.org 432/943-2187

MONAHANS: Butterfield Wagon Festival July 27. Ward County Coliseum. www.monahans.org 432/943-4311

ODESSA: Independence Day Parade and Firecracker Fandango July 4. www.mainstreetodessa.com 432/335-4682

ODESSA: Thunder in the Desert Drum-and-Bugle Corps Show July 23. Ratliff Stadium. 432/337-6655

GULF COAST

BEAUMONT: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Riverfront Park. 409/838-3435

BEAUMONT: Earl Staley Exhibit July 13-September 1. Art Museum of Southeast Texas. www.amset.org 409/832-3432

BROWNSVILLE: The President's Photographer: Fifty Years Inside the Oval Office July 25-October 12. www.brownsvillemfa.org 956/542-0941

CORPUS CHRISTI: Flamingo Fandango July 1-31. www.stxbot.org 361/852-2100

CORPUS CHRISTI: Summer TAAF Games of Texas July 25-28. Various venues. www.taaf.com 361/826-3460

CORPUS CHRISTI: South Texas Summer Polka Fest July 27. Moravian Hall. 361/215-9163

FREEPORT: Fishin' Fiesta July 3-7. Freeport Municipal Park. www.fishinfiesta.com 979/233-5137

GALVESTON: Dinos Alive Exhibit July 1-August 11. www.moodygardens.com 800/582-4673

HOUSTON: The Ornamental Plumb Bob July 1-27. Houston Center for Contemporary Craft. www.crafthouston.org

HOUSTON: Faking It: Manipulated Photography Before Photoshop July 1-August 25. www.mfah.org

HOUSTON: Freedom Over Texas July 4. Eleanor Tinsley Park. www.freedomovertexas.org

HOUSTON: Twilight Tours on the Buffalo Bayou July 6, 20. www.buffalobayou.org 713/752-0314

HOUSTON: The Big Show 2013 July 12-August 10. www.lawndaleartcenter.org 713/528-5858

HOUSTON: Reliant Park World Series of Dogs Show July 17-21. www.reliantdogshows.com

KEMAH: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. www.kemahboardwalk.com 877/285-3624

PALACIOS: LaSalle Landing Re-Enactment and Fireworks July 4. www.visitmatagordacounty.com 877/376-5386

PORT ARANSAS: Deep Sea Roundup July 11-14. Robert's Point Park. www.deepsearoundup.com 351/745-6339

ROCKPORT: Patriotic Boat Parade and Fireworks Display July 4. www.rockport-fulton.org 361/729-6445

ROCKPORT: Rockport Art Festival July 6-7. Festival Grounds. www.rockportartcenter.com 361/729-5519

ROSENBERG: Family Fourth Celebration July 4. Seabourne Creek Nature Park. www.citycfrosenberg.com

SAN BENITO: ResacaFest July 6. W.-I. Heavin Memorial Park. www.cityofsanbenito.com

VICTORIA: Winning the West: Firearms in the Texas Coastal Bend July 1-August 30. www.ml.seumoft-recoastal-bend.org 361/582-2511

VICTORIA: Joanne Ross Photography Exhibit July 11-August 25. www.navemuseum.com 361/575-8227

WEBSTER: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Texas Avenue Park. www.cityofwebster.com 281/316-4108

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: Luminous: 50 Years of Collecting Prints and Drawings at the Blanton July 1-September 15. www.blantonmuseum.org 512/471-7324

PHOTO: WILL VAN OVERBEEK



➔ **TH SPOTLIGHT**

TH tip

See pictures of a 2012 storm that left four-foot hailstone drifts.

The Panhandle's Notorious Weather

THE TEXAS PANHANDLE CAN RIGHTFULLY LAY CLAIM TO SOME OF THE craziest weather around. From blizzards to hailstorms, tornados, and wildfires, Panhandle folks are accustomed to coping with extremes. The **Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon** focuses on local weather in *Wild and Wacky Weather on the Panhandle Plains*.

The exhibit walks visitors through notorious weather events in the region's history, such as devastating blizzards of the 1880s, the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, widespread flash-flooding of 1978, and damaging wildfires of 2011. There's also a demonstration of National Weather Service monitoring instruments, as well as a display that simulates the TV news coverage and sounds of an approaching tornado.

"It's a departure from what we normally do," says Stephanie Price, marketing and communications manager for the museum. "It was a neat way for us to incorporate science into the museum in a historical way."

The exhibit runs through February 1. www.panhandleplains.org.

AUSTIN: Fourth of July Fireworks and Symphony July 4. Auditorium Shores. www.austinsymphony.org

AUSTIN: Austin Chamber Music Festival July 11-28. www.austinchambermusic.org/festival-2013

AUSTIN: Lady Bird Tribute Day July 28. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. www.wildflower.org 512/232-0100

BOERNE: Abendkonzerte July 2, 16. Main Plaza Park. www.boernevillageband.org 830/249-7277

BRADY: July Jubilee July 5-6. www.bradytx.com 325/597-3491

CASTROVILLE: Fourth of July Parade July 4. Houston Square. www.castroville.com 830/538-3142

CEDAR PARK: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Milburn Park. www.cedarparktexas.gov 512/401-5500

FREDERICKSBURG: Fourth of July Community Parade and Patriotic Program July 4. Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park. www.fbgparade.org 830/997-6523

FREDERICKSBURG: Pacific Combat Living History Program July 6-7. www.pacificwarmuseum.org 830/997-8600 ext. 205

FREDERICKSBURG: Night in Old Fredericksburg July 19-20. www.nightinoldfredericksburg.com 830/997-6523

GEORGETOWN: Landscapes and Landmarks July 1-31. Hill Design Gallery. 512/212-4865

JUNCTION: Disc Golf Tournament July 26-28. Junction City and County Parks. www.junctiontexas.com 210/289-2982

KERRVILLE: Kerr Arts and Cultural Center Exhibits, July 1-28. www.kackcerville.com 830/895-2911

KERRVILLE: Kerrville's Fourth on the River July 4. Downtown. www.kerrvilles4thontheriver.org 830/792-3535

KINGSLAND: Aqua Boom July 4-6. Kingsland Community Park and Center. www.kingslandchamber.org 325/388-6211

KYLE: Independence Day Celebration July 4. Plum Creek Golf Course. www.plumcreekgolf.com 512/262-5555

LAMPASAS: Spring Ho Festival July 8-14. Historic Hancock Springs. www.springho.com 512/556-5301

LEAKEY: July Jubilee and Centennial July 5-6. Downtown. www.friocanyonchamber.com 830/232-5222

LLANO: Rock 'n River Fest July 4. Badu Park. www.llanochamber.org 325/247-5354

MARBLE FALLS: July 4 Community Fireworks Celebration July 4. www.marblefallscommunityfireworks.com

MASON: Roundup Rodeo Weekend July 12-13. Courthouse square. www.masontxcoc.com 325/347-5758

NEW BRAUNFELS: Fourth of July Patriotic Parade and Program July 4. www.sophienburg.com 830/629-1572

ROUND ROCK: Frontier Days Celebration July 4. Old Settler's Park. www.austinsymphonicband.org

SAN MARCOS: Summerfest July 4. San Marcos Plaza Park. www.summerfestsanmarcos.com 512/393-5930

SAN MARCOS: Art Unhitched Art Market July 13. www.toursanmarcos.com/events/arts/art-unhitched.html

TAYLOR: Fourth of July Festival and Fireworks July 4. Murphy Park. www.taylorchamber.org 523/352-6364

TAYLOR: Taylor Rodeo July 19-20. East Williamson County Events Center. www.taylorrodeo.com 512/864-5898

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UVALDE: Sahawe and Bright Feather Dancers Summer Ceremonials July 22-27. www.visituvalde.com 830/278-2016

UVALDE: Uvalde County Market Days July 27-28. Downtown Plaza. www.uvaldemarketdays.com 210/844-8193

WIMBERLEY: July Jubilee and VFW Rodeo July 3-6. www.visitwimberley.com/rodeo 512/847-2201

WIMBERLEY: Market Day July 6. Lions Pavilion. www.shopmarketdays.com 512/847-2201

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: Original Team Roping Association World Finals July 1-9. Taylor County Expo Center. 806/499-3584

ABILENE: Craftapalooza and Junk Market July 20. www.montagefestivals.com 405/596-1687

ALBANY: Cell Series Artist: Brad Tucker July 1-September 15. www.theoldjailartcenter.org 325/762-2269

AMARILLO: Amarillo Globe-News Fireworks July 4. Southwest Park. www.visitamarillo.com 806/376-4488

AMARILLO: Kwahadi Dancers Present "Song of the Eagle" July 6-7, 13-14, 20-21. www.kwahadi.com 806/335-3175

AMARILLO: National Day of the Cowboy July 27. www.quarterhorsemuseum.com 806/376-5181

BRECKENRIDGE: Boomfest Fireworks and Music at the Rocks July 3. www.breckenridgetexas.com 254/559-2301

BUFFALO GAP: Tour de Gap July 27. Old Settler's Reunion Grounds. 325/695-6311

CANADIAN: Fourth of July Parade and Celebration July 4. Downtown. www.canadiantx.com 806/323-6234

CANADIAN: Fourth of July Rodeo and Dances July 4-6. Jones Pavilion. www.canadiantx.com 806/323-6234

CANYON: United States Military Uniforms from the Permanent Collection July 1-January 26. www.panhandleplains.org 806/651-2244

CANYON: TEXAS July 2-7, 9-14, 16-21, 23-28, 30-August 4. www.texas-show.com 806/655-2181

CANYON: National Day of the American Cowboy Celebration July 27. www.panhandleplains.org

CHILDRESS: Childress County Old Settlers Celebration July 19-20. www.childresschamber.com 940/937-2567

DALHART: Independence Day Fireworks Display July 4. Rita Blanca Lake. www.dalhart.org 806/244-5646

DALHART: XIT Junior Rodeo July 27. Rodeo Grounds. www.xit-rodeo.com 512/244-5646

EASTLAND: Old-Fashioned Fourth of July July 4. www.eastlandchamber.com 254/629-2332

EASTLAND: The Blessings of Liberty: The U.S. Constitution July 5-7. Eastland County Museum. 254/631-6894

FRIONA: Cheeseburger Festival and Cook-Off July 20. Friona City Park. www.frionachamber.com 806/250-3491

GRAHAM: The Red, White and You Fourth of July Parade July 4. www.grahamtxchamber.com 940/549-3355

LEVELLAND: Early Settlers Day July 13. Downtown. www.levelland.com 806/894-3157

LUBBOCK: Fourth on Broadway July 4. www.broadwayfestivals.com 806/749-2929

LUBBOCK: Archeology In Action July 13. Lubbock Lake Landmark State Historic Site. 806/742-1116

MOBEETIE: Old Mobeetie Music Festival July 26-28. www.mobeetie.com 806/845-2028

ROSCOE: Roscoe Independence Day Celebration July 6. Downtown. www.roscoetx.com 325/725-0756

SAN ANGELO: Holiday Artillery Salutes July 4. Fort Concho National Historic Landmark. 325/234-0316

SAN ANGELO: American Factory Glass of the Early 20th Century July 5-September 1. www.samfa.org 325/653-3333

SAN ANGELO: First Saturday at the Chicken Farm Art Center July 6. www.chickenfarmartcenter.com 325/653-4936

SAN ANGELO: National Cowboy Day July 27. Fort Concho. www.fortconcho.com 325/234-0316

SEMINOLE: Trade Days July 19-21. www.seminoletradadays.com 432/758-0807

VEGA: PBOMA Bluegrass Music Festival July 19-21. Vega City Park. www.oldhamcofc.org 806/267-2828

WICHITA FALLS: As We Were: Entertaining at Home July 1-August 30. Kell House. 940/723-2712

WYLIE: Wylie Jubilee: Bluegrass on Ballard July 6. Ballard Street. www.discoverwylie.com

PINEY WOODS

CENTER: What-A-Melon Festival July 11-13. Courthouse square. www.shelbycountychamber.com 936/598-3311

CLEVELAND: July Fourth Fireworks July 4. CISD Football Stadium. www.visitclevelandtexas.com 281/592-2011

COLDSRING: Christmas in July July 20. Courthouse square. www.coldspringtexas.org 936/653-2332

GLADEWATER: Boat Parade and Fireworks July 6. Lake Gladewater. 903/845-5501

HUNTSVILLE: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Kate Barr Ross Park. www.huntsvilletx.gov 936/291-5420

HUNTSVILLE: 150th Anniversary of Sam Houston's Death and Funeral July 26-27. www.samhoustonmemorialmuseum.com 936/294-1832

JACKSONVILLE: Fireworks on Lake Jacksonville July 4. www.jacksonvilletexas.com 903/586-0327

JEFFERSON: Fourth of July Celebration and Fireworks July 5-6. www.jeffersonrailway.com 903/665-6400

JEFFERSON: National Day of the Cowboy July 26-27. www.jeffersonrailway.com 866/398-2038

KILGORE: Texas Shakespeare Festival July 1-28. www.texasshakespeare.com 903/983-8601

KILGORE: Great Texas Balloon Race Festival July 24. www.kilgorechamber.com 903/984-5022

LONGVIEW: Great Texas Balloon Race and U.S. National Championships July 23-28. www.greattexasballoonrace.com 903/753-3281

MAGNOLIA: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Unity Park. www.cityofmagnolia.com 281/356-2266

NACOGDOCHES: Freedom Fest July 4. Downtown. www.visitnacogdoches.org 888/653-3788 or 936/564-7351

NAPLES: Watermelon Festival July 26-27. The melon patch on Front Street. 903/897-2037

SHEPHERD: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. www.greatershepherdchamberofcommerce.org 936/628-3890

TENAHA: Independence Day Celebration July 4. www.shelbycountychamber.com 936/248-3841

THE WOODLANDS: Star-Spangled Salute July 3. www.woodlandscenter.org 281/363-3300

THE WOODLANDS: Red, Hot and Blue Festival July 4. www.redhotblue.org 281/363-2447

TIMPSON: Frontier Days July 4-6. Downtown and SoSo Park. www.shelbycountychamber.com 936/254-2603

TYLER: Christmas in July Arts and Crafts Fair July 13-14. Rose Garden Center. www.tylerparksandrec.com 903/531-1214

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ADDISON: Kaboom Town! July 3. Addison Circle Park. www.addisontexas.net 800/233-4766

ARLINGTON: Fourth of July Parade July 4. Downtown. www.arlington4th.com 817/330-9872

ATHENS: Fireworks at the Fishery July 4. <http://athenstx.org/things-to-do/fireworks-at-the-fishery-2013> 903/676-2277

BASTROP: Patriotic Festival July 6. Fisherman's Park. www.bastropchamber.com 512/321-2419

BASTROP: Pine Street Market Day July 13. Downtown. www.bastropbusinesswomen.com 512/303-6233

BELLVILLE: Spring Creek Bluegrass Club Show and Jam July 27. www.springcreekbluegrass.com 979/865-5250



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Check out the spring (pictured) that feeds the pool.

TH SPOTLIGHT

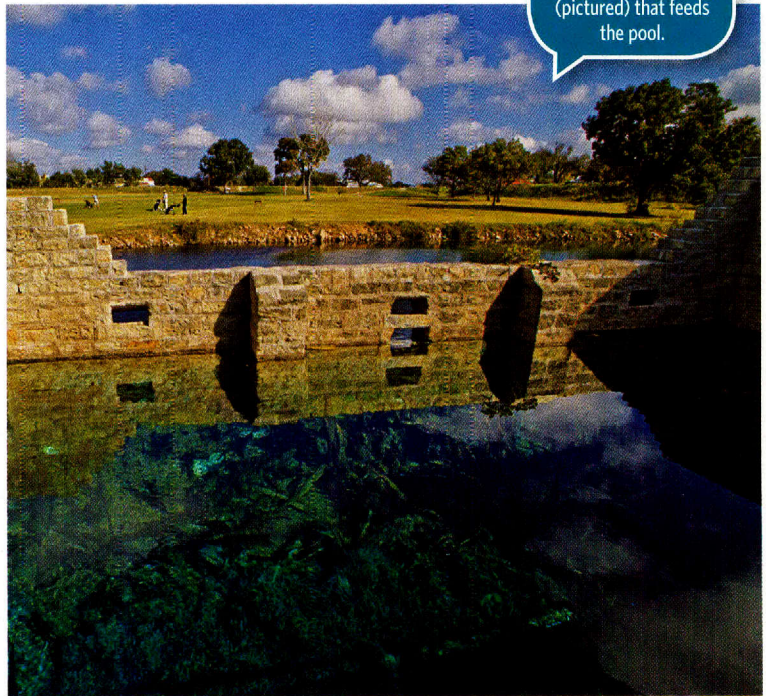
Night Swimming

WE'RE PACKING OUR GLOW STICKS AND venturing to **Lampasas** this month for the annual **Moonlight Swim** at Hancock Springs pool. The city will keep the pool open until 11 p.m. on June 22 and July 20 for the third season of the new summer tradition.

Along with the rare chance to swim the 68-degree pool after dark, the Saturday night events also include a potluck dinner and live music. The Sieker Band and Steve Mitchell will perform at the June and July events, respectively.

"Bring your favorite dish," says Micky Tower, director of the Lampasas Parks and Recreation Department. "The city will provide the drinks, and it will be a picnic atmosphere. The band comes in and starts at 8, and we'll listen to live music and go swimming." Sounds like a plan.

For more information, call 512/556-6831; www.cityoflampasas.com.



BONHAM: Kueckelhan Rodeo July 25-27. www.kueckelhanrodeo.com 903/583-5337

BONHAM: Quilt Hop Textile Exhibit July 26-27. Various venues. www.visitbonham.com 903/583-9830

BOWIE: Second Monday Trade Days July 6-7. www.secondmonday.com 940/872-1680

BRENHAM: Crush for Fun July 20-21, 27-28. Pleasant Hill Winery. www.pleasanthillwinery.com 979/830-8463

BRENHAM: Harvest Grape Stomp at Windy Winery July 20-21, 27-28. www.windywinery.com 979/836-3252

CHAPPELL HILL: Fourth of July Parade and Summer Cowboy Event July 4. www.chappellhilltx.com 888/273-6426

CLEBURNE: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Lake Pat Cleburne. www.cleburnechamber.com 817/645-2455

CLEBURNE: Goatneck 100K Bike Ride July 27. Begins at Cleburne High School. www.thegoatneck.com

COLLEGE STATION: I Love America Celebration July 4. <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu> 979/691-4014

COMANCHE: Family on the Fourth Celebration July 4. www.comanchechamber.org 325/356-3233

COMANCHE: Comanche Open Rodeo July 19-20. www.comanchechamber.org 325/356-3233

CORSICANA: Acoustic Wine Down July 13. Downtown. www.corsicanamainstreet.org 877/648-6248

CUERO: Fourth of July Fireworks and Family Fun Carnival July 4. www.cuero.org 361/275-3476

CUERO: Lester Meier Open Rodeo July 19-20. Cuero Rodeo Arena in City Park. www.lmrodeo.com 361/275-2112

DALLAS: David Aylsworth: Five, Six, Seven, Eight July 1-August 10. www.hollyjohnsorgallery.com

DALLAS: Alice's Wonderland Flower Village July 1-August 31. Dallas Arboretum. www.dallasarboretum.org

DALLAS: Katharina Grosse Exhibit July 1-September 1. www.nashersculpturecenter.org

DALLAS: Hotel Texas: An Art Exhibition for the President and Mrs. John F. Kennedy July 1-September 15. www.dallasmuseumofart.org 214/922-1200

DALLAS: Justicia: The Struggle for Mexican American Civil Rights in Dallas, Texas, 1920-2012 July 12-August 31. www.callasculture.org/latino/culturalcenter

DALLAS: Moon Day July 20. Frontiers of Flight Museum at Love Field. www.flightmuseum.com 214/350-3600

DENISON: Fourth of July Fireworks Show July 4. Munson Stadium. 903/465-2720

DENTON: Fourth of July Jubilee "Liberty Fun Run" July 4. www.dentonparks.com 940/349-7275

ELGIN: People's Patriotic Push, Pull, Peddle Parade July 4. Begins at 9 a.m. www.elgintx.com 512/281-5724

FAIRFIELD: Fireworks Display July 4. Moody Reunion Fairgrounds. www.fairfieldtexaschamber.com 903/389-5792

FAIRFIELD: Market Days July 27-28. Moody Reunion Fairgrounds. www.fairfieldtexas.com 903/389-2633

FARMERS BRANCH: Independence Day Celebration July 3. www.fbspeciaevents.com 972/919-2620

FORT WORTH: Romare Bearden: A Black Odyssey July 1-August 11. www.cartermuseum.org

FORT WORTH: Wari Lords of the Ancient Andes July 1-September 7. www.kimbellart.org 817/332-8451

FORT WORTH: We the People: Picturing American Identity July 1-September 8. www.cartermuseum.org

FORT WORTH: Selections: DADA July 6-30. Fort Worth Community Arts Center. www.dallasartdealers.org

FORT WORTH: NCHA Summer Cutting Spectacular July 12-August 3. www.nchacutting.com 817/392-7469

FORT WORTH: Day of the American Cowboy July 27. www.fcrtworthstockyards.org 817/625-9715

FRISCO: Frisco Freedom Fest July 4. Simpson Plaza. www.friscofreedomfest.org

GLEN ROSE: Art on the Square July 20. Historic Courthouse Square. www.glenrosetexas.net 254/897-2321

GRANEURY: Old-Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration July 4-7. www.granburychamber.com/4th-july-celebration 817/573-1622

GRANEURY: Last Saturday Gallery Night and Art Walk July 27. www.granburytx.com 817/579-7733

GRAND PRAIRIE: Feria Musical July 27. Traders Village. www.dwinfotradersvillage.com 972/647-2331

GRAPEVINE: SummerFest at the Gaylord Texan Resort July 1-September 6. www.gaylordtexas.com 817/722-9423

GRAPEVINE: Fireworks Extravaganza July 4. Oak Grove Park. www.grapevintexasusa.com 817/410-3185

GRAPEVINE: July 4 Train Rides July 4. Cotton Belt Depot. www.gvrr.com 817/410-3185

HEMPSTEAD: Watermelon Festival July 20. Gazebo Park. www.hempsteadtxchamber.com 979/826-8217

HICO: **Billy the Kid Film Festival** July 4-6. www.billythekidmuseum.com 254/796-2523

IRVING: **Independence Day Celebration** July 4. Irving Heritage District. www.irvingheritage.com 972/252-7476

JOSHUA: **Fourth of July Celebration** July 3. Joshua Owl Stadium. www.joshuachamber.org 817/558-2821

LA GRANGE: **Fayette County Country Music Club Opry** July 15. La Grange Knights of Columbus Hall. 979/966-3568

LOCKHART: **July Fourth Extravaganza** July 4. Lockhart City Park. www.lockhartchamber.com 512/398-2818

MANSFIELD: **Rockin' Fourth of July** July 3. www.mansfieldsgotgame.com 817/804-5785

McKINNEY: **Red, White and BOOM** July 4. www.mckinneytexas.org 972/547-7480

McKINNEY: **Third Monday Trade Days** July 13-15. www.tmttd.com 972/562-5466

MESQUITE: **Mesquite Pro Rodeo** July 5-6, 12-13, 19-20, 26-27. www.mesquiteprorodeo.com 972/285-8777

ROUND TOP: **Round Top Music Festival** July 1-13. Festival Hill Concert Hall. www.festivalhill.org 979/249-3129

ROUND TOP: **Fourth of July Parade and Celebration** July 4. Round Top Square. 979/249-3117

SEALY: **Sealybration** July 12-14. B&PW Park. www.sealycommunityfoundation.org

SEGUIN: **Freedom Fiesta** July 3. Central Park. www.seguintexas.gov 830/379-2234

SEGUIN: **Fourth of July Celebrations** July 4. Max Starcke Park. www.visitseguin.com

SEGUIN: **Texas Lineman's Rodeo** July 20. Nolte Island Park. www.tlra.org 936/525-7257

SHERMAN: **Dino Days Exhibit** July 1-August 3. www.theshermanmuseum.org 903/893-7623

SHERMAN: **Lights on the Lake** July 3. Pecan Grove Amphitheater. www.shermantx.org 903/892-7230

SHERMAN: **Second Saturday Nature Program** July 13. Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge. 903/786-2826

SHINER: **Half-Moon Holidays** July 6. Welhausen Municipal Park. www.shinertx.com 361/594-4180

SOMERVILLE: **The Great Texas LakeFest** July 20. www.burlesoncountytexas.com/lakefest 979/567-0000

TEMPLE: **July 4 Family Fun Fest** July 4. Miller Park. www.templeparks.net 254/298-5590

THE COLONY: **Liberty by the Lake** July 4. Stewart Creek Park. www.libertybythelake.com 972/625-1106

WACO: **Brazos Nights Concert** July 4. Indian Spring Park. www.brazosnightswaco.com 254/750-8080

WALLIS: **Annual Arts and Crafts Show** July 13-14. American Legion Hall. 979/885-2164

WASHINGTON: **Toy Time at Star of the Republic Museum** July 1-August 31. www.starmuseum.org

WASHINGTON: **Fireworks on the Brazos** July 4. www.birthplaceoftexas.com 936/878-2214

WAXAHACHIE: **Crape Myrtle Festival and Driving Trail** July 3-4. www.waxahachiechamber.com 972/937-2390

WEATHERFORD: **Parker County Peach Festival** July 13. www.peachfestivaltx.com 888/594-3801

WHITNEY: **Lake Whitney Music Fest** July 6. Downtown. www.lakewhitneychamber.com 254/694-2540

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

BEEVILLE: **Changes: Works by Crystal Farris** July 1-18. Beeville Art Museum. <http://bamtexas.org>

BEEVILLE: **Climb Every Mountain** July 1-18. Beeville Art Museum. www.bamtexas.org 361/358-8615

EDINBURG: **Texas Cook 'Em: High Steaks Cook-Off** July 6. www.edinburg.com 956/383-4974

SAN ANTONIO: **July 4 Arts and Crafts Show** July 1-4. The River Walk. www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com

SAN ANTONIO: **Fiesta Noche del Rio** July 1-August 10. www.fiestanochesa.com 210/226-4651

SAN ANTONIO: **Norman Rockwell: Behind the Camera** July 1-September 1. www.mcnyart.org 210/824-5368

SAN ANTONIO: **The America of Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton** July 1-September 8. www.mcnyart.org 210/824-5368

SAN ANTONIO: **Stars and Stripes over San Antonio** July 4. www.starsandstripesoversanantonio.com

SAN ANTONIO: **Freedom Fest at Market Square** July 4-7. 210/207-8605

SAN ANTONIO: **Balcones Heights Jazz Festival** July 12, 19, 26. www.sanantoniocentral.org/jazz-festival 210/732-0055

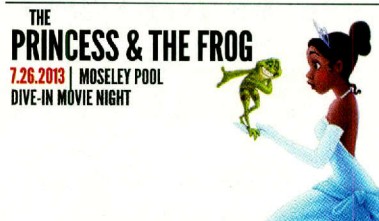
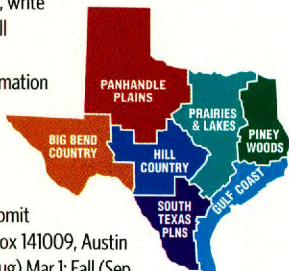
WESLACO: **Alfresco Weslaco** July 18. Texas Boulevard. www.weslacoedc.com 956/969-0838

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

For a free printed copy of an even more detailed, quarterly schedule of events, write to Texas Events Calendar subscriptions, Box 149249, Austin 78714-9249. Or, call 800/452-9292 from anywhere in the U.S. or Canada, between 8-6 Central.

For Texas travel questions, call 800/452-9292 to reach a TxDOT Travel Information Center, where a professional travel counselor will provide routing assistance, advise you of any emergency road conditions, and send brochures (including the official Texas State Travel Guide and map, accommodations guide, and quarterly Texas Events Calendar).

To submit event information: www.texashighways.com and go to Events. Submit Event Listing; e-mail: texasevents@txdot.gov; or mail: Texas Events Calendar, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. Listing deadlines: Spring (Mar, Apr, May) Dec 1; Summer (Jun, Jul, Aug) Mar 1; Fall (Sep, Oct, Nov) Jun 1; Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb) Sep 1.



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A Drippin' Great Day

CHET GARNER is the host of *The Daytripper™* travel show on PBS; www.thedaytripper.com.



TO LOCALS, the town of Dripping Springs is known only as “Drippin’.” But you don’t have to be a local to see the beauty that this proclaimed “Gateway to the Hill Country” offers.

8:30 a.m. I rolled into **Rolling in Thyme and Dough**, a Belgian-inspired bakery occupying a renovated 1920s home that specializes in delicious scratch-made pastries and other breakfast (and lunch) fare. Locals arrive early, knowing the breads, cakes, and other goodies in the bakery case sell out fast. I started with an amazing sausage-and-egg croissant filled with pesto and cheese. After topping off the meal with a sticky bun, I was ready to kick this day trip into high gear.

9:30 a.m. As the name implies, this town was founded (in the mid-1800s) beside the waters of a natural spring offering a consistent drip. As Texas travel expanded, Dripping Springs was a stop along the old Austin-Fredericksburg road. With permission from the **Homestead at the Dripping Springs** bed and breakfast, I took a short hike to the **Historic Springs** behind the property. And with the recent drought conditions, I’d say “dripping” was the appropriate description.

10:30 a.m. There are other springs hidden in the hills around town that offer much more consistent drips. Some in particular flow enough to fill up one of Texas’ most dramatic swimming holes at **Hamilton Pool Nature Preserve**. I arrived early enough to slip into the park without a wait. And after a quarter-mile hike along Hamilton Creek, I reached the massive limestone grotto to find a pool of refreshing water fed by a 50-foot cascading waterfall. In record time, I was down to my swimsuit and splashing around under the Texas sunshine.

1:00 p.m. While Hamilton Pool is amazing, it’s easy to see the impact humans have had on the landscape. To see a similar natural grotto in pristine form, I headed down the road to **Westcave Preserve** for a guided tour. Surrounded by green ferns and lush mosses, the Westcave waterfall, grotto, and cave feel transported

from a foreign rainforest and plopped into the Hill Country. Everything within me longed to dive into the clear, flowing water, but I held back for the sake of nature conservation.

3:00 p.m. Needing something to run, jump, and climb on, I headed to **Mil- ton Reimers Ranch**. This Travis County park along the Pedernales River (pictured) offers rock-climbing, hiking, swimming, fishing, mountain biking, and about anything else you can do on some 800 acres of outdoor playground. Fortunately, I had my rock-climbing gear in tow and spent the afternoon navigating some of

Contact the **Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau**, 512/858-4740; www.dripping-springstx.org.

Reimers’ towering limestone walls and its hundreds of climbing routes. I left with my fair share of accomplishments and probably more than my share of scrapes and bruises, but it was well worth it.

6:00 p.m. Though I could have jumped into the river to cool off, I opted

for a different kind of liquid refreshment back in town at the **Barber Shop**. This historic establishment no longer offers haircuts, but it does serve some of Texas’ finest craft beers, including the owner’s own handcrafted brews. With a pint of Live Oak HefeWeizen in hand, I shot some darts and munched on snacks.

7:00 p.m. After a day bumming around the Hill Country, I decided to step it up for dinner at the upscale **Creek Road Café**. The dinner menu is full of delectable dishes named for local personalities and destinations and covering surf, turf, and sky. I started with a “Westcave Wedge Salad,” proceeded to an amazing “Pedernales Pork Chop,” and finished up with a slice of coconut and chocolate “Polo Club Pie.”

THOSE who zip through Dripping Springs on US 290 will miss the town’s charm. Slow down and enjoy every drop of this Hill Country hideaway. So, whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path, I hope to see you on the road. **TH**



Click!

TH video on photographing at dusk at texashighways.com/windowontexas

Window on Texas

Photograph by **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**

MAGIC DUSK Dance halls in Texas are a great place to kick up your heels and hear fabulous live music. Some become so notable that they develop into cultural icons.

One of these is Gruene Hall in New Braunfels, built in 1878 and purported to be Texas' oldest continually operating dance hall. Restored in 1975, Gruene Hall has since hosted performers such as George Strait, Lyle Lovett, Joe Ely, and Angela Strehli. You'll find live music here daily.

During the daytime, the white, wooden building seems unassuming. As dusk approaches, the lights come on and the scene takes on a magical quality.

Photography Editor Griff Smith chose to photograph Gruene Hall at dusk for his photo tips video on www.texashighways.com. In the video, Griff talks about timing (dusk starts about 30 minutes after sunset) and creative options when shooting at dusk, such as choosing the right moment to shoot.

Gruene Hall is at 1281 Gruene Road in New Braunfels' Gruene Historic District. Call 830/606-1281; www.gruenehall.com.

Look for our cultural tour of dance halls in August's Texas Highways.

