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DECEMBER 2005

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TEXAS



TRAVEL LOG



KEVIN STILLMAN/TXDOT

Texas is aglow with holiday lighting events like College Station's Santa's Wonderland, a Texas-style Christmas village. See story inside.

TRAVEL NEWS

DESPITE a hurricane-induced postponement, **Corpus Christi** hosted the rescheduled **Texas Travel Industry Association's Travel Summit** from Oct. 31 to Nov. 3. At the event, the following industry standouts were honored:

David Dunham, associate publisher for *Texas Monthly* magazine, received the **Tall in Texas** award for being a travel and tourism professional who, through his commitment to tourism, has helped Texas' travel industry on many levels. "No one personifies those qualifications more than David," says TTIA board member Roger Tremblay. Dunham has served as treasurer and chairman of the TTIA Board and currently serves on its Legislative Affairs Committee.

John Robert Prude of **Prude Ranch** was on hand to receive the **Lifetime Achievement Award** given to an industry member who was described as a great ambassador for Texas. Five generations of the Prude family have run the ranch as a ranch and a guest ranch for more than half a century.

Prude, described as the "face of TTIA" and noted as a great promoter of Texas in the United States,

Mexico and the United Kingdom, has received honors such as Outstanding Manager of the Year, Citizen of the Year and the Gene Phillips Hospitality Award.

Paul Serff, President and CEO of TTIA, also presented **Mark of Distinction** awards to those who have had a profound impact on the state's travel industry "in ways that might not have made huge waves, but have consistently done a superb job for the industry and TTIA."

Receiving those honors were:

- **Nancy Millar**, Director of the McAllen Convention and Visitors Bureau and Vice President of the McAllen Chamber.
- **Sherrie Brammall**, Director of Communications for Schlitterbahn Waterparks.
- **Texas Department of Transportation's Travel Division.**

ACCORDING to the latest **Impact of Travel and Tourism on the U.S. and State Economies, Texas ranked fourth, overall**, in terms of total spending by domestic and international travelers, earning nearly \$35 billion in expenditures. The state also feels the impact of traveler spending through the

subsequent creation of 518,500 jobs.

The study, published by the **Travel Industry Association of America** and the **U.S. Chamber of Commerce**, shows the Texas figures were surpassed only by California (\$71.56 billion), Florida (\$56.3 billion) and New York (\$35.4 billion).

"This is evidence of what an economic powerhouse the travel and tourism industry continues to be in the U.S., despite the challenges faced by the industry the past few years," says Roger Dow, president and chief executive officer of the TIA.

When breaking down figures based solely on domestic or international travelers, the rankings change with Texas placing third (\$31.5 billion) among states where domestic travelers spent their money, topped only by California (\$61.1 billion) and Florida (\$42.9 billion).

The Lone Star state slips into a respectable fifth spot with \$3.12 billion in international traveler spending. Florida (\$13.4 billion), California (\$10.5 billion), New York

(\$7.7 billion) and Hawaii (\$5.42 billion) top off that list.

"Without a strong travel and tourism industry, we will not have a strong economy," says David Hirschmann, senior vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The rankings are based on 2003 data — the most recent year for which comparable data is available for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

THE **PORT of Galveston**, the largest cruise port in the Gulf of Mexico, is now **ranked** as the **12th largest cruise port in the world**, according to Lloyd's **Cruise International's** annual Top 20 Cruise Ports issue.

Galveston ran behind Miami; Everglades; Cozumel; Canaveral; Nassau; Georgetown, Grand Cayman; St. Thomas; San Juan; St. Maarten; Los Angeles; and Barcelona.

"The Board of Trustees and port staff worked diligently in the past few years to improve and enhance our cruise facilities and increase the number of visitors to Galveston Island without a thought to our rankings. The fact that our cruise numbers keep increasing confirms that the proper business decisions have been made," says Port Director Steven Cernak.

In U.S. rankings, the Port of Galveston placed No. 5, behind the Florida ports of Miami; Everglades and Canaveral; and Los Angeles, Calif.

Galveston ranked 10th in the world in Leading Caribbean Cruise Ports and Destinations and fourth among U.S. ports in the same Caribbean category.

"The same top four cruise ports as last year, led by Miami, continue to head the World Top 20 ports," write Peter Wild and John Dearing. "But ports such as Galveston, New Orleans, Ocho Rios and Costa Maya have been making up ground."

"Galveston Island is receiving

TOURISM DOLLARS

THE **TOP TEN** states by **total traveler spending** (in billions), according to the Travel Industry Association of America:

1. **California** \$71.56
2. **Florida** \$56.30
3. **New York** \$35.43
4. **Texas** **\$34.60**
5. **Illinois** \$23.00
6. **Nevada** \$21.34
7. **Pennsylvania** . . \$16.42
8. **Georgia** \$15.65
9. **New Jersey** . . . \$15.42
10. **Virginia** \$14.30

invaluable international publicity as a result of these world rankings," Cernak says.

Galveston is homeport to two Carnival Cruise Line ships, one Royal Caribbean ship, and seasonal cruise operations by Celebrity Cruises, Princess Cruises and Royal Caribbean. Together, the lines offered approximately 227 cruises in 2005.

THE WACO Convention and Visitors Bureau has undergone a Web site makeover and the results have been launched.

While the new site helps streamline the CVB's need to reach its four major target markets — leisure and business travelers, meeting and convention planners, tour planners, and media and film — visitors will continue to find helpful information on accommodations, attractions, transportation, entertainment, shopping, weather and traveler services.

"We are very pleased and excited about the Web site's new look," said Liz Taylor, Director of the Waco Convention & Visitors Bureau. "We recognize the importance of the Internet and strive to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information on our site."

For information about Waco, visit the site at www.wacocvb.com.

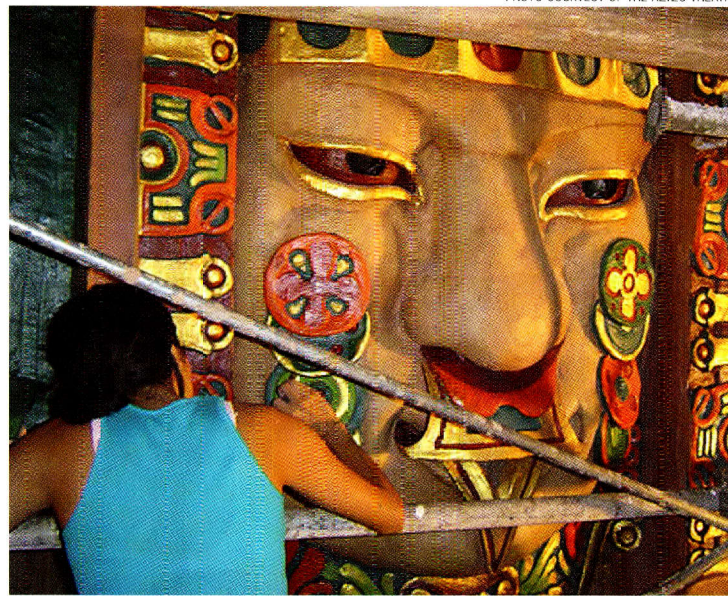
NEW BEGINNING

SAVED from demolition by its place on the **National Register of Historic Places**, the **Aztec Theatre in San Antonio** has been dormant for 15 years, but by early 2006, it is set to get a new lease on life when it reopens as **Aztec on the River**.

When it opened in 1926, the \$1.7 million theater dazzled guests with reproduced Meso-American columns, reliefs and artifacts, combined with "modern" special effects, to encourage guests to explore the lobby, mezzanine, balcony and theater. Later, a new two-story chandelier became the lobby's centerpiece.

With its reawakening, the fully restored lobby will feature a free special effects show at regular intervals throughout the day. Guests with tickets will take a guided tour through the theater while they experience even more special effects, with the help of a 1925 Mighty Wurlitzer theater organ. They'll also experience the gamut of film history from

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AZTEC THEATRE



Irma Rivera, of Restoration Associates Limited, works to clean and restore San Antonio's Aztec Theatre to its original splendor.

silent films that originally played at the theater to the large format film and sound system of a giant state-of-the-art IWERKS Extreme Screen.

Aztec On The River will have more than 16,500 square feet of dining and retail area on the River Walk and more than 3,400 square feet of retail along Commerce Street. Austin-based Iron Cactus restaurant has already signed on to be a part of the space.

On the River Walk level, there also will be a showcase of machinery, including the theater's engine room.

"It's a magnificent building. It lends itself to doing something magnificent," Steve Stendebach, president of Euro-Alamo Management that is heading up the development project, told the *San Antonio Business Journal*. "The interior architecture is absolutely incredible."

For more information, call (877) 432-9832 or (210) 227-3930, or visit www.aztecontheriver.com/home.htm.

PARKS NEWS

THE ARANSAS County Navigation District in Fulton has assumed control of the former **Copano Bay State Fishing Pier**, taking over pier management from the state park system, which has operated it since 1967. As a result, **Texas fishing license and saltwater stmp endorsement are now required** to fish from the pier.

The pier is actually the remnants of an old causeway bridge over the bay that was damaged by a hur-

cane and never repaired. The remaining extending sections, on the north and south side of the bay, became the state fishing pier, which created, in effect, two piers.

The transfer is one of the outcomes of a bill passed by the Texas Legislature that provides a process to transfer operation of state park sites that would be more appropriately managed by local entities.

For more information, call (361) 729-6661 or visit www.acnd.org.

OFFICIALS at Palo Duro Canyon State Park have shifted the facility into **winterization mode** during its slowest season in an effort to allow the park to stay within budget, **avoid layoffs and keep the gates open**.

"Through this plan we can curtail utility and vehicle fuel costs, maintain limited visitors' services and avoid layoffs of an already thin staff," says Hi Newby, park superintendent. "During this time of winterization, park staff will be busy repairing, cleaning and improving campgrounds and day-use areas. These projects do not require significant funds, they require a great deal of man hours." The plan went into effect on Nov. 28 and runs through March 2, according to Newby.

The plan includes closing Hackberry, Fortress Cliff and Cactus campgrounds, Mesquite and Equestrian areas, and the Cow Camp minicabins. The Chinaberry, Sunflower, Cottonwood and Juniper day-use areas are also closed. The Water

Crossing No. 1 day-use area and restroom remains open year-round.

As for the trails, Park Road 5 is closed at the Lighthouse Trailhead. Otherwise, all trails are open and trail rules remain in effect, but there are limited backcountry patrols and trail maintenance. The front-gate office also closes on Tuesdays and Wednesdays with visitors paying park entry fees at a collection box. The park's administrative office remains open year-round.

For more information, call (806) 488-2227 or visit www.visitamarillotx.com.

BOUNCING BACK

THE ART Museum of Southeast Texas in Beaumont is successfully **bouncing back**, after weathering Hurricane Rita, with free art exhibits and services to the people of the region.

"We are not an institution that's going to let some minor damage keep us from showing artwork," says AMSET Executive Director, Lynn Castle. "We were very lucky in how our building survived the storm, so it's time we got back to what we do best."

With that, AMSET's curatorial department has moved forward with its planned installation of paintings by Port Arthur resident and Lamar University art professor Steven Hodges.

"Art With Boundaries," which runs through Jan. 15, covers more than 40 years of Hodges' career and explores the mind of a painter who believes an artist should think on and through his canvases.

"We're very excited to have Steve's work here at the museum," says Curator of Exhibitions Ray Daniel. "His work is extremely important and has been very influential for many students and artists of our area."

Hodges is considered as much a philosopher as a painter. His readings and writings on philosophy and aesthetics are only outnumbered by his drawings, paintings and watercolors.

For more information about AMSET, call (409) 832-3432 or visit www.amset.org.

THE PORT Arthur Convention & Visitors Bureau has temporarily relocated to the **Museum of the Gulf Coast**, at 700 Procter St., while Hurricane Rita damage to the **Civic Center** is being repaired. Estimated time of

repairs is six months to one year.

"The museum has graciously opened its doors to us and given the Bureau a place to call home," says executive director, Tammy Kotzur.

For information, call (409) 985-7822 or (800) 235-7822 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. The CVB will be open for business and available for motor coach groups, conventions and meetings after Jan. 1. The mailing address is P. O. Box 368, Port Arthur, TX. 77641.

The museum and historical homes are open; however, Sabine Pass and Pleasure Island, where most of the eco-tourism sites are, sustained major damage but are expected to recover quickly.

"We are happy to be up and running and have high hopes to see our city rebound," says Kotzur.

INDUSTRY INSIDERS

THE SAN ANTONIO Convention and Visitors Bureau — with Janis Schmees serving as acting director — has made some **key position announcements.**

Robert Salluce is SACVB's new Vice President of Marketing & Communications. Salluce previously served as Public Relations and Community Relations Manager for the bureau. Prior to that, he coordinated communications for San Antonio Independent School District's bond programs, and he was a project coordinator with the City's project management office, overseeing the Convention Center Expansion project. Salluce will oversee the bureau's marketing efforts and daily operations of the advertising, film, community relations and public relations divisions.

Steven Clanton was hired by the SACVB as Director of Sales. With more than 30 years of experience in the industry, Clanton joins the bureau from the Marriott Rivercenter/River Walk where he served as Director of Marketing. He will direct the SACVB's overall sales activities, marketing San Antonio as a meeting and tour destination.

Tracy Barrett Janosko joined the San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau as the Washington, D.C., national sales director in the Sales Division. Janosko will operate out of the nation's capital to solicit meetings and conventions for the Alamo City.



LIGHT OF THE SEASON



THE SEASON is upon us again — when the air is thick with the scent of cinnamon and pine, holiday cheer, parades, food, music, parties, families and more. As always, Texas is a hotbed of holiday activity; no matter where you find yourself in the Lone Star State, you'll stumble across the glow of the season. It could be due to all the **lighting displays across the state.**

Some of these lighting events include:

- **Christmas Park — Land of Lights, Athens:** Drive through more than 2 million lights, 50 musical scenes, seven tunnels and 10 arches, over a 1-mile stretch of N.W. Loop 317. Through Jan. 1. (903) 675-7469 or www.christmasparkathens.com.
- **Grayson County Holiday Lights, Denison:** More than 50

animated lighting displays at Loy Lake Park. www.denisontexas.com.

- **Hill Country Regional Lighting Trail, Hill Country:** Boerne, Bulverde, Burnet, Dripping Springs, Fredericksburg, Goldthwaite, Johnson City, Llano, Marble Falls, New Braunfels, Round Mountain and Wimberley hold special events, displays, parades and other activities. www.tex-fest.com/regional.
- **Lights of the Blackland, Blackland Prairie:** Nine communities are decked with holiday-lighting displays: Granger, Taylor, Bartlett, Temple, Bastrop, Hutto, Thrall, Thorndale and Rockdale. www.lightsoftheblackland.com.
- **Moody Gardens Festival of Lights, Galveston:** More than a million lights turn the grounds into a winter wonderland at dusk. Also ice skating and a holiday musical.

(800) 582-4673 or www.moodygardens.org.

- **Wonderland of Lights, Marshall:** Experience 10 million lights, carriage rides, narrated bus tours, ice skating, parade, music, home tours, cowboy breakfast and more through Dec. 31. (800) 953-7868 or www.marshalltxchamber.com.
 - **Sweetwater Trail of Lights, Sweetwater:** A holiday lighting festival that is the town's "crown jewel event." Through Jan. 1. (325) 235-5488 or (800) 658-6757.
 - **Walkway of Lights, Marble Falls:** Stroll through Lakeside Park (along Lake Marble Falls) to see lighted trees, tunnels and sculptures. Through Dec. 31. www.marblefalls.org.
- For more holiday events, visit www.texashighways.com or www.traveltex.com.

The search for a new SACVB director (Melvin Tennant resigned that position in May) has been primarily on hold pending the appointment of a new city manager. In November, San Antonio welcomed Sheryl Sculley as its new city manager.

Frank Smith, who has served as executive director for the Sulphur Springs Tourism and Visitors Bureau, has taken on a new role as director of the **Graham Convention and Visitors Bureau.**

The **Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau** welcomes **Sarah O'Brien** back on its staff as their **visitor services coordinator.** O'Brien, who worked part-time at the visitor center, recently returned from France where she worked as an event-planning and hospitality intern.

Amy Roquemore, who has had more than a decade of experience as a newspaper reporter, joins the Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau staff to serve as **media relations coordinator.**

SPORTS TOURISM

THE UNITED States Team Penning Association's **National Finals and World Championships** will be held in **Amarillo** for 2006, 2007 and 2008,

based on a recent decision by the USTPA board.

USTPA President Gary Stanfill says, "Amarillo's proposal strongly indicated the dedication and interest this city has in supporting the events that come to the Amarillo National Center. We are delighted to be returning to Amarillo for another three years."

Competitors come to the event from across the United States and Canada. "According to the Destination Marketing Association International formula, this means big bucks for area businesses," says Eric Miller, director of communications for the Amarillo Convention and Visitors Council.

Based on the number of horses entered in the show, the number of days competitors are in Amarillo and the average number of dollars spent by competitors, the DMAI formula estimates that Amarillo will feel a direct economic impact of \$3.1 million during this week, while the turnover of dollars in the city will result in a \$6.2 million impact.

"I challenge anyone to show me a more hospitable city than Amarillo," says Stanfill. "The men who spend hours helping check in our exhibitors, unloading their trailers and best of all, cooking a prime rib dinner, are incredible and we truly appreciate all they do to make our stay here a memorable one."

For more information, visit www.visitamarillo.com or www.ustpa.com.

IN THE PRESS

THE *NEW YORK Times* had Texas on its mind with recent **travel features on Fredericksburg and Dallas.**

In its "36 Hours" feature, suggestions were made for spending that time in Fredericksburg — from 5 p.m. Friday through Sunday afternoon. The article touts Fredericksburg's rural charm, arts community, and nearby wineries and parks. Suggestions include sunset at Enchanted Rock, the National Museum of the Pacific, a stroll down Main Street, Trade Days, treats from bakeries and old German fare.

In another feature, Dallas is revisited as destination-worthy because of its growing cultural draw with the Nasher Sculpture Center, major collections bequeathed to the Dallas Museum of Art and plans for a Rem Koolhaas-designed Center for the Performing Arts.

"Dallas finally has cultural draws to eclipse Southfork and the Kennedy assassination for good. Dallas is now attracting international art connoisseurs, who formerly bypassed Big D's offerings in favor of Fort Worth and Marfa," the article reads.



TEXAS TRIVIA

What stately event happened on Dec. 29, 1845?

On that day, U.S. President James Polk followed through on a campaign promise to annex Texas and signed legislation making Texas the 28th state of the United States. The process began in 1836, when Texas declared (and fought to win) its independence from Mexico. The notion of annexation to the United States was popular, but treaty agreements with Mexico kept the U.S. from annexing Texas. Meanwhile, John Quincy Adams was adamant against the annexation, and Texas withdrew its annexation offer. Annexation talks resumed, and died, in 1844. And the issue resurfaced again in 1845 when a joint resolution for Texas' annexation passed in the U.S. Senate by one vote.

TEXAS TRIVIA

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TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

VISITOR NUMBERS as of October 31, 2005

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	9,480	-0.73	91,752	-11.59
ANTHONY	12,301	+9.72	133,622	+6.60
CAPITOL	6,771	-15.79	76,359	-4.79
DENISON	35,592	-2.10	386,019	+2.61
GAINESVILLE	39,856	+62.70	325,090	+38.33
LANGTRY	3,429	-45.48	55,865	-11.97
LAREDO	7,114	-28.12	108,912	-12.23
ORANGE	25,700	+50.74	513,681	-1.80
TEXARKANA	48,172	+26.11	462,072	+4.59
VALLEY	11,072	-9.96	177,653	+4.39
WASKOM	46,384	+3.74	497,093	+3.53
WICHITA FALLS	13,545	-3.83	159,529	+1.28
CENTER TOTALS	259,416	-2.94	2,987,647	+3.71

*Compared to last year

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

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