

Travel Log

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PAN AMERICAN

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

FINAL NOTICE!

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COMING UP

Developers hope to bring the sort of ambience found in Dallas' West End to southeast Oak Cliff. *The Dallas Morning News* reports Con-Real Inc. has invested more than \$2 million toward the renovation of the historic **Monroe Shops building**, adjacent to DART's Illinois Transit Center, in the south **Dallas** area. The 50,000-square-foot building at 2111 Corinth will contain restaurants, shops and offices, and will house the DART Transit Police headquarters and the DART Transportation Museum. The museum will showcase an original Dallas trolley car, historic transit industry memorabilia and an interactive learning center for kids. Grand opening is scheduled for this May.

Major expansion of the **Arlington Convention Center** will begin this fall. The construction of a 60,000-square-foot Grand Hall will add 30,000 square feet of formal, divisible ballroom space, as well as areas for use in pre-function activities, dressing rooms, a kitchen and storage. The center's location in the Entertainment District offers conventioners easy access to the city's myriad attractions, restaurants and hotels. For details, call 817/459-5000.

Civic and business leaders in the **Lower Rio Grande Valley** are

working to lure six **Major League Baseball** teams, including the Texas Rangers and Houston Astros, from spring training camps in Florida. State Rep. **Rene Oliveira**, D-Brownsville, said the Valley has plenty of hotels, restaurants and infrastructure to accommodate fans from Texas and northern Mexico. The only problem, he said, is funding. To accommodate all six teams, a minimum of three stadiums and five training facilities would have to be built at an estimated cost of \$75 million - a small price to pay, proponents say, compared to the millions of dollars, tax revenue and jobs the Valley could reap.

PLACES

Hundreds of taped conversations of **President Lyndon Baines Johnson** are now available through the **LBJ Library and Museum in Austin**. Initially, 72 tapes were released covering Johnson's presidency from January through March of 1964. An

additional 47 cassettes spanning April through June of that year were opened to the public last month. A library spokesman said the project is ongoing and that periodically other tapes will be released. The cassettes offer an intimate portrait of the office of President of the United States. Through them, Johnson reveals his tormenting decisions over Vietnam, his range of responsibilities, his bargaining skills as a politician and his sense of humor. The tapes sell for \$6 each, with a minimum order of two tapes required. In addition, visitors are invited to listen to the tapes in the reading room on the library's eighth floor. Open daily at 2313 Red River Street. Call 512/916-5137, extension 234, for details.

The *Austin American-Statesman* reports three Texas cities were named finalists in the **Great American Main Street Awards**. **Fort Worth**, **Georgetown** and **Harlingen**, along with 17 other U.S. cities, were recognized for their exceptional

accomplishments in revitalizing historic and traditional downtowns. The awards, co-sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, honor communities that have demonstrated active public and private participation in revitalization, success in boosting their downtown economy and adaptive use and preservation of key historic buildings.

It opened in 1990. But we're just now discovering the **Vintage Flying Museum**, a nonprofit antique aircraft restoration facility, at Meacham Airport in **Fort Worth**, that literally builds museums that fly. Vintage planes, land vehicles and support equipment within a nostalgic B-29 hangar boast proudly of their days in World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars. The last-known B-17G Pathfinder, saved from the scrap heap in 1979, stands humbly amongst the others, knowing full well she helped beat out the Nazi war machine. Model airplanes, artifacts and memorabilia speak to visitors of



NO NEED TO BE FORMAL A group of tuxedo-clad visitors from South Africa liked Texas so much they decided to stay. Last month Penguin Island opened at the Fort Worth Zoo, where 17 endangered black-footed penguins were transferred to a new 38,000-gallon pool. Their indoor climate-controlled environment allows visitors to watch the aquatic birds "fly" underwater. The adorable creatures can bask in the Texas sun in an outside pool and rocky beach area that simulates their coastal island homeland. For information on the zoo's adopt-a-penguin program, call 817/871-7029. For general information, call 817/871-7050.

TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD

more turbulent days. Museum spokeswoman **Chuckie Hospers** said the museum builds bridges to the future through its involvement with young people. Elementary schoolchildren prepare for takeoff on Take Flight Days, where they are instructed in the physics of flight and are guided through the facility by knowledgeable U.S. veterans. The museum, the Organization of Black Airplane Pilots and the FAA sponsor a week-long program for high school students to expose them to career opportunities in aviation. Open Saturdays and Sundays; weekday tours by appointment. Call 817/624-1935 for more info.

If you're directing visitors to **Cowtown**, you might want to suggest a couple of walking tours. **Hell's Half Acre to Sundance Square** leaves Fridays and Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. from the Radisson Plaza Hotel. The two-and-a-half-hour tour leads visitors to places of interest in downtown Fort Worth, while pointing out colorful tidbits about the city's past and present, and offering tips on things to see and do. Call 817/327-1178 for special arrangements; \$10 per person. Visitors can explore the history of the Old West as they take to the streets in the **Fort Worth Stockyards National Historic District**, just minutes from down-

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CAPITOL COMPLEX TIC
Assistant manager Mary Ulrich Jackson and counselor Leslie Dennard called howling with laughter after receiving a letter marked, "Missent to Melbourne, Australia. Retry U.S.A." It wasn't just any letter, but a Christmas card from counselors at the Orange TIC. "Can you believe it?" Mary asked. "All the way to Australia and back for just 32 cents!"

town. Tours are conducted daily from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. from the Visitors Center and include stops at the Livestock Exchange Building, Cowtown Coliseum, Stockyards Station, Cattlemen's Catwalk and Mule Alley. For a small additional fee, visitors can get a behind-the-scenes look at Billy Bob's Texas, the "world's largest honky-tonk." Call the Visitors Center at 817/625-9715; \$6 adults, \$4.50 seniors, \$4 children; group rates available.

The **Alpine and Fort Davis Chambers of Commerce Gateway Fam Tour**, where counselor **Brenda Baker** from TxDOT's Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center in Langtry and personnel from nearby chambers and C&VBs learned about the latest in tourism in the Davis Mountains and Big Bend regions. The busy two-day schedule included a Star Party at the McDonald Observatory, a tour of the Chihuahuan Desert Institute and a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new Big Bend/Marfa Lights Screening Room at Apache Trading Post in Alpine. The event was so successful, the two chambers are planning a repeat performance in April. For details, call **Jim Glendinning** at the Alpine chamber at 915/837-2326.

Bird-lovers can now start their day at the **Texas State Aquar-**

GAINESVILLE TIC The Denton C&VB converged on the center to let us in on the latest goings-on in Denton and the surrounding area. JoAnn Ballentine, Robin Myers and Kim Sutton Dillon updated counselors on the Texas Motor Speedway, the new Salt Grass Steak House in Lewisville and Denton's new web page.

JUDGE ROY BEAN TIC
More and more visitors are finding their way to the portable building, erected as temporary quarters during the center's renovation. "Our visitors don't even seem to mind the porta-potties all that much. Though I've noticed, they're in and out in a heartbeat," counselor Brenda Baker said. The center's renovation is about 25 percent complete.

FACES

The woman who's known throughout the Texas tourism industry for her easy smile, infectious laugh and tireless enthusiasm for promoting the Coastal Bend was presented the prestigious **Barbara Sheppard Award** at the **Coastal Bend Regional Tourism Council's** January meeting. What could be more fitting than for the council to present this second annual award to none other than **Barbara Sheppard** herself? The honor goes to an individual from the private or business

ium in Corpus Christi, where groups of ten or more can schedule private **Early Bird Tours**. Visitors are guided through the indoor and outdoor marsh exhibits by an expert aquarist, and enjoy a feeding demonstration with some of South Texas' most fascinating water birds. After the tour, the group is invited to view the aquarium's other exhibits and enjoy the wonders of the sea. Early birds welcomed on Tuesdays through Thursdays from 8 to 9 a.m.; \$9 (\$7 for seniors). For more information or to make reservations, call 512/881-1307. At 2710 N. Shoreline Boulevard.

LAB PARTNER A world of wondrous inventions and zany contraptions await young and old at the new H-E-B Science Treehouse at the Witte Museum in San Antonio. Interactive exhibits at the four-level attraction encourage visitors to launch a tennis ball two stories high, play music with laser beams, surf the Internet and lift themselves up with pulleys and ropes. Youngsters can explore the world of science at overnight camps. Open daily at 3801 Broadway. For more information, call 210/357-1900.



sector who has been instrumental in promoting tourism in the Coastal Bend. No doubt, no one is more deserving of that recognition than Barbara. She was the moving force that helped establish the Coastal Bend council, and has served as board member for the Texas Travel Industry Association and Port Aransas C&VB. As former owner of Fisherman's Wharf in Port Aransas, she continues to offer promotional support for the popular deep-sea charter vessels, and spends countless hours contributing to Port A fund raisers and special events. Congratulations to a dear friend.

Richard Luber joined the Austin C&VB as executive director on March 3. **Carl McKee**, board chairman of the Austin C&VB, said Richard clearly possesses the ability to advance Austin's efforts as a premiere convention and tourism destination. Under his leadership as vice president of the Greater Columbus C&VB in Ohio, convention bookings nearly doubled in one year. For the past seven years, he has served as CEO and president of the Greater Rochester Visitors Association in New York. To welcome him Texas-style, call 512/474-5171.

HISTORY

Historians believe Spanish explorer **Francisco Vázquez de Coronado** and his men spent the winter of 1541 at what's now **Blanco Canyon** in southern Floyd County, about 40 miles northeast of Lubbock. Now archaeologists are bringing to light a time in Texas history unfamiliar to many. *The Dallas Morning News* reports excavations in that area have unearthed scores of artifacts from 16th-Century Spanish explorers, including horseshoes, harness equipment, nails, cross-bow points and a chain mail glove once worn by a conquistador. **Donald Blakeslee**, a Wichita

State University professor supervising the dig, said after the work at Blanco Canyon, he'll begin excavation at Coronado's other supposed stops, in hopes of uncovering the rest of the expedition route.

Another important bit of Texas history was uncovered on a ranch in **Victoria County**, where archaeologists unearthed eight iron cannons that confirm the site of Fort St. Louis, founded in 1685 by French nobleman **René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle**. The site of the short-lived fort was never officially determined until the recent digs. Officials from the Texas Historical Commission said the cannons are well documented in French manuscripts and Spanish archives. They were found less than two feet under the earth, several miles upstream from Lavaca Bay.



SPREADING LIKE WILDFLOWERS In 1989, the City of Richardson planted nine acres of wildflowers in Campbell Ridge Park to beautify their community. The idea blossomed into more than 90 acres, planting the seeds for Wildflower!, an annual arts and music festival attracting almost 50,000 visitors. During April 24-27, regional and international performers, artists, dancers, magicians, fire jugglers, and fireworks take center stage. Call 972/680-7909 for details.

WILDLIFE

Thanks to \$1 million in federal grant assistance, **Austin** will soon add 942 acres to the **Balcones Canyonlands Preserve**. The current 22,000 acres in western Travis County offer sanctuary to endangered species, including the golden-cheeked warbler and various reclusive bugs that live in caves, fissures and other openings in the area's limestone. The grant represents one-sixth of the national outlay by the U.S. Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service, a real vote of confidence, officials say, in Austin and Travis County's habitat plan.

Fossil Rim Wildlife Center near **Glen Rose** celebrated the birth of its second female **southern black rhino** on February 2. Only ten zoological and wildlife facilities in the U.S. and Canada cooperate in the management of a population of 37 of these highly endangered animals. Each birth is critical to maintaining a self-sustaining captive population, as well as the ultimate survival of the species. As recently as 20 years

ago, the wild population of black rhino was believed to be around 65,000. Now less than 2,500 roam the African plains. Within a few weeks, the new mother and baby will join the other endangered species in the Intensive Management Area, where the public can view the animals on Fossil Rim's guided tours. Open daily. Call 817/897-2960 for details.

MUSEUMS

A global tour highlighting some of the world's most promising technologies in agriculture, energy and manufacturing is on view through May 4 at the **Fort Worth Museum of Science. Balancing Acts: Providing for Today, Preserving Tomorrow** carries visitors to five countries where they can explore real-life success stories of earth-friendly technology. The exhibit includes multimedia displays, larger-than-life models and cultural artifacts and a wind energy demonstration that promises to blow you away. Open daily at 1501 Montgomery Street. Call 817/732-1631 for details.

? **TEXAS TRIVIA**

Which Texas city was once known as the "sin city of the Gulf"?

During the days of Prohibition, Galveston exploited the banishment of liquor and gambling by offering illegal drinks and being in nightclubs and saloons. This, combined with extensive prostitution that had existed in the port city since the Civil War, gave credence to the title "sin city of the Gulf." The island's residents supported these illegal activities and even took pride as citizens of "the free state of Galveston." But times change. In the 1980s, Galveston voters defeated proposals to legalize casino gambling. More recently, the Galveston Park Board of Trustees banned alcohol consumption in Stewart Beach Park, to keep the area safe and fun for family-oriented entertainment and events.

TEXAS TRIVIA

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-date	Percent Variation*
Amarillo	9,474	-17.72	19,665	-7.48
Anthony	13,890	-17.82	27,552	-14.10
Denison	14,469	-.10	28,803	+5.88
Gainesville	21,303	-11.82	44,538	-6.79
Langtry	7,623	-32.94	14,700	-25.98
Laredo	6,087	-52.78	12,207	-53.19
Orange	33,960	-42.01	70,590	-35.24
Texarkana	26,277	-31.65	55,917	-30.69
Valley	64,488	+98	127,353	-.45
Waskom	40,152	-3.70	80,772	+1.05
Wichita Falls	12,864	-21.88	25,899	-10.53
Capitol Complex	7,890	-6.04	13,608	-12.40
1-800 Phone Center	8,805	-45.31	17,223	-39.74
CENTER TOTALS	267,282	-20.18	538,827	-16.44

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Data as of February 28, 1997
*Compared to last year

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