

TRAVEL NEWS

According to the **latest poll** conducted by the **Travel Industry Association of America (TIA)**, **64 percent of travelers** in the past year planned at least one of their trips at the last minute, more specifically, within two weeks of taking their trip.

And of these late-planning tourists, 26 percent coordinated all of their past-year leisure trips at the last minute. The poll indicated that the most popular reason for taking a last-minute trip is to visit friends and relatives (39%), while other reasons included sightseeing or attending a sporting event (23%), or for personal reasons, such as attending weddings, etc. (19%).

The poll also reflected a well-known travel trend of late, that most last-minute trips are close to home and short in duration, with most pleasure trips (69%) less than 500 miles, one-way, to the destination. Most last-minute travelers (70%) drove their own car, and nearly half (45%) of these last-minute tourists stayed in a hotel, motel, or bed and breakfast.

An interesting fact that the poll uncovered, however, was that only 17% of these last-minute travelers said they used the Internet to make travel reservations for their most recent last-minute trip.

TIA's survey results are based on a sample of 1,300 U.S. adults interviewed by telephone.

**TEXAS STATE DOCUMENT
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PAN AMERICAN
EDINBURG, TEXAS 78539-2999**

Congratulations go out to the cities of **Clarksville, Llano, Luling, Van Horn and Winsboro** for being named **2003 Texas Official Main Street Cities** by the Texas Historical Commission.

During the agency's Oct. 22 meeting, THC Chairman John L. Nau said, "The Texas Main Street Program is one of our most successful and recognized programs. We have seen tremendous accomplishments in both large and small Main Street communities in the past 20 years and believe these five cities will be among our most successful programs."

The newly designated cities join more than 70 other Texas cities in THC's downtown revitalization program. Each city will receive design

NEW DIGS The Granbury Visitors Center recently opened its new location, inside Granbury's sparkling new City Hall complex. After being housed in a temporary location for more than 10 months, the Visitors Center opened for business in its new digs on Oct. 7.

The Center's Carolyn Kagy said, "We are so proud of our new facility." The \$4.5 million project was launched in the Summer 2001, and the new 27,000-square foot facility is made of native limestone. The Visitors Center is located on the building's east entrance, and the building also houses the

Texas Lakes Trail Regional Coordinator.

Although the Center, located at 116 W. Bridge, has been open for business in its new location for almost two months, the formal grand opening is slated for Dec. 7.

For more info call the Center at

1-800-950-2212 or e-mail

gcvb@granburytx.com.



assistance, technical assistance and training from the THC staff. In addition, a Main Street resource team will visit each town and make recommendations for both short-term and long-term strategies to rehabilitate buildings, promote tourism, and attract new businesses.

In addition to the five new cities joining the program, Marshall and Waxahachie were recertified as Texas Main Street Cities. Since the program's inception in 1981, THC has worked with more than 130 cities across Texas, many of which are now popular tourist destinations.

For more info about the program, contact Kay Harvey-Mosley at (512) 463-6092.

TEXAS IN THE PRESS

According to *Hispanic magazine's* August issue, **two Texas cities** are among the top 10 of the **nation's best places for Hispanics to live and work**.

Austin ranked second best, while San Antonio was rated fourth

according to the publication. The list was compiled using criteria that included the percentage of Hispanics living in the city, political representation, frequency of Spanish being spoken, and the vibrancy and 'hipness' of the Latin cultural scene.

San Diego topped the magazine's list, Miami was third and Albuquerque was fifth.

The Dallas Morning News recently unveiled its list of the **12 best independently owned book stores** across the country, and **BookPeople in Austin** was ranked among those dozen selected.

The unique shop, located at the corner of 6th Street and Lamar Blvd., has undergone quite a few changes since its beginnings as a metaphysical bookstore 32 years ago. However, it still continues to keep its quirky charm, and you can even find a Buddha in the incense section, funky T-shirts and jewelry. *The Morning News* touted the store for its distinctly Austin flavor. "Ann

TEXAS TRAVEL

**TRAVEL TALES
OVERHEARD**

from TxDOT's Travel Information Centers

ORANGE T.I.C. Travel counselor Laura Blackwell recently helped a man looking for info about a 1,000-year-old tree near Galveston. He said he'd read about it in a brochure, which he'd left at home. While Laura was trying to track down the tree, the man began chatting about his travels in Big Bend. To Laura's surprise, he claimed he'd seen a brontosaurus! "Footprints?" she asked— "A replica?" Nope. He insisted that he'd seen a brontosaurus. Laura gave him the info she'd found about a historic tree near the coast and he was on his way.

GAINESVILLE T.I.C. A reunion of 160 former members of the 103rd Battalion, which trained at Camp Howze near Gainesville during World War II, made the Gainesville Center their initial stop recently. Gainesville Mayor Kenneth Kaden was on hand at the Center to welcome the soldiers and their families to the city. The group then toured the remains of the camp and later visited the Morton Museum, where special displays commemorating Camp Howze are on display for the next few months. Center supervisor Cheryl Cash said many of the former soldiers said while this reunion may be their last one, it was made even more special with their visit to Gainesville.

TEXAS TRAVEL LOG

is published monthly by the Texas Department of Transportation, Travel Division. Please send news items of interest to the Texas travel industry to *Texas Travel Log*, P.O. Box 141009, Austin, TX 78714-1009. (512) 486-5874, fax (512) 486-5879. E-mail: trv-log@dot.state.tx.us. Deadline for each newsletter is the 15th of the month preceding the issue date.

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Richards lives next door, Laura Bush was here to kick off the Texas Bookfest (and) Robin Williams spent three hours picking out science fiction titles."

For more info, visit www.bookpeople.com or call 1-800-853-9757.

NEW MONUMENT

A new memorial honoring Texas victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, and the ensuing Operation Enduring Freedom, will be constructed in the **Texas State Cemetery** in Austin.

In a ceremony coinciding with the one-year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Governor Rick Perry unveiled the memorial's design, which was selected from three finalists for the project. O'Connell Robertson & Associates, Inc. will build the monument, which will feature two steel column remnants retrieved from the World Trade Center buildings surrounded by a gently rising spiral of Texas granite. The columns were donated to Texas for building the memorial.

Perry said, "We who live today must make a solemn vow to always honor the victims of Sept. 11," Perry said during the ceremony on the State Cemetery

grounds. The winning memorial was selected from a field of 39 designs submitted to the Governor's office and reviewed by a Memorial Design Committee.

The completed memorial will be unveiled in a dedication ceremony on Sept. 11, 2003, marking the two-year anniversary of the attacks. The project will be funded through private donations.

TxDOT

TxDOT recently announced the launch of its redesigned Internet site, www.dot.state.tx.us. Although the site's new look and navigation has only been up a few weeks, officials say response has been positive.

The Web site's new look includes grouping information by categories, friendlier Web addresses, minimizing and eliminating unnecessary or duplicate information, and addressing American with Disabilities Act considerations. The new design also offers many new features to assist visitors with rapid exchange of TxDOT information and services.

The site's redesign took five months to complete and has streamlined many Web site addresses. For example, to find information on the Travel

Division's home page, the new, shorter address is www.dot.state.tx.us/trv.

Please give a Texas-sized "Howdy" to **Darah Waldrip**, the newest member of TxDOT's Travel Division. Darah took over as the Division's Special Projects unit leader on Nov. 1.

She's responsible for the department's litter prevention programs, which include "Don't Mess With Texas," Adopt-a-Highway and Keep Texas Beautiful. She also serves as the division's Legislative Coordinator and the media liaison/public information officer. She'll also be writing scripts for special projects, such as the awards presentations at the Texas Travel Counselors Conference.

OPENINGS

The **Houston Museum of Natural History** recently celebrated the grand reopening of its **Challenger Learning Center** after the completion of its extensive renovation project.

The Center opened in 1988 as a living memorial to the astronauts who died in the Challenger Space Shuttle.

The renovated center includes an improved, futuristic 'mission control' that gives students and visitors an idea of what the real Mission Control Students might look like in 20 years, and new computers and controllers designed to enhance the 'futuristic' experience. Students are encouraged to use problem-solving skills and modern technology to complete their mission – first to the Moon and then on to Mars.

The grand reopening was held in October and buoyed by the attendance of Cheryl McNair, widow of Challenger astronaut Ron McNair. Fifth-graders from a nearby elementary school were on hand to kick off the remodeled center's inaugural mission.

You can find out more about the Center by visiting www.hmns.org or by calling (713) 639-4629.



BUS STOPS The American Bus Association (ABA) recently announced its listing of the **Top 100 Events in North America for 2003**, and that list includes two Texas entries.

Grapevine's annual Grapefest and the long-time summertime musical production

"Texas" in Canyon made the list, which is selected by a committee comprised of motorcoach and tour operators from across the country.

"Texas" will start its annual summertime production from June 6 – Aug. 17 while Grapefest is slated for Sept. 11-14.

To see the ABA's complete Top 100 list, visit www.buses.org/top100events/.



NEW ARRIVALS

Folks visiting **Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch in San Antonio** aren't seeing double, but rather seeing the **two newest additions** to the park.

Two new **baby giraffes** were born just weeks apart earlier this fall at the park. 'Keya' was born Aug. 18, while her baby half-sister, 'Tosha,' was born Sept. 18.

Tosha's mother, 'Toya,' was also born in the park in 1993. The park's breeding program is proving quite successful, as five of the seven giraffes that call the facility home have been born within its confines. Tosha was no tiny baby at birth either, weighing 120 pounds and standing just shy of six feet tall.

Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch is open year-round. For more info call (830) 438-7400 or e-mail nbwr.tif@gvtc.com.

EXHIBITS

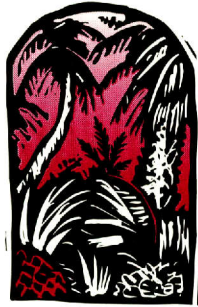
The **Museum of Fine Arts in Houston** is featuring an exhibit that showcases one of **Leonardo da Vinci's** most impressive masterpieces.

Leonardo da Vinci and the Splendor of Poland will be on display Dec. 8 through Feb. 17 in the Caroline Wiess Law Building. While the majority of the exhibit features works that reflect the history of collecting in Poland, the crown jewel is undoubtedly da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine (Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani)*. Painted around 1490, this powerful work anticipates the artistry of Mona Lisa and is astonishing in its own right. It has been hailed by critics as a breakthrough in the art of psychological portraiture.

The Museum's Wiess Building is located at 1001 Bissonnet St. For more info call (713) 639-7300.

The home of the American Quarter Horse Association headquarters and the American Quarter Horse Heritage Center and Museum now has a few more vibrant varieties of the animal. Thirty colorful replicas of American Quarter Horses, crafted by local artists, began appearing throughout **Amarillo** during the

SINGIN' IN THE RAIN? "Rainforests of the World" will be the theme of **Galveston's 2003 Mardi Gras celebration**, which runs **Feb. 21 – Mar. 4** in the city's historic Strand district.



summer as part of the public art display **Hoof Prints of the American Quarter Horse—America's Quarter Horse**.

The equines, with a potential to be joined by 20 more, remain on display through 2004. The display is a project of **Center City of Amarillo** and the **American Quarter Horse Association**.

The project is not unlike those that other cities throughout the country have held as a tourism attraction, said Eric Miller, director of communications with the Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council.

Similar events in Texas have included the Cow Parade in Houston and San Antonio, Bullovarts in Fort Worth and WaCows in Waco.

The animals already have garnered a lot of attention within the city and have become a conversational subject, according to Miller.

Maps and brochures of the exhibit are available through the Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council by calling 1-800-374-1497 or on its Web site, www.amarillo-cvb.org.

BIRD ALERT

Calling all bird watchers. Be on the lookout for a white bird with black wingtips known as a **whooping crane**—not to be confused with the grayish sandhill cranes.

The **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department** is asking Texans to report sightings of these birds to TPWD or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These endangered birds began arriving at their winter homes along the Texas coast Oct. 24 and will continue to arrive through early December.

More than 50 bands are scheduled to perform during this year's 12-day, 11-night celebration. In addition, there will be nine parades, 15 masquerade balls, art exhibits, and a culinary salute to the Rainforests of the World.

For more info on the upcoming Mardi Gras, call 1-888-GAL-ISLE or visit www.mardigrasgalveston.com.

"Texas plays an important role in the conservation of whooping cranes," according to TPWD.

Anyone sighting a whooping crane should report it to TPWD at 1-800-792-1112 or 512/847-9480 or via e-mail to lalinam@wimberley-tx.com. For more information, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/news/news/newsrel.htm.

SPORTS WORLD

Spurs Sports & Entertainment announced Nov. 13 that **San Antonio** will field a **Women's National Basketball Association team** beginning in 2003 due to the success of a Season Ticket deposit campaign that began in March.

The Spurs have been interested in securing a WNBA franchise since the league began, but they needed a suitable arena, said Jena Evans, communications manager for the San Antonio Spurs. The recently opened SBC Center gave them the venue they needed.

Right now the team does not have a name, nor has it been determined if San Antonio will host an expansion franchise or a relocated team. But that information may be available as early as the end of this month or beginning of January, according to Evans. Currently the WNBA has 16 teams, including the Houston Comets.

There are many benefits to San Antonio having its own team.

It presents an opportunity to see these women in person. People visiting during the summer have something to do that is inside, and tickets are affordable enough to take the entire family, Evans said.

For more information, see www.wnba.com.

TEXAS TRIVIA

What famous Texas lawman was once found innocent of a crime thanks to his shoe size?

William A. "Bigfoot" Wallace spent nearly 60 years in Texas and set the standards as a ranger, outdoorsman and folk hero. However, his lack of lengthy feet saved him from nearly being wrongly convicted. According to information found on the Web site www.williamwallace.com, Wallace was born in Lexington, VA, in 1817 and grew up working in his father's fruit orchard. However, his older brother and a cousin were killed during the infamous Gohad Massacre in 1836, which prompted him to head west and join the Texas Revolution. By the time he arrived, Texas' war for independence had already been won.

Wallace settled in La Grange, but in 1840 he set out for Austin to assist in the design and construction of the new Capitol building. It was around this time that he was mistaken for a Native American named 'Bigfoot,' who had been accused of ransacking a neighboring settler's home. Authorities compared Wallace's foot to a 14-inch imprint from Bigfoot, and found his was actually much smaller than the real 'Bigfoot.' Although he was found innocent of the crime, Wallace was given the nickname 'Bigfoot,' which he retained for the remainder of his life.

He proved his mettle as a soldier, fighting for Texas in several early conflicts. Later, he joined other Texans in the Mexican-American War, and in the 1850s he commanded a company of Texas Rangers fighting border bandits and Native Americans out on the frontier.

Although he died in 1899, the legend of Bigfoot Wallace lives on today.

TEXAS TRIVIA

NEW TRAVEL GUIDE Since the holiday season is now upon us, the new year can't be far away. That means that the new 2003 editions of the *Texas State Travel Guide*, *Texas Accommodations Guide* and *Texas Official Travel Map* will be available very soon.

All three publications sport distinctly Texan-like covers this year, featuring photos of cowboy boots that are colorful and uniquely Texas! In addition, the Travel Guide will include eight new city listings, as well as updated climate and airport information.

The new publications will be available beginning Jan. 1. To order your free copy of these publications, visit www.TravelTex.com or call 1-800-8888-TEX.

NUMBERS as of October 31, 2002				
TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-Date	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	10,047	+1.42	117,609	+5.70
ANTHONY	11,430	-21.73	142,137	-1.68
DENISON	29,088	+9.53	315,222	+26.72
GAINESVILLE	27,120	-1.36	298,917	+6.22
LANGTRY	5,778	-3.99	62,970	+3.57
LAREDO	5,739	+9.44	75,252	-1.05
ORANGE	29,205	-16.25	435,693	+5.26
TEXARKANA	41,952	-4.98	355,473	-7.02
VALLEY	9,822	-19.26	200,286	-17.34
WASKOM	39,210	+17.38	349,869	+6.21
WICHITA FALLS	15,456	-6.12	175,692	+7.99
CAPITOL	6,108	-11.86	85,050	-6.07
CENTER TOTALS	230,955	-2.88	2,614,170	+2.76

*Compared to last year

Dial toll-free 1-800-452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m.–6 p.m. daily, Central Time)

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