

TXD T 1325.6 T697 2008/10

## Texas travel log

# TEXAS TRAVEL LOG

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- ★ *Forbes* lists San Antonio's River Walk among Top 25 destinations in the U.S.
- ★ Dallas' Meadows Museum presents classic exhibit, From Manet to Miro

## WAKE OF THE STORM

**H**URRICANE IKE caused extraordinary damage along the Texas coast and has temporarily halted the tourism in affected areas, but it has not put a dent on the spirit of Texans who have begun the process of cleaning and rebuilding. The state's travel industry has been supportive, too.

The uncertainty of Hurricane Ike's path triggered evacuations from the Padre Island National Seashore and up the coast. A voluntary evacuation order had been issued for Calhoun County, but Port Lavaca Chamber of Commerce's new Executive Director Lacey Ekberg says their community ended up with only some small winds and no rain. The southern coast was spared and attractions, like Corpus Christi's Texas State Aquarium that closed temporarily, were able to get back to business as usual.

The upper coastline did not fare as well, with damage from Galveston, which took a direct hit, to Orange, which was on the eastern side of the storm taking tough punches. Portions of the Piney Woods region also suffered. But, reports show these areas are ready to clean up and get back into business as soon as possible.

## GALVESTON

**G**ALVESTON CITY Manager Steve LeBlanc says "cleanup could take months." Island preservationists and developers George and Cynthia Mitchell, The Grand 1894 Opera House and Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark are looking forward to the future.

The Mitchells, who own 17 historic buildings in Galveston, say they are fortunate to have sustained only minor damage to their buildings. "We expect to have all properties operational in the near future," George Mitchell says. "Our first concern is for the families who have suffered loss of, or injuries to, family mem-

## IKE'S TRAIL IN TEXAS



In the aftermath of Hurricane Ike, Texas Department of Transportation's Yoakum and Houston District forces arrive on Interstate 45 for combined cleanup of main lanes leading into Galveston.

bers, and for those whose homes were severely damaged by this devastating storm."

The Mitchells' historic The Tremont House, Hotel Galvez and Harbor House — part of the National Trust Historic Hotels of America — are slated to reopen by Oct. 15, pending repairs.

"I am confident that our city will work hard to rebuild and come back stronger than ever," Mitchell says.

**K**ATHY VAN DEWALLI, marketing director for The Grand 1894 Opera House reported that "our Grand gal" suffered no structural damage, but it did have street-level and basement flooding, including lower dressing rooms, orchestra pit and the first few rows of auditorium seats. The box office area and entry stairs also withstood high water, but it will recover.

The building's upper levels, including all records, remained dry.

Van Dewalli says, "We will be postponing our season until the theater has been cleared and polished and free of Ike's visit."

**S**CHLITTERBAHN Galveston Island Waterpark is closed temporarily for damage assessment and clean up. "We are honored to be a part of the Galveston community," says Ron Sutula, general manager for Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark. "Our goal is to continue to be a significant economic engine to our region's economy for many years to come."

## KEMAH

**S**HERMANS TRAVEL recently listed the Kemah Boardwalk as third on the list of Top 10 American Boardwalks, bested only

by those in Atlantic City and Coney Island. Today, Landry's is assessing the damage caused by Hurricane Ike and estimating that it may be 45-60 days before some of the restaurants and amusements on the boardwalk can open.

"We're affected right now, huge," Landry's Restaurants chief Tilman Fertitta says. He estimates damage to his properties in Galveston and Kemah could come in at \$50 million. About 3,000 employees are affected, including those at Landry's hardest hit restaurants Landry's and the Flying Dutchman in Kemah, and Galveston's Fisherman's Wharf.

Plans are to re-open some attractions and restaurants at the boardwalk with additional amusements opening monthly thereafter.

"We look forward to rebuilding the Kemah Boardwalk, making it better than ever," Fertitta says.





TXDOT PHOTO

Flood waters from Hurricane Ike temporarily blocked access to Texas Department of Transportation's Texas Travel Information Center in Orange.

**BEAUMONT**

**D**EAN CONWELL, executive director for the **Beaumont Convention and Visitors Bureau** says, "We have been through this before, and this time we were prepared. The damage in Beaumont proper was predominantly wind-related. Since we lost half our trees to Hurricane Rita, Ike was half as destructive." Overall, the tourism infrastructure was spared and the attractions are "coming back on line daily." He adds, "I wish our other neighbors in southeast Texas were as fortunate. Galveston, Orange, Bridge City, Winnie, parts of Port Arthur and Crystal Beach experienced significant damage."

Every Beaumont hotel now has power (even if it's by generator). Still, few hotel rooms are available. Beaumont is a major staging area for emergency responders. "Repair crews will be in the area for months sleeping in our hotels and working out of our meeting facilities. We are busy trying to assist our clients that have groups booked here this fall and trying to reschedule others for 2009 and beyond."

Gator Country Adventure Park & Restaurant owner Gary Saurage stayed in town to ensure no alligators were lost. As fences fell, Saurage and staff were there to make

immediate repairs. As a result, Gator Country is open and all alligators are secure, including an additional 41 gators that were rescued (with State of Texas' permission) from Crystal Beach and Galveston Island.

**ORANGE**

**O**RANGE received extensive damage throughout the city — including the Texas Department of Transportation's Travel Information Center in Orange, which became inaccessible for days due to high waters. As the city bounces back and services are restored, attractions are working to do the same so that they may reopen to the public as soon as possible.

**SHANGRI LA Botanical Gardens & Nature Center**

received minimal structural damage from Hurricane Ike, but the center experienced considerable flooding throughout the gardens, nature center, outpost and bayou areas. The botanical gardens, originally developed more than 60 years ago, will remain closed until restoration efforts are completed. All scheduled Shangri La events for October, including the Fall Festival and group and school tours, have been canceled until further notice.

**ORANGE'S Stark Museum of Art**, which focuses on the

American West, survived the hurricane with no structural damage or flooding, but remains closed until the protected collections have been re-installed.

The W.H. Stark House, including the Carriage House, also will remain closed until city services resume and recovery efforts are completed. This includes cancellation of all group tours scheduled for October and, possibly, through the end of the year.

**HOUSTON**

**EVENTS at Houston's Reliant Park Facilities** — Reliant Stadium, Reliant Center, Reliant

Arena and Reliant Astrodome — have been postponed because the facilities suffered wind and water damage, but they are also serving as emergency staging areas.

"To the best of our knowledge, the infrastructure is intact without significant damage, with the possible exception of Reliant Stadium," says Greg Ortale, president and CEO of the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau, which is open.

"Our thoughts go out to our neighbors in Bay Area Houston, Galveston and other parts of the region, which sustained damage."

**CARNIVAL Cruise Lines** is operating its regular schedule for Galveston-based *Ecstasy* and *Conquest* cruise ships from the **Port of Houston's** newly opened **Bayport Cruise Terminal** while the Port of Galveston is closed.

"We are especially grateful to the Port of Houston for their responsiveness. Many of their personnel involved in making this happen were dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Ike but set that aside to work with us on very short notice to assure these vessels would continue to have a Texas homeport and with minimal disruption to our guests," says Gerry Cahill, Carnival president and CEO.

Cahill says, "The Port of Galveston has been a valued and important partner since we launched year-round cruising from there in 2000. We look forward to bringing both the Carnival *Conquest* and Carnival *Ecstasy* back to the city as quickly as we can."

The Carnival ships became the first cruise ships to use the new \$81 million Bayport Terminal facility.

**PORT ARTHUR**

**A**LTHOUGH no objects were lost or damaged, the **Museum of the Gulf Coast in Port Arthur**

suffered significant wind and water damage, and it lost power in the wake of Ike. Pending clean up and restoration of electricity, the museum will remain closed.

Rose Hill Manor, one of the oldest landmarks in the city, sustained severe water damage and the floor of the house collapsed. A re-opening date has not been determined.

Sabine Pass Battleground State Historical Park and Sea Rim State Park were also heavily damaged.

**TEXAS STATE PARKS**

**G**ALVESTON AND **Sea Rim** state parks sustained catastrophic damage. Sea Rim

structures and facilities appear to be a total loss, and the hurricane washed away the park headquarters building, restrooms and shelter. It is uncertain when, or if, these two parks will open, but TPWD spokesman Tom Harvey says the first step is to assess the damage, consider the costs and then consider the options.

Lake Livingston; Martin Dies, Jr.; Huntsville; Daingerfield; Martin Creek Lake; and Mission Tejas parks, as well as the LaPorte Regional State Park office, suffered damage, as well.



Brazos Bend, Sheldon Lake, Village Creek and Caddo Lake received some damage. Goose Island, Mustang Island, Stephen F. Austin, Fanthorp Inn, Washington-on-the-Brazos, Fairfield Lake, Tyler and Atlanta received light damage.

The San Jacinto Battleground, including the park store and Battleship Texas restrooms, suffered significant damage from surge flooding and wind, and Mission Tejas suffered severe fire damage to the headquarters building, possibly caused by an emergency electrical generator. Call (800) 792-1112 or visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us) for up-to-date information.

### INDUSTRY RESPONSE

**E**VACUEES sought refuge in communities like San Antonio, Austin and Dallas, and the industry responded. Abilene offered evacuees a much-needed diversion with complimentary Roundup Attraction Passes to area attractions.

"The attraction community has pulled together to make the evacuees' stay more comfortable," says Abilene Convention and Visitors Bureau Executive Director Nanci Liles. She adds, the contribution "authenticates the spirit and compassion of the City of Abilene."

The Texas Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus offered an emergency hotel availability Web site, updated every eight hours by local convention and visitor bureaus.

**T**XDOT TRAVEL Information Division Director **Doris Howdeshell** reported that TxDOT's recorded Road Condition and Travel Information line — (800) 452-9292 — received more than 123,900 calls during Hurricane Ike. Additionally, employees at the Travel Information Centers (with help from district employees) answered another 15,500 calls, and there were more than 330,000 visits to the Road Conditions report at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov).

**I**KE'S DAMAGE and rescheduling conflicts forced the **Texas Travel Industry Association** to cancel this year's **Texas Travel Summit in Galveston**. TTIA President Paul Serff says, "We continue to commit our support to all members and communities affected by both Dolly and Ike, and know you will do likewise."

### NEW ADDRESS

**T**EXAS TRAVEL Industry Association has moved into its new Southwest Austin office — 3345 Bee Caves Road, Suite 102A — and is savoring its panoramic views of the Texas Hill Country and the Austin skyline.

For more information, contact the office at (512) 328-TTIA (8842).

### CREAM OF CROP

**A**CCORDING to *Forbes*, San Antonio's River Walk is among the **Top 25 Most Visited Tourist Destinations in America**. *Forbes* notes that, furthermore, the greater San Antonio area offers a "world of fun and exciting things to do and see."

The River Walk, which links major attractions, shops, bars and restaurants, attracts about 5.1 million visitors a year.

Other attractions making *Forbes'* list include Times Square in New York City, the Las Vegas Strip, Disney World's Magic Kingdom, Disneyland, Navy Pier in Chicago and the Cape Cod National Seashore.

**T**HE BEST in the international amusement industry was recently announced at the **2008 Golden Ticket Awards** held in Arlington. Schlitterbahn Waterparks in New Braunfels and Galveston took honors, as did Six Flags Fiesta Texas in San Antonio.

The Golden Ticket Awards are presented annually by *Amusement Today*, an Arlington-based industry trade magazine. The winners are determined by an international survey conducted among well-traveled amusement park aficionados.

The 2008 winners include Schlitterbahn Waterpark Resort in New Braunfels for Best Waterpark, Best Waterpark Ride (Master Blaster) and Best New Waterpark Ride of 2008 (Dragon's Revenge). Schlitterbahn Galveston Island won for Best Indoor Waterpark, and Six Flags Fiesta Texas took top honors, again, for having the Best Shows.

Ron Sutula, general manager of the Galveston waterpark, says, "Our indoor waterpark has gained notoriety not only for its state-of-the-art, ingenious convertible roof and wall system, but also for the variety of attractions all under one roof."

### IN THE PRESS

**T**HE OLD Schoolhouse Bed and Breakfast in Fort Davis Davis made *USA Today's* list of **10 Great Places for Studied Relaxation** — old schoolhouses across the nation that have been converted into inns. "Now a comfortable inn situated in a pecan grove, the building sports 22-inch-thick adobe walls and ceiling-high windows," the article reads. The three guest rooms are appropriately named Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic. For more information on the inn, visit [www.schoolhousebnb.com](http://www.schoolhousebnb.com).

**T**HE NEW YORK Times explored the age-old caves and the 2,000-plus pictographs of **Hueco Tanks State Historic Site near El Paso**, citing that its 860 rugged acres offer visitors "an experience of archaeology combined with an adventure that conjures up Indiana Jones." The article adds that, aside from the pictographs, the site also has an abundance of painted mask art designs (about 200) at Cave Kiva on the north side of the mountain.

### THE ARTIST'S CRAYON

**D**ALLAS' MEADOWS Museum hosts *From Manet to Miro*, an exhibit spanning the history of modern and contemporary drawing. The exhibit, which runs through Dec. 2 includes representation of Spanish artists from this period like Juan Gris, Miró, Julio González, Dalí and Óscar Domínguez. There is a strong focus on the last third of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, covering the epic period of avant-garde movements from roughly Post-Impressionism to Surrealism.

Sixty-five drawings by some of the key artists of the last two centuries — including Manet, Degas, Dalí and Miró — are from the extensive holdings of one of Spain's most important private collections (that of Juan Abelló and his wife, Anna Gamazo), which ranks among the top 200 collections in the world. Until now, the Abelló collection has not been shown in the United States.

The Meadows Museum, a division of the Southern Methodist University's Meadows School of the Arts, houses one of the largest collections of Spanish art outside of Spain, with works dating from the 10th to the 20th century. It includes masterpieces by painters like El Greco, Velázquez, Ribera, Murillo, Goya, Miró and Picasso, as well as a select group of sculptures by major 20th-century masters like Rodin, Maillol, Giacometti, Moore, Smith and Oldenburg.

Vincent van Gogh *Head of a Peasant Woman* (1884). Pencil, conté crayon and black chalk on paper.





## TEXAS TRIVIA

**The Dambach-Besler House was reconstructed and relocated to serve as the new entrance to which museum's grounds?**

Fredericksburg's Pioneer Museum sports the new historic entrance. "This building marks a tangible milestone in the Gillespie County Historical Society's plans to transform the Pioneer Museum into an exciting and inspiring visitor experience," says GCHS Executive Director Carol Schreider. The two-story rock house also will become the site of the Fredricksburg Convention and Visitors Bureau's Visitor Welcome Center, complete with a museum store and exhibit space for the museum's collection of vintage maps, photos and artifacts.

## TEXAS TRIVIA

**TEXAS TRAVELOG** is published monthly by the Texas Department of Transportation, Travel Information Division. Please send news items of interest to the Texas travel industry to Texas TraveLog, P.O. Box 141009, Austin, TX 78714-1009. (512) 486-5874, fax (512) 486-5879. E-mail: [trv-log@dot.state.tx.us](mailto:trv-log@dot.state.tx.us). Deadline for each newsletter is the 15th of the month preceding the issue date. To receive this publication electronically, please e-mail [trv-log@dot.state.tx.us](mailto:trv-log@dot.state.tx.us).

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## TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

VISITOR NUMBERS as of August 31, 2008

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	8,601	-12.50	63,322	-15.98
ANTHONY	7,587	-45.50	89,081	-11.80
CAPITOL	6,524	-15.05	55,609	-19.41
DENISON	38,509	+5.52	327,317	-5.89
GAINESVILLE	30,408	-41.83	327,829	-9.81
LANGTRY	3,407	-21.17	43,399	-11.32
LAREDO	12,125	+3.21	98,070	-2.43
ORANGE	40,166	-19.33	374,163	-6.16
TEXARKANA	20,434	-61.81	210,539	-37.89
VALLEY	5,682	-43.35	118,557	-20.62
WASKOM	36,243	-21.50	273,673	-29.76
WICHITA FALLS	20,106	+24.89	140,244	+3.89
<b>CENTER TOTALS</b>	<b>229,792</b>	<b>-26.32</b>	<b>2,121,803</b>	<b>-15.73</b>

\*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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