

# TEXAS TRAVELOG

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- ★ Dallas/Fort Worth airport is tops for tech-savvy travelers
- ★ Hueco Tanks rock art images are showcased at El Paso's museum of archaeology



The entire ground floor of the Texas White House on LBJ Ranch is open to the public for the first time in history after restoration efforts.

## ON EXHIBIT

**O**N DEC. 22, the 99th anniversary of Lady Bird Johnson's birth, **the entire ground floor of the Texas White House on LBJ Ranch opened to the general public for the first time in history.**

The Texas White House—which served presidents, prime ministers, ambassadors and heads-of-state—remained closed to the public through the life of Mrs. Johnson. In August 2008, President Johnson's office was restored to its 1960s appearance and opened for tours. In the following years the National Park Service and Friends of LBJ National Historical Park have continued to restore rooms to their former look, including furnishings.

Now, the National Park Service invites everyone to experience both the public and private ground-floor rooms of the Texas White House, including the president's dressing room, Lady Bird Johnson's bedroom and the kitchen where meals for a table of world leaders were prepared.

President and Mrs. Johnson donated the LBJ Ranch and Texas White House to the American public in 1972. Today, the park offers special educational and recreational programs throughout the year. The Texas White House and park facilities in Stonewall and Johnson City are open seven days a week.

For more information visit [www.nps.gov/lyjo](http://www.nps.gov/lyjo) and [www.friendsoflbjnationalpark.org](http://www.friendsoflbjnationalpark.org).

## TRAVEL NEWS

**T**HE TEXAS Parks and Wildlife Department has launched a **\$4.6 million appeal for help** to recover from a “triple whammy” caused by record heat and drought, wildfires, and the corresponding decline in visitation and revenue.

“We’re reaching out for help,” says Carter Smith, TPWD executive director, who says visitor fees have generated about half of the \$69 million operating budget. Until this year, those visitation numbers were growing. But with unconventional

heat, burn bans affecting campfires, receding lakes and rivers, and wildfire damage to three popular state parks—Bastrop, Davis Mountains and Possum Kingdom—revenue decreased by 25 percent compared with last year.

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“The bottom line is we have a \$4.6 million gap in our 2012 park system operating budget,” Smith says. “This is the amount we need to raise to help keep state parks open. We want to alert people now while there is still time to help.”

TPWD offers a three-pronged call-to-action: visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/help/parks](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/help/parks) to make a tax-deductible, year-end donation; make a donation when renewing a motor vehicle registration; and visit state parks.

“Cooler weather makes fall and winter a fine time to visit state parks, which are great places for holiday outings and gatherings,” says Brent Leisure, TPWD state parks director. “Also, recent rains are allowing many of our parks to lift burn bans. That’s making campfires possible once again — an important tradition for many park visitors.”

At present, burn bans affect state parks mainly in the Texas Hill Country, West Texas, the Panhandle and South Texas. However, there are exceptions to the ban such as Colorado Bend, Franklin Mountains, Garner and South Llano River state parks. Also, many state parks in burn-ban counties still allow charcoal grilling. For information on burn bans in Texas state parks, visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/faq/spdest/state\\_parks/#fir](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/faq/spdest/state_parks/#fir).

Leisure says state parks protect unique places, provide settings for healthy outdoor recreation and serve as economic engines for nature tourism.

The Texas Legislature passed a new option that allows people to make a donation when they renew their motor vehicle registration, estimating that would raise at least \$1.6 million per year. Starting Jan. 1, drivers can donate \$5 or more when renewing their registration.

For more information, call (800) 792-1112, option 3 or visit [www.texasstateparks.org](http://www.texasstateparks.org).

**H**OUSTON is the **first U.S. city selected for the 10-member BestCities Global Alliance**, the world’s first convention bureau alliance, which also has developed its own set of Client Service Standards to ensure a consistent level of excellence for international meeting-destination cities.



DISCOVERING GEORGE

COURTESY OF THE FORT WORTH MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND HISTORY



Many original objects belonging to President George Washington are on display at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History

**A**BOUT 100 original objects associated with George Washington—including the only surviving complete set of his famous dentures—are making **their only Texas appearance** at the **Fort Worth Museum of Science and History** through Jan. 22.

Discover the Real George Washington: *New Views from Mount Vernon* goes beyond the iconic image on the dollar bill to reveal the real Washington as not only a general and president but also as a young land surveyor, experimental farmer and savvy entrepreneur. Washington's views on religion and slavery, and the influence of his wife, Martha, also are explored in this exhibition, which features life-size figures of Washington.

"We are extremely honored to be chosen as the sole museum in Texas for this extraordinary historical exhibition," says Museum President Van Romans. "Partnering with Historic Mount Vernon is another proud milestone in the history of our museum, and we are so delighted to share this exhibition with our community and surrounding neighbors."

The exhibition is presented in 11 sections, ranging from Washington's youth to his final days. In addition to Washington's dentures, artifacts featured in the exhibition include paintings, books, maps and surveying equipment, Revolutionary War armaments, tools used by slaves and presidential table settings. Mrs. Washington is represented by origi-

nal jewelry, pieces of her china, silver and glassware, and reproductions of her gold wedding dress and purple satin slippers.

"Although over a million people come to walk in Washington's footsteps at Mount Vernon each year, we know that not everyone will have a chance to visit his home," says Jim Rees, executive director of Mount Vernon. "We wanted to bring the fascinating story of Washington's life to people around the country by showing a wide variety of compelling personal belongings

and some intriguing elements from our new Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center."

The website [www.discovergeorge washington.org](http://www.discovergeorge washington.org) was created to offer more information to enhance the visitor's exhibit experience.

Three life-size models of George Washington were assembled from a two-year forensic study where computer scientists, art historians, 18th-century garment experts and a forensic scientist used technology and research from primary sources to measure and analyze portraits, sculpture, and Washington's dentures and clothing.

For more information, visit [www.fortworthmuseum.org](http://www.fortworthmuseum.org) or call (817) 255-9300.

TPWD partnered with the City of Seguin's Parks and Recreation Department and Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority to develop the paddling trail. Canoe and kayak rentals are available through outfitters in nearby San Marcos.

With the rivers being dammed at Starcke Park and Nolte Dam, the slow current allows kayakers and canoeists to vary their time on the water—from one to six hours—by paddling the river in either direction and accessing the river from either site.

The shortest trip covers 2.6 miles one way from Max Starcke Park East, a popular fishing area, to River Shade RV Park. The longest paddle would cover 8.4 miles round trip from Starcke to Nolte Dam and back. The new paddling trail also allows for 3.2-mile and 5.8-mile treks.

The paddling trail also offers opportunities for birding and fishing.

**T**HE ROCKPORT-Fulton Chamber of Commerce recently opened its new, **state-of-the-art Visitor Center and Chamber offices** at 319 Broadway in Rockport.

The Visitor Center has features that were custom-made to give visitors a feel for all that Aransas County has to offer.

The entry archway, for example, features a mural—designed and hand-painted by a local artist—depicting wildlife and the harbor area. The main visitor area features panels reflected of the area's history, birding, art, fishing, education, Aransas Pathways and attractions. The historical timeline is accentuated by artifacts on loan from the Aransas County Historical Society.

A map room shows the entire county and its surrounding bays. There also is a childrens' table with coloring books.

Visitors also can buy postcards, T-shirts and other souvenirs.

On the Visitor Center's front porch, rocking chairs are set out for relaxation and enjoying the view. Plaques on the porch share relevant information about the area, including the history of the Rockport Harbor, the old courthouse, the old Bailey Pavilion, the railroad, the formation of Hug the Coast Highway, hurricane of 1919 and the "Fish Bowl" on the Million Dollar Boat Parade in 1940.

For more information, contact the Rockport-Fulton Chamber of

These international cities—including Cape Town, Copenhagen, Dubai, Edinburgh, Melbourne, San Juan, Vancouver, Singapore and Berlin—share information and plan joint marketing campaigns to offer destination expertise, bid assistance, conference planning, building attendance and onsite event servicing.

"Qualifying for BestCities membership is a major coup for Houston," says Greg Ortale, president and CEO of the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau. "We're in great company with these incredi-

ble cities, and we look forward to showcasing Houston to the world through this global alliance."

Houston and Berlin joined the Alliance in October as preliminary members and will be full members by June 2012. To meet the criteria for joining BestCities, Houston had to demonstrate they had world-class convention facilities, a minimum of 10,000 hotel rooms, a record of hosting international meetings and conventions, and professional convention bureaus dedicated to quality assurance and client focus.

For more information, visit [www.bestcities.net](http://www.bestcities.net) or [www.visithouston.texas.com](http://www.visithouston.texas.com).

**T**HE 34TH Texas Paddling Trail—and the second paddling trail in Seguin—**opened Dec. 7** along a scenic stretch of the Guadalupe River.

The River Shade RV Park and Max Starcke Park on Lake Nolte (also known locally as Meadow Lake) have been designated the put-in and take-out spots for Seguin's newest paddling trail.



Commerce at (361) 729-6445 or visit [www.rockport-fulton.org](http://www.rockport-fulton.org)

**T**HE CITY of Buda offers a new visitor experience with the opening of the historically restored Stagecoach House & Visitors Center, inside Historic Stagecoach Park. The center was designed to better share the property's history via maps and artifacts.

The Stagecoach House, also known as the McElroy-Severn House, is a late 19th-century dogtrot home that is one of the few buildings remaining from Buda's early post-railroad development.

On the property, visitors can view the Onion Creek Post Office and many key features of the house, including a 20-foot man-made well and an ADA-accessible trail.

The post office's front-gabled one-room building is noteworthy for its small size, craftsmanship, solid limestone construction and carved stone lintels.

Both historic structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Restoration of the house and post office was funded through a grant from Hays County.

For more information, visit [www.ci.buda.tx.us](http://www.ci.buda.tx.us).

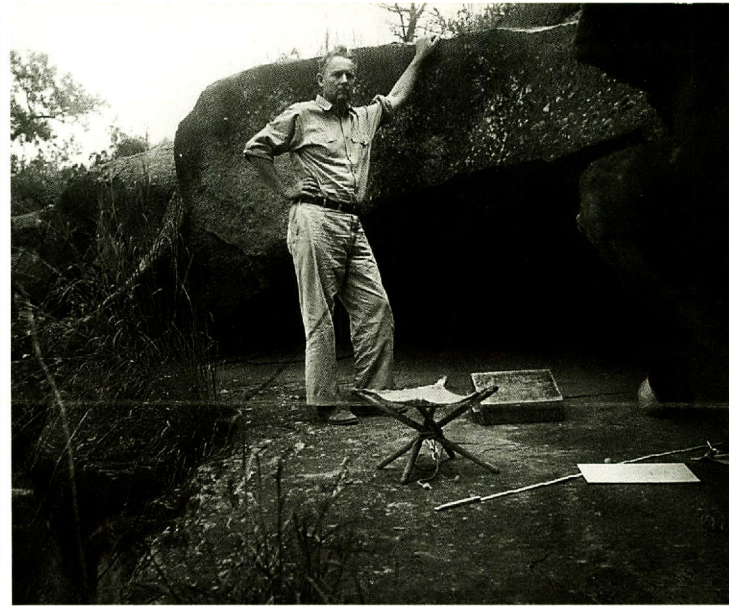
**BEST OF THE BEST**

**A**CCORDING to *Travel + Leisure* magazine, no place in the U.S. serves a burger quite like Houston. **Named America's Best Burger City, Houston** earned its reputation thanks to establishments like Lankford Grocery & Market, Jonathan's, Bubba's Burger Shack, The Burger Guys and Hubcap Grill. The vegetarian options from Ruggles Green, Beaver's and Dry Creek also get a nod.

Of the Montrose hideaway Lankford Grocery, *Travel+Leisure* notes, "don't let this hole in the wall fool you—the burgers here are outstanding. Lankford's old-fashioned burger as well as its south-of-the-border burger (smothered in Monterey Jack, cilantro dressing, pico de gallo and avocado) are highly recommended."

Jonathan's 9-inch certified angus chuck burger, known as The Rub, holds its own as *The Houston Press'* 2011 Best Burger contest winner. Meanwhile, Bubba's Burger Shack is dishing out buffalo burgers and gaining a following with its super-sized

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE EL PASO MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY



El Paso exhibit showcases watercolor reproductions of prehistoric rock art, documented by artist Forrest Kirkland beginning in the 1930s.

chili and mushroom-jack burgers.

The Burger Guys' inventive burgers earned them a 2011 Houston Entrée Award for creative touches, including their Sonoma burger and duck-fat French fries. Hubcap Grill also offers some unusual fare, like the Cheetos burger.

For those who steer clear of beef, the vegetarian options at Ruggles Green, Beaver's and Dry Creek might also cause a burger-lover stampede.

**THE ART OF ROCK**

**T**HE EL PASO Museum of Archaeology is showcasing the Hueco Tanks rock art images of Forrest Kirkland, who was the first artist to systematically document prehistoric rock art in Texas. Some of those Hueco Tank images that Kirkland captured in watercol-

or have since faded or disappeared.

The images in this exhibit, provided courtesy of the Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory at the University of Texas at Austin, include pictographs that are full-color reproductions scanned at high resolution from Kirkland's plates. The original watercolors are no longer in a condition to be exhibited because the paper and paints are brittle and light sensitive.

Kirkland, who was the founder of the Dallas Archaeological Society, became interested in rock art after visiting the petroglyphs (ancient images painted on stone) near Paint Rock in 1933. During the next eight years, he copied rock art at more than 80 sites across the state. Many of his watercolors were reproduced in the book *The Rock Art of Texas Indians*.

For more information, visit

[www.elpasotexas.gov/arch\\_museum](http://www.elpasotexas.gov/arch_museum).

**TOP FLIGHT**

**T**HE DALLAS/Fort Worth Airport came out on top in *PCWorld* magazine's quest to find the best U.S. airports for tech travelers.

The search included a test of Wi-Fi quality, cell reception and a count of electrical outlets at the 40 largest airports in the United States.

*PCWorld* notes that many airports have been pushing to increase the numbers of electrical outlets, USB ports and desks in their gate areas, and to increase the speed of their facility's Wi-Fi.

Magazine writer Mark Sullivan writes, "We found that, in general, the number of electrical outlets per gate remains low in U.S. airports, especially considering how many air travelers now carry mobile, connected devices that require regular charging. We also found that few airports scored well across the board in our amenities categories; those that did finished at or near the top of our overall rankings.

"DFW doesn't have the most outlets, it doesn't have the fastest Wi-Fi, and it's not number one in work desks. But no other airport achieves such consistently high scores across so many categories. Dallas ranked near the top of all airports on six of the eight tech amenities that we measured," Sullivan writes.

The airport also has benefited from partners like Samsung, which has 64 charging stations, seven "mobile travel lounges," "power stations" (work stations with power outlets), and large flat-screen TVs throughout the airport.

Along with those outlets, the airport has an average of 7.2 electrical outlets and 3 USB ports per gate, and internet kiosks and work desks among the gates.

Following the Dallas/Fort Worth's airport as tops in tech offerings are, airports in New York (John F. Kennedy), Atlanta, Detroit, Sacramento, Oakland, New York (LaGuardia), Salt Lake City, Baltimore and San Francisco.

Rankings are based on a combination of each airport's scores in each category relative to other airports, with outlets and Wi-Fi scores given double weight.



TEXAS TRIVIA

Which Texas town served as a key location for the 2006–10 TV series "Heroes?"

Odessa, which has been key in oil exploration and production in the state, was the central focus of the NBC TV series "Mission to 'Save the Cheerleader. Save the World.'" TV world aside, Odessa has many unique aspects to share with the traveling public.

Of heroic proportions is Jack Ben Rabbit, the World's Largest Jack Rabbit, which is an Odessa landmark. The 8-foot statue was erected in 1962 on Lincoln Street as a tribute to the critters that were abundant in the area.

Visitors also will find a replica of Shakespeare's Globe Theater, which presents classic and modern plays as well as other performances. The theater is on the Odessa College campus, along with the Anne Hathaway Cottage, a replica of the childhood home of Shakespeare's wife.

TEXAS TRIVIA

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TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

VISITOR NUMBERS as of November 30, 2011

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	4,498	-18.01	81,961	-5.63
ANTHONY	4,440	-2.16	58,129	-22.06
CAPITOL	5,177	-10.51	69,340	-13.01
DENISON	21,854	-17.82	276,301	-8.95
GAINESVILLE	16,375	-23.92	217,136	-19.94
LANGTRY	3,609	-8.59	42,950	-16.62
LAREDO	5,804	+7.42	67,161	-23.50
ORANGE	27,049	-24.37	367,537	-2.86
TEXARKANA	27,991	+128.85	167,919	-26.83
VALLEY	6,492	-18.51	117,683	-12.31
WASKOM	23,456	-7.06	292,925	-12.72
WICHITA FALLS	9,724	-23.70	141,059	-1.53
<b>CENTER TOTALS</b>	<b>156,469</b>	<b>-6.43</b>	<b>1,900,101</b>	<b>-12.68</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)

www.traveltex.com • www.texashighways.com  
www.txdot.gov • www.dontmesswithtexas.org

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