

INSIDE:

- ★ Indian Lodge renovations help restore property to its 1930s splendor
- ★ Hidalgo's Borderfest and other Texas event organizations win prestigious international awards
- ★ 2006 sees many positive changes to the face of Texas tourism
- ★ College bowls: Feast your eyes on football

TEXAS TRAVEL LOG

TRAVEL NEWS

TEXAS Travel Industry Association is gearing up to host industry representatives, legislators and elected officials at its annual **Unity Dinner**, slated for **Feb. 20 in Austin**.

Six Flags President and CEO Mark Shapiro is this year's keynote speaker for the Tuesday night event to be held at the Austin Hilton Hotel. There also will be presentations from state agencies and other guest speakers, a silent auction and reception that evening. Other related activities include the Texas Tourism Foundation Golf Tournament on Monday and Converge on the Capitol, an information session followed by visits with legislators on tourism issues, which is set for Wednesday.

Along with an available online option, registration packets will be mailed in early December. For more information, visit www.ttia.org.

SAN ANTONIO City Manager **Sheryl Sculley reorganized** and combined the function of the **city's convention facilities** — Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center, Municipal Auditorium and the Lila Cockrell Theater — along with the Alamodome departments to create the Convention, Sports and Entertainment Facilities Department.

Michael Sawaya, who has served for the past three years as Director of Convention Facilities, will oversee the new entity to manage convention operations and maintenance.

For more information, call (210) 207-8500 or toll-free at (877) 504-8895, or visit www.sanantonio.gov/convfac.

DALLAS tourism officials were noted in an **USA Today article** for their campaign to lure gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) visitors.

"In Texas and the Southwest, Dal-

THE LANDSCAPE of the **Live Music Capital** has taken on a colorful note as the **Austin GuitarTown public art project** paints the town with an assortment of unique 10-foot Gibson Guitar sculptures. The guitars are on view in front of many of Austin's landmarks and businesses through mid-2007.

The project, unveiled on Nov. 23, features about 60 guitars — 30 10-foot sculptures and another 30 regular sized Gibson Les Paul guitars. Of those, local artists designed 52. National or locally known celebrities designed the others.

"This is just a fun way to highlight what I think is, pound for pound, the hippest, most active and most vibrant community in the country," says Austin Mayor Will Wynn, who co-chairs the project with Asleep at the Wheel musician Ray Benson

"The artistry and musical heritage of Austin and Gibson Guitar will surely show through during this amazing project," says Henry Jus-

las has sort of taken the lead," says Phillip Jones, Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau's president and CEO. "We're trying to position Dallas as an appealing destination for GLBT travelers."

While Dallas is ahead of the pack in the region, these efforts are part of a growing trend in the industry — for domestic and international travel.

Travel Industry Association and top market research firm Harris Interactive have teamed with the leading GLBT marketing and communications agency to conduct what is expected to be the most up-to-date survey examining preferences of the GLBT travelers.

The Dallas CVB Web site's "Our Secret is Out" message is meant to show that the city is a great place for

kiewicz, Chairman and CEO of Gibson Guitar, the presenting sponsor. "It is amazing to see the creativity of all the designs chosen."

Some performers have lent their support by signing showcase guitars, like Texas-raised jazz and R&B artist Norah Jones, country star Dwight Yoakum, singer-songwriter couple Kelly Willis and Bruce Robison, rock 'n' roll pioneer Roky Erickson and "RockSTAR: Supernova" reality show member Patrice Pike.

The guitar art will also be featured in a coffee table book.

After being on display, the guitars will be auctioned off with all the money going to four Austin charities — Health Alliance for Austin Musicians, Austin Museum of Art,

American Youthworks and the Austin Children's Museum.

For more information, visit www.austinguitartown.com.

GUITARS AND STARS

COURTESY OF GIBSON GUITAR



Dwight Yoakum signs a 10-foot Gibson guitar sculpture, designed by artist Leah Maxwell, for the Austin GuitarTown community arts project.

the GLBT community to spend their time and money.

"It's not about being politically correct, it's about being economically correct," says Jones. He says GLBT travelers spend an average of \$100 more per day than other travelers and plan four to six trips a year. "We'd be foolish not to position Dallas as a destination for this market, which spends a lot of money on travel," he says.

The efforts are already paying off. San Francisco-based Community Marketing, Inc. recently listed Dallas (tied with San Diego) as the seventh top U.S. business destination for GLBT travelers. The agency adds that the American gay and lesbian community — with a median household income of \$79,000 — conservatively repre-

sents a \$55 billion travel industry.

Jones says that when he came to Dallas, he was surprised by the great diversity of its people. He has been conducting market research to shed old stereotypes and better reflect the city.

The CVB Web site also reaches out to Asian, Latino and African-American travelers.

GALVESTON Island Visitor Information Center, operated by the Galveston Island Convention and Visitors Bureau, has **moved its primary location** to 2027 61st St. The Center offers visitor information, free brochures and maps, and a tourism film, which is shown daily.

A satellite visitor center is in the

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT © 2006



Indian Lodge, in the Davis Mountains, is restored to its 1930s charm.

or covered up in the “modernizing” of Indian Lodge in 1967. The lodge’s heating, air-conditioning and plumbing systems have been upgraded in the first large-scale modernization to occur in almost 40 years. In addition, the patio was restored to its original layout with stone-lined concrete terrace, re-activated pool and fountain, and improved drainage and landscaping.

For more information, call (432) 426-3254 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Old Galveston Square building at 2215 Strand, while CVB offices are located at 2504 Church St.

For more information, call (888) 425-4753 ext. 145 or visit www.galveston.com.

EVERYTHING new is “old” again at one of the state’s most beloved historic inns. At **Indian Lodge**, original elements like pine beam ceilings and almost 200 pieces of original, rustic wood furniture have been **restored to their 1930s appearance**. Meanwhile, the mechanical systems have been updated to ensure modern-day comfort.

The Davis Mountains lodge, considered the “crown jewel” of the federal Civilian Conservation Corps structures in Texas, is owned and operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. This sole example of Southwestern Pueblo-style architecture in Texas has undergone an extensive, \$4.35 million renovation that took five years to complete.

“Overnight guests will be able to experience the historic lodge as it was intended to look when the CCC built the inn in its unique architectural style,” says David Bischofhausen, who manages the complex.

The purpose of the recently completed project was to restore much of the character and original features that had been de-emphasized

THE PORT ARANSAS Chamber of Commerce will be reaching more visitors with the **opening of its new satellite office** inside the Port Aransas Community Theatre at 2327 SH 361. The south location gives the agency an opportunity to reach visitors coming in from the town’s other entry point.

Like its main office on the north entry point at 403 W. Cotter, this outpost will be a valuable tourism resource with information on attractions, lodging, dining, shopping and more. Tickets to the Port Aransas Community Theatre also will be sold there.

For more information, call (800) 45-COAST (26278) or visit www.portaransas.org.

ART LOVERS and enthusiasts across the country get a chance to vote for their favorite cities in **AmericanStyle** magazine’s **Top 25 Arts Destinations** readers’ poll, a poll that includes Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio.

The Texas cities were among the 26 choices in the category for large U.S. cities.

The arts lifestyle publication opened the poll at www.americanstyle.com in early October, and polls close on Feb. 1.

Poll results and profiles of the highest-ranking cities in each category will be featured in the June 2007

issue of the magazine, which will be available in late April.

AMONG THE BEST

HIDALGO’s Borderfest Association swept the **International Festival and Events Association’s Pinnacle Awards** with a whopping 30 awards for its efforts with Borderfest 2006 “A Salute to Carnival.” IFEA recognizes outstanding examples of quality and creativity in promotional programs and materials produced by its 2,000 member festivals from around the world.

Grapevine Convention and Visitors Bureau was recognized with 12 awards for GrapeFest and Main Street Days.

The Downtown Fort Worth Initiatives, Inc. received 11 awards for its Main St. Arts Festival and the Fort Worth Parade of Lights.

The Woodlands Town Center Improvement District netted 6 awards for assorted projects including the Red, Hot and Blue Festival, Festival on the Green, The Woodlands Waterway Art Festival and the Ice Rink.

Pasadena’s San Jacinto Day Foundation took home 5 awards for the Pasadena Strawberry Festival.

Receiving four awards were Houston Festival Foundation, Inc. for its Houston International Festival and The Fiesta San Antonio Commission for Fiesta San Antonio.

Receiving three awards were the Neiman Marcus/Adolphus/Children’s Parade; Texas Folk Life Festival in San Antonio; and The City of Euless for *Euless Today* Magazine, May Day

Mother’s Day Tree Giveaway, Best Sponsor and the Out of School Bash.

Claiming two awards were The Town of Addison for Taste of Addison; Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo/Rodeo Austin; and the Galveston Historical Foundation for Dickens on the Strand and Galveston Historic Homes Tour.

Others receiving awards were Battle of the Flowers Association in San Antonio; Mayfest, Inc. in Fort Worth; Multicultural Fest and Parade’s Wal-Mart Posada & Laser Show in Houston; Buccaneer Commission, Inc.’s Buc Days in Corpus Christi; and the Texas Festivals and Events Association’s TFEA Annual Conference and Trade Show in Fredericksburg.

For more details and a list of all the awards, visit www.ifea.com.

FOUR TEXAS lodgings and two restaurants have received **AAA Five-Diamond recognition for 2007**.

Among 93 North American hotels awarded five diamonds are the Four Seasons and St. Regis in Houston (for the 12th and sixth year, respectively), the Four Seasons Resort and Club at Las Colinas in Irving (fourth year) and the Mansion on Turtle Creek in Dallas (a recipient for 16 consecutive years).

Two Texas restaurants are included among 58 Five-Diamond winners for dining excellence: the Mansion on Turtle Creek restaurant and the French Room at Dallas’ Adolphus Hotel. A complete list of AAA Five-Diamond and Four-Diamond winners is at www.aaa.com/diamonds.

THE NUMBER YOU HAVE DIALED ...

CALLERS dialing the 512 area code for the **Coastal Bend region** may find a non-working number, that’s because Coastal Bend communities gained a new **361 area code** in August — the 18th area code for Texas. Callers stopped receiving the recorded reminders of the change after Sept. 18.

The new area code replaced one the region shared with Austin. Austin maintains its 512 area code.

The Coastal Bend area includes Corpus Christi, Victoria, Port Lavaca, Hebronville and Kingsville. Counties affected by the area code change include all or most of Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Calhoun, Dewitt, Duval, Goliad, Jackson, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Lavaca, Live Oak, McMullen, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio and Victoria. Small parts of Fayette, Gonzalez, Hidalgo, Matagorda, Webb, and Zapata counties are also affected.

COURTESY OF SIX FLAGS OVER TEXAS



Cirque Dreams Coobriila will light up summer nights at Six Flags Over Texas.

DINING (along with shopping) tops the list of **tourism activities** in the United States. And, according to a recent Zagat Survey, **Texans dine out the most.**

Zagat's newly released "America's Top Restaurants" guide, covering 1,389 eateries in 42 cities, is based on 21 million meals worth of experience by more than 123,000 people.

The survey showed that 83 percent of people eat out as often or more than they did two years ago and that people in Houston eat out the most at 4.2 times a week, followed by Austin and Dallas-Ft. Worth, where residents dine out four times a week.

Las Vegas, Los Angeles and Miami come next, with people eating out 3.8 times a week. In New York, where the cost of the average meal (\$39.43 per person) could affect dining habits, people eat out 3.3 times a week.

"These are happy days for food lovers — this marks another year where restaurant quality, diversity and value have improved across America," says Tim Zagat, chief executive officer of the survey.

And what are people supping on? Nearly a third of diners said Italian food was their favorite, with American food coming in second at 16 percent and French third at 12 percent. But, when Japanese, Chinese and Thai were combined, they beat out American food for second with 25 percent.

NEW EXTRAVAGANZA

AS IT'S CELEBRATING its 45th anniversary season, **Six Flags Over Texas** has announced plans for the next — a **world-class extravaganza** of lights, sounds, imagery and **unprecedented** showmanship with **Cirque Dreams Coobriila**. The production, which debuts in June 2007, features Cirque Productions' signature style of wildly bizarre and creative costumes, original music and unlimited imagination.

"*Cirque Dreams Coobriila* will be like no other show we've ever presented," says Steve Calloway, vice president and general manager of the company's flagship park. "This is exactly the kind of world-class entertainment our guests have been looking for — an escape that will transport them to another place and time. It will, quite simply, take their breath away."

The production will be presented in the 10,000-seat Music Mill Amphitheatre, which will be reconfigured

with multiple stages and performance runways to make the presentation more engaging as it integrates performers into the audience.

"In the Coobriila dream, three personalities reign supreme — the 'Cooler,' the 'Brighter' and the 'Later.' Their inventive antics and acrobatic adventures will unfold to inspire, entertain and amaze audiences," says Neil Goldberg, producer and artistic director of Cirque Productions.

To complement the elements of the production, Six Flags Over Texas will remain open until 11 p.m. from June 16–Aug. 19. During the evening hours, the park will be filled with high-energy bands and performance groups that will take to the streets and the various stages of the park.

"Once the sun sets, we're going to completely 'amp up' the wow factor," says Bruce Mather, Six Flags Over Texas entertainment and special events manager. "We're going to literally light up the night with lasers, sky trackers and thousands of twinkling lights all over the park. Even the uniforms of our park hosts and hostesses will have an illuminated element. This will truly be a different park after dark."

For more information, call (817) 640-8900 or visit www.sixflags.com.

BOWL YOU OVER

AFTER THE TURKEY daze, folks start gathering around the television to **feast on football** — **college bowls**, in particular, and Texas is hosting a handful. At the end of the day, the winners are the host cities, experiencing an economic impact worth millions with all the outside sports fans who flock in for the game, dine at area restaurants and check into area lodgings.

Here are a list of College bowls slated at Texas venues.

■ **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** (Fort Worth): Dec. 23, Conference USA vs. Mountain West Conference. www.armedforcesbowl.com

■ **Texas Bowl** (Houston): Dec. 28, Reliant Stadium; Big 12 and Big East Conferences. www.texasbowl.org

■ **Brut Sun Bowl** (El Paso): Dec. 29, third place Pac 10 team vs. Big East, Big 12 Conference or Notre Dame. www.sunbowl.org

■ **Alamo Bowl** (San Antonio), Dec. 30; Fourth choice Big 10 and Big 12 Conference teams. alamobowl.com

■ **AT&T Cotton Bowl** (Dallas): Jan. 1, Big 12 vs. Southeastern Conference. www.attcottonbowl.com

MAPPING OUT TREES

WITH THE HOLIDAYS in full gear, **families** are latching onto a growing tradition — trekking to specialty farms to **hand-pick their own Christmas tree.**

The Texas Christmas Tree Growers Association, which includes a membership of more than 120 farmers, has made the road trip a bit easier with an interactive map of the state's Christmas tree farms at www.texaschristmastrees.com.

According to the association, the tradition is a win-win situation because it not only creates family memories, but growing Christmas trees continue to supply oxygen and provide shelter for birds and animals until purchased. Last year, more than 100,000 Texas-grown trees were sold.

Tree farms often have additional activities including hayrides, picnic areas, nature trails, craft stores, tours and more.

2006 YEAR IN REVIEW

THIS YEAR has been marked by **many notable improvements to Texas' tourism efforts.** Here are some of the highlights.

■ **Texas' cruise industry** ranks 5th in the nation with an economic impact of more than \$934 million in direct purchases in 2005. The growth continues and the new Bayport Cruise Terminal in Pasadena is on its way.

■ **Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport** becomes the first airport in the world to offer podcast service to travelers.

■ It's a score for **Houston**, which gained a new soccer team, the **Dynamos**, formerly the San Jose Earthquakes of California.

■ In January, the state-of-the-art **Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts** opens in **Amarillo.** It is an architectural and acoustical masterpiece.

■ **Luling** enhances its tourism value by launching the **Luling Zedler Mill Paddling Trail.**

■ **Austin's Blanton Museum** moves into a newly built complex tailored for its extensive collection of more than 17,000 works of art.

■ In **El Paso**, the 1930s **Plaza Theatre** is revamped and reopens as a state-of-the-art performance center.

■ **Aztec on the River, San Antonio's** 1926 movie theater, is back in business for tours and large-format screenings. Tower of the Americas, San Antonio's notable landmark has also reopened with improved offerings and attractions.

■ **SAYING GOODBYE:** **Stan Hodge**, director of tourism and research for the Office of the Governor—Economic Development and Tourism died May 5 after complications from bypass surgery.

Irving "Tag" Taggart, founder of Traders Village in Grand Prairie, died Oct. 22. He had won numerous awards including TTIA's Lifetime Achievement, Gene Philips and Tall in Texas awards.

INDUSTRY INSIDERS

WELCOME the following to their new job positions.

Brenda Scott, vice president of sales, services and marketing for the Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau.

John R. "Russ" Whitlock, superintendent, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park.

Sarah O'Brien, tourism director, Cleburne Chamber of Commerce.

Melissa Sanford, executive director, Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Kathy Wright, director of services, Plano Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Giorgia AuRelian, director of convention services, Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas.

TEXAS TRIVIA

Tis the season for this State Fruit of Texas.
What fruit is it?

The Rio Star Grapefruit, available from October through May, is one of two varieties of Texas Red Grapefruit (along with the Ruby-Sweet), which ripens perfectly in the Rio Grande Valley climate to create the world's finest grapefruit. Grapefruit makes up 70 percent of the Texas citrus crop grown on more than 28,000 acres. The grapefruit and sweet orange crops have an annual economic impact of \$150 million for Texas, which is ranked 3rd in the nation for citrus production.

TEXAS TRIVIA

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TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

VISITOR NUMBERS as of October 31, 2006

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	9,581	+1.07	97,469	+6.23
ANTHONY	10,723	-12.83	172,695	+29.24
CAPITOL	6,805	+0.50	78,318	+2.57
DENISON	37,663	+5.82	421,813	+9.27
GAINESVILLE	37,517	-5.87	416,923	+28.25
LANGTRY	6,138	+79.00	59,106	+5.80
LAREDO	10,920	+53.50	117,899	+8.25
ORANGE	43,249	+68.28	478,710	-3.92
TEXARKANA	44,795	-7.01	436,995	-5.43
VALLEY	11,393	+2.90	173,364	+1.59
WASKOM	48,272	+4.07	472,040	-2.20
WICHITA FALLS	14,996	+10.71	163,487	+2.48
CENTER TOTALS	282,052	+8.73	3,088,819	+4.68

*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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