

T E X A S Travel Log

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

T x D O T

Now internet travelers can make a cyberspace visit to Texas on the new **TravelTex World Wide Web** site, <http://traveltex.com>, developed by the **Texas Department of Transportation** and the **Texas Department of Commerce**. The site provides an entertaining and astonishingly complete vacation guide to virtually all of Texas. Travelers can access several five-to-six day driving tours, details on hundreds of popular destinations, and an extensive list of events in every corner of the state. An interactive map allows folks to pick from seven Texas regions; information is then accessed through an indexed version of TxDOT's *Texas State Travel Guide*. The web site ties together the guide and the *Texas Events Calendar* so customers can search for areas of interest by key word, city, and date. In addition, travelers can order travel literature, subscribe to *Texas Highways* Magazine, and send colorful internet postcards to friends. There's even a fun scavenger hunt game where winners can download a free Texas screen saver. **Linda Kneeland**, information resources administrator at TxDOT, said when the **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department** joins the site within the next several months, internet surfers can access information on hunting, fishing, boating, nature and the environment, outdoor adventure, and more. For details, call Linda at 512/467-3711.

Long-time travel counselor **Lisa Smith** was appointed manager of the **Wichita Falls Texas Travel Information Center**.

Lisa began her travel counseling career at the Wichita Falls TIC in 1982. She helped develop the current Achieving Service Excellence program for travel counselors, and serves as one of the program instructors. In 1993, she received the prestigious Roadrunner Award for her superior performance in the statewide travel-tourism industry. "Lisa is known throughout the Travel and Information Division for her expertise as a travel professional," said **Milton Meharg**, director of Travel Services. "In addition, she ran the Wichita Falls center for a year, during TxDOT's hiring freeze, after manager Jack Conley's retirement. Lisa brings a great deal of knowledge and experience to this position." Give her a call at 817/723-7931.

COMING UP

Houston was named as one of the 12 stops for **America's Smithsonian**, a traveling blockbuster exhibition featuring more than 300 items from the institu-

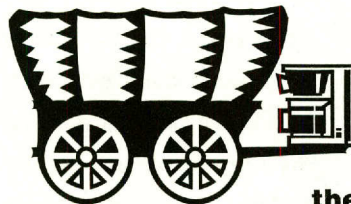
tion's museums, libraries, and archives. The free exhibition, which celebrates the Smithsonian's 150th anniversary, will be on view December 7, 1996, through January 12, 1997, at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Approximately 15,000 people a day are expected to tour the exhibit, leaving an economic impact of \$16 million during the 37-day event. For more info, call the Convention Center at 713/853-8000.

Soon, no trip to **Houston** will be complete without a walk through the human body at the **Museum of Health and Medical Science**, scheduled to open in early 1996. The 7,000-square-foot Amazing Body Pavilion, with its walk-through, interactive tour of the human anatomy, will highlight the new educational facility. Visitors will enter the giant exhibit through the cheek and detour along the tongue. After guests are "swallowed" down the esophagus, the tour continues along textured walls and ceilings of the rest of the body, accompanied by appropriate sound effects. At 1515 Hermann

Drive near the Texas Medical Center. Call the Houston C&VB at 1-800-4HOUSTON for details.

Plans for development of the **Presidential Corridor** between **Bryan-College Station** and **Austin** are well under way. The historical corridor became official this past spring when the Texas Legislature passed a bill designating portions of U.S. 290 and Texas 21 as the Presidential Corridor, in recognition of the connection between the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library in Austin and the George Herbert Walker Bush Library, now under construction at Texas A&M University. Events planned for this spring include a ribbon cutting in Austin, followed by the unveiling of highway signs. A festival in Bryan-College Station will highlight the day.

Sea World of Texas in **San Antonio** and its sister Anheuser-Busch Theme Parks became the exclusive theme park sponsors of the **1996 Summer Olympics** and the U.S. Olympic Team. During Sea World's upcoming



TRAIL BLAZING Just a short drive takes Metroplex visitors to a real working ranch on the famous Chisholm Trail. Twenty minutes north of Fort Worth, off U.S. 287 near Rhome, the 100-year-old Chisholm Trail Ranch is open to groups and individuals. The ranch offers bed and breakfast accommodations, horseback rides, Texas-style barbecues, outdoor dances, and 12 large stock ponds for fishing. Historical hayrides carry guests past the original 1883 stone ranch house and other points of interest, while a storyteller re-creates Indian legends, interwoven with truth and fable. For a taste of the Old West, call 1-800-216-8865.

TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD

1996 season, visitors can experience the Olympic spirit every day. An all-new Olympic-themed show at the White Whale and Dolphin Stadium will spotlight the park's animal athletes. Folks can meet **IZZY**, the official character of the '96 games, see Olympic heroes, past and present, and participate in Olympic-themed special events. Call 210/523-3630.

PLACES

The **Institute of Texan Cultures** in **San Antonio** will begin charging admittance fees on November 1. Visitors 13 years and older will pay \$4, and children ages 6 to 12 will pay \$2. Children 5 years and under, accompanied by an adult, will be admitted free. A special \$2 admission price will be offered to seniors, 65 and over, and to individuals participating in scheduled tour groups. The Institute of Texan Cultures features 26 ethnic and cultural groups in a rich variety of exhibits—where they came from and what they did, their food and clothing, their music and festivals. Open Tuesday through Sunday in HemisFair Park. Call 210/558-2300 for more information.

As **San Antonio** continues as one of the nation's hot spots for

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is published monthly by the Texas Department of Transportation, Travel and Information Division. Please send news items of interest to the Texas travel industry to Texas Travel Log, P.O. Box 141009, Austin, Texas 78714-1009. (512) 483-3727, FAX (512) 483-3793. Deadline for each newsletter is the 20th of the month preceding the issue date.

Ann Kelton, Editor

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DENISON TIC Counselor Devon Armstrong said last month marked the first anniversary of the opening of their new facility. It also marked the third wedding since the center's re-opening, when wannabe Texans from Oklahoma exchanged vows in front of the giant Texas star monument on the TIC grounds.

VALLEY TIC While Denison was celebrating its one-year anniversary, the Valley was cel-

ebrating number 15. In honor of the occasion, reporters from the *Valley Morning Star* visited the center, which resulted in a special feature article on TxDOT and its offerings for Texas travelers. Included with the article was a picture of counselors Albert Garza and Joey Sermino shown helping a visitor, and a photo of the *Texas State Travel Guide*.

JUDGE ROY BEAN TIC Did

you know that manager Neal Billings' rancher grandfather knew the old judge himself? We didn't either until we picked up the October issue of *Southern Living Magazine*. In a short feature article on the Judge Roy Bean center, Neal says, "My grandfather and Roy didn't get along. There were some good things he did, and some not so good things. Roy had a good heart. He was probably a necessary evil for the times."

tourists and conventioners, hotel companies work feverishly to keep up with demand. According to *The Dallas Morning News*, approximately 1,600 new hotel rooms have opened throughout the city since this time last year. A total of 1,659 hotel and motel rooms are under construction at this time. In spite of the recent increase in the number of rooms available, room occupancy is down only slightly. **Steve Moore**, executive director of the C&VB, attributes the growth in hotel room demand to the opening of Sea World of Texas, Fiesta Texas, the Alamodome stadium, and Rivercenter Mall. In addition, the \$175-million expansion of the city's convention center should further increase demand.

Valley Greyhound Park in **Harlingen** closed the beginning of this month because of declining business, reports *The Dallas Morning News*. Several factors contributed to the track's failure, including a decision last month by the Texas Racing Commission not to allow simulcast horse races in partnership with the Cameron County Fair Association. Officials said the \$16.2-million facility had cut short its live dog races but was continuing to offer betting on races televised from other tracks. Without the ability or right to accept simulcast racing, there were

no positive factors to turn business around. Track general manager **Bill McLaughlin** said the track has lost \$5 million since it opened in November 1990.

travel industry sales manager. Owings comes to Austin from the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce Convention and Visitor Council, where he was director of tourism and film. **Charles Stephens**, Austin C&VB director of marketing, said, "We are very pleased to have someone who knows the Texas tourism industry so well to become a part of our team."

FACES

Scott Owings joined the **Austin C&VB** last month as

ELEMENTAL ATTRACTION After three years of work by volunteers, the **San Antonio Children's Museum** opened September 9.

The bilingual museum offers more than 80 interactive exhibits designed for children ages 2 to 10. Children can encase themselves in giant bubbles, drive a front-end loader, or board an airplane bound for a faraway land. The exhibits are designed to foster a greater understanding of the workings of society, technology, and the physical world, while conveying to children a sense of participation in the multicultural life of San Antonio. Open Tuesday through Sunday at 305 E. Houston Street. Call 210/212-4453.



STATE PARKS

A half dozen Texas state parks and wildlife management areas will host **cowboy campfire gatherings** this fall. The specially packaged weekend events are offered through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Texas Conservation Passport program. From a borderland mountain cantina in El Paso to an 1800s-style cattle drive in the Big Bend Country to a campfire concert beneath West Texas stars, the program offers visitors a chance to touch the Texas myth. Travel packages range in price from \$78 to \$475. For details, call the Texas Conservation Passport customer service line at 512/389-4683.

More than half of the 137 Texas state parks now have **park stores**, a move designed not only to better serve visitors, but to generate greater revenue that allows parks to operate more like private businesses, reducing their reliance on public funds. Revenues from store sales at approximately 70 parks during fiscal year 1995 are expected to hit between \$750,000 and \$1 million, once all the figures are in. Overall park revenues climbed 23 percent to nearly \$20 million during FY 1994.

Beginning last month, the number of visitors to **Enchanted Rock State Park** near **Fredericksburg** was limited in an effort to reduce wear and tear on park facilities and its natural and cultural resources. Once the park reaches capacity during heavy use periods, such as weekends, holidays, and spring break, it will temporarily close for the day and reopen at 5 p.m. "This measure will help protect our park's resources and provide a safer environment for park visitors," assistant park manager **Harold Lemons** said. For more information, call 915/247-3903.

ECOTOURISM

When **Lake Belton** overflowed its spillway in 1992, folks had no idea what nature had in store. The water's force carved out a huge canyon and created a wetlands area below. Now government and private organizations are working together to preserve and protect this delicate natural area, while offering educational opportunities to area schoolchildren and visitors. A short drive from Temple or Belton, the 263-acre **Miller Springs natural area** includes eight miles of trails with varying degrees of difficulty. Future plans include construction of an environmental learning center, interpretive displays, a lab, and weather station. Free to the public from dawn to dusk. For tour information, call **Connie Kuehl**, director of tourism in Temple, at 817/770-5720.

? TEXAS TRIVIA

Where in Texas was the first permanent German settlement?

Industry, in northwest Austin County, was the first permanent German settlement founded in Texas. Friedrich Ernst and Charles Fordman came from Germany to New York and on to New Orleans, where glowing accounts of Stephen F. Austin's colony made them decide to come to Texas. Ernst received title to land near Mill Creek in 1831. And though he was ill-prepared for pioneer life, Ernst's enthusiasm ignited German interest and started the first steady stream of migration to Texas. Austin greatly valued the character of the Germans saying that "they have not in general that horrible mania for speculation which is so prominent a trait in the English and North American character. and above all they will oppose slavery."



STREET PARTY Nightlife revelers will find six nightclubs under one roof at **City Streets**, a \$2-million 30,000-square-foot **Bourbon Street-like superclub** near the Galleria in **Houston**. **Cruise The Rose**, a country/Western dance club with a replica of the **Alamo**; **Blue Monkey**, a blues club guarded by a 2,700-pound blue gorilla; **Stray Cats**, a piano sing-along show set in a **Mardi Gras-style party**; **Atlantis**, a nautical-themed dance club; **The Green Room**, a **speakeasy-style club**, and **The Midway**, a sports bar.

T H E A R T S

Texans can now "drive home" their support for the arts through a new program developed by the **Texas Commission on the Arts** in cooperation with the **Texas Department of Transportation**. For an additional \$25 a year, Texans can purchase **State of the Arts license plates**, an attractive three-color plate resembling a Texas flag. Twenty dollars from each set of plates sold will go directly to the Texas Cultural Endowment Fund, the nation's first state-created endowment for the arts for the purpose of preserving and securing the arts and cultural industry of Texas for future generations. Texas is 56th out of 56 U.S. states and territories in per capita government funding of the arts. Applications for the new plates are available from each county's tax-assessor collector office. For more info, call TCA at 1-800-252-9415.

Most define the term "millennium" as a thousand-year period. But among Christians, it refers to

that age when God's reign is established forever. Artists representing diverse religious backgrounds express their own beliefs about events to come in a special exhibition at the **Biblical Arts Center** in **Dallas**. **Millennium: Images of the Rapture, Revelations and Other Last Days Prophecies of the Bible** captures the interpretations of the work of artists from throughout the U.S. On view through November 26 at 7500 Park Lane. Call 214/691-4661 for details.

E V E N T S

Families can gain a greater appreciation of the often misunderstood and fascinating creatures associated with Halloween at **Owl Prowl** at **Fossil Rim Wildlife Center** in **Glen Rose**. The October 21 event will dispel the myths surrounding soaring raptors, stealthy cats, spiders, and snakes with demonstrations and hands-on presentations. The evening includes dinner and a starlit trek along Fossil Rim's nature trails. For reservations, call 817/897-2960, extension 0.

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-date	Percent Variation*
Amarillo	13,422	-3.66	107,403	-17.88
Anthony	13,377	+5.74	134,769	-14.71
Denison	19,824	+35.33	197,046	+1055.76
Gainesville	26,994	-6.81	295,695	-13.39
Langtry	6,357	-3.99	86,586	+11.57
Laredo	8,337	-23.32	95,937	-19.78
Orange	40,092	+6.76	475,893	+7.05
Texarkana	44,409	-8.88	486,291	+11.71
Valley	15,627	+6.90	252,912	+32
Waskom	34,779	-24.44	435,600	+3.70
Wichita Falls	14,637	-11.36	164,064	-10
Capitol Complex	8,508	-5.40	99,384	-15.70
1-800 Phone Center	12,228	-7.26	174,174	+37.17
CENTER TOTALS	258,591	-5.39	3,005,754	+7.13


Data as of September 30, 1995

*Compared to last year

MAIL SERVICES	This Mo.	Y-T-D
	51,894	1,160,336
SERVICES TO THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY		
TxDOT TRAX System	This Mo.	Y-T-D
Subscriber inquiries	65	
Addresses offered	77,607	
Addresses transmitted	19,478	
Addresses transmitted		567,517
OFFICIAL STATE TRAVEL MAGAZINE		
Texas Highways print run		
This month		384,830
This month last year		413,283
This year-to-date		3,367,944
Last year-to-date		3,721,065

Dial toll-free 1-800-452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m.-9 p.m. daily)

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