

Texas travel log [or, Texas travelog].

TEXAS TRAVEL LOG

INSIDE:

- ★ Texans have options galore for designated National Trails Day
- ★ Alamo, Galveston are tops in Texas according to survey
- ★ State can expect 11 new paddling trails by year's end, including Houston's new 26-mile stretch

ON THE MEND

THANKS TO funding from the **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009**, the **National Park Service** says nearly **800 projects** totaling \$750 million can be completed across the country, including \$199,000 to rehabilitate trails in **Big Bend National Park**.

"These projects are an investment in America's future that will create jobs, stimulate the economies of local communities, and get our country moving again," Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar says. "They are also an investment in telling the story of America to future generations through our national parks by conserving our awe-inspiring landscapes, our rich culture and our great heritage."

"We will use Recovery Act funding to make a difference in parks," says NPS Acting Director Dan Wenk. "We will fix trails, invest in energy-efficient vehicles, build new visitor facilities, clean up abandoned mine sites, increase our ability to generate power from the sun, and finally complete overdue maintenance on our buildings and roads."

IDEA HOME TOUR

WHEN *Coastal Living* magazine was ready to show its **Idea House** on the east end of **Galveston**, an unexpected guest — **Ike** — forced a delay, but the house is **now open for tours**. Galveston Island's Beachtown, where the home is located, has joined with the Galveston Historical Foundation to open the *Coastal Living* Idea House to the public with ticket proceeds benefiting GHF, one of the nation's largest local preservation organizations. Tickets purchased online through GHF at www.galvestonhistory.org can be used on any day that the house is open for tours.

According to *Coastal Living*, developer Tofigh Shirazi of the Beachtown Galveston Corporation worked

SCHOOL CHILDREN in **Amarillo** took on a **tourism project** that makes them unique ambassadors to their city, and their efforts are making their way to **brochure racks** and on the **Amarillo Convention and Visitors Council's Web site**.

The special kids-to-kids project — using nearly 40 Gifted & Talented students from Amarillo's Landergin, Paramount Terrace, Pleasant Valley and Sleepy Hollow elementary schools — features unique itineraries developed by each of the schools, highlighting what they feel are some of Amarillo's best things to do.

These itineraries, along with accompanying videos produced by the AISD students, are online at the Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council Web site.

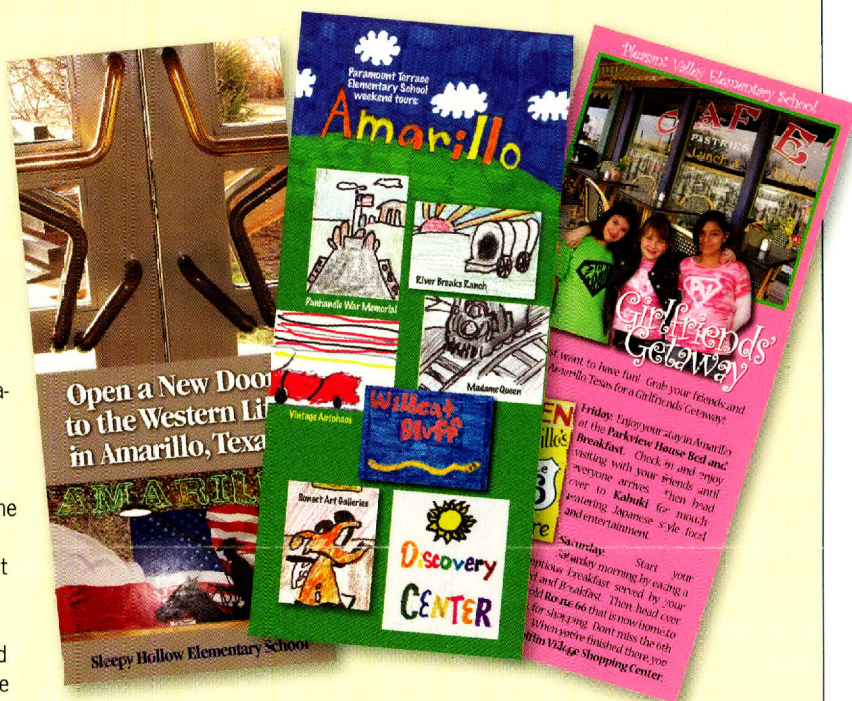
"What better way for kids to help plan their summer travel than to get ideas from other children," says Amarillo CVC Vice President Jerry Holt. "Research shows that Mom and Dad always listen to what their children want to do for travel."

with Atlanta-based interior designer Susan Bozeman and San Antonio-based architects Michael Imber and Brandon Moss to develop a look that combines traditional and modern, highlighting the beauty of Galveston's architectural history.

GROWING RIVER

A NEW TWO-mile stretch of the **San Antonio River Walk** — complete with water features, public art and tropical landscaping — **opened May 30**, doubling the River Walk in size. The extension winds north from the city's center, past the San Antonio Museum of

THEY'VE GOT CLASS



Amarillo elementary students promote city with their own unique itineraries. COURTESY OF THE AMARILLO CVC.

AISD Gifted & Talented Learning Facilitator Maria Chrzanowski says, "Our kids had a great time on this project. It helped improve their written and verbal skills while also letting the students dabble in the world of

graphic and video production. It was a very exciting educational project."

Local graphic designer Terry Pedigo helped interpret the students' ideas and designed the rack cards.

Art: and the restored Pearl Brewery.

The extension was welcomed with San Antonio-style celebrations including a gala and boat rides through the new area.

Plans are under way to extend the River Walk an additional nine miles for a total of 13 miles. The \$279 million project is expected to reach completion in 2014.

SPORTS TOURISM

THE **UVALDE Convention & Visitors Bureau**, along with the **City of Uvalde** and the **Soaring Society of America** will co-host the **32nd National World Gliding**

Championships in 2012. The International Gliding Commission made the announcement in Lausanne, Switzerland, at the International Olympic Committee's Le Musée Olympique (Olympic Museum).

Uvalde, which was the site of a previous U.S. World contest in 1991, beat out Narromine, Australia in the bidding process for the 15-meter — 18-meter Open Classes. The bid presented to the International Gliding Commission promoted Uvalde as a perfect location for such an event. The combination of great gliding weather and a local population that welcomes international guests also was well received by the Commission.

© TEXAS RIVER SCHOOL



Lady Bird Lake Paddling Trail in Austin is among the many new trails designated in the state this year.

Competitors from about 40 different countries are expected to enter the competition, slated for July 28–Aug. 19, 2012.

For more information on the event or being a part of the event, contact the Uvalde CVB at (830) 278-4115.

PADDLING TRAILS

THIS YEAR will mark the opening of **11 new paddling trails in Texas**, opening up new opportunities for adventure.

Houston's Buffalo Bayou Paddling Trail, dedicated April 28, became the 16th Texas Paddling Trail and — at 26 miles — the longest in the state. Notable as an oasis for wildlife and tranquility in Houston, the nation's fourth-largest city, the Buffalo Bayou Paddling Trail is only the first of nearly a dozen paddling trails expected to be unveiled this year.

"There has been a huge surge of interest in the Texas Paddling Trails program over the past year or so," says Shelly Plante, nature tourism coordinator for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "Communities across the state have seen the benefits a designated paddling trail has on local economies, and canoeists and kayakers seem to be excited about exploring new waters."

On May 2, the **Limestone Bluffs Paddling Trail**, on the Navasota River between Groesbeck and Mexia,

was dedicated. Or, May 6, the City of Austin and the Austin Parks and Recreation Department dedicated a **11-mile circuit on the capital city's downtown Lady Bird Lake (formerly Town Lake)**. And by early June, three trails will come online at **Martin Dies, Jr. State Park** near Jasper. The three trails will be the **Neches Paddling Trail**, **Walnut Paddling Trail** and **Sandy Creek Paddling Trail**.

The **Brazos River** will get **two new paddling trails** — one near Glen Rose and one near Brazoria, and Village Creek near Lumberton will have an 8.5-mile stretch designated as well.

Later in the summer, the **Gonzales Independence Paddling Trail** is slated for unveiling on the Guadalupe River near Gonzales, and a new trail on the Colorado River near Webberville also will be dedicated.

The **Red Bluff Paddling Trail**, the third planned for the Colorado River near Bastrop, was set for an October opening, but has been postponed pending the sale of private lands along the route.

Denise Rodgers, co-owner of Rising Phoenix Adventures in Bastrop, was instrumental in getting more than 20 miles of the Colorado River designated as the **El Camino Real and Wilbarger Paddling Trails**.

Plante says new paddling trails are officially opened only after local part-

ners — cities, counties, river authorities or conservation organizations — have secured local support and made any necessary improvements to put in and take-out locations on a proposed trail. "We have significant technical and promotional resources we can put at the disposal of anyone who wants to establish a new paddling trail on public waters, but the process always starts at the local level."

STATE PARKS

THE AMERICAN Hiking Society-sponsored **National Trails Day** is set for **June 6** and **Texas state parks are encouraging all to "go take a hike."** This year, the annual National Trails Days celebrates Congress passing (on March 25) the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act that protects 2 million acres of wilderness, 1,000 miles of rivers, more than 5,000 miles of trails and affirms the 26-million National Landscape Conservation System.

Jennifer Bristol, Bastrop State Park's resource manager, says the park will have a trail work party and guided hike on a portion of the more than 10 miles of hiking trails that traverse the park's hilly, pine forest.

"We have one of the larger trail systems in central Texas," Bristol says. "Few realize that part of the frontier-era Gotier Trace — a trail that connected several of the original Texas

colonies — exists within the park."

Other Texas state parks paying tribute to National Trails Day are Brazos Bend, Caddo Lake, Daingerfield, Franklin Mountains, Lake Texana, Mother Neff, Seminole Canyon and Stephen F. Austin.

Brazos Bend State Park in Needville will offer guided trail hikes focused on bird watching and alligator sighting, plus general nature hikes through Brazos River bottomland forests.

Caddo Lake State Park in Karnack plans to have nature hikes, workshops and guided canoe trips.

Daingerfield State Park will host "Hiking 101 — Discover Hiking!" to teach what to bring along to travel safely on a hiking trek.

Reservations are required to join in a three-mile, sunset hike on the Tom Mays Trail at Franklin Mountains State Park in El Paso.

Lake Texana State Park in Edna will host morning and evening hikes. It is accessible to the mobility impaired.

One of Texas' most historic state parks, Mother Neff State Park near Moody will welcome hikers to three miles of woodland trails.

Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site near Comstock will have a guided hike to see the ancient pictographs at Fate Bell Shelter. At their leisure, visitors also may take the .33-mile Windmill Trail featuring a natural water spring and great bird watching or the tougher Rio Grande Trail that goes six miles to the point overlooking where the Rio Grande and Pecos rivers meet.

Stephen F. Austin State Park near Sealy will have a one-hour, ranger-led trail hike.

National Trails Days activities are free, but regular Texas state park entry fees still apply.

For more information, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

FOR THE sixth year, **Texas Parks and Wildlife** is making fishing an **easier summer option.**

More than 50 Texas state parks are waiving the fishing license and stamp requirements, and an additional 13 state parks are hosting special family events, where participants learn fishing skills, angling rules and regulations, have a chance to catch a fish and perhaps win door prizes.

The number of participating state parks this year has increased from 11 to 13. The bayside ponds of Galveston Island State Park are being used

for the fishing events. Goose Island, Lake Casa Blanca and Cedar Hill state parks also have joined the roster of parks hosting family fishing events this year.

Park Ranger Jerry Vaughan, who oversees Ray Roberts Lake State Park fishing events, expects at least 200 people to show up for the popular events that draw residents from throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. He says the program attempts to replicate the kind of fishing advice once commonly dispensed to youngsters by older family members.

“Lots of parents today don’t know how to fish and are hesitant to take their kids fishing,” Vaughan says. “We try to create an atmosphere that is like you’re going fishing with grandpa. The key is getting kids outdoors so they’ll know what’s going on and respect the world around them.”

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department believes the special fishing events are increasing state park visitation and engaging new anglers, which will translate into future fishing license and equipment sales, as well as future conservationists.

For more information, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

TOP ATTRACTIONS

THE RESULTS are in from D.K. Shifflet & Associates’ **Top Attractions Survey**, which gauges the popularity of **Texas attractions**, and the **Alamo** and **Galveston Island** are **solid winners**. Information in the report prepared for the Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism was announced on May 12 during a press conference for Texas Travel and Tourism Week.

The list features the top 40 attractions among all visitors, Texas visitors and non-resident visitors, with only slight variations noted. The top five attractions among all visitors are The Alamo, Galveston Island, the River Walk, San Marcos Outlet Malls and the State Capitol. The most-visited attractions for non-residents are Galveston Island, Alamo, San Marcos Outlet Malls, the River Walk and the State Capitol. Among Texas residents, the top attractions are the Alamo, River Walk, Galveston Island, State Capitol and South Padre Island.

“We are extremely honored to earn this prestigious recognition,” says Lou Muller, Executive Director of the Park Board of Trustees.



IN THE BALANCE

THE CITY of El Paso Public Art Program held an official unveiling of **Sky Boulder**, a sculptural park designed by local artist Willie Ray Parish. The park, at the corner of Alabama and Harrison streets, is part of a space enhancement project, which transformed what was once a drainage dam. Now, the Sky Boulder space brings together five abstract elements — *Sky Boulder*, *Hepgrind*, *Mogul*, *Divider* and *Ballustrade*.

Parish, a metal and wood sculptor who is a sculpture professor at the University of Texas at El Paso, was chosen by an artist selection panel, including the Public Art Committee and the Cultural Affairs Advisory Board. The panel chose from a pre-qualified list of artists who could provide an iconic gathering place for community residents and visitors alike.

Sky Boulder is a metaphor for the tenuous state of the earth as it hangs in an environmental balance. *Mogul*, *Hepgrind*, *Divider* and *Ballustrade* were all designed to inspire the creativity and art of local skateboarders. Marks left by the public, including skaters, are intended to alter and gradually transform the patina of the sculptures.

Sky Boulder is the centerpiece of the City of El Paso’s Public Art Program’s sculptural park.

PHOTO COURTESY THE CITY OF EL PASO

“Galveston Island offers such a variety of historical and modern attractions and activities to its guests, and it is wonderful to hear that people are enjoying the Island.”

The surveys, mailed in July 2008, reflect 2007 travel information.

To see the list, visit <http://travel.state.tx.us/TravelResearch/TravelFacts/2007-Top-Attractions-Survey.aspx>.

GREEN ESTEEM

SHANGRI LA Botanical Gardens in **Orange** earned a spot as one of the world’s top 10 projects exhibiting sustainable architecture and green design solutions. The **2009 COTE Top Ten Green Projects designation** — by the American Institute of Architects and its Committee on the Environment — celebrates projects that reduce environmental impacts through strategies including reuse of existing structures, energy and water conservation and use of sustainable or renewable construction materials.

The award was received at the AIA 2009 National Convention and Design Exposition in San Francisco.

Shangri La, which has more than 300 plant species and thousands of nesting birds in Ruby Lake, uses a number of green design and construction features like proper orientation of the buildings for passive solar heating and cooling, waterless urinals, ul-

tra low-flow toilets, low-flow sinks, optimized overhangs, soybean-based spray foam insulation in the walls and ceilings, and window placement that contributes to the energy savings.

“Our goal from the very beginning of this project was to be as earth friendly as possible,” says Shangri La Managing Director Michael Hoke. “Now it is up to us to use the wonderful resources of Shangri La to meet our mission of Mentoring Children of All Ages to Be Kind to Their World.”

Many of the Shangri La structures were built using reused materials, sinker cypress salvaged from rivers in Louisiana, reclaimed asphalt from the repaving of Green Avenue in Orange, and fallen trees from Hurricane Rita.

Last year, Shangri La received the Prestigious Platinum Certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for New Construction by the U.S. Green Building Council. It is the first project in Texas and the 50th project in the world to earn the prestigious honor.

For more information, call (409) 670-9113 or visit www.shangrilagardens.org.

EXHIBITS

MCKINNEY’S Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary is showcasing *Treasures from the Earth*, a new exhibit that features an exotic

collection of diamonds, gems, precious metals, rare minerals, pearls and fossils. Some have never been exhibited in public.

Treasures from the Earth includes some of the largest uncut diamonds (up to 10 carats) ever found in the United States from the Crater of Diamonds State Park in Arkansas. You can also see some of the sparkling riches that were recovered from the Spanish galleon, *Nuestra Senora de Atocha*, which sunk in the Florida Keys in 1622.

A series of walk-through galleries describe the formation of these treasures, as well as highlight their functions in our daily lives.

A children’s activity area includes Panning for Pyrite and the interactive Observation Station where children can exchange information and observations about objects found in the natural world. A variety of unique, never-before-seen fossils, including a dinosaur nest and a T-Rex skull, are featured next to the popular walk-through Mosasaur.

While visiting the Heard, note that the museum recently opened its Native Texas Butterfly House, which includes a variety of native butterflies including the zebra longwing, the tiger swallowtail, red admiral, monarch and others.

For more information, call (972)562-5566 or visit www.heardmuseum.org.

TEXAS TRIVIA

There are no royal ties to this display of "thrones", but former plumber Barney Smith opens up his garage to the public for which quirky San Antonio attraction?

Smith's Toilet Seat Art Museum in San Antonio features a collection of more than 700 toilet seats-turned-art with inspirations that are of personal interest and national interest, like one that is a tribute to Sept. 11, 2001. The artist started transforming toilet seats into works of art more than 30 years ago, and has no plans to stop. Admission is free to this attraction which is open whenever Smith is home. For more information, visit www.unusualmuseums.org/toilet.

TEXAS TRIVIA

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TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

VISITOR NUMBERS as of April 30, 2009

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	6,638	+2.80	24,623	-0.78
ANTHONY	7,818	-39.75	32,670	-35.81
CAPITOL	6,559	-8.52	27,372	-3.48
DENISON	26,974	-25.38	109,303	-22.01
GAINESVILLE	23,117	-32.67	91,990	-43.18
LANGTRY	7,133	-12.92	24,593	-5.70
LAREDO	8,611	-19.38	37,141	-23.44
ORANGE	41,453	-16.75	156,345	-13.30
TEXARKANA	20,082	-34.02	77,758	-5.55
VALLEY	9,124	-24.22	91,987	-16.90
WASKOM	28,884	-6.75	113,633	-12.26
WICHITA FALLS	13,079	-8.80	52,249	-8.10
CENTER TOTALS	199,472	-21.33	839,664	-16.73

*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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