

# TEXAS TRAVEL

## NOTICE!

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## COMING UP

The **Alamo National Building**, one of San Antonio's most prominent downtown office towers, will be converted into a 300-room, first-class hotel within three years. The *San Antonio Express-News* reports the 24-story art deco landmark, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was dedicated in 1929, and is recognized by the two-story "Alamo" sign on top of the roof. A weather-vane tower, which decades ago rose above the sign, featured rings of white neon that rose and fell as outside temperatures changed. The neon rings and other unusual features will be restored. Announcement of the hotel affiliation and management is expected soon. At 105 S. St. Mary's Street.

**Houston** is taking flight on more than \$3 billion in improvements at **Bush Intercontinental Airport** and the close-in **Hobby Airport**, seven miles southeast of downtown. *The Dallas Morning News* reports the \$227 million Hobby project is aimed at updating an overcrowded 50-year-old terminal into a wider, more open facility with additional seating, new rest rooms, and modern signage and concessions. Southwest Airlines will go from 14 gates in two widely separated concourses to 20 gates in one central area for all its flights. Plans for the larger Bush airport include adding a fifth runway more than a mile north of the current terminal, and enlarging a general aviation runway to accommodate commercial use. The projects reflect a nationwide building boom to meet air-travel demand.

The continued success of the 17-day **Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show** in **Fort Worth**, held each January and February, has officials looking at stretching the event into another



**CENTER STAGE** Ten stories of iron and concrete have formed the inner structure of the **Hobby Center for the Performing Arts** in

**Houston**. When complete in the fall of 2002, the Hobby will offer theater-goers a dynamic venue with two grand audience chambers, a convenient garage, and a breathtaking lobby with views of the Houston skyline and Tranquility Park. Sarofim Hall will showcase the best in Broadway, and performances by major popular artists. The more intimate 500-seat Zilkha Hall will provide scores of arts groups with a world-class facility for dramatic, musical and dance productions. For updates, call 713/227-2001.

week. Organizers say exhibitors, competitors and visitors seem to support an extended show as long as there are enough events to attract crowds. The prospect of more people and more money flowing into Fort Worth certainly seems like reason enough for expansion. Still, lengthening an event of this magnitude comes with its challenges, such as scheduling with rodeos in San Antonio, Denver and Houston to avoid conflicts. The expo was first organized in 1896. Since then, the show has continued to grow in both size and scope. For updates, call 817/877-2400.

## PLACES

The tranquility of a quaint German village awaits visitors in **Muenster**, on U.S. 82 west of Gainesville. Now a clock tower with a rare German-styled **glockenspiel** lends authenticity to the town's Old World charm. The tower was erected adjacent to Fischer's Meat Market on Main Street, after years of research by owners **Johnny and Butch Fisher**. The Fisher brothers say there are only three or four known glockenspiels of like creation in the United States. As the clock chimes, a tiny door swings open for a delightful parade of hand-carved figurines. The design incorporates the culture's most traditional symbols, including a sausage man, a milkmaid, a cow, Fräulein and Herr dancers, a bear and a king. For details, call 940/759-4211.

Visitors can once again soar more than 5,000 high, with the reopening on March 10 of Texas' only publicly accessible mountain tramway in **Franklin Mountains State Park** in **El Paso**. The **Wyler Aerial Tramway** carries passengers on a four-and-a-half minute journey aboard new Swiss-made gondolas to the top of Ranger Peak, with an elevation of 5,632 feet. The spectacular 7,000-square-mile vista includes views of two countries and three states. The original tramway was built in 1959 under the direction of Karl O. Wyler Sr. of KTSM-TV, to provide access to the station's broadcast tower and transmitter. The popular attraction closed to the public in 1987 because of rising insurance costs. In 1997, Texas Parks and Wildlife was directed by the Texas Legislature to take over ownership and operation of the cable car system. Renovation and upgrades have taken four years to complete. The top of the peak includes a new observation deck and gift shop. Exhibit panels explain the tramway's operation, mountain topography, and points of interest in El Paso and Juárez. \$7 for adults, \$4 for children. For days and hours of operation, call 915/566-6622.

On January 17, **George W. Bush** made his official departure for the Oval Office from **Midland**, his boyhood home. Twenty-four hours later, approximately 22 million people worldwide had heard of the West Texas town.



**TRAVEL TALES  
OVERHEARD**

**ORANGE TIC** For more than a year, motorists entering Texas from the state's southeast corner have found themselves entangled in a mess of construction along I-10, making it difficult for visitors to find their way to the beautiful new center on Blue Elbow Swamp. Counselor Dan Perrine reports visitor traffic has escalated with the recent construction of a new I-10 ramp and the erection of new signs directing travelers to the TIC.

**VALLEY TIC** Counselor Albert Garza said visitation has tripled since the renovated center was rededicated in November. The brightly painted building with its blue-tiled entryway is attracting a slew of new travelers and a steady stream of repeat customers. "The video room stays packed," Albert said, "And we are continually restocking our shelves with *Texas State Travel Guides*."

**TEXAS TRAVEL LOG**

is published monthly by the Texas Department of Transportation, Travel 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) 486-5874, FAX (512) 486-5879. Deadline for each newsletter is the 20th of the month preceding the issue date.

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Design/Layout: Kirsti Harms

The influx of tourists over the past few months has the Midland CVB looking for more volunteers to staff the **visitor center**, in the lobby of the chamber of commerce office at 109 N. Main Street. Plans are under way to renovate the center to include new brochure racks and display cases, a built-in information desk, and a special exhibit featuring Bush photographs and memorabilia. The CVB, in partnership with NewsWest 9, the *Midland Reporter Telegram* and mywesttexas.com, has produced a two-hour video commemorating the "rise to power of Midland's favorite son." "**Midland's Rising Son: A Salute to George W. Bush**" includes the speech and a portion of the entertainment from the January 17 event, as well as inauguration activities, the oath of office and speech in Washington, D.C. The video sells for \$19.95. For more info, call 915/683-3381.

The collection of cemeteries that sprawl across San Antonio's east side has been designated the **Old San Antonio Cemeteries Historic District**, and the city's newest attraction. *The Dallas Morning News* reports the district covers 31 cemeteries run by the city, local synagogues and churches, religious and fraternal organizations, the United Confederate Veterans and the U.S. government. After years of neglect, city crews and volunteers are cleaning up debris, restoring headstones and washing away graffiti. Last year the city Parks and Recreation Department received \$78,000 in grants from the San Antonio Conservation Society and the San Antonio Foundation for new wrought-iron fencing. The fence is being installed by inmates from Dominguez State Prison, who are also assisting with restoration. The effort is led by **Maria Pfeiffer**, a special projects officer and park historian for the parks department, who says the historic grounds represent an incredible cross section of people who guided the city from a frontier village to a major metropolitan area. Simple iron crosses and elaborate tombs mark the graves

of Texas revolutionary leaders, Jewish pioneers, Polish immigrants, Confederate veterans, Texas slaves, German Lutherans and Mexican-American Catholics. Open daylight hours; on E. Commerce Street, between S. Pine Street and S. New Braunfels Avenue. For details, call 210/207-2883.

The **North Texas Association of Aviation Museums** is drawing attention to the region's aviation heritage with the release of a new publication. **Aviation Museums in North Texas** highlights ten museums and five related attractions with tours, vintage aircraft, static displays, air shows, resources and workshops. Brochures are available at city visitor centers in the Dallas/Fort Worth area and at the area's aviation museums. For more info, contact **Chuckie Hospers** at the Vintage Flying Museum at 817/624-1935.

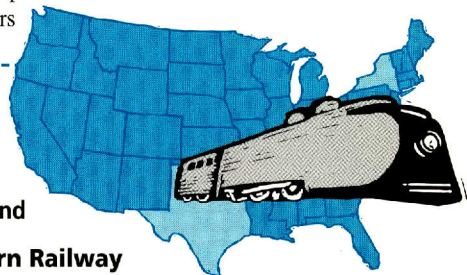
The **Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame** in Hico has moved to the Stockyards National Historic District in **Fort Worth**. Stockyards entrepreneur **Holt Hickman** purchased the rights to the four-year-old attraction from Hico residents **Bobby and Susan Kerr**. Exhibits honor more than 30 Texas cowboys and cowgirls who have excelled in their careers, including bull riders, ropers, steer wrestlers, barrel racers

and horse trainers. The Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame will join two new attractions in the Horse and Mule Barns on E. Exchange Avenue. The **Sterguell Wagon Collection** will showcase renovated carriages, wagons and sleighs from the 1800s. The **John Justin Hall of Fame** will feature the private holdings of John Justin, descendant of pioneer boot maker Herman Joseph Justin. The collections will open to the public sometime this month. For more information, call the Stockyards Station Visitor Center at 817/625-9715.

Two major expansions set the tone for the **40th anniversary** celebration at **Six Flags Over Texas in Arlington**. The mighty Titan hypercoaster premieres this month as one of the longest, tallest and fastest coasters in the world. Construction is under way on Looney Tunes USA, an all-new kids' area with ten themed rides, scheduled to open by mid-Spring. The new 2001 season attractions represent the single largest expansion in the park's 40-year history. For ticket information, call 817/640-8900.

**FACES**

**Sharon Eason**, a well-known leader in the Texas travel and tourism industry, passed



**THE BIG APPLE**

**AND BIG D** An agreement between **Amtrak** and the **Kansas City Southern Railway**

will allow the first direct service between **Dallas** and **New York City** in more than 40 years. A ceremonial inaugural run aboard the **Crescent Star** is expected in May. *The Dallas Morning News* reports trains will leave from historic Union Station in Dallas every evening for the 38- to 40-hour, one-way trek through Shreveport, Birmingham, Atlanta, Charlotte, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia. East Texas cities such as Wylie, Greenville, Sulphur Springs and Jefferson could be considered for stations. No start date or ticket prices have been set.



away February 11. For 27 years, Sharon served as director of visitor marketing, sales and services for the San Antonio CVB, positioning the city as a prime visitor destination. She most recently worked as tourism director with Parker & Wood, a San Antonio-based marketing, advertising and public relations firm. In 1997, she received a tourism award from the Governor of Texas and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Texas Travel Industry Association. Last year, at TxDOT's Texas Travel Counselors Conference, the Travel Division presented Sharon with the Gene Phillips Hospitality Award for her contributions to the Texas travel industry and for her support of the state's tourism program.

**HOTELS**

A couple of years back, hoteliers hailed the computer-in-every-room idea as a way of reaching the much-coveted business traveler. Now the lodging industry is rethinking their strategy to attract an increasingly tech-savvy public. *The Dallas Morning News* reports many hotels that led the way in providing in-room computers are dumping their PCs and opting for **speedy connections** instead. For one, travelers carrying their own laptops have no need for additional monitors and keyboards. And even if hotels provide computers, the guests' software and databases are back home. **John Keeling** of PKF Consulting, a hotel and hospitality consulting firm, said hotels that hope to cater to both the business community and the general public will need to install high-speed Internet connections. Other experts agree, saying the prevalent use of the Internet in everyday lives has made high-speed connections a must. "It's going to be as important as the bed," Mr. Keeling said.

**HISTORY**

The crumbled remains of an old Spanish mission lie dormant on the east bank of the Nueces River at the northern

edge of **Camp Wood**. Now the **Friends of Mission San Lorenzo de la Santa Cruz** and the **Nueces Canyon Chamber of Commerce** are drawing attention to their past by hosting rededication ceremonies on Saturday, May 12. The structure was built in 1762 by Franciscan monks and Lipan Apache Indians, serving as a mission for only seven years. It was used as a U.S. Army post from 1857 to 1861, and as a fort for the W.P. Lane Rangers following the Civil War. The day-long event will include historical reenactments, lunch, and ceremonies patterned after the original dedication on January 23, 1762. The Friends of San Lorenzo hope in the future to raise enough support and funds for reconstruction of the site. For details, call the chamber at 830/597-6241.

**MUSEUMS**

The countdown is on for the April 21 opening of the **Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum** in Austin. Three floors of interactive exhibits, covering nearly 34,000 square feet, will tell the story of Texas from before European exploration to the early 1970s. Important artifacts will be displayed on a rotating basis. A 7,000-square-foot gallery, reserved for short-term, temporary exhibits, will open with *It Ain't Braggin' If It's True*, a celebration of Texas, its symbols, its people and their accomplishments. The museum will include Austin's first IMAX® Theatre, the multimedia/special effects Texas Spirit Theater, a café, museum store and underground parking. At the corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and N. Congress Avenue. Open daily except Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas and New Year's Day. For ticket information, call 512/936-TSHM.

The **Meadows Museum** on the campus of Southern Methodist University in **Dallas** will move into a new 69,990-square-foot, \$25 million facility the end of this month. Sunlit rooms painted in deep

**FIDDLESTICKS** An exciting new Texas music festival takes the stage April 6-8 at Wurstfest Halle in New Braunfels. The **New Braunfels Music and Fiddle Fest** shines the spotlight on headliners Frenchie Burke, of "Cotton-Eyed Joe" fame, and Ray Price and his twin-fiddle harmonies. Top fiddlers from throughout the country will vie for the Western Championship title and \$8,000 in prizes during two days of competition. Nonstop music, an arts and crafts show, fiddle-making and wood-carving demonstrations, a children's area, and Cajun and German cuisine round out the family-fun event. For more info, call 830/997-8515 or 1-866-TEX-FEST.



**TEXAS TRIVIA**

**Which West Texas icon is making a comeback?**

The answer to this one, my friend, is blowing in the wind. For without those often relentless West Texas gales, vast reaches of the state could not have been settled. The winds powered the huge windmill blades that made it possible to pump water from beneath the ground, opening up whole new areas of Texas. By 1873 the wooden contraptions had become an important supplier of water for railways, small towns and small farms. Windmills spread rapidly over the Edwards and Stockton plateaus, into Trans-Pecos country, down into the Rio Grande plains, then northward into the Panhandle. Inhabitable land was no longer limited to regions with a natural water supply. Texas became the largest user of windmills in the United States. During the oil embargo and subsequent fuel crisis in the 1970s, researchers turned to windmills as a possible source of energy. This time technology would convert wind power into electricity. Today, West Texas wind farms are sprouting up as an alternative to natural gas and coal, providing a clean, nonpolluting source of power to some of the state's largest cities. On a private ranch in Culberson County, 40 turbines rise 176 feet into the air, directing electricity to customers in Houston, Austin and San Antonio. Big Spring can boast some of the largest turbines in the world. Once again, Texas stands among the leaders in wind technology. This time, experts predict, the windmill is here to stay.

**TEXAS TRIVIA**

eggplant, sage green, warm tan and muted gold will showcase one of the largest collections of Spanish art outside Spain, dating from the 10th through 20th Centuries, and including works by El Greco, Murillo, Goya and Picasso. Among museum holdings are Renaissance altarpieces, rococo oil sketches, baroque canvases, Impressionist landscapes, and 20th-Century masters' sculptures. The two-story Georgian red brick structure, flanked by patios and gardens, includes a special events space, a dining room, gift shop, and education areas. A Community Celebration with tours and art activities will mark the museum's official opening on March 25. On the SMU campus on Bishop Boulevard; closed Wednesdays. For details, call 214/768-2516.

In 1977, a group of enthusiastic residents in the Big Bend region formed the Marathon Museum Society in hopes of creating a local museum. After years of garnering artifacts and meriting support, the new **Marathon Museum** could welcome visitors as early as July. *The Desert Candle* reports the project got a boost with the recent acquisition of an old adobe building that served as the first schoolhouse in Brewster County. The museum will tell the story of Marathon and its place in Texas history. For more info, write Marathon Museum Society, P. O. Box 455, Marathon 79842.



| <b>NUMBERS</b>       |                       |                           |                              |                           |
|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>TRAVEL CENTER</b> | <b>Month Visitors</b> | <b>Percent Variation*</b> | <b>Visitors Year-to-date</b> | <b>Percent Variation*</b> |
| AMARILLO             | 7,395                 | -15.99                    | 14,532                       | -14.61                    |
| ANTHONY              | 16,866                | +64.92                    | 30,912                       | +52.77                    |
| DENISON              | 17,349                | -11.07                    | 32,634                       | -13.90                    |
| GAINESVILLE          | 20,319                | -14.77                    | 41,406                       | -12.28                    |
| LANGTRY              | 6,927                 | -23.06                    | 12,438                       | -20.38                    |
| LAREDO               | 7,428                 | -2.10                     | 14,193                       | -0.53                     |
| ORANGE               | 37,524                | +10.65                    | 72,357                       | +5.59                     |
| TEXARKANA            | 25,329                | +10.70                    | 51,255                       | +9.46                     |
| VALLEY               | 45,969                | +20.22                    | 97,587                       | +36.06                    |
| WASKOM               | 22,539                | -19.82                    | 43,686                       | -17.20                    |
| WICHITA FALLS        | 11,160                | -27.72                    | 22,104                       | -22.04                    |
| CAPITOL COMPLEX      | 9,996                 | +44.74                    | 16,383                       | +39.13                    |
| <b>CENTER TOTALS</b> | <b>228,801</b>        | <b>+1.94</b>              | <b>449,487</b>               | <b>+4.00</b>              |

|   | <b>This Mo.</b> | <b>Y-T-D</b> |
|---|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>Mail Services</b>                            | 74,976          | 130,197      |
| <b>Automated Attendant Road Condition Calls</b> | 13,214          | 75,428       |

Dial toll-free 1-800-452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m.-6 p.m. daily, Central Time)

Internet address: [www.traveltex.com](http://www.traveltex.com)  
[www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)  
[www.dontmesswithtexas.org](http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org)

Data as of February 28, 2001  
 \*Compared to last year

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