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- ★ Brownsville Museum of Fine Art showcases Dali's Divine sketches
- ★ People, events and programs that promote Texas' downtown districts recognized at annual convention

## TRAVEL NEWS

**M**AKING the most of a good thing, **South Padre Island** has launched its new **Sand Castle Trail**.

On the heels of the 2011 Sandcastle Days event, master sand sculptors from across the globe stayed behind to help create what trail founder Lucinda "Sandy Feet" Wierenga refers to as "semi-permanent" masterpieces all over South Padre Island. The sculptures feature a variety of themes, including an "Angry Birds" Tiki, a large pelican, a surfer hanging ten, a giant floppy-eared stuffed bunny, a bust of "The Turtle Lady" Ila Loetcher, and a musical band of fish.

These new stops on the trail join an ever-growing list of semi-permanent sand sculptures created and maintained by local sculptors Wierenga, Walter "Amazing Walter" McDonald, and Dennis Barrett. They are created with local sand mixed in with clay and Elmer's glue. After they have been carved, they are treated with a "magic potion" that turns them into something resembling concrete—provided they are given a chance to dry thoroughly.

According to Wierenga, this is just the beginning. She adds, "South Padre Island is the Sand Castle Capital of the World. I want to cover the place up with awesome sand sculpture that residents and island visitors alike can seek out and enjoy." She doesn't know how long they will last, though some experimental sculptures she has created in her yard have stayed intact for more than a year already, and those built in protected areas could last indefinitely. "The sculptures should stand up well to weather and finger pokes, and minor damage is repairable. I hope the public will enjoy and respect them."

All of the sculptures built so far have been funded by private donations, but sponsorships will be considered for future sculptures.



This sand sculpture, inside the South Padre Island Visitor Center, is one example of semi-permanent sculptures that will make up the Sand Castle Trail.

For more information, visit [sandcastletrail.com](http://sandcastletrail.com).

**N**EW BRAUNFELS voters have backed a ban on disposable containers for food and beverages on the Comal and Guadalupe rivers within city limits.

The City Council enacted the ban in August, but local businesses led a backlash to force the ballot referendum. Still, it passed with 58 percent of the vote.

New Braunfels Mayor Gale Popisil told *The Austin American-Statesman*, "We want people to come, have fun and have their beverage of choice, just not with a disposable container that's going to get dumped in our river. They can bring any kind of nondisposable container and any beverage they do like."

Supporters say the ban is about re-

ducing trash that winds up in the river.

Opponents say the crackdown on disposable containers will hamper the local economy by driving away tourists who flock to the city's rivers each summer. Additionally, they say any unsealed beverage delivery container, strictly speaking, would be a violation of the state's open container law. And anyone driving to the Comal River with alcohol, repackaged in nondisposable containers, would also be in violation of state liquor laws if it's in the vehicle's passenger area.

The ban will take effect Jan. 1. Violators, if found guilty, could be fined \$500.

The New Braunfels Ad Hoc River Committee also has made three recommendations to the city council—charging access fees to get onto the river in local parks; creating park-and-ride operations at the Comal

County Fairgrounds and Landa Plaza; and moving the outfitter shuttle pickup zone at the last public exit for tuber safety.

A Dec. 5 public hearing is set before the recommendations are presented to the council at their Dec. 12 meeting.

**W**ITH PLANS for a future state park, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department purchased 3,333 acres of cross-timbers region ranch land—three contiguous tracts composed of two ranches and a 42-acre in-holding—about an hour's drive west of downtown Fort Worth.

After spending the past few years exploring land in Johnson, Bosque, Erath, Hood, Parker, Palo Pinto and Tarrant counties, TPWD and the Nature Conservancy identified this property, which straddles the Palo Pinto and Stephens county line near the town of Strawn. With funds from its \$9.2 million sale of the former Eagle Mountain Lake State Park in 2008, TPWD paid \$7.14 million for the new acquisition. The future state park property features a two-mile front on the north fork of Palo Pinto Creek, and its topography ranges from hilltop vistas to riparian forests.

"By any measure, this property was worth the wait," says TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith. "We are excited about its diversity and the many recreational opportunities it will ultimately provide to the citizens and park enthusiasts of North Texas. The acquisition of the new park site never would have happened without the extraordinary generosity of so many private and public donors from the Fort Worth area. All of us who care about the future of our state parks owe these entities a great debt of gratitude."

The remainder from the sale of Eagle Mountain Lake State Park will be held in a dedicated sub-account for future parkland acquisition and/or improvements.

LOIS M. RODRIGUEZ/TXDOT



KEVIN STILLMAN/TXDOT

Salvador Dali's illustrations of Dante's *Divine Comedy* are paired with sculptures like his depiction of *Saint George and the Dragon*.

With limited staff resources, Smith says it will take some time to complete a master plan to guide public use and to develop the site, but when the gates of Texas' 94th state park do swing open, Carter believes the state's investment "will pay recreational and conservation dividends for generations to come."

**TRAVEL TRENDS**

**A**LTHOUGH high gas prices continue to be a concern, **Texas consumers say they will spend the same on holiday trips this season** and are about as likely as they were last year to take at least one overnight trip for the holidays in November and December, according to the AAA Texas Third Annual Winter Holiday Travel Poll.

Fifty-six percent of polled Texas residents said they plan on one or more holiday trips (compared to 57 percent last year), 34 percent definitely won't take a trip (31 percent last year) and 10 percent are undecided (12 percent in 2010).

The 34 percent not taking a holiday trip cited, respectively, too many other expenses, gas prices, rising prices for travel and rising household expenses.

Of those who travel in November and December, 62 percent planned to spend \$1,000 or less on their getaways, compared to 61 percent last year who

said they would spend less than \$1,000.

Fifty-one percent of surveyed holiday travelers will take one trip in November or December, 35 percent will take two, and 14 percent will take three or more. Last year, 49 percent said they would take one trip, 36 percent were taking two, and 16 percent were taking three or more.

"We are seeing some price sensitivity on the part of travelers because of the economy and high gas prices, but we also see that travel is viewed as a high priority, and people will continue to fit trips into their budgets however they can," says AAA Texas spokesperson Sarah Schimmer. "Fortunately, travel providers are recognizing this also and are offering many family budget-friendly deals and significant discounts for early bookings."

**ON EXHIBIT**

**D**IVINE COMEDY works by **Salvador Dali**, one of the world's most renowned artists, are **on showcase at The Brownsville Museum of Fine Art through Jan. 4.**

The exhibition, organized by the Las Cruces Museum of Art in New Mexico, is part of a 10-city national tour over a three-year period containing 100 prints from Dali's *Divine Comedy* suite.

In 1957, the Italian government

commissioned Dali to illustrate Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. Dali's watercolors were going to be reproduced as wood engravings and released as a limited edition print suite in honor of the 700th anniversary of Dante's birth. Often considered to be the greatest work of Medieval European literature, the *Divine Comedy* was written between 1307 and 1321.

Dali began creating a series of 100 watercolors for the commission, but when the project was publicly announced, there was a collective outcry from the Italian public who didn't believe a Spaniard should be chosen for this project. As a result, his commission was rescinded, but he continued to work on the project, confident that he'd find a publisher.

In order to translate Dali's watercolors into printed plates, two artists handcarved 3,500 blocks – an average of 35 separate blocks per print – a process that took five years. Dali considered this project to be one of the most important of his career.

For information, call (956) 542-0941 or visit [www.brownsvillemfa.org](http://www.brownsvillemfa.org).

**VETERANS DAY 2011** – 11/11/11 – marked the perfect opportunity to **open the The Voices of Veterans' "Every Veteran Has a Story to Tell" exhibit** at the **Texas Capitol Visitor Center** in the historic **Old Land Office** on the

**State Capitol grounds in Austin.**

The interactive exhibit which runs through September, includes multimedia iPad kiosks with selections from veterans' interviews and personal memorabilia. Twelve Texas veterans of four wars – World War II, Vietnam and both Iraq wars – are featured in videos about courage, duty, fear and survival as part of the exhibit.

"Our nation's wars are well-known," says Jerry Patterson, chairman of the Veterans Land Board and retired Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. "But hearing the gripping personal narratives from veterans of those wars – their experiences of leaving home, going abroad, facing combat and surviving – adds context for the public. These first-hand accounts prove that ordinary men and women, faced with incredible adversity, can accomplish extraordinary things."

The Voices of Veterans program is an oral history initiative of the VLB that honors veterans by documenting their stories via thorough interviews. Their stories are then permanently archived in the Office of Veterans Records at the Texas General Land Office, where they join the historic documents of other Texas heroes such as Sam Houston, David Crockett, Jim Bowie and William Barret Travis. The archives are made available to researchers, historians, genealogists and the general public to inspire future generations and remind us of our soldiers' sacrifices. The program is free to Texas veterans of all wars, from World War II to Afghanistan.

For more information on the Voices of Veterans program, call (800) 252-8387 or visit [www.voicesofveterans.org](http://www.voicesofveterans.org) or [www.texasveterans.com](http://www.texasveterans.com).

**TOPS IN TOURISM**

**T**HE BEAUMONT Convention & Visitors Bureau was named **Best Destination Marketing Organization for the Gulf Coast** region in the *Texas Meetings + Events* 2011 "Best of Texas" Readers' Choice Awards.

"It's such an honor for Beaumont to be recognized by our customers for our commitment to service and our dedication to ensuring a successful, memorable event," says Stephanie Molina, Director of Marketing for the Beaumont CVB.

Winners of the Readers' Choice Best of Awards are voted on by the

meeting planners, event planners and suppliers who read *Texas Meetings + Events* magazine. The annual awards are designed to honor those who excel in the regional meeting and events industry for superb service to suppliers who help planners meet and exceed the needs of their clients. The award was presented during a recent reception hosted by the magazine at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio.

**A**T ITS RECENT state convention in **Nacogdoches**, the **Texas Downtown Association's President's Awards Program** recognized more than 150 projects, events and people that make a difference in Texas.

Beverly Abell, Main Street director for the City of Tyler, received the inaugural Susan H. Campbell Award for Professional Excellence of the 2011 Texas Downtown Association President's Awards Program.

This award, named for past TDA president Susan Campbell who died in 2010, is given to a downtown professional who has displayed outstanding professionalism, achievement and support of the Texas downtown community.

Downtown Amarillo's Courtyard by Marriott at the Historic Fisk Building won the top design award for adaptive reuse of a historic building from the Texas Downtown Association.

The Courtyard by Marriott at the Fisk, which opened in the 1927 building on New Year's Eve 2010, was one of two finalists, along with the Texas Music Theater in San Marcos, in the Best Adaptive Reuse category for projects greater than \$1.5 million.

"This is great news for Amarillo's hospitality community. We are very proud of all the effort in the \$12.7 million project and send our congratulations to the management and staff of the property," says Jerry Holt, vice president of the Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council.

The building, redesigned by Amarillo architect Jim Doche, "represents a great example of taking a 1927 office building and transforming it into a modern business hotel," says Beth Duke, executive director of Center City, which nominated the hotel.

Among other recipients of the 2011 Presidents Awards, Best Renovation/ Rehabilitation honors went to the Salado Visitor Center and the Ste-

phens Central Library in San Angelo.

Best Restoration honors went to Byrne Reed House/Humanities Texas in Austin and the Duncan Depot Antiques/Lucas Hardware Building in Palestine.

Wichita Falls' Pride in the Falls won as Best Marketing Program.

Best Promotional Event honors went to 35 Denton and Salado's Chocolate & Wine Weekend.

Waxahachie's College Street Restaurant & Pub was noted as Best Downtown Business, while Best Downtown Partner went to Buda's Fine Arts Committee-Art Around Town and Waxahachie's Citizens National Bank of Texas. Lou Mallory, of Mineola, was named Downtowner of the Year.

The next conference will be Nov. 6-9, 2012, in Wichita Falls.

**A**USTIN-Bergstrom International Airport, ranked among the top airports in the world for customer service excellence, is **one of only 14 airports to be inducted into the first Director General's Roll of Excellence by the Airport Council International**. The recognition is given to airports that have been listed among the top five in the ACI's Airport Service Quality survey of more than 200 airports worldwide for five consecutive years. ABIA is ranked No. 3 on the latest list.

The ASQ Awards are among the industry's most prestigious accolades and the world's benchmark measure of airport excellence.

Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Executive Director Jim Smith says, "The ASQ survey has been the most important tool for us to develop a clear focus and make data driven decisions on customer service. This in turn, facilitates the execution of our business strategy for Austin's airport. The survey criteria allow us to select a few, key items to build our brand around. We work to excel in these areas and differentiate ourselves from other airports."

The Austin airport offers comfortable architecture, an ambiance made distinct with live music and local restaurants, enjoyable art and a super-clean terminal that distinguish this airport as uniquely Austin.

The airport recently added a cell phone waiting area to replace the 30-minute complimentary parking in the garage and parking lot A. Those

## PARK PERKS

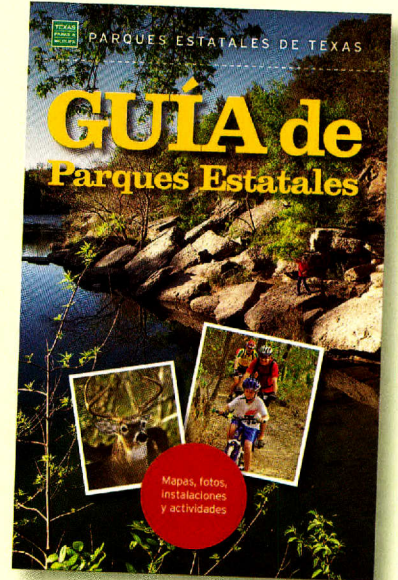
**T**HE LATEST edition of the free 112-page **Texas State Park Guide**, which includes details about more than 90 state parks, is **now available** in a variety of formats, including digital and Spanish versions.

The digest-size booklet includes information about special park programs, such as the Geocache Challenge, free fishing and the Texas Outdoor Family camping program.

Texas State Parks director Brent Leisure, who encourages Texans to take advantage of the cooler weather to visit a state park or historic site, says that entrance and camping fees, State Park Pass purchases and patronizing state park stores all help fund state park operations.

"We understand that many Texans continue to experience difficult economic times," says Leisure, "but our state parks continue to offer an affordable, safe and family friendly alternative to many other forms of entertainment and recreation."

The new edition highlights dozens of park sites located near Texas' major metropolitan areas for day trips or an economical weekend getaway. It also includes accommodations, ranging from modified screened shelters, rustic bunkhouses, cabins



and yurts to a historic ranch house and full-service lodges.

Free copies of the Texas State Park Guide are available at any state park, TPWD law enforcement offices, Sea Center Texas, Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, most Texas Department of Transportation Travel Information Centers, and select chambers of commerce and convention and visitors bureaus throughout Texas. It is available online at [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/parkguide](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/parkguide).

picking up passengers may wait in that area until receiving a cell-phone notification from their passenger.

## INDUSTRY INSIDERS

**S**ALMA GOTTFRIED has been appointed the **senior vice president of marketing for the Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau**, where she will be responsible for the overall direction and execution of DCVB marketing and public relations efforts.

"I, along with local community leaders and industry partners, am excited to introduce Salma as the DCVB's new senior vice president, marketing," says Phillip Jones, President and CEO of the DCVB. "Her previous experience managing some of the world's most recognizable brands and familiarity with the hospitality industry are invaluable. Salma's creativity, enthusiasm and track record of innovation make her

the ideal candidate to position the Dallas brand for future success."

Gottfried joins the DCVB after a 14.5-year stint with Dallas-based advertising agency Dieste, where she most recently served as executive director of brand leadership. She began her career in the hospitality industry with the Loews Anatole Hotel (currently the Hilton Anatole Hotel) in Dallas where her roles included director of advertising for its corporate chain.

"I'm thrilled to begin this new opportunity with the DCVB," Gottfried said. "Dallas is my home, and I see many exciting opportunities for both the Dallas brand and our city on the horizon."

A native of Mexico City, Mexico, Gottfried is fluent in both English and Spanish. She has previously served on the PR and press committee for the Travel Industry Association of America and the public relations committee for the DCVB.

## TEXAS TRIVIA

**Harlingen is home to the original full-scale sculpture of what national monument?**

Yorktown, Texas, native Harlon Block, who enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1943, is one of six men captured on film as they raised the U.S. flag over Iwo Jima, Japan. The pivotal World War II moment was immortalized in the Iwo Jima Monument that stands near Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. However, the original, full-sized sculpture used in casting the bronze memorial, makes its home in Harlingen, along with the Iwo Jima Memorial Museum on the campus of the Marine Military Academy. Block, who died at age 21 shortly after the flag raising, is buried next to this monument.

Sculptor Felix DeWeldon donated his original creation in 1981. For information on the Harlingen memorial, call (956) 412-2207 or visit [www.harlingencdc.com/qualityoflife](http://www.harlingencdc.com/qualityoflife).

## TEXAS TRIVIA

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## TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

VISITOR NUMBERS as of October 31, 2011

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	6,265	-16.77	77,463	-4.80
ANTHONY	5,095	-19.52	53,689	-23.50
CAPITOL	5,885	-19.30	64,163	-13.20
DENISON	20,460	-41.60	254,447	-8.10
GAINESVILLE	16,094	-29.62	200,761	-19.60
LANGTRY	3,991	-10.70	39,341	-17.28
LAREDO	5,155	-3.81	61,357	-25.52
ORANGE	24,621	-29.51	340,488	-0.62
TEXARKANA	30,933	+198.99	139,928	-35.60
VALLEY	5,045	-24.54	111,191	-11.91
WASKOM	23,067	-10.02	269,469	-13.21
WICHITA FALLS	8,905	-27.68	131,335	+0.63
<b>CENTER TOTALS</b>	<b>155,516</b>	<b>-13.02</b>	<b>1,743,632</b>	<b>-13.21</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](http://www.traveltex.com) • [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)  
[www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) • [www.dontmesswithtexas.org](http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org)

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