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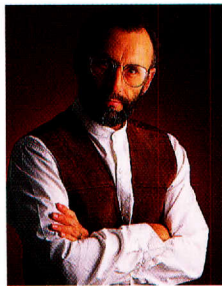
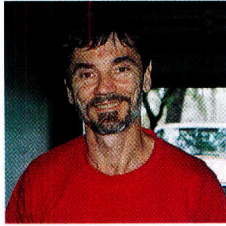
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ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Austin writer and Plainview native **Nelson England** says that he once thought of the region he called home as “boring.” Some 12 years ago, however, he began reading about the history and geography of the Panhandle Plains, and he became fascinated. He says, “I started seeing the plains through the eyes of European and American explorers—people who saw it before the sea of grass was plowed up and turned into farms. In the mid-19th Century, when the Comanches controlled the region, it was considered one of the wildest, most exotic places on earth.”

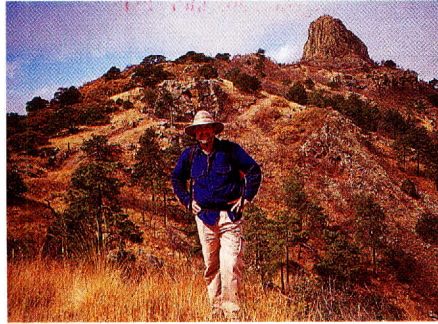


A fourth-generation Texan and a resident of Tyler’s historic Azalea District, **Randy Mallory** has contributed to *Texas Highways* for two decades. While researching his article on the Prairies and Lakes region, he wandered into Royers Round Top Cafe with the idea of enjoying a cold, German-style beer. “But the smell of the Royers’ pies was so overwhelming,” says Randy, “that before I knew what I was doing, I asked the waiter, ‘What kind of beer goes with pie?’” The waiter suggested Shiner Bock with a slice of buttermilk pie, which Randy deems “quite a complementary combo.” Randy calls the Prairies and Lakes region “the fertile heartland of the state and a place of great diversity—from laid-back rural communities to high-energy urban life.”

Freelance writer **Susan Kirr**, a native Midwesterner, discovered the Hill Country in the early ’90s while driving the backroads from Dallas to Austin. She had a fabulous time exploring the Hill Country’s hidden corners and regrets not having the space to include two more of her favorite towns, Uvalde and Gruene. Susan is at work on a documentary film about Austin’s bicycle subculture.



Dale Weisman is a frequent *Texas Highways* contributor who often writes about the Big Bend and other off-the-beaten-path destinations. A motorcycle fanatic, faux desert rat, Ed Abbey wannabe, armchair mountaineer, former caver, avid gardener, book junkie, and serious dilettante, Dale resides in Austin with his wife, Mary, and



their daughter, Erica. While researching his West Texas article, Dale drove 2,000 miles, dodging deer and dust devils along the way, and endured a choking Trans-Pecos sandstorm and a leisurely U.S. Border Patrol pursuit. Most absurd moment: buying a \$15 “titanium” watch from a huckster in an El Paso motel parking lot. Most soul-stirring moment: standing alone atop Guadalupe Peak, reflecting on how all journeys are circular and how all roads lead home.

A frequent contributor to *Texas Highways* since the early 1980s, Lake Conroe-based **Carol Barrington** found this Gulf Coast story assignment a grand way to combine work and pleasure. In all, she and her husband, Gene, drove more than 1,200 miles, refreshing memories in regard to old favorites and discovering much that was fresh and exciting. Along the way, they beach-combed for sand dollars, body-surfed



some waves, waited in lines for ferries, feasted on 25-cent oysters, poked into art galleries and antique shops, and got lost on backroads. “We enjoyed it all,” Carol notes, “but South Padre Island took top honors. It’s high on our ‘return trip’ list, just for the sheer fun of it.” A past president of the Society of American Travel Writers, Carol also writes *Day Trips from Houston*, published by The Globe Pequot Press.

While researching a story for *Texas Highways* on Martin Dies, Jr. State Park four years ago, freelance writer **Jan Edwards** had a moment of clarity in the Piney Woods of East Texas.

Less than a year later, she and her husband, photographer Stephan Myers, said goodbye to their home in



Corpus Christi and found a domicile deep in the forest near Lake Sam Rayburn. She says, “We love to travel across Texas in connection with our work, but any other free time we enjoy is devoted to the loblolly pines, water lilies, tree frogs, red cardinals, and hummingbirds that inhabit our yard. Some people might think we’re a bit sequestered from the mainstream of modern civilization out here, but for us, it’s a paradise on earth.”

Born in Dallas in 1950, **Gene Fowler** began performing and writing for theater during the Johnson Administration.



Gene’s prose has appeared in *Texas Highways*, *True West*, state and national newspapers, and other publications. His books include *Crazy Water*, *Mystic Healers and Medicine Shows*, and *Border Radio*.

Gene’s varied resumé also includes performances at the Kennedy Center, the White Elephant Saloon (Fort Worth), the Contemporary Arts Museum (Houston), the San Antonio Rodeo, and the Plaza del Sol Mall in Del Rio. He is developing an idea for a TV show called *There’s a Little Bit of Everything in Texas*.

ABOUT THE COVER

The open road...if it beckons you as it does us, you’ll love our Texas Travel Special. In this case, the road is Texas 118—one of the highest roads in the state—and it leads to Fort Davis and the Davis Mountains.
© Laurence Parent

THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS
TEXAS
HIGHWAYS

TEXAS TRAVEL SPECIAL VOL. 47, No. 9

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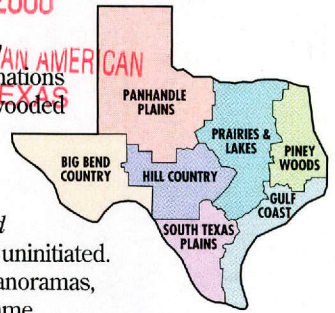
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TEXAS HIGHWAYS
TEXAS TRAVEL SPECIAL

2 OCT 13 2000

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN by Jack Lowry

Some of our top travel writers reveal their favorite destinations in Texas' seven regions—from oceanfront seafood joints and wooded retreats to breathtaking high points in the mountains



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SONG OF THE PLAINS by Nelson England

The Panhandle Plains region seems plain only to the uninitiated. Once you discover its varied terrain and inspiring panoramas, "the great wide open" begins calling your name

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Texans treasure this undulating landscape for its spring wildflower spectacular, but the Hill Country region has even more going for it. For starters, try its laid-back lifestyle, great barbecue, and cool rivers

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WEST TEXAS HIGH COUNTRY by Dale Weisman

Defined by mountains and desert, the Big Bend Country promises travelers hearty adventure. Our author finds that its lofty peaks, rugged trails, and grand silences encourage reflection, as well

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Beautiful beaches, funky seaside towns, and the nation's fourth-largest city commingle in the Gulf Coast region. Whether anglers or art-lovers, birders or browsers, visitors find paradise along the 624-mile-long shore

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With four national forests and the Big Thicket National Preserve, the Piney Woods region has more than its share of stately trees. Other charms range from unspoiled nature to fried catfish to vintage trains

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WILD HORSE DESERT by Gene Fowler

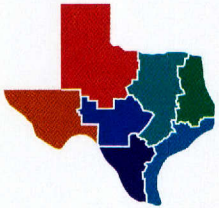
The South Texas Plains region claims romantic San Antonio as well as the storied brush country below the Nueces River. The region's Hispanic heritage flavors it all

SPECIAL ISSUE BONUSES

See our readers' picks in **Texas Faves** (page 64) and our **Where in Texas Are You? Contest** at the back of the magazine. Also, turn to page 62 for a list of **Lone Star Resources** that will help you find the information you need to travel the state!



THE MAGNIFICENT



A STATE THE SIZE OF TEXAS can be sliced many ways—and it has been. But the geographic regions don't necessarily correspond to the cultural ones, and the tourism regions don't align with the physical ones. In the mid-1990s, the Texas tourism industry and its state and local partners agreed to divide Texas into seven tourism regions to get the word out about the state's myriad attractions. *Texas Highways* has followed that division since the November 1997 issue, when we expanded our Fun Forecast section from five to seven regions.

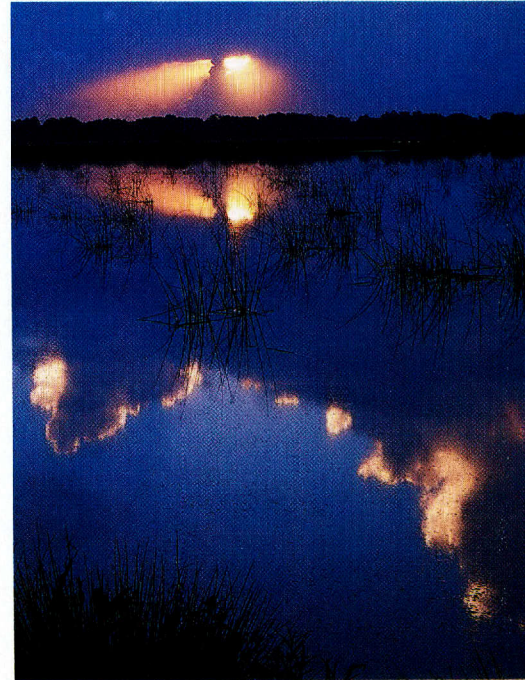
For this special issue, we asked seven of Texas' top travel writers each to take a region, select elements and destinations they liked within their area, and to tell you about their particular preferences within each region—designated as Panhandle Plains, Prairies and Lakes, Hill Country, Big Bend Country, Gulf Coast, Piney Woods, and South Texas Plains.

When you read the stories in this issue, keep in mind that these are not what you might understand to be the traditional regions of Texas. For example, under the seven tourism marketing regions, Brownsville is in the Gulf Coast, El Paso is in the Big Bend Country, and Ozona is in the Hill

Country. However, if you look in most sources on Texas, you'll find Brownsville listed in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, El Paso in the Upper Rio Grande Valley, and Ozona on the Edwards Plateau.

In the pages that follow, you have the seven regions of Texas presented through the eyes and preferences of our knowledgeable travel writers. Our intention has not been to be encyclopedic. It couldn't have been. Even our time-honored, award-winning *Texas State Travel Guide*, which boasts 264 pages chock-full of material on towns from Abilene to Zavalla, can't pretend to include *everything* about the Lone Star State.

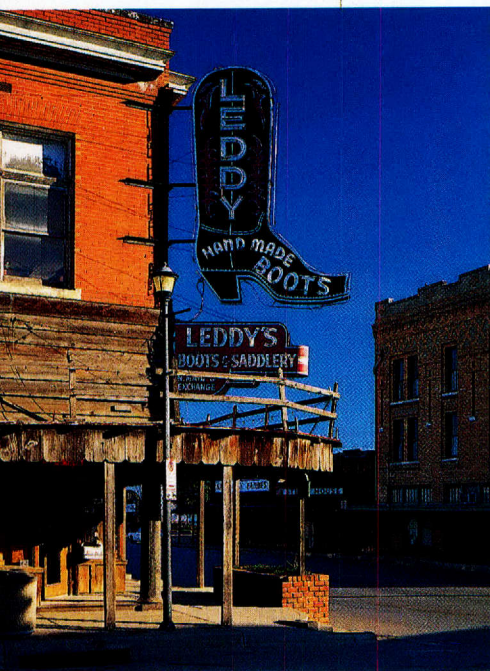
© MICHAEL DANBOM



GULF COAST Cattail Marsh, Beaumont

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

Leddy's Boots store, Fort Worth Stockyards



© LAURENCE PARENT

© LAURENCE PARENT



SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS
McNay Art Museum, San Antonio

SEVEN



PANHANDLE PLAINS
Caprock and foothills,
Dickens County

STAN WILLIAMS

The result of the personal perspectives, we believe, is a collection of accurate and *fun* assessments of the state. Because of Texas' size and diversity, none of the stories is comprehensive or definitive. Instead, we have tried to be fair and inclusive, erring on the side of the lesser-known, the offbeat, and the uncommon—to give you a perspective you wouldn't find elsewhere.

If your favorite place was not singled out within our regions, we offer you a simple solution. For those of you who receive this special issue as part of your subscription or on the newsstand, turn to the Readers' Choice Survey, between pages 56-57, and share your preferences with your fellow readers. If you get this as a stand-alone travel issue, we *still* want to hear from you. Future issues of *Texas Highways* and its Texas travel editions will contain additions, deletions, and, no doubt, many of your preferences. So, send us your thoughts at *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. Remember, like so many good things, this is a work in progress. Enjoy the road!

— JACK LOWRY



PINEY WOODS
Graceful Ghost paddle-
wheeler, Caddo Lake

HILL COUNTRY Lost Maples State Park, Vanderpool



© JOE LOWERY

BIG BEND COUNTRY

Tinaja and rock shelter in a drainage of the Pecos River



© FRED HIRSCHMANN



PANHANDLE
PLAINS

SONG OF THE PLAINS

BY NELSON
ENGLAND

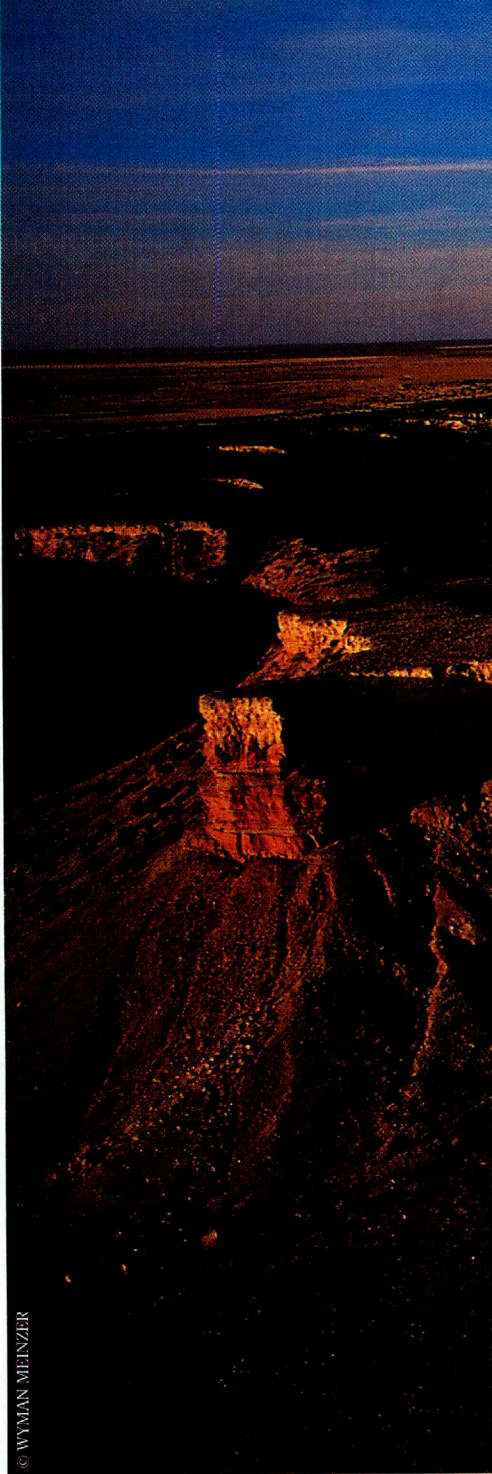
SKY, CANYONS, WIND. WIND, CANYONS, SKY. This is the Song of the Plains. To hear that whisper of a psalm, you have to pause long enough to listen. Each time I return to the place of my birth, silence must drive modern culture's clamor from my head before I can finally hear the poetry of this mystical terrain.

The Panhandle Plains region is a land where time stands still and space goes on forever. Beginning with Coronado, European and American explorers gazed in awe at its vastness, but what they saw no longer exists for our eyes to see. For them, the fourth element in the Song of the Plains was the *grass*—mile after boundless mile of tall red and golden grass shimmering in the sun, rippling in the wind like ocean waves.

One explorer after another feared that entry into the immense Llano Estacado, or “staked plains,” which comprises much of the region, would be like setting sail on an uncharted sea. And indeed, it was. The sea of grass, the overpowering sweep of sky, the hundreds of miles of canyons and breaks that slice through the high plateau on three sides form a land that once held a power to awe not unlike Africa's Serengeti. The wildlife it supported must have been almost as impressive as that of the Serengeti as well: millions of buffalo, antelope, mustangs, prairie dogs, and the wolves that preyed on them all.

Now, most of the native grass is gone; generations have plowed the prairie under or chopped it up with roads and barbed wire. Modern travelers hurry through what they consider a featureless terrain, eager to reach the verdant mountains to the west or the pine forests to the east. But those willing to pause find that much of the old power to astonish the senses and soul remains in those mysterious and sacred places where rivers have carved the plateau.

SEEING THE RIM OF THE CAPROCK
STRETCHING FOR MILES LIKE THE
GREAT WALL OF CHINA, YOU CAN
EASILY IMAGINE WHAT A BARRIER
THE ESCARPMENT SEEMED TO
EARLY TRAVELERS.



© WYMAN MEINZER

In spite of being one of the flattest places on earth, the Panhandle Plains has its high points, the most striking of which is the 250-mile-long, cliff-like ridge that extends southward from Pampa to Big Spring. This is the magnificent Caprock Escarpment, which divides the High Plains on the west from the Lower Plains on the east. The tributaries of the Red, Brazos, and Colorado rivers created canyons by eroding the limestone “caprock” that covers Texas' High Plains.

Some of the state's most spectacular



scenery unfolds here. The central escarpment harbors two of Texas' largest state parks, Palo Duro Canyon and Caprock Canyons. Farther north, the Canadian River sculpted another series of colorful breaks. And on the eastern periphery of the Lower Plains, the Brazos River flows through the green hills of Palo Pinto Country.

These areas—the Caprock Escarp-

ment, the Canadian breaks, and Palo Pinto Country—are my favorite parts of the region. Not only do they distinguish the plains, they contain a wealth of enticements for travelers.

CAPROCK ESCARPMENT

The undisputed gem of the Panhandle Plains region, Palo Duro Canyon State Park attracts tourists from all

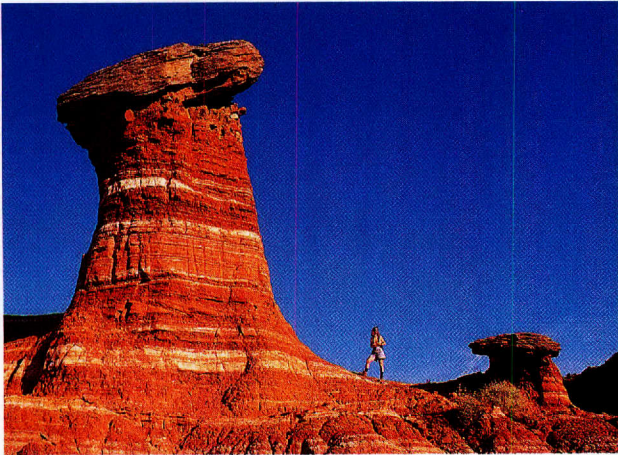
over the world. As you approach from the west, the ground suddenly drops from under you into a 1,000-foot chasm. Cutting through 240 million years of geological history, the “Grand Canyon of the Plains” maintains an average width of about six miles for its first 40 miles, before widening out into the breaks of the Lower Plains for another 80 miles.

If you seek beauty, solitude, and

Far from featureless, the Panhandle Plains region exhibits sharp contrasts on a grand scale, resulting in spectacular vistas. The 250-mile-long Caprock Escarpment (above) divides the High Plains from the Lower Plains and marks the edge of the Llano Estacado.

silence, visit the park in October. Summer heat and tourists have diminished, and the golden glow of the autumn sky accents the bright-banded layers of red, white, yellow, and maroon in the canyon's juniper-speckled cliffs, mesas, and pinnacles. Leaves have begun to turn gold on the cottonwoods along the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River, which winds through the canyon.

© LAURENCE PARENT



Known for its striking landforms, Palo Duro Canyon State Park entices hikers with its rugged beauty and adventurous treks. Above, a tall, striated hoodoo dwarfs a visitor.

An eight-mile paved road takes you to trailheads for hikes on some 23 miles of trails, but experienced hikers find some of the best exploring off-trail. Strike out in just about any direction, and you'll quickly lose yourself from the crowd and begin to appreciate the canyon's vastness. Park rules permit walking anywhere in the park, but you can rent horses, too. Campers get bonuses: clear nights for stargazing and spectacular sunrises and sunsets over the canyon walls (bring your camera).

Caprock Canyons State Park, near Quitaque, offers another place to get away from it all, with 27 miles of hiking/backpacking trails and two primitive campsites. The main eight-mile hiking loop through North Prong and South Prong canyons takes you past a "fern cave," a shallow pool, and hoodoos, the distinctive erosion-sculptured rock pillars often seen in photos of the park. On another trail, and not to be missed, the ascent to Haynes Ridge rewards hikers with wide vistas into both canyons and

to the east, into the badlands of the Little Red River valley. Another extensive network of trails snakes through the rough breaks in the lower park area, a paradise for mountain bikers.

Speaking of mountain biking, the best-kept secret in the state may be the nearby Caprock Canyons Trailway. This trail, also accessible by foot and horseback, follows 64 miles of former Burlington Northern track. From the village of South Plains on the Caprock, it gradually descends into beautiful Quitaque Canyon, passing through the heart of a former major Comanche and Kiowa camping area, also a rendezvous center for the Indians' trade with the Comancheros from New Mexico. You'll go 15 miles before you hit the first county road, and there's a good chance you won't see another human being the whole way, though you'll see plenty of

wildlife, including deer, beaver, hawks, and wild turkeys. These animals thrive along Quitaque Creek and several spring-fed tributaries, which also nurture cottonwoods, hackberries, wild plums, and grapes. The trail crosses Quitaque Creek and other creeks 23 times with bridges as high as 98 feet.

A trail highlight is a 742-foot-long railway tunnel, an engineering feat and one of the few such tunnels in the state (and on the National Register of Historic Places). The passageway also is home to 10,000 Mexican free-tailed bats (hat, dust mask, and

long sleeves recommended). Park rangers will soon offer an interpretive program that includes a tour of the tunnel to see the bats as they leave on their evening flight. (A private company now offers tours by van. See *When... Where... How.*) Great horned owls and hawks often lurk above the tunnel opening, preying on the bats as they fly out.

Though most of the canyons of the plains lie on private property, some public roads provide access to other isolated, scenic vistas. Texas 207, running north-south on the western side of the Caprock and paralleling it for more than 100 miles between Claude and Silverton, offers impressive views of Panhandle prairie before cutting across eight miles of lower Palo Duro Canyon and upper Tule Canyon. (The view from the Texas 207 roadside park on the south rim of the Palo Duro provides a canyon vista as spectacular as the one at the entrance to the state park.)

Continuing south on Texas 207, be sure to look for the big prairie-dog town on the east side of the road, about halfway between Palo Duro and Tule canyons. North of Post, you cross the grassy gorges of Yellowhouse Canyon. At one point, you can see the rim of the Caprock stretching for miles like the Great Wall of China. It's easy to imagine what a barrier the escarpment seemed to early travel-



© WYMAN MENZIE

The Caprock Canyons Trailway offers 64 miles of scenic mountain-biking terrain. The trail, also accessible by foot and horseback, follows a former railbed and features numerous creek crossings and an old railroad tunnel.



Yuccas bloom on the banks of Mackenzie Reservoir, northwest of Silverton and just off Texas 207. This highway parallels the edge of the Caprock for miles, and all along it, side trips on county and farm-to-market roads lead east to the Caprock rim.

ers who saw it from miles away as they approached in wagons.

From Post, FM 669 south takes you farther through the heart of the Double Mountain Fork breaks of the Caprock and on to the headwaters of the Colorado River.

CANADIAN RIVER BREAKS

You might not think of the northern Panhandle as a likely spot to look for fall foliage, but the region's relatively cold climate brings an early fall with dramatic color changes. The Canadian River breaks feature outstanding fall color as cottonwoods turn to gold and the stag-horn sumac reddens. Highways US 60 and US 83 from Miami to Canadian follow a trail of cottonwoods along Red Deer Creek. Just north of Canadian, turn east on RM 2266, which

parallels the Canadian River on its north bank for 11 miles to Lake Marvin. This route is so scenic that the town of Canadian has been celebrating it with a Fall Foliage Festival every October since 1950 (October 21-22, 2000).

Along the way, you pass the Gene Howe Wildlife Management Area, where large flocks of wild turkeys roost in the giant cottonwoods. Lake Marvin, in the Black Kettle National Grassland, offers picnicking, camping, and nature trails. West of Canadian, County Road 6 parallels the river's north bank westward for 23 miles. Here, the flood plain of the Canadian measures a mile-and-a-half wide, and buttes and mesas loom in the distance on both sides of the river. Driving this graded dirt road on one of the loneliest stretches in Texas, it's hard to imagine that the Canadian val-

ley once ranked as the busiest trail in the Panhandle. For centuries, Native Americans, European explorers, and American pioneers relied on this wide valley as a landmark and for its reliable water flow to get them across the trackless plains.

Seventy-five miles upstream from the town of Canadian lies Lake Meredith National Recreation Area. Here, the steepest bluffs of the Canadian provide a stark, treeless contrast to the dark waters of the lake. Yet oases of cottonwoods and hackberries thrive in sheltered side-canyons, and archeologists have discovered the remains of hundreds of rock and adobe dwellings from the Plains Village culture. These Indians, who inhabited the region between A.D. 1200 and 1450, mined the huge deposits of high-quality flint nearby and traded



The centerpiece of Lake Meredith National Recreation Area, 30 miles north of Amarillo, covers 16,500 acres and provides an excellent spot for fishing, boating, sailing, windsurfing, and other watersports. The Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument, the only national monument in Texas, lies nearby.

the prized commodity throughout much of North America.

A ranger-guided visit to the Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument offers both an opportunity to learn about this fascinating aspect of American pre-history and a chance to see outstanding views of the Canadian Valley.

Fishermen, take note: Fish from northern climates that cannot survive elsewhere in Texas thrive in Lake Meredith's cooler waters. Anglers come especially for the walleye, native to the upper Midwest and Canada. The 14-mile-long lake also proves an excellent spot for sailing and windsurfing, thanks in part to the nonstop Panhandle wind.

The contrast between the colorful oases of trees in the river breaks and the stark sweep of the surrounding prairies makes fall spectacular in the Panhandle Plains region. Nowhere is this contrast more startling than between Miami and

Lake McClellan via McLean. Seemingly endless miles of golden, rolling, native shortgrass prairie suddenly give way to the breaks of McClellan Creek, where dense stands of white oak, elm, hackberry, and cottonwood trees form a haven for wildlife. Publicly accessible footpaths meander for miles through the woods west of Lake McClellan, as well as through the surrounding grasslands.

PALO PINTO COUNTRY

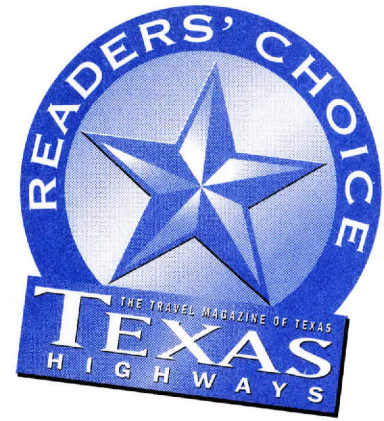
A hundred and fifty miles east of the Caprock, near the edge of

the Panhandle Plains, lies Palo Pinto Country, a surprising miniature version of the Texas Hill Country situated in the remnants of the Cross Timbers region (once an immense post oak forest that



Annual reenactments at Fort Griffin State Historical Park north of Albany draw visitors in springtime. One of several area forts established in the late 1800s to protect settlers, Fort Griffin features several restored buildings.

READERS! Here's your chance to voice your opinions on the **BEST OF TEXAS!** The top choices will appear in the magazine in January 2001. Just fill in the form with the exact names and locations of your Lone Star favorites. Fold as shown on the back, and send it in today. Postage is on us. The results should be fun! Thanks for participating.



- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Texas' Number One tourist attraction is
_____</p> <p>2 My favorite Texas vacation destination is
_____</p> <p>3 Texas' best annual festival or event is
_____</p> <p>4 Texas' best parade is
_____</p> <p>5 Texas' best bed and breakfast or historic inn is
_____</p> <p>6 Texas' best hotel or motel is
_____</p> <p>7 Texas' best place to watch the sunset is
_____</p> <p>8 Texas' best cheap tourist thrill is
_____</p> <p>9 Texas' best restaurant is
_____</p> <p>10 Texas' best restaurant for breakfast is
_____</p> <p>11 Texas' best restaurant for barbecue is
_____</p> <p>12 Texas' best restaurant for hamburgers is
_____</p> <p>13 Texas' best restaurant for Tex-Mex food is
_____</p> | <p>14 Texas' best place to walk or hike is
_____</p> <p>15 Texas' best spot for swimming is
_____</p> <p>16 Texas' best museum is
_____</p> <p>17 Texas' best place for a family reunion is
_____</p> <p>18 Texas' best place to view spring wildflowers is
_____</p> <p>19 Texas' best place to view fall foliage is
_____</p> <p>20 Texas' most beautiful building is (other than the Alamo or Capitol, which have long shared the top spot in the eyes of our readers)
_____</p> <p>21 Texas' best place to feel like you're <i>not</i> in Texas is
_____</p> <p>22 Texas' best thing to do on the Fourth of July is
_____</p> <p>23 Texas' best thing to do on Valentine's Day is
_____</p> <p>24 Texas' best thing to do on Halloween is
_____</p> <p>25 Texas' best place to commune with nature is
_____</p> |
|---|---|

I wish *Texas Highways* would publish a story on _____

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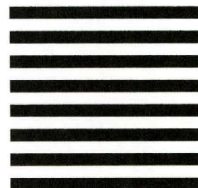
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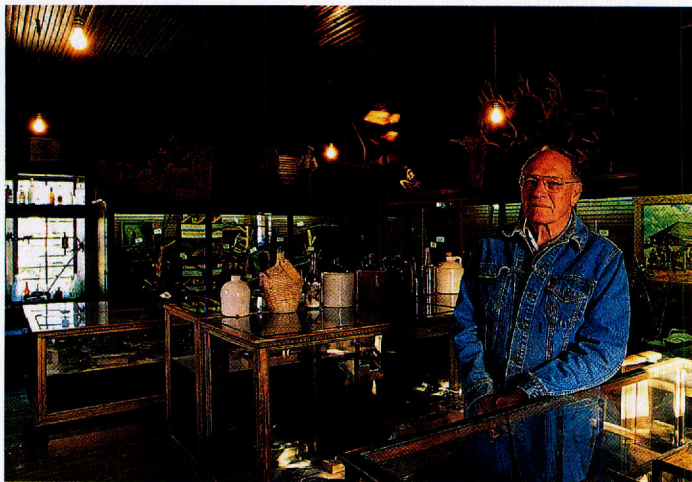


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Dr. R. Lee Rode, cofounder of Buffalo Gap Historic Village in Buffalo Gap, enjoys telling folks about exhibits in the jail on the second floor of the former Taylor County courthouse, one of 18 buildings that make up the unusual "museum-village."

extended south from Oklahoma into the midst of the Texas prairie). Two forks of the Brazos converge here to create one of Texas' greatest rivers. To travelers heading east, the greenery of this country looks downright lush, but those heading west from Fort Worth will recognize that they have now entered the much drier terrain that marks the beginnings of the Great Southwest.

Historically, the area carries strong connections with the High Plains. Comanches descending via the Brazos River valleys raided frontier settlements in Palo Pinto Country. Later, Anglo pioneers followed the same river forks upstream to settle the Comanches' former stronghold, the High Plains. The string of frontier forts established to protect the settlers stretches from Fort Richardson near Jacksboro southwest to Fort Concho in San Angelo. After Fort Concho, Fort Richardson and Fort Griffin (near Albany) are two of the best-preserved. Hikers and bikers will also enjoy the 10-mile Lost Creek Reservoir State Trailway, which starts at Fort Richardson State Historical Park and runs past swimming and fishing holes on Lost Creek and several area lakes.

For a beautiful drive, go north from I-20 on FM 4, the state's first designated scenic highway, which cuts through the heart of the Palo Pinto Mountains west of Mineral Wells, crosses US 180, then

continues north across the Brazos River valley.

Possum Kingdom State Park, on the Brazos River in the heart of Palo Pinto Country, offers long coves and inlets on Possum Kingdom Lake. Because of its exceptionally clear water at depths to 150 feet, the lake finds favor with scuba divers and snorkelers. For a thick slice of calm, walk the one-and-a-half-

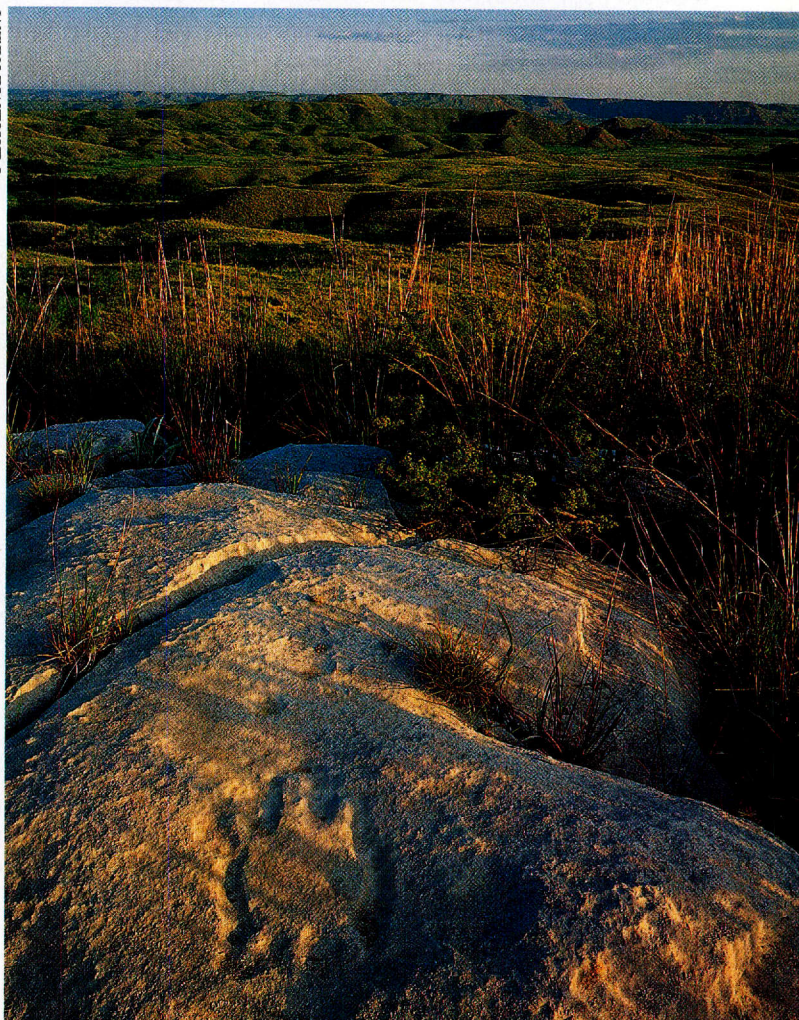
mile trail that follows the winding shoreline and then climbs a steep bluff for a grand overview of the lake. Twisted red sandstone boulders grayed by lichen stand guard on the cliffs like gargoyles.

One of the best ways to experience the unique beauty of the Palo Pinto area is by canoeing the heart of the Brazos River. Canoeists have long recognized the 20-mile stretch from Texas 16 below Possum Kingdom Dam to FM 4, with its high bluffs and abundant campsites, as one of the most scenic in the state.

Buddy Rochelle, who owns a canoe rental business on the Brazos north of the town

Sunrise reveals a turtle petroglyph at Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument. Archeologists believe the petroglyphs here are between 500 and 800 years old.

© LAURENCE PARENT



of Palo Pinto, says that some of the trout released each winter from the fish hatchery upstream manage to survive the hot Texas summers and grow long and fat in deep pools on this part of the river. "About the first week in November is when I like to go down the river," says Buddy. "The fall foliage is all pink, red, and orange, and it's the best time to see wild turkeys, deer, and bald eagles."

Nearby Lake Mineral Wells State Park, just outside Mineral Wells, preserves one of the best remnants of the Cross Timbers region. A five-mile-round-trip hiking trail (with primitive camping for backpackers) crosses canyons and upland woods of ash, post oak, and sugaryberry. Mountain bikers and equestrians have access to another 12-mile loop.

VIEWING WILDLIFE

No matter what area of the Panhandle Plains you're in, fall is ideal for wildlife-viewing. If not on many *human* travelers' lists of Top 10 vacation spots, for thousands of ducks and



The Panhandle Plains region displays its share of fall foliage. Decked out in golden leaves, wind-bent chinaberry trees along US 82, near Benjamin, compose an autumn scene.

Canada geese, a stay in the region is the waterfowl equivalent of a winter trip to the Bahamas. Ironically, though semiarid, the High Plains is a prime wetlands region, dotted with more than 19,000 shallow, circular “playa lakes” that fill after rainfall. Ducks and geese migrate south to winter on these lakes, with the perk of enjoying grain-harvest leavings in nearby fields. During fall and winter, you even find them quacking and honking away by the hundreds on the ponds in the area’s city parks.

At Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, visitors can view not only ducks and geese, but also the elegant sandhill cranes that migrate from Canada, Alaska, and Siberia. The cranes, four feet tall with an eight-foot wingspan, roost at night on a spring-fed lake in the northeast part of the preserve. Birders set up camp here each fall in order to see the cranes fly out to the grain fields at sunrise and return at sunset.

The drive south from the town of Muleshoe to the refuge provides a striking illustration of how the plains have changed since the 19th Century. The lush, irrigated crops of today give way suddenly to the dry grassland of the wildlife refuge, which has been maintained in a natural state since the 1930s. Two of the preserve’s three large playa lakes usually remain dry and covered with a coat of gleaming white alkali.

Standing in the utter silence beside one of the lakes and below one of the mesas here, you can get a sense of what the prairies once were like.

Birdwatchers also go to the plains to witness the return of the prairie chickens. Once so abundant that they provided the daily menu of railroad workers, these birds came close to extinction in the 20th Century. Now, ranchers in the Panhandle near Cana-

dian are protecting the chickens’ habitat and building blinds near their “booming grounds” so birders can watch their unusual mating ritual. Though usually so elusive that they are seldom seen, during the spring while courting, the chickens ignore human beings, says Remelle Farrar, Canadian’s community development director.

“The males blow out orange air sacs on their necks, fluff up their plumes, and make a booming sound as they fly up and throw their chests out at each other,” adds Remelle. “They’re really fun to watch.” Besides the prairie chickens, wild turkeys, beavers, deer, large prairie-dog towns, and 200 species of birds attract visitors.

Remelle directs the recently initiated Texas Prairie Rivers Program, in which some 50 ranchers controlling about 300,000 acres have agreed to provide access for wildlife-viewers. Much of

the land lies on remote stretches of rivers like the Canadian, Washita, Red, and Pease. Several of the ranches provide bed-and-breakfast or cabin accommodations. “Our landowners are looking for a way to make conservation economically feasible,” says Remelle.

Pronghorn antelopes, which favor open prairie and wheat fields, have begun to make a comeback in the Panhandle. Sightings are common near Miami and Canadian. Pheasants, introduced to the South Plains in the 1970s, prove abundant—they’re frequently spotted near grain fields on farm-to-market roads. And wild Barbary sheep, introduced from North Africa in the 1950s, have spread throughout the canyonlands.

There, in brief, is the Panhandle Plains that I love. This region may not be everyone’s kind of country, but if, like me, you like to take your serenity with a strong shot of simplicity, you just might find it to your taste. Out where Nature is reduced to the bare essentials of earth and sky, she concentrates my mind and provides an antidote to the numbing of the senses that so often comes with city life. Then, in revealing the variety of living creatures that she nurtures in this tough but beautiful land, she lifts my spirits. That’s why I’ll keep going back. ★



With three playa lakes (one is spring-fed and consistently full) and harvested grain fields nearby, the Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, south of Muleshoe, offers an ideal winter home to ducks, geese, and sandhill cranes.

Panhandle Plains

The cities may be few and far between, but it would probably take a lifetime to become familiar with all the attractions in this region. A list of some of the major ones follow. *Entrance, camping, and boating fees vary. Most of the indoor sites, as well as many of the outdoor sites, are wheelchair accessible; call ahead to be sure.*

Events

Lubbock pays homage to the rock-'n'-roll music of the '50s with the annual **Crossroads Music Festival** the first weekend in Sep. (Sep. 1-2, 2000). Chuck Berry headlines this year. Call 806/747-5232.

Turkey honors the King of Western Swing with the **Bob Wills Day Celebration** on the last Sat. in Apr. (Apr. 28, 2001). Call 806/423-1253.

Canadian's annual **Fall Foliage Festival** takes place the 3rd weekend in Oct. (Oct. 21-22, 2000). Call 806/323-6234.

Parks and Recreation Areas

Palo Duro Canyon State Park is 12 miles east of Canyon on RM 217. Visitor/interpretive center hours: Mon-Sat 9-5, Sun 1-5 (weather permitting). Call 806/488-2227.

Caprock Canyons State Park is 3 miles north of Quitaque on FM 1065. **Caprock Canyons Trailway** follows a former railway between Estelline and South Plains. Call 806/455-1492. **Queen of the Valley Tours** offers interpretive van tours of the trailway. Call 806/983-3639.

Possum Kingdom State Park is 17 miles north of Caddo on Park Rd. 33. Call 940/549-1803.

Lake Mineral Wells State Park is just east of Mineral Wells, off US 180. Call 940/328-1171.

Fort Richardson State Historical Park is on US 281, 1/2 mile south of Jacksboro. **Fort Richardson Days**, which features a military reenactment, takes place the 2nd weekend in Nov. (Nov. 11-12, 2000). The park provides access to the **Lost Creek Reservoir State Trailway**. Call 940/567-3506.

Fort Griffin State Historical Park is 15 miles north of Albany on US 283. The **Fort Griffin Fandangle**, an outdoor historical

musical, takes place the last 2 weekends in June. For reservations, call 915/762-3642 or 762-3838.

Fort Concho Natl. Historic Landmark is at 630 S. Oakes St. in San Angelo. Call 915/657-4444 or 481-2646.

Lake Meredith Natl. Recreation Area is 30 miles north of Amarillo on Texas 136. Call 806/857-3151.

Alibates Flint Quarries Natl. Monument is 6 miles south of Fritch, off Texas 136. Visits to quarry site must be ranger-guided; inquire at park headquarters in Fritch (419 E. Broadway). Tours take place at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. every day from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and by reservation. Call 806/857-3151.

Canoeing

Rochelle's Canoe Rental is 7 miles north of Palo Pinto, on FM 4 off US 180 West. *By reservation only.* Call 940/659-3341.

Wildlife Refuges and National Grasslands

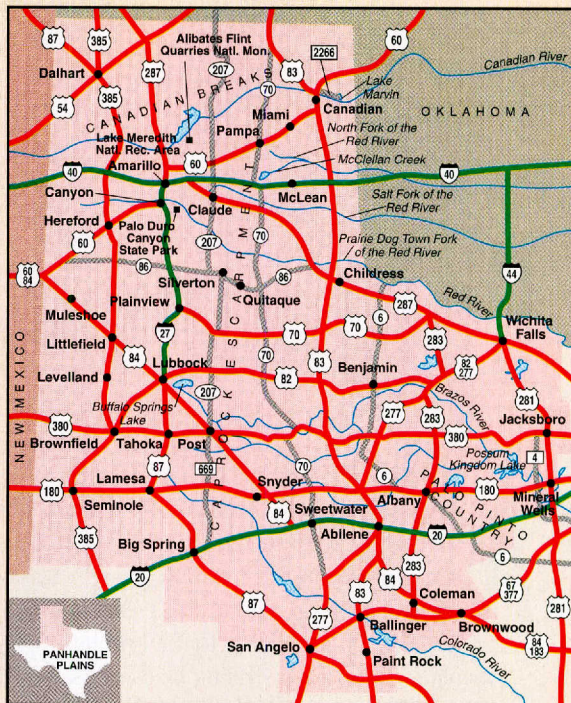
Muleshoe Natl. Wildlife Refuge is 20 miles south of Muleshoe on Texas 214. Hours (for day visitors): Mon-Fri 8-4:30. Sandhill cranes begin arriving at the end of Sep. and reach their peak numbers between Dec. and Feb. Call 806/946-3341.

Buffalo Lake Natl. Wildlife Refuge is 30 miles southeast of Amarillo on US 60. Hours (for day visitors): Daily 8-6 Oct-Mar (until 8 p.m. Apr-Sep). Call 806/499-3382.

Gene Howe Wildlife Management Area is 6 miles east of Canadian on RM 2266. Call 806/323-8642.

Lake Marvin/Black Kettle Natl. Grassland is 11 miles east of Canadian on RM 2266. Call 580/497-2143.

McClellan Creek Natl. Grassland and **Lake McClellan** are on



© KELLERBROS/PAPUS

Art Museums
Amarillo Museum of Art is on the Amarillo College campus at 2200 S. Van Buren. Hours: Tue-Fri 10-5, Sat-Sun 1-5. Call 806/371-5050.

The Old Jail Art Center is on South Second St., 1/2 block east of the courthouse in Albany. Hours: Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 2-5. Call 915/762-2269.

Prehistoric Sites
Lubbock Lake Landmark State Historical Park is just off Loop 289 near US 84 in northwest Lubbock. Hours: Tue-Sat 9-5, Sun 1-5. Call 806/765-0737.

The entrance to the

Paint Rock Indian pictograph site is off US 83 one mile north of the town of Paint Rock, which is 28 miles east of San Angelo. *Tours by appt. only year round (site is on private property).* For reservations, call 915/732-4376.

Architectural Preservation Sites

The **National Ranching Heritage Center** is on 4th St., east of Indiana Ave., in Lubbock. Hours: Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5. Call 806/742-0498.

Buffalo Gap Historic Village is 10 miles south of Abilene on FM 89. Hours: Mon-Sat 10-6, Sun 12-6. Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas days. Call 915/572-3365.

Books

Elmer Kelton's carefully researched historical novels, *The Day the Cowboys Quit* and *The Wolf and the Buffalo*, capture the true history and spirit of the plains. Three of the best nonfiction books on the region are *El Llano Estacado: Exploration and Imagination on the High Plains of Texas and New Mexico, 1536-1860* by John Miller Morris; *Caprock Canyons: Journeys into the Heart of the Southern Plains* by Dan Flores; and *Goodbye to a River, A Narrative* by John Graves.

RM 2477, 3 miles north of I-40, and 50 miles east of Amarillo. Call 806/779-2590.

For information about the **Texas Prairie Rivers Program** or about wildlife-viewing on Panhandle ranches, call the Canadian Chamber of Commerce at 806/323-5397.

Historical Museums

Texas' largest historical museum, the **Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum**, is at 2401 4th Ave. in Canyon. Hours: Mon-Sat 9-5 (until 6 Memorial Day-Labor Day), Sun 1-6. Call 806/651-2244.

The Museum of the Llano Estacado is at 1900 W. 8th St. in Plainview. Hours: Mon-Fri 9-5 year round (plus Sat-Sun 1-5 Apr-Nov). Call 806/296-4735.

The XIT Museum, showcasing the history of the XIT Ranch, is at 108 E. 5th in Dalhart. Hours: Tue-Sat 9-5. Call 806/244-5390.

The Devil's Rope Museum and the **Route 66 Exhibit for Texas Museum**, which feature the history of barbed wire and of Route 66, respectively, are at 100 Kingsley St. in McLean, 75 miles east of Amarillo. Hours: Tue-Sat 10-4 most of the year (winter hours vary). Call 806/779-2225.



Epiphany *on the* Prairie

BY RANDY
MALLORY

AS A KID WITH MY FAMILY, driving to Dallas from our home in Tyler brought an epiphany about halfway there. One minute, tall pines and oaks flew by outside the car window. The next thing I knew, the view opened to a carpet of black earth, fresh-plowed for cotton or corn and spreading to the horizon.

Traveling across these rolling blacklands still stirs me with a feeling of openness. Maybe that's how early-19th-Century pioneers felt as they emerged from Eastern forests onto the grassland prairies that stretched from Texas to Canada. That chest-high sea of green must've seemed awesome, but the underlying soil proved demanding.

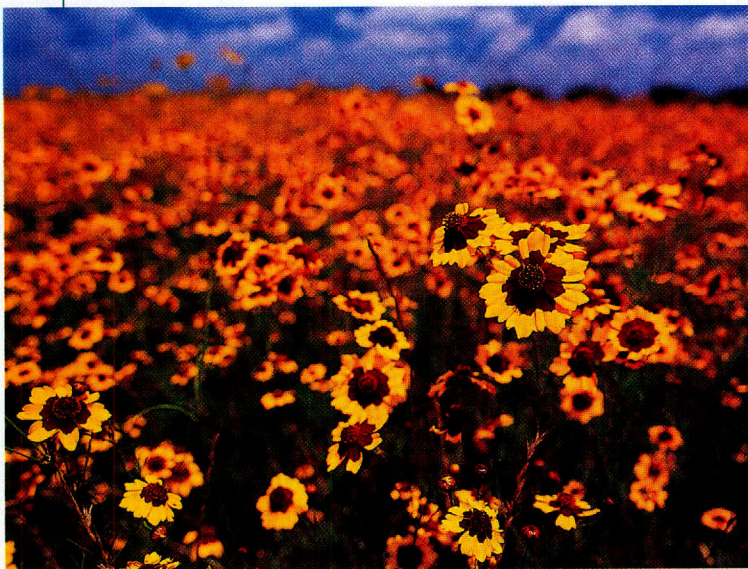
The black color came from eons of carbon accumulating as grasses and other organic materials decayed. Its heavy clay content shrank when dry and swelled when wet, soil so fickle that farmers called it "dinner bell" dirt: dirt too wet to plow before dinner and too dry after dinner.

Take a whirlwind
tour of dinosaurs,
downtowns, and
heavenly delights.

Yet blackland fertility paid off handsomely. Cotton became king. Railroads arrived. And the land fulfilled its promise of wealth as towns sprouted and thrived on the prairie.

During the 1930s, erratic weather (back-to-back drought and flooding) prompted decades of dam building, which added major lakes to the prairies.

Today, the 57-county "Prairies and Lakes" region comprises the middle of Texas, spanning 46,000 square miles (roughly the size of Pennsylvania). Home to 970 towns—small cozy communities and booming big cities—the region remains largely rural. Considering its rich natural and cultural heritage (and a population of 6.7 million), it's no wonder the area proffers a bumper crop of interesting and exciting things to see and do...plus a whopping 21,440 miles of highway to explore.



© JEREMY WOODHOUSE

[ABOVE] *Coreopsis gild* a field off of Interstate 45.

[FACING PAGE] Rolling blacklands epitomize Texas' Prairies and Lakes region, which remains largely rural, as this misty, pastoral scene near Lake Texoma attests.



Washington County

Indeed, my whirlwind tour of the region begins in one of my favorite exploring grounds, Washington County, with drives so scenic it's fun getting lost.

Right off, history buffs like me head for Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park and its reconstructed Independence Hall, the "Birthplace of Texas." Standing in the frame building, I sense the winds of change that delegates stirred up on March 2, 1836, by declaring Texas free from Mexico.

History comes alive—literally—at the park's new Barrington Living History Farm. Built around the 1844 home of Anson Jones, last president of the Texas Republic, the working farmstead re-creates life in the 1850s. Interpretive staff dressed in period clothing carry out typical farm chores—cooking, gardening, livestock grooming—as they answer visitors' questions.

Also in the park, the Star of the Republic Museum, which just renovated its first floor, has added new exhibits that chronicle Lone Star history from the long era of Native Americans to early statehood.



© RANDY MALLORY

At the Barrington Living History Farm, costumed interpreter Bonnie Roggensees discusses life in the 1850s with Rick and Carolyn Reed of New Braunfels.

George Bush Presidential Library and Museum

A short hop to College Station brings history up to date. Dedicated in 1997, the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum houses millions of



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The George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station chronicles the life of our 41st president—from video footage of his first steps in 1925 to cowboy boots commemorating a parachute jump in 1999.

documents and photographs and thousands of artifacts. Elaborate exhibits depict President Bush's life, with pivotal events—such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 1990 Gulf War—getting special treatment. Among displayed gifts from the American people, I like the cowboy boots commemorating Bush's daring 1999 parachute jump, and the pink dog costume given to Barbara Bush in 1990 for First Pooch, Millie.

Round Top and Painted Churches

South of Washington County, I revisit Round Top, a laid-back hoibed of history and culture. Nineteenth-Century buildings grace two pioneer villages—Henkel Square and Winedale. But many Round Top devotees come for classical performances—music at the International Festival-Institute and theater at Winedale's Shakespeare Festival (see "No Holds Bard," July 2000). To accommodate overnights, Round Top is rife with bed and breakfasts, many in historic homes.

Marveling at this busy little place, I

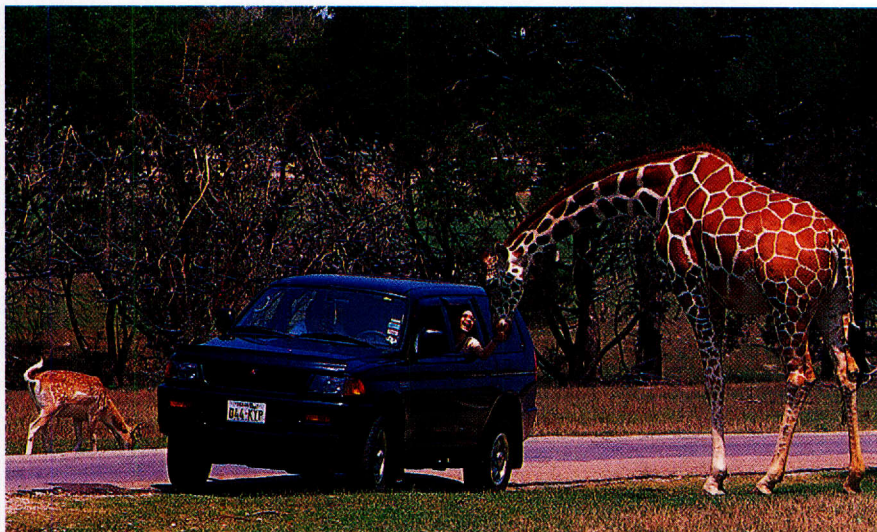
© J. GRIFFIS SMITH



Swiss-born artist Godfrey Flury painted 66 types of flowers, vines, and shrubs on the ceiling of Prah's Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, dedicated in 1895.



J. GRIFFITH SMITH



© RANDY MALLORY

From the protectors to the protected. Colt Paterson revolvers, silver badges fashioned from Mexican pesos, and Billy the Kid's 1873 Winchester carbine number among the memorabilia you'll find at Waco's Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum. At right, a rubber-necking reticulated giraffe leans in for an up-close view of visitors to Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, near Glen Rose.

stroll into the 38-seat Royers Round Top Cafe...only to find another marvel: racks of scrumptious pies—buttermilk, chocolate chip, and pecan—ready to eat or ship wherever. Houston exiles Karen and Bud Royer have turned flaky crusts into a cottage industry, complete with Web-site sales. The Royers also serve up a sophisticated dinner menu that's more big-city than tiny-town.

Heavenly sweets under my belt, heavenly sights are on my mind...at Fayette County's gallery of painted churches. Churches at Dubina, Ammannsville, High Hill, and Praha (see "Gilded Glory and Heavenly Hues," October 1999) lie a short drive apart, amid a pastoral world of farms accented by working windmills. The serene surrounds make stepping into the ornate churches even more inspiring. Intricate murals painted on ceilings, walls, and altars interplay with vaulted arches, faux-marble pillars, and stained-glass windows. The Gothic sanctuaries reflect the European heritage of the area's settlers.

Salado and Waco

A shrine of a different sort lies in the heart of the region at Waco—the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum.

On the way, I detour to the shopping-and-weekend getaway of Salado for another culinary fix. I'm addicted to the

food and old-fashioned service of the venerable Stagecoach Inn, where waitresses still recite the day's menu from memory. It sounds like mom's Sunday best: fried chicken or baked ham, hush-puppies, tomato aspic or banana fritters, salad, and homemade peach cobbler. A stage stop on the Chisholm Trail in the 1860s, the inn once hosted notable generals Sam Houston, George Armstrong Custer, and Robert E. Lee, plus notorious train robber Sam Bass.

The man who hunted Bass down, John B. Jones, looms large, as do other Texas Rangers, at their namesake museum in Waco. Artifacts and photographs chronicle their exploits, beginning with the ranging companies of citizen-soldiers of the Texas Republic. A veritable arsenal of historic weaponry (from Bowie knives to Bonnie and Clyde's sawed-off shotgun) lines the walls, mixed with tidbits of tough-guy trivia. I discovered, for example, that the Rangers' trademark badges originally were carved from silver Mexican coins, a tradition continued today

Granbury and Glen Rose

Texas abounds in old-timey squares centered around historic courthouses. The best of the lot, as voted by *Texas Highways* readers in 1998, is Granbury. Walking its square is like perusing a library shelf packed with inter-

esting titles. Here are the 1886 Granbury Opera House (year-round theater) and Granbury Live (professional musical productions). There's the 1893 Nutt House, whose early-1970s restoration got Granbury's award-winning preservation bandwagon rolling. (It now houses a hotel and fine restaurant, with horse-drawn-carriage rides waiting out front.) All around the square, visitors browse in more than 40 gift and antique shops.

From Granbury, the 17 miles to Glen Rose takes me back 100 million years to Dinosaur Valley State Park. Exhibits at the entrance show how 200 or so dinosaur tracks became preserved in the Paluxy River's rocky bottom. When park ranger Tommy Herr shows me four tracks found only last year, I realize an irony: Both floods and drought benefit park visitors, because erosion uncovers new tracks, and dry conditions reveal tracks otherwise submerged.

Texas' usually mild weather agrees with the 1,100 exotic, threatened, and endangered animals thriving down the road at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center. A scenic nine-and-a-half-mile drive through the park's 1,500 acres brings me up-close and personal with addax (African antelopes), Grant's zebras, and reticulated giraffes. Next visit, I'll try Fossil Rim's safari-like guided tour or a behind-the-scenes look at its accredited breeding programs.



J. GRIFFIS SMITH

Hari Hara: The Supreme Hindu Deity (ca. A.D. 675-700) from Cambodia is among the works at Fort Worth's world-class Kimbell Art Museum.

Fort Worth

Now I'm off to the Fort Worth Zoo, home of the state's first koala exhibit. They're cute critters, alright, but slow as paint drying. I prefer the lively antics of nearby kangaroos and wallabies or those longtime zoo favorites, the primates. A silver-back gorilla grooms himself beside a waterfall, as chimpanzees and colobus monkeys romp through the trees. With natural habitats, shade trees, and flowing water, the zoo has been ranked among the nation's top zoos by the *Los Angeles Times* and *USA Today*.

Fort Worth's nearby Cultural District gets rave reviews for highbrow venues—including the Kimbell Art Museum, the Amon Carter Museum (closed until next fall for major expansion; in the meantime, a downtown location features part of the collection), and the Modern Art Museum. The Museum of Science & History and the Fort Worth Botanic Garden add natural touches to



J. GRIFFIS SMITH

Cowpokes and city folks alike flock to Billy Bob's Texas, the "World's Largest Honky-Tonk," in Fort Worth's Stockyards National Historic District. Here, Mike Bubel snaps a photo of Jackie McCallum atop a "bucking bull."

the district. And the Will Rogers Memorial Center (equestrian and livestock shows) brings a Western flair.

If Fort Worth is "Where the West Begins," Step 1 starts at the Stockyards National Historic District, once a livestock-packing and -shipping hub. Raised sidewalks wind past eateries, drinkeries, hostleries, and shops with an Old West twang. A cowboy leads his saddled Longhorn, named Shiloh, down Exchange Avenue, posing for pictures with tourists—except when the street clears for the twice-daily Longhorn cattle drive. The Stockyards Station features still more shops and restaurants and doubles as a depot for the *Tarantula* train, which makes excursions from Grapevine and short trips to 8th Avenue. On weekends, rodeo action fills the 1908 Cowtown Coliseum, and Billy Bob's Texas, the "World's Largest Honky-Tonk," showcases country-music stars.

Sounds and especially tastes head for the border a few blocks south, at Joe T. Garcia's (another favorite of *TH* readers). This Tex-Mex restaurant has the confidence to serve only two choices at night—fajitas or enchiladas. They're that good. The pleasant outdoor patio at

Joe T's—with mariachi music, flowing fountains, and tropical plants—reminds me of garden restaurants in Mexico's colonial interior.

Arlington

Midway between Fort Worth and Dallas lies Arlington and its three consummate family-fun parks. On the observation deck of the orange oil derrick of Six Flags Over Texas, I find a bird's-eye view of the amusement mania below. Lines at two of the state's premier rollercoasters—the Texas Giant (wooden and old-fashioned) and Mr. Freeze (steel and state-of-the-art)—assure me that thrills are still the name of the game at this 221-acre theme park (see "Roller Coastering Across Texas," May 2000). Across Interstate 30, I see wet thrill-seekers in queue for the Black Hole at the water park Six Flags Hurricane Harbor. The thought of speeding down a 500-foot-long water slide *in total darkness* sends chills up my spine...which I guess is the point.

I find a big-league baseball thrill nearby at The Ballpark in Arlington. The Texas Rangers play out of town today, so I take the guided tour of the dugout,



Water, water everywhere! Lake Texoma, shown here at Eisenhower State Park, sprawls over 89,000 acres of Texas and Oklahoma and offers some of the best fishing in the nation.

clubhouse, press box, and a luxury suite. As my group walks the inner concourse and onto the field, a sea of real green grass welcomes us. In right field, the canopied Home Run Porch gives fans a cool, shady spot to snag homers. Architect David Schwarz gave the classic park a sense of place by using granite from Marble Falls and bas-relief sculptures of Texas scenes. The \$191 million, 49,232-seat facility also sports the Legends of the Game Baseball Museum and Learning Center, where fans find memorabilia from greats like Babe Ruth and Willie Mays.

the West End Historic District. Site of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, it has become a mecca for tourists from around the world. They respectfully gather at The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza—the former Texas School Book Depository, where Lee Harvey Oswald fired his shots—to survey the tragic Elm Street scene below. Through detailed exhibits, the museum helps them ponder “who really did it.” Across Elm and two blocks away, visitors stop at the newly refurbished Kennedy Memorial to pay tribute.

Most of the West End, however, is just



The elegant Elizabeth Crockett Bed and Breakfast, in a Queen Anne-style home built in 1880, sits one block west of Granbury's bustling town square.

Dallas

When I was growing up, Dallas was the “Big City” of my imagination. Big D still impresses me, especially its central-city renaissance.

Downtown's most compelling attraction remains Dealey Plaza in

for fun. Renovated 1920s warehouses brim with boutiques, artisans, music clubs, restaurants, and The Dallas World Aquarium (see last month's story). “Serious fun” unfolds nearby in the Arts District, where the Dallas Museum of Art, the Dallas Theater Center's Arts District Theater, and the magnificent Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center explore the old and new of the visual and performing arts.

Just east of downtown, Fair Park, a 277-acre National Historic Landmark, claims the nation's largest collection of 1930s Art Deco architecture, built for the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition. It also hosts an amalgam of eight museums and six performance halls. This time of year, Fair Park overflows with rides, exhibits, livestock, and creative arts entries during the State Fair of Texas (September 29-October 22, 2000), the nation's largest state fair.

Lakes and Prairies

Wherever you go in this region, a boating and fishing lake seems just a line's cast away. Top recreational lakes include Lake Texoma, Ray Roberts Lake, and Lake Somerville, each featur-

Prairies and Lakes

The Prairies and Lakes region's picturesque towns and vibrant cities offer diverse attractions. For details on admission or specific performance dates, times, and prices, contact each venue. Most attractions are wheelchair accessible; call to be sure. For more on state parks, write to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin 78744; 800/792-1112. Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us. For information on lakes (only a few are shown on map) and other attractions, contact the local chamber of commerce.

Washington

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park, which includes the **Barrington Living History Farm**, lies 8 miles southwest of Navasota off Texas 105 and FM 1155. Hours: Daily 8 a.m.-sundown. Write to Box 305, Washington 77880; 936/878-2214. On Sep. 16-17, 2000, the Barrington Farm hosts an old-fashioned corn-shucking bee. **Star of the Republic Museum** hours: Daily 10-5; closed Thanksgiving Day and Dec. 25-Jan. 1. Write to Box 317, Washington 77880; 936/878-2461. Web site: www.starmuseum.org.

College Station

George Bush Presidential Library and Museum is on the southwest corner of Texas A&M Univ. campus at 1000 George Bush Dr. West (77845). Hours: Mon-Sat 9:30-5, Sun 12-5. Call 979/260-9552. Web site: bushlibrary.tamu.edu.

Round Top

To reach Round Top (area code 979, zip code 78954), take US 290 to Texas 237, and go south 7 miles.

On the square is **Henkel Square** (Box 82, Round Top; 249-3308; open Thu-Sun 12-5) and **Royers Round Top Cafe** (Box 207; 877/866-PIES; open Thu 11-9, Fri-Sat 11-9:30, Sun 12-7, and Labor Day 12-3; Web site: www.royersroundtopcafe.com). **Winedale Historical Park** (Box 11, Round Top; 278-3530) opens Mon-Fri 8-5 for self-guided tours (guided tours available by appt. Sat 10-6 and Sun 12-6 May-Oct, and Sat 9-5 and Sun 12-5 Nov-Apr). The 30th season of **Shakespeare at Winedale** (512/471-8367;

Web site: www.shakespeare-winedale.org) sponsors *As You Like It* (performed by actors from the London stage) on Oct. 21, 2000, at 7:30. The **International Festival-Institute** (Box 89, Round Top; 249-3129; Web site: www.festival-hill.org) features a museum forum Sep. 23-24, 2000. *American Clocks: 200 Years of Marking Time*. At 3 p.m. on Sep. 30, 2000, the concert hall presents Ensemble Amarcord, a German vocal quintet.

Schulenburg

On I-10 halfway between San Anto-

nio and Houston, Schulenburg's main attractions include the 4 painted churches at nearby Ammannsville, Dubina, High Hill, and Praha. Contact the chamber of commerce (101-B Kessler, Schulenburg 78956; 979/743-4514; Web site: www.schulenburgchamber.org) for a map and details on guided tours.

Salado

On I-35 between Temple and Austin, historic Salado is home to the **Stagecoach Inn** restaurant and hotel, at #1 Main St., Salado 76571 (254/947-5111 or, for reservations, 800/732-8994). Dining

room hours: Daily 11-4 and 5-9. For information on local shopping, contact the Salado Business Assn., Box 1161, Salado 76571; 254/947-5040. Web site: www.salado.com.

Waco

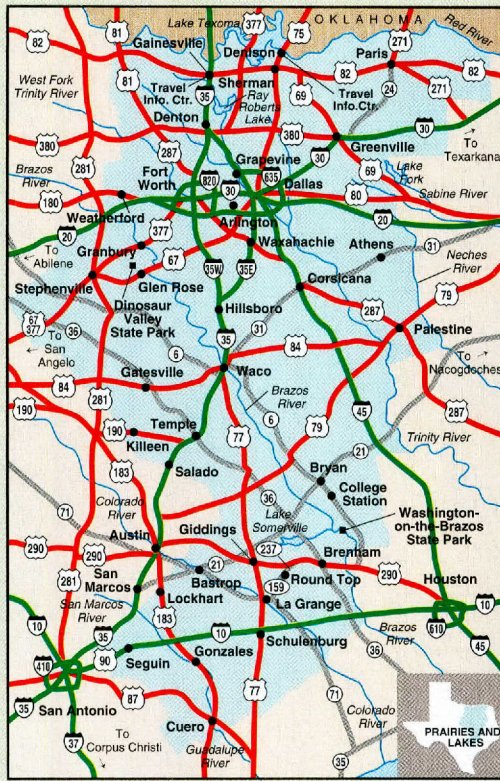
The Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum is in Fort Fisher Park (exit 335B on I-35). Hours: Daily 9-5. Write to Box 2570, Waco 76702-2570; 254/750-8631. Web site: www.texasranger.org. For information on Waco's other museums, write to the Waco CVB, Box 2570, Waco 76702-2570; 254/750-8696 or 800/922-6386. Web site: www.wacocvb.com.

Granbury

Granbury (area code 817) offers many attractions. The **Granbury Opera House** (573-9191; Web site: www.granburyoperahouse.org) presents *Fiddler on the Roof* Aug. 10-Sep. 4, 2000, and *The Cemetery Club* Sep. 8-Oct. 1, 2000. **Granbury Live** (573-0303; Web site: www.granburylive.com) stages *Lost in the Fifties* July 3-Sep. 24, 2000, and *Jukebox Gold, 6 Plays 25¢* Sep. 29-Nov. 19, 2000. Located in the Nutt House is the **Nutt House Hotel** (279-9457; Web site: www.2.itexas.net/nutthouse) and **Hennington's Cafe** (573-8400). For horse-drawn carriage rides, call **Granbury Carriage Co.** (279-6272). For details on shopping, B&Bs, and more, contact the Granbury CVB, 100 N. Crockett, Granbury 76048; 800/950-2212. Web site: www.granburytx.com.

Glen Rose

To reach **Dinosaur Valley State Park** (Box 396, Glen Rose 76043; 254/897-4588) from Glen Rose, take US 67 west for 4 miles to



ing shoreline state parks, as well as Lake Fork, traditionally one of the nation's top trophy-bass fishing spots.

In Athens, aquarium exhibits in the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center display Texas' 42 native species of freshwater fish in natural settings (see "Reeling 'Em In," June 1999). Even a novice like

me oohs and ahhs during the dive show, as a diver feeds the biggest largemouth bass in captivity, a 19- to 20-pound behemoth named Texas Star.

I find a subtler sense of "Wow!" at the state's largest protected remnant of blackland prairie, the Nature Conservancy's Clymer Meadow, near Greenville. As I sit

on the hilltop porch of the Conservancy office with manager Jim Eidson, a cold rain blows through. "With adequate rain, our grasses grow five feet tall or more," says Jim, gazing over 500 rolling acres never touched by plow. Big and little bluestem, yellow indiagrass, eastern gamagrass, and switchgrass thrive here,

FM 205, and take a right. Continue about 4 miles to Park Rd. 59, then go one mile. Hours: Daily 8 a.m.-10 p.m. **Fossil Rim Wildlife Center** is at 2155 CR 2008, Glen Rose 76043; 254/897-2960. Web site: www.fossilrim.org. Go about 3 miles southwest of Glen Rose on US 67, and follow the signs. Hours: Daily 9 a.m. until 2 hours before sunset. Call for information on guided tours, weekend events, the Foothills Safari Camp, and the Lodge at Fossil Rim.

Fort Worth

The area code for Fort Worth is 817. The Stockyards' zip code is 76106.

For **Stockyards Natl. Historic District** information, write to the North Fort Worth Business Assn., 131 E. Exchange Ave., Ste. 100-B; 624-4741 or 800/433-5747. Web site: www.fortworthstockyards.org. Events include the **Stockyards Championship Rodeo**, Sep. 1-2, 8-9, 22-23, and 29-30, 2000, and **Pioneer Days**, Sep. 15-17, 2000. For details on shopping in the **Stockyards Station**, write to 130 E. Exchange Ave. (625-9715; Web site: www.stockyardsstation.com). The **Tarantula Railroad** runs a Wed-Sun schedule from Grapevine to Stockyards Station (and to 8th Ave.). For times and rates, write to 140 E. Exchange Ave. (625-RAIL; Web site: www.tarantula-train.com). The **Cowtown Coliseum**, 121 E. Exchange (888-COWTOWN; Web site: www.cowtowncoliseum.com), features a rodeo Fri-Sat at 8 p.m. and a Wild West show Sat-Sun at 2:30 and 4:30 (June-Aug and on holiday weekends). Also in the Stockyards,

Billy Bob's Texas (2520 Rodeo Plaza; 624-7117; Web site: www.billybobstexas.com) opens Mon-Sat 11 a.m.-2 a.m., Sun noon-2 a.m. Call or check the Web site for show schedules and prices.

Joe T. Garcia's Mexican Restaurant is at 2201 N. Commerce St.; 626-4356. Web site: www.joets.com. Hours: Mon-Thu 11-2:30 and 5-10, Fri-Sat 11-11, Sun 11-10.

Many attractions are concentrated in the Cultural District, including: the **Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth** (1309 Montgomery St.; 738-9215. Web site: www.mamfw.org. Hours: Tue-Fri 10-5, Sat 11-5, Sun 12-5); the **Fort Worth Museum of Science & History** (1501 Montgomery St.; 255-9300. Web site: www.fwmuseum.org. Hours: Mon-Thu 9-5:30, Fri-Sat 9-8, Sun 12-5:30; call for Omni and planetarium times); the **Amon Carter Museum** (closed until 2001 for renovations; the Carter Downtown, at 500 Commerce St., features part of the collection; 817/738-1933. Web site: www.cartermuseum.org); the **Kimbell Art Museum** (3333 Camp Bowie Blvd.; 332-8451. Web site: www.kimbellart.org. Hours: Tue-Thu and Sat 10-5, Fri 12-8, Sun 12-5); the **Fort Worth Zoo** (1989 Colonial Pkwy; 871-7050. Web site: www.fortworthzoo.com. Hours: Daily 10-5, open until 6 on Sat-Sun Apr-Oct); the **Fort Worth Botanic Garden** (3220 Botanic Garden Blvd.; call for hours, 871-7686); and the **Will Rogers Memorial Center** (3300 W. Lancaster Ave.; 871-8150; call for events schedule. Web site: www.fortworth.com/willrog.htm).

Arlington

Six Flags Over Texas is at I-30 and Texas 360. Write to Box 90191, Arlington 76004; 817/640-8900. Web site: www.sixflags.com/texas. Hours beginning Aug. 19: Sat 10-8, Sun 11-7, except Sep. 2-4, when hours are 10-8.

Hurricane Harbor (1800 E. Lamar Blvd., Arlington 76006; 817/265-3356. Web site: www.sixflags.com/hurricaneharbordallas) is across I-30 from Six Flags. Hours beginning Aug. 19 until season ends on Sep. 4: Fri-Sat (and Labor Day) 10:30-6.

The Ballpark in Arlington is at 1000 Ballpark Way (817/273-5222; Web site: www.texasrangers.com). Call 817/273-5098 for details on Ballpark tours; no tours on game days. The **Legends of the Game Baseball Museum and Learning Center** (817/273-5600) opens Mon-Sat 9-6:30, Sun 12-4.

Dallas

The area code for listed Dallas attractions is 214.

For general information on the **West End Historic District** (and on events such as the annual West End Cattle Drive, Sep. 9, 2000, from 11-11), write to the West End Assn., 2200 N. Lamar St., Ste. 110, Dallas 75202; 741-7185. Web site: www.dallaswestend.org. The **Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza** (411 Elm St., Dallas 75202; 214/747-6660. Web site: www.jfk.org) opens daily 9-6. The **John F. Kennedy Memorial Plaza**, at Market and Main, is across Elm St. and 2 blocks away from The Sixth Floor Museum. **The Dallas World**

Aquarium is at 1801 N. Griffin, Dallas 75202; 214/720-2224. Web site: www.dwazoo.com. Hours: Daily 10-5; closed Thanksgiving and Christmas days.

Dallas' Arts District features the **Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center** (2301 Flora St. at Pearl St., Dallas 75201; 670-3600); the **Dallas Museum of Art** (1717 N. Harwood St., Dallas 75201; 922-1200. Web site: www.dm-art.org. Hours: Tue-Sun 11-5; open until 9 on Thu); and the **Dallas Theater Center's** Arts District Theater, at 2401 Flora St. at Fairmount (write to 3636 Turtle Creek Blvd., Dallas 75219-5598; 526-8210. Web site: www.dallastheatercenter.org).

Fair Park is at 1300 Robert B. Cullum Blvd. at Grand Ave. For a list of museums and events, write to Box 159090, Dallas 75315; 670-8400; info line 421-9600. Web site: www.fairparkdallas.com. Fair Park hosts the **State Fair of Texas** Sep. 29-Oct. 22, 2000 (Box 150009, Dallas 75315; 565-9931). Web site: www.bigtex.com.

Athens

The **Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center**, at 5550 FM 2495, Athens 75751 (903/676-2277), opens Tue-Sat 9-4, Sun 1-4. Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fish/infish.

Greenville

For directions to and guided group tours of **Clymer Meadow** prairie, write to the Texas Nature Conservancy, Box 26, Celeste 75423; 903/568-4139. Web site: www.texasnature.org.

as do 250 or so other species of plants, many flowering. Jim says some of the preserve's native grasses are hundreds of years old, and that the land looks much as it did when pioneer Jim Clymer set it aside as a hay meadow in the 1850s.

That's about the time Frederick Law Olmsted emerged from East Texas'

forests onto the blackland prairie on assignment as a newspaper correspondent. Later recognized as the founder of American landscape architecture and the designer of New York City's Central Park, Olmsted described the experience in his 1857 *A Journey Through Texas*: "We came out suddenly, as if a curtain

had risen, upon a broad prairie, reaching, in swells like the ocean after a great storm, to the horizon before us."

I ponder Olmsted's observation as bison graze on a rise in Clymer Meadow. Childhood memories of my own prairie epiphanies come rushing back, and the kid in me can't help but smile. ★



HILL
COUNTRY

Slow down! You're in the **HILL • COUNTRY**

BY
SUSAN KIRR

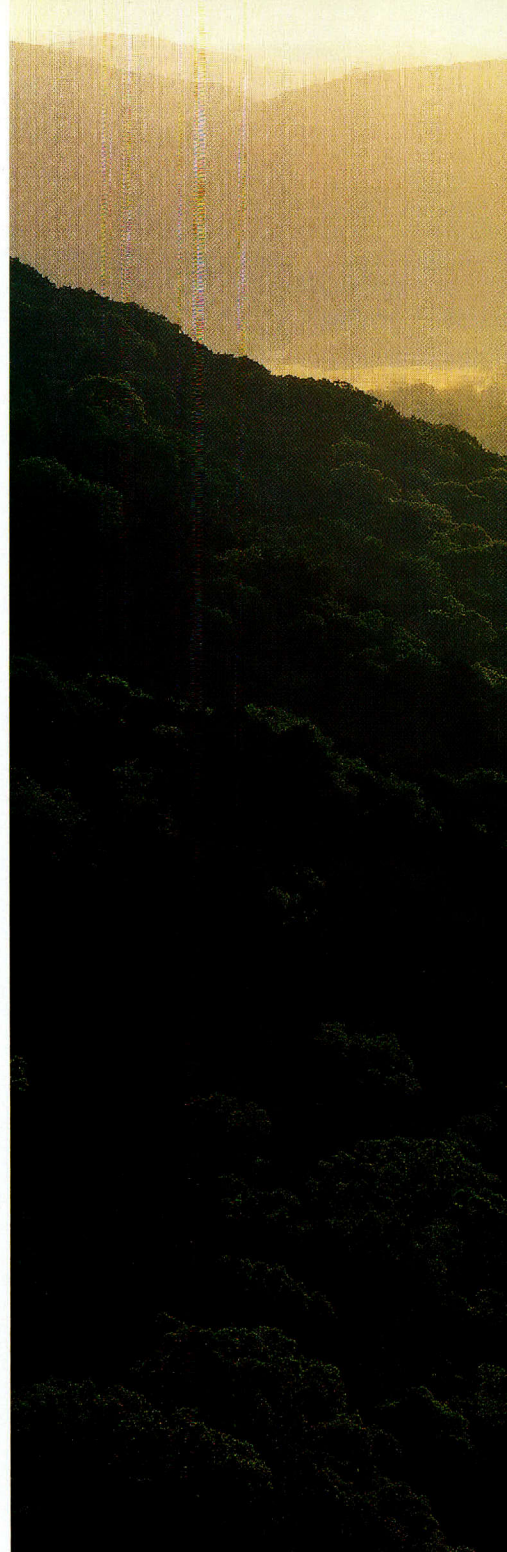
If you approach the Texas Hill Country from the north, you inevitably reach a plateau, and after a quick farewell to the flatness behind, you begin to penetrate a cozy quilt of undulating hills, wooded bluffs, and stony cliffs. If you approach from Austin, well, you're already in the thick of it, my friend. And if you approach from the west, miles upon miles of arid plains will gradually give way to the fecundity of the highlands. Turn off the cell phone, ditch the map, and ease your foot off the accelerator. Because if you drive too fast, you won't be able to smell the wildflowers.

When you pass into the Hill Country, something happens. The air is sweet, and it smells good. The spaces in between start to become more interesting than the objects themselves. People move about calmly, unhurried. They have time to chat, to share a curious tidbit you may never have thought to ask about. Life slows down to a human scale.



© LYNN HERRMANN

At Bierschwale Estate (830/990-9970), one of more than 300 bed and breakfasts in Fredericksburg, you can slow down, indeed.



The mellow pace of life in the Hill Country may very well work its spell on you.



© LAURENCE PARENT

Undulating hills give us thrills. Consider this consummate Hill Country landscape at sunrise in Real County.

Bandera makes an excellent jumping-off point to explore this inviting region. This itty-bitty town, nestled on the banks of the Medina River amidst a comfortable cowboy culture, lies right in the heart of the Hill Country. With a population barely over 1,000 and an old-fashioned main street that just about hits its stride before it quits, Bandera's amiable small-

town feel is genuine. Established as a Western frontier settlement in the mid-19th Century, the community and county were named for nearby historic Bandera Pass.

Though Texas boasts an abundance of bed-and-breakfast inns, perhaps the finest I've encountered in the state is here in Bandera. Hackberry Lodge

stands just one block from Main Street, but it feels like its own little universe. Several buildings on a rustic 1850s estate have been converted into a small-town paradise. Situated on three acres, Hackberry Lodge lures weary travelers with romantic boudoirs, a sprawling front porch, a small library, an inviting backyard patio, and the Sit-n-Bull,

a cute little building used exclusively for serving guests breakfast.

Bandera has always been cowboy country, but when the Depression struck, area ranchers got the idea to lasso a few “dudes” to entertain tourists and keep the ranches solvent. Hence the proliferation of the local dude ranches. Today, 10 such spreads dot the hillsides (see “Dude-ing It Up in Texas,” June 2000).

A German couple, Ralph and Iris Kirchner, own the thoroughly charming, 225-acre Running-R Ranch, which lies adjacent to Hill Country State Natural Area, one of the few state parks that

allows horseback riding. Guests can saddle up and explore the ranch, then delve into an extensive, untainted wilderness right next door. In addition to riding, diversions such as hiking, swimming, cookouts, and cowboy singers make the Running-R a popular vacation spot.

West of Bandera, you’ll discover some of the Hill Country’s most spectacular scenery. Ranch Road 337 snakes around hairpin turns through dense thickets of cedar as it winds west from Medina through Vanderpool and on to Leakey and Camp Wood. Crisscrossing these ridges, which remain largely undeveloped, yields

myriad views from either side of the road. Here, nature is reduced to an elemental state: the sensuous smell of burning mesquite, turkey vultures feasting on carrion, yellow and purple wildflowers dancing fleetingly in the wind.

Follow US 83 north of Leakey toward Texas 39, another country drive that offers up a different set of pleasures. Texas 39 twists back and forth over the Guadalupe River, flanked by rustic lodges, quaint cottages, and summer resorts. Lush lawns and flower beds spill down the hillsides, ending in the lazy tranquility of the river. As you approach Hunt, tow-



Near Fredericksburg, a field of red poppies dazzles the eye at Wildseed Farms, home to more than 80 varieties of wildflowers.

© LYNN HERRMANN

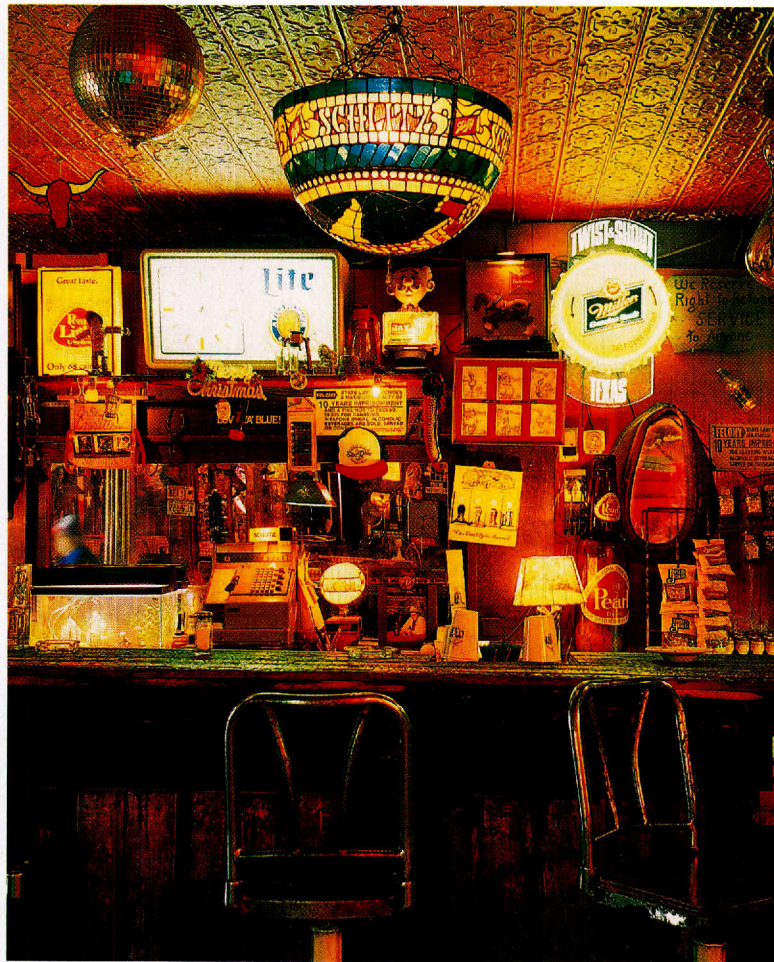


J. GRIFFIS SMITH

[ABOVE] Pleased to meat you. Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que in Llano smokes delicious pork, brisket, chicken, sausage, and cabrito.



MICHAEL AMADOR



© WILLARD CLAY

[ABOVE] Arkey Blue's Silver Dollar Saloon in Bandera offers an authentic slice of Western honky-tonk heaven. [LEFT] Gunfighters lend an air of *High Noon*-style drama to the streets of Brackettville's Alamo Village.

ering cypress trees form a feathery canopy over the road, providing a respite from the sun.

Southwest of Hunt, Ranch Road 187 draws you straight down toward Vanderpool and Lost Maples State Natural Area, a precious corner of the Hill Country. Here, the shimmering red, orange, and gold colors of fall provide a salve to any homesick northern souls longing for brilliant reminders of childhood autumns. As one of the few places in the state where bigtooth maples thrive, Lost Maples inhabits a special arboreal niche in the Texas landscape. Fall arrives late here, so set out in November, when the leaves usually hit their peak. The East Trail, a four-mile loop that creeps along the Sabinal River, will take you through gorgeous stands of these trees, then ascend high up on a

ridge, affording an expansive vista of the park and the river.

Pushing out to the farthest southwestern reaches of the Hill Country, you'll come upon Brackettville and its nearby Western attraction, Alamo Village. In the late 1950s, when John Wayne went hunting for a place to shoot his big-screen epic, *The Alamo*, local rancher Happy Shahan persuaded him to forget about Mexico and consider Happy's 30-square-mile spread just outside Brackettville (see "Alamo Village," May 1999). With the Duke on board, Shahan and a crew of thousands built a complete replica of the Alamo and surrounding village, using quarried Texas limestone and real adobe bricks. Alamo Village would become Texas' very own backlot.

Today, crews making movies and com-

mercials still inhabit the village from time to time, but it's mostly tourists who haunt the Old West town. Kids love poking around the livery stable, stagecoach depot, Merchant's Hotel, parson's house, and saloon. In the cantina, sample the house specialty, Portuguese tortillas, which are crispy strips of corn tortillas doused with a meaty enchilada sauce.

In Brackettville itself, Fort Clark Springs (see "Chill Out," August 2000) makes a nice stopping point for a picnic, a round of golf, or a tour of Fort Clark, a former military enclave. The post, closed in 1946, reopened later as a recreational and retirement facility, complete with homes, a restaurant, and a motel. Some post buildings date to the 1870s and 1880s, others to the 1930s and 1940s. With its frontier history in evidence, Fort Clark retains the charm of earlier eras.

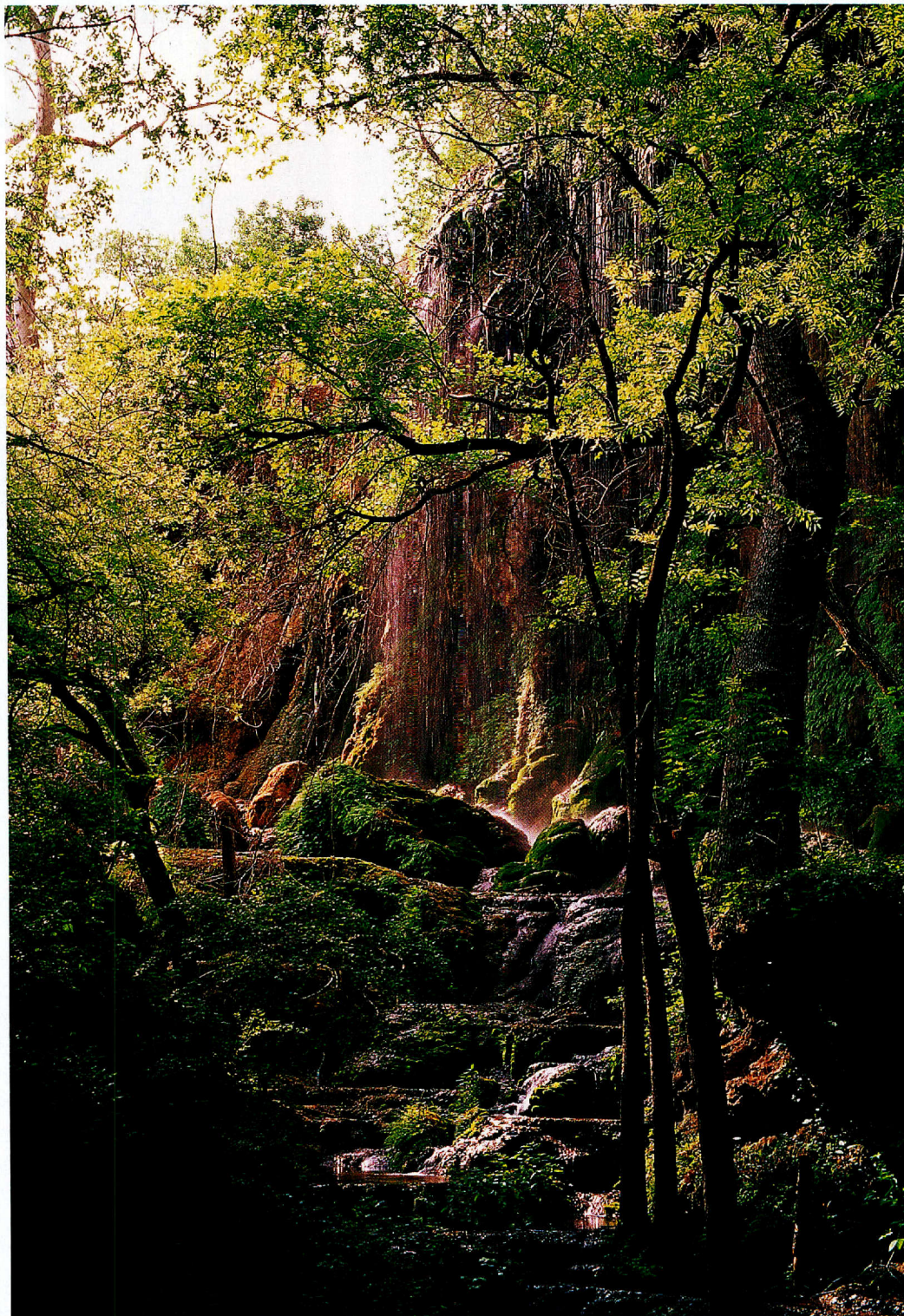
While in Brackettville, stop at Barbara's Table, housed in a former 1850s saloon and now run by Barbara and Neal Simmons and their son, Barkley. Barbara varies the restaurant's menu often, serving up a daily soup, salad, sandwich, and entrée, along with her homemade yeast rolls. On Saturday afternoons, when Neal stokes up the barbecue, the patio becomes a gathering spot. Barbara has also earned a well-deserved reputation for her delectable desserts: lemon tarts, chocolate-pecan pie, cappuccino mousse, and bread pudding with sabayon (zabaglione), a frothy egg sauce.

If Bandera beats as the heart of the Hill Country, then Fredericksburg functions as its nerve center. Almost any Texas traveler worth his salt has passed through this meticulously restored German settlement at one time or another. On any weekend in spring or fall, Main Street surges with throngs of people who come to stroll, browse, shop, and eat. But if you venture off the main drag, you'll discover another side of Fredericksburg's allure. Rolling, fertile hills surround the town, and as a result, many picturesque farms, vineyards, and wild game preserves have taken root in the area.

The 15-year-old Fredericksburg Herb Farm has become a pleasing place of respite. The gardens, naturally, form the focal point, and folks will find themselves inextricably drawn into the Star Garden via a rustic archway laden with cascading wisteria. This enormous plot, in the shape of a star, overflows with rosemary, garlic, sage, mint, and oregano, interspersed in spring with colorful banks of poppies, pansies, and bluebonnets. Equally enchanting, the Secret Garden invites contemplation and reflection with narrow, sinuous pathways and several benches from which visitors can view a lush array of flowering plants.

Sprawling across 14 acres, the Herb Farm makes a great day trip all by itself. Varney's Chemist Laden, also on the grounds, intoxicates with its soothing fragrances and neat displays of gourmet vinegars, herb-infused olive oils,

teas, potpourris, and lotions. Day-spa services are available at the Quiet Haus, and the nearby Poet's House offers candles, aromatherapy, and books and tools for gardeners. The light, airy Tea Room offers dishes accentuated by



© LAURENCE PARENT

Inspiring Gorman Falls, within Colorado Bend State Park, is yet another Hill Country jewel that awaits your discovery.

fresh herbs (from the garden, of course).

The Herb Farm has calmed many a weary traveler, but if it's a different floral feast you're after, Wildseed Farms could dismiss the doldrums in one fell swoop. This wildflower farm, situated on 217 acres along US 290 just seven miles east of Fredericksburg, cultivates more than 80 varieties of wildflowers. In the spring, bluebonnets, poppies, Indian paintbrush, winecups, and primroses awe visitors with their dazzling colors. In autumn, zinnias, cosmos, and sunflowers open their blossoms to the sun. Stroll through the vibrant realms of color, where you may compose photographs, pick your own bouquets, or loll away the day over a picnic lunch.

Grapes, as well as flowers, love Texas soil. Also on US 290 east of Fredericksburg, the approach to Becker Vineyards opens up with a breathtaking expanse of red bluebonnets in springtime. Farther

on lie several fields planted with lavender and more than 35 acres of French vinifera grapes. In the fall, visitors can witness the grape harvest and even participate in a grape stomp.



The Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm, at LBJ State Park (830/644-2252) near Stonewall, recalls Texas' not-so-distant pioneer past.

© LAURENCE PARENT

Becker Vineyards bottles more than a dozen red and white wines but particularly prides itself on its reserve cabernet, its dry rosé Provence, and its Viognier, a crisp white wine with hints of vanilla, peaches, and orange blossoms. Fredericksburg is replete with B&Bs (more than 300!), but the little 1890 homestead on the vineyard grounds, complete with potbellied stove, antiques, and homey quilts, remains one of its most charming.

At the northern reaches of the Hill Country, around Lampasas and San Saba counties, the land starts to flatten out, giving way to rolling meadows of tall grasses. The drive from Lampasas to Colorado Bend State Park along Ranch Road 580 affords pastoral views of fields flooded with prickly poppies and purple verbena in spring and summer; in fall, the grasses arch in soft breezes. Entering the park may prove daunting for some, as it entails a six-mile drive along a dusty, unpaved road. But once you're inside, this oft-forgotten park yields its own pleasures, well worth the trouble of getting there.

For instance, even in the driest of seasons, Gorman Falls proves inspiring. An imposing travertine cliff forms a dramatic backdrop for the flow of water that spills its way down, engendering little waterfalls here and there or a drapery of delicate beadlets that form



Louise Hays Park, on the banks of the Guadalupe River, in the heart of Kerrville, numbers among the many Hill Country river oases.

© JANN HERRMANN



Find yourself at Lost Maples State Natural Area near Vanderpool in any season.

a crystal curtain. Shiny moss and vibrant-green ferns cling to the rock face, soaking up the sparkling water.

Water also takes credit for the remarkable cave formations in the park. Scientists and cavers have explored more than 160 caves here, and to date not one has been commercially developed. Guides limit walking tours of Gorman Cave to 10 people, who must wear hard hats (available at the park) and carry a good flashlight (bring your own).

Although the formations are not as elaborate as those in the Caverns of Sonora or Inner Space Cavern (near Georgetown), visitors will discover phosphorescent crystals, cave ice, graffiti from 1833, hairy clusters of daddy-long-legs, and a small community of chattering bats. Our volunteer guide could not have been more informative or enthusiastic about her passion for caving. More-adventuresome folks can take a crawling tour of several more difficult caves.

Finally, don't leave the park without hiking up the Spicewood Springs Trail. This grassy path parallels the Colorado River for a time, then wends away from the river and crisscrosses the creek-like Spicewood Springs. The water opens out into a bracing, springfed pool, then culminates in a succession of waterfalls and still more unspoiled swimming holes.

A short drive south from the park on Texas 16 drops you into Llano, a quaint old town that straddles the Llano River. Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que here serves about the best barbecue I've eaten in Texas. In business for 45 years, Cooper's still uses fresh-split mesquite logs, huge iron burn-barrels, and six enormous iron pits. The staff shovel the red-hot coals from the burn-barrels straight into the barbecue pits, where pork chops, brisket, chicken, sausage, and massive hunks of cabrito bask in the smoke from the smoldering coals.

Diners choose their own cuts of meat right from the pit, then retire inside for potato salad, cole slaw, beans simmering in a huge iron pot, and a truly extraordinary blackberry cobbler. If you do pass through Llano, also take time to visit Enchanted Rock (see "The Hill Country's Rock of Ages," March 2000), just a short drive south off Texas 16. Once a sacred Indian ground, Enchanted Rock continues to entrance visitors to this day.

The mellow pace of life in the Hill Country, somewhat removed from the unmitigated onslaught of our digital, mile-a-minute, consumer culture, may very well work its spell on you. Everywhere I went, people welcomed me warmly and shared stories, clever anecdotes, good food, good conversation, and good laughs. Hill Country folks seem to have time to lavish on friends and new acquaintances alike, an overarching graciousness the one constant from town to town. Here, there's more than enough time to listen to a bird trilling, to pause at a magnificent view, to linger over a late-morning breakfast. And yes, it's catching. ★

Hill Country

The Texas Hill Country is bordered by Austin to the east, San Antonio and Brackettville to the south, Ozona to the west, and San Angelo and Lampasas to the north. All sites listed here are wheelchair accessible unless otherwise noted.

BANDERA

Accommodations

Hackberry Lodge, at 1007 Hackberry, offers 7 suites. Rates: \$85 and up (includes breakfast). Some rooms are wheelchair accessible. Call 830/460-7134.

Attractions

The **Running-R Ranch** offers riding lessons, swimming, cookouts, and hiking. Rates (per person; includes 3 meals and 2 hours of riding daily): \$80-\$90, \$55 ages 7-12, \$45 ages 4-6. Call 830/796-3984. Web site: www.rrranch.com.

Restaurants

The **Cabaret Cafe and Dance Hall**, at 801 Main St., usually features live music Thu-Sun, with an open mike on Wed. Cafe hours: Tue-Thu 11 a.m.-3 p.m. and 5 p.m.-10 p.m., Fri 11-3 and 5-11, Sat 11-11, Sun 11-9. Call 830/796-8166.

The **Old Spanish Trail**, at 305 N. Main St., serves steaks, sandwiches, and Mexican food. Hours: Mon-Thu 6 a.m.-11 p.m., Fri-Sat 6 a.m.-midnight, Sun 7 a.m.-10 p.m. Call 830/796-3836.

VANDERPOOL

Accommodations

The **Texas Stagecoach Inn** offers 5 rooms in a stately white mansion. Rates: \$85-\$115 (includes full breakfast). Wheelchair accessible with assistance. Call 888/965-6272. Web site: www.bbhost.com/txstagecoachinn.

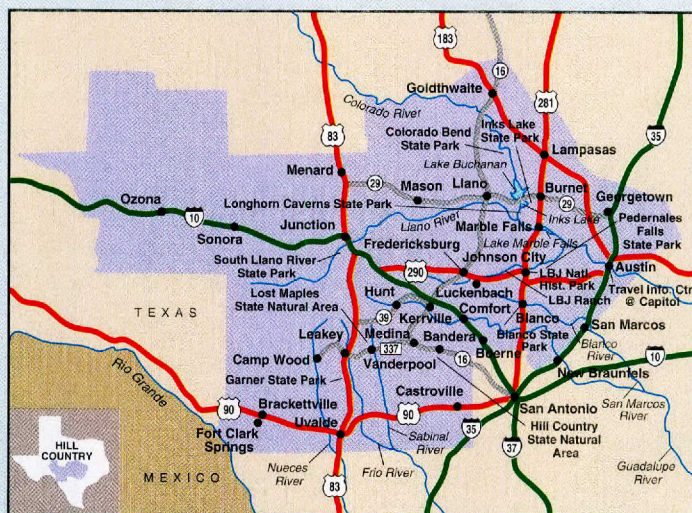
Attractions

Lost Maples State Natural Area is on RR 187 north of Vanderpool. Hours for day visitors: Daily 8 a.m.-10 p.m. Admission: \$4 (\$5 Oct-Nov), free age 12 and younger. Not wheelchair accessible. Call 830/966-3413. For camping reservations, call 512/389-8900. Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

BRACKETTVILLE

Attractions

Alamo Village, north of Brackettville off FM 674, features a replica



© KELLEYGRAPHICS

of the Alamo and a re-created Old West town. Hours: Daily 9-5 (Memorial Day-Labor Day 9-6). Admission: \$7, \$3.50 ages 6-11, free age 5 and younger. Partially wheelchair accessible. Call 830/563-2580. Web site: www.alamovillage.com.

At **Fort Clark Springs**, visitors can tour a historic army post. Swimming and fishing are limited to members and motel or RV park guests. **Las Moras Restaurant** opens Mon-Sat 8-2 and 5-10, Sun 8-2. The **Fort Clark Springs Motel** has rooms for \$48 a night (breakfast not included). A few rooms are wheelchair accessible. RV sites cost \$17 per night for non-members. Call 800/937-1590. Web site: www.fortclark.com.

RESTAURANTS

Barbara's Table, at 112 North St., offers soups, salads, entrées, and desserts. Hours: Wed-Sat 11-2, and 5:30-9, Sun 11-2. Call 830/563-2277.

FREDERICKSBURG

Attractions/Accommodations

The **Fredericksburg Herb Farm**, 6 blocks off Main St., includes shops, a tearoom, and a day spa. Farm hours: Mon-Sat 9:30-5:30, Sun 1-4. Tearoom hours: Mon-Thu 11:30-2, Fri-Sat 11:30-2 and 6-9, Sun 12-3. **The Herb Haus**, a small, 2-bedroom B&B, rents for \$118-\$163 (includes continental breakfast). Not wheelchair accessible. Call 830/997-8615 or 800-259-4372. Web site: www.fredericksburgherbfarm.com.

Wildseed Farms, 7 miles east of Fredericksburg on US 290, cov-

ers 217 acres, with more than 80 varieties of wildflowers, as well as a market center, cafe, and picnic area. Hours: Daily 9:30-6. Admission: Free. Call 830/990-1393. Web site: www.wildseedfarms.com.

Becker Vineyards, near Stonewall on US 290, opens for tours and wine tastings Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 12-5. Admission: Free. The **Homestead Bed and Breakfast** rents for \$125 a night (includes a bottle of wine and breakfast). Not wheelchair accessible. Call 830/644-2681. Web site: www.beckervineyards.com.

RESTAURANTS

Friedhelm's, at 905 W. Main St., features German specialties, including sauerbraten, knackwurst, kalbsleber, and 8 kinds of schnitzel. Hours: Tue-Sun 11-10. Call 830/997-6300.

LAMPASAS

Accommodations

Markward Manor, an 1875 limestone homestead just east of Key Ave., on FM 580, offers rooms in a well-furnished carriage house, complete with fireplace. Rates: \$59-\$79 (includes breakfast); 10% discount for military and age 60 and older. Not wheelchair accessible. Call 512/556-4238.

The **Moses Hughes Ranch Bed & Breakfast** (see "Ranch-Style Dreams," April 1999) is 7 miles west of Lampasas on FM 580, in an 1856 stone house. Two bedrooms and a courtyard suite rent for \$75-\$85 (includes breakfast). Not wheelchair accessible.

Call 512/556-5923. Web site: www.moseshughesranch.com.

Attractions

Colorado Bend State Park

offers camping, hiking, swimming, fishing, boating, and birdwatching, in addition to tours of the falls and the caves. The park entrance is 10 miles past Bend, at the intersection of Ranch Roads 580, 581, and 501. Once you enter the park, a 6-mile gravel road takes you to the park office. Hours for day visitors: Daily 6 a.m.-10 p.m. Admission: \$3, free age 12 and younger. Gorman Falls tours (weekends only, Sat 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.): \$3, \$2 ages 6-12, free age 5 and younger. Cave tours: \$10 for walking tours (Sat-Sun only, 9:15 a.m.), \$15 for crawling tours (first Sat. of month only, 1:30 p.m.). Tours not wheelchair accessible. Call 915/628-3240 or 800/792-1112. Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Restaurants

The **Bend Cafe**, near the entrance to Colorado Bend State Park, offers hearty breakfasts, sandwiches, and home cooking. Hours: Mon-Thu 7-2, Fri-Sat 7 a.m.-10 p.m., Sun 7-7. Not wheelchair accessible. Call 915/628-3523.

Eve's Cafe, at 521 E. Third St., on Lampasas' historic downtown square, features breakfasts, fresh sandwiches, and German cuisine. Hours: Mon-Thu and Sat 8-5, Fri 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Call 512/556-3500.

Storm's, at 201 N. Key Ave., is an old-style drive-in hamburger joint that has been in business for 50 years. Hours: Daily 6 a.m.-10 p.m. Call 512/556-6269.

LLANO

Accommodations

The **Dabbs Railroad Hotel**, at 112 E. Burnet St., is a historic hotel that often serves as a gathering spot for musicians. Rates: \$45-\$75 (includes breakfast). Call 915/247-7905. Web site: www.io.com/~dkb/dabbs/dabbs1.htm.

Restaurants

Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que, on Texas 29, smokes pork, brisket, chicken, sausage, and cabrito on the premises. Hours: Daily 10:30-7:30. Call 915/247-5713. Web site: www.coopersbbq.com.

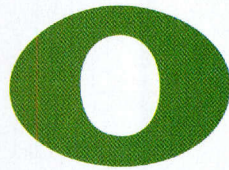


**BIG BEND
COUNTRY**

WEST TEXAS

High Country

BY DALE
WEISMAN



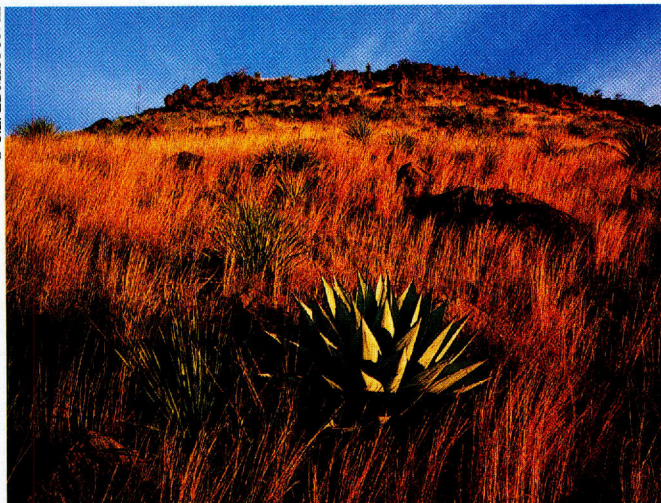
O **PEN** a Texas map and gaze west of the Pecos at all the mountains sprawling from the Big Bend to El Paso to the New Mexico state line. Here, chains of desert peaks and mountain

islands, some clad in montane forests and grasslands, rise and fall in cloud-piercing waves, soaring thousands of feet above a Chihuahuan Desert sea.

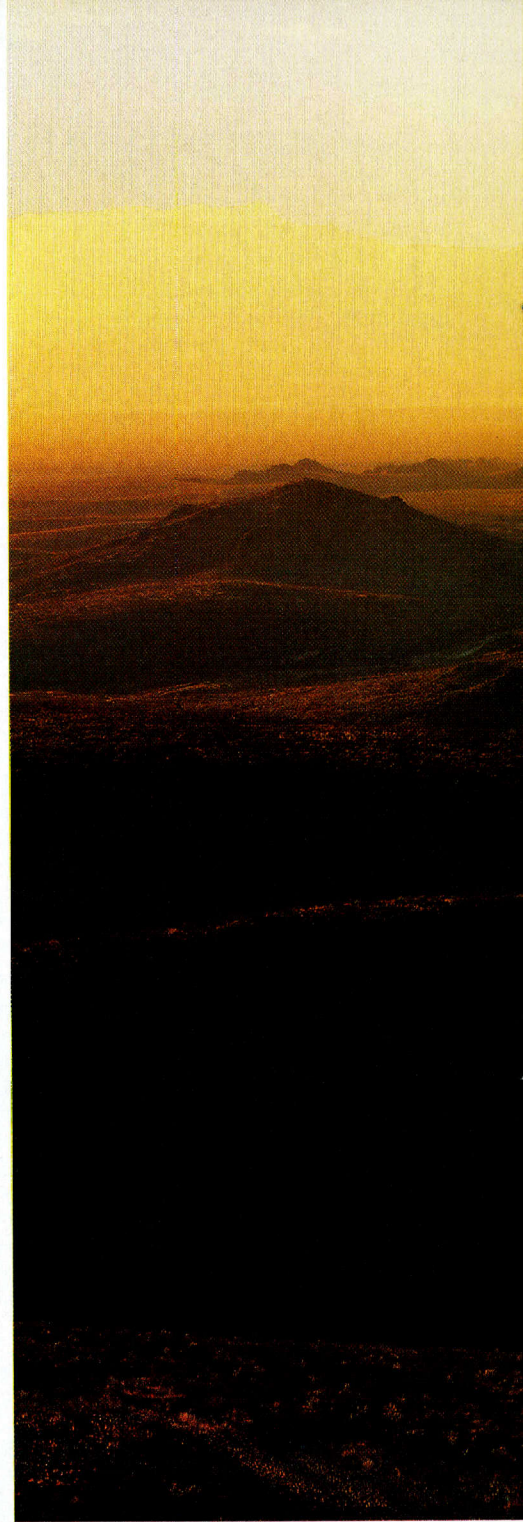
Maybe it's a backlash to growing up a Lubbock flatlander, but I'm drawn to West Texas pinnacles the way a desert bighorn sheep craves craggy heights. As a child, I imagined cumulus clouds were virtual mountains, ephemeral approximations of the real thing. Nowadays, heading to the mountains feels like going home.

This past spring, I spent a week meandering 2,000 miles across West Texas and hiked up four of the state's highest mountains. I clambered up Emory Peak, the 7,825-foot crown of the Chisos. I reached the summit of 8,378-foot Mt. Livermore in the new Davis Mountains Preserve near Fort Davis. The toughest hike took me up the tallest mountain in Texas — 8,749-foot Guadalupe Peak in Guadalupe Mountains

© C.L. EDMISTON III



Agave and grasses blanket the slopes of the Davis Mountains along Texas 17 near Fort Davis.



**TREK TO THE
TOP OF TEXAS,
WHERE MOUNTAIN
ISLANDS TOUCH
THE SKY.**



© LAURENCE PARENT

A hiker stands atop a rocky promontory in the foothills of the Chinati Mountains north of Presidio.

National Park. My sojourn ended on another high note—7,192-foot North Franklin Peak, the crescendo of El Paso's Franklin Mountains State Park.

According to John Karges, a conservation biologist at the Davis Mountains Preserve, many of Texas' highest peaks form "sky islands," a term that describes island-like alpine ecosystems separated by desert expanses. Karges likens the Davis

Mountains and other West Texas ranges to "beads of a necklace of mountains coming out of Mexico and contiguous with the Rockies." He adds, "A lot of migratory birds choose these sky islands as routes to cross the desert."

Crossing Big Bend Country

My own desert crossing began with a 500-mile journey from

Austin to Big Bend National Park. South of Fort Stockton, I truly felt out West when I spotted the truncated cone of 6,521-foot Santiago Peak.

Melodic Spanish placenames like Sierra Diablo, Cuesta del Burro, and Bofecillos dominate West Texas geography, reflecting the region's 450-year-old Hispanic heritage. Perhaps the most puzzling mountain moniker is "Chisos,"



Storm clouds envelop the Chisos Mountains in Big Bend National Park.

thought to mean “ghost” through a corruption of Spanish. Most likely, the range was named for the Chisos Indians who once dwelled there.

South of the Persimmon Gap entrance to Big Bend National Park, the Chisos apparition, like the battlements of a haunted castle, solidified into view. An hour later, I rolled into one of the few unoccupied campsites in the Chisos Basin, a cool, alpine enclave 2,000 feet above the desert floor. Before hiking into the high country, I talked with park naturalist Mary Kay Manning about desert mountains, Big Bend’s severe drought, and the park’s charismatic megafauna—“big furry things like deer, mountain lions, and bears,” explained Mary Kay.

She also assured me, “The climb to the top of Emory Peak is relatively easy and nontechnical, but exposed. You climb hand-over-hand about 30 feet to the top. Often, white-throated swifts dive all around you, which can be dizzying. The views are incredible.”

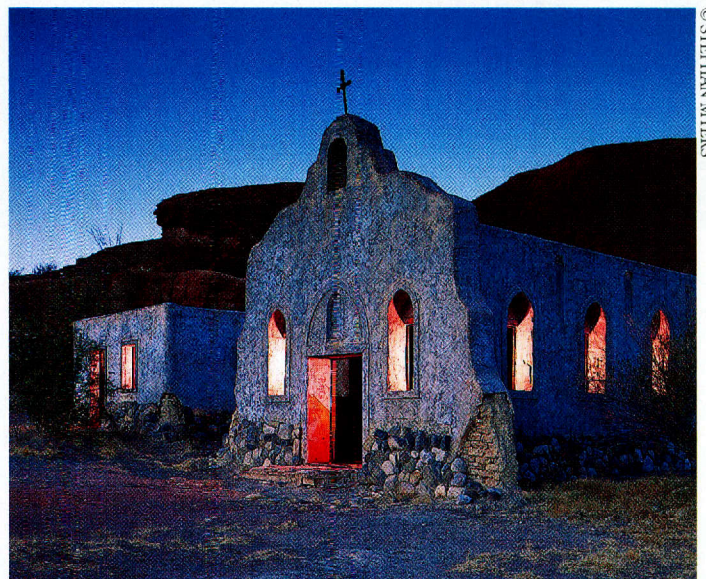
To reach the summit, I hiked 4.5 miles along the Pinnacles Trail, which wound through boulder meadows and piñon-

juniper-oak woodlands and switchbacked up and out of the Basin, past spires and buttresses of igneous rock. Beyond Pinnacles Pass, a one-mile spur zigzagged steeply to the top of the peak.

From the knobby summit 2,400 feet above the trailhead, I spotted neighboring Chisos peaks like Casa Grande and a panoply of other prominences: to the north, the Rosillos and Santiago ranges; to the northwest, the Christmas Mountains and the far-away Davis Mountains massif; to the west, the volcanic Bofecillos highlands of Big Bend Ranch State Park and the distant Chinatis; and to the east, the Dead Horse Mountains mingling with the lofty Sierra del Carmen in Mexico.

Secrets of the Chinatis

The next morning, I drove down from the Chisos, then west out of the park through Study Butte, Terlingua, and Lajitas. The next 50 miles to Presidio, along FM 170, also known as El Camino del Río (“the River Road”), serves up a spectacular rock show, as richly hued as



© STEPHAN AMERS

See the light. A movie set in Big Bend Ranch State Park includes a warmly-lit Southwestern church.



a Navajo rug. FM 170 levels out well before Fort Leaton State Historical Park and rolls into Presidio, founded more than 300 years ago by the Spanish.

Paralleling the Rio Grande, FM 170 continues west to Ruidosa (Spanish for “noisy”), a dusty hamlet anchored by Ben’s Bar and LaJunta General Store. I had two good reasons for heading off the beaten path: to soak my sore legs at Chinati Hot Springs and to drive the scenic Pinto Canyon Road (Ranch Road 2810)—especially the unpaved stretch that breaches the Chinati Mountains, the state’s fourth-highest range.

I wish Chinati Hot Springs could remain a secret, but savvy Big Bend travelers have already discovered the funky ambiance, rustling cottonwoods, rustic adobe cabins, 1920s bathhouses, and the restorative, 110-degree mineral waters of this laid-back oasis. Rejuvenated from the hot springs, I returned to Ruidosa and drove 54 miles north to Marfa along the Pinto Canyon Road, through the Chinatis.

Topped off by 7,728-foot Chinati Peak, the range appears primeval for good reason. About 33 million years ago, the Chi-

nati caldera produced the most violent volcanic upheaval in the Trans-Pecos. Fortunately, all’s quiet in the Chinatis today except for the howling wind.

Abandoned mines honeycomb the silver- and mineral-rich range. Forests once thrived on the higher slopes until most of the trees were felled to fuel mining operations near Shafter. Cresting Pinto Canyon, I reached paved highway and entered another world: the Marfa plateau, which forms a mile-high divide between the Chinati and Sierra Vieja ranges. Grassland punctuated with golden yuccas and junipers rolled to the mountain-fringed horizon. Storm clouds boiled up to the west, while due north rose an imposing blue hump that could only be the Davis Mountains.

Through the Texas Alps

Soaring to nearly 8,400 feet, the Davis Mountains are the highest range located entirely within Texas, as well as the state’s most extensive mountain chain, with some 700 square miles

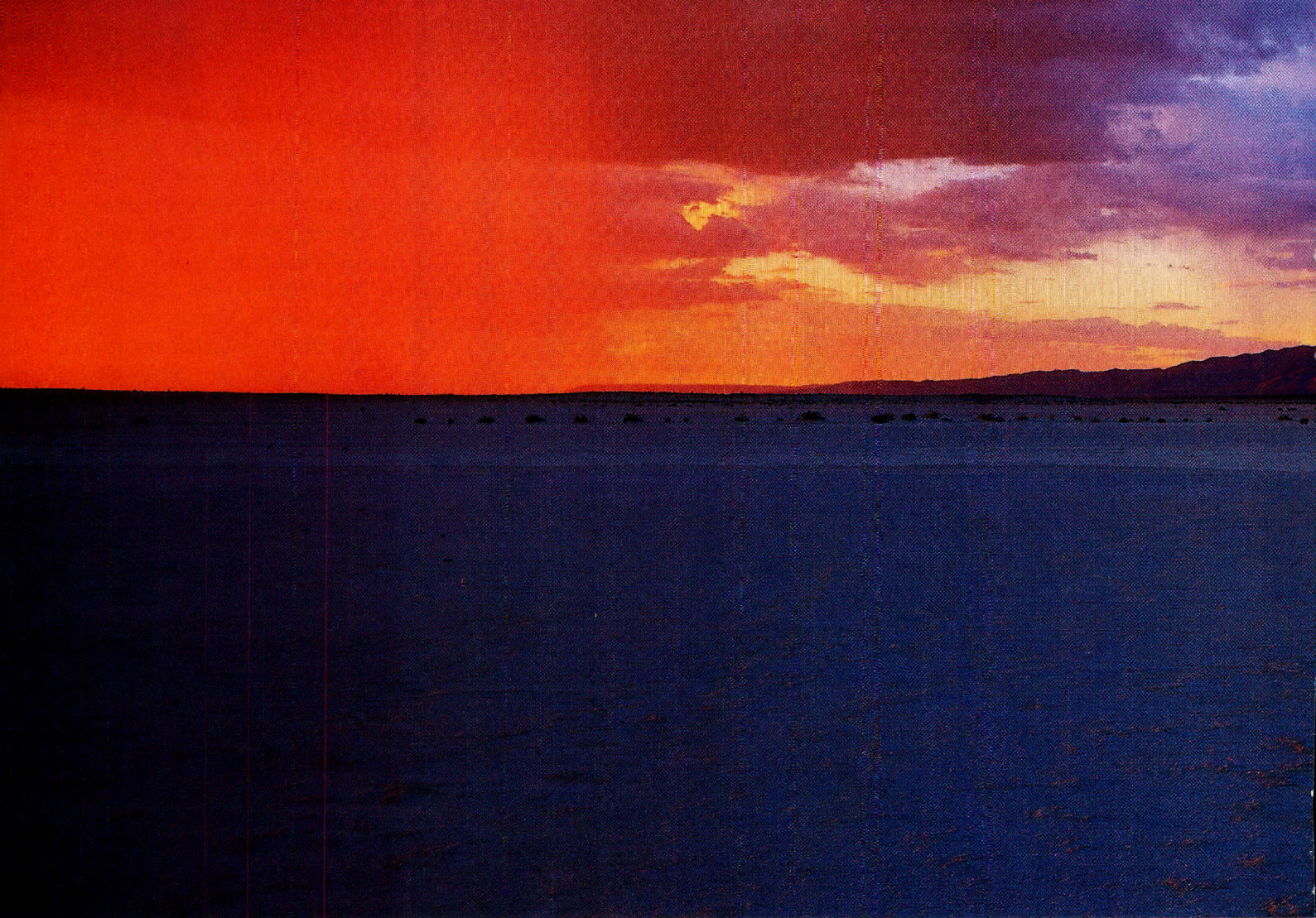
above 5,000 feet in elevation. Created by volcanic eruptions 35 million years ago, the lofty Davis range is a weather-maker, especially during the summer monsoon, when westerly winds uplift moisture-laden air and form thunderheads. Aspen, limber and ponderosa pine, Gambel and Emory oak, maple, madrone, and wild cherry flourish in the higher elevations. The Davis sky island also harbors plants and animals found nowhere else in Texas, including the Livermore paintbrush, the Mexican dwarf oak, and a giant, jackrabbit-size species of cottontail.

Mt. Livermore, the state’s fifth-highest promontory, rises above all else in the Davis range. People have ascended Livermore, also known as Baldy Peak, for centuries, as evidenced by an arrowhead cache found buried beneath a rock cairn on the summit. Discovered in 1895, the “Livermore Cache”—most likely a pre-Columbian ceremonial offering—is periodically on display at the Museum of the Big Bend at Sul Ross State University in Alpine.

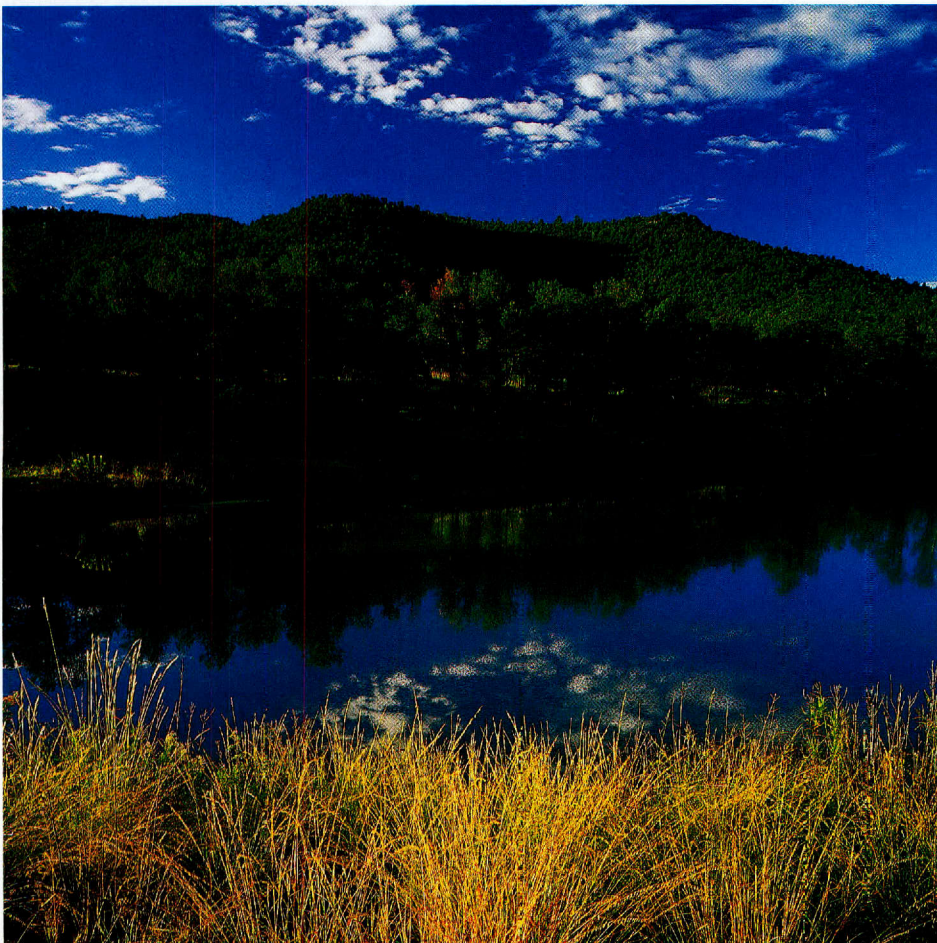
© LAURENCE PARENT



Bear grass and rocky hillsides frame the views from Mount Livermore in the Davis Mountains Preserve.



© LAURENCE PARENT



I wanted to see the cache site—and the mountaintop vista—for myself. James King, director of land protection for The Nature Conservancy of Texas, agreed to guide me to the top of Livermore.

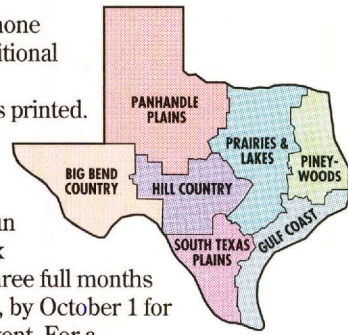
We met at the Conservancy office in Fort Davis and piled into a trail-beaten Land Rover. Beyond the Fort Davis National Historic Site, we headed west on Texas 118, which James called “the highway to heaven,” the first leg of the 75-mile Davis Mountains Scenic Loop. Texas 118 meanders up Limpia Canyon, past Davis Mountains State Park and the Pueblo-style Indian Lodge, and beyond Prude Ranch, one of the state’s most beloved guest ranches (see “Dude-ing It Up in Texas,” June 2000). The next stretch, the highest paved road in

The so-called Forty-eight Tank in the Nature Conservancy’s Davis Mountains Preserve provides much-needed water for wildlife in this spectacular Texas sky island.

October 2000						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
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29	30	31				

In Fun Forecast, we provide events and telephone numbers for next month, so that you'll have additional time to plan your outings.

Sometimes dates change after the magazine is printed. Before you drive miles to an event, confirm the date by calling the number listed next to the festivity or by contacting the local chamber of commerce. If you wish to submit an event for Fun



Forecast, please send the information to Fun Forecast, *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; fax 512/486-5879. Submit information at least three full months before the first of the month in which the event will take place (for example, by October 1 for January festivities). Space is limited, so we may not be able to print every event. For a quarterly, more detailed schedule of events, write for a free *Texas Events Calendar*, Box 149249, Austin 78714-9249.

Texas Highways' Web site (www.texashighways.com) includes an expanded Fun Forecast that gives descriptions of the events.

For free routing assistance or details on any destination in Texas, call 800/452-9292 toll-free from anywhere in the United States and Canada, any day between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Central Time. A travel counselor at one of the state's travel information centers will be on the line to provide travel information, send brochures, and advise you of any emergency road conditions.

1-Nov 12 PLANTERSVILLE (began Sep 30) Texas Renaissance Festival 800/458-3435	7 AZLE Lord's Acre 817/444-3323
8 DENTON UNT Concert Band 940/498-1356	BONHAM Bike Rally 903/583-2367 or 583-4811
3-7 MABANK Centennial Celebration 903/887-4747	BOWIE Chicken & Bread Days Festival 940/872-6246
8-8 WARRENTON Antique Show 979/249-3141	CAMERON Arts & Crafts Fair 254/697-4979
4-7 SHELBY Antique Show 281/373-9977	DECATUR Antique Car Show 940/627-6228
6-8 BOWIE Trade Days 940/872-4861	DENISON Main St Fall Festival 903/464-4452
1 DENTON (began Sep 29) <i>Hansel and Gretel</i> 940/498-1356	DENTON Arts, Antiques, & Autos 940/349-8529
FLATONIA Sacred Heart Fall Festival 361/865-3920	GRAND PRAIRIE Pumpkin Run 972/237-8100
FORT WORTH (began Sep 29) Home & Garden Show 713/529-1616	HONEY GROVE Davy Crockett Day 903/378-7211
IRVING Chili Cookoff 972/239-0959	JEWETT Fall Frolic 903/626-4202
KILLEEN Salsa & Merengue Fest 254/554-6990	PEARL Bluegrass Show 254/865-6013
OLNEY Halloween Celebration 940/564-5445	RICHARDSON Symphony Orchestra 972/234-4195
QUANAH Halloween Celebration 940/663-2222	SMITHVILLE Saturday Night on Historic Main St 512/237-2504 or 237-2313
TURKEY Ray Price 806/423-1273	WACO Heart o' Texas Fair & Rodeo 254/776-1660
1, 5-7, 19-22 DALLAS Dallas Symphony Orchestra 214/692-0203	WHITNEY Pioneer Days 254/694-2540
1-22 DALLAS (began Sep 29) State Fair of Texas 214/565-9931 or 421-8716	7-8 BONHAM Trade Days 903/583-2367
1, 7-8, 14-15, 21-22, 28-29 ANDERSON Fanthorpe Inn Tour 936/873-2633	FORT WORTH International Air Show 817/551-1967
1 ARLINGTON (began Sep 30) Mantra Holistic Bazaar 817/459-5000	OKTOBERFEST 817/392-2560
CANTON (began Sep 28) First Monday Trade Days 903/567-6556 or 567-2991	PARIS Tennis Tournament 903/737-7300
JACKSBORO Halloween Costume Contest 940/567-2602	RICHARDSON Cottonwood Art Festival 972/231-4798

Panhandle Plains

1 ABILENE (began Sep 29) Big Country Hot Air Balloon Festival 915/670-9348
BIG SPRING Disc Golf Tournament 915/267-6335
ST LAWRENCE Fall Festival 915/397-2268
1-Nov 18 MINERAL WELLS (began Aug 31) Clark Gardens Fall Season 940/682-4856
3 ABILENE Zoo Fest 915/676-6085
6-7 SAN ANGELO Square & Round Dance Festival 915/942-7660 or 944-1439
SNYDER White Buffalo Festival 915/573-1544
6-7, 13-14, 20-21 WICHITA FALLS Red River Americana Music Show 940/716-5500

7 BIG SPRING Pumpkin Hunt/Hayride Tour 915/263-4931
BROWNWOOD Depot Jazz & Blues 915/646-9535
CLYDE Pecan Bluegrass Festival 915/893-4221 or 893-2322
COLEMAN Fiesta de la Paloma 915/625-2163
GRAHAM Possum Pedal 100 940/549-1484
PAMPA Arts & Crafts Show 806/665-0343
RANGER Roaring Ranger Days 254/647-3091
7-8 LUBBOCK Friends of the City-County Library Book Sale 806/775-2826
SHAMROCK Irish Crafffest 806/256-3535
8 PAMPA Barbecue 806/665-1488

12-14 VERNON Rodeo 940/552-6291
13-14 RISING STAR OctoberFest 254/643-1100
13-15 ABILENE ACU Homecoming Musical 915/674-2000
14 FLOYDADA Punkin Days 806/983-3434
GRAFORD Possum Kingdom Lake Fall Arts & Crafts Festival 940/779-3883
MINERAL WELLS Crazy Water Festival 940/325-2121 or 800/252-6989
PAMPA Country Fair 806/669-3241
SAN ANGELO Oktoberfest 915/653-3333
14-15 STANTON Old Sorehead Trade Days 915/756-2006
SWEETWATER Cutting Horse Competition 915/235-3484

14-15 VERNON Craft Show 940/552-9393 or 553-3266
WICHITA FALLS Shrine Circus 940/766-4511
Zephyr Days Train Show 940/716-5500 or 692-6073
19-31 AMARILLO Big Texan Steak Ranch Big Boo 806/372-6000
20-21 ALBANY Watt Matthews Cowboy Days 915/762-2525 or 762-2269
20-22 SEMINOLE Trade Days 915/758-1955
21 LUBBOCK Grape Day Celebration 806/745-2258
LUBBOCK Ranch Day 806/742-0498
RANGER Remember McClesky Day 254/647-3340

21 VERNON Cultural Fiesta 940/552-2895
WYLIE Country Fair & Chili Cookoff 972/442-2804
21-22 ABILENE Tablescapes 915/698-1768
BIG SPRING Arts & Crafts Show 915/263-7690
21-23 ABILENE Fort Phantom Rendezvous 915/677-1309
Regional Airport Fly-In 800/727-7704
27-28 WICHITA FALLS <i>Everybody Loved Opal</i> 940/322-5000
28 ABILENE Boo at the Zoo 915/676-6085
Philharmonic 915/677-6710 or 800/460-0610
ELECTRA Scarecrow Festival 940/495-3577
JACKSBORO Halloween Costume Contest 940/567-2602

28 SAN ANGELO Cowboy Symposium 915/949-4757	
SEYMOUR Autumn Leaves Festival 940/888-2921	
THROCKMORTON VPD Halloween Carnival 940/849-3076	
30-Nov 4 AMARILLO US Team Penning Competition 806/322-4252	
31 OLNEY Halloween Celebration 940/564-5445	
QUANAH Halloween Celebration 940/663-2222	
TURKEY Ray Price 806/423-1273	
Prairies and Lakes	
1 ARLINGTON (began Sep 30) Mantra Holistic Bazaar 817/459-5000	
CANTON (began Sep 28) First Monday Trade Days 903/567-6556 or 567-2991	

1 DENTON (began Sep 29) <i>Hansel and Gretel</i> 940/498-1356
FLATONIA Sacred Heart Fall Festival 361/865-3920
FORT WORTH (began Sep 29) Home & Garden Show 713/529-1616
IRVING Chili Cookoff 972/239-0959
KILLEEN Salsa & Merengue Fest 254/554-6990
SOUTHLAKE Lake Cities Swing Band 817/283-3406
WEATHERFORD (began Sep 29) Trade Days 817/504-3801 or 598-4351
1, 5-7, 19-22 DALLAS Dallas Symphony Orchestra 214/692-0203
1-22 DALLAS (began Sep 29) State Fair of Texas 214/565-9931 or 421-8716
1, 7-8, 14-15, 21-22, 28-29 ANDERSON Fanthorpe Inn Tour 936/873-2633

7, 14, 21, 28 COLUMBUS Opry 409/732-9210 or 732-6510	14 BASTROP Pine St Market Days 512/303-6233	14-15 FORT WORTH Ceramic & Doll Show 817/738-8240 or 451-3035	20-22 YORKTOWN Western Days Celebration 361/564-2661	21-22 FAYETTEVILLE Lickskillet Days & Pumpkin Patch 888/575-4553	27-28 ROUND TOP Winedale Gartenfest 979/278-3530	28-29 DALLAS American Indian Art Festival & Market 214/891-9640	5-7 CENTER East Texas Poultry Festival 936/598-3682	13-15 LIVINGSTON Trade Days 409/327-3656
7-8, 14-15, 21-22, 28-29 GRAND PRAIRIE Halloween at the Wax Museum 972/263-2391	BEDFORD Gallery Day 817/283-3406	Model Railroad Show 817/249-4965	21 BASTROP Los Amigos del Mesquite 512/303-0985	GRANBURY Harvest Moon Festival 817/573-5548 or 800/950-2212	SEGUIN Hats Off to Juan Seguin 800/580-7322	RICHARDSON Crafts Show 800/783-4526	6-8 HUNTSVILLE Southwest Canoe Rendezvous 936/295-5644	14 HAWKINS Oil Festival 903/769-4482
8-22 GRANBURY Rio Brazos Art Festival 800/950-2212	CLEBURNE Octoberfest 817/645-9452	SAGINAW Train & Grain Festival 817/232-0500	CLIFTON Quilt Show 254/675-8637 or 675-2245	GREENVILLE Cotton Jubilee 903/455-1510 or 455-7232	27-29 FLATONIA Czhilispie 361/865-3920 or 865-2301	29 CALDWELL Czech Heritage Dinner & Dance 979/567-1900	6-7, 13-14, 20-21, 27-28 LIBERTY Opry on the Square 409/336-1079 or 800/248-8918	KIRBYVILLE Country Music Show 409/423-5744
10 YOAKUM Country Music USA 361/293-2309	COMANCHE Trade Day 915/356-3233	TEMPLE Gem & Mineral Show 254/773-9624	Trades Day 800/344-3720	SHINER Volksmarch 361/594-3304	FORT WORTH Red Steagall's Cowboy Gathering & Western Swing Festival 817/336-8791	GRAND PRAIRIE Haunted Hallway 972/647-2331	7 DE KALB Oktoberfest 903/667-3969	LINDALE Countryfest 903/882-3409 or 882-5538
10-12 WACO Brazos Forum 254/752-8066 or 800/922-6386	DECATUR Antique Farm & Tractor Show 940/627-3107 or 627-2198	14, 28 BOWIE Gospel Music 940/841-2041	COLUMBUS <i>The Sound of Music</i> 877/444-7339	21-22, 28-29 DALLAS Boo at the Dallas Zoo 214/942-3678	GLEN ROSE Fossilmania 817/579-0955	30 CANTON Children's Fall Festival 903/567-2072	DE KALB Oktoberfest 903/667-3969	LUFKIN Angelina Co Memory Walk 936/568-0188
12-15 BELLEVILLE Austin Co Fair 979/865-5995	GRANBURY Cowboys on the Brazos 817/326-6337	15 BASTROP Bass Fishing Tournament 512/321-2419	CORSICANA Food Festival 877/376-7477	GRAND PRAIRIE Forest of Fear 817/467-2104	MADISONVILLE Madison Co Trade Days 936/349-0163	CLARKSVILLE Halloween Carnival 903/427-2705	HUNTSVILLE Fair on the Square 800/289-0389	RUSK Pioneer Festival/ Indian Crafts Fair 903/683-4242 or 800/933-2381
CUERO Turkeyfest 361/275-2112	GRAND PRAIRIE Pumpkin Fun Run 972/264-1558	BREMONT St Mary's Fall Festival 254/746-7789	DUNCANVILLE Harvest Fest 972/780-5099	22 GRAND PRAIRIE Festival de la Familia 972/647-2331	SEGUIN Quarter Horse Show 800/580-7322	DENTON Classical Percussion/ Afro-Cuban Ensembles 940/498-1356	Fly-In 936/295-8136	TEXARKANA <i>Anything Goes</i> 903/792-4992
DENISON Grayson Co Fair 903/465-2330	LANCASTER Second Saturday on the Square 972/227-2579	FORT WORTH Mall.com 500 Indy Race 817/215-8500	GRANBURY Antique Engine & Tractor Show 817/573-5548 or 800/950-2212	HALLETTSVILLE Polka Fest 361/798-2311	27-Nov 4 FORT WORTH Appaloosa World Championship Show 817/871-8150	FORT WORTH Dash for the Timber 5-K 817/738-1933	14-15 HENDERSON Go-Kart Races 903/836-4557	
GUADALUPE CO FAIR & RODEO 830/379-6477 or 800/580-7322	LULING Night in Old Luling 830/875-3214	17 LOCKHART Country Music Jamboree 512/376-3430	GRAPEVINE Butterfly Flutterby 800/457-6338	22-31 VENUS Haunted House 972/366-3334	28 CYCLONE Polka Mass 254/985-2393	30-31 CALDWELL Halloween Spooktacular 979/567-3373	MOUNT PLEASANT Golf Tournament 903/572-8567	
12-14, 19-22, 26-29 GARLAND <i>Arsenic and Old Lace</i> 972/205-2790	MOUNT VERNON Countryfest 903/537-4365	17, 24 LEWISVILLE Fall Concert Series 972/219-3550	HARWOOD Bluegrass Show 512/263-7193	28 HURST Francisco Obregon, Latin Vocal Performance 817/283-3406	DECATUR Main St County Fair 940/627-2741	31 BONHAM Halloween on the Square 903/583-2367	7, 13-15, 20-22, 27-29 WINNSBORO Autumn Trails 903/342-3666	
13 FORT WORTH O'Reilly 300 NASCAR Craftsman Truck Race Series 817/215-8500	PARIS Bluegrass Jam 903/785-5394	18-21 BONHAM Fannin Co Fair 903/583-7453	HEARNE Intertribal Powwow 979/828-4977	26-28 FORT WORTH Senior Citizens Fair 817/871-8150	ELGIN Hogeye Festival 512/285-5721	8 HUNTSVILLE Classic Mountain Bike Race 936/295-5644	18-21 GILMER East Texas Yamboree 903/843-2413	
13-14 CEDAR HILL Settlers Reunion/ Country Day on the Hill 972/293-2886	SHINER Bocktoberfest 713/867-3210	18-Nov 12 DALLAS <i>An Experiment with an Air Pump</i> 214/522-8499	LOCKHART Main St Market 512/398-2818	26 SEALY Bluegrass & Gospel Music Festival 281/376-2959	ELGIN Hogeye Festival 512/285-5721	JEFFERSON Founders Day 903/665-2672	19-22 CONROE Children's Festival 281/363-3300	
13-15 RICHARDSON International Coin Show 254/799-4344	TEAGUE Parkfest 254/739-2061	19 GRANBURY Gospel Concert 817/572-0881 or 800/354-1670	PALESTINE Murder on the Disoriented Express 800/659-3484	27 DENTON US Marine Band 940/498-1356	GATESVILLE Cedarfest 254/865-8951	11-15 NACOGDOCHES Pineywoods Fair 409/564-0849	20 CONROE Auto Swap Meet 713/216-7297	
13-15 CANTON Antique & Classic Auto Swap Meet 972/276-1790	TEMPLE Bazaar 254/770-0613	19-21 ROCKDALE Fair & Livestock Show 512/446-2030	ROUND TOP Classical Violin & Piano Concert 979/249-3129	MESQUITE Light Crust Doughboys 972/289-8400	LEWISVILLE Halloween Carnival 972/219-3560	12-15 RUSK <i>I Do! I Do!</i> 903/683-2131	20-22 NACOGDOCHES Trade Days 936/564-2150	
13-22 WACO Casa Ole Pro Tennis Tournament 254/750-8662	VENUS Opry 972/366-3334	19-22 ENNIS NHRA Drag Racing Fall Nationals 972/878-4748	WHITESBORO Peanut Festival 903/564-3331	27 DENTON US Marine Band 940/498-1356	OTTINE Swamp Fest 830/672-6532	13-15 CONROE Cajun Catfish Festival 713/863-9994 or 800/324-2604	TYLER Trade Days 903/595-2223	

Pineywoods

**1, 7-8,
14-15, 21-22**
LIBERTY
(began Sep '80)
Trinity Valley
Exposition
936/336-8168

21
HENDERSON
 Cutting Horse Show
 903/657-2161

MOUNT PLEASANT
 Arts & Crafts Fair
 903/572-7048

SAN AUGUSTINE
 Archeology Fair
 936/275-3815

SOUR LAKE
 Bluegrass Show
 409/892-5767

TYLER
 Doll, Toy, & Teddy Bear Show
 903/561-7331

23
TEXARKANA
 Kiev Symphony Orchestra & Chorus
 903/792-4992

27-28
GOLDEN
 Sweet Potato Festival
 903/765-2444

27-31
NACOGDOCHES
 Haunted House
 409/560-6544

27-28, 30-31
NEW BOSTON
 Haunted House
 903/628-2581

28
HENDERSON
 Team Penning
 903/657-2161

NACOGDOCHES
 Scare on the Square
 888/564-7351

SAN AUGUSTINE
 Sassafras Festival
 936/275-3610

TEXARKANA
 Halloween Costume Party
 903/793-4831

Halloween Tombstone History
 903/793-4831

TYLER
 Special Olympic Plane Pull & Air Show
 903/592-0732

29
JEFFERSON
 Marion Co Fair
 903/665-2672

31
KILGORE
 Halloween Carnival
 903/984-5022

MINFOLA
 Halloween Block Party
 903/569-2087

Gulf Coast

1
CORPUS CHRISTI
 (began Sep 29)
 Bayfest
 361/887-0868

HOUSTON
 (began Sep 30)
 Great Southwest Oktober Fest
 281/578-7669

(began Sep 29)
 Texaco/Havoline Grand Prix of Houston
 713/739-RACE

KEMAH
 (began Sep 29)
 Jazz Festival
 877/865-3624

PORT ARANSAS
 Island Duathlon
 361/980-8226

TEXAS CITY
 Heritage Homes Tour
 409/945-4971

1-7
ROSENBERG
 (began Sep 29)
 Fort Bend Co Fair/PRCA Rodeo
 281/342-6171

3-5
BROWNSVILLE
 Rio Grande Valley Arts & Crafts Exposition
 956/542-0941

4-7
ORANGE
 Carnival
 409/886-2345

4-8
HOUSTON
 The Great Taste of Houston
 713/522-9723

5-8
CLEAR LAKE AREA
 Boat Show
 713/526-6361

HOUSTON
 Greek Festival
 713/526-5377

5-15
BEAUMONT
 South Texas State Fair
 409/832-9991

6-7
BROWNSVILLE
 Zoofari
 956/546-7187

6-8
PORT ARANSAS
 Celebrity Fishing Tournament
 361/758-7737 or 877/808-5777

6-8
SEABROOK
 Music Festival
 281/334-3253 or 474-3838

WINNIE
 Trade Days
 409/892-4000 or 296-3300

6-14
ANGLETON
 Brazoria Co Fair
 979/849-6416

6-31
KEMAH
 Boo on the Boardwalk
 877/865-3624

7
EL CAMPO
 Golf Classic
 409/543-2713

RAYMONDVILLE
 Market Day
 956/689-5206

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND
 Causeway Run & Wellness Walk
 956/943-2262

7-8
GALVESTON
 An Evening with Bob Newhart
 409/765-1894

KINGSVILLE
 Fiesta de Colores
 800/333-5032

ROCKPORT
 Seafair
 361/729-3312 or 800/826-6441

WINNIE
 Texas Rice Festival
 409/296-4404 or 882-9226

7-14
EDNA
 Jackson Co Youth Fair & Expo
 361/782-7146

8
PORT ARTHUR
 Second Sunday at Texas Artists Museum
 409/983-4881

10
BAY CITY
 Ballet Gran Folklórico de Mexico
 979/245-2727

12-15
GALVESTON/PORT ARANSAS
 Harvest Moon Regatta
 281/474-2511

ROCKPORT
 Vietnam Veterans Tribute
 361/727-0445 or 729-7144

12-15
SOUTH PADRE ISLAND
 Bike Fest 2000/Motorcycle Convention & Rally
 956/668-7484

13
GALVESTON
 Tales of the City
 409/765-1894

13-21
PASADENA
 Livestock Show & Rodeo
 281/487-0240

14
BAYTOWN
 Fun Run
 281/420-6594

HOUSTON
 IAH Airport Festival
 281/440-4160

LAKE JACKSON
 Brazosport Run for the Arts
 979/265-7661

LA MARQUE
 Gulf Coast Grill-Off
 409/935-1408

MATAGORDA
 Heritage Day
 979/863-7618

PALACIOS
 Harvest Moon Dinner & Dance
 979/245-8333

14
RIO HONDO
 Texas Air Museum Fly-In
 956/748-2112

WEST COLUMBIA
 Bluegrass Show
 979/265-4757

14-15
HOUSTON
 Bayou City Arts Festival
 713/521-0133

MCNAIR
 Arts & Crafts Fair
 281/421-4997 or 843-2688

SEABROOK
 Back Bay Market
 281/474-3869

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND
 Sandcastle Days
 956/761-6222

15
SPRING
 Vegetarian Chili Cookoff
 713/880-1055

20
CORPUS CHRISTI
 Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quartet
 361/888-6520

HOUSTON
 Carmen
 713/546-0200

20-22
GALVESTON
Will Rogers Follies
 409/765-1894 or 800/547-4697

HOUSTON
 Home & Garden Show
 713/529-1616

21
ALVIN
 Art & Cultural Music Festival
 281/331-8199

BAY CITY
 Market Day on the Square
 979/245-8333

Rice Festival
 979/245-8333

BELLAIRE
 Arts & Crafts Festival
 713/666-1521

CLEAR LAKE SHORES
 Island Fest
 281/334-2866

GALVESTON
 ArtWalk
 409/763-2403

HARLINGEN
 Jackson St Jubilee
 956/427-8703

LEAGUE CITY
 Bluegrass Show
 713/990-5171 or 281/993-1620

21-22
NEEDVILLE
 Harvest Festival
 409/793-4030

PALACIOS
 Mort Robert's Moonpie Madness Soiree
 979/245-8333

PORT ARANSAS
 Sand & Surf Beach Run
 361/749-5319

VICTORIA
Romeo and Juliet
 361/572-2787

21-22
ALVIN
 Antique & Craft Show
 281/331-5134

HOUSTON
 Asian American Festival
 713/861-8270

Wings Over Houston Airshow
 713/266-4492

Woodcarvers Show
 281/354-6817

KINGWOOD
 Fine Art Festival
 281/359-6936 or 361-3931

21-22
PORT ARTHUR
 Trade Days
 409/982-4950

RICHMOND
 Texian Market Days
 281/342-1256

TEXAS CITY
 Trade Days
 409/949-9273

25-26
VICTORIA
 South Texas Farm & Ranch Show
 361/576-5410

26-29
HOUSTON
 Ballet
 713/523-6300

27-28
CLEAR LAKE AREA
 Armand Bayou Creepy Crawlers
 281/474-2511

27-29
ANGLETON
 Austin Town
 979/864-1208

CLEAR LAKE AREA
Dracula
 281/480-1617

28
ALVIN
 Fall Festival
 281/388-4698

28
BEAUMONT
 Dinosaur Day
 409/833-5100

GALVESTON
 Great Pumpkin Party
 409/762-7668

Spirit of the Dance
 409/765-1894 or 800/821-1894

LAKE JACKSON
 Freaky Fright Fair & Monster Dash
 979/297-4533

ROCKPORT
 Friends of Fulton Mansion Halloween Costume Party
 361/729-0386

SWEENEY
 Trade Day
 409/548-3249

VICTORIA
 Air Show
 361/573-5277

WINNIE
 Oktoberfest
 409/762-8477

28-29
GALVESTON
 Art Fest
 409/763-5495 or 762-6454

HARLINGEN
 Art Mart Show
 956/425-4030



Everything's comin' up roses at the Texas Rose Festival in Tyler, October 19-22.

© RANDY MALLOY

28-29
HOUSTON
 Downtown Street Festival
 713/688-3773

PORT ARANSAS
 Fallback Festival
 361/749-6405

29
GALVESTON
 The King's Singers
 409/765-1894

29, Nov 1, 4, 7, 9-10, 12
HOUSTON
Katya Kubanova
 713/546-0200

30-31
BROWNSVILLE
 Boo at the Zoo
 956/546-7187

31
FREEPORT
 Halloween Festival
 979/233-6061

FULTON
 Mansion Madness
 512/729-0386

South Texas Plains

1
SAN ANTONIO
 Symphony
 210/554-1010

1-Nov 11
SAN ANTONIO
 (began Sep 29)
Zorba
 210/733-7258

3
THREE RIVERS
 Brush Country Music Jamboree
 361/449-2636 or 786-3334

6
SAN ANTONIO
 Art Walk
 210/222-1152

6-7
SAN ANTONIO
 Johnny Mathis
 210/554-1010

6-7, 13-14
SAN ANTONIO
 Oktoberfest
 210/222-1521 or 408-0004

7
BEEVILLE
 Bee Co Family Fall Fest
 361/358-3267

Market Day
 361/358-3267

7
HELOTES
 Market Day
 210/834-5396

7-8, 14-15, 21-22, 28-29
SAN ANTONIO
 Halloween Spooktacular
 210/523-3611

8
SAN ANTONIO
 Charreada
 210/554-4575

Low & Slow Classic Car Show
 210/432-1896

13-15
CARRIZO SPRINGS
 Brush Country Days
 830/876-5205

FALFURRIAS
 Fiesta del Campo
 361/325-3333 or 325-9285

POTEET
 Atascosa Co Fair
 830/769-3228 or 769-3066

SAN ANTONIO
 Shrine Circus
 210/650-3111 or 496-1625

14
BIGFOOT
 Market Trail Day
 830/665-5054 or 663-2410

GOLIAD
 Market Day
 361/645-3563

16
SAN ANTONIO
Alexander & the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day
 210/340-4060

17-21
SAN ANTONIO
 International Piano Competition
 210/655-0766 or 654-6974

20-22
MISSION
 Texas Butterfly Festival
 956/585-2727 or 800/580-2700

21
GOLIAD
 Mission Tour de Goliad Bike Ride
 361/645-3563 or 800/848-8674

SAN ANTONIO
 Art Jamboree
 210/223-1140

Fall at the Alamogordo
 210/225-1391

21-22
SAN ANTONIO
 Youth Rodeo Finals
 210/698-3300

26-29
SAN ANTONIO
 International Food, Wine, & Spirits Festival
 210/828-7215 or 824-3008

27
SAN ANTONIO
 Texas History Forum
 210/225-1071

27-29
SAN ANTONIO
 Market Square Halloween & Dia de los Muertos
 210/207-8600

28
SAN ANTONIO
 Doll, Craft, & Miniature Show
 210/673-0888

28-29
SAN ANTONIO
 Rivercenter Spooky Lagoon
 210/225-0000

30-31
SAN ANTONIO
 Zoo Boo
 210/734-7184

31
GOLIAD
 Scare on the Square
 361/645-2666

SAN ANTONIO
 Happy Halloween Hullabaloo
 210/212-4453

Hill Country

1
AUSTIN
 Mingus Big Band
 512/471-1444

(began Sep 30)
 Old Pecan St Fall Arts Festival
 512/441-9015

(began Sep 30)
 Texas Wildlife Expo
 512/389-4472 or 800/792-1112

BOERNE
 (began Sep 29)
 Red Steagall Texas Cowboy Celebration
 830/569-3401

1
FREDERICKSBURG
 (began Sep 29)
 Renewable Energy Roundup
 512/345-5446

NEW BRAUNFELS
 (began Sep 26)
 Comal Co Fair
 830/625-1505

1-31
AUSTIN
 Pumpkin Patch
 512/454-1002

5-7
GEORGETOWN
Sylvia
 512/868-2966

6-8
FREDERICKSBURG
 Oktoberfest
 830/997-4810 or 997-8515

JOHNSON CITY
 Harvest Festival
 830/868-7181

Pig Roast
 830/868-2217

7
AUSTIN
 Arts & Crafts Show
 512/442-7858

Herb Festival
 512/477-8672

Victor Borge
 512/471-1444

BURNET
 Fort Croghan Days
 512/756-4297

GEORGETOWN
 Harvest Fest
 512/863-5886

Saddle Series Riding Competition
 512/259-4161 or 254/547-2419

Triathlon
 512/930-3592

HONDO
 Hootenanny
 830/426-3438

KERRVILLE
 Down by the Riverside Festival
 830/257-4837

Harvest Moon Dance
 830/792-8343

LUCKENBACH
 Chili Championship & Ball
 830/997-2334

SAN MARCOS
 Tejano Fest/Fajita Cookoff
 512/353-1103

WIMBERLEY
 Market Day
 512/847-2201

7-8
CANYON LAKE
 Moving Waters Powwow
 830/964-3613 or 800/528-2104

JOHNSON CITY
 Texas Wine Trail
 830/868-2321

8
GRUENE
 Gospel Brunch with a Texas Twist
 830/629-5077

11
AUSTIN
 Yo-Yo Ma
 512/471-1444

13-15
DRIPPING SPRINGS
 The Gathering: Hill Country Art
 512/894-0499

FREDERICKSBURG
 Mesquite Art Festival
 830/997-1885 or 997-7344

KERRVILLE
 Kerr Co Fair
 830/257-6833

WIMBERLEY
 Gospel Music Festival
 512/847-9671

14
AUSTIN
 Jon Hendricks
 512/329-6753 or 469-SHOW

BANDERA
 Quilt Show
 830/796-4969 or 800/364-3833

BIG LAKE
 Chili Cookoff
 915/884-2633

CANYON LAKE
 Shrimpfest
 830/899-2173

CASTROVILLE
 Market Trail Day
 830/741-3841

GEORGETOWN
 Market Day
 512/868-8675

JOHNSON CITY
 Heritage Crafts Day
 830/868-7128

LAMPASAS
 Herb & Arts Festival
 512/556-5172

MEDINA
 Bluegrass Festival & Antique Tractor Show
 830/589-7224 or 800/364-3833

14
NATALIA
 Market Trail
 830/665-5901 or 665-4310

OZONA
 Pioneer Heritage Day
 915/392-2837

RIOMEDINA
 Market Trail Day
 210/538-2441

14-15
AUSTIN
 Collectors Expo
 512/454-9882

Sami Show
 512/441-7133

BOERNE
 Key to the Hills Rod Run
 830/755-8226

Market Days
 830/816-1796

GRUENE
 Music Fest
 830/625-6081

15
BOERNE
 Boerne Village Band 140th Anniversary Concert
 830/249-3543 or 537-5978

16
BURNET
 Barbecue
 512/756-4297

18
AUSTIN
 Emerson String Quartet
 512/471-1444

19
LLAMO
 Country Opry
 915/247-5354

20-22
LEANDER
 Old Leander Days Festival
 512/259-1907

21
BLANCO
 Market Day
 830/833-5101

DEVINE
 Fall Festival
 830/663-2739

GOLDTHWAITE
 Quilt Show
 915/648-2660

KERRVILLE
 Auto Show
 830/792-8343

NEW BRAUNFELS
 Quilt Guild Workshop
 830/629-2943

21-22
COMFORT
 Village Antiques Show
 830/995-2884

GRUENE
 Market Days
 830/629-6441

MASON
 Old Mason Market
 915/347-1840

21-25
GOLDTHWAITE
 Texas Friendship Wagon Train
 915/648-3356

22
AUSTIN
 The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre
 512/471-1444

26
GEORGETOWN
 Haunted Hayride & Carnival
 512/930-3596

26-29
INGRAM
 Art Show
 830/367-5120

27-28
FREDERICKSBURG
 Food & Wine Fest
 830/997-8515

28
BANDERA
 Open Horse Show
 830/796-7871 or 800/364-3833

BURNET
 Confederate Air Force Dinner & Dance
 512/756-4297

Pumpkin Street Festival
 512/756-4297

FISCHER
 Harvest Moon Ball
 512/847-2201

GRANITE SHOALS
 Last Saturday Pickin'
 830/693-8408 or 693-5646

KYLE
 Fair on the Square
 512/262-2205

28-29
BOERNE
 Antique Show
 830/249-8000

COMFORT
 Halloween Walk
 830/995-3552

GEORGETOWN
 Horse Breeders Festival & Farm Tour
 512/930-4003

28-29
GRUENE
 Texas Clay Festival
 830/629-7975

28-29, 31
GEORGETOWN
 House of Horrors
 512/930-2595

29
SABINAL
 Country Jam
 830/988-2761

30
AUSTIN
 Nina Simone
 512/471-1444

31
AUSTIN
 Halloween on Sixth St
 512/476-8876 or 478-0098

Big Bend Country

1
EL PASO
 (began Sep 7)
 Shakespeare on-the-Rocks
 915/565-6900 or 800/915-8482

(began Sep 29)
 Shrine Circus
 915/562-0011

MIDLAND
 (began Sep 8)
Gypsy
 915/682-4111

ODESSA
 (began Sep 30)
 Powwow
 915/355-6682

6-7
EL PASO
 Border Folk Festival
 915/532-7273

PECOS
 Reeves Co Fall Fair & Livestock Show
 915/445-2406

World Championship Barbecue Cookoff
 915/445-2406

6-8
EL PASO
 Chamizal Festival
 915/532-7273

WICKETT
 Bluegrass Festival
 915/943-6765

6-28
MIDLAND
Dial M for Murder
 915/682-4111 or 570-4011

7
PECOS
 Fall Fair Concert
 915/445-2406

7-8
EL PASO
 Mona's Birthday at El Paso Zoo
 915/532-8156

FORT STOCKTON
 Pecos Co Fair
 915/336-2224

MIDLAND
 FINA-CAF Airsho 2000
 915/563-1000

14
MARATHON
 Quilt Show
 915/385-4516

MIDLAND
 Smash Fiesta
 915/520-0075

Writers' Wordshop
 915/520-4679

14-15
EL PASO
 Amigo Airsho
 915/532-5387

17-19
ODESSA
 Permian Basin International Oil Show
 915/367-1112

20-21
ALPINE
 Center for Big Bend Studies Conference
 915/837-8179

EL PASO
 Symphony
 915/532-3776

21
BIG BEND NATL PARK
 International Good Neighbor Day Fiesta
 915/477-2251

MIDLAND
 World Day of Poetry Festival
 915/694-7381

22
EL PASO
 Celebration of the Americas Concert
 915/831-2703

28
McCAMEY
 Chili Cookoff
 915/652-8202

31
MIDLAND
 Halloween Carnival
 915/570-6058



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The Guadalupe, with El Capitan's prominent prow to the right, glow in the evening sun above the salt flats and gypsum sand dunes of Hudspeth and Culberson counties.

Texas, ascends 6,791-foot Mt. Locke, crowned by the creamy-white domes of the University of Texas McDonald Observatory. The new Hobby-Eberly Telescope, one of the world's largest telescopes, sits atop neighboring Mt. Fowlkes.

Soon we reached the gated entrance to the Davis Mountains Preserve and entered a scene from *Bonanza*, complete with rough-hewn ranch buildings, golden pastures, and verdant waves of forest rising up the flanks of Mount Livermore. As we jounced along a jeep road, James explained how the Conservancy established the preserve in 1998 by acquiring most of the historic "U Up U Down" McIvor Ranch and then selling some of the acreage to private landowners who agreed to conservation easements to protect the fragile sky-island habitat. The Conservancy has added to the original

McIvor purchase, expanding the private preserve to more than 20,000 acres.

"Actually, I think this is better than a national park," said James. "We offer managed access through the Friends of the Davis Mountains Preserve. The growth of our Friends group will build the support needed to make this preserve something special for Texas."

After negotiating seven miles of rough roads, we parked at Bridge Gap, elevation 7,400 feet. From there, we began the two-mile hike to the top of Baldy Peak, nearly a thousand feet above us. Storm clouds massed all morning, and now a wall of wind-driven dust raced out of the west, cloaking the distant profile of the Guadalupe Mountains.

We pushed on through the wind and dust and reached the base of the 150-foot-high summit knob. James led the climb, hand-over-hand on loose boul-

ders, then up a 15-foot chimney to an exposed ridgeline. The wind buffeted us as we traversed the ridge and made it safely to the summit. Immediately I saw the hollowed-out depression and scattered rocks where the Livermore Cache had sat undisturbed for untold centuries.

"There's no better place to view the mountains of Texas than Mt. Livermore," said James. "On a clear day, you can see a hundred miles."

When snow clouds threatened, we scrambled down. "You just hiked the highest private peak in Texas," said James as we headed down the mountain.

Mountain Time in the Guadalupe

The following day, I left the magnificence of the Davis Mountains and followed Texas 54 north of Van Horn toward Guadalupe Mountains National Park. West of the highway rose the rim-



© LAURENCE PARENT

El Capitan Peak looks daunting even from on high—in this case, from the top of Texas, 8,749-foot Guadalupe Peak.

rock of the Sierra Diablo range, where Texas Rangers waged the last Indian battle in Texas against Apaches in 1881.

A textbook fossil reef, the Guadalupe compose the loftiest section of the horse-shoe-shaped, 400-mile-long Capitan Reef, formed 250 million years ago by lime-secreting marine life and then subsequently uplifted. Scores of chasms incise the range, including majestic McKittrick Canyon, where the colors of bigtooth maple, Texas walnut, gray oak, and velvet ash dazzle those who hike this riparian woodland each autumn.

The wind blows hard and often in the Guadalupe, especially in the spring or when fronts barrel in. Indeed, Guadalupe Pass (US 62/180) rates among the nation's windiest places.

Passing into Mountain Standard Time, I arrived at the park's Frijole Visitor Center, where the winds gusted 30 to 40 mph. There I met with park ranger Linda Slater, who noted, "The annual visitation here is 200,000, but I think most just come to use the bathrooms. You can

often hike here throughout the year without seeing any other people."

The remote Guadalupe provided a sanctuary for Mescalero Apaches until the U.S. cavalry drove them out by the late 1800s. Nowadays, the mountains offer a haven for hikers and backpackers, who head for the skyline views and forest solitude. "It's hard to describe the feeling I get from the Guadalupe," reflected Larry Henderson, a former superintendent who oversaw this park for 10 years. "It's a very special place. I can almost feel the spirits of the Apaches around me on a full-moon night."

Mule deer, elk, mountain lions, and black bear still roam the 88,000-acre park. All told, about 80 miles of trails, some of them relatively easy and level, crisscross the park. The Guadalupe Peak Trail, though, provides an especially popular challenge for those who want to reach the top of Texas. You can't get any higher in the state than this, short of flying. The steep, rocky route—8.4 miles round trip—climbs

a leg-pounding, heart-pumping 3,000 feet.

I headed up Guadalupe Peak from the Pine Springs trailhead shortly after noon. The wind badgered me all the way up, and I called it worse things than "Mariah." Soon I reached patches of snow amid the conifers. Sparkling calcite crystals embedded in limestone along the trail caught my eye. The view dazzled me even more, the sun-washed Permian Basin spreading away from the shadowy shoulders of the Guadalupe.

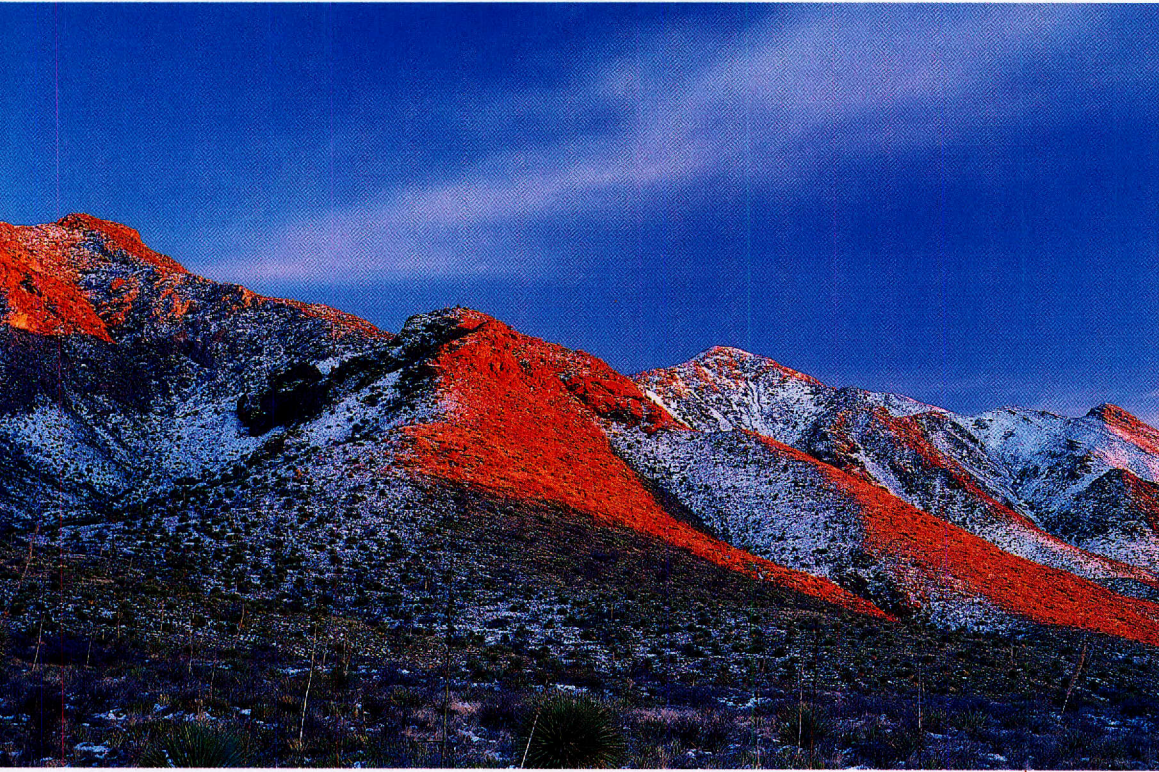
As I neared the top of Guadalupe Peak, a primal sight stopped me in my tracks: a half-dozen wild sheep with massive,

curved horns. Surely these were elusive desert bighorns, a species that died out in West Texas around 1960 and was later reintroduced to state-run wildlife management areas. As I snapped a couple of pic-



© JOE LOWERY

Bigtooth maples provide a vivid palette of fall color in McKittrick Canyon, one of the jewels of Guadalupe Mountains National Park.



North Franklin Peak basks in a veneer of snow and warm alpenglow.

tures, the sheep vanished like ghosts, bounding down the mountainside. Later, I learned they were aoudads, a North African species brought in for hunting leases in New Mexico.

Energized by the aoudad sighting, I scrambled up the rocky trail to the wind-scoured summit. Atop the peak stands an incongruous monument: a gleaming metal pyramid dedicated to the postal service and to aviators. At the base of the pyramid, I found the trail register, a tradition started a couple of years before the park opened in 1972. Hunkering down to escape the wind, I read some of the recent entries. "They say there are no mountains in Texas. I made it. I never felt so free and content. Thank you, Guadalupe," penned one hiker.

From the summit, I could see New Mexico's snow-capped, 12,000-foot Sierra Blanca soaring to the northwest; to the west, gleaming salt flats and the horn-shaped Cornudas Mountains; to the south, the Delaware, Sierra Diablo, and Davis mountains; and below, the dragon's spine of El Capitan and the entire Guadalupe range, a corrugation of crags and canyons.

I came down from the mountain and spent a cold, restless night at the Pine Springs campground, wondering if the wind would blow the stars away.

A Peak Experience in the Franklins

First light. On the road again, 101 miles to El Paso, the Franklin Mountains, and my final summit. I drove along one of the emptiest two-lane stretches in Texas, US 62/180 from Salt Flat to Cornudas, where I stopped for a green-chili omelet at the Cornudas Cafe. The cafe's quirky sign read: "Famous Cornudas Burger. \$5 blankets. Sale Sale Sale. Welcome to beautiful downtown Cornudas, Texas, population 5 or 6."

After breakfast, I drove on to Hueco Tanks State Historical Park, an 860-acre enclave of volcanic outcroppings adorned with more than 3,000 pictographs, some thousands of years old. The towering rock formations are honeycombed with *huecos*, natural basins that hold rainwater. Although the park is hemmed in by development, it remains a refuge for plant and animal life

and a spiritual sanctuary for Native Americans. According to park ranger Alex Mares, "There is evidence here of every known culture that has existed in the Southwest over the last 12,000 years."

Franklin Mountains State Park, my next destination, encompasses 24,000 acres of rugged desert mountains surrounded by El Paso. Jutting more than 3,000 feet above the city, the Franklins pierce the heart of El Paso like a mammoth arrowhead pointing to the Rio Grande. In the late 1970s, an El Paso developer planned to build a retirement center on North Franklin Peak. The threat of development mobilized local environmentalists to petition the State Legislature to turn the range into a park. The move was successful, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department established Franklin Mountains State Park in 1979 (see "El Paso's Peak Experience," October 1999).

Throughout El Paso's 400-year history, the mountains were deemed too harsh and inhospitable for settlement. Spanish and Mexican settlers avoided the range—then an Apache and Comanche stronghold—and by the late 19th Century, the Franklins had become a hideaway for outlaws. These days, the

Through the park's 400-year history, the mountains were deemed too harsh and inhospitable for settlement. Spanish and Mexican settlers avoided the range—then an Apache and Comanche stronghold—and by the late 19th Century, the Franklins had become a hideaway for outlaws. These days, the



A green-and-red pictograph at Hueco Tanks State Historical Park resembles a starry-eyed mask.



© LAURENCE PARENT

Sun and clouds create light and shadow on the Cuesta del Burro range, southwest of Marfa between Ranch Road 2810 and US 67.

pass is a peaceful but rugged haven for hikers heading up South Franklin Peak from the highway or en route to the park's Tom Mays Unit, a scenic area for hiking, mountain biking, picnicking, and camping, on the west side of the range.

Before driving up Transmountain Road, I stopped at the Wilderness Park Museum to orient myself to the area's prehistoric and historic cultures. I met with museum director Dr. Marc Thompson, who told me, "The mountains are one of the big draws of El Paso. It's good to know they are there, even if you never hike in them, just watching them change color throughout the day."

I, too, succumbed to the harsh, forbidding beauty of the Franklins as I drove through Smugglers Gap and down to the Tom Mays Unit. There, I met park ranger Lisa Hernández, who pointed out the 3.8-mile route to the top of 7,192-foot North Franklin Mountain, nearly 3,000 feet above the trailhead. "This is the only mountain range from which you can see three states—Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua, Mexico—and two nations."

I followed the West Cottonwood Spring trail and ascended a saddle called Mundy's Gap. Here, the trail widened

into a rock-strewn jeep track, which the developer had bulldozed shortly before the state shut him down. Beyond Mundy's Gap, a side trail branched to the right and began a series of switchbacks leading to the summit of North Franklin. Along the way, I saw no other hikers, only thickets of prickly pear, towering yuccas in full bloom, spindly ocotillo, and thorn-covered cholla. Soon, the rocky trail leveled off, and I stood atop North Franklin, king of all I surveyed.

The knife-edged Franklin ridge extended north to Anthony's Nose and beyond to the Organ Mountains in the Land of Enchantment. To the northeast, the Sacramento escarpment and snowcapped Sierra Blanca loomed over the ivory sliver of White Sands National Monument. Due east, the 6,000-foot Hueco Mountains dwarfed Hueco Tanks. Far away in the eastern haze hovered El Capitan's profile. South Franklin Mountain obscured the view of downtown El Paso, but farther south, across the river,

sprawled Ciudad Juárez, with its smoke-belching stacks and shanties creeping up barren mountainsides. Beyond Juárez, immense golden sand dunes stretched to the horizon.

Near the base of a nearby radio tower, I spotted a tattered zip-lock bag protruding from the rocks. Curious, I retrieved the bag and found a list of "Texas' Twenty Finest" peaks in order of prominence, along with an email address. A week later, I emailed the list's compiler and learned that he belonged to an organization called the "County Highpointers"—a loose-knit group of hiking enthusiasts driven by a passion to reach the high points of every county in the nation.

In discovering that list, I found a kindred spirit, another hiker who shared my desire to embark on journeys from lowland to lofty summit, enduring high winds, desert heat or winter cold, sore feet, and other discomforts along the way. But for what purpose?

Mountains are stairways to another world—not only the physical world of rock and skyline views, but also an inner world of emotion. The poet Lord Byron wrote, "High mountains are a feeling...." On the wild and windy summits of West Texas, I experienced adventure and camaraderie, challenge and accomplishment, and quiet moments of transcendence—feelings that came one step at a time along winding mountain paths. ★



© JANCE VARNELL

West Texas winds constantly shape the dune patterns at Monahans Sandhills State Park, between Pecos and Odessa.

Big Bend Country

The “fly-drive” approach to the Big Bend—arriving in El Paso’s or Midland’s international airport and then renting a car—can save a lot of driving time. For **El Paso** visitor information, call the El Paso Civic, Convention and Tourism Dept. at 915/534-0696 or 800/351-6024. A TxDOT Texas Travel Information Center is on I-10 near Anthony at the Texas-New Mexico state line. For **Midland/Odessa** visitor information, call the Midland Convention and Visitors Bureau at 915/683-3381 or 800/624-6435, and the Odessa Convention and Visitors Bureau at 915/333-7871 or 800/780-4678.

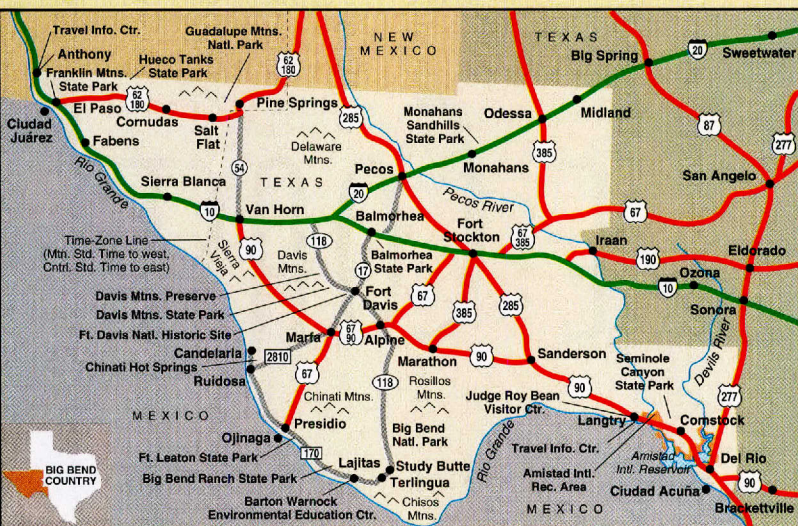
Westbound travelers can make good time by zooming along Interstate 10 to **Fort Stockton**, gateway to the Big Bend. Visit Fort Stockton’s Caboose Visitor Information Center, at exit 257 south of I-10 (915/336-8052), or the chamber of commerce at 1000 Railroad Ave. (915/336-2264 or 800/336-2166). If you like to dawdle, consider the route along US 90 through Del Rio, Amistad International Reservoir, Langtry, and beyond to Marathon.

For **Del Rio** information, call the Del Rio Chamber of Commerce at 830/775-3551 or 800/889-8149. Web site: www.drchamber.com. For information on Amistad Intl. Recreation Area, call 830/775-7491, or go to www.nps.gov/amis. Nearby Seminole Canyon State Historical Park (915/292-4464) on US 90 also abounds with rock art. Stop at TxDOT’s Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center (915/291-3340) in Langtry off US 90 for maps and information 7 days a week.

Marathon is anchored by the historic Gage Hotel (915/386-4205 or 800/884-4243). Call the Marathon Chamber of Commerce at 915/386-4516.

Terlingua abounds with adventure-travel outfitters. Nearby **Lajitas** (915/424-3471 or 800/944-9907), a resort town on the Rio Grande, has plenty of lodging and river-trip outfitters.

Presidio is a jumping-off point for Big Bend Ranch State Natural Area and trips into Mexico. Write to the Presidio Chamber of Com-



merce, Box 2497, Presidio 79845; 915/229-3199.

Add **Marfa** to your itinerary if you want to see the setting for *Giant*, the historic El Paisano Hotel, and the mysterious Marfa Lights (8 miles east of Marfa on US 90/67). Write to the Marfa Chamber of Commerce, Box 635, Marfa 79843; 800/650-9696.

Alpine, home of Sul Ross State University, is the de facto capital of the Big Bend and a burgeoning arts community. Visit the Alpine Chamber of Commerce at 106 N. 3rd St.; 915/837-2326 or 800/561-3735. Web site: www.alpinetexas.com and www.travelbigbend.com. The Woodward Agate Ranch (915/364-2271), popular with rockhounds, is 16 miles south of Alpine on Texas 118.

The **Fort Davis** area abounds with scenic and historic attractions, including the Hotel Limpia (915/426-3237 or 800/662-5517), Davis Mountains State Park (915/426-3337) and its Indian Lodge (915/426-3254), Fort Davis National Historic Site (915/426-3224), the McDonald Observatory (915/426-3640), and Prude Ranch (915/426-3202 or 800/458-6232). Write to the Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce, Box 378, Fort Davis 79734; 915/426-3015 or 800/524-3015.

Van Horn offers more than 500 hotel rooms. Visit the Van Horn Visitors Bureau, 1801 W. Broadway; 915/283-2682. Some 33 miles west of Van Horn, the town of Sierra Blanca offers additional lodging,

several restaurants, and an out-of-the-way gift shop worth visiting, Sunset Coyote Gallery (915/369-2031).

Featured Parks and Sites

Big Bend National Park (801,000 acres) can be reached from three highways: US 385 from Marathon, Texas 118 from Alpine, and FM 170 from Presidio. Chisos Mountains Lodge offers overnight lodging in the Basin (call 915/477-2291). Find tent camping and RV sites in the Basin, Rio Grande Village, and Castolon. Primitive and backcountry camping also available with free park permits. Call 915/477-2251. Web site: www.nps.gov/bibe.

Big Bend Ranch State Park (287,000 acres) extends north and west of Big Bend Natl. Park, along FM 170 (the River Road) and the Rio Grande between Lajitas and Presidio. Call 915/229-3416. Fort Leaton State Historical Park, 4 miles east of Presidio (915/229-3613), is the western gateway. Web site for state parks: www.tpwd.state.tx.us. The Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center in Lajitas (915/424-3327; open daily) is the park’s eastern gateway. Email: warnock@brooksdata.net.

Chinati Hot Springs is about 36 miles west of Presidio on FM 170. Call 915/229-4165. *Reservations recommended.*

The **Davis Mountains Preserve** is on Texas 118 North, beyond the

McDonald Observatory. The preserve is accessible to members of the Friends of the Davis Mountains Preserve organization; memberships start at \$25. Call 915/426-2390. Web site: www.texasnature.org.

The **Museum of the Big Bend** is on the campus of Sul Ross State University in Alpine. Call 915/837-8143 or 837-8730 (gift shop).

Guadalupe Mountains National Park is on US 62/180, about 110 miles east of El

Paso. Call 915/828-3251. Web site: www.nps.gov/gumo. The nearest food, lodging, and gasoline are 35 miles northeast, on US 62/180 in Whites City, New Mexico.

Hueco Tanks State Historical Park is 32 miles northeast of El Paso. Take US 62/180 east, and turn left on RR 2775. Call 915/857-1135. Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/hueco/hueco.htm.

El Paso’s **Wilderness Park Museum** is at 4301 Transmountain Rd. Call 915/755-4332.

Franklin Mountains State Park lies between I-10 and US 54 in the heart of El Paso. Transmountain Rd. (Texas 375) bisects the park. Call 915/566-6441. Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/franklin.htm.

Books, Etc.

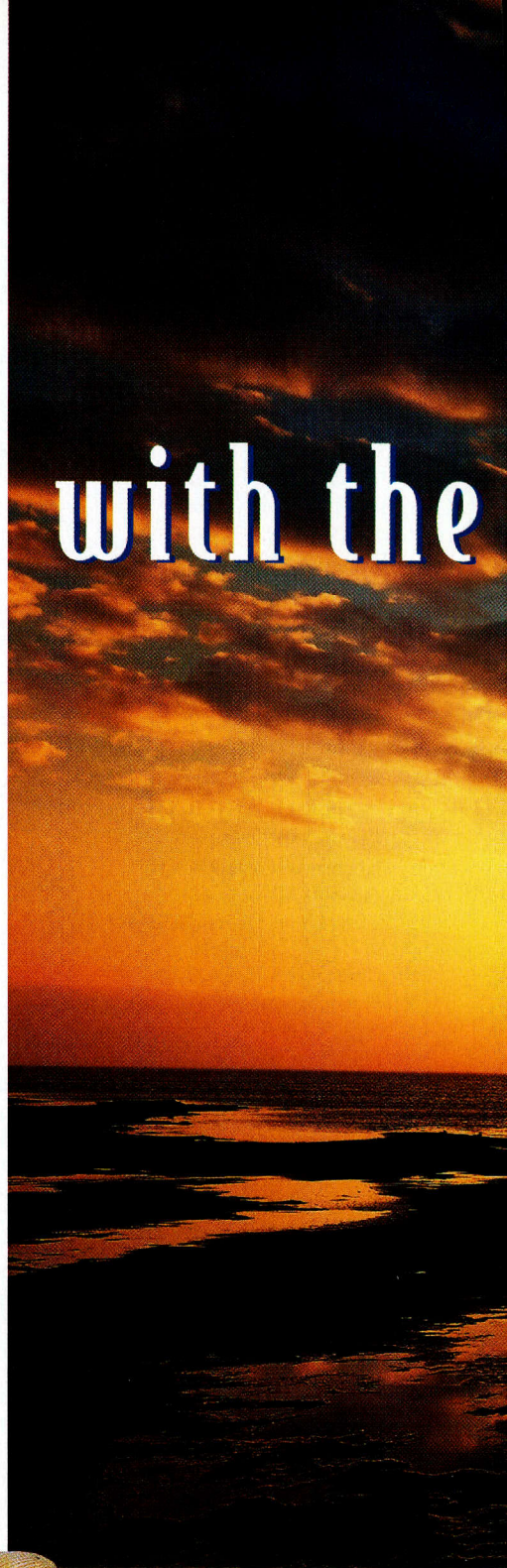
Look for the booklet *Hiker’s Guide to Trails of Big Bend National Park* (\$1.95) at national park visitor centers. For more in-depth guidance, refer to Laurence Parent’s *Hiking Big Bend National Park and Hiker’s Guide to Texas*, both from Falcon Press. For general West Texas travel information, get Eric O’Keefe’s *West Texas and the Big Bend* (Gulf Publishing Co.).

For a catalog of Big Bend books and maps, contact the Big Bend Natural History Assn. (BBNHA), Box 196, Big Bend National Park 79834; 915/477-2236. Web site: www.nps.gov/bibe/BBNHA/books.htm.



GULF
COAST

THE COAST



with the

BY CAROL
BARRINGTON

WANT TO EXPERIENCE the best of the Texas Gulf Coast region? Then rev up your decision-making skills—there’s a challenge ahead! Nearly every vacation activity known to man and Mother Nature thrives here, either at various locations along the state’s 624-mile-long coast or within a short drive inland.

So—where to go and what to do? It helps to know that this long strip of semitropical territory divides easily into three distinct sections.

The upper coast, dominated by the Houston metro area, bustles with man-made development, often adjacent to still-pristine natural habitat. Moving from an airboat ride or a wetlands kayaking trip to an evening of world-class ballet, opera, symphony, or theater requires only a change of clothes and a brief car trip. Those so inclined can even explore outer space en route.

Development diminishes as travel itineraries move down-

state. In sharp contrast to the upper coast, the Coastal Bend (central coast) territory generally remains a series of rural and ranching panoramas running south to the Gulf. Only in the Rockport and Corpus Christi areas does civilization bid for your attention and dollars via assorted museums, galleries, vintage homes, eateries, and lodgings. At those city limits, however, the roadscape reverts swiftly to open country, empty beaches,

© ROBERT MIHOVIL



At the Texas Seaport Museum in Galveston, don't miss a tour of the 1877 Tall Ship, *Elissa*.



**Divine Dining,
Smooth Sailing, and
Endless Exploration
Along the Texas Coast**

Most



© LAURENCE PARENT

Padre Island National Seashore: Sand beneath your feet, the sun dipping low on the horizon. You may think you've found paradise.

and some of the best birding habitat in the nation.

Largely because of vast cattle operations (the Kenedy Ranch alone sprawls over some 400,000 acres), the lower coast seems even quieter—except for 3½-mile-long South Padre Island, on the southernmost toe of Texas. Physically

separated from North Padre Island on the central coast by the man-made Mansfield Cut and a very fragile barrier island ecosystem in the best of times, this lively resort area draws more than 3 million visitors annually.

With the three Gulf Coast regions defined, your vacation selection process

narrows. Where will you find the most fun? Drawn from more than 30 years of Gulf Coast roaming, this author's idiosyncratic selection of the top travel experiences within each area follows. Some suggestions are well-known headliners, while others are new or on the brink of discovery—small journeys with large rewards.

Wherever you explore, be sure to travel Lone Star-style, stopping to chat as you go. Generally speaking, Texans are among the world's friendliest folks, generous with "insider" information that can shape your trips in unique and enriching ways.

Upper Gulf Coast

Beginning in Orange, there's no better introduction to the state's native coastal wildness than Super Gator Tours' exhilarating airboat rides through the Little Cypress Bayou and Blue Elbow Swamp portions of the Sabine River. Almost primeval, these wetlands also are the first stop on the new Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail (see sidebar, page 42). Alligators thrive here—you'll get close enough to toss them a marshmallow snack—and two-hour night trips spotlight foxes, raccoons, and other wildlife. Best time to go? From now through autumn's first frost.

Next stop should be one or more of Beaumont's nine museums. The Best of Show award goes to the McFaddin-Ward House, a majestic Beaux Arts mansion built in 1906 by oil-enriched folks with bottomless pockets. It gives a rare look at a now-vanished Texas lifestyle. For cultural contrast, also tour the John Jay French Museum, a restored 1845 trading post in the woods north of downtown. Only 60 years—little more than two generations—separate these two dramatically different pictures of Beaumont's past.

Nature-lovers glory in Sea Rim State Park, on the coast south of Port Arthur via Texas 87. Its 15,000-plus acres include three miles of beach, a 3,640-foot-long boardwalk through wetlands behind the dunes, and airboat rides through an extensive marsh. Rental canoes allow you to explore this wild terrain at your own pace.

Beachcomber alert: Pleistocene-era

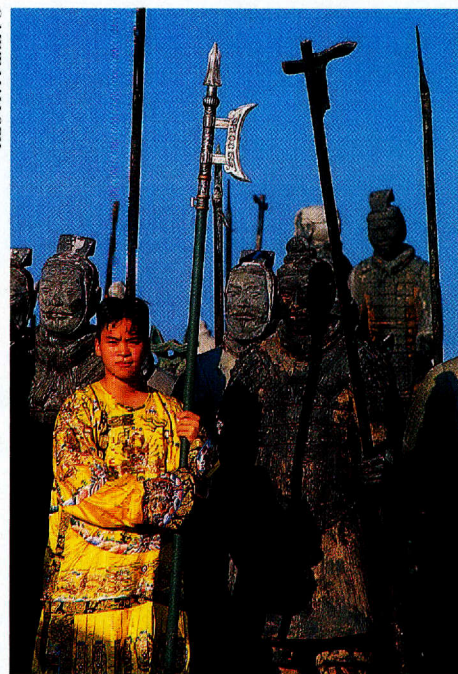
KEVIN STILLMAN



Once a sleepy fishing town, Kemah now bustles with flashy boats and great restaurants. The new Kemah Boardwalk (above), a 14-acre entertainment area on the Galveston Bay waterfront, features restaurants, shops, and even a Ferris wheel.



© MIKE MALLORY



© GEORGE HOSEK

The Houston metroplex boasts the state's largest collection of first-class museums, restaurants, shops, theaters, and hotels, as well as unusual attractions like Forbidden Gardens, an outdoor museum in Katy that replicates scenes from Imperial China.

fossil finds—bits and bones attributed to sloths, giant armadillos, mastodons, mammoths, and tapirs, among other extinct life forms—often wash up along more than 10 miles of beach, starting about 15 miles west of Sabine Pass. Best hunting areas stretch from the southern reaches of Sea Rim State Park (there's a mastodon tooth on display in the park's interpretive center) to well within the borders of McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge. Tip: Best finds follow big storms.

Warning: Hunt for fossils only in areas accessed by the paved portion of Texas 87, which extends approximately five miles south of Sea Rim State Park. Farther south, a stretch of the highway remains temporarily closed. Although it's possible to drive farther down the beach at low tide, it's easy to get stuck a long way from help, even with four-wheel drive. And remember, it's illegal to remove fossils or artifacts from any state park property.

Love a bargain and/or antiques? Don't miss Old Time Trade Days in Winnie, a huge event held on the first Friday-Sunday after the first Monday of the month. That timing draws many of the dealers from First Monday at Canton—more than 700 are scheduled for October. And you won't be the only bargain hunter. "We get an average of 10,000 people every month," notes Trade Days' founder Larry Tinkle, "and antiques are the backbone of our business." Fun tip: Don't miss Mr. Tinkle's fancy, \$80,000 bathrooms.

Continuing southwest via some jogs to the coast and/or Galveston Bay, you can catch the autumn migrations of birds, dragonflies, hawks, and monarch butterflies at either High Island or Smith Point in the Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area—prime time is around October 1. From either, wend your way to Texas 87 for a drive to the southern end of Bolivar Peninsula. Paved beachside roads are rare in Texas, so roll down your windows and breathe the salt air.

If you're hungry, stop at the Stingaree in Crystal Beach. Specials at this eatery include snapper throats (a delicacy), barbecued and soft-shelled crab, and (after November 1) fresh bay oysters. In early

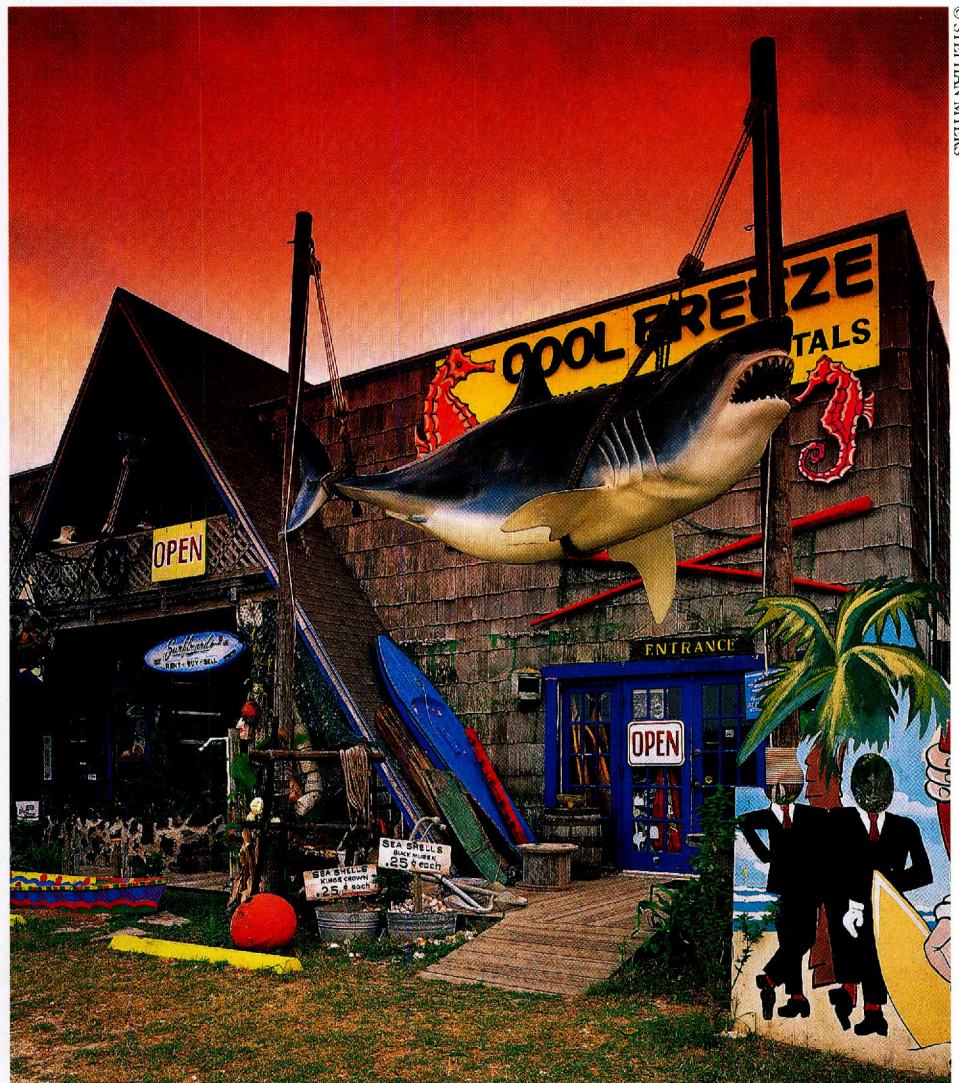
season, those juicy, plump little mollusks usually go for less than three dollars a dozen here.

Next, ride the free Bolivar ferry to Galveston Island, where, in addition to 32 miles of beachfront, the major must-sees include the Strand National Historic Landmark District; the 1877 Tall Ship, *Elissa* (docked at the Texas Seaport Museum); and three historic house-museums (Moody Mansion, Ashton Villa, and the Bishop's Palace), known collectively as the Broadway Beauties. Marvel also at Moody Gardens, an \$18 million family-learning project with three huge glass pyramids of fun (an aquarium, a rainforest, and a discovery museum). Then, when your Galveston day's done, consider buying a bucket of chick-

en to eat while dangling your legs over the Seawall, tossing morsels to the gulls—the perfect end to a Galveston day.

Next stop: Kemah, a bayside village midway between Galveston and Houston. Here, a 14-acre entertainment-and-eatery complex called Kemah Boardwalk offers waterside dining, an old-fashioned carousel and Ferris wheel for the kids, and a continuous boat parade—in all, some of the best people-watching and seafood around.

Then it's on to Space Center Houston, a multimillion-dollar humanization of America's space program in nearby Clear Lake. Once you've landed a space shuttle, intercepted a runaway satellite, and worked at zero gravity, ride the tram to Rocket Park and Mission Control at adjacent Johnson Space Center.



Plenty of affordable lodging, funky eateries, souvenir shops, and topnotch beach-strolling make Port Aransas a quintessential anytime getaway.

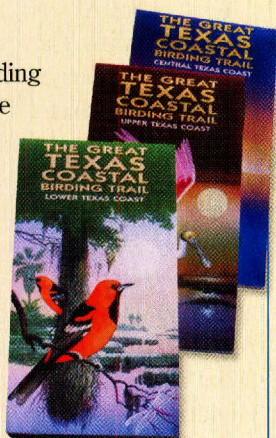
TAKING WING The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail Maps

The richest birding territory in the nation, the

Texas Gulf Coast region serves as the permanent or migratory home to more than 540 species. According to the late Roger Tory Peterson, the noted birding authority, this is three-quarters of the species known to occur between the Mexican and Canadian borders and nearly as many as have been listed for all of Europe.

Tapping into this gift of nature is now a breeze, thanks to the three Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail maps available from the state of Texas. Don't know an oriole from an owl or a woodpecker from a warbler? Worry not. Covering the upper, central, and lower coasts respectively, these maps not only beautifully illustrate many of the individual species to aid with identifications, but they also help itinerary planning via well-organized, color-coded loops.

Specifics as to where and when to go, as well as information about special tours and lodgings, earn these maps a permanent home in every traveler's car. They'll also keep you out of trespassing trouble by detailing the locations that allow access to private lands.



Some map mentions you might not find on your own:

- **Fennessey Ranch Nature Tours**, which explore private acreage near Refugio (enormous numbers of hummingbirds, sandhill cranes, sparrows, ducks, and other species in season).
- **Boating excursions** from Port Aransas to The Nature Conservancy of Texas' Shamrock Island, the summer nesting home of herons, egrets, and spoonbills.
- **Sanborn's Tours** of the Kenedy Ranch in Sarita, south of Corpus Christi (noted for numerous sightings of the rare ferruginous pygmy-owl, Audubon's oriole, northern beardless tyrannulet, and other species).
- **King Ranch Nature Trails**, which show off far more of this storied ranch than the standard visitor's loop.
- **The Arroyo Queen's** interpretive nature cruises down the Arroyo Colorado, departing from the Port of Harlingen.
- **BB&B—bed, breakfast, and birding**—at the outstanding Inn at Chachalaca Bend, in Los Fresnos, and at The Inn at El Canelo, near Raymondville. Those elusive ferruginous pygmy-owls perch in the backyard of the latter, easy to see even without binoculars.

Want information on access to these special places and more? Request a set of The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail maps by calling (toll-free) 888/TX-BIRDS (892-4737).

—Carol Barrington

In Houston proper, don't miss a tour of downtown's new, \$280 million Enron Field, America's current "cutting edge" baseball stadium, and do arrange advance tickets for at least one performance in the city's thriving Theater District. Space City's symphony, opera, ballet, and Alley Theatre all have won worldwide acclaim, and new seasons

open for all this fall. Other absolute must-sees include Bayou Bend, Miss Ima Hogg's mansion-turned-museum in the swanky River Oaks residential district, and shopping in the *très* upscale Galleria Uptown area.

Houston's hinterlands hold a few topnotch surprises, as well. Example: Where else might you find 6,000 terra-

cotta soldiers, each individually rendered at half life-size, standing at attention in a former rice field? Perfectly replicating the famed Xian burial pits of China's first emperor, this and more await visitors to Forbidden Gardens, a beautifully executed open-air museum that sprawls over 40 acres of Katy prairie, a few miles west of Houston. Handmade in China by gifted artisans who then installed their work on-site, exhibits here replicate major scenes from China's history, starting in the 3rd Century B.C.

Central Coast Region

Until 1991, the fishing village of Port O'Connor (locally referred to as "POC") had only a nice beach to offer tourists, and few made the long trip down Texas 185 more than once. Then Texas Parks and Wildlife established the ferry to Matagorda Island State Park from POC's quiet waterfront.

An outstanding example of "build it and they will come," that ferry-and-island experience now attracts more than 50,000 visitors to POC annually. Hearing opportunity's knock, the town has responded with an outstanding waterfront restaurant (Clark's Seafood—dolphins often entertain those who dine outside on the deck), a new motel (Captain's Quarters), and several eco-tours into the coastal bays.

Robbie Gregory's Spoonbill Express, for example, shuttles small groups (via boats) to the shores of Sundown Island, one of several natural sanctuaries in

© L.F. VAN LANDINGHAM



The Texas Gulf Coast is the richest birding territory in the nation. Here, a roseate spoonbill displays its plumage.

southern Matagorda Bay. Tri-colored herons, brown pelicans, roseate spoonbills, white ibis—even whooping cranes in winter—nest here, so come with questions and cameras.

Rare, endangered, and very shy, whoopers love this central part of the Texas coast, particularly the Laguna Madre side of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. You'll find additional viewing tours departing from the Rockport/Fulton Beach area and from Port Aransas from mid-December through March.

In contrast to tiny Port O'Connor, Corpus Christi weighs in as the region's tourism heavyweight, taking full advan-

tage of its sparkling and protected bay. Beaches abound, as do rentals for nearly every toy that floats, from jet skis and paddleboats to small catamarans. Three whopper attractions on the bayfront—the Art Museum of South Texas, the massive U.S.S. *Lexington* Museum, and the outstanding Texas State Aquarium—make this city a multiday exploration. Coming soon at the latter: a \$13 million, indoor-outdoor dolphin extravaganza. In the meantime, don't miss the luminescent jellyfish and sea-horse exhibits or the rare white alligator.

Corpus Christi also makes a great base for excursions into the nearby

towns. Short drives bring you to the artsy little town of Rockport (great art center, wade-fishing, and scads of brown pelicans) and its sidekick suburb of Fulton Beach (don't miss the Fulton Mansion, a \$100,000 wonder when it was built in 1876). Nearby, you can catch the free ferry to Port Aransas on the northern tip of Mustang Island.

Best described as a "state of mind," tiny Port Aransas was for years treasured by locals as a funky, slow-down spot where progress was a sometime thing. Alas, this getaway definitely has been "discovered." It's still fun, but don't come on nice-weather weekends without



© STEPHAN MEYERS

South Padre Island offers almost every activity in the book. In between parasailing, horseback riding, shopping, and fine dining, most visitors succumb to Nature's magic—after all, nothing beats walking on the beach, listening to the crash of waves.



Nicknamed the “Blue Ghost” by Tokyo Rose for her stealth during World War II, the U.S.S. Lexington now calls Corpus Christi Bay home. Tour the great ship during your next Gulf Coast trip.

advance reservations for lodgings, and for dining at Beulah’s, one of the more inventive eateries on the coast. Other Port Aransas play includes party fishing in both the bay and the Gulf, dolphin watches, birding and nature tours, and day trips via jetty boat to primitive San José Island (locally called St. Jo).

Driving south, the 18-mile length of Mustang Island—watch for ultralight aircraft riding the tide-line as you go—brings you to North Padre Island, gateway to Padre Island National Seashore. Primarily an untracked, 80-mile reach of dunes, seagrass, and endless surf, this barrier-island park has campgrounds, food concessions, showers, and first-aid facilities only near the entrance. After that, you’re on your own to explore what is considered the finest and largest natural seashore in the nation.

Lower Gulf Coast

Tourism in this region translates to South Padre Island. A license to relax and just have fun seems to settle over visitors as they crest the Queen Isabella Causeway from the mainland.

That human impact, however, triggers a constant and relatively successful bal-

ancing act between the proliferation of commercial projects versus the protection of Nature’s gifts—a tough challenge for what is only a half-mile-wide sliver of sand. All development in this “Riviera of Texas” borders five miles of paved road at South Padre’s southern tip, leaving the rest of the island’s 29 miles of beach and dunes only to those who rent beach buggies or four-wheel-drive jeeps.

Sandwiched between long lines of charging waves on the Gulf side and the calmer Laguna Madre on the other, South Padre offers the best of both watery worlds. Beautiful beaches, surf fishing, horseback riding at the water’s edge, boating, parasailing—the activity list doesn’t miss a trick. Laguna Madre’s steady breezes and wide reaches lure world-class windsurfers (it’s a great place to learn, as well), and its pro-

tected nature also provides nearly 100 linear miles of ideal bird and marine habitat. Guided trips that explore this estuary’s natural side—and guarantee to acquaint you with entire families of dolphins—can be arranged through Colley’s Fins to Feathers guided boat tours.

Lodging options range from bed and breakfast (both Casa de Siesta and the Brown Pelican Inn are outstanding) to motels and condos, and possible day trips include a short drive to the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville or a 25-mile jaunt over the border to Matamoros. Golfer alert: The South Padre Island Golf Club is a challenging 18-hole, par-72, championship course, with a beautiful view of the island, just 15 minutes away on the mainland.

Galveston, Corpus Christi, and South Padre tourism meccas aside, the most tantalizing thing about the Texas Gulf Coast is the limited vehicular access. Commercial development thus discouraged, much of the shore area remains as wild as when French explorer La Salle came ashore in the late 17th Century.

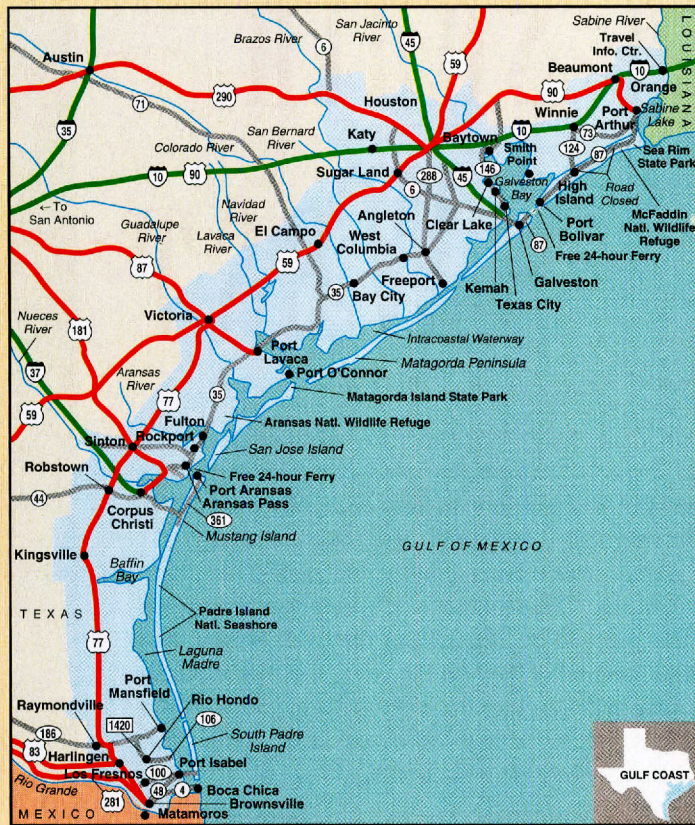
Protected by a long stream of barrier islands and constantly reshaped by storms, those long stretches of beach scratch that almost universal human itch



Lots of folks like to tour Galveston Island by bicycle. Via bike (rent one or bring your own), you can take in the island’s hundreds of historical homes at a leisurely pace.

to walk where there are no other footprints. When you do so, it’s somehow comforting to know that even yours will disappear with the next tide. ★

Gulf Coast



Super Gator (Airboat) Tours operate year round at 10, 12, 2, and 4, or on request. Cost (includes tax): \$25.50, \$20.41 students and age 60 and older, \$12.88 age 12 and younger. Group rates available. *Reservations required.* Wheelchair accessible. Write to 108 E. Lutchter, Orange 77632; 409/883-7725 or 800/241-6390. Web site: www.pnx.com/gator.

The **McFaddin-Ward House** opens year round. Hours: Tue-Sat 10-4, Sun 1-4. Admission: \$3; children allowed only in Carriage House. No credit cards. Begin tour at the Visitor's Center, 1906 Calder. Wheelchair accessible. Write to 725 3rd St., Beaumont 77701; 409/832-2134. Web site: www.mcfaddin-ward.org.

The **John Jay French Museum** opens year round. Hours: Tue-Sat 10-4. Admission: \$3, \$2 age 55 and older, \$1 for students. First floor is wheelchair accessible. Write to 3025 French Rd., Beaumont 77706; 409/898-3267.

For additional information on the lower East Texas region, contact the following:

Beaumont Convention and Visitors Bureau, 801 Main St., City Hall, Ste. 100, Beaumont 77701; 409/880-3749 or 800/392-4401. Web site: www.beaumontcvb.com.

Port Arthur Convention and Visitors Bureau, 3401 Cultural Center Dr., Port Arthur 77642; 409/985-7822 or 800/235-7822. Web site: www.portarthurtexas.com.

Sea Rim State Park opens daily year round 8 a.m.-10 p.m. Admission: \$2, free age 12 and younger. Airboat rides available Mar-Dec (reservations required Mar-Apr and Sep-Dec). Cost: \$13.50, \$8.50 ages 6-11. Partially wheelchair accessible. Write to Box 1066, Sabine Pass 77655; 409/971-2559. Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Find **Old Time Trade Days** at exit 829 on I-10 in Winnie. Hours: 8-5 on Fri-Sun following the first Mon. of the month, year round. Wheelchair accessible. Write to 14902 FM 1663, Winnie 77665; 409/296-3300 or 892-4000.

Stingaree Restaurant opens Wed-Sun 11-9 from Labor Day until school is out, weather permitting, and daily during summer. Partially wheelchair accessible. Write to 1295 Stingaree Rd., Crystal Beach 77650; 409/684-2731.

For information on all Galveston tourist attractions, contact the **Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau**, 2428 Seawall Blvd., Galveston 77550; 409/763-4311 or 888/GAL-ISLE. Web site: www.galvestoncvb.com.

Kemah Boardwalk's shops and restaurants open daily. For additional information, write to the Clear Lake-NASA Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, 1201 NASA Rd. 1, Houston 77058; 281/488-7676 or 800/844-LAKE.

Space Center Houston opens daily. Admission: \$13.95, \$9.95 ages 4-11, \$12.95 age 65 and older, free age 3 and younger. Wheelchair accessible. Write to 1601 NASA Rd. 1, Clear Lake 77058; 281/244-2100 or 800/972-0369. Web site: www.spacecenter.org.

For information on Houston attractions and lodgings, write

to the **Greater Houston Convention & Visitors Bureau**, 901 Bagby, Ste. 100, Houston 77002; 713/437-5200 or 800/4-HOUSTON.

Forbidden Gardens

opens Wed-Sun 10-5 year round (10-7 summer), weather permitting. Admission: \$10, \$5 ages 6-18 and age 60 and older, free age 5 and younger. Wheelchair accessible. Write to 23500 Franz Rd., Katy 77493; 281/347-8000. Web site: www.forbidden-gardens.com.

For information on Port O'Connor, write to the **Port O'Connor Chamber of Commerce**, Box 701, Port O'Connor 77982; 361/983-2898.

Captain Robbie Gregory's **Spoonbill Express** tours operate on weekends throughout the

year. Call 361/983-2862. Web site: www.captainsquartersmotel.org.

For information about **Matagorda Island State Park**, write to the Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept., 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin 78744; 800/792-1112. Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

For information on Rockport/Fulton Beach, write to the **Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce**, 404 Broadway, Rockport 78382; 361/729-6445.

For information on Corpus Christi and Padre Island Natl. Seashore, write to the **Corpus Christi Convention & Visitors Bureau**, 1823 N. Chaparral, Corpus Christi 78401; 361/881-1888 or 800/766-BEACH. Web site: www.corpuschristi-tx-cvb.org.

For information on Port Aransas and Mustang Island, write to the **Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce**, 421 W. Cotter, Port Aransas 78373; 361/749-5919 or 800/452-6278. Web site: www.portaransas.org.

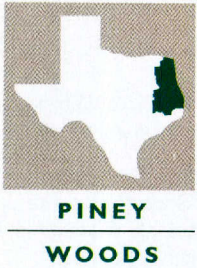
Colley's Fins to Feathers operates birding tours of Laguna Madre, as well as dolphin encounters and



See alligators and other critters at **Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge in Anahuac (409/267-3337)**.

beachcombing tours. For information and prices, call 956/943-BIRD or 454-4799. Web site: www.fin2feather.com.

For information on South Padre Island, write to the **South Padre Island Convention & Visitors Bureau**, 600 Padre Blvd., South Padre Island 78597; 956/761-6433 or 800/SO-PADRE. Web site: www.sopadre.com.

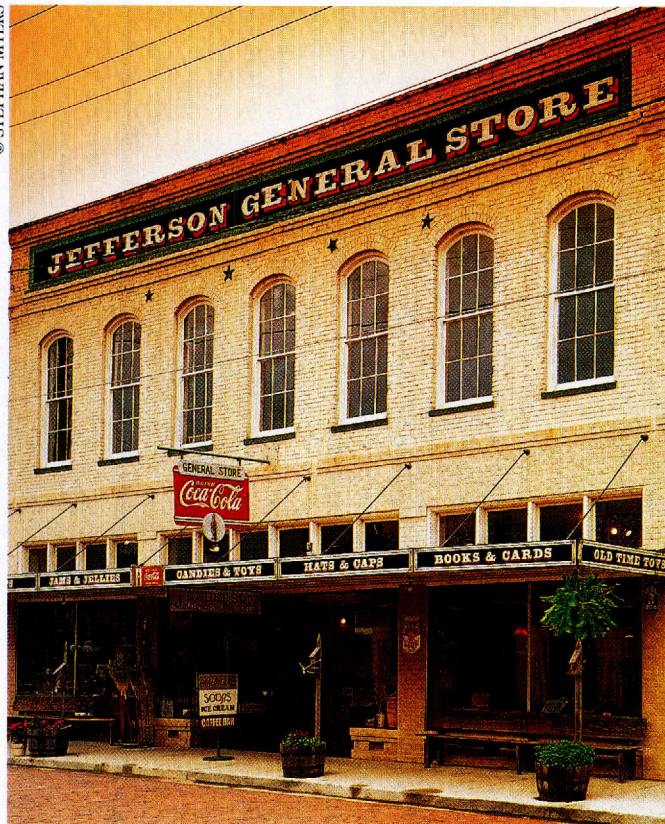


Old South of the WEST

BY JANET R.
EDWARDS

If it's *big blue skies*, sun-baked deserts, limestone terraces, and prickly pear cactus, it's gotta be Texas. But fragrant forests filled with lofty pines, evergreen magnolias, and giant cypresses? "Nah...you're just joking," folks living outside our state (and many within) might say. "There's too much water and too many trees for this place to be Texas." But they'd be wrong. And that's not all. Instead of beef on the hoof, it's timber on the hills they raise in the eastern third of the state. And you'll discover that East Texans devour more fresh, fried catfish than barbecued ribs at roadside restaurants.

© STEPHAN MYERS



Jefferson General Store (903/665-8481) contains a potpourri of Texas-style sundries, gifts, and gadgets. It also serves ice cream and other goodies from an old-fashioned soda fountain.

© JOE LOWERY



For some folks,
the East Texas
Piney Woods are
a quiet little
piece of heaven.



Good morning, sunshine. Davy Crockett National Forest's neighborhoods of woods demand that you get out and enjoy nature's autumn art.

Deep in the woods, floppy-eared hunting dogs behave like beloved kinfolk, and rows of fully rigged fishing poles lean up against the front porch. Cattle guards and man-made fences prove rare. Instead of hearing “Howdy, y’all,” visitors are likely greeted by locals with a smile and a nod of the head.

Other parts of Texas hold their own special appeal, yet few spots can dazzle the eye like East Texas, be it a blizzard

of snow-white dogwood blossoms in spring, or the fluttering, fireball foliage of sugar maples in autumn. This is a land of verdant, rolling hills layered in deep, sandy soils, broad, bass-filled lakes, and clear, spirited streams; a region that appears for all the world like a small, but luscious slice of the “Old South.” And for some folks, it’s a quiet little piece of heaven.

Informally defined as the region where pine trees flourish, East Texas’ irregular

boundaries run roughly from west of Texarkana to Tyler, Palestine, and Huntsville. Moving on just north of Houston, the deep forest travels due east to the Sabine River (and beyond the Louisiana border), then heads north back to Texarkana.

The Caddo Indians settled here about a thousand years ago, followed in the 1700s by pioneers from Spain, France, and Mexico. By the early 1800s, the United States successfully defended its

own claim to the region, thanks to the efforts of men like Sam Houston. Steamboat trade on Big Cypress Bayou (still navigable today within Caddo Lake) made cotton farming here profitable, but the railroads soon rumbled in, hauling cotton and other crops, iron ore, and tons of fresh-cut lumber to the north. By the 1930s, settlers discovered that Mother Nature had deposited even greater riches underground, with oil strikes in Longview and Kilgore fueling a boom in local economies that lasted for decades.

East Texas is not just defined by its trees, East Texas *is* the trees. Taking advantage of any bare soil, they sprout billions of leaves to purify the air and populate it with shades of green too subtle to name, too radiant to ignore. Even the highways seem beholden to the trees—ribbons of pavement that narrowly cleave the forest as if drawn by the teeth of a giant comb.

Though bustling, business-minded cities dot the region (yet no city here reaches a population of 100,000), much of East Texas' charm is most poignantly felt in its smaller towns. Crafters, collectors, history buffs, and the merely curious may seek untold treasures from the region's past in local antique shops, junk stores, and flea

STAN WILLIAMS

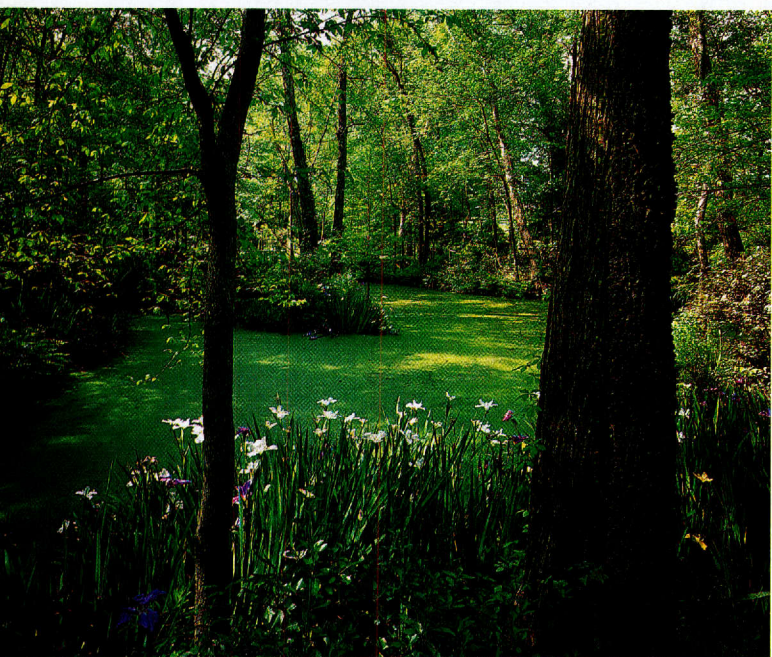


Don't mean a thang if it ain't got that twang. Country Plus, the house band at Texarkana's Oaklawn Opry (903/838-3333), performs regularly on Saturday nights.

markets, all of which offer an inventory that can easily outdo any "new stuff" you find in shopping centers elsewhere.

Despite the region's obvious and abundant natural resources, the tons of asphalt pouring forth from the state's mega-cities haven't materialized this far yet, leaving much of the area's Southern charm and bucolic beauty unscathed. Time moves to a different tempo in these parts, more in tune with the seasonal cycles of life. So, be ready to relax when you get here. Let yourself marvel at town squares still paved in old red bricks, quaint country cottages nestled in pines, and ambrosial woodlands interspersed with rivers, lakes, and flower-strewn meadows.

© STEPHAN MEYERS



Mount Pleasant's five-acre Tankersley Gardens provides sanctuary for more than 100 different plant species, including the lovely irises in the foreground.

TEXARKANA

A good place to begin a tour of East Texas is in Texarkana, the "way-northeast" city whose main artery, State Line Avenue, hails from Arkansas on one side of the street and hollers from Texas on the other. Even the community's Bi-State Justice Center, situated in a downtown rotunda, lies smack on the mid-

dle of the state line. Locals pay these anomalies no mind, pleasantly coexisting in the two-state culture.

Architecture and music get special nods in Texarkana. For instance, there's the city's Ace of Clubs House, a three-story 1885 home in the shape of a three-leaf clover or club, reportedly built with winnings from a poker game. Also speaking with architectural eloquence of Texarkana's stylish past is the Victorian House, built in 1898 and recently renovated into a splendid gift shop and tea room. Musical harmony hums in the city on the stage of the Oaklawn Opry, where regional musicians show off their talent every weekend for a loyal, family-oriented crowd.

MOUNT PLEASANT

Following a modified "s"-curve on the map southwest from Texarkana, you'll find a little town whose personality exceeds even the promise of its name. The streets of Mount Pleasant fairly shine with civic pride and attention to details like colorful storefronts, friendly coffee shops, and comfy sitting spots that make visitors feel welcome. I could hardly pull myself away from Antiques and Uniques, a cozy shop offering creamy cheesecakes, gifts, and ample supplies for the family photo album and scrapbook crafter. I also enjoyed indulging my affection for the town's Tankersley Gardens, where more than 100 species of plants, including Louisiana irises, dogwoods, and azaleas, set

a glorious stage (both outdoor and indoor) for weddings and other celebrations.

TYLER

You won't need rose-tinted glasses to relish this place. America's favorite flowers grow in abundance fresh on the stem, in a kaleidoscope of colors at the Tyler Municipal Rose Garden and Rose Center. The city also nurtures a fine collection of exotic animal life at its Caldwell Zoo. But when I hankered for some outdoor camping, I headed for nearby Tyler State Park, where picture-perfect lakeside campsites, paddleboat rides, and shady forest trails can make any outing a rejuvenating experience.

KILGORE

Can't miss 'em. Lined up like silver trophies, more than a dozen oil derricks gleam in the sun along this town's famous "World's Richest Acre," a park just off Kilgore's downtown square (see *Texas Highways*, April 2000). In this tiny block, the town once boasted the greatest concentration of oil derricks in the world, a field that produced more than 2.5 million barrels of oil between the mid-Thirties and the mid-Sixties. As impressive as these now-silent monuments are, I understood



© LAURENCE PARENT

Just north of Tyler, on nearly 1,000 Smith County acres, Tyler State Park provides a forested retreat in the Piney Woods.

the story much better after visiting the nearby East Texas Oil Museum. Here, a street scene from the town's oil-boom days looks and sounds so real I worried about getting mud on my shoes. An awesome "elevator" ride to the earth's oil-laden, interior depths and humorous soliloquies by animated characters like the town's former bank president also make this museum memorable.

LONGVIEW

A sleepy agricultural community of the 1850s and thriving oil town of the 1930s, Longview today bustles with more than 200 industries, as well as Le Tourneau University. The Gregg County Historical Museum, housed in an elegant downtown bank dating to

1910, is a great place to find out how energetic locals made the city prosper. You'll see detailed exhibits on the timber industry, farming, tool manufacturing, banking, railroading, and homemaking.

MARSHALL

East of Longview, this city marshals up one of the state's finest selections of clay pottery (as well as other items for the home—like pots, pans, dishes, and glassware) at the 80,000-square-foot Marshall Pottery and Museum. Downtown, decorative icons from the past also draw the eye: the Victorian-style 1896 Ginocchio Hotel and the city's restored 1912 T&P Railstation, where Amtrak trains still arrive and depart. The Starr Family State Historic Site, a two-story mansion set off by full-length, dual-level verandahs and a white picket fence, was sturdily and expertly built in 1870 of red heart pine by James F. Starr, son of Dr. James Harper Starr, an early financier in the state and Secretary of the Treasury for the Republic of Texas.



Texarkana's famous Ace of Clubs House can't be trumped as an East Texas example of 19th-Century Italianate-Victorian architecture.



© RICHARD REYNOLDS

Popular Huntsville State Park attracts nearly a half-million visitors a year.

JEFFERSON

If only the streets of this town could talk! More than 30 buildings in the downtown area bear State Historical Medallions. Many of these brick and wooden structures now serve as bed-and-breakfast inns, upscale restaurants, and private residences. Built during the town's heyday in the 1840s, when steamboat traffic from New Orleans fattened Jefferson's coffers, each edifice boasts its own evocative tale. Narrated tours, available by trolley, horse-drawn carriage, or wagon, will keep you captivated, but if you're like me, you'll spend most of your time prowling the fabulous antique and "junk-tique" stores, many of which offer good bargains.

RUSK/PALESTINE

A childhood fascination with trains made a ride on the Texas State Railroad a poignant experience for me (see "Iron Horse Adventure," June 1999).

Antique steam and diesel engines haul vintage passenger coaches between Rusk and Palestine, a 25-mile cruise past luxuriant, rolling woodlands, scenic ponds, and quiet homesteads. Next time, I plan to bring my bicycle along (with advance permission) for the journey from Palestine to Rusk, then cycle back. Footbridge Park, in Rusk, features a 546-foot walking bridge, originally erected in 1861, and recently rebuilt, for foot passage across a valley in rainy weather.

NACOGDOCHES

East of Rusk/Palestine lies a venerable town named for the Nacogdoche Indian tribe that once

lived here. By the mid-1700s, Nacogdoches found itself the destination for French explorers and Spanish missionaries, becoming an established trading post in 1779. Red brick, blanketing both storefronts and streets downtown, gives Nacogdoches a colonial feel, reminiscent of old Philadelphia.

It's easy to navigate the town, since numerous eateries, shopping centers, and even Stephen F. Austin State University lie right on the main thoroughfare. I always make a beeline for La Hacienda Restaurant, which serves one of the state's most delectable tortilla soups, along with other Mexican-food specialties. Texas-history bugs will also enjoy a trip to

Millard's Crossing, a few miles north of the city, where pioneer artifacts and antiques populate a re-created 19th-Century settlement (log cabins to Victorian mansions).

LUFKIN

There's a whole lot to like about Lufkin, which lies about 30 miles south of Nacogdoches. Diverse shopping destinations, a healthy economy, and easy access to both forest and lake recreational areas make this friendly town an ideal domicile or place to visit. I found myself mesmerized by the peacocks at the Ellen Trout Zoo, though there are plenty of other fascinating creatures here, including white rhinos, American alligators, and giraffes. And a visit to the city's Texas Forestry Museum made me realize the startling, almost unbearable hardships and dangers faced by early loggers and their families who were pioneers in the region.

SAN AUGUSTINE

The first time I drove through this town, about 30 miles east of Lufkin, I couldn't shake the feeling that many generations had come and gone here. As it turns out, San Augustine has indeed set the stage for more than a molehill of history, witnessing the escapades of such luminaries as Davy Crockett, Sam Houston, and J. Pinckney Henderson, Texas' first governor. El Camino Real

© STEPHAN MYERS



You can go to the head of the class at this Millard's Crossing log-cabin school in Nacogdoches.

(also known as the Old San Antonio Road or the Royal Highway), the first international highway in North America, passes through town (this portion is designated as Texas 21 today). This route follows the trail established in 1690 for travel between Mexico, San Antonio, and St. Augustine, Florida.

The Ezekiel W. Cullen Home, a Greek Revival home built in 1839 by an early judge of the First District Court of Texas, deserves a visit, if only for its elegant ballroom, which occupies the entire upstairs floor. One block away in the business district, the town's weathered storefronts, including an old theater beautifully refurbished for community gatherings, still open their doors along what may be the state's tallest street curbs.

JASPER

Named for a hero of the American Revolution, this little town, about 45 miles south of San Augustine, enchants visitors with its regal courthouse, quaint shops, and old county jail. The Belle-Jim Hotel, one of only two remaining wooden hotels in the state and situated right across from the courthouse, pampers guests with personal attention and quiet, cozy accommodations. But the Belle-Jim also proves tempting at noontime with its delectable, home-style lunch, served on weekdays in its sunlit dining area. If you want to see some of the state's most Herculean pines, go to Martin Dies, Jr. State Park, a short drive west of town, where my husband and I love to camp, hike, bike, and canoe along the sloughs of adjacent B.A. Steinhagen Lake. At nearby Rayburn Country Resort, you can enjoy Lake Sam Rayburn, championship golfing, and more comfortable accommodations, including condos with kitchen facilities.

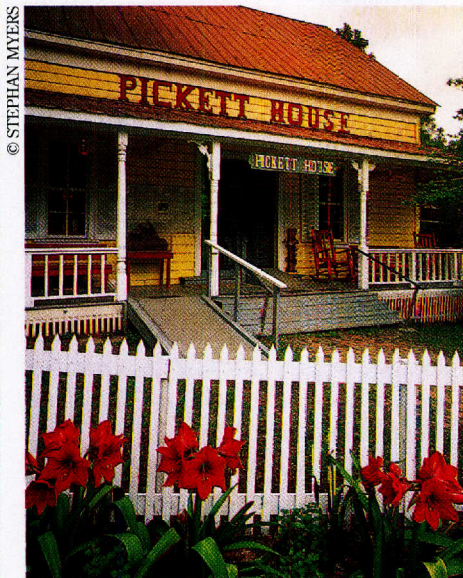
WOODVILLE

Due west of Jasper, you'll find Woodville, an ideal launching point for a tour of the Big Thicket National Preserve and the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation. But I also recommend the Heritage Village Museum, a passport

to the glories of a bygone century. Historical buildings (an old log cabin, church, and rail station) house antique photographs, bicycles, and tools, and a gift shop sells items made by local artisans. Best of all, you can have lunch at the museum's Pickett House restaurant, which serves tasty boarding-house-style meals of chicken and dumplings, homemade biscuits, and other Southern culinary delights.



Powwow with the Alabama-Coushatta tribe on their reservation, east of Livingston.



Don't let the picket fence stop you. Come on in for some Pickett House chicken and dumplings. The restaurant is on the grounds of Woodville's Heritage Village Museum.

LIVINGSTON

You might presume that Livingston, nestled in the Trinity River Valley in the midst of pine and hardwood forests, offers another excellent place from which to explore the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation. On walking tours, you'll learn about Native American life and lore, and the history of the tribe's elaborate costumes. Studded with dazzling, beaded designs and flashing feath-

ers, these garments add spectacular color to authentic, drum-driven dance demonstrations. You'll also see exhibits of tribal crafts.

Located on the northern edge of the Big Thicket National Preserve, the reservation also provides bus tours that take you through some of the preserve's lushest and most diverse habitats. In the similar woodland setting of nearby Lake Livingston State Park, you can boat, fish, swim, water-ski, hike, and camp.

HUNTSVILLE

Getting its start in 1836 as an Indian trading post, this town served as home for the legendary Sam Houston, and since 1879 has claimed the educational institution named in his honor. The Sam Houston Memorial Museum Complex, one mile south of downtown on Sam Houston Avenue, provides a chance to inspect a collection of buildings and property that belonged to the famous Texan. But it's the statue of the man five miles south of downtown, at I-45 and Texas 75, which reaches a staggering 77 feet (total height), that knocks my socks off! As lagniappe, Huntsville State Park (see *Texas Highways*, Oct. 1999) covers 2,123 acres of forest and offers boating, swimming, and fishing on Lake Raven. Not far away lies the privately owned Blue Lagoon, where scuba divers can explore an old rock quarry filled with clear artesian springwater



STEPHAN MATTERS

Trees tower around a trailer at a Lake Sam Rayburn campground, deep in the East Texas forest.

and an assortment of submerged boats and platforms.

CONROE

Lofty pines accent roadsides and parkways in Conroe, as they do throughout East Texas. But most of all, I hope to return to Conroe to explore more of its numerous discount outlet malls, flea markets, and antique stores. In addition, don't miss the Heritage Museum of Montgomery County, the refurbished home of the local pioneer Grogan-Cochran family, where exhibits focus on the life of Charles B. Steward, who designed the Lone Star State Seal and one of Texas' Lone Star flags.

LAKES OF EAST TEXAS

CADDO LAKE

This giant body of water appears to be more wood than water, with thousands of Spanish-moss-draped cy-

press trees flourishing within the lake's uncounted sloughs and bays. The shallow water system hosts 42 miles of "boat roads," navigated by numerous fishermen seeking champion largemouth bass and redear sunfish. For me, the *Graceful Ghost*, a steam-powered, double-deck paddleboat patterned after an authentic paddlewheel riverboat of the 1890s, offers a palatial way to tour the lake. The boat's desultory pace guarantees a quiet, romantic excursion, with the captain providing tidbits about the lake's colorful history. Hiking, camping, and canoe rentals are available at Caddo Lake State Park.

SAM RAYBURN RESERVOIR

This is the largest body of water wholly within the state. With 114,500 acres of fresh water and thousands of acres of flooded timber, this lake boasts perhaps the best catches of bass to be found in Texas. But you can enjoy all types of boating activities here, as well as camping and hiking in the lush, extensive woodlands around its margins.

TOLEDO BEND RESERVOIR

Linking Louisiana and Texas, Toledo Bend waters cover a whopping 181,600 acres. The reservoir's 650 miles of shoreline make it a popular destination for retirees as well as watersports enthusiasts, who delight in the lake's excellent fishing, boating, and sailing.

BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE

Blessed with a wide variety of soil types and elevations, including many that prove welcoming to the deep,

thirsty tree roots, East Texas offers a biological diversity found nowhere else in the state—a claim to fame made manifest in the Big Thicket National Preserve (see *Texas Highways*, Feb. 2000). An 84,000-acre patchwork of dense forests, swamps, grasslands, and creek bottoms, the Big Thicket harbors at least 10 distinct ecosystems featuring an astonishing blend of the ordinary and the unexpected: river otters, roadrunners, beavers, carnivorous sundew plants, prickly pear cactus, and black cherry trees.

NATIONAL FORESTS

Texas' national forests cover 634,912 acres of the state, a fact that makes East Texas special indeed. Governed by the multiple-use principle, these four forests—the Angelina (famous for its longleaf pines), Davy Crockett, Sam Houston, and Sabine—are prized for their timber and water, wildlife, and recreation. Primitive camping (only) is permitted in some areas, as well as hunting and fishing regulated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Keep an eye out for signs designating these forests, since many highways and rural roads pass through them.

Though we'll always love the azure skies, rugged mountains, and wide-open plains of our state's ubiquitous Hollywood image, East Texas lends to it a bit of Southern spice. To experience this for yourself, skedaddle on over to the Piney Woods, a land of lush vegetation and storied animals like the red fox, pileated woodpecker, American alligator, and bobcat. Here, people enjoy life's simpler pleasures—morning and evening walks along forest trails shaded by lofty pines, stringers full of glistening striper bass, and a lake's calm surface set ablaze by the sinking sun. But whether it's the trees, the antique shopping, the freshwater reservoirs, the historical destinations, the clean air, or the solitude you long for, you'll find all of these pleasures and more, right here in the Old South of the West. ★

Piney Woods

For more information, contact local chambers of commerce or convention and visitors bureaus. *Admission fees vary. Most sites are wheelchair accessible, but call ahead.*

Conroe

Prime Outlets, at I-45 and League Line Rd.; take exit 91. Hours: Mon-Sat 10-9, Sun 11-6. Call 409/756-0999. Web site: www.primeoutlets.com.

Heritage Museum of Montgomery Co., Candy Cane Park (take I-45 access road north from Texas 105 exit). Hours: Wed-Sat 9-4. Call 936/539-6873.

Huntsville

Sam Houston Memorial Museum Complex, 1836 Sam Houston Ave. Hours: Tue-Sun 9-4:30 (Memorial Day-Labor Day 10-5:30). Call 936/294-1832.

Huntsville State Park is 6 miles south of town, off I-45, on Park Rd. 40. Call 936/295-5644. Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Sam Houston Statue and Huntsville Visitor Center, 7600 Hwy. 75 South. Call 936/291-9726 or 800/289-0389. Web site: www.huntsvilletexas.com.

From Huntsville, the **Blue Lagoon** is 7 miles north on FM 247, then west 1 mile on Pinedale Rd. Hours: Mar-mid-Nov, Mon-Thu 10-6, Fri 10-10, Sat 8 a.m.-10 p.m., Sun 8-6. Call 936/291-6111.

Jasper

Belle-Jim Hotel, 160 N. Austin. Call 409/384-6923.

Martin Dies, Jr. State Park, 13 miles west of Jasper on US 190. For rates and information, call 409/384-5231.

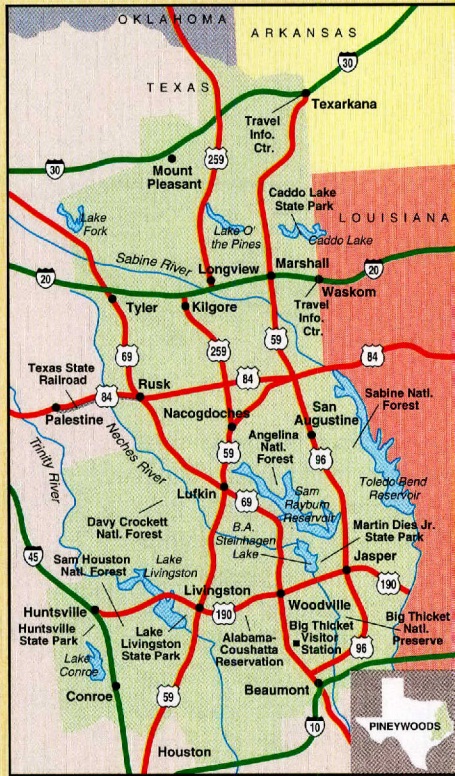
Rayburn Country Resort, about 20 miles north of Jasper via US 96 and FM 1007. Hours: Daily 7 a.m.-11 p.m. Call 409/698-2444.

Jefferson

City Trolley Tours depart daily at 11, 1, and 3 from Historic Jefferson Tour Hdqtrs., at 119 E. Austin St. Call 903/665-1665.

The Turning Basin River Boat Tour departs just upstream from the old trestle across the Polk St. bridge (US 59). Call 903/665-2222.

Caddo Lake Steamboat Co. boat departs from Taylor Island off



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Bois d'Arc Lane from late Mar-Nov. Call 903/789-3978 or 888/325-5459.

Kilgore

East Texas Oil Museum, US 259 at Ross St. Hours: Tue-Sat, 9-4 (Apr-Sep 9-5), Sun 2-5. Closed Easter and Thanksgiving. Special holiday schedule Dec. 20-Jan. 1. Call 903/983-8295. Web site: kilgore.cc.tx.us/atr/etom/etom.html.

Livingston

Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation is 17 miles east of Livingston, off US 190. Hours: June-Aug, Wed-Sat 10-6, Sun 12:30-6 (on Mon-Tue, only gift shop open 10-6); Mar-May and Sep-Nov, Sat 10-6, Sun 12:30-6; closed Dec-Feb. Call 800/444-3507. Web site: www.alabama-coushatta.com.

Lake Livingston State Park is 7 miles southwest of Livingston. Take US 59 to FM 1988, then FM 3126 north to Park Rd. 65. For rates and information, call 936/365-2201.

Longview

Gregg County Historical Museum, 214 N. Fredonia St. Hours: Tue-Sat 10-4. Call 903/753-5840.

Lufkin

Ellen Trout Zoo and Park, 402 Zoo Circle, off Loop 287 North.

Hours: Daily 9-5 (9-6 in summer). Call 936/633-0399.

Texas Forestry Museum

1905 Atkinson Dr. Hours: Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5; closed major holidays. Call 936/632-9535.

Marshall

Marshall Pottery and Museum, 2.5 mi. southeast of Marshall on FM 31. Hours: Mon-Sat 9-6, Sun 10-6. Call 903/938-9201.

Starr Family State Historic Site, 407 W. Travis St. Hours: Mon and Thu-Sat 10-4, Sun 1-4. Closed Tue-Wed. Call 903/935-3044.

T&P Railstation Museum

800 N. Washington St. Hours: Wed-Sat 10-4, Sun 1-4. Call 903/938-9495.

Mount Pleasant

Antiques and Uniques, 109 N. Madison. Hours: Mon-Sat 10-5, closed Sun. Call 903/572-1545. **Laura's Cheesecake** is inside; call 903/577-8177 or 800/252-8727. Web site: www.laurascheesecakes.com.

To reach **Tankersley Gardens**, exit I-30 at US 271, and go 1 mi. west on Tankersley Rd. Hours: Apr-Oct, Tue-Sat 9-6. Call 903/572-0567.

Nacogdoches

La Hacienda Restaurant, 1411 North St. Hours: Mon-Thu 11-10, Fri-Sat 11-10:30. Call 936/564-6450.

Millard's Crossing, 6020 North St. (US 59 North). Tours Mon-Sat 9-4, Sun 1-4. Call 936/564-6631.

Rusk/Palestine

The **Texas State Railroad** depot is in Rusk State Park, 2 miles west of Rusk on US 84. Train runs Sat-Sun Mar-May; Thu-Sun Jun-Aug. 1; Sat-Sun Aug. 2-mid-Nov. *Reservations recommended.* Call 903/683-2561 (in Texas, 800/442-8951).

San Augustine

Ezekiel W. Cullen Home, intersection of Congress and

Market sts. Hours: Tue-Sat 1-3. Call 936/275-5110.

Texarkana

Ace of Clubs House, 420 Pine St. Hours: Tue-Sat 10-4. Call 903/793-4831.

Victoria House, 1920 Magnolia St. Hours: Mon-Wed 9:30-5:30, Thu-Sat 9:30 a.m.-10:30 p.m. Call 903/793-4776.

Tyler

Tyler Municipal Rose Garden and Rose Center, 420 S. Rose Park Dr. Hours: Garden daily 6 a.m.-midnight; garden center Mon-Fri 8-5, Sun 1-5; museum Mon-Fri 9-4, Sat 10-4, Sun 1-4 (Nov-Feb, closed Mon). Call 903/531-1212.

Caldwell Zoo, 2203 M.L.K. Blvd. Hours: Oct-Mar daily 9:30-4:30, Apr-Sep daily 9:30-6 (closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's days). Call 903/593-0121.

Tyler State Park is 7 miles north of Tyler via FM 14 and Park Rd. 16. For rates and information, call 903/597-5338.

Woodville

To reach the **Information Station of the Big Thicket Natl. Preserve**, take US 69 to FM 420, then follow the signs. Hours: Daily 9-5, closed Christmas and New Year's days. Day areas in preserve units open sunup-sundown. Call 409/246-2337. (The preserve's main headquarters are in Beaumont; call 409/246-2337.)

The **Heritage Village Museum** is 1 mile west of Woodville on US 190. Exhibits and gift shop open daily 9-5. **Pickett House Restaurant** opens Mon-Fri 11-2, Sat 11-8, Sun 11-6. Call 409/283-2272.

Other Recreation Areas

Lakes include Caddo Lake in **Caddo Lake State Park**, west of Uncertain on FM 2198 (903/679-3351); **Sam Rayburn Reservoir**, about 20 miles north of Jasper via US 96 and FM 1007; and **Toledo Bend Reservoir**, northeast of Shelbyville via FM 417.

For information on the **national forests in Texas**, write to Forest Supervisor, USDA Forest Service, Homer Garrison Federal Bldg, 501 N. First St., Lufkin 75901; 936/639-8501.



SOUTH
TEXAS
PLAINS

Wild Horse

Desert

BY GENE
FOWLER

THE LONE STAR STATE, as appraised by honky-tonk sage Billy Joe Shaver in his anthem-like tune, “Heart of Texas,” is the land “where I grew up learnin’ ’bout the Alley-mo.” Me too, Billy Joe. Like millions of little shavers, I grew up watching (cue: theme music) “Davy, Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier” and (new theme) “Jim Bowie, Jim Bowie” on television. The Alamo is not only the best-known landmark in the South Texas Plains—a patch of cactus country that ranges from San Antonio and Goliad down to the Rio Grande Valley and Eagle Pass—but its romantic facade, familiar parapet, and limestone

Hispanic culture, flavor, and vitality distinguish the patch of cactus country that lies between San Antonio and the Rio Grande.

© LANCE VARNELL



walls comprise the most powerful icon in the state. To many people around the world, the Alamo *is* the story of Texas.

They know that Crockett, Bowie, William B. Travis, and nearly 200 others lost their lives at the old mission-turned-fort in 1836, battling a much larger Mexican force led by general and dictator Santa Anna. Though it wasn’t the first blood spilled in the Texas Revolution, it served as a rallying cry in the continued fight for independence. “Remember the Alamo!” hollered Texian rebels as they stormed the Mexican army at the Battle of San Jacinto six-and-a-half weeks later.

The first time I laid eyes on the San Antonio shrine, around the age of 10, that story resembled a dim and unimaginable pageant of ancient history. My fuzzy subconscious whispered that ol’ Davy must be around here somewhere, perhaps

[FACING PAGE] Outlines of history. Mission Espíritu Santo, at Goliad State Historical Park, embodies the era when Spain ruled Texas. Stretching from San Antonio to the Rio Grande, the state’s South Texas Plains region continues to be defined by its Spanish, Mexican, and Indian heritage.

[ABOVE] Prickly pear cactus and mesquite brush are no strangers to the area below the Nueces River. Once known as the Wild Horse, or Mustang, Desert, the land here is also referred to as the Brush Country.



across the plaza in Woolworth's, admiring Alamo postcards. Now, after numerous pilgrimages in the 40 years hence, I have more fully grasped the tale of its events. And yet, the tragic atmosphere of the old stone chapel still packs a mystery.

I can't imagine a more compelling account of those events than Stephen Harrigan's recent novel, *The Gates of the Alamo*. His portrait of Crockett brims with the Tennessean's frontier wit and folksy charm. The novel adds dimension to the story of the Tejanos (Texas settlers of Hispanic descent) who fought alongside other Texians, and it humanizes the often-faceless Mexican soldiers, as well as Travis' slave, known to history only as Joe.

As the largest Spanish Colonial and Mexican outpost in the land that became Texas, San Antonio retains a distinctive flavor. Will Rogers said that the seat of Bexar County was one of three unique cities in the nation. If you don't trust a comedian, take it from noted author John Gunther. He observed in 1947, "San Antonio, next to San Francisco and New Orleans, and possibly Boston, is the most colorful, the most 'romantic' city in America." Other cultures played a part in the romance—the poet Sidney Lanier described the town in the 1870s as "a bizarre exhibition of sights and sounds, arising from the crushing conflux of Americans, Mexicans, Germans, Frenchmen, Swedes, Norwegians, Italians... all manner of odd personages or 'characters'"—but it is primarily its Hispanic heritage that gives San Antonio its soul.

That soul was nurtured at four other San Antonio missions—Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción, San Francisco de la Espada, San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, and San

Juan Capistrano—that rose along the meandering San Antonio River in the 1700s. Each one architecturally unique, the four make up the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. San José, the "Queen of the Missions," exemplifies a Spanish Baroque style called

churrigueresque, noted for fantastic, lavish detail. A tangle of legends surrounds one of San José's most-photographed features, the ornate "rose window." Though debunked by historians, the stories say that Pedro Huizar, an artisan who worked on the mission as he waited for his fiancée to arrive from Spain, sculpted the beautiful window as therapy for coping with his grief when the lady either died at sea or chose another suitor.

Another Spanish Colonial building, the 10-room, limestone Spanish Governor's Palace on San Antonio's Military Plaza, or Plaza de Armas, is open to the public as a house-museum with period furnishings. Nearby, the Casa Navarro State Historical Park maintains the 1850s adobe home of Tejano patriot José Antonio Navarro. "People remember the Alamo and Travis, Crockett, and Bowie," says park manager and historian David McDonald, "but we tell the rest of the story—the story of Texas' Mexican heritage." Navarro, a merchant, rancher, and land investor, represented San Antonio in the legislatures of Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and the State of



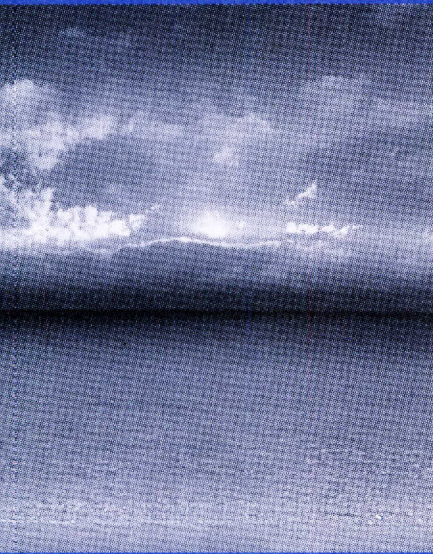
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In the 18th Century, Franciscan priests founded missions at the headwaters of the San Antonio River. The Rose Window (above) at Mission San José forms a focal point of the largest of the four missions that make up San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. The river, with its beautiful channel-side walk (below), has become a premier draw for travelers from around the globe.



MICHAEL AMADOR

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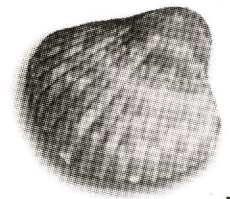
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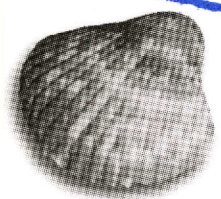
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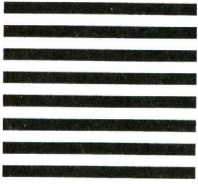
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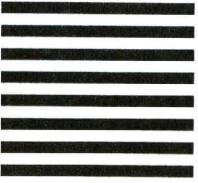
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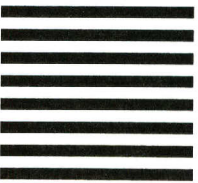
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At Mission San Francisco de la Espada, founded in San Antonio in 1731, both the chapel and an acequia (irrigation ditch) remain in use after more than 250 years.

Texas. Born in San Antonio in 1795, he was one of two native Texans to sign the Declaration of Independence in 1836, the other being his uncle, Francisco Ruiz.

Also near Military Plaza, El Mercado, or Market Square, offers a chance to enjoy San Antonio's Mexican heritage with food, entertainment, and shopping in a historic setting. El Mercado is said to be the largest such market north of the border.

Don't worry about experiencing all of the Alamo City's attractions in one trip. There's always something new to discover, and return visits will prove a tonic, I guarantee. It's most fun to stumble upon things off the beaten path, but I still like to indulge in the city's more touristy pastimes. Time and time again I've strolled

along the enchanting Paseo del Rio, the famed River Walk by the San Antonio River, awash in wall-to-wall *turistas*, and my wife, Gyla, rates a River Walk dinner as *muy romántico*.

The many twists and turns of the river may have inspired the delightfully topsyturvy layout of the streets in downtown San Antonio. The name given the river by the Indians who lived in the area when the missionaries arrived, Yanaguana, has been translated as "Old Man Coming Home from the Bridge" and "Drunken Old Man Going Home at Night."

Old Man River straightens his course before leaving the Alamo City and, 90 miles downstream, rolls past Mission Espíritu Santo and Presidio La Bahía

(see *Texas Highways*, March 1999), both just south of the town of Goliad. "The mission moved to this location in 1749 and served the local Indians, the Aranamas, and local settlers until 1830, when it finally complied with secularization orders," says mission manager Lupita Barrera. By the time Goliad State Historical Park, the 178-acre preserve that contains the mission, was founded in 1931, Espíritu Santo had fallen into ruin. The Civilian Conservation Corps reconstructed the chapel in the '30s, though it looks much older. The rock wall around it dates to Spanish Colonial days.

Lupita points out that Mission Espíritu Santo once claimed 40,000 head of cattle on what is believed to have been the



J. ORFFERS SMITH

[ABOVE] Renowned for its fishing, 87,000-acre Falcon Reservoir is jointly owned by the United States and Mexico. Falcon State Park (956/848-5327), some 14 miles northwest of Roma, offers cabins, boat ramps, and many other amenities.

[RIGHT] Green jays are permanent residents of South Texas and points farther south. This beauty was spotted at Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, a prime birding site near McAllen. A few miles upriver, birders also flock to Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park (956/585-1107).

first giant ranch in Texas. “In fact,” she adds, “a trail drive of mission and presidio cattle to Louisiana helped feed soldiers fighting the British during the American Revolution.”

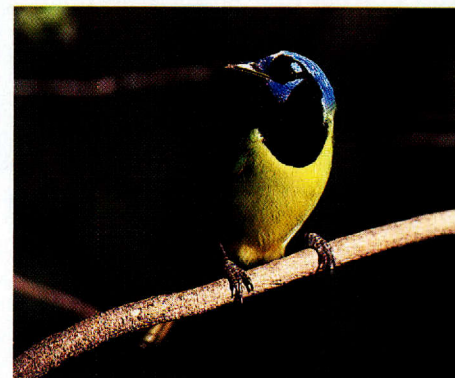
Just down the road, Presidio La Bahía flies “nine flags over Goliad,” three more than most of the Lone Star State. “The solid green flag is for the first Republic of Texas, established here in 1812,” says Presidio La Bahía’s manager, Newton Warzecha. “The red-and-white flag with a white star represents another effort at independence, in 1821, and the flag with the severed arm holding a sword was flown in late 1835 by a group of 92 Texans who signed a declaration of independence in the presidio’s chapel.”

The old-timey buildings around Goliad’s courthouse square house shops like

Faye’s Texas Naturals (specialties include salsas and jellies made with the native chilipiquín peppers) and residents like Newton Warzecha, who lives above the Soho Goliad Emporium. “We call it Soho Goliad for the Soho arts and residential district of New York,” says Newton with a grin.

The area takes pride in its ranching history. With a nod to the long-ago mission ranch, Goliad bills itself the “Birthplace of Texas Ranching.” The 1870s Market House Museum and a century-old blacksmith’s shop (both near the square) exhibit brands of area ranches. Pleasanton, just south of San Antonio, proclaims itself the “Birthplace of the Cowboy”—there’s an eight-foot wrangler in bronze at city hall—as well as “The City of Live Oaks and Friendly Folks.”

In this part of the South Texas Plains,



MICHAEL A. MURPHY

brush country mingles with prairie woodlands and the edges of the Hill Country, but south of the Nueces River, on the long trek to the Mexican border, thorny chaparral takes over the landscape. Mapmaker Thomas Bradford named this part of Texas the “Mustang or Wild Horse Desert” in 1835. After the Civil War, the vast, mostly-flat lands between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande became notorious as the “Nueces Strip.” Until the Rangers caught up with them, outlaws deemed it the closest thing to paradise. But one brush-country settler, Don Pedro

Jaramillo, inspired an Old West legend that had nothing to do with shootin' irons and thievery.

"Don Pedrito was a shepherd in Mexico," explains Dolores Villarreal, who owns the small cemetery that contains Jaramillo's grave-site shrine. "The story handed down in my family says that he received the gift of healing after injuring his nose—you can see the gash on his nose in the photos."

The *curandero* moved north of the Rio Grande in 1881, settling on Los Olmos Ranch (just north of Falfurrias), where hundreds often camped awaiting his services. His *recetas*, or prescriptions, utilized water and other natural substances, but the main ingredient was always faith. When he visited the Alamo City in 1894, the *San Antonio Daily Express* found "no distinction of class or race" among the throng that lined up for treatment.

Today, 93 years after his death, a constant stream of visitors finds its way to the modest cinder-block building that shelters Don Pedrito's grave and headstone. Many buy candles in the adjacent store and burn them in the shrine to beseech the healer's spirit for help with any number of worldly concerns. "People come here from every state," says Dolores.

"Busloads make regular trips from the Rio Grande Valley."

Continuing south toward that valley (which is really more of a delta) last spring, I remembered crossing the Wild Horse Desert to visit kinfolk in McAllen when I was 10. I probably asked if we were "there yet" a thousand times. And I vaguely recall that—at the end of our long journey through the mesquite, huisache, and prickly pear—the semi-tropical Valley almost seemed a mirage.

It's no illusion, as the palm trees along US 83, the Valley's major thoroughfare, attest. The 64,000-acre Lower Rio Grande wildlife corridor (which includes Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge and Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park) preserves 1,200 species of plants, along with critters such as the Texas horned lizard, the jaguarundi, and the ocelot.

McAllen's Texas Tropics Nature Festival celebrates the Valley's biodiversity each April with birding seminars and other events. An open house at Quinta Mazatlán during the fest offers a chance to view one of the Valley's most unusual homes, which also beckons walkers to trails through its eight acres of native flora and fauna.

Built by husband and wife Jason and Marcia Matthews in the 1930s, Quinta Mazatlán's 10,000 square feet make it one of the largest extant adobe homes in Texas. Jason, an eccentric composer and writer, had been an international soldier of fortune when he settled in McAllen in the '30s, choosing the Valley as the crossroads of the Western Hemisphere and the ideal command post from which to monitor the political situation in some of the Third World countries

in which he'd served as a mercenary.

"He had the adobe bricks made in McAllen from his own formula," says Mike Mangum, superintendent of building maintenance for the McAllen Parks and Recreation Department, which bought the house in 1998 from Frank Schultz, owner of one of the Valley's largest fruit- and vegetable-packing firms. "People say he found the secret ingredient in the adobe in the Bible's description of King Nebuchadnezzar's palace in Babylon, but I think it was probably lime. He painted the walls inside and out with an aluminum zinc sulfate paint so that radar waves could not penetrate them."

The doors of the Spanish Governor's Palace in San Antonio inspired the design for Quinta Mazatlán's front doors, which were crafted by master woodcarver Peter Mansbendel of Austin. But instead of gargoyles and cherubs, the Matthews' doors feature likenesses of Jason, Marcia, and their two children. Legend has it that the king of Lebanon presented Jason with the cedar beams that adorn a corridor of the home, in gratitude for his service in the Arab Revolt (1916-18), which made Lawrence of Arabia famous.

McAllen old-timers still remember their unusual citizen strolling to the post office each day in Bermuda shorts with a walking stick, his goatee waving in the wind. Marcia died in 1963, Jason in 1964. Many attended their estate sale, which included not only a saber that Matthews had reportedly seized while fighting with Pancho Villa in Mexico, but also a parrot that sang grand opera.

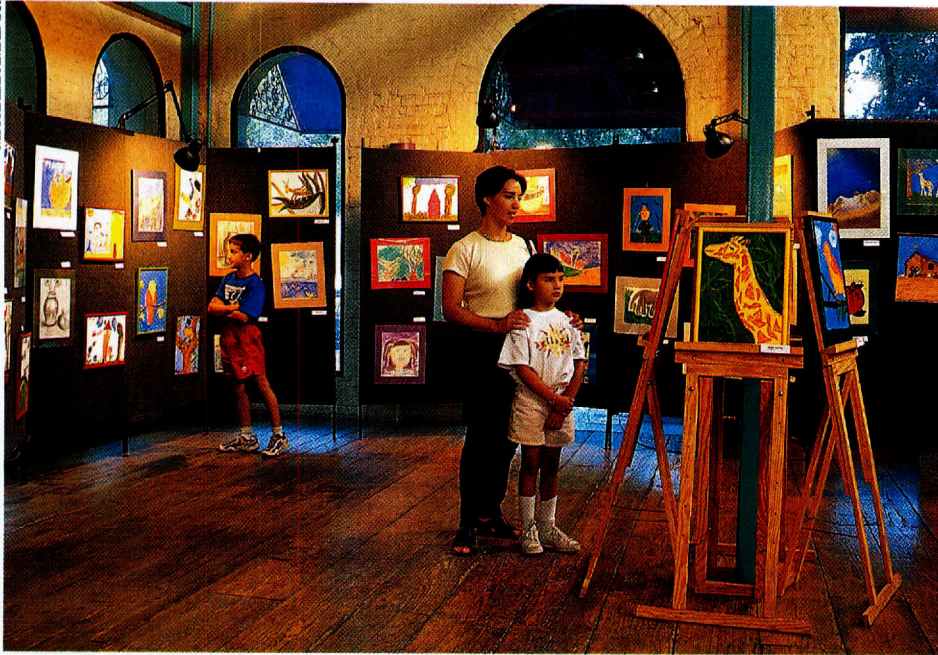
At present, Quinta Mazatlán opens only for special events, but beginning in mid-2001, it will open as the McAllen site for the World Birding Center Project.

Upriver, in Rio Grande City, another one-of-a-kind border home has been welcoming visitors for nearly a century. French immigrant François La Borde, a local merchant, built the home (which doubled as a store) in 1897, then added the second story 20 years later and opened a hotel called the La Borde House. When businessman and farmer Larry Sheerin restored the hotel in the early 1980s, he used bricks from the same

MICHAEL AMADOR



Quinta Mazatlán, the adobe home of eccentric adventurer and publisher Jason Matthews (1887-1964), will open in mid-2001 as the McAllen site of the World Birding Center (headquarters in Mission; 956/584-9156).



Martha Gonzalez, her son, Adan, and her daughter, Paloma, enjoy an exhibit of art by local schoolchildren at the Laredo Center for the Arts, where Martha serves as director. The center is home to the Laredo Art League, the Laredo Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Webb County Heritage Foundation.

plant, in Camargo, across the river, that La Borde had used. Victorian antiques from New Orleans, San Francisco, New Braunfels, and Fredericksburg grace quarters with names like the Rio Grande Room, Ringgold Room, and the Recámara Roja, or Red Room.

While dining in the hotel restaurant, Che's, you can admire two large paintings by Rio Grande City artist Humberto Cavazos, who died last year. Painted in the late '30s and early '40s, one depicts steamboat travel on the Rio Grande (that's how François La Borde got here from Matamoros). The other shows a tornado bearing down on the town. A priest and nun face the approaching twister with faith and calm assurance, while townsfolk run helter-skelter with fear. Several years ago, one resident told me that a lady depicted in a crimson dress in the painting lived for many years in the hotel's Red Room.

Every time I visit Rio Grande City and the neighboring town of Roma, I take time to admire the historic border architecture. German immigrant Heinrich "Don Enrique" Portscheller designed many of the area structures—such as the Silverio de la Peña Drugstore in Rio

Grande City—which have been praised for their “elegant lines and finely-wrought details.” Even the buildings that have not been restored seem imbued with dignity by the slow hand of time.

If you're heading on to Laredo from Roma, be sure to stop off in San Ygnacio to view the San Ygnacio Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In *Hispanic Texas* (University of Texas Press, 1992), authors Helen Simons and Cathryn A. Hoyt point out that the district is “the only South Texas community that still retains a large number of the once-common sandstone structures built in the mid- to late 19th century.”

Before my visit this past spring, I had not walked the streets of Laredo in more than a decade. I was sorry to see that the 1920s Hamilton Hotel had closed—but glad it's being fixed up for multiple uses—and I admired once again its exterior tile-and-mosaic ornamentation. Another historic downtown building, the 1880s Old Mercado, or Market House, has been transformed into the Laredo Center for the Arts. The center houses three galleries that present changing exhibitions of work by local, national, and international artists.

“In November, for the Day of the Dead, we'll have an exhibit of altars by local artists,” says center director Martha O. Gonzalez. “And at the opening, a poetry reading will feature the tradition of *calaveras*, poems expressing humorous perspectives about people who are still alive.” Each February, the center hosts a display of elaborate debutante gowns from Laredo's venerable Washington's Birthday Celebration.

The arts center also provides office and public reception space for the Laredo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Webb County Heritage Foundation. Three blocks south of Old Mercado, on San Agustín Plaza, the heritage foundation operates the Republic of the Río Grande Museum, which has received a spiffy facelift since my last visit. “This building was the capitol of the Republic of the Río Grande, which included parts of northern Mexico and southern Texas,” says foundation research assistant Elsa Navarro. Formed in defiance of Santa Anna's dictatorship, the republic lasted for 283 days in 1840. “People are surprised to learn that seven flags have flown over Laredo,” adds Elsa.

On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, trolley tours depart from the museum, bound for other historical points of interest. Next door, a 1916 high school is now home to the luxurious hotel La Posada, and across the plaza, the 1872 San Agustín Church stands where Laredo's first chapel was founded in the 1750s.

Upriver from Laredo, near Eagle Pass, the seat of Maverick County (and another of my favorite border cities), our trek through the South Texas Plains comes full circle on the Coahuilan plains of Mexico, about five miles south of the Rio Grande. There stand the stone ruins of Mission San Bernardo, the lone survivor of three 18th-Century missions that formed the “Gateway to Spanish Texas.” About “two musket shots” away, the village of Guerrero shelters the ruins of a presidio built to protect the missions. Not long ago, I walked Guerrero's main street with writer Al Kinsall, who hails from Eagle Pass: “You're on the Camino Real now,” said Al. “The royal road to the Alamo.” ★

South Texas Plains

All sites are wheelchair accessible unless otherwise stated.

San Antonio

For a free visitor information packet on San Antonio, write to the San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau, 203 S. St. Mary's, 78205; 210/207-6700 or 800/447-3372. Web site: www.SanAntonioCVB.com.

The **Alamo** is on Alamo Plaza downtown. Hours: Mon-Sat 9-5:30, Sun 10-5:30, closed Christmas Eve and Day. Admission: Free. Write to Box 2599, 78299; 210/225-1391.

Mission Concepción is at 807 Mission Rd., **Mission Espada** is at 10040 Espada Rd., **Mission San José** is at 6701 San Jose Dr., and **Mission Capistrano** is at 9101 Graf Rd. Hours: Daily 9-5; closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's days. Admission: Free. The Visitors Center is next to Mission San José. Write to Park Hdqtrs., San Antonio Missions Natl. Historical Park, 2202 Roosevelt Ave., 78210-4919. Web site: hps.gov/saan.

The **Spanish Governor's Palace** is downtown on Military Plaza. Hours: Mon-Sat 9-5, Sun 10-5. Admission: \$1, 50¢ ages 7-13, free age 6 and younger. Write to 105 Plaza de Armas, 78205; 210/224-0601.

Casa Navarro State Historical Park is at the corner of S. Laredo and W. Nueva. Hours: Wed-Sun 10-4. Admission: \$2, \$1 age 12 and younger. Write to 228 S. Laredo St., 78207; 210/226-4801.

El Mercado, Market Square, is at Santa Rosa and Commerce. Write to 514 W. Commerce, 78207; 210/207-8600.

Diez y Seis de Septiembre (Sep. 16, Mexican Independence Day) is celebrated at various venues, including El Mercado and the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, on the weekend nearest Sep. 16 (Sep. 16-17, 2000). Call the CVB.

Goliad

Goliad is at the juncture of US 59 and US 183, about an hour and a half southeast of San Antonio. Write to the Goliad Co. Chamber of Commerce, Box 606, 77963; 361/645-3563.

Goliad State Historical Park and Mission Espíritu Santo are just south of town on US 183. Hours: Daily, during daylight. Admission: \$2, free age 12 and younger. Write to 108 Park Rd. 6, 77963-3206; 361/645-3405.

Presidio La Bahía is on US 183, about a mile south of the state park. Hours: Mon-Sun 9-4:45. Admission: \$3, \$2.50 age 60 and older, \$1 ages 6-11, free age 5 and younger.

The Quarters, a 2-bedroom suite (with living room, kitchenette, and bath) in the old Officers Quarters, rents for \$150 a night. Write to Presidio La Bahía, Box 57, 77963; 361/645-3752.

The **Market House Museum** is just off the square on Market St. Hours: Wed-Sat 10-4. Admission: Donation. Write to Box 8, 77963; 361/645-8767.

The **Dial House**, a B&B, is at 342 W. Oak. Write to Box 22, Goliad 77963; 361/645-3366.

Christmas in Goliad (Dec. 3-4, 2000) includes the lighting of the courthouse square and the arrival of Santa Claus in a sled pulled by "reinsteer."

Don Pedro Jaramillo Shrine

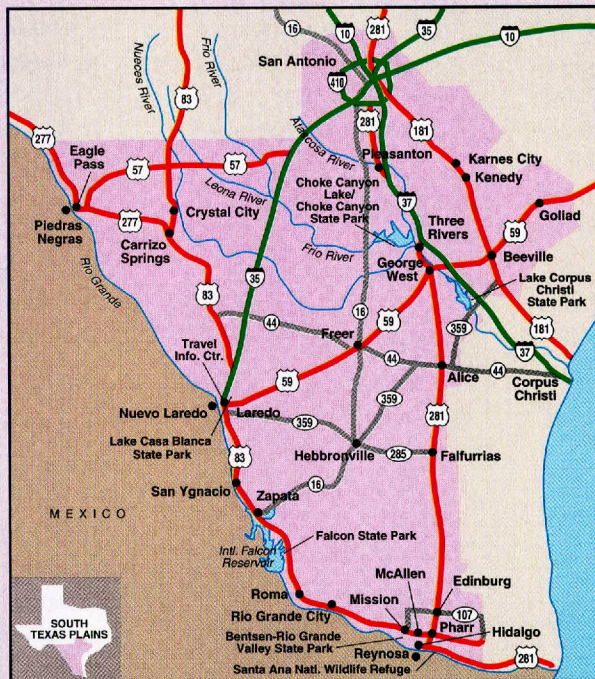
The Don Pedro Jaramillo Shrine is north of Falfurrias on FM 1418, just off Texas 285. Watch for the signs. Hours: Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun 9:30-5, Mon 8-5. Admission: Free. Write to Rt. 1, Box 74B, Falfurrias 78355; 361/325-2224.

McAllen and Mission

McAllen is at the juncture of US 281 and US 83, a few miles north of the Rio Grande. Write to the McAllen Chamber of Commerce, Box 790, 78505; 877/MCALLEN.

Call the McAllen Cof C for information on the **Texas Tropics Nature Festival**, held in April.

Quinta Mazatlán is at 600 Sunset. At present, the home opens only for special events, but it is available for weddings, receptions,



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and other occasions. Write to the McAllen Parks and Recreation Dept., Box 220, 78505-0220; 956/682-1517.

Two interesting new shops in McAllen are **Nuevo Santander Gallery** (fine art, antiques, Old West collectibles), 717 N. Main, 78501, 956/618-4959; and **Vida Antiques** (antiques, folk art), 133 W. Business Hwy. 83, 78501, 956/686-6086.

Mission, just west of McAllen, sponsors the **Texas Butterfly Festival** in late Oct. (Oct. 20-22, 2000). Write to the Mission Chamber of Commerce, 220 E. 9th, Mission 78572; 800/580-2700.

Rio Grande City

Rio Grande City is about an hour west of McAllen on US 83. Write to the Rio Grande City Chamber of Commerce, Box 2, 78582; 956/487-3024.

La Borde House is 5 blocks from the center of town. Rates: \$50-\$67.80. Not wheelchair accessible. Write to 601 E. Main, 78582; 956/487-5101.

Laredo

Laredo is at the southern end of I-35, about 3 hours south of San Antonio. Write to the Laredo Convention & Visitors Bureau, 501 San Agustín, 78040; 800/361-3360.

Laredo Center for the Arts is at 500 San Agustín. Hours: Tue-Fri 9-5, Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5. Admission: Donation. Write to 500 San Agustín, 78040; 956/725-1715.

The **Republic of the Río Grande Museum** is on San Agustín Plaza at 1005 Zaragoza. Hours: Tue-Sat 9-4, Sun 1-4. Admission: \$1. Call regarding the trolley tours, or write to the Webb Co. Heritage Foundation, Box 446, 78042; 956/727-3480.

La Posada Hotel/Suites is on San Agustín Plaza. Rates: \$99-\$425. Write to La Posada, 1000 Zaragoza, 78040; 800/444-2099.

Diez y Seis is celebrated in both Laredo and Nuevo Laredo at various locations. The big border blow-out, **Washington's Birthday Celebration**, first held in 1898, takes place all over Laredo, Feb. 3-18, 2001. Write to the Washington's Birthday Celebration Assn. of Laredo, Inc., 1819 E. Hillside Rd., 78045. Web site: www.wbcald.com.

Books

Look in your library or bookstore for *The Gates of the Alamo* by Stephen Harrigan (Knopf, 2000). Another of my favorite novels set in the South Texas Plains is *Southwest* by John Houghton Allen (Lippincott, 1952; Univ. of New Mexico Press reprint, 1977). Although some might feel that the novel, set in the ranch country near Laredo, paints the landscape too bleakly ("hard country, brush country, mean country, heartbreak country"), still, the finely crafted prose reveals a love of the country and its people. I would also recommend *A Wild and Vivid Land: An Illustrated History of the South Texas Border* (Texas State Historical Assn., 1997) by Laredo historian Jerry Thompson, and *Border Cuates: A History of the U.S.-Mexican Twin Cities* by Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp (Eakin Press, 1995).

CONVENTION & VISITOR BUREAUS AND CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE OF SELECTED CITIES AND TOWNS

Region indicated in parentheses following town name: BB=Big Bend Country, GC=Gulf Coast, HC=Hill Country, PP=Panhandle Plains, PL=Prairies and Lakes, PW=Piney Woods, SP=South Texas Plains

Abilene (PP): CVB, 1101 N. First, 79601; 800/727-7704; www.abilene.com/visitors

Alpine and Big Bend (BB): CofC, 106 N. Third, 79830; 800/561-3735; www.alpinetexas.com

Amarillo (PP): CVC, 1000 S. Polk, 79101; 800/692-1338; www.amarillo-cvb.org

Austin (HC): CVB, 201 E. 2nd, 78701; 800/926-2282; www.austintexas.org

Bandera (HC): CVB, Box 171, 78003; 800/364-3833; www.banderacowboycapital.com

Beaumont (GC): CVB, Box 3827, 77704; 800/392-4401; www.beaumontcvb.com

Big Spring (PP): CVB, Box 1391, 79721-1391; 800/734-7641; www.bigspringtx.com

Brenham/Washington Co. (PL): CofC, 314 S. Austin, 77833; 888-BRENHAM; www.brenhamtexas.com

Brownsville (GC): CVB, Box 4697, 78523; 800/626-2639; www.brownsville.org

Bryan/College Station (PL): CVB, 715 University Dr. East, 77840; 800/777-8292; www.bryan-collegestation.org

Corpus Christi (GC): CVB, Box 2664, 78403; 800/766-2322; www.corpuschristi-tx-cvb.org

Dallas (PL): CVB, 1201 Elm, Ste. 2000, 75270; 800/232-5527; www.dallascvb.com

Del Rio (BB): CofC, 1915 Ave. F, 78840; 800/889-8149; www.drchamber.com

Denton (PL): CVB, Drawer P, 76202; 888/381-1818; www.denton-chamber.org

El Paso (BB): CVB, One Civic Center Plaza, 79901; 800/351-6024; www.elpasocvb.com

Fort Davis (BB): CofC, Box 378, 79734; 800/524-3015; www.fortdavis.com

Fort Worth (PL): CVB, 415 Throckmorton, 76102; 800/433-5747; www.fortworth.com

Fredericksburg (HC): CVB, 106 N. Adams, 78624; 888/997-3600; www.fredericksburg-texas.com

Galveston (GC): CVB, 2428 Seawall Blvd., 77550; 888/GAL-ISLE; www.galvestoncvb.com

Harlingen (GC): CofC, 311 E. Tyler, 78550; 800/531-7346; www.harlingen.com

Houston (GC): CVB, 901 Bagby, Ste. 100, 77002; 800/4HOUSTON; www.houston-guide.com

Jefferson (PW): Marion Co. CofC, 118 N. Vale, 75657; 888/GO-RELAX; www.jefferson-texas.com

Kerrville (HC): CVB, 2108 Sidney Baker, 78028; 800/221-7958; www.ktc.net/kerrcvb

Kingsville (GC): CVB, 1501 N. Hwy. 77, 78363; 800/333-5032; www.kingsvilletexas.com

Laredo (SP): CVB, 501 San Agustin, 78040; 800/361-3360; www.visitlaredo.com

Longview (PW): CVB, 410 N. Center, 75601; 903/753-3281; www.longviewtx.com

Lubbock (PP): CVB, 1301 Broadway, Ste. 200, 79401; 800/692-4035; www.lubbocklegends.com

Marshall (PW): CofC, Box 520, 75671; 800/953-7868; www.marshalltxchamber.com

McAllen (SP): CofC, Box 790, 78505; 877/MCALLEN; www.mcallenchamberusa.com

Midland (BB): CVB, 109 N. Main, 79701; 800/624-6435; www.visitmidlandtx.com

Nacogdoches (PW): CVB, 200 E. Main, 75963; 888/564-7351; www.visitnacogdoches.org

New Braunfels (HC): CofC, Box 311417, 78131; 800/572-2626; www.nbcham.org

Odessa (BB): CofC, Box 3626, 79760; 800/780-4678; www.odessachamber.com

Orange (GC): CofC, 1012 Green Ave., 77630; 800/528-4906; www.org-tx.com/chamber

Port Aransas (GC): CofC, 421 W. Cotter, 78373; 800/45-COAST; www.portaransas.org

Rio Grande Valley Partnership (SP/GC): Box 1499, Weslaco 78599-1499; 956/968-3141; www.valleychamber.com

Rockport-Fulton (GC): CofC, 404 Broadway, 78382; 800/242-0071 or 800/826-6441; www.rockport-fulton.org

San Angelo (PP): CVB, 500 Rio Concho Dr., 76903; 800/375-1206; www.sanangelo-tx.com/tourindex.html

San Marcos (HC): CVB, Box 2310, 78667-2310; 888/200-5620; www.sanmarcostexas.com/tourism

South Padre Island (GC): CVB, 600 Padre Blvd., 78597; 800/SOPADRE; www.sopadre.com

Sweetwater (PP): CofC, Box 1148, 79556; 800/658-6757; www.camalott.com/~sweetwater

Temple (PL): Tourism & Convention Services Dept., 2 N. Main, 76501; 800/479-0338; www.ci.temple.tx.us

Tyler (PW): CVB, 315 N. Broadway, 75702; 800/235-5712; www.tylertexas.com

Victoria (GC): CVB, Box 2465, 77902; 800/926-5774; www.visitvictoria.org

Waco (PL): CVB, Box 2570, 76702; 800/WACOFUN; www.wacocvb.com

Waxahachie (PL): CofC/CVB, Box 187, 75168; 972/937-2390; www.waxahachie.com

Weatherford (PL): CofC, Box 310, 76086; 888/594-3801; www.weatherford-chamber.com

Wichita Falls (PP): CVB, Box 630, 76307; 800/799-6732; www.wichitafalls.org

TEXAS BOOKS WE CONSULT OFTEN

Texas State Travel Guide The best deal, period, for Texas travel information. **Free copy** available by calling **888/8888-TEX**.

New Handbook of Texas (Texas State Historical Assn., 1996); www.tsha.utexas.edu

Texas Almanac (Box 655237, Dallas 75265; published every two years by *The Dallas Morning News*); www.texasalmanac.com

The Roads of Texas (Shearer Publishing, 1995)

Texas Atlas & Gazetteer (DeLorme Mapping, 1995)

Lone Star: A History of Texas and Texans by T.R. Fehrenbach (Collier Books, 1968)

The Indians of Texas from Prehistoric to Modern Times by W.W. Newcomb Jr. (Univ. of Texas Press, 1961)

Roadside Geology of Texas by Darwin Spearing (Mountain Press Publishing, 1991)

Why Stop? A Guide to Texas Historical Roadside Markers by Betty Dooley Awbrey and Claude Dooley (Gulf Publishing Co., 1999)

TxDOT TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

Contact any center by calling **800/452-9292**.

Amarillo 9400 East I-40, 806/335-1441

Anthony 8799 S. Desert Blvd. (I-10 at NM state line), 915/886-3468

Austin Capitol Visitors Center, 512/463-8586

Denison 6801 US 69/75, 903/463-2860

Gainesville 4936 North I-35 (at US 77), 940/665-2301



The Texas Department of Transportation recently opened this new Travel Information Center 18 miles north of Laredo, at the intersection of Interstate 35 and US 83. Besides information provided by professional travel counselors, amenities include plentiful parking, 24-hour restrooms, xeriscaped grounds, three fishponds with waterfalls, and seven picnic arbors.

Langtry US 90 West/Loop 25 at Torres Ave., 915/291-3340

Laredo 15551 I-35 North (at US 83), 956/417-4731

Orange 1708 East I-10 (at LA state line), 409/883-9416

Texarkana 5909 N. Park Rd. (I-30 at AR state line), 903/794-2114

Rio Grande Valley 2021 W. Harrison (junction of US 77 and US 83), 956/428-4477

Waskom 1255 N. I-20 East (at LA state line), 903/687-2547

Wichita Falls 900 Central Frwy. (I-44 at US 277/281), 940/723-7931

MAJOR TEXAS TRAVEL WEB SITES

www.texashighways.com (for an online **Calendar of Events**, go to www.texashighways.com/fcforecast.html)

www.traveltex.com

www.tourtexas.com

www.tpwd.state.tx.us (Note: Reservations for camping in any Texas state park can be made

on the Web at the **Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.** home page; by calling 512/389-8900; by emailing e-mail.reservations@tpwd.state.tx.us; or by faxing 512/389-8959.)

OTHER USEFUL WEB SITES

State of Texas information
www.state.tx.us/Texasinfo

Texas Historical Commission
www.thc.state.tx.us

Texas Historic Sites Atlas
atlas.thc.state.tx.us

Texas State Historical Association
www.tsha.utexas.edu

Texas Association of Museums
www.io.com/~tam/museum.html

NATURE OF TEXAS

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 Lacrosse Ave., Austin 78739; 512/292-4200; www.wildflower.org

Wildseed Farms (flower fields, bulk wildflower seed, gifts, etc.), Box 3000, Fredericksburg 78624; 800/848-0078; www.wildseedfarms.com

Helpful wild-flower books include *Wildflowers of Texas* by Geyata Ajilvsgi (Shearer Publishing, 1989), *Texas Wildflowers* by Campbell and Lynn Loughmiller (Univ. of Texas Press, 1996), *Wildflowers of the Texas Hill Country* by Marshall Enquist (Lone Star Botanical, 1987), and *A Field Guide to Wildflowers*,

Trees & Shrubs of Texas by Delena Tull and George Miller (Gulf Publishing, 1999).

Helpful books for birdwatchers include *A Field Guide to the Birds of Texas and Adjacent States* by Roger Tory Peterson (Houghton Mifflin, 1979) and *A Field Guide of Birds of Texas* by John H. Rappole and Gene W. Blacklock (Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1994).

Plant guides include *Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas* by Correll and Johnston (Univ. of Texas at Dallas, 1979), *Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of the Southwest* by Robert A. Vines (Univ. of Texas Press, 1960), *A Practical Guide to Edible & Useful Plants* by Delena Tull (Texas Monthly Press, 1987), *A Field Guide to Texas Trees* by Benny J. Simpson (Texas Monthly Press, 1988), and the many-volume (Vol. II coming out soon) *The Useful Wild Plants of Texas* by Scooter Cheatham and Marshall C. Johnston (Useful Wild Plants, Inc., 1995).

NATIONAL RECREATION SITES

Amistad International Recreation Area, HCR 3, Box 5-J, Del Rio 78840-9350; 830/775-7491; www.nps.gov/amis

Big Bend Natl. Park, Box 129, Big Bend National Park 79834; 915/477-2251; www.nps.gov/bibe

Big Thicket Natl. Preserve, 3785 Milam, Beaumont 77701; 409/246-2337 or 839-2689; www.nps.gov/bith

Fort Davis Natl. Historic Site, Box 1456, Highways 17-118, Fort Davis 79734; 915/426-3224; www.nps.gov/foda

Guadalupe Mountains Natl. Park, HC 60 Box 400, Salt Flat 79847; 915/828-3251; www.nps.gov/gumo

Lake Meredith Natl. Recreation Area/Alibates Flint Quarries Natl. Monument, Box 1460, Fritch 79036; 806/857-3151; www.nps.gov/lamr and www.nps.gov/alf

Lyndon B. Johnson Natl. Historical Park, Box 329, Johnson City 78636-0329; 830/868-7128, ext. 244; www.nps.gov/lyjo

Natl. Forests (Angelina, Davy Crockett, Sabine, and Sam Houston) and **Natl. Grasslands**, USDA Forest Service, Homer Garrison Federal Bldg, 701 N. First St., Lufkin 75901; 936/639-8501; www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/texas

Padre Island Natl. Seashore, Box 181300, Corpus Christi 78480-1300; 361/949-8068; www.nps.gov/pais

San Antonio Missions Natl. Historical Park, *Headquarters*: 2202 Roosevelt Ave., San Antonio 78210-4919, 210/534-8833; *Visitor Center*: 6701 San José Dr., 78214, 210/932-1001; www.nps.gov/saan

Of course, the talented writers who contributed to this special issue aren't the only experts on traveling our great state. We wanted to hear from the other gurus: you, our readers—and that's why we asked for your "Texas Faves" starting back in May. Some of your responses follow; look for others in the Readers Recommend section of upcoming issues. Call ahead for hours and admission prices where applicable. And thanks for sharing!

My faves? The beautiful **Courthouse** and the **Waggoner home** in **Decatur**, **Fort Richardson** at **Jacksboro**, and the **Texas Ranger Museum** in **Waco!**

W. Mack Palmer, Austin

For more on Decatur, call the CofC at 940/627-3107. You can reach Fort Richardson State Historical Park at 940/567-3506. Call Waco's Texas Ranger Hall of Fame & Museum, in Fort Fisher Park, at 254/750-8631.

We have eaten at many wonderful restaurants throughout this great state, but one that really impressed us was **The Shed**, outside a tiny village called **Wingate**. The food is superb.

David and Lauren O'Dowd, County Roscommon, Ireland

The Shed is on CR 210, 35 miles south of Abilene; 915/743-2175.

The **Deutschburg Seafood Benefit Dinner**, held annually the last Saturday of January, is my favorite event. Volunteers from this tiny farming and ranching community work tirelessly to serve fish, oysters, and shrimp to more than 1,200 diners at the Community Center, on FM 1862 about 10 miles northwest of **Palacios**.

Frankie Gerhard, Hallettsville

For more on Deutschburg's Seafood Dinner, call Martha Kubecka at 361/972-2495.

My favorite activity is floating in the cool waters of **Barton Creek**. You feel as if you're in the middle of nowhere, and really you're in booming Austin.

Cathy Gretencord (no town given)

For more on Austin's many cool

spots, call the Parks and Recreation Department at 512/476-4521.

Everyone visiting **Lake Texoma** needs to try **Huck's Catfish** restaurant outside of **Pottsboro**.

Gerald Peterson Jr. (no town given) Huck's is on FM 120, 2 miles north of Pottsboro; 903/786-8777.

An extraordinary man-made attraction that combines art, architecture, history, and personal memory is the **Hall of State** in **Dallas' Fair Park**. The Hall can truly be called the Pantheon of Texas. The murals and sculpture are of both artistic value and historical interest.

Scott Chase, Dallas

For more on Fair Park (at 1300 Robert B. Cullum Blvd.), call 214/670-8400; info line is 421-9600. Call the Hall of State directly at 214/421-4500.

One of my most enjoyable work details was when I was sent for several months to **Woodville**. Best of all was the place where I stayed—the **Woodville Inn**: clean rooms, very good food, and the nicest staff you could find.

Miriam Cacho, Vega Baja, Puerto Rico

The Woodville Inn is at 201 N. Magnolia; 409/283-3741. Call the Woodville CofC at 409/283-2632.

Recently, I was in **San Saba**, the "**Pecan Capital of the World**." The orchards there are something to behold.

Ed Haraldson, Houston

Call the San Saba CofC at 915/372-5141.

A West Texas gem, the **Fine Arts Center in Breckenridge** features a new exhibit of 15 ornate festival gowns worn by participants in past coronation pageants in Corpus Christi, San Antonio, and Tyler.

In 1992, Kathryn and Julian Leach of Fort Worth chose the center as the permanent home for Mrs. Leach's lifetime collection of dolls (nearly 750) from around the world.

Ted Goldsmith, Breckenridge

The Breckenridge Fine Arts Center is at 207 N. Breckenridge Ave.; 254/559-6602.



Reenactors bring frontier days to life during special events held each year at Fort Richardson State Historical Park in Jacksboro.

Just want to tell you about a neat place called **Sisters in Marble Falls**. It's a quaint antique shop with an honest-to-goodness soda fountain.

Wayne and Darlene Reitmeyer, Austin

Sisters is at 216 Main St.; 830/693-2734.

Stop by the **Texas Maritime Museum** on your next trip to **Rockport**. It is dedicated to preserving Texas maritime history through the collection of artifacts and documents.

McRae W. Hill, Austin

The Texas Maritime Museum

is at 1202 Navigation Circle; 361/729-1271.

Right here in my hometown of **Pampa**, we have beautiful parks and a special **hike-and-bike trail**, which follows Red Deer Creek through town. Sculpture has been added along the trail, including a 150-foot-long, 10-foot-high music sculpture of Woody Guthrie's song "This Land Is Your Land." (Pampa is the "second hometown" of **Woody Guthrie**. We have an annual event on Labor Day to honor him.)

We have two excellent museums, too.

Mrs. Thelma Bray, Pampa

Call the Pampa CofC at 806/669-3241, or call Mrs. Bray at 806/665-1180.

Railhead Smokehouse **B-B-Q** (**Fort Worth** and **Colleyville**).

The epitome of consistency—always tender, delicious beef and cold Shiner Bock in a frosty mug!

Murphy and Darla Walker, Weatherford

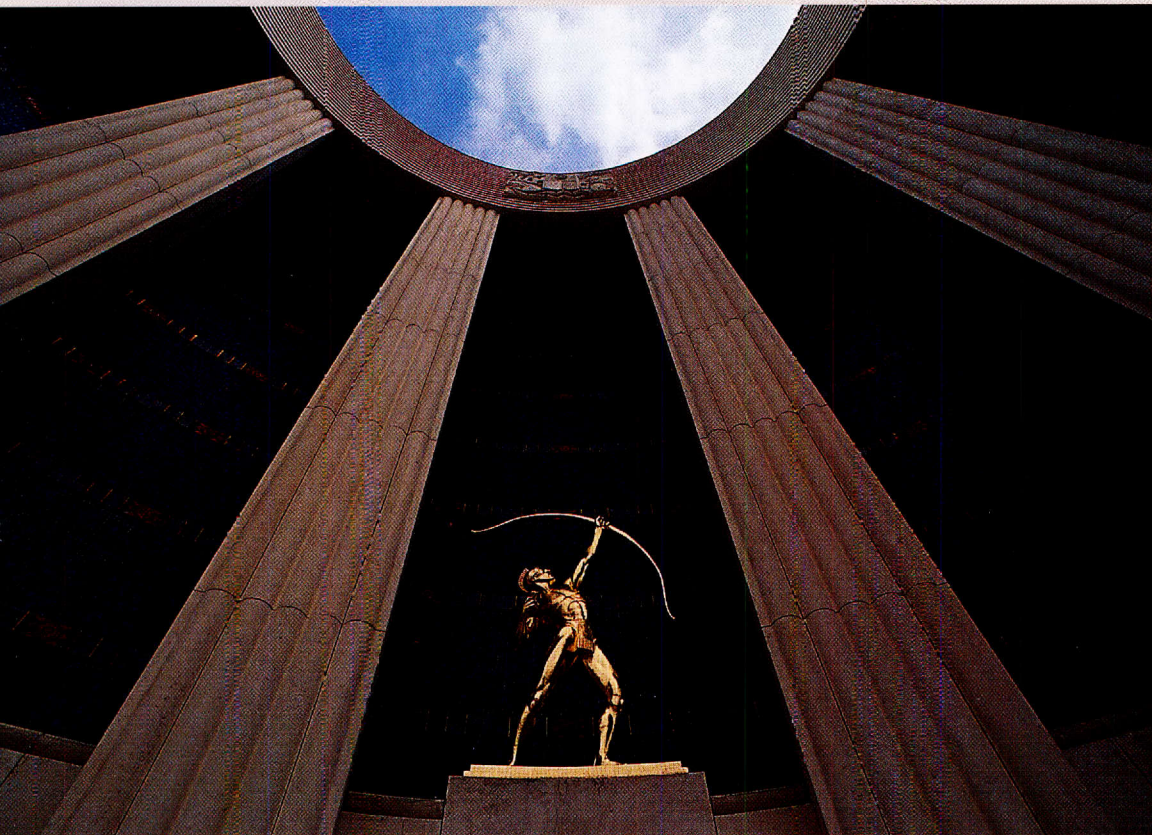
Railhead Smokehouse B-B-Q is at 2900 Montgomery St. in Fort Worth (817/738-9808) and at 5220 Texas 121 in Colleyville (817/571-2525).

AND THERE'S MORE...

Many thanks to Wanda Morrow of Beeville, who wrote to rave about the **Fort Davis area** (call the CofC at 800/524-3015) and the mysterious **Marfa Lights** (call the Marfa CofC at 800/650-9696; ask about the Marfa Lights Festival Sep. 1-3, 2000); Aileen Peck of Hallettsville, who recommends **Splashway Family Waterpark in Sheridan** (979/234-7718); and Linda Prosperie of San Marcos, who says that **Wheeler's Restaurant** (830/990-8180) in **Fredericksburg** serves the best cornbread in Texas. And when it comes to events, Nancy Stacks of **Marble Falls** had great things to say about the town's **EMS fish fry**, held the first Wednesday of March and October at the **Blue Bonnet Cafe** (830/693-2444).

Where in Texas Are You?

TEXAS
HIGHWAYS
CONTEST
Win a Getaway in
Fredericksburg!




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Tell us the name of the statue, its location, and the occasion for its dedication, and you could win a Fredericksburg getaway (*see contest rules at right*).

The contest winner will receive:

- ★ A two-night stay provided by First Class Bed & Breakfast Reservation Service (*includes room and tax*)
- ★ A \$25 gift certificate to The Plateau Café
- ★ A \$25 gift certificate to the Fredericksburg Winery
- ★ A \$25 gift certificate to Wildseed Farms
- ★ Two tickets to the National Museum of the Pacific War
- ★ Two tickets to the Pioneer Museum Complex
- ★ Two complimentary massages and dinner for two at Fredericksburg Herb Farm


FREDERICKSBURG
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Bureau, 106 N. Adams, Fredericksburg 78624; 830/997-6523 or 888/997-3600. Email: ass.cir@fredericksburg-texas.com. Web site: www.fredericksburg-texas.com.

Our thanks to the Fredericksburg Convention & Visitor Bureau, who put together this nifty prize package in this most popular Hill Country town. *Texas Highways* readers love Fredericksburg!

For Fredericksburg travel information year round, write to the friendly folks at the Fredericksburg Convention & Visitor

CONTEST RULES

(no purchase necessary)

- 1.** Only one entry per person. Entries must be on postcards. To be eligible for the drawing, each entrant must include on the postcard the complete correct answer (judges' decisions are final), as well as his/her name, mailing address, and daytime phone number.
- 2.** Entrants must be 18 years of age or older. Employees of the Texas Department of Transportation and their immediate families are not eligible.
- 3.** Send entries to: *Texas Highways* Contest, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. All entries must be post-marked by September 20, 2000. *Texas Highways* is not responsible for late, lost, or misdirected entries.
- 4.** The winning card will be drawn on September 27, 2000. We will attempt to notify the winner the same day. If we cannot contact the winner directly by 5 p.m. on September 29, another card will be drawn.
- 5.** The prize package expires December 31, 2001. Transportation and other additional expenses are not included in the package. B&B certificate is subject to availability; reservations required.
- 6.** The winner is solely responsible for any income taxes incurred.
- 7.** By entering the contest, contestants agree to the above rules and regulations.

