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# T E X A S Travel Log

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

## COMING UP

A new museum that transports visitors across space and time to life in the future opens at **Galveston's Moody Gardens** on June 7, 1997. The **Discovery Museum and IMAX Ridefilm Theater** will feature interactive exhibits developed in cooperation with NASA's Johnson Space Center. A life-sized moving and talking hologram will acquaint visitors with their unusual surroundings. They soon realize they are standing on the deck of a star ship somewhere, sometime in the future. Intriguing exhibits tell the story of how they will live, work and utilize their resources in outer space. The first floor of the museum will house the IMAX Ridefilm Theater, with an immersive, 180-degree, wraparound screen, where visitors will strap on seat belts and hold on for a moving and shaking film viewing adventure. For the latest space scoop, call 1-800-582-4673.

The historic Vandergriff building in downtown **Arlington** will become a \$9.2-million complex for the **Texas Girls Choir**. Plans call for converting the building into a rehearsal hall, and adding a 350-seat recital hall and a 1,000-seat performance hall with theater seating. The choir, which is currently located in Fort Worth, should move to its new quarters by September 1997.

Wonder Woman and Batman took time out from saving the world to tout the latest attractions at **Six Flags Fiesta Texas in San Antonio**. The superheroes were joined by park president **Andy Barkley** at a press conference held in Crackaxle Canyon,

site for the new Roadrunner Express roller coaster, slated to debut next spring. Included in the lineup of 1997 season openers is the "DC Comics Super Heroes Live" stage show, where Wonder Woman, Batman, Batgirl, Superman and Green Lantern battle it out with The Joker and Lex Luthor. The Crazy Buffalo Saloon will feature a mystery-themed stage show, straight out of the Old West, for both lunch and dinner guests. Valuable 1997 Season Passes are valid for unlimited admission at all Six Flags Theme Parks, which boast a statewide total of 23 roller coasters, 24 water rides and 21 shows. For details, call 1-800-473-4378.

The metal teeth of Texas' only inverted steel roller coaster have begun to protrude as construction of the multimillion-dollar addition to **Sea World of Texas in San Antonio** moves above ground. **The Great White** will extend more than 2,500 feet, rise more than 10 stories high and reach speeds of almost 50 miles per hour. The giant coaster will

premiere March 8, 1997, the first day of the park's 10th season.

Since 1948, the **Battleship USS Texas** has anchored peacefully beside the **1836 San Jacinto Battlegrounds** where Texans won their independence. Now consultants say the 20th-Century war relic and 19th-Century battlefield give the area a slightly chaotic feel. According to *The Dallas Morning News*, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department commissioned a study of **San Jacinto Battleground State Historical Park in La Porte** to determine essential needs. The plan recommends separating the two landmarks to restore their individual identities. Park superintendent **Russell Kuykendall** said even if the Parks and Wildlife Commission approves the move at their January meeting, the change could be years in the making. Besides taking an enormous sum to move the massive battleship, an alternative site still needs to be determined. For more information, call the park at 281/479-2431.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department announced plans for the renovation of **Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center in Lajitas**. The center, currently the southern visitor contact point for Big Bend Ranch State Park, will become the premier interpretive and environmental education facility for the Big Bend region of Texas and for the adjacent areas in the states of Coahuila and Chihuahua, Mexico. The long-term, two-phase project will include new exhibit galleries, environmental education classrooms, a conservation laboratory and new administrative offices and library.

**Sheldon Hall**, president of the **El Paso Mission Trail Association**, traveled to Spain to gain support from Spanish officials for the **1998 Quadricentennial Celebration**, and to extend an invitation to HRM the King Juan Carlos to attend the El Paso event. In 1598, Juan de Oñate led the nation's first major colonization effort through El Paso del Norte, claim-



**NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION** With its recent passage in both the Senate and the House, **H.R. 2579** will aim to increase the U.S. share of the global tourism market by creating the **U.S. National Tourism Organization**. Directed by the National Tourism Board, it will function as a public/private partnership charged with research, advertising and marketing the United States as a tourism destination and will advise the President, the Congress and the tourism industry. For details, call the office of U.S. Senator Larry Pressler, chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation; 202/224-1251.

## TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD

ing the land for the King of Spain. Now Manuel Gullon y de Oñate, Count de Tepa, a direct descendant of Don Juan, has become an enthusiastic supporter of the 400th anniversary celebration, arranging for some of Hall's meetings with high-ranking officials in Madrid. Spain will participate in the 1998 festivities, and send key people, including the Spanish Ambassador to the U.S., Minister of Culture and Secretary of the Interior for Spain. For more info, call 915/534-0677.

Texas hero Sam Houston stands as a towering 66-foot-tall statue just south of Huntsville on I-45. Soon he could be joined by a **Trail of Texas Giants** if sculptor **David Adickes** has his way. Adickes wants to commemorate the state's heroes with a series of oversized concrete statues, each standing 60 feet on a 10-foot base. Plans call for statues of Davy Crockett in Crockett, Stephen F. Austin in Nacogdoches, Jim Bowie in La Grange, William B. Travis in Gonzales, Juan Seguin in Seguin and Ben Milam in New Braunfels. Unlike the Houston statue, which was a gift from Adickes to his hometown, the new Texas Giants would cost communities about \$400,000 each. For further updates, watch this space.

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**TEXAS TRAVEL LOG**

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

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**JUDGE ROY BEAN TIC**

Manager Neal Billings has rounded up the troops and sent them packing to a nearby portable building in preparation for the upcoming renovation and expansion of the visitor center. Besides modernization of the building, long-term plans include restructuring the popular cactus gardens to comply with ADA regulations and restoring the Judge Roy Bean Opera House, which was donated by the Val Verde County Historical Commission in 1994. During

construction, the cactus gardens and the old judge's saloon will not be open to visitors.

**WASKOM TIC** When the Champiom Boxer visited the center, counselors found him to be a real winner, but of a different sort than you might imagine. The Dallas gentleman turns colorful artwork and photographs found on calendars, and Christmas, birthday and other greeting cards into custom-made boxes, ranging from one-half inch to 15-inch squares. You won't find his mas-

terpieces in any mall, for he distributes about 100 a week to hospitals, nursing homes and anyplace else he thinks might need a bit of cheer.

Mr. John R. Hancock just couldn't resist a visit to the "new" center. You know, the one in Waskom built in 1964. He said during his college days as a Texas A&M cadet, he served as a travel counselor in Waskom during the summer of 1948, then the next year in the Gainesville TIC.

**P L A C E S**

They're calling in the cows in the promised land for daily tours. **Promised Land Dairy** in **Floresville**, southeast of San Antonio, recently began bottling their own milk from one of the finest jersey herds in the world. (Yes, they still use bottles and the "girls" are rBST and rBGH free.) Visitors can drop in for dairy and plant tours any day of the week, for a \$3 fee. The Ice Cream Shop & Restaurant make lunchtime the best time, where guests choose from a full menu, complete with sandwiches, steaks and seafood, and enjoy free samples of fresh sweet milk and cornbread while waiting for their meals. To arrange for restaurant reservations or large group tours, call 210/216-7093. For hours of operation and other details, call 210/216-7182.

The **Southern Pacific Railroad Depot** in **Edinburg** once bustled with the comings and goings of early 20th-Century commerce and trade. After the station was shut down in 1982, it became the victim of vandalism and neglect. Today the depot once again stands with pride as the center of economic expansion and

growth. With its recent renovation, the stately old building now headquarters the city's Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau, the Economic Development Corporation and the Industrial Foundation. The Spanish colonial structure, with its original tile floors and Roman-style columns, serves Winter Texans and other Valley visitors, as well as local business and industry, and offers a link to the city's past. For a free tour, go just west of the courthouse to 602 W. University Drive. For more info, call the chamber at 210/383-4974 or 1-800-800-7214.

The transfer last month of the **Austin Museum of Art** into temporary quarters in the downtown area more than doubled its exhibition space and moved it one step closer to a permanent downtown address. Though the museum will continue to use its original location at Laguna Gloria for smaller exhibitions, the move to downtown helps consolidate long-term efforts by providing office space for most of the staff, expanding educational facilities and bringing the satellite gift shop under the museum's roof. The museum and the City of

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**LINK IN A BLINK Past meets future on the Texas Historical Commission's new Web site. The site includes stories behind Texas' landmark county courthouses, developments in archaeology, a list of museums and their exhibits, information on the state's historical markers, feature articles on preservation issues and updates on special projects. History buffs can key in <http://www.thc.state.tx.us> or call 512/475-4960.**



Austin have formed a public/private partnership to build architect Robert Venturi's design at Third and Guadalupe Streets, which, under the terms of the contract, must break ground by December 31, 2000. The current galleries at 823 Congress Avenue opened with three exhibitions focusing on minority women. Open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. (9 p.m. on Thursdays); Sundays, 1-5 p.m.; closed Mondays and major holidays. For information on upcoming events, call 512/495-9224.

East Texas will lose a popular tourist stop with the closing of **Annie's in Big Sandy** on December 29. The complex of Victorian homes included a bed and breakfast, tearoom and gift shop. A spokeswoman said the complex will be closed for good.

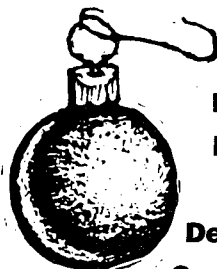
Another sad day in tourism came with the closure of a Central Texas attraction on November 8. More than 2,500 exotic animals were sold at auction last month with the shutdown of **Texas Safari Wildlife Park** near **Clifton**.

**W I L D L I F E**

**Fossil Rim Wildlife Center** near **Glen Rose** was one of three wildlife parks honored by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) for their cooperative management program for the **addax**. The highly endangered spiral-horned antelope comes from the deserts of North Africa. Only 200 to 500 currently survive in the wild. Fossil Rim, along with the other award winners, St. Louis Zoological Park in Missouri and the Living Desert in Palm Desert, California, have cooperatively developed a Species Survival Plan for addaxes based on sound genetic and demographic research and management that could serve as the foundation for

a reintroduction program in the future. For details, call Fossil Rim at 817/897-2960.

**The eagles are back!** And what better way to experience the power and grace of this magnificent creature than aboard the *Texas Eagle II*, on a two-and-a-half hour **Vanishing Texas River Cruise**. A 70-foot, 200-passenger vessel carries nature-lovers along the untouched scenic wilderness of the Colorado River Canyon and Lake Buchanan in the Texas Hill Country near **Burnet**. The canyon nurtures one of the largest colonies of the North American bald eagle in the state. Passengers are sure to spot abundant species of other



**CHRISTMAS PAST** The Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens in Houston offers a glimpse of the history of Yuletide in America, December 11-January 3. In a 17th-Century setting, not a bauble hints that Christmastime nears. In early New England, Puritans regarded Christmas as a papist holiday, so it was not celebrated at all. Elaborate decorations and an abundance of gifts in the Victorian Belter Parlor reflect the indulgent family celebration Americans know today. Call 713/639-7750.

**? TEXAS TRIVIA**

**Who was Texas' first black licensed pilot?**

Bessie Coleman was not only Texas' first, but the world's first black person to become a licensed aircraft pilot. Coleman was born in Atlanta, Texas, in 1892 and grew up in Waxahatchie. Acting on a lifelong dream, Coleman traveled abroad in 1920 to attend aviation school in Le Crotoy, France, after she discovered no school in the U.S. would accept African Americans. Her goal was to open a flying school for black students, and she often gave lectures at schools and churches to encourage young black women and men to enter aviation. She staged exhibition flights throughout the country, many of them in her native South. Her daredevil stunts and hair-raising maneuvers earned her the nickname "Brave Bessie." By the year of her death in 1926, Coleman had become one of America's most popular stunt pilots. Although her dream of establishing a flying school for black students never materialized, the Bessie Coleman Aero Groups flying clubs were organized after her death.



migratory birds, as well as wild turkey, white-tailed deer, Spanish goats and other offspring of nature. The eagles begin their annual migration south each autumn from Alaska and Canada, and remain in the Hill Country and other locations in Texas until late winter. The Vanishing Texas River Cruise ecological tours are just one way of viewing these majestic birds. For reservations, call 1-800-4RIVER4.

**MUSEUMS**

When the **Port Isabel Historical Museum** opens in the spring of 1997, visitors can step onto the museum balcony and see Brazos Santiago Pass where 300 shipwrecked Spaniards were pursued to their deaths by Karankawa Indians. The pass opens to Port Isabel Bay and Brazos Harbor, once hangouts of cutthroats, pirates and smugglers, and once blockaded by the Texas, French and Union Navies. Here natives heard the first volley of the U.S./Mexican War and the last shot of the War Between the States. The rich history of this southern tip of the

Texas Gulf Coast will be told through audiovisual film interactives and lighted displays of artifacts, rare documents and vintage photographs. Housed in the A.A. Champion Building, the museum shares its grounds with a water well used by Zachary Taylor's troops. For details, call 210/943-7602.

Beginning this month, **The Presidential Museum in Odessa** began charging a nominal admission fee. History buffs can hop aboard the presidential campaign trail for just \$2 each. Visitors age 65 and older are admitted for \$1 and students and preschoolers still get in free. This one-of-a-kind museum was opened in 1965 to heighten appreciation for the nation's highest office, and offers a glimpse into the presidency since the days of George Washington. Visitors can get a feel for the times through biting political cartoons and campaign slogans, buttons and posters, from the mundane to the bizarre. Open Tuesday through Saturday at the corner of Seventh and Lee Streets. For more information, call 915/332-7123.

<b>TRAVEL CENTER</b>	<b>Month Visitors</b>	<b>Percent Variation*</b>	<b>Visitors Year-to-date</b>	<b>Percent Variation*</b>
<b>Amarillo</b>	7,284	-22.63	143,631	+10.56
<b>Anthony</b>	11,400	-6.20	155,817	-3.14
<b>Denison</b>	15,756	+12.99	182,607	-21.20
<b>Gainesville</b>	23,070	-9.50	321,195	-8.75
<b>Langtry</b>	7,002	-13.30	100,401	-2.52
<b>Laredo</b>	5,649	-35.69	118,236	+3.82
<b>Orange</b>	40,974	-16.00	654,192	+14.68
<b>Texarkana</b>	32,532	-34.20	497,805	-15.90
<b>Valley</b>	21,327	-23.20	320,406	+5.81
<b>Waskom</b>	47,100	-3.88	535,038	+66
<b>Wichita Falls</b>	12,495	-.45	188,658	-.92
<b>Capitol Complex</b>	7,569	+4.00	96,066	-17.07
<b>1-800 Phone Center</b>	7,554	+10.10	127,680	-33.41
<b>CENTER TOTALS</b>	239,712	-14.25	3,441,732	-4.03

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\*Compared to last year

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