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Wildflower Drives: Top Picks for 20

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Texas Highways

THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

PLUS »

PAGE 21 «

Panaderia in Presidio

PAGE 56 «

Granbury's Langdon Center

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BY THE TEXAS AUTO WRITERS ASSOCIATION

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The Serendipity of Wildflowers 2011

This way to the wildflowers. With the help of experts at Austin's Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, we present four drives that promise scenic displays, as well as additional diversions.

Text by **MELISSA GASKILL**

Check out www.texashighways.com for more travel information

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48 | **Second Nature**
From zipline adventures to nature trails, ecotourism is on the rise in East Texas. Preservationists hope the trend will help save this diverse ecological haven.

Text by **JENNIFER BABISAK**
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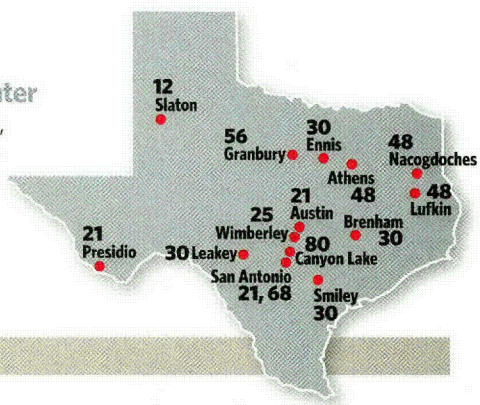
Concerts, writing conferences, cooking classes, and public-art installations number among the enticements at this North Texas venue.

Text by **CHARLES LOHRMANN**
Photographs by **MICHAEL AMADOR**



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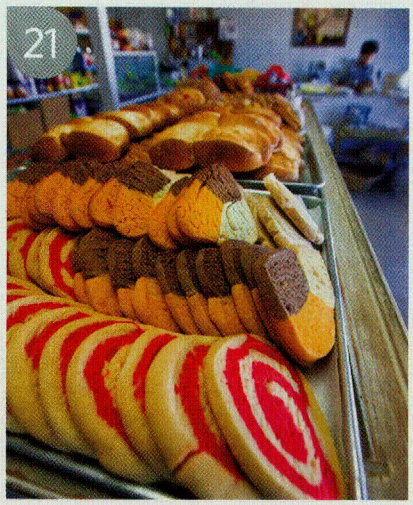

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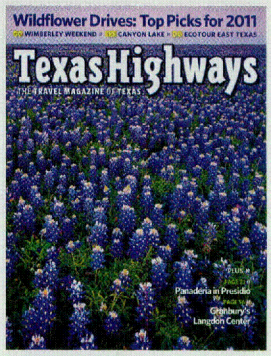

About Our Covers

FRONT: Only in Texas (Washington County, to be precise)—a bluebonnet-defined landscape. For 18 pages of wildflowers from winecups to baby blue eyes, turn to page 30. **Photo © James Volosin**

BACK: A pair of hippos enjoys the attention of zookeeper Crissy Hall at Lufkin's Ellen Trout Zoo, which displays more than 800 mammals, reptiles, and birds from around the world. **Photo © Erich Schlegel**

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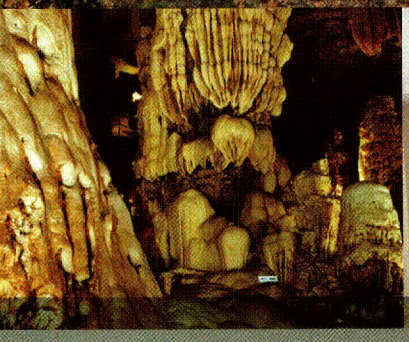

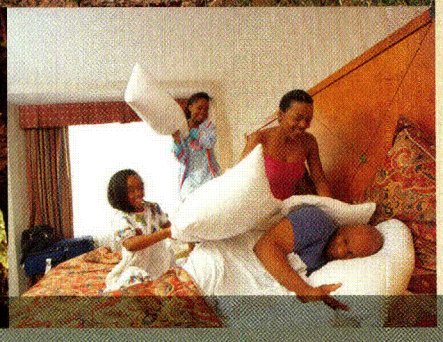

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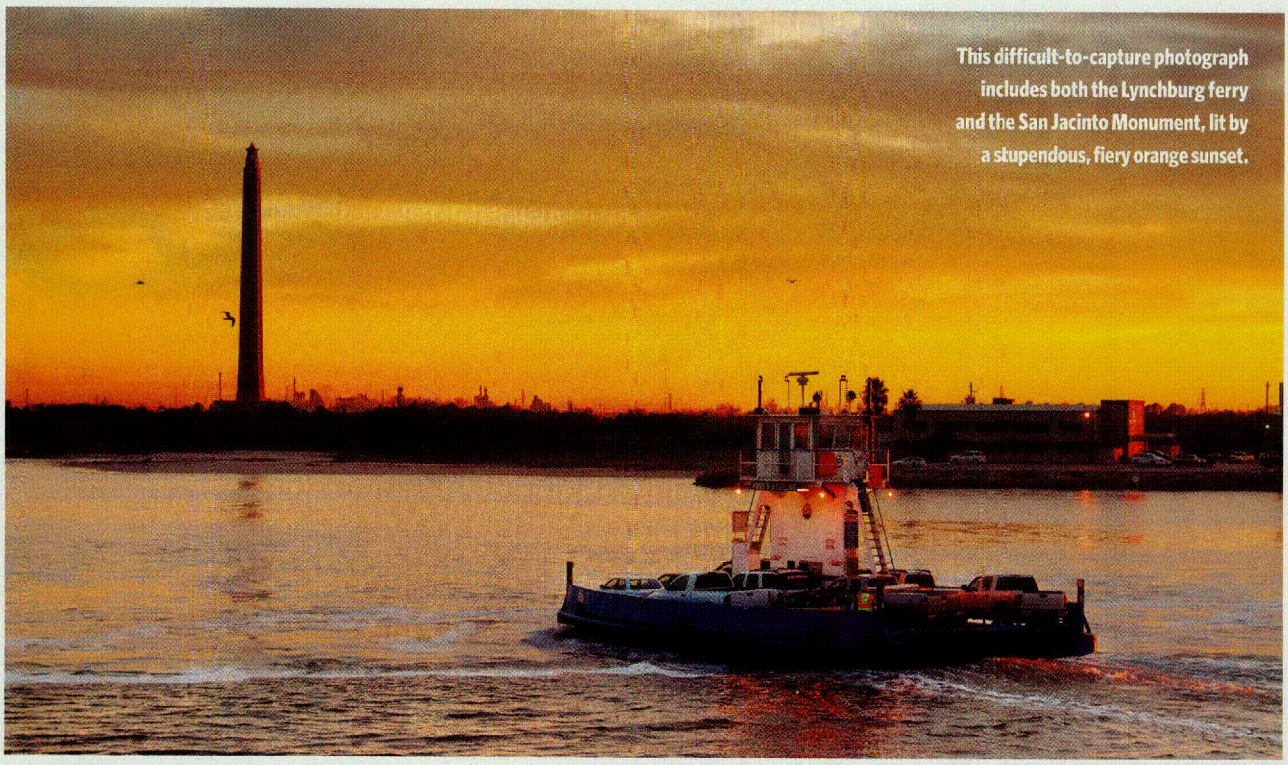


This difficult-to-capture photograph includes both the Lynchburg ferry and the San Jacinto Monument, lit by a stupendous, fiery orange sunset.

© BEN DESOTO

One Frame of Texas History

BEFORE I GOT A GOOD LOOK at Ben DeSoto's photograph of the Lynchburg ferry with the San Jacinto Monument, I couldn't have imagined such a difficult composition. Weeks earlier, as I rode the ferry across the San Jacinto River from the landing near the monument, I could have imagined an image that included the ferry or the monument. But not such a beautifully composed photograph that included both. And how do you order such a lavish sunset? So I asked DeSoto how he managed to frame this image and to time the exposure.

"First, I'm a native of Pasadena, so I grew up in the shadow of the San Jacinto Monument. Then I worked for the *Houston Chronicle* for 25 years, so I had the chance to follow a number of Houston-area subjects like this.

"Once I meditated on the feedback about the assignment from (*TH* Photo Editor) Griff Smith," DeSoto says, " I made a couple of trips to the ferry to study it."

And capturing this photograph was far from automatic or routine. "On the first trip when I took the photograph, the ferry had Christmas lights," he says. "That photograph might be historic, too, because regulations might forbid Christmas lights on the ferry in the future."

While he fine-tuned the concept for the photograph, DeSoto focused on the historic perspective. "I thought a lot about the Texian experience, and the people traveling down what is now Independence Trail to the Lynch ferry landing in the 1830s."

But how did you get this exact picture?

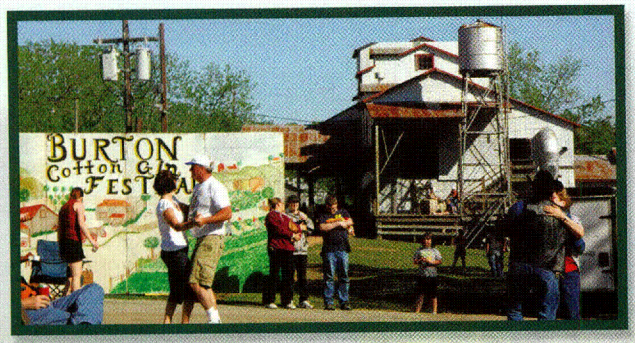
"I was able to travel in the pilot house of one ferry with the captain (he wouldn't let me get on the roof), and photograph the view of the other ferry (there are two 12-car ferries in service at the crossing) with the monument in the background," DeSoto explains. "We often get good sunsets here, but when I asked the captain his opinion of this particular sunset, he said it was one of the best sunsets he had ever seen."

DeSoto's observations about the Texian experience at the ferry in the 1820s and 1830s made me think about how we experience history. Not only did Texians cross with a ferry at this point on the San Jacinto River more than 175 years ago, but the ferry also figures into the early chapters of the Texas War for Independence. Interim president of the Republic, David G. Burnet, whose homestead (now a Harris County park) lay just across the water from the ferry landing in the early 1800s, moved the fledgling government to Galveston to avoid Santa Anna.

So Texans today can ride on a ferry in the same setting where Texians crossed 175 years ago. And we can walk over the battleground where General Houston and his troops won the decisive battle to gain Texas Independence.

And, with a little luck, enjoy a gorgeous sunset as well.

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor



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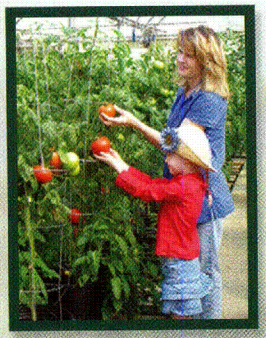

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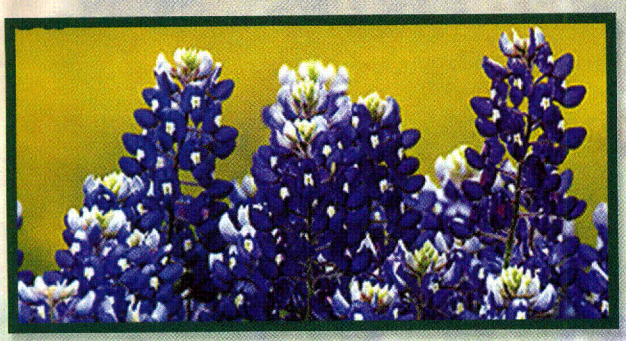

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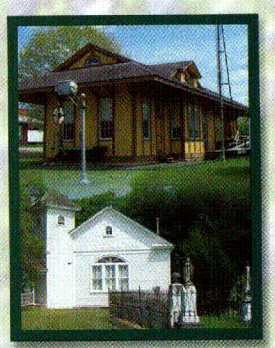

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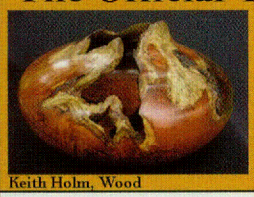

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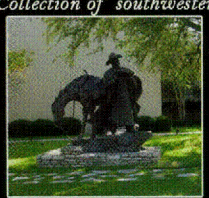

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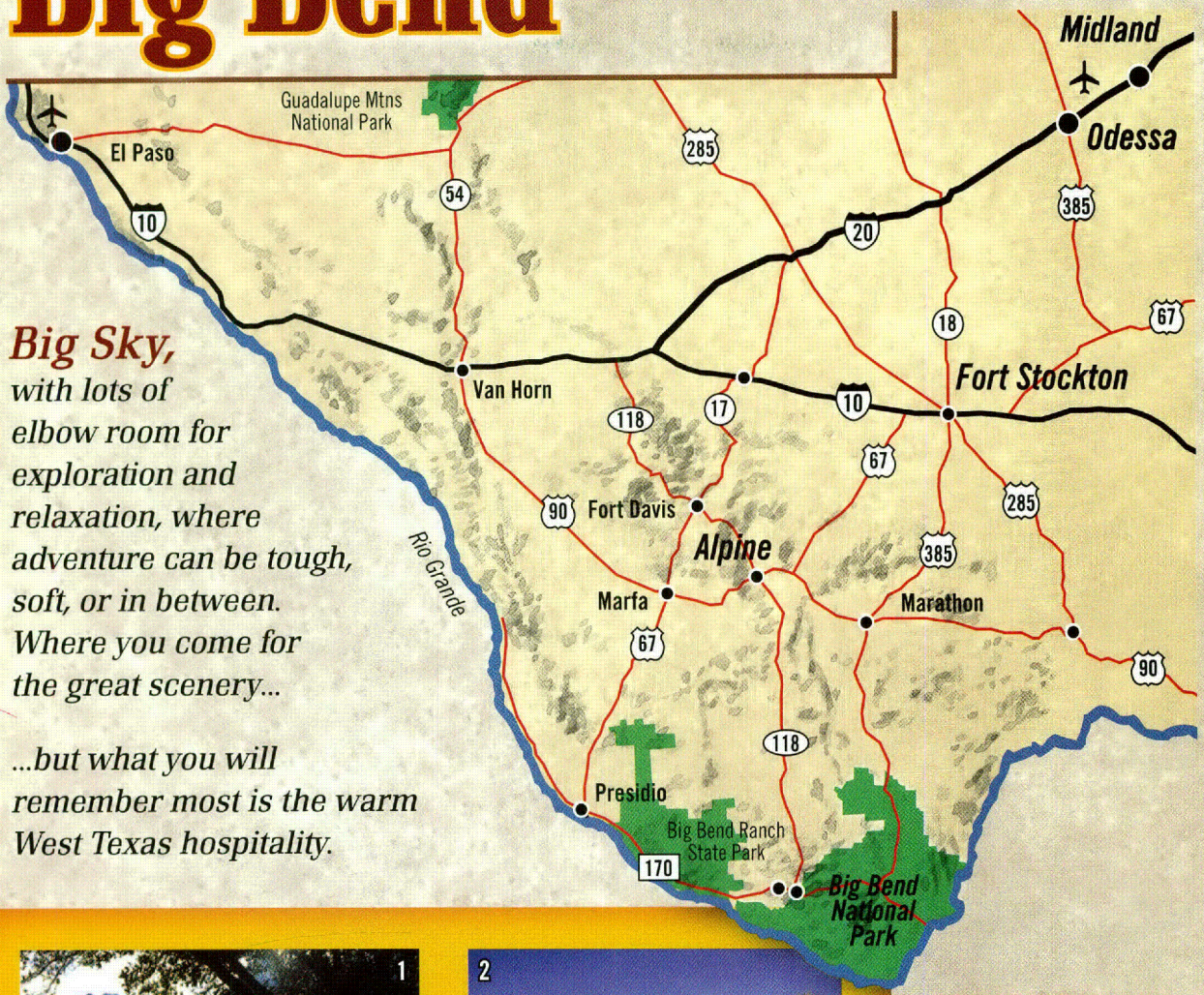
Big Bend & Texas Mountain Country



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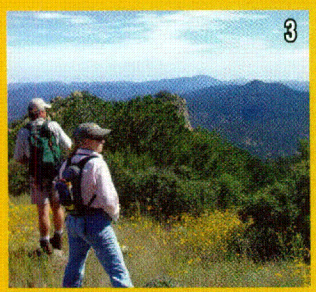

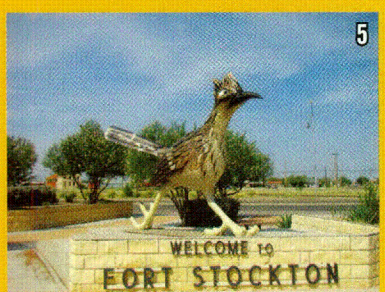

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Talk TO TH

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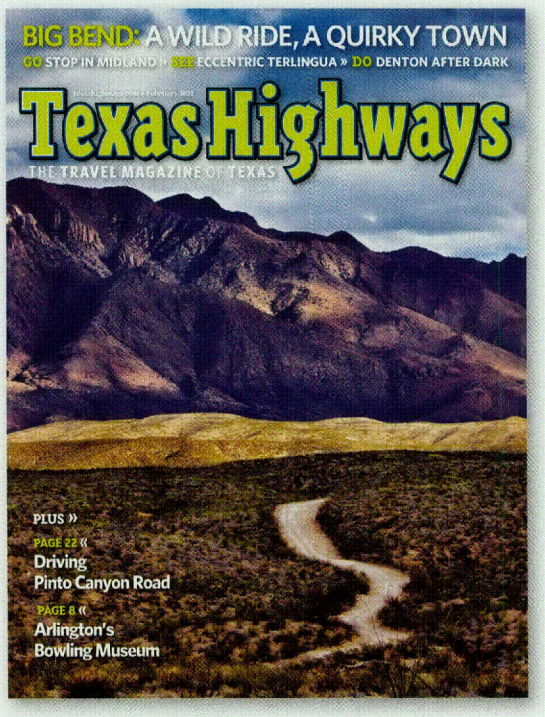
Near the end of Pinto Canyon Road we picked up a stranded English tourist with several flat tires!

—PAULA BOSSE, TH Facebook Fan



The Pinto Experience

Regarding Charles Lohrmann's story on Pinto Canyon Road [February]: Fantastic drive! We discovered this gem of a road last year. We went unprepared with only one spare and no supplies except a cooler full of sodas and water, but we survived! No blown tires and those drinks were much appreciated! It was *hot* when we got to Chinati Springs, and that was the ambient temperature, not the springs. We highly recommend this drive from either direction (we went north to south), but not in wet weather ... it might get too interesting then.

More *TH* Talk at www.texashighways.com/talk

JANIE GRAYSON MASON,
TH Facebook Fan

[continued on page 10

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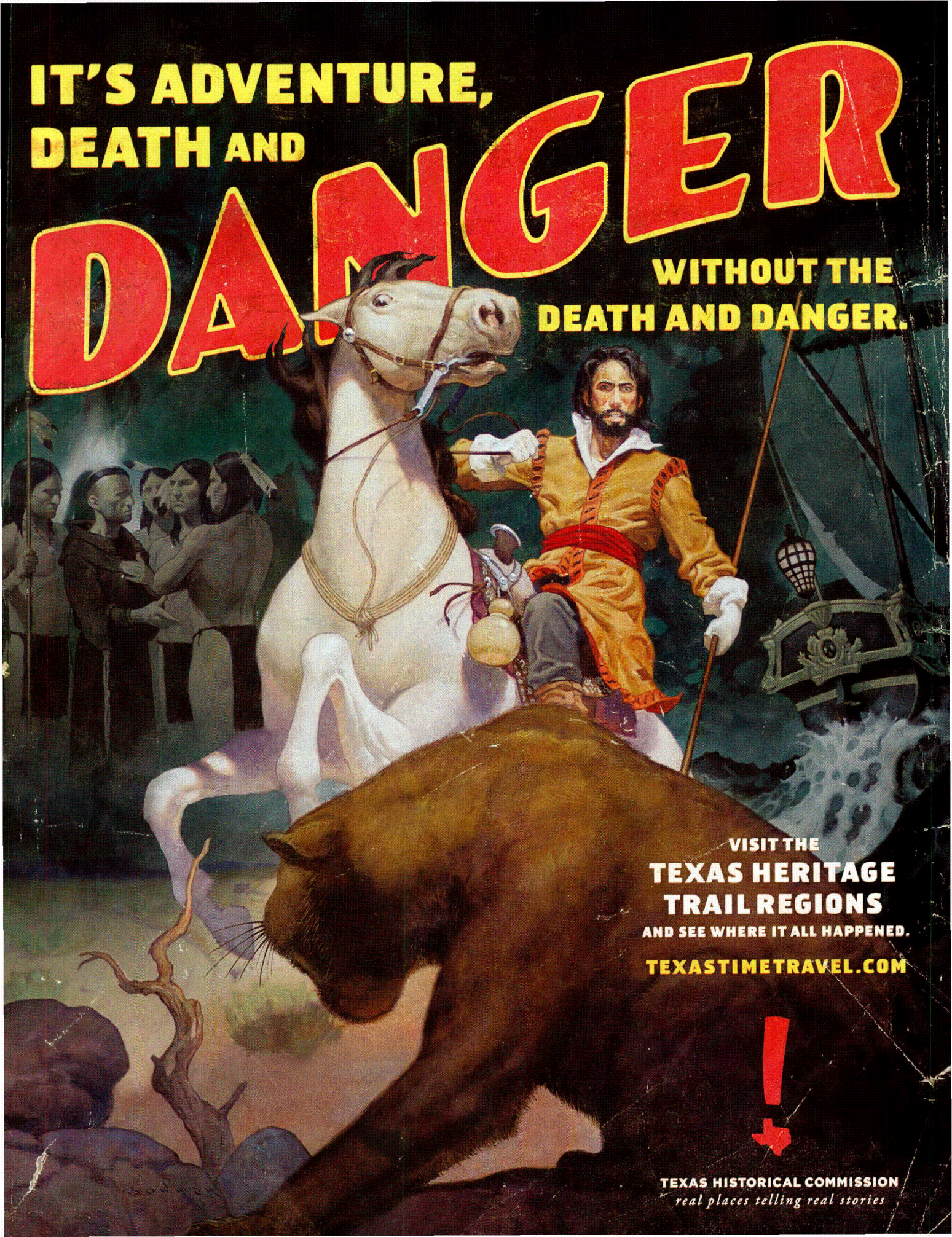
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Talk

TH READER RECOMMENDATION

Luling To-Do's

WE RECENTLY visited the **Central Texas Oil Patch Museum** in **Luling**. For a small town such as Luling, it is a fantastic museum. There are also other interesting things to do and places to visit while there: Take an audio tour at **Zedler Mill**, or grab a delicious barbecue sandwich at **Luling Bar-B-Que**.

MR. AND MRS. GERALD CLANTON, Belton

Central Texas Oil Patch Museum is at 421 E. Davis Street, 830/875-1922; www.oilmuseum.org. The Zedler Mill complex and surrounding nine-acre park are at 1170 S. Laurel, 512/227-1724; www.zedlermill.com; www.cityofluling.net. Luling Bar-B-Que is at 709 E. Davis, 830/875-3848.

CONTACT TH

We want to hear from you! Send feedback and recommendations to: *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. E-mail: letters05@texashighways.com. Space constraints prevent us from publishing every comment/suggestion we receive. We reserve the right to edit items. Because we're unable to check out every recommendation, and because hours vary and details can change, please call ahead for more information.

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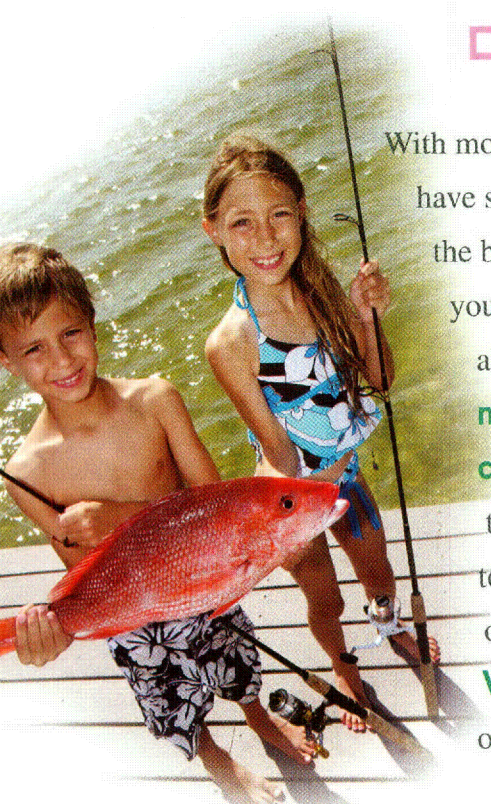

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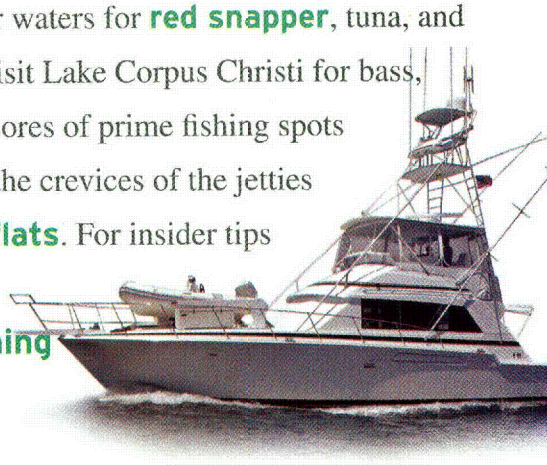

04
11

Postcards

INSIDE: SAMPLE THE SWEET DIVERSITY OF PANADERIAS...21 WIMBERLEY'S WINNING WAYS...25

Do!
Celebrate Slaton's centennial July 1-4

All Aboard for Slaton

A former Santa Fe hub romances the rails Text by **NOLA McKEY**

AS A FREQUENT TRAVELER FROM Austin to Lubbock, I always look forward to the sweeping views of the Caprock Escarpment that unfold along US 84 between Post and Slaton. On a recent trip, I explored the small town on the western side of the dramatic divide and found that Slaton has worthy attractions of its own.

Named for Lubbock banker O.L. Slaton, who helped persuade the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway to come to the area, Slaton originated in 1911 as a division point for trains passing through the Panhandle. A century later, Slaton's last original Santa Fe building—a carefully renovated 1912 Harvey House—offers visitors a glimpse of the golden age of American railroads.

One of some 80 Harvey Houses that the Fred Harvey Company built along railroads across the U.S. from 1876 to 1949, Slaton's two-story, Mission Revival structure provided railroad passengers and others with elegant meals and efficient service for three decades. Trains telegraphed passengers' orders ahead, and when the diners arrived, well-trained, im-

Trains still rumble past Slaton's 1912 Harvey House, now a bed and breakfast, museum, and community center.

PHOTO: KEVIN STILLMAN

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peccably groomed "Harvey Girls" served their meals around a horseshoe-shaped counter on the first floor.

I checked into the Harvey House late on a Tuesday evening. My room, one of four upstairs suites that share a large common area featuring Mission-style decor, proved more luxurious than I'd expected—soft linens covered a cushiony, queen-size sleigh bed, and the spacious, tiled bathroom offered a generous supply of plush towels. I thought passing trains might keep me awake—freight trains still run on the tracks alongside the Harvey House—but I found the rumbling noises strangely comforting, even sleep-inducing.

The next morning, I joined longtime Harvey House supporters Sue and Ernie Davis in the dining room. Over a spread of fluffy biscuits, blueberry muffins, bacon, and fruit, they shared the backstory of the building's transformation from deteriorating landmark to historic treasure.

I learned that the Harvey House was almost destroyed in 1990, when a Santa Fe demolition crew arrived unannounced with the intention of tearing down the long-abandoned building. Had it not been for local plumber Bill Burks, who was asked to salvage fixtures and then quickly alerted city leaders, Slaton's signature structure wouldn't have survived.

Slaton's 1912 Harvey House offers visitors a glimpse of the golden age of American railroads.

After the close call, residents formed the Slaton Railroad Heritage Association, the organization that raised funds and spearheaded renovations for almost two decades. The Harvey House reopened officially in September 2007—this time as a museum, a community center, and B&B. The same year, it was awarded a Texas Historical Marker.

"We didn't rebuild the dining counter that originally filled the room," Sue told me. "We wanted to make the building more functional as an events center. But the newsstand on the west wall looks much the same as it did back then." Later, she showed me a black-and-white photograph of the original newsstand: Periodicals hung across the top, and postcards, candy, and other items resided in a glass case below, just as they do today.

Other original features include the large, divided windows with stained glass at the top, which offer views of passing trains. "I never get tired of watching them," said Sue. "My father was a Santa Fe engineer in the '50s so they bring back a lot of memories." [continued on page 16

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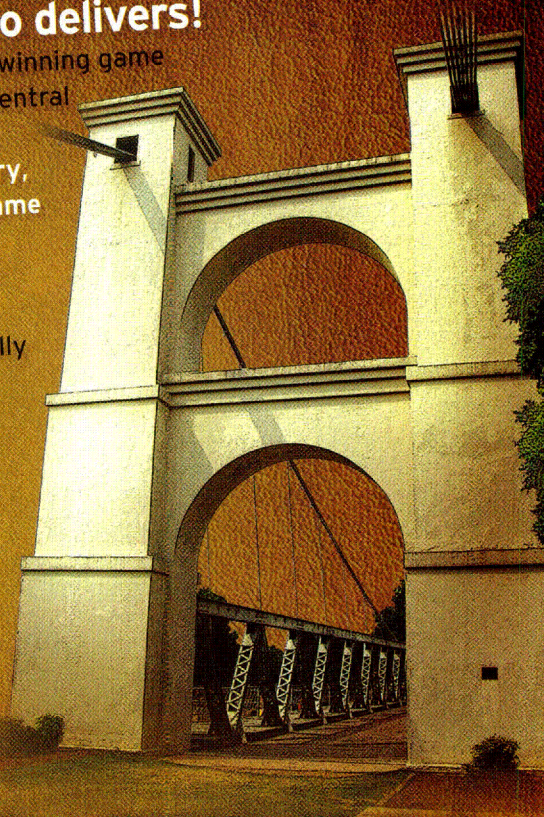

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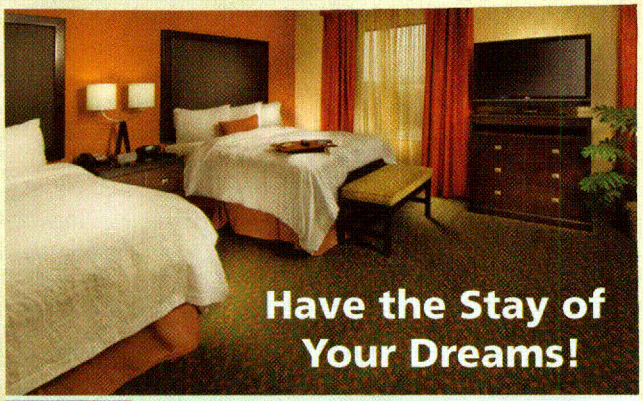

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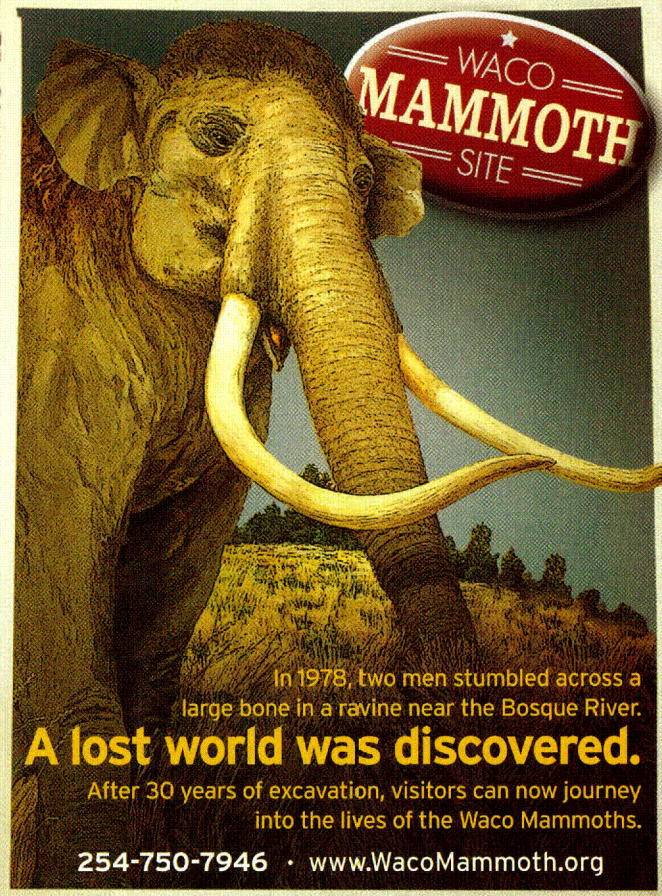

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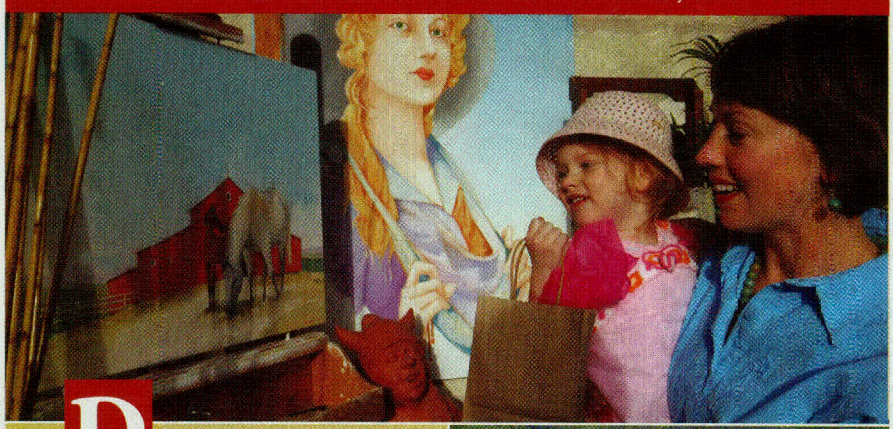

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T·E·X·A·S

continued from page 14 Later that morning, I met another Slaton resident with ties to the railroad. Jolene Fondy's parents both worked at Harvey Houses: As a teenager, her father was a butcher at the Slaton Harvey House, and her mother was a Harvey Girl at the Sweetwater location. "Everything was so elegant," said Fondy, recalling meals at the Slaton Harvey House. "The desserts were always beautiful. There was fine china, and the linens came from Ireland, the silver from England."

Owned by the same family for more than six decades, the Slaton Bakery dates to 1923, when two local bakeries consolidated.

Fondy told me that while some Harvey Houses offered lodging, the Slaton one didn't (until recently). The second floor originally included a small apartment for the manager's family and eight tiny rooms and a shared bath for the Harvey Girls.

"Like all the Harvey Girls, Mother had to sign a contract when she was hired that she wouldn't marry for a year. I also remember her talking about the strict curfews and other rules. They had to wear opaque, black hose, and black shoes, and the hems of their uniforms had to be eight inches from the floor."

Later, as Fondy showed me around the building, she pointed out a mannequin wearing a replica of the starched, black-and-white Harvey Girl uniform. Other displays included historical photographs, Harvey House china and glassware, and advertising items, as well as Native American baskets and other artifacts that Fred

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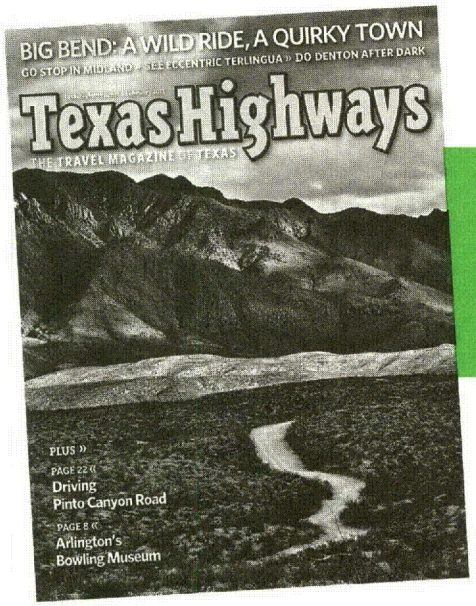

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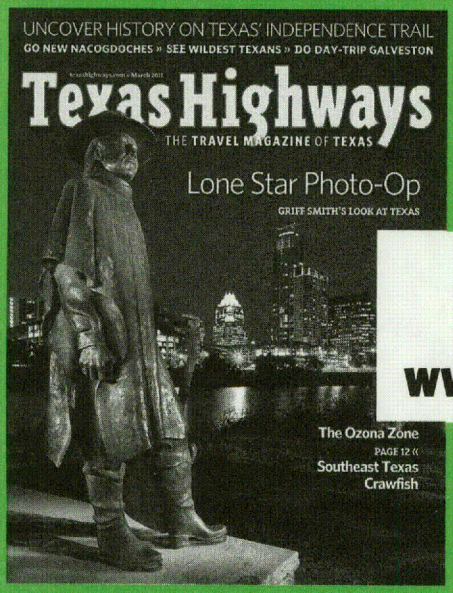

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Harvey collected throughout the Southwest and sold in his gift shops.

A call to lunch cut the tour short, so Fondy and I joined the group that had gathered for the Wednesday buffet, which B&B managers Weldon and Sandy Self began serving last fall. On the day I visited, the menu included chicken enchiladas, salad, beans, and cornbread, with carrot cake for dessert.

At lunch I learned that Slaton was planning its centennial celebration July 1-4; the kickoff reception will be at the Harvey House. The Slaton landmark seems destined to come full circle—a gleaming symbol of the railroad's glory days is now the site of a celebration honoring Slaton's 100-year heritage.

Next, I headed downtown to another landmark—the 88-year-old Slaton Bakery.

The vintage truck that Sherrell and Robin Wilson drive in parades and take to local car shows resembles the one Sherrell's parents used for deliveries in the '50s.

When you enter the bakery, you're greeted by a glass case filled with an array of donuts, kolaches, cookies, candies, and cakes. Off to the left, there's a small eating area where lunch customers can order salads and sandwiches. Bakery owners

PHOTO: KEVIN STILLMAN

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The Hands-On Play Zone features a small-scale fire academy, Coast Guard tower, and construction site for kids to climb on and explore, or they can build their own structures. In the Racers Build and Test Zone, participants test their car-building skills by timing their own miniature creations on a test track. In DUPLO Village, baby builders can play with larger, softer blocks.

Interactive rides with names like Merlin's Apprentice and Kingdom Quest involve activities such as pedaling and using a laser gun. And on guided tours through the LEGO "factory," guests can watch raw plastic transform into LEGO bricks before their eyes. The center also offers a 4D Cinema, café, and party room. Call 972/539-9386; www.LEGOLANDDiscoveryCenter.com. —*Haley Dawson*

LEGOLAND's Racers Build and Test Zone invites participation from budding engineers.

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Sherrell and Robin Wilson and their son Chad told me what it was like to be in the bakery business in the same community for more than six decades. "We feel like we've raised a lot of our customers," said Sherrell. "We've made 80th-birthday cakes for grandmothers who had their wedding cakes made here."

Sherrell's parents, Barney and Ollie Mae Wilson, bought the business from Barney's employer in 1943. (The bakery's origins can be traced to 1923.) A Texas Historical Marker on the building's exterior states that the Wilsons introduced sliced hamburger and hot dog buns to the area. Later, when Sherrell showed me around the "Antiques Room"—a large area displaying baking equipment from the company's early days—he pointed out a slicing machine. "We downsized in the late '50s," he said, "and continued making donuts, pastries, and cakes, just on a smaller scale."

Of the bakery's dozens of items, the Wilsons told me that donuts are the most popular, followed by thumbprints and vanilla wafers. After sampling the thumbprints I understood why they made the cut; they're lighter than most versions, with just the right amount of frosting in the center.

Customers also find a few nonedible items at the bakery, including a large collection of colorful cookie jars and a cookbook the Wilsons compiled—*Baking With Memories: A Collection of Recipes by the Slaton Bakery*. It includes 65 pages of anecdotes from customers relating their favorite memories of the bakery. "That's what our business is all about," Sherrell told me, "making memories for people."

If you count the bakery's "Antiques Room," Slaton will soon boast five museums. I didn't have time for a proper tour of the Slaton Museum or the Texas Air Museum, but I stopped in at the Slaton Model Railroad Studio downtown, where Robert Mamlok and others have laid the groundwork for a model-railroad museum. They expect to complete renovations in time for a regional National Model Railroad Association convention in Lubbock this

Postcards

June. The eclectic crew of artists, train modelers, and computer-savvy folks has begun converting a 1930s CTC (Centralized Traffic Control) machine that once ran the Santa Fe line between Slaton and Muleshoe into a control center for an HO scale model-train layout. The 120-foot by 40-foot layout, which runs the length of the building, mimics the old Santa Fe route, complete with tiny, historically accurate buildings alongside the tracks.

I made two other stops before I left town. The AT&SF 1809 Locomotive, which has resided on the east side of the square since 1955, played a key role in Slaton's agricultural economy, making runs delivering bales of cotton from this area to ports on the Gulf. The Slaton Heritage Mural, which graces a building on the other side of the square, pays tribute to the town's agricultural and railroad history. Painted by local artist Bill "Tex" Wilson, it depicts a Santa Fe train in the center, beneath bold, red letters spelling "SLATON." After my brief stay in this friendly small town, the scene resonated with me, and as I drove away, the image seemed a perfect souvenir of my visit. TH

Slaton

lies off US 84, 15 miles southeast of Lubbock. The town's Centennial Celebration takes place July 1-4. **Call 806/828-6238**; **www.slatonchamberofcommerce.org**.

The **Harvey House of Slaton**, 400 Railroad Ave, **806/828-5900**; **www.harveyhouseofslatontx.org**. Upcoming events include a 1-day exhibit of John and Gayle Schacht's Fred Harvey collection (features items made by southwestern Native American tribes and sold in Harvey House gift shops) on June 11.

Slaton Bakery, 109 S. 9th St., **806/828-3253**; **www.slatonbakery.com**.

Slaton Model Railroad Studio, 166 S. 8th St.; **http//:slatonmrs.org**.

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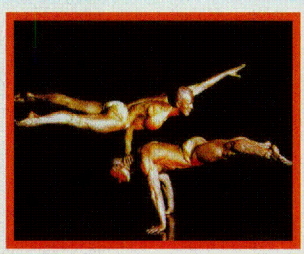

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Panaderia in Presidio

Whether they serve a small neighborhood community or an urban crowd, panaderias offer aromatic and colorful comfort food.

Text by **CHARLES LOHRMANN**

Do!
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THE MODEST, UNOBTRUSIVE, SINGLE-STORY BUILDING HOUSING the Don Jose Panaderia alongside FM 170 (aka O'Reilly Street) in Presidio does not immediately make a strong visual impression on me as I drive by with *TH* Photography Editor Griff Smith. But a couple of hours later, after an enjoyable lunch at The Enlightened Bean restaurant nearby, we decide to stop in and check out the bakery for a quick dessert.

In the early afternoon, the display case is sparsely populated, and the collection of baked goods, although colorful, seems a little lacking. Even though the immediate supply is dwindling, we ask about taking a few photographs, and owner Miguel Hernandez responds with the answer, "No, not now, wait until after three o'clock."

Why is three o'clock the magic hour? we wonder.

"That's when everything comes out of the oven," Hernandez explains.

We have other work to undertake that afternoon, so we decide to wait until the next day. Sure enough, when we stroll

The regular customers arrive and start filling paper bags with warm *pan dulce*.

Don Jose Panaderia in Presidio delights customers with its array of colorful *galletas* and *pan dulce*, as well as menudo and barbacoa on weekend mornings.

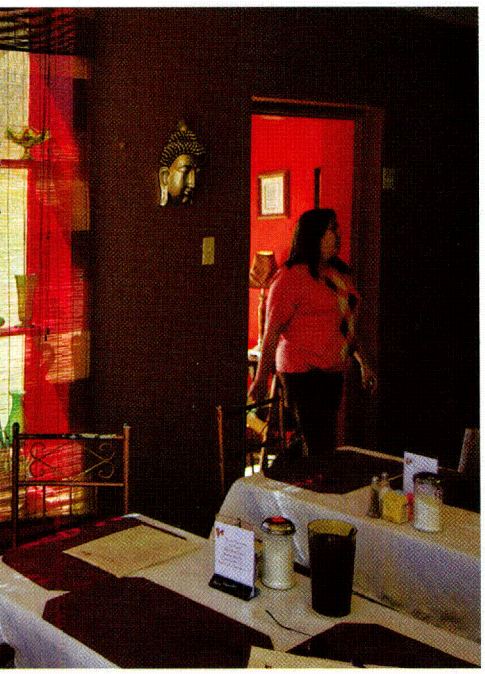
PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH

Room with a view: The Enlightened Bean, a family-owned restaurant and a neighbor to Don Jose Panaderia in Presidio, serves daily specials as well as inventive and diverse dishes from the main menu.

through the front door mid-afternoon, some of the brightly sugared *pan dulce* awaits us in the old-fashioned, wood-and-glass case and in a row of metal trays lined up side-by-side on top. Even though the aromas, colors, and textures distract us, we notice that Hernandez slips a few more multi-colored *galletas* and golden *pan de huevo* into the display case every few minutes. And the regular customers, knowing their timing is perfect, arrive and start filling paper bags with warm *pan dulce*. They share a quick conversation with the staff, then leave to make way for newcomers. This panaderia clearly is the warm heart of a community bound together by cinnamony aromas and a sweet tooth.

The names of the individual creations amuse us as well: *marranitos* are thick gingerbread cookies shaped like little pigs; the *payasitos* or little clowns, are three-colored, triangular cookies; *esponjas* or sponges—are sweet, arched breads topped by colored sugars, which compare to their namesake (with requisite jokes about SpongeBob).

PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH



Even though I'm tempted to seek out recipes for some of these delights, the thought of missing the sensory experience of the panaderia, as well as the extremely reasonable prices, leads me to conclude that a visit to the bakery is worth the time.

For many bakeries of any heritage—urban or small-town—the prevailing assumption notes that the early morning hours offer the freshest baked goods and pastries. In this Presidio panaderia, it turns out, the community is up early anyway, but they're mostly going to work. So they stop in after work and on the way home to pick up treats for either an afternoon snack or the next morning's breakfast.

Don Jose Panaderia's offerings are not all baked goods. The candy also invites indulgence. One choice is a tray of bright orange pumpkin sections that have been simmered in a syrupy concoction until completely transformed into sugary wedges.

On weekend mornings, the hand-lettered signs tacked to the bakery's wall explain that customers can expect fresh tamales, *barbacoa*, *menudo*, and *carne asada*. I wish we were going to be in town, because fresh barbacoa borders on miraculously good. In fact, back in Austin, a Saturday morning barbacoa taco [continued on page 24 ➲

Panaderia Hot List

FOR HER POPULAR FEATURE ON tres leches cake in the May 2010issue, *TH* Web Editor Lois Rodriguez assembled this list of the most popular items at panaderias along with a few recommendations of sources around the state.

Pan de huevo (egg bread): A rounded, mildly sweet yeast bread with stenciled patterns of puffy white, yellow, pink, or chocolate sugar topping.

Empanadas: Traditional favorites are *empanadas de calabaza* (pumpkin turnovers) and *camote* (sweet potato.) There also is an array of fruit-filled empanadas in a flakier (*pan fino*) pastry.

Marranitos (little pigs): Soft pig-shaped gingerbread molasses cookies.

Polvorones: Bite-sized cinnamon shortbread cookies dusted in sugar.

Galletas: Yellow, pink, or chocolate sugar cookies. Some come with multicolored sugar sprinkles, others with cherry centers. A popular one comes with cornflakes baked into the cookie and a cherry center.

Semita de anis: A fragrant and delicious anise-flavored bread. Just sweet enough to enjoy alone or with a cup of coffee.

Other panaderia offerings include *bolillos* (white bread rolls), French-influenced *cuernos* (croissants), bread pudding, *flan*, and candies like pralines and *banderilla de coco*, a popular coconut candy in the red, white, and green colors of the Mexican flag.

Lois' pandaderia favorites include: **Aranadas Bakery** in **Houston** at 912 Fosbak, **713/694-1813**; 8331-C Beechnut St., **713/771-3616**; 9803 Gulf Fwy., **713/941-0100**; and 11919 Eastex Fwy., **281/227-3600**; **www.arandasbakery.com**. **Mi Victoria Bakery**, 5245 Burnet Road, **Austin**, **512/458-1898**. **Casa Maria Restaurant and Bakery**, 4327 South 1st St. (at St. Elmo), **Austin**, **512/444-8861**; **www.casamariarestaurant.com**. **Mi Tierra Cafe Y Panaderia**, 218 Produce Row, **San Antonio**, **210/225-1262**; **www.mitierracafe.com**.

Taste

continued from page 23

draws me to the popular Mi Victoria panaderia on Burnet Road where I wait in a long line with excited customers anticipating both fresh *pan dulce* and breakfast tacos.

As I ask around about favorite panaderias in Texas, I find strong opinions and clear-cut preferences, either for a specific bakery's speciality or simply the establishment's aura. I know I can't visit them all, so for a quick and convenient visual refresher course on *pan dulce*, I stop in to La Mexicana on South First in Austin, where more than 40 varieties of *pan dulce* and another two dozen types of cookies greet me. I resist major temptation and settle on a "crispy," a tortilla-size crunchy baked pastry made from dough spiraled with cinnamon and dusted with cinnamon and sugar.

One of the state's landmark sources of *pan dulce* is San Antonio's legendary Mi Tierra, a circus of a restaurant and panaderia that can satisfy your sweet tooth, or your craving for *machacado*, 24 hours a day. In fact, let me warn you against even looking at their Web site unless you want the photos to fire up your taste buds. (In other words, DO NOT go to www.mitierracafe.com.)

Admittedly, Don Jose Panaderia is out of the way, but it's a good place to end your drive on FM 170 from Lajitas. After all, you'll need some *pan de huevo* for the drive back. And more for breakfast in the morning. TH

Presidio Picks and More

Don Jose Panaderia, FM 170/ O'Reilly, Presidio, **432/229-3424**.

The Enlightened Bean, 201 W. O'Reilly, Presidio, **432/229-3131**.

La Mexicana, 1924 S. First St., Austin, **512/ 443-6369; www.la-mexicana-bakery.com**.

Mi Tierra Cafe Y Panaderia, 218 Produce Row, **San Antonio, 210/225-1262; www. mitierracafe.com**.

Mi Victoria Bakery, 5245 Burnet Rd., Austin, **512/458-1898**.

Wimberley Wonderful

A Hill Country adventure fit for the whole family

Text by **BERNADETTE NOLL**

See!
A summer movie at the Corral Theatre

Shooting stars lit up the skies, and we were grateful for this view not granted us in the city lights of home.

SEEKING A CHANGE OF SCENERY AFTER A FEW DAYS OF URBAN sightseeing in Austin, my husband, Kenny, and I packed up our four kids and their visiting French cousin for a short road trip to Wimberley. Rather than taking a straight shot south on I-35, we hopped on US 290 West to Dripping Springs, then turned south on Ranch Road 12, a winding, two-lane highway that traverses some of the prettiest countryside in Texas.

As we neared Wimberley, my niece commented on how much the landscape—rolling hills and rocky outcroppings dotted with sprawling live oaks and craggy vegetation—reminded her of her home in the Languedoc region of southern France. As we passed a small vineyard, we all agreed that this Central Texas topography was a dramatic departure from

Lounging on the pool deck of the kid-friendly Mountain View Lodge, guests take in daytime views of the pastoral Blanco River Valley. At night—nothing but stars.

PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH

Free glassblowing demonstrations at Wimberley Glass Works take place Tuesday through Saturday. Here, owner Tim deJong works his magic with molten glass.

PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH

the desert environment foreigners often envision when they think of Texas.

We arrived in Wimberley in the late afternoon and found our lodging for the weekend, the 16-room Mountain View Lodge, which, true to its name, overlooks the gentle summits surrounding the Blanco River Valley. Landscaped with Texas redbud, agarita, yucca, sotol, and wizened live oaks, the property attracts cardinals, goldfinches, scrub jays, and hummingbirds practically year round. Upon our arrival, we noticed a mob of ruby-throated and black-chinned hummingbirds buzzing the feeders outside the main office.

On the way to our rooms, the kids squabbled over which bed they'd claim for the weekend, but they quickly abandoned the battle when they spied the gleaming pool. While the kids swam, I lounged on the deck jutting out over the hillside, taking in the inspiring view of rolling hills and rocky mesas covered with contorted, scrubby plants. Kenny, binoculars in hand, hiked the lodge's nature trail, which meanders through the 5 ½-acre property. (A nature-trail guide, available at the front desk and in each room, identifies animals and plants you're likely to encounter.) When he returned, he told us he'd found the property's *Allosaurus* footprint, which was embedded in a creek bed during the late Jurassic period. That announcement piqued the interest of the kids, who scrambled down the hillside for a look, still dripping from the pool.

After a quick cleanup, we piled into the van for the short drive to downtown Wimberley. The town square is just a few blocks long, but it's jam-packed with boutiques, galleries, restaurants, and shops with a predominantly Western flavor. Midweek, the sidewalks were quiet, so we took advantage of a little window-shopping, admiring vintage and new cowboy boots, handmade jewelry heavy on the turquoise and silver, artwork both traditional and modern, and handmade, kitschy crafts.

Nearby, Cypress Creek, which flows into the Blanco River in the center of town, reminded me of the perfect habitat for woodland gnomes. We entertained that thought on an old stone bridge, surrounded by knobby cypresses, as the kids scampered around on the crooked tree limbs and splashed in the cool water.

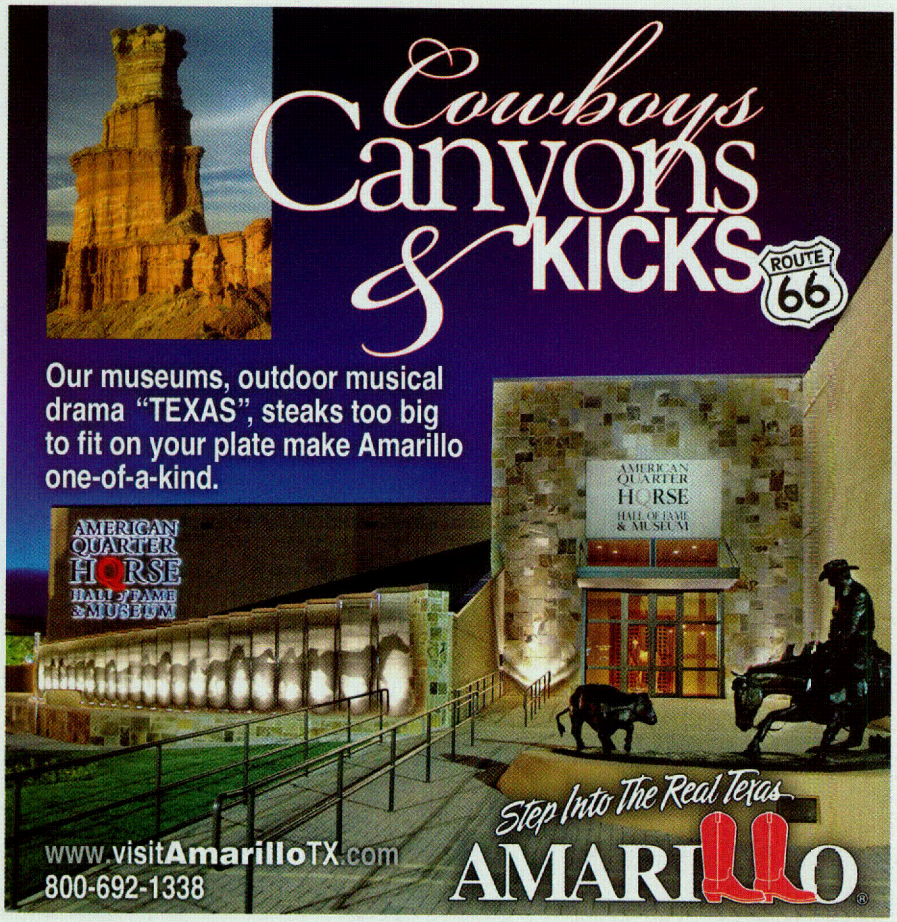
Back at the hotel, we spent a few hours stargazing from the deck. Far, far in the distance, we could make out the muted lights of Austin. Several shooting stars lit up the skies, and we were grateful for this glimpse of the sky—a view not granted us in the city lights of home.

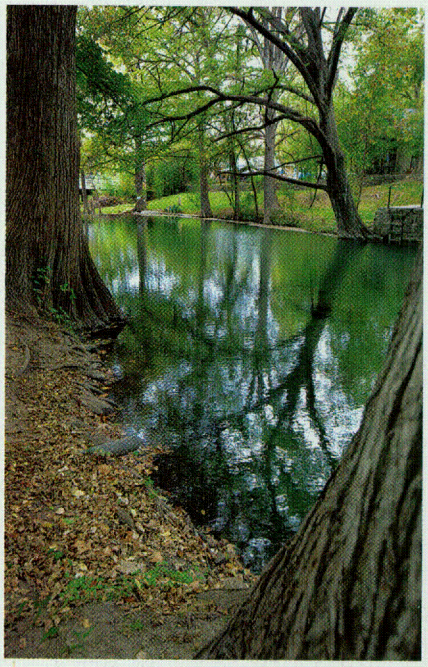
The next morning, we visited Wimberley Glass Works, a gallery and working glass studio between Wimberley and San Marcos. With children in tow, I felt

> Cypress Creek, which flows into the Blanco River, reminded me of the perfect habitat for woodland gnomes.

some trepidation exploring the showroom, which is filled with fragile vases small and large, sconces of nearly every shape and color imaginable, gleaming floor lamps, multicolored chandeliers, and hand-blown paperweights that look like they hold tiny alternate universes. Toddler held close to my hip, we made our way around the shop, entranced.

To learn more about the glass-blowing process, we scrambled into the bleacher seats in the attached working studio to watch two trained glassblowers give a fascinating demonstration. With a long, steel blowpipe, one artisan picked up a blob of molten glass from a furnace, rolled it in crushed glass to add color, then returned it to the fire. Next, we watched them work the glass—blowing through the pipe and shaping it with tools and more fire—into a one-of-a-kind lampshade. We appreciated the glassblowers' patience as they answered questions, and we admired their remarkable skill in creating such beauty.





Swimming opportunities abound on Cypress Creek, but don't overlook the rewards of simple riparian daydreaming.

We all agreed that the place, the products, and the process were wondrous indeed.

Back in town, we paid a visit to the Senior Citizen Thrift Store, one of two thrift stores near the town square. (We'll have to drop by Village Thrift on a return trip.) I love thrift stores, especially when traveling, as they provide a glimpse into the personal stories of residents, both living and long-passed. Here, among the antique women's hats, timeworn coveralls, and kitchen implements, I was thrilled to find—for just a dollar—an out-of-print volume of children's poetry I had been seeking for years.

From there we made good on a promised visit to the Wimberley Pie Company, which has been baking pies and other sweet treats in its rustic stone building since 1989. We deliberated awhile over the array of pies (some 20 at any time!) before opting for four generously sized slices of lemon, pecan, buttermilk, and apple pie. We passed them around the table, sighing in delight as we declared our favorites. In the end, there

PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH

was no clear consensus, other than each was a winner.

We opted to spend our final afternoon swimming at a spot on Cypress Creek called Blue Hole—one of our favorite swimming holes of all time. With grassy banks, cypress-shaded picnic spots, rope swings, and clear, cold, blue-green water, Blue Hole offers something for everyone in my family. While the little ones waded in the shallow end, the big kids learned some tricks from the local teens, who were proudly displaying their daring Cirque du Soleil-style tricks from the myriad ropes, chains, and rings that dangled from tress over the deep end.

As a family, we liked Wimberley. We were grateful to delight in the splendor of the Hill Country, bask in Wimberley's magnificent natural beauty, and take in its easygoing character. We made a list of things we'd try next time: a hike to the top of Old Baldy, a rocky summit with a 360-degree view of the Hill Country; the zipline tour by Wimberley Zipline Adventures; and the summer "walk-in" movie at the outdoor Corral Theatre.

As we often do at the end of family road trips, we voted on whether or not we should return, and we all responded with a resounding and enthusiastic "yes!" TH

Wimberley

To learn more about lodging, attractions, shops, and restaurants in Wimberley, contact the Wimberley Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center, **512/847-2201**; **www.wimberley.org**.

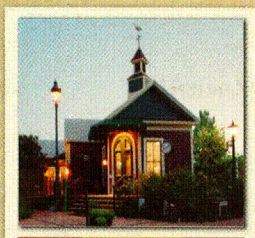
Mountain View Lodge, 512/847-2992; www.mountainviewlodge.com.

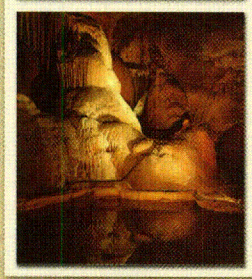
Wimberley Glass Works, 512/393-3316; www.wgw.com.

Wimberley Pie Company, 512/847-9462; www.wimberleypie.com.

Blue Hole, 512/847-0025; www.wimberleybluehole.com.

Senior Citizen Thrift Store, 512/847-3184.





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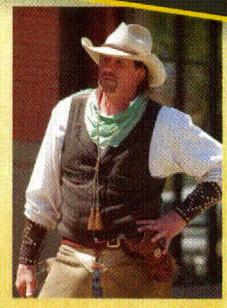

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the serendipity of WILDFLOWERS

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Text by **MELISSA GASKILL**

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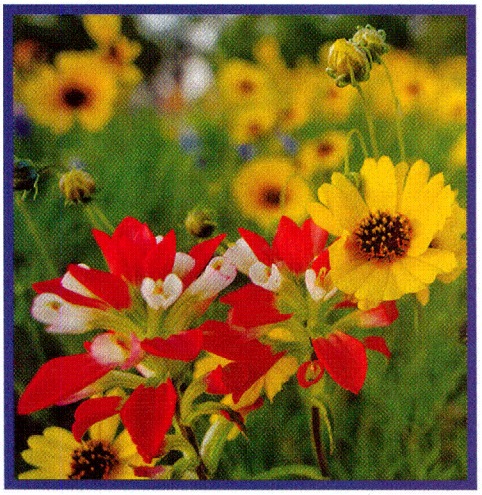
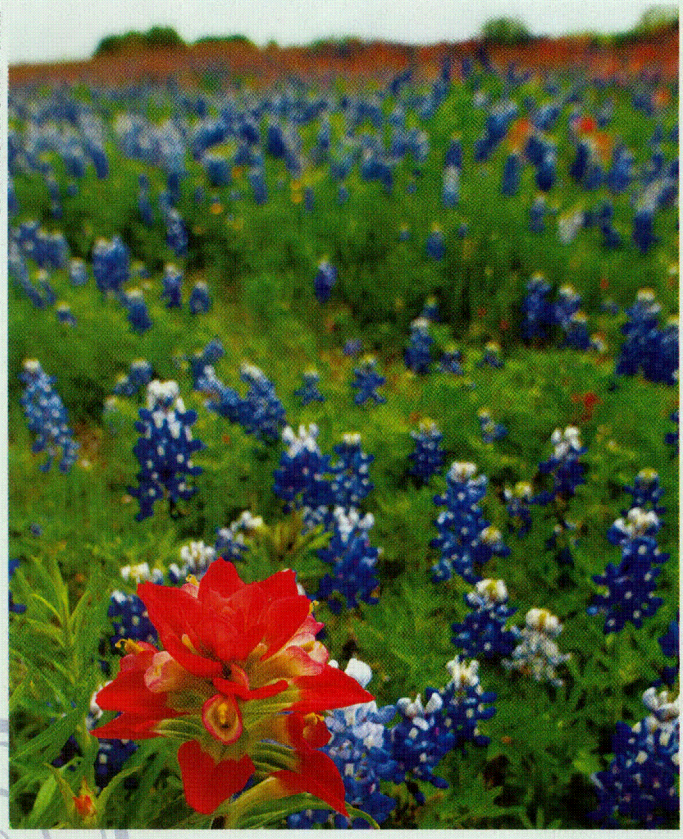


AS OUR FIRST LADY IN THE 1960s, Lady Bird Johnson worked tirelessly to call attention to our country's natural beauty, and she deserves much credit for the abundance of glorious spring wildflowers that we enjoy today. She recognized the beauty and also the ecological advantages of native plants, and, in 1982, along with actress Helen Hayes, founded what has become the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Now affiliated with the University of Texas, the Austin center is a national leader in native-plant research and education. Any Texan who has ever snapped baby photos in the bluebonnets or marveled at a pasture awash in color can thank Mrs. Johnson, as well as the state agencies, counties, municipalities, and private landowners who follow her vision.

We selected our annual wildflower drives with the assistance of Wildflower Center botanists and other experts. While even the pros can't entirely predict the whims of nature, you're bound to see some wildflowers on these routes, which are scenic year round and offer plenty of additional diversions. Contact the individual sites for specifics on spring wildflower conditions. And as always, take your camera ... and take your time. →

LEFT: Bluebonnets cluster among Indian paintbrush and coreopsis in DeWitt County. ABOVE: An enchanting perspective on greenthread and Indian paintbrush at Old Baylor Park in Independence.



BOTH PHOTOS © ANDY SHARP

northeast TEXAS

Each April, the Ennis Garden Club sponsors Ennis Bluebonnet Trails, a monthlong event that showcases the area's wildflowers. The members monitor 40 miles of roads around Ennis, making it easy for travelers to head straight for the best displays of bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, verbena, Texas five stars, Arkansas lazy daisies, prairie parsley, broomweed, winecups, scarlet gaura, rose vervain, winter vetch, and blue-eyed grass.

While in town, visit Kachina Prairie, 30 acres of rare blackland prairie off Baldridge Street, then fuel up on Czech pastries at Kolache Depot Café & Bakery on nearby Brown Street. Roll down US 287 south to Corsicana, and look for wild petunia, prairie parsley, and Engelmann's and Lindheimer's daisies along the way. From Corsicana, take Texas 31 to Athens, a gentle roller-coaster drive past green pastures, ponds, stands of pines, and flowers such as winecups, wild indigo, blue-eyed grass, horsemint, and pink evening primrose. Just before Kerens, a pond at a picnic area on the south side of the road sports a healthy population of spider lilies when spring brings enough rain. Other water-loving flowers to look for in bar ditches and on river and pond banks along this route include water willow, obedient plant, and germander.

ABOVE AND RIGHT: Ennis, anyone? Bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush pair up along the Ennis Bluebonnet Trails. Wildflower-watchers will also spot verbena, prairie parsley, winecups, and blue-eyed grass along the 40-mile, bloom-laden route.

In Athens, take US 175 north, and turn on CR 3918, then on CR 3914, to Tara Vineyard and Winery. The tasting room is open Tuesday through Sunday, and a covered patio offers dinner and occasionally live music. Rest up at the two-story guest mansion overlooking the vines, or spend a quiet evening in one of two cottages nearby at Oak Creek Bed and Breakfast, set on wooded acres where dogwoods bloom in early spring and pond frogs provide a campfire serenade. Oak Creek lies down a long country road off Loop 7.

Continue on US 175 to Kaufman, past Cedar Creek Reservoir, and watch for wildflowers, including echinacea, butterfly weed, and other milkweeds, as well as redbud trees in bloom. Michael Eason, a botanist with the Wildflower Center who coordinates

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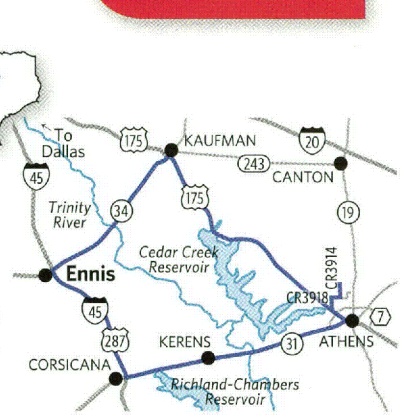
Plan your wildflower drive to end around dusk. Stay overnight in Ennis and catch a double-feature at the Galaxy Drive-In.

For more about the dogtooth violet, see texas highways.com/webextra.

collecting for the center's seed bank, says the now uncommon dogtooth violet was sighted near Corsicana and in Kaufman County in the 1930s. Hard to see from the road, this flower appears in forested areas during early spring, and blooms before trees put on leaves. Eason would love to hear from anyone who spots its delicate, white, lily-like flowers.

Take Texas 34 back to Ennis, crossing the Trinity River, and look for larkspur, Indian paintbrush, wild verbena, and puccoon. If you stay overnight, you can catch a double-feature at the Galaxy Drive-In Theatre.

For the latest Ennis-area wildflower reports, call 888/366-4748. Updated Bluebonnet Trail maps are available at the Ennis Visitor Center. For information about Ennis, call 888/366-4748, www.visitennis.org; Corsicana, 903/874-4731, www.corsicana.org; Athens, 903/675-5181, www.athenscc.org; Kerens, 903/396-2391, www.ci.kerens.tx.us; Kaufman, 972/932-3118, www.kaufmantx.com.



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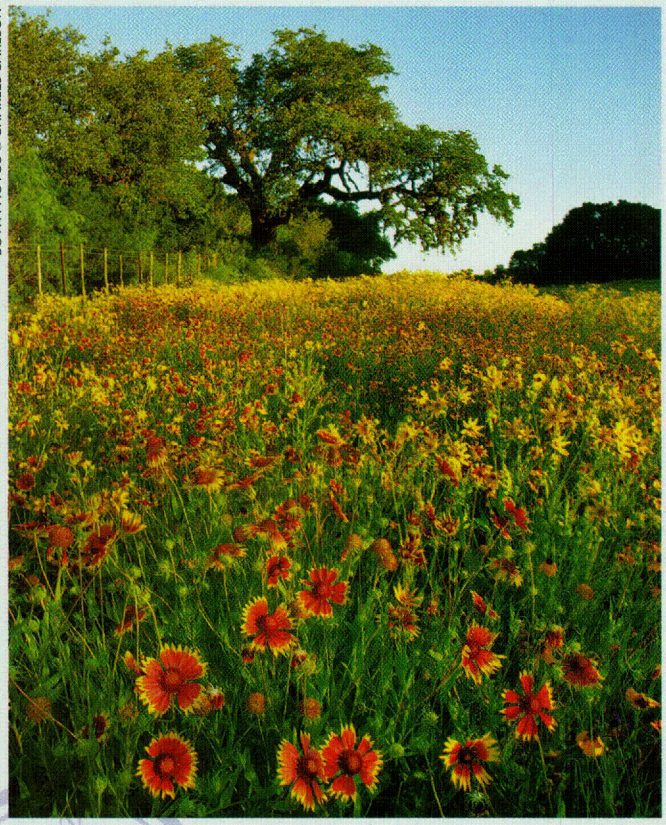


leakey AREA

From Leakey, take Ranch Road 337 to Vanderpool, surely one of the most scenic drives in the state. The narrow road twists over ridges with endless views, and on the rocky hillsides, you may see golden ball leadtree, mountain laurel, mealy blue sage, false day flower, and rock penstemon. Make a short detour north on FM 187 to Lost Maples State Natural Area, and hike the Maple Trail (eight-tenths of a mile each way), or the 4.6-mile East Trail or 4.9-mile West Trail, both of which explore the park's backcountry. If you want more time to savor the flowers, book a riverside cabin at Foxfire Log Cabins, a few miles from the park.

Back on RR 337 heading east, look for the purple fields of Imagine Lavender Farm just east of Vanderpool. On weekends after April 15, stop in for a closer look and perhaps a lavender-inspired product or two. This route offers glimpses of the Medina River and roadside flowers such as perfume balls, brown-eyed Susans, agarita, winecups, and golden-eyed phlox. Look for chatterbox orchids along the river, and for Mexican prickly poppies in the gravelly banks. In Medina, turn south on Texas 16 and drop in at The Apple Store and Love Creek Orchard Bakery for all things apple-flavored, from coffee to pie, and a hearty sandwich or salad at the Patio Café behind the store.

ABOVE: Indian blankets and Engelmann's daisies emblazon Ranch Road 187 near Utopia. RIGHT: Just off Ranch Road 334 between Brackettville and Camp Wood, brown bitterweed glows golden on a country lane.

Continue to Bandera and experience wildflowers in true Texas style— from horseback. Running-R Guest Ranch offers rides of one to five hours exploring the adjacent Hill Country State Natural Area. This sprawling preserve often abounds in flowers, including the usual suspects—bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, primroses, firewheels, blue sage, daisies, wild petunias, and many others. Two hours of riding, breakfast, and lunch come with an overnight stay at one of Running-R's oak-shaded cabins. For dinner, try Busbee's Bar-B-Que, or country cooking at the OST Restaurant, both in town.

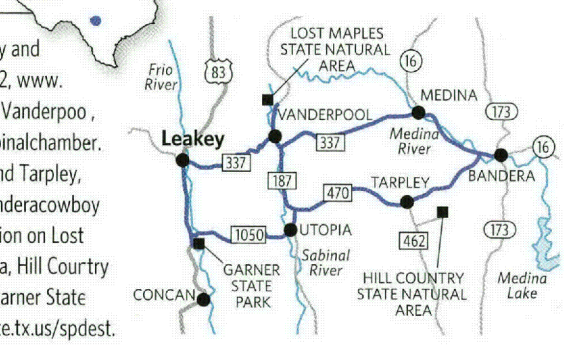
From Bandera, go west on Ranch Road 470, past beard-tongue, prairie vervain, thistles, skeleton plant, Navajo tea,

Experience wildflowers in true Texas style—on horseback at the Running-R Guest Ranch near Bandera.

scrambled eggs, and blue curls. In Tarpley, Mac & Ernie's Roadside Eatery serves burgers for lunch and gourmet fare such as honey-basted quail for dinner Friday and Saturday (brunch on Sunday). If you're not hungry in Tarpley, keep going to Utopia for burgers, steaks, or Mexican food at Lost Maples Cafe. All that driving and flower-gazing is hard work; rest up at Bend O' the River Bed & Breakfast, just north of Utopia on RR 187.

Driving Ranch Road 1050 to US 83 takes you back to Leakey. Swing into Garner State Park on the way, and dip your feet in the Rio Frio, or pitch a tent and stay all night.

For information on Leakey and Utopia, call 830/232-5222, www.friocanyonchamber.com; Vanderpoo , 830/988-2010, www.sabinalchamber.com; Medina, Bandera, and Tarpley, 800/364-3833, www.banderacowboycapital.com. For information on Lost Maples State Natural Area, Hill Courtry State Natural Area, and Garner State Park, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest.



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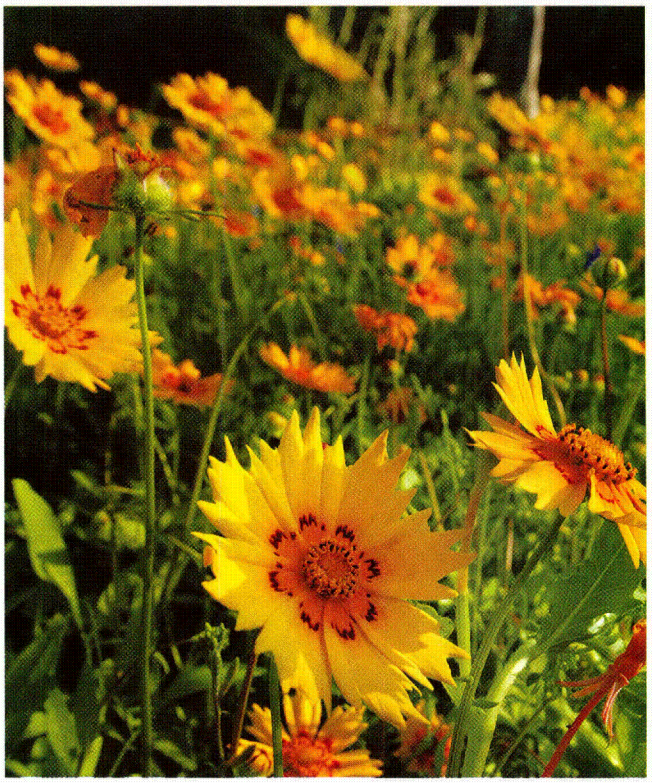
In Westhoff, near Cuero in DeWitt County, unpaved Cheapside Road provides a priceless display of blooms.

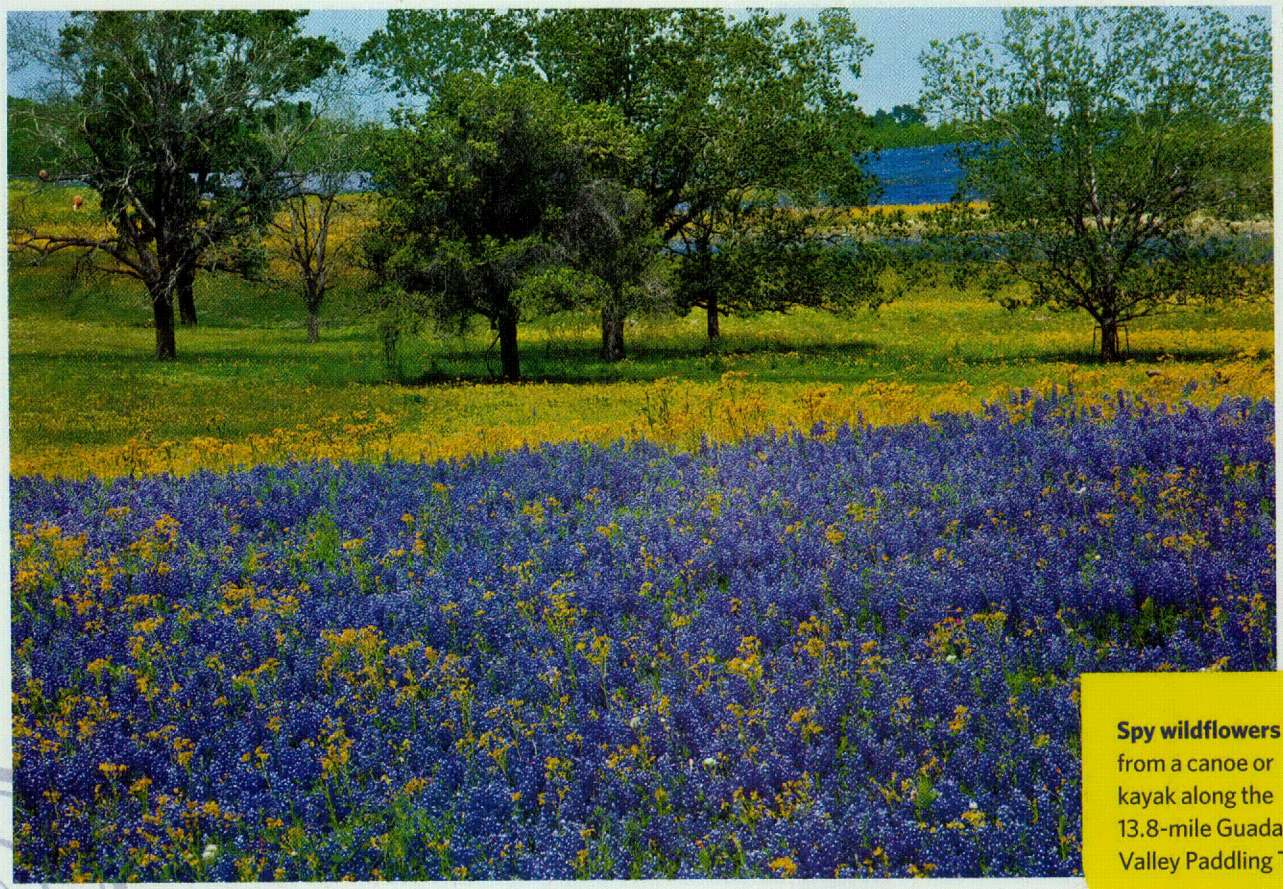


J. GRIFFIS SMITH

Vibrant, coreopsis-covered vistas enrich Cheapside Road in DeWitt County.

© JOE LOWERY

ABOVE: Pink splash. Rose prickly poppies fancify a Duval County fenceline in deep South Texas. LEFT: Daylight fades on a flowery field of phlox, larkspur, Texas groundsel, and bluebonnets near Westhoff.



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Spy wildflowers from a canoe or kayak along the 13.8-mile Guadalupe Valley Paddling Trail.

south TEXAS

From Smiley, take US 87 south. At Westhoff, turn left on unpaved Cheapside Road and drive about two miles for a truly dazzling flower display on both sides of the road. Make a safe U-turn, return to US 87, and head for Cuero. This drive traverses Central Texas Plains, where lazy daisies, rattlesnake flower, Barbara's buttons, blue-eyed grass, wild onion, linum, American basket-flower, prairie vervain, and skeleton plant bloom. Bunk at Ridge View Ranch, seven miles outside of Cuero, and from the spacious porch or from beneath a sprawling oak tree, enjoy vistas that often include bluebonnets, phlox, winecups, and coreopsis.

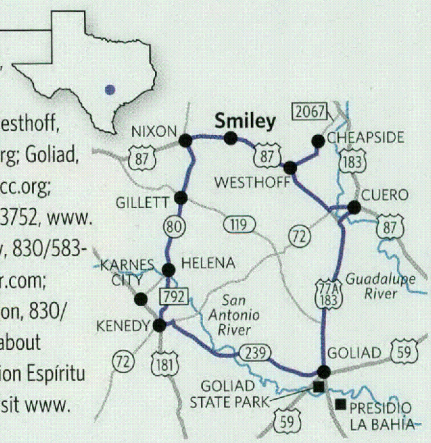
The Guadalupe River skirts Cuero; spy wildflowers from a canoe or kayak along the 13.8-mile Guadalupe Valley Paddling Trail, which has access points north of town on FM 766, and south on FM 236. A third access point on Texas 72 splits the route into legs of 6.6 and 7.2 miles, perfect for a morning or afternoon paddle, with a hearty meal at Smolik's Quality Meats & BBQ before or after.

From Cuero, drive US 183 south to history-rich Goliad, past flowering hawthorn trees, Texas sensitive pea, showy evening primrose, and marbleseed. Stop at Goliad State Park, and visit Mission Espíritu Santo State Historic Site, a refurnished replica of the mission built here in 1749. The 188-acre park also offers a wildflower meadow with bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, Mexican hats, Indian blankets, phlox, and horsemint, as well as access to a 6.6-mile paddling trail on the San Antonio River. A quarter-mile south lies Presidio La Bahía, originally built in 1749 to protect Mission Espíritu Santo. You can tour the newly refurbished museum, or even spend the night in the Presidio's two-bedroom officer's quarters (make reservations well ahead). For dinner, dig into homemade chicken and dumplings at the Hanging Tree Restaurant or jalapeño soup at Blue Quail Deli, both on the town square.

Take Texas 239 west for 33 scenic miles to Kenedy. Turn north on FM 792 to Helena, then take Texas 80 north to Nixon, where you can catch US 87 back to Smiley. Keep a sharp eye out for wildflowers in pastures and roadsides along the way.

ABOVE: A blanket of bluebonnets and Texas groundsel splashes across a field along CR 401 in Wilson County.

For information about Smiley, call 830/587-6220; www.smileytx.com; Cuero and Westhoff, 361/275-2112, www.cuero.org; Goliad, 361/645-3563, www.goliadcc.org; Presidio La Bahía, 361/645-3752, www.presidiolabahia.org; Kenedy, 830/583-3223, www.kenedychamber.com; Helena, 830/780-3732; Nixon, 830/582-1924. For information about Goliad State Park and Mission Espíritu Santo State Historic Site, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest.



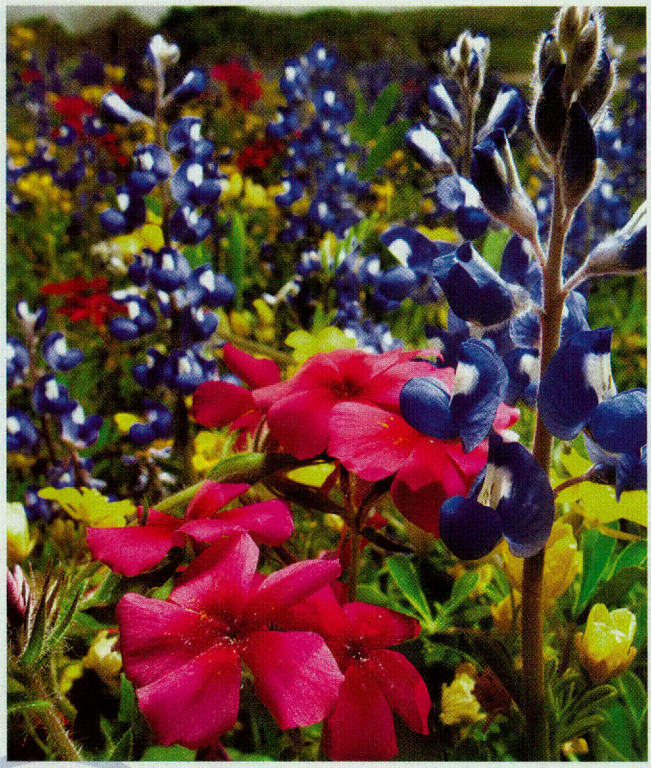
Phlox and coreopsis enliven a pastoral scene along Cheapside Road near Westhoff in DeWitt County.

To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

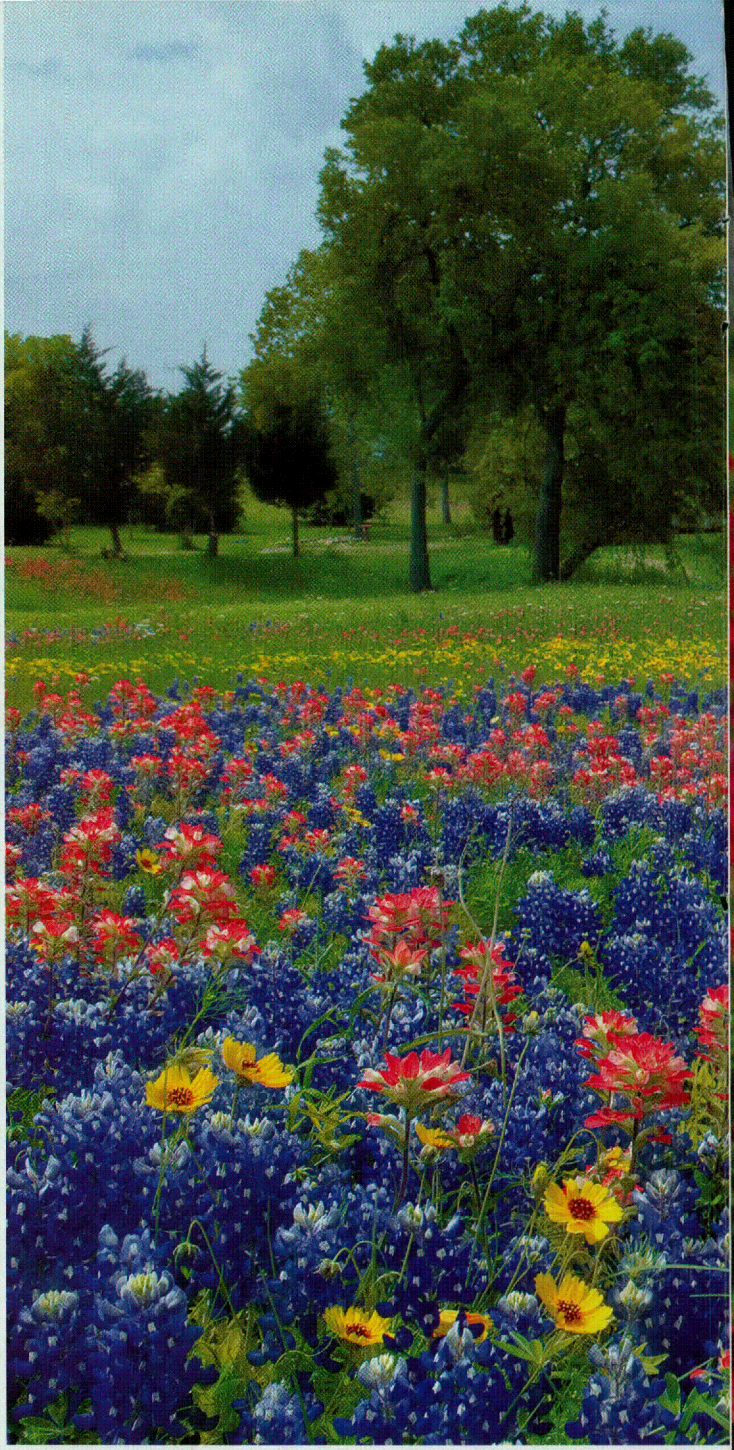
PHOTO BY J. GRIFFIS SMITH

In a clearing near Llano, a patch of bluebonnets and a few Indian paintbrush await an approaching spring storm.

To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com. PHOTO © JOE LOWERY



J. GRIFFIS SMITH



© LANCE VARNELL

ABOVE: No pastels in this palette. A roadside near Ottine features phlox, bluebonnets, and wild mustard in deep, rich hues. ABOVE RIGHT: A classic trio of bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, and greenthread graces a clearing near Independence in Washington County.

washington AND *grimes* COUNTIES

Start in Brenham, and take Texas 105 a few miles, then turn north on FM 50. If you got a late start, turn off on Airport Road and enjoy lunch at the Southern Flyer, a '50s-style diner complete with a jukebox and waitstaff in poodle skirts, overlooking the runway. A few miles farther down FM 50 on Clover Road, bluebonnets fill the fields around Windy Winery, says manager Linda Meitzen. Savor them along with a glass of Brazos Red from the cozy tasting room's patio. Continue on FM 50 to Independence, with a quick detour left on FM 390 to Old Baylor Park, home to a riot of wildflowers, before proceeding east on FM 390. This road has a sharp dogleg, where you can take the scenic route—narrow William Penn Road—to Texas 105. If the area's plethora of wildflowers inspires you to linger, take a detour down Pickens Road to Brazos Bed and Breakfast. A downstairs suite and upstairs guest room sleep up to seven, outdoor decks offer great birdwatching and fresh air, and breakfast includes eggs straight-from-the-chickens and herbs from the garden.

A bit farther down Texas 105, turn on FM 1155 and swing into Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site to add some history to your horticulture. Stroll the park's trails, Star of the Republic Museum, and Barrington Living History Farm, and take a guided tour to see where the Texas Declaration of Independence was signed. Enjoy a picnic in the park, or try the daily special, or perhaps the ribs, at R Place right next door. Or drive on through Navasota, following Texas 105 to FM 1774 in Plantersville; Allphin's Bar B Que and Smokehouse is on the right. The little building looks nondescript, but the sliced-beef sandwich is piled high with melt-in-your-mouth brisket and comes with thick, slightly spicy, handmade potato chips. Tombstones in the wooded Plantersville cemetery date to the Civil War. Take FM 1774 to Magnolia, and check out the town's Texas Historic Landmark, a 1901 train depot.

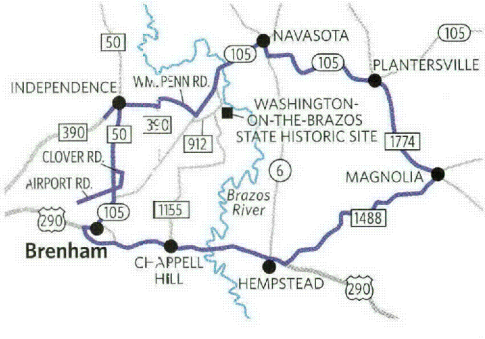
From here, FM 1488 rolls through pine and oak woods to US 290. Head west here, and detour at FM 1155 to the Chappell Hill Historic District, home to antiques shops, historic churches, a history museum, one of the oldest continually

Savor the bluebonnets, along with a glass of Brazos Red, from Windy Winery's tasting-room patio.

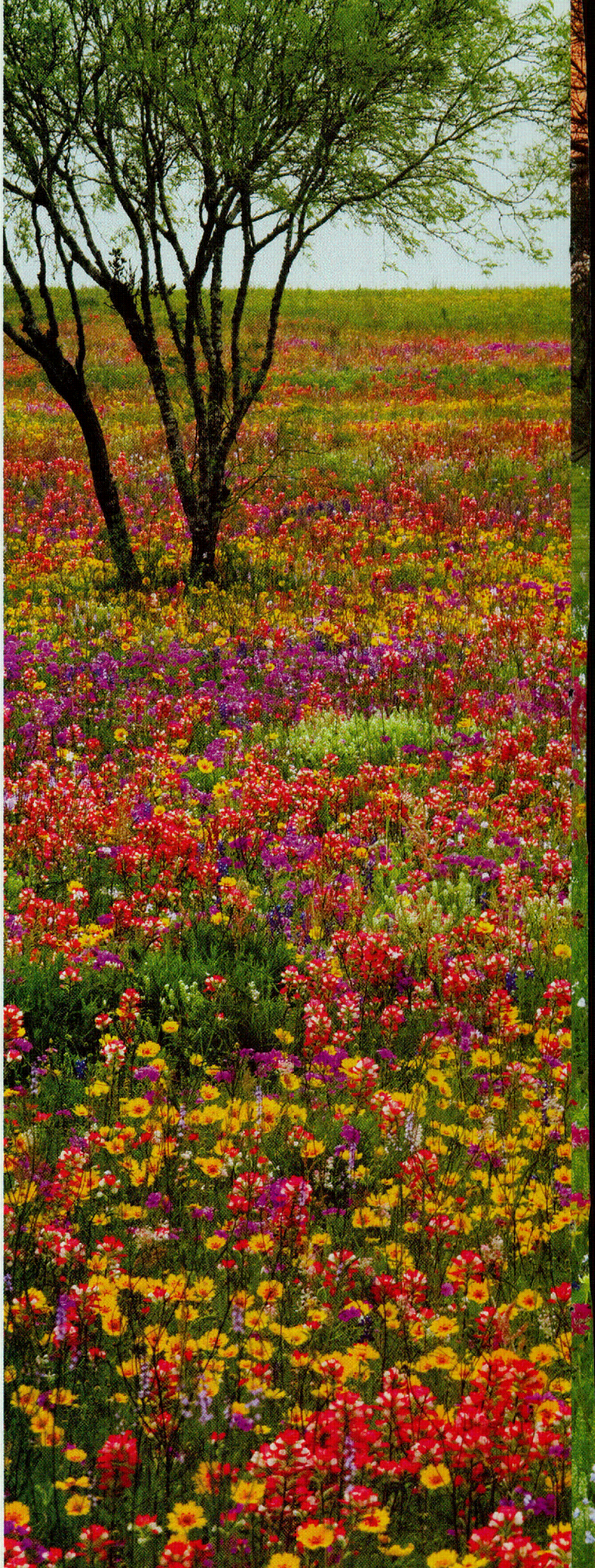
operating banks in America, and the Stagecoach Inn. In case you're ready to call it a day, the inn's two secluded guesthouses lie within walking distance of the historic district. Or follow US 290 West back to downtown Brenham for dinner at the Brenham Grill (you can't go wrong with the meatloaf and a brownie for dessert), located in historic Ant Street Inn. TH

A longtime fan of Lady Bird Johnson and wildflowers, Austin writer and native Texan **MELISSA GASKILL** *never grows tired of exploring routes for our annual wildflower drives.*

For information about Brenham and numerous Washington County sites (including Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site and Chappell Hill Historic District), call 979/836-3696, www.visitbrenhamtexas.com (for updates on the area's blooms, click on "Wildflower Watch"); Independence, visit www.independencetx.com; Plantersville and Navasota, 936/825-6600, www.navasotagrimeschamber.com; Magnolia, 281/356-1488, www.magnoliatexas.org.



J. GRIFFIS SMITH



© LAURENCE PARENT

SPRING AT THE *wildflower center*

IN HONOR OF NATIONAL WILDFLOWER WEEK, the **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** in **Austin**, along with ***Texas Highways*** and **Canon**, will present ***The Serendipity of Wildflowers 2011***—a photographic exhibit showcasing the vibrant wildflower images on these pages—from May 2-8 in the center's McDermott Learning Center.

The center celebrates its annual **Wildflower Days** from March 14-May 31 this year with several other special events, including exhibits of the intricate paper sculptures of **Shou Ping** and mosaics by **Stefanie Distefano** March 19-May 22; the **Artists and Artisans Festival** (works in watercolor, wood, metal, and ceramic for sale) March 19-20; and an expanded **Spring Plant Sale & Gardening Festival** April 9-10. On April 30, the center officially breaks ground on its new **arboretum** with a tree-planting ceremony and tours. And the annual **Gardens on Tour**, featuring access to five private gardens and tours of the center's displays, takes place May 7. **Call 512/232-0100**; **www.wildflower.org**.

For details about the **wildflower photo contest**, sponsored by the Wildflower Center and *Texas Highways*, go to **www.wildflower.org/photocontest**.

ABOVE: A sea of baby blue eyes near Ottine shows this wildflower's true color. RIGHT: Dotted with Indian paintbrush, phlox, and coreopsis, this field along FM 427 in Wilson County resembles a mosaic.

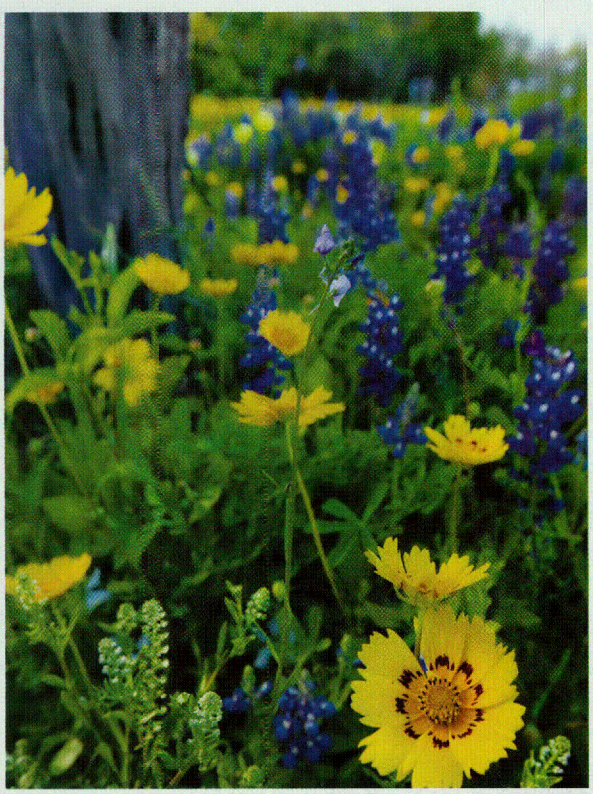
A lone pumpjack makes an unlikely backdrop for a profusion of spring color in a South Texas pasture.

To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

J. GRIFFIS SMITH

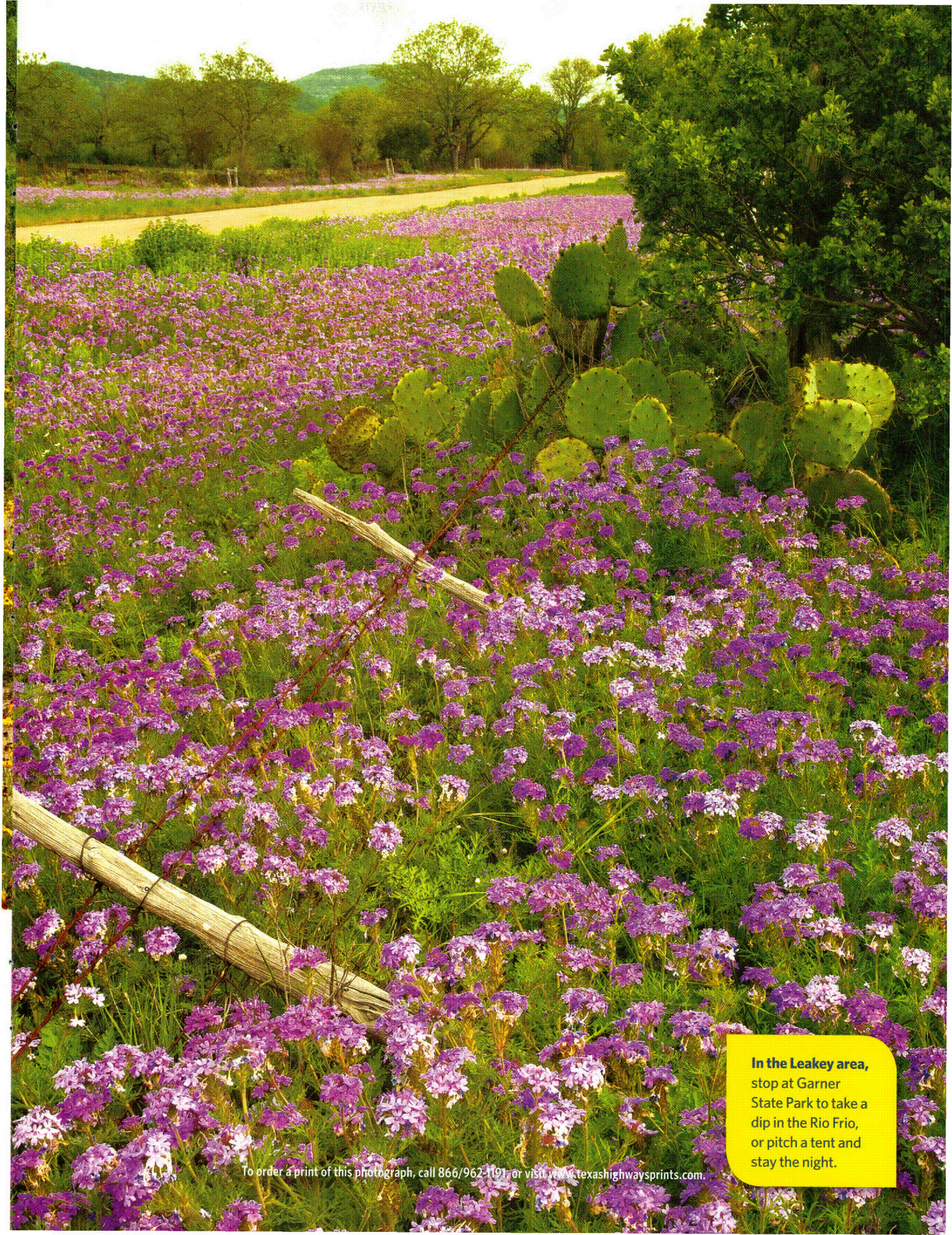
Brightly colored phlox contrast with a weathered fence post along Cheapside Road near Westhoff.

J. GRIFFIS SMITH



ABOVE: Coreopsis and bluebonnets mingle with Texas toad flax and pepperweed in DeW tt County. RIGHT: A roadside north of Camp Wood sports thriving verbena.

© CHARLES CARLSON



In the Leakey area, stop at Garner State Park to take a dip in the Rio Frio, or pitch a tent and stay the night.

To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

Second Nature

SEE THE FORESTS FOR THE TREES IN ECOLOGICALLY DIVERSE EAST TEXAS

ABOVE: Wildlife watchers enjoy hiking the two trails of the Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest, eight miles southwest of Nacogdoches. RIGHT: Zip-line tours of the tree canopy provide an exhilarating way to experience the forests.

Text by **JENNIFER BABISAK**
Photographs by **ERICH SCHLEGEL**

GROWING UP AMONG THE LUSH forests of East Texas, Wayne Collins, who runs a bed and breakfast near Nacogdoches with his wife, Mattie, assumed that many of the towering trees around him would continue to reach skyward for centuries to come. As a native East Texan, I understand the perception that those massive forests are permanent fixtures of the landscape. So I was surprised to learn that nearly three million acres of this timberland was sold in 2010, representing the largest transfer of private property in Texas history and placing this ecological haven in jeopardy. But there is hope for this region, one of the most ecologically diverse in the United States, thanks to the diligent efforts of conservationists.

From one of the highest elevations in East Texas, the view of the fog-shrouded hills and endless forest causes me to gasp.

IN FACT, CONSERVATION GROUPS ARE SPEARheading a massive effort to preserve a significant percentage of the land. Julie Shackelford, Texas Programs Director for The Conservation Fund, a national nonprofit organization that conserves land, tells me that the group has protected 35,000 acres in the Big Thicket as well as 6,700 acres in the Neches River National Wildlife Refuge. Additionally, the group recently launched the Texas Pineywoods Experience, an initiative to promote recreational tourism opportunities in the area. Describing a tourist's experience with ecotourism, she says, "That's how people learn to appreciate nature. Suddenly a place on a map becomes personal to them, and they're willing to speak up for the area." Shackelford hopes that visitors who have witnessed the natural beauty of East Texas will advocate for its preservation.

I decide to check out this wave of East Texas ecotourism myself. I find an excellent home base in the rustic luxury of the Collinses' bed and breakfast, Stag Leap Country Inn. Each of Stag Leap's six cabins sits tucked into a patch of forest on the 200-acre property, giving guests the experience of complete solitude. Inside my cabin, I find two cozy bedrooms, one with a Jacuzzi tub and an electric fireplace. It's pitch black outside, and as streaks of lightning flash across the sky, the rumble of thunder provides a bass note to the harmony of crickets and cicadas. The living room, with its plush couch, leather armchair, and inviting day bed, beckons me to curl up and listen to the patter of rain on the metal roof. Usually, the stargazing is spectacular this far from city lights, but tonight the storm has blanketed the sky with clouds.

Early the next morning, the rain has stopped, and I set out in a golf cart (provided with each cabin) to explore the property. I drive along the rain-softened paths, hearing the rustling of wildlife just beyond the trail. The muted gray sky and subdued woodland sounds cloak the morning in serenity.

After my motorized exploration, I hike from my cabin down a steep path some 150 yards to Bonaldo Creek. With only a trickle of water visible, I stand in the muddy creek bottom, surrounded by five-foot-tall banks. This enchanting creek bottom feels otherworldly, completely secluded from humanity and humming with the buzz of insects. I could stay here indefinitely, reflecting on nature's delicate balance, but eventually I return to my cabin. I'm ready for more exploration.

Each of Stag Leap's six cabins sits tucked into a patch of forest on the Collinses' 200-acre property, giving guests the experience of complete solitude.

A few miles away, I test my stamina further by hiking the Interpretive Trails in the Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest, which spans more than 2,500 acres, including 1,800 acres of mature bottomland hardwood. Two separate loops take visitors through 2.8 miles of this forestland. As I walk the well-maintained trails, sunlight filters through the tree canopy, tinting the swaths of foliage golden. Sprinklings of wildflowers accentuate the backdrop of green forest, and I encounter more deer than people.

Tourists who witness the natural beauty of East Texas are likely to advocate for its preservation.

Next, I'm eager to experience a bird's-eye view of these forests. Several East Texas zip line companies offer this thrilling form of ecotourism, and I decide to check out the canopy tour at New York, Texas ZipLine Adventures, which offers seven zip lines high in the tree canopy, including one that is nearly 900 feet long. After an early breakfast, I set out on the scenic drive to New York. Here, from one of the highest elevations in East Texas, the 35-mile view of fog-shrouded hills and endless forest causes me to gasp.

But I wager that the views are even better from above, so I set out on the adventure course with two canopy tour guides. I am more than a little nervous, but they reassure me that they use only top-of-the-line equipment and routinely pass rigorous safety inspections.

Stag Leap's cozy cabins offer wireless Internet access, but most guests forgo technology and instead succumb to the charm of nature.

Finally, secured in a harness attached to a cable overhead, I work up the courage to step off the first 30-foot-high platform. With a whoosh, I find myself soaring above the tree canopy as I "zip" through the treetops. Fear gives way to exhilaration as

The newly designated Neches-Davy Crockett Paddling Trail is a 9.2-mile stretch of river that hugs the Davy Crockett National Forest.

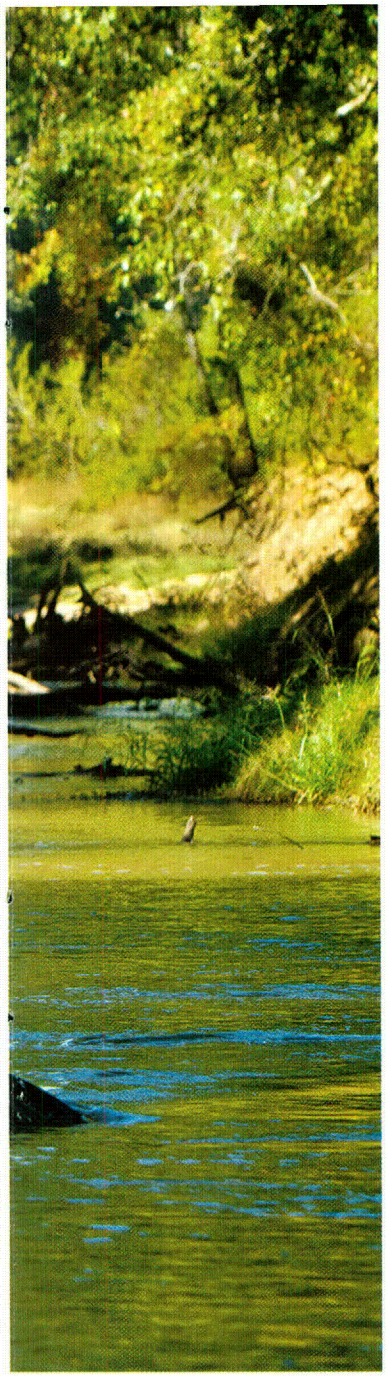
I enjoy the wind rushing against my face and the aerial view of the surrounding countryside. I try a few more, and promise myself that I'll return for a full-moon tour sometime soon.

For a more low-key experience, I head to the placid waters of the Neches River, about 16 miles west of Lufkin. My paddling companions and I launch a canoe onto the newly designated Neches-Davy Crockett Paddling Trail, a 9.2-mile stretch of river that hugs the Davy Crockett National Forest. The umber-colored water offers a gentle reflection of the muddy banks and lofty trees. The serene water presents scarcely a ripple, making it almost as easy to paddle upstream as down. Dragonflies skim gracefully above the water's surface. Trees reach over each side of the bank, straining toward the river.

I reach my hand into the water and discover that it's comfortably warm; I wouldn't mind sliding out of the canoe for a refreshing dip. But with the scores of downed trees and jagged limbs poking from the water, as well as the alligator tracks along the bank, I decide to stay in the boat. At one point, we row into a tangled cluster of fallen trees. Just as I think the obstacle impenetrable, we spy a narrow passage, barely wider than our canoe. Holding up our paddles to block the branches from scratching our faces, we ease through the gap.

Though the gentle hum of highway noise fades into the distance soon after we set upon the river, there are occasional reminders of civilization—a rope swing, a ladder, and empty soda cans, which we

For more on the Texas Pineywoods Experience, see texashighways.com/webextra.



This enchanting creek bottom feels otherworldly, completely secluded from humanity and humming with the buzz of insects.

gather to dispose of later. But we spy no other paddlers. The Neches offers an experience of tranquility and solitude.

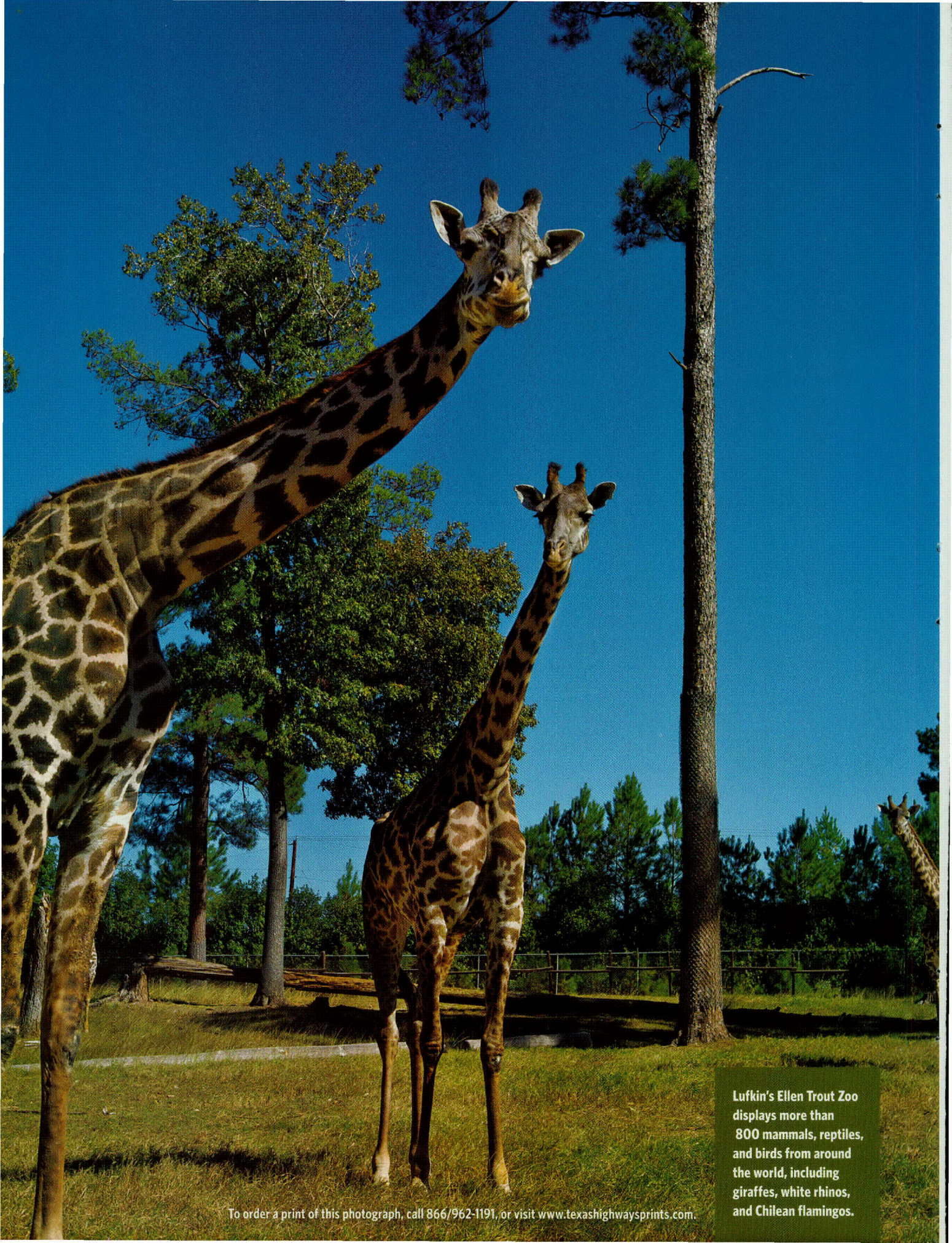
When rain interferes with further nature exploration, I decide it's the perfect time to learn the history of these East Texas forests at the Texas Forestry Museum in Lufkin. Director Rick Bray guides me through the museum's informative exhibits. Permanent displays here tell the stories of a typical sawmill town, the challenges of managing (and preventing) forest fires, and the importance of the timber industry to Texas' economy, especially between 1890 and 1900. I pause to examine models of trees being harvested of sap to make turpentine. As I stare quizzically at a toilet seat on display, Rick explains that East Texas lumber has been used in the manufacture of everything from these seats to ammunition boxes. Bray feels strongly about the museum's role in education. "Part of my mission is to show folks that history can be fun," he says. "I want to make you care."

After wrapping up my tour of the Forestry Museum, I drive a few miles up the road to one of Lufkin's most popular attractions, the Ellen Trout Zoo, which displays more than 800 mammals, reptiles, and birds from around the world, including giraffes, white rhinos, and Chilean flamingos. It surprises me that so many animals roam free here: Dozens of peafowl strut about the grassy courtyard, pecking for food and tending their fluffy, gray babies. I also spot a lone free-range rabbit, who bounds a hasty retreat upon my approach. Bordering the giraffe yard, I find a spacious deck with tables, chairs, and ceiling fan, where I sit down for a moment, mesmerized by the slow, ambling movements of the giraffes. The graceful creatures share their roomy habitat with a variety of other animals, including a bontebok, an antelope native to South Africa.

When I finish my tour of the zoo, I step outside its main gate and board the Z&OO Railroad. The miniature train, which is run by volunteers, whizzes me around the perimeter of the zoo and across a bridge over Ellen Trout Lake. Yellow "alligator crossing" signs dot the lake, and I

The Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest spans more than 2,500 acres, including 1,800 acres of mature bottomland hardwood.

ABOVE: American beautyberry enlivens the understory of the Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest. LEFT: Canoers and kayakers explore the new Neches-Davy Crockett Paddling Trail.



Lufkin's Ellen Trout Zoo displays more than 800 mammals, reptiles, and birds from around the world, including giraffes, white rhinos, and Chilean flamingos.

To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

On a spacious deck bordering the giraffe yard, I sit down for a moment, mesmerized by the animals' slow, ambling movements.

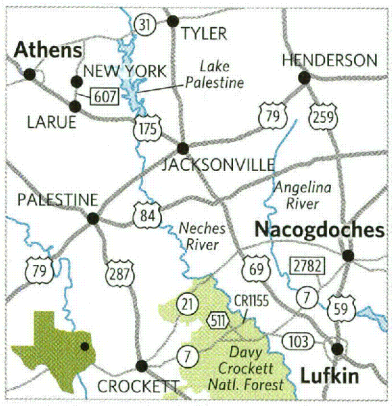
ABOVE: On the grounds of the Texas Forestry Museum in Lufkin, visitors can explore a vintage logging locomotive and caboose. LEFT: Giraffes at Lufkin's Ellen Trout Zoo share their habitat with other mild-mannered ungulates.

see what looks suspiciously like an alligator peering up from the dark surface of the water. The train plunges into the thickly wooded area bordering the lake before making its way back to the station.

I've had a blast, but my experiences here leave me with more than memories of a fun vacation. Instead, I'm awestruck by the inestimable value of these East Texas forests, and I understand why the Collinses and many others care so deeply about preserving this land. TH

Writer **JENNIFER BABISAK** *enjoyed exploring the natural attractions of East Texas while researching this story. Photographer and outdoorsman* **ERICH SCHLEGEL** *particularly relishes adventures on the water.*

TH ESSENTIALS



East Texas Ecotourism

FOR DETAILS about The Conservation Fund's Texas Pineywoods Experience, see www.texaspineywoodsexperience.org and www.conservationfund.org. *Contact information for sites in the story follows.*

Lodging

Stag Leap Country Inn is at 2219 FM 2782 in Nacogdoches. Call 936/560-0766; www.stagleap.com.

Attractions

Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest Interpretive Trail System, 8 miles southwest of Nacogdoches off FM 2782. See www.srs.fs.usda.gov/wildlife/trail.htm.

New York, Texas ZipLine Adventures, 15 miles east of Athens on CR 4328. Call 903/681-3791; www.gozip texas.com.

Neches-Davy Crockett Paddling Trail, west of Lufkin, with a put-in at CR 1155. See www.tpwd.state.tx.us. (Click on "fishing and boating" and then on "paddling trails.")

Texas Forestry Museum, 1905 Atkinson Dr. in Lufkin. Call 936/632-9535; www.treetexas.com.

Ellen Trout Zoo, 402 Zoo Circle in Lufkin. Call 936/633-0399; www.cityoflufkin.com/zoo.

THIS PAGE: This majestic live oak overlooking Lake Granbury is designated as the Poets Laureate Live Oak by Charles and Dominique Inge.

OPPOSITE: 2010 Texas Poet Laureate Karla Morton reads to a Langdon Weekend group gathered under the Poets Laureate Live Oak.

Granbury's Langdon Center

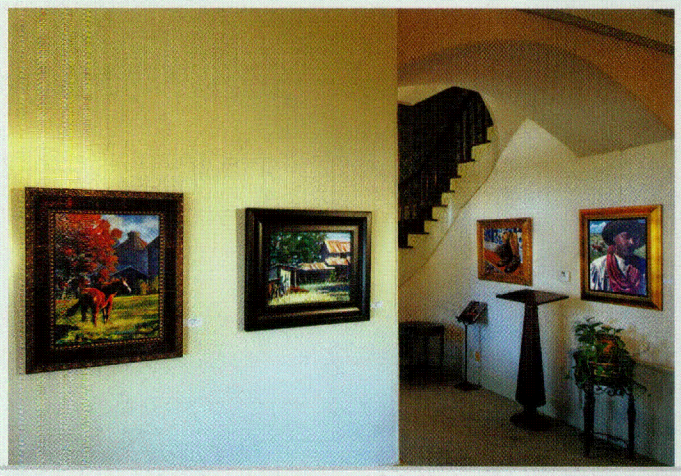
Tarleton State University reaches out to its extended community through the visual arts, historic preservation, writers' conferences, and even cooking classes.

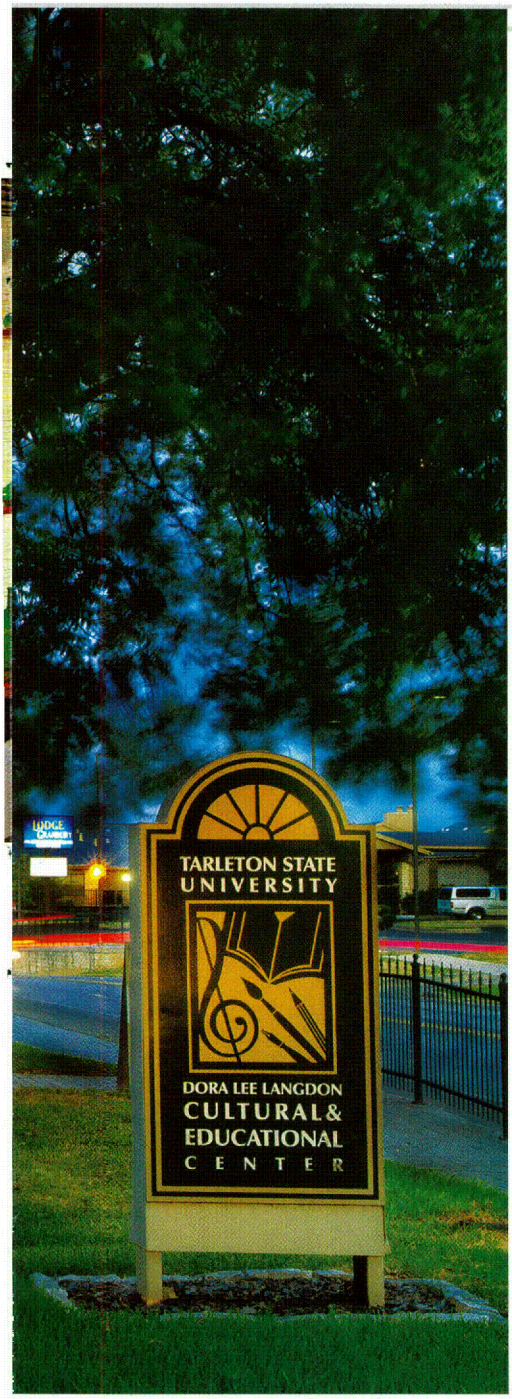
Text by **CHARLES LOHRMANN**
Photographs by **MICHAEL AMADOR**

On a bustling Friday afternoon, the traffic on US 377 Loop through Granbury tests my patience. I might not be so edgy if I were a daily traveler among these folks driving home from Fort Worth, 30 miles or so away, or navigating back toward the Metroplex for the weekend. The fact is, I get impatient because I know

Granbury's historic A.P. Gordon House now serves as office and gallery for Tarleton State University's Langdon Center.

One of the quirky features of the Langdon Center's A.P. Gordon House is what it no longer has—more than half of its original size.

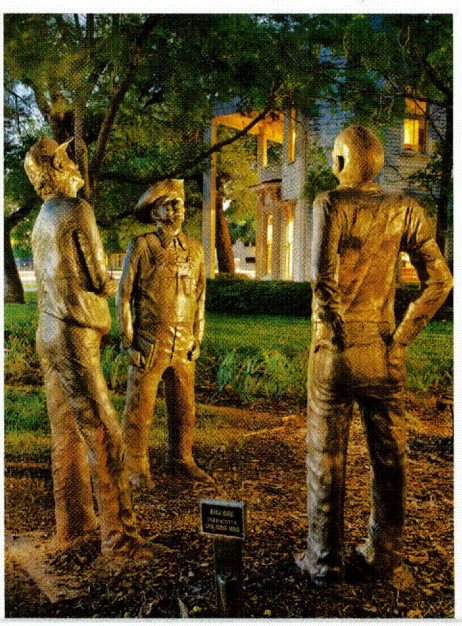




Charles and Dominique Inge acknowledge Texas Poets Laureate and sponsor regular poetry readings under the Poets Laureate Live Oak.

that in a few minutes, I'll make the turn off 377, drive across the Lake Granbury bridge that marks the channel of the pre-lake Brazos River, and enjoy a getaway in Granbury's quiet historic district.

On two of my more recent trips to Granbury, my destination was the Langdon Center, an outpost of Tarleton State University in Stephenville, which engages visitors with concerts, poetry events, writing conferences, and monthly cooking classes. Like its hometown of Granbury, the Langdon Center embraces both the arts and historic preservation, sharing its enthusiasm with folks from around the region.



The Langdon Center grounds include public art installations (*Bifocal Buddies* by Granbury sculptor Art Blevins) as well as classrooms, performance venues, and an art gallery.

The Langdon Center Concert Hall, previously Granbury's First Christian Church (built in 1892), offers superb acoustics for musical performances.

The two-story, Victorian A.P. Gordon House anchors the Langdon Center on its block just one street over from the Hood County courthouse square. This house shares the block with the Concert Hall, a 100-person-capacity building that once served as Granbury's First Christian Church, and two other residential-scale buildings that house classrooms and meeting rooms.

One of the quirky features of the A.P. Gordon House is what it no longer has—more than half of its original size. As Janice Horak, Tarleton's Director of External Relations, explains, "In a very literal down-sizing project, descendants of A.P. Gordon dismantled the sleeping porches and several rooms from the back of the house. The final changes came in the 1970s, when the last Gordons decided to add a modern kitchen.

"The house went through the same stages as many Victorian houses, even renting rooms after World War II," adds Horak. "I walked through the house with one of Mr.

Inside the 19th-Century church building now serving as a concert hall, visitors enjoy musical performances as well as poetry readings and conference events.

Gordon's great-grandaughters, and she shared details of the house's history. When Dora Lee Langdon bought the house in 1982, she made some changes, including adding the elevator."

The Langdon Center's Concert Hall, built in 1892 by the First Christian Church on a site five blocks away, also serves as a venue for conferences, classes, and meetings. It was moved to the site in the early 1990s in a difficult project that required shutting off the power to the square. "Until work started on the building, no one knew it had the vaulted ceiling. The acoustics are so alive in this building that musicians really love playing here. And it is perfect for intimate performances for 50 or fewer," Horak explains.

One of the center's signature events is the *Langdon Review* Weekend, which takes place for a few days in September and accompanies the release of the annual publication of the same name. The schedule starts midweek on the Stephenville campus of Tarleton with workshops for high school students. Then, the venue shifts to Granbury, where writing workshops and performances draw a few dozen participants, primarily from surrounding communities.

2010 Texas State Musician Sara Hickman performs for a Langdon Center crowd in the Granbury Square Plaza just off the courthouse square.

The 2010 *Langdon Review* Weekend draws attention to the work of Texas Poets Laureate, and Langdon neighbors Dominique and Charles Inge invite the group to enjoy a picnic lunch on a shady expanse of their lakeside property. Following the meal, several poets laureate gather to read their work under a particularly palatial live oak that the Inges dedicate to sheltering such readings. Now, the Inges have acknowledged the tree with a plaque that outlines the tree's standing in the realm of Texas poetry.

"The stimulation of the annual *Langdon Review* Weekend workshops refocused my lifelong interest in poetry," says Charles Inge. "And this resulted,

The Inn on Lake Granbury offers a picturesque setting to enjoy the monthly cooking classes at the Langdon Center.

in 2010, in publication of my *Brazos View* collection of poems. I have been impressed with how important *Langdon Review* Weekend has been to other poets from all across the state who have participated in the programs."

Dominique Inge adds, "We have supported Tarleton's Langdon Center since its inception because its stated mission, 'enriching lives through education and the fine arts,' has special meaning for us. It's gratifying to see how the Langdon Center has grown into an important cultural and educational gathering place. Its location in the heart of downtown Granbury, with its park-like grounds, historic home, and concert hall, helps build our community."

One of the other programs that draws participants to the Langdon Center is the monthly cooking class staged at the [continued on page 64 ➔

ABOVE: Visitors to the Inn on Lake Granbury relax on the welcoming grounds overlooking the water.

RIGHT: The Inn, with a 19th-Century house at its heart, hosts cooking classes in association with the Langdon Center.

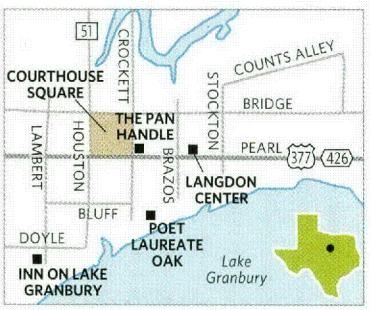
TH ESSENTIALS

Granbury

Langdon Center (The Dora Lee Langdon Cultural and Educational Center), 308 E. Pearl St., 817/279-1164; www.tarleton.edu/langdoncenter. This year, proceeds from the **Granbury Wine Walk**, April 29-30, will benefit The Langdon Center. Visit www.granburywinewalk.com.

Inn on Lake Granbury collaborates with the Langdon Center to host monthly cooking classes and also sponsors the Granbury Wine Walk; 205 W. Doyle St., 877/573-0046; www.innonlakegranbury.com.

The Pan Handle, which calls itself a "gourmet tool shop," offers a range of cooking classes in addition to the Langdon classes it co-sponsors. On the Granbury square at 106 N. Crockett St., 817/579-1518; www.thepanhandle.com.



For more information on lodging and events in Granbury, contact the Granbury Convention and Visitors Bureau at www.granburytx.com or the town's official website at www.granbury.org.

Barking Rocks Vineyard and Winery joins the Granbury Wine Walk and sponsors performances; 1919 Allen Court, 817/579-0007; www.barkingrockswine.com.

continued from page 62

nearby Inn on Lake Granbury, a hostelry that combines its bed and breakfast with meeting rooms and a superb and inviting view of the lake. On my visit, the Inn is hosting conference participants for lunch in the specially configured kitchen and conference room where the cooking classes take place. I'm tempted to seek out the hammock slung between two oaks standing guard over the lake view. If only there were time for a dip in the lavishly landscaped saltwater pool.

And it's important to point out that the day-to-day cooking that takes place at The Inn on Lake Granbury deserves a class of its own. Breakfasts include compelling combinations of French toast, eggs, fruit salads, and pastries.

And a visit would not be complete without a stroll around the courthouse square, which defines the heart of Granbury's historic district. One of the longtime merchants, a gourmet specialty shop called The Pan Handle, also serves as a sponsor for the Langdon Center's cooking classes.

As Dominique Inge explains, "The Langdon Center hosts a broad range of indoor and outdoor cultural and educational programs and activities that enrich the quality of life here, and my own life has been enriched immeasurably by these diverse offerings."

With such support and enthusiasm, the Langdon Center now serves as a proven model for a partnership between a historic Texas town and a state university with deep roots in its community. TH

Texas Highways Editor **CHARLES LOHRMANN** *takes part in the Langdon Center's Writing Down the Brazos writers' workshop as well as the* Langdon Review Weekend. *Photographer* **MICHAEL AMADOR** *enjoyed the opportunity to meet Texas poets and listen to their work. And he adds, "Sara Hickman rocks!"*

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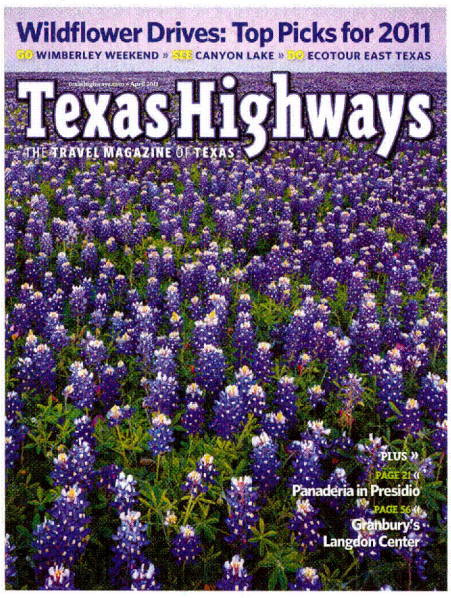

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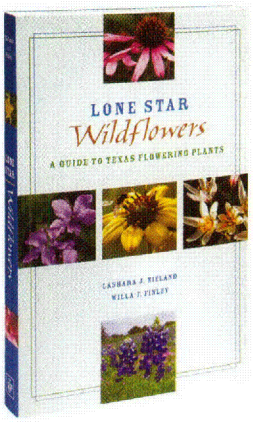
Blooming AROUND Texas



Bluebonnet Splash Tee
Texas bluebonnets bloom beautifully on the side of this "crazy soft" tee. Tapered cut with cap sleeve and scoop neck. Color: surf blue. 100% cotton; machine wash cold. Missy sizes: S – 2XL

Item 38267 ..... $24.95

Bluebonnet Pillow
Brighten your décor with our Texas bluebonnet throw pillow. The state flower is woven, with green and white accents through this tapestry pillow. Blue fabric on back and piping around the edges. 17″ x 17″

Item 37808 . .... $22.95

Wildflower Coasters
Four beautifully decorated ceramic coasters, with faux tumbled-marble design. Each coaster showcases assorted Texas wildflowers. 4″ x 4″. Box of four.

Item 37810 ..... $24.95

Lone Star Wildflower: A Guide to Texas Flowering Plants
By LaShara Neiland and Willa Finley
Enjoy the rich lore of Texas wildflowers with this easy-to-use, fun-to-read book. Identify your own floral finds in a snap with its handy, color-coded organization. 2009, 320 full-color pages.

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Wildflower Photo Note Cards
Gift box of eight gorgeous cards featuring images from the Lone Star Wildflowers book. 8 cards/envelopes, blank inside.

Item 35203 ..... $11.95

Beach with Pink Flower Print
Whether your last visit to the Gulf Coast was a week or years ago, seeing this photo of the waves, dunes and vibrant vegetation will bring it all back in an instant. 20″ x 24″

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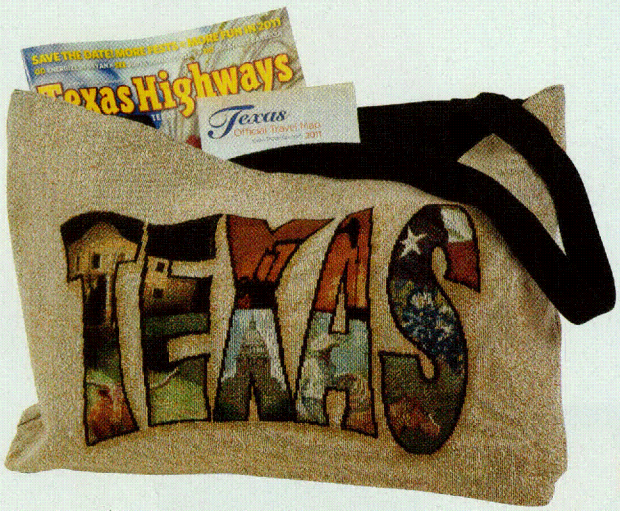
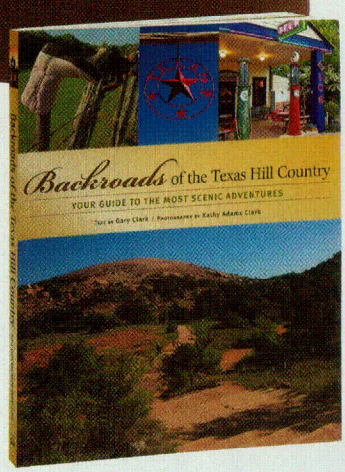
Wild ABOUT Texas





Inside Texas Tote Bag
Classic Texas scenes depicted within its name give this beautifully crafted tote a unique flare. Cotton/polyester blended exterior woven in tapestry style. Fully lined; 14" shoulder strap. Dry clean. 17" x 12.5"

Item 37418 ..... $21.95

***Ten in Texas* CD**
Ten recordings from 10 Texas songwriters performed by 10 great Texas artists. Includes: Carolyn Wonderland singing Honky Tonk Heroes, Aaron Watson with True Love Ways, Joe Ely sings Sunday Morning Coming Down, and much more.

Item 37604 ..... $19.95

***Texas Road Trip* CD**
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Item 37603 ..... $19.95

1836 Longhorn Tee
A bold scroll design and a classic Texas longhorn shield are screened in rich tones of red, terra cotta and cream across this chocolate brown tee. 100% pre-shrunk cotton; machine wash in warm. Men's sizes: S – XL

Item 38271 ..... $21.95

Texas Shield Cap
Heavy-duty washed cotton cap in terra cotta is handsomely embroidered with our stylized Texas shield in brown. Comes with a low crown, pre-curved visor, sewn eyelets and sliding-fabric adjustment strap.

Item 38734 ..... $16.95

Backroads of the Texas Hill Country
By Gary Clark
A colorful guide to 30 scenic drives through the heart of the Lone Star State. Ideal for planning a day trip or a weekend getaway. Illustrated with beautiful color photos and intriguing historical images. 160 pages, color, soft cover, 8.5" x 11"

Item 36351 ..... $21.99

Wild in Texas Tee
Wildflowers and butterflies artistically intertwine through Texas on this silk-screened coral tee. Made with environmentally friendly recycled yarn. 65% cotton/35% polyester; machine washable. Women's sizes S – XL

Item 38268 ..... $18.95

Howdy from Texas Mug
Take a trip back in time every time you take a sip. Fun vintage Texas art surrounds this 15 ounce white ceramic mug.

Item 37337 ..... $10.95

Welcome to Texas Puzzle
Take a trip through Texas when you put this colorful puzzle together. Shaped like the Lone Star State, it features dozens of themes and locations throughout the state. 1000 pieces will make this one a challenge for the most experienced puzzler. Recommended for ages 10 and up. Finished size: 32" x 25.5"

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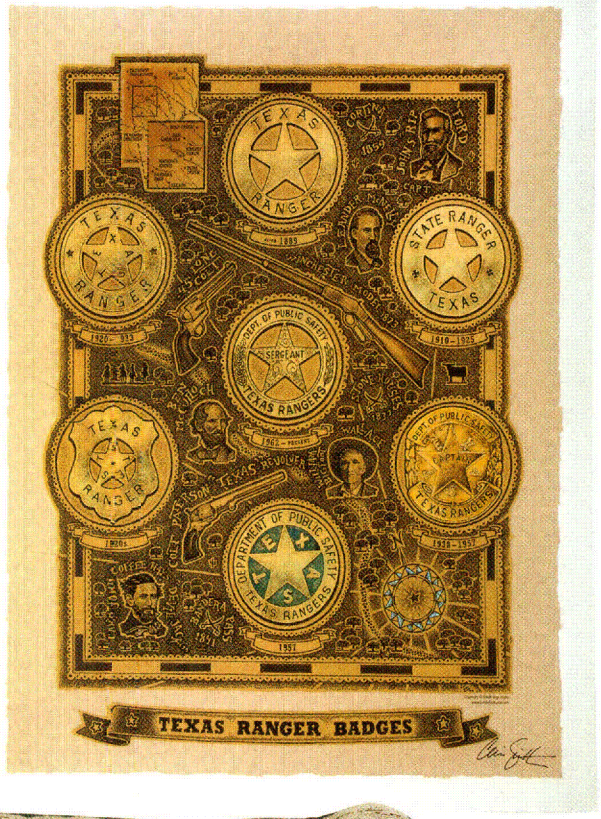

Texas Ranger Badges Print
The Texas Rangers have worn seven badges throughout history. In this print, artist Christopher Smith authentically rendered each badge and surrounded them with historic images of Ranger battle sites, famous Texas Rangers and the weaponry used. 16" x 20"

Item 32196 ..... **$25.95**

God Bless Texas Accent Pillow
Add a little whimsy to any room with this accent pillow in burgundy, white and deep blue. Embellished with Lone Stars, the mini-pillow is 12.5 x 8.5 inches. Poly/cotton blend filled with 100% polyester fiber of recycled material.

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The Oldest Park in Texas

*The revitalized San Pedro Springs Park has deep roots in **San Antonio**'s history*

Text by **GENE FOWLER**

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IN SAN ANTONIO, A FEW MILES northwest of the Alamo, Texas' oldest public park enchants visitors with a spring-fed pool, broad expanses of tree-shaded land, and an archeological history that predates Spanish colonization of the New World.

In his 1709 diary chronicling an expedition into the northern frontier of New Spain, Franciscan padre Isidro Felix de Espinoza wrote, "Crossing a broad plain, we entered a growth of mesquite with some mottes of live oaks in it. We came upon an irrigation ditch full of water and very well wooded, which was sufficient for a town, and all along it were places to tap the water, for the ditch was on high ground, and the land was sloping. We called it the Waters of San Pedro."

Not only did Espinoza describe the area where the Villa de San Fernando de Béxar—known today as the city of San

The swimming pool at San Pedro Springs Park opens mid-June. Humans have visited the springs here for some 12,000 years.

PHOTO: KEVIN STILLMAN

Current patrons of Espinoza's "broad plain" enjoy not only a swimming pool, but also tennis courts, a playground, a theater, and a public library.

Antonio—would soon be established, but he also observed an important factor in its founding: the abundant, spring-fed "Waters of San Pedro."

Archeological evidence found here—including weapons and vessels for carrying water and food—suggest that humans have gathered at these springs for more than 12,000 years.

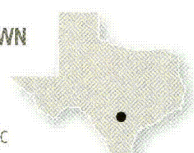
Today, the 46 acres surrounding the springs still welcome visitors as San Pedro Springs Park, the oldest park in Texas and one of the oldest in the country. Current patrons of Espinoza's "broad plain" enjoy not only a community swimming pool, but also tennis courts, a children's playground, a theater for live performances, and a public library. Moreover, amblers, daydreamers, and sky-gazers find in the open green space a restorative oasis amid the busy urban swirl. Some of the giant oaks in the park seem old enough to have been there to greet the padre. Some, known by children and adults alike as "climbing trees," fell long ago and have re-rooted. Hector J. Cardenas, president of the Friends of San Pedro Springs Park, points out the variety: oak, elm, cypress, palm, anaqua, and mesquite.

For history buffs, a San Pedro stroll offers a hands-on experience of San Antonio's storied past.

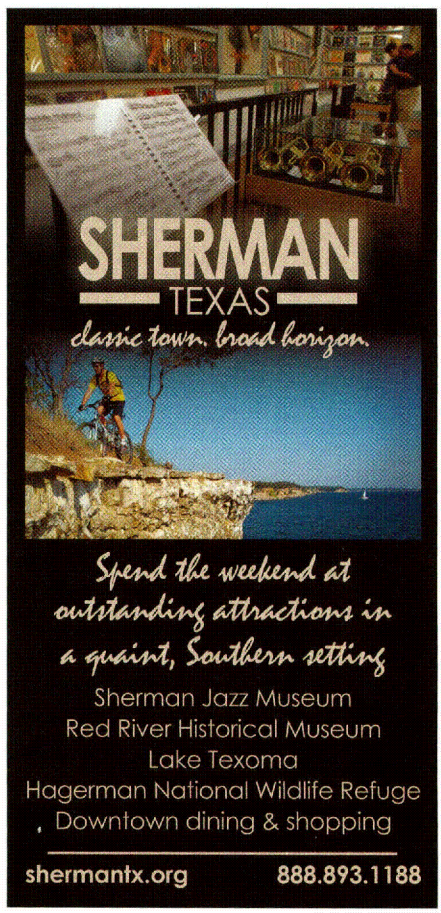
Nearly a decade after Franciscan missionaries named the springs in 1709, the first San Antonio mission and presidio were established nearby. "These soldiers and their families were the first European settlers in San Antonio," explains Cardenas. The garrison moved to Military Plaza in 1722, and the mission, San Antonio de Valero, was moved to a site on the San Antonio River in 1724. In time, it included the iconic structure known the world over as the Alamo.

The king of Spain proclaimed San Pedro Springs and surrounding acreage to be an *ejido*, or public land, in 1729. "Two years later," explains environmental scientist Gregg Eckhardt, a San Pedro Springs

San Pedro Springs Park



SAN PEDRO SPRINGS PARK IS A FEW MILES NORTHWEST OF DOWNTOWN San Antonio, at 1315 San Pedro Ave. (at the intersection of San Pedro and West Ashby Place). The springs were named by Franciscan missionaries in 1709, and the king of Spain proclaimed the springs and surrounding acreage to be public land in 1729. Thus, San Pedro Springs Park is the oldest park in Texas and one of the oldest in the nation. For more details, call 210/207-7275; www.sanantonio.gov/parksandrec/directory_san_pedro.aspx. The swimming pool (210/207-3113) opens mid-June through mid-August; admission is free. For details about McFarlin Tennis Center, call 210/732-1223. For a schedule of performances at San Pedro Playhouse, at 800 West Ashby Place, call 210/733-7258; www.sanpedroplayhouse.com. For details about the San Pedro Branch Library, call 210/733-1454. For information about the Friends of San Pedro Springs Park, see www.fspsp.org. For more on San Pedro Springs Park history, including an informative video, see www.edwardsaquifer.net/spspring.html. —*Gene Fowler*



Speaking of Texas

San Antonians took trolley cars to the springs, where they glided in swan boats, ascended in hot air balloons, and marveled at a zoological collection.

Early 20th-Century postcards depict San Pedro Springs Park as an idyllic hideaway—not far from the truth even today.

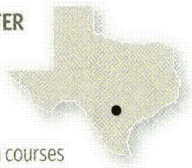
enthusiast who has collected more than 50 vintage postcards of the park, "the *ejido* was used for the first time in the public interest when the commander of the Royal Presidio designated it the temporary farming land of immigrants sent by Spanish authorities from the Canary Islands. As such, the land around the springs was also the site of San Antonio's first permanent settlement by European civilians." The islanders' permanent homes were south, clustered around Main Plaza, and the springs remained an outpost outside the settlement. In 1731, the Spaniards constructed an *acequia* to furnish water for irrigation and household use. "It took more than a century for the area around the springs to take on the appearance of a modern-day park," adds Eckhardt.

During the decade of the Republic of Texas, Texas Rangers held horsemanship contests at the springs with Mexican vaqueros and Comanche warriors. The City of San Antonio declared the site a public park in 1852. Throughout the rest of the 19th Century and for the first two decades of the 20th, San Pedro remained the city's prime destination for recreation. Celebrations of Juneteenth, Diez y Seis, the Fourth of July, and Columbus Day brought crowds to San Pedro Springs Park during these years. And year round, San Antonians took trolley cars to the springs, where they enjoyed music and dining at a beer garden, glided in swan boats on small lakes, ascended in hot air balloons, and marveled at a zoological collection that became the genesis of the San Antonio Zoo. A natural history museum here, opened by Hungarian naturalist Gustave Jermy, was a forerunner of today's Witte Museum.

Sam Houston addressed a throng at the park in 1860, imploring his fellow

POSTCARD COURTESY FRIENDS OF SAN PEDRO SPRINGS

Brackenridge Park



ESTABLISHED ON LAND DONATED IN 1899 BY THE SAN ANTONIO WATER Works, which were owned by philanthropist George Washington Brackenridge, **Brackenridge Park**—like San Pedro Springs Park— also sprang into being because of springs. Located just south of San Antonio Springs, headwaters of the San Antonio River, the 343-acre park is bisected by the river, which courses through the famous River Walk tourist area downstream. The springs still flow from a spot known as the Blue Hole at University of the Incarnate Word, but most of the river water today is supplied by wells and recycled city water.

By the 1920s, Brackenridge Park had become what many regard as the "crown jewel" of Alamo City parks. Visitors today enjoy paddle-boating on the river, extensive hike-and-bike trails, riding through dense park woods on the Brackenridge Eagle miniature train, birdwatching, fishing, and teeing off at the park's 18-hole golf course. The park's Japanese Tea Garden, restored and reopened in 2008, offers shaded walkways among lily and koi ponds, stone bridges, and lavish landscaping. Another park attraction, the Sunken Garden Theater, hosts dance and drama performances, as well as concerts in a former limestone quarry. The San Antonio Zoo (210/734-7184; www.sazoo-aq.org), which also incorporates dramatic quarry walls, houses some 3,500 animals representing 600 species. The Witte Museum (210/357-1900; www.wittemuseum.org), which opened in 1926, offers exhibits that document and interpret natural history, science, and the cultural heritage of South Texas.

The Japanese Tea Garden, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, occupies a former rock quarry near the San Antonio Zoo.

Portions of that heritage are still being discovered at Brackenridge Park. Archeologists examining the path of a new hike-and-bike trail recently unearthed a Guadalupe adze, a flint woodworking tool used by Native Americans thousands of years ago. And recent work to extend pedestrian access on the river uncovered a stone wall from a late 1800s millrace.

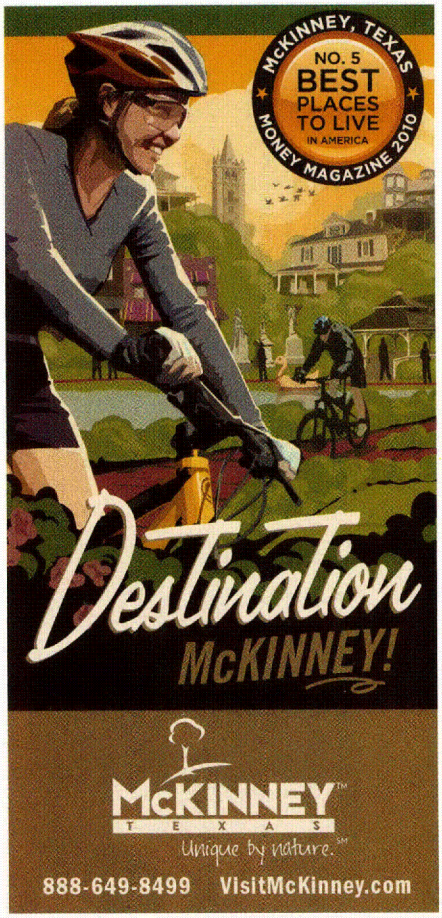
Call 210/207-7275; www.sanantonio.gov/parksandrec/directory_brackenridge.aspx.

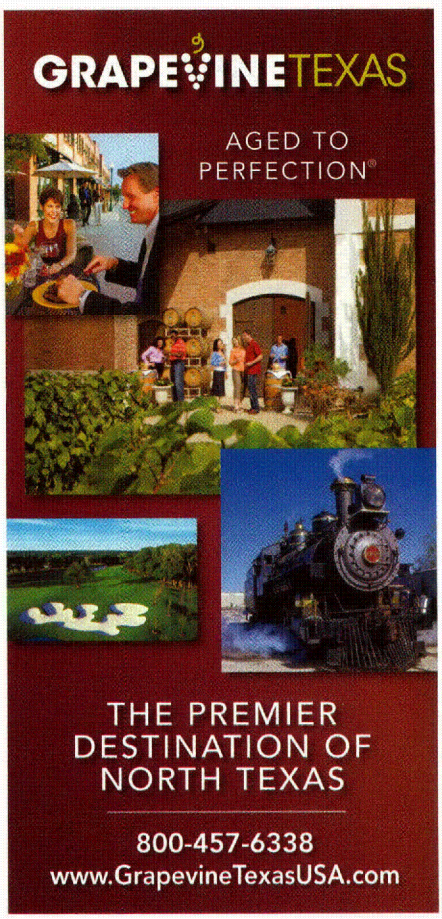
—Gene Fowler

Texans not to forsake the Union. Later, as the Civil War raged on, the site held a prisoner of war camp for captured Yankees. After the war, the Union's newly formed black regiments, the Buffalo Soldiers, camped and trained at the springs before deployment to West Texas.

Markers describe the park's location on the Camino Real and other historically important features. A camel figure in the children's playground area recalls the U.S. Army's experiments using camels in the 1850s as beasts of burden and military transport. Other enigmatic structures evoke San Pedro legends and mysteries. Gregg Eckhardt points out that a small stone building, known as the Block House, is believed by some archeologists to be the oldest Spanish Colonial structure in the state; it does seem possible that the building's vertical gun ports could have been used to fight off would-be attackers. A star-shaped stone structure, once topped by an elaborate

PHOTO: STAN WILLIAMS





Speaking of Texas

water fountain, is a remnant of the formal landscaping found here during the early 20th Century.

Springwater still cascades down a tall, moss-and-fern-covered, cone-shaped grotto. But the flow of the park's 10 or more springs began decreasing due to drought and pumping from the Edwards Aquifer as early as the 1890s. In the 1940s, the pool closed for a decade, then reopened as a smaller pool filled with city water. Heavy rains and conservation brought the spring flow back, intermittently, in the early 1990s. Today, when conditions are favorable, springwater fills several smaller, emerald-green ponds before continuing on to San Pedro Creek.

Distinctive architecture graces the San Pedro Playhouse and the San Pedro Park Branch Library, both of which opened on park grounds in 1930. The Greek Revival design of the playhouse, which recently featured a season of all-Texas plays, was based on the facade of the demolished 1850s Market House. The park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Overshadowed since the 1920s by the much larger Brackenridge Park, San Pedro today is enjoying a revival, thanks to recent restoration work by the San Antonio Parks Foundation and the nonprofit Friends of San Pedro Springs Park. A restoration in the 1990s increased green space and redesigned the pool to resemble the natural lake and spring-fed pool. The Friends of San Pedro Springs Park continue working to preserve and interpret the park. "San Pedro Springs is one of the most important places in the entire Southwest," says Gregg Eckhardt. "Without these springs, the seventh largest city in the country might not even exist." TH

SOMETHING'S ALWAYS HAPPENING IN GRANBURY

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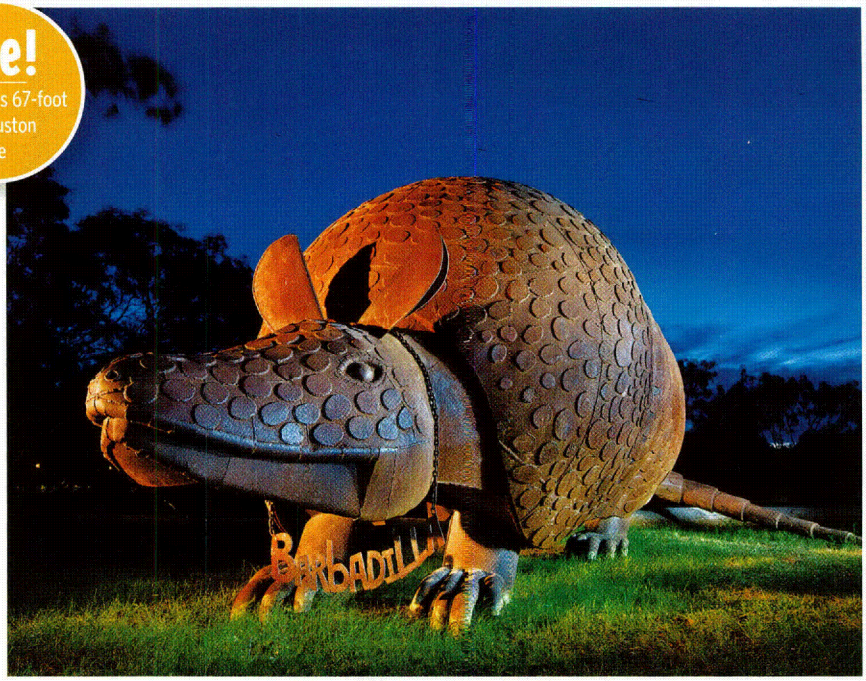
True Griff

See! Huntsville's 67-foot Sam Houston statue



A SELECTION OF *TH*

Photography Editor Griff Smith's favorite photographs, spanning more than 25 years of Texas travels, will be on view through June 30 in the **Katy and E. Don Walker Sr. Education Center** at **Sam Houston Memorial Museum** in **Huntsville**. Portraying sites from the Cadillac Ranch near Amarillo to the Port Isabel Lighthouse, and from Monahans sand dunes to Dallas' Thanks-Giving Square, the images serve as a visual collection of short stories about the people and places of Texas. For more on *Griff Smith's Texas*, call 936/294-1832; www.shsu.edu/~smm_www/.

PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH

April Events

BIG BEND COUNTRY

EL PASO: *El Hilo de la Memoria*: The Threads of Memory April 1-24. Three centuries of Spanish presence in the United States. El Paso Museum of History. www.visitelpaso.com

EL PASO: Monet to Matisse April 1-May 22. El Paso Museum of Art. www.visitelpaso.com

EL PASO: Blue Man Group April 27. Plaza Theatre. www.visitelpaso.com

FORT STOCKTON: Big Bend Open Road Race April 20-23. www.bborr.com 432/336-3331, ext. 238

ODESSA: Macbeth April 15-17, 22-24. Globe Theater. www.globesw.org 432/332-1586

PRESIDIO: Spring Cattle Drive April 21-23. Big Bend Ranch State Park. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/big_bend_ranch 512/389-8919

GULF COAST

BAYSIDE: Fennessey Ranch Spring Migration Tour April 16, 23. www.fennesseyranch.com 361/529-6600

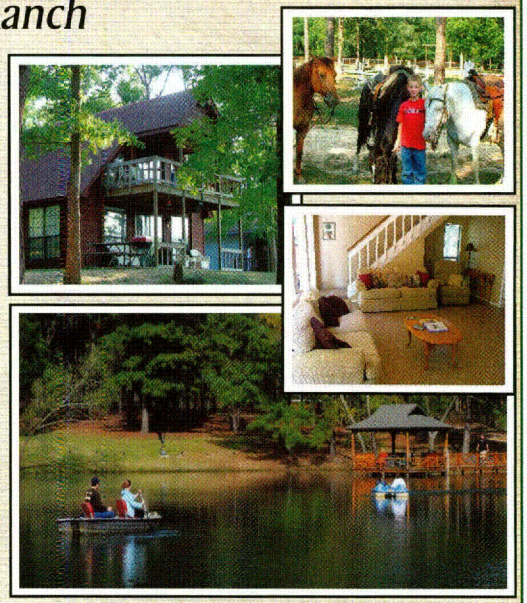
BEAUMONT: Symphony of Southeast Texas Master Series April 2. Julie Rogers Theatre. www.sost.org 409/892-2257

BRAZORIA: Second Annual Battle on the Bernard April 2. www.battleonthebernard.com 979/236-3494

BROWNSVILLE: Earth Day Celebration April 17. Resaca de la Palma State Park. www.worldbirdingcenter.org/sites/brownsville 956/350-2920

CLUTE: Brazosport Planetarium Show April 5, 12, 19, 26. Center for the Arts & Sciences. www.bcfas.org 979/265-3376

DEER LAKE CABINS
on the Double S Ranch



Deer Lake Cabins is a family-owned property with 8 fully furnished cabins (1, 2, and 3 bedroom), including cookware and utensils, nestled on over 800 secluded acres at the Double S Ranch located off FM 115, adjacent to Lake Cypress Springs, just outside of Mt. Vernon, Texas.

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TH SPOTLIGHT

Flower Power

TOWNS ACROSS TEXAS CELEBRATE NATURE'S SPRING show this month. Stop by **Linden**'s **Wildflower Trails** event on April 23 for an all-access pass to roadsides in bloom, an amateur art show and contest, and a quilt show, along with a 5-K run, arts and crafts, live music, local foods, and a rodeo.

Throughout the month in **Ennis**, drive the state's official Bluebonnet Trails, which wind 40 colorful miles around the town, and check out the **Bluebonnet Trails Festival** on April 16-17 with arts and crafts, live music, children's activities, and a bluebonnet souvenir booth. Head southwest to the bloom-bedazzled Wildseed Farms in **Fredericksburg** for the **Wildflower Celebration** from April 2-17, and ring in spring with chuckwagon-style cooking paired with live music on the weekends.

For details, visit www.lindenwildflowertrails.com, www.visitennis.org, and www.wildseedfarms.com. And as always when wildflower-watching, call ahead to find out peak blooming times.

41st Annual
RANCH DAY
Building the West
April 30 • 10am - 4pm • 3121 Fourth Street
Ranch Day at the **National Ranching Heritage Center** is a living history, educational event that began in 1970. Highlights of Ranch Day include:
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Horseback Riding • Rope Making • Steer Roping
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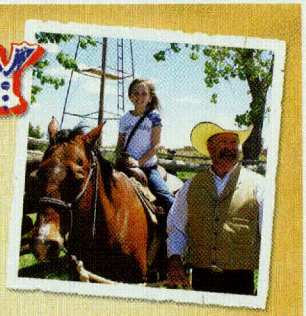

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WWW.BAYTOWNCHAMBER.COM

CORPUS CHRISTI: Texas International Boat Show April 7-10. Corpus Christi Marina. www.texasinternationalboatshow.com 561/842-8808

CORPUS CHRISTI: Great Texas Birding Classic April 9-17. www.birdingclassic.org 888/892-4737

DEER PARK: Totally Texas BBQ Cook-Off April 1-2. Jimmy Burke Center. www.deerparktx.gov/recreation 281/478-2050

FREEPORT: Riverfest & Flapjack Run April 28-30. Municipal Park. www.freeportriverfest.com 979/233-0651

GALVESTON: Feather Fest April 7-10. www.galvestonfeatherfest.com 832/459-5533

GALVESTON: Galveston Symphony Orchestra Performance April 17. The Grand 1894 Opera House. www.thegrand.com 800/821-1894

GALVESTON: Texas Outdoor Family Workshop April 30-May 1. Galveston Island State Park. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/galveston 512/389-8903

HOUSTON: Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet April 1. Wortham Center's Cullen Theater. www.spahouston.org 713/227-4772

HOUSTON: Impressionist & Post-Impressionist Masterpieces from the National Gallery of Art April 1-May 23. The Museum of Fine Arts Houston. www.mfah.org 713/639-7300

HOUSTON: Boat Rides on the Buffalo Bayou April 9. www.buffalobayou.org 713/752-0314

HOUSTON: Houston International Festival April 30-May 1. City Hall, Tranquility Park, and Sam Houston Park. www.ifest.org

PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH

HUMBLE: Quilt Round-Up "Texas Style" April 15-16. Humble Civic Center. www.kingwoodareaquiltguild.com

INGLESIDE: Round Up Days Festival April 1-2. Simmons Park. www.inglesidetxchamber.com 361/776-2906

KATY: "In A Quilter's Garden" Quilt Show April 8-9. Leonard E. Merrell Center. www.whqg.org/show

KEMAH: Bluegrass Festival April 29-May 1. Kemah Lighthouse District. www.kemah-tx.gov

KINGSVILLE: "Ride on the Wild Side" Bicycle Ride April 16. King Ranch, Highway 141. www.kingsvilletexas.com 361/592-8516

LA PORTE: San Jacinto Day Festival & Battle Re-enactment April 16. San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site. www.sanjacinto-museum.org 281/479-2421

LA PORTE: Sylvan Beach Festival & Crawfish Jam April 30. www.laportechamber.org/Sylvan_Beach.html 281/471-1123

LAKE JACKSON: Migration Celebration April 15-17. San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. www.migrationcelebration.org 866/403-5829

LEAGUE CITY: South West International Boat Show April 14-17. South Shore Harbor Marina. www.southwestinternationalboatshow.com 561/842-8808

MAURICEVILLE: Annual Crawfish Festival April 15-16. Mauriceville Festival Grounds. 409/745-1202

NEEDVILLE: Tunes & Tales April 2. Brazos Bend State Park. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/brazos_bend 979/553-5101

NEEDVILLE: Texas Outdoor Family Workshop April 9-10. Brazos Bend State Park. www.brazosbend.org 512/389-8903

ORANGE: WW3.5 Mud Run April 30-May 1. www.ww3.brickmanngroup.com 409/988-6264

PORT ARANSAS: IFA Texas Redfish Tournament April 2-3. Port Aransas Harbor. www.redfishtour.com 478/836-4266

PORT ARANSAS: Texas SandFest April 15-17. Master Sand Sculpting Competition. Between beach markers 9 to 14. www.texassandfest.com 361/215-0677

PORT ARTHUR: Mercado Days Latino Fest April 14-17. Procter Street Pavilion. www.sethcec.org 409/983-4006

PORT NECHES: River Fest & "Thunder on the Neches" April 28-May 1. www.portnecheschamber.com 409/722-9154

PORTLAND: Windfest April 14-17. Portland Community Center. www.windfest.org 361/643-2475

ROCKPORT: Herb Festival April 9. Paws & Taws Convention Center. www.rockportherbs.org 361/729-6037

SEABROOK: Clear Lake Crawfish Festival April 1-2. Landolt Pavilion at Clear Lake Park. www.clearlakearea.com 281/488-7676

SEABROOK: Sailboat Races on Clear Lake April 6, 13, 20, 27. www.clearlakeracing.com 281/468-6909

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: Beach 'N Biker Fest April 15-17. South Padre Island Convention Centre. www.beachnbikerfest.com 956/605-6598

VICTORIA: Earth Day Celebration April 30. Texas Zoo. www.texaszoo.org 361/573-7681

VIDOR: Texas Barbecue Festival April 29-May 1. Claiborne West Park. www.vidorchamber.com 409/769-6339

WHARTON: Wharton County Youth Fair Cook-Off April 15-16. www.whartoncountyyouthfair.org 979/677-3350

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: Clyde Littlefield Texas Relays April 1-2. Mike A. Myers Stadium, UT campus. www.texassports.com 800/687-8379

AUSTIN: Texas Hill Country Wine & Food Festival April 1-3. www.texaswineandfood.org 512/249-6300

AUSTIN: Urban Music Festival April 2. Auditorium Shores. www.urbanmusicfest.com 512/314-5433

AUSTIN: Art City Austin April 2-3. Second Street District. www.artallianceaustin.org 512/458-6073

AUSTIN: Spring Plant Sale & Gardening Festival April 9-10. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. www.wildflower.org 512/232-0100

BANDERA: Cowboys on Main April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30. Main Street. www.banderacowboycapital.com 800/364-3833

BLANCO: Blanco Trade Days & Farmers' Market April 23-24. Yett Park. www.blancotradedays.i8.com 830/833-4460

BOERNE: Annual Texas Corvette Association Open Car Show April 16. Downtown. www.texas-corvette-association.org

BURNET: Bluebonnet Festival April 8-10. Downtown Square. www.burnetchamber.org 512/756-4297

BURNET: Bluebonnet Air Show April 9. www.highlandlakessquadron.com 512/756-2226

CANYON LAKE: Market Day April 9. CRRC Recreation Center. www.crrcofcanyonlake.org 830/964-3003

CEDAR PARK: Cedar Park Heritage Parade & Festival April 9. Elizabeth Milburn Park. www.cedarparkfun.com 512/401-5508

DRIFTWOOD: Old Settler's Music Festival April 14-17. Salt Lick Pavilion and Camp Ben McCulloch. www.oldsettlersmusicfest.org 888/512-SHOW

FREDERICKSBURG: Hill Country Film Festival April 28-30. Stagecoach Theater. www.hillcountryff.com 310/770-8552

FREDERICKSBURG: Wings Over the Hills Nature Festival April 29-May 1. Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park. www.wingsoverthehills.org

GEORGETOWN: Red Poppy Festival April 16-17. Historic downtown. www.redpoppyfestival.com 800/436-8698

GRUENE: Old Gruene Market Days April 16-17. www.gruenemarketdays.com 830/832-1721

KERRVILLE: Earth Day Celebration April 16. 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Riverside Nature Center. www.riversidenaturecenter.org 830/257-4837

KERRVILLE: Symphony of the Hills Concerts April 28. Kathleen C. Cailloux Theater. www.caillouxtheater.com 830/896-9393

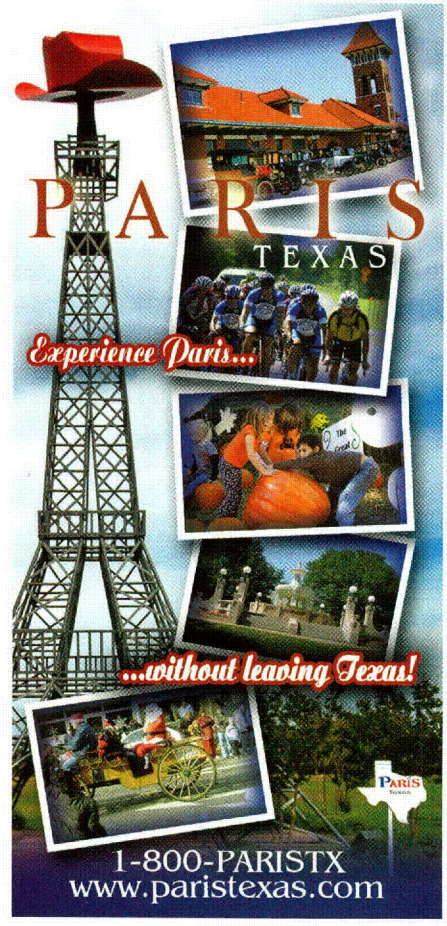
LAMPASAS: Art in the Park April 30. Hanna Springs Sculpture Garden at Campbell Park. www.lafta.org 512/556-8677

LLANO: Fiddle Fest Weekend & Fiddlers' Open Contest April 1-3. www.llanofiddlecontest.com 325/247-3979

LLANO: Crawfish Open April 15-16. Robinson Park. www.llanocrawfishopen.com 325/247-2270

MARBLE FALLS: Marble Falls Opry: Memories of Conway Twitty April 30. Uptown Theater. 830/693-9996

ROUND ROCK: Empty Bowl Festival April 2. www.roundrockarts.org



SAN MARCOS: Texas State University Mariachi Festival April 1-2. www.txstate.edu/mcmusic 512/245-7401

SAN SABA: Pecan Capital Trade Day April 2. Downtown square. www.sansabatexas.com 325/372-8291

STONEWALL: Easter at the Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm April 23. Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/lbj 830/644-2252

UVALDE: Relay for Life April 15-16. Honey Bowl. 830/275-5350

WIMBERLEY: EmilyAnn Theatre Butterfly Release April 22. EmilyAnn Theatre. www.emilyann.org 512/847-6969

WIMBERLEY: Arts Fest April 30. Wimberley Square. www.wimberley.org 512/847-2201

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: Philharmonic Orchestra Concert April 2. Abilene Civic Center. 325/677-6710

ABILENE: D&G Barrel Productions Super Tour April 8-10. Taylor County Expo Center Horse Barn. 940/538-4327

AMARILLO: Third Thursdays at the Amarillo Museum of Art April 21. www.amarilloart.org 806/371-5050

AMARILLO: Eggstravaganza April 23. www.amarillozoo.org 806/381-7911

ANSON: Art Walk April 5. 325/823-3259

BALLINGER: Texas State Festival of Ethnic Cultures April 30-May 1. Downtown. www.ballingertx.org 325/365-2333

BIG SPRING: Contest Powwow April 2-3. Dorothy Garrett Coliseum. www.powwowbigspring.net 432/263-3255

BROWNFIELD: Annual Quilt Show April 15-16. www.terrycountyquilts.com/Quilt-Show.html 806/637-4060

BUFFALO GAP: Annual Buffalo Gap Wine & Food Summit April 15-17. Perini Ranch. 800/367-1721

CANYON: Spring Roundup April 30. Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum. www.panhandleplains.org

EDEN: Spring Stampede April 9. Lee Pfluger Park. www.edentexas.com

IDALOU: Apple Blossom Celebration April 9. www.applecountryorchards.com 800/765-7055

IRA: Petticoats on the Prairie April 29-30. Special shopping event. Black Locust Farm. 325/242-0206

JACKSBORO: Living History Day at Fort Richardson April 8-9. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/fort_richardson 940/567-3506

LEVELLAND: Taste of Texas Barbecue Cook-Off April 9. Courthouse Square. www.levelland.com 806/894-3157

LUBBOCK: Ranch Day April 30. National Ranching Heritage Center. www.nrhc.ttu.edu 806/742-0498

SAN ANGELO: Texas Mesquite Art Festival April 15-17. Fort Concho National Historic Landmark. www.texasmesquiteassn.org 866/839-3378

SAN ANGELO: Frontier Day at Fort Concho April 30. Fort Concho National Historic Landmark parade grounds. www.fortconcho.com 325/657-4444

SNYDER: May Day Celebration April 30. The Coliseum. 325/573-4035

STANTON: Old Sorehead Trade Days April 9-10. www.stantontex.com 432/756-2006

WICHITA FALLS: Wine Tasting Festival April 16. J.S. Bridwell Ag. Center. www.redriverwinefestival.com 940/766-3347

PINEY WOODS

CENTER: Seventh Annual Center Fly-In April 30. Municipal Airport. www.shelbycountychamber.com 936/598-3682

CONROE: Montgomery County Fair & Rodeo April 8-17. www.mcfa.org 936/760-3631

GLADEWATER: East Texas Gusher Days April 15-17. www.gusherdays.com 800/627-0315

HUNTSVILLE: Walker County Fair, Rodeo & BBQ Cook-Off April 1-3. www.walkercountyfair.com

HUNTSVILLE: General Sam Houston Folk Festival April 29-May 1. Sam Houston Memorial Museum. www.samhoustonfolkfestival.org 936/294-1832

JASPER: Paddling the Forks: Guided Canoe Trip April 16. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/martin_dies_jr 409/384-5231

JEFFERSON: Outlaw Nationals Rod Run & Antique Car Show April 15-17. www.jefferson-texas.com 903/665-7121

KILGORE: Rangerette Revels April 6-9. Kilgore College Campus. www.rangerette.com 903/983-8179

KILGORE: Spring Film Festival April 13-May 5. 4 Star Cinema. 903/983-1249

KIRBYVILLE: Magnolia Festival April 15-16. Magnolia Park. 409/423-6500

LONGVIEW: Harvest Festival & Crawfish Boil April 16. Maude Cobb Activity Center. 903/757-2432

LONGVIEW: Longview Symphony—Symphonic Fireworks April 30. 903/233-3080

LUFKIN: Main Street Lufkin Downtown Hoedown April 16. www.lufkintexas.org 936/633-0205

MINEOLA: League of the Arts Annual Art Show April 8-9. www.mlota.org 903/569-8877

MONTGOMERY: Fire & Ice Country Music Festival April 1-2. http://fireandicemusicfestival.com

MONTGOMERY: Historic Montgomery Antique Sale and Show April 30-May 1. www.hmba.biz 936/597-1004

NACOGDOCHES: Azalea Trail April 1-2. www.nacogdochesazaleas.com 888/653-3788

NACOGDOCHES: Farmers' Market Spring Fling Saturday April 2. http://farmermktnac.blogspot.com 888/653-3788

RUSK: A Day Out with Thomas: Leader of the Track Tour 2011 April 8-10, 15-17. Texas State Railroad's Rusk Depot. www.texasstaterr.com 888/987-2461

SOUR LAKE: Old Timers' Day Festival April 22-23. Lions Club Park. 409/790-0587

TEXARKANA: Scout-O-Rama April 8-10. Spring Lake Park. http://caddobsa.org 903/793-2179

PHOTO: COURTESY AMON CARTER MUSEUM; MARTIN JOHNSON HEADE, *STUDY OF AN ORCHID*, 1872, OIL ON CANVAS. NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, THE ROBERT L. STUART COLLECTION, S-112

Go! To the Amon Carter's Fifty Fest August 13

TH SPOTLIGHT

Amon Carter Five-O

TH* TRAVELER SALUTES FORT WORTH'S AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN Art**, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year with a bundle of exhibitions and special events. Through December 11, ***The First 50 Years retrospective hones in on the museum's landmark exhibitions and public programs over the last five decades, featuring photographs of prominent figures who have visited the museum, along with images of the Philip Johnson-designed building and Amon Carter himself, and moments that have shaped the museum into the leading art institution it is today. This year's lineup includes a collection of watercolors and drawings by artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe, Winslow Homer, and John Singer Sargent; modernist John Marin's paintings of the natural world; and iconic Hudson River School landscape paintings. Admission is free. For more on these and other anniversary events, call 817/738-1933; www.cartermuseum.org.

THE WOODLANDS: Waterway Arts Festival April 9-10. The Woodlands Waterway. www.woodlandsartsfestival.com

TYLER: Azalea & Spring Flower Trail April 1-10. www.tylerazaleatrail.com 800/235-5712

TYLER: Dogwood Days Driving & Walking Tours April 1-10. Tyler State Park. 903/597-5338

WOODVILLE: Tyler County Dogwood Festival April 2. www.tylercountydogwoodfestival.org 409/283-2632

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ADDISON: Walk MS April 2. Addison Circle Park. www.addisontexas.net

ANDERSON: Stagecoach Day April 9. Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site. www.birthplaceoftexas.com 936/873-2633

ATHENS: Bird and Nature Walk April 9. Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center. 903/676-2277

BASTROP: Yesterfest April 30. www.bastropdba.com/yesterfest.html 512/321-6600

BELLVILLE: Fruhling Saengerfest April 10. German singing festival. Concordia Hall. www.texasgermansociety.com

BELTON: Creekside Art Festival April 9. www.creeksidegallery.com 254/939-5599

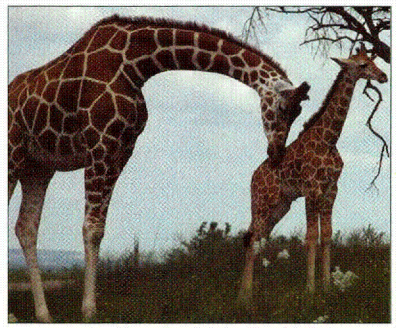
BRENHAM: Golden Dragon Acrobats April 10. W.W. O'Donnell Performing Arts Center. 888/273-6426

BRYAN: Wine & Roses Festival April 23. Messina Hof Winery & Resort. www.messinahof.com 979/260-9898

BURTON: Cotton Gin Festival April 16. www.cottongin museum.org 979/289-3378

CAMERON: Dewberry Festival April 29-30. Ledbetter Park. www.cameron-tx.com 254/697-4979

CANTON: First Monday Trade Days April 1-3, 28-May 1. www.firstmondaycanton.com 877/462-7467



Fossil Rim Wildlife Center

Make Memories . . . Save Animals

- Barnard's Mill Art Museum
- Brazos & Paluxy Rivers
- Creation Evidence Museum
- Dinosaur Valley State Park
- Dinosaur World
- Historic Courthouse Square
- Land of the Dinosaurs
- Oakdale & Big Rocks Parks
- The Promise

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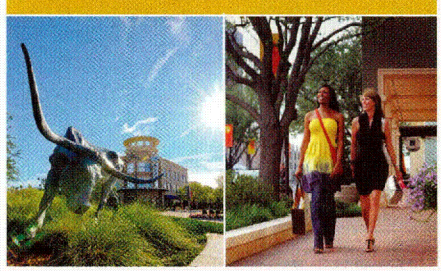


Do!
Check out Corpus Christi's Intl. Boat Show this month

TH SPOTLIGHT

"Arrr" You Ready?

JOIN CORPUS CHRISTI FOR THE ANNUAL Buc Days Celebration, which begins with a Folklórico Competition April 8, followed by a slate of rodeo events, including the PRCA Rodeo April 20-23, and the Barbecue Cook-off celebration on the bayfront April 21-23.

The following week, the Miss Buc Days and Buc Days King contestants will sail into Corpus Christi's Yacht Basin, capture the mayor, and send him down the plank (he jumps into the water) to kick off the **Buc Days Pirate Festival**.

Festivities include a carnival, a night parade, and an 11-day roundup of musical and pirate-themed entertainment.

Call 361/882-3242; www.bucdays.com. For rodeo tickets, go to www.ticketmaster.com.

CEDAR HILL: The Lost Prairie April 16. Penn Farm at Cedar Hill State Park. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/cedar_hill 972/291-5940

CHAPPELL HILL: Official Bluebonnet Festival of Texas April 9-10. www.brenhamtexas.com 888/273-6426

CLEBURNE: Antique Alley & 25 Miles of Sales April 15-17. www.antiquealleytexas.com 817/240-4948

DALLAS: Dallas International Film Festival April 1-10. http://dallasfilm.org

DALLAS: Dallas Symphony Orchestra Performances April 1-3, 14-17, 21-23, 28-May 1. Meyerson Symphony Center. www.dallassymphony.com 214/871-4000

DALLAS: Dallas Art Fair April 8-10. Fashion Industry Gallery. www.dallasartfair.com 214/748-4344

DALLAS: Concerts in the Garden Series April 19, 21, 26, 28. Dallas Arboretum. www.dallasarboretum.org

DENISON: Texoma Lakefest Regatta April 15-17. Grandpappy Point Marina. www.texomasailing.org 903/465-1551

DENTON: Annual Denton Redbud Festival April 9. Civic Center. www.kdb.org 940/349-8737

DENTON: Denton Arts & Jazz Festival April 29-May 1. www.dentonjazzfest.com 940/565-0931

EAGLE LAKE: Attwater's Prairie Chicken Festival April 9-10. www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/attwater/index.html 979/234-3021

FLATONIA: Crawfest April 16. www.flatoniachamber.com 361/865-3920

PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH

FORT WORTH: Race Week at Texas Motor Speedway April 7-9. Features the Samsung 500 Sprint Cup Race. Texas Motor Speedway. www.texasmotorspeedway.com 817/215-8500

FORT WORTH: Main Street Fort Worth Arts Festival April 14-17. Sundance Square and Main Street. www.msfwaf.org 817/336-2787

FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra Performances April 15-17. Bass Performance Hall. www.fwsymphony.org

GARLAND: Taste of Garland April 23. Special Events Center. 972/487-4700

GONZALES: Dutch Oven Cook-Off April 30. Pioneer Village Living History Center. 830/672-6532

GRAND PRAIRIE: Prairie Dog Chili Cook-Off & World Championship of Pickled Quail Egg-Eating Contest April 9. Traders Village. www.tradersvillage.com 972/647-2331

GRAPEVINE: Texas Coin Show April 1-3. Grapevine Convention Center. www.grapevinetexasusa.com 800/457-6338

GRAPEVINE: Blessing of the Vines & New Vintage Wine & Gallery Trail April 8-9. www.grapevinetexasusa.com 800/457-6338

HALLETTSVILLE: Texas State Championship Fiddlers Frolics & Songwriters Serenade April 14-17. Knights of Columbus Hall. www.fiddlersfrolics.com 361/798-2311

IRVING: Las Colinas Symphony Orchestra April 16. Irving Arts Center. www.irvingartscenter.com 972/252-ARTS

KELLER: KellerFest April 29-May 1. Keller Town Hall. www.kellerfest.com 817/431-2169

LULING: Zedler Mill Classic Canoe Race April 30. www.zedlermill.com 830/875-3214

MALAKOFF: Cornbread Festival April 9. www.malakoffchamber.com 903/489-1518

MCKINNEY: Art Walk April 9. www.downtownmckinney.com 972/547-2660

MESQUITE: Real. Texas. Festival. April 29-30. Rodeo Center. www.realtexasfestival.com 972/216-6499

MESQUITE: Southwest Ceramic Show April 30-May 1. Mesquite Exhibit Hall. www.swca-inc.com 214/782-9678

MOUNT VERNON: Tour de Cypress Bike Ride & Tour April 16. www.tourdecypress.com 903/537-4365

MUENSTER: Germanfest April 29-May 1. City Park. www.germanfest.net 940/759-2227

PALESTINE: Texas Dogwood Trails Celebration April 1-3. Main Street District. www.palestinechamber.org 903/729-6066

ROUND TOP: Marburger Farm Antique Show April 1-2. www.roundtop-marburger.com 800/999-2148

ROUND TOP: Spring Antiques Fair April 1-2. The Big Red Barn and Carmine Dance Hall. www.roundtoptexasantiques.com 512/237-4747

SALADO: Texas Packard Car Meet April 1-3. Stagecoach Inn. www.texaspackardmeet.com 210/922-1300

STEPHENVILLE: Tarleton Stampede Rodeo April 28-30. Lone Star Arena. www.tarleton.edu/rodeo 254/968-9187

TEMPLE: Bloomin' Temple Festival April 15-17. Downtown. www.bloomintemple.com 254/773-2105

TERRELL: Heritage Jubilee April 16-17. Ben Gill Park. www.terrelltexas.com 972/563-5703

WACO: Komen Central Texas Race for the Cure April 30. Indian Spring Park. www.komencentraltexas.org 254/753-3037

WAXAHACHIE: Scarborough Renaissance Festival April 9-May 30. www.scarboroughrenfest.com 972/938-3247

WEATHERFORD: Spring Fling April 2-3. Chandor Gardens. www.chandorgardens.com 817/613-1700

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

PEARSALL: Potato Festival April 8-9 . Downtown. 830/334-9414

POTEET: Strawberry Festival April 1-3. Strawberry Festival Grounds. www.strawberryfestival.com 888/742-8144

SAN ANTONIO: Revolution and Renaissance: Mexico and San Antonio, 1910-2010 April 1-July 15. The arts and culture of Mexico and San Antonio. Museo Alameda. www.thealameda.org

SAN ANTONIO: Fiesta San Antonio April 7-17. www.fiesta-sa.org 877/723-4378

SAN ANTONIO: Viva Botanica April 9. San Antonio Botanical Garden. www.sabot.org 210/207-3250

SAN ANTONIO: Fiesta Arts Fair April 9-10. www.fiestaartsfair.com

SAN ANTONIO: Valero Texas Open April 11-17. www.pgatour.com/tournaments/r041 210/491-5800

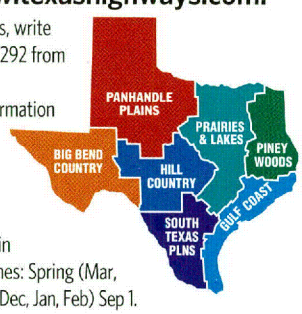
SAN ANTONIO: A Night in Old San Antonio April 12-15. La Villita National Historic District. www.niosa.org 210/226-5188

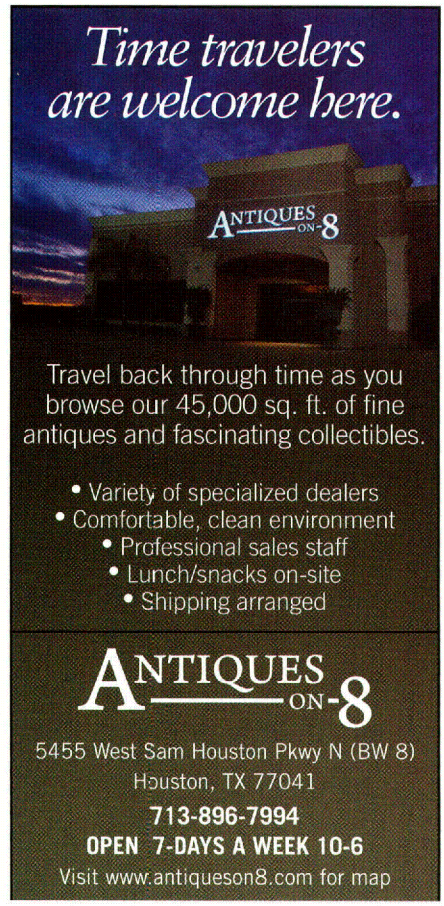
Want more? Go to the Events Calendar at www.texashighways.com.

For a free printed copy of an even more detailed, quarterly schedule of events, write to Texas Events Calendar, Box 149249, Austin 78714-9249. Or, call 800/452-9292 from anywhere in the U.S. or Canada, between 8-6 Central.

For Texas travel questions, call 800/452-9292 to reach a TxDOT Travel Information Center, where a professional travel counselor will provide routing assistance, advise you of any emergency road conditions, and send brochures (including the official Texas State Travel Guide and map, accommodations guide, and quarterly Texas Events Calendar).

Send future event information to: Texas Events Calendar, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; fax: 512/486-5879; e-mail: trv-tec@dot.state.tx.us. Listing deadlines: Spring (Mar, Apr, May) Dec 1; Summer (Jun, Jul, Aug) Mar 1; Fall (Sep, Oct, Nov) Jun 1; Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb) Sep 1.





Canyon Lake Is Calling!

CHET GARNER is the host of *The Daytripper* travel show on PBS; www.thedaytripper.com.

THE REASONS I love Texas are endless: the state's great outdoors, history, Tex-Mex, sunsets, swimming holes ... the list keeps going. And when I hear of a place where I can experience most of my favorites in a single day, I hit the road—this time to the Hill Country's scenic Canyon Lake.

9:00 a.m. What's the difference between a gorge, a gulch, and a gully? I found out on a tour of the **Canyon Lake Gorge**, one of Texas' newest natural landmarks, dating to 2002, when the region received a year's worth of rainfall in a single weekend. The lake overflowed, sending torrents of water over a spillway and ripping an expansive gorge through a small valley. The water exposed millions of years of geological evidence, including fossils, aquifers, and dinosaur tracks. The only way to experience the gorge is on a guided tour with folks from the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority and the Gorge Preservation Society. It took everything I had not to dive into the beautiful turquoise pools filled by cascading waterfalls. Turns out the difference between the terms above is a matter of size, and after seeing the Canyon Lake Gorge, it's obvious that "gulch" and "gully" wouldn't do it justice.

12:15 p.m. For lunch, I drove to **Frank's Bait & Taco**, a strange conglomeration of a business selling everything from fishing bait, antiques, and carports to some of the tastiest Tex-Mex in Texas. The interior is so cluttered with knickknacks it looks like the owners have hung an entire yard sale from the ceiling. The only thing missing at Frank's is an employee named Frank. When the current owner, Eddie Fonseca, moved into the building, he decided to keep the name because everyone in town already knew where "Frank's" was. The chaotic decor gave me plenty to look at while the kitchen prepared my order. (As Eddie puts it, "Here, you are on lake time.") Luckily, my combo plate with two homemade enchiladas and two crunchy tacos was well worth the wait. And no, "bait" tacos are not on the menu.

Contact the **Canyon Lake Chamber of Commerce** at **830/964-2223** or **800/528-2104**; **www.canyonlakechamber.com**, and the Canyon Lake office of the **Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority** at **830/964-5424**; **www.canyongorge.org**.

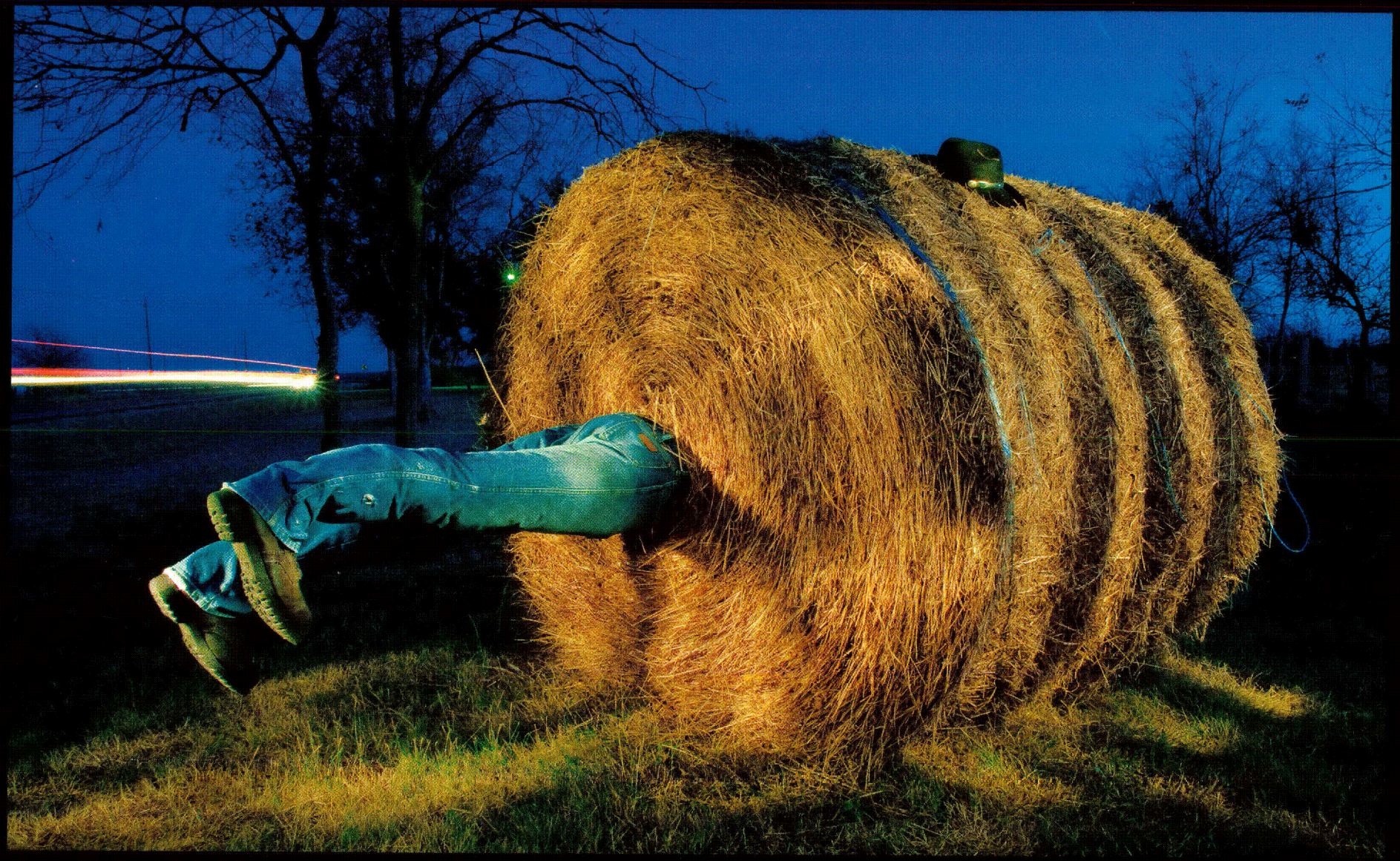
1:30 p.m. I took a mountain-bike ride along the **Madrone Trail**, an 8.2-mile trail weaving through **Canyon Park** on the north side of the lake. The challenging ups and downs along the dirt-and-limestone path revealed sweeping Hill Country views and lakefront panoramas. I then cooled down at **The Heritage Museum of the Texas Hill Country** on the south side of the lake, and learned about the history of the region, from dinosaurs to Native Americans to settlers.

4:30 p.m. The clear lake water beckoned me like a siren of the sea, so I surrendered to its call at **Overlook Park**. The park offers the best views of the Canyon Lake dam and is my favorite place to take a dip. I spent my time basking in the sunshine and swimming along the park's rocky shore. If you have kids or don't want to navigate a steep hike to the shoreline, head to **Comal Park** to play along its pebble beach.

6:30 p.m. The cool evening air proved perfect for dinner outside. I drove back to Canyon Park to eat at **Lucky Sailor Oyster Bar**, the only waterfront restaurant on Canyon Lake. After much consideration, I decided to pass on the "Lucky" burger, an enormous two-pound cheeseburger that is free if you can polish it off in 24 minutes. I opted instead for a pan-seared tilapia sandwich on a toasted torpedo roll.

WITH A TORPEDO in one hand and a bottle of Shiner Bock in the other, I toasted the setting sun and savored the near-perfect conclusion to a near-perfect Texas daytrip. So, whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path, I hope to see you on the road. TH

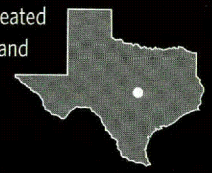
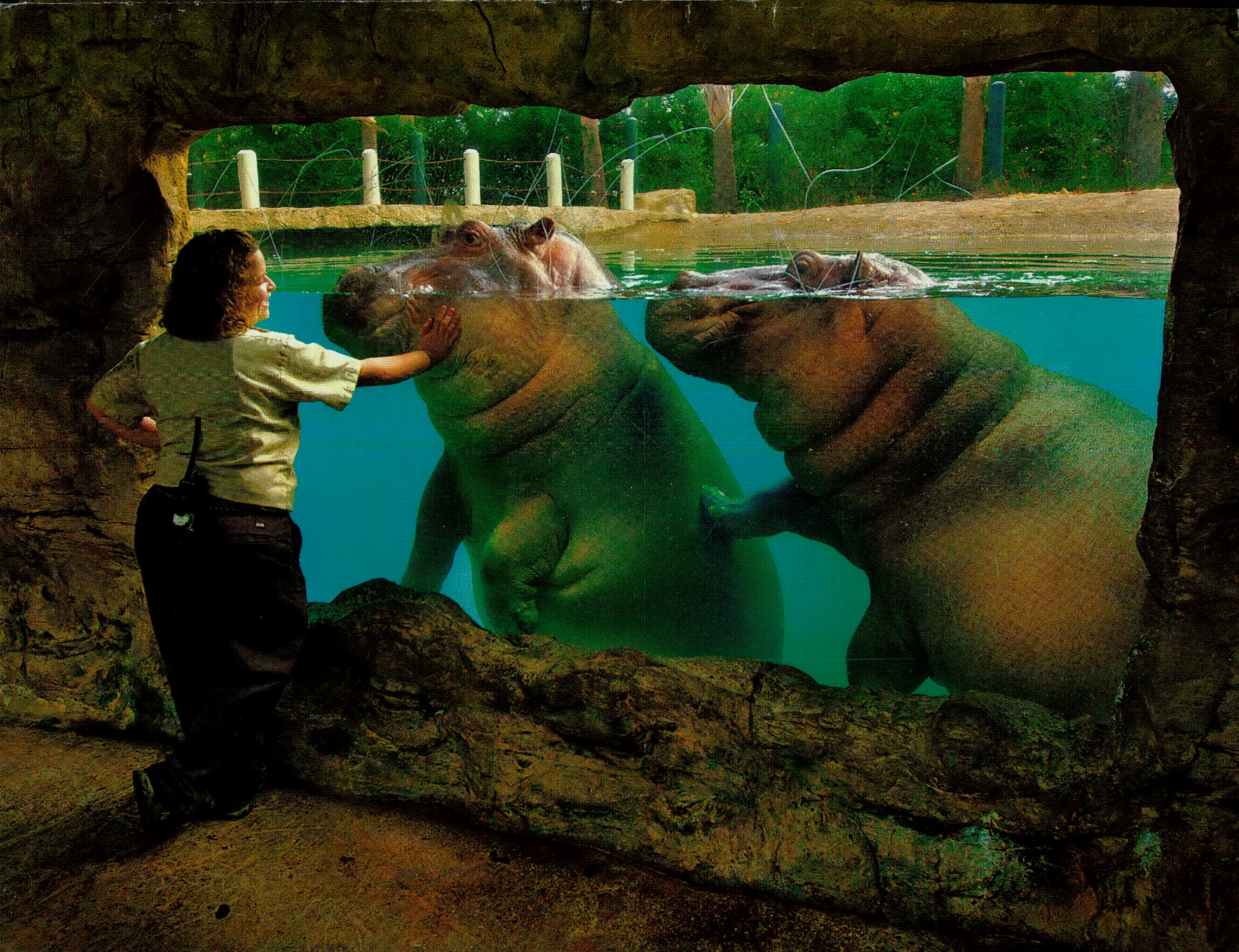
PHOTO: COURTESY *THE DAYTRIPPER WITH CHET GARNER*



Window on Texas

Photograph by **ANDY SHARP**

HAY LEGS While baling hay last October off Texas 29 near his home in Jonah, Albert Garcia decided to add a bit of levity to his work. He created this display with Halloween in mind, but it was still up in late December and delighting passersby, many of whom couldn't resist stopping and taking family pictures in front of it. For information about the Jonah area, **call 512/930-3535**; **www.georgetownchamber.org**.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