

Texas Heritage

TRAVEL GUIDE

VISIT THE
**TEXAS HERITAGE
TRAIL REGIONS**
AND SEE WHERE IT ALL HAPPENED.

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REAL PLACES TELLING REAL STORIES

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C O N T E N T S



Reenactment of Early Texas Land Surveying
at San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site,
San Felipe

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Pathways to History, Heroes, and Tradition

The history of Texas is as big and bold as its reputation. Beginning with the Native Americans who lived here for thousands of years and the Spanish explorers who blazed the trails, later followed by the pioneers and the heroes of the Texas Revolution, the story of Texas is filled with exciting adventure. It is flavored with the customs and cultures of the indigenous and many different people who came here. It is populated with a rich cast of characters ranging from Spanish missionaries to rugged cowboys, from cattle barons to struggling farmers, from oil-boom roughnecks building derricks to elegant sophisticates building Victorian-era mansions. Accounts of their lives are conveyed across the state in communities large and small, each with their own special tales to tell. In centuries-old structures, in world-class and small-town museums, in beautifully restored courthouses and on historic Main Streets, local communities have set the stage to tell the entertaining story of Texas to visitors who come their way.

The Texas Heritage Trails Program brings it all together. The program itself has historic beginnings. In 1968 Governor John Connally and the Texas Highway Department (now the Texas Department of Transportation) created a series of ten scenic driving trails across the state in conjunction with HemisFair, an international exposition that commemorated the 250th anniversary of the founding of San Antonio. Blue road signs went up all over the state to mark these scenic byways. In 1997, almost thirty years later, the state legislature charged the Texas Historical Commission (THC) to create a heritage tourism program. The THC responded with a regional statewide program built around these old trails based on partnerships that celebrates the history of each region. The trails now serve as scenic pathways through ten heritage regions filled with historic communities and attractions both on and off the trails.

Those classic blue signs are still marking the way, but now they are revealing the exciting adventures to be had across the cultural roadmap of the Lone Star State. Throughout Texas, the real places are telling the real stories of a vibrant and vital state. Use this guide as a starting point for your adventure. Enjoy your visit!

TOP: ERWIN E. SMITH (1886-1947); GANTT HORSE IN BIG COUNTRY (ON CANADIAN RIVER RANGE, TEXAS), 1908-1910, GELATIN DRY PLATE NEGATIVE, ERWIN E. SMITH COLLECTION OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ON DEPOSIT AT THE AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, FORT WORTH, TEXAS; MIDDLE, THE; BOTTOM, THE DOLPH BRISCOE CENTER FOR AMERICAN HISTORY, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN



Cowboy on the Plains



Texas Pecos Trail Sign, near Sheffield



Bonham Parade



★ MAIN STREET, TEXAS The Heart of Texas Towns

At the heart of every community lies a Main Street. In some communities that's the actual name of the street, in others it may have a different name. Whatever it is called, the main street of town serves as the economic engine and the core of the community. Our Main Streets tell us who we are and who we were, and how the past has shaped us. In the last 40 years, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has promoted its Main Street Program as a way to revitalize historic downtowns across the nation. More than two thousand communities are now participating including nearly 90 in Texas. When you visit a designated Main Street city, you know that local citizens have taken steps to bring back the historic heart of their communities. You'll find charming storefronts, interesting shops and restaurants, all in restored historic structures. Brick-paved streets and vintage lighting grace many of the Main Street cities around the state. Look for the special Main Street icon before city descriptions in the regional chapters. 🇹🇽



COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION

Caring for Texas Treasures

For many county seat communities, the courthouse is a source of civic pride. Texas has more historic courthouses than any other state. Today more than 235 courthouses still stand that are at least 50 years old and about 80 were built before the turn of the 20th century. By the end of that century, most of these structures were significantly deteriorated. In the 1990s, the Texas Historical Commission documented the condition of 50 of the state's oldest courthouses and also determined that counties lacked the resources to preserve these distinguished buildings. In 1998, the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed Texas county courthouses on its roster of Most Endangered Properties in the nation. The state's response was to create the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, the largest preservation grant program ever initiated by a state government. This nationally recognized program has turned around the trend of disrepair and begun the process of taking care of some of the state's most treasured historic landmarks. So far, about 70 have been restored to their former splendor and are the magnificent centerpieces of their communities once again. Look for the special courthouse icon before city descriptions in the regional chapters. 🇺🇸

County Courthouse, City, Region

Archer, Archer City, *Lakes Trail Region*
Atascosa, Jourdanton, *Hill Country Trail Region*
Bee, Beeville, *Independence Trail Region*
Bexar, San Antonio, *Independence Trail Region*
Bosque, Meridian, *Brazos Trail Region*
Brooks, Falfurrias, *Tropical Trail Region*
Cameron, Brownsville, *Tropical Trail Region*
Cass, Linden, *Forest Trail Region*
Colorado, Columbus, *Independence Trail Region*
Comal, New Braunfels, *Hill Country Trail Region*
Cooke, Gainesville, *Lakes Trail Region*
Dallas, Dallas, *Lakes Trail Region*
Denton, Denton, *Lakes Trail Region*
DeWitt, Cuero, *Independence Trail Region*
Dimmit, Carrizo Springs, *Tropical Trail Region*
Donley, Clarendon, *Plains Trail Region*
Edwards, Rocksprings, *Pecos Trail Region*
Ellis, Waxahachie, *Lakes Trail Region*
Erath, Stephenville, *Forts Trail Region*
Falls, Marlin, *Brazos Trail Region*
Fannin, Bonham, *Lakes Trail Region*
Fayette, La Grange, *Independence Trail Region*
Franklin, Mount Vernon, *Forest Trail Region*
Goliad, Goliad, *Independence Trail Region*
Gray, Pampa, *Plains Trail Region*
Grimes, Anderson, *Brazos Trail Region*
Hamilton, Hamilton, *Brazos Trail Region*
Hardeman, Quanah, *Plains Trail Region*
Harris, Houston, *Independence Trail Region*
Harrison, Marshall, *Forest Trail Region*
Hood, Granbury, *Lakes Trail Region*
Hopkins, Sulphur Springs, *Lakes Trail Region*
Hudspeth, Sierra Blanca, *Mountain Trail Region*
Jeff Davis, Fort Davis, *Mountain Trail Region*

Johnson, Cleburne, *Lakes Trail Region*
Karnes, Karnes City, *Independence Trail Region*
Kendall, Boerne, *Hill Country Trail Region*
Lamar, Paris, *Lakes Trail Region*
Lampasas, Lampasas, *Hill Country Trail Region*
La Salle, Cotulla, *Tropical Trail Region*
Lavaca, Hallettsville, *Independence Trail Region*
Lee, Giddings, *Brazos Trail Region*
Leon, Centerville, *Brazos Trail Region*
Lipscomb, Lipscomb, *Plains Trail Region*
Llano, Llano, *Hill Country Trail Region*
Lynn, Tahoka, *Plains Trail Region*
Marion, Jefferson, *Forest Trail Region*
Maverick, Eagle Pass, *Pecos Trail Region*
McCulloch, Brady, *Forts Trail Region*
Menard, Menard, *Forts Trail Region*
Milam, Cameron, *Brazos Trail Region*
Mills, Goldthwaite, *Forts Trail Region*
Navarro, Corsicana, *Lakes Trail Region*
Newton, Newton, *Forest Trail Region*
Parker, Weatherford, *Lakes Trail Region*
Potter, Amarillo, *Plains Trail Region*
Presidio, Marfa, *Mountain Trail Region*
Rains, Emory, *Lakes Trail Region*
Red River, Clarksville, *Forest Trail Region*
Roberts, Miami, *Plains Trail Region*
San Augustine, San Augustine, *Forest Trail Region*
San Saba, San Saba, *Forts Trail Region*
Shackelford, Albany, *Forts Trail Region*
Sutton, Sonora, *Pecos Trail Region*
Throckmorton, Throckmorton, *Forts Trail Region*
Trinity, Groveton, *Forest Trail Region*
Val Verde, Del Rio, *Pecos Trail Region*
Wharton, Wharton, *Independence Trail Region*
Wheeler, Wheeler, *Plains Trail Region*
Williamson, Georgetown, *Brazos Trail Region*



Fulton Mansion, Rockport

STATE HISTORIC SITES

Real Places Telling the Real Stories of Texas

The Texas Historical Commission Historic Sites Division is responsible for overseeing the agency's 34 historic properties located throughout the state. Staff members provide expertise in archeology, architecture, curation, interpretation, and marketing. From Native American ceremonial mounds to whitewashed ruins and sprawling frontier forts, these sites exemplify the breadth of Texas history. Heritage tourists can learn more about Texas' rich history and experience real places and stories at each of the historic sites. For more information, visit texashistoricsites.com.

The following is a list of the historic sites, which are also featured in their respective regional communities:

- Acton**, Acton (near Granbury), *Lakes Trail Region*
- Barrington Plantation**, Washington, *Independence Trail Region*
- Caddo Mounds**, Alto, *Forest Trail Region*
- Casa Navarro**, San Antonio, *Hill Country and Independence Trail Regions*
- Charles and Mary Ann Goodnight Ranch**, near Claude, *Plains Trail Region*
- Confederate Reunion Grounds**, Mexia, *Brazos Trail Region*
- Eisenhower Birthplace**, Denison, *Lakes Trail Region*
- Fannin Battleground**, Fannin, *Independence Trail Region*
- Fanthorp Inn**, Anderson, *Brazos Trail Region*
- Fort Griffin**, Albany, *Forts Trail Region*
- Fort Lancaster**, Sheffield, *Pecos Trail Region*
- Fort McKavett**, near Menard, *Forts Trail Region*
- French Legation**, Austin, *Hill Country Trail Region*
- Fulton Mansion**, Rockport, *Tropical Trail Region*
- Kreische Brewery**, La Grange, *Independence Trail Region*
- Landmark Inn**, Castroville, *Hill Country Trail Region*
- Levi Jordan Plantation**, Brazoria, *Independence Trail Region*
- Lipantitlan**, Mathis, *Tropical Trail Region*



Casa Navarro, San Antonio



Barrington Plantation, Washington



Kreische Brewery, La Grange



Port Isabel Lighthouse, Port Isabel

- Magoffin Home**, El Paso, *Mountain Trail Region*
- Mission Dolores**, San Augustine, *Forest Trail Region*
- Monument Hill**, La Grange, *Independence Trail Region*
- National Museum of the Pacific War**, Fredericksburg, *Hill Country Trail Region*
- Old Socorro Mission**, Socorro, *Mountain Trail Region*
- Palmito Ranch Battlefield**, Brownsville, *Tropical Trail Region*
- Port Isabel Lighthouse**, Port Isabel, *Tropical Trail Region*
- Sabine Pass Battleground**, Sabine Pass (near Port Arthur), *Forest Trail Region*
- Sam Bell Maxey House**, Paris, *Lakes Trail Region*
- Sam Rayburn House**, Bonham, *Lakes Trail Region*
- San Felipe de Austin**, San Felipe, *Independence Trail Region*
- San Jacinto Battleground**, La Porte, *Independence Trail Region*
- Star of the Republic Museum**, Washington, *Independence Trail Region*
- Starr Family Home**, Marshall, *Forest Trail Region*
- Varner-Hogg Plantation**, West Columbia, *Independence Trail Region*
- Washington-on-the-Brazos**, Washington, *Independence Trail Region*



Waco Suspension Bridge, Waco



Brazos

TRAIL REGION

Ordinary People Making Extraordinary History

History is determined not only by generals and frontier fighters but also by ordinary people. The Texas Brazos Trail Region is filled with the legends of proud Native Americans who once roamed this land and courageous Spanish explorers who carved the way for future settlers. Other stories feature determined men and women driving cattle north along the Chisholm Trail, enslaved workers toiling on cotton farms, and townspeople with dreams that rose and fell with the fortunes of the railroad.

As you drive through the 18 counties of this region, you'll see miles of black-earth fields and green pastures. You'll cross the Brazos River and its major tributaries. The dark, rich soil of the blackland prairie proved ideal for growing cotton. Like the black gold—oil—that would be discovered later, the soil attracted a rush of immigrants, bringing with them their distinctive cultures. They also brought enslaved workers, which made the cotton enterprise possible. After the Civil War, this area was transformed into one of the most productive cotton-growing regions in the nation.

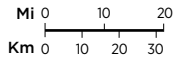
While cotton was relatively easy to grow in the Brazos region, transporting it was a challenge. In the early days, farmers hauled their crop to nearby gins and the cotton eventually made its way to Texas coastal towns for shipment to markets on the East Coast of the U.S. Before the advent of river steamers and railroads, cotton buyers employed teamsters to make the overland trek, who traversed the Brazos River at ferry crossings. By 1830, steamships started traveling the Brazos to ports farther south, making

cotton transport easier, but the river was prone to flooding, and sandbars and snags made navigation difficult.

The arrival of the railroad removed those obstacles. Throughout the late-19th and early-20th centuries, the railroad reshaped the area. Towns like Temple were built by the railroad. Others picked up and moved to be near the railroad. It transformed towns like Waco into booming commercial centers based largely on the shipment of cotton. You'll see that cotton wealth displayed in beautiful antebellum homes in Waco and Calvert and the stunning commercial buildings of downtown Bryan.

Today, caring citizens in many historic towns have lovingly restored their heritage treasures, and many of these town centers look much like they did more than a hundred years ago. Visit these communities to gain a rare insight into a different time. Museums, historic sites, courthouse squares, theaters, and heritage festivals are among the exciting attractions awaiting visitors to the Texas Brazos Trail Region.

BRAZOS TRAIL REGION



- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- Old San Antonio Road
- 1968 Texas Brazos Trail

FEATURED COMMUNITIES

The following cities are highlighted in this chapter:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|--------|
| Anderson | Clifton | Hico | Taylor |
| Bastrop | Elgin | Killeen | Teague |
| Belton | Fairfield | Madisonville | Temple |
| Bryan-College Station | Gatesville | Marlin | Waco |
| Caldwell | Georgetown | Mexia | West |
| Calvert | Giddings | Round Rock | |
| Cameron | Groesbeck | Salado | |
| | Hearne | Smithville | |



Buescher State Park in 1954, Smithville



Bosque County Courthouse, Meridian



Main Street, Bryan



Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site, Anderson



MAIN STREET CITIES

- Bastrop
- Caldwell
- Clifton
- Elgin
- Georgetown
- Hamilton
- Taylor
- Temple
- Waco



THC STATE HISTORIC SITES

- Confederate Reunion Grounds, Mexia
- Fanthorp Inn, Anderson



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- Bosque County
- Falls County
- Grimes County
- Hamilton County
- Lee County
- Leon County
- Milam County
- Williamson County

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, TXDOT; THC (X 2); RANDY MALLORY;

! 🏠 ANDERSON

The picturesque Grimes County Courthouse is at the heart of this quaint rural community, which is home to the Texas Historical Commission's Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site. The white, two-story clapboard inn was built in 1834 by English immigrant Henry Fanthorp and is an extraordinary example of architecture from Texas' pre-Republic era. You can almost hear the footsteps of travelers arriving, exhausted after a long day's journey. Don't miss the red 1850 Concord stagecoach in the barn; rides are offered on select weekends.

★ BASTROP

Proximity to the Colorado River attracted early settlers to Bastrop in 1804, though the presence of

the Comanche discouraged permanent settlement until the 1830s. One of the oldest towns in Texas, Bastrop's proximity to the vast loblolly pine forests nearby turned it into a lumber town, a prosperous industry that lasted into the early 20th century. Today, Bastrop has recaptured and restored the best of its past, including the Bastrop Opera House and the charm of its downtown along the banks of the river. The Bastrop Visitor Center on Main Street contains a museum and has information on walking and driving tours featuring homes, history, and cemetery lore.

Bastrop State Park is another area attraction that has been a favorite for generations of park users who have enjoyed the "Lost Pines" and the beautiful cabins and other structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, TXDOT; AUBREY STOPA (X2)



Historic Civilian Conservation Corps Cabins in Bastrop State Park, Bastrop



1904 Howell & Co. Wholesale Grocers Building, Bryan



Bell County Museum, Belton



George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum, College Station



1886 St. Olaf Rock Church, near Clifton

BELTON

Belton's early history is marked by the masculine trappings of such things as cowboys herding longhorns up the Chisholm Trail, but the town should also be known as a hotbed of frontier days-era girl power. Texas' first female governor, Miriam "Ma" Ferguson was from Belton, and another group of independent-minded women formed the Belton Woman's Commonwealth in the late 19th century. The Sanctified Sisters commune operated a modern hotel, steam laundry, and farm co-op. You can find out more at the Bell County Museum, housed in a restored Carnegie Library building, just off the town square. The museum also features a permanent exhibit detailing the archeological findings of the Gault Site in Bell County; the area has been home to human beings for more than 13,000 years. Anchoring the square is the magnificent Bell County Courthouse, one of the most elaborate Renaissance Revival structures in the state.

BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION

Visitors to Bryan's rejuvenated downtown district are treated to beautifully preserved historic buildings and a lively mix of commerce, culture, and community. Stop by the 1903 Carnegie Public Library, which houses a local history and genealogy center. The nearby Children's Museum is a fun destination for younger travelers.

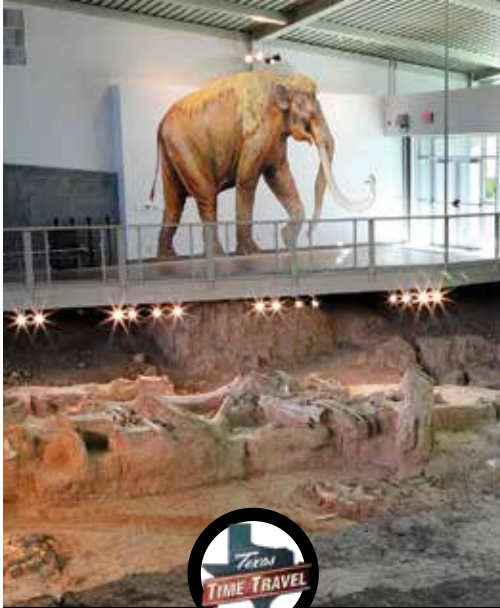
Four miles from downtown Bryan, the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History has a variety of

natural and cultural history exhibits. Focusing on the regional cultural experience of African Americans, the Brazos Valley African American Museum chronicles the tragedies and triumphs of life from ancient civilization to the present.

It's difficult to separate the identity of College Station from that of Texas A&M University, and citizens and students alike are proud of their "Aggieland" moniker. The campus has museum offerings, including the J. Wayne Stark University Center Galleries, and the Corp of Cadets Center, where a vast antique firearms collection highlights 19th century Colt pistols and early flintlock revolvers. The crown jewel of College Station's heritage offerings is the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum, which has attracted millions of visitors since it opened in 1997. The facility celebrates America's 41st president and his life of adventure, courage, dedication, and service. The exhibit galleries trace his life from his years as a young boy learning the value of public service, to his years as a Navy hero and world leader. You can explore countless photos, archival documents, news coverage, and never-before-seen film footage documenting world-changing events such as the reunification of Germany, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the invasion of Panama, and the end of the Cold War.

★ CALDWELL

Caldwell has long been a stopping point for travelers. Founded in 1840, the Burleson County seat was laid



PREHISTORIC TEXAS

Dinosaurs, Mammoths, and Ancient Cultures

Evidence of prehistoric Texas can be seen at museums and other sites throughout the state. In the Lakes Trail Region, Glen Rose is known as the “Dinosaur Capital of Texas.” Just one step into the fossilized 113-million-year-old dinosaur footprints in the Paluxy River at Dinosaur Valley State Park, and you’ll see why. With some of the best-preserved dinosaur tracks in North America, this paleontological find is an important clue to how and where these ancient creatures walked the earth. At Waco Mammoth National Monument in the Brazos Trail Region, you can experience a climate-controlled dig shelter and traverse a suspended walkway, which provides an overhead view of several specimens, including a bull mammoth and a camel that lived approximately 68,000 years ago. The Gault Site, near Florence, is one of the largest excavated sites of the Clovis culture, which flourished 13,500 years ago. The Bell County Museum, in Belton, features a permanent interactive exhibit about the site. The Horn Shelter, discovered in Bosque County, is a rare, 11,200-year-old Paleo-American archaeological site where two skeletons and an array of burial offerings were found. The Bosque Museum, in Clifton, explores the site in a comprehensive exhibit.

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out to be parallel to the Old San Antonio Road, a major artery into Texas. Many of the state’s Czech immigrants settled in Caldwell, and the local community celebrates this culture at the Burleson County Czech Heritage Museum and at the annual Kolache Festival in September, which draws thousands of people. The Burleson County Museum, located in the basement of the courthouse, explores the county’s history and displays artifacts of early settlers.

CALVERT

Calvert was founded in 1868 and named for Robert Calvert, a large plantation owner who was instrumental in directing the railroad through Robertson County. The railroad brought prosperity to Calvert and many cotton planters moved to the area after the Civil War, establishing huge plantations. Today Calvert remains a gem of Victorian-era culture, Southern flavor, and Texas friendliness. The historic district encompasses beautifully restored residences that are showcased during a home tour every spring.

CAMERON

A lovely restored courthouse and a statue of county namesake, Ben Milam, welcome guests to this pleasant community. For a glimpse into Cameron’s past, explore an exquisitely detailed miniature model of Cameron, circa 1940, on display in the county offices downtown. For a more in-depth look at county memorabilia, visit the Milam County Historical Museum nearby. Housed in the old county jail, the museum’s star exhibit is complete with gloomy cells and a gallows tower. Learn about Milam County’s history on the Spanish Colonial route known as El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail by following the signs in Cameron leading to significant river crossings, mission sites, and the natural landmark known as Sugarloaf Mountain.

CLIFTON

Few small towns can crow about a prehistoric past, nationally recognized artists, and a bustling downtown with the oldest, continuously running “picture show” in Texas. You can catch a first-run movie and ample old-time nostalgia at the restored Cliftex Theater. The Bosque Museum features the “Horn Shelter” exhibit, which interprets the significant 1970 archeological discovery of 11,000-year-old skeletal remains of a man and a girl,

WACO MAMMOTH SITE; OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, AMY MILLER; TH.C.; AUBREY STOPA (X2); TXDOT



Western Days Festival, Downtown Elgin



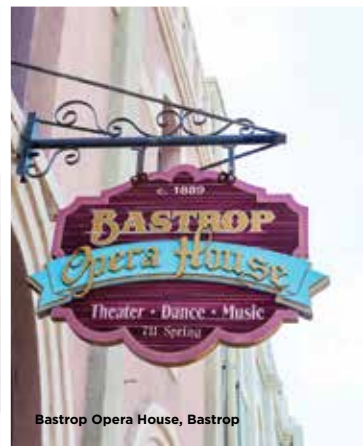
Bell County Museum, Belton



Milam County Courthouse, Cameron



Downtown Calvert



Bastrop Opera House, Bastrop

excavated at a rock shelter along the Bosque River. The museum also pays homage to Norwegian immigrants with the largest display of Norwegian artifacts in the Southwest. Clifton is a burgeoning arts community and home to several members of the Cowboy Artists of America. The Bosque Arts Center, located in a rehabilitated and expanded historic building, offers an impressive permanent collection along with live theater performances. The town is also home to the Clifton Classic Chassis Auto Museum.

★ **ELGIN**

Established in 1872 and built around cotton and the railroads, Elgin is now famous for two products being made in the town since 1882: reliable bricks and delicious hot sausage. This small community just outside

Austin produces more than 250 million bricks and 3 million pounds of sausage annually. Elgin citizens used these locally made bricks at the turn of the 19th century to construct many of the buildings that make up the community's historic district, which boasts a National Register of Historic Places designation today. Visitors can sample the famous sausage at any of the area's barbecue joints and at several annual celebrations. The Elgin Union Depot Museum, housed in the beautifully restored depot, explores the history of the area.

FAIRFIELD

Surrounded by ranchland and peach orchards dotted with farm stands, Fairfield offers heritage attractions downtown and recreational opportunities at nearby

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, THIC; OLD FORT PARKER; TXDOT



Downtown Georgetown



Old Fort Parker, Groesbeck



German POWs Perform at Camp Hearne WWII POW Camp, Hearne



Fireman's Park, Giddings



Palace Theatre, Georgetown



Fairfield Bell at Freestone County Museum, Fairfield

Fairfield Lake. The Freestone County Historical Museum complex encompasses several historic sites, including the 1881 jail and two log cabins, which are open to visitors.

GATESVILLE

Rolling farmland with wooded breaks along the Leon River mark the approach to Gatesville. In the town square, the magnificent Coryell County Courthouse is easily recognized by its soaring cupola along with a clock and bell tower. The Coryell Museum and Historical Center, located just off the 1897 courthouse square, displays a double-walled log jail and an impressive assortment of memorabilia, including an extensive collection of spurs, which has earned the town the title of “Spur Capital of Texas.”

★ GEORGETOWN

Selected as a “Great American Main Street” by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Georgetown’s charming courthouse square reflects the community’s commitment to celebrating its rich history. A decades-long effort to revitalize downtown Georgetown has resulted in a thriving commercial historic district filled with beautifully restored structures, including the 1881 Grace Episcopal Church, now known as Grace Heritage Center. The restored Palace Theatre, with its distinctive Art Deco features, hosts musical events and plays. The Williamson Museum offers free tours of the restored copper-domed courthouse and also offers special tours to the Gault archeological site. You can also explore nearby Inner Space Cavern, one of the best-preserved caves in Texas.

GIDDINGS

With three renovated train depots, Giddings has earned its moniker as the “Depot Capital of Texas.” The beautifully restored courthouse anchors the town square. The Lee County Museum and Visitors Center, in the 1879 Schubert-Fletcher Greek Revival house, displays historical photos and other county artifacts.

In the nearby town of Serbin, the Wendish Heritage Museum recounts the history of Giddings first residents.

GROESBECK

One of the most dramatic tales in early Texas history played out in 1836 just north of town, at Fort Parker, when a band of Comanche attacked the settlement, killing five men and capturing five women and children. One of them, 9-year-old Cynthia Ann Parker, grew up with the Comanche and later married Chief Peta Nocona. Recaptured 24 years later with her two-year-old daughter, she tried several times to return to the Comanche life she had known for so long. Her son, Quanah Parker, became the last great Comanche chief. Today, Old Fort Parker provides a living history interpretation of early life in the region.

HEARNE

Hearne calls itself the “Crossroads of Texas” for good reason. Platted in 1870, the city sits where two railroad lines and several highways converge. Railroad enthusiasts will enjoy the restored arrow-shaped Hearne Railroad Depot, a railroad and local history museum. Camp Hearne is just north of town and visitors can learn about its fascinating history as a World War II prisoner of war camp that housed thousands of Germans. The guard tower and

LEFT, TxDOT; MIDDLE, AUBREY STOPA; RIGHT, BARCLAY GIBSON



La Salle Hotel, Bryan



Round Rock's Historic Namesake, Round Rock



Sidewalk Cattleman's Association, Madisonville



1st Cavalry Horse Division, Killeen

a barrack have been reconstructed, and the barrack displays artifacts from the daily life of the prisoners.

HICO

Originally established along scenic Honey Creek, Hico was relocated in 1880 on the Bosque River two miles away in order to be near the railroad. Today, Hico attracts visitors with its restored historic downtown, many who want to explore the legend of Billy the Kid, who according to local lore, did not die in New Mexico but survived and lived the rest of his life in Hico using the name “Brushy Bill Roberts.” The Billy the Kid Museum has intriguing exhibits about the notorious outlaw and a gift shop designed like a saloon. Pie and chocolate are two other claims to fame for Hico, which also hosts the largest steak cook-off in the Southwest.

KILLEEN

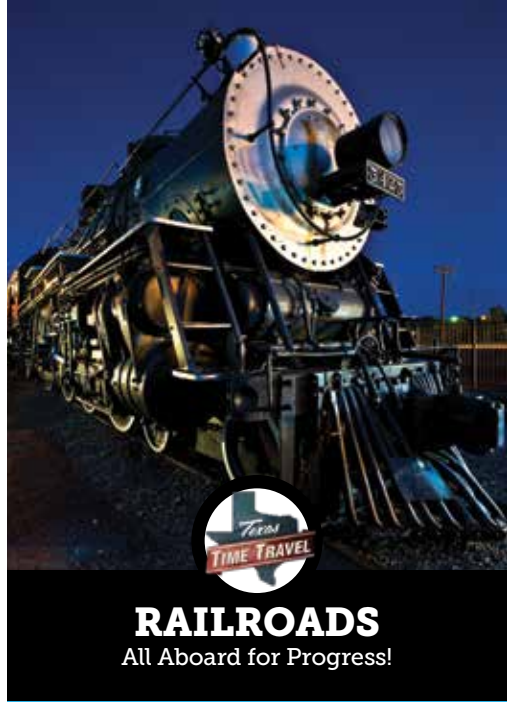
This small farming community changed forever in 1942 when Camp Hood was established to support the United States’ involvement in World War II. Fort Hood is now the largest active-duty armored military base in the U.S., with history to share at the 1st Cavalry Division Museum and 3d Cavalry Regiment Museum. The Mayborn Science Theatre and planetarium on the Central Texas College campus is another draw for visitors.

MADISONVILLE

Founded in 1853 and named after President James Madison, this small community is now known as the “Mushroom Capital of Texas” and hosts an annual festival that celebrates the fascinating and tasty fungi. The Sidewalk Cattleman’s Association is another Madisonville mainstay that celebrates the community and its history. At the Madison County Museum, housed in a refurbished, historic bank building, you can find out more about local history. The Woodbine Hotel, a restored 1904 structure, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and still accepts overnight guests.

MARLIN

In 1892, a gusher blew in Marlin—but it wasn’t oil. In a discovery that would change the face of the community, hot mineral water shot 75 feet into the air. Within three years, Marlin became a spa boomtown. The introduction of antibiotics and other modern medical treatments diminished the need for “taking the waters,” but the mystique surrounding its healing powers still lingers. Today, visitors are drawn to



In the late-19th and early-20th centuries, the growth of Texas was on a parallel track with the extension of railroad lines into the state. The first railroad in Texas got rolling in 1853. By the end of 1879, the railroad system in East Texas was well developed, but there was less than 100 miles of track in West Texas. All that changed in the 1880s, when more than 6,000 miles of railroad lines were constructed in a relative frenzy of track laying. Towns lived or died depending on the routes selected. Some towns up and moved to be closer to the railroad. Other towns were established during this time, many of which were named for railroad officials. In 1911 Texas became the state with the most railroad mileage, a ranking it still maintains.

Dozens of railroad museums throughout Texas illustrate and celebrate the fascinating and entertaining stories derived from our railroad legacy. Train depots have been lovingly restored across the state, and they’ve been given new life in many forms, from tourist visitors centers and museums to restaurants and special event centers.

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the public pavilion a couple of blocks east of the Falls County Courthouse where the hot waters still flow.

MEXIA

In the late 1880s, a small group of Limestone County Confederate veterans began meeting every year at

a spot in Mexia where Jack's Creek flows into the Navasota River. Confederate Reunion Grounds State Historic Site remains a gathering place, and visitors to the Texas Historical Commission site have the opportunity to see a Civil War-era cannon with a documented history of both Federal and Confederate action, an 1893 dance pavilion listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and ruins of structures from the Mexia Oil Boom of the 1920s. Park facilities at nearby Fort Parker State Park were built by an African American company of the Civilian Conservation Corps and offers outdoor recreational opportunities.

ROUND ROCK

Stagecoaches and cattle herds traveling through the area in the late 19th century often crossed Brushy Creek near the circular limestone rock that inspired the community's name. Across the street at Chisholm Trail Crossing Park, visitors will appreciate the sculptures and commemorative plaques that tell this story. Downtown, visitors can enjoy the shops and restaurants in restored historic buildings. The gravestone of the notorious outlaw Sam Bass who was killed in an 1878 shootout with Texas Rangers can be seen in the Round Rock Cemetery.

SALADO

Downtown Salado rewards visitors with art galleries, antiques stores, and restaurants in 19th century limestone buildings and historic residences. Main Street once saw the dust of cattle headed to market along the Chisholm Trail and served as a well-known stopping point for stagecoaches. Wagon wheels carved permanent ruts in the bedrock of Salado Creek, where

fish-filled springs lured Native Americans long before Spanish explorers and Anglo-American settlers arrived. The creek itself is a designated Texas Natural Landmark. Wagon wheel ruts can still be seen in the creek north of Pace Park, which is also home to Sirena, an Indian Mermaid sculpture. The historic Stagecoach Inn has been serving travelers since the early 1860s.

SMITHVILLE

With more than 200 properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places, Smithville is always ready for its close-up. Hollywood agrees and the beautifully scenic little town has graced the silver screen in many movies, most famously in "Hope Floats," filmed here in 1998.

Earlier in its history, the railroad took center stage, and that heritage is celebrated at the James H. Long Railroad Park and Museum, which also has a visitors center and the chamber of commerce. More local history is on display at the Heritage House and Museum in a 1908 Victorian residence reflecting early community life.

★ TAYLOR

The smoky aroma of barbecue drifts through downtown Taylor, where second-generation pitmasters turn out nationally recognized brisket, ribs, and sausage each day. The downtown commercial district is filled with restored historic buildings housing art and antiques shops that attract heritage-minded tourists hungry for more than a meal. A few steps from the commercial district, the Moody Museum, a handsomely restored 1887 home, offers a look at the life of



BELOW RIGHT, AUBREY STOPA; OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP-LEFT, THC; AUBREY STOPA, THC



1893 Dance Pavilion at
Confederate Reunion Grounds State Historic Site, Mexia



Moody-Bradley House Museum, Fairfield



Grimes County Courthouse, Anderson

Dan Moody, the youngest governor of Texas. Discover the details of how Moody took office in 1927 at the age of 33 and how, as district attorney earlier, he famously and successfully prosecuted Ku Klux Klansmen.

TEAGUE

A quiet hamlet today, Teague was a major railroad town at the turn of the 20th century—the heyday of American passenger travel. As many as six trains a day arrived here, a main destination point between Houston and Fort Worth. The Burlington-Rock Island Railroad Museum (known as the B-RI Museum), housed in a stunning red-brick depot, now pays tribute to the industry for which it was established with exhibits, photographs, and railcars on display.

★ TEMPLE

The town of Temple has come a long way since its founding as a railroad town in the 1880s, and the melding of its past and present comes together seamlessly at the Temple Railroad and Heritage Museum. Located in a restored 1910 passenger depot, the museum is dedicated to Temple's booming railroad days. The depot sits on a working railway line and visitors can listen to live dispatches while watching the train traffic from a second-floor viewing alcove. Less than a mile away, you'll find the Czech Heritage Museum, where the contributions of this ethnic culture are celebrated.

★ WACO

Cattle drives along the Chisholm Trail here helped stimulate the post-Civil War economy, and the town

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT, TXDOT, THC, TXDOT



Westfest, West



Dr Pepper Museum, Waco



Homestead Heritage Traditional Crafts Village in Elm Mott, North of Waco



Temple Railroad and Heritage Museum, Temple

began to experience a boom after the Waco Suspension Bridge was built in 1870, straddling the Brazos River and becoming the longest single-span suspension bridge west of the Mississippi at the time. The bridge remains a legendary icon in downtown Waco and is now surrounded by more than 25 beautiful bronze sculptures depicting the cattle drives of yore. Sixty-five thousand years before longhorns appeared in Texas, there were larger, more exotic creatures roaming the land. Waco Mammoth National Monument is the nation's first recorded discovery of a nursery herd of Pleistocene-era Columbian mammoths. The Cameron Park Zoo, nestled in one of the largest city parks in the country, features a Brazos River Country adventure that follows the Brazos River through Texas highlighting the animals and landscapes native to the area. The Baylor University campus is home to the Mayborn Museum Complex and the Armstrong Browning Library, which claims to be home to the largest collection of secular stained glass windows in the world and was voted one of the most beautiful college libraries in the country. Other heritage sites you won't want to miss include the Dr Pepper Museum in a restored 1906 bottling plant, the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum and the Texas Sports Hall of

Fame. The gracious McLennan County Courthouse and several lovingly restored historic homes round out Waco's heritage offerings. In nearby Elm Mott, the Homestead Heritage Village features a community of craftsmen who create handmade products. Visitors can watch craftsman work as they tour the village, which includes a gristmill, blacksmith forge, potter's wheel, gift barn, and café.

WEST

The kolache is king in West, where travelers have been veering off the interstate for a carb fix for decades. Venture a little further to the historic downtown, and you'll find the oldest operating Czech bakery in Texas and restaurants that offer authentic Czech and German fare. The railroad brought prosperity and many of the descendants of the original Czech settlers continue to farm the lands and run the businesses today. The West Depot is now home to a railroad museum and information center. Westfest, a Labor Day weekend celebration of regional heritage that draws thousands of visitors each year, includes live music, polka dancing, a parade, and (of course) all the kolaches you can eat. 🇹🇽





Forest

TRAIL REGION

Gateway to Texas for Explorers, Pioneers, and Immigrants

Spanning 35 East Texas counties, the Texas Forest Trail Region was the “Gateway to Texas” for Caddo Indians, Spanish and French explorers, Anglo pioneers, European immigrants, and enslaved and freed African Americans.

The state owes its name to the Caddo tribes of East Texas, known to early Spanish explorers as “Tejas,” meaning friends. Shadows of early Caddo and Spanish occupation are still visible in the well-worn trade routes etched across the region. One such road is the legendary El Camino Real de los Tejas, also later known as the King’s Highway and Old San Antonio Road.

East Texas embodies the indelible Texas spirit, from vibrant downtowns lined with monuments, museums, and old railroad depots to the state historic sites, saw-mills, and oil derricks that stand as testament to the industries that define the region. These attractions are nestled amid natural treasures, including four national and five state forests, an incomparable national preserve, and the largest cypress grove in the world.

Sam Houston made his home in East Texas for many years. After leading Texas’ fight for independence from Mexico in 1836, Houston became the first elected president of the new republic. When Texas became a state, he served as a U.S. senator and then governor.

During the Runaway Scrape, settlers from all over Texas fled their homes after the fall of the Alamo. Many headed toward the Louisiana border and took refuge in East Texas towns until word came of the decisive victory at San Jacinto.

Throughout the 1800s, western expansion and European immigration brought settlers to East Texas, displacing Native Americans. Since 1858, two tribes, the Alabama and the Coushatta, have made their home on a reservation in the Big Thicket, near Livingston, their rich traditions contributing greatly to the region’s heritage.

During the Civil War, Texas chose secession. Passions ran high and some towns served as suppliers and mustering points for the Confederate Army.

In the 1870s, railroad expansion in East Texas and the depletion of forests in northern states gave rise to a thriving timber industry, which continues today through the use of modern forestry and conservation practices.

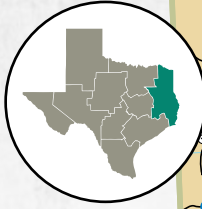
Texas became synonymous with oil when the Lucas Gusher blew at Spindletop near Beaumont in 1901. In the 1930s, oil discoveries in Gladewater and Kilgore brought fortune hunters and desperate families seeking relief from the Great Depression.

Historically, the Texas Forest Trail Region’s natural beauty, wildlife, and abundant water attracted settlers. Today, the region’s rolling timberlands continue to beckon visitors, and the development of cultural and heritage attraction and authentic Texas experiences make East Texas the place for historic adventures.

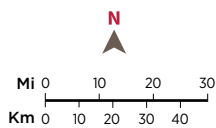
FOREST TRAIL REGION

FEATURED COMMUNITIES

The following cities are highlighted in this chapter:



- Alto
- Athens
- Atlanta
- Beaumont
- Carthage
- Center
- Clarksville
- Coldspring
- Conroe
- Crockett
- Daingerfield
- Gilmer
- Gladewater
- Hemphill
- Henderson
- Huntsville
- Jacksonville
- Jasper
- Jefferson
- Karnack
- Kilgore
- Kountze
- Linden
- Livingston
- Longview
- Lufkin
- Marshall
- Mineola
- Montgomery
- Mount Pleasant
- Mount Vernon
- Nacogdoches
- Nederland
- New London
- Newton
- Orange
- Palestine
- Pittsburg
- Port Arthur
- Quitman
- Rusk
- San Augustine
- Silsbee
- Texarkana
- Tyler
- Weches
- Winnsboro
- Woodville



- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- 1968 Texas Forest Trail



MAIN STREET CITIES

- Beaumont
- Carthage
- Clarksville
- Henderson
- Huntsville
- Linden
- Livingston
- Longview
- Marshall
- Mineola
- Mount Pleasant
- Mount Vernon
- Nacogdoches
- Palestine
- Pittsburg
- San Augustine
- Texarkana
- Tyler
- Winnboro



THC STATE HISTORIC SITES

- Caddo Mounds, Alto
- Mission Dolores,
San Augustine
- Sabine Pass Battleground,
Sabine Pass
- Starr Family Home, Marshall



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- Cass County
- Franklin County
- Harrison County
- Marion County
- Newton County
- Red River County
- San Augustine County
- Trinity County



Fredonia Hotel, Nacogdoches



Rusk Footbridge, Rusk

TOP, THC; BOTTOM, AUBREY STOPA



Fire Museum of Texas, Beaumont



GumboFest, Beaumont



Atlanta Historical Museum, Atlanta



1885 Shelby County Courthouse, Center



Downtown Beaumont



Texas Country Music Hall of Fame, Carthage



Caddo Mounds State Historic Site, Alto

LEFT, CITY OF CARTHAGE; RIGHT, THC; OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, TXDOT, BEAUMONT CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU; AUBREY STOPA, DWAIN COX

! ALTO

For centuries, travelers have followed El Camino Real de los Tejas, or the Royal Highway, through Texas, which roughly follows Texas Highway 21 through Alto. Spaniards blazed the route in the 1690s, guided by Native Americans tracing their ancestors' footsteps. Southwest of town, the scenic highway opens onto the spectacular Neches River Valley occupied by Caddo Indians from the ninth to 14th centuries. Today, visitors can explore El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail. Walk among the ceremonial earthen mounds at the Texas Historical Commission's Caddo Mounds State Historic Site and learn about the everyday life and the history of this ancient civilization.

ATHENS

See entry in the Lakes Trail Region, page 103

ATLANTA

Founded in 1871, Atlanta maintains the southern character of its Georgian namesake. Brick-paved sidewalks, tree-lined streets, and American flags on nearly every pole beckon visitors to explore one-of-a-kind shops, eateries, and museums downtown. The Chamber of Commerce and Atlanta Historical Museum are housed in the renovated 1920s Texas and Pacific Railroad Depot. The museum features child-friendly exhibits showcasing community history. The centerpiece is a scale model of a bi-wing plane and an exhibit honoring Atlanta native Bessie Coleman, the world's first licensed female African American pilot. Caddo land, now Atlanta State Park, offers outdoor adventure on Wright Patman Lake.

★ BEAUMONT

Oil transformed Beaumont and catapulted Texas into the Industrial Age when the Lucas Gusher blew at Spindletop in 1901. The history and impact of the petrochemical industry in Southeast Texas figure prominently at the Spindletop-Gladys City Boomtown Museum and the Texas Energy Museum. Beaumont maintains several historic homes, including the 1845 French House, the 1906 Chambers House, and the Beaux Arts-style 1906 McFaddin-Ward House, a heritage treasure filled with authentic and luxurious furnishings of the day. In downtown Beaumont, the opulent 1927 Jefferson Theatre features an organ that rises from the orchestra pit on a hydraulic lift, once-abandoned historic buildings have become restaurants and nightclubs in the Crockett Street Entertainment District, and museums, including the Art Museum of Southeast Texas, the Edison Museum, and the Fire Museum of Texas, offer something for the whole family. To learn about the native daughter who earned the title "the greatest woman athlete of the first half of the 20th century," visit the Babe Didrikson Zaharias Museum and Visitor Center.

★ CARTHAGE

Carthage's downtown offers a charming town square, complete with an old-fashioned gazebo to welcome guests. The Texas Tea Room and Heritage Museum is a favorite stop for visitors and locals alike. The Old Jail Museum, housed in the restored 1891 structure that is the oldest building in town, shares the history of the area. Carthage is also home to the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame, which includes the Tex Ritter Museum, filled with personal memorabilia from the life of "America's most beloved singing cowboy."



EL CAMINO REAL DE LOS TEJAS

The "Royal Road" through Texas

Designated as a National Historic Trail in 2004, El Camino Real de los Tejas has existed for more than 300 years. It runs along Highway 6 in Louisiana and Highway 21 in Texas. The "royal road" was instrumental in the development, settlement, and history of the state. It begins in the east in Natchitoches, Louisiana, and runs from the Piney Woods all the way to Mexico. The Spaniards and the French who marked the trail were then followed by such noted pioneers as Moses Austin and his son Stephen F. Austin, Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett, and Sam Houston, as well as early missionaries of multiple faiths. The trails originally served as a lifeline for those transporting supplies and providing military protection. Later they were used for exploration, colonization, trading, ranching, and battle, ultimately becoming the state's original highway. Visit the towns that dot this historic trail and learn more at nps.gov/elte and elcaminorealdelostejas.org.

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CENTER

Named for its location near the center of Shelby County, Center boasts one of the most unusual county courthouses in Texas. Erected in 1885, the structure, often described as the "Crown Jewel of Texas," was designed to resemble an Irish castle, complete with 12 distinctive fireplace chimneys rising dramatically along the perimeter. After a \$1.2 million restoration in 1998, it now serves as a visitor

center. Nearby historic attractions include the Shelby County Jail, built concurrently with the courthouse, and the Historical Society Museum, located in the Weaver-Oates home built in circa 1900.

★ 🏛️ CLARKSVILLE

Known by many as the "Gateway to Texas," Clarksville was often the first stop for pioneers crossing the Red River into Texas. By the 1880s, the area economy was booming, and a grand Renaissance Revival-style courthouse was built in 1885. Now restored, the Red River County Courthouse proudly presides over downtown, within walking distance to several museums and historic sites, including the 1833 home of the town's first newspaper editor and publisher, Colonel Charles Demorse, the "Father of Texas Journalism."

COLDSRING

The Texas legislature established San Jacinto County with Coldspring as the county seat in 1870. Downtown was relocated just blocks from its original location after a fire destroyed the first courthouse in 1915. The San Jacinto County and Old Jail Museum, a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark housed in the 1887 jail, remains at the original town site, along with other historic buildings, including a 1920s-era post office and a corncrib built in 1840.

CONROE

Things started to boom in Conroe in 1931 with the discovery of oil. Fueled by the new wealth, signature buildings were constructed, including the Crighton Theatre in 1934, now restored and a performing arts venue, and the Montgomery County Courthouse in 1936. The Heritage Museum of Montgomery County chronicles the history of the area through permanent displays, traveling exhibits, and oral history retellings. Bordered by 22,000-acre Lake Conroe, W. Goodrich Jones State Forest, and the Sam Houston National Forest, present-day Conroe is an outdoorsman's paradise. The Lone Star Monument and Historical Flag Park honors the Texas flag, as well as the 13 flags that flew over Texas during the fight for independence.

CROCKETT

Crockett, the county seat of Houston County, the oldest county in Texas, was named for the famous Tennessean scout and Alamo hero, Davy Crockett. The 1909 International-Great Northern Railroad Depot, home of the Houston County Museum,



Caddo Lake, Karnack



Sam Lightnin' Hopkins Statue, Crockett



Sabine County Library and Museum, Hemphill



Jones State Forest, Conroe



Discovery Well, Gladewater



Sam Houston Statue, Huntsville

exhibits regional artifacts dating from 1872. Sam “Lightnin’” Hopkins, a Crockett native and legendary bluesman, played music along Camp Street in the 1930s and ‘40s, and a statue memorializing him sits across from the Camp Street Café and Store, a music venue for traveling artists. Just north of the town square, the ruins of Mary Allen Junior College, a former African American girls’ school, stands as a testament to the struggle for education and equality.

DAINGERFIELD

In 1542, Spanish explorers passed through the area where Daingerfield State Park is now located. Nearly 100 years later, the French established a trading post and immigrants began to settle the area. During the Civil War, iron foundries and sawmills worked at

full speed to supply the Confederacy with guns and wartime products. Daingerfield State Park was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. It offers camping, boating, swimming, hiking, and nature study, and tours of the state park may be arranged by special request.

GILMER

Red-brick streets and old-fashioned shops invite a leisurely stroll around the courthouse square of Gilmer, located on the site of a former Cherokee Indian village. The Historic Upshur Museum, housed in a 1925 post office, recounts area history. In the 1920s, local farmers were devastated by a sweet-potato weevil infestation. When officials lifted the quarantine in 1935, the farmers staged a

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, THIC; TXDOT; GILMER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Downtown Jefferson



East Texas Yamboree, Gilmer



Big Thicket National Preserve, Kountze

celebration, and that tradition is still going strong. Now about 100,000 people gather each October to attend the East Texas Yamboree, one of Texas' oldest, continuously running festivals.

GLADEWATER

Once an oil boomtown, Gladewater now makes the most of its title as the "Antique Capital of East Texas." Its delightful downtown is filled with antique stores in historic buildings. The Gladewater Museum, located in a restored art deco building, is a heritage attraction you won't want to miss.

HEMPHILL

Located on the Toledo Bend Reservoir in the Sabine National Forest, Hemphill is considered one of the best bass fishing spots in East Texas. The Sabine County Courthouse graces the square, as does the old Romanesque Revival county jail. The 1903 jail, remodeled in 1925, houses the Sabine County Museum and Virgie Speights Memorial Library, where county memorabilia and genealogy records now share space with jail cells and trap-door gallows.

★ HENDERSON

Prior to the Civil War, cotton was the foundation of Henderson's early economy and was even used as legal tender. The community prospered along with the railroad in the 1870s and again with the East Texas oil boom in the 1930s. Today, Henderson's vibrant town square is a National Register District and reflects small town revitalization at its best. The popular Depot Museum Complex includes the Rusk County History Museum as well as the Children's Discovery Center, a hands-on learning center, in the former cotton warehouse of the 1901 Missouri-Pacific Depot.

★ HUNTSVILLE

Gen. Sam Houston, a key figure in the battle for Texas independence, made his home in Huntsville in 1862, and a 77-foot likeness of the Texas hero stands tall among the pines of East Texas. The Sam Houston Memorial Museum features the Woodland Home, which Houston sold to pay campaign debts, and the relocated Steamboat House, where Houston's body lay in state in 1863 before being laid to rest at Oakwood Cemetery. The Texas Prison Museum offers a fascinating look at life and death behind prison walls, and the H.E.A.R.T.S. Veterans Museum honors the contributions of veterans.

JACKSONVILLE

Tomatoes were Jacksonville's mainstay crop in the early 1900s. The town even earned the title "Tomato Capital of the World." Today, the community continues to make the most of the tasty fruit with an annual Tomato Festival. Tomatoes are so revered in Jacksonville that they named the downtown football stadium the Tomato Bowl. Carved into an earthen bowl and made of red iron ore, the stadium was completed by the Works Progress Administration in 1940, and is one of the more unusual structures in East Texas. Another downtown attraction is the Vanishing Texana Museum. Just north of town, Love's Lookout, a roadside park known for its spectacular views, hugs a high ridge along U.S. 69.

JASPER

Jasper's historic town square features its 1889 courthouse, bed-and-breakfasts housed in historic homes, businesses in brightly colored storefronts, murals, and the old jail, home of the Jasper County Historical Commission. Outdoor enthusiasts are also attracted to Jasper because of its proximity to B.A. Steinhagen Lake and Lake Sam Rayburn. Sawmill Trail, located at Boykin Springs Recreation Area in the Angelina National Forest, leads to the ruins of the old Aldridge sawmill and ghost town. Once a thriving sawmill town, Aldridge was abandoned by residents in the 1920s, after the native timber was depleted.

JEFFERSON

With more than 100 state and nationally recognized structures, Jefferson offers history buffs looking for an authentic southern experience an opportunity to walk among well-preserved buildings, tour beautiful Greek Revival homes, visit museums, and relive its colorful history. Once a bustling river port, today's Jefferson is reminiscent of its heyday, with specialty shops and restaurants lining the original brick streets. Scores of gracious homes are now a vacationer's retreat, earning this charming town the designation of "Bed-and-Breakfast Capital of Texas." Tour an elegant 1888 railroad car, visit the 1907 restored Carnegie Library, see the restored 1913 Marion County Courthouse, or take a boat tour through the world's largest cypress forest, located directly on nearby Caddo Lake.



Kilgore Oil Rigs, Kilgore



Harrison County Courthouse, Marshall



Starr Family Home State Historic Site, Marshall

KARNACK

Karnack was the childhood home of Claudia “Lady Bird” Taylor Johnson, former U.S. first lady. It now serves as a gateway to the mystical Caddo Lake. Various operators offer boat tours of the lake, and Caddo Lake State Park features historic cabins and other buildings constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.

KILGORE

With the discovery of the East Texas oilfield in the 1930s, Kilgore was thrust into the international spotlight. Within days, the town’s population exploded. By 1939, nearly 1,200 oil derricks crowded together within the city limits, mostly concentrated within one square block downtown, which became known as the “World’s Richest Acre.” Sixty of those derricks still stand, topped with giant lighted stars. Explore oil’s dramatic effect on the region at the East Texas Oil Museum at Kilgore College. While there, visit the Kilgore Rangerette Showcase Museum, honoring the world-famous dance team. Stop by Driller Park, a ballpark constructed in 1947 of oil pipe, tank steel, and concrete to celebrate the postwar return of baseball. Kilgore also hosts the Texas Shakespeare Festival in July.

KOUNTZE

Kountze is an entry point to the vast, dense woods that were once hideouts for murderers, thieves, and Civil War draft dodgers. These days the Big Thicket National Preserve attracts more genteel visitors interested in exploring this beautiful, ecologically diverse wilderness area. In downtown Kountze, you’ll find the 1959 Hardin County Courthouse and the picturesque 1903 Kirby-Hill House Museum, which hosts murder mystery dinners.

★ LINDEN

Ragtime legend Scott Joplin, blues phenomenon Aaron “T-Bone” Walker, and rock star Don Henley all have called this Piney Woods town home. This rich heritage is celebrated at the Music City Theater, a renovated auditorium that was built in the 1950s, where nationally known bands of all genres now perform. The restored 1861 Cass County Courthouse is the oldest continuously operating courthouse in Texas. A Depression-era mural titled “The Last Crop” adorns the Department of Agriculture and Post Office building downtown, and depicts African



EAST TEXAS FORESTS Lumber Land

The magnificent forests of East Texas remained undisturbed prior to the 1880s. Hauling timber was a tedious and rare endeavor since local rivers could not provide a reliable means of transportation. That all changed with the coming of the railroad. As tracks were laid, sawmills followed closely behind, and between the 1880s and late 1920s, the lumber industry exploded. Mill towns were born, lumber kings were crowned, and timber production dominated the East Texas economy. In 1907, the industry reported a record annual cut of more than 2.25 billion board feet of lumber. After World War I, the industry declined as companies exhausted timber supplies and ceased operations. It flourished again after World War II with reforestation as well as new equipment, which utilized more of the tree, increasing the variety of wood products. Today, evidence of this mighty industry is still apparent in old sawmill ruins, log trucks, museums, state parks, and national forests.

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American tenant farmers harvesting cotton by hand during the Great Depression.

★ LIVINGSTON

Founded in the 1830s, Livingston features a lovely downtown with a mix of shops and cafes around the courthouse square. A locomotive and a log cabin mark the location of the Polk County Memorial Museum and Heritage Park. East of town, in the heart of the Big Thicket, is the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation. The tribe settled in East Texas around 1780, and Sam Houston had the land declared a reservation as a reward for the tribe's courage in remaining neutral during Texas' war for independence.

★ LONGVIEW

The Southern Pacific bought a 100-acre tract in 1870 and laid out the town of Longview. It was named for the expansive vistas that can be seen from nearby Rock Hill, the highest point in the area. Longview's first 100 years, 1870-1970, are chronicled in 10 sections on the walls of Heritage Plaza, a commemorative park in the heart of downtown. The interpretive panels proudly tell the community's story from the railroad and the oil and gas boom to World War II. The revitalized storefronts, downtown festivals, and colorful murals in the Main Street historic district proudly celebrate the community's rich history. The Gregg County Historical Museum's exhibits illustrate the development of Gregg County, from the days of the Caddo Indians to the robbery of the local bank by the notorious Dalton Gang.

LUFKIN

The timber industry along with the railroads forged the city of Lufkin, transforming it into a major hub for the lumber bonanza of the late 1800s. Timber and railroad prosperity also brought hotels, foundries, and other enterprises to Lufkin, creating a vibrant community by the 1900s. Today, you can experience a lively downtown historic district anchored by the historic Pines Theater, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and visit several other places that tell the town's stories, including the Texas Forestry Museum, the Museum of East Texas, and the Naranjo Museum of Natural History. And don't miss the Ellen Trout Zoo, one of the finest small city zoos in the nation.

! ★ 🏠 MARSHALL

Marshall was founded in 1841, and by 1850 it was the fourth largest city in Texas. In 1871, the Texas and Pacific (T&P) Railway Company was established to build a southern railroad line from Marshall to San Diego. The Ginocchio Hotel, a three-story Victorian, was built in 1896 to provide hospitality to trainloads of westward-bound immigrants. The current T&P Depot, located in the Ginocchio National Historic District, was built in 1912 and serves as an active Amtrak train station and railroad museum. African Americans who traveled the rail between logging camps in the 1870s are credited with the creation of Boogie Woogie, and the style's earliest musical notations are named after T&P stops. Marshall's rich heritage is proudly displayed in the restored 1901 Beaux Arts Renaissance Revival Harrison County Courthouse and the Starr Family Home State Historic Site, a Texas Historical Commission property, which maps the 150-year history of the affluent Starr family in Texas. The Buard History Trail driving tour highlights important African American historic sites, such as historic Wiley College, New Town, and the Old Powder Mill Cemetery.

★ MINEOLA

In 1873, the Texas and Pacific and International-Great Northern Railroad raced to put Mineola on the map. This Main Street city's restored 1906 depot and museum is still used by Amtrak passengers. Shop and dine in the National Register downtown historic district or catch a feature film or a live production at the Select Theater, one of the oldest in the state. Explore local heritage at the Mineola Historical Museum and step back in time at the pristine Mineola Nature Preserve on the Sabine River.

MONTGOMERY

Montgomery's downtown is bustling as much as it did in the mid-1800s, when it served as a busy trading center for the region. The historic district boasts many historic commercial buildings, gracious homes and museums, including the Fernland Historical Park Museum and the N.H. Davis Pioneer Complex, which houses replica sketches of the Lone Star Flag and the Republic of Texas seal, drawn by native son Charles Bellinger Stewart and adopted by the state in 1839.



1894 W.H. Stark House, Orange



1912 Franklin County Courthouse, Mount Vernon



The Getaway Memorial, Nacogdoches

★ MOUNT PLEASANT

Centuries before Mount Pleasant was established, Caddo Indians called the rolling hills of Northeast Texas home, attracted by the red mineral springs they found there. Water is still attracting visitors to the area, especially Lake Bob Sandlin State Park, where the Fort Sherman Cemetery is located and where hundreds of years' worth of archeological evidence of Caddo Indians can be seen. Visitors also enjoy the heritage attractions downtown and on the courthouse square. The Mount Pleasant Historical Museum is located one block north in the city library.

★ 🏠 MOUNT VERNON

Mount Vernon's rich history has been proudly preserved through careful restoration and clever adaptation of the city's most historic buildings. The 1912 Classic Revival-style Franklin County Courthouse has been restored to its former splendor, and the 1940 fire station has found new life as the Fire Station Museum. The Old Jail Art Museum operates in the 1912 lockup, and the Franklin County Historical Museum resides in a 1940 Works Projects Administration structure. The Bankhead Highway Visitors Center is housed in the 1868 home

of Mount Vernon native Henry Clay Thruston, who at 7 feet 7 inches was reportedly the tallest soldier in the Confederacy. The Bankhead Highway was the first all-weather transcontinental route from coast to coast.

★ NACOGDOCHES

Walk the brick-paved streets of Nacogdoches, and you'll find yourself on the path to early Texas history. The entire downtown is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and the city claims bragging rights as the "Oldest Town in Texas." Start your visit at the Charles Bright Visitor Center located on Main Street's original red bricks. Explore the early days of Texas history at the Stone Fort Museum, the Sterne-Hoya House Museum and Library, and the Durst Taylor House and Gardens. Nacogdoches is also known as the "Garden Capital of Texas," and for good reason. You'll find several beautiful gardens on the campus of Stephen F. Austin State University, as well as those around The Old University Building, which houses a museum. African American heritage is represented by the 1914 Gothic Revival-style Zion Hill Baptist Church in the Zion Hill Historic District, which developed after the Civil War. The

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DAVE BUSH; AUBREY STOPA; LEANNA SKARNULIS; THE



Mission Tejas State Park, Grapeland



Texas State Railroad, Rusk



Downtown Nacogdoches



Windmill Museum, Nederland



The Cenotaph, New London



Stark Museum of Art, Orange

Oak Grove Cemetery is the final resting place for a number of legendary Texans, including four who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence. Stay overnight at the Fredonia Hotel, a recently restored mid-century modern structure.

NEDERLAND

Established in 1897 by Dutch immigrants who named it after their homeland, Nederland was promoted to settlers from the Netherlands seeking opportunities with the area's railroad jobs and rich farmland. Acadians from South Louisiana were also lured to the area. Both cultures are honored at the Windmill Museum and La Maison Acadienne Museum in Tex Ritter Park—named for Nederland native “Tex” Ritter, the famous singing cowboy in western movies.

NEW LONDON

“The Day a Generation Died” was the phrase used to describe the horrific consequence of the 1937 school explosion that killed approximately 300 local students and teachers. Within weeks after the tragedy, sparked by an undetected natural gas leak, survivors testified before the state legislature and succeeded in getting a law passed requiring that odor be added to natural gas. The New London Museum tells the poignant story. Located between the museum and the rebuilt school is a landmark cenotaph, or empty tomb, bearing the names of the victims.

NEWTON

Visitors can see the influence of pioneer families and sawmill towns at the Newton County Historical Center and Museum and tour a restored 1914 historic hotel. The interior of the Newton County Courthouse was gutted by fire in 2000. The Second Empire-style building was restored through the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program and reopened in 2012.

ORANGE

Because of its isolated location on the Louisiana border, Orange was known in its early days as a rowdy place and a stopover for outlaws and renegades crossing the Sabine River into Texas. A lumber-fueled economy ushered in a more refined golden age in the late 19th century. Lumber magnates and their descendants built or funded major local heritage sites. The city also played a key role during World War II as a shipbuilding center. Today, you can visit the Stark Cultural Venues, named for the philanthropist William Henry Stark, who prospered here at the turn of the 20th-century and whose family shared the wealth with the community. The fully restored Stark House reveals the family's lifestyle, complete with original furnishings on all three floors, and the Stark Museum of Art maintains an acclaimed collection of art. The Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center offers natural beauty in the heart of town.

LEFT, AUBREY STOPA; RIGHT, TXDOT

★ PALESTINE

For a sense of Southern charm, visit Palestine in the springtime, when magnolias perfume the air and dogwoods bloom. Attend the annual Dogwood Festival and Texas Dogwood Trails Celebration in March or enjoy driving and walking tours year-round. Palestine boasts more than 1,800 historic sites within two National Register Historic Districts, including the 1914 Classical Revival-style Anderson County Courthouse. Arts aficionados are drawn to the Art Tracks Sculpture Exhibit and the Historic Texas Theatre that enliven the Main Street District. Railroad buffs climb aboard a steam or diesel train at the historic Texas State Railroad for a 25-mile excursion through the scenic Piney Woods.

★ PITTSBURG

Melodious bells chime on the hour from a beautiful prayer tower in Pittsburg's downtown historic district. The nearby Northeast Texas Rural Heritage Center and Museum is housed in the restored 1901 Cotton Belt Railroad Depot. The museum showcases a working telegraph office, the history of the poultry industry, and a full-sized replica of a curious flying machine. The Ezekiel Airship was built in 1902, inspired by a biblical verse and reportedly took to the air one year before the Wright Brothers' historic flight. The original airship was destroyed in a train accident en route to the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. Experience rural life at the Farmstead Museum, where history comes alive in a blacksmith shop, smokehouse, general store, and a fully restored 100-year-old farmhouse.

! PORT ARTHUR

Discovery of oil at Spindletop, just north of Port Arthur, generated a tremendous growth in population and economic development. The city's rich Cajun heritage is just one of the elements attributed to this boom. Beautiful homes built on the waterfront are now part of a historical home tour. The Pompeiian Villa, one of the oldest landmarks, was originally traded for Texaco stock, giving it the nickname the "billion dollar home." The original Dutch consulate, Vuylsteke, and other homes, such as Rose Hill Manor, line Lakeshore Drive overlooking Pleasure Island and Sabine Lake, home to a marina, a golf course, and excellent fishing. The Museum of the Gulf Coast showcases area history, including the Music Hall of Fame, which features more than 60 performers with

regional roots, such as rock 'n' roll icon and Port Arthur native Janis Joplin. The Robert Rauschenberg Gallery showcases works by the late renowned artist, another native of the city.

Just south of the city, Sabine Pass Battleground State Historic Site, a Texas Historical Commission property, commemorates the area's role in the Civil War. The true story sounds much like a tall Texas tale. On September 8, 1863, 20 Union vessels with about 4,000 men trying to invade Texas were defeated by 45 Irish dockworkers led by Lt. Dick Dowling. Visit this battle site and then venture to Sea Rim State Park on the Gulf of Mexico for beach time, kayaking, and wildlife viewing.

QUITMAN

James S. Hogg was the first native-born governor of Texas. While in office, from 1891 to 1895, he did much to strengthen public respect for law enforcement. That's fitting, considering that as a young man in Quitman, he was shot by a group of outlaws while he was helping the local sheriff. He recovered and went on to have a long and illustrious career. Quitman honors his memory with the Governor Jim Hogg City Park.

RUSK

A remarkable footbridge, an authentic steam railroad, and a 19th century engineer have left their marks here. The 546-foot-long bridge has been around since 1861. It was reconstructed in 1889, and is believed to be the longest footbridge in the country. The bridge was restored again in the 1960s, with plans provided for posterity by the same engineer who worked on the original reconstruction. The real steam engines and magnificent scenery draw tourists and Hollywood filmmakers alike to the Texas State Railroad for the 25-mile train ride through the Piney Woods between Rusk and Palestine. The Heritage Center of Cherokee County in downtown Rusk imparts more area history. Just outside of town, the Jim Hogg Historic Site is located in the city park and features a replica of the log cabin birthplace of the first Texas governor to be born in the state.

! ★ SAN AUGUSTINE

Established in 1832 along El Camino Real de los Tejas, San Augustine was one of the earliest Anglo communities in Texas. It served as a gateway for settlers from Southern states traveling the "Royal Highway" that ran from the Rio Grande to Louisiana. See remnants of the trail at the Lobanillo



Silsbee Ice House Museum and Cultural Center, Silsbee



Goodman-Legrand House and Museum, Tyler



Historic Texas Theatre, Palestine



Pompeian Villa, Port Arthur



1828 Rice Family Log Home, Weches

Swales, about 12 miles east of town. Mission Dolores State Historic Site, a Texas Historical Commission property, commemorates a Spanish mission founded in 1716. Exhibits explore the life of missionaries and Native Americans, and struggles between Spain and France. Visit the Ezekiel Cullen House, which once housed pioneers, patriots, and officials of the Republic of Texas, and the elegantly restored 1927 Classical Revival-style San Augustine County Courthouse.

SILSBEE

Located at the edge of the Big Thicket National Preserve, Silsbee was originally developed with the railroad but later thrived through oil, timber, and agricultural resources. Learn about the town's development at the Ice House Museum and Cultural Center, located in a 1926 icehouse, which features exhibits illustrating life before refrigeration.

★ TEXARKANA

First time visitors to Texarkana can't resist posing on Photographer's Island, with one foot in Texas and the other in Arkansas. It is right in front of the 1933 Post Office and Courthouse, the only one in the country that serves two states. Just around the corner, the 1911 federal courthouse has been restored and is now the home of the Regional Arts Center. The oldest standing brick building in the city dates to 1879, and now serves as the location of the Museum of Regional History. Experience the interactive musical exhibit dedicated to Scott Joplin, known as the "Father of Ragtime Music," whose youthful talent was nurtured in Texarkana. Performing arts take center stage at the

fully restored Italian Renaissance-style Perot Theatre, which began life in 1924 as the Saenger Theatre. One of the more whimsical architectural features in town is the Draughton-Moore Ace of Clubs House and museum, a 22-sided Italianate-Victorian structure. Legend has it that this elegant 1885 home, built in the shape of a cloverleaf, was intended to mimic the lucky card in a poker game.

★ TYLER

Roses and azaleas are the calling cards of this charming city filled with abundant gardens and brick-paved streets, but that wasn't always the case. When a peach blight threatened Tyler's main crop in the early 20th century, growers began cultivating rose bushes. Now called "the Rose Capital of America," Tyler celebrates the Texas Rose Festival in October, a tradition since 1933. The Municipal Rose Garden showcases 14 acres of more than 500 varieties of America's favorite flower. The Tyler Rose Museum and Gift Shop features elaborate gowns of past Texas Rose Festival Queens and tells the history of the rose industry. There are more blooms to enjoy in late March and early April during the Azalea and Spring Flower Trail, which includes residential gardens and historic home sites. More natural wonders abound at the 85-acre Caldwell Zoo.

Explore area history at the Smith County Historical Museum, located in the adapted 1904 Carnegie Library and featuring Works Progress Administration-era murals and a variety of exhibits. For a taste of antebellum Texas, visit the Goodman-LeGrand House and Museum, an elegant mansion

filled with antiques and period furnishings. Tyler's role in the Civil War is represented at Camp Ford Historic Park, the largest prisoner-of-war compound for Union troops west of the Mississippi River.

WECHES

The pride of Weches is Mission Tejas State Park, a site honoring the first Spanish mission in the Texas wilderness. The park was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1934 as a commemorative representation of Mission San Francisco de los Tejas established in 1690. The restored 1828 Rice Family Log Home, one of the oldest structures in the area, has served as a stopover for immigrants, adventurers, and travelers following the El Camino Real de los Tejas, also known as the Old San Antonio Road. Weches lies on the outskirts of the Davy Crockett National Forest near the Neches River Bottom, Big Slough Wilderness Area, and Neches Bluff Overlook Area, a few miles from Caddo Mounds State Historic Site.

★ WINNSBORO

A noon stop for daily passenger trains in the early 1900s, Winnsboro acquired a reputation for its food and hospitality. People especially enjoy visiting during the Autumn Trails Festival, which draws hundreds of equestrians to the area. Winnsboro has also garnered a reputation as a cultural center. Downtown's inviting historic district includes the Winnsboro Center for the Arts.

WOODVILLE

Glorious blooming trees are the focal point of the annual Dogwood Festival that draws tens of thousands of people to this small town each year. The event got its start back in 1938, and has become a rite of spring for East Texas. Woodville also lays claim to former Texas Gov. Allan Shivers, who spent his early childhood there. The Allan Shivers Library and Museum honors his legacy. Experience a living museum of pioneer history at the Heritage Village Museum. 🇹🇽

LEFT, MICK WATSON; RIGHT, AUBREY STOPA



1933 Post Office and Federal Courthouse, Texarkana



School House in Heritage Village Museum, Woodville



Reenactors Portraying Buffalo Soldier Life at Fort Concho, San Angelo



Forts

TRAIL REGION

Frontier Soldiers Secure the Wild West

The frontier forts of Texas were lonely outposts. Frontier soldiers built garrisons linking wild country and settled lands, while protective Native Americans defended their traditional hunting grounds. An epic and sometimes violent struggle ensued across the rolling hills and plains of today's Texas Forts Trail Region.

Attempts at altering Native American life began in the mid-1700s when Spanish missionaries sought to Christianize the Plains Indians. Presidios were built for the protection of missions. Those early efforts were eventually abandoned.

After statehood in 1845, settlers flooded into Texas and the U.S. Army established a line of frontier forts. Settlements pushed farther west in the 1850s, and the military built a second line of forts. Following the Civil War, additional forts were established along a third line. The pre- and post-Civil War forts along with the Presidio de San Sabá comprise the historical backbone of the Texas Forts Trail Region.

The passions of that frontier era often resulted in conflict: tough frontiersmen on one side, Native Americans on the other. Between the two stood the frontier soldiers. Their hardships were many and the dangers very real. Settlements often cropped up near forts for safety and opportunities for Army contract work. Many settlements were dangerous places with desperate characters.

While millions of buffalo still roamed the Great Plains in the 1870s, the systematic slaughter of the animals had decimated the vast southern herd in Texas by the time the first railroads arrived. The Army encour-

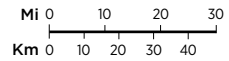
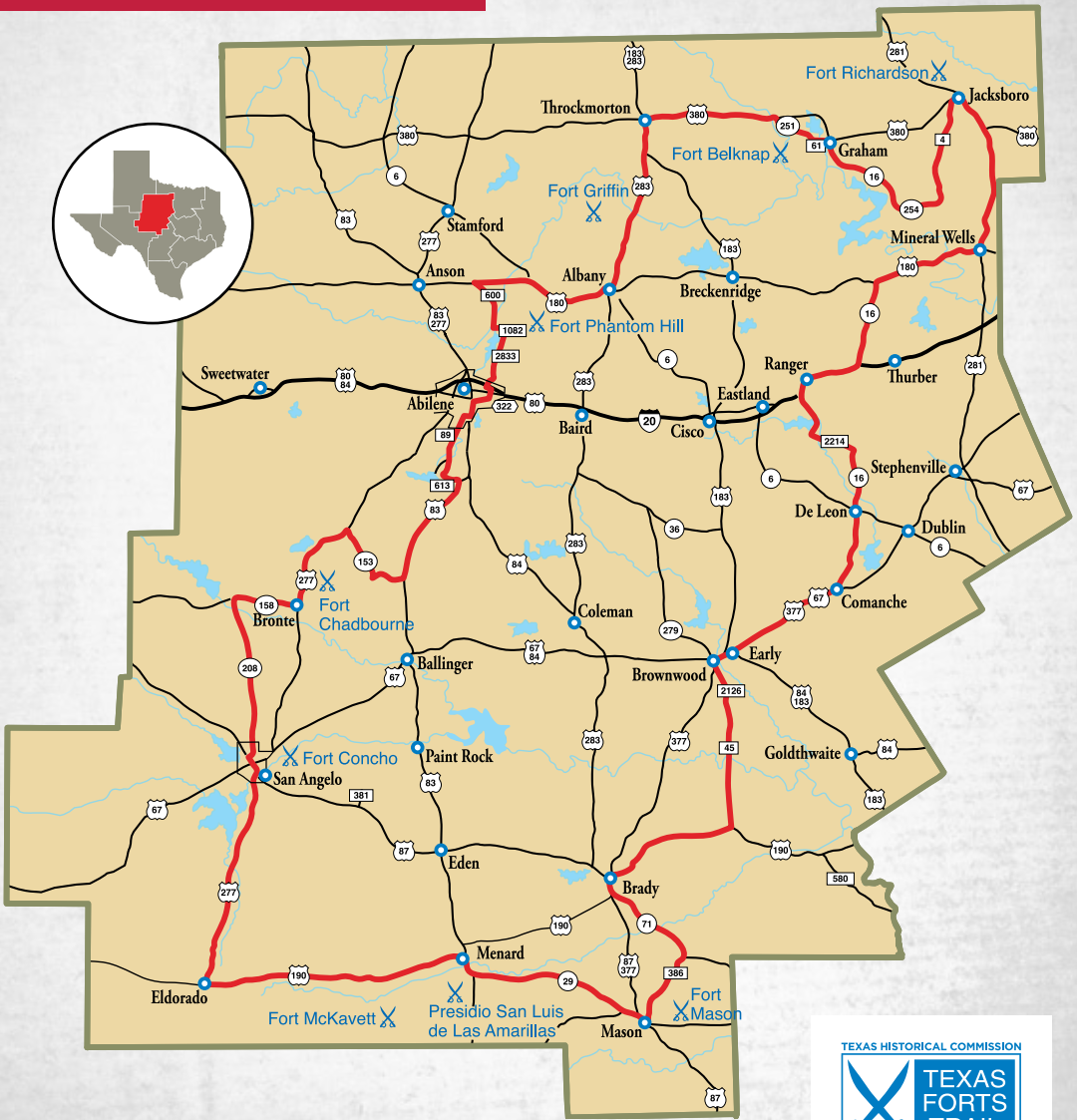
aged their elimination as a way to drive Plains Indians onto reservations. Comanche, Kiowa, and Kiowa Apache warriors responded with violent raids. Soldiers stationed at frontier forts launched a relentless military campaign, the Red River War of 1874–75, which finally forced the state's last free Native Americans onto reservations in present-day Oklahoma.

Railroad expansion gave pioneers unprecedented access to distant markets, boosting the local cattle and cotton economy. Towns formed along, or moved to, rail lines and prospered. More prosperity burst from the ground from 1910 through 1920, when oil was discovered.

The region was an ideal spot for military flight and infantry training bases during World War II. After the war, towns and cities swelled with new people. The economy, rooted in farming and ranching, grew with new business opportunities.

Communities in the 29 counties of the Texas Forts Trail Region invite visitors to relive the area's dramatic past. Along the way, you can walk in the footsteps of a colorful cast of characters—Spanish missionaries, nomadic Native Americans, eager settlers, and gritty soldiers—who struggled to make this region their home.

FORTS TRAIL REGION



- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- Farm or Ranch Road
- Fort
- 1968 Texas Forts Trail

FEATURED COMMUNITIES

The following cities are highlighted in this chapter:

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Abilene | Comanche | Menard |
| Albany | De Leon | Mineral Wells |
| Anson | Dublin | Paint Rock |
| Baird | Eastland | Ranger |
| Ballinger | Eden | San Angelo |
| Brady | Eldorado | Stamford |
| Breckenridge | Goldthwaite | Stephenville |
| Bronte | Graham | Sweetwater |
| Brownwood | Jacksboro | Throckmorton |
| Cisco | Mason | Thurber |



Fort Chadbourne, Bronte



Fort Belknap, Graham



Fort Richardson State Park, Jacksboro



Fort Phantom Hill, Abilene



Fort Griffin State Historic Site, Albany



World's Championship Rodeo at Dublin, Rodeo Heritage Museum



MAIN STREET CITIES

- Mineral Wells
- San Angelo
- Stephenville



THC STATE HISTORIC SITES

- Fort Griffin, Albany
- Fort McKavett, near Menard



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- Erath County
- McCulloch County
- Menard County
- Mills County
- San Saba County
- Shackelford County
- Throckmorton County

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: AUBREY STOPA (X2); THC; TXDOT; THC; THC

ABILENE

If not for the persuasive skills of the founding fathers of Abilene, the Taylor county seat might have stayed in nearby Buffalo Gap. Those initial Abilene boosters convinced Texas and Pacific Railway representatives to bypass the existing county seat for their newly platted town site. Many years later, the transcontinental Bankhead Highway also came through town. Now the region's largest city, Abilene mixes traditional Old West heritage with contemporary cultural offerings.

Frontier Texas! is a good first stop. This multimedia destination celebrates frontier life with a dramatic sight-and-sound experience that the *New York Times* described as "kind of like a little Disney World, only with cowboys and Indians." The site also serves as a visitors center for Abilene and the Texas Forts Trail Region.

Many of Abilene's cultural offerings can be found at the Grace Museum, housed in the lovely, restored Grace Hotel. It is now a cultural focal point, showcasing art, history, and a children's museum.

Down the street is the Paramount Theatre, a magnificent movie palace and monument to a bygone era. Also downtown is the 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum. Displays chronicle the exploits of the "Hellcat" division, which captured 72,000 German soldiers and liberated prisoners from Nazi death camps.

North of town stands Fort Phantom Hill, a federal outpost from 1851 through 1854. The fort's elevated site seems to flatten upon approach, hence the name "phantom hill." During its brief service, the garrison experienced only peaceful encounters with Plains Indians.

Let's circle back to Buffalo Gap. Although the town, and former county seat, faltered after being bypassed by the railroad, the tiny little hamlet now attracts its share of visitors. The Buffalo Gap Historic Village has 20 relocated historic structures, including pioneer log cabins, a blacksmith shop, and a schoolhouse. The 1880 Taylor County Courthouse and jail stands on its original site inside the village complex.



Fort Griffin State Historic Site, Albany



Fort McKavett State Historic Site, near Menard



The Grace Museum, Abilene



1883 Shackelford County Courthouse, Albany



Charles H. Noyes Statue, Ballinger

! ALBANY

Albany citizens are proud of their jail. Built in 1878, it was the first permanent jail to be built in Shackelford County and no doubt remained busy during its early years, especially given the parade of occasionally nefarious characters passing through nearby Fort Griffin. But jail traffic was never busier than today and local citizens have good reason to be proud. Known as the Old Jail Art Center, the restored building is a historic landmark as well as a thriving art museum dedicated to both contemporary visual arts and the local history of Shackelford County. You may want to go directly to jail when you visit Albany!

To get a feel for what some of those characters from the fort may have experienced, spend some time at Fort Griffin State Historic Site. From 1867 through 1881 the fort was the center of frontier defense, between Fort Richardson, in Jacksboro, and the mountains of Big Bend. Several cavalry and infantry regiments, including Buffalo Soldier units, were stationed here. The Texas Historical Commission site features restored structures and ruins, living history exhibits, demonstrations, and reenactments throughout the year. The park is also home to the Official State of Texas Longhorn Herd, recalling the days of the great Western Cattle Trail.

Albany also boasts one of Texas' most picturesque historic downtowns, dominated by the restored 1883 Shackelford County Courthouse. The town celebrates its heritage each June with a foot-stomping outdoor musical called the Fort Griffin Fandangle, which is staged by 250 citizen actors. It was first performed as an Albany High School senior play in 1938 and is now the longest running outdoor musical pageant in Texas.

ANSON

Originally called Jones City, Anson came into being in anticipation of a railroad line. Stores and hotels opened, but alas, the rail line ended up further south. The community, and later Jones County, was named after Anson Jones, the last president of the Republic of Texas. Anson's historic district includes the Anson Jones Museum housed in the 1929 First Presbyterian Church, the restored Beaux Arts-style Jones County Courthouse, and the 1907 Opera House.

A post office may not be a typical tourist stop, but visitors won't want to miss seeing the glorious 12-foot-tall Depression-era mural in Anson's post office lobby. "Cowboy Dance" depicts Westerners at a frontier dance and was painted in 1941 as part of a federal government program employing artists who beautified public buildings across the country. The artist's inspiration may well have been the Cowboys' Christmas Ball, which has been held in Anson every year since 1885 except in 2020 due to the pandemic.

BAIRD

Named for Texas and Pacific (T&P) Railway Director Matthew Baird, the town sprung up around the local railhead that was established with the arrival of the railroad in 1880. As a result, Baird prospered and hundreds of thousands of cattle passed through along the Western Cattle Trail. Stop by the Baird T&P Depot and Transportation Museum to find out more about the town's railroad heritage.

BALLINGER

Like many small county seats, the heart of Ballinger lies in its historic downtown and courthouse square,

LEFT, TOP; RIGHT, TXDOT



TEXAS FORTS

Heart of the Frontier

The forts and presidios of early Texas were the very heart of the community. The first Spanish missions were protected by nearby presidios. After the Texas Revolution and then statehood in 1845, pioneers began streaming into the state, and many frontier forts were built. The forts reflect the stories of the people who traveled westward to Texas' remotest areas. As frayed tents gave way to barracks, existing towns were revitalized, and new communities popped up alongside federal posts. Throughout the state explore these famous forts, discover unique towns, and experience a day in the life of a frontier soldier. The Forts Trail Region is home to 8 forts and one presidio:

- Fort Belknap
- Fort Chadbourne
- Fort Concho National Historic Landmark
- Fort Griffin State Historic Site
- Fort Mason
- Fort McKavett State Historic Site
- Fort Phantom Hill
- Fort Richardson
- Presidio de San Sabá

texastimetravel.com

one of the largest in the state. Restored period homes and the 1889 Runnels County Courthouse add to its charm. In 1909, a new library opened in Ballinger, courtesy of philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. The restored structure remains one of the few Carnegie libraries in Texas that is still used as a public library. Rising from the spacious courthouse lawn is the life-size Charles H. Noyes Monument, created in 1919 by famed Italian sculptor Pompeo Coppini, who was commissioned by a wealthy rancher grieving the loss of his son in a range accident.

BRADY

Brady is proud to call itself “The True Heart of Texas,” because of its proximity to the geographical center of Texas. Established halfway between Fort Mason and Fort Griffin, Brady’s secure location along a frontier military road proved fortuitous. When rail service arrived around 1900, the town quickly became a cattle-shipping point. The same year, the now restored Romanesque-style McCulloch County Courthouse was built, and a decade later, Brady’s town square added a new county jail, which now houses the Heart of Texas Historical Museum’s extensive collection of artifacts. The museum includes information on Brady’s World War II prisoner of war camp and Curtis Field, a World War II flight training facility. At the Heart of Texas Country Music Museum, you can take a journey that traces the history of not only country music in Texas, but of the entire industry as a whole.

BRECKENRIDGE

Although Breckenridge was founded in 1876 when it became the county seat of Stephens County, it was a 1920s oil boom that put it on the map. The population grew from a quiet 1,500 to a raucous 30,000 in a single year. That boom led to the necessity for a larger courthouse, and the current Classical Revival edifice was completed in 1926. A portal of the older courthouse—an 1883 Italianate structure—still stands as a reminder of former glory. The town’s oil boom past is commemorated with a steel oil derrick, looming across the street from the courthouse, and wall murals on half a dozen downtown buildings, inspired by photos that can now be seen in the Swenson Memorial Museum housed in the Beaux Arts-style 1920 First National Bank building.

BRONTE

Originally called Bronco, Bronte was renamed in 1889 by some literary-minded cattle ranchers who were apparently fans of the English novelist Charlotte Bronte. The railroad arrived a decade later, and the 1911 Bronte Depot still stands, restored as a Masonic lodge. Bronte’s main claim to fame lies 12 miles north at Fort Chadbourne.

Built in 1852 at the frontier’s edge, buffalo stampedes and Native American skirmishes were common. Later, the post provided defense for a Butterfield Overland Mail stage stop. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Fort Chadbourne was surrendered; after the war, troops



Fort Chadbourne, Bronte



Fort McKavett State Historic Site, near Menard



Original Entrance to 1883 Stephens County Courthouse, Breckenridge



Frontier Texas!, Abilene



Heart of Texas Country Music Museum, Brady



Carnegie Library, Ballinger



Old Cora Log Cabin Courthouse, Comanche



Fort Chadbourne, Bronte

returned but a lack of water and supplies caused the post to be decommissioned. In 1874, Thomas Odom bought the site, and eight generations of his family used the fort buildings for ranching operations. Today, guests can tour a visitors center and the fort's ruins and restored structures, which includes the state's only restored Butterfield Overland Mail stage station.

BROWNWOOD

Walk two blocks from the Brown County Courthouse, and you'll arrive at what looks like an ancient fortress. Actually, it's the Brown County Museum of History, a county jail from a century ago and now the repository of county history. Here you'll learn how cattle drives built the town in the 1870s. Two railroads once served Brownwood, and you can experience this railroad history firsthand at the restored 1909 Santa Fe Depot (now a visitors center and Fred Harvey House) and next door, at the Lehnis Railroad Museum, where you will be immersed in the sights and sounds of all things trains.

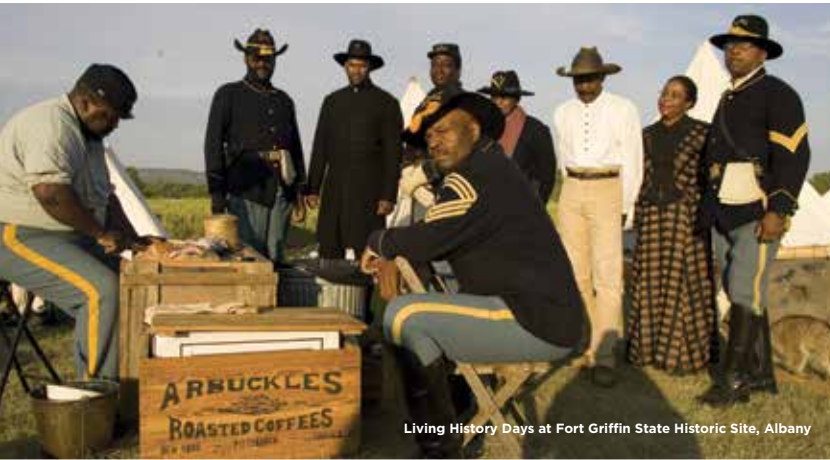
Brownwood boomed again during World War

II as the home of Camp Bowie, the largest military training center in Texas, which also housed German prisoners of war. A state historical marker retells the camp story at the entrance to the 36th Division Memorial Park, where displays honor the military's role in area history.

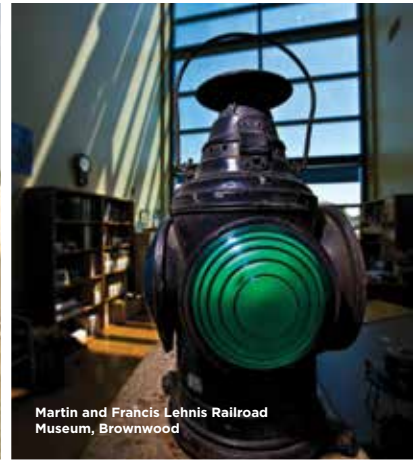
Lake Brownwood State Park opened to the public in 1938 and remains a popular destination for travelers to the region. Besides the natural features that have endeared it to generations of park-goers, Lake Brownwood is notable for being the most extensively developed Civilian Conservation Corps park in Texas.

CISCO

Cisco may seem an unlikely birthplace for one of the most famous hotel brands in the world, but that's exactly where the Hilton hotel chain got its start. Conrad Hilton's hotel empire was built on a foundation originally laid by Henry Mobley, who built a modest hotel in Cisco in 1916. When oil was found a year later, the Mobley stayed so full it rented rooms in eight-hour shifts. In 1919, a young



Living History Days at Fort Griffin State Historic Site, Albany



Martin and Francis Lehnis Railroad Museum, Brownwood



Anson Cowboy Dance Mural, Anson



The Hilton Museum in the Old Mobley Hotel, Cisco



W.P. Kloster Museum, Dublin



Fort Griffin State Historic Site, Albany



Brown County Museum of History, Brownwood

entrepreneur named Conrad Hilton arrived to buy a Cisco bank. When the deal fell through, he bought the Mobley instead. After purchasing his first hotel, Hilton is said to have “dreamed of Texas wearing a chain of Hilton hotels.” Now a museum, the Mobley features exhibits that recount the Hilton legacy. Other exhibits recall local history, including the famous Santa Claus bank robbery of 1927, when a quartet of men, one donning a Santa Claus suit, stole \$12,400, killed two police officers, and prompted the largest manhunt in the state at the time.

COMANCHE

Named after the Comanche Native Americans known for their excellent hunting skills and superb horsemanship, this town was established in 1858 and became the county seat the following year. The Comanche County Historical Museum chronicles that history from frontier times to the mid-1900s. See a replica of the original Comanche saloon where notorious gunslinger John Wesley Hardin killed a deputy in 1874 and then escaped from custody. Comanche celebrates its heritage with many historic buildings, including the oldest existing log courthouse in Texas. Known as Old Cora, the building was built in Cora (the first county seat) and later relocated to the current courthouse square near the Moderne-style Comanche County Courthouse that was built in 1939.

DE LEON

Deriving its name from its close proximity to the Leon River, De Leon is another railroad town established in the early 1880s. Cotton was king until the boll weevil devastated crops, and then peanut production took center stage. You can marvel at the collection at the Terrill Antique Car Museum, which bears the name of a retired peanut farmer with a fascination for four-wheeled wonders, including a rare 1901 Coffin steam carriage, the only one ever made.

DUBLIN

Dublin is the official “Irish Capital of Texas,” but the origin of the town’s name is debatable—it could be for the capital of Ireland, or perhaps for the double-inn stage coach stop used by early settlers. There is no doubt that Dublin is home to the world’s first Dr Pepper bottling plant—and the family-owned Dublin Bottling Works remains one of the state’s oldest soda bottling facilities, though it no longer makes Dr Pepper. The Rodeo Heritage Museum tells the story of the earlier rodeo days, as well as those of more contemporary rodeo stars. Another heritage site is the Ben Hogan Museum, which features the inspiring story of how Dublin’s native son became a golfing legend.

EASTLAND

Courthouses are the center of attention for many small county seats, but Eastland’s courthouse, unveiled in 1928, was upstaged by a small reptile. When the cornerstone from the old building was removed, surprised witnesses reported that a Texas horned lizard lay inside, supposedly still alive after a 31-year slumber. Dubbed Old Rip, the lizard became an instant celebrity. When Old Rip finally passed, he was enshrined in a glass-top casket, still on view at the courthouse. You can also find the lizard’s tale and an oversized statue in a park around the corner from the courthouse.

The 1920s oil boom left its mark on Eastland in the form of several beautiful buildings, restored for use by a new generation of citizens and visitors. The First State Bank building currently houses the Eastland County Museum. A Western-themed Art Deco theater is now home to the Majestic Theatre. And don’t miss Eastland’s most notorious historical tidbit, as told at the Law Enforcement Museum, located in the 1897 county jail where the state’s last public lynching took place, in 1927. An angry mob



Shopping on Historic Concho Street,
Downtown San Angelo



Fort Richardson State Park, Jacksboro



Downtown Eastland



Mills County Courthouse, Goldthwaite



Cowboy Statue Outside of the Old Post Office
Museum and Art Center, Graham



Main Street, Mineral Wells

stormed the jail where one of the men involved in the Santa Claus bank robbery in Cisco was being held and took matters into their own hands.

EDEN

Eden gets its name not from a biblical garden, but from town founder Frederick Ede, a native of England and a pioneer ranchman who donated land for the town's establishment. When England came under German attack during World War II, the town's most famous native son, Air Force Gen. Ira C. Eaker, went to the rescue. The Don Freeman Memorial Museum chronicles Eaker's life alongside exhibits on early Concho County history.

ELDORADO

When rail service finally reached Eldorado in 1930, sheep production was on the rise and in 1939, the first woolen mill in Texas was established there. West Texas Woolen Mills flourished with U.S. Army contracts for wool blankets during World War II. The mill closed in the 1980s, but tours are available by appointment. The Schleicher County Historical Museum, located in the 1922 Eldorado Hardware Store building, tells more stories about the area's history.

GOLDTHWAITE

Post-Civil War vigilante groups still terrorized locals in Mills County in the late 1880s when Goldthwaite became the seat of the newly formed county. The first order of county business: build a sturdy two-story limestone jail—now listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Right next door is the wonderfully restored courthouse, which remains the centerpiece of Goldthwaite's shady downtown square. A short walk away, an 1890s stone structure houses the Mills County Historical Museum. Twenty miles southwest, you can still drive on the wooden planks of the 1939 Regency Suspension Bridge, spanning the Colorado River as one of the state's last suspension bridges still in use.

GRAHAM

The third time was the charm for the Young County seat as three different courthouses were built there in 1876, 1884, and 1932, respectively. A two-story frame courthouse was replaced with a limestone version, and only the arch remains from that second structure. Then in 1932, county leaders settled on a beautiful art moderne stone-and-concrete structure.



BUFFALO SOLDIERS

"We Can, We Will"

African Americans have served proudly in every American war. Nearly 200,000 African American servicemen fought bravely during the Civil War. In 1866, legislation was adopted by Congress to create six African American army units, including the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry. Black soldiers enlisted for five years and received \$13 a month, far more than they could have earned in civilian life. These soldiers' main charge was to protect settlers as they moved west and to support the westward expansion by building the infrastructure needed for new settlements to flourish. They overcame prejudice from within the army and from the frontier communities they were stationed in and compiled an outstanding service record. These troops were known as "Buffalo Soldiers" and the name has a bit of interesting lore behind it, with three possible explanations. One reason could have been that the curly hair of the soldiers reminded others of the buffalo. Or it might have been because their fierce, brave nature was reminiscent of the buffalo. Or finally, it may have been because they wore thick coats made from buffalo hide during the winter. Whatever the reason, it was a term of respect and honor. Several of the forts within the Forts Trail Region were among the first where Buffalo Soldiers served. The Buffalo Soldiers' heritage can be explored at forts and museums throughout the state.

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The building includes many interesting details across its exterior, such as relief sculptures of Young County pioneers and a depiction of the arrival of the Graham brothers, the community's namesake. Today Graham's attractions revolve around art and history, like the Old Post Office Museum and Art Center, which features a Depression-era mural evoking the 1930s oil boom. Thirteen miles northwest of Graham, Fort Belknap, an 1850s garrison, offers visitors insight into Graham's early frontier days.

JACKSBORO

The small agrarian colony along the banks of Lost Creek, first known as Mesquiteville, was selected as Jack County seat in 1858, the first year the Butterfield Overland Mail Stage Line set up a local station. The town was renamed in honor of brothers William and Patrick Jack, veterans of the Texas Revolution and the county's namesake. Located in one of the few counties that voted against secession, Jacksboro suffered the abuse of both secessionists and raids by local Native American tribes, and by the end of the Civil War, the community consisted mostly of ruins and remains. In 1868 the nearby construction of Fort Richardson increased the chances of the community's survival and new settlers moved in. Fort Richardson is now a state park and historic site, where rangers lead tours on weekdays. Pioneer life is also interpreted through artifacts at the Jack County Museum, located in one of the oldest houses in town. Local teacher and county agent Tom M. Marks lived in the house in 1907, when he founded the local Corn Club, a forerunner to 4-H Clubs of America.

MASON

The U.S. Army established Fort Mason here in the 1850s to protect German immigrants settling in the nearby hills and valleys. Robert E. Lee served at Fort Mason before commanding Confederate forces during the Civil War. A replica of the officers' quarters marks the historic grounds, and many structures in the scenic historic district contain limestone from the old fort. At the heart of downtown is the 1909 Mason County Courthouse, which the county plans to rebuild after a devastating fire in early 2021. Across the street, the Mason Square Museum paints the broad strokes of county history—from the area's famous topaz stones to the cattle feud called the Hoo Doo War. Inside an 1887 stone schoolhouse, visitors can discover the Mason County Historical Museum. Mason also boasts the

refurbished 1928 Odeon Theater, which still shows first-run films and stages live performances. The Walt Disney film "Old Yeller" premiered at the Odeon, because native son Fred Gipson wrote the story in Mason.

MENARD

In 1757, Spanish authorities built Presidio San Luis de Las Amarillas (Presidio de San Sabá) to protect nearby Mission Santa Cruz de San Sabá from Native American raids. After nearly a decade, protection proved impossible and the fort was abandoned. Almost a century later, Menard grew up near the fort ruins, which are now partially reconstructed. A primary attraction in town is the stately and restored Art Deco Menard County Courthouse. The community also serves as gateway to Fort McKavett State Historic Site, a frontier post established in 1852 to provide protection for West Texas settlers and California-bound immigrants. At the Texas Historical Commission site, you can take in the spectacular vistas and experience early West Texas life through the real stories of the infantrymen, Buffalo Soldiers, women, and children who lived at what Gen. William T. Sherman once described as "the prettiest post in Texas."

MINERAL WELLS

Mineral Wells founder J.A. Lynch claimed that drinking and bathing in the local mineral waters cured his aches and pains. Lynch capitalized on the nation's health craze—a late-19th century phenomenon that swept the country—and spread the word about his cure. Starting in 1913, the mineral water was bottled and shipped throughout the country. Several bath houses attracted both famous and common folk to town. Mineral Wells continues to make the most of its mineral-rich waters today; the historic Famous Mineral Water Company is still bottling the water and is even offering mineral baths again. Another attraction of the community is the 20-mile Lake Mineral Wells State Trailway, the 1899 rail line stretching between Mineral Wells and Weatherford where hikers and bikers trek along the route that hundreds of thousands of health seekers traveled to local spas a century ago.

PAINT ROCK

For several hundred years, the shelter of a 70-foot cliff near the Concho River proved a worthy resting place and crossroads for nomadic Native Americans. Here,



Presidio de San Sabá, Menard



Native American Pictographs, Paint Rock



Fort Mason, Mason



Fort McKavett State Historic Site, near Menard



National WASP WWII Museum, Sweetwater



Odeon Theatre, Mason



Ditch Walk, Menard

they painted some 1,500 pictographs on a half-mile stretch of the cliff's limestone rock. One of Texas' major rock art sites, the Paint Rock pictographs are accessible via a guided tour by the landowner, whose family has protected the site since the 1870s.

RANGER

Named to honor the Texas Rangers whose 1870s camp guarded settlers, the fledgling town moved two miles west in 1880 to the Texas and Pacific (T&P) Railway line. After a drought hit farmers in 1917, town leaders encouraged oil exploration. They hit pay dirt when a wildcatter well blew, filling 1,700 barrels per day. By 1921, the boom had blown out as quickly as it blew in. Aviation history can be explored at Ranger Airfield, where Amelia Earhart landed her Pitcairn Autogiro in 1931. The annual Old School Fly-In and Airshow No. 15 takes place there each October, and biplane rides can be booked throughout the year.

★ SAN ANGELO

The town site, originally a trading post called Santa Angela, evolved in tandem with nearby Fort Concho, and was established in 1867 along the banks of the Concho River. Twenty-three of the original 40 native limestone fort structures survive, earning National Historic Landmark status and providing a remarkable legacy of the region's rowdy frontier past.

Fort soldiers once crossed the river for entertainment and visitors now stroll the same crossing along a heritage trail, El Paseo de Santa Angela, which

links Fort Concho and the historic depot with the Concho River and downtown. The trail's tiered plaza is adjacent to the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, itself an architectural masterpiece.

The Concho River was named for the mussels that produce unique pink pearls found for centuries in the waterway; they are still sold in local jewelry stores. An eclectic mix of shops and eateries occupy restored historic buildings downtown, which include Miss Hattie's Bordello Museum, an early 1900s elaborately furnished brothel still housed in its original quarters.

STAMFORD

Stamford may have been named for a city in Connecticut, but has been known for its cowboy culture since the late 1800s, when the first Swedish immigrant to Texas began ranching here and helped the Texas Central Railroad found the town. To boost morale during the Great Depression and to celebrate cowboy culture, town leaders started the Texas Cowboy Reunion in 1930. The annual gathering still showcases the world's largest amateur rodeo. Cowboy traditions also take center stage at Stamford's Cowboy Country Museum, which displays historic photos and ranch-family heirlooms.

★ 🏠 STEPHENVILLE

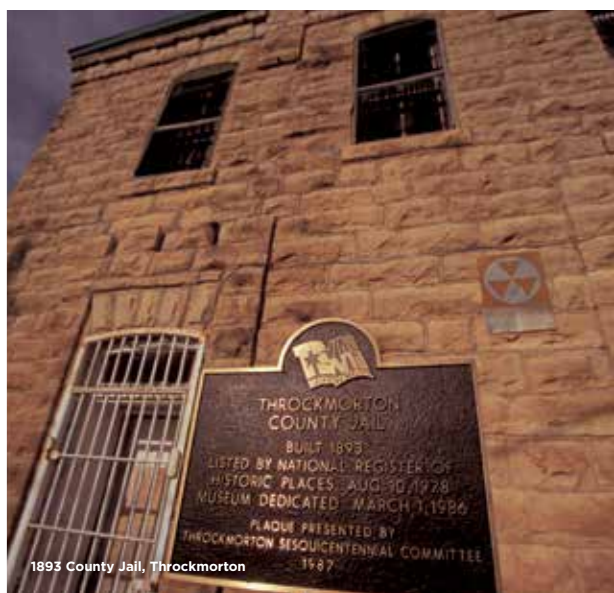
Town namesake John M. Stephen donated land for the town site, which was laid out by county namesake George B. Erath. Today, downtown Stephenville offers 1890s-era stone buildings surrounding the



International Waterlily Collection in Civic League Park, San Angelo



Stephenville Historical House Museum, Stephenville



1893 County Jail, Throckmorton



Throckmorton County Courthouse, Throckmorton



Official State Longhorn Herd at Fort Griffin State Historic Site, Albany



W.K. Gordon Center for Industrial History of Texas, Thurber

restored 1892 Romanesque Revival-style Erath County Courthouse. In 1869, former Civil War Col. J.D. Berry built a two-story stone cottage, which is now the town's oldest house and a signature component of a historical village at the Stephenville Historical House Museum.

SWEETWATER

Wide-open spaces and potable water brought Native Americans, buffalo hunters, and ranchers to these rolling prairies and plateaus. When the first railroad arrived in 1881, the fledgling town turned into a cattle-shipping center and then later, cotton. The downtown commercial historic district testifies to those early-20th-century boom years, boasting more than 50 National Register-listed structures. Find more fascinating history at the Pioneer City County Museum, housed in a 1906 Texas historical landmark home.

Wide-open spaces also led the U.S. Army Air Forces to turn the local airport into Avenger Field, which during World War II served as the only all-female air base in history. More than a thousand members in the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) trained on every kind of U.S. warbird and eventually flew 60 million miles of stateside non-combat duty, freeing male pilots for overseas combat missions. The airfield's 1929 Hangar One now houses the National WASP World War II Museum to honor those pioneering women aviators.


THROCKMORTON

When you travel U.S. 183 through Throckmorton, think cattle drive. The highway traces the great Western Trail of the 1870s and 1880s, where tough cowboys drove millions of cattle from South Texas across Indian country to railheads in Kansas. That's about the time Throckmorton County was organized. To make a statement about its bright future, the county built a grand Italianate-style courthouse in 1890, now restored, even though the town had only 124 residents at the time.

THURBER

In the early 20th century, a prosperous coal and brick operation made Thurber a thriving city between Fort Worth and El Paso. Owned by the Texas and Pacific Coal Company, the booming company town became America's first totally unionized community.

In 1917, the company's entrepreneurial executive, W.K. Gordon, struck oil in nearby Ranger, setting the stage for the West Texas oil boom. Ironically, steam locomotives began burning oil instead of locally mined bituminous coal. The company continued operation of the brick plant, but by the late 1930s, Thurber was a ghost town.

The W.K. Gordon Center for Industrial History of Texas, a component of Tarleton State University, uses lively interactive exhibits to trace Thurber's boom-to-bust story. The museum and research center also highlights the broader industrial past of Texas and the Southwest. 

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, THC (X3)



Workbench at Heritage Village, New Braunfels



Hill Country

TRAIL REGION

A Rich Blend of Culture, Nature, and History

Rolling hills and sparkling rivers, creeks, and springs have been drawing people to the area we now call the Hill Country for thousands of years. Paleo-Indian hunter-gatherers roamed the region during prehistoric times.

Water and wildlife later attracted nomadic tribes who hunted there. Spanish soldiers and missionaries established a presidio and five missions in San Antonio during the 18th century.

After Texas gained its independence from Mexico in 1836 and established statehood in 1845, pioneers streamed west and Germans and other immigrants settled farms and founded villages. Native American resistance clashed with pioneer persistence, and violence occasionally erupted.

After the Civil War, cattlemen spurred economic recovery by herding millions of head of cattle through the region along the Western and Chisholm trails. By 1900, Native American raids ended, railroads arrived, and the frontier was a fading memory. The burgeoning capital of Austin became more sophisticated, attracting such legendary figures as the European sculptor Elisabet Ney and budding journalist William Sydney Porter, who later gained worldwide fame under the pen name O. Henry.

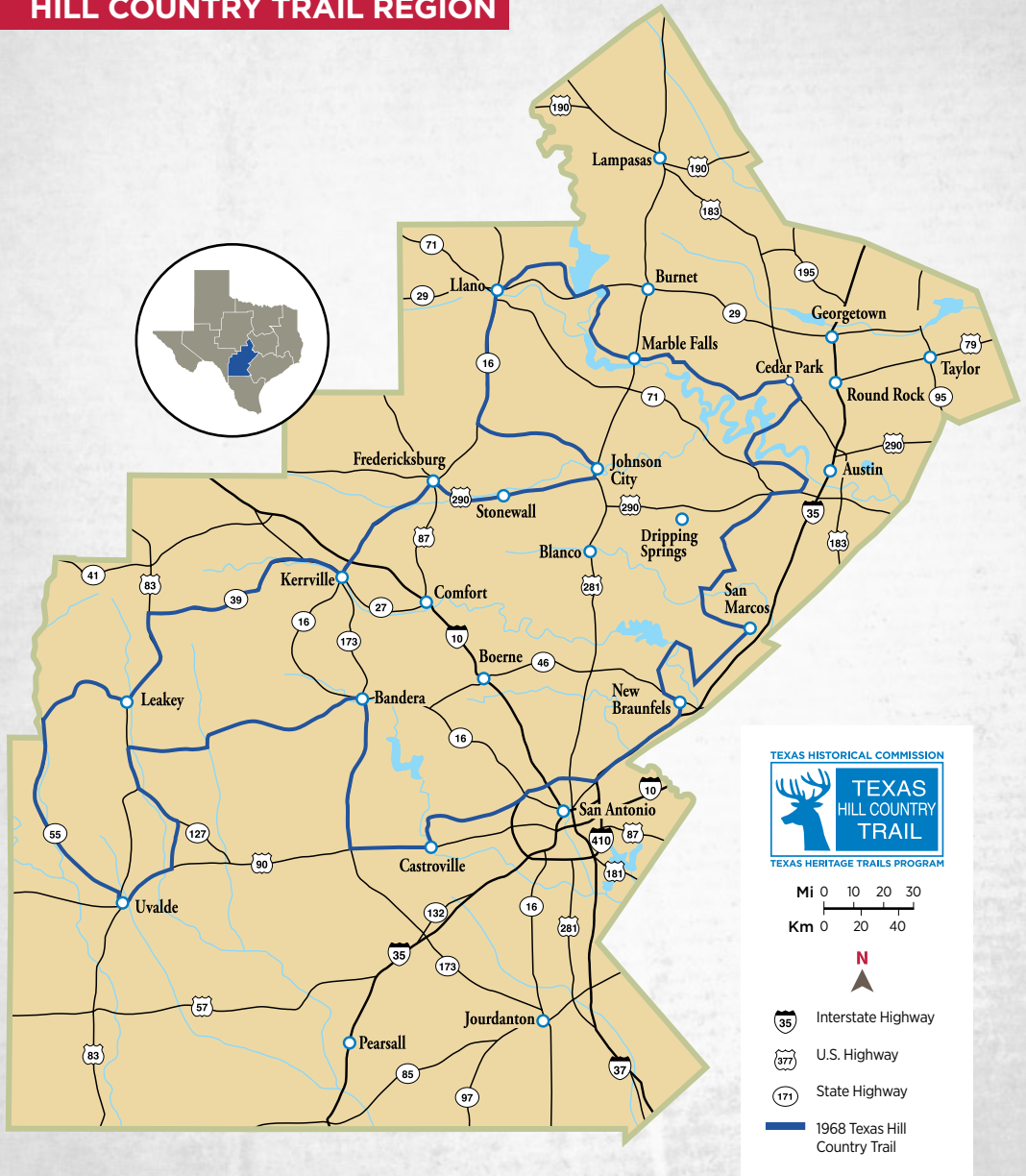
The Hill Country also shaped two of America's most colorful and powerful politicians. Uvalde Congressman John Nance "Cactus Jack" Garner became President Franklin Roosevelt's vice president during the Great

Depression in the 1930s. He guided New Deal programs through Congress, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, which built the region's first and now iconic state parks. Another New Deal supporter was then-Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson, who went on to become president during the turbulent 1960s.

Throughout World War II, Austin and San Antonio played important roles as the locations of large military installations and home-front industries. Flight-training airfields were also established in San Marcos, Hondo, and Uvalde. The post-war decades were good to the area, with rapid growth in Austin and San Antonio and broadening ethnic diversity. Today, the region is one of the most popular travel destinations in Texas.

Head for the hills and discover stunning vistas and amazing caverns. Hike dramatic canyons and float lazy rivers. Explore roller-coaster back roads and picturesque towns. Experience the history of the 19 counties in the Texas Hill Country Trail Region by following in the footsteps of Native Americans and Spanish missionaries, German immigrants and Anglo pioneers, cattle drovers and powerful politicians—and stand on the stage of the real places where all of their stories unfolded.

HILL COUNTRY TRAIL REGION



FEATURED COMMUNITIES

The following cities are highlighted in this chapter:

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Austin | Georgetown | Pearsall |
| Bandera | Johnson City | Round Rock |
| Blanco | Jourdanton | San Antonio |
| Boerne | Kerrville | San Marcos |
| Burnet | Lampasas | Stonewall |
| Castroville | Leakey | Taylor |
| Comfort | Llano | Uvalde |
| Dripping Springs | Marble Falls | |
| Fredericksburg | New Braunfels | |



Parade in Downtown Georgetown



Texas Memorial Museum, The University of Texas at Austin



Hancock Springs Park, Lampasas



Gruene Hall, New Braunfels



Covered Wagon, Bandera



MAIN STREET CITIES

- Georgetown
- Kerrville
- Llano
- New Braunfels
- San Marcos
- Taylor
- Uvalde



THC STATE HISTORIC SITES

- Casa Navarro, San Antonio
- French Legation, Ausitn
- Landmark Inn, Castroville
- National Museum of the Pacific War, Fredericksburg



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- Atascosa County
- Bexar County
- Comal County
- Kendall County
- Lampasas County
- Llano County
- Williamson County

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LUCAS ADAMS; THC; TXDOT; AUBREY STOPA; TXDOT



Texas State Capitol, Austin



Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, Austin



Wild Bill Hickock Statue, Boerne



St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, Bandera



Cave Without a Name, Boerne

AUSTIN

There is no shortage of history or legend in the city of Austin, first known as Waterloo. The townsite was chosen as the capital of the new Republic of Texas in 1839, and renamed in honor of the “Father of Texas.” In 1845 Texas became the 28th state in the Union, and the first capitol building was constructed in 1853. In 1883 the University of Texas was founded. After the original capitol was destroyed by fire, the current structure was completed in 1888. All of that history is chronicled and preserved in dozens of museums and heritage sites throughout the city.

The Bullock Texas State History Museum is a great place to start a heritage-minded journey through Austin. Since 2001, this state-of-the-art museum has been engaging audiences to learn about the continually unfolding “Story of Texas.” The museum is within walking distance of other historic structures in the capitol complex, including the Capitol Visitors Center, which is housed in the historic General Land Office Building, the oldest state building in Austin. Just down the street is the Governor’s Mansion, which has served as the official residence of the state’s top elected official since 1856.

The downtown area along Congress Avenue and Old Pecan Street (now named Sixth Street) is a National Register district. Free guided tours are offered Thursday through Monday at the Austin Visitor Center.

The University of Texas has several top-quality museums. The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum chronicles LBJ’s life and his service as president. The Texas Memorial Museum was the first state museum and is focused on natural history, including spectacular dinosaur fossils. The Harry Ransom Center advances the study of culture and the humanities. The Blanton Museum is one of the largest university art museums in the country. Just west of campus is the 1855 Neill-Cochran House Museum, a Greek Revival mansion that once served as a school for the blind and a Civil War hospital.

Heritage sites abound all over Austin. In East Austin you’ll find the Texas State Cemetery, the final resting place of Texas’ most notable sons and daughters. The George Washington Carver Museum is dedicated to African American history and culture. The Texas Historical Commission’s French Legation State Historic Site preserves the legacy of France’s recognition of the Republic of Texas as a sovereign nation. In northeast Austin you’ll find the Jourdan-Bachman Pioneer Farms, a living history

museum that demonstrates the demands of 19th century farm life.

The Elisabet Ney Museum is nestled in the lovely historic Hyde Park neighborhood in central Austin. The famous German sculptor built a studio there in 1892 and created statues of famous Texans, works that are now displayed in the Texas Capitol. Also in central Austin is the Texas Military Forces Museum at Camp Mabry, which recounts the exploits of the Texas National Guard in wars from the Texas Revolution through today.

McKinney Falls State Park is in southeast Austin and traces of the El Camino Real de los Tejas can be seen there. In the 1850s, Thomas F. McKinney established a racehorse ranch on Onion Creek. The ruins of his home and a trainer’s cabin can be found along the park’s hiking trails.

BANDERA

Bandera’s designation as “Cowboy Capital of the World” originated when it became a staging area for the last great cattle drives of the late 1800s, branding the small town with an authentic cowboy heritage that it continues to celebrate today. The first dude ranches here began welcoming guests in the 1920s. The community’s historic downtown buildings serve as a backdrop for cowboy-themed events throughout the year. The influence of Polish immigrants, who arrived here in 1855, can also be seen throughout the town, especially at the St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, the second-oldest Polish Catholic Church in the United States.

BLANCO

This picturesque spot along the banks of the Blanco River has a pastoral rural character that visitors appreciate. The Blanco Historic District encompasses eight blocks in the town center with the old limestone 1885 courthouse as its centerpiece, which now serves as a visitors center and community hall. Situated around both banks of the river, Blanco State Park provides outdoor recreational opportunities thanks to the labor of the Civilian Conservation Corps, who built the park in the 1930s.

BOERNE

Visitors to Boerne enjoy the history of the town as they stroll along “Hauptstrasse,” the German term for “Main Street,” which is now lined with antique stores, art galleries, and specialty shops. When the town was settled in 1852, its setting along Cibolo Creek was so



GERMAN HERITAGE

Sunday Houses and Schnitzel

European settlers were part of the stream of immigrants into Texas. The largest European ethnic group in Texas was German. By 1850, they constituted more than 5 percent of the total Texas population, a proportion that remained constant through the remainder of the 19th century. A majority of German immigrants settled in a broad, fragmented belt across the south central part of the state. This “German Belt” stretched from Galveston and Houston in the east to Kerrville, Mason, and Hondo in the west. They left a legacy of traditional music and dance, food and drink, and architecture and religion. A few old-timers still speak the German of their ancestors, and many Hill Country towns embrace their Germanic roots, including Fredericksburg, New Braunfels, Boerne, and Comfort. Historic eateries serve traditional breads and pastries, plus culinary staples like German sausage, sauerkraut, and dark beer. Food and music take center stage at heritage festivals such as Oktoberfest in Fredericksburg and Wurstfest in New Braunfels. Immigrants adapted European architectural styles to fit Texas weather and available materials. The region abounds in fine examples. Many of Fredericksburg’s famed “Sunday Houses”—cottages used by farmers on weekend trips to town—now serve as historic bed-and-breakfasts.

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pleasant and bucolic that Boerne gained a reputation as a health resort. To accommodate visitors, The Kendall (formerly Ye Kendall Inn) opened in 1859 and is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It still welcomes guests today. Visit the AgriCultural Museum and Arts Center to learn more about Boerne’s agrarian past. For an underground adventure, stop at Cascade Caverns and the Cave Without a Name.

BURNET

“The Bluebonnet Capital of Texas” claims a colorful past and abundant natural beauty. Visit the 1937 Burnet County Courthouse on the town square for a lesson in local legends. The adjacent History Plaza includes a pathway through a winding labyrinth of Burnet County historical events. Burnet grew up around Fort Croghan, a 1949 frontier outpost that is now a museum. Travel 11 miles southwest of Burnet to explore Longhorn Cavern State Park, developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps. For another twist to your trip, take the Hill Country Flyer, a restored steam train running from Cedar Park to Burnet, which gives you time to shop, eat, and explore before watching the Burnet Gunfighters put on a Wild West show.

↓ CASTROVILLE

Castroville is the only remaining Alsatian community in Texas and one of the largest in the U.S. The town is affectionately known as “The Little Alsace of Texas,” and has seamlessly melded its Alsatian heritage into the heart and soul of the community. With more than 200 historic structures in town, Castroville claims one of the largest historic districts in the state. The town’s visitors center is located in the Steinbach House, which was built in the 1600s in France and donated to the people of Castroville in 1998. The first public school here was started by the Sisters of Divine Providence by 1870. The building that houses that school is now the Moye Retreat Center, a place for renewal and retreats. The first Catholic Church built in Castroville is also on the Moye Retreat Center grounds. Another must-see is the Landmark Inn State Historic Site, a Texas Historical Commission property. The inn offers bed-and-breakfast lodging and features pleasant waterfront grounds and an old mill.



Bluebonnet Field, Dripping Springs



Landmark Inn State Historic Site, Castroville



Texas Hill Country Flyer, Cedar Park



Fachwerk Steinbach House, Castroville



Longhorn Cavern State Park, Marble Falls

COMFORT

This beautiful little town is like a time capsule of Central Texas German immigrant history. In 1852, a group of German “freethinkers” settled along the banks of Cypress Creek. Today most of downtown is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and some properties have remained in the same families for generations. Stroll among the historic buildings of Comfort, which now houses restaurants, shops, and lodging facilities.

DRIPPING SPRINGS

In 1854, three Mississippi families put down roots along the Austin-Fredericksburg Road in present-

day Dripping Springs. Dr. Joseph M. Pound and his wife Sarah built a one-room log cabin (later expanded) where they raised seven children to adulthood. Dr. Pound, the first doctor to practice in Hays County, served in the Mexican and Civil wars, and four generations of his family lived in the home and operated a farm for more than 130 years. Now preserved as the Dr. Joseph M. and Sarah Pound Historical Farmstead Museum, the site looks much today as it did more than a century ago.

! FREDERICKSBURG

Fredericksburg has long celebrated its heritage. Thanks to the excellent preservation and restoration

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: AUBREY STOPA;
TRAVEL, TEXAS; BLAKE WISTICH



1913 Atascosa County Courthouse, Jourdanton



Gruene Hall and Water Tower, New Braunfels



Downtown Fredericksburg



Granite Dome Up-Lift at Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, near Fredericksburg



Schreiner Mansion, Kerrville

work of Fredericksburg citizens past and present, there are more than 700 historically significant structures in the town's historic district, creating a charming ambiance for tourists drawn to shopping, museums, historic walking tours, and art galleries. There are more than 1,500 bed-and-breakfasts, guest houses, and vacation rentals. To experience the lives of early German immigrants, visit the Pioneer Museum Complex in downtown Fredericksburg and the Sauer Beckmann Living History Farm in nearby Stonewall. One of the premier heritage sites in town is the National Museum of the Pacific War State Historic Site, a world-class facility. The Texas Historical Commission site pays tribute to those who served in the Pacific Theater during World War II. North of Fredericksburg, a 425-foot pink granite dome rises in the Llano Uplift. Native Americans revered and feared this rock. Today, Enchanted Rock State Natural Area is a National Natural Landmark.

GEORGETOWN

See entry in the Brazos Trail Region, page 17

JOHNSON CITY

A heated election led by town namesake James Polk Johnson moved the county seat to Johnson City from Blanco in 1890. Decades later, hard-fought elections would lead one of his relatives, Lyndon Baines Johnson, all the way to the White House. LBJ was five years old in 1913 when he moved with his parents to Johnson City, and his boyhood home is now a centerpiece of the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park. You can learn more about LBJ at the national park as well as the state park and historic ranch, about 14 miles to the west in Stonewall. The Blanco County Courthouse is Johnson City's

downtown centerpiece, and holiday lights each year draw thousands to the town.

JOURDANTON

Jourdanton lies along the historic El Camino Real that carried traffic from Mexico through Texas. The county's name is the Spanish word "Atascosa," which refers to boggy ground that hindered travel. In springtime that formerly boggy ground is covered with bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, and other wildflowers, providing a profusion of color along area highways, roads, and fields. The town square is actually a circle, anchored by the 1913 county courthouse, the only surviving Mission Revival-style courthouse in Texas.

KERRVILLE

Selected as the Guadalupe River crossing and holding site along the great Western Cattle Trail, Kerrville's boom years of the late 1880s and the 1890s were punctuated by cattle drives. As the town prospered, so did the fortunes of cattleman and former Texas Ranger, Charles A. Schreiner. His restored, Victorian-era Schreiner Mansion is now a historic site and event center. The Museum of Western Art showcases the work of legendary artists, past and present. The Kerr Arts and Cultural Center represents more than 600 artists and features workshops, demonstrations, and a gift shop. The Sculpture Prayer Garden is another cultural attraction. The annual Kerrville Folk Festival, first held in 1972, has become a must-attend event for music fans nationwide.

LAMPASAS

The mineral springs along the Sulphur Creek branch of the Lampasas River have attracted health-seekers



Hancock Springs Park, Lampasas



1892 Llano County Courthouse, Llano



National Museum of the Pacific War, Fredericksburg



Sauer-Beckman Living History Farm at Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site, Stonewall



Real County Historical Museum, Leakey

from Native Americans to Spanish explorers to 19th- and 20th-century visitors eager to “take the waters.” After the railroad arrived in 1882, the town grew as a resort—and as the Lampasas County seat—with spas, hotels, and saloons. By 1911, the town’s Hancock Springs Park included a swimming pool and a bathhouse. Today, the sulphur springs still flow, delighting visitors to the city pool. Learn more about Lampasas at the Lampasas County Museum, and visit the 1884 Lampasas County Courthouse, the restored centerpiece of the downtown historic district.

LEAKEY

The beautiful Rio Frio (or “cold river”) has been attracting leisure travelers for decades. Garner State Park, just south of Leakey, is one of the most popular in Texas, and structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps have been enjoyed by several generations of families. Leakey became the seat of Real County in 1913, and the 1918 county courthouse is a rustic example of Hill Country charm. Just off the square, the Real County Historical Museum preserves pioneer ways.

★ LLANO

This lovely town graces the banks of the clear-running Llano River with a pleasant blend of historic architecture and green, leafy landscapes. The entire downtown has been designated a national historic district, and the 1893 Romanesque Revival-style courthouse has been restored. Nearby is the old “Red Top” jail, made of locally quarried granite and complete with gallows on the upper floors. The Railyard District includes a train depot that is home to a railroad museum and visitors center. The district features dining, bed-and-breakfast accommodations, and a recently refurbished railroad hotel. You can learn more about the town at the Llano County Historical Museum, housed in a circa-1900 drugstore, where the original marble-top soda fountain and leather stools still welcome visitors at the front door.

MARBLE FALLS

Early 19th century travelers marveled at the Colorado River cascading 20 feet over ledges that look like marble but are actually made of granite and limestone. Locals donated rock quarried from nearby Granite Mountain for Austin’s new state capitol when the old one burned. For this contribution, a narrow-gauge railroad was built to haul the nearly 16,000 carloads of granite needed for the monumental project. These

stories and others unfold at the Falls on the Colorado Museum, housed on the first floor of the 1891 Granite School building. For more information about what’s happening in and around Marble Falls, visit the historic train depot. Downtown, visitors can enjoy shops and restaurants in quaint historic buildings. Nearby Inks Lake State Park offers a variety of outdoor recreation.

★ NEW BRAUNFELS

New Braunfels’ location at the confluence of the Guadalupe and Comal rivers has attracted people for hundreds of years. The community was a watering stop for cattle headed to market on the Chisholm Trail in the late 1880s, and Comal Springs refreshed Spanish travelers on El Camino Real de los Tejas between 1600s through the early 1800s.

New Braunfels’ first settlers included German immigrants whose cultural influences are still felt today. Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels founded the town in 1845. On a hill overlooking the village, he laid the cornerstone to a fort and colony headquarters called Sophienburg (Sophie’s Castle), named after his fiancée. On that site, the Sophienburg Museum chronicles the challenges and successes of New Braunfels’ pioneers. You can also visit Heritage Village, next to Conservation Plaza, and take a step back in time to the days of yore.

The city’s delightful downtown historic district has earned recognition as a National Trust Distinctive Destination. The beautiful Comal County Courthouse stands across from the Main Plaza.

Gruene was close to becoming a ghost town a few decades ago, but the emergence of the preservation movement in the 1970s provided the perfect platform for its resurrection. Today, this historic district within the city limits of New Braunfels is long on history, music, and charm. A historic water tower stands as a beacon, overlooking the old gristmill, which is now a popular restaurant, and Gruene Hall, the oldest continually operating dance hall in Texas.

PEARSALL

The modern history of Pearsall began with the railroad in 1882, when the International–Great Northern Railroad laid lines to a well formerly used by wagon trains. The new railroad town drew businesses and homes away from Frio City, the seat of Frio County. Within two years, Pearsall was the new county seat, and Frio City became known as Frio Town (now a ghost town). The oldest building in Pearsall is the

county jail, which was built in 1884 and was in use until the 1960s. This historic two-story rock building now houses the Frio Pioneer Jail Museum today. Downstairs, the five-room sheriff's residence contains artifacts and historic photos. Upstairs are four jail cells for men and two for women, one of which was used to store illegal liquor during Prohibition. The museum hosts an annual Pioneer Day, held at the old jail and the relocated Frio Town school.

ROUND ROCK

See entry in the Brazos Trail Region, page 20

SAN ANTONIO

See entry in the Independence Trail Region, page 92

★ SAN MARCOS

The distinction of being the only university in Texas with a U.S. president as a graduate, along with a spring-fed river and numerous historic districts, are just three good reasons to drop by this pretty little town.

San Marcos has been a favorite destination for more than 12,000 years. An underwater archeological dig in Spring Lake, at the headwaters of the San Marcos River, uncovered artifacts dating back to the time of the Clovis people, who were some of the oldest-known inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere. Find out more at Texas State University's Meadows Center for Water

and the Environment (formerly Aquarena Center), where archeological investigations tell the story of the region's earliest inhabitants, and glass-bottom boat tours showcase plant and animal life unique to the area.

The university that Lyndon Baines Johnson graduated from in 1930 overlooks downtown San Marcos, an area listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The 1909 Hays County Courthouse is at the heart of the town square, surrounded by period buildings filled with shops, restaurants, cafes, and entertainment venues. The LBJ Museum, located in a former downtown movie theater, displays news clippings, photographs, memorabilia, and oral histories relating to the years the president spent at college and as a teacher.

The Heritage Association of San Marcos holds Friday Cottage Kitchen luncheons in the 1867 Charles S. Cock House Museum in Juan Veramendi Plaza park. The popular park also features the restored 1847 cabin of one of San Marcos' founders, Dr. Eli T. Merriman, and a tree-lined pathway to the city's river walk. Don't leave town without driving through the leafy Belvin Street Historic District, an enclave of Victorian homes that open for tours in May.

Another interesting stop is Wonder World, the first "show cave" in Texas. You won't want to miss the Central Texas Wing of the Commemorative Air Force Museum, at San Marcos Municipal Airport, which houses a collection of World War II-era warplanes.



The Falls on the Colorado
Museum, Marble Falls



Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, Johnson City



San Marcos River, San Marcos



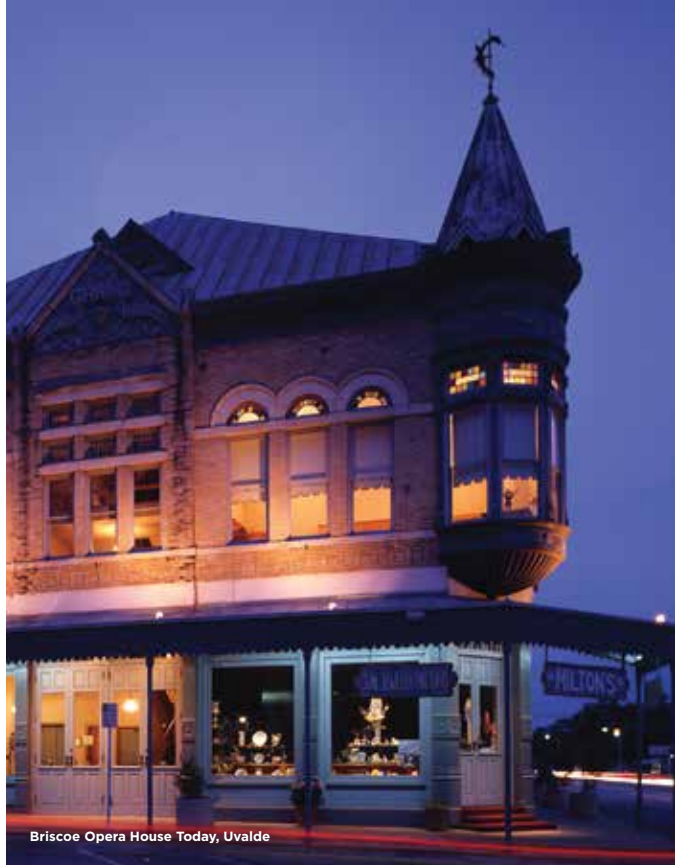
Frio Pioneer Jail Museum, Pearsall



1898 Comal County Courthouse, New Braunfels



Briscoe Opera House in 1891, Uvalde



Briscoe Opera House Today, Uvalde



Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm at Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site, Stonewall



Central Texas Wing of the Commemorative Air Force, San Marcos

STONEWALL

Fourteen miles west of Johnson City, at the Stonewall unit, the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park continues the story of the 36th president. A drive along the Pedernales River takes visitors past LBJ's reconstructed birthplace; his grandparents' farmhouse; the Junction School, where he learned to read; and the family cemetery, where he and his wife Lady Bird are buried. The focal point of the Stonewall site is the LBJ Ranch. An 1890s-era stone cottage forms the nucleus of the ranch's main house, which LBJ expanded into a showplace. The president brought so many dignitaries back to the ranch that it became known as the Texas White House. Across the Pedernales River lies the Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site. The visitors center features multimedia shows and exhibits on the natural and cultural history of the area. Experience an authentic farm of the early 1900s at the park's Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm, where period-dressed interpreters carry out typical daily chores of an early German-Texan farm family. The original smokehouse, windmill, and water tank complete the living history site. For a taste of a more modern-day harvest, check out the award-winning wineries that have sprung up along Highway 290 in the scenic region that's been called the "Tuscany of Texas."

TAYLOR

See entry in the Brazos Trail Region, page 20

★ UVALDE

Two famous families have left their mark on the town of Uvalde, and their legacy includes the historic buildings and museums that bear their names. U.S. vice president John Nance "Cactus Jack" Garner had an illustrious political career that culminated with his attaining the second-highest office in the land, under president Franklin Roosevelt. Dolph Briscoe's political career led him to the Governor's Mansion. Garner's Uvalde home, a National Historic Landmark, now serves as the Briscoe-Garner Museum, where visitors can learn more about the life and times of these two famous native sons. Also named in honor of the vice president, Garner Field opened in 1941 as a World War II primary pilot training school. The field's Hangar #1 now houses an aviation museum, which displays aircraft and memorabilia from the war. Governor Briscoe's wife, Janey, is honored at the restored and refurbished 1891 Grand Opera House, which had been owned by the Garner family and was later donated to the city. One block away from the opera house is the Rexall Soda Fountain, still dishing up malts the old-fashioned way.

Fort Inge Historical Park is on the east bank of the Leona River, a mile south of Uvalde. The site is dominated by Mount Inge, a 140-foot volcanic plug, and archeological evidence indicates that the place has been intermittently occupied since the Pre-Archaic period, about 6000 B.C. 🇹🇽



The Alamo, San Antonio



Independence

TRAIL REGION

Heroes Fighting for Texas Freedom

In the saga of Texas history, no era is more distinctive or accented by a higher number of epic events than the struggle for independence. “Remember the Alamo” is a clarion cry that has reverberated around the world for more than 185 years.

The events that led to the Texas Revolution began in the early 1800s, when Spain attempted to protect its New World territories from European rivals. As a last-ditch defense of what is now Texas, the Spanish Crown allowed immigrants from the U.S. to settle between the Trinity and Guadalupe rivers. The first settlers were known as the “Old Three Hundred,” families who established Stephen F. Austin’s initial colony. Lured by cheap land, homesteaders came to Texas, first in a trickle, then in a flood. In 1821, sovereignty shifted when Mexico won independence from Spain.

Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna seized control of Mexico in 1833 and ruled with an iron fist. By 1835, the dictator tried to stop immigration to Texas, limit settlers’ weapons, impose high tariffs, and abolish slavery—changes resisted by most Texans.

On March 2, 1836, after more than a year of failed negotiations and a few armed conflicts, citizen delegates met at what is now Washington-on-the-Brazos and declared that Texas was independent from Mexico. They wrote a declaration of independence, adopted a constitution and voted to raise an army under Gen. Sam Houston.

By March 6, the Alamo fell to Santa Anna. Two weeks later, 342 Texans surrendered at Goliad and were executed. Women and other noncombatants fled from danger in an uneasy episode known as the Runaway Scrape. Near Gonzales, Houston challenged settlers to join the fight. As he moved eastward, he gathered more troops and burned whatever the advancing Mexican forces might utilize, including whole villages. On a marshy plain at the mouth of the San Jacinto River, near the present-day city of Houston, the Texan army encountered Santa Anna’s encampment. The epic Battle of San Jacinto gave Texans a victory for independence in just 18 minutes.

Today, the Texas Independence Trail Region comprises a 28-county area stretching more than 200 miles, from San Antonio to Galveston. Artifacts and interpretation at heritage sites across the region help visitors understand the interwoven lives and events that form this rich historical tapestry. At unforgettable battlefields, stately Spanish missions, and in large cities and small towns, you can feel the presence of the heroes who made history here.

INDEPENDENCE TRAIL REGION



FEATURED COMMUNITIES

The following cities are highlighted in this chapter:

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| Anahuac | Brenham | La Grange | Sealy |
| Bastrop | Burton | Liberty | Seguin |
| Bay City | Chappell Hill | Lockhart | Shiner |
| Baytown | Columbus | Luling | Smithville |
| Beeville | Cuero | Palacios | Victoria |
| Bellville | Fannin | Panna Maria | Washington |
| Brazosport Area: | Floresville | Port Lavaca | West Columbia |
| Angleton | Galveston | Richmond- | Wharton |
| Brazoria | Goliad | Rosenberg | Yoakum |
| Clute | Gonzales | Round Top | |
| Freeport | Hallettsville | San Antonio | |
| Lake Jackson | Houston | San Felipe | |
| | Independence | Schulenburg | |



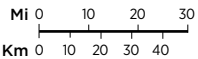
MAIN STREET CITIES

- | | | |
|----------|-------------------|-----------|
| Bastrop | Goliad | La Grange |
| Bay City | Gonzales | Luling |
| Beeville | Houston's | Sealy |
| Brenham | Emancipation Ave. | Seguin |
| Cuero | | Victoria |
| Elgin | | |



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Bee County | Goliad County |
| Bexar County | Harris County |
| Colorado County | Karnes County |
| DeWitt County | Lavaca County |
| Fayette County | Wharton County |



- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- Farm or Ranch Road
- 1968 Texas Independence Trail



Reenactment at Presidio La Bahia, Goliad



International Accordion Festival, San Antonio



Antique Carousel in Fireman's Park, Brenham



Matagorda County Museum, Bay City

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, TXDOT; THC; TXDOT; THC; TXDOT

! THC STATE HISTORIC SITES

- Barrington Plantation, Washington
- Casa Navarro, San Antonio
- Fannin Battleground, Fannin
- Kreische Brewery, La Grange
- Levi Jordan Plantation, Brazoria
- Monument Hill, La Grange
- San Felipe de Austin, San Felipe
- San Jacinto Battleground, La Porte
- Star of the Republic Museum, Washington
- Varner-Hogg Plantation, West Columbia
- Washington-on-the-Brazos, Washington



Archeologist at Levi Jordan Plantation State Historic Site, Brazoria



INDEPENDENCE Trail Region Timeline

1600s

1685: Explorer Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle establishes French colony near Lavaca Bay.

1690: Spain builds outposts in East Texas to block French trespass.

1700s

1718–1731: Spain concentrates its power in Texas at San Antonio.

1749–1754: Presidio and missions built at Goliad to guard Texas coastal plains.

1800 –
1829

1803: U.S. purchases Louisiana from France.

1819: Adams-Onís Treaty clarifies boundaries for Spanish lands in North America.

1812–1819: American filibustering expeditions support separation from Mexico.

1821: Mexico wins independence from Spain.

1821: Stephen F. Austin begins colonization of region around lower Brazos and Colorado rivers.

1824: Mexico adopts federalist constitution; Texas and neighbor Coahuila join as a single state; Anglo immigration increases.



Home of Gen. Thomas Jefferson Chambers, Anahuac



The "Come and Take It" Festival, Gonzales

ANAHUAC

In 1721, French explorer Jean Baptiste de la Harpe visited a village of Atakapan Indians who lived nearby. A little more than a century later, a Mexican fort was established here, and the town was officially named Anahuac in 1831 after the ancient capital of the Aztecs. Fort Anahuac was the site of the first armed conflict of the Texas Revolution, and William B. Travis was briefly jailed here. Now, a historical marker located within Fort Anahuac Park marks the site. Two other notable historic sites are the 1830s original residence of Thomas Jefferson Chambers, for whom the county was named, and an 1890 medical office that displays period medical equipment. The Chambers County Courthouse was built in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Anahuac is also known as the "Alligator Capital of Texas," and celebrates with Texas GatorFest each September. Learn more about local heritage at the Chambers County Historical Museum in nearby Wallisville.

★ BASTROP

See entry in the Brazos Trail Region, page 12

★ BAY CITY

Bay City became the seat of Matagorda County in 1894 before a single building was constructed there. Hurricanes in nearby Matagorda helped convince local voters that Bay City was a better location for their government offices. A few years later, railroads arrived and the town flourished. A post office was built in 1917, and that structure now houses the Matagorda County Museum. A signature exhibit features artifacts from La Belle, a shipwrecked vessel of the famous 17th-century French explorer Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle. The museum is one of seven Texas museums telling the story of the "La Salle Odyssey."

BAYTOWN

In 1822, Nathaniel Lynch began operating the

LEFT, LEONARD G. LANE, JR.; RIGHT, TXDOT

1830 –
1835

1831–1832: New tax and immigration laws cause clashes at Anahuac, Velasco, and Nacogdoches.

October 1832: Texas delegates at the Convention of 1832 at San Felipe call for immigration reforms and separate statehood.

April 1833: Delegates at the Convention of 1833 press their appeals for government reforms.

1834: Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna creates Mexican dictatorship and repeals 1824 Constitution; Stephen F. Austin jailed in Mexico City on charges of sedition.

October 2, 1835: First shots of Texas Revolution fired at Gonzales.

October 16, 1835: San Felipe delegates resolve against Santa Anna, vote for provisional Mexican state government, and order Sam Houston to raise an army.

Late 1835: General rebellion; Texans take Presidio La Bahía at Goliad and lay siege to San Antonio; U.S. volunteers begin arriving for the Texas fight.

1836 –
1839

February 24, 1836: Siege of the Alamo begins.

March 2, 1836: Texas Declaration of Independence presented at Washington-on-the-Brazos.

March 6, 1836: The Alamo falls; Runaway Scrape begins.

March 19–20, 1836: Mexican army surrounds Col. James W. Fannin's troops at Battle of Coleto. On March 27, the prisoners are executed.

April 21, 1836: Texans launch surprise attack at San Jacinto and defeat Santa Anna's army.

May 14, 1836: The period of the Republic of Texas begins with peace treaties signed at Velasco.

October 22, 1836: Sam Houston sworn in as president of the Republic of Texas at West Columbia.

January 1839: Waterloo (present-day Austin) chosen as new Texas capital.

1840s

March 1842: Centralist rebels try to reinstate Mexican law over Texas.

September 1842: Mexican Gen. Adrian Woll captures San Antonio; Texan volunteers engaged at the Battle of Salado Creek.

November–December 1842: Texans try to avenge Mexican invasion with punitive expedition that evolved into the ill-fated Mier Expedition.

1843–1845: U.S. Congress debates the Texas annexation question; U.S. president John Tyler calls for statehood.

December 29, 1845: U.S. president James K. Polk signs annexation agreement to allow Texas into the Union as the 28th state.

Lynchburg Ferry. The ferry carried settlers, supplies, and soldiers across the San Jacinto River. A modern ferry still operates here. A trip across the Houston Ship Channel today will take visitors to the San Jacinto Monument, a shining symbol of freedom at the Texas Historical Commission's San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site, the sacred ground where Texas' independence was won. (See the Houston listing on page 85.) Back in Baytown, learn more about local history at the historical museum, which is located in a 1930s-era former post office with its restored WPA mural. At the Republic of Texas Plaza Park, a living history museum brings the past alive amid restored historic buildings. The historic and recently renovated Brunson Theater now houses the Baytown Visitor Information Center.

BELLVILLE

Modern Bellville residents are surprised to learn that two languages—both English and German—

were once required subjects in local public schools, especially during the prosperous times ushered in by the railroad. Elegant mansions were built, which can now be viewed on a driving tour. An opera house and the Turnverein Pavilion were added to a growing list of German institutions. As the seat of Austin County, an elaborate jail reflecting the community's Teutonic ancestry was constructed in 1896. Today, the structure is home to the Austin County Jail Museum, complete with a fourth-floor tower designed as a gallows.

↓ BRAZOSPORT AREA

Several communities clustered around the mouth of the Brazos River comprise the Brazosport area. At the Lake Jackson Historical Museum, enjoy interactive exhibits from the plantation era through modern times. In Clute, the Brazosport Center for the Arts and Sciences is a cultural and educational complex featuring an art gallery, two performance

theaters, a planetarium, and the Museum of Natural Science. Close to Brazoria is Levi Jordan Plantation State Historic Site, a Texas Historical Commission property that is currently under development and expected to open to the public in early 2022. Well-preserved archeological evidence has provided an unprecedented view into the lives of enslaved and freed African Americans in Texas. North of the mouth of the Brazos, in nearby Angleton, the Brazoria County Historical Museum, housed inside the old 1897 county courthouse, features an Austin Colony exhibit that traces the history of Texas as a colony, including early Spanish exploration and the events surrounding the Texas Revolution. You can also paddle the Stephen F. Austin Trail of the Brazos River and wind through dense, wet Columbia Bottomlands forest. This lush world of towering trees, palmetto thickets, and flowering plants supports a multitude of wildlife species and habitat much like it did when Stephen F. Austin's "Old Three Hundred" made their way up the Brazos. A 76-foot statue of the "Father of Texas" is the centerpiece of the Stephen F. Austin-Munson Historical County Park in Angleton.

★ **BRENHAM**

Today, Brenham may be best known for bluebonnets and ice cream, but in the mid-19th century, it was better known as a cotton, retail, and wholesale hub, thanks to a railroad line, German immigrant farmers, and Jewish merchants. The delightful historic downtown district reflects their legacy. Fire and water are also part of this pastoral community's history. In 1866, federal troops burned buildings after a clash with Brenham residents. That incident, along with conflagrations in the 1870s led to the construction of 27 cisterns, which collected rainwater used to fight fires and for household use. A State Antiquities Landmark, this network of underground cisterns is interpreted at Toubin Park. Temporarily housed in the Brenham Bus Depot, the Brenham Heritage Museum showcases the town's tales. Nearby, a rare 1879 Silsby steam-powered fire engine turns heads on Market Street, a main thoroughfare leading to historic Fireman's Park and another rare sight: a working early-20th-century carousel. The Barnhill Center at Historic Simon Theatre is a performing arts venue and event center in a restored building that is part of the National Register-listed Brenham Downtown Historic District. Brenham is also known for the many historic bed-and-breakfasts sprinkled in and around town. Visitors won't want to miss

sampling Brenham's signature product. Founded in 1907, the Brenham Creamery Company changed its name in 1930 to Blue Bell Creamery, so called for the local blue bell flower. The rest, as they say, is history.

BURTON

Cotton is still king in Burton, especially at the Texas Cotton Gin Museum where a 1925 gin, a National Historic Engineering Landmark, still rattles to life on occasion. The National Register-listed Burton Commercial Historic District tells the story of the cotton economy from the 1870s through the 1940s. Burton owes much of its growth to the 1870 arrival of the railroad, and the Railroad Depot Museum details that story.

CHAPPELL HILL

Settled in the 1840s on a prairie overlooking the fertile Brazos River bottoms, Chappell Hill reflects bygone tranquility. Bed-and-breakfasts, galleries, and antique shops beckon visitors to linger along Main Street. Review local history at the Chappell Hill Historical Museum. In nearby Hempstead, the 1853 Liendo Plantation represents one of the state's earliest cotton plantations. At the end of the Civil War, Union Gen. George Armstrong Custer headquartered there. Noted Texas sculptor Elisabet Ney owned the plantation at one time and is buried on the property.

COLUMBUS

Columbus was one of the towns founded when Stephen F. Austin's group of settlers, known as the "Old Three Hundred," began arriving in Texas in the early 1820s. Some 15 years later, Gen. Sam Houston burned the community to the ground as he retreated from Gonzales to San Jacinto in the Runaway Scrape. The town quickly recovered and prospered, as evidenced by the homes and buildings constructed during this time, many of which are still standing today. Columbus' historic driving tour, a heritage traveler favorite, features an audio history that is available through the Discover Columbus Texas app. The restored Colorado County Courthouse and several museums are also included in the tour.

★ **CUERO**

Cuero pioneered the turkey-raising industry in this part of Texas, and was one of the largest poultry markets in the Southwest in the early 20th century. Cuero was known then as the "Turkey Capital of the World," where gobblers were herded through town



Texas Cotton Gin Museum, Burton



1896 Dewitt County Courthouse, Cuero



Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin

to packing houses. Locals parlayed the event into an annual Turkey Trot. Folks still flock to the original Trot's descendent event, the Turkeyfest. There's more to see here than poultry on parade. The stunning DeWitt County Courthouse, the Chisholm Trail Heritage Museum, and more than 50 architecturally interesting structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places make Cuero a good destination for heritage-focused tourists.

! FANNIN

In March 1836, Col. James W. Fannin and several hundred volunteers retreated eastward from Goliad after the Alamo fell. The Fannin Battleground State Historic Site tells the dramatic story of their fate. After surrendering to Mexican forces, Col. Fannin and his men were ordered to be executed in nearby Goliad, inflaming the Texas cause and spurring the battle cry, "Remember La Bahia!" At the Texas Historical Commission site, you can walk the landscaped grounds and view the impressive stone obelisk that marks the spot where Fannin

surrendered, taking a moment to remember the men who helped forge Texas' destiny.

FLORESVILLE

Canary Island immigrants first settled in the area in the 1730s, and in the 1750s, a ranching outpost that served one of San Antonio's missions was built nearby. The ruins of Rancho de las Cabras are now part of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, which offers monthly guided tours. Floresville's beautiful Wilson County Courthouse was built in 1894. Citizens later adorned the courthouse lawn with a huge peanut statue to honor the community's cash crop.

GALVESTON

Galveston's first European settler was the pirate Jean Lafitte, who established the initial colony here in 1817. By the 1820s, it was a Mexican port of entry, and in 1836, it was where the Texan army last retreated before their victory at nearby San Jacinto. After the revolution, Galveston became a wealthy seaport, known as the "Wall Street of the

LEFT, TEXAS INDEPENDENCE TRAIL; BOTTOM RIGHT, THC

West.” After the Civil War, Union Gen. Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston and announced the end of slavery in Texas on June 19, 1865, nearly two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. The anniversary of that date is commemorated annually as Juneteenth, a holiday celebrated worldwide and noted by a historical marker and mural in Galveston’s Strand district. By the 1880s, the Galveston business district was hopping, and grand Victorian-era homes were constructed. The Strand’s collection of iron-fronted buildings, considered one of the finest concentrations of 19th century commercial architecture in the nation, continues to serve Galveston visitors today.

Visitors can capture the feel of a thriving late-19th century seaport by boarding the *Elissa*, a restored sailing ship that doubles as a floating nautical museum, docked at the Texas Seaport Museum. Galveston’s good fortunes were challenged in 1900 when a hurricane created the worst natural disaster in the history of the U.S., killing thousands as the storm surge swept the island and destroyed all but a few of the community’s structures. To lessen damage from future storms, Galveston built a seawall in 1902. Amazingly, some of Galveston’s finest homes survived the storm and are now open for tours. Housed in the historic Galveston Orphans Home, the Bryan Museum features more than 70,000

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, THIC; AUBREY STOPPA; THIC; TXDOT



Juneteenth Mural, Galveston



Presidio La Bahía, Goliad



Moody Museum, Galveston



Turnverein Pavilion, Bellville



The Elissa, Galveston



Project Row Houses, Houston

artifacts, documents, and artwork spanning 2,400 years of Texas and Southwestern history. Regional railroad history is explored at the Galveston Island Railroad Museum, which boasts one of the largest restored railroad collections in the southwest. Other attractions include Moody Gardens and Pleasure Pier, which was designed to hearken back to Galveston’s glory days in the 1940s, when the historic amusement park was the largest of its kind in the country.

★  **GOLIAD**

With the exception of “Remember the Alamo!” the Texas Revolution’s most potent battle cry was “Remember Goliad!” This pastoral community is where Mexican forces executed Col. James W. Fannin and his men. Some were killed along roads near Goliad’s historic Presidio La Bahía and others were executed inside the fort, which had been constructed in 1749 to protect the nearby Mission Espíritu Santo. Today, visitors to Presidio La Bahía may tour the grounds and chapel and visit its museum. Fannin and his troops are buried beneath the Fannin Memorial Monument, located next to the fort. Also nearby is the birthplace of Gen. Ignacio Zaragoza, a Mexican hero honored by Cinco de Mayo celebrations. Goliad State Park maintains a reconstruction of the Nuestra Señora del Espíritu Santo de Zuniga Mission, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The park also interprets the ruins of the 1754 Nuestra Señora del Rosario Mission, located a few miles away. More

Goliad history unfolds downtown at the Market House Museum, which is close to the restored 1894 Goliad County Courthouse.

★ **GONZALES**

In 1835, Gonzales became the “Lexington of Texas,” when the Texas Revolution’s first skirmish happened there. Colonists flying a flag that defiantly bore the phrase “Come and Take It” repelled Mexican efforts to seize the village cannon. A few months after the first shots were fired, men from the region gathered there, becoming the only reinforcements to be sent to the Alamo. Today, visitors can learn all about these stories in the Texas History Museum District, which includes the Gonzales Memorial Museum, the Old Jail Museum, historic homes, and the Pioneer Village Living History Center. Also located downtown is the exquisitely restored 1894 Gonzales County Courthouse.

★  **HALLETTVILLE**

John Hallett settled here in 1831 on a land grant from Stephen F. Austin. After his death, his wife donated land for the town site. In 1852, Hallettsville became the Lavaca County seat, and in 1897, a beautiful courthouse was built. Now restored, the structure looms over an old-fashioned downtown square. The Lavaca Historical Museum recounts area history.

★  **HOUSTON**

Historical markers across Houston chart the advance

LEFT, THIC; RIGHT, RANDY MALLORY



"Come and Take It" Cannon, Gonzales Memorial Museum, Gonzales



Statue of Gen. Sam Houston, Houston



Buffalo Soldiers National Museum, Houston

of the Texas Revolution armies toward San Jacinto. Santa Anna torched an early Anglo-American settlement here called Harrisburg. After his defeat, the town was reestablished and named for the victorious Texas Gen. Sam Houston. From 1837 to 1839, the community served as the republic's capital. Today, the city of Houston is a vast metropolis, rich with culture and dotted with important elements of its storied past.

At the Heritage Society museum complex, visitors can explore Gen. Sam Houston's story and learn about early Texas colonists and industrialists. Adjacent to the city center, Houston's Museum District hosts world-class art collections, historical artifacts, and discoveries in science. The district's Buffalo Soldiers National Museum highlights the military experience of the African American regiments who defended the frontier after the Civil War. The Project Row Houses, a community-building project in a historic African-American neighborhood, provides studio and exhibition space for local and visiting artists. Nearby is Emancipation Avenue, a district certified as an official Texas Main Street community, as well as Emancipation Park, which was founded by African Americans to celebrate Juneteenth.

Nearby Buffalo Bayou leads to the mansion of Miss Ima Hogg, daughter of the first Texas-born governor. Hogg's affluent lineage and philanthropic bent resulted in the Bayou Bend Collection, a stunning assortment of art, antiques, and architecture gifted to the people of Texas.

East of Houston in La Porte is the Texas Historical Commission's San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site. The San Jacinto Monument towers over the battlefield where Texas won its independence on April 21, 1836. Badly outnumbered but impassioned by losses at the Alamo and Goliad, Gen. Sam Houston's army surprised Gen. Santa Anna's encamped Mexican forces and overpowered them in an 18-minute battle. At the monument's base, the San Jacinto Museum of History gives a vivid account of this famous event.

From the monument's observation deck visitors can see Battleship Texas, which is closed for a lengthy repair project. Now a National Historic Landmark and state historic site, it's anchored in the Houston Ship Channel.

For more than a century, vacationers have flocked to Houston's Bay Area on Galveston Bay's north shore. Clear Lake empties into the bay, giving Clear Lake City its name. But the city's top attraction looks skyward, not seaward. NASA's Johnson Space Center



LA SALLE ODYSSEY

One Story Told by Seven
Texas Museums

In 1685, French explorer Robert Cavellier, Sieur de La Salle attempted to establish a French foothold on the Gulf Coast. He overshoot his destination of the Mississippi River and set up a colony named Fort St. Louis near Matagorda Bay. After one of his ships, *La Belle*, wrecked in 1687, the adventurer began an ill-fated overland trek that ended when his own men murdered him. The fort was abandoned two years later after a Karankawa Indian attack. Spanish troops later found the French ruins and built their own presidio there.

In the 1990s Texas Historical Commission archeologists discovered *La Belle* in Matagorda Bay and Fort St. Louis near Victoria. *La Belle* is one of the most important shipwrecks ever discovered in North America, and more than 1.6 million artifacts were recovered. Many of the finds—plus artifacts from Fort St. Louis and the subsequent Spanish fort and mission—are on display at seven coastal community locations. Collectively known as the La Salle Odyssey, the museums chronicle this pivotal episode in Texas history. In October 2014, the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin unveiled an exhibit, "*La Belle*: The Ship That Changed History," which includes the reassembly of the original ship's hull in full view of visitors.

texasmetravel.com

remains home base for America's astronauts. Space Center Houston's visitors center dramatically details NASA's manned space flight history.

In nearby Deer Park, history-minded citizens have laid claim to being the "Birthplace of Texas." Following the Battle of San Jacinto, Gen. Sam Houston took Santa Anna to a nearby cabin to draft the initial treaty papers securing Texas' independence from Mexico. The cabin was the home of Dr. George Moffitt Patrick, and was located on Buffalo Bayou in what is now Deer Park. The City of Deer Park proudly displays a replica of the historic cabin in a prominent location downtown.

INDEPENDENCE

Founded in 1835 as part of Stephen F. Austin's original colony, the town was a religious and educational center for the Republic. Organized in 1837 and rebuilt in 1872, the Independence Baptist Church is one of the state's oldest Baptist churches and is one of six historic churches in the area, which are part of an evening lighted church tour. Old Baylor Park marks the site where the forerunner of Waco's Baylor University and Belton's Mary Hardin-Baylor University once stood. Cherished possessions brought by early Texas pioneers invariably included

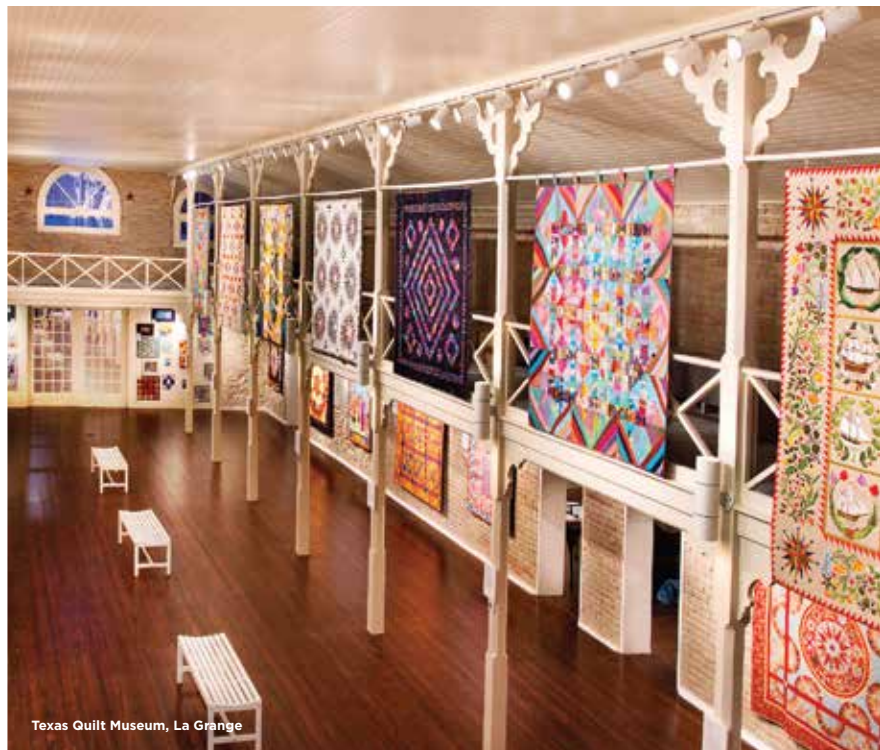
cuttings of their favorite roses. Antique roses are the stock and trade of the Antique Rose Emporium, an eight-acre garden on a pioneer homestead that includes an original 1855 stone kitchen.

LA GRANGE

Militia from Fayette County rushed to the defense of the Republic of Texas in 1842 to expel Mexican forces from San Antonio. The Texas Historical Commission's Monument Hill State Historic Site honors the casualties from those encounters. The monument also names victims of the ill-fated retaliatory raid into Mexico, the Mier Expedition. Carved into the cool recesses of a nearby bluff, Kreische Brewery State Historic Site preserves the ruins of an early-day German brewery. Downtown La Grange has many other old buildings, including some constructed by Heinrich Kreische. The 1891 Fayette County Courthouse has been restored to its former glory. It was designed with a feature that distinguished it from others in the state: an open central atrium. But by the 1940s, county government needed more space, so the atrium was enclosed and converted to offices. Restoration of the building reopened the atrium, to the delight of local residents. A block away stands the Old Fayette County Jail, now home to the Texas Heroes



Texas Baptist Museum, Independence



Texas Quilt Museum, La Grange



San Jacinto Monument, La Porte



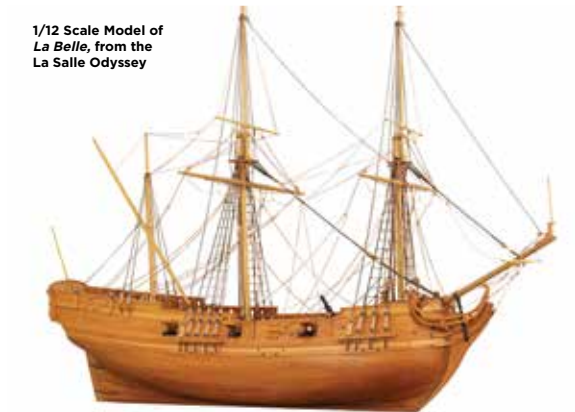
Underground Cisterns in Toubin Park, Brenham



Lake Jackson Historical Museum, Brazosport Area (Lake Jackson)



1886 King Iron Bridge, La Grange



1/12 Scale Model of La Belle, from the La Salle Odyssey

Museum. A newer heritage attraction is the Texas Quilt Museum, where “history in the making” is displayed in two restored 1890s buildings. The Historic Casino Hall building houses the visitors center and offers tours. The Texas Czech Heritage Center celebrates all things Czech at a site next to the Fayette County Fairgrounds.

LIBERTY

After the Texas Revolution, Sam Houston opened a law office in Liberty. Memorabilia from Houston and other Texas notables awaits visitors and researchers at the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research

Center. The parklike complex includes the Jean and Price Daniel House—patterned after the Texas Governor’s Mansion and owned by a great, great-granddaughter of Sam Houston and her husband, a former governor—as well as two restored historic homes and an 1898 church.

LOCKHART

Lockhart is known as the “Barbecue Capital of Texas.” It’s also known for a nine-block historic district centered on the elaborate 1894 Caldwell County Courthouse. Vast herds of cattle moving north on the Chisholm Trail passed through in the

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, TH-C: IRON WERCHAN; TH-C: TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY; AUBREY STOPA



Gen. Sam Houston



Halfmoon Reef Lighthouse, Port Lavaca

late 1800s. The Caldwell County Museum houses memorabilia and exhibits detailing the area's cattle-driving history.

★ LULING

Once a cattle and cotton railhead, Luling became an oil boomtown in the early 1920s. The Luling Oil Museum bears witness to that story. A more fanciful and artistic testament to this legacy can be seen on the decorated oil well pump jacks scattered across town. Another local legacy, the Zedler Mill, is preserved on the San Marcos River. Built in 1874, the picturesque site remained in continual operation by the Zedler family until the 1960s. Today, it is a community park and the take-out point for the first inland paddling trail in the state.

PALACIOS

By the time members of Stephen F. Austin's "Old Three Hundred" colony sailed into Matagorda Bay to settle the area in 1822, the remains of the French shipwreck, *La Belle*, had been lying undiscovered on the bottom of the bay for nearly two centuries. Almost 100 years later, the town of Palacios was established nearby. One of the first public buildings completed

in the settlement was the "Pleasure Pavilion," an open-air pier that served as the town's entertainment center. A hurricane destroyed the original pavilion in 1934, and 1961's Hurricane Carla destroyed the replacement. In 1991, Palacios residents constructed yet another new pavilion in its place. Palacios is also home to more than 400 shrimping vessels. Palacios' City by the Sea Museum celebrates this discovery by participating in the La Salle Odyssey, a seven-museum exhibition of *La Belle* artifacts.

PANNA MARIA

Panna Maria (which means "Virgin Mary" in Polish) is where immigrants, in 1854, held the first Polish Catholic Mass in their new American home and established the first permanent Polish settlement in the U.S. An active parish still worships at the restored 1877 Immaculate Conception Church. The history of this cultural touchstone is depicted in displays at the 1858 St. Joseph's School, the oldest Polish private school in the country.

PORT LAVACA

French explorer Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle landed south of town in 1685 and set up the central

LEFT, TEXAS STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES; RIGHT, THC; OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, THC; TXDOT (X2)



Fayette County Courthouse, La Grange



Texian Market Days, George Ranch Historical Park, Richmond



Shrimp Boats, Palacios

Texas coast's first European colony. Today, a granite statue of the explorer rises from Magnolia Beach in Indianola, once a prime entry point for immigrants to Texas. When hurricanes in 1875 and 1886 destroyed much of the town, nearby Port Lavaca became a prominent sea town. The 1858 Halfmoon Reef Lighthouse recalls the area's nautical past and sits alongside Port Lavaca's chamber of commerce. Next to the county courthouse, the Calhoun County Museum is part of the La Salle Odyssey and displays artifacts from the shipwreck.

REFUGIO

See entry in the Tropical Trail Region, page 165

RICHMOND-ROSENBERG

Some of Stephen F. Austin's earliest settlers populated this area in 1822. Richmond was platted in 1837 and became the county seat a few years later. Rosenberg came into existence decades later when Richmond refused to provide the right of way for a railroad.

In Richmond, the downtown historic district is a testament to its heritage. Walking-tour maps are available at the Fort Bend Museum. The crown jewel is the 1908 Fort Bend County Courthouse. Another

architectural treasure is the 1887 former county jail, which now serves as the police department headquarters. South of Richmond, the George Ranch Historical Park hosts year-round living-history programs.

Rosenberg was platted in 1883 and named for a former president of the railroad. A Union Depot was constructed in 1889. The Rosenberg Railroad Museum, modeled after the original depot, preserves the past. Specialty shops, restaurants, and a renovated art deco theater enliven Rosenberg's downtown district.

ROUND TOP

With fewer than 100 residents, Round Top is one of Texas' smallest cities, but heritage-rich attractions draw visitors worldwide. In Round Top's vintage downtown, Henkel Square features relocated structures built by Anglo and German pioneers that are now filled with shops and galleries. Donated to The University of Texas at Austin by philanthropist Ima Hogg, the Winedale Historical Center preserves a 19th century farm community. Its Shakespeare at Winedale program, held in an 1880s-era hay barn, presents student productions every summer. The



San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site, San Felipe



Haynes Mattress Factory, Sealy



San Fernando Cathedral, San Antonio



The Heritage Seguin and Guadalupe County Museum, Seguin



Historic Home, Round Top



Mural at Casa Navarro State Historic Site, San Antonio



Mission San José, San Antonio

Round Top Festival Institute is another popular year-round draw. Several popular antique fairs also bring in people by the thousands. To accommodate tourists, Round Top is rife with historic bed-and-breakfasts.

! SAN ANTONIO

“Remember the Alamo” is the immortal battle cry that galvanized Texian soldiers fighting for Texas independence in 1836. That heroic story is told at arguably the most popular tourist attraction in Texas. The Alamo is one of five 18th century missions located in San Antonio that still stand today, a tribute to the men and women who brought European culture and Christianity to the region. They are collectively designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the first in Texas. The Alamo was built in 1718, followed by San José in 1720, and San Juan, Concepción, and Espada in 1731. San Antonio’s mission trail is but one of many world-class historic attractions that make the city a mecca for heritage visitors. La Villita, San Antonio’s first neighborhood, is still a bustle of activity, featuring art galleries, shops, and restaurants. At Casa Navarro State Historic Site, you can explore the life of a Texas patriot, José Antonio Navarro, one of only two native-born Texans to sign the Texas Declaration of Independence. The Texas Historical Commission site celebrates his life at his original 1850s-era home, a historic jewel among its urban surroundings. The King William Historic District was settled by prominent German merchants in the 1800s, and grew to become the most elegant residential area in the city, zoned as the state’s first historic district. Along the San Antonio River, stone

pathways on the city’s famed River Walk connect shops, restaurants, hotels, museums, and missions with a blend of historic and modern architecture. The San Fernando Cathedral anchors San Antonio’s main plaza. Built in the mid-1700s, it is the oldest cathedral in the U.S. and remains an active parish. There are dozens of other heritage attractions and museums scattered throughout the city that celebrate the unique diversity of cultures that have congregated in the state over the centuries. The Institute of Texan Cultures at HemisFair Plaza celebrates them all by sharing and interpreting the cultural tapestry that makes Texas what it is today.

! SAN FELIPE

San Felipe de Austin was founded as the headquarters of Austin’s Colony along the banks of the Brazos River in late 1823. From here, Stephen F. Austin issued land grants to settlers immigrating to Mexican Texas. The entire townsite was burned during the Runaway Scrape in spring 1836 by local militia to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Mexican army. San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site, a Texas Historical Commission property, interprets these pivotal years with a state-of-the-art museum, interactive exhibits, an outdoor map plaza, and educational programs that include annual archeological excavations. An outdoor exhibit—the Villa de Austin—with new buildings evoking significant past structures, is slated to open in late 2021.

SCHULENBURG

An old dance hall and a group of churches may

seem like an odd combination, but in Schulenburg they are a perfect pairing of heritage attractions. In 1894, Charles and Gustav Sengelmann built the Two Brothers Saloon and Dance Hall. For more than 40 years, it was the social center of the town. Today, it is restored to its former glory, back in business, and drawing patrons from all over Texas. The Painted Churches around Schulenburg have also been drawing in crowds since they were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Located in the small communities of Dubina, High Hill, Praha, and Ammansville, the churches are simple on the outside, but with frescos and murals have the look of ornate churches within. The small town also lays claim to several museums, including the Stanzel Model Aircraft Museum and the Texas Polka Music Museum.

★ SEALY

Sealy began as a railway stop and soon became a commercial center with several notable businesses, including the Haynes Mattress Factory, predecessor to Sealy Mattresses. The local chamber offers a self-guided tour, during which you can find out more about the other historic buildings around town as well as numerous horse farms in Austin County.

★ SEGUIN

Seguin was founded in 1838 by frontier rangers and named for Juan N. Seguin, also known as the “Paul Revere of Texas” because he warned Texans of the advancing Mexican army during the Runaway Scrape. He later fought with the Texas Army at San Jacinto. A bronze statue of Juan Seguin on horseback stands in downtown’s Central Park. A more whimsical monument, a large concrete pecan, graces the courthouse square in honor of the bountiful local crop. Once known as “Concrete City,” Seguin had more than 90 edifices made of the limecrete substance. One of those structures, the Sebastopol House, is now a historic site where you can learn more about this unique time in Seguin history. Heritage Village features five of the first buildings in Seguin’s history and offers self-guided tours.

SHINER

Shiner is synonymous with the product that is still made at the oldest independent brewery in Texas. Named for Henry B. Shiner, who donated land for the town site to the railroad, the community grew as a trade center for Czech and German farmers. To meet their thirst for “the old country,” Shiner established a brewery in 1909 and hired Bavarian



St. Cyril and Methodius Church, Schulenburg



Spoztl Brewery, Shiner



Fourth of July Parade, Downtown Seguin



Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site, West Columbia

brewmaster Kosmos Spoetzl to make it authentic. His legacy survives in the brewery name and in the iconic Shiner beer. The brewery offers tours and tastings. To learn more about Shiner area history, visit the Edwin Wolters Memorial Museum.

SMITHVILLE

See entry in the Brazos Trail Region, page 20

★ VICTORIA

In 1685, French explorer Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle established Fort St. Louis near what would one day become Victoria. The fort was abandoned after La Salle was murdered by his own men. The Spanish then built a presidio over the fort ruins, a counterattack in the ongoing struggle for Europeans to control the New World. A battle between military might, religious conversion, and crown wealth continued to unfold across the territory for decades. This dramatic struggle can be explored today at the Museum of the Coastal Bend, on the campus of Victoria College. In 1824, Martín de León brought 41 Mexican families to settle in the area, calling the town Guadalupe Victoria in honor of the first

president of the Republic of Mexico. After Texas independence, however, Guadalupe was dropped and the town became known as Victoria. Coming full circle, La Salle is back, at least in spirit, thanks to the discovery by the Texas Historical Commission in the 1990s of the exact location and ruins of his fort and the shipwrecked *Belle*. The accumulation of artifacts, called the La Salle Odyssey, is spread across the region in seven museums including Victoria's Museum of the Coastal Bend, home to an excellent exhibition of La Salle's misadventures. In nearby Edna, the Texana Museum also displays some La Salle relics along with other eclectic artifacts.

! WASHINGTON

It was here in 1836 that 59 representatives of the Texas settlements met to make a formal declaration of independence from Mexico. This is where Texas became Texas. This story and others are told at the Texas Historical Commission's Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site. A replica of Independence Hall marks the place where the Texas Declaration of Independence was signed. At the Star of the Republic Museum, visitors can discover the interesting history



Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, Washington



Star of the Republic Museum, Washington

of the new Republic and learn about the cultures and values of early Texans. Barrington Plantation State Historic Site was the final home of Anson Jones, the final president of the Republic of Texas. Visitors can step back in time to the mid-19th century as living history interpreters conduct themselves much as the earliest residents of the original farmstead did


! WEST COLUMBIA

The capital of the Republic of Texas for only a year, from 1836 until 1837, this historic town is also where Sam Houston was sworn in as president of the new Republic and where Secretary of State Stephen F. Austin, the “Father of Texas,” died. A 1900 hurricane destroyed the humble structure that was the new nation’s first capitol, but a replica here is a reminder of Texas’ early days of independence. The Capitol of Texas Park features 21 black granite monuments depicting the people and events that contributed to the birth of the Republic. Near West Columbia, Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site vividly interprets life on a 19th century sugar plantation, including the lives of those enslaved to toil here. At this Texas Historical Commission property, several generations of Texas history and commerce come alive.

WHARTON

The wonderfully restored 1889 Wharton County Courthouse is at the heart of Wharton’s downtown historic district. The Wharton County Historical Museum recalls local history. A short drive away, Danevang is considered the “Danish Capital of Texas.” The tiny burg began as a church colony and continues to preserve its culture at the Danish Heritage Museum of Danevang.

YOAKUM

In the late 1800s, Yoakum and most of the surrounding region was used as a gathering area for cattle headed to market along the Chisholm Trail. The railroad arrived in 1887, and in the early 1900s, a productive hide tanning and leather craft industry developed. About that time, the Elkins family constructed a beautiful Victorian home, which now houses the Yoakum Heritage Museum. Serving the community as a remembrance of its roots, the museum contains historical and cultural artifacts of Yoakum and the San Antonio and Aransas Pass railroads. The community also honors its past at the Chisholm Trail Memorial Park, adorned with larger-than-life topiaries of longhorns on the trail. 



Lake Granbury, Granbury



Lakes

TRAIL REGION

Where the Wild West Meets Southern Charm

Geographically and historically, the Texas Lakes Trail Region of North Texas has long been a meeting place. Once, a great ancient sea met the land here. The land later became rolling tall-grass prairies, located between piney woods to the east and wind-blown plains to the west. Major rivers crossed the prairies, as did belts of hardwood forests.

In these verdant grasslands and scattered forests, wildlife thrived. Spanish soldiers trekked here in 1542, searching in vain for gold and silver. The French arrived from neighboring Louisiana in the 1700s, engaging in trade with the native people who lived here.

During the first half of the 19th century, American settlers drifted into the region. This drift turned into an avalanche after the Republic of Texas became the state of Texas in 1845. Cotton growers and enslaved workers extended the cotton culture to the prairies, turning rich blackland soil into productive plantations.

As farms and towns arose, authorities pushed out native peoples and established frontier forts, including Fort Worth, to protect the settlers. During the Civil War, the region supplied the Confederacy. After the war, families fled the ravaged South for a fresh start on the prairies, and freedmen moved from plantations into growing towns such as Dallas.

In the 1870s and 1880s, cowboys herded millions of longhorns from South Texas through the area along the Chisholm, Shawnee, and Western cattle trails.

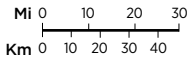
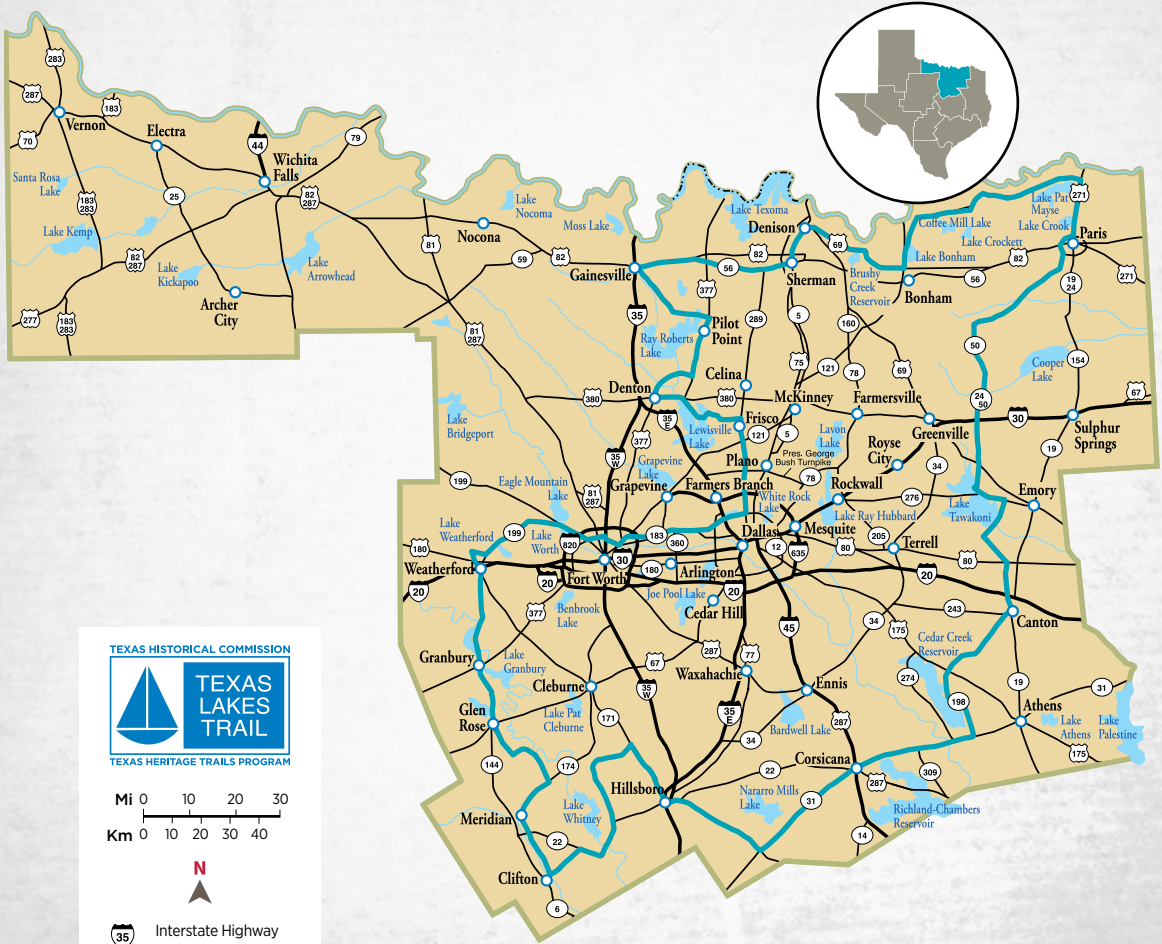
Cattle and cotton shaped the culture, and steel rails brought the first real prosperity in the late 1800s. Texas cattle, cotton, and other products found unprecedented access to outside markets with the arrival of trains.

By the turn of the 20th century, increasing wealth and burgeoning populations turned Dallas and Fort Worth into centers of commerce and culture. In the 1910s and 1920s, oil discoveries in North Texas further boosted the economy.

Big lakes began dotting the prairies in the 1930s, and several decades of federal dam building impounded more than 30 large bodies of water, providing reliable water resources to a growing region. These reservoirs also created new prospects for outdoor recreation.

Today, the region sprawls across 31 northern counties. The Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex remains the regional hub, offering an array of world-class cultural, commercial, and educational possibilities. The Texas Lakes Trail Region remains a meeting place—where the history of the Wild West meets Southern charm.

LAKES TRAIL REGION



- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- 1968 Texas Lakes Trail



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE RESERVATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

FEATURED COMMUNITIES

The following cities are highlighted in this chapter:

- | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Archer City | Ennis | Mesquite | Archer County |
| Arlington | Farmers Branch | Nocona | Cooke County |
| Athens | Farmersville | Paris | Bosque County |
| Bonham | Fort Worth | Plano | Dallas County |
| Canton | Frisco | Sherman | Denton County |
| Cedar Hill | Gainesville | Sulphur Springs | Ellis County |
| Cleburne | Glen Rose | Terrell | Fannin County |
| Clifton | Granbury | Waxahachie | Hood County |
| Corsicana | Grapevine | Weatherford | Hopkins County |
| Dallas | Greenville | Wichita Falls | Johnson County |
| Denison | Hillsboro | | Lamar County |
| Denton | McKinney | | Navarro County |
| | | | Parker County |
| | | | Rains County |

OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, THC (X3); AUBREY STOFFA



Paris Balloon Festival, Paris



Pioneer Village, Corsicana



Sam Rayburn's 1947 Cadillac at the Sam Rayburn House, Bonham



MAIN STREET CITIES

- Bridgeport
- Canton
- Celina
- Clifton
- Corsicana
- Decatur
- Denison
- Denton
- Ennis
- Farmersville
- Grand Saline
- Grapevine
- Greenville
- Hillsboro
- McKinney
- Mesquite
- Paris
- Pilot Point
- Rockwall
- Royse City
- Sherman
- Vernon
- Waxahachie
- Weatherford



THC STATE HISTORIC SITES

- Acton, Acton (near Granbury)
- Eisenhower Birthplace, Denison
- Sam Bell Maxey House, Paris
- Sam Rayburn House, Bonham



1888 Cotton Belt Railroad Depot, Grapevine

ARCHER CITY

There's a long history of book lovers in Archer City. The town's first settler, in 1874, was well educated and became a prominent county leader and influential proponent of reading and schooling. That seems fitting, given that literature often brings folks from across the world to Archer City, thanks to native son and Pulitzer Prize–winning author Larry McMurtry. The town and the loss of its local theater inspired McMurtry's popular novel, *The Last Picture Show*, which was later made into a movie. Gutted by fire in 1965, the real-life Royal Theater was rebuilt in 2000 and now stages various productions. McMurtry's bookstore offers thousands of used and rare books. The 1891 Archer County Courthouse was restored as a participant in the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program.

ARLINGTON

Fertile blackland soil first drew farmers here in the 1840s. In the 1920s, the newly laid Bankhead Highway brought business and early road trippers. It also brought gamblers and bootleggers during Prohibition to the infamous Top O' Hill Terrace, the tea room turned casino that has been referred to as "Vegas Before Vegas." Today, visitors can learn how this den of iniquity was busted and eventually became Arlington Baptist College, where most of the historic structures have been preserved. Arlington is fertile ground for other heritage attractions, including the renovated Arlington Music Hall, Knapp Heritage Park, and Fielder House.

ATHENS

The seat of Henderson County got its name in the 1850s because locals hoped it would be a cultural

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, TXDOT, CANTON FIRST MONDAY STAFF, THC (X3)



Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza, Dallas



First Monday Trade Days, Canton



Layland Museum, Cleburne



Sam Rayburn Library, Bonham



Denton County Courthouse, Denton

center like Athens, Greece. The popular Old Fiddler's Reunion brings music to the forefront every year and has been going strong for 90 years on the tree-shaded courthouse square. Athens claims to be the birthplace of the hamburger. Local history can be explored at the East Texas Arboretum, which features the 1850s Wofford House Museum, the original Henderson County Jail (a small jail cell), and other 19th century artifacts. Another popular draw, the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, explores the cultural phenomenon of fishing.

BONHAM

Named in honor of Alamo hero James Butler Bonham, the community's true claim to fame is being the hometown of Sam Rayburn, one of the most influential politicians of the 20th century. The story of his legacy is told at the Sam Rayburn House Museum, a Texas Historical Commission site, where visitors can walk in his family's footsteps. The Sam Rayburn Library Museum features a replica of his office during a long career as speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Next door is Fort English Village, which features restored log cabins that recreate pioneer life. The Fannin County Museum of History is housed in the restored railroad depot, and the Creative Arts Center showcases all forms of art. Bonham State Park is just outside of town and offers outdoor recreation amid facilities built in the early 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

CANTON

The largest flea market in the world can be found in Canton. The historic market dates to frontier times, when people traded goods while waiting for the judge to see them on "First Monday" court days. These days, thousands of dealers gather to sell their wares the weekend before the first Monday of every month, attracting about two thousand bargain hunters. For a historical view of First Monday, visit the Plaza Museum.

CEDAR HILL

In 1854, John Anderson Penn settled in the cedar-covered hills of southwest Dallas County. Remnants of his farm can be found at Cedar Hill State Park, on the eastern shore of Joe Pool Lake. Pioneers are commemorated at the Penn Farm Agricultural History Center with period farm machinery along with reconstructed and historic buildings, all within view of the Dallas skyline.

CLEBURNE

Cleburne celebrates its Western heritage at the Chisholm Trail Outdoor Museum. Visit this site to see the oldest log courthouse in Texas while tracing the steps of cowboys who moved millions of cattle along the Chisholm Trail. An old Carnegie Library building houses the Layland Museum of History. You can stroll the square downtown and see the 1913 Johnson County Courthouse with its marble-clad and stained-glass-capped atrium, influenced by the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan.

CLIFTON

See entry in the Brazos Trail Region, page 14

CORSICANA

Corsicana is the seat of Navarro County, which was named for José Antonio Navarro, a hero of the Texas Revolution and namesake of the Texas Historical Commission's Casa Navarro State Historic Site in San Antonio. In 1848 Navarro was given the honor of naming the new town, and he suggested calling it Corsicana, after the island of Corsica, the birthplace of his parents. In 1894 a water-well driller accidentally tapped into the first major oil discovery west of the Mississippi River, and Corsicana became Texas' first oil boomtown. The boom attracted many new citizens, including a group who in 1898 constructed an unusual and beautiful synagogue, now a community meeting hall. Visitors can learn about local and county history at Corsicana's Pioneer Village. Another heritage attraction is the Pearce Museum, on the Navarro College campus. The Navarro County Courthouse is the centerpiece of the historic downtown, where visitors can find many specialty shops and take in a live performance at the Palace Theatre, a 1921 vaudeville playhouse.

DALLAS

Dallas was founded on commerce, and that remains the hallmark of the city today. Pioneer John Neely Bryan settled on the Trinity River in 1841 and opened a trading post. In the 1870s, Dallas was one of the state's first rail crossroads.

Since 1886, visitors have flocked to Dallas for the annual State Fair of Texas. It's held in Fair Park, a large museum and entertainment complex just east of downtown. Built in 1936 for the Texas Centennial Exposition, the park is a National Historic Landmark, with the largest collection of art deco exposition

buildings in America. The area is home to several fine museums, including the African American Museum of Dallas.

The city's most visited heritage site, Dealey Plaza Historic District, is also a National Historic Landmark. The plaza was built in the 1930s as the western gateway to downtown. Tragedy made it famous in 1963. On the plaza is the former School Book Depository, where Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President John F. Kennedy. It's now the Sixth Floor Museum, which recounts Kennedy's life, death, and legacy. The historic district also encompasses the 1970 Kennedy Memorial, a replica of Bryan's 1841 log cabin, and the 1891 courthouse, now home to the Old Red Museum of Dallas County History and Culture.

Up the road from Dealey Plaza, on Elm Street, is the elegant Majestic Theatre that was refurbished half a century after its 1921 opening. Not far away is the Adolphus Hotel, a baroque masterpiece built in 1912. On downtown's north side, the Arts District, the largest in the country, is home to the city's leading visual and performing arts institutions. From the Arts District, visitors can ride the vintage McKinney Avenue Trolley to Uptown, a 125-year-old residential, entertainment, and retail district.

Dallas' premier historic village is located just south of downtown, in Old City Park. Dallas Heritage Village features the largest and finest collection of 19th century pioneer and Victorian homes and commercial buildings in Texas. Stroll the grounds and discover what life was like more than 100 years ago for ordinary Texans.

From downtown, Elm Street extends eastward into an entertainment and arts district called Deep Ellum. After the Civil War, former slaves made this a freedmen's community. By the early 1900s, it was a warehouse district and a hotbed of African American life and culture, especially blues music. Now it's one of Dallas' headquarters for many kinds of live music.

!★ DENISON

Denison came to life as a railroad town in 1872, and 18 years later, its most famous son was born in a modest white frame house on the railroad line. Dwight D. Eisenhower's story is told at the Eisenhower Birthplace State Historic Site. At this Texas Historical Commission property, visitors can experience the lifestyle of a late-19th century working family and learn more about Eisenhower's role in history. Another "Ike" site is on nearby Lake Texoma.

Eisenhower State Park is an outdoor haven, near an old Butterfield Overland Mail stagecoach crossing on the Red River. Visitors won't want to miss the vibrant downtown arts and cultural district. The Katy Train Depot is at one end, and the other end includes the site of the first free public school in Texas. In between are antique stores and specialty shops, all nestled among buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Between Denison and nearby Sherman is the Grayson County Frontier Village at Loy Lake Park and the Perrin Air Force Base Historical Museum at the North Texas Regional Airport. More than a dozen historic buildings, constructed during the Depression by the Civilian Conservation Corps, were relocated to this park.

★🏰 DENTON

Denton became a college town early in its history with the founding of the University of North Texas in 1890 and Texas Women's University (TWU) in 1901. The Little Chapel in the Woods on the TWU campus is considered one of the most unique architectural achievements in Texas. Now Denton is known as a jazz center, thanks to the award-winning University of North Texas jazz studies ensemble, the One O'Clock Lab Band. Since the band's inception more than 60 years ago, it has performed throughout the world. A history of music is just one element that makes Denton so appealing to heritage-minded tourists. Watching over downtown, ground zero for Denton's lively music scene, is the domed clock tower of the grand 1897 Denton County Courthouse. Inside, the Courthouse-on-the-Square Museum depicts county history. An associated heritage site, the Bayless-Selby House Museum, is also downtown and offers tours and lectures in an 1898 home representing life at the turn of the 20th century. Next door is the Denton County African American Museum. Denton is also at the center of one of the largest concentrations of horse farms in the country.

★ ENNIS

Stop by the visitors center in the historic downtown to learn about area attractions, including the many festivals held at various times of the year. Celebrating everything from bluebonnets to Czech heritage, these events include the National Polka Festival. Ennis was founded in the 1870s as a railroad town, and that history is commemorated at the Railroad and Cultural Heritage Museum, right next to the visitors center. Ennis' historic residences are another draw,



State Fair of Texas, Dallas



Farmers and Fleas Market at the Onion Shed, Farmersville



Penn Farm Agricultural Center, Cedar Hill



Eisenhower Birthplace State Historic Site, Denison

and dozens of structures in this Texas Main Street City are listed on the National Register.

FARMERS BRANCH

The oldest rock structure in Dallas County can be found at its original 1850s site in the Farmers Branch Historical Park, which presents restored buildings in an outdoor museum that illuminates what North Texas life was like in the early days.

The park is also home to two vintage baseball teams, enabling guests to enjoy the sights and sounds of a 19th century game. At the Firehouse Theatre, enjoy stage productions in the restored fire station.

★ FARMERSVILLE

Farmersville enjoys a certain celebrity as the early home of World War II hero Audie Murphy, one of the most decorated combat veterans in history. The town celebrates Murphy's legacy every year on Audie Murphy Day. There's a trailhead named for Murphy that leads to one of the longest multi-purpose trails in the country. The Northeast Texas Trail extends 130 miles from Farmersville to New Boston, through part of the Caddo National Grasslands. Back in the day, Farmersville was true to its moniker as a major hub

for crops, especially onions. A Farmersville mainstay in the 1930s, the crop inspired the town to call itself the "Onion Capital of North Texas." Farmersville commemorated its crop-growing past with the restoration of a 1930s-era onion packing shed called, appropriately, the "Onion Shed," which now serves as the location for the "Farmers and Fleas Market," held the first Saturday of every month. The 1930s also saw the construction of the downtown post office, and its original 1941 Federal Art Project mural remains in excellent condition.

FORT WORTH

Fort Worth has good reason to claim that it is "where the West begins." The town was established in 1849 as a military post on the Texas frontier. Cattle drives rumbled through from the 1860s to the 1880s, and Fort Worth became known as "Cowtown." After the arrival of the railroads, in the 1870s, Cowtown became a railhead along with a stockyards and beef-packing center.

That Western heritage still rings true at the Stockyards National Historic District, north of downtown. Restored mercantile buildings and stockyards from the early 20th century embody

the west. Located in the 1904 Livestock Exchange Building, the Stockyards Museum chronicles the stockyards' heyday. At the Cowtown Coliseum, cowboy heritage gallops to life at weekly rodeos. The stockyard station also serves as a depot for the Grapevine Vintage Railroad. Twice-daily Longhorn cattle drives and historic district walking tours also begin here.

A few miles west of downtown, you can discover why Fort Worth has been called the cultural capital of the Southwest. The city's cultural district features five internationally recognized museums in a parklike setting, all acclaimed for their architecture, the quality of their collections, and the programs they offer. From the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame to the world-renowned Kimbell Art Museum, there's a place for any taste. Fort Worth is also home to Benbrook Lake, which was created as a result of significant flooding on the Trinity River in the early 1900s. Camping, fishing, hunting, boating, and hiking are just some of the activities available in the parks and other public lands of Benbrook Lake. The National Multicultural Western Heritage Museum in East Fort Worth celebrates the diverse contributions of the many different people that built the unique culture of the American West.

History rides high in downtown's Sundance Square, an area named for the Sundance Kid, who hung out here with his partner in crime, Butch Cassidy. Its red-brick streets and restored turn-of-the-century

structures host theaters, restaurants, and lodging. Sundance Square Plaza features Texas-sized umbrellas and fountains. The stately Tarrant County Courthouse presides proudly over this area.

Experience the pioneer era at Log Cabin Village. This living history museum located in a city park includes seven preserved pioneer homes built during the 1850s. A more opulent time is on view at Thistle Hill, where visitors can stroll through an 11,000-square-foot mansion that was built by a cattle baron for his daughter.

FRISCO

Preston Road bustles with activity in Frisco, one of state's fastest-growing cities. Before the Civil War, it was Longhorn cattle and cowboys that traveled along this road, then known as the Shawnee Trail, the first north-south cattle trail in Texas. Frisco's Central Park recalls that period through a larger-than-life sculptural stampede of cattle. Frisco was incorporated after the St. Louis–San Francisco Railroad (known as the "Frisco") arrived in 1902. At the Frisco Heritage Center, part of the Frisco Heritage Museum, visit the Museum of the American Railroad exhibits.

GAINESVILLE

During the cattle-drive era, Gainesville became a supply point for cowboys moving herds north to Kansas. Later, cotton and oil sustained the economy. By the 1880s, local banks held high-dollar deposits by



National Polka Festival, Ennis



Shoppers Enjoying Downtown Granbury



Acton State Historic Site, Acton



Dinosaur Valley State Park, Glen Rose



Frisco Heritage Museum, Frisco

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, RANDY MALLORY; TXDOT; ROGER ROBINSON

cattle barons all over North Texas. A steady business acumen continued to serve the community, helping Gainesville to survive the cattle-drive bust at the end of the 19th century as well as the Great Depression in the 1930s. Today, Gainesville is a town deeply rooted in its past with a historic downtown district anchored by the restored Cooke County Courthouse and long-running traditional events. You can learn more about Gainesville history at the Santa Fe Depot Museum and the associated Morton Museum of Cooke County, located nearby in a renovated building that had previously served as city hall, a firehouse, and a jail.

GLEN ROSE

There's no question that Glen Rose is the "Dinosaur Capital of Texas." The state's best-preserved dinosaur tracks draw thousands to Dinosaur Valley State Park on the Paluxy River. It was the Paluxy that attracted Charles Barnard to the area in 1860, where he built a gristmill. Today the building houses Barnard's Mill and Art Museum. The State Antiquities Landmark retells the Barnards' story while displaying works of several artists, including local sculptor Robert Summers. A short walk away, Summers' life-size bronze statue of the Barnards graces the lawn of the

Somervell County Courthouse, which serves as a focal point for the quaint historic downtown, now a National Register district, filled with specialty shops, restaurants, and a historic inn. South of town is an animal conservation park called Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, where endangered, threatened, and native animals roam.

! GRANBURY

The list of accolades for Granbury's commitment to historic preservation is long. The delightful courthouse square became the first in Texas to be added to the National Register of Historic Places and has been described as one of the most complete examples of a late-19th century courthouse square in Texas. Balanced by the 1890 Hood County Courthouse, dozens of antiques shops, restaurants, and boutiques line the square. Most historic among downtown's live entertainment venues is the Granbury Opera House. Established in 1886 as Kerr's Hall, the venue was restored in the 1970s and has been renovated once again. Visit the Hood County Museum in the 1880's-era jail for more local history. The historic Brazos Drive-In theatre has been entertaining families since it opened in 1952, and the vintage concession stand still doles out movie treats. Located



CHISHOLM TRAIL

Exploring legends, lore and legacy!

In the decades following the Civil War, more than six million cattle were herded out of Texas in one of the greatest migrations of animals ever known. These drives laid the foundation for the state's successful cattle industry. Although a number of routes existed during this period, none have so penetrated the heart of the country's popular imagination like the Chisholm Trail. Historians have long debated details of its story, including the exact route and even its name. Iconic Texas Longhorns that were herded north were descendants of cattle brought over by early-16th-century Spanish explorers and missionaries. Missions like San Antonio de Bexar (the Alamo) and Mission Espíritu Santo were among the earliest ranches in Texas. In the early 1800's Spain lost control of the region but ranchero and vaquero traditions lingered, affecting the look, equipment, and vernacular of America's cowboys. Various starting points and tributary routes of the Chisholm Trail typically entered a main cattle drive stream that surged north toward Austin, Waco, and Fort Worth before crossing the Red River. By the late 1880's, driving cattle north from Texas was no longer profitable and the practice declined rapidly. Today, communities along the Chisholm Trail celebrate this illustrious legacy in a variety of ways, from outdoor sculptures and museums to the National Historic District at the Stockyards in Fort Worth.

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in the nearby town of Acton, the Acton State Historic Site, a Texas Historical Commission property, is the smallest historic site in Texas and the burial ground of Davy Crockett's second wife, Elizabeth. Visitors come to pay their respects and admire the striking statue of Elizabeth.

★ GRAPEVINE

The story of Grapevine began in 1843, when Gen. Sam Houston and representatives of the Republic of Texas met with members of 10 American Indian nations. They gathered to negotiate a treaty of peace at Grape Vine Springs, which opened North Texas to homesteaders. The town's name has become even more appropriate in recent years as Grapevine has hung its hat on a popular grape product that sets it apart from its neighbors. Now considered to be the headquarters of the Texas wine industry, downtown Grapevine is home to about a dozen winery tasting rooms. The town's slogan is "Aged to Perfection," which reflects its commitment to the heritage of the area. Downtown has been adoringly restored and historic buildings are filled with restaurants, art galleries, and more. Main Street is anchored on one end by the 1888 Grapevine Cotton Belt Railroad Depot, where you can visit a museum and get tickets to ride Grapevine's vintage railroad. Also downtown is the Grapevine Opry, which has been performing for more than 25 years at the Palace Theatre, a renovated 1940s-era art deco theater. At nearby Nash Farm, a historic home dating to 1869, you can learn about the city's agricultural heritage through exhibits, interpretive programs, and interactive displays. Grapevine is also known for its many festivals throughout the year, including GrapeFest, one of the largest wine festivals in the country.

★ GREENVILLE

Business in Greenville boomed in the 1880s as six railroads shipped local cotton to distant markets. The town's early wealth is reflected in the historic downtown buildings that surround the downtown square and the 1929 Hunt County Courthouse. A historical walking tour offers the backstory about the structures that now house eateries, antiques shops, boutiques, music venues, and a winery. Depression-era federal funds built the nearby 1939 art deco-style Municipal Auditorium, which staged musical stars from Duke Ellington to Elvis Presley. It still hosts live shows, including the Kenneth Threadgill Concert Series, named for the Greenville native who went on to become a roots music legend in Austin. The Audie Murphy/American Cotton Museum illustrates the area's cotton legacy, along with the story of native son Audie Murphy, the most decorated American soldier of World War II.

★ **HILLSBORO**

Just over a century after Hill County’s grand 1890 courthouse opened, it burned to the ground. With help from Willie Nelson, the county rebuilt the structure to its former glory and today it’s the heart of a vibrant downtown. Area history unfolds at the Hill County Cell Block Museum, located near the courthouse in an 1893 county jail. Nearby neighborhoods of elegant historic homes testify to the 19th-century prosperity of this cotton and railroad town. The Texas Heritage Museum explores the Texas Revolution, the Civil War, the weapons of World War I, Texans in World War II, and the Vietnam War.

★ **MCKINNEY**

Collin McKinney was a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence and the author of a bill establishing the counties of North Texas. Locals honored him by naming both the county, Collin, and its seat, McKinney, after him. He’d be astonished to see what’s become of the once quiet little town center. Downtown’s historic district is one of the largest in

the state and flaunts 100 shops, more than a dozen restaurants, and a luxury hotel that housed the 1880s mercantile and opera house of brothers Stephen and John Heard. Stephen Heard’s restored 1900 Victorian mansion is now the Heard-Craig Center for the Arts, hosting house tours, art exhibits, and educational programs. John Heard’s daughter, Bessie, turned her love of wildlife into the Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary. Life from 1850 through 1930 comes alive at Chestnut Square Historical Park, which presents living history events, an annual ice cream festival, and one of the top farmers markets in Texas. The 1875 Collin County Courthouse served as a seat of government during its first century. A recent rehabilitation converted it into a seat of the arts, the McKinney Performing Arts Center.

★ **MESQUITE**

Established in 1873 and likely named after a nearby creek, this town is filled with local folklore and history. Outlaws Jesse James, Cole Younger, and



Texas Heritage Museum at Hill College, Hillsboro



Nash Farm, Grapevine



Florence Ranch Homestead, Mesquite



Fort Worth Stockyards Cattle Drive, Fort Worth



The Statler Hotel, Dallas



1894 Hopkins County Courthouse, Sulphur Springs



Baccus Plaza in Legacy Town Center, Plano



Historic McKinney Farmers Market at Chestnut Square, McKinney



1926 Plaza Theatre, Paris

Belle Starr lived in the area in the late 1800s, and Sam Bass once held up a Texas and Pacific train as it passed through town. These days you'll find more law-abiding characters there, though the spirit of the Wild West rings true at the Mesquite ProRodeo arena, home of the Mesquite Championship Rodeo. Among the more highly regarded early Mesquite residents were David and Julie Florence, who built a clapboard ranch house in 1871. Today, the Florence Ranch Homestead is an outstanding example of late-19th-century rural Texas architecture and pioneer ranching. At the Opal Lawrence Historical Park, you can learn about the agricultural lifestyle of one of Mesquite's earliest families. The Mesquite Arts Center celebrates all things artistic.

NOCONA

Named in honor of Peta Nocona, a Comanche chief and husband of Cynthia Ann Parker, the town was first known to white settlers as the last stop in Texas before crossing the Red River on the Chisholm Trail. Nocona attracted many people who were looking for opportunities, including boot maker H.J. Justin. His business, Justin Boots, along with his daughter Enid's Nocona Boot Company, made the town the leather goods capital of the Southwest. Boot makers can still be found in Nocona, and the popular Chisholm Trail Ranch Rodeo is held annually. The Tales 'N' Trails Museum paints a vivid picture of North Texas history. Along Nocona's historic Clay Street, century-old buildings now house restaurants, shops, and the Horton Classic Car Museum.

! ★ 🏛️ PARIS

You just might hear a "Bonjour, Y'all!" when visiting Paris, though there seems to be some question as to whether this charming town is named for the more-renowned city in France. Nonetheless, Paris claims several structures with classic European touches. You'll even find a Texan-ized Eiffel Tower here. The beautiful Lamar County Courthouse that presides over downtown was built of marble and pink granite from the same quarry as the State Capitol. A stroll away is the downtown plaza, centered around the grand Culbertson Fountain, which was built in 1927 after a fire destroyed most of downtown. The restored 1926 Plaza Theatre hosts popular productions of the Paris Community Theater. Down the street is another European touch, an 1831 peristyle located at Bywaters Park, which hosts free summer concerts by the oldest municipal band in Texas. Perhaps the

city's most notable historic structure is the 1867 Sam Bell Maxey House State Historic Site. Visitors to this Texas Historical Commission property are guided through the Victorian-era home of the Maxey and Long families, and learn how an upper middle-class family lived in the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

PLANO

Plano's sleepy historic downtown has come to life in recent years, and is now a vibrant collection of businesses in late-1800s-era storefronts along authentic red-brick streets. The city honors its origins as a cattle drive stop along the Shawnee Trail with lifelike bronze cattle crossing the Baccus Plaza in Legacy Town Center. Transportation history is brought to life at the Interurban Railway Museum, housed in the original 1908 structure. Once a vital part of the Texas Electric Railway, which stretched from Denison to Waco, the Interurban is one of the original electric cars that ran on the tracks through Plano. For a taste of pioneer and farm life on the North Texas blackland prairie, visit the Heritage Farmstead Museum, where living history and hands-on experiences will take you back in time.

★ SHERMAN

Sherman became the county seat of Grayson County in 1846, and by 1850 it was a stop on the Butterfield Overland Mail route through Texas. Austin College opened its doors to students that same year, making it one of the oldest colleges in the state. You can learn more about area history at the Sherman Museum, located in the former Carnegie Library. In historic downtown Sherman you'll find retail shops, restaurants, museums, and arts and cultural venues housed in an eclectic mix of buildings dating to the mid-1800s. The Sherman Preservation League is custodian of a community treasure: the C.S. Roberts House and Museum. The league also hosts an annual homes tour in the elegant neighborhood around Crockett Street each spring.

🏛️ SULPHUR SPRINGS

Originally called Bright Star, the town became Sulphur Springs in 1871, when entrepreneurs used nearby mineral springs to promote the community as a health resort. In 1894, the town got its own courthouse, which is very similar to the structure in Waxahachie, designed by the same famous architect, J. Reily Gordon. The restored Hopkins County Courthouse rises above a recently transformed historic

downtown district of antiques shops, restaurants, and specialty stores. The Hopkins County Museum and Heritage Park is right off the square, and contains more than a dozen relocated historic structures. Hopkins County is one of the state's top-producing dairy counties, and that heritage is celebrated at the Southwest Dairy and Education Center.

TERRELL

Trains, planes, and automobiles have all played a role in Terrell's colorful history. In 1873, town namesake Robert Terrell donated 100 acres to the railroad in exchange for a depot on the rail line. In the 1890s, Terrell became the headquarters of one of the most prosperous short-line railroads in the country, headed by Col. E.H.R. "Ned" Green, who was quite a character. In 1899, Green made the first automobile trip in Texas, a jaunt from Terrell to Dallas. He was also in the first auto accident in Texas. Planes entered into the picture during World War II, when British pilots came to Terrell to learn to fly at the first and largest civilian training school in the U.S. That fascinating story is told at the No. 1 British Flying Training School Museum, located at the airport. Downtown, visitors can stroll through Terrell's historic district and see the Terrell Heritage Museum in the old Carnegie Library building to find out more about the area's past.

★ VERNON

A short drive north of Vernon is a humble adobe building that remains a touchstone of the Texas cowboy culture. In 1881, the first Willbarger County settlers, the Doan family, built a store and home near a low-water crossing of the Red River. They catered to cowhands herding longhorns up the great Western Trail. Quanah Parker traded here and became a friend of the Doan family. Each year since 1884, the public celebrates that trail-driving past with a picnic at the store on the first Saturday of May, the state's oldest continuing event. The Red River Valley Museum recalls the area's rich ranching heritage and displays sculptures of noted artist-rancher Electra Waggoner Biggs. Downtown, the refurbished Vernon Plaza Theatre shows classic and current films.

★ WAXAHACHIE

Waxahachie is proud of its history, and its vibrant downtown is a testament to that fact. Few courthouses are as inspiring as the ornate 1897 Ellis County Courthouse, which presides over bustling

downtown shops and restaurants inside adapted century-old structures. There are more than 300 structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Out-of-towners drop by the 1889 Masonic Temple for its visitors center and heritage exhibits at the Ellis County Museum. An 1889 truss bridge serves as a hike-and-bike trail pedestrian crossing a few steps away from the restored depot. Waxahachie is also known as the Gingerbread City because of neighborhoods filled with ornate Victorian-era homes, which have caught Hollywood's eye—more than 30 movies have been filmed there. One of Waxahachie's must-see attractions is surrounded by shade trees at Getzendaner Park. As part of an adult education movement, originally started in New York, the Chautauqua Auditorium seats 2,500 in an octagonal open-air pavilion built in 1902. It remains the only operating Chautauqua hall in Texas.

★ WEATHERFORD

Weatherford's crown jewel is the breathtaking Parker County Courthouse. Located in the geographic center of the county, the restored structure is the heart of downtown and the entire community. Visit the historic shops around the square, and take a driving tour through tree-shaded avenues lined with elegant historic homes. A highlight is the home of Mary Martin, the Hollywood star, and son Larry Hagman, famous for his well-known TV roles. Chandor Gardens is located in the historic district, another popular attraction.

The Doss Heritage and Culture Center shares the history of Parker County and Texas. Get information on other local attractions at the restored 1908 Santa Fe Depot visitors center.

WICHITA FALLS

Ranching, railroads, and petroleum provided wealth to this community, which is reflected in several historic districts. The Depot Square Historic District includes oil-boom skyscrapers, plus an oddly narrow building that has been called the world's littlest skyscraper. The Kemp Center for the Arts is the heart of the creative community in the area. The Art on the Green outdoor sculpture garden is an oasis in downtown Wichita Falls enjoyed by locals and visitors. Several museums will intrigue visitors, including the Kell House, which details the lifestyle of a prominent early family. The Museum of North Texas History preserves the heritage of this part of the state. 🗺️



1886 Parker County Courthouse, Weatherford



Ellis County Courthouse, Waxahachie



Military Sword at Sam Bell Maxey House State Historic Site, Paris



Socorro Mission, El Paso



Mountain

TRAIL REGION

Historic Vistas and Rugged Tales

Breathtaking mountains and high-country hikes. Dramatic river canyons and exotic desert panoramas. These sights and more delight visitors at every turn in the six West Texas counties of the Mountain Trail Region.

Stretched across two time zones, this region is a geological wonder. Ancient continental shifting and volcanic action shaped the land and millennia of wind and water sculpted majestic mountains and mesas.

The Rio Grande gradually carved a deep notch in the mountains, creating a natural river crossing that Spanish explorers named El Paso del Norte. The river also created glorious canyons in today's Big Bend National Park. Throughout the centuries, the climate grew hotter and the land drier.

A century before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, Spanish explorer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca traveled with the first European expedition here in the 1530s. He encountered agricultural communities and scattered nomadic tribes.

In 1598, Juan de Oñate crossed the Rio Grande in present-day El Paso. He set up a provincial capital connected to Mexico City by an 1,800-mile road, El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (the Royal Road of the Interior). The trade and supply trail passed through El Paso, where a permanent mission was founded in 1659. In 1680 Pueblo tribes revolted, sending Spanish settlers fleeing out of the Santa Fe region with Tigua and other

Indians to establish the El Paso settlements of Ysleta and Socorro, Texas' oldest permanent communities.

During the mid- to late-1800s, Apache and Comanche tribes raided across the region. To thwart raids and facilitate westward travel, the U.S. Army established military outposts. Far West Texas became a central destination for trade and travel. Prospectors passed through en route to California gold mines, and stagecoaches brought mail and new residents along the San Antonio-El Paso and Butterfield Overland Mail routes.

Mining operations tapped veins of silver, copper, mercury, and other minerals found in the mountains. The arrival of four railroads into El Paso in the early 1880s sealed its future as a commercial and cultural crossroads.

Railroads also attracted ranchers to the vast rangelands of the Davis Mountains and Big Bend. Large ranches, some of which still operate today, provided the primary economic base for the region well into the 20th century.

Today, the allure of the Texas Mountain Trail Region is reflected in its captivating history and in vistas found nowhere else in the state.

MOUNTAIN TRAIL REGION



FEATURED COMMUNITIES

The following cities and areas are highlighted in this chapter:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Alpine | Guadalupe Mountains National Park | Presidio |
| Big Bend Region | Marathon | Sierra Blanca |
| El Paso | Marfa | Van Horn |
| Fort Davis | | |

THC STATE HISTORIC SITES

- Magoffin Home, El Paso



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- Hudspeth County
- Jeff Davis County
- Presidio County



Big Bend Ranch State Park, near Presidio



Big Bend National Park



1886 Presidio County Courthouse, Marfa



Frijole Ranch History Museum, Guadalupe Mountains National Park

ALPINE

Situated at the edge of the desert, between Big Bend National Park and the Davis Mountains, Alpine is right in the middle of everything to see and do in this part of the state. The town was founded in 1882, when the Southern Pacific Railroad instituted a watering stop here to fill steam locomotives. In 1887 Alpine became the seat of Brewster County, and a red-brick courthouse was built, which still graces downtown. That's a good place to start a walking tour of the historic downtown area. Inside the courthouse you'll find the Hall of History, offering a glimpse of yesteryear through historic photos.

Sul Ross State University has been part of Alpine's cultural life since it opened in 1920. The Museum of the Big Bend is located on campus and recounts the natural and cultural heritage of the Big Bend region. The museum also hosts Trappings of Texas, an annual show of contemporary Western arts and crafts. Another favorite tradition is the Texas Cowboy Poetry Gathering, which celebrates the working cowboy with poetry, stories, and music every year. Built in 1928, the Holland Hotel is at the center of a bustling downtown surrounded by interesting shops and restaurants.

BIG BEND REGION

Remote. Rugged. Wild. The Big Bend region of Texas contains several tourism draws for those with an adventurous spirit. The area includes both a national and state park that together preserve more than a million acres of public land. Situated on the United States' boundary with Mexico along the Rio Grande, it is a place where countries and cultures meet. The parks are the primary draw, but gateway communities have their own stories to tell, which contribute to the rich mosaic of history and culture that awaits travelers to the region.

Big Bend National Park is a remote treasure covering 800,000 acres. While the park is famous for its natural beauty and recreational opportunities, its cultural history is abundant. Native peoples lived in or passed through this area for thousands of years. From archeological sites dating back nearly 10,000 years to ranches and mining operations from the 20th century, the park is a great place to explore.

Today, you can drive along portions of the Comanche Trail on modern roads first built by the young men of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). In the early 1930s, the CCC constructed the road into the Chisos Mountains Basin, which made



Big Bend National Park



Museum of the Big Bend, Alpine

the creation of the park possible. Exhibits at the park's five visitors centers interpret Big Bend's geology and archeology, in addition to its human history. Drive-by exhibits along park roads further explore a variety of topics. The park also maintains several National Register districts. The Castolon Historic District has long been a stopping point for visitors heading to Santa Elena Canyon, but it suffered a devastating fire in May 2019. Some buildings were significantly damaged, and the site is currently closed. The Alvino House, the oldest adobe structure in the area, survived intact.

The Hot Springs Historic District preserves a fertile history of human occupation from thousands of years ago along with the not-so-distant past. You can see pictographs, visible along a cliff wall, and soak in the hot water that bubbles up through the ground in the ruins of the old bathhouse.

The Mariscal Mining Historic District contains a mercury mining site, the best preserved of its kind in the state. The mine once bustled as the center of the Big Bend quicksilver mining economy.

At 300,000 acres, Big Bend Ranch State Park is the largest in the state park system. When it was acquired, it more than doubled the amount of state park acreage in the state. For over 10,000 years, people have settled in the canyons, mountains, and valleys here and the materials and structures they left behind tell their stories.

By the 1880s, several hardy families had established ranches. The remnants of the Crawford-Smith Ranch in Fresno Canyon illustrate the challenges of ranching

in the high desert. Ranchers grew crops, raised goats, and operated a wax-rendering plant that provided wax to waterproof World War I military supplies. Visitors can see the ruins of these operations in the eastern portion of the park.

The land that was to become the park was amassed beginning in 1905. It changed hands several times. Thanks to the efforts of both individuals and groups involved in land conservation, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department was able to purchase the ranch in 1988. Big Bend Ranch State Park opened fully to the public in 2007 and has miles of trails for hiking, equestrian use, and mountain biking.

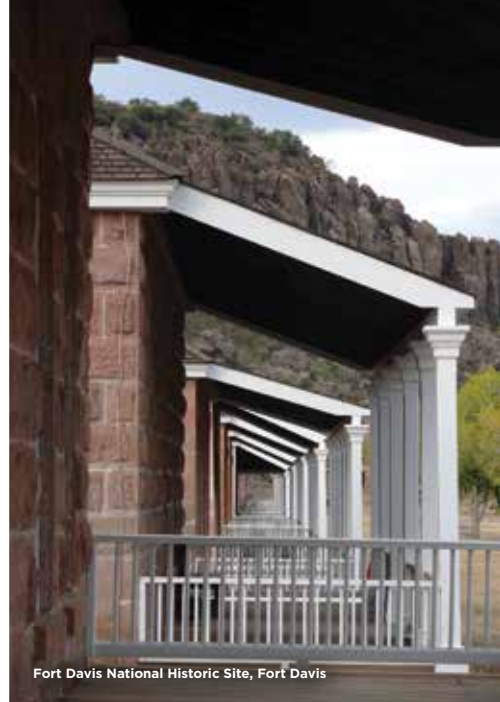
All visitors to Big Bend Ranch should stop at the Saucedo Historic District. You can pick up a walking guide at the park headquarters. The buildings were constructed in the early 1900s and a variety of improvements have been added over the years. Built in the 1960s, the bunkhouse offers visitor lodging with separate dormitory-style rooms for men and women.

Tucked in the lowland desert between the national and state parks lie the small communities of Study Butte, Terlingua, and Lajitas. The remains of the Big Bend Quicksilver Mine can be found at the base of Study Butte, which serves as the western entrance to the national park. A smattering of motels, restaurants, shops, and outfitters occupy the streets where miners once struggled to survive on meager wages.

The name Terlingua has been applied to three different settlements in this area, with the current version founded after the discovery of quicksilver



McDonald Observatory, Fort Davis



Fort Davis National Historic Site, Fort Davis

in the late 1800s. In 1906, wealthy businessman Howard Perry built a mansion overlooking the town. The Chisos Mining Company provided employment for hundreds of workers, many of whom lived in the simple, stacked-rock structures that still stand. Quicksilver mining peaked by the end of World War I. Many of the original mining buildings are filled with saloons, eateries, and small shops today, and a number of the tiny rock structures have been restored to serve as residences for Big Bend's desert dwellers. The Perry Mansion underwent a restoration in 2014, and guest rooms are available in the historic old building.

Cross-river commerce to Lajitas increased substantially after quicksilver was discovered, and a store that doubled as a saloon was soon built along with a church. After the boom ended, the land here changed hands over the decades, and in the 1970s, a Houston businessman bought the town and created a Western-style tourist destination. Subsequent owners continued to develop the idea. Today, Lajitas is a desert resort town on one of the state's most spectacular drives, the River Road. The twisting, rollercoaster-like drive shadows the Rio Grande for more than 100 miles, from Lajitas to Candelaria. East of Lajitas is the Barton Warnock Visitor Center, the eastern gateway to Big Bend Ranch State Park. At the renovated interpretive center, the exhibit, "Una Tierra - One Land," is the collaborative effort of state and national park experts in Texas and the Mexican states of Coahuila and Chihuahua, with information

on the natural history and geology of these regions presented in both English and Spanish.

! EL PASO

At the western tip of Texas, where the state meets New Mexico and Old Mexico, lies El Paso, the largest international metropolis in the world. Its four hundred years of history is a tapestry woven from a vibrant blend of cultures.

In 1581, Spanish explorers reached the Rio Grande and observed a pass between two mountain ranges, rising out of the desert. They named it El Paso del Norte (the Pass of the North), and it was colonized in 1598. New settlements were founded by Spanish colonists as well as Tigua Indians in the 17th century. The trade route through this area became one of the historic Camino Reales, or royal highways, from Mexico through Texas.

Not until the end of the Mexican War, in 1848, did El Paso finally become a part of the U.S., with the establishment one year later of the military post that eventually became Fort Bliss. The Southern Pacific Railroad arrived in 1881. In 1911, the Mexican Revolution ushered in a new era as refugees streamed into the city, bringing their rich cultural traditions with them.

Downtown is a great place to start your exploration of this history. At the El Paso Visitor Center you can learn about the many attractions and historic districts throughout town and in the near vicinity. Besides tourism information, the center also displays

a restored 1857 locomotive, a symbol of the town's railroad history. Step back in time as you wander the streets of the historic downtown using the Visit El Paso app, which offers driving, biking, and walking tours.

As El Paso prospered after the railroad arrived, the downtown also blossomed. Many fine buildings were designed by famed regional architect Henry C. Trost, including the grand Hotel Paso del Norte. Opened in 1912, the hotel retains its original Tiffany stained-glass dome. Other downtown hotels in historic buildings include the Plaza Hotel Pioneer Plaza, Aloft in the O.T. Bassett Tower, and Hotel Indigo. Another architectural wonder is the restored Plaza Theatre, a Spanish Colonial Revival structure built in 1930. While downtown, explore the vast multicultural and multinational history of the area at the El Paso Museum of History. Next door is the El Paso Art Museum, featuring an impressive and eclectic collection. Another notable downtown site is the Holocaust Museum.

Less than a mile away from the downtown center, you'll find the Magoffin Home State Historic Site, the beautifully renovated 1875 residence of one of El Paso's earliest community leaders. This Texas Historical Commission site offers a glimpse of an elegant El Paso past. The historical significance of the home lies in its unique adobe architecture and in the history of the Magoffins and their descendants, who lived in the home for more than 100 years. A multicultural family, the Magoffins were active and influential participants in their community and are representative of the diversity of this borderland community.

El Paso's Scenic Drive will lead you to other interesting sites. The drive skirts around the edge of Franklin Mountains, revealing expansive views on both sides of the river. From there you can detour into Franklin Mountains State Park, the largest urban park in the nation. Two additional museums are located nearby. At the Border Patrol Museum you can journey through the history of this federal force.



Plaza Classic Film Festival in the 1930 Restored Plaza Theatre, El Paso



"The Pinery," Guadalupe Mountains National Park



Magoffin Home State Historic Site, El Paso

The El Paso Museum of Archaeology tells of the first inhabitants of the El Paso area, and the grounds include a nature trail.

For another view of area flora, check out the Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens on the University of Texas El Paso campus. In El Paso's upper valley, explore the Keystone Heritage Park, where you'll find a garden and a natural wetland beside a rare archeological site of unexcavated Native American brush huts dating to 2500 B.C.

For a glimpse of El Paso's military history, visit Fort Bliss. Established in 1848, it's one of the biggest military installations in the country with hundreds of historic buildings. There are several museums at the base, where you can learn more about Fort Bliss, past and present.

Heading southeast from El Paso, you can travel back to the 17th century and visit the earliest European settlements in the area. Along the state's oldest mission trail are two exquisitely restored missions and a presidio chapel, each one gracing

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. Numerous refurbished heritage sites along the trail in Socorro, Ysleta, and San Elizario show the splendid history of this area.

East of El Paso, discover the natural and archeological wonder that is Hueco Tanks State Historic Site. Native Americans camped here for 10,000 years, leaving behind more than 2,000 rock paintings. Unique outcroppings attract rock climbers from around the world.

FORT DAVIS

Nestled in the foothills of the Davis Mountains at just over 5,000 feet in elevation, Fort Davis is the highest town in Texas and enjoys more moderate weather than just about anywhere else in the state. It was the area's "pure water and salubrious climate" that led to its selection for a frontier fort in 1854.

The fort played a significant role in the defense and development of West Texas, and an account of the area's lively military history, including that of the Buffalo Soldiers, is told at Fort Davis National



Thanksgiving Reenactment at San Elizario Mission, San Elizario

Historic Site, considered to be one of the nation's most well-preserved frontier forts. The site has been thoughtfully renovated, with interpretive displays throughout the buildings and grounds.

In 1859, the Butterfield Overland Mail route relocated to Fort Davis. The only existing unpaved portion of the original trail is still in use today as one of the town's streets. In 1913 on another downtown street, Hotel Limpia opened to accommodate guests—and it still hosts visitors to this day. The hotel is one of dozens of historic sites in the town and just one stop along a popular historic walking tour. Another impressive site is the Jeff Davis County Courthouse.

The natural beauty around Fort Davis is on glorious display along the popular Scenic Loop Drive. The 75-mile loop passes by Davis Mountains State Park, which offers camping, picnicking, hiking trails, and an interpretive center. The park's pueblo-style Indian Lodge, built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps, has been a preferred place to stay for generations. Further along the loop is the McDonald Observatory, which hosts regularly scheduled star parties. Just south of town, you'll find the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center and Botanical Gardens, home to an arboretum and a greenhouse with more than 200 species of the area's desert cacti.

GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

You can stand on top of Texas at this remarkable national park, situated 110 miles east of El Paso. It's a hiker's paradise, with more than 80 miles of trails over ruggedly gorgeous terrain. The park also contains some of the earliest remnants of our frontier past. At the Pine Springs Visitor Center, interpretive exhibits will help familiarize you with the park for your visit. Just outside the door is a short hiking trail that leads to the ruins of a Butterfield Overland Mail stage station. McKittrick Canyon attracts thousands of visitors each year, seeking to enjoy its hidden splendor and stunning fall colors. Wallace Pratt and his family donated the canyon to the National Park Service in 1960. His 1930s-era wood-and-stone cabin, located in the canyon, is now listed on the National Register. The Frijole Ranch Cultural Museum resides in a ranch house, which has played a part in the history of this area since the late 1800s. On the park's western edge, the farming community of Dell City is the gateway to the Salt Basin Dunes, a 2,000-acre expanse of glittering white sands, set



HISTORIC HOTELS

Authenticity and Architectural Integrity

Railroads reached far West Texas in the early 1880s, and visitors in need of lodging soon followed. Lavish hotels popped up throughout the region, many designed by renowned El Paso architect Henry C. Trost. For nearly a century, these hotels served as gathering places for cattlemen, ranchers, and miners, while welcoming cross-country travelers, as they do to this day.

These rehabilitated historic hotels have become tourist icons, providing modern accommodations and services amid the rustic setting of the Texas Mountain Trail Region.

1. Hotel Paso del Norte, El Paso
2. Cibolo Creek Ranch, Marfa
3. Gage Hotel, Marathon
4. Holland Hotel, Alpine
5. Hotel Limpia, Fort Davis
6. Indian Lodge, Fort Davis
7. Hotel Paisano, Marfa
8. Hotel El Capitan, Van Horn

texastimetravel.com

against the backdrop of Texas' highest peaks. A walk among the luminous white dunes, which rise up to 60 feet above the desert, is a one-of-a-kind experience in the state.

MARATHON

Named by an early rancher who thought the area resembled Marathon, Greece, this railroad community also prospered as a cattle and mining

shipment center. Alfred S. Gage arrived here in 1882 with only a \$20 gold piece in his pocket and went on to establish a ranching empire. In 1927, after moving to San Antonio, he built the Gage Hotel so that he would have a comfortable place to stay whenever he visited town. The renovated 1927 Gage Hotel still offers fine accommodations and dining. Five miles south of town, enjoy Post Park on the Peña Colorado River. The former U.S. Army Camp Peña Colorado was established here in 1880. A little further south, just outside the entrance to Big Bend National Park, you'll find Hallie's Hall of Fame Museum, which commemorates Hallie Stillwell, one of the Big Bend's most colorful characters. Inquire at the Stillwell Store.

MARFA

One of Marfa's claims to fame is the mysterious Marfa Lights, which were first documented in 1883. If these mystery ghost lights are cooperating, you can view them any time after sunset at the Marfa Lights

Viewing Area, east of town. In 1885, the railroad town was named the county seat and a majestic courthouse was built, which has since been restored and still anchors the center of town. You'll find the Marfa and Presidio County Museum in a gracious 1880s home nearby. Also downtown is the historic Hotel Paisano, which opened in 1930. In 1955, the hotel was home base for the star-studded cast of the epic movie "Giant," and there are exhibits dedicated to the film in the lobby. A star from the modern art world arrived in Marfa in the mid-1970s. Visionary artist Donald Judd purchased ranchland property and the grounds of Fort D.A. Russell, a military outpost first established in 1911, and transformed old abandoned fort structures into a modern home for contemporary art, now known as the Chinati Foundation.

PRESIDIO

Presidio and its neighbor across the river, Ojiaga, share a history as part of an ancient farm and trade area. In the 1700s the Spaniards built a fort, Presidio



The Chinati Foundation, Marfa



1920 Hudspeth County Courthouse, Sierra Blanca



Fort Leaton State Historic Site, Presidio



1886 Presidio County Courthouse, Marfa



Clark Hotel Museum, Van Horn

del Norte, on the southern bank of the river to protect area missions. Today you can stroll through St. Francis Plaza, a walled garden dedicated to the contributions of the Franciscan missionaries that served both cities. In 1848, Ben Leaton built his own adobe fort on a bluff overlooking the Rio Grande. U.S. Army forts had not yet been established on the frontier, thus Fort Leaton was the only bastion north of the Rio Grande offering protection. Fort Leaton State Historic Site serves as the visitors center at the nearby western entrance of Big Bend Ranch State Park.

Heading north from Presidio on the scenic River Road will take you to remote historic communities. By 1914, farmers in Ruidosa had settled the riverfront. They also built the remarkable Misión del Sagrado Corazon Catholic Church. Now, Ruidosa is virtually a ghost town, but the church endures as one of the most significant adobe religious structures in Texas. For another sort of adventure, head north from Ruidosa to Chinati Hot Springs, where you can stay in refurbished 1930s-era stone cabins and swim in hot spring water. The River Road ends at Candelaria, where a former cotton gin, a small Catholic church, and several adobe houses mark a once-thriving border town.


North of Presidio, on Highway 67, you'll find another ghost town, Shafter, which straddles Cibolo Creek in the shadow of the Chinati Mountains. Shafter's historic district includes the Concordia and Brooks cemeteries.

SIERRA BLANCA

Hudspeth County has the only courthouse in Texas to be constructed of adobe. Completed in 1922, the structure is the jewel of Sierra Blanca. It was geographic serendipity that the remote town of Sierra Blanca grew as a ranching and shipping center. The Southern Pacific and Texas and Pacific Railroads, which were competing for a second transcontinental line, came within 10 miles of each other in late 1881. Neither would yield the route to the other, but a compromise was reached that joined the two lines where the town now stands.

VAN HORN

Twelve miles south of Van Horn, a natural watering hole (now known as Van Horn Wells) attracted Native Americans for centuries. The arrival of the railroad in the 1880s spurred growth in the region, but gunfights remained an occasional method for resolving conflict, a predicament not uncommon along Texas' early Western frontier. It took more effective law enforcement, the turn of the century, and the opening of national parks to the north and south of Van Horn to provide it with a friendlier character, one it shares with thousands of travelers today who pass through the town on their way to the Guadalupe Mountains and Carlsbad Caverns to the north or the Big Bend region due south.

Guests once stayed at the historic Clark Hotel, the oldest building in town, which now serves as the Clark Hotel Museum and tells the stories of Culberson County. Today, visitors often choose to check into the revitalized Hotel El Capitan, a Henry Trost-designed classic. 



PECOS RIVER HIGH BRIDGE

HIGH CANYON WALLS DOMINATE THE LAST SIXTY MILES OF THE PECOS RIVER BEFORE IT ENTERS THE RIO GRANDE. THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD BUILT THE FIRST HIGH BRIDGE ACROSS THE PECOS RIVER IN 1891. THE FIRST HIGHWAY BRIDGE TO SPAN THE RIVER WAS BUILT ONE MILE DOWN RIVER FROM HERE IN 1923. JUST FIFTY FEET ABOVE WATER, THE 1923 BRIDGE WAS DESTROYED BY FLOODWATERS IN 1934. TWO TEMPORARY LOW WATER BRIDGES BUILT NEARBY IN 1934 AND 1935 ALSO WERE DESTROYED BY FLOODWATERS. A NEW 1,310-FOOT LONG BRIDGE WAS COMPLETED HERE IN 1957. AT 273 FEET ABOVE THE RIVER, IT IS THE HIGHEST HIGHWAY BRIDGE IN TEXAS.

(1923)



Pecos

TRAIL REGION

Frontier Spirit in Big Sky Country

High tabletop mesas rise above wide-open prairies. Ancient rivers course through rugged limestone canyons. Above it all stretches a sky so big you can almost reach out and touch it.

This is the legendary Wild West found in classic books and movies, and the real-life landscape of the Texas Pecos Trail Region. For centuries, Native Americans hunted buffalo here. Rock art they left behind in the Lower Pecos canyons provides haunting imagery of their lives.

By the mid-1700s, nomadic Comanche tribes swept in, displacing existing Native Americans. They controlled traffic and trade and raided into Mexico along the so-called Comanche Trail, a series of routes later followed by settlers and soldiers.

After the U.S.-Mexico War of 1846-48, the frontier pushed into West Texas, and trade routes were mapped. Many who passed this way faced attacks by Native Americans determined to defend their territory. To safeguard travelers, the U.S. Army established a new line of frontier forts.

In the 1860s, legendary cattlemen Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving drove Longhorns to market up the Pecos River, a gritty trip during which Goodnight first used his new invention, the chuck wagon. The Goodnight-Loving Trail became one of the Southwest's most heavily used cattle trails.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the U.S. Army drove a dwindling number of Native Americans from the

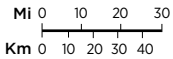
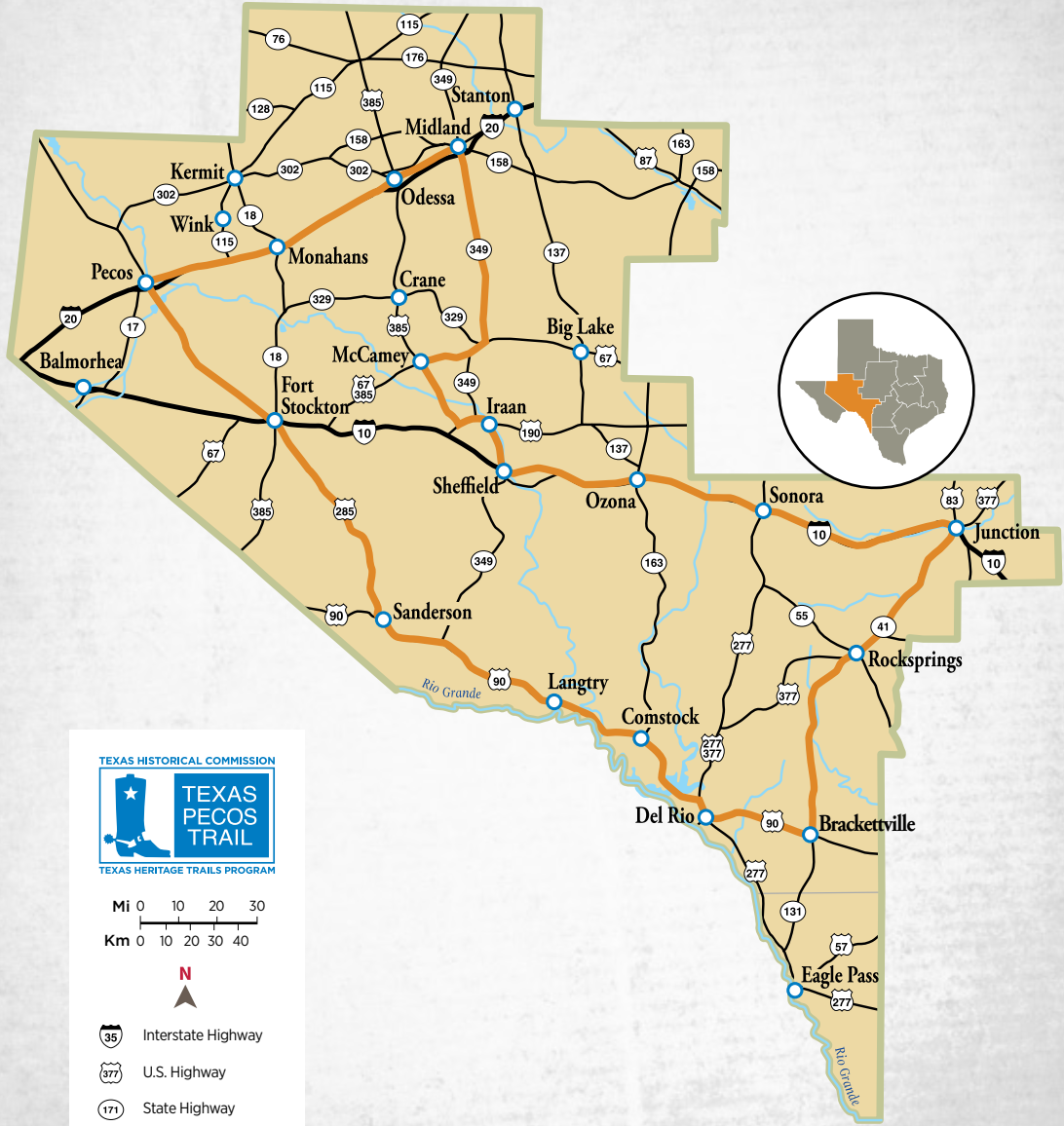
plains into government reservations. The end of the Indian Wars coincided with a pivotal moment in West Texas history: the arrival of the railroad.

Because the railroad's steam locomotives required water, watering stops popped up across West Texas, and towns developed around them, drawing cowboys, gunslingers, and outlaws on the run. In the rough-and-tumble Wild West, the job of keeping order lay with hard-nosed legendary lawmen, such as "Law West of the Pecos" Judge Roy Bean.

When oil was discovered in the Permian Basin in the 1920s, ranchers became overnight millionaires, and sleepy ranch towns exploded into oil-boom cities. Riches from ranching and petroleum continued to turn remote villages into towns and, in the case of Midland and Odessa, small towns into bustling cities.

Today's modern highways in the region follow the paths of ancient trails, carrying travelers in the footsteps of those who have come before: prehistoric people, Spanish explorers, Plains Indians, ranchers, farmers, and oilmen. Visitors to the 22 West Texas counties of the Texas Pecos Trail Region will experience the true Western heritage of the Big Sky Country.

PECOS TRAIL REGION



- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- 1968 Texas Pecos Trail

FEATURED COMMUNITIES

The following cities are highlighted in this chapter:

- | | | |
|---------------|----------|-------------|
| Balmorhea | Iraan | Ozona |
| Big Lake | Junction | Pecos |
| Brackettville | Kermit | Rocksprings |
| Comstock | Langtry | Sanderson |
| Crane | McCamey | Sheffield |
| Del Rio | Midland | Sonora |
| Eagle Pass | Monahans | Stanton |
| Fort Stockton | Odessa | Wink |



Monahans Sandhills State Park, Monahans



Ellen Noel Art Museum, Odessa



Laughlin Heritage Foundation Museum, Del Rio



Crockett County Museum, Ozona



Fort Lancaster State Historic Site, Sheffield



West of the Pecos Museum, Pecos



MAIN STREET CITIES

Del Rio
Eagle Pass



THC STATE HISTORIC SITES

Fort Lancaster, Sheffield



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Edwards County
Maverick County
Sutton County
Val Verde County

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, TXDOT; AUBREY STOPA; THC (X3); AUBREY STOPA

BALMORHEA

Dubbed the “Oasis of West Texas,” Balmorhea is best known for the cool, clear waters of San Solomon Springs. For centuries, Native Americans camped here, as did Spanish explorers. Mexican farmers came in the 1850s. After 1900, Anglo farmers arrived, brought in by developers who gave the town its name—Balcum, Moore, and Rhea. In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps built the world’s largest spring-fed swimming pool over the springs and added adobe lodging that is still available to visitors today. The waters are home to two endangered desert fishes, which are now protected through a unique cienega project that created a desert wetland, complete with an underwater viewing area. A short drive west of the park you’ll find Calera Chapel (aka Mission Mary), which has been lovingly restored to its 1930s-era appearance.



Balmorhea State Park, Toyahvale

BIG LAKE

There was once a lake here, but now the town’s namesake is the state’s largest dry lakebed. The springs flowed for centuries, attracting Native Americans, Mexican traders, and cattle drivers. After 1900, the lake attracted Anglo settlers and the railroad. In 1923, another kind of liquid turned Big Lake into a boomtown, when the Santa Rita No. 1 oil well blew. A replica rig and state marker designate the discovery well of the Permian Basin. After the oil boom, Big Lake became the seat of Reagan County; its historic 1927 courthouse is still in use today. The former county seat, Stiles, is now a ghost town, and picturesque ruins of its 1911 native-stone courthouse are visible just off the highway.

BRACKETTVILLE

Although a nearby replica of the Alamo, now permanently closed to the public, stood in for the real



Calera Chapel, near Balmorhea



Black Seminole Indian Scout Cemetery, Brackettville



Paisano Pete, Fort Stockton

thing in movies and commercials for the last 50 years, Brackettville needs no facsimile when it comes to authentic buildings from the Texas frontier. The city's collection of 19th century architecture includes the former county courthouse, which was built in 1879 and served as a post office and then a Masonic Lodge after a new courthouse was completed in 1911. Nearby Fort Clark, established as a frontier defense in the mid-1800s and now a residential resort, maintains some of the best period architecture in the state. Beautifully restored officers' quarters, cavalry barracks, and the guardhouse—the Fort's museum—join a list of other notable historic sites around town. Black Seminole Indian Scouts served at the fort in the 1870s and many are buried at the cemetery outside town. These fierce fighters and expert trackers played a major role in protecting the Texas frontier. Brackettville is also the southern gateway to Kickapoo Cavern State Park, a great spot for cave tours and Mexican free-tailed bat flight observations.

COMSTOCK

Ancient rock art is Comstock's calling card. Rock shelters in lower Pecos River canyons served as massive canvases on which world-class ancient pictographs were created. Fate Bell Shelter contains some of North America's oldest Native American pictographs and is the centerpiece of Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site, where interpretive tours are offered regularly. Exhibits at the park depict life in a rock shelter, as well as the continent's oldest and southernmost buffalo jump, which is a cliff formation

Native Americans used to hunt bison. Other exhibits chronicle the clash of U.S. Army soldiers and Native Americans, early ranching and railroading, and the construction of the Pecos High Bridge. Though it was replaced in 1944, the bridge still provides a panoramic view of the Pecos River canyon, where another major rock shelter, White Shaman Preserve, is open for rock art tours.

CRANE

After oil was discovered in 1927, Crane County was organized and its only town, Crane, named the county seat. Historic trails forded the Pecos River nearby, at Horsehead Crossing. A roadside park several miles south of town bears a state historical marker that marks the site where Native Americans, explorers, soldiers, and adventurers traversed the wild river. Artifacts from the crossing are displayed at the Museum of the Desert Southwest. Between Crane and McCamey, a unique geological feature called Castle Gap has been fascinating travelers for centuries. The gap is a mile long and only yards wide at its narrowest point. Native Americans passed through here before it became part of the Butterfield Overland Mail route and the Goodnight-Loving Trail.

★ DEL RIO

Late 19th century farmers settled along San Felipe Springs, building irrigation canals that are still in use today. They called their community San Felipe del Rio, later shortened to Del Rio. One of those canals flows through Whitehead Memorial Museum, which

contains a frontier village of historic structures. The restored 1887 Val Verde County Courthouse is another downtown heritage highlight. Art and history come together at the Firehouse Gallery, which contributes to a vibrant and active downtown. The gallery is located in the town's original city hall and fire station. Less than a mile away is Val Verde Winery, the oldest continuously operating winery in Texas.

The U.S. Army patrolled here during the U.S.–Mexico War of 1846–48 and World War I. The 1940s brought an air-training base, now Laughlin Air Force Base. You can find out more about local aviation history at the Laughlin Heritage Foundation Museum. Nearby Amistad Dam and Reservoir, built along the Rio Grande just southwest of Del Rio, has helped transform this arid city into an angler's destination. The Amistad National Recreation Area Visitor Center offers videos and exhibits on the history of the U.S.–Mexico joint venture dam. The annual Fiesta de Amistad features folklorico dancing and friendship ceremonies between officials of Del Rio and Ciudad Acuña, Mexico.

★ EAGLE PASS

Eagle Pass arose from a much smaller settlement not far downriver from its present location. The community moved upstream to take advantage of the safety provided by Fort Duncan, an 1849 military post established along the Rio Grande. You'll want to visit Fort Duncan Park, where it all began. And just down river marks the famous El Camino Real de los Tejas, which was the primary north-south route between Mexico and Texas for two centuries. During the Texas Revolution, Santa Anna and his army crossed into Texas here on their way to the

Battle of the Alamo. Today, Eagle Pass celebrates a spirited heritage legacy that it shares with sister city Piedras Negras, just across the border. The town is particularly proud of its restored Maverick County Courthouse, a Romanesque Revival-style structure built in the 1880s.

FORT STOCKTON

Fort Stockton was once home to Comanche Springs, one of the largest sources of spring water in Texas. It dried up in the 1960s due to excessive pumping of the aquifer. Built in 1859, the fort became a routine rest stop on the Comanche Trail, the Old San Antonio Road, and the Butterfield Overland Mail route. It served as the headquarters of the 9th Cavalry (Buffalo Soldiers), starting in 1867. The strategic location provided a busy center for trade, labor, and business throughout the frontier community. Fort Stockton now offers heritage travelers a look at the ruins of Comanche Springs, the remains of the fort, and the Annie Riggs Memorial Museum, housed in an 1899 hotel.

IRAAN

A 1926 gusher on the ranch of Ira and Ann Yates gave rise to an overnight boomtown. During this time, a young cartoonist named V.T. Hamlin worked in the Yates Field, and his creative mind conjured up images of the dinosaurs that once roamed the region. By 1932, Hamlin's West Texas inspiration led to the first drawings of Alley Oop, one of America's longest-running cartoon strips. To honor him, the city created Alley Oop Fantasy Land that boasts several large reproductions of the strip's characters alongside the Iraan Museum.



Alley Oop Fantasy Land, Iraan



1887 Val Verde County Courthouse, Del Rio



1885 Maverick County Courthouse, Eagle Pass



Historic Trumpet, Fort Stockton



Fort Lancaster State Historic Site, Sheffield



Permian Basin Petroleum Museum, Midland

JUNCTION

Named for its location at the junction of the North and South Llano rivers, this small community was founded in 1876. The Kimble County seat suffered two courthouse fires in its early history, and the current structure that graces downtown was built in 1929. The Kimble County Library honors the memory of Congressman O.C. Fisher with a reproduction of his Washington, D.C., office and exhibits on his 32 years of service. The Kimble County Historical Museum chronicles county history and details the life of another local politician, Coke R. Stevenson, governor of Texas from 1941–1947. Nearby, South Llano River State Park offers camping, hiking, watersports, and wildlife watching. At Schreiner Park in town, a 1937 bridge crosses the river.

KERMIT

Kermit the Frog Boulevard is named in honor of the famous frog who visited this small town in 2005 to kick off a world tour. But the seat of Winkler County was actually named for President Teddy Roosevelt's son, who hunted here shortly before the county organized in 1910. That same year, a local cattleman disassembled his elaborate ranch house and reassembled it in town.

LANGTRY

The legendary Judge Roy Bean didn't put Langtry on the map, but his notoriety has certainly kept it there. The spirit of the "Law West of the Pecos" is commemorated at the Judge Roy Bean Travel Information Center, featuring his restored Jersey



Cactus Garden at
Judge Roy Bean Travel
Information Center, Langtry



Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site, Comstock



First Passenger Train Arriving in 1929, Kermit



American Airpower Heritage Museum, Midland



Museum of the Southwest, Midland

Lilly Saloon and courtroom, where the keen-witted, pistol-packing judge dispensed whiskey and frontier justice. Nearby is his preserved home, called the Opera House. Whereas Bean named his saloon and courtroom after his idol, English actress Lillie Langtry, the town was likely named after an engineer on the Southern Pacific Railroad, which arrived in 1882. The visitors center also features a cactus garden and area travel information.

McCAMEY

The high mesas surrounding McCamey are filled with huge wind turbines, making McCamey the official “Wind Energy Capital of Texas.” McCamey sprang to life in 1925 as a boomtown after wildcatter George B. McCamey discovered oil nearby. Within six months, 10,000 people had moved to the dusty tent city. The Mendoza Trail Museum at Santa Fe Park provides a snapshot of the Wild West with Native American artifacts, fossils, and relics as well as oil boom mementos from the area’s wildcatting days. The 1915 Adrian House is also located at the park. The old Santa Fe Depot was relocated to the park and is now used as a community center.

MIDLAND

Midland may have begun as little more than a halfway point between big cities Dallas and El Paso along the Texas and Pacific Railway, but its long-standing relationship with petroleum has transformed it from rural town to glittering city. Its skyline can be seen from 30 miles away. Midland’s first crack at petroleum prosperity began in the 1920s with the Permian Basin oil boom, a black gold rush that brought thousands of investors and workers into the community. But where there’s a boom, there’s also a bust, and the community hit hard times in the 1930s. Good times rolled back in after 1945, and by mid-century, more

than 200 oil companies had established offices here. This pattern would be repeated several times during the second half of the 20th century and, in fact, has yet to subside in the 21st century.

Midland wasted no time in showcasing its prosperity during the course of its oil boom cycles, creating cultural centers and museums. Relive the powerful story of oil—from its geological origins to final production and delivery—at the Permian Basin Petroleum Museum. West Texas oil helped fuel victory in World War II, and the war’s aviation history is vividly retold at the American Airpower Heritage Museum at Midland International Airport. Downtown is the Midland County History Museum, with a wide variety of artifacts on county history from prehistoric times through the 20th century. At the Museum of the Southwest, you can explore a sculpture garden, children’s museum, art gallery, and planetarium. One of Midland’s most famous residents is honored at The George W. Bush Childhood Home, where the story of a great American family is told and the lives of two presidents, two governors, and two first ladies are celebrated. Local flora, fauna, and cultural history can be found at the Sibley Nature Center in Hogan Park.

MONAHANS

In 1881, Pat Monahan dug the first water well between the Pecos River and Big Spring, and a community called Monahan’s Well sprang up around the tank. Almost half a century later, it was a much bigger tank that put Monahans on the map. An oil company dug a million-barrel oil storage tank near a railroad line, but the first time it was filled, it started leaking and was abandoned. In the 1950s, a clever entrepreneur used it for water-skiing shows, and the city later turned it into a 400-seat amphitheater. The giant, open-air bowl now hosts community events.



George H.W. Bush 1948 Family Residence, Odessa



Presidential Archives and Leadership Library, Odessa



White-Pool House Museum, Odessa



Crockett County Museum, Ozona

The tank is part of the Million Barrel Museum, which also claims a restored 19th century hotel, an early jail, and other historic memorabilia. The museum also displays artifacts and exhibits from the former Rattlesnake Bomber Base Museum in nearby Pyote. Monahans' ancient history is on display at nearby Monahans Sandhills State Park, which offers visitors the thrill of walking and sliding across 4,000 acres of white, glistening sand dunes that were created thousands of years ago. A visitors center includes

exhibits on the environmental forces that shape and maintain the dunes.

ODESSA

Legend has it that immigrant railroad workers named this 1880s railroad water stop after their home in Odessa, Russia. Midwestern settlers followed, including Charles and Lucy White, who built a large home here in 1887. In 1923, the house was bought by Oso Pool, who boarded workers during the 1927 oil

boom. Restored as the White-Pool House Museum, Odessa's oldest home features period furnishings from both eras.

After the railroad arrived, Odessa became a livestock shipping center. The city is home to one of the only museums in the country dedicated solely to the U.S. presidency: the Presidential Archives and Leadership Library. Also on site is the restored and furnished 1940s-era family home of President George H.W. Bush. Next door is the Ellen Noel Art Museum, featuring three galleries of American art. One highlight is Western artist Tom Lea's 17-foot-long mural "Stampede," which was painted in 1940 and originally located in Odessa's downtown post office.

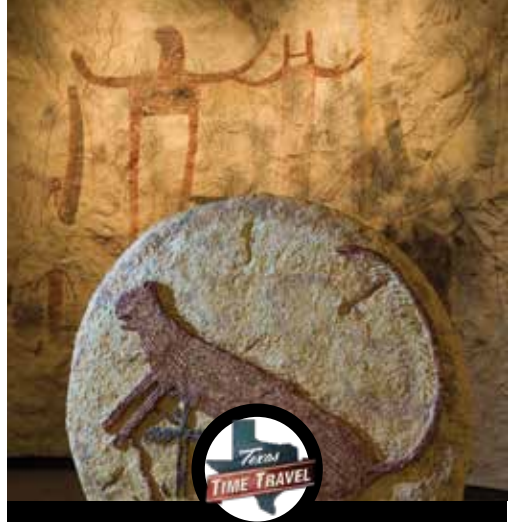
Five miles west of town lies one of the world's most famous meteor craters. Identified in the 1920s, the Odessa Meteor Crater is made of several smaller craters formed more than 20,000 years ago by the impact of thousands of iron meteorites. An interpretive trail leads from a visitors center into the crater of the National Natural Landmark.

OZONA

Pecan trees shade the quaint downtown square of Ozona, the county seat and only town in Crockett County. A bronze sculpture of the county's namesake and Alamo hero, Davy Crockett, greets visitors to the square, along with a sculpture honoring pioneer families. Overlooking the square is the 1902 Crockett County Courthouse. Nearby is the 1926 church that now houses the Crockett County Museum. The town's motto is "Hang Your Hat in History," and museum exhibits tell the rich stories of the region. Right off the interstate, Ozona's visitors center provides information and brochures on the entire Texas Pecos Trail Region. The visitors center includes an interpretive nature trail with descriptions of traditional uses of the native plants.

PECOS

Home to one of the world's first rodeos, Pecos has a long tradition of honoring its cowboy heritage. The town grew out of its strategic location at a crossroads of several old cattle and wagon trails and later, the railroad. Cowboys were drawn to the area, and some friendly competition culminated in a challenge that resulted in the inaugural rodeo in 1883. Learn the story of this historic town at the West of the Pecos Museum, located in an historic 1896 saloon and hotel.



LOWER PECOS ROCK ART

A Glimpse into Ancient Lives

Until recently, few people knew that Texas possessed one of the largest and most diverse bodies of rock art in North America. Over five millennia, Native American artists recorded elaborate scenes upon the limestone canvas of canyons and rock shelters in an area defined by the lower courses of the Pecos and Devils rivers and their confluences with the Rio Grande. These 4,000-year-old paintings offer an evocative glimpse of their lives. Located near the town of Comstock, the White Shaman Preserve and nearby Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site feature the colors red, black, yellow, orange, and white—all traditionally part of the artists' palette. This prehistoric art continues to provide clues about the expressions of shamanistic ritual. San Antonio-based Rock Art Foundation is a nonprofit organization that owns and maintains the White Shaman Preserve. With guided tours of the preserve, the foundation enables the public to experience the educational significance of the preserve's imaginative rock art. Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site includes more than 200 pictograph locations, showcasing numerous recurring figures or motifs. Their precise meaning is still debated by scholars.

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ROCKSPRINGS

About a million years ago, water carved out an underground cavity that collapsed several thousand



1891 Sutton County Courthouse, Sonora



Old Sonora Ice House Ranch Museum, Sonora



Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area, Rocksprings



Whitehead Memorial Museum, Del Rio

years ago into what one pioneer dubbed “the outlet to Hell, the Devil’s own sinkhole.” Now Devil’s Sinkhole State Natural Area is a huge eco-tourism draw for nearby Rocksprings. At dusk, from April through October, upwards of four million bats make a breathtaking exodus from the vertical cavern. Heritage-minded tourists appreciate the restored 1891 Edwards County Courthouse downtown, and the Historic Rocksprings Hotel still welcomes guests today.

SANDERSON

The Southern Pacific Railroad came through Terrell County in 1882, and an ex-soldier and saloon keeper named Charlie Wilson established Sanderson at a division point. When Judge Roy Bean tried to open a new saloon here, Wilson spiked his whiskey barrels with kerosene. The rowdy frontier town became known as “Too Mean for Roy Bean.” A friendlier Sanderson is now known as the “Cactus Capital of Texas” because of its scenic location at the confluence of three ecological zones. Stop by the Terrell County Visitor Center for info on local sites of interest, including the 1906 Mediterranean-style Terrell County Courthouse and the 1907 cottage of W.H. and Luella Lemons.

! SHEFFIELD

Built in 1855, nearby Fort Lancaster was abandoned during the Civil War, but revived in 1867 when it began serving as a sub-post for the Buffalo Soldiers’ 9th Cavalry assigned to Fort Stockton. In December 1867, more than 40 soldiers and officers held off roughly 400 Kickapoo, suffering only three casualties. Fort Lancaster is the only Texas fort that was attacked by Native Americans. The Texas Historical Commission site brings that history to life with dynamic exhibits and a self-guided walking tour among the ruins.

SONORA

The restored Sutton County Courthouse anchors the main street of this small town with a rakish past. Legend has it that town founder Charles Adams was involved in a shoot-out over the water well at the town square with Isaac Miers, who stumbled to his house and died. Another fatal shoot-out involved local lawmen and Sonora cowboy Will Carver, a member of the notorious Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch gang. You can learn more about these stories at the Old Sonora Ice House Ranch Museum and the Miers House. Sonora’s Eaton Hill Nature Center provides an opportunity to explore the area’s natural environment,

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, AUBREY STOPA (X2); RANDY MALLORY (X2)

with hiking trails and interpretive exhibits. Nearby, visitors can venture deep underground at the Caverns of Sonora, designated a National Natural Landmark.

STANTON

As you drive into town, a large sign proclaims, “Welcome to Stanton, Home of 3,000 Friendly People and a Few Old Soreheads.” The town makes good on the friendly part of its slogan during its Old Sorehead Trade Days, held several times a year. Downtown’s historical park hosts the arts and crafts festival, which attracts hundreds of vendors and thousands of buyers. Stanton is also known as a wellspring of Catholicism in West Texas. In 1882, Carmelite friars established a Catholic farming colony here and built the first Catholic church in West Texas, along with the region’s first school, housed in a two-story adobe monastery that still stands. The Martin County Historical Museum chronicles the town’s religious origins and its later development. Other heritage

sites include the town’s first structure, the Connell House, built in 1882 for Catholic priests, and the 1908 county jail.

WINK

In 1926, wildcatters discovered oil near here and a boomtown sprung up from the ranchland almost overnight. Wink was a stable oil town by 1946, when a young musical prodigy named Roy Orbison moved to town with his family. While his dad worked in the oilfield, Orbison furthered his singing and songwriting talents in a country band called the Wink Westerners. He went on to become a singing and songwriting sensation, which is chronicled in the small Roy Orbison Museum, his boyhood home (open by appointment only). Wink’s 1920s-era Rig Theater, where Orbison and the Wink Westerners once performed, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. 📍



Fort Lancaster State Historic Site, Sheffield



Roy Orbison Museum, Wink



Caverns of Sonora, Sonora



National Ranching Heritage Center on
the Texas Tech University Campus, Lubbock



Plains

TRAIL REGION

Land of the Frontier Spirit

Cowboys, cattle, and wide-open spaces: for many, it's a Texas of the imagination. In the Texas Plains Trail Region, cowboy culture and ranching heritage come vividly to life.

The landscape is part of the story. From the vast plains that once harbored millions of bison to spectacular canyons where harrowing battles were fought, this 52-county region has exciting stories to share.

Archeological sites reveal 12,000-plus years of human occupation. Apache tribes were here from the 16th century until after 1700, when the Comanche arrived on Spanish mustangs, dominating life on the plains for the next two centuries. Their existence hinged on the vast herds of bison that roamed the plains.

Searching for gold and silver, Spanish conquistador Francisco Vázquez de Coronado arrived in 1541 and named the area Llano Estacado, or staked plains.

After the Santa Fe Trail was blazed in the 1820s, residents of Northern Mexico (in what is now New Mexico) hauled goods in oxcarts to trade with the Comanche. By the 1840s, Anglos traveled along the Santa Fe Trail in wagon trains, trading goods hauled between Fort Smith and Santa Fe.

By the 1870s, tensions climaxed between settlers and Native Americans. Commercial hunters were slaughtering huge numbers of buffalo for the hide market, and treaties were broken. When Native

Americans attacked near an abandoned trading post called Adobe Walls, the U.S. Army launched the Red River War of 1874–75, which ended the nomadic life of the Southern Plains Indians. They were forcibly relocated to reservations in present-day Oklahoma.

The way had been cleared for commerce. Cowboys drove millions of cattle from South Texas to northern markets. Cattlemen such as Charles Goodnight established large ranches. Their branded Longhorn cattle traveled the open range, a practice brought to an end starting in the 1870s with the invention of barbed wire.

The 1880s ushered forth two other major advancements: the windmill and the railroad. Windmills provided water for wider settlement, and railroads spawned towns and fortunes as new markets were opened up.

During the early 1900s, many large ranches were divided into cotton and wheat farms. Agricultural advances and oil discoveries increased wealth. All-weather highways were built, including the legendary Route 66.

These dramatic stories come to life today in towns across the Texas Plains Trail Region in diverse culture, dynamic museums, unique historic buildings, and vibrant festivals.

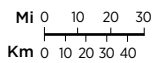
PLAINS TRAIL REGION



FEATURED COMMUNITIES

The following cities are highlighted in this chapter:

- Amarillo
- Big Spring
- Borger
- Boys Ranch
- Brownfield
- Canadian
- Canyon
- Childress
- Clarendon
- Claude
- Colorado City
- Crosbyton
- Dalhart
- Dimmitt
- Dumas
- Floydada
- Fritch
- Hale Center
- Hereford
- Lamesa
- Levelland
- Lipscomb
- Lubbock
- Matador
- McLean
- Miami
- Mobeetie
- Morton
- Muleshoe
- Pampa
- Panhandle
- Perryton
- Plainview
- Post
- Quannah
- Quitaque
- Seminole
- Shamrock
- Silverton
- Slaton
- Snyder
- Spearman
- Tahoka
- Tulia
- Turkey
- Vega
- Wellington

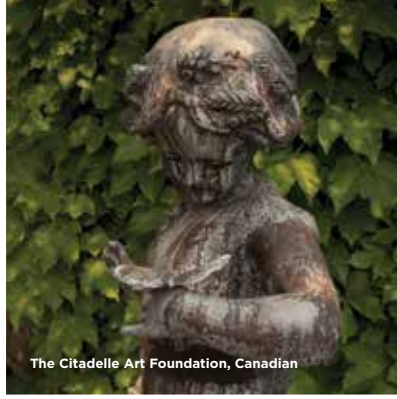


- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- 1968 Texas Plains Trail

OPPOSITE: AMARILLO, TXDOT; CANADIAN, TXDOT; CLAUDE, TEXAS PLAINS TRAIL; CANYON, TH.C; MOBEETIE, TEXAS PLAINS TRAIL; VEGA, AUBREY STOPA; LUBBOCK, AUBREY STOPA



Cadillac Ranch, Amarillo



The Citadelle Art Foundation, Canadian



Official State Bison Herd in Caprock Canyons State Park, Quitaque



R. Wright Armstrong Park, Childress



Molly Goodnight Statue, near Claude



Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Canyon



Quanah Parker Trail, Mobeetie



MAIN STREET CITIES

- Amarillo
- Canyon
- Childress
- Levelland
- Plainview



THC STATE HISTORIC SITES

- Charles and Mary Ann Goodnight Ranch, near Claude



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- Donley County
- Gray County
- Hardeman County
- Lipscomb County
- Lynn County
- Potter County
- Roberts County
- Wheeler County



Artifact from Restored 1924 Magnolia Station on Route 66, Vega



Buddy Holly Center, Lubbock

★ AMARILLO

The color of the area's wildflowers and creek-bank soil most likely inspired naming this 1887 town with the Spanish word meaning "yellow." Amarillo's first residents got into the spirit by painting their houses the same hue. A cattle boom followed, and shortly before the turn of the 20th century, Amarillo's status as a cattle shipping point outranked all others worldwide. The community prospered and signature Art Deco-style buildings went up, including the Potter County Courthouse, which has since been restored. Along Polk Street, visitors can see impressive early-20th-century commercial buildings and original neon signs. Route 66, America's Main Street, runs through town along West Sixth Street. This stretch, designated as Amarillo's first historic district, now includes more than 100 shops, bars, and restaurants, nestled inside historic buildings whose frontage is lined by trees, vintage lighting, and cobblestone sidewalks. The quirky Cadillac Ranch outside of town is another tourist favorite, and you can almost imagine the iconic tail-finned cars zipping along Route 66 back then. Just outside of town, at Wildcat Bluff Nature Center, a giant arrow sculpture marks the Quanah Parker Trail, a tribute to the landmarks, events, and artifacts that connect to the Native Americans who roamed Texas' Panhandle Plains. Museum-loving tourists have plenty of options, with more than half a dozen choices throughout town, including the American Quarter Horse Museum.



American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame & Museum, Amarillo



1916 Canadian River Wagon Bridge, Canadian



Palo Duro Canyon State Park, near Canyon

BIG SPRING

The namesake spring of this town is said to have gushed thousands of gallons of water per minute before drying up in the 1920s. Enterprising citizens have recreated the spring habitat in Comanche Trail Park using the park's lake waters, providing visitors with an idea of how it may have appeared years ago. Situated on the historic Bankhead Highway, one of the nation's earliest transcontinental highways, Big Spring offers travelers details of its historic past at the Heritage Museum and the Hangar 25 Air Museum, where military history unfolds inside an enormous red-brick hangar. Downtown, the 1930 Hotel Settles has been restored to its original Art Deco splendor and is welcoming guests once again. Big Spring State Park offers outdoor adventure opportunities. Don't miss the dramatic views atop a 200-foot bluff amid park facilities built by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

BORGER

During the Roaring Twenties, Borger boomed as one of West Texas' roughest oil towns. Shrewd promoter and town namesake Ace Borger platted his town in March of 1926, and within three months 45,000 people called the place home. The boom also attracted criminals, so many that Governor Daniel J. Moody imposed martial law and sent the Texas Rangers to restore order. Artist Thomas Hart Benton's famous painting "Boomtown" is based on sketches he made during a trip to Borger, and a print is on display at the



Ballroom of Hotel Settles, Big Spring



1932 Potter County Courthouse, Amarillo

Hutchinson County Historical Museum along with other oil-boom exhibits. The museum also chronicles the story of Adobe Walls, the site of a 19th-century buffalo hunters' camp. Attacks by Native Americans defending their way of life sparked the Red River War, an epic struggle that led to the subjugation of Southern Plains Indians in the 1870s. Near the museum, the restored 1947 Morley Theater shows modern-day movies.

BOYS RANCH

From a raucous cowboy town called Tascosa in the 1880s to a ranch devoted to the well-being of young people, this community has interesting history to share. It was the Oldham County seat until 1915 but became a ghost town after being bypassed by the railroad. Vestiges of Old Tascosa—including Boot Hill Cemetery, the resting place of numerous gunfighters—remain at Cal Farley's Boys Ranch, established in 1939 by an Amarillo businessman. The old 1884 courthouse is now the Julian Bivins Museum, where you can learn more about Panhandle history and the story of how Boys Ranch came to be.

BROWNFIELD

In 1904, Brownfield became the Terry County seat; the city grew rapidly with the arrival of the automobile in 1910 and the railroad in 1917. The Terry County Heritage Museum expounds on this history. The grounds also feature two relocated wooden structures from the early 1900s—the county's first jail and the town's railroad depot. Hamilton Park honors the rich heritage and promising future of the area with interpretive panels that illustrate the county's legacy.

CANADIAN

Drive the high rolling hills of Hemphill County and experience the same vistas seen by Spanish explorers seeking treasure, Native Americans hunting bison, and pioneer adventurers bound for California gold fields. Once you reach the Canadian River, the town of Canadian (which is also the county seat) beckons with many heritage attractions. The River Valley Pioneer Museum explores area history. Stroll through Canadian's bustling downtown, past the beautifully restored Palace Theater and the handsome county courthouse, both built in 1909. Enjoy fine art and architecture at the Citadelle Art Foundation, housed in a landmark 1910 church. Stroll over the 1916 Canadian River Wagon Bridge, now part of a hiking trail across the river. The visitors' center provides information about dining and lodging options in historic structures, as well as local events.

★ CANYON

Named for nearby Palo Duro Canyon, this small town offers many heritage delights, including the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum. Housed in a thirties-era Art Deco building, the museum displays an impressive and eclectic collection. More than 30 historical markers are scattered throughout Canyon, including one on the Randall County Courthouse. A favorite among visiting artists is the marker commemorating 20th-century American painter Georgia O'Keeffe and her time spent as a faculty member at what is now West Texas A&M University. She was no doubt drawn to Palo Duro Canyon, now a state park. Stretching 120 miles long, 20 miles wide, and 800 feet deep, it is the most spectacular landscape feature in the Panhandle—maybe all of Texas. Each summer the popular



THE ORIGINAL ROAD TRIP

Route 66

Although much of Route 66 has been displaced, its spirit still survives along the road's original route in Texas. This stretch of highway from Chicago to Los Angeles, built in the 1920s, became the route of choice for cross-country travel. There were 178 miles of the famous road in Texas, spanning the Panhandle through Amarillo. A mile-long expanse of vintage Route 66 architecture still occupies the city's Sixth Street. Attractions continue to thrive along the route in other towns, including Dot's Mini Museum and the Vega Motel, both in Vega, the Art Deco-style Tower Station and U-Drop Inn Café in Shamrock, and the MidPoint Café in Adrian.

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musical drama *Texas* is staged in the beautiful outdoor amphitheater, which was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s. The CCC also built the cabins and other park facilities here.

★ CHILDRESS

Named for George Campbell Childress, co-author of the Texas Declaration of Independence, this town was created in the 1880s when the railroad came through. Located in a 1935 post office downtown, the Childress County Heritage Museum imparts interesting area history. A few blocks away, the 1939 Childress County Courthouse presides over the town square.

🏠 CLARENDON

Brick streets and tree-shaded lawns frame the Donley County Courthouse like a century-old

picture postcard. Dramatic towers rise from the walls of the restored 1891 Romanesque Revival edifice, the oldest still-functioning courthouse in the Panhandle. Irishman John Adair and cattleman Charles Goodnight formed the Panhandle's first ranch nearby, and a town quickly followed. Early cowboys called the saloon-free, church-filled community Saints' Roost. Adair's wife, Cornelia, opened a hospital in 1910 to care for ranch hands, and today it's the Saints' Roost Museum, a repository for county artifacts. Each September the museum honors the famous ranchman's signature invention with the Charles Goodnight Chuck Wagon Cookoff. Clarendon's classic 1950s-era Sandell Drive-In shows movies seasonally, and the dazzling neon marquee over the 1946 Mulkey Theater lights up downtown streets every night.

↓ CLAUDE

Charles Goodnight cast the tie-breaking vote that named this town as county seat in 1890. Learn more about area heritage at the Armstrong County Museum and at the historic Gem Theatre, a performing arts venue once again. Twelve miles east of Claude, visit the Texas Historical Commission's Charles and Mary Ann Goodnight Ranch State Historic Site. The 1877 house is considered to be one of the most important historic structures in the Texas Panhandle. At the time of its construction, the home was regarded as the finest in the region. It features a second-floor sleeping porch with spectacular views of the countryside and the nearby bison herd, descendants of buffalo raised by the Goodnights. The J. Evetts Haley Visitor and Education Center offers interpretive displays.

COLORADO CITY

Colorado City became a boisterous cattle town after the railroad arrived in 1881. The Classical Revival-style Mitchell County Courthouse was built in 1924. That same year, two locals found fossilized bones of *Bison antiquus* on Lone Wolf Creek. A replica of that ancient bison stands now in the Heart of West Texas Museum. A few blocks from the museum, a downtown "branding wall" mural displays more than 200 cattle brands from area ranches. Catch a show at the 1899 Colorado City Opera House, one of the state's oldest music venues, or view traces of the old Bankhead Highway through town. The Bankhead Highway was one of the nation's earliest transcontinental highways. Its path crossed approximately 850 miles of Texas from Texarkana to El Paso.

CROSBYTON

Four miles east on U.S. 82, mesas and mesquites form a rugged backdrop for historical markers that tell dramatic stories about nearby Blanco Canyon. The area was a battleground in the early 1870s, pitting Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie against the Comanches. Once the Native Americans were forced out, Texas Rangers set up Camp Roberts to maintain law and order. One of the state's finest roadside parks now sprawls along this highway, where Depression-era stonework remains at Silver Falls. These stories and more come to life at the Crosby County Pioneer Memorial Museum and its Wayne J. Parker Center for the Study of Native American Cultures. The Crosby County Courthouse is a Classical Revival structure built in 1914.

DALHART

In 1882 the Texas Legislature traded three million acres of land in the Panhandle to investors in exchange for the construction of a new state capitol building in Austin. The land became the XIT Ranch, which initially covered part or all of 10 different counties, including Dallam and Hartley, on the borders

of which Dalhart is located. The XIT Museum downtown expounds on this story. The XIT Ranch Rodeo & Reunion, held annually since 1936, is famous for serving a colossal—and free—barbecue dinner. The Classical Revival 1922 Dallam County Courthouse is also downtown, as is La Rita Performing Arts Theatre, a magnificently restored 1920s-era movie palace.

DIMMITT

Prairies provided grasses and then rich soil for early ranchers and farmers, who eventually turned ranchland into farmland around 1900. The Ozark Trail, a series of automobile trails that was a precursor to the federal highway system, came through here; one of the original obelisk markers adorns the Castro County Courthouse lawn.

DUMAS

In 1891 land speculator Louis Dumas platted his namesake town in the Panhandle. Big ranches—but few people—existed there until oil was discovered in 1927. Rail lines arrived four years later and the population grew rapidly. Dumas was made famous



1891 Donley County Courthouse, Clarendon



First Arrow Installed on the Quanah Parker Trail, Crosbyton



XIT Museum, Dalhart



Charles and Mary Ann Goodnight Ranch State Historic Site, near Claude

in the early 1930s by the hit song “I’m a Ding Dong Daddy from Dumas.” Find out more about that and other Dumas history at the Window on the Plains Museum. Next door, the Art Center shows local artwork and hosts workshops.

FLOYDADA

As the place where as many as a million pumpkins are grown every year, Floydada claims the title of “Pumpkin Capital USA.” To honor that heritage, an annual Punkin’ Days festival is staged each October on the courthouse square. A different kind of heritage draws visitors to the Floyd County Historical Museum. In the 1950s, in nearby Blanco Canyon, a local amateur archeologist made startling discoveries of artifacts dating to the expedition of the Spanish conquistador Francisco Vázquez de Coronado more than 400 years earlier. The museum displays some of the remarkable finds.

FRITCH

The Lake Meredith area harbors the world’s only outcrop of Alibates flint, a beautiful, multi-colored stone that prehistoric people knapped into tools. At Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument, park service rangers guide visitors to shallow

quarry pits and discuss the site’s geologic and cultural importance.

HALE CENTER

Texas has led the nation in cotton production nearly every year since 1880. The Hale County Farm and Ranch Museum preserves cotton farming history and historic farm implements. The museum recalls railroad heritage in a restored 1911 railroad depot and early 20th-century family life in a 1907 house. Many buildings in downtown Hale Center feature murals depicting the town’s heritage.

HEREFORD

Land and water have long attracted people to Hereford. After a railroad came through in the late 1890s, a town called Blue Water sprang up. The name was changed to Hereford when cattlemen imported British livestock in 1898 and the town became the county seat. In the mid 20th century, scientists noticed that the mineral-rich water helped prevent tooth decay, earning Hereford the moniker “Town without a Toothache.” Today, the 1910 Deaf Smith County Courthouse anchors a charming downtown in this self-proclaimed “Beef Capital of the World,” and visitors can learn more about area history at the



Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument, Fritch



Floyd County Historical Museum, Floydada



Hale County Farm & Ranch Museum, Hale Center



“The City of Mosaics,” Levelland



American Wind Power Center and Museum, Lubbock



Lubbock Lake Landmark, Lubbock

Deaf Smith County Museum.

A World War II heritage site is located a few miles out of town. From 1943 to 1946, 5,000 Italian prisoners of war were confined at the second largest POW camp in the country. Prisoners built a church there, now restored and memorialized with a historical marker, to bury five who died while interned. The Italian prisoners beautified another church north of town in nearby Umbarger with murals and sculptures, which have been restored by area artists.

LAMESA

In 1903 founding fathers called this flat land Lamesa, Spanish for “the table.” Twenty-three years later, one of the finest hotels between Dallas and El Paso was built—the Dal Paso Hotel—which now houses the Dal Paso Museum. The restored hotel lobby retains its grand period appearance. To visit the museum, inquire at the chamber of commerce, which is located next door.

★ LEVELLAND

Named for area topography, Levelland was designated the county seat when Hockley County was organized in 1921 and the courthouse was built. Known as “the City of Mosaics,” Levelland has public buildings scattered throughout adorned with colorful mosaic murals depicting regional and historic themes. The charming downtown district has shops and restaurants in restored buildings and an inviting old-fashioned gazebo. An art museum is a featured attraction on the campus of South Plains College.

🏠 LIPSCOMB

Lipscomb may have only a few dozen residents, but

it’s still the county seat. In the 1880s town founders platted Lipscomb expecting the railroad to come, but it never did. Ranchers and farmers came anyway, drilling wells and harnessing the prairie wind to pump life-giving water. A windmill stands outside the Wolf Creek Heritage Museum, where interpretive panels, artifacts, and a rich array of historical photos recall the pioneer era. Business is still conducted out of the 1916 Classical Revival-style Lipscomb County Courthouse.

LUBBOCK

The epicenter of the South Plains, Lubbock has been driven by the railroad, a rich ranching and agricultural heritage, and Texas Tech University, which was established in 1923. The university’s National Ranching Heritage Center traces ranching from the 1700s to the early 1900s. Relocated and restored ranch and pioneer structures offer visitors a walk back in time. The Texas Tech campus is also home to several facilities that explore cultural and natural heritage, including the Moody Planetarium and the Natural Science Research Laboratory. The main museum houses more than five million objects and contains collections in the arts, humanities, and sciences. Lubbock Lake Landmark, a significant North American archeological site and National Historic Landmark, contains a complete cultural record from the Clovis Period 12,000 years ago through more recent historic times, evidence that Lubbock is one of the oldest communities in the world. The FiberMax Center for Discovery tells the story of farming on the South Plains. Right across the street is the American Wind Power Center and Museum, home to more than 100 vintage windmills. Learn how this amazing invention influenced the development



Old Mobeetie Jail Museum, Mobeetie



Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, Muleshoe



1927 Phillips 66 Service Station, McLean



Silent Wings Museum, Lubbock



Museum of the Llano Estacado, Plainview

of the western U.S. and how windmill technology is evolving today. Another wind-powered machine soared overhead during World War II at South Plains Army Air Field, where some 6,000 pilots learned to fly gliders. These non-motorized planes are honored at the Silent Wings Museum, housed in a 1950s-era airport terminal. Other Lubbock attractions include the Depot Entertainment District, the heart of the city's reemerging downtown scene, and the Buddy Holly Center, which keeps the 20th century music icon's memory alive.

MATADOR

Matador is named for the nearby historic Matador Ranch, once property of the Matador Cattle Company, which got its start in 1882. The ranch's compelling heritage includes a visit by Comanche chief Quanah Parker. Today, the Matador Ranch offers world-class hunting opportunities. In town, the restored Hotel Matador is a heritage standout and open for guests once again as a bed-and-breakfast. Other attractions include the Motley County Historical Museum, located in the old Traweek Hospital, and the restored 1891 Motley County Jail, in which a series of professionally

produced documentaries illustrate chapters from the county's history.

MCLEAN

Located on historic Route 66, McLean embodies both early ranching and early highway heritage. From its beginning, barbed wire was dubbed "devil's rope," as unsuspecting cattle often became tangled in the new style of fencing. The Devil's Rope & Route 66 Museum demonstrates how barbed wire ended open-range ranching. The museum also features Route 66 memorabilia. Five blocks west is the state's first Phillips 66 service station, built in 1927.

MIAMI

Miami supposedly derives its name from a Native American word meaning "sweetheart," and the community has promoted itself as the "Sweetheart of the Plains." The town served as a cattle shipping point for the region's ranches, and the National Cow Calling Competition has taken place in the community every year since 1949. The historic railroad depot now serves as the Roberts County Museum, and the 1913 restored Classical Revival-style courthouse rises majestically above the town's center.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, TXDOT (X2); TEXAS PLAINS TRAIL; AUBREY STOPA; TEXAS PLAINS TRAIL

MOBEETIE

In 1875, a trading post and buffalo hunter camp sprang up near Fort Elliott, one of Texas' last frontier forts. The fort was served by African American troops called Buffalo Soldiers, among them West Point's first black graduate, Henry O. Flipper. The settlement grew into Mobeetie, one of the Panhandle's earliest towns and the original Wheeler County seat. Mobeetie's colorful history is retold at the Old Mobeetie Jail Museum. The flagpole from the fort's original parade grounds stands out front, while half a mile away, a granite historical marker pinpoints the original site of Fort Elliott. A visitors center, housed in a 1923 school, chronicles the Red River War and displays paintings by Texas artist Kenneth Wyatt. Visit the nearby town of Wheeler to see the Wheeler Historical Museum and restored Wheeler County Courthouse.

MORTON

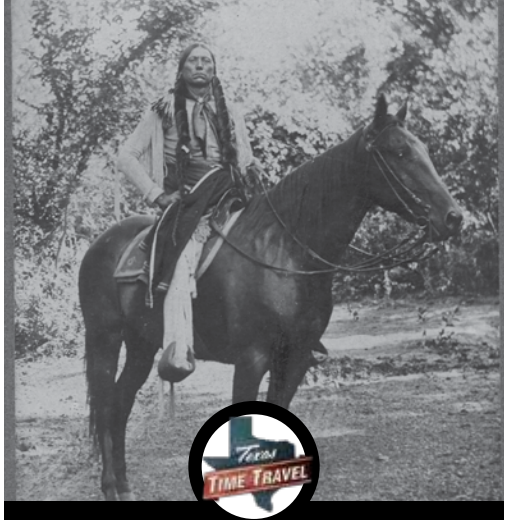
Cochran County remained sparsely settled until the 1920s. Texas' Last Frontier Museum interprets the county's late-blooming history. To celebrate its history, including the 1877 Buffalo Soldier Expedition, the museum hosts a Heritage Celebration every year.

MULESHOE

With a mule's shoe as its brand, the Muleshoe Ranch was carved out of the historic XIT Ranch. The railroad pushed through in 1913, and a town formed at the ranch's cattle-loading pens. The depot is now part of the Muleshoe Heritage Center, along with several other historic buildings. The "World's Largest Muleshoe" looms over the complex; a life-sized mule statue can be found in town as a tribute to the animal's role in World War I. Natural history is the featured attraction at the Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge. Established in 1935, it's the oldest national refuge in Texas and a designated National Natural Landmark.

PAMPA

Picturesque brick-paved streets and charming shops welcome visitors to Pampa. The town has enjoyed a prosperous history and that good fortune afforded a robust collection of heritage architecture, now preserved and restored. At the chamber of commerce, pick up a walking tour guide of historic locations around downtown, including "Million Dollar Row:" several buildings from the 1930s, anchored by the elegant 1929 Beaux-Arts Gray County Courthouse



NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE

The Red River War and the Quanah Parker Trail

Quanah Parker and the Comanche once dominated the vast lands now encompassed by the Texas Plains Trail Region. Quanah's mother was Cynthia Ann Parker, taken captive during an 1836 Indian raid on Parker's Fort; his father was Peta Nocona, a Comanche band war chief. Raised as a Comanche warrior, Quanah emerged as a leader. In 1871 he led the fight against Col. Ranald Mackenzie's U.S. 4th Cavalry at the Battle of Blanco Canyon. Alarmed by continued white encroachment on their territorial lands, Quanah led a combined force of Plains tribes in a retaliatory strike against buffalo hunters in June 1874 at Adobe Walls. By September, Mackenzie attacked the main Indian encampment in Palo Duro Canyon, bringing what is called the Red River War to an end by forcing the Indians to reservations. Quanah, who wasn't there, accepted Mackenzie's surrender orders in 1875 and led his band to Ft. Sill. With the Comanche removed and the remaining southern bison herd exterminated, the age of Comanche domination came to an end. Quanah and the Comanche legacy in West Texas are commemorated by the Quanah Parker Trail (quanahparkertrail.com), which identifies historic sites, events, and museum artifacts that are linked to Quanah, his family, the Comanche, and their Indian allies. Sites are marked by 22-foot stylized Comanche arrow sculptures.

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restored through the Texas Historical Commission. The White Deer Land Museum details the history of Pampa and the surrounding countryside. The Freedom Museum USA chronicles Pampa's military history, and the Woody Guthrie Folk Music Center commemorates the famous folk singer, who lived in Pampa from 1929 to 1937.

PANHANDLE

History runs deep in the city of Panhandle. The restored 1928 Santa Fe depot houses City Hall, and the 1950 Moderne-style Carson County Courthouse remains the seat of county government. A refurbished downtown boasts businesses in historic structures and streets built of century-old red bricks. The acclaimed Carson County Square House Museum is a complex of historic buildings, galleries, and artifacts that showcase the region's cultural history, natural history, and art. The museum's centerpiece is the white clapboard square house built in 1887 by the N Bar N Ranch.

PERRYTON

Perryton, the state's northernmost county seat, was founded in 1919, when area pioneers relocated to a new rail line and abandoned the former county seat of Ochiltree. They moved the buildings as well, and one of the historic structures now houses the Museum of the Plains, boasting an impressive 10,000 artifacts, where visitors can find out more about the town's beginnings, as well as its Kiowa culture. Along Main Street visitors will find the 1928 Classical Revival-style county courthouse and the restored 1930s-era Ellis Theater.

★ PLAINVIEW

Rustic brick streets and the 1910 Beaux-Arts Hale County Courthouse welcome visitors to the town's historic district. In 1941, archeologists excavated a

9,000-year-old bison kill site within the city limits, which yielded a distinctive flint projectile point they named the Plainview point. Visitors can find out more about this aspect of prehistory, and much more, at the Museum of the Llano Estacado on the Wayland Baptist University campus.

POST

In 1907 cereal magnate C.W. Post established his namesake town as a model farming community. In the process he introduced agricultural innovations and paid the Santa Fe Railroad to ensure that a depot would be finished by 1910; the restored building now serves as the city's Visitors Center and Chamber of Commerce. A five-block refurbished historic district looks much as it did in his day. Post's 1911 office is now the OS Ranch Museum, an art gallery. A 1912 sanitarium houses the Garza County Historical Museum, which explores Post's life. Next door, a two-story Arts and Crafts bungalow, built in 1913 for sanitarium nurses, houses the Caprock Cultural Association. A statue of Post sits outside the 1923 Prairie School-style Garza County Courthouse. Bed-and-breakfast-style lodging is offered downtown in the 1915 Hotel Garza.

🏛️ QUANAH

Quanah was named for Comanche chief Quanah Parker, the son of Peta Nocona and kidnapped Anglo settler Cynthia Ann Parker. A dramatic 1938 Works Progress Administration mural in the post office depicts the naming of the town. The famous chief is honored with a granite monument beside the Beaux Arts-style 1908 Hardeman County Courthouse restored through the Texas Historical Commission. Quanah's story comes alive at the Hardeman County Historical Jail Museum, located in an 1890 stone jail. More history is revealed at the renovated 1908 Quanah, Acme and Pacific Railway Depot Museum.



Quanah, Acme, and Pacific Railroad Depot Museum, Quanah



Museum of the Plains, Perryton

It's right across the street from a giant arrow sculpture that marks the Plains Trail Region's Quanah Parker Trail. The story continues 13 miles south, at Copper Breaks State Park. The park offers exhibits on the 1860 recapture of Cynthia Ann Parker by Texas Rangers. Part of the official Texas Longhorn herd can be seen there as well, and the park's dark skies make it an excellent location for stargazing activities. Drive east of Quanah, on U.S. 287, to view four rounded hills that remain a sacred Comanche site called Medicine Mounds. Make a side trip to the ghost town of Medicine Mound, and see photos of past glory preserved in an old general store, now the Downtown Medicine Mound Museum.

QUITAQUE

Quitaque serves as a gateway to the sprawling 14,000-acre Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway, once part of the historic JA Ranch established by Charles Goodnight and John Adair. Descendants of wild bison that Goodnight and his wife Mary Ann saved from extinction in the 1870s now roam the park as the Official Texas State Bison Herd. The park's multi-use Caprock Canyons Trailway runs 64 miles from Quitaque to Turkey along an abandoned 1920s-era rail line. The hike-and-bike trail passes through

the 700-foot-long historic Clarity Tunnel, home to more than 50,000 Mexican free-tailed bats from April through October. The Comanchero Canyons Museum includes artifacts and information on the impact of Native American, U.S. Cavalry, and Comanchero (Hispanic traders) activities in the area.

SEMINOLE

Platted in 1906, the town of Seminole experienced an oil boom and was incorporated in the 1930s. Today Gaines County is among Texas's top agricultural and energy producers. The Gaines County Museum preserves the colorful history of the county seat and surrounding area, with a focus on the five cultures that contributed to it from ancient times. In nearby Seagraves, the Seagraves-Loop Museum and Art Center, located in one of the few buildings left standing after a 1928 fire destroyed most of the city's business district, portrays early pioneer life.

SHAMROCK

You can't miss Shamrock. Just look for the water tower. Built in 1915 and rising 176 feet high, it's the tallest water tank of its type in Texas. The town is also on historic Route 66, and the striking 1930s-era Art Deco Tower Conoco Station and U-Drop Inn



Hale County Courthouse, Plainview



Chief Quanah Parker Monument, Quanah



Woodie Guthrie Folk Music Center, Pampa



OS Ranch Museum, Post



Statue of White Buffalo, Snyder



Bob Wills Tour Bus, Turkey

Café now serves as a visitors center. Just off Route 66, check out the historic Reynolds Hotel, which began serving guests in the Roaring Twenties. Now it is home to the Pioneer West Museum. Next door is a restored 1930s-era Magnolia Oil gas station. A few blocks away, catch a current movie or live music in the refurbished 1930 Texas Theater. Immigrant Irish sheep rancher George Nichel named this town Shamrock in the 1890s for good luck and courage. Since 1938 the town has honored that heritage with its St. Patrick's Day Celebration, now designated the official St. Paddy's Day event for the state of Texas.

SILVERTON

Reportedly named by the wife of town founder Thomas J. Braidfoot for the silvery reflections she saw on local playa lakes in 1891, this tiny town prospered as the county seat and a trading center. In 1894, a jail was built and its first occupant, the county sheriff, was locked up as a joke during the grand opening ceremony. Located on the grounds of the Briscoe County Courthouse, the restored jail, the oldest building in the county, serves as the Old Jail Museum. Inquire at the courthouse for admission.

SLATON

A downtown mural illustrates Slaton's railroad, farming, and German heritage. Trains still rumble through the town, and the restored 1912 Harvey House is now a bed-and-breakfast reminding visitors of the elegance of the old hotels and restaurants that graced railroad towns across the American West. Don't miss the 1809 locomotive on the town square. The Texas Air Museum, located at the airport,

features rare vintage aircraft and celebrates military aviation from the early 1900s to the present day.

SNYDER

On a creek that flows through what is now the town of Snyder, professional buffalo hunter J. Wright Mooar killed a rare white buffalo in 1876. A few years before, Col. Ranald S. Mackenzie blazed a U.S. Cavalry trail that now passes by the Scurry County Courthouse. The courthouse lawn features a statue of a white buffalo, and the community stages an annual White Buffalo Days celebration. The Scurry County Museum, on the Western Texas College campus, tells that story and more, and the Heritage Village on the nearby grounds of the Coliseum is home to more than a dozen historic structures, including the town's oldest home.

SPEARMAN

As early cattlemen fenced their ranches, some pastures were cut off from natural springs or creeks, so ranchers began drilling wells and harnessing the wind to pump water for their herds. Without windmills, settlement of the arid plains would have been impossible. In the 1960s, J.B. Buchanan started collecting historic windmills. More than 20 of his restored windmills are on display at the J.B. Buchanan Windmill Park, which features a rare 1915 Aeromotor model with a 12-foot-diameter wheel that actually pumps water from a deep well.

TAHOKA

One hundred residents gathered at the Tahoka Lake in 1902 and voted to organize Lynn County and select a



J.B. Buchanan Windmill Park, Spearman



Restored 1924 Magnolia Station on Route 66, Vega



Restored U Drop Inn Cafe, Shamrock

county seat, named for the Native American word for “fresh water.” Tahoka’s town square features the 1916 Classical Revival-style Lynn County Courthouse. The building, which maintains its original architectural integrity, has earned National Register and State Antiquities Landmark designations.

TULIA

In 1874, Col. Ranald S. Mackenzie camped nearby before attacking Comanche, Kiowa, and Cheyenne Indians in the last major battle of the Red River War. Mackenzie ordered the slaughter of the tribes’ pony herd, and the battle marked the end of the Comanche way of life. Cattleman Charles Goodnight later established a division of his famed JA Ranch in the area. The Swisher County Archives and Museum details these and other colorful aspects of county history. A large white obelisk rises from the brick street surrounding the Swisher County Courthouse square. This 1920 Ozark Trail marker denotes Tulia as a stop along one of America’s early driving routes, a precursor to Route 66.

TURKEY

Operated by the Armstrong County Museum, the historic Gem Theatre on Main Street continues to host performances to this day. In the 1930s, Turkey’s most prominent son, Bob Wills, performed here, and in 1941 the theatre presented Wills’ first motion picture. The Bob Wills Museum honors the “King of Western Swing” with items donated by his family. Every April, the town echoes with live music during its annual Bob Wills Day. Bed-and-breakfast-style lodging is available at the Hotel Turkey, in business since 1927.

VEGA

In the 1920s, Route 66 offered Americans a new way to discover the country. The “Mother Road” stretched from Chicago to Los Angeles, traversing the entire Texas Panhandle. In Vega, travelers stopped for gas at the Magnolia Station. The restored 1924 station, located next to the Oldham County Courthouse, is now a drive-by attraction. Oldham County history can be discovered at the Milburn-Price Culture Museum.

Another Route 66 attraction lies 14 miles west in Adrian, situated at the midpoint of the historic route. A replica of a period American Automobile Association, or Triple A, sign proclaims “1,139 miles to Chicago—1,139 miles to Los Angeles.” Across the street is the 1928 MidPoint Cafe, where locals and tourists mingle over pie and coffee.

WELLINGTON

The town was named for the duke of Wellington by one of the English owners of the Rocking Chair Ranch. Visitors can picnic in Pioneer Park, a site where Comanche Chief Quanah Parker once camped. The park also features a state historical marker recalling the day in 1933 when Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow crashed their car into the river. The famed outlaws left behind Bonnie’s glove and a clip from Clyde’s gun, items now on display at the Collingsworth County Museum. The museum occupies three historic buildings that overlook quaint brick streets and the 1931 county courthouse. Other downtown attractions include the restored 1929 Ritz Theatre, an Ozark Trail Monument marking a historic roadway, and the Wellington post office, which houses a 1940 Works Progress Administration mural. 🇺🇸



Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historic Site, Port Isabel



Tropical

TRAIL REGION

History with a Hispanic Flair

Many people have called this balmy, vibrant southern tip of Texas home over the centuries, and it has a storied history to share. Diverse groups struggled for control of this strategic borderland. Centuries of conflict and cultural blending forged a history that embodies the spirit of the six flags of Texas.

Nomadic hunter-gatherers occupied this land in 1519 when Spanish navigator Alonso Álvarez de Piñeda mapped the Texas coast and explored the Rio Grande. For almost three centuries, south Texas was part of New Spain's buffer zone between established Spanish provinces in present-day Mexico and French Louisiana to the east. In 1685, France unsuccessfully challenged Spanish control when Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, established the ill-fated Fort St. Louis near Matagorda Bay.

In response, Spain bolstered its frontier presence during the 1700s with presidios and missions. It also offered land grants to settlers to stabilize the region. At last, Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821. Then, in 1836, the Republic of Texas gained independence from Mexico and claimed the Rio Grande as its southern boundary. Mexico set the Nueces River as the line, and the dispute continued even after Texas became part of the United States in 1845. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the U.S.-Mexico War of 1846–48, settled the matter, and the Rio Grande became the international boundary.

During the 1850s, steamboats hauled cargo up and down the river, creating wealth for riverboat barons such as Richard King and Mifflin Kenedy, both of whom later turned their riches into ranching empires.

After the Civil War, ranchers drove millions of cattle to northern markets. Ancient traditions of the Spanish vaquero formed the basis of the cowboy culture that spread across Texas during the late 1800s.

The early-20th century brought other newcomers: tourists attracted by the coast's prolific fisheries, cool breezes, and pristine beaches. In the late-20th century, another breed of tourist flocked to the area, attracted by the astounding biodiversity, which provides for some of the best bird-watching in the world.

For more than a century, Hispanic and Anglo traditions have blended to create a truly distinctive bicultural heritage. By preserving and promoting that legacy, dozens of museums and heritage sites in the 20-county region remain *guardias del pasado*, or guardians of the past.

TROPICAL TRAIL REGION



FEATURED COMMUNITIES

The following cities are highlighted in this chapter:

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Alice | Harlingen | Rio Grande City |
| Brownsville | Hidalgo | Rockport-Fulton |
| Carrizo Springs | Kingsville | Roma |
| Corpus Christi | Laredo | San Benito |
| Cotulla | McAllen | San Ygnacio |
| Donna | Mission | Sarita |
| Edinburg | Port Aransas | Weslaco |
| Falfurrias | Port Isabel | |
| George West | Refugio | |



Old City Cemetery, Brownsville



King Ranch Vaqueros, Kingsville



Kenedy Ranch Museum, Sarita



Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park, Brownsville



King Ranch Headquarters, Kingsville

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, THC (X3); TXDOT (X2)



MAIN STREET CITIES

- Brownsville
- Corpus Christi
- Cotulla
- Harlingen
- Kingsville
- Laredo
- Rio Grande City



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- Brooks County
- Cameron County
- Dimmit County
- La Salle County



THC STATE HISTORIC SITES

- Fulton Mansion, Rockport
- Port Isabel Lighthouse, Port Isabel

ALICE

Named for legendary rancher Richard King's daughter, Alice became a major cattle-shipping point in the 1880s. You can learn more about the impact of the industry on this region at the South Texas Museum. Alice played an important role in the development of Tejano music. This lively music genre gained a wider audience in the late 20th century thanks to artists such as Selena. But it all started long before in Alice with Ideal Records in 1944.

★ 🏠 BROWNSVILLE

Sitting at the southern tip of Texas, two cultures meet in Brownsville to create a unique destination full of history. The town popped up around Fort Brown in

1846, when the garrison was established. The first battle of the U.S.–Mexican War was fought here, and the two-year conflict that followed changed the map of North America. The Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park preserves and interprets the battle site. Be sure to pick up the city's detailed (and free) guide to Brownsville's local heritage trail. Good stories are told throughout the Historic Townsite District, where you will find the restored 1912 Cameron County Courthouse and the Brownsville Heritage Complex, which includes the Heritage Museum and the 1851 Stillman House. Automated visitor kiosks and photo murals bring the past to life. Even the beautiful Old City Cemetery offers a self-guided tour of tales from the past. Nearby you'll



Costume of the Americas Museum, Brownsville



South Texas Museum, Alice



Historic Brownsville Museum, Brownsville



Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park, Brownsville



USS Lexington Museum on the Bay, Corpus Christi

find the Mitte Cultural District, which encompasses several heritage attractions, including the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art and the renowned Gladys Porter Zoo. The World Birding Center attracts birders from all over the world to the Valley. Brownsville's Resaca de la Palma State Park lays claim to the largest tract of native habitat in the World Birding Center network. The Sabal Palm Sanctuary is home to the last remaining vestiges of original sabal palm forest in the U.S. and is home to the historic 1892 Rabb Plantation House, which offers overnight lodging.

CARRIZO SPRINGS

Carrizo is Spanish for a type of cane grass that grew among the springs that once flowed around this community. The 1884 Dimmit County Courthouse, remodeled in the 1920s, has been restored to reflect its 1927 Classical Revival architecture. A few miles south of town, the Bel-Asher House, built by Asherton's founder in 1911, is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register.

CORPUS CHRISTI

The neighboring expansive beaches at Padre Island National Seashore as well as Port Aransas are complemented in Corpus Christi by the similarly expansive history of this area. Corpus Christi's roots date to the early 16th century, when the bay was discovered by Spanish explorers. Shipwrecks as well as Native American and pirate attacks kept the area from being permanently settled until a trading post was established during the Civil War, which attracted permanent settlers.

A good place to begin exploring area history is Heritage Park. A dozen refurbished historic homes are a tribute to the ethnic diversity and culture of the area and include the oldest structure in the city, an 1850s home. A short walk away in the museum

district is the Texas State Museum of Asian Cultures, the only one of its kind in the state. The Art Museum of South Texas is also there, waiting to be discovered.

Across from the Water Garden, the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History details the region's natural and cultural history. The collection showcases 500 years of history and is part of the La Salle Odyssey, the seven-museum exhibition that chronicles the ill-fated adventures of Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, and the shipwrecked *Belle*. A more modern ship can be viewed across the ship channel. The *USS Lexington* served throughout the Pacific Theater during World War II and is now a floating museum. Just a few steps to the south of "Lady Lex" is the Texas State Aquarium.

Corpus Christi is also home to the Texas Surf Museum and the South Texas Music Walk of Fame, bearing names of regional music stars. The city's biggest music star, Selena Quintanilla, has her own museum, located in the complex where the late Latina diva recorded her major hits.

COTULLA

Lyndon Baines Johnson started his teaching career in Cotulla, and his experience with poor Hispanic students resonated deeply with him. When he signed the Higher Education Act of 1965, he spoke of the Welhausen School here. Cotulla's Brush Country Museum gives the account of that history in addition to other stories of the area. On the town's historic Front Street, restored buildings house visitor-oriented businesses. The 1931 restored Moderne-style La Salle County Courthouse with Art Deco detailing is on the square.

DONNA

Donna's namesake was one tough cookie. Donna Hooks Fletcher was a 21-year-old divorcee who turned a gift of land from her father, in 1902, into a thriving



HISPANIC HERITAGE

¡Viva la Cultura!

Spain and Mexico controlled Texas for centuries, and the cultural imprint of that time remains solid. The occupation of Texas by Spain lasted for more than 100 years, ending in 1821, but the impact is still strongly felt. Most obvious is the extraordinary number of Spanish place names across the state. Forty-two of the 254 counties in Texas bear either a Spanish name, or an Anglicized version like Galveston, or a misspelling like Uvalde. San Antonio was the first formal municipality in Texas. The names of geographical features such as Llano Estacado and Padre Island serve as reminders of Spanish explorers and those who crossed portions of Texas well before the Atlantic Coast was settled by the English. The restored missions at San Antonio and Goliad stand as enduring monuments to the Franciscans who brought Christianity to Texas. Spanish is a second language for millions of Texans; for some it is their first language. The culture of Spain and Mexico is reflected in cities large and small across the state, but especially in places like San Antonio, El Paso, and the Valley, where vibrant Hispanic culture, lively music, and spicy cuisine flavor the heritage offerings. Missions and presidios, historic neighborhoods, and museums across Texas share the stories of our Hispanic heritage.

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produce and dairy operation. During the tense days of the Mexican Revolution, she once defended her property with a Bible in one hand and a pistol in the other when revolutionaries raided inhabitants across the nearby Rio Grande. You can see that Bible and pistol at the Donna Hooks Fletcher Historical Museum. The town celebrates its Chisholm Trail heritage with an annual festival.

EDINBURG

By the time the railroad reached Edinburg, irrigation had helped transform many area ranches into farms. Stop by the renovated 1927 Southern Pacific Depot to pick up visitor information. Visit the Museum of South Texas History, with over 22,000 square feet of exhibit space on regional history and culture. The community honors its musical heritage with the Tejano Walk of Fame. Several Tejano stars are inducted each year during Hispanic Heritage Month. The Edinburg Scenic Wetlands is a 40-acre World Birding Center location.

FALFURRIAS

Pioneer land developer Edward C. Lasater bought ranches from Hispanic land-grant families in the Rio Grande Valley and amassed the 350,000-acre Falfurrias Ranch in the 1890s. The town was founded a few years later with the arrival of a rail line, and in 1914 noted architect Alfred Giles designed the Brooks County Courthouse. Lasater eventually developed one of the world's largest herds of Jersey cattle, and his Falfurrias Creamery distinguished the town. Find out more at the Falfurrias Heritage Museum, situated along the Chisholm Trail. Just outside of town, a religious shrine commemorates Pedro "Don Pedrito" Jaramillo, a Mexican Indian who arrived in 1881 telling stories of self-healing. With scant medical care in the region, this Mexican peasant became a famous *curandero*, or faith healer. Each year, thousands of people still make a pilgrimage to his shrine.

GEORGE WEST

While still a teenager, George Washington West was one of the first to drive Longhorns out of South Texas after the Civil War. When he was 19, he drove 14,000 head of cattle to Montana, just 100 miles short of the Canadian border. The job may have earned him and his accomplishment the honor of being the youngest trail boss and conducting the longest trail drive in history. In 1880, he bought a large ranch in Live Oak County, and in 1912 when the railroad came

through, he founded his namesake town and built a courthouse. The town's colorful past comes alive at the Grace Armantrout Museum.

★ HARLINGEN

Visitors to downtown Harlingen's historic Jackson Street are immersed in area history and culture with vibrant larger-than-life murals that bring the revitalized historic district to life. The town was founded in 1904 by Lon C. Hill, and his home was the first residence here. He built the region's original gravity-fed irrigation canals, setting the stage for the farming that would become the mainstay of the area economy for decades. Find out more at the Harlingen Arts and Heritage Museum, where you can tour Hill's house. Also on the grounds is the Historical Museum, which features photos from Harlingen's heyday as an airbase along with cultural and natural history exhibits. About a mile away is the Iwo Jima Memorial Monument. This enormous outdoor sculpture is the original from which the monument in Arlington, Virginia, was cast and depicts the raising of the U.S. flag over Iwo Jima during World War II. The museum across the street features Marine Corps memorabilia and a veteran's hall of fame. Take time to discover Arroyo Colorado Harlingen, a gateway to the entire World Birding Center network connected by the Arroyo Waterway.

HIDALGO

Hidalgo was once the epicenter of the "Magic Valley," a verdant stretch of the Rio Grande Valley where, it was said, anything would grow. The challenge facing farmers at the time was how to get the river water to the fields. The Hidalgo Pumphouse solved the problem and soon fields of fruits, vegetables, and cotton grew along a system of canals and levees, all fed by the plentiful waters of the Rio Grande Valley. The pumphouse remained in use for more than 70 years. Today, it and its irrigation magic are part of the Hidalgo Pumphouse Heritage and Discovery Park. The site is also one of nine "wings" of the Rio Grande Valley-wide World Birding Center. For another representation of area heritage, visit the city's historic district, "Hidalgo Viejo," which includes the restored former county courthouse, first courthouse jail, and other 19th century buildings.

★ KINGSVILLE

Kingsville's namesake was the legendary cattleman Richard King, the 19th century entrepreneur who created the "birthplace of American ranching." Captain King was born to Irish parents, spent his childhood in New York City, stowed away on a ship bound for Alabama, served in the U.S.-Mexico War, and based his ranching style on the centuries-old Hispanic legacy of feudal rule. He lived a cinematic



1914 Brooks County Courthouse, Falfurrias



Portrait of Town Namesake Donna Hooks Fletcher, Donna



Iwo Jima Memorial Monument, Harlingen



Hidalgo Pumphouse Heritage and Discovery Center, Hidalgo

life, wheeling and dealing from age 11 on and died a wealthy man. His wife Henrietta and son-in-law Robert J. Kleberg established his namesake town and elevated the fortunes of the King Ranch, still one of the largest working ranches in Texas. Encompassing 825,000 acres, the ranch is larger than Rhode Island. The complete history of the place unfolds at the King Ranch Museum. Rail service began at a new depot in 1904. Today, the restored structure houses the 1904 Train Depot Museum, which also serves as a visitors center. The downtown historic district includes specialty shops and the old-fashioned Harrel's Kingsville Pharmacy Soda Fountain. Kingsville is also home to Texas A&M University-Kingsville where the John E. Conner Museum serves up an entertaining dose of natural and cultural history, providing a thorough picture of one of the state's most defining eras.

★ LAREDO

The heart of Laredo's heritage district lies in San Agustín Plaza, designated in 1767 during the original partitioning of village common areas by the Spanish colonial authority. The classic open-air plaza is the center of the surrounding San Agustín de Laredo Historic District, where preserved architectural gems such as San Agustín Cathedral, Republic of the Rio Grande Museum, and Casa Ortiz exemplify area traditions and culture. The plaza also features the historic La Posada Hotel and is the starting point for a trolley tour of the city's historical districts, including the Old Mercado downtown area, the Victorian-era

St. Peter's District, and old Fort McIntosh. Optional stops include the Laredo Center for the Arts and the 1909 Webb County Courthouse.

MCALLEN

The lively community of McAllen exemplifies the melding of cultures that make up the borderland. In 1848, Brownsville businessman John Young fell in love with Salomé Ballí, the great-granddaughter of one of the original Spanish settlers. Together they built a successful ranching operation. After Young's death, Ballí married John McAllen, the town's namesake. The thriving arts district downtown is home to dozens of galleries and restaurants. Historic Archer Park is here, too. More than 100 years old, the city landmark features a charming 1918 gazebo. The historic district is one block west along 15th Street. You'll find the 1937 home of an early town leader and the Casa de Palmas Renaissance Hotel, built in 1918. The International Museum of Art & Science is a few miles away and is the premiere museum of its kind in south Texas. Another unit of the World Birding Center is located at Quinta Mazatlan, a historic Spanish adobe hacienda surrounded by lush tropical landscaping. The beautiful grounds include a trail featuring 25 bronze sculptures.

MISSION

In the 1860s, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate priests built a church to serve families on La Lomita Ranch. When the town was founded in 1908, it was named Mission in honor of the chapel.



Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge, Hidalgo County



Folkloric Pair in Front of San Agustín Church, Laredo



Quinta Mazatlan World Birding Center, McAllen



Los Ebanos Ferry, near Mission



Grapefruit, Mission



Farley Boat Works, Port Aransas

Floods destroyed the original structure, but the tiny replacement, La Lomita Chapel, still offers the charm of a frontier mission church. Irrigation and a year-round growing season allowed farmers to experiment with Texas' first citrus crops, and grapefruit became the area's signature crop. Since 1932, Mission has celebrated its favorite fruit with the annual Texas Citrus Fiesta. South of town at Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park, visitors flock to the headquarters of the World Birding Center to partake in some of the best birding in the country. Thirteen miles west of Mission in Los Ebanos, a scene right out of the history books takes place: pedestrians and motorists float across the Rio Grande on a ferry powered by five men pulling on a rope. The Los Ebanos Ferry is the only hand-drawn ferry still in operation along the border.

PORT ARANSAS

This beach town has had many names over the years, including Mustang Island for the horses brought here by Spaniards in the early 1800s, and then Tarpon in 1899 for the large number of prized game fish that were caught here. Citizens began calling their town Port Aransas by the 1930s and that name has stuck. The historic Tarpon Inn was built in 1886 with surplus lumber from Civil War barracks. It first housed workers who built the Mansfield Jetty. After the work was completed, it became a hotel and has been welcoming visitors for more than 100 years. The Port Aransas Museum recounts island history, including that of Farley Boat Works, a historic boat building company just blocks from the museum that is now a living history exhibit with boats being built before your eyes. Mustang Island State Park has been welcoming beach lovers since 1979.

↓ PORT ISABEL

By 1853, increased shipping in the area called for a lighthouse, which was used until 1905. Today, visitors can climb the signature structure at the

Texas Historical Commission's Port Isabel State Historic Site for an expansive Gulf view. Don't miss the reconstructed lighthouse keeper's cottage, which contains exhibits and visitor information about area museums and attractions. The Port Isabel Historical Museum is housed in the 1899 Charles Champion Building, adorned with a famous fish mural painted in 1906. The Port Isabel-Cameron County Airport also hosts the Commemorative Air Force's Rio Grande Valley Wing.

REFUGIO

In 1793, Spanish friars built their last Texas mission near here. Two years later, Nuestra Señora del Refugio (Our Lady of Refuge) Mission was relocated to present-day Refugio. In 1900, a newer church was built, which sits on the original mission site and remains an active parish. The original mission bell is at the Refugio County Museum, which is slated to reopen in 2022 after recovering from damage from Hurricane Harvey. Southeast of town in nearby Bayside is the Fennessey Ranch, part of a legendary 750,000-acre Texas land empire that has remained in the same family for more than 170 years and is open to groups and visitors for guided tours.

★ RIO GRANDE CITY

Before the arrival of the railroad in 1883, Rio Grande City served as an important center for trade. Thanks to the establishment of nearby Fort Ringgold in 1848, Rio Grande City saw its fortunes rise throughout the late 1800s. The fort was home to leading military figures during its glory days, including Robert E. Lee and John J. Pershing. In 1899, the fort housed Buffalo Soldiers, who were subject to racial restrictions and harassment from local citizens. Conflicting reports of impending attacks on the fort led to the soldiers firing toward the town. The disturbance was quelled, but the Buffalo Soldiers were eventually moved from the fort. The fort's service ended in 1944 and is now owned by the Rio Grande City Independent



Fulton Mansion State Historic Site, Rockport



Our Lady of the Lourdes Grotto, Rio Grande City



Annual Onion Festival, Weslaco



Historic Roma Plaza, Roma

School District. Visitors can tour the campus to see remaining fort structures and peruse artifacts and exhibits in the restored R.E. Lee House. Downtown, there are several other heritage attractions. The 1899 La Borde House welcomes visitors as a hotel. Across the street from the Starr County Courthouse is Our Lady of the Lourdes grotto, which was built by a Catholic priest and has been attracting visitors since 1924.

! ROCKPORT-FULTON

These two communities offer heritage travelers a wealth of experiences. There are numerous historic homes in the area, some of which accommodate guests. Rockport has a thriving arts community with several galleries in the brightly painted old buildings downtown. More can be found at the Rockport Center for the Arts, located on the waterfront. The Texas Maritime Museum explores nautical history. As one of the museums hosting a La Salle

Odyssey exhibit, the facility shares part of the story of the shipwrecked *La Belle*. Rising above Aransas Bay in Fulton is the impressive Fulton Mansion State Historic Site, a Texas Historical Commission property. The extravagant home was built by the town's founder. The Aransas Pathway offers miles of hike-and-bike trails connecting nearly 100 birding and historic sites in the area.

ROMA

Perched high on a bluff overlooking the Rio Grande, Roma was once an important shipping point for steamboats. Tracing its roots to the Spanish colonists of the 1760s, Roma still has physical reminders of more than two centuries of borderland heritage. The nine-block area around Roma Plaza is a National Historic Landmark District containing more than 30 structures built before 1900. History and nature meet at the Roma Bluffs World Birding Center, which includes a riverside nature area.

SAN BENITO

The soundtrack for a documentary about this town would no doubt include the buoyant strains of *conjunto* music. San Benito and surrounding border communities gave rise to the popular music genre, and Narciso Martínez, known as the “father of *conjunto* music,” died here. At the Texas Conjunto Music Hall of Fame and Museum, you can find out more about this popular musical style. You can hear it at occasional events at the Narciso Martínez Cultural Arts Center or La Villita, San Benito’s own historic dancehall. But it’s not only conjunto music that puts San Benito on a music lover’s map. It was the hometown of Grammy Award-winning native son Freddy Fender, who is buried in the San Benito Memorial Park Cemetery. The legacy of African Americans in South Texas is presented at the Callandret Black History Museum.

SAN YGNACIO

Established in 1830, San Ygnacio is the last south Texas community to retain a large selection of 19th century sandstone structures that once dominated architectural styles in the region. The San Ygnacio Historic District includes Spanish and Mexican-influenced buildings that date from this earliest period of settlement up to the late-19th century. The Treviño-Uribe Rancho, a National Historic Landmark, was built in 1830. The broader story of San Ygnacio and Zapata County can be enjoyed through the interactive exhibits at the Zapata County Museum of History in nearby Zapata.

SARITA

The tiny town of Sarita has a big history. Established in 1904, it was named for the daughter of rancher John Kenedy, the son of Mifflin Kenedy, who was the

business partner of Richard King of the King Ranch dynasty. When he died, Kenedy’s huge fortune passed to his daughter, the town’s namesake, who in turn donated much of it to charities, including the foundation that operates the Kenedy Ranch Museum located in Sarita’s 1927 Kenedy Pasture Company. Sarita is the county seat and only town in Kenedy County, and its 1916 courthouse has been restored to its original appearance.

WESLACO

The town’s name is an acronym of W.E. Stewart Land Company, which capitalized on the Lower Rio Grande Valley’s agricultural boom around 1910. Agriculture is still big business in the area. The famously sweet 1015 Onion was developed by a researcher at the Texas A&M University Extension Service in Weslaco, and the town now celebrates this claim-to-fame with an annual Onion Fest. Celebrating the fruits of the land has deep roots here. The Weslaco Museum imparts details about the Weslaco Style Show of the 1930s, a unique celebration that included a pageant of women dressed in clothes made from local fruits and vegetables. A more serious exhibit pays tribute to hometown hero Harlon Block, the only Texan in the famous World War II photo of soldiers raising the American flag on Iwo Jima.

South Texas is a world-class birding destination, attracting birders from all over the world. Frontera Audubon runs an urban nature preserve in downtown Weslaco. Also located on the site is a 1927 home that is believed to be one of the first to be built in Weslaco. Estero Llano Grande State Park, a unit of the World Birding Center, is another not-to-be missed wildlife viewing hot spot. 🇹🇽



1906 Fish Mural on the Port Isabel Historical Museum, Port Isabel



18th century bell in the Refugio County Museum at Heritage Park, Refugio



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