



# 29 THINGS WE LOVE ABOUT *TEXAS*

By Jennifer Mckenzie Frazier

**T**exas is more than just cowboy boots and wide-open spaces. It's a state with a state of mind—and an independent one, at that. There's tons to do and even more to see, and Texans are proud of every bit of it. Here's a starter list, in no particular order, of 29 reasons to visit the Lone Star State.

**1 BLUE JEANS AND COWBOY HATS**

Miniskirts and trendy cropped pants come and go, but in this state, some traditions will always remain the same. White-knuckled Texans ferociously hold onto them. We're talking about stiffly starched blue jeans, cowboy boots, and ten-gallon hats. You see, in Texas, you can wear starched Wranglers to a wedding, just as you would a tuxedo. In fact, you just might fit in better if you left the tux at home.

**2 LUCKENBACH**

First established in 1849 as a trading post, Luckenbach became a music mecca after the late Hondo Crouch, a folk humorist, bought the town in 1970 for \$30,000. Legend goes that Hondo just wanted a spot of his own where he could grab a beer on his way home from Fredericksburg. Then a song called "Luckenbach, Texas," mentioning "Waylon and Willie and the boys," hit the airwaves, and the rest is history. Now this place is known for its cold beer, outdoor concerts, and laid-back vibe. Like Hondo said, "Everybody's somebody in Luckenbach." [www.luckenbachtexas.com](http://www.luckenbachtexas.com) or 1-888-311-8990.

**3 FIRST MONDAY TRADE DAYS**

No matter what you're looking for, chances are First Monday Trade Days in Canton has it. Wooden bowling pins. An Amish horse-drawn carriage. An original "Wanted" poster of John Dillinger circa 1934. A pair of brand-new Nike sneakers. That's because this, friends, is the mother of all flea markets. It's held the Thursday through Sunday preceding each month's first Monday. [www.firstmondaycanton.com](http://www.firstmondaycanton.com) or (903) 567-6556.

**5 PEDRO'S TAMALES**

You'll never bother with another tamale once you've had a bite of Pedro's Sirloin in a Shuck. Employees prepare shredded beef and stone-ground corn, and then a machine forms the tamales and slices them into sections. Take a tour of this Lubbock factory, or dine on a dozen in the car. (There's no place to sit and eat.) Remember to order them at Christmas too. 8207 U.S. 87, Lubbock; [www.pedros-tamales.com](http://www.pedros-tamales.com) or 1-800-522-9531. *i* turn to page 4

**^ See Also**

Snagging a room at Hotel San José can be difficult. Try The Driskill Hotel ([www.driskillhotel.com](http://www.driskillhotel.com) or 1-800-252-9367) or the Mansion at Judges' Hill ([www.mansionatjudgeshill.com](http://www.mansionatjudgeshill.com) or 1-800-311-1619).



Hotel San José

**4 HOTEL SAN JOSÉ** We just love that owner Liz Lambert bought and resurrected this spot because it needed a face-lift. She turned it into one of the coolest hotels—not only in Texas or the U.S., but in the world. This 40-room sleeping oasis perfectly captures what travelers love about Austin: It is ultracool and edgy, while remaining down-home and comfy. 1316 South Congress Avenue, Austin; [www.san-josehotel.com](http://www.san-josehotel.com) or (512) 444-7322.

**6 BLUEBONNETS** The state flower is more than just something that grows up from the ground. Seeing a carpet of bluebonnets on the side of any highway or in a field takes your breath away. Texans are as proud of those flowers as a fella is of his tractor. Rumor is that picking one gets you an automatic death penalty. There isn't actually a law against picking bluebonnets, but we think you should just look and leave these beauties for others to enjoy as well. To buy seeds, stop by **Wildseed Farms** in Fredericksburg ([www.wildseedfarms.com](http://www.wildseedfarms.com) or 1-800-848-0078) or **The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** in Austin ([www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org) or [512] 232-0100).

**7 BABE'S CHICKEN DINNER HOUSE** When you eat here, the question is, "Fried chicken or chicken-fried steak?" That's the whole menu. But it's enough to convert vegetarians with a single bite. The original is located in Roanoke, a tiny town northeast of Fort Worth. This place serves hot plates of fried chicken and chicken-fried steak alongside creamed corn, mashed potatoes, cream gravy, homemade biscuits, and salad. It's better than grandma's. *104 North Oak Street, Roanoke; [www.babeschicken.com](http://www.babeschicken.com) or (817) 491-2900.*

**8 BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK**

This is what Texans are talking about when they say "wide-open spaces." The park encompasses more than 800,000 acres, which is plenty of room for horseback riding, rafting, and viewing wildlife. The Chisos Mountains serve as the centerpiece of the park, but really it's the sunrises and sunsets that will blow your mind. *[www.nps.gov/bibe](http://www.nps.gov/bibe) or (432) 477-2251.*



Schlitterbahn

**^ See Also**

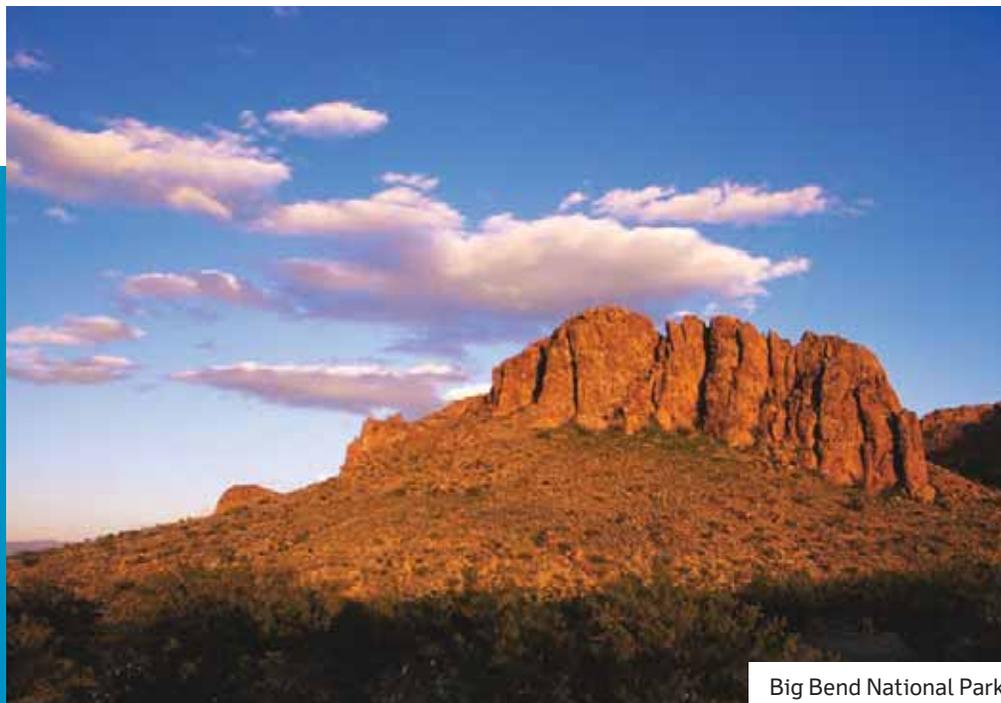
For other great places to take the kids, try **SeaWorld San Antonio** ([www.seaworld.com/sanantonio](http://www.seaworld.com/sanantonio) or 1-800-700-7786), the **Children's Museum of Houston** ([www.cmhouston.org](http://www.cmhouston.org) or [713] 522-1138), and **The Dallas World Aquarium** ([www.dwazoo.com](http://www.dwazoo.com) or [214] 720-2224).

**9 SCHLITTERBAHN** Texans are said to do everything bigger and better. Same goes with its water parks. This 65-acre gem lies along the Comal River in New Braunfels and features waterslides, pools, hot tubs, uphill coasters, lazy rivers—you name it. There's also a new Schlitterbahn in Galveston. *400 North Liberty Street, New Braunfels; [www.schlitterbahn.com](http://www.schlitterbahn.com) or (830) 625-2351.*

**10 THE CHINATI FOUNDATION**

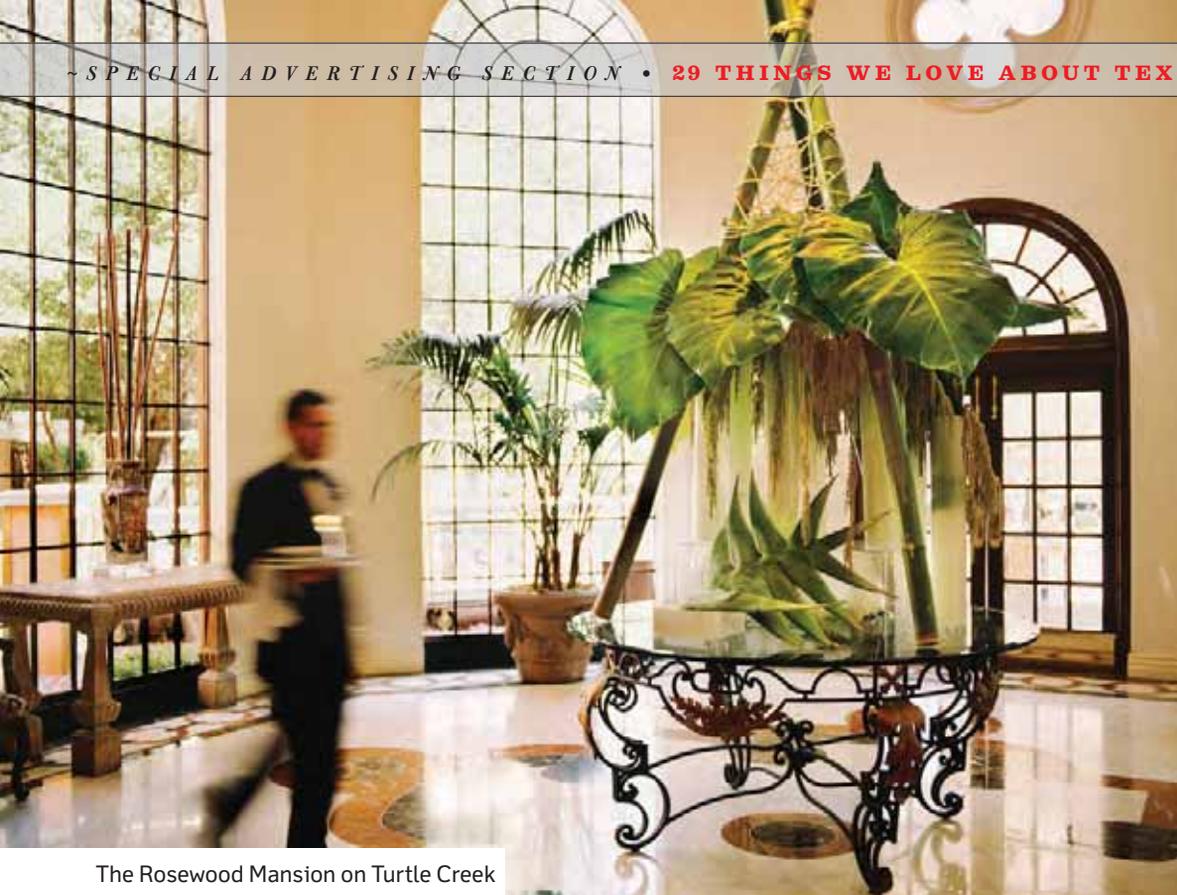
You won't believe your eyes when you visit this contemporary art museum on 340 acres of land way out west in Marfa. Founded by minimalist artist Donald Judd in 1979 on the site of former Fort D.A. Russell, the collection includes works by Judd, John Chamberlain, Dan Flavin, and others. Tumbleweeds roll across dusty roads while ultra-hip city slickers show off modern and inventive artwork. So modern, in fact, you'll really think you're dreaming. Surely you're not in the middle of nowhere and seeing such futuristic designs. It's something people are flocking to from all over the world. If you haven't been there yet, hurry. *[www.chinati.org](http://www.chinati.org) or (432) 729-4362.*

*i turn to page 6*



Big Bend National Park

**^ See Also** For more of the great outdoors, visit Texas Parks and Wildlife online at [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us). We especially love **Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway** ([806] 455-1492), **Mustang Island State Park** ([361] 749-5246), and **Eisenhower State Park** ([903] 465-1956).



The Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek

## ◀ See Also

Other hotels in Dallas: Hotel Zaza ([www.hotelzaza.com](http://www.hotelzaza.com) or 1-800-597-8399), Warwick Melrose Hotel ([www.warwickmelrosedallas.com](http://www.warwickmelrosedallas.com) or [214] 521-5151), Rosewood Crescent Hotel ([www.crescentcourt.com](http://www.crescentcourt.com) or 1-888-767-3966).

**11 THE ROSEWOOD MANSION ON TURTLE CREEK** This is luxury perfected. Built in 1925 as the residence of a cotton magnate, the restored hotel still feels much like a home—a very lavish home. An award-winning restaurant, 143 sophisticated and stylish rooms including 16 suites, and service fit for royalty. Enough said. *2821 Turtle Creek Blvd., Dallas; [www.mansiononturtlecreek.com](http://www.mansiononturtlecreek.com) or (214) 559-2100.*

**12 PROJECT ROW HOUSES** Houston's Third Ward is a neighborhood your mama might tell you to stay away from. But there's a magnificent art installation and community program here called Project Row Houses. A number of the 22 shotgun homes were turned into exhibit space for African American and other artists, making this area a must-see. *2521 Holman Street, Houston; [www.projectrowhouses.org](http://www.projectrowhouses.org) or (713) 526-7662.*

**13 HUECO TANKS STATE HISTORIC SITE** Colorful pictographs painted on walls of ancient shelters. Now that's something you wouldn't expect in Texas. But 30 miles northeast of El Paso, in a park that gets its name from the *huecos* (depressions) that catch rainwater, you can hike to see some of the coolest prehistoric and historic rock art by native tribes. *6900 Hueco Tanks Road No. 1, El Paso; [www.elpasocvb.com](http://www.elpasocvb.com) or (915) 857-1135.*

**14 AUSTIN CITY LIMITS** After 33 years, *ACL*, as it's known by fans, has become the longest-running live music showcase on television. It's nearly impossible to get tickets. It's still produced at station KLRU on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin, and not much has changed since the program began. So sit back, watch it on the tube, and appreciate what it is—true Texas. *[www.austincitylimits.org](http://www.austincitylimits.org) or (512) 475-9077.*

Austin City Limits



**15 ARMSTRONG BROWNING LIBRARY** The library on the campus of Waco's Baylor University is no ordinary library. This building also houses the largest number of secular stained glass windows under one roof in the world. You'll also find the biggest collection of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning memorabilia in one place. Impressive. *710 Speight Avenue, Waco; [www.browninglibrary.org](http://www.browninglibrary.org) or (254) 710-3566.*

## ^ See Also

For more music in Austin, try the Continental Club ([www.continentalclub.com](http://www.continentalclub.com) or [512] 441-2444) and Antones' ([www.antones.net](http://www.antones.net) or [512] 320-8424).

i turn to page 8

**16 BARBECUE** Texans claim they do barbecue best—slow-cooked beef, with plenty of thick sauce. The only thing Texans can't agree on is a favorite restaurant. Some folks adore **The Salt Lick** in Driftwood ([www.saltlick.com](http://www.saltlick.com) or [512] 858-4959). Others, the original Dallas location of **Sonny Bryan's Smokehouse** ([www.sonnybryans.com](http://www.sonnybryans.com)). Some still claim **Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que** in Llano ([www.coopersbbq.com](http://www.coopersbbq.com) or 1-877-533-5553). And don't forget **Kreuz Market** in Lockhart ([www.kreuzmarket.com](http://www.kreuzmarket.com) or [512] 398-2361). The best part of not agreeing is that you have to keep sampling to settle the debate.

**17 THE BROKEN SPOKE** Long before the young and famous of Hollywood moved in and started making music in Austin, this place was jamming with up-and-comers such as Bob Wills, Willie Nelson, and George Strait. Folks would boot scoot on the concrete floor, drink a few cold beers, and listen to locals rock out. Nothing's changed today. You can still hear Texas tunes, eat darn-good chicken-fried steak, and show off your two-step. This honky-tonk is legendary—they just don't act like it. *3201 South Lamar Blvd., Austin; [www.brokenspokeaustintx.com](http://www.brokenspokeaustintx.com) or (512) 442-6189.*

▼ **See Also**

Hop over to neighboring Fort Worth to see the Kimbell Art Museum ([www.kimbellart.org](http://www.kimbellart.org) or [817] 332-8451), where admission to the permanent collection is always free.

**18 NASHER SCULPTURE CENTER** Seeing is believing when it comes to this Dallas gem. It was a longtime dream of the late Raymond Nasher and his wife, Patsy, who amassed one of the finest collections of modern and contemporary sculpture in the world. You'll see more than 300 pieces of artwork as well as an amazing building by architect Renzo Piano, but the real star here is the 1.5-acre outdoor garden. Adorned with live oaks and babbling fountains, the garden boasts the works of Rodin, Picasso, and Borofsky. Because the center sits in the heart of downtown Dallas, you'll also get a postcard-view of the city. *2001 Flora Street, Dallas; [www.nashersculpturecenter.org](http://www.nashersculpturecenter.org) or (214) 242-5100.*

▶ turn to page 10



Nasher Sculpture Center

**19 PARIS** Who needs France? We have our own dang Eiffel Tower. And our 65-foot version wears its own red cowboy hat, to boot. Go see it in Paris—Texas, that is. [www.paristexas.com](http://www.paristexas.com) or 1-800-727-4789.

**20 THE BIG TEXAN STEAK RANCH** We dare ya. This authentic, yet somewhat rustic, Amarillo steak house is known for its 72-ounce steak challenge—can you do it? It's a delicious feast. The oversize cut of beef is free, if you finish it along with a salad, shrimp cocktail, baked potato, and a roll. The tricky part is you have to complete the task within one hour. 7701 I-40 East; [www.bigtexan.com](http://www.bigtexan.com) or 1-800-657-7177.



Caddo Lake

**21 SPACE CENTER HOUSTON** Blast into the official visitors center for NASA's Johnson Space Center. Part science theme park and part U.S. space travel museum, the cool place offers serious out-of-this-world adventure. Take a guided tour, view a film on a giant screen, watch an astronaut train for a mission, touch a moon rock, and see tons of cool mock-ups. 1601 NASA Parkway, Houston; [www.spacecenter.org](http://www.spacecenter.org) or (281) 244-2100.



Space Center Houston

^ **See Also** Kids will also have a blast at The Houston Museum of Natural Science. With dinosaur bones, a giant screen movie theater, and a butterfly center, this place thrills visitors of all ages. 1 Hermann Circle Drive, Houston; [www.hmns.org](http://www.hmns.org) or (713) 639-4629.

**22 NEIMAN MARCUS** This is the phenomenon that put department stores on the map. And it all started in downtown Dallas. The result is extravagant and over-the-top fashion. Dress in your finest black garb (don't leave the fur at home) to enjoy a trip to the original downtown store, where it all began. While you're there, pamper your palate with the lunch of the rich and famous: orange soufflé, chicken salad, and popovers with strawberry butter at The Zodiac. 1618 Main Street, Dallas; [www.neimanmarcus.com](http://www.neimanmarcus.com) or (214) 741-6911.

**23 CADDO LAKE** When we think of Texas, we think of enormous ranches with cattle and lots of open space. Or maybe we see images of dry desert with cacti and tumbling tumbleweeds. What doesn't come to mind is a lake with moss-draped trees. Texas has that too. Visit Caddo Lake State Park, located in the northeast corner of the state, to see a thick labyrinth of channels, creeks, and swamps—nothing you'd expect in these parts. The depth of the lake averages anywhere from 8 to 20 feet. With camping, hiking, canoeing, fishing, and pontoon boating, it's an adventurer's dream. You can hook 71 species of fish or spy alligators, turtles, frogs, snakes, raccoons, beavers, white-tailed deer, and armadillos, among other creatures. [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us) or (903) 679-3351.

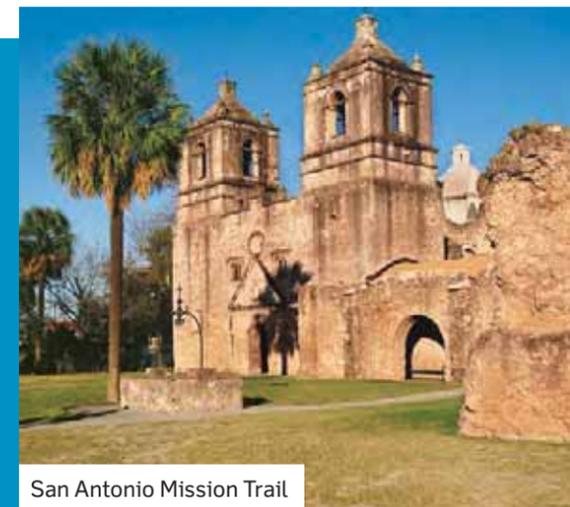
^ **See Also** If you're not a lake person, how about the beach? Head south to South Padre Island where Texans go to relax, catch some rays, and play in the blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico. [www.sopadre.com](http://www.sopadre.com) or 1-800-767-2373.

**24 BLUE BELL ICE CREAM** Texans are faithful to Blue Bell. When it comes to a piece of birthday cake, Blue Bell tops it. Same goes with pecan pie on Thanksgiving or peach cobbler during the summer. Take a tour of this little Brenham-based creamery, which recently celebrated its 100-year anniversary, and learn why it's so sweet. You'll get a free sample at the end of the tour. 1101 South Blue Bell Road, Brenham; [www.bluebell.com](http://www.bluebell.com) or 1-800-327-8135.

**25 MODERN ART MUSEUM OF FORT WORTH** A work of art houses works of art here. From the granite staircase and the concrete walls to the outdoor pond that reflects Zen-like shadows, this structure is a powerful example of Japanese architecture. Featuring artists such as Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, and Roy Lichtenstein, it rivals the great museums in New York, Chicago, and Europe. Texans are mighty proud of it. 3200 Darnell Street, Fort Worth; [www.themodern.org](http://www.themodern.org) or (817) 738-9215.

**26 MISSION TRAIL PARKWAY**

We've all heard the phrase, "Remember The Alamo." But can you name the other four missions that are part of the Mission Trail Parkway? No trip to San Antonio is complete without discovering the trail that connects these historic structures—the Mission Concepcion, Mission San José, Mission San Juan, and Mission Espada. Admission to each is free. *Visitor Center:* 6701 San Jose Drive, San Antonio; [www.sanantoniocvb.com](http://www.sanantoniocvb.com) or (210) 932-1001.



San Antonio Mission Trail

↳ turn to page 12

^ **See Also** While in San Antonio, don't miss dining at one of the many outdoor restaurants on the Riverwalk. We like Biga on the Banks ([www.biga.com](http://www.biga.com) or [210] 225-0722).

**27** **BARTON SPRINGS POOL** This spring-fed pool in Austin's Zilker Park is considered sacred. At 68 degrees year-round, it beats the triple-digit temperatures like baking soda does a kitchen fire. Open for business all year, it stretches the length of three football fields and measures 18 feet at its deepest. Be prepared for possible encounters with nature because the limestone-floored pool is home to fish, turtles, crayfish, and salamanders—all good tempered, of course. *2201 Barton Springs Road, Austin; www.ci.austin.tx.us or (512) 476-9044.*

**28** **SIXTH FLOOR MUSEUM** Each year more than 325,000 people visit the former Texas School Book Depository where Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly perched amid cardboard boxes filled with textbooks and fired on President John F. Kennedy's motorcade from the southeast window. This is a part of Dallas history we'll never forget. See photographs, letters, artifacts, and films, including a 10-minute work by Walter Cronkite, who could barely fight back the tears to get through his commentary. *411 Elm Street, Dallas; www.jfk.org or (214) 747-6660.*



Cibolo Creek Ranch

**29** **CIBOLO CREEK RANCH** There's no way to stumble onto this spectacular inn, which lies at the bottom of the Chinati Mountains in the Big Bend, just 30 minutes south of Marfa. Though it is in one of the most rugged parts of the state, it is also one of the most memorable, luxurious spots we've ever seen. A cross between a dude ranch, Hollywood movie set, and five-star hotel, it offers the best in accommodations and absolute relaxation. *U.S. 67, Marfa; www.cibolocreekranch.com or (432) 229-3737.*