

7 Totally Cool Texas Getaways

Satisfy your wanderlust without leaving the Lone Star State

BY CYNTHIA J. DRAKE

Whether you're a foodie who enjoys noshing at new restaurants, a golfer always ready to tee up on a new green, or an environmental enthusiast with a soft spot for animal rescue, there's a Texas getaway perfect for you and your family, whatever your budget. Here, we offer up what to see and do, what's new, and where to stay in these sure-to-please destinations.



Beachfront at Cinnamon Shore
in Port Aransas



Rockport Center for the Arts

The Coastal Bend

Why Go? Beaches, sea turtles, museums

After a long winter, it's time to break out the flip-flops and head to a trio of beloved beach towns hugging the Aransas and Corpus Christi bays.

Corpus Christi

Check in on rescued sea turtles at the new **Wildlife Rescue Center**, then head next door to the **Texas State Aquarium**. And pay respects to the late singer Selena at the small but thoughtfully curated **Selena Museum** that honors this hometown hero dubbed the Queen of Tejano Music (she was slain by her fan club president in 1995). On the culinary front, pop into **Central Kitchen** downtown for breakfast to start the day with its breads and pastries or tasty toasts. Sample the Mediterranean-inspired menu at **Elizabeth's at the Art Museum** overlooking Corpus Christi Bay, featuring a luscious brunch menu. Come evening, imbibe at the **Nueces Whiskey Library**, which serves whiskeys and bourbons from around the world. Overnight at the **Omni Corpus Christi** (from \$145) for nice bay views.

Port Aransas

Get your feet wet with surf lessons from **Texas Surf Camps**, or perfect your sand-turret technique with the **Port Aransas Sandcastle Guy**. Rent a souped-up golf cart from **Port A Beach Buggies**, pair your favorite tunes with the in-cart speaker, and have fun bumping across the beach. **Sea turtle releases** start in mid-June at Padre Island National Seashore. Stay at the **Tarpon Inn** (from \$99), a former Civil War barrack, or go more upscale at **Cinnamon Shore** (from \$250 plus fees) or **Palmilla Beach Resort** (from \$375 plus fees), 2 beachfront New Urbanist communities. Both are perfect for families, with accommodations ranging from condos and cottages to 5-bedroom homes. Even if you're not a guest at Cinnamon Shore, splurge on dinner at **Lisabella's**, its fine-dining seafood bistro.

Rockport

Take in the exhibitions at the **Rockport Center for the Arts**, now housed in an impressive new building that opened in late 2022. Come nightfall, experience the water in a different light with nighttime **GlowRow** kayaking, where your glowing, clear-bottomed kayak enables you to see fish swimming underneath you (this experience is available in any of these coastal cities). Cap off your day at the new, reimagined 1950s-era **Reel 'Em Inn** motor lodge (from \$229), complete with a private pier that's ideal for night fishing and viewing picture-perfect sunrises.

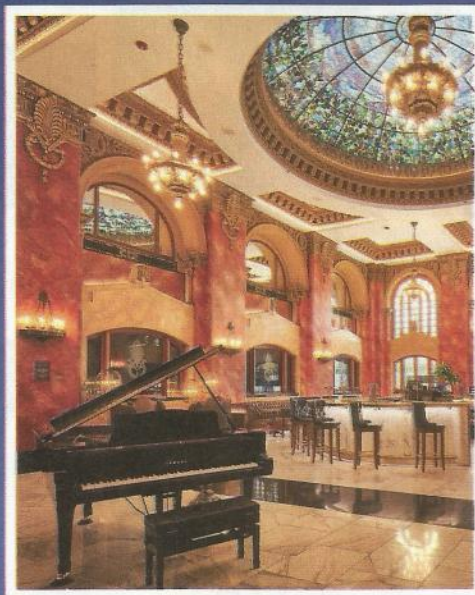
2 El Paso

Why Go? Architecture, hiking, missions

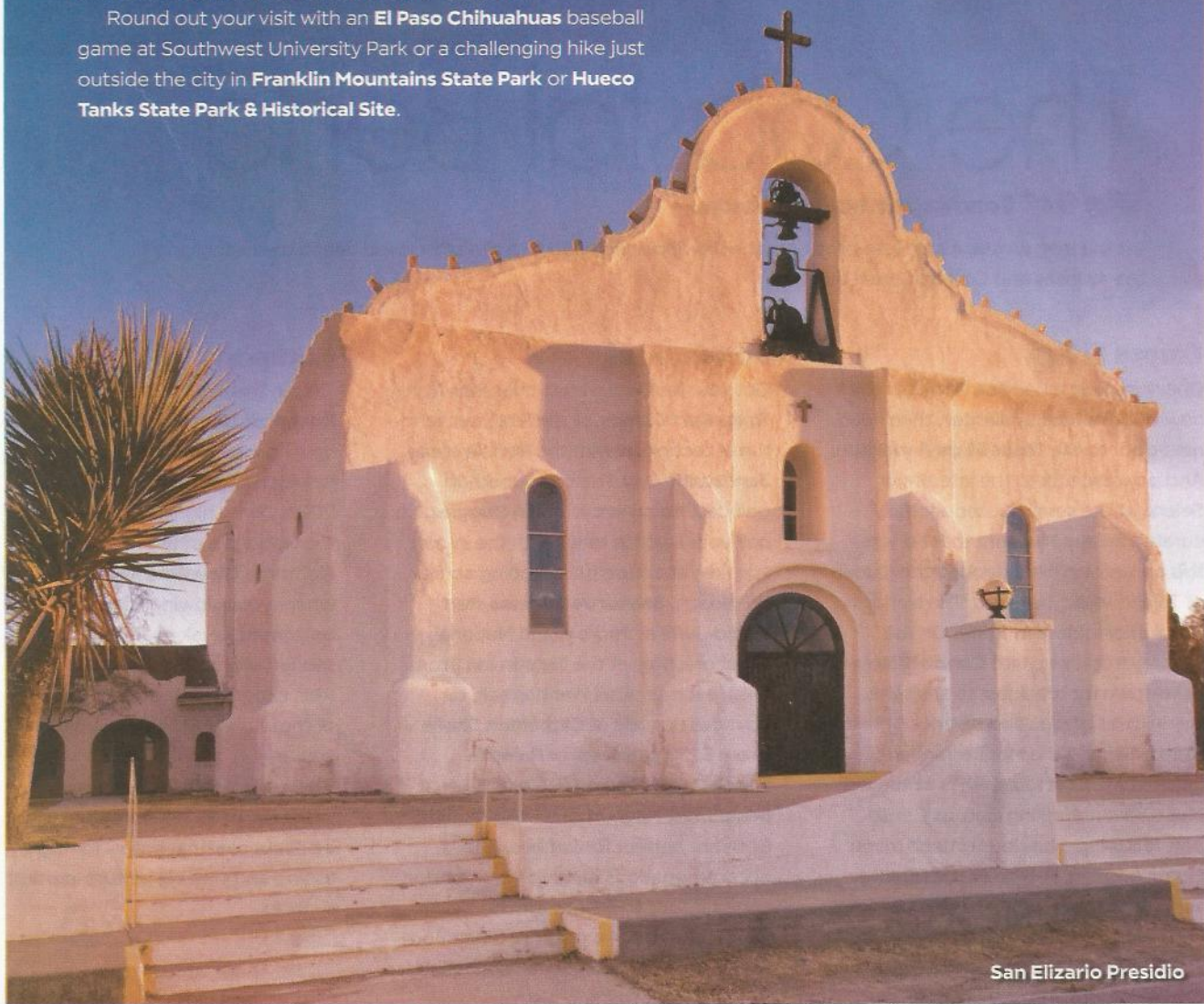
By the early 1930s, El Paso glittered with architectural beacons such as the **Plaza Theatre**, the Henry C. Trost-designed **Hotel Paso Del Norte** (from \$184), and **Plaza Hotel Pioneer Park** (from \$193)—the latter hosting notable socialites and celebrities of the day, including a young Elizabeth Taylor, who lived here during her marriage to Conrad Hilton Jr. By the early 2000s, both historic hotels had fallen into disrepair, but their grandeur was fully restored in 2020, bringing elegance to downtown El Paso once again. Having a cocktail while basking in the stained-glass glow of either hotel's bar is to be transported to another era.

Go even further back in history and spend a full day exploring the **El Paso Mission Trail**, stopping for stunning photos of the oldest continuously operated missions in the U.S.

Round out your visit with an **El Paso Chihuahuas** baseball game at Southwest University Park or a challenging hike just outside the city in **Franklin Mountains State Park** or **Hueco Tanks State Park & Historical Site**.



Hotel Paso Del Norte



San Elizario Presidio

LEFT: WTOLD SKRYPCZAK/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; INSET: NICK SIMONITE

Buddy Holly Hall of Performing Arts



Lubbock

Why Go? Wine, food, Buddy Holly

With national acts taking the stage at the multimillion-dollar **Buddy Holly Hall of Performing Arts**, which opened in 2021, there's a lot to "Rave On" about this often-overlooked, budget-friendly destination located between the Texas Panhandle and the Permian Basin. Fans of music history can also visit the **Buddy Holly Center** to learn about the brief life of one of rock music's pioneers, a Lubbock native whose grave site is located southeast of downtown. Go on a self-guided food tour of some of the newest restaurants, from **Chez Sami** (French) to **The Nicolette** (New American) to **Claraboya Scratch Kitchen + Bar** (Tex-Mex). Just outside the city limits lies the fertile ground of Texas' booming wine industry, and you can sample wines right from the vintners at **McPherson Cellars** and others. Check in to the **Cotton Court Hotel** (from \$146) for playful vibes in this growing city that never takes itself too seriously.

Boerne

Why Go? Breweries, boutiques, bistros

With an impressive number of breweries (7), restaurants serving everything from Southern favorites to tapas and Salvadoran fare, and quirky boutiques along Main Street (also known as the **Hill Country Mile**), you'll find something to love about historic Boerne. On the second weekend of every month, **Boerne Market Days** showcase local vendors and artisans on the Main Plaza. Make it a memorable stay at **The Kendall** (from \$175), which offers eclectic historic lodging options at different price points. Save room for a meal at **Peggy's on the Green**, with mouthwatering Southern-style cuisine, from perfectly cooked steaks to corn pudding.



Peggy's on the Green



Be sure to **designate a driver** if you plan to drink alcohol.

FROM TOP: COURTESY VISIT LUBBOCK; COURTESY VISIT BOERNE

Matagorda

Why Go? Fishing, kayaking, shelling, barbecue

Still considered somewhat of a sleepy fishing town, this less-visited beach destination offers a lot even if you're not an angler. A prime attraction: **Matagorda Bay Nature Park**, at the confluence of the Colorado River and the Gulf of Mexico, where the fun includes kayaking the wetlands and hunting for shells on the beach. Stop for some seriously underrated barbecue at **Coastal Que BBQ and More**, open seasonally starting the first weekend of May. If you want to stay for the weekend, check out the Lower Colorado River Authority's new bungalows or the retro-style Airstreams at the nature park (from \$248).



Matagorda Bay
Nature Park



Waco

Why Go? Dining, Dr Pepper, mammoths

It has been more than 10 years since Chip and Joanna Gaines opened **Magnolia Market** in Waco, and the city is now considered way more than just a *Fixer Upper* fan base. Settle into the couple's elegant new **Hotel 1928** (see page 6) or relax with a beer spa soak in a copper tub (exactly what it sounds like) in the Czech-themed **Pivovar Hotel**, where you can also stay overnight (from \$129). Sample some of the newer restaurants, such as the Southern-inspired **Milo**, serving elote-style corn ribs and blue crab hush puppies. In the birthplace of Dr Pepper, you can create your own soda flavor at the **Dr Pepper Museum**, and travel back to prehistoric times at **Waco Mammoth National Monument**, featuring fossil specimens of Ice Age Columbian mammoths.

FROM TOP: COURTESY LCRA PARKS; SHELBY SORREL



Frisco

Why Go? Football, golfing, family fun, gaming

This DFW-area suburb is generating lots of buzz, with Universal's first theme park in Texas planned here for 2026. But there's plenty to do now. Tour **The Star**, the headquarters of the Dallas Cowboys, to see the team's 5 Super Bowl trophies and other memorabilia. A new interactive exhibit gives fans of America's Team an opportunity to ask owner Jerry Jones questions in a virtual conversation generated by AI technology. Check out the entertainment district, too, with 35 restaurants and shops. Elsewhere in town, golfers will salivate over the **Omni PGA Frisco Resort** (from \$368), which opened in 2023 with a pair of 18-hole golf courses and a 10-hole short course. It also boasts a family-friendly putting green and entertainment zone that even appeals to nongolfers. Speaking of families, **KidZania** is a one-of-a-kind experience for youngsters to test out various "careers" by visiting different centers within a kid-centric indoor "city." From firefighter to pilot, veterinarian to podcaster, children wear uniforms, use equipment, and learn lessons from on-site guides. At the nearby **National Videogame Museum**, all ages love a little button-mashing.

CYNTHIA J. DRAKE is a travel writer based in Austin.

Explore Spring IN ALEXANDRIA PINEVILLE

**Drive TO,
not THROUGH!**

APRIL - MAY - JUNE EVENTS
 Alex River Fête | Dinner on the Bricks | Spring Herb Day | Red River Run
 Louisiana Dragon Boat Races | Pops on the River | Bug Day
 Men Who Cook and Mix | Cenla Pride Festival
 Juneteenth Celebration | Indian Creek Triathlon

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WHAT
EVENTS
ARE
GOING
ON?

SCAN ME

PLAN YOUR FALL Festival FUN IN SHREVEPORT-BOSSIER

UPCOMING FESTIVALS:

- ★ Highland Jazz & Blues Festival Sept. 14
- ★ Red River Revel Sept. 28 - Oct. 6
- ★ Prize Fest Oct. 11 - 20

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