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Discover New Frontiers In Texas

This is Texas: a locals' guide to the Lone Star State

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TRAVEL TEXAS

About this content

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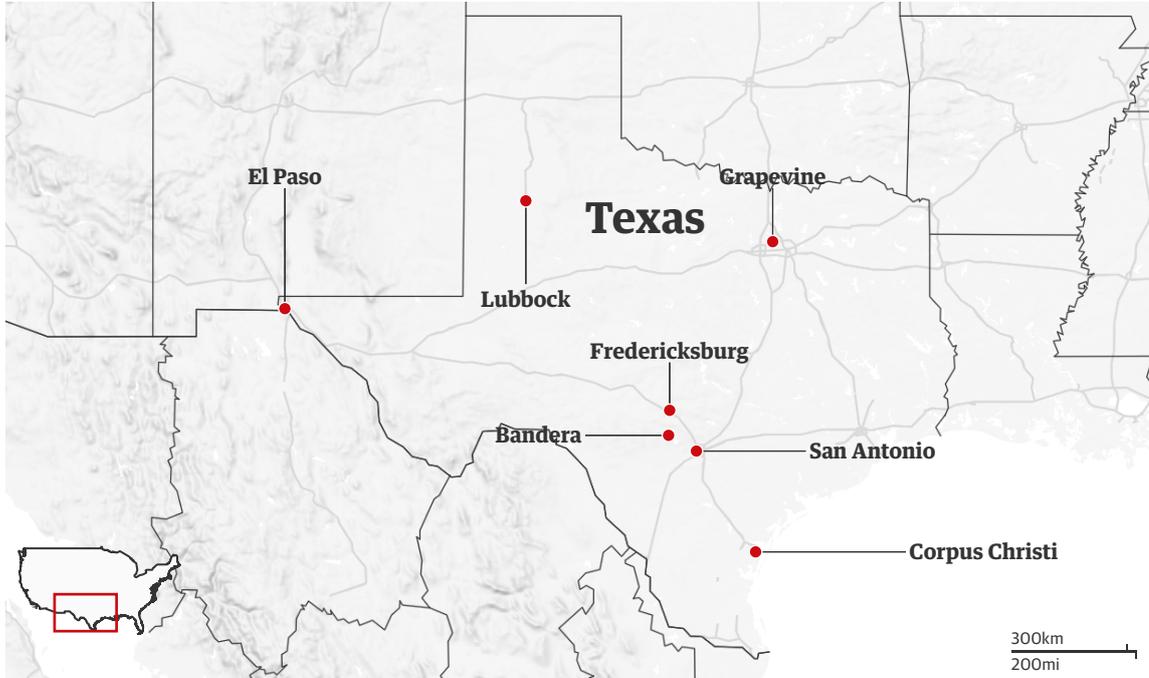


📷 Vast horizons and desert mountains embody the mythical landscape of south-west Texas. Photograph: Corey Lynch courtesy of Travel

These eight destinations are full of charm and wonder – find out how to experience them at their best from the people who live and work there ...

Though most travellers may be familiar with the vast geographical expanse of Texas, it's quite another to experience this unique part of the US first-hand, where no two regions are quite the same – from the Mexican influences of South Texas to the wonderful wineries and vineyards of the north.

To help guide you along your journeys in Texas, we've handpicked locals to give their best recommendations for what to do in their cities: the best spots to find a great meal, chat up a local over a nightcap, catch an exciting home game, or experience moving artwork.



Lubbock, north-west Texas

Lubbock-Depot-District Cactus Theatre on Buddy Holly Street

📍 The Cactus Theatre on Buddy Holly Street. Photograph: Jaime Hudson courtesy of Travel Texas

The local: *Antonio Piña, chef*

The hometown of rock pioneer Buddy Holly, Lubbock is now known as a college town (home of Texas Tech University) with a thriving arts and dining scene and the fertile grounds of Texas's booming wine industry.

"Shows like Yo-Yo Ma and Hamilton will come to town at Buddy Holly Hall, and people are coming to eat and then go see a show," says chef Antonio Piña of Claraboya Scratch Kitchen + Bar, a restaurant at DoubleTree by Hilton Lubbock. It has a menu that includes dishes informed by his South Texas roots, as well as Mexican cuisine, such as bison meatballs, fresh mussels and red snapper. "The culture is awesome," he adds.

Antonio Piña recommends:

Food and drink: [Claraboya Scratch Kitchen + Bar](#); [Taquería Autlán](#); [Chez Sami](#).

Nightlife: [Narrow Bar](#); [the Funky Door](#); [Flippers Tavern](#).

Outdoor, sports and adventure: [Lubbock Matadors FC](#); [Buffalo Springs Lake](#); [the Range](#).

History and heritage: [Buddy Holly Center](#); [National Ranching Heritage Center](#).

Music, arts and culture: [Buddy Holly Hall](#); [First Friday Art Trail](#); [Civic Center](#).

Fredericksburg, central Texas

Variety of wine for tasting on table in vineyard

Local wineries and German-inspired restaurants bring the flavour to Fredericksburg. Photograph: Jacobs Stock Photography Ltd/Getty Images

The local: *Blake Smith, owner of Walden Retreats*

German roots mix with Texan hospitality in this little wine destination that is growing each year.

"It's a small-town feel with a lot of locally owned businesses, shops and people walking on the streets," says Blake Smith, owner of [Walden Retreats](#) in nearby Johnson City. "The architecture is refined, you have the shaded, covered sidewalks with the wrought-iron posts. It's nice. There's a lot to offer from a dining perspective, and good to see a lot of German-inspired restaurants are still around."

Blake Smith recommends:

Food and drink: [Vaudeville](#); [Otto's German Bistro](#); [William Chris Vineyards](#).

Nightlife: [Luckenbach Dancehall](#); [Albert Dancehall](#); [Hilltop Cafe](#).

Outdoor, sports and adventure: [Enchanted Rock State natural area](#); [Ranch Road One Bike Rentals and Tours](#); [Walden Retreats](#) (private access to fishing and hiking).

History and heritage: [Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park](#); [National Museum of the Pacific War](#); [Oktoberfest](#).

Music, arts and culture: [Fischer & Wieser Cooking School](#); [Johnson City Science Mill](#); [Fredericksburg art galleries](#).

San Antonio, south-central Texas

The Alamo, San Antonio, Texas

The Alamo at dusk. Photograph: Wesley Hitt/Getty Images

The local: *Johnny Hernandez, restaurateur*

WITH UNESCO heritage designations both for its historic missions, as well as its gastronomy, this Texas destination offers something truly special for visitors seeking out new experiences. Nearly \$1bn (£800m) in improvements to the pedestrian areas and museum spaces near the Alamo, as well as nearby La Villita and Hemisfair Park are well under way, breathing new life into this truly magnificent historical destination.

"We have the largest Day of the Dead celebration in the country, in addition to a new La Villita beer festival starting this year," says chef Johnny Hernandez, owner of several San Antonio restaurants, including La Gloria, Burgerteca, Casa Hernan Cantina, and Fruteria - Botanero. "We're really focused on doing things in a very authentic and unique way, honouring the heritage, not only just the food, but obviously the cultural experiences that are part of any celebration."

Johnny Hernandez recommends:

Food and drink: Leche de Tigre; Nola Brunch & Beignets; Casa Hernan.

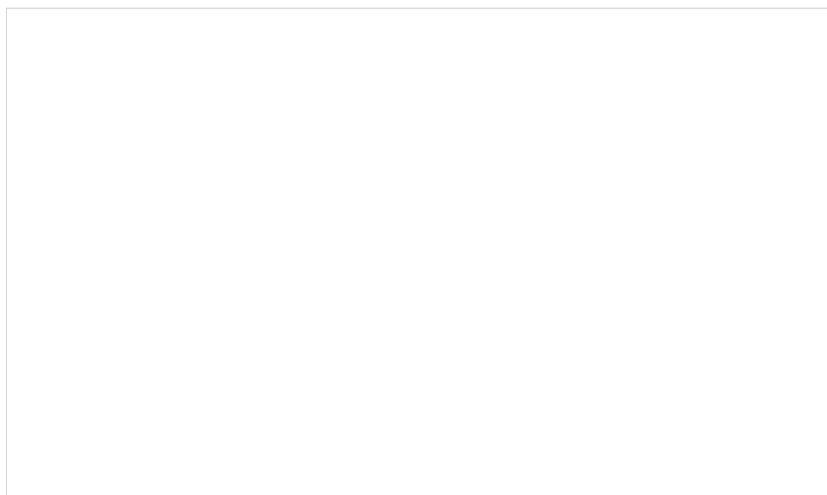
Nightlife: Bar Loretta; Jaime's Place; Paper Tiger; the Lonesome Rose.

Outdoor, sports and adventure: San Antonio Spurs; BCycle; Mission Reach Paddling Trail.

History and heritage: the Alamo; San Antonio Missions National Historical Park; Hemisfair Park.

Music, arts and culture: La Villita; San Antonio Museum of Art; Fiesta San Antonio; Historic Market Square.

Corpus Christi, Gulf Coast



📷 With lessons and camps, you can learn to surf in Corpus Christi's beautiful waters. Photograph: Nick Simonite courtesy of Travel Texas

The local: *Sarah Zigmond, who works at the Texas State Aquarium*

Situated on the Texas Gulf Coast, Corpus Christi is one of the largest beach towns in the state, offering shopping, dining, and museums, as well as relaxing getaway options. In recent years, people have invested more in the downtown corridor, which is located just a few blocks from the waterfront. This has made the shopping and dining district into a destination.

"Corpus Christi is a laid back beach town with unique, independently owned restaurants and charming little shops," says Sarah Zigmond, chief of staff at the Texas State Aquarium. "The downtown area, situated right by the marina, offers shopping and dining with a water view. Many of the restaurants partner with local anglers to provide the freshest catch of the day."

Sarah Zigmond recommends:

Food and drink: Elizabeth's at the Art Museum of South Texas; the Pearl Oyster Bar (best sunset in town); The Blue Clove Seafood Bar and Grill.

Nightlife: Bar Under the Sun (BUS); Nueces Whiskey Library; the Goldfish Bar.

Outdoor, sports and adventure: Padre Island National Seashore; Corpus Christi Hooks baseball games; Texas Surf Camps.

History and heritage: Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History; USS Lexington Museum; Texas State Museum of Asian Cultures.

music, arts and culture: [Texas State Aquarium](#); [Selena Museum](#); [Art Center of Corpus Christi](#); [First Friday ArtWalk](#).

Big Bend, south-west Texas

BigBendStatePark ClosedCanyon

📷 Hiking in Big Bend National Park. Photograph: Nick Simonite courtesy of Travel Texas

The local: *Vicki Barge, general manager at the Hotel Paisano*

The Big Bend region of Texas is almost mythical in its vast mountain/desert landscape, which has inspired generations of artists, starting with Donald Judd in 1971, to travel from all around the world to live here and create.

"He loved the openness of this land, he loved the quaintness of this small town and the people here," says Vicki Barge, general manager and director of hospitality and guest services at the [Hotel Paisano](#) in the city of Marfa. "It was the land and the space itself that drew him here. He had a belief that art should be of a place, and stay in that place."

Vicki Barge recommends:

Food and drink: [Jett's Grill](#) at the Hotel Paisano; [Marfa Spirit Co.](#)

Nightlife: [McDonald Observatory](#); [Marfa Lights](#); [Planet Marfa](#).

Outdoor, sports and adventure: [Big Bend National Park](#); [Davis Mountains State Park](#); [Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center](#); [Angell Expeditions](#).

History and heritage: [Fort Davis National Historic Site](#); [Blackwell School National Historic Site](#); [Museum of the Big Bend](#).

Music, arts and culture: [Chinati Foundation](#); [Judd Foundation](#); [Ballroom Marfa](#).

Grapevine, north Texas

Wine at winery

📷 Grapevine is home to several winery tasting rooms. Photograph: piola666/Getty Images

The local: *Sallie Andrews, historian and writer*

Just 10 minutes' drive from the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, this quaint town is known for its over-the-top Christmas celebration as the Christmas Capital of Texas, as well as its wine-tasting options, with several Texas wineries represented along the charming Main Street.

"Texas has wonderful wineries across the state, but Grapevine has a wonderful collection of winery tasting rooms," says Sallie Andrews, a local historian and writer. "So while some of them like Messina Hof may grow their grapes down by Bryan-College Station or out by Lubbock, they come into Grapevine to showcase their wine, so you can really have a great wine experience right on Grapevine if you just do the Grapevine wine trail."

Sallie Andrews recommends:

Food and drink: [Main Street Bistro & Bakery](#); [Bacchus Kitchen + Bar](#); [Harvest Hall](#)

Nightlife: [Tolbert's Restaurant](#); [Third Rail](#); [Glass Cactus](#).

Outdoor, sports and adventure: [Grapevine Golf Course](#); [Grapevine Lake](#); [Movement Climbing, Yoga and Fitness](#).

History and heritage: [Peace Circle](#); [Nash Farm](#); [Grapevine Historical Museum](#).

Music, arts and culture: [Palace Theatre](#); [Meow Wolf Grapevine](#); [Holder Dane Gallery & Art Studios](#).

Bandera, south-west Texas

Mayan Dude Ranch horseback riding



📷 Embrace the cowboy life at Mayan Dude Ranch. Photograph: Pierce Ingram/Travel Texas

The local: *Patricia Moore, executive director of the Bandera County Convention and Visitors Bureau*

Known as the Cowboy Capital of the World, Bandera is popular among international travellers seeking authentic Western-style experiences, such as ranch stays and live wild west shows in the plaza every Saturday. It's a place where one local restaurant still insists on using an old-fashioned cash register, and people happily wait in line to pay their bill in cash. Locals insist this small town is welcoming and puts the "all" in "y'all".

"It's a lifestyle of independence and camaraderie," says Patricia Moore, executive director of the [Bandera County Convention and Visitors Bureau](#). "It's an environment where you put down your cell phone, as people would rather talk to you."

Patricia Moore recommends:

Food and drink: [Old Spanish Trail \(O.S.T.\)](#); [Trail Boss Steak & Grill](#); [TJ's at the Old Forge](#).

Nightlife: [11th Street Cowboy Bar](#); [Arkey Blue's Silver Dollar](#); [Wildhorse Saloon](#).

Outdoor, sports and adventure: [Mayan Dude Ranch](#); [Dixie Dude Ranch](#); [Hill Country State natural area](#); [Lost Maples State natural area](#).

History and heritage: [Cowboys on Main](#); [Frontier Times Museum](#).

Music, arts and culture: [Bandera Natural History and Art Museum](#).

El Paso, west Texas

Hueco Tanks State Park

📷 Cave art at Hueco Tanks State Park. Photograph: Chris Zebo courtesy of Travel Texas

The local: *Liz Soto, manager at [Sessions Climbing](#)*

Laid out as a city in 1859, the historical El Paso is located on the famous Rio Grande (big river), and was a stop on the Butterfield stage route to California. Its mountainous desert landscape overlooks Mexico and the city itself is filled with art deco architectural gems, has its own special local cuisine, murals of the Lady of Guadalupe, and an incredible trail of historic Spanish missions.

"It offers a really great balance between finding things to do but also feeling the small-town vibe," says manager at Sessions Climbing, Liz Soto, who leads hikes and climbing tours to nearby outdoor destinations such as [Hueco Tanks State Park & Historic Site](#).

Soto's advice for travellers to El Paso: "Get to know the community, the food here, and the people. A term of endearment that a lot of the older community will call you is '*mijo*' or '*mija*', which is translated like 'sweetie' or 'darling'. And I always say, where else are you going to go where a complete stranger calls you *mija* and *mijo*?"

Liz Soto recommends:

Food and drink: [Cattleman's Steakhouse at Indian Cliffs Ranch](#); [Aurellia's Bottle Shop & Brewhouse](#); [Amar](#).

Nightlife: [the Reagan](#); [the Tiki Room](#); [El Mirador](#).

Outdoor, sports and adventure: [Sessions Climbing & Fitness](#); hiking at [Franklin Mountain State Park Tom Mays Unit](#) or at [Hueco Tanks State Park](#); guided UTV tour at [Red Sands with Rent a UTV Off-Road Adventures](#); [Chihuahuas](#) baseball game.

History and heritage: [El Paso Mission Trail](#); [Hueco Tanks State Park & Historic Site](#); [El Paso Museum of Archeology](#) - Of the museum, Soto says, "admission is free but I highly recommend booking a guided tour."

Music, arts and culture: Any concert by the [El Paso Symphony Orchestra](#) at the [Plaza Theater](#); a showing of [Viva El Paso!](#) at the outdoor [McKelligon Canyon theater](#) (late June to early August); [El Paso Museum of Art](#).

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