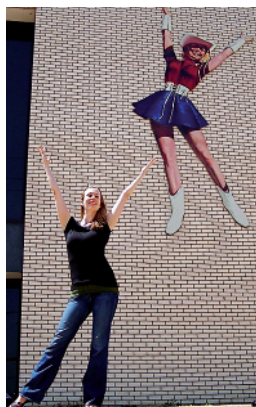


On the Road



MARIELLA KRAUSE COORDINATING AUTHOR

The quantity of cow skulls on this wall might seem excessive – until you realize that together they make up the shape of a much larger cow skull. This was at the Gage Hotel (p300) in Marathon, last stop before Big Bend National Park.



SARAH CHANDLER On our east Texas adventure my sister and I found ourselves in Kilgore (p226), a 1930s oil boom town and home to the Kilgore Rangerettes – the world's first women's precision drill team. I'm in front of the museum, channeling my best Rangerette pose. Then it was off to the Country Tavern for barbecue, of course.



RYAN VER BERKMOES Padre Island National Seashore (p253) is not just a gem of Texas but of the nation as well. Where many of the Gulf beaches are lined with condos, oil refineries or even SUVs, the 65 miles of brilliant white sand here is as natural as it's been for millennia – seaweed and all. I wandered for hours, pausing to gaze out to sea with my back resting on the sun-warmed dunes. The only sound: the breeze.

Destination Texas

Cue the theme music, and make it something epic: this is Texas, as big and sweeping a state as can be imagined. If it were a country, it would be the 40th largest, with over 268,000 sq miles to explore. And as large as it is geographically, it is equally large in people's imaginations.

Cattle ranches, pickup trucks, cowboy boots and thick Texas draws – all of those are part of the culture, to be sure. Texas plays up the stereotype with 100-year-old dancehalls, saloons, and cowboy-themed bed and breakfasts. But an Old West theme park it is not. With a state this big, there's room for Texas to be whatever you want it to be.

There will probably always be a little bit of a maverick spirit ingrained in the culture of the Lone Star State. After all, Texas doesn't take kindly to being told what to do. Once part of Mexico, Texas declared its independence in the Texas Revolution. Then it was the Republic of Texas for a while before joining the USA. Any state that served under its own rule is bound to have some issues with authority. Although there's some dispute as to whether Texas is allowed to secede from the USA if it wants, there's a tacit satisfaction among Texans in believing they can.

You'll see 'Don't mess with Texas' emblazoned on everything from T-shirts to coffee mugs to bumper stickers throughout the state. But that's not bragging, and it's not a threat, as some people imagine: it was actually created as part of an antilitter campaign – and a highly successful one at that. Not that taking pride in the state's appearance was a hard sell. Texans take pride in just about everything.

The Texas flag is a statewide icon, as is the very state itself: the curvy silhouette of Texas, defined more by rivers and coastline than by straight lines and narrow thinking, stands out as much for its size as its easily identified shape, which is copied on everything from cookie cutters to cattle brands. (Take that, rectangular Colorado.)

But if state pride is what unites Texas, there are few other generalities you can make about a state this massive. Conservative Houstonians look askance at quirky Austinites, who have so little in common with Dallas that you'd think one of them was adopted. The Panhandle and west Texas are so remote they're a day's drive from most of the state. There are different climates, different cuisines, different accents, different attitudes.

You can pretty much choose your own adventure, from the sprawling cowboy country of west Texas to the beaches of the Third Coast, from a glitzy metropolis to the rolling hills of central Texas. You can find theme parks, citified shopping and nightlife, well-preserved historical monuments and a vibrant music scene. And the nearly year-round warm weather makes it ideal for outdoor activities such as rock climbing, cycling, hiking and rowing.

So saddle up for whatever adventure suits you best: the Lone Star State is ready to ride.

FAST FACTS

Capital city: Austin

Population: 24.8 million

Width: 773 miles

Length: 790 miles

State flower: bluebonnet

Miles of coastline: 367

Largest city: Houston

Smallest town: Luckenbach

Highest point: Guadalupe Peak (8749ft)

Number of cars at Cadillac Ranch: 10

Getting Started

Texas truly is a huge state. Seeing it all in one trip is an ambitious endeavor, especially since there are cities in Texas that are nearly 900 miles from each other. Unless you have a good amount of time, the state is best conquered in regions. Reasonable clusters to tackle: the Dallas area; Austin, San Antonio and the Hill Country; Houston, Galveston and the Gulf Coast; and west Texas and Big Bend.

You don't need much advance planning unless you're traveling during the peak summer season or attending one of the state's major events, such as Austin's SXSW music and media extravaganza, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo or the Texas State Fair, in which case you'll need to make arrangements months ahead. At other times it's easy to travel solo, with a couple of friends or as a family. Texas is big enough to accommodate everyone.

Most of the major cities have fairly good public transportation networks, but sprawling Texas is a driving state, and it's always easier to get around with a car or motorcycle.

WHEN TO GO

Texas' generally mild climate makes it *possible* to visit year-round, but keep in mind that it's in the southern part of the country, where the summers get hot during the day and stay hot at night. In winter, temperatures can dip below freezing at night but usually stay rather moderate. Winter is definitely the off-season in Texas, and some of the larger theme parks, for example, are closed.

The best times to visit may be from April to early June and from September to November, when temperatures are more moderate and most attractions are open. These are also the months when most festival planners throw their events. If you do visit in high summer – June to August – it will be stiflingly hot outside, but you can find easy respite indoors: there's air-conditioning almost everywhere you go.

See Climate Charts (p346)
for more information.

COSTS & MONEY

Big cities such as Dallas and Houston have luxury hotels and first-class restaurants, but you don't need to be rich to enjoy Texas. In this guide, we emphasize the middle ground, while providing plenty of options for travelers who want to spend a little more or conserve their cash, as they like.

If you're camping and making most of your own meals, you could spend under \$50 a day. If you're two people staying in budget motels and eating

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Strong sunscreen and high-quality sunglasses
- A bathing suit, even if just for the hotel
- Cowboy boots if you've got 'em; cash to buy some if you don't
- A great road map
- Your MP3 player loaded with driving tunes
- Copies of your passport, driver's license and credit-card numbers
- Your résumé, just in case you, like everyone, fall in love with Austin

out (even cheaply), budget at least \$100 per person. Whether you rent a car is the wild card; without one, your expenses plummet, but you'll probably want a car, since the state is very big and public transportation isn't that great. That's at least \$40 a day for a rental car, then.

For comfortable midrange travel, budget \$150 to \$200 per person a day. 'Comfort' is relative, but with this budget you can mix up a nicer B&B with a budget hotel and balance days at expensive destinations (say, one of Texas' many theme parks) with days at free ones (rivers, parks and the Gulf Coast beach).

Going in high season also significantly affects your costs; if you're hitting Austin during the SXSW music festival or Houston during the rodeo. And of course, if you spend all your time in Dallas' fancy hotels and hitting the nightclubs, who knows how much cash you'll drop.

If you plan ahead, check the web, call and ask, and are a little flexible, you'll find numerous opportunities to trim your costs here and there.

HOW MUCH?

Plate of Tex-Mex \$8-12

Cowboy boots in Houston \$100+

Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum admission \$7

Vehicle admission to Big Bend National Park \$20

Dallas boutique hotel room \$150-200

TRAVELING RESPONSIBLY

Texas is a private-property state, but the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department does what it can to promote habitat conservation and build public support for wildlife conservation programs. One such effort provides wildlife-viewing trails like the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail and Great Texas Wildlife Viewing Trails; see www.tpwd.state.tx.us for information.

You can do what you can by helping to keep the state clean ('Don't mess with Texas') and packing out whatever you pack in when hiking or camping.

Texas has several self-governing Native American reservations. Be aware the native communities may have different rules and regulations than the rest of the state; for example, you may need special permission or licenses to fish, hike or hunt. Watch for posted signs, or check with reservation officials.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

What's Texas really like? Glad you asked.

In small-town (and big-town) Texas, football is a religion. *Friday Night Lights* (2000), by HG Bissinger, chronicles a year in the life of the Permian High School Panthers in Odessa, where the fate of the town is inextricably tied to the fate of the team. The movie and TV series based on the book give an even more realistic look at just how many Texans talk, live and feel.

Calling Texas Home (2000), by Wells Teague, has interesting tidbits of Texas history, from its Spanish legacy and struggle for independence all the way to the modern day, interspersed with personal anecdotes that are entertaining and enlightening.

Rick Vanderpool visited all 254 counties in Texas photographing the word 'Texas' on belt buckles, theater signs, tumbledown buildings and every surface imaginable. His book *Looking for Texas* (2001) is a journal of his trip, with essays about his experiences and encounters throughout the state.

In *Texas Hill Country* (2003), by John Graves, you'll find stories of the land and its people and how they influenced each other, from the German pioneers who settled this part of the state to the modern-day settlers calling it home.

In *A Natural State* (1994) nature writer Stephen Harrigan evokes the landscape of Texas with vivid essays covering the natural wonders of Texas, from the beaches to the deserts to the Hill Country's Enchanted Rock.

Larry McMurtry is famous for *Lonesome Dove*, but in 1968 he published a classic book of essays on what it means to come from Texas. The second edition of *In a Narrow Grave* (2001) is still a timeless look into the past.

TOP 10



FESTIVALS & EVENTS

From quirky regional festivals to major events that draw thousands of visitors, Texas knows how to throw a good party.

- 1 Texas State Fair in Dallas, home of Big Tex (late September to early October; p85)
- 2 Luling Watermelon Thump (late June; boxed text, p174)
- 3 Mardi Gras in Galveston (February; p239)
- 4 Terlingua Chili Cookoff is two simultaneous events (November; boxed text, p290)
- 5 National Cowboy Symposium and Celebration, in Lubbock (September; p330)
- 6 San Antonio's Night, the late-April highlight of Fiesta (p159)
- 7 Austin City Limits Music Festival, a SXSW challenger (October; p125)
- 8 Marfa Lights Festival (Labor Day Weekend; p298)
- 9 Sand Castle Days showcases sand art in South Padre Island (October; p259)
- 10 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, three weeks in March (p201)

COOL SMALL TOWNS

Most visitors focus on the major cities, but Texas' small towns are an essential part of any road trip.

- 1 Marfa, in central west Texas, boasts minimalist art and mystery lights (boxed text, p295)
- 2 Round Top, west of Houston, hosts a massive antiques fair (p220)
- 3 Rockport, up the coast from Corpus Christi, has a pedestrian-friendly waterfront (p244)
- 4 Fredericksburg in Hill Country is popular when wildflowers are in bloom (p177)
- 5 Del Rio, west of San Antonio, is one of our favorite border towns (p275)
- 6 Shiner, southeast of Austin, is where Shiner Bock beer is brewed (p167)
- 7 Port Aransas, near Corpus Christi, is easily Texas' most charming beach town (p251)
- 8 Brenham, between Houston and Austin, is home to bluebonnets and Blue Bell Ice Cream (p214)
- 9 Port Isabel is the last stop before South Padre Island (p256)
- 10 Jefferson (p221) has a 19th-century feel

MUSEUMS

Art, history, taxidermy, soda pop... Texas has museums to commemorate them all.

- 1 Wouldn't you like to be a pepper, too? Visit the Dr Pepper Museum in Waco (p108)
- 2 Wander through the beautiful gardens at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas (p85)
- 3 The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston is considered by many to be the finest art museum in the state (p198)
- 4 Those famous glasses are proudly on display at the Buddy Holly Center, in Lubbock (p329)
- 5 Republic of the Rio Grande Museum, in Laredo, is housed in the 1840 capitol of the short-lived Republic of the Rio Grande (p272)
- 6 The Museum of the Gulf Coast in Beaumont offers a glimpse of the natural, cultural and geological history of the region (p232)
- 7 Ride a bronco and see how the West was *really* won at the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame, in Fort Worth (p100)
- 8 Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, in Austin, is a glitzy, high-tech presentation of how Texas got that way (p117)
- 9 El Paso Holocaust Museum is a hidden gem, with moving and artful displays (p304)
- 10 The Buckhorn Saloon & Museum, in San Antonio, has pure camp value and a ridiculous collection of horns (p149)

INTERNET RESOURCES

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Get fellow travelers' advice, post questions and much more.

Texas Monthly (www.texasmonthly.com) The national magazine of Texas, with great information and wonderful writing.

TourTexas (www.tourtexas.com) Information broken down by regions, plus access to lots of free travel brochures.

TravelTex (www.traveltex.com) The state's official tourism website, where you can order the huge *Texas Travel Guide* and search for tons of info.

Wild Texas (www.wildtexas.com) A guide to Texas parks, travel and outdoor recreation, with an active forum where you can get advice from other travelers.

Itineraries

CLASSIC TRIPS

COASTAL TEXAS

One Week/Port Arthur to Corpus Christi

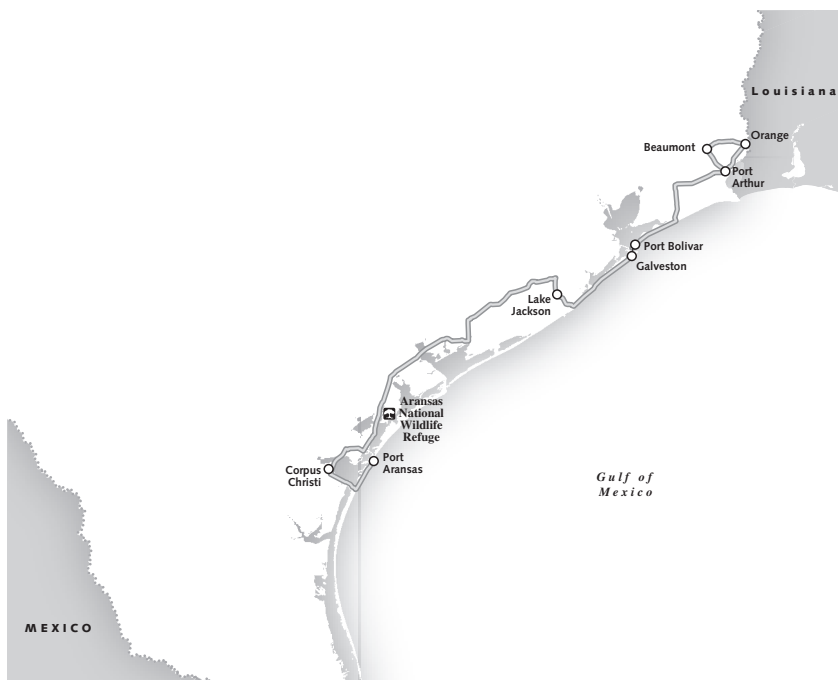
Start your Third Coast adventure in the Golden Triangle – **Beaumont** (p229), **Port Arthur** (p232) and **Orange** (p232) – visiting the area's museums, including the excellent **Museum of the Gulf Coast** (p232).

Head to Port Bolivar and catch the **Galveston–Port Bolivar ferry** (p242) to historic **Galveston** (p234). Spend a day or two exploring **Galveston Island State Park** (p242), ogling the mansions in the **Silk Stocking Historic Precinct** (p237), and wandering the stores, restaurants and attractions of the **Strand** (p235).

Continue around the coast, stopping at the **Sea Center Texas** (p243) in Lake Jackson to check out the aquarium and fish hatcheries. Then make your way down to **Aransas National Wildlife Refuge** (p244), the best bird-watching site on the Texas coast.

Take the loop around **Corpus Christi Bay** (p252), and be sure to stop by **Port Aransas** (p251) with its pedestrian-friendly waterfront. Finish your trip in **Corpus Christi** (p246), spending some time at the Museum of Science and History, the Texas State Aquarium, and the Art Museum of South Texas.

Follow this route, which shirks Houston in favor of 300 miles' worth of sunny beaches, interesting small museums, historical towns and some of the state's best bird-watching. The lazy pleasures of the Third Coast await.



WEST TEXAS & BIG BEND LOOP

One Week/El Paso and Back

Spend a day in **El Paso** (p301), where you can tour the thoroughly enjoyable **El Paso Museum of Art** (p304) and the nearby **El Paso Museum of History** (p304). See some of that history in real life by visiting the **Mission Trail** (p305).

The next day, head to **Fort Davis** (p292) to see the remarkably well-preserved frontier **military post** (p292) that gave the town its name. Try to time your trip so you can catch a Star Party at **McDonald Observatory** (p293), 19 miles northwest of town.

In the morning, drive through **Marathon** (p300) to check out the fabulous **Gage Hotel** (p300) and pick up supplies for your drive into **Big Bend National Park** (p282). Check in to the **Chisos Mountain Lodge** (p289) or set up your tent for camping. Then it's up early for two or three days of hiking, probably the **Window Trail** (p286) the first day, the **Lost Mine Trail** (p286) the second, and your choice of hikes to see the **Rio Grande** (p286) on the third.

The next day, for a change of scenery, make your way to **Terlingua** (p289) and its ghost town, slipping in a visit to the **Starlight Theater** (p291). Spend the night in **Alpine** (p292), then visit its **Museum of the Big Bend** (p298) to learn the history of the region you just hiked.

Drive to **Marfa** (p295) and check out the gorgeous **Presidio County Courthouse** (p297) and all the **art galleries** (p296). After dinner, hit the **Marfa Lights Viewing Area** (p296) and look for the mystery lights on the horizon after dark. Spend the whole next day exploring minimalist art at the **Chinati Foundation** (p295) before heading back to El Paso.

Ditch your cell phone, your laptop and maybe even your watch as you ease into west Texas, starting with bicultural El Paso then taking a slow, 650-mile loop through small towns and Texas' best national park.



SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

One Weeks/Austin To San Antonio

Start with two days around **Austin** (p112), focusing on sights **downtown** (p117), around the **UT campus** (p120) and the oasis of **Zilker Park** (p123). Don't miss the **Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum** (p117), a splash in **Barton Springs Pool** (p123) or the **bat colony** (p120) under the Congress Ave bridge. Quirky **South Congress** (p113) is wonderful for people-watching, noshing and shopping. After dark, visit Austin's **live music clubs** (p135).

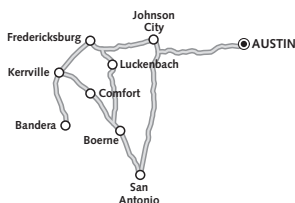
Next, head out to the Hill Country, stopping at **Johnson City** (p176) to see the **LBJ Ranch** (p176). Then spend two or three nights in **Fredericksburg** (p177) or **Kerrville** (p181). Activities around the former include a visit to the Texas **wine country** (p179), a climb up **Enchanted Rock** (p180) and a musical pilgrimage to **Luckenbach** (p180). Meanwhile, Kerrville is the place for **tubing** (p182) on the Guadalupe River, **cowboy art** (p181) and **dude ranches** (p184) in nearby Bandera.

On the way down to San Antonio, go hunting for antiques in **Comfort** (p183) or caving in **Boerne** (p185) or get off the beaten path on the **Waring-Welfare Rd** (p185).

Start your **San Antonio** (p144) visit with the **Alamo** (p147) and the **Mission Trail** (p153). Around sunset, stroll along the **Riverwalk** (p148) to catch live jazz at the **Landing** (p168).

The next morning, drop by the historic **King William District** (p151), then spend the afternoon museum-hopping at the **San Antonio Museum of Art** (p154) and the **McNay Art Museum** (p155). Families with energetic kids may want to head to **Natural Bridge Caverns** (p173) or spend the day at **SeaWorld** (p155) or **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** (p155).

Wildflowers, back roads and charming small towns are bookended by two of Texas' most interesting cities on this 300-mile road trip deep in the heart of Texas.



GRAND TEXAS TOUR

One Month/Austin to El Paso via Houston

So you want to do it all? Get ready for some serious driving. Spend your first week exploring **Austin** (p112), **San Antonio** (p144) and the **Hill Country** (p176) as outlined in the South Central Texas itinerary (p23). Then head west to **Houston** (p189) for a few days of big-city life. Don't miss the stellar **Museum of Fine Arts** (p198) and the **Houston Museum of Natural Science** (p198), and spend some time wandering the eclectic **Montrose** (p199) neighborhood, known for its restaurants and shops. If you have the time, drive down for an overnight in **Galveston** (p234).

Swing up to **Dallas** (p76) for more museum-hopping in the enormous **Arts District** (p83). Downtown, **Dealey Plaza** (p81) and the **Sixth Floor Museum** (p81) are fascinating for anyone with even the slightest interest in the Kennedy assassination. Heading to **Fort Worth** (p95), don't miss the world-class **Kimbell Art Museum** (p99) and take the opportunity to go dancing at the world's largest honky-tonk, **Billy Bob's** (p105).

It's now time to settle in for a loooong day of driving and wide-open spaces as you head west toward **Big Bend National Park** (p282). Spend several days hiking and maybe floating down the Rio Grande. As you head back out of the park, stop in the small town of **Marfa** (p295) and check out the minimalist art of the **Chinati Foundation** (p295). Further along, don't miss the **McDonald Observatory** (p293) in **Fort Davis** (p292). Finish up in **El Paso** (p301), where you'll find some of the best Mexican food around and most of the museums are free. Congratulate yourself, because you grabbed this huge state by the horns and took it down.

Nearly 1500 miles
is what it takes
to see all the best
Texas has to offer,
and we're probably
leaving some out.
You could shave
some time by fly-
ing, although you'd
be missing out on
a lot of wonderful
small towns along
the way.



TAILORED TRIPS

TEXAS FOR KIDS

Whether your kids gravitate toward theme parks, museums or outdoor adventures, you're in luck. Texas is made for family fun.

In Austin, start out at the **Austin Children's Museum** (p124). Zip over to Zilker Park for wading in **Barton Springs Pool** (p123), **miniature train rides** (p124) and the wonders of the **Austin Nature & Science Center** (p124). Downtown, don't miss the nightly egress of Austin's own **bat colony** (p120).

Aquatic fun awaits in **San Marcos** (p173) or **New Braunfels** (p173), and San Marcos' **Wonder World** (p175) offers adventure for junior spelunkers. In San Antonio, take a cruise along the **Riverwalk** (p148), visit the **San Antonio Children's Museum** (p157), then head to Brackenridge Park (p157) for the excellent **Witte Museum** (p157), old-fashioned carnival rides and more. You could easily spend a whole day at **SeaWorld** (p155) or **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** (p155).

In Houston, be sure to catch the **Children's Museum of Houston** (p201) and the **Johnson Space Center** (p214) in Clear Lake. Galveston is home to family-friendly **Stewart Beach** (p239), or, if you need to up the wow factor, take the family to **Schlitterbahn Beach Waterpark** (p258).

If you're in Dallas in September/October, visit Big Tex at the **Texas State Fair** (p85). Over in Arlington, **Six Flags Over Texas** (p106) is great for little ones and teenagers alike.



QUIRKY TEXAS

In central Texas, locals try to '**Keep Austin Weird**' (p127), and one of our favorite embodiments of that movement is the exceedingly nontraditional **Christmas lights** (p126) on 37th Street each December. Down in San Antonio, the **Buckhorn Saloon & Museum** (p149) is a kitschy monument to taxidermy with a two-headed calf thrown in for good measure.

Houston is more conservative, but a couple of local mavericks keep the freak flag flying with two local attractions: **Orange Show** (p199) and the **Beer Can House** (p199). Kilgore is the home of the sassy **Rangerette Museum** (p226), an ode to the famous Rangerettes drill team who enlivened Kilgore College football games starting back in 1939.

West Texas has its share of oddities, including the mysterious **Marfa Mystery Lights** (p296) that appear on the horizon outside of Marfa after dark, and the little town of **Terlingua** (p289), which is actually a new town being built on top of the ruins of a ghost town.

Over in Amarillo, don't miss **Cadillac Ranch** (p336), Texas' answer to Stonehenge, and finish with a meal at the monument to excess that is the **Big Texan Steak Ranch** (p339). And tiny McLean is where you'll find the only-in-Texas **Devil's Rope Museum** (p338), with its many displays involving barbed wire.



HONKY-TONKIN'

Dancehalls, honky-tonks – call 'em what you will, but a spin or two around a well-scuffed wood floor to the sounds of live country music is an essential Texas experience. Texas' oldest continually operating dance hall is **Gruene Hall** (p174) in tiny Gruene. Built in the 1880s, this barnlike building was – and still is – the social center for the town.

If you're lucky you can catch a weekend dance at the old-old-timer **Luckenbach Dance Hall** (p181). It was established in 1849, abandoned for a while, then rescued by Hondo Crouch in the 1970s.



North of San Antonio in Helotes, the **John T Floore Country Store** (p168) goes back to 1942 and has an impressive roster of former guests including Hank Williams, Bob Wills and Willie Nelson. Head to nearby **Bandera** (p184), the 'Cowboy Capital of Texas,' for two historic halls from the 1930s: **Arkey Blue's Silver Dollar Bar** (p184) and **Bandera Cabaret Dance Hall** (p184).

In Austin, folks gather at the **Broken Spoke** (p137), a relative newcomer that's only been around since the 1960s but is still a great place to practice your Texas two-step. Least historic but still noteworthy, **Billy Bob's** (p105) in Fort Worth is the world's largest honky tonk, with 40 bars, live music and live bull riding.

FOR HISTORY BUFFS

Texas has some excellent historical sites and museums for anyone who wants to experience the past without the help of a history book. One of the best known is the **Alamo** (p147) in San Antonio – a must-stop on your tour. While you're remembering the Alamo, don't forget **Goliad** (p246), another significant Texas revolution site.

San Antonio is also home to the **Mission Trail** (p153), with four beautifully preserved missions. El Paso's **Mission Trail** (p305) has two missions and a chapel that form the oldest settlements in Texas.

Texas has several ties to presidential history. You don't have to be a history buff to appreciate the significance of Dallas' **Dealey Plaza** (p81), where President John F Kennedy was assassinated, or the **Sixth Floor Museum** (p81), created from the perch where Lee Harvey Oswald hid. There's also the **Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) Presidential Library & Museum** (p121) in Austin, **LBJ Ranch** (p176) in Johnson City and the **George Bush Presidential Library** (p216) in College Station.



If military history is more your style, try **Fort Davis National Historic Site** (p292), a scenic and well-preserved frontier military post, or **Fort McKavett State Historical Park** (p325), southeast of San Angelo.

The **Museum of Printing History** (p200) in Houston is a fascinating repository of old newspapers from significant historical events from around the nation.

