

San Antonio & Hill Country



Everyone thinks Texas is thoroughly, consistently flat. But in south central Texas, there are hills in them thar' hills. There are also caves, rivers, trees, and wildflowers lining the roadways in spring, making it a marvelous place to meander.

Fredericksburg is the most touristy Hill Country town, but the area is more about winding roads and stopping along the way than any particular destination.

San Antonio, on the other hand, is definitely a destination. The seventh-largest city in the US offers museums, the Riverwalk and, for families, two theme parks worthy of a day each. San Antonio also caters to the history buff. Of course there's the Alamo, site of the most famous battle in the fight for Texas' independence from Mexico. There are also four beautifully preserved Spanish missions, a historical church, and a military base where Geronimo was held captive.

San Antonio has a large Hispanic population, which has a significant impact on the local culture – from mariachi bands roaming downtown to colorful handicrafts available at the local *tiendas*. And there's excellent Mexican food everywhere you turn, with margaritas, cervezas and *aguas frescas* to wash it down.

HIGHLIGHTS

Best Beer in Texas

Hands down, it's Shiner Bock, and you can watch it brewed at the Spoetzl Brewery (p167) in Shiner

Easiest Place to Remember

The Alamo (p147), a historical shrine in San Antonio to the men who fought for Texas' independence

Most German Town in Texas

The unofficial capital of the Hill Country, Fredericksburg (p177) offers a hearty *wilkommen* to all

Most Taxidermy per Square Foot

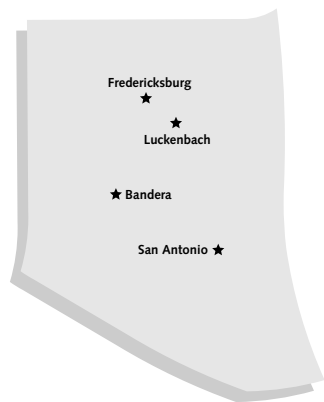
The Buckhorn Saloon & Museum (p149) in San Antonio packs in mounted animals and discarded horns

Smallest Town with Nightlife

Luckenbach(p180), population three, welcomes visitors with its cold beer and daily live music

Bow-Leggiest Town

Bandera (p184), the self-proclaimed Cowboy Capital of Texas (which would make it the Cowboy Capital of the World)



SAN ANTONIO

pop 1.3 million

In most large cities, downtown is bustling with businesspeople dressed for office work hurrying to their meetings and luncheons. Not so in San Antonio. Instead, downtown is filled with tourists in shorts carrying cameras and consulting their maps. In fact, many people are surprised to find that two of the state's most popular destinations – the Riverwalk and the Alamo – are right smack dab in the middle of downtown, surrounded by historical hotels, tourist attractions and souvenir shops.

The rest of the city sprawls out around downtown, careful not to impinge on the tourist trade. And even though San Antonio

is the seventh-largest city in the USA, it never feels particularly crowded.

ORIENTATION

San Antonio is daunting for drivers, and parking is no treat either. Yet the city is laid out in a grid system (albeit a little skewed at times), making navigation easier on the nerves. Pay close attention to highway signs, especially when they indicate a left-hand exit – miss one of those and you're in for a nickel tour of the surrounding suburbs.

Central San Antonio is enclosed by two concentric rings of highways. The ring closest to downtown is formed by I-35 in the west and north, Hwys 87 and 90 and I-10 in the south and west (they run along I-35 for a while),

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