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Dallas & the Panhandle Plains

Includes 🔿

Dallas	141
Fort Worth	160
Grapevine	171
Arlington	173
Waco	176
Permian Basin	180
San Angelo	183
Abilene	187
Lubbock	190
Caprock Canyons	
State Park	196
Palo Duro Canyon	197
Amarillo	199

Best Places to Eat

Javier's (p155)

 Lonesome Dove Western Bistro (p169)

Patina Green (p173)

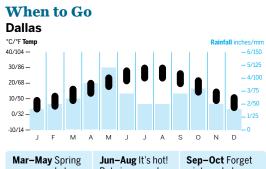
Best Small Towns

- Grapevine (p171)
- McKinney (p172)
- Denton (p173)
- Waxahachie (p175)

Why Go?

Dallas and Fort Worth may be next-door neighbors, but they're hardly twins – or even kissing cousins. Long regarded as being divergent as a Beemer-driving sophisticate and a rancher in a Ford pickup truck, these two cities have starkly different facades. Beyond appearances, however, they share a love of high (and low) culture and good old-fashioned Texan fun. In the surrounding area is a plethora of fabulous small towns worthy of a road trip, including Waxahachie and McKinney.

Leave the big smoke behind and you'll find that the Panhandle and Central Plains may be the part of Texas that most typifies the state to outsiders. This is a land of sprawling cattle ranches, where people can still make a living on horseback. The landscape appears endlessly flat, punctuated only by utility poles and windmills, until a vast canyon materializes and seems to plunge into another world.



comes early to Texas and the wildflowers stage a grand show. Jun–Aug It's hot! But air-con and swimming in water holes will cool you down. Sep-Oct Forget winter – balmy fall days are the best.

BACKROAD BBQ

The rule of thumb for back-road Texas barbecue is simple: if you see lots of smoke and pickups, stop and eat.

Biggest to Smallest

Dallas population 1,250,000

Turkey population 380

Top Sights for Kids

 Perot Museum of Nature & Science (p150)

- → George W. Bush Presidential Library & Museum (p153)
- Kimbell Art Museum (p165)

 Grapevine Historical Society (p171)

Hotel Settles (p182)

Best Museums

 Perot Museum of Nature & Science (p150)

 Six Flags Over Texas (p174)

 Six Flags Hurricane Harbor (p174)

 Museum of the Southwest (p180)

Grace Museum (p187)

Planning Ahead

Sports are the big consideration if you're making advance plans to visit Dallas or Fort Worth and the Plains. Dallas Cowboys games will be sold out so you'll have to find a source for tickets. The same goes for the many college football and basketball tournaments. Otherwise this is a pretty easy place to visit at the drop of a (cowboy) hat.

You'll rarely encounter times (outside of the sporting events above) when rooms are booked solid. A few tours and activities, such as guided hikes, may require advance booking but these are an exception.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation in this part of Texas is almost entirely limited to two modes: cars and trucks. If you're flying in, shop around for the best rental-car deal you can find and make sure the car comes with unlimited mileage – in order to fully enjoy the wide open spaces, you'll be doing a fair bit of driving. You'll also soon realize that Texas is in the midst of the greatest open-air sculpture construction in history. Enormous freeway overpasses and cloverleafs that dwarf anything found in California are rising around major cities as part of an unprecedented highway-building boom.

Note that on many back roads, which are often by far the most scenic, there is a paucity of gas stations. Even some rural county seats have lost their last place to fill up. So when the tank gets below a half, fill up.

Resources

D Magazine (www.dmagazine.com) Dallas' glossy magazine has regional dining, culture and shopping news.

• **Eats Blog** (http://eatsblog.dallasnews.com) The food blog of the *Dallas Morning News* is the place to find out what's new in dining.

Roadside America (www.roadsideamerica.com) Strange and wonderful things in Texas towns large and small.

Historic Route 66 (www.historic66.com) The historic way across the Panhandle.

➡ KDAV (www.kdav.org/kdav) This radio station in Buddy Holly's hometown of Lubbock streams his music.