



# Houston & East Texas

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Oxheart (p224)
- ➔ Haven (p226)
- ➔ Royers Café (p238)
- ➔ Larry's French Market & Cajun Kitchen (p253)

## Best Museums

- ➔ NASA Space Center Houston (p234)
- ➔ Houston Museum of Natural Science (p211)
- ➔ Menil Collection (p211)
- ➔ Museum of Fine Arts Houston (p214)

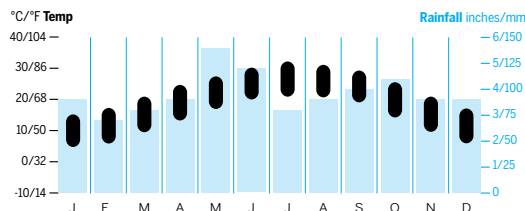
## Why Go?

More down-home than Dallas, more buttoned-up than Austin: Houston has money and culture, but wears them like a good ol' country boy come to town. What's that mean? Award-winning, chef-run restaurants where ties are rarely required. Attending world-class museum exhibits followed by cheap beer at patio bars. Enclaves of attraction spread all across the state's largest – and widest – city.

When you get sick of the concrete maze of interstates, it's easy to escape. Within day-tripping distance, Galveston calls to beach lovers and Washington County entices antique-hunters. Further afield, Northeast Texas *is* the Piney Woods, with towering forests, winding roads, natural attractions and Southern belle historic towns. To the east, Beaumont and the Golden Triangle may be a little oil-and-gas industrial, but the Cajun influence there has appeal. Come for the city, stay for the country; Houston & east Texas has both.

## When to Go

### Houston



**Mar–Apr** Azaleas and bluebonnets in bloom; not-too-hot weather with lower humidity.

**Oct** Temperatures crawl down from summer highs; it's small-town festival time.

**Dec** Towns go all out for Christmas with light shows, festivals, even outdoor ice-skating.

## Advance Planning

Generally speaking, Houston and East Texas do not require a lot of advance planning. The exception is if you are staying anywhere during Texas' spring break, which covers the entire month of March; then you should book as far in advance as possible. In Houston, make reservations in top-end (\$\$\$) restaurants at least a week ahead; for Oxheart you should book more than a month before. Boat and other tours should be reserved at least two days before departure.

### TRANSPORTATION

You gotta love your car in East Texas, otherwise you'll never get anywhere. Other than the light rail corridor on Main St in Houston, public transportation is all but useless – if it exists at all. Inside downtown Houston, parking is plentiful, but you'll have to pay. Everywhere else in the region parking is abundant, and mostly free. Gas prices are generally higher in small towns, so fuel up before you hit the road.

## Off the Beaten Path

- ➔ National Museum of Funeral History (p215) See a crab-shaped coffin and learn a new embalming technique.
- ➔ Beer Can House (p211) An estimated 50,000 flattened cans cover this, um, artistic home.
- ➔ Art Car Parade (p221) No, you're not hallucinating, it's an 8ft papier-mâché rabbit rolling down the road.
- ➔ Big Thicket National Preserve (p252) Hike among the towering pines and swampy cypress... Yes, there are trees in Texas.
- ➔ Discovery Green's Ice Skating Rink (p210) No, December is not really freezing in Houston, but that doesn't stop locals from having an outdoor ice rink.

### FIRST TIMERS

From June through September, Houston and east Texas are hot and humid; drink plenty of water. If you plan to spend time in the outdoors, be prepared with sunscreen and mosquito repellent.

## Fast Facts

- ➔ **Houston metropolitan population** 6.22 million
- ➔ **Upper East Texas population** 117,000
- ➔ **Beaumont & Golden Triangle population** 388,745
- ➔ **Washington County population** 34,093
- ➔ **Houston area** 656 sq miles

## For Kids

- ➔ Discovery Green (p210)
- ➔ Children's Museum of Houston (p222)
- ➔ Kemah Boardwalk (p235)
- ➔ Stewart Beach (p243)
- ➔ Gator Country (p251)

## Resources

- ➔ **Houston Tourist Board** ([www.visithoustontexas.com](http://www.visithoustontexas.com))
- ➔ **Washington County Chamber** ([www.visitbrenhamtexas.com](http://www.visitbrenhamtexas.com))
- ➔ **Texas Forest Trails Region** (<http://texasfortstrail.com>)
- ➔ **Galveston** ([www.galveston.com](http://www.galveston.com))