

Texas

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Best Places to Eat

- Cochineal (p712)
- Güero's Taco Bar (p676)
- Bread Winners (p701)
- Cove (p685)
- Hugo's (p691)

Best Places to Stay

- Gage Hotel (p713)
- Hotel San José (p674)
- Hotel Belmont (p701)
- Hotel ZaZa (p690)
- Stockyards Hotel (p706)

Why Go?

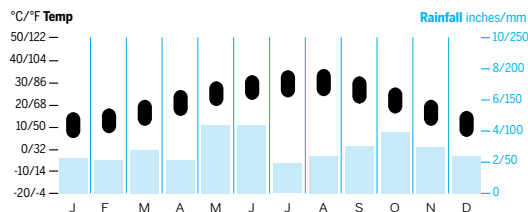
Cue the theme music, and make it something epic: Texas is as big and sweeping a state as can be imagined. If it were a country, it would be the 40th largest. And as big as it is geographically, it is equally large in people's imaginations.

Cattle ranches, pickup trucks, cowboy boots and thick Texas drawls – all of those are part of the culture, to be sure. 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.

You can find beaches, amusement parks, citified shopping and nightlife, 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.

When to Go

Austin



Mar Warm weather during spring break attracts college students and families with kids.

Apr–May Wildflowers line roadsides, festivals are in full swing and summer is yet to swelter.

Oct Crowds have thinned, the heat has broken, but it's still warm enough for shorts.

Getting Around

Texas is big, but it's easy to get around. The best way to travel is to rent a car or bring your own. Flying is another good option if time is short, especially with cut-rate carrier Southwest Airlines (p1191), which offers short hops within Texas for as little as \$59 one way if you book ahead.

There's also limited train service within Texas. Amtrak's *Sunset Limited* (Florida–California) passes through Houston, San Antonio and El Paso, and the *Texas Eagle* (San Antonio–Chicago) stops in Dallas–Fort Worth and Austin. Note that trains often have late-night arrivals or departures in Texas.

Greyhound and its partner **Kerrville Bus Lines** (☎800-231-2222; www.iridekbc.com) serve all but the tiniest towns, though it may take several transfers and twice as long as by car.

TEXAS PARKS

In a state as big as Texas, there's plenty of exploring to be done, and packed into the wide, open spaces you'll find more than 125 state parks, historic sites and natural areas. You could seek out the unique ecosystem at swampy Caddo Lake, watch bats fly out of the Devil's Sinkhole, or descend into a 120-mile-long chasm at Palo Duro Canyon, just to name a few. Some parks are remote and rustic; others are downright fancy. Create your own adventure using the free guide from **Texas Parks & Wildlife** (☎800-792-1112; www.tpwd.state.tx.us), available both in print and online.

Texas Barbecue

Make no bones about it: Texas barbecue is an obsession. It's the subject of countless newspaper and magazine articles, from national press like the *New York Times* to regional favorite *Texas Monthly*, which publishes what many consider a definitive listing of the top barbecue joints in Texas.

Some of central Texas' smaller towns – Lockhart and Elgin, to name only two – maintain perennial reputations for their smokehouse cultures and routinely draw dedicated pilgrims from miles around. To find the best barbecue, you can either follow your nose or check out the **Texas Barbecue Trail** (www.texasbbqtrails.com), a list of some of the best family-owned joints in central Texas.

However you like it best – sliced thick onto butcher paper, slapped down on picnic plates, doused with a tangy sauce or eaten naturally flavorful right out of the smokehouse barbecue pit – be sure to savor it and then argue to the death that your way is the best way. Like a true Texan.

DID YOU KNOW?

Texas is unique in the USA as the only state that was once its own republic (1836–45). It still sometimes threatens to secede.

Fast Facts

- **Hub cities** Dallas (population 1.2 million), Houston (population 2.1 million)
- **Time zone** Central, except El Paso, which is Mountain
- **State flower** Bluebonnet (you'll see it everywhere in Texas)

Best Small Towns

- Marfa (p711) boasts minimalist art and mystery lights.
- Fredericksburg (p680) is lovely during wildflower season.
- Terlingua (p709) is a pretty happening ghost town.
- Under-the-radar Denton (p704) rocks.
- Find Texas' oldest dance hall in Gruene (p679).

Resources

- **Texas Tourism** (www.traveltex.com)
- **TX Department of Travel** (www.txdot.gov/travel)
- **State Parks** (www.tpwd.state.tx.us)