

Best Bets in Southern **BIG XII** Towns

For college sports fans, nothing can compete with being at a game. Four of college football's Big XII are in Texas; add Oklahoma's two teams, and you've got half the league close enough for a weekend getaway.

AUSTINATIOUS

Austin has no shortage of entertainment, but football fans won't want to miss the University of Texas at Austin's tailgating extravaganza just south of campus or the scene at the Four Seasons, where out-of-town game-goers gather to enjoy UT and football-themed amenities. Need help to unwind? Visit the hotel's spa; the eucalyptus steam room will relax you and a massage will renew you.

Gear up for college football season on some of its star teams' home grounds.

Before and after the game, win or lose, you'll want to check out the rest of Austin. Famed for its live music scene, iconic clubs such as Antone's, the Continental Club, the Broken Spoke and the Saxon Pub helped make

Austin the "Live Music Capital of the World." Dozens of other spots offer every kind of sound.

You'll find fun apparel shops on South Congress Avenue and South Lamar Boulevard, and Heritage Boots, downtown on Eighth Street just west of Congress, offers original cowboy boot designs at reasonable prices.

LOTS TO DO IN LUBBOCK

From the Spanish Renaissance architecture to one of the top 10 university art collections in the nation, the Texas Tech University campus begs to be explored. Off campus, tasty food and rollicking music beckons.

Lubbock seems to breed great musicians, and you can pay homage to them all at the West Texas Walk of Fame and the Texas Musicians Hall of Fame at the Buddy Holly Center. The center houses photos of Buddy Holly, memorabilia and personal possessions, including record contracts and the glasses he was wearing the day the music died. You can also hear great live music at the Cactus Theater, where shows such as *Always...Patsy Cline* bring back those days, and



at the many local clubs where more contemporary bands take the stages.

Shoppers will delight at local stores such as Hollyhocks and Hodgepodge Design, and at shopping centers such as South Plains Mall and the upscale Kingsgate Center.

BY RONA DISTENFELD



PHOTOGRAPHY BY RONA DISTENFELD

Touching Down in Huntsville

Ascent 60 miles east of Bryan and College Station lies the "Athens of Texas," Huntsville. It's well worth the stop.

Check out the Sam Houston Memorial Museum Complex, home of two of Gen. Sam Houston's homes, Woodland and Steamboat House, along with the man's law office, personal belongings and artifacts from the Texas Revolution.

Incarceration is the theme at the Texas Prison Museum, the way it was as long ago as 1848, and how it is today. And don't miss the HEARTS Veterans Museum of Texas or the town's 67-foot Sam Houston statue, *A Tribute to Courage*.

Upcoming Huntsville events include the Huntsville Antique Show, Sept. 20-21, at the Walker County Fairgrounds, and the Fair on the Square, Oct. 4, featuring 300 arts and crafts vendors downtown on the restored historic square.

For good eatin', head for New Zion Barbeque, next door to the New Zion Missionary Baptist Church, 2601 Montgomery Road, a long-running fundraising venture of the church's congregation. The brisket, ribs, chicken and sausage are legendary. It's open 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Wednesday through Saturday.

For more information about Huntsville, call (800) 289-0389 or visit www.huntsvilletexas.com.

Excellent food helps make the party for tailgaters at the University of Texas at Austin (above). Music fans can learn all about Buddy Holly through artifacts and personal possessions at the Buddy Holly Center in Lubbock (left), his home town. The replica of George H.W. Bush's oval office (far right, above) in College Station is the only one in a presidential library in which visitors can actually sit.

TEXAS A&M TRADITIONS

Bryan and College Station are two towns, but the area's all Aggieland.

The Corps of Cadets remains a source of pride on the Texas A&M University campus, and its history is celebrated at the Sam Houston Sanders Corps of Cadets Center. Exhibits cover the corps' story, and a highlight

Have a real Dr Pepper, made with cane sugar, at the soda fountain in the Dr Pepper Museum in Waco.



is the Metzger/Sanders Firearm Collection, with hundreds of antique pistols, rifles and historical weapons dating to the 14th century.

The MSC Forsyth Center Galleries strike a more delicate note with the Bill and Irma Runyon Art Collections. Priceless English cameo glass, Tiffany vases, Steuben glass and Baccarat paperweights are part of this 1,100-piece collection, which also includes paintings by Mary Cassatt, Frederic Remington and Charles M. Russell.

The George Bush Presidential Library and Museum is favorite visitor stop. Exhibits take you through the life

and service of both George and Barbara Bush, including a display of some of the gifts they received during his presidency and dozens of personal family photos.

Bryan's historic downtown offers antique stores, restaurants and shopping. Have lunch at Madden's, where the food is beautifully prepared and presented but reasonably priced, then browse the adjacent store packed with clothes and decorative items. And at

the Messina Hoff Winery, visitors can sample the award-winning wines in the tasting room and have dinner in one of the best restaurants in Texas.

BRIMMING BAYLOR

Waco boasts a lot of surprises, most of them clustered near Interstate 35 exits 335A and 335B. Get a real Dr Pepper made with cane sugar at the soda fountain of the Dr Pepper Museum. Discover the legendary lawmen of the West at the Texas Rangers Museum, where guns, photographs, and personal possessions of famous outlaws and lawmen take you back in time.

The Cameron Park Zoo is a great place to relax, and kids especially enjoy the otter exhibit, where they can crawl into tubes in the tank and watch the otters swim around them. Shoppers will enjoy River Square Center's dozens of booths set up like a single store.

Waco has lots of dining choices, from family steakhouses to upscale eateries.

Local favorite George's restaurant offers fried everything and huge drinks.

BIG TIMES IN OK

In Oklahoma, Stillwater and Norman offer Big XII action even closer to home. In Stillwater, check out concerts at the Tumbleweed Dance Halls and Concert Arena, shopping in the historic downtown or Campus Corner areas, and cheese fries at Eskimo Joe's.

Stop by the Gardiner Art Gallery in the Bartlett Center for Studio Arts on the Oklahoma State University campus to view works-in-progress as well as completed pieces. And no one should have to twist your arm to visit to the National Wrestling Hall of Fame—it's wonderful.

The history of OSU and the state's other universities is told at the Oklahoma Museum of Higher Education, just north of University Avenue on the OSU campus between Hester and Knoblock streets.

Norman has the state's largest recreational rock climbing wall at Andy Alligator's Fun Park, as well as the state's largest casino and the Little River Zoo, so everyone in the family can have fun, no matter who wins the game.

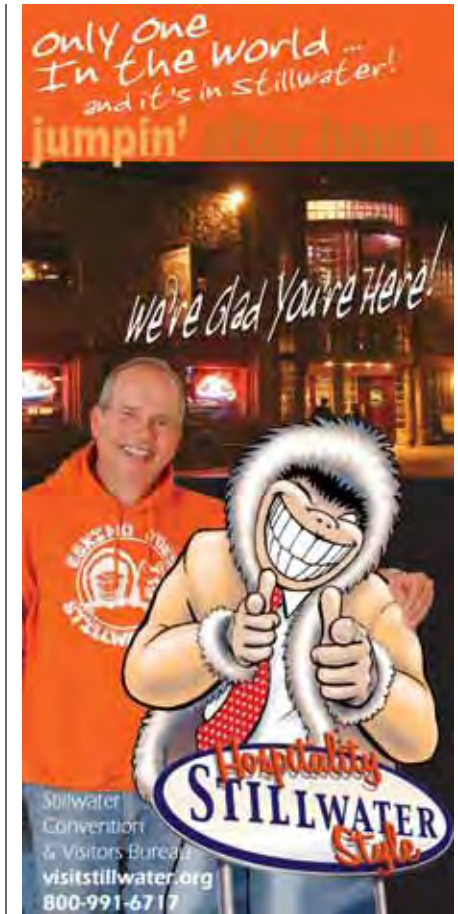
Tours of the University of Oklahoma can be arranged at the visitor center in Jacobson Hall, and it's well worth the time. And two must-dos are the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art on Elm Avenue—traveling contemporary exhibits from around the world complement rotating selections from the permanent collection—and the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History on Chautauqua Avenue—the state's history, starting with the dinosaurs.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

For travel planning information, visit AAA.com/travel.

H&A

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