



ESPN 360.COM advertisement: Watch More LIVE College Football Online Than Ever Before



Site | Yellow Pages | Calendar | Archives | Web Search by Yahoo!

keyword or search term

SEARCH

- FOOD | FASHION | HOME & GARDEN | TRAVEL | CELEBRATIONS | HEALTH | PETS | GREAT DAY SA

Web Posted: 03/10/2007 2:00 CST

Head up to Waco for a cool Spring Break

READ comments

RSS | EMAIL | PRINT | SAVE

(Courtesy Waco CVB)

This historic Suspension Bridge was once part of the Chisholm Trail. Visitors can picnic along the Brazos River and feed the flocks of ducks.

Jennifer Roof Laster Express-News Staff Writer

When I was a child, every Spring Break trip began and ended the same way.

That is, it began with high hopes, carefully packed snack bags, and four reasonably normal, eager family members.

And it ended with grunts from my father, snack food ground into the seat cushions, and my mother's eyes popping out of her head as she listened to the nth iteration of those famous four words:

Are we there yet?

Like most middle-class families, four plane tickets were a bit much of a splurge for a Spring Break trip. So, my plucky parents piled us in the car and tried something new every year: Big Bend (beautiful, but way too far for an elementary schoolgirl's bladder); Corpus Christi (relaxing, but we never fully got the sand out of the back seat and my father was lobster red the first day); or Enchanted Rock (perfect for a day, not a week).

It's hard to find a spot for a family with kids that meets the Spring Break trifecta: inexpensive, close and of equal interest to elementary schoolgirls and their teenage brothers. But earlier this spring, I think I may have found an option for all those beleaguered families still trying to find something to do with the kids next week.

Waco.

Yes, wacky Waco.

Or maybe not so wacky. Try warm, welcoming and — best of all — fewer than three hours away and affordable on just about any budget.

It's not too late: Clip out our handy plan of attack, pack some bags for Mark and Maria, and get thee into the car for as many days as you can spare this Spring Break.

Day one Begin your visit to Waco with a jolt of caffeine and history at the Dr Pepper Museum. Dr Pepper was created in Waco back in 1885 by a pharmacist named Charles Courtice Alderton who liked the tangy fruit syrup smell of the drugstore and wanted to capture that in a drink.

The historic, three-story Dr Pepper Museum building is chock-full of advertising memorabilia, old signs and bottles, and insight into the soft drink industry. Why did anyone ever make a "Wine Cocoa" or "Celery Champagne"? Why is there no period after "Dr" in Dr Pepper? Why did a wartime advertising campaign ask consumers to drink a Pepper at 10, 2, and 4? And just what does it mean to "Be A Pepper" anyway?

Answers to these cosmic questions and more are answered here. And more than 65,000 people a year come to find out.

Of note, Dr Pepper was originally called a "Waco" by thirsty types who would belly up to soda fountains and ask the soda jerk to "Shoot me a Waco." You, too, can order a Waco in the quaint turn-of-the-century style soda fountain on the museum's ground floor. I paired mine with a moon pie and was immediately transported back to the second grade. Heaven.

We should tell you to mind your manners here. "Belching," says the museum's motto, "is not encouraged. We are a museum after all." In other words, save the burping contests for the ride home. Or not.

That afternoon, keep the Waco-history trend going with a stop at the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, which celebrates the legendary Texas Rangers with memorabilia, historical exhibits and lots and lots of firearms. This is one of the biggest draws in town, but not for the reason you might think. "People come from all over to see the Chuck Norris exhibit," the girl who worked the front desk told me. Yep, Walker, Texas Ranger, has his own shrine in the museum, and it attracts people from across the globe. "I tell them he's not really a Texas Ranger, but they don't believe me," the guide said.

Non-Norris fans can wile away the afternoon checking out everything from antique Ranger badges to Western art. Kids can enjoy a play area with Wild West costumes to dress up in, as well as assemble an early Colt Repeating Pistol from four parts. (Embarrassingly, I must admit, it's harder than I thought.) Some of the exhibits are a little outdated, but history buffs and little boys who love the Rangers will be in their element. Take your photo with the life-size Ranger statue on your way out. Or, if you must, with the Chuck Norris memorabilia.

Total cost for a family of four (two adults, two children): \$31

Dr Pepper Museum, 300 S. 5th St.: \$5, adults; \$3, students

Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, I-35 at University Parks Dr. \$5, adults; \$2.50, children 6-12; Free, children 5 and younger

Day two

On your second day in town, don't waste any time hitting the Mayborn Museum Complex.

It's not like any museum you've ever been to before. Remember the big keyboard Tom Hanks dances on in "Big"? They've got one here. Also a humongous replica of a heart you can walk through and hear the beat. And a mock television studio where kids can tape their own newscasts.

And that's just one wing.

Walking the first floor, I found myself in a Smithsonian-worthy maze of learning about natural history and Texas biology. Huge fossils and animal replicas hang from the ceilings, amazingly realistic dioramas show the natural life in different regions of Texas, while the dazzling Waco Mammoth Exhibit lets guests walk on a clear plastic floor to view replicas of the Columbian mammoth bones found in Waco.

Upstairs, interaction rules the day with what the museum calls 16 "discovery rooms for hands-on learning" that focus on sound, energy, transportation and more. In addition to the above-mentioned keyboard, kids (and adults) can grind corn, run their fingers through the fur of stuffed animals (the real kind), play with bubbles and hang out with a host of live critters. Most exhibits are geared for 12 and younger, but teens and adults will love them too.

More stories

- Texan Colby Brown takes challenging hike in the Himalayas
Spaces — Antique furniture adds to the history in Castroville house
AIA cancels home tour after loss of participant
Calvin R. Finch: Getting the most out of bird feeders
Horticulturist finds, preserves vintage varieties
Good to Grow: Lemongrass
Luxurious accommodations at the Houstonian Hotel
A grand ole' time in Nashville
Texas blessed with luxury golf resorts
Red Letter Days: October

Save and share



- JOBS | AUTOS | REAL ESTATE | CLASSIFIEDS

HEALTHY CHALLENGE Running for Life... presented by H-E-B and San Antonio Express-News

LIVESTRONG CHALLENGE AUSTIN, TEXAS GO AHEAD. PICK A FIGHT. LIVESTRONGCHALLENGE.ORG

MOST : commented emailed viewed

- Longoria Parker urges Hispanics to register to vote
Things don't look good for Latino voters
Family devastated by wreck
College class for men only is raising legal questions
Man riding bike killed on West Side
Barbecue pit fire destroys Northeast Side home
Congregations face decisions over politics
The nation's 'precarious' finances should come as no surprise to Bush
Mother's worst fear comes tragically true
Board officials like Bible curriculum

express-news ads view all

- A & B Hearing Aid & Audiology Centers (2)
Affordable Cosmetic Surgery / Dr. Jose Luis Villarreal
Aire Smith Inc.
Alamo Exhibition Bird Club's / Bird Show
Alamo Music Center
Allergy & Asthma Research Center
Anna's Chem-Dry
Arbolito's Nursery (2)
BEL Furniture
Beltone (2)
Big Bend
Bluebonnet Chrysler / Dodge (2)
Bluebonnet Ford / Lincoln / Mercury
Bluebonnet Jeep
BMW of San Antonio (2)
Bob's Cooling & Heating

View more

express-news publications view all

Living Green, Travel & Fun Guide, Parade of Homes. Published on 7/26/2008, 9/28/2008, 8/29/2008

readers' choice '08



Readers of mySA.com and the Express-News spoke and we posted. List includes everything from fajitas to Thai, from spa to TV weather forecaster. Even the critics chimed in.

