

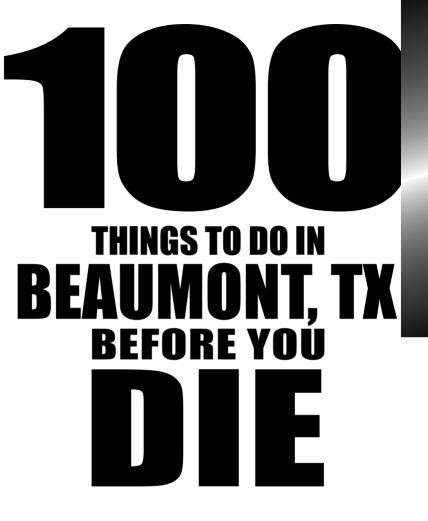
# THINGS TO DO IN BEAUMONT, TX BEFORE YOU



# LAUREN MONITZ







## LAUREN MONITZ



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# DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to everyone who gave me such a warm southeast Texas welcome and made me feel instanteously like part of the community.

And to everyone who asked why I moved here, sometimes it takes an outsider to show what's right in front of you.



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# PREFACE

When I tell people I moved to southeast Texas from Colorado, the knee-jerk reaction is always: "Why?" Way too often I hear from locals that there's nothing to do here. I'll start rattling off attractions and they'll look at me with a blank stare. "I've never heard of any of those things."

Regardless of where you were born, grew up, or moved for work, so many people just don't appreciate where they live. As someone who's resided in three different states and had the same conversation each and every time, I've come to realize it has far less to do with the place, and everything to do with the person.

It's so easy to get stuck in a rut when you see the same things every day. You drive the same route to work. You take your kids to the same fast-food franchise on the corner. You look for reasons to rush home instead of actively seeking out new places to go or things to do.

Every place has its pros and cons; the pros just may not be as obvious until you leave or look at them from the 40-foot view. And anywhere can be boring if you don't take advantage of what's right in front of you.

I never thought I'd be able to afford a big, beautiful home just 40 minutes from the ocean. We're equally poised to spend the day in the big city as we are to enjoy swampy backwoods fun. It's amazing to be able to get just about anywhere in seven

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minutes without battling traffic or fighting for parking. And don't even get me started on the food. It will forever be Beaumont's biggest attraction (the Texas 20 is real).

Since moving, I have made it my mission to experience as much as I can to be the best possible cheerleader for my adopted home and to take full advantage of the area for however long we end up here. Now, I'm inviting you to join me.

Like negativity, boredom is a mindset. You have to actively choose to make life an adventure every single day. One of the easiest ways to do that is by viewing your hometown through the eyes of a tourist. We don't know how long we have on this big, blue planet so treat each day like the chance to try something new.

My life mission has been about finding things you didn't know you wanted on your bucket list. I urge you to use this book as a guide to do the same. Instead of going to the same old haunts, commit to trying a new restaurant this week. Visit that museum you drive by every day and never thought twice about. Go for a hike at the state park you forgot is just 10 minutes away. View each and every weekend as the opportunity for a mini vacation. Plan a day trip, road trip, or weekend getaway. Stack your calendar with things to look forward to.

You can change your location or you can change your attitude—the choice is yours. Happy exploring.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the visitors, I want you to see why I fell in love with southeast Texas. The people are the heart and soul of this community and what makes it special.

To the lifelong Beaumonters, be proud of where you live. If you don't love your home, who will? I challenge you to view your city through fresh eyes, and take full advantage of all the gems you have right in your own backyard.

A huge thank you to the Beaumont Convention and Visitors Bureau, which is anything but conventional. Y'all continue to push boundaries and work tirelessly to promote this weird little corner of the world. Thanks for welcoming a Yankee who will forever mispronounce "Neches," "Tyrrell," and all the other Cajun-isms.



# FOOD AND DRINK



. . .

# **GO RETRO AT MIKE'S** old fashioned soda fountain

1

Pop a squat on one of the swirling red barstools and step back in time at a soda fountain from days gone by. Owner Michael Lisotta opened the retro 1950s style shop when he turned 50 as a way to recapture the nostalgia of his youth. Decorated with turn-of-thecentury antiques and classic cartoons playing on repeat, Mike's is a treat for the whole family with ice cream creations made from the state's beloved Blue Bell. Standard offerings include cups, cones, and sundaes, but more decadent treats include malts, milkshakes, and brownie sundaes to satisfy every sweet tooth. We recommend digging into a banana split for the full experience.

While you're in the area, make a day of it. Check out the shops on historic Port Neches Avenue, get a java jolt from the Avenue Coffee & Cafe, throw axes at Avenue Axe, or toss one back at Neches Brewing Company.

1302 Port Neches Ave., Port Neches, 409-985-5194 mikes-old-fashioned-soda-fountain.business.site

2

# **DON'T SKIP DESSERT** At la real michoacana

Home to towering freakshakes and tropical pineapple-filled sundaes, La Real Michoacana is a Mexican ice cream shop with two locations in Beaumont. As decadent as they are Instagrammable, their impressive creations are the dessert version of the leaning tower of Pisa, piled high with everything from candy and marshmallows to whole cookies and brownies.

Don't let the lack of an English menu scare you; it's perfectly okay to order by pointing at one of the pictures on the wall or by color. You can't go wrong with the bright yellow Mexican vanilla or eggnog, blue bubblegum, or pink strawberry—better yet, get all three.

For something a little less sugary, the agua frescas and homemade popsicles are also a refreshing treat. Their healthy-ish fruit bowls come with your choice of granola, condensed milk, chili, and chamoy for a (slightly) less guilty indulgence.

4030 Dowlen Rd., Suite 8 and 2949 College St., Suite #135 409-899-8993 and 409-554-0377, larealmichoacanaicecreamery.com

#### TIP

Looking for more cool treats? Mabel's is another must-try Mexican ice cream and dessert spot, while Quenchies has New Orleans–style snowballs in over 100 flavor combinations.

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# **TASTE AWARD-WINNING** BARBECUE AT 1701 BARBECUE

3

Barbecue in Texas is a highly competitive industry and to make the state-wide top 50 list is no easy feat, especially when the owners hail from a family of morticians, not restaurateurs. But 1701 consistently earns praise from reviewers and locals alike with lines wrapped around the building before they even open.

Central Texas-style barbecue, they use a simple dry rub cooked low and slow to highlight the technique rather than masking the meaty flavor in heavy sauce. Everything is cooked on live fire smokers using oak wood, and all the sides and sauces are made in-house.

Open until 2 p.m. or sellout Tuesday–Saturday, when you get to the counter, pick and choose from pulled pork, brisket, sausage, beef or pork ribs, chicken, turkey, and all the fixin's until you have a tray piled high with goodies.

1701 Calder Ave., 409-554-8009 1701barbecue.com

## TIP

The fall-off-the-bone dinosaur-sized ribs, sweet japaleno relish potato salad, and Southern green beans make a mighty fine food coma, if I do say so myself. **SIP** LOCALLY MADE SPIRITS AT CLIFFORD DISTILLING, LLC

4

The first distillery in southeast Texas, Clifford is a fifthgeneration distiller with Tennessee roots that combines a spirited Southern tradition with a nod to Port Arthur's Prohibition era in a shop that oozes pure Americana. In the 1920s, Port Arthur was known for its speakeasies, mainly on Procter Street and Houston Avenue. Housed in a former school gymnasium, it was actually where NBA star Stephen Jackson grew up shooting hoops.

Whiskey, bourbon, gin, and rum are all produced onsite from generations-old family recipes, including one found scribed in a monastery. Open for public tours, tastings, and craft cocktails, there are regular performances on the indoor "front porch" stage, plus rotating bingo and poker nights throughout the month.

As a proud veteran-owned business, liquor names pay homage to famous Texas battles like the San Jacinto, San Patricio, 82-proof in honor of the 82nd Airborne Division, and the 101-proof whiskey for the 101st Airborne Division.

> 235 Procter St., Port Arthur, 409-300-4023 clifforddistilling.com

#### 6

## TIP

Be sure to say hi to their furry fourlegged mascot, Whiskey, who'll nuzzle up on you as you sip.

## **HAVE** A FROZEN COCKTAIL FLIGHT AT TIA JUANITA'S FISH CAMP

5

Mexi-cajun fusion that packs a punch, Tia Juanita's is a "fish camp," a place where the local fishermen would go to let their hair down after a long day on the docks.

It is one of the restaurants that exemplifies why food will forever be Beaumont's biggest attraction and where you go to show off the local cuisine when there's family in town, want a fun night out with friends with strong drinks, or a date night where you'll never have a bad meal and the servers remember you like old friends.

Always delicious and consistent, you can't go wrong with anything on the menu, but they're famous for their gumbo (with optional potato salad for dipping, the true Louisiana way), boiled shrimp, and a blackened shrimp and crab bread bowl that's simply a must. To wash it down, there's a full wall of New Orleans–style slushies in a rainbow of colors, but if you can't or don't want to choose, the frozen drink flight gives you a sample of four and is perfectly acceptable to share.

5555 Calder Ave., 409-434-4532 facebook.com/tia-juanitas-fish-camp-beaumont-720316034675981

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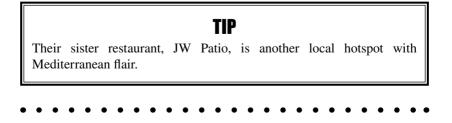
#### 6)

# TRY THE MAN CANDY AT J. WILSON'S

The quintessential neighborhood watering hole, J. Wilson's, is where you go for a consistently tasty lunch or dinner. With something for everyone, the food and beer menus change seasonally but are always some form of American staple with a slight southern twist. Don't skip brunch because their hair of the dog is a solid way to ease yourself into the weekend, and don't miss their wildly popular once-a-month hot dog and wing nights, which offer elevated versions of comfort classics. To wash it down, there's always rotating taps to sip.

Two things you must order every time are the man candy, candied pork belly bathed in habanero jelly—the perfect sweet and salty bite—and the oyster nachos, Gulf oysters coated in cornmeal served on a tortilla chip topped with remoulade, pesto aioli, Fresno chilis, and corn salsa; an umami explosion that packs just the right punch of spice.

4190 Gladys Ave., 409-899-8686 jwilsons.com



# FOLLOW THE CAJUN TRAIL

7

Eat your way through southeast Texas on the 20+ stop Cajun Food Trail, the Convention and Visitors Bureau's free passport program. Earn rewards for dining local and exploring the native cuisine, savoring gumbo, etouffee, crawfish, barbecue crab, and other regional delicacies at a variety of venues. You'll expand your palate and learn to discern the nuances between Creole-inspired, Southern-influenced, and simply made with soul, embracing the seafood bounty dished up by the Gulf.

All you need to get started is your mobile phone, as prizes like t-shirts and signature TexJoy spice blends are awarded for the number of check-ins you complete. Pack an appetite and your stretchy pants and make it a road trip or weekend getaway to earn fun swag and bring a taste of Beaumont home with you.

explore.visitbeaumonttx.com

#### **CAJUN TRAIL**

Floyd's Cajun Seafood & Texas Steakhouse 2290 I-10 S 409-842-0686 floydsseafood.com

#### Jingo Cajun Eatery

4318 Dowlen Rd. 409-347-8538 facebook.com/people/ jingo-cajun-eatery-beaumont/100066537892140

Pine Tree Lodge 3296 Pinetree Rd. 409-796-1600 facebook.com/thepinetreelodge

Ralph & Kacoo's 5055 Eastex Fwy. 409-895-0099 ralphandkacoos.com

#### Rock'n Crab 4430 Dowlen Rd.

409-333-1073 rockncrabseafood.com Boil City Seafood Restaurant & Bar 3871 Stagg Dr. 409-347-7858 boilcity.com

#### Reel Cajun Seafood Restaurant & Bar

7500 Twin City Hwy. Port Arthur 409-853-1818 reelcajunseafood.com

#### The Schooner Restaurant

1507 S Hwy. 69 Nederland 409-722-2323 theschoonerrestaurant. com

Vautrot's Cajun Cuisine 13353 TX-105 Bevil Oaks 409-753-2015 vautrotscajuncuisine.com

The Bayou Café 1255 N Major Dr. 409-861-1133 bayoucaferestaurants.com

Find many more at explore.visitbeaumonttx.com.

**GET CHEESY** with award-winning queso at carmela's

8

Beaumont has no shortage of tantalizing Tex-Mex, but who makes the best queso in town is a hotly debated topic. Type and color of cheese, thickness of pull, and spice level all play into the discussion, but it's hard to argue with a statewide top-10 list. Wide Open Eats presented Carmela's the accolade for its simplicity—yellow cheese with or without carne (meat), available as a starter or if you're feeling extra ambitious, by the gallon.

The hardest part will be deciding what to get with it. A local, family-owned favorite for nearly two decades, you can't go wrong with anything on Carmela's menu, but the giant quesadillas are another cheesy delight. Or, for more variety, the combo platters offer a taste of all their savory tamales, enchiladas, and flautas.

> 3925 Calder Ave., 409-898-4745 carmelasmexicanrest.com

#### TIP

For the early risers, their breakfast plates are an equally tasty way to start the day.

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# TASTE KING CAKE, A MARDI GRAS TRADITION

A round, braided coffee cake with a plastic baby hidden inside, King Cakes are one of Mardi Gras's most celebrated traditions. Whoever finds the surprise is crowned king for the day and invited to host next year's festivities. Bakeries around the area pump them out by the thousands come festival season. The cakes are available in a variety of sizes and flavors, with cinnamon being the most common.

The season kicks off January 6, the Twelfth Night after Christmas, and is a tradition that predates even Mardi Gras itself. In the sixteenth century, France commemorated King's Day with a Twelfth Night cake. That, combined with the Spanish tradition of throwing a grand ball on the Twelfth Night, kicked off the entire season of balls. The King and Queen were chosen by finding a bean (the precursor to the baby) and thus declared the next festival hosts. . . .

## **EAT STREET TACOS** OUT OF A FORMER VIDEO RENTAL SHOP AT TACOS LA BAMBA

10

Nearly three decades ago, Carlos Zuniga started selling tacos out of the back of a video rental shop. And while VHS tapes have long been a relic of the past, his food was so popular that even after the movie rental industry collapsed, the tacos prevailed, transforming the space into Tacos la Bamba.

Decked out in funky murals, the fast-casual spot is the epitome of a neighborhood gem. Offering a variety of Tex-Mex favorites from tortas to burritos, the whole mojarra fish platter is a sight to behold, as is the shrimp and beer platter doused in a festive and spicy red Michelada mix.

In addition to tasty cuisine, Carlos takes great pride in bringing awareness to Hispanic culture through events. He regularly participates in First Thursdays on Calder with \$1 tacos, throws an annual Dia De Los Muertos celebration with Lucha Libre, Mexican wrestling in the parking lot, and is a huge supporter of the arts. He recently founded the nonprofit Unidad ("Unity" in Spanish) to better facilitate serving the community.

> 2005 Calder Ave., 409-838-6222 facebook.com/tacoslabamba

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# **TRY A PALOMA FLIGHT** AT LACUNA BRUNCH & TEQUILA CAFÉ

Founded by a husband and wife duo, Lacuna is on a mission to bring elevated Mexican culture to southeast Texas beyond the humble margarita. With a goal of educating the public on the tequila drinking experience, they offer high-end tasting opportunities for the connoisseur or those looking for recommendations to expand their palate.

For those who prefer a delicious craft cocktail, their signature flights have a variety of fruit-forward Palomas. They begin with a base of grapefruit and lime juice that strike a balance between sweet and sour. The signature drink is rimmed with tajin and chamoy and goes down a little too easily.

Lacuna has some of the best birria tacos in town, but the sweet pink tres leches waffle is the signature breakfast bite. Stop by for one of their music brunches where you can rock out to Drake, Britney vs. Christina, or whatever other theme they dream up.

> 4210 Calder Ave., Ste. A, 409-347-7440 lacunatequila.com

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## PINCH, SUCK, AND PEEL: TRY CRAWFISH

12

Mudbugs, redneck lobsters, crawdads, crayfish, whatever you call them, crawfish season (January–July) is the best time of year in Cajun country. Freshwater crustaceans, crawfish are a type of shellfish that taste like the love child of a shrimp and lobster. Prices and sizing varies throughout the year with March/April peak eats.

Countless restaurants serve the local delicacy, each putting their own spin on preparations. Purists stick with just Cajun seasoning, while others gussy up their boils with rich melted garlic butter and dipping sauces.

It's not uncommon to put down three to five pounds per person in one sitting. Prepare to get messy and order a platter by the pound at your desired spice level with the optional addons of potatoes, corn, and boiled eggs. Eating crawfish is a full hands-on experience: when it's time to feast, simply pinch, twist, and peel until the meat is free from the tail.

beaumontcvb.com/restaurants/crawfish-trail

#### TIP

To suck or not to suck is a controversial topic. Ask a local about that "tradition."

## **CRAWFISH SPOTS TO TRY**

**Crazy Cajun Beaumont** 2310 N 11th St. 409-554-0366 crazycajunbeaumont.com

#### Floyd's Cajun Seafood & Texas Steakhouse 2290 I-10 S

409-842-0686 floydsseafood.com

#### Jingo Cajun Eatery 4318 Dowlen Rd. 409-347-8538 facebook.com/people/ jingo-cajun-eatery-beaumont-100066537892140/

Juju's Cajun Crawfish Shak 16474 FM 365 Rd. Fannett 409-794-2020 facebook.com/ jujus-cajun-crawfishshak-238819609960

**Red Tailz** 19705 State Hwy., 124 409-767-1395 redtailz.com Red's Icehouse 7665 College St. 409-223-1557 facebook.com/redsicehouse

#### Reel Cajun Seafood Restaurant & Bar

7500 Twin City Hwy. Port Arthur 409-853-1818 reelcajunseafood.com

#### Rock'n Crab Seafood Boil & Bar

4430 Dowlen Rd. 409-333-1073 rockncrabseafood.com

#### A Touch of Cajun

1147 Boston Ave. Nederland 409-853-1888 facebook.com/cajuncrawfishcafe

Boil City Seafood Restaurant & Bar 3871 Stagg Dr. 409-347-7858 boilcity.com

Find many more at beaumontcvb.com/restaurants/crawfish-trail

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# **SIP WINE ON THE BAYOU** At free state cellars

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The only winery on a bayou, Free State Cellars boasts a fascinating past. A 19th-century border dispute left the 40-mile stretch of land between Texas and Louisiana unclaimed. As a bitter territory war waged between the US and Spain, the "Free State" area became a lawless society ripe with debauchery known as "No-Man's Land." The legends of the Devil's Playground are woven into the storytelling elements of each of the winery's pours.

Free State's signature, muscadine-based heirloom wines thrive in the hot, humid conditions. America's only native grape, the Texas select varietals come from grapes grown in the Lone Star State. Sip by the glass or try a flight of wines or frozen sangrias paired with one of their Texas-shaped charcuterie boards (available with advance order) in the tasting room. You may also consider joining the Smugglers Union Wine Club, which gives you exclusive access to member's only events, discounts, and tastings.

> 4702 Tejas Pkwy., Orange, 409-221-7232 freestatecellars.com

### TIP

Don't miss the highly anticipated annual late summer Community Harvest. Everyone's invited to help pick and stomp grapes and enjoy free brunch and entertainment. • • •

# COOK YOUR OWN DINNER AT KO KOREAN GRILL

14

With neon signs that'll have you feeling like you just stepped off the plane in Seoul, KO is a high-end Korean barbecue spot and interactive dining experience. Take turns slicing, dicing, and cooking on the tabletop grills in front of you or let the chefs prepare your plate to perfection in the back. Choose your favorite protein or opt for a combination platter of meats which each serve two to four. Entrees come with rice, salad, and a variety of banchan (sides) like pickled vegetables for a well-rounded, palate-pleasing meal.

They also offer creative fusion dishes like Korean fried chicken, tacos, cheesesteaks, and burgers. You can't go wrong with anything on the menu, but be sure to wash it down with a tasty flavored Soju flight (distilled Korean liquor). Alternatively, bring your squad and share the gigantic Supamelon Bang, a potent punch served in a whole watermelon.

> 6165 Muela Creek Dr., Ste. B, 409-299-9758 kokoreangrill.com

### TIP

Save room for dessert! The tabletop s'mores are a kid and adult fan favorite.

### 20

15

# SWING LIFE AWAY AT POURO9 BAR & ROOFTOP

Pour09 is the sister venue next door to KO Korean. The name is a play on "409," Beaumont's area code. The aesthetic screams hometown pride as every iota of space was creatively and thoughtfully designed to bring a big-city vibe to Beaumont. A massive mosaic and murals everywhere you turn promise photo ops galore.

Southeast Texas's first rooftop bar and the go-to late-night spot, this is the place to get gussied up and get your sip on. They offer a variety of craft cocktails, top-shelf champagnes, and an extensive liquor list. For a light, fruity concoction, the Strawberry Fields goes down easy, while the smoked Old-Fashioned hits a little harder. If you prefer a sweet nightcap, the s'mores and cheesecake martinis are dessert in a glass.

> 6165 Muela Creek Dr., Ste. A, 409-333-1260 pour09.com

### TIP

They regularly host daytime and nighttime events that include food truck throwdowns and Market 409, an artisan vendor mart. Pour09's owner is also the co-founder of the city's annual Muralfest.

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### **FEAST ON STEAKS** COOKED BEFORE YOUR EYES AT THE TREE RESTAURANT BAR & GRILL

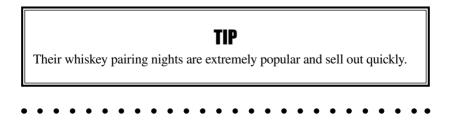
16

You wouldn't expect the best steak in southeast Texas to come from a strip mall, but just about everything in the region will surprise you, and the Tree is no exception.

Every steak is hand cut and cooked before your eyes over a coal-fire grill in the dining room. Simply select your meat, size, temperature, and toppings, and salivate as you watch it sizzle. Order by the ounce (as big as you can manage) and get it finished with glazed mushrooms, garlic butter, or cowboy butter—beer mixed with butter, a real Texas treat.

They're best known for their colossal ribeyes, but a daintier, no less tasty version is the filet mignon, served in a martini glass on a bed of mashed potatoes. They also have Cajun and Southern comfort dishes, including a chicken fried steak that gets rave reviews.

> 434 N Lhs Dr., Ste. 600, Lumberton, 409-227-0384 facebook.com/thetreerestaurantllc



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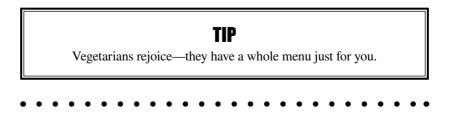
## **TRY VIET-CAJUN FUSION** At sweet basil Vietnamese noodle house

Many people don't know there's a large Vietnamese population in the region, the result of a massive resettlement effort after the Vietnam War. The climate, fishing, and shrimping industries offer similarities to their homeland. Paired with a growing economy, the combination made southeast Texas an attractive place to stay.

Sweet Basil owners Calvin and Be Pham were both raised locally, and Calvin spent most of his high school summers on a shrimp boat in the Gulf. Wanting to introduce the community to their native cuisine while fusing it with the Cajun tradition of the region, they opened Sweet Basil in 2016, dubbing it Viet-Cajun.

The Hot Mess Fries topped with sweet and spicy ribeye, aioli, and scallions are a must, but save room for the Seafood Shebang, an off-the-menu boil platter of towering crustaceans and shellfish. The signature smoked Wagyu brisket pho is also popular, as is the green tea beignet balls and monkey bread to finish it off.

4026 Dowlen Rd., 409-347-7594 facebook.com/sweetbasilbmt



# EAT THE BEST BURGER OF YOUR LIFE AT DADDIO'S BURGER

18

100 percent Nolan Ryan beef from Texas, small batch challah, whole wheat, or jalapeno cheese buns from a Houston bakery, and premium toppings are the magic formula that make DaddiO's some of the most craveable burgers in the area.

Factor in crazy concoctions like the Mac Daddi with mac and cheese, bacon, cheddar, and chipotle; the Maui Burger with grilled pineapple, glazed teriyaki, and swiss; and the Big Easy with boudin, jalapenos, pepper jack, bacon, and chipotle, and you have a recipe for success.

In addition to burgers and chicken sandwiches, their gourmet shakes and malts, hand-cut fries, and new fancy hot dog lineup are also worth a trip to the fast-casual concept founded by the owner of Novrozsky's. And the establishment isn't just for meat lovers—people swear by their black bean burger, parmesantruffle brussels sprouts, and even salads.

> 4230 Calder Ave., 409-898-1977 daddiosburger.com

### 19)

## DINE IN AN AIRSTREAM AT WILLY BURGER

Beloved by kids and adults alike, Willy Burger is your nostalgic diner experience with the added delight of dining in a retro airstream. The walls are adorned by pool balls and decked out in vinyl, the old-school ambience warranting a visit on its own. The food is nothing to sneeze at either, racking up accolade after accolade in publications like *Texas Monthly*.

The Hee-Haw Burger with homemade pimento cheese, fried green tomatoes, bacon, and pepper jelly was chosen as one of the Texas Bucket List's best burgers, lovingly described as "an old-fashioned Southern supper tucked inside a toasty bun," while the Booty Burger with fried Cajun boudin, melted cheddar, and Creole mustard puts regional flavors on full display. Toss in some onion rings and a funnel cake, and you have a "Willy, Willy good" meal worth writing home about.

> 5535 Calder Ave., 409-892-3400 eatwillyburger.com

# **REEL IT IN AND COOK IT** AT STINGAREE RESTAURANT & MARINA

20

Whether you're docking and dining, hiding out from the blazing sun, or just looking for a central place to meet up with friends, Stingaree is more than just Crystal Beach's favorite restaurant. It's been the post-beach gathering spot for years.

The main dining room upstairs overlooks the Intracoastal Waterway with 270-degree views as barges, boats, and birds roll by. Whether you choose an entree off their seafood-centric menu or haul in your own catch for their "you hook, we cook" option, it doesn't get much fresher than locally caught Gulf bounty straight from the peninsula.

Below, DownUnder Bar and Grill is the place to pull up a stool, groove to the live music, and toss back a cold one as the day fades into night. Also on-site is a full-service marina with boat ramps, gas, ice, beer, and bait for purchase.

> 1295 N Stingaree Rd., Crystal Beach, 409-684-2731 stingaree.com

# EAT AT THE ORIGINAL JASON'S DELI

21

Over 40 years ago, an Italian immigrant named Joe Sr. made his way to Beaumont through Ellis Island. He owned grocery stores, a barbecue restaurant, and a sandwich shop, among other entrepreneurial ventures. Joe Jr. watched his father's foray into the food and hospitality industry, and wanting to follow in his footsteps, opened the first Jason's Deli.

A nationwide success story with over 250 locations in 28 states, Jason's is still headquartered locally. It is one of the highest-ranking US chains for customer satisfaction and commitment to healthy ingredients. They are best known for their soup and sandwich combos, salad bar, and free soft-serve ice cream, but the local shops also serve as test kitchens for new menu items and offer unique regional selections like po'boys and muffulettas.

Did you know? Despite Joe Sr.'s having seven sons, there is no one named Jason in the family. Originally wanting to call the deli Tortorice's, they ultimately decided their last name was too hard to pronounce. The oldest son was "Jay," and thus, "Jay sons" was born.

> 112 Gateway St., 409-833-5914 jasonsdeli.com

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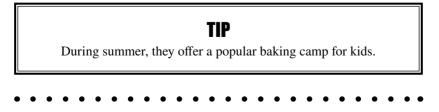
### **INDULGE** IN THE OLDEST BAKERY IN SOUTHEAST TEXAS AT RAO'S BAKERY

Founded in 1941, Rao's is an authentic Italian coffeehouse. The original location is on Calder, but there are several outposts around town so you're never too far from a sweet treat or java jolt.

The glass display is so packed you'd never be able to settle on just one thing. Luckily, they offer miniature versions of popular menu items like cinnamon rolls, croissant sandwiches, and fruit tarts so you can indulge in a few bites with slightly less guilt. Their bags of iced sugar cookies and massive muffins are always wellreceived gifts, but they're also the King Cake headquarters of the region come Mardi Gras time.

Rao's is also a great place to try a kolache. A regional delicacy with Czech roots, the European breakfast pastries were traditionally stuffed with sweet fillings, but Texas variations have sausage or boudin, cheese, and jalapeño baked in a soft, doughy shell. Rao's version also happens to highlight cult favorite and locally made Zummos meats.

2596 Calder Ave., 409-832-4342 raosbakery.com



# **BOAT TO BRUNCH** WITH GOLDEN TRIANGLE WATERSPORTS

23

Why drive to breakfast when you can boat to brunch? Golden Triangle Watersports will captain the ship and supply your crew with mimosas en route as you meander down the Neches River in style. The boat is BYOB and six to seven people can fit comfortably on the pontoon. Toss back a morning libation with your hair blowing in the wind before enjoying a nice leisurely brunch at Neches River Wheelhouse.

The Wheelhouse is a local staple for its vibrant, open-air tiki setting, one of just a handful of waterfront dining options in the area. American, Cajun, and seafood favorites are on the menu with po'boys, shrimp and grits, fried green tomatoes, and chicken and biscuits all popular bites. Island-flavored mojitos and mimosas keep the party going.

Want to bring the kids? Great! Both the boat and restaurant are family friendly.

5390 Pine St., 409-223-5037 goldentrianglewatersports.com

### TIP

Rather play on the water or play captain? Golden Triangle Watersports also rents pontoons and jet skis by the hour or day.

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# DINE IN AN ARCHITECTURAL MARVEL AT KATHARINE & COMPANY

24

Katharine & Co. evolved out of a successful catering business to become the signature spot for a gourmet lunch downtown. Housed in the Mildred Building, the opulent Mediterranean Revival–style compound was built by the founder of the Yount-Lee Oil Company during the second oil boom in honor of his daughter, Mildred. It is divided into an apartment complex and retail center. The building was included on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and designated a Texas Historic Landmark in 1999.

The pecan parmesan-crusted chicken is one of the menu staples, as is the grape and celery chicken salad. But you can't go wrong with any of their mix-and-match salads, soups, and sandwiches, which all offer a unique twist on comfort classics and Southern favorites. Standouts include the black-eyed pea and corn salad, mushroom artichoke soup, and green beans and artichokes.

> 1495 Calder Ave., 409-833-9919 katharineandcompany.com

# TRY A LOCAL DELICACY, BARBECUED CRABS, AT CRAZY CAJUN

25

Barbecued crabs are a bit of a misnomer as the crustaceans are not actually cooked on a grill and you won't find a lick of smoke or sauce in preparation. A regional delicacy born locally, they're actually deep-fried blue crab you crack open and eat with your hands.

The cooking process is a bit macabre as the crabs are deshelled, submerged in ice, doused in Cajun seasoning, and shoved in the deep frier still alive, but it's that particular technique that gives it a flavor unlike anything you've ever tasted.

You'll find barbecued crabs on a number of menus around town, but Crazy Cajun prides itself on being the area's seafood headquarters and offers both an appetizer portion of five or an entree platter of 10. They are always one of the first to have fresh crawfish each season, sometimes even before Christmas (a holiday miracle from Santa Craws himself) set to a colorful crawfish mural to commemorate the occasion.

> 2310 N 11th St., 409-554-0366 crazycajunbeaumont.com

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### **EAT AT THE OLDEST** BLACK-OWNED AND FAMILY-OWNED BARBECUE RESTAURANT IN TEXAS AT PATILLO'S BARBEQUE

26

A fifth-generation business, Patillo's is the oldest Black-owned and family-owned barbecue restaurant in Texas. With over 100 years of tradition, they got their start catering to the affluent oil barons of the early 1900s before opening their first brick-and-mortar shop in 1912. They've moved nearly half a dozen times since, but the current building has been home since 1956. During segregation, there was even a separate dining room for people of color in the back.

The pioneers of southeast Texas-style barbecue, Patillo's is all about the beef links, churning out batches of 500 at a time using the same recipe Robert Patillo's great-grandfather developed. The all-beef casing is stuffed with brisket (the only place you'll find brisket on the menu) and a special blend of seasonings before being smoked over an open pit to give it a big juicy flavor.

> 2775 Washington Blvd., 409-833-3156 patillosbbqtx.com

# **WRECK YOUR DIET** AT SACHI'S CAKES AND DESSERTS LAB

27

If you've ever dreamed of stepping into Willy Wonka's factory, make your way to Sachi's. A real-life *Cake Boss*, owner Cat Altamirano travels all over the world to study baking techniques, which she brings back to her whimsical shop. Sweetly named after her daughter, ("Sachi" means "happiness" in Japanese) it is a pastel Instagram heaven.

There's no set menu, so stop by often to try whatever new creation she's dreamed up. Their ube cheesecake and chocolate pinatas that you break with a tiny hammer have gone viral online, but the pastry cabinet is always stocked with a variety of dessert favorites from giant cookies and cupcakes to a rainbow of macarons, cookie sandwiches, dessert cups, and brownie blocks. Seasonal holiday treats have included pumpkin spice cheesecake at Thanksgiving, Butterbeer at Halloween, and cocoa bombs at Christmas. Because who can resist a good theme or a sweet surprise?

> 3050 Dowlen Rd., Ste. J, 409-499-4868 sachiscakes.com

# PAIR BUBBLE TEA AND BUBBLE WAFFLES At cha cha café

28

Cha Cha Café started as just a small counter in Parkdale Mall, but when the bubble tea craze took over America, they added a second, bigger sitdown location in the West End. With endless combinations of mix-and-match milk teas and boba drinks, finding your favorite hot or cold beverage in an array of colors should be no problem.

The drinks are solidly worth a trip alone, but the more memorable menu item is the customizable bubble waffles. Pick your base flavor of dough, vanilla, chocolate, or matcha green tea; your ice cream flavor; and top it with everything from drizzles to marshmallows, fruit, and candy.

For the truly adventurous eaters, check bubble waffle dogs off your foodie bucket list. A hot dog wrapped in a waffle, get it served Asian style or topped with cheesy, crunchy Cheetos.

> 426 Dowlen Rd., 409-767-7047 chachacafe.kwickmenu.com

### 29

# EAT SIZZLING FAJITAS AT EL VIEJO TONY

A staple of Tex-Mex cuisine, fajitas were invented in nearby Houston, with many southeast Texas restaurants clamoring to offer the local delicacy. One of the best in the area is El Viejo Tony. Neon signs proclaiming everything from "Too many tacos, but did you die?" to "I love tequila so much" welcome you to a fun, festive ambience.

The tableside guacamole, colorful margaritas, and towering brochette are tasty, but the fajitas are clearly the star of the show. There's plenty of drama when the mini tabletop grill is plopped in front of you with a skillet of sizzling steak, shrimp, chicken, onions, and peppers enveloping you with smoke and good scents. Served with homemade tortillas, rice, beans, pico de gallo, and the accoutrements, make yourself a messy wrap with all the toppings. The secret? Mexican butter for dipping (a carbon copy of cult favorite Pappasito's Cantina).

> 4545 Dowlen Rd., 409-347-0927 elviejotonybarandgrill.com

### TIP

Save room for dessert because they also have a free soft serve ice cream machine.

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### **SIP YOUR WAY** AROUND SOUTHEAST TEXAS ON A CRAFT BEER CRAWL

30

The only way to find your favorite brewery is to try them all. So get to sippin'!

Neches Brewing Co. was the first to open in southeast Texas in 2016. They have 20 beers on tap, plus guest taps, wine, and cider. There's live music on Friday and Saturdays in a fun, family-friendly atmosphere.

Born out of a Kickstarter campaign, Struggle Street is Beaumont's nano brewery. With 20 taps and no flagship pours, they make everything in small batches, barrel by barrel, so it's always fresh and ever-changing. Creative and frequently fruitforward, there's been everything from PB&J to dill in stouts and sours you can wash down with their homemade pizza.

Owned by a husband and wife duo, Buckstin Brewing Co. is an award-winning, local craft brewery also with a familyfriendly atmosphere. All the beers are made in-house, in addition to an extensive fine wine program, house-made seltzer, guest cider, cocktails on tap, champagne, soda, and some of the best pizza around.

36

### **LOCAL BREWERIES**

### **Buckstin Brewing Company (Nederland)**

1211 Boston Ave., Nederland, 409-519-8091 buckstinbrewing.com

### Buckstin Brewing Company (Beaumont; coming soon) 6280 Phelan Blvd., Beaumont

Neches Brewing Co. 1108 Port Neches Ave., Port Neches, 409-237-5700 facebook.com/nechesbrewingcompany

### **Struggle Street Brewing Co.**

2140 Calder Ave., 409-299-9299 facebook.com/profile.php?id=100051338995057 **MARVEL** At Molecular Gastronomy Magic At Eculent

31

If you view food as a culinary experience worth sparing no expense for, Chef David Skinner's eculent in Kemah is the ultimate splurge meal. Dishing up 25-35 courses over three hours of molecular gastronomy magic, it comes with a hefty price tag (think a few hundred dollars per person plus optional wine pairings), but it's more of a dinner performance than purely good, gourmet food.

The menu is ever-changing, but is always inventive featuring Willy Wonka–esque tricks from edible paper to dishes served with magnifying glasses and hidden table compartments. The meal spans cuisines and continents, at times feeling more science lab than dinner table, but is one of the most memorable food experiences you'll ever have and will leave you wondering why Michelin hasn't made its way to Texas yet.

> 709 Harris Ave., Kemah, 713-429-4311 eculent.com

### TIP

Reservations are hard to come by and open exactly at 11 a.m. CT the first of each month for the following month. Your best bet is to stalk the waitlist. Even without a reservation, you can visit the winery and distillery on-site or grab a drink before dinner.



# MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT

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### **GET FESTIVE** At the oaks historic district "Homes for the holidays" event

32

The Oaks Historic District is the largest historic district in Texas, and residents take great pride in living in the neighborhood. Established in 1993, they've cultivated community for over 30 years by offering free events such as Porchfest and building lending libraries. Their annual Preservation Bash helps fund beautification projects throughout the city and funds a scholarship for a high school senior who resides in the district.

Come Christmastime, their "Homes for the Holidays" event is the place to be. Tour several impeccably decorated historic homes, while enjoying a cup of seasonal cheer with the gracious hosts and hostesses, who each put their own unique spin on the decor. Whether you're an architectural aficionado, a cultural curator, an appreciator of interior design, or just an enthusiastic partygoer, it's like being invited into a friend's cozy living room, while simultaneously going back in time and getting a taste of true Southern hospitality.

oakshistoricdistrict.org

FIGURE OUT WHODUNNIT AT THE KIRBY-HILL HOUSE MURDER MYSTERY DINNER THEATER

33

A highly anticipated local production, the Kirby-Hill House Murder Mystery Dinner series sells out each season. If you're lucky enough to snag seats to the soiree, be sure to dress the part and anticipate an evening full of good food, entertainment, and company. Actors divulge pieces of the story with each course as you assess the clues and try to solve the case—all while potentially becoming part of the show. There are prizes for those that guess correctly, and you're sure to leave well-fed and yearning to return for each new caper.

A stately manor built in 1902, the home itself is an architectural marvel and the perfect setting for a theme party. The mansion has retained most of the original furniture and china. Give yourself time to admire the curved walls, oval grand staircase, and elegant furnishings as you lavish being one of the guests of honor.

210 W Main St., Kountze, 409-246-8000 kirbyhillhouse.com . . . .

## SAY CHEERS At logon cafe & Pub

34

One of Beaumont's favorite dives, you'd never guess from the nondescript exterior that the dark interior of the Logon Cafe features such quirky decor. Formerly a computer repair shop, the name "log on" pays homage to its former life with a bar comprised of components such as floppy discs and chips you likely haven't seen in a decade, while the walls are adorned with psychedelic 3D art, paper lanterns, beer taps, instruments, old photos, and miscellaneous memorabilia.

Come play pool, darts, dominos, washers, and table games while snacking on made-to-order food. If you've been yearning for a stage, they're home to the longest-running open mic night in the Golden Triangle. You'll also find regular trivia, karaoke, and live music with events nearly every night of the week.

> 3805 Calder Ave., 409-833-6950 logoncafe.net

### TIP

The monthly Monday orchestra performance is one of the area's bestkept secrets. It features a full 20-piece band with horns, drums, and swanky singers. Tickets are just \$10 at the door.

## **CELEBRATE MARDI GRAS** IN THE CAJUN CAPITAL OF TEXAS

35

Beaumont takes its role as the Cajun Capital of Texas very seriously, and nowhere is that more evident than during the Mardi Gras celebrations when we really "Laissez le bon temps rouler."

The festivities include four days of parades, performances, and carnivals the weekend before or after Fat Tuesday in February. Grab your krewe and enjoy rides on the Midway, feast on fair food, and stake out a spot along the parade route. Floats wind around downtown with Crockett Street the prime viewing area. Everything from golf carts and motorcycles to pets are on full display tossing beads to the crowd.

A family-friendly soiree, attractions vary by year but have included everything from white tigers, the Budweiser Clydesdales, and a petting zoo to the flamboyantly feathered strolling Mummers band with musical headliners like Vanilla Ice and Nelly.

> 700 Crockett St., 409-721-8717 mardigrastx.com

### TIP

In true Cajun tradition, the celebration kicks off with a chicken toss (yes, a live clucking bird) thrown by the year's grand marshal for all the kids to chase.

# PLAY WINE-O-BINGO AT COTTON CREEK WINERY

36

Beaumont's only winery, Cotton Creek, is a cozy and warm family-owned establishment that looks like a little taverna plucked out of Tuscany. Focused on events that bring the community together, one of the winery's signature series is Wine-O-Bingo. The festivities are completely free but advanced reservations are recommended as seats book up fast. It's a great date night or ladies' night out as you sip and swirl fruit-forward blends, frozen sangrias, and nosh on tasty pizzas and appi-teasers.

The bingo boards contain combinations of wine names and letters like "W Syrah," and the caller takes turns announcing which bottle stopper has made its way out of the hopper. Played in rounds, there are various games from your standard single line bingo to four corners and other variations. Winners of each round are gifted their choice of wine-themed prizes from the goody table.

> 6755 Phelan Blvd. #10, 409-861-0400 facebook.com/cottoncreekwinery/

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# **ATTEND CLASSIC MOVIE NIGHTS** At the Jefferson Theater

Classic Movie Nights at the Jefferson harken back to the heyday of cinema and make movie going an experience. More than just a gorgeous setting to catch a flick, showings are often cult classics and themed to the genre, Alamo Drafthouse style. And with tickets less than \$10, it's one of the best cheap date nights or family outings in town.

From an Italian mob wedding for the 50th anniversary of *The Godfather* to an alien luau for *Lilo & Stitch*, the stormtroopers were in attendance for *Star Wars* while *Rocky Horror Picture Show* capped off 13 Nights of Halloween.

The theater itself is an architectural marvel. Built in 1927, it has hosted some of the world's greatest motion pictures and stars, most notably the *It's A Wonderful Life* premier with Frank Capra.

345 Fannin St., 409-838-3435

beaumonteventstx.com/jefferson-theatre-info/jefferson-theatre-movies/

### TIP

Catch a film with the accompanying Robert Morton Organ, one of a few like it left in the world!

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# SEE A SHOW AT 7 OAKS EVENT GARDEN, AN AUTHENTIC TEXAS LISTENING ROOM

38

Have you ever wanted to host an intimate concert for your closest friends and family in your living room? That's what it feels like to catch a show at 7 Oaks Event Garden.

Frustrated trying to find places to perform that weren't loud, crowded bars just looking for musicians to play cover songs, local singer-songwriter Courtney Hale-Revia started inviting traveling musicians to perform their original music in her home.

And while she did eventually outgrow her living room, which had seating for exactly 40, she built a barn on the property, which could accommodate up to 80 guests. It still feels like a wildly intimate musical experience with the added benefit of BYO drinks, catering, and concessions depending on the night.

Performers come from all over the world (as far away as Sweden) and around Texas to introduce their music to a new audience. Whether you're a lover of live music, in need of a unique event venue, or are just looking for a memorable date night, 7 Oaks is your jam (pun intended).

14865 Garner Rd., 832-594-7526 70akseventgarden.com

# **BOOGIE DOWN WITH A TEXAS TWO STEP** At Sawdust Saloon and Social Club

39

Billed as a country bar and dance hall, the interior of Sawdust Saloon feels like you're stepping into a retro hunting lodge. The walls are adorned with trophy heads in all shapes and sizes as folks boot scoot boogie, Watermelon Crawl, and twirl their way around the dance floor. Alternating between slow jams and upbeat line dances, anyone born with southern roots seems to have the beat inherently in their blood.

If country music isn't your scene, the exterior patio area is more like a traditional night club. Clientele varies wildly from your old-school cowboys—complete with 10-gallon hat and belt buckles—to the college crowd reveling in an unforgettable night they may not remember in the morning. Either way, it's a sight to behold and worth dusting off your dancing shoes for.

4680 Fannett Rd., 409-730-7490 facebook.com/sawdust-saloon-social-club-114628444925165

## **BET ON BLACK** AT THE CASINOS IN LAKE CHARLES

40

Beaumont is a mere 30 minutes from the state border, and Louisiana has one big thing Texas doesn't—legal gambling. Just 45 minutes away, Lake Charles is known as "Louisiana's Playground" for its Vegas-style gaming resorts.

Even if you don't like casinos, it's worth the trip for the swanky pools and a plethora of restaurants, entertainment, and nightlife options. The Golden Nugget and L'Auberge are two of the best resorts, and connected by a beach boardwalk, you can easily walk between the hotels enjoying the amenities of both. While a day lounging at the lazy river or swim-up bar is worth the drive alone, big-name headliners are regularly passing through, which make an excellent excuse to spend the night. Or, for even more excitement, head down to Delta Downs and catch the horse races.

visitlakecharles.org

### TIP

Want to explore more of the area? The 180-mile Creole Nature Trail is a designated All-American byway, which winds through the prairies, marshes, and beaches, often referred to as Louisiana's Outback.

### **LAKE CHARLES CASINOS**

### Golden Nugget Lake Charles Hotel & Casino

2550 Golden Nugget Blvd., Lake Charles, 70601 337-508-7777 goldennugget.com/lake-charles

### L'Auberge Casino Resort Lake Charles

777 Ave. L'Auberge, Lake Charles, 70601 337-395-7777 llakecharles.com

### Delta Downs Racetrack, Hotel & Casino 2717 Delta Downs Dr., Vinton, 70668 800-589-7441 deltadowns.com

Horseshoe Casino & Hotel Lake Charles 100 Westlake Ave., Westlake, 70669 337-430-0711 caesars.com/horseshoe-lake-charles • •

# **GET A THRILL AT THE SOUTH TEXAS** STATE FAIR & RODEO

41

Founded by prominent early moguls Andrew Jackson, Sam Houston, and others, the South Texas State Fair is a highly anticipated annual event and one of the longest running state fairs in Texas. The festival has withstood wars, hurricanes, a pandemic, multiple location and name changes, and continues to bring joy to the area for the 100-plus-year-old tradition.

Rolling into town almost exactly a month after Mardi Gras, gear up for 10 days of rodeos, carnivals, Midway games, stomach turning rides, and all the fair food and food trucks you could possibly consume. Entertainment includes petting zoos, livestock shows, and art exhibits, while not-to-miss attractions include stunt dog shows and camel rides. Families should keep their eyes peeled for discount days which often provide free or cheap entry.

> 5115 Interstate 10 Access Rd., 409-832-9991 ymbl.org

### TIP

Don't let the line at cult-favorite Rudy's Kabobs scare you. It moves fast and is well worth the wait.

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# TAKE THE CAR FERRY TO GALVESTON

Perfect for a day trip or a quick beach getaway, you can get to Galveston via the highway, but the more scenic route is the free car ferry across Bolivar Peninsula, which takes under 20 minutes and operates 24 hours a day.

Settled by pirates, home to one of the country's busiest ports, and the birthplace of Juneteenth, Galveston is a quirky waterfront outpost on the Gulf Coast that was once the largest city in Texas. Known for its iconic beach boardwalk lining the seawall, you'll find shops, restaurants, rides, and water sports at Pleasure Pier.

Moody Gardens is a not-to-miss attraction with four venues under one roof—an aquarium, rainforest, paddleboat, and 4D theater. Downtown, the Strand is a National Historic Landmark and the heart of Galveston's cultural district, where you'll find a mix of shops, art galleries, and restaurants. Both are accessible by trolley.

visitgalveston.com

### TIP

Dickens on The Strand and the Tall Ships Festivals are two not-to-miss events.

# HAVE A DOGGONE GOOD TIME At dogtoberfest

43

A Beaumont Main Street production, Dogtoberfest is when families and furry friends of all shapes and sizes descend on "Central Bark" in downtown Beaumont. Held on the second Saturday of October, highlights include the Strut Your Mutt parade and fashion show, paw readings, kissing booth, pawtraitures, spa-w, agility course, shopping at "Neiman Barkus," and adoptions through local rescue organizations.

As fun to watch as it is to participate, there are contests throughout the day for master/dog look-alike, best-dressed, cutest pooch, best tail wagger, most talented, best howler, and Mr. and Mrs. Dogtoberfest. Coveted fire hydrant trophies and awards are up for grabs. Whether you come to compete, walk the runway, or just admire all the furry fun, it's a free family-friendly festival for all the good girls and boys.

> "Central Bark" 765 Pearl St., 409-838-2202 beaumontmainstreet.org

### TIP

The event is the perfect complement to human Oktoberfest, which is typically held the same day later in the afternoon in Rogers Park.

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**DRESS LIKE** A TACKY TOURIST AND SIP AWAY ON A TACKY WINE AND BREW TOUR

44

You know what they say: "You can't drink all day if you don't start in the morning." That's the motto of Tacky Wine and Brew Tours, anyway, which takes all the stress out of a day full of wining and dining with 8-15 of your besties. It's up to the group how enthusiastic they want to get with attire. Tacky tourist garb is encouraged, but that's open to interpretation, so break out your Sunday finest and board the bus.

Completely customizable, you choose whether you want all breweries, all wineries, or a mix. A typical tour takes about six hours for three stops and includes all tastings, travel to and from venues, pick up and drop off, lunch, snacks, and water. Be sure to pace yourself—it's a marathon, not a sprint—hydration is essential.

facebook.com/tackywinetour

55

KICK OFF THE HOLIDAY SEASON At main street market

45

One of the Junior League's flagship fundraisers, Main Street Market, is a three-day, one-stop holiday extravaganza the first week of December. Get a head start on your Christmas list as you wander Candy Cane Lane and Jingle Bell Boulevard to shop for apparel, gourmet foods, jewelry, and artisan crafts to a backdrop of festive cheer.

A highly anticipated annual event, expect an abundance of photo ops, giveaways, entertainment, and a joyful, holly jolly spirit to kick off the holiday season. Events include designer purse raffles, cocktail tastings, dance and choir performances, a silent auction, wine pull, and more. Peruse a plethora of carefully curated vendors from Texas and beyond and get all your stocking stuffers in one fell swoop knowing you shopped for a good cause. Proceeds benefit the Junior League's community programs through local projects, grants, and scholarships.

701 Main St., 409-832-0873 juniorleaguebeaumont.org/msm

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### **EAT YOUR HEART OUT ON FAT TUESDAY** At taste of the triangle

46

Held annually on Fat Tuesday, the Taste of the Triangle is the foodiest way to celebrate Mardi Gras and one of Beaumont's most delicious affairs. The tradition is over 40 years old, and one ticket gets you unlimited tastings and beverages from eateries all over the Golden Triangle to a backdrop of live music and revelry.

Restaurants prepare dishes that best exemplify their unique culinary offerings, while esteemed judges vote on the best bite and booth decoration. There's often a Cajun twist—think gumbos, jambalayas, and bread puddings galore, but anything goes to show off the area's Vietnamese, Hispanic, and ethnic influences.

Come hungry because the bites are Texas-sized, which seems appropriate for Fat Tuesday. Put on by the nonprofit Sabine Area Restaurant Association (SARA), you can feel good overindulging for a cause, as proceeds benefit Lamar University's Hospitality Management Program, the Texas Restaurant Association's Education Foundation, and professional development for the Texas Chefs Association, which even purchases livestock to feed local food banks.

sara-tra.com

### **EMBRACE YOUR INNER HERO OR VILLAIN** AT THE TEXAS RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

47

Just outside Houston, the Texas Renaissance Festival is the largest of its kind in the world. Over 500,000 guests attend the multimonth affair each year, which has themed weekends throughout fall featuring all your favorite magical, mystical characters, creatures, and beasts. From pirates to barbarians, don your best fairy or fantastical garb and head to the castle for the chance to escape reality and embrace the supernatural.

Modeled after a 16th-century European village, the fairgrounds are spread over a whopping 70 plus acres with over 20 stages and more than 400 food, game, and craft booths. Anytime you go, you can expect jousting and giant turkey legs across five themed areas from the enchanted forest to the arena. For an elevated experience, look for the special extras like tea and strumpets, royal scotch tastings, an escape room, mead tastings, after-hours concerts, and the King's Feast.

> 21778 Farm to Market 1774, Todd Mission, TX 77363 800-458-3435, texrenfest.com

#### TIP

About two hours away, the fair is close enough to be a day trip, but you could also spend the night in their enchanted campgrounds—an experience unto itself. • •

### HAVE A MEMORABLE NIGHT AT MADISON'S

48

For over 18 years, Madison's has been a staple of the Beaumont bar scene. Known for their creative pub programming, whether you come for daytime drinking at brunch, an afternoon crawfish craving, or a night you won't remember with the friends you'll never forget, Madison's often has live music, entertainment, and legendary late-night debauchery on one of the most pet-friendly patios in the area. From doggie play dates to drag brunch and music bingo, there's always an excuse to post up on the stylish swings and toss one—or a few—back.

Owner Frankie Randazzo is a true community enthusiast and consistently one of the first to support in times of trouble. Leading numerous hurricane relief efforts, it's those types of local businesses you want to support in return.

4020 Dowlen Rd., 409-924-9777 facebook.com/madisonsondowlen

#### TIP

Don't miss their famous turtle races on St. Patrick's Day, a 10+ year tradition.

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### PLAY THE DAY AWAY AT MAIN EVENT

49

Your childhood arcade transported into the twenty-first century on steroids, Main Event is designed to be the "most fun you can have under one roof." Everything is futuristic and digital, with over 100 3D and 4D video, mixed reality, and virtual reality games where you can earn points to redeem for prizes in the Winner's Circle.

Their high-tech hyper bowling isn't your traditional "knock down the pins" game but has other options where you can aim for different colors on the bumper and a VIP area with swings. Glow in the dark laser tag has sessions every 15 minutes, and once you've worked up an appetite, grab a bite from their full-service restaurant and bar, which has all the snacks, apps, and indulgences you could possibly dream up (mason jar cheesecake FTW).

5380 Rexora Dr., 409-287-0700 mainevent.com

#### TIP

The fun isn't just for kids! Open until 2 a.m. on weekends, plan the ultimate late night date night.

#### 61



# SPORTS AND RECREATION

### CAMP ON CRYSTAL BEACH

50

As a Northerner, one of the biggest surprises was Texas's lack of rules regarding public lands and the general "come and take it" mentality. Whether you come for a day or spend the night, the 27 miles of Crystal Beach on Bolivar Peninsula are all fair game.

Once you get over the "Can or should my car drive on sand?" and see that everyone else is doing it, you too can drive right up to the water's edge and plop down wherever you choose to set up shop. There are no parking lots, and camping and campfires are allowed just about anywhere that's not private property.

Toilets, on the other hand, are more of a luxury. Facilities and rinse-off showers are available 24/7 at the pavilion on Crystal Beach Road behind the fire station. There are also public restrooms at the Big Store, your camp headquarters for food, games, supplies, and where you can snag the required \$10 annual beach parking permit.

bolivarpeninsulatexas.com

51

### TRY A REAL-LIFE SCAVENGER HUNT GEOCACHING

If you like puzzles and scavenger hunts, you'll love geocaching. The world's largest treasure hunt, there are millions of "caches" (containers) hidden around the globe and in your own backyard. All you need to get started is an adventurous spirit and the free Geocaching app.

An anywhere, anytime activity, the app shows you all the caches hidden nearby. Follow the GPS coordinates to each location and use the clues to navigate to each container. What you're looking for varies by size, shape, and difficulty at each location.

The official Visit Beaumont Geotour has 25 caches throughout southeast Texas that'll take you to interesting places around the region. Grab a passport from the Convention and Visitors Bureau and find them in any order at your leisure. It's designed to take about two full days to complete and each container has a letter you need to solve a word scramble. Visit all the stops and decode the puzzle to take home a commemorative coin and swag.

beaumontcvb.com/things-to-do/geocaching

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### **WIND THROUGH** THE WATERWAYS KAYAKING WITH BIG THICKET OUTFITTERS

52

Owner and operator of Big Thicket Outfitters, Gerald Cerda knows every inch of the backwater bayous. And he should, being that he was instrumental in getting it designated an official Texas Parks & Wildlife paddle trail.

Big Thicket Outfitters rents and runs guided canoe, kayak, and pontoon trips along the Cooks Lake to Scatterman Paddling Trail, best described as a Brothers Grimm fairytale come to life. Rated easy-to-moderate, the 4.8-mile loop weaves through the mysterious moss-draped cypress-tupelo slough of the biologically diverse Big Thicket National Preserve. A relatively flat paddle, it takes anywhere from two-to-five hours to complete depending on wind conditions, water level, and time spent exploring. This is all while Gerald spews out facts about the wildlife, history, and ecology like a proud papa bear. His favorite thing to point out is the beloved "Madonna tree," an old cypress bearing a faint resemblance to the Virgin Mary.

> 115 Connolly Rd., Vidor, 409-786-1884 bigthicketoutfitters.com

> > 66

### TIP

Accessible year-round, autumn weather is the most enjoyable and is about the closest you'll get to fall colors in southeast Texas.

### **EXPLORE AMERICA'S** FIRST NATIONAL PRESERVE, THE BIG THICKET

53

Called "the biological crossroads of America," the Big Thicket is unique from most nationally protected lands in that it encompasses a massive 113,000 acres, 9 ecosystems, 15 units, and spans multiple counties. A cross-section of habitats, vegetation, flora, and fauna, it is a designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, a Globally Important Bird Area, and a choose-your-own-adventure for outdoor activities.

Recreation opportunities abound, including paddling, biking, hunting, fishing, and hiking. Over 40 miles of trails offer everything from the casual nature walk to longer thru hikes. With a 1.5-mile inner loop and a 2.5-mile outer loop, the Kirby Nature Trail is your best bet for getting an overview of the area, while the Sundew Trail is one mile of short, accessible boardwalks with wildflower views. The preserve is also home to four of the five carnivorous plant species in the US. These unique plants are best seen on the one-mile Pitcher Plant Trail.

6102 FM 420, Kountze, 409-951-6700 nps.gov/bith **FIND YOUR ZEN** WITH FREE YOGA AT CATTAIL MARSH SCENIC WETLANDS & BOARDWALK

54

The marsh is the final phase of the city's wastewater treatment plant and the sustainable and innovative process has attracted the attention of environmentalists and wildlife professionals across the state. The resulting relationship with the city is both unique and symbiotic.

Voted the best free outdoor attraction in Texas, the Education Center offers free binocular and disc golf rentals, a telescope, educational materials, and activity books for learning at your leisure. Every Saturday morning, there's free yoga on the boardwalk along with kid's crafts like birdhouse building and origami as part of the Cattail Explorers program. Whether you're a seasoned yogi or are just looking to set your intentions for the weekend, it's a casual, judgment-free way to namaslay the day. Other free classes and meetups include photography workshops, nature screenings, coffee chats, van tours, and more.

4233 Babe Zaharias Dr., 409-554-2447 beaumontcvb.com/things-to-do/cattail-marsh

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### LEARN TO BIRD

Thanks to its unique position along the Gulf, Beaumont is located on two of the four migratory flyways in the US, and one of the very last strips of land before our feathered friends head South for the winter. Any time you visit, you can see upwards of 320 different species, which balloons to 400 during peak spring and fall migration.

There are 28 Great Texas Coastal Birding Trails within a 40-mile radius of Beaumont. The Convention and Visitors Bureau has a suggested birding itinerary which takes you to a variety of habitats from the piney woods to the wetlands and the beaches to the bayous. Hotspots include Cattail Marsh, Shangri La Botanical Gardens, the Big Thicket, Sam Rayburn Reservoir, Angelina National Forest, Sea Rim State Park, Sabine Woods, Anahuac, Bolivar Flats, and High Island, which was the inspiration for the movie *The Big Year*.

beaumontcvb.com/things-to-do/birding

#### **BIRDING HOTSPOTS**

Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary Port Bolivar 713-932-1639 houstonaudubon.org/ sanctuaries/bolivar-flats/ about-bolivar-flats.html

#### Cattail Marsh Scenic Wetlands & Boardwalk

4233 Babe Zaharias Dr. 409-554-2447 beaumontcvb.com/ things-to-do/cattailmarsh

#### Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center

2111 W Park Ave., Orange, 409-670-9113 shangrilagardens.org

Big Thicket National Preserve 6102 FM 420, Kountze 409-951-6700 nps.gov/bith Angelina National Forest 936-897-1068 111 Walnut Ridge Rd. Zavalla

#### Sea Rim State Park

19335 S Gulfway Dr. Sabine Pass 409-971-2559

tpwd.texas.gov/stateparks/sea-rim

Sabine Woods M3X2+MC Port Arthur

#### Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge

4017 FM 563, Anahuac 409-267-3337 fws.gov/refuge/anahuac

#### **High Island**

2088 5th St., High Island 713-932-1639 houstonaudubon.org/ sanctuaries/high-island

#### Sam Rayburn Reservoir

15 mi NW on TX 63, then E on TX 255 409-384-5716

### **TOUR ON TWO WHEELS** ON A BEAUCYCLE DOWNTOWN

56

Beaumont has one of the only downtowns in the country that as a whole is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. And with most attractions clustered in just a few blocks radius, it's easily walkable or bikeable.

Rent a Beaucycle from the Beaumont Convention and Visitors Bureau or Civic Center for just \$5 for three hours and \$1 for each additional hour. You can explore on your own or follow one of their suggested routes for art and mural lovers, architectural and historical gems, top 10 must-see spots, and even a bike scavenger hunt, each designed to take between one and four hours.

We recommend rolling around to the free art museum, snapping a photo at Crockett Street, admiring the Julie Rogers and Jefferson Theaters, meandering by the Tyrrell Historical Library, and finding your favorite mural. All you need to get started is the Movatic app and a credit card, which has easy-tofollow instructions on the stations.

beaumontcvb.com/beaucycles

Beaumont Convention & Visitors Bureau 505 Willow St., 409-880-3749 beaumontcvb.com Beaumont Civic Center 701 Main St., 409-838-3435 beaumonteventstx.com **FIND EDEN** AT THE FREE SHANGRI LA BOTANICAL GARDENS AND NATURE CENTER

57

The book *The Lost Horizon*, for which it's named, describes "Shangri La" as a utopian place of beauty, peace, and enlightenment. Free for all to enjoy, Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center is the place to get lost in nature and equally lost in thought. Featuring more than 300 plant species spread across nine meticulously manicured gardens, be sure to keep an eye out for the water lily pools, hanging garden, and Pond of the Blue Moon.

Ravaged during Hurricane Rita and sustaining significant flood damage during Hurricane Ike, Shangri La seems to have nine lives yet always manages to build back better. In fact, it was the first project in Texas and the 50th project in the world to earn the U.S. Green Building Council's platinum LEED certification for sustainable design.

> 2111 W Park Ave., Orange, 409-670-9113 shangrilagardens.org

#### TIP

The Fall Scarecrow Festival is a popular time to visit, as are the winter Christmas Strolls, but every season brings something new to admire.

### **HOLD, FEED, AND WADE** with alligators at gator country

58

An alligator adventure park meets animal sanctuary, Gator Country is where you can get really hands-on with the locals: feeding, wading with, and holding baby alligators. The sanctuary is home to over 450 reptiles and nuisance gators. As you make your way around the various boardwalks and habitats at the dual indoor/outdoor facility, you'll learn why "Aly," the ex-wife, is now in a separate enclosure, see the wounded gators, and marvel at the weeks-old babies.

Highlights include feeding the gators hot dogs via fishing poles and a visit with Big Al (88 years old!) and Big Tex, two of the largest gators in captivity, each weighing in at over 1,000 pounds. Your entrance fee includes a feeding show, splash pad for the kiddos, and a petting zoo (don't miss the giant tortoises). Their seasonal crawfish nights even include free entry.

> 21159 FM 365, 409-794-9453 gatorrescue.com

#### TIP

They also offer boat rides through Taylors Bayou for the chance to see gators in the wild.

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### **PRACTICE YOUR PUTTING** AT 5 UNDER GOLF CENTER

59

A Top Golf affiliate, 5 Under is a state-of-the-art entertainment venue. The two-story outdoor driving range has 20 bays powered by Toptracer Range technology and various other games of skill and accuracy. Whether you play golf or not, consider yourself an amateur or a pro, it's a fun daytime or nighttime outing with family, friends, or your significant other, especially if you like to get casually competitive.

The indoor Swing Suite simulators have different gaming options with over 140 virtual courses to play, carnival games, zombie dodgeball, baseball, hockey, soccer, football, and puzzles if you're just there for the social experience. They host a number of events throughout the year and often have live entertainment to add to the ambience. And don't sleep on the food or drinks—5 Under has one of the best brunches in town with injectable donuts on the menu.

5945 College St., 409-219-5342 5undergolf.com

#### TIP

Looking to more competitively hit the green? Beaumont's weather allows it to be a year-round golf destination with multiple 18-hole and 9-hole courses.

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### **CAST A LINE AND REEL IN** THE CATCH OF YOUR LIFE FISHING

60

Thanks to the availability of both freshwater and saltwater, the fishing in southeast Texas is some of the best in the world. Prize catches include speckled trout, flounder, alligator gar, and redfish. Favorite locations to cast a line are the Gulf Coast and Sabine Lake, which hosts multiple tournaments throughout the year. But, you'll find fishermen lining the banks just about everywhere, from the Neches River to the Sabine Causeway, Walter Umphrey State Park, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, and on many of the lakes and bayous.

If you're just getting started or are new to the sport, Sea Rim State Park offers equipment rentals, tips, and hosts workshops throughout the year. You don't need a permit to fish at any Texas state park. Anglers can cast a line right from shore, but kayaks and boats are a popular way to get deeper. There are also several deepsea fishing charters in the area if you'd prefer to go with an expert.

beaumontcvb.com/things-to-do/parks-outdoors/fishing-hunting

#### TIP

Crabbing is another popular pastime and requires much less skill. All you need to get started is raw chicken, a net, and string.

#### **FISHING HOLES**

Sabine Lake Port Arthur

Sabine Pass Public Boat Ramps 4701 Broadway St., Sabine Pass

Walter Umphrey State Park 3964 Martin Luther King Jr Dr., Port Arthur 409-736-2851 tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/walter-umphrey

> Keith Lake Backridge Rd., Sabine Pass

Ancelet's Marina 7069 Rainbow Ln., Port Arthur 409-962-5098

#### **Port Neches Riverfront Park** 600 Grigsby Ave., Port Neches 409-727-2182

### **STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES** At the beaumont Botanical gardens

61

The free Beaumont Botanical Garden is the best place to clear your head and find some zen right within city limits. An oasis of greenery, admire 23 acres of beautiful flora and fauna in your own backyard—a welcome respite from the everyday hustle and bustle.

Developed by the Beaumont Council of Garden Clubs over 50 years ago, the 10,000 square-foot Warren Loose Conservatory is one of the largest indoor conservatories in a public garden in Texas. The warm, humid air cultivates a variety of exotic and tropical plants interspersed with otherworldly and surprising sculptures and decorum.

Outside, make your way down the winding Friendship Walk, which is paved and accessible for wheelchairs and strollers, and takes you through the various gardens. Keep an eye out for the koi pond, goldfish, water lilies, birds, butterflies, and the rose garden.

#### 6088 Babe Zaharias Dr., 409-842-3135 bbgtx.org

62

### **SPEND THE NIGHT** At a floating campsite at sea rim state park

If you've ever dreamed of waking up to a soundtrack of seabirds and lapping waves, you won't get a better backdrop than the Gulf Coast as your bedroom as the lull of the marsh rocks you to sleep. If you're up to the challenge of getting there, that is.

Sea Rim State Park has one primitive floating campsite for rent, accessible only by two-mile kayak or canoe. It is a fairly easy paddle protected by the channel, so you don't have to worry about battling the waves. What makes it adventurous is that you have to pack in and pack out all your own supplies. That includes a tent, fuel stove for cooking, and yes, it is BYOB (bring your own bucket). Without going into too much detail, we're talking number two.

You reserve the site the same way as any other campsite on the Texas Park and Wildlife website. Kayaks can be rented from the park, and bags and buckets can be purchased from the park office. If traditional camping is more your style, they also have water and electric hookups as well as primitive camping on the beach.

19335 S Gulfway Dr., Sabine Pass 409-971-2559 tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/sea-rim

### HORSE AROUND AT TYRRELL PARK STABLES

63

What's better than exploring on two legs? Hoofin' it on a horse, of course. Located in beautiful Tyrrell Park between the Beaumont Botanical Gardens and Cattail Marsh, Tyrrell Park Stables offers Western and English lessons, trail rides, boarding, birthday parties, horse camps, and special events for all levels from beginner to expert that can be booked by the hour.

Many believe that hanging with horses is therapeutic, so if you're looking to clear your head, head to the barn. Opt for a casual guided walk through the woods, test your agility on obstacles and jumps, or come for the social get-togethers and bond with the nice cowboys and cowgirls. From Christmas parades to Halloween on horses, it's a tight-knit and passionate community of animal lovers that always has an event in the works.

> 4765 Babe Zaharias Dr., 409-730-7073 facebook.com/tyrrellparkstables

#### TIP

There are often pony rides on the first Sunday of the month to help offset the cost of animal care and vet bills.

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### **RACE ON A SAILBOAT** At the port arthur yacht clubno experience necessary

While most stereotypes of yacht clubs are exclusive and stuffy, the Port Arthur Yacht Club is keen on introducing people of all ages and abilities to the sport and prides itself on being inclusive and welcoming. You don't even need a boat to participate.

The best way to get involved is to come during race season, which is on Thursday nights from April through August. They'll get you out on the water for an unofficial lesson as you learn to pull lines and steer with your crew. The exhilaration of the air in your hair and the wind in your sails will hopefully convince you to become a member.

Anyone can join the club, which allows you to take their boats out or tag along with another member until you feel comfortable and competent on your own. Other opportunities to participate include cruises, events, and socials from casual gettogethers to on-water scavenger hunts.

> 410 Pleasure Pier Blvd., Port Arthur, 409-356-6253 payc.us

### **HIKE IT OUT** AT VILLAGE CREEK STATE PARK

65

Embodying the theme of "a river runs through it," water is the lifeblood of southeast Texas and a focal point of Village Creek. Set on the edge of the Big Thicket, Village Creek State Park is another spot to get back to nature right in city limits.

They offer several guided, ranger-led hikes throughout the year, from "fantastical fungi" to "tree ID" and "full moon treks" on eight miles of trails that can be explored on foot or by bike. Take the little ones on the Lil' Paws Nature Trail, burn some calories on the Fitness Trail, or get your steps in on the longer Water Oak Trail, which runs alongside the sandy swamp.

Prefer to play in the water? They have standup paddleboards, kayaks, and canoes to rent, and fishing is free in state parks. There's even a tackle box to borrow.

8854 Park Rd. 74, Lumberton, 409-755-7322 tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/village-creek

#### TIP

Kids can join in on the fun with the Junior Ranger program, which provides all the tools they need to fall in love with nature.

66

### **ROOT FOR THE HOME TEAM** WITH A GAME AT LAMAR UNIVERSITY

The cult following that is football in Texas has long been documented by Hollywood, but one thing that always struck me as odd was the fanatical dedication to high school sports over some colleges. Lamar University is Beaumont's home team and deserves all the support and backing of the community, too.

Part of the Southland Conference, the Cardinals compete in 17 NCAA Division I men's and women's sports and have a history of winning championships in all 17. Proudly donning the red and white, they compete in baseball, men's and women's basketball, men's and women's cross country, football, men's and women's golf, men's and women's tennis, men's and women's indoor and outdoor track and field, soccer, softball, and volleyball.

Catch the excitement tailgating at the recently renovated Provost Umphrey Stadium, get in on the hoops action at the Montagne Center, or watch America's game from the stands of Vincent-Beck Stadium. There are sports year-round that make for an exciting and affordable family day out.

> 409-880-1715 lamarcardinals.com

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### **PLAY PICKLEBALL,** THE FASTEST-GROWING SPORT IN AMERICA, AT BEAUMONT MUNICIPAL TENNIS CENTER

67

A cross between tennis, badminton, and ping-pong, pickleball skyrocketed in popularity during the pandemic as a way to get outside and get active without much of a learning curve. It's fun and competitive for all ages and abilities, not super physical, and can be played indoors or outdoors, with singles or doubles, on a slightly modified tennis court. All you need to get started is a net, paddle, and ball.

The Facebook group SETX Pickleballers is the place to find opponents, classes, clinics, and socials, and the Beaumont Municipal Tennis Center is your hub for the action. They have four outdoor and four covered pickleball courts with paddles to demo that'll get you started and offer group and private lessons. There are other outdoor courts around town if you're looking for a spot to play a pickup game.

> 6455 College St., 409-866-2833 bmttenniscenter.com

### **FLY THROUGH** THE BACKWATERS OF THE BAYOU ON A SWAMP SAFARI

68

Seeing an alligator in the wild should be on everyone's southeast Texas bucket list, and the best way to do that is by zipping through the bayou on a boat. A few tour operators offer rides through Blue Elbow Swamp near Orange, Texas, on the Louisiana border, sometimes in conjunction with fishing charters or sunset cruises.

Traditional airboats like the Dragon Lady operate flatbottom watercraft that sit atop the water, which allows them to navigate through the shallow swampy marshes. Swamp and River Tours has another style of boat that's quieter, faster, and shaded, designed to be quick yet unobtrusive. Passengers have elevated seats that provide a birds-eye view of the habitat and its inhabitants. Whoever you choose as your captain, keep your eyes peeled for alligators, turtles, hogs, deer, raccoons, and a vast array of birds as you meander the maze of estuaries.

> beaumontcvb.com/blog/post/make-some-waves-swampriver-tours-in-southeast-texas

Swamp & River Tours 813 E Lutcher Dr., Orange 409-883-0856 swampandrivertours.com Dragon Lady Airboats 102 N Farragut Ave., Orange 321-266-1498 dragonladyairboats.com . . . .

### HIT A BULLSEYE THROWING AXES

69

Axe throwing gained popularity in recent years as both a hobby and a social outing—the newer, hipper bowling or mini golf, if you will. Equal parts competitive and a way to blow off steam, there are a few venues that offer the bullseye daytime or evening activity to partake with friends, family, or as a unique date.

Avenue Axe in Port Neches was the first in the area. They recently renovated to add digital ranges and still use real wood and axes. Kids ages seven and up can throw hatchets at the targets.

Hooligan's in Lumberton is a more high-tech option with digital targets and a variety of games. Owned by third- and fourth-generation competitive axe throwers, the family is happy to impart their wisdom on guests and provide tips to perfect your toss and help everyone become an axe-pert. From duck and zombie hunter to tic tac toe, kids eight and up are welcome.

For the full Texas experience, Copper Bullet Lodge in Buna has a pistol range that doubles as a tactical, rifle, and shotgun range, as well as offering axe throwing and archery. They have classes in concealed carry, ladies only, and one-on-one, in addition to a mobile trailer they bring to events.

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#### **AXE THROWING OPTIONS**

Avenue Axe 1126 Port Neches Ave., Port Neches 409-344-4542 avenueaxe.com

Hooligan's Axe Throwing

737 N Main St., Lumberton 409-227-0247 hooligansaxe.com

#### **Copper Bullet Lodge**

1128 County Rd. 713, Buna 409-289-4183 copperbulletlodge.com . . . .

### **FEEL THE WIND** IN YOUR HAIR ON NECHES RIVER ADVENTURES' PONTOON BOAT

70

Neches River Adventures is a non-profit organization that operates the Ivory Bill pontoon. The boat runs seasonally on Saturdays for public tours March through November and yearround for on-water environmental education and discovery classes for students K-12 in the eight surrounding school districts.

Departing from Collier's Ferry Park, the two-hour public boat ride provides an overview of the area's ecology, history, and conservation efforts which is ideal for school field trips, casual social outings, or just a day spent in nature. Winding down the cypress-lined channels of the Big Thicket, the area is home to more than 200 tree species, 47 mammals, 300 birds, and many reptiles and amphibians. It's part eco-tour, part relaxing ride down the river, where you'll hear all about the diverse flora and fauna of the region in one of the most accessible ways to get out on the water.

> 5390 Pine St., 409-651-5326 nechesriveradventures.org

#### TIP

With seating for 32 of your closest friends, you can also charter the boat for private tours as a unique setting for your next business meeting or special event.



## CULTURE AND HISTORY



### **TOUR A MAJESTIC** PERIOD MANSION AT THE MCFADDIN-WARD HOUSE HISTORIC MUSEUM

71

One of Beaumont's most recognizable residences, the McFaddin-Ward House, or "the White House of Southeast Texas," is one of the best examples of the culture and lifestyle of a wealthy oil boom family. Built in 1906, prominent local architect Henry Conrad Mauer designed the beaux arts colonial mansion, which commands an entire city block. A meticulously kept diary by Mamie McFaddin documents the social events, consumer habits, and daily routines of the time, allowing the museum to recreate the experience in exquisite detail.

Take a free docent-led tour of all three floors of the main home and the carriage house, which includes the garage, stable, gymnasium, staff rooms, and gardens boasting 50 varieties of roses, or opt for a self-guided audio tour of the first floor. Admire the immaculate interior which includes original furnishings from chandeliers and china sets to period pieces like luggage and roller skates.

> 1906 Calder Ave., 409-832-2134 mcfaddin-ward.org

#### TIP

Check their calendar as year-round community and education events include music and movies on the lawn, lecture series, and more. . . . .

### **GO BACK IN TIME** At the John Jay French Museum

72

The John Jay French Home is the oldest house in Beaumont that has been completely restored to its original state. Built in 1845, the house has had several notable firsts, including being one of the first two-story homes in the area, one of the first made of milled lumber, and one of the first to be painted. Tour the property to see what life would've been like as a prosperous pioneer family from 1845 to 1865 and admire the blacksmith shop, tannery, privy, smokehouse, and graveyard on-site.

The museum is operated by the Beaumont Heritage Society, which also offers tours of the historical Chambers House residence, hosts monthly heritage happy hours at distinct venues around town, and throws seasonal events, including their popular Pumpkin Walk, Christmas Tours, and Easter Egg Hunt.

> 3025 French Rd., 409-898-0348 beaumontheritage.org

#### TIP

The French Home is also the setting of Camp Lookinback, a summer program that offers kiddos the opportunity to get hands-on with games and crafts from the 1800s.

**SNAP A PHOTO** WITH THE WORLD'S LARGEST WORKING FIRE HYDRANT AT THE FIRE MUSEUM OF TEXAS

73

Both a kid- and dog-approved outing, the 24-foot Dalmatianprinted fire hydrant is the world's largest working fire hydrant and one of Beaumont's most iconic sights and popular roadside attractions. Once you've snapped your selfie, mosey inside to explore the free museum, which offers a unique look into the world of first responders.

Inside, you'll find trucks and equipment dating back to the 1800s, gear to try on, and safety and prevention exhibits. Displays proudly demonstrate how the Beaumont Fire Department pioneered several important innovations in technology and training, including building the first searchlight truck in the world and establishing the first mutual aid organization in the US, which would go on to become a national model for disaster recovery.

400 Walnut St., 409-880-3927 firemuseumoftexas.com

#### FUN FACT

Donated by Disney in 1999 to celebrate the re-release of *101 Dalmatians*, the hydrant spots are actually copyrighted.

**CATCH** A GUSHER REENACTMENT AT SPINDLETOP-GLADYS CITY BOOMTOWN MUSEUM

74

The place where the Texas economy was changed forever, Spindletop is a recreated boomtown and outdoor museum dedicated to the discovery of oil. Housed on the Lamar University campus, they hold gusher reenactments a few times a month to show just how powerful and life-changing the geyser was, erupting 100 feet in the air for nine straight days.

As you meander through the 15 buildings and imagine what life would've been like back in the black gold heyday, explore the old (still working!) print shop, photo studio, general store, post office, and livery. Along the way, you'll pick up interesting tidbits like how intrepid prospectors had to rent out barbershop chairs to sleep because the town ballooned so quickly and why the doctor's office shared a space with the ice cream parlor.

> 5550 Jimmy Simmons Blvd., 409-880-1750 lamar.edu/spindletop-gladys-city/

#### TIP

The best time to visit is for one of their annual festivals when characters bring the museum to life with period games, shootouts, blacksmith demonstrations, and prohibition-era tea time in the saloon. . . . .

# GO ON A SELF-GUIDED MURAL TOUR

75

In 2021, a feature article in *Texas Monthly* proclaimed Beaumont was brimming with vibrant murals and quietly boosting its public art scene. Well, quiet no more because the city is on a mission to become the mural capital of Texas. With over 45 masterpieces throughout the region, art is playing a pivotal role revitalizing the area, infusing a youthful energy and bathing the city in color.

Grab a map from the Convention and Visitors Bureau, which has all the addresses, artist info, and inspiration behind the pieces, and make it a photo scavenger hunt to find your favorite. Recurring themes include local iconography, important figures, nature, and inspirational quotes celebrating the region.

Muralfest in spring is a great time to visit, which brings artists from all over the world to create 10-15 new works in a weekend. You can interact with the artists and watch them work in real-time at the city-wide block party.

beaumontcvb.com/things-to-do/arts-culture/murals-and-visual-art

76

### **LEARN ABOUT** THE HISTORY OF THE INDUSTRY AT THE TEXAS ENERGY MUSEUM

It's hard not to be touched by the oil and gas industry in some way in southeast Texas. If you want to do a deep dive into the region's biggest export, the Texas Energy Museum offers adults and kids an interactive and fascinating look into the history and process from the Spindletop era to present day.

Robotic characters narrate the various exhibits, which walk you through the story of petroleum from digging to refining, manufacturing, and production. Touching all disciplines of science, you'll learn about the geological formation of oil to modern chemistry, the technology required, and the biological makeup of the compounds.

Their annual fall Dino Day is one of the most popular times to visit, but quirky giant paper mâché dinosaurs can be seen on the lawn anytime you stop by.

> 600 Main St., 409-833-5100 texasenergymuseum.org

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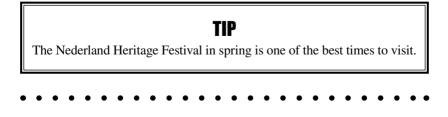
#### **TRANSPORT YOURSELF** TO THE NETHERLANDS AT THE DUTCH WINDMILL MUSEUM

77

Nederland, Texas, pays homage to its ties to the Netherlands at the Dutch Windmill Museum, an exact replica of a windmill you'd find in Holland and a tribute to the area's early Dutch settlers in "Tex" Ritter Historical Park. On the same property is La Maison Acadienne, "The House of Acadia," an adjacent early Acadian-style French home.

Your best photo op this side of the pond and one of the area's best Instagram spots, the 40-foot structure is actually a two-story museum you can go inside. Climb the narrow, winding stairs to learn about the heritage and culture of northwest Europe with artifacts like turn-of-the-century wooden shoes, tulips, a 1952 Olympic gold medal, and mementos of the late Tex Ritter, a country western music star who called Nederland home. You can also shop the small gift shop stocked with imports direct from Holland.

1500 Boston Ave., Nederland, 409-722-0279 nederlandtx.com/museums/dutch-windmill-museum



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# **FIND YOUR FAVORITE LOCAL LEGEND** At the museum of the gulf coast

The best place to dig into the story of the southeast Texas/ Louisiana region, the Museum of the Gulf Coast is part history museum, part tribute to notable personalities of the region. The first floor chronicles the early settlers' journey from Native American times through the Civil War, but you'll also find exhibits on the petroleum industry and the region's maritime history set to a full wall mural of the Jurassic period.

The upstairs features galleries dedicated to musical legends, sports stars, and other celebrities with ties to the area. Highlights include the mixed media room of acclaimed artist Robert Rauschenberg and a replica of Janis Joplin's 1965 rainbowpainted Cabriolet car.

The museum also manages the bubblegum pink Pompeiian Villa down the block, which you can tour by appointment. Modeled after an Italian home from 74 AD, it's believed to be the last remaining landmark of the "dream city" Port Arthur aspired to be.

> 700 Procter St., Port Arthur, 409-982-7000 museumofthegulfcoast.org

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### **LEARN TO HOMESTEAD** AT CHOSEN WEEDS FARM

79

Thanks to a long growing season, lots of land, and a unique ecosystem with plenty of rain to bless plants and produce, Beaumont has a robust agritourism scene.

A small urban farm in the middle of a residential neighborhood, Chosen Weeds was born out of a desire to create a place of sustainability and service to the community. Sign up for their email list to be the first to hear about hands-on classes to become junior farmers and private farm tours where you'll learn about growing fruits and veggies, preservation, and foraging while interacting with the animals.

Kids can toil in the garden, collect eggs, sample the products, and do crafts and chores that teach self-sufficiency. The highlight is undoubtedly chasing the chickens, cuddling the rabbits, and milking the goats.

> 350 Gum St., Bridge City, 409-749-0184 thechosenweeds.com



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### **ADMIRE A REAL BABE** At the babe didrikson zaharias Museum & Visitor Center

*Sports Illustrated* called her one of the top 10 athletes of the twentieth century, and more than likely, she's the biggest sports star you've never heard of. Indeed, Mildred Ella "Babe" Didrikson Zaharias is widely regarded as one of the greatest female athletes of all time. Breaking barriers and gender stereotypes, shattering both women's and men's records, and winning a team division as a solo athlete, her nickname is a nod to the GOAT, Babe Ruth.

The only athlete to win Olympic medals for running, throwing, and jumping, setting three world records and one Olympic record, Didrikson excelled in multiple sports. But her real success came in golf. One of the 13 founding members of the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), at the peak of her career, she won 14 consecutive tournaments.

Visit the small, circular museum that chronicles her life and career, which is a truly inspiring dedication to female empowerment. The best takeaway? The only thing she didn't play was dolls.

> 1750 I-10 Frontage Rd., 409-833-4622 bdzfoundation.com

FOLLOW THE FAITH TRAIL

81

In the Bible Belt, religion is intertwined with many aspects of life. The Faith Trail celebrates this with a diverse collection of places of worship around southeast Texas. These buildings are as architecturally significant as they are devout, stemming from the diverse backgrounds of the original settlers. Go on a selfguided tour of the 11 most prominent synagogues and churches in the area to admire their external beauty and magnitude.

Standouts include St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica, one of the four minor basilicas in Texas; Temple Emanuel's brilliant copper dome and stained glass windows, each depicting one of the prophet's stories; Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church and Shrine, which celebrates Mexican-American culture; Queen of Peace Shrine & Gardens, featuring a larger-than-life Virgin Mary; and the tranquil Buu Mon Buddhist Temple and gardens.

beaumontcvb.com/plan/trip-ideas/faith-trail

#### FAITH TRAIL

#### St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica

700 Jefferson St., 409-833-6433 stanthonycathedralbasilica.org

#### **Temple Emanuel**

1120 Broadway, 409-832-6131 emanuelbeaumont.org

Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church & Shrine 3648 S/Sgt. Lucian Adams Dr.

Port Arthur, TX 77642, 409-962-6777 olg-pa.org

#### **Queen of Peace Shrine & Gardens**

801 9th Ave. Port Arthur, TX 77642, 409-983-7676 gxnuvuongportarthur.org

#### **Buu Mon Buddhist Temple**

2701 Procter St., Port Arthur, 409-982-9319 facebook.com/buumonbuddhisttemple

For others, visit beaumontcvb.com/plan/trip-ideas/faith-trail

# **EXPLORE LOCAL LORE** AT THE ICE HOUSE MUSEUM

82

At 95 percent history and 5 percent art, the Ice House Museum in Silsbee is a fascinating local museum dedicated to the settling of southeast Texas, the founders of the region, and the lore of the Big Thicket.

From alleged Big Foot sightings to herbal roots and natural medicines found in the forest, the eclectic collection includes everything from a 10-million-year-old rhinoceros fossil discovered in the Neches River to presidential letters from LBJ. Permanent and rotating exhibits include a recreated flatboat used to sail the Neches River in the 1800s and a 1920s-era kitchen designed with painstaking detail to keep everything as historically accurate as possible down to the rope and square nails. Their approach to history is to make it personal and relevant, always with a story told through the eyes of the original settlers.

> 818 Earnest Ave., Silsbee, 409-385-2444 icehousemuseum.org

#### TIP

The building itself is a Texas historical landmark, opened in 1927 as an ice factory. It was used to manufacture and deliver ice by horse and buggy prior to electrical refrigeration.

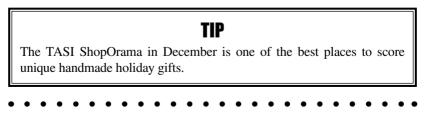
**SHARPEN YOUR CREATIVE CHOPS** WITH A CLASS AT THE ART STUDIO, INC.

83

Part studio, part gallery, part co-working space, The Art Studio Inc. (TASI) is a creative hub for artists. Founded in the 1980s as a nonprofit, TASI saw the need for affordable studios with access to equipment for imaginative, entrepreneurial spirits and has since evolved into a thriving arts community designed to keep local talent local.

A supportive place to cheer on each other's progress and encourage experimentation, tenants span mediums with an affinity for ceramics, painting, foundry, woodworking, and metalwork with rotating galleries and exhibitions. Public classes celebrate all forms of self-expression with everything from pottery on the wheel to life drawing, creative writing, and band nights. Desiring to be a place welcome to all, they work cooperatively with programs and institutions that address issues of at-risk youth and people with special needs.

> 720 Franklin St., 409-838-5393 artstudio.org



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### **FIND YOUR NEW FAVORITE ARTIST** At the free art museum of southeast texas

84

Open seven days a week, always with free admission, the Art Museum of Southeast Texas, or AMSET, has been a pillar of the community since the 1950s. The permanent collection contains nearly 1,700 paintings, collages, textiles, sculptures, drawings, photographs, decorative arts, folk art, and mixed media from more than 400 artists.

One standout is the Felix "Fox" Harris Gallery, named for a local man who used recycled materials to follow a directive from God to "make somethin" out of nothin"." Rotating exhibits feature fine and folk art spanning the nineteenth through twenty-first centuries, often shining a light on underrepresented Texas artists.

The museum hosts and participates in a variety of public programs and outreach throughout the year. A few not to miss include the Christmas Tree Lighting and Family Arts Day at Halloween when kids can "Eat a Bug." For a more traditional bite, Two Magnolias Cafe has its famous lunch buffet inside the lobby most Fridays.

500 Main St., 409-832-3432

amset.org

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#### TIP

Looking for more art? The Dishman Art Museum at Lamar University and the Stark Museum of Art in Orange are also both free!

# **SEE THE AREA'S CROOKED PAST** At the police museum

85

Sequestered in the basement of the Beaumont Police Headquarters, the Police Museum is available to explore by appointment. Popular among scout and civic groups, clubs, and schools, it is one of the coolest homages to the rough and tumble past that comes with being a boomtown. Walk through and tour the old jail cells, get sent to solitary, snap a photo of yourself behind bars, and see a variety of police relics and regalia dating back to the turn of the century.

Exhibits highlight a range of weaponry, celebrated sergeants, old uniforms, the canine crew, and various drugs and paraphernalia. You'll chuckle at the crazy charges from some of the area's shadiest characters and take a moment to appreciate the somber memorial for those lost in the line of duty.

255 College St., 409-880-3825 police.beaumonttexas.gov TAKE A SELFIE

#### **IMAGE A SELFIE** WITH AN ICONIC ROADSIDE ATTRACTION, THE MUFFLER MAN

86

One of the last true symbols of Americana, the Muffler Man is a roadside attraction of legendary stature. The 14- to 25-foottall fiberglass sculptures were originally created as a form of advertising you couldn't help but notice, the first modeled after Paul Bunyan in the 1960s. Soon after, thousands began popping up around the country, most notably along Route 66. The macho representations of lumberjacks, cowboys, and Indians creatively promoted whatever business they guarded.

Only about 100 of the iconic statues remain, one of which keeps watch over 11th Street in Beaumont. Known as the "Happy Half-Wit," the smiling giant was inspired by the fictitious MAD magazine character, Alfred E. Neuman, and has attracted road trippers and motorcyclists from across the country who wish to take a photo with the larger-than-life sculpture.

830 S 11th St.

### **BLAST OFF** At space center houston

87

Since Apollo 13 coined the famous phrase "Houston, we have a problem," Houston has been synonymous with space exploration. One of the city's top attractions, the Smithsonian-affiliated museum can turn just about anyone into a NASA nerd or science geek.

A dual indoor-outdoor experience, the Johnson Space Center is still home to an active mission control and advanced astronaut training program. Visitors can tour the facility to see astronaut and starship galleries, a spacesuit collection, and even have breakfast with an astronaut. There are more than 400 space artifacts, motion and VR simulators, and live shows.

Outside, walk through a multi-level replica of the space shuttle Independence before taking the free tram (timed reservations required) to Rocket Park, mission control, and the astronaut training facility to gawk at the massive contraptions that carried Americans to the moon.

> 1601 E NASA Pkwy., Houston, 281-244-2100 spacecenter.org



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# **EMBRACE YOUR INNER INVENTOR** At the edison museum

Sequestered in a tiny brick building behind Edison Plaza is a museum dedicated to inventor Thomas Edison. And while he had no specific ties to the area, Gulf States Utilities opened it as a tribute to the electrical industry. Located in the Travis Street Substation, they still supply power to a small portion of Beaumont.

More than anything, it's a museum dedicated to yesteryear. A new exhibit upstairs showcases old electronics and appliances dating back to the 1920s, which document the evolution of household gadgets and gizmos. You could spend hours trying to discern what they're for and how they work. An old hair curler looks like a Medieval torture device, while the kids are fascinated by the TVs and phones, much more recognizable to the older generation.

Downstairs is all about Edison's life with interactive stations where you can "talk" to the inventor via letters and coded messages. On display are his creations like the ediphone, an early recorder, the phonograph, a "listening machine," and a replica of the original light bulb.

> 350 Pine St. #1750, 409-299-9195 edisonmuseum.org

### **STIMULATE YOUR SENSES** AT DHARMA RECOVERY CENTER

89

Dharma Recovery Center offers what they call Fe-SiO therapy, which stands for "functional expertise sensory input overload." It's a mouthful, but the gist is that we all need to relieve stress. Created in partnership with a doctor at CHRISTUS Hospital, founder Melissa Cornwell came up with the concept during the COVID-19 pandemic as an outlet for mental health. She and her partner Amanda run the alternative medicine studio, offering a variety of classes and therapies for the mind, body, and soul.

Their most popular and unique offerings are the ASMR sessions. Each starts with tea in the lounge before you're brought into a magical indoor garden. You're blindfolded to heighten your other senses and forced to be present while your body experiences a variety of stimulations through texture, temperature, sounds, smells, and taste. They also offer guided yoga, pilates, Reiki (the ancient Japanese art of energy healing), sound bowls, and other classes.

2684 Calder Ave., 409-338-2126 fesiotherapy.com

#### TIP

Don't miss their "Dinner in the Dark" Valentine's Day events, a super intimate and memorable date.

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# PLAN A STAYCATION AT THE BOOK NOOK INN

90

The only true bed and breakfast in the area, the Book Nook Inn is a cozy place to plan a staycation in your own backyard. Adjacent to the Big Thicket, the five guest rooms each have their own bathroom, so you could hole up and never see a soul or take full advantage of property amenities that include a fresh cooked breakfast, stocked fishing pond, billiards room, indoor theater, and augmented reality room (coming soon). As the name suggests, books are a major theme, with an impressive library full of novels and DVDs to borrow.

With gazebos and waterfalls, the backyard is a fairytale setting that doubles as an event venue. They often host fun community events like karaoke, blindfolded *Bird Box* dinners, gourmet Valentine's meals, and adult prom, in addition to author readings and reviews.

10405 Cooks Lake Rd., Lumberton, 409-225-9106 booknookinn.com . . . .

# **PICK YOUR OWN** PRODUCE AT A U-PICK FARM

91

While not exactly rural, southeast Texas is blessed with plenty of land and rain that contribute to a fertile growing environment. And truly, there's not a more wholesome or memorable family outing than a day on the farm.

There are several pick-your-own farms in the area with various fruits and vegetables you can snag by season. Many have strawberries, blackberries, and blueberries (the most common) in spring, pumpkins and fall fun in autumn, Christmas trees in winter, and farm fresh goodies year-round. One of the most unique is Ridgetop Flower Farm in Orange, which lets you walk amongst the wildflowers to make your own bouquet on their designated U-pick nights.

Want to get in the weeds and give back? The Giving Field is a community garden that donates to area soup kitchens and is always looking for volunteers.

#### **U-PICK FARMS**

Third Day Farm and Ranch 373 CR 092 Jasper, 409-291-1456 facebook.com/ third-day-farm-andranch-783661788439790

Leeland Farms 2501 Hwy. 326 S Sour Lake, 409-893-1594 facebook.com/ leefarms2017

Berryland Farms of Texas 2877 FM 1941 Winnie, 713-551-6360 berrylandfarmsoftexas.com

**B&M Farms** 2365 Blueberry Patch, Silsbee, 409-299-2836 facebook.com/theblue berrypatchsilsbeetexas

Byars Blueberry Farm 255 Southland Dr. Lumberton facebook.com/ byarsblueberryfarm

#### The Bell Blueberry Farm

317 Private Rd. 8480 Warren, 409-880-1123 facebook.com/people/ the-bell-blueberryfarm/100064746154640/

KJ Farms 3371 FM 1293, Kountze

facebook.com/profile. php?id=100057393860822

**Ridgetop Flower Farm** 4593 Wagner Ln. Orange, 409-779-7331 ridgetopflowerfarm.com

Brown's Berry Farm County Rd. 3073 Kirbyville, 409-963-4056 facebook.com/ brownsberryfarm

Donna's Farm 11073 Koelemay Dr. 409-782-9846 donnasfarm.com • { 92

# SLEEP ON A SWINGING BED At the rock'n dollar ranch

What started as a working cow ranch and horse training facility, the barn at Rock'N Dollar Ranch was converted into a wedding venue when owner Freddy could no longer ride due to a health scare. Guests begged him to be able to stay the night, so he decided to try out the Airbnb concept.

Naturalist Boudoir was the first cabin he built on-site by hand. A honeymoon suite regaled for its swinging bed and an intentional lack of TVs and internet surrounded on three sides by the Big Thicket, it quickly became one of the most popular Airbnbs in Texas, and people came from all over the world to unplug.

As demand grew, he eventually built more cabins and tiny houses on the property, three with the signature swinging beds. Most include water views with private piers, and all have hot tubs, outdoor showers, and kayaks to use.

> 11134 Burge Rd., Lumberton, 409-351-5699 facebook.com/naturalistboudoir

#### TIP

Tied by what's affectionately referred to as a marriage knot, the bed is designed to rock you to sleep like a cruise ship.

**SWEETEN UP** YOUR LIFE TOURING MOORE HONEY, A WORKING HONEY BEE FARM

93

If you've ever (bee)n curious about the honey-making process, a trip to Moore Farm is a fascinating look into the sweet inner workings. Any time you want to visit, they welcome facility tours to learn about honey-making and beekeeping—if you can coordinate with owner Chris's busy schedule that is. He and his son buzz around maintaining 2,500 colonies across five counties, each of which houses 10,000–60,000 bees depending on the time of year. They also rent their bees to farmers across the country, which are used to pollinate almonds and seedless watermelons.

The best time to visit is during their open farm event in July, which is a hands-on look at the harvesting process. Extraction happens just once a year, and it takes about three weeks to collect all the fruits of their labor, which yields about 30 barrels a day.

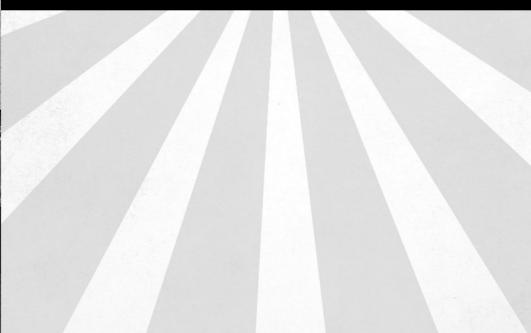
> 9767 Bevil Blvd., Kountze, 713-724-7110 moorehoney.com

#### TIP

Every region's honey tastes differently depending on the makeup of the flowers in the area. Like most food in the South, ours is slightly darker and more flavorful.



# SHOPPING AND FASHION



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### **TREASURE HUNT** At the many antique shops

94

Unlike thrifting, real antiquing is an art requiring the ability to identify and spot decorative home accents and furniture that would garner significant value for their craftsmanship, collectability, and exquisite attention to detail. One-of-akind pieces are sourced from around the region and abroad, with European imports and designs popular amongst treasure hunters searching for items of age, beauty, rarity, and historical significance.

Whether you're a collector, a casual hobbyist, or just like window shopping, Beaumont's Old Town Antique District is home to a variety of high-end and resale shops along Calder Avenue, offering everything from vintage treasures to discount flea-market finds. From tiny holes-in-the-wall to sprawling antique malls, you never know exactly what you'll find, and each trip will uncover new vintage gems. Get ready to search high and low because it's as much about the hunt as it is the find.

beaumontcvb.com/things-to-do/shopping/antiques

#### **ANTIQUE STORES**

Burns Antik Haus 2195 Calder Ave. 409-835-3080 burnsantiques.com

Urban Habitat 4145 Gladys Ave. 409-833-7417 facebook.com/ urbanhabitatbeaumont

Finder's Fayre Quality Antiques 1485 Calder Ave. 409-833-7000 findersfayre.com

Antique Mall of Lumberton 1181 S Main St. Lumberton, 409-755-3388 antiquemalloflumberton. com

McManus Company 820 N 11th St. 409-833-4393 mcmanusco.com

Snooper's Paradise Inc. 5509 E Parkway St. Groves, 409-962-8427 snoopersparadise.com

Yellow Rose Antiques 1303 Port Neches Ave. Port Neches, 409-722-2265

Old Towne Flea Market 1216 Port Neches Ave. Port Neches, 409-721-9690 BAW Resale & Interiors 1096 Calder Ave. 786-209-9712 facebook.com/bawresale-interiors-llcbeaumonts-antique-warehouse-143278902416718

A Lot of This N That

3700 Main Ave. Groves, 409-217-1971 facebook.com/ alotofthisnthat

**Texas Reclaimed** 

3145 Calder Ave. 409-242-1969 facebook.com/ texasreclaimed

Treasure House of St. Mark's 805 North St. 409-832-0253 facebook.com/ treasurehousebmt

**Heirlooms for Hospice** 

5925 Phelan Blvd. facebook.com/heirlooms4hospice 409-223-1888

The Crow's Nest 1125 Dallas St. Port Neches, 409-720-8264 facebook.com/crowsnesttx

# PERUSE THE BEAUMONT FARMERS MARKET FOR GOODIES

95

Research confirms that farmers markets bring a number of advantages to a community, from supporting local farmers to increased access to nutritious food and sustainability.

Open nearly year-round with just a short winter break, the Beaumont Farmers Market is held Saturday mornings at the Beaumont Athletic Complex, rain or shine. A producer-only market, all products must be made or grown by vendors within a 150-mile radius of Beaumont. With nothing resold or sourced, you know everything is super fresh and hyper local. Stop by and shop for gifts and goodies from seasonal produce, meat, and eggs to artisan and gourmet products like jellies and jams, baked goods, bath and body products, and even fresh flowers.

To provide increased access to healthy foods, many vendors even accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) payments.

6525 College St., 409-828-7400 beaumontfarmersmarket.org

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### MAKE IT A BUC-EES ROAD TRIP

96

You might be wondering what's so special about a gas station, but Buc-ees embodies everything that's right—and wrong with Texas. Cheap gas is nearly overshadowed by the variety of products in what looks more like a supersized Walmart than a gas station.

The chain holds multiple world records for the world's largest convenience store, the world's longest car wash, and fiercely defends their claim to have the "cleanest restrooms in America." Indeed, Buc-ees is a novelty stop for any road trip and a worthy destination unto itself if you've never experienced one.

The closest to us is 45 minutes away in Baytown, which boasts 100 pumps on 18 acres. Between the white-label candy, fudge, homemade beef jerky, arguably some of the best barbecue in Texas, home goods, gifts, and apparel, it's impossible to leave without a cartful of snacks and souvenirs including at least one thing emblazoned with the beloved beaver mascot.

> 4080 East Fwy., Baytown, 979-238-6390 buc-ees.com

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### SHOP THE BOUTIQUES ON BOSTON AVENUE

97

The best place find stylish women's apparel and accessories, historic Boston Avenue is your one-stop shop for blocks of boutiques. You know you're in the right place when you pass under the archway welcoming you to Nederland. Pop in and out of Baubles & Bliss, Blanc on Boston, Gaudie & Co., Sassy Trendz, and Twisted Gypsy as you try on the latest fashion and trends.

Their Christmas in July event is one of the best times to shop the sales and get festive in the middle of summer. Snag even more deals at the Annual Winter Blowout in January, Fall Market Days in October, Pink Friday in November, and their monthly themed street events.

When you need a pick me up, cool off with a sweet treat from the Legendairy Gelato Cafe, grab a bite at A Touch of Cajun, toss one back at Buckstin Brew Pub, or make a personal charcuterie board at Soirée and Vine.

Boston Avenue, Nederland facebook.com/people/ shop-boston-avenue-the-heart-of-nederland/100057245216834

#### **BOSTON AVENUE BOUTIQUES**

Baubles & Bliss 1126 Boston Ave., Nederland 409-344-4302 baublesandbliss.com

Blanc on Boston 1205 Boston Ave., Nederland 409-300-8443 blanconboston.com

Gaudie & Co. 1143 Boston Ave., Nederland 409-729-2700 gaudieandco.com

Sassy Trendz 1220 Boston Ave., Nederland 409-853-1255 sassytrendzboutique.com

Twisted Gypsy 1219 Boston Ave., Nederland 409-344-8998 facebook.com/twistedgypsyboston

### **SEE THE KNICK KNACKS** AT LARRY'S OLD TIME TRADE DAYS

98

Despite origins in France, flea markets are a Texas tradition, and it's widely believed the concept first appeared in America in the Lone Star State.

A place to scour second-hand items through a variety of vendors and merchants, Larry's Old Time Trade Days has been a southeast Texas tradition for over 20 years. The market is held monthly on the weekend following the first Monday. It attracts people from all over thanks to an easily accessible location off I-10 between Beaumont and Houston in Winnie.

The dual indoor-outdoor market has up to 500 vendors at any given time, some more permanent than others, with everything from antiques, crafts, and collectibles in a bazaar-like atmosphere. Indulge in rows of food trucks as you meander the stalls in search of handmade home decor, accessories, and jewelry.

> 14902 FM 1663, Winnie, 409-296-3300 larrysoldtimetradedays.com

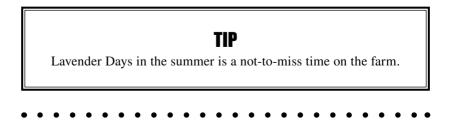
### **SHOP SUPER SMALL** AT BEAU-TANICALS LITTLE FARM STORE

99

Not liking the chemicals found in many store-bought products, Shari started making soaps for her six children 12 years ago by bartering with a local farmer for goat's milk. She and her husband ended up falling in love with farm life, moving to the country, and opening a small storefront on their property.

They sell all-natural bath and home products with animals meandering about as you shop. Open off and on throughout the year, their products are also regularly available at the Beaumont Farmers Market. Nearly everything sold is made by one of the family members down to the pottery, but it's the goat's milk fudge that has the cult following. Spring is lamb and goat season, so beyond fawning over the babies, they have special days when you can sample the goat's milk cheese, cookies, caramels, and other goodies.

N China Rd., 409-351-6348 facebook.com/beautanicals



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### FIND LOTIONS, Potions, and salves at down to earth bath brews and baubles

100

Located in the beautiful Mildred Building, Down to Earth is the bath and body store of your organic dreams. Billed as a modernday apothecary, they have homeopathic remedies, salves, and tinctures with a touch of metaphysical.

Throw yourself a DIY spa day full of self-care and pampering or pick up a gift for that hard-to-shop-for friend. There's everything from aromatherapy to herbal teas, plus curiosities like tarot cards and crystals to cleanse the body and soul, and their bath bombs are quite literally the bomb. In addition to essential oils and household cleaning solutions, there are all-natural skincare collections for women, men, and infants. Their curated monthly subscription boxes are full of themed surprises each season. Radiating a certain scent or vibe? Talk to them about making a custom blend.

> 1455 Calder Ave., 409-813-8522 dteshops.com

> > 130

### TIP

The owner also has a specialty stationary shop: Letters to Zoe. And for more unique treasures, next door in the Mildred Building is L'malam, a custom Moroccan import shop.



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