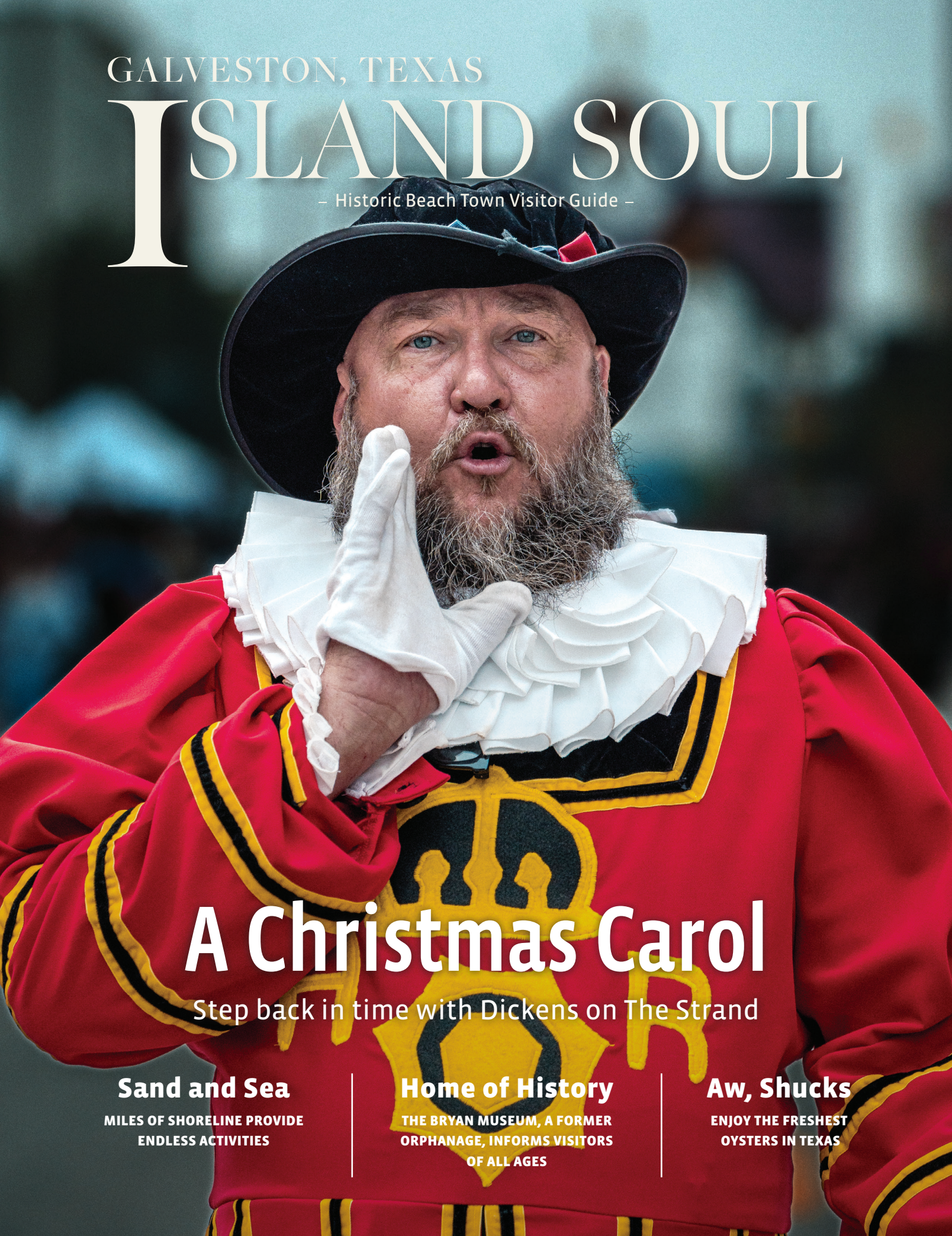
GALVESTON, TEXAS

ISLAND SOUL

– Historic Beach Town Visitor Guide –



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Welcome

A Letter From the Editor

All Are Welcome

Something special happened when I arrived on Galveston Island earlier this year. As I drove over the causeway to the Island for the first time as a resident and not a visitor, I was welcomed with a sweeping, sparkling sunrise over Galveston Bay and the distinct scent of salt-tinged Gulf air. It was a beautiful, natural reception to be sure, and I reacted with an ear-to-ear grin as I drew in deep breaths of clean coastal air.

I was to discover later that this "causeway cure" is a common occurrence, but that's not the special happening I'm referring to.

I arrived at Visit Galveston as its new Chief Tourism Officer and was received by a knowledgeable staff, all of whom are eager to tell the story of Galveston Island and showcase our extraordinary location. Indeed, this issue of *Island Soul* reflects their passion and the truth behind their enthusiastic explanations of all things Galveston. From the freshly caught seafood (page 30) to unforgettable vacation experiences (page 54) and the Island's rich historical landscape (page 40), there is something to be experienced and treasured for every type of visitor.

And still, something even more singular—even more special—occurred when I arrived on Galveston Island.

For upon arrival in my new home, I met a group of residents, the likes of which I have yet to encounter in my travels. I am originally from England, and I spent the last decade as the chief marketing officer for a destination in the Sierra Nevada mountains. We were no stranger to resident transplants and a steady influx of seasonal convention-goers and vacationers, all bringing unique stories from their hometowns. Yet on Galveston Island, I've encountered an entire culture of locals who brag about being born on the Island and take immense pride in being "B.O.I." (born on Island).

Galveston's hometown culture has multicultural elements imbued within. With the Island's diverse immigration history, even the people who are "from here" or B.O.I. have family roots from somewhere else, yet all the cultures and customs seamlessly connect once you cross the causeway. A wide variety of heritages and identities are represented on Galveston Island, and Southern hospitality truly abounds. All are welcome, from Texas, across the nation, and all around the world.

Perhaps most striking about the local community is the pride they have not just in their origins, but for the Island's institutions. There is a reason that Galveston's history remains preserved irrespective of what Mother Nature may send our way (page 22): It's because of the residents. We are all about sustainability and stewardship. We make sure that we respect one another, our land, our buildings, and we make sure trash finds its way to the proper receptacles. I immediately felt a kinship with my new neighbors in these sentiments.

With that, I welcome you to Galveston Island, and I encourage you to peruse the pages of the *Island Soul* visitor's guide. We look forward to making memories together.

Tony Lyle, Chief Tourism Officer
Visit Galveston;
Editor-in-Chief, *Island Soul*

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FEATURES

Fall/Winter 2023-24

22 **Immerse Yourself in 'Endless Stories'**
The Bryan Museum rose from the ruin of an infamous hurricane. Now it's one of the best museums in Texas.
BY TYLER HICKS

30 **Sea to Table**
Fresh Gulf comfort food makes for the coziest days and nights on the Island. BY MARK STUERTZ

40 **The Benevolent Mitchell Family**
The stylish appearance and reputation of Galveston Island's downtown district are due in no small part to one local couple. BY CRAI S. BOWER

FROM TOP RIGHT: Gumbo; a Hurricane cocktail; crawfish etouffe; the New Orleans platter

DAVID HALLORAN

COURTESY VISIT GALVESTON

PHOTO BY DAVID HALLORAN

PHOTO BY ROGER VELAZQUEZ

PHOTO BY ROGER VELAZQUEZ

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DEPARTMENTS

Fall/Winter 2023-24

02

Welcome
Our editor-in-chief shares his thoughts about life on Galveston Island.

Fresh Catch 08
Restoring Gavleston's dynamic duo bring new life to the Island's historic structures.

Experiences of a Lifetime 10
Find fun for the young ones with these family-friendly experiences.

Relax in Luxury 14
Pamper the body and mind in these highly-appointed accommodations.

Beachside Boutiques 16
Dive into the rich past of Galveston in one of the many shops near the seawall.

Neighborhood Spotlight 18
From the mafia to Frank Sinatra, the Cedar Lawn area has seen it all and more.

Island Institutions 20
Revitalize and exercise the mind and body with these unique Island experiences.

Events for All 50
Niche and bespoke spaces dot the Island for a one-of-a-kind event experience.

Wedding Bliss 52
Have an Island bachelor or bachelorette party to remember.

Things to Do 54
With so much happening on the Island and its historic downtown, plan wisely.

Marketplace 62
A roundup of places and services to make your visit memorable.

Never a Dull Moment 66
Galveston locals know how to throw a celebration. Make sure you don't miss out.

A Blast From the Past 72
Tracing the roots of international beauty pageants over the decades.

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MARRIOTT BONVOY

Fresh Catch

The Latest Happenings on the Island

ELIZABETH JOY WITH YIPPIE HOUSE

Ashley and Michael Cordray (left); demo day at the "Kettle House"

Vintage Island

Restoring Galveston's dynamic duo sees potential through the rust. BY JOSHUA CARROLL

A LARGE, BOWL-SHAPED STEEL structure bearing a rusty exterior and a collection of scars from weathering the elements was formerly an infamous sight among Galveston residents. Affectionately known as the "Kettle House," the structure had become an unconventional landmark since its construction in the 1960s. Originally made as a steel storage tank, the historic building had since been relegated to a roadside attraction.

At a glance, the average person may have only seen a pile of scrap metal within the Kettle House. However, one Galveston couple saw potential. Michael and Ashley Cordray, owners of the real estate company Save 1900, have a long-standing passion for renovating historic buildings in the area.

"There's potential, potential everywhere here," Michael says.

He's been restoring old homes since he was in college, and it's a hobby that he and his wife would continue to bond over. Not only that, but realty runs in his family, with his father, great-grandfather and great-uncle all having experience in real estate.

While the couple had been working on historic homes for a while, they were only able to do so on the side, as their previous jobs had them working in the oil fields. It wasn't until the aftermath of 2008's Hurricane Ike that the two considered taking the plunge and making realty a full-time job.

Since 2016, their former hobby has spun into a full-fledged real estate business, a sizable social media following and their currently running TV show, *Restoring Galveston*, which showcases the process of their projects. From filming episodes for their show, managing real estate and parenting three children, the Cordrays are never short of things to do.

"We work a lot, so I guess it's good that Ashley likes doing it as well, and we do it together," Michael says. "Otherwise, we'd probably never see each other."

Despite spinning so many plates, Ashley says their current schedule allows them to spend time with their family, in part because the close-knit environment of Galveston is well-suited for the work-and-play balance.

"Everything you want to do is just at your fingertips," she says. "We go to restaurants, and you see people you know when you walk downtown. That doesn't happen in a big city."

For the Cordrays, renovating these buildings is part of preserving the historic draw of Galveston Island. As time goes on, the two hope people will come to recognize what makes the Island special. SAVE1900.COM

ELIZABETH JOY WITH YIPPIE HOUSE

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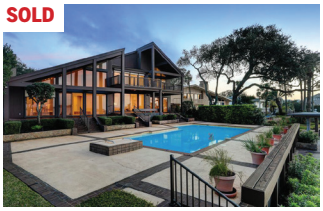

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The Tall Ship *Elissa* on the open sea.

All Hands on Deck

You don't have to be a seafarer to appreciate the rare opportunity to sail on the Tall Ship *Elissa*. BY VANESSA ORR

SEEING THE TALL SHIP *ELISSA* docked at Galveston Historic Seaport is an impressive sight, but actually helping her set sail and riding the wind across the Gulf of Mexico is the experience of a lifetime.

For roughly three weeks each spring, prospective sailors can learn what it's like to sail the 1877 square-rigged iron barque as part of a day sail where they not only get to enjoy time on the water, but actually work on the 146-year-old National Historic Landmark. Considering that the ship is one of only three of her kind in the world that still actively sails, this experience is not only exciting but extremely rare.

"People who have taken part in the day sail have been overwhelmingly positive in their comments; many say that it was a far more memorable experience than they'd expected," says Mark Scibinico, port captain/director of the Galveston Historic Seaport and Galveston Historical Foundation. "They are enthusiastic and engaged when they get here, and once they walk on board, they fall in love."

While tickets for the day sail can be purchased after the first week of December, members of the Galveston Historical Foundation are allotted a short window where they can buy tickets before anyone else.

While the Tall Ship *Elissa* sails for a number of weeks each year, it mainly serves as a floating museum. Open to the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. most days except holidays, visitors to the ship can walk the decks and take a self-guided tour on board, as well as watch the story of *Elissa*'s rescue and restoration in an adjacent museum and theater. Adult tickets are $10; youth (6-18) are $7 and children 5 and under are free. The Texas Seaport Museum & *Elissa* are located at 2200 Harborside Drive.
For more information, visit galvestonhistory.org

Working the Tall Ship *Elissa* is a once-in-a-lifetime experience

"We've had people sign up to be members just to get the first crack at a ticket," laughs Scibinico.

Originally from Aberdeen, Scotland, *Elissa* was sitting in a scrapyard in Piraeus Harbor in Greece when the Galveston Historical Foundation brought her home with the goal of restoring her to her former glory. In 1982, the ship was once again sailworthy, and since then, more than 40,000 visitors annually have come to tour the ship.

Each spring, those who buy a ticket for the day sail can work on the *Elissa* as she sails after first taking part in a safety orientation. During the eight-hour day, they learn about the ship's history and take part in various sailing maneuvers while working as deckhands hauling in ropes and lines.

"People can participate as much or as little as they want," Scibinico says. "It's not heavy labor, but they do need to be reasonably ambulatory. If they can take a walk around the block, they can do this."

The next day sail takes place from late March through April 2024, and spots are available on about 12 to 14 day sails a year. Tickets run approximately $250 per person and the minimum age to participate is 12. All of the money raised is fed directly back into the ship for continued maintenance.

The Galveston Historical Foundation also offers another option for those who have the sailing bug. Adults 18 and over can sign up to participate in the Volunteer Trainee Program that begins at the end of July and lasts 20 Saturdays over seven months. After graduating from the free program, sailors then become part of the crew while the ship is sailing, supervised by a group of professional officers.

"A lot of people who participate in the day sail then go on to join the volunteer program; we have numerous repeat customers," Scibinico says. "But even if they can't commit to the seven-month time requirement, there are always ways that they can come out and support the ship."

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At Your Service

Let these turnkey businesses do the heavy holiday lifting for you. BY MELANIE HAIKEN

AS MORE PEOPLE SEEK TO slow down, simplify and savor their vacation time, they're discovering that a luxury rental property with turnkey service offers the perfect solution to a stress-free vacation. And the holidays are the perfect time to take advantage of this option, with concierge services available to handle all aspects of a festive celebration. Whether it's a holiday feast delivered hot from a local restaurant, a pre-decorated Christmas tree ready in place or rooms bedecked for festive celebrations, guests have nothing to do but unlock the door.

Turnkey luxury rentals are popular with couples and smaller families seeking a cozy and restorative escape as well as with multi-generational families and groups of friends. "Larger groups often choose to book larger luxury properties because they can share costs and get more space and amenities for their money," says Jessica LaBelle of Sand 'N Sea Properties, a family-owned company managing nearly 200 properties in West Galveston's most desirable beachfront locations.

"Amenities like elevators, hot tubs and private pools play a big part in the home selection process, and we are seeing more requests for smaller scale luxuries like coffee bars and gaming systems," LaBelle says. "More than ever, families are looking for a vacation oasis at every price point."

Concierge grocery delivery services allow guests to walk into a fully stocked kitchen and have a meal on the table faster than they can order takeout. "Guests are used to using grocery delivery services at home, so they're happy to take advantage of 'home away from home' amenities like a full kitchen and ample storage," LaBelle says. And while you're at it, there are services that allow you to hire a private chef.

Another turnkey company, Above & Beyond Concierge, offers party planning and setups, or larger event planning

A beach party by
Above & Beyond Concierge

Plan your own concierge-guided Galveston Island vacation with the help of these resources

Sand 'N Sea Properties
sandnsea.com

Above & Beyond Concierge
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Gulf Coast Concierge
gulfcoastconcierge.com

Sandy Feet Sand Castle Services
galvestonsandcastles.com

One of the many gorgeous creations from Sandy Feet Sand Castle Services

A sunset luau by
Above & Beyond Concierge

that may include flowers, entertainment, bartending and other celebratory services. Above & Beyond also provides photography to help visitors document memorable moments.

Galveston's Leave No Trace ordinance, which prohibits leaving anything on the beach overnight, has contributed to a rise in rental requests for beach chairs, umbrellas, tents and canopies that come with setup and take-down service. "Families with lots of kids don't want to deal with hauling those items back and forth," LaBelle says.

Renting a four- or six-person golf cart is another popular option for getting people and gear to and from the beach, particularly for guests staying in beachside or bayside homes. Gulf Coast Concierge offers golf cart rentals as well as information and advice on where guests can ride them and what is off-limits.

Planning activities that are fun for the whole family can be tricky, but concierge services can handle that, too. Gulf Coast Concierge offers a three-hour Bonfire on the Beach event complete with fire pit, chairs and s'mores.

Sandcastle lessons have become a popular activity for families looking to bring everyone together for some old-fashioned, sun-drenched fun. "I teach the fundamentals of sand sculpture, from properly compacting sand to carving," says Emerson Shreiner of Sandy Feet Sand Castle Services. "At the end we have a nice castle and a cool photo opportunity."

Beachside Boutiques

Where to Shop Around Galveston

Ware It's At

Explore the many shopping options on Postoffice Street. BY TERRI MARSHALL

SITUATED IN THE HISTORIC DOWNTOWN Galveston district, Postoffice Street houses an eclectic collection of locally owned shops featuring everything from uniquely designed jewelry, art, mystical books and chic island-inspired clothing. Meet the locals as you search for treasures in the intriguing Postoffice Street shops.

Tangerine Boutique

Tangerine Boutique exists for fearless women who play by their own rules. Founded in 2009 by artist Kim Cherryhomes, this family-run boutique showcases a mix of elegant-yet-casual West Coast couture inspired by its founder's artistic background. A single mom and domestic violence survivor, Cherryhomes' vision for Tangerine Boutique focuses on making the shop a space of creativity, comfort, peace and, of course, fashion.

TANGERINE.BOUTIQUE

The Style co.

The Style co. owner Kathryn Zimmerman believes life is too short to wear boring clothes. She makes sure her customers are never boring with a bold, colorful collection of women's clothing and accessories that she describes as "casual island chic with a touch of sassy." Also an artist, Zimmerman features her work throughout the store. You'll also find jewelry, gifts and a self-care area with bath bombs and face masks in this eclectic boutique.

VISITGALVESTON.COM/DIRECTORY/THE-STYLE-CO

Ha.Ba's Clothing

Founded in 2004 by sisters Erica and Monica Barry, Ha.Ba's is now owned by former store manager Kathrine Pompa. A Galveston native, Pompa grew up shopping at Ha.Ba's. Blending island style with L.A. trends, Ha.Ba's offers affordable fashion finds for women and children. You'll also discover plenty of cute accessories, gift cards and jewelry along with extra unexpected goodies like art and even cocktail mixers. HABASCLOTHING.COM

René Wiley Gallery

A true family affair, the René Wiley Gallery showcases the works of award-winning artist René Wiley and daughters Rachel Wiley-Janota and Samantha Wiley. Husband and father Capt. Ben L. Wiley operates the gallery, proudly presenting the artwork of his wife and daughters. Stop in to see the works of this talented family.

RENEWILEYGALLERY.COM

The Old Galveston Trading Company

Specializing in one-of-a-kind artisan gift items, candles, home décor, T-shirts and furniture, The Old Galveston Trading Company is a Galveston treasure. Among its most popular offerings are Singing Bowls. Crafted from fine materials like antique brass and handcrafted crystal, the sounds produced from the bowls promote relaxation, reduce stress and aid in healing. FACEBOOK.COM/THEOLDGALVESTONTRADINGCOMPANY

The Witchery

Housed in the old Central Drug Store, The Witchery exudes a mystical vibe. The brainchild of owners Clyde and Kimberley Wood, The Witchery features literature focused on self-discovery, self-empowerment and spiritual enlightenment. The Witchery also offers inspirational gifts sourced from around the globe. Take your mystical journey a step further with psychic readings every Saturday and Sunday. WITCHERYONLINE.COM

Cruz Cortez Clothiers

Turn the corner at 23rd and Postoffice, and chances are you'll see Cruz Cortez and a friend solving the world's problems on a bench just outside his clothing store. Inside Cruz Cortez Clothiers, you'll find a selection of colorful Hawaiian shirts that match his personality. The store also features guayaberas, hats and women's sundresses, all perfect for island life. Cruz also serves as the go-to guy for tuxedo rentals, Mardi Gras balls, prom and other special occasions in Galveston.

VISITGALVESTON.COM/DIRECTORY/CRUZ-CORTEZ-CLOTHIERS-SHOP

Fullen Jewelry

Supplying Galveston locals and visitors with fine jewelry since 1975, Fullen Jewelry presents a mix of classic, contemporary and nautical designs. Among the original pieces available at Fullen Jewelry are custom-made bracelets, cufflinks, earrings, money clips and rings created from authentic ancient coins. Fullen Jewelry is also home to Galveston hook bracelets crafted from sterling silver with 14-karat gold accents known as The Original Galveston Destination jewelry collection. FULLENJEWELRY.COM

COURTESY ROSENBERG LIBRARY

Frank Sinatra (second from right) at the Balinese Room.

Cedar Lawn

This bucolic Galveston community used to be the stomping grounds of bootleggers and mobsters. BY SHELBI ANKIEWICZ

THESE DAYS, GALVESTON IS KNOWN as a beautiful, welcoming and family-friendly island city. But a century ago, it was the gambling hub of Texas and a preferred destination of the criminal underworld. Cedar Lawn, a small neighborhood on the Island, holds memories of past homeowners and mischievous activity. From famous mobsters to elite nightclubs, this neighborhood's rich history doesn't present itself to the naked eye.

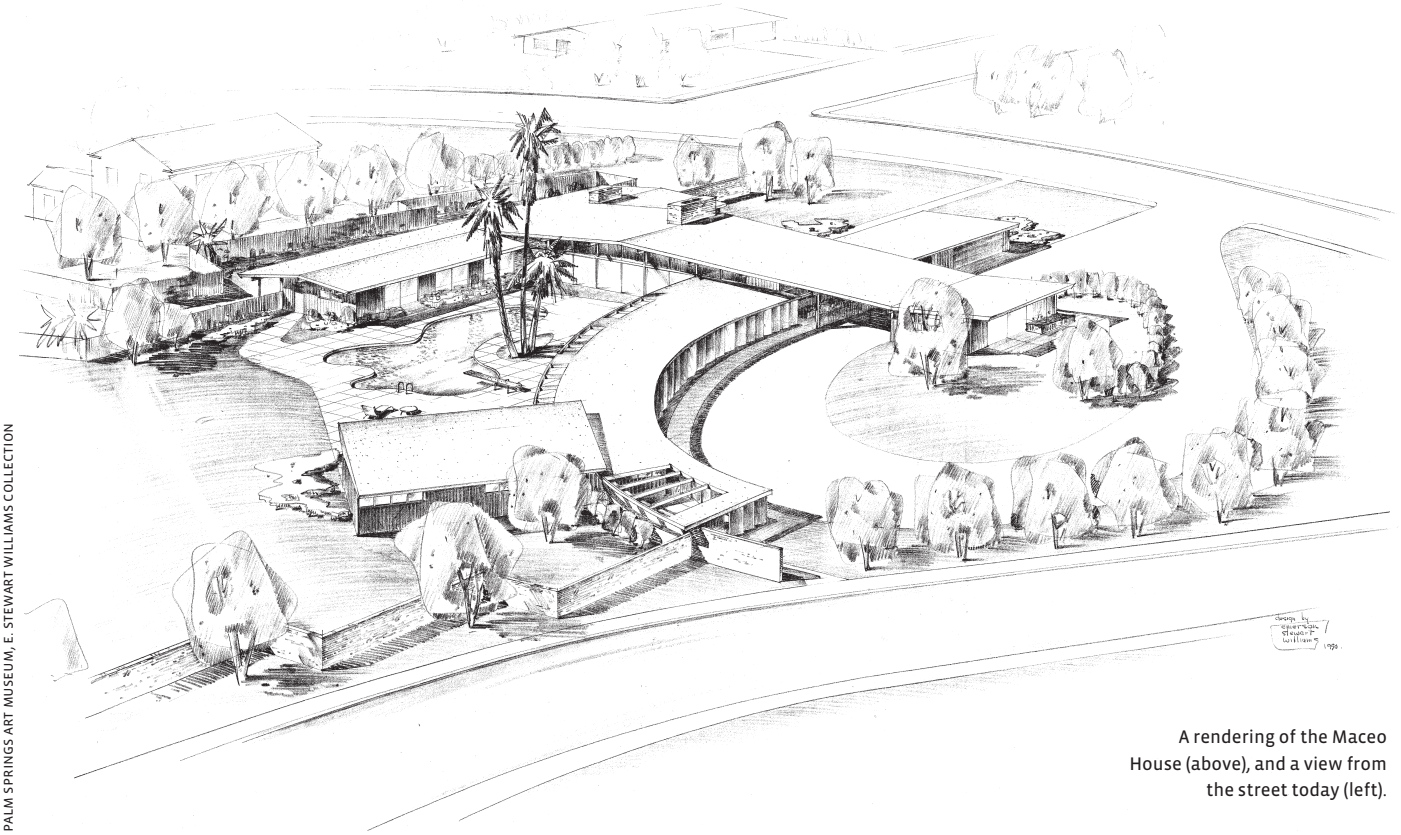
BALINESE ROOM

There was a popular nightclub that opened in 1942 called the Balinese Room, located near Cedar Lawn. Owned by brothers Salvatore (Sam) and Rosario (Rose) Maceo, they created a destination where people flocked to participate in gambling, drinking and live music. The Maceo brothers were Italian immigrants who originally made their way to Galveston as barbers. But after being offered a small gig of hiding illegal liquor, they realized doing business behind the law's back would make them more money, which led to the start of their organized crime reputation. During this time, gambling was illegal federally but was tolerated in Galveston, which is why some used to refer to the Island as the "Sin City of the Southwest."

Big stars such as Frank Sinatra and Bob Hope were some of the performers at the Balinese Room. However, the club shut its doors in 1957, when government officials in Galveston were on the hunt to get rid of all casinos in the city. Over the duration of the club's life, it underwent several name changes and multiple renovations. After withstanding many storms and seeing different owners, the piece of Galveston history was destroyed by Hurricane Ike in 2008. Now, the Balinese

COURTESY ROSENBERG LIBRARY

Sam Maceo (right) at the Balinese Room.



PALM SPRINGS ART MUSEUM, E. STEWART WILLIAMS COLLECTION

A rendering of the Maceo House (above), and a view from the street today (left).

Room can be honored by paying a visit to the pier that once held it and discovering the plaques that tell its story.

MACEO ESTATE

The infamous Twin Palms Estate, Frank Sinatra's iconic home in Palm Springs, California, shares a connection with a similarly iconic dwelling in Cedar Lawn. The same architect who built Twin Palms, E. Stewart Williams, was hired by Sam Maceo to build his own house in Cedar Lawn. After Maceo visited Sinatra in California as an invited guest, he loved the design and architecture of the Twin Palms home so much that he wanted something similar. Located at 43 Cedar Lawn Circle, the Maceo Estate of the former mobster still holds sway. Construction on the house was finished in 1952, but Maceo died in 1951. Situated on over an acre, the mansion is 6,700 square feet and has seven bedrooms and nine full baths. The estate has a gated driveway, swimming pool and is decorated with palm trees. All previous owners have tried to keep the property in its original form, only making renovations when necessary. Just like the Balinese Room, this historical marker can be visited, but only from the outside.

Make sure to stop by these other Cedar Lawn spots.

Queen Gypsy Inn
A stay with a fascinating history and a phenomenal location. **QUEENGYPSYINN.COM**

Bakery and Grocery
Emmanuel Panaderia
A hidden gem where one can find their favorite homemade goodies or a Mexican dessert. **FACEBOOK.COM/EMMANUELBAKERYTX**

Koops BBQ Kitchen & Catering
For takeout or sit-down, all the meats are fantastic, but the brisket is a must.
FACEBOOK.COM/KOOPSBBQ

Old City Cemetery
Discover a place nearly 200 years old that's a collection of seven cemeteries in one. **GHOSTCITYTOURS.COM/GALVESTON/HAUNTED-GALVESTON/OLD-CITY-CEMETERY**

Health + Wellness

Boost your vacation with the best of the Island's body-conscious activities. BY JULIE BIELENBERG

ONE OF THE BEST BENEFITS of vacationing in Galveston is the accessibility to body-rewarding sport and food. The Island offers myriad opportunities to indulge in good-for-you entertainment and nutrition, which will add an elevated dimension to your impression of "Island time."

Here's the perfect day for a curated exploration and a sample of Galveston's freshest take on well-being.

JOG THE CITY

It seems nearly every town and city in America has a walking tour, but do they have a jogging tour? Galveston Unscripted has a dedicated 3.15-mile trail through the city with owner and creator of the company, J.R. Shaw. While pacing through the town, you'll also get a whirlwind history of the people and buildings that define Galveston. The charge is $35 per person, and there is also a 2.5-mile, 2-hour walking tour.

COURTESY J.R. SHAW (2)

J.R. Shaw's Galveston Unscripted running tours

Galveston Unscripted is also an award-winning podcast that discusses the history of the Island. The podcast is free and can be enjoyed while walking the streets of the city. Start your day with interviews from historians and local preservationists while revving up the metabolism. GALVESTONUNSCRIPTED.COM

NUTRIENT BOOST

Start the morning at Smooth Tony's Juice and Smoothie Bar. The boutique spot has over a dozen smoothie choices including watermelon, Nutella, pitaya, horchata, greens and nopal (cactus). You can even invent your own. There are six flavors of lemonade, cold juice options and a green vaccine. Double up and opt for an add-on such as hemp, flaxseed or spirulina.

While waiting for your liquid vitamins, take a deep breath in the brightly-painted yellow space decorated with lots of living greens. 409-765-5200

Or, try a healthy bowl, wrap, salad, sandwich or smoothy at Lolo Kai. LOLOKAIGALVESTON.WIXSITE.COM/SMOOTHIES

Lolo Kai Acai fruit bowl

Autumn Sunrise Yoga on Saturday

Are you visiting the Island for a fall weekend getaway, wedding or celebration? April through October, SUP Gold Coast and Yoga Haven team up for a Saturday sunrise session with the waves, birds and possibly dolphins swimming by. Classes are 7 to 8 a.m. and cost $15 per person. Classes are at 29th Street & Seawall on the sands near Lifeguard Tower 27.

All other times of the year, SUP Gold Coast offers daily umbrella and chair rentals from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Reservations are taken online and walk-up is available at their three locations: 29th Street & Seawall with public restroom and shower; 39th Street beach with free parking across the street, public restroom and shower; and 85th Street (Pearl Beach).

Bent on Healthy Living Wellness Center's cycle studio

Paddleboard yoga with SUP Gulf Coast

LUNCH AND PADDLEBOARD

Take your smoothie and head to SUP Gulf Coast. Stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) is one of the fastest-growing, human-powered recreational sports on the water. From novice to expert, the ride is always enjoyable and a good workout. Located at 29th Street beach is the SUP Gulf Coast shop, where you can rent SUPs and traditional surfboards from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. SUPGULFCOASTTX.COM

BENT ON HEALTHY LIVING WELLNESS CENTER

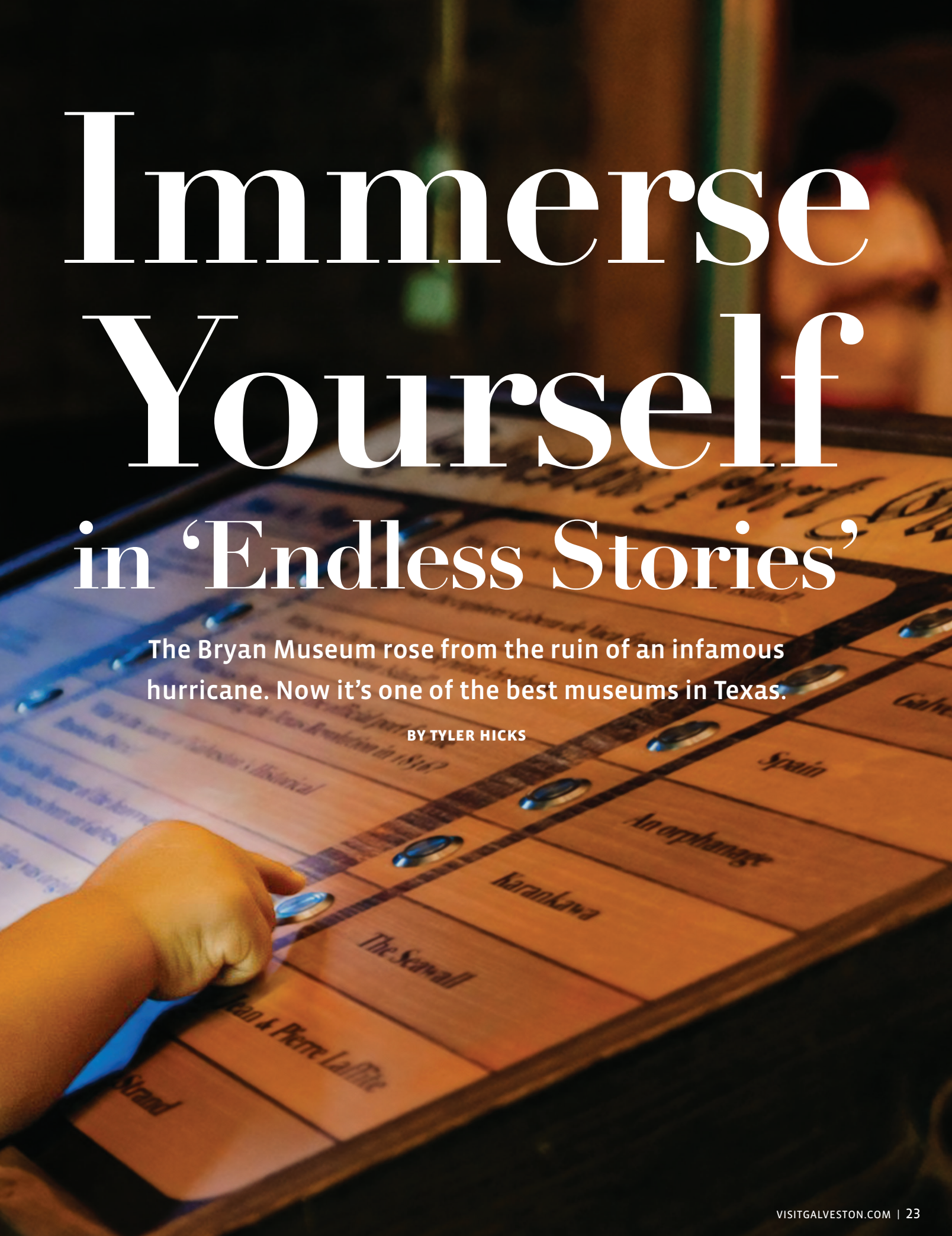
Come afternoon, Renae Bentley's mecca for body-positive activity and treatment in her Bent on Healthy Living Wellness Center will be a welcome stretch and reprieve for the muscles. Bentley is an essential oil educator, healthy eating advocate and 38-year fitness instructor. She integrates these three passions into the practice. The Center offers an indoor cycling studio, group fitness, yoga, cardio and strength classes, and wellness therapies including massage, IV drip, infrared sauna, salt booth, vibration and Raindrop (a therapy using essential oils).

Whether you enjoy Pilates or barre class, or want to try something new, this is the opportunity to combine physical strength with an added relaxation post-workout. Class schedules are available online and private wellness treatments can be booked online or via phone. The added bonus of a good night's sleep is always welcome when focusing on mind and body. BENTONHEALTHYLIVING.COM

Immerse Yourself in 'Endless Stories'

The Bryan Museum rose from the ruin of an infamous hurricane. Now it's one of the best museums in Texas.

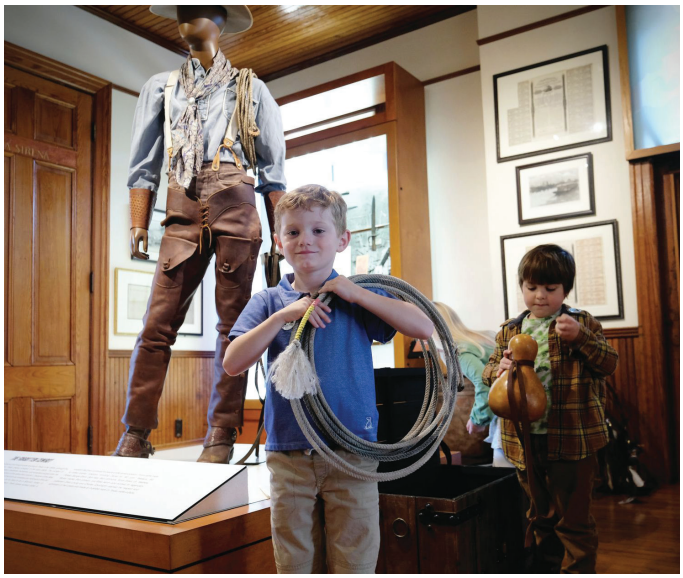
BY TYLER HICKS



The orphanage after the hurricane in 1900 and before in 1895 (inset)

"Darkness is overwhelming us, to add to the horror. Dearest, I reach out my hand to you. My heart. My soul."

COURTESY ROSENBERG LIBRARY (2)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A group of children looking at artifacts; hands-on activities and interactive lessons; the conservatory; The Bryan Museum today

An anonymous figure—likely a nurse at a local hospital, historians say—wrote those words on the fateful night of September 8, 1900. A monstrous hurricane was ravaging Galveston, and the writer was crafting a note for her beloved while, all around her, coworkers were grabbing everything they could and heading for shelter.

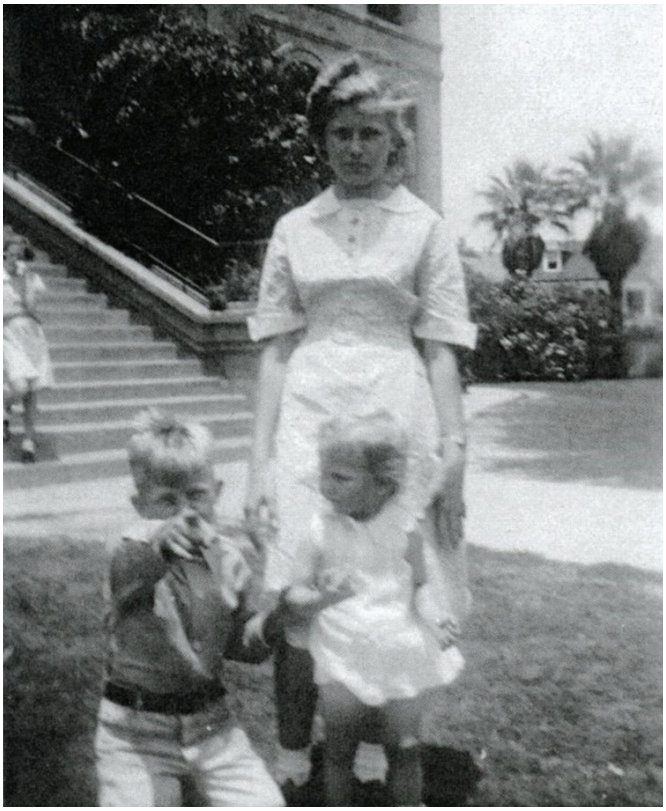
In the aftermath of what is still America's deadliest natural disaster, many citizens sought refuge alongside the orphans and matrons at the Galveston Orphans Home, a stunning structure built in the Gothic Revival style. And, contrary to urban legend, everyone at the orphanage survived.

A video credited to Thomas Edison, one of the oldest examples of film in the world, shows costly damage to the building itself, yet no one inside was injured or killed by the infamous storm. In the hurricane's aftermath, legendary publisher William Randolph Hearst (of *Citizen Kane* infamy) sponsored a charity event that raised enough money to rebuild the orphanage. Among the attendees was an author named Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain. Then, after continuing its service as an orphanage for decades, the building was bought, refurbished and transformed into The Bryan Museum.

These historical tidbits are just part of the larger, incredible story of what is now one of the best museums in Texas. For the past eight years, the building with the fascinating past has been giving locals and visitors alike an incredible window into the history of Texas and the many icons, innovators, artists and communities that have made the state a premier destination.

In turn, The Bryan Museum has become both a local fixture and a must-see attraction.

"There's over 100 years of history in the building," says Tony Alves, the museum's executive creative director, "not to mention all the history in the exhibits themselves. You might be interested in American history, or Texas history, or you might just like to get lost in a really great museum."



Photos of life at the orphanage before it closed in the 1980s (above and top right); a couple that met in the orphanage as children (bottom right)

HISTORY RESONATES

The full list of everything on permanent display in The Bryan Museum is enough to make any history buff book an immediate trip to Galveston. In fact, thanks to prolific collectors J.P. and Mary Jon Bryan and their eponymous collection, the museum is home to one of the world's biggest collections of artifacts, artwork and documents. All told, the collection of rare books, portraits, maps and more paints a stunningly vivid portrait of more than 12,000 years of life in Texas and the American West. Native American culture is explored in depth alongside the histories of English, French, German and Spanish peoples. For instance, the museum contains a chronological history of Texas and its station in the American West, breaking down the region's evolution into intriguing, digestible stories.

Critics have called the museum's vast collection "a gift inside a gift," and much of the credit goes to J.P. Bryan himself. A member of the Austin family (Bryan's ancestor, Moses, is Stephen F. Austin's brother), J.P. Bryan once said that "history resonates. It's personal."

That's certainly true for Alves, who speaks about the museum with impassioned reverence.

"Our mission is to tell stories of all people who have shaped the history of Texas and the American West," Alves says. "We try to tell stories that have never been told, and if you have heard those stories, we want to tell you something new about it. We want you to immerse yourself in endless stories."

Alongside the Bryan Collection, the museum also houses permanent exhibitions of the Spanish Colonial Era, the Texas Frontier and Western art and culture, from New Mexico to California. In one gallery, guests can gaze upon the unique paintings, sculptures and other artwork created by "Texas Masters," including legendary landscape artist José Arpa y Perea and Frank Reaugh, commonly known as "the Dean of Texas Painters."

These mainstays are only rivaled by the rotating exhibits brought to life by Alves and his team. In addition to the "Art Untamed" and "Visions of the West" experiences opening September and October 2023 (see sidebar), they are also hard at work on a 2024 exhibit that will take patrons behind the scenes of *Lonesome Dove*, the miniseries based on Larry McMurtry's iconic book.

Alves says the ideas for the exhibits often begin with a desire to subvert expectations.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Children on a field trip; a photo from the Texas City explosion; a land grant box

"Sometimes people think a museum is just paintings on a wall," he says. "We want to take that notion and turn it on its head. You're not going to get bored, and actually, you'll be surprised by what you can experience."

The rotating exhibits have included everything from equestrian culture to football. All exhibits are painstakingly detailed and curated.

"After months or sometimes even years of work on an exhibition or program, it is so rewarding to see visitors come to the museum and learn from something we've created," Alves says. "I feel very blessed to work in such an educational environment."

NOTHING IS EVER STATIC

Alves is also quick to note that some of the best stories at The Bryan Museum aren't the kind of stories you can distill in an exhibit.

For example, when the Galveston Orphans Home was still in operation (it merged with another facility in the 1980s), two children met and became fast friends. Eventually, they fell in love, and years after they had graduated, the pair got married on the same grounds where they once met.

At that point, the orphanage, after much wrangling about possible uses for the building, became The Bryan Museum.

Alves tells these stories so he can convey that there's

Art Untamed

A few years ago, The Bryan Museum hosted "Art Untamed," a showcase of revered contemporary Western artists. The event was meant as a fundraiser for the museum's education programs, but it was so popular among locals and visitors that it became a yearly ritual. On October 7, Art Untamed will return with Galveston's own Karen Kirby, an acclaimed artist, alongside ceramicist Daryl McCracken and Comanche artist Nocona Burgess, the great-great-grandson of legendary Native American leader Chief Quanah Parker.

The signature event will cap off the museum's second annual "Visions of the West" exhibition and auction, a display of some of the most stunning artworks and artifacts the Bryans have collected during their time amassing a historical treasure trove.

"Visions of the West" runs from September 15 to October 7, and you can find more details on both events at thebryanmuseum.org.

something truly special about the museum, something intangible that can't quite be expressed in words. It has to be felt; it has to be seen.

Of course, he is well aware of the persistent rumors that the museum is haunted. But it's not—at least, not for the reason people expect.

The Galveston Orphans Home is often mistaken for another nearby orphanage, St. Mary's, which did indeed lose many people during the hurricane of 1900.

"One of the first questions a lot of our visitors have is, 'Is it haunted? Where can I see ghosts?'" Alves says.

That's likely part of the reason the museum's annual family-friendly Halloween event, replete with scavenger hunts, candy and plenty of costumes, brings in thousands of guests annually.

Events like that are just another way the museum brings together members of the community and visitors from afar, and Alves believes nothing unites people quite like storytelling.

"What's really exciting about working in a place like this is nothing is ever static," he says.

In other words, he and his colleagues are always creating something. Recently, their creations have included an exhibit on the 1947 Texas City explosion (when a boat fire triggered one of history's largest non-nuclear explosions) and an exhibit on their humble origins: The Galveston Orphans Home.

"We put a call out for anyone who had family or connections to the orphans, and we've been doing tons and tons of interviews," Alves says. "The exhibit is going to be very interactive, very immersive."

When it's live, guests will be able to use RFID technology to scan a code on, say, a toy or a letter. Then, the tech will tell them everything they ever wanted to know about the artifact and its history.

"That's why we do this," he says. "To bring history to your fingertips."

Tyler Hicks is a journalist from Austin, Texas. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *American Way*, *Texas Monthly* and many other newspapers, magazines and websites across the country.

FROM LEFT: Joey Smecca, Danny Hart, and Johnny Smecca

All in the Family

Meet the three brothers bringing healthy food and other creative concepts to Galveston.

DO YOU HAVE SIBLINGS? If so, you may know that brothers and sisters tend to have their own niches, their own talents. That's certainly true of the Smecca & Hart brothers—Johnny & Joey Smecca and Danny Hart—who have been using their respective skills to bring great food to Galveston for over two decades.

Galveston Restaurant Group, created in 1997, is responsible for some of the tastiest, most inventive restaurants in the area (see sidebar). While Joey curates the menus, Danny handles operations and Johnny manages marketing, advertising and more. Together, the group has remained resilient through multiple hurricanes and a pandemic—all while serving the community via food donations and their employees via a focus on retirement funds.

"Our people are part of our family, just like Galveston is part of our family," Johnny says. "We believe in giving back to the community that has given us so much, so we'll never turn down a request to help people."

The Seven Concepts

Discover the delicious dining options made possible by Galveston Restaurant Group.

THE GUMBO DINER

Classic American dining meets the vibrant flavors of New Orleans in this local favorite, which offers everything from beignets and chicken and waffles to classic Gulf shrimp. The Gumbo Diner also serves breakfast all day, every day. THEGUMBODINER.COM

SKY BAR STEAK & SUSHI

This establishment may be best known for its award-winning happy hour, but the savory sushi will make you want to walk through its doors well before that happiest of hours. Come watch super-talented sushi maestros craft delectable seafood dishes right before your eyes. SKYBARGALVESTON.COM

MARIO'S SEAWALL ITALIAN RESTAURANT

Operated by first generation brothers, this is Galveston's most storied Italian restaurant, merging the tastes of Texas and Italy for nearly 50 years. Like fine wine, it continues to get better. Pasta, pizza and every other classic Italian dish is available at this can't miss eatery, recently named restaurant of the year. MARIOSSEAWALL.COM

PAPA'S PIZZA

No Galveston getaway is complete without a slice of pie from Papa's. Gourmet 'zas are always on tap as well as savory sandwiches and other tasty Italian options. Always fresh, always delicious. . FREEHOTPIZZA.COM

TAQUILO'S TEX-MEX CANTINA

Margs, queso, guac and more are always flowing at the aptly-named Taquilo's, which boasts award-winning chips and salsa alongside a sensational ceviche bar. You can never go wrong with the shrimp fajitas, just as you can never go wrong with grabbing a drink and posting up under the umbrellas lining Postoffice Street just outside this terrific Tex-Mex eatery. TAQUILOS.COM

SALTWATER GRILL

This fine dining experience is home to the Smecca brothers' original kettle cooking. And just like any Galveston Restaurant Group establishment, Saltwater Grill gives you plenty of options. The Certified Angus Beef is simply savory, and elsewhere on the menu, the supertalented brothers have combined classic Gulf Coast seafood with the delectable delights of Asian fusion food. Come for the food, stay for the unbeatable nightlife atmosphere. SALTWATERGRILL.COM

LITTLE DADDY'S GUMBO BAR

San Fran meets the Big Easy at this award-winning establishment that is perfect for a lunchtime po-boy or a fun night out. It's highly possible Little Daddy's Gumbo Bar will become your newest culinary obsession, and if so, don't fret: the Smeccas have opened a location in League City, too. Still, nothing compares to chowing down on some sweet, sweet gumbo while relaxing in the heart of Galveston Island. LITTLEDADDYSGUMBOBAR.COM

Sea to Table

Fresh Gulf comfort food makes for the coziest days and nights on the Island.

BY MARK STUERTZ | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID HALLORAN

Chargrilled oysters at BLVD Seafood

With 32 miles of coastline and a vibe that exhales serenity, Galveston is an island town with art galleries, historic architecture, chic boutiques and an exuberant dining scene featuring succulent seafood. And though the temperatures dip a bit in the fall, it's still a great time to converge on this captivating Gulf Coast barrier island and let its comfort food soothe the soul.

But what exactly is Gulf Coast comfort food?

"Fall comfort foods are all about family, traditions, and memories from gatherings, Thanksgiving, and changes in the weather," says Brett Otteman, general manager of Katie's Seafood House. "Like my crab stuffing, that's got a fall and winter style to it. I've also got a good butternut squash bisque."

There are a range of mouthwatering dishes that qualify as Gulf Coast comfort food, from red beans and rice to rib-sticking shrimp 'n grits to lithe crab cakes laced with just a touch of breading—pure mom and apple pie comfort. Then there's gumbo, that viscid and murky mother of all stews.

"It's down-home cooking; it's good for the soul," says Gail Peterson, marketing and public relations manager for the Galveston Restaurant Group, owner of Little Daddy's Gumbo Bar. "It feels good. It feels warm and comfortable. Gumbo has all those warm things in it. It's got rice, which is always comfort food. When it's cold, people say they want some gumbo."

Also emerging out of the comfort food kettle are etouffees, chowders and jambalaya, which is a stew-like Creole and Cajun rice dish with meats and vegetables sassed up with herbs and spices. Though not necessarily comfort food, Gulf Coast oysters on the half shell are in their prime in the fall and winter months.

Oysters grow like kudzu in the Gulf, where they never go dormant due to its warm waters. But they're at their best in the raw from November 1 through April 30 in Texas, though several spots in Galveston serve raw oysters year-round from the cold waters along the East Coast and Canada.

Oysters come in several semblances: Rockefeller, chargrilled, BBQ, baked, shucked, and prepared Toreado style. You'll even find them in gumbo for a double-comfort whammy. Stop by these selected seafood locales and dress your palate in Gulf cozy.

A James Beard Foundation award winner, Mark Stuertz's writing has appeared in a variety of publications including *Texas Monthly*, *Food & Wine* and *American Driver*. He is the author of *Secret Dallas: A Guide to the Weird, Wonderful, and Obscure*; and *Fork Fight!* with Pei Wei Asian Diner co-founder Mark Brezinski.

Shrimp and grits

BLVD Seafood

A gleaming example of casual dining on the Island, BLVD Seafood hugs the Galveston seawall, which is on the National Register of Historic Places and was designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. Think about that while you're forking their flagship shrimp 'n grits with sauteed shrimp, andouille sausage and cheesy grits all washed in Creole sauce. Established in 2015, BLVD Seafood features some of the best ocean fare the warm waters of the Gulf dispense.

Savor BLVD's famous crab cake with honey lemon tartar and a red bell pepper coulis; or "The White," a comforting, rich coconut- and cream-based chowder delicately embracing fish, shrimp and clams bobbing with potato and bacon. Or skip the shucking and savor the chargrilled Gulf oysters in chili butter. BLVDSEAFOOD.COM

FROM TOP LEFT: Butternut crab bisque; oyster stew; stuffed crab platter

Katie's Seafood House

Since 2019, Katie's Seafood House has been a popular waterfront dining destination brimming with "right off the boat" seafood opulence. Their menu is sourced from Katie's Seafood Market next door, a purveyor founded by Buddy and Katie Guindon. It has been furnishing quality seafood to Galveston locals and visitors alike for more than 20 years. Famished diners can wallow in everything from catches of the day cooked your way to crispy fried shrimp and fish tacos to the freshest oysters (raw in season) and crab that Gulf waters have to offer.

Diners seeking the best in seafood comfort can indulge in oyster stew with butter-poached oysters in a pleasing milk broth laced with oyster liqueur and bits of potato, carrot and onion; or the butternut crab bisque with fresh crab and savory roasted butternut drenched in cream and spices.

And don't miss Katie's dazzling portfolio of oyster concoctions. Mouthwatering options include mesquite-smoked oysters in olive oil; chargrilled dockside oysters in garlic butter and parmesan; oysters Rockefeller with artichoke hearts and anisette bacon; and the signature Oysters Katie, six sweet herb-marinated smoked oysters grilled with crab and seasonings.

Katie's Seafood Market was featured in the National Geographic Channel's Big Fish Texas, which ran in 2016 for a season and chronicled the Guindon family's harrowing struggles to keep their homegrown enterprise growing and thriving. KATIESSEAFOODHOUSE.COM

Ceviche corinto

Rudy & Paco's Restaurant

Located next to the Grand 1894 Opera House, Rudy & Paco's is billed as Galveston's most unique dining experience, an Island dining gem exuding a romantic ambiance. This upscale steakhouse features grilled meats and seafood prepared with South American and Central American influences. Here, hungry diners will find ceviche, plantain-crusted Gulf snapper and a selection of delicious steaks.

Indulge in the lusciously rich sopa crab bisque, generously strewn with nuggets of jumbo lump crabmeat. Another standout is the ceviche corinto, a marinated Gulf snapper filet sectioned into pieces and marinated in lime juice and a blend of spices. And don't miss their signature lobster tempura. RUDYANDPACO.COM

Chardonnay mussels

Saltwater Grill

Located in Galveston's Historic Strand Distric, Saltwater Grill serves a wide variety of rice dishes, beef and recipes imbued with fish and seafood. The setting is vibrant with open kitchen theater to boot.

Among Saltwater's signatures are its "kettle" recipes, renditions of bouillabaisse, a French-style soup with seafood and vegetables; cioppino, an Italian seafood soup; and Little or Big Daddy Gumbo, a deep roux stew with shrimp, oysters and crab. Dive into the shrimp and crawfish fondue in a delectable cream sauce and baked with pepper jack and cheddar cheeses. Or try the chardonnay mussels steamed in a white wine pesto cream broth. There's also baked or freshly shucked oysters, and the corn and crab chowder, a New England-style chowder stock with fresh lump crab and roasted corn. SALTWATERGRILL.COM

Crawfish etouffee

Little Daddy's Gumbo Bar

Little Daddy's Gumbo Bar celebrates Gulf of Mexico comfort food as unleashed by steam kettle cooking, a process that yields tasty options such as traditional gumbos, seafood stews and cioppino. The gumbo fare is broad and includes prime rib gumbo, chicken and sausage gumbo and seafood gumbo. But the mother of all gumbos at Little Daddy's is Mumbo Gumbo, a bit of culinary gibberish with shrimp, crab, oysters, chicken, sausage and prime rib—kitchen sink stuff.

That's in addition to red beans and rice and the crawfish etouffee, topped with a scoop of white rice. But Little Daddy's isn't limited to stuff that can be had with a spoon. They also serve oysters in three guises: BBQ, chargrilled and on the half shell, along with a whole cadre of poboys served on fresh baked baguettes and sassed up with a cream burn of Tabasco-infused mayonnaise, adding a punch of fire to your warm soul comfort. LITTLEDADDYSGUMBOBAR.COM

Half order of raw oysters

Shucks Tavern & Oyster Bar

While oysters are the mother tongue of Shucks Tavern & Oyster Bar, the Shucks' menu has a profusion of other fruit-of-the-sea options, including snapper ceviche, seafood poboys and red beans and rice slow-cooked with ham hocks. Shuck's also features an oyster BLT with bacon and jalapeno mayo and serves shucked oysters year-round from the East Coast and Canada and the Gulf when in season.

Their robust portfolio of oysters includes grilled with spinach parm and bacon; toreado with pico de gallo, cheddar and a sliver of jalapeno; and parmesan panko with garlic, herbs and butter topped with panko breadcrumbs.

FACEBOOK.COM/PEOPLE/SHUCKS-TAVERN-OYSTER-BAR-GALVESTON/100075944007249/

COURTESY MOODY GARDENS

Lobster bisque

Shearn's Seafood and Prime Steaks

Lodged on the ninth floor of the Moody Gardens Hotel, Shearn's Seafood and Prime Steaks is cast in an elegant dining room featuring floor-to-ceiling windows with panoramic seascape views. Signature dishes include shrimp de Jonghe and the luxurious lobster bisque, comfort food for the silver spoon and silk pocket square set.

Take in stunning views of the Moody Gardens Pyramids and Galveston Bay sunsets while sipping single malts in Shearn's Lounge, the bar just outside the restaurant. Relish the jumbo shrimp cocktail with cocktail and remoulade sauces; the East Coast cold water oysters with mignonette and horseradish sauces; and the soothing French onion soup with a baguette and layers of gruyere cheese. Rib-sticking tranquility. MOODYGARDENS.COM/DINING/HOTEL_DINING

The Benevolent Mitchell Family

George and
Cynthia Mitchell

COURTESY GALVESTON HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

The stylish appearance and reputation of Galveston Island's downtown district are due in no small part to one local couple.

BY CRAI S. BOWER

In 1972,

Evangeline Whorton visited San Francisco where she attended a Charles Dickens-themed event. Detailed, lavishly ornamented urban sets were created to evoke Dickensian London. Whorton suddenly realized she was looking at her hometown of Galveston, no set dressing required.

"At the time, none of our decaying buildings had electricity," says Dwayne Jones, CEO of the Galveston Historical Foundation (GHF). "Evangeline, who was an active GHF volunteer, created the inaugural 'Dickens on the Strand' as a one-night membership fundraiser, an atmospheric event that evoked the author's 19th century London."

Dickens on the Strand will celebrate its Golden Anniversary this December, but the irony of the original event, set in an abandoned downtown building, wasn't lost on the Galvestonians in attendance.

It's hard to imagine today, but downtown Galveston in the early 1970s was not somewhere anyone wanted to be. A series of derelict buildings constructed during previous economic booms and then left to fall into disarray, The Strand and Mechanic Street environs were "no-go zones" for tourists and residents alike. At the time, many residents considered leaving, or did vacate, the Island due to urban blight.

A downtown Galveston metamorphosis would require a unique collaboration between community and business leaders, a partnership that would transform The Strand from urban embarrassment into a national case study for successful urban revitalization.

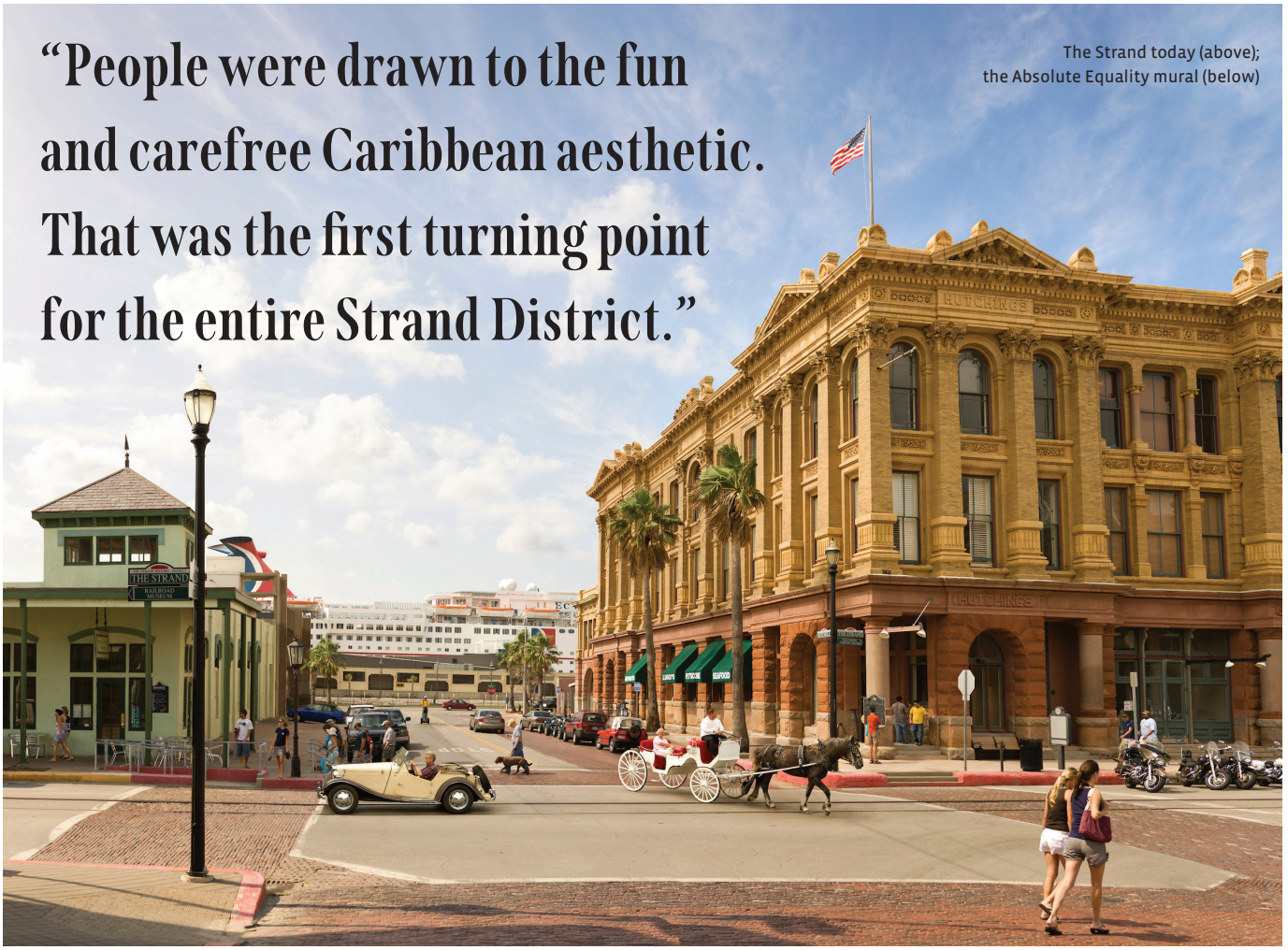
PRESERVING HISTORY

The Galveston Historical Foundation had been active for a century when, in 1973, Peter Brink was hired as the organization's first executive director. A preservation lawyer, Brink soon established The Strand Revolving Fund with support of the Moody Foundation. The fund encouraged local business leaders, led by George and Cynthia Mitchell, to invest in and rehabilitate local buildings, many of which would earn historic landmark status.

"My father, George Mitchell, was born to Greek immigrant parents, once lived without a home in Galveston," says Sheridan Lorenz, . "He never forgot the support he received from the local community. He was determined to give back when he could afford to do so."

George Mitchell (second from right) watches as a For Sale sign goes up

COURTESY GALVESTON HISTORICAL FOUNDATION



The Strand today (above); the Absolute Equality mural (below)

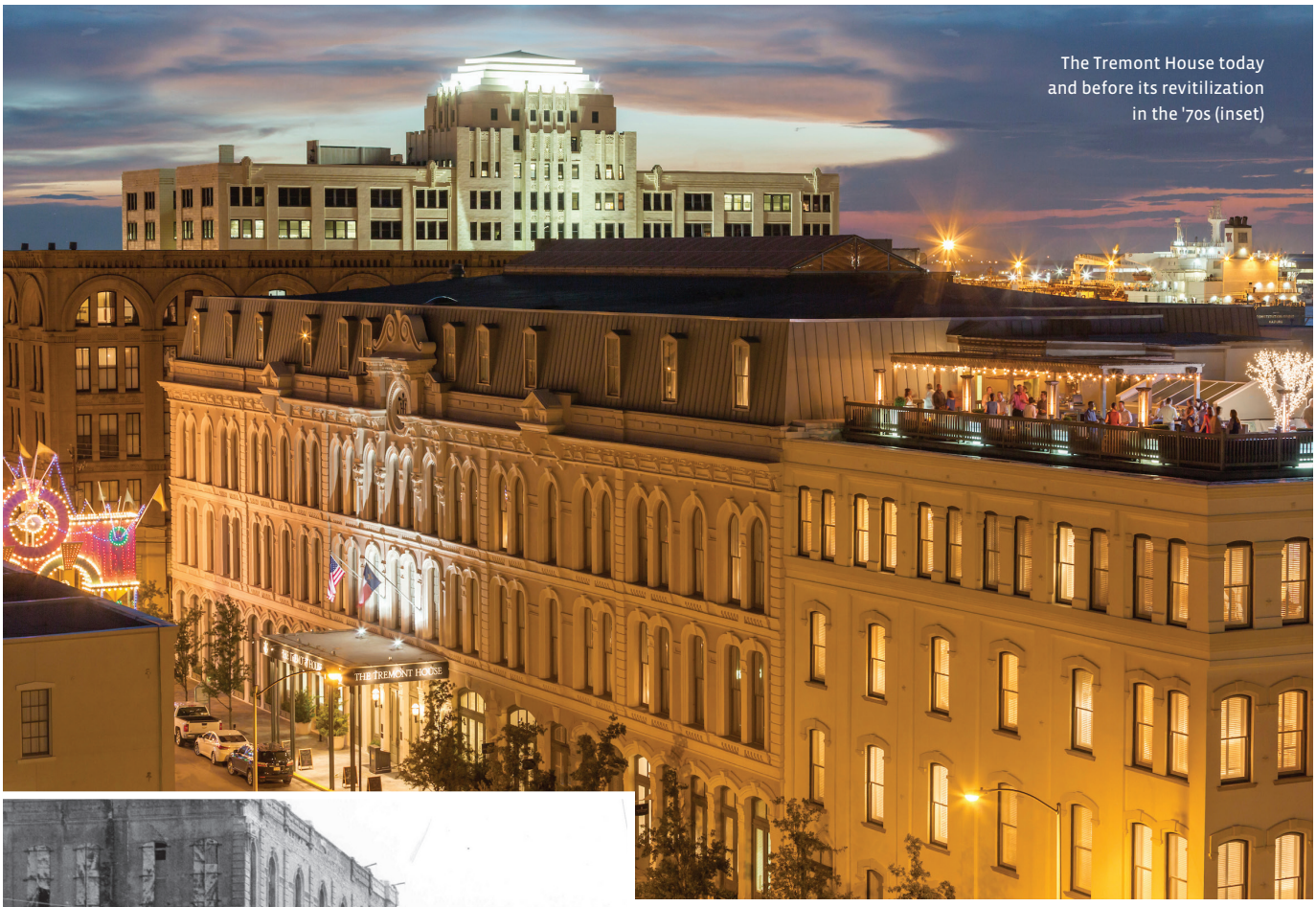
"People were drawn to the fun and carefree Caribbean aesthetic. That was the first turning point for the entire Strand District."

Lorenz recalls seeing the boarded-up buildings when driving through the historic Strand after family fishing trips.

"My father always loved Galveston and said he missed the downtown he remembered as a child," she says. "My mother, an artist by nature, had a fondness for architecture and design. Together, my parents developed a plan to rehabilitate one building after another."

The Mitchells' first purchase was in 1976, when they acquired the Thomas Jefferson League building from The Strand Revolving Fund. Located at the corner of Tremont and The Strand, the Greek Revival-style building, constructed in 1871, was originally home to several stores. Ben Blum Hardware occupied the structure for half a century until 1972, the same year the Mitchells visited Savannah, Georgia, and first learned about that city's urban renaissance due to an innovative and ambitious preservation program.

"My parents' first decision was to put a restaurant in the T.J. League Building," Lorenz says. "They held a naming contest among their 10 children. I had recently learned about a spiral shell called the wenteltrap and, because I assumed an old building would have a spiral staircase, I proposed the name for the new restaurant. My mother, who loved naming things so much we used to joke that's why she had 10 kids, loved the name and I won the contest."



The Tremont House today and before its revitilization in the '70s (inset)

COURTESY GALVESTON HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

In addition to Wenteltrap Restaurant, the Mitchells added independent shops to the main floor and established offices on the upper floors. The T. J. League Building, with its cast iron façade and galvanized iron cornice, was granted Texas Historic Landmark status in 1979. It was the first of 20 buildings the Mitchells would restore on The Strand and Mechanic Street.

"If you build it they will come" may be a development cliché, but there was no guarantee visitors would return to downtown Galveston. The Mitchells believed the area needed more than an obscurely named restaurant and a few distinctive shops. Establishing a luxury hotel was an essential, if risk-laden, step in changing the district's fortunes. The new Tremont House was born.

ESSENTIAL, RISK-LADEN STEP

The Tremont House's several iterations reflect the changing fortunes of Galveston. First built in 1839, the same year Galveston was officially founded, the hotel was destroyed by the Great Fire of 1865, which ravaged The Strand District.

Architect Nicholas Clayton who, like many European architects and builders, was drawn to the prospect of rebuilding a large urban area, designed the second Tremont House hotel, which opened in 1872.

The hurricane of 1900 destroyed much of the Island, devastating the local economy. Clayton's Tremont House was condemned and demolished in 1928. In 1981, the Mitchells acquired the Leon & H. Blum Building. The third Tremont House was born in 1985, the first luxury hotel to open in downtown Galveston in 60 years.

As it was in 1839, the Tremont House today is considered the crown jewel of Galveston. Visitors find 133 well-appointed rooms and suites, the Blum & Co. bistro-style restaurant, 1888 Toujouse Bar and Galveston's only rooftop bar.

"My parents went all out with the new Tremont House," says Lorenz. "My mother hired celebrated designer Ann Milligan Gray to design the interiors after seeing her work in a Washington, D.C., hotel where she was staying. She gave my

Two of The Strand's largest events: Dickens on The Strand (top) and Mardi Gras (bottom)

Annual Festivals

Every day is a great day to visit The Strand. Here's a list of special events:

Galveston Island Shrimp Festival
Sept. 22-23, 2023
The glorious gumbo gala takes over Historic Downtown with a cookoff, Strand Merchant Walkabout and a 5K run, among other activities.

ARTober FEST
Oct. 21-22, 2023
The juried art showcase features over 120 artists from across the U.S.

Dickens on The Strand
Dec. 1-3, 2023
The street festival brings out the Victorian-era arts from strolling carolers to costumed revelers.

Mardi Gras! Galveston
Feb. 2-13, 2024
The purple, yellow and green themes return with parades, masked balls and other Fat Tuesday festivities.

The Grand Kids Festival
Check VISITGALVESTON.COM for dates
Professional and student performers celebrate the theatrical arts among family-friendly activities.

mother, who was very involved in the project, three design options. They chose a Caribbean theme, with black and white pinstripes, large palms in the lobby and other details that reflect that breezy, resort style. People were drawn to the fun and carefree Caribbean aesthetic. That was the first turning point for the entire Strand District."

The Mitchells had also hired a public relations consultant, Dancie Ware, at the beginning of the revitalization. Ware knew The Strand would only succeed if it became the cultural center of Galveston. She proposed resurrecting the Galveston Mardi Gras.

The first Galveston Mardi Gras celebration was held in 1867, but the event fell victim to the hurricane of 1900 and was disbanded until 1910. Mardi Gras, suspended during WWII, eventually disappeared entirely in 1953. In 1985, Galveston Mardi Gras reappeared in conjunction with the opening of Tremont House hotel. Today's Mardi Gras has never been bigger, with a series of masked balls, parades and parties.

"My parents and Dancie knew Mardi Gras would have to be a big deal right from the start, so they went big." Lorenz says. "It's definitely part of their legacy."

ISLAND RESILIENCE

In 2008, Hurricane Ike flooded The Strand District, submerging Tremont House in nine feet of water. Like her mother before her, Lorenz participated actively in the restoration of the fabled property. "I have always worked very closely with my parents," she says. "I moved back to Galveston from Austin to work on The Strand revitalization in the 1980s. I remain committed today."

Lorenz says it's always important to remember that Galveston was once a thriving port because of the cotton

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***

EXCITING NEWS FOR 2023!

GALVESTON COUNTY MUSEUM PRESENTS...

A PADLOCK MYSTERY: KEYS TO THE PAST

An interactive mystery that allows participants to explore the museum's exhibits and travel further into the past with each key they collect, this game is fun for the whole group!

The Hendly Market before (inset) and after

COURTESY GALVESTON HISTORICAL FOUNDATION (INSET)

trade, which was built on the backs of slaves. "Galveston is also home to Juneteenth, June 19, 1865, the day enslaved people were liberated across Texas. I am most proud of the 'Absolute Equality' mural we commissioned at the corner of Strand and 22nd Street."

Galveston's cultural and historical significance has few rivals. The Strand Historic District, the Downtown Cultural Arts District and the Historic Strand Seaport each exemplify the Island's renaissance.

Dwayne Jones says The Strand District is once again evolving as a new generation takes responsibility for the area's upkeep and future.

"We continue to see things shift and change," he says. "The big concept of historical buildings being the core of revitalization, while not unique to Galveston, is certainly an important study in the state of Texas and beyond."

Lorenz adds that the next generation's commitment is as important to the future of Galveston as when her parents and other civic leaders committed to revitalizing The Strand District in the 1970s and '80s.

"My parents and their business peers took a 'down-on-its-heels' downtown and created an area that people wanted to visit," she says. "What's critical now is that young families commit to living on the Island. Vision Galveston, led by the amazing Christine Bryant, is working on what Galveston will be in the future. Galveston's future is every bit as exciting as when we revitalized The Strand District almost 50 years ago."

Walk down The Strand today, past the thriving restaurants, below the stunning iron and brick cornices, and it's easy to forget that this storied historical district was once derelict and soulless. Fortunately, local business leaders, countless volunteers and the Mitchells understood the significance of the past to create the potential for the future.

Writer and photographer Crai S. Bower contributes scores of travel and lifestyle articles and images to numerous publications including *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Garden & Gun* and *AARP*. His essay, "Finding Love on the Slopes," received a 2022 Lowell Thomas Award for Excellence in Travel Journalism.

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2411 42ND STREET
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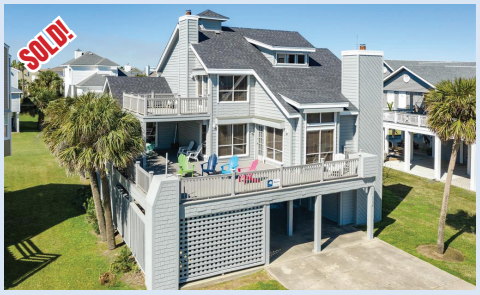

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3BR/2BA SQFT: 2,431

4203 PELICAN LANE
3BR/2BA SqFt: 1,702

12925 JOHN REYNOLDS ROAD
3BR/2BA SqFt: 864

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TEAR ALONG THE PERFORATION TO TAKE THIS GUIDE WITH YOU!

Welcome to GALVESTON

MAIN MAP

1. East End Lagoon
2. East Beach
3. Stewart Beach
4. Ferry Landing
5. Seawolf Park
6. 1892 Bishop's Palace
7. The Bryan Museum
8. The Grand 1894 Opera House
9. Ocean Star Offshore Drilling Rig and Museum
10. Galveston Historic Seaport
11. Port of Galveston Cruise Terminal
12. Galveston Railroad Museum
13. 1895 Moody Mansion
14. Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier
15. 1838 Menard House
16. Galveston Island Convention Center
17. 61st Street Fishing Pier
18. Schlitterbahn Galveston Waterpark
19. Moody Gardens
20. Moody Gardens Golf Course

MAP 2

21. Coastal Heritage Preserve
22. Pirates Beach
23. Galveston Island State Park

MAP 3

24. San Luis Pass

Map 2

Termini-San Luis Pass Road

To town

West End BEACHES

Map 3

San Luis Pass Road

Pelican ISLAND

To Port Bolivar

Seawolf Parkway

Pelican Island Causeway

To Houston

Harborside Drive

Harborside Drive

Gulf Freeway 45

Broadway Avenue J 87

Galveston HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

25th

Ferry Rd

61st Street

53rd Street

33rd Street

Bernardo De Galvez Avenue

Avenue S

Stewart Road

Seawall Boulevard

Seawall Boulevard

To West End Beaches

BEN SANDERS

Galveston ISLAND

MAIN MAP

WEST END BEACHES

Map 2

Map 3

25 MUST-HAVE EXPERIENCES IN GALVESTON

1. Watch a **sunrise** over the Gulf of Mexico or **sunset** on Galveston Bay
2. Discover the unique boutiques, antiques, art galleries and restaurants in **Historic Downtown**
3. Follow in the footsteps of immigrants arriving in Galveston in the 1880s at the new **Ship to Shore** immersive experience
4. Play on the **Historic Galveston Island Pleasure Pier**
5. Visit **Moody Gardens Aquarium Pyramid** and **Rainforest Pyramid**
6. Take the self-guided **Freedom Walk** tour to learn about Galveston's rich African American history and the birthplace of Juneteenth
7. Rent chairs and umbrellas and lounge on **Stewart Beach** and **East Beach**
8. Tour historic mansions—**1892 Bishop's Palace** and **1895 Moody Mansion**
9. Splash into **Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark**
10. Visit one of the world's largest collections of historical artifacts, documents, and artwork relating to Texas and the American West at **The Bryan Museum**
11. Eat at the iconic **Gaido's Seafood Restaurant**
12. Take a walking/biking tour of the **East End Historic District**'s beautiful historic homes and the **Galveston Tree Sculptures**
13. Take a **dolphin tour** from Pier 21
14. Tour or watch a live show at **The Grand 1894 Opera House**
15. Watch saltwater taffy being made the old-fashioned way at **LaKing's Confectionery**
16. Explore Pier 21's one-of-a-kind museums, including the **Ocean Star Drilling Rig Museum**, **Galveston Historic Seaport** and **1877 Tall Ship Elissa**
17. Learn about locomotive history at the **Galveston Railroad Museum**
18. **Catch fish** from a pier, on a chartered trip, or go wade fishing
19. Go on a year-round **historic cemetery** or **ghost tour**
20. Take a kayak tour with **Artist Boat** or visit **Galveston Island State Park** for outdoor adventure
21. Visit the **Galveston Naval Museum** at **Seawolf Park** for a tour of a WWII submarine and Navy destroyer escort and great fishing
22. Go **bird watching** to see some of the 300 species found in Galveston
23. Play golf at **Moody Gardens Public Golf Course**
24. Buy fresh seafood at **Katie's Seafood Market** or **Sampson & Son's Seafood** on Pier 19
25. Attend one of the many year-round festivals, including **Mardi Gras! Galveston**—the third-largest Mardi Gras celebration in the country

TROLLEY TRANSPORTATION

With a transfer station located at 21st Street & Seawall Boulevard, visitors may ride the trolley throughout Downtown Galveston, along the historic homes on 25th Street, then connect with the rubber wheel trolleys and go as far west as Moody Gardens, or as far east as Stewart Beach.

Cost: $1 for adults, free for children accompanied by an adult. Fare includes the transfer at 21st & Seawall.

Hours of Operation: Visit website for latest hours of operation. galvestontrolley.com

PARKING ON THE ISLAND

The best way to pay for parking along the Seawall and Historic Downtown is through the PayByPhone app. Simply download the app to your mobile device. PayByPhone goes by license plate number, so you can park anywhere by entering your location code. Please note that the Seawall and Historic Downtown do not share the same parking code.

Seawall location code: 5004
Historic Downtown code: 5689

PayByPhone: 866.234.7275

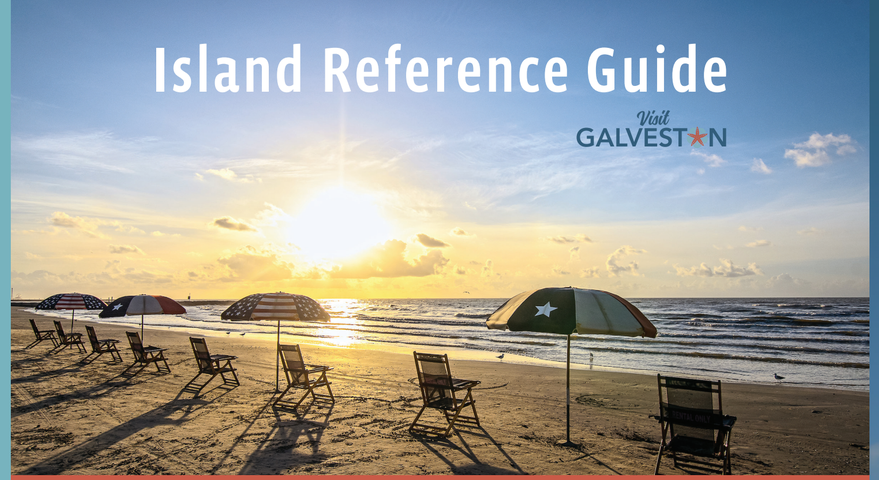
ISLAND INFO

Scan QR code for a full digital resource guide for all of your Island escapes and adventures.

GO TO VISITGALVESTON.COM FOR DIRECTIONS AND MORE EXPERIENCES.
STOP BY THE GALVESTON ISLAND VISITORS CENTER TO PLAN THE PERFECT ISLAND GETAWAY!

Island Reference Guide

Visit GALVESTON



SAFETY TIPS FROM THE AWARD WINNING

GALVESTON ISLAND BEACH PATROL

- AVOID DANGEROUS CURRENTS
- NEVER SWIM ALONE
- ASSIGN A "WATER WATCHER"
- NEVER DIVE HEAD-FIRST
- TAKE PRECAUTIONS AGAINST THE SUN AND HEAT
- FOR MORE TIPS, GO TO GALVESTONISLANDBEACHPATROL.COM

THE FLAG WARNING SYSTEM

- CONDITIONS CALM SWIM WITH CARE
- CALM TO MODERATE WATER DOES NOT ASSURE SAFE WATER
- HEAVY SURF — DANGEROUS CURRENTS STAY WITHIN WAIST-DEEP WATER
- PRESENCE OF VENOMOUS MARINE LIFE
- INDICATES AN ENVIRONMENTAL WARNING FOR AIR AND/OR WATER QUALITY

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CITY OF GALVESTON
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FISHING ON & OFF THE ISLAND

From bay fishing to blue-water, piggy perch to tuna, Galveston offers something for everyone with a rod, a reel and a love of angling. There are bait and tackle shops, marinas for storing your boat, and charter services that send you home with a great haul and plenty of fish tales. Head to VisitGalveston.com for more information.

SURF

You can fish the surf along most of the island's beaches year-round. One of the best spots is Galveston Island State Park, where no license is required. The proper combination of bait and tackle will net you redfish, kings and even sharks.

PIERS AND JETTIES

The island's extensive jetty system, as well as places like the 61st Street Pier and Galveston Pier at 91st Street, provides ample room for the avid angler. Routine catches include croaker, perch, speckled trout, sheepshead, sand trout, gafftop and bull reds. Seawolf Park, meanwhile, offers some of the best flounder fishing on the upper Texas coast.

GALVESTON BAY

The bay is often calmer than the Gulf, allowing you to fish from smaller boats. Trout and redfish are the preferred haul for most bay fishermen.

THE GULF

When it comes to adventurous angling, nothing beats the Gulf of Mexico. Kingfish, snapper, dorado and shark are abundant within 30 miles of shore. Go a little farther, particularly near the oil rigs, and you'll find ling, amber jack, grouper, sailfish, even tuna.

OFFSHORE/BLUE-WATER

Charter a boat for a trip 100 miles out for some of the most challenging sport fishing anywhere. White and blue marlin weighing hundreds of pounds are there for the taking, as are large tuna, wahoo and dorado. For a list of fishing charters, go to VisitGalveston.com.

FISHING PIERS

61st St. Fishing Pier | 6101 Seawall Blvd | 409.744.8365
Galveston Fishing Pier | 9101 Seawall Blvd | 409.974.4383
Seawolf Park | 100 Seawolf Park Blvd | 409.797.5114

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO....

The State of Texas requires both fishing licenses and saltwater stamps for legal fishing in Gulf waters, on- and offshore. (State parks are the notable exception.) There are also strict catch limits and size restrictions for certain species of fish and crab. Avoid the often-sizable fines by checking with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (tpwd.texas.gov) beforehand.

VISITGALVESTON.COM/FISHING

GALVESTON WEDDINGS

Your big day deserves a memorable setting - and you'll find it in Galveston. Whether you're in search of a historic venue, beachside reception, or anything in between, Galveston can set the stage for the wedding of your dreams.

VISITGALVESTON.com

Photo by: Reed Through The Lens Photography

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The Music Hall Ballroom at the Grand Galvez

What's Old is New Again

These historic buildings provide unique venues for meetings and events.

BY VANESSA ORR

THERE ARE MANY ADVANTAGES TO holding a meeting or convention in Galveston. Not only does the city offer an impressive nightlife, but beach access is easy, as is shopping and dining along The Strand. Even better is that conference facilities don't have to be boring. Three historic Galveston properties make it easy to mix business and pleasure within the Island's distinctly singular setting.

"The Tremont House offers a unique environment replete with history; the ambience is different than just going to a square box hotel with breakout rooms off of corridors," says Jacque Stilwell, director of sales and marketing. "Our meeting space is designed to be dynamic and flexible: You actually experience a meeting instead of just attending it."

Built in 1839, the original Tremont House was known as the Belle of the South before it burned down, and it was rebuilt in 1872. In 1900, the great Galveston hurricane destroyed it once again, and it wasn't rebuilt until 1981 when George and Cynthia Mitchell, leaders in transforming Galveston's downtown, decided to return the hotel to its former glory (see "The Benevolent Mitchell Family" on page 40).

"The Tremont has undergone a lot of metamorphoses through the years, and its upscale, romantic, elegant design honors its amazingly deep and rich history," says Stilwell of the hotel, located one block from The Strand.

In 2022, the Tremont underwent a complete renovation and was remodeled from top to bottom and rebranded as a Marriott Tribute Portfolio hotel. In addition to 135 rooms in the hotel, there are also 15 suites in the Quarter, which is across the street. Its 9,000 square feet of meeting and event facilities, which includes a grand ballroom, can accommodate groups of up to 300 people.

"We also have the Davidson Annex underneath the ballroom, which is great for galas, auctions and parties," Stilwell says. "Our iconic rooftop bar is one of the most popular rooftop bars in Galveston and Houston, and offers a great view of the harbor."

From Municipal Plant to Community Center

The Historic Galveston Water and Electric Light Community Center was originally constructed in 1904 to house the city's water pump and electricity generator, and was once the oldest functioning municipal waterworks plant in the United States. Today, the Romanesque-style building in the heart of the Cedars at Carver Park is home to numerous community events including weddings, the city's annual holiday party and public meetings.

Renovated in 2020, the building still boasts many of its historical features including 13-foot-tall double-hung wood windows, pressed metal cornices and the exterior brick, which was rehabilitated. Renovated with modern restrooms and open spaces to configure for all different uses, the center can accommodate up to 350 people.

To learn more, visit galvestontx.gov/1191/Historic-Galveston-Water-Electric-Light

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO **VISITGALVESTON.COM/MEETINGS-GROUPS/GALVESTON-ISLAND-CC**

The hurricane of 1900 also played a role in the opening of the Grand Galvez, built in 1911. According to Mark Wyant, president of Seawall Hospitality, the town fathers built the hotel to show the world that the city had recovered from the natural disaster and to help reclaim the Galveston tourism industry. Opened to great fanfare, the hotel has since housed many historical figures including the Rat Pack, who performed at the former Balinese Room across the street (see "Neighborhood Spotlight" on page 18).

"Most people don't realize that Galveston was the Las Vegas of the 1920s and '30s," says Wyant, noting that the public area of the hotel has been completely reimagined to pay tribute to The Great Gatsby era. He adds that everything has been completely renovated, including the rooms, meeting facilities and the public areas, which include a beautiful mosaic custom designed in Italy, a Hall of History that houses one of the vehicles used in the promotion of the hotel in 1915, and a new Italian marble fountain on the front lawn.

Approximately 300 people can be accommodated in the hotel's convention area, which includes a music hall featuring 16 large Italian chandeliers, a veranda that overlooks the ocean and the ability to expand one room into another.

"People love the historic nature of the hotel," Wyant says. "It's a true Galveston landmark."

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Sugar & Rye

Before Tying the Knot

From dance parties to axe throwing to karaoke, Galveston Is hot for bachelor and bachelorette parties BY HEIDE BRANDES

GALVESTON ISLAND'S BEACHES OFFER 32 miles of sand frolicking fun, but the city has even more hidden gems to offer. From beach resorts and historic hotels to funky dive bars and dance clubs, Galveston is the unsung hero for a Texas bachelorette or bachelor party getaway.

From private villa rentals at resorts to dolphin tours in the Gulf to dancing and tequila tasting all night, Galveston is hot. The possibilities for festivities are endless—boat rides, dolphin watching tours, charter boats, golf packages, spa treatments and even mechanical bull riding.

After hitting up the party experts on Galveston Island, *Island Soul* came up with a few recommendations on where to spend a night of celebration for both bachelor parties and bachelorette gatherings.

Fueling Up for the Party

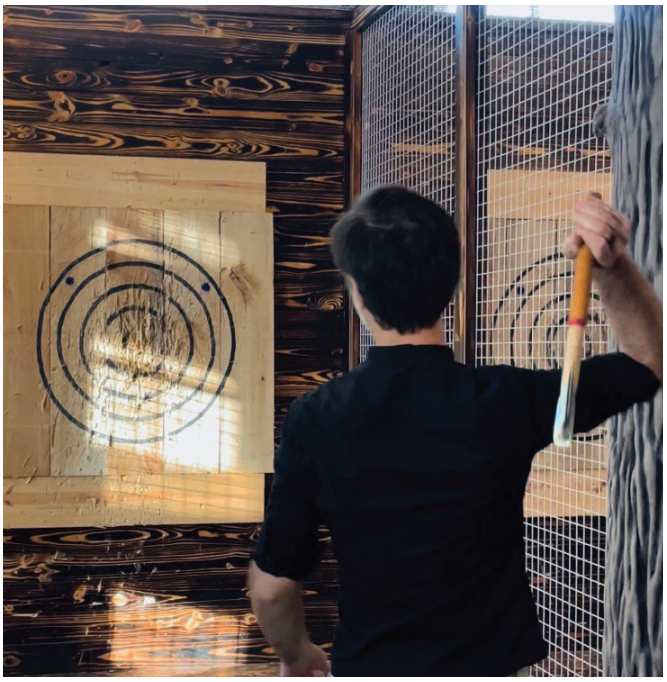
Start the day at Sugar & Rye Coastal Kitchen and Cocktail Bar in downtown Galveston with Sydney's Bridal Brunch. This brunch menu includes a choice of avocado toast, the famous S&R cobb salad, a good old fashioned two egg breakfast or the Smokin' Skillet with Koop's smoked brisket, maque choux, breakfast potatoes, a sunny side up egg, cotija and a Mexican Crema drizzle. Oh, and don't forget the mimosas and the bloody mary made with house-infused spicy vodka or Buffalo Trace bourbon to start the party with an early morning kick.

"At Sugar & Rye we are known for serving high-end cocktails and food in a casual atmosphere. We have had numerous bachelorette parties here since we opened," says Ryan Olsem, owner and general manager. "We have done special menus for large parties and will personalize it to their event as well."

Riondo's Ristorante Bar & Grill has happy hour specials throughout the week, but it's known for its Italian menu featuring such dishes as pappardelle and duck ragu, artisan pizzas, the Gulf shrimp spaghetti carbonara and a 16-ounce Argentinian ribeye.

Yaga's Cafe, located on The Strand, is infamous and popular for a reason: Not only is it a place to dance the night away, it's also the place to chow down on shrimp burgers, fresh pizzas and homemade bread pudding.

RumShack



Axecade

Bottom's Up

The Spot, known as Island Famous, is one of Galveston's most popular places for both bachelor and bachelorette parties. The Spot's restaurant is known for its giant burgers and panoramic beachside views, but Island Famous is not just the restaurant. It's actually five concepts located in one spot, with each location offering something different that appeals to all the different personalities in the party.

For those looking for a laid-back beachy feel, the island hangout Tiki Bar serves signature tropical drinks. If your best man or bridesmaids want craft beer, then hop over to The Spot's SideYard bar. Still need more? Check out the other two concepts, Squeeze Ritas & Tequilas and the RumShack.

Yaga's Cafe is also a hot spot for libations, especially with its next door tequila bar concept called Tsunami's Exotic Tequila Emporium, where you can choose from 45 tequilas, nine styles of margaritas and other island libations.

"Tsunami's is a big part of the nightlife here in downtown Galveston," says Kinley White, marketing director. "We have lots of bachelorette parties that roll through here all the time. It's great because Yaga's is also open for nightlife on the weekends and people are able to bounce back and forth."

Party goers can enjoy the live music and a dance floor at Yaga's, but then pop next door to Tsunami's to grab a drink and relax. Or, within a two block radius, there's the Playground for live music, Brews Brothers for brews, Bliss Galveston's premier nightclub for dancing or Hearsay for gorgeous cocktails if classy is more your vibe.

If you're planning on a party this fall, the rooftop bar at the Tremont House downtown is set to reopen, and it promises to be fabulous. Or, DTO (Daquiri Time Out) is Galveston's number-one spot for craft cocktails.

Lasting Memories

If you want your bachelor or bachelorette party to be memorable, why not incorporate hands-on adventures into the celebration? Axecade is an axe-throwing and arcade venue set up on the second floor of Old Galveston Square. Besides showing up your friends with your axe-wielding skills, you'll be launching those weapons in a "magical forest" while testing your classic beer pong skills at the beer pong tables.

For those with something wilder in mind, the mechanical bull and boot scooting at Buckshot Saloon is a riot, and ladies can show off their talent at Galveston's only karaoke lounge, The Sound Bar.

Parties wanting their own special day of pool time and exclusivity can even rent out private poolside villas at resorts like San Luis Resort, Spa and Conference Center, a 32-acre beachfront property.

The famous Sunday brunch at the Grand Galvez is also a must for pre-wedding parties and even for a brunch the day after a wedding. But, that being said, you don't have to spend a lot of money or go fancy. Why not bring your wedding party to spend a day and go on rides on the Pleasure Pier that juts out over the Gulf of Mexico?

And, if you time it right, don't forget the bikini contest held monthly from March through October at Float Pool Bar. Even if you miss your chance to compete or admire the contestants,the Float Pool Bar is open year-round and is the perfect place to relax.

Galveston Island has more fun activities for parties then you'll have time to do, but one thing is for sure: You'll have the best party ever.

Things to Do

Fun is Around Every Corner in Galveston

To-Do List

Here's your quick guide to the adventures, experiences and excursions that await you on Galveston Island. BY TYLER HICKS

The fall and winter months are a special time. The weather is nice yet not too chilly, and on top of the classic staples beloved by visitors and locals alike, Galveston Island comes alive with a full slate of seasonal activities. From browsing books to watching birds and celebrating *Día de los Muertos*, or Day of the Dead, the list of things to do can run long; and we haven't even gotten to the food yet.

But don't fret—we're here to help.

Here's your handy rundown of some of the most fun and flavorful experiences available to you during your Galveston getaway.

Celebrate Dia de los Muertos with LULAC

From the art to the architecture, everything about Galveston is authentic. That includes the holidays. Each year, LULAC helps the Galveston community celebrate Day of the Dead as it is honored in the heart of Mexico. An altar will be set up to pay tribute to loved ones, while vibrant face painting and classic *Dia de los Muertos* food and music will be available throughout the day.

Ghost & Cemetery Tours

You may already know that Galveston is one of the most haunted places in Texas. Now it's time to experience the spookiness for yourself. You can explore a haunted cemetery, immerse yourself in the famous Ghosts of Galveston Tour, or, if you dare, venture into the truly depraved and macabre with the kid-free Shadows of Revelry tour.

Galveston Shrimp Festival

While you can get delicious seafood any day of the year here, there's only one shrimp festival. From September 22 to 23, you can join the annual fest for a celebration of all things shrimp and, of course, the shrimp gumbo that keeps locals and visitors alike coming back each year. Cook-off teams will compete to see who can make the best gumbo, but there's already one clear winner: you.

Mosquito cafe

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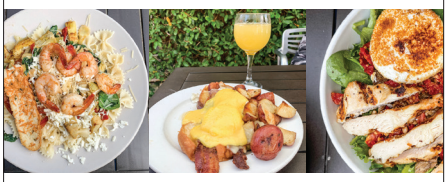

Tuesday - Saturday
8am to 8:30pm

Sunday Brunch
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Watch a Football or Baseball Game at Sports Bars

We mentioned the great weather, but let's be honest: Cool weather is also about sports. With the baseball playoffs and World Series and both college and professional football heating up, you might find yourself looking for a great place to enjoy the game. You'll have plenty of options, including the Brickhouse Tavern & Tap (order the Southern fried chicken sandwich).

Black Friday Shopping

While people across the country stress over long lines or resort to online shopping, you and your crew can enjoy a leisurely stroll through downtown Galveston or the historic Strand shopping district. If you opt for downtown, you'll have over 100 distinct shops to choose from, including a mercantile, multiple markets and a number of must-see stores and eateries on Market Street.

Enjoy Great Coffee

Nothing pairs with a walk, stroll or shopping spree quite like a nice cup of joe, and in Galveston, you have plenty of options. To name just a couple, you have Sugar Bean: a cute coffee shop selling tasty biscuits and some of the most delightful coffee and cold brew you'll ever have. And then there's MOD Coffeehouse: a cozy getaway where you can curl up with a good book or a latte, or even catch some live music.

Card Reading at The Witchery

Speaking of the historic district: An old drugstore brimming with history has been turned into a home for magic and spiritual enlightenment. At The Witchery, you can get a tarot card reading and walk away with a mystical gift such as a book on spells. Even if you don't believe in magic or mysticism (yet!), you'll still enjoy the positive vibes and unique atmosphere of this fan-favorite storefront.

Enjoy the Ocean or Fly a Kite

Just in case that aforementioned nice weather gets a bit too chilly—which happens a few days per year—we highly encourage you to take a dip in the refreshing Galveston waters. Better yet, grab a kite and take to the beach for a scenic flight under the cool fall skies. Backlit by the tranquil Galveston waters, you and your loved ones can create memories you'll never forget.

Enjoy 'Iceland' at Moody Gardens

Each winter at Moody Gardens, the beautiful locale hosts 'Iceland', an ice sculpture extravaganza that runs from the final week of November through the first days of January. Inspired by the world-famous Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival in China, the city of Galveston flies in the talented sculptors all the way from China to create the unforgettable Iceland sculptures.

Grab a pumpkin spice latte and peruse these unique creations at your own pace.

Lone Star Rally

In the mood for a completely different kind of celebration? Look no further than the annual Lone Star Rally, our state's largest motorcycle rally. From November 2 through 5, you can enjoy the sights and sounds of a one-of-a-kind showcase of classic motorcycles and strength. Yep, you read that right: In addition to spotlighting vintage hogs and a bike rodeo, this rally also features a weightlifting contest for brawny bikers.

Winter Bird Watching at East End Lagoon

We share this Island with an array of birds, and sometimes there's nothing more soothing than watching some of the winter birds in action. This time of year, you can spot piping plovers, sandhill cranes and many more beautiful species. Plus, at visitgalveston.com, you'll find a beginner's guide to birdwatching that includes details on the best spots for birdwatching, including places near Galveston Bay and West Bay.

Caramel Apples at Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory

It isn't a trip to Galveston if you don't stop by Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory. This famous sweet shop offers ice cream, delectable candies and a trip down memory lane: One bite of a sundae or one of their handmade chocolates, and you'll feel transported back to the classic confectioneries of the past. The shop's caramel apples—a perfect combo of sweet and tart—are the ideal autumn treat.

Festival of Lights

While we're on the holiday train, we'd be remiss not to mention the Festival of Lights at Moody Gardens. This is the best of both worlds: You have stunning views of Galveston Bay while you stroll along a lane lined with trees lit up for the holiday season. Plus, you can grab hot chocolate or s'mores along the way and enjoy several light shows synced up to classic holiday tunes.

Get a Pumpkin at the Farmers Market

It's always a great time to visit Galveston's Own Farmers Market, a vibrant and tasty collection of local produce and vendors. But the market is somehow even more special in the fall, when you and your loved ones can walk away with a bushel of pumpkins ripe for the carving just in time for Halloween. Or bake the seeds for a holiday snack.

Galveston Children's Museum
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2618 Broadway - galvestoncm.org
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GALVESTON PARK BOARD
SEAWOLF PARK
Located on Galveston's Pelican Island, Seawolf Park boasts one of the island's most popular fishing piers and picnic sites. The park also features a playground for the kids and the Galveston Naval Museum. The museum is home to the USS Cavalla WWII submarine and the USS Stewart, one of only two remaining Destroyer Escorts. Learn more at **VisitGalveston.com**.

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Grab a Book at Galveston Bookshop

Calling all readers: Located in historic downtown, Galveston Bookshop is the perfect place to find a beach read or peruse the store's fabled collection of used and out-of-print books. It's virtually guaranteed you'll find a great read among these stacks, which have housed literary treasures for more than 30 years.

Take a Photo in Front of the Downtown Christmas Tree

Is there anything better than a well-lit Christmas tree? One look at Galveston's classic tree and you'll be in the Christmas spirit the entire holiday season. Located at Saengerfest Park in Downtown Galveston, the vintage tree provides both the perfect photo op and enough gleam to warm the heart of even the grinchiest Grinch.

Explore our many museums

Galveston is home to a wide variety of museums, including the revered, highly creative Bryan Museum (see story on page 22). Railroad enthusiasts will find plenty to love in the intricate, informative Galveston Railroad Museum, while the historic seaport and naval museum will satisfy any fan of maritime history. You can also immerse yourself in the rich history of one of Texas' most famous dynasties at the historic Moody Mansion.

Horse-Drawn Carriage

Imagine yourself being drawn through a picturesque fall scene thanks to a classic horse-drawn carriage. Scratch that: You don't have to imagine, because it's possible with Island Carriages. Your personal carriage ride will take you along tree-lined lanes and into the heart of Galveston's historic East End, where classic mansions still hold court and the Gilded Age is all around you.

Eat the Famous Pecan Pie at Gaido's

Gaido's, located on Seawall Boulevard, may be a seafood restaurant, but it's perhaps best known for its famous pecan pie: a ridiculously good recipe of organic pecans, warm caramel and smooth vanilla ice cream, all topped by a ganache so gorgeous you almost won't want to ruin the visual. Key word: almost.

FROM HARMS WAY TO HISTORIC

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GALVESTON NAVAL MUSEUM

Moody Mansion

You'll find larger, more expensive wedding venues in Galveston, but you won't find a more elegant setting for the most important day of your life. The 28,000-square-foot mansion is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, faithfully restored to its original splendor. It offers historical ambiance for memorable occasions like your wedding, reception, bridal photography and more. For dramatic 360-degree views of the **1895 Moody Mansion**, visit MOODYMANSION.ORG

Cruise Vacation Savings

Port of Galveston Cruise Parking is the most convenient, secure cruise parking on the Island, with online reservations and 24-hour port police security. Sign up for Loyalty Rewards to earn discount points every time you reserve cruise parking. Park and walk from lots at any of our three terminals or take the free shuttle from our nearby economy lots. We're your official cruise parking for Carnival, Disney, Norwegian, Princess and Royal Caribbean cruise lines. Reserve parking now for the new Carnival Jubilee! PORTOFGALVESTON.COM

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Never a Dull Moment

Special Events September 2023 - February 2024

GALVESTON ISLAND SHRIMP FESTIVAL

DATE: Sept. 22-23
TIME: Varies
WHERE: Saengerfest Park, 2302 Strand Street
ADMISSION: Advance tickets start at $13
GALVESTONSHRIMPFESTIVAL.COM

Galveston Island is a seafood lover's paradise all year round, but in September, Yaga's Entertainment Inc., brings foodies a little taste of heaven at the Galveston Island Shrimp Festival. Featuring some of the best shrimp gumbo the Gulf Coast has to offer, the festival features a seafood cook-off, gumbo tasting, L'il Shrimps Parade, live music, a children's area and a Strand merchant walkabout.

"GHOSTLY GALVESTON" FESTIVITIES

DATE: Throughout October
TIME: Varies
WHERE: Locations vary
ADMISSION: Prices vary
VISITGALVESTON.COM

The place of the deadliest storm in U.S. history, Galveston Island is a popular destination for haunted exploration. From a 112-year-old haunted hotel to Galveston's storied harbor to cemeteries and Victorian mansions, there are numerous ghost tours to be explored throughout October. The historic Grand Galvez and the Galveston Historical Foundation offer haunted history tours throughout the month. Enjoy spooks year-round with Dash Beardsley's Ghost Tours of Galveston and Texas' only year-round haunted house, Haunted Mayfield Manor.

ARTOBERFEST

DATE: Oct. 21-22
TIME: Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
WHERE: Postoffice Street
ADMISSION: $5
ARTOBERFEST.COM

If you love art, then you don't want to miss the 26th annual ARToberFEST in downtown Galveston. This juried fine art festival features more than 100 artists, food and live music amid Galveston's Historic Downtown Cultural Arts District, art galleries and shops. Admission proceeds benefit The 1894 Grand Opera House's education and community outreach programs.

ISLAND OKTOBERFEST

DATE: Oct. 27-28

TIME: Varies

WHERE: First Lutheran Church, 2415 Winnie Street

ADMISSION: Free

ISLANDOKTOBERFEST.COM

Island Oktoberfest "oompahs" back to Galveston for its 41st year, celebrating German heritage with a full weekend of food, drinks, live performances, games and special activities. The festival features an expanded entertainment lineup. Attendees are encouraged to dress in traditional German costumes.

LONE STAR MOTORCYCLE RALLY

DATE: Nov. 2-5

TIME: Varies

WHERE: Locations vary

ADMISSION: Free

LONESTARRALLY.COM

Visitors to Galveston have a chance to experience the largest four-day biker rally in the country as the Lone Star Motorcycle Rally makes its way to the Island. More than 500,000 motorcyclists will gather among hundreds of vendors in a celebration of the finest machines on the open road. The rally will include several bike shows, live concerts and a variety of celebrity appearances.

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"WINTER WONDER ISLAND" GAVESTON HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES

DATE: November and December
TIME: Varies
WHERE: Locations vary
ADMISSION: Prices vary
GALVESTON.COM/HOLIDAYMAGIC

In November and December, Galveston becomes the "Winter Wonder Island" of Texas, offering a special lineup of more than 1,000 holiday events. Experience the charm of a traditional Victorian Christmas while enjoying the benefits of island weather by visiting Galveston for events like The Polar Express Train Ride and Festival of Lights at Moody Gardens, Dickens on the Strand and even quirky events like the Santa Hustle half marathon.

THE POLAR EXPRESS TRAIN RIDE

DATE: Nov. 10–Dec. 22
TIME: Varies
WHERE: Galveston Railroad Museum, 2602 Santa Fe Place
ADMISSION: Prices vary
GALVESTONRRMUSEUM.ORG

Set to the soundtrack of the motion picture, The Polar Express will be theatrically re-created to immerse passengers in the sights, sounds and intrigue of this classic children's tale while they are whisked away for a magical one-hour trip to meet Santa. The Polar Express train ride in Galveston consists of six cars pulled by vintage locomotives from the Galveston Railroad Museum's collection.

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ICE LAND: RAINFOREST HOLIDAY

DATE: Nov. 18–Jan. 6, 2024

TIME: Varies

WHERE: Moody Gardens, One Hope Blvd.

ADMISSION: Prices start at $29

MOODYGARDENS.ORG

The attraction features 2 million pounds of colorful ice carved into the shapes of monkeys, beautiful birds, butterflies and orchids. An award-winning contingent of craftsmen from Harbin, China, will wield chainsaws and other tools to create the magnificent display. Rainforest Holiday will be housed in an insulated 28,0000-square-foot structure that is kept at 9 degrees Fahrenheit. Parkas are provided.

DICKENS ON THE STRAND

DATE: Dec. 1-3

TIME: Varies

WHERE: Historic Downtown Galveston (Strand Street)

ADMISSION: Prices vary

GALVESTON.COM/HOLIDAYMAGIC

The world-famous Dickens on The Strand festival returns to Galveston for its 50th year. The beloved holiday festival transforms the Island's downtown Strand district into the Victorian London of Charles Dickens. Put on by the Galveston Historical Foundation, the event features a full lineup of special events, parades and live entertainment. Visitors to Dickens on The Strand will meet characters from Dickens' novel as they walk the streets while costumed vendors peddle their wares from street stalls and rolling carts laden with holiday food and drink.

GALVESTON RESTAURANT WEEK

DATE: Jan. 8-28, 2024

TIME: Varies

WHERE: Participating Galveston Island restaurants

ADMISSION: Prices vary. No tickets necessary.

GALVESTONRESTAURANTWEEK.COM

Galveston Restaurant Association offers visitors a true taste of the Gulf with more than 40 local restaurants participating to showcase the unique flavor of Galveston. For two full weeks, diners can sample dishes from lunch and dinner menus at attractive prices. Two- and three-course dinners will be priced between $20 and $35, while two-course lunches, breakfasts and brunches will cost between $10 and $20.

GALVESTON MUSEUM DAY

DATE: Jan. 27-28, 2024

TIME: Varies

WHERE: Participating Galveston Island museums

ADMISSION: Prices vary from free to Buy One Get One

GALVESTONMUSEUMDAY.COM

Visitors can learn about Galveston's place in history as one of the wealthiest cities in the United States during the late 1800s, the powerful families who helped build the city, its significance as the birthplace of Juneteenth and the importance of the industries that keep Galveston thriving.

MARDI GRAS! GALVESTON

DATE: Feb. 2-13, 2024

TIME: Varies

WHERE: Historic Downtown District & Seawall

ADMISSION: Prices vary

MARDIGRASGALVESTON.COM

The third-largest Mardi Gras celebration in the country, Mardi Gras! Galveston returns in February with scores of masked balls, balcony parties, parades, concerts and other festivities.

There's always action on the Island. Go to **visitgalveston.com/events** for a full list of happenings, dates, prices and times, as well as new events and cancellations.

A Blast From The Past

Dive Into the History of the Island

The inaugural International Pageant of Pulchritude, 1926

Pageant of Pulchritude

BY ERIC BROUSSARD

DID YOU KNOW THAT GALVESTON is the birthplace of The Miss Universe Pageant? The Island holds the title for just about the first "everything" in Texas, but this one just might take the prize. As Galveston was in the process of recovering from the devastating effects of the hurricane of 1900, efforts began to put Galveston back on the map as a tourist destination. In 1920, a promoter named C.E. Barfield and managing director of the Galveston Beach Association, Willett L. Roe, teamed up to embark on a campaign to entice visitors back to Galveston with an event called "Slash Day." What humbly began as the official opening of beach season quickly evolved into a series of successful attractions.

The most popular addition was an event known as the Bathing Girl Revue. Featuring contestants from Galveston and the surrounding area, this beachside beauty pageant featured a parade, picnic lunch and an award presentation on the rooftop of the Crystal Palace Bathing House. Judged on "general attractiveness, originality, and becomingness," young ladies from East Texas competed for cash and prizes while strutting their stuff for tens of thousands of spectators.

Over the next five years, the event attracted so many visitors that the Revue was expanded to an all-day event and began accepting entries from the rest of Texas, and in subsequent years, from all over the U.S. and the world. The first International Pageant of Pulchritude took place in 1926 and was so well attended that the following year, it was expanded to a two-day spectacle including two parades and two separate pageants: Miss United States and Miss Universe.

From 1926 to 1931, the Pageant of Pulchritude continued to grow beyond all expectations with each year outperforming the last in terms of attendance and participation. At its peak, the pageant was a full three-day experience, giving out lavish prizes such as $2,000 in gold (about $40,000 today) to Miss Universe as well as diamond rings and silver plaques. The event was so popular with locals that prizes and plaques were put on public display in the weeks leading up to the competition, and the announcement of winners often took up most of the front page of the *Galveston Daily News* (complete with photos, of course).

The pageant came to a sudden end in 1931, a victim of the economic challenges created by the Great Depression. However, the contest was hosted briefly, and sporadically, by Belgium in 1932 and 1935. After 1935, international pageants were not held again until the modern Miss Universe contest was created in 1952 in Long Beach, California.

Galveston's International Pageant of Pulchritude went on to become a working model for most major beauty contests that began after World War II. In 2009, the pageant was resurrected and is now known as the Galveston Island Beach Revue. This new version features local contestants in vintage and contemporary swimwear and still takes place each year in mid-May on the Island.

STEWART BEACH

"TOP 10 BEACHES FOR FAMILIES"

- Family Vacation Critic

Located where Broadway Avenue meets the Seawall, Stewart Beach is Galveston's premier family-friendly beach park. Stewart Beach offers all you need for a day of fun, including umbrella & chair rentals, playground, beach supplies and snack shop, outdoor showers, ADA-accessible restrooms, and free beach wheelchair rentals. Beach Season runs March through October.

401 Seawall Blvd.

IT'S ISLAND TIME!

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EAST BEACH

GALVESTON'S LARGEST BEACH PARK

Surrounded by the East End Lagoon Nature Preserve, the exclusive East Beach is located at the island's eastern tip. Amenities at the Park include a pavilion, boardwalk and entertainment stage, volleyball courts, umbrella and cabana rentals, playground, outdoor showers, ADA-accessible restrooms, free beach wheelchair rentals, and free sandcastle lessons each summer. Galveston's only alcohol-allowed beach park, East Beach sells drinks and food at the snack bar & cantina. Beach Season runs March through October.

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