

Outdoor adventure in Texas - It's not just for cowboys

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Whether you are looking to camp, hike, bike, golf, swim, fish, hunt, horseback ride, bird watch or experience just about any other outdoor activity you can think of, Texas is the place to be.

Tourism is one of the largest industries in Texas, employing 514,000 Texans. In 2005, travelers spent more than \$49.2 billion in Texas. Travel expenditures generated \$2.5 billion in state taxes and \$854 million in local taxes. For more information on Texas travel events and vacation destinations, visit www.TravelTex.com or for a free Texas State Travel Guide call 1-800-8888-TEX.

With more than 267,000 square miles to explore, cyclists find many diverse and thrilling rides in Texas whether it is through the mountains of West Texas or on the trails of the Piney Woods.

Texas also has a number of excellent spots to pitch a tent and spend the night under the stars. State parks, national parks, sandy beaches and nature preserves offer campers a vast variety of areas from which to choose.

One of the most majestic sites for camping and hiking is Palo Duro Canyon State Park in North Texas. If adventure is on the agenda, visitors have their choice at Big Bend National Park in far West Texas that encompasses more than 800,000 acres of mountains and desert along the Rio Grande River, where visitors enjoy hiking, camping, wildlife and more.

The fish are sure to be biting in the more than 90 freshwater lakes and saltwater bays of Texas. From tournament fishing for black bass to fly fishing for rainbow trout, Texas offers fishermen more than any other single state. Deep sea fishing excursions from South Padre Island, Corpus Christi and Galveston offer fishermen a chance to bring home a prize sailfish or shark as a souvenir from their day in the Gulf of Mexico.

For visitors who want to get their feet wet, Texas offers numerous swimming, rafting and scuba diving adventures. Located just 110 miles off the coast of Freeport, the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary is a scuba diver's paradise and a world premier diving destination.

With over 600 species of birds to see and catalogue, Texas is arguably the birding capital of America. Famed birding areas in Texas include the Gulf Coast, Texas Hill Country and the Piney Woods of East Texas. Texas is also home to the World Birding Center, a network of nine birding sites dotted along 120 miles of river road from South Padre Island west to Roma along the Rio Grande River of South Texas.

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