

Travel

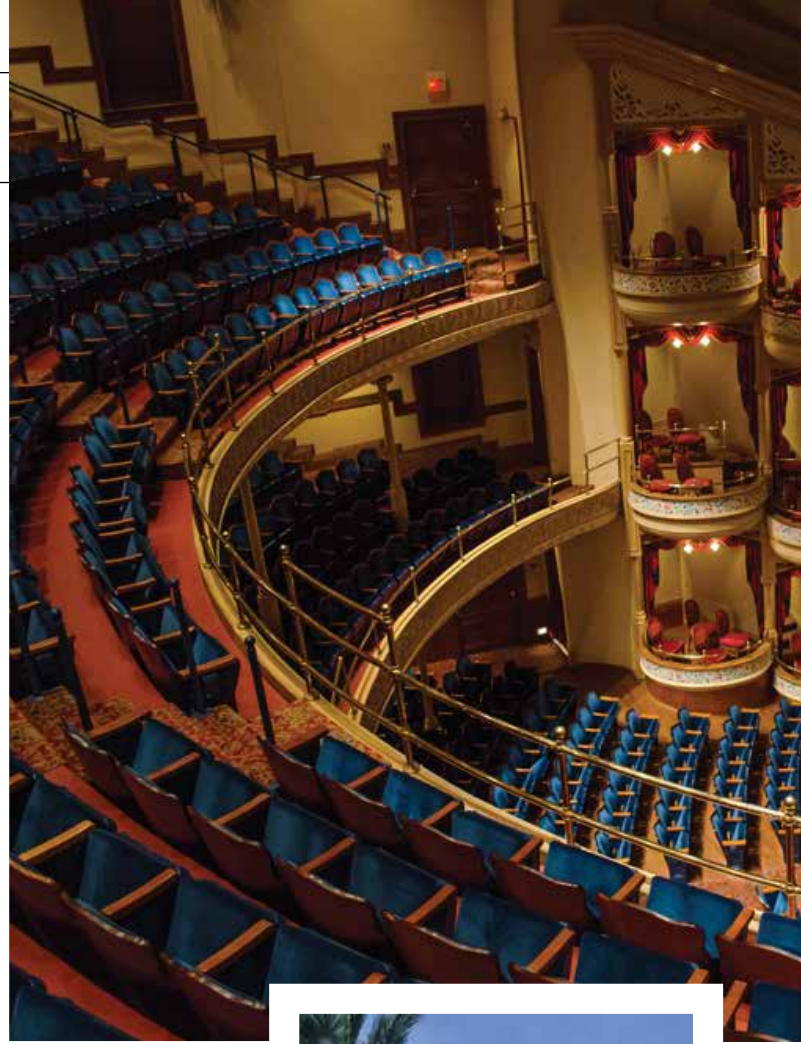


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SUIT UP

Head to Galveston this month for spirited springtime activities like the 10th annual Beach Revue. **PAGE 122**

PHOTO BY ILLUMINE PHOTOGRAPHIC SERVICES.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
A historic photo of Hotel Galvez and the Seawall; the Grand 1894 Opera House; one of the pyramids at Moody Gardens; thrill rides at Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier

GALVESTON

There's more to this historic Gulf Coast island than just beachside delights

BY MADELINE HOLLERN

I'm on the hunt for paranormal activity. Our tour guide is leading a small group through the historic Hotel Galvez in Galveston, walking us to allegedly haunted spots and telling tales of spectral sightings.

"Ghosts often show up in mirrors or photos," she says, showing us pictures of supposed apparitions that past guests have captured. The images look too creepy to be easily explained, yet too real to be the result of Photoshop. I'm skeptical, but I nevertheless snap photos on my phone everywhere we go.

Inside Room 501, purportedly haunted by a ghost bride named Audra, I look through my photos from the tour so far, and I'm shocked by what I see. In one picture, near the check-in area of the hotel, there's a faint, shadowy figure of a man sitting on the steps. He has dark hair, a mustache, and a beard, and a white collar around his neck. Is he a priest? A benevolent soul? A figment of my imagination? I don't say anything, but a few minutes later the guide shows the group another image of a hotel specter. He looks eerily similar to mine. I reveal my photo, and she asks me to text it to her to add to her collection. I end the tour both spooked and delighted.

If ghosts *do* exist, it's easy to imagine that Galveston would be full of them. The island community was the site of a devastating 1900

hurricane that killed between 6,000 and 12,000 people, making it the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history. The storm inspired the city's residents to build a 17-foot-tall seawall that extends more than 10 miles. With its long stretches of sand next to warm Gulf Coast waters, Galveston is a great place to go for a relaxing beach vacation. But while you're in town, dive into its other attractions, including museums and theaters, an emerging restaurant scene, innovative festivals, and, if you dare, a haunted tour or two.



LEARN Get a sense of the city's history by viewing *The Great Storm*, a fascinating and heartbreaking 27-minute documentary about the 1900 hurricane, shown hourly at **Pier 21 Theater**. History buffs will love the **Bryan Museum**, which has a huge collection of artwork, artifacts, and documents relating to the history of Texas and the American West. pier21galveston.com; thebryanmuseum.org

EXPLORE Catch a concert or performance at the gorgeous Romanesque revival-style **Grand 1894 Opera House**, deemed the Official Opera House of Texas by the state Legislature in 1993. Looking for a family-friendly activity? Take the kids to **Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier** to ride roller coasters, swing rides, and a giant Ferris wheel overlooking the Gulf of Mexico, or head to **Moody Gardens** to view wildlife inside its impressive Aquarium and Rainforest pyramids. thegrand.com; pleasurepier.com; moodygardens.com

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
The 1877 tall ship **Elissa**; the exterior of the **Tremont House** hotel; **Daiquiri Time Out's** Aviation cocktail; the sign outside of **Old Moon Deli & Pies**



EAT For a nice meal, you can't beat the food and ambiance at **Rudy & Paco** in downtown Galveston. Start with an order of the signature lobster tempura before indulging in Gulf red snapper and shrimp or a prime-cut steak. (Take note: the restaurant has a dress code at dinner, so no shorts, tank tops, or ball caps.) **BLVD. Seafood** on the Seawall offers great Gulf oysters, redfish on the half shell, and shrimp 'n' grits in a more casual setting. Start your day at **The Sunflower Bakery & Cafe** (order the K.M.A. Greek yogurt and granola, topped with fresh fruit, and ask the story behind the name), and at lunchtime, chow down at **Old Moon Deli & Pies**, a specialty sandwich shop with fantastic potato salad and divine slices of pie. rudyandpaco.com; blvdseafood.com; thesunflowerbakeryandcafe.com; facebook.com/oldmoondeli

SIP Sample some of the best drinks in the city at **Daiquiri Time Out**, a laid-back lounge featuring both classic and inventive craft cocktail options. For a delicious, Instagram-worthy libation, order the Aviation, made with gin, lemon, and maraschino and crème de violette liqueurs and garnished with violets. dtogalveston.com

STAY Nicknamed "the Queen of the Gulf," 107-year-old **Hotel Galvez & Spa** is grand in every sense. Enjoy rooms with ultra-comfortable beds and beach views, book a spa treatment, order a drink at the swim-up bar in the outdoor saline pool, and sign up for one of the regular onsite ghost tour dinners, which feature a guided ghost tour followed by dinner at **Galvez Bar & Grill**. Another luxe hotel option is the boutique-style **Tremont House** in the Strand Historic District. During happy hour, head to its open-air **Rooftop Bar** to soak in stellar views of the city at sunset. hotelgalvez.com; thetremonthouse.com

DON'T MISS Galveston boasts three big events this month. The family-friendly **Tall Ships Festival** (April 5-8) offers tours of historic tall ships, sailing,

and other maritime happenings; the **Galveston Island Wine Festival** (April 20-21) is a weekend of wining, dining, and tastings; and the inaugural **Third Coast Music Festival** (April 26-29) includes 40 bands and 50 shows along with the 10th annual Beach Revue, one of the highlights of which is a retro-inspired Bathing Beauties swimsuit contest. galvestonhistory.org/events/tall-ships-galveston; galvestonislandwinefestival.com; thirdcoastmusicfestival.com **AW**

Meals, accommodations, and activities in Galveston provided by Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau. Disclosure: Open Sky Media, owner of Austin Monthly, is producing the Third Coast Music Festival.

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