

DREAM TOWN

Galveston, TX

Thanks to 32 miles of gorgeous Gulf of Mexico shoreline and an ability to reinvent itself time and again, locals have fallen in Texas-size love with this friendly beach town

The Lone Star State may have a reputation for barbecue and cowboys, but Galveston, a barrier reef island located just 50 miles south of Houston, is a world away from brisket and boots. Situated on two miles of land sandwiched between the bay and the Gulf of Mexico, Galveston maintains such a strong personal identity that locals here jokingly refer to it as The Republic of Galveston Island.

And that's precisely the appeal for sand and sea lovers who feel the pull of this close-knit community. Choppy, blue-gray waters crash into a 17-foot seawall (built for protection after the Great Storm of 1900); shrimp boats drop anchor so close to the horizon that they look like tiny dots against the sky.

The road along the edge of the Gulf is coddled by gentle waves on one side, fantastic restaurants and

brightly lit shops on the other. With the affordable real estate, the restoration of numerous historic properties, and the new waterfront Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier, excitement about revitalization efforts is palpable: "Galveston's eclectic neighborhoods, people, and events make it unique," says resident Alicia Cahill. "I moved here 16 years ago never expecting to stay, but Galveston charmed me." ➡



Galveston's new Pleasure Pier brings some boardwalk fun to the Gulf of Mexico. Inset: Admiralty Shop in the Historic Downtown Strand Seaport District

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your
BEACHES

Stewart Beach is the best spot for families, with a pavilion and volleyball. At the far eastern tip of the island, East Beach's summer parties, live bands, and yearly sand castle competition appeal to a younger crowd; expect a lively scene.

your
MAIN STREET

The Historic Downtown Strand Seaport District—36 blocks in all—is home to shops and art galleries filled with works by local artists. The Admiralty has coastal decor, such as turquoise mermaid bookends; Tina's on the Strand carries gifts and chic resortwear.

your
RESTAURANT

Gaido's Seafood Restaurant has been deep in the heart of Texans for more than 100 years, serving gourmet spins on just-caught fare, such as chipotle-glazed shrimp. (And the pecan pie is legendary.) Sit outdoors at Olympia Grill at Pier 21 to enjoy the Cajun-Greek fusion dishes while you watch the sun set.

your
ACTIVITIES

A host of museums (such as the Lone Star Flight Museum) and historic homes (like Bishop's Palace, an 1892 mansion) are open for self-guided tours. For birders, Galveston is a major migratory bird path and a habitat for the endangered piping plover.

JUST VISITING? Check in to the historic Hotel Galvez & Spa for sublime views; wyndhamhotelgalvez.com.



Fishing boats haul in fresh catch, including scallops on the half shell at Olympia Grill (inset).

WHY WE WANT
TO LIVE HERE ...

1 THE PIER The crown jewel of this waterfront, the nearly year-old Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier is a \$60 million family-oriented entertainment structure that extends into the Gulf and houses 16 rides.



2 THE FOLKS What you'll find here is a group so tightly woven, it's hard to tell longtime locals from the newcomers, like Staci Adams. "Trust me when I say, once you cross that causeway, you may never cross it again," she says.



3 THE DEALS The city's Association of Realtors reports continuously improving sales with average home prices settling around \$175,000 and condos a steal at about \$150,000—not bad for this slice of Gulf Coast gold.



4 THE PARTIES We love the annual Mardi Gras festivities, brought back to life with much fanfare by Galvestonian George P. Mitchell and his wife, Cynthia, in 1985. This year's celebration included 22 parades and dozens of concerts, parties, and balls.

READY TO MOVE IN?



BEACHSIDE BEAUTY

4 bedrooms, 4 baths • 3,028 square feet • \$984,000

DETAILS: Single-family home with wraparound deck/porch on the main level and recent upgrades including a whirlpool tub and steam shower

NEIGHBORHOOD: The Dunes
Listing #20122863; sandnsea.com



WATERFRONT OASIS

6 bedrooms, 5½ baths • 4,555 square feet • \$1,195,000

DETAILS: Fully furnished residence with four levels, elevator, media room, spa tubs, and three large porches overlooking the Gulf of Mexico

NEIGHBORHOOD: Beachside Village
Listing #20123583; sandnsea.com



HISTORIC-DISTRICT CHARMER

3 bedrooms, 2 baths • 2,251 square feet • \$229,000

DETAILS: Single-family bungalow with upgraded kitchen cabinets and appliances, plus spacious deck and backyard

NEIGHBORHOOD: East End Historic District
MLS #12774840; thehousecompany.com

