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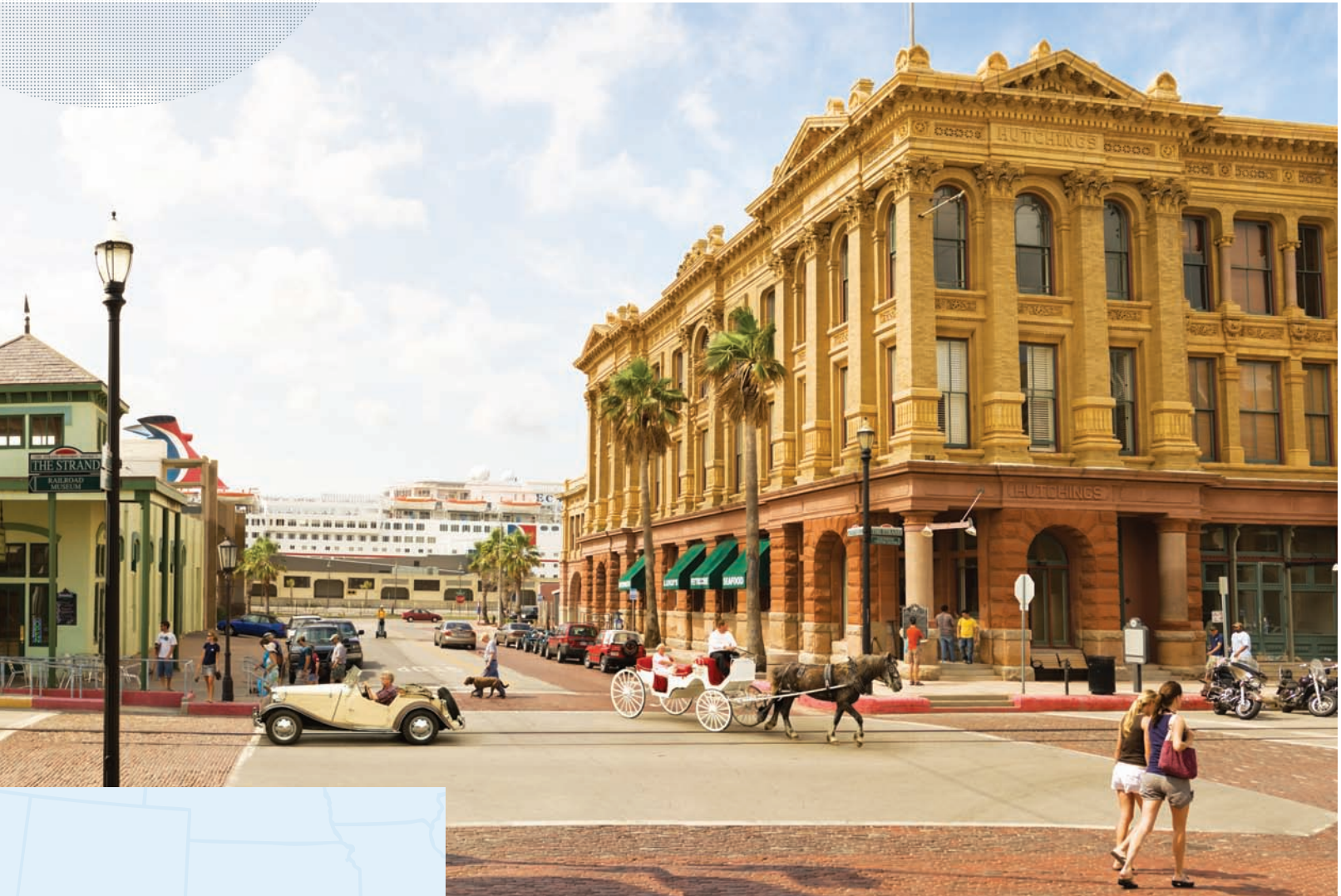
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# CITY SPOTLIGHT



## Galveston, Texas

By Mari Shirley

Known as the “Playground of the South” in the late 1800s, Galveston was Texas’ largest city and a hot destination built on its convenient location, beaches and various attractions. But in 1900, a hurricane nearly destroyed the city. Thousands of lives were lost, and so were the grandeur and popularity of the gulfside city. When Hurricane Ike struck more than a century later in 2008, it left behind billions of dollars in destruction. Galveston was especially hard-hit, with about 80 percent of its homes and almost all of its businesses damaged by Ike’s high winds and flooding. In the five years since, the city has been rebuilt and restored, with more than \$125 million in new and improved attractions since 2010. The only reminders of Ike and other hurricanes are the water markers that can be found on houses, businesses and historic sites around the city, as well as tree sculptures carved from storm-damaged trees that decorate the yards in the historic district. Guided tours through these neighborhoods offer a glimpse into a grand past that Galveston has worked hard to return to.



### HISTORIC HOTELS

Known as the “Queen of the Gulf,” the beachfront Hotel Galvez and Spa [1] is a AAA Four-Diamond property that has more than its fair share of history. Not only does the hotel, built in 1911 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, have the public Hall of History museum in its lower level, but it also offers ghost tours in October. While its sister hotel, The Tremont House, lacks in supernatural spirits, it’s just as notable with its location in the heart of historic downtown. The European-style hotel set amongst the city’s Victorian architecture recently opened a rooftop bar [2] that gives patrons a bird’s eye view of Galveston and the harbor.

### MILE-HIGH ENTERTAINMENT

At the Lone Star Flight Museum, a vintage B17 bomber shares real estate with more than 30 other restored warplanes [3] and a 1940s Continental airplane, most still in working condition. The Continental, originally built in 1943, is being restored for sunset flights where flight attendants in original Continental attire will serve drinks and appetizers to groups of up to 15. Larger groups can rent out the entire museum, which accommodates 1,500 for a stand-up reception and more than 800 guests for seated meals. In addition to tours, the museum also offers rides in the restored warbirds, giving passengers a true bird’s eye view of the island [4].

### BEACHFRONT BREAKOUTS

Adjacent to more than 700 hotel rooms, the Galveston Island Convention Center [5] at The San Luis Resort has nearly 100,000 square feet of meeting space in a gulf-front setting. The 30-acre resort provides a convenient lodging option for groups that need a lot of space: the convention center has a 43,100-sq.-ft. exhibit hall, a 15,500-sq.-ft. ballroom and 12,000 square feet of breakout space.

### PIER GROUPS

Galveston Island opened its newest major attraction, the historic Pleasure Pier [6], in May 2012. Jutting out over the Gulf of Mexico, the pier is reminiscent of the pleasure pier that was on the island in the 1940s with amusement park rides, carnival games, shops, restaurants, live music and entertainment for groups to enjoy.



**Texas Monthly named Gaido’s crustless pecan pie the best in the state.**

TERRY VINE: GALVESTON ISLAND CIVIC; KENNON EVETT