

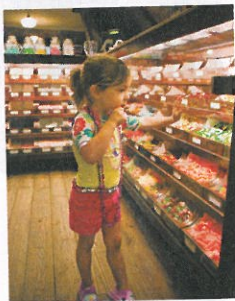
# GALVESTON

■ A CAREFULLY DESIGNED, KID-FRIENDLY ROMP THROUGH A HISTORIC CITY BY THE SEA. *by* **KATY VINE**



→ Few places in Texas capture a child's imagination quite like Galveston. Maybe it's because of the Island's rich history. For many years, the heavily tattooed native Karankawa tribe fished

there, greasing their bodies with alligator oil as an insect repellent. Spanish explorers had begun charting the coast by the early 1500's, pirates hauled their booty onshore in the 1800's, and in 1900 a devastating hurricane killed more than six thousand. Afterward, in a major engineering feat, the entire city was raised off the ground (in some areas by as much as seventeen feet). ¶ The streets, with their stilt houses and Victorian gems, offer a beautiful backdrop, and the dolphins, roller coasters, and water slides provide the thrills. Just stick to this tested itinerary, which takes into account all the necessary naps and blood-sugar crashes along the way.



ounce of energy from their restless bodies at this 26-acre water park. There's a beach area, a small pirate ship replica, and a wave lagoon for toddlers, but the real excitement is for school-age kids. Adults can relax at the swim-up bar, unless the Cliffhanger Speed Slide is summoning you.

■ **6:00 P.M. — DI BELLA'S**  
Tall wood booths at this classic eatery prevent toddlers from wandering off, while American musical standards (think Sinatra) soothe them into submission. During our visit, our pickier family members happily ate half a serving of spaghetti with sauce on the side, while my husband and I found simple dishes that suited us, like grilled shrimp fettuccine.

## SATURDAY

■ **8:00 A.M. — SUNFLOWER BAKERY AND CAFE**  
Kids can color on their menus while chowing down on pancakes in this sunny space, as their parents tuck into oysters Benedict and crabmeat

## FRIDAY

■ **11:30 A.M. — BENNO'S ON THE BEACH**  
Upon arrival, feed the family at this laid-back seawall spot with speedy service. Young-

sters love the fried shrimp, and adults shouldn't miss the Cajun-style specialties.

■ **1:00 P.M. — SCHLITTERBAHN**  
Having likely subjected your active children to a long drive that morning, squeeze every

omelets. (Grab muffins for the road; you never know when you'll need them.)

■ **10:00 A.M. — MOODY GARDENS**  
We hit the Aquarium Pyramid just as seal feeding was beginning, and you should too. Afterward, wander through the Rainforest Pyramid and gawk at the strange scarlet ibis and the cotton-top tamarin before taking a break in the 4D Special FX Theater, where you'll be sprayed, snowed on, windblown, and poked. After lunching in the food court, hop aboard the 1800's paddleboat and pray that your youngest falls asleep—ours didn't. (Older kids might prefer the Pleasure Pier, with rides like the Iron Shark roller coaster and the Pirate's Plunge log flume.)

## ■ 2:30 P.M. — STEWART'S BEACH

If anyone still needs a nap, drive around the East End Lagoon; while kids doze, parents can spot piping plovers, cormorants, egrets, and herons in the grasses. When the crew is awake, head for the fine sand around Sixth and Seawall, where there's also an abundance of restrooms, showers, and umbrella rentals.

## ■ 6:00 P.M. — GAIDO'S

The wait can be long, but the food—such as the fourteen-ounce pork chop coated in a garlic-and-cracker crust—is worth it and offers kids a chance to hone their manners.

## SUNDAY

### ■ 8:00 A.M. — MOSQUITO CAFE

Like many airy breakfast spots in Galveston, this bistro fills up by 9, so get seats early. My husband went for the Breakfast Bowl: roasted potatoes, sautéed spinach, bacon, mozzarella, and eggs. He was not disappointed, and neither were those of us who dove into the French toast and the granola and yogurt.

### ■ 10:00 A.M. — DOLPHIN CRUISE

After buying tickets just behind Willie G's on Pier 21, walk a short distance to the 36-passenger Baywatch 1, whose captain takes visitors up close to the harbor's bottlenose dolphins.

### ■ 11:00 A.M. — ELISSA SHIP

My children remember her as a "pirate ship," even though, built in 1877, she's actually one of the oldest still-sailing merchant vessels. Do not, under any circumstances, use the nautical term "poop deck" to describe her stern, unless you want to spend the next few hours in a scatological frenzy. Wind down the staircase and point out how tidy the cabins are. Your family will never complain about tight quarters again.

### ■ 12:00 P.M. — LA KING'S CONFECTIONERY

At this twenties era-themed candy store, load up on saltwater taffy to dole out sparingly all the way home.

## FACTS TO IMPRESS YOUR KIDS

- 1 Some sources say that the Karankawa were cannibalistic; others say that the Spanish explorers became cannibals, to the disgust of their Karankawa hosts.
- 2 Spanish explorer Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca named Galveston the Isle of Doom after he was shipwrecked near there, in 1528.
- 3 Jean Lafitte ran the Island's pirate kingdom out of an extravagant mansion, called the Maison Rouge, until the U.S. Navy chased him away, around 1821.