

GALVESTON MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

Those seeking a destination to suit everyone's interests can be satisfied by a visit to Galveston Island. With a wide variety of attractions, Galveston is a vacation destination that offers adventure, relaxation and history all in one place. Galveston is home to 32 miles of beaches and thrilling attractions, museums and historic sites. While the island's center is full of activity, the island's West End and offshore offerings provide a peaceful paradise where the avid birder or eco tourist can retreat in nature.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Artist Boat: Artist Boat offers a variety of two-hour and four-hour guided interpretive tours to places of natural significance on Galveston Island and Galveston Bay via kayak. Eco-Art Kayak Adventures include a watercolor demonstration, providing the chance to create a personalized souvenir and express your artistic side during a relaxing break. www.artistboat.org

Beach Parks: Galveston is home to 32 miles of beaches where you can enjoy a wide variety of beach activities, including surfing, swimming, boating or simply lounging on the sand. The island's five public beach parks offer special amenities, such as free events and concerts, outdoor showers, restrooms, concessions and more! The beaches are great for group activities, such as sandcastle building. www.galveston.com/beachparks

Explore the Deep: Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary: Did you know Galveston's coast is home to an extraordinarily rare and vibrant coral reef? Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary is one of 14 federally protected underwater areas and the only sanctuary site located in the Gulf of Mexico. Originally discovered by snapper and grouper fishermen in the early 1900s, the banks were named after the brightly colored sponges, plants, coral and other marine life exclusive to the area. It contains some of the healthiest, most beautiful coral reefs in the entire Gulf of Mexico which contains more coral than what is found off the Florida Keys. From manta rays and whale sharks, to colorful tropical fish and invertebrates, this place teems with life. While Flower Garden Banks is a marine protected area, it is not off-limits to the public. For the avid diver and angler, [private charters](#) are offered to reach the reef, 100 miles off Galveston's coast. If you prefer to keep your head above water, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) offers a wealth of educational resources about this fascinating natural wonder. Flower Garden Banks exhibits exist at Galveston's Moody Gardens in addition to a traveling exhibit, [Reef on the Road](#), which is housed at different locations for 6-12 months at a time.

Galveston Island State Park: The Galveston Island State Park is a great place for kayaking, birding and nature exploration, offering visitors access to the Gulf of Mexico and Galveston Bay. Witness herons and pelicans flying overhead, travel back in time to when the Karankawas made Galveston Island their winter home and discover how restoration scientists have restored wetlands and fisheries. This 1,200-acre state park hosts many examples of barrier island habitats explored easily from the beach or by walking trails. <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/galveston-island>

Harbor Tours: Come aboard the Seagull II for sightings of the island's playful dolphins and a view of the island from the sea on this exciting one-hour boat tour of Galveston's harbor. Contact: 409-763-1877 or www.galvestonhistory.org. Also check out Bay Watch Dolphin Tours at www.galvestonbaywatch.com.

Seaside Golfing on Galveston Island

For a relaxing golf escape, Galveston offers two unique golf courses complemented by lush scenery and picturesque waterside views. The Galveston Country Club – the oldest country club in Texas – is located between Galveston Bay and the Gulf of Mexico and features an 18-hole course lined with

palm trees and beautiful greenery. Off Galveston Bay, you'll find the Moody Gardens Golf Course, an award-winning, links-style, par-72 course offering gorgeous bayside views. In 2010, the Moody Gardens Golf Course was named one of the best golf course remodels in the country by Golf Digest. The course was designed by renowned golf course architects at Jacobsen Hardy Golf Course Design.

MUSEUMS + HISTORIC SITES

Bishop's Palace: The unique design and history of this 1892 historic mansion will amaze you as you tour through several floors of the home, which has survived numerous hurricanes since it was built. www.galvestonhistory.org

The Bryan Museum: The Bryan Museum houses the largest collection of Southwestern artifacts in the world. With 70,000 items spanning 12,000 years, it is no surprise Texas plays a large role in the museum's vast expanse of historic artifacts that paint a vivid picture of the significance of the cattle drive and how cowboy culture permeated the region. This is why the museum hosts rotating exhibits throughout the year, beyond its evergreen collection. www.thebryanmuseum.com

Dash Beardsley Ghost Tours: Paranormal expert Dash Beardsley will lead you on an exciting tour of Galveston's ghostly history. Dash offers year-round tours in Galveston's downtown district, cemeteries and beyond. www.ghosttoursofgalvestonisland.com.

East End Historical District: One of Galveston's most beautiful historic neighborhoods, this district is lined with classic Victorian homes painted in the most interesting ensembles. A popular destination for walking or bicycle tours, the district is home to the [Galveston Tree Sculptures](#), carved from Oak trees that were damaged during Hurricane Ike, as well as charming shops and restaurants, like local favorite Sunflower Bakery & Café.

Galveston Railroad Museum: Towering at the head of The Strand, the Galveston Railroad Museum boasts one of the largest restored railroad collections in the southwest, and one of the five largest in the country, with more than 20,000 railroad items, including more than 40 engines and cars. www.galvestonrrmuseum.com

Haunted Mayfield Manor: Get spooked by Texas' only year-round haunted house, which is housed in a building that served as a morgue after the 1900 Storm – the deadliest natural disaster in United States history. www.hauntedmayfieldmanor.com

Historic Downtown Galveston: Peruse boutiques, shops, art galleries and museums housed in beautiful, iron-front Victorian buildings. The district's most popular street, known as The Strand, is the center of downtown activity with tempting offerings like the old-fashioned candy shop LaKing's Confectionery, Saengerfest Park and more.

Moody Mansion: Come tour this 1895 historic mansion filled with opulent furnishings and heirlooms from one of Texas's most powerful families. www.moodymansion.org

Ocean Star Offshore Drilling Rig & Museum: Take a leisurely, self-guided tour through the retired Ocean Star jack-up rig, which now serves as a museum and educational facility. www.oceanstaroec.com

Pirates! Legends of the Gulf Coast: Explore the history of pirates in Galveston and along the Gulf Coast in this interactive museum that includes a variety of exhibits, a deck of a pirate ship, a captain's cabin and actors portraying the crew of the notorious Jean Laffite who settled in Galveston during the early 1800s. www.piratesgulfcoast.com

Texas Seaport Museum: Share the adventure of the high seas at the Texas Seaport Museum, home of the celebrated 1877 Tall Ship ELISSA. The museum also tells the story of seaborne commerce and immigration in Galveston, which was the second busiest immigration port in U.S. history. www.galvestonhistory.org

HIGH ENERGY THRILLS

Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier: Located on the Gulf of Mexico, this pleasure pier amusement park brings the glory of Galveston's famous history into the present with thrill rides for adults and kids, midway games, shopping, live music and entertainment, and a full-service restaurant. The amusement park is located on a pier standing over the Gulf of Mexico in the same location a pleasure pier stood in Galveston during the 1940s. www.pleasurepier.com

Jetboat Thrill Rides: There is plenty of opportunity to cool off on the sparkling waters of Galveston Harbor, such as taking a Jet Boat Thrill Ride from Pier 21. On this 20-minute, thrilling jet boat ride passengers will experience intense speeds, right angle turns and "The Hamilton Spin," a maneuver that spins the boat 360° on its axis throwing a head-high wall of water into the air – and onto passengers! <http://suntimewatersports.com>

Moody Gardens: Galveston's Moody Gardens recently completed a \$37 million renovation on its Aquarium Pyramid, offering new exhibits including the addition of jellyfish and tropical penguins. The Moody Gardens aquarium features marine life from four regions of the world including the Gulf of Mexico to South Atlantic, the South and North Pacific and the Caribbean. Moody Gardens is a family entertainment complex featuring a tropical rainforest, aquarium, 3D and 4D theaters, a ropes course and zip line, Palm Beach water park, a golf course, the Moody Gardens Hotel and more. www.moodygardens.org.

Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark: Splash into one of the hottest, coolest times in Texas! Schlitterbahn features uphill water coasters, water slides, kid's playgrounds, whitewater rapids, a wave pool, hot tubs, plus the Boogie Bahn surf ride. And, the exclusive Transportainment river system makes Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark the ultimate family friendly destination. <http://schlitterbahn.com/gal>

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The Grand 1894 Opera House: Come tour "The Official Opera House of Texas," which is one of the few remaining theatres of its era in Texas and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Grand hosts live performances year-round. www.thegrand.com

Island ETC: Located directly across from the historic Tremont House Hotel on Mechanic Street, Island ETC is Galveston County's only professional repertory theatre company showcasing five productions a year. The theatre also offers a great spot to view the annual Mardi Gras! Galveston parades, so check the website for tickets! <https://www.islandetc.org>

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Health + Fitness Attractions on Galveston Island

Vacationing on Galveston Island often means fun in the sun and surf, cold drinks and tasty eats. But enjoying a little island time doesn't always have to mean lazing around for hours on end. Galveston is the perfect spot for a wide variety of exciting activities for those who enjoy an active lifestyle. At more than 10 miles long, Galveston's seawall is the nation's longest continuous sidewalk and is a great spot for your daily run, walk, jog, skate or bicycle ride with its scenic view of the Gulf of Mexico. You can also enjoy yoga on the beach, paddle boarding, kayaking or challenge yourself on the Moody Gardens Ropes Course or drop in for a WOD at one of several CrossFit studios.

Relax at Galveston's World-Class Spas

After watching a Galveston sunrise over the Gulf of Mexico, there is no better way to kick-start your day than with a relaxing trip to any of the island's' world-class spas, offering a unique array of Asian and European massages, body scrubs, wraps, hydrotherapy baths and more. To experience Galveston like Jennifer Lopez did while filming an episode of American Idol in 2012, visit Spa San Luis at The

San Luis Resort, which offers a signature Shirodhara Therapy Massage – an ancient Ayurvedic ritual. For an equally luxurious experience, visit The Spa at Hotel Galvez, known for its tranquil relaxation room and Eucalyptus steam rooms. And, for a unique experience, visit the Moody Gardens Hotel, which is home to a world-class adult spa that was completely redesigned in 2015 as well as the Secret Garden Teen Spa.