

Go Girls

Galveston, Oh, Galveston

Given the chance for an impromptu girlfriends beach getaway, the easiest option also happens to be most gratifying: Galveston is scarcely a five-hour trip from North Texas, and you'll need far less time than that to plan the escape. Pack a swimsuit, sandals and casual togs; grab your BFFs; and point the car toward the Gulf. Re-energized by post-Hurricane Ike renovations, the island city serves up diversions of all sorts.

For lodging, old world elegance reigns at the Hotel Galvez, recently renovated. Its lobby bar, beautiful pool and position right across from the beach make it a first-rate choice. Borrow the hotel's courtesy bicycles to get a good look at the spiffed-up gingerbread architecture in the East End and Lost Bayou historic districts. The Galvez offers shuttles downtown for shopping and dining. At the fashionable San Luis Resort, you can have a balcony with seating, pool cabana rentals (ask for the Champagne package) and a cool swim-up bar. Beachfront house rentals on the West End include modern homes with two to seven bedrooms.

Begin your day with a morning walk or run on the beach, followed by some touring. Everyone should see the 1892 Bishop's Palace, one of Galveston's most beloved mansions. Pick up a map to a remarkable selection of East End tree sculptures, crafted from wood stumps left standing after trees were ravaged by the 2008 hurricane. Or see the sculptures from aboard the funky Cool Tours painted bus that treks all over the East End, past the mansions on Broadway Avenue and around the Silk Stocking National Historic District. There's a number of guided ghost walks and cemetery tours around town, too. Check out Artist Boat Kayak Adventures to paddle away a morning in Galveston Bay's lagoons and bayous and learn about the local ecosystems.



The century-old Hotel Galvez, called the Queen of the Gulf, faces the seawall and ocean beyond.

Photo by Terry Vine



Find early mornings prime time for collecting seashells on a quiet Galveston beach.

Photo by Galveston.com & Company Inc.

Ladies on the lam from responsibilities can forget their cares during a massage or skin treatment. At the spa at the Hotel Galvez, you can have lunch in the Meditation Garden. The San Luis also has a full menu of scrubs, wraps, soaks, massages and

more in its spa. For shopping, head to Postoffice Street to check out Tangerine Boutique and ha.ba.'s. On the Strand, visit Head to Footsies for shoes and Tina's for decor, handbags and clothes.

Come evening, you and your besties may want to take in a show at The Grand. First, grab a coffee at MOD Coffeehouse or a martini at Sky Bar. For brunch and lunch, the sister-owned Farley Girls Cafe is tops, with offerings like over-easy eggs on Gouda-mushroom grits. At Pier 21, Olympia Grill has seafood as good as the harbor view. The dark roux gumbo at Gumbo Diner on Seawall Boulevard gets two thumbs up, as does a plate of fried oysters with bacon and jalapeno followed by grilled Gulf redfish with lemon beurre blanc at Number 13 Prime Steak and Seafood on Broadway.

You and your fellow travelers won't want to leave, but remember, you can do it all again soon. — **June Naylor**

THE DETAILS

Galveston For general information including tours, shopping and restaurants, visit galveston.com.

Hotel Galvez Rooms from about \$140. 2024 Seawall Blvd., Galveston; 409-765-7721 or hotelgalvez.com.

San Luis Resort Rooms from about \$159. 5222 Seawall Blvd., Galveston; 800-392-5937 or sanluisresort.com.

West End Beach

House Rentals From about \$300. For more info, visit galveston.com/vacationrentals.



Farley Girls Cafe, on the East End, makes a good pizza-and-wine stop.

Photo by Kennon Evett