

GALVESTON STILL RISES



Downtown Galveston is a popular shopping area, with numerous boutiques and historical attractions situated in grand old buildings close to the cruise docks and bay. / PROVIDED BY GALVESTON ISLAND CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

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PLUS

For the family

Bishop's Palace

Bishop's Palace is one of a few grand old Victorian homes on the island open to the public as a museum. Built by the prominent Gresham family before becoming a property of the Catholic Church for decades, every niche, cranny and chandelier in the mansion is a work of art. The magnificence and opulent details help visitors understand what Galveston had achieved at the turn of the century, and everyone will leave envious that their own homes will never, ever have a main staircase quite like the one they just walked down.

Moody Gardens

This Galveston nonprofit mainstay with three pyramids started as a hippotherapy arena and has since turned into a full-blown resort destination with an aquarium, impressive walk-through rainforest and new attractions such as a zip-line course. Here be exotic equatorial fauna – and penguins.

Engulfed. After each hurricane, Texas' eastern vacation spot remakes itself better than ever.

An observant eye will see the signs everywhere: "1900 — this high. 1919 — this high. 1961 — this high. 2008 — this high." They're water marks on houses, churches, restaurants, museums and shops. Their heights vary, but they always mean one thing: "The water was this high, but look at us now."

Galveston, Texas, began as a bustling port city, back when Victorian ideals held sway with Western culture. The care, pride and wealth are obvious in the old houses that still stand, for whom the water never got so very high. Visitors can tour many of the best and ogle the rest along pleasant, sunlit streets. These were houses built on the premises of invincibility and optimism.



A brick pillar along Pier 21 demarcates the high-water lines from various hurricanes. The mark from 1900 sits far above the others.

KATE THOMAS, METRO

Students of history know it didn't last. The last year of the 19th century brought with it a hurricane that still holds the record as the deadliest natural disaster in United States history. Thousands died and the island was

flattened. Those few homes that still stand were saved when the smashed detritus of every other building in the vicinity created a de facto sea wall around them.

But Galveston rebuilt. Engineers raised the entire grade of the island. Buildings were built higher and sturdier. Community pillars donated vast sums, and officials and residents banded together to make the island great again. And when the next hurricane hit, and the next, they cleared away the rubble and started over.

When Hurricane Ike hit in 2008, the island took it hard. But, as is the Galveston custom, residents rebuilt better and sturdier. Six years later, there are few signs that troubled waters ever swept across the city — except the ones that residents display on their walls, porches and stilts, markers of human resilience.



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Covered trolley if by land, dolphin tour if by sea

Tours across the island

When vacationers get tired of lying on the sand beneath the grand expanse of Texas sky, they can ex-

plore the island on several sorts of tours, whether viewing charming neighborhoods or taking a boat out onto the bay to see offshore oil rigs being built while catching glimpses of

playful pods of bottlenose dolphins gliding alongside the boat.

It's a busy stretch of sea, but the dolphins, terns and pelicans don't seem to mind.

Where to eat

Best breakfast

Sunflower Bakery & Cafe

One of the glories of Texan cuisine is the state's take on breakfast, and this place delivers, with an extra side of shore-side specialty. Migas? Got it. Crab cakes? Got it. Southern-style eggs served over corn cakes with ranchero sauce and cheese? Yes, PLEASE. This is the real thing, and the real thing is delicious. And yes, they do brunch.

Best seafood dinner

Gaido's Seafood Restaurant

This is about as historical and blue-blood as a restaurant can make itself, and it takes its reputation as seriously as it takes its seafood (and its pecan pie). The menu delves

deeply into the spicy, rich Creole tradition, reminding visitors that the Gulf-kissed island often has as much in common with New Orleans as the rest of the state's more Southwestern flair.

Want to go all out?

Number 13 Prime Steak and Seafood

Standing out from the generally beach-centric, relaxed atmosphere of the island is this new establishment, which, with its attention to ingredient acquisition and the upscale atmosphere, would feel at home along some taxiriddled big-city avenue — if it weren't attached to a marina. This isn't a place to take the kids, but it does spectacular things with such sundries as cocktails and gnocchi, and this place knows steak.



Go for the pecan pie at Gaido's Seafood Restaurant. / PROVIDED