

Things-to-do in Houston, Texas

Museums

The **Natural Science Museum** has a lot of stuff. There are permanent collections of minerals, natural history exhibits, a planetarium with laser shows and an Imax theater, a butterfly habitat, a paleontology exhibit with dinosaurs, and a new chemistry hall. This place is very crowded, especially on weekends, and you should call for reservations for the I-max, planetarium and butterfly exhibit.

The Heritage Society houses and museum at Sam Houston Park, downtown. The oldest house in Houston, plus houses from several eras of Houston's history, transported to the park and restored.

Bayou Bend is Ima Hogg's former estate near River Oaks, now a museum for her private collection of antiques. Also has beautiful gardens.

Space Center Houston is the NASA tourist center. Exhibits and tours of the nearby NASA facility.

There are smaller museums scattered around the area: Fire, Funeral, Police, Printing, etc.

Restaurants

Houston's a good restaurant town. The specialties are seafood, Cajun, Mexican and barbecue. You need to go to Goode Company Barbecue while you're here. There's more than one location. Try the pecan pie. Second choice for barbecue would be Brisket House (Pappa's barbecue) or Luther's.

Go to **Kemah** for fresh seafood as you watch the boats go in and out.

There are also a lot of ethnic restaurants. On the west side of town along Bellaire is a Chinatown, with all kinds of oriental food. There's a smaller Chinatown near downtown, and a Little Vietnam on the southwest side of downtown. Scattered around town are Indian, Mid-east, German, French, African, South-American, Italian etc.

Try **eating at the restaurant school at UH**. Good food and a chance to grade your waiter.

The free paper [Houston Press](#) has extensive restaurant listings and ads.

Outdoors stuff

There are two arboretums (arboreta), Houston and Mercer. Various parks, including Memorial Park, Hermann Park, Buffalo Bayou Park, and Sam Houston Park. Further out of town are Armand Bayou Nature and **Brazos Bend State Park**. Various places to rent a canoe, horse or sailboat. Cruises on Clear Lake, Buffalo Bayou, or Galveston Bay. Fishing all along the coast and at various lakes. Walk out the Texas City Dike (a good fossil locality). Several water parks.

Shows

Houston's a good theater town. Try a play at the Alley, TUTS, Stages, Ensemble, Main Street, etc. The UH School of Theater has professional-caliber shows for the price of a movie. Dinner and magic shows at Magic Island. Various Comedy Clubs (try Comedy Sportz for great improv). Radio Music Theater does great comedy sketches.

The **Miller Outdoor Theater** has something showing 3-4 nights a week, from May through October. Various types of music, Shakespeare, full-scale musicals, symphony, etc. It's always free.

Live music

Anything from classical to reggae is available here. There are concert listings in the weekly free paper **Houston Press**. Of course, there are also listings in the regular newspapers.

Sports

- Gulf Greyhound Park, the world's largest pari-mutuel dog racing complex.
 - Houston Raceway Park, drag strip with racing several nights a week
 - The Sam Houston Race Track, local horse racing
 - Bike and jogging trails at Memorial and Hermann Parks and along Buffalo and Braeswood Bayous.
 - Equestrian Center for horses and Velocidrome for bicycling.
 - Lower Westheimer. Day for shopping, night for food and entertainment. Antiques, resale shops, tattoos.
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More Fun

Go to a **Fiesta grocery store** and check out the weird stuff from all over the world.

There's a free **ship channel tour boat** (though you need to make reservations well in advance). Or you can go down on Sunday and drive around the docks; take the Ship Channel exit off the East (610) Loop, follow the signs to the guard station, and they'll give you a map and directions.

Spaces & Places

Hermann Park -- you can do the Natural History museum, the garden center, the zoo, etc. The zoo has the new primate exhibit. There's a miniature train, golf, picnic areas. In the evening, there's often something showing at Miller Theater.

Allen's Landing -- downtown, where the Allen brothers, early real-estate developers, first landed their boats and founded Houston. Nothing there to see, but it's been nicely landscaped lately. The Bayou Belle cruises leave from here. (??)

The **San Jacinto Monument** commemorates the battle where Texas won its freedom from Mexico. The monument looks like the Washington monument but it's taller. There's a museum in the base, and an elevator up to an observation deck at the top.

The **Battleship Texas** is docked near the San Jacinto Monument. The Texas fought in both World Wars, and has recently been extensively repaired. You can wander all over the ship, above and below deck.

Industrial tours -- **Imperial Sugar** (in Sugar Land) and **Budweiser** beer (I-10 at the 610 Loop)

The **Transco Tower water wall and observation deck**. The water wall is a man-made waterfall next to the Tower, spectacular from up close.

The downtown **Chase Tower** has an observation deck.

The **tunnel system** under downtown Houston has over 4 miles of connected tunnels, with stores and restaurants. It's only open on workdays during business hours.

The **Pasadena refineries at night**; this isn't as spectacular as it used to be with the new lighting sources, but it's still worth a trip (If Hell could be beautiful, it would look like Pasadena at night.)

Rice University -- check out the architecture, or see a film at the media center or a recital at Stude Hall.

Take the **Medical Center** tour

River Oaks -- just drive through and look at the mansions

Other: Various Religious Temples and Churches on Synott Road.