

Photos courtesy of Visit Georgetown

W

Georgetown for the Holidays



Santa makes a special trip to Georgetown every holiday season for the annual Christmas Stroll.

Sure you've passed through many times on your way to Austin or maybe you visited on a class trip to explore Inner Space Caverns, but if you haven't taken time to hang out in the town that boasts the "most beautiful town square in Texas," and which was recently named the "Texas Heartland's Most Underrated Destination" by *thetravel.com* (June 2022), this holiday season might be just the right occasion.

Just a little over an hour from Waco, Georgetown delights visitors and residents alike with scenic parks and trails, many diverse dining options, unique art venues, wine and tap rooms and more. It's fair to say that Georgetown, Texas hits the spot for Waco's holiday season day trippers.

Established in 1848 as an agricultural trading center, Georgetown is the home

to Southwestern University and was listed in *Southern Living* magazine (June 2022) as the fastest growing city in the country, as measured by 2020 U.S. Census Bureau statistics.

The charming town square, located between Austin Avenue and Main Street, is the perfect place to start exploring this hidden gem. The streets are lined with dozens of shops and restaurants, all surrounding the historic Williamson Country Courthouse. Whether you're coming in for an afternoon of shopping or just for dinner, there's something for everyone along the square, which will be festively lit up through New Year's Eve.

"We are known for being the best little square in Texas, but this place, wrapped in white lights during the holidays, is just magical," said Dixie Doss, owner of

To Have And To Hold, a gift shop located at 215 S. 8th St. "There's really nothing like it and I know it sounds like a Hallmark movie, but that's what people love about it."

Doss, who moved her shop to Georgetown from Round Rock in 2020, said that from her corner of the square across and one block off each side of the square, every building, every tree, every limb is covered in white lights.

"It's just stunning," Doss said. "We have a countdown Friday night, the day after Thanksgiving, where the whole town comes together to flip a switch and everything changes. The air changes. Peoples' attitudes change. Christmas is in the air and you can feel it the minute you drive into town."

The 41st Annual Christmas Stroll, hosted by the Downtown Georgetown Association, is set for Friday, Dec. 2 from 5-9 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 3 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on the square. There will be a holiday parade, live musical performances, Whoville Hair Salon, Bethlehem Village, photos with Santa and more than 150 artisan and food vendors. Children of all ages can enjoy the Groovin' with Grinch Street Dance Friday night. The Christmas Stroll parade begins Saturday morning at 10 a.m., followed by activities and photos with Santa from noon to 8 p.m.

"We're bringing in some characters from Austin who will be dressed as Elsa and Olaf and they will be walking around," Doss said. "If you want to escape and you want to be able to walk and drink and enjoy the

atmosphere — that’s what it’s all about.” For more information about the holiday events on the Georgetown square, call 512/930-3545 or visit thegeorgetownsquare.com.

Georgetown’s historic city square offers plenty of browsing, tasting and relaxation options with more than 40 retail shops, including a day spa, toy store, art galleries, restaurants, tap rooms and wine tasting rooms — enough to fill a day or a whole weekend.

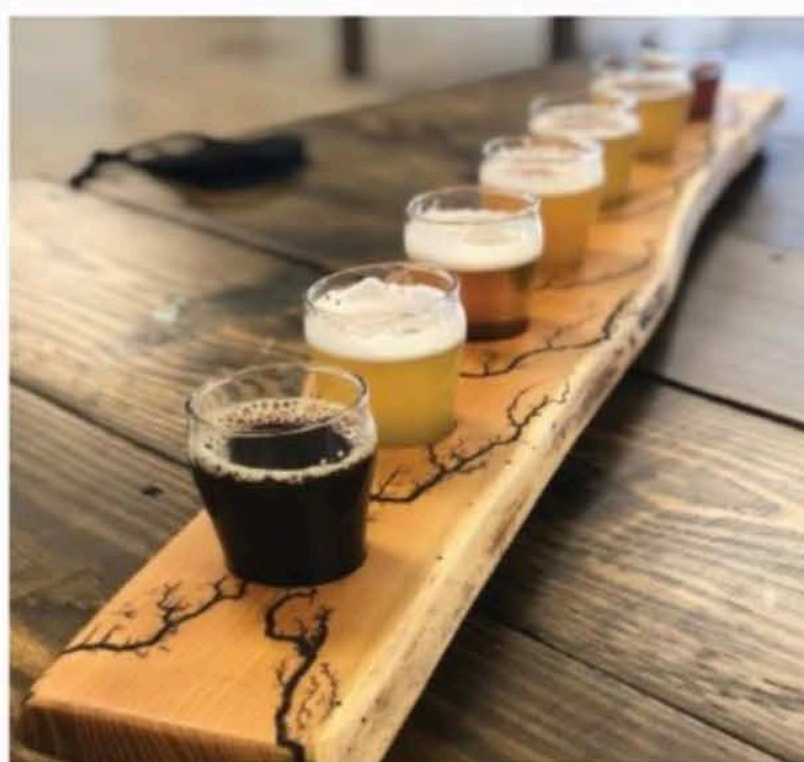
One not-to-be-missed restaurant on the square is Blue Corn Harvest, offering authentic Southwestern cuisine served in a lively atmosphere with a covered patio for al fresco dining. The brunch menu features everything from migas to steak and egg’s Benedict. And the Bloody Mary Bar — a lavish buffet of pickles, olives, bacon, sausage and even onion rings — is a feast in itself.

Grab a beer and some high end gear at Mesquite Creek Outfitters, a local pub and outdoor apparel store that offers 16 Texas craft beers on tap, more than 20 wines and a selection of men’s and women’s clothing, jewelry and unique accessories.

Wildfire is an upscale eatery housed in an historic building that was once the City Hotel as well as a Piggly Wiggly and a Sears and Roebuck Catalog Store over the last century. Serving steaks, seafood and pasta, Wildfire is a great spot to grab lunch or dinner while on the square.

But when thinking about food in Georgetown, it can’t be limited to the square, as some of the town’s best-loved establishments are located just to the north on Austin Avenue.

Monument Cafe, located at 500 Austin Ave., is a classic roadside diner that prides itself on using local, seasonal and organic ingredients, all made from scratch. Signature dishes include the chicken and grits, turkey, bacon and avocado sandwich and the chicken fried steak. You can’t leave without a slice of Monument Chocolate Pie, which is dark



Left to right, top to bottom: Left to right, top to bottom: Sip and shop at Mesquite Creek Outfitters, with 16 Texas craft beers on tap and an assortment of men’s and women’s apparel. The town square between Austin Avenue and Main Street are covered in lights for the holidays, from every building to every tree. Breweries like Barking Armadillo Brewery offer tasting flights for beer enthusiasts just outside of downtown while Barons Creek Vineyards offers wine testing while soaking up the holiday magic.



**Robinson
Greenhouse**

628 N. Robinson Dr.
662-0311
Monday-Saturday 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

LARGE ASSORTMENT OF
INDOOR PLANTS,
FOUNTAINS & POTTERY

*Hanging Baskets
Annuals
Perennials
Shrubs & Trees*

Poinsettias are Here!
Call and reserve yours now
Delivery available!

NEW LOOK, NEW VISION SAME COMMITMENT TO WACO

Historic Waco's mission to preserve and promote the history of Waco and McLennan County continues with a bold new look, a new Executive Director, and a renewed focus on telling the stories that matter: Your Stories.

Learn more and join us at historicwaco.org.



@historicwacofoundation

Historic Waco Foundation

(254) 753-5166

chocolate mousse topped with fresh sweet whipped cream and chocolate shavings in a candied pecan crust. Monument Cafe is open daily from 7 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Just down the street is the iconic El Monumento, located at 205 W. 2nd St., and serving contemporary Mexican fare inspired by the haciendas of South Texas and Central Mexico. With an interior courtyard, patio and open kitchen, this is the place for dinner and drinks. Start with an order of queso flamedo, served with house-made flour tortillas and an el mon margarita. You won't be disappointed with the chile relleno or the san gabriel especial. You should definitely top off the experience with a slice of tres leches cake. El Monumento is open Sunday through Thursday from 3-9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 3-10 p.m.

Families can ring in the season at the very festive Sweet Eats Farm, located at 14400 E. State Highway 29. Santa Claus and his real, live reindeer will visit the farm every weekend until Christmas.

A farm visit also includes more than 30 different activities, including apple cannons, pig races, pony rides, a petting zoo, hay maze, jump pads, treasure mountain, pipe races and more. A magical 11-foot gingerbread house is a great place for kids to explore and also to take family photos. General admission tickets cost \$19.95 on weekdays and \$21.95 on weekends.

A special Breakfast With Santa event is set for 8-9 a.m. every Saturday and Sunday until Dec. 24. A ticket includes a breakfast buffet of eggs, bacon, sausage, potatoes, pancakes, donuts, assorted croissants and muffins, quiches, fruit and a yogurt parfait bar. The adult ticket includes bottomless mimosas — and Santa will visit each table, asking kids about their Christmas wishes.

Breakfast tickets cost \$18.99 for adults and \$15.99 for children.

But it's not all about the kids at Sweet Eats Farm. An adult "Flashlight Ornament Hunt" is set for Friday and Saturday nights from 7-9 p.m. Think Easter egg hunt, but with Christmas ornaments and prizes of all sorts, plus drink vouchers. Tickets cost \$35. Visit sweeteats.com for tickets and more

WACO GASTROENTEROLOGY ASSOCIATES WELCOMES...



DR. SHAMYAL KHAN

Dr. Khan has recently joined Waco Gastroenterology after completing his Fellowship and residency at Baylor Scott and White in Temple where he served as Chief Resident. Dr. Khan specializes in Diagnostic and Screening Colonoscopies along with advanced procedures including endoscopic ultrasound (EUS) and endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP). Dr. Khan is accepting new patients.

Call Waco Gastro at 254-537-0911.

45 IS THE NEW 50 FOR COLONOSCOPIES

The American Cancer Society and the US Preventative Services Task Force now recommend that the average male and female should get their first Colonoscopy Screening at age 45. If you have a family history of colon cancer, you might need to get a colonoscopy more often, and possibly before age 45. Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the third most common cancer in the United States, but a simple Colonoscopy screening can detect early signs and possibly help to prevent CRC.



Waco Gastroenterology Associates
www.wacogastro.com
364 Richland West Circle, Waco
254-537-0911

information.

Another fun holiday hot spot is the Wolf Ranch Farmer's Market, located at 1015 W. University Ave. Visitors can browse stands of locally produced farm goods and food on Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Vendors sell a variety of items that range from vegetables to homemade jerky to candles. During the holiday season, Santa will stop by the market to visit with kids and saxophonist Ryan Youmans will play Christmas music.

Wine and beer lovers will find plenty of breweries, tap rooms and wineries that are nice to visit during the holidays or any time of year. There are three wine tasting rooms on Georgetown's square – Grape Creek, Barons Creek and Georgetown Winery. Each offers award-winning wines and the opportunity to relax and take in the town. Bottles are available for sale and retail sale. Plus, you are able to walk the square while sipping on your travel-ready cup of wine.

For craft beer enthusiasts, a couple of breweries outside of the downtown area are worth the trip. The Barking Armadillo, 507 Riverbend Dr., offers house-brewed stouts and ales as well as lagers and sours. Try the Quarantine Island IPA for something nicely hopped, but not overly bitter or the Eurotrip Pilsner for a lighter drink. While you sip, you can play some vintage video games, like Pac Man and Galaga or classic Star Wars pinball in the brewery arcade.

A bit further down the road, Rentsch Brewery located at 2500 NE Inner Loop is a bit of an oasis in the middle of an office park with a terraced patio and beer garden set around a grove of 100-year-old oak trees. There's always a food truck, some from Austin, with interesting food that pairs well with the beers, which range from light to dark, fruity to bitter and everything in between.

"When people say Georgetown is a day trip, it really can be," Doss said. "But now it's more like you can make a weekend of it because there's something for everyone here. There are fine restaurants, like five star dining at City Post, if that's what you choose to do. There's Good Folks' gluten-free fried chicken. Who knew there was such a thing? There are

bars, several wineries. There are gift shops — unique and custom gifts is what we do at To Have And To Hold. We have art museums. The history in Williamson County and this town is way cool. The building I'm in used to be the veterinary clinic where injured horses were treated after bringing in the carriages."

Speaking of history, the nonprofit, historic Georgetown Palace Theatre in the downtown district is home to a year-round season of live theatre productions including musicals, comedies and dramas. Catch the production of "Holiday Inn" throughout December. Find out more at georgetownpalace.com.

Art enthusiasts can immerse themselves in creative expression at the Georgetown Art Center, just a block off the square in historic Firehouse No.1 (circa 1892).

Nature lovers can also find plenty of options outdoors as well. Lake Georgetown is a recreational spot that offers camping, boating and fishing, biking, hiking and horseback riding trails, as well as swimming and picnic areas. The San Gabriel Hike & Bike Trail offers nearly nine miles of trails along the San Gabriel River.

And then there's Inner Space Cavern — a site many Central Texans visited as elementary school students. But it's definitely worth another tour and a great place to take kids and grandkids for an exciting educational adventure.

With its large rooms, stunning cave formations and prehistoric animal bones, Inner Space Cavern — which remains a constant 72 degrees year round — has a unique discovery story to boot. In 1963, a Texas Highway Department core drilling team discovered over 7,000 square feet of cave while taking six-inch core samples to determine if the ground was stable enough to support a large highway overpass. As they were drilling one of the test holes, the bit suddenly dropped 26 feet, and the highway crew knew they had discovered something special.

A mission for the general one-and-a-half hour tour is \$21.95 for adults and \$15.95 for kids. Visit innerspacecavern.com for prices on special tours, like Hidden Passages, Ice Age and Wild Caves.