

REDISCOVERING THE ISLAND

GALVESTON HAS LONG BEEN A POPULAR DESTINATION, BUT NEW ADDITIONS
ARE UPPING THE ANTE ON FUN.

BY KATRINA AUTEM





IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TO GALVESTON LATELY, then you haven't been to Galveston. The island has managed to reinvent itself with new attractions and yet still features all of the old favorites. Modern surprises fit in well with the Old World charm of the city, offering visitors an unexpected getaway.

A treasure trove of American Southwest history, The Bryan Museum is one of the most anticipated additions to Galveston Island. The collection contains around 70,000 pieces of art and historical artifacts, including “exquisite saddles and spurs, antique firearms ... exceedingly rare maps and more.” Originally built as an orphanage in 1894, the statuesque brick building with pine floors and cypress wood beams now houses the lifetime accumulation of artifacts from Mary Jon and J.P. Bryan. The decision to place the comprehensive collection in Galveston adds a new, noteworthy feather in the cap of the historical island.

Also among new additions is Moody Gardens' SpongeBob SubPants Adventure, part of which is an ice-sculpture installation within the holiday ICE LANDS exhibit, on display from November 2015 through January 2016. Carved out of 900 tons of ice and kept at a chilly 9 degrees, the interactive display features some of Nickelodeon's most famous characters that will undoubtedly keep kids entertained. Don't forget about Moody Gardens' permanent collection—the Rainforest Pyramid, Aquarium and 4D Theater.



“Within Galveston’s Historic District is The Strand (pictured right), a street that encompasses all the vintage charm of Galveston... [and] some of the most quaint shops and restaurants in the South.”

BELOW: SCHLITTERBAHN WATERPARK OFFERS INDOOR AND OUTDOOR ATTRACTIONS, FROM EXHILARATING WATER RIDES TO KID-FRIENDLY PLACES TO PLAY.



If it’s beach time you’re seeking, don’t underestimate the Texas island. The rebuilt Pleasure Pier, which opened in 2012, juts out more than 1,100 feet into the gulf and lets park-goers enjoy sweeping views of the beach. Visitors and residents who can remember the original amusement park, destroyed in the 1961 hurricane, are glad to see its return. With the sights and sounds of pure, unmistakable fun, it has breathed new life into the beach. Rides like the Iron Shark steel roller coaster, Texas Teacups and Pier Pileup bumper cars add peels of laughter and screeches of delight to the sounds of crashing waves.

Beaches aren’t the only way to enjoy water in Galveston, however. Schlitterbahn Waterpark offers indoor water rides and traditional summertime entertainment during cooler fall and winter months, although in Texas, the summer season runs from mid-April to mid-October. The Wave Lagoon, Soaring Eagle ZipLine and Faust Und Furious slides are just some of the family-centered attractions that bring droves of visitors to Schlitterbahn every year.

And if you’ve decided to head to this gulf getaway, don’t forget your passport. Galveston serves as a busy port for top cruise lines like Royal Caribbean, Norwegian and Disney, where travelers set sail for paradise

destinations like Roatan, Cozumel, the Cayman Islands and Jamaica.

But why not schedule a little fun before departure? Located within walking distance from the cruise-ship terminal sits Galveston’s historic district and, most famously, the Strand—a street that encompasses all the vintage charm of Galveston and lets visitors shop, eat, drink and relax in some of the most quaint shops and restaurants in the South. Set among century-old buildings from Galveston’s heyday, modern art galleries, confectionaries, museums and an array of bars line the street. The Strand also serves as the center of the annual Mardi Gras celebration, with parades and street festivals that draw large crowds.

But perhaps nothing speaks to Galveston’s new image like the restored Victorian structures originally erected by wealthy residents and businessmen. Once a booming center of trade and commerce, Galveston shows off its opulent days with ornate homes like the commanding Bishop Palace and the 32-roomed Moody Mansion—both of which are open to the public. Many of these homes have been cleaned and refurbished from the 2008 hurricane and look more magnificent than ever. The city offers a variety of historic homes tours that are worth checking out for history buffs, architecture enthusiasts and interested visitors alike.

(FROM LEFT) ©SCHLITTERBAHN WATERPARKS AND RESORTS; ©GREATER HOUSTON CVB; (PREVIOUS SPREAD) ©GHCVB; ©THE BRYAN MUSEUM