

3 DAYS *in the Alamo* CITY

BY KAREN O'DONNELL KRAJCKER

Everyone has his or her own idea of an ideal

vacation. With so much to see and do in San Antonio, it helps to have a plan, even if that plan is just to relax and have some fun. No matter what you're in the mood for—historical landmarks, cultural events, culinary delights, family fun, or a romantic evening—there's an itinerary for every taste and a travel adventure sure to make your visit to the Alamo City memorable.

ROMANTIC

Getaway

DAY 1: PEARL

Hold hands on a guided GO RIO San Antonio cruise along the river, and cheer when a bride and groom say “I do” on Marriage Island, an intimate (yet highly public) island little more than an arm's length from your riverboat. Ascend the steps from the River Walk into Bella on the River's candlelit dining room. With natural limestone rock walls, this secluded gem feels like an Italian grotto. At Hotel Havana's Ocho, sip Cuban-inspired craft cocktails in the stunning glass atrium overlooking the water. Before you head back to your room at Hotel Emma, San Antonio's award-winning boutique hotel housed in the Pearl Brewery, share a dessert at Southerleigh or one last glass of wine at High Street Wine Company. Maybe all that sugar will move you to dance to the music of a live band down at JAZZ, TX, a live-music hotspot.



GO RIO
River Cruise



JAZZ, TX



La Cantera Loma de Vida Spa

Becker Vineyards in
Fredericksburg

DAY 2: SPAS, SPORTS, AND SHOPPING AT LA CANTERA

Sometimes quality time means treating yourself to a relaxing day before joining your partner for an evening together. Out where the highways roll into the Texas Hill Country, golfers tee off at La Cantera Resort and Spa's Palmer Golf Course. At La Cantera Resort's new Loma de Vida Spa, take in magnificent views from the outdoor rain-fall shower of your private sky loft. The open-air Shops at La Cantera features upscale stores and a variety of stylish dining options including Whiskey Cake Kitchen & Bar, where you and your love-bird can swing from hanging nest chairs while sampling a selection of its expansive craft-cocktail program. Enjoy a nightcap at Sire Bar and count the shooting stars over the hills.



LOCAL'S TIP: RIDESHARE COMPANIES HELP YOU GET AROUND SAN ANTONIO, BUT SNUG PEDICAB AND HORSEDRAWN CARRIAGES TURN YOUR TRANSPORTATION INTO A ROMANTIC DESTINATION. ARRANGE FOR A HOTEL PICKUP AND FLOWERS FROM YELLOW ROSE CARRIAGE COMPANY OR ENJOY THE QUICK TURNS AROUND ALAMO CITY'S VIBRANT NIGHTSPOTS FROM BEHIND THE BICYCLE OF A SAN ANTONIO PEDICAB.

DAY 3: HILL COUNTRY WINE TOUR

The nine-million-acre Texas Hill Country wine region is a tour for the eyes and palate. Visit your favorite local winery, or, depending on the season, hop on a wine trail, such as the springtime Wine and Wildflower Trail, and enjoy special offerings and tours. Let service providers like Cottonwood Wine Tours of San Antonio and Fredericksburg Limo & Wine Tours take care of the driving so you can relax in a private car or chartered bus. Many of the Hill Country's more than fifty wineries are just a few turns away from charming towns like Fredericksburg and Comfort, which offer shopping, restaurants, and lively street festivals. Make sure your ride gets you back to town in time for a world-class performance at the Tobin Center for Performing Arts, or the Majestic Theatre, Empire Theatre, or Aztec Theater.

TRENDY

Tour

DAY 1: ICE HOUSES, DISTILLERIES, AND LIVE MUSIC

Before taking your first steps down to the River Walk below Hotel Valencia, load up on empanadas at Dorrego's, the hotel's new, beautifully tiled Argentinian restaurant. Kick back at San Antonio's many outdoor ice houses and growler stations: the Friendly Spot, La Tuna Grill, GS1221, Big Hops at The Bridge, and Hills & Dales Ice House. If you seek to warm your insides, check out San Antonio's many local spirits makers: Dorcol for brandy, Rebecca Creek Distillery for whisky and vodka, Ranger Creek Brewing and Distilling for whiskey, Garrison Brothers for bourbon, Edwards Ridge Distillery for rum, Artisan on Alamo for vodka, and the new Seersucker Distillery for gin. All offer sips of their creations on tours or at on-site bars, and many feature live music on weekends, but only Maverick Whiskey lets you sip craft whiskey distilled by Kenneth Maverick, direct descendent of Declaration of Independence-signer Samuel Maverick. The retrofitted 1918 bank building that houses the Maverick Whiskey distillery and tasting room sits on the site of the original Maverick homestead. For live music and



revelry, spend your evening on the St. Mary's Strip at revamped venues Paper Tiger, The Amp Room, The Mix, Limelight, Hi-Tones, or La Botánica. New to the strip are The Squeezebox—a live music and dancing venue that features Tejano, conjunto, and cumbia music in addition to DJ sets—and Jandro's—a nightclub that celebrates live music, local art, and the chill factor. Fuel up before the show at the strip's newest restaurant, Chisme, and recover with late night eats (and maybe one more song) at Faust Tavern.

Ranger Creek Brewing & Distilling



LOCAL'S TIP: THE LAST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT 9 P.M.,

HUNDREDS OF CYCLISTS CONVERGE IN FRONT OF THE ALAMO BEFORE SETTING OFF ON A MASS RIDE THROUGH THE CITY. RIDE ROUTES ARE UNANNOUNCED, BUT PLAN AHEAD TO BYOB AS THE GROUP TAKES SEVERAL SOCIAL STOPS ALONG THE WAY.

DAY 2: HIPSTER HAVENS SOUTHTOWN AND DIGNOWITY

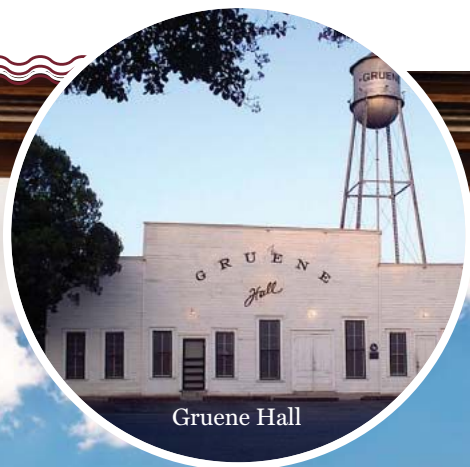
With their fingers on the pulse of the up-and-coming and affordable, hipsters are heading east to the Dignowity neighborhood. After joining Mobile Om for sunrise yoga on the historic Hays Street Bridge or one of their other many downtown pop-up locations, wake up with a coffee at Estate Coffee Company, where you can observe the entire coffee roasting process or peruse a curated selection of specialty goods at Oak & Salt, which shares the residence. From your bike, admire historical homes and contemporary architectural renovations, and then treat yourself to hearty burgers and soul food at eastside establishments Mrs. Kitchen Soul Food and Bakery, Lord's Kitchen, Mark's Outing, or Tony G's Soul Food (in St. Paul's Square). Find an original gift



LOCAL'S TIP: SAN ANTONIO HAS LOADS OF FREE EVENTS AND FESTIVALS, MANY OF WHICH HAPPEN IN DOWNTOWN AND MIDTOWN: FREE MOVIES IN THE PARK FROM SLAB CINEMA, FREE LIVE MUSIC AT FARMERS MARKETS, FREE ADMISSION INTO BLUE STAR ART GALLERIES ON FIRST FRIDAYS, FREE CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES AT YANAGUANA GARDENS, AND BODY-MOVING CELEBRATIONS OF LIVE MUSIC AND DANCE AT LA VILLITA'S ARNESON RIVER THEATRE. TRAVIS PARK IS THE EPICENTER OF FREE EVENTS, SUCH AS MUSICAL AND DANCE PERFORMANCES, FITNESS BOOT CAMPS AND FESTIVALS, OUTDOOR MOVIES, AND OTHER SEASONAL SPECIAL EVENTS.

at Yeyah's Antiques & Oddities or GOOD Goods. Enjoy the live music, patio games, and food trucks at Alamo Beer Company or Burleson Yard Beer Garden, whose décor and cocktail menu are inspired by the nearby railroad tracks. Be sure to cruise the South Alamo Street's mile-long corridor of good times: restaurants, bars, ice houses, and art galleries. Dance late into the night at eastside favorite Tucker's Kozy Korner.

Alamo Beer Company



Gruene Hall





Villa Finale

DAY 3: TUBING AND SHOPPING IN NEW BRAUNFELS AND GRUENE

Tubing on the refreshing Comal and Guadalupe Rivers is a choose-your-own adventure float. Daring floaters ride the tube chute and rapids, while those preferring a more leisurely drift can wave from beneath the cypress trees. Several companies offer tube and raft rentals and will give you a ride to the launch site. The ultimate ride for convenience and price (free, if you have your own tube) is the Horseshoe Loop. This half-hour to two-hour float, depending on water levels, ends less than a half mile from entry, which makes it easy to ride the loop and grab midway snacks all day. Non-swimmers explore the boutiques and shops of New Braunfels' West San Antonio Street and downtown Historic Gruene. At the end of the day, enjoy live performances from country music legends of today and tomorrow at Whitewater Amphitheater or at Texas' oldest dancehall, Gruene Dance Hall. Cozy up for an outdoor movie at the Stars and Stripes Drive-in Theatre.



LOCAL'S TIP: WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE TO VISIT AND TOUR ALL FIVE OF SAN ANTONIO'S SPANISH COLONIAL MISSIONS, ESPECIALLY IF YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF VIA'S VIVA MISSIONS BUS ROUTE, YOU MIGHT PREFER TO FOCUS ON TWO OR THREE IN A SINGLE DAY. THOSE CLOSEST TO DOWNTOWN—MISSIONS SAN ANTONIO DE VALERO (THE ALAMO), CONCEPCIÓN, AND SAN JOSÉ—RECEIVE THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS, WHILE MISSIONS SAN JUAN AND ESPADA ARE TYPICALLY MORE SERENE. ESPADA'S HISTORIC ACEQUIA (AQUEDUCT) AND DAM, THE OLDEST IN THE NATION, ARE STILL IN USE TODAY.

CULTURAL *Adventure*

DAY 1: HISTORIC ADVENTURES DOWN SOUTH

From your newly restored early-twentieth-century room at The St. Anthony Hotel, plan your tour of the five eighteenth-century Spanish Colonial missions that earned UNESCO World Heritage status. About a mile from the stone steps of the Alamo, the River Walk's expanded Mission Trail will lead you to Missions Concepción, San José, San Juan, and Espada. While you're headed south, take a self-guided walking tour through King William's Greek Revival, Victorian, and Italianate homes before visiting the Steves Homestead Museum and Villa Finale. Making use of its historic charm, Southtown is full of popular bars and restaurants housed in retrofitted spaces. At Liberty Bar, guests enjoy contemporary American and Texas fare in a former convent, now painted pink, while patrons at Bliss dine in an elegantly redesigned gas station. Guests at Battalion, one of Southtown's newest upscale restaurants, sip wine in the old Fire Station No. 7, built in 1924. In addition to housing the city's longest-running contemporary art space, Blue Star Arts Complex, a redeveloped ice- and cold-storage warehouse, hosts an assortment of art galleries, working studios, boutique art shops, and delicious food and drink.



San Antonio
Botanical Garden

DAY 2: MUSEUMS

If you only have one day to explore San Antonio's exceptional museums, you're going to have to make some tough choices. Western buffs and Texas naturalists gravitate to the Briscoe Western Art Museum—where visitors admire art, history, and culture of the American West—and The Witte Museum, which showcases Texas nature, science, and culture. The San Antonio Museum of Art and the McNay Art Museum exhibit paintings, sculpture, and other works of art in a retrofitted brewery and mansion, respectively, and both feature beautiful courtyards. Stroll through the newly redeveloped San Antonio Botanical Garden before taking a driving tour through the charming Monte Vista Historic District. One of the largest and oldest historic districts in the nation, Monte Vista is filled with turn-of-the-twentieth century bungalows in an array of styles: Georgian, Moorish, Antebellum, Victorian, Queen Anne, Spanish, and Hollywood. Recharge with gumbo, rabbit crépinette, and New Orleans jazz at The Cookhouse or soak those tired feet under the cypress trees of San Pedro Springs Pool before catching a show at The Public Theater of San Antonio.

DAY 3: NATURAL HISTORY

Get out of town and hike where the dinosaurs roamed. Government Canyon State Natural Area is home to 110-million-year-old *Acrocanthosaurus* and *Sauroposeidon* tracks, casts of which were used in The Witte Museum renovation. Forty miles of hiking and biking trails lead visitors through 12,000 acres of gently rolling grasslands, rugged canyons, and shaded creek beds. Pack a picnic, or swap your hiking boots for cowboy boots and head a few miles east to John T. Floore's Country Store. An authentic Texas dance hall and cafe rather than an actual store, Floore's is known to many as the musical birthplace of country music legend Willie Nelson. Not ready to boot scoot back to the bunkhouse? Continue towards Boerne, which offers shopping, art galleries, turn-of-the-century European architecture, and picturesque gardens and greenbelts. ☼



LOCAL'S TIP: SAN ANTONIO HAS A THRIVING LITERARY COMMUNITY. IF YOU'RE NOT LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE HERE DURING THE ANNUAL SAN ANTONIO BOOK FESTIVAL, YOU CAN CATCH A READING AT THE TWIG BOOK SHOP OR TAKE A WRITING CLASS WITH GEMINI INK. THE SAN ANTONIO CENTRAL LIBRARY HOUSES AN IMPRESSIVE COLLECTION OF LATINO LITERATURE, COOKBOOKS, AND SIGNIFICANT NONFICTION WORKS WRITTEN IN BOTH ENGLISH AND SPANISH, AND LITERARY TREASURES AWAIT THOSE WILLING TO LOOK THROUGH THE STACKS AT CHEEVER BOOKS.