

Your cutie can see a variety of friendly animals up close at the petting zoo at Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch

Exotic Summer Safaris

10 wild nature adventures perfect for the whole family

Written by Liza Winkler and Kirsten Ham



Families can see and feed exotic animals like zebras during tours at Cherokee Trace Drive-Thru Safari



Explore lush tropical plants and butterflies at Moody Gardens' Rainforest Pyramid

Breakfast with a bison, tent-camping on the beach, relaxing in a hot tub as animals stroll past – whatever your family's flavor, these wild summer safaris have it all! With lots of spots within short driving distance of Katy, your family can embark on a new adventure, see amazing wildlife up close, and enjoy the great outdoors.

1 Cherokee Trace Drive-Thru Safari

1200 CR 4405 • Jacksonville
903-683-3322 • cherokeetrace.org

When was the last time you hung out with a Canadian wood bison or chatted with a miniature donkey? Within the green plush woods of East Texas lies Cherokee Trace, a 300-acre preserve home to wildlife like Arabian camels, llamas, and red kangaroos. Guests can ride in style in a zebra-print van or take a self-guided vehicle tour. Families are able to see and feed exotic species from five different continents. The park also offers a large picnic area, so bring a lunch and enjoy this exotic retreat.

2 Moody Gardens

1 Hope Blvd. • Galveston
800-582-4673 • moodygardens.com

A favorite spot for many Katy families, Moody Gardens features a giant aquarium with thousands of marine animals from eels to penguins. For a tropical escape, journey through the Rainforest Pyramid and see butterflies, Brazilian rainbow boas, and cobalt blue tarantulas up close in the facility's many exhibits. As one of the world's most authentic rainforest habitats, the pyramid provides guests with a larger-than-life experience viewing over 1,000 species of exotic plants and animals. Families can also have lunch on the Colonel Paddlewheel Boat, treat their inner scientist at Discovery Museum, relax in the Palm Beach wave pool, or enjoy a unique film at the 4D Special FX Theater. There is certainly no shortage of entertainment and fun!



Kids can hold anemones, crabs, and snails in the 20-foot touch tank at Sea Center Texas



Experience over 500 species of animals from the comfort of your vehicle at Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch

3 Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch

26515 Natural Bridge Caverns Rd. • San Antonio
830-438-7400 • wildliferanchtexas.com

Are all zebra patterns the same? For families interested in heading toward the New Braunfels and San Antonio areas this summer, the Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch is a definite must-see. The park spans 400 acres with four miles of winding roadway. Families can follow the safari map to view and feed about 500 exotic animals wandering the landscape, including zebras, giraffes, and lemurs, all from the comfort of their vehicle. Be sure to schedule feeding time for your family at the onsite Safari Camp Grill. There are several educational opportunities for self-guided or group-guided tours unlike any other, including animal specialist interaction in the Longneck Learning Center.

4 Sea Center Texas

300 Medical Dr. • Lake Jackson
979-292-0100 • tpwd.state.tx.us/seacenter

Experience the sensation of holding sea crabs, anemones, and snails in Sea Center's 20-foot touch tank. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department operates this 75-acre marine aquarium, fish hatchery, and education center. Families can enjoy visiting the various aquariums, such as the Gulf

Aquarium, which houses nurse sharks, gray snapper, Atlantic spade fish, and the state record moray eel. The facility contains a unique opportunity to view the world's largest redfish hatchery, a wetland exhibit, a children's fishing pond, and 36 one-acre fish culture ponds. Visit their website to access fun scavenger hunts that include word search puzzles, mazes, mad libs, and more.

5 Brazos Bend State Park

21901 FM 762 • Needville
979-553-5101 • brazosbend.org

Only a short drive from Katy, Brazos Bend State Park spans across 5,000 picturesque acres of the Texas coastal prairie. Families can observe animals like snakes, alligators, and tarantulas up close at the nature center. Outdoor enthusiasts can untangle their Twister Tail and Sutton Spoon lures at the park's six lakes. The George Observatory, located in the park, is a stargazer's paradise with domed telescopes and the Challenge Learning Center, which lets your cuties solve the problems of space travel. Learn about alligator etiquette and how to spot a swallow-tail throughout the park's guided hikes. You'll love seeing the park's lush ecosystem up close.

Katy's Finest Mexican Restaurant & Bar



*at LaCenterra Cinco Ranch
(under the clock tower)*

Las Alamedas



Lunch & Dinner Breakfast & Brunch Live Music Courtyard Dining Catering & Banquets

Located at LaCenterra
23501 Cinco Ranch Blvd.
(281) 347-3030
www.LasAlamedas.com

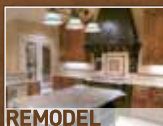
*A 30 year old tradition.
A new Katy favorite.*

Las Alamedas

Fine Mexican Restaurant and Bar
"Since 1980"



*Experience Infinite
Imagination*




encore
Group

281.344.2121
encorepools.com



6 Animal World and Snake Farm Zoo

5640 I-35 S. • New Braunfels
830-608-9270 • exoticanimalworld.com

On the outskirts of San Marcos lies the hidden treasure of the Animal World and Snake Farm Zoo. The facility has dazzled generations of animal lovers for over 40 years. Have you ever seen a lemur paint? Visit Lizzie Lemur and several canvas-loving crocodiles at the animal art exhibit. Interact with over 500 animals at the petting zoo, or observe feeding time with exotic creatures like alligators and primates. Families can also attend a variety of exciting events at the zoo, including reptile, animal, and snake encounter shows each day. Check their online calendar to help you plan your trip.



Your cutie will love
petting the friendly llamas
at The Exotic Resort Zoo

7 The Exotic Resort Zoo

235 Zoo Trail • Johnson City
830-868-4357 • zooexotics.com

The Exotic Resort Zoo offers a more compact zoo experience, located on 137 acres with several lakes and creeks designed to imitate the animals' natural habitats. Guided tours are offered throughout the day, and veterans like Omar the camel and Rusty the buffalo aren't shy - they eat food pellets right from visitors' hands. More than half of the animals in the park were at one time included among endangered species. Families can get up close and personal at the petting zoos, which house a variety of animals like attention-loving deer, kangaroos, and llamas. The resort offers five different cabins where you can become neighbors with a wallaby, all while enjoying amenities like pools and a game area. The zoo staff will even build a bonfire for you upon request.