



Live music and antique shopping in nearby Wimberley make Blue Hole Regional Park a preferred destination



Landa Park in New Braunfels allows easy access to the popular Comal River

Dreamy Texas Destinations

Relax this fall and enjoy the natural beauty of Texas with a guide to the best off-the-map destinations for Katy families

Written by Leigh Ann Mitchell and Ashley Lancaster



Barton Springs in Austin is a spring-fed swimming hole that stays cool and refreshing year-round



Fort Clark Springs is a historical military fort that has 18 holes of golf, swimming, hiking, and ATV trails



Jewel-bright waters underneath a waterfall at Hamilton Pool Preserve

Hamilton Pool Preserve (4 hours away)

24300 Hamilton Pool Rd., Dripping Springs

512-264-2740

parks.traviscountytexas.gov/find-a-park/hamilton-pool

Located just three-quarters of a mile upstream from the Pedernales River, this enchanting preserve is a 30,428-acre system of endangered species habitats and is the perfect place to hike with the family. The creek runs over a limestone cliff creating a stunning waterfall. Cool off with a dip in the refreshing waters! The pool fills up fast, so make sure to arrive early in order to gain entry.

Blue Hole Regional Park (3 hours away)

100 Blue Hole Ln., Wimberley

512-660-9111 | blueholeregionalpark.com

Located in Wimberley, which is already well-known as a popular antiques and weekend destination, has another perk to offer families with Blue Hole Regional Park. The swimming area is a naturally-fed spring with a shallow end for little ones. With 126 acres of walking trails and shaded



Barton Springs is a popular place to cool off with the family after sightseeing in Austin

lounging areas for concerts and picnics, it's the perfect family retreat. "We even have two swinging ropes over the deep end of the swimming hole, which is unique. You don't see them very often anymore," says Lauren Shrum, park director for the City of Wimberley.

Canyon Lake (3½ hours away)

Located 20 miles north of New Braunfels

canyon-lake.net

With 80 miles of beautiful shoreline to enjoy, Canyon Lake is located on the Guadalupe River and is one of the deepest lakes in Texas. With multiple parks located in the area, families can hang out, go camping, take part in water sports, catch a fish, or just relax on a beach chair. Fees and hours of operation will vary per park.



Rope swings provide hours of old-fashioned entertainment at Blue Hole Regional Park



Water enthusiasts spend hours boating, swimming, and fishing at Canyon Lake near San Antonio

Lake Buchanan (3½ hours away)

Located west of Burnet
highlandlakes.com/lakebuchanan

This Texas landmark is 30 miles long and is the second-largest of the Highland Lakes of Central Texas. Have a blast with numerous water sports, lodging, camping, a winery, and even cruise on the 200-person vessel to spot rarely seen bald eagle nests and enchanting waterfalls.

Barton Springs Pool (3½ hours away)

2201 Barton Springs Rd., Austin
512-867-3080
austintexas.gov/department/barton-springs-pool

A refreshing spot nestled in the heart of Austin, Barton Springs is a natural, spring-fed pool that maintains a constant chilly temperature of 68 to 70 degrees. Shelley Parks of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department says, "After a day of sightseeing, shopping, hiking, listening to music, or just having fun in Austin, Barton Springs pool is a great way to end the day on a cool note." Visit their website for hours of operation. Fees for residents, non-residents, and age groups will vary.

Fort Clark Springs (6 hours away)

PO Box 345, Bracketville
830-563-2493 | fortclark.com

With the most historical sites in the state of Texas, hotel rooms refurbished from the old barracks, an on-site restaurant, 18 holes of golf, and more, recreation director for the former U.S. military fort turned family-style resort David Box says, "Fort Clark Springs is truly a hidden gem of a family destination in Texas." The fort features hiking, mountain bike and ATV trails, swimming, and is also rich in U.S. and Texas history. It is a designated bird sanctuary with over 200 avian species to see.

Landa Park (3 hours away)

164 Landa Park Dr., New Braunfels
830-221-4000 | nbtexas.org

In addition to having all of the major amenities of a great family park like hiking trails, picnic areas, paddle boats, and more, Landa Park is unique because it gives families access to the Comal and Landa Springs, the two largest in the state. When you're done swimming in the crisp, spring-fed waters, explore the arboretum with over 50 species of trees, play a round of miniature golf, or do what the locals do, float the Comal River just up the road.

Burger's Lake (4 hours away)

200 Meandering Rd., Fort Worth
817-737-3414 | burgerslake.com

No family vacation would be complete without a 25-foot trapeze line over the water! Have a blast with epic waterslides, diving boards, volleyball courts, and more while you grill out and chill out. There are two sandy beaches for sunbathers and large trees for anyone who needs cool shade. Burger's Lake also includes certified lifeguards on duty and over 300 picnic tables.

Inks Lake State Park (3½ hours away)

3630 Park Rd. 4 W., Burnet
512-793-2223 | tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/inks-lake

Inks Lake State Park is known for its jewel-blue waters, stunning rock formations, and marvelously colorful sunsets. Located in Burnet, Texas, it has an endless world of activities for both land and water adventurers to choose from. Enjoy camping, scenic nature trails, searching for geocaches, swimming, water sports, playgrounds, and more. Visit their website for hours of operation.

Lake Somerville, Birch Creek Unit (1 hour away)

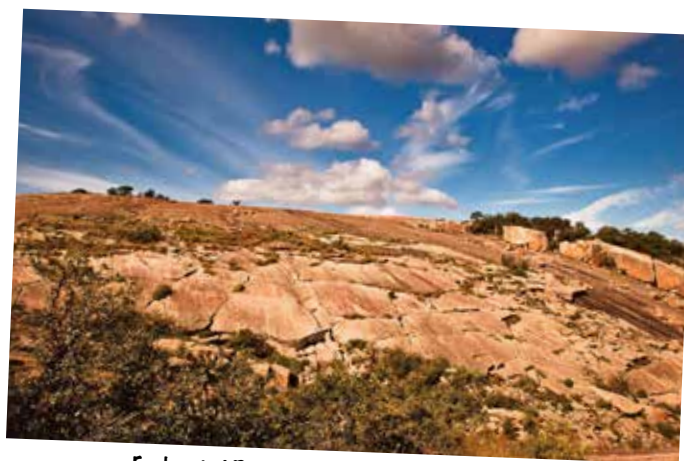
14222 Park Rd. 57, Somerville
979-535-7763 | tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lake-somerville

Those who love horses will love visiting the Birch Creek Unit. There are equestrian activities for you and your horses to participate in, as well as the best of camping, fishing, boating, and even birdwatching.

Enchanted Rock (3½ hours away)

16710 Ranch Rd. 965, Fredericksburg
830-685-3636 | tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/enchanted-rock

Made entirely of pink granite, Enchanted Rock is truly a Texas treasure. Bring your backpacks and go for a hike, rock climb, search for a challenging geocache, enjoy a relaxing picnic, or bird watch. As night sets in, be amazed at the beauty of the night sky in this stargazing utopia. Adult admission is \$7 and children are free. **KM**



Enchanted Rock is a well-known hiking and stargazing destination in Fredericksburg

LEIGH ANN MITCHELL is a graduate of Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University). She and her family hope to see the natural sights of the Lone Star State.

Please contact locations to verify hours and activities that may change due to weather or as a result of natural conditions.

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