A wild ride at Rio Vista Falls on San Marcos River
Photo Courtesy of San Marcos Convention and Visitors Bureau

Great Texas Water Rendezvous

WRITTEN BY JULIA TEMLYN PRINDLE

For many Katy families, fall is an optimal time for camping and outdoor recreation. Whether it's swimming in spring-fed pools, camping along your favorite river bank, or fishing for that prized catch, Texas has it all.

San Marcos River

The San Marcos River bubbles to life at Aquarena Springs in San Marcos, with the Blanco River adjoining four miles downriver, while the San Marcos continues to flow southeast for seventy-five miles. The mouth of the San Marcos is located along the Guadalupe River.

"The San Marcos River is great for a variety of activities, including floating peacefully downstream, tubing or kayaking down a series of rapids, or snorkeling in the clear, spring-fed waters," says Angela Boland, tourism promotion coordinator for the San Marcos Convention and Visitor Bureau. "The river is lined with beautiful parks shaded by canopies of large cypress trees - a great place for family barbeques or just a quiet place to unwind," she adds.

Activities on the San Marcos River include swimming, scuba diving, snorkeling, canoeing, kayaking, tubing, and camping. The nearby Aquarena Center, which is situated at Spring Lake, a San Marcos spring-fed lake, features a glass-bottom boat ride for a small fee. Additionally, those seeking whitewater rapids can visit the San Marcos Rio Vista Falls.

"Our springs, which come from the Edwards Aquifer and literally 'spring up' in the middle of San Marcos to create the San Marcos River, are very important to wildlife and people from central Texas to the Gulf Coast. At the coast, our spring flows are essential, especially during droughts, to keeping the bays healthy with enough fresh water to mix with the saltwater so that fish and crabs and shrimp can reproduce to populate the Gulf of Mexico. Many migratory birds depend on this bounty of the bays, including the internationally protected whooping crane," says Dianne Wassenich of the San Marcos River Foundation.

Guadalupe River

Just above and below Canyon Lake, the Guadalupe River flows freely, offering both exciting and relaxing activities for water lovers. The Upper Guadalupe River is perfect for whitewater rafting and kayaking, while the lower part is excellent for tubing and canoeing.

Coleto Creek Reservoir

The Coleto Creek Reservoir is located in the Guadalupe River Basin, 15 miles west-southwest of Victoria. The reservoir has a surface of 3,100 acres and 61 miles of shoreline. The average depth is 11 feet, while its maximum depth is 46 feet.

The area is great for camping, fishing, hiking, and boating. Fishermen can expect to find Largemouth and White bass; Hybrid striped bass; Crappie; Blue, Channel and Flathead catfish; and Bluegill and Red Ear sunfish.

Lake Travis

Considered one of the clearest lakes in Texas, Lake Travis is located on the Colorado River, just northwest of Austin, and flows through Travis and Burnet counties. It's 65 miles long, covers a surface of more than 18,000 acres, and reaches a maximum depth of 190 feet.

Activities include swimming, scuba diving, sailing, windsurfing, parasailing, fishing, boating, and camping. Among its many nearby parks is Hippie Hollow, the only clothing-optional public park in Texas.

Barton Springs Pool

Barton Springs Pool, located within Zilker Park, is the most popular swimming hole in Austin. The pool, fed from underground springs, formed when Barton Creek was dammed up. The water is so clear that you can literally see the bottom, which is made of natural rock and can be a bit slippery, so water shoes are recommended. There are steps for entry in varying depths. The pool is over 900 feet long, stretches three acres, and stays an average of 68°F (20°C) year round.

Aaron, Ryan, Kyle, and Mitch enjoy a little "land" time during their trip to the lake.

Barton Springs is another great way to cool off this summer

As you swim you'll find patches of water that are slightly warmer than others. Varying temperatures are normal in such a natural spring. The pool is open from 5 a.m. until 10 p.m., Friday through Wednesday. A small fee of less than $5 is charged for entry to the pool in warmer months. Swimming is free in the winter and year-round before 9 a.m. and after 9 p.m. However, lifeguards are not present during the after-hours, so swimming is at your own risk. The pool is closed for maintenance on Thursdays from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m. To find out if the pool is open, call the 24-hour hotline number at 512-867-3080.

Goose Island State Park

Goose Island State Park contains over 300 acres of coastal pleasures, including camping, boating, fishing, bird watching, and hiking, but not swimming. Fishermen will be in their element on a 1,620-foot-long lighted fishing pier, surrounded by Speckled trout, flounder, redfish, drum, oysters, and crab. Bird watchers can spy 500 bird species – especially the endangered whooping cranes.

While you're there, don't forget to visit the "Big Tree," considered one of the oldest and largest live oak trees in America. The tree is over 1,000 years old, stands 44 feet tall, and the trunk's circumference measures over 35 feet.

Canyon Lake

Canyon Lake, nestled 16 miles northwest of New Braunfels on the Guadalupe River, is one of the deepest lakes in Texas, averaging 43 feet with a maximum depth of 125 feet. It measures 8,308 acres of surface and has 80 miles of shoreline.

In addition to its gorgeous scenery, eight public parks are located within those many miles: Canyon Park & Canyon Beach Swim Area, Comal Park, Crane's Mill Park, Guadalupe Park, Jacob's Creek Park, North Park, Overlook Park, and Potter's Creek Park. These are all managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Lakeside park hours vary, but are open on average from 7 a.m. until 10 p.m.

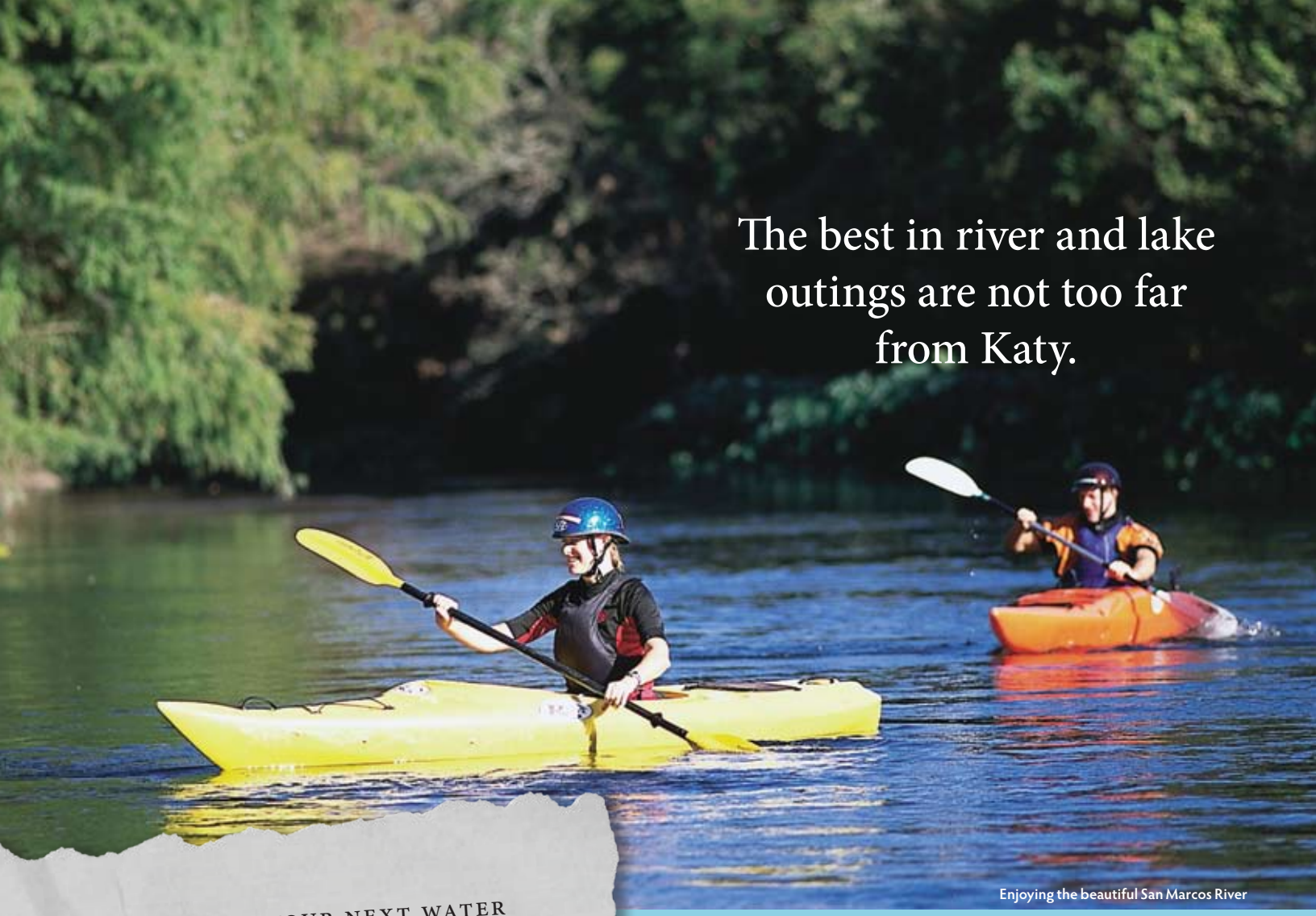
Seemingly endless activities abound in and around the lake and its parks. Visitors can enjoy swimming, water skiing, parasailing, scuba diving, boating, sailing, fishing, camping, and hiking. Fishermen can usually find Largemouth bass, Smallmouth bass, Guadalupe bass, White & Striped bass, and Catfish. The lake also features 23 boat ramps, two marinas, and a yacht club, as well as a golf course.

Possum Kingdom

Possum Kingdom Lake in Caddo is known for being a great place to water ski and as a great place to set up camp, since it's adjacent to Possum Kingdom State Park. The lake is 20,000 acres of clear,

Rio Vista tubing fun

The best in river and lake outings are not too far from Katy.



Enjoying the beautiful San Marcos River

blue water, which makes a beautiful spot for a family outing. The lake's maximum depth is 145 feet, with an average of 37 feet.

In addition to water skiing, families can swim in the fresh water lake and go camping, fishing, biking, boating, and more. Cabins are available, as well as campsites with electricity. Families will be delighted to see white-tailed deer in the park as well. **KM**

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TO PLAN YOUR NEXT WATER RENDEZVOUS, VISIT THESE ONLINE RESOURCES

Canyon Lake & Guadalupe River
CanyonLakeChamber.com

Coleto Creek Reservoir
GBRA.org/Recreation/ColetoCreek

San Marcos River
SanMarcosRiver.org

Lake Travis
LakeTravis.com

Barton Springs
ci.austin.tx.us/zilker/

Goose Island State Park
WildTexas.com/parks/gisp.php

Possum Kingdom Lake
PossumKingdomLake.com

Aaron, Ryan, Kyle and Mitch are ready for some tubing fun.