

By Rona Distenfeld

# More Than Just ANOTHER BEACH TOWN

**L**OOK BEYOND THE MILES of white sand beaches. Corpus Christi, along with neighboring Port Aransas and Padre Island, offers an amazing variety of things to do, making it a favorite destination for Winter Texans and vacationers.

In April and May Corpus Christi celebrates Buccaneer Days. A carnival, PRCA rodeo, barbecue contest, classical music festival, triathlon, fishing tournament and archery tournament are just a few of the events. A nighttime illuminated parade, featuring debutantes in spectacular bejeweled gowns costing more than \$10,000 each, is a highlight of the celebration.

## WORLD CLASS WINDS

Sailors and kite flyers delight in Corpus Christi's consistent breezes with regular competitions, such as the Wednesday night sailboat races in Corpus Christi Bay and the Texas State Kite Fly in mid-May. Bird Island Basin at Padre Island National Seashore has become a mecca for windsurfers who come from all over the country.

The annual Velocity games attract windsurfing and kite boarding competitors from all over the world to vie for titles and more than \$40,000 in cash prizes. Skateboarding and BMX exhibitions are also part of this Memorial Day weekend event.

## FROM THE SEA AND SKY

At the Texas State Aquarium, Sundance and Kimo welcome you in the new Dolphin Bay, where they play with you in the underwater viewing area. Other exhibits let you view sharks, watch the teaming life around drilling platforms, delight in the antics of river otters, and even pet sharks and rays.

Want to watch dolphins in the wild? Take the free ferry to Port Aransas and board the *Mustang*. The crew knows where the bottlenose dolphins like to play, and they share their extensive

knowledge of the local sea life. You never know what the trawl net will bring up for you to touch and see.

If fishing is your thing, be sure to take advantage of the many piers and charter boats in Port Aransas. As the fishing capital of Texas, Port A is home to the Deep Sea Roundup, the oldest and largest fishing tournament on the Gulf Coast, held the second weekend in July.

More than 360 species of birds call Corpus Christi home, at least part time. Hans A. Suter Wildlife Park is a nexus for four migratory paths, and counts of raptors, hummingbirds and butterflies are held here each year.

## A DAY AT THE BEACH

No trip to Corpus Christi would be complete without a visit to the beach, and there are lots of choices. If you're staying downtown, Corpus Christi Beach is handy. Port Aransas has many family beaches with lifeguards, and Mustang Island State Park allows camping and has rinse-off showers. J.P. Luby Surf Park's waves attract a younger crowd.

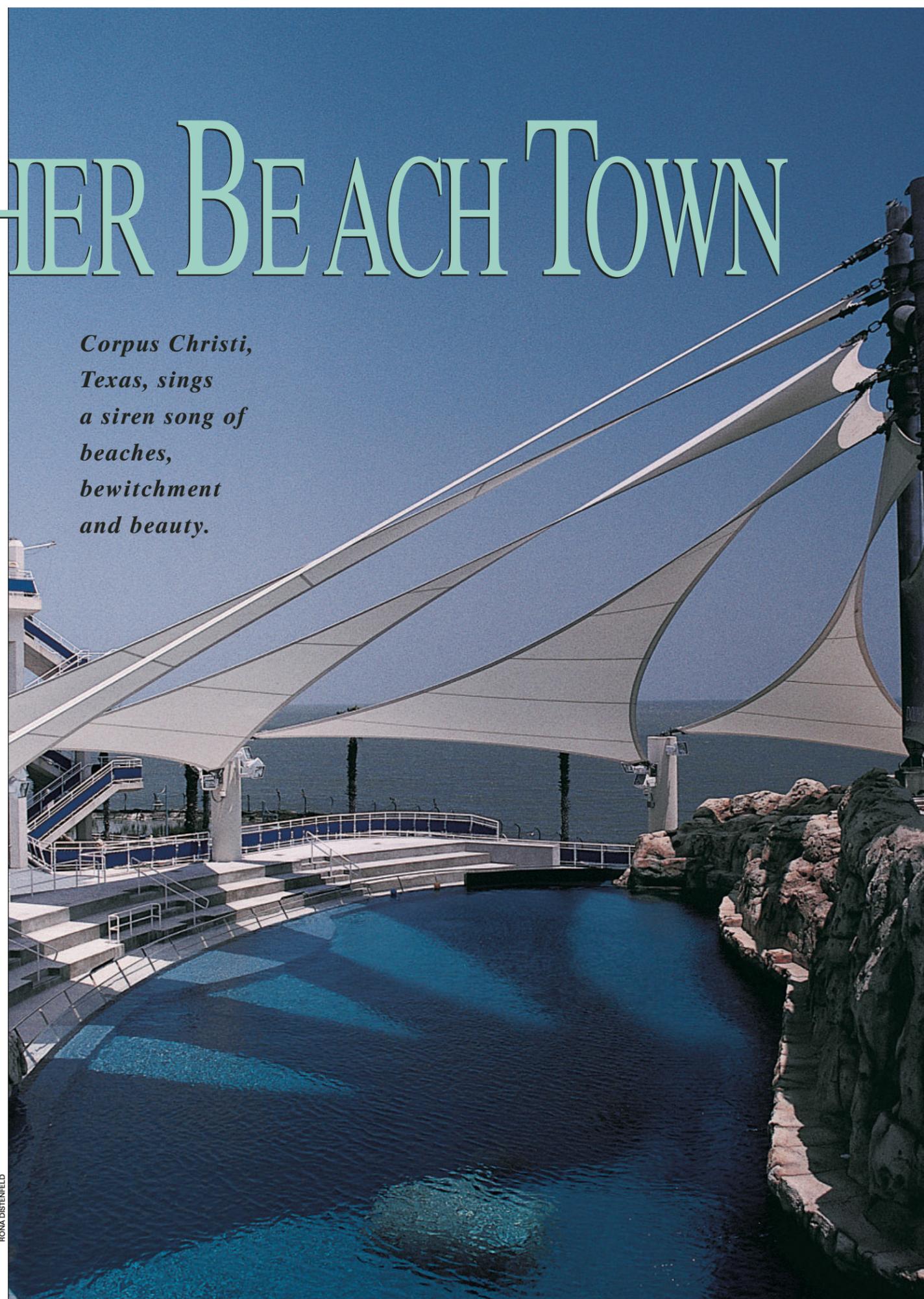
Padre Island National Seashore has more than 60 miles of beach to explore. The Malachite Visitor Center has showers, concessions, and ranger lectures and walking tours. If you like to camp on the beach, the Malachite Beach Campground has showers, sites for RVs and smaller vehicles, and 26 tent camping sites.

The park is also a nesting ground for sea turtles, including the endangered Kemp's-Ridley sea turtle. The park runs an active hatchling program, and visitors are welcome to attend the hatchling releases during the summer months.

## INDOOR ACTIVITIES

Ready to come inside? Tour the *USS Lexington*, the most famous aircraft carrier in U.S. naval history. Guides are available, and when you're done visit the Joe Jessel MEGA Theater for more great adventures.

*Corpus Christi, Texas, sings a siren song of beaches, bewitchment and beauty.*



## Before You Go

Visit AAA for maps and *TourBook* guides. Then check out:

- **Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau:** (800) 678-6232; [www.corpuschristi-tx-cvb.org](http://www.corpuschristi-tx-cvb.org)
- **Buccaneer Days:** (361) 882-3242; [www.bucdays.com](http://www.bucdays.com)
- **King High School Planetarium:** 5225 Gollihar, Corpus Christi; (361) 994-6917; [www.kingplanetarium.callernetwork.com](http://www.kingplanetarium.callernetwork.com)
- **Art Museum of South Texas:** (361) 825-3500; [www.stia.org](http://www.stia.org)
- **Velocity Games:** (866)-946-3922; [www.velocitygames.us](http://www.velocitygames.us)
- **Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History:** (361) 883-2862; [www.cctexas.com/?fuseaction=main.view&page=200](http://www.cctexas.com/?fuseaction=main.view&page=200)
- **USS Lexington:** (800) Lady-Lex; [www.ussexington.com](http://www.ussexington.com)
- **Asian Cultures Museum and Educational Center:** (361) 882-2641; [www.geocities.com/asiancm](http://www.geocities.com/asiancm)
- **Texas State Aquarium:** (800) 477-GULF; [www.texasstateaquarium.com](http://www.texasstateaquarium.com)
- **Dolphin Watch Nature Tours:** (361) 749-6969; [www.dolphinwatchnaturetours.com](http://www.dolphinwatchnaturetours.com)
- **Padre Island National Seashore:** (361) 949-8068; [www.nps.gov/pais](http://www.nps.gov/pais)
- **Sea turtle release information:** (361) 949-7163
- **Texas Treasure Casino Cruise:** (800) 472-5215; [www.txtreasure.com](http://www.txtreasure.com)



Watch dolphins play (left), or share a quiet moment (above) at the new Dolphin Bay at the Texas State Aquarium.

**The Philip Johnson-designed Art Museum of South Texas is the only fine arts museum in the coastal bend.**

For fine arts, visit the Philip Johnson-designed Art Museum of South Texas. Along with juried exhibitions, modern art shows and collections of Western art, the museum has hosted exhibits on motorcycles, surfing and miniature golf tees. There is also an interactive area for kids with costumes, blocks and books.

Kids also will delight in the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History and its interactive learning area and special kids' activities on Saturdays. The museum is the official repository for all recovered underwater artifacts from Texas waters, and the Columbus replica ships are docked here. Natural history exhibits teach about how snakes move, how birds and reptiles are similar, where a turtle's backbone is and more.

The Asian Cultures Museum and Educational Center is one of only five in the nation. It houses more than 8,000 objects and documents—the largest collection of artifacts to leave Japan in the 1950s. Arts



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and crafts from the Philippines, China and Korea can also be found here.

For a different kind of indoor activity, gamble, dine and enjoy quality entertainment on the Texas Treasure casino cruise.

**WHERE TO STAY**

With more than 8,000 hotel and motel rooms in the area, there's something for

every budget. From the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel Bayfront Tower, a stone's throw from the aquarium, to the Holiday Inn Sunspree on Padre Island's beach front, your ideal accommodation is here. Book ahead during peak summer months. ■

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