

HILL COUNTRY Heaven

If you think there's nothing but peaches in Fredericksburg, Texas, you're in for a surprise.

By Rona Distenfeld



Spinning demonstrations (inset) help visitors understand life in early-day Texas during Founders' Day at The Pioneer Museum. Butterflies flutter among the wildflowers (background) at Wildseed Farms. Lavender fields and *trompe l'oeil* paintings provide a backdrop for wine tasting at Becker Vineyards (opposite page, top).



WHEN YOU SPEND A FEW DAYS in Fredericksburg, Texas, you learn to expect the unexpected. This once sleepy town, with its strong German roots and shop-filled Main Street, has become a mecca for artists and entrepreneurs offering attractions that complement the local flavor.

On and off Main Street, you'll find a variety of interesting shops and restaurants. Stop at Quintessential Chocolates, the only place in the United States that makes award-winning Cutty Sark Scots Whisky liquid-center chocolates. Or visit Fischer & Wieser for award-winning salsas and preserves.

Antique lovers will delight in shops offering everything from fine crystal to wagon wheels. Art galleries feature local and national artists, and work by local artisans can be found in shops offering jewelry, textiles and gifts. Leather lovers can shop at Texas Jack's Wild West Outfitter, which supplied costumes for *Lonesome Dove* and other Western films.

When it's time to refuel, there are restaurants for every taste and budget, from the Airport Diner's 1950s-style soda fountain to salads at the Peach Tree Gift Gallery & Tea Room to traditional German fare at the Der Lindenbaum.

LIVING HISTORY

History buffs will find their niche at both ends of Main Street. The Admiral Nimitz Museum and the National Museum of the Pacific War tell the story of America's last five-star admiral, Chester Nimitz, and the U.S. role in World War II's Pacific Theater. Many of the displays are interactive, and the Japanese Garden of Peace is a lovely place to relax and rest.

At the other end of Main Street, The Pioneer Museum maintains 11 historic structures on a three-acre site that also includes native plant gardens and thousands of artifacts. Group tours are available, and all guides are German-speaking Fredericksburg natives. On Mother's Day weekend, the museum hosts a Founders' Day event featuring sheep-shearing, stone carving, spinning and other pioneer ways of life. From May through Sep-

tember, the grounds are home to Fredericksburg Saturday Night, a monthly showcase of American music.

In between, on the Marktplatz Town Square, the Vereins Kirche Museum offers exhibits on county history. East of town, the Fort Martin Scott Frontier Army post gives a glimpse of frontier life in the 1800s with walking tours, living history events and the Annual Inter-Tribal Pow-Wow, featuring American Indian tribal dancers, food and crafts.

More modern fans of history and politics can visit the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park. Take a ranger-guided tour of LBJ's boyhood home, also known as the Texas White House. A permanent exhibit chronicles America's involvement in the Vietnam War with photos and video footage not available elsewhere.

WINE AND WILDFLOWERS

Texas' wine reputation is growing, and there are more than a dozen wineries in and around Fredericksburg, 16 of them on the Texas Hill Country Wine Trail. All have tasting rooms and offer tours. Some have bed-and-breakfast accommodations. Be sure to try the mead at Bell Mountain Vineyards and Winery, and don't miss the lavender fields and *trompe l'oeil* paintings at Becker Vineyards.

Wine lovers can also do some serious tasting at Cuvée Bistro Market & Wine Bar, where you can choose from more than 500 bottles or try dozens of wines by the glass to accompany your gourmet meal and house-made breads.

The Hill Country is even more famous for its wildflowers than its wine, and spring is the peak season. Drive the Heart of Texas Trail or visit Wildseed Farms, the largest working wildflower farm in the United States. Pick flowers, purchase wildflower seeds for specific regions of the country and enjoy the butterflies.

ACCOMMODATIONS TO SUIT YOUR STYLE

From luxurious inns to RV parks, Fredericksburg has your room waiting. Rose Hill Manor offers elegant dining and decor in a plantation-style hotel featuring

YOUR HOME TEAM

WHATEVER YOUR REAL ESTATE NEEDS,
TURN TO AAA —
AND GET EXCLUSIVE BENEFITS ON:

BUYING OR SELLING A HOME:

Work with a highly trained,
local professional you select
from the LendingTree real
estate agent network.

HOME EQUITY:

- No closing cost options
- APR at Prime +0.0% or better*

MORTGAGES AND REFINANCING:

- Save an average of \$1,200 at closing**



LendingTree AAA

TOLL-FREE
(866)596-8946

OR aaa.com/LendingTree

Reservation Code: aa13-0105

No closing cost option not available to all borrowers. Eligibility for no closing cost option depends upon your creditworthiness, loan-to-value ratio, property location and other factors, and will be determined by each Lender independently. Option may require minimum loan amount and for line to remain open for two years, with such requirements to be determined by each Lender independently.

*The APR is based on Prime Rate plus 0.0% as published in the Wall Street Journal (4.25% APR as of June 30, 2004), is variable and subject to change. Maximum APR will not exceed 25%, as limited by state law. Your initial APR may be higher depending on your creditworthiness, initial loan amount and other factors. Fees vary by state and lender. For AAA members that qualify, closing costs are \$0 and for members that don't meet the qualifications, estimated closing costs on a \$50,000 line are between \$100 and \$900. The lender may include additional fees to open the plan of up to \$500, depending upon the lender; appraisal fee of \$0 to \$250; mortgage taxes in some states ranging from a flat \$100 to \$5.50 per \$1000 borrowed; annual fee of \$0 to \$75. Hazard, property, title and flood insurance may be required. Minimum property values and maximum loan-to-value ratios apply and a property appraisal may be required. Final loan approval is subject to verification of acceptable income and credit.

**Based on Freddie Mac PMMS comparison.

For program details, including LendingTree's current state licensing information and disclosures, you can go to www.aaa.com/lendingtree, e-mail a LendingTree representative at aaa@lendingtree.com or call 1-866-596-8946. LendingTree, Inc., located at 11115 Rushmore Drive, Charlotte, NC 28277, is a duly licensed real estate broker and mortgage broker as required.

LendingTree is required to disclose the following licenses by state law: AZ Mortgage Broker License No. MB-0902469; Licensed Real Estate Broker, CA Department of Real Estate, (916) 227-0931, License No. 01230150; CA Finance Lender; CT Mortgage Broker (not a CT Mortgage Lender); GA Residential Mortgage Licenser; IL Residential Mortgage Licenser, License No. 5435; IS Licensed Mortgage Co., No. 99-827; Licensed Mortgage Lender, MD Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, License No. 4739; MA Licensed Small Loan Agency, License No. SL 0533; MA Licensed Mortgage Broker, License No. MB1942; MS Licensed Mortgage Co., No. 99-827; Licensed Mortgage Lender, License No. 5435; NH & 273 MB; IT Technologies in lieu of true name LendingTree, Inc., Registered Mortgage Broker—NY Banking Department, Licensed Mortgage Broker—NJ Department of Banking and Insurance; OH Mortgage Broker Registration, MB 3006 & MB 3007, 37812 2nd Street, Willoughby, OH 44094; Licensed First Mortgage Broker, PA Department of Banking (also licensed pursuant to PA Secondary Mortgage Loan Act); RI Licensed Broker.

four-poster beds, antiques and views of the Pedernales River. Gourmet dinners are served Wednesday through Sunday, and cooking classes are available.

MORE HOME-STYLE HOSPITALITY

Prefer to be pampered in a healthful way? The Fredericksburg Herb Farm's bed-and-breakfast surrounds you with healing scents and homegrown tastes. The Quiet Haus day spa offers massage therapy and natural skin care treatments. The farm's knowledgeable staff can help you choose herbs for your own garden.

The vintage-style Hangar Hotel takes you to the 1940s, especially during one of the vintage airplane shows. Free broadband connections provide a modern comfort. If you'd rather stay in a rustic but well-appointed cabin, try the Cotton Gin.

Pick peaches in the summer, stomp grapes in the fall, bird-watch in the winter and enjoy the wildflowers in the spring. You'll find at least two to three events every weekend of the year. ■

RONA DISTENFELD of Austin, Texas, is a regular contributor.

Keeping in Touch as You Travel the Lone Star State

Keep this list at hand, along with your AAA Texas *TourBook* guide and maps.

- **Admiral Nimitz Museum State Historical Site and National Museum of the Pacific War**
(830) 997-8600 or (830) 997-4379
www.nimitz-museum.org
- **Airport Diner**
(830) 997-4999
www.airportdiner.com
- **Becker Vineyards**
(830) 644-2681
www.beckervineyard.com
- **Bell Mountain Vineyards and Winery**
(830) 685-3297
www.bellmountainwine.com
- **The Cotton Gin Restaurant & Lodging**
(830) 990-5734
www.cottonginlodging.com
- **Cuvée Bistro Market & Wine Bar**
(830) 990-1600
www.cuveewine.net
- **Der Lindenbaum**
(830) 997-9126
- **Fischer & Wieser**
(830) 997-7194
www.jelly.com
- **Fort Martin Scott Frontier Army Post**
(830) 997-9895
www.fortmartinsscott.com
- **Fredericksburg Convention and Visitors Bureau**
(888) 997-3600
www.fredericksburg-texas.com
- **Fredericksburg Herb Farm**
(800) 259-HERB (4372)
www.fredericksburgherbfarm.com
- **Hangar Hotel**
(830) 997-9990
www.hangarhotel.com
- **Lyndon B. Johnson National Historic Park**
(803) 868-7128, ext. 245
www.nps.gov/lyjo
- **Peach Tree Gift Gallery & Tea Room**
(830) 997-9527
www.peach-tree.com
- **Pioneer Museum and Vereins Kirche Museum**
(830) 997-2835
www.pioneermuseum.com
- **The Quiet Haus**
(830) 997-8615
www.fredericksburgherbfarm.com/spa/index.htm
- **Quintessential Chocolates**
(803) 842-3382
- **Rose Hill Manor**
(877) ROSEHIL (767-3445)
www.rose-hill.com
- **Texas Hill Country Wineries**
www.texaswinetrail.com
- **Texas Jack's Wild West Outfitter**
(800) Texjack (839-5225)
www.texasjacks.com
- **Wildseed Farms**
(800) 848-0078
www.wildseedfarms.com