

In MY Town...

Alumni tell about where they live

SAN ANTONIO, TX (pop. 1.2 million)

by patti shackelford larsen '72

¡Bienvenidos!"

"Every Texan has two homes, his own and San Antonio."

That phrase originated with historian/folklorist J. Frank Dobie, and it also applies to those of us who have adopted Texas as home. That's me. Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pa., I relocated to San Antonio in the 1970s and after one winter in this charming city, I was hooked. Now the eighth largest city in the country, San Antonio is located about 140 miles north-west of the Gulf of Mexico. It's a city of contrasts, a rare blend of history and progress.

And, ahem, did I mention that we're the home of the 2005 NBA World Champions? Our San Antonio Spurs have now won three titles in seven seasons. Okay, Pistons fans, enough said!

Now to the questions. . .

What do you have to see before you leave town?

The Alamo. The missions in the area are living monuments to San Antonio's Spanish and Native American roots. One of these missions is the Alamo, "the shrine of Texas liberty," and yes, it's "located" in the middle of downtown! Part of the original Mission San Antonio de Valero, the Alamo made its mark on history in 1836, when a small band of 189 "Texians" led by Jim Bowie, David Crockett, and Col. William Barrett Travis defiantly stood their ground against General Antonio López de Santa Anna's Mexican army of 1,800 soldiers. (www.thealamo.org) Their ultimate sacrifice steeled the resolve of Sam Houston's soldiers, who with cries of, "Remember the Alamo!" defeated Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto, and Texas was born.

Be sure to also stop at the historic bar in the Menger Hotel, next to the Alamo, where Teddy Roosevelt recruited his Rough Riders.

The Riverwalk – the Paseo del Rio – is more than three miles of winding pathways along the banks of the San Antonio River – 20 feet below street level. It's the heart of San Antonio's tourism industry and its flagstone paths and footbridges are lined with riverside cafes, restaurants featuring every cuisine imaginable, gleaming modern hotels, specialty shops and boutiques, all mixed in with quiet, park-like stretches of greenery and towering cypress trees. Dine aboard open-air cruisers that wind along the Riverwalk. It's the location of wildly popular parades – where the floats really float. The Holiday River Parade (the day after Thanksgiving), the River Parade during Fiesta, and oh, yes, those Spurs Championship Parades! More than 300,000 people lined the banks of the River for this year's championship celebration. (Which reminds me, dare I mention visiting the SBC Center, where our Spurs dethroned the Pistons? Oops, mentioned it again. Sorry.)

The Alamo and the Riverwalk are Texas' top two tourist attractions.

What's the best time of year to visit?

All year long is the best time, but Christmas – along the Riverwalk, 150,000 lights in our trees, topped by a couple of billion stars, is a personal favorite. The Alamo Bowl, ESPN's

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top rated bowl game last season, happens in late December. And of course, Fiesta! (www.fiesta-sa.org) One of this nation's premiere festivals, Fiesta is a 10-day, city-wide, fun-filled, multicultural, family-oriented celebration. With over 100 different events, it's the biggest party and greatest community benefit in the state of Texas. Fiesta 2006 is April 21-30. We also are in the circuit and regularly host the NCAA Men's Final Four, Women's Final Four, regional and sub-regional rounds, plus other NCAA events secured by our San Antonio Sports Foundation. Check out their website at www.sanantoniosports.org.

Where's the best place to eat and why?

From quesadillas to roasted quail, San Antonio offers restaurants to please any palate. We're defined by our Tex-Mex fare and barbeque; perfectly smoked brisket and totally decadent enchiladas are plentiful. But there's so much more. We have top-flight steak houses, **Morton's, The Palm, Little Rhein Steak House**, as well as ultra-contemporary bistros and offerings from German to Persian, Vietnamese to Indian, Chinese, Italian, and Japanese. The Riverwalk has them all, but they're also found in every sector of the city. Riverwalk favorites include **Boudros, Rio Rio, the County Line** (great barbeque), **Zuni Grill, Casa Rio**, and many more. There are also lots of fun, funky clubs, like **Mad Dogs, Howl at the Moon, Dick's Last Resort**, and **Jim Cullum's Landing** for some great jazz.

What are the two best streets to drive down to get a feel for the place: its charm, architecture, and residences?

King William District – A 25-square block area south of downtown on the east bank of the San Antonio River is one of

the city's most beautiful residential areas. It is the state's first zoned historic district. Restored houses and museums – just charming.

Commerce Street – the longest street in the city – 14.8 miles and 110 blocks. It runs east and west through the center of the city. Traveling along the route gives visitors a flavor of the multicultural nature of the city, as well as its central business district, the Alamodome, Marriott Riverwalk and Rivercenter Hotels, Rivercenter Mall, plus office buildings, the convention center, new convention headquarters hotel, and City Hall.

Houston Street - the arts district, plus restaurants, clubs, museums, hotels, and it's just one block off Commerce St.

Any unique phrases?

Since there are almost as many people who have relocated to San Antonio from other U.S. cities as locals, you'll hear that reflected in accents and phrases spoken throughout the city. However, "Y'all" is sprinkled into virtually every conversation and is a universally acceptable word. My personal favorite: "I may not have been born in San Antonio, but I got here as fast as I could."

Final thoughts?

Will Rogers said there are only four unique cities in the United States: Boston, San Francisco, New Orleans, and San Antonio. There is so much more to see and do, I encourage everyone to check out the San Antonio Convention and Visitors Bureau web site at www.sanantoniovisit.com and The Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce web site at www.sachamber.org.

Other Stuff

San Antonio, "The Soul of Texas"
Population: 1.2 million (the Metropolitan Statistical Area almost 1.6 million)
Eighth largest city in the country



Bob Howen