

*Visit* GALVESTON 

PRE-CLASS READING &  
REFERENCE MATERIALS



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## PRE-CLASS READING & REFERENCE MATERIALS

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

THIS READING MATERIAL PROVIDES THE BASIS FOR CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND OPEN-BOOK EXAM.

BEFORE YOUR SCHEDULED CLASS, PLEASE

- READ THIS MATERIAL THOROUGHLY
- COMPLETE ALL EXERCISES
- HAVE MATERIALS WITH YOU IN THE CLASS

### QUESTIONS?

VISIT GALVESTON

(409) 797-5000

INFO@VISITGALVESTON.COM

WWW.VISITGALVESTON.COM





## CONGRATULATIONS!

THANK YOU for your decision to become a Certified Tourism Ambassador™ (CTA) – a nationwide designation in the hospitality industry. Your participation in the Galveston Island Tourism Ambassador Program demonstrates your willingness to enhance the quality of the visitor experience, as well as helping the island shine in the eyes of the visitor.

A great deal of research and planning has gone into making this a fun and valuable experience for you. The Galveston Island Tourism Ambassador Program will give you the knowledge, tools and resources to better serve your guests. In addition, it will provide you with continuous learning opportunities to keep you informed about new attractions and other exciting developments within our community, while helping you satisfy annual certification renewal requirements.

The program was designed to meet your needs. As the program expands throughout the island, we encourage you to provide recommendations on how we can make the program even better.

Congratulations on taking this important step! We wish you much success as you go forward as a Certified Tourism Ambassador™ for our community!

Remember, it all starts with a visit and **YOU** make the difference in the visitor experience!



*“I shortchanged myself. I should have started earlier and devoted more time to reading this document. I had no idea it was so full of information of interest.”*

## **A message from the Tourism Ambassador Institute<sup>®</sup>**

Welcome to the *Certified Tourism Ambassador™ (CTA)* program, the only industry-recognized front-line certification program for the tourism industry.

### **CTA Is Certification, Not a Class**

The CTA designation will be with you for your entire career, if you renew annually.

To earn the CTA certification, you are required to meet all requirements, including reading this document, completing the exercises, engaging in active class participation, and passing the exam.

CTAs agree that it’s a good investment in their future.



## **You Are Part of Something Big – CTAs Hold International Status and Prestige**

You will join over 56,000 individuals who have become CTAs since the program's founding in 2006.

The CTA pin and initials behind your name symbolize to visitors that you are knowledgeable and committed to their experience.

## **You'll Get Out of It What You Put into It – Don't Blast Through the Reading**

Read the material over several days, rather than "speed-reading" in a single session. Even the most devoted will experience reader fatigue, if they try to read it all at once.

## **Keep and Use This as a Reference Tool**

This copyrighted document is yours to keep and use as a reference tool, including the *Quick Reference Guide and Index*. Add your own notes or pages to make it more useful to you.

## **Your Learning Doesn't End with the Class**

The status and prestige of the CTA designation are strengthened by CTAs who understand the importance of continuing their learning over time. As a result, they are functioning at a higher level as a tourism industry professional.

## **This Program Is Designed for You**

What will you learn? You determine the value of the learning experience. You'll get out of it what you put into it.

**We look forward to welcoming you to the CTA family!**



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## **INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **Program Objective**

To increase regional tourism by inspiring front-line employees and volunteers to turn every visitor encounter into a positive experience.

The Galveston Island Certified Tourism Ambassador Program is designed to give you – as a front-line tourism industry employee or volunteer – learning experiences that will build upon your knowledge of the region and your performance in serving your customers.

It will help you answer the wide variety of questions you get from visitors and will increase your awareness of, and your ability to use, available information resources. It also gives you a chance to meet one another, learn from one another's experiences and celebrate together!

The premise is simple: If front-line employees and volunteers (those who come into immediate contact with the visitor) provide quality service to visitors (conference attendees, leisure travelers, business travelers, etc.), those visitors are more likely to have a positive experience.

When visitors have positive experiences, they are more likely to return and are more likely to share positive impressions with their friends.

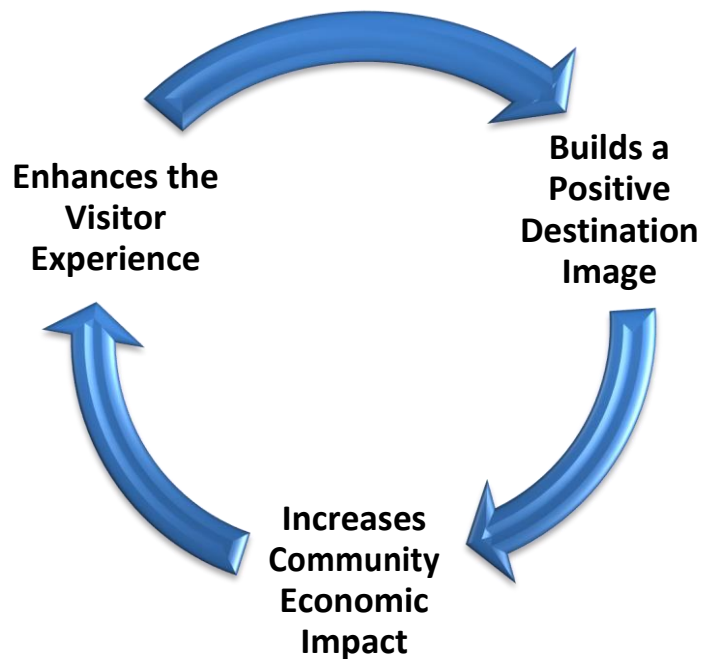
Everyone benefits – visitors, the tourism industry (including you) and the local economy.

## Think about the big picture.

When you enhance the visitor experience, you contribute to building a positive image for our region, which has a positive impact on the economy.

The benefits cycle looks like this:

### CTA PROGRAM BENEFITS CYCLE<sup>®</sup>



## THE VISION OF THE CTA PROGRAM

What makes Galveston Island so special?

What draws more than 8 million visitors to our area each year? Why do people like to live here?

Is it our 32 miles of relaxing beaches, our incredible history, our striking architecture...or is it the people?



Many cities boast fabulous restaurants, interesting sightseeing, and unique attractions – but inevitably, the most memorable experiences we have as a traveler involve the people we meet.

This is the foundation of the Galveston Island Tourism Ambassador Program.

Knowing your area and taking pride in sharing it with visitors does make an impression!

## More and More Visitors Are Coming Here!

Our region is experiencing an exciting period of growth. People not only want to move here, but they also want to visit to experience our rich heritage and the beautiful, unique surroundings in which we live. As our destination increases in popularity, thousands of people will be experiencing our area for the first time.

That's why our Galveston Island tourism leaders realized that it was time to unite the front-line to better serve our current visitors and to prepare for the future. Many exciting events and developments are on the horizon for Galveston that will make our destination even more popular to visitors.

Will we be ready? Yes! And, each Certified Tourism Ambassador™ will play a big part in helping us welcome these visitors and give them an experience they'll remember FOREVER.

### Share the Vision...

Imagine the year 2030 – hundreds of people throughout Galveston Island will have been trained, certified, and renewed as CTAs.

Everywhere you turn CTAs will be working together AND going the extra mile to answer visitor questions and to enhance the visitor experience.

What happens as a result?

- Everyone around the country is talking about our area
- More conferences and visitors come to Galveston Island
- Our number of CTAs keeps getting bigger and better!

**IMAGINE THE POWER!!!**

*“The most memorable experiences we have as a traveler involve the people we meet.”*

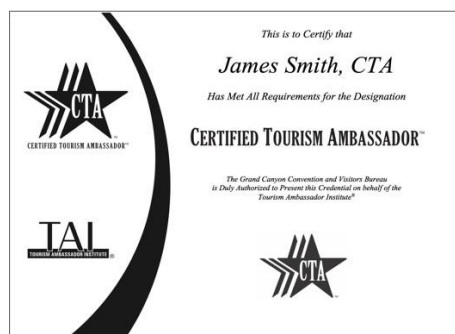


## AMBASSADOR BENEFITS AND EXPECTATIONS

### Industry-Recognized Certification

Upon successful completion of the program, CTAs receive:

- A certificate, suitable for framing, denoting your designation as a CTA
- A pin identifying you as a *Certified Tourism Ambassador™*
- A pin identifying you as a Visit Galveston Certified Tourism Ambassador



**Sample Certificate, CTA Lapel Pin, Visit Galveston Lapel Pin**

The *Certified Tourism Ambassador™* (CTA) logo is a symbol of quality that represents an individual's or company's commitment to building tourism by turning every visitor encounter into a positive experience.

The CTA logo and pin are designed as a series of stars, as you and your fellow CTAs are the Stars of the Tourism Industry!





### Wear Your Pin with Pride

The CTA pin isn't a novelty pin. It shows you are certified. Wear it with pride.

Visitors will see you as a professional. One CTA reported a visitor saying, "I want one of those pin people."

*"I want one of those pin people."*

### Use the CTA Designation Behind Your Name

Use the CTA initials behind your name on your email signature block, name badge, and business cards to let your customers and co-workers know you're the go-to person for visitor information and excellent service.



### Use the CTA Logo on Your Website

Add the logo to your website to show visitors and customers you are dedicated to their experience. CTAs may request permission to use the CTA logo, at no charge, on their websites, email footers, and printed promotional material. Logo Usage Request forms are available through the Tourism Ambassador Institute® on [CTANetwork.com](http://CTANetwork.com).



## CTA REQUIREMENTS

The Tourism Ambassador Institute® (TAI), as the accrediting body for the CTA designation, has granted licensing and accreditation rights to Visit Galveston to present, on behalf of the TAI, the CTA designation to those individuals who satisfactorily complete all program requirements.

Therefore, as this is an industry-recognized designation, Visit Galveston is required to ensure



that you have met the requirements to earn the CTA designation.

### What's Required to Become a CTA?

After the conclusion of the classroom training session, you will be notified as to whether you have satisfactorily:

- Completed the required reading and pre-class exercises
- Demonstrated active participation in all classroom exercises
- Earned a passing score on the open-book exam at the end of the classroom session
- Demonstrated your commitment to becoming a CTA and to renewing your certification annually

Please be sure to contact the local program administrator, if you have questions about the program or the requirements to achieve the CTA designation.



### QUESTIONS?

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## RENEW ANNUALLY - REQUIREMENTS

### *“When You Stay a CTA Star, Everyone Benefits!”*

#### Why Annual Renewal?

This program is geared toward initial certification followed by renewal of certification every year thereafter.

This ensures that CTAs are kept up-to-date on important new developments and that they demonstrate a willingness to assume responsibility for continuing to learn about the great things our area has to offer. It also ensures that the program maintains momentum and evolves over time to meet the needs of CTAs and visitors.

#### When Do I Renew?

After your first full *calendar* year as a CTA, you will be required to renew your designation annually.

#### What’s Required? How Do I Accumulate 50 Points?

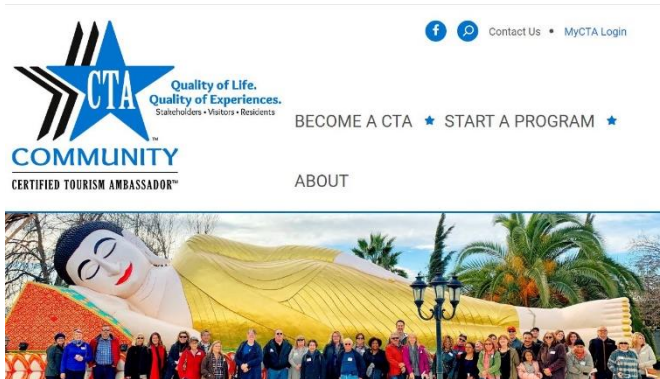
A total of 50 points will be required each year to maintain your CTA designation, along with a modest annual renewal fee.

Renewal Points vary and may be earned as follows:

- **10 Points:** Visiting point-earning area attractions and venues (museums, points of interest, festivals, **etc.**) outlined in this document and CTANetwork.com
- **5 Points:** Participating in planned CTA networking or other events
- **5 Points:** Staying current with new developments and new resources
- **5 Points:** Watching or reading tourism-related speeches, videos, articles
- **5 Points:** Volunteering at festivals, events, or other activities

# How Do I Record My Renewal Points?

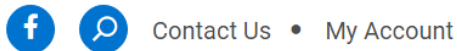
Keeping track of your renewal points is easy on the [www.CTANetwork.com](http://www.CTANetwork.com) website. It only takes a few minutes to log in and record your points. Once you become a CTA, you will receive a system-generated password, which you can change once you log in to [www.CTANetwork.com](http://www.CTANetwork.com).



← **Log in Here**

## LOGGED IN VIEW – Local Program - MyCTA

Renewal applications can be completed on line, on any device.



←

### Account Actions

- ⌵ [Edit Profile](#)
- ⌵ [Address Book](#)
- ⌵ [Contact Information](#)
- ⌵ [Opt In and Out](#)
- ⌵ [Points Bank/Record Points](#)
- ⌵ [Pay Outstanding Orders](#)
- ⌵ [Change Username](#)
- ⌵ [Reset Password](#)

Click "My account"  
 Click "Manage Account"  
 Click "Points Bank/Record Points"  
 Use the yellow button to add points received.

←

Click **ADD POINTS RECEIVED** below to start a new entry.

Click the  to edit any record. Click the  to delete any record.

**ADD POINTS RECEIVED**

←

## BENEFITS TO CTAs

### What's in it for Me?

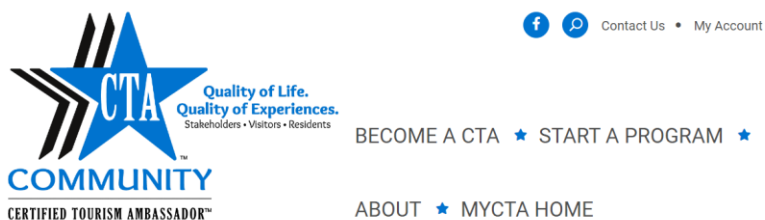
You've read about the benefits of CTA to Galveston. Here are the benefits to YOU:

- Provides you with a meaningful credential that is visible to visitors, friends, and family (John Smith, CTA)
- Belongs to you – even if you change employers, the designation is yours to keep, for as long as you renew annually
- Increases business, which may mean larger paychecks or higher tips
- Builds skills you'll have for a lifetime
- Helps bolster your resume
- Supports your career development
- Helps you network with – and learn from – your peers across the area
- Helps you stay “in the know” with regular updates



**What Can I Do on the CTANetwork.com Website?** As a Certified Tourism Ambassador™ you'll have exclusive access to resources within the [CTANetwork.com](http://CTANetwork.com) website.

Log in to utilize the **MyCTA** local microsite. This is a powerful online resource to help you stay connected, stay informed and stay professional. On the local microsite you can:



- Find and print attraction information
- View the local event calendar
- View dates for CTA networking events
- Access exclusive Freebies & Discounts
- Shop the CTA Store
- Connect with your fellow CTAs via the CTA directory or social media
- Keep informed on local happenings and industry news

Visit [CTANetwork.com](http://CTANetwork.com) frequently as a resource to build your knowledge and skills!

## EXPECTATIONS OF CTAs

As a CTA, we hope you'll assume the responsibility of strengthening the status of the designation in the eyes of your employer and Galveston Island. Here's what you'll be expected to do:

- Continue your education at every opportunity
- Enhance your *product knowledge* about the city's restaurants, attractions, and everything else a visitor to Galveston Island may want to do
- Provide feedback on how to improve local resources
- Take advantage of discounts or free offerings from participating businesses to experience their 'product' firsthand
- Celebrate your achievements with your co-workers
- Maintain your credential by completing annual certification renewal
- Encourage your colleagues to become CTAs
- **Have fun!!**



## Importance of Your Involvement

As you can now see, this is an historic undertaking for our region. You are part of an exciting program that will elevate Galveston Island to new heights. Help us make the program bigger and better by giving Visit Galveston, the Program Administrator, your ideas as the program unfolds over time.

**Be proud of your accomplishment.  
Celebrate it with your colleagues!**

## EARNING THE CTA DESIGNATION

As this is an industry-recognized designation, Visit Galveston is required to ensure that you have met the requirements to earn the CTA designation.

After the conclusion of the classroom training session, you will be evaluated as to whether you have satisfactorily:

- Completed the required reading and pre-class exercises
- Demonstrated active participation in all classroom exercises
- Completed all assignments
- Earned a passing score on the open-book exam at the end of the classroom session
- Demonstrated your commitment to becoming a CTA and to renewing your certification annually

## Notification to CTA Candidates

1. Approximately two weeks after your classroom session you will be notified whether you have satisfied requirements for the CTA designation.
2. If you are successful, you will receive a congratulatory email with your password to access CTANetwork.com, as well as certificate suitable for framing and an attractive lapel pin designating you as a certified.  
See Section II for more details.
3. If you are not successful, you will be required to retake the exam and, if necessary, read the materials and participate in another class.

## Good Luck!!

Thank you for your interest in this exciting program. You're on your way to becoming a CTA!

**NOTE:** The Tourism Ambassador Institute® (TAI), as the accrediting body, grants Accredited Providers Visit Galveston, the accreditation rights to present, on behalf of the TAI, the CTA designation to individuals satisfactorily completing all program requirements. To maintain their accreditation status, Accredited Providers must annually conform to quality assurance standards. This requirement is established to maintain uniform standards of quality for the CTA designation. Therefore, please be sure to contact your local program administrator, if you have questions about the program or the requirements to achieve the CTA designation.

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**CDME – Certified Destination Management Executive**, offered by Destinations International to CVBs and DMOs across the world

**COC – Chamber of Commerce**

**CTA – Certified Tourism Ambassador™**

**CVB – Convention & Visitors Bureau** (*interchangeable with DMO*)

**DI – Destinations International**

**DMO – Destination Marketing Organization** (*interchangeable with CVB*)

**TAI – Tourism Ambassador Institute®**

# PARK BOARD OF TRUSTEES



## **PARK BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

In 1963 the citizens of Galveston voted to create a specialized unit of government called the Park Board of Trustees of the City of Galveston. The organization is responsible for overseeing Galveston's tourism efforts, Galveston Island Beach Patrol and Coastal Zone Management. The Park Board is funded primarily through the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) and beach user fees for the six parks that they manage. Tourism pays for tourism as no sales or property tax is collected by the Park Board.

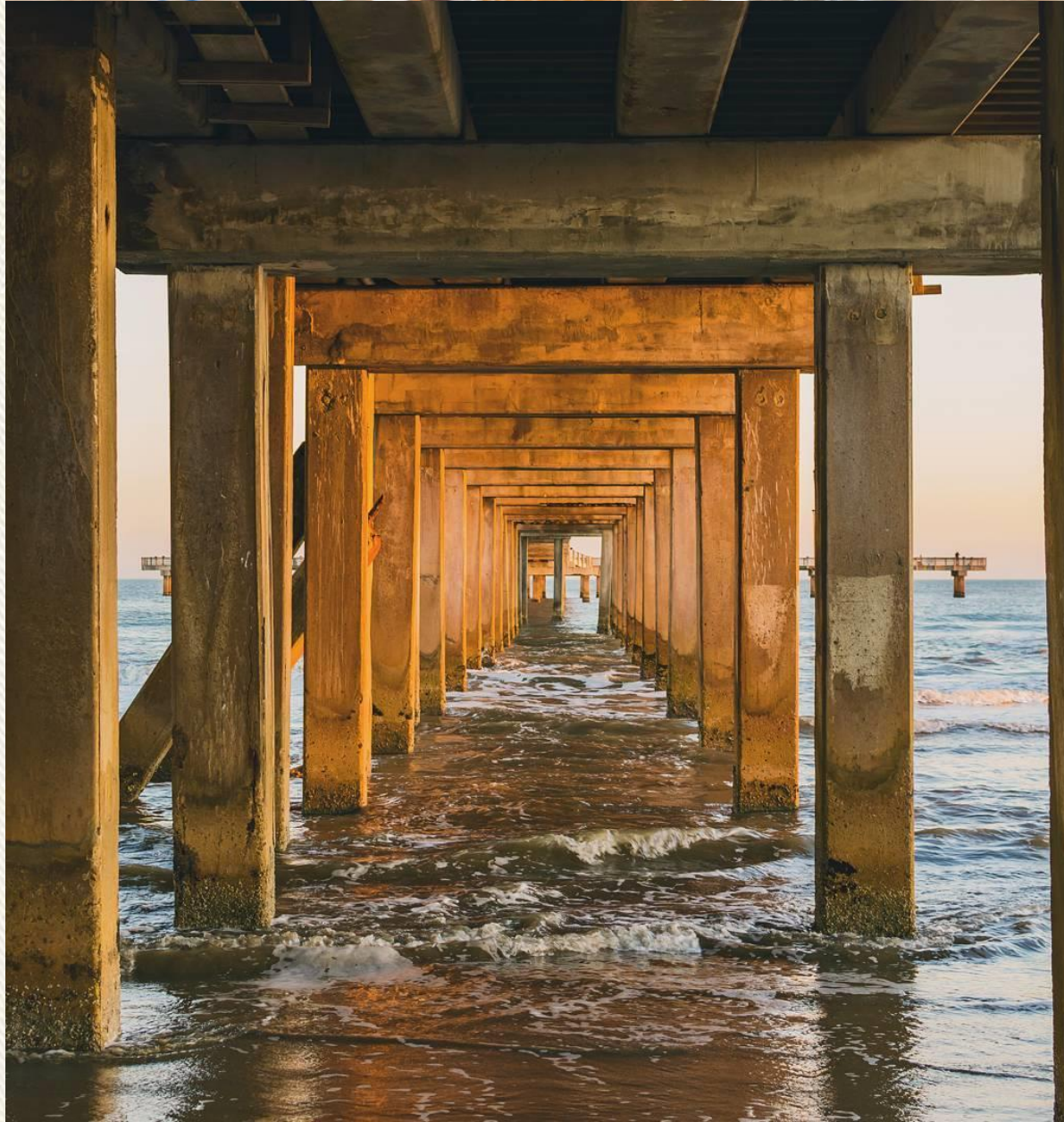
The nine-member board is comprised of volunteer residents with diverse business backgrounds. Each is required to serve at least two years and must also serve on one of the Park Board's advisory committees. Committees include the Beach Maintenance Advisory Committee, the Tourism Development Advisory Committee, Parks and Amenities Committee, the Workforce Development Committee, and the Finance and Operations Committee.

The Board of Trustees and advisory committees hold meetings regularly following all requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act.

The Park Board of Trustees is responsible for management of R.A. Apfel Park, Stewart Beach Park, Sewall Urban Park, Dellanera RV Park, East End Lagoon Nature Preserve and Seawolf Park. The Park Board offers an annual parking pass to Galveston's beach parks.

The Park Board also manages concessions at the beaches and along the seawall. Beach concessionaires are important to the beach experience for millions of guests who visit Galveston's Coast. The Park Board encourages minority owned and small businesses to consider operating in Galveston.

# VISIT GALVESTON



## VISIT GALVESTON

Formerly the Galveston Island Convention and Visitors Bureau, Visit Galveston was created in 2021 as the official destination marketing organization for Galveston Island. The new name amplifies the mission of Visit Galveston to bring visitors to Galveston. The Visit Galveston brand, "*It's Island Time*," is all about relaxing and leaving stress on the mainland.

The mission of Visit Galveston is to promote and support tourism on Galveston Island to foster an environment that establishes a great place to live, work and visit.

Visit Galveston works to promote tourism within the leisure, group travel, and meetings and conventions markets. Our team works with guidance from the citizen-led Tourism Development Advisory Committee, which has members who are professionals in tourism, outdoor recreation, and arts and culture.

Visit Galveston administers the Certified Tourism Ambassador program and the Galveston Island Visitor and Information Center. The Visitor and Information Center is a partnership with the Galveston Island Chamber of Commerce and provides personalized trip planning recommendations on attractions, restaurants, tours and other must-see experiences. The Center can provide accessibility information, assist with restaurants and tickets, provide dining and accommodation information and recommend guided and self-guided tours.

Visit Galveston also operates VICi, our mobile visitor center, that can be used by the community for anything from information sharing to a registration booth. VICi is frequently seen at events and festivals on Galveston Island.

Visit Galveston is accredited by Destinations International and is globally recognized by the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP). Achieving DMAP accreditation positions Visit Galveston as a valued and respected organization with the community and increases credibility among stakeholders. To become accredited, a destination organization must demonstrate compliance with more than 100 performance standards.

# CITY OF GALVESTON



## CITY OF GALVESTON

How many people live on the island? What's our biggest industry? Visitors often ask about what drives our local economy. Read on so you can share some interesting facts with them!

### Our Population

- Jean Lafitte established the colony of Campeche on Galveston Island in 1817, numbering about 1,000 people. Once Michel B. Menard and a group of investors founded Galveston in 1838, our region began to balloon.
- When Texas joined the Union in 1845, Galveston was the **largest city in the state** with a population of 3,500 residents. Galveston thrived on the strength of our port and cotton and grain shipping.
- Although our island suffered during the Civil War in the 1860s, we rallied to reclaim the spot as the **largest city in Texas** in 1870 with over 13,800 people and again in 1880 with nearly 22,250 people.
- Our population grew steadily, reaching almost 37,790 at the time of the 1900 Storm. A steady stream of immigrants and the establishment of military installations pushed us over 60,860 people by the time World War II began in 1941. Galveston Island's **population peaked** in 1960 with 67,175 residents.
- The island's population slowly declined. In 1980, our civic leaders began a concerted effort to revitalize and renew the city and island in an attempt to attract new residents.
- Galveston Island's population was 47,762 in 2012, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's latest numbers.

### Our Metropolitan Area

- Galveston is one of **12 cities in Galveston County**. The county estimates that of its over 300,400 residents, nearly 1 out of 10 resident taxpayers primarily resides in another county or state.
- Our region is part of the **Houston-Galveston-Brazoria** Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (Houston CMSA) which consists of eight counties: Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery and Waller.

### Our Economic Drivers

- The primary pillars of Galveston's economic base include the **Port of Galveston** and maritime businesses, **University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston**, higher education technology research, and **tourism**.
- Galveston's **economy was hit hard** by Hurricane Ike in 2008. Today, Galveston is embarking on a community renaissance reminiscent of those efforts that led to the successful rebuilding of this coastal island community following the devastating impacts caused by the 1900 Storm.

Currently there are close to **\$2 billion in local, state and national resources** dedicated to making Galveston a better place.

- ❓ The island has seen a year-over-year increase in tourism since 2010. In 2022 Galveston welcomed a record 8.1 million visitors, a 25% increase from 2021 and an 11% increase from 2019. Visitors spent a record \$1.2 billion. Average spending of an overnight visitor (\$261) was almost five times more than that of a day visitor (\$57). Lodging was the highest income per visitor for the island, followed by food and beverage, recreation, retail, transportation and cruises.

❓

## Our Major Employers

- Tourism jobs span across sectors and include many small businesses. Taken as an industry, **tourism is considered the largest employer** on Galveston Island.

Major Employers in Galveston	Industry Sector	No. of Employees
UT Medical Branch	Healthcare	7,500
Galveston Independent School District	Education	1,366
Landry's, Inc.	Leisure/Hospitality	1,300 / 1,900 in summer
Moody Gardens	Leisure/Hospitality	1056
American National Insurance	Insurance	866
Galveston County	Local Government	864
City of Galveston	Local Government	722
Mitchell Family Corp.	Leisure/Hospitality	460
Texas A & M - Galveston	Education	423
Galveston College	Education	300
Schlitterbahn	Leisure/Hospitality	286 / 700 in summer
<b>Remember: Tourism creates over 11,646 (1 in 3) jobs on Galveston Island!</b>		

Source: Galveston Economic Development Partnership, 2015

## Our Area's Economic Development

- Since its founding in 1845, the **Chamber of Commerce** has been promoting and advocating for business, and is committed to action through carefully planned programs that include economic development, community development, public affairs and legislative issues. **Galveston Regional Chamber of Commerce** – 2228 Mechanic St., Suite 101, Galveston, TX 77550, 409-763-5326, [www.galvestonchamber.com](http://www.galvestonchamber.com)
- The mission of the **Galveston Economic Development Partnership** is to utilize broad-based community support for the expansion of Galveston Island's employment and tax bases while working to facilitate new projects and/or investments across the island. **Galveston Economic Development Partnership (GEDP)** – 5007 Avenue U, Galveston, TX 77550, 409-770-0216, [www.gedp.org](http://www.gedp.org)
- The **Park Board of Trustees of the City of Galveston's** mission is to position Galveston Island among the top five tourist destinations in the State of Texas by accepting responsibility for Galveston's number one industry: Tourism. They are responsible for promoting Galveston Island, its diversity and natural resources, and oversee the Galveston Island Beach Patrol, the Park Board Police Department, Seawall Parking, Beach Parks, Beach Cleaning and Visit Galveston. **Park Board of Trustees** – 601 Tremont St., Galveston, TX 77550, 409-797-5000, [www.galvestonparkboard.org](http://www.galvestonparkboard.org)

## Our Institutions of Higher Education

- **University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB)**, established in 1891, has grown from one building, 23 students and 13 faculty members to a modern health science center with more than 70 major buildings, 2,500 students and 1,000 faculty. The 84-acre campus includes four schools, three institutes for advanced study, a major medical library, a network of hospitals and clinics that provide a full range of primary and specialized medical care, an affiliated Shriners Burns Hospital, and numerous research facilities. **University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB)** – 301 University Blvd., Galveston, TX 77555, 409-772-1011, [www.utmb.edu](http://www.utmb.edu).
- **Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG)** is the ocean-oriented, branch campus of Texas A&M University offering undergraduate and graduate degree programs in marine and maritime-related fields. The Mitchell Campus on Pelican Island, opened in 1957, has about 2,000 students and about 400 faculty and staff. This unique university is also home to the Texas Maritime Academy, which incorporates the academic degree programs with professional licensing for the U.S. Merchant Marine and officer training for the U.S. Navy. **Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG)** – 200 Seawolf Pkwy, Galveston, TX 77554, 409-740-4411, [www.tamug.edu](http://www.tamug.edu)
- **Galveston College (GC)** provides Galveston Island and the surrounding region with academic, workforce development, continuing education, and community service programs. The College, opened in 1967, serves an ethnically diverse population of approximately 2,400 students each

semester in credit programs and nearly 5,000 individuals annually in continuing education programs. **Galveston College (GC)** – 4015 Avenue Q, Galveston, TX 77550, 409-944-4242, [www.gc.edu](http://www.gc.edu)

## LANDMARKS

Thanks to aggressive preservation efforts, our island has one of the largest concentrations of historic districts and buildings in the country. Many of our early residents built elaborate Victorian-era homes and mansions that give our city its unique urban feel. Through revitalization efforts in the 1980s, this wealth of historic architecture has become a cornerstone of our tourism industry. Read on to be able to answer a visitor when they ask, “What’s that building?”

### Historic Preservation

- The **Galveston Historical Foundation** was founded in 1954 specifically to save the Samuel May Williams’ house, from demolition. Since then, GHF has been responsible for the preservation of many individual places and structures that contribute to Galveston’s amazingly rich architectural, cultural and maritime heritage. The 1838 Michel Menard House, 1839 Samuel May Williams House, 1859 Ashton Villa and Heritage Visitors Center, 1859 St. Joseph Catholic Church, 1880 Garten Verein, 1892 Bishop’s Palace and 1877 Tall Ship *ELISSA* are all managed through the Foundation.
- GHF also manages the **1900 Storm Survivor Plaques** program visible on many of Galveston’s oldest buildings, and maintains Lost Galveston, a photo gallery of buildings that no longer exist. GHF holds the annual **Galveston Historic Homes Tour** each May and **Dickens on The Strand** in December and offers an **Architectural History Shuttle Tour** of the East End Historical District and Strand/Mechanic District on the weekends.

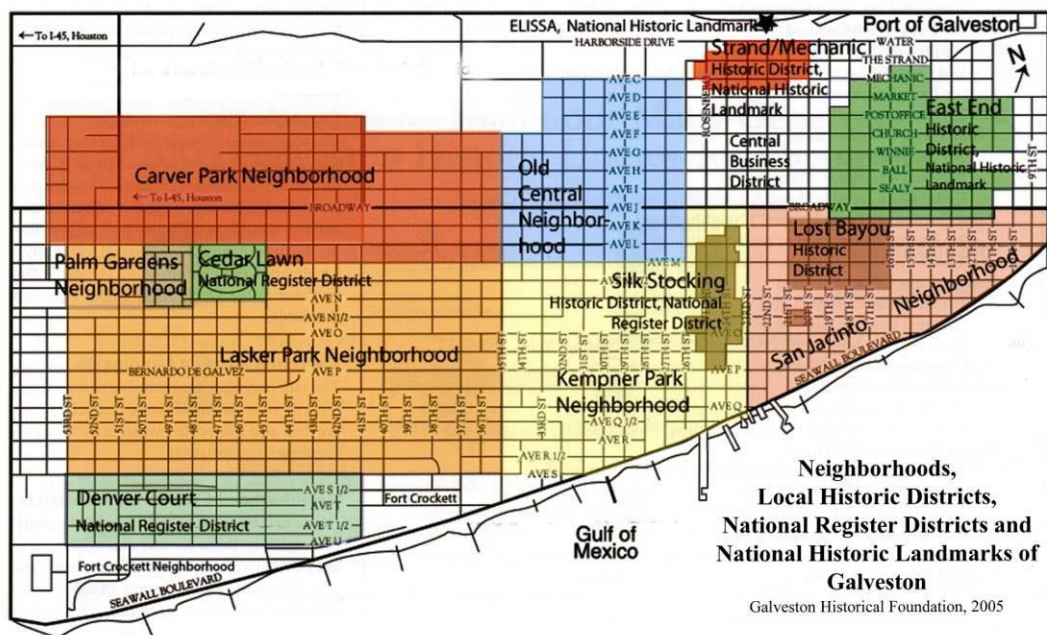
### Our Historic Districts

**Strand Mechanic National Historic Landmark District** - Strand and Ship's Mechanic Row between 20<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Streets, Galveston, TX 77550, [www.downtowngalveston.org](http://www.downtowngalveston.org)

- Our only predominantly non-residential historic district was established in 1988. It is among the island’s most significant collections of nineteenth and twentieth- century architecture, with more than 45 buildings in 12 blocks of significant architectural merit. It also contains one of the **largest collections of historic cast- iron commercial buildings** in the country. Most of the buildings were built between 1875 and 1899.
- During Hurricane Ike in 2008, buildings in the district sat for over two days in a mixture of salt water, oil and debris, **inundated with 10 to 13 feet of water**. More than 44% of the buildings in

the Strand/Mechanic district, along with buildings on Market and Postoffice streets have cast-iron storefronts that began to rust after the storm. In the aftermath of Hurricane Ike, the City of Galveston received a federal grant to rehabilitate our rich cast iron architectural heritage.

- Notable buildings include Hendley Row, four adjoining buildings constructed 1858-1859, used as a **lookout during the Battle of Galveston** and now the oldest commercial buildings in Galveston. The Rosenberg Building that housed the largest dry goods store in Texas in the 1870s, and the 1884 W. L. Moody Building, that housed Colonel Moody's banking and cotton businesses.
- Within the Strand/Mechanic District is the Historic **Downtown Strand Seaport District**, from Harborside Drive to Broadway along Strand Street. **The Strand**, from 20<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> Street, was dubbed the "Wall Street of the Southwest." Originally Avenue B, the street got its name from Michael William Shaw who wanted a more glamorous name for his address, so he started using the name of the **famous Strand roadway in London** on his stationary. **Downtown Strand Seaport District** – 2326 Strand St., Galveston, TX 77550, 409-763-7080, [www.downtowngalveston.org](http://www.downtowngalveston.org)
- Mitchell Historic Properties (MHP) that oversees properties owned by developer, philanthropist and preservationist George Mitchell's family, **owns and preserves approximately one-fourth of the buildings** in the Historic Strand Seaport Area. **Mitchell Historic Properties** – [www.MitchellHistoricProperties.com](http://www.MitchellHistoricProperties.com)
- The **Postoffice Street** restoration in the 1990s revitalized over 25 historic buildings creating the Postoffice Street Arts & Entertainment District. It's now home to art galleries, shops and restaurants in beautifully restored historic buildings. The Grand 1894 Opera House and the former U.S. Customs House are both located on this architecturally rich avenue.



**East End Historical District** – 19<sup>th</sup> Street to 10<sup>th</sup> Street, south side of Broadway to Mechanic Street, Galveston, TX 77550, [www.eastendhistoricdistrict.org](http://www.eastendhistoricdistrict.org)

- In 1971, 40 blocks of the East End became **Galveston's first historic district**. It later added an additional 18 blocks, so that the district now covers a large portion of what was, and is, the **most prestigious residential area** in the city. This is where many of the most prominent citizens of 19<sup>th</sup> century Galveston chose to build their homes.
- The district reflects a **variety of styles and periods** from small, simple cottages to large, elaborate houses, the earliest being examples of Greek Revival style built during the 1850's. Notable residences include the 1859 Henry Rosenberg Home, 1881 Medard Menard House (nephew of Galveston founder, Michel B. Menard), 1887-93 Bishop's Palace, and 1906 Isaac H. Kempner Home. *Get a walking tour map online from the **East End Historical District Association** – 1501 Postoffice St., Galveston, TX 77550, 409-763-5928, [www.eastendhistoricdistrict.org](http://www.eastendhistoricdistrict.org)*

**Lost Bayou Historic District** – 16<sup>th</sup> Street to 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Avenue K to Avenue M ½, Galveston, TX 77550, [www.sanjacneighborhoodassoc.org](http://www.sanjacneighborhoodassoc.org)

- The 23-block district was designated in 1994. The area was originally covered by a body of water known as **Hitchcock's Bayou** that was “lost” when the island's elevation was raised after the 1900 Storm. The **1885 Galveston Fire** that devastated 42 blocks of the East End came right through the Lost Bayou. Most of the homes were rebuilt within a year, which gives the district an **architecturally consistent** look and feel. It contains excellent examples of Greek Revival, Italianate, Arts & Crafts, and Folk Victorian architecture.
- The district sits in the **San Jacinto neighborhood** between 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Broadway and Seawall Boulevard. It's estimated that about four additional blocks of the neighborhood were reclaimed by the Gulf during the 1900 Storm. Structures nearest the beach were completely destroyed. As the debris piled up and pushed inland, it formed a natural breakwater, or seawall, that eventually saved the rest of the city from more complete destruction. **San Jacinto Neighborhood Association** - [www.sanjacneighborhoodassoc.org](http://www.sanjacneighborhoodassoc.org) *See a great **San Jacinto neighborhood architecture photo tour** online - [www.therealgalveston.com/Self-Guided-Tours/San-Jacinto.html](http://www.therealgalveston.com/Self-Guided-Tours/San-Jacinto.html)*

**Silk Stocking Historic District** – Avenue K, Avenue P, 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Rosenberg (25<sup>th</sup>) Street, Galveston, TX 77550, [www.silkstockinggalveston.org](http://www.silkstockinggalveston.org)

- The Silk Stocking Historic District, roughly containing 14 blocks, was established in 1975 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. The name comes from the neighborhood's reputation as being the **home of some of our island's most prosperous families**. It contains some of Galveston's best examples of Queen Anne style homes, dating from 1850 to the 1920s. *Learn more about the Silk Stocking District and print a walking tour*

*map from the **Silk Stocking National Historic District Neighborhood Association** - [www.silkstockinggalveston.org](http://www.silkstockinggalveston.org)*

- The district sits in the **Kempner Park neighborhood**, from Rosenberg (25<sup>th</sup>) Street to 37<sup>th</sup> Street, Broadway to Seawall Boulevard. The **two oldest houses on the island** are in Kempner Park; the 1838 Michel Menard House, and 1839 Samuel May Williams House (see below). It was also the site of the Ursuline Academy, designed by **Nicholas J. Clayton**, one of the first professional architects in Texas, who dominated Galveston architecture between 1873 and 1900.
- A portion of Kempner Park also developed into Galveston's **first predominately- Black neighborhood** near Avenue M and 29<sup>th</sup> Street.

## Historic Landmarks

### ANICO Buildings

- ☐ The American National Insurance Company (ANICO) was founded by Galveston business pioneer W. L. Moody, Jr. (1865-1954). It opened for business in 1905 on the third floor of the Moody Building at 22<sup>nd</sup> and Strand streets with ten employees. The first home office built especially for the company was completed at 21<sup>st</sup> and Market streets in 1913. As the company grew, an additional building, at 21<sup>st</sup> and Mechanic streets, was completed in 1929. By 1971, the home office employed 1,200 and moved into the 358-foot, 23-story American National tower in 1971. What is now One Moody Plaza, at 1902 Market Street, was the tallest building on the island at the time. Today American National is the largest Texas- based life insurance company. The first building was demolished but the second building has been renovated and is now the Historic Medical Arts Building.



ANICO buildings - bottom right 1913 (demolished); bottom left 1929 Historic Medical Arts Building (demolished); top right 1971 One Moody Plaza

Photo [www.galvestonhistory.org/Lost\\_Galveston.asp](http://www.galvestonhistory.org/Lost_Galveston.asp)

**Broadway Beauties:** Ashton Villa, Bishop's Palace, Moody Mansion, Open Gates

**Ashton Villa** – 2328 Broadway, Galveston, TX 77550

Built in 1859, by hardware store owner James M. Brown, it was the first brick house in Texas and the first of our grand Broadway homes. The three-story Italianate villa style home features wide overhanging eaves and ornate cornice brackets. The Brown House was the headquarters for the Confederate Army and then the Union Army after the battle of Galveston Bay. The Brown family lived in the house until it was sold to the Shriners, who used it as offices until 1970, when the house was saved from demolition and restored by the Galveston Historical Foundation. The mansion is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Ashton Villa isn't open to the public but is available for group tours and event rental. **Discover It: Ashton Villa** - 2328 Broadway, Galveston, TX 77550, 409-765-7834 [www.galvestonhistory.org/site/special-event-venues](http://www.galvestonhistory.org/site/special-event-venues)

**Bishop's Palace** – 1402 Broadway, Galveston, TX 77550, (409) 762-2475, [www.galvestonhistory.org/site/1892-bishops-palace](http://www.galvestonhistory.org/site/1892-bishops-palace)

- ☐ Also known as Gresham's Castle, the 21,000 square-foot mansion was built from 1887 to 1892 for railroad magnate Colonel Walter Gresham and his family. In 1923, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Galveston purchased the house and for many years, it was the residence for the local bishop. The diocese opened the house to the public in 1963.
- ☐ This famous house was designed by Nicholas Clayton, Galveston's premier Victorian-era architect. Constructed of steel and stone (it survived the Great Storm of 1900 virtually unscathed), the structure soars three stories over a raised basement level, with long sculptural chimneys, varicolored and irregularly shaped stone, arches, and pronounced carvings of vegetation, animals, people, and imaginary creatures. The interior spaces are grand with fourteen-foot ceilings, exotic materials, and a forty-foot tall octagonal mahogany stairwell with stained glass on five sides. It was named by the American Institute of Architects as the 14<sup>th</sup> most important Victorian building in America.

☐

**Moody Mansion** – 2618 Broadway, Galveston, TX 77550

The mansion was built between 1893 and 1895 in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, for Narcissa Willis, the widow of Galveston merchant Richard Short Willis. In 1900, the house was purchased by William L. Moody, Jr., for his family, his wife Libbie Rice Shearn Moody and children Mary, W. L. III, Shearn, and Libbie. Family members lived in the house until 1986. It was opened as a museum and memorial to the Moody family in 1991. The 28,000 square-foot, four-story structure features turrets, heavy arches and massive stonework while the interior has been restored to recreate the character of the house in 1911 with furnishings original to the home.



A Broadway Beauty - Moody Mansion (1889-1890)

**Open Gates (Sealy Mansion)** – 2424 Broadway, Galveston, TX 77550

The Renaissance revival home was built 1889-1890 for railroad magnate and banker George Sealy and his wife Magnolia. The firm of McKim, Mead and White of New York designed the house with construction supervised by Nicholas J. Clayton. According to Sealy family legend, the mansion came about after the birth of their fifth of eight children (and fourth daughter), when Magnolia told George she would give him a second son if he built her the finest home in Galveston. Open Gates is considered by architectural historians as one of the last great romantic buildings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Sealy family donated Open Gates to the University of Texas Medical Branch in 1969, with much of the original furniture in the bequest. The mansion has been closed to the public since being damaged during Hurricane Ike.

**Broadway Cemeteries** – Broadway to Avenue L, from 40<sup>th</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup> streets, Galveston, TX 77550

There are seven cemeteries in the area; Old City, Oleander, Evergreen, Trinity Episcopal, Old Catholic, New City, and Hebrew Benevolent. Old City Cemetery, also called Broadway Cemetery, is the resting place for many prominent Galvestonians including our city's founders Michel Menard and Samuel May Williams, Thomas Jefferson Chambers, a Confederate soldier, and George Childress, an author of the Texas Declaration of Independence. The New City Cemetery was the Yellow Fever Yard used for casualties from the yellow fever epidemics in the 1860s. When the grade was raised on the island, headstones were lifted and repositioned but the bodies remained where they were, which made room for another level of coffins. In January 2014, the Texas Historical Commission approved Broadway Cemetery Historic District as a National Historic District. **Discover It:** *Understandably, the Broadway Cemetery is a popular place for ghost tours.* [www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com)

**Falstaff Brewery** – 3302 Church St., Galveston TX, 77550

- ❓ This was originally the Galveston Brewing Company from 1895 to 1918, founded by Adolph Busch. It was one of the few regional breweries that survived Prohibition (by making XXX Root

Beer) and survived the 1900 Storm with only minor damage. The brewery changed hands multiple times before being purchased by Falstaff Brewing in 1956. They closed the brewery for good in 1981. The brewery is now home to cruise parking, climate-controlled storage and a special event venue.

**Galveston Garten Verein** – 2704 Avenue O, Galveston, TX 77550

The Garten Verein ("garden club") was organized in 1876 as a German social club. The group purchased the five-acre homestead of Galveston businessman Robert Mills, and laid out the property as a park, with a clubhouse, gardens, fountain, bowling alleys, tennis courts, croquet grounds, and a dancing pavilion. The complex was the first place in Galveston to have underground wiring. The octagonal dancing pavilion, built in 1880, is the only structure to survive the 1900 Storm (it required extensive rebuilding). The club dissolved in 1923, and was purchased by Stanley Kempner, Isaac H. Kempner's youngest brother, who gave it to the city of Galveston for use as a park. The pavilion is not open to the public but is available for event rental.

**Grand Galvez** – 2024 Seawall Blvd, Galveston, TX 77550

- Listed on National Trust Historic Hotels of America, the hotel is a symbol of our island's resilience. Following the devastation of the 1900 Storm, a group of businessmen raised \$1 million to build the hotel on the seawall. The hotel opened in 1911, with 275 guest rooms with a room rate starting at \$2.00 per day. It boasted modern, timesaving tools such as a potato peeling machine, an ice-maker, a dishwasher and an ice cream maker. Families "moved in" to the hotel for the summer, saying a few weeks to a few months, taking advantage of the luxurious accommodations (for \$2.00 a day!)
- In the 1920s, it was the headquarters for the International Pageants of Pulchritude, beauty pageants that were predecessors to the Miss Universe Pageant and functioned as a working facility for the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II. It's also thought to be quite haunted. The hotel had many celebrities and political figures as guests, from entertainers at the Balinese Room to U.S. Presidents. Today, the Grand Galvez is the only historic beachfront hotel on the Texas Gulf Coast.

**1838 Michel B. Menard House** – 1605 33<sup>rd</sup> St., Galveston, TX 77550

The house was built in 1838 by Michel Branamour Menard, one of the founders of the City of Galveston. It is the oldest house on Galveston Island. Menard died in 1856 and his descendants occupied the house until 1879. In 1880, the house was bought by Edwin N. Ketchum, who was police chief during the 1900 Storm. The Ketchum family owned the home until the 1970s. During the early 1990s, the abandoned house was in such disrepair, it was threatened with demolition by the City of Galveston. Philanthropists Fred and Pat Burns restored the property to its 1850s grandeur, including furniture and furnishings from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1800-1850s). The house is only open for group tours and event rental.

**Old Red (Ashbel Smith Building) at UTMB** – 301 University Blvd., Galveston, TX 77555

In 1891, when the University of Texas Medical Department first opened with 13 faculty members and 23 students, this one, and only building, housed the entire medical school. Recognized for its ornate Romanesque style, the building is known informally today as “Old Red” because of its ruddy exterior of red pressed brick from south Harris County’s Cedar Bayou area, red Texas granite columns, and sandstone capitals and ornamentation. It was designed by noted architect Nicholas J. Clayton. The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) was renamed in 1919. The building was officially named in 1949 for Ashbel Smith (1805-86), pioneer surgeon, diplomat, and "Father of the University of Texas." It was nearly demolished in the 1960s!

**Rosenberg Fountains** – various locations, Galveston, TX

Galveston philanthropist Henry Rosenberg (1824-1893) commissioned public fountains in his will to supply drinking water for the island’s people and animals. By 1898, seventeen fountains, designed by prominent sculptor, John Massey Rhind had been completed. Originally, fountains were placed in each of the twelve wards of the city, plus one at Sherman Park, Central Park, and Lasker Park, and in open public spaces near the Union Railway Station and on 20<sup>th</sup> Street. Over the years, fountains were dismantled and today, only 9 remain. The fountains are made of granite ornamented with bronze, in different classical designs; each inscribed "Gift of Henry Rosenberg." **Rosenberg Fountains** – 12<sup>th</sup> St. & Ball St. (Avenue H); 15<sup>th</sup> St. & Ball St.; 20<sup>th</sup> St. & Avenue N½; 21<sup>st</sup> St. & Ball St.; 21<sup>st</sup> St. & Postoffice; 24<sup>th</sup> St. & Ball St.; (Rosenberg Library); and Hendley Green-21<sup>st</sup> St. & Strand St.; 16<sup>th</sup> & Broadway and 10<sup>th</sup> St., between Ball & Winnie, Galveston, TX 77550



Rosenberg Fountain - 31<sup>st</sup> St. & Seawall Blvd.

**Scottish Rite Temple** – 2128 Church St., Galveston, TX 77550

Galveston is the Mother of Scottish Rite Masonry in Texas, with the first lodge established here in 1867. The Art Deco style Scottish Rite Cathedral, built in 1929, boasts a 400-seat theater with hand-painted scenes capable of transporting audiences from the Roman catacombs to lush forests to Greek temples and beyond, and an original pipe organ containing 1,256 pipes. A

marble staircase leads downstairs to a library filled with Masonic memorabilia and some of the finest antique furniture in the area. The venue is available for event rental.

**St. Joseph's German Catholic Church (1859)** – 2202 Avenue N, Galveston, TX 77550

Built in 1859, it is the oldest German Catholic Church in Texas and the oldest wooden church building in Galveston. The church was nearly destroyed in the 1900 Storm and restored under the direction of Nicholas J. Clayton. The building is a simple wooden Gothic Revival structure with beautiful original paintings, original pews hand-carved alters, and plaster Stations of the Cross. In 1968, the Catholic Diocese closed the church and sold the contents at public auction. Upon learning that the building was to be used as a warehouse, Galveston Historical Foundation leased the property and recovered most of the original furnishings. The church is not open to the public but is available for group tours and event rental.

**St. Mary Cathedral Basilica (1848)** – 2011 Church Ave., Galveston, TX 77550

In 1847, Pope Pius IX made St. Mary's Cathedral “The Mother Church” of the Catholic Diocese of Texas. The original structure was completed in 1848. The Gothic Revival church was designed by Charles G. Bryant in the form of a Latin cross, based on King's College Chapel in Cambridge, England. In 1876, Galveston architect Nicholas J. Clayton added a transept tower to the roof of the sanctuary. In 1878, a new bell, and a cast-iron statue of “Mary, Star of the Sea” was added to the bell tower. Mariners formerly used the lighted crown of the statue as a beacon to guide them into the Port of Galveston. In 1979, Pope John Paul II elevated the Cathedral to a “Minor Basilica,” an honor bestowed on select churches because of their antiquity or historical importance. Although it was temporarily closed for repairs due to damage from Hurricane Ike, St. Mary Cathedral Basilica is now open.



St. Mary Cathedral Basilica (1848)

**Stewart Mansion (private property)** – 14520 Stewart Rd., Galveston, TX 77554

- The mansion was built in 1926, as a West End retreat for George Sealy, Jr. and his family. It overlooks Lake Como, between Galveston Country Club and Galveston Island State Park. Maco Stewart, the founder of Stewart Title Company, purchased the 8,200 square-foot Spanish

Colonial Revival style house in 1933. The family donated it to University of Texas Medical Branch in 1944 for a convalescent home. George Mitchell bought the property in 1968 planning to build a resort. The mansion has been vacant for a number of years and is deteriorating, but the original tile courtyard and hand-painted murals of pirates are still visible. Many people have reported paranormal activity in the abandoned house. It is said that the eyes of the pirates in the paintings watch visitors, and the pirates change places in the murals. People have also reported banging doors and the sounds of a woman weeping and humming.

- The site is near Lafitte's Grove, where pirate John Lafitte and his men engaged in the ***Battle of Three Trees***, a 3-day fight with the Karankawa in 1818, after they kidnapped the chief's daughter. It's also rumored that Lafitte buried his treasure near here when he left Galveston Island.

### **1877 Tall Ship *Elissa*** – Texas Seaport Museum

The *Elissa* is a three-masted, iron-hulled sailing ship built in 1877 in Aberdeen, Scotland by Alexander Hall & Company. *Elissa* first called on Galveston in 1883 with one passenger, and a cargo of bananas for sale. From her stern to the tip of her jibboom, she measures 205 feet. Her height is 99 feet, 9 inches at the main mast and she displaces about 620 tons at her current ballast. Her working life as a freighter ended in Greece, where she was rescued from the scrap yard by a variety of ship preservationists. In 1978, *Elissa* was placed on the National Register of Historic Places; she is the first object granted this status while outside the territorial limits of the U.S. *Elissa* came to Galveston in 1979 for restoration and today, she is not a replica but a fully functional vessel that continues to sail annually during sea trials in the Gulf of Mexico.

### **Texas Heroes Monument** – Rosenberg St. (25<sup>th</sup> St.) at Broadway, Galveston, TX 77550

The striking bronze statue, created by noted sculptor Louis Amities was dedicated on April 21, 1900. It was built in "memory of the heroes of the Texas Revolution of 1836" with funds provided by noted philanthropist Henry Rosenberg. The monument tells the true story of the Texas Revolution. Lady Victory's extended arm points to the battle grounds at San Jacinto (east of Houston) where independence was won for the Texans. Four very vivid bronze panels at the monument's base that show not only the victory of San Jacinto, but also the Goliad Massacre, the Battle of the Alamo, and General Houston charging against the large numbers of the Mexican army at the final battle. The monument is one of the most viewed and admired landmarks in our city and is the reason that 25<sup>th</sup> was named after Mr. Rosenberg.

### **The Grand 1894 Opera House** – 2020 Postoffice St, Galveston, TX 77550

- The Grand Opera House and Hotel complex was built in 1894 to satisfy a need for artistic and cultural pursuits to a growing community. The quality performances were part of the Henry Greenwall circuit that toured through much of the South. Later, vaudeville was enjoyed at The Grand, and in 1924 it was converted into a movie house. Beginning in 1974, The Grand was once again the setting for live theatre.

- Restoration began in 1974 with emphasis on creating a modern, practical theatre with state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems while retaining the charm of its past. This beautifully restored theatre seats approximately 1000 patrons. In June 1993, The Grand was designated by the Texas State Legislature as "the official opera house of Texas," and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Today, an average of forty professional productions are presented at The Grand annually. The variety of programming includes artists in the fields of theatre, comedy, dance, opera, and popular music. Other activities during non-performance times include tours of the structure and use of spaces for meetings, conventions and receptions.

**U.S. Custom House (1861)** – 502 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Galveston, TX 77550

Built in 1861, it was the first civil building constructed in Texas and remains the oldest non-military federal building in the state. It was built in only 4½ months and extensively uses galvanized cast-iron for architectural detail; all the columns are made from this material. The fireproof cast iron was revolutionary and likely accounted for the survival from the 1885 Galveston Fire. During the Civil War, the Confederate Army occupied the building. In 1865, the Custom House was the site of the ceremony officially ending the war in Galveston. Significant alterations were made in 1917 when the U.S. Custom House became the Federal Courthouse and a courtroom was created on the second floor. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places, in 1970.

### Other Notable Landmarks

**“The Face” at UTMB** (on private property) – 301 University Blvd, Galveston, TX 77555

As legend has it, the previous property owner told his family never to sell the property or he would come back and haunt them. After his death, his daughter sold the property to UTMB and the Ewing Hall Building was built on the property. Shortly after, a ghostly image appeared near the top of the building. When the school sandblasted the image off, it reappeared in a lower spot. When that was removed, the image came back, this time right over a doorway. The image hasn't been touched since then because they're afraid he will reappear on the door and come into the building! The building is on private property but the wall can be seen from the fence.

### Galveston Causeway Railroad Bridge

Opened in January 2013, the bridge replaces the rolling leaf bascule bridge that carried trains, water and electricity to the island for over 100 years. The old bridge had become a navigational obstacle. The new bright blue bridge is a 382-foot main lift span that rises 80 feet to allow Intercostal waterway traffic on Galveston Bay to pass under the BNSF Railroad. The 160-foot-tall steel towers total 6 million pounds of structural steel. The causeway gap was widened for seagoing traffic from 104 feet to 300 feet across to accommodate the average 40 vessels per

day that pass under the bridge. Approximately 14 trains per day cross over the bridge between Houston and the Port of Galveston. An 800-foot-long tunnel was constructed under Galveston Bay to carry new water lines.



**Galveston Causeway Railroad Bridge**

**Galveston Jetty Lighthouse** (Galveston College) – 4015 Avenue Q, Galveston, TX 77550

An 84-foot tall lighthouse with a 3-story keeper's quarters had sat on the South Jetty since

1918 and had been inactive since 1972. Plans were underway to relocate the lighthouse to Galveston Island State Park, where it could be restored and opened to visitors. Unfortunately, a severe thunderstorm toppled the light into the Gulf on May 2, 2000. Luckily, the lantern of the collapsed Galveston South Jetty lighthouse was salvaged and restored; it now stands atop a 40-foot decorative steel skeletal tower in Beacon Square on the campus of Galveston College. The historic original 3<sup>rd</sup> order Fresnel lens is on display in the lobby of the Galveston County Commissioners Court Building (722 21<sup>st</sup> Street).<sup>47</sup>



**Galveston Jetty Lighthouse Lantern at Galveston College**

**Murdoch's Bathhouse** – 2215 Seawall Blvd., Galveston, TX 77550

Murdoch's Bathhouse is one of Galveston's most historic locations. Bathhouses such as Murdoch's rented bathing suits and provided showers for beach visitors. Originally built in the late 1800's, the 1900 storm destroyed the bathhouse. Rebuilt in 1901, it was destroyed by another storm in 1909. When Murdoch's reopened in 1910, it had 542 rooms, 251 for women and 291 for men, and cost .25c. The Guyette Gift Shop and Gaidos Seafood restaurant both opened inside Murdoch's Bathhouse, and both companies are still going strong today. The storm of 1915 and Hurricanes Carla in 1961, and Ike in 2008 destroyed Murdoch's yet again but the iconic business rebuilt and continues to operate at its same location on the seawall.

**Palisade Palms** – 801 E Beach Dr, Galveston, TX 77550

Opened in 2007, Palisade Palms is the first on the beach condominium project to be built on Galveston Island in more than 20 years. The two 27-story towers that rise 382-feet at the water's edge on East Beach are currently the tallest buildings on the island.

# GALVESTON REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



## GALVESTON REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Established in 1845 by the Republic of Texas, the Galveston Regional Chamber of Commerce serves as Texas' oldest chamber of commerce in continuous operation. As a regional member organization, the mission of the Chamber is to promote and advocate for business and community development. The Chamber has over 800 members from different business sectors, including small businesses, education, research and healthcare facilities, government entities, non-profit, and religious organizations. Partnerships include the City of Galveston and the Galveston Economic Development Partnership.

The board of directors form the policy level of the organization. The president and chief executive officer and six staff members manage the operations and daily work of the chamber. Additionally, the Chamber has a 501c3 supporting organization, The Chamber Partnership, which operates programs devoted to community, education, leadership, and workforce development.

Chamber services include governmental advocacy, educational programs, marketing exposure, networking opportunities, and attracting visitors. In 2021 the Chamber advocated for storm surge protection systems, affordable wind and flood insurance and assuring critical water supplies. The Business Advocacy Committee promotes a positive and pro-active business environment in the Galveston area.

Chamber sponsorships and activities include Leadership Galveston, Lemonade Day Galveston County, an annual golf tournament and the Galveston Women's Conference. C-Crewe engages young professionals under forty in the Galveston business community. The Chamber also acts as a resource for small business development. Networking events include Good Morning Mainland and social mixers.



# THE POWER OF TOURISM



# Learning Objectives

- Identify how tourism drives the U.S. and regional economy.
- Realize the importance of area-wide collaboration to increase tourism.
- Explain the composition of the visitors to our area; i.e., who visits and why?
- Explain the importance of Convention & Visitors Bureaus (CVB)/ Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO), and Chambers of Commerce.
- Explain 'Branding' and its importance to a DMO and our area.
- Identify the role of the *Certified Tourism Ambassador™* and how CTAs can favorably impact our area's tourism.

## THE POWER OF TOURISM

What do we mean when we talk about “Tourism”?

A partial definition of “Tourism” includes the idea of:

*People traveling for vacations and visits to places of interest.*

### The Concept of Choosing to Travel

Naturally, most people choose to travel to places that interest them and/or where they have friends or relatives or are attending a meeting. They go to places where they think they’ll have an enjoyable experience. Unless it’s a mandatory business meeting, no one forces them – they **CHOOSE** to go!



**CHOOSING** to travel is a critically important concept to grasp, because it is the backbone of the tourism industry.

People choose to go to one city over another for many reasons: appeal of the destination, affordability, geography, etc.

### When Visitors Stop Coming

Now, think about what it is like in an economic downturn. For example, after a natural disaster or when our economy is strained.

- People choose *not* to travel
- Tourism plummets, entire tourism industry suffers
- Businesses close, people are laid off
- Local and state economies are greatly affected



This shows how important tourism is to our economy and our destination!

**What have you experienced at your job?  
Have you seen the impact of less tourism?**

## Tourism Is Big Business

When you think of tourism in the broad sense, it's big business. It means new money flowing into a city or region that wouldn't be there without the visitor.



**TRAVEL & TOURISM:**

- Is a \$2.6 *trillion* industry nationwide; \$6.8 *billion* per day!
- Creates 15.8 million jobs
- Constitutes 1 of every 10 jobs in the U.S.
- Generates \$179.7 billion in local/state/federal tax revenues, keeping YOU from paying \$1,400 in additional federal taxes per year!

Source: US Travel Association, 2018

What about Galveston? In our area, tourism:

- Accounts for more than 8.1 million visitors each year
- Equates to more than \$1.2 billion in economic impact
- Creates over 11,890 (1 in 3) jobs on Galveston Island

The economic impact of tourism is huge and is why we constantly see advertisements trying to lure us to a certain destination. **Competition for the tourist dollar is fierce and is gaining increasingly more importance to states and cities everywhere!**

## The 'Ripple Effect' of Tourism Spending

The \$872 million in economic impact (what people spend and the impact of that spending) creates a "ripple effect" throughout the entire region.

**Example:** Think about the products or services a single hotel buys to serve its guests: food, sodas, liquor, china, linens, furniture, bedding, towels, etc. Now, think about ALL the hotels, restaurants, attractions, and other businesses in our region that buy these or other products. They *stay* in business because of the spending created by tourists! When the visitors don't come, these businesses suffer. When they *do* come, the businesses grow.

New restaurants open, new attractions open and our areas become more appealing to the visitor and more pleasant for us, as well!

# THE POWER OF TRAVEL

## How Travel Dollars Support America



This graphic, produced by the U.S. Travel Association, shows the 'ripple effect' of tourism spending.

Travelers use various means of transportation.

They spend money on many things.

Local businesses benefit.

More jobs, higher wages, and rising tax revenues to put back into our local infrastructure

## IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM PROMOTION

Across the nation and the world, **Convention & Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) or Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)** are working to convince people to come experience what their cities have to offer.

Since their beginnings in the 1920s, CVBs have worked to bring conference attendees and tourists to their region. Leaders from more than 1,000 CVBs and DMOs around the country meet each year to share ideas and to discuss industry research and key issues. They are friendly competitors, competing for the same tourists. And, their “product” – the destination’s appeal, attractions, and its people – make it an easy or difficult “sell.”

### Working Together to Lure More Visitors

In the Galveston area, there are numerous organizations that are working together to advertise and promote our region to bring more visitors, including:

- Restaurants
- Attractions
- Hotels
- Cultural Organizations

In addition, Visit Galveston works closely with specific organizations in our community to promote Galveston’s many attributes including: other cities, counties, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, restaurant and tourism associations, airports, and more. All are working together to deliver a special brand promise for our region. It’s extremely competitive out there – even more reason for our region’s CTAs to shine for our visitors!

# MARKETING AND BRANDING



## WHAT IS A BRAND?

When you think of a city, do you think of a brand? You may not realize it, but you probably do.

What comes to mind when you think of the following cities?

**EXERCISE:** Next to each, write the first few things that come to mind.

Orlando: \_\_\_\_\_

San Francisco: \_\_\_\_\_

Las Vegas: \_\_\_\_\_



Chances are, what you wrote describes their brand. And, whether you realized it or not, you most likely recalled something that has an EMOTIONAL APPEAL. Examples might be San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge with the water flowing below or Las Vegas' nightlife and fun.

A destination's brand encompasses:

- Its "personality"
- What a visitor remembers most
- What they tell their friends

## A Destination's Brand

Destinations work to create slogans and logos that capture the essence of their brand. And, they work to deliver that brand through a Brand Promise.

## What is a Brand Promise?

It's what a destination hopes to deliver to *every* visitor – the experience they want them to have. It takes all CTAs working together to do the little things that add up to an experience that visitors can't get anywhere else.

Now, think of a brand for our region...

**What is the “personality” and brand of Galveston Island?**

**What do people expect when they come here?**

**What emotions do people feel when they're here?**

**What will they remember?**

**What will they tell their friends?**

Visit Galveston uses the following images in promoting our destination to leisure travelers and convention planners alike.



To strengthen the brand, Visit Galveston uses social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to talk about our unique attractions and events and uses videos on YouTube to expose visitors to everything from local restaurants and lodging to historic sites and beach activities. We also use an abundance of photographs – images that convey our unique waterfront location, rich heritage, and stunning architecture.

These words and images are part of our ‘Brand Message.’ However, it is all of us on the front-line who help us keep our **Brand Promise** – to ensure that the uniqueness we are promoting is what the visitor will experience.

## WHO VISITS OUR AREA AND WHY?

People visit our area for many reasons – they may come to visit friends or relatives, attend an event, or to get away for a few days.

### Visitor Profile: Why Are They Visiting?

Each visitor to our area has their own profile for every trip. They may be attending a sporting event, visiting grandkids, golfing, or shopping. Asking what brings them to Galveston Island will give insight on how to help them have an exceptional experience.



### What Types of Visitors Come to Our Area?

While not an exact list, the following shows the visitor segment or type of visitors you may encounter:

**Arts & Culture**  
**Senior Travel**  
**LGBT Travel**  
**Shoppers**  
**Adventure Travel**  
**Girls / Guys Getaways**  
**Motor Coach Visitors**

**Culinary Travel**  
**Traveling with Pets**  
**Outdoor Enthusiasts**  
**Family Reunions**  
**Convention Attendees**  
**Business Travelers**

## DESTINATION MARKETING

### EXERCISE—Put Your Sales Hat On

Marketing a destination is not an easy job. Imagine yourself a salesperson for Visit Galveston. What would you say to a prospective visitor to “sell” them on coming here? Or, to a person who was considering bringing a meeting or conference here?

**Write some of the key points you would mention:**

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Did any of the following come to mind?

- Natural beauty
- Friendly people
- Miles of beaches and laid-back island vibe
- Small town feel with big city amenities
- Rich cultural heritage
- Eclectic and stunning architecture
- Exciting history
- Vibrant fine arts and performing arts
- Incredible outdoor recreation on and off the water
- World-class lodging, resorts and spas
- Renowned culinary scene and offerings

## Impressing Meeting Planners

Now, think about meeting planners coming here with the idea of possibly bringing a meeting or convention here. Visit Galveston shows them around, but they also go out on their own. And, when they do, they're looking at EVERYTHING – the cleanliness of the city, what there is to do, how their attendees can get around, and most important, *the service they receive*.

## Locals as Marketers for Our Destination

From another angle, many area residents are members of associations, such as the National Association of Realtors or the American Bar Association. There is an association for virtually everything and it's been estimated that more than half of the people who live in our region belong to at least one. Also, think about our area's business owners who could possibly bring a business meeting here. What if our residents were to feel so confident about our area and the product it delivers that they all wanted to bring their meeting or convention here? Think of the thousands of visitors this would generate and the impact it would have on you and your job!

But, residents won't feel comfortable recommending our area as a meeting or convention site ***unless and until they believe in their hearts that our area is exceptional*** – that it will provide a quality *experience* for their attendees. Unless they see the brand of the city as an exciting, fun, quality-service destination, they won't bother.

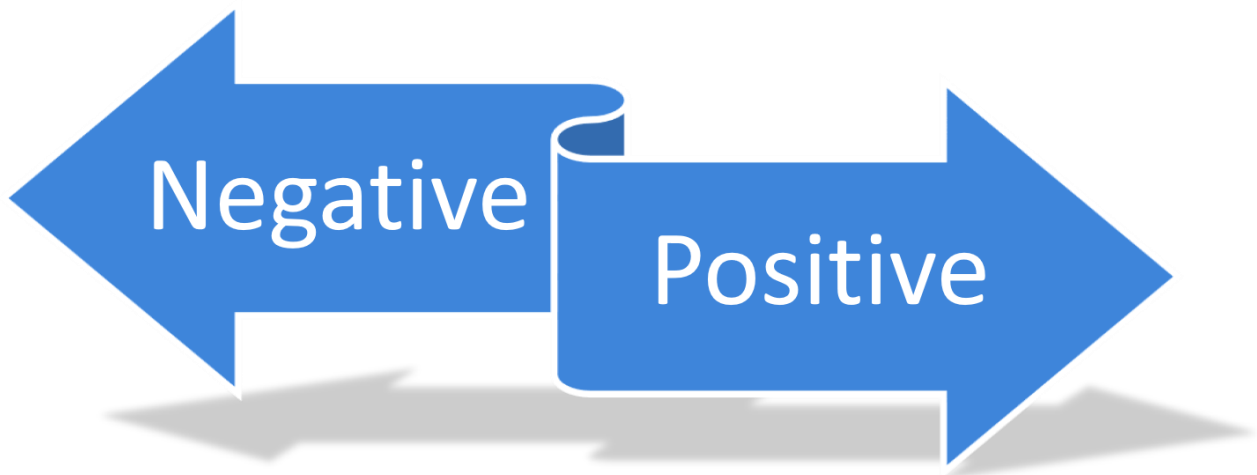
Many of us who live in Galveston and the surrounding region don't realize how truly special it is – how beautiful, how much fun, how friendly.

## Working Together

Think of the potential impact that you and your fellow CTAs could have *working together* to bring more business here. In some cases, that would mean changing our attitudes from negative to positive. It implies that we all meet the challenge of something very important.

## **Sending Out Positive Messages, Always!**

Do you cringe when you hear someone disparaging where we live? Or sending them to a restaurant in a city/town outside our area?



### ***From the Negative...***

***“There’s not much to do here.”***

***“Everything shuts down  
after 9:00 p.m.”***

### ***To the Positive...***

***“We have a lot of exciting  
things to see and do.”***

***“There’s a lot of nightlife,  
may I help you find it?”***

## When the Experience is *Negative*

People are naturally disappointed when they hear locals expressing these (or other) negative thoughts.

**When someone says something negative, it “sticks”. Visitors remember it, and it becomes part of their perception of your area.**

When you had a bad experience while eating out or on vacation, what EMOTIONS did you experience?

Frustration?  
Anger?  
Helplessness?  
Wasted Time?  
Wasted Money?

***“Let’s just go back to our hotel.”***

***“I’ll never come back here again.”***

***“Let’s leave tomorrow.”***

***“I can’t wait to tell everyone what a terrible experience this was.”***



This bad experience probably resulted in the following:

- Lower tips to the worker
- Lost future business
- Bad word-of-mouth or posts

CTAs need to work together...**to make sure that everything said is positive.**

## When the Experience is *Positive*

Now, think about what you feel when you have a positive experience eating out or while on vacation.

What did you experience? Excitement?

Fun?

Fond Memory?

***“I can’t wait to come back here!”***

***“This was fun; let’s go on to another place!”***

***“Let’s stay an extra day.”***

***“I can’t wait to tell others what a wonderful experience this was.”***



This positive experience probably resulted in:

- More tips
- More business for the company
- More visitors returning and telling others

A restaurant can have a great menu, but if the service is bad in any way, it won't be around for long. A local attraction can have interesting things to see and do, but if workers aren't helpful and friendly, customers will not want to return and they're not likely to recommend it to others.

### **The difference is YOU!**

You can give a visitor a good or bad experience, thereby influencing future decisions to return here.

**Bottom Line...we're all marketers for our destination.**

## THE POWER OF YOU: YOU ARE THE BRAND

Our area has much to offer. But one of the best things we have to offer is YOU!

Whether you realize it or not, you play a key role in keeping tourism secure for our community and in convincing more people to visit. In simple terms...

### **YOU are the Brand!**

A lot of what visitors **feel**, **remember**, and **tell** others will depend on the *experience* they had while they were here. **YOU** are a vital, inseparable part of that experience! Every CTA is a purveyor of the brand. You strengthen or weaken the brand with your action *or inaction*.

Who gets the questions about things to see and do? **YOU**

Who gets a chance to create a positive and memorable experience? **YOU**

Who helps create our area's personality? **YOU**

### **CTAs are at the Top of the Tourism Pyramid**



## Key messages in Marketing and Branding include:

- Tourism is big business on Galveston Island – 8.1 million yearly visitors, \$1.2 billion yearly economic impact, and over 11,890 jobs.
- Tourism generates tax revenues, creates jobs, and new attractions, restaurants, etc.
- CVBs / DMOs around the country promote their destination and compete among themselves to attract meetings, conventions, business travelers and leisure visitors.
- A city's brand is its "personality." It's what a visitor remembers most and what they tell their friends.
- The exceptional service provided by CTAs is a critically important part of the visitor experience – and it's the *experience* that visitors will remember. Therefore, YOU are the brand! You help deliver the Brand Promise – what a visitor expects to experience when they come here!

# HOSPITALITY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE



## Learning Objectives

- Explain the importance of exceeding customer expectations, for your organization and your community
- List ways to listen – actively and passively – and the barriers to effective listening
- Describe how everything communicates, whether spoken or unspoken
- Describe ways to turn customer complaints into opportunities
- Explain the importance of continuously improving upon your customer service skills
- Identify ways to leave a positive last impression following every visitor encounter

## HOSPITALITY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

When someone gives you poor service, what do you think about that person?

Lazy?

Going through the motions?

Doesn't care about customers?

This module focuses on the *attitudes and behaviors* of front-line CTAs to continually exceed customer expectations.

The way our visitors are treated influences what they say to others during their stay and after they leave, which can either hurt or help our destination's image and future tourism. Continually honing your customer service and people skills is vitally important.

***These are skills you will have for the rest of your life –  
that you will take with you into every job.***

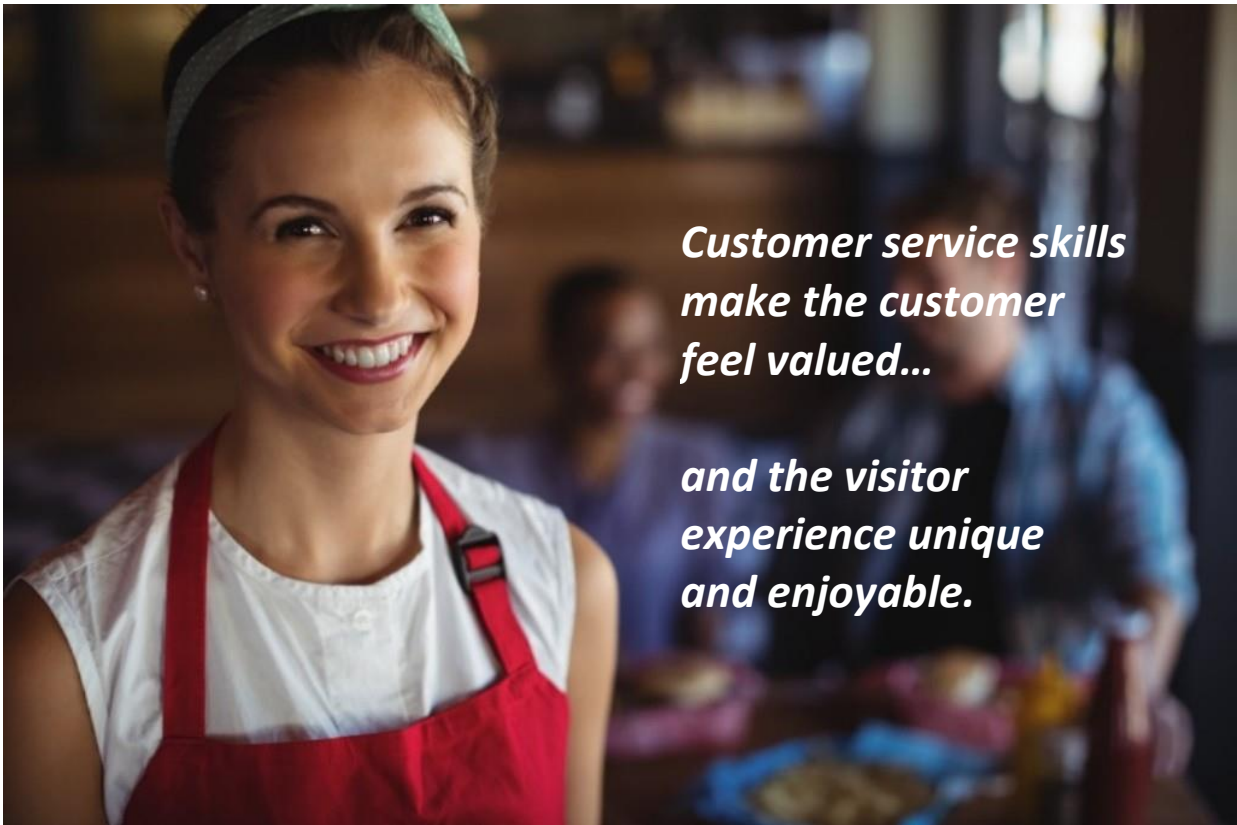
## DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

If you're thinking, "Oh no, not more training on customer service", then you probably shouldn't become a CTA.

Ongoing tourism customer service refreshers help you develop, enhance, and build upon the skills you use to take care of visitors and meet their needs.

These experiences contribute to customer loyalty, which translates into repeat business. The better your customer service skills are, the better your company's business will do, which will ultimately be considered in your own performance appraisal and, possibly, higher wages or tips.

The visitor is the one thing that binds us all together as CTAs.



## **MAPPING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE**

‘Mapping the Visitor Experience’ is thinking about what the visitor experiences from the time they leave home, to the time they return.

Basically, this means if you were to write down everything the visitor did or things that happened to them on their trip, you would create a ‘map’.

**They traveled here.**

**They checked into their hotel.**

**They ate out.**

**They went sightseeing.**

**They went shopping.**

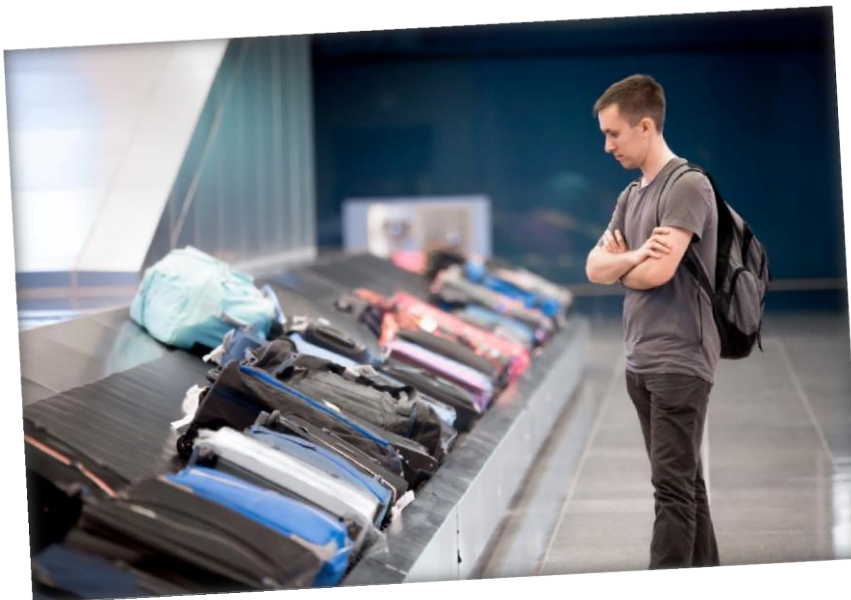
**They returned home.**

Now, think about what visitors have gone through to get here...

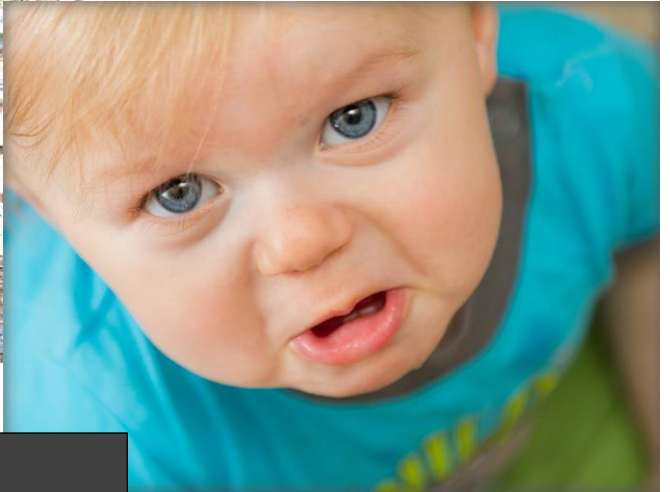
They may have driven or flown a long distance...



They may have lost their luggage...



They may have been swamped before they left...



They may have traveled with children...



They just want to get here, get settled in,  
and start having fun.



That's why when they see you...  
they want a smile.

When they see YOU they want a smile, some help, and some reassurance that they've made the right decision to come to our beautiful part of the world.

**This reinforces how YOU are the brand for the destination.**

**YOU are one of many steps along their journey that makes or breaks their stay.**

## EXCEEDING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Every customer goes into a place of business expecting a certain level of service. This is called ‘customer expectations.’

What does it mean to “meet expectations” or “exceed expectations?” Are they the same thing? **No, they are not.**

Think about buying a car. Let’s assume that you love the car but had a terrible experience with the dealership. The product was good, but service was bad, which led to a bad experience.



It might be expressed as a simple equation:

**Product (Good) + Service (Bad) = A Bad Experience**

Now, let’s use a similar example common in the tourism industry. A visitor goes to a restaurant and enjoys good service, but the food is poor.

**Product (Poor) + Service (Good) = A Bad Experience**

But, the server realized that her customers were not happy, so she offered a free dessert. Now look at it...

**Product (Poor) + Service (Great) = A Good Experience**

But, she didn’t stop there. She knew her supervisor would support giving them a coupon for a discount on their next meal. Now look at it...

**Product (Poor) + Service (Exceptional) = A Memorable Experience**

That’s what we mean by **exceeding customer expectations**. The server put the “WOW” factor into the experience.

Think of how it would have turned out, if she had just left it as a bad experience – had not taken the steps to turn it into a memorable experience.

## Would the visitor ever return? What would they tell others?

### Let's Do the Math...

#### On average in the Galveston Island area:

- Just over 1,080 hotel/motel rooms are occupied daily by 1.5 people per room = **1,620 people per day.**
- These 1,620 people have at least 2 “encounters” (dining, asking directions, etc.) resulting in  $2 \times 1,620$  or **3,240 Contacts per Day!**
- **That means more than 3,200 opportunities each day to “Get it Right” ...to “Make a Difference”**

**And, that's only counting those visitors staying in hotels!** It doesn't include those staying elsewhere, staying with friends or relatives, or driving in and out on a day trip.

### *What can I do? I'm just one person.*

**The beauty of the CTA program is that you're *not* just one person.**

You are part of an important group of professionals who are working to enhance the visitor experience. All visitor encounters, collectively, (including those involving YOU) make up the total visitor experience.

As you can see, the power of each Certified Tourism Ambassador™ is tremendous.

**YOU want to be remembered.**

**YOU want to stand out from your competitors. YOU want customers coming back.**

**This requires that you exceed customer expectations, by delivering exceptional customer service.**

## TEN RULES FOR EXCEEDING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Here are some basic rules and skills that provide guiding principles for all CTAs. As you read each, celebrate those skills you've mastered, and those you wish to improve.

### Rule #1 – ATTEND TO THE CUSTOMER

**FACT: The customer makes your job possible. You have a job because of the customer.**

Attend to the customer. They are your number one priority!



- The customer always comes first.
- Meet their needs.
- Answer their questions or refer them to someone who can.
- Watch for approaching customers. Focus on them as they approach.
- If you're busy, acknowledge them and use these powerful words: ***"We'll be right with you."***
- Smile and give them your full attention. Stop multi-tasking.
- Engage them; maintain eye contact. Make them feel special.
- Eliminate side conversations. Focus on *their* needs, not yours.
- Be genuine. Make them feel like you've invited them into your living room.
- Happy customers mean less stress and more fun on the job for you and your co-workers.
- Realize their importance – without them, you wouldn't have a job!

## Rule #2 – EVERYTHING COMMUNICATES

**FACT: Whether you're speaking or not, you're communicating.**

Think of what is communicated to customers when they see long lines, sloppy dress, excessive small talk, or a dirty work area.

Everything communicates when it comes to the customer.

- **Attitude** – make sure it's positive and helpful.
- **Appearance** – Maintain a professional and confident presence. It shows that you care about yourself and your customers.
- **Cleanliness** – Strive for a clean body, clean clothes, and a clean work area.
- **Friendliness** – Let them know you're glad they're here!
- **Body Language** – Watch your body language. Make sure it's positive.
- **Set the Stage** – Before you start work, think of the above and do what a fellow CTA does. Before he goes into the hotel lobby, he puts on his badge and says, *"It's show time!"*



**Which one would prefer to serve your table? Better yet, which one would you hire?**

**Everything communicates.**

## Rule #3 – CREATE A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

**FACT: Negative comments or attitudes and customer service don't mix.**

*If you can't say something positive, don't say anything at all.*

Negative comments can destroy the visitor experience.

- Make all experiences positive regardless of your personal problems.
- If something goes wrong, never blame others, especially in front of a customer.
- Don't cut down the competition.
- Avoid negative comparisons about businesses or people.
- Never air your 'dirty laundry' or gossip in front of the customer; it makes you look unprofessional.

## Rule #4 – LISTEN TO THE CUSTOMER

**FACT: Customers are not interruptions to your work –they are your work!**

Effective listening is a skill that can be carried with you for life.

- Effective listeners keep their ego from getting in the way.
- Ask questions and *listen* to their answers.
- Clarify what they want or need. Make sure you understand.
- Listen for what's interesting to *them*, not necessarily to you.
- Ask "What are your interests? What would you like to see or do?"
- Be patient. If you're feeling impatient, imagine you are serving your elderly aunt – the aunt you love dearly.

### Active Listening

is *hearing* what the customer is saying.

### Passive Listening

is finishing the customer's sentences, interrupting, or doing something else while they're talking, like multi-tasking.

*Effective listening is a skill that can be carried with you for life.*

## Rule #5 – KNOW YOUR JOB

**FACT: The more you know about your job, the more you will enjoy doing it.**

- Be good at what you do. Convey enthusiasm.
- Ask your boss for feedback on how you're doing.
- Recommend new ways of doing things.
- Think *continuous improvement*...think about ways to make your customer service more effective, easier.
- What else can you learn? Know your company's history, plus 'cool trivia', and 'tourist tips'.
- Be aware of the value that a diverse workforce brings to our region – a tapestry of physical abilities, cultures, and experiences.
- Know what's going on; stay current on major events.
- **Take initiative. The only person who knows best how to improve the quality of your work is you.**



## Rule #6 – VIEW COMPLAINTS AS OPPORTUNITIES

**FACT: Every complaint is an opportunity to exceed customer expectations.**

- When you can't say Yes, never say No.
- Use the complaint as an opportunity to exceed expectations.
- Make eye contact. Show concern. Be empathetic.
- Listen and ask questions to find out the cause of the complaint.
- Take ownership. Tell the customer what you intend to do and then *do it*.
- Stay with the problem until you have it resolved. Don't turn them over to someone else unless you know they can fix the problem.
- If someone else can help them, make the introduction, then explain the complaint.
- Know your company's policies. Ask your supervisor how far you can go to 'make it right', e.g. money back, discount coupon, freebie, etc.
- Never say, "There's nothing I can do." You must *try*. They'll appreciate it.
- Don't take it personally.
- Say "I'm sorry. May I try to straighten things out?" These words show action and make you look professional.
- Talk with your co-workers about how they handle complaints. Learn all you can from them.
- Learn something from every complaint.

## Rule #7 – GO THE EXTRA MILE

**FACT:** Every visitor appreciates something extra.

Exceeding customer expectations = going the extra mile:

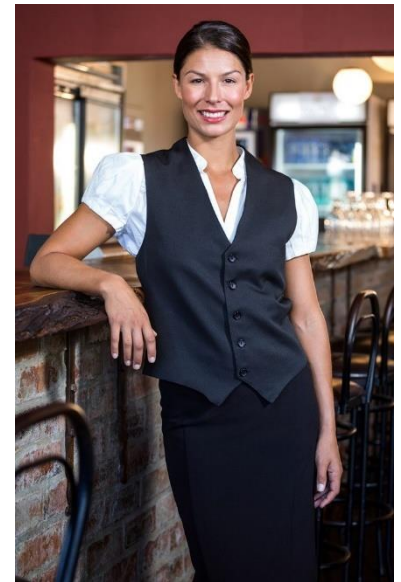
*Become an advocate and proud ambassador for our area.*

- Go beyond what's expected of you.
- Give them something 'extra' every opportunity.
- Use the tools and resources available to you.
- Help them with what they're interested in seeing or doing.
- Work with your colleagues around the region to create a unique visitor experience.

## Rule #8 – IMPROVE YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICESKILLS

**FACT:** *Everyone* can improve their customer service skills.

- Be aware of how you are serving the customer.
- Work to grow your skills.
- Watch others and learn from them.
- Do the right things right!
- Work with your team to polish their skills. Support and build the team.
- Never say "That's not my job" or leave the customer hanging.
- Take responsibility. Serve the customer as if *you* owned the business!



## Rule #9 – TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR WORK

**FACT:** The surest way to **NOT** deliver exceptional customer service is to choose not to.

Accountability for your customer service starts and ends with you.

- Don't let others convince you it's not 'cool' to provide exceptional customer service.
- Believe in yourself. Be self-confident.
- Always deliver quality.
- Never stop learning and growing.
- Take pride in who you are and the job you do.
- Never forget how important you are to our area's tourism and economic development.

## Rule #10 – LEAVE A POSITIVE LASTING IMPRESSION

**FACT:** The customer will remember you, if you exceed their expectations.



The *final* impression is as important as the *first* impression.

When you've paid money for something, how many times has a person told you thanks, by smiling and making sincere eye contact?

How many times have you actually felt they were glad to have your business? Not many?

What you say and do at the end of the visitor encounter leaves a lasting impression:

- Thank them for their business. And mean it!
- Make eye contact, smile, and use positive body language.
- A robotic 'thank you' is worse than nothing at all.
- Encourage them to allow you to serve them again.
- **Leave the visitor with this message, in your own words:**

***Thanks for coming to our great city!  
We hope you'll tell others what a  
great place we have here and that  
you'll come back soon!***

## SPECIAL NEEDS VISITORS

Since the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), many more people with disabilities are traveling. Wheelchair ramps, audible crosswalks, accessible hotel rooms, and flexible transportation are just a few of the myriad improvements.

To better serve these visitors with a high-level of empathy and ease of mind, you are encouraged to increase your knowledge through your employer-provided training, online reading, and local resources.



## FREQUENT ENCOUNTERS AND CTA RESPONSES

Consistency of message across our destination is one of the goals of the CTA program – having CTAs deliver similar messages to visitors at critical moments during their stay.

This ensures consistency in the quality of the service CTAs provide to the visitor.

**Below you will find common visitor questions or interactions and suggested responses. How do these responses compare with those you would typically use? Are they similar?**

**Study them closely and begin to memorize the responses. You don't have to use these exact words,** use your own style to get the message across. You might like to 'try these on' for a while. With a little practice, they'll become second nature.

When said with sincerity and with a smile, they're bound to have a positive impact on our visitors.

**Think of the impact this will have across the region when hundreds of CTAs give these**

responses to visitors at every opportunity!

### **CTA Response #1:**

What is a CTA?

In your own words:

*“It stands for Certified Tourism Ambassador. It’s industry certification for people like me who have been trained and certified to help make sure our visitors have a great experience.”*

### **CTA Response #2:**

What is there to do around here?

*“There’s a lot to do. How much time do you have and what are your interests?”*

### **CTA Response #3:**

Can you recommend X over Y?

Don’t disparage other businesses:

*“That’s a good place. You may also want to try restaurant A or B.”*

### **CTA Response #4:**

The CTA Closing Statement.

At the end of every visitor encounter, in your own words:

***“Thanks for coming to our great city. We hope you’ll tell others what a great place we have here and that you’ll come back soon!”***

If you were to go somewhere on vacation and you heard similar words consistently throughout your stay, wouldn’t you be impressed? You’d probably say, ***“Wow, this place really gets it!”***

That’s what will make a difference – consistent messaging from the front-line.

**Imagine the power of YOU and fellow CTAs combined!**

## **KEY MESSAGES**

- Do your very best to turn *every* visitor encounter into a positive experience.
- Continuously refine and improve your customer service skills.
- Develop the habit of *going the extra mile* when serving visitors.
- Know the elements that contribute to the visitor experience – *map* the visitor experience.
- Be aware of the consequences of visitors having good – vs. bad – experiences.
- Focus on the customer rather than yourself.
- Listen attentively and actively. Ask questions.
- Use the resources and tools that are available to you.
- Determine with your supervisor how far you can go in handling problems.
- Know the importance of a smile and what a smile communicates to visitors.
- Never blame others, especially in conversations with visitors or customers.
- Don’t degrade competitors, attractions, or events.
- Say something positive or say nothing at all.
- View complaints as opportunities to create and share a positive experience.
- Everything communicates – attitude, appearance, cleanliness, friendliness, and body language; 90% of communication is non-verbal.
- End every encounter with the CTA closing statement – it’ll have a lasting impact.

# GALVESTON ISLAND HISTORY



## **Learning Objectives**

- **Be knowledgeable of the core attractions and venues most frequently asked about by visitors and their geographic location.**
- **Describe some of the attributes that distinguish one attraction from another.**
- **Identify the location of the main entertainment areas in and around the region.**
- **Demonstrate the ability to assist visitors with itinerary planning.**
- **Discover what's unique to our area that visitors may not find anywhere else.**

## DISCOVERING GALVESTON ISLAND AND OUR REGION

Most CTAs report that this is their favorite part of becoming a CTA, because they learn new, interesting facts – even those who have lived here their entire lives.

### **You never know what visitors will ask about!**

Our visitors have a wide range of interests which can include anything from history to the outdoors to the unique things that make our destination so appealing.

Therefore, it's important to broaden your knowledge base and your general awareness so you can tailor your assistance to exceed their expectations.

**You are not expected to memorize everything** about our area that appears on the following pages. **You *are* expected to read this material carefully to become more aware of our history and the many other things that make our area special.**

Through this reading and by completing the required pre-classroom exercises, you will be better able to answer visitors' questions about what there is to see and do.

Enjoy the journey!

## OVERVIEW OF GALVESTON

Galveston was the largest city in Texas in 1845 and again in 1870. At the time of the 1900 Storm Galveston's population was almost 38,000 people. Currently Galveston Island's population is around 50,000.

Galveston is one of 12 cities in Galveston County and is the seat of government for the county.

The primary economic drivers are the Port of Galveston, the University of Texas Medical Branch and tourism. The island draws over 8 million visitors to the city. Efforts for economic development are led by the Park Board of Trustees, the Chamber of Commerce and the Galveston Economic Development Partnership. The University of Texas Medical Branch, Texas A&M University at Galveston and Galveston College are our three institutions of higher education on the Island.

Some of our influential island natives include Tilman Fertitta, Kay Bailey Hutchison, Jack Johnson, King Vidor and Barry White. Names that you will see frequently associated with Galveston include Isaac Kempner, George P. Mitchell, William Moody, Henry Rosenberg and John Hutchings Sealy. Other entertainment names include Katherine Helmond, Tracy Scoggins, and Bill Engvall.

Galveston Island is home to one of the largest concentrations of historic districts and buildings in the country. Our historic architecture has become a cornerstone of our tourism industry. Historic Districts include the Strand Mechanic National Historic Landmark District, the East End Historical District, Lost Bayou Historic District (16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, Ave K to Ave M ½) and the Silk Stocking Historic District (Ave K, Ave P, 23<sup>rd</sup> St, 25<sup>th</sup> St.). There are also several designated Neighborhoods including, San Jacinto, Kempner Park, Lasker Park, Denver Court, Palm Gardens, Cedar Lawn, Carver Park and Old Central.

Galveston boasts several notable and historic landmarks. The tallest building on the Island is the American National Insurance Company offices, built in 1971. Called the Broadway Beauties, Ashton Villa, Bishop's Palace, Moody Mansion and Open Gates are all large stone or brick mansions on the eastern end of Broadway.

Galveston also has several historic cemeteries, including Broadway Cemeteries which holds the Old City, Oleander, Evergreen, Trinity Episcopal, Old Catholic, New City and Hebrew Benevolent burial sites. The cemetery is now part of the Broadway Cemetery Historic District. Other notable structures include the Falstaff Brewery (currently under renovation), Galveston Garten Verein, the Grand Galvez, the Menard House, Old Red at UTMB, the Rosenberg Fountains (various locations throughout the city), the Scottish Rite Temple, Stewart Mansion, St. Joseph's

German Catholic Church, St. Mary Basilica, the Texas Heroes Monument, the Grand 1894 Opera House and the U.S. Custom House.

## **OUR REGION'S EARLY HISTORY**

The earliest inhabitants of our island were ancient people, including the Akolisa, Karankawa and Atakapa, who found many of the resources they needed in the waters of the bay. They hunted and fished the swampy land. Archaeologists have located shell middens here which indicate indigenous peoples inhabited this area as early as 10,000 B.C.

Our ocean-side location also brought early explorers to our area and provided an easy transportation method to make our island a desirable place for early settlers to live. Our region gets its name from a Spanish military officer who was also an American Revolutionary War hero. Bernardo de Galvez was Governor of New Spain, where he secured the port of New Orleans and supplied George Washington's troops. Galvez sent Jose Antonio de Evia to chart the Gulf of Mexico coast. De Evia named Galveston Bay for Galvez. Later the island and city took the same name.

In an effort to secure Texas for the United States, Dr. James Long built a mud fort at Bolivar Point in 1820. His wife, Jane Wilkinson Long was thought to have given birth to the first Anglo child in Texas.

The pirate Jean Laffite settled in Galveston and the area in the early 1800s. Laffite and his brother Pierre were involved in smuggling and established the village of Campeche on the island. Laffite left the island in 1821 under pressure from the United States. The ruins of Laffite's home, Maison Rouge, can still be seen today at 1417 Harborside Drive.

The Texas Navy berthed in the port of Galveston during the Texas Revolution and helped protect the interim government, which took refuge on the island in 1836. During that time Galveston was the temporary capital of the new Republic of Texas. A bronze statue of General Sherman, hero of the War of Independence is at 7<sup>th</sup> and Broadway.

The first land claim on the island given by the Republic of Texas was to Michel Branamour Menard. Menard was a French-Canadian fur trader and organized the Galveston City Company to design the new city of Galveston. The City of Galveston was incorporated in 1839. Street names were on a grid and designated by a letter or number but many have been renamed to honor prominent citizens or landmarks. Menard also established the Galveston Wharf and Cotton Compress Company to build piers and warehouses for the large number of goods sold through the port.

Galveston is noted for having the state's first courthouse, post office, opera house, hospital, golf course, bakery, grocery store, telephone and first electric lights! The first drug store opened in Galveston in 1886 and still serves treats at its original soda fountain at Star Drug Store, 510 23<sup>rd</sup> St.

From 1840 to 1870 the city was a major immigration point for over a quarter million Europeans. By 1870 the population had risen to nearly 14,000 inhabitants. The public school system was also established in 1870.

Texas' oldest historic preservation group, the Galveston Historical Foundation, was founded in 1871 to preserve the area's written history. The Foundation, now located at XXXX, operates nine museums and historic properties including the Moody Mansion, the Bishop's Palace and the 1877 Tall Ship Elissa.

Galveston rose to prominence as the "New York of the Gulf" and by 1874 was the state's banking and commerce center. The area was filled with flourmills, cotton shipping, textile and bagging mills, an iron foundry and even a rope factory. The Strand became known as the Wall Street of the Southwest. The Port of Galveston is the oldest port in the Gulf of Mexico west of New Orleans.

By 1899, Galveston was the world's foremost cotton port. The port was serviced by wooden three- and four-masted ships during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 1877 Tall Ship Elissa at the Texas Seaport Museum is one such ship. Ferry service has been a part of the island transportation system since the 1800s and continues today between the island and Port Bolivar.

In 1881 the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) was established in Galveston, followed shortly by the new John Sealy Hospital in 1890. UTMB is now the largest employer in the city with over 11,000 employees.

Our impressive collection of Victoria-era homes was borne of a massive fire that swept through Galveston's east end in 1885. The fire destroyed 568 homes in 42 blocks between 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> streets. Many of these homes survived the devastating 1900 storm which killed over 6,000 residents and remains the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history.

The Great Storm reshaped the town and community. The hurricane struck on September 8, 1900 with winds up to 140 miles per hour and a 16 foot storm surge. The highest point on the island at the time was only 9 feet above sea level. The island lost a sixth of its population and over 3,600 buildings were destroyed or damaged. The estimated cost of the damage was \$20 million, the equivalent of almost \$1 billion in 2023. Many of the buildings preserved by the Galveston Historical Foundation date from this disaster. A statue paying tribute to those who

lost their lives is on the seawall at 48<sup>th</sup> and Seawall Blvd. The Galveston and Texas History Center at the Rosenberg Library has the largest collection of photographs and documents relating to the 1900 storm.

The original section of the seawall was laid in October of 1902 and stretched for 3.3 miles along the Gulf-side beach. The seawall was built to 17 feet and the entire city behind it was raised by 8 feet. 16.3 million cubic yards of sand was dredged to build up the east end of the island behind the seawall. Around 2,000 buildings were raised, using hand-turned jackscrews. The seawall expansion to 99<sup>th</sup> street was completed in 1963.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Galveston is a barrier island. It protects Galveston Bay from the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The island is 27 miles long and 3 miles wide at its widest point. Pelican Island, forming the north side of the harbor, was formed after a very small natural island was joined by fill from channel dredging. Bolivar Peninsula is classified as a peninsula but is actually another barrier island. High Island, at the extreme east end of Bolivar Peninsula is the highest point on the Gulf of Mexico at 38 feet above sea level.

The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway is a navigable waterway on the north side of Bolivar Peninsula that runs over 1000 miles along the Gulf of Mexico. Two granite block restraining walls, the North and South Jetties, were built at the end of the Bolivar Peninsula and Galveston Island in 1898 to provide a deep water channel to Galveston Harbor.

Galveston Bay is about 30 miles long and 17 miles wide and 6-12 feet deep. Galveston Bay consists of the Trinity Galveston, East and West Bays. Freshwater enters into the Bay from the Trinity, Brazos and San Jacinto rivers and mixes with salt water from the Gulf to form estuaries.

The Island has 32 miles of beaches, prairies and wetlands and provides crucial habitats for numerous species and provides recreation for tourists and residents. The sand dunes along the beaches help protect the beaches, land, bays and estuaries from damaging wind, waves and storm surge. Driving on the dunes is not permitted and overnight camping is not permitted except in designated campsite areas. The Galveston Park Board of Trustees maintains and operates the municipally owned beach parks and beaches.

The Gulf waters along Galveston Island are mixed with muddy water from the Trinity and San Jacinto rivers and Gulf salt water. The water turns to green-blue as it deepens a few hundred yards off shore.

Texas is home to more species of birds and animals than any other state. Coyotes on the Island have been genetically linked to the rare DNA of endangered red wolves not seen since the

1980s. Atlantic bottlenose dolphins are frequently seen in Galveston Bay which also has the most abundant supply of shellfish on the Texas coast.

Reefs of the American oyster are large and abundant in Galveston and East Bay. The Kemp's ridley turtle is the most endangered sea turtle in the world and can be found during nesting season (April-July) on our beaches.

Galveston Island is also on the pathway of a major migratory flyway between North and South America. Hundreds of thousands of birds stop to rest in our area flying from Central and South America across the Gulf of Mexico. More than 300 species of birds have been identified here. The Reddish Egret is the official city bird. Endangered Brown Pelicans and white pelicans are also numerous during the winter. Great places for birding include the Big Reef Nature Park, East Lagoon Nature Trail, Offats Bayou, 8-Mile Road, Lafitte's Cove Nature Preserve and Galveston Island State Park. The Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council holds FeatherFest each April.

The Park Board manages the Island's beach parks and the Seawall beaches between 10<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> streets. Parks include East Beach, Stewart Beach, Seawall Urban Park, Dellanera RV Park and Seawolf Park as well as several Beach Pocket Parks. Information on the parks can be found at [www.visitgalveston.com](http://www.visitgalveston.com).

Galveston is also well known for its hiking, walking, running and biking activities as well as kayaking and canoeing on Galveston Bay and an active surf scene. The city boasts two golf courses, a skate park and several sports facilities.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The first railroad to connect the island to the mainland was built in 1860. You can still see evidence of the Galveston, Houston & Henderson rail company at the GH&H Depot at 325 33rd Street. The last scheduled trip of the Galveston-Houston Electric Railway passenger train left Galveston on April 11, 1967.

After several connections between the island and the mainland were started in 1860, the island is now connected by the Interstate 45 causeway that was completed in 2008.

Started in 1867, the Galveston Street Railway Company used mule-drawn streetcars to pull streetcars down Market Street. The mules were replaced by electric trolleys in 1891. The new Galveston Trolley began service in 1988 and, after a decade out of service in the mid-2000s, are back in service both as a steel-wheeled downtown trolley and as rubber-wheeled trolleys that route along the seawall.

Our prominence as a cruise port began in 1974 after a deepening of the Galveston ship channel. The cruise industry is now a major economic driver with over 1.3 million passengers in 2023, the 3<sup>rd</sup> most popular port in the United States.

## **MILITARY**

While Galveston was the temporary capital of the Republic of Texas it was also home port of the Texas Navy. In 1836 Fort Travis was established on the eastern end of the island to protect the Galveston harbor. The octagonal fort housed twelve-pound guns taken from the Cayuga. The fort was converted into a gun battery and in 1898 was established at Fort San Jacinto.

The second Fort Travis was built in 1898 on Bolivar Point. Two batteries were completed in 1899 and some of the old bunkers still remain.

Galveston was captured by Union forces during the Civil War in 1862 at the First Battle of Galveston. The confederates, led by Major General John Bankhead Macgruder retook the island during the Second Battle of Galveston in 1863.

Fort Crockett was built in 1897 for coast artillery training and harbor defense. From 1917 to 1918 Fort Crockett was used as an assembly point to equip and train troops being sent to France during WWI. During WWII 3,000 troops were garrisoned in tents on the parade ground of the fort. In the late 1940s Fort Crockett was a recreational facility for active and reserve military personnel. In 1955 the National Marine Fisheries Service occupied 10 of the original buildings after the military declared the fort as surplus. You can still see the Fort Crockett batteries along the seawall between 45<sup>th</sup> street and Seawall Blvd.

The Galveston Pleasure Pier was built in the 1940s to provide entertainment to military service personnel and their families. It was operated as the largest pleasure pier in the country until 1961 when it sustained damages from Hurricane Carla. It was replaced by the Flagship Hotel and then the Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier.

## **CULTURE**

Immigrants had an enormous impact on the island.

German immigrants are now the third largest national-origin group in the state and came through Galveston in the mid-1800s. The annual Oktoberfest celebration continues to grow each year.

African-Americans arrived with the first European explorations as both slaves and free blacks

as early as 1528. Under Spanish rule freed Blacks were free to work in professions or skilled trades and had all legal and political rights of citizenship. Slavery in Galveston began before 1820 with the Laffite brothers and were operating slave markets by 1850. In 1865 the Emancipation Proclamation was issued on the corner of 22<sup>nd</sup> and Strand in Galveston freeing all slaves. The celebration on June 19 became known as Juneteenth and is now a federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery. Juneteenth is celebrated in Galveston with non-stop parades, picnics, poetry readings, gospel music and freedom tours. Plans are underway to establish a Juneteenth Museum.

The island's Hispanic heritage runs deep. Today the Hispanic population makes up a third of the population. Hispanic and Latin influence can be seen in the name of the town and streets. Several Hispanic heritage events are held annually, including a large Dia De Los Muertos celebration. NEED MORE.

Galveston is the oldest extant Jewish community in Texas, established in the mid-1800s. The first Jewish cemetery was established in Galveston in 1852 followed by the establishment of the oldest Reform congregation in Texas at Temple B'nai Israel Galveston in 1868. The Galveston Movement operated to divert Jews feeling persecution in Eastern Europe between 1907 and 1914. Over 10,000 Jewish men, women and children passed through Galveston as a result.

The first known Greek to arrive came with the pirate Jean Laffite in 1817. The first Greek community in Texas was established in Galveston and created a large presence in the fishing and oyster industries.

In the 1880s Italian immigrants began to arrive in large groups as farmers and railroad workers. Joe Grasso pioneered the Galveston shrimp industry which lives on in Pier 19's Mosquito Fleet. Italians have had an outsized impact on Galveston. Rosario and Salvatore Maceo arrived in Galveston in 1910 and quickly became leaders in bootlegging and illegal gambling. The men opened several restaurants and nightclubs, contributing to Galveston's reputation as a cauldron of illegal behavior. The brothers also owned and operated several legitimate businesses and had large real estate holdings. In 1942 the brothers opened the Balinese Room where many famous acts crossed the stage, including the Marx Brothers, Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope and Duke Ellington. It is claimed that the margarita was invented by Balinese bartender Santos Cruz in 1948. The Maceo gambling empire came to an with end with a raid on the city by the Texas Rangers in 1957.

Galveston has a growing LGBTQ+ population and celebrates Gay Pride at several events including Galveston Gay Beach Weekend and the Gay Pride Festival and parade. The island has a reputation as open and welcoming for all people.

## TODAY

After languishing for several years the city was revitalized in the 1980s by prominent citizens like Galveston-born oilman George Mitchell. Mitchell overhauled the Historic Downtown District and revived the annual Mardi Gras celebration. The celebration is now the third largest Mardi Gras event in the United States.

The Grand 1894 Opera House was also restored in 1984 and now hosts numerous concerts and local events every year. The Strand and Postoffice districts are vital and thriving areas of shops, restaurants and art galleries. Galveston now has over 2,000 buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Hurricane Ike struck the island on September 13, 2008 and brought a 17 foot storm surge through the historic downtown. At \$25 billion Ike remains the costliest hurricane in Texas history and the fourth costliest in U.S history. Damage to long-term and historical properties was extensive. The Flagship Hotel on the 25<sup>th</sup> pier was damaged beyond repair. The Grand 1894 Opera House spent 92 days making essential repairs that allowed it to reopen on its 114<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Balinese Room and pier were completely destroyed.

The Island has slowly rebuilt and is a regional economic driver for Galveston County and Texas. The cruise industry is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest in the country and our educational institutions anchor much of our economy.

# TRANSPORTATION



## TRANSPORTATION TODAY

Today, our transportation options for visitors include public buses, taxi companies, car rental companies, limousine and sedan charters, airport shuttles, ferries, and even street-legal golf cart rentals! Search [www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com) for transportation listings and information.

### Airports

Our local airport is **Scholes International Airport**. It is a general aviation airport, accessible for corporate and chartered planes and helicopters. The 1,200-acre airport offers a first-class airport terminal and 24-hour fixed base operator. Several of our top attractions, Texas Aviation Hall of Fame, Lone Star Flight Museum, Moody Gardens Hotel and Convention Center, and Schlitterbahn Water Park are located on the airport complex. ***Scholes International Airport (GLS)*** – 2115 Terminal Dr., Galveston, TX 77552, 409-741-4609, [www.galvestonairport.com](http://www.galvestonairport.com)

Most visitors come to Galveston through two Houston airports. See the airport websites and [www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com) for **shuttle and transportation options** to and from the airports to Galveston Island.

- **William P. Hobby Airport** is the closer of the two airports, just 40 miles from Galveston and is Houston's second largest airport with non-stop direct air service to over 40 destinations within the U.S. It's home to one of Southwest Airline's most important hubs and is an international gateway. Hobby Airport also serves AirTran Airways, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, and JetBlue Airways. ***William P. Hobby Airport (HOU)*** – 7800 Airport Blvd, Houston, TX 77061, 713-640-3000, [www.fly2houston.com/HOU](http://www.fly2houston.com/HOU)
- **George Bush Intercontinental Airport** lies on the north side of Houston, 70 miles from Galveston. Houston's largest airport offers non-stop service to more than 170 destinations and currently ranks 5<sup>th</sup> among U.S. airports with scheduled non-stop domestic and international service. It serves 21 passenger airlines and is the largest hub for United Airlines with more than 650 daily departures. ***George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH)*** – 2800 N. Terminal Rd., Houston, TX 77032, 281-230-3100, [www.fly2houston.com/IAH](http://www.fly2houston.com/IAH)



Carnival Triumph

## Cruise Ship Terminals

- Galveston ranks as the **fourth-busiest port for cruising** in the U.S., behind Florida, and one of the top ten in the world. *Lloyd's Cruise International* and *Travel Weekly* have rated the Port of Galveston as one of the nation's top cruise ports.
- Currently, cruises to the **Caribbean** and **Mexico** on Carnival Cruise Lines and Royal Caribbean, along with cruises to **Key West, Nassau, Bahamas** and **Castaway Cay** on Disney Cruise Lines, sail from our island out of two cruise terminals. The port is considering adding a third terminal. **Port of Galveston** – Terminal No. 1: 2502 Harborside Dr., Terminal No. 2: 2702 Harborside Dr., Galveston, TX 77550, [www.portofgalveston.com](http://www.portofgalveston.com)

## Public Transportation

- **Island Transit**, the City of Galveston's public transportation system, provides daily fixed-route, ADA-accessible bus service. The service area covers 27 square miles of Galveston Island. Schedules and fares are available on the website. As you read earlier, the Galveston Trolley is not currently running. **Island Transit** – 3115 Market St., Galveston, TX 77550, 409-797-3900, [www.islandtransit.net](http://www.islandtransit.net)

## Free Ferry Service

- The **Galveston-Port Bolivar ferry** carries vehicles and passengers between Galveston Island and the Bolivar Peninsula on State Highway 87. It's the only way motorists can cross the waterway to the mainland other than I-45 and FM 3005. The trip is an excellent opportunity to get an up-close look at **ships, sea birds and dolphins**, plus the remains of the **SS Selma**, a World War I reinforced concrete tanker that was scuttled in the harbor.

- The ferry operation consists of **five boats**, each of which can carry approximately 70 vehicles, 500 passengers and six crewmembers. Each ferry is capable of carrying eight 18-wheel trucks weighing 80,000 pounds each!
- **Free ferry service** is provided by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) 24-hours a day. The 2.7-mile trip takes approximately 18 minutes to cross one of the busiest waterways in the world. Loading and unloading times vary depending on the time of day and season - the peak months for ferry use are June, July and August. *Parking is available at the ferry landing for visitors that just want to ride the ferry.* **Galveston-Port Bolivar Ferry** – Galveston Ferry Landing, Ferry Road (Hwy 87), Galveston, TX 77550, 409-795-2230, [www.txdot.gov/driver/travel/ferry-schedules.html](http://www.txdot.gov/driver/travel/ferry-schedules.html)



Galveston-Port Bolivar Ferry

## Guided Tours

- For visitors with no transportation or those who want help in discovering our region, **guided tours** are just the thing. Visitors can explore the area by bicycle, carriage, motorboat, airboat, kayak, paddlewheel boat, and even on a Segway personal transporter with knowledgeable and fun guides. For a listing of guided and self-guided **Tours** check out [www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com)
- **Water-based tours** range from relaxing historic tours of the harbor, dolphin watching, and kayaking to thrilling airboat and jet boat rides on Galveston Bay.
- **Land-based** tours include walking tours of historic downtown or a haunted cemetery.
- For a combination, narrated Galveston Duck Tours cover miles of **land and water**.

## Getting Around the Island

- As a majority of our visitors arrive by car, it might help to know a little about how our roads are laid out. Our island is 32-miles long and 2.5-miles wide, which makes getting around pretty easy. There are only a few main roads that cross the island:
- **Interstate 45 (I-45) also called the Gulf Freeway** - becomes **Broadway** (also Avenue J and SH 87) east of 61<sup>st</sup> Street. Broadway is flanked with the mansions of our city's early business tycoons. At the east end of the island, SH 87 crosses Galveston Bay to Bolivar Peninsula by the free ferry.
- **Harborside Drive** runs along the north side of the island from I-45 to SH 87 and provides access to the Pelican Island Causeway and the Cruise Terminals.
- **Seawall Boulevard** - runs from the east tip of the island just past Scholes Airport and intersects with **San Luis Pass Road** (also FM 3005) that connects the west end of the island to the mainland by a toll bridge over San Luis Pass.
- As a rule, **avenues named with letters** run east and west, and **numbered streets** run north and south. Street names with "½" (e.g. Avenue M ½) are the result of building lots longer than a city block that had streets cut through the middle when they were subdivided.
- Many of the **streets downtown have two names** on most maps and GPS systems – the original number or letter, and the name of a person or landmark – which can be a little confusing to a first-time visitor. Remember to show them the most direct route on a map or point out the major roadways such as **Strand, Mechanic and Post Office Streets and Rosenberg Street / 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Christopher Columbus Blvd.** and, of course **Broadway**.

## Seawall & Downtown Parking

- The **Port of Galveston** official cruise parking lots, Parking Lot A and Parking Lot B are located at the intersection of 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and Harborside Drive, marked with blue pole banners that read "Port of Galveston/Cruise Parking." Visitors departing on a cruise can find parking lots and **pre-pay for parking** or find a list of lodging venues that offer parking and shuttles to the Port on [www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com)
- Visitors to **Downtown and the Seawall** are able to use a mobile app, the internet, or a mobile phone to pay for parking through **PayByPhone**. The parking transactions are associated to a license plate and are transmitted real-time to reflect payment status to parking ambassadors and patrol cars. Downtown has installed pay stations on corners where you can pay with cash or a credit card. Seawall Beach Ambassadors on Segways can take credit card payments for parking on the Seawall. The Galveston Park Board has a local call center where visitors can talk to Seawall Beach Ambassadors 409-797-5198 or 409-797-5199.
- PayByPhone is the preferred payment method for the Galveston Seawall area. Tickets can also be purchased from select vendors, including 61<sup>st</sup> Pier, Ohana's Surf Shop (28<sup>th</sup> and Seawall) and Island Bicycle Company (18<sup>th</sup> and Seawall).

- Paid parking areas include the north and south sides of **Seawall Boulevard from 6<sup>th</sup> to 69<sup>th</sup> Street and 81<sup>st</sup> to 103<sup>rd</sup> Street**. The area between 69<sup>th</sup> and 81<sup>st</sup> Street is free of charge. An annual seawall parking pass is valid for entry into all Galveston Island paid beach parking, including; Stewart Beach, East Beach, Dellanera Park and the West End Beach Pocket Parks.
- Parking fees apply from 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., **7 days a week**. A one-time registration is required. The fee is \$1/hour, not to exceed \$8/day. Payment can be made through the app, online or by phone.
- Seawall Annual passes are \$25 per year and can be purchased on the app by entering 52 weeks for the parking time or by contacting the call center or a beach ambassador. Annual passes can also be purchased from select vendors. Seasonal beach parking passes are also valid for Seawall Parking and can be purchased at any of the Galveston Island Beach Parks (Stewart Beach, East Beach, Dellanera RV Park, West End Pocket Parks, Galveston Island Visitors Center and Park Board of Trustees). **PayByPhone** – *Galveston Seawall location is 5004 - 866- 234-7275, [www.paybyphone.com/galveston](http://www.paybyphone.com/galveston)*

# BEACH PATROL



## BEACH PATROL

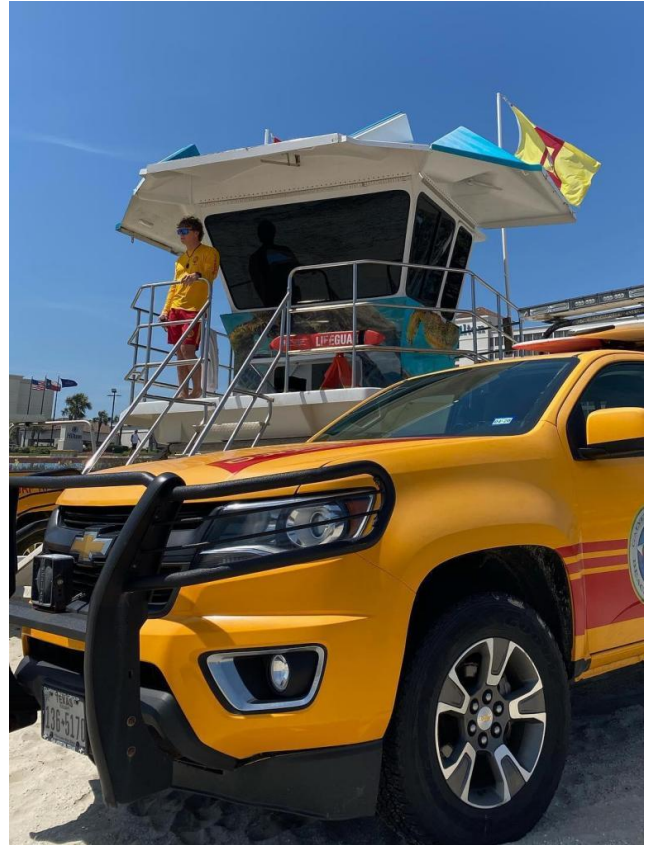
The Park Board is also home to the Galveston Island Beach Patrol. While the origins of the Beach Patrol go back to the 1800s the modern beach patrol was established in the 1930s and 40s. The Beach Patrol has 10 full-time staff along with over lifeguards, senior guards, supervisors, peace officers and dispatchers. The Beach Patrol is augmented by the Park Board Police Department.

The Beach Patrol monitors current beach conditions and posts the flag warning system to inform and warn beachgoers of surf conditions. Warning flags are posted each day along Seawall Blvd. at 61st St., 53rd St., 37th St., 29th St., and 10th St.

During the summer months, each guarded Lifeguard Tower flies the appropriate flags for the day. All Park Board operated parks, such as East Beach, Stewart Beach and the West End Pocket Parks, also display the warning flags when the parks are open.

The Beach Patrol also has many programs that tie to the community in which they are embedded, such as the Jesse Tree/Beach Patrol Survivor Support Network, the Junior Lifeguard Program, the School Outreach Program that provides instruction to over 30,000 children per year, and the “Wave Watcher Program”. The Wave Watcher Volunteer Program is a way for citizens to join the team. It’s a mini lifeguard academy that is free of charge and that serves as a force multiplier in efforts to prevent drowning deaths and aquatic accidents.

The Beach Patrol also runs Junior Lifeguard Day Camp Program and is a member of the Galveston Lifeguarding Association, the Gulf Coast Region Chapter of the United States Lifesaving Association.



# NATURE TOURISM



## NATURE TOURISM

### Climate

- Galveston Island's climate is classified as **humid subtropical**. Prevailing winds from the south and southeast bring both heat from the deserts of Mexico and moisture from the Gulf of Mexico. Summer days are hot with high humidity, and winters are temperate with typical January highs near 60°F. We see rain year- round with most of it occurring in the summer months but rarely get snow. **Here’s a Tip:** Find current **weather, 10-day forecasts, and beach and surf conditions** all on one page - <https://www.visitgalveston.com/plan-your-trip/weather/>
- October through March we can experience what Texans call a “**Blue Norther**” when icy cold winds blow in from the north/northeast and cause the temperature to drop quickly. When these winds arrive they sometimes create bluish-gray clouds, and that’s where the name came from.
- As you are aware by now, our location on the Gulf of Mexico puts us in the path of hurricanes and tropical storms that originate in the Atlantic Ocean. **Hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30**, with peak hurricane activity typically occurring in August and September. **Discover It:** Learn more about Hurricane season and being prepared from the **National Hurricane Center** - [www.nhc.noaa.gov](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov) and **Galveston County Office of Emergency Management** – [www.gcoem.org](http://www.gcoem.org) and **City of Galveston Office of Emergency Management** – 601 54th St., Galveston, TX 77551, 409-765-3710, [www.cityofgalveston.org/154/Office-of-Emergency-Management](http://www.cityofgalveston.org/154/Office-of-Emergency-Management)

Average Temperatures for Galveston Island												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average High	58°	60°	66°	74°	78°	85°	87°	87°	84°	77°	68°	61
Average Low	47°	48°	56°	65°	71°	77°	78°	78°	75°	68°	58°	50°
Water Temp	54°	55°	61°	71°	78°	83°	86°	86°	83°	75°	67°	59°
Average Precip	3.3"	2.3"	2.3"	2.4"	3.6"	4.4"	4.0"	4.5"	5.9"	2.8"	3.4"	3.5"

## Geology and Geography

- **Galveston Island** is a **barrier island** in the Gulf Coastal Plains region of south Texas. Barrier islands typically protect bays, harbors and estuaries on their leeward (sheltered from the wind) side from the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico.
- Geologists have drilled holes in the island and dated seashells to determine that Galveston Island began to form **about 5,300 years ago**, when the sea level began to rise from the melting of glacier ice at the end of the last Ice Age.
- Our island is about **27 miles long and 3 miles wide** at its widest point. It lies at the eastern end of a nearly continuous chain of barrier islands that extends more than 600 miles along the Texas and Mexican coasts.<sup>43</sup>
- The current **Pelican Island**, about 4.5 miles off Galveston Island, was formed after a very small Pelican Island and Pelican Spit were joined by fill from channel dredging. It continues to grow from dredged material piped in from clearing the Houston Ship Channel.
- The **Bolivar Peninsula** is classified as a peninsula, defined as bordered by water on three sides and connected to the mainland, but is actually a barrier Island. The narrow strip of land is less than three miles from Galveston Island, and is about 27 miles long and 3.5 miles at its widest point.
- The **topography of Galveston Island is generally low**, ranging from about 14 to 18 feet above sea level adjacent to Seawall Boulevard to approximately 8 to 9 feet in the area of Galveston Harbor. The seawall has an average height of about 17 feet. Natural elevation averages around 6 feet along the remaining 20 miles of the island, west of the Seawall.
- **High Island** sits at the extreme eastern end of Bolivar Peninsula. Its 38-foot rise above sea level makes High Island the **highest point on the Gulf of Mexico**. During hurricanes and floods, residents from miles away on the Bolivar Peninsula and coastal lowlands rush to High Island - often the only point above water - for protection.<sup>44</sup>
- Galveston Island is oriented generally **northeast-southwest**, with the **Gulf of Mexico** on the east and south, **West Bay** on the west, and **Galveston Bay** on the north.

## The Gulf of Mexico

- The **Gulf of Mexico** is the ninth largest body of water in the world and one of the most biodiverse bodies of water on the planet. Similar to the Mediterranean Sea, the Gulf is **partially landlocked**, situated between the U.S. and Mexico coasts and the island of Cuba. The Gulf links the ports of five southern U.S. states and six Mexican states with the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea.

- The Gulf has a **diurnal tide** or only one high and one low tide each day. The **Gulf Stream**, an important fast-moving warm water Atlantic Ocean current, is fed by the Gulf Loop Current that originates in the Gulf of Mexico.
- The Gulf of Mexico's coastline contains **half of the coastal wetlands in the U.S.** and is dotted with tidal flats, mangrove swamps, estuaries and bays.
- The **Gulf Intracoastal Waterway**, on the north side of Bolivar Peninsula, is a navigable waterway that runs 1,050 miles along the Gulf of Mexico coast from Brownsville, Texas to the Florida Panhandle. It's part of the larger Intracoastal Waterway, a 3,000-mile continuous natural and man-made route along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts that links major ports and provides access to inland waterways systems used for transportation of freight by barges.
- Twin granite block restraining walls were built into the Gulf of Mexico to provide a deep water channel to Galveston Harbor – the **North Jetty**, at the southwestern end of Bolivar Peninsula, and the **South Jetty** at the east end of Galveston Island. Work on the jetties began as a construction experiment in 1874, and completion of the system in 1898 made Galveston a deep-sea port for world commerce. The jetties **protect the entrance to the Galveston/Houston Ship Channel** and keep the channel from filling with silt that would prevent ships with more than a 12- foot draft to pass through the area.

## Galveston Bay

- **Galveston Bay** is approximately 30 miles long and 17 miles wide, and 6 to 12 feet deep. It has a surface area of 600 square miles. *Find more information on the bay from the **Galveston Bay Information Center** – Texas A&M University at Galveston, 200 Seawolf Parkway, Galveston, TX 77550, 409-740- 4703, [www.gulfbase.org](http://www.gulfbase.org)*
- The Galveston Bay area includes a large **bay-estuary-lagoon system** consisting of the Trinity, Galveston, East, and West Bays, which are separated from the Gulf by Pelican Island, Galveston Island, and the Bolivar Peninsula. *Download the **Drive and Discover** driving tour app for the Galveston Bay area from the **Galveston Bay Estuary Program** – 17041 El Camino Real, Ste. 210, Houston, TX 77058, 281-218-6461, [www.gbep.texas.gov](http://www.gbep.texas.gov)*
- **Estuaries** are transition zones between the land and sea where fresh water from rivers mixes with salt water from the Gulf to create **brackish water**. Freshwater enters primarily from the mainland by the Trinity, Brazos and San Jacinto Rivers and numerous local bayous. Seawater enters the bay from the Gulf of Mexico between the island and peninsula and at San Luis Pass and Rollover Pass.

- Galveston Bay is the **largest of seven estuaries** located along the Texas coast and one of the **most significant bay ecosystems in the U.S.** The estuary is Texas' leading bay fishery and supports vibrant recreation and tourism industries.
- Estuaries are some of the most productive ecosystems in the world. Many animal species rely on estuaries for food and as places to nest and breed. Human communities also rely on estuaries - of the 32 largest cities in the world, 22 are located on estuaries. Human activities and environmental events have led to a decline in the health of estuaries, making them **one of the most threatened ecosystems** on earth.

## Beaches & Dunes

- Our island boasts **32 miles** of Gulf beaches! Beaches are important for **storm protection** – a wide sandy beach helps separate storm waves from upland structures. They provide **crucial habitats** – numerous species rely on wide, healthy beaches as a place to live, feed and nest. And they supply us with **healthy recreation** – America's beaches have twice as many visitors annually as all of America's national parks combined!
- **Sand dunes** are one the most important physical structures on a barrier island. Dunes form at the back edge of the beach on the Gulf side by an accumulation of drifting and blowing sand, partially held in place by sparse vegetation. **Dunes help to protect** our beaches, land, bays and estuaries from damaging winds, waves and storm surge.
- While the Seawall, over 10 miles long and 17 feet high, **protects the eastern end** of Galveston Island from intense storms, the rest of our island is protected by dunes!
- In order to preserve and enhance our beach dune area and enable it to protect Galveston Island from major storms, certain **activities are not permitted on the dunes.** These include **not driving any motorized vehicle or walking/riding a horse** upon, over, or across any sand dune, and **no overnight camping** on the beach except in designated campsite areas.
- The **Galveston Island Park Board of Trustees** maintains and operates Galveston's municipally owned beach parks and provides beach maintenance, cleaning and lifeguard service for most of Galveston's beaches.
- In 2013, the Park Board partnered with the non-profit Artist Boat to plant 14,000 dune grass seedlings on Seawall beaches between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> streets, and between 57<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> streets. The newly planted vegetation is intended to protect the beach from erosion caused by coastal wind and tides. Learn about more **beach restoration projects** from the Galveston Island Park Board of Trustees – [www.galvestonbeachinfo.com/projects.asp](http://www.galvestonbeachinfo.com/projects.asp)

## Unusual Water Conditions

- Visitors frequently ask about the color of our water. So, “**Why is the water brown?**” Muddy fresh **water from the Trinity and San Jacinto Rivers** and bayous on the mainland flows into Galveston Bay and out into the Gulf. Offshore winds and currents **churn the sand and silt** in the

shallow water as it moves down the shoreline making it look muddy. It's possible that sediment from the Mississippi River makes it all the way to our coastline, but it's more likely to be from our own rivers.

- Let visitors know that our water is more **green-blue as it deepens** a few hundred yards off the shoreline, and at certain times of the year (spring and winter) when the **winds blow from the north**, back into the bay.
- **Red Tide** occurs when the microscopic algae *Karenia brevis* blooms in large numbers. Texas red tides, more **common August-February**, typically begin in the Gulf of Mexico. Currents and winds then transport blooms up along Gulf beaches, and less frequently into bays and estuaries. The algae are toxic to fish in high concentrations, resulting in dead fish washing up on beaches. Airborne algae from surf spray can cause respiratory irritation in humans. **Red Tide warnings are posted on the Texas Parks & Wildlife – [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/enviroconcerns/hab](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/enviroconcerns/hab) and Texas Department of Health - [www.dshs.state.tx.us/seafood/RedTide.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/seafood/RedTide.shtm)**
- ☒ Do be aware that **Beach Water Warnings** may be issued if a high level of bacteria is detected at any of our beaches. Elevated bacteria levels are usually caused by road and waste runoff after a heavy rain. Visitors can still go to the beach, but it's recommended to avoid the water. Water quality issues are noted by an **orange flag** on the beach. **Here's a Tip:** Water quality is constantly monitored and **Beach Advisories** are posted by the Beach Patrol and Galveston County Health District - 409-938-2251, [www.cgis.glo.texas.gov/beachwatch/index.html](http://www.cgis.glo.texas.gov/beachwatch/index.html)

## Flora and Fauna

- Galveston Island has a unique variety of distinct eco-regions, including beaches, prairies and wetlands **that support an abundance of plants and wildlife**. The best place to see what our island looked like before it was settled is at Galveston Island State Park.
- Outside of the downtown area, the island is characterized by numerous **sand ridges** and swales. Open **grasslands and prairies** cover the interior and were once used for grazing cattle. Extensive **tidal marshes** and other lowland vegetation occupy large areas lying along the northern shoreline of the island.
- Our **wetlands** are important habitats between water and land that support a vast array of plants, fish and wildlife. They also trap water, sediments and nutrients and play a major role in improving water quality and decreasing pollution.
- Texas is home to more species of birds and animals **than any other state**. Common wildlife seen on the island are rabbit, squirrel, beaver, muskrat, nutria (also called river rat), rattle snake, Cottonmouth (water moccasin), American Alligator, lizards, salamanders and turtles.
- **Vegetation** in our area varies from panicum, morning glory, sea purslane, and sea oats along the coast to tall grasses, and wild buckwheat, bluestem, southern wax myrtle, American elderberry, black willow, dwarf palmetto, Texas lantana, and fragrant sumac in town. Wildflowers are a common site in the spring along with our **state flower, the Bluebonnet**.

- The official nickname of Galveston is “**The Oleander City**,” due to the large number of colorful, vibrant oleanders in the area. The oleander is an extremely toxic plant to people, particularly young children.
- Hurricane Ike in 2008 destroyed over 40,000 trees, **80 percent of the trees** on the island. Initial damage was toppled trees and within weeks, most trees lost their leaves, with the exception of palms, due to exposure to excessive salt – from wind-borne salt spray, the storm surge or both. Since 2009, Galveston Island Tree Conservancy has planted almost 12,400 trees to replace those destroyed by Hurricane and will plant an additional 5,000 trees, part of a five-year plan to re-establish the Island’s urban canopy. **Galveston Island Tree Conservancy** – P.O. Box 2123, Galveston, TX 77553, 409-599-6357, [www.galvestonislandtreeconservancy.org](http://www.galvestonislandtreeconservancy.org)

### Seaweed is Important

- Another common question we get from visitors is “**Why is there so much seaweed on the beach?**” **Seaweed**, also known as gulfweed or sargassum, is a free-floating algae found in warm coastal waters. It provides crucial habitat for a wide variety of marine animals in the open ocean and on shore.
- Seaweed typically washes up on Galveston’s beaches May - July. The Park Board **seaweed maintenance crews** operate as needed depending on seaweed levels (which can be daily during peak season). For safety reasons, the crews operate at low-traffic times for the beach parks, typically after 9:00 p.m. through the early morning.
- TAMUG developed the **Sargassum Early Advisory System (SEAS)** program, which was designed to predict seaweed influxes before they hit land. The SEAS tool was first introduced in Galveston in spring 2012 and has been 90 percent accurate in its predictions, allowing the beach maintenance team to better prepare staff and equipment for seaweed influxes that could affect tourism.
- Here’s something to think about – **Seaweed** and seagrass decomposing on the beach may smell pretty bad to us, but it’s an important source of food for animals such as crabs and insects, which in turn are eaten by sea turtles and numerous species of shorebirds. The Galveston Park Board **intentionally leaves seaweed on the sand**, pushing it to the back of the beach so that it can decompose which helps protect the beach and dunes from erosion and nurtures all the critters that live there.

### Sea Life & Endangered Sea Turtles

- The Gulf of Mexico is home to a diverse range of **sea life** and thousands of fish species such as barracuda, grouper, Spanish mackerel, sailfish, tarpon and tuna. Bull shark and hammerhead shark are often seen as well.
- Atlantic **bottlenose dolphins** are easy to spot in Galveston Bay; the free ferry ride from Galveston Island to Bolivar Peninsula is a great place to watch for dolphins.

- **Jellyfish, Portuguese Man-O-War, and stingrays** can pose a hazard for swimmers. A **purple flag** indicates a potential problem or presence of dangerous marine life.
- Our **bays and estuaries** are teeming with spotted seatrout, flounder, red drum (redfish), and black drum, squid and stingrays. Shrimp, crabs, sea stars, and periwinkles inhabit a variety of coastal habitats, while sea anemones, tunicates (Sea Squirts), and sea urchins prefer hard surfaces in moving water, such as the jetties.
- Galveston Bay has the **most abundant supply of commercial shellfish** on the Texas coast. Reefs of the **American oyster** are large and abundant in Galveston and East Bays and somewhat less so in West Bay due to higher salinity.



Kemp's ridley sea turtle

- Threatened and **endangered sea turtles**, such as the green, hawksbill, and Kemp's ridley, are seen in our area as well. The **Kemp's ridley**, named after Richard M. Kemp, a fisherman from Key West, Florida, is **the most critically endangered** sea turtle in the world. Adult Kemp's ridley's weigh 80-120 lbs. and at only 26-30 inches long, are considered the smallest marine turtle in the world.
- During nesting season (April-July), female sea turtles swim ashore to **lay their eggs on our sandy beaches** in areas fortified by seaweed for camouflage. When the eggs hatch, the young turtles make their way to the ocean to begin their journey. Normally, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requires the sea turtle eggs to be **moved to the Padre Island National Seashore** for incubation and release of the hatchlings.
- A resolution was drafted by Sea Turtle Restoration Project and adopted by the Galveston City Council in 2013 to **protect the growing breeding population of Kemp's ridleys** on the Upper Texas Coast by keeping the eggs on Galveston Island. **Discover It: Learn more from *Sea Turtle Restoration Project* – [www.seaturtles.org](http://www.seaturtles.org)**
- TAMUG instituted formal **weekday nesting patrols** on Galveston Island, Bolivar Peninsula and Surfside/Brazoria County because our beaches are frequented by increasing numbers of tourists during nesting season. **Discover It: Remember if a visitor tells you they saw a turtle, all sightings of sea turtles (live or dead) or sea turtle tracks or nests should be immediately reported by calling 866-TURTLE-5. Stranded or injured**

dolphins and whales should be reported to the **Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network** – 4700 Avenue U, Galveston, TX 77551, **800-9- MAMMAL**, [www.tmmsn.org](http://www.tmmsn.org)

## Birding Mecca

- Galveston Island is in the path of a major migratory **flyway between North and South America**. Hundreds of thousands of birds stop to rest in our area after flying from Central and South America across the Gulf of Mexico. More than 300 species of birds have been identified here during spring and fall migrations. Over 60 percent of North American bird species can be found on Galveston Island at some time during the year.
- The **Reddish Egret** is Galveston Island's official city bird. This species only nests in Texas (1,000 pairs), Louisiana, and Florida. With declining numbers, the Reddish Egret may soon be on the endangered species list.



State Bird - Mockingbird



Roseate Spoonbill



Reddish Egret

- Spring and summer are prime seasons for migrating **songbirds**, **colonial water birds** and nesting **shore birds**. Fall and winter bring **hummingbirds** as they fatten up prior to flying back over the Gulf. Hundreds of thousands of waterfowl, including **Sandhill cranes**, threatened **Piping Plovers** and endangered **Brown Pelicans** winter on and around Galveston Island.
- The Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council publishes a detailed description of top **birding areas**, a **map and seasonal checklist** of species sighted. **Discover It: Great Birding In and Around Galveston Island brochure** – [www.galvestonnaturetourism.org](http://www.galvestonnaturetourism.org) or stop by the Galveston Island Visitor Center at 2328 Broadway.
- Some of our best birding spots include **Big Reef Nature Park** and **East Lagoon Nature Trail** near East Beach, a great spot for cormorants, egrets, herons, ibis, ducks, black skimmers, gulls, and terns. **Offats Bayou** at 61<sup>st</sup> Street is good for grebes, diving ducks, and - in the spring - Pacific loons. The **8-Mile Road** area's shallow inter-tidal marsh, tidal creek, oyster reef, mud flats, brackish freshwater pond, and pasture attract innumerable types of birds. **Lafitte's Cove Nature Preserve** is an excellent place to find migrating songbirds in spring and fall, at least 137 species were recorded during past migrations.
- Galveston Island State Park** has a perfect mix of habitats and open space that supports a large year-round bird population that explodes during spring and fall migration. **San Luis Pass** at the

far west end of the island boasts large flocks of gulls, terns, skimmers, avocets, stilts, pelicans, cormorants, waders, sandpipers, plovers plus the occasional songbird.

- Bolivar Peninsula has a number of Houston Audubon Sanctuaries of which, **Bolivar Flats** is designated a Globally Important Bird Area. Plus, gulls, brown pelicans, and magnificent frigate birds are a common sight on the free ferry ride from Galveston to Port Bolivar. **Discover It: Find a map and information on the *Houston Audubon Sanctuaries*** - [www.houstonaudubon.org](http://www.houstonaudubon.org)
- Galveston Island is part of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department's **Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail**, a system of drivable loop trails with designated stops. The Galveston Loop, Bolivar Loop, and Bluewater Loop on the Upper Texas Coastal Birding Trail map cover over 20 of the best birding sites in our region. **Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail** at [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wildlife/wildlife-trails/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wildlife/wildlife-trails/)
- The Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council's annual birding festival, **FeatherFest** attracts birders from across the country to Galveston each April for birding and nature photography workshops and field trips. The 2013 FeatherFest had a record 625 birders and photographers. **Galveston FeatherFest & Nature PhotoFest** – 2228 Broadway, Galveston, TX 77553, 832-459-5533, [www.galvestonfeatherfest.com](http://www.galvestonfeatherfest.com)

## Nature Preserves & Natural Areas

- **East End Lagoon Nature Park and Preserve** is 684 acres and one of Galveston's largest undeveloped spaces. The site contains both tidal and nontidal wetlands, beach dunes, a freshwater pond, black mangroves and upland prairie, along with an extensive marine coastline. Flounder, trout and redfish are regularly caught along the beachfront and the lagoon; Blue crabs are plentiful throughout the year. Shorebirds, birds of prey, and hundreds of species of migrating birds can be found at various times of the year. Professional and amateur nature photographers will find subjects from birds to bugs, flora and fauna, shells and even ships. Kayakers can explore the lagoon, while hikers will have a system of trails to follow in the future. **East End Lagoon Nature Park and Preserve** – Boddeker Rd, adjacent to R.A. Appfel Park (East Beach), Galveston, TX 77550, [www.eastendlagoon.org](http://www.eastendlagoon.org)



East End Lagoon Nature Park & Preserve

- **Galveston Island State Park** features 2,000 acres of barrier island ecosystem containing a mosaic of coastal habitats that host a surprising variety of wildlife. Visitors enjoy bird watching, nature study, hiking, and fishing. Wading and shore birds, mottled and mallard ducks, raccoons, armadillos and marsh rabbits are found in the park, which is ideal for wildlife observation and photography.
- **Lafitte's Cove Nature Preserve** covers 32 acres in the center of the 192-acre Lafitte's Cove Residential Canal Subdivision. The Preserve is managed by a uniquely created Lafitte's Cove Nature Society, who stepped in to stop over development of the area. The wooded preserve is the island's best temporary refuge for trans Gulf Neotropical songbird migrants. Three water drips attract brightly colored warblers, tanagers, orioles, catbirds, etc. The preserve also teems with wildlife from rabbits, to snakes to alligator. The area, dubbed "Mitchell Ridge" by archeologists, was inhabited by the indigenous people who lived seasonally on Galveston Island for hundreds of years. It is widely believed that Mitchell Ridge is where the Spanish Explorer Cabeza De Vaca lived after being shipwrecked in 1528. An approximately 3/4 of a mile paved nature trail runs through the area, with markers identifying the numerous native trees and plants, and an overlook with a gazebo. **Lafitte's Cove Nature Preserve**
- *Eckert Drive, off Stewart Rd., Galveston, TX 77554, [www.laffitescovenaturesociety.org](http://www.laffitescovenaturesociety.org)*

# ARTS AND CULTURE



## ARTS AND CULTURE

Our island is filled with historic charm and architecture, food, shops, arts and festivals that can only be found here and are what make Galveston Island so unique!

### Our Unique Tree Sculptures

- The damaging combination of Hurricane Ike's powerful winds and waves killed over 40,000 trees on the island. Local artists have breathed second life into something Mother Nature attempted to destroy. Damaged Oak trees that once canopied over the streets of the East End Historical District have been carved into whimsical and inspirational tree sculptures. The 35-plus sculptures have become so popular they now make up a formal **Hurricane Ike Tree Sculptures Tour**. Visitors can take a free self-guided walking or biking tour or SegCity offers daily guided Tree Sculpture tours on Segways. *Tree Sculpture Tour walking tour brochures are available at the Galveston Island Visitor Center.*



"Dalmatian," by artist Jim Phillips near Fire Station 1 was one of the first Tree Sculptures

### Our Ghostly Appeal

- Galveston Island's ghostly history makes us one of the **top destinations in the country for "haunted" travel**. Visitors seek to be spooked by numerous ghost stories that stem from the country's deadliest natural disaster and other tragedies. We have a lot of haunted options from guided walking tours of our cemeteries and the historic Strand district to a year-round haunted house to exploring haunted hotels, mansions and military sites.
- Every October, the 105-year-old **Hotel Galvez**, featured on the Travel Channel's Ghost Stories and on the Discovery Channel's Ghost Lab for its paranormal significance offers public ghost tours, and the **Galveston Historical Foundation** runs haunted harbor and haunted cemetery tours. **Here's a tip:** Visitors can find **Ghost Tours** and haunted happenings on [www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com)

## We're in the Movies & on Webcams

- Many film productions have been shot in Galveston over the years. Below is a list of some of the more prominent film, television and commercial productions filmed here:
  - Paris, Texas (1984)
  - The Evening Star (1996)
  - Night Game (1989)
  - Armageddon (1998)
  - Prison Break (2007)
  - The Little Couple (2009-2013)
  - American Idol (2012)
  - Ghost Hunters (2012)
  - Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern (2013)

Visit Galveston from anywhere in the world with our live-streaming webcams. Whether you live on the island, have visited, or are planning to visit Galveston, our beautiful beaches and vibrant city never get tiresome. If you're lucky enough to be here experiencing it first hand, we're happy to have you! But if you are not, then here's the next best thing – watch our live-streaming webcams and transport yourself virtually to enjoy the sun, surf, and island life from anywhere in the world! **Galveston Webcams** – [www.visitgalveston.com/webcams](http://www.visitgalveston.com/webcams)

## Our Specialty Shops

- Visitors often want to take something home with them that's unique to our region. Our island's **historic downtown and Seawall** area are brimming with eclectic boutiques, galleries, and gift shops.
- **Galveston Bookshop** located in the heart of the historic Strand shopping district has a huge selection of used and out-of-print books.
- **Eighteen Seventy One** is the Galveston Historical Foundation's store on the Strand offering books, tours, gifts and vintage games and toys.
- **La King's Confectionery** is a throwback to the 1920s and offers handmade chocolates, fresh Saltwater Taffy and other novelties made the way it was 100 years ago.
- Downtown also has unique one of a kind shopping experiences and **The Witchery**, appropriately housed in the old "Central Drug Store" building on Postoffice Street, specializing in books, gifts and supplies of a metaphysical nature.
- The Galveston Island Market offers an **outdoor market** at Saengerfest Park where local artisans, handcrafters, and growers showcase their creations including quilts, handmade soaps, photography, jewelry, and more. **Galveston Island Market** – *3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month (excluding July and August) from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., located at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street & Mechanic Street, Galveston, TX 77550, [www.galvestonislandmarket.com](http://www.galvestonislandmarket.com)*

- Many shops along Seawall Boulevard cater to beachgoers, stocking plenty of swimsuits, surf gear, sunglasses and sunscreen. There are also souvenir shops, boutiques, casual clothing stores plus bike, surf and skate rental shops. **Murdoch's Bathhouse** and **Wings** along the Seawall are great for shells and souvenirs.

Check out [www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com) for a listing of specialty shops and shopping in Galveston.



Shopping on The Strand

## Our Food

- Our food reflects the wide array of cultures that make up our region. And, one of the best things about living in such a diverse community is the **variety of restaurants and cuisines**, including everything from American, Italian, and Mexican to Mediterranean, Asian and Barbeque.
- Diners can choose from down-home style cafés and pubs to waterfront bistros, to upscale fine dining and everything in between. Some of **our classic eateries include Gaidos Famous Seafood Restaurant** (since 1911), **The Original Mexican Café** (since 1916 in the same location), **Landry's Seafood** (the third Landry's restaurant opened in Texas) and **Jimmy's on the Pier** (our only over the water dining).
- Our visitors may not know about our **regional specialties** such as the **Muffaletta** from Maceo Spice & Import Company (Papa Rose Maceo's family is said to have invented the sandwich).
- Be sure to also tell visitors about our **Tex-Mex** cuisine that blends regional ingredients with the traditional preparations of Mexico. **Chili** (without beans!) is our State Dish, and a local treat is **Frito Pie**. The **Pecan** is our state tree, which makes pecan pie a local favorite. They may also be surprised to learn that **Dr Pepper** and the **frozen margarita machine** were invented in Texas!
- We are **a destination for seafood!** The waters around Galveston Island provide local restaurants with the freshest and largest selection of seafood on the Gulf of Mexico. Excellent **seafood restaurants** can be found all over the island. Pier 19 is home to the Mosquito Fleet

and a number of **seafood markets** for visitors (and locals) that want to cook up a fresh catch for dinner.

- 📍 To complement the fresh seafood, **locally grown produce**, prepared foods, and edible farm products can be found at the Galveston farmer's market. **Galveston's Own Farmers Market** – *Sundays, June-Sept, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., Oct-May, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at 3304 Market St, Galveston, TX 77550, [www.galvestonsownfarmersmarket.com](http://www.galvestonsownfarmersmarket.com)*
- **Restaurant Week** held in January, is a great way to sample some of our island's best restaurants with affordable prix fixe or multi-course set price menus and specials. **Restaurant Week (January)** – [www.galvestonrestaurantweek.com](http://www.galvestonrestaurantweek.com)

Check out [www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com) for a comprehensive listing of culinary offerings.

## Nightlife

- From **family-friendly locations** to activities **just for adults**, our region offers after dinner entertainment options for every age and frame of mind. Kids will enjoy miniature golf, go-kart racing, thrill rides and midway games. They'll also like the **free movie nights** at Saengerfest Park on the first Saturday of each month at dusk, and **free music nights** at 6:00 p.m. on the second and fourth Saturday from March- October.
- For a night out, our area boasts everything from beach bars to wine bars and stylish lounges to dance clubs. Visitors can sip a cocktail while **watching the sunset** from a rooftop bar, relaxing to live piano, or **watching the waves** from a number of casual bars on the beach. **Dance clubs** and lounges can be found throughout downtown and on Seawall Blvd. We also have an **incredible live music scene** with local and national bands playing everything from country to alternative, jazz to rock.

Check out [www.visitgalveston.com/food-drink/nightlife](http://www.visitgalveston.com/food-drink/nightlife) for the variety of nightlife and entertainment options in Galveston.

## Festivals/Unique Events

- Our festivals and events celebrate our diverse cultural heritage as well as our island's unique history and offer great live entertainment, games, food and activities.
- Galveston is probably best known for our 100+ year old **Mardi Gras celebration** – the third largest celebration in the U.S! Our 12-day party attracts more than 300,000 attendees with almost 40 concerts, over 20 parades, balcony parties and elegant masked balls. *Learn more about **Mardi Gras! Galveston** - [www.mardi-gras-galveston.com](http://www.mardi-gras-galveston.com)*
- We also host a wide variety of events including the **Lone Star Rally**, the largest 4- day Motorcycle Rally in North America, **Galveston Island Beach Revue**, officially the City of Galveston's "Kickoff to Summer" event, and **Galveston FeatherFest**, one of the largest birding festivals in Texas.



Galveston Island Beach Revue - Bathing Beauties Contest

- A few of our other annual Festivals and Events are:
  - **Yaga's Chili Quest and Beer Fest** – January
  - **Galveston Restaurant Week** – January
  - **Mardi Gras! Galveston** – February
  - **Sea Turtle Saturday** – February
  - **NOAA Ocean Discovery Day** – March
  - **Causeway Fun Run** – March
  - **Movie Night & Music Nite on the Strand** – March-October
  - **Galveston Food & Wine Festival** – April
  - **The Grand Kids Festival** – April
  - **Diva's Half Marathon** – April
  - **Adopt-A-Beach Clean-up** – April
  - **Galveston FeatherFest & Nature PhotoFest** – April
  - **Steampunk Festival** - April
  - **La Izquierda Music Festival** - May
  - **Historic Home Tours** – May
  - **Galveston Island Beach Revue** – May
  - **Yaga's Wild Game & BBQ Cook-off** – May
  - **Juneteenth Celebration** – June
  - **Clean Galveston's Back Garden Tour** – June
  - **Galveston Beach Band Concerts since 1929** – June - August
  - **July 4th Fireworks Display** – July
  - **Texas Race Week Regatta** – July
  - **AIA Sandcastle Competition** – August
  - **Galveston Wild Texas Shrimp Festival** – September
  - **Galveston Triathlon** – September
  - **Harvest Moon Regatta** – October
  - **Toughest 10K Causeway Run** – October

- **Clean Galveston Walkabout** – October
- **ARToberFEST** – October
- **Oktoberfest** – October
- **Greek Festival** – October
- **Lone Star Motorcycle Rally** – November
- **Galveston's Winter Wonder Island** – November - January
- **Moody Gardens Festival of Lights and Ice Land Sculptures** – Nov.- Jan.
- **Dickens on the Strand** – December
- **Santa Hustle** – December
- **Victorian Homes Tour** – December
- **Breakfast with the Sandhill Cranes** – December

*For a current list see the Galveston Island Calendar of Events at [www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com)*

## Visual Arts

- Galveston Island boasts a vibrant cultural arts scene! Arts and cultural agencies showcase artistic works of every style, genre and format.
- In 2012, the **Texas Commission on the Arts** announced the designation of the **Galveston Downtown Cultural Arts District** as an official cultural district for the State of Texas. It is home to 20-plus art galleries, two live theaters, boutiques, antique shops, regular live entertainment and the nation's third largest annual Mardi Gras celebration.
- The area of **The Strand, Postoffice Street and Mechanic Street** has become a major arts and entertainment hub, anchored at the east by The Grand 1894 Opera House.
- ARToberFEST is our **annual art festival** featuring 125 quality artists and artisans displaying their works in a relaxed atmosphere along Postoffice Street surrounded by a variety of antique shops, boutiques, art galleries, and restaurants in and around the festival site. **Discover It: ARToberFEST is held each October - [www.artoberfest.com](http://www.artoberfest.com)**
- 📍 The **Galveston Arts Center (GAC)** produces approximately 24 innovative contemporary art exhibitions each season focusing on emerging through established regional artists in a variety of disciplines. The GAC also houses a museum shop, **ArtWorks**, that presents a showcase for fine craft artists and artisans from around Texas. *Admission is free to the **Galveston Arts Center** – open Wednesday - Sunday – 2127 Strand., Galveston, TX 77550, 409-763-2403, [www.contemporaryartgalveston.org](http://www.contemporaryartgalveston.org)*
- For over 25 years, the Galveston Art Center has produced **ArtWalk** in the heart of the historic district. Now spreading to other parts of the Island, ArtWalk takes place in existing commercial galleries, non-profit arts spaces and what are called "other wall" spaces – restaurants and retail stores – offering alternative places to see and learn about art. **Discover It: ArtWalk occurs approximately every six weeks on Saturday nights from 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m., see the website for dates and map of locations - [www.contemporaryartgalveston.org/artwalk](http://www.contemporaryartgalveston.org/artwalk)**

- **The Bryan Museum** encompasses treasures ranging from ancient Native American cultural artifacts to modern 21<sup>st</sup> century pieces. The collection includes rare documents in German, French, Spanish, and English, exquisite saddles and spurs, antique firearms, rare books, fine art, religious art, folk art, portraits, exceedingly rare maps, and more. **Discover It: The Bryan Museum** – 1315 21<sup>st</sup> St., Galveston, TX 77550, 409-632-7685, [www.thebryanmuseum.org](http://www.thebryanmuseum.org)
- Artist Boat promotes awareness and preservation of our coastal and marine environment through the sciences and the arts. **Artist Boat's Seawall Interpretive Trail (Project SIT)** beautification project will transform 63 Galveston Seawall benches into educational works of art that depict the coastal and ocean heritage of Galveston Island and the Gulf of Mexico. To date, 12 benches have been completed at Menard Park and Historic Pleasure Pier. **Discover It: Learn more about Artist Boat's Seawall Interpretive Trail (Project SIT)** – [www.artistboat.org/projectsit](http://www.artistboat.org/projectsit)

Check out [www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com) for a listing of arts groups, museums and galleries.

## Performing Arts

- Our performing arts venues are home to **world-class artists** as well as regional and local performers. **Galveston Symphony Orchestra**, an ensemble of highly skilled amateur and professional musicians, and **Galveston Ballet**, a pre-professional ballet company and academy, make their home at The Grand 1894 Opera House for their season performances. Galveston is now also designated by the State of Texas as a **Texas Music Friendly Community**. Our major performance venues are:
  - **The Grand 1894 Opera House** – designated the Official Opera House of Texas and on the National Register of Historic Places, presents a year-round schedule featuring International and nationally recognized touring artists in the fields of popular music, jazz, dance, classical music, as well as a broad spectrum of theatre, children's programming and special events. Notable performers have included Willie Nelson, Ray Charles, Itzhak Perlman, Bernadette Peters, Lyle Lovett and Tommy Tune.- 2020 Postoffice St., Galveston, TX 77550, 409-765-1894, [www.thegrand.com](http://www.thegrand.com)
  - **Island ETC** (East-End Theatre Company) - professional repertory theatre company stages five to six musical comedy productions a year plus screens a classic film series in the historic restored Strand Theatre building – 2317 Mechanic St., Galveston, TX 77550, 409-762-3556, [www.islandetc.org](http://www.islandetc.org)
  - **Pier 21 Theater** - a family-friendly venue managed by the Galveston Historical Foundation offers three documentary films daily, *The Great Storm*, *Pirate Island*, and *Galveston – Gateway on the Gulf*, highlighting the major events of Galveston Island - 2100 Harborside Dr., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Galveston, TX 77550, 409- 763-8808, [www.galvestonhistory.org/sites/pier-21-theater](http://www.galvestonhistory.org/sites/pier-21-theater)

- **Galveston Island Convention Center** - hosts meetings, conventions, tradeshow, sports events, and special events of all types in a 140,000 square- foot property with breathtaking views of the Gulf of Mexico - *5600 Seawall Blvd., Galveston, TX 77551, 866-505-4456 ext. 145, [www.galvestonislandconventioncenter.com](http://www.galvestonislandconventioncenter.com)*

# FINDING RESOURCES



## Learning Objectives

- Explain why it's important to go the extra mile to assist visitors.
- Explain how to efficiently – quality and speed – retrieve information requested and/or needed by visitors.
- Know – and know how to use – resources available from the local DMO/CVB and other entities, e.g. visitor center, visitor guide, websites, brochures, maps, etc.
- Know – and know how to use – helpful Internet sites such as MapQuest, Google, Ticketmaster, Yelp, Roadfood.com, etc.
- Know the location of the Visitor Center, telephone, address, website, and the services provided by their staff and volunteers.
- List modes of transportation and how visitors can gain access.
- List ways to communicate with other CTAs to share information.
- Describe best practices to stay aware of current and coming events of interest to visitors.

## FINDING RESOURCES

The focus of this module is on a key ingredient of the CTA program's success – **helping YOU help the visitor** – which is at the heart of creating satisfying and memorable experiences.

This involves your developing a keen awareness and understanding of **how to effectively find and use resources**. As a CTA, you are not expected to know everything or to have everything at your fingertips. But, you *should* know how to get information to visitors that meets their immediate needs.

***It's up to you to learn how to give visitors  
the right information,  
in the right amount, at the right time.***

**As a busy person, how do you keep up on everything?**

Here are a few best practices used by CTAs to help them better serve visitors:

### Stay Informed

**Enhance Your Professional Competency** – Make the idea of being a *capable, effective information manager* an integral part of your professional competency.

**Constant Awareness is Key** – The main thing is to stay current on events, trends, and changes. Try to learn something new on a regular basis, if not daily.

**Develop a Curiosity** – Maintain intellectual curiosity. Information gives you the power to exceed customer expectations.

**Develop an 'Information Habit'** – Develop information retrieval processes as a habit; i.e. newspapers, websites, regular updates from CVBs, etc.

**Keep Resources Handy** – Make sure helpful tools, such as the Visitors' Guide, are readily available at or near your workstation, along with active links you can cut/paste.

**Request the Tools You Need** – Ask your employer or call to request helpful tools from Visit Galveston that you need to effectively serve the visitor. If you repeatedly get the same question, provide a printed card to WOW visitors.

**Give Your Feedback & Ideas** – Is something causing confusion for visitors, such as a directional sign? Do you have an idea to improve a guide or map? Tell Visit Galveston about it, so they can pass it along. If all CTAs practice this, area resources will get better and more useful over time.

**Stimulate Communications** – Encourage your employer to help keep you and Visit Galveston ‘in the know’ about what’s happening at your place of business. Do your part to stimulate and participate in the communications flow. If possible, add your company events to the Visit Galveston online calendar.

## Be ‘In the Know’

**Does it bother you when you don’t know the answer?** Here’s how.

**Know the Medical and Emergency Services Near You** – Keep this information on hand for quick access, as stressed visitors often ask for the names of the closest 24-hour pharmacies, walk-in clinics, or emergency rooms.

**Explore and Learn About Your Immediate Area** – How do you get to the closest Visitor Center? What are the most popular attractions in your area? Where can families eat? What can people do for FREE? This information will help you strike up conversations with visitors and may lead to a return visit or a larger tip!



**Know What’s Ahead and When It’s Coming** – Take interest in knowing what’s going on around the city/region – what new developments are underway or what’s just opened. *You’ll impress people with your knowledge!*

**Familiarize Yourself with History** – Learn about the people, places, and events of historical importance all around your area. Be sure to know any historical sites located in your immediate area, near where you work – visitors will ask!

**Know the Area’s Most Popular Attractions** – Make sure you’ve visited or know something

about what the core attractions in our area have to offer, e.g. those most frequently asked about by visitors.

**Go Where Visitors Are Going** – Have visitors told you about something new going on in your area, of which you weren't aware? New things 'pop up' all the time and are often driven by social media. Be sure to pass this new information on to your teammates and try to experience it first-hand!

## Get CTAs In Your Door with *Freebies & Discounts*

**Freebies & Discounts Section** – TELL EMPLOYERS! Expose area businesses to hundreds of CTAs. Offer discounts, BOGO, or free admission through the *Freebies & Discounts* feature on [CTANetwork.com](http://CTANetwork.com). The service is FREE and easy to use.

CTAs can gain first-hand exposure and speak from their own experience! A powerful connection takes place with the visitor, as well as important word-of-mouth marketing for your business.

By participating, you may help CTAs earn points for their *Annual Renewal of Certification*, while providing a valuable renewal benefit. Here's how it works:

## Stay Connected to Fellow CTAs – Locally and Internationally

In new happenings and new attractions, while meeting interesting people who also work in the tourism industry.

**Make it a point to meet other CTAs and exchange contact information** at CTA and industry events and on [CTANetwork.com](http://CTANetwork.com). That networking connection could come in handy, when you're trying to find an answer to a question or recommend something special to a visitor. Whatever stage you are in your career, growing your own professional network is important – and it's fun!

## USE GALVESTON RESOURCES

A significant amount of time and energy has resulted in the development of many helpful resources to help YOU better serve visitors, as shown below:

### Galveston Island Visitor Center

Galveston Island Visitor Information Center

2228 Mechanic St #101 (inside Chamber of Commerce) Galveston, TX 77550

409) 797-5144

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sunday Noon - 5 p.m.

Closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

#### *The Official Visitors' Guide*

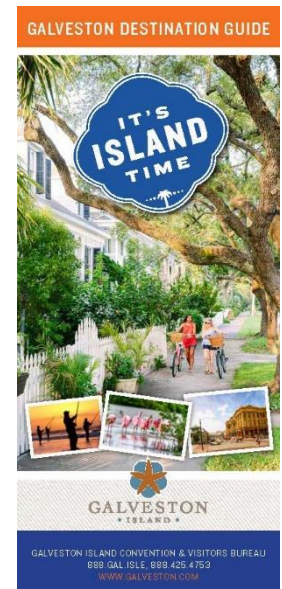
This publication from Visit Galveston provides maps and a comprehensive listing of many things visitors ask about. An exercise follows later in this reading to help familiarize you with this important resource.

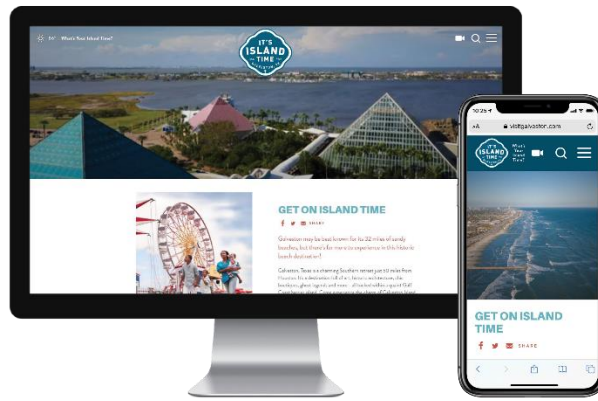
If you become familiar with the *Visitors' Guide*, you'll be better able to answer questions quickly and correctly!

- See how it's organized to quickly answer questions
- Hand it to visitors to take with them
- Keep a supply on hand – ALWAYS!

#### *Website*

VisitGalveston.com holds a wealth of information and easy ways to navigate to obtain the information. Sign-up to have the monthly newsletter emailed to you. Live webcams and an electronic version of the *Official Galveston Visitors' Guide* are also available. Be sure to thoroughly review [www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com) designed for use on a handheld mobile device such as a smartphone or tablet computer (like an iPad), and become familiar with this important resource. Read the latest news releases on the Galveston Island attractions, dining, recreation, and special amenities that make our area such a unique destination.





### *Social Media*

Visit Galveston and local businesses post lots of current information about events, restaurant specials, attractions, and more on their social media pages:

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/visitgalvestonisland](http://www.facebook.com/visitgalvestonisland)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/galvestonisland](http://www.twitter.com/galvestonisland)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/galvestonisland](http://www.instagram.com/galvestonisland)

### *Tourist Maps*

Located at five intersections along Seawall Boulevard and eight locations downtown – feature a unique QR code that links to a mobile website with GPS capabilities for smart phones, providing directions to area attractions, shops and dining venues. The signs also include traditional directions to top attractions based on the location.



**Tourist Maps for Pedestrians**

### *The Galveston Island Pass*

Visitors can save up to 40% off admission prices when they purchase admission to four or more participating attractions with the **Galveston Island Pass**. Attractions include museums, tours and activities. The pass must be purchased online and used within 30 days of purchase.

**Galveston Island Pass** – [www.galvestonislandpass.com](http://www.galvestonislandpass.com)

## EXPLORE WEBSITES AND APPS

Use the Internet to find virtually anything. This list shows popular trip/travel sites.

- Check them out – see how they function.
- Bookmark them for easy use.
- Ask your fellow CTAs what they use!

### *Local Websites*

**www.VisitGalveston.com** – The official site for our area, as described in the previous section.

**www.cityofgalveston.org** – information on city government, parks, events and developments

**www.downtowngalveston.org** – an in-depth view of all downtown attractions and events

**www.galvestonchamber.com** – local business listings, wedding services, interactive map and community events

**www.galvestoncountytexas.gov** – county information including beach pocket parks and boat ramp locations

**www.galvestondailynews.com** – Texas' Oldest Newspaper, local news, weather, sports and events available online

**www.galvestondailynews.com/coast/** – local articles, events and happenings from Coast Magazine online

**www.galvestonhistory.org** – local architectural, cultural and maritime history, plus historic preservation events and projects

**www.galvestonislandconventioncenter.com** – information for meeting planners, exhibitors and attendees

**www.galvestonmonthly.com** – arts, events and articles with a local slant from Galveston Monthly magazine

**www.galvestonparkboard.org** – Galveston Park Board of Trustees beach park information, private event rentals, news and projects

**www.galvestonseafarerscenter.com** – resources for seafarers, men and women who live and work at sea

**www.portofgalveston.com** – information on commercial shipping and cruise lines, map of the port, calendar of arriving and departing cruises

**www.texasalmanac.com** – all things Texas and local information from sports to agriculture

**www.texasbeachsafety.org** – Beach Patrol surf and water conditions, safety tips and beach news

**www.texashighways.com** – Texas Highways magazine, online articles, events and resources

**www.tourtexas.com** – a compilation of the state's attractions, events and maps

**REVIEW SITES:**

**[www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)** – Reviews on hotels, dining, and attractions from real travelers

**[www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com)** – User reviews of local restaurants, shopping, events, hotels and more

**[www.roadtrippers.com](http://www.roadtrippers.com)** – Plug in your road trip; provides interactive maps of restaurants, attractions, natural wonders, and “weird stuff” along your route

**CULTURAL/HERITAGE:**

**[www.theculturaltraveler.com](http://www.theculturaltraveler.com)** – Information on cultural and heritage travel destinations

**PET-FRIENDLY:**

**[www.bringfido.com](http://www.bringfido.com)** – Pet-friendly lodging, attractions, dog parks, hiking trails and beaches around the country

**RESTAURANT/FOOD:**

**[www.opentable.com](http://www.opentable.com)** – Restaurant reviews and online reservation service

**[www.restaurant.com](http://www.restaurant.com)** – Purchase Restaurant Certificates at a discount

**[www.roadfood.com](http://www.roadfood.com)** – Memorable local eateries on highways and back roads

**[www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com)** – User reviews of local restaurants, shopping, hotels and more

**[www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)** – Reviews on hotels, dining, and attractions

**WI-FI:**

**[www.wififreespot.com](http://www.wififreespot.com)** – Locations with free wireless internet access for their customers, guests, and/or the public

## USE OTHER AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Make sure you're constantly aware of and use the resources available to you. Below are some suggestions. Can you think of others?

- **Guides, Maps, etc.** – In addition to the resources offered by Visit Galveston, maps and other resources may be available that are free and of great value to visitors, such as shopping guides, beach guides, and more.
- **Your Company's Materials** – Concierge notebooks, printed directions, and other resources may be available from your employer. Many times, these resources are extremely useful because they've evolved over a long history of answering the most frequent – or most challenging – visitor inquiries.
- **Local News** – Local news or weekly inserts/alerts, provide a good overview of what's going on over the weekend.
- **TV & Radio** – Make it a point to “tune in” and listen attentively when you hear something that may be of interest to visitors. (Upcoming shows, events, new restaurants, etc.)
- **Free Wi-Fi** – Know where visitors can get free Wi-Fi, especially near you.
- **CTANetwork.com Website** – Log in to access a complete list of attractions and tourist tips you can print out to hand to visitors (under *Visiting Attractions*), along with a calendar of events, and timely updates from Visit Galveston.



## REGIONAL RESOURCES

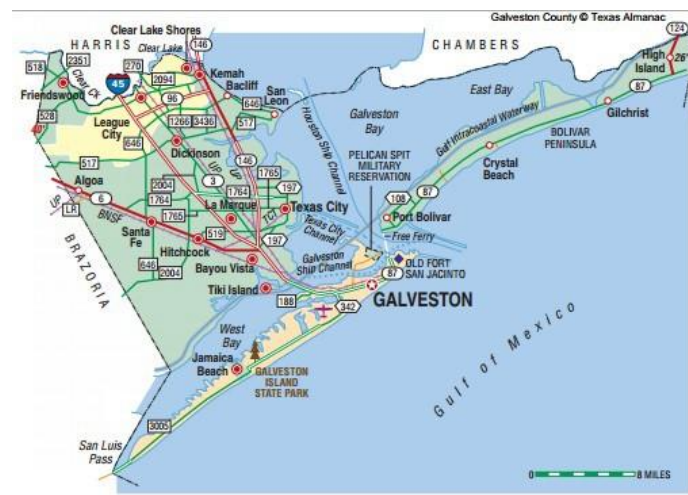
Visitors don't just visit our points of interest. They also travel around the region and will ask YOU about things to see and do.

Shown below are the CVBs and, in smaller towns, Chambers of Commerce, who are working with their local attractions and businesses to promote tourism in their areas and to welcome those who visit. A call to their office or directing visitors to their local visitor center can be of great help. These are also listed in the Visitors' Guide.

A few items of note:

Local Visitor Centers provide helpful information from friendly, knowledgeable local staff.

1. **Hours May Vary** and some offices may be closed on weekends.  
If so, you can direct them to their website for local information, where applicable.
2. **Keep this List Handy** for easy reference in helping visitors.



### LISTED GEOGRAPHICALLY:

#### Central/Downtown:

**Visit Galveston** – 601 Tremont St., Suite 200, Galveston, TX 77550, 409-797-5145,

[www.VisitGalveston.com](http://www.VisitGalveston.com)

**Galveston Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center** – 2228 Mechanic St., #101, Galveston, TX 77550, 409-763-5326, [www.galvestonchamber.com](http://www.galvestonchamber.com)

#### East Regional:

**Bolivar Peninsula Chamber of Commerce** – 1750 Hwy 87, Crystal Beach, TX 77650, 409-684-5940, [www.bolivarchamber.org](http://www.bolivarchamber.org)

**North Regional:**

**Friendswood Chamber of Commerce** – 1100 S. Friendswood Dr., Friendswood, TX 77546, 281-482-3329, [www.friendswoodchamber.com](http://www.friendswoodchamber.com)

**Hitchcock Texas Chamber of Commerce** – 8300 Highway 6, Ste. A, Hitchcock, TX 77563, 409-986-9224, [www.hitchcocktexaschamber.com](http://www.hitchcocktexaschamber.com)

**Kemah Visitor Center** – 604 Bradford, Kemah, TX 77565, 877-775-3624, [www.kemahtourism.com](http://www.kemahtourism.com)

**North Galveston County Chamber of Commerce** – 218 FM 517 West, Dickinson, TX 77539, 281-534-4380, [www.northgalvestoncountychamber.com](http://www.northgalvestoncountychamber.com)

**Santa Fe Texas Chamber of Commerce** – 12408 Highway 6, Santa Fe, TX 77510, 409-925-8558, [www.santefetexaschamber.com](http://www.santefetexaschamber.com)

**Texas City-La Marque Chamber of Commerce** – 9702 E.F. Lowry Expressway, Texas City, TX, 77590, 409- 935-1408, [www.texascitychamber.com](http://www.texascitychamber.com)

**Visit League City** – 300 W. Walker, League City, TX 77573, 281-554-1000, [www.visitleaguecity.com](http://www.visitleaguecity.com)

# ACCESS STATE RESOURCES

Our state also has exceptional resources to assist visitors.

**Texas Office of Tourism** 1100 San Jacinto Blvd., Austin, TX 78711  
800-452-9292

Texas Tourism has information on all of the attractions, outdoor recreation and historical sites in the cities and towns throughout Texas.

Call the toll-free visitor information line at **800-452-9292** to request printed information or go online at [www.TravelTex.com](http://www.TravelTex.com) for information on what there is to see and do throughout the entire state!

## Texas Travel Information Centers

Texas Travel Information Centers are staffed by professional travel counselors who welcome visitors to Texas, help with routings and provide information on points of interest, events and road conditions.

The nearest center in our region is on Interstate 10 near the Louisiana border:

**Texas Travel Information Center at Orange** – 1708 E. I-10, Milepost 880, Orange, TX 77632, 409-883-9416, [www.txdot.gov/driver/travel/information-centers.html](http://www.txdot.gov/driver/travel/information-centers.html)

- Open daily from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. except closed Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving, day before Christmas, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day



Texas Travel Information Center at Orange